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CHAPTER 12

EGYPTIAN RELIGIOUS TEXTS

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Textual material of a religious nature is ubiquitous in ancient Egypt, perhaps due to accident of preservation; much of this documentation comes from tombs and temples, built of durable materials. Domestic architecture, whether royal or private, was made of more perishable materials. Notwithstanding Kemp's cautious warnings to the contrary, spiritual matters appear to have been of paramount importance in ancient Egypt. From birth and its attendant dangers, to unexplained illnesses and unforeseen misfortunes, to death – that greatest of unknowns – the ancient Egyptians seemed to have felt the need to communicate with the unseen forces (which we call divinities) whom they believed responsible, whether positively or negatively, for such events. They composed a myriad of texts to placate or honor their gods, an act they felt gave them a degree of control over their own lives.

Since storytelling is innate in human beings, it is likely that composing and recounting tales about the gods was the first step in this process.[1] This small sampling of religious texts will begin with myths and, remembering the importance of the power of spoken word in ancient Egypt,[2] will go on to official temple ritual, where some of those sacred tales were retold in formal contexts. Next, texts detailing personal piety will demonstrate – for example, with personal names – that knowledge of the sacred stories can be assumed for the entire population. The last section will examine the mortuary literature, composed to give the Egyptians psychic comfort about death and its aftermath. Many of these categories are perforce somewhat arbitrary, since various elements could be woven into a single text. For example, a narrative tale could use religious symbolism that would have been well known to the original audience; a protective spell could contain allusions to well-known mythological episodes, the happy outcome of which would be magically transferred to the earthly recipient; or a hymn to the god Osiris could contain a lamentation meant to be sung by his sisters Isis and Nephthys (e.g., Pap. Berlin 3008).[3]

Sacred History – Myths

Cosmogonies

Creation stories, which are common to all societies throughout world history, answer such existential questions as "Who are we?" and "Who made us, where, and when?" and explain the world and its phenomena. The Egyptian material is not always immediately accessible to the modern reader, because of how the ancient Egyptians saw natural occurrences. As H. A. Frankfort suggested,[4] what the modern mind sees as an "It" was perceived as a "You" by the ancients. One example of this approach is the ancient explanation of the Nile flood. The Egyptians did not know about the "Why," the early summer rains in northern Ethiopia, which caused the Blue Nile to overflow its banks and start running north, causing the Nile to rise in Aswan in mid-July. They therefore asked "Who?" in this instance, the god Hapy, an anthropomorphic deity who was said to reside in the caverns of the first Cataract area and be responsible for the inundation.

Another obstacle is that the full mythical narratives often have to be pieced together from diverse sources. The ancient Egyptians – for reasons that can be endlessly debated – never felt the need to write down treatises of their complete theology. Two famous examples of this lack are the myth of Osiris and the creation account from Heliopolis; the former, apart from Plutarch's later account, must be pieced together from a number of allusions found in the Pyramid Texts and from scattered references in hymns to the god, while the latter must be gathered hither and yon in the Pyramid Texts. This absence of a full narrative led Assmann to suggest that myth did not exist in Egypt before the period of the New Kingdom.[5] Others have taken a more moderate approach, proposing that, although full mythical narratives are not found in corpora such as the Pyramid Texts, perhaps the myths were relegated to the sphere of oral tradition.[6] In 2002 Goebs also cogently argued that the context in which the myths are found must be taken into consideration. The position taken in this chapter – admittedly not completely unassailable – will be that myths did indeed exist as far back as the Old Kingdom, when the Pyramid Texts were carved on the inner walls of royal pyramids, and that traces of them can in fact be found in the corpus. As the present writer sees it, since the Pyramid Texts were written to help the deceased king with his rebirth, it should not be surprising to find stories of the birth of the world within their many-layered utterances.

In ancient Egypt, the creation accounts were very much a reflection of the world as the Egyptians saw it. Every spring, the Nile flood would subside and what first emerged from the water were triangular-shaped islands of rich black earth. These little mounds represented the promise of new life, which led to the notion that all creation must have begun exactly the same way.

Heliopolis: The first creation story is from Heliopolis, Egyptian Iunu, or "Pillar-Town." Out of dark and inert water called the Nun, a small hill appeared, on which the god Atum-Khepri manifested himself. The text is full of puns, which underscores the power of the spoken word: "Hail to you Atum and hail to you Khepri, the one who came into being (*kheper*)

by himself, as you become high (*qai*) in this your name of Hill (*qa*), and as you come into being (*kheper*) in this your name of Khepri" (PT, § 1587). Atum then begins masturbating to fashion the god Shu and the goddess Tefnut, who represent the polarity of air and moisture, respectively, one a preserving and the other a decomposing agent. Another version has Atum creating the two deities through the use of puns: "What you [Atum] sneezed (*ishesh*) was Shu and what you spat out (*tef*) was Tefnut" (PT, § 1652). This first pair of deities then produce the earth-god Geb and the sky-goddess Nut, who, in turn, beget two further divine pairs, Osiris and Isis and Seth and Nephthys. This last generation represents the link between the earthly and the divine world and the beginnings of the political realm on earth. Known by the Greek word Ennead in modern scholarship, this divine family was called *pesdjet*, "(Group of) Nine," by the Egyptians, a feminine word that presumably alluded to the group's cosmic procreative powers.

Hermopolis: From the Middle Kingdom, with additional texts from later periods, the next creation story comes from the city of Hermopolis, the Greek designation for Egyptian Khemnu, "Eight-Town." Clearly a local memory of the area's own creation myth, the tale contains four pair of male and female divinities, the former represented as frogs and the latter as snakes. Called "the Eight Infinite Ones" by the Egyptians (CT Spell 76), they are usually referred to by another Greek term, the Ogdoad, in Egyptological literature. Compared to the Heliopolitan tradition, the Hermopolitan is a more abstract doctrine. These eight deities are Nun and Nunet, symbolizing the primeval waters of the earlier Heliopolitan tradition; Heh and Hehet, representing the concept of the flood; Keku and Kekut, embodying the darkness; and Tenem and Tenemet, signifying straying or lack of direction. With the ascendancy of Amun during the New Kingdom, theologians replaced the last couple with Amun and Amunet, representing the invisible but active breath of life. These deities appear simultaneously and set the inert primeval mass in motion; this movement churns up the mud of the primeval waters, which condenses into a hill that emerges from the floodwaters. From this hill, called the Island of the Flame, the sun appears out of a water lily in some accounts, or out of a primordial egg in others.

Presumably aware of the Heliopolitan account and borrowing from it, the Hermopolitan theologians wrote that the god Atum emerged "from the *heh*-flood, from the *nun*-ocean, from the *keku*-darkness, and from the *tenem*-lack of direction" (CT Spell 76), that is, from the Ogdoad. They also referred to their Ogdoad as "the fathers and mothers who came into being at the very beginning, who gave birth to the sun and created Atum." [7]Thus did they reassure their faithful that their own cosmogony was simply part – but a major part – of the other great creation story emanating from Heliopolis.

Memphis: The third major creation account centers on the god Ptah of Memphis; hence its customary name, The Memphite Theology. Its source is the so-called Shabako Stone, a 25th Dynasty copy of an earlier worm-eaten papyrus. Long thought to date to the Old Kingdom, the Memphite Theology has now been convincingly dated by Schlögl to the Ramesside Period. The main means of creation is through the god's mind (*ib*, often rendered as "heart") and tongue, that is, will and the power of the spoken word. The god needed only

to think of something and then pronounce its name to make it occur, reminding us of the well-known New Testament passage "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God" (John 1:1).

A number of points connect the Memphite Theology to the previous creation accounts. The introductory passage by King Shabako mentions that he ordered the text copied on behalf of "his father Ptah-Tatenen," a syncretistic god associating Ptah with the Memphite deity whose name means "the land that has arisen," a reference to the primeval hill that emerged out of the waters of the Nun at the time of creation in the earlier Heliopolitan myth. The creation account then introduces "The gods who came into being by means of Ptah," followed by a list of eight deities, including Ptah-Nun and Ptah-Nunet. The number eight may be a coincidence but, given the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, is certainly noteworthy; perhaps the Memphite theologians were actively seeking to connect their doctrine to the earlier one. Next, "Through the mind and through the tongue did it come into being (*kheper*) as the image of Atum" (Shabako Stone, col. 53), linking Ptah with his Heliopolitan counterpart. Another passage ties Ptah's own Ennead with "that phallus and those hands of Atum" (Shabako Stone, col. 55), seemingly a direct correlation with the Heliopolitan Atum's creative act.

This notion of a creative mind that names things was not new to Egypt, as the deities Sia and Hu – personifications of divine perception and utterance, respectively – are known as far back as the Old Kingdom (PT, §§ 267b–d, 300c, etc.). The belief that something had to be named before it could exist is also found on Pap. Berlin 3055, a 22nd Dynasty papyrus that describes the primeval condition as a time when "the name of any thing had not yet been conceived."[8] Far from being contradictory, these three creation accounts are actually complementary. Egyptian theologians were obviously aware of various accounts and, instead of competing with them, chose to integrate earlier stories into their own, in a clear demonstration of a sense of spiritual compromise.[9] Where earlier scholars chose to see competition between the various cities and their priesthoods, perhaps one should see accommodation and creative thinking. Current research includes detailed study of the cosmogonic stories as found in the Coffin Texts, or from particular sites such as the Khonsu Temple at Karnak; examinations of particular genres of text, such as Late Period hymns, in which the creation motifs reflect earlier New Kingdom traditions at the same time as they show great innovation; and studies on such specific topics as the use of the number seven in myth, or the influence of ancient Egypt on Old Testament theologians.[10]

Tales of the Divine

Osirian Cycle: The importance of the Osirian cycle is second to none, since it informs so many aspects of ancient Egyptian culture, from the obvious funerary texts to protective ("magical") spells and amulets to personal names that demonstrate how well all strata of Egyptian society knew the tale. The full saga is only recorded by the first century AD Greek

writer Plutarch; as with the cosmogonies, the Egyptians never wrote the complete story down. Some pharaonic material, however, contains parts of the story, allowing comparison of this earlier material to Plutarch's narrative.

In the first of the three portions of the story, the god Geb gives the office of kingship to Osiris. Osiris is said to be a good and beneficent ruler. His jealous brother Seth murders Osiris by throwing a chest containing his body into the river. His sister – and wife – Isis discovers him in Byblos, and she takes the chest back to Egypt, thus revivifying the king. Seth again kills Osiris, but this time cuts the body into fourteen pieces, which he scatters over Egypt. Isis looks for Osiris anew and eventually finds all the pieces, save for the phallus, so that an artificial phallus has to be supplied to Osiris. Isis brings him back to life again long enough to conceive a child. Osiris then descends to the underworld to rule the dead. The second part of the cycle has Isis hiding in the marshes of the Delta, where she gives birth to Horus, whom she protects from scorpion and snakes. The third part tells of a now-grown Horus avenging his father, through a number of battles with Seth, in one of which Horus loses his eye. When the god Thoth heals the eye, it is said to be "hale" (*udjat*), an icon that became ubiquitous in ancient Egypt. Horus eventually claims the throne through a divine legal judgment. This portion is told in a protracted, and sometimes comical, series of events in which Isis often intervenes on her son's behalf.[11] One of the sequences, a homosexual attack by Seth on Horus, has generated much discussion, notably by Parkinson, who, in 1995, investigated the difference in approach to the subject in literary and nonliterary texts; Walls, who more recently has looked at the episode from a Freudian point of view; and Amenta, who connects the *topos* to magical texts and suggests that the condemnation of homosexual activities was simply prompted by its inability to further mankind's procreation.

The first and most obvious theme of the full story is that the death of Osiris and his subsequent rebirth assured ordinary Egyptians of the possibility of their own resurrection. Second, the loving ministrations of Isis gave all women a role model as wife, mother, and protectress. The last role made her important as a healer and explains the many references to that particular portion of the cycle in so-called magical spells.[12] As Quirke rightly pointed out,[13] the many roles Isis plays throughout the legend make her the unifying element, the one common actor in the whole cycle. A third major theme is the importance of tribunals, since a divine court of law eventually gave Horus his father's inheritance. This decision must surely have encouraged the population to use the local courts to settle their disputes instead of taking matters into their own hands. This theme is underscored by the behavior of Horus and Seth in the third part of the cycle, where the former continually presents his case to the divine court in a calm and rational way, while Seth keeps losing his temper and challenging Horus to fight. The final outcome in court must have left no doubt to anyone listening to the tale as to which behavior was the better one to emulate.

Destruction of Humanity: The myth traditionally known as the Destruction of Mankind[14] contained in the first part of the so-called Book of the Divine Cow, tells of the aging god Re who discovers that mankind – his creation – has been plotting against him. He convenes a

divine council to seek their advice; there, he is told to send his eye, in the form of Hathor, to destroy humanity. Hathor then turns into the bloodthirsty Sekhmet ("the Powerful One") and begins to enjoy her destructive work so much that Re repents and decides he must save his creation from total annihilation. To achieve this, 7,000 jugs of beer mixed with red ocher are spread over the fields; seeing what she thinks is blood, she begins to drink the beer and, drunk, "failed to recognize mankind," thus saving humanity.

Apart from some explanations on the formation and the structure of the world found in the second part of the tale, the main theme of the Destruction story is that mankind brought on its own misfortunes by "[devising] plans to be enemies of Re." This is echoed in *The Instructions to King Merykare*, a Middle Kingdom text that tells how the creator god "slew his foes and reduced their children because they had planned rebellion." This theme of an angry creator god deciding to punish his rebellious creation is well known to many other ancient cultures, as Schmidt has shown.

Official Cult

Ritual Texts

Stories about deities made them more accessible and made it easier for the ancient Egyptians to cope with the unknown world, but they also dealt with the gods directly, through actions and words. Texts containing ritual activities must have existed in great quantities in ancient Egypt, if the list of documents contained in a library such as the temple of Edfu's "House of Books" is to be believed[15]; given the fragile nature of papyrus, however, only a small sampling of these survive today. Records of foundation ceremonies, with texts and images, are found on temple walls. Elaborate lists of festivals and illustrations of a few of these, accompanied by captions that complement the reliefs,[16] were also carved on temple walls. Additional texts can be found on stelae, such as King Piye's great victory stela, part of which describes him performing ritual ceremonies at the temple of Re in Heliopolis. Texts describing ritual acts are also found on papyrus.

The major purpose of the temple ritual was the preservation of the cosmos from chaos through interaction between the king – officially always the actor, although in practical terms his role had to be delegated to priests – and the gods. The king offered sustenance to the gods, who, in turn, promised the king peace and prosperity. A few extant texts with detailed instructions for the officiants help us flesh out this ritual. The introductory section of the previously mentioned Pap. Berlin 3055 reads: "The beginning of the recitations (lit., 'spells') of the sacred rites that are carried out in the temple of Amun-Re, king of the gods, in the course of every day, by the great *wab*-priest who is in his day." What follows is a list of acts called "striking the fire," "taking the censer," "placing the incense upon the flame," and so on, after which come the actual words to be spoken during the cultic acts. The ritual could also contain allusions to mythological episodes such as the triumph of Horus over Seth, symbolizing the victory of order over chaos.[17]

Further ceremonies dealt with the institution of kingship. One of the most discussed texts is the late Middle Kingdom Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus. The text consists of a ritual drama complete with dialogue for actors and stage directions, written in clearly delineated vertical columns, which are, in turn, separated by horizontal lines to distinguish the various parts. The papyrus was long considered to be part of a Sed Festival celebration; Quack has recently proposed that it deals with the old king's death and the new monarch's accession. A similar text is found on the left side of the previously mentioned Shabako Stone. Its design and content recall those of the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus, and its purpose is to affirm the right of Horus – that is, the reigning king – to rule over Egypt.

Another intriguing text that re-creates the Osirian Cycle is the late second century BC text known as the Triumph of Horus, from the temple of Edfu. As devised by Fairman – a conception that has not met with complete approval[18] – it consists of a prologue; act 1, with five scenes; act 2, with two scenes; act 3, with three scenes; and an epilogue. Each scene is laid out similarly: an introductory line of text lies above the full scene; below this, columns of text on the left constitute the script, to the right of which are representations, complete with captions. The full drama essentially consists of the same actions done repeatedly, representing the triumph of Horus (once again symbolizing the reigning king) over his enemies, notably the god Seth. Gillam has staged the actual play and fully examined the question of performance and drama in ancient Egypt.

Recent work on temples[19] include a full study by Wilkinson; Beinlich and others' investigations on various topics from the daily ritual performed there to the iconography of the deities; Ullmann's study of the royal mortuary temples and the term "House of Millions of Years"; Mohamed's volume on festivals and their logistical impact on the economies of the communities involved; and Goyon's publication of the "Ritual for Appeasing Sekhmet," wherein the king was introduced as the offspring of the "Eye of Re" and thus put under its protection. Late Period temples have also been investigated, notably Leitz's volume on Greco-Roman period temple inscriptions, as well as his bibliography of such texts.

Hymns

While some texts were performed in the formalized context of temples, others offer a more personal relationship with the deity. Hymns were recited or chanted, perhaps even sung, as the representation in the early Middle Kingdom Theban tomb of Senet – complete with two harpists shown under the text (Fig. 12.1) – would seem to indicate. Written in verse form, using mostly couplets but sometimes also triplets and even quatrains, the hymns are exquisitely composed, and they reveal the believers' deeply held convictions regarding the deities. Space does not allow a catalogue of these prayers,[20] but they were composed in honor of Amun-Re, Hathor, Isis, Maat, Osiris, Ptah, Re, Sekhmet, Sobek, Thoth, the Nile, and even the king, to name a few of the recipients. Most are written on papyrus, but a few,

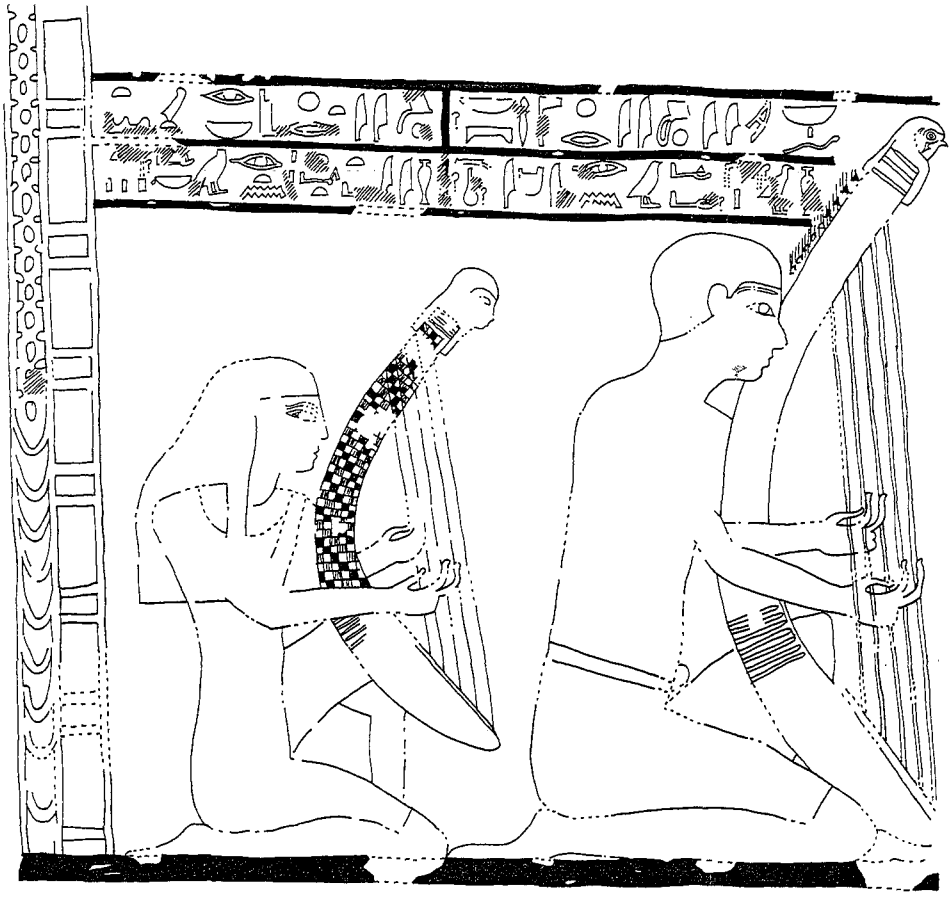

FIGURE 12.1. Harp players and hymns to Hathor, Early Middle Kingdom Tomb of Senet. Redrawn from N. de Garis Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Antefoker, Vizier of Sesostris I, and his Wife Senet (No. 60)*, Theban Tomb Series 2. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1920, pl. 29. Drawing by Barbara Ibronyi.

such as the stela Louvre C286, which bears many of the episodes known from Plutarch's narrative of the Osiris story, are carved on stone.

The hymn to the syncretistic sun god Amun-Re in Pap. Leiden I 350 is an exceptional example of the craft of the ancient author, who skillfully wove themes from one stanza to another. The first four stanzas are lost, but Stanza 5 deals with Amun's daily rebirth from the underworld to usher in a new day, followed by Stanza 6, which describes Amun's reign over the whole world. Stanza 7 then relates Amun's gifts as healer, after which his ability to sustain life is described in the eighth stanza, a theme reiterated in the ninth stanza, where Amun-Re is acclaimed as creator god, followed by the provenance of this creation – Thebes – in the tenth. Because he has earlier been described as rising, the next stanza (numbered 20; from here on, the figures are in multiples of tens) illustrates the sun god's journey across the cosmos, with the sun's enemies being destroyed in stanza 30 and a reiteration of the

god's self-creation in stanza 40. Stanza 50 details the might of the god, comparing him to a falcon, a lion, and a bull, all symbols connected to royalty, fitting images for the so-called King of the Gods. This is continued in stanza 60 with Amun's dominion over the entire world, followed in stanza 70 by the god's beneficences, again echoing royal imagery, here as the shepherd of his people. Next come a number of sections where Amun-Re is described as a primeval god, using the stanza numbers as puns; thus stanzas 80 and 90 mention the god's Ogdoad and Ennead, respectively. Two more stanzas (100 and 200) recount his early manifestations, while stanza 300 sums them up with a mention of Amun, Re, and Ptah, three creator gods. Stanzas 400 to 600 then chronicle the god's powers, with the latter echoing the Memphite Theology in its mention of the divinities Sia and Hu. The penultimate section relates Amun-Re's dominion over the cosmos, with the poem culminating in stanza 800 with passages about mooring in the west, that is, references to death.

The puns just mentioned are, in fact, very much part of the poet's craft, as he plays throughout with the number of the given stanza and the themes explored therein. Thus, stanza 5 uses the words *diu* "five," *duat* "underworld," and *dua* "to praise." Stanza 6 plays on the word for "six," *sisoo*, and the "regions," *suau*, the god controls. Other puns include those between *medj*, "ten," and *mety*, the "pattern" for which every other city Thebes is said to be; *maba*, "thirty," and the *maba*-harpoon that destroys the sun's enemies; *hemu*, "forty," and *hemu*, "to fashion," which the god is said to do for himself.

Phrases and themes can also be borrowed from one hymn to another. Compare, for example, an 18th Dynasty hymn to Amun found in Pap. Bulaq 17 and published by Luiselli, where the demiurge is said to have "created the Tree of Life" (stanza 1), to Pap. Leiden I 350, where Amun-Re's seed is proclaimed as "the Tree of Life" (stanza 600). A few comparisons can also be made between Pap. Bulaq 17 and Akhenaten's Great Hymn to the Aten. In stanza 5 of the former, the creator god is said to have "distinguished [mankind's] nature and made their lives, and also separated skin (color) one from the other" which can be paralleled by Akhenaten's declaration that "their skins are different because you [the Aten] have distinguished the foreigners" (col. 8). The end of the same stanza in the Amun hymn states that "the cattle grow languid when you [Amun] shine," which can be likened to Akhenaten's assertion that "all herds are at peace in their pastures" once the sun disk has risen (col. 5). An iconographic correspondence can also be made between Amun and Aten. In stanza 6 of Pap. Bulaq 17, Amun is called the "Truly Unique One, with many hands," surely a precursor to the subsequent illustrations of the Aten, whose multiple sun rays end in hands bestowing life.[21]

Parallels have also been drawn between Akhenaten's Great Hymn and the Biblical Psalm 104, which celebrates Yahweh's creation. Column 5 of the Aten hymn declares that "Birds have flown from their nests, their wings in praise of your life force," which finds a parallel in Psalm 104:11–12: "Beside them the birds of heaven nest, they sing among the branches." Similarly, compare the Aten hymn's "You have made an inundation (lit. "a Nile") in the sky that it may descend upon them [foreign lands] and make waves upon the mountains like the sea" (cols. 9–10) to Psalm 104:13: "From your palace on high you water the mountains; by

your labor the earth abounds." And finally, the Hymn to the Aten's "How manifold is that which you do, although it is hidden from sight! O sole god, there is no other beside you; you created the earth according to your wish" (cols. 7–8) can be likened to Psalm 104:24's "How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creations." Given the centuries between the composition of the Aten Hymn – a text that was presumably proscribed soon after Akhenaten's reign – and of Psalm 104, one should certainly not infer that the Psalmist borrowed directly from the Egyptian text, but the numerous parallels are certainly intriguing.[22]

Much work has been done on the study of hymns recently, notably the meticulous examinations of the metrical format of the songs by Patanè and Mathieu. Other welcome projects are fresh publications of long known but often inaccessible texts, such as the previously mentioned Pap. Bulaq 17, as well as Pap. Berlin 3049, a 22nd Dynasty document studied by Gülden. Hornung's masterful study of Akhenaten's religion,[23] among other topics, finally laid to rest the claim that it was monotheistic; and the texts from that period have also been masterfully translated by Murnane.

Personal Worship

The texts used in official temple contexts were unavailable to much of the population, who had limited access to the temples.[24] Religious material from the nonelite is, nevertheless, represented in written sources,[25] from graffiti in shrines and temples, to prayers written on stelae or papyrus; even everyday letters reveal a certain degree of religiosity, as Baines's 2001 study of the divinities invoked in the introductory formulas has shown. It must be stressed that this material was not from the poor, but from the vast majority of the population, from all socioeconomic strata. This so-called popular religion is not a separate strand of ancient Egyptian religion, but simply a different manifestation of the same beliefs.

Everyday Protection

Birth, always considered a dangerous occasion, was accompanied by magical spells to protect the mother and hasten the process. One example underscores what has already been said about the ancient Egyptians' knowledge of their myths: "O Re and Aten . . . Isis is suffering from her behind, as a pregnant woman. Her months have been completed according to the (proper) number, in pregnancy with her son Horus, the avenger of his father . . . It is not I who have said it . . . it is Isis who has said it . . . Take care of the child-bearing of N born of N in the same manner."[26] The pregnant woman is compared to Isis, and the gods are encouraged to help her just as they had helped Isis in mythical times. Although anepigraphic and thus beyond the scope of this chapter, a polychrome illustrated birth brick recently discovered at Abydos must be mentioned. It shows a seated mother and her newborn flanked by images

of the goddess Hathor, associating the mother with the goddess.[27] Such objects, which were often inscribed with Spell 151 of the Book of the Dead, must have been common, but few have survived. Other texts with magical significance are the so-called stelae of Horus on the Crocodiles, also known as *cippi* of Horus. These round-topped stelae depict a young Horus trampling crocodiles beneath his feet and holding snakes, scorpions, and gazelles in his hands; the incantations written on the monuments were designed to avert or heal wounds suffered from these animals, as Ritner has shown.

Throughout their lives, constant brushes with unknown forces compelled the ancient Egyptians to compose ever more protective spells. One is the so-called Spell for the Protection of a Child, which addresses a number of spirits, exhorting them to "flow out . . . failing in that for which you came," and ends with the emphatic statement "Against you have I made a protection!" Graffiti left at shrines implore the deity to "Do good, do good," to "Grant him [the writer] a good endowment," or "Let favor be his <with> gods and men."[28] Such texts assume that the deities invoked will hear the petitions and, indeed, there is a category of monuments referred to as ear-stelae – recently studied by Morgan – the central focus of which is ears carved on their surfaces to enable the deities to hear the supplicants' pleas. This belief is further supported by appeals to gods who are said to "hear" (*sedjem*) pleas and petitions.[29] In another genre of text the author plays an intermediary role, promising to pass petitions on to the divinity in return for offerings. One example is a statue left at Deir el Bahari, part of which reads: "The Royal craftsman Tjawy says: I am a sistrum player for Hathor, who hears the petitions of any young girl who weeps, and who has put her trust (in) Hathor. . . . Give (me) sustenance in your presence, and then I shall speak to Hathor, who hears pleas. . . ."[30] Another instance of appeals to gods was oracular questions put to the statues of the divinities as they passed by the population during festival processions. There, the supplicant was said to "go," "stand," or "say" before the god, as well as "call to" the deity, who, in turn, expressed approval of the request by "moving forward," "walking forward," or "addressing" the petitioner; disapproval was expressed by the god "walking backward" or being "angry." It is to be noted that the texts never mention the god actually saying anything; only the priests carrying the god are responsible for the god's response.[31]

Penitential Texts

Stelae that confess specific sins and plead for the god's mercy appear in the Ramesside period. Although these have often been said to have been the result of the aftermath of the Amarna heresy and the subsequent fury of the gods, it may simply be that these were the products of a loosening of the restrictions found in previous periods, as Podemann Sørensen has suggested. In one example, a man named Neferabu confesses to having "sworn falsely by Ptah, lord of Maat" and was subsequently afflicted by blindness. He ends his prayer with a declaration that Ptah "taught me (a lesson)"[32]

Personal Names

Although little is known about the process of naming a child, onomastics are an overlooked source for elucidating personal religious beliefs. For example, and notwithstanding the iconographic evidence that does not show people directly praying to gods before the New Kingdom, Archaic Period theophoric names demonstrate how personal contact with divinities did occur before the New Kingdom. A few examples suffice: Iy-en-(i)-Min ("Min comes to me") and Ma-en-(i)-Neith ("I have seen Neith") hint at individuals to whom a god has made an appearance; Inet-Neith ("The one [fem.] whom Neith has brought forth") and Iri-en-Anubis ("The one [masc.] whom Anubis has created") suggest parents praying for an offspring who, in gratitude, name the child after the divinity after the birth; and, finally, Mer-netjer ("The one whom the god loves") and Inedj-en-Khnum ("The one whom Khnum has protected") allude to personal protection accorded by a deity to an individual.[33]

Similarly, another group of theophoric names help corroborate that all ancient Egyptians knew their myths. For example, the name Pa-en-iat ("The one who belongs to the primordial mound") associates the recipient of the name with the sacred mound from which the demiurge appeared, as does Ni-su-pauti-tawy ("He belongs to the primordial god of the two lands"), as *pauti* is a generic term for the creator god. The Osirian cycle is also well represented in theophoric names. Since Akh-bit (also known as Chemnis) is the Delta site where Isis gave birth to Horus, the names Aset-em-akh-bit ("Isis is in Akh-bit") and Pa-en-ta-net-akh-bit, ("The one [masc.] who belongs to the-one [fem.]-of-Akh-bit") refer to the second part of the Osirian cycle, when Isis hid in the Delta marshes. Isis' role as protectress is further represented by the name Nakht-Aset-er-ou ("Isis is strong against them"), the generic pronoun "them" referring to the malevolent forces against which Isis battled. Horus is also well represented. The name Hor-sa-Aset ("Horus is the son of Isis") describes the relationship between Horus and Isis; similar names are the touching Hor-em-qeni-Aset ("Horus is in the embrace of Isis") and Hor-em-akh-bit ("Horus is in Akh-bit"), recalling the name seen earlier. Horus' association with his father is also attested, as we find names such as Hor-nedj-it-ef ("Horus is his father's protector") and Hor-her-set-it-ef ("Horus is on his father's throne"), the latter leaving no doubt of the outcome of the struggle between Horus and Seth.

Funerary Texts

The funerary ritual's purpose was to ensure the deceased, whether royal or private, a successful transition to a happy afterlife. Not surprisingly, the textual material contains a great many references to the myth of Osiris, as the latter's resurrection and rebirth reassured the ancient Egyptians that they could achieve the same. The texts are probably the best known of all ancient Egyptian religious material and feature prominently in most books on ancient Egypt.[34]

Pyramid Texts

Found in the Saqqara pyramids of the last king of Dynasty 5 and all the kings and a few queens of Dynasty 6, as well as one Dynasty 8 ruler, the Pyramid Texts are the oldest collection of religious material from ancient Egypt. They consist of over 700 spells without, however, any single pyramid containing the entire collection. The most important recent work on this corpus is by J. P. Allen, whose fresh translation of 2005 will remain the standard English rendering henceforth. His decision to publish the texts from each pyramid separately highlights the extent of the changes from one pyramid to another and allows an integrated study of each pyramid's selection of spells. Allen has also masterfully reconstructed the order in which the texts are to be read (1994). Whereas an earlier generation of scholars such as Schott wished to read the texts in the direction a visitor to the pyramid would, that is, from outside in, Allen has convincingly argued that the spells are meant to be seen from the king's point of view, that is, from the inside out. He has also established that the burial chamber represented the Duat-underworld, while the antechamber symbolized the Akhet-horizon. Although it is anepigraphic and therefore beyond the scope of this chapter, recent research has also shown that the serdab, at the eastern end of the antechamber, represents the Mansion of Osiris, a stopping place on the deceased's way to the sky.[35] The full catalog of spells in a given pyramid thus narrate the king's journey out of the burial chamber into the antechamber, and from there to the sky via the exit corridor found in the north end of the antechamber.

The Pyramid Texts contain a variety of genres of spells. Protective spells are found on the west wall of the burial chamber over the king's sarcophagus, at the eastern end of the antechamber, and at the beginning of the northbound corridor leading out of the pyramid; their placement suggests that they safeguarded the outer portions of the king's chambers. The resurrection ritual is found on the south wall of the burial chamber and in the passageway between the burial chamber and the antechamber, while the offering ritual, including the Opening of the Mouth ceremony, is found on the north wall of the burial chamber, to the left of the king. And in the antechamber and the corridor are ascension and transformation spells, so-called personal spells meant to be used by the deceased himself.

As part of the resurrection ritual in the burial chamber, the king is first assured: "Not dead have you departed, but alive have you departed" (PT § 134a). Once the king has been told to "Raise yourself" (PT § 657e), he is free to move toward the sky. In the passageway leading to the antechamber, the king is prompted to "Go stand at the Akhet's door" (PT § 255). This is underscored by PT § 257, a spell at the western end of the antechamber, which tells the king that he has "emerged from the Duat," and PT § 496, a text on the northwest corner of the antechamber, which mentions opening "the door of the Akhet." Once the king has turned left into the exit corridor, the door of the sky is ordered to "open a path" for the king (PT § 502).

Recent books on the Pyramid Texts are the previously mentioned translation by Allen and the studies edited by Bickel and Mathieu on the relationship between the Pyramid Texts

and the Coffin Texts. Work on individual aspects of these texts includes investigations of the divine genealogies in the corpus and the list of enemies the king was likely to encounter in the other world.[36] Studies on individual spells have also been published, such as those on the famous Cannibal Hymn. Eyre concentrated on the performative aspect of the hymn, with its word plays and metaphoric use of language, while Goebs viewed the text as a description of the sunrise, where the night stars are said to be swallowed by the rising sun god as they disappear one by one from the sky. Another important recent study is the investigation of the Dynasty 6 Saqqara tomb of the noble Ankhmahor by Vischak, which compares the sequence of images in the tomb to the layout of texts inside the pyramid chambers.

Coffin Texts

Because so little royal funerary material has survived from the Middle Kingdom, private burials must provide a glimpse of the funerary beliefs of that period. The most important corpus is known as the Coffin Texts because it was mostly written in cursive hieroglyphs on the panels of coffins; the ancient Egyptians referred to this collection as "The Book of Making a Man's Voice Be True in the Realm of the Dead" (CT Spell 1). Although they were long thought to have originated in the First Intermediate Period, recent discoveries have shown that the genesis of the Coffin Texts is significantly earlier. A coffin from Dakhleh Oasis dating to the late Old Kingdom contains partial imprints of what appear to be a number of Coffin Texts spells; additionally, part of the Book of Two Ways, which comprises CT spells 1029–1186, has been found within an Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts corpus. Conversely, two sheets of papyri glued together found in the funerary temple of King Pepy I, which contain parts of PT spell 217 on one side and spell 690 on the other, date to Dynasty 12.[37] Therefore, the chronological divide between the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts is significantly blurred, and the two corpora should probably not be considered distinct.[38] The Coffin Texts continued to be used well into the Late Period, as Gestermann has established.

Each coffin was meant to be a miniature version of the pyramid chambers, with some of the Coffin Texts spells placed deliberately in specific areas of the coffin as Barguet has shown. Thus, CT spell 229, which exhorts a deity to "place my head on my neck for me," is usually placed at the head (northern) portion of the inner panels, while CT spell 236, placed by the deceased's feet, enjoins another deity to "give me my legs, that I may walk on them." Enough exceptions to such patterns exist, however, to defy consistency.

The Coffin Texts spells number 1,186 but, as with the Pyramid Texts, no one coffin includes more than 200 spells.[39] There are a number of themes in the Coffin Texts, some of which are known from the Pyramid Texts, such as the resurrection and offering rituals and protective spells. Other types of spells provision the deceased, provide safe passage through obstacles, and transform. Accompanying the spells are some illustrations, such as the friezes

of objects found near the deceased inside the coffin, the Fields of Hetep of spells 464–8, and the previously mentioned Book of Two Ways.

Recent studies of themes in the Coffin Texts include investigations into the hazards the deceased could meet in the underworld, such as having to walk upside down or eating feces, and the spells composed to help the dead avoid such unpleasantness; the possibilities of the deceased's cyclical rebirth and renewal through the symbolic representations of astronomical references; and the various kinds of mortuary liturgy included therein.[40] Specific portions of the corpus have also been considered. The ritual landscape encountered in the Book of Two Ways has been examined by Robinson, and a number of spells from the same body of texts have elucidated the different concepts of the afterlife as conceived by the author(s) of the collection.[41] Integral studies of individual coffins have permitted valuable observations on the functions of the coffins as funerary objects. Willems's highly detailed study of the placement of the spells and the illustrations on a single coffin has clarified the relationship between the various parts of the coffin. Meyer-Dietrich's equally detailed study looks at the texts and illustrations as actual performance aids in the funerary ritual. Shalomi-Hen's paleographical studies of the texts, specifically the determinatives on divine names, provide insights into the ancient Egyptian's perception of the divine. A number of useful dictionaries and concordances of the Coffin Texts have also been recently published.[42]

Book of the Dead

The so-called Book of the Dead is a collection of texts the Egyptians called "The Book of Going Forth by Day." Usually regarded as a New Kingdom composition, Geisen's careful investigation of a now-lost queen's coffin has allowed her to redate it to Dynasty 13, with the important conclusion that the Book of the Dead spells found on it are now the earliest such spells found. Like the relationship between the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts, the Book of the Dead shows affinities with its predecessors. For example, BD spell 6, the so-called Shabti Spell, which released the deceased from corvée labor in the underworld, goes back to CT spell 472; BD spell 30, the "Spell for not allowing the deceased's heart to create opposition against him," hearkens back to CT spells 20 and 113; and BD spell 17, which presents a summary of the full Book of the Dead, recalls CT spell 335, "(Spell for) Going out into the day from the realm of the dead"; and BD spell 110, which describes the Field of Offerings, goes back to CT spells 464–8.

Nearly all the Book of the Dead spells are personal spells, in that they were meant to be used by the deceased. Examples are BD spell 25, which helped the deceased remember their names; BD spells 31 and 32, used as protection against crocodiles; and the all-important BD spell 44, which prevented the deceased from "dying again." Also significant were the transformation spells (BD spells 76–88), which allowed the deceased to metamorphose into various shapes that allowed more freedom;[43] and BD spells 144–7, which helped the dead through various underworld doorways and gateways. As with the Coffin Texts, certain

spells contain glosses in parts of the texts. One example is BD spell 17, where the editors query the meaning of certain passages, indicating – as Lapp has shown – that even the ancient theologians had difficulties understanding some of the passages they were copying. Although mostly written in cursive hieroglyphs on papyri, certain spells became so closely identified with their purpose that they came to be inscribed on specific objects. Examples of these are the previously mentioned BD spell 6, which was carved on shabti figurines and placed in the tomb, and BD spell 30, which was carved on the underside of scarabs and placed close to the heart on the mummy itself.

One major innovation in the Book of the Dead is the series of vignettes that illustrate the texts. A full study of the iconography of the Book of the Dead, a difficult and gargantuan task, remains to be done. Another innovation is Book of the Dead spell 125, the so-called Declaration of Innocence. Often referred to as the Negative Confession, it is in fact nothing of the sort, as the deceased denies having done a number of misdeeds that range from social to cultic transgressions.

Much of the most important recent scholarship on the Book of the Dead has appeared in two major series, the *Handschriften des Altägyptischen Totenbuches* (HAT) and the *Studien zum Altägyptischen Totenbuch* (SAT), which deal with specific papyri and topics, respectively. So far, Book of the Dead papyri dating to Dynasty 18, the Ramesside, the Third Intermediate, and the Late and Ptolemaic Periods have been published in the HAT collection; new papyri are also part of the SAT series.[44] The SAT series has offered a general bibliography of the Book of the Dead; a list of occurrences of spells in Third Intermediate Period papyri; an index of a Late Period papyri; studies on specific spells; and ritual books.[45] General studies on the corpus, as well as the history of its transmission, such as that of Rößler-Köhler, are also available. Another significant advance is that of Stephen Quirke, who, in his Web site for University College, London, has not only translated much of the Book of the Dead but also added a most welcome transliteration of the original Egyptian.

Other Funerary Texts

The New Kingdom royal books of the Underworld, known collectively as the Book of Amduat, from the Egyptian *imy-duat*, "what is in the underworld," include the Books of Gates, of Caves, and of Caverns, to name a few. The theme of all these compositions is the sun god's nautical journey through the underworld during the twelve hours of the night, with the king as part of the divine crew, the culmination of which was the sun's successful rebirth at dawn. Mostly inscribed on the walls of the New Kingdom royal tombs, they are accompanied by vivid illustrations that depict the topography of the underworld, complete with gates and their fierce guardians, as well as its inhabitants. These have been described in great detail by Hornung,[46] and more recently studied by Wiebach-Koepke, Darnell, and Hegenbarth-Reichardt. The Book of Amduat in the tomb of Thutmosis III has recently been published by Barré, complete with CD-ROM disk.

Among nonroyal funerary texts, the most ubiquitous is the Offering Formula, which begins with the phrase "An offering that the king gives, and that god N has given." It has been repeatedly discussed in the literature, with the most recent being Franke's study, which convincingly argued that the king and the god were always meant to be parallel givers of the offerings, and thus that no historical change occurred between the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period. Another significant nonroyal text is the Appeal to the Living. Found on tomb facades, commemorative stelae, and statues, as well as in quarries and mines, it urges passers-by – who are still on earth and living – to recite prayers in honor of the text's author. The latter, who often styled himself as a well-equipped *akh*-spirit, promised in turn to watch over the offerers from his vantage point in the other world. A recent study of this genre by Shubert has analyzed the texts from the Old to the late New Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

From Erman's description of the ancient Egyptians' beliefs as "unparalleled confusion" and Gardiner's characterization of these as "unmitigated rubbish," the world of scholarship has produced individuals such as Siegfried Morenz, who very much wrote "from the heart" as a believer, and Jan Assmann, whose elaborate theories mix a standard Egyptological approach with more current theories on theology, culminating with J. L. Foster's eloquent plea to respect the religion of Egypt and take it seriously.[47] The varied religious texts that have survived from ancient Egypt continue to reveal more about the civilization that produced them.

NOTES

1. See Baines 1991: 94; Loprieno 1996: 49.
2. Sauneron 1969: 125–9; Ritner 2001: 321–2.
3. See, respectively, on religious symbolism, Baines 1996; protective spells, Pinch 1994: 18–32; Guilhou 1995; Pap. Berlin 3008, Lichtheim 1980: 116–21.
4. Frankfort 1971: 12.
5. Assmann 1977, 1982.
6. For example, Baines 1991: 102–3; Baines 1996; and Zeidler 1993. See also Morenz 1996.
7. Sethe 1929: 52.
8. Barucq and Daumas 1980: 293.
9. Hornung 1982: 237–43.
10. See, respectively, Coffin Texts: Bickel 1994; Khonsu Temple: Mendel 2003; Hymns: Knigge 2006; Seven: Rochholz 2002; Old Testament: Currid 1997.
11. Simpson 2003: 91–103.
12. Borghouts 1978: 30, 31, 40, 43, etc.
13. Quirke 1992: 67.
14. Simpson 2003: 289–98.
15. Sauneron 1969: 138.
16. Spalinger 2001.

17. A few sections of this text can be found in Barucq and Daumas 1980: 287–97; and Ritner 1997. For the allusions to mythological episodes see Ritner 1997: 55.
18. Fairman 1973; but see O'Rourke 2001.
19. Wilkinson 2000; Beinlich 2002; Ullmann 2002; Mohamed 2004; Goyon 2006; Leitz 2004 and 2005.
20. For fresh and accessible translations, see Foster, 1995a.
21. Barucq and Daumas 1980:197, n. [ac].
22. See Foster, 1995b: 1759.
23. Hornung, 1999a.
24. For discussions on the areas where the population was allowed access, see Bell 1997:164–70; Teeter 1997: 4–5; Wilkinson 2000: 71, 99. Bell's and Teeter's conclusions have been challenged by Baines 2001: 31.
25. For graffiti, see, e.g., Jacquet-Gordon 2003; for nontextual evidence of religious participation, see, e.g., Pinch 1993.
26. Borghouts 1978: 40.
27. Wegner 2002; Wegner 2006: 35. For a recent study of such objects, see Roth and Roehrig 2002.
28. The examples given here are taken from Borghouts 1978: 41–2; and Sadek 1987: 53–6.
29. Guglielmi and Dittmar 1992.
30. Cf. Pinch 1993: 333–4, with a slightly different reading.
31. For a recent and accessible study of oracles, see Kruchten 2001.
32. See Simpson 2003: 287–8.
33. For these and other examples, see Hornung 1982: 44–6.
34. For a recent study in English, see Grajetski 2003.
35. Mathieu, 1997b.
36. Divine genealogies: Köthen-Welpot 2003; lists of enemies: Meurer 2003.
37. For the Dakhleh coffin: Valloggia 1986: 74–8; Book of Two Ways: Pierre-Croisiau 2004: 268; Pepy I funerary temple papyri: Berger-el Naggar 2004.
38. Mathieu 2004; see also Allen 2006.
39. For the full number: Willems 1996: 138, 411; for the lesser number: Allen 1988: 40.
40. For the hazards of the Underworld see Topmann 2002; for the astronomical references, Wallin 2002; for the mortuary liturgy, Assmann 2002.
41. Backes, 2005a.
42. See Molen 2000, 2005; along with an electronic version: Plas and Borghouts 1998.
43. For recent studies of these spells, see Servajean 2004; Lüscher 2006.
44. For these papyri see, respectively, Dynasty 18: Munro, 1995a, 1995b; Ramesside: Munro 1997; Third Intermediate Period: Munro 1996, 2001; Late Period: Verhoeven 2001; Ptolemaic Period: Lüscher 2000; Falk 2006; Munro 2006; new papyri in the SAT series: Stadler 2003.
45. For the SAT series bibliography see Gülden and Munro 1998; Third Intermediate Period: Munro, 2001b; Late Period: Backes, 2005b; specific spells: Lüscher 1998; ritual books: Munro 2004 and Beinlich 2000.
46. Hornung, 1999b.
47. Erman 1971: 261; Gardiner 1957: 55; Morenz 1973: xvi; Assmann 2001; Foster, 1995a: 8.

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