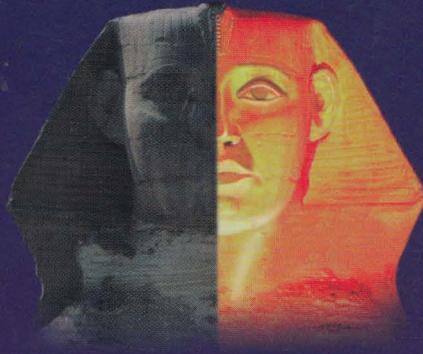


THE ESOTERIC WISDOM REVEALED



THE
SACRED
TRADITION
IN
ANCIENT
EGYPT

ROSEMARY CLARK

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O you who are alive on earth,
And you who shall be born,
Who shall come to this desert
And see this tomb, and pass by it:
Come, let me lead you to the way of life
That you may sail with good wind
That you may reach the abode of generations.
. . . That you shall last in life and follow Sokar,
That you shall behold the face of Ra in the morning.

Inscription in the Tomb of Petosiris (400 B.C.E.)

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PREFACE

This is a book of initiation. It was not intended to be when my formative work on the retrieval of the Egyptian mysteries began to take serious form more than twenty years ago. I sought then, as at times I continue to do now, a rational disclosure of the esoteric tradition, along with a logical meaning to the irresistible passion I carried for as long as I could remember for all things Egyptian.

As I sought the substance of this ancient wisdom, a variety of both scholarly and arcane sources presented themselves as likely keys. Egyptology was the natural choice of study, followed by hieroglyphic writing—and when the mysteries of meaning and context deepened—pyramid power and reincarnational chronicles. But when these failed to decipher any of the enigmas with certainty, the metaphysical teachings of Theosophy and Rosicrucianism, along with an endless number of alleged authorities on reserved teachings, offered an occasional breath of authenticity.

Altogether, I found innumerable discrepancies among the tenets of myth, occult tradition, and the academic scholarship available on ancient Egypt. In nearly all cases, rigid opinions prevailed and speculation was the rule. The resulting body of “knowledge” revealed an incoherent picture of this ancient world, a maze of passages constructed by the subjective interpretation of experts, visionaries, and sojourners alike that led to no destination.

And so, like innumerable seekers before me, I sought a way in which a genuine door to understanding could be opened that would usher on my quest.

It was my practice of the astrological art that provided the first, and perhaps the most essential key. The study of planetary and stellar influences is a process that reveals deep insights into human behavior, and after enough reflection it becomes apparent that not only individuals, but large groups of people—even whole civilizations—looked at their past and probed their future events through the lens of a celestial paradigm that opened up a portal to self-knowledge. In former times, this cosmic world view was not expressed in a philosophy of distant, heavenly bodies impersonally emanating influence into the human sphere, but as a system of mutual communication between human and divine life. And it was sometimes effected by means of that often misunderstood practice, magic.

I was serious about exploring this paradigm to its ultimate realization. If cosmic intelligence expresses its character to us, I thought, can we in turn communicate our selves to celestial life? Is this not what the ancients did to maintain natural harmony? And so when I set myself to answer these questions, I found that I was not alone.

It was in this manner that the second key began to develop. With a group of astrological students who had posed similar questions to me, we chose to pursue the explanations we sought in as pure a form as possible—through the emulation of Egyptian ceremonials in a space and at times that were as wholly authentic as twentieth century circumstances allowed. Over a number of years, we reconstructed a protocol of philosophical instruction, art, music, science, design, liturgy, and religious practice that was as close to that of the ancient priesthood as could be realized.

The worship of the Egyptian deities played no part in this discipline; rather, it defined itself as a repertoire of exploring archetypal images using astrological keys in concert with pharaonic symbolism. The unexpected result of this work was the discovery of an inner temple that could be accessed through this religious practice, a psychic reservoir of information that transmitted itself into our everyday lives. Proof of its nature came in a range of phenomena from the emergence of creative skills to spontaneous healings, all confirming that another dimension of experience had been initiated.

The third key naturally followed. I had begun to learn that work on the inner planes often culminates in the meaningful occurrence of events on the physical plane—even to an introduction to persons who embody the denouement of

one's spiritual quest. This was not my expectation when making my first pilgrimage to Egypt in 1976, but it was a significant consequence of that journey.

"You are looking for me, aren't you?"

Those enigmatic words came from a blue-eyed, diminutive lady with a British accent who greeted me at a rest house in Abydos next to the temple of Seti I—a place I had carefully designated on my itinerary as a living sanctuary. There was a girlish air about her that belied her bent figure and grey head, and as she waved me over to sit with her a sense of recognition and familiarity unfolded.

Yes, I was looking, though I did not know then that a person or place would be part of the search. I had been crawling through the apertures of steel-gated monuments at Giza and was escorted past military sentries at Tanis—a series of small miracles effected solely by local mentors who seemed to understand my irrepressible longings, and who scribbled obscure Arabic orders that gave me access to the places I believed to be most sacred.

But in the dusty village of Balyana, I found a woman who remembered me as her daughter in an ancient time. After several visits and over uncounted bottles of Omar Khayyam wine, Omm Seti and I spoke of our work, our loves, and our personal mysteries that swirled around this inexplicable desire to open the doors of the temple wisdom. We were doing almost the same thing, though in different settings—reading the ancient inscriptions, making the offerings, and chanting the proscribed formulas—not always understanding why but knowing that it was a necessary expression of our existence.

With Omm Seti's guidance I learned that the key to understanding the esoteric tradition is to live it, no matter how fragmentary the knowledge or how inhospitable the environment. The directive is to go forward with what information is there, and fuse it with one's everyday living. In doing this, I learned that the gaps become filled serendipitously. I also discovered that the momentum of time and history does not necessarily bury the spirit of a vital tradition; it comes alive for those who communicate with it.

I did not know at the time that she was regarded by some of the egyptologists in the area as their "patron saint," nor did she herself realize that her life was so very unusual to the rest of the world. It was only a few days after I last saw her in the spring of 1981 that Omm Seti became an Osiris, when her extraordinary talents became the subject of film and books. Her passing left me rudderless for

a time, until I returned in earnest to solitary studies. In this manner the fourth key arose, after reexamining everything I had learned from scholarly sources in the light of the practical and sensory experience Egypt had brought me.

This key was embedded in the disclosures of a new breed of scholars whose work—best described as symbolist in approach—departed from the soulless, academic view of Victorian-era egyptology that most encounter when first scrutinizing the subject. In addition to philosopher-orientalist R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, egyptologists Margaret Murray, Richard Wilkinson, Mark Lehner, and Robert Kriech Rimmer expressed insights that provided coherence to a very profound impression I had gleaned from my personal work—that behind the apparent contradictions between modern science and ancient Egyptian esotericism exists an underlying theme of both spiritual and pragmatic relevancy. This, as I understood it, was a spiritual technology aimed to actuate the transformation of the human condition into a vehicle for higher functions. And those functions, which the ancients had expressed in couched and allegorical terms, could lead to the sorts of lofty accomplishments with which we credit Egyptian civilization.

From this contemplative laboratory of scholarship and experience my own seminal insights into the Egyptian mysteries arose. In the form of both the astrological symbolism I was well versed in and the ceremonial protocol I had practiced, three paths emerged as the key that reveals the spiritual tradition of ancient Egypt. The most accessible, a Lunar-Osirian path, concerns organic transformation through an identification with natural life. Its knowledge was transmitted through the funerary rites of the House of the Dead, and all who passed through its doors were its recipients.

In addition, an exclusive path reserved for a select few, expressed in a Solar-Horian theme through the Royal House, was aimed at imparting a moral transformation through the resolution of matter and spirit, a dilemma faced by those in possession of the greatest powers of the material world. The fusion of these two realms was the continuous mission of those who assumed the crown of kingship, and they were intrinsically tied to this path as much for the stability of collective as for the self.

But the most enigmatic path I encountered revealed a Stellar theme, one that had been alluded to in some of the ancient writings, but apparently transmitted only through certain temple traditions and reserved for an unspecified body of

persons by an unknown protocol. It conferred a process of metamorphosis to both body and soul, through a knowledge of, and a fusion with, the genesis of celestial life.

These paths fulfilled the sacred mandates of the temples, tombs, and pyramids, and they have deep relevance to us today. The Lunar-Osirian path teaches us the strengths and weaknesses of the body, while the Solar-Horian path portrays the powers and limitations of our social responsibility. However, the Stellar path discloses our true relationship with the gods and constitutes a process that recapitulates the first two, yet offers the supreme spiritual consummation, becoming a "Master of Secrets." There are ancient records which intimate the existence of these individuals, and they came from all walks of life.

The harvest of my discoveries and experiences took form on the pages that follow. From them, I acquired the most valuable key of all—that Egypt portrays our godliness and our power to raise knowledge and action to a high order of achievement. This has endured through the ages, and reminds us in the present of what it is we really are, and could strive to become.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of outstanding individuals were integral to helping me define the scope of this work and fulfill its design, physically and spiritually.

Among them, Deborah Forman provided valuable suggestions throughout the process, while Bliem Kern furnished a great deal of moral support when needed. But even earlier, when *The Sacred Tradition* was initially developed as an audiovisual journey into the ancient mysteries, Margie Hamai of Honolulu's Maitreya Institute drew me to an understanding of how significant Egypt's legacy is to so many people today.

Several of my students also pressed me on to delineate this knowledge not only for their sake but because they recognized its relevance to others. They include Patt Butti, John Kelly, David Fruhauf, Carmen Nervoso, and Keith Pratt. In addition, my agent John White believed that this book had a critical message to impart, and he fulfilled his promise to find it a home.

I would especially like to extend my appreciation to Denise Koehler of Deniart Systems in Toronto, whose beautifully designed hieroglyphic fonts grace these pages. Her great talent and contribution of special figures have added to the distinction of this work. And an equal amount of appreciation must go to Tom Lewis, my assiduous editor at Llewellyn, whose patient scholarship helped polish this philosopher's stone.

INTRODUCTION

The wisdom of ancient Egypt is a living tradition. Even though a complete compendium of details has yet to be written, fragments can be found in extant works on mythology, science, astronomy, astrology, and history.

In an effort to fill the gaps and provide a practical syllabus for students of Sacred Science, material for research and contemplation has been appended to each chapter. Each is a practicum providing specifics on the subject matter of the chapter, intended as a valuable component in the understanding of Egyptian esotericism.

There are also a few idiosyncrasies in this text that deserve explanation. In the numerous translations of Egypt's sacred literature, a person in possession of the mystical books for journeying through incorporeal regions are variously referred to as "the deceased," and in some cases "the living one." But as orientalist Alexandre Piankoff pointed out, "The 'mystical' or 'prelogical' mind does not make a definite separation between these two states." (Piankoff, *The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon*. Princeton U. Press: Princeton NJ, 1955; p. 22 ff.)

For the Egyptians, the identity of the sojourning soul who enters the first path of transformation becomes "the Osirified," one identified with Osiris, god of renewal. This appellation was given to those who had relinquished the rhythm of earthly existence—literally or figuratively. Such literature is also found in non-funerary works and places intended for the living, though under very unique conditions. In view of this, those persons in this work are referred to—in the words of the ancient Egyptians—as "the initiate."

We also find a notion in Egyptian literature that refers to the locale where the experiences of transformation take place when one becomes "Osirified." In translations that were rendered in the late nineteenth century, this place was designated as "the Underworld." But the Egyptians did not view human experience confined to the arbitrary limits of the visible, physical world. Rather, non-physical dimensions of experience that the conscious mind could engage were regarded as factual, as material reality. In light of modern studies by parapsychologists and neuropsychologists that verify such phenomena, these dimensions are referred to here as "the inner life."

There are a number of translations of Egyptian sacred texts available today, the most voluminous being renditions of the so-called "book of the dead," known to the Egyptians as *The Book of Going Forth (by Day)*. For context I have relied on Thomas George Allen's translation published in 1974 by the University of Chicago and rendered my translations from the hieroglyphic text of E. A. Wallis Budge published in 1895 by the Trustees of the British Museum. For the Pyramid Texts, I have provided by own translations, using as guides R. O. Faulkner's supplement of hieroglyphic texts published in the 1998 special edition for Sandpiper Books Ltd., and the hieroglyphic plates in Alexandre Piankoff's *The Pyramid of Unas*, published in 1968 by Princeton University Press. All unattributed translations are my own.

When discussing the funerary and magical literature of the Ramessides, I have also rendered my own translations, referring to the plates portfolio in *The Tomb of Rameses VI* by Alexandre Piankoff, published in 1954 by the Bollingen Foundation.

All remarks from the *Hermetica* are quoted directly from Sir Walter Scott's 1924 translation, reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston, 1993.

SACRED NAMES

The Egyptian names, rather than the Hellenized names of the *Neteru* (male and female divine principles) are used throughout this work. This, in deference to the ancient tradition that the sacred names, words of power, and original appellations of spiritual figures convey, both in their writing and enunciation, the spirit that they engender.

Egyptian	Greek
Amun	Ammon, Zeus
Amunhotep (Son of Hapu)	Amenothes
Anher	Onuris
Anpu	Anubis
Anqet	Anukis
Apep	Apophis
Apuat	Ophois
Asar	Osiris
Asar Hapi	Serapis
Auset	Isis
Bakha	Buchis
Djehuti	Thoth

Egyptian	Greek
Hap	Apis
Her em Anpu	Hermanubis
Herishef	Harsaphes
Heru Behutet	Harendotes ¹
Her em Akhet	Harmakhis ²
Heru em Aakhuti	Harakhte ³
Heru pa khart	Harpocrates ⁴
Heru Ur	Haoeris ⁵
Heru	Harsiesis ⁶
Het-Her	Hathor
Ihy	Harsomtus
Imhotep	Imouthes
Imset	Mestha
Khnum	Khnoumis
Maat	Mayet
Min	Chemmis, Pan
Montu	Buchis
Nebt-Het	Nephys
Nefertum	Iphtimis
Neit	Athene
Nekhabet	Eileithyia
Nem Ur	Mnevis
Pakhet	Artemis
Ptah	Hephaistos

1 "Horus of the Winged Disc."

2 "Horus in the Horizon."

3 "Horus of the Two Horizons: the Sphinx at Giza."

4 "Horus the Child."

5 "Horus the Elder."

6 "Horus the Younger."

Egyptian	Greek
Sah	Orion
Sekhmet	Sakhmis
Selqit	Selkis
Sept, Sopdet	Sothis, Sirius
Set	Sutekh, Typho
Shu	Sos
Sobekh	Suchos
Sokar	Sokaris
Taurt	Thoeris
Tefnut	Thphenis
Un Nefer	Onnophris
Wadjet	Buto, Edjo



PROLOGUE

On a golden morning 3,500 years ago, a young Egyptian prince sped across the tawny sands of the Libyan desert on his swift mount—a gift from the renowned stables of his father Amunhotep II, ruler of the Two Lands of Egypt and the far-off surrounding countries called in those days “The Nine Bows.”

From a distance, the sacred mountains of Rostau—the white and red-faced pyramids of the ancestors—reflected the light of daybreak and shone like beacons on the northern horizon. Below the plateau on which they rose like the sacred mounds of time, the great river unhurriedly flowed toward the lush northern marshes, where it spread into seven sinuous arms that fed the land with a verdant green cloak of vegetation.

Unlike the river, the prince desired to press far beyond the serene banks of the Nile. He urged his steed along the fractured blocks of limestone abandoned by the royal sculptors of bygone days, past the broken huts of the old tomb makers—all the debris of former times receded behind him as he penetrated the cool morning mist of the desert. He knew that it would quickly evaporate when the full face of Ra emerged in splendid illumination over the Two Lands, and so he hastened over the dunes to test the prowess of his young horse.

The prince bore the name of three of his forefathers—Thutmoses, “Who Comes Forth from Djehuti”—meaning that his spirit emerged from the primeval ocean like the powerful word that brought all life into being. This was the name he was called from birth, though like the other royal children he might acquire more titles as the temple priests discerned more of his imperial destiny.

Of all the sons of Pharaoh, Thutmose was most like his father. Tall in stature and taking great pleasure from the liberty of the outdoors, the prince delighted in riding the royal mounts of the king. His father Amunhotep had accomplished many great deeds during his reign, but of all of them his sheer physical vitality “made the faces of the people gleam when he was seen.” It was also said of him that he was “a beautiful youth . . . he was one who knew all the works of Mont—the spirit of endurance and victory. He had no equal on the field of battle. He was one who knew horses; there was not his like in the royal army.”

And so like his father before him, Thutmose spent his mornings in the vast solitude of the sand mountains surrounding the white-walled city of Memphis, the place where his family had established the great palace of the Two Lands. Here he was removed from the endless retinues of foreign ambassadors, the ceremonial protocols of the temple ministers, and the intricate hierarchy of aristocratic cousins and siblings. Here he could soar like Heru—the spirit of royal youth—across the dry plains on the outskirts of the city. Here also he could draw his long bow toward the fleeting gazelle and spread his muscular arms to the wind.

For though he was the son of a king, Thutmose was born of Tiaa, a noble lady far removed from the Golden Throne. As such, he could never carry the crook and flail among the people. His life could only be the prescribed array of boring regal pursuits, bordered by the sacred mandate that only his half brother—the son of the royal heiress—could assume the Two Crowns of Egypt.

In those early hours of morning Thutmose passed over the heaps of quarried rock and far into the sloping hills of glossy white sand in the western desert. Time passed, the face of Ra ascended over the horizon and his golden boat sailed overhead. The *nemes* cloth on the brow of the prince became damp, and the horse slacked in pace as he turned back toward the east and realized that he had ventured farther from the palace than ever. In the distance, the crimson fluttering pennants of the royal city’s white wall were nowhere to be seen. He gazed back and forth at the two horizons momentarily and realized that he had veered considerably from his usual course and would have to stop and rest before proceeding to more familiar ground.

Thutmose then remembered the glorious resting place that his father had made in his own youth near the pyramids, a place where the white-robed priests

of Heliopolis spoke of “the greatest of souls, the holiest of the holy ones,” Heru em Aakhuti, the Lord of the Two Horizons. Emanating from the sunlight in the east at dawn and reposing beyond the western desert at dusk, this great being joined together the powers of Ra the Sun, with Atum the father of creation, and Kephri the revolving heaven. From this deity the patriarchs of the Royal House were said to have descended centuries ago, born of a priestess of the House of the Sun. Heru em Aakhuti embodied the elusive magical power of kings, and was said to dwell within the mighty image of a recumbent lion-man, though his temple and sanctuary were now but an ancient memory.

He turned northward toward the pyramids elevated on the flat Giza plain and before much time had passed, he led his tired horse across the vast limestone courtyard of the great temple that honored “The Pyramid of Divine Places.” The resting spot was not far, but Thutmoses felt a lethargy in his shoulders that urgently begged for respite. Dismounting, a faint cool breeze from the Nile passed over and filled his nostrils like a tranquil balm. It came up from below the temple wall where a hollow could be seen, shaded by an immense worn stone projecting from the sand. Thutmoses walked down the causeway beside it, and flung himself into the dark recess, relieved that the overhead light did not penetrate the dim space. As his eyes accustomed themselves to the shade, he tore his headdress away, rumbled his damp auburn hair, and allowed his head to fall back into the cooler depression of the ancient rock. In the noon Sun, the young prince sighed and slept.

“Menkheperu Ra,” a voice spoke, breaking his private slumber.

Thutmoses raised his brow inquisitively. To whom was this stranger speaking? No one in the palace ever spoke to him by this curious name, which means “one who is established in the light of transformations.” Balanced between the worlds of sleep and waking, Thutmoses paused, but then settled back into the comfortable depths of his afternoon slumber.

“Menkheperu Ra,” once again.

This time the prince was aroused, though his eyes were still closed and his body reposed in the shadows. He became aware of a great presence nearby, one that felt at once powerful and familiar, like his father the king.

“Behold me, Thutmoses,” the voice said, knowing that his listener heeded him in wonder and curiosity. “I am your father Heru em Aakhuti, who encircles the

horizons of Ra-Atum-Khephri, and thou art my son. I will give to you my kingdom on earth as the head of the living.”

Thutmoses paused in his sleep and his breath quickened at the words. Though the voice spoke of things he did not quite understand, the sounds came as if out of the dimension of timeless time, known already to him. In his heart he nodded assent, and the great presence responded benevolently.

“The sand whereon I have my existence has enveloped my sides. Say unto me that you will do all that I desire.”

In his reverie, the prince bowed to his ancient father.

“Through me shall all good come if you will hearken to these words,” the spirit continued. “Clear away the sand from my image and restore my temple. . . for this, the land of Egypt will be yours, the land of the North and the land of the South. You will wear the Two Crowns and rule in prosperity and happiness for millions of years.”

Thutmoses then saw the great being through the eyes of his heart, a spirit of the most splendid power, possessing the crowns and the scepters of kings and queens, standing as sentry over the ages. The spirit was indeed dwelling in the stone beneath where he lay, but the sands had blown over time to cover his lion’s body and choke his altar of offerings. As Heru em Aakhuti sheltered his mortal son from the noonday heat, the sleeping prince gazed at the divine image until his worldly eyes stirred and it faded away.

As quickly as the apparition departed, the eyes of Thutmoses opened. The Nile breeze still passed into the shadow of the great stone where he lay, and the solar barque was now moving toward the Western Land. He arose and touched the cool surface of the rock that sheltered him, a rock that he now knew to be the graven image that housed Heru em Aakhuti, god of his ancestors and the living Pharaoh. He devotedly caressed the worn ridges beneath his fingers, still sensing the ancient power that had spoken to him. And as abruptly as he had awakened from his strange sleep, he took to his horse and sped down the familiar path along the Nile toward Memphis.

Thutmoses did fulfill the call of his divine vision. Abandoning for a time his beloved morning excursions into the western desert, the young prince oversaw a vast project of the royal engineers to remove the mountains of sand from the body of the ancient image. Liberating it from the debris of millennia, the sanc-

tuary was uncovered and the temple restored. In only a few years, Heru em Aakhuti's mysteries were reestablished and Thutmoses—as promised by the guardian spirit reposing in the Sphinx that had been forgotten—carried the crook and flail of his people and wore the Two Crowns of Egypt in the name of Menkheperu Ra, “Established in the Light of Transformations.”

This he recorded in gladness on a stone between the paws of the lion-man he heard in the shadows of a morning in his youth, and this can be still seen today.



Chapter One

A SACRED SCIENCE

Sacred science starts from this mysterious but demonstrated reality which shows an energetic (spiritual) world preceding the material and quantitative world.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Sacred Science*

The dream of Thutmose IV and his subsequent ascendancy to the throne of Egypt is a matter of written record, taken from the stele he erected between the paws of the Sphinx in Dynasty 18 (circa 1570–1360 B.C.E.). A few of the narrative details described here may not be wholly authentic, but of the dozens of accounts that repeat the story, each reflects the distinct perspective of the interpreter along with similar interpolations of related facts, philosophical musings, and imagination. The story has been paraphrased as a quaint folktale, detailed as an historical statistic in royal chronologies, and even cited as a clever political fraud to advance the prestige of Thutmose and his heirs politically. Though the Sphinx story is mostly evaluated as an example of the prevailing religious superstitions in the New Kingdom, no agreement exists today on the veracity or full meaning of the monumental inscription.

This and other ancient events of Egyptian kings, queens, priests, and peasants are so reported in both scholarly and popular works. Like the story of Thutmose, they are repeated in a number of ways, some supporting or discounting a particular

point of view, some taking another new perspective that might elaborate on a great enigma that has yet to be disclosed. In this manner the bequest that ancient Egypt has left the human race—prolific writings, a rich and varied artistic tradition, and an architecture that evades modern replication—continues to beckon to our curiosity and our understanding. For the last hundred years especially, we have sought to acquire some insight into the connection we all seem to have with the sacred places, covered like the Sphinx with the debris of millennia. And like Thutmoses and his dream, we perceive a great power in the ancient images even though they evade our immediate scrutiny.

This was certainly the persuasion of the ancient Egyptians as well, and numbers of their relics confirm this. At the same time, we find no perplexity about the human experience in the antiquities we have inherited from them. There is instead a conspicuous lack of spiritual conflict in spite of occasional social disruptions, coupled with an inordinate passion for living that inspired accomplishments which we have yet to match. Like the stele of Thutmoses, an attitude of great devotion is consistently expressed, mingled with a radiant dignity and sense of order. It is hard not to recognize that we lack or have forgotten this approach to existence—or dispelled it for the more important concerns of modern civilization. In doing so, we are always reminded of the questions that remain unanswered, the mysteries about nearly everything that pertains to a “higher life.”

The prevailing opinion regarding Egypt’s antiquity has been a severe limitation in our grasp of its ancient wisdom—not to mention the barriers we have erected of language, religion, and culture. The first egyptologists ascribed the chronology of dynasties to a beginning around 4000 B.C.E.¹ This was essentially based on what little was known in the nineteenth century of our era about geology, history, and hieroglyphs. This figure has been continually altered to later times, and serious disagreements still exist now as to a precise figure. Further complicating the matter is modern technology—offering data from the cultivation of grain in the Nile Valley to the carving of the Sphinx—which places such phenomena at a much older period, a range from 7,000 to 15,000 B.C.E.

1 See Appendix One: An Abbreviated Dynastic Chronology.

The Egyptians themselves believed that their country had been founded by spiritual beings from “the beginning of timeless time.” A series of demigods followed for several thousand years, who ruled and were then succeeded by the dynastic kings we know today as the “Pharaohs.”

Herodotus (440 B.C.E.) reported in his *Histories* that 17,000 years had elapsed from the reign of the last demigod of Egypt to his day. His source was the famed priest-school of Heliopolis, known in his time to be the most highly regarded reservoir of arcane wisdom to the Egyptians. Manetho, an Egyptian priest living at the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (300 B.C.E.), concurred with his predecessor and tells in his *History of Egypt* that the first rulers of the Egyptians were their gods, who were followed by the dynasty of demigods that ruled for a total of 24,836 years. Diodorus Siculus (60 B.C.E.), a Greek historian who traveled extensively to collect historical information, writes in the *Bibliotheca Historica*, “The priests of Egypt, summing up the time from the reign of the Sun to the descent of Alexander upon Asia, calculate it to be about 23,000 years.” And finally, a number of 36,525 years for the age of Egypt is given by Iamblichus (250–330 C.E.), who also wrote on the nature of Egypt’s esoteric tradition and many of the components of the ancient mystery schools and initiation. But these and other reports have been flatly dismissed as impossible fabrications, contrived to enhance the fame of their inventors.

Though no agreement exists on the beginnings of Egyptian civilization, the end is known to have encompassed the period of three hundred years before and after the inception of our modern era. Known as the Graeco-Roman Period, the time was heralded by Egypt’s sequential conquest by Persia, Greece, and Rome. It was characterized by a prevalence of polytheistic religions, the emergence of monotheistic faiths, the filtering of Greek philosophy into the science and technology of the time, and the coexistence of diverse cultures in the tolerant atmosphere of Roman expansion.

This was at times a period of great civil disruption throughout the ancient world, though it was also a unique period of cultural synthesis which allowed the dissemination of Egyptian ideas that had hitherto been impossible due to Egypt’s geographic and political isolation. In the Graeco-Roman world, Egypt

was the most ancient of civilizations known at the time. Historians, travelers, scholars, and explorers flocked there to chronicle its disappearance, while inadvertently witnessing the last breath of that great devotion, radiant dignity, and marvelous approach to existence that had endured in the memory of time.

The Hermetic Tradition

Those who related the spiritual legacy of the Pharaohs for posterity were decidedly outsiders, though some achieved enough of a degree of intimacy with the remaining Egyptian sages to relate some factual documentation. Through them, reports and some details of Egypt's esoteric tradition are found in a wide range of records, studies, and experiences. Herodotus, in pursuing knowledge of Egypt's famed religious mysteries, found what he sought, yet deferred in revealing the details:

At the festival of Isis at Busiris, everybody—tens of thousands of men and women—when the sacrifice is over, beat their breasts: in whose honor, however, I do not feel it is proper for me to say.²

Plutarch (46–125 C.E.), a historian of the Roman period born near Delphi in Greece, was also a priest of the Pythian Apollo; he traveled throughout the civilized world to record the disposition of the religious traditions of his time. In his extensive summation on the Egyptian mysteries *De Iside et Osiride* (“On Isis and Osiris”) he wrote:

This much may be depended upon: the religious rites and ceremonies of the Egyptians were never instituted upon irrational grounds, never built upon mere fable and superstition, but founded with a view to promote the morality and happiness of those who were to observe them, or at least to preserve the memory of some valuable piece of history, or to represent to us some of the phenomena of nature.

Another valuable source of Egyptian wisdom was preserved in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (“Hermetic Body”), a collection of writings originating in Egypt

² Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book Two.

from the Alexandrian sage schools reputedly functioning during Graeco-Roman times.

Of the few conquests by foreigners into Egyptian territory over several thousands of years, the last and most significant was that of Alexander, whose favored general Ptolemy Lagus inherited the royal house of Egypt. According to the Greek historian Arrian, the city of Alexander was founded by him in 331 B.C.E. on the original site of the Egyptian village of Rakote. The metropolis was planned by the architect Deinokrates of Rhodes.

Through the centuries of Ptolemaic rule, a concerted effort was undertaken to gather together all knowledge of the civilized world, with the assembly of a reputed 700,000 volumes at Alexandria. Besides the collection campaign, an extensive undertaking was also made to translate the contents into Greek, the language of the intellectual elite. Manetho was one of the more well-known compilers directly involved in the task. Two legendary libraries were established to further this end: the Serapeion (in Latin, Serapeum) adjoining the Temple of Serapis, and the Mouseion (Museum).

The Ptolemaic royal court at Alexandria flourished for nearly three hundred years. The rulers descended from Ptolemy all patronized the artistic, scientific, and scholarly personages of their day, encouraging the fusion of Egyptian religion and philosophy—which they revered for its antiquity and depth—with Hellenistic ideas. In short time, the centers and the schools attached to the libraries made Alexandria known as the plexus of learning in the Greek-speaking world.

In turn, the Romans annexed Egypt following the wars of the Caesars. When the last Ptolemaic monarch, Kleopatra VII, failed to rally support against this invasion, her forces were defeated by Augustus Caesar in 31 B.C.E. While this event was to dramatically alter the landscape of western religion and philosophy thereafter, the new conquerors dispersed Alexandrian knowledge to the extent of their empire in the second half of the Graeco-Roman period, while importing new ideas from the far-flung reaches of their new territories: the Far East, western Europe, and rapidly-evolving Gnostic communities in the Middle East.

At the time, the Hermetic writings accumulated in Alexandria's libraries were collectively attributed to Hermes, a Greek conception of the Egyptian deity Djehuti—patron of science, language, and learning. Hermes was believed to have embodied himself as a teacher of sages a number of times, and at the concluding decades of Egyptian civilization, in the guise of Hermes Trismegistus, the “thrice greatest,” because he had mastered the three sacred disciplines of medicine, architecture, and astronomy.

Djehuti was regarded as the original teacher of sacred knowledge to the Egyptians, being the divine scribe of myth charged with writing the secret books of the temples and possessing the magical words of power used in temple ritual. Greeks living in Egypt knew him as Thoth-Hermes. This figure was, in turn, associated with the legendary Imhotep, a scholar of the Old Kingdom who was esteemed as a sort of patron saint of arcane teachings. He was, according to Egyptian legend, the originator of the architectural canons employed in the building of the Saqqara and Giza monuments, those pyramid complexes believed by the Greeks and Romans to be temples of initiation into the highest religious mysteries. Thus, the legend of Thoth/Hermes Trismegistus came into being, with all its attendant Hermetic associations and historical lore derived from Graeco-Roman culture.

Though the *Corpus Hermeticum* is ascribed to the demigod Hermes, scholars agree that the material is a collection of works undoubtedly composed by several individuals, a school of philosopher-sages perhaps dedicated to the divine scribe who they believed spoke through their writings. The work is comprised of a series of dialogues—transmissions between teachers and students. They are filled with descriptions of cosmic life, the role of humanity in the universe, and the progress of the soul from earthly life into heavenly realms. Besides these philosophical discourses, other treatises on astrology, magic, alchemy, and some religious compositions are included. Throughout, Hermes is represented as the great source of spiritual revelation:

Hermes saw all things, and understood what he saw, and had power to explain to others what he understood . . . for what he had discovered he inscribed on tablets, and hid secretly what he had inscribed, leaving the larger part untold, that all later ages of the world might seek it.

Excerpt XXIII (*Kore Kosmu*): 5

There is controversy among Hermetic scholars as to exactly what constituted the *Corpus Hermeticum*. It is agreed that the essence of a cultural wisdom circulating throughout the civilized world during the Graeco-Roman age was placed into the Alexandrian libraries by scribes serving the philosophic priest-schools of the time. This undoubtedly included the extant esoteric tradition of Egypt, as well as important contemporaneous Greek, Roman, and Persian spiritual works. The latter was strongly laden with Manichaeism, a philosophy of dualism that eventually became incorporated into early Christian belief. The collection attained great notoriety, and was studied by intellectuals who were migrating in great numbers to Egypt seeking access to its legendary ancient wisdom. At some time during these events the *Corpus Hermeticum* was assembled, perhaps being intended as a series of summaries or commentaries on the fundamental elements of Egyptian esotericism. Altogether, seventeen works are recognized as being truly Hermetic, or emanating from the philosophic Alexandrian school of the period.³

Hermetic philosophy may be the only vital remnant of the ancient world that survived the dramatic shifts of political and religious power throughout the Middle East and Europe in the centuries that followed its compilation. Until the Arab conquest 640 C.E., the civilized world considered Egypt to be the ultimate repository of its spiritual traditions. But occult tradition says that the sunset of the ancient mysteries was known to the philosopher-sages during this period, and that it was understood to be entering into a latent phase. For this reason, it was in Alexandria that the library of ancient knowledge continued to accumulate until a series of burnings imposed by Christian domination under the Emperor Theodosius threatened its existence. After an alleged restoration of more than 300,000 manuscripts, the Arab conquest under Caliph Omar dismantled the literary collections and consigned them to legend in the Dark Ages.

The *Corpus Hermeticum* continued to circulate during the Middle Ages, when scholars of every religious persuasion were able to acquire and reproduce writings of ancient works for their own study and for the collections of their patrons. Christian, Jewish, and Islamic translations exist, many of which are similar in content yet all contaminated with the flavor of their translators as well. These

³ Scott, *Hermetica*, p. 17.

were combined with the eclectic fragments of low magic, Graeco-Roman religion, and ancient folklore that survived along with authentic *Hermetica*. The result became a confusion of the arcane wisdom and the remnants of a culture in historical transition, already bereft of its once-revered spiritual and moral mandates.

The Italian philosopher Marsilio Ficino was the first to translate Platonic and Hermetic works from Greek and Latin in the fifteenth century, along with commentaries that introduced the late medieval world to the esoteric tradition of Graeco-Roman Egypt. And by the time the Italian Renaissance was in full bloom, the sixteenth century Dominican priest Giordano Bruno was leaving the church to pursue Egyptian religious magia and disseminate Platonic and Hermetic literature at Oxford, Prague, Frankfurt, and Venice (he was later imprisoned by the Inquisition and burned in Rome as a heretic). Both Ficino, Bruno, and the scholars who followed them not only understood the material they were heir to, but articulated it well enough from its original perspective to significantly influence the minds that eventually brought about the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

The greater portion of the Hermetic works is mostly in the form of dialogues concerning the origin of natural and divine life, as discussed between Hermes Trismegistus and his students, Tat and Asclepius. The well-known fourteen sermons of the Divine Pymander are the best example of the genre. These articulate the conscious unfolding and manifestation of spiritual forces in human life, the realms in which they exist, and the manner in which they are accessed. This is not dissimilar from what is known of Egypt's esoteric tradition, although in the Hermetic system the means toward the end was somewhat different.

For though the Hermetic writings reflect the fundamental world view of ancient Egypt, they can convey an erroneous theme of spiritual teaching to the casual reader. To begin with, Hermetic revelation was not a process of the teacher consciously infusing knowledge into the candidate. Rather, it was a process by which the candidate arrived at wisdom through learning the order of the natural universe and contemplating it, a structure implied by several of the dialogues.

The many "hermetic" visions and magical experiments reported by the restless dilettantes of the Graeco-Roman milieu gave rise to another misunderstanding of the Hermetic writings—that candidates for the mysteries were chosen for their spiritual aptitude, when in reality most were shallow aspirants caught up in the phantasmagoria of the age. Borrowing indiscriminately from long-established oriental esoteric traditions, assorted programs of mystery teachings were instituted by the politically and socially elite, rather than the spiritually accomplished. As a result, the goal of the mystery religion—to free the soul of its ties to carnal existence and temporal life in order to know a spiritual existence with eternal life—was undoubtedly overlooked by the chroniclers of the period.

In the Greek Mysteries, the *Neophyte* was ideally admitted into a particular religious tradition for preliminary testing of suitability for the spiritual life. At the next stage, the *Adept* was trained with an intensive program of study in the curriculum of the mystery school. And at the last stage, the *Initiate* was raised to the position of openly practicing the mysteries as a teacher. The entire program was facilitated by a protocol that paid some attention to moral aspiration and spiritual merit, but as time passed the control of political families degenerated the system into an elitism that excluded all but the wealthy.

As class became the primary distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated in the Graeco-Roman world, the prejudices assumed by such thinking created obstructions which still cloud our understanding of ancient religious life today. In the hundreds of books concerning Egyptian religion in print, we may find persistent references by authors to the "public worship" in "cults of the gods" by "ordinary folk" possessing "simple ideas," as distinguished from either the rich, the royalty, or "high initiates" who possessed more "elevated ideas." The ancient Egyptians made no such references to the spiritual status of any groups in their society.

And philosophically, several spectrums of thinking from diverse cultures co-existing with the Graeco-Roman world are found in the Hermetic works; these systems of thought impose their own set of contradictory ideas. Some portions of the *Corpus* refer to a triune division of life, from the physical to the cosmic

levels and this is consistent with Egyptian cosmology. But other works refer to scales of seven worlds and ten realms of universal manifestation, which reflect Greek and Qabalistic concepts.

There is no doubt that some elements of the *Corpus Hermeticum* are derived from Egypt's esoteric tradition. However, significant components of it come from Graeco-Roman thinking, such as the Hermetic spiritual goal. This is supposed to be achieved primarily through acts of initiation, where external agencies—such as teachers, tests, and trials—impel the processes of spiritual transformation. Conversely, Egypt's esoteric tradition calls for the inward experience of initiation, the awakening of indwelling powers through progressive communication with natural life. This is not necessarily accomplished through outer means, but through the exercise of the internal forces and senses. Self-initiation was also emphasized, in sequence with natural cycles determined through the use of sacred astronomy. This is the premise behind Djehuti's ancient appellation, "He Who is Self-Created," as expressed in numerous hymns and spells in sacred literature. Even divine beings were believed to have entered the phenomenal world by progressive stages of self-knowledge.

The Hermetic tradition is thus not delineated by the transposition of Egyptian philosophical and mythological images with Greek and Roman ones. Its *modus operandi* also depends on a manner of thinking that is not purely Egyptian in spirit and must be redefined. The most significant disparity of the Graeco-Roman Mystery Tradition emphasizes wisdom acquired from a "master" or hierarchy of masters, who endowed the candidate with access to the cosmic worlds. For the ancient Egyptian, however, spiritual awakening endowed the initiate with the accomplishment of individual mastery, the power to become a "Master of Secrets," as expressed by high priests, priestesses, and royalty in their life summaries at temples and tombs. And in the Egyptian system, the initiate has not commenced, but fulfilled one of the mandates of the temple by mastering himself. This process is intensely personal, for in the true Hermetic universe, the spiritual powers reside within.

The sages of Alexandria and the early Middle Ages were followed in later centuries by the metaphysical confidences of the Templars, Qabalists, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and in modern times, the Spiritualists, Theosophists, and New Age

“questers.” Each have expounded on some aspect of Egypt’s sacred wisdom, but each appears to have appropriated what was either useful to their ideologies or simply available in their day.

Sacred Science

The science of archeology is barely over one hundred years old. Until recently, it had been mostly enshrouded in the conventions of methodology, with many professionals in the field struggling to reconcile the data of ancient Egypt with either biblical history or Darwinian theory. Fortunately, some independent approaches have emerged in modern times, fusing the data of archeology, anthropology, and the emerging science of archeoastronomy to explain some of the ancient mysteries that remain unresolved.

Along with the scholarly approaches, speculative views have been postulated that place the answers far from the realm of the Egyptians themselves. Some propose that influences outside of human civilization are the forces behind the legendary esoteric tradition of ancient Egypt. Theories from intergalactic space-ships to secret political hierarchies from the mythical Atlantis have been earnestly forwarded, none of which have brought us any closer to comprehending the ancient legacy. Still, an alternative interpretation of the known facts, alluded to by various proponents of the esoteric tradition throughout the ages, offers tremendous insight into the situation; this has been discounted by academia for obvious reasons that we will examine later.

A most unique and thought-provoking study of this esoteric tradition was accomplished by the Alsatian mathematician, philosopher, and orientalist René Schwaller de Lubicz, a scholar whose views formulated a “symbolist” interpretation of Egypt’s legacy—a term borrowed from the late nineteenth century French literary and art movement that rejected academic and realistic modes of representation. De Lubicz spent a significant part of his life in Egypt studying its monuments and culture, and his work has only in recent times become accessible to English-speaking students. Initially met with scholarly derision and rejection, de Lubicz’s ideas have nevertheless been gradually and clandestinely incorporated into mainstream egyptology, almost as if they had been a part of it from its earliest days.

As expected, the symbolist approach of de Lubicz departs from the conventional posture of early egyptology that viewed Egypt's spiritual framework as a crude precursor of Western monotheism. It begins with the acceptance of Egypt's ancient chronology as legitimate record, albeit couched in arcane language, and then looks at the supporting evidence of ancient historians as a valid account, examining the remnants of Egyptian civilization—art, architecture, literature, and science—in the symbolic language of the Egyptians themselves. De Lubicz's interpretations are neither subjective nor speculative, they are delivered in light of what we are beginning to discover about the ancient disciplines integrally, in line with cosmology, physics, anthropology, and genetics. He says, "The symbol is a sign that one must learn to read, and the symbolic is a form of writing whose laws one must know."⁴

This groundbreaking work was one of the precursors of a modern egyptological renaissance that has dispelled a narrow, literal interpretation of Egypt's legacy. Until recently, this narrow interpretation was the source of a tremendous amount of confusion about ancient philosophy, science, and religion. Thanks to the enlightened views of de Lubicz and other modern scholars, we can become empowered with the knowledge that the human race has possessed—and still could possess—the wisdom to build monuments that will endure for millennia and the insight to coexist harmoniously with the natural environment. This prospect, if explored seriously, could revolutionize the education, science, religion, and philosophy of our time.

The key to making this prospect a reality is in the rediscovery of what the symbolists call the Sacred Science, a body of knowledge from which all of Egypt's endeavors arose. Through the prodigious studies that de Lubicz completed—of temples, literature, and art—he revealed that the use of this science was a conscious, deliberate effort to apply the deepest spiritual wisdom to human life. This was effected through the use of what we would today call magic, but which to the Egyptians was a natural technology of transformation. De Lubicz also proposed that this knowledge is tremendously archaic—possibly predating Egyptian civilization itself—and that it is a discipline which melds science, the arts, religion, and philosophy.

4 De Lubicz, *Symbol and the Symbolic*. New York: Inner Traditions International, 1978.

One objection that conservative scholars have to interpretive views on ancient Egypt such as this arises from the fundamental religious prejudices that most of us hold but fail to recognize when examining other civilizations. For example, the symbolist view departs from the common monotheistic and materialistic interpretation of the world that prevails in Western creeds. Instead, it articulates a polytheistic, metaphysical approach that is necessary to understanding the world of the ancient Egyptians, who produced a scheme of the universe populated by innumerable divine powers interacting on numerous planes of manifestation.

The symbolist view, as the name implies, also emphasizes the symbol as exponent of divine principles at work in the mundane sphere, in addition to its literal description, artistically and linguistically. We know that the Egyptians utilized symbol extensively in their art, architecture, writing, and science—in a manner that often confounds the student. This is because the symbol in Egyptian thinking stands for more than an idea: it also represents a state of being. And most importantly, the critical element of their use of symbol is that no condition, concept, or element is without its corollary in the natural world. In this respect, the ancient Egyptians excelled in communicating ideas that intertwine with the rhythms of nature, plant, animal, and even human life. Hieroglyphic writing is an outstanding example of this.

Although hieroglyphic writing shows no real evolution and appears fully developed from the most archaic times, it did acquire elaboration as time passed, until three distinctive forms came into use: hieroglyphic (comprised of signs), hieratic (a cursive form of hieroglyphic), and demotic (a late vernacular also in cursive form). We will look at how three archaic and recurrent hieroglyphic signs illustrate the manner in which the Egyptian symbol serves to convey both concrete and abstract ideas. By happenstance, all three represent a particular aspect of “universal protection,” and all three also share common symbols but use them in unique ways.

The circle universally signifies a unity, or a continuous, eternal principle in motion. The horizontal line is commonly used to signify the plane of reality or sequential, linear phenomena such as the measurement of time. The vertical line commonly denotes an energetic principle in ascent or descent. These ideas have been expressed from time immemorial in the arts and sciences of diverse human cultures, but in Egyptian symbolism they are associated with forms



Shen: A hollow sphere bound by a rope to a horizontal base, reminiscent of the Greek *ouroboros*. The circle represents the continuance of natural forces through cyclic periods, tied to the plane of manifestation. It refers to timeless time, endless periods, and eternity in hieroglyphic writing. In art and architecture, the *Shen* was presented to those—both divine and human beings—who had completed a series of transformations. It is most commonly seen surrounding the names of royal persons as the cartouche.



Ankh: A representation of the *umbilicus*, which connects new life to its source of nourishment and growth. In its archaic form, the loop, and its tail are connected to the arms with a length of rope tied in the center. The *Ankh* symbolically represents life and the living, and the endowment of the life force. When delivered by a divinity, the transference of the god's living principle to the recipient is denoted.



Sa: The sign is associated with an ancient device constructed of woven rushes, worn by boatmen of the Nile as a flotation device. The woven cylinder was folded and bound by a rope, and slipped over the shoulder as a life preserver. As a symbol, it is a representation of cosmic energy, which is shared by both human and divine beings. It is also used to signify magical and intangible strength and spiritual protection. In religious texts, it refers to “the fluid of life.”

Figure 1—Hieroglyphs of Protection: The common elements in these images—the circle, horizontal line, and the rope—are fused to represent a particular aspect of the universal protective functions.

found in natural life. The uniqueness of the *Sa*, *Ankh*, and *Shen*, however, is that the figures are composites of the circle and line—“tied” together or “joined” by woven rope—a device associated metaphorically with the action of knotting, consolidating, or drawing together multiple states of being.⁵

Sa represents divine protection, and is used in the context of “constituting” or “establishing” an action or a place. The *Sa* figure is shown in some of the earliest tomb inscriptions of ancient Egypt depicting everyday activities, revealing

⁵ Guénon, René: *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*. Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1995, p. 278.

that the symbol is derived from a floating device used on Nile vessels to protect boatmen from drowning. At the same time, it is used in written form to indicate protection by means of the universal force that binds all things together. The Sa figure comes into being when the horizontal plane of reality is fastened by the cosmic cord to form a protective coil. A number of divinities are shown using the Sa as a sceptre or a “marker.” In representations of the sky, the Sa is often shown at the center of the pole, to represent the “mooring post” or place of stability in the heavens.

Ankh, simply meaning “life,” has been the subject of much speculation: it is believed to represent everything from a penis sheath to a sandal strap. In the context that it is used, however, some scholars postulate that it represents the fundamental connection to life that all the living have from the beginning—the umbilicus. It is used in pictorial inscriptions to show how life is conveyed from divine to human beings, and how life is infused from one form to another to ensure vitality. In written form, the Ankh refers to that which is protected, vitalized, and renewed. The most ancient inscriptions of the Ankh show the loop and its tail joined to a horizontal bar with wound rope, suggesting the descent of an eternal principle to the physical plane.

Shen represents the idea of protecting life through isolating and defining what it surrounds. The Shen surrounds the written name of royal persons as a cartouche, symbolically fortifying the person with the power of continuance. The circle symbolizes the unbroken circuit of natural forces; it is “tied” to the plane of reality by the cosmic tether.

Thus, Sa, Ankh, and Shen each express how we are tied to the universe, to each other, and to natural forces. When considered in this light, Egypt’s religious and philosophical mysteries as expressed in their writing can appear less baffling, as literal translations fail to elaborate on such possibilities of meaning. The combination of human and animal images as spiritual ideas, for instance, opens up a fascinating world of metaphors rather than a perverted convolution of nature. And while the Egyptian language does have rules of context implied, the symbolic nature of its words, signs, and levels of meaning have not yet been fully explored.

The Neteru

While human existence is certainly elevated in the Egyptian view of life, it is not separate from either nature or spirit, but participates in these realms as cocreator and transmitter of divine principles. This is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of ancient Egyptian religion and its concepts of divinity. Egyptian religious writings reflect a consistent pantheism, and frequent references to those spiritual beings from whom life originates, the *Neteru*. This term has traditionally been translated as the “gods,” the Neter being the individual deity of a place or action (the “t” in the word is pronounced as a soft “tch”).

Since the decipherment of hieroglyphic writing in the nineteenth century, the term Neter has always been understood in this way. But some scholars have proposed that the apparently complex cosmological system of Egypt—containing the vast array of god and goddess figures, animal totems, and celestial asterisms—was the language of the Sacred Science.⁶ The Neteru represent the sacred notation of the system, incorporating principles and functions into composite figures, each expressing a realm of action and experience as well as an idea.

Neter also means “power” or “force” in the abstract sense. It does refer to the “high being” or “god” as we understand it, but not as an entity elevated from human life. To the Egyptians, the Neteru interpenetrate human life and nature, so that in relation to our experience, they are the “sacred” or “divine” dimension of persons, places, and things. The sacredness of the Neteru does not set them apart from us, but binds all things together. Thus, the Neter is not the progenitor of a power, but an exponent of it.

The Neter also distinguishes consciously living matter from the unconscious. In the cosmologies of Egypt, whatever the period of time or place of origin they are said to have “evolved” from, the Neteru were believed to have emerged out of a primeval substance called the *Paut*. Sometimes the Neteru are collectively referred to as the *Pauti*, the “many of the Paut.” This original matter of which the Neteru are entirely composed is wholly conscious, and is found to some degree in the physical world and human beings. In the sacred literature, the ini-

⁶ Clark, R. T. Rundle: “For the Egyptians, mythology was not a collection of texts but a language. This is fundamental.” *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978, p. 263.

tiate, by literally or figuratively relinquishing physical life, becomes “a member of the Paut.”

Outside of the physical world, the Neteru exist in an ideal condition, without form or impetus, a state akin to timeless perfection. But in spite of this existence in the divine regions, they require the fulfillment of their energetic nature through human life and its endeavors. This is the vital idea of ancient Egypt, the message which was apparently emphasized in the Sacred Science and which we see expressed in the physical legacy of the literature and monuments today.

The hieroglyph for Neter has been identified as either a bolt or a bone, wound with a lengthy strip of cloth. In some examples it appears to be a pennant, as the cloth unfolds when it stands upright. Here the hieroglyph conveys a very important aspect of the Neter as the Egyptians understood it: the purpose of divine life is to reveal itself, or “unfold” in the natural world through time and space.

The Sacred Science is believed to be a body of teachings and practices whose goal was the maintenance of the innate bond between the Neteru and physical life. That goal is formulated on the premise of a natural, pre-existing unity between the two realms which only the material world occludes. In this system, the emphasis is on human and divine life as an indivisible energy dynamic, acted out and mirrored through all phases of the natural world. Nature is the supreme model in this world view, and every concept in the system employs a natural element that articulates a spiritual reality in a concrete, obvious way. Animate and so-called inanimate figures participate—from animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms to seasonal and celestial phenomena.

A comparison of this ancient world view with our own shows that the relationship between humans and the several levels of divine beings was most important, and that the human connection with nature was the means by which the bond was maintained. In turn, our materialistic, “sole-god” thinking promotes only a separation between the two (the “physical” and the “nonphysical”) and usually, a subjugation of the latter. Thus, a comprehensible explanation of any paranormal, or spiritual phenomena is impossible.

Ancient travelers reported that within the Houses of Life—the great temples of learning of ancient Egypt—the program for initiated members was the development and use of all human faculties to their fullest potential. This was also intimated in the *Corpus Hermeticum*:



In the first example, Neter assumes that meaning of a body of water, a continuously moving stream, or a “flow” as determined by the fluid lines appended to the word.



Here, the image conveys the meaning of a spirit, essence, or extraction of liquid as determined by the depiction of the traditional beer jar.



In the third example, Neter refers to a cloth covering, garment, or physical veil, with the designation of the bolts of cloth in the ideogram.



Here, the word represents an elevated being, force, or power. In actuality, these written expressions of Neter all concern the nature and being of the divinity in ancient Egypt. The Neter is an outflow of the primeval matter, containing its essence. It assumes a form or covering that elevates the material frame it constitutes.

Figure 2—The Word “Neter”: Meaning “power” or “force” abstractly, the term also refers to a “high being” or “god.” They are numinous entities, representing the sacred dimension of persons, places, things, or concepts.

For thought alone can see that which is hidden, inasmuch as thought itself is hidden from sight; and if even the thought which is within you is hidden from your sight, how can He (God), being in himself, be manifested to you through your bodily eyes? But if you have power to see with the eyes of the mind, He will manifest himself to you.

Libellus V: 2

In pursuit of this power, the fulfillment of the vital idea through initiation was accomplished—the maintenance of the human-divine interface. That the supra-

corporeal senses were included in their program is also certain, as the traditions of magic, metaphysics, religion, and philosophy descending from Egypt reveal. The teaching with the least emphasis was cerebral activity, which in our culture is the most highly valued.

How do we know that this tradition existed? Is the fanciful rumor and brief mention of past centuries nothing but another persistent delusion about Egypt? The evidence of a high teaching is spoken of in consistent but enigmatic references made by those of cultures existing simultaneously with the Egyptian, as the writers Herodotus, Diodorus, and Plutarch have related. By their admission, the mystery traditions of their own cultures borrowed from or literally copied their practices from Egypt. In the period overlapping the ancient and modern eras, the scholars of antiquity supported the existence of Egypt's mystery tradition and its influence on the religions and philosophies of their own cultures.⁷

A considerable amount of Egyptian literature supports the existence of this tradition. Prompters' marks on written ritual tracts, mystery plays with secret chambers specified, and an elaborate body of funerary and magical rites inscribed in temples and tombs demonstrate that living participants were very much involved in the mysteries. In many historical records produced by Egyptians, references are made to highly accomplished healers, magicians, and philosophers, along with the temple schools with which they were associated. The great Dynasty 3 architect-magician Imhotep was the most notable of these sages, who in the following centuries came to be regarded as a spiritual master for having reached the pinnacle of human achievement.

In the temples, salient elements of ancient architecture also provide strong evidence that this tradition possessed a specific locale of practice. The existence of ventilation chambers in pyramids are an example of this. Superfluous for the dead, it may be argued that they served to circulate air in chambers intended for the living, who on occasion inhabited them, though their specific reasons for doing so can not be articulated. Egyptologists have struggled with explanations

7 Diodorus Siculus, I. 96: "For the priests of Egypt recount from the records of their sacred books that they were visited in early times by Orpheus, Musaeus, Melampus, and Daedalus, also by the poet Homer and Lycurgus of Sparta, later by Solon of Athens and the philosopher Plato, and that there also came Pythagoras of Samos and the mathematician Eudoxus, as well as Democritus of Abdera and Oenopides of Chios." Oldfather, C.H. (trans.): *Diodorus Siculus, Books I and II*. Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA, 1933.

regarding this phenomenon as well as other anomalies in sacred architecture to no avail. We are simply not certain of their purpose, and cannot depart from speculation even today.

The underground crypts and roof chapels at a number of temples such as Dendera, Edfu, and Abydos—centers that were constructed in vastly separated epochs—offer intriguing possibilities. All were places for ceremonies commemorating the transitions and transformations of human life. At Abydos in Upper Egypt, there is a subterranean, water-filled chamber in the Osireion at the rear of the major temple which recreates the resting place of Asar before his renewal. Unique among all places as either a temple or a tomb, the chamber's purpose has provoked every manner of speculation in egyptology. At the Dendera temple, crypts hidden behind the temple staircases are inscribed with elaborately rendered, fantastic images of sky ascent and journeys through cosmic realms—imagery undermining the odds that they were intended as janitorial “store-rooms,” as some popular guide books suggest. And at both Dendera and Edfu, stairways lead to mysterious roof chapels that depict emanations from celestial asterisms bringing new life to those in the physical world.

With such tantalizing clues, speculation abounds. What was the intended use for this elaborate scheme of architecture, spanning so many ages? If indeed there was a far-flung network of esoteric schools throughout Egypt over such an inordinate period of time, how did it evade the scrutiny of common minds?

Apart from some popular explanations (for example, that the temples, tombs, and pyramids served as meeting places for secret societies or as spaceship landing sites), one plausible explanation is that the esoteric function of these structures could be recognized if the appropriate tools for understanding their purpose were made accessible. The historians of antiquity occasionally spoke of such a tradition with reverence, but at the same time declared that it could only be known by those who possessed the capacity to understand it. From such references, some unusual popular interpretations have come about. One is that an exclusive federation existed in ancient Egypt, one comprised of neophytes who received special teachings from a hierarchy of mysterious sages. Others suggest that political powers working through the Royal House dispensed exclusive

knowledge to aspirants as a sort of spiritual favoritism. But while the ancient writers on the subject indicated that a sacred tradition did exist, how its practices were conducted or its positions were acquired remained unspoken.

The symbolist view of these matters is that these individuals did not appear at the behest of political expediency or priestly power struggles, but arose naturally out of a society that anticipated, recognized, and depended on their functions. Those accomplished in the temple mysteries were regarded as the essence, or “ferment” of their time and collectivity, being capable of disclosing the spiritual criteria of their milieu according to a preordained program. And this program was formulated at the mythical beginnings of Egyptian civilization, “in the beginning of time.” These individuals were also distinguished by their use of intelligence and consciousness in a manner that was not reactive to the outer world but in harmony and synchronicity with it. With this tool, the capacity to effect natural transformation was possible. But to comprehend this tradition required then, as it does now, the use of faculties that are unique to the Egyptian mind.

The Egyptian Mind

The communicating bridge between the Neteru and the human condition is what de Lubicz called the “innate intelligence,” and which the Egyptians called the “intelligence of the heart.” It does not refer to cerebral intelligence or intellect, which is acquired primarily through physical conditioning and experience. Innate intelligence is resident in human life, inscribed in the matter of which it is composed. Most importantly, it is retained through all the possible transformations human life may experience—while awake or asleep, conscious or unconscious, “alive” or “dead.” This parallels the Egyptian concept that the consciousness originating out of the primeval substance, Paut, is the active force behind the sentient powers in human life.

The Egyptian mind emphasized the use of three qualities that enable the awakening of innate intelligence. These qualities may be employed by us as well, so that we may return to the vast wellspring of wisdom known as the Sacred Science.

Simultaneity

In Egypt, the course of nature was also perceived as the natural course of human life. All physical phenomena were viewed in the context of natural cyclic processes, such as the budding, fruition, and hibernation of plant life and the rise and fall of the Nile River. However, cyclic life was not viewed as a linear process with a beginning and an end. Rather, it was perceived as a series of natural transformations, with all events in any cycle occurring simultaneously on more than one level of manifestation.

In modern times, the idea of Simultaneity was articulated by psychologist Carl Jung with his concept of synchronicity—a non-causal connecting force—in the physical universe. In this view, there may be no coincidental occurrence of simultaneous events that are connected by meaningful attributes. Rather, such occurrences point to an underlying principle from which they all mutually arise.

In the Egyptian mind, Simultaneity makes it possible for human life to participate in divine experience by becoming aligned or connected to this underlying principle. Activity on divine levels is viewed as timeless—continuously taking place as activity on the material plane takes place, even though it is not perceptible in the physical sphere. By crossing this sphere, the experience of the Neteru and their powers may be directly accessed, as the “inner” or “after” lives share the same dimension. The connection is made through the events of natural transformation. And with this device (if it can be harnessed or mastered), there can be no “cessation of life” or “death.” Rather, there is a continuation of the cycle on another level of experience. “Plane” or “dimension” may also represent the meaning of “level.” The salient point is that experience in other than the physical realm is denoted.

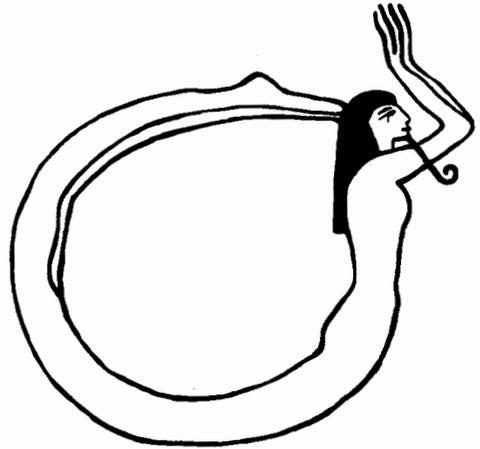


Figure 3—The Asar Image: The circle-wound Asar, representing the cyclic flux of active and passive forces in natural life.

The metaphor of Simultaneity is expressed in Egyptian thinking through the great Osirian mythos. Tradition says that Asar was the first regent of Egypt and regarded as the father of the Egyptian race. In the myth, he was murdered at the hands of his corrupt brother Set, and his body was restored and elevated as sovereign of the supernatural worlds in a series of magical acts that were emulated in the Egyptian Mysteries.

The story is filled with a wealth of symbolic elements which depict natural processes existing in a continuous flux of apparent life and death. Asar is the Neter representing the active and passive germinal principle of all the activities of agricultural life—cyclic growth as well as the unsown, latent phase of organic forms. Osirian consciousness is thus continuous participation in the overall natural cycle through life, death, or any transformative experience.

Pairing

The ancient Egyptians perceived every principle along with its inverse or complementary aspect. The notion of “Pairing” applies to all ideas, in the manner that balance and symmetry is sought in art.

This is not to say that ideas were countered with opposite ideas, a pattern observed in philosophical religions such as Zen Buddhism. Rather, a concept was understood together with its opposite. This view was expressed in sacred images, such as the two guardians of the royal crown—the vulture Nekhebet and the cobra Wadjet. It also pertained to geography, as in the categories of the red (desert) and the black (cultivated) lands of the country, to the heraldic plants of the lotus and papyrus, and the Valley and Delta regions of the Nile.

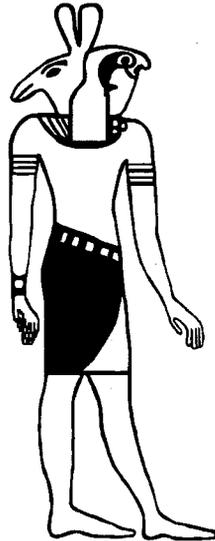


Figure 4—Nubti, The Heru-Set Image: The features of Heru and Set in synthesis, depicting the conciliation of opposing forces.

The metaphor of Pairing is supremely expressed in the great Heru-Set mythos. The two Neteru—Heru and Set—represent on one level certain polar opposites in the physical universe: ascension and fixation, or movement skyward and movement earthward. In myth, the two divinities are portrayed in continuous conflict and antagonism. They contend over the throne of Egypt, magically annihilate each other's possessions, and engage in a battle of cosmic proportion that affects the land of Egypt and the peace of the heavens.

But in the Egyptian world order, resolution is also implied in these contradictory forces. Many deities represented this phenomenon as they merged with or combined their natures with others. One such deity, known as Nubti, embodied Heru and Set as a double-headed image with one body. This representation was a metaphor of Horian consciousness, the resolution of opposing forces and impulses through synthesis.

Association

Nothing is perceived as separate or out of context from everything else in the Egyptian mind. There is always a correspondence existing between any one thing and others, through all possible realms of manifestation in nature.

Traditional Hermetic philosophy states, "That which is above is that which is below." This is based on the premise of associative thinking as the Egyptians used it and is believed to be the foundation of the magical technology which enabled transformation of both energy and matter to take place. The maxim suggests that higher principles are embodied in their lowest counterparts, no matter what the specific causal force may be. In this thinking,

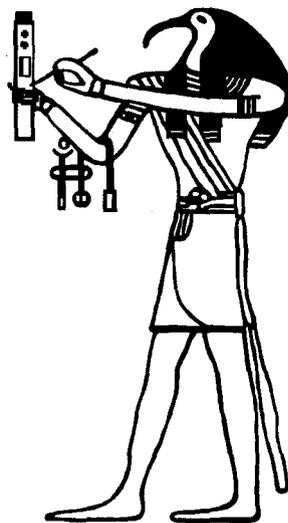


Figure 5—The Djehuti Image: Recorder and messenger, represents the principle of Association and communication through all the worlds.

there can be no ultimate good or evil, because all things in our world are mirror images of subtler worlds. There can only be gradations of what essentially is divine force in all cases, which manifest in sky, earth, plant, animal, and human life.

The metaphor for Association is expressed in the activities of Djehuti, the Egyptian Neter who bridges the physical and nonphysical worlds. He is the translator par excellence, conveying the power of the primordial sound. His function is to ensure transmission of the divine pattern into the terrestrial world, where it is employed as language, architecture, and sacred ritual. Through him, Association with divine principles becomes possible. Djehuti also impels the cultivation of Hermetic consciousness, the comprehension of the phenomenal world in context with its divine origin and the multiple realms in which it exists.

Three Paths of Transformation

The superiority of Egyptian thinking and their perception of life—as attested in many ancient chronicles—undoubtedly stemmed from this mentality of Pairing, Simultaneity, and Association. If this superior sense could be described in capsule, its chief quality lies in an emphasis on the interrelatedness of all things, physical and nonphysical, in the universe. And by using these frames of reference, the goal of awakening innate consciousness becomes possible.

The three images of Asar, Heru-Set, and Djehuti that embody the three modes of Egyptian thinking also constituted a unique paradigm for spiritual experience in the ancient world. This model distinguishes three paths for the soul's transformation which the ancient Egyptians defined very clearly. The three paths were emphasized at cyclic intervals in Egyptian history⁸ with the emergence of certain religious images, temple and funerary rites, and royal iconography that were distinct from other periods, though they were not new. We will find them continually appearing as the backdrops from which Egypt's legendary esoteric tradition is expressed.

For example, the earliest esoteric ideas in Egypt almost exclusively used Stellar symbolism. The Neteru were understood to embody celestial phenomena, the deceased were believed to return to the sky, and magical concepts took the form

⁸ See Appendix Two: The Mystery Tradition of Ancient Egypt.

of heavenly forces residing in the stars, appearing and disappearing cyclically. Following this, Solar symbolism took precedence as the Neteru participated in the diurnal journeyings of the Sun through night and day, while human beings were subject to the manifestations of light and dark both in this life and the next. And in the late period of Egyptian history, Lunar symbolism emerged as the path of transformation, with phases of growth and hibernation becoming the metaphors of spiritual experience.

The Stellar path is embodied by the Neter Djehuti, who engenders the mode of associative thinking and awakening through his knowledge of cosmic resonance. The Solar path is represented by Heru (and his dark adversary Set), the Neter of light reborn. He emphasizes the mentality of Pairing and resolution of the heavenly and earthly (light and dark) principles in the approach to awakening innate consciousness. And the Lunar path is represented by Asar, who embodies the principle of Simultaneity in natural life and awakening through the cycles of organic experience. These three paths are clearly outlined in the written and constructed vestiges of ancient Egypt that remain today, but they are mostly viewed as contradictory, confused approaches by ancient man to understand himself and the universe. One egyptological view expresses the confusion about these spiritual paths succinctly:

. . . new beliefs were continuously assimilated without older ones being discarded, so that the beliefs of the New Kingdom times were a curious mix of ideas based on the Association of the dead king with the sun god Re, the stars of the heavens and the netherworld deity Osiris.⁹

Using a symbolist perspective, these seemingly contradictory beliefs can be viewed in a different light. If we take into context the celestial cycles that alternated during the times when these beliefs were in vogue—such as the shift of the pole to a different star marker and the precession of the equinox into a new con-

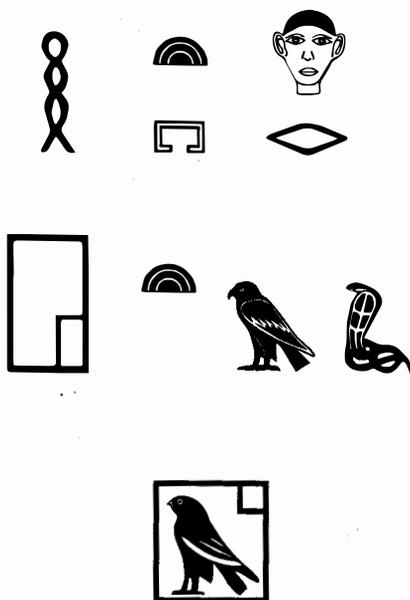
⁹ Reeves, Nicholas, and Richard H. Wilkinson: *The Complete Valley of the Kings*. Thames and Hudson: London, 1996. p. 46.

stellation—they make perfect sense. The cosmic landscape, so carefully regarded by ancient people, dictated a new paradigm when such changes took place. The shifting of celestial images into new places created new mandates, while the old ones retired into the background of mythology.

Thus, the Sacred Science which de Lubicz described was not a static or slowly evolving body of knowledge, fabricated through time by an arcane school of mages who incorporated diverse ideas into a system as time went by. Instead, it constituted a complete program—defined as a whole from the earliest times down to the last breath of Egyptian civilization—because it was predictable from a knowledge of the most obvious natural phenomena. Evidence of this abounds, in the hieroglyphic language, sacred astronomy, and temple rituals through all historic periods.

Of those who actively practiced and taught this Sacred Science, we may draw upon both esoteric tradition and the enigmatic testimony of the ancient chroniclers. Those who had arrived at the full use of innate consciousness were described by de Lubicz as the “Elite of the Temple,” whom we will later learn were known to the Egyptians as the “Masters of Secrets.” But they were not segregated from society or the infrastructure of the Egyptian community. The practice of the Sacred Science was fully and cognizantly supported by the hierarchy and the specialized environment of the temple, which combined sacred art and architecture with a magical technology deploying sacred astronomy and ritual in unison. And its end was intended to encourage and enhance the processes of human transformation, in fulfillment of the “vital idea”—the continuous existence of a human-divine interface.

De Lubicz’s work was interdisciplinary, and well grounded in the knowledge of ancient traditions. Like a cryptologist, he recognized that elements of the Sacred Science have always been with us, but as is typical of the modern mind, we have classified them in Aristotelian categories—as history, science, mythology, and occultism. Though the study of each is a dead end for understanding the great achievements of Egyptian civilization, when taken together they present a compelling picture of human potential.



Het-Her (phonetic): This Neter's name is written in its phonetic form, *ht-hr*, "House of Heru", with a determinative symbol after *ht* to indicate an enclosure or house. In the second example, *ht-hr* is written as "Heru's House."

Het-Her (contextual): The biliteral sign for "house" is signified and appended with the determinatives for "Heru" (i.e. the falcon) and "female divinity" (the cobra).

Het-Her (unified): In the third instance given, the Neter Het-Her is expressed by the composite signs for "house" and "Heru," pictorially conveying the idea of the Neter's role as the abode which encloses the Solar principle.

Figure 6—The Neter Het-Her, Three Levels of Hieroglyphic Notation: The name Het-Her means "House of Heru," referring to this divinity's function as the abode of solar light in its incubation phase. Het-Her represents the Lunar principle that houses and reflects the Sun, which is born through her as the youthful Ihy, son of Heru. Het-Her expresses the rhythms of the Lunar principle in the sky, on earth, and in the inner life.

Like many sacred names in ancient Egypt, the phonetic form conveys the sound of the word, the determinatives represent the context of the word, and the composite form expresses a unified image comprising the principle and function intended.

The Sacred Literature

Egyptian writings are available from a wide chronological period. As timeless examples of the Egyptian experience, they convey to us directly a view of life and death in ancient times that is both insightful and mysterious, the latter being mostly due to our lack of essentials in Egyptian language. Reference is often made to Egyptian "sacred literature," but the entire body of their writings should justifiably be considered as such if we take into account the very nature of the writing used.

Writing in ancient Egypt is referred to as *medu neter*, “divine words.” The art was believed to have been endowed to the human race by the divine scribe Djehuti¹⁰ from “the beginning of time”—an archaic period when the land of Egypt came into being and the Neteru descended to earth by enunciating their own names. As a consequence of this event, language and writing came into being, to continuously express the sacred principles embodied by divine beings and to preserve cosmic order. Thus, the art of the scribe was regarded as one of the highest spiritual disciplines and its role in religious and social endeavors was viewed as a sacred duty, following time-honored conventions that never deviated throughout the ages.

The hieroglyphs stand for sounds, words, and ideas, but rarely are they expressed in a consistent manner. This has been misunderstood in modern times, leading some to believe that an “exoteric” and “esoteric” writing existed, but neither truly describes the situation. It is more accurate to say that hieroglyphic writing transmits spiritual ideas through mundane images, in the same way that the Egyptians understood that the powers of the Neteru are expressed more readily through certain natural life forms than abstractly. It requires only a mind employing the faculties of Simultaneity, Pairing, and Association to apprehend the full meaning of the *medu neter*.

Hieroglyphic orthography utilizes three levels of notation. On the first level, the hieroglyphs serve as letters—phonograms representing single or multiple (biliteral and triliteral) sounds. When grouped together, the sounds form words of the Egyptian language—although only the consonants are known for certain; vowels are only approximated in modern transliterations.

Like many other languages, ancient Egyptian has words which sound the same, but hieroglyphs specifying their meaning express another level of communication: the idea. There are hundreds of these signs—called determinatives—which impart the particular notion of a word, resulting in a term meaning something vastly different from another sounding exactly the same.

A third level of hieroglyphic notation suggests the context of the word symbolically—ideograms. In this instance, particular signs are chosen that convey

¹⁰ Lurker, Manfred: “Knowledge of cosmic order was one of the secrets withheld from the profane. The title ‘Master of Secrets,’ common in the Old Kingdom, is to be understood in this way.” *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*. Thames and Hudson: London, 1980; p. 9.

together peripheral meanings or the overall functions of the idea expressed. As a whole, the signs form an immediate impression to the reader, yielding a pictorial, active representation of the idea.

Throughout Egyptian history, writings collectively referred to as didactic, or “wisdom literature,” reveals a typically practical yet elevated philosophy. The most prolific dates from the Old Kingdom and was directed primarily to youth, imparting through instructional maxims and moral stories the values of loyalty, honesty, and industry. The wisdom literature was secular in distribution, but evidence of its origin and composition in the temple’s House of Life is certain. It was accessible to all, and evidently was the primary material used in teaching the scribal skills of writing, copying, and illustrating. A number of these compositions were reproduced down through several historical periods. The Instruction of Ptah Hotep (Dynasty 5), which was regarded as a high order of counsel intended for the training of royalty and scribes, presents such an example. The subject of this and other writings of the genre concerned the development of respect, honor, equity, and good conduct in the student.

Do not be proud of your knowledge, consult both the ignorant and the wise. For art’s limits are never reached, and no artists’ skills are perfect.

Apart from the lists of precepts, narratives were also employed to convey standards of morality. Stories such as The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant—the tale of the persistent efforts of a simple peasant to receive justice and compensation from an unjust landowner—promulgate a standard of integrity and social responsibility regardless of class distinctions:

A sluggard has no yesterday, one deaf to justice has no friend. The greedy has no holiday.

The early wisdom literature also includes stories filled with legendary magic and references to historical mages whose feats included healing the sick and raising the dead. But in spite of these and later similar works, the writings consistently present an underlying theme unique to Egyptian thinking. It postulates a preexisting, pervasive order and harmony in the universe, which in human life is expressed through a canon of behavior that is serene and optimistic in attitude,

and orderly in one's approach to fulfilling the duties of a social being. While the balance of forces on a cosmic scale was believed to be mirrored in the human experience, the conscious recognition and acceptance of it was the ultimate accomplishment of the learned. This theme is called Maat, corresponding in principle to the Neter of cosmic order, Maat, called by some the "goddess of truth."

But Maat also refers to "the way" or "path," in the same sense that Eastern yoga represents the retrieval of balance and harmony. Maat is the Egyptian concept of the original, unadulterated universal arrangement, which is perfect equilibrium. It is thus the ideal and the goal of all human striving, on individual and collective scales of activity. This high regard for order was literally expressed in the temples with extensive inscriptions throughout the sacred precincts of recipes, liturgies, calendars, and chronologies of royal families and events—all of which perpetrated the continuance and expectation of order in secular and religious life. These writings were copied from older records and were identified as having originated from antiquity, underscoring the continuance of the original, ancient traditions on every level of spiritual endeavor.

The maintenance of tradition and a royal person's intimate Association with it is seen in the monumental writings of ancient Egypt. Obelisks and temple pylons may transpose Pharaoh's image with that of an ancestor in describing his or her role as perpetrator of divine order. This has caused some egyptologists to label them "usurpers" of their predecessors' accomplishments. Thus, one of Hatchepsut's obelisks at Karnak states,

Your father, Akheper Ka Ra, ordered the setting up of obelisks and your majesty must continue to make them, to enable you to live for ever.

At the temple of Amun at Luxor and the Ramesseum on the west Theban bank, Rameses II is depicted on the outer pylons of the temples as the hero of the Battle of Kadesh, an event of both historical and metaphorical significance in the Egyptian view of the maintenance of Maat. The cyclic vanquishing of evil symbolizes the role of Heru, son of Asar, who avenged his father's murder by Set and reestablished the throne of Egypt after a series of battles. Such scenes are repeated on the pylons of much later Ptolemaic temples, with the central figure,

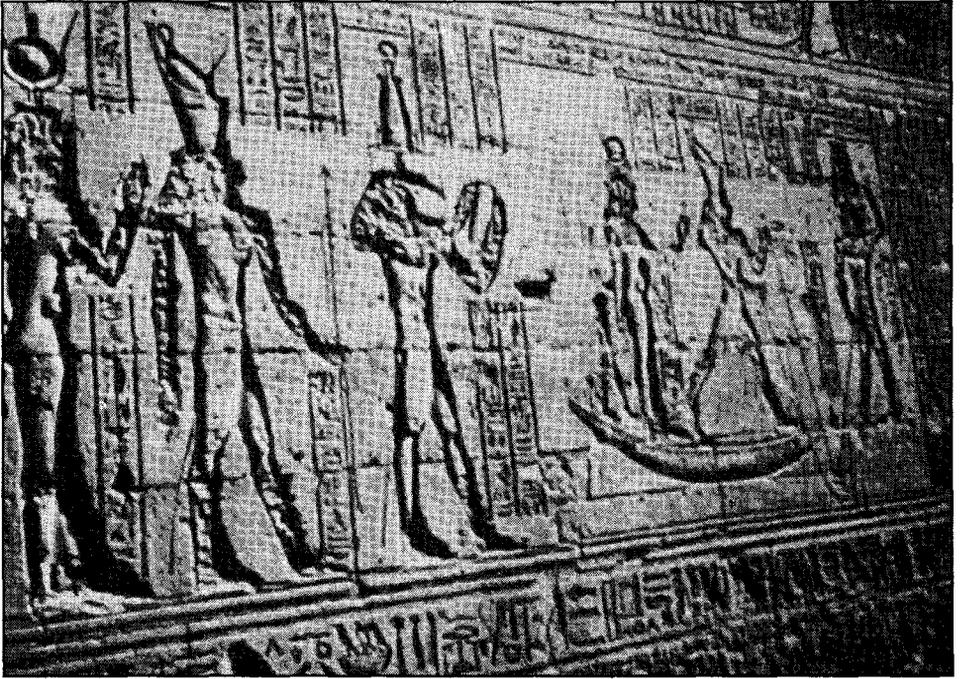


Photo 1—Vignette of the Mystery Play at Edfu: The god Heru, accompanied by his mother Auset, slays his adversary, Set, in a scene from the mystery play inscribed on the west wall of the Edfu Temple. Theatrical performances were a means of instructing the public on the nature of the temple's mysteries.

Pharaoh, assuming the same role: vanquisher of evil. In Egypt, such is the role of the ruler on earth, from the beginning of time through each investiture of Heru (Pharaoh) on earth.

The royal enactment of universal balance is also portrayed at the Edfu temple of Heru in Upper Egypt. Inscriptions at the site declare that a sacred drama and an accompanying festival were performed annually, to renew the power of the temple. The king assumed the role of Heru, the queen fulfilled the role of Auset, the mourning widow in search of her slain consort. Much of the action took place in the vicinity of the temple's sacred lake, where Heru is depicted harpooning Set in his forms of crocodile and hippopotamus. After vanquishing the adversary, Heru restores the ancient union of the Two Lands and assumes the royal crowns of North and South.



Figure 7—Detail from the Mystery Play at Edfu: Heru with Auset on the Solar barque.

The Mystery Play of Heru is inscribed on the inner walls of the temple enclosure. Although there is nothing on the surface of the detailed scenes that appears mysterious, the inscriptions reveal a literary tradition unique to Egypt, and later copied by Greece and Rome. Public performances of mythic events were opportunities for the general public to acquire insight into the symbolic tradition of the temple, in the manner described by Carl Jung as *participation mystique*. In this process, the audience may apprehend the sacred content when the dramatic environment supports the spiritual principles that are being portrayed. Initiation into spiritual mysteries becomes possible under these conditions, as divine beings are believed to enter the players and communicate with the audience through the power of ritual drama.

Books of magic and metaphysics are abundant from the Late Period onward, when essentials of the temple tradition were modified to conform with existing Graeco-Roman practices. Recipes, spells, incantations, and dream interpretation of the period are found combined in eclectic collections, derived mostly from tombs. There is a distinctly different quality to these writings compared to the

earlier sacred literature. The material is intended to be literally understood and the “cookbook” style reveals an attitude of the times that is materialistic and irreverent to the fundamentals of the Egyptian moral code. The mentality that encourages employment of the Sacred Science for higher ends appears to have submerged.

Initiatory Literature

It was implied by the ancient writers that the veil of secrecy shrouding Egyptian esotericism is lifted when one is initiated into its sacred mysteries. But what is initiation in Egyptian terms?

Some clues lie in the fundamentals of Egyptian thought we have examined. The Neteru coexist with nature and human life, and their powers may be apprehended through our use of the mental faculties of Simultaneity, Pairing, and Association. In addition, we know that symbol was used extensively in art and architecture to create a supportive environment for using these faculties. Ritual was another essential component of initiation. Its purpose was directed toward actively communicating with the Neteru, to engender participation in Maat or balance. Altogether, these elements were employed through the timing and symbolism of a sacred astronomy that dictated the moment and place of divine manifestation, a critical ingredient in renewing the bonds between human and celestial life. Thus, initiation in Egyptian terms is a process, the pursuit of an ordained path that is closely mirrored in natural phenomena.

The content of Egypt’s sacred literature covers the widest range of spiritual, mathematical, astronomical, medical, and magical writings ever produced by a civilization. However in modern times, when conscious international efforts were brought to bear in order to examine them, some assumptions were initially made that are in conflict with the Egyptian minds which produced them. Consequently, as minor as the prejudices appear to be, they contribute to our fundamental lack of understanding about Sacred Science, the body of ancient knowledge which could offer clues to past human accomplishments as well as our own future possibilities.

A very real prejudice is based upon modern science’s rejection that ancient technologies could be superior to our own. And to this day, the standard egypto-

logical literature is condescending to the spiritual ideas of the ancients and promotes the view that Egypt's written legacy is a mere collection of exaggeration and primitive superstition. Ancient accounts describing the transformation of the body, the prolongation of life, and interaction between the living and the dead are ascribed solely to funerary notions promulgated by priestly cults to control a spellbound populace.

But a highly sophisticated knowledge possessed by Egyptian priests and sages is more than alluded to in ancient writings, and indeed is demonstrated in the construction of their sacred monuments, the use of a calendric system which we have inherited, and other technologies that were well in advance of those found in neighbor civilizations. But their purposes in the spiritual context are mostly guessed at and only partially known.

For instance, the extant body of writings whose intention for funerary use is doubted, even though it may have been recovered from tombs. This includes formulae for obviously practical, day-to-day purposes while living, such as medical treatment, recipes for warding off disease and psychic attack, and many hymns invoking the Neteru—all of which are found in temples as well. In these works, some of the spiritual activities described range from conversing with divine forces to visiting favored locales and persons on Earth or in one of the many regions of sacred beings. The acquisition of occult powers is also discussed, which may be brought back to the human world. The material is thus neither mundane nor funerary, and while it contains religious images it is highly pragmatic in tenor. This is more evidence of the initiatory tradition spoken of consistently by the ancients.

In spite of the consistent allusions to this tradition by the ancient historians, their reports of esoteric sciences existing in Egypt are rejected by a majority of modern scholars as unrealistic or imagined. Behind this dismissal stands genuine religious prejudice stemming from the intolerance fostered by monotheism; this is further supported by the widely accepted, preposterous dictate of Biblical chronology, which in some cases sets the Creation at 4004 B.C.E. In this world view, nothing civilized or conscious could have taken place earlier. As for the prospect of spiritual accomplishment by common individuals, this is also repudiated, in line with the fundamentalist mentality that only a chosen person or group has access to enlightenment and divine favor.

These prejudices must be abandoned before the essential nature of Egypt's spiritual tradition can be known. In this respect, all of the sacred writings of Egypt may qualify as initiatory literature, in that they convey elements of the Sacred Science when viewed with the Egyptian mind—rather than with the modern mind, which has been limited by very narrow, materialistic views.

In order to discover the true qualities of Egyptian thinking and realize the potential it promises, the metaphysics of the Egyptian system must be examined in as pure a form as possible. The sacred literature on cosmology, science, and the funerary tradition that is available today make this possible. We need only look at it from a different perspective, perhaps by abandoning the popular hermetics of speculation and considering instead the direct physical evidence that Egypt has left us in monuments and writings. We will reexamine these vital sources, using the tools of symbolist thinking that the Egyptians employed in many instances. A comprehensive task of this sort may never be fully realized, but the legacy of Egypt that we so admire deserves an earnest effort at understanding.

Polytheism has been said to embrace all possibilities, while monotheism rejects the all in favor of just one. The Egyptians left a maze of religious figures for us to study, at first glance complex and contradictory due to our inclination to think monotheistically. But the great number of deities present on an archetypal level the numerous possibilities of being and becoming, as the Egyptians demonstrated in their literature concerning human transformation. We shall see how these divine figures represent, in reality, a fully integrated cosmological scheme, one that represents an extraordinary code of nature and reality. Understanding this scheme, as promised by the ancient sages, is the first step through the portal of initiation.¹¹

11 De Lubicz, R. A. Schwaller: "... gnosis (which we designate as inborn knowledge concerning the 'secret of becoming')..." *The Egyptian Miracle*. Inner Traditions International: New York, NY, 1985; p. 13.

Practicum

THE HERMETIC AND CEREMONIAL TRADITIONS

Though much of the Hermetic philosophy that we study today is incomplete, what remains is a valuable remnant of Sacred Science. Most of this remnant is based on the third component of the Egyptian mentality: associative thinking. De Lubicz expresses the great importance of this tool in spiritual development when he writes in *Verbe Nature*, “Analogies and Signatures are the Sage’s guide and make him a Magus.”

The philosophy of Hermeticism, while recognized as basically Egyptian in origin, is known to be strongly flavored with Platonic ideas (which themselves are believed to be derived from Egyptian cosmology). Plato’s goal was a life of self-mastery achieved primarily through knowledge, which he believed to be fundamentally a process of “remembering.” Like the innate consciousness of the Sacred Science, Platonism regards the original human condition as one of wisdom, which can be approached through harmonizing reason and passion. This philosophy also propounds the “doctrine of forms,” a concept which pictures the phenomenal world descending from a realm of immaterial, unknowable principles. Like the world of the Neteru, this realm can only be experienced through the forms these principles take in the “world of appearances”—earthly life.

Plato’s philosophy was further articulated by the Neoplatonists of the third century of our era, and interpreted eloquently by Plotinus, a scholar born in Lycopolis, Egypt, of Roman parents. His knowledge of Graeco-Roman magic and metaphysics entered into a doctrine he expressed in his *Enneads*: that the soul, he explains, remembering its primeval communion with the immaterial principles, could return to this source through knowledge of the levels or emanations of the immaterial worlds. These regions were incorporated into a complex system of daemonology that reflected the popular images of religious belief in Plotinus’ day. As it existed contemporary with the nascent Christian and Islamic faiths, Neoplatonism consequently colored the theologies of those religions before they organized as religious movements; at the same time, it maintained a philosophical connection with certain Egyptian concepts. A key

example of this is the Neoplatonic idea of the soul remembering its origins, a characteristic corresponding with the Egyptian understanding that the primeval composition of all life, Paut, leaves its imprint in human consciousness.

Elementary Neoplatonic thought is thus grounded in the Egyptian world view, but natural forces in the world around us—rather than abstracts—are the components of spiritual life in the latter system. Egyptian beliefs are also oriented to the sky, rather than to the earth. And as Djehuti is associated with celestial phenomena in Egyptian cosmology and eventually became the “chronocrator” of divine cycles in myth, his cultus was entrusted with the dispensation of Hermetic wisdom. Thus, the means to understanding spiritual processes in the Hermetic system follows the ancient tradition that knowledge of the Sacred Astronomy—the appearances and movements of the planets and stars—is a prerequisite to gnosis.

Egyptian symbolism is fundamentally triune, and cosmic families are drawn from multiples of three, with polarized figures or pairs producing a third, unique function. Alternatively, Hermetic teachings emphasize a septenary structure on all levels of natural life. In that system, the great scale of cosmic manifestation is symbolized by the classic seven planets, their “rays” representing seven planes of vibration in a universal order. The Hermetic Scale was believed to contain the master key to all organic life.

There are seven wandering stars which circle at the threshold of Olympus, and among them ever revolves unending Time. The seven are these: night shining Moon, all sullen Saturn, the glad Sun, the fertile Venus, the bold Mars, the swift-winged Mercury, and first author of all births Jupiter. To those same stars is assigned the race of men, for we have in us Moon, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Saturn, Sun, and Mercury. Our tears are Saturn, birth is Jupiter, speech is Mercury, anger is Mars, the Moon is sleep, Venus is desire, and the Sun is laughter . . .

Excerpt XXIX

The divine function of three is also embedded in the sacred astronomy. Djehuti established the cycles of rotation, revolution, and precession of celestial bodies, which on Earth defines the day, the year, and the epoch. While we recognize these three celestial motions in modern astronomy as the three essential qualities of cyclic time, they were also the ancient criteria for determining the power of one living system to influence another living system. For instance, on

♄
SATURN

♃
JUPITER

♂
MARS

☉
SUN

♀
VENUS

☿
MERCURY

☾
MOON

Figure 8—The Hermetic Scale of the Planets: The seven planets can be grouped in this sequence representing the relative velocities of these celestial bodies. The range of cycles and rhythms derived from this sequence provides an overall guide to the workings of nature, if they can be read correctly.

the organic level rotation corresponds to energy, revolution to vibration, and precession to consciousness. Following these three cycles, it is through the seven planetary rays that Djehuti manifests the archetypal powers that influence the physical world.

Of the seven planets concerned with phenomenal life or the “realm of appearances,” the Moon begins the Hermetic Scale by virtue of her rapid revolutionary cycle of 27.33 days. Mercury follows (87.9 days), then Venus (224.7 days). The Sun stands at the center of the scale (365.5 days), followed by Mars (1.8 years), then Jupiter (11.8 years) and concluding with Saturn (29.4 years). The cyclic frequency of these bodies was certainly known in the sacred astronomy and tallied at regular intervals, as tables of planetary motion from ancient epochs reveal.

The Hermetic Scale has its corollary in astronomical models of many cultures, and is found in the Chaldean oracles, the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres, and Kepler’s laws. But as a system of symbols it represents more than the relative velocities of the traditional seven planets. The range of cycles and rhythms in the Hermetic Scale are a guide to the the workings of nature in every possible realm. In modern times, its symbolism has been misunderstood to be evidence that the ancient astronomers were incapable of identifying more than seven heavenly bodies.

In the Hermetic system, the seven planetary “rhythms” are associated with the entire spectrum of life. Of all of them, the seven organic functions are highly significant, as they describe the physical

alchemy innate in the human form. These functions were viewed by the ancients as the human equivalent of the transformative powers engendered by the Neteru, the microcosm mirroring the macrocosm.

In a unique commentary on this system, Schwaller de Lubicz pointed out that each of the seven organic functions utilize four physical organs which discharge each function. The complete process enumerates twenty-eight activities, the vital number of organic life as well as the number of days in a lunar cycle.

Beginning with the function of *digestion*, the organs of the mouth, stomach, small and large intestines are involved. In the function of *selection*, the small and large intestine, liver, and kidneys are at work. In *excretion*, the large intestine, bladder, lungs, and skin are employed. With *individualization* (a form of internal assimilation), the small intestine, liver, lungs, and kidneys are utilized. *Generation*, a higher function of the organic form as viewed by the ancients, is achieved with the small intestine, kidneys, spleen, and genitals. *Transformation* of the blood in the body is accomplished through the liver, spleen, lungs, and bone marrow. Transmutation of the blood into energy calls into play the bone marrow, pituitary, thyroids, and the adrenal glands.

All of these associations may at first glance appear to be irrelevant to spiritual development. But it is these very physical mechanisms—manifest within the carnal body—that in the practice of the Sacred Science may be “tuned” to a higher frequency, enabling the aspirant to *assimilate*, *generate*, or *transform* subtler, cosmic nourishment into spiritual force—and “divinize” the mortal form.

This Hermetic Table of Correspondences (pages 44–46) also provides insight into the occult development of the human senses, as well as the age cycles of influence with which the planetary rays are associated. For instance, the Moon is associated with the function of memory, which is highly receptive at the infancy stage of life—when Lunar nourishment dominates most of the human experience. Existence at this stage is centered on the instinctive level, to ensure biological conformity to natural rhythms for survival.

The table enumerates the traditional levels of Hermetic initiation as well, along with the natural sequence of spiritual maturation expressed through the traditional arts, sciences, and occult practices. On the nonphysical levels, the mastery of spiritual planes is also delineated according to the planetary rays. At the Moon

level, for instance, the physical form is developed to its highest degree; the next Mercury level denotes refinement of the etheric form, and so on up the scale.

This example of the components of the septenary Hermetic Table of Correspondences, as recorded in numerous works derived from the Hermetic body (or expounded as Hermetic in spirit), are diverse and often conflicting. But the information as a whole provides numerous clues to the teachings and activities of the arcane schools in ancient times, which in our era were revived in European secret societies that sought to restore the ancient mysteries. The Order of the Golden Dawn, variations of the Rosicrucian and Theosophical movements, and Masonic offshoots have in some instances used Egyptian symbolism and ideas extensively in this manner, but often without the goals of Sacred Science itself in view. Thus, the fundamental idea of innate consciousness, its awakening and its use, and the consequent transformation of the personality and soul is never fully articulated in these modern systems.

Ceremonial Magic

Modern ceremonial magic is derivative of a number of esoteric systems from several cultures, most of which claim to be Hermetic or Egyptian in origin. They universally rely upon the device of Association to convey spiritual concepts and depend exclusively on the premise of Hermetic philosophy that material and immaterial forces are mirrored in each other. However, both of these approaches can be fraught with misconceptions. The doctrine of Association is often misapplied, due to a philosophical lack of understanding the fundamental universal causes. As a result, erroneous effects are attributed to planets in astrology or imprecise remedies are advocated in natural healing. Similarly, the noble Hermetic premise of "As above, so below" is sometimes grasped as a fated condition of life, diverting the student from the self-determination espoused by the ancient philosophers to understand more deeply and work in harmony with creation.

The Greek conception of cosmic order was based on five primeval elements in the universe: Fire, Earth, Air, Water, and the Quintessence (literally, the "fifth property or element"). These are touched upon in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, although only the four physical elements are specifically articulated:

... if all the four elements are combined together in fit proportions, then the creature is so made as to be ardent in action, light of movement, and solid in structure. For the earthly element is that which makes the body solid, the watery element is that which makes it diffuse itself so as to unite with things, the airy element is that in us which causes movement, and all these are roused to action by the fire in us.

Excerpt XXVI: 18

The planetary scheme of the Hermetic system, with its emphasis on ascending, transformative processes, is often confused with the material emphasis of the elemental order, which itself represents the powers that descended into the physical world. The latter gives rise to a set of correspondences regarded as the Ceremonial Scale, an intrinsic tool in the practice of ceremonial magic. Here, the components of the universe are expressed in their Hellenistic forms as Fire, Earth, Air, and Water. Though this particular model is a remnant of Graeco-Roman magical thinking, the Egyptians did use a similar quaternary in their ceremonial protocol, particularly in temple and funerary rites. However, the four principles were usually personified as two pairs of Neteru, polarized forces in physical balance around a concrete structure, such as the corners of the temple, tomb, or sarcophagus.

The fifth element—the Quintessence of Aristotle and the medieval alchemists who followed his teachings—was known as *aether* to the Greeks and *akasha* in Hindu cosmology. In Egyptian metaphysics, the fifth principle entering the quaternary is usually a figure from which the four are originated, and which presides over their activity. For instance, Ra (the celestial Sun) presides over the cosmic activity of Shu, Tefnut, Nut and Geb; Heru (the earthly Sun) elevates the powers of the four organs of the human body through the actions of his four “sons”: Imset, Daumutef, Qebsenuf, and Haapi.

The use of a four-pointed graphic figure in meditation practice, the mandala, has long been a Far Eastern device to effect the focusing of psychic energy. Modern psychology acknowledges the importance of the quaternary figure as a stabilizing figure for the psyche. And in the ceremonial magic practiced today, the quaternary forms the basic structure of ritual activity. The consecration of the four quarters of a ritual space, the invocation of the four elemental forces,

and the fourfold process of invocation, manifestation, communion, and dispersal are part of a typical spiritual practice. Cosmology and symbolism are often hybrid fabrications of esoteric traditions, but the use of quaternary symbolism, stemming from antiquity, often provides viable results.

The view that all physical manifestation is patterned after the quaternary and its source is demonstrated in the Ceremonial Table of Elements (pages 47–49), a collection of correspondences embodying the Hermetic-Platonic concept of the five physical realms. In this instance, the scale represents powers which affect human beings primarily through the five elemental forces.

Modern esotericism is in many ways removed from the natural simplicity of the Sacred Science, emphasizing, for instance, the complex associations of the seven planes and the five elements far more than the blueprint from which they originate. Today, it is common to find a veil of Egyptian symbolism covering a body of knowledge derived from such diverse notions of Hermetic scholarship as taught through the ages, much of which is valid in context with its original, non-Egyptian sources. And though the full disclosure of Egyptian esotericism is still lacking, a voluminous amount of original material exists to study. In later chapters we will examine much of this material—derived from both temple and tomb—to glean the details of the Sacred Science.

Planet	☾	♀	♁	☉	♂	♃	♁
Organic Function	Digestion	Selection	Excretion	Individualization	Generation	Transformation	Transmutation
Organs	Mouth, Stomach, Small & Large Intestine	Small & Large Intestine, Liver, Kidneys	Large Intestine, Lungs, Bladder, Skin	Small Intestine, Liver, Lungs, Kidneys	Small Intestine, Kidneys, Spleen, Genitals	Liver, Spleen, Lungs, Bone Marrow	Bone Marrow, Pituitary, Thyroids, Adrenals
Human Sense	Memory	Sight	Taste	Touch	Smell	Clairvoyance	Clairaudience
Age Cycle	Infancy	Childhood	Adolescence	Maturity	Middle Age	Advanced Age	Senescence
Level	Instinctive	Intuitive	Emotional	Waking	Superconscious	Creative	Spirit
Science	Music	Mathematics	Aesthetics	Astronomy	Geodesy	Philosophy	Alchemy
Magic	Theurgic	Theomantic	Sympathetic	Thaumaturgic	Ceremonial	Goetic	Alchemic
Practice	Healing	Transmission	Retrieval	Communion	Manifestation	Divination	Transformation
Plane	Physical	Etheric	Astral	Mental	Archetypal	Divine	Cosmic
Ganglia (Plexus)	Sacral Plexus	Prostatic Plexus	Epigastric Plexus	Cardiac Plexus	Pulmonary Plexus	Pharyngeal Plexus	Cavernous Plexus
Endocrine	Gonads	Adrenals	Spleen	Thymus	Thyroid	Pituitary	Pineal
Hermetic Law	Correspondence	Polarity	Gender	Unity	Rhythm	Vibration	Karma
Hermetic Action	Synthesis	Separation	Attraction	Light	Motion	Evolution	Involution
Hermetic Ray	Diversity	Intellect	Harmony	Will	Magic	Idealism	Order

Table 1—A Hermetic Table of Correspondences (Part 1)

Planet	☾	♀	♀	☉	♂	♃	♁
Hermetic Principle	Periodicity	Mentalism	Relatedness	Individuality	Rhythm	Motion	Continuity
Solid Form/ Sides	Hexahedron/6	Pyramid/5	Icoso- hedron/20	Sphere/0	Tetrahedron/4	Dodeca- hedron/12	Octahedron/8
Natural Kingdom	Plant	Elemental	Animal	Human	Mineral	Planet	Angelic
Symbol	Triangle	Pentacle	Interlaced 'V'	Circle	Swastika	Hexagram	Cross
Neteru	Theban Triad	Esna Triad	Dendera Triad	Ra	Initiatory Triad	Memphite Triad	Cyclic Triad
Color	Green	Yellow	Orange	White	Red	Blue	Violet
Metal	Silver	Quicksilver	Copper	Gold	Iron	Tin	Lead
Flower	Lotus	Papyrus	Jasmine	Sunflower	Rose	Carnation	Nightshade
Instrument	Harp	Flute	Sistrum	Cymbal	Trumpet	Lyre	Drum
Zodiac Signs	Cancer	Gemini- Virgo	Taurus Libra	Leo	Aries/ Scorpio	Sagittarius/ Pisces	Capricorn/ Aquarius
Mode	Mutable	Air	Water	Cardinal	Earth	Fire	Fixed
Weekday	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Sunday	Tuesday	Thursday	Saturday
Musical Notes	B	A	G	F	E	D	C
Greek Letter	Epsilon	Iota	Upsilon	Alpha	Eta	Omicron	Omega
Greek Deity	Selene/ Hecate	Hermes	Aphrodite/Eros	Apollo/ Dionysus	Area/ Pallas	Zeus	Kronos/ Demeter
Civilization	Celtic	Atlantean	Lemurian	Egyptian	Roman/ Mayan	Greek/ Chinese	Hindu

Table 1—A Hermetic Table of Correspondences (Part 3)

Planet	☾	♀	♀	☉	♂	♃	♁
Ancient Center	Diana at Ephesus	Pyramids, Sphinx	Ziggurats at Ur	Temple of Solomon	Colossus of Rhodes	Zeus at Olympia	Mausoleum at Halicarnassus
Teaching	Agriculture	Language	Art	Astronomy	Medicine	Theology	Alchemy
Magical Role	Nurturer	Teacher	Peacemaker	Monarch	Healer	Counselor	Magus
Archangel	Raphael	Uriel	Haniel/Lucifer	Gabriel	Michael	Zadkiel	Sandalphon
Spirit	Hasmodal	Tapthurath	Kedemel	Sorath	Baisabel	Hismael	Zazel
Spirit Number	369	2080	175	666	325	136	45
Intelligence	Malcha	Tiriël	B'nei Seraphim	Nachiel	Graphiel	Jophiel	Agiel
Intelligence Number	3321	260	1225	111	325	136	45
Sephiroth	Malkuth	Yesod	Hod	Tiphareth	Netzach	Chesed	Geburah
Sacrament	Baptism	Confirmation	Matrimony	Communion	Confession	Holy Orders	Extreme Unction
Animals	Cat, Fish, Wolf	Dog, Baboon	Dove, Dolphin	Bee, Hawk, Lion	Leopard, Tiger, Ram	Horse, Eagle	Elephant, Raven
Chakra Name	Muladhara	Svadhithana	Manipura	Anahata	Vissuddha	Ajna	Sahasrana
Yoga	Hatha	Jnana	Bhakti	Raja	Karma	Mantra /Mudra	Laya /Tantra
Mantra	Lam	Vam	Ram	Yam	Ham	Om	Om Mani Padme Hum

					
	Fire	Earth	Air	Water	Quintessence
Direction	East	North	West	South	Above/ Below
Neter	Asar	Set	Auset	Nebt-Het	Djehuti
Color	Red	Yellow	Blue	Green	Violet
Gem	Carnelian	Obsidian	Lapis	Malachite	Alexandrite
Stone	Granite- Basalt	Sandstone	Alabaster /Limestone	Unbaked Brick	Schist
Figure	Pyramid	Cube	Sphere	Crescent	Egg
Elemental Neter	Qebsenuf	Daumutef	Imset	Haapi	Heru
Canopic Image	Falcon	Jackal	Human	Baboon	Scarabaeus
Organ	Intestines	Stomach	Liver	Lungs	Heart
Funerary Neter	Selqit	Neit	Auset	Nebt-Het	Nut
Sacred City	Sais	Heliopolis	Mendes	Buto	Abydos
Wind	Henkhisuesui	Qebui	Hutchaiui	Shebui	—
Sacred Bird	Bennu	Vulture	Sparrow	Owl	Ibis
Perception	<i>Maa</i>	<i>Sedjem</i>	<i>Sia</i>	<i>Hu</i>	<i>Heka</i>
Sense	Sight	Hearing	Speech	Taste	Cognition
Diurnal Cycle	Dawn	Midnight	Dusk	Noon	Predawn
Solar Neter	Ra	Atum	Heru-Ur	Kephri	Sopdet
Solar Tide	Equinox	Solstice	Equinox	Solstice	Rise of Sopdet
Lunar Tide	New Moon	3rd Quarter	Full Moon	2nd Quarter	Dark of Moon
Season	Summer	Spring	Autumn	Winter	Present

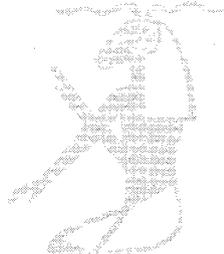
Table 2—A Ceremonial Table of Elements (Part 1)

					
	Fire	Earth	Air	Water	Quintessence
Sacred Anatomy	Ka	Khat	Ab	Ba	Akh
Occult Principle	Double	Body	Heart	Spirit	Soul
Psychic Plane	Etheric	Physical	Mental	Astral	Super-conscious
Celestial Rudder	<i>Aakhu Heri- Ab Het</i>	<i>Sekhem- Nefer</i>	<i>Nekhen- Seshmu Tau</i>	<i>Khenti Herab- Het Djesheru</i>	—
Cardinal Neter	Heru	Set	Djehuti	Anti/Asar	—
Instrument	Gong	Drum	Harp	Bell	Sistrum
Musical Note	E-F	C	A-D	B-G	—
Vowel	A	E	I	O	U
Ceremonial Tool	Sword	Stone	Wand	Cup	Mirror
Sacred Offering	Candle	Salt	Incense	Water	Oil/Wine
Metal	Gold	Lead	Mercury	Silver	Electrum
Alchemical Element	Sulphur	Salt	Quicksilver	Dew	Philosopher's Stone
Alchemical Process	Combustion	Decomposition	Evaporation	Solution	Animation
Magical Condenser	Metal	Stone	Aeriform	Liquid	Blood, Sperm
Taste	Bitter	Salt	Alkaline	Sweet	Acid
State	Hot	Dry	Cold	Humid	Fission
Nature Spirit	Salamander	Gnome	Sylph	Undine	Angel
Folk Spirit	Elf	Brownie	Fairy	Sprite	—
Angelic Spirit	Michael	Auriel	Raphael	Gabriel	Yeheshuah

Table 2—A Ceremonial Table of Elements (Part 2)

					
	Fire	Earth	Air	Water	Quintessence
Angelic Wind	Eurus	Boreas	Notus	Zephyr	—
Qabalistic Name	Jehovah Tzabaoth	Adonai ha Aretz	Shaddai el Chai	Elohim Tzabaoth	Eheich
Oriental Image	Phoenix	Dragon	Tiger	Tortoise	—
Vedic Element	Tejas	Prithivi	Waju	Apas	Akash
Vedic Realm	Samadhi	Sushupti	Jagrat	Svapna	Avastha
Human State	Being	Deep Sleep	Waking	Dreaming	Enlighten- ment

Table 2—A Ceremonial Table of Elements (Part 3)



Chapter Two

COSMOLOGY

... the names of all the gods have been known in Egypt from the beginning of time.

Herodotus, *The Histories*

The goddess Hathor—as Het-Her was named by the Greeks—was the divinity of “love, music, and dance,” a mirror image of the Hellenic Aphrodite who presided over all the amorous affairs of the human race. To the Romans, her “cult” was associated with the usual round of hedonistic practices—from drunken bacchanalia to animal worship—and was especially abhorred by critics who disdained veneration of the female image. Some even attributed the moral decadence of the Israelites to their worship of Hathor’s image as a golden calf, and viewed her sacred mysteries as an example of the degenerate character of Egyptian religion.

Yet temple and tomb inscriptions reveal that this Neter’s tradition was imbued with the practices of astronomical science, restorative healing, and funerary observances, all of which addressed the two deepest concerns of Egyptian society—birth and death. Her realm of influence, from celestial regions to the geographic terrain and the necropolis, is minutely detailed in hundreds of prayers and vignettes addressed to her as “Eye of Ra,” “Mistress of the East,” and “Lady

of Manu,” a few of her many epithets illustrating her complex nature. We will later see that the Egyptian Het-Her represented vital metaphysical principles at work in the human sphere—overseeing the corporeal form through the fluxes of its myriad transitional cycles from conception to sexual awakening and on to physical dissolution.

The wide range of such deities, their associations and functions, has probably been one of the most fascinating and speculative focal points for those concerned with ancient Egypt. During Graeco-Roman times, it was common for foreign visitors to associate the gods of Greece and Rome with the Egyptian Neteru, and much of the literature of the time refers to those deities interchangeably with similar ones from the surrounding cultures. Djehuti was, for instance, equated with Hermes, and Heru with Apollo. Interpretation of Egyptian cosmology was thus strictly confined to the spiritual and metaphysical understanding of non-indigenous observers. This persists even today, as we tend to analogize the profound cosmic functions of the Neteru with the narrow monotheism of western religions, limiting our perception about these deities and the natural philosophy they embody.

This tendency has resulted in a great deal of confusion about the religious worldview of Egypt. In turn, it has promoted a medley of scholarly opinions that view the Egyptians as a religiously fickle, gullible culture, manipulated by the whims of an imaginative clergy who invented gods and cults when the occasion suited them.

The Four Theological Schools

Traditional egyptology also promotes the comparison of cosmogonies found at different temples and views them as isolated, self-contained mythic traditions. Philosophical discrepancies found between them are then explained as “predynastic tribal differences” among early Egyptians; these differences supposedly continued as theological disputes between priestly schools in later, more civilized times. Often, the preeminence of a mythic theme at a particular period is attributed to the religious preference of the monarchy in power at the time.

For example, modern accounts of Egyptian religion tell us that at the city of Heliopolis, the geographical meeting point of the Nile Valley and Delta, the

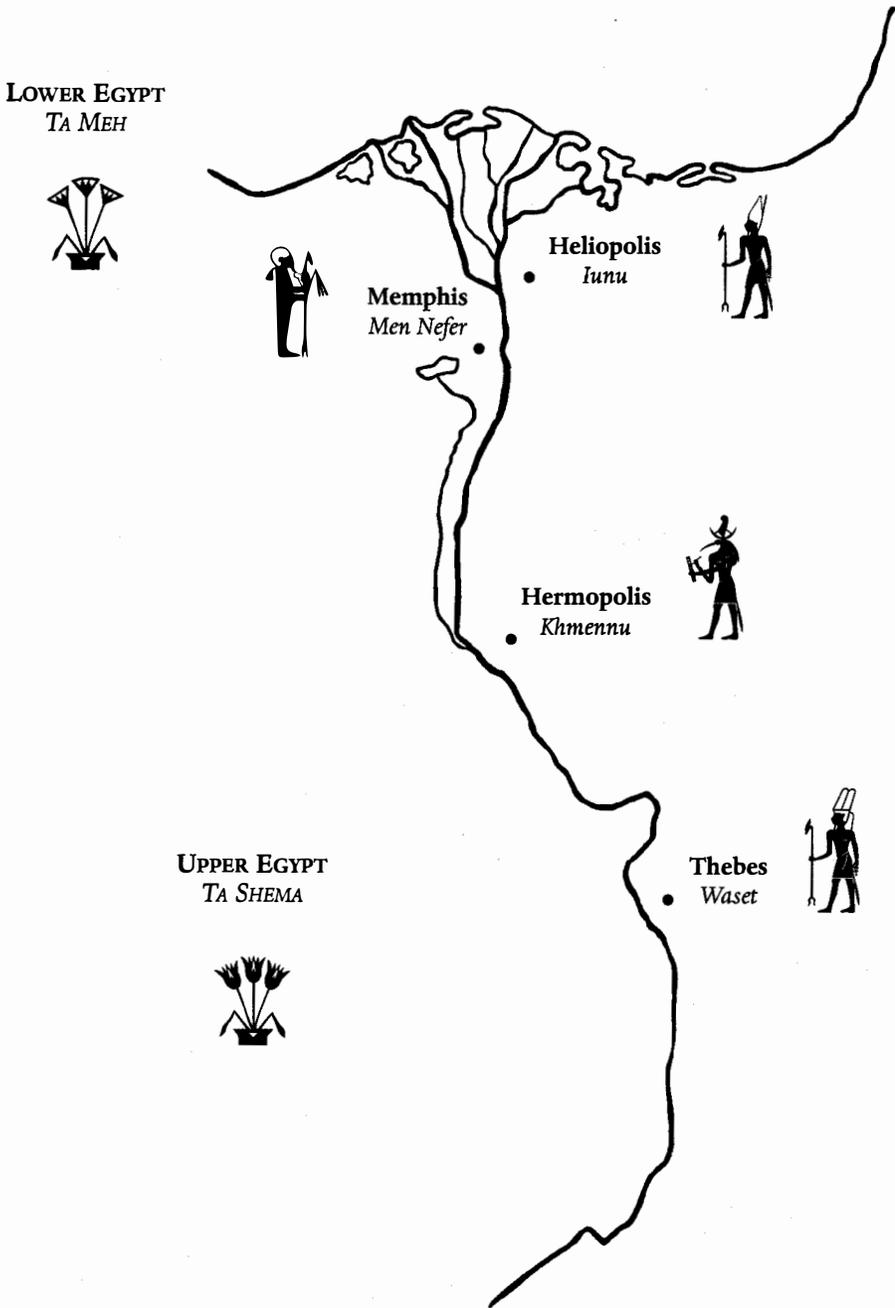


Figure 9—Map of Egypt: The Four Theological Centers

creation of cosmic order was taught as the genesis of a divine ennead, or company of nine divinities. But across the river at Memphis, a powerful, fiery triad was believed to have brought forth life in the beginning of time. In Middle Kingdom Egypt at Hermopolis, a family of eight deities, a divine ogdoad, was said to be responsible for the origin of the universe. And at the legendary Thebes in southern Egypt, another triad of gods explained the inauguration of life in the world.

These four cosmogonies of Heliopolis, Memphis, Hermopolis, and Thebes are viewed as Egypt's "four theological schools" by scholars, who also discount periodic or regional religious beliefs as "cults" of far less importance. But though these four schools did maintain the four temple centers for long periods of time, other religious pantheons attained equal importance, influencing the thought and cultural endeavors of Egypt throughout its four chronological rhythms of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, and the Late Period.

We are also told that these four schools were always in philosophical, if not actual conflict throughout Egyptian history. The cosmogony of Hermopolis was preeminent in the oldest records, known in egyptology as the Archaic Period (3100–2700 B.C.E.). During this time, Hermopolis was regarded as the spiritual center of Egypt and the Neteru of its cosmogony played a universally thematic role in art and architecture.

Following this, scholars trace a shift of emphasis to the delta region, where the cosmogonies of Memphis and Heliopolis overlapped in the time of the Old Kingdom (2700–2180 B.C.E.). Religious texts of the time reflect these unique cosmogonies, but after the historical First Intermediate Period (2040–1780 B.C.E.), the region of Thebes attained prominence in both political and religious terms.

Despite these changes, each school continued to be supported by royal and secular efforts throughout the ages. Students from many regions and a wide sector of society attended the Houses of Life at these centers, and endowments were regularly presented by royalty to support the maintenance and activities of the temples. A theological harmony shines through these circumstances, implying that a sort of religious cohesion must have existed, even though each religious center retained its unique teachings and praxis. Each cosmogony was present in the formative years of Egyptian civilization, but at the same time each creation myth, no matter how seemingly divided from the others by time or

place in popularity, formed an integral element in an overall worldview which the Egyptians consciously understood in the large context of time.

Thus, we find that in spite of the separateness of these doctrines, certain religious themes and images did not just appear or disappear. Rather, their specialized features became more distinctive as chronological time passed, and their functions "filled out" a bigger picture.

A solution to this apparent conundrum is forwarded by the symbolist view. De Lubicz believed that the teachings of these schools were not only creation myths, but an esoteric code of cultural unfoldment, taught by the temple elite. As such, the different pantheons represent cycles or resonances of the civilization itself, whose characteristics are embodied in the art, architecture, and literature of the time in which they came to prominence. He suggests that the scheme was consciously understood by the temple teachers to be a living, vital system which could both predict and instruct the spiritual process of any moment throughout the course of Egyptian history and the experiences of its people. And through the teachings and cult practices of each school, the divine mandate of Egypt could be revealed through the passage of time. What constituted this mandate may be disclosed in a study of the creation schemes themselves.

This intriguing view appraises the preeminence of Egypt's four theological schools at differing periods metaphorically: each site was both a receptacle for and the embodiment of the lives and powers of the Neteru in each cosmogony. As a result, the four sacred cities became the geodetic equivalents of the four spiritual worlds of creation that brought life to Egypt. Thus, as the universe came into being and developed progressively, so the civilization of Egypt was viewed to similarly be in the process of creation, bringing forth a distinctive mythic character and cultural endeavor in cycles of time, through the successive dominance of the Hermopolitan, Memphite, Heliopolitan, and Theban religious schools.

With this approach, we cannot reduce these four traditions as priestly, theological disputes about creation. Rather, they historically represent four paradigms of cultural progression, and metaphysically explain how four simultaneous and synchronous lifestreams—or worlds—maintain and support life from the smallest to the greatest phenomena in rhythms or phases.

In a provocative way, this multidimensional picture of Egypt's cosmological scheme represents a program of spiritual unfoldment that can be taken to another level—as a blueprint for both individual and cultural transformation. The enigmatic creation lore and its accompanying fantastic figures can be viewed as rhythms or resonances which also articulate stages of human development in a number of dimensions. In many of the religious texts of ancient Egypt, this idea is clearly expressed, as the initiate enters the four worlds of creation progressively and becomes transformed into the substance of which each is composed.

In short, Egyptian thinking sees the act of creation as a pattern of episodes that do not occur in a linear time frame but as synchronous events of interrelated phenomena, affecting individual life as well as lifestreams. These events are symbolized by the emergence of Neteru who represent the energy dynamic of a particular phase of creation. Many ancient traditions expressed the primeval act of creation as a coming into being through phases, such as the universally recognized elements of Fire, Earth, Air, and Water. Similarly, Philolaos (fifth century B.C.E.), a Greek philosopher of the Pythagorean school, strongly influenced by the wisdom of Egypt, hypothesized that four worlds or spheres constitute the universe: Olympos (the realm of the fixed stars), Kosmos (the planets and luminaries), Ouranos (the sublunar region), and Antichthon (anti-earth). He was also the sage who defined the five cosmic elements with their associated geometric figures: Earth (cube or hexahedron), Fire (tetrahedron), Air (icosahedron), Water (octahedron), and Aether (dodecahedron).

The Egyptian philosopher Plotinus later expounded a fourfold hierarchy of reality: the First Cause, the Intelligence, the Soul, and Nature. In Qabalistic cosmology, four worlds are also expressed: emanation, creation, formation, and action. Following the paradigm of these philosophies, we will look at the four themes that constitute the cosmology of the Egyptian universe.



Figure 10—Manu: Horizon of the Waters

Manu: The Primeval Creation (Water)

In the Egyptian universe, four worlds exist, interpenetrate, and interact through time and space. The world of Manu

(“horizon of waters”) is the celestial sphere, from which time and space emerge in the first cosmological phase. All expressions of life come forth from the watery mass that encompasses this realm. Every potentiality exists in this primeval water, but it is undefined. All possibilities are articulated, but not manifest.

References to the divine land of *Manu* are found in the sacred literature of Egypt, often as the cosmic place where the *Neteru* retire to rest. In this context, *Manu* refers to the cyclic state of quiescence which cosmic powers enter at the end of an age. This sacred place is depicted as a watery swamp, the primeval marsh from which all life—individual and collective—originally sprang. The entryway to the sacred precincts at temples is often designed to convey this image. Soaring columns resembling aquatic plants and reliefs of marsh animals in proliferation contribute to the overall effect of entering into the original place of creation at diverse places such as the temple complex of Djoser at Saqqara (Old Kingdom), and the great temple of Amun at Karnak (Middle Kingdom)—exemplifying an ageless view that all life arose from a cosmic sea. At individual tombs of the Old Kingdom, the land of *Manu* is depicted in the numerous swamp scenes showing the deceased as a central figure in the creation, symbolically fusing with the powers inherent in the realm.

The cosmogony of Hermopolis represents the first rhythm of creation. The *Neteru* in this family depict the principles at work in the aquatic genesis, reminiscent of the transformations generated during the first trimester of human prenatal life. In cosmic terms, *Manu* is the motion, reaction, and fission of energy prior to the formation of matter in the universe.



Figure 11—Aakhut: Luminous Horizon

Aakhut: The Cosmogensis (Fire)

The world of Aakhut (“luminous horizon”) is inhabited by the *Neteru* who impart the spark of life through the emanation of light or fire into the primeval waters. In addition, they constitute the pattern of all physical form, so that it may maintain its cosmic nature and eventually return to its celestial origin.

The Memphis cosmogony embodies this Fire aspect in this second rhythm of creation. Here, individual spirit is brought forth, arising from the first aquatic phase. Other celestial bodies come into being, such as the stars and luminaries. In human terms, this phase represents the onset of life with the fetal heartbeat, the metaphysical beginning of incarnation.



Figure 12—Rostau: Horizon of Spirits

all who share their existence on earth. In this phase of creation life takes on physical form from the mating of prototypical pairs who generate earthly life.

The cosmogony of Heliopolis represents the Earth aspect in the third rhythm of creation, symbolized by the sacred mound upon which the Sun rests at the beginning of earthly time. This phase expresses the containment of the sacred fire in matter, the acquisition of physical form.

In human life Rostau is that phase which stimulates the development of the four essential organs in the fetus, those which make independent existence possible. These are the four elemental receptacles signified by the funerary (Canopic) jars: the lungs, intestines, liver, and stomach.



Figure 13—Ament: Horizon of the West

Rostau: The Anthropogenesis (Earth)

The world of Rostau (“horizon of spirits”) is comprised of the Neteru who associate with the terrestrial sphere and establish the organic protocol for

Ament: Evolution (Air)

The world of Ament (“horizon of the west”) contains the families of Neteru who move through all three parallel worlds. Periodic and cyclic functions originate in the region of Ament,

such as the Moon’s phases and the Nile’s inundation.

The cosmogony of Thebes represents the last rhythm of creation, the Air aspect. It corresponds to our present world in the life of the universe. The Neteru in this world govern the processes which all living forms partake of, both cyclic and spontaneous. In human terms this phase denotes the emergence from the womb and the transitional experiences that constitute the life cycle—which

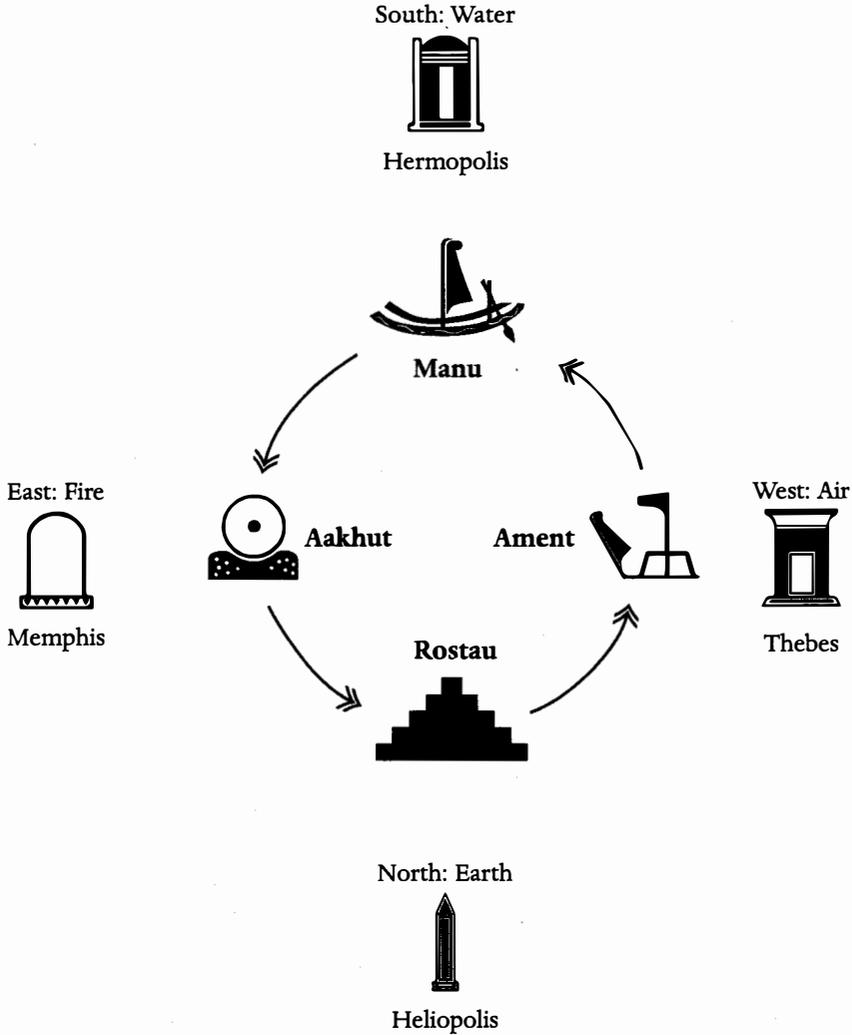


Figure 14—The Creation Cycle

includes death. Here, the Neteru represent the magical, transformative forces that interact in the realm of appearances and regulate transitory existence.

In cosmic terms Ament also provides the possibility of elevating matter back into its original spirit/Fire. It is the cycle of return, in which all living beings participate. This world also provides the mechanisms for the mutation of the

physical form, which make possible the conscious experience of moving through several planes of existence.

In ancient Egyptian, *ament* refers to the right-hand and the western direction (visualized when one looks south). In Egypt, all burials were performed on the west bank of the Nile, and *Amenti* is one of the names of the Neter who represents those who have passed on, an appellation sometimes given to *Asar* in his aspect as the lifeless god. *Amentiu* is the name often used in funerary literature referring to those who have passed into the western land, and *Amentet* refers to the “shadow world” of *Ament*. This cosmic location is considered the ultimate destination for those who have lived on earth, offering a sublime existence—a heaven—where the afterlife parallels human life in its most ideal form. It is divided into numerous halls, chambers, and geographic strata, appearing to have a mirror image relationship to sacred places on earth.

The Ten Cosmic Families

... the Egyptian Sages have established no rigid system for this hierarchy, perhaps because such a system would have revealed certain secrets about natural forces—secrets of dreadful danger, as recent developments of science have shown.

Isha Schwaller de Lubicz, *Her-Bak, The Living Face of Egypt*

Modern scholarship has organized our knowledge of Egypt into disparate categories, and the ancient repertoire of divine images cannot be comprehended with this thinking. Like nature, permutations on the original are featured, and diversity is celebrated. Each Neter is portrayed in association with others or as a member of a family, and working on a number of levels of manifestation. Adding to this complexity, each Neter’s spiritual activities and symbols may be shared with those of another, and its functions may overlap in time (seasons) and space (geographic and cosmic) with those of another. Association is the protocol employed, rather than delineation.

And so, of the vast reservoir of religious images in ancient Egypt, there have been distinctions made regarding the regions, folk associations, prenatal and postmortal functions governed, and the chronological appearances of the Neteru. But the four cosmological worlds defined by the symbolist view point to realms of action expressed by the Egyptian divinities that are unique. These are

comprised of ten families of Neteru in all, each expressing an archetype—or, as elucidated by psychologist C. G. Jung, a mythological motif.

The number ten in ancient Egypt was concerned with the process of delimiting and was a basis of common measurement—our own mathematical system is derived from this scheme. Hieroglyphic notation of numbers was decimal, rendered in multiples of ten followed by single units to denote parts of a tenth. And multiples of ten—30, 60, 110—stood for the essential cycles in nature and human life. Ten units or measures represented the manifestation or existence of a temporal principle.

The World of Manu

This world embodies what de Lubicz called “that which is in heaven,” the first phase of creation. The Neteru of this region constitute the repository of all causal powers, from which all potential expressions of life emerge. They are primeval, far removed from the direct experience of human life.

The Hermopolitan Ogdoad expresses the archetype of formation, as symbolized by life initially emerging from a primeval swamp and the reptilian forms proliferating there. The original water of creation is *Nun*, the active and central source of the genesis. His consort is *Naunet*, the passive or raw material of creation. In this family, *Huh* and *Hauhet* are depicted as frogs in the activity of teeming reproduction. They are symbolic of the cosmic expansion and contraction principles which place the life force into motion. *Kuk* and *Kauket* are the cosmic serpents who portray the states of conscious and unconscious existence.

Djehuti causes the creative act of his predecessors to reverberate throughout the universe through his articulation of the “divine word.” He is originator of the vibration of life, which causes the primeval elements to resonate in frequencies. His consort *Maat* is the progenitor of order by dispensing the matrices or patterns through which all life resonates.

Also associated with the World of Manu is the Solar Triad, comprised of *Ra*, *Khepri*, and *Sopdet*. This particular trinity appears at the earliest time in Egyptian history, its archaic imagery represented in the enigmatic inscriptions found in pyramids. Collectively they express the archetype of fluctuation, by impelling the cyclic rhythms of the Sun, planets, and stars. Boat symbolism is used consistently to describe the actions of the Solar Triad, referring to the region of watery,

The Hermopolitan Ogdoad

Formation



Nun



Naunet



Kuk



Kauket



Huh



Hauhet



Maar



Djehuti

The Solar Triad

Fluctuation



Sopdet



Ra



Khepri

Figure 15—The World of Manu

primeval existence from whence they emerged to create the first light. Ra is the principle of the original light sustaining the life force; Khepri is the life force in motion, undergoing metamorphosis; and Sopdet, the Egyptian name of the star we know as Sirius, was to the Egyptians both the origin and the destination of the lifestreams in the universe. The symbolism of the Solar Triad is the prototype

of many Egyptian metaphors of fire arising out of water, a theme that is repeated in nearly all the major cosmogonies as well as in the individual families of Neteru.

The World of Aakhut

This world signifies what de Lubicz called “that which is in the intermediate world.” The Neteru of this region function between the abstract (above) and the concrete (below) powers. Each of the two cosmic families in this region embody an independent triad of creative action.

The Memphite Triad expresses the archetype of articulation, by bringing the three principal elemental forces of nature into manifestation. Fire is embodied in *Sekhmet*, the “hidden consort of Ra,” a manifestation of the function of light first expressed in the initial phase of *Manu*. Her active aspect as purifier is symbolized in the lioness, her passive aspect as protector is expressed as *Bastet* the cat. The Earth element is embodied in *Ptah*, the matrix which receives the creative fire. Known as “The Engraver,” he is the patron of artisans, metalworkers, and builders, being the Neter who transposes impulse and idea into form. The result of this union is *Nefertum*, a child arising from the first lotus of the primeval

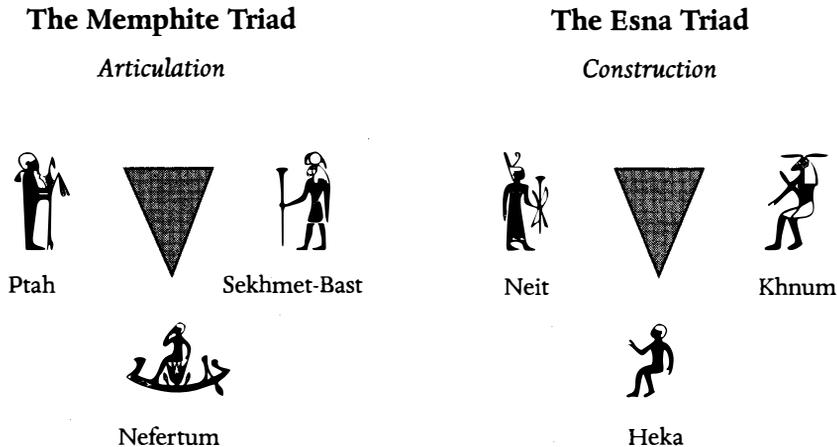
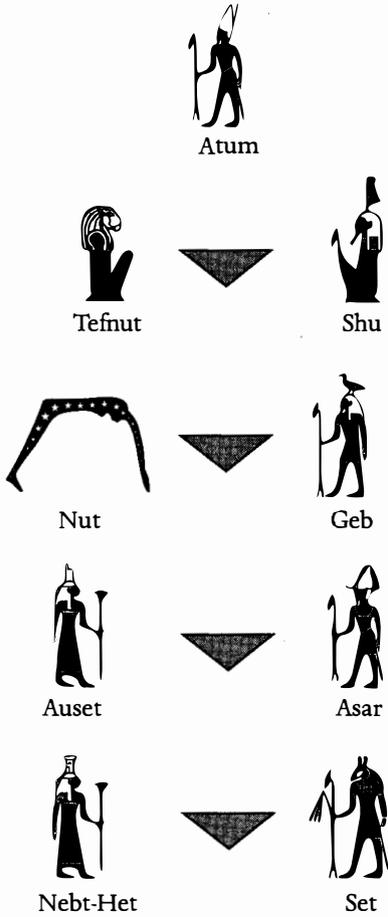


Figure 16—The World of Aakhut

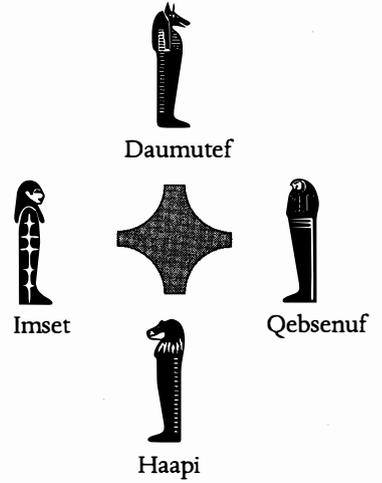
The Heliopolitan Ennead

Augmentation



The Funerary Quaternary

Sublimation



The Dendera Triad

Proliferation

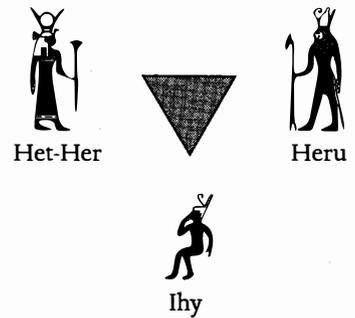


Figure 17—The World of Rostau

waters. This Neter emanates the creative pulse, the divine scent of inspiration that impels life to ascend to sacred regions.

The Esna Triad expresses the archetype of construction, by implanting the three principal vital forces into the physical sphere. *Khnum* represents the Earth element in his form as “divine potter,” who fashions the Ka (“double”) of human beings before they are born into the world. *Neit*, his consort and often called the “Warrior Goddess,” channels the elemental Fire into the physical body in her role as sustainer of species. As “Weaver of Forms” she is also healer of the body, and her legendary temples were well regarded in antiquity for the treatment of illness. The child of their union is *Heka*, whose name means “magical power.” This Neter signifies the dream and vision states, which are intrinsically bonded to the realm of the intermediate world. *Heka* is depicted emerging from a lotus, representing the watery region of the collective unconscious to which all the living belong.

The World of Rostau

This world is “that which is on earth,” referring to the concrete or terrestrial world with its many gradations. In symbolist terms, this includes both the prenatal and postmortal states (the two *Duats*—earth and earth’s shadow) in addition to active existence. These regions are populated by the Neteru of the Heliopolitan Ennead, who express the archetype of augmentation because their actions overlap all the worlds that make up terrestrial life.

From *Atum*, the “totality,” two heavenly and two earthly pairs emerge. *Shu* and *Tefnut* define the air and water of the physical universe as cosmic wind and moisture, respectively. *Geb* and *Nut* represent the cosmic matter and fire, he embodying the earth and she the sky. They are the parents of prototypical man, who emerges as their firstborn, *Asar*. This Neter and his consort *Auset* define the focal existence of life descending from the higher worlds and ascending from the lower. *Asar* and *Auset* embody the latent powers in human life and which are played out in nature: renewal and fruition.

Their “siblings,” *Nebt-Het* and *Set*, depict the powers of the material sphere which ensure the continuance of physical life after it has become manifest: *secretion* and *fixation*. They are the material expressions of the abstract cosmic

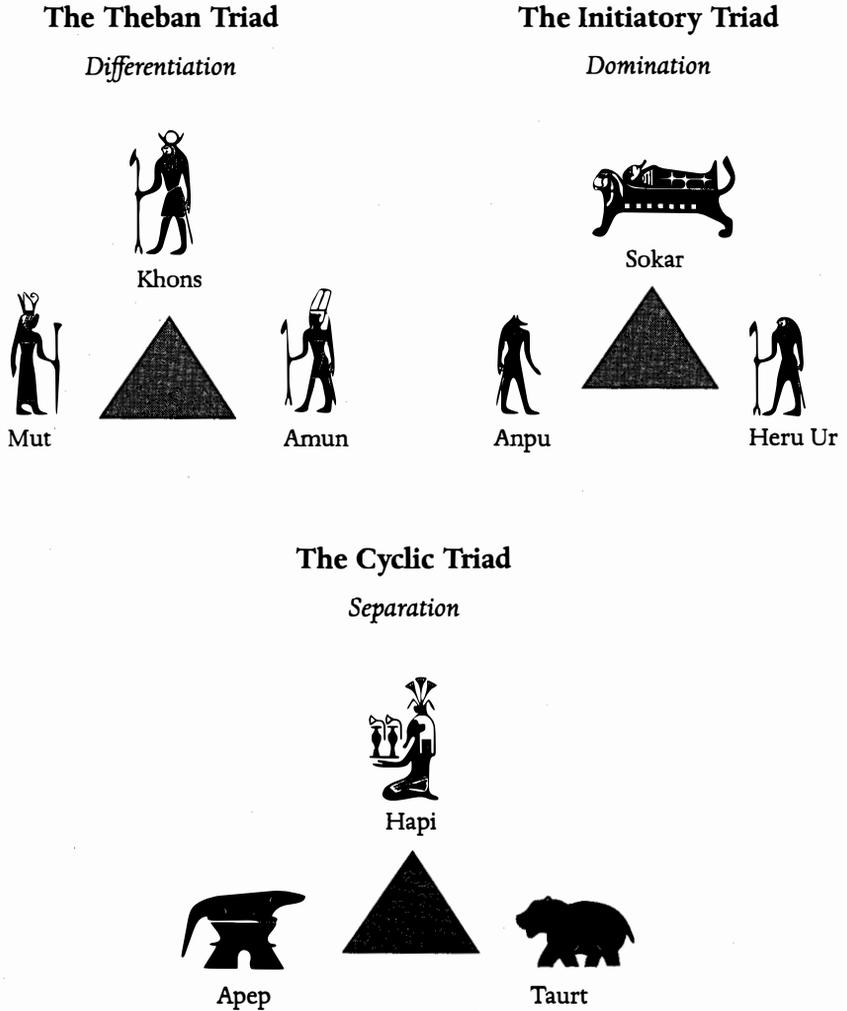


Figure 18—The World of Ament

principles of expansion (Huh) and contraction (Hauhet) in the higher world of Manu.

The Dendera Triad also belongs to the world of Rostau, expressing the archetype of proliferation. The Earth element in this realm is ascribed to *Het-Her*, the

Neter who constructs the physical form for human embodiment and returns it to elemental existence at its end. The Fire aspect is embodied in the younger *Heru* who takes on the image of the hawk, a creature of both earth and sky. The Neter *Ihy* is the child of their union, arising out of the water on a lotus with a finger to his lips. He is able to walk among men unlike the other lotus-born, signifying the creative power which is accessed in all procreative acts.

The Funerary Quaternary expresses the archetype of sublimation, being present at all rites of the dead as well as in a number of rituals in the magical repertoires of Egypt. They are summoned for theurgic activities—from divination to sorcery—and are necessary for the invocation or dispersal of elemental forces in the traditional forms of the ancient world: Fire, Earth, Air, and Water. *Imset*, *Daumutef*, *Haapi*, and *Qebsenuf* are also guardians of the compass directions and reside in the principal organs of the human form: the liver, stomach, lungs, and intestines, respectively.

The World of Ament

This world is the final destination of the lifestreams. Here, the sacred drama is played out in the world of shadows, which is subject to all the periodic functions of the universe.

The Theban Triad expresses the archetype of differentiation, which first arises from *Amun*. This Neter embodies the manifestation of innate consciousness, descended from the unified substance of Atum in the parallel world of Rostau. His consort Mut ensures the transmission of innate consciousness from one world to another through incubation and protection. The union of Amun and Mut produces *Khons*—the runner—who is the embodiment of the lunar phases because he “strides over the sky.” He symbolizes the periodic manifestation of innate consciousness, as well as all functions which regulate the appearance of divine principles on earth.

I have defined the Initiatory Triad as such because it is comprised of the three Neteru who are consistently depicted together and always in the context of high ceremonial acts of transformation. Their interaction provokes rejuvenation in mystic rites, and together they express the archetype of domination and the mastery of material life by the spirit.

World of Manu (Water)	World of Aahkut (Fire)	World of Rostau (Earth)	World of Ament (Air)
Hermopolis Ogdoad (Formation)	Memphis Triad (Articulation)	Heliopolis Ennead (Augmentation)	Theban Triad (Differentiation)
Solar Triad (Fluctuation)	Esna Triad (Construction)	Dendera Triad (Proliferation)	Initiatory Triad (Domination)
		Funerary Quaternary (Sublimation)	Cyclic Triad (Separation)

Table 3—The Forty-Two Neteru

The disposition of kingship, certain postfunerary rites, and high rituals of the temple show the *Elder Heru* (with a hawk head) in the company of *Anpu* (with a jackal head), both in otherwise human form. They are usually depicted with the lifeless form of *Sokar*, the Neter of latent existence. The role of Sokar is usually played by the initiate or by the royal person ceremonially. The Elder Heru in this context represents the principle of spiritual ascension, while Anpu signifies the transmutation of physical forces that takes place during true spiritual initiation. Sokar is the latent spiritual principle within all living things, the spirit embedded in the deepest regions of matter that awaits arousal.

The Cyclic Triad is so named because it is composed of the three principal Neteru who govern the cyclic functions of nature and express the archetype of separation. *Hapi* is the embodiment of the river Nile, depicting its rise and fall throughout the seasons, as an androgynous being that is both father and mother in nature. On another scale, *Taurt* is the cycle of growth that produces living forms through cellular replication. And in the realm of the inner life, *Apep* represents the natural repetition of the life cycle—reincarnation—to which all souls are subject.

In all, these ten families express the archetypal nature of cosmic action, the celestial alchemy that brings life into the world, sustains it, and regenerates it in divine cycles. These ten families constitute the forty-two natural principles in Egypt's esoteric philosophy.

Number Symbolism

The Greek Pythagorean tradition portrays such universal principles in number, and the symbolism of number was most certainly known to the ancient Egyptians and employed by them, not abstractly but in obvious, visual ways. Temple architecture demonstrates this, as well as the association of certain numbers with the activities of the Neteru in their myths and symbolism.

At this point, we should examine the knotty question of whether or not the Egyptians were monotheists or polytheists—a question that seems to trouble modern scholars. While belief in one, universal, causal principle exists at the root of the four great cosmogonies, it is the families of deities arising from the one source that take precedence in everything religious and cultural. The Neteru were viewed within the context of their group and associations with other divine principles; they were in a perpetual state of fluidity. And so, while it can safely be said that the Egyptians were of both persuasions, it does appear that their worldview was thoroughly polytheistic and that in attitude the philosophy of Egypt resists sole-god thinking.¹

The principle of one, or unity, is expressed in the Pythagorean idea of the *monad*. In Egyptian cosmology the monad denotes the original condition of the life force in primordial time. Creation is implied, but not yet expressed. All potentiality resides in the monad, whose purpose is to incubate all possibilities before their time of manifestation and expression has come.

This brings us to the principle of the *duad* in number symbolism, which expresses the ideas of division and polarization, “opposition.” In Egyptian cosmology, the duad is commonly found in the images of paired functions: male and female, active and passive, heavenly and earthly. What is different about the duad in Egypt is that it most often depicts complementary forces rather than antagonistic ones. Unity or the unification of principles is also implied in this idea.

¹ Hornung, Erik: “It is evidently unnatural for Egyptian gods to be strictly defined. Their being remains a fluid state to which we are not accustomed; it escapes every dogmatic, final definition and can always be extended or further differentiated. The combinations gods form with other gods are transitory in many respects and can be dissolved at any time. This fluidity leaves no room for monotheism, which bases itself on unambiguous definitions.” *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca NY, 1996; p. 99.

The *triad* is a frequent image in Egyptian iconography. It represents completion of the process arising from the monad and synthesizing in the duad, as well as a synchronization of related powers. The triad also signifies the energetic exchange and balance within a creative expression, as in a “family,” having a specific realm of influence.

Quaternaries are found in both celestial and terrestrial worlds, denoting the materialization of certain powers. The quaternary signifies the maintenance of natural forces in such images as the four winds. The principle of sustaining and protecting is also attributed to this number, as in the activity of the four rudders of heaven.

The *ogdoad* (family of eight) is related to the quaternary, which denotes the composition of either four pairs or two quaternaries. In turn, the ogdoad represents the four-dimensional state of natural life, the mirror image of heaven and earth.

Five is a number peculiar to the pharaonic role. The royal person acquired a total of five names and five crowns, each of which represented a vital function of kingship in maintaining order, unity, and continuity between the physical and spiritual worlds. Pharaonic monuments consistently depict five niches or chambers that accommodated these functions in the form of commemorative statuary and offering rites designed to sustain the fivefold functions of the divine ruler. In turn, five *phyles*, or shifts of clergy, maintained the sacred schedule of ceremonies at these sites and in the temple and tomb.

Septenary symbolism appears to represent powers of the Neteru that are conveyed to the human race. In nature, seven is associated with numerous organic cycles, such as the Moon’s phases of seven days times four. We find this symbolism in Het-Her’s images, numbering seven; Khnum’s activities as he creates seven forms of the Ka for Pharaoh; and the seven funerary envelopes: three coffins, three shrines, and the sarcophagus comprising the “House of Eternity” in the tomb. This number is also associated with the seven- to fourteen-day funerary cycle of offering and petitions to the dead, a precursor to Christian novenas of later times.

The *ennead* or “company of nine” represents the manifestation of all possible expressions in a cosmic family or principle. Pythagorean philosophy maintains that all potential rhythms can be reduced to nine, and this concept is traced to

the initiatory tradition learned in Egypt by the ancient Greeks. The Egyptians articulated this in many ways, as in all of the known lands under the divine guardianship of Pharaoh, who was “Ruler of the Nine Bows (regions).” The number nine was often used in monumental writings to signify “many” or “myriads” in chronological time.

Other significant numbers in the Egyptian pantheon include ten, which has already been discussed as a principle representing temporal and spatial delimiters. In addition, the function of twelve arises from the combination of the triad and quaternary (3x4), representing a cyclic manifestation of powers. The expressions of ten and twelve, in turn, give rise to the number twenty-two, a figure that plays a prominent role in the cosmological structure of Egypt.

Twenty-two is expressed artistically and architecturally at a number of sacred sites, representing the twenty-two original *nomes*,² or provinces, of Lower Egypt. The number also corresponds to the number of encephalographic nodes in the human brain, and denotes the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the ten planets as expressed in the twenty-two images of the Major Arcana of the Tarot. Hence, this number is the expression of a complete cycle of energetic and material manifestation.

Similarly, the numbers twenty-four and twenty-eight also appear in Egyptian symbolism, usually within the context of organic phenomena and the process of renewal at a sacred precinct. Rows of pillars in temple halls often number twenty-four, symbolizing the reassembled spine of Asar, the archetypal figure of rebirth. This number encompasses the seven cervical vertebrae which correspond to the seven ancient planets, the twelve thoracic vertebrae that symbolize the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the five lumbar vertebrae which represent the five elemental forces in nature. Nor can we overlook the correspondence between the number twenty-four and the division of the day, which the Egyptians were the first to enumerate in ancient times as a procession of twenty-four deities heralding each hour. Twenty-eight is sacred to Asar, which directly associates this deity with the lunar month.

2 Nome: a region in Egypt demarcated by natural features in the landscape and religiously personified by a distinct deity or spirit; from the Greek *nomos*, “region.” Each nome was governed by a nomarch, from the Greek *nomos* + *arkhon* (ruler), “nome ruler.”

The Thirty-Six Dekans

What distinguishes Egyptian religion from all others is that it is consistently oriented to the sky, rather than to the earth. We shall see how the sacred astronomy was an adjunctive language of the Sacred Science, in addition to hieroglyphic script, and that the Zodiac—though different from the one in use today—played a highly important role in both spiritual and practical matters.

The Zodiac is a 360° circular path (called the “ecliptic” in astronomy) over which the planets inscribe a continual path as they revolve around the Sun. In our era, it is distinguished by twelve divisions of stars (constellations) associated with Greek and Roman mythology. The Egyptians divided their Zodiac into thirty-six sectors, referred to by the Greeks as *dekanoi* (singular *dekan*, a “tenth” or “unit of ten”). Each was depicted as a divinity, carefully annotated in both temple and tomb for a system of timekeeping that was religious in nature, though still highly accurate and efficient.

It is very significant that the thirty-six dekan gods and the forty-two Neteru together number the seventy-eight sacred principles associated with the traditional Tarot card deck. Ascribed to an Hermetic origin, the Tarot images represent archetypal forces at work in human life. Intended through the ages to be used as a system of spiritual instruction, occult legend says that the images were fabricated into playing cards because man’s proclivity for gambling would never cease—a guarantee for the system’s survival.

The Forty-Two Neteru

Whatever the time or locale, forty-two principles always constitute the framework from which Egyptian cosmology is articulated. The number forty-two is used as a sacred expression of cosmic truth, divine life, and natural harmony in its art and literature. There are forty-two sacred districts in the Two Lands, twenty-two in Upper Egypt and twenty in Lower Egypt. These provinces were regarded as “navels” of the land. Each possessed a local nature spirit who was associated with a heavenly counterpart—one of the forty-two Neteru.

The identification of the land with spiritual principles is certainly not unique in ancient thinking or in cultures where the highest aesthetic is nature. To the Egyptians, the physical world was an expression of sacred life and not to be taken

for granted. A hymn to the omnipotent Nile, which gives life to the land, evokes this high regard:

One offers to all the Neteru that which Hapi has provided, the mighty one in his cavern, whose name is unknown to those below. O you who extol the greatness of the Neteru: respect with awe all that Hapi has made. He is the universal lord who sustains both shores

“Hymn to Hapi,” Papyrus Sallier II

The names of the Neteru and their associated nome spirits are interchanged at times, and older families are restructured with additional associations in some cases, due to what egyptologists call “absorption” or “conquest.” But that phenomenon can be attributed to the articulation of more specific functions of the Neteru through time, rather than to a loss of their popularly-known qualities.

In the moral literature of Egypt, the forty-two sins are articulated in the “Negative Confession,” a statement of honest behavior preceded by forty-two declarations, “I have not . . .” This was to be recited by the initiate in the presence of the forty-two Maati, assessors of truth and functionaries of the supreme Neter of ordered, correct existence, Maat. In this instance, the number forty-two represents all the possibilities that human behavior may take in moral form.

The Egyptians saw human life as the expression of all possibilities embodied by the Neteru. This view has been articulated in modern times by a number of insightful scholars, including the psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the mythologist Joseph Campbell, both of whom postulated that the cosmic principles of ancient civilizations more truly represent archetypal forces within the human psyche, or potentialities resident in the soul. In this sense, the Neteru of Egypt also stand for the resultant use of spiritual energies; they point to how certain functions in the human organism can be enhanced as one works consciously with the powers they represent.

In all, the forty-two principles embodied by the Neteru represent a template which manifests on numerous levels of experience—the sacred geography of Egypt (the nomes), the forty-two assessors of truth (ethics), and the forty-two Neteru or divine images (human powers), to name a few.

Forty-two is a multiple of seven. All gestation periods in mammalian life partake of cycles of the lunar-related seven. But the number forty-two also repre-

sents the proportional distance of the Sun to Saturn—the last of the organic powers in the Sacred Astronomy.

The ancient Egyptians used what would later be described as Pythagorean progression, assigning numeric proportions and associated qualities to each of the known “planets.” Beginning with the Sun, which equates with unity or the number one in sacred astronomy, we have the expression of spirit and consciousness. The planets radiating out from the Sun represent the forces that we employ in expressing this solar function. Mercury, the next planet from the Sun, represents mentality, or the number seven. Venus embodies the principle of association, or the number fourteen. The Earth/Moon system governs the principle of emotion, or the number twenty-one. Mars represents the principle of action and the number twenty-eight. Jupiter personifies growth and the number thirty-five, while Saturn stands for a cycle of manifestation or completion, the number forty-two.

Planets —

Symbols of the Neteru

The symbols of the Neteru are associated neither by chance or design, just as their numerical attributes express basic concepts about the variant rhythms or “vibrations” of cosmic manifestation. Whatever the historical period and however stylized the characteristics of the Neter may be in illustrated form, certain elements are always consistent.

With few exceptions, the headgear of the Neteru is one such constant in temple and tomb art. A marvelous range of regional crowns, feathers, horned figures, and plant life is found in statuary and detailed reliefs of the male and female Neteru. The headgear’s obvious association with cerebral activity is of interest and emphasizes the psychological functions which the Neteru personify as well. De Lubicz suggested that the symbolism of the crown or diadem represents the replacement of an ordinary cerebral activity with a spiritual activity, so that the Neter’s headgear specifies its creative power, and its natural potential to transform an ordinary neurological and related psychological function into an elevated condition. The crown in this instance consistently depicts the Neter’s principle.

The sceptres or wands of the Neteru may vary, depending upon the context of the temple relief or papyri. Often the implements held in the hands of the



The Scarabaeus of Khepri: The Neter of cyclic return assumes the image of the *Scarabaeus sacer* beetle, which is rolled in its egg by the parent toward the Sun; following its chrysalis stage, it emerges as a benevolent, winged creature. Its life cycle is a metaphor of the transformative processes in nature engendered by the Sun which quicken the life force on Earth.



The Djed Pillar of Asar: A representation of the Acacia tree trunk that concealed the body of Asar after it was cast into the Nile. The four segments of the pillar are compared to the four regions of this Neter's spinal column after he was dismembered by Set: the cervical, thoracic, lumbar, and sacral. Rejoined, the vertebrae endow stability, strength, endurance, and permanence.



Heru Merti: The "eyes of Heru" were worn together by a select few. The right eye represents the Sun, the left eye the Moon. In the great myth of the battle between Heru and Set, Heru was said to have lost his left eye; this was restored by Djehuti, lord of the Moon. The legend may allude to the phenomenon of the Solar Eclipse (believed to be caused by Set).



Het-Her's Instruments: The rhythmic instruments of this deity include the *crotaalum*, the *sistrum*, and the *menat*—all three are used in her mystic ceremonies of awakening the Solar and Lunar principles at her temple. When shaken, the sounds emanating from her instruments emulate cosmic rhythms of creation and procreation. The menat was believed to emanate the power of healing.



The Regalia of Seshet: This Neter's crown and scepter represent the sacred measuring instruments of the temple astronomer and architect. The crown is a seven-pointed star, a measuring device used to site stars. Her palm frond scepter, representing her power to enumerate, stands for "countless years," or eternity.

Figure 19—Symbols of the Neteru (Part 1)



Serpent Images: These took on a number of meanings in ancient Egypt, which can be reduced to either the function of a guardian spirit or a hostile force. Reproductive power was also attributed to serpents, especially of a cosmic nature. The horned viper was one of the forms of Amun in his role as the procreative force of Pharaoh, while the cobra Wadjet embodied the female divinity who protected the royal crown and thus ensured its continuance.



Thet: The “buckle” or knot of Auset represents the womb of this Neter which incubates the latent seed of Heru Ur. As an amulet, it was worn to protect the female generative organs. The knot is colored red, symbolizing the blood she shed after learning the secret name of Ra—a metaphor for the menses and its power to rejuvenate the life force.



Aegis of Neit: The weaving shuttle and shield with crossed arrows are associated with Neit by virtue of the power expressed in her name Netet, “to weave” and “draw together.” She was also viewed as a divinity possessing both genders, having come into being by her own parthenogenic power.



Nekhebet and Wadjet: These two archaic goddesses bestowed and protected the royal crowns. Nekhebet of Upper Egypt embodied the vulture, while Wadjet of Lower Egypt was symbolized by the cobra. Together, these Neteru are called the “Nebty,” the forces resident in the double crown of Pharaoh.



Shu and Tefnut: The first couple to arise out of the singularity of Atum, Shu, and Tefnut brought air and moisture into the cosmic landscape. In the image of mated lions, the pair embodied the continuous passage of time through the Solar circuit over the two horizons, as the guardians of “yesterday and tomorrow.”

Figure 19—Symbols of the Neteru (Part 2)

Neteru symbolize a particular action which affects the recipient. At the Abydos temple, hundreds of vignettes depicting Seti I in the presence of the Neteru show the king ornamented differently in each scene. Sceptres are shown in the ceremonial reliefs being given to the Neter in offering or being received as a result of a spiritual empowerment.

The sceptre or wand of the Neter explains a great deal about the terrestrial manifestation of its power, the extension of its principle into the physical spheres at temple or tomb. In the reliefs found at these places, the principle is intended for human use, and is placed in the hands of royal, initiated, or deceased persons who then acquire direct access to the Neter's power. The most obvious example of this is the Ankh in the hands of the Neter, pointing toward or bestowed upon the recipient. I have interpreted two distinct meanings from these examples. The act of pointing the wand toward the person metaphorically infuses "life" or the specific power which the Neter represents. The wand bestowed upon the person—always over the head—associates with the "awakening" of the Neter's principle from within.

Clothing also possesses a deep symbolism, aside from the connotations of historical period and regional design. The swathed body is highly symbolic, representing a latent or "hibernating" condition buried deep within the layers or recesses of the physical form. Sokar, Asar, and Ptah are most often portrayed in this manner. The Neteru are sometimes depicted seated or throned, another symbolic idea of their function in context with the sacred scene where they are found. The Neter on the throne "presides" over the environment in this case, or takes precedence and control over the other principles present.

Animal Worship

Herodotus wrote that in no other land of the ancient world was there such a profusion of animal worship than Egypt. The impression that this activity composed most of the religious activity of Egyptians continues to be reinforced by the modern prejudice that ancient peoples lacked a fundamental understanding of the difference between nature and natural forces. But in symbolist thinking, the material form of a power only describes its action in the physical world. In subtler worlds, the power is far less limited and much more accessible. Thus, the

Element	Animal	Sense	Anatomy
Earth	Reptile	Smell	Olfactory Lobes
Air	Bird	Vision	Visual Lobes
Water	Canine	Sound	Auditory Lobes
Fire	Feline	Vital Consciousness	Cerebral Lobes

Table 4—Sacred Correspondences in the Animal World

animal form of the Neter is of great significance. It expresses both principle and function in physical action, as can be observed in nature.

Symbolist thought propounds that there is found with certain animal species an “exceptional proliferation” of sacred functions. This can exemplify to the human observer how the senses may attain superhuman, “exalted” levels, where the Neteru exist in pure (non-animal) form. In reptilian life, for instance, the sense of smell is emphasized because the olfactory lobes are highly developed in the species. An elemental association with Earth phenomena is indicated, as the reptilian type is said to be a creature of the land. In the Hermetic sense this means that mastery in the Earth plane is achieved through the exaltation of the sense of smell. We know that in Egypt, the process for achieving this was the high art of “scent alchemy,” which today we know through the popular practice of aromatherapy. Other correspondences are as follows:

The cat’s preeminence in Egyptian iconography is a recognition of the animal’s superiority by the Egyptians, and this is validated by modern science. Besides having a brain structure that is basically the same as that of a human being, the cat’s “nine lives” in popular modern superstition correspond to the nine neuro-functions observed by feline researchers: smell, taste, touch, temperature, balance, sight, hearing, direction, and time. The legendary “psychic” nature of the cat is in fact a marvelous synchronization of these senses, which human beings also possess in latent form.

The Neteru represent a vast array of latent human powers associated with physical senses that serve as “communicating bridges” to supracorporeal realms.

But as we look at Egyptian metaphysical beliefs, we should resist assuming that these beliefs and practices entailed “evolution” of a personal, physical kind; higher levels of acuity following certain spiritual endeavors did not play a part in their mystical system, as far as that system can be understood. The popular viewpoint that these practices induced a superior physical state (as expressed in modern metaphysics) continues to patronize Darwinian thinking in a completely inappropriate way.

Contrary to this misperception, the idea of “evolution” is in fact alien to the Egyptian mind. The ancient spiritual goal of the Sacred Science instead articulated the process of awakening pre-existing powers already resident in human life which are merely latent in expression. The process itself involved the transformation of physical qualities so that this awakening could take place naturally.

The Primeval Ogdoad

In the first phase of creation, the cosmogenesis—birth of the macrocosm—is depicted by the appearance of prototypical Fire, Earth, Air, and Water.

In the creation mythos of Hermopolis, initial, primal existence proceeds from Nun who coexists with his counterpart, Naunet. Nun’s symbol is the cosmic water, Naunet’s the cosmic fiber or substance. The Egyptians believed that the pair embodied the primeval womb from which all ensuing life and activity emerged. Nun represents the “Principle of Genesis,” which initially functions in the life of the universe as *motion*. Naunet represents the “Principle of Substance,” which functions in the universe as *matter*. After the manifestation of these two initial forces, new energetic principles next come into play using the metaphoric images of reptilian life. They portray qualities of cosmic consciousness and their eventual grafting to the human form.

From the waters of Nun and the substance of Naunet emerged the cosmic mound, called the Isle of Flame. From this mound the Paut, the first matter, emerged. Then, Huh and Hauhet, depicted as a pair of frogs existing in “infinite space,” came into being. They symbolize the proliferation of water and substance through rhythmic activity. Huh represents the “Principle of Expansion,” Hauhet the “Principle of Contraction.” In the natural world, the pair function as *space* and *time*, respectively.

The symbol of the cosmic serpent is reflected in nearly every civilization's religious cosmology. In the Egyptian tradition, the pair of serpents in the Primeval Ogdoad represent the condition of energy and matter's active and passive expressions in the cosmic sphere. Kuk is the function of *darkness* and Kauket is the function of *light*. In the cosmogenesis, Kuk represents the "Principle of Quiescence," or the hibernation of vital activity manifesting as darkness. Kauket represents the "Principle of Mutation," which manifests as the awakening of quiescent matter when it is exposed to the stimulation of light. The synthesis of these two powerful forces is often depicted in pharaonic iconography, as the cobra placed on the crown of the exalted monarch, who symbolically possesses mastery of the two cosmic functions. Kauket is the cosmic counterpart of Wadjet, the archaic cobra of the nineteenth nome of Lower Egypt, *Am Pehu*. She is one of the original guardians of Egypt's Royal House.

The following stage in the cosmogenesis is expressed in the activity of the Neter Djehuti and his "consort" Maat. These Neteru were not depicted in primeval images as were the rest of their family in the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, who rarely appeared in human terms and most often were embodied in reptilian forms. Throughout Egyptian history, this pair has frequently appeared as interacting with humans, in the context of facilitating new building projects and the dispensation of learning at temple centers.

As progenitor of vibration and sound, Djehuti personifies the primeval magus, performing the final stage of synthesis between energy and matter. He articulates the divine word, which sets into motion the rhythm of life. The complementary process is ensured by Maat, who fabricates for all life—inclusive of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms—the physical pattern that embodies the rhythm of each form. It is she who dispenses the exalted matrices of form through the canons of the Sacred Science—art, architecture, geometry, and celestial asterisms. These "cosmic templates" result in the harmony, symmetry, and ideal proportions of the *Peru Neteru*, the "houses of the Neteru." Djehuti represents the "Principle of Resonance," and Maat the "Principle of Natural Order."

Change or mutation of the human physical pattern is described in certain mystery school initiation scenes, as recorded by Iamblichus in the fourth century of our era. When Djehuti is depicted as Thoth in the Graeco-Roman initiation scene, he represents measured speech, the divine word awakening innate intelli-

gence, permanently altering the initiate's consciousness and, consequently, his biophysical functions.

Both Djehuti and Maat are frequently portrayed with the scribe's palette and reed pen, symbols of the original word of creation which is recorded in the universal memory, called the Akashic record in occult tradition. Their guardianship of civilization and learning in the physical world is expressed in Djehuti's function as *communication* and Maat's function as *structure*.

The crown of Djehuti is often portrayed as the beak of an ibis bird, protruding from the frontal region of the head. It symbolizes the conscious functions of the cerebral cortex, as distinguished from the hindbrain and midbrain which embody earlier stages in the cosmogenesis. The crown of Maat consists of a single feather emerging from the fissure of the two lateral lobes of the brain. She is thus associated with the combined use of intellect and intuition, the linear and circular perceptions.

Inorganic forms, such as those constructed by man, are governed by Seshat, Maat's image in the physical sphere. At all of the major temple centers in Egypt, she dispenses the sacred measures that inaugurate the building of the houses of the gods (Peru Neteru). The so-called thirteenth zodiacal sign of Cetus (the Whale), which lies between the Taurus and Gemini constellations, is associated with *Seshat*, the Neter who guides mortal construction and who is often designated as a "consort" of Djehuti. Her sceptre, the Egyptian sacred cubit configured as a measuring rod, signifies her role as delineator of measures whenever a temple site is begun. Her presence, depicted on temple dedication steles, assures posterity that the sacred canon has been followed and therefore the ancient tradition has been maintained. Only in this manner may the Neteru descend to earth and fulfill their energetic function in the physical sphere. In some of the sacred components of Egyptian architecture the three subsidiary functions performed by these Neteru are summarized as *geometry* (Djehuti), *volume* (Maat), and *number* (Seshat).

The eight phases in the creation myth of Hermopolis correspond to the formation of the basic eight familiar elements of chemistry: alkalis, nitrogens, alkalines, oxygens, borons, halogens, carbons, and noble gases contained in the universe. These are represented by the four pairs of prototypical Fire (Huh and Hauhet), Earth (Kuk and Kauket), Air (Djehuti and Maat), and Water (Nun and

Naunet). The eight phases of creation depicted in the Hermopolitan Ogdoad can be compared with the eight musical octaves and the eight trigrams of energetic activity in Taoist philosophy.

The Solar Triad

Three phases of cosmic activity are expressed by the Neteru of the Solar Triad. Boat symbolism is associated with each member of this family, a metaphor of the fiery spirit traveling through the cosmic ocean. The sea of Nun, the celestial water, is the medium through which these principles manifest in great cycles.

Sopdet, the star Sirius symbolized as a celestial boat in the constellation Canis Major, was the asterism by which all sacred measures of time and space were determined in ancient Egypt. When Sopdet appeared in the heavens in her annual heliacal rising, cycles of civil, secular, and religious activity began anew. Sopdet as a Neter embodies the "Principle of Presentience," or foreknowledge. This association is due to the Egyptian perception of the star as the initial marker of the heavens as well as the preordained path of the human race. In every star chart and celestial scheme, Sopdet "leads the way" and the Neteru, pole stars, and planets follow. And in the Pyramid Texts, the most ancient writings of the Egyptians, the royal Ba ("soul") completes its cosmic sojourn and "becomes one with Sopdet," fulfilling the objective of the awakened human being by fusing with its spiritual antecedents.

In the physical world, Sopdet functions as *precession*, appearing to the Egyptians as the measurer and marker through ages or epochs. The theme of every epoch is expressed in the symbolism of the precession of the equinoxes and the changing of the pole stars, which the Egyptians measured from the cycles of Sirius. The function that Sopdet embodies is not visible or active in human terms, because it embodies "the embryonic Sun god,"³ or the residence of divine light which has not yet come into conscious manifestation in the human race.

Khepri represents the mutation of the light resident in Sopdet. In Egypt, this Neter's theme was epitomized by the activity of the *Scarabaeus sacer* beetle. This insect's actions were considered to be synchronous with the Solar principle, with its continuous motion of rolling its eggs in soil toward the rising Sun each day.

3 Budge, E. A. Wallis: *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*. Dover: New York, 1988; p. 183.

The Neter was also regarded by the Egyptians as the powerful, transformative aspect of light, as when the chrysalis of the insect transforms from larva to winged beetle. Khepri is a creature of Water and Fire, for he is associated both with remote, cosmic life (Nun) and daily, earthly life (Ra), as well as with the rhythms of the Nile (Water) and the Sun (Fire). He also assures the awakening of the deceased in the afterlife, as testified by the myriad funerary scarabaei discovered by archaeologists. Khepri represents the “Principle of Metamorphosis,” which functions in the natural world as revolving light, or *revolution*.

Ra, the Neter of the Sun in Egypt, was shown traveling in a sailboat from east to west each day. In the Maatet boat, the Sun is gaining light, culminating to noon. In his Sektet boat, Ra is losing light, when the Sun descends to the western horizon. Another ancient myth of the primeval Sun depicts the emission of the sacred fire (Ra) out of the watery abyss (Nun), after which Ra “copulates with himself” and the Neteru come forth from his body. He then assumes the role of creator in the Solar Triad, possessing aspects of Khepri as well as being regarded as the original source of the terrestrial Neteru. This is expressed in a hymn to Ra translated in our era:

Hail to thee, Ra, lord of truth, whose shrine is hidden. Thou master of the Neteru, thou god Khepri in thy boat. At the going forth of thy word, the Neteru sprang into being.⁴

Ra represents the “Principle of Circulation of Light,” manifesting in the physical world as the function of *rotation*. From this activity, the diurnal cycle is determined as well as the architecture of the Peru Neteru, which are designed to receive and house the cosmic light at strategic times of the solar day.

The solar function of rotation is itself fourfold in nature. The priesthoods of ancient Egypt—whether they followed the regimen of solar devotions or the rhythms of other Neteru—observed a protocol of worship that divided the day into four sacred periods. Each period was determined by the angular relationship of the Sun to the horizons. And each was “governed” by an aspect of Ra—Atum-Heru-Khepri, a composite image of the Neteru that represent all the manifestations of light occurring in the diurnal cycle of the Sun.

⁴ Grebaut, ed.: “Hymne a Amun-Ra.” Paris: 1875.

The Four Diurnal Phases of Light

I. Sunrise: Khepri (The Reborn Light). From 6:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., sunrise to noon. This period denotes the birth of the Sun in the east, where it emerges from the womb of Nut (the sky) each day in order to enter the physical sphere. Governed by Khepri, the “Principle of Metamorphosis.”

II. Midday: Heru (The Ascended Light). From 12:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., midday to sunset. This is designated by the period when the Sun culminates to its highest point in the sky and begins its descent to the west. Governed by Heru, the “Principle of Ascension.”

III. Dusk: Ra (The Circulated Light). From 6:00 P.M. to 12:00 A.M., sunset to midnight. This period of the setting Sun was when the Egyptians ended the day, because it is the time when the light “dies.” The event was depicted as the light entering the mouth of Nut in its return to the sacred, hidden regions. Governed by Ra, the “Principle of Circulation.”

IV. Midnight: Atum (The Unified Light). From 12:00 A.M. to 6:00 A.M., midnight to sunrise. This period of the Sun’s disappearance was illustrated in funerary texts as the journey of light through the deepest regions of the universe, battling the nefarious forces of darkness in order to be reborn in the next period. Governed by Atum, the “Principle of Unity.”

In the initial phase of creation represented by the ogdoad of Hermopolis, energy and matter come into being. In the next phase symbolized by the Solar Triad, the formation of the physical universe takes place. The three qualities of cosmic motion—rotation, revolution, and precession—come into manifestation through Ra, Khepri, and Sopdet, respectively. In the next phase, the entrance of the intelligent spirit into the material world is expressed in the activity of the Creative Triad of Memphis.

Memphis: The Creative Triad

A Dynasty 25 stele known as the Shabaka Stone has allowed egyptologists to decode the primary source of the Memphite cosmogony. The ancient, sacred drama inscribed on the stone had apparently originated at a much earlier period of Egyptian history than the reign of Pharaoh Shabaka and was copied and passed down as an important religious document. Discarding the theory of twentieth-century historians that the Shabaka Stone depicts a “fabrication” of the “Memphite theologians” seeking to “usurp the power” of the Solar and

Hermopolitan priest schools, we will view this creation myth in the symbolist manner, as an integral component of Egypt's overall cosmological scheme.

The source of creative activity in this triad commences with Ptah, who transmits the individual sacred fire which came into existence as a body with the Solar Triad. He represents the "Principle of Animation," or that which ensures the transference of the life force from its energetic form to the physical mantle which will house it. Ptah is thus not confined to action in the cosmic sphere, but is at work in the numerous realms of the natural world: the human, animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms. In the physical world Ptah is the function of *fabrication*, the action of embodying inert matter with the genius of function and form. So all-encompassing is the action of Ptah upon every level of creation that the Shabaka Stone declares this Neter as the source of embodiment for even the gods:

He placed the Neteru in their shrines, he provided their offerings. He established their sacred precincts, and made their bodies according to their desires. In this manner the Neteru entered their forms, into wood, stone, and clay. Every thing that emanates from him is that which came to be.

The Uas sceptre of Ptah represents the alternating flux, or electromagnetic current, which constitutes physical life. The sceptre is said to be the ancient prototype of the Greek caduceus. Metaphysicians contend that the spirit is electric and matter is magnetic, and that their sacred union is ensured by this Neter. Hence his association with healing and procreative acts, both of which involve the transmission of energy into matter. Similarly, in Graeco-Roman times Ptah was equated with Hephaistos (Latin, Hephaestus), the god of divine fabrication who embodied the protection of the Greek gods into the impermeable tools of power used by the ancient warriors and heroes.

The "consort" or complement of Ptah is the lioness *Sekhmet*, who as "Daughter of Ra" personifies the destructive aspect of the sacred fire descended from the Solar Triad. She wears the solar disc as a crown, surmounted by the cobra of light and darkness that has descended from the Hermopolitan phase of creation. She polarizes the creative fire of Ptah by her action of burning away the dross resident in physical matter with the purifying light of the Sun. By this action, Sekhmet consecrates matter to spirit before its incarnation.

Sekhmet is closely associated with the Neter personified as the domestic cat, Bastet. The latter was the spirit of the 18th nome in Lower Egypt, *Am Khent*, where the temple of Bastet was located; a detailed description of this temple is given by Herodotus. Together, these Neteru represent the dual aspect of the solar principle on earth: the destructive, purifying flame and the nurturing, life-giving heat of the Sun. Sekhmet carries the flint knife of the embalmer that announces death, while Bastet carries the life-welcoming sistrum rattle of the birth chamber. Both portray the unique qualities of the feline kingdom: the light-reflecting lens of the cat's eyes and the completely flexible range of motion in the cat's spinal cord, both of which are associated with the kundalini fire of metaphysics rising through the body.⁵

Sekhmet represents the "Principle of Purification," which takes place when the sacred Fire has entered the mundane sphere. It is at this moment of creation that the purification of matter proceeds, and continues on from birth to death in the life cycle of all physical forms. In the physical world, Sekhmet performs the function of *purgation*, as in acts of ceremonial magic and healing of which she is patroness. In her traditional role as protectress of the Egyptian army, she oversees the defense of the physical land by banishing nefarious forces from its sacred precincts with her destructive fire.

While Ptah assumes the function of Earth in this triad and Sekhmet embodies the Fire aspect, their union produces a Neter of the Water element, *Nefertum*. He is symbolized as an eternal youth rising from a lotus that rests on the cosmic sea of Nun. An enigmatic figure, Nefertum represents the "Principle of Precipitation," that which stimulates physical life to ascend from its natural level to supernatural levels of expression. Nefertum is also associated with the solar principle, being descended from the Solar Triad. In the ancient Pyramid Texts, the king is identified with this Neter in primeval time:

(Pharaoh) Unas rises as Nefertum from the lotus at the nostrils of Ra.
Utterance #266

A number of myths describe the initial appearance of certain Neteru as being preceded by overwhelming scents of beauty and intoxication. As the Neter of

5 Kundalini (Sanskrit): "circular power," referring to the electric or fiery occult energy resident in the physical body and moving through it via the spinal canal.

divine scent, Nefertum also personifies the conditions which cultivate inspiration and spiritual elevation. These states were encouraged in ancient Egypt through, among others, the sacred art of “scent alchemy.” In temple and tomb rites, as well as in theurgic activities, the elevation of the sense of smell was a highly regarded experience and an intrinsic component of the magical repertoire.

The lotus is found in numerous cultures as a symbol of the human soul. The metaphor of the lotus, as depicted in thousands of inscriptions at temples and tombs in ancient Egypt, was often used to convey the meaning and purpose of earthly existence. The blue lotus flower of the Nile flourishes through its deeply embedded roots in the muddy silt and water of the river, while spreading its gloriously delicate petals upward toward the sky. Thus, in spite of its foul origins, the flower produces an exquisite appearance and aroma. It is an object that lives in all of the elements: Water, Earth, Air, and also aspiring to the fiery world of spirit. In tomb inscriptions, the depiction of the deceased holding the lotus represents his reawakening in the spiritual plane.

In science, the action of precipitation denotes the drawing out of a liquid element from a dense element where it is contained. In Egyptian terms, the lotus of Nefertum draws the vital fire of cosmic worlds into the psychic sphere, and functions in the physical world as *desire*.

Esna: The Physical Triad

Spirit, woven into intelligent form, has descended to matter in the Creative Triad at Memphis. But this imprint, and its continuity of embodiment in the phenomenal world, is ensured through the actions of the Physical Triad personified at Esna, in Upper Egypt. The Neteru of this family are concerned with the transmission of the cosmic prototypical pattern through the lifestream by way of the autonomic functions that will become embedded in physical forms.

The progenitor of this group appears as *Neit*, the creatrix. Rather than appearing as a passive appendage of her consort, she holds her own powers, like many of the female deities of Egypt who symbolize an active principle; as she is the only Neter in this family of powers who is not a reflection of her masculine associate, she is in that sense unique. Like Sekhmet, she is a fiery principle “married” to an Earth principle. Both are similarly associated by the color red—which is worn exclusively by these deities—and the possession of weapons, which are not carried by the male Neteru of their worlds. Their Fire symbolism is connected

to the Solar principle—and human blood—in circulation, with which they are also both associated in catastrophic or cathartic events.

Neit's festival in ancient times was reported by Herodotus as being honored by the lighting of lamps, torches, and candles. Regarded as a mother divinity and the result of a parthenogenesis or virgin birth, Neit's anthropological role is expressed as transmitter of the vital substance descended from the Creative Triad.

Mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only from the mother, has been shown through mutation studies by researchers to trace human ancestry back to a single source, a generation of first humans believed to be of African origin. The symbolism of the goddess suggests a connection to this phenomenon. Neit variously carries a shield, a bow, and crossed arrows in her iconography found at southern regions, where she was regarded as a huntress or harvester of animal food. To the north, in the Delta, she is shown with the weaving shuttle and wearing the red crown of the North—a diadem peculiar to the royal queens and emblematic of the dynamic substance every mother passes on to her child through the blood. Her name is derived from the root *netet*, which means “to knit” or “to weave,” describing her role of drawing together the vital spiritual and physical functions which altogether constitute the corporeal form. Neit of the southern regions selects living matter to nourish existing life, and similarly Neit of the northern regions mends together or interfaces divine elements to renew life. In this manner, the Neter sustains the body through the “Principle of Fusion.” And when this cohesion is broken through the disturbances of illness and injury, she functions as *healing*.

In the Memphite Triad, Ptah embeds intelligent fire into the physical mold in his role as creator. In the Esna Triad, *Khnum* performs a similar role in physical life by apportioning the instincts (defined by Neit) to the body. These will serve as the natural guides for innate consciousness to know itself and its origins. His action is described in his role as “divine potter,” inscribing the Ka of every being with this pattern—the memory of divine existence. In human terms, Khnum oversees the replication of DNA that gives information to cellular life.

Khnum is often pictured as a ram-headed Neter (see the opening page of this chapter), an image often used by ancient peoples to represent the instinctive realm. In the Late Period, he was associated with the ram of Mendes as *Ba Neb Tattu* (“the soul of the pillar”), a composite fertility figure. The deity has been

associated in Christian times with pagan magic, a remnant of the Egyptian belief that horned figures were related to Set and hence, represented the corruption of physical matter or evil (from which tradition early Christian imagery derived the equation: horned being = devil). But Khnum (whose name means “joins together”) has a more sublime association with physical life.

At a number of temples, Khnum is shown creating seven Kas for the royal person, and overseeing the fabrication of the special instinctive functions which only the descendants of the Neteru possess. The number seven in this instance represents the traditional seven instincts which influence human behavior, and are influenced by the seven endocrine glands. They are: survival (the adrenals), generation (the gonads), nourishment (the spleen), nurturing (the thymus), conscious development (the thyroid), creativity (the pituitary), and aspiration to supracorporeal experience (the pineal). Khnum distills what Nefertum has precipitated; he implants the spiritual essence of life into the first envelope of the physical form, the soul. This Neter represents the “Principle of Distillation” and in the natural world functions as *embodiment*.

Sobekh, the Neter of the crocodile image who was also regarded as a creator, is sometimes associated with the Neteru of the Esna Triad in some Late Period writings; in some cases the two are confused for one another. He is occasionally named in place of Khnum in the triad, but was actually the nome spirit of the region where Khnum was revered, *Nart Pehut*.

The child of the divine pair at Esna is *Heka*, whose name means “magic” or “magical words.” Like Nefertum of Memphis and Ihy at Dendera he is lotus born, a power who initially emerges from the watery element. He is sometimes depicted holding twin serpents, which represent the empowerment of form through regeneration, symbolized by the cyclic shedding of reptilian skin. In the Late Period, this Neter came to be associated with *haute magie*, the legendary high art of transformation practiced by the Alexandrian mages, of which Heka was patron. In this aspect, he possesses the words of power which metamorphize all forms endowed with life, and he infuses lifelessness with vitality.

Heka carries the sceptre in the shape of a curved feather, originating from Maat and Djehuti, the mediums of resonance and vibration. It is bound to a lotus handle that originates from Nefertum—the medium of creative imagination. These symbols—derived from the Air and Water elements—represent the

emanation of words of power in Heka's world of preconsciousness. The manipulation of these forces empowers him as the "Principle of Transformation." And in the physical world which he is about to enter, he functions as *ritual*.

The cycle of coming into individual being is now complete. In the cosmogenesis, spirit has embodied matter and the divine substance is now endowed with the powers to manifest all possible expressions. In the next rhythm, the Heliopolitan Ennead begins the cycle of anthropogenesis, the embodiment of cosmic life on earth in human form.

Heliopolis: The Solar Ennead

At Heliopolis, the next phase of creation is articulated by the descent of this conscious substance from the cosmic realm into the material world of physical reality. It develops individually through principles resulting from the pairing or the polarization of earthly forces.

The canonical "Great Nine" of Heliopolis are figures derived from the Pyramid Texts. It includes *Atum*, the central creator of the group, followed by the two celestial pairs of *Shu* and *Tefnut*, *Geb* and *Nut*. The last pair, in turn, gives birth to the two terrestrial pairs of *Asar* and *Auset*, *Set* and *Nebt-Het*.

Egyptologists are fond of the Heliopolitan Ennead, and have given "more press" to its mythological components than any other group of Neteru. We can, for instance, read endless variations on the Osirian mythos—which was appended to the Heliopolitan saga—from the stories and adulation reported by travelers in antiquity. At the same time, the well-developed cosmogony of Heliopolis is continually portrayed by modern scholars as a "fabrication" by the intellectual elite of the temple schools in northern Egypt, devised to hold sway over the primitive theologies of the south. The popularity of *Asar* and *Auset* encouraged writers in ancient times to be prejudiced toward the "religion" of Heliopolis. They elaborated on the story as much as possible when religious festivals honored the popular Osiris and Isis—favorites of the Graeco-Roman elite.

The imagery of creation depicted in the Pyramid Texts begins with *Atum*, who leaves the cosmic sphere and comes to rest on the primeval mound of earth at Heliopolis. In the scheme of the anthropogenesis, this action is the metaphor of the unembodied soul descending to earth. *Atum* is always depicted as a fully

developed man, usually in the company of the other Neteru of his family. He is viewed as the father-creator, originator, and source of life for the ensuing pairs who bring forth and maintain the earthly life of the soul. In some archaic symbolism, Atum is shown as an eel, swimming in the waters of Nun from whence he originated. In this image, he has access to the all, becoming the “totality”—one of his names—because he encompasses all existence which has manifested from the cosmic to the mundane spheres. Atum at times also takes the form of the *ichneumon* (mongoose), a creature associated with the ferret and weasel family in modern times. As such, he is the slayer of serpents and the destroyer of crocodile eggs—all emblems of Set, the destroyer of souls. In this form his sacred name is *Shet*.

Atum also possesses a Solar function, and is identified with Ra and Khepri of the Solar Triad. In his role as the Ka of Heliopolis, Atum is the shadow of these higher entities on earth, ruling over the midnight-to-dawn cycle when the light has disappeared from the sky. He thus represents the process of the soul’s descent into its material form on earth, and the spiritual light which it possesses that awaits manifestation during the course of the “day” (the life cycle). Because of his fundamental connection with the original light and its destination on earth, Atum represents the “Principle of Unity,” which functions in the physical world as *consciousness*.

Atum is variously described as spitting forth, masturbating, or solely engendering the Neteru of the Heliopolitan family. From him emerges the first pair who participate in the condensation of the soul into the body. Shu and Tefnut, like Huh and Hauhet of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, represent complementary forces in space. But they work at the microcosmic level, ensuring the initial development of the physical form after it has been entered by the soul. They were depicted as a mated pair of lions, each facing the opposite direction with the hieroglyph *akhet* (“horizon”) between them. In this instance, these Neteru signify the vital principle embodied by Sekhmet descending from cosmic regions into the physical form through the functions of breath and circulation.

Shu’s hieroglyphic name is in concert with his particular realm: the four ruders or pillars of heaven. He embodies space with air. In this aspect he is the “Principle of Inhalation,” which functions in the physical world as *breath*. Tefnut

is referred to as the “cosmic moisture” or dew, her name being derived from *tef*, “to moisten.” She is the “Principle of Diffusion,” which functions in the physical world as *sensation*. Tefnut’s action is to circulate the breath made manifest by Shu.

The next pair emerging from Atum represent the forces stimulating physical growth and augmenting it after embodiment, through the father-image of Geb (earth) and the mother-image of Nut (sky). Nut is depicted with the water vase as her crown—a symbol of the realm of Nun to which all are connected, the fluid of life that has descended from primeval time into earthly existence through her body. The water vase also represents the amniotic waters of her womb that insulate the augmenting physical form before its birth. She is shown in Egyptian reliefs as being “held up” in the sky by her father Shu, who provides the breath that sustains the developing soul.

In the funerary texts, Nut provides nourishment to the returning soul so that it may be refreshed during its journey through the sky. In earlier periods of Egyptian history, her image covered the interior roof of the tomb, while in later times her painted image enfolded the deceased within the coffin. Her two sycamore trees—described in initiatory texts as providing the refreshment to the sojourner and are represented by the two fish in the modern constellation of Pisces. They are linked by the cosmic umbilicus, which joins the earthly lifestream to the celestial lifestream.

Nut is depicted with an outstretched body over the earth, covered with stars (*siu*). These represent the souls of the earth returning to the sky, their cosmic mother. The *siu* also symbolize the celestial aspect of a Neter or natural force. They encompass the body of Nut, who houses the stars and planets. The Egyptian five-pointed star additionally represents the five physical senses of human life, which communicate with nature by virtue of their nourishment received from Nut. As mother of the soul coming into manifestation and nourisher of the initiate reborn into the sky, this Neter represents the “Principle of Augmentation.” She functions in the physical world as *gestation*.

Geb, the father of the terrestrial Neteru, is shown playing a passive, beneficent role in the creation at Heliopolis. Reliefs depicting the earth and sky union of Geb and Nut show him in a recumbent position with his counterpart outspread in the heavens above, held in place by their father Shu. Geb is portrayed variously

with phallus erect, awaiting the descent of Nut for fertilization, in apparent sleep, or twisted in a sort of somersault position. In the latter case, Lucie Lamy, an insightful symbolist scholar, says, "It is difficult to avoid seeing an allusion here to the rotation of the earth on itself, in the direction opposite to that of the apparent movement of the sky."⁶

This Neter is regarded foremost as the great provider, whose abundance of trees, plants, herbs, and grain was praised in hymns as "the house of Geb." One of his symbols is the Ka pillar, which stands for provision in the context of sacred offerings presented to the Neteru. The Ka pillar is a bundle of Nile plants, a representation of the fruits of the fields which nourish divine life as well as the journeying soul in its passage through the Duat, or shadow world. The Neteru receive the Ka pillar at their various festivals and ritual appearances throughout the sacred year. It is also depicted with the lotus and papyrus pillar in temple sculpture and tomb reliefs, when the annual Great Offering Ceremony is celebrated.

Geb's attributes of domesticity and fertility are summarized in his image as the "great cackler," the *seb* goose of heaven. The species is regarded for its life-long attachment to its mate and the careful guardianship of its eggs and young. In his role as progenitor of earthly life, Geb's name was Erpa, "The Chief of the Neteru." He represents the "Principle of Creation," and as patron of agriculture in Egypt, he functions in the physical world as *vegetation*.

After Geb initially brings forth vegetative life on earth, his son Asar, "The Firstborn of the Divine Brethren," brings forth human life. He does this by germinating the primeval matter—that which originated from the sacred waters and emitted the divine fire, and then descended from primeval time through the cosmic worlds into the present.

Like Geb, Asar is sometimes depicted in a circle-wound, inverse position. But unlike his father, it is not the daily revolution of the earth which Asar maintains. This Neter epitomizes the circuit of natural life, going from hibernation to birth, to growth and completion, then death and hibernation once more. In this aspect, he symbolizes the cyclic revolution of the life force in human form. One of his

6 Lamy, Lucie: *Egyptian Mysteries*. Crossroad: New York, 1981.

names, *Un Nefer*, means “to spring up, arise.” The hieroglyphic sign used to denote his name in this aspect is the hare, a symbol of the spring season in numerous cultures, and a representation of reproduction in nature. However, in the context of Asar, the hare represents the circulation of the individual life force, which “rises” from this life into the next.

The four-tiered *Djed* column is also an emblem peculiar to Asar. In amulet form it represents the trunk of the Acacia tree in which Asar was concealed and found by Auset after his death. It is also believed to signify the spinal cord of the god, symbolically “raised” at his restoration. Its four tiers correspond to the four regions of the spine: the cervical, thoracic, lumbar, and sacral vertebrae. In amulet form, the Egyptians believed “it gives the power to reconstitute the body and become a perfect soul.” The Djed column symbolizes the “Principle of Renewal,” which Asar performs as “sovereign” of all human beings, in that he serves as the prototype of the human form.

Plutarch rendered an extensive summation of the Osirian religion in his time, recounting the myth as historical record. According to him, Asar was murdered by Set on the seventeenth of Athys, which falls in November/Scorpio, the cycle of death and transformation. He died in his twenty-eighth year, an allusion to the number of days in the lunar cycle which governs organic life. In all, fourteen parts (half of the lunar cycle) of the dismembered Neter were collected by his sisters Auset and Nebt-Het, taken to the mythic Island of Flame, and reassembled to perform a mystical transformation that became the prototype of Egypt’s funerary tradition. Fourteen temples were subsequently established at the places where Asar’s relics were discovered, which were to become the plexus of the Osirian mysteries throughout Egypt in both cyclic festivals for the living and funerary ceremonies for the dead.

Because of his association with the Moon, Asar represents the repeating rhythm of natural life as demonstrated in seasonal and lunar cycles. In Egypt, the soil itself is considered the body of the Neter, which is constantly renewing the life that springs forth from its depths. The Egyptians called their land *Khem* (“the black land”), the later Arabs called it *Al Khemi*. The image of Asar in this context was the “Black Neter,” unsown and unrealized in the land. The “Green Neter” was his transformation, having undergone the repetition of genesis, growth,

fruition, decay, and latency. Thus, Asar embodies the greatest power in creation: the function of *germination*.

Second of the children of Nut and Geb, Set is the contentious brother of Asar, who plotted and executed the death of his sibling through a series of nefarious acts. Many of these events are symbolic of the vicissitudes of human life. In the first of these acts, Set encloses the body of Asar by trickery in a lead coffin that molds around his form perfectly. Lead, the heaviest of the metals, is an ancient alchemical symbol for the physical body. Asar is then thrown into the Nile, where his body floats to a great distance from his home. It is there that his sister-wife Auset discovers the coffin enclosed in an Acacia tree trunk. Here, the journey into the physical world is depicted. Set reappears, and dismembers the body of his brother, throwing the parts into the Nile, which were collected by Auset and Nebt-Het. The dismemberment of Asar by Set is a metaphor of the mortality of the human form, which is governed by forces of division and multiplication.

The Osirian Mysteries proceed from this segment of the myth, but Set lives on to face Heru—in a symbolic confrontation between spirit and matter of cosmic proportions—until his power is vanquished, but he is also assimilated into the Heru figure.

The Greeks equated Set with their image of *Typhon*, The Destroyer. All of the Typhonic figures—the spotted leopard, oryx, ass, pig, boar, serpent, crocodile, turtle and, in a feminine aspect, *Selqit* the scorpion—have a relationship to Set in his role as devourer or divider. He represents the purely physical, spiritually undivided rhythm of nature. These images all portray the unconscious, repetitive motion of material life, which swallows, absorbs, and elevates physical survival above all else. Thus, Set fulfills the “Principle of Fixation,” which, when allowed to proliferate in the physical world, functions as *corruption*.

Set has also been associated with the crocodile, and in Late Period funerary literature with *Apep*, a synthetic figure composed of the crocodile and hippopotamus. In this form, he appears in the judgment hall to devour the soul which has not successfully passed the weighing of the heart against truth. As the hippopotamus is a symbol of reproduction, its combined power with the crocodile, principle of annihilation, speaks of the return of the soul back to the physical world. Here, Set the devourer portrays the enveloping power of physical form

that encloses the soul in a living human again after it has “failed” the weighing of the heart. And as the heart is the seat of desire, the metaphor reveals that return to earthly incarnation ensues when the passions outweigh the resolutions completed during the life of the deceased.

Egyptologists have puzzled over the strange variety of these figures. Some speculation has been forwarded that the Set animal frequently found in hieroglyphic notation is the extinct breed of a ferocious hunting dog. This and other varieties of strange figures have puzzled scholars enough for some to suggest that the fabulous animals of Egyptian sacred literature are meaningless fabrications. One standout example of this occurs where Wallis Budge, in an unusual lack of insight into Egyptian symbolism, states, “. . . we have several examples of winged and many-headed serpents, which the artist invented to amuse himself and to add to the mystery of the texts he was writing.”⁷

In the Osirian restoration scenes at several temples, *Nebt-Het* is depicted as the faithful mourner, weeping tears at the embalmment and funeral of her brother. The filled water bowl that forms the crown of *Nebt-Het* symbolizes the result of this action, which the *Neter* represents as the “Principle of Secretion.” She also provides the waters of life, and fulfills the role of nurse to the young *Heru*. Her nourishing milk represents the restorative processes in healing, which she governs in her Late Period forms of *Meskenet* (“birth house”), a *Neter* of childbirth, and *Renenet*, a goddess of nursing. Both are depicted as guardians of the deceased in the funerary Papyrus of Ani and the magical Papyrus Westcar.

In the inner life, *Nebt-Het* serves as the intermediary for those who have passed on, providing protection and nourishment. This, according to the Egyptians, was a most necessary role in the postmortal state, when the body is in the process of restoration with sacred fluids from its desiccation as a mummy to functional human-like form. Hence the *Neter*’s association with immediate postmortal existence, where she also provides air with her wings for the soul to ascend to divine regions as well as her offering bowl to “refresh” the newly born soul. In the physical world, *Nebt-Het*’s function is *sustenance*.

7 Budge, E. A. Wallis: *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*. Dover: New York, 1988; p. 104.

The last of the children of Nut and Geb, *Auset* and her consort enjoyed the longest and most revered treatment in Egyptian religion. As the fourth-born, the number four is especially associated with her, and was regarded by the Egyptians to be a fortunate day, number, and configuration. In the Pythagorean symbolism derived from the Sacred Science, the number four represents physical manifestation and established existence, an appropriate value assigned to the Neter who brings things to fruition and gives birth. The Osirian mythos praises her maternity of the child Heru, the particulars of which share a strong resemblance to later Christian accounts of the birth of the savior. In this role, the Neter fulfills the "Principle of Fruition."

The *thet* symbol was specific to Auset; it is often referred to as the "buckle" or "girdle" of the Neter. It has been said to represent her womb, which brings forth all earthly life. In amulet form it was worn to grant an individual access to the "secret places in the Duat." The *thet* also grants the ability to know the words of power which protect a person from evil forces. An interesting story regarding the origin of this protection is told in the Turin papyrus.

The narrative relates how Ra, the Solar principle, advances in age and loses his vitality. After being bitten by a poisoned serpent, he summons the Neteru "who have proceeded from my body" to aid him in removing the poison that rattles his bones. Auset appears, and desiring to know the words of power in heaven and on earth, seizes the opportunity to elicit from him his secret name in return for dispelling the poison. After succeeding, she is empowered with his most potent name, which makes her "Mistress of Spells and All Magic."

The crown of Auset is the throne, which represents the seat of her earthly manifestation, the royal lineage. She functions in the physical world through the process of *birth*. The acquisition of kingship in ancient Egypt was legitimized in the Royal House through the marriage of the male to the throne princess, a title passed on to the eldest daughter of the dynasty, who represented the earthly incarnation of Auset's power and who was also custodian of her throne, the seat of divine power on earth. The throne on the crown of Auset in this instance represents the Heliopolitan tradition of divine succession, the passage of the royal **Ka** (pharaonic soul) into each king as Heru incarnate. Originating with Atum, it

was transmitted through the Neteru of the ennead to her, the prototypical mother of the human race.

The Heliopolitan Tradition

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 580–496 B.C.E.), known as the originator of theoretical arithmetic, is said to have entered the mystery schools of Egypt and to have been a student in the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis for twenty-five years. The legendary science of numeration that he taught in his philosophic school at Crotona, Italy, propounded a view of the universe which is comprised of nine essential rhythms, a “divine ennead.” In his organization of manifest reality, the numbers one through nine symbolically represent every possible expression of the life force, which the Heliopolitan Ennead traditionally embodies in the functions of its Neteru.

Metaphorically, the nine Neteru of the Heliopolitan creation also represent the nine months of human gestation, as well as the nine components of physical embodiment and growth in mammalian life. Atum represents the moment of the spirit’s descent into the physical matrix. Shu embodies the sperm and Tefnut, the ovum. Nut provides the amniotic waters of the womb and Geb the umbilicus which nourishes the fetus. Asar is the spirit’s entrance into the womb and its enclosure in the body, while Set is the separation of the spirit from its original state and attachment to human life. Auset, the womb, gives birth and Nebt-Het feeds the newborn infant.

The Dendera Triad

After the earthly incarnation of spirit, expansion or augmentation proceeds on the physical, emotional, and psychic levels. The processes of transformation taking place during its various developmental stages on earth are represented in the triad of Neteru at Dendera.

Het-Her, the Neter regarded through the ages as the figurehead of Egyptian “goddess worship,” is associated with both sky, earth, and shadow worlds in her many images. Her traditional crown, the solar disk resting between the two “horns” of the waxing and waning crescent moons, is often lent to other female Neteru as a representation of the processes of nurturing and growth provided by the earthly mother. This crown also signifies the union of light and shadow, or spirit and matter, being the “Principle of Fertilization.”

The natural function of Het-Her as nurturer is expressed in her dual association with the cow, feeding the newborn royal child on earth and the newly awakened soul in heaven. She was said to greet the sojourner in both instances in her multiple forms of seven, her sacred number.

The eminence of Het-Her throughout ancient times was not confined to the borders of ancient Egypt. In addition to the great Ptolemaic temple complex at Dendera, there were seven known shrines in antiquity of the goddess, corresponding to the seven forms of the Neter mythically present at every human birth and death. They were located, according to legend, in Thebes, Heliopolis, Aphroditopolis, Ammu, Herakleopolis, Kaset, and the Sinai. These localities are said to be the seven “navels” of the Neter, spanning the seven degrees of latitude that encompass the lands of Egypt.

A 1980s discovery in southern Sinai revealed the existence of *Sarabit el-hadem* (“mountain of the god”). Archeologists at the University of Tel Aviv say that this may be the original Mt. Sinai of Biblical record—as the certain identity of this mountain has not been established and is a controversial matter. An Egyptian temple in the area is dated 700 years before the Exodus, and one mile from the temple exists a cave with proto-sinaitic carvings. The inscriptions in the cave include characters for the word *El* (Hebrew for “god”), and are dated from the time of Moses. The temple and cave are believed to belong to the sacred precinct of Het-Her. Thus the story of the Israelites’ worship of a “golden calf” before receiving their commandments from Moses is likely an historical event.

The *menat*, a peculiar symbol exclusive to Het-Her, resembles the ancient ceremonial collar. It also corresponds to the Neter’s power of expansion, and as an amulet the device endowed one with the power to restore the lungs’ natural functions in the shadow worlds. In religious ceremonies, priestesses rattled the *menat* in conjunction with rhythmic chants to awaken the Neter to earthly life and breathe in the censed air of the sanctuary.

The sceptre of Het-Her is the sistrum rattle, a ceremonial instrument used to arouse the sacred presence as well as to banish nefarious forces. In ancient Egypt, the sistrum was usually surmounted by an image of the cow or the bovine ears of Het-Her’s sacred animal in order to invoke her protection. The sistrum is also a vehicle for Djehuti’s cosmic words of power, the evocation of spirit toward motion, time, and space. In the physical world, Het-Her functions as *conception*.

In the spiritual cycle at Dendera, the introduction of the Heru figures proceeds, which later proliferates in images that are transposed into other related cosmogonies. Het-Her means the “house of Heru,” a name referring to her function as both wife and mother to *Heru Behutet* and *Heru-pa-khart*, the avenger and heir of Asar. And though she was always a popular figure at times and places where honoring the goddess was emphasized, she should nevertheless be understood in context with her union to the Heru images, in the manner that the Egyptians regarded her. Often called *Nub-t*, “the Gold” or “the golden,” the name is a reference to her perfect qualities of reflecting the Solar principle.

Heru first comes onto the scene as *Heru Ur*, the “elder” hawk. He is sometimes depicted as a member of the Heliopolitan Ennead in latent form, as a seed existing in the womb of Nut. This seed is passed on into the womb of Auset, and is later fertilized by the hibernating Asar to be born as the avenging hawk Heru Behutet, the consort of Het-Her. The difference between the two figures is that the elder Heru exists as potentiality, the younger Heru comes to life as a necessary antidote to physical existence, with all of its inherent dualities and conflicts.

Heru Hebennu is another figure arising out of the Heliopolitan rhythm, representing the crown prince and heir to the throne of Asar. His sacred animal is the bennu bird, a heron said to live in the holy tree of Heliopolis. In later times, the bird is described as the legendary phoenix cyclically rising out of fire. The names of the bennu bird and the sacred Ben Ben stone of the Heliopolis temple are derived from the same root *Bn*, which means “ascension.” It is this image, in the form of a hawk, that is passed on to Pharaoh, who is the living “Principle of Ascension.”

Human beings are composites of lower and higher forces, matter and spirit. Heru represents a fourfold process of these forces at work in human life, four

Time of Day	Neter	Greek Name	Image
Dawn to Noon	Heru pa Khart	Harpocrates	The Youth, Child
Noon to Dusk	Heru Behutet	Horus	The Avenger
Dusk to Midnight	Heru em Aakhuti	Harakhte	Hawk of the Two Horizons
Midnight to Dawn	Heru Ur	Hamarchis	The Elder Hawk

Table 5—The Four Diurnal Phases of Heru

being his sacred number. In this scheme, one belongs to the earth (physical life), the sky (home of the spirit), the inner life (the shadow worlds), and the succeeding generations (the future). This was understood by the ancients in the fourfold divisions of the day, which depicts the metamorphosis of matter and spirit through these realms.

Thus, Heru represents the past, the present, the future, and the destiny of the human race. Within each phase, subtle images depict the processes involved in the journey of the Neter from youth to maturity. At dawn and dusk, Heru is the hawk, who has ascended from “the deep” of night hibernation (*Heru Ur*), traversed the sky, and descended back to earth as guardian of the two gates of day and night (*Heru em Aakhuti*). In the morning light he reappears (*Heru pa Khart*), representing the transmission of innate intelligence into his newly incarnate form. And, in the waning light, he battles with the forces of darkness to ensure the ascension of innate intelligence through the confines of matter once more (*Heru Behutet*).

The victories of Heru through these rhythmic battles is signified by the unique triple crown he wears, the *hememet*. A composite of the white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt, it also carries the golden, twin plumes of the bennu bird on each side. The white crown is often featured on male Neteru, symbolizing the function of the cerebral cortex and the development of logic. The red crown is worn by many female Neteru and queens, with its spiral extension symbolizing the cerebellum, which controls muscular reflex and equilibrium. Together, the two crowns depict the union of logic and instinct. The two gold plumes denote the balance of Maat (truth) in the spirit and material worlds, where Heru exists and functions as *mastery*.

Heru pa Khart (the Child) is the earthly, mirror image of the cosmic child Nefertum, the lotus-born son in the Memphite Triad. He embodies the perfection of physical form as Ihy at Dendera. This is the regenerated human being, who has synthesized the functions inherited from both the spiritual and material realms.

Ihy is depicted with the right (active) finger to the lips. The hushed, quiet posture of this Neter describes intuitive, speechless knowledge—the aim of the mystery tradition, of which Heru was patron in the Hermetic milieu. His knowledge is attained through mastery of speech and application of the

primeval creative utterance originating from Djehuti. Ihy is thus the initial realization and use of innate intelligence, wholly resident in the soul but as a child in the knowledge of itself.

It is through use of the creative force that Ihy embodies the "Principle of Insemination," or the Hermetic process of self-creation as a metaphor of uniting the soul with its original substance. In the physical world he is expressed in the function of *procreation*. Here he represents the conscious transmission of divine life into the worldly sphere through the sexual rhythm, potent in youth and channeled as creative expression in maturity.

Ihy as a metaphor of rhythmic expression was patron in ancient times of music. He was also associated with the ithyphallic *Min*, a revered figure of fertility and the sexual vigor of kings, and a spirit of *Herui*, the fifth Upper Egyptian nome of the "two Heru's."

The Initiatory Triad

As the descent of spirit into matter is accomplished and the embodiment of the soul into physical form is completed, the experiences of an individual's life proceeds from the rhythm established in the preceding cosmogony. Next, a group of Neteru long associated with the mystery tradition of Egypt represents the manner in which the spirit extricates itself from the consuming power of matter. They also perform the arcane processes, symbolized in ancient alchemy, by which the body and soul become elevated by spirit. Here, *Sokar* represents the body, *Anpu* the soul, and *Heru Ur*, the incarnate spirit.

Sokar was, among other things, the Neter of the Saqqara necropolis, an Osirian figure depicted as a mummiform man in funerary garb. He is often shown reclining in a sarcophagus, a metaphor of the soul's enclosure within the most elaborate matrix of material existence, the body. With its complex of autonomic and instinctive functions, the physical form is expressed here as a vehicle of tremendous vital power, dormant in its expression of spiritual vigor.

The "Principle of Latency" which Sokar embodies was associated with the solid, vital energy of the bull, manifesting as physical potency in his role as "Lord of the Herd." A number of sacred bulls in ancient times were regarded as vehicles of this spiritual principle, which could be ceremonially tapped by their attendant priesthoods at cosmically potent times. Among them was the sacred bull Hap (Greek *Apis*), who was the "Bull of Saqqara." In later times, he was aligned

with other principles and regarded as Ptah-Sokar-Asar, a Neter possessing the triple powers of animation, incarnation, and restoration. Nem Ur (Greek *Mnevis*) was the bull of Heliopolis, the incarnate solar principle which has passed from death to life once more. And Bakha (Greek *Buchis*) of Hermonthis, was known as the "bull of the mountains," a reference to his association with the tombs of Upper Egypt. This sacred bull embodied the declining life force in the cemetery, but he also "absorbed" the transformative powers resident there. In physical life, Sokar embodies the function of *inertia*.

Anpu, the Neter of the necropolis, represents the processes by which sentient life, deeply bound in matter, transmutes inert substance into life-giving elements. His sacred animal was the jackal, a creature that often stood watch over the ancient cemeteries. At times, he is regarded interchangeably with Apuat the hound, whose name means "opener of the ways." The latter was also depicted as a wolf in Lycopolis (Greek for "city of the wolf"). In this respect, Anpu opens or releases the hibernating principle of Sokar to higher functions.

Anpu's origins present interesting connotations. Keeping in mind that he is said to be the son of Set and Nebt-Het, his association with decay and death becomes clear. Set governs the physical shell of all things, Nebt-Het the immediate postmortal condition. Anpu serves as the bridge between the two conditions.

The funerary *Imiut*, a ceremonial standard composed of an animal skin mounted on the lotus pole, frequently accompanied the paraphernalia of the tomb and was an emblem exclusive to Anpu. It is symbolic of the shedding of the body by the departing soul. Besides the event of death, this symbol also refers to initiation in the mystery tradition. The Imiut is sometimes shown in reliefs with blood emptying out of its orifice, symbolizing the draining of the life force from the body prior to its transmutation into spiritual essence. But sacred libations were also poured through ceremonial Imiut as a magical device for effecting the rebirth of the spirit body into the inner life, thus serving as a spiritual birth canal.

Anpu represents the "Principle of Transmutation," which he effects through biochemical changes in the physical form. He functions in the physical world as *digestion*, where the components in physical substance are broken down and transmuted into higher matter, in the cemetery as well as in the human body.

The Elder Heru completes the energy dynamic of the Initiatory Triad as the stimulus that causes matter to become exalted by virtue of awakening the spirit

which animates it. Existing only as a potentiality in the Heliopolitan rhythm when incarnation takes place, the Neter now becomes active through the hibernation of Sokar (the inertia of the body) and the transmutation of Anpu (the purification of the soul). The “Principle of Exaltation,” as represented by Heru Ur, is one of the ramifications of initiation: the redemption of matter. Human beings, standing between the two realms of undifferentiated cosmic spirit and the diverse physical forms on earth, serve the dual purpose of allowing innate intelligence its conscious realization as well as providing raw matter with the sanctification of divine embodiment. Thus, Heru Ur functions in the physical world as *initiation*.

In later times, the melding of the Heru and Anpu images synthesized as the Graeco-Roman figure of *Hermanubis*, as described by Plutarch. Double-headed as a hawk and jackal, he was known as the “Power of the Two Lands,” being the opener of the roads to both the South and the North. In this aspect, the two Neteru stand for the conscious fusion of spirit and body.

Thebes: The Royal Triad

The exaltation of human existence is portrayed by the Neteru of the Theban Triad. In this phase, innate intelligence has awakened and fulfills a divine mandate on earth through the sacred lineage of the gods, the Royal House. In Pharaoh’s body the primeval substance, Paut, rises with vitality to awaken everything in his presence and give life to all in the land. But this also calls for the expression of a high wisdom that enables other human beings to live in harmony with natural forces.

The meaning of *Amun’s* name is unknown, except that it is the same word used to express “to hide,” and “hidden.” However, the word in Egyptian is also used in the action “to make firm, establish, fortify.” Some of Amun’s symbols—the goose and ram—are also associated with the Neteru concerned with the family and progeny, Geb and Khnum. Amun fulfills their functions on earth as father of the divine family on earth (the Royal House) and transmitter of the aristocratic principle (realization of one’s sacred origin). He achieves this in his aspect as *Kaumutef*, who embodies the creation of vital life in the human form and its transmission of DNA via the male sperm.

Amun was the exclusive patron of the Royal House in the Middle Kingdom period. He was the “Lord of Kings,” being the prototype of the mature, fully realized human being. Having passed through the cosmic realms, impregnating matter and joining with the elemental forces of nature, Amun is both the divine descendant on earth and the fountainhead of human achievement in heaven. In this aspect he is the source of the theocratic tradition of Egypt, embodied in the image of Pharaoh. The Egyptians understood the connection between themselves and their ancestors to be unbroken by material existence and a continuously developing heritage upon which to draw and to contribute. Genealogy was not traced to establish authority or distinction, but to discern and perpetuate the ancient traditions which had descended into the present from endless past epochs. In this context, Amun embodies both the past and future of human experience, and is here the “Principle of Completion.” And as the reliquary of innate intelligence awakened in earthly life, he functions as *maturation*.

In ancient Egypt, it was the queen mother who ensured transmission of the royal Ka from one king to the next. *Mut* (“mother”) is the facilitator of this process, acting as both incubator and protectress of the innate intelligence embedded in the royal Ka, which traces descent from the gods. She guides it toward the goal of conscious realization by giving it birth. This Neter has a mirror image relationship to Nekhebet, the vulture goddess whose origins predate the earliest dynastic records; she is the spirit of the third nome in Upper Egypt, *Ten*. The vulture goddess, with her twin Wadjet (the cobra), are the guardians of the two crowns of Egypt, ensuring the realization of the noble inheritance that “awakens” in the royal person at his or her investiture. Mut also assumes the image of the vulture—with its legendary protective instinct toward its eggs and young—in the human body, as guardian of the embryo. Her principle is also at work in the intricate cycle of ovulation. Mut represents the “Principle of Incubation,” which functions in the physical world as *protection*.

Khons, the child of their union, possessed shrines at Karnak, Hermopolis, Ombos, and Behutet, with a distinctive image at each place. His name means “the traveler,” but in the Pyramid Age (ca. 2700–2180) his character is delineated as “The Slaughterer” or slayer of certain cosmic forces—performed so that the **king** may eat or absorb their powers. This is certainly an allusion to the Neter’s

role as transmitter of divine attributes, acquired as the royal person undergoes the royal initiations and becomes a representative of the Neteru on earth.

In the Middle Kingdom, when the Theban Triad arose as the spiritual model of the Royal House, Khons served as the Neter of the royal placenta, a Lunar symbol (the physical body is governed by the Solar principle). The Egyptians believed that the fate of the placenta presaged the fate of the newborn, and various ceremonies were performed to preserve it, thus ensuring that no disruptive events proceeded the birth of a person. The royal placenta was carried ceremonially on a standard before the king's processions, and is depicted at times in the headdress of Khons. In this aspect, he serves as a guardian of the royal principle—past, present, and future—as does his mother, Mut.

But Khons was also associated with cosmic fecundity, being the Neter who would incarnate in the as-yet unborn royal person, a reason for his frequently appearing without crowns and wearing the helmet of the immaterial world which Ptah also wears. He is decked out in a placental shroud that represents the undifferentiated role of the royal child, and he holds a bundle of sceptres in his hands, each signifying the variant functions that future kings and queens may serve for posterity. Khons in this aspect is the succession of divine appearances on earth and chronographer of the Royal House.

Standing for the myriad numbers of incarnations that are yet to be, Khons assumes the role of measurer for the individual spirit, and is known by the name *Heseb Ahau*, "Reckoner of the Life Span." He represents the "Principle of Enumeration," fulfilling the role of his cosmic counterpart, Djehuti, on earth; hence, the association of both Neteru with the Moon. Khons reduces the great celestial cycles of transformation into the mundane cycles of change embodied in the moon's rhythm. In this aspect, he is shown wearing the lunar crescent as a crown. On the physical plane, he functions as *periodicity*.

The Funerary Quaternary

Flesh is not heir to the divine mandate of eternal life, though spirit attains this knowledge through the progressive stages of its embodiment and transformation. Natural forces exist within the physical form to ensure the continuance of vital functions, as well as the timing of their departure back to the great lifestream from whence they originated. The transmutation of the spirit through

cosmic and earthly realms forms a portion of this great journey, but the dissolution of the body is also a necessary phase required of the sojourner.

The four “sons of Heru,” consist of this group, and are associated with Heru by virtue of the vitalization they transfer from the Solar principle to physical form. *Imset*, *Haapi*, *Daumutef*, and *Qebsenuf* are essential in the mystical transformations described in the ancient Pyramid Texts as well as Late Period funerary and magical literature. They assume both animal and human form, which to the symbolist denotes the presence of exalted functions at work in the physical sphere—the pure, unembodied natural forces supporting organic forms and preventing dissolution or decay. In the funerary tradition they are referred to as the “four genii,” akin to beneficent entities that “guard” the mummified remains. But esoterically, they represent the processes by which the forces of the natural world move through the human form and stabilize its functions. When invoked, they may vitalize the body, restoring it to health or supernatural strength. And once dispersed, they go on to embody other forms and fulfill their roles as stabilizers in organic life. They represent, in a sense, the recycling of forces in nature, though they are not to be confused with the principle of reincarnation, which applies to the return of individual spirit to human embodiment. An invocation to these Neteru, describing their mystic function, is inscribed in the Dynasty 5 pyramid of Pepi:

O sons of Heru—Haapi, Daumutef, Imset, and Qebsenuf: make the motions which transfer the fluid of life to your father the Osirified. It is that which will endow him with substance before the gods

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The Funerary Quaternary are not spiritually conscious principles, but serve as terrestrial, autonomic functions that stabilize sentient life and its environment. The Egyptians believed that when disruptions occurred in either world, a consequent alteration took place in the other through the medium of these four genii.

There is differing information on the rulerships and functions of the four, which seem to shift at various periods in Egyptian history. I have found conflicting associations forwarded by various egyptological authorities, indicating that no final scholarly word has been spoken on the symbolism of the Funerary Quaternary.

Given the uncertainty surrounding these Neteru, the following can be said with confidence. Imset is regarded as the leader of the quaternary, one of his titles being “Leader of His Brethren.” Personified with a man’s head, he was said to associate with the right side of the body and the western direction. He represents the “Principle of Coagulation,” physically functions in the *liver*, and his element is Air. The man-headed figure denotes conscious influence and choice, as well as the unique qualities of mammalian life.

Haapi (the name rendered differently to distinguish the Neter from Hapi, the Nile), means “to circulate.” His action is similar to that of the Nile god, but his work is confined to the physical body rather than the river’s great cycle in nature. He is represented with a baboon head, and associated with the lower regions of the body and the southern direction. Haapi represents the “Principle of Circulation,” and he physically functions in the *lungs*. His element is Water. The baboon-headed figure denotes the activity of periodic phenomena and the balance of natural forces. The baboon was also an image of the Lunar functionaries—Djehuti and Khons—and it sat at the counterpoise of the scale in the hall of judgment in the inner life.

Daumutef evokes transmutation, being associated like Anpu with the canine species. His work is the transformation of organic substance into vital energy, being connected with the upper regions of the body and the northern direction. Embodying the “Principle of Decomposition,” his physical power functions in the *stomach* and his element is Earth.

Qebsenuf is given the title, “He Refreshes His Brethren,” and is associated with the hawk. Representing the “Principle of Assimilation,” he physically functions in the *intestines*, the seat of nutrient absorption. His orientation is the left side of the body and the eastern direction, his element, Fire.

The functions of these four Neteru included rulership of the vital Canopic vessels in the funerary equipment, each containing the separately-mummified internal organs they once embodied. This procedure was undertaken to drain the vital energy from the body, so that the soul would be free of the sensations (hunger, thirst, breath, and desire) that these organs impose when stimulated by their counterparts in nature.

In the ceremonial magic of the Late Period, the four genii were invoked to accomplish enchantments, sometimes using their corresponding organs, which

were taken from animals. These served as the physical sources of natural energy for the temporary embodiment of inanimate or lifeless forms. Such practices survived in the African folk magic of later centuries.

The Cyclic Triad

At the fundamental level of earthly existence, natural cycles govern all phenomena. The Cyclic Triad expresses the action of these pulsations, which influence everything that exists in the physical world. The hippopotamus *Taurt* and the crocodile *Apep* both exist in the life-giving waters of Hapi, the Nile. In this triad, life returns metaphorically to its watery origins.

On the cellular scale, *Taurt* represents the "Principle of Multiplication," which ensures the continued generation of organic forms. This *Neter*, represented as a pregnant hippopotamus in amulets and votive forms, was revered in Egypt as the women's guardian of successful conceptions and births. She was frequently invoked to ensure completion of the natural pregnancy term, thus her association with physical growth cycles and the function of *parturition*. She is often shown with the hieroglyphic symbol of the *Sa*, representing the immaterial life force that permeates the universe, the energy she is continually transmuting in her productive, fruitful womb.

Hapi unites the two lands with the river Nile, and is often shown enshrined within a coiled serpent (the emblem of the circuit, circle, or cycle) in a "hidden cavern." The image is of an androgyne, a man with pendulous breasts and a womb, wearing a crown of lotus flowers. Hapi's secret place in his hymns is "everywhere, but he is not found in any one place."

Hapi represented for the Egyptians the summary of earthly existence, with its repetition, transformation, and abundance. He also embodies the consummation of all life on earth by spiritual forces, which consistently return with unending vitality. In this aspect, Hapi fulfills the "Principle of Continuity." In the natural world of Egypt, he is expressed in the function of the Nile's *inundation*.

The hippopotamus is a Typhonic animal, but as *Set* it is depicted in red, a color of destruction and evil to the Egyptians. *Taurt* is a white hippopotamus, the color of joy and continuance. *Apep* is a curious representation of mostly crocodile and hippopotamus, dark and shadowy, sometimes taking on the form of a serpent or demon. In the inner life, the figure symbolizes psychic consumption

and annihilation, and appears after the weighing of the heart to claim the unjust. In the scheme of spiritual and physical genesis, much speculation has been forwarded regarding the context in which this figure was intended.

While the cosmogenesis occurs but once, the cycle of anthropogenesis is continuous. In terms of the life of the spirit, Apep represents its continued circuit through the realms of embodiment, beginning again with Atum in the Heliopolitan Ennead and ending with Apep in the Cyclic Triad. The process is elective, as the ancient texts demonstrate, but the powers that attract the spirit in both the immaterial and physical worlds are equally compelling.

The three divinities of the Cyclic Triad have a transcendental connection to cosmic epochs as well as natural cycles on earth. Hapi is at once the waterway of the Nile in Egypt, and the Milky Way in the heavens, dividing the shores of the eastern and western halves of the sky. Taurt contains and distributes the recurring manifestations of vital force in nature, and also maintains the cyclic rhythm of great ages foretold by the shift of polestars, in her role as keeper of the “mooring post” in the northern heavens. At the same time, Apep expedites “involution,” the decline of the spirit back into matter. In the sky, he heralds the descent of darkness in storms and the appearances of comets.

Religion must be in a process of continuous adaptation, in synchronicity with the culture, the times, and the locale of its practice. Otherwise, it becomes fossilized and unable to provide the spiritual foundation that people require to maintain their connection with both natural and divine life. In the case of Egypt, it appears that such a system—though diverse and complex at first sight—was continuously employed. The rich tapestry of images that supported it reveals the fundamental components of the elusive Sacred Science that has been alluded to throughout the ages: the Neteru. Within each family a selection of natural dynamics are expressed, which articulate the intrinsic powers that belong to us and to which we belong. And as the great celestial cycles pass overhead, they emerge to personify the spiritual stages of development that await human participation.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Wallis Budge ruminated over the complexity of it all, but admitted that the great antiquity and origin of Egypt's cosmogonies are worthy of our contemplation:

... it is impossible to fathom the reasons which led men to select such objects as the symbols of their gods, and we can only accept the view that they were the product of some indigenous, dominant people who succeeded in establishing their religious customs so strongly in Egypt that they survived all political commotions, and changes, and foreign invasions, and flourished in the country until the third century of our era at least.⁸

The Neteru are never far distant from human life in Egyptian terms. This belief engendered perhaps some of the greatest accomplishments in the human endeavor, and certainly some of the greatest legacies of art, architecture, and engineering that we can still view today. But for the ancients, these accomplishments appear to have been mere byproducts of a vital spiritual practice that mandated the course of their lives—and afterlives.

Working through the myriad forms of visible nature, the Neteru were seen to transmit their special qualities with great consistency and intimacy, though at some times far more potently than at others. A study of these times and the observation of the divine appearances was, by all accounts, fully integrated in Egypt's Sacred Science from the most remote periods. This attitude, with its view of sky and earth as one juxtaposed reality, lay at the heart of a technology that placed a cosmic imperative above all other mundane considerations.

⁸ Budge, E. A. Wallis: *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. I. Dover: New York, 1969.

Practicum

ATTRIBUTES OF THE DEKANS, NOMES, AND THE NETERU

Knowledge of the denizens in the sacred regions—both sky and earth—was a prerequisite to initiation in ancient times. In the sky, dekan spirits led the way to the gods, while on earth the nome spirits served as intermediaries to divine forces.

The *Hermetica* emphasizes the power of the dekans to influence events affecting the human race:

The force which works in all events that befall men collectively comes from the Dekans; for instance, overthrows of kingdoms, revolts of cities, famines, pestilences, overflowings of the sea, earthquakes—none of these things, my son, take place without the working of the Dekans.

Hermetica, Excerpt VI: 8

For the ancient Egyptians, all time—from fractional parts of the hour to great cosmic cycles—was comprised of divinely appointed periods. These periods of hours, days, months, and years were determined by a variety of methods, each of which had religious significance.

Timekeeping began with the observation of stellar constellations moving across the vault of the sky throughout the night. The Egyptians recognized that certain groupings of stars appeared at different times on the horizon at dusk, depending on the time of the year. They were then followed by other stars that shifted across the sky in predictable motion. Careful observation revealed that the appearances of these stars were consistent with the passage of time, and they thus became incorporated into a system of timekeeping.

Thirty-six star groups that lie south of the ecliptic became incorporated into this system. Each group acquired a name and associated spirit guardian. Many of these groups have been compiled in lists, although the order and names vary somewhat according to the historical period when they were inscribed in tombs or on papyri. Nevertheless, the number remains invariable, and since the thirty-

six figures divide the 360° ecliptic into ten-degree segments, they have been called “dekans,” the Greek term for divisions of ten. The time between the appearance of one dekan and the next on the horizon—at the equinoxes, when day and night are equal—would translate into forty minutes of modern time. In this manner, the dekans served as markers for nocturnal hours.

Obviously, not all thirty-six dekans can be viewed on the horizon because daylight obscures the stars for half the day. But each will have its turn on the night horizon at some point in the year, which the Egyptians observed for signalling the beginning or ending of a season. Thus, the dekans also served as markers for the months of the year when they each in turn first appeared at dusk.

Each dekan possesses a spirit that characterizes its action, and an associated Neter. The Neter is often one of the major celestial or terrestrial deities of the Heliopolitan rhythm, or one of the four genii. Associations with the genii probably describe the elemental character of each asterism, as the dekan was believed to convey a unique power to promote certain conditions and results when appearing in the sky. This view embodies the essence of the sacred astronomy of Egypt, which later disseminated to ancient Greece and Rome as astrological magic. The great temple at Dendera and the Temple of Khnum at Esna serve to detail the dekan spirits in a number of zodiacal schemes, both linear and circular. Dendera B (the circular Zodiac) locates the dekans by their direction north/south of the ecliptic, while Dendera E (the linear Zodiac) locates the dekans as they overlay the signs of the Zodiac.

Other dekan lists are inscribed in the tombs of royalty and nobles, with some of the finest examples rendered on the cenotaph of Seti I (1303 B.C.E.) and the ceiling of the unfinished tomb of Senmut at Deir el Bahri (1473 B.C.E.).

The dekan spirits in the tomb symbolically assisted the deceased through the celestial sphere—after passage through the Duat—so that the exalted soul could make its way to the Sun barque of Ra. In this context, they represent segments of the heavenly terrain over which they both govern and provide protection to the deceased from nefarious forces, necessary helpers for even in the heavenly regions darkness could block the journey of the Sun.

In the oldest lists the dekans began with the star Sirius, identified by the Egyptians as Sopdet. The foregoing list thus begins with the ecliptical position of Sirius at the Sothic cycle of 2780 B.C.E. and proceeds in ten-degree increments

from that point. At the present time, the position of this star is 12° 59' of Cancer in the Tropical Zodiac, or 19° 15' of Gemini in the Sidereal Zodiac.

The ancient Egyptians measured the stars along the ecliptic as they gradually changed in position over the ages, and not in tropical (stationary) terms as practiced by most modern astrologers. However, if in “the beginning of time” Sirius rose heliacally at the summer solstice as Egyptian legend relates, then a tropical arrangement of the dekans should begin with Sirius at 0° Cancer.

The foregoing dekans constitute the Seti I-B list, the oldest of the groups. These were annotated by archeoastronomers Otto Neugebauer and Richard Parker, who studied the timekeeping texts of the ancient Egyptians extensively. Other details have been gathered from the work of astrological historians Rupert Gleadow and Cyril Fagan.

The Seti I-B list is found at the Dendera Temple of Het-Her in two places. In the main temple, the list is inscribed on the ceiling of the outer hypostyle hall and on the walls of the so-called “Silver Room,” located on the west side of the Hall of Appearings.

The Nome Spirits

In ancient times, geography played a major role in a culture’s cosmology. A correspondence between the physical geography of ancient Egypt and its sky is known to exist, though the obvious parallel between the forty-two Neteru and the frequently mentioned forty-two nome spirits has been overlooked. These sacred figures not coincidentally mirror each other in number and function, because both symbol systems are derived from a sacred tradition that expresses the interdependence between the realms of sky and earth.

The Egyptian geographic concept of the nome parallels a notion that most indigenous peoples share—that the personality and power of a locality communicates itself to those in its environs, and as a result, geography mirrors the native consciousness. The “spirit” of a place is connected to the natural phenomena of the area, and may develop a mystery tradition unique unto itself. Gods of lakes, rivers, and mountains are known in many places by sacred names and images. The power of the place becomes so individual in the culture that it is distinctive from the general image of a lake, river, or mountain.

Every nome in ancient Egypt—twenty in the Delta and twenty-two in the Valley—possessed a capitol where the shrine of the nome spirit was maintained. This city or town was considered the navel or center of the nome, where its connection to celestial places existed. At this shrine the nome “standard” or totem was kept at all times, except in times of crisis or invasion when it was carried out to the battlefield to release its distinctive power. The totem was believed to embody the nome spirit, and could be conveyed to communicate with a Neter at its temple or emanate support to Pharaoh’s army. Such instances have been misinterpreted in egyptology as persistent relics of tribal thinking or animistic superstition, overlooking the fundamental connection which the people of Egypt’s variant regions continuously maintained as an expression of their belief in physically belonging to the land.

The nome standard took the form of symbols that embodied the nome spirit’s sacred power. At major temple centers in Egypt, representations of all the nome standards were depicted in inscriptions or in physical form, allowing a divine outpouring of the temple to be symbolically “carried” back into the nome at periodic times. Inscriptions of the nome spirits—depicting their images and distinctive qualities in plant and animal life—are almost always located at the base stones of the temples, signifying that though the nome spirit supports the physical foundation of the temple, its power originates from a celestial principle. The presence of the nome spirits at the great temples symbolized another concept in Egypt’s esoteric tradition—the undistorted reflection of the sky (the Neteru) on earth (the nomes). The physical land was regarded as a mirror image of divine regions. Thus, among other things, the nome spirits served as intermediary, material connections between the Neteru and the physical environment. They were the *genii loci* of the land and united it with the sacred regions.

The esoteric function of the nome in the body of Egypt is revealed through the character of the nome spirit. For instance, at the 8th nome of Upper Egypt, the nature spirit of the region was *Khentiamenti*, a figure that both guarded and led the way to “the hidden land” of the departed, *Amentet*. It was believed in ancient times that the entrance to Amentet, over which Asar presided, was physically located in the region between Thinis and Abydos, “between the two hills,” a reference to the shoulders of Khentiamenti. Thinis, the earliest burial place of

royal persons known in Egypt, was later incorporated with the town of Abydos and assumed a nome standard called “the shrine of the head,” identical to that of the Osirian relic depicted in the reliefs at the Abydos temple, where the head of Asar was said to be enshrined. Khentiamenti, the earthly governor of the area, assumed the form of Asar as a shadowy, mirror image of the celestial power with which he was associated. But more importantly, Abydos as “the head” of the terrestrial body of Asar represented the place where the Neter’s form spread itself northward over the Nile.

Principles and Functions of the Neteru

The Neteru can be understood both as general and personal principles. In the thousands of hymns and litanies which belong to the great reservoir of Egyptian literature, the enumeration of the qualities of the Neter is expressed to demonstrate the realms in which the Neter manifests, sometimes in seemingly unrelated contexts. For instance, Auset, time-honored in her numerous images of woman and goddess, is also hailed in her great litany as “Mistress of Spells, weaver and fuller, daughter of Geb, child of the universal lord, daughter of Nut, first royal wife, whose son is Lord of the Earth, whose husband is inundation of the Nile.”

These enumerations represent more than religious adulation. Each is a metaphor of the Neter’s power in a distinct realm—human, cosmic, in the temple, and in nature. By examining their individual aspects in detail—as well as their places in the cosmological scheme—insights may be gained into the possibilities of human consciousness that the ancients understood through these symbolic devices.

Dekan	Sidereal Position 2000 B.C.E.	Sidereal Position 2000 C.E.	Spirit	Metals and Gems
1	24 ♀ 08	19 ♀ 15	Tepy a Sopdet	Gold, Ebony
2	4 ♁ 08	29 ♀ 15	Sopdet	Gold
3	14 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Anher Maat Tchai	Gold, Lapis Lazuli
4	24 ♁ 08	19 ♀ 15	Shetu	Gold, Carnelian
5	4 ♁ 08	29 ♀ 15	Tcheriu Khepti Kenmut	Gold, Glass
6	14 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Ha Djat	Gold, Glass
7	24 ♁ 08	19 ♁ 15	Pehui Djat	Gold, Glass
8	4 ♁ 08	29 ♁ 15	Themat Khert	Gold, Copper
9	14 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Uashati Bekati	Turquoise
10	24 ♁ 08	19 ♁ 15	Ipset	Gold, Iron
11	4 ♁ 08	29 ♁ 15	Sebsheshen	Green Jasper
12	14 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Tepa Khent	Hematite
13	24 ♁ 08	19 ♁ 15	Khent Hert	Gold, Dark Quartz
14	4 ♁ 08	29 ♁ 15	Imseti em Ibu	Electrum, Carnelian
15	4 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Temes en Khent	Gold, Glass
16	24 ♁ 08	19 ♁ 15	Sapeti Khenui	Flint
17	4 ♁ 08	29 ♁ 15	Heri Ib Wia	Gold, Glass, Lapis
18	14 ♁ 08	9 ♁ 15	Shesmu	Gold, Glass

Table 6—Seti I-B Dekans (Part 1)

19	24 ✎ 08	19 ✎ 15	Kenmu	Gold, Carnelian
20	4 ⚓ 08	29 ✎ 15	Tepy Asmad	Gold
21	14 ⚓ 08	9 ⚓ 15	Smad	Gold, Copper
22	24 ⚓ 08	19 ⚓ 15	Sert	Gold, Dark Flint
23	4 ⚡ 08	29 ⚓ 15	Sa Sert	Gold, Carnelian
24	14 ⚡ 08	9 ⚡ 15	Khery Kheped Sert	Gold, Glass
25	24 ⚡ 08	19 ⚡ 15	Tepy Aakhui	Gold, Garnet
26	4 ⚔ 08	29 ⚡ 15	Akhui	Gold, Carnelian
27	14 ⚔ 08	9 ⚔ 15	Tepy a Baui	Gold
28	24 ⚔ 08	19 ⚔ 15	Baui	Gold
29	4 ♀ 08	29 ⚔ 15	Khentu Heru	Gold
30	14 ♀ 08	9 ♀ 15	Hentu Tcheru	Gold, Red Jasper
31	24 ♀ 08	19 ♀ 15	Sau Khed	Gold, Glass
32	4 ♂ 08	29 ♀ 15	Khau	Gold, Glass
33	14 ♂ 08	9 ♂ 15	Ayret	Gold, Granite
34	24 ♂ 08	19 ♂ 15	Remen Hery	Gold, Quartz
35	4 ♀ 08	29 ♂ 15	Tches Ayreq	Gold, Quartz
36	14 ♀ 08	9 ♀ 15	Uayret	Gold

Table 6—Seti I-B Dekans (Part 2)

Nome	Name	Nome Standard	Nome Spirit	Greek Capital
1	Ta Sety	Land of the Bow	Satis, Anuquet	Elephantine
2	Thes Hertu	Throne of Heru	Behdety	Apollonopolis Magna
3	Ten	Shrine	Nekheny	Hierakonopolis
4	Waset	Plumed Sceptre	Iuny	Thebes
5	Herui	Two Falcons	Heqet	Apollonopolis Parva
6	Aa-Ta	Crocodile	————	Tentyris
7	Seshesh	Sistrum	Bat	Diospolis Parva
8	Ta Ur	Ancient Land	Kentiamenti	Abydos
9	Amsu	Min	Kaumutef	Panopolis
10	Uadjet	Cobra	Antiu	Antaeopolis
11	Set	Set	Sobekh	Hypselsis
12	Tu-f	Viper Mountain	Anti	Antaepolis
13	Atef Khent	Upper Nedjjet Tree	Ap Uat	Lycopolis
14	Atef Pehut	Lower Nedjjet Tree	————	Cusae
15	Un	Hare	Wennut	Hermopolis Magna
16	Meh Mahedj	White Oryx	Pakhet	Hipponon
17	Iunyt	Black Jackal	Ap Uat	Cynopolis
18	Sepa	Falcon	Nemty	Ankhyronopolis
19	Uabut	Two Sceptres	————	Oxyrhynchus
20	Nart Khent	Upper Sycamore	Herishef	Heraleopolis Magna
21	Nart Pehut	Lower Sycamore	Sobekh	Crocodilopolis
22	Matenu	Flint Knife	Renenutet	Aphroditopolis

Table 7—The Nome Spirits of Upper Egypt

Nome	Name	Nome Standard	Nome Spirit	Greek Capital
1	Aneb Hedj	White Palace	Herybakef	Memphis
2	Khenshu Aa	Ox Foreleg	Kherty	Letopolis
3	Ament	West	Hap	Naukratis
4	Sapi Meh	Southern Shield	Wadjet	Sais
5	Sapi Res	Norther Shield	Djebauti	Buto
6	Khasut	Mountain Bull	Sakha	Xois
7	Nefer Ament	Western Harpoon	Hu	Metelis
8	Nefer Abt	Eastern Harpoon	—	Succoth
9	Per Asar	Two Pillars	Andjety	Busiris
10	Kam Ur	Black Ox	Khentekhtai	Athribis
11	Ka Heseb	Heseb Bull	Mahes	Leontopolis
12	Theb Ka	Divine Calf	Anher	Sebennytus
13	Heq At	Prospering Sceptre	Iusaas	Helopolis
14	Khent Abt	Foremost of the East	Wadj Ur	Pelusium
15	Djehut Unnu	Ibis	Sefket Abwy	Hermopolis Parva
16	Kha	Dolphin	Hatmehit	Mendes
17	Behdet	Place of the Throne	Behdety	Diospolis
18	Am Khent	Southern Royal Child	Horhekenu	Bubastis
19	Am Pehu	Northern Royal Child	Khonshu Neferhotep	Tanis
20	Sopdu	Plumed Falcon	Sopdu	Pharbaithos

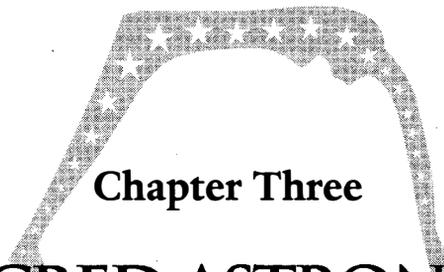
Table 8—The Nome Spirits of Lower Egypt

Neter	Principle	Function	Astrosynthesis	Nome Spirit(s)
Nun	Genesis	Motion	Milky Way	Wadj Wer
Naunet	Substance	Matter	Galactic Center	Mehet Weret
Huh	Expansion	Space	Dubhe (Ursa Major)	Tatenen
Hauhet	Contraction	Time	Merak (Ursa Minor)	Heqet
Kuk	Quiescence	Darkness	Phact (Ursa Major)	Mehen
Kauket	Mutation	Light	Megrez (Ursa Major)	Wadjet
Djehuti	Resonance	Communication	Gemini	Aah
Maat	Order	Structure	Aquarius	Seshat, Heret Kau
Sopdet	Presentience	Precession	Sirius	Sopdu
Ra	Circulation	Rotation	Sun	Bakha
Khepri	Metamorphosis	Revolution	Pluto	Heh
Ptah	Animation	Fabrication	Mercury, Vulcan	Herybakef
Sekhmet	Purification	Purgation	Sagittarius	Paket
Nefertum	Precipitation	Desire	Arcturus	Herishef
Khnum	Distillation	Embodiment	Saturn	Benebdjedet
Neit	Fusion	Healing	Chiron	Hatmehyt
Heka	Transformation	Ritual	Bungula	Nehebukau
Atum	Unity	Consciousness	Solar Apex	Iusaas
Shu	Inhalation	Breath	Uranus	Weneg
Tefnut	Diffusion	Sensation	Neptune	Satet
Nut	Augmentation	Gestation	Pisces	Hesat
Geb	Creation	Vegetation	Virgo	Aker
Asar	Renewal	Germination	Aries, Orion	Anher
Auset	Fruition	Birth	Libra	Meskhenet, Selqit
Set	Fixation	Corruption	Capricorn	Ash

Table 9—Principles and Functions of the Forty-Two Neteru (Part 1)

Neter	Principle	Function	Astrosynthesis	Nome Spirit(s)
Nebt-Het	Secretion	Sustenance	Cancer	Renetet
Het-Her	Fertilization	Conception	Taurus, Pleiades	Bat
Younger Heru	Ascension	Mastery	Leo	Mont
Ihy	Insemination	Procreation	Mars	Aahes
Elder Heru	Exaltation	Initiation	Polaris	Khenty Irty
Anpu	Transmutation	Digestion	Scorpio	Ap Uat
Sokar	Latency	Inertia	Earth	Andjety
Amun	Completion	Maturation	Jupiter	Kaumutef
Mut	Incubation	Protection	Venus	Nekhebet
Khons	Enumeration	Periodicity	Moon	Min
Imset	Coagulation	Liver	Kochab (Ursa Minor)	Res Hati
Haapi	Circulation	Lungs	Phecda (Ursa Minor)	Kesefemtep
Daumutef	Decomposition	Stomach	Yildun (Ursa Minor)	Imyut, Nemty
Qebseuf	Assimilation	Intestines	Alifa (Ursa Minor)	Baba
Taurt	Multiplication	Parturition	Draconis	Ipy
Hapi	Continuity	Inundation	Aldebaran	Nepri
Apep	Repetition	Metempsychosis	Ursa Major	Sobekh

Table 9—Principles and Functions of the Forty-Two Neteru (Part 2)



Chapter Three

A SACRED ASTRONOMY

The god of light has made me vigorous, I rise up like Sah [Orion], I come forth from heaven, sailing over the sky, holding loving intercourse with the gods.

Book of Going Forth: Chapter 74

Most people believe that the ancient gods live no longer. Some lament the loss of a strange, close familiarity that former societies seem to have cultivated with their deities for so long a time, while the majority applaud the great progress the human race has achieved by discarding such simple thinking. But the one realm in which bygone divine images still appear to be recognized and honored as sentinels of human events is that much-ridiculed practice of astrology. In modern times a futile controversy will periodically erupt as to whether it is a science, an art, or a persistent body of superstition. But anyone who looks at the practice objectively will at least be astounded by the consistency of the mythological characters found in every culture, and the remarkable degree to which human beings have esteemed and guided their lives by the heavenly asterisms throughout the ages.

In modern times, Egyptian spirituality has for the most part been regarded as a crude sky religion, comprised of notions remaining from still older, more primitive epochs. But for the Egyptians, cosmic life was viewed as a realm of conscious, vital forces existing harmoniously and synchronously with mortal life,

divided from it only by the veil of the material form. Astronomy and astrology were not segregated disciplines as they are now, but interacted mutually in a system supporting this world view of intricately related powers, visible and invisible. This is the essential concept behind the Hermetic axiom, "As Above, So Below," and it is the fundamental premise of astrological thought.

To the ancient Egyptian, the Neteru were not far removed from his personal experience. After passing through the regions of the inner life, one could join them in their heavenly fields and share in their abundant food and happiness. Not only was this possible, but a perpetual journey in the celestial solar barque of Ra could also be shared. And finally, the enlightened could also partake of divine existence by transforming into a stellar body, as the Neteru had done in the beginning of time. In the Pyramid Texts, the earliest cosmological writings of Egypt, this status is achieved automatically by the royal person, who is transformed into a sky being after ascent from Earth:

My sister is Sopdet, my offspring the morning star. Sopdet comes to light because I am a living one, the son of Sopdet.

Utterance #265

Here, elevation from mortal life was possible, as well as entrance into the worlds where the Neteru exist. In the canon of Egyptian ritual, an act could be performed to assure this end, which incorporated the individual Ka into the Kas of cosmic nature. We find in this concept that Egyptian thought is probably the earliest to articulate the concept that divine consciousness can be attained by human beings. For them, one of the prerequisites to achieving this was a thorough knowledge of the celestial geography, both in literal and symbolic terms.

Egyptian philosophy emphasizes eternal existence as both an advantage of the Neteru and a supreme goal for human beings. At the same time, the cycle of birth and death is recognized as a necessary, inevitable course for all sentient beings; even the gods possessed a cyclic existence. This apparent contradiction can be resolved in a study of Egypt's Sacred Astronomy, a discipline that permeated all temple teachings and comprised the earliest underpinnings of its religion, philosophy, and mythology. The premise of the Sacred Astronomy was simple but overwhelmingly integral to all we know about Egyptian civilization.

In its view, all astronomical phenomena—the movement and cycles of luminaries, the planets, and the stars—represented the visible dimension of divine forces. These phenomena, in their risings, culminations, and settings through the sky, demonstrated the ebb and flow of those forces, as well as their infallible return over long periods of time.

The contradiction between eternal existence and human mortality is thus resolved in the tenets of this Sacred Astronomy. One metaphor that expresses these two themes is found in the Egyptian classification of the heavenly bodies: the *Akhemu Urtchu* (“never-resting stars”) referred to the planets revolving through the Zodiacal constellations, rising and setting daily from the eastern to western horizons, while the *Akhemu Seku* (“imperishable ones”) are the unchanging polestars, which never rise or set but appear to be permanently established in the highest regions of the sky. In this scheme, the planets are cyclic, the stars eternal—contained within the mortal framework is the immortal essence of things.

Astrology may have come naturally to the denizens of Egypt; it is believed that the environmental isolation of Egypt and the unique geography of the Nile Valley was responsible for the long life of its civilization. This “milieu control” certainly contributed to the ease with which astronomical concepts became such an intrinsic part of Egyptian life and inseparable from everyday, practical concerns. In Egypt, the horizons are clearly defined and the movement of stars and planets is stunningly apparent: climatic conditions never vary, ensuring a repetitious seasonal cycle. Egypt also enjoys a cloudless sky at all but the rarest times, and a location in latitude that allows the most densely populated region of the starry heavens to come into view.

The practitioners of Egyptian Sacred Astronomy came primarily from the temple clergy. Regarded as both priests and technicians, their function was to support the gods in the temples by translating their physical emanations—present in all celestial phenomena—into human terms. This was effected by observing, recording, and interpreting the appearances of stars, planets, and luminaries as events that fit into the temples’ agenda of sacred rites and festivals.

Between the events of sunrise and sunset, timekeeping was an important activity in the temple. It included the notation of day and night hours, as well as seasons coinciding with the natural events of the Nile. A detailed body of



Ra
The Sun



Khons
The Moon



Nut
The Sky



Meten
The Ecliptic
(path of the Sun)



Aakhut Shetat
The Secret Horizon
(chamber of the temple where
the god resides)



Sopdet
Sirius

Figure 20—Figures in the Sacred Astronomy (Part 1)



Aah meh Uatchet
The Full Moon

Figure 20—Figures in the Sacred Astronomy (Part 2)

astronomical recordkeeping is evident from the beginning of the Old Kingdom. Lists of the times of day at which celestial bodies were to appear during the different seasons of the year were gathered for temple use. As celestial bodies were believed to contain the Ka of a Neter and their appearances signaled spiritual events, these records served to keep time on a cosmic scale as well.

Egyptian records detail a number of calendars, of which there were three in use throughout dynastic times. The solar year was measured from one summer solstice to the next, and the lunar year was measured from the first crescent of a New Moon to the next, for thirteen consecutive moons. Their sidereal year was based on the observations of the annual Sothic cycle, the periodic movement of the star known to the Egyptians as Sopdet, to the Greeks as Sothis, and to the Romans as Sirius.



Ami Unnut
The Horoscope



Tehentiu
The Constellational Stars that Rise and Set

Figure 20—Figures in the Sacred Astronomy (Part 3)

The Solar Cycle

The Egyptian Solar (civil) year was based on the length of the tropical cycle, the period of time between two successive equinoxes or solstices. This calendar was used primarily to plan and record the events governed by the royal house, and was devised by an elite group of temple scholars known as the solar priesthood. Teaching and practicing a unique form of astronomy believed to have been given to the first temples by Djehuti in “timeless time” (the ancient period when the gods ruled Egypt), the Solar priesthood functioned as overseer of protocol for both religious and secular festivals, ensuring that timing and ritual were flawlessly synchronized.

It is believed that the solar year was initially determined in archaic times by observing the annual flooding of the Nile, a phenomenon that coincided with



Tena Tep
The Period of the New Moon to
the First Quarter

Skhen
Journey or Transit of a Star



Akhemu seku
The Imperishable Stars
(polestars)

Nemu
The Star Gods, Dekans

Figure 20—Figures in the Sacred Astronomy (Part 4)

the summer solstice—which in turn was recognized by the Sun's position at its most northerly position in the sky through the seasons. Inundation was gauged by a gradual rise in the Nile waters, measured at two key locations on the river, Elephantine and Heliopolis. It became the exclusive duty of the solar priesthood to measure the water at the nilometers—shafts of stone sunk into the water and used for calculating the river's level—immediately following the solstice in order to predict the extent of the inundation and hence, its eventual impact on harvested land.

Solar ceremonies in ancient Egypt were similar to those celebrated by all ancient peoples. They were comprised of rituals representing the passage of the Sun from its most northerly point on the horizon at the summer solstice (sym-

Akhet: Inundation
Nile Floods, August 13–December 10

<i>Month</i>	<i>Deity</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Coptic Name</i>
Thoth	Tekhi	8/13–9/11	Thut
Phaopi	Ptah	9/12–10/11	Beba
Athys	Het-Her	10/12–11/10	Hatur
Choiach	Kehek	11/11–12/10	Keiach



Pert: Winter—Emergence
Sowing, December 11–April 9

<i>Month</i>	<i>Deity</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Coptic Name</i>
Tybi	Min, Setbut	12/11–1/9	Tuba
Menchir	Rekh Ur	1/10–2/8	Amsheer
Phamen- oth	Rekh Netches	2/9–3/9	Baramhat
Parmuthi	Renuti	3/10–4/9	Baona



Shemut: Summer
Harvest, April 10–August 7

<i>Month</i>	<i>Deity</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Coptic Name</i>
Pachons	Khonshu	4/10–5/9	Bashanz
Paoni	Her khent khati	5/10–6/8	Baramoda
Epipi	Apet	6/9–7/8	Apeeb
Mesore	Her Ra em khut	7/9–8/7	Mahri



The Epagomenal Days
Coptic Month of Nisi

<i>Deity</i>	<i>Period</i>
Asar	August 8
Set	August 9
Heru-Ur	August 10
Auset	August 11
Nebt-Het	August 12

Figure 21—The Tetramenes: Three Sacred Seasons of the Egyptian Year

bolizing the quickening of the life force) to its most southerly point at the winter solstice (symbolizing the quiescence of vitality). As the winter solstice denotes the literal decline of solar light, festivals celebrated at this time are connected with the renewal of the life force. One of these festivals was the annual raising of the Djed pillar of Asar at his great temple at Busiris in Lower Egypt. This was a symbolic restoration of the Neter's life, an event which followed a ritual reenactment of an episode in the great Osirian mythos, The Contendings of Heru and Set. It took place, according to ancient records, on the 30th of Choiach, a time coinciding with the end of the Nile's inundation over the land. In our calendar the festival begins on December 10 and culminates at the winter solstice (December 22). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Djed pillar represents the spinal cord of Asar, an emblem of stability and strength. By reerecting his image in this manner, the connection with the fertile (though latent) Earth force was reestablished between the people and the Neter who made possible the agricultural fecundity of Egypt.

Equinoxes were equally significant, being recognized by the equality of day and night as well as their occurrences midway between the two solstices. In ancient Egypt, the vernal equinox coincided with the return of Orion's rising before dawn, an event which heralded the symbolic return of Asar, as he was associated with the constellation. The autumnal equinox was also a sacred time in stellar terms; it coincided with the rising of the star Spica before dawn. This star was associated with Auset, and thus the two equinoxes were identified with the divine pair who represented the celestial genealogy incarnate on Earth.

The solar calendar yielded twelve months, each consisting of thirty days. Every day was associated with a mythic event in the life of the Neteru, such as the 27th of Athys (our November 7), which was the day that Heru and Set made peace after their struggle. In addition to these 360 days, five epagomenal days (also known as "intercalary days") were assigned as the "birth" days of the five terrestrial Neteru in the solar cosmogony: Asar, Set, Heru the Elder, Auset, and Nebt-Het, respectively.

The year was divided into three seasons which the Greeks called the Tetramenes. They consisted of four months each, and were determined by the Nile's inundation, planting, and harvesting cycles. Month deities presided over each 30-day period. Weeks were devised as thirty-six periods of 10 days' duration

each, with a deity presiding over each week, one of the thirty-six dekans. The appearance of each dekan successively at dusk in the eastern sky at ten-day intervals signalling the beginning of a new week.

The dekans were also used as hour notations. As the earth rotates daily on its axis, the full circle of stars passes overhead. The dekan gods, each representing $\frac{1}{6}$ th of the sky ($36 \times 10 = 360^\circ$), served to keep time as they appeared in the east, culminated overhead, and set in the west. Observation of the dekans was a continuous activity in the temples, as a number of papyri and temple inscriptions show.

The Lunar Cycle

The Sun and Moon were not regarded as separate celestial bodies. Rather, they were considered the eyes of Heru, or "the two eyes of heaven." The Sun was the right eye, the Moon the left eye of this Neter; together they were honored as *Heru Merti* and worn as protective amulets to subordinate the forces of darkness.

Egyptologists believe that the lunar (wandering) calendar was the first method of timekeeping employed in the Nile Valley, and that its observances were regarded as separate, unique events from those of the solar calendar throughout dynastic history. The thirteen months and the presiding deities of the lunar calendar were also known by names other than those of the Solar calendar, though it is believed that some of the names of the latter were borrowed from the former. The lunar calendar served throughout Egyptian history as the basis for most temple feasts, just as some Christian feasts in modern times continue to follow the ancient calendar; Easter, for instance, is celebrated on the first Sunday after the Full Moon following the Spring Equinox.

The individual lunar month was important to the Egyptians, being marked at its commencement by the first appearance of the crescent New Moon. This was followed by the Six-Day Feast (First Quarter), at which time food offerings were taken to tombs for the sustenance of the dead by their families or funerary priests. The Full Moon was considered sacred to Asar, and the period of the Waning Moon was associated with his dismemberment by Set, the principle of darkness. The fourteen days of the waning hemicycle were associated with the fourteen parts of the Neter's body, which were scattered on the Nile and later restored by Auset. Lunar eclipses were considered especially malignant, as the

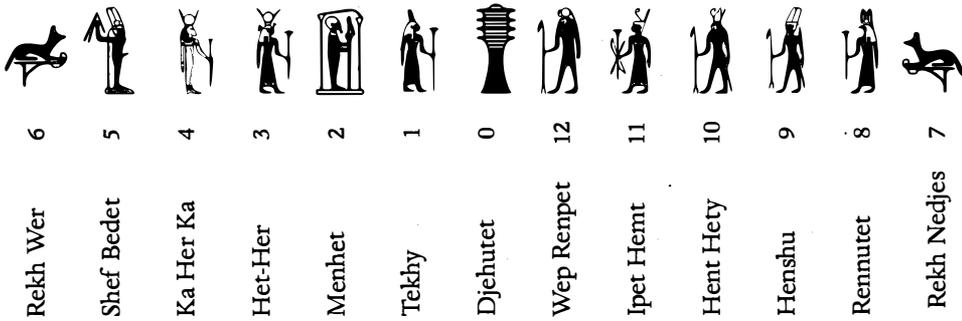


Figure 22—The Egyptian Lunar Feasts: This scheme is derived from the lunar calendar inscribed on the ceiling of the Ramesseum (Dynasty 19) on the West Bank of Thebes. The Egyptian Lunar months were determined by the synodic period of 29.5 days, from New Moon to New Moon. The arrangement was different from the Solar (civil) calendar of 12 months with 20 days each, though in some epochs the Solar and Lunar months shared some of the same names. The Lunar calendar commenced with the first New Moon following the heliacal rising of Sopdet. The zero month of Djehutet is the intercalary month of variable length, inserted between the last month Wep Renpet and the first month Tekhy for the interval between the end of the last month and the rising of Sopdet.

darkened face of the Moon was believed to represent the ascendancy of Set over Asar. All state celebrations and temple activities were temporarily suspended during these times.

The lunar year also determined events in the agricultural calendar, from planting to harvesting. With the obvious synchronization of the Moon's phases and growth cycles, the lunar year was viewed as the organic cycle of celestial activity. The association between the Moon and agriculture culminated in the Great Offering Ceremony, performed at the end of the lunar year with a substantial feast offered to the collective dead for their sustenance and consequent blessings. We can not help but speculate that the Jewish feast of Passover and the Muslim Ramadan are closely related to the intent of this original festival, as they are similarly based on the lunar calendar.

The Sidereal Cycle

The Egyptians were aware that at the beginning of inundation, certain celestial conditions took place consistently each year. Thus it was discovered in some remote period that the reappearance of certain stars at specific points in the sky

measured the true annual length of the year. The sidereal (“of the star”) cycle is the most accurate measurement of this period and for the Egyptians it determined the special celebrations of the Royal House, from the recording of public events to the annexation of foreign lands and the building of great monuments. The beginning and anniversaries of a ruler’s accession to the throne and the foundation dates of important temple centers are also recorded in this manner. Generally speaking, the Sothic (fixed) calendar represented the most “sacred, eternal” events.

Egyptologists are not certain why Sirius (Alpha Canis Majoris, the “dog star”) was viewed as the most sacred star in the Egyptian sky, or at least was used as the marker to indicate the beginning of the celestial sphere. According to some historians, Sirius marked the spring equinox when Egyptian civilization began, a celestial event which would have occurred in approximately 7000 B.C.E. The brightest star on the ecliptic, Sirius closely follows the constellation Orion, known to have been deeply sacred to the pyramid builders. Some metaphysicians view the star as the origin of the lifestreams on Earth and that the ancient Egyptians knew of this as evidenced by their knowledge of the star’s binary nature and cyclic phenomena.

The Sothic year is determined at the onset by the appearance before dawn of the star Sirius just before the Sun’s corona envelops the eastern horizon—its heliacal (“with the Sun”) rising. This cosmic event, occurring once a year, was the metaphorical union of Sopdet with Ra, as described in numerous temple inscriptions. It signified the celestial dawn, the beginning of the “sacred year of the gods.” The cycle was believed to have been established by Djehuti, the Neter of sacred measures.

The true solar year is 365.25 days, creating an extra day at the end of four years of 365 days (in the modern Gregorian calendar this accounts for the extra day in a leap year). To the ancient Egyptians, this discrepancy would have become apparent with the observation of the annual heliacal rising of Sirius. After four years, the event would transpire a day earlier in the solar calendar, and after 1,460 years the event would have regressed by one day through the entire 365-day solar calendar. This gives rise to the astronomical period of the Sothic cycle.

The Roman historian Censorinus reported that the heliacal rising of Sirius occurred simultaneously with the beginning of the solar year (the first of

Djehut) in 139 C.E. Calculating the Sothic period back 1,460 years (there is no zero year), we can then determine that this event also took place in 1322, 2782, and 4242 B.C.E. The last date was believed by de Lubicz to be the foundation for the Sothic calendar, though some astronomers who have examined ancient Egyptian chronology and myths place the calendar's foundation at an even earlier Sothic cycle.

The wandering, civil, and fixed calendars present a complex, yet highly sophisticated astronomical system of timekeeping. The idea of time in ancient Egypt acknowledged both linear and cyclic concepts, a unique view for ancient people. And the use of Lunar, Solar, and Stellar time frames encouraged an understanding of both the limitations imposed on physical life and the continuation of it in other realms, as expressed in the great celestial rhythms of nature.

The Precession of the Equinoxes

The chronological rhythm of the earth is in fact based on three of its movements: axial, which measures the length of the day; orbital, which measures the length of the year; and precessional, which measures the period of earth's northern shift around the pole star. As a consequence of the latter, the spring equinox takes place at a slightly different location along the ecliptic each year, slowly moving to the west through the twelve constellations we know as the Zodiac.

The phenomenon gives rise to the cycle known as the "Great Year" of 25,800 solar years in duration, a period during which the equinox circumscribes the entire circle of the Zodiac. It is divided into twelve subcycles of 2,150 years each, the approximate time it takes for the equinox to progress through each of the twelve constellations.

The discovery of the equinoctial precession has long been attributed to the Greek mathematician Hipparchus (190–120 B.C.E.) founder of western observational astronomy. However, there is more than enough evidence to assert that the Egyptians were well versed in the phenomenon. Shifts in the position of the equinox are clearly inscribed on the circular Zodiac at the Dendera Temple of Het-Her, giving rise to the probability that the Egyptians not only observed the changing equinox but used it as a celestial marker in sacred architecture.

And despite the controversy arising from the mathematical symbolism of the Great Pyramid at Giza, it is nonetheless significant that the numbers of precession

are incorporated in several measures. Using the so-called "pyramid inch" (a hypothetical measurement, somewhat shorter than a modern inch, derived from the sacred cubit of the ancients), the English engineer David Davidson ascertained that by adding the base diagonals of the Great Pyramid, the true value of precession (25,826.6 years) was obtained. In addition, he found that the radius of the so-called King's Chamber to the pyramid's capstone was equivalent to the same figure.

Because the twelve constellations do not have clearly established demarcations, the exit of the equinox from one and its entry into another cannot be determined with certainty. Some estimates vary by hundreds of years, but the table below represents a generally accepted chronology of the astrological ages.

Age	Begins	Ends
♈	10,960 B.C.E.	8800
♉	8800	6640
♊	6640	4480
♋	4480	2320
♌	2320	160
♍	160 B.C.E.	2150 C.E.
♎	2150 C.E.	4310 C.E.

The twelve subcycles, called the Astrological Ages, have been regarded by esotericists as the mechanisms by which the "spirit" of the age is expressed. In addition, the "shadow" of the age is said to be expressed by the opposite sign through which the vernal equinox is passing. Thus, with the vernal point now moving through the sign of Pisces, we are in the "Age of Pisces," and the shadow of our age is symbolized by its opposite sign, Virgo.

The unification of Upper and Lower Egypt—"The Two Lands"—is believed to have taken place around 7,000 years ago, coincident with the Age of Gemini (6640–4480 B.C.E.). Prior to this, Egyptian legends tell us that the northern and southern halves of the country were independently ruled, each adhering to a distinctive world view and culture.

Archeological evidence from this period reflects a preeminence of dual divinities in religious iconography. The two archaic patronesses of Egypt appear—Nekhebet (the vulture) of the south and Wadjet (the cobra) of the north. This symbolism of Pairing became so ingrained in following ages that it was preserved in the emblems of the Royal House and served as icons of national identity. The vulture and cobra were the “guardians of the throne,” as Pharaoh took their “Two Ladies’ Name” upon accession as king. Accompanying his name afterward, the sedge and the bee, emblems of Upper and Lower Egypt, became synonymous with the unification of the two regions that kingship maintained.

In the Age of Taurus (4480–2320 B.C.E.) the thematic image of the sacred bull was universally expressed in Egyptian religion, art, and architecture. Mythologically, Asar acquired the appellation “Bull of his Mother,” while Nut was celebrated as the “divine cow in heaven” in her role as celestial mother. And in the Royal House, Pharaoh’s legitimacy as the living deity was celebrated in a jubilee “marriage” with Het-Her, the bovine mistress of fecundity on earth.

Aries, the sign which rules the head and cerebral functions as symbolized by the ram’s horns, represented the new epochal theme as the vernal point left Taurus and moved through Aries (2320–160 B.C.E.). The horns of the ram and the gazelle in Mideastern cultures express the life force in its potent form. In this period, Asar became “He of the two plumes,” a reference to the crown of the Royal House which comprised the double-feathered horns that signified the newly-dominant cerebral functions of the epoch. The ram-headed Khnum of Upper Egypt became patron of the royal person, while the mysteries of the ram-headed Amun overlapped those of Asar, the sacred bull.

The polar opposite sign of Libra, which governs sacred unions, came to express the spiritual importance given to consanguinity in royal marriages. Temple inscriptions of the time depict royal births proceeding from the sacred marriage between the Queen and Amun, the divine father, emphasizing the theocratic mandate of the Royal House.

Such thematic changes match the shifts in the stellar landscape over time. Looking at the cycles of religious and cultural metamorphosis in ancient Egypt, it becomes apparent that the variations in the preeminence of certain Neteru—including their symbolism and their mysteries—coincides with the symbolic character of the astrological ages.

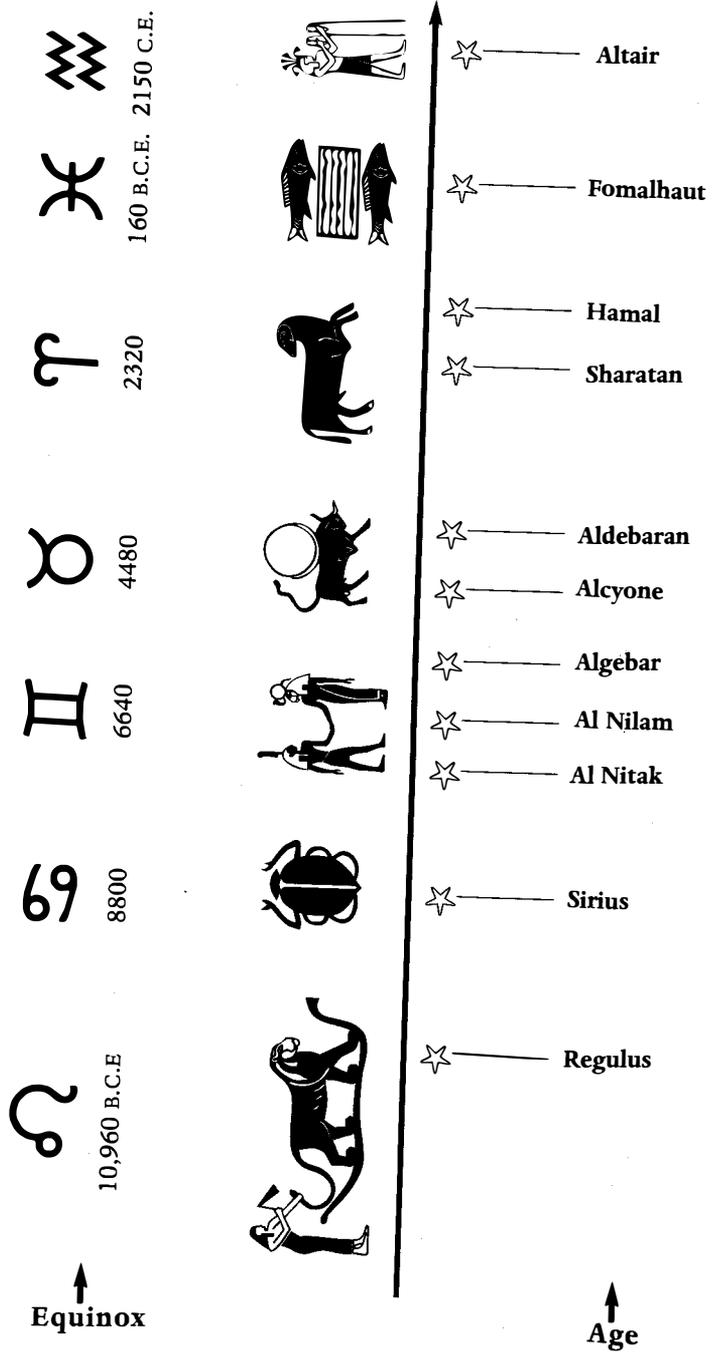


Figure 23—Precession of the Equinoxes

Sky Maps

The oldest celestial diagrams are found in the Dynasty 18 tomb of Senmut, the gifted architect of Hatchepsut who designed and was himself buried near her exquisite funerary temple at Deir el Bahri. The Dynasty 19 tombs of Seti I and Rameses IV also depict the constellations on the ecliptic and the polar regions with great detail. In these instances, the star map is provided to guide the Ka through the heavenly regions.

The temple of Khnum at Esna and Het-Her's temple at Dendera also possess star maps, but of a different character. They depict the actual ecliptical positions of stars and planets at the times the temples were dedicated. Computer analysis confirms the precision with which these celestial diagrams were rendered. The famous round Zodiac of Dendera—the only one of its kind discovered in Egypt—depicts the planets at sunrise on April 17, 17 C.E. and the sidereal positions of the dekan gods at other places in the temple for 700 B.C.E.

Moreover, the Zodiac discloses other marvelous features. Markings on it show the spring equinox for the epoch of the temple's last dedication in 700 B.C.E., as well as orientations toward older vernal points. The original eastern axis of the Dendera Zodiac, which is inscribed with the hieroglyph for "east," intersects at the constellation Orion, lying between Gemini and Taurus. If this orientation reflects the spring equinox when the temple was first founded, then it gives the intriguing epoch of 6640–4480 B.C.E.

Thus, it appears that measurement of the astrological ages was a significant component of the temple sky maps, and that the body of prophetic knowledge also associated with the temples may have been derived from them.¹

Astrology

The legendary body of astrological knowledge known by the ancient Egyptians was said to be considerable by classical travelers in the later periods. We have specific examples of only two forms of pure Egyptian astrology, as Graeco-Roman practices are often mixed with and represented as the former tradition. Political

¹ Fagan, Cyril: *Zodiacs Old and New*. Llewellyn Foundation for Astrological Research: Los Angeles CA, 1950.

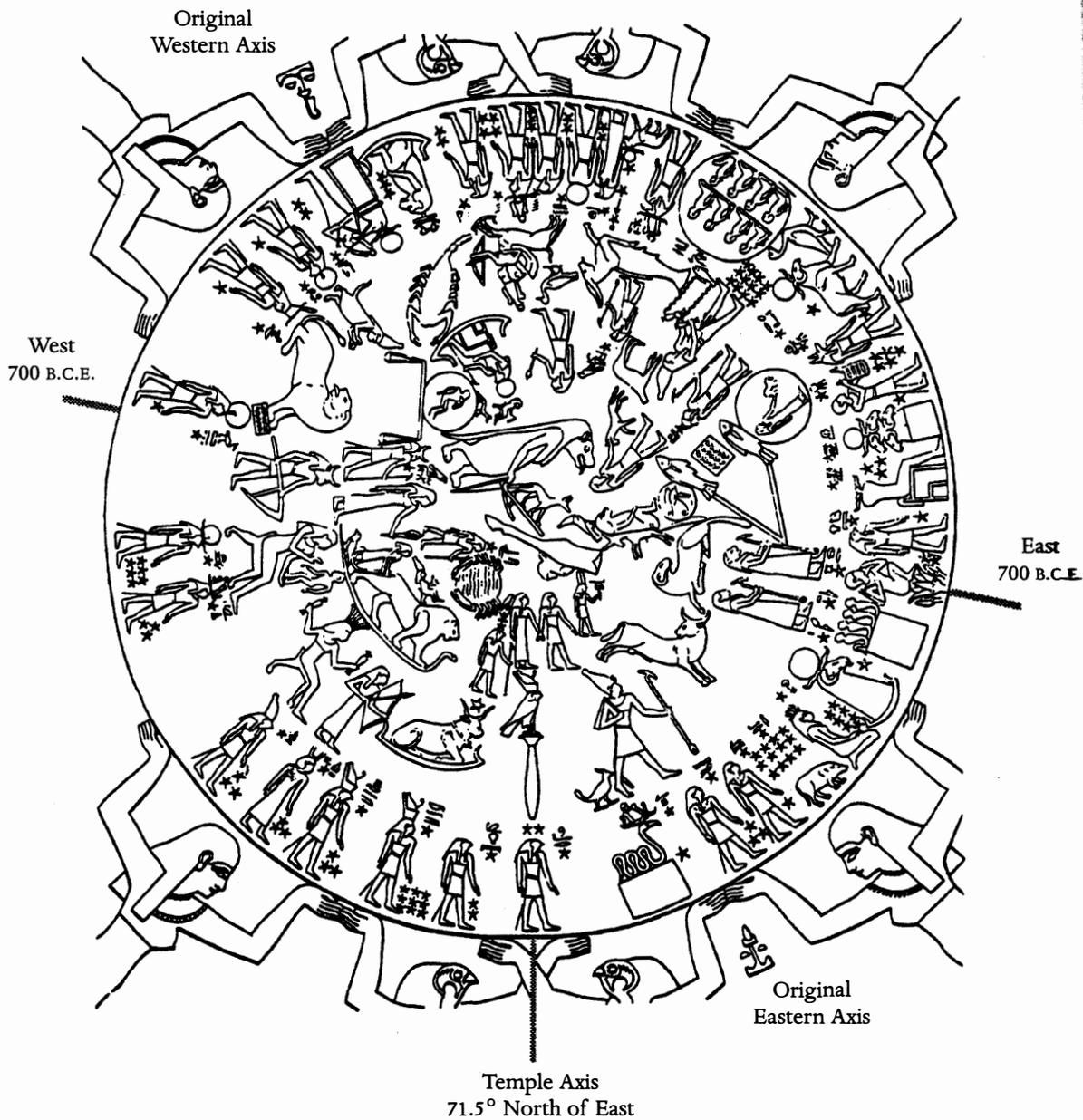


Figure 24 (at left)—The Dendera Zodiac:

There are a total of six zodiacs depicted at Het-Her's temple complex at Dendera. Egyptologists have designated them according to their location in the temple complex.

Dendera A is an oblong, linear zodiac located in a side room on the ground level known as "The Silver Room." Dendera B is the famous circular zodiac on the eastern roof of the temple. Dendera C is rectangular, covering the eastern and western halves of the western roof room known as "The Chapel of Asar." Dendera D is inscribed in strips, on the ceiling of the Outer Hypostyle Hall on the ground level. Dendera E is also in strips, in the same location. Dendera F is located in the south corridor of the east wall, in "The Birth House of Auset."

Dendera B, the only circular zodiac in the Temple of Het-Her, is depicted in the illustration on the preceding page. It is located on the inner roof of the east chapel over the major temple, on the western half of the ceiling, and is dated to the Ptolemaic Period, in the years prior to 30 B.C.E. The zodiac shows twelve Neteru (eight in the image of Heru and four of Het-Her—the divine pair of the temple) supporting the ceiling, one for each month of the Tetramenes. The outermost circle of the zodiac depicts the thirty-six dekan figures. They are numbered clockwise, and begin with Kenmut, who is positioned beneath a cow in a barque (equivalent to the constellation *Argo Navis*). To the right of this figure, a pillar surmounted by a falcon marks the temple's north-south axis and the plane of the Milky Way. This figure represents the ancient founders of the temple, the *Heru Shemsu*.

The next circle inward shows the twelve constellations on the ecliptic, the "signs" of the Zodiac. The Neteru of the planets—indicated by the stars over their heads—are situated near the astrological signs where they are traditionally "exalted," or in their most powerful places. Known as the hypsomata, Jupiter is in Cancer, Mercury in Virgo, Saturn in Libra, Mars in Capricorn, and Venus in Pisces.

The enigmatic figure of a Uadjet eye within a circle is placed between Aries and Pisces, a probable indicator of the position of the equinox at the time of the temple's last reconstruction (700 B.C.E.).

The innermost circle at the center shows the following polestars:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Figure</i>	<i>Constellation</i>	<i>Common Name</i>
Khem	Jackal	Ursa Minor	"Little Bear, Little Dipper"
Meshtiu	Ox Leg	Ursa Major	"Great Bear, Big Dipper"
Hesamut	Hippopotamus	Draco	"Dragon"

The polar orientation on the major axis of the zodiac is toward Gamma Draconis (Eltanin), the polestar of 5000 B.C.E.

Intersections of the vernal point were apparently added during subsequent reconstructions of the temple. They are inscribed on the relief at the constellations of Aries, Taurus, and Gemini, orienting the vernal point of the temple's founding between the latter two. There, the hieroglyph for "east" intersects the constellation Orion, which rose at the spring equinox in 10,500 B.C.E.

In modern times, no definitive measuring device has ever been devised for determining the exact commencement of the astrological ages. This is due to the disagreement among astrologers about the precise beginnings and endings of the constellations.

astrology existed, a practice concerned with the affairs of groups and government. Genethliacal (natal) astrology—concerned with the destiny of individuals—was also practiced, though in a much different form than today. Emphasis was placed on the power of the planets and stars in the mundane sky at birth rather than their placement in the signs of the Zodiac.

The original use of mundane astrology was confined to predicting fortunate and unfortunate days in the annual solar cycle. These were associated with divine events in the myths of the Neteru. For instance, the 14th of Tybi (our December 20) was an unfortunate day, because it was the traditional mourning for Asar by his two sisters, Auset and Nebt-Het. Music and singing was discouraged on that day.

Natal astrology was apparently reserved for members of the Royal House in earlier times, and practiced by the solar priesthood of Heliopolis. Horoscopes from Dynasty 13 exist, carved into the handles of ivory batons and depicting the planets and constellations at nativity. By the Graeco-Roman period, horoscopes similar to the ones constructed today (but rectangular or square in shape) were available to anyone who wanted to purchase one. Of particular interest are the horoscopes and star charts found on numerous coffins. Besides providing the initiate with a celestial guide through the heavenly regions, they frequently depicted the birth horoscope of the individual. Such horoscopes are accurately drawn maps of the sky for the person's nativity. Comparing the ancient records with computer-generated horoscopes for the same times will show consistently that the Egyptian astrologer was adept at calculating planetary positions.

The horoscope was called *Ami Unnut*, the "record of wandering stars." Demotic horoscopes of the Late Period show Greek influences, such as the adoption of the twelve-sign Zodiac. Most of the surviving material on horoscopy per se comes from the Graeco-Roman period, containing very little of early Sacred Astronomy. We have only a small reservoir of material on this vast tradition, though the *Corpus Hermeticum* mirrors some of the original wisdom and provides a supplement to the astrological remains.

There is evidence of Horary (divinatory) astrology, consisting of tables which delineated the "lucky" and "unlucky" times of the day. For this practice, the day was divided into three periods: from sunrise to noon was under the realm of

Khepri the renewed Sun; noon to sunset was dedicated to Ra the maturing Sun, and sunset to midnight was given to Atum the hidden Sun. But in religious practice, the day was divided into four parts and daily solar observances were made at dawn, noon, dusk, and midnight. Thus, astrology for practical use was limited to a simple and practical method of determining auspicious times.

Sacred Astronomy

The tradition of Sacred Astronomy appears to have originated in Heliopolis, the ancient “city of the Sun,” and is historically evident from the Old Kingdom onward. The Egyptians revered this city as the sacred mound from whence the Sun god, in his aspect as a bennu bird—the phoenix—arose cyclically to renew Egypt. The great Sun temple at Heliopolis contained the sacred Ben Ben stone, a short, truncated obelisk which contained the Ka of the Sun and which marked the location of the sacred mound. All subsequent obelisks were considered incarnations of the original Ben Ben, and designated the temples where they were located as “residences” of Ra. Often the obelisk was positioned in the temple precinct where the zenith passage of the Sun could be observed at a specific season sacred to the Neter of the temple.

The Sacred Astronomy propounded that every celestial body contains the Ka (spiritual essence) of a Neter; it is equivalent to the Neter’s natural form. However, the Ka requires a “receptacle” into which its immaterial force may be contained and then dispersed—at the proper times—to the living. As a result, the sanctuary of each Neter in ancient Egypt was in every astronomical way harmoniously aligned to the celestial body representing its Ka, so that its essence could be transmitted into the receptacle of the temple. The main axis of the temple, in particular, was aligned to the rising or setting of the Neter’s star, and its appearance at dawn with Ra (the heliacal rising) often marked the sacred day or festival of the temple. Remarkable examples of these stellar alignments are found at such places as Karnak, Dendera, Edfu, and Ombos, as the prodigious work of royal astronomer Sir Norman Lockyer documented. In a life-long study of Egyptian monuments at the turn of the century, the British scientist translated precise, complex surveys into supporting evidence that all of the surviving sacred architecture had a deliberate association with celestial phenomena.

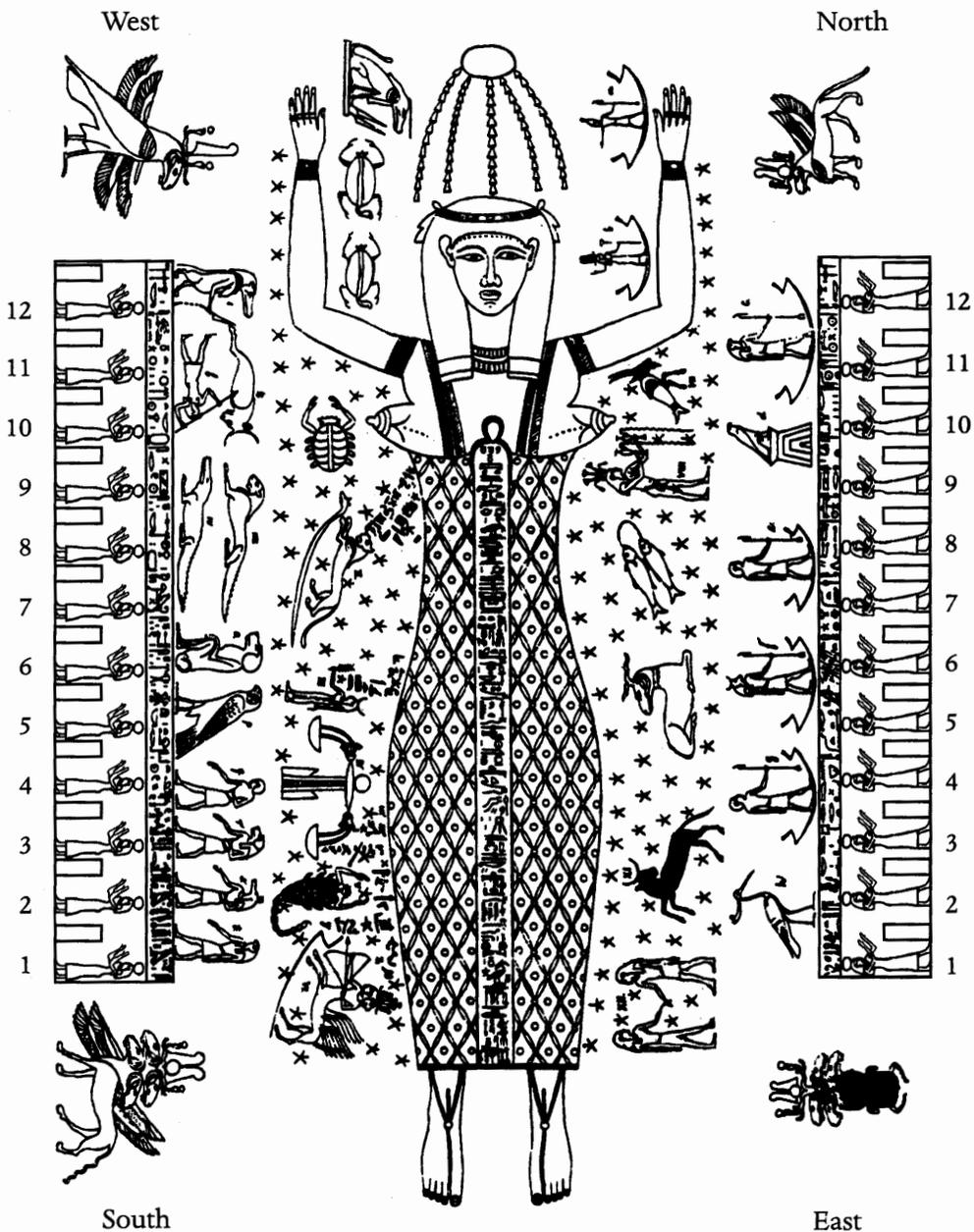


Figure 25 (at left)—The Coffin Lid of Heter:

Looking at the upper, inner face of the coffin, this celestial diagram depicts the sky as it appeared at the birth of a man named Heter in the first half of October, 93 C.E. According to a Demotic inscription located elsewhere on the coffin, Heter lived 31 years, five months, and twenty-five days—information which places his demise in 125 C.E. The detail of Heter's horoscope provides a wealth of accurately rendered astronomical data for the epoch, which has since been confirmed by computer analysis.

Facing the coffin lid, we see the figure of Nut—representing the celestial firmament—spread vertically down the center of the horoscope. On the left, the signs of the Zodiac, beginning with Cancer, are depicted from her right breast down to her feet. On the opposite side, the second half of the Zodiac, beginning with Capricorn, is depicted from her left breast down to her feet. The hieroglyphic names for Jupiter and Saturn are placed in the constellation of Leo, Mars is in Virgo, and Mercury and the Sunrise (rising sign) are placed in Scorpio. Venus falls between Scorpio and Sagittarius.

Looking to the right of Nut's head, the figures of Canopus (on the top) and Sirius (on the bottom) are depicted in their celestial boats. The four corners of the coffin are guarded by the four gods of the directions. They are: Henkhisuesi (east), Hutchaiui (west), Qebui (north), and Shehbui (south).

On the left side of the horoscope, an upper horizontal register depicts (from top to bottom) the following constellations: Hesamut (Draconis), Meshtiu (Ursa Major), Sahu (Orionis), Ru-Neteri (Leo Minor), Sak (Ursa Minor), and the four elemental genii, Imset, Haapi, Daumutef, and Qebseuf. The lower register depicts the figures of the Hours of the Day, from top (12) to bottom (1).

On the right side of the horoscope, the upper horizontal register depicts the planets as Neteru on their celestial barques. They are (from top to bottom): Jupiter, Sun (as Heru), Mercury, Saturn, Mars, and Venus (as a phoenix).

The lower register depicts the figures of the Hours of the Night, from top (12) to bottom (1).

His research showed, for instance, that the main axis of the temple of Sobekh-Heru at Ombos is aligned to Alpha Centauri, the binary star closest to our solar system. In the tropical Zodiac, this is located at the twenty-eighth degree of Scorpio, which in astrology symbolizes the dual processes of decay and transformation. The temple contains two sanctuaries, established as the seats of two Neteru—the crocodile Sobekh, principle of physical corruption, and the hawk Heru, principle of spiritual ascension. Lockyer also found that the temple of Khons at Karnak—the Neter of the cyclic Moon in the Theban triad—was aligned to Canopus, a star in the constellation Argonavis. The Egyptians called this star *Kahi Nub*, “the boat of Asar.” The celestial boat is a form of the crescent Moon, in which he is said to traverse the sky during his perpetual cycle of renewal.

Day 1		Day 11		Day 21	
Day 2		Day 12		Day 22	
Day 3		Day 13		Day 23	
Day 4		Day 14		Day 24	
Day 5		Day 15		Day 25	
Day 6		Day 16		Day 26	
Day 7		Day 17		Day 27	
Day 8		Day 18		Day 28	
Day 9		Day 19		Day 29	
Day 10		Day 20		Day 30	

Table 10—Lucky and Unlucky Days: The lucky and unlucky days for Djehut, the first month of the Egyptian Solar year. The *Nefer* symbol indicates fortunate conditions, while the *Aha* (boat mast) denotes the influence of nefarious influences. (Table based on Papyrus Sallier IV.)

Besides stellar alignments, we find other themes in temple architecture regarding the orientation of the sacred space, with the diurnal transit of the Sun often dominating the plan. Lockyer proposed that the orientation of Egyptian temples could be divided into two classes: Solstitial and Equinoctial. The former are oriented to the rising Sun at either the summer (June 21) or winter (December 21) solstice when the day is longest or shortest, respectively. Equinoctial temples are oriented to the rising Sun at either the spring (March 20) or fall (September 20) equinox, when day and night are of equal length.

Lockyer concluded that most of the temples in Upper Egypt are solstitial in plan, being oriented on their East-West axes to the Sun when it attains maximum declination north (in the summer) or south (in the winter). The entranceways of these monuments receive sunrise or sunset light, illuminating the interior—often up to the sanctuary—in a very precise manner. In other instances, statuary of a monumental type is so oriented.

The famous Colossi of Memnon on the west Theban bank of the Nile exemplify this phenomenon. These two seated statues of Amunhotep III, once flanking the entry to the Pharaoh's funerary temple, face sunrise at the winter solstice.² At that moment, according to legend, the statues would emit an eerie sound, which is no longer audible due to the erosion of the monuments. The great temple of Amun at Karnak is oriented at the southwest entrance to sunset at the summer solstice, while its northeast entrance is oriented to sunrise at the winter solstice. A solstitial monument closely examined in modern times is the Temple of Amun-Ra, built on the southern frontier of Egypt at Abu Simbel by Rameses II. An international effort to preserve the monument was accomplished in the 1970s, and the temple was raised to higher ground. It continues to face the rising Sun at the winter solstice as it did in antiquity.

Besides orientation to specific stars and alignment to the Sun (and possibly other luminaries), certain great temple centers were aligned to polestars, the region of permanence to the ancient Egyptians. The descending passageway of the Great Pyramid aligns with the polestar, specifically to Gamma Draconis which was exactly on the pole in 5000 B.C.E. The precision of this alignment has been interpreted by some as evidence that the pyramid was constructed as a celestial observatory, overlooking the fact that all ancient Egyptian monuments have some manner of cosmic association which is often spoken of in reliefs at the temple itself. The symbolism of the pyramid's alignment with the polestar speaks of an imperishable, permanent principle which the monument embodies, suggested by one of its ancient names, *Ta Khut Akhet*, "light of the horizon."

The visual impact of the ecliptical constellations in the southern sky may be one reason why Upper Egypt's temples—located in the most southerly regions of the land—demonstrate a solar-oriented cosmological theme; hence, the solstitial and equinoctial designations of Lockyer. In Lower Egypt—the north—the preponderance of monuments are oriented to the north pole, and here we find a stellar-oriented cosmological theme emphasized religiously and architecturally. This phenomenon provides evidence for the coexistence of at least two religious traditions that appear to have been practiced at these ancient sites, one

2 Krupp, Dr. Edwin C.: *Echoes of the Ancient Skies*. Oxford University Press: New York NY, 1983; p. 257.

supporting the agenda of the Royal House, the other supporting an esoteric tradition that was reserved for others. Of the latter, ancient references to the “mystery schools” of the Delta, primarily at Heliopolis and Memphis, are made in the histories of many Greek travelers, in particular in the biography of Pythagoras, a reputed initiate of this tradition.

The interpretation of celestial events by the temple priests was effected in both a scientific and religious context. In the god’s house, knowledge of cosmic resonance became the tool for maintaining the perpetual interaction between heaven and earth. The Sacred Astronomy is thus a supreme metaphor of the Egyptian world view, the best example of their understanding of our place in nature. Here, the heavens establish the time, the seasons, and the cycles of a Neter’s appearance; on earth, the temples contain a Neter’s cosmic force when it appears in the sky, embodying this force in a symmetrical form which mirrors its celestial origin. This is the template from which the ancient canons of art, architecture, mathematics, hieroglyphic writing, medicine, and magic arose, and is the essential key for understanding Sacred Science.

Practicum

AN ASTROLOGICAL CALENDAR OF THE NETERU

The Egyptians were the first who introduced the names of the twelve gods and the Greeks borrowed their names from them . . .

Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book II

In astrological philosophy, each sign of the Zodiac represents a cosmic principle in action as expressed in a phase of human experience and the solar cycle through the year. For instance, the sign of Libra represents the principle of joining and balancing, as expressed in the social institution of marriage and the seasonal equality of day and night at the autumnal equinox, which traditionally marks the beginning of the sign. Similarly, the Egyptians recognized that each of the Neteru represents a phase in nature and human experience that functions in the well-ordered scheme of the life cycle. Thus, the Neteru were associated with the signs of the Zodiac in later ages to demonstrate the profound metaphor of spiritual unfoldment that is symbolized by the Sun's journey through the constellations in the seasons of the year.

♈ **Aries** is where the Sun is exalted at the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere and is also the beginning of the agricultural year. It is a phase representing the renewal of life through the planting and germination of seed. Aries represents birth of a new cycle following a period of latency.

♉ **Taurus** is where the Moon is said to have her exaltation, where physical processes are activated through rhythmic motion. In this phase, nurturing the new life is depicted in the activities of creating food and taking sustenance. In the agricultural cycle it is the provision of nourishment to the earth—watering and fertilizing—in order to encourage new life to take root.

♊ **Gemini** is the phase of the sensory development, the extension of the body into the phenomenal world through the activities of observation and participation. It is also the germination of wisdom through perception of natural order. In the planting cycle, the Gemini phase represents the extension of the roots throughout the soil and the emergence of the shoot above the ground.

♋ **Cancer** represents the peak in the cycle of physical growth, the maturation of the earthly form and the development of its inner, subtle forces. It brings about the fulfillment of the plant's design with the development of its leaves, with the budding of what will eventually become fruit.

♌ **Leo**, individuality emerges and is empowered by the proper use of will and personal force. The reception of spiritual rank and divine authority is accomplished through representation of the collective to which one belongs, epitomized by the king of beasts, the lion. Here, the plant produces its flowering seed for the future re-creation of the form it now embodies.

♍ **Virgo** is the elevation of physical form into its ultimate, prototypical pattern. In the season of harvest, all that has flowered is refined and reduced back into the seed form, to be stored for a future cycle of sowing.

♎ **Libra** is the union of the soul with its spirit or celestial counterpart, the cosmic marriage. It also denotes entrance into the collective realm of experience through social participation. Here, the remains of the plant are scattered to provide nourishment for other forms of life.

♏ **Scorpio** begins the journey into the inner life, as the sap begins to recede into the earth for winter hibernation. This represents the commencement of the initiatory mysteries, where the outer form is relinquished for transmutation into a higher substance. Here, the pre-winter decay of plant matter allows decomposition into the elemental forms of latent life.

♐ **Sagittarius** is the phase of purification, where the solar principle ignites the spiritual fire to burn away the remaining dross of the earthly form. The life force is conserved into the darkest regions of the earth, and maintained by the sacred flame from which it originates. In plant life, hibernation commences.

♑ **Capricorn** confers power over matter after material life has been relinquished for spiritual existence. This is the cycle of elevation, the redemption of the body from the dark winter and the glorification of the soul with the promise of new life. In plant life it is the deepest phase of latency.

♒ **Aquarius** is the perception of universality which bestows perfect judgment and the vision of perfect existence. This is communicated in the spiritual endeavors perpetuated by the temple teachers. Here, the winter

thaw begins, which commences to cleanse the soil and prepare it for a new cycle of growth.

✕ Pisces is the return of the soul to its source, union with the world of spirit. The cosmic stream is accessed and all possibilities awaiting expression are available to the sojourner. It is the distribution of the seed to the soil once more.

Astrological Correspondences

Hermetic teachings conveyed the idea that the Neteru associate with the physical world by necessity. This is because the gods both embody nature and convey the natural forces that are interdependent with human life. In particular, it was believed that the Neteru have a threefold purpose for interacting with human life. The first purpose may be characterized as the *theurgic necessity*. In this scenario, one of the functions of the Neter is to reveal, through vision or appearance, its existence. This increases the Neter's power and extends the realms of its manifestation. The second purpose is the *magical necessity*. The Neteru manifest through material mediums, and so their natural powers increasingly associate with, rather than separate from, the physical world. In this scenario, the Neter's existence is continuously integrated with natural life. And the third purpose for the Neter's interaction with human life is the *goetic necessity*. The power of the Neter that has animated the material form imprints and modifies it—and thus elevates it. A by-product of this phenomenon is that the modified material form may be “read” or “interpreted” by human observers and serve as a medium for divination, prophecy, and healing. In this scenario, the Neter's imprint continues to refine the matter that it embodies.

Thus, each Neter has attributions of sacred days, animals, colors, scents, talismanic stones and metals resulting from these expressions of power. At the Dendera temple of Het-Her, for instance, a complete list of magical correspondences is inscribed in one of the vertical Zodiacs. In the inscriptions, great importance is attached to the wood and metals associated with each dekan, or ten-degree unit of the Egyptian Zodiac. This denoted, among other things, the material from which the magical image of the dekan god was to be constructed. Some of these correspondences have been passed down through the Hermetic

tradition and are still used—though incompletely—with our modern Tarot images and systems of magic.

One example of the Egyptian importance of correspondences is the magical use of gems. Malachite is a stone sacred to Asar. It was believed to be the mummified blood of the Neter, which entered the ground and flowed to the caves of the eastern desert—in the direction of the rising Sun—after his assassination by Set. Afterward, it rose to the level of the living soil to become regenerated. Thus, the magical use of malachite was believed to be both life-giving to the Neter and life-giving to the wearer. An image of Asar fashioned of this material was certain to provide its owner with a direct connection to the Osirian realm of renewal.

The Zodiacal Family

We do not know if the attributions of the present Zodiac—taking into account the precession of the equinoxes that places the sign of Pisces at the spring equinox in modern times—is applicable to the ancient view of the Neteru and their cosmic correspondences. But, using the Dendera Zodiac as a metaphor, some associations provide useful insights into the tenets of the Sacred Astronomy. Thus, the Neteru herein associated with the signs of the Zodiac are not arbitrarily assigned, but have been drawn from the symbolism which the two disciplines share. Astrology constitutes a language of arcane origin which supports the Sacred Science, even though its modern function falls short of its ancient, initiatic purpose. Modern astrology is derived from the master code of ancient Egypt, but at least one-half of the current practice is of Mesopotamian origin, especially in the symbolism that is used.

It is for this reason that we must resist literal interpretations of the ancient symbol systems. Egypt's wisdom is often trivialized because of our limited connection to natural life in modern times. For instance, the lioness Sekhmet is the Neter who embodies the principle of purification in nature, on both terrestrial and celestial levels. Taking all of her symbolism and mythic images into account, this is a theme specific to the Sagittarius cycle in astrology, which signifies the purifying fire that precedes initiation in the following cycle of Capricorn; the image of physician and healer is attributed to Sagittarius (Chiron, the centaur who taught the human healer Asclepius in Greek mythology, currently fills this

role). In ancient Egypt, Sekhmet was patroness of healers and physicians, and the destroyer of malefic forces. Thus, Sekhmet is depicted as a lioness, the sign of Leo is not automatically denoted as an equivalent. Leo the Lion is an altogether different cultural image, derived from the astrology of Mesopotamian culture. In Egyptian terms, Horus the golden hawk (the youthful Sun) governs the Leo cycle, because this Neter represents the development of “the intelligence of the heart” and “the mastery of the will,” as embodied by the king. All of these symbols—the gold, the Sun, the heart, the will, and kingship—are time-honored correspondences of the Leo phase of experience. Sekhmet, who governs another realm in Sacred Astronomy, does not embody these particular symbols, her leonine attributes notwithstanding.

Of the forty-two Neteru, those who illustrate the twelve principle functions of the Zodiacal cycle are presented. During the Late Period in Egypt when Persian, Greek, and Roman influences dominated the cultural milieu, the same association of concepts took place, resulting in the body of Hermetic philosophy which we study today. Those cultures used an exclusively twelve-signed Zodiac, which the Egyptians of the time also adapted to their cosmic scheme.

The rationale for assigning the following twelve Neteru to the twelve signatures of the Zodiac is based on the imagery of the Sun (Ra), who travels the circuit of the sky through the heavenly vault (Nut's body) daily. Nut's children (Asar, Auset, Set, Nebt-Het) and their own progeny (Heru, Anpu) would necessarily have a close relationship with this phenomenon, as would Nut's consort, Geb. The remaining four unassigned signs of the Zodiac are given to: Het-Her, because she is associated closely with Heru as his counterpart/wife; Djehuti and Maat, because they are the only two celestial Neteru who communicate through all worlds and are concerned with circuits and cycles; and Sekhmet, because of her close association with the Sun as daughter/wife/counterpart. Nut is the last sign of the Zodiac because she is the beginning and the end of the Sun's circuitous path, just as Pisces is depicted as the two fish (or the two sycamore trees of Nut) that face both directions in the sky. The entire scheme is representative of the Solar-Horian path, expressing transformation through the resolution of light and dark forces—or the passage of the Sun through the hours of day and night in the sky.

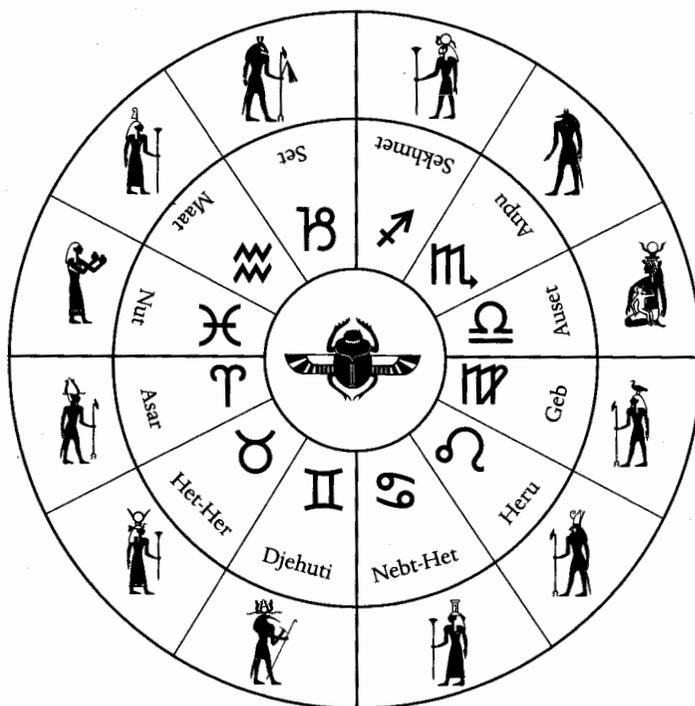


Figure 26—The Twelve Neteru in the Zodiac

Asar: Neter of Renewal, associated with Aries

I am reborn on this day, giving homage to Asar, first of the divine brethren who rises in the east of the holy land.

Asar and his siblings: Auset, Nebt-Het, and Set are associated with the four zodiacal cardinal points of Aries, Libra, Cancer, and Capricorn, respectively. Asar as “Firstborn of the Divine Brethren,” is a reference to his seniority over the terrestrial Neteru in the worlds of Ament and Rostau. He was, according to the historical tradition of the Egyptians, the first regent, a figure in the mists of their own prehistory who peacefully established a Golden Age and a line of pharaonic theocracy that was to last thousands of years.

The ancient Egyptian writings speak of Asar as the first ruler on earth, who introduced planting and harvesting to society and eliminated “cannibalism.” This may indeed be a reference to an archaic event in prehistory, when the elevated

society of which Asar was regent prompted the dispersal of hunting or primarily meat-eating groups from Egypt followed by settlement of the Two Lands and the establishment of an agriculturally-based civilization. Scientific studies of ancient cultivated grains propose such an event between 12,000 and 18,000 years ago.

Asar popularly represented resurrection in Graeco-Roman times, but this was an erroneous understanding of the Neter's symbolism by outside cultures. His mythos was not concerned with the resurrection of a dead body, but the restoration of innate, natural powers to human beings as well as the renewal of the life force in the land. The popular Osirian story of his slaughter at the hands of Set, his raising from death by Auset, and his restoration to the throne of Egypt, all represent the promise of renewal through transformation. These ideas were adopted by subsequent traditions—especially the early Christian—but similarly misunderstood in all. The Egyptian concept of renewal is based on the view that death is but a phase of natural existence, rather than a condition isolated from the rest of the cycle of life. Through thousands of years, Asar was closely related to the agricultural cycle as the Neter signifying the sprouting of the seed which has been latent, or “hibernating,” through a cycle of time. Asar is both the fruit (the living king) and the seed (the deceased ancestor)—he is the future and the past. This is symbolized in his images as the Green God (active, renewed life) and the Black or Dark God (latent life). He is thus the entire cycle of renewal, rather than an episode within it. Therefore, when one passed through the full cycle of his mysteries, one became “Osirified.”

The theme of the spontaneous rising of life out of the apparently lifeless soil is an event associated with spring in all of the ancient agricultural societies. With Aries signifying the first sign or phase of Zodiacal experience, we have during this period of the year the vibration of renewal and a reminder of the eternal cycle of return to which all lifestreams belong.

During the astrological Age of Aries (2320–160 B.C.E.), Asar ascended as pre-eminent Neter in Egyptian society, the universal human being or human condition. His mysteries, now democratized, granted to all persons—from royals to the peasant class—participation in his transformation and renewal. Asar's universal appeal during this period is expressed in a religious hymn of the time which speaks of “. . . He whose beauty is adored everywhere, doubly sweet is his love for all, his goodness felt in each heart.”

The sacred animal associated with Asar is the bull, for one of his earliest appellations was “the Bull of Heliopolis.” His *sekhem* (vital force) was believed to incarnate in each successive bull, chosen following the death of its predecessor based on special markings found on its head (a solar disk), tongue (a scarab), and body (a faultless black skin). The color of Asar is the verdant green of newly-sprouted grain; his scent is cypress, a substance used in mummification. His stone is the green Malachite, his metal the life-reviving Iron used in the manufacture of the ceremonial adze used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony. His wood comes from the *Nart* (Acacia), the tree in which Auset found his body after it floated down the Nile.

Major Temple: The Osireion at Abydos

Abydos has been regarded from antiquity down to modern times as the seat of Asar. A vast temple complex originally included the sanctuary of this Neter, shrines said to contain some of his remains, and an archaic necropolis from which some of the oldest artifacts of Egyptian civilization have come down to us. Today, the remains include a temple rebuilt during the time of Seti I and completed by his son, Rameses II.

At Abydos, Asar is celebrated in his myriad forms as Neter of flourishing life, latency (death), and renewal in the form of the land and the king. He is depicted in variations of physical color, ceremonial headdress, and magical sceptres demonstrative of his endless realm in the land of life as well as his powers of metamorphosis.

A much older and enigmatic monument behind the temple proper at Abydos embodies the Osirian mythos in its supreme form: the return to life in primeval time as renewal of the physical form and the body of Earth. From the New Kingdom onward, the Osireion was regarded as a tomb of Asar and a place of his metamorphosis, where a re-creation of his spiritual reconstitution and return to life was performed. But it was also undoubtedly employed for initiatory ceremonies of a special character. Constructed at a lower ground level than the other monuments at Abydos, it makes use of the natural ground water which seeps upward to fill a roofless chamber. This surrounds a raised, rectangular platform representing the original land upon which the body of Asar rested as “firstborn” on earth.

This sacred place provides us with a scenario that depicts even more than the experience of death and renewal. It also represents the realization of timeless time, the eternal cycle encompassing the events of life and death as well as the fundamental permanence and survival of the life force possessed by all of the living.

Het-Her: Neter of Fertility, associated with Taurus

Het-Her, make my face perfect among the Neteru, open my eyes that
I may see Ra each day. Place me under your sacred tree, to receive your
food and rejoice in your beauty.

The name Het-Her means “House of Heru,” referring to her role as the physical receptacle of Heru’s power, the solar principle. *Qebhu*, a region of the sky described in the ancient Pyramid Texts, is known as her domain, and was also called the “House of Heru.”

Het-Her was venerated in the Late Period in her role as Great Provider, the nurturer of both the deceased and the newly-born. In *The Book of Going Forth*, it is she who protects the initiate from hunger and thirst by providing spiritual nourishment in the passage through the Duat (shadow worlds).

In Taurus the Moon is exalted, meaning that here the lunar principle achieves its fulfillment as an exalted feminine power through procreative and maternal flower. Depicted as a heavenly cow, Het-Her’s two horns contain the solar disk, which represents the New Moon—a phase symbolizing the containment of masculine light by the feminine darkness. When the two are conjoined, they initiate the cycle of illumination. In her aspect as fertile goddess, she is the mate of the Younger Heru and counterpart of the youthful Sun. The pair represented the Egyptian ideal of conjugal happiness and the rhythmic joy of physical existence expressed in music and dance. Besides dance, the cultic offerings of fragrance, mirrors, and amulets of sexual potency were under her realm.

The number seven was especially associated with Het-Her, as the Neter was said to have seven “images” or forms which were associated with the seven stars in the Pleiades cluster in the constellation Taurus. And perhaps the ancient—and sacred—“Dance of the Seven Veils,” said to have originated in Egypt, may be associated with Het-Her, Neter of rhythmic motion. Each of the seven manifestations of Het-Her had a shrine located in one of the original seven districts of ancient Egypt, divisions of the land that were distinct from the nomes. This coincides

with the length of seven degrees of geographic latitude which the ancient Two Lands encompassed, as the realm of Taurus is concerned with the physical land into which the light or spirit incarnates. Each of these manifestations of the goddesses contributed a part to one's destiny at birth, perhaps the original association of the number seven with individual "luck."

The animal of Het-Her is the cow, which embodies the functions of maternal nourishment and fecundity. Her color is blue-green, a hue conveying joy and gladness; the beautiful faïence pottery of ancient Egypt was rendered in this color and used extensively in personal decoration and offering goods at both temple and tomb. Het-Her's scent is myrrh, a substance used in perfumery and ceremonial incense to evoke devotion. Her stone is derived from her sacred name, "Lady of Turquoise." Her metal is copper, from which ancient mirrors were manufactured, and her wood is the festive, fruit-bearing *Iser* (Tamarisk).

Major Temple: Dendera

The Divine House of Het-Her is a remarkable temple complex housing buildings each of which represents a sacred function of the Neter. Curiously, the number of remaining structures amounts to seven, her number. The major temple features two hypostyle halls of columns surmounted by the head of the Neter. It also possesses the traditional vestibules and sanctuary, but also a number of roof chapels and hidden crypts below the main floor. Here, on the three levels of temple architecture, Het-Her's power is expressed in the underworld, the land of the living, and the sky.

The calendric and astronomical elements that are so carefully preserved at Dendera demonstrate the important functions of the Sacred Astronomy at this locale. Holes in the floor of the temple roof, where the famous round Zodiac was discovered in our era, were used to erect siting devices for the astronomer-priests. Every inscription within the temple reflects an element of the cosmic phenomena so carefully observed by the sky-watchers of the goddess—phases of the Moon, cycles of the Sun, seasons, and celestial events representing the passage of divine forces into the sacred precinct.

The annual event commemorating the sacred marriage of Het-Her and Heru entailed a journey of the goddess in her solar barque from Dendera to the tem-

ple at Edfu, the Divine House of Heru, located one hundred miles south up the Nile. Here, her consort awaited her in his shrine, where she was conveyed with great ceremony and reverence. A mystical mating then took place between the two Neteru in the privacy of the sanctuary.

Djehuti: Neter of Resonance, associated with Gemini

Djehuti who is self-created, reckoner of the stars: mark the scales of truth with my righteousness, speak for me on my day of judgment.

Often depicted holding the reed pen and palette—the tools of the ancient scribe—Djehuti records all the utterances of the Neteru but is also the originator of sound or the “vibration” which set all matter into motion in primeval time.

Djehuti is the divine communicator, who presides over the spoken word. In Egyptian myths, he is the vizier of the Neteru, who announces occurrences in both divine and earthly realms, marking all deeds into his great record book. As inventor of the sacred hieroglyphs, he is also called “great scribe, keeper of books.”

This Neter was considered to be the enunciator par excellence of *maa kheru* (“true speech”), the word which commands every living thing. He was the teacher, in the great Osirian mythos, who imparted the magical formulae to Auset that enabled the revival of Asar’s spirit from the sleep of death, in order to father Heru. As guardian of all the sacred spells, the Neter was regarded in the Late Period as author of the forty-two legendary “Books of Thoth,” which were said by the Greeks to contain all the arcane wisdom of Egypt.

In his aspect as measurer, Djehuti is timekeeper of celestial motion, and was closely associated with the Moon’s orbit. In such rhythmic functions, the Neter oversees all periodicities in the natural world. A highly regarded icon of this phenomenon is the ibis bird, whose migratory activities were a major ancient event marking the seasons. The beak of the species is also highly reminiscent of the scribe’s writing instrument. Another animal totem of the Neter is the baboon, who was regarded by the Egyptians for its remarkable talent of mimicry and vocal diversity. The baboon’s loud expressions greeting the sunrise were also considered evidence of the animal’s intelligent recognition of celestial events.

The sacred art and architecture followed a prescribed canon of measurement and classical form that rarely deviated throughout the thousands of years of Egypt's building activity. Based on the geometric symmetry of nature, sublime mathematical correspondences in the precise monuments of ancient times continue to be discovered. Djehuti is believed to be the source of these measures, a result of the Neter's utterance of the primeval word which set the physical universe into motion and which created the original patterns of the phenomenal world through time. Because of this, the Greeks in the Late Period regarded him as the power to be invoked prior to all divinatory activities, as he was custodian of the Akashic (universal) record.

The heliacal rising of Sirius—the star's appearance at dawn just before sunrise—signaled the commencement of the Nile's inundation and the beginning of the sacred year. As calendars were the so-called invention of Djehuti, he was associated with the Sothic cycle. The star's ecliptical longitude has been in the constellation of Gemini since 6000 B.C.E.

Djehuti's animals are the ibis and the baboon, his color is the silver-gray of the former animal. His scent is eucalyptus, used in the ancient divination ceremonies over which he presided. His stone is the multi-hued agate, his metal is the magnetic lodestone, used in the apparatus of the ancient architect. His tree is the *Inhemem* (pomegranate), the leaves of which he inscribed with the deeds of great kings and queens in the cosmic worlds to preserve for eternity.

Major Temple: Hermopolis

There is little but the foundation stones left of the Great Temple of Djehuti and the Hermopolitan Ogdoad (the company of eight Neteru in the creation myth of the region). Located in Middle Egypt at the modern town of El Ashmunein, the temple was part of a complex that included an extensive House of Life where the principal activity was instruction in the sciences of the day. The area became the site of pilgrimages for Greek and Egyptian followers of Hermes Trismegistus in Graeco-Roman times. Large underground necropoleis of the sacred ibis and baboon were established here in ancient times.

The site also provides us with an enchanting example of ancient temple life in the tomb of Petosiris, a high priest of Djehuti in the Late Period. The tomb's façade is constructed as a small temple, within which the priest and his family are

seen performing the obligations of a religious household in the service of the Neter. Petosiris carefully describes the literary works housed in the Great Temple of Djehuti at Hermopolis, of which nothing remains. It is another reminder to us of the extensive wisdom of ancient Egypt, once carefully recorded and accessed at sacred places, which now must be retrieved by us through other means.

Nebt-Het: Neter of Secretion, associated with Cancer

Oh she who hides herself, who breathes by the disc: extend your arms unto me, encircle me, unite me unto your protection.

Nebt-Het, “Lady of the House,” is sister of Asar and Auset, the ancient figurehead of family tradition and the preceptress of Egyptian custom and funerary protocol. She is often depicted with Heru—the child of her siblings—as his teacher, nurse, and custodian. Her association with children is that of passive protectress, as depicted in her image of winged guardian—perhaps the prototype of the “guardian angel” of modern folklore. In this aspect she assumes the maternal instincts of the desert vulture, a bird renowned for her fierce, protective nature toward her young as well as a remarkable ability to fly both very close to the earth and very high above it—an allusion to the powers of the astral body which she guards.

The mystical functions of Nebt-Het are alluded to in her name. “The house” refers to the physical form; as protectress of the body she works through automatic, unconscious functions such as sleep. Unlike Het-Her, whose role is concerned with nurturing the physical form, Nebt-Het provides subtler forms of food. She serves the living by conveying the ceremonial gifts they present to the Neteru, as sustenance is necessary even in divine regions. In ancient Egypt, the consumption of food following its presentation as a sacred offering was considered to be entirely appropriate, as its sacred essence was believed to have been absorbed by the deity. Consequently, what was left contained the imprint of the Neter, which could benefit the recipient as spiritual nourishment.

The sign of Cancer is concerned with nurturing the newly-born, as depicted in Nebt-Het’s traditional activities as nurse of Heru, the incarnate solar principle. The lunar rhythms associated with Cancer govern habit, memory, and the organic cycles of ingesting food and eliminating waste. This double process corresponds to the Neter’s dual existence in the Duat—as receiver of the newly

deceased who enters the inner life, and as midwife to the newly-born who leave the same region for incarnation into physical life.

Her headdress is a crown consisting of a libation bowl upon a pedestal, the traditional offering dish of sacred ritual presented at both temple and tomb. It is a symbol of Nebt-Het's divine task, which is to convey the spiritual equivalent of physical nourishment to and from the regions of earth and sky.

Nebt-Het's animal is the owl, which to ancient people was believed a medium for spirit voices from the inner life. Her color is Nile blue, woven in veils of high priestesses, and her scent is lotus, a plant grown in the sacred temple pools whose fragrance was believed to rise to heaven. Her substances are the pearl and coral, reserved for the adornment of princesses. Her metal is silver, used in Egyptian ceremonies to deflect adverse powers from the sacred precinct. Her wood is the *tcherat* (willow), mentioned in the funerary texts as a substance that binds nefarious forces and protects the deceased.

Major Temple: The Funerary Shrine

The image of Nebt-Het is found at thousands of funerary shrines dating from all periods in Egyptian history. From the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, her figure is frequently depicted in conjunction with her sister. Together, they conduct the magical rites that restore natural powers to the traveler through the Sacred Land. As Auset grants the initiate the spells of protection, Nebt-Het offers her "feathered arm" spoken of in her many litanies to protect one from adverse powers.

Throughout the tomb, her sister is shown leading the soul toward the Osirian land, while Nebt-Het follows behind as protectress of the funerary train. This is depicted in the tombs of Seti I at the Valley of the Kings, and the tomb of Nefertari at the Valley of the Queens, both in Upper Egypt.

The temple of Auset at Philae features shrines dedicated exclusively to the sacred rites of renewal, a connection to the important function of the two sister-deities in the Osirian mythos. On the chamber walls, Nebt-Het is consistently depicted as the mirror image of her sister in the embalming, the ceremony of infusing life, and the restoration of vital power to the initiate.

Heru: Neter of Ascension (the Younger) and Exaltation (the Elder), associated with Leo

I have risen as Heru Henu, as a great falcon coming forth from his egg. I have flown as the golden falcon, I have risen from the deep.

Heru is depicted as the son of Asar and Auset, conceived while the former slept in death through the magic evoked by his mother. He was born secretly in the swamps of the Delta to avoid discovery by the archenemy Set who murdered Asar and ascended the throne of Egypt. In a series of legendary adventures that are related in the mythic Contendings, Heru wrests the ruling power of Egypt back to reestablish the tradition of pharaonic theocracy.

The spiritual tradition of Egypt maintained that the civilization was inaugurated by the *Heru Shemsu*, “followers of Horus,” descendants from the Neteru who ruled on earth in the earliest mists of antiquity. From the Old Kingdom onward, Pharaoh was the representative of Heru as the idealized man, as described in the “Heru name” he received after ascending the throne. Through this, he attained mastery of his realm as well as the spiritual heritage passed on from these legendary founders of Egypt. The king was considered Heru incarnate, the mediator between gods and men on earth.

Heru has several aspects that represent the stages of personal power attained by the divine heir. These aspects were symbolized in the diurnal cycle of the Sun. As Heru-pa-khart he is the “the Child” or rising Sun; as Heru-Khuti he is “Lord of the Two Horizons” or the all-encompassing noon Sun; as Heru-Ur he is the elder, retiring Sun at dusk. These principles play key roles as the Neteru in the Dendera and Initiatory Triads.

Three of the planets in the Sacred Astronomy were also associated with the various aspects of Heru. The image of Heru Behutet is the the Avenger (Mars), Heru Ur is the Elder (Jupiter), and Heru Nub is the Youthful or Golden image personifying the rising Sun. All of the Heru figures are metaphors of spiritual aspiration and attainment, the “kingship” denoted in the cycle of Leo. The Neter is associated with the initiate’s mastery of conscious life (the Sun) in its varying levels of manifestation (the planets). In the solar cosmogony of Heliopolis, Heru became more closely associated with the Divine Ennead, or company of nine Neteru, so that eventually Atum, the head of the family, receded as the icon of

Egypt's past spiritual tradition and Heru emerged as precursor of humanity's future spiritual condition, to be set forth by the reigning Pharaoh.

The animal of Heru is the hawk, his colors are the brilliant yellow of the newly-risen Sun and the royal purple of kingship. His scent is sandalwood, "the perfume of kings;" his stone is the peridot, often embedded in the images of the god to represent his all-seeing eyes. His metal is gold, called "the flesh of the Neteru," and his wood is the olive, the tree believed to be his natural sanctuary after his heavenly flights.

Major Temple: Edfu

No other temple in Egypt today conveys the magnificent power of the Neter's Divine House more than Edfu, an archaic center last rebuilt in Ptolemaic times. Almost complete despite its age, the temple offers us a glimpse of the sacred life in a most comprehensive way.

At Edfu, the great Mystery Play of Heru is fully inscribed on the outer west wall of the temple quarter. It details the complete Horian mythos acted out by Pharaoh and his retinue at an annual festival which included the sacred drama followed by a regional celebration. The play depicts the triumph of Heru over the adversarial figures of Set, in the forms of hippopotamus, oryx, and crocodile.

The only example of the solar barque of temple ritual was found in the last century at Edfu. Now restored, it can still be viewed in a chamber at the rear of the sanctuary, resting upon its original stone pedestal. Inscriptions along the walls of the ascending and descending staircases to the temple roof show the procession of clergy bearing the solar barque around the temple precincts in company with chanters, musicians, and offering bearers.

Geb: Neter of Creation, associated with Virgo

May I be purified in the field of offerings and receive the blessings of Hotep. Hunger and thirst shall be banished from me, as I am blessed among the living.

Geb, the Neter who was said to have brought food to ancient Egypt, inaugurates the activity of planting in his season after the waters of inundation have receded. He is the source of all that comes forth from the soil, providing sustenance to human beings through his invention and maintenance of agriculture. Often, he is depicted as a being with green patches over his body, symbolic of the

cultivated fields of the Nile Valley. One of his aspects is *Hotep*, the personification of the “fertile fields,” who also taught humanity how to make beer, wine, and bread—the traditional foods of offering at temple and tomb where numerous inscriptions “give thanks to Hotep for food and drink.” Geb was also invoked in a number of magical papyri as healer, being the source of all medicinal plants.

As a celestial being, Geb coupled with his sister-wife Nut (the Firmament) to produce the four Neteru of terrestrial life: Asar, Auset, Nebt-Het, and Set. His initial role on earth was the division of the land of Egypt into its northern and southern districts, and his association with the fertile, generating power of nature is a curious, but uniquely Egyptian image. His realm exists at the precincts of the Nile’s edge, over which the body of Nut is encircled. In many ancient cultures, the earth force is usually depicted as a female image and the sky powers are masculine, but in Egypt these roles are reversed. This undoubtedly has some association with the highly-regarded part that ancient man played as agriculturalist and partner of the land, a role which never lost its respect and prestige.

In a variation of the Heliopolitan cosmogony, Geb and Nut first produced the divine egg, from which the Sun-god emerged as a phoenix. He is in this aspect a fiery creation figure associated with the primeval solar force. Geb was believed by the Egyptians to be the ancient father of the human race, the originator of the species.

Geb’s animal is the goose, a creature known for fidelity to its mate and the care of its young. The fruitful brown soil reflects his color, while his scent is the earthy patchouli and his stone the deep, golden amber—both derived from aged trees. His metal is bronze (associated with Virgo) and his tree is the sacred *ished* (persea) of Heliopolis, from which the mythological Egyptian phoenix is said to arise after a great cosmic cycle is renewed.

Major Temple: Heliopolis

Geb played a prominent role in the solar cosmogony and was a member of its Great Ennead, “the company of nine,” forming the creative effort in the world of Ament. His great sanctuary is recorded by the Egyptians to be there, though the scantest remains of this ancient sacred place can be viewed today. All that can be seen is a partial temple foundation and one of its original obelisks, which was restored during the Middle Kingdom.

However, the legacy of Heliopolis is not completely lost to us. Though mostly buried under a modern suburb of Cairo today and protected by centuries of soil, the original City of the Sun may once more come to light. The ancient myth tells us that the phoenix hatched from the primeval egg of Geb and Nut returns to Heliopolis at the end of a great cycle. After immolating itself in the sacred, purifying fire of the temple, the bird rises from its ashes whole once again, to signify the commencement of a new solar age.

Auset: Neter of Fruition, associated with Libra

I am the Lady of the Words of Power, I repulse all things which are evil.
You are an exalted one, born of the incense tree in the house of Iunu.

Auset is associated with the autumnal equinox, opposite the solar cycle that belongs to her brother-husband, Asar. During this period, the Sun begins to move south on the ecliptic. This is traditionally the commencement of the initiatory journey, when the waning of the solar principle invites spiritual introspection and the contemplation of the sacred mysteries.

As mother of the redeemer Heru, Auset fulfills the role of birth mother in both the physical act and the spiritual process of life's renewal. Her season in the Nile Valley is preceded by the implantation of the seed in the soil, symbolized by the activity of Geb, her celestial father. She then manifests in the initial bursting forth of life from the seed casing (Asar's principle), when the renewed life force takes its first breath.

Throughout the vast history of ancient Egypt, every temple dedicated to a Neter in the creation cycles possessed a smaller temple at the edge of the sacred precinct dedicated to Auset. When one visits Egypt today, the so-called "Birth House of Isis" on the tour itinerary gives the traveler an impression that the origin, or "birth place" of this Neter was continually changing in ancient Egypt, a notion which the guide books continue to promote. However, the function of Auset as Neter of Birth clarifies the presence of the birth house at so many temple sites. Her magical seat strategically located near the temple entrance symbolizes her "birthing" of the god at the site. Visitors to the temple partake of this spiritual birth also, by entering the sacred precinct through the birth house and passing through its chambers that are symbolic of the birth canal.

As Neter of magic, Auset acquired her power through invoking the sacred spells of Djehuti, which enabled Asar to return to the world of life. She conceived Heru through another metaphoric spiritual process: raising the life force in her dead husband by transforming into a bird and beating her wings. In a myth derived from the solar cosmogenesis, she is the only Neter to know the “hidden name of Ra,” meaning that she possesses the secret of the creative fire; in this aspect she is known as “The Great Enchantress.” The image associated with this role is the legendary Black Isis, guardian of the mysteries; it survives today as the Black Madonna in numerous European cultures.

Many of the spells of the Neter in *The Book of Going Forth* are meant to heal injuries originating from adversarial forces; in this context Auset presides over occult healing. Her name is invoked to protect the initiate from annihilation, and to insure remembrance of the magical spells in the journey through the inner life which preserve the body. In the latter case, a curious but accurate depiction of this belief is portrayed in a scene from the classic film, *The Mummy* (1932). The reincarnated priestess, under attack by the revived mummy, invokes the goddess to help her “remember the ancient words and spells.”

The Egyptian name Auset means “throne,” a reference to the function of the Neter as the “seat” or presence of divine authority which is conferred to the king. As transmitter of the royal Ka (believed to have originally resided in her blood), she embodies the tradition of matrilineal descent in pharaonic times, which was established to ensure that the ruler was empowered by virtue of his association (marriage) to the throne heiress. The consequent union of relatives in some periods should not be viewed literally, as it was the symbolic union with the heiress—the descendant of the Auset principle—which established the authority of the ruler.

Auset is often depicted with the crown of Het-Her—the horned Sun disk surmounted by the throne—because in Graeco-Roman times the two images of the Neteru merged. Both exhibit the harmonizing principle represented by the planet Venus, with which both are associated: Het-Her representing the physical sphere (Taurus) and Auset the spiritual world (Libra) of fruition.

The animal of Auset is the swallow, a form she took when in search of her slain husband. Her color is maroon, as it is associated with her sacred blood, invoked in spells to protect the initiate from poisons. Her scent is the fragrant,

flowering jasmine, which still fills the air at autumn in Egypt, and her stone is the red carnelian, which the Egyptians believed was most efficacious substance against magical assault. Her metal is electrum—a combination of gold, silver, and copper—used exclusively in the manufacture of only the most sacred ceremonial objects. Her wood is the fragrant cedar, used in the doors and furniture of the temple and believed by the Egyptians to be immune from decay and magical destruction.

Major Temple: Philae

The island of Philae marked the southern frontier of Egypt on the Nile, and has been the home of the goddess from antiquity to modern times. In the mythic drama of the wanderings of Auset in search of her slain husband, Philae was said to be her place of refuge and rest. Today, the construction of the Aswan High Dam required the relocation of the temple complex to the island of Agilkia, on higher ground.

Fortunately, the pristine, white limestone monuments were moved according to the original plan of Philae, and still retain the beautiful symmetry representing the Neter in her sanctuary. A small boat quay and elaborate kiosk at the tip of the island mark the commencement point of pilgrimages that culminated in visits to the many shrines, which were dedicated to healing and spiritual retreat. The open, terraced colonnade outside of the temple proper invites a re-creation of the dramatic processions held regularly on the island by an extensive clergy who resided in the sacred precinct.

The overall impression to the visitor today at Philae is that the Divine House of Auset is still very much alive, and that her presence continues to pass through her sacred place. Remembering that she was worshiped here formally through Christian times and up to the sixth century of our era, it is no wonder that the island and its delicate monuments appear still to be very much the stronghold of the goddess.

Anpu: Neter of Transmutation, associated with Scorpio

Presider over the pavilion of the Neteru: hasten me to arise. Let me live in the region of silence.

Anpu is the guide through the portal of the inner life, the Duat. Here the initiate must first pass in order to begin the journey of transformations which ultimately

awakens the knowledge of one's spiritual heritage and empowers the traveler to ascend through the sacred regions. Depicted with the head of a jackal, he is the ever-watchful animal of the night and traditional guardian of secluded places.

The Neter of Scorpio represents the natural processes of decay in living matter, the materials which eventually become food for other forms of life. The jackal of the African desert lives on carrion, burying it prior to ingestion so that its elemental nature changes. The digestive structure of the jackal is also unique, being a symbolic alchemical processor. Hence, Anpu is associated with the embalming act which uses art, science, and magic to preserve the physical form.

Anpu is one of the Neteru of the so-called "Dark Rite," a spiritual initiation that confers power on one's soul in the Shadow Worlds when the soul has faced a judgment of merit and become transmuted into higher matter. In Graeco-Roman times, Anpu's legendary power over physical corruption was alluded to in his association with sorcery and necromancy.

Another name of the Neter is *Ap Uat*, the "Opener of the Ways." In this initiatory role he is the sacred hound, leading the soul through the regions and caverns of the inner life toward the place of judgment where redemption or annihilation are conferred upon the soul. Two images of this deity share the occult dimensions of the world: Anpu governs the northern (imperishable) heaven, Ap Uat presides over the southern (transitory) realms. Perhaps with this in mind, Plutarch named Anpu "the Divider," the Neter who parts the visible world (ruled by Auset) from the invisible (ruled by Nebt-Het). His power, once accessed by the magician, confers the ability to see beyond the physical senses and to transmit subtle forces into the physical world.

Anpu's animal is the jackal of the western desert, and his color is black—believed to represent both death and new life in the process of metamorphosis. His scent is camphor, used extensively in ancient medicine and ceremonial incense. His stone is serpentine, believed by the ancients to ward off the reptiles of the desert. His metal is brass (associated with Scorpio) and his wood is the palm, the extract of which was used in the mummification process.

Major Temple: Lycopolis

Anpu in his form Ap Uat the hound presided over the sanctuary at Lycopolis, located in Middle Egypt near the modern city of Asyut. This city was the home of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus, who lived in the third century of our

era. He was known throughout the Roman world in his day as a philosopher-magician of the highest order, and he left the last legacy of the mystery tradition to students of the ancient world. Nothing remains of his temple, though scarce archeological study in the area encourages the hope that more of his legendary complex may eventually come to light.

Anpu as funerary deity was always reserved a small sanctuary in the tomb; of particular note in the great treasure of Tutankhamun's burial discovered in the Valley of the Kings. Here, the Neter presides over the burial equipment and guards the entrance to the tomb in his image of watchful jackal. His presence also ensures the continued alchemical process of transformation for which the tomb has been designed.

Sekhmet: Neter of Purification, associated with Sagittarius

Great one of magic: arise from your seat of silence. Make a place for me amidst the terror. Grant me life and power in the Boat of a Million Years.

One of the names of the lioness Sekhmet as the hidden consort of Ra is *Nesert*, "the eye in the flame." As the embodiment of heavenly fire that purifies all it touches, this Neter was regarded in ancient times with awe, fear, and respect. She was called "Lady of the East," being the first light of the appearing solar disc which banishes the darkness and evaporates the desert mist. Sekhmet is the principle of heat and combustion resident in the solar principle, preparing the material form for its transfiguration as a spiritual vessel in the ancient alchemical tradition.

As the Sun is the celestial flame, Sekhmet is the earthly flame, who burns away all terrestrial impurities so that matter may be elevated to spiritual levels. Yet she also assumes a reviving, life-supporting aspect, as many of her ancient temples were dedicated to the training of a special clergy—the red-robed priests of Sekhmet—renowned in the ancient world as surgeons, exorcists, and healers. Her image as "Red Goddess" is associated with blood in mammalian life, and tradition says that she was the only Neter to whom human sacrifice was made. In this aspect she was patroness of the Egyptian army, safeguarding "the defenders of Ra" by drinking the blood of their enemies and fortifying the gateways of the Two Lands with her awesome shield of fire.

Another of the Neter's images is the familiar form of Bastet, the domestic cat. In this aspect she is protectress of home and children, depicted with the solar disk of her heavenly consort Ra and with the royal serpent Wadjet (the *uraeus*) upon her head. This is also the symbol of divine awakening, in which the beneficent celestial fire brings illumination. Here, the solar principle enters the physical sphere and opens the occult Third Eye (pineal gland).

Sekhmet's animals are the lioness and cat; her color is the fiery orange of the midday Sun. Her scent is civet—extracted from the musk glands of the Nubian *Viverra civetta*—and her stone is flint, used in the manufacture of ancient surgical knives. Her metal is tin (associated with Sagittarius) and her tree is the *wan* (juniper), the fruit of which was used in the ancient manufacture of medicinal purgatives.

Major Temple: The Precinct of Mut at Karnak

At this vast temple complex, more than six hundred seated statues of the Neter have been uncovered in modern times. Each is carved from black granite, the stone traditionally used by the ancients to contain the cosmic fire invoked in *haute magie*.

The precinct of Mut lies on the southerly end of the great temple complex at Karnak, a significant religious and political center of the Middle Kingdom in Upper Egypt. Mut represents a maternal function in the creative triad that includes Amun and Khons at Thebes. She embodies the recurrence of the life impulse through ovulation in the female cycle. Sekhmet's association with this principle as protector and purifier of the newly-formed physical mantle is shown by her great prestige at this center. The precinct is surrounded by a crescent-shaped sacred lake, which marks the southerly point of the sanctuary. It served as a ceremonial and therapeutic area for the pilgrimages of the sick to the temple.

The Temple of Bastet at Bubastis (the modern Zagazig) in the Delta was a large complex constructed of delicately-hued rose granite. Black granite altars inscribed with the image of Sekhmet now punctuate a vast field of broken rubble, evidence of a great sacred precinct dedicated exclusively to the cat goddess. Herodotus reported on the grandeur of this center, once the site of a popular national festival honoring Sekhmet-Bastet in the Late Period.

Set: the Neter of Fixation, associated with Capricorn

I soar as the primeval one soars, I have become as Kephri, I grow as plants grow, I am the fruit of every god.

Book of Going Forth: Chapter 83

Set is the fourth member of the terrestrial family of Neteru, consort of Nebt-Het—and according to some of the Late Period myths—the father of Anpu, an initiatory figure. Although portrayed as an antagonist to the forces of light or growth, he was revered in various dynastic periods.

In the symbolism of the mysteries, Heru is “He Who Resides above,” the principle of the ascending spirit. Set is “He who resides below,” the dense, impenetrable matter that encloses physical life. Together they signify the inseparable elements of earthly existence. During Egypt’s middle epoch when Heru attained pre-eminence as patron of Pharaoh, Set merged with his counterpart to form the dual-headed Nubian figure, Heru-Set (cf. Chapter One). Here, matter and spirit fuse in the body of the royal person to balance spirit and matter in eternal harmony.

In spite of his legendary nefarious ways and association with all that is barren, dry, and lifeless, Set is also the sacred principle embodied by the imperishable northern constellations which never rise or set, but remain unmoving at the ecliptical pole. This region was regarded as the ultimate destination of ascending souls, as well as the outermost limits of human existence. Thus, Set was regarded as the metaphor of cosmic permanence as well as the channel through which celestial matter became fixed into the domain of physical existence.

Set is associated with the winter solstice, the period when the Sun (principle of light) is at its most southerly point in the sky and daylight is shortest. It is the ancient cycle of the Sun’s symbolic “descent” into the nether region of the sky where dark forces reside. This Neter was also connected to the phenomena of eclipses, when the solar light is obscured by the lunar shadow, and when the Greeks said that in his form as Typhon he swallowed the solar disk.

Set is depicted in the sacred literature as a pig, crocodile, ass, or a composite of all these animals. He is known as “the Red God” for his legendary hair color, and because of his intense anger and predilection for bloodshed—which under fortunate circumstances ensured the destruction of Egypt’s enemies. His scent is the musk of the Libyan gazelle, an animal with which he was closely associated.

His stone is the onyx, which is still associated today with death. Set's metal is lead, from which is constructed the adze sceptre used in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony—a ritual object empowering the user to pass through the northern regions. His wood is the ancient *hebeny* (African ebony), fabricated into the ceremonial wands of the temple.

Major Temple: Kom Ombo

At Ombos is found the double sanctuary of the twins Sobekh-Haoeris, the Graeco-Roman version of Nubti, the image that incorporates the heads of Heru and Set in one figure. The pair symbolize the harmonious balance of once polarized principles of spiritual and physical desire.

The Egyptians in most regions abhorred the crocodile, which was associated with Set in his devouring aspect. But at the temple of Ombos, a small sanctuary is dedicated exclusively to Set in this form and contains a large number of mummified crocodiles which are the apparent remains of the sacred animals maintained at the temple. Here, the reptiles frolicked in the sacred well, where it is said that they wore jeweled collars and earrings, and were tame enough to be fed and petted by the priests of the sanctuary.

The dual character of the Kom Ombo temple is expressed in the twin sanctuaries and in architectural details that are rendered in symmetrical, double form. They mirror another negative element which Set embodies: division. At the same time, the harmony of the two in creative union is also articulated at this temple, suggesting to us that the two principles in unison contribute to the elevation of both spirit and matter.

Maat: the Neter of Order, associated with Aquarius

The world of the lotus flower is the region of Maat, wherein truth presides. May my words be pleasing to you, Mistress of Books, as I am judged in the Hall of Truth.

Maat is the celestial navigator, the Neter who sits at the prow of the Sun barque in its diurnal motion through the sky. Egyptian tradition says that she established Meten, the "path" of the ecliptic on which the planets travel. In this role, Maat is patroness of divine order, the unalterable course of the solar principle (life force) through the sky. Here, she is called "Lady of the Prow."

In her aspect as a funerary Neter, Maat wears the Feather of Truth, which is weighed against the heart of the initiate in the great judgment scene. This act ascertains the righteousness of one's deeds and determines whether one journeys to the region of the Neteru, transforms into a sky being, or returns to earth.

The feather is the instrument of writing in ancient Egypt, and Maat is consort of the divine scribe, Djehuti. In this aspect she is "Lady of Letters," the Neter of the recorded word which her husband has uttered in primeval time. As recorder, she fulfills the function of structure, embodying the limitless matrices of form which Djehuti's resonance fills. The feather is also the phonetic equivalent in the Egyptian hieroglyphic language of the word for the *cubit*, prime measure of the sacred canon. It is this measure, based upon the celestial rhythm, that is used in the design of the ancient sanctuaries that house the Kas of the Neteru when they descend to earth.

As one of the celestial pairs, Djehuti and Maat represent the expression of cosmic intelligence, and their realm encompasses the continuity of past, present, and future in the action of heavenly bodies. Divinatory activities come under their rule, as well as the theomantic science of empowering life through knowledge of the words of power and sacred names.

Before the initiate passes through the Duat in the journey toward cosmic life, the hall of the Maati goddesses must be traversed. Here reside the forty-two forms of the Neter who oversee the Negative Confession which must be recited in order to be freed from all past evil (karma). In this aspect, Maat represents the principle of conscience and innate ethical morality.

The heron—a bird of the papyrus swamps—is the sacred animal of Maat, and her color is the shimmering, pure white reflected in its feathers. Her scent is frankincense, burnt in the crowning of kings, and her stones are the amethyst and the rare, blue-purple Egyptian alexandrite. Her metal is platinum, a substance known in Egypt and regarded as cosmic in origin. *Mehyt* (papyrus), the testament of Egypt's sacred writing, is her exclusive plant.

Major Temples

All temples throughout Egyptian times originally possessed a dedication stele featuring Maat in her aspect as *Seshat*, the surveyor. In this image she is the dispenser of the architectural sacred canons as well as the divine inspiration of the

architect and builder. Some inscribed reliefs of this nature have been found at numerous sites, buried in the deepest portions of the temple center. In symbolist terms, this indicates that they were implanted as symbolic seeds of the building, along with portions of older temples from the site that would assure the continuity of the Divine House for a new cycle.

Inscriptions at Karnak depict Maat assisting Pharaoh and the local governor of Thebes in establishing the sacred precinct's cornerstones. A small temple at this great complex was dedicated to Maat in the Middle Kingdom and built by Amunhotep III.

Nut: the Neter of Cosmic Fluid, associated with Pisces

My mother Nut has embraced me, giving me dominion over the waters. I am exalted in the beauty of my mother, the nether sky.

Nut is Neter of the sky, who—with her brother Geb, the earth—gave birth to the four terrestrial powers represented by the cardinal signs. Her body is depicted as the firmament of stars through which Ra, the Sun, and the train of planetary Neteru travel each day in the Barque of a Million Years (eternity). In this aspect she is shown in temple reliefs as a great outstretched body, encircling the earth and enfolding all of creation. Each morning she gives birth to the luminaries at dawn; each evening she swallows them at dusk in a continuous cycle of heavenly renewal in which the goddess plays the major role.

Nut is depicted with the water vase as her crown, signifying the celestial fluid Sa through which all living things pass in their birthings through her body. This is the symbolic amniotic waters of her celestial womb, in which all life gestates. She is thus the causal power of manifestation, the bringer of birth on the cosmic level.

In the funerary literature, Nut welcomes the deceased into the sky after ascent from the Duat. She offers rest and refreshment under the legendary Nehet trees—her two sycamores—which continuously bear fruit that grant eternal life. These heavenly trees are said to stand on either side of the celestial opening (her body), an Egyptian representation of the two figures in the Pisces image.

Nut is both the beginning and ending of the celestial cycle, bringing forth the living and receiving the dead. The sarcophagi and coffins of all periods bear a remarkable consistency in depicting the Neter as the cosmic mother, who is

always inscribed on the roof of the structure, often covering the entire ceiling of the tomb. The deceased is thus enfolded in the arms of she who gestates all the living, even though the body has for a time been shed.

The animal of Nut is the hippopotamus, the form assumed by Taurt, the guardian of maternity. Her color is indigo, the hue of the night sky. Her scent is oakmoss, used in the ceremonial manufacture of *khyphi*, the incense burnt in temple ceremonials at sunset. Her stone is lapis lazuli, a substance associated with cosmic phenomena by virtue of its indigo color and gold specks that emulate the starry sky. The metal associated with Pisces is aluminum, the salts of which were used in mummification. The *nehet* (the fig-like, fruit-bearing sycamore, whose ancient name also means “shelter”) is Nut’s sacred domain in the sky, depicted as a locale where one receives refreshment in the Duat.

Major Temples

As Nut represents the sky of Egypt, all of the temples of the celestial Neteru feature a chapel of Nut adjacent to the temple proper, a testimony to the recognition of her power to bring forth the Sun, house the planets, and embody the stars. The goddess is usually depicted on the ceiling of an outdoor shrine, which was also illuminated at night from torch mountings in the chapel architecture. These precincts were the starting point for religious ceremonies that proceeded to the roof of the temple, where celestial life was observed and recorded. Hymns to the celestial bodies were made as they passed over the meridian of the temple, while records of such passages were tallied for sacred timekeeping. Above the Nut chapels at Dendera, Philae, and Edfu, the upper roofs feature carved post holes into which were placed the siting rods of the astronomer-priests.

The apex of mother goddess symbolism is fulfilled in Nut. The first half of the Zodiac represents human development in the sphere of earthly life, the second half symbolizes spiritual development in cosmic realms. The Neter Auset begins the second half as terrestrial mother who provides physical existence at birth and then releases her progeny to an elevated existence in the sky. Nut completes this cycle of experience as the celestial mother who welcomes back the returning soul, which has become illuminated as a star in the firmament of her body.

The Zodiacal Families

The division of the Zodiac into modes of activity (Qualities) and expression (Elements) apply in an interesting manner to the Neteru assigned herein to the zodiacal phases. This scheme may aid the student in understanding the complex functions of the Neteru in the context of esoteric astrology.

The qualities divide the work of the Zodiac signs into Cardinal (active, linear), Fixed (passive, circular), and Mutable (adaptive, diffuse) modes of activity as follows:

Cardinal	♈ ♉ ♊ ♋	Terrestrial Neteru	Asar, Nebt-Het, Auset, Set
Fixed	♌ ♍ ♎ ♏	Neteru of the Duat	Het-Her, Heru, Anpu, Maat
Mutable	♐ ♑ ♒ ♓	Celestial Neteru	Djehuti, Geb, Sekhmet, Nut

For the elemental phases, the Neteru manifest in four types of action: fire, earth, air, and water. The Neteru of Creation (Fire) implant the life force, those of Generation (Earth) contain it, those of Communication (Air) transmit it, and those of Dissolution (Water) metamorphize it as follows:

Fire	♈ ♉ ♊	Neteru of Creation	Asar, Heru, Sekhmet
Earth	♌ ♍ ♎	Neteru of Generation	Het-Her, Geb, Set
Air	♏ ♐ ♑	Neteru of Communication	Djehuti, Auset, Maat
Water	♒ ♓ ♈	Neteru of Dissolution	Nebt-Het, Anpu, Nut

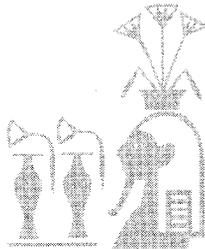
The Neteru descend to earth through the medium of the stars, but the maintenance of their power in the terrestrial sphere was believed by the Egyptians to be both the responsibility and the reward of the human race. The locale of this work was the Divine House, the place where spiritual forces were known to incarnate cyclically, to reveal themselves to the living, and to bring their power to the environment.

Sign	Neter	Principle	Function	Animal	Stone
	Asar	Renewal	Germination	Bull	Malachite
	Het-Her	Fertilization	Conception	Cow	Turquoise
	Djehuti	Resonance	Communication	Ibis	Lodestone
	Nebt-Het	Secretion	Sustenance	Owl	Moonstone
	Heru	Ascension, Exhaltation	Mastery, Initiation	Hawk	Topaz
	Geb	Creation	Vegetation	Goose	Amber
	Auset	Fruition	Birth	Swallow	Carnelian
	Anpu	Transmutation	Digestion	Jackal	Flint
	Sekhmet	Purification	Purgation	Lioness, Cat	Sapphire
	Set	Fixation	Corruption	Pig, Crocodile	Diamond
	Maat	Order	Structure	Heron	Alexandrite
	Nut	Augmentation	Gestation	Hippopotamus	Lapis Lazuli

Table 11—Correspondences of the Twelve Neteru in the Zodiac (Part 1)

Sign	Color	Metal	Scent	Wood	Temples
♈	Green	Iron	Cypress	Acacia	Abydos
♉	Blue-Green	Copper	Myrrh	Tamarisk	Dendera
♊	Gray-White	Quicksilver	Eucalyptus	Pomegranate	Hermopolis
♋	Blue	Silver	Lotus	Willow Philae	Dendera,
♌	Yellow	Gold	Sandalwood	Olive	Edfu
♍	Brown	Bronze	Patchouli	Persea	Heliopolis
♎	Maroon	Electrum	Jasmine	Cedar	Philae
♏	Black	Brass	Camphor	Palm	Lycopolis
♐	Orange	Tin	Civet	Juniper	Karnak
♑	Red	Lead, Iron	Musk	Mulberry	Ombos
♒	Blue-Violet	Platinum	Frankincense	Papyrus	Karnak
♓	Indigo	Aluminum	Oakmoss	Sycamore Edfu, Philae	Dendera,

Table 11—Correspondences of the Twelve Neteru in the Zodiac (Part 2)



Chapter Four

THE DIVINE HOUSE

Do you not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven, or, to speak more exactly, in Egypt all the operations of the powers which rule and work in heaven have been transferred to earth below? Nay, it should rather be said that the whole Kosmos dwells in this our land as in its sanctuary.

Hermetica: Asclepius III, 24b

There is a belief today among the dwellers at Edfu, in Upper Egypt, that the ancient sanctuary still possesses mystic powers. Women of the village who hope to have children have been known to enter the temple at night, circumnavigate the altar within the shrine seven times, and exit with the certainty that their barrenness will disappear.

This custom at modern Edfu, a predominantly Muslim village, represents a universal sentiment known to all cultures—regardless of time and place—that the unique force in a house of spiritual life never fades. The temple moves us to experience and communicate with that which is greater than ourselves, to apprehend what evades our conscious understanding. There was apparently no variant for this feeling to the ancient Egyptians, and it is expressed in myriad ways at the Per Neter, the Divine House.

In Egypt, the temple is the temporal residence of the Neter as well as the locale of its mysteries. In this context, “mysteries” refer to the special knowledge of the Neter’s powers and manifestations, as well as the manner in which this is

accessed by those associated with it. Reference to the mysteries practiced at Egyptian temples are numerous in the reports of ancient travelers and it appears that the knowledge and practice pertaining to these activities was reserved for only those qualified to participate, even though their existence was universally known. The qualifications included prolonged study at the Per Neter as well as a period of service dedicated to the temple exclusively.

The fundamental basis of the Neter's mysteries consisted of fixing its presence into a consecrated precinct and honoring it through continuous sacred ritual. The evocation and maintenance of the divine presence made its power accessible to both clergy and laity, in the periodic episodes of the Neter's appearances as signaled by the Sacred Astronomy, and in the festivals that honored significant mythic events. As simple as the scheme appears, these basic activities were intricately choreographed through the deployment of the Sacred Science in a clearly defined manner, using principles grounded in natural philosophy and science. And in this pursuit of communing with divine life, it was recognized that first and foremost the constitution of a sacred space was necessary, one that would mirror the Neter's nature in all possible ways.

Architectonics

Without philosophy, there is no architecture, but only building technique.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Egyptian Miracle*

In human life, the spirit embodies the physical form, and in the same manner the Neter embodies its temple. The Per Neter was regarded not only as the Neter's house but also as the physical counterpart of its spiritual principle, its body. The Egyptian temple was thus viewed as an edifice reflecting the qualities of both sky (the region of the Neteru) and earth (the region of human endeavor).

As the temple embodies all of divine life on a macrocosmic scale, it necessarily reflects in the physical world the sublime qualities of divine regions. The sacred marshes of time are embodied in the soaring columns of the hypostyle hall of the temple, which leads celebrants into the environment of the Neteru. The great halls of the Duat are reflected in the temple's auxiliary chambers and Hall of Records, which in ancient times recorded for posterity the divine geneal-

ogy of royal persons and hence, the human race. And the sacred mound upon which the ancient ones came to rest at the beginning of time is established in the sanctuary of the temple, which also houses the *naos* where the Neter reposes.

The temple is also a microcosm of the universe—and as such it becomes an *anthropocosmos*. In this dimension, the temple possesses the skeletal, circulatory, and organic systems rendered in building materials that assist in the reception and transmission of the Neter's vital principle to those who enter its house. In this manner the Neter becomes one of the living on earth, partaking of sustenance through the daily rituals of the temple and sharing in the drama of human life through ceremonial events.¹

The traveler to Egypt today will observe a number of ancient temples reflecting architectural styles from the entire range of accepted Egyptian chronology—the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms as well as the Late Period and Graeco-Roman times. But in spite of superficial variations, certain features are consistent, such as the division between the outer and the inner courts and the existence of subterranean and roof chambers within the levels of the building. Schwaller de Lubicz discovered that a very complete, though subtle number of features is found in the Egyptian temple which demonstrate the existence of a complex, yet deliberately employed knowledge of sacred building design which he regarded as *architectonics*. Its aim was the creation of a mechanism by which a focusing lens for both worlds—sky and earth—could harmoniously and consciously exchange information and experience.

The essential premise of architectonics is that the sacred space occupies a number of dimensions other than the physical. Four dimensions and their reference points have been identified in symbolist philosophy as the subtle tools employed in the architecture of the Divine House. Each explains the esoteric features of the Per Neter and the unique, though often inexplicable, design elements of a number of temples. De Lubicz defines them as the following:

1 Shafer, Byron et al: "The traditional temple was a tight weave of world-as-divine symbols. The plait of its particular visual forms, ritual behaviors, and conceptual contents virtually excluded an intrusive interpretation that god was transcendental to the world." *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca NY, 1997; p. 235.

Number: This defines the size of the temple, thus its function and form. As one of the material dimensions, this delimits the physical area of the temple, its boundaries and physical features. *Number provides the “seed plan” of the temple.*

Time: This provides the orientation of the temple, thus its symbiosis. The temple’s orientation consisted of two principal reference systems, terrestrial and celestial. The former was employed in reference to the Nile, the latter in reference to Solar, Lunar, and Stellar points. This dimension invites the fusion of heavenly and earthly, physical and nonphysical forces at cosmically opportune times. *Time provides the purpose of the temple.*

Geometry: This defines the shape of the temple, thus its harmony. Much has been reported on the sacred geometry employed in the design of Egyptian monuments, though rarely in the context of the other reference points which provide additional dimensions—and insights—into the building and its purpose. Nevertheless, two principle elements of sacred geometry are ever present at the temple: the circle and the square. These are often embodied in the use of the two irrational number roots, pi ($\pi = 3.14159$) and phi ($\phi = 1.6180339$) or the Golden Section. *Geometry provides the growth plan of the temple.*

Volume: This articulates the meaning of the temple, thus its experience. Inclusive in this dimension is the appearance of what de Lubicz calls volume-forms, symbolized by the five regular solids or the four elements and their binding force, the quintessence. The use of certain building materials chosen to evoke specific associations with elemental forces is also relevant to this dimension. *Volume provides the goal of the temple.*

The Dimension of Number: Temple Function and Form

To build the house of the Neter means to create its idea in all possible ways, with the material as well as with the measurements and the text carved on the stones.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Egyptian Miracle*

As we have seen, the land of Egypt was regarded as a mirror of divine regions. Its divisions and the locations of significant religious, political, and funerary cities were determined by the protocol of the celestial sphere and the associations of the Neteru with natural phenomena. These characteristics were inscribed and recorded throughout the millennia in Egypt’s temples, whose locations, designs, and functions embodied the Sacred Science in the most comprehensive manner of any ancient milieu.

From the earliest times, Egypt was divided into the northern and southern halves, or Lower and Upper Egypt, in reference to the direction of the Nile's flow from upstream in the south to downstream in the north. The river cuts low into a deep valley which comprises the southern region, and in ancient times it fanned out in the north to seven branches that created the verdant Delta region. The eastern and western divisions of the country were determined by the city of Memphis at the apex, the earliest known capitol of the unified Two Lands.

This natural division had a political parallel as well—the earliest recorded king of Egypt, Mena of Dynasty I, is recorded as the unifier of what had originally been two nations. According to egyptologists, Lower Egypt was reputed to have been an agricultural society symbolized by the royal sceptre of the *nekheka* (the harvester's flail), while Upper Egypt was the domain of hunters and herdsman, symbolized by the royal sceptre of the *heka* (the shepherd's crook). The joining of the Two Lands was geodetically determined at Memphis because the length of the region from north to south at the time was centered at this location.

Two ancient nilometers from which the annual flood was measured were located in Upper and Lower Egypt, situated near the two legendary "hidden caverns" of the Nile god, Hapi. Lower Egypt's nilometer was located at the present island of Roda on the Nile, between the cities of Cairo and Giza. It was administered by the priests of Heliopolis, who measured the depth of the waters at the height of the annual inundation to determine its consequent impact on the planting and harvesting season in the Delta. In Upper Egypt, the Theban priests monitored the nilometer on the island of Elephantine, near the sacred rock of Senmit, one of Hapi's mythic caverns. Here the impact of the inundation also determined agricultural life as well as shipping and commerce in the region.

As each half of the land possessed its own capitol which served as a political and economic center for the region, so did each maintain a sacred cemetery to which all the dead sojourned. The necropolis of the south is situated on the west bank near modern-day Abydos, the ancient Abedju (Thinis), seat of the nome spirit *Anher*. The necropolis of the north is located at Saqqara, residence of the nome spirit *Sokar*, on the southwestern bank of the Nile across from modern Cairo. The people of each region were not obligated to conduct burials exclusively at their respective necropoleis, however. From the beginning of Egyptian history, we find that memorials to the deceased were maintained at both centers,

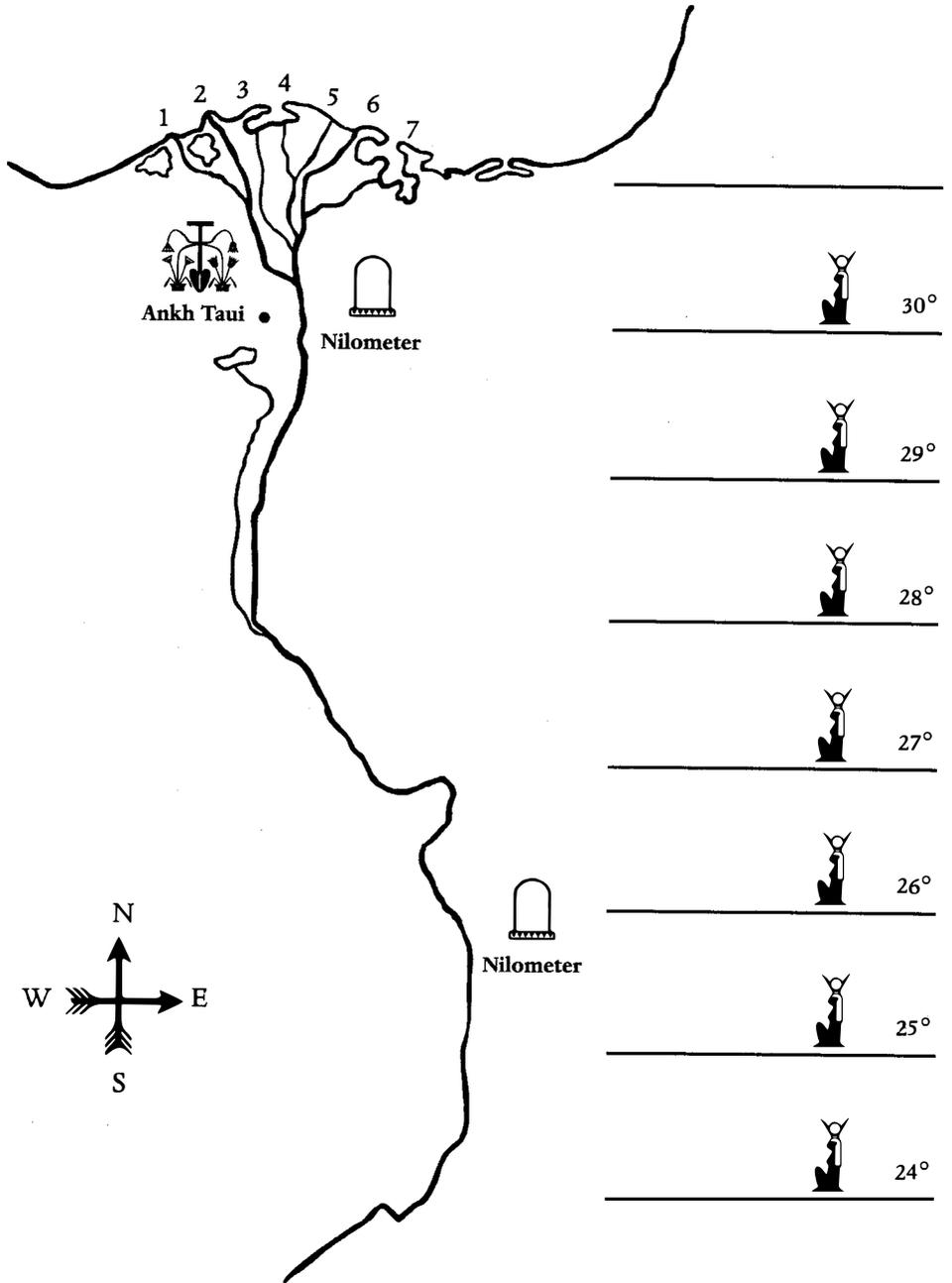


Figure 27 (at left)—The Ancient Divisions of Egypt:

Diodorus reported seven branches in the ancient Nile* from west to east (left to right). They were:

1. the Canopic
2. the Bolbitine (now the Rosetta branch in the western Delta)
3. the Sebennytic
4. the Phatnitic (now the Damietta branch in the eastern Delta)
5. the Mendesian
6. the Tanitic
7. and the Pelusiatic.



The ancient capital of the united two lands of Egypt was Ankh Tau, “Life of the Two Lands,” where the city of Memphis was founded. This metropolis marked the east-west axis of Egypt as a whole.



The nilometers at Roda (Lower Egypt) and Elephantine (Upper Egypt) were annually consulted at flood time by the temple priests of Heliopolis and Thebes, respectively. Here, prognostications on the agricultural yield were made based on the depth of the Nile silt at inundation.



The seven ancient districts of Egypt were each under the rulership of one of the seven Het-Her deities, and divided the Nile almost exactly where modern latitude lines are located.

Het-Her Goddess	Demarcation	Sanctuaries
Border of Egypt	= 31° N	Behdet
Het-Her of the Sinai	= 30° N	Serabit el Khadim
Het-Her of Heliopolis	= 29° N	Heliopolis
Het-Her of Hermopolis	= 28° N	Hermopolis
Het-Her of Aphroditopolis	= 27° N	El Badari
Het-Her of Thebes	= 26° N	Abydos, Dendera
Het-Her of Ammu	= 25° N	Edfu
Het-Her of Kaset	= 24° N	Philae

* Murphy, Edwin: *The Antiquities of Egypt: A Translation with Notes of Book I of the Library of History of Diodorus Siculus*. Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick, NJ, 1990; p. 41.



	Kemet, "Black Land"		Deshret, "Red Land"	
District		Delta		Valley
Plant		Papyrus		Lotus
Pharaonic Emblem		Bee		Sedge Plant
Royal Crown		Red (<i>Deshret</i>)		White (<i>Hedjet</i>)
Sceptre		Flail (<i>Nekheka</i>)		Crook (<i>Heka</i>)
Archaic Neter		Wadjet of Buto		Nekhebet of El Kab
Metal		Gold (<i>Nub</i>)		Silver (<i>Het</i>)
Temple Tradition		Solar		Lunar
Neter		Heru		Set
Predynastic Center		Pe-Dep		Nekhen
Capitol		Buto		Hierokonpolis
Ancient Necropolis		Saqqara		Abydos
Sacred Astronomy		Equinoctial		Solstitial
Economy		Agriculture		Husbandry

Table 12—Symbolic Elements of the Two Lands

despite the prevailing politics of the time. In many cases, the mummy was interred at one location while the Canopic jars containing the internal organs were buried at the other. In other instances, the body was buried at one necropolis and a cenotaph (literally, "empty tomb") or tablet commemorating the deceased was erected at the other. Another unusual custom in some periods involved the burial of royal personages in rock tombs, with additional, uninhabited tombs constructed for them at both the Upper and Lower Egyptian cemeteries.

This curious regard for maintaining northern and southern locales for sacred events was not confined to burials. The Neteru had their northern and southern divine houses just as the Royal House possessed northern and southern palaces. In another way, the Two Lands also reflected the essential qualities of the celestial sphere. The permanence of the polar regions was symbolized in the orientations of a number of structures in the north, while the ecliptical path from east to west was incorporated in much of the architecture of the south. Thus, the distinctions of the Two Lands were metaphorically joined in balance, and at the Per Neter, this union was maintained.

Besides the regions of north and south, the divisions of the land into seven sacred districts, each ruled by one of the Het-Her deities, was another criterion of the geodetic scheme of Egypt depicted in the temple. The natural divisions of the Nile in the Delta region into seven branches was also a theme expressed in Egyptian symbolism.

The Lunar number fourteen is frequently incorporated into architectural elements at the Per Neter. At the temple of Luxor in Upper Egypt, fourteen tawny sandstone "papyrus" columns form the glorious colonnade of Amunhotep III. And surrounding Djoser's sacred precinct at Saqqara in Lower Egypt, a white limestone wall is inscribed with fourteen closed dummy doors, believed to be imitating the original white wall around the ancient city of Memphis. Besides defining the length of days in the lunar waxing and waning cycles, fourteen represents the archaic number of Osirian shrines. These existed from antiquity, each being erected over one of the legendary places where Asar's relics came to rest after his dismemberment by Set. During the Nile's inundation in ancient times, a fourteen-day journey was possible between the two principal Osirian shrines—Abydos in Upper Egypt and Busiris in Lower Egypt. The former was the shrine

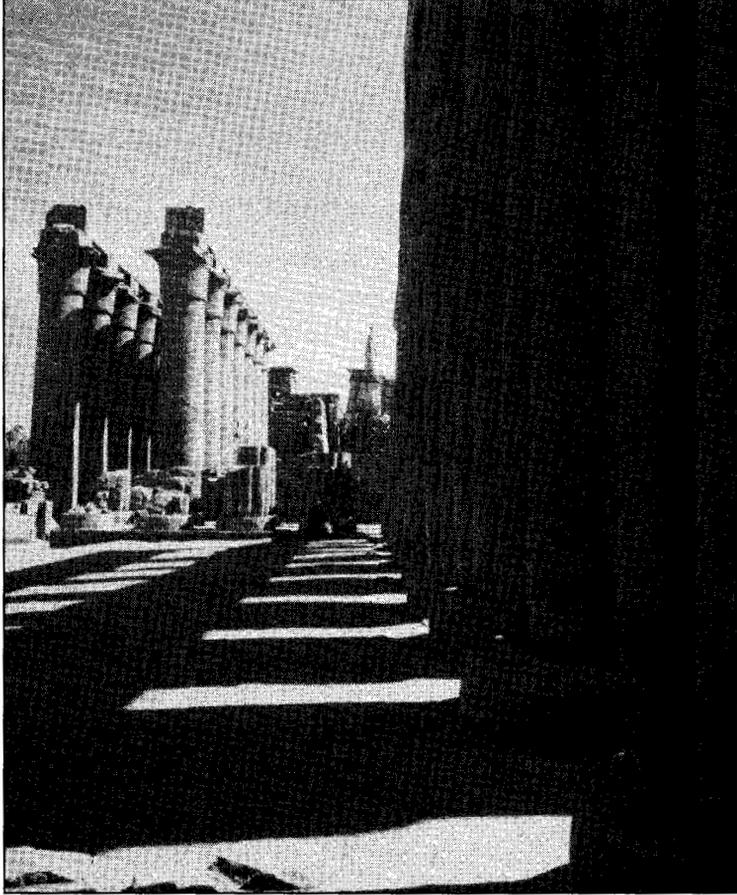


Photo 2—Colonnade at the Luxor Temple

of the Neter's head, the latter was where his leg came to rest. The religious pilgrim was thus able to recapitulate the restoration of the Neter as the flooded river revived the land. Of the fourteen shrines, four important centers were also selected to represent the four funerary directions of the Delta: Sais in the west, Mendes in the east, Buto in the north, and Heliopolis in the south.

The number fourteen has other esoteric attributes and stems from a most ancient figuration of sacred space. The funerary literature articulates fourteen *Aats* or regions of *Sekhet Hetepet*, the Osirian realm. It has been suggested that

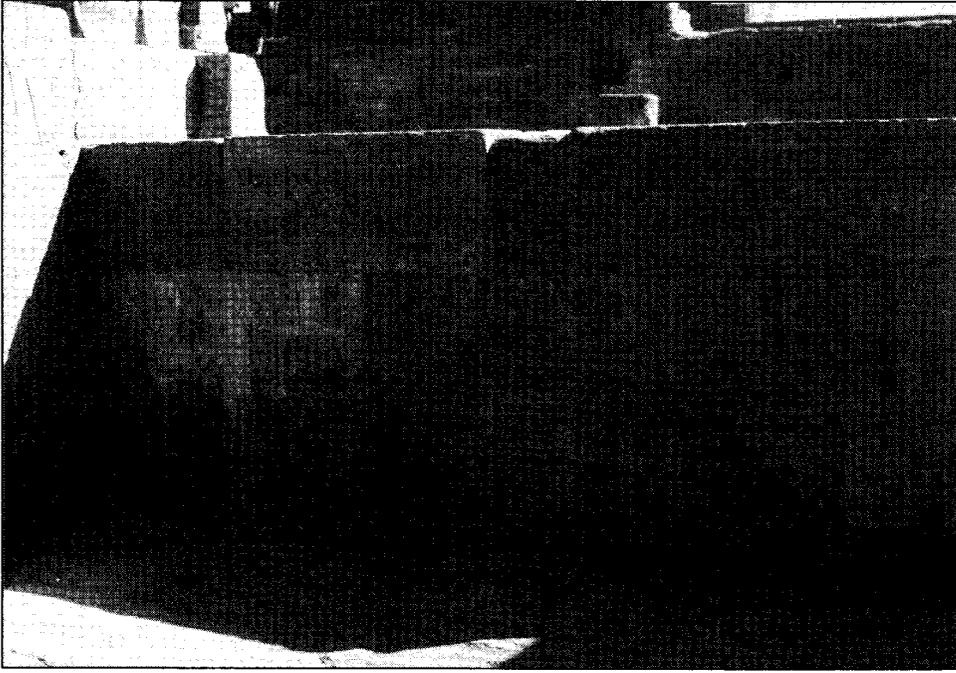


Photo 3—Nome Spirits at the Foundation of the Ombos Temple

these regions are associated with the fourteen stars in the Orion constellation with which Asar was identified from earliest times.² In turn, the fourteen pyramids constructed in the Dynasties 4 and 5 are thought to be gateways to these regions.

The forty-two nome divisions, their guardian spirits, and capitols, were also of fundamental importance in establishing the foundation of the temple. Their symbolic presence denoted that the earth spirits were ceremonially recognized at the temple's periodic festivals, and supported the Neter's power and continuance in the physical world. At Philae, Ombos, and Karnak, striking reliefs of the nome spirits bringing offerings to the temple are prominently inscribed in each of the temple's foundation stones. These figures symbolize the perpetual tribute provided to the temple at the beginning of every sacred year by the inhabitants of

² Krupp: E. C.: *Skywatchers, Shamans & Kings*. John Wiley & Sons: New York, 1997; p. 288.

the nomes, as well as the devotion that the earth spirits provide to the Neter of the temple.

Thus, the basic divisions representing the characteristics of the land, its archaic power centers and sacred shrines, are incorporated into the fundamental plan of the temple. In some cases, they are literally articulated by the number of pillars and gates present at the center, in other instances the numbers are inferred in divisions within the temple—in chambers and reliefs. These numbers reflect an integral function of the Divine House; they emulate the sacred terrain of the Neteru, the sky. And they serve to remind the celebrants that, even though on earth, they enter this region through temple ritual.

The Dimension of Time: Temple Orientation and Alignment

In Egypt . . . the pantheon was astronomical and, to a very large extent, solar in origin. I shall have to show that the remainder—nearly the whole of it—had its origin in stellar relations.

Sir Norman Lockyer, *The Dawn of Astronomy*

In modern times, the alignments of Egypt's temples to stars has been observed and recorded, but with little understanding of the meaning behind the practice. We have seen how Sir Norman Lockyer, the nineteenth-century astronomer and founder of *Nature* magazine, was convinced that Egyptian architecture had an important astronomical basis. He believed that it was not necessary to examine ancient Egyptian writings in order to document the intended purpose of the temples. Rather, he proposed, it was only logical to study the temples themselves. In fulfillment of this view, Lockyer spent a number of years in Egypt making an exhaustive study of the ground plans of a large number of Egyptian temples and monuments, matching them with the alignments of celestial objects, notably the Sun and major stars.

According to Lockyer, the entire temple agenda was dependent upon precise celestial observation in order to commune with the gods at the times of their appearance. This included the monitoring of dawn at various periods of the year which determined the commencement of a particular Neter's feast day when the Sun rose with certain stars that were associated with the divinity.

We know that the study of star locations and their sacred names was undertaken to calculate sacred periods by temple clergy. This is evidenced by detailed

dekan lists and star maps of the ecliptical and polar regions from numerous historical periods that have been found in both temples and tombs since Lockyer's surveys. Egyptologists have explained their function as part of the temple repertoire of timekeeping, but Lockyer and others believe the practice was required to effect the evocation of the Neteru in the sky consistently and accurately.

The end result of Lockyer's study supports the symbolist view that the Egyptian temples are arranged in space to fulfill two objectives: orientation and alignment. He proposed that the Egyptians had two astronomical systems in place at the Per Neter—one in which the temple was oriented to cosmic light at the most potent times, and another in which it was aligned to "capture" the illumination of specific stars passing overhead. The Egyptians used these perspectives as the software for communing with divine beings who traverse the sky at regular intervals in their "barques" or stellar bodies.

In the category of orientation, Lockyer defined Egyptian monuments as falling into two groups: the solstitial monuments of Upper Egypt and the equinoctial complexes of Lower Egypt. The former are oriented to sunrise or sunset at the solstices (east-west orientation), the latter to sunrise or sunset at the equinoxes (north-south orientation). As he defined it, the solar temples depict the drama of light and dark, day and night. Here, he noted that hymns to the solar gods included references to *Akhet* (the horizon), depicting the Neteru (as stellar bodies) appearing and withdrawing from east to west in their daily manifestations. Although he believed that the Egyptian temples were primarily solar

Locality	Monument	Period	Orientation
Abu Simbel	Temple of Rameses II	New Kingdom	Sunrise at the Winter Solstice
Karnak	Great Temple of Amun	various	"
Karnak	Temple of Ra Harakhte	"	"
Karnak	Avenue of Ram Sphinxes	New Kingdom	Same Axis as the Great Temple of Amun
West Thebes	Colossi of Memnon	Middle Kingdom	Sunrise at the Winter Solstice

Table 13—Temples Oriented to the Solstices

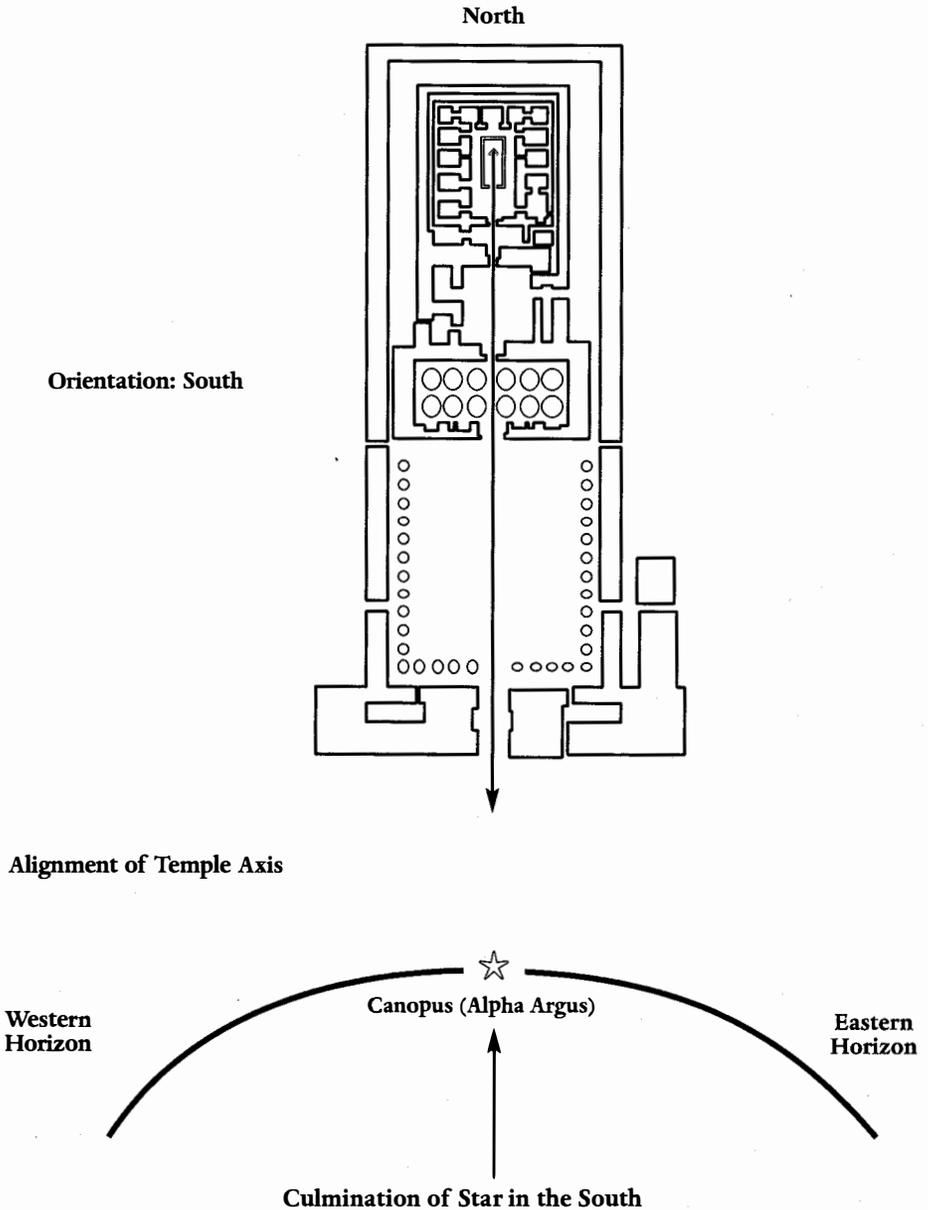


Figure 28—Orientation and Alignment of the Temple of Heru at Edfu (looking north): Lockyer calculated that Edfu was aligned to the culmination of the star Canopus, though temple inscriptions say that its axis is aligned to Orion in the south and Ursa Major in the north—referring only to the constellations and not to specific stars.

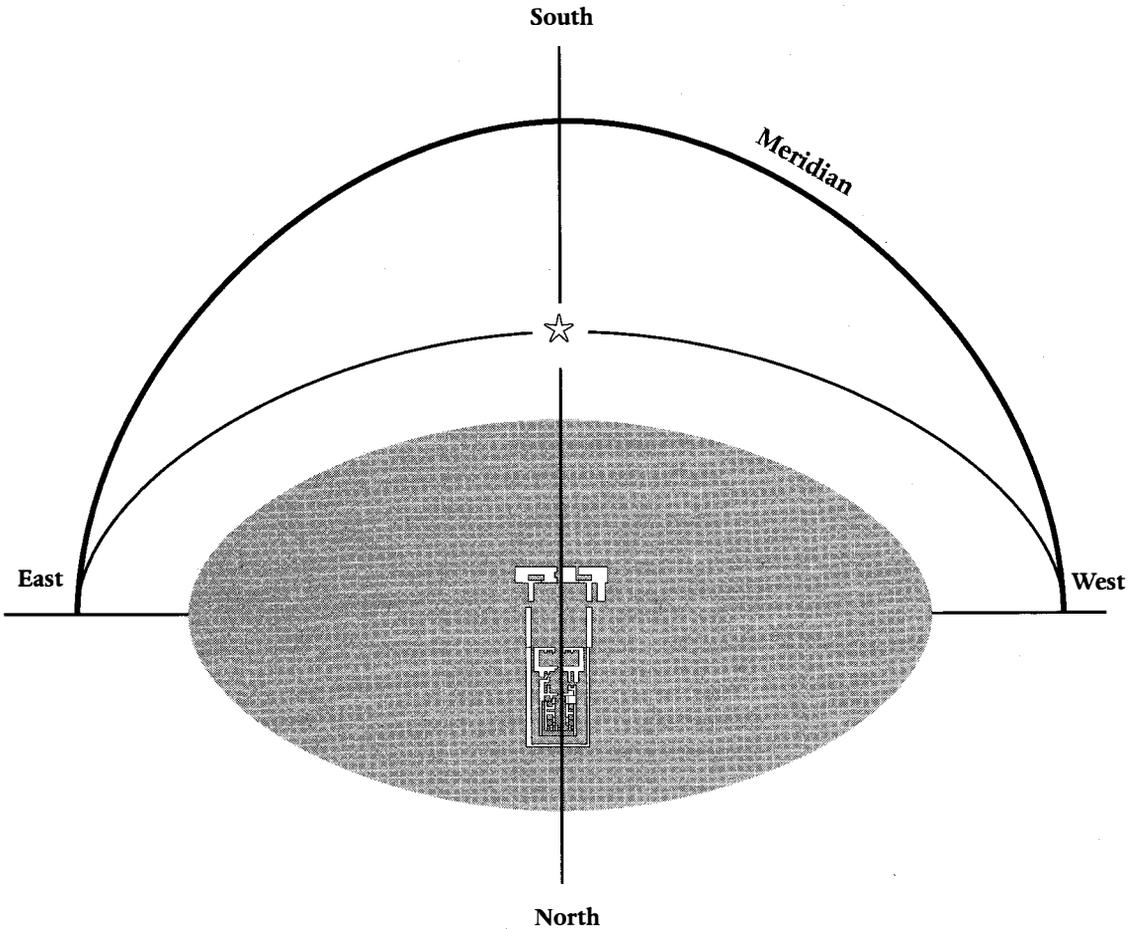


Figure 29—Perspective of the Orientation and Alignment of the Temple at Edfu (looking south)

in nature, Lockyer did find unusual characteristics at some locales which do not fit strictly into the scheme of Solar architecture.

Lockyer also believed that a number of temples are aligned to the culminations of specific celestial bodies held sacred in many ancient cultures. Some alignments are stars which, in rising in the east and setting in the west during their diurnal circuit, culminate (reach their highest point in the sky) directly in line

with the temple's sanctuary. In other cases, stars are associated with the particular Neteru of the temple, who "make their appearances" in the sanctuary on the day of the year when the star rises just before dawn's light, illuminating the sanctuary through the precisely aligned pylons and columns of the temple's outer courts.

While some astronomers in Lockyer's day criticized his thesis and argued that a wide variety of stars could, by coincidence, rise at dawn or culminate along the axis of every Egyptian temple, Lockyer documented his observations that only eight stars consistently fulfilled the criteria, and their names are emphasized in the temple inscriptions where they align. These, as the tables on pages 199 and 200 reveal, include specific ecliptical and polar stars.

Certain other temples are oriented to stars which never rise or set but remain permanently positioned in the northern sky (though not always visible during the daylight hours). The monuments that reflect polar alignments are, curiously, the largest and the oldest of Egypt, and appear to stem from the tradition that expresses a goal of Stellar transformation: renewal through identification with great cosmic cycles.

Locality	Monument	Period	Orientation
Abydos	Temple of Sen I	New Kingdom	Sunrise at the Equinoxes
Luxor	Great Temple of Amun	New Kingdom	"
El Kab	Temple of Nekhebet	Old Kingdom	"
Giza	Sphinx	Old Kingdom	"
Medinet Habu	Temple of Rameses III	New Kingdom	"

Table 14—Temples Oriented to the Equinoxes

Locality	Monument	Period	Orientation	Astronomical Catalog
Abu Simbel	Temple of Het-Her	3200 B.C.E.	Phact	Alpha Columbae
Edfu	Temple of Heru	6400 B.C.E.	Canopus	Alpha Argus
Heliopolis	Annu	5300 B.C.E.	Capella	Alpha Aurigae
Karnak	Temple of Seti II	1700 B.C.E.	Canopus	Alpha Argus
Karnak	Temple of Khons	1000 B.C.E.	Canopus	Alpha Argus
Karnak (B)	Temple of Maat	2100 B.C.E.	Canopus	Alpha Argus
Karnak (D)	Temple of Mont	1800 B.C.E.	Sirius	Alpha Canis Major
Karnak (G)	Temple of Ptah	2500 B.C.E.	Capella	Alpha Aurigae
Karnak (J)	Great Temple of Amun Ra	2500 B.C.E.	Phact	Alpha Columbae
Karnak (O)	Temple of Ra Herakhte	3100 B.C.E.	Sirius	Alpha Canis Major
Karnak (U)	Temple of Asar and Opet	3000 B.C.E.	Capella	Alpha Aurigae
Karnak (V)*	————	3400 B.C.E.	Phact	Alpha Columbae
Karnak (Y)	Temple of Khonspehkhrod	3200 B.C.E.	Spica	Alpha Virginis
Kom Ombo	Little Temple	2400 B.C.E.	Bungula	Alpha Centauri
Kom Ombo	Temple of Sobekh and Haoeris	200 B.C.E.	Capella	Alpha Aurigae
Medinet Habu	Ethiopian Temple	800 B.C.E.	Phact	Alpha Columbae
Memphis	Temple of Ptah	5300 B.C.E.	Capella	Alpha Aurigae
Philae	Temple of Auset	6400 B.C.E.	Canopus	Alpha Argus
Philae	Ethiopian Temple	800 B.C.E.	Sirius	Alpha Canis Major
Philae	Temple of Auset	700 B.C.E.	Sirius	Alpha Canis Major
Tel el Amarna	Temple of Aton	1900 B.C.E.	Spica	Alpha Virginis
West Thebes	Rameses II	2600 B.C.E.	Bungula	Alpha Centauri

* Letters designate monuments classified by Lepsius' survey.

Table 15—Temples Aligned to Elliptical Stars

Locality	Monument	Period	Orientation	Notes
Dendera	Temple of Het-Her	4800 B.C.E.	Dubhe	Alpha Ursa Major
Dendera	Temple of Het-Her	4200 B.C.E.	Eltanin	Gamma Draconis
Heliopolis	Temple of Atum	5300 B.C.E.	Dubhe	Alpha Ursa Major
Karnak (W)*	Temple of Nectanebo II	2500 B.C.E.	Eltanin	Gamma Draconis
Karnak (J)	Great Temple of Amun Ra	2500 B.C.E.	Eltanin	Gamma Draconis

* Letters designate monuments classified by Lepsius' survey.

Table 16—Temples Aligned to Polar Stars

The Dimension of Geometry: Temple Harmony

Being consecrated to a specific principle, an Egyptian temple becomes what we would call a library, exhaustively epitomizing all that can be known about its subject.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Egyptian Miracle*

That the Egyptians strived for a high degree of harmony, balance, and proportion in their architecture is acknowledged by those who experience the distinctive ambiance of the temples, as well as scholars who have discovered significant geometric patterns in temple design. This is to be expected, in that the design of the temple imitates the universe, incorporating fundamental principles of cosmic nature in one composite form.

The circle and the square represent the two principle elements of sacred geometry. Derived from the circle, π is the ratio of the circumference to its diameter (366/116.5014183), a number representing an infinite cycle of growth. The geometry of the circle symbolizes the unmanifest and at the same time it offers no resolution, being a continuous, unbroken function. In the last century, pyramid scholars discovered that significant geometric values were built into the Great Pyramid, a Dynasty 4 monument attributed to construction by the Pharaoh Khufu. The perimeter of the Great Pyramid divided by twice its height

gives the value of π (3.14159+). The same value is arrived at using the corresponding measures of the upper chamber of the pyramid and the granite coffer inside it.

The square gives rise to the three sacred number roots, which will generate the five perfect geometric solids: the hexahedron, dodecahedron, octahedron, tetrahedron, and icosahedron. The sacred number roots are as follows.

$\sqrt{2} = 1.41421+$, called the number of *generation*.

$\sqrt{3} = 1.73205+$, called the number of *formation*. The *vesica piscis*, a geometric figure used as the basis of floor plans in medieval cathedrals, is derived from this value.

$\sqrt{5} = 2.23606+$, called the number of *regeneration*. This last value is related to phi (ϕ), used by mathematicians to represent the ratio of the Golden Section, so named by Leonardo da Vinci. It is obtained by adding 1 to the square root of $\sqrt{5}$ and dividing the sum by 2 ($1 + \sqrt{5} / 2 = 1.61803+$). The ratio also occurs between numbers in the Fibonacci series, named for the twelfth-century mathematician. The Fibonacci numbers (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55), can continue ad infinitum, so long as each term is the sum of the two previous terms. There is no fixed ratio between these numbers, but if we take two at a time and state them as fractions to determine their decimal values, we do find a constant of 1.618034+.

Why is the Golden Section so important? The ϕ proportion is found extensively in natural forms. From the structure of cosmic nebulae to the formation of the human fetus, this harmonic is fundamental to all spiral arrangements observed in nature: in the trunks, branches, and leaves of trees, in flower petals and plants, and in the shapes of sea mollusks. In the sunflower, seeds are arranged on the head in spirals, each spiral containing ϕ times more seeds than the one inside it.

Architecture employing the Golden Section as its formula is harmonious and pleasing to the eye, as medieval artists and builders discovered. It produces balance and relatedness, not only to the eye but in the function of communicating chambers and walls in a structure. In anatomy, the ϕ proportion divides the human body at the navel, establishing that the measure is embodied in the human form

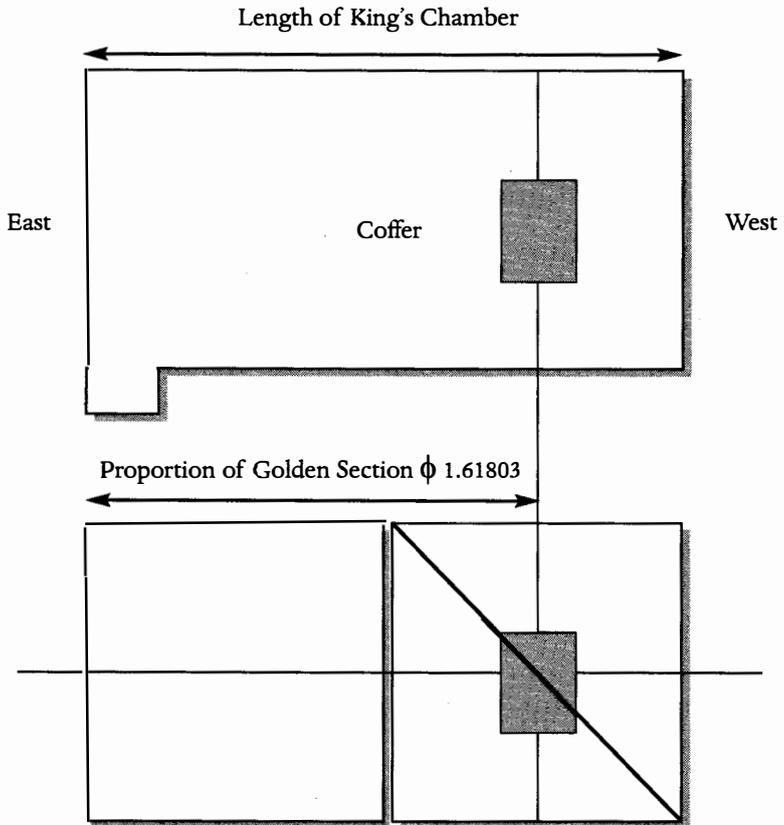


Figure 30—The Floor Plan of the Great Pyramid's Upper Chamber

from embryonic life. Schwaller de Lubicz demonstrated that in turn, the geometry of the temple mirrors the idealized human form—the anthropomorphic design is the prototype of the sacred space. He believed that ϕ represented the creative function at work in the temple, the process of the Neter's reproduction in the phenomenal world of which its house is the shell.

Both π and ϕ are irrational numbers, not being expressed as integers or fractions and capable of infinite calculation. When employed together, they evoke harmonic progression, combining the properties of the circle's continuity with the square's incremental growth. This phenomenon is termed *gnomonic expansion*,

and is a geometric principle consistently found in the architecture of the Egyptian temple. From the sanctuary to the outer pylons, the initial geometry of the holy of holies is amplified in the outer courts by size, volume, and use of symbolic building materials. In nature it is embodied in spiral forms, from the hair and the skeletal bones to tree trunks. In the Great Pyramid, both irrational numbers are integrated in the outer and inner dimensions of the structure.

Related to the concept of harmonic progression and the Golden Section is the "golden triangle," a rectangle with adjacent sides having lengths in the golden ratio. Its property is such that if a square with a side equal to the rectangle's short side is marked off, the remaining figure will be another golden rectangle; this process can be repeated infinitely. The floor of the Great Pyramid's upper chamber consists of two equal squares or a rectangle. The line marking the proportion of the Golden Section on the floor plan falls in the position of the coffer in the chamber.

The Dimension of Volume: The Temple Experience

The study of the pharaonic monument is inexhaustible.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Temple in Man*

As each temple was viewed as a branch or shoot emanating from divine regions, it required a cosmic framework in order to take flower in the soil of the sacred space. From this it blossomed, arising at its time of ripening according to its orientation and alignment, and growing according to the seed plan of its number. In this manner, the form of the Neter flourished, and was sustained with the physical materials that reflected the Neter's substance. Every corporeal aspect—stone, wood, color, and inscriptions—was a vital consideration in the housing of divine life and its transmission to those who entered its realm.

Egyptologists have remarked that elements of more ancient buildings were reused in temple foundations and pylon walls because the ancients "ran out" of building materials or "usurped" former structures and built over them when dynastic disputes prevailed. Yet it is known that the Egyptians deliberately used both raw and manufactured materials in a symbolic manner, to convey sacred ideas as well as to fulfill practical functions. The symbolist examines the context in which these materials are used to discover the overarching meaning contained in these structures.

The Egyptians integrated the Osirian principle of simultaneity—new life rising out of death—in every aspect of their art, crafts, and building construction. At the Divine House, this idea was incorporated from the beginning into the foundation of the physical structure. De Lubicz pointed out that one of three types of temple foundations are found in Egypt, each representing a sacred principle working at the root level of the Per Neter. The first type is found at the temple originally built on virgin soil, with symbolic elements sown into the foundation. Salt, bitumen, charcoal, and resins have been identified as the common materials, but some unique foundation deposits had been uncovered in modern times, located in a secure or secret part of the temple. Green-glazed faïence bricks, plaques of gold, silver, copper, lapis lazuli, lead, carnelian, jasper, geometric pieces of alabaster, and threaded crystal awls have been discovered. The inauguration of a new principle is implied in this instance, supplied by the raw elements of the environment and the sacred tools that symbolically assist in the creation of the sacred space over time.

The second type of foundation reveals relics from more ancient temples, carefully turned over at the root level of the new edifice to symbolize the sowing of the earlier center's sacred "seed" into a new layer of soil and hence, a new cycle. A process of regeneration is implied, as well as a "hybridization" occurring in the original seed.

The third type is found in the temple built on a stylobate (platform) or hollow basin, which is filled with disparate stones from a former temple in apparent disorder. The disorder is misleading according to de Lubicz; the stones are placed at critical axes of orientation or the sanctuary area to convey the continuance of the divine outpouring from the earlier temple into selected areas of the new center. The stylobate thus represents a symbolic "vase" from which a branch of the previous temple flowers.

Following the foundation, the volume of the temple is also determined by its floor plan. Many of Egypt's temples share a basic layout that is devised for both practical considerations and esoteric purposes. From a practical standpoint, the temple houses the sacred being as well as its attendants; subsidiary areas of the space support this arrangement. Esoterically, the space mirrors the divine regions in order to function as an extension of the Neter into the physical world.

Thus, the floor plan of the temple shows a correspondence to the five sacred elements of Fire, Earth, Air, Water, and the Quintessence, which organized the cosmic sphere in primeval time. And at the same time, the materials with which the Per Neter was constructed were carefully selected from a repertoire of substances that were associated with these elemental forces; they were employed in the corresponding areas of the sacred space.

The outer precincts of the temple represent the primeval swamp, the World of Manu or undifferentiation from whence each Neter originates. Water is always located on the outer perimeter of the temple, representing the ocean of Nun and the condition of primordial chaos. This most often took form as the Sacred Lake, which also served to purify those entering the sacred ground of the Neter. Both clergy and pilgrims participated in ritual bathing ceremonies to emulate a return to the world of timelessness, often in a reserved area outside of the temple called the "House of the Morning," an allusion to the original rising of the Solar fire out of the primeval waters. One such chamber is situated at Edfu and is built into the forecourt of the temple of Heru. During periodic festivals, the sacred boat of the temple containing the image of the Neter also celebrated a return of the divine being to its origins by symbolically voyaging back over the waters of the sacred lake and then returning to "descend" to its sacred mound in the temple once more.

Another metaphor of the primeval waters surrounding the consecrated ground was expressed in the construction of unbaked, mud-brick *temenos* ("sacred precinct") walls around the temple. The bricks, "uniting water and earth" according to de Lubicz, were sometimes constructed in wavelike courses that emulated the primordial waters. In some places, this water symbolism is found in foundation deposits upon which the temple is constructed, symbolizing the emergence of the Neter's house out of this embryonic element, just as the sacred mound arose out of the primordial waters.

After passing through the waters of the World of Manu, the entrances or gateways to the Divine House are followed by soaring columns, designed to imitate the aquatic plants of the primeval swamp. Here, the precursor to physical manifestation is implied, the commencement of the Neter's incarnation. Such design is repeated in the peristyle outer courts leading to the entrance of the covered temple.

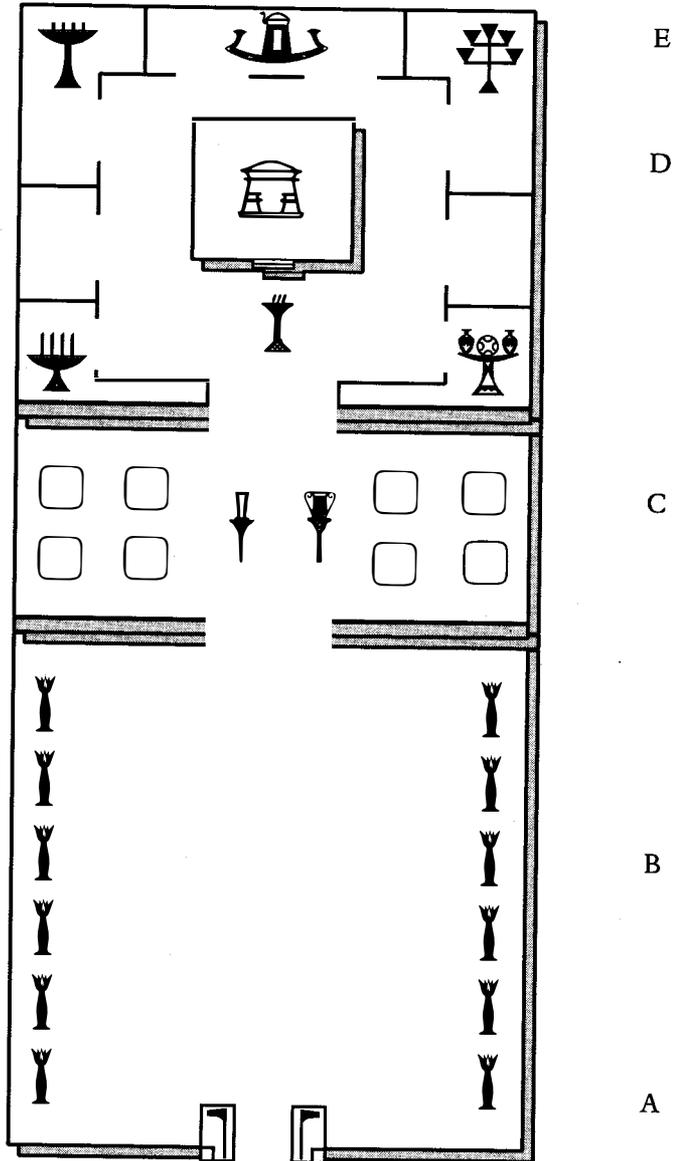


Figure 31 (at left)—The Elemental Forces in the Temple:

The temple is entered through (A) the Erpi, the “divine doors.” The first (outer) court (B), Per Nu Usekhet (“House of Water”) is associated with that element, representing the primeval regions before the Neteru came into being. This is also the Hall of the People.

The first inner court (C), Per Nezer (“House of Flame”) is associated with Fire, symbolizing the divine spirit that arose out of the celestial ocean in timeless time to enter the sacred space of the temple. This area was reserved for the musicians, singers, and lectors who emulated the sound of creation each day by awakening the Neter with sacred music.

The Sanctuary (D), Per Ur (“Exalted House”) is associated with Earth, signifying the sacred mound upon which the Neter rested after its evocation into the temple. It contains the naos housing the image of the divine being.

Surrounding the sanctuary (E) are temple storage chambers associated with the element Air, among which was the Het Mennet (“Incense Chamber”), used to support both the body and spirit of the Neter with offerings brought from the land and its people.

The landscape of the divine worlds proceeds to the next feature in the Per Neter, the covered inner court, often designed as a series of ascending chambers leading to the sanctuary on the high ground. These symbolize the World of Aakhut and the sacred fire arising out of the timeless waters of Manu. Stone of igneous or volcanic origin was used in these areas, materials that include granite, syenite, basalt, and diorite—all substances of great endurance and high conductivity.

The sacred mound or seat upon which the Neter rests in the physical World of Rostau is symbolized by the sanctuary of the temple. As the cosmic element Earth is signified, materials corresponding to that elemental principle were used—such as the sedimentary rock sandstone and its crystalline equivalent, quartzite. Moving inward, the sanctuary is surrounded by chambers that house the sacred goods and relics of the temple, symbolizing the supporting functions of the World of Ament and the element Air. The materials associated with this principle include limestone and alabaster, which are also found in the rear and underground chapels at many sites. Limestone, originating from vegetal matter from ancient lakes and swamps, symbolically nourishes the Earth element of the sanctuary.

The image of the Neter and its naos were usually rendered in metamorphic stone, which contains high aggregates of quartz. Schist, one of the hardest rocks known, is one such material employed in elaborate sculptures whose process of

execution is unknown but which have lost no detail through the ages. The most ancient Egyptian sculpture known, the famous Palette of Narmer, was rendered in schist. Sa, or the quintessential fifth element, corresponds to this physical receptacle of the Neter, the final destination of the sacred principle through the four worlds into the Divine House.

That the chemical constituents and physical properties of stone were known to the ancient Egyptians is demonstrated by their advanced skill, from quarrying monoliths to cutting fine gems. The creation and conduction of electromagnetic fields with stone by Egyptian craftsmen has also been suggested by some to explain the unusual geometric configurations of altars, shrines, obelisks, and the unique architecture employed in some sections of the temple.

The colors of stone materials were also subject to scrutiny before selection for use in sacred architecture. Purity of the material was an obvious requisite, but the colors of the stone also had a purpose in reflecting the Neter's power to the viewer and containing its force over a long period of time. The careful use of color by the ancient Egyptians has been closely documented, and its association with certain Neteru cannot be overlooked. Blue was associated with the sky and the cosmic divinities, green was regarded as the color of Hapi and Asar. In statuary and wall inscriptions, men were painted in ocher, women in yellow. These conventions were strictly adhered to, and esoterically represented the vibration of natural forces associated with the subject of an artistic or architectural representation. The qualities of color were also understood in the alchemical sense to convey processes of spiritual transformation. Black is associated with the land of Egypt, and symbolized the phase of corruption or putrefaction of matter. Out of this arises growth, symbolized by the color white. Used ceremonially, it represents the vegetative phase of plant life. Red was often used in stone selection and employed in wall inscriptions. It represents the phase of animation and also symbolizes the completion of the fruit-bearing cycle.

Color combinations also designated the sacred character of the Neteru in wall inscriptions, and these are often repeated in sacred texts written on papyri. Blue and black are associated with Amun, while red and black are Set's colors. The hues of Auset are blue and green, of Asar black and green. Ra and the Solar principle are rendered in white and yellow, the colors of Heru are red and yellow, and blue and yellow portray Djehuti's image.

Sacred images and commemorative objects were also rendered in materials reflecting the elemental force with which they were associated. The shrine at Edfu is carved from a single block of syenite, the Sekhmet altar at Bubastis is made from black granite—both reflecting the fiery principle of the two Neteru emanating from their heavenly residences. Obsidian, also associated with fire, was employed in the making of jewelry and statuary of a sacred character that was meant to endure in the life of a temple or tomb. Flint, a substance of the Earth element, was associated with Heru and used in the making of ceremonial objects and weapons. Alabaster, associated with the element Air, was carefully selected for use in statuary, lamps, offering vessels, and sarcophagi, and in special instances on the floors of inner temple chambers because of its nature to reflect light. The sacred images of the Neteru were most often rendered in precious metal, but the most sacred stone of all, lapis lazuli, was chosen to reflect the cosmic nature of divine beings.

In addition to these vital principles, Schwaller de Lubicz devoted fifteen years of study at the Luxor Temple to discover what he believed to be three esoteric devices utilized in the construction and placement of wall inscriptions, devices critical to understanding the occult ideas embedded in the sacred volume-forms.

Transposition. In this first device, a particular wall inscription is further articulated by hieroglyphic texts or carved images in a nearby wall inscription—creating a sequence of ideas that can only be understood in the whole and not separately.

Transparency. The second device is a technique of transparency, where an inscription or figure may be properly understood in relation to others that exist parallel to it through certain walls or chambers, reflecting an idea like a mirror, or as if the space were transparent. De Lubicz found this phenomenon in instances where the reference point articulates a biophysical or anatomical correspondence between the human body and the temple.

Orientation. Finally, the orientation of inscriptions along a particular axis of the temple articulate a third esoteric meaning. In the case of the Luxor Temple, he demonstrated numerous instances where inscriptions are oriented along one of the three axes of that monument.

At the Luxor Temple, a number of curious features in the construction of the Per Neter are found in its inscribed stonework. These features appear to reflect a

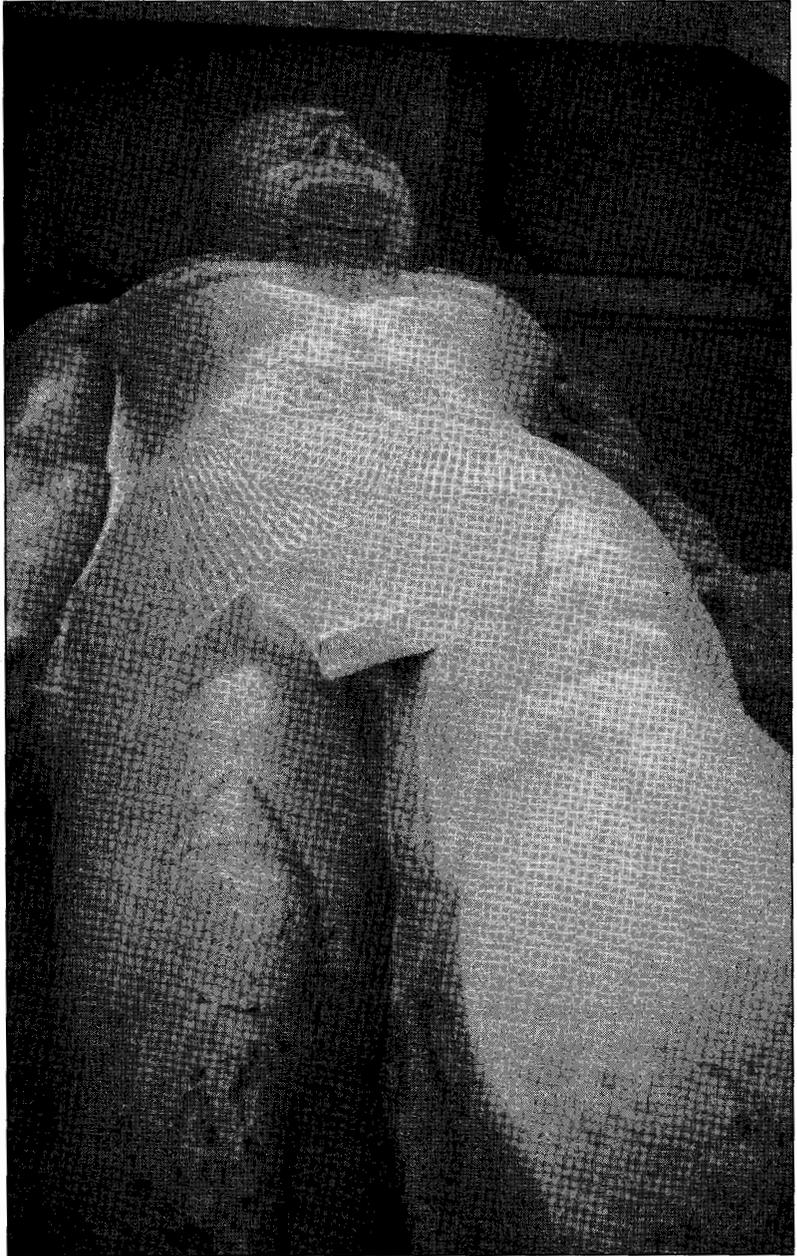


Photo 4—Limestone Statue of Rameses II at Memphis

consistent philosophy employed in the construction of the temple that underscores the Egyptians' belief in the Divine House as a living organism and a representation of the anthropocosmos—the cosmic human. De Lubicz proposed that horizontal joints of blocks inscribed with bas reliefs at Luxor are of three types, each conveying this idea but also articulating the esoteric function of the temple. The first he termed “joints of correspondence,” which show a relationship between the diagrammatic arrangement of the blocks and the human figure superimposed upon the temple in its entirety. These connect together the different chambers of the temple as the head, trunk, and limbs of the body are joined by connective bone and tissue. The second, “joints of position,” emphasize certain esoteric functions of the body by the location of inscriptions detailing those functions on certain block joints. And lastly, “conducting joints” guide the observer in the reading of significant inscriptions throughout the temple that are relevant to the seed intention of the building and the Neter's mysteries.

Other buildings separated by vast periods of time and religious tradition, such as the temple at Ombos and the Great Pyramid at Giza, share unique features of stonework construction. A symbolic network of mortices carved around the perimeter of the most reserved chambers of the temple are an example. Engineers have proposed that these mortices may have been intended to hold mortar or wooden pegs to assist in joining and supporting the blocks together, but the weight and mass of blocks discounts such a necessity. The mortices, now hollow, more probably contained a semiprecious metal or stone material that would have been intended to join the blocks in a metaphysical sense. And since the Egyptians reputedly understood the electromagnetic properties of metal and stone, such a network would serve to transmit the vital power of the Neter from the sanctuary throughout the temple and perhaps “ground” the Neter to the sacred precinct.

In a number of temples from various periods, the ancient manner of joining monolithic stone with great precision is only superseded by the unusual and difficult technique of cutting unique joints in communicating blocks. Individually, such blocks may be cut at oblique slopes vertically, at other than 45° angles, indicating a geometric principle—and hence, an organic relationship—being transmitted through the structure. In other cases, oblique angled blocks are also

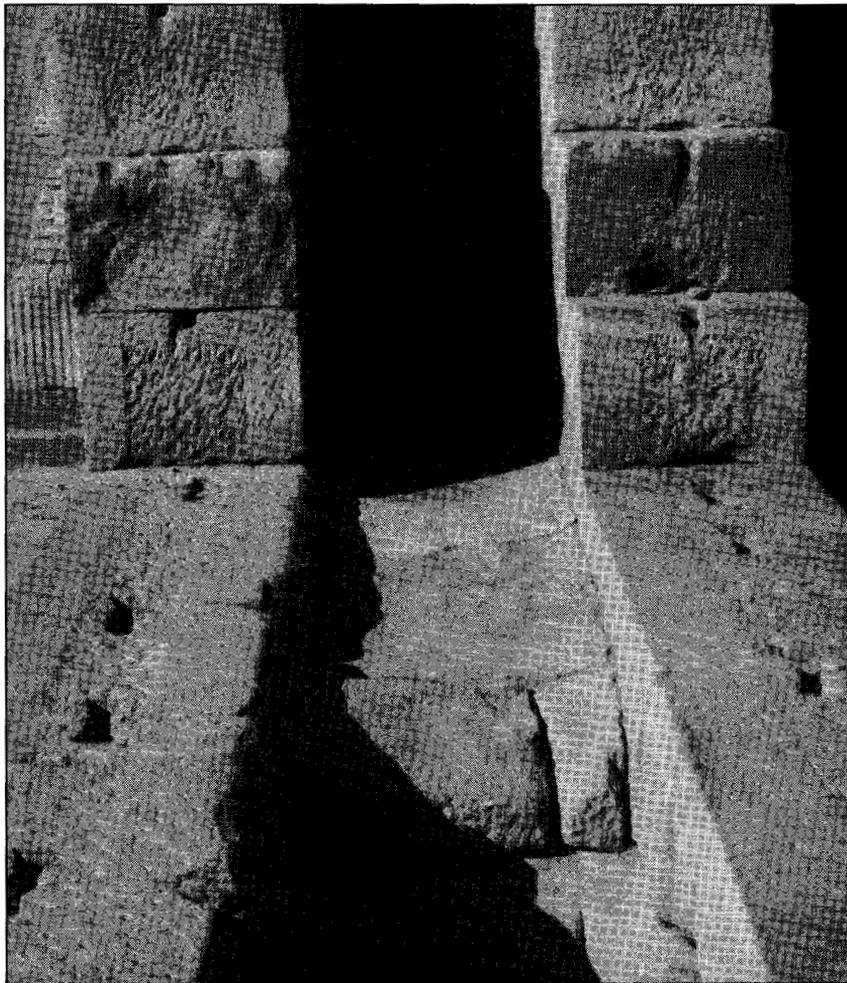


Photo 5—Hollow mortices in the walls around the dual sanctuary at the Temple of Sobekh-Heru (Ombos)

joined by interlocking mortices, suggesting the meshing of the chamber's forces with those in adjacent structures. It has also been proposed that this technique, though never tested, provided a certain acoustic ambiance in temple chambers, allowing sounds of specific pitch to resonate throughout designated areas.

Some blocks are cut around corners, implying the energetic extension of the Neter's force around the precinct. De Lubicz pointed out that the apparent



Photo 6—Looking west (right) on the easement of the Grand Gallery in the Great Pyramid: The evenly-spaced slots, situated longer than a man's stride apart, may have been intended for metallic pegs to construct an elevated network approaching the Upper (King's) Chamber.

defacements of specific areas of temple stonework that are evident today could not have been executed randomly by Islamic or Christian zealots of later eras, as only joined blocks and the inscriptions on them were hammered out. His thesis that the masters of the temple deliberately undertook the symbolic dismantling

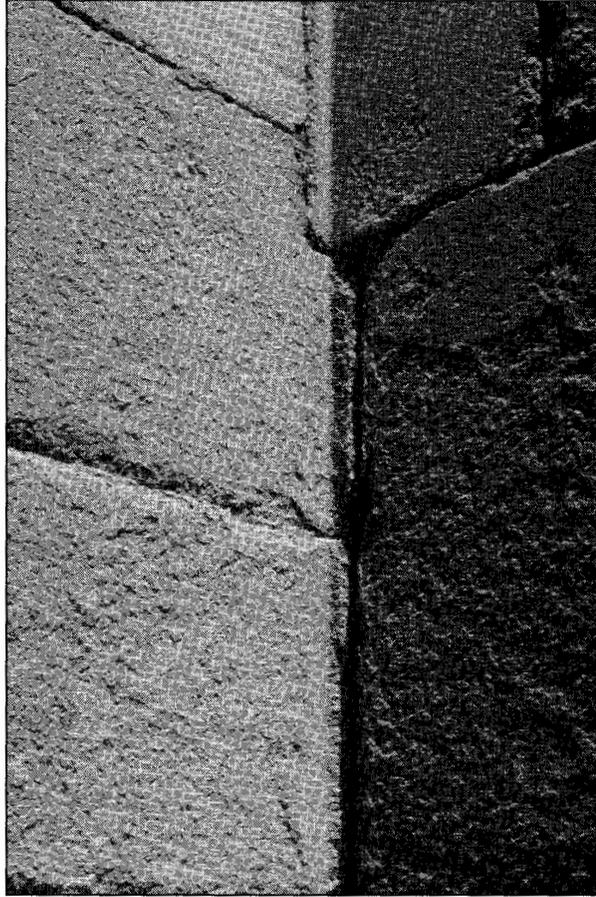


Photo 7—Rounded corners in the stonework at the Temple of the Sphinx

of the building in this manner is argued by egyptologists, but it is in keeping with the principles of esoteric architecture.

Inauguration of the Per Neter

... every particle of this temple will retain animation even when the structure has crumbled to dust.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Egyptian Miracle*

Metaphysically, the temple was the result of the Neter's initial descent from primeval regions to the earth, as revealed in the cosmogeneses of Heliopolis,

Thebes, Hermopolis, and Memphis. The physical remnants of these occurrences always existed at the core of the temple's physical foundation in some form, and the record of its implantation was carefully preserved for posterity. Throughout the ages, the ritual that inaugurated the temple never deviated from its archaic form.

Ever present at the foundation ceremony of the Per Neter were those divine beings who established the sacred precinct and assisted in its initial formation, not the least of whom was Pharaoh, their living descendant. The Neteru governing sacred measures were notably present: Ptah (divine fabrication), Khons (enumeration), Djehuti (initiation of the divine canon) and one whose functions were almost exclusively devoted to the founding of the Divine House, Seshat. Known as "She Who is Foremost in the House of Books" and "Lady of Builders," Seshat is moderator of the epoch as well as surveyor of the temple. Her headdress, a seven-pointed star surmounted by a bow, is believed to represent an ancient astronomical siting device and underscores the fundamental criteria in the planning of the Divine House—its association with sky phenomena. Her regalia often includes the leopard skin garment, originally worn by the seer-priests of Heliopolis and later by exalted members of the clergy. Its spotted surface is associated with the starry sky and the region of cosmic powers.

Among her tools Seshat carries the measuring cord, a knotted rope that is divided into segments of the sacred cubit. She is sometimes shown with the palm leaf, recording the length of mortal life in the pictorial representation of the royal person's genesis. Her functions are an extension of Djehuti's numerical motif: recording time, dispensing measures, defining space, and presiding over the apportionment of land to the Neteru. At Abydos, an inscription tells of the rebuilding of the temple by Seti I with the foundation of the sacred precinct attended by the goddess Seshat. At this event Pharaoh says to the Neter,

The hammer in my hand was of gold, as I struck the peg with it. And you were with me in your capacity as Harpendonapt. Your hand held the spade during the fixing of the temple's four corners, and accuracy was given by the four supports of heaven.

A priestess or queen represented Seshat in the week-long foundation ceremony, accompanying the king who represented the people as well as the land of

Egypt (in the case of female rulers such as Hatchepsut and Kleopatra, the queen assumed the role of temple founder). The dedication of the sacred precinct, called the *Pedjeshes* (*pedj*: “to stretch,” *shes*: “cord”) then commenced. The night ritual required the two divine representatives to align a measuring cord with an astronomical point determined by the attendant priests, with the royal person gazing at the sky through the headdress of the priestess and marking out the axis of the temple by stretching the cord from that point. The corners of the temple were thus established, and a mallet held by the representatives tapped stakes of precious metal into the ground.

In the Papyrus Berlin 3029, we find a copy of an inscription describing the foundation of a building by Senusert I; this is believed to have been taken from an original wall in the temple of Atum at Heliopolis. In the ritual of dedicating the land to the temple, the king assumes the role of both representative of the Neter and the sacred domain when he speaks:

Mine is the land, its length and breadth. Mine is the land, I am its lord,
my power reaches heaven’s height. I excel by acting for my maker,
pleasing the Neter with what he gave.

After announcing his authority, the king assents for the temple clergy to perform the dedication. The papyrus continues:

The chief lector priest and scribe of the divine books stretched the cord.
The rope was released, laid in the ground, and made to be this temple.
His majesty ordered his courtiers to proceed; the king turned round
before the people. Joined together were Upper and Lower Egypt.

Number symbolism played significantly into the dedication ritual. Pharaoh is often accompanied by four courtiers bearing the archaic standards of kingship: the jackal, hawk, ibis, and royal placenta (totems of the Initiatory Triad and the king’s Ba). After the measures of the temple had been traced out by the architects, the royal person ploughed the soil four times and implanted the foundation deposits. A wide variety of materials, each representing a necessary element in the construction and maintenance of the temple, included glazed bricks, food offerings, commemorative scarabs, dedication plaques, ritual tools, building implements, and seeds of grain or incense. These were left in place, even when

the temple was later destroyed or dismantled, thus underscoring the permanence that the Egyptians placed on the dedication of the sacred precinct to the Neteru. After this symbolic implantation, the first foundation bricks or stones were put into place. In the former instance, the royal person mixed earth and water together four times and placed them at the four corners of the temple. The four worlds of the Neteru were undoubtedly intended in this symbolism, for if the divine presence was to enter the temple it must pass through these regions in order to enter into its earthly house. The sacred precinct was then censed by circumnavigation and purified with water, an act expressing the feeding and nurturing of the heavenly plant now embedded in its terrestrial soil. In the final act, the temple was “given to its master,” formally offered to the Neter in four individual ceremonies at the four cardinal points of the temple.

No schematic plans of temples or pyramids exist from any period, though maps from Ramesside times reveal the layout of some Theban tombs. But the construction of the Neter’s house stemmed from a prescribed tradition, as the enigmatic Edfu Building Texts reveal. These inscriptions at Heru’s temple describe the construction of the prototypical house of the Neter in mythological terms, at an archaic time when divine beings delineated the sacred precincts of Egypt and established the corpus of sacred art and architecture. According to the texts, these ancient plans were recorded by Djehuti and defined the manner in which all of the temples of Egypt were constructed. While this record is carefully recorded at Edfu and referred to in similar terms in the foundation records at other temples, the actual body of knowledge alluded to has not yet been discovered. However, evidence of an esoteric construction plan may have been inscribed in the infrastructure of the temple and then covered over by the building process, as the hidden axes of the Luxor Temple revealed in modern times.

The Three Functions of the Divine House

In Egypt, the three profound mysteries of natural life—creation, procreation, and renewal—were the concern of the Per Neter. Consequently, the activity of the Per Neter took place through a threefold network of temple centers—and clergy—dedicated to interpreting and transmitting the spiritual basis of those experiences.

The first genre of temple is the well-known *Per Ankh* (“House of Life”). This temple was both repository and college of its particular creation mysteries, such as those defined by the cosmologies of Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis and Hermopolis. But the activity of the *Per Ankh* was not just confined to theological philosophizing. The creation of the Neteru produced an order in the universe expressed in the secular wisdom—writing, divination, mathematics, and science. At the *Per Ankh* this knowledge was archived and taught, as it was recognized as originating from the Neteru and intended to guide the human race in *Maat* throughout the ages. Hence, the engineer in ancient Egypt was foremost a priest of Ptah, the Neter of construction, and most probably studied at *Het Ptah Ka* (“House of Ptah’s Spirit”), the House of Life at Memphis.

At other temples, a tradition was taught and practiced that aimed at maintaining the bonds between the inner and after lives of both the living and the dead. This was accomplished through the activities of the *Per Aa* (“Great House”). Egyptologists have interpreted this to mean either the necropolis or the Royal House, which seems puzzling unless viewed in the context of Sacred Science. The dispensation of the *Per Aa* was centered around the cycle of the generation of life, its transition to other regions, and the continuance of divine existence in its material form. The entire cycle of physical experience—from conception to death to renewal—formed its metaphorical tenets. A connection with the agricultural phases of the land—the inundation of the soil, the planting of seed, and the harvest—was the mystical basis of this dispensation, because the interred in their tombs were believed to extend a spiritual fertilization to the land. At the *Per Aa*, natural phenomena were portrayed in themes articulating the manifestation of divine life in the physical world, such as conception and birth at Dendera, and its withdrawal in death or hibernation such as is found at Abydos. The mysteries at these temples were often acted out ritually in sacred dramas and festivals by members of the Royal House, who assumed the sacred roles of the Neteru and transmitted their spiritual powers to the participants. These mysteries also underscored the most important promise of spiritual continuity to the ancient Egyptians, which originated with the Neteru who brought forth the human race and renewed it through the cyclic festivals of the *Per Aa*.

In what is known today as the pyramid complexes, another temple dispensation appears. The *Per Heh* (“House of Eternity”) was initially viewed as a reference

to the tomb, but its name used at other places gives reason to believe that it refers to a very distinct type of place and function. We know that the objective of the Per Heh was the fulfillment of the third natural mystery, renewal. At these places, a necessary parallel existed with the funerary tradition, but the majority of its activities was centered on the exaltation to divine life in what appear to have been selected living persons. The Per Heh was usually situated on the western bank of the Nile, and often included temples, causeways, chapels, and pyramid structures within a separate enclosure. The pyramid complexes at Saqqara, Abusir, Abu Gurab, and Giza possess these criteria.

Throughout the history of Egypt, we find these three functions of the Per Neter consistently exercised, irrespective of the cosmogony in use at the time or alterations made in the location or size of the temple complex. Sometimes, the activities at the different centers were identical and the priestly functions overlapped. This is wholly consistent with Egyptian religious practice, which more often emphasizes the generalist rather than the specialist approach.

Yet a predefined scope of activities existed at every temple, in accordance with what the Egyptians defined as their ancient tradition. I view this triune scope of temple work in the terms of the Sacred Astronomy, which best describes the nature of the activities on each level as well as the type of clergy that fulfilled them. The consistent temple agenda of teaching, royal mortuary services, and reserved initiation rites that have been described to us by the ancients fall precisely into the roles of Solar, Lunar, and Stellar functions at the three types of temple centers. There are also physically distinguishing characteristics in the architecture and geographic locations of these three types of temples that also support these categories.

Lunar Temples: Per Aa, The Great House

The entire Lunar cycle of twenty-eight days, repeated on a monthly basis, involved in Egypt a series of individual celebrations that required enormous manpower and resources. Certain religious activities proceeded with the New Moon, when the first crescent sliver of light is visible. Prayer and remembrances of the dead were performed at this time. The Six-Day Feast followed, being the period of the visible first quarter of the waxing Moon. As inferred by the festival's name, the presentation and consumption of food was arranged by families

of the deceased or priests appointed by the estate of the dead person to continue the nourishment of the Ka.

The Full Moon was celebrated in the Osirian tradition with an offering ceremony to ancestors at the cemetery. Since the dead were regarded as “Osirified,” the waxing and waning cycles of the Moon—one of the cosmic vehicles of the Neter—were regarded as “openings” between the two worlds of the living and the dead when communication could take place. Asar’s power appears to have been important on every occasion of the Full Moon, but the one closest to the vernal equinox (spring) was described as “the entrance of Asar into the Moon.” A wall at the mortuary temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu records the New Moon festivals of the calendar year, each lasting several days up to the time of the Full Moon. The annual Great Offering Ceremony, designed to honor Asar and all deceased, was the culmination of this cycle.

In addition to the maintenance of funerary observances, the Per Aa served the fisherman, the peasant, and the bedouin traveler with essential, non-religious functions. Specialists gathered at these centers to provide the resources needed for record-keeping, communications, and commerce throughout the country. The consistent gathering of people during the regular Lunar festivals in provincial areas also invited the visitation of law courts which settled local disputes at the gates of the temples. Justice was available to all who were willing to appeal to the proper authorities in ancient Egypt, and traveling judges made use of these gatherings to mediate and to convey royal edicts. In this manner the Per Aa also maintained the legal and political arms of society, as well as the firmly-entrenched ancestral customs that enfolded all of society in their performance.

Strategically, the Per Aa also served as a distribution site for the goods paid by Pharaoh to government workers, of which there was often a large population. This included temple craftsmen, tomb workers, and construction personnel of every level. The exchange of money and services was always necessary at these places, resulting in the enforcement of standard weights, measures, and civil contracts overseen by the priesthood. A massive bureaucracy of scribes and their services naturally became attached to these centers as a result of such activity. Their tasks are detailed at these temples, along with records on the distribution of

goods from the Royal House to the priests and the general population at royal jubilees and festivals.³

While maintaining the necropolis and serving as an administrative hub for government, certain of the Per Aa were regional centers for the nome spirits and sanctuaries for Neteru of the great pantheons where their principal temples were far distant. Hence, we find shrines of certain Neteru at seemingly obscure, unrelated temples. A sanctuary of Atum, the prime Neter of Heliopolis, could be found at the temple of Bast in the east Delta city of Bubastis, where a great cat necropolis was known from antiquity. Similarly, shrines of Sekhmet and Het-Her, deities of distinct cosmic families, are found at the Delta city of Kom el Hisn, the ancient Imu. Besides serving as the capitol of the third Lower Egyptian nome, the temple administered a number of extensive cemeteries. In this instance, the Per Aa is characterized by a great diversity of functions—religious, political, funerary—as reflected in the variant shrines and sanctuaries found here and at other similar temples.

According to nome lists inscribed at the temples of Dendera and Edfu, the twenty-two districts of Upper Egypt and the twenty in Lower Egypt were delineated from the time of the Old Kingdom. The shrines of nome spirits were regarded patronizingly by scholars in the past merely as centers for local “cult deities,” but their esoteric function was much larger and more profound in scope. The regional centers, marked by local temples, were recognized by the Egyptians as geodesic power places, the natural residences of telluric forces. Even today, a large number of religious shrines around the world trace their sanctity through the ages, having housed a sacred presence of some sort despite the prevailing religion of any time. In Egypt, this can be seen at many places such as Luxor and Philae, where a succession of religions (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Coptic Christian, and Muslim) overlap in the architecture at one place.

Each nome was represented at the Per Neter by a “standard,” a ceremonial pole crowned by the insignia of the region. The Egyptians did not regard these

³ The function of the so-called mortuary temples on the Theban west bank has been reexamined and supports this view. See Shafer, Byron et al: *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1997; pp. 236–7.

standards as mere symbols of the nomes; like many nature-focused cultures, the standard was the actual repository of the region's power. Natural forces and the human population of the nome were symbolically fused in the icon, which consolidated the animal, vegetable, and functional forms of the place. This deep, psychic need for individuals to identify with the group souls of nature persists even in modern times. The attributes of animal totem, fantasy figures, and obscure tribal symbols are an integral part of all societies, as evidenced by the icons of modern sports teams, institutions, and political parties. In all ages, these icons serve to rally the psychic forces of individuals to group action by unifying them with a natural spirit that is environmentally familiar.

At the great temples, the standards lined the perambulatory of the Neter's shrine to symbolically "lead" the celebrants from the energies in the physical land to the powers of the divine region. At the local nome capitol, considered the "navel" of the region, the power site was marked by a shrine and architectural accommodations for the Lunar festivals, such as offering altars, gateways, and sacred wells.

Medicine was also regarded as the domain of the temples in the Lunar tradition, in the same manner that the later Greek temples were gathering places for the healing of the physically and spiritually afflicted, and ministered by the physician-priest followers of Asclepius. A healing temple such as the type found at Dendera was Lunar in function, in that it dispensed medical treatments and services intended to avert the destruction of the body by accident or pestilence. These services were administered by the priests in residence, who were trained as diagnosticians, surgeons, pharmacists, and veterinarians.

The magical rites that ensured the stimulation of healing processes and a unique repertoire of psychotherapy were the inseparable practices of the physician-priests at the healing temple. The adjunctive smaller temples at Dendera provide evidence of this. A sanatorium, sacred lake, and a series of subsidiary structures for housing the clergy form part of this complex which was known to be a healing center in ancient times. Each temple not only provided the services of these specialties, but the production of their tools and supplies as well. At Edfu, the companion religious center of Dendera, the walls of a chamber known as the "laboratory" are inscribed with the recipes for drugs, sacred perfumes, and pharmaceutical salves.

But the Per Aa also includes temples that were formerly identified by egyptologists as mortuary centers. The vast graveyards of Egypt were usually confined to the west bank of the Nile, the place of sunset or the symbolic death of the Sun, and temples in those precincts were assumed to be funerary in nature. A number of prominent buildings—notably the Ramesseum, Hatchepsut's *Djeser Djeseru* ("Holiest of Holy Places") at Deir el Bahri, and the temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu—were also constructed on the west bank, but served the spiritual purpose of honoring the deified status of those kings through the periodic offering services celebrated long after the funeral.

How all the diverse activities of the Per Aa can be viewed together as one temple function is best understood in terms of the Egyptian philosophy on the maintenance of life through its cyclic variations. The symbolism and provision of nourishment—from the unsown harvest to specially prepared offerings—formed the core of religious activity for the living, the dead, and the Neteru. Humanity was dependent upon the Neteru for subsistence, for spiritual as well as physical food. In return, the land and its people received nourishment from the king, their ancestors, and the gods. This was a cyclic, continuous process understood by the ancients as a necessary exercise in maintaining the bonds between all worlds and synthesized them in harmony.

Dendera

The "Great Seat" of Het-Her was regarded as a sacred precinct from the most archaic times. Though the existing temple at Dendera dates from the Graeco-Roman period, one of its crypts reveals an inscription stating that the plan of the temple was established in predynastic times.⁴ The plan is said to have been written in ancient characters and originated from the palace of King Pepi I, a Dynasty 6 monarch who was known as "Son of Het-Her, Lady of Dendera." Later texts of Thutmose I and III, who restored the temple, refer to the ancient *Heru*

⁴ The dynasties of Egypt as we know them were defined by Manetho in the Graeco-Roman Period, and encompass thirty ruling lineages of varying duration. In addition to Manetho, some king lists recorded at temples and on papyri are incomplete, and there is no definitive source of Egyptian history by the Egyptians. But one consistently reported fact does arise from the records: in the Late Period, priests declared to travelers that their civilization had already existed through several astronomical epochs, each at least 25,000 years in length. Allowing for exaggeration or misinterpretation, if this is at least close to the truth, then there can truly be no "predynastic" period in Egypt, but only a vastly archaic period which historical accounts cannot verify (cf. Appendix I).

Shemsu (followers of Heru) who were the early kings of Egypt descended from the Neteru. They describe the rebuilding of the ancient temple and record that “. . . the great plan was found at Dendera, in old delineations written upon animal skin from the time of the Heru Shemsu.” Today, one enters through the Roman period sections and encounters the older portions of the temple while moving toward the inner sanctum.

The event of the present temple's foundation is well documented. In an inscription placed in the Hall of Appearings—an antechamber in the older part of the temple—the Pharaoh Thutmoses III discloses his participation in the ritual for posterity:

The living god, the magnificent son of Asti [a name of Djehuti], nourished by the sublime goddess in the temple, the sovereign of the county, stretches the rope in joy. With his glance toward the *Ak* [eye] of the Bull's Thigh constellation, he establishes the temple house of the mistress of Dendera as took place there before.

[Pharaoh speaks:]

Looking to the sky at the course of the rising stars and recognizing the *Ak* of the Bull's Thigh constellation, I establish the corners of the temple of Her Majesty.

The Great Seat is oriented north and is aligned 71.5° north of east, which archeo-astronomers have determined to point toward Eltanin in the constellation Draco. Yet this alignment would only be possible if the temple was working between 4000–3000 B.C.E. If the inscriptions are correct about the great antiquity of the site, then this alignment is appropriate, but few egyptologists are willing to entertain the possibility that a fully mature civilization existed in Egypt prior to 3000 B.C.E.

Het-Her's house cannot be understood in its full context without noting that its companion temple of Heru at Edfu functioned liturgically and calendrically with Dendera—for if Het-Her is the Moon, her counterpart Heru is the Sun.⁵

5 Shafer, Byron et al.: “A list of all the gods of Edfu is inscribed in the hypostyle hall at Dendera, and in the Edfu temple we find the festival calendar of Dendera. The two temples cooperated in celebrating the famous festival of the Reunion of Hathor and Horus.” *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca NY, 1997; p. 205.

The present Temple of Heru is also of Ptolemaic construction, but it too is situated on a site recorded by the Egyptians as one of great antiquity. While Dendera is oriented north, Edfu is oriented south. Inscriptions on the inner pylon at the temple of Heru depict the annual festival in which the image of Het-Her, accompanied by a great assembly of the Dendera clergy, journeyed one hundred miles distant by boat at the New Moon of Epipi, stopped for festivities at the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak, and continued upstream to arrive at Edfu just before the Full Moon. The fourteen-day festival was the apex of the sacred year for both temples and involved the participation of all temple personnel, the Royal House, and the populace of three nomes.

But Het-Her should not be considered as strictly a Lunar deity, nor can she be viewed solely as a mother goddess complementing a preeminent masculine god. Like all of the Neteru, her functions and realms interpenetrate many regions of cosmic life; at times she fulfills the role of divine mistress and wife, at others she is warrior and healer. Her close association with the Moon is symbolized by her crown: a solar disk surmounted by the two waxing and waning lunar crescents embodied in the bovine horns that support her regalia. At the same time, her home at Dendera is a complex of the Lunar Mysteries—depicting the transcendental power of the Moon's rhythm on earth, in the sky, and embedded in the nucleus of the religious mysteries celebrated at the Lunar temple.

Solar Temples: Per Ankh, The House of Life

We have seen how, in the intricate scope of the Sacred Astronomy, the Solar temples furnished the technical knowledge that allowed the clergy to fulfill the mandate of the Sacred Science. Here, celestial phenomena were observed, recorded, and interpreted for both the mundane and spiritual affairs of the country, from determining the beginning of the New Year to signaling the sacred festivals of specific Neteru. Early egyptologists referred to the priests' work as a cultish sky religion because astronomical science was practiced in a religious context at these temples. However, the secular work of the Solar priesthood involved far more. From historical records we know that the Solar temples trained the scholars who served as counselors to members of the Royal House. This is because the Solar priesthood claimed the exclusive administration of the theocratic tradition

of the Pharaohs. As such, they were obligated to advise royal persons on matters of traditional law, ethics, and protocol. Most importantly, the genealogies and historical records of the Royal House were maintained by the Solar priests, as they performed the pharaonic initiations. This resulted in the establishment of formal temples for the priest-in-residence at the political capitols.

Perhaps the most famous Per Ankh of antiquity was Iunu, the legendary temple of Heliopolis—the On of the Biblical text. Today there is but a remnant of its foundation remaining and an obelisk at the original site in a northern suburb of Cairo. This temple was believed by the ancient Egyptians to have been the prototype of all Sun temples constructed following the Old Kingdom, and was also regarded as the repository of all the royal records and historical events of Egypt. From both legendary and historical sources, many of the initiates of antiquity spent time at Heliopolis in spiritual training. They are said to have included Plato and Pythagoras, all having gone through a rigorous curriculum which encompassed both spiritual and scholarly studies. Herodotus claimed to have consulted the priests of Heliopolis regarding the history of Egypt, which they reported as already having existed for several millennia.

The most detailed history of Egypt's Royal House and its association with the Solar priesthood of Heliopolis comes from the Westcar Papyrus, a copy of a Dynasty 5 document of the Pyramid Age. The text records that the Pharaohs Userkaf, Sahura, and Neferirkara, all brothers living in that period, were the progeny of the Ur-t Tekhent (the high priestess of Heliopolis) and Ra, the Sun. The Neter was said to have descended from the heavens with the express purpose of creating a divine dynasty, choosing the priestess of the Sun as the vehicle for the initiation of this sacred line of demigods. The similarity between details of this story and the Annunciation of the Virgin in the Christian tradition is remarkable, and coincidental in that the city of Heliopolis is the destination of the holy family's flight to Egypt according to the New Testament.

From these three kings the descent of the Royal House of Egypt was thereafter configured. And from this historical point onward, Pharaoh became closely identified with Ra—receiving the appellation Sa Ra, "Son of the Sun." The dynasty of the first Solar kings coincided with the imminent entry of the equinox into Aries and it was during this historical period that members of the

Royal House embarked on a new spiritual mandate upon entering the tomb. After death they were transformed into Solar beings, traveling with Ra in his heavenly barque through the diurnal and nocturnal hours of day and night in the heavens. In the previous Age of Taurus, royal personages were empowered to fuse with cosmic life as a star. That tradition was to last until the Solar-Horian dynasties became established in the Age of Aries.

Temple centers founded by the legendary "star kings" of the previous Taurean age are highly distinctive, and of the fourteen ascribed to them, all are located on the west bank of the Nile in the pyramid complexes of Dynasties 4 and 5, all of which appear to have served Stellar functions. Each reproduced the sanctuary of Heliopolis in a unique manner, featuring a sacred Ben Ben stone upon the high ground of the complex in some form. But they functioned for a highly restricted group of individuals and were attended by a special class of priests—unlike the later Per Ankh, which was open to those who pursued a prescribed course of study for the secular professions and were supervised by multidisciplinary instructors.

The Solar-Horian theocracy encompassed the dynastic period of Egypt that we are most familiar with, the Middle and New Kingdoms. During this period, the priestess of the highest rank in the Solar temples was referred to as *Hem-t Neter*, "Consort of the God," although she was often married to an earthly husband, usually a priest of the temple. In some instances, she was titled *Mut Neter*, "Mother of the God." This office was maintained as a vestige of the archaic Solar kings, who traced their origin to Ra and the priestess of the Sun. By the Late Period, the office was assumed by the *Divine Adoratrix* in Amun's temple at Karnak. Such was the importance of a king's connection with the divine family that spurious rulers during times of political unrest managed to establish authority by drawing some relationship in their lineage to the House of the Sun.

Thus, one of the most important missions of the Per Ankh was the maintenance and support of the Royal House, both spiritually and economically. The locale of its teachings was usually attached to the main temple and administered by the Solar priests. Training equivalent to modern graduate studies was conducted, with members recruited from the local environs on the recommendation of teachers, scribes, and other priests. The study of calendars and observations

of the Nile cycle was pursued, along with the extensive ancient sciences derived from this body of knowledge—civil engineering, architecture, mathematics, military strategy, and literature.

The dispensation of secular education, royal tradition, political counsel, and all of the locations where these activities took place were extensions of the Solar temple. While the individual sites shifted according to the social and political emphasis of the time, the functions at the Per Ankh remained the same.

Unfortunately, three of the four known great temples of this tradition have fallen to ruin and only the barest of their remnants exist for study. Of Heliopolis, Memphis, and Hermopolis there are few relics but many stories of their glory and importance in the ancient world. Today the temple complex of Karnak at Thebes—the ancient Waset—alone provides testimony to the power and diversity of the Per Ankh by the vast extent of shrines, obelisks, columns, statues, and inscriptions that have been laboriously restored there. Many of these features underscore the great importance that the Per Ankh gave to the continuity and power of the Solar tradition and the Royal House.

Karnak

The great temple of Karnak—called *Ipet Sout* in ancient times—architecturally expresses the passage of the Sun through the sky and the continuity of the solar fire through the seasons. But a number of smaller temples at Karnak deviate from the east-west orientation to Sun-related phenomena, suggesting that this sacred precinct, like the Sacred Science, served a multiplicity of functions which overlapped in time and space. An avenue of lion/ram sphinxes on the western end of Amun's complex outside of the first pylon demarcates the axis of the Sun, and other avenues at the site may convey information about the auxiliary functions of those extended monuments. Another avenue of ram sphinxes joins the Temple of Amunhotep II to the precinct of Mut on a southeastern axis, and may have an association with a Stellar principle at Karnak. Still another avenue of human-headed sphinxes leads from the Temple of Khons at Karnak to the Luxor Temple, and may be associated with the Lunar principle, in that Khons is connected to functions of the Moon. Thus, the great temple complexes at Thebes could be viewed as a whole, depicting three temple functions—Solar, Lunar, and Stellar—working synchronously at one location. Schwaller de Lubicz regards the Temple of Amun at Karnak

as “the Temple of Cosmogogenesis,” and the Luxor Temple as “the Temple of Anthropogenesis.” We will look at some of the details of each to get an overview of how the Egyptians viewed the esoteric dimension of solar phenomena.

The High Room of the Sun

When Lockyer surveyed the Temple of Amun at Karnak in 1890, he concluded that its central axis was in perfect alignment to sunset at the summer solstice. This axis line runs from the west through the center of the ram-headed avenue of sphinxes, through the six pylons, and through the altar of Ipet Sout: it also cuts through the easternmost enclosure wall built by the Ptolemies. In 1971 the British astronomer Gerald Hawkins measured this axis at an azimuth 116.9° east of north, which points to the rising Sun when its declination is -23.87° . This was the position of the Sun at its southern extreme during the winter solstice in the third millennium B.C.E., a period which includes the reigns of Hatchepsut and Thutmoses. Thus, Hawkins discovered, the temple complex is oriented east at the winter solstice, not west at the summer solstice as Lockyer surmised.

However, Hawkins was puzzled by the fact that the original, ancient altar of Ipet Sout was blocked by the Temple of Ra Harakhte on the east, which he realized would not allow the Sun to be visible at its rising from the time of Rameses II onward. An inscription to the rising Sun on the east face of Pylon III further complicated the matter:

O Rameses, you behold your father Amun Ra, Neter of all Neteru, Lord of the thrones of the two Egypts. You behold your father each time that he rises from out of Ipet Sout. His rays merge there like the horizon at dawn, illuminating the double door of the universal master in the horizon. The *Rekh Khet* [observers] are happy that His beauty is risen, and they rejoice.

The inscription suggests that even in the time of Rameses II the rising Sun should have been observable at the Karnak complex—though the arrangement of the buildings does not appear to support that possibility. But on the wall of the Hall of Festivals, a long mural dating from the period of Hatchepsut-Thutmoses provides a clue: it depicts the birth of the fourfold Solar principle Ra-Heru-Sokar-Kephri each year at a special location in the temple. An inscription there says:

One climbs the Aha, the reserved place of the exalted Ba, the high room of the Akh which moves across the sky. One now opens the door of the Akhet house, place of the ancient spirit of the Two Lands, to see the mystery of Heru in his shining.

Hawkins found an ascending stairway on the north side of a jubilee temple erected by Thutmoses III, leading to the so-called "High Room of the Sun," a roof chamber dedicated to Ra Harakhte. There he discovered a square alabaster altar in front of a rectangular aperture in the wall. The wall itself is inscribed with images of Pharaoh facing the very same aperture and greeting the rising Sun. Here, he says, the priest-astronomer could make his observations of the rising Sun at the winter solstice without the obstructions present at the ground level. Hawkins found this alignment of great significance. Besides confirming that Lockyer was on track but erroneous in his identification of the solstice, he drew an important parallel to the alignment of trilithons at Stonehenge, which also mark the sunrise at winter solstice. In his words,

The sun overcomes the powers of darkness in a combat in the underworld each night, and overcomes the threat of the solstice each year. The new god is born free in victory at dawn on Midwinter's Day.⁶

Luxor

The sanctuary of Amun at the Luxor Temple is especially important in view of the Sacred Science. It was called *Amun em Ipet Resyt*, "Amun Who is in His Southern Sanctuary," and its inscriptions depict the Neter in an anthropomorphic, ithyphallic form. Here, too, texts found in a fourteen-pillared colonnade describe the annual festival of the New Year, when the shrines of Amun, Mut, and Khons were taken in their sacred barques from the Karnak temple on the shoulders of the priests to temple barges on the Nile for a southern excursion to the Luxor Temple. A procession that included soldiers, chariots, musicians, and dancers arrived at the southern sanctuary to celebrate the "Night of Ipet," marking the beginning of the New Year festivities.

⁶ Hawkins, Gerald: *Beyond Stonehenge*. Harper and Row: New York, 1973.

The Luxor Temple is oriented north-south, and Lockyer identified its alignment to Alpha Lyrae (Vega), the polestar of 12,000 B.C.E. which he also associated with the original temple of Asar at Abydos. Three distinct axes are found in the three major sections of the Luxor Temple. It is possible that the separate axes were devised at separate periods in Egyptian history when cyclic reconstructions took place, giving rise to the prospect that the temple was aligned to an asterism that changed in latitude over long periods of time. The three axes of the Luxor Temple as determined by Schwaller de Lubicz are as follows:

The Geometric Axis ($33^{\circ} 00'$ east of north) is the meridian that accurately divides the face of the original temple—constructed by Amunhotep III—into two equal parts proceeding from the triple sanctuary at the southern wall northward. De Lubicz believed that this axis possesses an astronomical character, though an analysis of his hypothesis has yet to be performed.

The Solar Axis ($33^{\circ} 34'$) is the north-south line of the Sun's culmination, which serves as the longitudinal meridian for the temple's construction—also called the "axis of measures." It is traced under the limestone paving of a sanctuary that housed the sandstone platform for the barque of Amun, and was later hammered into the stone. It divides the southern part of the temple into two unequal segments. De Lubicz associated this measure as possessing both an Osirian and a Horian meaning, and considers the location significant where this axis intersects with the axis of Amun (described next) at the threshold between the sanctuary of the barque and the chamber that precedes it on the north.

The Axis of Amun ($34^{\circ} 27'$) proceeds from the center of the sanctuary of the barque, and ends northward at the precise center of the triple shrine of Thutmose III dedicated to Amun, Mut, and Khons. This angle, according to de Lubicz, corresponds to an orientation of the temple at a given hour, and he recommends consulting the list of solar barques at Edfu to determine the hour. However, he does not indicate in which manner such lists were employed by the astronomer-priests to derive angles or tangents of celestial bodies.

According to de Lubicz, each axial section within the Temple of Luxor is a module that is derived from one of these meridians. The modules each produce a "rhythm" that contributes to the "movement" in the overall harmony of the

construction. In this manner the sacred precinct represents the creative function of the Neter at work on three different planes, and may be linked to the Lunar, Solar, and Stellar paths of transformation.

Stellar Temples: Per Heh, The House of Eternity

The reality of the Sacred Science as the reservoir of a semisecret wisdom is supported by many distinctive monuments dating from the Old Kingdom. Here, the architectural canons and some known religious functions appear to define a simple scheme for temple and tomb, but enigmatic details belie this view. A number of the most unique features found in these oldest monuments are rarely repeated in later times. Besides the most distinguishing architectural characteristics—a lack of ornamentation and extremely simple, geometric lines—definitive functions for these sites have not been articulated, though a long-term cycle of rebuilding and rededication is documented in Egyptian records.

At the pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx for example, we confront the legendary places where, classical writers tell us, the mystery teachings were dispensed and preserved through specialized activities that are best described as initiatory in character. They are quite distinct from the Solar and Lunar complexes that we have examined, in that creation and procreation were not the themes celebrated. Rather, the union and identification of certain individuals with the Neteru through transformative processes is emphasized in the textural evidence and architectural elements of these places. And although they were believed by early egyptologists to be intended specifically for burial, not all maintained this view. The eminent egyptologist Margaret Murray wrote:

The question as to the use of the early pyramids has never been satisfactorily answered. It is usually stated that they were burial places; this may be true of the later ones, but there is no proof that this was their original purpose. But there is evidence that they were used for some special religious ceremonies in connection with the Divine King, though whether he was alive or dead is uncertain. It must also be remembered that many Pharaohs had both a burial place and a cenotaph, and it is possible that the pyramid was the cenotaph.⁷

7 Murray, Margaret A.: *The Splendor That Was Egypt*. Praeger Publishers: New York, 1972.

A number of modern scholars concur.⁸ And in view of the fact that funerary processions and ceremonies are conspicuously absent from the voluminous inscriptions within the pyramids and their adjacent temples, causeways, and offering chapels, a more arcane purpose appears to have been at work at these enigmatic sites.

Saqqara is one of the most extensive cemeteries in Egypt, and vies with Abydos as the most ancient. Here, the complex of the monarch *Neter Khat* ("Divine Body") *Djoser* offers a most exemplary model of the Per Heh. Djoser ruled Egypt from the ancient capitol at Memphis in Dynasty 3 and egyptologists mark his kingship with the commencement of the Old Kingdom. His complex is considered the oldest organized technological project in stone of any civilization, and it evokes the realization that such skill and planning must have been in conscious development for generations prior to its inception.

Both legend and archeological evidence tells us that Djoser's center was conceived and executed by the Pharaoh's chancellor, Imhotep. A high priest of the Per Ankh at Heliopolis living in the archaic mists of early dynastic Egypt, Imhotep was regarded as a master of all the architectural, mathematical, and geodesic canons of the ancient world. And as a physician and the eventual patron of medicine, he was invoked as a deity in Egypt's Late Period to restore health. Later, he was also regarded by the Alexandrians as the precursor of all the high magical and scientific arts of Egypt in Graeco-Roman times. A vast cultus honoring his mysteries is evidenced by shrines dedicated to his honor from Memphis in the north to Philae in the south. In essence, Imhotep appears to have represented to the ancient Egyptians the apex of human achievement, both in spiritual and intellectual terms. He became the scribe's ideal, the inspiration of the architect, and the priest's source of wisdom.

A statue found at Saqqara in our era contains an inscription bearing both Djoser's name and that of Imhotep. Tablets unearthed at the corners of his complex also give the names of Djoser and his two daughters, the princesses Intkas and Hetephernebti. But later kings also made use of the complex for ritual ceremonies

⁸ The consensus in the late twentieth century is that pyramids served a religious and magical function for the Ka of royal persons. See Lehner, Mark: *The Complete Pyramids*. Thames & Hudson: London, 1997; and Shafer, Byron et al.: *Temples of Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca NY, 1997.

of the Royal House, suggesting that the center was not exclusively intended for funerary purposes, but as an important locus for observances reserved for a selected body of participants.

Djoser's monuments include a number of apparently disparate elements, until viewed in the context of the Sacred Science. The complex includes a 197-foot high stepped structure that has been alternately identified as an elaborate mastaba (Arabic for "bench" because of its shape) or a pyramid, the oldest in Egypt. This Step Pyramid is contained within a square, walled structure stretching one mile on a side, in all of the architecture of Egypt. It is believed to be replica of the legendary "White Wall" of Memphis, a white limestone enclosure that surrounded the ancient city and distinguished it even in ancient times as a sacred precinct.

The complex incorporates the symbolic divisions of Egypt and the heavenly regions in one architectural masterpiece. The major divisions of north and south are also depicted as northern and southern precincts at the complex along with the nomes and their spirits. Ceremonial rooms—initially called "burial chambers"—are found at several places within, although actual physical evidence of burials is lacking.

In the Turin King List of Dynasty 19, Djoser's reign is demarcated in red ink, indicating a significant point in historical time to the Egyptians. Djoser's center, judging from its age, represents the inauguration of a new epoch, most probably the precession of the vernal point from Gemini (symbolizing the king as unifier of the Two Lands and crowns) into Taurus (symbolizing the king as fulfilling the earthly role of the Bull of Heaven). This era, which would have commenced around 4000 B.C.E., is portrayed at the center in great symbolic detail. Memphis in the earliest part of the Old Kingdom was known as *Ankh Tau*, "the Outpouring (Life) of the Two Lands." The name refers to this region as the center of Egypt's unity and the geographic plexus of the Two Lands. From the Old Kingdom, the image of the king as unifier and stabilizer of the country was regarded as the primary spiritual role of the heir to the Royal House. The first cataract of the Nile was established as the southern boundary of Egypt in Djoser's reign; this and other accomplishments set him apart from others in

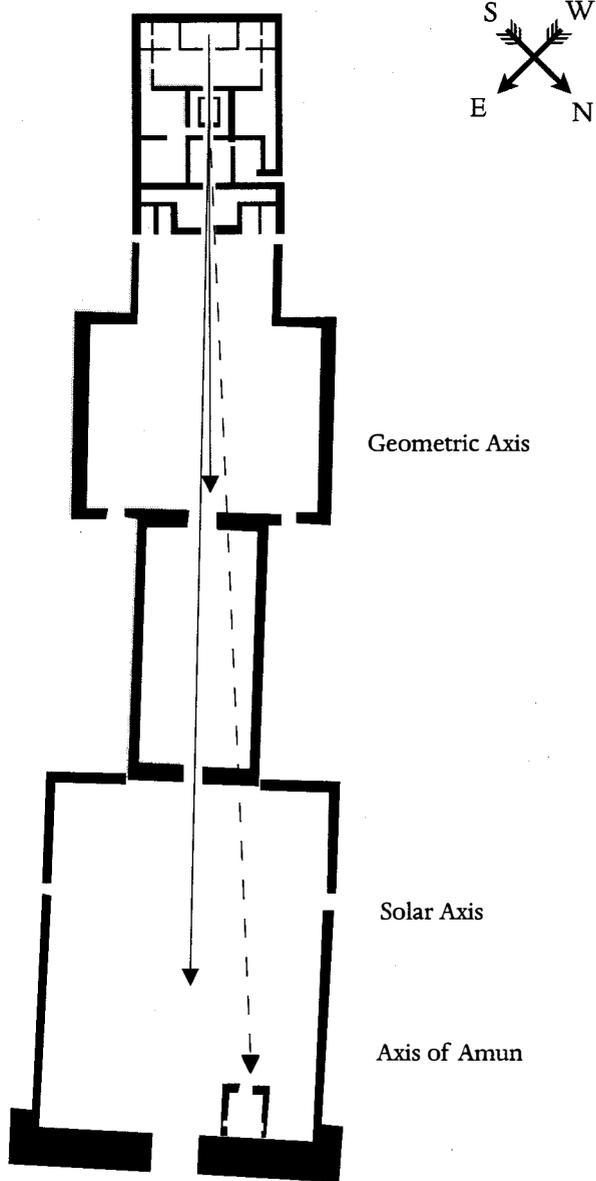


Figure 32—The Three Axes of the Luxor Temple

antiquity as the precursor of Egypt's geographic order and power in the region. As such, his monument reflects the many aspects of this order, expressed in chambers, halls, courtyards, and shrines.

At Saqqara, the architecture of Djoser's complex depicts a spiritual expression of the king and his relationship to both the heavenly and the earthly powers. The king in ancient Egypt was equated with a number of principles embodied by the Neteru. As the symbolic names of Pharaoh suggest, he was seen as the unifier of the divided regions in his role as Heru, "Stabilizer of the Two Lands," symbolized by the two crowns. Pharaoh also personified the continuous manifestation of sacred forces in his role as the Solar principle, "the Son of the Sun." And finally, the king embodied the prototypical imprint of Egypt's first monarch, Asar. As such, he was the synthesis of earthly and cosmic principles joining together all natural phenomena. The cyclic expression of life and its eternal, vital qualities were all aspects of his power.

A number of ritual acts, reserved exclusively for Pharaoh at cosmically potent times, reinforced these roles so that land and king could be renewed as the seasons. These were consolidated in the legendary jubilee festival celebrated by and for the king, the *Heb Sed*. The components of the festival have been recorded from a number of dynastic periods, and varied little through the passage of time.

Though the *Heb Sed* served as a symbolic renewal of the land and its master, it also represented the maintenance and continuity of the union between the Neteru and human life. The king's person represented the human collective from which he sprang and the *Heb Sed* provided a means to assuring the collectivity that strength, stability, and equilibrium could be maintained through another generation. Early egyptologists viewed the *Heb Sed* as the remnant of an archaic ritual of the slaying of the king, proposing that the ancient African custom of the slaying of an elderly chief to make way for the accession of a younger, more vital one influenced the Egyptian royal tradition. Yet there is no evidence, even from predynastic times, to verify this assumption.

This same thinking also maintained that the Step Pyramid and the other structures of Djoser were strictly funerary in nature, supposedly constructed to memorialize the dead king, house his remains, or serve as a cenotaph to his past

accomplishments. But in view of evidence collected from excavations completed at the site in the twentieth century, the Heb Sed court of Djoser is now viewed as a center intended for periodic rites attended by the living Pharaoh. The Heb Sed was celebrated approximately every thirty years, and archeoastronomers believe that this number represents the cycle of Saturn's return (29.5 years) to the same place in the sky.⁹ This is also an astrological cycle of death and renewal on some level of human experience, and tradition propounds that this cycle is the true chronometer of a single human generation. But even if these tenets of astrology are discounted, records reveal that the rituals were timed by the *Maa* (seers of the temple), those belonging to the tradition of the Solar priesthood who were observers and interpreters of stars. One of Imhotep's epithets was "Chief of the Observers," a title of the high priest of Heliopolis who advised the Royal House on significant cosmic events such as the Saturn cycle of return.

The Step Pyramid contains no extensive texts, but a number of stelae that depict Djoser in various scenes of the Heb Sed ceremony. South of Djoser's complex is the pyramid of Unas, one of the sources of the intriguing pyramid texts which disclose the transformation of the king into a sky being. Modern research of these texts by Joachim Spiegel conclude that the Unas pyramid inscriptions are a ritual drama. The inscribed writings in stone commence on the right as one enters the pyramid of Unas, and develop logically as one goes round the walls of the chambers until reaching the entrance again. Two rituals are postulated: a spoken ritual and a shorter, silent ritual fulfilling the criteria of a drama. It was performed at night inside the pyramid with six officiants; the rite began with bringing the inert body into the pyramid, its interment in a sarcophagus, and after a number of ceremonies which symbolically restored the functions and provided nourishment, returning life to the royal person. The king (or his representative) could then emerge from the pyramid to greet the New Moon, demonstrating that the ritual drama was performed at the three-day period of the dark of the Moon.

⁹ Sellars, Jane B.: *The Death of Gods in Ancient Egypt*. Penguin Books: London, 1992; p. 235.

But the Egyptians were fully cognizant of the mortality of human life. Following the completion of earthly experience, the transition of death was believed to provide a supreme opportunity for awakening the soul to its innate powers and entering into a life of myriad realms and benefits. The ultimate locale of this great event was the House of the Dead, a place as sacred and diverse as the temples of the Neteru.

Practicum

SACRED SPACE

The coordination of cosmic resonance, sacred architecture, and ritual constituted the practice of Sacred Science in ancient Egypt. We have seen how the Sacred Astronomy was an essential key to determining the appearances of the gods; we will now examine how the architectural encryption of sacred principles in the temples fostered the descent of those forces into the physical sphere. Such excursions through divine spaces, even symbolic ones, can awaken the perception of divinity resident in material form, a view that can elevate our own perception of ourselves.

The Lunar Temple at Dendera

Today, one enters the sacred precinct through the Roman propylon and the temple through the Hypostyle Hall (I), also dating from the Roman period (refer to the diagram of the Dendera Temple on the following page). It features an unusual forest of twenty-four square pillars, each surmounted by the head of Het-Her with bovine ears. The capitals of these columns are *crotalums*, which are peculiar to the goddess and underscore her role as mentor of rhythm. The crotalum is an ancient percussion instrument often seen in temple iconography together with the sistrum rattle; when used as an architectural element, the distinctive trapezoidal shape of the crotalum called to mind the resonances of such an instrument, creating in space an effect which the ancients must have also experienced in sound. Entry into this initial chamber of the temple evokes the mystic nature of sound as a vehicle for transporting the spirit to cosmic realms, where the twenty-four divisions of the day become twenty-four stages of transformation.

The macrocosmic nature of Het-Her's house is repeated throughout the chambers. An astronomical ceiling runs the length of the Hypostyle Hall in seven panels (corresponding with her sacred number) on both the east and west sides, depicting the skies as the ancients viewed them. As one enters the hall, the

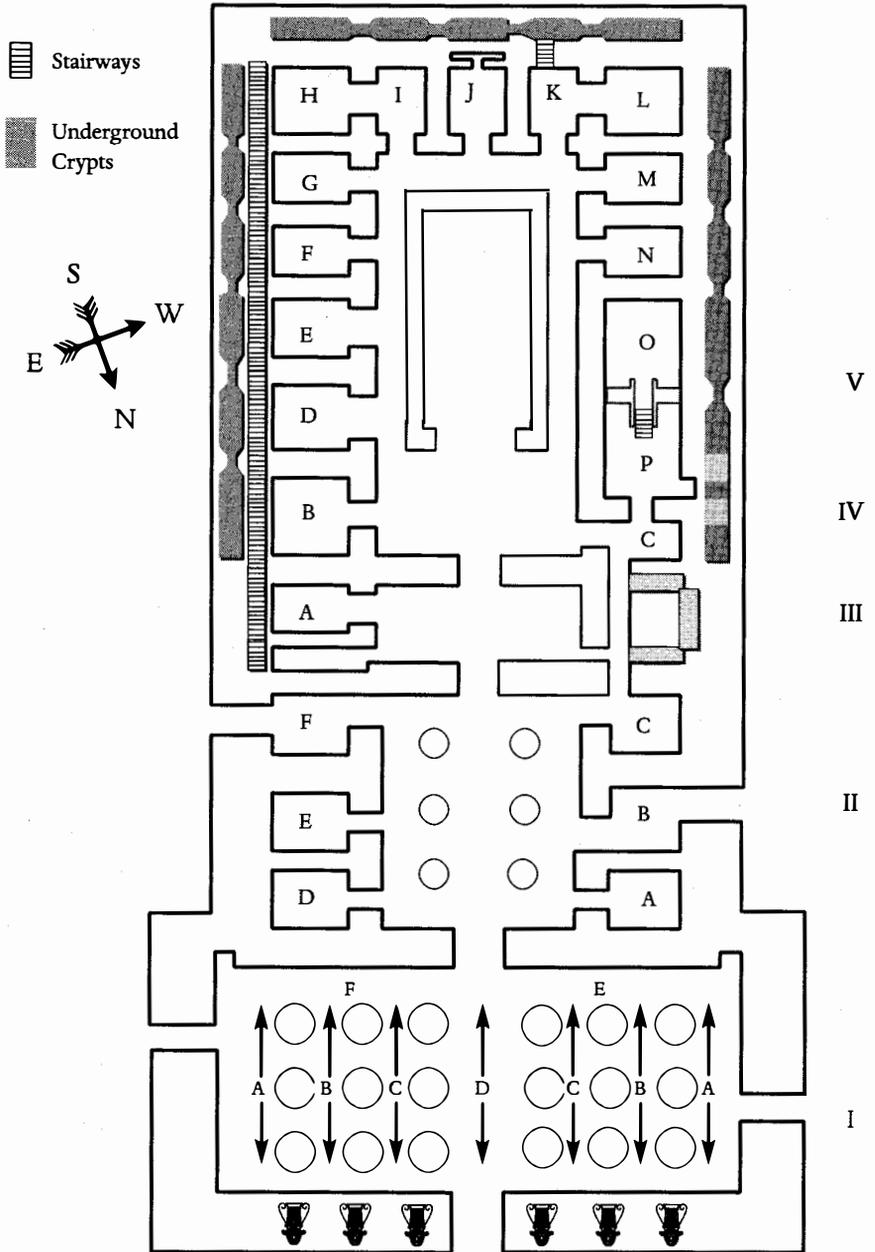


Figure 33—The Per Aa of Het-Her at Dendera

far left (A-east) inscriptions depict the stars and constellations on the ecliptic, and the far right (A-west) inscriptions depict the asterisms of the northern pole. In the middle panel (B-east) are the planets, the stars of the twelve hours of night, and the signs of the Zodiac. In the middle panel (B-west) are the constellations of the southern and northern heavens.

In the inner panels are the (C-east) path of the Sun and the (C-west) path of the Moon. The Moon's register is divided into three scenes: the Full Moon, the fourteen days of the Waning Moon, and the fourteen Days of the Waxing Moon. The lunar hemicycles for both the waxing and waning periods are symbolized by fourteen Neteru standing upon fourteen ascending and descending steps that lead to and from the celestial eye of the Sun. The Moon's image is assumed by Asar, protected by Auset and Nebt-Het upon a celestial barque resembling the lunar crescent.

The middle panel (D) running down the center of the Hypostyle Hall is decorated with winged discs and vultures, symbols of the Sun and Moon. On the west rear wall (E) is an inscription of the northern Sun giving birth to Kephri and on the east rear wall (F) is an inscription of the southern Sun shining on Het-Her and her temple.

The ambiance in the Hypostyle Hall evokes all of the rhythmic cycles of celestial life, over which Het-Her in her role as nourisher of the heavens presides. On entering this realm, one encounters the denizens of celestial existence, who proceed perpetually on their journeys through the sky. After passing through this region, the inner part of the temple reflects the land of the Neteru where Het-Her resides and the acts of her life-giving mysteries are celebrated.

The Hall of Appearings (II) marks the beginning of the Ptolemaic temple, which is the older part of the Neter's house. It is inscribed with scenes of Pharaoh dedicating the temple. On the west side of the inside wall, Pharaoh breaks the earth for the foundation of the temple. He is shown laying the first stone and dedicating the building. On the east side, Pharaoh presents the foundation deposit bricks of the temple to Het-Her. He then purifies the sacred precinct and dedicates it to the Neter.

This hall, where the goddess first appears at her feasts, is surrounded by six chambers beginning with the Treasury (A), a chamber that stored the precious metals of the temple. There may be some relationship between the activities of

this room and the recipes for creating sacred images in the dekan lists—much of the temple manufacture of religious goods in ancient times took place in just such chambers. Offerings of pure metals and stones are described on inscriptions here, “. . . all the splendid gems of the mountains.”

The Nile Room (B) provides access to the sacred well and farther out to the west, the sacred lake. Libations of Nile water from the seven mouths of the Delta were stored here for special purifications connected to the Neter’s high rituals. Texts on the outer door jambs instruct the priests in the ceremonial acts of the temple. A communicating chamber (C) used for offerings leads into the main temple and accesses one of the stairways to the roof.

The Laboratory (D) has inscriptions that describe the recipes for unguents, perfumes, and the incenses used in the temple and the Festival Room (E) contains the liturgical calendar of the temple. The Offering Room (F) was a reception area for temple offerings brought to the Neter from the outside. This room connects with the exterior, from which visitors to the temple endowed the Neter and her clergy with goods. Meat, bread, wine, beer, and flowers are shown on the inscriptions.

The Hall of Offerings (III) gives access at either side (east and west) to the stairways to the roof chapels (refer to the diagram of the Roof Chapels on page 246). This vestibule is the place of assembly for the temple personnel in the presentation of offerings and music to the Neter. On the west inside rear wall is a list of offerings presented to Het-Her at her feast, on the east side the King offers her the ritual intoxicating drink that myth says was given to her by Ra as appeasement for not destroying the human race when it transgressed against the Neteru at the beginning of time. The inscription says:

O beautiful One, O Cow, Great One, Magician: splendid Lady, Queen
of gods, Pharaoh reveres you with sacred wine, give, that he may live.

On the east is a chamber (A) used for sacrificial offerings, called the Purification Chamber. Here, the daily sustenance of the Neter was prepared and assembled with oblations from the public. All were carefully inspected for purity and cleansed according to ritual canon before presentation in the sanctuary.

The second vestibule that precedes the sanctuary (IV) is called the Hall of the Cycle of the Neteru. Its walls are inscribed with the mysteries of Het-Her and marked the boundary for the profane entering the temple. Beyond, only consecrated attendants could enter. On the east is the Linen Room (B), a chamber used for storage of the Neter's sacred regalia. Reliefs show the priests carrying chests of Het-Her's holy garments. On the west is the Silver Room (C), and though silver objects may have indeed been kept in this chamber, the metal is an allusion to the Lunar principle. The sacred mirror, an object specific to Het-Her's mysteries, was in ancient times coated with silver to reflect the astral light emanated by the Moon. Mirrors used cosmetically were manufactured from copper.

The Sanctuary (V) is known as "the Great Seat." It contains inscriptions of the daily ritual of the temple: the awakening of the Neter; her bathing, anointing, feeding; and the offering of prayers and hymns. They are read from east to west to south. This chamber remained darkened and closed off from temple personnel for most of the year.

The corridor and adjoining chambers that encircle the sanctuary is known as the Corridor of the Mystery, and depicts the Neteru who support or represent Het-Her in some aspect. The entrance to this corridor on the east shows the Neter on her sacred barque, sailing up and down the Nile; this is inscribed on the outer walls of the entire sanctuary and serves as a sort of diorama while one circumnavigates the corridor from east to south to west. From the east, the chambers surrounding the Corridor of the Mystery are known as the Chapel of the nome spirits of Dendera (D), the Chapel of the Birth of Heru (E), the Chapel of Sokar (F), Neter of hibernation and prototype of unawakened man. Chapel (G) belongs to "the Serpent God Who is Son of the Earth," and celebrates the union of the Two Lands.

The Eastern Shrine of the Voyage of Het-Her to Edfu (H) contains the hymns that commemorate the journey of the Neter to her consort. It is a double room, leading to the Castle of the Sistrum (I) —also one of the names of the temple. It is a very sacred area, with a niche in the north wall depicting the coronation of Ihy as Neter of music and a niche in the south wall shows Het-Her playing a tabor, one of her rhythmic instruments.

The central chapel (J) contained the portable shrines of the Neter, which were placed on a high recess in the south wall. Inscriptions here show Pepi II honoring his patron goddess, and the New Year's Day procession that commenced here before dawn. In the next chapel (K) Het-Her is depicted as a lioness in her terrible aspect, called the House of Flame. It is a double room, leading to the Throne of Ra (L)—a chamber parallel to the Castle of the Sistrum on the opposite side. It contains niches and access to the suite of five crypts in the most southerly extreme of the temple where reserved rites were conducted. Knowing that the mysteries of renewal were also celebrated here, this may have been a room inhabited prior to initiation rituals which culminated in the roof chapels.

Surrounding the chambers off the Corridor of the Mystery below ground level are a series of fourteen crypts. Three are undecorated and the remainder possess highly detailed inscriptions of cosmic life and transformation. In the five southern crypts that run under the rear shrines, Ihy is depicted in the easternmost chamber; in the westernmost room a scene shows Pharaoh Pepi I presenting Ihy to Het-Her. A curious representation of Ihy's circumcision is depicted here which has an esoteric as well as a traditional association. Circumcision was performed in ancient Egypt prior to puberty, marking entry into adulthood and recognition of religious and political office which was assumed at that age. The act itself invited the powers of generation, and in this crypt it invites the regeneration of the moonlight. This chamber also housed the statue of Het-Her's Ba (visible manifestation). On New Year's Eve, it was brought up from below to the Festival Room. Inscriptions on the walls of other crypts depict the musical instruments of the Neter, her statues, and the Menat—the sacred collars which represent her power of rhythmic contraction and expansion, like the moon's orb in its monthly journey through the sky.

The next chapel (M) is dedicated to Het-Her's Menat collar and (N) is the Chapel of Ihy. The corridor terminates at the Silver Room, which provides access to a stairway and to an area of the temple that served as an outdoor chapel. It included an Offering Hall (P), an open court that once featured a statue of the Neter, and the Pure Place (O). This elevated kiosk is separated by two small versions of the capitals in the Hypostyle Hall, and is entered from a staircase of seven steps. Inscriptions within depict the royal family paying homage to the

Neteru, and offerings from Upper and Lower Egypt being presented to the temple. The ceiling shows Nut giving birth to the Sun.

If these crypts were merely intended as storage areas (as some popular guidebooks suggest), then the enigma of their elaborate design and rich illustration remains unresolved. But viewing her house as a metaphor for Het-Her's energy dynamic at work in the three realms of divine, earthly, and natural life, the crypts surrounding her sanctuary can be seen to represent the arcane heritage of the temple, the root past, and the organic forces present in the sacred precinct. These underground chambers were undoubtedly reserved for ritual use in initiation ceremonies associated with the Lunar Mysteries. Each of the fourteen chambers represented the loss of light in the waning lunar hemicycle, light which was restored in the rituals performed in the high rooms of the temple on the roof.

The pure architectural symmetry of Dendera—harmonizing east and west in the temple chambers—is repeated in the high rooms. One ascends to the roof of the temple from the eastern stairway accompanied by inscriptions of the temple priests bearing the nome standards, and descends on the western stairway. According to temple protocol, the roof chapels were designed to be entered first through the open kiosk in the southwestern corner of the roof, known as the Chapel of the Disc (VI) (refer to Figure 34 on the following page). In this place the statue of Het-Her was borne at dawn on the first day of the New Year to receive the first rays of the Sun, in a rite called the "Divine Unification." But lunar phenomena—highly visible in the night hours from this place—undoubtedly played a large role in the rituals performed on the western side.

The Western Chapels (VII) represent the realm of the Osirified—those who have entered the symbolic western land to undergo the Lunar transformation of the temple. Here, a number of ritual texts portray the mysteries of Asar and the roles of his sisters in his reconstitution, a metaphor of the lunar light returning to the sky after its passage through the Duat (Shadow Worlds). Initiates were renewed by the restored moonlight that was diminished in the crypts below, in a series of twenty-four separate rites performed over a period of twenty-four hours, beginning at dusk.

Auset and Nebt-Het mourn Asar in this chamber (A). He is guarded by spells of the Neteru who watch the twenty-four hour spirits of day and night. These

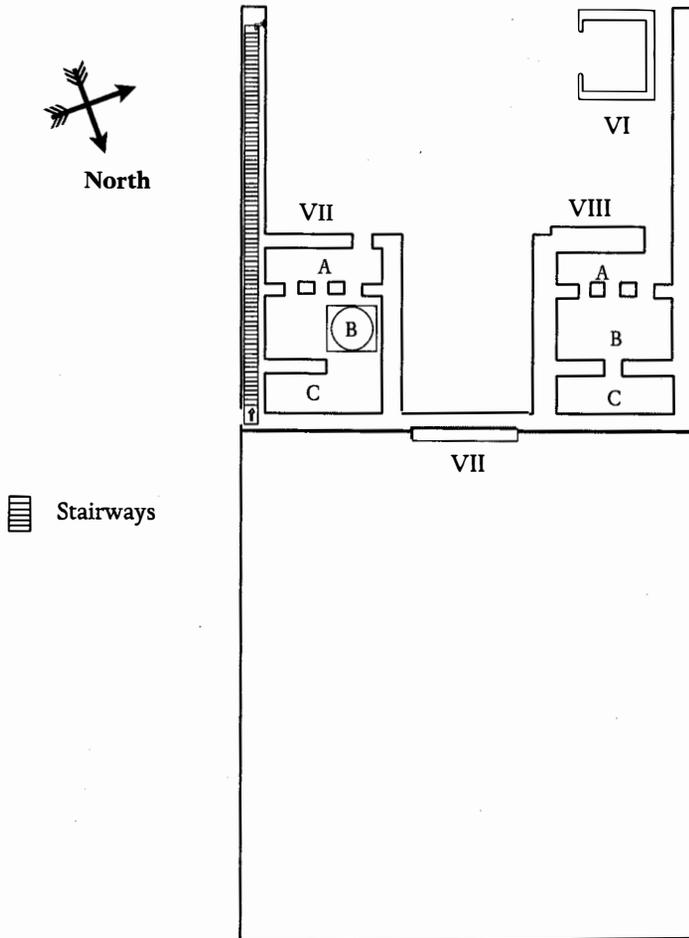


Figure 34—The Roof Chapels at the Dendera Temple

spirits each perform a ceremonial ablu­tion that mystically joins and reconstitutes the members of his body. The spirits of the Duat guard the gates of the shadow world in the next chamber (B). On the ceiling, Nut is stretched over a double-wound figure of Geb, depicting the creation of the physical world. The inner sanctuary is also called the Tomb of Asar (C). Here, the initiate undergoes a mystical conception and attains renewal as depicted on wall inscriptions where Asar impregnates Auset after she has assumed the form of the bird known as a kite.

In turn, she creates a sacred wind which gives breath her to consort and those who enter this place of renewal. The suite of rooms depicts the mysteries of mortality—birth, death, and the return to the world as a newly incarnate spirit.

The Eastern Chapels (VIII) are dedicated exclusively to Nut—Neter of the sky—in her cosmic manifestations. The outer chamber (A) contains the texts for creating the Bed of Asar, a fetish designed to emulate the sprouting of the seed and its continuance as life-giving food. Linen, filled with earth, is seeded and watered until the grain sprouts. The chapels here disclose the enigmatic mystery of transformation in nature, from the agricultural cycle to great cosmic cycles in the sky.

The Circular Zodiac (B) on this chamber's western ceiling is believed to depict the skies for the same era as the oblong Zodiac in the Silver Room—dawn, April 17, 17 C.E., when the temple was last renovated by the Ptolemies.¹⁰

The Zodiac accurately displays the circumpolar stars, the constellations on the Sun's path, and the Egyptian dekans. Points of orientation for the vernal equinox are clearly marked on the Zodiac to denote the major epochs of the temple. In the center of the ceiling is an outstretched figure of Nut and on the eastern side she is portrayed once more, surrounding fourteen lunar barques.

The Chapel of Asar on His Bier (C) is the innermost chamber. On this ceiling, Nut encircles a stairway of fourteen steps, signifying the lunar days of the waxing Moon, with Asar traveling in his barque and followed by Auset. This suite of rooms represents the mystery of the Moon's continuous recreation and renewal.

The northern part of the roof (IX) appears to have served as some form of waiting area in antiquity. What appear to be gaming boards are carved on the floor of the roof, but the markings may also be slots used for astronomical sighting devices employed by the hour priests. And if the function of game boards can indeed be confirmed, they no doubt were instruments of augury, as one of the primary Lunar functions is divination.

At the rear of the temple, on the ground floor outside the main sanctuary, a carved door provided symbolic access to those who were unable to enter the temple. We do not know for what reasons pilgrims could be excluded from the temple interior, though many of the Neter's feasts were attended solely by her clergy at certain times of the year. The emblem of Het-Her is inscribed upon the wall, marking

¹⁰ Gleadow, Rupert: *The Origins of the Zodiac*. Castle Books: New York, 1968; p. 181.

the axis of the temple, though it has been worn down by the continued touching of ancient visitors' hands, who over the course of time gouged dust out of the hollow to acquire talismanic mementos of their journey to this divine house.

The sacred lake, at the southwestern corner of Het-Her's precinct, contains four stairways at each corner. South of this is the temple of Auset (the Iseum), comprised of two areas: the western portion faces north, the hypostyle hall is rotated and faces east. This is a most unusual combination of orientations for a single temple, but it serves to fulfill a Lunar function—being oriented north-south like the Great Seat—and a Stellar function as well. In the sanctuary on the west, Asar, Auset, and Nebt-Het are shown as a triad. The eastern portion's azimuth is 18.5° south of east, which Lockyer determined was the alignment to the heliacal rising of Sirius in 700 B.C.E. That Sirius is identified with Auset has been confirmed by both egyptologists and astronomers, and within this shrine an ancient text defines the sacred day:

Auset shines into her temple on New Year's Day, and she mingles her light with that of her father Ra on the horizon.

At the northwestern end of the precinct is the sanatorium, which served as a lodging place for visiting clergy and a hospice for the ill of body and spirit. Though only the foundation remains, a number of private chambers can be seen surrounding a central area that held a pool of water. An inscription found here suggests that the water had the power to heal all diseases. Nectanebo, a Pharaoh of the Persian Period known for his restoration of many ancient monuments, placed the next monument, a *mamissi* ("birth house") to celebrate the birth of Ihy. On the north side of this is a Coptic basilica (400 C.E.) which contains three sanctuaries that may have emulated the original trinity of the birth house in Christian terms. It is entered from the west.

The Roman era birth house on the northernmost end was once part of Nectanebo's *mamissi*. Here, plant-form columns depict Bes and Taurt—deities who assist in gestation and birth—with Ihy as a child on a lotus blossom. The vestibule contains offering scenes presiding over by the Roman emperors, while the sanctuary depicts the conception of the Pharaoh, the creation of his Ka on the potter's wheel, and his birth and presentation to the Neteru. A niche in the false door shows Het-Her and her child. These vignettes depict an often-repeated

theme in sacred art, the divine ancestry of the royal person. And at the temple, the king or queen is viewed as the progeny of the Neter, or sometimes literally appears as the physical incarnation of the deity.

Het-Her's Great Seat expresses the functions of the Lunar principle in myriad ways. The common acts of gestating, feeding, healing, and burial are raised to metaphysical levels in her realm—they attain a magnitude that reflects the life-giving power of night and the Moon. And even though other of the Neteru may be associated with planets, stars, or constellations, they take their places at Dendera to support and assume many of the Lunar roles in this Neter's time and space. The mysteries of Het-Her's rhythmic magic are also revealed in the chambers of her temple. Though Asar loses his vitality in the circuit of the Moon through the sky, Ihy arises from the solar pool of heaven and is brought forth by his mother to invoke the cosmic harmony once more. This takes place in the continuous celebrations of the Lunar temple, and on the great occasions when Pharaoh presents himself to the Neter as her son and the reappearance of the New Moon.

The Solar Temple at Karnak

The Karnak temenos is an exemplary complex of the Solar temple on its largest scale. Here, in the great Per Ankh of Amun, we find the house of the Neter and his family, along with a number of distinctive structures consecrated to Neteru of the region and the Royal House—spanning more than 2,000 years of religious activity. The site is comprised of three distinct areas: the precinct of Mont (Neter of the Theban nome) in the north; the precinct of Amun with its sacred lake in the center, and joined to the precinct of his consort Mut to the south by an avenue of ram-headed sphinxes. Another sacred lake attached to Mut's district—called Asheru—lies to the south. There are temples within these areas dedicated to festivals in the sacred calendar, chapels, courtyards, and small sanctuaries of the Neteru in the Theban cosmogony. Yet in spite of the apparent disorder, each monument serves a vital and interdependent function in the multiplicity of continuous events celebrated at this archetypal Solar complex.

Records reveal that during the reign of the early Ramessides the temple of Amun possessed more than 80,000 attendants in the service of the Neter, more

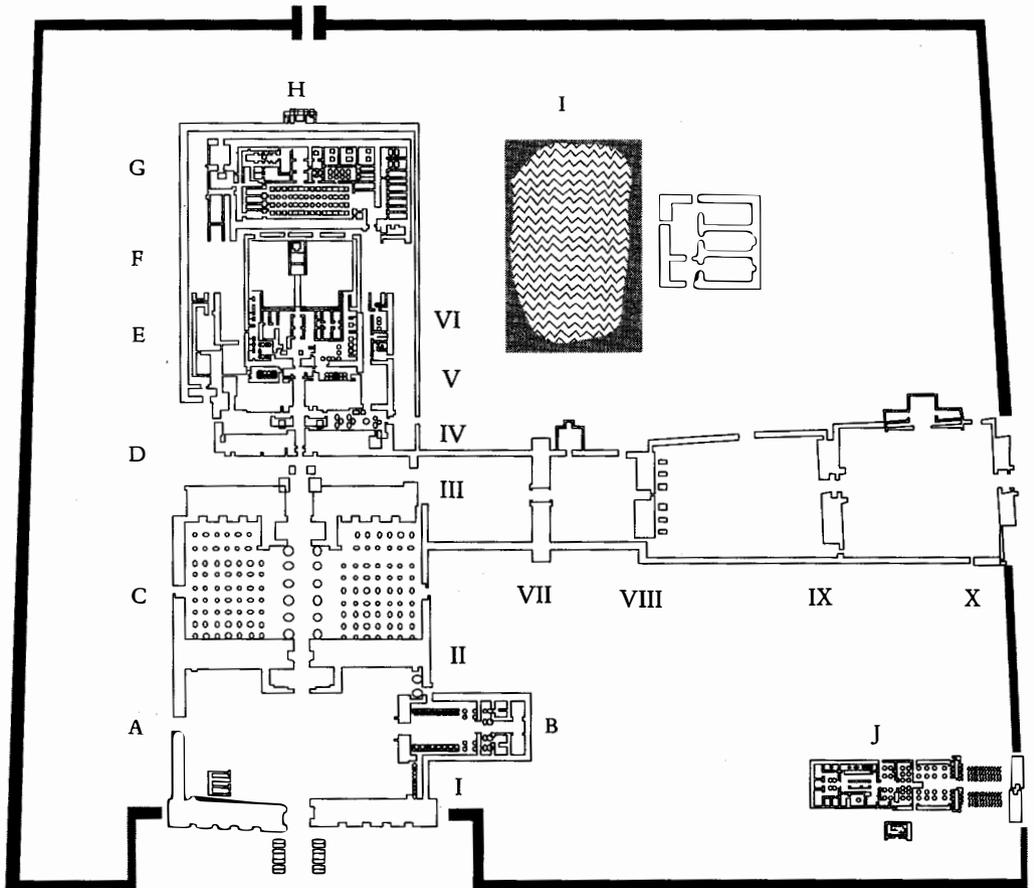
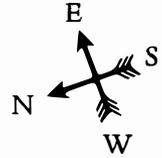


Figure 35—The Per Ankh at Karnak

than 5,000 sacred images, and 700,000 acres of land throughout Egypt. Additionally, more than 421,000 head of cattle belonged to Amun as well as thousands of sacred animals in residence at other temples. Flocks of geese, sacred to the Neter, were kept near his temple at Karnak.

A quay on the Nile originally led to the entry of the temple at its western border. Six successive double pylons follow an avenue of sphinxes eastward into the temple proper, all constructed between Dynasties 18–30 (circa 1350–332 B.C.E.). Each pylon demarcates a courtyard containing ceremonial halls filled with a spectrum of columns, each contributing a unique dimension to this “City of Pillars.” The numerical order of the pylons is determined by egyptologists from the sacred precinct’s point of entry, at the avenue of ram sphinxes in the west (refer to the diagram of the Per Ankh of Karnak on the facing page).

Constructed during the short-lived Nubian Empire (715–672 B.C.E.), Pylon I is the largest and latest of the pylons. Built in sandstone, it is undecorated and unfinished, a circumstance that symbolists view as deliberate. Sandstone, associated with the element Earth, implies here that the mound of Amun has been transposed to the entry of the precinct to await a new cycle of embodiment.

The Great Court (A) lies within Pylon I. Here, the remains of a kiosk with an alabaster block altar in the center are known as Taharqa’s Columns. This small monument is one of the stations that was used in the daily ritual of carrying Amun’s image to the outer court. Nearby is the sphinx of Tutankhamun and two striding colossi of Rameses II; the northern statue has only feet remaining.

The temple of Rameses III (B) in the south of the Great Court is the only extant monument in Egypt constructed on a homogeneous plan by a single monarch. The pylon of this small building depicts Rameses as the warrior king, while walls of the inner court are lined with his mummiform pillar-statues, accompanied by inscriptions of the yearly festival of Amun-Min. The sanctuary contains three shrines to Amun, Mut, and Khons. This temple is oriented north with an amplitude of 63.5° north of east. The star aligning on its temple’s axis at rising (circa 1300 B.C.E.) is Eltanin, in the polar constellation of Draco.

The shrine of Seti II lies in the northwest corner of the Great Court, depicting the Ba of Amun-Ra in the form of a ram. This shrine was also used as a resting place for the sacred barques during the great processions at Karnak. The three

chambers within are dedicated to Amun, Mut, and Khons, and the construction is comprised of gray sandstone with doorways of rose granite. The temple is oriented south with an amplitude of 63° south of west and the star aligning on the temple's axis at setting is Canopus, a southern star.

An avenue of sphinxes leads to the next (easterly) gateway, Pylon II. They are undoubtedly remnants of an older entry, but heralded the manifestation of a new order of royal power in Dynasty 19. This pylon was begun by Horemhab and Rameses I, and was completed by Seti I. In modern times, it was found to contain some of the sandstone blocks of Akhnaton's temples to Aton, originally built at the most easterly point of the Karnak precinct. Here, a vestibule which shows Rameses II defeating the foes of Amun. The symbolism of Akhnaton's ruins lying within this structure conveys the sentiments of the Ramessides, who sought to restore Egypt's ancient tradition of kingship and the canon of Solar descent after Akhnaton's religious deviation in Dynasty 18.¹¹

The Great Hypostyle Hall (C) was called "The Hall of the Two Crowns," because pharaonic investitures took place in this sacred space beginning in Dynasty 19. The environment reflects a spacious realization of the king's ascendancy from mortal to divine power in a symmetrical arrangement of 134 columns in sixteen rows, the most famous architectural feature at Karnak. Erected by Rameses I, Seti I, and Rameses II, the columns were constructed of sandstone circular drums with sunken relief decoration. Twelve calyx (open bud) capitals line the central course of the hall, which originally supported a raised roof, and are elevated nearly one meter above the bud capitals arranged in six rows on each side. These were arranged with nine columns in each row, and one row on each side comprised of seven columns. They support clerestory windows (stone grills) above, which would have provided subtle, dim light to emulate the depths of the sacred marsh of time. The floor of the Great Hypostyle Hall was covered with sheets of silver, as were the floors of the inner chambers of the

11 Although sporadically popular in modern times because of his apparent monotheism, Akhnaton is more accurately perceived as a religious fanatic who attempted to eliminate the entire corpus of Egyptian temple traditions in favor of his own practice, worship of the Aton (Sun disc). His "new religion" was a hybrid of Old Kingdom solar ritual, instituted by this Pharaoh's declaration of a holy war on the priests and practitioners of the traditional religion. To further reinforce his changes, Akhnaton subverted the established artistic and architectural canon of Sacred Space in favor of his "realism." He erected monuments portraying himself and the

Luxor Temple to the south. On the outside north and south walls of this hall are scenes of Seti I and Rameses II vanquishing the enemies of Egypt, a metaphor for the king's role as the subjugator of disorder.

Pylon III was erected by Amunhotep III, the father of Akhnaton. Within the pylon were found fine limestone blocks of the small pavilion of Senusert I (2000 B.C.E.), built as a Heb Sed monument for the king. It is the oldest structure at Karnak (Dynasty 12), and when disassembled in ancient times its blocks were undoubtedly reused to symbolically fuse elements of the old order into the new. The monument was reassembled in modern times and is now located outside of Amun's temple to the north of Pylon I, though it was originally located along the avenue of human-headed sphinxes leading from Karnak to the Luxor Temple and used as a rest station for the festival barques of the gods. Details inscribed within the pavilion were carefully studied by Lucie Lamy, who pointed out that it is a monument of sacred measures, containing the nome list along with their capitols and guardian spirits, inscriptions of the enumerations of digits, palms, and spans used in architectural mensuration, the land measures of Egyptian territory, and the standards of the Nile's inundation at three points on the river.

Following Pylon III eastward into the Central Court (D) is access to the avenue to the southern buildings and four obelisks of Thutmoses I, Rameses IV and VI. Pylon IV marks the entry to the original temple, and within this gateway stand King Hatchepsut's rose granite obelisks, walled up during the reign of her successor Thutmoses III. Pylon V was constructed during the reign of Thutmoses I.

The sanctuary at Karnak (E) is located east of Pylon VI, a reconstruction that was comprised of two chambers made of pink granite, rebuilt by Phillip Arrhidaeus, brother and successor to Alexander the Great. In the outer chamber the Neter held audience, inside the Neter reposed in a sacred barque on a pedestal that remains today. The inscriptions on the sanctuary's outer walls depict Pharaoh's purifications, coronation, and confirmation by the Neteru, a high ceremony exclusively conducted at Amun's house.

Royal Family in a new, alien style. However, the true test of these beliefs and their legitimacy took place immediately after his death: had there been some value in his reforms, the entire scope of Egyptian religion would have turned to Aton worship. Instead, every trace of his changes was purged from the culture, and his image was chiselled off the monuments. The ancient religion was immediately restored and thereafter, while Akhnaton was referred to as "He Whose Name May Not Be Spoken." We must surmise, therefore, that Akhnaton's great experiment was indeed a failure.

The original sanctuary at Karnak (F) lies east of the Macedonian chamber, and only the pavement remains of this sacred area. It was known in ancient times as *Amun Ipet Sout*, “Amun, the counter of the places (as they bring tribute),” a reference to *Ipet*, the Neter of multiplicities and a form of Taurt. Her small shrine in the southwest corner of Amun’s precinct, adjacent to the Temple of Khons, was continuously maintained through the centuries. It also features two sections, an allusion to the two periods of darkness and light honored at the site.

The Great Jubilee Temple (G) of Thutmoses III is located east of the original sanctuary. It was named Akh Menu, “fortress of resplendent spirit” in ancient records. Called the “Hall of Festivals” by modern scholars, it is oriented on a north-south axis but is entered from the southwest corner. Intended as a memorial to the Thutmosside forebears, its south end is a “Chamber of Ancestors” depicting the king making offerings to his predecessors (the original reliefs are in the Louvre). The main hall contains twenty columns in two rows in the center, hewn in a unique shape that has been described as “tent pole.” These are enclosed by thirty-two square pillars distributed on either side, and end in the precinct’s holy of holies comprised of three chambers—to Amun, Mut, and Thutmoses.

Fifty small halls and chambers lie to the east of the Hall of Festivals (H), built on its outer wall. These were probably dedicated to nome spirits and other temple gods, and appear to have been intended for public use. Sometimes referred to as the “Chapels of the Hearing Ear,” they were designed to receive prayers and supplications to the Neteru for specific requests by pilgrims. To the east of these chapels is the temple of Ra Harakhte built by Rameses II, also known as the “Temple of the Hearing Ear.” It is on the same axis as *Ipet Sout*, and east of this lies the base of the largest extant obelisk in the world (rising thirty-one meters), moved to Rome’s Lateran Square in 1587. The location of the obelisk at this easternmost site suggests that a significant observational ritual of the Sun took place here, as the Ben Ben represents the culmination of celestial light at the place where it is situated.

Adjacent to the Great Temple of Amun is the Sacred Lake (I) on the southeast. A nilometer runs along the northern wall of the lake, and a gigantic scarab overlooks the lake, one of four placed by Amunhotep III in honor of Khepri. A stone

tunnel on the south side of the lake allowed the sacred geese to run from the fowl yards to their daily swim.

The temple of Khons (J) was built by Rameses III, behind and to the southwest of his temple. The building is in almost complete condition. Pointing south, the gateway pierces through the enclosure wall and stretches through an avenue of human-headed sphinxes to Luxor. A temple of Ptah and Sekhmet lies north of Ipet Sout, depicting the Neteru of the Memphis cosmogony built by Thutmoses III. There is a statue of Ptah in the central chapel and one of Sekhmet in the southern chapel.

The Journey of Light

The most important occasion at the Solar temple was the appearance of light, and each day the creation was reenacted at this event. The sacred lake was the initial site, where a ritual bathing—by the clergy and, in later times, by pilgrims to the temple—recalled the emergence of the Sun from the waters of Nun. After these purifications, the shrines of the temples within the precinct were opened to represent the entry of the Neter into the lower worlds and its coming to rest on the primeval mound of the sanctuary. Priestesses awakened the Neter to the world of life with chants and the rhythmic cadence of the drum and sistra, while attendants censed the sanctuary to welcome the sacred being into its house. Thus embodied, the divine spirit was transported to the outer court to be bathed in the rays of the rising Sun, symbolizing the illumination of the sacred land and its renewal. This reenactment ensured the reappearance of the Neter's power in the world of life and the continuance of divine order.

Amun's precinct is oriented on an east-west axis, synchronous with the rising and setting of the Sun. Today, it is approached from the Nile on the west through an avenue of sphinxes which incorporate the images of lion and ram surmounted by the solar disc, with effigies of the high priest and Pharaoh Pinudjem between the paws. The recumbent statues personify the melding of the ram's docility and the lion's nobility—the ancient Solar genealogy overshadowing the Royal House. The lion and ram also herald the energy dynamic of the warrior-king, elevated during the reign of the Ramessides (Dynasty 19) in the epoch of

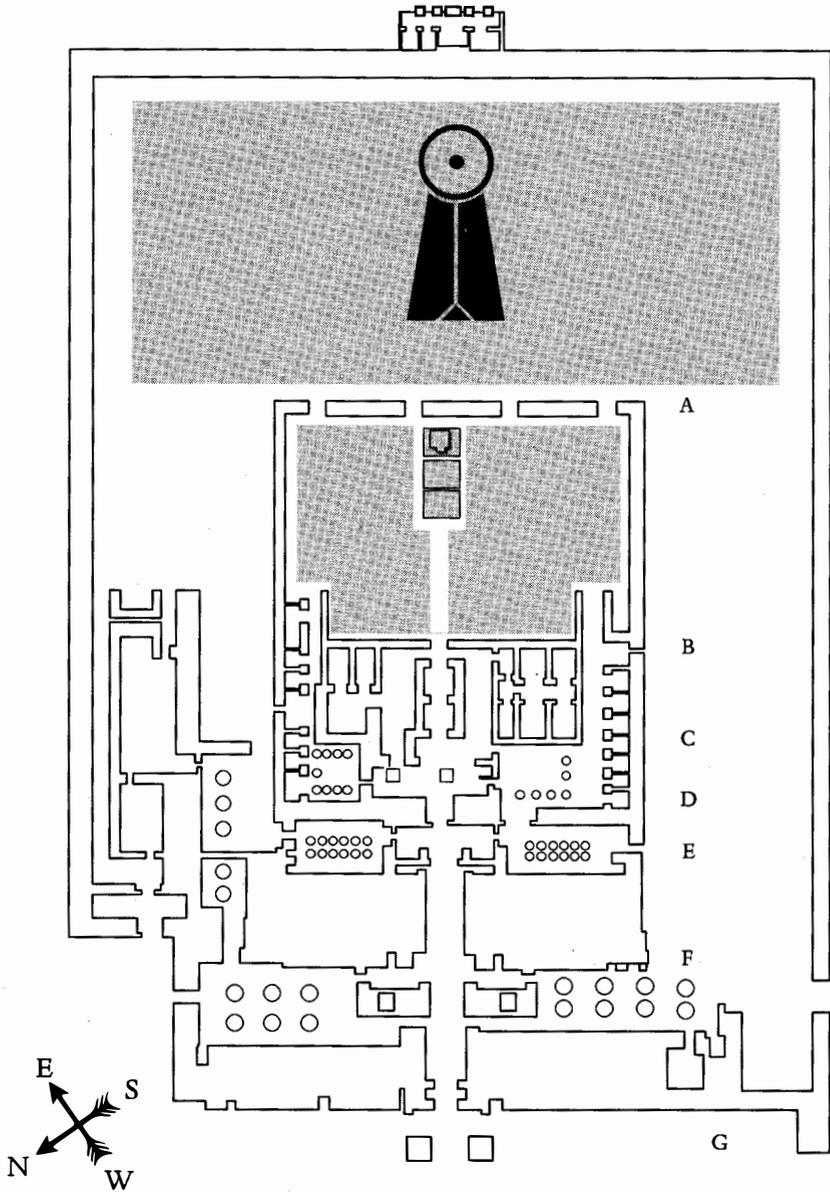


Figure 36— The Journey of Light at Amun's Temple

Aries. During this period, Egyptian civilization was mobilized almost exclusively to repulse a series of invasions by the Hittite empire, and the Royal House fully assumed the archetype of the divine son Heru (Leo), avenger of his father Asar and conqueror of adversarial forces. As the Sun in Sacred Astronomy rules the sign of Leo and is exalted in the sign of Aries, the Solar temple necessarily reflects the symbolism of these two images—and at Karnak they are splendidly fused with the dignity of kingship.

But the Karnak axis is also a record of the daily path of the Sun during the earlier reign of Thutmose I (Dynasty 18), when the temple extended from east to west up to Pylon IV. Much of what existed in the time of Thutmose I has long since disappeared, but we do know that the vast tract between the eastern perimeter of the original temple and the present sanctuary was a sacred space filled with chambers, passages, and halls dedicated to Amun and his family. We also know that at dawn in the eastern gateway (A), named “The Upper Door of Amun’s Domain,” the rising Sun in its first hour was observed (see the figure on the previous page).

The solar circuit over the temple from east to west was ritually expressed with the opening of its doors as the Sun passed overhead. As the Sun circuted over the horizon and its light reached into the chambers of the great temple during the passing hours, light passed into the inner sanctuary (B), in the eighth hour after sunrise. Here, the barque of Amun, flanked by offering chambers, was carried out by priests into the Hall of Records (C), a chamber inaugurated by Thutmose III. The hall is inscribed with state records made by the priests of the temple recording the gifts and booty received from his military campaigns.

The solar barque, borne by the priests and following the steady course of the heavenly orb overhead, next passed through two massive granite pillars decorated with the heraldic plants of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms, the lotus and papyrus. The Sun then approached the last and smallest of the temple’s gateways, Pylon VI. On each face are lists of tribes in the south and the 119 tribes in the north (Syria) subjugated by the army of Thutmose III. Here (D), he is shown worshipping “Amun in the ninth hour.”

Between Pylon V and Pylon VI is a colonnade (E) comprised of twenty-four 16-sided columns, known as the “Field of Reeds,” the place where the hours of

day and night arose in timeless time. The Sun reached this space in its tenth hour. It then passed through Pylon V and entered its eleventh hour at a second colonnade (F), of fourteen papyrus columns that were gilded in antiquity. Here, the fourteen divisions of Asar's dismembered body were symbolically made whole by the solar light.

As it passed over Pylon IV, called "Amun Great in Majesty," the Sun concluded its visible course in the sky by marking the twelfth hour after descending over the two obelisks that marked the terminus of the New Kingdom temple of Thutmoses I (G). In ancient times, the solar barque circuited the outer courtyard at dusk to emulate the passage of the Sun into the Duat, and returned to the inner sanctuary of the temple to await renewal the next day.

The Stellar Temple at Saqqara

One enters Djoser's complex at the southeast (A), the place of sunrise at the solstice (refer to the figure on the following page). The white limestone wall surrounding the area has been fashioned as a series of fourteen paneled doors—they have no physical openings but are sculpted to appear ajar. The one aperture that allows access to the interior also appears as a double door in open position, replete with carved hinges and slits indicating which panel should be closed first. The entryway is thus permanently open, symbolizing the intention of eternal admission to this place of renewal.

One continues the approach to the interior through the the Great Colonnade (B), a corridor of forty-eight columns stylized as bundled reeds and roofed by stone slabs hewn to imitate palm logs. These forty-eight pillars, each attached to the walls of the chamber, are believed to represent the number of geographic nomes in Djoser's time. However, the subdivision of these pillars implies another esoteric symbolism. The first portion of the colonnade is comprised of twenty-four columns, each signifying the hours of day and night through which the entrant passes into another field of time. On another level, the columns represent an ascent through the twenty-four vertebral junctures of the body in order to enter the superphysical worlds. The second portion of sixteen columns, fused together in twos, signifies the four corners of the four worlds in the Egyptian universe, which lead to a rectangular chamber of eight smaller columns (C), also

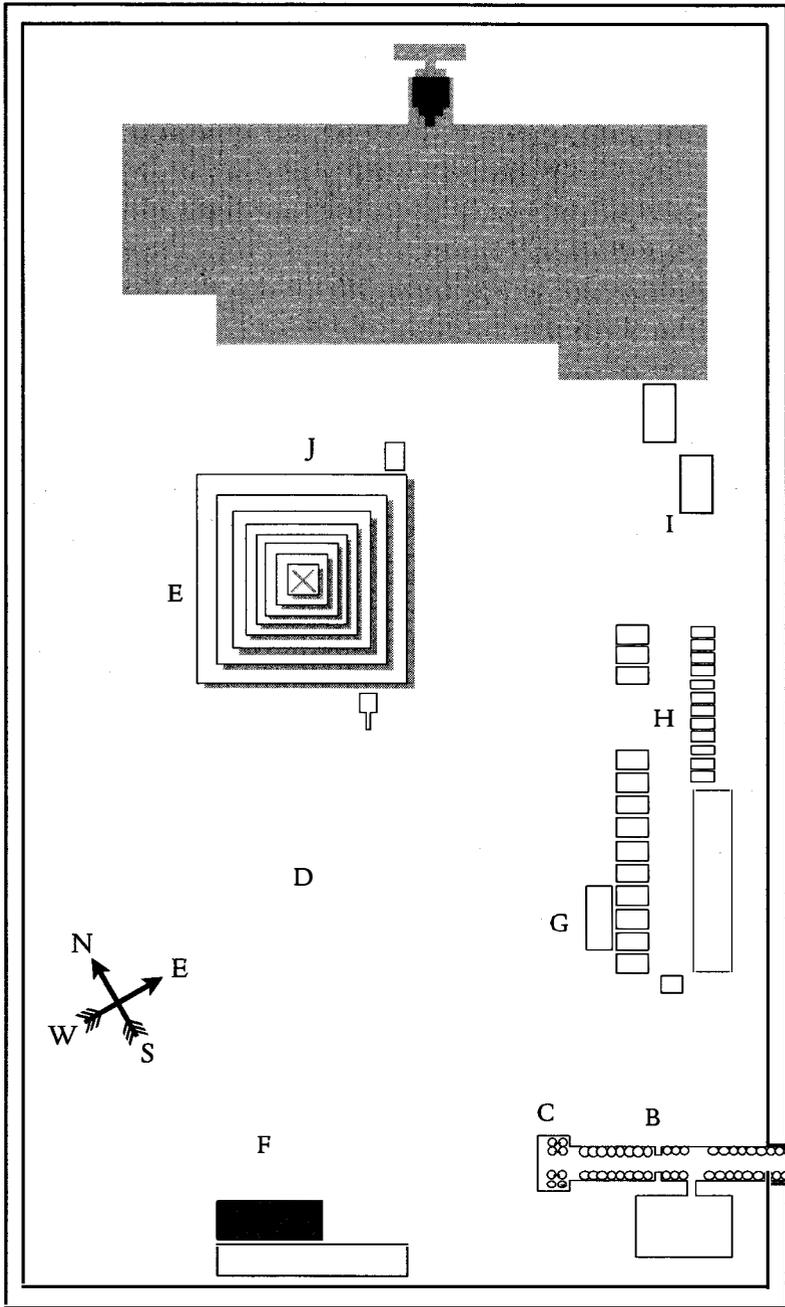


Figure 37— The Per Heh of Djoser at Saqqara

fused in twos. This last sacred space represents the four primeval elements, paired to delineate the unmanifest reality prior to the physical world. It provides entry into the Great Court (D), an archetypal representation of the body of Egypt.

The Great Court symbolizes the extent of Egypt's land in archaic times, divided into its northern and southern halves. The Step Pyramid (E) lies at the northern end of the field, to the south is a small monument believed to be a burial site but referred to in inscriptions as a birth chamber (F). This building contains a room that is too small to accommodate an adult body, but it is believed that during certain Heb Sed rituals, one in a fetal position could be confined there.

On the east side of the Great Court is a curious set of chambers which appear to have served as a temporary palace for Pharaoh during the Heb Sed festivities (G). With an interior of rooms and corridors, it features the enigmatic Robing Room, where a great quantity of regalia necessary for the Heb Sed rituals was stored. This building belies the assumption that Djoser's monument is a funerary structure; it affirms a purpose of great ceremonial use—perhaps continuously over centuries—by the living.

The Heb Sed Court (H) is entered after passing by the temporary palace. This area has evoked the most speculation from egyptologists as it emphasizes the dual features of the entire complex with great clarity. Two types of shrines—carved to emulate the archaic reed sanctuaries of predynastic Egypt—line the eastern and western sides of the court, each representing the nomes of Lower and Upper Egypt. At the southern end is a four-cornered dais that accommodated the double thrones of the king.

To the north of the Heb Sed court are two separate structures believed to represent the ancient royal residences, the Palace of the North and the Palace of the South (I). These once more symbolize the division of Egypt into Two Lands, with the distinctive plant forms of each region constructed as columns in the façades and chambers.

The Step Pyramid is not a pyramid but a true mastaba with six tiers. Egyptologists say that changes in its plan by Imhotep account for the disparate arrangements within the structure. But in view of the implied purpose of the entire site as a monument to the eternal union of land, king, and the Neteru, this may not be so. The changes in plan are more accurately evidence of separate constructions which took place at the various celebrations of the Heb Sed, during or

subsequent to Djoser's reign. In fact, as there is archeological evidence of five alterations, the original may have been built only as a single mastaba-type structure, with the subsequent five tiers added under later pharaonic periods.

Within the Step Pyramid is a maze of corridors, galleries, and chambers, totaling 3.5 miles, originally accessed by a northern stairway. Many of the chambers are decorated with blue faïence tiles and once contained more than 40,000 alabaster and diorite vessels, objects of high artistic integrity and extreme durability. Many of these were inscribed with the names of royal persons and officials older than Djoser along with papyri and ceremonial objects from later dynasties. Whether the Step Pyramid served for a long period of time as a repository for selected royal articles or was chosen as a safe precinct for storage during unstable times is uncertain, but we know that it was regarded throughout Egypt's history as a place where both the history and the mandate of the Royal House was honored.

One last intriguing element of Djoser's complex is the northern *serdab* (J), a small, slanted limestone enclosure at the northern face of the Step Pyramid that contains a life-size Ka statue of the king. Two holes have been drilled at the eye level of the statue, and through these apertures Djoser gazes north to view the polestar eternally. This and other architectural devices of the Old Kingdom built into the pyramids—such as air shafts aligning with the culminations of significant stars—underscore the the importance of Pharoah's Stellar destiny.

There is more affirmation of Djoser's complex being a ceremonial center for the living than a funerary monument for a dead monarch. The known components of the Heb Sed are the living king, representatives from each nome of the land, the clergy from every great temple, and a precinct dedicated exclusively to the ritual—as evidenced by the unique Heb Sed monuments from many periods that remain today at different sites in Egypt. The specific order of acts in the ceremony is not known, but most of the rite's components have been illustrated at diverse places and times to give an intriguing picture of the event.

The Heb Sed festival commenced in the night hours at the dark of the Moon. Hundreds of torches were lit and placed in their posts at Djoser's center for illumination, and a great gathering of priests, royal attendants, and governors from all of the nomes of Egypt assembled. Entering through the Great Colonnade, the king and his personal priests and courtiers marched through the passage of columns to the cadence of mock funerary drums and chants. The passage

through the Colonnade is reminiscent of reports made by those who have known the near-death experience—entering a long passage or tunnel at the end of which one enters the inner life. The columns narrow subtly as one passes through, an architectural device intended to evoke a feeling of contraction as well as the visual experience of passing through a narrow passage, such as the birth canal or the entry into the inner life.

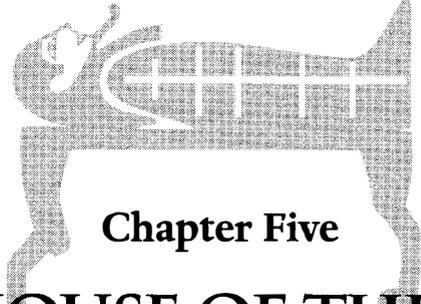
On approaching the small southern chamber in the Great Court, the king dons the peculiar Heb Sed robe that emulates the placental shroud, and he is then confined in the small enclosure of the southern chamber to incubate his new life. In the three days of this mystic process, the nomarchs present the offerings from their precincts at the shrines of the nome spirits to invoke the celestial powers for a return of life, stability, and health to Pharaoh and to the land. The king belongs to the Neteru during this time, but after his time in traveling with the Sun through the dark hours, he emerges into the Great Court symbolically renewed. Still inert, the traditional *Setem* (funerary) priest immediately performs the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, an act intended to bestow all of the functions of speech and feeding upon the newly born king.

In the Great Court the king, unclothed in the innocence of his new life, completes a symbolic circuit of the Two Lands, to reclaim its precincts as his own as well as to unify them. Inscriptions of Heb Sed ceremonies show the naked royal person carrying a number of symbolic objects: vases of Nile Water, the royal flail of Lower Egypt, the great oar of a Nile vessel, and the mysterious *hepet*, an instrument closely resembling the Masonic square. The circuit is performed four times, though some descriptions speak of a ritual dance rather than a jog around the precinct.

With the first sliver of the New Moon now visible in the sky, the festival moves to the east of the precinct and into the Heb Sed court. After assuming new regalia in the Robing Room, the king ascends the double thrones before the court of nome spirits and is crowned four times after honoring the four winds at each corner of the dais. A very elaborate ceremony of offering by representatives from every nome in Egypt follows, and may have taken place over several days. Bounty from every region was presented following an elaborate reception of the nomarch by the king. An important offering culminated the ceremony—the pre-

sentation of palm leaves, which represents in hieroglyphic form “millions of years,” an endowment intended to give lasting endurance to the royal Ka. After these formalities, the king was crowned at each shrine in the court by the nome officials. A large variation of crowns were bestowed, each representing the sacred divisions of Egypt and the heavenly powers of the Neteru joining forces on the brow of the king.

The Complex of Djoser represents a new life cycle for the king through participation in the Heb Sed and the continuance of the divine cycle inaugurated from the time of the Neteru’s presence in Egypt. The ceremonies performed there embody the prototypical cycle of human experience through the king’s interment and renewal in a passage through death and rebirth, his test of endurance, the acquisition of power from the regions of the land, and a symbolic reception of divine favor in the crownings. The spiritual mandate of this temple—transformation of the human element into an imperishable, life-giving principle—is fulfilled at Djoser’s House of Eternity.



Chapter Five

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

May your Ka live, and may you spend millions of years, you who loves Thebes, sitting with your face to the northwind, your two eyes beholding happiness.

Ceremonial cup from the tomb of Tutankhamun

The central theme of Egyptian metaphysics is that human life is intrinsically bonded to divine life. The material world separates a number of spiritual or subtle planes in varying degrees, but these worlds are accessible by altering the material veil. And according to the Sacred Science, transformation is the means by which this access is accomplished and maintained.

In Egypt, the experience of death was described by the word *mena* “to moor,” or “to arrive in port,” as if the return to an origin was implied. The dead were regarded as “the Justified,” having passed the judgment of the Neteru for living an exemplary life; they were also called “the True of Speech,” after passing through the locales and transitions of the Duat by knowing the commanding words of power over the denizens in those regions. The experience of birth was conveyed by the word *mes*, “to bring forth.” Curiously, the name given to embalmers was *Mesu Aat* (“They Bring Forth to the Dark Region”) and one of

the many appellations of Asar, governor of the dead, is *Mesu em Uhem*, "Who Brings Forth (gives birth) a Second Time."

Birth and death are life's transformative processes. According to the Egyptians, they are experiences that reinforce our bond to divine life. We may use their power to heal and regenerate, provided that the environment in which they are brought forth supports renewal. In the temple, birth is always the theme and in the tomb, death is portrayed, although in neither case was the condition of the body a prerequisite; in fact, the disposition of the physical body was of less significance than the processes of transformation themselves. Today we vaguely understand these systems and refer to them as "magical traditions" possessing antiquated value and little application to modern life.

But in Egypt, magic is the technology of transformation, its primary product being the transformed human being whose innate consciousness has awakened. This theme permeates all of the ideas left to us by the Egyptians. In myth, magic is used to maintain divine order by transforming division into synthesis. On temple inscriptions, magic transforms the sacred house of the Neter into a mirror of the universe so that the divine realm may extend into the earth. And in the sacred texts of the pyramid and tomb, magic transforms the initiate into a being empowered to enter the spiritual planes and participate in cosmic life.

The overall impression we have of Egypt has, for many decades, been based almost exclusively upon the nineteenth-century discoveries and examinations of mummies, tombs, and papyri, along with the detailed remarks of classical authors such as Herodotus and Diodorus about the funerary practices of the ancient Egyptians. The proliferation of such relics and comments naturally gives many the impression that the culture was obsessed with the continuance of life even in the face of death, and that the greater part of the arts and sciences was devoted to funerary activities.

Archeologists studying our own culture one thousand years from now may certainly believe the same of us, having only twentieth-century landfills brimming with the residues of life-extending drugs and cosmetics, as well as cemeteries replete with embalmed bodies and objects of religious sentiment to study. The debris of a civilization provides only a skeleton of its complete form, and in either the case of modern America or ancient Egypt, the fundamental value sys-

tem expressed by that culture must be taken into account before its relics are interpreted.

Egyptologists studying the earliest funerary sites have found that even in the “predynastic” times, the dead were sent to the inner life in a manner consistent with the practices of later times. Overall, the fundamental procedures for spiritually preparing the dead varied little over the 4,000-year history we know of as dynastic Egypt. Thus, there is no evolution of funerary practice, only an elaboration as time went on, though even the latter is also an assumption. The earliest funerary sites may have been highly elaborate but the number of tombs and burials in pristine condition is minuscule compared with those of later times.

The Necropolis

In Upper Egypt, the body rested on its left side, facing west. The gesture places the feet at the north, the place of “imperishable” existence. Burials in the Delta placed the deceased facing east, symbolically promising the same renewal as the Sun and “wandering” stars. But in all cases, the earliest graves that have come to light reveal a concern for the sustenance and comfort of the departed, with the placement of food and objects of everyday use in the grave with the body. The continuance of the person’s existence after death was firmly believed, and every necropolis in Egypt reflects that belief in its funerary art, architecture, and literature.

The sites of the earliest graves, as well as those dating contiguously down through Egypt’s history, are concentrated at two major burial centers: Saqqara, near the Delta region of Lower Egypt, and Abydos in the Valley of Upper Egypt. Both are located on the west bank of the Nile, the place of the setting Sun and thus the “region of the dead.”

In the earliest times, it was customary for those ably equipped to make the journey to maintain dual funerary cenotaphs at each great mortuary complex—Abydos in the south and Saqqara in the north. The mortuary complex near Abydos, located in the ancient town of Abedju, was the place from which the god-kings in primeval time were believed to have originated. The necropolis at Saqqara, located near Men Nefer (Memphis) was distinguished by the elaborate white, limestone walls that separated the city from the great cemetery. Egyptian burials spanning a 5,000-year period are found here. In Dynasty 19, Horemhab

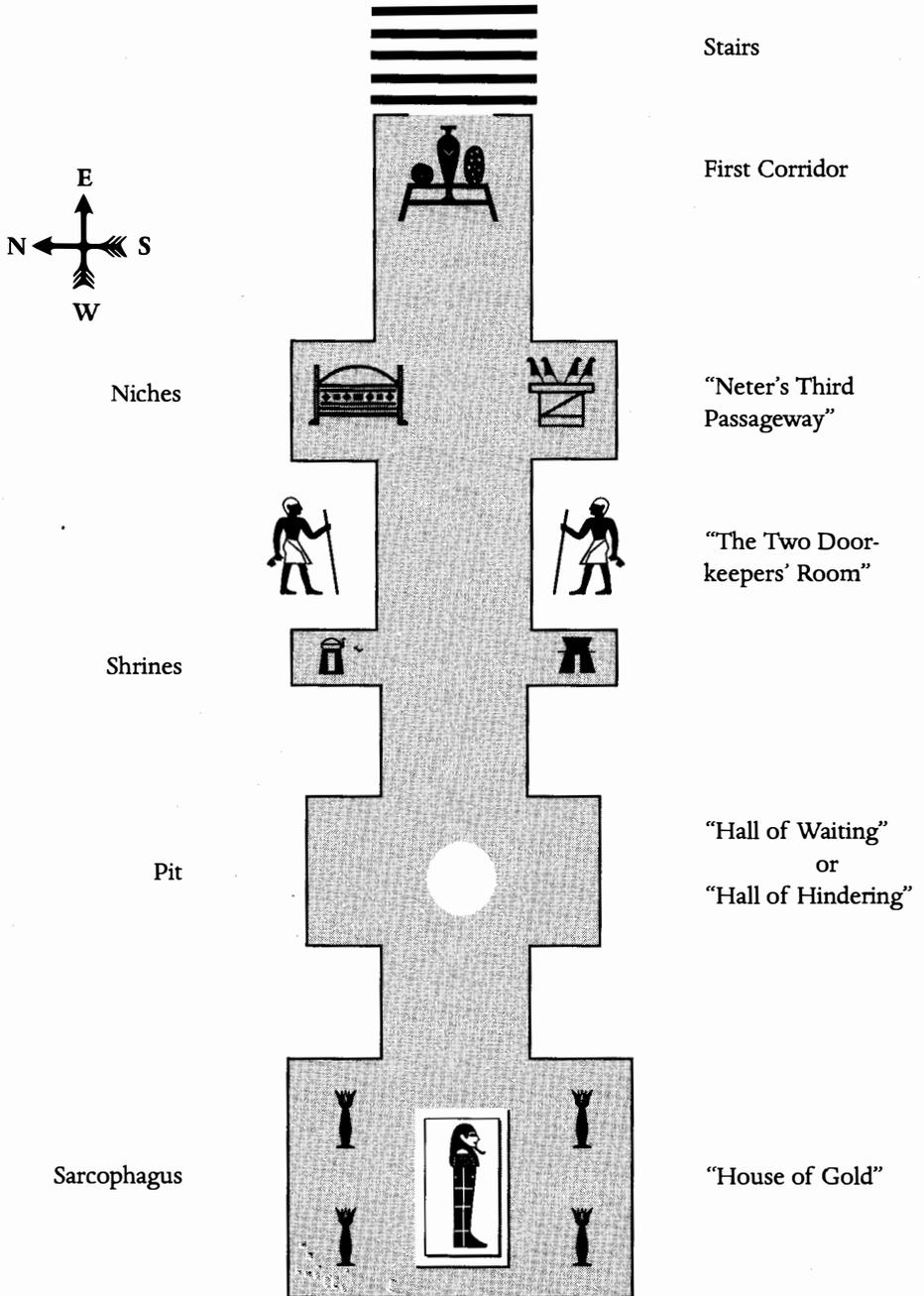


Figure 38—The Architecture of the Tomb

reinstated the Old Kingdom custom of maintaining dual burial sites after a long lapse in the tradition, as well as other funerary customs of the older period. These were carefully revived and pursued by his successors, the Ramessides.

During the Old Kingdom, the necropolis contained both individual and family burial places, each contained within a structural compound known as the mastaba. Of varying sizes and elaborate design, the mastaba was astronomically oriented in some respect to the northern polestar, to "moor" the tomb to the imperishable forces in the sky. Within the structure, chambers were designed to both house the dead and welcome living visitors during the annual funerary celebrations and, during the Lunar cycle, to receive offerings that were presented by the priests of the necropolis.

Other rooms in the mastaba served as ceremonial chambers supported by walls carefully inscribed with the formulae meant to ensure continuity of the spirit in the inner life. The spells and rituals were most often rendered in illustrated form, a convention of the Old Kingdom which has been misunderstood in modern times. Literal translation of the figures may show the deceased leading an army, hunting in a marsh, practicing veterinary medicine, and collecting taxes in his region—all diverse and unrelated professions for one apparently remarkable person. However, the illustrations are metaphorical, and are similarly found in all tombs of the period and every class of persons. Each scene represents a spiritual reality, rendered in earthly terms much as the corporeal world was understood to mirror the cosmic world. Leading an army was symbolic for "overcoming the adversary," hunting in a marsh was "returning to the primeval marsh of time," and collecting taxes was "balancing accounts," in the sense of paying one's moral debts.

The dead were usually buried beneath the mastaba, in deeply hewn shafts. In later times, after some periods of anarchy that resulted in the desecration of ancient tombs, rock-cliff tombs in remote locales were chosen as burial sites by the Royal House and its clans to ensure isolation from such events. They featured a layout similar to the mastaba, with a reception hall, ceremonial rooms, and a burial shaft cut deep into the rock. Eventually in the New Kingdom, tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens of Upper Egypt superseded the traditional mortuary complexes of earlier times.

Tomb architecture reflects a consistent design used for all classes throughout dynastic history: the terrain of the Shadow Worlds. Six chambers or sacred areas are clearly defined, with the seventh sacred domain being the sarcophagus itself. The stairwell or entrance often depicts the names and titles of the deceased accompanied by scenes of “entering the west” or the inner life, and greeting or presenting offerings to the Neteru therein. Inscriptions from the “Negative Confession” are often found here. In the Old Kingdom, the living were allowed to pass through this area.

After entering the tomb, the first chamber or corridor features reliefs proclaiming hymns to the Sun, perhaps along with illustrations of the Sun’s journey through the hours of day and night. The ceiling is frequently adorned with a representation of the physical heavens—the stars and dekan gods. These inscriptions symbolize the initial entry into the sky region by the deceased. In the Old Kingdom, this chamber was usually open to the family or priests of the necropolis, and was outfitted with an offering table to receive funerary goods. On the walls, scenes of baking, beer-making, and the feeding and slaughtering of animals are found—all symbolic of the living supporting the spiritual life of the deceased as the sojourner begins his ascent.

The second chamber is alternately called the “Neter’s Third Passageway” or the “Sanctuaries in which the Neteru of the East and West repose.” Herein are niches holding sanctuaries for figures of the inner life spirits, the first to be encountered in the spiritual journey. On the walls in the Ramesside tombs, The Book of What is in the Duat is inscribed, serving as a guide through the many regions and paths that the deceased may encounter. In the Old Kingdom, this was usually the Per Ka, or the chamber where the Ka of the deceased entered the tomb to take sustenance and return to the spirit world once more.

“The Two Doorkeepers’ Room” usually follows, which egyptologists believe was a chamber where the royal guard stood watch during the funerary ceremonies of aristocrats. Niches that hold funerary goods in shrines are also found here, along with inscriptions depicting the process of manufacturing the goods—metal working, bead making, carpentry, weaving, and glass blowing. In the Middle Kingdom, scenes from the final judgment are herein inscribed. The symbolism of two is repeated throughout this area, an allusion to the making of

moral choices or the splitting of paths from the physical to the spiritual realms. Here, the two doorkeepers symbolize the soul's entry to divine life or its return to earth.

Every mastaba or tomb featured a pit or sunken chamber, called the "Hall of Waiting" or "Hall of Hindering." Practical uses have been suggested for this—to divert water from flash floods of the desert or to deter tomb robbers. But a symbolic use is also proposed, as the tomb is overall a representation of the deceased's journey through the spiritual realms. The pit, which follows the scenes of judgment and often has another starry ceiling overhead, implies the prospect of returning to earth or reincarnation into the physical world. In the Old Kingdom, scenes of hunting or harpooning were depicted, symbolic of overcoming the carnal forces of the physical world in order to enter into the spiritual realm. In even earlier times, the deceased was often buried in the pit serving as a chamber of reembodiment into another realm.

The chamber of the "House of Gold" held the sarcophagus, and here the symbolism of four is reiterated throughout. Four pillars or storerooms usually surround the sepulcher, and in the Middle Kingdom four niches are carved in the four walls to house divinities of the four funerary directions or the four genii of Heru. In the tomb of Tutankhamun, four perfectly preserved golden shrines surround the mummy's chamber. The ceiling is another starry sky, with Nut—Neter of cosmic birth—overhead. Inscriptions in this chamber show stages of transformation passed through by the deceased—from forms of the bird and insect kingdom to Osirification and birth scenes as a child of the Neteru. As four represents the containment of spiritual force within the physical vehicle, the symbolism of this chamber conveys the ultimate magical purpose of the tomb—the birth of the deceased into immaterial realms as a spiritual being.

The sarcophagus, usually carved out of a single monolithic block of rare material (alabaster, red sandstone, and granite were commonly used) is the last or seventh chamber of the tomb. Inscribed within, the deceased is enfolded in the arms of Nut who spreads herself over the body of the departed—symbolically absorbing the soul into her body. On the walls of the sarcophagus, spells and hymns are written to ensure that the journey through the many regions of the inner life is not hindered by adversarial forces.

From the evidence, it appears that none of the alleged builders of the thirty-five major pyramids in Egypt were buried within those monuments. The few that have yielded funerary remains were found to have been sites of intrusive burials, serving as tombs for individuals buried centuries after the pyramids were built. As a result, egyptologists are nearly evenly divided on the “pyramids as tombs” issue. While no definitive evidence exists either way, all are in agreement that the pyramids served important funerary functions.¹ Their location on the west bank—the place of sunset and the cessation of light at dusk—symbolize an association with the gateway to the inner life. The modern discovery that the pyramid shape has a preserving effect on organic material lends credence to the belief that the pyramids may have been designed to enhance the mummification process. The remnants of mortuary temples in the immediate vicinity of the pyramids also supports the view that a vast complex of functions—of which burial was a subsidiary part—was administered at the necropolis.

The Funerary Cult

The funerary tradition of Egypt was a well-developed system in which all levels of society participated, from peasant to royalty. Far after the funeral itself, members of the family or paid clergy renewed and repeated various ceremonies for the benefit of the deceased. Egyptologists have termed this phenomenon as either a “funerary cult” or an “ancestral cult” in Egypt, overlooking the sociological aspects of the activities, which are well known.

The initial departure of the deceased to the Sacred Land was signaled by the completion of the mummification process. Before entombment, the mummy required the symbolic restoration of vital functions, in order to begin its complex journey through the inner life. This was effected by the funerary rituals and feast, followed by the journey itself, undertaken with the assistance of the funerary literature, priests, and members of the family.

1 Krupp, E. C.: “The austere and empty character of pyramid burial chambers has tempted Mark Lehner to speculate, at least informally, that some Old Kingdom pyramids were not even true tombs where the body of the deceased Pharaoh was interred, but symbolic tombs, magical houses for the spirits of the dead kings. Whether or not all of the pyramids were genuine tombs, they certainly seem to have had something to do with the departed king’s ascent to the sky.” *Skywatchers, Shamans & Kings*. John Wiley & Sons Inc.: New York, 1997; p. 292.

The importance of the funerary feast was not limited to the deceased. Restorative powers were extended to the participants, who shared in the new life entered into by the person of "second birth." This rite of communion can be seen as the foundation of subsequent religious concepts found in the Christian religion, which expresses the transformation of matter back into spirit through partaking of bread and wine. At the same time, the communicant is empowered through the rite to be joined with divine life through the transformative process it transmits. Most agricultural societies maintain this view of the spiritual nature of food, and express it through elaborate ceremonies at birth, weddings, and funerals with ritual feasts that symbolically join the participants together through the consumption of food whose life-giving properties are magically multiplied.

Funerary Literature

Wholesale plundering of ancient tombs in Egypt was an accepted manner of livelihood from the onset of foreign conquests. Records of such invasions by foreign peoples begin to appear from Dynasty 22, when Libyan chiefs overtook regions of Lower Egypt. What may have been lost of sacred literature in the process of searching for wealth continues to be speculated, but there exist fairly cohesive examples from all periods that provide more than a glimpse of the written funerary tradition.

In the late nineteenth century, egyptology as an organized, academic discipline developed rapidly. This came about mostly from the cooperative efforts of European and American universities and organizations working with the Egyptians under the less restrictive rule of the Mohammed Ali dynasty. Though plagued with mutual antagonisms and tremendous technical difficulties, much was saved of Egyptian antiquities that otherwise would have been profaned or lost.

The efforts of individual English, French, German, and Egyptian explorers also produced numerous documents from a wide range of Egyptian periods that we know were intended for funerary use. They were found in tombs, on coffins, and wrapped with the mummies in sarcophagi. Their content is, in many cases, similar and repetitious, being concerned wholly with the maintenance of the

tomb, the continued offering of sustenance to the spirit, the restoration of the functions of the deceased, and prayers for the fulfillment of specific needs in the inner life. However, there are curious exceptions, particularly in the funerary relics of royalty and the priesthood. Such items are obviously richer and more elaborate, giving substance to the assumption, forwarded by the early egyptologists, that funerary magic, like rich tomb equipment, was a commodity available only to those of financial means.

That so few examples of funerary literature came from the graves of common people does not necessarily indicate that it was reserved only for the higher classes. It is true that the texts written on papyrus or inscribed on walls are found in the tombs of the wealthy or nobility. But those of lesser means did have access to the same sacred literature. Portions may have been recited through the mourning period of the embalming process, much like the Catholic requiem mass is offered for the deceased in our era. Other parts of the liturgy were read over the grave at the funeral proper or over the entire necropolis by the funerary priests during the annual Great Offering Ceremony.

Funerary Books

The Book of the Opening of the Mouth and the Liturgy of Funerary Offerings are among the most essential of the funerary books, being intended to imbue life back into the deceased through the Ka image. A complete reconstitution of physical functions and form is outlined in the former work, and transmutation of material offerings into spiritual substance is described in the latter. Each work is complementary to the other and the two were intended to be used together.

One version of The Book of the Opening of the Mouth is a work composed of Middle Kingdom texts from the coffins of Peta Amun Apt and Butchai Amun. It consists of a series of twenty-eight ceremonies intended to metaphysically reconstitute the essential activities of the deceased in the inner life—such as the body's mobility, the senses, and eating—in order to partake of the funeral feast that followed the entombment of the mummy.

The Liturgy of Funerary Offerings is derived mostly from inscriptions at several pyramids from Saqqara (including those of Unas and Pepi I) dating from the Old Kingdom. The work is also found in the tomb of Seti I (New Kingdom),

demonstrating a remarkable consistency with the oldest examples of the work. It is composed of 114 ceremonies that involve the presentation of food, drink, oils, clothing, and cosmetics to the deceased, whose awakening into the inner life has taken place and whose functions are now restored.

The first half of this lengthy series of magical acts is devoted to a meticulous purification of the body, performed symbolically on the Ka statue. In addition to a number of lustrations with water, an interesting series of libations with oil are administered in seven steps. This is an example of the legendary "scent alchemy" of ancient Egypt, a science intended to elicit transformation through the use of sacred perfumes. The importance and value given by the Egyptians to this type of ritual magic is often overlooked. In the tomb of Tutankhamun, it was noted that an elaborate number of vases containing sacred oils and unguents formed a significant portion of the funerary trove. But even more interesting was the evidence left by the ancient tomb robbers, who were able to pilfer only a limited number of items before they were apparently apprehended. They first chose to take the contents of the unguent vases, and left hand prints on those vessels as proof of their hasty actions.

The second half of the Liturgy of Funerary Offerings encompasses the formal presentation of food offerings to the newly constituted Ka and an important ceremony involving the ritual feasting of the deceased with the living.

Egyptologists have noted that the operations in both works were performed on the Ka statue, but possibly due to a lack of magical imagination, they assert that the recipient of both ceremonies was the mummified body. However, the instructions are very clear and the depictions on tomb walls and papyri clearly show that the Ka statue was central in the process. Thus, the modern assumption that the Egyptians believed in a literal, physical resurrection after the performance of the ceremonies on the body is in error. The disintegration and decay of the physical body were recognized as necessary stages in the cycle of transformation.

Yet even though they have been identified as funerary in spirit, both ceremonies are recorded as having been performed in rites designed to embody images of the Neteru and notable great ancestors, such as the legendary Imhotep of the Old Kingdom. An example is the Ritual of the Divine Cult recorded at

Karnak, where it is apparent that these ancient ceremonies were not reserved strictly for the funeral, but were also employed as magical operations intended to confer the functions of the living on disembodied beings.

The foundation of funerary ritual throughout Egypt's dynastic history was essentially Osirian, and the mythos is very clear about the end result of the Osirified after the ceremonial purifications, restorations, and feedings. Asar was not resurrected on earth after his miraculous renewal, but his identity and functions were resurrected into the inner life where he assumed reign over the souls in the "sacred land." His son Heru then assumes his role on earth among the living, representing the Osirian principle in its renewed, vital condition. The two interface as a living complex of eternal life and cyclic renewal in all worlds.

We have seen how the Egyptian view of life depicts the existence of numerous planes, dimensions, or realities. As the application of Sacred Science could have an effect on the deceased's experiences on these planes, then the use of such rituals as instructed in the Liturgy of Funerary Offerings and The Opening of the Mouth represented a supracorporeal process. This process would provide the material necessities for the deceased, who was not yet accustomed to the new world in which she or he found herself or himself. Thus, all of the funerary works reflect the numerous processes intended for transformation on the various levels which the deceased would eventually encounter and pass through.

The Book of the Dead

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the German egyptologist Carl Richard Lepsius published the first version of the "book of the dead," based upon his translation of a Ptolemaic funerary work. The numerical order of the hymns, spells, and spiritual instructions from this one source, which was constituted by 192 individual pieces, was enlarged by the work of subsequent egyptologists (the most notable being Pleyte, Naville, Wallis Budge, and Allen), who produced translations of other papyri, coffin, and tomb inscriptions. Some standardization of arrangement can be found throughout these works. For instance, in every standard version of the "book of the dead" produced by these early scholars, Chapter 125 is the "Negative Confession," the declaration of innocence by the deceased.

Today's popular understanding of the Egyptian "book of the dead" is derived mostly from the Papyrus of Ani, a Dynasty 18 scribe whose version contains the most individual pieces found in one source of funerary literature. It was translated by the eminent Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, the prolific Victorian-era scholar of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at London's British Museum. His version, as well as a large number of other funerary works he translated, have been rendered a reasonably intelligent, if not (at times) poetic translation. Other "books of the dead" are, in the words of egyptologist Margaret Murray, ". . . apparently concerned only with exact word-for-word translation; the results are that even hymns and prayers are terrifyingly bald and soulless but 'scholarly.'"² Altogether, more than 200 magical formulae and prayers have been assigned to be part of Ani's book, which has further been deemed to represent the standard body of funerary liturgy for its period.

Egyptologists have assigned four recensions, or versions, to this "book of the dead." Each recension represents one of four different epochs that have been arbitrarily determined from the material produced by excavations up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Pyramid Texts: Old Kingdom

Sources: Dynasty 5 Pyramids at Saqqara

The Dynasty 5 pyramid of Unas at Saqqara is the first inscribed pyramid according to egyptologists, and is the major source of the Pyramid Texts. It is also the primary source extant of the Heliopolitan cosmogony, which was preeminent in the period during which the Unas pyramid is said to have been built (3500 B.C.E.). The cosmogony is primarily Stellar in its symbolism, but Solar elements are also significantly emphasized.

Chambers of the Unas pyramid contain 283 chapters of classical hieroglyphic text, each chapter being preceded by the inscription, "Recite the words . . .," giving rise to the belief that the entire text was intended as a ritual play or ceremony. The inscriptions are rendered in a curious low relief and filled in with an exquisite turquoise blue paste. Other sources at the Saqqara necropolis from which

2 Murray, Margaret: *The Splendor That Was Egypt*, Praeger Publishers: New York, 1964; xvi.

texts of the same genre and period are derived include the Dynasty 6 pyramids of Teti, Pepi I and II, and Mer-en-Ra, providing a total of 759 recitations.

The Pyramid Texts are a scriptural depiction of the king's spiritual synthesis with cosmic life. Stellar phenomena and names are frequently invoked as the royal person is incorporated into the celestial scheme both as the Sun and as a star.

The Fields of Rushes are filled with water, and I am ferried over to the far eastern side of the sky, to the place where the Neteru fashioned me, wherein I was born, new and young.

Utterance # 264

The Theban Recension: Middle Kingdom

Sources: Hieroglyphic Papyri and Coffin Texts

Most of the Theban Recension is derived from the Dynasty 18 papyri of Nu, Ani, Nebseni, and Anhai. In the Papyrus of Nu, a British Museum document, the Sekhet Iaru and Sekhet Hetepet heavens are described, denoting the highly complex topography of the inner life which later works elaborate upon.

Inscriptions on the coffins and writings found within tomb chambers of the same period are included in the Theban Recension, and are referred to as the Coffin Texts. In addition to elaborate inscriptions, the coffins of the Middle Kingdom depict a symbolic "window" through which the deceased looks out from the region of the dead, looking easterly toward the living from the western land.

The body of literature comprising the Theban Recension is in reality an illustrated guide to the Osirian experience, described by the Egyptians as *Per em Hru*, the "Chapters of Going Forth by Day." Its central theme is the judgment of the deceased, in order that he may become "justified" to become a member of the Osirian realm. This theme, called the *Psychostasia* by esotericists, is depicted throughout the literature, tombs, and coffins of the period in the following general order:

1. The initiate must cross a great river resembling the Nile. This body of water stands between the initiate and the kingdom of Asar. This watery region may refer to the Milky Way, the portal into cosmic worlds. The theme of this phase is Stellar in nature, harking back to images of the soul's celestial migration as depicted in the Pyramid Texts.

2. The initiate must next pass through the twelve circles. These are regions which represent the Zodiacal realms, as well as the Sun's twelve hours of darkness or night which surround the region of the dead. The theme of this phase is Solar in nature, and is filled with images of adversarial forces impeding the progress of the soul as it seeks entry into the barque of Ra.
3. The initiate then enters the holy chamber—the hall of judgment. Here the “Negative Confession” is recited and the weighing of the heart (Ab) against the feather of truth (Maat) is performed. One is judged by the forty-two assessors (Maati) after the weighing of the heart. If one passes, the prospect of joining the Neteru in the sacred land is offered. For those who fail, a denizen of the Duat (one of the Shadow Worlds), Apep, swallows the soul and one is subject to the agonies of a second death. This is a metaphor of reincarnation, the return to physical life.
4. Following the judgment, the initiate may now enter into one of the two heavens. The Elysian Fields of Asar, Sekhet Hetepet, contain fourteen Aats or regions; while the barque of heaven, Sekhet Iaru, contains seven Arits or divisions, also known as the “Great Gates.” This journey could be completed by the recitation of the names of the gates. Each leads to a great hall with a gatekeeper, watcher, and herald. Each gate is also guarded by three gods of terrifying aspect, who are appeased with the recitation of their names. One may then enter and live an idyllic life in the Elysian Fields, or become transformed as a member of the divine retinue, journeying through the heavens eternally with the Neteru. The theme of this phase is Lunar in nature, as it uses the metaphor of Lunar mansions or houses to enumerate the myriad regions and chambers in the Osirian world.

The Theban Redaction: Late Period

Sources: Hieratic Tomb Papyri

Funerary documents dating after Dynasty 20 are assigned to this version. It is almost identical to the Theban Recension, but demonstrates no fixed order of chapters.

Saite and Ptolemaic: Late Period

Sources: Hieroglyphic and Hieratic Tomb Papyri

It is from this incomplete collection of funerary works that the first “book of the dead” was translated by Lepsius. The work demonstrates a thorough revision of the Theban Recension, with a fixed order of chapters.

The Three Paths

Egyptologists assert that the use of different “books of the dead” at different periods and places was determined by the “cults in power,” priesthoods whose popularity was established by political maneuvering or just plain use of force. Resulting conditions, they explain, depict religious confusion. The British egyptologist I. E. S. Edwards articulates this view when he says, “From the Middle Kingdom onwards the two strains of Heliopolitan sun worship and Osirianism became inextricably woven together in the daily ritual, and the utterances used at every stage in the ceremonies reveal this theological tangle.”³

Whether the identity of the deceased merges with the constellation of Orion or the deities Ra, Asar, or Heru in the funerary literature, a “theological tangle” is probably not the case. While there is a shifting emphasis on the fate of the deceased in the funerary collections of differing periods, the fundamental premise is the same—transformation of the deceased into a divine being who enjoys both the material and immaterial benefits of spiritual life.

Using a symbolist approach, it is evident that these “versions” of funerary literature can be associated with the last three equinoctial periods of the precessional Great Age. The spiritual mandates expressed in the cosmic cycles of the ages of Taurus, Aries, and Pisces—the epochs encompassing dynastic Egypt—provide an interpretation of the three paths expressed by the Egyptians as the three transformations of the soul. These three paths also identify with the thematic elements of the Stellar, Solar, and Lunar concepts emphasized in the funerary literature, providing other allusions to the spiritual destiny of the recipient.

Old Kingdom (Stellar). The texts from this period articulate the aim of the individual’s entry into cosmic life as a star. Transformation from human to divine existence is the goal. This distinction is the birthright of the royal person especially, who is closest to the Neteru by virtue of the ancient bloodline. But nonroyal persons are also on record as participants in this spiritual synthesis. The Stellar symbolism of this funerary tradition also underscores another fundamental idea—that human existence can be transformed into a conscious reality that is cosmic in scope.

Many Solar concepts are also expressed in the Old Kingdom’s Pyramid Texts, but they are subsidiary to the ultimate goal of entering the firmament

3 Edwards, I. E. S.: *Introductory Guide to the Egyptian Collections*. British Museum Publications, Ltd.: Oxford, 1976.

as a being equal to the Neteru. The Stellar theme is preeminent in the Taurean Age, but enigmatically, salient elements of it were revived and disclosed in the Hermetic writings of Egypt's last renaissance, the Graeco-Roman period.

Middle to New Kingdom (Solar-Horian). In this literature the individual's aim is mastery of the two opposing worlds, the physical (Set) and the spiritual (Heru). Some transformational experience is expressed, though acquisition of magical power through mastery of adversarial forces is emphasized. Knowledge of the names of regions, gates, and spirits in the Duat is acquired as one journeys through the regions of night and day with the Sun. Maintenance of natural order and the enlargement of personal power is the theme of this period, the Age of Aries.

Late Period (Lunar-Osirian). These works express the individual's aim of entry into Amentet, the mirror of life on earth and the realm of Asar. The soul is judged or balanced with its earthly past and freed of its physical exigencies, after which the pleasures of earthly existence are continuously dispensed. Lunar stages of incubation and transformation are described as the initiate becomes Osirified and his physical nature is elevated. Continuity of consciousness between these states or transitions is the goal expressed in this period, the Age of Pisces.

These three themes—the Stellar, Solar-Horian, and Lunar-Osirian—each represent a spiritual path that determines the nature and scope of the postmortal journey. The funerary literature, decoration of the tomb, and in some instances, the preparation of the body, were all contingent upon which of these themes articulated the spiritual sojourn of the deceased. But aside from the historical and cosmic epochs that define these metaphysical destinations, other undetermined factors appear to have brought about the fusion of all three at a unique juncture in Egyptian history.

The Ramesside Books

This collection (dating from the beginning of the New Kingdom in Dynasty 19) is distinct among the funerary literature of the period and of Egyptian history overall.⁴ Combining philosophical, magical, and deeply religious themes, the

⁴ Budge, E. A. Wallis: *Osiris, The Egyptian Religion of Resurrection*, Vol. II, pp. 18-20. This passage discusses the restoration undertaken by Seti I at Abydos and the personal religious persuasion that may have been responsible for it.

works reflect Stellar, Solar-Horian, and Lunar-Osirian objectives for the deceased, often within the same tomb.

The cosmogony of the Ramesside books appears to be derived from the Heliopolitan Stellar theme, as expressed in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom. A serious return to this archaic tradition was undertaken under Horemhab, the founder of Dynasty 19. His reasons may have been due to his ancestral tradition—he came from a region of the Delta near Heliopolis—unlike the centuries-old pharaonic line of Theban nobles that he replaced. Horemhab's renaissance may have also been a response to the religious chaos inflicted on all levels of Egyptian society by his predecessor Akhnaton, who instituted a fundamentalist view of the Solar cosmogony with the literal practice of Sun worship. After this catastrophic period, funerary imagery returned to the ancient Stellar cosmogony, merging these with the Solar theme of the deceased journeying through cosmic realms following the hours established by sunset and sunrise. In particular, the royal funerals of the period portray powerful Solar-Horian images, with the ascending king assuming the role of Heru the Avenger and vanquisher of darkness. But the funerary compositions of the Ramesside period are also balanced with graphic Lunar-Osirian concepts, articulating organic metamorphosis through cyclic transformations.

When taken together, the Ramesside sacred texts reveal a distinctive approach to spiritual symbiosis. It incorporates the Stellar theme to elevate the soul to the cosmic realm of the Neteru with the Solar-Horian journey to ensure the maintenance of natural order and continuance. And throughout, the Lunar-Osirian experience is articulated to purify the physical form and endow it with renewed life through cyclic processes.

The following works are found in whole or in part at the Ramesside tombs of Upper Egypt, mostly inscribed on the tomb walls, sarcophagi, and ceilings of the tombs of Rameses I through IX, Seti I through III, Thutmoses III, Horemhab, and Merenptah. However, these works are also included in the Osireion, a ritual precinct adjacent to the temple at Abydos that has no funerary association.

The usual arrangement of the texts, beginning at the entrance of the tomb and going toward the chamber of the sarcophagus, was (1) Litany of Ra, (2) The

Book of Caverns, (3) The Book of Gates, (4) The Book of the Divine Cow, (5) The Book of What is in the Shadow World, (6) The Book of Day, and (7) The Book of Night.

Litany of Ra

Located at the entrances to many of the Ramesside tombs, the litany enumerates the sacred names of Ra. Its purpose is to invite transformation into the Solar principle by assimilating its names of power. This work underscores the mostly Stellar and Solar-Horian nature of the Ramesside tradition. It is comprised of seventy-five invocations that are recited, each articulating one of the “forms of Ra.” The intention of the recitations is to provide the king, who has Osirified, with the second transformation as the Solar principle through a process of recapitulating the Sun’s original primeval genesis and acquisition of forms, symbolized by the divine names. The most complete version of the litany comes from the shroud of Thutmose III. Other sources include the tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens, and numerous Dynasty 18 coffins.

The Book of Caverns (*Shat am Qereret*)

This work is inscribed at the Osireion of Abydos and several Ramesside tombs, but it is rare as a funerary work, thus giving rise to the probability that it was not meant strictly for funerary use. There are six divisions in this book, which represent six processes or transformations, accompanied by registers describing a region composed of twenty nine “caverns” (*qereret* also means “envelopes” or “cocoons”). The connotation between the twenty-nine-day synodic lunar month and the caverns indicates a cycle of organic gestation. In one section, the sojourner first enters the region and Ra announces himself as its master:

Behold, I know your names, your secrets, your caverns. I know from what you live when the Regent of the Shadow World orders you to live. Your throats breathe when you hear the words of the Osirified. When I pass through the Shadow World, when I enter upon the roads of the West, you are in peace and your souls are mighty; you are powerful in your caverns. You hear my voice. I call you by your names.

The Book of Caverns: Introduction

I

Set Amentet
 "He of the Hidden Eye"

Ḥ
Set, Tat
 "Guardian of the Desert"

III

Septet A Uawan
 "Mistress of Nourishment"

Ḥ
Aqebi
 "Stinger"

V

Arit
 "Mistress of Duration"

Ḥ
Teka Hra
 "Flame Eyed"

VII

Pesit
 "Shining One"

Ḥ
Akha en Maat
 "Hidden of the Eye"

IX

Aat Shefsheft
 "Exalted in Veneration"

Ḥ
Ab Ta
 "Tusked One of the Earth"

XI

Shetat Besu
 "Mysterious of Approaches"

Ḥ
Am Netti-f
 "Effluent One"



Ḥ
Sia Set
 "Swallower ofa Sinners"

Ḥ
Tebetbi
 "One of Action"

Ḥ
Set en Maat-f
 "Darting of the Eye"

Ḥ
Set Hra
 "Flame Faced"

Ḥ
Sethu
 "Binder"

Ḥ
Sehi, Reri
 "He of the Dawn, Enveloper"

II

 "Intense of Flame"

IV

Nebt-s Tchefau
 "Provisioner"

VI

Nebt Aha
 "Throne of Her Lord"

VIII

Bekhhki
 "Scorching Hot"

X

Tchesrit
 "Sacred One"

XII

Tesert Batu
 "Sacred of Power"

Figure 39 (at left)—Book of Gates: Names of the Twelve Gates in the Duat from the Sarcophagus of Seti I.

The Book of Gates describes the journey of the royal soul, now incorporated into the body of the Sun god, through the twelve gates of the West.

As the sun barque journeys west on the celestial river, Gate I is entered from the Nile. At Gate 6, the judgment hall of Asar is entered. When the journey concludes at Gate 12, the eastern vestibule is opened, and the soul is reborn at dawn with the Sun.

In this book, Ra descends into the region of Asar and revives the Neter of the dead with words of power and the light of his disc in a process of six transformations. The enemies of the Sun are thus completely annihilated—their heads, hearts, souls, and shadows are consumed in fiery cauldrons. But placing these horrific depictions into perspective, the work is clearly alchemical in nature, revealing processes by which the power of light transforms flesh into regenerated matter.

The Book of Gates or Pylons (*Shat am Sebekhet*)

This is a Solar-Horian work, the most complete version having been inscribed on the alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I. It is also featured on the walls of the corridor leading to the Osireion at Abydos. Believed to be of very ancient origin, the material is deeply magical in nature. The region disclosed encompasses a celestial river with a right and left bank, comprised of twelve gates, each guarded by a serpent. The river is traversed by entering the horizon of the west in the Sun barque of Ra.

In the tomb of Horemhab, the gates are depicted as “barriers.” In the fourth division, a curious register depicts the origin of the four races according to the Egyptians, who came into being from the actions of the Neteru:

Race	Descended From:
Egyptians	Ra
Asiatics	Set
Negroes	Heru
Libyans	Sekhmet

The Book of Gates depicts the deceased, having incorporated into the body of the Sun, to be traveling in the barque of the sky to the Mountain of the West,

where she or he receives symbols of power. The journey continues through twelve pylons where the consequences of immoral acts are articulated through processes of judgment, followed by regeneration and birth into a new cycle. At the fifth gate, the sojourner approaches a sacred pool of fire, which is inhabited by a divine cobra. Ra announces to the beings in this region that the deceased has authority over this gate:

O you Neteru who guard this holy pool, who grant water to the One Who Presides Over the Silent Region: the water of this pool is destined for the Osirified, its freshness is intended for this One Who Presides Over the Shadow World. The flame of your breath and your magic are directed against the souls of those who may come near the Osirified with bad intent.

The Book of Gates: V

The Book of the Divine Cow

This work is found in the tombs of Rameses II, II, VI, Seti I, and one of the shrines enclosing Tutankhamun's sarcophagus, but it can also be traced to the more ancient Pyramid Texts. Also named The Legend of the Destruction of Mankind, the text is usually inscribed in a small chamber entered through the tomb's Hall of Columns. The legend contains a mythic scenario of the origin of the human race, as well as the genealogy of the Neteru of the sky and their correlations with life on earth. It relates the story of Ra's displeasure with men and his desire to depart from the sky. Episodes where humanity is punished are described, with the Neteru eventually restoring order and allowing Ra to govern the heavens peacefully.

Within this text is inserted another legend, called The Chapter of the Divine Cow. Nut is the sky spirit represented by the divine cow, whose milk feeds the Ka's of all living things and is manifest in the region of the Milky Way. This text provides the sky traveler with the means to destroy the cosmic serpents who in timeless time obstructed the path of the Ra in his celestial journeying. It also reiterates the promise of Ra to impart to Asar and to his magicians the words of power which had guarded him from these attacks. For thousands of years, the snake charmers of Egypt were believed to possess the power bequeathed from the arcane disclosures of this work.

The recitation of the legend was in itself believed by the Egyptians to pass on magical power. The reciter becomes Ra, imbued with the Neter's force as long as he fulfills other ceremonial requirements: he must be bathed in Nile water, wearing new white sandals and linen clothing, and anointed with sacred oil after a nine-day purification. Incense must be burnt throughout the ceremony, and the image of Maat must be painted on the tongue in green ink. He is also instructed to be accompanied by a priestess, who assumes the role of a serpent goddess in order to be protected from the denizens encountered along the journey.

The Book of What is in the Shadow World *(Shat am Duat or Amduat)*

The Dynasty 19 Turin Papyrus—a highly magical work—contains an early version of this New Kingdom text. Known to the Egyptians as The Book of the Secret Chamber, it was intended to initiate a select few into the regions of the inner life. The Ramesside version is unique. It contains twelve chapters, each describing the twelve divisions for the twelve hours of night/darkness when the Sun passes through the Duat. Each division possesses a sacred name, warder or gate, and hour goddess. In the fifth hour, an alchemical scene depicts the soul as Sokar, awakening from within his region and merging with the Sun. The introduction to this text describes the nature of the journey about to be undertaken:

This is the knowledge of the power of those in the Shadow World.
This is the knowledge of what they do and their sacred rituals to Ra.
This is the knowledge of the mysterious powers, of what is in the hours and their Neteru. This is the knowledge of what Ra says to them, of their gates and the manner in which the Great One passes through them. This is the knowledge of the movement of the hours and their Neteru, knowledge of the powerful ones and the annihilated ones.

The Book of What is in the Shadow World: Introduction

The most complete version is found in the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, and a highly detailed work is in the tomb of Rameses VI at the same location. The book is also found in the tomb of Thutmose I, and portions of it are found in papyri at Leiden, Berlin, and Turin—all literature deemed to be highly magical in nature. Scholars believe that the work exclusively reflects the theology



Division	Name	Warder	Hour Goddess
—————FIRST HOUR OF NIGHT—————			
I	<i>Maati, Net Ra</i> "Great City"	<i>Arnebau</i>	<i>Ushem Hatiu Kheftiu Nu Ra</i> "Splitter of the Heads of Ra's Enemies"
II	<i>Urnes</i> "Field of Urnes"	<i>Am Nebau</i>	<i>Seshet Maket Neb-s</i> "The Wise, Guardian of Her Lord"
III	<i>Net Neb Ua Kheper</i> <i>Aut</i> , "Field of the	<i>Khetra</i>	<i>Tent Baiu</i> "Slicer of Souls"
IV	<i>Ankhet Kheperu</i> "Cavern of the Life of Forms"	<i>Ament Sethau</i>	<i>Urt em Sekhemu-s</i> "Great of Power"
V	<i>Ament</i> "Cavern of Sokar"	<i>Aha Neteru</i>	<i>Sekhmet Her Abt Uaa-s</i> "She on Her Barque"
VI	<i>Metchet Nebt Duat</i> "Deep Water"	<i>Sep Metu</i>	<i>Mesperit Ar At Maatu</i> "Proficient Leader"
VII	<i>Tephet Shetat</i> "Cavern of the Mysterious Cave"	<i>Ruti en Asar</i>	<i>Khesfet Hau Hesqetu</i> <i>Neha Hra</i> "Repeller of the Serpent"
VIII	<i>Tebat Neteru-s</i> "City of the Gods' Sarcophagi"	<i>Aha An Urt Ne</i>	<i>Nebt Usha</i> "Mistress of the Night"
IX	<i>Best Aru Ankhet</i> <i>Kheperu</i> "City of Living Manifestations"	<i>Sa em Keb</i>	<i>Duatet Maketet en Neb-s</i> "Adorer"
X	<i>Metet qa Utchebu</i> "City of Deep Water"	<i>Aa Kheperu</i> <i>Mes Aru</i>	<i>Tentenit Uhetes Khak Ab</i> "Beheader of Rebels"
XI	<i>Ra en Qerert Apt Khatu</i> "City of Corpse Counting"	<i>Sekhen Duatiu</i>	<i>Sebit Nebt Uaa Khesfet</i> <i>Seba em Pert-f</i> "Repulser of Rebels"
XII	<i>Khepher Kekiu Khau Mest</i> "City of the Appearance of Birth"	<i>Then Neteru</i>	<i>Maa Nefert Ra</i> "Beholder of the Beauty of Ra"
—————FIRST HOUR OF DAY—————			

Table 17—The Twelve Divisions of the Duat: From the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings.

of the Amun priesthood of Upper Egypt (conservators of the Theban cosmogony). However, the work reflects a Stellar theme with Solar-Horian elements, depicting the twelve-hour nocturnal cycle of the Sun and a recapitulation of the solar journey with which the sojourner is identified.

An allusion to reincarnation is depicted in this work: the Solar rebirth is represented in the twelfth hour, showing the barque of the Sun being towed backward by beings who enter the night serpent's body from the tail. As the aged figures move toward the mouth, they become younger and emerge newborn, while the Sun is transformed into Kephri, who flies into the sky.

The Books of the Sky

A number of cosmological texts are included with the Ramesside books, often designated as "astronomical ceilings" because of their location. The Book of Day is a work only found in the tomb of Rameses VI, detailed in several places on the ceiling. It describes the twelve diurnal hours, in which the reborn Sun (the king) in the form of a winged scarabaeus, is brought forth in the east by the pregnant Nut, assisted by Auset and Nebt-Het. The king, now a Neter, is greeted by the divine inhabitants of the sky who worship his barque as it passes through each hour. The names, appearances, and descriptions of the hours are given as hymns by the king, who is now a Solar divinity.

The Book of Night is a work also inscribed in several places in the tomb of Rameses VI, and is apparently intended for use with The Book of Day. It is derived from Old Kingdom sources, as it describes the nocturnal journey of the Sun after it has "disappeared behind the western mountain." In addition to the enumeration of the twelve hours and their sacred names, the thirty-six dekans are detailed, with their names and locations in the heavens. The deities of the cardinal points and the *Aakhu* (transfigured spirits) are also present. In the twelfth hour, an allusion to reincarnation is represented: the nocturnal Sun is transformed into a newborn brought forth by Auset and Nebt-Het, and flies into the sky as a scarab.

The Book of Nut is an interesting text on cosmic topography. It depicts the transits of the dekan stars through the Earth's meridian, and speaks of the "death" and "return" of stars when they seasonally become invisible and reappear in the night sky. This period of an asterism's invisibility, usually lasting

seventy days, was compared by the Egyptians to purification undergone by the soul during the mummification process

Book of Aker (Earth)

This work appears in the burial chambers of Rameses VI and IX, and on the sarcophagus of Siptah. It describes the elevation of the king—who represents physical matter—through a nightly voyage to rebirth. A new consciousness is attained through this journey, enabling past and future conditions to be known. Divided into four parts, the book is alchemical in nature; Aker being the Neter in the form of a double-headed lion (the alchemical union of opposites and the gold of transformation) who greets the newly born Sun at dawn.

In all, the Ramesside books illustrate the three mysteries of the soul's transformation. After the soul passes into the tomb and greets the Sun—source of all life-giving powers on Earth—with the Litany of Ra, it proceeds to the organic transformation of the Lunar-Osirian Mystery in *The Book of Caverns*. Then it advances through the passages defined in *The Book of Gates*, where it enters the sky and moves through the Solar-Horian cycle to resolve the conflicts of light and darkness. In *The Book of the Divine Cow*, empowerment is received from the Solar divinities. Then, the soul is welcomed into cosmic existence in *The Book of What is in the Shadow World*. And finally, the celestial asterisms delineated in *The Books of the Sky* become the companions of the soul as a newly born star and member of the cosmic realm in the *Stellar Mystery*, which is disclosed in *The Book of Aker*.

The three golden "birth" couches of distinctive animal images at Tutankhamun's tomb illustrate these three transformations. The representations of lioness, cow, and hippopotamus are traditional birth figures, each associated with a different realm of life. The lioness (an image of Tefnut, who with her consort Shu "holds up" the two horizons of heaven) represents Stellar existence, becoming a member of the eternal, timeless realm of the Neteru. The cow ("divine cow," Nut) represents Solar existence, traveling through the shadow and light worlds and partaking of the immaterial substances and activities shared by the souls who reside there. The hippopotamus couch in the tomb (Taurt, the principle of organic replication) represents rebirth into the physical world, reincarnation.

Mummification and the Resurrection of the Body

Herodotus wrote, "The Egyptians were the first to assert that the soul of man is immortal, and that when it perishes it enters into some other animal, constantly springing into existence. When it has passed through different kinds of terrestrial, marine, and aerial beings, it again enters the body of a man and is born."⁵

Those words are accurate in the symbolic sense, but also reflect a profane understanding of spiritual experience in the inner life as the Egyptians understood it. The funerary literature articulates release from the earthly limitations of hunger, thirst, and weariness, as well as the enhancement of personal powers through the transformations of the tomb. There is also a convincing argument from the study of certain texts that some of the rites were also designed to empower the person to remove himself from the cycle of reincarnation altogether.

Egyptologists say that the process of mummification was inadvertently stumbled upon by the Egyptians in predynastic times, when it was noticed that dead bodies naturally desiccated in the dry, hot sands of the desert. Why this inexpensive, simple process was not employed thereafter is not explained, but the custom of mummification, involving a complex series of procedures preserving every detail of the human form, is known from the earliest times in Egyptian history.

Death and birth were viewed as the reverse and obverse faces of existence in Egyptian funerary doctrine, which forwards a belief in reincarnation and a knowledge of the processes by which it took place. The entire period of entombment lasted 272 days, the average length of human gestation. The mummification process counted for seventy days, a period that coincides with the disappearance of successive dekan stars in the night sky during their annual cycles. The deceased was often equated with the constellation Orion, which descended into the Duat or invisible sky in midwinter and was reborn in the spring. Here, the Osirian themes of annihilation and reappearance were reprised in a motif of cyclic return coincident with the stars.

In Egyptian philosophy, eternal life is not viewed as the continual existence of the physical form. Rather, it is believed to be a condition which transcends the corruption of matter, and is distinguished by the continuance of *consciousness*.

5 Herodotus: *The Histories* (trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt), Book II, paragraph 123. Penguin Books Ltd.: Middlesex England, 1976.

The goal in the funerary works is the attainment and maintenance of this reality by the deceased, and the elaborate funerary rituals, which include mummification, constitute the method by which this is attained. Thus, the objective of mummification was not the preservation of the body, but its transformation into cosmic states.

Initiatory literature is of the same genre, emphasizing the use of innate consciousness to master the realities which the initiate enters after “release” from the physical sphere. Symbols of sacred beings, birds and other animals in the writings express the nature of the transformations experienced, and are metaphorical of the soul’s “flight” or “descent” into supracorporeal realms. And so we find a common language employed in the two systems of funerary and initiatory philosophy, which implies more than the shared vernacular. The symbolism and aims of both classes of literature are essentially the same.

Sacred Anatomy

As members of a natural cosmic order, the Egyptians believed themselves to be active participants in the drama of sacred life. The interaction between the Neteru and human beings was understood to be a natural, continuous process, effected through a subtle system of interchanges in the physical body that take place irrespective of the conditions of “life” or “death.” The system is described in both metaphysical and funerary treatises without distinction to such conditions, emphasizing only the purity of the person’s life or his intention.

This “sacred anatomy” also plays a role in the legends and folk stories of ancient Egypt, many of which were used to illustrate spiritual ideas and moral values, concepts of great importance for the development of the temple student. A Dynasty 12 papyrus, *A Dispute Between a Man and His Ba*, has intrigued translators since its discovery in the late nineteenth century. The content centers around a man’s unhappiness and disillusionment with life and his desire to pass on into death, which appeals to him “like the fragrance of myrrh.” While the work raises questions about the social disorder of the time it was written, there is no doubt that it also reflects fundamental Egyptian concepts about the spiritual counterparts of one’s physical life, such as the Ba, the Ka, and the transformation of the soul.

The innate bond between all the immaterial realms is maintained through a natural hierarchy within the sacred anatomy. These concepts are richly illustrated in funerary texts and described with careful detail in magical literature from the earliest to the latest periods with great consistency. This is additional evidence that Egypt's magical technology, like its religious cosmology, was a fully constituted system from the commencement of the civilization. There is no evolution of concepts, but a complete system in place from the beginning throughout dynastic times.

Many of the components of the sacred anatomy are described in the literature found in coffins and tombs. In these works, the activities of the initiate are described on numerous planes of the spirit world. But initially, human beings do not have immediate access to the places of the inner life. First, the person undergoes a transformation before entering a particular realm. Thus, for each dimension a transformative change must be effected before one may proceed on the journey.

Like the Neteru, certain of the "spiritual bodies" in the sacred anatomy are found to dominate the sacred literature in some chronological periods more than others. For instance, the Akh ("spirit") was the vehicle of spiritual ascension in the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, while the Ka ("double") assumed prominence in Middle Kingdom funerary literature. This does not discount any one concept in favor of another where the overall system is concerned. Rather, it may intimate that certain spiritual ideas attained preeminence at certain times because the cosmic climate promoted their disclosure to the masses, rather than limiting their access to members of the Royal House or the accomplished of the temple.

The funerary and initiatory literature also reveals that the components of the sacred anatomy are associated with a Neter, in some cases far more closely than with others. For instance, Auset is often depicted as protectress of the Ba in temples and tombs, while Het-Her is always associated with the physical needs of the body, such as hunger and thirst. Many of these associations are symbolized by the hieroglyphic names or characters describing the spiritual bodies.



Figure 40—*Khaibit*: Shadow, shade of the elemental world

the many indigenous cultures that recognize its existence, but as a vehicle subtly connected to nature and its phenomena. The animal soul contains the intelligence resident in organic life, which in human brings works through the body's autonomic functions. The *Khaibit* is, for instance, sensitive to weather and seasonal rhythms, as well as the presence of animal and plant life in its environment. It has the power to move about freely and may protect the soul from threatening forces with its subtle senses of light and sound. It takes on the image of the person to whom it belongs, and dissolves naturally at death. The *Khaibit* is associated with *Het-Her*, the *Neter* of reflective images.



Figure 41—*Khat*: Physical body, outer form, "That Which Decays"

The Shadow

The *Khaibit* of a person refers to the "shadow" or mirror image of the body, the invisible animal or body elemental of metaphysics. This "animal soul" is not viewed as an inferior principle by

The Body

The *Khat* represents the physical form of a life, its material body. It is the earthly vessel of the *Ka*, being comprised of elements that are subject to decay. Its hieroglyphic determinative is

a Nile fish, representing the highly corruptible nature of the flesh.

The subject of the preservation of the physical body and its maintenance after death in ancient Egypt has been a controversial matter in egyptology for centuries. The existence of mummies and elaborate funerary equipment from all dynastic periods is believed by scholars to indicate that the Egyptians literally believed that the body would eventually be resurrected by the returning soul after its journey through the inner life. But if we understand the process of mummification as a metaphor of the initiate "becoming Osirified," then the need for so much funerary equipment and ritual is justified. *Asar* was resurrected not into the physical world but into the inner life, becoming a master of those realms. It did not occur by chance, but through deliberately acquired knowledge of sacred ritual, names, and geography of the sacred regions.

The physical world is considered a mirror of the divine regions in Egyptian cosmology; what occurs on each plane has a parallel existence on other planes. And so the rituals of mummification served a number of purposes. One was to ensure the process of the person's spiritual individuation on successive planes of existence by "reassembling" his divided body in the manner that Asar's body was restored. Another was to create an environment in which participants in the funerary rites could experience this individuation as well. Hence, the necessity of the funerary feast and continued activity of commemorating the dead annually.

The Khat ("that which decays") is associated with Set, the principle of fixation. It is the receptacle which "fixes" the various subtle forms of the individual into the earthly sphere.

The Senses

Maa (sight), *Sia* (touch), *Hu* (taste), and *Sedjem* (hearing) are the four powers which correspond to the four senses of human existence. They are associated with the four "sons" or functions of Heru, elemental deities whose presence is critical to the successful conclusion of magical and funerary ceremonies. They are Qebsenuf (*Sia*), who resides in the intestines; Daumutef (*Hu*), who resides in the stomach; Haapi (*Sedjem*), who resides in the lungs; and Imset (*Maa*), who resides in the liver.

The quaternary establishes terrestrial or physical manifestation in the sacred geometry. Its purpose is to bind celestial forces to a material pattern and thus raise the character of physical life through its embodiment of a subtle force. For instance, besides the sense of taste, *Hu* is also the name of the divine food upon which both the Neteru and men are sustained. This concept arises from the belief that earthly food possesses and transmits a subtle energy that nurtures the spirit. In addition, *Hu* also represents the act of "authoritative utterance," a term frequently encountered in Egyptian theurgy, but perhaps better defined as "conscious expression." Similarly, one of the highest titles of the high priest of Heliopolis was *Maa* or seer—one whose sight extended beyond the physical realm. *Sia* as the sense of touch is a term also used to describe knowledge and understanding, or the apprehension of anything outside the center of being—perhaps equivalent to our term for consciousness. *Sia* and *Hu* are depicted as a voyagers with the soul in the Sun barque, as it journeys through the sky in *The Book of Night* and *The Book of Gates*.

The vitalization of the four functions is a preliminary ritual in the initiatory literature of the Pyramid Texts. In the funerary books, restoration of the four functions is also preparatory to empowering the Ka to breathe and take nourishment. The importance of maintaining the body's functions and senses through all the possible transformations of human experience is continually emphasized in the sacred literature. It reveals to us the pervasive Egyptian belief that the human senses may be elevated to and exercised on spiritual planes.

The four senses came into being in the cosmological world of Aakhut, having initially emanated as functions of Heka, child of Neit and Khnum. Heka is portrayed in the funerary texts as a spirit of the Duat, possessing the ability to produce, transmit, and absorb magical forces. In the physical world, Heka is an essential component in the maintenance and continuance of life. Yet translators are hard-pressed to define the principle of this divinity, as he appears to be the embodiment of a distinctly personal force, whether it be of a divine or human being. The four senses as emanations of Heka reveal much of the meaning behind his significance as a Neter. The Egyptians viewed the degree of one's personal power with the extension of the senses, and one's ability to develop them beyond ordinary experience. The physical senses are a vehicle by which one's Heka is expressed and continuously made vital.



Figure 42—*Ren*: Name, personality

The Name

In modern Egypt, a curious custom exists which is believed to hark back to pharaonic times. People are legally and officially known by their birth names, which are appended—in Islamic tradi-

tion—to the names of their fathers and grandfathers, respectively. Thus, one named Ahmed Mohammed Hassan is an individual known as Ahmed, son of Mohammed and grandson of Hassan. But Ahmed may never be known to his village, his employer, or his government by this name. Instead, he may be known to all but his intimate family members as Mamoud, or perhaps Aziz. The use of a substitute name arises from the long-enduring belief that knowledge of one's name can empower another with one's vital essence.

Similarly, the *Ren* represents this power in the individual “name” of ancient Egypt. The name of a person was believed to evoke his personal power, his *Heka*. In Egyptian metaphysics, to speak the name of a person or a divinity is to strengthen and perpetuate its connection with the living. The *Ren* in this context possesses a character that attracts and reinforces the life force. It has a close association with the *Djed* principle, which is the causal principle behind the name.

We are most familiar with the importance of names in the titulary of royal persons so carefully inscribed at temples and tombs. Five names collectively comprised the titulary of Pharaoh, of which the first was known as the Heru Name. As the king was Heru incarnate on earth, this name represented the aspect of the Neter in active expression. The Neby “Two Ladies” name stood for his role as transmitter of archaic tradition, represented by the two Neteru, Nekhebet (the vulture) and Wadjet (the cobra). The Golden Heru name symbolized the exalted, initiatory role of the king, with reference to the spiritual agenda of his kingship (the name was endowed after the crowns were received). The Nesu Bity “Sedge and Bee” name represented the royal person’s role in the Two Lands, and the Son of Ra name signifies the aspect of that Neteru in its expression through the body of Pharaoh.

For someone’s name to go down in obscurity meant certain denial of eternal life. As a remedy, funerary protocol required the inscription of the deceased’s name on all tomb equipment, thus assuring that his identity would continue into the spiritual realms. In some memorial inscriptions, the deceased is given a second name, the “Good Name,” to signify his entry into spiritual life and continuous recognition by the Neteru. In the Pyramid Texts, the continuance of the name is glorified:

Your name lives on earth, your name flourishes on earth, you shall never decay, you shall never perish, but live for ever and ever.

Utterance #764

The acquisition of a new title or nomen after spiritual empowerments are received is found in cultures where the name is regarded as a receptacle of power. The *Ren* is associated with Nebt-Het, the Neter who nurtures the transformed soul when it has entered its new life.



Figure 43—*Ka*: Double, etheric body

The Double

The *Ka* is possessed by gods, men and all natural life. It is a subtle body that moves through physical forms in both life and death, and according to Wallis Budge, who made a lifelong study of

Egyptian metaphysical concepts, “. . . it existed before the body to which it joined itself was born.” The *Ka* is a vehicle that makes possible the circulation of the life forces *Sa* (cosmic) and *Sekhem* (individual).

The *Ka* is sometimes called the “double” of the person, and corresponds to the etheric body of metaphysics. A counterpart of the physical form, it is visible to clairvoyants as the “aura.” In this respect the *Ka* is the matrix of the body and carries its imprint. It maintains the mold of all physical characteristics, so that, as commonly reported in medicine, a missing limb may still convey the sensation or feeling of itself. Besides serving to transmit vitality between the material body and the spiritual bodies, the *Ka* was believed to have an immortal nature, unlike the etheric double of modern metaphysics which dissolves after death. The *Ka* of Egyptian belief lives on through the ages, and was believed to serve as the cohesive agent for all the bodies of the person’s inner life.

There is also an intelligent function in the *Ka* which is expressed in some of the mystical literature of ancient Egypt. When with the physical form, according to Wallis Budge, the *Ka* serves as “its mental, moral, and spiritual individuality and disposition, its rational guide, its far-seeing protector, and in some respects it acts as its guardian angel.”

Before birth, the *Ka* is joined with the child through a mystical act performed by the Neter Khnum, in his role as divine potter. In the process of fashioning the *Ka* into the likeness of the new human being, the Neter spins his potting wheel and infuses the form with distinct qualities. Khnum, “Principle of Distillation,” represents the encoded physical matrix in the seed and, specifically, the transference of DNA in matter.

Each man and woman is depicted in possession of their *Ka*, while royal persons are frequently shown in possession of several. At the Temple of Khnum at Esna, the Neter fashions up to seven forms (*Kau*) for one royal birth. In the case

of kingship, the Ka was accompanied by a female counterpart, the *Hemsut*, which was passed only through the royal mother and ensured the continuance of the divine lineage.

The Ka resides in the tomb after death in an idealized form of the deceased, the Ka statue. The statue was consecrated after the body has been mummified by the Hem Ka—a specialized funerary priest—to house the Ka while it was in the tomb. But physical sustenance was required by the Ka in order to maintain its subtle form, and this was fulfilled by the *Setem* (“keeper of offerings”) priests, who were responsible for its maintenance and presented offerings of food at the tomb. Libations of water and precious oils were also poured over the Ka statue at annual festivals to purify and refresh the deceased, practices which are still seen today in the Near East. And although we do not realize it, the tradition of feeding the dead still survives in Western society in the presentation of floral remembrances at cemeteries and the annual harvest festival of Halloween.

The hieroglyphic determinative for the Ka is two outstretched hands, seen from above. When visiting the Per Ka (“house of the Ka”), the deceased was believed to stretch out his hands through the “false door” (more accurately, a portal to the Shadow Worlds) of the Ka chamber to receive the offerings placed in the tomb. The essence of the physical offerings would then nourish its subtle form. The Ka’s activity in and out of the physical world is reminiscent of stories about the repetitious journeys of ghosts or shades, told in varied cultures throughout history.

The Egyptians believed that all living and vital forms possess the Ka—the Neteru, plant life, animals, stars, and temples, even geographic places. It was accepted that the Ka of an individual could be invoked in the tomb, and the Ka of the Neter could be materialized in the temple. This was possible because the Ka—even though separated from the physical world—could embody itself, if the proper ceremonies and form to house it were available. The legendary ceremonial art of ancient Egypt was capable of this, with necromancer-priests who embodied stone statues with the Ka of the dead. The Graeco-Roman Papyrus London-Leiden describes this phenomenon as well as stories from the Greeks of later times, who reported that this type of theurgy was also practiced in Egypt to enable the physical manifestation of the Neteru in the temple. The Ka is

First Line:
Heru Name



Her Ka nakht tut mesut
Heru: "Strong Bull, Perfect of Birth"

Second Line:
Nebty Name



Nebty nefer hepu segerh tau
Two Ladies: "Whose beneficent laws pacify the Two Lands"

Third Line:
Golden Heru Name



Her Nubu Uetches khau sehotep neteru
Golden Heru: "He Who Wears the Crowns, Who Satisfies the Neteru"

Fourth Line:
Sedge and Bee Name
(Prenomen)



Nesu Bity Heka pesdjat
King of Upper and Lower Egypt: "Ruler of the Nine Bows"



Neb tau Neb Kheperu Ra
Lord of the Two Lands: "All the Transformations of the Sun"

Fifth Line:
Solar Name
(Nomen)



Sa Ra En chet ef mer ef
Son of the Sun, of His Body Whom He Loves



Tut Ankh Amun Iunu Shemau
Established in Amun, Ruler of Southern Heliopolis (Iunu/Thebes)

Figure 44— The Royal Titulary: The full name of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun.

associated with Asar, governor and archetype of all the Ka of nature, as well as the ancestral dead in his region of Amentet.



Figure 45—*Ba*: Personal soul, astral body

The Soul and Astral Body

The *Ba* has been regarded as a “ghost” or “apparition” in funerary literature, but in the spiritual context it refers to the visible manifestation of any spiritual being, the soul. In metaphysical terms,

it is the closest approximation to the astral body. The *Ba* may transmigrate—it may enter the physical vehicles of living persons or animals with the proper magical ceremonies. In order to accomplish this, it must be rejoined to the *Ka* or companion etheric form. Unless the corpse or a body is accessible, the *Ba* permanently departs from the locale of its former life.

The *Ba* is artistically depicted as a human-headed hawk, after the initiate passes into the inner life. Throughout the sacred literature, hieroglyphic names of the subtle bodies which travel through or exist in the inner life are almost always denoted by a sacred bird. Such winged figures represent a spiritual condition which is humanly accessible, as the bird is a creature of both earth and sky. In symbolist thinking, the superior visual lobes of certain bird species denote levels of subtle perception which may be active in human life. The *Ba* is often depicted hovering over the mummified body in its bird form, and is sometimes shown together with the *Ka* awaiting transfiguration.

The astral body has been recognized from ancient times as the vehicle which may come and go from the physical body without loss of life or consciousness, and as a vehicle possessing innate knowledge of places and things both in the present and from past lives. The Instruction of Merikara in Dynasty 18 says,

The *Ba* comes to the place it knows, it does not miss the path of its former life. No form of magic holds it back, it comes to those who offer it water.

Amulets to invoke the *Ba* were common, in the form of the bird with the human head. These were also worn to “bring back the *Ba*” as well as to protect the body from possibly dangerous influences while the *Ba* was out and visiting about the astral plane.

In the process of rebirth, the Ba takes on a different image from the human-headed bird. As the migratory stork, the Ba figure represents the reincarnating soul, who is shed of his previous identity (the human head) in order to begin the new life. This may perhaps be the origin of the age-old “arrival of the stork” metaphor in denoting a new birth. The Ba is associated with Auset, as she is the Neter concerned with bringing forth the astral body into the inner life. In the Osirian mythos, she herself is depicted in bird form, flapping her wings over the mummiform Asar to “create wind,” or endow him with breath.



Figure 46—*Ab*: Heart soul

The *Ab* represents the “heart soul,” a concept unique to Egyptian metaphysics that represents the seat or container of all the earthly passions. The *Ab* is believed to contain the personal intelligence of a human being—the residence of one’s honor, dignity, and truth accumulated throughout life. The *Ab* is depicted as a covered vase in tomb art, a representation of the life memory which accumulates during a person’s existence and which rapidly unfolds at the moment of death.

The *Ab* is weighed on the scales of justice against the feather of truth in the journey through the Shadow Worlds by the initiate. The outcome of this sojourn determines a return to earthly life (reincarnation) or entrance into the heavenly realms. The *Ab* is associated with Anpu, whose function entails the transformation of decaying matter into vital energy, a process that takes place in the transition between life and the afterlife. He then guides the soul through the initial regions of the Duat to face the judgment presided over by Asar.

The Heart Soul

The *Ab* represents the “heart soul,” a concept unique to Egyptian metaphysics that represents the seat or container of all the earthly passions. The *Ab* is believed to contain the personal



Figure 47—*Akh*: Being of light, vehicle of spiritual intelligence

The Spirit

The *Akh* is, according to the Pyramid Texts, the elevated essence and “high intelligence” of the individual. It is an imperishable form of light, possessing the ability to transcend time and space,

with the knowledge of all things earthly in the past, present, and future. The Akh is capable of spanning all material dimensions and resides on the superconscious plane, an idea expressed metaphysically as the Mental Body.

The Akh appears in the earliest time (Dynasties 3–6), but by the Middle Kingdom its significance is superseded by the Ka. The diminishing importance of Egypt's ancestral tradition provides an occult explanation for this. The earliest monarchs—viewed as demigods by later people—were seen as direct descendants of the Neteru and were believed to possess divine memory—knowledge of the names and powers of all sacred beings. Arousing and maintaining this memory was critical in sustaining the connection between the Royal House and its predecessors, a process incorporated into pharaonic initiation. A ritual transforming the soul into the Akh or divine being is referred to in Old Kingdom texts, where the initiated person declares, "I am now excellently equipped as Akh."

In the Liturgy of Funerary Offerings (spells 28 through 34, a section concerning the purification of the body), a number of ceremonies empower one to "become an Akh and to arouse the Sekhem." This was achieved through the mystic reunification of the Ba (astral body) and the Ka (etheric body) in a series of magical anointings that "allows one to have openings before one's eyes," i.e., to awaken clairvoyant perception. It also allows the *Aakhu* (other transfigured beings) to see one and to hear one's name. This ritual is also the basis for the empowerment received through the ancient mysteries, in which the union of Asar (the etheric Ka) and Auset (the astral Ba) creates a new function for the initiate, the ability to penetrate and move through cosmic worlds.

The Akh is represented as the crested ibis or phoenix in hieroglyphic notation. This Arabian bird possesses a shining plumage which is described in the translation of the name, "resplendent light." Other meanings include "exaltation" and "transfiguration," denoting the process by which this vehicle is created. There is no doubt that a superconscious, transcendent state is attained when the soul enters this phase of experience. Akh is associated with Sopdet, an immanent figure of Auset who manifests through the light of the star Sirius. She is the Neter concerned with cosmic cycles and the commencement of the sacred year.



Figure 48—*Djed*: Speech, articulation

The Sacred Resonance

Djed (“speech”) is the principle of verbal articulation, the power to transmit life through the manifestation of the divine word. Speech was not considered an inconsequential act in ancient Egypt—it was a power regarded as a sacred privilege for all. The principle of *Djed* also represents sound in continuous motion, or rhythm—a high science practiced in the temples with chant accompanied by the sacred instruments, the drum and sistrum.

The concept of the “original word” is found in nearly every ancient culture as the initiating force behind creation. All life is latent until this principle comes into manifestation and it has been viewed as the highest of all creative acts. Egyptian belief maintains that speech endows life to all things, a standard originating in the myth of *Djehuti*’s original “word” which brought primeval life into motion. His function is similar to that of the Hindu god *Shiva*, who personifies the cosmic vibration that precedes the manifestation of physical form, causing matter to respond in cyclic resonances. In consequence of this, all living things possess a distinct frequency derived from the cosmic ambiance which existed at their birth or inception. Knowledge of these frequencies enabled the temple mages to invite sacred forces into the sanctuary.

In human beings, *Djed* is the creative force which gives life to the inanimate on the physical plane. There are ethical implications in this concept. The law of cause and effect (the *karma* of Hinduism) is inherent in the process of *Djed*, which predestines future conditions that originate from the initial act of giving life—whether to a thought, desire, or action. This principle is associated with *Djehuti*, the *Neter* whose creative power is defined in his original act of pronouncing the divine sound which set all forms into motion.

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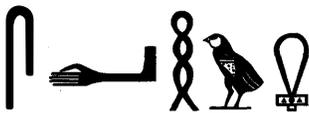


Figure 49—*Sahu*: Oversoul, origin of all spirits

The Oversoul

Sahu translates as those who are “free, noble, and accomplished,” a concept of elevated existence as both a being and a destination. In the context of Sacred

Science it is the “dwelling place of the souls” or the great oversoul. This is a reference to the everlasting and incorruptible life essence in each life that is rejoined to its origin at the end of a great cycle. It began as the cosmic fire in timeless time that gave substance to all individual spirits.

There are some references in the Pyramid Texts of returning to the Sahu, or visiting the realm where it exists. This is accomplished when a number of progressive transformations take place in the initiate after the sky ascent. This principle is associated with Geb, the Neter who represents the prototype of the human race. As the primeval father and originator of the species, he represents the collective soul.



Figure 50—*Sekhem*: Personal power, vital force

The Vital Force

Sekhem is the personification of one’s vital force, and the expression of the personal will. It is referred to in some ancient texts as the “altar of fire.” In human life, this principle manifests prior to any creative, procreative, or

magical endeavor. In Eastern metaphysics, this is expressed as the kundalini energy which travels through the physical form in the spinal cord.

The Neteru each possess a distinctive *Sekhem*, which manifests as its magical function in the world. The *Sekhem* of Asar, for instance, establishes continuous, cyclic life. By virtue of his death and restoration he also personifies the sum total of all magical power available to the common man. Of his sacred names, *Sekhem em pet* means “magical power in heaven,” and *Sekhem tau* means “magical power of the Two Lands.” This principle, as the root word implies, is associated with *Sekhmet*, the Neter of the cosmic fire incarnate on earth.



Figure 51—*Sa*: Cosmic or universal life force

The Life Force

In addition to the sacred bodies, another principle comes strongly into play in the sacred anatomy. The *Sa* is the fluid life force of the universe, animating and binding together all things.

It is impersonal in its action and affects all of the living. Sa permeates the physical plane and consolidates—acting as a sort of adhesive—for all the other planes of manifestation. In this respect, it is equivalent to the Greek Aether and the Sanskrit Akasha, both concepts describing the subtle energy which binds the cosmos together.

References to the generation and dispensation of Sa are found in inscriptions describing special rites at the temples. These magical ceremonies were designed to raise the power of the temple through invocation and ritual to its Neter. The Sa that accumulated was consequently dispensed to the populace through anointing ceremonies, the distribution of food offerings, and bathings in the sacred lake at sacred times. This was believed to enable healings, divinations, and divine appearances to take place. This principle is associated with the body of Nut, the Neter who provides cosmic nourishment in her celestial womb to all living things which emanate from her and return to her body in their cyclic journeyings.

In Egyptian metaphysics, these immaterial bodies inhabit the subtler planes of the universe but are not limited in their activity nor are they necessarily confined to one particular realm, just as the physical body is capable of visiting any number of places on the physical plane. The Ka, for example, is a body of the etheric plane that may manifest in the physical world. To do so would require the proper ceremonies of transformation with attendant physical sustenance that would draw the Ka to the material sphere. Not only was this believed possible, but according to Egyptian magical tales, such occurrences did take place regularly in the temple and the tomb.

Similarly, when a spiritual body is said to have an “intelligence,” it is regarded as possessing the faculty of understanding and the ability to communicate. This is true even though that body may have an exclusive association with the emotional plane, such as the Ab or heart soul.

The Shadow Worlds

In many hymns to the Neteru, and throughout the magical and funerary writings we have reviewed, the inner life is described in variant terms, though each represents a unique locale populated by distinctive spirits and forces. In particular, the

Principle	Neter	Vehicle	Figure	Amulet	Association
<i>Khaibit</i>	Het-Her	Body Elemental		Usekh	Collar
<i>Khat</i>	Set	Physical Form		Ursh	Back, Neck
<i>Maa</i>	Heru	Sight		Imset	Liver
<i>Sia</i>	Heru	Touch		Qebsenuf	Intestines
<i>Hu</i>	Heru	Taste		Daumutef	Stomach
<i>Sedjem</i>	Heru	Hearing		Haapi	Lungs
<i>Ren</i>	Nebt-Het	Name		Uadj	Thighs
<i>Ka</i>	Asar	Etheric Body		Djed	Solar Plexus
<i>Ba</i>	Auset	Astral Body		Thet	Prostatic Plexus
<i>Ab</i>	Anpu	Heart-Soul		Ab	Heart
<i>Akh</i>	Sopdet	Intelligence		Shuti	Throat
<i>Djed</i>	Djehuti	Speech		Uadjet	Brow
<i>Sahu</i>	Geb	Spirit		Shenu	Feet, Hands
<i>Sekhem</i>	Sekhmet	Personal Power		Ahat	Back of Head

Table 18—Correspondences in the Sacred Anatomy

sacred literature most often alludes to four distinct realms in this dimension, which appropriately translate as “Shadow Worlds”—*Neter Khert*, the *Duat*, *Sekhet Hetepet*, and *Amentet*. These four places are comprised of detailed, complex terrains which mirror, or “shadow” the physical world as we experience it.

Though the *Neter Khert* has been translated as “the underworld,” its meaning is far different. This region is truly the “Sky Shadow,” a realm that mirrors the celestial sphere. The hieroglyphic rendition shows a mountain, or high place surmounted by the biliteral *neter* (“sacred being”) the meaning of which is obvious—it is the land of the gods, and in this conception, it is accessible to the human soul. This is the destination of the Stellar path—the incorporation of the individual *Ka* with the *Ka*'s of cosmic nature. It is accessed in the sacred literature through *The Book of the Divine Cow* and *The Book of Aker*.

The *Duat* is the “Solar Shadow,” the realm that encompasses the dark and light worlds—the invisible and visible circuits of the Sun. Another appropriate meaning for the *Duat* is “lower hemisphere,” a reference to the cosmic depths of the natural world where the Sun passes after it sets in the western horizon. The symbol for the *Duat* is the star within the solar disc, the latter being the governing luminary of this region. This is the destination of the Horian path, which seeks to elevate matter or darkness (*Set*) into the light of the spirit (*Heru*) through the balance and synthesis of both principles.

The *Duat* is divided into two sections. *Sekhet Hetepet* is the “Lunar Shadow,” containing fourteen *Aats* or regions, arranged from south to north. Each *Aat* possesses characteristics of the Egyptian geography that undoubtedly correspond to the fourteen Osirian shrines of antiquity and the Lunar mirror which reflects the Solar principle in the *Duat*. This is one of two destinations in the Osirian path, which is governed by the Moon. The other, *Sekhet Iaru*, contains seven *Arits* or divisions and twenty-one gates, also numerically corresponding to the Lunar cycle.

The first *Aat* in *Sekhet Hetepet* is *Amentet*, the “Earth Shadow,” a realm that mirrors the human world. The name *Amentet* is distinguished from the cosmic world of *Ament*, the region of the *Neteru* who embody the cosmogenesis of the universe. The earth is the governing orb of *Amentet*. This region is one of the destinations of the Osirian path, where life on earth continues in an idyllic fashion, and where the “rewards” of a justified life are bestowed.

These spiritual destinations closely parallel the Far Eastern religious concept of karma (Sanskrit: "action"), as the principle at work behind the fate of the soul. Karma—which in turn is closely associated with the concept of reincarnation—represents the guiding force behind spiritual predetermination, and is often misunderstood by students cultivated in Western religions. One's personal karma is most often viewed as an accumulation of negative past actions that instigate retributive experiences in the present, over which one lacks any determination. In short, "the powers that be" impose the same limitations in the present that one may have inflicted in the past, in the same way that a child is severely punished for naughty behavior by a judgmental parent. This misguided view extols human existence as a cycle of adverse paybacks guided by an unmerciful authority—a view far removed from the Egyptian view of conditions in the afterlife. Thus, it may not be possible for the Western mind, with its well-developed dualistic thinking and predisposition to supernatural justice, to understand the philosophical premise of karma, especially in its Egyptian form. The funerary paths outlined in the sacred literature and articulated in the Stellar, Solar-Horian, and Lunar-Osirian themes, illustrate the soul's fate in progressive acts of personal transformation, or divine synthesis, or in the worst-case scenario, a return to the material world for renewal.

Each of these paths presupposes preexisting actions, which determine the course of the journey and its probable outcome. In the Lunar-Osirian path, the physical nature is elevated, enabling the soul to partake of "higher" forms of earthly emotion and material benefits than those experienced in one's previous life on earth. In the Solar-Horian path, the mastery and synthesis of one's natural powers—in the physical and the spiritual realms—redeems both the individual and the collective to which he belongs. And in the Stellar path, the soul is fully renewed—it undergoes a series of cosmic transformations that emulate the genesis of the universe, and ultimately it becomes a cosmic entity existing in rhythm with celestial life.

Each path has its karma, or an effect resulting from an initial cause set into motion through earthly acts. This is undoubtedly why the apparently disparate collections of funerary literature in a wide range of tombs present an inconsistency to Egyptologists. The sacred writings taken by the deceased to the tomb

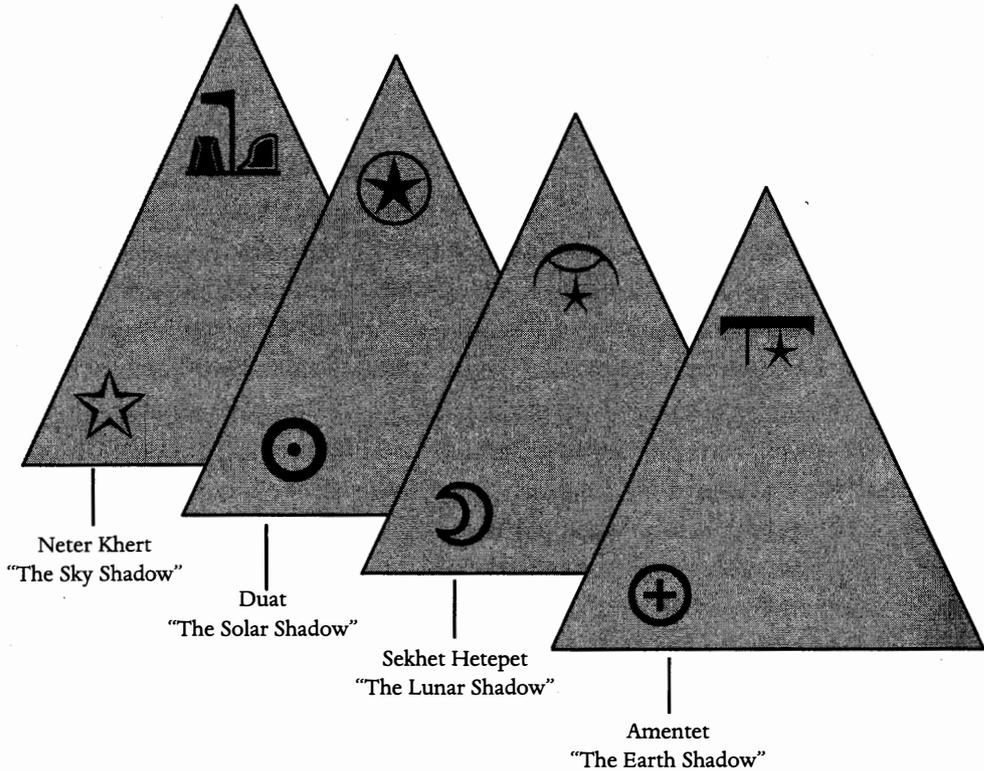


Figure 52—The Shadow Worlds

may not have been accessed solely through monetary purchase, political patronage, or superstitious fear. Rather, they may have been conferred on the deceased by temple mentors to guide her to a spiritual destination that reflected the soul's legacy in life.

Funerary vs. Initiatory Literature

The literature we have reviewed has been found, for the most part, in tombs and shrines reserved for the deceased. The assumption has always been that the "funerary literature" was intended for the dead, and not in any instance for the living. But the eminent American philosopher Manly Palmer Hall, who spent his lifetime researching and preserving the mystery traditions of ancient civilizations,

Aat	Region Name	Neter	Features
1	Amentet "The Earth Shadow"	Amsuqet Menuqet	Entered near Abydos. A place where one lives on cakes and ale, and is reunited with loved ones.
2	Sekhet Iaru "Barque of Heaven"	Ra Heru Khuti	The "Elysian Fields," divided into 7 Arits with 21 Gates. Wheat and barley grow to great height.
3	Aatenkhu	Asar, Ra	A region of resplendent light.
4	Tui Qauí Aauí	Sati Temui	A place of rejoicing.
5	Aatenkhu	Asar	Spirits here feed on the inert and feeble.
6	Am Mehet	Sekhet At, Sekher Remus	Sacred to the Neteru, spirits are banished from this place and the dead are denied entry.
7	Ases	Rerek	A place of burning, fiery flames whose Neter is a serpent.
8	Ha Hatep, Ha Sert	Qa Ha Hetep, Fa-pet	A place that features roaring torrents of water
9	Akesi	Maa Thetef	Unknown to even to the Neteru; "the god who dwelleth in his egg" is its only inhabitant.
10	Nut Ent Qahu, Apt Net Qahu	Nau, Kapet, Nehebekau	Here is found the serpent god who welcomes the soul into heaven and prepares its first meal.
11	Atu	Sopdet (Sothis)	The goddess here is light that illumines the darkness.
12	Unt	Hetemet Baiu, Aschetet em Ament	The goddess here is the counter of hours.
13	Uart Ent Mu	Hebt Re-f	The hippopotamus goddess who dwells here is never appeased.
14	Kher Aha	Hapi, the Nile	A mountainous region near Heliopolis, a destination of sublime happiness.

Table 19—The Fourteen Aats: Regions in Sekhet Hetepet, The Lunar Shadow from South to North.

Arit VII

Arit VI

Arit V

Arit IV

Arit III

Arit II

Arit I



Gate 1
Name Mistress of Trembling
 Gate 2
Name Mistress of the Sky
 Gate 3
Name Mistress of the Altar
 Gate 4
Name Mistress of Trembling
 Gate 5
Name Fiery One
 Gate 6
Name Mistress of Darkness
 Gate 7
Name Powerful of Knives
 Gate 8
Name Lighter of Flames
 Gate 9
Name Foremost One
 Gate 10
Name Veiler of the Weary One
 Gate 11
Name Ceaseless in Knifing
 Gate 12
Name Invoked by the Two Lands
 Gate 13
Name Piercing of Voice
 Gate 14
Name She Above Whom Asar Stretches
 Gate 15
Name Mistress of Anger
 Gate 16
Name She Above Whom Asar Stretches
 Gate 17
Name Great on the Horizon
 Gate 18
Name Lover of Heat
 Gate 19
Name Dreaded One
 Gate 20
Name Dweller Within the Cavern of her Lord
 Gate 21
Name Sharpener of Flint
 Gate 22
Name Possessor of the Books of Djehuti



Gate 1
Name Mistress of the Sky
 Gate 2
Name Mistress of the Sky
 Gate 3
Name Mistress of the Altar
 Gate 4
Name Fiery One
 Gate 5
Name Lighter of Flames
 Gate 6
Name Foremost One
 Gate 7
Name Invoked by the Two Lands
 Gate 8
Name Ceaseless in Knifing
 Gate 9
Name Mistress of Anger
 Gate 10
Name She Above Whom Asar Stretches
 Gate 11
Name Great on the Horizon
 Gate 12
Name Dweller Within the Cavern of her Lord
 Gate 13
Name Dreaded One
 Gate 14
Name Lover of Heat
 Gate 15
Name Sharpener of Flint
 Gate 16
Name Possessor of the Books of Djehuti



Gate 1
Name Mistress of the Altar
 Gate 2
Name Mistress of the Sky
 Gate 3
Name Mistress of the Altar
 Gate 4
Name Mistress of Trembling
 Gate 5
Name Fiery One
 Gate 6
Name Mistress of Darkness
 Gate 7
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 Gate 8
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 Gate 12
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 Gate 13
Name Dreaded One
 Gate 14
Name Lover of Heat
 Gate 15
Name Sharpener of Flint
 Gate 16
Name Possessor of the Books of Djehuti

Table 20 (at left)—The Twenty-One Secret Gates in Sekhet Iaru: The list of secret gates in Sekhet Iaru, the realm of Asar, has intriguing associations with the mystic cycle of the Moon. The traditional New Moon Feast, celebrated universally throughout Egyptian history as a commemorative act of offering for both the deceased and the Neteru in the Shadow Worlds, began at the first visible sliver of waxing lunar light, seven days following the Sun-Moon conjunction (New Moon). In the twenty-one days following that event, additional prayers and offerings could be made, often to suspend the forces of stagnation brought by the waning lunar light. The names in this table are intended to perform that task for each day after the Feast, used in conjunction with the Words of Power, which are as follows (from the *Per em Hru*, Book of Going Forth by Day):

Arit I

Gate One: Mistress of Trembling
Nebt setau qat sebt hert nebt kheb khebt sert.
Mert kheseft neshenu nehemet uai eni aau

Gate Two: Mistress of the Sky
Nebt pet het tauu nesbit nebt tememu tent
bunebu

Gate Three: Mistress of the Altar
Nebt khaut aat aabet sene tchemet neter neb am
s-hru khent er abtu

Arit II

Gate Four: Powerful of Knives
Sekhmet tesu hent tauu hetchet khefti nu urt ab
arit saru shut em au

Gate Five: Fiery One
Nebt rekhu resht tebnet tatu nes an aq eres un
tef

Gate Six: Mistress of Darkness
Nebt senket aat hememet an rekht tu qas-er
usekh-s an qemtu get-s em shaa au hefu her-s an
rekht tennu mes en thu kher hat urtu ab

Arit III

Gate Seven: Veiler of the Weary One
Ak kit hebset bak aakebit mert sehaph khat

Gate Eight: Lighter of Flames
Rekhet besu akhmet tchafu sept pau khat tet
smam an netchnetch atet sesh her-s en sent nah-s

Gate Nine: Foremost One
Amt hat nebt usr hert ab mestet neb-s khemt
shaa em shen-s satu em uatcht qema theset bes
hebset bak feqat neb-sra neb

Arit IV

Gate Ten: Piercing of Voice
Qat kheru neheset tenatu sebhet erqa en kheru-s
nert nebt shefsheft an ter-s netet em khennu-s

Gate Eleven: Ceaseless in Knifing
Nemt tesu ubtet sebau hent ent sebkhet nebt aru
nes ahehi hru en ankhekh

Gate Twelve: Invoked by Her Two Lands
Nast tauu si sekseket nem matu em nehepu qahit
nebt khu setemt-h kheru neb-s

Arit V

Gate Thirteen: She Above Whom Asar Stretches
Sta en asar aau ef heres sehetchet hap em
amentef

Gate Fourteen: Mistress of Anger
Nebt tenten khebt her tesheru aru nes haker hru
en setemet au

Gate Fifteen: Great of Valour
Bati tesheru qemhut aarert pert em kerh sent
chert seba her qabi-f ertat aau-s en urtu am em
at-f art itet shem-s

Arit VI

Gate Sixteen: Dreaded One
Nerutet nebt aatet khaa khau em ba en reth
khebsu mit en reth sert per qemamet shat

Gate Seventeen: Great on the Horizon
Khebt her sen-f ahibit nebt ua-ui-uai

Gate Eighteen: Lover of Heat
Mer setau ab abtu merur-s shat tepu amkhit
nebt aha uhset sabau em masheru

Arit VII

Gate Nineteen: Possessor of the Books of Djehuti
Sert nehepu em aha es ursh shem met nebt useru
aniu en djehuti techesef

Gate Twenty: Dweller Within the Cavern of her Lord
Amt khen tepeh neb-s hebs ren-s ament qemamu
s-thetat hati en am-s

Gate Twenty-One: Sharpener of Flint
Tem sia er metuu ari hemem hai nebau-s



Arit	Gatekeeper	Watcher	Herald
I	<i>Sekhet Hra Asht Aru</i> "Upside Down of Face"	<i>Semetu</i> "Eavesdropper"	<i>Hu Kheru</i> "Roaring Voice"
II	<i>Tun Hat</i> "Open of Countenance"	<i>Seqet Hra</i> "Seqet Face"	<i>Sabes</i> "Glowing"
III	<i>Am Huat ent Pehui fi</i> "Eater of Foulness"	<i>Res Hra</i> "Alert of Face"	<i>Uaau</i> "Curser"
IV	<i>Khesef Hra Asht Kheru</i> "Hostile of Face"	<i>Res Ab</i> "Perceptive"	<i>Neteka Hra Khesef Atu</i> "Crocodile Repeller"
V	<i>Ankh em Fentu</i> "Existing on Maggots"	<i>Ashebu</i>	<i>Teb her kehaat</i> "Hippopotamus Face"
VI	<i>Aken Tau-k Ha Kheru</i> "Raging of Voice"	<i>An Hra</i> "Face Remover"	<i>Metes Hra Ari She</i> "Keen of Face"
VII	<i>Metes Sen</i> "Prevailer over Knives"	<i>Aaa Kheru</i> "Strident of Voice"	<i>Khesef Hra Khemiu</i> "Rebuffer of Insurgents"

Table 21—The Seven Arits (Divisions of Sekhet Iaru): Each Arit is entered through a gate having three attendants: the gatekeeper, the watcher who announces the arrival of the sojourner, and the herald who receives and announces his or her name.

The names of these entities are also *hekau*—invocations or words of power that grant the initiate access through the region. Entry was possible with the knowledge of these words, and virtue was superseded by possession of the magical formulae.

was convinced otherwise. From conversations and correspondence with the leading egyptologists of the twentieth century, Hall proposed that evidence of Egypt's secret doctrine was profuse in the funerary works. He writes the following in regard to the contents of "the book of the dead" as it was viewed by some of the scholars of his day:

Professor Breasted,⁶ the most distinguished Egyptologist, told me that he was convinced that this book contained the ritual of a sacred drama performed by the living in the secrecy of the ancient temples. He justified his remarks by saying that he had personally examined the manuscripts of this work which had been margined with prompter's marks and notes containing entrances and exits.⁷

The ancient initiatory literature conveys, through philosophical, religious, and magical means, the awakening of innate consciousness. At times, a complex symbolism or language is used either deliberately—to reserve the information from the common mind—or of necessity, because an exclusive use of the reader's perceptions is required. In modern times, psychological studies of folklore, myths, and cultural legends reveal that what may appear to be a simplistic tale when understood in its literal terms is quite often a profound truth in symbolic terms. The determining factor is always the reader's use of her consciousness.

With this view in mind, we can say that the so-called funerary texts were certainly intended for, but not limited to, the deceased—and many of them are so represented.⁸ We have seen how the activities of the Solar, Lunar, and Stellar temple traditions shared the common language of the Sacred Science. Its primary function was the awakening of innate consciousness, which in turn promulgates transformation. But to the Egyptians, the soul was not regarded as the only beneficiary of this tradition. The body, mind, and environment were equally qualified for this transformation, as their records of magical practice reveal. Thus, the legendary life-regenerating philosophy of Egypt is indeed imbued in the funerary literature, and possesses a valid initiatory purpose for the living as well.

Those who brought this wisdom to the living were regarded by the Egyptians as both the embodiment and the custodians of an already archaic tradition. They possessed the time-honored books, the sacred dramas, the mystic rites, and the divine words which brought spiritual meaning to common experience. And yet

6 Founder of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute.

7 Hall, Manly Palmer: *The Soul in Egyptian Metaphysics and The Book of the Dead*. Philosophical Research Society: Los Angeles CA, 1965.

8 Clark: R. T. Rundle: "On some of the tombs which contain funerary texts we are told: 'This will be useful for a man here on earth as well as when he has died.'" *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. Thames and Hudson: London, 1978; p. 179.

they were ordinary men and women as well, residents of the sanctuaries possessing both devout intentions and human aspirations. Their lives have been the fascination of centuries, and their words are as alive today as when they passed through the doors of the Divine House.

Practicum

FUNERARY MAGIC

The belief that spiritual influences manifest through certain parts, centers, or nodes of the physical body is inherent in nearly every culture. Often, we find a corresponding science, medical system, or ritual discipline supporting this belief, and with the Egyptians a clear expression of sacred anatomy is disclosed in the anointing rituals of priestly initiation and the mummification process, where fourteen centers or nodes are detailed.

Amulets wrapped with the mummy reveal the organs and regions of the body which the Egyptians deemed essential for protection in the afterlife. The amulets were also intended to restore to the mortal form the vital functions necessary for the initiate to be fully cognizant of the journey through spiritual realms. As they were placed over their governing member during the mummification process, they were anointed and empowered with spells that later formed a large part of The Book of Going Forth. In some instances, the spells were inscribed on the amulets themselves, or on papyri that were placed over the governing region of the body. The formulas were also employed by the living when assuming protective amulets.

The *Uadjat* amulet (right eye of Heru) was placed in the upper half of the mummy wrappings, usually over the brow or the right eye itself (A) (see figure 53 on the following page). It was also impressed on wax or clay over the embalmer's incision on the torso. The *Uadjat* symbolizes the restoration of Heru's power by Djehuti, after his eye was torn away by Set. As such, it represents the revitalization of the deceased, and numerous offerings were made in the name of the *Uadjat* to ensure the continuous process of vital restoration. The *Uadjat* was rendered in glazed faïence, wood, granite, hematite, carnelian, lapis lazuli, gold, silver, or copper. Chapter 167 contains the formula for empowering the *Uadjat*. It is associated with the cavernous plexus.

Both eyes, *Merti*, are associated with the two eyes of Heru: the Sun and Moon. The right eye represents the boat of day *Maadjet*, the left eye represents the boat

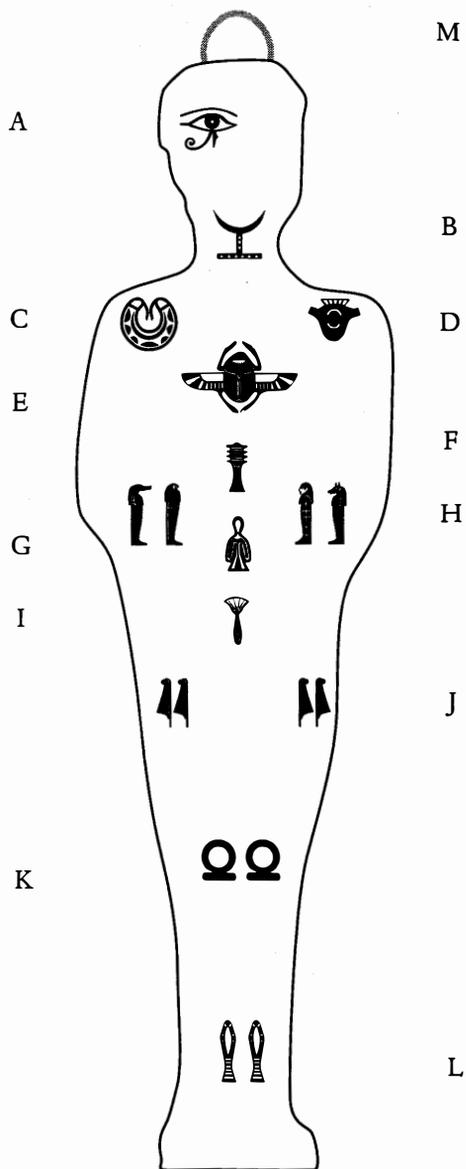


Figure 53—Amulets of the Sacred Anatomy

of night, Mesketet. The pair are rarely depicted together, except on the regalia of certain high priests and royal persons. The Merti were placed in a belt around the waist of the mummy of Tutankhamun.

The neck was regarded by the Egyptians as an especially vulnerable psychic center. Every effort was made to protect both the back and the front of the neck—for the living and the dead—with the use of magical amulets and figures that were hung about the neck and over the pharyngeal plexus. The *Ursh*, also called the “amulet of the pillow,” was regarded as an essential protective device for both the living and the Osirified. Made of hematite or iron, substances associated with Set’s power, it serves as a model of the large wooden head rests used by the Egyptians that were placed under the neck (B). Chapter 166 describes how the amulet serves to ensure awakening and protection of the neck so that the head can not be taken from the spiritual sojourner.

The *Usekh*, a collar or pectoral, is associated with Het-Her in her funerary aspect, whose collar of gold brings breath to the sojourner. Chapter 158 was recited while the collar was placed around the neck on the day of interment. In some epochs, the Neraut or collar of the vulture replaced the *Usekh*. It was also fabricated of gold and was placed on the neck of the mummy on the day of the funeral (C). Chapter 157 is used to empower this amulet, associated with the pulmonary plexus.

The *Ab* or heart amulet is made of the most durable materials, usually green schist or carnelian. It appears after the Solar-Horian epoch (First Intermediate Period) in the image of Kheper, the scarabaeus sacer beetle, “Who becomes.” On its underside were inscribed Chapters 26–30 of The Book of Going Forth. It was placed over the site of the removed heart in the mummy, or the cardiac plexus (D) and (E), respectively. The amulet ensured that the heart would remain with the soul in the inner life, and in embalming ceremonies was placed in the mummy by the Sem priest, wearing the mask of Anpu. Its presence commanded that the heart would not oppose or speak against the initiate, so that the continuous processes of transformation would take place.

The *Djed* pillar of Asar is described in Chapter 155. It is associated with the vertebrae in the spinal column of this Neter. Djed in this context means “firmness, stability,” and “setting upright.” The chapter states that it should be made of gold, but most examples are made of wood, wax, or gilded bitumen. Others have

been rendered in lapis lazuli, carnelian, and inlaid mother-of-emerald. The Djed was dipped in juice of *ankhamu* (rose) flowers and placed on the torso parallel to the spinal cord, corresponding to the epigastric (solar) plexus (F). Its presence ensured the raising of the body into the inner life.

The *Thet* of Auset, called the “buckle,” is described in Chapter 156 to bring the wearer the virtues of this Neter, notably her words of power, spells, and magic. It was rendered in red jasper, carnelian, porphyry, red glass, red faïence, sycamore wood, and gilded. This amulet was also dipped in juice of *ankhamu* flowers while the spell was read and the amulet placed over the prostatic plexus (G). The *Thet* brought protection of the body’s members by Auset.

Empowerment of the four sons of Heru in the body is described in Chapter 151, though it is often inscribed on the walls of the funerary chamber. Imset promises to “make thy house flourish,” Haapi declares that he will protect the head and members of the body. Daumutef will “set thee upon thy feet forever,” and Qebsenuf will “bring thy heart and place it upon its throne within thy body.” Figures of the four sons of Heru are placed in the mummy, over the places of the removed organs with which they are associated: Imset (liver), Daumutef (stomach), Qebsenuf (intestines), and Haapi (lungs). At times, they are found facing each other in pairs, on the right and left sides of the mummy’s torso (H).

The *Uadj* or papyrus stalk means “to be green, verdant.” It was an essential amulet for the mummified body, usually carved of green feldspar and covered with gold leaf. It was placed on either side of the lower torso or the upper thighs, though it could be worn as a pendant by the living. Chapter 159 in *The Book of Going Forth* describes the spell used for the placement of the amulet, which bestows youth and vigor under the auspices of the “nursing” deity, a form of Nebt-Het. It is associated with the pelvic or coccygeal plexus in the sacrum (I).

The *Shuti*, or amulet of the feathers, is formed of two ostrich feathers side by side, and was placed on either side of the throat, the brow, or on the thigh (J). Chapter 83 contains the rubric for empowering the soul to become endowed with an Akh and attain the powers of the Neteru. With these, the initiate assumes the form of the bennu bird, the phoenix of transformation into cosmic life. The feather is described in an inscription of the third chamber of the west roof chapel at Dendera, as one of the 104 amulets that accompanied Asar to his

“House of Gold.” The chamber also enumerates the spells, magical figures, and ceremonies involved in the Osirian Mysteries conducted at the temple, which empower the one assuming the role of Asar with his mastery over the regions of the inner life.

The *Shen* was inscribed on stelae, painted on coffins, and worn as an amulet of lapis lazuli or carnelian. It promised the continuance of life through eternity, and was placed on the arms, legs, or grasped in the hands of the initiate (K). Similarly, the *Sa* amulet, fabricated of gold, conveyed the all-encompassing protection of cosmic life, with its power to interpenetrate and continuously vitalize all of the body in its passage throughout subtle realms. It was placed at the feet and around the mummy and in niches of the funerary chamber, to surround the soul with its protective emanations (L).

Lastly, the *Ahat*, or hypocephalus amulet was usually rendered in gold, on a round disc that was placed beneath the head. Its anatomical association is the cervical ganglion, where the brain connects with the spinal cord at the medulla and the twelve cranial nerves emanate (M). It is inscribed with the four sacred names that are believed to preserve the body’s heat, surrounding the figure of Nut as a cow. Chapter 162 describes its placement and its power to cause flames to blaze from the head of the initiate in the shadow world, so that “he will not be repulsed from any portal in the Duat.” The chapter is also known as The Book of the Mistress of the Hidden Temple.

The head was regarded as the receptacle of one’s identity, the body member by which the sojourner could be recognized in the spiritual worlds. The presence of heat under the head allowed for continuous passage through these realms. In earlier periods, this spell was inscribed on papyrus and placed behind the head of the mummy. The symbolism of this amulet’s power parallels depictions of human illumination achieved through spiritual accomplishment. In many cultures the solar orb over the crown or light emanating from the head symbolizes this enlightenment.

The associations of the body’s organs and members with the Neteru underscore the belief by the ancient Egyptians that specific centers in the physical organism were regarded as sacred. In addition, the mummified body overall assumed the form of Asar, as a reconstituted vehicle of fourteen parts that was

fused into a frame where the ordinary functions were transformed into divine entities. The amulets, spells, and images of the Neteru governing each part maintain this fusion, and at the same time give the sojourner passage through the worlds in which they exist.

The phenomenon of the physical body's spiritual metamorphosis is also expressed in detail in the texts of funerary magic. The divinization of all the members of the body is a transformation described in Chapter 42 of *The Book of Going Forth*. In it, the body of the initiate becomes identified with the Neteru once he has ascended to their realm, and the perishable form is replaced by their everlasting, imperishable principles. This spiritual fabrication of a new, heavenly body is achieved by the assembled powers of the Neteru. The chapter cites the parts of the body that come into being in this manner, and a varying number is given at different epochs, though most frequently twenty-two are mentioned. In the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, the members of the body enumerated for divinization are twenty-six, a number also reported by Diodorus as the quantity of Asar's sacred relics distributed by Auset in archaic time to institute the sacred centers of his worship. In the New Kingdom Papyrus of Ani the number is twenty-one, though in the Litany of Ra, a Ramesside text of the same period, twenty-three members of the body are enumerated that become incorporated into divine life after the solar transformation.

Though wealth is the most cited criteria for the placement of large quantities of amulets and sacred objects on the mummy, it appears that other factors determined their presence because even modestly buried mummies are found with numerous items rendered in clay or glass. The amulets and protective objects placed on the mummy of Tutankhamun numbered 143, and it is well documented that his initiations, crownings, and investiture involved a number of religious ceremonies that are detailed on inscriptions at the Karnak temple. In such cases, it appears that the traditional restoration of the original body's fourteen vital functions was intended, in addition to the creation of a new spiritual body (with twenty-two members) and the numerous other metaphysical functions acquired in life through temple consecration. This accounts for the varying number of descriptions for sacred centers, nodes, and body members in the funerary literature of distinguished persons.

The salient point is that the elevation of the physical body and its functions was regarded as one of the primary spiritual goals of all the funerary transformations in Egyptian metaphysics. Coexistent with this process was the acquisition of the exalted senses possessed by the Neteru and their use by the soul reborn into sacred regions. An example of this is best expressed in one of the passages of the Pyramid Texts:

I am not of the earth, I am of the sky. I have soared to the sky as a heron, I have kissed the sky as a falcon. I have reached the sky as a locust which shadows the Sun.

Utterance #467

Ceremonies of Entombment

The esoteric objective of Egyptian religion, be it the Lunar, Solar, or Stellar path, is transformation of the human fabric into celestial substance. Death propels transformation of the body into its rudimentary earthly components, but in the doctrine of the Sacred Science the supracorporeal extensions of the body—shadow, soul, and spirit—were also vehicles of transformation into the realm of eternal life. Egypt's funerary tradition fulfilled this plan in whole while satisfying the vital idea of maintaining the divine/human interface.

The cities of the dead were almost wholly self-contained through all periods of Egyptian history. Located on the west bank of the Nile, the funerary centers were carefully isolated from the commercial, residential, and theological endeavors on the east bank. Tomb builders and their families, artisans of funerary goods, and a great range of priestly technicians—attached to the embalming houses and temples of funeral service—lived apart from the farms and cities of the living, though it appears that they fully enjoyed all of the privileges and laws of the land.

On the occasion of death, a number of specialists at the necropolis came into play for the careful preparation and care of the deceased prior to entombment. Herodotus recorded the details of Egyptian funerary protocol in the fifth century B.C.E., beginning with the appearance of the *Qeres* (“undertaker”) who removed the body with a number of attendants from its domicile and transported it to the House of the Dead.

The magical reconstitution of Asar was the prototype of Egypt's funerary rites. Altogether, the formulae and technical procedures were a carefully executed science to achieve mummification through both chemical and magical means. The *Utu* ("embalmer") performed the physical and religious procedures of preparing the dead for the metamorphoses of the tomb, a very elaborate process involving the transformation of the body into a *Khu* ("glorified body"), a permanent replica of Asar's corpse. Each step in the process coordinated the application of preservatives, the recitation of spells, and the placement of amulets on the body. This set the stage for the great ceremonial investiture of the deceased into Osirian life, along with the tomb equipment provided by the family.

Two priestesses play essential roles in the mummification ceremonies, the greater *Tcherat* and the lesser *Tcherat*, representing Auset and Nebt-Het, respectively. They reenact the occult ceremonies of reassembling the body of Asar, reconstituting its members with life, and awakening the astral senses of the deceased with chant and words of power while it awaits entombment. The priestesses also serve the critical task of psychically protecting the *Khu* while it undergoes this mystic symbiosis, because it is vulnerable to the attacks of Set's confederates—who embody the processes of dissolution and decay.

An enigmatic figure now appears for the entombment, the *Iunmutef* ("pillar of his mother"), a ceremonial officiant concerned with the transition of the *Ka*. The role is usually assumed by the heir of the deceased emulating the role of Heru, who assisted Auset at the funeral of Asar. Wearing the sidelock of youth and ceremonial leopard skin, he guides the funeral procession and interment of the *Khu* with its possessions, a ritual reenactment of the legendary Osirian cortege. As the procession makes its way through the four symbolic funerary cities of Asar's burial and then to the necropolis, professional mourners sing the dirges of the deceased, who is now identified with Asar in the Lunar-Osirian metamorphosis.

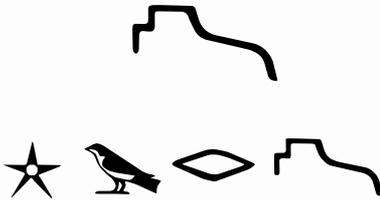
The tomb was regarded as the most sacred space for the departed, the locale of the highest transformation that could be offered the virtuous soul. It had to be continuously protected from the nefarious forces of the Shadow Worlds that could inhabit the *Khu* or deny it the sustenance offered at the periodic memorial services. To ensure protection of the tomb, the Ceremony of the Four Torches was first performed at the burial site, prior to bringing the *Khu* within. Besides

the *Iunmutef* and attendants, only the family of the deceased could be present, as the ceremony was regarded as very archaic. Tradition says that this most secret of rites was passed down from the time of Hardjedef, son of Khufu, who discovered it in a secret temple coffer, written in the hand of Djehuti.

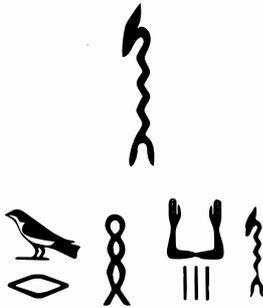
The ceremony is delineated in Chapter 137 of *The Book of Going Forth*. Four flames or torches made from red linen are created for the sojourner, which are held by four attendants with the names of the four sons of Heru inscribed on their arms. After the spell for protection of the *Khu* and its house are intoned, the torches are quenched in clay bowls filled with incense and cow's milk, symbols of birth. Following this, four bricks are ceremonially placed in the walls of the mummy's chamber, with spells recited at each quarter by the ceremonially pure *Iunmutef*. The evocation of spirits for protection from the four directions is a most ancient rite itself; in the Egyptian context it summons the guardians of the celestial quarters and ensures that the forces which bring about the Solar-Horian metamorphosis are present. With the heavenly pillars established, the Sun can now proceed on its natural journey from east to west, to be joined at the gate of darkness by the sojourning soul who is now a traveler in the solar barque.

The place of transformation is now ritually purified and protected. The most reserved of magical rituals followed—the Opening of the Mouth—performed by the *Ari Makh* (“guardian of the scale”) and another ceremonial officiant, the *Samer-f* (“kinsman” or “friend”), a title also given to the high priest at Abydos who conducted the annual mysteries of reviving Asar in his inert state. He is distinguished by the wearing of Heru's sidelock of youth and the sacerdotal leopard skin. In royal funerals, the role was assumed by the Heru incarnate, the new Pharaoh. We are reminded here that the ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth was not solely reserved for funerary ceremonies. It is reported as the quintessential ritual for embodying statues with spiritual force and empowering the sick to regain vitality. Its performance was conducted by priests of every tradition, though reserved only for critical rites of passage and not informal occasions.

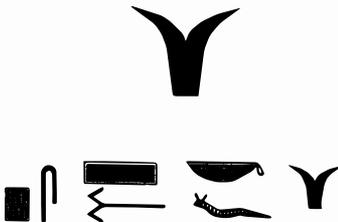
The ritual of the Opening of the Mouth precedes the Stellar metamorphosis, entry into cosmic life. The *Un Ra* (“who opens the mouth”), presents the rose quartz *Peshenkef* sceptre, welcoming the sojourner into the cosmic realm. Then, the *Seb Ur* sceptre is presented, an implement fabricated in the shape of



Seb Ur—the adze, made of iron (possibly meteoritic), the “metal of the north.” This implement was used to reconstitute the initiate’s functions by “opening” the mouth and eyes, and restoring the ability to speak, eat, and drink in the Shadow Worlds. The unusual shape of the object is believed to represent the polar constellation Ursa Major, called *Meshtiu*, the “thigh” of the northern sky. According to an archaic myth, Set “opened the mouths of the Neteru” with this magical instrument. The polestars were associated with him, who controlled the imperishable powers that held sway over the cycle of day and night. The presentation of the *Seb Ur* was symbolic of passing through this region, and bypassing Set’s powers (physical existence) in order to enter into cosmic life.



Ur Hekau—*Sa*, the constituting force of the cosmic realm, is transmitted with this sceptre, whose name means “greatest of powers.” Upon its presentation to the initiate, *The Book of the Opening of the Mouth* says, “You become as one who possesses twofold strength, and the fluid of life has been bestowed upon you.” The recipient is then told that she has become a being who shall not die and who has joined with the powers of the Neteru.



Pesheskef—This ceremonial implement was used to “open the mouth” of the deceased, the first act in restoring its earthly senses. It was probably made of rose granite or pink quartz, substances used abundantly in Egypt for magical work. The object has been recently proposed to also represent the ancient birth instrument of midwives, used to sever the umbilicus of the newborn. Following the separation of the infant from its mother, the *Pesheskef* was held before the child’s face to announce its life of independent existence. If this correlation is accurate, it supports the context of the *Opening of the Mouth* ceremony, which announces a new identity and welcomes the initiate into a new realm of existence.

Figure 54—The Ceremonial Sceptres: Used in the Ritual of the Opening of the Mouth.

the polar constellation Draco, to empower the lifeless form with the functions of speaking and eating as it fuses with cosmic life. The deceased is then presented with the *Ur Hekau*, the instrument that transmits the Sa of divine beings into the world of the living.

The funerary liturgy speaks of “smiting” or striking the recipient initially with these sceptres, in order to restore the lost functions. Such motions ceremonially awaken the latent senses, which now make the transition from earthly to cosmic existence.

The rites performed in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony were directed solely to the statue of the deceased, which was to house the Ka after transformation. So important was this image for magical empowerment in the afterlife that any other likenesses which may have been made during the life of the person were installed in the tomb along with the Ka statue to prevent evocation of the deceased into the unwholesome atmosphere outside of the consecrated tomb. The so-called “reserve heads” of the departed found in early dynastic tombs exemplify this belief. Their eyes or skulls were found mutilated, to ensure the embodiment of the Ka only into its specially consecrated image.

Following the Opening of the Mouth, the first act of empowerment by the deceased is celebrated. With all her functions spiritually restored, the funerary feast allows those present to partake of the magic acquired through the three transformations that have taken place in the tomb. Because the Egyptians believed that the source of occult energy emanated from both in the sky and the tomb, the funerary ceremony allowed a transference of this energy through the time-honored ritual of communion. The Setem was called upon to establish the provisions for the newly inaugurated Osirian sojourner and her guests—bread, freshly slaughtered meat, beer, fruit, and grain.

After the funeral feast, a company of magical specialists now came forth to maintain the tomb and ensure the continuance of the Ka. Existence in the afterlife was expected to mirror life on earth, and one’s duty could include the performance of certain duties in the service of Asar, regent of Sekhet Hetepet, the Elysian Fields. The Setem assisted the deceased with this duty by infusing the *Ushabtiu*, magical figures made to provide security and comfort when needed. Each figure was fabricated to bear her mirror image, a means of increasing her

power in the Shadow Worlds—where any action could be accomplished by magical means. There were usually enough Ushabtiu fabricated to assume duty for each day of the year (365), though the number more probably ensured that the Ka would be vitalized by the physical powers embodied in the figures.

Chapter Six of The Book of Going Forth gives the rubric for empowering the Ushabtiu with life and assuming the identity of the deceased. The spirits are then directed to perform any work that they may be called upon to do. The cultivation of fields, irrigation of land, and transportation of sand from the eastern to the western zones of the sacred region were all readily accomplished by these attendant spirits. These acts have been interpreted as literal expectations of conditions for the deceased in the afterlife, but they are also spiritual metaphors. The ability to fuse with natural life in the cyclic return of the Nile's inundation, the planting and harvesting of food, and the movement of the winds were a magical power acquired by the soul in the Elysian Fields. In this respect, the deceased was not only elevated from the concerns of human life, but also became part of natural events, in the names of the Neteru who embodied them.

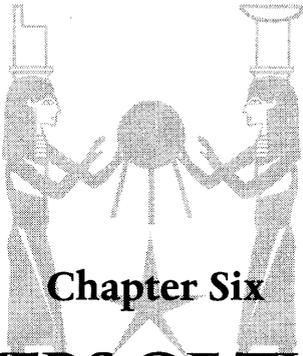
(For the embodiment of the Ushabtiu, the posture of invocation is assumed, with the right hand outstretched toward the figures. The formula may be recited in translation, though the ancient words are considered most potent.)

*A ushabtiu apen, ari apet [name] ari heseb,
Er arit kat nebt art em Neter Khert,
Setu en set ebet am em se er khertef,
Er serut ent sekhet er semehet uteb,
Er khenny em shai en abtet er amentet.
Ari-a, makua ka am.*

O thou ushabtiu, your faces have been opened! If Asar [name] calls upon you to perform work in the domain of the Neteru, you will answer. If any obstacles have been placed before her, you are charged to do those tasks. Obey the one who has created you, obey not her enemies.

Here am I. I am thou.

Book of Going Forth: Chapter VI



Chapter Six

THE MASTERS OF THE TEMPLE

It was the Egyptians who originated and taught the Greeks to use ceremonial meetings, processions, and liturgies; a fact which may be inferred from the obvious antiquity of such ceremonies in Egypt compared with Greece where they have only recently been introduced.

Herodotus, *The Histories*

Decked out in stiff ceremonial robes, the graven images of Egyptian priests gaze at visitors from their tombs at Thebes and Saqqara and speak of the eternal rewards they will enjoy in the sacred regions for their devotion to the gods. After entering these places, we can read long lists of formal titles the ancient clergy achieved, of years spent in service at the temples, and noble deeds accomplished in their towns and cities. But in spite of their verbosity, they fail to inform us about the details of this very honorable tradition, how they filled the days and nights of their lives, and what impulse propelled their pursuit of the spiritual life.

Yet we would err in our study of the Egyptian temple by viewing it merely as an imposing edifice controlled by a regimented clergy who followed a collection of liturgical recipes derived from archaic, lifeless traditions. The monuments that we look upon today—temple, tomb, and pyramid—are all embodiments of the essential, vital idea of ancient Egypt, transformation of the human condition into divine substance. And we have seen how each of the monuments intended

to dispense a particular aspect of this Sacred Science through the distinctive practices of the Solar, Lunar, and Stellar temple traditions. This could only have been effected with the active involvement of participants who were highly trained in the technology of these traditions and capable of passing it on in a consistent and reliable manner. The process obviously required stamina, great devotion, and a level of well-being that could forsake ambition and restlessness, at least temporarily—one that was content with a routine that appears to have been compensated more by spiritual credit than material reward.

The Divine House did function for the masses in the great variety of ways that spiritual and psychological support is dispensed during the significant events of an individual or family's life through traditional churches. Birth, coming of age, marriage, illness, the undertaking of journeys, and death were all events that fit into the scope of human participation in the Per Neter. Records speak of a wide variety of services rendered at the temple that included more than public ceremonies—from the dispensation of justice to the interpretation of dreams. And besides these services, a scale of participation by the public was offered, from limited apprenticeship to full-time supervision of temple events.

The Greek mystery tradition was known even in ancient times to have originated in Egypt, but certain characteristics of their system did not follow that of Egypt. The Greek schools distinguished their hierarchy of spiritual participation in three grades. Those at the third or highest degree, the *Pneumatikoi*, were considered true initiates into the temple mysteries, being at an enlightened stage and awakened by the vital idea of the temple's tradition. The *Psychikoi* were at the middle level, students of the temple who were in the process of learning the various technologies of the tradition. And at the lowest level, the *Hylikoi* were the masses, not obligated to any spiritual discipline and least developed in the realm of metaphysical experience and ability. The early Christian church followed this division of temple membership by initially establishing separate rituals for its three classes of followers: the Clergy, Communicants, and Celebrants. Similarly, the Far Eastern concept of the three Buddhist "jewels of wisdom" represents three traditional paths of spiritual participation, though each level is regarded as valuable and noble as the others. Each of the jewels is believed to be a vehicle for the vital idea of Buddhism: *Buddha*, the ideal human prototype; *Sangha*, the teachers of its wisdom; and *Dharma*, the practice of the wisdom in the world for

all human beings. Each of the jewels possesses a distinct karma, yet each is interdependent upon the other.

The Egyptian hierarchy of religious life did offer the three levels of spiritual development in the Greek sense and three expressions of practice in the Buddhist sense. But many other functions are described in tomb and temple records. Some appear to be completely unrelated to the renowned sacred tradition of Egypt, others fall into intriguing categories that have been the underground pursuit of philosophers, healers, and metaphysicians since ancient times.

The Temple Wisdom

The Graeco-Roman theologian Clement of Alexandria (150–215 C.E.) alluded to forty-two books authored by Hermes Trismegistus, the deity of his time regarded as the patron of the ancient wisdom. It is not unreasonable to assume that this number of literary works—each under the guardianship of one of the forty-two Neteru—did exist, though the figure more probably refers to categories of teaching under the purview of the temple rather than an actual number of books. The Edfu library inventory describes the works belonging to the temple, which were undoubtedly specialties of that religious order. The Edfu temple was reconstructed by the Ptolemies in 237 B.C.E., but like Karnak, Dendera, and many other divine houses, the Egyptians record that the site was originally founded in archaic times. Consecrated to Heru Behutet (his role as avenger of his father Asar, heir to the throne of Egypt and protector of the Two Lands), the temple reflects in its literary collection the fundamental purview of a clergy concerned with the continuance of power through the Royal House and the commemoration of Heru's victory over dark forces. Inscriptions in the library chamber indicate that a total of thirty-seven great works were in the possession of the temple, but only the following are described.

The moral conduct taught at Edfu philosophically fixed the courage, loyalty, and self-knowledge of Heru as the standard for both student and teacher at the temple. The Book of Overcoming the Demon—referring to Heru's adversary Set—contained more than the legendary account of the archaic war between these two Neteru. It was also a guide to repulsing Set's influences in this life and the next. The Book of Repulsing the Crocodile is another reference to Set in his

aspect as the abhorrent Nile denizen. Both the legend and the actual instance of the individual confronting evil were disclosed. In *The Formulas for Repulsing the Evil Eye*—the title referring to the eye lost by Heru during his confrontation with Set—a belief in the loss of one's personal magic was addressed. *The Book of Apprehending Enemies* included divinatory activity for identifying the source of evil intent, an important step in rendering enemies ineffectual.

A knowledge of the use of magic was considered as important in temple training as the study of theology and the practical skills of writing, art, and architecture. *The Book of the Preservation of the Ship* detailed the techniques for providing magical protection to Nile vessels, a very serious concern in a time when the great river was the main source of transportation. *The Book of Protections* was a treatise concerned with the magical protections available to the city, the individual residence, and the Royal House. It no doubt included formulas for blessing or dedicating a location and exorcising it of previous influences.

The Book of Protecting the Body may have been a medical as well as a magical work, but it must be emphasized that the Egyptians found no discrepancy between the two disciplines. *The Book of Protection for the King* is an additional work which detailed the special rituals to preserve the Royal House, the king's person, and the amulets and insignia reserved for Pharaoh and his family.

The Book of Hunting and Taming Animals was a work that specifically dealt with the hunting of the lion and repelling serpents and crocodiles. We know that magical spells were used largely for this purpose, but a science of conversing with animals and using hypnosis to neutralize their predatory behavior is referred to in some ancient texts.

The instructions on temple ritual understandably comprised most of the library's works. *The Book of the Neter's Exodus* was a description of the great feasts of the temple when the image of Heru left the shrine, and the rituals accompanying his processions were defined. *The Book of the Promenade of the Great Ship* specified the conduct in bearing the sacred barque of the temple at its sacred times and places. The room of the vessel, Mesen, was considered sacred from ancient times. Located directly behind the sanctuary at Edfu, it was the repository of the Neter's divine boat when it was not in processional.

The Book of Launching the King on Processions was a guide to the protocol, attendants, and equipment required by the clergy when accompanying the royal

person. The Book of the Conduct of the Order cited the rules and regulations of Edfu's religious personnel including the ritual purifications, the construction and care of ceremonial clothing, footwear, and the consumption of food and drink by the priesthood.

The Book of Temple Regulations was a work concerned with the daily ritual and periodic festivals necessary to maintaining the spiritual life of the Per Neter. It specified who was responsible for conducting the duties of the religious events and who was authorized to participate. The Book of the Temple Guardians instructed those who were responsible for maintaining the physical environs of the temple. It also specified the reserved areas of the divine house and the care of the chambers and the goods within by the clergy designated for those tasks. The Book of Divine Offerings detailed the inspection of offerings and sacred animals before presentation to the Neteru—a required knowledge of the offering priests. Cleanliness and purity were paramount as was the preparation of foods, especially the wide variety of bread and loaves, which were offered at the temple as a time-honored custom.

The Book of the Secret Forms of the Neter contained the sacred names, associated amulets and natural forms that the Neter of the temple embodied, while The Book of the Secret Forms of the Neteru was a work detailing the sacred names and qualities of the Neteru in the great temples. The Book of the Temple Inventory listed the goods of the temple and the repositories where they were kept. The regalia and jewelry of the Neter, the crowns and sceptres, and the shrines and barques were enumerated.

Medical works included The Book of Placating Sekhmet. Though this fiery, powerful Neter was charged with the protection of the body and the destruction of disease, she was also the source of human illness. This work disclosed the metaphysical remedies for infirmities. The Book of the Laboratory Secrets concerned the production of the sacred essences used in the temple ceremonies, the medicines, elixirs, and traditional formulas for incense, anointing, and lighting.

Stemming from most ancient times, The Book of Combat detailed the military strategy and the histories of the great warriors, beginning with Heru and his contest against Set and his conspirators. We know that wrestling, the use of the sword, stick, and the harpoon were special training disciplines. But the martial arts of Egypt have yet to be seriously examined, and more attention has been

given to examining the alleged exploits of notable kings during their military campaigns than individual training and accomplishment in physical skills.

The Book of Wall Decorations was a treatise on the sacred canons used in the decorations of the temple, the placement of the liturgies and texts in the temple chambers, and the placement of sacred figures and symbols of the Neteru. Architectural instruction and geometric formulae may have been included in this work. In *The Book of Sacred Places* the details of Egypt's geodetic science were once more emphasized. The work listed the divisions of Egypt, their guardians and features, the nome spirits and their residences. It also contained geographic descriptions of prominent locales and the agricultural specialties of the regions.

Astrological works were of paramount importance, and Edfu's roof chambers reveal that astronomical observation took place on a regular basis at that site and at its sister temple at Dendera. The *Book of the Favoring Hour* was a work on horary and electional astrology, listing the favorable times for specified activities. The *Book of Knowing the Return of the Luminaries* is believed to be an eclipse table as well as the source of calculating solar and lunar phenomena—New Moons and Full Moons. The *Book of Knowing the Return of the Stars* detailed the hour tables, dekans, and times of the inundation and seasons.

Not the least revered of the literary traditions recorded at Edfu was the sacred drama inscribed on the inner west wall of the temple precinct. The *Mystery Play of Heru* relates how the Neter, after attaining his majority and claiming the throne of his father Asar, confronts his adversary Set in a series of eleven reliefs, each of which comprises a theatrical scene and dialogue. The *dramatis personae* in *The Mystery Play* appear to have been members of the Royal House; the audience involved nomarchs and the general populace, while the priests served as both the theatrical directors and commentators for the audience. The play was performed annually at Edfu on the 21st of Menchir, the second month of winter, and four days afterward, which constituted the Festival of Victory. In 110 B.C.E. (when the walls at Edfu were inscribed) this fell on March 9–13, just prior to the spring equinox.¹

Drama was a legitimate and respected approach to sacred instruction in ancient Egypt; indeed, many egyptologists believe that most religious cere-

1 Fairman, H. W.: *The Triumph of Horus*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles CA, 1974; p. 27.

monies and magical rituals which have been preserved in temple and tomb reliefs were originally observed in dramatic form to convey a transcendental ambiance to the teaching. The result, for both players and viewers, is a *participation mystique* in which all were bound together in the divine words, acts, and gestures. Scenes depicting sacred dramas are also evident at Karnak, Dendera, and Abydos, with the priests of the temple and their attendants explicitly in command of the occasion. They choreographed the music, chants, the scenery of sacred figures and regalia, and even the royal performers, who for the event assumed the roles of the Neteru and transmitted their power to all participants as part of the divine experience.

Temple Service

Abundant references to the religious personnel of the Per Neter have been made throughout the annals told in Egypt's temples and tombs. Most of the religious titles varied little as time passed, and though some designations changed at the great temples, the roles remained essentially the same.

Clement of Alexandria chronicled the closing events of Egypt's great civilization in the second century of our era. Though of Greek birth and a Christian apologist, his profuse writings detail the state of philosophy and religion in his time, and the earnest attempt by the Alexandrian scholars to fuse Greek thought and the new Gnosticism with traditions of the past. There can be no doubt, after reading some of his reports, that much of what was to follow in the emerging new religion was modeled after the customs of antiquity. He describes a great religious procession in his time as one following the protocol of ancient times:

In the solemn pomps of Egypt the singer generally goes first, bearing one of the symbols of music. They say it is his duty to carry two of the books of Hermes; one of which contains hymns of the gods, the other precepts relating to the life of the king.

The singer is followed by the Horoscopus, bearing in his hand the measure of time (hour glass) and the palm branch, symbols of astrology. It is his duty to be versed in and recite the four books of Hermes, which treat of that science. Of these, one describes the positions of the fixed stars, another the conjunctions and illuminations of the Sun and the Moon, and the others their risings.

Next comes the Hierogrammat, the sacred scribe. He has feathers on his head and a papyrus book in hand, with a palette equipped with ink and reed. It is his duty to understand the hieroglyphics, geography, the course of the luminaries and planets, the conditions of Egypt and the Nile, the weights and measures and things used in holy rites.

Then follows the Stolistes, bearing the cubit of justice and the cup of libation. He knows all pertaining to education and the choice of offerings which are comprehended in ten books. They describe the manner of honors paid to the gods, including sacrifices, first fruits, hymns, prayers, processions, holy days, and the like.

Lastly comes the Prophet, who carries in his bosom the water jar, followed by a procession carrying loaves of bread. He provides over all sacred things and knows the contents of the ten sacerdotal books relating to the gods, the laws, and the whole priestly discipline.²

Aside from these grand ceremonials, the Egyptian priests were not removed from, but very much involved in the activities and concerns of everyday life. According to Egyptian records, those who served in the Per Neter came from many ranks of society. Entry into the service of local temples began at a very early age; those whose families were attached to or closely associated with these temples stayed on to serve for life while others returned to secular living and volunteered afterwards for designated seasons to attend the Neteru. In the nome temples, elevated positions of the clergy were inherited, though by custom and not by rule. Priestly roles were also acquired through individual talent and scholarship, patronage from the Royal House, and even monetary purchase in the later historical periods.

The great temples accepted candidates after a basic curriculum was fulfilled at the trainee's local level and also at the Per Ankh, thereafter a wide scope of education became available according to the student's temperament, aptitude, and the sponsorship of temple teachers. There is every indication that talented students could choose from a number of priestly professions—and those included specialization in nearly every expert discipline known to the ancient world as the

² Wilkinson, Sir J. Gardner: *The Ancient Egyptians—Their Life and Customs* (Vol. I, facsimile of the 1853 edition). Crescent Books: New York, 1988.

Edfu sacred books indicate: medicine, science, engineering, construction, teaching, law, navigation, and theology.³

Subsidiary roles at the temple were filled by secular members of the surrounding community, organized into rotating groups or phyles. Though only peripherally involved in the high ritual of the Neter's house, they were nonetheless valued by the temple clergy and were required to serve for at least one of the three seasons out of the year; it is unknown if the privilege required a lifetime commitment or occasional service as secular life allowed.

The Dynasty 18 Instruction of Merikara extols the spiritual benefits of temple service for all:

A man should do what profits his Ba. In the monthly service, wear the white sandals, visit the temples and contemplate the mysteries. Enter the shrine and eat bread in the Neter's house. Offer libations, multiply the loaves, increase the daily offerings. It profits him who does it.

Included in the secular class of priests was the *Hem Ankhiu* ("priest of the living"), who served as a counselor for those who came to the temple seeking guidance; members of this office also judged local legal cases. Among those who served as ritual attendants periodically were the *Thai Shebet* ("wand bearer") and the *Ahai-t* (sistrum bearer)—the names indicate that the role was fulfilled by females.

In the New Kingdom, a class of priests called the *Sau* ("watchers") were raised from the ranks of military protectors, as certain army battalions also possessed this name. The name also refers to those of the temple who recited chants. The *Sau* served as temple guardians at various pylons of the sacred precinct, as we are told in many tomb narratives that priests ascended to higher degrees by serving progressively at the temple pylons until they reached "the two divine doors" of the sanctuary—the most sacred honor that could be attained by the guardian. Their function may have been to maintain the recitation of sacred names and chants throughout day and night in the temple, in the same manner that sutras

³ Lichtheim, Miriam: *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. III, p. 36, ff. 10 and p. 41, ff. 19. University of California Press: Berkeley CA, 1980.

are continuously recited in Buddhist sanctuaries. In this manner, psychic defenses were maintained in the temple precinct.

The elite of the temple acquired the title *Ur* (“high” or “exalted”), a name that designated Pharaoh’s representative in the sacred rituals that heralded the return of light at dawn each day. As the ruler was the living descendant of the Neteru on earth, his participation in the temple assured the proper transference of divine energy into the sacred environment. And because it was not physically possible for Pharaoh to be present at every divine house in Egypt, his designated representative fulfilled the duty and became the true high priest or priestess of the temple. At Memphis, the *Ur Kherp Hemut* was the “Master of the Hammer,” the high priest of Ptah. At Sais, the chief physician and high priest’s title was *Ur Senu*. At the temple of Heliopolis, the high priest was the *Ur Maa*, “Great Seer,” one of the titles of Imhotep. *Ur-t Tekhent* is the title of the high priestess of Heliopolis, *Ur Ra* designates the high priestess of Busiris, and *Aakhut* (a name also referring to Auset in her aspect as the rising Sirius) was the title of the high priestess of Prosopites.

While levels of proficiency and practice in the priesthood varied little among the great temples, members of the clergy did specialize in the realm of their patron Neter, and they spiritually assumed or transmitted some of the unique powers of the temple’s gods. This is most evident from the frequent references to the priest-physicians, known as “sons of Sekhmet,” as well as the architect-engineers of Ptah. In the former case, knowledge of the goddess’ healing mysteries elevated the priest in medical practice, and in the latter, the wisdom of the principal artisan of the gods endowed the priest with the details of construction in sacred architecture.

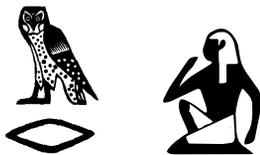


Figure 55—*Mer*: Overseer of the temple

The Mer

The daily activity of the temple, both religious and worldly, was administered by the *Mer*, the overseer of the Per Neter. This role required an immense proficiency in business, commerce, and

human resources, in addition to a well-grounded knowledge of the temple’s tradition. Nearly every divine house possessed its own subsidiary lands, from which

food crops, herds of domestic animals, and other agricultural products used in the production of clothing, perfume, and medicine were apportioned for temple use. The remainder was often sold to market, stored at central granaries, or bartered for other goods—wood, metals, stone, and manufactured products—to be used at the temple. All of this business was managed by the Mer, in addition to the hiring of servants, artisans, and security guards when events required them.

A unique tomb was discovered in modern times at the outskirts of Hermopolis in Middle Egypt. Here, five generations of temple overseers in the Late Period were entombed, servants of the Per Ankh of Djehuti. Exquisitely designed, the tomb of Petosiris appears to be a miniature temple, recording the lives and accomplishments of a priestly family. The tomb commemorates the grandfather Djed Thoth-ef-ankh, the father Nes Shu and mother Neferenpet, two brothers Djed Thoth-ef-ankh II and Petosiris, and the son of the latter, Thoth-rekh, who died in youth. Petosiris, the central and most eminent figure of the group, was both high priest and comptroller of the temple. He speaks through his tomb inscriptions of the great instability during the Persian conquest while he lived, and the sacred duty of the priests to restore the shrines and the services of the temple as they existed in the time of his ancestors:

When I became comptroller for Djehuti the lord of Khnum, I reestablished the temple of the Neter to its former condition. I restored every rite to be as before, and every priest to serve at his appointed time. I made great his priests, advancing the temple's hour priests. I promoted all his servants, I guided his attendants.

An interesting anecdote is also revealed in Petosiris' story of these unhappy times. In the absence of a legitimate ruler from the Royal House of Egypt, the high priest was empowered to reestablish the Per Ankh himself, as tradition required:

I stretched the cord and released the line, to found the temple of Ra in the outskirts. I built it in pure white limestone and finished it with all manner of work. Its doors are of pinewood, inlaid with Asian copper. I enabled Ra to establish residence within as a youth in the eastern sky.

The tomb of Petosiris and his family is most notable for its great variety of inscriptions—which include chapters from the ancient Pyramid Texts to the contemporaneous Book of Going Forth, as well as hymns to the Neteru and summaries of the wisdom attained by the family of priests in the form of admonitions and spiritual guidance. From these we see the reflection of a philosophy put to practical use and an understanding of faith, morality, and spiritual dedication that was passed on with great certainty and contentment.



Figure 56—*Kher Heb*: Reciter, lector, keeper of the sacred books, accomplished in all rituals of the temple

The Kher Heb

The *Kher Heb* is the most frequently mentioned class of priest, one who served as lector and chief scribe of the temple. Accomplished in the repertoire of temple services, there were Kher hebs at the great temples, the nome shrines, and the necropolis. Another

appellation of the Kher Heb was “possessor of the sacred books,” denoting that the holder of this office was charged with the copying and keeping of temple records and the library. The Kher Heb was undoubtedly accomplished in all the rituals of the temple as a result of this, being required to furnish the other priests with liturgical formulas, accompanying chants, and the protocol of the rituals according to tradition. At times the Kher Heb attended ceremonies at other temples, serving as the sole representative of his Per Neter.

Most importantly, the Kher Heb was the chief scribe, and as such the training of lower scribes to maintain the temple library and dispense copies of the sacred books to other temples, the Royal House, and students was a significant and ongoing responsibility. Service in the temple for all priestly grades commenced with scribal instruction, and we can never underestimate the great respect given to scribal study in Egypt—it was regarded as a gift of the Neteru as well as the singular vehicle by which a person could change her destiny and station in life. This is probably why such a great store of Egyptian writings still exist, in spite of centuries of plunder and decay. A quantity of significant literature comes from copies made laboriously by scribal trainees and temple students, which dupli-

cated already ancient compositions that were standards of social, religious, and historical value to the temple.

Another responsibility of the Kher Heb was the knowledge of properly reciting the words of power and sacred names of the Neteru during the rituals of the temple. This was a doctrine taught through the oral tradition and cannot be easily discerned through any study of the ancient literature. But it was as equally important as the knowledge of writing and books, if not the most vital in the scope of this priestly function. For the very creation of the cosmic worlds was preceded by divine utterances, especially those spoken by Djehuti, prototype of the scribe's divine service, and Ptah, creator of physical forms who first articulated them through divine thought.

Every priest and court official of the Old Kingdom appears to have begun with a career as Kher Heb. The fundamental knowledge of writing and classical literature—as well as the written rites, hymns, and prayers of the temple—was only preliminary to procuring a distinguished role in the temple or the Royal House. Harkhuf, a Dynasty 6 official who served Pharaohs Merenra and Pepi II, became governor of Upper Egypt after working his way up from Lector Priest to Chief of Scouts, Seal Bearer, and finally to Count. But in spite of these worldly titles, words at his tomb speak of the knowledge—both practical and magical—that he acquired from his service to the Neter's temple:

I am an excellently equipped Akh, a lector-priest knowing his speech.
As for any man who enters this tomb unclean, I shall seize him by the
neck like a bird . . .



Figure 57—*Uab*: Pure one, asperger, libationer

The Uab

Herodotus remarked on the absolute requirement of cleanliness for Egyptian priests and the diligent procedures followed throughout the daily life of the clergy and temple ceremonies to ensure

the purity of the temple. The *Uab* (“pure one”) performed the purifications prescribed by this goal, and fulfilled them on a daily, and even an hourly basis, in the Divine House.

Aside from the obvious need for hygienic measures mandated by Egypt's intensely warm climate, the rituals associated with purification were believed to have been taught to the human race by the Neteru, who also endowed civilization with language, art, science, and aesthetics. Temple inscriptions specified that those who entered into the divine presence must have absolute purity of body and mind, and it is not surprising that the role of Uab also required celibacy—at least for the period of service in the temple. Herodotus mentioned that in his time, only the Greeks and the Egyptians regarded the temple as a place exclusive from the common events of human life—sexual intercourse, eating, and gambling did not take place there and were excluded from the conduct of the attendant priests while in service at the temple.

Everything that came into contact with the Neter required some form of purification, whether it was physical or psychic cleansing. The personal routine of temple residents included bathing upon rising, at midday, dusk, and the middle of the night, prior to the schedule of rituals that were conducted in the Neter's house. Body hair was thoroughly removed, men shaved their heads and many women did so also, covering their heads with wigs. Only white clothing was worn, and fresh apparel was changed after each bathing. Footwear consisted only of papyrus sandals, though white cloth sandals are mentioned for those of the higher grades.

Clothing derived from sheep and most animals was strictly forbidden. Large stores of finely woven linen kept at every temple were used to clothe both the Neter's image and the priests in a distinctive manner. Special lengths of linen were also used to cover the hands of those who opened the doors of the temple's inner chambers, touched the Neter's image, and carried the sacred barques; these were also the responsibility of the Uab.

It is not surprising that water, regarded as a divine conduit and the transmitter of renewal and new life, was the special agent of the Uab. This priest not only served as the inspector of sacred offerings in the temple, but also as the asperger for all that was to be presented to the Neteru in ceremonies. Water from the Nile or the temple's sacred lake was sprinkled on all food and gifts prior to being taken into the Offering Chamber. Vessels of water located strategically around the temple precinct in ancient times were undoubtedly precursors of the holy

water fountains at Christian churches, ensuring that those who entered the Neter's house were clean of body and, metaphorically, of spirit.

Besides water, the substances associated with purification were salt, fire, incense, and sacred essences. A variety of minerals was used for purifying water itself and the cleansing of the body. Natron (i.e. hydrous sodium carbonate), the traditional ingredient, was employed throughout all dynastic periods for this purpose; a naturally occurring mineral found in desert depressions from prehistoric sea beds, it is comprised of sodium chloride and the bicarbonate, sulphate, and muriate of sodium. Besides being used in sacred ceremonies, it was also the main ingredient used to mummify corpses.

The temple fires were maintained in braziers outside the sanctuary, usually in the great stone vessels of the Offering Hall. From these the hundreds of temple lamps and torches were kindled and placed in the sanctuary, subsidiary chambers, and corridors. The legendary Temple of Neit at Sais in the Delta was known for its perpetually burning fire that may have been the precursor of the vestal fires of Rome. Herodotus reported that at the Neter's annual festival, thousands of lamps were lit from this fire and taken through the city in a sacred procession known as "The Festival of the Lamps." The temple fire was regarded as a highly potent form of purification, and the blessing of the physician's instruments and the warrior's weapons usually took place over it at the Divine House.

Resins, regarded as the lifeblood of trees and plants, were burnt in the temples at dawn to prepare the sacred precinct for the reentry of the Neter. These included storax (*Liquidamber orientalia*), gum arabic (*Acacia*), and Somalian frankincense (*Boswellia thurifera*). Myrrh (*Balsamodendron myrrh*) was offered when the Sun reached its zenith, and at dusk the legendary incense khyphi was burnt. Plutarch describes the manufacture of khyphi as a separate temple rite, accompanied by the chanting of sacred words of power. The ingredients of this fragrance are cited by Herodotus as comprising sixteen sacred plants and substances, among which were frankincense, myrrh, wine, honey, raisins, sweet rush, calamus, asphalt, thryon, and orris root.

Scent was regarded in Egypt as a powerful agent of transformation. The art of scent alchemy originated in the Divine House, and became a significant part of the Uab's duties. Perfume and unguents (*Sti Neter*, "the scent of the god")

were manufactured in the temple primarily for the anointing of images, ceremonial regalia, and initiation ceremonies for the clergy and the Royal House. These procedures were regarded as sacred acts, governed by Nefertum, the patron of scent, and other deities. Among them, Sokar was associated with the process of infusion and the transformation of botanicals into sacred elixirs. He was also deemed the fashioner of the silver bowls used in the temples for presenting the sacred essences. Another deity, Shesmu, was regarded as “master of perfumery,” and has been represented on inscriptions in the process of squeezing grapes into wine and plants into oil.

We are told that an Egyptian priest or priestess was “anointed into office.” The priestly initiation first entailed physical purification, which involved fasting or the consumption of only certain foods—those considered inoffensive to the Neter of the temple—over a period of time. This was followed by the candidate’s formal presentation in the temple by the sponsor, often a relative or a higher grade cleric. Then, one was ushered into the sanctuary to receive “sight of the Neter,” which may have been the first of many or, in some temples, the only opportunity allowed to certain candidates. The company of sanctuary priests then conferred the consecration to temple service, at which point elaborate anointing rites were performed. At the final stage, the revelation of the Neter’s mysteries took place, a rite possibly taking the form of ritual, drama, or seclusion in the most sacred area of the temple.

The production of certain cosmetics was also the purview of the Uab, many of which were endowed with medical and magical properties. Eye paints were applied to statuary on a daily basis at the morning service in addition to the anointing ceremony itself. Incense, sacred cosmetics, and plant essences were believed to symbolically endow the Neter’s image with physical sight and breath. And in magical ceremonies—especially those of a divinatory nature—their use allowed the physical senses of the seer to penetrate invisible realms.

The daily service of the temple usually followed the natural rhythm of the Sun’s light. Before dawn, the morning watch prepared for the wakening of the Neter with extensive purification rituals. Those priests conducting the morning services were required to first sanctify themselves by thorough bathing and anointing in a ceremonial context, accompanied by special prayers and invoca-

tions. Following this, the morning offerings were inspected for purity and the precise criteria of the Neter, such as the presence of special markings on the sacrificial animals. Food was not consumed by attendants until the Neter had been presented with the first offerings of the day. Any objects that would touch the Neter's sanctuary or image had to be ceremonially pure, which was effected by censuring and applying the appropriate consecration with sacred names and chants. And after the great ceremony of awakening and greeting the Neter, its image and regalia also underwent cleansing with water and purification with incense before being presented with new accoutrements and sustenance.

The afternoon and evening services (at dusk and at midnight) of the temple were less elaborate in scope than those of the morning, but the same purification rites were in place for both attendants and offerings. Some significant ceremonies did take place at night, especially at the temples of Edfu, Dendera, and Esna, where stellar observations were conducted throughout the evening hours. These concerned the greeting of sacred stars and the Moon with invocation, censuring, and divination. The Uab was one of the overseers of all this activity, ensuring that the protocol of purity was observed in each instance. And because the Uab was required to know the proper formulas for psychic as well as physical cleansing, the role was as magical as it was practical.



Figure 58—*Hem Neter*: Servant of the god, high priest, ceremonialist

The Hem Neter

The *Hem Neter* was the “servant of the god,” acting as the chief ceremonialist in the sacred rites of the temple. The term *Hem-t Neter* refers to his consort (legally or metaphorically, “in spirit”) as well as the consort of the Neter in cer-

tain temple traditions. Some temple services did call for the engagement of both priest and priestess, others required only the most senior of its ritualists for selected ceremonies. From earliest times the Hem Neter was also called the “prophet of the Neter”; from this we may surmise that the individual was consecrated exclusively to the service of one deity and spoke the Neter's pronouncements in divinatory matters and by request from the Royal House. In

some instances, the consort of the Neter was an individual who shared a most intimate relationship with the spirit of the temple—as such she served as the voice or judge for the Neter following its evocation.

Although the term “prophet” is used, the Hem Neter was not necessarily a clairvoyant or the exclusive link with the spirit of the temple that the title implies. We know that the words of the Neter, in the form of traditional pronouncements, were recited following ritual evocations by this priest, in the same manner that sermons are read in religious gatherings to remind the celebrants of traditional religious precepts. However, some of the prophets of ancient Egypt undoubtedly did receive spiritual inspirations while in silent discourse with the Neter, and their account of these events indicate that this type of communion was encouraged and admired. The Hem Neter was in a class with distinguished scholars, and they received authority from only the Hem Neter Tepi—the high priest of the central temple, if one existed.

The Egyptians distinguished between prayer (*qakh*, “invocation to the Neter”) and meditation (*uaa*, “to take self counsel in the heart”). Another form of spiritual meditation was used in the rituals (*kai*, “chanting”) and direct knowledge of the Neter was possible (*mekh Neter*, “to know the divinity”). Instruction from the temple prophet in these activities was highly valued and mentioned in the religious accomplishments of individuals in their tombs.

In the Graeco-Roman period, a chronicle of the life of a high priestess is revealed in the tomb stele of Taimhotep, who died in her thirtieth year in the reign of Kleopatra VII. At fourteen she married the Hem Neter of Ptah at Memphis, Psherenptah, and bore him four children. The priestess speaks of the accomplishments of her husband—who was the son of the then-deceased high priest of Ptah, Pedibast,—giving his titles as “Scribe of the Neteru in the House of Books, Prophet of the Robing Chamber, Chief Prophet of the Neteru of Egypt, Lector Priest in the Temple of Djehuti, and Chief of the Master Craftsmen.”

After the birth of her three daughters, Taimhotep tells how she and her husband invoked Imhotep to give them a son. Then, she reports, “The Neter came to the head of the high priest in a revelation,” and promised them a male child “after a great work is done in the holy of holies.” So it is told that her husband

Psherenptah awakens from his meditative discourse with the saintly Imhotep, and instructs the priests and initiates of the temple to carry out the great work requested by the dead sage. After calling together the temple's craftsmen, the Opening of the Mouth ritual is performed for Imhotep, followed by an offering of good things in his sanctuary. "In return," she says, "the god [Imhotep] made me conceive a child." The child, named Pedibast after his grandfather, was born on the feast of Imhotep in 46 B.C.E., according to the stele.

Taimhotep's story is replete with details of temple tradition, even though they may not be articulated as such. We learn that though her husband had ascended through numerous degrees of temple responsibility, he sought the stability of a family and the necessity of passing on his accomplishments to a son who would take his place, just as he had taken the place of his father. We also learn that the concerns of everyday life were under the purview of the temple, and that direct communication with the Neteru about these concerns was possible. The revelation her husband received may have been a vision or a dream but the message is clear, Imhotep will answer the prayer of the Hem Neter if he is welcomed into the world of life with the revered ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth, and all in the temple comply with this great work. It involved the other priests, the students, and even the sculptors, who are rewarded after the ritual with gifts. We may surmise that the temple craftsmen fashioned a statue or figures of Imhotep, which by tradition were distributed to the pious as holy objects—thus perpetrating the name of the saint and symbolically giving him life again in exchange for the new life he gives to his priest.



Figure 59—*Maa*: The seer

The Maa

The oracles of the temple, by all accounts in every historical period, conducted a brisk business. Herodotus reports that the revered Greek oracles of

Dodona and Thebes originated in Egypt—the priestesses there being descendants of legendary Egyptian exiles. He also refers to the highly regarded priestess-oracles of Nebt-Het at the Delta city of Buto, who foretold the lengths of pharaonic reigns. Concerning these Egyptian practices, he wrote:

The Egyptians . . . have made more use of omens and prognostics than any other nation; they keep written records of the observed results of any unusual phenomenon, so that they come to expect a similar consequence to follow a similar occurrence in the future.

The astrological clergy—who were present at nearly every temple—included both observers and interpreters of celestial phenomena. The *Mer Unnut* were the “overseers of the hours,” using the traditional navigational tools and observational equipment of the astronomer to determine time. The *Unnut* were the “hourmen” of the Neter’s house, who recorded the planetary risings and the passages of the dekans through the seasons, working together with the *Mer Unnut* to notify the temple personnel of the times for the rituals that were scheduled for specific hours, days, and seasons. The *Ami Unnut* (a name also given to the horoscope) were the “interpreters of the hours”; in the astrological sense they consulted the temple books for the election of propitious times for planting, harvesting, and the distribution of royal edicts. They often gave prognostications on the births of royal persons and made predictions of the annual floods based on heavenly signs.

Though the *Ami Unnut* mostly consulted compiled information in the temple libraries that revealed the traditional meanings of celestial events, some are recorded as having been highly skilled interpreters of future conditions. The astronomer/astrologer (and snake charmer) Harkebi, who lived around 400 B.C.E., is described on a statue of his likeness in Cairo’s Egyptian Museum with the following declarations of his talents:

The hereditary prince, the solitary one, knower of the sacred writings, who observes all there is to observe in heaven and on earth. Clear-eyed in his observations, there is no error among them. He announces the risings and settings at their times with the Neteru who foretell the future, for which he purifies himself in the days when Akh⁴ rises with bennu⁵ from the earth and contents the lands with his predictions.

He observes every stellar culmination in the sky, foretelling the heliacal rising of Sopdet at the commencement of the year. He observes

4 A name for the seventh dekan.

5 The planet Venus.

Sopdet on the day of her first festival, knowledgeable in her course and observing her daily movement. All she foretells is in his keeping.

Knowing the northing and southing of the Sun and their times, he declares their omens before and after they occur. He divides the hours of day and night without error, knowing all which is visible in the sky. He skillfully attends to their conjunctions and movements. He does not disclose his opinions, being circumspect with all he has seen.

Specialists of the oracular discipline were expected to render wisdom directly from the Neteru, at times in spontaneous fashion and without consulting the written texts on spiritual problems. The Maa (“seer,” from the same word that defines the sense of sight) was a member of the temple who offered a talent quite distinct from that of the trained priests—prophecy. The Maa possessed an extensive knowledge of sacred tradition, but it was also coupled with the power to see into the future, as a number of records reveal. This, along with expertise in the temple rituals and knowledge of divine evocations, enabled appraisal on occult matters, averting of evil events, or inviting successful enterprises for the Royal House and individual petitioners.

The Maa was distinguished by the donning of the skin of the spotted leopard over the white linen dress of the priest. The spots of the skin represented the stars of the cosmic regions through which he traveled to see the past and future. The leopard plays a dominant role in some of the vignettes of *The Book of Going Forth*, being a Solar creature whose sight penetrates the dark night and whose fierce aspect deters the enemies of Ra. In certain royal ceremonies concerning the transference of power, the leopard skin is also worn by Pharaoh or his heir.

Consulting the Neter for spiritual guidance or assistance called for the *Peh Neter* (“approaching the god”), a ritual separate from the daily devotions of the temple. It proceeded with invocation of the Neter by the Maa, which required the recitation of the *hekau* (“words of power”), the sacred names and appellations of the divinity. As the name empowers natural forces to live and take form, the knowledge of these names was essential to establishing a successful communication. The next step required an elaborate offering to the divinity, as the Ka of the Neter requires nourishment for as long as it appears in material form. This was followed by private conversation with the deity that may take the form of



Khenu
Prophet, "One Who Proclaims"



Thai Shebet
"Wand Bearer"



Hem Ankhui
Priest of the living, counselor
and judge



Uab Sekhmet
Exorcist



Setem, Sem
Keeper of offerings, priest
of the dead, and the necropolis



Hem-t Neter
Consort of the god



Neter Sesheta
Scribe of the holy books

Figure 60—Priests of the Divine House (Part One)

meditation, dream state, or mediumship. Surrounded by attendant priests, the communication between the Maa and the Neter is then recorded by the *Heri Sesheta* ("recorder of the mysteries") and kept in the archives of the temple.

Neferti, a seer living in the time of the Dynasty 4 king Seneferu, left a series of prophecies which foretold the great civil disruption of the First Intermediate Period—which was to actually occur some centuries later—and the restoration of Egypt's peace and prosperity by Pharaoh Amunemhat I in Dynasty 12. A native of Heliopolis, a lector priest, and a sage at the Per Ankh of Bastet in the Delta, Neferti possessed all of the qualifications by his association with those great temples to present himself as an experienced clairvoyant to the Royal House. He came before Seneferu to answer the king's request that he "speak to me of what shall happen, for today has already come into being and one has passed it by." Thereupon the prophet said,

I will speak of what is before my eyes, I will never foretell what is not to come . . . I show you the Two Lands in calamity, for what had never took place before has now happened . . . a king of the south will come . . . he will assume the White Crown and he will wear the Red Crown . . . right will come to its place once more and wrong will be dispelled.

The prophecies of Neferti and other records of this genre are regarded by egyptologists as propaganda, contrived by later kings who sought to legitimize their lack of royal or divine lineage. But whether the prophecy was actually made or not, Neferti's words serve as an example of what the Egyptians regarded as an important priestly function. The role of prophet—one who was thoroughly schooled in the details of Egypt's historical past as well as possessing sight of the future—held an essential place in both temple and Royal House throughout the ages.

A treatise on magic from the third century of our era reveals some of the traditional methods of divination still used at the end of Egyptian civilization by priests and physicians. An admixture of recipes written in Greek and Demotic, the Papyrus London-Leiden contains magical spells for healing or inflicting illness, and methods of divination using the lamp, Sun, Moon, vessels of water, and human mediums.



Heri Sesheta
Recorder of mysteries;
overseer of books



Aakhut
Being of light, the enlightened, the wise



Atef Neter
Father of the god



Hekai, Hekait
Sorcerer, sorceress



Sau
Guardians, magical protectors,
reciters of spells



Ami Unnut
Observers and interpreters
of the stars

Figure 60—Priests of the Divine House (Part 2)

According to the papyrus, purification is always the first step in divination. The metaphysician must fast or cleanse to purify the body of any incongruent influences in order to arrive at accurate and reliable results on the matter being questioned. The next step is the recitation of the appropriate hekau, which awaken the spiritual forces and welcome them into the divination space or vessel. An offering must be prepared to honor and nourish the summoned entities—this is a critical step in establishing contact. Incenses, herbs, the organs of ani-

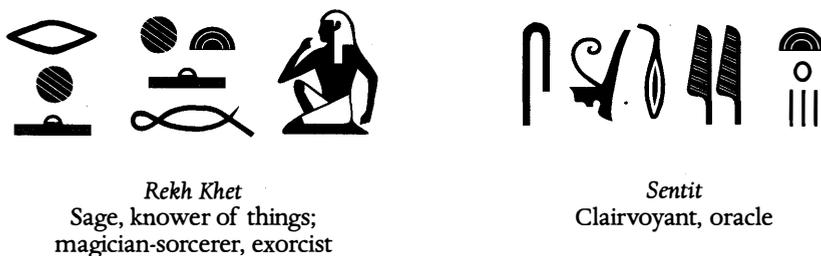


Figure 60—Priests of the Divine House (Part 3)

imals, and ritual objects form part of the offering, each carefully chosen to correspond with the nature and cosmic realm of the spirit. Once manifested, these forces are then questioned, and directed to respond through the medium. The last and most important step is the dispersal, which releases the spirit from the physical confines of the divination.

Anpu plays a prominent role in divination ceremonies. As the guardian of the initiate through the shadow worlds in the form of the divine jackal, he is the ultimate guide through unknown regions because he can see in the darkness. In the divination with vessels of water, the image of Anpu was inscribed at the bottom of the bowl or pool, which was darkened with pitch mixed with gold dust to reflect the astral light of the region of the Neteru.⁶ Perfumed oil was dropped in the water-filled vessel to form a fine film over the surface that would reflect images to the seer. The Papyrus London-Leiden instructs the practitioner to make the following invocation seven times after constructing the vessel:

Hail, Anpu! Come to me, Thou Chief of Mysteries in the Shadow World, Chief Physician of Asar. Come to this earth, show yourself to me on this day, for you are Djehuti who came forth from the father of fathers. Come to the mouth of my vessel today and tell me in truth everything that I shall inquire of, without falsehood . . .⁷

⁶ Murray, Margaret A.: *The Splendor that was Egypt*. Praeger Books: New York NY, 1964; p. 114.

⁷ Adapted from Griffith, F. L. and Thompson, Herbert: *The Leyden Papyrus*. Dover: New York, 1974; Column II: 18-22.



Photo 8—Detail from the Wall Carvings in the Tomb of the High Priest Mereruka

The most sacred of mediums used exclusively at the temples for divination was the image of the Neter itself. There exist some examples from the Late Period today, the bodies of which are hollow to accommodate a mechanical apparatus by which the mouth or eyes could be opened for the Neter to speak or respond to ritual invocations. It is generally believed that the device was worked

through the walls or the floor of the temple by deceptive priests. Similarly, the temple of Sobekh-Heru at Ombos is honeycombed with crypts and once-secret passages. One point of access to the underground maze is an entry in the double wall that divides the sanctuaries of the two Neteru. This is connected to a tunnel that runs under the floor to a room that is, according to egyptologists, believed to be a “priest’s hole,” the source of the oracular voices that spoke through the sacred images.

The public could consult the oracles during the periodic festivals of the temple, when the Neter took leave of its house to journey through the every day environs of the city streets. Reliefs at Karnak show Amun leaving the sacred precinct during the annual festival in his golden barque, borne by priests of the temple. An officiant usually led the procession, which stopped at various stations to allow the oracle of the Neter to speak—if the Neter took notice of a petitioner and caused the barque bearers to halt. When such an occurrence took place, the querent presented a concern to the officiant, who in turn relayed it to the Neter in its mobile sanctuary. The barque would then turn in a certain direction to indicate an answer, and nod assent or denial of the question.

Records from a tomb makers’ village in western Thebes reveal that the Pharaoh Amunhotep I, regarded as a deity of the area several hundred years after his passing, was consulted for divinatory solutions to everyday problems. At several shrines to the dead king, his image was invoked for the answers to personal and legal matters, and at Deir el Medina, the statue visited the village regularly to maintain peace in the community. In one instance, after being questioned on the whereabouts of some stolen goods, the image went directly to the place where they were hidden—a villager’s house. It is reported that the image of Amunhotep “nodded greatly” to questions presented by petitioners, some of whom confidently bartered with the deity for the favor of being heard.

Techniques of Divination

Looking at these vestiges of the divinatory tradition of Egypt, one might well question their authenticity as true spiritual practices. But there are some grounds for viewing them as legitimate metaphysical exercises. *Radiesthesia* is a technique which includes all methods that employ physical divining tools. The

use of dowsing rods to locate mines and water sources is an example of radiesthesia, as is the use of the pendulum to locate missing objects and the planchette of the modern Ouija board to determine answers to questions. The operations of radiesthesia are based upon the supposed use of psychokinetic energy, which is believed to be a subtle force found in nature and human beings. Psychokinetic phenomena are very common, as the use of the pendulum or planchette by first-time experimenters can attest. In radiesthesia, it is the operator's psychokinetic force which causes the divining tool to respond. This force is, in turn, influenced by the unconscious senses of the operator, which are believed to be capable of communicating with any intelligence in nature and deriving information from it under the right circumstances. Objects made of highly conductive materials are the preferred tools of radiesthesia—woods, metals, and stones, as well as objects conforming to specific shapes.

Apport is another phenomenon, associated with the movement of objects from a distance—usually by a nonhuman entity, though some persons have demonstrated this ability. It also works on the premise of psychokinetic energy in action. While it is true that many of these so-called powers prove to be fraudulent upon examination, there are just as many apparently genuine examples, both in ancient and modern times, whose occurrence has no logical explanation.

Those in service to the Neter as bearers of the sacred barques reported in ancient times “feeling the divine weight that caused the Neter's ship to bend.” The movement of the sacred image or barque may have been affected by radiesthesia, as the Egyptians were well versed in the use of electromagnetic substances for construction of sacred images and objects. And we know that such substances were used exclusively in the creation of the Neter's image, regalia, sanctuaries, and the barques used in processions. The accompaniment of chant and rhythmic instruments in the Neter's ceremonies was also essential—a device known to evoke altered states in both the performer and the audience. All of these elements can create an atmosphere in which the manifestation of the Neter is possible in a number of ways, at least to the participants.

Yet the oracles of the Neter in the temple and in procession have been patronizingly evaluated by scholars as typical priestly charlatanism, designed to solicit the obedience of the populace and discourage religious deserters. But these prac-

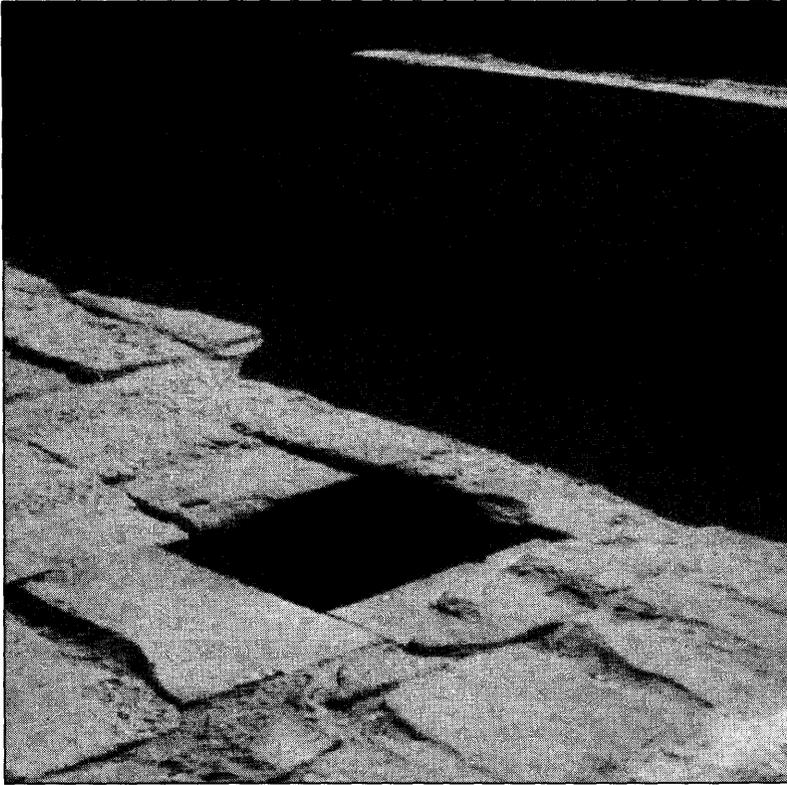


Photo 9—Entry to the Underground Priests' Hole at the Temple at Ombos

tices at least deserve an alternate explanation, taking into account the belief in and the recorded practice of radiesthesia techniques in the priestly repertoire of ancient Egypt. The Neter was believed to influence the carriers of its image and processional attendants by the force of its will, and could exert it on any in close proximity to its great power. The apport or movement of sacred objects in the sanctuary was also an expected conclusion of the Neter's rites in the temple, as its sacred force was always ritually directed to embody the environment in some manner.

Thus, we cannot imply either political motives or miraculous events as being the sole cause in every case. But we can allow that this religious tradition called for communication with the Neter in a number of situations both in its divine

house and its earthly environs, and that any expedient means to encourage this were acceptable.

Besides the temples, certain wells, oases, and mountains were natural places where the power of great Neteru could be invoked. Some of the attendant priests at these places, who appear to have been of a monastic class, attained prominence for their oracular talents. One such place in antiquity was the famous Well of Amun, an oracular shrine located in the Siwa Oasis, close to the Libyan border. Amun's great temple was in Upper Egypt, some five hundred miles from the Siwa shrine. Arrian records in his biography of Alexander the Great that the general was told of his divine mission in Egypt before his conquest of the country when visiting this oracle. There he was declared a true son of Amun, and by his birthright was fated to be king of Egypt.

Those with clairvoyant ability included the Sentit (the name is a female form), with oracular talents that included consulting the entrails of sacrificed animals—a practice that spread to the Roman world in later times. Readings performed by gazing into vessels of water, mirrors, and magic lamps were also obtained by the Sentit. Some magical papyri specify the choice of a youth as the medium for this type of divination, as the legend of the wanderings of Auset tells of the foresight of some children who revealed to her the place where Asar was buried. Plutarch comments on this when he recounts the legend in his report on the Egyptian Mysteries, *De Iside et Osiride*:

For this reason the Egyptians look upon children as endowed with a kind of faculty of divining, and in consequence of this notion are very curious in observing the accidental prattle which they have with one another whilst they are at play, especially if it be in a sacred place, forming omens and presages from it.

Regarding sacrifice, some may recoil at the thought of animal organs being used in Egyptian offering ceremonies and divination rites. But animal products were used in the same manner in ancient times as in the modern world—for nourishment, medicine, and the fabrication of apparel and decoration. The only difference in Egyptian practice is that the vital parts, which are usually discarded today as inedible, were regarded as receptacles of supernatural power and were thus reserved for magical use before disposal. Like most indigenous societies, the

Egyptians believed that no part of the animal was to be wasted and every aspect of its body was intended for constructive human use.

There is also no evidence that the Egyptians butchered animals solely for satisfying the religious service. Only animals designated for eventual human consumption were devoutly presented first to the Neter. And following the presentation of animal offerings at temple or tomb, the provisions were removed for meals of the priests or the family of the deceased, "after the Neter was satisfied." If we compare these practices with the brutal atmosphere of the modern-day slaughterhouse, we might view the ancient Egyptian practice of a sacrificial offering in the reverent environment of the temple as preferable.

Omens are a means of divination in the absence of sacred powers who may be consulted directly; as such, they have only a general rather than a specific meaning. The movements and fortunes of holy animals were often interpreted as omens. Their appearances in the wild or at temple parks, their investitures in the sanctuaries, and the events in their lives were observed closely and interpreted as divine forebodings. The sacred Hap bull of Memphis was the most ancient, believed to possess the power of Asar's renewal. The Bakha bull of Mont at Thebes represented a similar principle, the containment of the Neter's vital power in an earthly vessel. Other living animal divinities included the sacred cats of Bast, the baboons and ibises of Djehuti, the crocodiles of Sobekh, and the rams of Khnum. What qualified these animals to represent the Neter and live in its temple were their colors, markings, and conduct that embodied the ideal qualities of the deity. In this respect, the temple priests were true connoisseurs of perfectly bred animals, but the guidelines dictating the service of animals in the Divine House were established by the degree to which they embodied the traditional attributes of the Neteru.

Dreams were definitely viewed to contain omens, as they were seen to be supernatural means par excellence of communicating with both natural and divine forces. The most celebrated prophetic dream of antiquity is recorded on *the stele of Thutmose IV, a copy of which now stands in its original place between the paws of the great Sphinx of Giza*. According to the record, Thutmose as a young prince sought refuge in the shadow of the ancient monument following a sojourn in the desert. While he slept, Heru em Aakhuti, the

spirit of the Sphinx, spoke to him, forecasting that he would become the future king if he cleared the sand and debris from the temple and restored the mysteries of the god. And though Thutmose was not in the royal succession at the time, he performed the sacred duty and did live to fulfill the prophecy.

Dream books used in the Middle Kingdom were in popular use, though they are believed to have originated from very ancient times. And while they allege to interpret dreams, the books—containing categories of single distinctive elements in dreams such as seeing a crocodile or losing one's sandals—are more truly encyclopedias of omens. Each element is classified as either "good" or "bad," and no attempt is made to integrate various elements occurring in one dream together. But for those lacking immediate recourse to the Neter's oracle or the Maa's spiritual vision, these volumes served to comfort and reassure the dreamer that a predictable, natural order still existed.

As time passed and the fortunes of Egypt shifted with the successive conquests of the Persians, Libyans, Greeks, and Romans, more of the temple tradition became accessible to the public. Prognostication by the casting of lots is said to have been introduced to Egypt in later times by foreign settlers, and it is known that gambling and similar practices were considered sacrilegious by the Egyptians. The gods were believed to communicate readily and without hindrance through natural mediums rather than those contrived by human foibles.

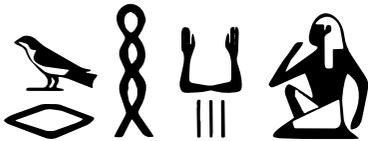


Figure 61—*Ur Hekau*: Magician, master of powerful words and gestures

The Ur Hekau

Heka ("magic") represents the supernatural underpinnings of all Egyptian religion, the premise by which transformative circumstances become possible. The Egyptians understood it as both a force and a law which could be

accessed and mastered in the appropriate environment. Egyptologists of the last century asserted that magic was merely an "attempt" by the Egyptians at applied religion, and that the magical practices alluded to in temple and tomb writings were degenerate forms of the originally pure, archaic religion. But the Egyptians viewed magic as an integral component of religious practice through-

out all dynastic history; it was viewed as a critical ingredient in the pursuit of personal and collective transformation.

The image of the Neter *Heka*, child of Neit and Khnum, is very ancient. In a magical formula of the Pyramid Texts, he takes the form of a serpent in the Duat, in later times he anthropomorphizes as a man holding two serpents in each hand. In his divinatory role he is known as “Lord of Oracles and Revelations,” and “He Who Predicts What Will Happen.”⁸ His mediator on earth is the *Ur Hekau* (the female form is *Ur-t Hekau*), the magician and “master of sacred powers.” The primary function of this priestly role was the transmission of heka from the sanctuary to the other priests, the Royal House, and in the healing temple, to those deprived of it through illness.

Heka is also an impersonal, mystical force that has been translated as “magic,” but the term also applies to the transformative power of individuals, places, and the Neteru—as well as to the words, objects, and gestures which convey this power. Heka is a fundamental catalyst in all living things; it was created in the celestial regions to benefit the human race and engendered Maa (“sight”), Sia (“touch”), Hu (“taste”), and Sedjem (“hearing”)—being indivisible from the physical senses. Heka was believed to have been initially used by the Neteru to preserve cosmic order; thereafter it served as an extension of creation to maintain the primeval, divine pattern. Thus, the heka of an individual is vital, and an essential component in the maintenance and continuance of life.

The distinction between white (life-giving) and black (life-destroying) magic was not simplistically defined, because heka was viewed as a neutral force. Funerary texts abound with examples of decimating natural forces that could block the way to joining with the Neteru, so that as long as magical practices could benefit the living, honor the dead, and fuse the bonds between humankind and the Neteru even closer, they were regarded as necessary and pleasing—even though symbolic combat, mutilation, or sacrifice may have been part of the process. As such, heka can be used to infuse life when the recipient seeks harmony with its surroundings; it can conversely be used to interrupt the flow of life when the receiver has broken natural law.

⁸ Riner, Robert K.: *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization No. 54. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Chicago IL, 1995; p. 215.”

The Egyptian method of effecting transformation in persons or events is dynamically based on the concept of sympathetic magic, a category of spiritual practice that only possesses definition in Western, monotheistic thinking. Nevertheless, the premise of sympathetic magic is rooted in the Hermetic principle of correspondences: like attracts like because both are related in vibration as they emanate from the same cause. And as numerous causes exist in the Hermetic universe, a thorough knowledge of these and their related effects and emanations is essential. Thus, plant and animal essences, gems, metals, colors, sounds, seasons, and hours are interrelated, and constitute the repertoire of the metaphysician who wishes to evoke change in himself, others, or environmental conditions. For the *Ur Hekau*, magic can be effected by manipulating a variety of substances that emanate from a certain cause to produce a desired effect.

Wax, associated with Solar forces (being derived from the sacred bee), was employed in magical enchantment and is reported as such in the Papyrus Turin. A nefarious plot is spoken of in this New Kingdom work, contrived by palace conspirators in the time of Rameses III to kill the king so that other officials could assume power. To further the scheme, a magician named Hui was recruited to perform magic by inflicting harm on wax images of Pharaoh. The figures were discovered, and the conspiracy of black magic was considered serious enough to execute the guilty promptly. In this case, the figures of the king bore his name and were thus associated with his physical body. It is interesting to note that in Egyptian magic the use of a person's name is far more powerful in furthering magical operations than the use of hair, fingernails, or bodily excretions from that person as required in European folk magic. The latter substances were deemed more useful in healing and medical treatment by the Egyptian physician-priest.

The use of magical figures was also believed to influence the course of events. Nectanebo, the last native Egyptian Pharaoh of Egypt, was regarded as a magician-king and a clairvoyant. A Greek text written by a person known to scholars as Pseudo-Callisthenes tells of the king constructing wax models of his soldiers, sailors, ships, and chariots, and thereby vanquishing his enemies in miniature form. For some years afterward Nectanebo ruled peacefully, but the second Persian conquest followed, thus consigning Egypt to foreign rule ever after.

Objects could be infused with heka, to evoke transformation continuously, or solely for a specific purpose or time of need. For the ancient Egyptian, many so-called inanimate objects possessed intelligence—being fetishes in the true sense of the term—in that they were embodied with a spirit that continuously accumulated and transmitted its own heka. An example of which were the nome standards that were always present at the temple. Some were believed to have originated in great antiquity, while others were “reincarnations” of the power of the region.

The Ur Hekau undoubtedly manufactured the repertoire of magical amulets, objects charged with heka to serve specific purposes. Such items were produced in great quantity at the temples and distributed as souvenirs—though nonetheless sacred—of a pilgrimage by the faithful to the divine house. These may have been infused in special ceremonies with the heka of the temple’s Neter or a divinity related to its family. An example of such amulets are the miniature cat figures from the Temple of Bastet worn as jewelry, and the funerary scarab placed over the heart of the deceased to ensure transformation.

Images of the Neteru who were closely associated with *haute magie* also possessed amuletic power—figures of Djehuti could make the spoken word effective to the gods, while those of Selqit could banish physical or psychic poisons. Talismans, natural objects associated with supernatural forces by virtue of their physical characteristics, could be natural items such as gems, metals, and Nile water. Even soil from the sacred precincts possess heka, as revealed by the worn stones, walls, wells, and courtyards of the temples that we see today, diminished by the hands of pilgrims taking dust on their journeys home through the ages. Objects crafted by the human hand, such as written spells on papyrus and linen, were also viewed as talismanic because they contain the signs and images of the Neteru, considered sacred in themselves. All these apotropaic devices were believed to possess heka which could be transmitted to the owner. They could purify, influence special conditions, or deflect adversarial forces. Talismans could transmit their power by being worn, burnt, or placed in strategic locations. The magical Papyrus Harris describes the manufacture of images of Hapi in the time of Rameses III which were made of precious stone and metal. These were inscribed with spells invoking a plentiful inundation, and were cast into the Nile as offerings to the Neter.

Auset was consistently regarded in ancient Egypt as the highest ideal of magical practice. Inscribed on the temple walls at Edfu, The Legend of the Winged Disk tells how she created the incantations which banished the serpent Anrutet in the great battle between Heru and Set. Henceforth she was named by Djehuti "the priestess Nebt Heka," and a female at the Edfu temple continued to assume that role in its annual festival honoring the archaic struggle between light and dark forces and the emergence of Heru as the progenitor of the Royal House. This priestess served as mistress of spells in temple ritual and represented Auset, mother of Heru, in the ceremonial services of Pharaoh's coronation.

The *Uab Sekhmet* was the exorcist, one who was called upon to remove or restore heka to a person or place. As the name implies, this priest was a "purifier of Sekhmet," who performed more on a level of psychic than physical healing (although illness was not strictly segregated in such categories in ancient times). The exorcist was skilled in working with spiritual influences both of this world and the shadow worlds, and could dispel unwelcome influences and return lost or stolen personal power.

Sorcery was definitely the realm of Set, as revealed by the Papyrus London-Leiden. In a spell to inflict catalepsy, the terrible names of "He Who Destroys All and is Unconquered" are recited over the head of an ass, a creature who embodied Set and who was almost universally associated in later times with black magic. Necromancy, or the calling up of dead spirits, was also known and specific instructions were given on dealing with the different classes of deceased persons. Special formulas are detailed for evoking the spirits of the living, the drowned, the murdered, and thieves. These levels of magic were certainly known to the temple clergy, though the practices themselves appear to have been endemic to secular persons or degenerated priests. It was the *Uab Sekhmet* who was usually called upon to reverse the consequences of their ill-intended actions.

The belief in restless spirits of the dead and malefic forces by surrounding nations lent to Egypt a reputation for dealing quite effectively with such powers. In these matters, the Neter Khons plays a prominent role, the divinity of the Lunar rhythm and, by analogy, the principle behind the light and dark forces that wax and wane in psychic life. Inscriptions on a black sandstone stele of the New Kingdom found near Benent, the temple of Khons at Karnak, tell such a story.

It concerns the power of Khons dwelling within an image at the temple, which could dispel the influences of an evil spirit that had possessed the young princess Bentreshy in the distant land of *Bekhten* (modern Iraq). The princess was the sister of Raneferu, one of the wives of Rameses II. The girl's brother, the prince of Bekhten, sent an appeal to Egypt for the magical assistance of Pharaoh and his priests in delivering her from the illness. The oracle of Khons was approached on the matter, and the Neter consented to help after the oracular consultation.

The story relates how the priests of the temple undertook a journey to the distant kingdom in the company of a small statue in which the great statue of Neter at the temple had "bestowed a fourfold portion of his power and spirit." Accompanying the religious convoy was a *Rekh Khet* ("knower of things"), a priest of magic who was well versed in the use of magical instruments and an associate of the Per Ankh at Karnak. After confronting the demon, the image of the Neter made peace with it and a great shrine to Khons was established in Bekhten afterward.

As the stele of Bekhten discloses, the statue of Khons which traveled to Bekhten received the power and spirit of the Neter by the transference of its Sa from the great image residing at Karnak to the smaller image. How this was achieved has been speculated upon, but we know that the Egyptians believed that emanations radiated by the Neter's presence were a natural outcome of magical ceremony, and that at least two methods were employed to effect a transference of this energy. Either the portable statue was brought near the temple image and it received Sa by direct contact with the sacred image of the deity, or the magician-priest first received the Sa from the image and then transmitted it to a lesser one by embraces and passes through the hands.

A natural outcome of this mysterious process was that the magician-priest acquired ancillary knowledge on the use of amuletic and talismanic magic. In the Bekhten story, the image of the Neter was charged with the heka of Khons as were the instruments used by the magician-priest—supernatural agents required to effect a reversal of the dangerous psychic condition afflicting the princess. The stele also mentions that the *Rekh Khet* who journeyed to cure her illness was "a man who was deeply instructed in his heart and possessed of skilled fingers," a reference not only to his wisdom but to the sacred gestures which accompanied

the ancient use of images, sceptres and wands. The Dynasty 30 Pharaoh Nectanebo was also known to have used an ebony rod by which he worked magic, and the legendary rod of Moses may have been such a divining tool, as the Biblical story relates that he struck a rock in the wilderness from which water poured forth.

In addition to using ceremonial implements, the Egyptians adopted a strict code of physical deportment in temple ceremonies, as numerous inscriptions illustrate. These were not designed to impose a rigid physical conformity as some might assume; rather, it was known that certain postures allowed the flow of heka from the Neter through the ceremonialist to occur more efficiently, without inflicting harm or impediment as it was transmitted to the object or recipient.



Figure 62—*Senu*: Physician-priest

The Senu

Herodotus remarked that the Egyptians were the healthiest people in the ancient world, and that they regarded diet as the fundamental means of ensuring

health and long life. He also mentions that one of the common health regimens practiced in the Nile Valley was a three-day period of fasting and purging each month. In addition, a wide variety of medical specialists delivered a highly sophisticated array of services to the people for physical, mental, and psychic well-being.

The healing art was believed by the Egyptians to have descended from very ancient times. The Dynasty I Pharaoh Djer (Athothis) was regarded as an accomplished physician and healer, but Imhotep of Dynasty 3 attained by his widespread spiritual reputation the level of a divine healer by the Middle Kingdom. Even earlier, Egypt's medical system was believed to have been laid down in the divinely recorded Hermetic books. Clement of Alexandria describes the medical knowledge of Egypt with this view, citing Book 37 as recording Anatomy; Book 38, Diseases; Book 39, Surgery; Book 40, Remedies; Book 41, Diseases of the Eye; and Book 42, Diseases of Women. In 1872, the German egyptologist Georg Ebers came into possession of a papyrus that is believed to be Book 40, a document 68 feet in length, containing 811 prescriptions written in hieratic.

The Papyrus Ebers is a scribe's copy written in Dynasty 18, believed at that time to be a record of medicine originally written in Dynasty 1. And while it combines medicinal recipes for diseases, commonplace complaints (such as baldness and impotence), cosmetics, and domestic hints, it most importantly reveals a highly sophisticated knowledge of natural medicine. The *materia medica* of the Papyrus Ebers includes vegetable and fruit extracts, herbs, minerals, animal and human byproducts. Of particular interest are plant substances known for their efficacy in modern times: castor oil, aloe juice, antimony, calamine, cucumber, peppermint, poppy, flax, and saffron.

The Papyrus Edwin Smith—a Middle Kingdom document now in the possession of the New York Academy of Medicine—presents significant evidence of a highly developed repertoire of treatment for the Egyptian surgeon. The work, believed by Henry Breasted to be a copy of a treatise originally authored by Imhotep—outlines the procedures for treating wounds to the head, thorax, and fractures, along with emergency surgery. Of particular interest in this work is the ancient categorization of vessels, which—although modern medical experts say it is lacking in the knowledge of the body's circulation—nevertheless endowed the physician-priest with deft diagnostic skills. Twelve major "heart vessels" are articulated, along with subsidiary vessels in the nose, either temple, the back of the head, collarbone, intestines, and each of the limbs. The vessels in this system are said to convey not only blood, but air, water, and mucus. A remarkable similarity to the vessels of *ch'i* in oriental acupuncture cannot be overlooked.

It appears that the physician-priest attained status after fulfilling basic studies as Kher Heb, since the reservoir of traditional medical knowledge was recorded and stored in the archives of the Per Ankh. Here was taught the renowned knowledge of the Egyptians in anatomy, herbal pharmacology, medical diagnostics, and metaphysics to treat illness of both body and mind. As modern holistic medicine proposes, the ancients saw no separation between spirit and matter, and in the practice of medical therapy treated both equally. Thus, the Senu priest served as a kind of psychotherapist as well as doctor and pharmacist of the body.⁹

9 Gordon, Andrew H: "Origins of Ancient Egyptian Medicine, Part 1: Some Egyptological Evidence," *KMT* —A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt, Vol. I: No. 2, Summer 1990

And although dentists and veterinarians possessed their own distinct disciplines, every Senu had enough fundamental knowledge to render treatment in those areas if necessary.

A detailed knowledge of the spiritual origin of illness constituted much of the physician-priest's approach to treatment. Sekhmet rules pestilences and fevers, Taurt the complications of childbirth, Heru the diseases of the eye, Auset the poison of serpents and magical afflictions—each Neter possesses the heka to inflict as well as dispel the complaint. Similarly, herbs, trees, and plants were also categorized by their affinity to particular Neteru and their natural remedies were prescribed for the diseases they were believed to embody. The treatments of the particular illness of the Neteru were not only taught at their respective temples, but their cures were believed to be most effectively generated at the sacred precincts where their powers were contained. Water, soil, and amulets from these temples were also considered potent against the occurrence of the illnesses associated with their patron Neteru.

Since most people went to the temples for medical consultation, we may surmise that following study, internship was served at the Per Ankh by the physician-priest in order to attain practical experience. Medical specialization was, however, the inevitable outcome of a system that encouraged individual talent. Specialists emerged from the Divine House to establish individual practices in the major cities along with traveling consultation to prominent patients or unusual cases. The most renowned, the priests of Sekhmet, attained their station by virtue of mastering a number of specialties and serving at the Neter's temple in the Delta, which by all accounts was a bustling center of medical training and treatment. One further piece of evidence for this relationship lies in the fact that the deified physician Imhotep was referred to as the "son of Sekhmet" in temple inscriptions.

Numerous temples accommodated the sick with specially constructed sanatoria, which can be seen today at Dendera and Philae. Here, consultation between the temple specialists and visitors took place. The physician-priest often conducted a medical diagnosis first with the aid of dream interpretation on the

patient. In the ancient world, dreams were regarded as vehicles by which divine powers communicate with human life and received strict attention in times of distress or illness.

Water and hydrotherapy were also regarded as highly potent medical treatments. The association of this element with the primeval waters of Nun, the inexhaustible source of all life, and Nut, the celestial river at which all souls sought refreshment, elevated water as the ultimate source of physical regeneration. Healing baths and libations were often delivered by pouring water over sacred stones or statues, the latter often rendered in the fiery substance of basalt and in the image of sacred beings or divine ancestors who brought cures to the sick. Examples of these have been found at Dendera and at Ombos, but now reside in European museums.

Prior to delivering a remedy, the physician-priest identified with the Neteru in a magical process of evoking the divine powers and absorbing them to drive away infliction. In most instances, protection was invoked from the highest sources of therapeutic law: Auset and Ra. And as the Papyrus Ebers divulges, the priestess often identified the illness as her own when appealing to the Neteru, also declaring to them that she would be cured by their words of power and the learned knowledge of physicians contained within the sacred writings.

The Senu then consulted the Neter who governed the particular illness and after following the outlined procedures for treatment and medication, included extensive prayers and invocations to the deity for a successful cure. Both priestess and patient participated in this process:

May Auset heal me even as she healed Heru of all the pains that Set inflicted on him . . . Oh Auset, great enchantress: heal me, deliver me from all evil, bad, typhonic things, from demoniacal and deadly diseases and pollutions of all sorts that rush upon me, as you did deliver and release your son Heru!

The numbers four and seven are closely associated with healing practice in ancient Egypt. Remedies were given in these quantities or over a period of four or seven days; the accompanying spells and invocations were also recited four or

seven times to produce the ideal curative effect. Pythagorean philosophy associates the number four with the physical body and the concrete world; the number seven and its multiples represents the cycle of organic growth and completion. These ancient ideas carried over into the Middle Ages, and were expressed in the “critical days” of illness, the fourth day being the turning point of the sickness and the seventh day being the stage of its reversal.

In addition to numbers, the influence of the heavenly bodies were equally important when rendering treatment. Medicinal plants were gathered during the most potent times, when it was believed their sap or “spirit” arose from the earth in response to the catalytic power of celestial asterisms passing overhead. Drugs were given at the most auspicious times, and curative spells were recited when cosmic conditions favored their success. And it was known in ancient times—just as it is recognized today—that bleeding and psychic instability increased during certain stages of the Lunar cycle.

Heru the Elder and the crocodile image of Sobekh were associated in ancient times with healing; their Graeco-Roman temple at Ombos was the site of oracles and healing pilgrimages for several hundred years. The Papyrus Ebers reveals that crocodile byproducts were used extensively in prescriptions, and although the animal was hardly favored by the Egyptians, its healing properties were largely appreciated. Chapels lining the rear of the Ombos temple contain inscriptions believed to depict medical and surgical implements, and one chapel—where the oracle of the “Hearing Ear” is located—received petitions from pilgrims seeking cures. Inscriptions of ears in the chapel represent the divine ears of the Neter which listened to prayers, along with inscriptions of sacred eyes signifying health and wholeness that was granted to petitioners.

Upon the successful completion of a medical treatment, offerings were made to the divinity in gratitude for the cure. Physicians were allowed to accept gratuitous sums of money from their patients, but the Neteru were specially honored for granting relief. Carved and molded representations of ears, hands, eyes, and other body members cured of affliction were offered at the temples, containing inscriptions of thanks to the Neteru as memorials of their intercession in the illness.



Figure 63—Hem Ka: Priest of the Ka, overseer of the tomb

The Hem Ka

While the Setem dedicated the offerings for the Ka at the entombment, the Hem Ka, (“priest of the Ka”) was responsible for the periodic offerings presented at the tomb. This duty and the provision of continuous service was a serious and

necessary consideration, usually carried out with support provided by endowments from the deceased and her family. The priestly disciplines of scribal scholarship, purification, magic, divination, and healing all coalesce in the role of the Hem Ka. His specific task was to ensure the peace of the deceased—and the family—through the performance of continuous prayer and offering ceremonies. Physical nourishment at the tomb is believed by metaphysicians to form the ectoplasmic basis for materializations of the Ka, or “ghost.”¹⁰ In this manner, the Egyptians expected the Ka to return after its flight through the shadow worlds to the tomb seeking this nourishment, so that it could preserve its bonds with the physical world and manifest when summoned.

The Hem Ka was also required to know the spells which magically brought sustenance to the deceased, an act as important as receiving the physical offerings. The recitation of formulae for ensuring all manner of food and drink had to be executed at the proper times and in the appropriate manner to ensure the continuance of the name and the Ka. An example of the necessity believed by the Egyptians for the services of the Hem Ka is found in a widely circulated tale of a priest haunted by a restless spirit in ancient times. It is recorded on a number of ostraca—limestone flakes used for scribal practice—from the Ramesside period.

Khonsemhab, a high priest of Amun, was performing a religious ceremony one evening in the Theban necropolis—a ritual described as an invocation to the Neteru of the sky and earth; the southern, northern, western and eastern regions; and the spirits of the Duat. The ritual described is itself a variation from what is generally known of the regular religious services performed in the

¹⁰ Ectoplasm: in the metaphysics of psychic phenomena, a physical residue left by immaterial spirits.

cemetery after the funeral—these were usually confined to recitations of prayers for the dead accompanied by offerings of water, food, clothing, and grave goods at the tomb. Perhaps Khonsemhab was, in addition to being a priest at the Karnak temple, also a Hem Ka for a certain family, though he may also have been a Rekh Khet—since the Theban temples were renowned for such masters and the ceremony he performs in the narrative is undoubtedly magical in nature. Nevertheless, following Khonsemhab's invocations a spirit appears to him named Nebusemekh. The priest asks what the ghost desires, and he replies, weeping:

I will remain here without eating or drinking, without growing old or becoming young. I will not see sunlight nor will I breathe the northern winds, darkness is before my eyes each day.

The ghost reveals that he passed away after serving as a member of the army of the Dynasty 11 Pharaoh Nebhepet Ra Mentuhotep. He was laid to rest in a fine tomb that eventually collapsed, which caused the debris to blow away and leave no trace of the monument. Thus, the spirit was left to wander the necropolis without a home or offerings for ages.

The high priest, recognizing that the deceased was now consigned for eternity without the peace of a tomb, had pity on the homeless spirit and offered to place in his service five men and five maidservants, who would pour daily libations and make offerings of wheat in his name. But the spirit said, "Of what use are these things? A tree grows and sprouts foliage, but stone will never proceed to age."

After considering this wisdom—that only stone can be exempt from the vicissitudes of life and withstand the ages—the priest sends three workmen from the Theban necropolis to find a stone monument near Mentuhotep's great funerary temple that will house the ghost for all time. The men later return to the great temple at Karnak—where Khonsemhab is once again officiating at a religious service—and announce, "We have discovered an excellent place to make the name of that spirit endure." Together they rejoice, in the knowledge that a noble ancestor will at last be at peace through eternity.

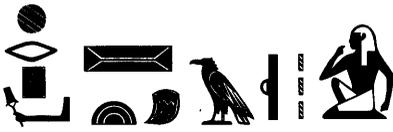


Figure 64—*Kherp Shetat*: Master of Secrets

The Master of Secrets

Though Egyptian tombs record that a number of illustrious individuals rose up through the ranks of temple service as priests, others enter the historical annals as individuals whose skills

exceeded both their professional training and rank in the House of Life. Their accomplishments were sometimes cited as extraordinary abilities or highly prescient talents that equalled that of divine beings.

One person who stands out as such was Imhotep, whose name means “he comes in peace.”¹¹ As vizier, or prime minister to the Dynasty 3 Pharaoh Djoser, he was credited by the Egyptians as a master of—among other things—medicine, magic, architecture, astronomy, and sacred literature. Of the latter, he was also acclaimed as a poet, and a number of didactic compositions were ascribed to him in later periods though none have survived.

Imhotep is acknowledged as the designer of the temple complex at Saqqara that houses the Step Pyramid and the jubilee courts of Djoser, and by virtue of the fact that he alone is cited in Old Kingdom inscriptions as architect of a monument singles him out particularly. Throughout Egyptian history, the record is practically nonexistent of other names so honored for succeeding generations, with the exception of one more individual—Amunhotep Son of Hapu—a Dynasty 18 overseer of royal works for the Pharaoh Amunhotep III. With his guidance, the king instituted a vast building agenda that included a number of temples in Nubia, at Karnak and Luxor, and on the west bank of Thebes, a royal palace, an artificial lake, and the famous Colossi of Memnon.

An inscription at the Ptolemaic temple of Heru at Edfu attributes its archaic origins to Imhotep. On the temple’s western surrounding wall, he is depicted in the leopard skin of the high priest and seer, reciting the ancient myth of Set’s defeat by Heru. Here, he is also named the “son of Ptah” and the creator of the original sanctuary of Heru on that sacred ground. Votive representations of

11 Hurry, J. B.: *Imhotep, The Egyptian God of Medicine*, Appendix B, “The Name Imhotep and Its Variants.” Ares Publishers, Inc.: Chicago IL, 1987.

Imhotep have been found from a wide range of historical periods. They are rendered in stone, bronze, or clay, and all universally depict him as an ordinary scribe, seated with an open scroll on his lap. He wears the shaven head of the priest and is without ornament. In a few instances, he carries the Uas sceptre of Ptah and the ankh.

In modern times Imhotep is believed to have been the guiding force behind the critical architectural transformation from mud brick to monumental building rendered wholly in stone. It is by this achievement alone that some historians believe Egyptian civilization reached its artistic and technical peak. But his role was evidently not confined to public works in service to the king, and his legendary intellectual genius was said to have even surpassed the achievements of his day. In a Dynasty 11 rendition of the Song of the Harper, the musician refers to Imhotep and another ancient sage as prototypes of wisdom:

I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardjedef, which, because they wrote them, are treasured beyond everything.

In the centuries following his life, the talents of Imhotep were increasingly celebrated by members of the scribal profession, physicians, and the priesthood. He came to represent the sagacity of Old Kingdom wisdom, and became the spiritual patron of higher learning. Eventually, even his mother Kherduankh and wife Renpetnefert were revered as demigoddesses by their relationships to him.

Imhotep finally became associated with the supreme Neter of Memphis, Ptah, as both his intermediary and his son, and in the New Kingdom, as the divine son of Ptah and Sekhmet, Nefertum. His spiritual association with the Memphite Triad and allusions to his tomb located near the Djoser complex culminated in a widespread following that honored events in his life annually with pilgrimages to Memphis by the sick and childless. His apotheosis also brought spiritual powers that came to be regarded in the Late and Graeco-Roman periods as miraculous. As god of medicine and successful cures throughout the Hellenistic world, he was called upon in temples and domestic shrines to abate diseases and misfortune of every kind.

The oldest temple of Imhotep no longer stands, though it was recorded in antiquity as both a shrine and school of medicine. Called the Asklepeion, its location at the Memphis necropolis is believed to have been adjacent to the

Serapeum, dedicated to the Graeco-Roman deity Serapis—itsself yielding evidence of even more ancient offering altars to Imhotep. The *Hermetica* also describes the temple of the divine healer Asclepius to be in the Memphite necropolis, enshrining the tomb of the deified Imhotep. Most scholars believe that the two legendary figures were viewed by the Greeks as one and the same person.¹² However, the tomb has never been categorically identified, though a mastaba outside the pyramid complex of Senusert I at Lisht contains his name, along with a mastaba northeast of Djoser's complex, which shares the exact orientation of the Step Pyramid.

Egyptian beliefs in later times are reflected in Ptolemaic buildings featuring Imhotep's image located along the length of the Nile, far south of Memphis. In the Theban domain at Deir el Bahri, a sanatorium on the second terrace of Hatchepsut's famed mortuary temple was built by Ptolemy IX in honor of both Imhotep and Amunhotep Son of Hapu. It operated as a healing center well into the Second Century of our era. And at the southern border of Egypt at Philae, a small temple dedicated exclusively to Imhotep as healer is located along the colonnade to the great Temple of Auset.

The association of Imhotep with Amunhotep Son of Hapu is as intriguing as it is ubiquitous among the ruins of Egypt. At Karnak, the Temple of Ptah dating from the Roman Period in the northern part of the sacred precinct honors both sages. Two facing doorposts that lead into the sanctuary acknowledge the deified Imhotep as a merciful benefactor, and in one section, a curious reference to him and the centuries-younger Amunhotep is made as spiritual counterparts:

The learned ones praise god for you. Foremost among them your brother, who loves you, who you love: Amunhotep, son of Hapu. He abides with you, he parts not from you; your bodies form a single one, your Ba's receive the things you love.

These statements more than forward the impression that Imhotep and Amunhotep Son of Hapu were regarded as one and the same person by the Egyptians. Recalling that the Ba refers to only the astral form, the inscription presents a provocative notion. Each individual was famed as architect, healer, and

¹² Fowden, Garth: *The Egyptian Hermes*. Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ, 1986; p. 40.

magician of divine status. Each appeared at the beginning of an epoch that was ushered in by a distinguished king who patronized the construction of a voluminous amount of inventive monuments. Thus, though they were separated by a period of more than 2,000 years, the postulation that the two were regarded as one and the same spirit—though possessing different astral forms by virtue of the separate sojourns spent in earthly life—is persuasive. Given the evidence of the Karnak statement and the consistent portrayal of the two together in other sacred places, they equally shared the devotion of pilgrims, priests, and Pharaohs—dispensing their blessings to petitioners of all rank. It is perhaps a unique affirmation of the Egyptian belief in reincarnation.

Another question is posed by this scenario—could the ancient sage Imhotep have acquired the means to choose his role in future incarnations through mastery of the Sacred Science? Some egyptologists admit that the high esteem given him by the Egyptians was due to more than the accumulated talents of an individual in the ancient arts and sciences. Rather, as the nineteenth-century French egyptologist Gaston Maspero said, it was “in virtue of his powers as a magician.”¹³

As for Amunhotep Son of Hapu, his mastery of the magical tradition is well documented. The most formidable and lengthy curse that warns trespassers not to violate the sacred place of the deceased is found at his Theban tomb,¹⁴ evidence that the architect-scholar must have also been a skilled Rekh Khet priest.

Imhotep’s long-lived prominence as a demigod points to one aspect of Egyptian tradition that all of its magic, science, and learning were undoubtedly meant to consummate. The transmission of one’s wisdom and benevolence in the form of physical healing to following generations was the ultimate achievement of the ancient master, rather than an unlimited power over nature. Here, the individual moved beyond the highest social and political traditions of his time and became qualified as a truly elite member of the earthly temple, a “Master of Secrets.”

13 Hurry, J. B.: *Imhotep, The Egyptian God of Medicine*. Ares Publishers, Inc.: Chicago IL, 1987; p. 63.

14 For a complete translation of the inscription, see Murray, Margaret A.: *The Splendor That Was Egypt*. Praeger Books: New York NY, 1964; p. 140.

The solution to the great mystery of this office has been sought for centuries. From Graeco-Roman times, consistent references to an initiatory tradition that enabled the aspirant to acquire such powers and pass them on to posterity had been alluded to, but never fully disclosed. Yet the secrets revealing this enigma may still be possible to discern, using the very skills that Imhotep was alleged to have taught—the discipline combining art, magic, science, and altruism—Sacred Science.

Practicum

TEMPLE RITUAL

We often envision the scope of Egyptian ceremonies to be elaborate celebrations of cosmic events, royal episodes, or mystic rites observed in the secluded shadows of sacred precincts. But for all the categories and themes present in the thousands of daily and cyclic ceremonies that were possible in ancient times, one service remained essentially unchanged and consistent within every temple and tomb.

The formula of *Irt Hotep Di Nesu* (“Performing the Royal Offering”) is found from the Old Kingdom up to the Roman period, and was conducted before the altar at the temple shrine, the Ka statue in the tomb, and even stelae dedicated to the deceased in the home or garden. As is typical of Egyptian ritual, the officiant assumes the role of a god, in this case Heru, son of Asar, who initially offered sustenance to his deceased father in order to restore his senses in the inner life. Following this theme, the ritual was always performed in the name of the king, who was descendant and representative of Heru; hence, the title “Royal Offering.” As such, the rite was deemed opulent and powerful, the best that could be offered in a sacred environment. In the funerary setting, the Hem Ka presented the offering.

The Irt Hotep Di Nesu Formula

The formula may be recited in translation, though the ancient words are considered most potent. The offerings themselves must be fresh, and though a modest supply of bread, beer, and meat was presented, it was believed to magically increase with the recitation of the spell.

Most importantly, the vocalization of this rite determines its efficacy, as denoted by the opening words, “Send forth thy voice . . .” In addition, the posture of invocation is assumed, with the right hand outstretched toward the recipient. The *Irt Hotep Di Nesu* was also employed as a spell to appease the restless

spirits of the necropolis, disturbed by those who might be entering their place of rest. In modern times, it may also be so used, especially when entering the ancient cemeteries.

*Hotep di nesu, Asar nub djedu,
 Neter ay-a nub Abedju,
 Di-f pert hru em-t henket
 Kau apdu she-s menhet
 Het nebt nefert waybet
 Ankhet meter im,
 En ka en imakhy [name] maakheru.
 Paet em ast segera em neter ta Sekhet Iaru.*

This boon is granted in the name of Asar, Lord of Busiris,
 Neter of Greatness, sovereign in Abedju.
 Send forth thy voice to grant refreshment:
 She is given a thousand of bread, she is given a thousand of beer,
 A thousand of oxen and fowl, fine ointment and clothing.
 She is given all things good and pure, all things on which the Neteru live.
 These are granted in the name of the revered [name] of this place,
 The Justified.
 She exists in the region of silence, the sacred land, Sekhet Iaru.



Chapter Seven
INITIATION

Initiation does not reside in any text whatsoever, but in the cultivation of intelligence of the heart. Then there is no longer anything occult or secret, because the intention of the enlightened, the prophets, and the “messengers from above” is never to conceal—quite the contrary.

R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, *Esotericism & Symbol*

What many believe is lacking in modern spirituality is the passion, devotion, and reflection evoked by the ancient religions, which appear on every level to have involved its participants in a manner that bound body, mind, and soul to their mythic themes. The environment of the Egyptian temple supported this, enfolding its constituents in abundant celebrations accompanied by time-honored liturgy, music, and ritual. Throughout one’s life, and for every profession or station represented in the ancient world, a model of behavior and experience was expressed in the legends of the Neteru and their powers in the sanctuary and nature. In addition to this, the ancient Egyptian belonged to a society that viewed its origins as sacred and its existence rooted in the surrounding natural phenomena. Today, we can only imagine what life would be like if every aspect of it—from the design of our clothing and buildings to the calendar of our work, leisure, and spiritual endeavors—reflected such a sublime spiritual vision of order and harmony.

Egypt did not have the monopoly on this spiritual vision, but the scale, depth, and duration of her religious tradition was acclaimed even in ancient times. According to the traveler-historian Diodorus Siculus, Orpheus was initiated into the Osirian rites of Egypt and brought them to Greece.¹ Such was the high regard for Egypt's religious institutions that, according to Plutarch and Tacitus, Ptolemy Soter—founder of the Greek dynasty that ruled Egypt at the very end of her existence as an empire—consulted the Egyptian priest Manetho to organize a unifying religious mandate for the region by Hellenizing the cults of Asar and Auset.² By doing so, the Greeks brought rationalism to the religious traditions they discovered in Egypt, while the Romans who followed brought a homogenization of all the oriental doctrines with which they came into close contact. By the Graeco-Roman period, the temple traditions of Egypt had penetrated nearly every culture within the boundaries of the civilized world, but with them came a spiritual program amalgamated from the diverse themes of the Eleusinian, Mithraic, and Dionysian religions they came into contact with, and which included one of the most sublime aspects of the Egyptian esoteric tradition—the mysteries.

Originally, the rites and ceremonies of Egyptian initiation were under the purview of the priesthood, and were prefaced by a lengthy study and religious service in the temple. Special rites of purification and dedication preceded entry into the Divine House, followed by service at the Per Neter for a designated period of time before offices of status were attained. A gradation of spiritual development was emphasized as one progressed in age, knowledge, and experience. Those accomplished in the temple who retired from active service acquired the title *Atf Neter*, “father of the god,” and were regarded as pontiffs of their tradition. They may have continued to live at the Divine House or traveled and taught at other religious centers, and appear to have been regarded as scholars and the ultimate authorities on a temple's history and customs. The title *Atf Neter* was also given to the highest religious counselor to the Royal House, who served as spiritual mentor or “father” to the king.

1 Murphy, Edwin: *The Antiquities of Egypt: A Translation with Notes of Book I of the Library of History of Diodorus Siculus*. Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick NJ, 1990; p. 29.

2 Turcan, Robert: *The Cults of the Roman Empire*. Blackwell Publishers, Ltd.: London, 1996; p. 78.

For those outside the priesthood, spiritual instruction was widely accessed through the festivals and celebrations of the temple, where the themes of birth, royal ascension, death, and renewal were portrayed in sacred drama within the precinct of the holy ground. And in celebrations honoring the special powers of the gods, great numbers of devotees freely traveled to the temple centers in order to participate in rites and receive the blessings that emanated from the sacred ceremonies.³

Lacking the infrastructure of Egypt's ancient temple tradition, the Graeco-Roman mysteries that were practiced at provisional sites throughout the scattered colonies of the Mediterranean were a shadow of their predecessor, yet the attraction was powerful. Elements that comprised the mystic religions of the period were quite different from Egypt's ancient doctrine, and in temples of the Egyptian gods on foreign soil, direct access to the sacred dramas and rites was rare. In Rome, for instance, where Egyptian religion was considered a corrupting vestige of Hellenistic culture, much of the common ritual of the temple went underground to preserve it from the persistent condemnations of the political elite, who viewed the enigmatic philosophy of the Nile sages as dissident to Roman authority. At the same time, priestly duties were assumed by appointed lay persons in the Roman tradition of the cult flamens, who presided over public ceremonies rather than summoning the gods through private encounters in the manner of their Egyptian counterparts. Testing of the candidate's discretion was a foremost consideration, followed by a baptism, the recitation of oaths, and communal meals on entering the cult. Under such circumstances, rites of initiation were mere pledges of secrecy and support of the foreign gods, while their mysteries were celebrated in the most obvious, diluted terms.

As we have seen, many of the Egyptian temples were populated by a hierarchy that evolved from the hereditary passage of office, while others were based on a system of intellectual advancement and seniority in the temple tradition. In either case, the assumption of title and temple responsibilities was always conferred by religious ritual, and the record on that is scant save for those mostly associated with kingship. Certain religious ceremonies, called *shetat* ("mysteries," or "secret

3 Morenz, Siegfried: *Egyptian Religion*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca NY, 1973; p. 90.

rites") were practiced by select members of the temple, engaging ritual drama, elaborate ceremony, and rites employing spells of protection and transformation on the soul entering the region of the Neteru. Of these, the ritual dramas inscribed in the sarcophagus chamber of the Osireion at Abydos, the Edfu mystery play of Heru, and the chambers of the Unas pyramid at Saqqara are recognized as examples of the genre.⁴ Areas in the great temple of Amun at Karnak and the Luxor temple also reveal details of reserved ceremonies concerning the initiation of kings in the holy precinct where members of the Royal House and their religious intimates held intercourse with the gods.

In the nineteenth century, the egyptologist J. Gardner Wilkinson reiterated a notion on these matters expressed by the ancients and recognized by most modern scholars, yet which remains curiously bereft of documentation:

It was the great privilege of the priests to be initiated into the mysteries; though they were not all admitted indiscriminately to that honor; and "the Egyptians neither entrusted them to every one, nor degraded the secrets of divine matters by disclosing them to the profane; reserving them for the heir-apparent of the throne, and for such priests as excelled in virtue and wisdom." The mysteries were also distinguished into the greater and the less—the matter preparatory to a fuller revelation of their secrets.⁵

By this it becomes apparent that the Egyptian program of initiation differed considerably from the beliefs of later times. Even in the most spiritual of settings, grades of spiritual progress in the Graeco-Roman world were gauged by one's willingness to accept the salvation offered by a distant, foreign power rather than assume that power oneself. Following this, adeptship in the god's mysteries was achieved through a process of physical and mental purification from forces in the outside world, often personified as the antagonistic, competing gods of subordinate cultures.

⁴ Fairman, H.W.: *The Triumph of Horus*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles CA, 1974; pp. 7-8.

⁵ Wilkinson, Sir J. Gardner: *The Ancient Egyptians: Their Life and Customs, Vol. I*. Crescent Books: New York, 1988; p. 321.

Egyptian initiation is fundamentally distinct, if we understand the term as an allusion to entry into a “higher” life that is in concert with divine life. As the sacred literature demonstrates, it is characterized as a series of psychic transformations—a process of metamorphosis—that awakens latent spiritual powers already resident within the individual. In temple and tomb inscriptions, these transformations are often symbolized as the assumption of animal and divine images by the initiate, images which metaphorically represent stages of reanimation achieved by the latent functions of the body, mind, and soul.

The Physics of Transformation

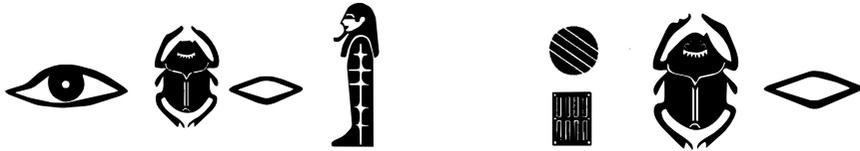
The divinization of the body is a theme in Egypt’s esoteric tradition that constitutes the focus of its sacred art, physical science, and religious practice. The goal is the transformation of one’s physical functions into eternal, supracorporeal powers. This transformation was believed to result in the constitution and use of a higher body derived from the lower, carnal body—a process alluded to in the ancient mystery religions but never articulated so fully as in the sacred literature of Egypt.

Transformation was viewed as a natural and continuing process in nature and the ultimate recipients of its power were human beings. The process itself was called Kheper, evoking the power of Khepri, “Lord of Transformations,” the guiding principle behind all great cyclic and personal change.

The Neteru themselves were believed to be subject to transformation, being the progenitors of change and metamorphoses in the universe. For example, Khons in his Lunar aspect was recognized as both luminary in the sky and herald of the new cycles on earth, as expressed in an ancient hymn which said:

You are a child in the morning, an old man in the evening, and a youth
at the beginning of the year.

And these powers were not reserved only for divine beings. The solar power of Ra was transmitted daily to the living, as proclaimed in one of his morning salutations:



Ari Kheperu
To assume different forms, to effect
transformations

Kheper
To transform oneself; to come into being;
self-made, self-produced



Aiu
Change, transformation

Kheperu
Changes, the transformations
made in the Duat

Figure 65—The Principle of Transformation

I join with you each day, so that the members of my body may be made new again by your light.

In the mystic environment of the temple, the Neter's transformative powers were acknowledged and sought through invocation and ceremony. Here, Auset's magical force dispelled destructive influences, while Sekhmet possessed the capacity to reverse disease and make the body whole once more. And in the tomb, the greatest transformative forces were believed to reside and accumulate to a potency that would eventually enable the soul to retrieve its earthly functions and use them continually in the inner life.

Human beings were also believed to serve as conduits in these processes of transformation. The regular provision of material offerings at the tomb by

relatives of the dead was one example of this, an observance based on the Egyptians' profound belief in the conversion of material substance to spiritual force. Tomb offerings were transformed in the mystic environment of the grave, becoming a mysterious food called *tchefa*, the substance upon which spirits grow and flourish. Human participation also played a vital part in the religious celebrations that initiated the transformations of the Neteru, such as invoking the return of Hapi's efflux at inundation and the potency of Amun at the Ipet festival of ancient Thebes. At the public mysteries celebrated annually at Abydos, pilgrims fashioned images of Asar's body parts from the last harvest's grain, and fused the dough into a reassembled form to symbolically return the Neter to life in the physical world. In these instances, the role of food as *prima materia* in transformative acts was emphasized.

But in addition to natural processes and their psychic emulation in public ritual for the gods and the dead, magic was the ultimate technology by which transformation proceeded for the individual's divine maturation. The most obvious example of this is exemplified in funerary literature, where a process is disclosed in one's elevation from material to spiritual existence, with the physical body being the *prima materia*. Initially, one is accorded an identification with spiritual powers, "becoming one with the god." On one of the golden shrines surrounding the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun, Auset informs the young king of this symbiosis:

You make transformations in heaven as Ra, you are born in the morning as him.

Later, he assumes the powers of the god, and is told:

You are beautiful as Ra (and) your forms are as Shu when he rises in the morning. You are born each day.

And in the final stage, the soul achieves transubstantiation, becoming divine in both physical and spiritual terms. In the case of Tutankhamun, he becomes the power of transformation itself in its solar aspect:

The king will assume the forms he desires, living forever as his father Ra in heaven each day.

In the ancient Pyramid Texts, another proclamation describes this process as the royal person becomes the progeny of divine beings and the Neteru themselves are told:

Your body is the body of the king; your flesh is the flesh of the king;
your bones are the bones of the king; as you go forth the king
goes forth.

Utterance #219

This process of identification with the Neteru, assumption of their powers, and the subsequent transubstantiation of form embodied a physics of transformation that constituted the Egyptian Mysteries. We may well ask how this was accomplished, and why was this mystic scheme called for to begin with? The answers lie in the science of occult anatomy and the mandate of its spiritual evolution that the Egyptians so conscientiously articulated in their sacred literature.

The restoration to an original, unadulterated condition—whether it be physical, spiritual, or in nature—was the highest ideal in Egyptian metaphysics because the primordial reality was seen as supremely vital and flawless. The original state of the universe was believed to be harmoniously bound together in Maat; human beings were viewed as descendants of the Neteru in possession of active, divine powers; the numina in nature communicated freely with spiritual and human life. Death could bring an end to this, and in some instances, life created a barrier that disallowed this original state to exist. A means to resolving these hindrances had to be continually employed, and in this the Mysteries fulfilled the sacred ideology of returning to the primeval unity.

At the end of physical life, the worst fate that could be suffered was the division and scattering of the body, a dissolution which brought loss of identity and personal power—as portrayed in the mythic destruction of Asar. The sacred task of finding his mutilated form, consecrating it through a mystical reassembly, and restoring his inherent powers was not only the prototype of the Osirian funerary ceremonies, but was essentially the paradigm of the mystery tradition overall. The division and dissolution of the body was also not the only cause for concern. Human life is multidimensional, its energies amalgamated from a number of planes interacting through the individual's consciousness. The scattering of those energies evokes a loss larger than life—death can invite the devastation of

all that one's human experience has contributed to the ancestral soul and the reservoir of future becoming. More importantly, one's individuality, particularly that of the highly accomplished person, could be forgotten and lost to oneself as well as the collectivity. The preservation of that legacy was vital in Egypt, not only because the sum total of one's existence was valued, but because it empowered one's soul to consciously experience its being on all the planes it existed, and escape confinement to one level of existence.

Once the interaction of the body, the vital force, the soul, and spirit cease to resonate together in the sphere of mortal life, forces of dissolution intersect on both the physical and subtle planes. In the Egyptian Mysteries, this cataclysmic event can be averted by fusing those principles together once more, a governing motive behind the elaborate funerary ceremonies of offering and the spiritual

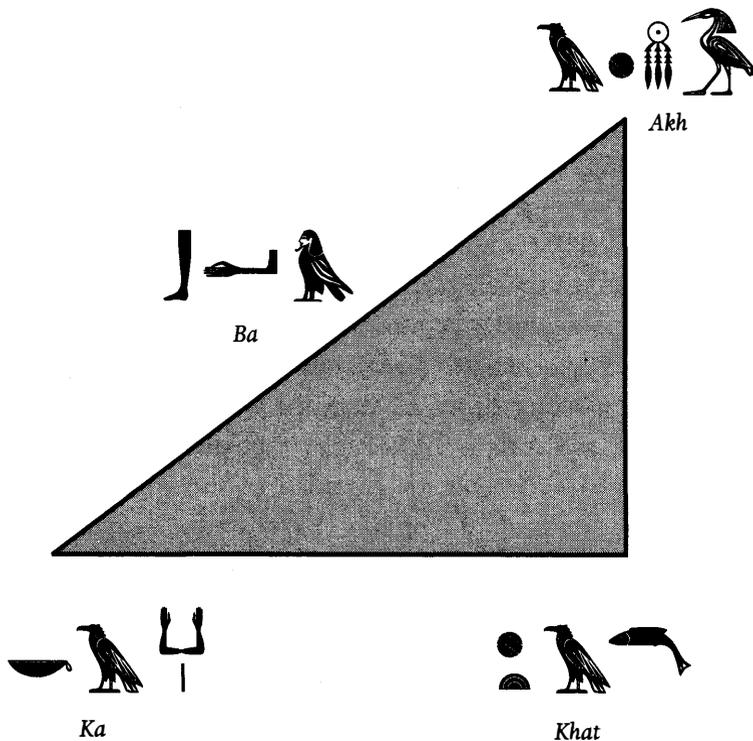


Figure 66—The Subtle Bodies

alchemy of temple ritual. And in acts that invoke the powers of the Neteru who animate the body in life, this mystic fusion can be rendered to provide an intact and conscious continuity of life in preparation for the transition from mortal to immortal realms.

We can ascertain that to attain this end, it was of absolute importance to preserve the accumulated energies of the Ka and the Ba, and maintain their cohesion with the body through the transition into the inner life. This was achieved after death through the mummification rituals, which focused on the restoration of the physical form (Khat) and by this act on a parallel level, the Ka and Ba were realigned to their original identity with the person. The Ka, being a vehicle of etheric matter, is essential to transmitting the vitality of the spirit world to the body in life, but in death it serves to transmit the energies of the material world to the inner life, which explains the protocol of providing regular nourishment at the tomb to sustain the Ka. Hence the Ba, being the person's soul and memory of accumulated experience, can only maintain its connection to the mortal world by retaining the functions of the Ka. An invocation from *The Book of Going Forth* articulates the desired fusion between these spiritual elements:

My soul bears with it my exalted spirit, but if it tarries, grant that my soul shall be united with its body.

Chapter 89

Lamy illustrates the relationship between these principles in the metaphor of sacred geometry, using the Pythagorean 3-4-5 triangle, a figure Plutarch regarded as the building block of nature.⁶ The perpendicular side is equal to three, being the principle of divine intelligence (Akh); the base is equal to four, embodying the principle of material form (Khat) and its companion, the Ka. The hypotenuse, equal to five, can be regarded as the communicating principle between the spirit and the body, the soul (Ba)—a vehicle capable of spanning all realms between the material and the divine.

The focal point in this metaphor is the Akh, a being bonded to the realm of spirit that is the sublime destination of the lower worlds. It has its own curious

⁶ Lamy, Lucie: *Egyptian Mysteries*. Crossroad: New York NY, 1981; p. 26.

qualities: unlike the Ka and the Ba, it was not believed by the Egyptians to be a natural vehicle within the spectrum of human life; rather, it had to be created through the efforts of the lower bodies and with the assistance of the magical technology of transformation. This body, derived from the essences of the lower bodies, would “spring forth” into the higher worlds, and in doing so, would at the same time refine and redeem the matter from whence it originated.

The Three Stages of Transformation

Were these mystical processes the spiritual goal of individuals before bodily death? The possibility has often been alluded to by scholars and metaphysicians over the ages, but it has rarely been presented directly. Nor did the Egyptians assert it in a straightforward manner, but some passages of the sacred literature support the pursuit of spiritual transformation for the living unequivocally. In *The Book of Going Forth*, the process of “making transformations” is specified on the Six-Day Feast, the first quarter of the Lunar cycle. Following the recitation of the hekau, the passage states:

As for every initiate for whom this is done while he is among the living, he shall not perish . . . he shall not die again . . . he shall go forth by day as Heru for he is living . . .

Chapter 136

The rubric concludes with admonitions of secrecy regarding the power and use of the rite. Later, the hekau is provided for “penetrating the Duat and going forth by day,” denoting the magical process of entering the inner life in any state of being and returning unharmed:

As for one who knows this passage on earth, or if it is written on his coffin, he goes forth by day in any form and re-enters his seat unhindered.

Chapter 72

Finally, an enigmatic initiation is disclosed in Chapter 80, titled “Transformation into a God of Light.” The “two contenders,” Heru and Set, unite in the initiate’s body and Asar, “He Who Has Fallen in Abydos” is raised. Then, the body takes on the qualities of crystal, turquoise, and lapis lazuli, as it

fuses with “The Woman Who Lightens Darkness,” a celestial being who penetrates “the Deep” and makes it bright. Three processes are specified, which culminate in the final transfiguration.

In these examples, the promise of not dying again, of entering the inner life unhindered, and transformation into a celestial being underscore the fundamental dispensations of the Lunar, Solar, and Stellar temples. At the Per Aa (“Great House”), the sanctum of the Lunar Mysteries, a conscious communication was sought with the organic intelligence that brought renewal to the land and hence, to the soul. In the tomb, this was effected with the unification of the individual to the ancestral soul, joining the personal Ka to the Kas of nature in the consistent observances of the Six-Day Feast and other Lunar stations. In the temple, the continuous regeneration of organic life was invoked in ceremonies that reprised the anthropogenesis of divine beings into the world of the living, enabling both the land and its inhabitants to renew their power. These events took place in a field of time that fused with the Lunar orbit, in its cyclic stations of darkness, the increase of light, and illumination throughout the sacred year.

At the Per Ankh (House of Life), the temple of the Solar Mysteries, the maintenance of cosmic order was emulated in rituals that observed the continuous circuit of light throughout the day and invoked the celestial powers to overcome the denizens of night when the Sun descended from the sky. These observances were orchestrated through Pharaoh or his spiritual agent in the temple, who embodied both the fusion of light and dark forces in the celestial sphere and the harmonization of spirit and flesh in the terrestrial realm. In the Per Ankh, the powers of organic intelligence were known and valued. But here, in a field of time that emulated the Sun’s revolution through the heavens, fusion with the moral intelligence symbolized by the solar light offered a new wisdom to the initiate—knowledge of cosmic order and induction into a social pattern based on that order, which had been inaugurated on earth in timeless time. This accomplishment, becoming a member of the *Heru Shemsu* (“followers of Heru”), endowed its constituents with the true power to raise one’s soul, the Ba, to the fiery world of creation.

In the Per Heh (“House of Eternity”), the Stellar Mysteries brought the sojourn of the transforming soul to its supreme destination, a field of time

marked by the enduring cycles of precessional movement in the sky. Here, fusion with the cosmic intelligence that created the *sba* (“star,” a name also meaning “gateway”) endowed the initiate with a new vehicle, the Akh, a body of luminous qualities that existed with the imperishable stars and became permanently incorporated into the cosmic landscape with them. These Stellar rituals also conferred the wisdom of parthenogenesis, a knowledge of bringing forth from oneself both the divine and infernal forces that engender existence in the cosmic worlds. The Coffin Texts disclose this mystery as the king becomes incorporated into Stellar life:

Make way for me, that I may see Nun and Amun, for I am the Akh who passes through the gatekeepers. They do not speak for fear of He-Whose-Name-is-Hidden, who is in my body. I am equipped and effective in opening his portal. For any person who knows this spell, he will become as Ra in the eastern heaven, as Asar in the Duat. He will go down to the circle of fire without the flame ever touching him.⁷

The instrument by which these transformations were accomplished was the choreography of cosmic resonance, sacred architecture, and ritual—the practicum of Sacred Science. Its sole aim was the creation of the Akh, the body of luminous endurance, the ultimate realization of the Mysteries and perhaps, the ultimate stage in human evolution.

The Lunar Transformation

The landscape from which the Osirian Mysteries arose was dependent upon both the expression of cyclic time and the revelation of timelessness—features that are intrinsic to the environment of the Nile Valley. The daily pulse of sunrise and sunset, the monthly rhythm of lunar light, and the seasonal procession of constellations in the night skies combined with the perpetual reappearance of a river flood, which brought nourishment to the land and renewed life for its dependents.

It is not known how long these phenomena were observed before they became embedded as the mythic ingredients in a universal narrative that assumed supreme importance in the everyday existence of the Nile’s inhabitants.

⁷ Lichtheim: Miriam: *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. I. University of California Press: Berkeley CA, 1975, p. 132.

Yet it is known that from the beginning of Egypt's history an image that enfolded both the known, visible face of cyclic time and the catalytic, mystic power of timelessness emerged in the form of Asar, god of both the living and the dead.

Egyptian history, inextricably imbued with legend and myth, identifies Asar as the founding governor of its land, emerging from the mists of antiquity first as a demigod and progenitor of the Egyptian race, then as inventor of agriculture and preceptor of social law, and finally, as redeemer of the beleaguered throne of Egypt through his engendering of Heru and the theocratic line of Pharaohs. His image encompassed both the worlds of time and timelessness as "Lord of the Living" and "Governor of Eternity," and as the most beloved and time-honored of Egypt's divine heroes, he metamorphosed through the ages in images reflecting the somber Sokar of archaic times to the radiant Graeco-Roman Serapis, yet remained changeless in many aspects.

On the phenomenal level, Asar has been equated with the land of Egypt itself, his black aspect disclosing the enigmatic mystery in which the land is rejuvenated by the dark silt of the annual flood, brought from the great distance of the Ethiopian highlands and deposited in the Nile valley by the waters impelled by his consort, Auset. Following this, his image is transformed into its green aspect, by which he quickens the seeded soil to vitality and growth. Throughout this cycle, he appears passive and restrained, yet his power remains inexorable and all-encompassing.

The renewal of Asar—commemorated in temple and tomb with the mystic rites of his death, restoration, and renewal—is the metaphor of all organic life, subject to cyclic law but nevertheless transcending it by virtue of its power of continuance. These dual powers—transcendence and reoccurrence—are intimately associated with his divine genealogy. As son of Nut, he is imbued with the powers of the sky, which contain and reflect the unceasing journeys of cosmic beings who have descended from sacred regions into the visible universe. As son of Geb, he is also a being of the physical world, subject to the rotating limits of dark and light, but at the same time is empowered by them to alternately compress and release the powers he has inherited from his celestial progenitors. And in addition to this, Asar's role as prototypical man is infused with

the dualities of human existence, the ageless paradigm of mortality. His life is a succession of tragedies and triumphs, overcoming the obstacles imposed by a jealous sibling and attaining honor among the people he rules. Even in the last episodes, his death and dismemberment is resolved with a magical restoration, and his horrific murder avenged by the birth of a son who takes his place among the living. Asar overthrows chaos—personified by Set—by transcending it and by removing himself from the field of time where it exists, entering a world beyond its power. And it is at this point that his character fully assumes its breadth. Asar—once a member of the living present—now governs an immense, unlimited realm, one populated by all of the souls of the past, the ancestral body. Yet from this body comes forth the seed of new life, the future, the young Heru who restores the order inaugurated by his father.

In the mythic scenario of these mysteries, Asar is neither resurrected nor reborn into the world of time. Rather, he rises to govern timeless time, the world of the past and future. This attainment is reprised by his descendants—those who have “Osirified”—who transcend the temporal world and “go forth” into the next, receiving the reward of his sacrifice and the promise of his perpetual existence. The feat of transcendence is accomplished continuously, with each and every human passage into the Western Land.

Yet Asar’s supremacy does not end here. While he has overcome the vicissitudes of mortal life, he also surpasses the limits of the Duat, as articulated in the funerary literature of the Osirian tradition. Those who follow him relive his passage through the complex zones and regions of the shadow worlds, each of which presents an archetypal challenge to one’s spiritual inheritance. The transformations assumed by Asar and his surrogates through these processes represent the limitless manifestations of his power in the natural world, passed on to the individual soul in the form of continuous adaptation and regeneration—the power of reoccurrence. The Duat poses many dangers to the sojourner, but in each phase of the journey it also awakens latent powers that mortal life had veiled with the envelope of the body. Now freed of this impediment, the soul can progress toward the perfect state attained by the original awakened one, the beautiful “Elysian Fields” of Sekhet Iaru.

The Solar Transformation

Out of death the seed of life arises. Myth traces the genesis of Heru from the moment of his father's death, when he was conceived and superseded Asar. From this event he came to represent the principle of active, conscious existence, as opposed to his father's passive, unconscious life in the shadow worlds. At the same time, Heru was said to have existed in whole prior to his entry into the physical world as a potentiality in the womb of Nut, and then as a seed passed into the body of Auset that needed only the quickening of death to come into life.

Once incarnate, Heru's existence was fraught with conflict. He faced the continued opposition of Set, who challenged his sovereignty and contrived a number of schemes to overturn the natural succession of Egypt's Royal House. In one scenario, Heru lost his left eye—a representation of the lunar orb and his predecessor—but it was restored by Djehuti. In sacred ritual, this act was commemorated in the presentation of offerings at both temple and tomb; the "eye of Heru" was ever afterward a metaphor of the restored nourishment, functions, and qualities that were lost in the division of the body at death and in the nightly ebb of the Neter's power in the sanctuary.

Set is the great divider and separator. On earth, he breaks apart that which is united and sunders the harmony in nature. In the sky, he divides the region of the living from the region of the gods. But in Heru's last act to mend these rifts, he acquired the sceptre of his adversary, the Seb Ur. This magical implement opens the way between the two realms of earth and sky, and in his mystic role as restorer of Maat, Heru then brought a new life to his father, restoring his earthly senses and joining together that which had been divided in the lower realms—matter and spirit. This act was also reprised at both temple and tomb in the great Opening of the Mouth ceremony, a rite that restores the physical functions of speaking and eating to the disembodied spirit, ensuring an effective transmission of energy through all the worlds.

Within the field of time, organic life arises and quickens with the cyclic change evoked by the lunar rhythm; but conscious life thrives upon a more immediate order, that symbolized by the rhythm of darkness and illumination, night and day. The initial and primary role of Heru was the embodiment of this solar rhythm on earth, involving a continual, daily subjugation of Set, who represents

the threat of disorder and chaos brought by the division of light in the revolution of the Sun through the visible and invisible skies. On a mystic level, he achieved this not by annihilating his enemy, but by subduing his power and performing the great symbiosis, melding the two principles of order and tumult together as Nubti, an integrated divinity who fulfills the imperative of each impulse by consolidating the fearful divisions of life into a predictable order, Maat. This act is the ultimate destination of the royal person, and the goal of the Solar initiation.

In Heru's reconciliation with Set, he fulfilled his genealogy as the living Solar principle in his pharaonic role, where he and only he could ascend daily from the earthly sphere and become a Ba of the Sun, a visible manifestation of the creator in many forms—as Amun, Atum, Ra, or Mont—bringing light to the world below and life to all of its inhabitants in a dependable, resolute cycle. But Set's opposition could never fully be eradicated because even the existence of the gods was rhythmic and their powers in continual flux. He would reappear cyclically, necessitating the continued appearance of a liberator, a mender of discord. The scenario of restoration and resolution had to be reenacted after every event of dissolution or diminution in order to bring forth new life and its regulation. This took place continuously in the temple and tomb, and most importantly, at each investiture of the new Heru on earth.

The Role of Pharaoh

The exaltation of Pharaoh was underscored by a number of fundamental premises in the Egyptian world view, appropriately symbolized by the five sacred names of kingship. The most important was that he maintained the fusion between two dynamic worlds—the visible and the invisible—and served as the bridge between the living and the dead. His royal mission was to join and humanize the past with the future as son of Asar, being heir to a vast inner world to which he would eventually sojourn and rule over at his death. At the same time he was the living Heru, triumphant over death and the father of the next heir. In this aspect the Heru name, oldest in the titulary of the Royal House, represented the particular incarnation of this Neter that Pharaoh embodied and the specific role he would carry out in joining the ancestral past to the future. *Wehem mesut* (“He Who Repeats Births”) was the designation of both Amunemhat I and

Seti I, *Ankh mesut* ("He Whose Births Live") was an appellation of Senusert I—examples of the theocratic principle embodied by the Heru name of Pharaoh that was passed on to succeeding kings.

Another premise of Pharaoh's exaltation was that the land of Egypt and its people were an interrelated, inseparable living organism. The royal body was the catalyst of this principle, and within this form flowed both the life force of the land (the cobra) and the blood of its inhabitants (the vulture) in microcosmic proportion. The *Nebty* ("Two Ladies") name represented this function. Pharaoh was also avenger of his predecessor's decline and Asar's assassination; he was the triumphant son and "master of his foes." The *Heru Nub* ("Golden Heru") name conveyed this duty, which endowed the royal person with divine status after accomplishing the subjugation of disorder, symbolically in the great festivals of the temple and literally as commander-in-chief of the armies.

The ruler also fused together the North and the South, maintaining equilibrium in the two kingdoms as arbitrator, judge, and lawgiver. Thus, fusion is signified in the *Nesu Bity* ("Sedge and Bee," the two heraldic images of kingship), the throne name. The sedge stood for plant intelligence, the bee for animal intelligence; by drawing upon these kingdoms in nature Pharaoh perpetuated Maat. And finally, the royal body was the living receptacle of the Neteru, who had once descended to earth, established the Two Lands, and propagated the royal race, the divine ancestors. Within this body the Neteru maintained their connection to the living, and in doing so maintained harmony between society and nature. This set the precedent for the king's role in the daily rites of the temple and his presence in all sacred acts, symbolized by the *Sa Ra* ("Son of the Sun") name. Here, he stands between gods and men, possessing the powers of the Neteru with the mortality of humans.

None of the principles embodied in kingship existed in stasis. Pharaoh's roles were perpetual, performed in complex rituals, military campaigns, or trade expeditions—all of which fulfilled the mandates of the five sacred names—and each required continuous participation and management. Along with this, the royal person was vital in promoting the fertilization of the land, as described by the temple overseer Shetepibra at Abydos in Dynasty 12:

Cleave to His Majesty in your hearts! He is Sia in the hearts, his eyes seek out every body. He is Ra who sees with his rays, who lights the Two Lands more than the sun disc, who makes verdant more than great Hapi. He has filled the Two Lands with life force.⁸

When fulfilling his role as mediator between gods and men, Intef II assumed the role of Het-Her's consort, representing the interests of peace in the temple:

I inform her when I am at her side that I rejoice when seeing her. I am he who summons the singer to awaken Het-Her, every day and every hour that she desires. May you proceed in good peace, may you rejoice in life and happiness with Heru who loves you, who feasts with you on the offerings.⁹

And in his supreme archaic role of subjugating the forces of chaos, Rameses II assumed the Ba's ("souls" or "appearances") of many gods before vanquishing the Hittites in the legendary Battle of Kadesh:

His arms mighty, his heart stout, his strength like Mont in his hour. Of perfect form like Atum, hailed when his beauty is seen. He is victorious over all lands, wily in launching a fight. He is a strong wall around his soldiers, a shield on the day of battle.¹⁰

The Heru Shemsu and the Samer-f

In the sacred literature occasional reference is made to the Heru Shemsu ("followers of Heru"), a group that maintained the Horian mandate through the living Royal House and at the same time was comprised of those who literally "followed" or succeeded Heru, the body of kings who had relinquished their mortal existence. They are first mentioned in the Dynasty 5 pyramid of Pepi, where the king assumes the form of Anpu and is told, "You have propitiated the followers of Heru," meaning that he fulfilled the mission of his ancestral mentors.

8 Ibid., p. 128.

9 Ibid., p. 95.

10 Ibid., p. 63.

Following this, he descends to a holy field before entering the barque of the Sun, and “The followers of Heru purify you,”¹¹ a reference to the purification and offering ceremonies they perform solely on behalf of the king, and the opening of his mouth.

Who were the members of this enigmatic group and what was their function? One hypothesis is based on the reports of Diodorus: he relates that demigods ruled Egypt up until the first mortal king Mena took the throne in Dynasty 1. Further, the demigods functioned in fact as the priestly caste in predynastic times, instituting the Horian Mysteries in order to raise the royal Ba to join with the Ba’s of nature through the pharaonic investiture. The mission of this caste passed into the functions of the royal priesthood, who initiated the king into the sacred mysteries of the throne so that he could guide Egyptian society to live in Maat. An elaborate cycle of ceremonies and the investiture of crowns on Pharaoh’s assumption of kingship was performed by this body, in order to awaken in him the powers of the ancient demigods.

As a group, the Heru Shemsu was believed to have descended from two legendary houses, the foremost being the “souls of Pe,” originating in Lower Egypt and possessing the falcon as their cultic image. They governed two sacred precincts at the ancient capitol of Buto: the Per Nezer (“House of Fire”) and the Per Nu (“House of Water”). From them, the red crown and the Wadjet cobra were bestowed on Pharaoh. The second house was the “souls of Nekhen,” said to have originated in Upper Egypt, possessing the wolf or hound as their emblem. Their sacred precinct at Nekheb was the Per Ur (“Exalted House”), a name that is supposed to be the root of the Greek term “Pharaoh.” They bestowed the white crown on the king, which was protected by the vulture Nekhebet. The members of these two houses were collectively referred to at times as the “Souls of Heliopolis,” and commanded the dual shrines of the royal court, as seen in Djoser’s complex at Saqqara. In turn, they were believed by the Egyptians to have been the body from which the Solar priests at the Heliopolis temple of the Sun descended.

11 Budge, E. A. Wallis: *Osiris and the Egyptian Religion of Resurrection*. University Books: New Hyde Park NY, 1961; pp. 161 & 163.

The legendary authority of the Heru Shemsu extended into several areas of sacred duty. In the tomb, the ancient role of the Heru Shemsu was assumed by the Samer-f, the “kinsman” or “friend.” It was he who performed the intimate, exclusive rite of Opening the Mouth for the deceased, and with this fulfilled the mission of the elite body who passed on the sacred act that Heru performed for his father to restore his powers. In the temple, the Samer-f conducted the daily Opening of the Mouth ceremony for the gods, empowering the divine forces of the temple to animate the sacred space.

But the investiture and enthronement of kings was the ultimate accomplishment of this fraternity. The ceremonials conducted by the Heru Shemsu were designed to advance the initiate into the realm of the gods by assuming their Ba’s, the visible manifestations of their invisible powers. These symbioses were the distinct prerogative of the ruler, and arose from the initial power Heru acquired in the fusion with his adversary, Set. But an examination of the sacred literature shows that a fusion within the individual was the preliminary to assuming the forms of the Neteru, an act that emulated the prototypical joining of Heru and Set. In the Coffin Texts, a communion between Asar and Ra takes place in a mythological scenario in the tomb. They become a united Ba and “speak with one mouth.” This mystic union takes place in Mendes, the city of the ram-god (the word for “soul” and “ram” in ancient Egyptian was the same: Ba). A central relief in the tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens illustrates this process. A ram-headed mummy is described as “the soul of Ra that has come to rest in Asar, and Asar when he has come to rest in Ra.” This was interpreted by the early egyptologists as proof of a religious syncretism, but the esoteric nature of the image is evident. The Lunar Asar is lord of the Ka, the Solar deity Ra is lord of all the Ba’s in nature. Their fusion in relation to the individual is a fusion between the vital, etheric force of the body and the soul, which possesses the powers to travel through the regions of the gods. A new entity arises from this act, one nurtured by both the physical forces on earth and the subtle forces emanating from the sky.

Powers of the Solar Initiation

All order and power comes from the gods, and cannot be bestowed upon mortals; rather, powers must be passed on as the powers of Asar and Ra were passed on to Heru. In this respect, kingship demanded a continual dedication to the sacred roles personified in Heru and the Solar principle; in return the royal person received two significant powers: the capacity to maintain order and the acquisition, use, and transference of divine energy.

The maintenance of order is often portrayed in royal inscriptions with Pharaoh's presentation of the Maat symbol to the gods. Such illustrations represent an assurance to the Neteru that the royal person has preserved the Solar harmony that was originally conferred in the rites of kingship, and is offering a continued effort toward its endurance. But in representations of the king exercising his personal power, a unique scenario is depicted. The consummation of the daily ritual in the temple shows the royal person (or his designated priestly representative) embracing the sacred image of the god and receiving its vital force, becoming "charged" with divine power. In turn, he embraces those in his immediate environment, passing on to them that which he has received from the divine source. This mystic embrace alludes to a divine attribute, one that was initially bestowed by Atum when he poured Sa, his life force, into his first creations, Shu and Tefnut. Afterward, the cosmic landscape is maintained with the indivisible energy of this substance, which brings and restores life to its recipients. Sa, the fluid of life, was seen to protect the bodies and souls of human beings, animals, the home, and temple. Protection of the body was assured through the wearing of the Sa amulet, and a house could be protected by placing Sa images in wall niches, outside the house, or buried with the amulets facing the directions from which psychic attack was expected.

Temple inscriptions disclose that those who possessed Sa (the gods, royal persons, and certain priests) could transfer it by embracing another and then "make passes" with the hands placed on one's back, from the nape of the neck to the lower vertebrae. The Sa could also be received by a person from a god by taking its image in one's arms, a ceremony that was part of the temple's daily ritual and certain rites requiring healing and exorcism.

The possession of Sa in its most potent form and its dispensation to the environment was the culmination of the monarch's evolution. Kingship bestowed the power of this vital force, but it did not automatically provide the lessons of its use. The annals of Egypt's kings consistently speak of their glorious deeds in battle, but few impart the impression that genuinely divine conduct was consistently displayed in everyday life. One exception is well chronicled at a small, remote temple in the eastern desert of Upper Egypt at the present-day Wadi Mia. Here, Seti I led an expedition far from civilized territory to quarry gold, but according to the record, was extremely moved by the harsh conditions of the desert. After stopping to "take counsel in his heart," the king is reported to have said:

How painful is the way without water, what are travelers to do? What quenches the thirst in this wilderness? Behold, I set forth a plan: I will provide the means to sustain them, so that my name will be blessed in the future.

Having "spoken these words in his heart," Seti then sought a place in the desert to sink a water well, whereupon the gods directed him to the appropriate place and by his hand water gushed forth in great quantity. Seti's honorable concerns were not only rewarded with the discovery of the well, but the expedition to discover a new source of gold was also bountifully blessed by the gods. In turn, he dedicated a large portion of the wealth to the sanctuary he built at Abydos.

Together, the actions of Maat and Sa produce moral intelligence, the realization of the Solar transformation and the divine power of kings. It brings a new life to its recipients just as Heru effected a new existence for his father, and is undoubtedly the original "touch of grace" bestowed by the elite. Examples of this gift are embedded in the chronicles of Solomon, the golden precepts of Hammurabi, and the legends of Arthur. The royal embrace is the reconciling agent in all divisions, and the restoration of harmony impelled by true sovereignty.

The Stellar Transformation

I come to you, O Nut: I have cast my father Asar to the earth, I have left Heru behind me. My wings have grown and my two plumes are those of a sacred falcon. My Ba has brought me forth and its magic has equipped me.

Utterance #245

Through the cycles of initiation in the Lunar and Solar fields of time, the substance of transformation is the physical form, subject to the cycles of growth and dissolution, light and dark. But in the sacred astronomy, the annual appearance of the star Sopdet heralds a new order with the return of the Nile floods, evoking a renewal of creation itself—when the waters of Nun appeared in timeless time and precipitated the genesis of cosmic life. In the Stellar transformation that is foreshadowed by this event, initiation raises the physical body into the cosmic landscape, to metamorphose it into a divine body, an illuminated vehicle that journeys through celestial regions and fuses with Stellar powers to bring them to earth. In Egypt this process was a shamanic tradition of extremely archaic origin, brought forward by the elite of the temple for initiates from the sacred lineages—the Royal House and the Divine House. This tradition endowed the recipient with knowledge of the nature of the gods, the ability to absorb their forces, and become incorporated in their universe.

The transubstantiation of the body into a divine vehicle is not only the fundamental basis of all the esoteric imagery in Egypt's religious mysteries, it has been a spiritual goal articulated in all the world's religious doctrines over time. In the Sufi tradition, the initiate becomes *Indris-Hermes*, the "man of light," when united with the godhead, a corollary of the earlier "radiant body" of Neoplatonism. Likewise, the Qabalistic *Zelem* separates from the physical body to exist separately in higher realms, and the construction and assumption of the *Vajrakaya* or "diamond body" of Buddhism is the fulfillment of all spiritual endeavor. There is no doubt that these spiritual aims correspond to the "resurrection body" of Christianity, but physical death is implied. In these doctrines, existence in the divine body occurs after discarding the material vehicle, but in the Egyptian texts death is presented as an opportunity for transformation, not a prerequisite.

The mythological foundation of the Stellar initiation is concealed in a number of legends associated with Auset. Chronologically, it begins with her magical restoration of Asar after obtaining the sacred knowledge from Djehuti to imbue him with life—a process that employs the magical embrace, the transference of Sa into his inert body. Following this, she effects a miraculous conception of Heru, a fulfillment of bringing to life the seed of Heru Ur that came into being in the heavenly realm of Nut before her own birth. Then, a chronicle recounts her acquisition of the Sun-god's most secret name, a power that would ensure Heru's inheritance of the Solar throne. After allowing a poison to diminish Ra's strength, she obtains the powerful name from him in exchange for banishing the poison; the name she has acquired is passed on to her son and thereafter to his descendants.

The doctrine of parthenogenesis was associated with both Neit and Auset in ancient times. Neit was understood to have emanated from her own substance in primeval time, being neither male nor female. And in her creation of the seeds of the human race, she possessed the power to divide it into the sexes. In the Osirian mythos, however, Auset joined back together the male and female principles in a magical act, making it possible to conceive Heru without the conscious presence of her husband. These mythic ingredients certainly represent metaphysical processes that occur in a nonphysical setting, yet they appear consistently in the transformational landscape of the Pyramid Texts. In this context, the power of bringing life is endowed by the goddess in her form as Sopdet (the star Sirius), who fuses with the vital force of the initiate as “the woman who lights the darkness,” impelling the metamorphosis from earthly to divine existence to proceed:

Auset comes to you rejoicing through love of you. Your seed issues into her, she being ready as Sopdet. Heru-Sopdet has issued from you in his name of Heru-who-is-in-Sopdet.

Utterance #593

The sexual imagery in this passage can not be overlooked, though it should be viewed metaphorically. Here, Auset absorbs the seed of one's former existence so that it may incubate in her womb and become the fruit of its ultimate,

intended form. The great mystery of the Stellar transformation is this gestation through Sopdet; she is the access through which the exalted soul becomes incorporated into cosmic life. Auset serves as the conduit to a new existence, and the true character of this initiation is the Stellar-Sothic mystery, which is the supreme goal of both the Lunar-Osirian and Solar-Horian passages. Djehuti impels this process by lending the primordial hekau of creation to the goddess, which enabled her to both raise her consort and conceive the Solar principle in a new but prototypical form, the latent Heru Ur. Thus, she is the key to the metamorphosis of the Stellar-Sothic mystery, as well as being the progenitor of the first two initiations which lead to it—raising the father and bringing forth the son.

The phenomena of this star were undoubtedly connected to the supreme mysteries of the Stellar transformation as the ritual texts disclose. In the Pyramid Age, Sopdet rose heliacally at the summer solstice, coincident with the beginning of inundation. The royal Heb Sed festivals, intended to endow Pharaoh with the powers of the Neteru and “millions of years,” were celebrated at the dark of the Moon prior to this cosmic event and culminated in the appearance of the star at dawn—at the same time that the royal person “appeared” in the Heb Seb court reborn and renewed. The essential meaning of Sopdet’s arrival with her father the Sun at this time is a reprisal of the legendary event when the poison from Ra was dispelled by her. Then, his sacred name was revealed to the living—celebrated in a ceremony that elevated the initiate above the transitory cycles of Sun and Moon, and into a reality of eternal, luminous duration.

Initiation In the Pyramid

For centuries, it was believed that the supreme repository of Egypt’s secrets was the pyramids. Here, the memory of the dead was elevated to enduring existence. As the alleged burial places of kings, they were testimony to both the egocentric power of the Royal House and the abject devotion of his subjects to pharaonic power. Of the thirty-four known pyramids, all are situated on the west bank of the Nile and reside within complexes of varying size that incorporate causeways, temples, and satellite pyramids. These surrounding buildings have, until recently, been regarded as mortuary temples—places where the rites of the dead king

were performed and the funeral was conducted prior to the ultimate burial within the pyramid.

Until the opening of the Dynasty 5 pyramid of Unas in 1881, this was the prevailing opinion—that the function of all the pyramids was strictly funerary. But shortly after modern eyes saw and recorded the voluminous hieroglyphic inscriptions within this massive stone monument and others that emerged from the nearby archaic zone of the Saqqara necropolis, a perplexing image appeared. The Pyramid Texts were deciphered to be a body of ritual, intended for performance within the pyramid, either at its inauguration as a spiritual house for the royal person or as a continuous evocation of spiritual transformation for whoever resided—literally or symbolically—within. Each section in the corpus became denoted as an “utterance,” because it was preceded with the directive, “Recite these words . . .”

Both the written and spoken word were recognized by the Egyptians as ritually effective, if not the former more so when inscribed in stone. We are not certain why the earlier pyramids are uninscribed, particularly the Giza monuments, which surpass all others in technical accomplishment and size. But if we take a cue from the shift in Egypt’s temple design over the centuries, beginning with the same massive, uninscribed simplicity and ends in labyrinthine structures covered profusely with every detail of temple life, an intent becomes obvious: the time for disclosure on the specifics of the reserved, high ritual of ancient tradition had come. Fear of losing the time-honored infrastructure of the cult in a world exposed to alien forces has been cited as one motive behind the inscrip-tional elaboration in both pyramid and temple in the latter years of their golden ages. But seeing these alterations through the lens of the Sacred Astronomy, such changes were undoubtedly recognized and conceded to accommodate the shift in cultural identity brought by each new astrological age. The divine heir of the Old Kingdom gave way to the warrior tribe of the New Kingdom, which in turn surrendered its exclusive pact with the gods to an eclectic, gnostic body of custodians in the Hermetic age (circa 300 B.C.E to 350 C.E.).

From the evidence to date, the Unas pyramid is the oldest to have sacred texts inscribed in its interior. The texts have been evaluated by scholars as already ancient when they were written, dating at least from the unification of Egypt

(4700 B.C.E. in Chronology I). And though they appear tangled with the surreal imagery of the archaic language and the subtle nuances typical of mystical literature, the whole of this testament elucidates a ritual that apparently conferred, with some significant preliminaries, a Stellar transformation in enigmatic but compelling terms.

The Pyramid Texts proceed with a depiction of the king rising from the primeval waters in a ritual of rebirth. In this realm, the bolts on the doors to heaven are opened, and the initiate assumes at once the forms of Heru (the living Sun) and a baboon (a manifestation of Djehuti and the Moon), and “takes his seat on the horizon” (begins a journey). All of the physical functions are retained at this point, underscoring the premise that the rite was conferred upon a conscious person. Here, the scenes of rebirth after emerging from Nun and ascension to the Solar landscape demonstrate a coherence in the ceremonial repertoire of Egypt’s esoteric tradition. In these processes, the initiate recapitulates the Lunar transformation with a baptismal immersion in the primeval waters, and enters the sun barque of the Solar transformation. In the sacred environment of the pyramid, the return to the primeval waters would have taken place at the entry, and the ascension to Solar life would have ensued in an ascending corridor. The initiate then entered a higher region in the pyramid to ritually assume the form of a divine hawk and unite with Sopdet in the heavens. In this phase the goddess pronounces:

Assume your place in heaven among the stars, for you are a solitary star, a companion of Hu.¹² You shall look down upon Asar while he commands the spirits, yet you are apart from him and not among the spirits.

Utterance #245

Following this, an elevated symbiosis takes place in the chamber of transformation, where the initiate assumes the forms of the gods by absorbing their qualities. An inscrutable section of the ritual draws the scenario of this doctrine in terms that have eluded many scholars. This so-called “Cannibal Text” relates an extensive process by which the initiate retreats from the earth, ascends to heaven,

¹² Hu: one of the names of the Sphinx at Giza.

and appears to the sky gods in power. He becomes a master of wisdom in the celestial expanses, and is recognized by the forces there as he consumes them:

The king eats their heka and swallows their noble forces. The great ones become his morning meal, the middle-sized ones are his afternoon meal, the small ones become his night meal. The king feeds on the lungs of the sages, and he delights to live on their hearts as well as their heka.

Utterance #273

In the theurgic practices of ancient Egypt, acts of ritual tasting and swallowing were themselves considered a form of initiation.¹³ The powers inherent in sacred images, scripts, and substances could become consciously known and incorporated into one's body by the act of absorption through the mouth, in a form of psychic communion. The acts of consuming the gods and their powers described in the Pyramid Texts are just such a communion, endowing the initiate with the qualities of the gods. We know that the body of these writings formed the basis of an elaborate ritual drama performed in the pyramids, and that a number of offerings were presented at critical stages in the ceremonies. These cryptic texts are probably intended to accompany the offering rites, to evoke the mystic processes by which the ingestion of sacred substances induces the absorption of godly powers to metamorphose the body.

Following this, a mystic fusion takes place between the initiate and Atum, "the All," the creator itself: the Akh is fabricated, and from this fusion becomes a permanent component in the creative landscape of the universe:

Raise yourself upon your iron bones and golden members, for your body is the body of a god. It will not decay, it will not be destroyed, it will not decompose . . . May your flesh be born to life, may your life exceed the life of the stars while they live.

Utterance #723

In this final exaltation, the initiate is disrobed and beholds the gods, takes possession of his crowns (divine faculties), and receives new offerings, which ascend

¹³ Ritner, Robert Kriech: *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Chicago IL, 1995; pp. 108–9.

Spiritual Path	Lunar-Osirian	Solar-Horian	Stellar-Sothic
Astrological Age	Pisces	Aries	Taurus
Dynastic Period	Graeco-Roman to present	Middle to New Kingdom	Archaic to Old Kingdom
Chronology	600 B.C.E. to present	2000–600 B.C.E.	3400–2000 B.C.E.
Mentality	Simultaneity	Pairing	Association
Identification	Organic, Natural Life	Royal, Cultural Life	Cosmic Life
Evolutionary Path	Anthropogenesis	Cosmogenesis	Parthenogenesis
Initiatory Theme	Death	Birth	Rebirth
Hieroglyph	Shen	Sa	Ankh
Mythos	Osirian	Horian	Sothic
Goddess	Auset	Het-Her	Sopdet
Ritual	Renewal	Investiture	Transubstantiation
Tradition	Funerary	Ruling	Initiatory
Temple	Per Aa	Per Ankh	Per Heh
Process	Osmosis	Symbiosis	Metamorphosis
Powers	Transcendence	Fusion	Absorption
Latent Function	Reoccurrence	Exaltation	Creation
Sacrament	Baptism	Confirmation	Communion
Alchemy	Salt	Sulphur	Mercury
Resolution	Life/Death	Good/Evil	Time/Eternity
Cosmic Principle	Change	Order	Continuity
Element	Water	Fire	Air
Spiritual Body	Ka	Ba	Akh
Pharaonic Image	Bull	Ram	Hawk

Table 22—Summary of the Three Paths

from earth to heaven. He is given birth as a star, and assumes the form of Nefertum at the nostrils of Ra.

The Master of Secrets

The Hermetic literature refers to Hermes—the custodian and dictator of the hermetic lectures—as a *Trismegisti* (“acolyte of the Thrice-Greatest One”),

allegedly referring to the three disciplines which were mastered by the sage: medicine, architecture, and astronomy. But the subject matter of the *Hermetica* is far afield from these secular disciplines. The nature and meaning of the universe, the gods, and men is elaborately discussed in terms that disclose the purpose of religion and the mysteries:

. . . man has been able to find out how gods can be brought into being and to make them. Our ancestors were at first far astray from the truth about the gods; they had no belief in them, and gave no heed to worship and religion. But afterwards, they invented the art of making gods out of some material substance suited for the purpose. And to this invention they added a supernatural force whereby the images might have power to work good or hurt, and combined it with the material substance; that is to say, being unable to make souls, they invoked the souls of daemons, and implanted them in the statues by means of certain holy and sacred rites.

Asclepius III: 37

In this passage, Hermes further reveals to Asclepius that the student's ancestor, whom we must presume is the legendary Imhotep, was in this manner deified, and that his own predecessor was elevated to divine status by the ancients in Hermopolis as the divinity Djehuti. The "art" and "invention" referred to in this discourse may seem dubious, but the goals of Egypt's spiritual initiations were directed to the same processes—"making gods"—a metaphor of raising human life to existence in a divine body. In this context, the Trismegisti of the Hermetic milieu refers to those who have accomplished the three initiations of Egypt's esoteric tradition; the Lunar-Osirian (medicine), the Solar-Horian (architecture), and the Stellar-Sothic (astronomy) transformations. Could this be a vestige of the dynastic initiate known as the Master of Secrets?

References to this accomplishment in Egyptian records are infrequent but intriguing. A recently discovered funerary ushabti of the priest Nesibastet (Dynasty 21) points to the meaning of this title. The exceptionally rare appellation "Master of the Secrets,"¹⁴ is inscribed upon it, along with the text of the Chapter

¹⁴ KMT: Volume 8, #3, Fall 1997, pp. 5-6.

5 in *The Book of Going Forth*—instead of the customary Chapter 6, which empowers the figure with the spiritual force to perform work in the afterlife. In another case, ushabtis of Amunemopet, also of the same period, bear the same variant, and like Nesibastet, Amunemopet also holds the title “Master of the Secrets.” It is noteworthy that Chapter 6 excludes the ushabti owner from having to work in the afterlife altogether, by virtue of one’s spiritual accomplishments. It states, “It is I who lift up the arm of Him who is inert; I have gone out of Hermopolis. I am a living soul, I have been initiated into the hearts of the baboons.”

An earlier Master of Secrets recorded his life as a high priest at Abydos in Dynasty 12, during the reign of Senusert III. Ikhernofret served as commander of the Osirian ceremonies, and he details some of his duties performed in the sacred mysteries celebrated at the ancient temple. He organized the annual festival, the procession of the god, and the mystery play that reenacted the Neter’s life. His stele describing these events, now in the Berlin museum, states:

I made the hour priests diligent at their tasks, I made them know the ritual of every day and of the feasts of the beginnings of the seasons . . . I clothed the Neter’s body with his regalia in my rank of Master of Secrets, in my capacity as Kheri Heb. I was pure of hand in attending to the Neter.¹⁵

The secrets to which this title alludes undoubtedly concern the reserved knowledge that we find, in part, recorded in the sacred literature. Chapter 161 of *The Book of Going Forth* tells its owner, “No outsider knows this secret, which the common folk also do not know. You shall not perform it on anyone, neither your father nor your son. It is for you alone. It is truly a secret, which none of the people should know.” The secrecy of spells intended to protect the dead from nefarious forces is understandable, and the rites bestowing kingship and priesthood are known to us only in outline because they conferred high powers to their recipients—powers believed to stem from the gods. The ultimate secret was

¹⁵ Lichtheim, Miriam: *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. I. University of California Press: Berkeley CA, 1976; p. 123.

acquisition of those powers as a god oneself, and possessing the means that would bring them into the environment of the living.

Three Initiatory Paths

The goal of every esoteric tradition is to preserve and disseminate spiritual truths through the religious and cultural endeavors of the milieu. Unless this is fulfilled, the tradition perishes, and its adepts relinquish their function in the human undertaking. Is that what transpired in Egypt during its closing years? I doubt this. The Sacred Science is still being transmitted to those who are sensitive to it, albeit through incomplete sources such as the decaying ruins and records of a past civilization. But like all true disciplines concerning the transformation of the human condition, it is meaningless unless it is in motion and performing its work in the world of life. It is we who have failed to accept the bidding of this doctrine, and our failure lies in a departure from something that the Egyptians consistently valued and we have disregarded—our connection with natural life along with our distinctiveness within it. This is the sacred key that we must retrieve and employ in our daily activities before we may be guided toward that marvelous destination which they spoke of as “eternal life.”

body and the revivification of his powers. The subsequent fate of the mortal form, in transformation from physical to divine substance, was an expression of this god's supremacy over the powers of division and dissolution. As the sacred literature relates, this supremacy is innate to all human souls, once the powers are confronted and mastered in their indigenous realm. According to legend it was at Abydos where this mystic transformation first took place in timeless time, and where tradition placed it ever after.

The First Initiation: Ta Ur, the Exalted Land

The temple of Seti I at Abydos is known to have been reconstructed in Dynasty 19 on the archaic ground that Egyptian tradition distinguished as *Ta Ur*, "the exalted land," the most ancient place of the ancestors. It was here that from time immemorial the annual sacred drama of the "Great Going Forth" was celebrated, the popular festival that reenacted the death and rebirth of the green god. But it was also here that Seti and his immediate descendants executed a monumental effort to honor their ancestors by resurrecting an ancient temple complex that was to house one of the most complete king lists of Egypt, enumerating his divine predecessors who embodied the continuity of the Osirian principle through the spiritual clan to which the royal dead belonged. The temple proper contains seven sanctuaries, dedicated to Seti, Ptah, Harakhte, Amun, Asar, Auset, and Heru. These seven chambers provide the first clue to the provocative function of the site, representing the seven phases of the Lunar transformation symbolized by the seven Arits or divisions of Sekhet Iaru in the domain of Asar. Chambers in a southern extension to the temple also contain sanctuaries, dedicated to Nefertum and Ptah-Sokar, as well as a long passage leading to the rear of the temple and entry to a mysterious monument of obscure origin, known as the Osireion. Included in the restoration program of Seti, this building represents the reinstatement of a tradition that had begun in ages past and which had assumed renewed importance to the Ramessides and their descendants.¹⁶

¹⁶ Zuhdi, Omar: "Apropos of the South Wing of Seti's Temple at Abydos." *KMT*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (Summer 1997).

In the first century of our era, the Roman natural historian Pliny the Elder reported that a vast underground labyrinth, consisting of 3,000 apartments, existed in the Faiyum near the pyramid of Amunemhat III at Hawara. Legends of this and other subterranean complexes circulated in the ancient world,¹⁷ along with the notion that these districts, sacred in character, were the sites where the Osirian mysteries were celebrated. The labyrinths were described as ritual temples, designed to represent the ramparts of the underworld, in which the court of the gods presided over the ancestral company of souls in a continuously celebrated mythic ritual that honored Asar's restoration and renewal. Egyptian legend disclosed that the prototypical site of this great mystery was a mound reached from the outside by a winding passage, containing an island that housed the body of the slain god. It was here that an eternal vigil was kept by priestesses who assumed the roles of Nebt-Het and Auset, and where the allegorical story of Asar was replayed in rites that conferred his powers of transcendence and reoccurrence upon those who entered into his domain.

The Osireion, which predates Seti's temple by centuries, is among a small number of enigmatic monuments at Abydos regarded by the ancient Egyptians as sacred to Asar, and its true age may predate the dynastic era. Sunk below and behind the foundation of Seti's temple, it architecturally reflects the simple grandeur of the Old Kingdom, and has been compared to the monumental design of Kauf Ra's valley temple at Giza (Dynasty 4), though its massive granite architraves exceed even those of Kauf Ra in size.¹⁸ The Osireion is aligned to both the main axis of Seti's temple and to the constellation of archaic royal tombs three miles distant on the plain of Omm el Qa'ab, symbolically joining the living sanctuaries of the New Kingdom temple to the ancestral graves of Egypt's earliest rulers. As such, it presents one of the most credible possibilities as a site of ancient initiation—for the living—into the mysteries of the ever-renewing

17 Watterson, Barbara: "A second brick pyramid was built from Amunemhat III at Hawara, near the Faiyum. It has elaborate internal structures, but its chief claim to fame was its memorial temple which, according to Pliny, boasted 3,000 apartments, half of them underground, and was the original Labyrinth." quoting Pliny: *Natural History*, xxxvi, 13 and 84. *The Egyptians*, Blackwell Publishers, Inc.: Cambridge MA, 1997; p. 86. Other classical accounts are found in Herodotus II, 147-148; Manetho II; and Strabo XVII.1.37.

18 Zayad, Abd el-Hamid: "These pillars recall those of the valley temple of Kauf Ra at Giza, but are even more massive, measuring 4.0 x 2.38 x 2.13 m. against the 4.3 x 1.1 x 1.1 of those of Kauf Ra." *Abydos*, Ministry of Culture and National Orientation of the U.A.R.: Antiquities Department of Egypt, General Organization for Printing Office, 1963; p. 103.

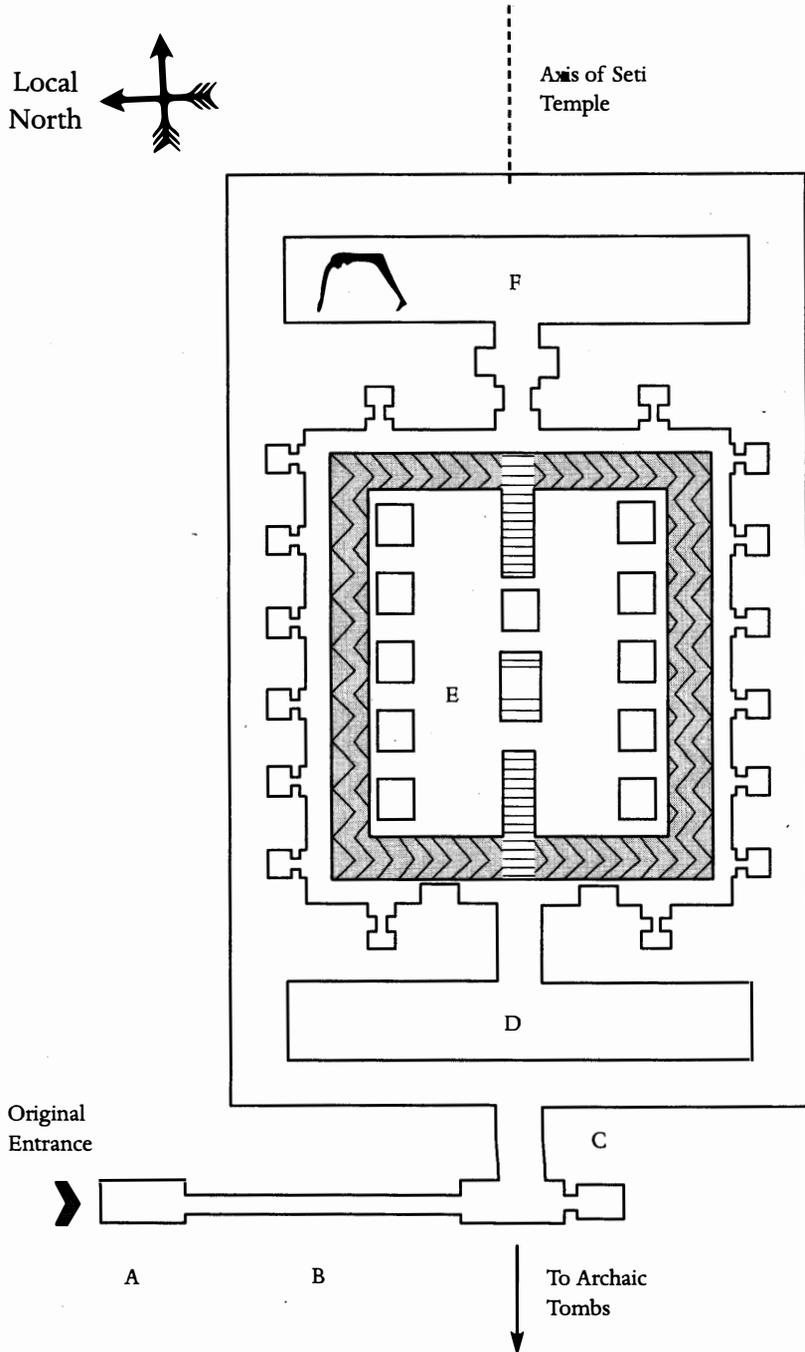


Figure 67—The Osireion at Abydos

god. This sacred place serves as a passage from the world of time to the realm of timeless time.

The Osireion rests fifty feet below the floor level of Seti's temple, and is believed to have been covered by a tumulus in antiquity upon which trees grew, being associated with the primeval mound of creation and the legendary hill in which Asar was laid to rest between two willows—his mourning sisters. Its interior has been regarded as a recreation of Asar's "winding way," an architectural theme found in the underground complexes beneath the pyramids and repeated on a smaller scale in many tombs. The winding way is a metaphor for the celestial Milky Way, which geographically parallels the Nile and represents the initial path of the sojourner following Asar. Its embodiment in sacred architecture proves an environment for the initiate to proceed on a journey through the shadow worlds, and, guided by the texts and images inscribed in these rare places, to join with the powers of natural life. This archetypal locale was probably the template that gave rise to an enigmatic tomb of Rameses II's sons recently uncovered in the Valley of the Kings,¹⁹ as well as the famed labyrinths described by historians in the ancient world.

But the Duat was evidently not the domain of only the dead. Seti's restoration of the Osireion, carried on by his son Rameses II and grandson Merenptah, ensured that the winding way would remain open to all of their descendants, and may have served as the means by which the living could establish communion with the forces of the shadow worlds and return to the living empowered by them.

The Osireion was originally entered from the northwest, outside the temenos wall of Seti's temple (A). A rectangular anteroom is first encountered, depicting Merenptah presenting an image of Maat to the deities Ra and Asar, a dedicatory gesture that commences the symbolic journey into the Duat. Southward, a passage with a stone vaulted roof ensues (B), sloping downward toward the subterranean complex. The walls of the passage, commencing at the northern end, are decorated with colored texts of *The Book of Gates* on the western wall, and *The Book of What is in the Duat* on the east wall. The sloping passage ends in a vestibule (C), which has a small room at its southern end with another vaulted

¹⁹ Reeves, Nicholas and Wilkinson, Richard H.: *The Complete Valley of the Kings*. Thames & Hudson: New York, 1996; pp. 144–6.

roof—areas which may have served as incubation chambers similar to those found within Djoser's complex at Saqqara. The room is covered with texts depicting scenes from the Duat, which, when viewed in the dim light of torches, would have imparted a surreal landscape to the sojourner. Inscriptions in the vestibule show Merenptah worshipping Asar and Heru—deities of the Lunar and Solar initiations—and a list of the 102 sacred names of Asar, invoked before entering his domain.

One then enters the realm of the dormant god, where a large transverse hall (D) with another vaulted roof is encountered. We can imagine the assembly of priests and priestesses choreographing the sacred performance of Asar's deepest mysteries here, set apart from the looming, emotional crowds who gathered during the annual festival in the town of Abydos. Within, the great central hall (E) represents the archetypal dwelling of Asar's timeless slumber, on a massive island of sandstone surrounded by a channel of water, upon which stand ten monolithic pillars of red granite that once supported a vaulted roof.

Since it was reopened in 1903, egyptologists have speculated for decades what purposes the Osireion may have served. It has been discounted as a tomb for many reasons: it lacked funerary equipment or identifying texts on discovery; it does not lie within the confines of a necropolis; and most importantly, the baffling central hall is surrounded by water eight meters deep—not a desirable feature for the preservation of a body. The water channel surrounding the island of the Osireion was fed in ancient times by a stone passage that ran eastward below Seti's temple to an ancient canal connected to the Nile. Today the entire hall is submerged due to a rise in the water table of the area and the permanent height of the river—no longer subject to a rise and fall—controlled now by the Aswan Dam. But the presence of water within underscores the symbolism of this monument as the sacred place of Asar, governor of the Moon and the life force of Egypt brought by the river.

Diodorus reported that the name Asar means “the many-eyed,” an allusion to the myriad forms he takes as a luminary in the sky.²⁰ The Moon's face assumes diverse forms as it passes through its cyclic variations—from New Moon, to Full Moon, to a dark orb reflecting a sliver of light in its last phase. The Moon has always

20 As quoted by Budge, in *Osiris: the Egyptian Religion of Resurrection*, p. 9.

been associated with the element Water in esoteric symbolism, undoubtedly because of its known influence on the tides; Asar's connection to this principle was expressed in the mythic elements of his death, restoration, and renewal. His body was scattered on the river and protected by the waters surrounding his sacred island during the mystic process that transformed him from mortal to immortal existence. Asar was also harbinger of the Nile's return at inundation, coincident with the return of Orion in the sky after a seasonal disappearance that signaled the ebb of the river. In the Osireion, this symbiosis is exemplified in the central hall, where two flights of fourteen steps on the eastern and western ends lead down to the water channel and up to the sandstone island, appropriately symbolizing each day in the lunar month that the nocturnal orb ascends and descends in the sky. In the center, a raised, stepped platform represents the resting place of the renewed deity, who was thrown into the water broken and divided, and emerged restored and whole.

Those who have analyzed the Osireion give differing opinions for the purpose of the platform on the island in the central hall. Because of Asar's connection with sprouting grain in agricultural ceremonies, it has been proposed that barley was placed upon the platform and watered in a ceremony intended to quicken the god's fertile powers for the coming growing season. Alternatively, the platform has been regarded as the resting place of an ancient sarcophagus, now gone, that originally held the god's relic. But this sacred chamber, intended for the living and revered enough by Seti to deserve a complete renovation for the coming ages, may have served another, more sublime, purpose.

Once the initiate passed through the descending passage and confronted the powers of the Duat on entering the shadow world, she would have first encountered the deep waters of the central hall and reprised the god's dissolution, followed by an ascent to the island and an interlude on the platform where life was symbolically restored to the body in a mystic trance or induced sleep. But the island in the central hall is also a recreation of the sacred Isle of Flame, the place in the Hermopolitan cosmogony where the divine Paut emerged from the waters of Nun and the ogdoad of divinities came into being to create the universe. This was a return to the "exalted land," the place of timeless time and the Pauti, the ancestral body, where new life could be secured both in this existence and the next.

The central hall is surrounded by a series of cells that were once shuttered by wooden doors, six on either side of the north-south axis, two on the west, and three on the east. Reminiscent of temple chapels, they may have represented the realms of the gods within the mythological court who judged Set's crime against Asar, and ritually opened in turn to bestow upon the slumbering initiate the powers of conscious mastery in the regions of the shadow worlds through which she had passed.

The middle cell on the east—already closed for centuries in ancient times—was broken through by Seti's restoration, leading to a second transverse hall (F) with a vaulted roof that features on its northern end one of the most exquisitely detailed astronomical ceilings of the New Kingdom. Known as the "sarcophagus room" because of its architectural similarity to the funerary chamber, a mythological text inscribed on the walls is believed to be the ritual drama enacted in the room. This was designed to "open the way" to existence in the great cycles in the heavens. At this point, the sojourner was called upon to "arise" and "awaken," as the renewed god had been brought into the world of eternal life after passing through the deepest regions of darkness.

Near-death experiences are known to be life-transforming. Did the Osirian Mysteries, emulating the passage from the world of life to the unknown shadow worlds, recreate this experience for the initiate? Was it a recreation of the primeval genesis or the embryonic separation of the body from its source at birth? An insight into the original design of this experience has been forwarded by egyptologist R. T. Rundle Clark:

The plight of Osiris is generally described as "weariness" or "sorrow," but he is also "asleep"—he has lost his ability to know.²¹

The ancient Egyptians believed—and Seti's enormous building campaign demonstrated—that the connection meant perpetual interaction, beginning with their primordial ancestors and extending through the royal clan to the myriad travelers through Ta Ur. At the same time, the body of the living was believed to be intrinsically engaged with the processes of nature, springing forth and

21 Clark, R.T. Rundle: *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. Thames & Hudson: London, 1978; p. 128.

returning to these origins in a continuous cycle. They recognized that this knowledge is subsumed by the obstacles and paradoxes of earthly life, and though inscribed in the deepest layers of physical matter, becomes lost. By passing through the winding way it is retrieved, as Asar regained his ability to know—or to remember—immortality. Here, the Osirian Mysteries are equivalent to attainment of the Buddhist nirvana, transcendence of the cycle of birth and death.

On the ceiling of the sarcophagus room, the ultimate destination of the mystic process embodied in this monument is revealed. Following Asar's return to and emergence from the primeval waters, another journey awaits the renewed soul—the ascent to the sky. But that transformation remains for another time and place. Here in the region of the slain and renewed god, one is at once engulfed by the primeval waters and restored by them. Fusing with the organic intelligence that he embodied, one can regenerate the dark forces symbolized by the shadows of the Lunar cycle and attain Asar's supremacy over the cessation of physical life in his chamber of renewal.

The Second Initiation: Per Ur, The Exalted House

One of the titles of the great temple at Karnak was "Heliopolis of the South," a reference to the Solar tradition maintained by the priests who served in the sacred precinct, called Ipet Sout. Here, Amun embodied the invisible powers of light, and bestowed upon his initiates the sacred task of kingship that made visible the invisible forces of the celestial fire and carried them to earth. By the Second Intermediate Period, this site became the theater of all royal investitures, after Amun assumed supremacy as the Solar principle with the inception of the Age of Aries.

The rites of investiture were a straightforward interpretation of the Horian Mysteries—the king was ritually fused with all of the gods of Egypt, after which he would receive their powers and acknowledgement. He would then assume the throne; receive his crowns, sceptres, and regalia, and take command of his royal territory: the land and its inhabitants, and the houses of the gods. But these ceremonies were also infused with a deep solemnity and drew from a tradition that built and maintained the very foundation of Egyptian civilization. As perfunctory as they appear in description, they nevertheless endowed the recipient

with a status that exalted him beyond common experience, and in turn brought to those he represented an exaltation that awakened the impulse of divine aspiration.

Since the record of the royal coronation at Karnak predates the construction of Pylons I and II, the route of initiation can be traced from Pylon III, constructed in Dynasty 18 by Amunhotep III and regarded as the border of Amun's domain since Dynasty 12. A procession began here (A), which included the initiate and officials of the Royal Court, who accompanied their mortal candidate to the edge of the sacred precinct and waited to hail an immortal being into the world of life after the rites of royal confirmation.

After passing through the pylon, the initiate entered the world of divine powers, the region of the gods (B). Here, his secular companions halted and released their charge to the sacerdotal authorities of the temple, whose sacred duty to induct the king into the body of the Heru Shemsu began. A priest in the guise of Heru em Aakhuti, the Neter of the two horizons, brought the initiate into the precinct outside of Pylon IV (C), which stood at the most ancient perimeter of Ipet Sout. Here, the initial rite of enthronement was performed, a purification by the four deities of the Heliopolitan cardinal directions: Djehuti (south), Set (north), Heru Behutet (east), and Heru Dunawy (west), the latter an enigmatic falcon image who only appears in the ceremonies of kingship.

The initiate was then led to a part of the sanctuary between Pylons IV and V, designated as the "House of the King." Between two rows of papyrus columns (D), the coronation took place. This hall was comprised of two areas, emulating the two ancient houses of the Heru Shemsu: the Per Nezer (north) and the Per Ur (south). Priestesses in the garb of the two ancient guardians of the crown, Nekhebet and Wadjet, placed their insignia, the vulture and cobra heads, over the Nemes linen headdress upon the initiate's brow. This was followed by a salutation from ceremonialists assuming the images of the Solar ennead. The Samer-f, in the sacred garb of the spotted leopard, then appeared and invested the initiate with the royal crowns in an elaborate ceremony that endowed his body with new powers as he received the diadems.

The Atef crown was comprised of the Hedjet (the white crown of the Upper Kingdom), feathers, and the horns of Amun, representing the Theban genealogy of the king. The Ureret was the crown of Maat's two plumes with the solar disc, representing the pervasive power of light and the foundation of order brought

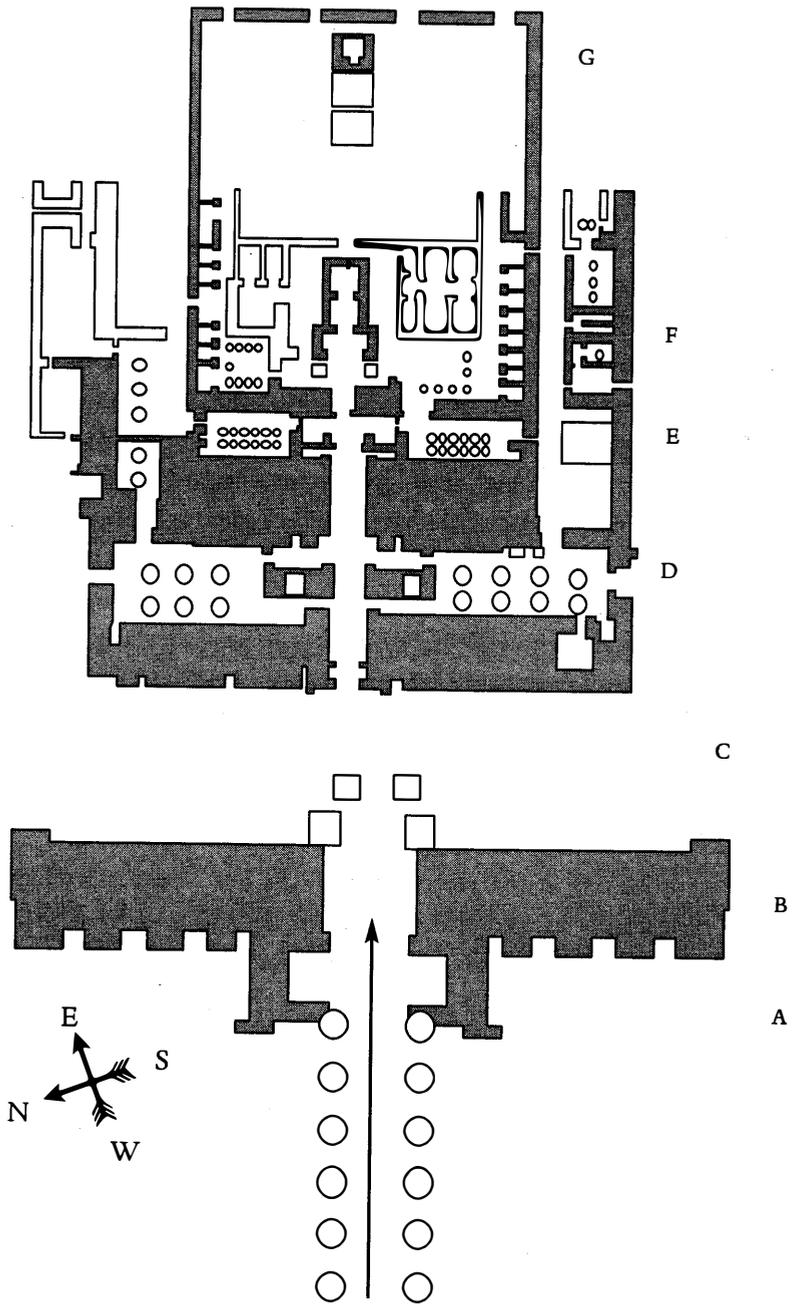


Figure 68—The Royal Coronation at Karnak

by the monarch through the Hermopolitan gods. The Ibes combined the Deshret (the red crown of the Lower Kingdom) with the two plumes of the bennu bird, symbolizing the ancestral powers of the Heliopolitan gods. In addition to these crowns, the king received the crook and flail of the Two Lands, the Uadj ("papyrus stalk of fecundity"), and the Uas ("staff of power"). Other regalia included the giraffe tail, an insignia worn on the belt that endowed the power to "see afar," and the royal sandals, upon which were inscribed the metaphorical "nine captives," an allusion to all possible enemies of Egypt that were trod upon by the king.

After receiving his crowns, the initiate passed through Pylon V and into a southern chamber hewn in rose granite (E). Here, he received the blue *Khepresh* ("warrior crown") that extended the protection of the Memphite gods, the *Chopesh* ("sickle sword"), and was officially confirmed with the five sacred names. He then returned to the processional route, passed through the sanctuary of the solar barque (F) and proceeded to the sanctuary (G), to be initiated into the high ritual of Amun's house. The ceremony commenced with the opening of the great door bolts of the naos, the awakening of the god, and the purifying and feeding the sacred image. This was the first ceremonial act as divine heir of the Neteru, and would set the rhythm thereafter for each divine awakening performed at dawn by Pharaoh's representative in the temple.

The ceremonies of investiture were repeated in abbreviated form for public viewing in a ceremony called *Kha Neter* ("manifestation of the god"), where the initiate was shown to the people in the outer court of the temple following the sacred rites within. After this, he was crowned with the *Pasekhenty* ("two powerful ones," the double crown), and performed the ritual circuit of the temple courtyard, taking symbolic possession of the Two Lands.

A rite of equal profundity and power that reinforced the divine lineage of the royal person took place annually at the Ipet festival, when the king reunited with his divine progenitors and the Theban temples re-fused through the journey of Amun from his northern (Karnak) to his southern (Luxor) sanctuary. The celebration culminated in a rite of purification for the king, followed by a reenactment of his coronation and reception of divine power from the Neteru. More importantly, Pharaoh realized a transformation through this festival that not

only endowed him with the blessings of the gods, but the renewed ability to transfer those blessings to the land and its people.

The Third Initiation: Ta Khut Akhet, Light of the Horizon

Modern reconstructions of the adjoining pyramid temples support a new but coherent view of these structures. Rather than serving as mortuary buildings for the king's funeral, they are now seen as working temples dedicated to the Akh of the royal person. The ancients viewed the pyramid—often referred to as Akhet “horizon” or “place of the Akh”—as a personification of the king's body, permanently constituted by the most enduring of physical substances and the highest magic. This is borne out by the very names that the ancient Egyptians gave to the pyramids: “The Places of Unas are Perfect,” “The Perfection of Pepi is Established,” and “The Perfection of Merenra Appears,” among others.

As a divine principle, the Akh was believed to be embodied in the *pyramidion*, a pyramidal stone representing the structure, placed not at the apex of the pyramid, but installed in the pyramid temple to emanate its Stellar powers into the environment. In this scenario, the king has truly become a god among the living, and his attendant priesthood maintains the temple of this divine being, a House of Eternity, fulfilling its ultimate mandate of “making gods.”

If the architecture of the pyramid reflects the body of its spiritual progenitor, the chambers and passages also mirror the divine regions where he lives and travels, because he has opened the way between the physical and spiritual worlds through this embodiment. In the Dynasty 4 pyramid of Khufu (the Great Pyramid), the puzzling arrangement of chambers and passageways characteristic of the pyramid structure becomes coherent in light of the esoteric physiology actuated by the Stellar transformation (refer to Figure 70 on page 426). The so-called “unfinished chamber” below the base of the pyramid (A) represents the the resting place of the Khat (the deepest earth) and the place of its purification. The upward passage from this region (B), oriented to the north polar sky, symbolizes the ascent from physical life through the doors of heaven, where the initiate assumes Lunar and Solar identities. These transformations take place first in the limestone, vaulted-roofed queen's chamber (C), where the Ka is restored in a transformation effected through the mysterious, monolithic offering niche in the eastern wall, and proceeds under the five-tiered ceiling of



Deshret
Esna



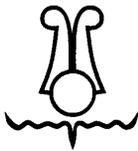
Ibes
Heliopolis



Hedjet
Abydos



Pasekhemty
Edfu, Behdet



Ureth
Hermopolis



Atef
Thebes



Nemes
Dendera



Kheprsh
Memphis

Figure 69—The Royal Crowns and their Correspondences to Egyptian cities

the king's chamber (D), where the Ba began its solar journey into cosmic realms in the black granite "sarcophagus."

Archeoastronomers pinpoint the Pyramid Age as the epoch when a simultaneous alignment of sacred stars appeared in the so-called shafts of the Great Pyramid. With the polestar Alpha Draconis (Thuban) aligned to the northern shaft of the king's chamber, Al Nitak—the largest star in Orion's belt—would appear in the southern shaft (D).²² At the same time, Sopdet would be positioned in the southern shaft of the queen's chamber (C), with the stars of Ursa Minor aligned in its northern shaft. The four stars of this constellation which form the "bowl" of the little dipper were known to the Egyptians as the Shemsu, recalling once again the sacred fraternity who guide the passage from mortal to immortal realms. A singularly potent event is symbolized by the synchronization of these cosmic asterisms, one that clearly exemplifies the Stellar transformation. The four points in the sky that emanate into the pyramid's architecture may indeed indicate the fusion of the four cosmic worlds and the four spiritual principles of the body coming together in the sacred space of this House of Eternity. This is also suggested by the placement of the four so-called "solar boats" that have been found buried at each side of the Great Pyramid and other pyramids of the epoch, which served as the ritual vehicles of passage through the four cosmic worlds. Though dismantled in ancient times, their reconstitution in the modern age—physically and magically—may signal the revitalization of the ancient mysteries that made possible this ultimate transformation.

Speculation in modern times has postulated that the Stellar journeys of the ancients, depicted in mythology and ritual, were literal circumstances accomplished by yet unknown techniques—and there is evidence both for and against this view. But returning to the Egyptian mind, this premise is simplistic and discounts the vast esoteric philosophy forwarded by the sacred literature. For them, life was multidimensional, an existence in concert with all the worlds in creation and all beings enfolded in it. The three initiatory paths were viable routes by which those worlds and beings could be rejoined in the living, ecstatic moment of timeless time, at least for the sojourner and those who followed.

²² Krupp, E. C.: *Skywatchers, Shamans, and Kings*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1997; p. 288. Krupp notes that the phenomenon was first proposed in a collaboration by egyptologist Alexander Badawy and astrophysicist Virginia Trimble in 1964.

CONCLUSION

Like the Egyptians, most of us recognize that life is comprised of more than the visible dimension, but the difference in us is a lack of the blueprint to experience what lies beyond. We seek this mystic consciousness in everyday life, where logic and materialism no longer dominate our perceptions. Yet in spite of this, and the popular acceptance of alternative philosophies and traditional cultures in modern times, we are for the most part still disconnected from natural life and our own intuitions, to the detriment of our peace of mind and confidence in the future.

At times in our collective reveries, the ineffable image of Egypt inevitably comes forward, with the implication that perhaps lost treasures will be uncovered or long-hidden knowledge will be revealed, and that such events will provide the antidote to our longings. Though these expectations have never been fulfilled, such wishful thinking periodically reappears, asserting that the ancient mysteries will indeed be solved in our time and to our benefit.

For those who have directly sought knowledge of Egypt's sacred tradition, the mythology and religious practices appeal but their functions are puzzling, in light of what is presented in museums and academic books. The inscrutable formulas promised eternal life and wisdom to men and women long gone from the earthly sphere, and they seem impossible to achieve in the present. Moreover, the task of restoring an ancient spiritual practice seems formidable, and few have sought it seriously because the effort may not equal the intangible results.

But Egypt's spiritual practice can be restored. The words and gestures are documented, and the art and architecture of the sacred sites have been analyzed ad

infinitem. Only a spirit of acceptance, willingness and participation is missing. The instructions, preparatory rites, and ceremonial observances in the companion volume to this work are a response to that need. They encompass a considerable number of years spent in investigation, study, and practice, but mostly they were constituted by a passion to pursue the divine life as the ancient Egyptians pursued it. As time passed, it became evident from the results of this work that it was meant to be disclosed and practiced as widely as possible, so that the benefits of a true spiritual practice in the ancient canon could be enjoyed by contemporary persons.

Toward that end, the full praxis for maintaining an inner temple and a living liturgy are provided in *The Sacred Magic of Ancient Egypt* (to be published by Llewellyn Publications, Summer 2002). Along with this knowledge comes the promise that the Neteru answer every summons, and the certainty that they appear in their time, at any place dedicated to their nature and their work. The three paths of transformation are accessible, and may be entered upon once again by all true initiates.

EPILOGUE

For man is a being of divine nature; he is comparable, not to the other living creatures upon earth, but to the gods in heaven. Nay, if we are to speak the truth without fear, he who is indeed a man is even above the gods of heaven, or at any rate he equals them in power. None of the gods of heaven will ever quit heaven, and pass its boundary, and come down to earth; but man ascends even to heaven, and measures it; and what is more than all beside, he mounts to heaven without quitting the earth; to so vast a distance can he put forth his power. We must not shrink then from saying that a man on earth is a mortal god, and that a god in heaven is an immortal man.

Hermetica: Libellus X:24b, "The Key"

Appendix One

AN ABBREVIATED DYNASTIC CHRONOLOGY

Period	Date	Dynasties
Prehistoric	5500 B.C.E	
Predynastic	5500–3100	
Archaic Period	3100–2700	1–2
Old Kingdom	2700–2180	3–6 — Pyramid Age
1st Intermediate Period	2180–2040	7–10
Middle Kingdom	2040–1780	11–12
2nd Intermediate Period	1780–1570	13–17
New Kingdom	1570–1080	18–20
Late Period	1080–332	21–22
Ptolemaic	332–30	} — Graeco-Roman Period
Roman	30 B.C.E–395 C.E.	
Byzantine	395–641 C.E.	
Islamic	641–1300 C.E.	

This conservative dating scheme, called “Chronology II” by scholars, was developed by James Henry Breasted (1865–1935), whose interest in resolving Egyptian history with Biblical events strongly influenced the outline. Here, Dynasty 1 is

dated 3100 B.C.E. However, Egyptian chronology continues to be in dispute today. One of the earliest efforts to create a dynastic record was completed by Manetho, an Egyptian priest living at the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Manetho's record places Dynasty I much earlier, at 4777 B.C.E. This version of Egyptian history was supported and augmented by Sir William Flinders Petrie (1853–1942)—commonly regarded as the father of modern archeology—and is given as Appendix Two on the following pages.

Appendix Two

THE MYSTERY TRADITION OF ANCIENT EGYPT

Chronology I: Manetho, Petrie (with Notable Rulers)

4212–3335 B.C.E. (Dynasties 3–6)

Old Kingdom

Queen: Hetepheres

Kings: Khufu, Kauf-Ra, Djoser

The Stellar Mysteries are recorded in the Pyramid Texts—writings which primarily reflect the cosmologies of Heliopolis and Memphis. The essential practices of this “sky religion” take precedence at the temple centers. Observations of stellar phenomena dominate temple life and the Sothic cycle is adopted as the standard value for the length of the year, though the archaic lunar calendar is retained for certain religious purposes. Use of *hydrologia* (water clocks) is documented from this period. The kings at the end of this period acquire an additional name that henceforth becomes a pharaonic tradition, Sa Ra, “Son of the Sun.”

3335–2778 B.C.E. (Dynasties 7–10)

First Intermediate Period

Queen: Sobekhemsaf

Kings: Khety's and Mentuhotep's

The Solar Mysteries are introduced with an emphasis on Solar and the cyclic symbolism of the seasons. The Coffin Texts come into general use, with astronomical and astrological symbolism woven into the symbolic journey of the deceased through the inner life. This is symbolized as traveling through

the region of the Neteru (the sky) with the Sun, during the twelve hours of day and night.

2778–2112 B.C.E. (Dynasties 11–13) Middle Kingdom

Queen: Sit-Hathor Iyunset *Kings: Senusert's (I–III)*

Mummification and funerary practices become more elaborate; the removal of brain and organs from the mummy prior to burial is introduced. Commencement of writings placed with tomb goods, later collectively called The Book of Coming Forth. These contain detailed descriptions of the inner life and the heavenly regions, and the Neteru presiding over segments of the visible and invisible worlds in the sky.

2112–1587 B.C.E. (Dynasties 14–16) Second Intermediate Period

Queen: Tetisheri *Kings: Amenemhep's*

The invasion of the Hyksos introduces religious concepts which polarize Egyptian theology with ideas of good and evil, life and death. Hence, eclipses, comets, and other unusual astronomical phenomena are interpreted as evil forebodings. The democratization of funerary rites and the dissemination of Lunar–Osirian mysteries to the masses commences in this period.

1587–1102 B.C.E. (Dynasties 17–20) First Half of New Kingdom

Queens: Hatshepsut, Nefertiti *Kings: Amunhotep's, Akhnaton, Tutankhamun*

Religious upheaval with an attempt to restore the Heliopolitan Solar Mysteries in the literal form of the Sun (disc) worship. The ancient geodetic centers were reestablished throughout Egypt as the priesthood of Amun sought to restore order after the disruption caused by Akhnaton's heresy.

1587–1102 B.C.E. Second Half of New Kingdom

Queens: Nefertari, Twosre *Kings: Ramessides*

Restoration of many Old Kingdom religious centers and traditions. The Book of Breathings, The Book of Caverns, The Book of What is in the Duat—many of which are Stellar and Solar in character—are added to a

funerary repertoire that has popularly become expressed in Lunar-Osirian terms. Under the Ramesside rulers, important astronomical and astrological works of the Sacred Science were consolidated and preserved in texts, temple reliefs, and tomb paintings—notably the Ramesseum and the tomb of Seti I.

1102–525 B.C.E. (Dynasties 21–26)

Late Period

High Priestesses: Nitocris, Ankhnesneferibe Kings: Sheshonq, Taharqa

The political capitol is moved to Tanis in the Delta, while the preeminence of Amun is restored in Thebes with the establishment of the seat of Divine Adoratrice. This is a role of the temple high priestess who eventually supersedes the throne princess in fulfilling the transmission of the royal Ka (ancestral spirit) to the soul of the Pharaoh, a tradition originating with the Heliopolitan temple of the Old Kingdom.

In funerary custom, an exclusive emphasis on Lunar-Osirian symbolism results in the replacement of Stellar and Solar concepts of transformation with the idea of an afterlife that resembles earthly existence. During this period, a series of Sudanese and Ethiopian kings incorporate certain African traditions into Egyptian culture. Colonization from Greeks, Persians, and Hittites also bring outside religious and esoteric traditions to Egypt, setting the stage for the Hermetic synthesis of the Graeco-Roman Period.

525–332 B.C.E.

Persian Conquest

The melding of Babylonian and Persian astronomical concepts with the Egyptian. Emphasis on planetary observation and the extensive recording of celestial phenomena in funerary books. Ecliptical (east-west) points of reference supplant the ancient polar (north-south) astronomical emphasis with the introduction of the twelve-asterism Zodiac.

Beginning of Graeco-Roman Period

332–30 B.C.E.

Greek Conquest

Queens: Kleopatras and Arsinoes Kings: Ptolemies

The introduction of Greek astronomical concepts. From early writings of Egypt's sacred astronomy, it appears that the ancient Egyptians held a heliocentric (Sun-centered) view of the universe. During Ptolemaic times, however, a geocentric worldview is expressed, which passed on through the Middle Ages in Western science. This is also when Egypt adopts the twelve-sign Zodiac and slowly abandons the traditional 36-segment frame of reference for the heavens. Personal horoscopes for the masses are recorded in tomb reliefs and on coffins. The Zodiac of Dendera from this period was discovered by the eighteenth century Napoleonic expedition.

The library of Alexandria is conceived and constructed to house all the literary knowledge of the ancient world and translate it into Greek—the language of the intellectual elite of the time. This results in the dissemination of Egyptian esotericism to a wide body of philosophers and scholars who eventually form the Hermetic school.

30 B.C.E.–641 C.E.

Roman Conquest

The Caesars

The melding of Greek and Roman religious figures with the Egyptian Neteru results in the widespread emergence of the cults of Serapis and Isis. Horary and mundane astrology are in vogue, along with the use of many temple rites for popular divination. In the Graeco-Roman Period, astrology, magic, and alchemy were hybridized from their ancient, mystical forms to profane, simplified practices. The Temple of Esna and portions of Dendera and Edfu are restored or expanded by the Caesars in this period.

641 C.E.**Arab Conquest**

The Arabs preserved, translated, and commented on many Egyptian and Greek texts of the Graeco-Roman period. Of their writings, alchemy and astrology were the most prolific. Astronomical observation continued, and many catalogues were compiled of stellar and planetary phenomena with their horoscopic meanings for use in mundane and natal astrology. Many of the stars in modern astronomical catalogues retain their Arabian names. A large number of the alchemical and philosophical works of this period found their way into Medieval monasteries, where they were translated and influenced a number of intellectual movements in the Middle Ages.

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Rosemary Clark (Virginia) is an author and speaker on the esoteric tradition of ancient Egypt and its religious, philosophical, and metaphysical legacy in modern times. She has been featured on the NBC network as founder of Temple Harakhte, a group devoted to the experiential religious practices of Egypt's Old Kingdom period. Ms. Clark leads ceremonial tours through Egypt and is the illustrator of *The Traveler's Key to Ancient Egypt*.

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