

Funerary Mythology

The Egyptian View of Death

The experience of death is universal, but mankind has seldom accepted this fact without protest. To a certain degree all religion can be considered a great monument to this protest against death.¹ The protest against death that the ancient Egyptians expressed in their religion is imposing to all who have studied the monuments in Egypt itself or in museums with Egyptian collections all over the world. Most of what remains of ancient Egyptian culture, whether it is material (pyramids, mummies, statuary, and other remains) or literary (texts on stone and papyrus and other inscriptions), is funerary. Although our knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture is doubtless one-sided, since most of its non-funerary aspects are lost forever, it must be said that the ancient Egyptians focused on questions of life and death to a degree unsurpassed, before or since. In the millennia of their history they developed an imposing, extensive, and intricate funerary mythology to answer the riddle of death and to make its prospect more acceptable.

In Egypt, death was not considered shameful and forbidden as it has been until quite recently in much of modern Western culture,² but was accepted instead as part of creation.³ It was considered not just the end of life, but also the entrance to a new mode of being. The Egyptians believed that, although life is transitory,⁴ it could be preserved through renewal. In ritual this mythical truth was reversed, and life renewed by preservation. Death might be viewed as an enemy⁵ or as a friend,⁶ but it was inevitable. The underlying idea was that life can only exist, be renewed, and be regained through death. Not only human beings, but also such gods as Re and Osiris were mortal: They had life in the sense that they had died and arisen from the dead. The renewal, that mysterious process that Kristensen⁷ called life from death, came about outside the created world in the unfathomable depth and darkness of the primeval waters (Nun) that surround this world. It is in that mysterious space that the deceased could live again. One sun-hymn reads:

How beautiful is thy shining forth in the horizon
We are in renewal of life. We have entered into Nun
He has renovated (us) to one who is young for the first time
The (one) has been stripped off, the other put on.⁸

The last sentence has been interpreted to mean, "The old man is cast off and the new man is put on."⁹ It may also call to mind the mummy-bandages that are thrown off in the decisive moment of resurrection¹⁰ and the white garments that the glorified dead wear in depictions of the Underworld. The dead bodies sink after death in the chaotic, lightless, and endless primeval waters. Here the sun-god, after having shone upon earth, descends in the evening and gives light and life in the Underworld and orders at least part of it with time and space into life-times¹¹ and abodes in which the resurrected dead can live. The Underworld is created or divided into twelve hours, according to the Book of Amduat, and into twelve portals, according to the Book of Gates. The dead do not all sink back into the uncreated non-being like the enemies of the gods. They are preserved, and arise from the dead in a mysterious space, a realm of the dead that man on earth can reach only in his imagination and through his knowledge about the mysterious course that the sun daily makes around this world.

Egyptian Funerary Mythology and Ritual

The Pyramid Texts, mankind's oldest corpus of written religious texts, dating from the first half of the third millennium B.C., or even earlier, already represent an intricate funerary mythology. Here it is stated that the king survives after death among the gods in heaven. Many passages appear at first sight to be rather unmythological protests against death.

Oho! Oho! Raise yourself, O King; receive your head, collect your bones, gather your limbs together, throw off the earth from your flesh, receive your bread which does not grow moldy and your beer which does not grow sour.¹²

From:
Mummies and Magic
The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt
Ed. by S. d'Aurica et al.
Museum of Fine Arts
Boston 1988

O my father, the King, raise yourself upon your left side, place yourself upon your right side for this fresh water which I have given to you. O my father, the King, raise yourself upon your left side, place yourself upon your right side for this warm bread which I have made for you.¹³

This utterance seems to begin with a very naturalistic, flat denial of death with no mythological detour. It seems to suggest that the deceased king is not dead but only asleep, and can raise himself, eat, and drink. It is, however, not simply an emotional outcry denying the reality of death, but a traditional ritual text written in several pyramids and recited at the occasion of offering. Food was offered to the dead, not so much with the expectation that they would really eat it, but with the aim of including them in the community. The dead were not expelled from the community, but given a special status as the blessed dead to whom food was offered on certain occasions. As every human being knows, the personality does not simply disappear on the day of burial. In Egypt, it would be dangerous to neglect the traditional obligations of alimentation. One should not take this text to mean the Egyptians of the third millennium B.C. believed that the dead king would rise to eat and drink on earth. This would, at best, happen in an imaginary or mythological abode.

The Pyramid Text goes on with words, names, and sentences that we would, without any hesitation, call mythological:

O my father, the King, the doors of the sky are opened for you, the doors of the celestial expanses are thrown open for you. The gods of Pe are full of sorrow and they come to Osiris at the sound of the wails of Isis and Nephthys. The souls of Pe clash (sticks) for you, they smite their flesh for you, they clap their hands for you, they tug their side-locks for you and they say to Osiris. "Go and come, wake up and sleep, for you are enduring in life! Stand up and see this, stand up and hear this which your son has done for you, which Horus has done for you. He smites him who smote you, he binds him who bound you. . . . You shall ascend to the sky, you shall become Wepwawet, your son Horus will lead you on the celestial ways; the sky is given to you, the earth is given to you, the Field of Rushes is given to you in company with these two great gods who come out of Heliopolis."

Without here giving a detailed explanation of all the mythological features in this funerary text, one can remark that the burial of the king in his pyramid represents his resurrection and ascension to heaven, whose doors are said to be open for him.

We might easily mistake mythological texts like those cited above for mere emotional exaggeration. What did the Egyptians really believe? A prominent early twentieth-century Egyptologist, evaluating the following mythological text from the middle of the second millennium B.C., wrote: "But looking behind all the make believe we discern clearly enough, a radical skepticism as to man's fate in the hereafter. The emotions conjured up a brightly colored picture, but the reason, had it been consulted, would have told another tale."¹⁴

You come in, you go out,
Your heart in joy at the praise of the lord of the gods;
A good burial after revered old age,
After old age has come.
You take your place in the lord-of-life (coffin),
You come to the earth in the tomb of the west.
To become indeed a living *ba*,
It shall thrive on bread, water and air;
To assume the form of phoenix, swallow,
Or falcon or heron, as you wish.
You cross in the ferry without being hindered,
You fare on the water's flowing flood.
You come to life a second time,
Your *ba* shall not forsake your corpse.
Your *ba* is divine among the spirits,
The worthy *bas* converse with you.
You join them to receive what is given on earth,
You thrive on water, you breathe air,
You drink as your heart desires,

Your eyes are given you to see,
 Your ears to hear what is spoken;
 Your mouth speaks, your feet walk,
 Your hands, your arms have motion.
 Your flesh is firm, your muscles are smooth,
 You delight in all your limbs;
 You count your members; all these, sound,
 There is no fault in what is yours.
 Your heart is yours in very truth,
 You have your own, your former heart.
 You rise to heaven, you open *duat* (Netherworld)
 In any shape that you desire.
 You are summoned daily to Wen-nefer's altar.
 You receive the bread that comes before (him)
 The offering to the lord of the sacred land.¹⁵

A modern Westerner might indeed see this example of Egyptian funerary mythology as "make believe," but within the context of Egyptian cosmographical and anthropological beliefs it is not unreasonable. Funerary texts, like this one from the tomb of Paheri in el-Kab, assure the deceased that he can and, indeed, will make use of the possibilities of a new life that are available, according to the traditional Egyptian knowledge and conception of the universe.

Funerary texts are often called magical texts.¹⁶ But the distinction between the magical and the religious is one of definition. The word *magic* is often used simply to label actions, sayings, and ideas that do not seem reasonable from a Western positivistic or Christian point of view.

Souls of the Dead

According to the text cited above, the deceased comes into the earth after burial. The earth is here another expression for that mysterious region outside the world of the living that in a foregoing text was called Nun or primeval waters. We have already suggested that the personality is not annihilated at death. The deceased becomes a living *ba*. In older Egyptological literature, the *ba*, represented as a bird, sometimes with a human head, was often incorrectly translated as soul; one might instead call the *ba* the alter ego, the embodiment of psychic and physical forces.¹⁷ The *ba* travels far in the cosmic circuit in the course of the sun-god. It may, as well, visit well-known spots on earth. The mummy remains motionless in the tomb or Underworld. The tomb is identified with the Underworld in the funerary texts and representations on the walls of the tomb or coffin and in papyri close to and around the mummy. The corporeal resurrection of the deceased comes about when the *ba* visits the tomb and unites itself with the mummy. The *ba* united with the mummy is an *akh*.¹⁸ *Akh* is usually translated as "spirit" but its corporeal aspect should not be neglected. A bodily spirit or spiritual body may seem a contradiction in terms, but it is not unknown in religious, or at least Christian, terminology: If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.¹⁹

The inevitable process of aging – the decay of sight, hearing, speech and mobility – that culminates in the complete bodily impotence that we call death seems to be thought reversible. Life arises from death: "You come to a life a second time." But it is also said, "You have your own, your former heart." The heart was believed to be the center of man's personality,²⁰ and provided continuity in the identity of the old and that of the new resurrected person. For this reason the heart was carefully left in the body during mummification and, as an extra precaution, a heart-scarab was added to the mummy. A spell was added in the Book of the Dead to give the heart back to the owner in the hereafter, in case the heart was lost in spite of all precautions.²¹

In the last lines of our quotation the deceased is reassured that he will be summoned to the altar of Osiris and receive the offerings. In the later texts it is said

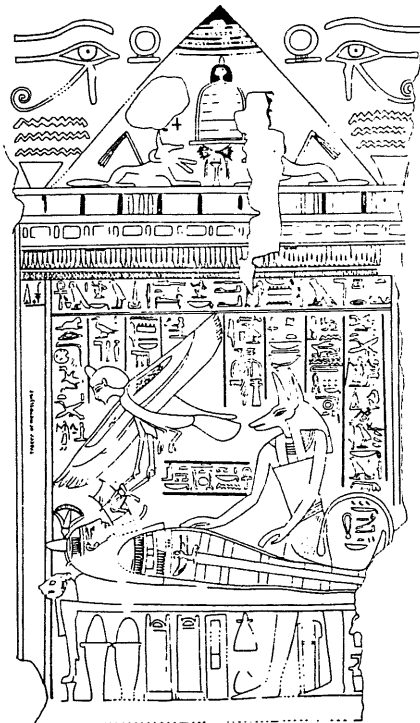


Fig. 15. The *ba* bird gives the hieroglyphic signs of the breath of life to the deceased, who is prepared by Anubis for resurrection. Relief in Theban tomb 106.

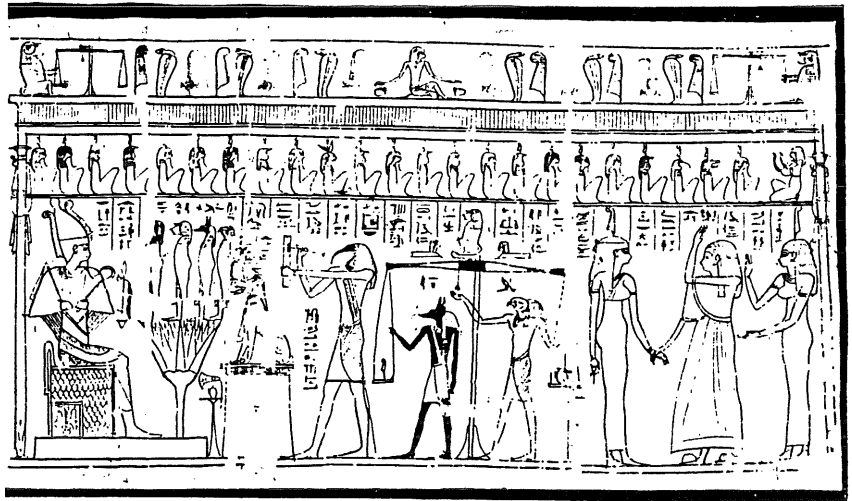


Fig. 16. Judgment of the Dead, vignette of Spell 125 in the Book of the Dead (cat. 134).

that he eats bread beside the god, that the gate opens for him; the bolts slide back automatically and he reaches the Hall of the Two Truths.

Judgment of the Dead

In this so-called Hall of the Two Truths, (or the two Maat goddesses), the judgment of the dead²² takes place, as is well known from the texts and representations of the New Kingdom, especially from text and vignette of Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead. This judgment is represented largely as a solemn pro-forma session. Indeed the Egyptian hereafter is not described in Egyptian funerary literature solely in terms of unearthly bliss. Sinners and criminals, called the nameless enemies of the gods, were punished in the hereafter; but nowhere is the punishment known to have struck a well-known Egyptian whose name was written in a tomb, in a funerary papyrus, or on a coffin and who was admitted to the final judgment. Enemies of the gods were doubtless not allowed entry into the Hall of the Two Truths. This ceremonial judgment was apparently not believed to be a serious examination that the person in question could possibly fail. Although it is out of the question that the judgment would result in condemnation to die a second death, the examination could be painful because its aim, as is explained in Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead, was to separate the deceased from his sins.

Already resurrected, the deceased was ushered into the Hall of Judgment, usually by Anubis, who had presided over his mummification and had protected him so far. He greeted the lords of the judgment, who could be Re and his nine gods or Osiris and his forty-two messengers, assuring them, "I know you, I know your names." A balance stood in the hall. The heart of the deceased, as the seat of identity and memory of the details of life on earth, was put in one of the scales. In the other was a feather of Maat, the symbol of truth, justice and order. The well-prepared resurrected person did not wait for a painful interrogation to begin, but recited a formula, the so-called Negative Confession, in which he denied all sorts of ethical or cultic sins:

I have not done falsehood against men.

I have not impoverished my associates.

I have done no wrong in the Place of Truth.

I have not learnt that which is not.

I have done no evil.

I have not made people labor daily in excess of what was due to be done for me. . .²³

He might also have recited a second formula, another declaration of innocence, that addressed the forty-two judges of Osiris:

O Far-strider who came forth from Heliopolis, I have done no falsehood.
 O Fire-embracer who came forth from Kher-aha, I have not robbed. O Long-nosed
 [Thoth] who came forth from Hermopolis, I have not been rapacious.
 O Swallower of shades who came forth from the cavern, I have not stolen. . .²⁴

The scales of the balance remained in equilibrium as long as the deceased spoke the truth. But every deviation from truth made the heart heavy, and the balancing pan holding the feather would rise. Anubis, sometimes together with Horus, verified the results and brought the scales in balance again. The presence of Anubis reassured those who were mummified; having performed the mummification, the god already had an intimate knowledge of the deceased. The god Thoth made a written record and reported the outcome, usually favorable. In case of doubt the personal circumstances and fate of the deceased were taken into consideration as mitigating factors. Moreover a well-prepared person should have spoken to his heart with the words of Spell 30B of the Book of the Dead:

O my heart which I had from my mother!
 O my heart which I had from my mother!
 O my heart of my different ages!
 Do not stand up as a witness against me,
 do not be opposed to me in the tribunal,
 do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance. . .²⁵

At this point a general verdict would be given like that written in the Papyrus of Ani:

Words spoken by the Great Ennead to Thoth who dwells in Hermopolis: What you have said is true. The Osiris scribe Ani, justified is righteous. He has committed no crime nor has he acted against us. Ammit shall not be permitted to prevail over him. Let there be given to him of the bread-offerings which go before Osiris and a permanent grant of land in the Field of Offerings as for the followers of Horus.²⁶

Ammit, whose name may mean "Devourer of the (condemned) Dead," is a hybrid monster with the head of a crocodile, forepart of a lion, and hindquarters of a hippopotamus. She would sit very near the balance, but she is never shown devouring a deceased who had entered the Hall of Judgment.

This does not mean that the Egyptian did not believe in punishment in the hereafter, but the punished were always the others, the enemies of the gods. They were beheaded, chopped into pieces, cooked in a cauldron, roasted in fire and burned until nothing was left. They were not only tortured, but annihilated, and died a second death so that they could not come to life again.

Perils of the Underworld

In funerary literature one may discern a certain fear that the deceased might inadvertently be drawn into the terrible punishments of the enemies. For this reason he is provided with many spells to prevent and ward off the dangers in the hereafter. These spells contain information and prescriptions as to what to do and say at the right moment. Even the deceased who is not mixed up with enemies and is himself not guilty of criminal or sinful acts fears that his *ba* may be caught in a net between heaven and earth, that unpleasant doorkeepers may be reluctant, or even refuse, to open gates that one necessarily has to pass. He may be caught, he may be bound, he may be tortured and thrown into pits and prisons. A ferry-man may ask difficult questions.

One typically dangerous situation was the lake of fire²⁷ that one had to pass and in which the enemies were burned. It stank. Birds flew away from it. As soon as the justified approached this horrifying lake of fire, which could not be evaded, it would turn into a pond with cool refreshing water from which he could drink and through which he could easily wade.

These dangers could be overcome by knowledge written in books of funerary mythology and by calling on mighty gods, especially Osiris, the lord of the Underworld, or the sun-god Re, who travels in his boat through the mysterious re-

gions of the Underworld. Hymns to these gods are included in the Book of the Dead to provide a religious attitude in the hereafter. Better than such a last-minute, post-mortem religion in the hereafter is the religious attitude on earth:

Those who used to worship Re on earth, who charmed Apophis, who offered their oblations, who censured their gods they indeed, after they have gone to rest, they dispose of their libations, they receive their food offerings. . . . Those who spoke the truth on earth, who were not in the proximity of sins, they are invited unto this gate. They live in righteousness. Their libations come from their pools.²⁸

It was not only knowledge or religion that counted, but also ethical behavior, as this later text suggests:

He who is beneficent on earth, to him one is beneficent in the Netherworld. And he who is evil, to him one is evil. It is so decreed (and will remain so) forever.²⁹

The deceased who has overcome all dangers on the road to the hereafter is admitted to the Hall of Judgment, where he is purified or separated from all his sins.

The Realm of the Dead

In the Pyramid Texts the deceased pharaoh is assured that he will be accepted as a living god among the gods in heaven. In later funerary literature – the Coffin Texts, the Book of the Dead, and such New Kingdom compositions as the *Amduat*, the Book of Gates, the Book of Caverns, and the Book of the Earth – the hereafter is more often described as being under or in the earth. The knowledge of the hereafter was closely connected with Egyptian theological and cosmological speculations about the course of the sun, which disappears at night in the west and supposedly travels under the earth, reappearing in the morning in the east. Egyptian funerary mythology seems largely to be derived from the mythology and cult of the sun-god Re. In the earliest funerary texts, the Pyramid Texts, funerary mythology centered on Osiris, the god who died and arose from the dead. This mythology was influenced by the theology of the sun-god Re venerated in Heliopolis.

According to Egyptian conceptions, the abode of the dead is indeed a mysterious region. The dead may be called "those whose place is hidden or mysterious" and the abode itself the "mysterious space." It is a mythical place that can be reached only in the imagination. Courageous explorers cannot visit this mysterious place as they might visit far countries. The knowledge of the abode of the dead does not seem to be based on ecstatic experiences or reports of human visitors who had made a temporary visit to that mysterious region. The late story of Khaemwase in which such a visit is described is a rather exceptional phenomenon in Egyptian culture.³⁰

The hereafter can only be incompletely indicated with symbols, words, and pictures, derived from this world. It may be called the West because the sun sets in the west and was thought to descend into the hereafter or Underworld (*duat*), because it was thought that the sun travelled under the earth from west to east during the night. Sometimes it is called "the Great City" but it is often stressed in word and image that it is a region with water and vegetation of plants and trees, sometimes called Ealu-fields, although a desert may also be found there. It is separated from the world of the living by a broad stream. A great river is also in the hereafter along which the sun-god Re proceeds in his boat. One can imagine that a sandbank is in this river as sandbanks are in the Nile. This is the sandbank of Apophis, the enemy of Re. Apophis does not succeed, however, in his attempt to shipwreck Re's boat.

The battle of Re with Apophis in the Underworld in the evening, at dawn, or in the middle of the night is often mentioned in sun-hymns and funerary literature. The dead watch as Re and the gods in his boat ward off this threatening monster of chaos in the shape of a huge serpent. Apophis is conjured with words, bound, attacked with knives, and subdued to nothingness. All occupants of the

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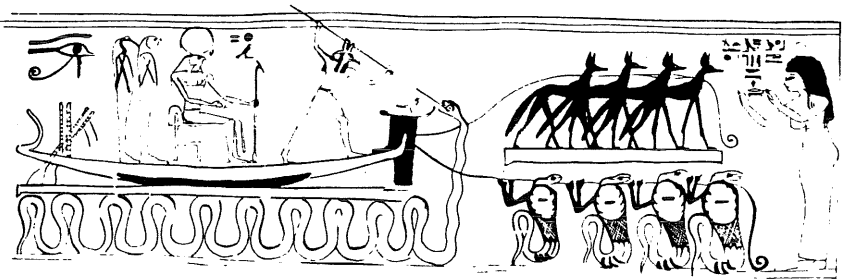


Fig. 17. Seth harpoons Apophis, the monster of chaos, from the prow of the sun barque, on the funerary papyrus of Her-Weben, Cairo.

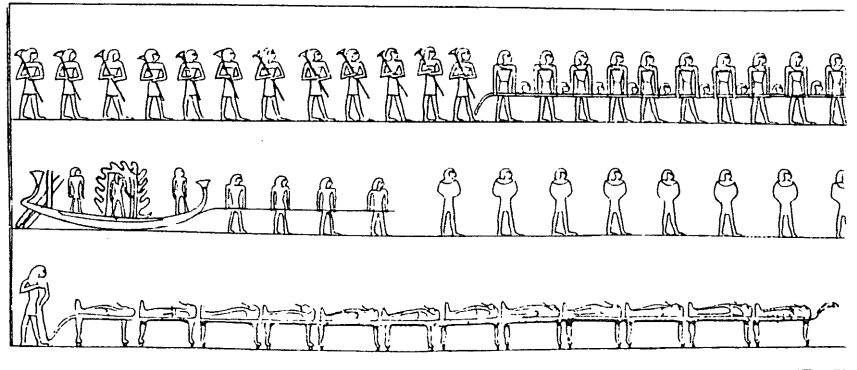


Fig. 18. Book of Gates. Part of the sixth hour. In the lower register, mummified dead rest on couches and are about to arise from death on the arrival of the sun-god (middle register).

sunboat may take part in this glorious battle: Sia (the personification of wisdom), Hu (the creative Word), Heka (creative energy or magic), and greater gods and goddesses such as Hathor, Isis, Maat, Horus, Thoth and Seth. Especially the mischievous, murderous and violent thunder-god Seth may be represented as standing with his huge spear in the prow of the sun-boat, and repelling with word and deed the monster of chaos.

As mentioned above, the Egyptians divided the day and night into twelve hours each, hence the Underworld is divided in twelve departments or hours. The sun-god remains one hour in each department of the Underworld.

But time in the hereafter is different from time on earth. One hour in the Underworld is the equivalent of a lifetime (*ḥꜣw*) during which the resurrected live their life and cultivate the fields that are allotted to them, and enjoy the light of the sun. As soon as the sun-bark approaches a portal of the Underworld, the gates open automatically. When the sun-god shines in the darkness and speaks his creative word the sarcophagi or shrines are opened and the mummies arise from their sleep of death. They throw off the mummy-bandages that had protected them and take food and clothing and all that was necessary in the new life. According to the Book of Gates the sun-god in the Underworld speaks:

'O gods (i.e., deceased) who are in the Underworld,
 who are behind the ruler of the West (i.e., Osiris),
 who are stretched on their side,
 who are sleeping on their supports,
 raise your flesh,
 pull together your bones,
 collect your limbs,
 unite your flesh.
 May there be sweet breath to your noses,
 Loosing for your mummy-wrappings.
 May your head-masks be uncovered.
 May there be light for your divine eyes
 in order that you may see the light by means of them.
 Stand up from your weariness.³¹

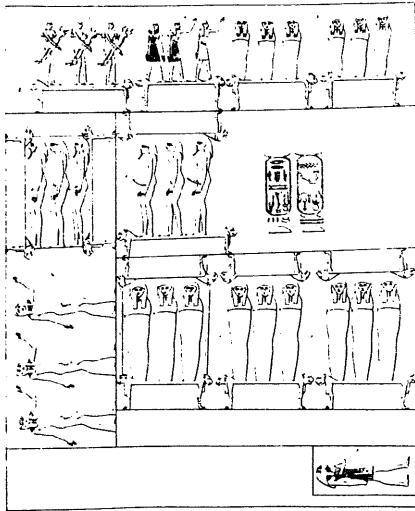


Fig. 19. The process of resurrection, during which the mummy-bindings are thrown off and new clothes put on. Painting on the ceiling of the tomb of Ramesses IX.

Resurrection

Mummy-bindings had to be removed at the moment of resurrection. Mummification prepared the body for resurrection in the Underworld and protected it in its journey to that mysterious space. Mummy-bindings were both protective attire for the "space traveler" and, at the same time, the bonds of death. They may be called the bonds of Seth, because Seth was the god of death, who brought death into the world by murdering Osiris. The thoroughness with which the Egyptians are wrapped makes understandable such special prayers as the one written on a coffin in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, directing the goddess Isis to free the mummy from its wrappings at the moment of resurrection: "Ho my mother Isis, come that you may remove the bindings which are on me."³²

Representations of the process of resurrection are depicted on ceilings of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings:³³ some of the dead are still in mummy-shrouds. Others have arisen and are standing upright, clearly visible as nude males and females. Still others move their arms, while a few already wear their new garments of the hereafter. The Egyptians did not cherish an idea of paradisaical nudity. On earth, not only food and drink, but also linen cloth was offered to the dead and in the Underworld the dead receive, among other offerings from the sun-god, food, drink, and clothing.

During the one nocturnal hour that the sun-god visits a department of the Underworld, the dead in that department come to life again and live a lifetime. The resurrected see the sun-god face to face. They jubilate and adore him. They behold the glorious sun-boat and all its divine occupants. They repeat life also in other respects, as may be gathered from the typical scenes of daily life in Theban tombs. Cultivation of the fields, fishing and fowling, playing games, music-making and dancing, banquets together with wife and children and other members of the family and friends and many other scenes of daily life are repeated. Repeating a life-time in such a nocturnal hour, flooded by the light of the sun, was diverting and recreative. The old people, with their new bodies in the bloom of life, enjoy doing once again what they did on earth. This life in the Underworld does not seem to have the toils and faults of earthly life. And, even if some of these appear, it remains an idyllic life on the whole.

In the same space and at the same time, however, enemies are punished, as one may conclude from the texts and representations of the Books of the Underworld. There is no clear-cut spatial division between "heaven" and "hell" as in some other religions. One might discern a tendency to depict the punishment of the enemies in the lower register of the three registers of Amduat and Book of Gates, at the right side of the sun-boat, which would mean the left side, since everything in the Underworld is reversed. At our present state of knowledge, however, it is hazardous to conclude that on the left side of the river the enemies are punished to death and on the right side the justified dead enjoy life as one might expect. One should also take into consideration that the Underworld is a mysterious region that is not ordered spatially like the earth. The sun, which gives light and life to the justified, gives burning heat and death to the enemies. A lake may give life and refreshment to the one and death and fire to the other. King Merikare is warned on earth:

The Court that judges the wretch
You know they are not lenient
On the day of judging the miserable
In the hour of doing their task.
It is painful when the accuser has knowledge.
Do not trust in length of years:
They view a life-time in an hour
When a man remains over after death.
His deeds are set beside him as a treasure
And being yonder lasts forever.

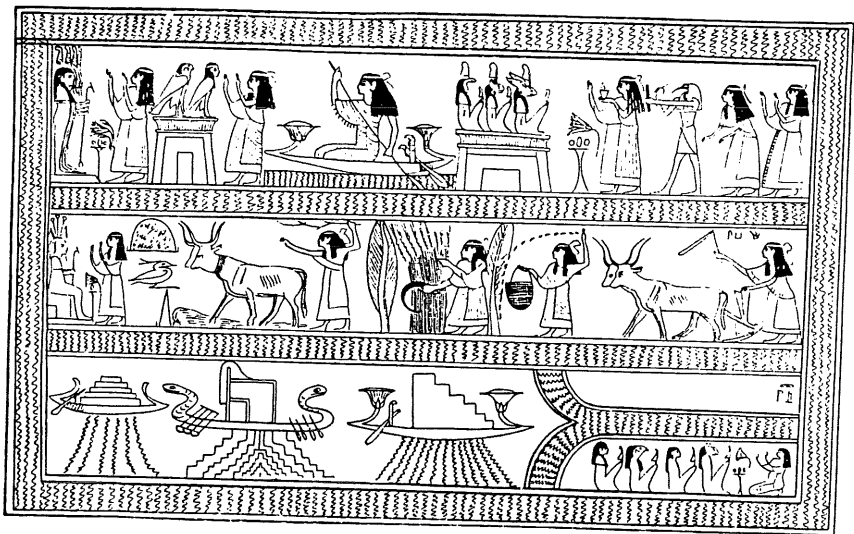


Fig. 20. Drawing of Papyrus Berlin 3008 showing life of the resurrected in the Ealu-fields. Ploughing, sowing, reaping, and threshing in the middle register. Vignette of Spell 110, of the Book of the Dead.

A fool is he who does what they reprove.
 He who reaches them without having done wrong
 Will exist there like a god,
 Free-striding like the lords forever!³⁴

Some of the deceased, or rather, their *bas*, are not admitted at the entrance-gate of the hereafter or do not get a place in the sun-boat that is said to be the ship of millions (of occupants). Others arrive in the hereafter only to be punished for a life-time. The judges "view a life-time in an hour." But for the justified, "His deeds are set beside him as treasure." But what about those who have no treasure to set beside them? Repeating life or living anew (*whm 'nh*) may also mean to bring life to completeness and fulfillment in a new way. The one who starved to death on earth may now cultivate the fruitful fields and bring in rich harvests. The woman who was barren, or died too young on earth, may bear a child in the Underworld, as statuettes of a woman with child found in women's tombs suggest. Those who are separated from their sins and have some blank spots may repeat their life in a somewhat different way. Men may enjoy life in an ideal way, a life-time long like a nightmovie of one hour.

At the end of a nocturnal hour, the sun-boat goes on with its occupants and followers, gods and *bas*, to the next department. The dead lament after Re has passed them by. The gates close automatically and the dead sink back in the sleep of death after having returned into their protective mummy-wrappings. Their life is over, only to be renewed after twenty-three hours in the next night.

Preparations for Death

In hieroglyphic writing the mummy sign is used to denote words signifying not only mummy, but also statue, image, form or shape. According to Egyptian conception, a human being living on earth is already an image of the sun-god. An aim of mummification was to stylize the human corpse into a divine image. The ideal body of the resurrected in the hereafter was prefabricated in the work of the mummification on earth. A fine-looking mummy was a persuasive symbol of resurrection. While mummification was highly desirable, there is no certain evidence that mummification was ever a necessary precondition for corporeal resurrection. The Egyptians were certainly aware of the fact that the bodies of some of their loved ones were irreparably lost and could not be mummified, not to mention all the bodies of the poor that were not mummified. Corporeal resurrection was not restricted to the privileged members of the elite who were buried with all the ritual pomp and circumstance on earth and who were mummified. In several places in the Books of the Underworld³⁵ a special concern is

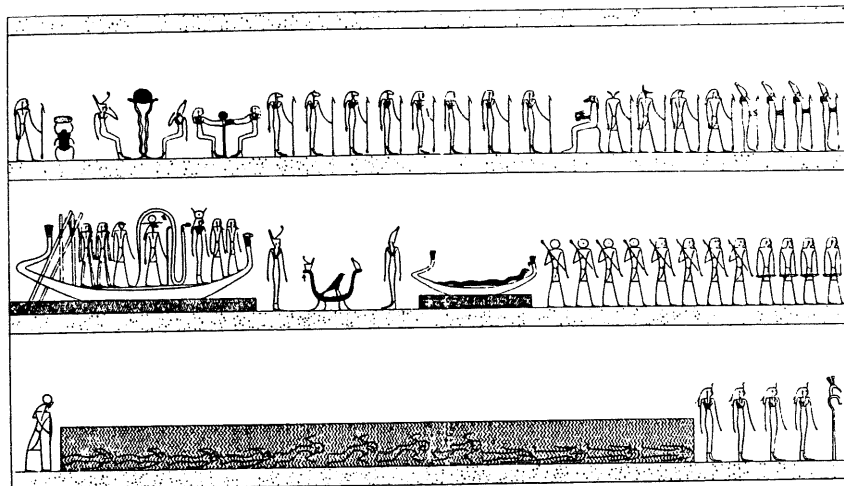


Fig. 21. Book of Amduat, tenth hour. In the lower register, non-mummified dead float disorderedly in the water before resurrection.

shown for all those deceased who had not undergone special additional preparations to make the "space-travel" to the Underworld, been provided with mummy-shrouds, coffins and so on. In texts and representations attention was paid to human remains floating in the Nun or primeval waters. A divine rescue party was at work at the command of the sun-god to pull those aimlessly floating corpses out of the endless space of the depth of the primeval waters. The bodies were brought ashore in the Underworld. It is written, "Stand up weary ones, behold, Re takes measures on your behalf."³⁶ This and other textual evidence indicates that those who were not mummified on earth could also repeat life in the Underworld. At the word of the sun-god they also arose bodily from the dead. It seems that these texts and representations concerning those who are in Nun refer, not only to those who were accidentally drowned in the waters of the Nile, but to the general situation of the departed. Men who die return to the non-being, to the primeval waters prior to and outside the created world of the living. It would be natural that the corpses decay in the endless darkness and depth of nothingness. The sun-god, however, creates and recreates the endless and the deep, dividing it into time and space, into an Underworld in which people, under certain conditions, are allowed to live anew. People were drawn from the primeval waters to receive another life in the hereafter.

A life in the hereafter was prefabricated by words, deeds and gifts. These extensive preparations evince an impressive prayer to draw life from death. In Egypt the human protest against death was turned into a persuasive prayer or, as some would have it, into magic, to preserve and renew life.

Skepticism

Even in Egyptian culture, some remained skeptical as to the funerary mythology of the hereafter that mortal man on earth can only reach by imagination and speculation. The skeptical words of Intef are also human:

None comes from there
To tell of their state
To tell of their needs
To calm our hearts
Until we go where they have gone.³⁷

HERMAN TE VELDE

1. Van Baaren 1964, p. 164.

2. Ariès 1974, p. 85ff.

3. Rössler-Köhler 1980, cols. 252f., e.g. Pyr. § 1466, here and henceforth according to the text-edition of Sethe 1908-1910 and the English translation of Faulkner 1969.

4. Wirz 1982.

5. Zandee 1960.
6. Kristensen 1926.
7. cf. n.6.
8. Pap. Ch. Beatty IV rt 11, 8-10, cf. Gardiner 1935a and Assmann 1975b, nr. 195, 274-278.
9. Gardiner 1935a, p. 34, n. 10; and De Buck 1939, p 6.
10. Zandee 1960, p. 78.
11. Hornung 1978, p. 281ff.
12. Pyr. § 654-655.
13. Pyr. § 1002-1003; 1004-1010.
14. Gardiner 1935b, p. 30ff.
15. Tomb of Paheri in el-Kab: Lichtheim 1976, p. 17.
16. E.g. Morenz 1964, p.140; Morenz 1965, pp. 399-445.
17. Žabkar 1973, pp. 588-590; Žabkar 1968, pp. 106-114.
18. Hornung 1983, p. 173; Hornung 1984, p. 494ff. On *akh* in general: Englund 1978; Demarée 1983, p. 189ff.
19. 1 Corinthians 15:44.
20. Brunner 1977, col. 1159.
21. Spell 26 cf. the translation of the Book of the Dead: Faulkner 1985, p. 37. See Pyr. § 1640.
22. Seeber 1976.
23. Cf. Faulkner 1985, p.29.
24. Cf. Faulkner 1985, p.31.
25. Cf. Faulkner 1985, p.27.
26. Faulkner 1985, p. 14; Spencer 1982, p.145.
27. On punishments: Hornung 1968. On the lake of fire: Hornung 1968, p. 22f.; Seeber 1976, pp. 184-186.
28. Book of Gates, 2nd scene 5th and 6th Hour: Hornung 1979, pp. 15-21; 1980, pp.47, 50; cf. English translation. Zandee 1969, p. 284.
29. Lichtheim 1980, p. 141.
30. Lichtheim 1980, p. 138-142; cf. Gressmann 1918.
31. Book of Gates, 6th Hour, scene 40: Hornung 1979, pp. 236-239; Hornung 1980, p. 168; cf. English translation Zandee 1969, p. 301.
32. Hayes 1959, p. 71; cf. Hornung 1983, p. 170.
33. Hornung 1982, p. 137 and 146 (pl.117); Hornung 1983, p. 170ff.
34. Lichtheim 1973, p. 101.
35. Book of Gates, 9th Hour, scene 58: Hornung 1979, pp. 312-317; 1980, pp. 214-219; English translation Zandee 1969, pp. 310-311. Amduat, 10th Hour: Hornung 1963, I, pp. 176-177; II, pp. 169-171. For the rescue-party see: Amduat, 5th Hour, nos. 339-343.
36. Zandee 1969, p. 310.
37. Lichtheim 1973, p. 196. cf. Wirz 1982, pp. 73-77.