

BOOK OF O heart of my mother,
THE DEAD O heart of my mother,
SPELL 30B O heart of my transformations:

Do not rise up against me as a witness,
Do not oppose me in the tribunal,
Do not be hostile to me before the guardian of the scales

For you are my Ka
That dwells in my body
The Khnum who prospers my limbs...



MY HEART MY MOTHER

Death and Rebirth in Ancient Egypt

ALISON ROBERTS

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Introduction



M With a return—the return of the fiery serpent eye goddess, Hathor-Sekhmet, in the aftermath of King Akhenaten's religious revolution during the 14th century BC.

Its primary focus is 19th Dynasty Egypt, a profound time of change when the Egyptians had to face the enormous repercussions of Akhenaten's reign.

In Hathor Rising I sought to show the impact of Akhenaten's theology on the feminine powers in Egyptian religion. In less than twenty years he and Queen Nefertiti had overseen the growth of a completely new city at el-Amarna dedicated to the supernal solar deity Re.

Beautiful hymns were composed expressing Akhenaten's glorious vision of the unity underlying all creation. Radical new art forms emerged, suitable for a cult that celebrated the radiance of light streaming forth anew each day. All the manifold cult statues hidden away in the gloom of temples became superfluous.

There was only one focus for royal religious rites at el-Amarna: the great globe of the sun known as the Aten, radiating forth light in the sky. Now rituals were performed before huge open-air sun altars, where the royal couple appeared, standing with their arms raised in praise towards the sun, their gaze fixed forever on the source of spiritual light and life.

Step by step Akhenaten eliminated all traces of Egypt's complex pantheon from his worship of Re. And even though in traditional solar religion Hathor had been the sun god's beloved companion, rearing up on his brow as the fiery spitting uraeus or shining forth as his Eye, in the end she too suffered the same fate as the other deities.

For ultimately it was the trinitarian Father God who reigned supreme in the later phase of Akhenaten's reign.¹ Yet however glorious Akhenaten's vision might have been—and glorious it undoubtedly was for some—in the end his successors drew back from his religious path. Returning to the traditional pantheon, they eventually dismantled his city of the sun, leaving little physical trace of this extraordinary episode. But things could never be the same again. Nor could the return ever quite recapture that spirit of exuberance and certainty encapsulated in so much of 18th Dynasty art and architecture.

Ramessid Egypt was a time of reaction to deep trauma. Piety and devotion to the deities were now the mood of the time; and a 'wisdom of the heart' prevailed, as the Egyptians engaged in a sober reappraisal of their religious life.

Yet Akhenaten's successors could not simply forget him. In their urgency to reinstate the traditional pantheon, it is clear they also needed to transform his vision of unity into more acceptable threefold forms. Not all of these can be mentioned here, but one key development was the emergence of Amun-Re as an all pervading world-god embodying different dimensions of the cosmos.²

The move to emphasize the connections between deities—to present them as a unity—is another sign of Akhenaten's influence. Such a shift to analysis of the pantheon, to reflection and explanatory modes of expression, imply a certain retreat from direct experience, a hint that already in the Ramessid period some of the lifeblood had begun to drain away from Egyptian religion. But from the standpoint of our own time it is a helpful development, as the Egyptian symbolic language suddenly becomes much more transparent in meaning.

Not only had Akhenaten ignored Hathor-Sekhmet and other feminine powers in the later phase of the Amarna solar cult, there had also been Previous page 1 Statuette of Akhenaten and Nefertiti from el-Amarna. The couple's names are inscribed on the back of the plinth, together with the later names of the Aten, indicating it was made after year 9 of Akhenaten's reign. Such votive statuettes were often found in the private house and garden shrines at el-Amarna (Louvre Museum, Paris)

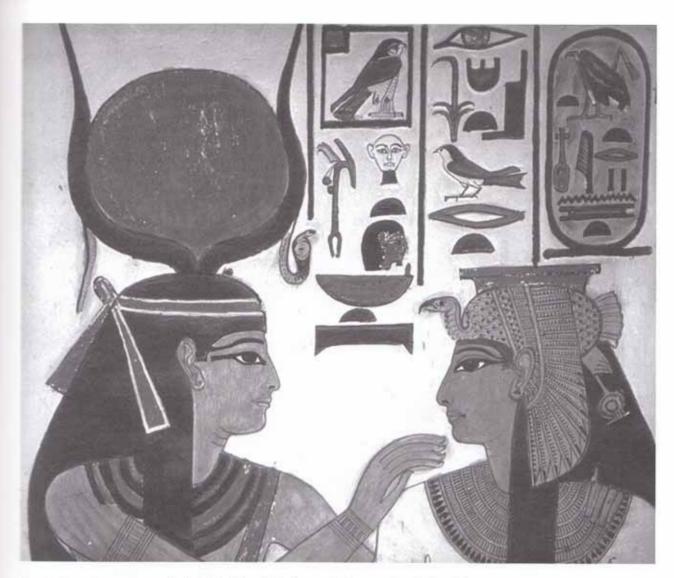
Right 2 The goddess Hathor embraces Queen Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II (Relief in the tomb of Nefertari at Thebes)

a total rejection of the dark side of life, of death and everything connected with the night-time journey of the sun to the realm of Osiris.

The reaction to this is all too obvious in Ramessid private tomb decoration at Thebes. In place of the lively images of Egyptian life—sowing and reaping, the trampling of grapes, musicians and festivities—so characteristic of 18th Dynasty tomb decoration, there are now scenes devoted to the cult of Osiris and the fate of the deceased in the afterlife.

A small but significant detail typifies this change. Replacing the 18th Dynasty scene portraying the king receiving gifts from his subjects came a representation of the enthroned Osiris. Deity—not Pharaoh—now ruled the hearts of the people. Such evidence shows just how deeply Akhenaten's reign affected ancient Egyptian consciousness.

But it is Seti I's marvellous temple at Abydos which takes us to Hathor's crucial importance in the Osirian realm. Inheriting the throne after the brief reign of his father Ramesses I, Seti grounded the 19th Dynasty once again in the archetypal pattern of Horus succeeding Osiris. This had eluded Egyptian rulers since Amarna times, for Tutankhamun, Ay and Haremhab had all died without a filial successor. But with the appearance of Ramesses I's son on the throne, Egypt entered a new era of stability and prosperity once again. Moreover, Seti



also took great care to emphasize his dependence on Hathor in this succession from father to son.

His religious devotion and piety pervade the sacred art of his time. No doubt partly in reaction to Akhenaten, but also moved by a deep connection with the past, Seti seemed determined to disclose the essence of New Kingdom religion, enshrining it forever in stone. In doing so he gave out esoteric knowledge as never before, especially in his tomb at Thebes and his temple at Abydos. Nor was he concerned solely with content—the decoration in his Abydos temple is overwhelmingly

beautiful. Its precisely carved reliefs are among the finest in Egypt, weaving together Osirian darkness and solar light in wonderfully detailed imagery.

Just how far Akhenaten had gone in his abolition of the feminine from the solar cult at el-Amarna is emphasized by how determinedly Seti set about restoring the wisdom of the feminine. Seti's portrayal of the journey of death and rebirth through the body of the sky goddess Nut, on a ceiling deep in the mysterious Osireion at Abydos, is the earliest known version of the Book of Night. It is juxtaposed with a scene of

Nut raised aloft by her father Shu, the Heliopolitan air god with whom Akhenaten identified in the early years of his reign. Nearby on the ceiling is the only known version of the Shadow Clock Text equating the interior parts of Nut's body with the twelve night hours. Here indeed is a restoration of feminine involvement in the solar circuit, and it is surely no coincidence that such texts and images seem to appear for the first time only after Akhenaten's reign.

Furthermore, dominating one side of the west wall in the hypostyle hall at Karnak, there is a huge scene of Isis as the mediating solar daughter, shaking her sistrum whilst leading Seti into the presence of Amun-Re (pl 3). The size alone of this scene is sufficient to demonstrate its importance to the king, especially his uncompromising determination to reinstate the solar daughter as mediatress between the father god and Pharaoh—a function noticeably absent from Akhenaten's cult at el-Amarna.³

Seti's temple at Abydos also takes us deep into the meaning of ritual. The ancient Egyptians were a people of ritual, and I became convinced whilst writing this book just how much their temple ceremonies had influenced the decoration and lay-out of temples. Neighbouring scenes on a temple wall, apparently unconnected in theme, take on a completely different meaning in the light of Egyptian ritual. Consequently, to study ritual, especially the pattern of ceremony from beginning to end, is crucial for interpreting temple decoration.

We know only a small fraction of the rituals which must once have been performed in the secrecy of Egyptian temples; and only fragments remain of the vast temple libraries containing all the papyri necessary for the cult. It is but necessary to glance at the inventory of sacred books engraved in a room in the Horus temple at Edfu, listing a whole host of different ritual titles, to realize just how much has been lost, and how rich a ceremonial life the Egyptians must have lived.⁴

Nevertheless, there is still much to be gleaned from those rituals still miraculously preserved on papyri and dispersed now in different museums world-wide. Above all, what will here be called the *Ancestor Ritual* is of cardinal importance for understanding Hathor's place in the Osirian realm. Rescued from oblivion by the painstaking work of the late Sir Alan Gardiner (who published a papyrus in the British Museum containing one

version of the ritual), this ceremony for Amenhotep I was designed to unite the living on earth with the ancestral spirits in order to bring about a rebirth of the world.

It is one thing to describe a ritual, however, quite another to perform it, for inevitably the ritual's impact diminishes upon the written page. A ritual is intended above all for performance. But even so, tracing this profound ritual through to its conclusion, may evoke, in however pale a memory, a sense of the powerful relationship that existed between living Egyptians and the so-called dead.

And more. The sequence of rites in the Ancestor Ritual also explains the order and content of seven perplexing scenes, rich in symbolism, decorating the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos.

For in trying to understand this ritual, in all its different phases, it became obvious that the unfolding ceremonies corresponded exactly to these seven reliefs in Seti's temple. And that underlying both the ritual and temple art, determining their composition and order, were seven specific stages of Osirian death and rebirth. What had at first seemed a sequence of disconnected themes in art and ritual suddenly shone out as a deeply meaningful process of transformation.

My reconstruction of how the Amenhotep ritual may have taken place in Seti's temple may be anathema to some specialists. But I hope that at the very least, it will encourage people to think of Egyptian temples not as art galleries but first and foremost as sacred places of ritual designed to facilitate the performance of quite specific ceremonies.

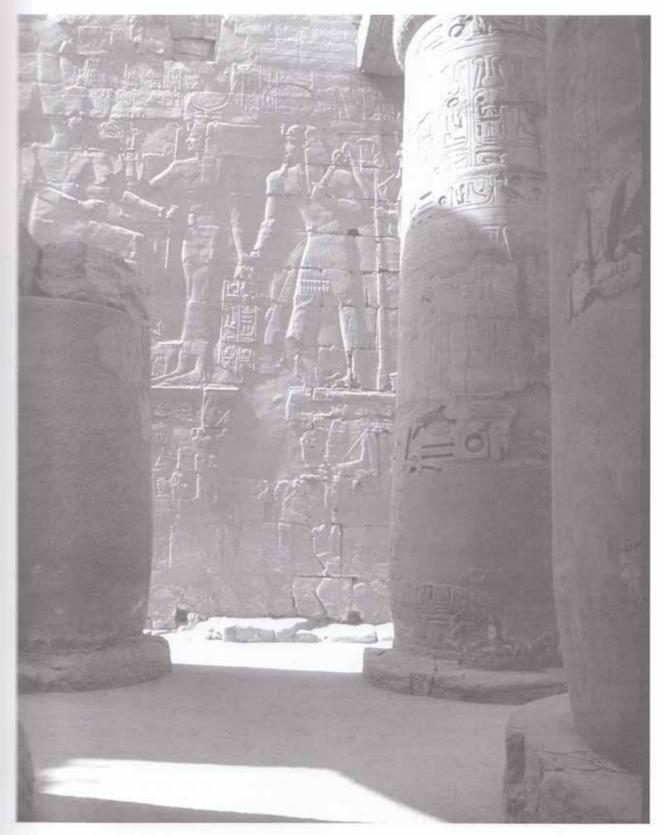
Yet it should also be remembered that the Ancestor Ritual for Amenhotep I gives us access to ritual knowledge, which would have been known to very few Egyptians in ancient times. The ceremonies, for 3 Huge scene showing Isis as a solar daughter shaking her sistrum in order to propitiate the Theban father god, Amun-Re. She is mediating on behalf of Seti I whom she leads into the god's presence for his acknowledgement as the ruling king of Egypt (Relief on the west wall of the hypostyle hall at Karnak)

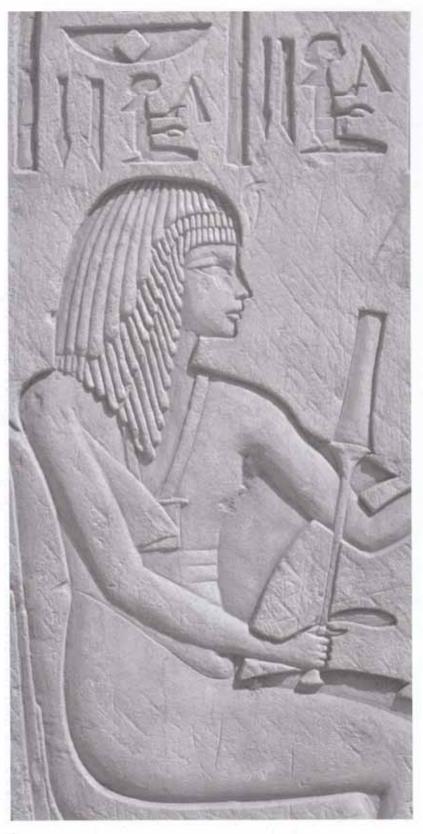
good reason, would have been closely guarded secrets, the preserve of temple initiates who performed them in the safety of sacred enclosures never entered by the population at large.

The centrality of ritual inevitably raised further questions for me which have long caused controversy among Egyptologists. What was the relationship between rituals on earth and the heavenly cosmos? How did the Egyptians harmonize their temple architecture with the movements of the sun, moon and stars?

For ancient rituals and temples were never simply terrestrial phenomena, but rather had to mirror the celestial order through complex, and now sometimes obscure, correspondences. As an old Hermetic dictum succinctly declares: 'As Above, So Below'. The problem for us has always been to know which 'Above' corresponded to which 'Below' in ancient Egypt, and the latter part of this book is concerned with such questions. More especially it explores the relationship between the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual for Amenhotep I.

The list of kings in Seti's temple at Abydos, which names the Pharaohs who had ruled over Egypt since the First Dynasty, acknowledges neither Akhenaten nor his immediate successors, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun and Ay. Nevertheless, even in Tutankhamun's reign there was already a return to the traditional ways of Egypt and the desertion of Akhenaten's city at el-Amarna. Cut off from their historical roots Tutankhamun's court had returned to the ancient capital of





Left 4 A fine relief of Haremhab in his tomb at Saqqara, built when he was still commander-in-chief of Tutankhamun's army. After Ay's death Haremhab ruled Egypt and his royal status is symbolized by the uraeus on his brow, which must have been etched in after he became king

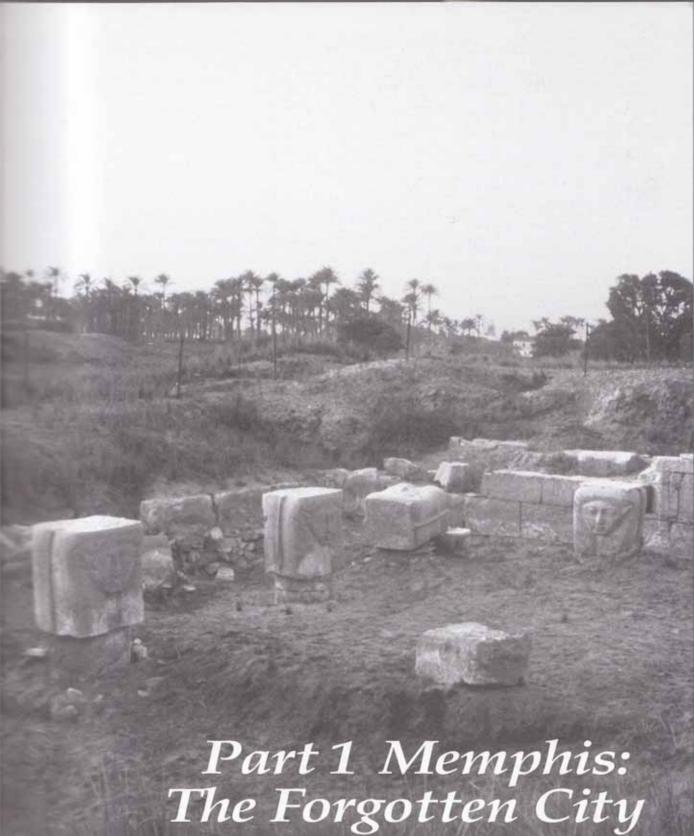
Opposite 5 A view of the once glorious 19th Dynasty Hathor temple at Memphis which dates from the reign of Ramesses II. Only the Hathor capitals are now visible, the rest of the temple lies underground

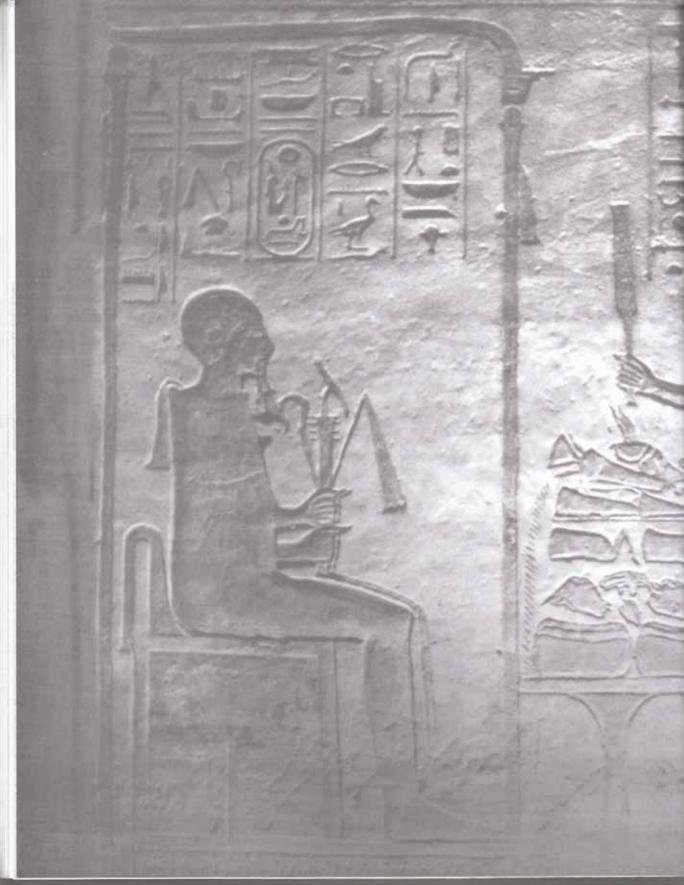
Overleaf 6 Ramesses II wields a sekhemsceptre of power as he administers offerings before Ptah, 'Lord of Maat', seated like a cult image within his shrine (Relief in the hall of the small temple at Abu Simbel)

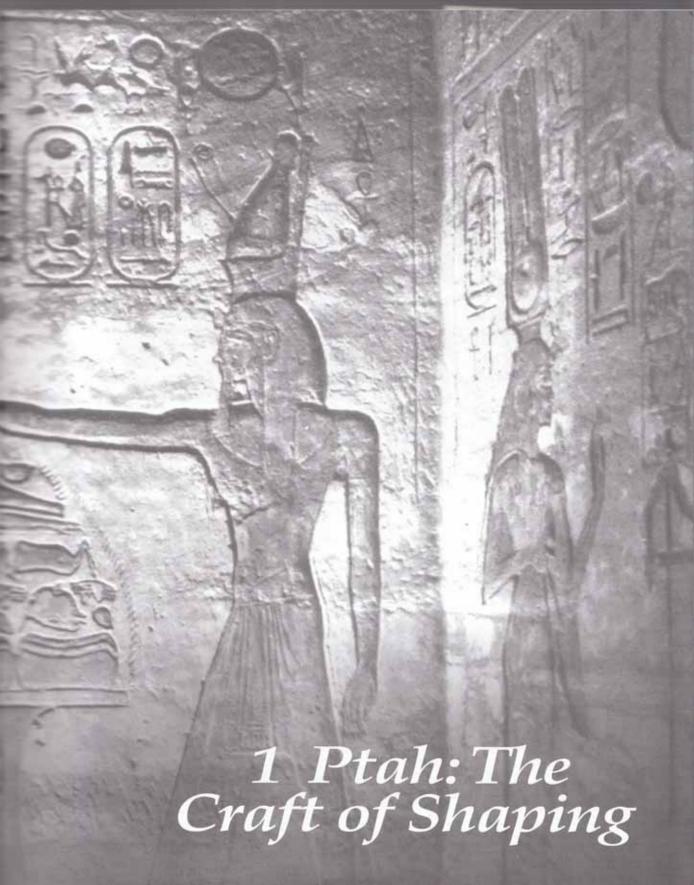
Memphis, and begun the restitution of shrines that had 'fallen into desolation', the restoration of a land that 'was in confusion'.

But it seems that Tutankhamun who was married to the daughter of Akhenaten, Ankhesenamun—had been too closely interwoven with the Amarna episode to be included in Seti's king list, which instead names Haremhab, the regent and erstwhile commander-in-chief of Tutankhamun's armies (pl 4), directly after Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III.

It was king Haremhab, taking control after Ay's demise, who embarked on a comprehensive renewal of Egypt. His extensive restoration work included dismantling Akhenaten's sun temples at Karnak and using the blocks as filling for his own pylon before the great hypostyle hall. Apparently he and Queen Mutnodime were childless, for after him came yet another army general, who ruled briefly as Ramesses I before his son Seti I succeeded him, followed by Seti's son, Ramesses II. These were the rulers who took a firm grip on Egypt after Akhenaten, enabling her to rise once again from the ashes of the abandoned fire altars at el-Amarna.







M ORE THAN EVER
things we can live with
are falling away, for that
which is oustingly taking their
place is an imageless act.
Act under crusts, that will readily
split as soon
as the doing within outgrows them
and takes a new outline.
Between the hammers lives on
our heart, as between the teeth
the tongue, which, in spite of all,
still continues to praise
(Rilke Ninth Duino Elegy)

In the aftermath of Akhenaten's troubled reign, it must have been deeply reassuring for the court of Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun to return to Memphis at the apex of the Delta. This was the city which, according to Herodotus writing in the fifth century BC, had been founded by Menes, the first king of dynastic Egypt. Here at the very heart of the city lay the early royal citadel, the 'White Wall' which gave the city its early Egyptian name. Later the city became known as Mennefer (Memphis). To the south of this fortress was the huge temple area dedicated to Ptah, the patron god of Memphis, which saw a huge expansion during the

reigns of Ramesses II and his successor Merneptah, when new temples dedicated to Hathor, Ptah and the deified Ramesses II were built on the southern approaches leading up to the main temple.

The 'Beauties of Memphis' had always held a special place of affection in Egyptian hearts. To sail to the city where Ptah, Sekhmet, their fragrant child, Nefertem, and Hathor, the 'Golden One', were worshipped, was to sail to a place of vitality and delight, a hallowed place where life powerfully throbbed amongst burgeoning ripe nature. At Memphis, according to a New Kingdom love poem,

The river is like wine,
Its rushes are Ptah,
Sekhmet is its foliage,
Iadet its buds,
Nefertem its lotus blossoms.
Gold is in joy
When earth brightens in her beauty,
And Memphis is a bowl of fruit
Placed before the merciful of face!

Not that it is easy for a modern visitor to believe that here, at the village of Mit Rahina some twenty-four kilometres south of modern Cairo, there was once a sophisticated metropolis and thriving centre of commerce, where arts and crafts flourished under the patronage of its city god, Ptah (pl 9). Only shapeless ruins are visible, where once stood famous temples, led by a high priest who bore the title 'Supreme Leader of Crafts'. Gone are the sacred groves, the finely decorated palaces, the pylons, the obelisks, the avenues of sphinxes, the goldsmiths' quarters, the potters, the jewellers and furniture makers. Not a trace remains of its bustling harbour and foreign quarters, or their temples for the cults of the Syrian deities-Baal, Anat, Reshef and Astarte-foreign cults brought to Egypt by merchant traders. All are gone, the stones long since removed to build Cairo. Memphis now lies scattered, like the dismembered body of Osiris, strewn across mounds and gigantic dust heaps. Here a fallen statue, there a grove of trees bordering pools where truncated columns lie half-submerged, halfforgotten in sand and water. And inevitably this devastation means that there is a constant danger of a very one-sided picture of ancient Egypt, one heavily biased towards Thebes where so many more New Kingdom buildings can still be visited.2

But something of old Memphis is evoked in a letter from a Ramessid lady called Styka, who was a chantress in Hathor's temple at Memphis. Writing to her friend in Thebes (also a temple chantress), she vividly captures the luxury and graceful ease of life in the city, describing this cosmopolitan city during the 19th Dynasty as a place where Egyptians and



Left 7 Tomb relief of Memphite temple musicians in a procession, probably from a Ramessid tomb at Saqqara (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

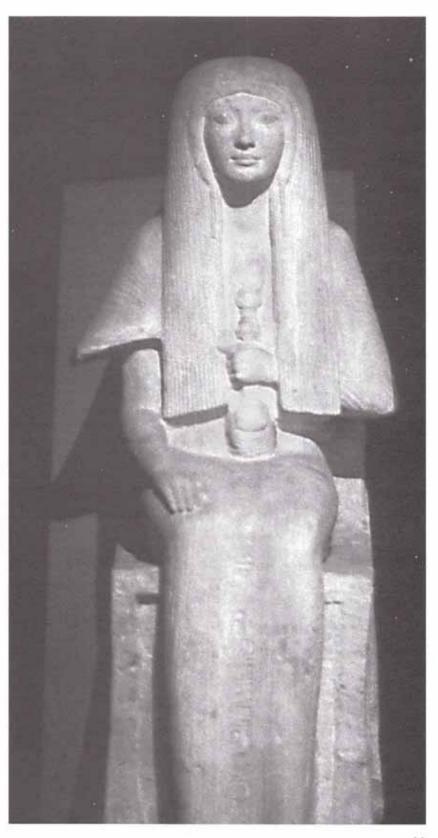
Right 8 A lady of Memphis, holding the menit-necklace sacred to the goddess Hathor (Statue of Meryt, the wife of Tutankhamun's treasurer, Maya, in the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden) foreigners mingled freely, enjoying abundant prosperity:

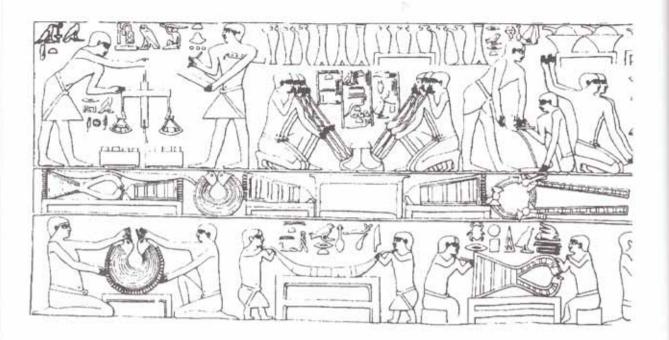
Her granaries are full of barley and emmer; her hillocks have herbs, her lakes are full of lotus buds . . . moringa oil is sweet and fat abundant, and plenty of jars of oil . . . the Asiatics of Memphis sit at ease, they are confident and embraced.³

However, Styka's main reason for writing the letter was not primarily to dwell on the beauties of Memphis, delightful though they might be, but rather to tell her friend about a contest between acrobatic dancers from the South and North, which had taken place during one of the many festival processions in Memphis. It was obviously of great interest to these two temple musicians, who must themselves have been skilled in temple arts. Styka writes:

The depek-dancer of the South has come. She has prevailed over the northern one and has put her foot upon her neck, and has placed her hand upon the ground. The august ladies of Memphis are seated at ease, their hands laden with foliage and greenery.4

One wonders what happened during Akhenaten's reign to such temple musicians and all the other numerous temple personnel throughout Egypt. How might they have written to each other some sixty years or more before Styka's letter? Certainly not in such a relaxed style as Styka, though it is true to say that many of the population were probably untouched by Akhenaten's revolution. Mural decorations in the houses of the workmen's village at el-Amarna, for example, show that the population still held fast to their traditional deities. There, adorning the walls, are Bes and Taweret, the protectors of women in childbirth. Moreover, vessels with the modelled face of Hathor on them were still used in the village, perhaps for pouring wine. Although Akhenaten's reign



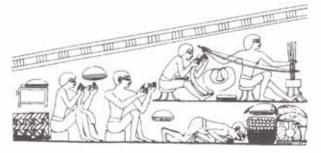


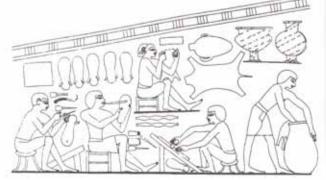
9 EGYPTIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS

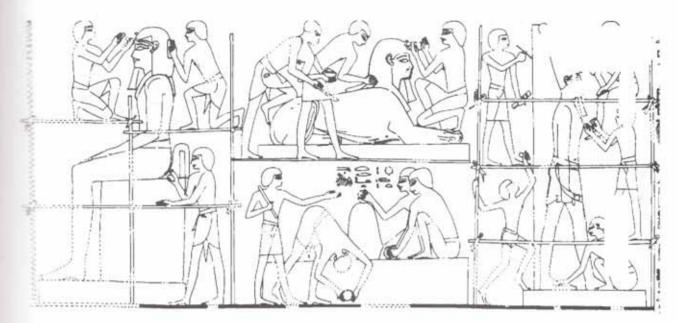
Right—Ostracon showing craftsmen reverently kneeling before their patron god, Ptah, who is protected here by the winged serpent goddess of the Theban necropolis Meretseger 'She who loves silence' (City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham) Above—Old Kingdom metal-workers, including dwarfs, making jewellery in the lower register (Sixth Dynasty relief in the mastaba of Mereruka at Saqqara)

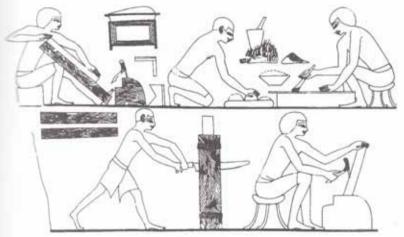
Scenes in the tomb of Rekhmire at Thebes: below left, beadmaking; below right, leather working—shoemakers cut and sew sandals made from an animal hide; facing page, above, New Kingdom sculptors working on a sphinx and royal statues; below, woodworking including sawing a plank lashed to a tree and planing with an adze











was later to be described as an 'illness in the land', for many Egyptians domestic life must have carried on much as usual. The gods and goddesses dose to the concerns of daily life continued to occupy the little domestic shrines and to be painted on the walls of private houses

FTAH: THE DIVINE SMITH

Tutankhamun's return to Memphis meant not only a return to royal tradition but also a return to the Egyptian centre of metallurgical wisdom and artistic crafts presided over by Ptah, whose name perhaps means 'fashioner'. He was the patron of artists, miners and metal-workers, all who worked the materials of earth (pl 9).

Indeed, Ptah himself is usually portrayed with a close-fitting blue skullcap, similar to the caps worn by metal-workers, smiths and other craftsmen in Old Kingdom tomb reliefs at Saqqara, which was the principal necropolis for ancient Memphis. Normally, Ptah's face is painted green, a colour which brings to mind one of his distinctive epithets, 'the merciful of face', since green symb-

olized beneficence and propitiation in ancient Egypt. Sometimes Ptah appears in the form of a dwarf, with twisted legs, hands on hips and a huge head, as in the amulets of Ptah discovered in the Egyptian copper mining temple at Timna. The origin of this iconography is obscure, though a connection of dwarfs with mining and metallurgical work in African cultures and elsewhere is well-documented, while in a number of Old Kingdom reliefs, dwarfs are shown busily engaged in making jewellery (pl 9).6

There is abundant evidence too of Ptah's connection with mining. When miners went to the hot, desert regions of Sinai in quest of precious copper and turquoise, stelae were left in honour of their patron Ptah, and Hathor, 'Lady of Turquoise'. She, the matrix of earth, gave them this turquoise, prized for its beautiful colour, glittering with all the radiance of solar life—a mineral widely used by the workers of Ptah to make beautiful jewellery.⁷

But Ptah and his craftsmen not only fashion remarkable adornments. He is also the god responsible for the whole of Egyptian culture as it existed

in the temples and cities of the land—a culture which Akhenaten had so severely undermined. For it is the Memphite demiurge who knows the secrets of the strange subterranean world. It is he who knows how to 'give birth' to the divine statues of the deities within the temple shrines by using the earth substances, which grow 'in' him and 'on' him in his manifestation as the earth god, Ptah-Sokar. With consummate skill and artistry he shapes and transforms these earth substances into manifold forms and bodies. In short, Ptah is the culturegiver, the inventor of all the arts of life.

Not surprisingly, therefore, after a reign during which innumerable cult images had been discarded, Ptah now returns with greater authority than ever and-alongside Amun of Thebes and the solar deity, Re- emerges as the third member of the state triad worshipped throughout Egypt from the end of the 18th Dynasty onwards (pl 12). Together, these three deities herald one of the many responses to the threefold creator in Amarna religion, since they too form a unity, but a much more acceptable version that now includes the terrestrial cult image or 'body' represented by Ptah. The thirtieth chapter of the Leiden Papyrus explicitly says of these three aspects:

All gods are three.

Amun, Re and Ptah whose equal is not.

Hidden is his name as Amun.

He is Re in countenance.

His body is Ptah.⁸

Such a triple god—hidden in the interior of a shrine, with a bodily form and the face of Re—is indeed a powerful counterblast to the celestial sun god worshipped in Akhetaten, whose single cult form was the visible, heavenly orb shining in the sky.

Before investigating the reappearence of Hathor and other serpent eye goddesses in the wake of Akhenaten's revolution, we need to look a little more closely at the nature of masculine, creative activity in Memphis, since this is closely related to how the goddess reappears.

In contrast to neighbouring Heliopolis—with its cosmological wisdom, its esteem of 'seership' under its high priest the 'Greatest of Seers', and its Ennead brought into being by the ejaculation of Atum aroused by 'his Hand'—religious life at Memphis lay much closer to the warmth and passions of human activity, to the lifeblood and language of all living things.

Moreover, the organs used by the Memphite demiurge to bring the world into being were not his phallus but rather his heart and tongue. And this touches on the very essence of the difference between Amarna religion and religious life under Akhenaten's successors, whose reigns were characterized by great personal piety and devotion to the deities.

In the response to Akhenaten it was the power of the heart that assumed overwhelming importance, a response in which the need to feel overshadowed the need to see.

HEART AND WORD: CREATING BODIES

To understand the formation of the world according to the Memphite tradition, we must turn to a remarkable text inscribed on a black granite block now in the British Museum, the Memphite Theology.9 Unfortunately, the block was later used as a millstone which resulted in precious phrases being lost. Nevertheless, enough of the text is still preserved to tell us about Ptah's supreme formative skills. The inscription dates from the reign of King Shabaka, one of the 25th Dynasty Nubian rulers who came from the south to take control of Egypt at the end of the eighth century BC. Shabaka himself says that, finding the original in a 'worm-eaten' condition (probably

Right 10 Ptah, the divine craftsman of Memphis, holding the symbols of stability and power (18th Dynasty relief in the temple of Ptah at Karnak)

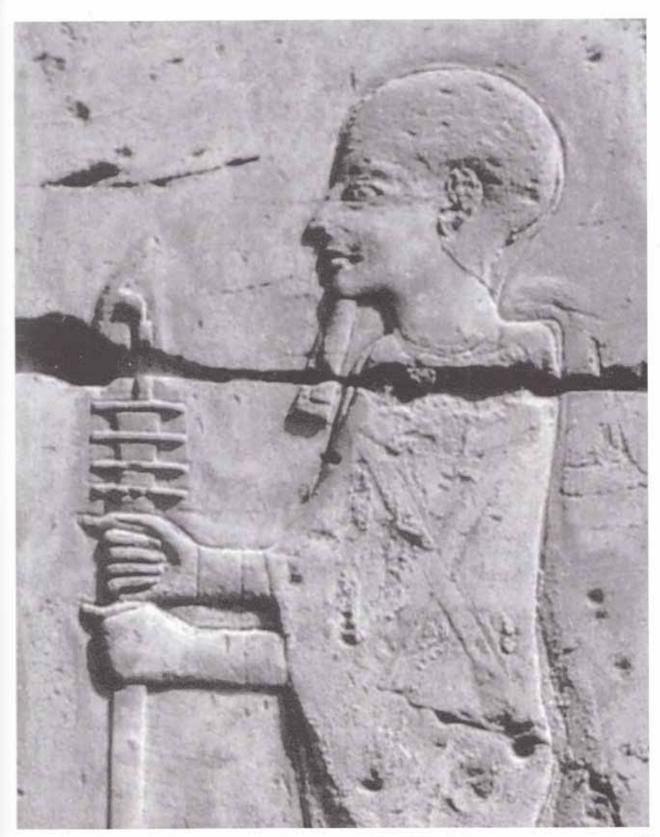
written on papyrus and stored in a temple library), he ordered it to be copied with the intention that the inscribed stone should be erected in the temple of Ptah at Memphis.

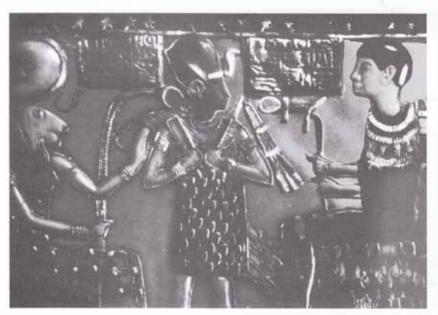
Exactly when the original composition should be dated is a thorny problem, and various suggestions have been made, ranging from the Old Kingdom right through to the Late Period. Hermann Schlögl concluded that it must have been composed in the 19th Dynasty, and even though some of the themes occur already in Middle Kingdom texts, his arguments seem plausible.10 Indeed, once the background of the Amarna Revolution is borne in mind when reading the Memphite Theology, the work immediately takes on the character of a carefully considered Memphite reply to Heliopolis, an expression of Memphite distress towards the city which had provided the foundation for such a drastic form of religion in Akhenaten's reign.11

Be that as it may, the text affirms the centrality of Ptah's craft wisdom in no uncertain terms. The relevant section opens with the names of the seven hypostases or manifestations of Ptah, the kingly demiurge dwelling in the primal waters of Nun and Naunet. Regrettably, only four of his names are preserved, which are:

Ptah-on-the-Great-Throne . . .
Ptah-Nun, the Father who made Atum,
Ptah-Naunet, the Mother
Who gave birth to Atum,
Ptah, the Great One,
Who is the heart and tongue of the Ennead
[Ptah] . . . who gave birth to the gods
[Ptah] . . . who gave birth to the gods
[Ptah] . . .

After these seven hypostases of Ptah comes an eighth-'Nefertem at the





nose of Re each day', the sweetsmelling child of the lotus flower, whose subtle fragrance Re loves to inhale when he rises at dawn each day. According to an Old Kingdom Pyramid Text, the Egyptian king also appears as an incarnation of Nefertem, gleaming with all the radiant freshness and vitality of the wondrous lotus plant: 'Unas shines as Nefertem, the lotus at the nostril of Re when he rises daily in the horizon' (PT §266).

So in this Memphite version of creation, the seven aspects of the demiurge are first enumerated, culminating in the appearance of the sensual dawn child, the plucked lotusbearer of light. His appearance also recalls the cosmogony of Hermopolis, the City of the Eight, with its four couples of serpents and frogs brooding in the primeval swamp, who generate the sun. At Hermopolis, however, light appears in the form of the young sun child at the beginning of his growth cycle, seated in the midst of the lotus flower surging forth from the primal mass of water and mud. Opening its petals to the sun in the morning and closing them again each night, with unfailing regularity,

this flower encloses the mystery of the regenerative cycle, of life rising and falling endlessly, day after day, in harmony with the measure of time.

At Memphis, in contrast, if Nefertem, the plucked lotus flower, is excluded, the primeval assembly who bring forth the sun are seven in number. Also important, the context in which they do this is the formation of a material world under the rule of Ptah. Moreover, as the text goes on to say, this materialized realm is very much bound up with Heliopolis, for the Heliopolitan creator, Atum, is himself utterly dependent on the heart and tongue of the Memphite demi-urge for his existence:

There took shape in the heart, there took shape on the tongue, the image of Atum. For the very great one is Ptah who gave life to all the gods and their Kas, through his heart and through his tongue

Here it is explicitly stated that Ptah forms Atum of Heliopolis, the cosmic creator who brought forth the air god, Shu, and his female partner, Tefenet, either by spitting them forth from his mouth or by letting his seed fall into the primal waters after masturbating. Left 11 Pectoral from the tomb of Tutankhamun showing the king receiving life and power from Ptah, the craftsman god of Memphis. On the left Seklmet blesses him with a lifetime of years, symbolized by the notched palm ribs she holds (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Right 12 The state trinity of Egyptian religion during the 19th Dynasty—the gods Amun, Re and Ptah—as shown on the bell of a silver trumpet from Tutankhamun's tomb. Amun stands in the centre. Ptah is within his shrine on the right, and the hawk-headed sun god, Re-Harakhti, is on the left. Two such trumpets were found in the tomb (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

From this first-born pair came the earth god, Geb, and the sky goddess, Nut, followed by Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys.

The Memphite Theology does not seek to deny Atum's creative activity at Heliopolis. On the contrary, it acknowledges that the Ennead originate from 'the semen and hands of Atum, for the Ennead of Atum came into being through his semen and fingers'. But it emphatically insists that the Ennead also depend on Ptah's heart and speech if their names are to be known in the world:

The Ennead are the teeth and lips in this mouth which pronounced the name of everything and from which Shu and Tefenet came forth and which gave birth to the Ennead.

In short the cosmic Heliopolitan world of Atum is completely permeated and ruled by the power of the divine 'Word'. ¹² The cosmos becomes form through sound.

By virtue of his power to create through word and utterance, Ptah is like those 'divine artisans' described by Mircea Eliade, who possess the occult secret of 'fabrication' and 'construction', who know how to give shape to the world, singing everything into existence through their creative utterances. As Eliade wrote of this creative faculty: 'To 'make' something means knowing the magic formula which will allow it to be invented', and he described the artisan as a kind of 'magician' who possesses the secrets of formative life.¹³

But ancient Egyptian physiology is also important for understanding why the Memphite text should so insist on the supremacy of Ptah's heart and tongue. For the Egyptians, like other ancient peoples, saw the heart as the seat of thought and intelligence, the crucial organ commanding the whole of the body.

So, for example, the section of the New Kingdom medical *Papyrus Ebers* dealing with the heart, states that the heart is united with the male sexual organs:

Two vessels go (from the heart) to both his testicles. They are the ones which bring the semen.¹⁴

Evidently the Egyptians considered that male semen first originated in the heart, being then conducted by two vessels to the testicles, which were simply a reservoir for the seed, waiting for the heart 'to speak'. All bodily organs function because the

heart commands them to do so, or, as the *Papyrus Ebers* puts it, the heart 'speaks from the vessels of every limb'. ¹⁵

Consequently, whenever the skilled Egyptian medical practitioners examined a patient by touching various parts of the body, they were simultaneously placing their hands on the patient's heart to sense particular irregularities.

And so, although the Heliopolitan Ennead may come into being through Atum's ejaculation, it is the heart, and the heart alone, which should be regarded as the true source of his activity. The *Memphite Theology* goes on to say:

Sight, hearing, breathing, report to the heart. It is the heart which makes every understanding come forth. And it is the tongue which repeats what the heart plans.

This simply reaffirms what every ancient Egyptian medical expert

already knew, including those renowned priest-healers of Sekhmet, who specialized in blood complaints and healing by touch—that all the sensual faculties depended on the heart.

All of which only serves to bring home even more forcibly the enormity of Akhenaten's challenge to Egyptian tradition. Not only had he shaken the Egyptian pantheon to its foundations by his adherence to the God of Light and Life, but he had also struck at the very heart of Egyptian religion, had severed Heliopolis from the blood and sap of Memphis and the ways of the Memphite deities.

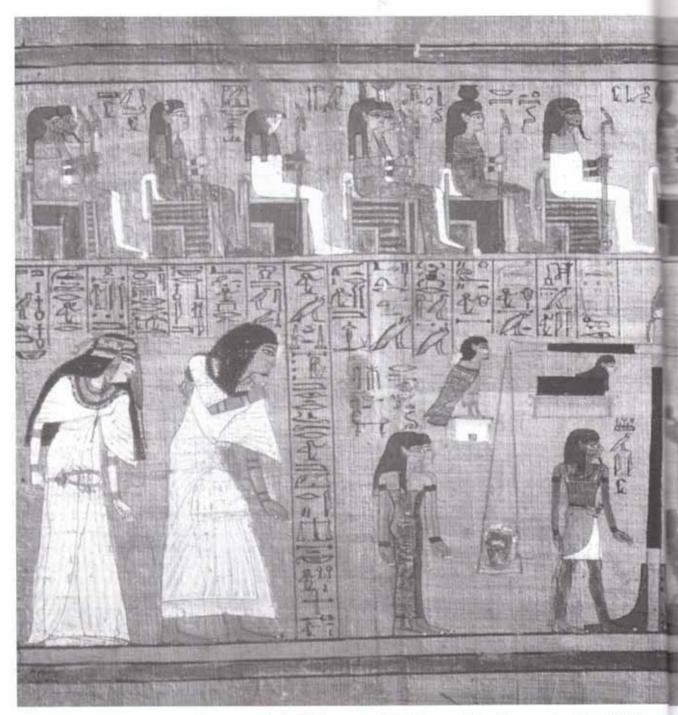
What had happened in his reign was the collapse of a world view, a separation of religion from traditional bodily knowledge and teaching, the removal of the sun god from the heart of Memphis.

And just as Akhenaten's strange physiognomy in reliefs defied the traditional artistic canon,so too his religious practices broke the connection between

Memphis and
Heliopolis, they
denied the work
of the demiurge
who grounded
and earthed the
cosmos in
terrestrial bodily
forms. Akhenaten
had, in fact, succeeded

in suppressing a religion rooted in the heart and in earth.

But that was not all. Was not the heart also the seat of morality, the source of human conduct? Do not the famous scenes of the afterlife in the Egyptian Book of the Dead show a person's heart being weighed in the balance against the feather of Maat in the judgement hall of the double Maat (pl 13)? No wonder, then, that

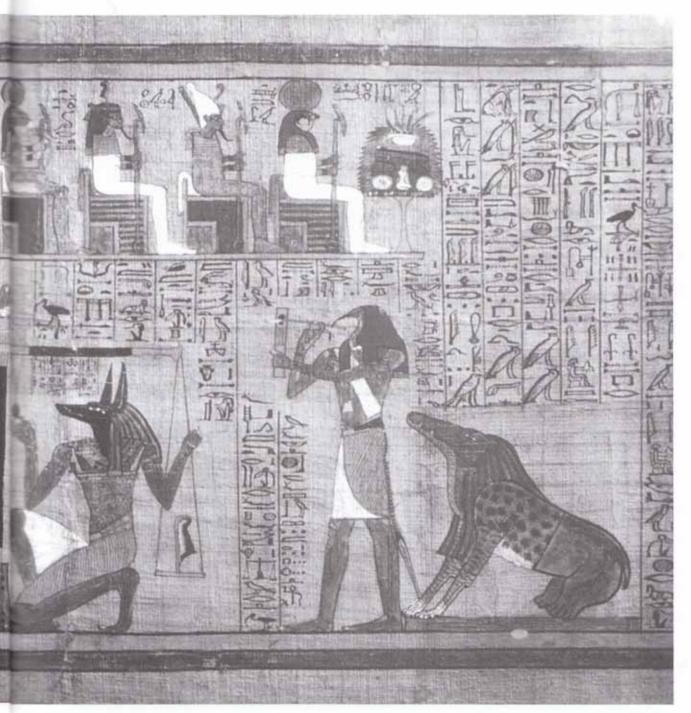


the Memphite Theology continues by praising the justice within Ptah's realm, stating that 'life is given to the peaceful, and death is given to the criminal'.

Moreover, after this reaffirmation of the moral social order, the text goes on to proclaim Ptah's responsibility for all the sacred cities, the shrines, the cult images and rituals which are the wellspring of Egyptian culture.¹⁶

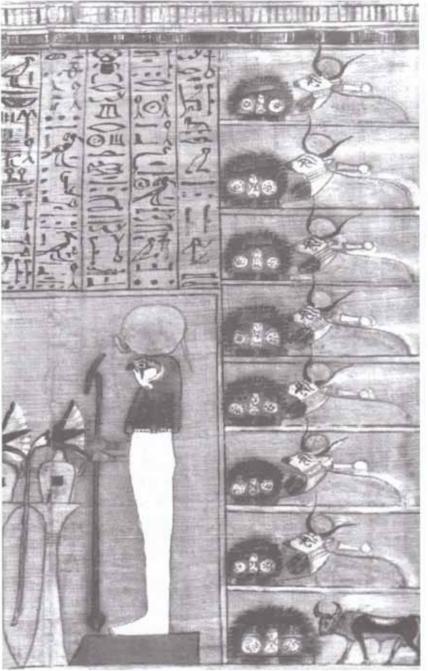
Yet Ptah does not accomplish all this out of 'no-thingness' like Atum, but rather he is a Maker, who uses all the varied substances of earth, 'all kinds of wood, stone, and clay, everything that grows upon him'.

And from these substances he brings to birth the multitude of deities, the cult images housed in shrines throughout Egypt's towns and



nomes. It is said that he fashioned the bodies of the gods according to their desire, so that 'the gods entered their bodies . . . content and united with the Lord of the Two Lands.' And as the divine artisan, the god is portrayed holding both a Was-sceptre 13 The weighing of the heart in the court of the afterlife. The scribe Ani, accompanied by his wife, watches as Anubis steadies the plummet before weighing Ani's heart, which is being weighed against the feather of Maat, goddess of truth, justice and right

action. Facing Anubis stands a figure personifying 'Fate'. To the right of Anubis stands Thoth, the divine scribe, ready to record the verdict while a baboon, sacred to Thoth, perches on the top of the scales (Papyrus of Ani, British Museum, London)



of dominion, which terminates in the head of the Seth animal, and a *Djed*pillar symbolizing stability (pl 10).

Ptah, in short, firmly holds in his grasp the violent energy of divinity, which he knows how to use in his craft activities. Moreover, included in his shaping activity is none other than the glittering body of the sun god (pl 14). We glean as much from the opening passage of the Myth of the Destruction of Humanity, telling how Re is growing old in a body composed of mineral elements—'his bones being silver, his flesh is gold and his hair real lapis lazuli'. For, like the cult images in

Left 14 The hawk-headed sun god, Re represented as a cult statue within a shrine. Behind, as providers of food and nourishment, are the bull and seven sacred cows, each wearing a menitnecklace (Scene illustrating chapter 148 of the Book of the Dead in the papyrus of Ani, British Museum, London)

Right 15 Statue of Sekhmet holding a papyrus sceptre and Ankh-sign of life, symbolizing her green, life-giving power (Temple of Ptah at Karnak)

Egyptian temples which progressively lost their power and intensity and had to be recharged, in this myth Re longs to return to Nun, to sink into the primeval waters 'where I came into being', so that he may be revitalized and reborn. The earliest extant version of this myth is inscribed on one of the large golden shrines surrounding the sarcophagus found in Tutankhamun's tomb, and so dates to the time immediately after Akhenaten's reign.¹⁷

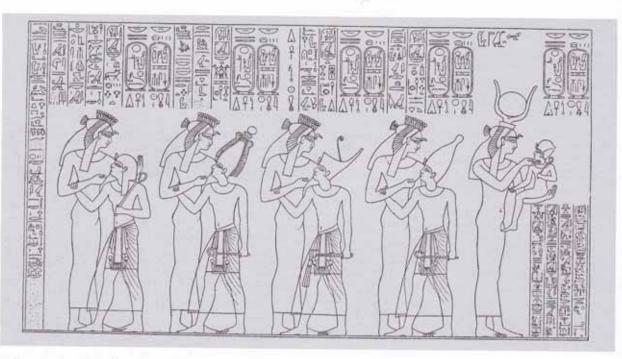
This makes the myth's significance even more striking. For, by repudiating a terrestrial Re, Akhenaten had, in fact, caused this 'image' sun god to reemerge with ever more clarity and insistence.

Clearly, Re is not to be understood here as the celestial God of Light and Life, whose power is manifest in the heavenly orb of the sun—the Aten—but as a ruler possessing a material body, a god who governs both earth and sky, a 'king of the people and gods together' as the myth says. And, like all forms connected with earth, he is subject to the vicissitudes of time, he too grows old, his body crystallizes, his brightness dims, his heat lessens, and he must return to the waters of renewal.

Moreover, this 'mineral' sun god is also closely bound up with the feminine, with the female Sun Eye of ancient Memphis—the turbulent, excitable goddess of dread and attraction, Hathor-Sekhmet.



2 Glances of the Sun: Reclaiming Hathor



It MIGHT BE tempting to suppose, given the account in the Memphite Theology, that the demiurge accomplishes his work alone, and that we have yet again a version of creation in which the female has no part. But this would be a travesty of Memphite-Heliopolitan religion, a denial of the fiery Eye goddess, Hathor-Sekhmet, dwelling at the heart of Egypt.

For it is she who infuses the Maker's forms with life, she who bestows on them all her vitality, her feelings and passions, all the arrows, the raying darts, the smiles and tears, all the fiery warmth of love and desire which pervades mortal life on earth. But what is the evidence for so bold a statement?

Firstly, in the 19th Dynasty temple of Seti I at Abydos, there is an important speech made by Isis, which is inscribed alongside a figure of the goddess tenderly nursing her young son, King Ramesses II (pl 16). The gist of what she says deals with the king's bodily nature, and she tells him that his body has been both moulded by Khnum and welded by Ptah. But then, having

given these two craftsmen gods their due, Isis goes on to say that the king's vitality, his neferu, derives from Hathor. And, as if to illustrate the truth of her words, four figures of Hathor are shown directly to the left of the goddess, each one, like a divine wetnurse, suckling the king.

Kimum has moulded you with his hands,
Together with Ptah,
who has welded your body.
The august Hathor of Dendara, she it is who nurses you,
Hathor, Lady of Hiw,
she is a nurse for you,
The Lady of Cusae
and Hathor, Lady of Atfili,
nurture your vitality.
May they all unite together,
so that they protect your Majesty
To rule every land.

Whatever upheavals Akhenaten may have inflicted on Egypt, one effect he most certainly had was to push the Egyptians into a more explicit mode of expression about their religion. For what could only be guessed at from a scene in the Luxor Temple, showing Hathor seated opposite Khnum as he moulds the body of Amenhotep III, is now quite openly stated by Isis here at Abydos (pl 16). The vitality that flows so freely from Hathor is needed to complement the masculine work of the potter and smith gods as providers of the royal body. In short, the female gives life, the male provides form.²

Secondly, there is a creation story, albeit much later in date, in which the Eye is instrumental in helping the creator bring to birth a feeling world. This unusual myth is recorded in the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus dating from the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, and is inserted between a collection of magical spells aimed at protecting the sun god from the evil snake Apophis, the monster of chaos opposing Re during his daily course across the sky.3 To help reinforce the cosmic order threatened by Apophis, the creator gives a long monologue describing the different phases of creation, an account which also highlights his dependence on his Eye for the manifestation of his power in the world. It

could, of course, be argued that because the papyrus is from the Late Period it has little relevance to New Kingdom Egypt. But as with other late papyri and inscriptions, the texts in the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus are almost certainly copied from much older works, since extracts from them are known from New Kingdom papyri.⁴

The text opens with a passage concerning the pre-existence of Atum-Khepri in the primordial waters, from whom all transformations and emanations come to pass. He says:

When I came into being, beings came into being and all beings came into being after I came into being.

Then the creator tells how he brought forth myriads of beings from his mouth before sky and earth had been formed, before the serpents had come into being. These dwelt in Nun as latent existence, waiting for the creator to find a place to stand.5 Then another phase of the cosmogonic process begins as new hypostases or projected image-forms come into being-the twins Shu and Tefenet. And here, as in the Memphite Theology, the demiurge depends upon the connection of his heart and phallus for his creative activity. It is his heart and thoughts that motivate him to masturbate and ejaculate forth the first-born pair. The demiurge speaks:

I devised in my own heart that manifold forms of forms should come into being, namely the forms of children and the forms of their children. I am he who rubbed with my fist, I copulated with my hand. I spat with my own mouth. I spat forth Shu, I ejected Tefenet, and it was my father, Nun, who supported them.

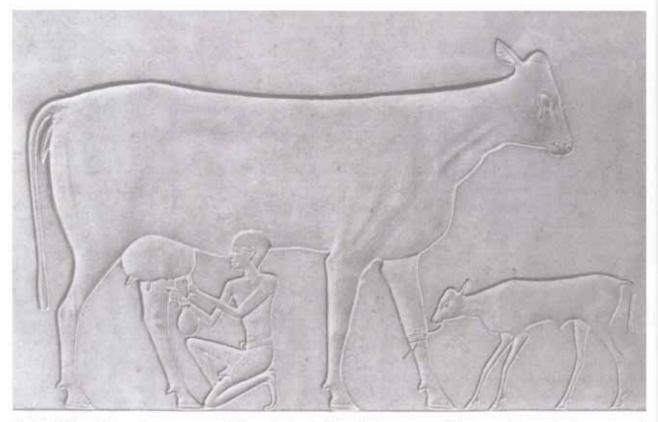
Because of this sole Creator there are now three in existence, though the forms of Shu and Tefenet still lie like lifeless statues, inert and helpless in the primordial waters of Nun, far from



their maker. However, heeding the plight of the twins in this watery darkness is the Eye, sent forth, it seems, by the demiurge in order to watch over his offspring. And when they return once more to their maker with his Eye, he weeps over them, so causing the people (rmt) to come into existence from his falling tears (rmit):

Facing page 16 Ramesses II suckled by four Hathors. On the right lsis tenderly holds Ramesses upon her arm as she tells him how Khnum, Ptah and the four Hathors provided his form and vitality (Relief in the temple of Seti I at Abydos)

Above 17 Sekhmet presents her menit necklace to Seti I, symbolizing her propitiated Hathorian aspect (Relief in the temple of Seti I at Abydos)



My Eye followed them for many ages (when) they were far from me after I had come into being as the sole god. And so it was that there were three gods. Then I came into being in this land, and Shu and Tefenet rejoiced whilst they were still in a state of inertness. And they brought back my Eye to me with them. Whereupon I rejoined my limbs. I wept over them, and that is how the people (rmt) came into being from the tears (rmjt) which came forth from my Eye.

In this account of the Heliopolitan creation the birth of the first couple is closely interwoven with the peopling of earth and plurality in the cosmos—a relationship established mainly through clever punning on the words for people (rmt) and tears (rmit). Such punning, in which similarities of sound are used to express a deeply significant connection, well illustrates Egyptian reverence for the creative possibilities of speech and language. Here a pun is used to establish that the activity of

this particular demiurge brings a peopled, humanized world into being. And perhaps the image of a cow accompanied by her tethered, weaned calf, weeping as milk is taken away from her for human consumption, also expresses this link between tears and human life (pl 18).

Different though the style may be from the Memphite Theology, once again the concern is with the connection of heart and phallus, of cosmic creation linked with powerful feelings and emotion.

Undoubtedly Atum-Khepri is there, metamorphosing in the primeval waters. But the creative process has been taken a stage further, having moved into another dimension much closer to life as lived on earth. And the nature of this demiurge is clear enough. Male seed is united with the heart in a realm which bears a profoundly human mark, borne out by the fact that the vivification of Shu and

Tefenet coexists with the creation of humanity on earth.

But that is not all. For it is the Eve who is here the instrument of life for the inert pair whom she seeks out in the immensity of the waters. It is Hathor, the 'messenger of the sole lord', who, according to Spell 331 of the Coffin Texts, brings Shu and Tefenet back to the creator.6 Nor is she the source of life for Shu and Tefenet alone. As the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus relates, the creator 'rejoins his limbs' at her return, the implication being that he too has lain motionless without her. Only when she returns is he restored to new activity, reconnected once more with his feelings and creativity. For are we not told that he weeps tears from his Eye when Shu and Tefenet return-tears which also give existence to the people? This is no remote creator, far removed from emotional experience and life; but one who feels joy, who feels sadness-one who is also moved to tears by the forms he has created.

Such feelings are also strongly in evidence in the *Decree of Ptah-Tatenen* for King Ramesses II, which is inscribed on several stelae, including one placed in the large temple at Abu Simbel. Again, the notion of the king as a statue or cult image is crucial, and it is explicitly said that Ptah-Tatenen has fashioned the king's body in electrum, his bones in copper and his flesh in iron.

All the skill of a smith working with fire has been brought to bear on the creation of this coppery-golden king of metals, all the energy of the Memphite craftsman has gone into the shaping of his form, which is the perfect likeness of the sun god no less:

Re is in his body, who came forth from Re, whom Ptah-Tatenen created.⁷

And as Ptah beholds the beautiful creation he has made or, as the Egyptians would say, has 'brought to birth', (since the same word msj is used both in the sense of 'to give birth' and 'to create objects'), he is overwhelmed by deep joy welling up in his heart, joy which impels him to take Ramesses within his arms in an embrace of gold:

When I see you my heart rejoices and I receive you in an embrace of gold,

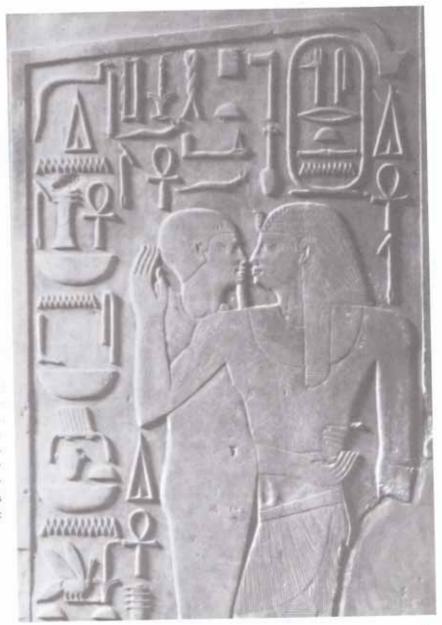
I enfold you with permanence,

stability and power.

I imbue you with health and joy of heart.

I fill you with jubilation, joy, gladness of heart, delights and rejoicings.8

Such a powerful description of the intoxication felt by the embracing demiurge (pl 19) brings to mind the words of the French poet, Paul Valery, who wrote that the forms created by fire are modelled more than any others 'in order to be caressed', a perception he seems to have shared with the ancient Egyptians." Indeed, temple scenes sometimes show the



Pharaoh with Ptah and Hathor, the form-giver and life-giver paired together on opposite walls, with the goddess herself reaching out her turquoise necklace to the king, waiting to surround him with her passionate embrace of solar love.

But we have not yet finished with the creation myth in the *Bremner-Rhind Papyrus*. For there is another side to the life-giving beneficence of the Eye. Always there lurks the danger that she Facing page 18 Scene of a cow weeping whilst being milked, accompanied by her tethered calf. Her tear reveals her sadness that her calf is now weaned and her milk used for other purposes (11th Dynasty relief on a limestone sarcophagus from Deir el-Bahri belonging to princess Kawit, a priestess of Hathor, Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Above 19 Ptah embracing the 12th Dynasty king Senwosret I (Limestone relief on a pillar which was discovered beneath a floor in the Karnak temple. Egyptian Museum, Cairo)



may run amok, out of control, and this is indeed a very real possibility in the myth immediately after the creator has peopled the earth from his falling tears. The reason for her anger in this instance is her discovery that, whilst she has been seeking out Shu and Tefenet in the waters, she has been ousted by another resplendent eye, called the Akhet-eye, which the god has rashly put in her place, an act arousing her fury:

Then [the eye] became enraged against me when she returned, and found that I had put another in her place, having replaced her with the Glorious One (the Akhet-eye).

To assuage her rage the creator then binds her around his head, fixing her in the centre of his brow, where she takes root as the uraeus who 'rules the entire land'. Only after she has been propitiated and restored to her rightful place can the creator's work unfold further; and he then emerges from the depths of earth to form reptiles as well as Shu and Tefenet. Then he engenders the earth god, Geb, and the sky goddess, Nut, who gives birth to Osiris, Seth, Isis and Nephthys, along with all the other myriad forms on earth.

Kurt Sethe perceptively pointed out the aetiological purpose of this myth, describing it as an Egyptian way of explaining the problematic, and apparently contradictory, presence of two Sun Eyes.10 There is the restless female eye, the goddess of aggression and attraction, who sometimes separates herself from the sun god, and is associated with the recurrent cycles of renewal. But there is also the brilliant shining Akhet-eve, the celestial luminary eternally giving light to the world, which was also known as the Aten, and which became the focus of Akhenaten's cult at el-Amarna.

Unquestionably the episode carries this aetiological meaning. Nevertheless, this raging return of the goddess takes on even more interest if we also read it within the background of events in Akhenaten's reign. Then it also provides us with an illuminating insight into the fury of Hathor-Sekhmet at being so utterly displaced by another Eye.

In his rapt devotion to the celestial Eye of light, Akhenaten seems to have had no compunction whatsoever about depriving Hathor of her intoxicant power. Nowhere, for example, do we see Amarna ladies adorned with her sacred menit-necklace, a Left 20 The sycamore fig-tree goddess pours liquid and holds out fruit for Nakhtamun and his wife, Khemena. This was a popular theme in New Kingdom tombs and the sycamore goddess is often named as Hathor, Nut or Isis. Here the personified tree is simply named as 'Sycamore'. Sometimes the tomb-owner's Ba is shown as a human-faced bird, fluttering in the branches of the fruitladen tree, or drinking from a garden pool (Relief in the tomb of Nakhtamun at Thebes, dating from the reign of Ramesses II)

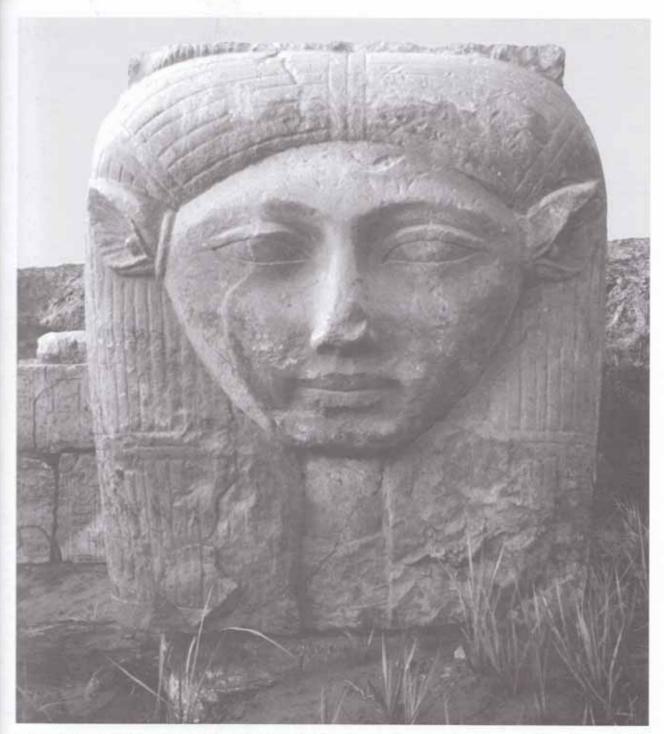
Right 21 Head of Hathor visible at the top of a buried column in the Hathor temple of Ramesses II at Memphis. The temple has yet to be fully excavated

symbol of her attraction.¹¹ To wear it would have been to acknowledge solar attraction rooted in earthly materiality, to honour a Sun Eye related to bodily forms, to reverence the attraction of solar life within the earth religion of Memphis.

So, it is understandable enough that the pendulum swings firmly towards earth in the reigns of Akhenaten's successors, a swing which results, moreover, in the resurgence of a religion much more securely rooted in earth, in everything connected with bedrock, larvae, seeds sown, trees with roots, with all the earth substances which the Memphite creator uses to shape the world.

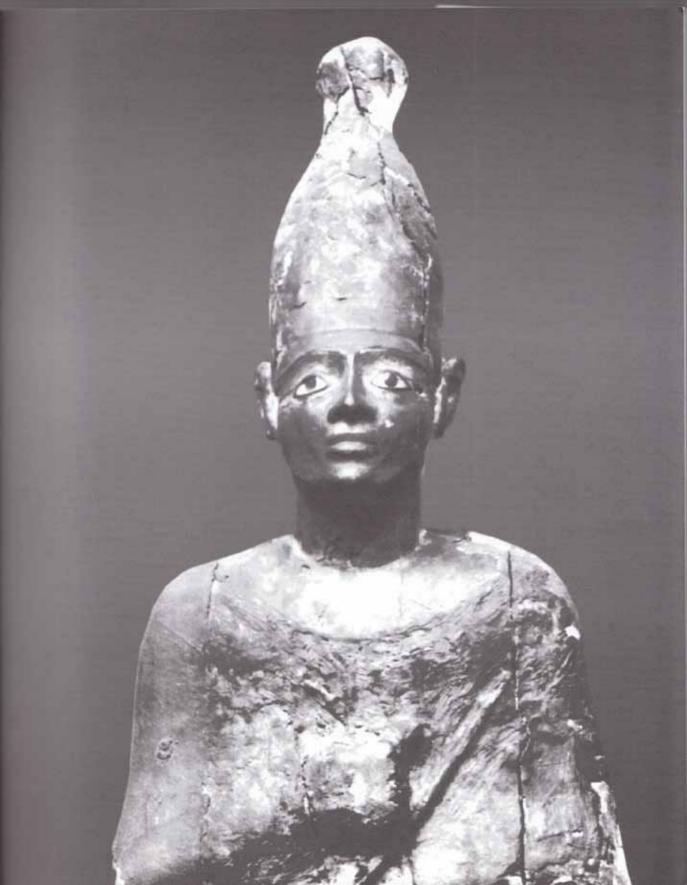
As well as being the solar eye of attraction in Memphis, Hathor was also worshipped as a tree goddess, the 'Lady of the Sycamore', who rises forth from the branches of this much loved tree. Significantly, a milky white liquid is obtained from the sycamore's fruit and also oozes from the leaves—a juice called 'milk of the sycamore' by the Egyptians.

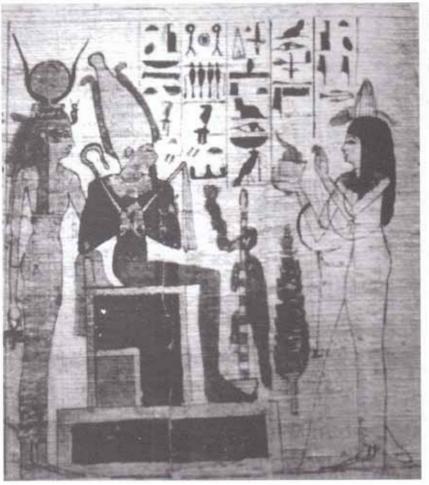
Similarly, we see the beneficent tree goddess amongst the branches, pouring out her vital juices into the hands of worshippers, who are sometimes accompanied by their living Bas



(pl 20). Some representations show this tree as a skeletal form, stripped of its bark, from which, however, the goddess rises forth, like the rising sap of life, dispensing her goodness from the tree of life.¹² She is the life of the sun circulating through the veins of earth, within the wood, within the stones, within all the materials fashioned by Ptah which become, through Hathor, living beautiful forms. Without her these remain stiff and lifeless, like Shu and Tefenet lying in the primal waters, stripped of vitality, devoid of movement. But equally important, without Hathor the body of Re, created by Ptah, would be unable to radiate either light or beauty.

3 Becoming Earth: Osiris at Memphis





We turn Now to the night, to the mysteries of darkness and death, mysteries which Akhenaten's successors also needed to reclaim. Not death, however, in the sense of return to the Mother at dusk, to the passivity of her nurturing care which ensures an ever-repeating renewal of Ka-life. But death as the deep, dark ground of existence, as the night-realm of Osiris, within whose mysterious kingdom the serpent eye goddess has a crucial place and function.

For in ancient Egypt death was not irreconcilably and eternally split off from life; nor was darkness simply a negative time when evil spirits sought to harm the living—as it became in Amarna religion during Akhenaten's reign. On the contrary, chapter 170 of

the Book of the Dead declares death to be 'the night of going forth to life'. And elsewhere it is said of Osiris that he gives life to others:

I am Osiris . . . I have fallen upon my side, so that the gods may live on me.²

However, not until Plutarch wrote his account in the second century AD do we have any coherent description of how Osiris died.³ Before then all had been veiled in hints and allusions, as if the deed were too dreadful to be fixed in writing. According to Plutarch, Osiris, the first-born son of the earth god, Geb, and the sky goddess, Nut, fell victim to a ruse planned by his brother Seth, the god of unbridled lust and desert heat. For some unstated reason Seth sought to kill his brother,

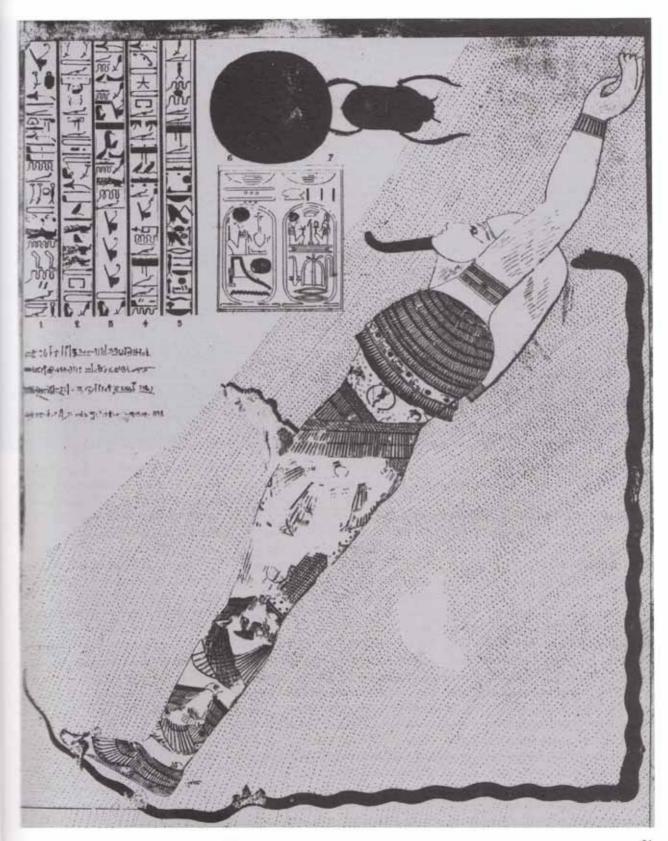
Previous page 22 Wooden statue of Osiris wearing the White Crown (British Museum, London)

Left 23 Asety, a chantress of Amun, burns incense before Osiris and Isis, who is adorned with the Hathorian solar horned head-dress and uraeus. The rest of the papyrus has scenes from the Amduat (Vignette from the 21st Dynasty papyrus of Asety, Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Right 24 Re-Khepri shining on Osiris who lies surrounded by a chthonic snake deep in the sand of the necropolis mound. The new risen life coming forth from death is symbolized by the erect phallus of the mummiform god. Next to this scene in the tomb is one of the king offering Maat to Ptah (Line drawing of a relief in the tomb of Ramesses IX at Thebes)

and to this end he made a magnificent chest, which was exactly the size of Osiris. Then he held a great banquet during which he promised to give the chest to the person who could lie down in it. Various of the guests tried, but only Osiris, the wise ruler of Egypt, could fit into it. And as soon as he had done so, Seth immediately snapped the lid shut and cast the chest out on the waters where it floated away to sea.

Eventually, the chest was washed up at Byblos in the Lebanon, where a fragrant tree grew around it, which was then felled by the king of the country to be used as a column in his palace. Soon the sorrowful Isis, searching for her husband, arrived in Byblos where she met the queen's maids. She taught them the secrets of plaiting their hair and breathed her fragrance upon them. In this way she gained access to the palace, for the queen of Byblos also wanted to learn the stranger's secrets. And, after some time, Isis persuaded the rulers to let her return to Egypt with the body of her husband, where, on arrival, she hid the coffin in the Delta swamps, near where Horus was being cared for. But once again Seth intervened, this time stealing the body



and violently dismembering it into fourteen pieces, scattering them throughout Egypt. Undeterred, Isis set out again to recover each fragment, finding all except the phallus of her husband, which had been greedily eaten by Nile fishes.

By means of her magical powers, she cunningly reconstituted the body, replacing the missing phallus with an image she had made. Then it is said that Osiris came to Horus from the underworld in order to teach him so that he could avenge his murder in a bitter struggle with Seth. Finally, Plutarch briefly states that Isis, having had sexual union with Osiris after his death, gave birth prematurely to Horus-the-Child.

Such is the bare outline of Plutarch's account, which undoubtedly harks back to Egyptian beliefs. But it must also be remembered that, though the essence of the Osirian drama remained constant throughout Egypt's long history, the focus of Osirian rites shifted enormously. For example, we need but recall the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, with their graphic accounts of the Osirian king's ascent to the stellar regions of the Imperishable Stars in the northern sky, and then compare these with his earth destination in New Kingdom rites in order to appreciate the vast changes in Osirian religion.

By the New Kingdom the focus had shifted almost entirely to the 'earth-bound' existence of Osiris.⁴ All this, of course, must be understood in conjunction with other religious developments around 2000 BC during the time of the Middle Kingdom, when there was a profound move towards a sense of inward feeling, of personal responsibility for actions, which was to culminate in the New Kingdom piety and worship of Amun-Re as the god of justice and mercy.⁵

This move coincided with the spread of Osirian religion among the populace at large, as well as the shift towards 25 Taking the shape of a hawk hovering above Osiris, Isis conceives Horus. The god lies in Sokar's realm guarded by Horus and Isis (Temple of Seti I at Abydos)

the worship of Osiris as an earth deity. Now, besides the archaic sky and stellar religion of ancient Heliopolis, there also began to appear texts concerned with the journey of the sun god to the realm of Osiris in the *Dwat*.

The judgement in the afterlife also became a much more prominent theme as the deeds of a lifetime were weighed in the balance against the deceased person's heart (pl 13).

More than ever before, death was beginning to be experienced from the perspective of earth, summed up by the voyage which the sun god makes to the earth-bound Osiris lying deep within the realm of the Memphite earth god, Sokar (pl 27). Now too the aim of the blessed dead, including the Osirian kings, was to greet the sun god during his nocturnal journey.

This shift is also reflected in royal funerary architecture. By the time of the New Kingdom the building of pyramids, with interior passages and apertures carefully oriented towards the stellar regions, had been abandoned in favour of tombs tunnelled deep into the desert cliffs in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes. And decorating the walls of these tombs were strange images of Re's passage through the chthonic realm of Osiris, unfurling like huge papyri along the walls.

It is beyond the scope of this book to explore all the different manifestations of Osiris over the ages. Nor is this necessary, since it is the power of Osiris to 'become earth' which relates directly to Hathor's return after Akhenaten's reign.

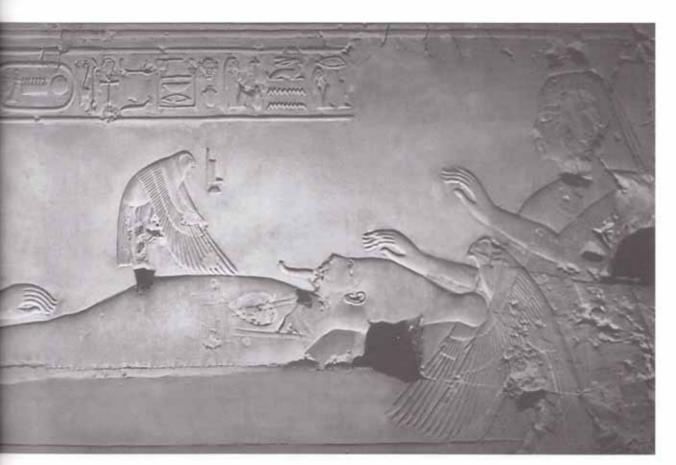
To Osiris belongs the secret of revival, manifest when life comes forth anew from earth after apparent death, not least the life that returns after the longed-for inundation waters have



flowed in the heat of summer, restoring vitality to the scorched parched land. And with this earth Osiris we return also to Memphis, because, as 'earth', Osiris is closely bound up with the Memphite deities—with the chthonic Ptah-Sokar, guardian of the earth's interior, and with the Memphite creator, Ptah-Tatenen, 'Ptah-of-the-Risen-Land'. And last, but by no means least, he is also connected with the feeling Sun Eye shining at the heart of the city, the goddess Hathor-Sekhmet.

BEARING BURDENS: THE FOUNDATION OF EGYPT

The chthonic nature of Osiris is clearly brought out in a hymn which is written on an ostracon—a fragment of limestone frequently used by the Egyptians as a writing material—now in the Cairo Museum.⁶ The hymn



opens with a vivid invocation to the mummiform phallic god lying in the sand. He is a subterranean power working deep within the caverns of Sokar, an earth snake illumined by Re during his journey through the Netherworld (pl 24):

O you who stretches out his arms,
Who sleeps on his side, who lies in sand,
Lord of earth,
O mummy with the long phallus,
O snake, great of years . . .
Re-Khepri shines on your breast
When you lie as Sokar,
So that he may dispel
The darkness which is upon you.
So that he may give light for your eyes.

[You are praised]

The hymn continues by praising Osiris as the bearer of earth, whose arms reach as far as the four pillars supporting the sky. Moreover, his quaking

movements cause earth to tremble, and moisture and air to come forth:

Earth lies upon your arm
And its corners upon you,
As well as the four supports of the sky.
When you quiver, the land trembles...
[The Nile] comes forth
From the sweat of your hands,
You spew forth the air
Which is in your throat...

Mention of the quaking Osiris hints at his revival and posthumous erection, procured by the magical Isis as she conceives Horus from the seed of her prostrate husband. Their union is graphically portrayed in a scene in the temple of Seti I at Abydos, which shows Osiris, lying in 'the temple of Sokar', as he fecundates Isis, who hovers above him in the form of a bird (pl 25). So too the *Great Hymn to Osiris*, written on a stela now in the Louvre.

praises Isis as the goddess who alights with beating wings upon Osiris to take his seed into her womb. She it is who 'makes shade with her plumage, creates breath with her wings' as she joyfully revives

The weary one's inertness, Receives the seed, Conceives the heir.⁷

Isis, the fluttering bird goddess, is here the life-bearer, hovering upon the threshold between the created and uncreated worlds, upon the threshold of life and death, where all that is to be flows from her dead husband. From his body issues forth the seed of new life which the goddess jubilantly takes into her womb.

And it is only through her, the 'mighty Isis', the goddess who protects her brother-husband, who sought him without wearying, who roamed the land lamenting, not resting till she found him, that the prostrate mummiform god is able to manifest as a life-giving source. And nowhere is this deep connection between life and death more intimately portrayed than in this scene of their union at Abydos—a union in which the momentous arousal of Osiris and release of seed has earth-shattering implications for Egypt, profoundly affecting the whole course of nature. According to the ostracon hymn, the breath of life returns and moisture is brought forth from his pores when he revives.

Next the ostracon hymn continues with an unusual evocation of Osiris as the backbone of Egypt, the ground upon which the whole of Egyptian culture is built. Upon his spine rest the houses, the temples, the monuments, all the fields and tombs, and—in an aside to Egyptian horror vacui—it is proclaimed that there are no empty spaces on the god's body:

If canals are built . . .

If one builds estates and temples,
Moves monuments, makes fields,
Excavates tombs and graves,
They lie on you,
You are the one who does this.
They are on your back,
More than can be written about.
There is no empty space on your back.

Is it to be wondered, then, that the Pharaohs displayed such unswerving dedication to covering the earth with vast temples and monuments?

The social reasons for this apparent obsession have often been commented on. But less frequently mentioned is its meaning as a service performed for Osiris. Such buildings provide adornment for his body, ensuring that he is not given to emptiness and nothingness, but remains firmly within the created order of Egypt.

And if Ptah is revered as the skilled demiurge of Memphis, the culturegiver so fervently praised in the

Memphite Theology, it is manifestly clear that Osiris is also essential for this work of formation. His earth existence provides the stable foundation, the deep, dark life that grounds the whole of the Egyptian materialized world.

Touchingly the ostracon hymn declares that this great weight of Egypt which Osiris bears upon his back is in no sense a burden for him

They all endure on your back [and you say] not: 'I am burdened'.

Without this stable foundation which is provided by Osiris, it is impossible to imagine that Egyptian culture could have survived for three thousand years. He is the solid base, the enduring ground upon which the whole of Egypt rested.

ATTHE MIDNIGHT HOUR: LIGHTING THE DARKNESS

The sun god also participates in this 'earth' existence of Osiris. As the ostracon hymn quoted above says, 'Re-Khepri shines on your breast when you lie as Sokar'. Likewise, scenes in Theban royal tombs show the sun god journeying through the twelve hours of the night within this dark realm of Sokar-Osiris (pl 27). He enters there as a Ba, and during his journey he sees the mysterious processes of earth transformation as they unfold beneath the starry realm of the night sky. Deep sky and deep earth, interconnected in one and the same process of living and dying, death and rebirth.

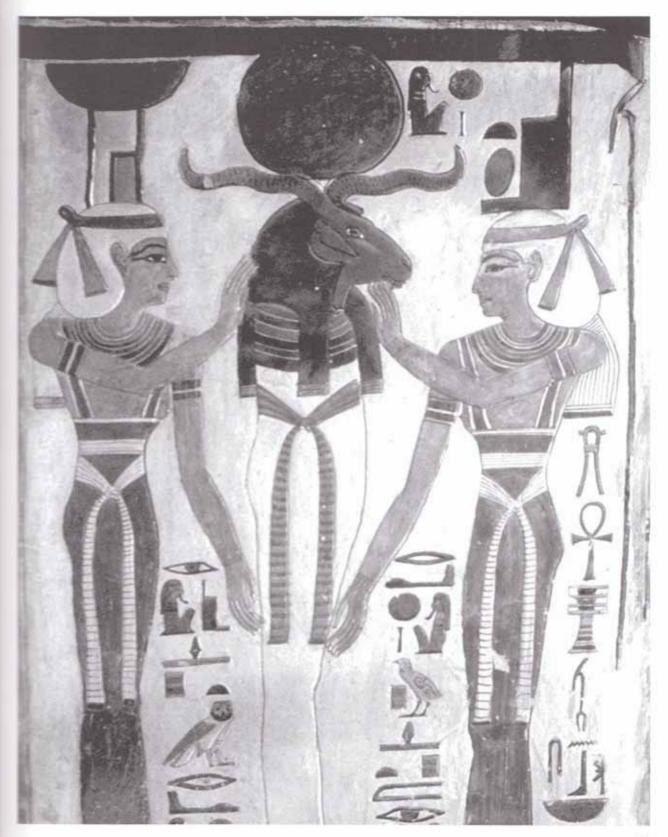
Re see this earth realm teeming with bodies in various stages of dying and becoming, sees the realm of flesh continually arising from and returning to the archetypes of creation. He sees how worn bodies are renewed, how forms and shapes change, including his own mysterious transmutation from egg enveloped in dung-ball to worm or larva, to cocoon, and then finally to the winged insect of the scarab beetle,

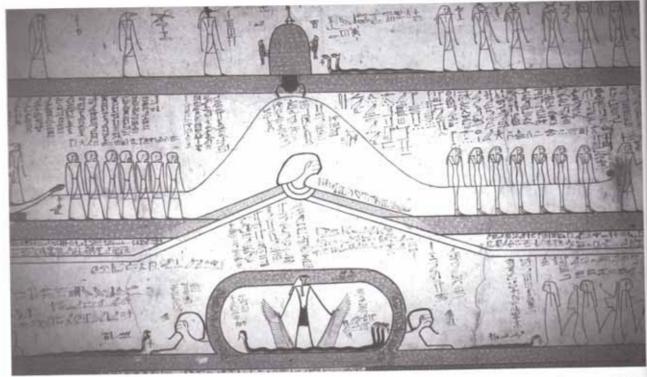
26 The union of Osiris and Re is symbolized in this composite image of the mummiform Osiris and the ram-headed sun god. Protecting the united gods are the two sisters Isis and Nephthys accompanied by the text, 'This is Re resting as Osiris, and Osiris resting as Re' (Relief in the tomb of Nefertari at Thebes)

Khepri. In short, he sees all the hidden secrets of what is contained in the mineral realms lying deep beneath earth.

Thus, for example, in the fourth hour of the night described in the Amduat (the Book of What is in the Dwat), the ram-headed Re slides down into the gloomy desert region of Rosetau where Sokar-Osiris dwells 'following the same path as the corpse of Sokar who is on his sand'. The fourth hour belongs to descent to the nadir in the ever increasing darkness. And here the barque of Re no longer sails on the river, but has to be dragged overland in complete darkness, guided only by the flames coming from the mouths of the serpents at his boat's stern and prow. Caught up in this regression to primal origins, the sun god cannot see any of the forms in this hour; and, just as hearing is the only faculty left to the dving in the very last stages before clinical death, so too Re can but call out words of comfort to those in the darkness. 'He does not see their forms, he calls to them when near them, and it is his words they hear'.

Then in the fifth hour comes that mysterious moment when something issues forth from the body of death (pl 27). Just as surely as Re has been close to departing life in the fourth hour, so now he sees something new coming forth as he passes by an ovoid cavern at the very heart of earth. His light illumines the hawk-headed figure of Sokar rising forth from an earth snake, holding great wings like those of Horus in his hand, reborn from the snake larva amidst great thunder; while hovering above, guarding this mysterious cavern, are Isis and Nephthys.





27 The fifth hour of the Amduat (the 'Book of what is in the Dwat'). During this hour, the sun god brings light to the ovoid earth cavern of the hawk-headed god Sokar, and a great roaring is heard as life begins to stir within the egg enclosed in the chthonic depths. The scene is located on a wall of a descending corridor leading to a deep well in Thutmose III's tomb, an architectural feature reflecting Sokar's profound depths in the earth. In terms of the overall tomb design the well marks a crucial transitional point of the descent towards the cartouche-shaped burial chamber beyond (Relief in the tomb of Thutmose III at Thebes)

From what has been surrendered in death, something new can now be born: and it is this awesome moment of life in death, when 'noise is heard inside this egg', which Re illumines as he passes by during the fifth hour.

During this night journey, Re also sees the fate of the damned, sees the shapes of monstrous gesticulating beings, some turned upside down with their hearts cut out, and others beheaded, condemned by the deeds of a

lifetime. But here in this earth realm there also dwell all the Osirian rulers who have served Egypt. At night they wait to be shone on by the sun god as he sails by, longing to rise up from their caverns as the 'Risen Dead', the transfigured ones (Akhs) who receive offerings from Re during the sixth hour of the night:

They stand by their caverns, And they hear the voice of this god daily

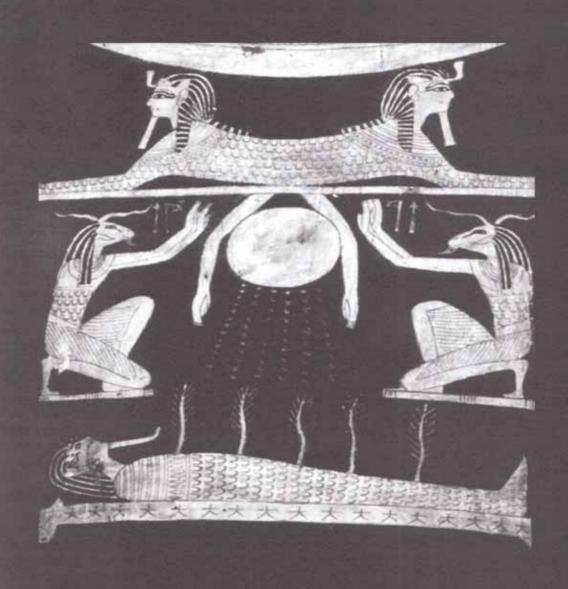
And here in the nocturnal journey, Re and Osiris, 'Tomorrow' and 'Yesterday' unite with each other in an embrace which enunciates the mystery of life in death and death in life (pl 26).

Through such an embrace, Osiris is revealed not as a dead, inanimate body, but as a being from whom new life continually arises and in whom the potential to manifest power continually shines—provided that Re willingly undertakes his night voyage into the darkness. This journey of Re—or more specifically his Ba—not only

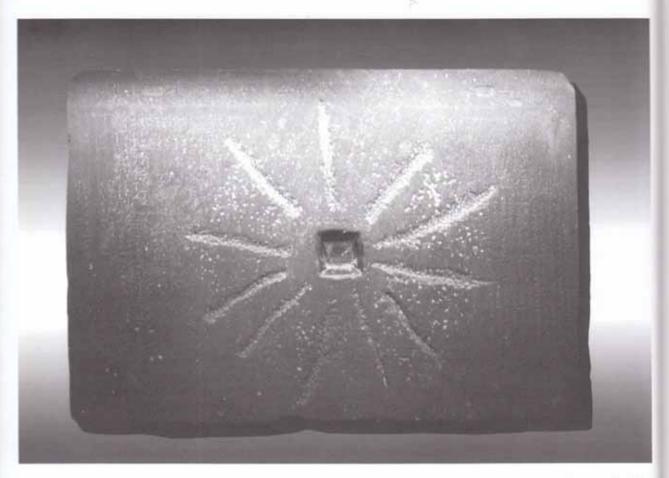
enables Re to renew his own 'flesh', but also preserves continually the unity of the living and the dead, binding together their potentially separate realms. Moreover, for those dwelling in the darkness of earth, the sun god's coming is indeed a powerful source of light, healing and salvation.

Yet despite the fact that a female figure—who is named as 'Mistress of the Barque' and crowned with solar horns—sails as one of the crew in the sun god's boat, there seems at first sight little information in the *Underworld Books* to help us interpret the place of the solar goddesses within the Osirian realm. To understand their role it is better to start with Osirian temple art and royal rituals.

But first we need to turn once more to the *Memphite Theology* since this crucial text sets out the complex relationship between the living and the dead, between Osiris and Horus, the past and present rulers of Egypt, as well as the manifestation of Osiris as an 'earth god' at Memphis.



4 Stages of Renewal: The Memphite Theology



The Memphite Theology's assertive plea for Atum's dependence on Ptah—and its insistence upon creation through the heart and the divine word—was touched on already in chapter 1. But that section now needs to be placed within the overall sequence of the text.

Superficially, the Memphite Theology seems to be no more than a series of disconnected episodes in the lifedeath drama of Horus and Osiris, interrupted in the middle—for no apparent reason—by the section dealing with Ptah's formation of Egypt and his role as culture-giver.

Indeed, Henri Frankfort dismissed the text's literary construction as being 'of the flimsiest', a succession of statements 'in no way subordinate to one another'. He summed up the text's literary form as 'most primitive', a curiously disparaging judgement from someone who elsewhere wrote so perceptively about Osirian religion.

Yet to approach the Memphite Theology from the standpoint of literary criticism seems inadequate, since we are dealing here not with carefully constructed fiction, but rather with Osirian religion, rites and practices. Indeed, on closer investigation it would appear that the way the text is structured closely resembles certain key structural elements in both Osirian temple art and ritual.

Far from being a string of disconnected episodes, the Memphite Theology seems to bear the unmistakable stamp of an Osirian ritual drama about the succession of Horus to the throne of Osiris—and how Osiris himself becomes a fertile earth deity within the circuit of the sun at Memphis.² The argument, in short, is that the same archetypal pattern which determines how an Osirian ritual should be performed and how certain reliefs should be arranged on New Kingdom temple walls, also underlies the Memphite Theology. This archetypal pattern unfolds in seven stages.

First there is a purification and 'renewal' of Egypt's ruler, aimed at reintegrating all the various bodily parts (stage 1). Next comes the 'justification' of Horus—the triumph of the Moon Eye—when Horus is recognized as the legitimate successor of Osiris, in preference to Seth, whose destructive impulses have threatened to destabilize the realm (stage 2). Then follow rites of 'vitalization' to activate the heart of Horus. The fiery serpent goddesses empower Horus, causing solar warmth, feeling and life to enter

Previous page 28 Grain sprouting from the body of Osiris, the foundation of all existence. Connected with the cosmic cycle of sun and stars, the god lies on a starry sky sign as rays from a great sun-disk held by maternal arms shine down upon him. Above are two sphinxes, guardians of entry to and exit from the Dwat (Scenes inside the 21st Dynasty Theban coffin lid of Nespawershefi, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

Left 29 The Shabaka Stone inscribed with the Memphite Theology. Though the stone dates from the 25th Dynasty reign of King Shabaka, the text may be a New Kingdom composition which Shabaka ordered to be recopied. The stone was subsequently used as a mill-stone (British Museum, London)

the rulership of Egypt. His appearance as ruler means that the stricken Osiris too is saved from turbulent forces and able to manifest his fertile 'earth' powers (stage 3). Next comes the glorification of the 'Mistress of Life', the heart goddess of Memphis, who sustains all life in the Two Lands (stage 4).

With the heart now functioning and the arrival of this female life-bearer, further transformation then occurs. Osiris, identified with the Memphite earth god, Ptah-Tatenen, 'becomes earth' at Memphis. But this time his 'earth' manifestation is experienced in its cosmic dimension within the solar circuit (stage 5). His return to 'earth' coexists with the appearance of Horus as the glorified ruler who sustains the whole of Memphite-Heliopolitan creation (stage 6). Finally, the process concludes with 'completion' in the horizon realm (stage 7).

As we shall see, this sevenfold transformational journey—throughout which the Memphite goddesses weave their way, appearing at crucial phases in the journey—recurs in a variety of different ways. It is discernible in the ordering of reliefs in Seti's I's temple at Abydos. It is recognizable in the unfoldment of the New Kingdom Ancestor Ritual. And the Egyptian

scribes also undoubtedly drew on the same wisdom when composing the Memphite Theology.

It can all too easily be forgotten just how deeply embedded the ancients were in ritual practice and paradigmatic models, how profoundly their lives had to fulfil archetypal patterns. And then, having failed to identify such underlying patterns, there is always the temptation for us to compare the ancients unfavourably with discursive thinkers, to dismiss them as incapable of consistent thought-and their works as illogical-when all along their whole mode of expression was completely different. So, daunting though the task may be, unless we can fathom the ancient 'maps of consciousness', which governed how temples had to be decorated, how texts should be composed, and how rituals must be performed, such writings as the Memphite Theology will inevitably fail to pass our tests of logic and consistency. And, as a consequence, the old Nile-dwellers will be doomed to remain as inscrutable and elusive as

The Memphite Theology, as mentioned already, was perhaps composed in the Ramessid period, a time when the Egyptians were at their most reflective about the nature of the pantheon and at their most insistent about a religion founded in a wisdom of the heart. All this, of course, stemmed from Akhenaten's drastic challenge to tradition. Though Heliopolitan by inclination, he had nevertheless resolutely shunned the mysteries of Osiris. But in doing so he had also broken with the pattern of royal succession that had sustained Egypt for close on two thousand years, a pattern so clearly set out here in the Memphite Theology.

In the following summary, the text has been subdivided into the seven stages reflecting the gradual move from disintegration to order, from death to life. It must be emphasized, however, that these stages are not explicitly divided from each other in the original text on the Shabaka Stone, though the justification for such a division will become clearer after the comparison with temple art and ritual in the following chapters.

STAGE 1 DECAYING FORMS: THE RENEWAL OF EGYPT

At the outset, the 25th Dynasty ruler, Shabaka (c 710 BC) proclaims himself the agent of renewal at Memphis, because he has ordered that this damaged text, 'a work of the ancestors' which he has found in a 'worm-eaten condition', should be recopied. The text, like all forms, is in danger of disintegration through the workings of time, so by his action Shabaka becomes the son of his father, the Memphite Ptah-South-of-his-Wall, as well as a renewer of royal tradition who ensures that Ptah lives forever.

His Majesty found it to be a work of the ancestors which was worm-eaten, so that it could not be understood from beginning to end. Then his Majesty copied it anew, so that it became better than it had been before, so that his name might endure and his monument last in the house of his father, Ptah-South-of-his-Wall, forever, as a work done by the Son of Re, Shabaka, for his father, Ptah-Tatenen, so that he may give life forever.

Shabaka then goes on to glorify the name of Ptah as the Crown of the earthly kingdom, the 'self-begotten' ruler who arose as 'King of Upper Egypt' and 'King of Lower Egypt'.

STAGE 2 JUSTIFYING HORUS: OVERCOMING OPPOSITIONS

The text now shifts its theme to that of a courtroom drama presided over by Geb, the earth god and father of Osiris in the Heliopolitan Ennead. Geb begins by calling the Ennead as witnesses for his arbitration between the two rivals, Horus, and Seth, the brother of Osiris and Isis, who both claim the throne of Egypt.³ With all the legal authority and formality of a judge, Geb decides to partition Egypt, declaring that Seth should rule in Upper Egypt, 'the place where he was born', and Horus in Lower Egypt, 'the place where his father was drowned'.

Thus the north-south division of the kingdom, one of the eternal contrasts into which Egypt was separated and ruled over by the Pharaoh, has been lain down on the orders of Geb. But such a separation fails to satisfy him, and he regrets his decision, announcing that because Horus is the eldest son of Osiris he should be given the whole kingdom to rule. It belongs to Horus as

The son of my son, Horus, the Jackal of Upper Egypt . . . the first-born Horus-the-Opener-of-the-Ways . . . the son who was born . . . on the birthday of the Opener-ofthe-Ways.

As the first child to open the womb of his mother, Isis, Geb identifies Horus with the god, Wepwawet, whose name means 'Opener-of-the-Ways' and who appears in the form of a jackal, the

animal whose tracks every desert traveller knows to follow in order to find ways through unknown terrain. Just as Osiris was the first child to open the womb of the sky goddess, Nut, so now Horus, not Seth, should rule over both Upper and Lower Egypt. Manifestly, not 'brotherhood' but 'motherhood' and inheritance from father to eldest son should determine the legal succession in Egypt, according to Geb, the male head of the Osirian family.

STAGE 3 BINDING THE SERPENT: HEALING DIVISIONS

Horus now bestrides Egypt as 'uniter of this land'. And, as the ruler who holds together the complementary opposites of North and South, he is ready for the serpent crowns to take root on his brow, as is next proclaimed in the text.

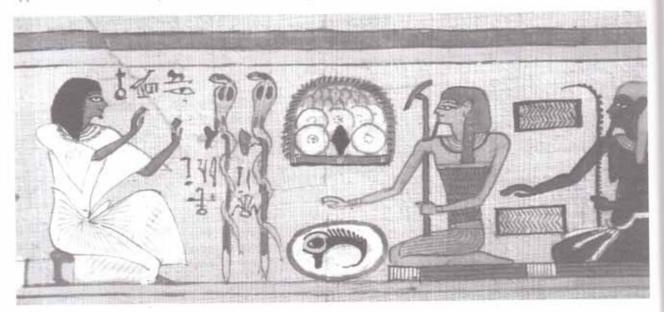
Then sprouted the two enchantresses upon his head. He is Horus who appears as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who unites the Two Lands in the nome of the (White) Wall (Memphis), the place in which the Two Lands were united.

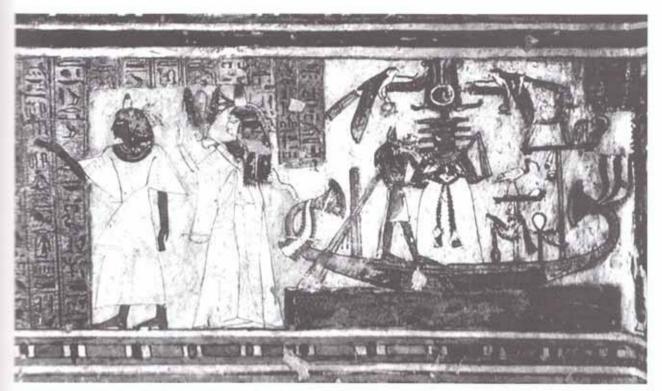
Now Horus, the victorious Moon Eye who has triumphed over Seth, is empowered by the dual fiery serpent goddesses, a union which means that the heraldic plants symbolizing Upper and Lower Egypt, the reed and papyrus, also grow at the double door of the House of Ptah in Memphis (pl 30). Vital life flourishes again; and the text interprets this new growth in nature as a sign that Horus and Seth have been pacified, so creating equilibrium in Egypt.

Reed and papyrus were placed at the double door of the House of Ptah. That means Horus and Seth, pacified and united . . . in the House of Ptah, the Balance of the Two Lands in which Upper and Lower Egypt have been weighed.

But such a victorious crowning is not only about uniting with rising vitality and life. Here at Memphis the royal solar hawk must also appear as a ruler nourished and sustained by his Osirian father.

And so the Memphite Theology tells how directly after his triumphant crowning Horus turns towards the unhappy fate of Osiris, who is drowning. The inscription on the Shabaka stone is badly damaged at this point, and the following is partly based upon the account of the rescue at the end of





the text, where it is described a second time. Like much of the narrative, the tone in which the events are narrated is legalistic, as if an eye-witness is recording the rescue of Osiris for the purpose of a legal document. It begins by describing how Isis and Nephthys look out and see Osiris floating help-lessly in the waters.

Isis and Nephthys looked and caught sight of him (Osiris) and feared for him. Then Horus ordered Isis and Nephthys to seize Osiris without delay and prevent him from drowning. They heeded in time and brought him to land ... He united with the palace and joined the gods of Tatenen,

Left 30 Hunefer worships the two serpent goddesses entwined in the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt. Behind them are a food-laden offering table and a god holding a sceptre of power. His other hand protectively guards the sacred Eye of Horus. Behind him is a fecundity figure carrying an emblem of 'Years' and holding a hand over a pool of water (Detail from the papyrus of Hunefer, British Museum, London)

Ptah, Lord of years. So Osiris became earth in the Royal Fortress... and his son Horus appeared as King of Upper Egypt, appeared as King of Lower Egypt in the embrace of his father Osiris, and of the gods before him and after him.

Like the drowning king, the Rex marinus, rescued by his royal son in much later alchemical texts, Osiris appears here as a helpless floater in the waters. Caught up in the surging turbulence, he is in danger of drowning and being forgotten.⁴

But his plight is heeded by his two sisters, Isis and Nephthys, who, acting upon the orders of Horus, bring Osiris safely to land. And the text makes absolutely clear which manifestation of Osiris is reverenced at Memphis, declaring that Osiris 'became earth' in the royal fortress, while his son Horus arose as the new ruler 'in the embrace of his father Osiris'.

The threat of potential chaos, of drowning in the surging waters, has been overcome—a world of order and stability has been made possible by Above 31 The sacred Djed-pillar of Osiris is brought to safety in a boat, protected above by two Horus hawks. Within the boat stands the jackal-headed Anubis, supporting an arm of the Djed. At the prow are the processional standards of Wepwawet ('Opener of the Ways') and Thoth, carried by animated symbols of life and power (Relief in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Neferrenpet at Thebes)

this rescue of Osiris, whose fertile power is now released for the benefit of Egypt. Now the royal fortress can be established at Memphis, and finally Isis calls on Horus and Seth to come together and 'make peace'. All the potentialities of Horus, which lay dormant until his conflict with Seth, have now been fully developed. All his powers have united with one another in this reconciled state of peace.

Next comes the discourse of Ptah with Heliopolis already mentioned in chapter 1. Ptah asserts the wisdom of creation through his heart and divine word. Its position here in the text is not at all arbitrary. For it is an assertion



of the kind of cult world which is established when Horus manifests as the regenerated solar ruler in Memphis. He reigns in a world founded on stable earth reclaimed from the waters, in a world which exists through the power of the heart. And he serves in a cult shaped by Ptah, who gives life to all the divine bodies together with their Kas.

STAGE 4 ISIS: MISTRESS OF LIFE

After the lengthy praise of Ptah's work, which ends by acclaiming him as the divine 'Image Maker', comes a cryptic statement about the female 'Mistress of Life', the heart goddess of Memphis.

She is the sustainer and nourisher, whose existence is deeply interwoven with fertile generation and the renewal of life. The passage is brief but its Left 32 The solarized Isis nurses King Seti I on her knee (Relief in the temple of Seti I at Abydos)

Facing page 33 The glorification of the transfigured Osiris as Djed-pillar. The colours surrounding Osiris are red and gold, and the Died-pillar is hidden deep within the caverns of earth. The pillar also supports an animated Ankh-sign representing the power of Osiris united with the 'life'-bearer in a living cosmos. Ka-like arms are shown holding a shining sundisk, which is also being held by the maternal arms of the celestial sky goddess above. Isis and Nephthys kneel in praise beside the Djed, accompanied by baboons above them greeting the sun. Passing from below to above, and above to below, along the great axis of heaven and earth, the initiate glimpses the unity of existence as mediated by the life-giving powers in the horizon (Relief in the Ramessid tomb of Nefersekheru at Thebes)

inclusion here is entirely consistent with the Memphite pattern of Osirian transformation, though the crucial importance of the 'Mistress of Life' will become much clearer when we look more closely at Osirian reliefs and ritual in the temple of Abydos. In the Memphite Theology, however, she is hailed simply as

The Great Throne, who unites with the heart of the gods in the House of Ptah, is the granary of Tatenen. The Mistress of all Life, through whom the sustenance of the Two Lands is provided.

Mention of the 'Great Throne' here brings to mind the mother goddess, Isis, whose name 'Isis' (3st) is often connected with the word 'throne'(st) in puns. Frequently she bears a throne emblem on her head as the goddess intimately linked with the royal seat upon which Horus sits, like a child seated upon the lap of his mother. And here this female 'Great Throne' is proclaimed to be the 'Mistress of Life', the source of food and nourishment in

the 'granary of Tatenen'. Through her, increase and prosperity are brought to Memphis; and the surrounding region becomes a powerful repository for earth vitality where food is stored for the benefit of Egypt.

This female throne also 'unites with the heart of the gods'. But here again, it is only when we go on to look at ritual practice and temple art that it becomes clear this is not Isis acting alone. For to become the bearer of life at Memphis she must also combine with the Sun Eye, Hathor-Sekhmet.

The female, the vital nourisher, the giver of joy are all celebrated in this short statement which follows the passage about Ptah as maker of divine bodies. And how could it be otherwise? For Ptah's manifold forms would simply be devoid of movement and vitality without the female 'Mistress of Life'.

STAGE 5 BECOMING EARTH: OSIRIS AND RE

Then comes what seems at first an unnecessary repetition of the rescue of Osiris in stage 3. But it is clearly set in a different context: this second rescue takes place within the great cosmic circuit of sun and stars. For it is said that after Isis and Nephthys bring Osiris to land, he enters the secret gates in the following of the one who shines in the horizon, on the ways of Re at the Great Throne, a statement apparently absent from the earlier account.⁵

He entered the secret gates in the splendour of the Lords of eternity, in the following of him who shines in the horizon, on the ways of Re at the Great Throne. He united with the palace and joined the gods of Tatenen, Ptah, Lord of Years. So Osiris became earth in the Royal Fortress.

Osiris is described here as a participant in the solar circuit, the god into whose earth realm Re and the Horus King enter at night on their journey of redemption. And, together with Isis,



he has become a fertile source of life linked to the Memphite deities.

STAGES 6 AND 7 COSMIC SUCCESSOR: THE HORIZON EMBRACE

The final statement of the Memphite Theology might seem no more than a repetition of the identical formula in stage 3. But the words take on a new significance because Osiris is now instrumental as an earth power in the great way of the sun:

His son Horus appeared as King of Upper Egypt, appeared as King of Lower Egypt, in the embrace of his father, Osiris, and of the gods before him and after him.

However, the words give only a highly condensed summary of what is entailed in this manifestation of Horus, compressing together his 'appearance' as ruler (stage 6) with the 'embrace' between father and son (stage 7). As we shall see these two phases are worked out in far greater detail in temple art and ritual. But clearly his redemption of Osiris within the solar circuit means that Horus too now manifests as a cosmic ruler.

And coming as it does after the formation of Egypt's cultural world through Ptah's heart and tongue, the celebration of the female as 'life-bearer' and the redemption of Osiris within the solar circuit, their embrace takes on an entirely changed significance

Right 34 Sprouting Osiris from the tomb of Tutankhamun. The silhouette, made of wood, was planted with grain and watered before being placed in the tomb (Egyptian Museum Cairo)

Facing page 35 The sacred right Eye holds two flames within the mountain of the West. The flames are held towards the enthroned Osiris Wennefer as the 'King of the Living'. Beneath the Eye is the small figure of the tomb-owner, joyfully raising his hands in praise (Relief in the Ramessid tomb of Pashedu at Thebes)

than at the previous appearance of Horus in stage 3.

Such an embrace between Horus and Osiris could be associated with the horizon realms of both East and West. But here it seems to be an embrace of the solar king rising in the eastern horizon, for it follows the description of Osiris incorporated into the solar circuit. At that sacred moment in the grey of dawn, when suddenly the whole earth seems to change mysteriously from dark to light as the sky deepens and warms, the Egyptians celebrated the continuity of existence, the moment when the Living and the



Dead were eternally transfigured and united. And it is graphically described in the Old Kingdom *Pyramid Texts*, which invoke Osiris to rise up and join himself with Horus, to close himself around his son:

O Osiris, this is Horus within your arms.

He will protect you.

He is transfigured again with you,

In your name

'He of the Lightland from which Re goes forth'

You have closed your arms round him,

Round him, he will not go away from you.

Horus does not allow you to be ill.

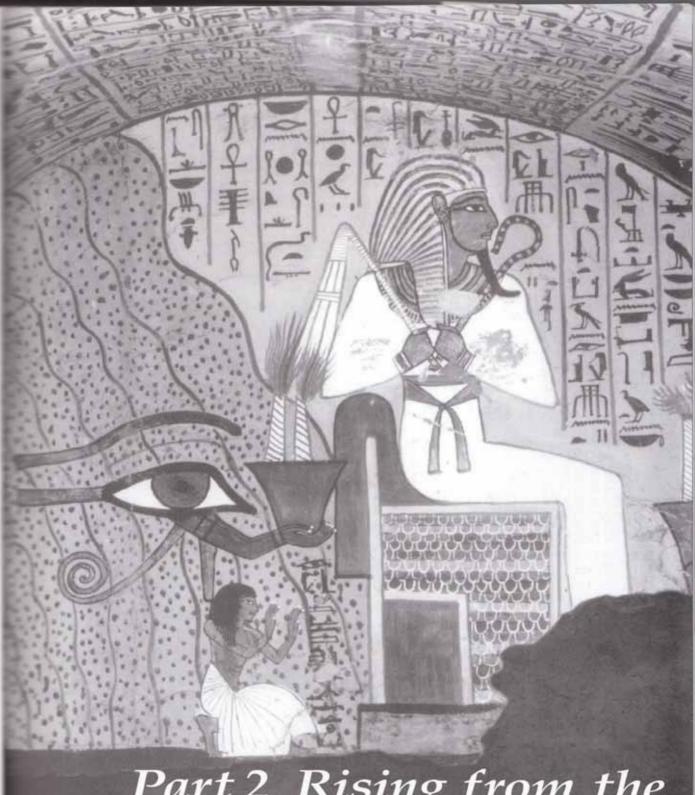
Horus has put your enemy under your feet,

So that you may live (PT §636a-637b)

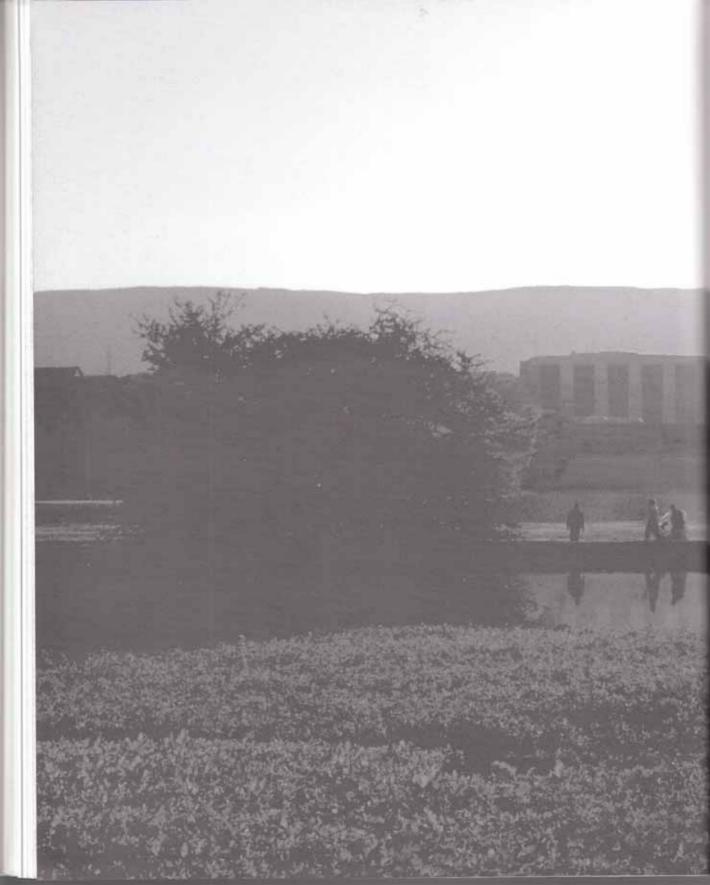
As Henri Frankfort wrote about this embrace: 'Horus and Osiris are inseparable, even at the moment when Horus appears as the ruler of Egypt, after the burial of his father. It seems that the actual occupancy of the throne creates a fusion of the powers of the late king and his successor'.6

Hence it is entirely fitting that at the end of the Memphite Theology the completion of the great work of unification between the Living and the Dead should be expressed by an embrace. For this is a text emanating from an ancient city which cherished a wisdom of the heart, and a recognition that life itself means constantly to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn, to separate and be reunited. The unity of Life (Horus) and Death (Osiris) has now been brought to fruition through the power of the heart. Moreover, this succession to the throne of Egypt ensures a rich and fertile land where the heart beats, where life stirs and speaks, and where the heart of Horus is forever empowered to serve the Osirian realm.

And it is from the vista of this realm that the union between Father and Son is revealed in its ultimate meaning and completed form at the close of the Memphite Theology.

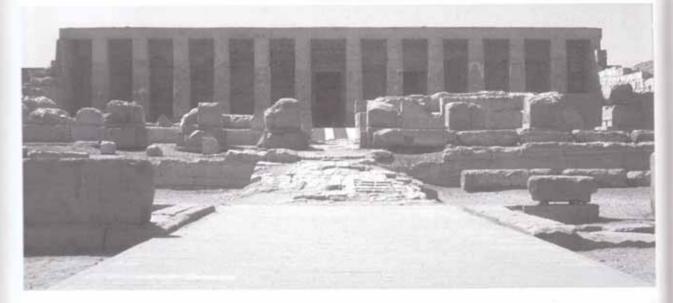


Part 2 Rising from the Dead: Hathor and Osiris





5 Osiris and Horus: Embrace of the Heart



CCORDING TO Erik Hornung, in his Valley of the Kings, the trinity of Hathor-Osiris-Anubis incorporates the most important deities of the dead.1 Yet there has been little sign of the Memphite Sun Eye, Hathor-Sekhmet, in the Osirian sources mentioned so far. Indeed, at the close of the Memphite Theology, which, after all, is a Memphite text, it could legitimately be asked: 'Where is the solar goddess'? For, apart from briefly mentioning the 'two enchantresses' on the brow of the new Horus ruler, there seems hardly a trace of Hathor in what some may find a rather prosaic inscription.

By far the best place to start to disentangle her role in the Osirian mysteries, however, is not Memphis itself, of which so little remains, but rather Abydos. So we cannot do better than follow in the steps of countless Egyptians before us, and journey some 500 kilometres southwards from Memphis to this holy city of Osiris, where, within the temple of King Seti I, we shall find abundant evidence concerning the resurgence of Memphite earth religion and the serpent eye goddess under the 19th Dynasty kings

Even today the focal point of Abydos is the remarkable limestone temple

built in the reign of King Seti I and completed by his son Ramesses II (pls 36,37). These 19th Dynasty kings steadfastly continued the restoration work set in motion by Haremhab, but were also driven by an urgent desire to reinstate the succession from father to son according to the ancient tradition of Horus succeeding Osiris. This had eluded the rulers at the close of the 18th Dynasty, including Haremhab and Queen Mutnodjme, who apparently died childless.

Once again Egypt had been left without an obvious heir to the throne; and once again it fell to an army commander to take control, in this case an elderly man named Paramesses who hailed from the Delta region. As Ramesses I, he ruled Egypt for only a short time (pl 43) but unlike Haremhab he was blessed with a highly capable son named Seti, 'the man of Seth', who was also from the military.

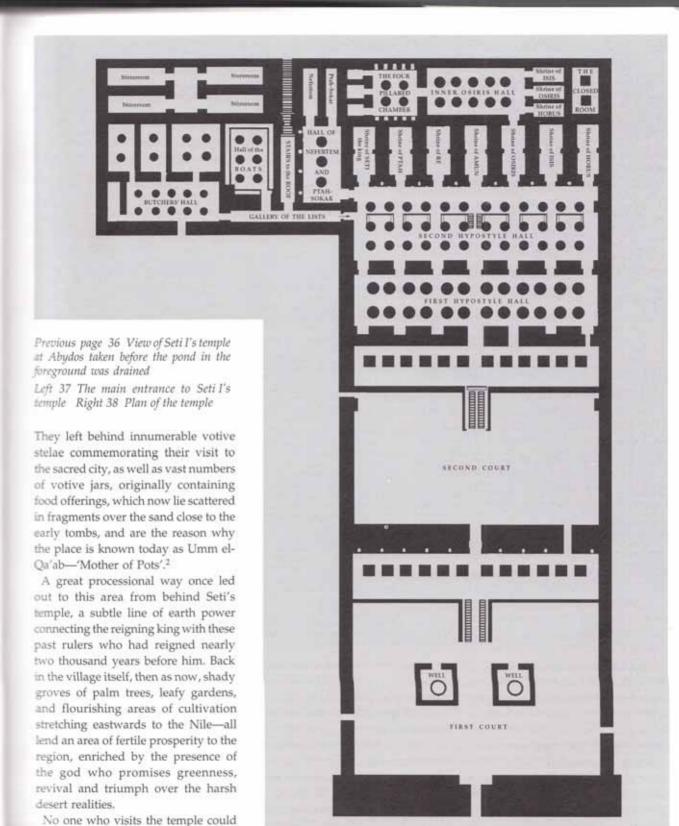
Consequently, when Seti succeeded his father around 1305 BC there arose the real possibility of founding a new dynasty, which was subsequently realized when Seti named his own son Ramesses as his successor, so ensuring the generational sequence of a grandfather, father and son upon the throne

of Egypt, like the divine succession of Geb, Osiris and Horus. As if to emphasize his commitment to the ancient capital, Memphis, Seti added to his own name the epithet 'beloved of Ptah'. And together with Queen Tuya—whose parents are named on the monuments as the lieutenant of chariotry, Raia, and his wife, Ruia—he set about renewing Egypt's glory, not least making amends to Osiris for the 'godlessness' and 'neglect of the afterlife' which had prevailed during Akhenaten's reign. And, undoubtedly, his finest work was the temple at Abydos.

In a picturesque setting of rustic tranquillity it rises up from earth on the desert edge, silhouetted against the backdrop of the crescent-shaped mountains beyond, which protectively enclose the hallowed city.

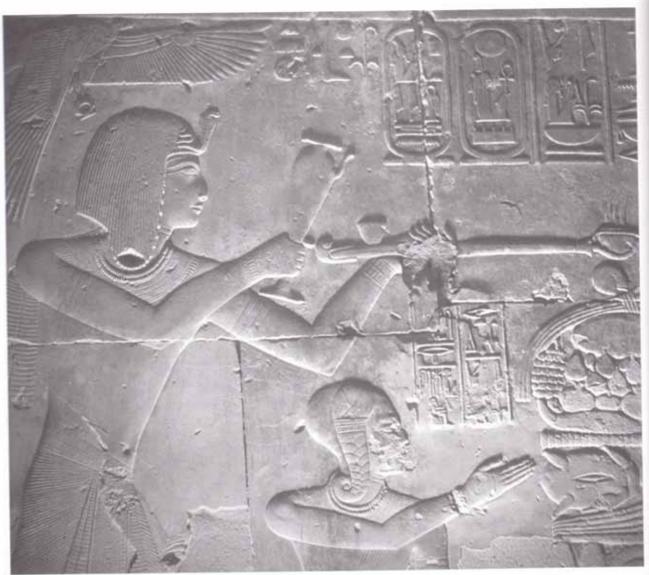
Further out to the west, in a remote desert spot, close to a great gap in the mountain peak, lie the tombs (or possibly cenotaphs) of the First Dynasty kings; and one of these, that of King Djer, was venerated as the sacred tomb of Osiris.

Each year pilgrims flocked to Abydos for the annual festival celebrating the resurrection of Osiris, and the triumph of Horus over Seth and his followers.



is to be moved by the beauty of its

49



decoration, particularly the delicate low reliefs so meticulously carved by artists working for Seti, their colours still miraculously preserved with all the pristine freshness of when they were first painted over three thousand years ago.

Furthermore, within the second hypostyle hall filled with rows of burgeoning papyrus columns, there is also the highly unusual row of seven shrines dedicated to two sets of divine triads. To the right of the central aisle are the shrines for Osiris, Isis and Horus, the family triad of Abydos. To the left are

those for the Ramessid 'state' triad comprising the Theban Amun-Re, the sun god of Heliopolis, Re-Harakhti, and the Memphite demiurge Ptah, with the end chapel on the left side reserved for the cult of Seti himself. Like the seven lights of the menorah candlestick described in the Book of Exodus, shining in front of the Ark of the Covenant, so too, here in Egypt, when the priests lit the lamps within these shrines, seven modes of divine being rayed out side by side within the temple, illuminating the symbolic landscape of the hall's papyrus thicket. And in the innermost

area of the temple, behind these shrines of sevenfold unity, were concealed other chambers guarding the more esoteric aspects of the Osirian cult.

BONDS OF AFFECTION: REMEMBERING THE DEAD

But here we are concerned primarily with the fiery Memphite sun goddess, whose presence is everywhere to be seen on the walls and columns of the temple. So, for example, as the leonine Sekhmet or the graceful Hathor, she adorns the papyrus columns flanking Left 39 King Seti I performs the cult accompanied by his young son, the crown prince Ramesses (Relief in the Gallery of Lists at Abydos)

Right 40 The kneeling Seti I offers to Hathor in the form of a Ba-bird (Relief in the chapel of Nefertem in the Ptah-Sokar-Osiris area of the Abydos temple)

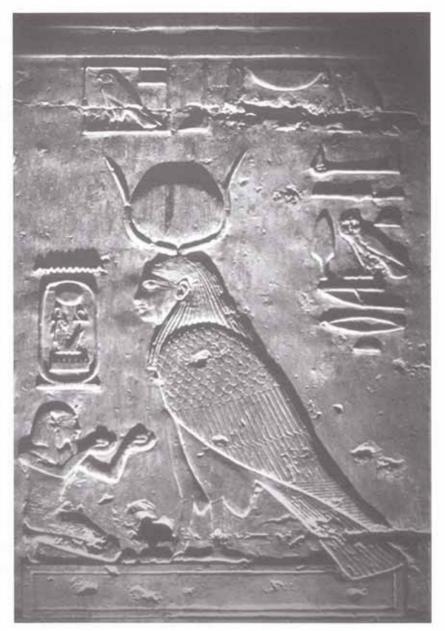
the Memphite aisle leading to the chapel of Ptah. Moreover, again and again, Isis (and other goddesses too) are shown holding Hathorian cult objects, identifying them with the raging-beneficent goddess.

But why Isis with a menit-necklace or sistrum here at Abydos? To answer this we must look first to the temple's inscriptions, which positively teem with utterances about the impassioned service of the dead practised by the 19th Dynasty rulers. The mood is Memphite, the tone Hathorian, as a devotional wisdom of the heart is brought to bear on the cult which the Horus king performs for Osiris and his predecessors.

When, for example, Ramesses II reflects on his relationship with his father in the famous dedicatory inscription written on a wall at the temple's entrance, the tone is one of heartfelt gratitude and active longing to serve Seti, realizing that his own rulership and well-being is built upon the back of his Osirian predecessor:

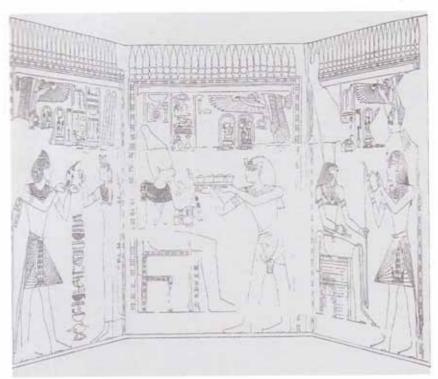
Therefore I spoke in my heart, it is a good and enduring thing to bring to completion the past. Beneficial, fine, good and kind is a son who turns his heart to his father. My heart directs me to perform benefactions for Merenptah (Seti I). I will act so that it may be said of me for eternity and ever: 'It was his son who preserved his name in life'. Then will my father, Osiris, bless me with the long lifetime of his son Horus.³

This is no empty statement. For earlier in the text Ramesses describes how he travelled through Egypt in Year 1 of his reign and discovered that the Abydos temple had been left unfinished



at his father's death, 'Its pillars were not erected on the terrace, and its statue lay on the ground without having been created like a statue of the House of Gold. The divine offerings had ceased, likewise the priestly duties'.⁴

But this chaotic standstill in the cosmic order caused by Seti's death, carrying with it the possibility that Seti might languish in emptiness, is now overcome through this language of the heart which compels Ramesses to serve his dead father. The young king immediately orders that the temple be completed—though the heavily incised reliefs of the fiirst hypostyle hall, hurriedly executed in his reign, contrast starkly with the fine work done by his father's artists, betraying the youthful impetuosity of a ruler eager to complete his task. Other statements in the Abydos texts are still more specific about the 'heart' qualities compelling the reigning king to act on behalf of his



Osirian predecessor—to build beautiful temples of fine stone, to adorn them with precious minerals and fill them to overflowing with food offerings, so that he may become a named king, like Osiris, enduring forever.

When, for example, it is said that his heart is 'full of charm (jm3) for the one who has engendered him', we may be sure that behind these words lies Hathor's power, actively stirring the heart of Ramesses, nourishing his desire to shine beneficently on his Osirian father in the West.

This comes out most strikingly, however, in temple reliefs. Plate 40 shows Seti kneeling devoutly before Hathor, 'the female Hawk', who appears in the form of a human-headed Ba bird. Between the king and goddess are inscribed the words

May she give charm and attraction

and the fact that Hathor is shown here as a Ba-bird means that she is to be understood as dynamically present, manifesting herself in all her vital power before the praying king. For the Ba is another of those faculties, like the Ka, possessed by both deities and humans alike, though its meaning is difficult to circumscribe within a single definition.

But whereas the Ka denotes the inherent capacity to live possessed by every living creature, and is a nutritive force continually preserving and sustaining the body through life, the Ba represents above all the capacity to appear as a dynamic, living presence and emanate power affecting others.6 Such power might manifest as awesomeness, vengeance, attraction or destruction. Like the Ka, the Ba also needs a body or statue to preserve its identity. But, unlike the Ka, it is also able to leave the body, move at will, change shape, or fly to the sky and take on multiple different manifestations-as is well illustrated by the numerous spells aimed at becoming a 'living Ba' which are preserved in the Book of the Dead. And as already mentioned, it is as a Ba that the sun god

Left 41 Three scenes in the niche between the shrines of Isis and Horus in the second hypostyle hall at Abydos. On the left Isis transmits solar attraction to her son, Seti I. In the centre Seti, now empowered by the goddess, offers to Osiris and on the right to Horus. The triptych illustrates the crucial importance of Hathorian power for the Osirian cult at Abydos

Right 42 The Ba flies towards the shadow standing in the doorway of the tomb. On the left is a striding male figure holding a staff with a black sun-disk above. The scene illustrates chapter 92 of the Book of the Dead, 'The chapter for opening the tomb for the Ba and the shadow' (21st Dynasty papyrus of Ankhesenmut, Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

enters the Netherworld each night during his journey through the Osirian realm.

In this scene, then, the full force of Hathor's radiating attraction manifests to Seti, kneeling in awe before the goddess (pl 40). But the reason why he should beseech her so fervently for her power is revealed in another relief, this time located in the niche between the shrines of Horus and Isis in the second hypostyle hall (pl 41). Here we are explicitly told that Hathorian attraction is the medium connecting him with his father Osiris. In this instance. however, it is not Hathor but the mother goddess Isis, adorned in complete solar splendour, who transmits female 'attraction' to Seti by extending her menit-necklace towards him with the words:

Take the menit so that it may give your attraction to your father Osiris.

This self-same attraction which the Pharaoh emanates into the hearts of his people in the eastern horizon realm, Isis also seeks to bring to Osiris. And as Seti reaches out to touch her turquoise beads, so a quickening, joyous power passes from goddess to king, firing him with desire to commune and look lovingly towards his



father—and by implication, towards all those past Osirian rulers who have now entered the realm of the dead.

Nowhere do the Egyptians of the Ramessid period more explicitly state that the radiant solar attraction, which flowed so freely in the City of the Sun during Akhenaten's reign, now warms even the dark realm of the so-called dead. Though Osiris may not have been acknowledged in Akhetaten, Hathor's power is shown here at Abydos to be the medium which connects the sun with the dark interiority of earth—the goddess who brings the

warmth of solar life into those gloomy recesses ignored by Akhenaten, a goddess who transforms the unillumined side of existence by uniting it with the realm of the heart.

The three scenes in plate 41 form a kind of triptych. In the middle scene Seti makes an offering to Osiris, while in the one on the right he stands before Horus, son of Osiris, whose rule he embodies as the reigning king. By including Isis bestowing her menitnecklace on Seti as the third scene, the king's service for Osiris is immediately shown to be imbued with Hathor's

fiery spirit—a goddess who not only weaves bonds of loving affection between Osiris and his son but who also ensures that never again will an Egyptian king turn Egypt into a wasteland by ignoring the cult of the dead.

Indeed, above this same niche, in a scene facing into the hypostyle hall, Isis again holds out her *menit* towards Seti whilst Horus bestows on him the sceptres of Upper and Lower Egypt with solar serpents entwined around them. In her words to Seti, Isis blesses the work he does in the temple as a service for Osiris: 'May you make your



Above 43 The devotion of the Ramessid kings to the cult of Osiris at Abydos is exemplified in this beautifully carved limestone relief from a temple at Abydos showing Ramesses I offering to the Osiris symbol protected by Isis on the left. The accompanying text praises the king as the creator of monuments in Abydos and one who 'propitiates the heart of Wennefer (Osiris) through his attraction'. It is unclear what the mysterious object to which the king offers originally represented. After the New Kingdom, however, it became the reliquary associated with the sacred head of Osiris, the most important relic of Osiris traditionally assigned to Abydos. A similar symbolic object, which also represents the nome of Abydos, was probably kept within the temple at Abydos (Metropolitan Museum, New York)

Facing page 44 The lions of 'Yesterday' and 'Tomorrow' guarding the western and eastern horizons (Scene on the sarcophagus of Khonsu, Egyptian Museum, Cairo) temple in order to increase our rituals, in order to endow our offering loaves'.

In short, this repeated offering of Hathor's menit demonstrates that service without love, without the feelings of the heart, would be meaningless here at Abydos. And it could be said that these 19th Dynasty kings inscribed Hathor's solar warmth and affection at the very heart of the relationship between Osiris and his son (pl 43).

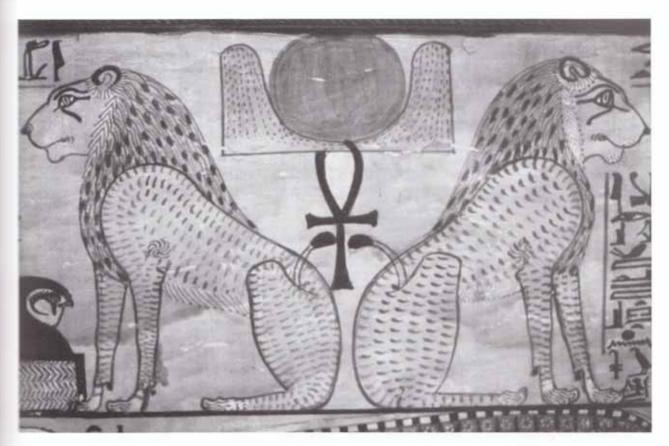
YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW: ALTERNATING TIME

But perhaps the most moving statement of this love between father and son occurs in the lengthy dedicatory inscription of Ramesses II, which is inscribed across an entire wall of the portico at the temple's entrance. Part of the text has already been quoted

earlier but the inscription also includes a vivid description of how Seti presents Ramesses as his successor to the Egyptian court, which was probably assembled in the palace at Memphis. Determined to secure a smooth succession Seti acts in accordance with the archetypal pattern of Horus succeeding to the throne of Osiris by taking his vital young son in his arms before his courtiers, and ordering that he be crowned. Just as Horus appears as king of Upper and Lower Egypt in the arms of Osiris in the Memphite Theology, so Seti too, enthroned upon the seat of Geb, enfolds his son in a ritualized embrace, enacting the mythical act whereby the tradition of kingship is passed on through the generations. Let us leave Ramesses himself to describe the occasion:

Then I was inducted as eldest son to be hereditary prince upon the throne of Geb . . . When my father appeared in glory before the people I was like a child within his arms. He said concerning me: 'Let him appear as king so that I may see his beauty while I yet live'. He had the Chamberlain summoned to place the crowns upon my brow. 'Place the Great One [the serpent crown] upon his head', said he concerning me, while he was yet on earth . . . weeping because my attraction was so great in his body. He provided me with a household, a royal household in the likeness of the beautiful ones of the palace . . . Behold, I am Re over the subjects, the people of Upper and Lower Egypt are under my sandals.8

The reason Seti gives for this anticipatory crowning of Ramesses is his desire to see his son's vitality whilst he is still alive, to see the radiance of the son who will one day be king, and on whom he will depend for his existence in the afterlife. Unlike those legendary kings who fail to recognize the sterility which threatens their kingdom—as in the *Grail Legend* for instance—Seti, far



from repressing or ignoring the signs of rising new life, seeks to harmonize with them on behalf of his son. Not only does he have Ramesses invested with the serpent crown, but also-as was customary in the palaces of Egypt-he also provides his son with beautiful Hathorian women, the 'vital ones', with whom Ramesses can enjoy the pleasures of sexuality like the thyphallic Theban Amun-of-Luxor, the wirile palace god. If the kingdom is not to become barren, new growth and copulation must be allowed to flourish, all of which Seti seeks to ensure for his young son.9

Had the Egyptian courtiers, who were watching this crowning within the palace, been asked at this point Who are these two kings?', they may well have responded with the initiate's apply uttered in chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead. On being questioned about the meaning of the two Aker-lions

of Yesterday and Tomorrow, that guard the western and eastern horizons where the sun sets and rises each day (pl 44), the initiate says of them:

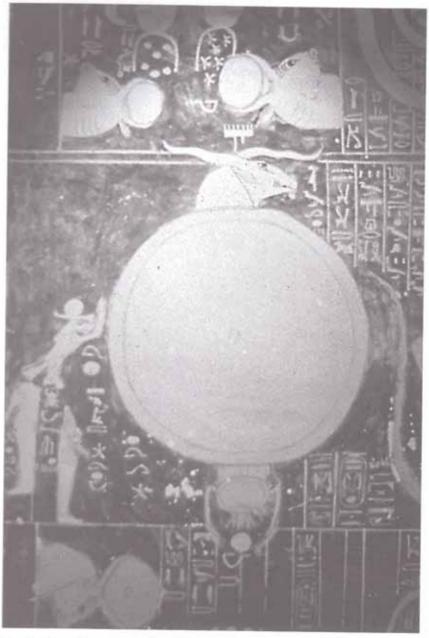
It is Atum, the dweller in his disk, or it is Re in the eastern horizon of the sky. I am Yesterday, I know Tomorrow.

And when pressed to elucidate further, the initiate continues by describing 'Yesterday' as Osiris and 'Tomorrow' as Re on the day when Osiris established Horus as his successor:

Yesterday is Osiris and Tomorrow is Re on that day when the enemies of the Lord of All are destroyed, and when his son Horus is established as ruler.

The crowning of Ramesses marks the dawn and the 'Tomorrow' of a new king, but it also involves the ageing of Seti, the Evening King who must reach 'completion' and 'duration' in time. It brings into the open before the court the inescapable reality of Seti's own waning faculties. For as surely as the new solar successor, resplendent in his serpent crowns, moves towards sunrise, shining like Re over his people, so too the old king, Seti, must anticipate sunset, mortality and passing away now that he has seen and known 'Tomorrow'. For a brief moment there yawns the awful possibility of a tense and irreconcilable separation between father and son—between 'Yesterday' and 'Tomorrow'.

But this tension is resolved by the solar qualities of the newly crowned Ramesses. According to the text, his 'attraction' fills the body of his father as he shines upon Seti, striking right into the heart of the old king with his radiating warmth. And for once the mask drops from the usually impassive face of a Pharaoh, as we glimpse how, within the palace, Seti is overcome with deep emotion, moved to



tears by the radiant young ruler whom he has created. For a rare moment an Egyptian king turns to flesh and blood before our eyes, compelled to give vent to his feelings by the power of the goddess now united with his son.

By inscribing Hathor's desire for relatedness at the heart of Osirian succession, these texts of the Ramessid kings positively glow with solar feeling and compassion, singling them out from the usual restrained tone and formality of Egyptian royal inscriptions. Perhaps all this is another legacy of Akhenaten's reign, not least a continuance of the solar affection which had so obviously bonded together the Amarna family.

For although there can be no question that the Ramessid kings had returned to the pantheon, nevertheless the flow of Amarna radiance still Left 45 A huge sun-disk from which emerges a ram's head above and a scarab beetle below, symbolizing the eternal cycle of dying and becoming (Relief on a ceiling in the tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

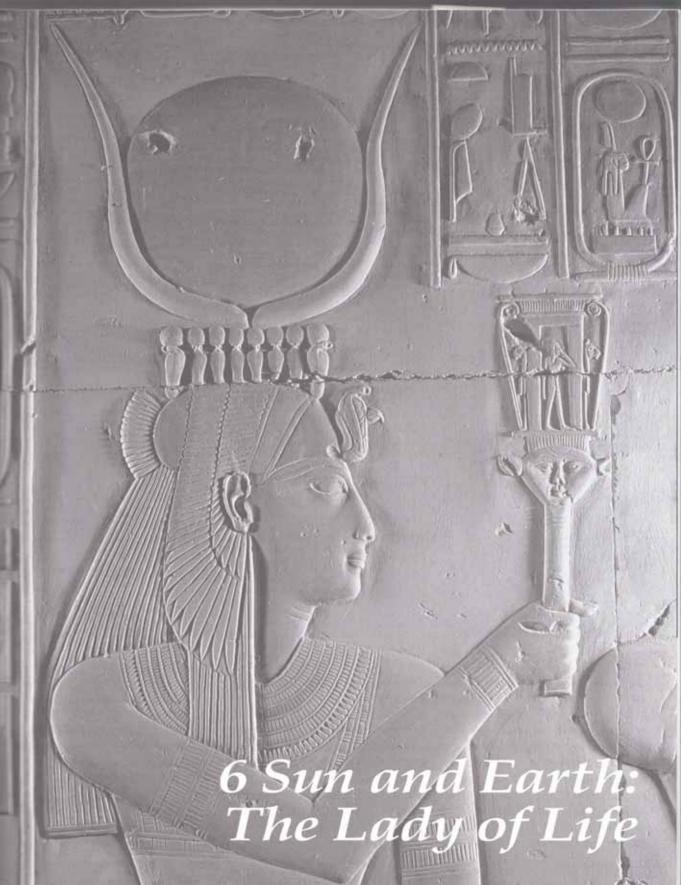
Facing page 46 Isis as a solar goddess shaking her sistrum (Relief in the temple of Seti I at Abydos)

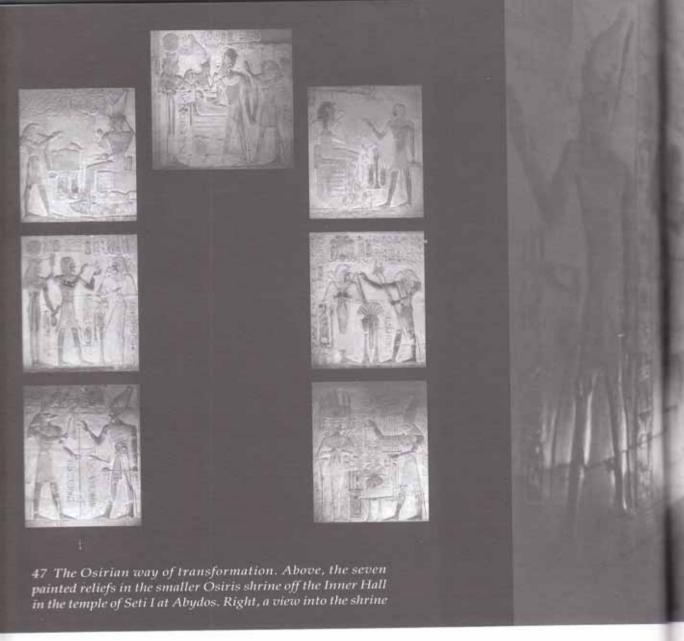
seems to stream through the whole of their relationships.

Hence the overwhelming importance to them of Hathor, the mediatress who transmits solar attraction and life within all the vicissitudes of an earth-bound existence. Deeply interwoven as she is with Memphite death and renewal, Hathor is also able to reach out solar life-giving arms like the Aten but in a much more earthly realm. For in the Memphite realm nothing can move or change without the decline of another; and indeed the rising life of Ramesses, nurtured by Hathor and other deities responsible for vital growth, inevitably demands a new mode of existence for Seti.

Yet at the same time, this decline, leading to the deep darkness of Osirian earth existence, is inextricably bound up with life. Indeed, the living only derive their meaning and reality, insofar as they are related and united with the so-called dead. And death itself is but a passing from one mode of existence to another, a natural and inevitable process in the cycle of becoming. As the passage quoted above from the Book of the Dead says; 'Yesterday is Osiris. Tomorrow is Re'.

Rising and setting, dying and being born, waxing and waning, all belong to the ceaseless movement of creation, to the very essence of life in the materialized cosmos (pl 45). And in this sense, Seti and Ramesses, Horus in the arms of Osiris, Atum and Re, Old Sun and Young Sun, are indivisibly one, the two poles of existence in the journey of the sun, utterly united by Hathor's attraction glowing at the heart of Egypt.





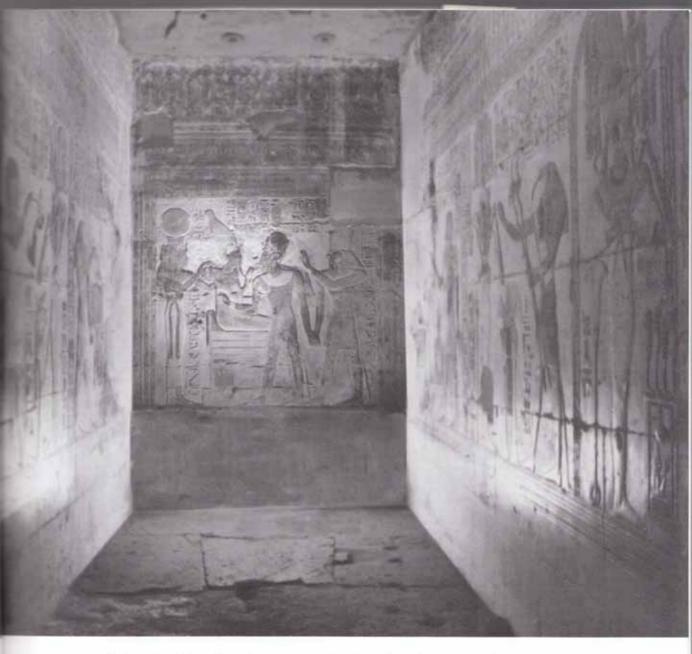
NREACHING the second hypostyle hall, a visitor to Seti I's temple at Abydos might easily conclude that the imposing array of seven shrines is the climax of the temple's design. But in fact a doorway at the back of the Osiris shrine gives access to a further sacred space (see pl 38). Immediately on the right, there are three shrines dedicated to Isis, Osiris, and Horus, the holy family of Abydos; while to the left, a processional hall leads off towards the

innermost part of the temple—the 'Chamber of the Four Pillars' and its associated rooms.

The decoration of the 'inner Osiris shrine'—in the centre of the three shrines on the right—is exceptionally well-preserved, and in rich, complex imagery it sets out the Memphite way of transformation.¹ It will be seen too that the Theban Amun-Re is also involved in this transformational sequence. For in a very real sense

Amun-Re cannot be separated off from the Memphite deities into an unrelated compartment, since he too is a deity of the heart.

Moreover, his shrine holds the central place in the row of seven shrines within the second hypostyle hall, having the shrine of Osiris as its neighbour on the north side. And it means that the healing, binding together and unification of opposites, which characterizes so much of Memphite religion, is here



amun-Re, resulting in a startlingly complex path of transformation.

Osirian renewal requires a conscious and voluntary entry into the undersorld realm, an active desire to fulfil the unification of the living and the dead. But there is also that urge for self-regeneration which drives the live arms of the living and the living and the living and the living arms of the living arms of

and return to origins, in order to be born again at dawn.²

The result is that layer upon layer of the life-death process mingle with each other within the sacred art and ritual at Abydos, a fact we need to bear in mind when tracing the stages of transformation, beginning first with the scenes in the inner Osiris shrine.

The only means of access to this shrine, and indeed to the whole of the columned hall in the rearmost part of the temple, is through an opening in the back wall of the large Osiris shrine in the row of seven shrines in the second hypostyle hall (pl 38). By contrast, at the back of the other six shrines there is an imitation door, the so-called 'false door', which is a characteristic feature of Egyptian funerary architecture (pl 59). The 'false door' served as a threshold place connecting the living and the dead, where food-offerings, upon which the Ka of the tomb-owner

depended, could be brought and offered in the funerary cult.

As we step through this opening in the back wall of the Osiris shrine into the gloom of the hall beyond, we are passing into an area normally sealed off from the living. It is as if we are entering directly into the mysterious Ka-realm of Osiris.

Our destination is the inner Osiris shrine, located between the Horus and Isis shrines lying immediately to the right here in the north-west of the temple (see the plan, pl 38).

Beyond the columned hall to our left, in the south-east, lies a smaller hall with three more shrines at its far end. Though the decoration is mostly destroyed, enough remains of a scene in the central chamber to show Isis as bird goddess, alighting upon the erect phallus of her trembling husband, so that she may receive into her womb his great flow of seed, as in the similar scene in the shrine of Sokar (pl 25).

Isis is here the jubilating great goddess, whose magic is so powerful that she is able to conjure forth new life from apparent death.

We shall return to these southern rooms in the next chapter. But for now it is the inner Osiris shrine in the north-west which concerns us, where perfectly preserved reliefs of breath-taking beauty adorn the walls. These ancient artists of King Seti spared no effort in executing their work, lavishing infinite care and attention on every detail, each hieroglyph, each flower petal, each curl or line of a wig, bead or necklace, all chiselled and painted with consummate delicacy and skill.

Surrounded by such surface delight we could be forgiven for passing over any deeper significance these reliefs may hold. But the effort needed to fathom their religious significance is richly rewarding, for they reveal in their arrangement that same pattern of Osirian transformation which is profoundly Memphite in origin. The first curious feature worth noting is that, unlike the scenes in the neighbouring shrines showing Seti offering either to Isis or to Horus, it is not Osiris but Seti himself, for whom the cult is performed in the three scenes on each side wall. There is no distinction made between king and god here, for both partake in the same destiny, Osiris himself being the archetypal king whose suffering and death is shared by every Egyptian ruler.

However, another more disconcerting feature is the fact that Seti is not always shown as an incarnation of Osiris. Sometimes he appears as the successor, Horus, and sometimes as the predecessor, Osiris, though this is not always immediately obvious.

There is a continuous oscillation between these two polarities, and we do not have to look far for an explanation. As we have already seen in previous chapters, the death and restoration of Osiris are inextricably interwoven with the revelation of Horus as his crowned successor.

Life and death are part of the same indivisible process; and the disclosure of this truth underlies some of the strange juxtapositions and symbolism in the seven scenes adorning the shrine's walls.

The sequence begins on the right wall, and, as in our discussion of the Memphite Theology, headings have again been given to encapsulate each scene. Again, it should be remembered that these headings are not specifically included in the hieroglyphic inscriptions in the shrine, but are provided here as an aid to understanding the transformational process. All has to be gleaned primarily by interpreting the layers of meaning in the richly detailed imagery bequeathed us by these ancient artists.

It will also become clear, however, that these seven phases are not a modern imposition but correspond to Egyptian notions of transformation. Moreover, although certain themes 48 Renewal. Horus purifies the mumform Seti with the water of renewal at the beginning of the rites. The king's head dress identifies him with Amun-Re. Theban crown god of Egypt (First relief the right wall, inner Osiris shrine, Abvás

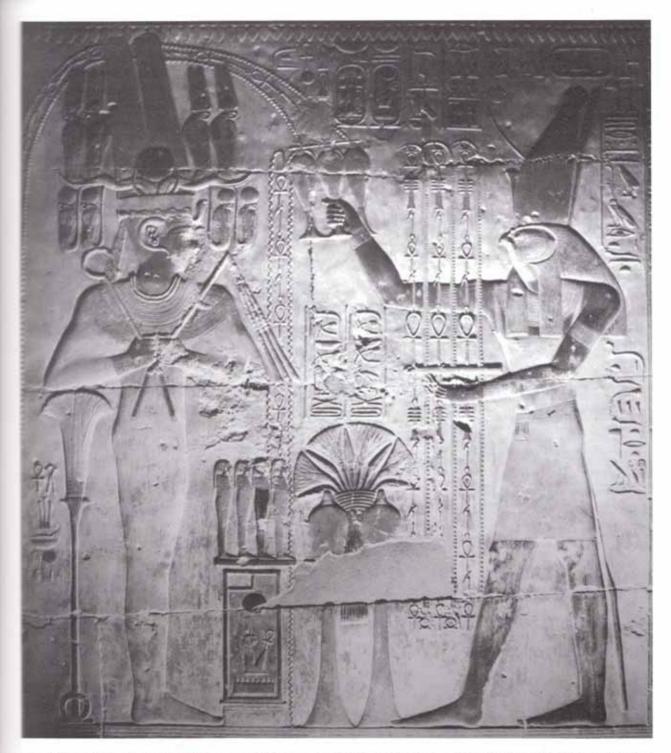
have been developed differently here in the Abydos reliefs, the seven stages are not dissimilar to those in the Memphite Theology.

Clearly, there was a certain pattern underlying Osirian religion, which determined how texts, reliefs and ritual should be arranged. And, as already described, this pattern during the New Kingdom starts with an ascending phase culminating in the appearance of Horus as the crowned ruler, who safeguards the cults and order of Egypt supported by his Osirian predecessor. Then comes entry into the Osirian realm where the Osirian predecessor is incorporated into the solar circuit, into a cosmic unity embracing both the living and the dead.

Stated like this the ritual pattern might seem simple and uniform. Ye in reality Osirian transformation was a deep and complex process, expressed through very varied rituals and ceremonies. And one such ritual process is remarkably preserved here in the inner Osiris shrine.

PICTURE 1 DECAYING FORMS: THE RENEWAL OF EGYPT

Horus, son of Osiris, is shown pouring streams of living water from three vases over the mummiform figure of Seti, purifying his body as all impurities are washed away (pl 48). Perched upon the royal name before Seti are the four sons of Horus, whose presence here, as in the mummification rites, symbolizes the king's reintegration with all the various parts of his body. They also ensure protection during this bodily purification and renewal.³ Yet though the mummiform



king holds a crook and flail like Osiris, Seti is also patently to be understood here as an image of Amun-Re, the Theban crown of Egypt, the regenerative Bull-of-his-Mother, as indicated by his elaborate head-dress, which consists of cap, tall feathers, sun-disk, curled ram's horn and eight uraei. Similarly, the purifying water, poured out for Amun-Re, becomes like the primordial waters of Nun into which the solar god sinks each night in order to regenerate himself. As in the Memphite Theology then, this transformational process is initiated by bodily



(or physical) reintegration, in this case the renewal of Seti identified with Amun-Re. This is also made perfectly clear in the inscription above Horus:

Pure is King Menmaatre, given life, for he (Horus) has deified him with his own Eye. Pure is his body and divine is his image.

In other words, it is the bodily renewal of Seti in his 'cult' or 'image' realm.

PICTURE 2 JUSTIFYING HORUS: OVERCOMING OPPOSITIONS

Across on the left wall, the first scene might seem an abrupt switch of theme (pl 49). It shows Seti, wearing the Red and White Crowns of Lower and Upper Egypt, breathing in life and dominion from sceptres held towards him by the Upper Egyptian jackal god, Wepwawet, 'Opener-of-the-Ways'.

Wepwawet also gives him a crook and flail, which the hieroglyphic text between king and god declares to be the crook and flail of Osiris. And in his speech to Seti inscribed above the god, Wepwawet says:

I have come to you bearing life and power so that you may be young like Horus as king. I assign to you the crook and flail, the excellent office of Wennefer. May your name endure because of what you have done...

But why show the jackal god making such a presentation? Now perhaps we can appreciate why the *Memphite Theology* is so crucial for our understanding of these scenes, since in the second section, following on from renewal, comes the judgement between Horus and Seth. More specifically, it is Geb's authoritative pronouncement

Left 49 The justification of Horus as the victorious Moon Eye. Wepwawet 'Opener-of-the-Ways' gives the regalia of Osiris to King Seti wearing the Double Crown. The king appears here as an incarnation of the lunar warrior Horus who has triumphed over his opponent Seth. The White Crown of Upper Egypt has yielded to the Red Crown of Lower Egypt and Horus becomes ruler of the land (First relief on the left wall in the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos)

that Horus-Wepwawet, and not Seth, should be the successor of Osiris, which holds the clue to this scene. As the first to open his mother's womb, Horus-Wepwawet should be given the rulership of Egypt (see page 40).

But what a welter of conflict and traumatic experience lies behind both Geb's declaration at Memphis and this scene at Abydos, as the problems of reconciling warring and contentious oppositions surface in the conflict between uncle and nephew. We need but mention here the tumultuous encounter of Horus and Seth as they battle with each other in the depths of the water; the indecision of Isis caught between her loyalties to brother and son; the brutality and terror-striking fury of Horus towards his mother; the healing of his wounded eyes by Hathor, the compassionate tree goddess of Memphis; his homosexual initiation with Seth; and finally the triumph of the Moon Eye, bursting forth from the humiliated head of Seth. All this Horus has to withstand and challenge, to accept, experience and heal, if he is to win the throne of Egypt.4

And here, encapsulated in this scene, in all its awful horror and redeeming beauty, lies such experience. Seth, the uncle, yet stranger, ever seeking to wrest the kingdom from Horus, has to be faced, his oppositional power externalized and separated out within the divisions of Egypt, before it can fruitfully be brought to bear within a united country. All this and more wells up in our mind's eye, as we look

Right 50 Thoth, the ibis-headed moon god, gives an Ankh-sign of life to the mummiform Seti. Thoth holds two solar cobras entwined in the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt, symbolizing that the fiery uraei have taken root on the king's brow and that the Two Lands are united through the triumphant king. The Ka-standard and Horus name are visible behind Seti symbolizing his Ka (or foodgiving) power (Second relief on the right wall in the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos)

at these two figures of Horus and Wepwawet standing so impassively and regally before us, if we can step behind the surface images and contemplate their deeper meaning.

PICTURE 3 BINDING THE SERPENT: THE GENERATIVE KING

Yet this triumph of the Hawk King is by no means the end of the story. Now comes the journey from Moon to Sun, from the triumphant Moon Eye to the Bery Sun Eye, the movement towards the serpent crowns, as we progress to the central scenes on each side wall.

In the scene on the right, Thoth-the bis-headed lord of wisdom, writing, measurements and time-is shown holding two sceptres, each with a crowned uraeus snake coiled around as he gives an Ankh-sign of life to Seti (pl 50). These sceptres recall the snake-entwined staff, the caduceus, which was held by Hermes whom the Greeks identified with Thoth. But here at Abydos the sceptres have a distinctly Egyptian form, being shaped like the reed and papyrus heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt. Their inclusion here also evokes the descripson in the Memphite Theology when it is said that reed and papyrus sprout at the Double Door of Ptah's temple at Memphis as the two serpents settle on the brow of Horus (page 40).

According to Thoth, the vizier who inscribes the words of the deities, Seti receives the gift of life as the ruler blessed by Re. He is his living solar



incarnation upon the throne of Egypt, the king who 'unites the two banks':

The White Crown and the Red Crown are firm on your head. The two banks are united for your portions by Re, who speaks with his mouth, whilst my person writes it down: 'How perfect is my son upon the throne of his father, King of Upper and Lower Egypt. There will never be his like again'.

Empowered by the fiery serpent goddesses Seti now exercises his solar sovereignty as a 'Life'-ruler.

The themes here at Abydos and in the Memphite Theology follow an almost identical progression. And though it may seem strange that Horus should be shown as an Osirian mummiform figure in such an obvious scene of triumph, a small but essential detail provides a clue to the meaning.

Behind Seti is a Ka-standard which supports and embraces his Horus name: 'Horus-the-Mighty-Bull-(Ka)-appearing-in-Thebes-who-makes-the-Two-Lands-live', a name identifying him with the Ka (or food-giving) power and masculine vigour of the bull gods.

Furthermore, to emphasize this connection with Seti's Ka, the standard itself holds an emblem which bears an image of the royal head, surmounted by hieroglyphic signs reading 'Ka of the King'.

When we trace the Ancestor Ritual in the next chapter, we shall see that it is precisely at this point in the ritual that the reigning king, supported by his Osirian predecessor, calls the pantheon to a great banquet in Heliopolis. So, Seti's mummiform appearance here at Abydos must be meant to show that his food-giving functions deeply involve his generative Osirian forebear. For clearly he is an 'Osirian' king who knows how to rouse his serpents, how to unite with the fiery flame of the goddesses and the life held out to him by Thoth. And as a crowned life-giver, he manifests as a bodily reincarnation of his Osirian predecessor.

On another level of interpretation, seen from the perspective of Thebes, the mummiform figure also provides a link with the self-regenerative Theban Bull-(Ka)-of-his-Mother, the phallic god who perpetuates an ever-repeating cycle of food and renewal, reincarnating himself anew as son in the reigning king.⁵ Both the Theban and Osirian cycles mingle in this Ka-realm.

There can be no rulership, no food, nourishment or life for Egypt without such a regeneration. The reigning Horus, empowered by the dual female serpents of North and South, must unite with his predecessor, a snake ruler breeding fertility as two generations merge in their Kas.

And whether renewal be experienced in the cycle lived from dawn to dusk by the Theban god or within the deep, dark earth existence grounded by Osiris, the reigning king appears as the regenerated form of his father. Only by uniting his life with that of his predecessor can he function as a fertile, food-giving power.

Horus, the New King, reigns. The transition to 'Tomorrow' is almost complete. But not quite. For Osiris, the Old King, must also be brought to

completion in time, to his place in the great movement of sun and stars and in the eternally recurrent cycles of nature.

Without this bringing of Osiris into his earth realm, there can be no 'Tomorrow', no rebirth for Horus. And it means that their existence must now be experienced in the cosmic rhythm of the solar circuit, connected with the chthonic powers working in creation.

PICTURE 4 ISIS: LADY OF LIFE

Across from the relief of Thoth and Seti stands the lady of life, Isis, behind the royal successor in the guise of the Inmutef priest (pl 51). Clothed in a panther skin and wearing his characteristic sidelock, this priest (whose name means 'Pillar-of-his-Mother') burns incense and chants an invocation before the mummiform Seti.

The incense comes, the divine perfume comes, Its perfume is for you,

O Lord of the Two Lands, Menmaatre.

And though they are not inscribed here, this well-known invocatory chant continues with the words, 'the perfume of the Eye of Horus comes'—that fragrant, luminous power which protects Osiris from maleficent forces seeking to break the links that bind together the order of Egypt, and to interrupt the movement to 'completion'.

Significantly, this is the only occasion in the sequence of seven reliefs when Seti holds a Was-sceptre, its straight shaft terminating in the head of the Seth animal, which rests at the king's throat.

The sceptre is absolutely vertical, holding the king's body in equilibrium, providing a symbolic reminder that the tumultuous death-bringer, Seth, is firmly within the grasp of his erstwhile victim. The instigator of ferment and confusion has been transformed into a powerful instrument of

Right 51 The transfiguration of a lifetime. Isis-Hathor, the Mistress of Life, shake her sistrum behind the Immutef priest, the 'Pillar-of-his-Mother' representing the successor, as he burns incense for King Seti. This rite symbolizes that the king life now belongs to the cosmic solar circus (Second relief on the left wall in the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos)

renewal and strength—a symbol of restoration within the kingdom.

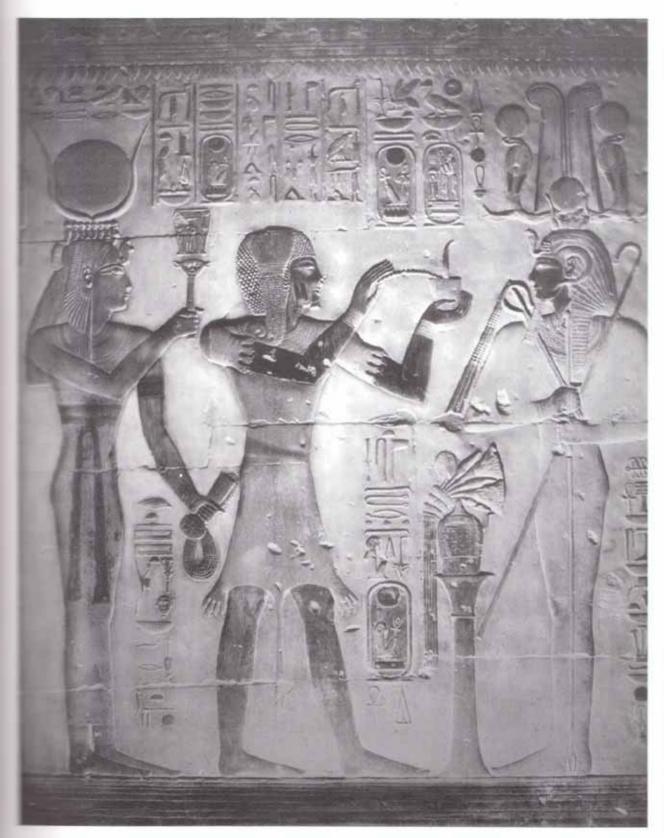
Behind the priestly successor stands Isis, whose involvement with the Osirian king is the gist of the inscription above her:

I cause you to rest upon the Great Throne appearing as Atum.

The goddess here declares her part in bringing Osiris-Seti to completion, in causing him to appear upon the Great Throne as the evening king, Atum—the complementary pole to the rising sun king on the opposite wall.

Yet nothing in her iconography would lead us to believe that we have here before our eyes the mother goddess who brings the ageing king to completion, other than her name inscribed above. Everything points to 'Tomorrow', to the dawn mother, Hathor, the goddess ever desirous of growth and new life. There she stands crowned with the solar horned headdress resting on a circlet of eight cobrasnakes, while another uraeus snake rears up on her brow, as she shakes her sistrum and holds her turquoisebeaded menit-necklace behind the Inmutef priest (pl 51).

And lest there be the slightest possibility of misunderstanding this composite female image, a tiny figure of the young Re is shown in the naos superstructure of her sistrum, replacing the usual uraeus serpent. Holding his finger to his mouth in a childlike gesture, he stands in a doorway flanked by heraldic lions, the guardians of the western and eastern horizon gates which open for Atum and Re,





Osiris and Horus, 'Yesterday' and Tomorrow' in the circuit of the sun. It is a marvellous symbolic image of Isis and Hathor united together—the musical goddesses of sunset and sunrise, who sustain the flow of life, keeping in motion the ceaseless rhythm of death and renewal throughout a

Left 52 Detail of plate 51 showing the massistrum held by Isis. In the doorway of the naos stands the young sun childholding his finger to his mouth in a childlike gesture. Flanking the doorway of each side is a heraldic lion guarding western and eastern horizon gates when open for Atum and Re, Osiris and Horse 'Yesterday' and 'Tomorrow'.

Right 53 Becoming Earth. Thoth call Seti to his feast as the buried earth king purified by the inundation waters in the realm of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris (Third relief on the left wall in the inner Osiris shrine)

lifetime on earth. Through this Lady of Life, here associated with the Great Throne, a new being is conceived from death, born into a vital realm of movement and joy.

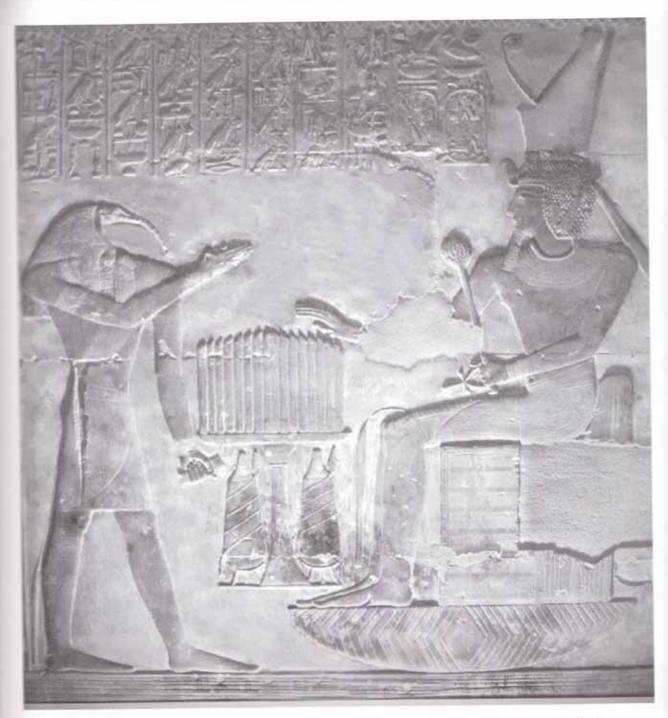
And through her too the Osirian king appears as a ruler in a bounded contained world, for whom the cult aperformed by his young successoran emotional Horus, imbued with all the warmth and fire of a mother goddess whose desire forever impels him to serve his predecessor. Past and future bearing together the great tradition of rulership in Egypt.

And with this heavenly celebration of the king, transfigured within the birth-death life-cycle of the solar circuit, we are ready to pass to the ultimate completion of Seti within his sky and earth realms.

As the Memphite Theology declares. Osiris is brought into the palace by Horus 'in the following of him who shines in the horizon, on the ways of Re at the Great Throne', where he joins the Memphite earth gods. Tatenen, 'the Risen Land' and Ptah, 'Lord of years'.

PICTURE 5 BECOMING EARTH: OSIRIS AND THE WATERS

The third scene on the left wall involves Seti as a buried ruler, one who has 'become earth' as the Memphite Theology



says (pl 53).6 And here the inscriptions describe his deep connection with the annual flow of the Nile inundation, with the earth rhythms of increase and decrease in the realm of creation. The scene shows the moon god, Thoth, calling Seti, now crowned with the

Red and White Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, to his feast:

A thousand of bread, a thousand of beer . . . which Hapy (the inundation god) has brought forth from his cavern. My arms may they give, and may the inundation purify King Menmaatre.

Here Thoth prays that Seti may receive his food offerings and be purified by the inundation waters. And finally he cries out to the king with the words: Come, Son of Re, Seti-beloved-of-Ptah, come to Hepty for these your food-offerings.



and rise up and put on various glorious colours like the flowers in Spring, and the Spring itself rejoices and is glad at the beauty which surrounds them.

Such a description lies very close to the heart of Osirian renewal in New Kingdom Egypt, involving the earth dwellers who lie hidden, buried underground in the caverns of Ptah-

Left 54 The Ruler of Gold. The Inmuter priest calls Seti to his feast as the Heliopolitan Horus king purified by the sun god (Third relief on the right was

Sokar. They too revive with the returning waters, to bring life and bloom again to Egypt. And this sceneshowing Thoth calling Seti to his food offerings, is but one instance of this

This name Hepty is extremely significant here, since it is also an epithet given to the Memphite earth god, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, in a food-offering invocation inscribed opposite the long list of ancestor kings in the south wing of the Abydos temple.7 Alongside the list, Seti is shown with his young son Ramesses II, who reads from a papyrus roll as if intoning the names of their illustrious forebears now buried deep in the realm of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris (pl 56). Similarly, here in the Osiris shrine. Thoth now calls on Seti to 'become earth' in the realm of the earth gods where all the past rulers of Egypt dwell-a 'becoming' associated with food and the purifying Nile floodwaters which renew the fertility, life and vigour of Egypt's Black Land.

In a Graeco-Egyptian alchemical text known as the *Dialogue of the Philoso*phers and Cleopatra, there is a beautiful description of the dead lying in their caverns under the earth, waiting for the waters of resurrection to come and revive them, so that they may appear in radiant colours like the flowers of springtime. Cleopatra is asked to tell about the mysteries of renewal,

Tell us...how the blessed waters descend from above to visit the dead, who are bound and afflicted in the darkness and obscurity of Hades. And how the Medicine of Life enters Hades and rouses the dead from sleep so that they wake at the voice of their masters. And how the new waters penetrate into Hades, those waters which... are come with the light.⁸

Cleopatra then describes these waters of salvation, which cause the land to blossom again:

The waters, when they come in Hades, wake the bodies from sleep and the spirits that are imprisoned and weak. For they have undergone oppression for a long time, but they will be consoled again in Hades. And, little by little, they grow

PICTURE 6 SHINING CREATION: THE WORK OF GOLD

belief in earth rebirth.

Over on the right wall is the heavenly complement to this earth existence of Osiris-Seti (pl 54). The text above the *Inmutef* priest tells that he is proclaiming the triumph of Seti before the Great and Small Enneads of Heliopolis and the two Conclaves of Upper and Lower Egypt. Here, however, Seti's purification is not of earth and the inundation waters, but of sky—a celestial solarization performed by the sun god, Re. The priest asks that:

Re may purify King Menmaatre in this his house, in this his temple, in his nomes which are in Upper Egypt, in his tombs which are in Lower Egypt, upon his altars which are in the sky, and which are on earth and in his temple.

We have to imagine not the waters of earth pouring over the body of Seti here, but the solar splendour of gold, purifying him as the reigning king of sky and earth in this cosmic stage of his illumination. And as his triumph is proclaimed, so a new world streams forth in sunlight, brought into being



by the solar king who now appears, to male and serve as the incarnate link in Heliopolitan creation.

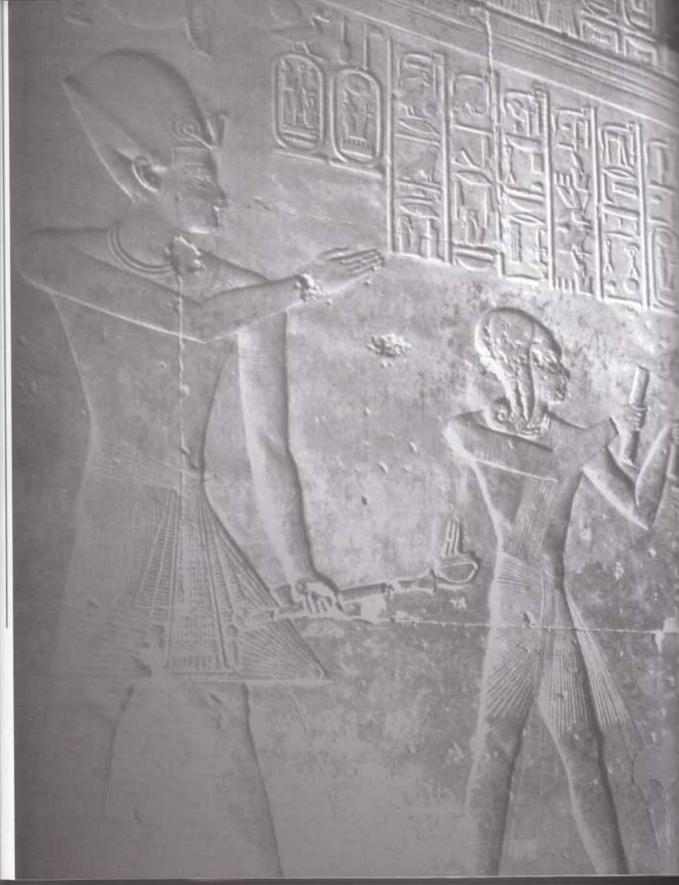
INCTURE7 UNITING REALMS:

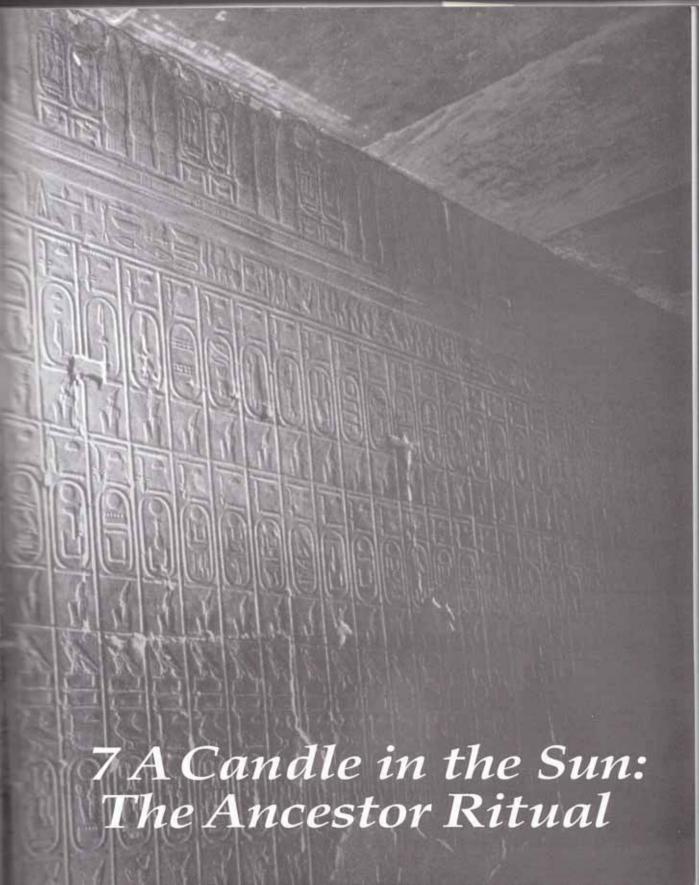
HORIZON EMBRACE

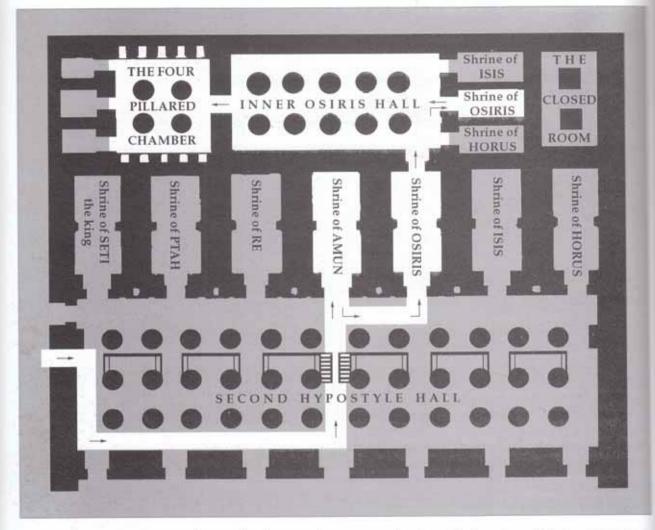
Finally, holding the central axis of the strine is a single scene on the back wall, showing Seti being brought by Horus into the presence of Osiris and king entering to embrace his

father watched by the mother goddess (pl 55). And it means that the realms of sky and deep earth, depicted in the third relief of each side wall, are now connected and united through this central image of an embrace. The work of unification is accomplished as above and below, sky and earth, are held together by this life-giving embrace of Osiris and Horus, which is now revealed, as at the close of the Memphite Theology, in its completed form.

Above 55 Glorified Unity. In this scene on the back wall of the inner Osiris shrine Horus leads Seti into the presence of Osiris and Isis for the embrace between father and son. Protected by Isis, who wears the solar horned head-dress, Osiris gives an Ankh-sign to Seti. The way of transformation is complete now that Osiris himself manifests as the cosmic lifegiver. And the sequence culminates by glorifying the moment when Osiris and the Horus ruler meet in an embrace







BUT CAN SUCH RELIEFS tell us anything about the ceremonies and rituals enacted in the temple at Abydos? It is all very well to analyze pictorial symbolism, but what about actual ritual practices? Is there any ritual that we may safely associate with the sequence of reliefs in the Osiris shrine, and which would lend support to the interpretations just put forward?

Such a ritual does in fact exist—the moving 19th Dynasty ceremony performed for the ancestral rulers of Egypt known as the Ritual of Amenhotep I, which we shall refer to as the Ancestor Ritual. But although scholars have noted similarities between this ritual and certain scenes in the Osiris shrine,

there has never been a comprehensive study linking the ritual with the seven scenes as a whole.¹

The versions of the Ancestor Ritual that have come down to us were performed for the 18th Dynasty king, Amenhotep I, and are preserved, albeit in a fragmentary state, on two different papyri dating to Ramesses II's reign.²

Both these papyri are roughly contemporary in date, therefore, with Seti's temple at Abydos.³ Sir Alan Gardiner, who undertook the difficult task of translating and publishing the longer, more complete, manuscript (now in the British Museum), suggested the ritual was probably composed in Thebes, where both Amenhotep I and his mother, Queen Ahmose Nefertari, were especially revered as beneficent ancestral rulers in the Ramessid period. Indeed, in one version of the ritual, Ahmose-Nefertari is included as a recipient of the cult together with her son. Gardiner noted that the ritual would probably have been adapted for use in other temples elsewhere in Egypt, with appropriate incantations added, some deleted, to suit the needs of the different cult centres.⁴

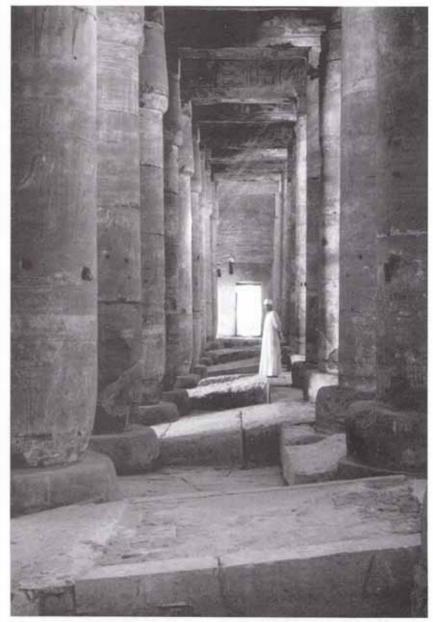
One of these temples must surely have been Abydos, where there was not only a Ramessid shrine dedicated to Amenhotep I, but also an overwhelming emphasis on the link with Preceding page 56 Seti 1, with his young son Ramesses, burning incense before the famous list of kings. Ramesses holds a papyrus scroll as he recites the illustrious names of their predecessors stretching back to the first king of Dynasty 1, Menes, around 3000 BC (Relief in the Gallery of Lists at Abydos)

Left 57 Plan of the inner rooms of the Abydos temple showing the suggested route of the Ancestor Ritual. Starting from the Gallery of Lists, the ritualists would have visited the shrine of Amun-Re, then passed through the shrine of Osiris and into the inner Osiris hall. Immediately on the right is the small inner Osiris chapel and the ritual culminates in the innermost four pillared chamber

Right 58 View across the second hypostyle hall at Abydos, showing the ramps leading to the seven shrines

the royal predecessors-as is plain to see in the relief of King Seti and his young son Ramesses, burning incense and chanting prayers before the long list of ancestral rulers (pl 56). Furthermore, phrases closely similar to ones occurring in the Ancestor Ritual are inscribed behind King Seti in one of the scenes in the Osiris shrine and elsewhere in the temple, making it even more plausible that this ritual was important here at Abydos.5 As Algernon Caulfeild remarked in a book about the temple: There seems no reasonable doubt that the temple was used for commemorative services of the early kings'.6 But how might such a service have been enacted in the temple? And, if one of these rituals was indeed the Ramessid Ancestor Ritual, how are we to make sense of its perplexing text?

This is where the relevance of the seven scenes in the Osiris shrine comes in. For, if their strange combination of symbolic imagery is correlated with the Ancestor Ritual, then it becomes possible to trace a meaningful pattern in the ritual itself—a ritual which has puzzled scholars ever since it firstcame to light. This is not least because, in the



ritual too, there are curious shifts between the ancestral ruler and the reigning Horus king of Egypt, similar to those we have already experienced in the scenes at Abydos. Sometimes it is the reigning king who is said to perform the rites, sometimes the ancestral king. Yet when these shifts are interpreted together with the seven scenes in the inner Osiris shrine, then their perplexities and apparent illogicality seem not so strange at all.

Writing about the problem of interpretation, Gardiner observed:

The Amenophis ritual is not one of those texts which surrender their secrets at a single reading. Indeed, so many are its obscurities and so elusive the problems which it raises that a first commentator can barely hope to do more than clear away some of the most obvious difficulties. For an Egyptian reader these difficulties doubtless existed only to a limited extent, since not only will he have

been thoroughly conversant with the allusive mode of diction employed, but he will also have been quite familiar with the outward routine of the temple services.⁷

Gardiner's last point is important, because the papyrus gives little indication about where the ritual would have been performed in the temple as a whole. Only the actual rites and accompanying incantations were written down, since the rest would have been self-explanatory for the ritualists involved—unlike the modern reader, the Egyptian clergy would have known where each phase should occur in the temple. And obviously the lack of such indications is a very considerable hindrance when attempting to reconstruct this ancient temple rite.

Nevertheless, if we compare the ritual with others, it seems reasonable to assume that the clergy would have moved to different areas and shrines within the temple. Clearly, for example, in the New Year ritual of The Confirmation of the King's Power the ceremonies took place in different shrines and sacred enclosures.8 Similarly, according to François Daumas, the New Year rite performed in Hathor's temple at Dendara, fell into three distinct phases, which were enacted in three different parts of the temple, the last phase taking place in a kiosk on the temple roof.9 Likewise, in the following attempt to make sense of the Ancestor Ritual, it is suggested that three different areas of the Abydos temple would have been involved-indeed, in the next chapter it is argued that the temple's architecture was specifically designed with the enactment of just such a ritual in mind.

In tracing how this ritual might have been performed at Abydos, we shall keep strictly to the order given in Gardiner's publication, using the translations he provided. However, in order to simplify and highlight the functions of the royal predecessor and reigning king, the name of Amenhotep I, to whom the ritual was dedicated, has been replaced in the following by Ancestor King N, and that of Ramesses II by Horus King N. Also, the version of the rites preserved by the Cairo and Turin papyri will also be taken into account, for this version seems closer to the content of Seti's seven scenes at Abydos. Moreover, to assist comparison with these scenes, the same seven headings used in the previous chapter will again be included to help set out the transformational process more clearly.

In essence, the ritual is an evocation of the ancestors, a celebration of their link with the reigning Pharaoh.

And not surprisingly, a crucial focus of the rites is food, that element on which both the living and the dead depend. To give food to the royal predecessors is to reverence them as Ka-powers, who are potently alive, sustaining and supporting the ruling king. Though, as we shall see, the ritual is not quite so straightforward as this, since sometimes it is the living king who gives food, and sometimes the ancestor king. So let us begin the delicate task of tracing it through the temple at Abydos.



PHASE 1 DECAYING FORMS: THE RENEWAL OF EGYPT

It is a feast-day of the ancestors. Egypt is still in darkness as the temple priests and priestesses rise earlier than usual to make their ablutions and robe themselves in fine linen garments in a southern annex of the Abydos temple. 59 View into the central shrine of Amun-Re in the second hypostyle hall at Abydos. Decorating the side walls are reliefs of Seti I performing the daily renewal rites for the cult image. On the back wall is the false door which seals off the Amun-Re shrine from the inner Osiris hall beyond

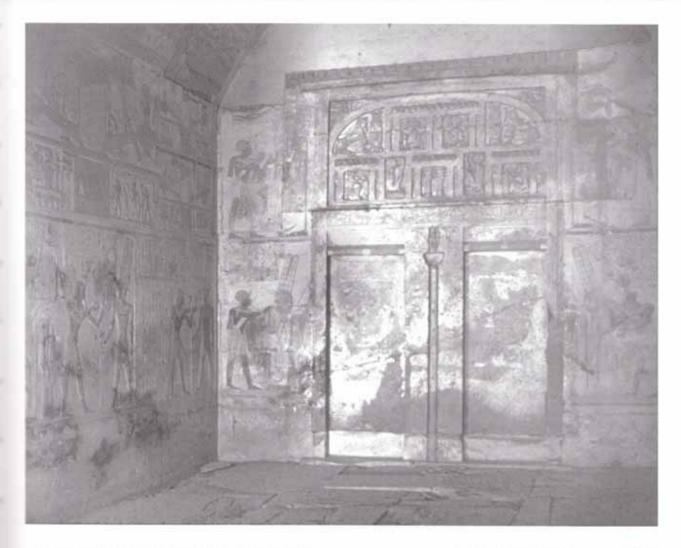
First they must fulfil the daily morning ritual of purification, clothing and anointing of the temple cult images before they can perform this ceremony for the ancestors. And a lector priest must oversee the preparation of the special sacrificial meat in the kitchens and butchery lying in the south wing, making the appropriate incantations for food which will shortly be brought to the ancestral tables. Then all is ready.

Now a procession of offering bearers sets out, incarnations of the inundation god, Hapy. Each member bears aloft platters laden with choice breads and meat, jugs of beer and wine to quench the divine thirst, lotus flowers and other plants to fill the temple with fresh perfume and scent. Led by a chanting priest, they make their way along the Corridor of Kings towards the door leading into the main part of the temple:

Open up the doors of heaven, open up the doors of earth, With libations for the Ancestor King N. Which Thoth brings upon the hand of Hapy...

The door swings open into the hypostyle hall, the prayers echo through the huge papyrus columns, as incense is burnt, purifying the food for the deities dwelling within.

Freshness, vitality, all the good things which come forth from the primordial waters of Nun have entered, flooding the temple with greenness and renewal. And not one of these offerings on the laden platters must fall to the ground, disturbing the cosmic harmony. All is precision, as each ritual



action is reverently carried out. Slowly, the procession winds its way around the hypostyle hall towards the steps leading to the central shrine where the cult image of Amun-Re-Bull-of-his-Mother, the supreme deity of Egypt, is housed (pl 59). For the ancestral food offerings must first be brought to the Crown of the Kingdom.

The Sem priest goes to the sacred miche containing the cult statue, which has already been renewed in the daily mies. But now, once again, the priest takes the nemset-bowl and four times sprinkles renewing water of life over the niche and cult image in order to estore the god's body again, chanting as he does so:

Take your head,
unite with your eyes,
I have brought to you
what came forth from Nun,
the beginning which came forth from Atum,
in this its name of nemset-bowl.

O Ancestor King take your head, unite with your bones, fasten your eyes in their place.

The ritual here associates the royal predecessor with rebirth from Nun, with rebirth from the waters of renewal, exactly as King Seti, wearing the crowns of the Theban god, Amun-Re, is shown being purified by Horus in the first scene on the right wall of the inner Osiris shrine (pl 48). Whilst

incense is burnt in the shrine and food offerings consecrated, so the invocations continue, restoring the king to a renewed bodily existence as the various parts of his body are joined together again—a reintegration reminiscent of the body's restoration in the mummification rites.¹¹

Finally the platters of food are offered up so that the priest can pronounce the spell which binds the food-laden altar for Amun-Re and the Ancestor King, hailing these gifts of bread, incense and divine offerings as the Eye of Horus. He sprinkles purifying holy water over them and burns incense, rousing the Theban ruler to renewed life with the words:

Your water be unto you, Your inundation be unto you, Your natron be unto you, Which came forth from you.

Wash your hands,

Open your mouth, unstop your ears.

See with your eyes, speak with your mouth . . .

Come to this your bread that is warm and to this your beer that is warm . . .

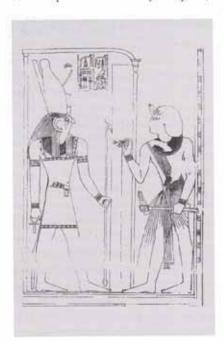
O smite with your sceptre,
O rule with your disk,
Raise yourself, O Amun-Re,
Lord of the Thrones of the
Two Lands, and Amun of Opet.

Enter in to this your bread,

And to these your divine offerings,
In your place and in your temple

For ever and ever.

Finally, the priest chants a long invocation imploring Amun-Re (and the Ancestor King associated with him) 'to come' with his soul and magic to the reigning Horus ruler, so that he may enter his sanctuary and receive his food offerings. Again, these offerings are all identified with the Eye of Horus, the 'White One', the Moon Eye which is said to deify Seti in the first scene of purification at Abydos (pl 48).



Manifestly, it is the raying lunar Eye of Horus which holds sway during this mysterious renewal of bodies in the ritual's opening phase. Appropriately too, as befits the supreme Crown of Egypt, ruling over the country's four corners, the invocation is repeated four times. And with this bringing of Amun-Re to his banquet, the first phase of the ritual is at an end. In it Amun-Re, and the Ancestor King identified with him, have been reunited with all the various parts of their body, including their Ba and their 'Magic', in preparation for the next phase of the ritual. 12



PHASE 2 JUSTIFYING HORUS: OVERCOMING OPPOSITIONS

The lector priest and another priest, bearing the heart of the sacrificial beast slaughtered previously, now withdraw towards the neighbouring chapel of Osiris. Reverently they make their way through the Ka-opening in the back wall into the gloom of the inner hall beyond. They turn immediately to the right, to the central shrine of Osiris-Seti (pl 47), where the priest breaks the seal of the door, pushes it open and devoutly enters before the naos. Now the moment has come when Horus, for the sake of Osiris and the cosmic order, must seize the phallus of Seth, associated by the Egyptians with the bolt of the shrine (pl 60). So

60 The priest-king Seti 1 draws back the bolt of the shrine containing the cult statue of Horus (Line drawing of a relief in the shrine of Horus in the second hypostyle hall at Abydos)

the priest—representing Horus in the ritual—draws back the bolt, declaring:

I am Horus, O my father Osiris, who seizes Seth's phallus for you with his hand,

So that Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, and Amun of Opet, may rest in his palace,

So that Horus may rest in the arms of his father Osiris.

As he draws back this 'phallus of Seth', Horus, the palace ruler, affirms that he has come to create harmony in Egypt. Just as the justification of Horus with regard to Seth is celebrated in the second scene of the inner Osiris shrine, when Wepwawet, the 'Opener-of-the-Ways', gives the insignia of Osiris to the Horus ruler, Seti (pl 49), so here the priest, holding the phallus of Seth in his hand, identifies with the victorious Horus.

Then the priest opens the doors of the naos and sees the cult image inside—a revelation of Horus in the embrace of his father Osiris. The Egyptians understood the naos itself as Osiris and the statue enclosed within (known as the Akh-statue) as Horus. Hence the statue resting in the naos was for them like Horus resting in his father's arms when he appeared as his successor.¹³

And as the priest in the ritual beholds the beauty of the cult image, so he feels a shudder of fear running through his body. He sees the glittering crystal-encrusted eyes of the statue, its crown gleaming with brilliant colours, shining in the darkness. He sees the precious turquoise, carnelian and lapis lazuli stones adorning the sacred body, the sight of which fills the chanting lector priest with awe and fascination:

Your beauty belongs to you,

O Amun-of-Opet,

Your father Osiris has placed you in his arms. In this his name—

"The-Horizon-from-which-Re-goes forth'.

You are cool and beautiful
With your father Osiris.
Thoth comes to you.
He has brought you the Eye of Horus,
So that you may have power through it,
So that you may have honour through it,
So that you may live as a god for ever.

In this chant the priest praises Thoth for restoring the powerful Eye of Horus, which had been so severely damaged in the conflict with Seth. So too he praises the divine beauty of the new solar ruler who appears like an Amun-of-Opet (the palace god of Luxor) in the arms of his father Osiris. Clearly, we have entered here the liferealm, since the horizon embrace of Horus and Osiris is a life-giving act of the Ka. For to put one's arms around another person means to imbue that person with existence and life, to impart one's vital essence.¹⁴



PHASE 3 BINDING THE SERPENT: THE GENERATIVE KING

Then as the priest's chant dies away, another priest, representing the Osirian Ancestor King, begins a new invocation for the rite of 'Bringing the Heart to the God'. The pulsing seat of blood, heat, warmth and sexual desire, the mucial organ of the slaughtered bull, is too brought before the cult image as the offering symbolizing all the vital to the successor of Osiris. And the successor of Osiris. And the successor of Horus with the incestuous union of Horus with the mother, Isis, during which their

hearts are joined together. As the priest offers up the heart, he hails this union between mother and son, again calling Horus by the name Amun-of-Opet, so characterizing him as the fertile manifestation of the Theban phallic Amun within his palace:

Hail to you, O Amun, Lord of Opet— The King, Lord of the Two Lands, The Ancestor King N has brought your heart to set in its place

Just as Isis brought Horus her son his heart And set it in its place,

And as Horus brought Isis his mother her heart And set it in its place.

Keep silence O you gods, listen O Ennead, hear the good words

Which Horus spoke to his father Osiris . . . That he might be there with him . . . As Chief of the Westerners . . .

Here the priest declares this incestual union between mother and son to be an act so dreadful that even the gods must keep silence about it.

But by virtue of sexually uniting with his mother, Horus has indeed taken the place of his father in every possible way. He has become a 'Bull-of-his-Mother', capable of perpetuating an unending cycle of regeneration through the heart. And incestuous though this union of hearts may be, it encapsulates the mysterious exchange of life energy necessary for the empowerment of the new ruler. Though Osiris has gone to his Ka he remains actively supporting his son, who now embodies the procreative powers of his predecessor. 16

Empowered now by this throbbing organ of life and sexual feeling, Horus appears as the vital ruler of the Two Lands; and it is highly appropriate that this offering of the heart, this transmission of vital energy, is said in the

61 Ramesses III sweeps away traces of his footprints and sprinkles purifying water around the shrine after performing rites for the cult image (Relief in the first court of the temple at Medinet Habu) ritual to be a gift brought by the Ancestor King for the youthful ruler in the palace. He it is who hands over this vital organ essential for procreative life. Only when Horus has gained this heart of rulership is his father released to become Osiris, Chief of the Westerners, free to rule in the West. Only then can the full extent of Osiris's latent powers be experienced subsequently in the ritual.

The priest ends this chant with a great cry to the four corners of earth, to Geb, the father of Osiris, who opens the gates of South, North, East and West so that the radiant new solar ruler can go forth:

Come. Your father, Geb,

Has opened for you the gates of earth,
South, North, West and East . . .

Go forth, glorious as Re,
Powerful and equipped as a god.

As his cry dies away, so the lector priest begins another chant honouring the food offerings being brought into the shrine. These are brought as a gift of the reigning Horus for Amun-Re and the Ancestor King, who are to rise up as the rulers of Lower Egypt.¹⁷ Now





62 Horus emerging from the body of his father, symbolizing the procreative regenerative power of Osiris (Scene from the Book of the Earth in the sarcophagus chamber of Ramesses VI's tomb at Thebes)

their rule encompasses both the sky where Re shines and the deep earth where the blessed dead and the decanal stars are to be found on their journey of renewal:

Whether you are in the sky with Re
Or whether you are in earth
With Sekhet-Hotep and the Unwearying
Stars,

Arise, rise up,
O Amun-Re, King of the Gods,
And Ancestor King N,
Proclaimed as King of Lower Egypt,
The Majesty of Shu purifies you

with your food offerings.

What does this proclamation of the Ancestor King as the Lower Egyptian ruler, the wearer of the Red Crown whose rule spans heaven and earth, mean here? According to the Coffin Texts it means that the Osirian god's Ba now soars forth, manifesting as Horus generated from the seed of his 'dead' father, an awesome act at which the deities tremble as they behold the Red Crown. For this Red Crown is a sign indeed that Osiris is fully awake,

that he is truly a procreative force whose power is revealed through the appearance of his crowned son—his regenerated soul:

I am that great Ba of Osiris whom the gods have commanded, so that he engenders, who lives day by day on high, whom Osiris has created from the fluids of his body as seed which came forth from his penis, in order to go forth by day so that he may engender. I am the son of Osiris, his heir in his worth. I am the Ba of the one who is in his redness. I am the one who can reveal that great Lower Egyptian crown of Osiris, the revelation of which the gods fear, for I am that great Ba of Osiris. 18.

This soaring forth of Ba-power in the Coffin Texts is experienced as complete identification with Horus flowing from the seed of Osiris. He is the Ba-soul who reveals the Lower Egyptian Crown of Osiris. And it means that Osiris is now no longer in a passive state, but completely revealed as a god capable of generating new life.

It is this generated new life, the power of the fully functioning Ba spanning heaven and earth, which the ritual now celebrates when the ruling Horus king brings these food offerings for the risen Ancestor King of Lower Egypt. And as this food is offered up, so the

customary invocation is made when food is given in the cult of the dead: 'Your thousand of bread, your thousand of beer, your thousand of oxen' and so on.

But it is not only the fertile Osirian predecessor whom the Horus ruler serves here. He also nourishes the manifold deities of the Two Lands and must be blessed by them. So another invocation, its content solar, immediately follows, praising Horus as the ruler who treads the sacred ground of Heliopolis to provide a great feast for the Theban deities, the Ennead of Heliopolis, Horus, Mut, Ptah, Thoth, Khons, Sobek, Hathor and other divinities. All are implored to come to this great banquet which the solar Horus, the 'Strong Bull', provides for them in Heliopolis, the sacred city of their origins:

O come to Heliopolis

From whence you came,

Even to this sanctuary in Heliopolis,

Whence you came . . .

Take your food which the King . . .

The Horus, the strong Bull,

Beloved of Truth, gives to you.

And may you give him

All life from you.

All stability from you . . .

To come to Heliopolis is to come to fire and food, to return to the source of generation and new life, to come to food offerings crackling in flame on the open-air sun altar, guarded by the king, the son of Re, who exudes fertility and life from every pore of his being. Here the solar king is confirmed in the ritual as a generative food-giving power in Heliopolis—a confirmation which undoubtedly means he appears as the serpent-crowned ruler, for no Pharaoh could enter Heliopolis unless empowered by the fiery goddesses.

Here, in revered Heliopolis, the deities of Egypt receive their offerings from the fire altar of the sun god, and they in turn bless the reigning king with life, stability, prosperity, joy and health, in a mutual act of giving and receiving which sustains the cosmic realm. And the ritual incantation closes with a request that the Ancestor King too may have power throughout eternity.

The message of the ritual is plain. When the serpent-crowned Horus manifests, so the regenerative 'seed' power of the Ancestor King, the ruler of Lower Egypt, is also revealed in the heat of Heliopolis. For without flame there can be no true regeneration or fertile life.¹⁹

And now perhaps we understand more clearly the ambivalent mummiform figure of Seti receiving his serpent crowns from Thoth in the corresponding third scene at Abydos; and why he should appear here so clearly related to death when receiving these serpent crowns of a living Horus ruler blessed by Re (pl 50). For this is surely a representation of the progenitor in his flame, a wonderful evocation of the crowned Horus rising from Osiris as the great Ba of the one who is 'in his redness', whom the fertile god engenders from the streaming fluids of his body.

The mummiform god has indeed raised his uraeus serpents' to generate new life, has united with flame to bring forth a new living being who serves at the great Heliopolitan sun altar, which is the source of food for both the living and the dead.

When we remember, moreover, that all this is also made possible by virtue of the heart that Horus has just been given in the rite of 'Bringing the Heart to the God', then we can readily understand why the section in the Memphite Theology, praising Ptah as the creator responsible for the Heliopolitan cult order, might be relevant immediately after the crowning of Horus with his fiery serpents and his union with Osiris.

Through his heart and creative word, Ptah shapes the bodies of the

Heliopolitan deities, through him the Heliopolitan cult order comes into being, entirely dependent upon his work for existence.

So, just as the solar king journeys to Heliopolis in the Ancestor Ritual, empowered by his heart, so the Memphite Theology follows a similar pattern of development. However, the purpose of the journey to Heliopolis in the Memphite Theology is not primarily to perform the cult there but rather to reaffirm Heliopolitan dependence on Ptah's heart activity.

But we must return to the Ancestor Ritual. The offerings have been made, the naos doors are again closed. Then the priest sweeps all traces of footprints from the floor, scaring away any negative forces with a final injunction against anyone who dares to profane the shrine's sanctity:

Thoth has come. He has rescued the Eye of Horus from his enemies. No male or female enemy shall enter this shrine.

He withdraws, bolts the door, sealing it with the words, 'Ptah fastens the door, Thoth closes the door', and leaves behind the statue in its shrine, Horus resting within the arms of his father Osiris, Old King and Young King, now united and joined together as one through the power of the heart.



PHASE 4 GLORIFYING ISIS: THE MISTRESS OF LIFE

And now, whilst purificatory water is sprinkled and incense burnt around the shrine, there begins a great hymn



63 The heavenly flight of a Ba-bird, soaring up into the light of the sun. Scene on the Ptolemaic sarcophagus of Harmachis (National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden)

of praise, celebrating the birth and lifetime of Horus-Re in the solar circuit, perhaps sung by priestesses, though this is not stated in the papyrus.

The chant glorifies Isis, upon whom Horus utterly depends for his growth and existence—the Mother, nurturing and protecting her child as he lives his lifetime amidst the waters of the Great Green which come forth from Osiris, fanned by the sweet breezes of the east wind. She is the Mother of the heart, who guards her child through all his transformations from birth to death.

As the chant soars forth within the temple, it transforms the chapel into a shrine of adoration, glorifying the deity within, whose life is sustained by Isis, the Mistress of Life—exactly as the musical goddess is shown in plate 51 accompanying the *Inmutef* priest burning incense before the Osirian king:

Receive joy, O Atum, Lord of Heliopolis, Receive these libations, O Re-Harakhti . . . Horus became the oldest of the old ever since he was ill. He went forth with his Eye alive after Seth had seized it. He received it from Isis in Djebat-Aryt.

O come forth renewed from between
the thighs of your mother Isis.

She gives birth to you.

You become a youth reborn.

You become Re. You suck the milk

From the breast of your mother Isis.

Her cry raises you . . . You go forth

from the arms of your father, Osiris.

You live through him, you are whole through him, Through the sweet libation, which comes forth from your father Osiris,

On the east side of the Great Green, which surrounds the Hau-Nebut, You live from the east wind on the east side of the Great Green.

You are alive, being a little one, you become a youth, grow warm and vigorous.

And so you become old of this your old age and your completion²⁰

The activation of the heart and regeneration in the 'life'-realm of food and nourishment (phase 3) have led now to an experience of life's rhythm from birth to death, a rhythm shared both by the celestial bodies of the solar circuit and by all humans on earth.

This glorious moment in the ritual reveals the vista of an entire earthly lifetime, sustained by Isis. But as both this chant and the equivalent fourth scene in the Osiris shrine show so clearly, it is not Isis alone who sustains life in the solar circuit. Her child in the chant also 'becomes Re'. And have we not already seen Isis shaking Hathor's sistrum (pl 51), the instrument belonging to the solar mistress of growth, feeling and life?

In this great work of unification between the living and the dead, Isis actively seeks out and nurtures what old age surrenders, bringing to birth a new child in the fullness of time. But

Left 64 right 65 The transformations of Tutankhamun's lifetime as revealed in these four images of the king on a double cartouche-shaped box found in his tomb. On the front (pl 64) he is a child with an orange-red complexion and holding symbols of rulership. Above is the solar disk with two uraeus serpents each holding an Ankh-sign of life. On the back (pl 65) he appears as a mature ruler wearing the Blue Crown. In one image his skin is painted red, symbolizing the adult king at the fullness of his



Hathor's vitality is also needed, kindling the rise and development of her vigorous young son. In short, the Mistress of Life in the ritual bears the essence of both goddesses within her.²¹

The singers continue their great chant of power in the scented air, thick with the incense swirling through the hall. Focussing on the reawakening of life, they assure the king that he will rise again, united with his Eye and transfigured by the sun god.

Such a transfiguration is also encapsulated in the fourth scene of the Osiris shrine, showing the *Inmutef* priest burning incense before Seti (pl 51):

- awake in peace. If Re-Harakhti awakes in peace, you awake in peace.
- O awake in peace. If Horus at the head of the eastern holy place awakes in peace, you awake in peace.
- O Horus take your Eye to yourself, unite with him who is at the head of the eastern holy place . . .
- O Horus, take to yourself . . . this your Eye,
- O Horus Great-of-Magic, equip yourself with it It does hamage for you before Geb, it gives you joy before the Great Ennead, equip yourself with it,
- O Re-Harakhti, O incense of Re

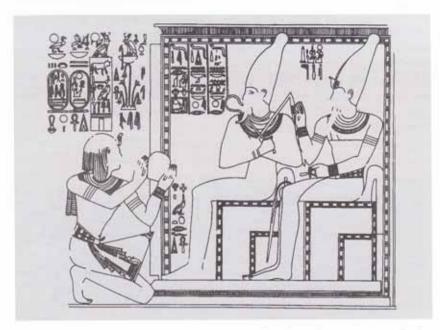
Then this rhythmic and repetitive litany to the radiant king, the 'Greatof-Magic', united now with his powerful Eye, increases in intensity as the singers begin to praise the transfigured sun god and all the gods and

weer. In the other his skin is painted week symbolizing his descent into death old age. Then on the front of the box is a child reborn again. The motifs also be read as Tutankhamun's royal me Nebkheperure meaning the 'Lord' Transformations is Re', enclosed in a cartouche. The basket on which the g sits represents the word 'Lord' web). The four different images of king are his 'transformations' Experu), and the sun disk above is (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

goddesses who surround him in the cult. All the beneficent powers of the solar circuit are praised, raising a great spiral of sound—to Re, to the Disk of Re, to Atum, his Eye, and his Body, to the Eye of Khepri, to Khepri, to the Lion, and the two Lions, Shu and Tefenet. Then the singers praise all the gods and goddesses who sail with Re in the sun-boat:

To Maat at the prow of the boat of Re,
To Isis at the prow of the boat of Re,
To Hathor at the prow of the boat of Re,
To Hu ('Creative Utterance')
at the prow of the boat of Re,
To Sia ('Understanding')
at the prow of the boat of Re,
To Khons and Thoth
at the prow of the boat of Re,
To the gods and goddesses . . .





Then as this climax is reached, there ascends a great cry of praise to the evening boat, to the morning boat, to the sky, and to all the gods and goddesses in it. And borne upon this great crescendo of sound the priests now turn from this place of awakening towards the southeast of the temple to take part in the rite known as the 'Reversion of Offerings', which proclaims that 'the enemy is fallen' and that the triumphant Eye of Horus now comes as the 'maker of offerings' for the Ancestor King.



PHASE 5 BECOMING EARTH: OSIRIS AND THE WATERS

Slowly the procession moves between the ten columns of the Hall, the priests bearing aloft their offerings along the central aisle as they move towards the primordial realm of the White Crown in the South, to the night of great sleep. They file past scenes decorating the hall's side walls, showing, amongst many others, Seti raising the sacred Djed-pillar, Seti offering flowers to the twin-headed god who 'brings the inundation very greatly', and offering to all the ancestors of the past and those who are to come in the nome of Abydos.

Bearing aloft these offerings, which are soon to be distributed to all the altars of the temple deities and ancestral rulers, they approach the 'Great doorway of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menmaatre, protector of the one who has created him' and pass into the small chamber with its four pillars supporting a sandstone ceiling covered with star constellations.

The figure of Osiris, the god who supports everything on earth as far as the sky, adorns these four supports, reminiscent of lines quoted earlier from a hymn to Osiris which says 'earth lies upon your arm, and its corners upon you, as well as the four supports of the sky' (page 33). Then the food offerings are lowered

Left 66 The unity of the living and the dead is revealed in this scene of Seti 1 reverently offering to Osiris seated in a shrine. Osiris wears the White Crown of Upper Egypt and the other white-crowned figure within the shrine is none other than Seti himself. Here the living Horus king offers to his Osirian self named as 'Menmaatre, the great god' (Line drawing of a relief in the inner hall at Abydos)

onto stone benches on each side of the hall, close to the three innermost shrines of the temple, shrines which include the scene of Horus watching his own conception. Watching as Isis, the female hawk, hovers above the erect phallus of Osiris, the dead father recumbent upon a lion bed deep in the realm of Sokar; watching as the jubilating goddess strives to bring forth new life from the midst of death.

Also shown in these innermost shrines is the anointing of Osiris, who wears the White Crown of the South—that crown which Horus also seizes from Seth in order to rule Upper Egypt. And as the priest sprinkles water over the offerings, so his chant hails the White Crown of Re, the blessed source of salvation and power.

Then the chant goes on to praise the triumphant Osirian Ancestor King, who now brings the Red and White Crowns to Ptah and Thoth, symbolizing his dominion over Seth within Ptah's earth domain, his triumph over detrimental forces incompatible with a united realm. And this coming of the Double Crown is associated also with the coming of the inundation—those life-giving fertilizing waters which wash and purify the transfigured kings:

This is that White Crown of Re Which brings your power. The incense which purifies you. May the inundation place itself Upon your head, may it purify you. Hail to you, O Ptah, O Thoth, deputy of Re, You are pure, you are pure, You are praised, you are praised. Your son, the King, the Lord of the Two Lands, The Ancestor King N, given life, has brought you This White Crown and Red Crown, which is in Pe (Buto), which is in Nekheb (El Kab). It washes you, it adorns you.

It makes its place upon you for ever.

Here again, the content of this chant its mention of Ptah and Thoth, its praise of the purificatory inundation waters and the Ancestor King who brings the Red and White Crowns associated with the ancient cities of Pe and Nekheb—is remarkably similar to the fifth scene at Abydos (pl 53). This shows Thoth calling Seti, who wears the Double Crown and sits before a table laden with food offerings, to come to his chthonic throne in the realm of the Memphite earth gods, purified by the inundation waters.

Through the power of these earth rulers, the recurrent cycles of nature are restored, through them the flowing waters bring fertility to Egypt, and in their suffering, death and mysterious revival lies the secret to the annual renewal of the seasons. All of which is celebrated in this chant, honouring the Ancestor King who has brought the crowns of the united land and reached his earth realm.

After this chant, priests then light candles which are held by four torch-bearers (pl 68). As they are lit, so the chamber's darkness is transformed into a blazing palace of flame and fire. Salvation enters the darkness of the Osirian realm. A new chant now begins, this time hailing the protective power of the Eye of Horus, which safeguards both the deities of Egypt and all the ancestral rulers who have served the royal tradition:

The candle has come . . . There has come one who proclaims night after day.

The Eye of Horus has come, shining gloriously in this sanctuary . . .

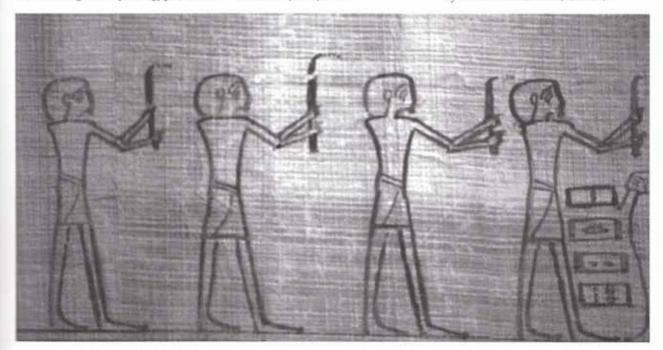
The Eye of Horus is your protection. it spreads protection over you and overthrows your enemies.

Pure, pure is the beautiful one. It has come, the Eye of Horus, the beautiful One, It has come, the proclaimer, the candle of new fat . . .



Above 67 Water pours from the hands of the Osirian King Osorkon II as he is purified by priests (Relief on the Heb Sed portal of Osorkon II from Bubastis)

Below 68 Vignette of the four torchbearers from chapter 137A of the Book of the Dead. They hold out torches towards a mummiform figure (not shown here) before whom are set four basins (Papyrus of Nu. British Museum, London)





69 The sacred right Eye holds two flames within the mountain of the West. The flames are held towards the enthroned Osiris as the 'King of the Living' symbolizing the divine powers of eternal return (Relief in the Ramessid tomb of Pashedu at Thebes)

This chant is a version of the 'Chapter of the Four Blazing Flames made for the Akh-spirit', chapter 137A of the Book of the Dead. The rubric of this chapter says that the ceremony should be performed over four flames made of red linen soaked in oil which are carried by four torch-bearers 'who burn fire facing the beauty of Re'.²² It also goes on to say that it should only be enacted for a close relative, being a great mystery of the West, 'a secret initiation in the Otherworld', causing a person to appear

as Osiris and in possession of power 'like this god'. It is only to be performed when it is desired that the Osirian person should 'arrive at one of the doorways of the seven halls of Osiris'.

Next the chanters intone their hymn of praise to the divine powers of Thebes and Heliopolis, naming in turn the ancestral rulers who have served in their cults. Kings of the 19th Dynasty, kings of the 18th Dynasty, kings of the Middle Kingdom—all are named, one by one, as rulers who have served the deities of Egypt.

And so the thin veil separating the living from the dead falls away, as this illustrious ancestral company come forth from their evening realm to partake of their meal with the reigning king. In his lifetime, each one has been a Horus, each one, in turn, has been guided safely through the gateway of the West by the protective power of the Moon Eye. Through them the tradition of rulership has passed through the generations, a vast chain of earth kings stretching back through time.

Next—in unison—the flames are extinguished. How this is accomplished is not stated but sometimes this was done in temple rituals by placing the flames in four basins filled with the milk of a white cow. Or sometimes they were extinguished on the floor. Darkness descends once more. Or so it seems.

But then the priest proclaims a moving incantation of trust in the power of that other great Eye, the



Sun Eye, that bearer of light and enchantment, she who ever desires to bring new life from Manu, the western mountain, at dawn:

This is that Eye of Horus

Through which you become great,

Through which you live and have power . . .

This is that Eye of Horus which you eat, And through which you enchant your body.

What is it to you that the Wedjat-eye enters Manu And that the god Is content with his possessions?

She returns, she returns, The Eye of Horus in peace.

'She returns, she returns'. The Eye returns, the light returns, so the chant proclaims, brought by the shining power who can be none other than the golden goddess of dawn, Hathor, the great Sun Eye, that other Eye of Horus, the glittering turquoise goddess of the eastern horizon, who will never allow the darkness to prevail (pl 69). She is returning.²³

When the candles were lit the chant celebrated the Moon Eye of Horus, the great protector of those in the Osirian realm, the 'one who proclaims night after day', and with whom the West is entered.

But now, as the candles are extinguished and return beckons in the East, the chant invokes the power of that other great Eye, the Sun Eye, the Eye of flame. For entry into the Osirian realm and the West is with the moon, but return is with the sun.²⁴

And this is why we see Hathor in the Book of the Dead as cow goddess, stepping forth from the western mountain (pl 70, overleaf). Before her stands the heavily pregnant form of the birth goddess, Taweret, holding aloft a blazing candle—a promise indeed that light and life are returning in this realm of the dead.



PHASE 6 SHINING CREATION: THE WORK OF GOLD

Then the ritual continues with a great hymn of praise, which gives voice to the cosmic powers of Heliopolis and glorifies the reigning Horus. His appearance on the throne as the servant of Egypt heralds the dawn of a new creation, emanating from Atum upon the Benben-hill of origins in Heliopolis. And included in this new creation is also the Osirian Ancestor King who is now embraced by Atum.

His union with the Heliopolitan creator reveals the ultimate return of all to their primal source, it proclaims that the so-called dead in truth exist forever within the eternal cyclic rebirth of the cosmos:

Hail to you, O Atum! Hail to you, O Khepri! You are exalted as Height,

You shine forth as the Benben-stone In the Temple of Benben in Heliopolis, You spit forth Shu and Tefenet,

You place your arms around the King, The Lord of the Two Lands, the Ancestor King N, And cause that his Ka may endure for ever.

It flourishes—
the name of Atum flourishes—
The Lord of the Two Lands of Heliopolis

Even as flourish the divine offerings Given by the Horus King N

For his father Amun, Lord of Opet, Together with his Ennead, Flourishing for ever,

Even as flourishes the name of Shu . . . Even as flourishes the name of Tefenet . . .

Even as flourishes the name of Geb . . . Even as flourishes the name of Nut . . . ²⁵

So the chant continues, praising all the deities linked with Heliopolis, whose names flourish because of the royal priest of Egypt who provides them with their cult offerings. And this Heliopolitan king is shown seated before the *Inmutef* priest in the sixth scene at Abydos (pl 54). By virtue of this naming and service, through the deeds of his heart and creative word, the Horus King, like the demiurge praised in the *Memphite Theology*, gives existence to the whole company of Heliopolis. And at this most profound

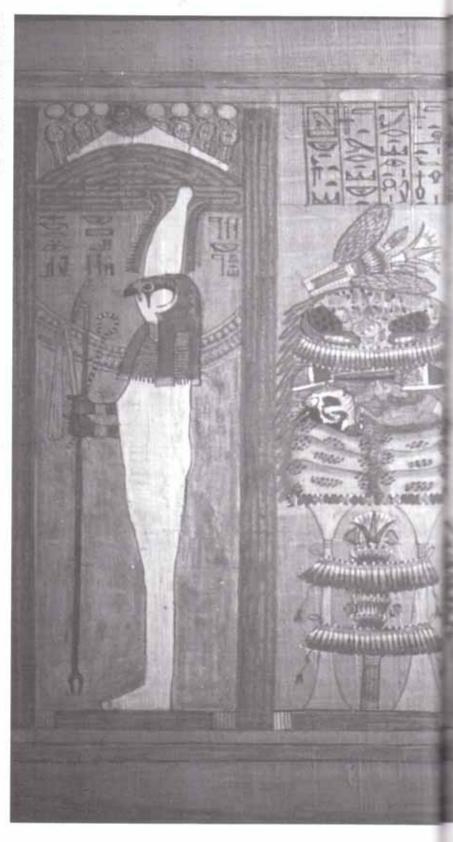
moment in the ritual, on the very threshold of creation, what could be more felicitous than that the power of the name and voice resounding at the beginning of the world should be celebrated? Through the union of the reigning king with his ancestors the cosmos has been restored to primordial unity; and through this great paean of praise the cycle is called forth anew.

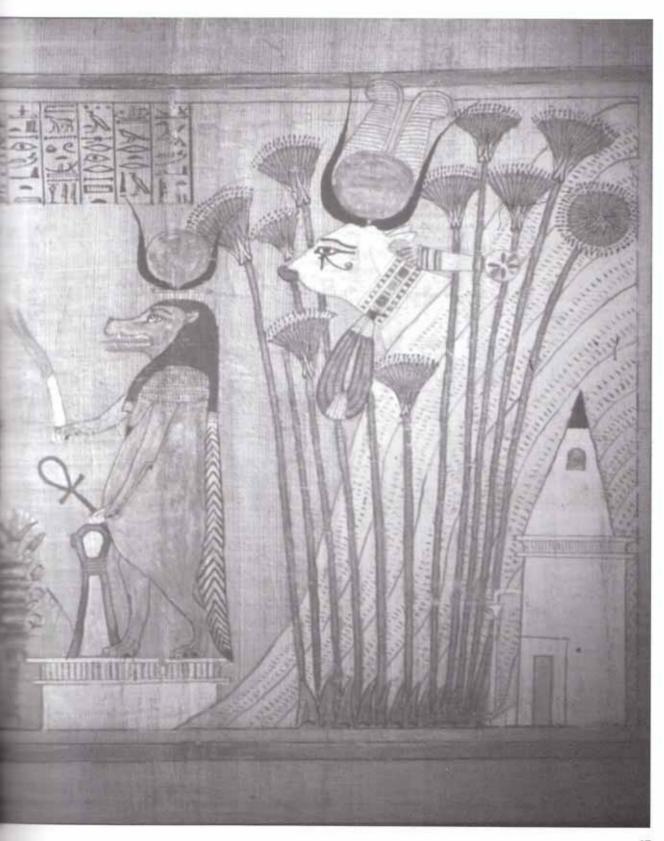


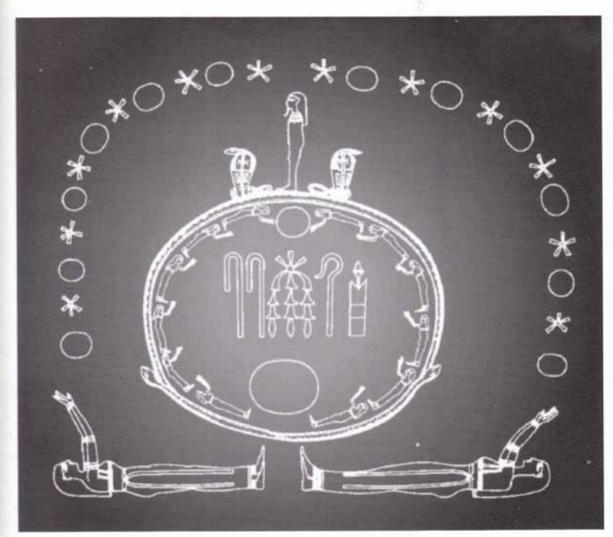
PHASE 7 UNITING REALMS: THE HORIZON EMBRACE

Creation renewed, the priests now begin to retrace their steps in the temple, moving along the aisle of the inner Osiris hall, past the three inner shrines for Isis, Osiris and Horus, through the Ka-doorway of the outer Osiris chapel, back into the hypostyle hall. Day is indeed dawning in the world beyond the temple as they now pause before

70 The head of Hathor, surrounded by papyrus plants, emerges like the newborn from the mountain of the West. In front of her is Taweret, the hippopotamus birth goddess who assists women in childbirth. She holds a burning flame before a laden food-offering table. Within the shrine on the left stands Sokar, the chthonic hawk-headed god of the necropolis protected above by cobras. Together Hathor and Taweret enflame, protect and nourish the return of solar life from the secret earth realm of Sokar-Osiris (From chapter 186 of the Book of the Dead, papyrus of Ani, British Museum, London)







Above 71 Enclosed within a sun-disk, the cosmic name of Ramesses III is surrounded by the twelve goddesses of the hours (Line drawing of a relief in the tomb of Ramesses III at Thebes)

Facing page 72 The Ramessid cult of the royal ancestors. The 18th Dynasty Pharaoh, Amenhotep I, sits with his mother Queen Ahmose-Nefertari in a kiosk. On the left (not shown here) the tomb owner, Neferrenpet, burns incense and pours out a libation for them (Relief in the tomb of Neferrenpet at Thebes)

the shrine of Amun-Re at the centre of the row of seven shrines. And as befits the close of a ritual for the ancestral rulers at the dawn of day, a great hymn of praise for the 'Two Regions' now soars forth, sung by the temple singers who praise Amun-Re at his glorious rising in the East. He is the radiant god whose golden rays encompass both the Ancestor King and the living Horus ruler.

As day dawns so the Living and the Dead are held together for a wondrous moment, united and transfigured together in eternity whilst the whole earth is bathed anew in beauty and light—a union which is celebrated in the seventh scene of embrace in the Osiris shrine (pl 55):

The doors are opened at the great place, The shrine is thrown open in the castle. Thebes is in festival, Heliopolis in joy... Jubilation is in heaven and on earth... Song is made to this noble god Amun-Re,
Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands . . .
Sky and earth are full of his beauty,
He floods them with the gold of his rays,
With life and prosperity
to the nose of the good god,
Lord of the Two Lands, the Ancestor King N
May you love him more
than any other king . . .
May your beautiful face
be content for your son, the Horus King N.

May you love him more than any other king . . . O Ancestor King N May Amun favour you for all your deeds.

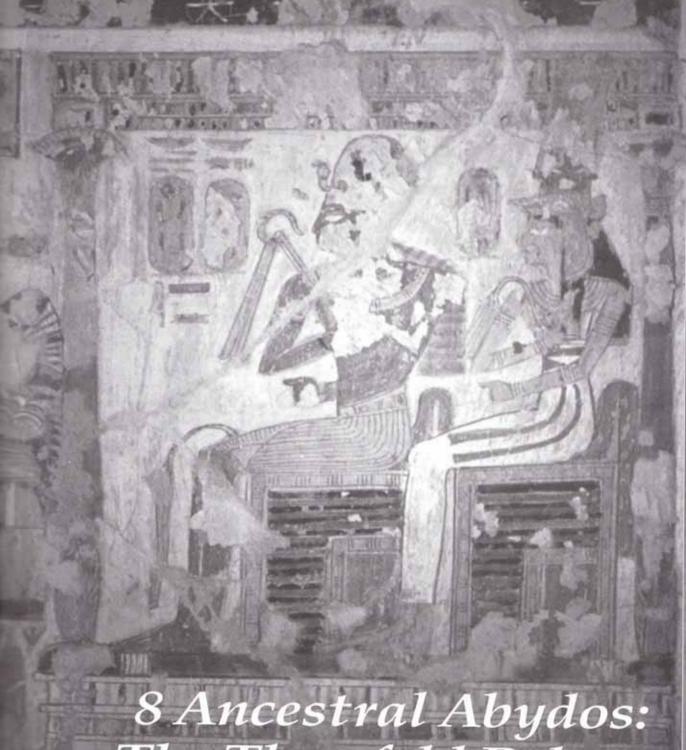
May Amun favour you for all your deeas.

May he favour you, love you, perpetuate you,

And overthrow your enemies

Whether dead or alive.'

THE RITUAL IS AT AN END. 26



8 Ancestral Abydos: The Threefold Palace

Seti I is portrayed as the restored predecessor and as an incarnation of the Theban god, Amun-Re, purified by Horus the son of Osiris	Shown as Horus, the living ruler, Seti receives symbols of legitimate succession—the sceptres of Osiris—from Wepwawet the 'opener of the ways'	Thoth presents fiery uraeus snakes to a mummiform Osirian Seti who nevertheless manifests as the new ruler, Horus	Solarized Isis plays sistrum with sun child image in naos while Inmutef, the heir, censes Seti as triumphant Osirian king grasping the Sethian sceptre
1 RENEWAL Renewal of Amun-Re- together with the deceased king	2 JUSTIFICATION Horus grasps the power of Seth and is embraced by Osiris	3 REGENERATION Exchange of hearts and manifestation of Ba-power	4 GLORIFICATION Glorification of the lifetime of Isis's child; transfiguration in the solar circuit
BODILY REASSEMBLY Purification with water —'Take your head, unite with your bones, fasten your eyes in their place'. SUMMONING TO THE MEAL Spell for bringing the god to his meal— 'Come, O Amun-Re Come to your body'	DANGEROUS ENTRY INTO THE LIFE-REALM. Unbolting of the naos shrine which symbolizes Horus grasping the phallus of Seth. Hymn celebrating Horus embraced by Osiris and receiving the Moon Eye from Thoth 'that you may have power through if'	THE HEART OF THE SACRIFICIAL BEAST is brought along with hymns invoking Horus as a sexually vital ruler; the power of the Red Crown when the ancestor king appears as a risen Lower Egyptian ruler; and praising Horus as he feeds the deities in Heliopolis	VISTA OF A LIFETIME. Libations for Re are accompanied by an incant- ation praising the birth, life and old age of Horus-Re, child of Isis and Osiris INCENSE IS BURNT around the shrine accompanied by a hymn—'Awake in peace'—praising all the occupants of the solar boat
Shabaka renews the worm-eaten text as a monument to Ptah. Praise of Ptah as ruler of Egypt	Geb's final judgement affirms Horus-Wepwawet rather than Seth as Osiris's legitimate successor on the throne of the Two Lands	Uraeus snakes appear on Horus' brow. Rescued Osiris as fertile earth power. Praise of Ptah as creator of the Heliopolitan Ennead	Praise of the Mistress of Life who unites with divine hearts and is a source of fertility
IMAGE REALM: REINTEGRATION	LIFE REALM: REGENERATION		
HYPOSTYLE HALL	INNER OSIRIS HALL AND SHRINES		
	the restored predecessor and as an incarnation of the Theban god, Amun-Re, purified by Horus the son of Osiris 1 RENEWAL Renewal of Amun-Re together with the deceased king BODILY REASSEMBLY Purification with water—'Take your head, unite with your bones, fasten your eyes in their place'. SUMMONING TO THE MEAL Spell for bringing the god to his meal—'Come, O Amun-Re Come to your body' Shabaka renews the worm-eaten text as a monument to Ptah. Praise of Ptah as ruler of Egypt IMAGE REALM: REINTEGRATION	the restored predecessor and as an incarnation of the Theban god, Amun-Re, purified by Horus the son of Osiris 1 RENEWAL Renewal of Amun-Re together with the deceased king BODILY REASSEMBLY Purification with water—Take your head, unite with your bones, fasten your eyes in their place'. SUMMONING TO THE MEAL Spell for bringing the god to his meal—'Come, O Amun-Re Come to your body' Shabaka renews the worm-eaten text as a monument to Ptah. Praise of Ptah as ruler of Egypt IMAGE REALM: REINTEGRATION living ruler, Seti receives symbols of legitimate succession—the sceptres of Osiris—from Wepwawet the 'opener of the ways' 2 JUSTIFICATION Horus grasps the power of Seth and is embraced by Osiris DANGEROUS ENTRY INTO THE LIFE-REALM. Unbolting of the naos shrine which symbolizes Horus grasping the phallus of Seth. Hymn celebrating Horus embraced by Osiris and receiving the Moon Eye from Thoth 'that you may have power through if' Geb's final judgement affirms Horus-Wepwawet rather than Seth as Osiris's legitimate successor on the throne of the Two Lands LIFE	the restored predecessor and as an incarnation of the Theban god, Amun-Re, purified by Horus the son of Osiris —from Wepwawet the 'opener of the ways' 1 RENEWAL 2 JUSTIFICATION Renewal of Amun-Re together with the deceased king BODILY REASSEMBLY Purification with water —'Take your head, unite with your bones, fasten your eyes in their place'. SUMMONING TO THE MEAL Spell for bringing the god to his meal—(Come, O Amun-Re togethe to your body') Shabaka renews the worm-eaten text as a monument to Pah. Praise of Ptah as ruler of Egypt Iliving ruler, Seti receives symbols of legitimate succession—the sceptres of Osiris—from Wepwawet the 'opener of the ways' 3 REGENERATION Exchange of hearts and manifestation of Ba-power THE HEART OF THE SACRIFICIAL BEAST is brought along with hymns invoking Horus as a sexually vital ruler; the power of the Red Crown when the ancestor king appears as a risen Lower Egyptian ruler; and praising Horus sa he feeds the deities in Heliopolis Geb's final judgement affirms Horus-Wepwawet than Seth as Osiris's as fertile earth power. Praise of Ptah as ruler of Egypt IMAGE REALM: REINTEGRATION RENEWAL 2 JUSTIFICATION HORUS grasps the power of Seth and is embraced by Osiris 3 REGENERATION Exchange of hearts and manifestation of Ba-power THE HEART OF THE SACRIFICIAL BEAST is brought along with hymns invoking Horus as a sexually vital ruler; the power of the Red Crown when the ancestor king appears as a risen Lower Egyptian ruler; and praising Horus snakes appear on Horus' brow. Rescued Osiris as fertile earth power. Praise of Ptah as creator of the Heliopolitan Ennead LIFE REALM: REGENERA

THIS THEN IS HOW the 19th Dynasty Ancestor Ritual may have been enacted in an Egyptian temple. In its essence it is a threefold passage of rebirth, encompassed in seven stages. First comes reintegration—the cult renewal of the physical body and related aspects. The middle phase is devoted to the regeneration of life in the heart realm. And it closes with the

service of Osiris which leads to cosmic Heliopolitan rebirth.

These three ritual spheres are also encapsulated in three separate speeches which Osiris makes to Seti I. Significantly the three speeches are located together on the entrance thicknesses of that key inner Osiris shrine containing the seven scenes of transformation, with each speech being repeated on both thicknesses.² Three times Osiris declares that he has come to Seti's temple, and in each speech he praises a different aspect of his appearance there.

Firstly he says he has come to the temple 'with a loving heart', affirming that his heart is 'green', because of everything that Seti has done there, like 'a son who respects his father'.

	A CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF TH	0 1
Seti, portrayed as the ancestral 'earth' ruler purified by the inundation, is called to his meal by Thoth	Inmutef, the heir, invokes Seti as cosmic reigning king purified by Re before the great and small Enneads of Heliopolis	The unity expressed by the embrace between Osiris and the reigning king—a union associated with the horizons of dawn and dusk—i acclaimed by Isis and Horus
5 BECOMING EARTH Calling forth ancestral spirits to receive food offerings	6 NAMING THE SOURCE Emanation of Heliopolitan creation with Horus king as foundation	7 UNION Hymn of praise to the sun in the horizon
REVERSION OF OFFERINGS on the altars of kings is announced in a hymn which states 'your enemy [Seth] is fallen' LIBATION SPELL invoking the White Crown PRIESTS LIGHT CANDLES to call forth ancestors—'The flame has come, the eye of Horus has come'	RENEWING THE DIVINE OFFERINGS Invocation for Heliopolitan creation— coming into being through the power of naming and creative utterance. 'Hail to you, O Atum! Hail to you, O Khepri! you spit forth Shu and Tefenet It flourishes, the name of Atum flourishes'	SONG OF THE TWO REGION praises the radiance of the sun god rising in the horizon and his gift of life to the Ancestor King. Amun-Re both lovingly gazes on the reigning Horus and blesses the Ancestor King. 'Sky and earth are full of his beauty, he flood them with the gold of his rays with life and prosperity'
Second rescue of Osiris who becomes fertile earth power in the solar circuit at Memphis	Appearance of Horus, the son of Osiris on the throne of Upper and Lower Egypt	Horus the ruler appears in the embrace of his father, Osiris, and the gods before him and after him

PRIMORDIAL SPHERE: REBIRTH

FOUR-PILLARED CHAMBER

This is the green Osiris speaking, a god who proclaims the greening power of heart because of his son's deeds.

In the second speech Osiris declares his contentment with the temple's physical appearance: How splendid for me are its floors'. And he says he will ensure that Seti appears as and-like' in Abydos. In other words here confirms his pleasure with his

physical temple as a cult space; and his intention to glorify Seti as a divine being in the terrestrial setting of Abydos. Just as Amun-Re and the Ancestor King become 'god-like' at the beginning of the Ancestor Ritual, so Osiris will ensure that Seti too appears in a similar way in his temple. His third declaration affirms his

'earth' aspect, and his dependence on

Table 1 Concordance of the Ancestor Ritual, the inner Osiris Shrine and the Memphite Theology

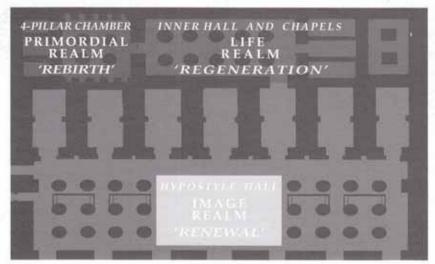
the living king at the head of the Ennead for his food offerings in the West. 'I know that you are beneficial. May I receive and may you act for me afterwards. As you are at the head of the Ennead, so I am on earth'.

CROSSING THRESHOLDS: THREE REALMS

So clear is Osiris about these three dimensions he experiences in the temple that it would be surprising if this threefold, heart-centred wisdom of the world were not enshrined in the temple's architectural form, decoration and cult. In other words the Abydos temple had to accommodate a threefold pattern of ritual-working, traversing an 'Image' or 'terrestrial' cult realm, a mediating 'Life' or Kasphere linked with the greening power of the heart, and finally a primordial third realm belonging to Osiris as an earth deity in the West-three realms corresponding with the threefold way of rebirth in the Ancestor Ritual.

It is, of course, difficult to be sure exactly how the stages of the ritual would have been located within the Abydos temple or precisely how the ritual might have been performed. But if we look closely at Seti's temple, particularly in its original conception, it becomes clear that it has been organized around a threefold planexcluding the rooms in the south wing for storing cult objects and preparing food offerings, as well as the various additions made by Ramesses II. According to the publication of the temple, the most important parts in Seti's reign were the four-pillared Osiris chamber, the inner Osiris hall and Amun-Re's shrine, all of which were finished during Seti's reign.3

And it is striking how ideally suited the temple lay-out seems to be for a



Above 73 Plan of the innermost part of Seti I's temple at Abydos showing the three realms associated with phases of the Ancestor Ritual

Facing page 74 Standing on the head of a god who holds the praisers of West and East, a goddess called 'She who vanquishes' raises the sun aloft from the darkness (Scene from the Book of the Earth in the sarcophagus chamber of Ramesses VI's tomb at Thebes)

ritual like the Ancestor Ritual, with its three essential parts of an outer hypostyle hall housing the seven shrines for the cult images, the three inner shrines for Isis, Osiris and Horus, and finally the innermost primordial area of the four pillared chamber.

In the hypostyle hall it is Amun-Re's shrine which is placed firmly in the central position. Here is the sacred space devoted to rites for the 'cult image', for the re-membering of the body and all its faculties, for the renewal of Amun-Re as the supreme cult ruler of Egypt.

At the back of each shrine, apart from the Osiris shrine, there is a 'false door'—the place in funerary architecture where a deceased person's Ka could receive food offerings. In six of the shrines this door seals off the room from the inner hall beyond, but in the Osiris shrine this area is completely open giving access to the other side. Here lies the inner Osiris hall in the rearmost part of the temple, with its three shrines immediately on the right dedicated to Isis, Osiris and Horus—the central shrine containing the seven scenes associated with the Ancestor Ritual. By crossing the threshold normally reserved for the false door, the Egyptian ritualists entered the 'Life' or Ka-zone of the temple; and these three shrines need to be understood within this 'Life' space.

Finally, crossing along the axis of the ten-pillared hall, passing near scenes which include Seti offering to the Inundation god and to the ancestors, the innermost four pillared chamber is reached. Not all the details of the decoration can be gone into here, but in this primordial part of the temple figures of Osiris adorn the four supports of the ceiling originally strewn with stars. There are also stone benches where offerings could be lowered when candles were lit to call forth the ancestral dead. It is, in short, a room highly appropriate for the final part of the Ancestor Ritual.

RESTORING BONDS: REMEMBERING NAMES

A threefold view of the world runs right through post-Amarna religion, expressed not only in temple and tomb architecture but also in hymns to different deities.⁴

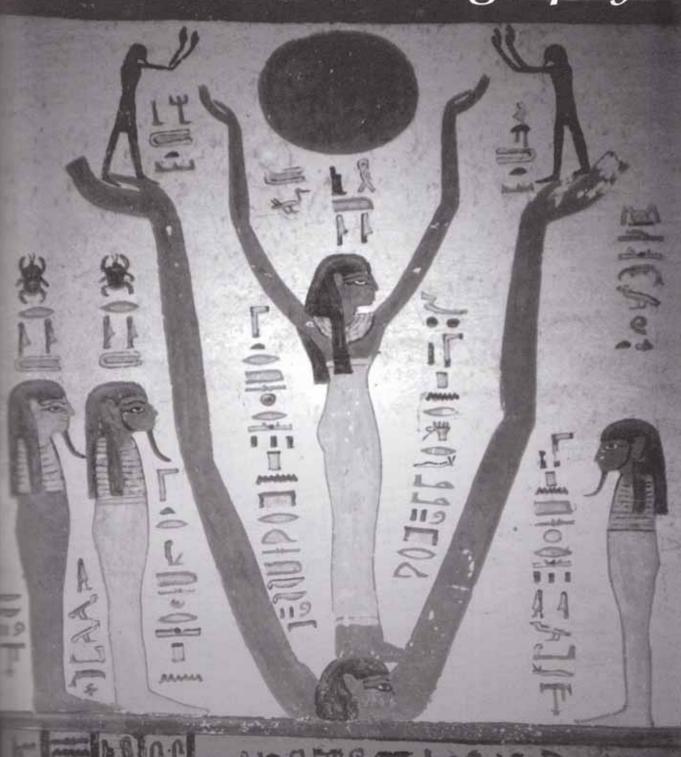
This was not new. Even before Akhenaten the three realms were an important structural principle in temple design. As discussed in *Hathor Rising*. Queen Hatshepsut's terraced temple at Deir el-Bahri is also based on a three-fold division of 'Image' realm, 'Life' sphere and 'Primordial' realm, highly reminiscent of Seti's temple at Abydos.⁵

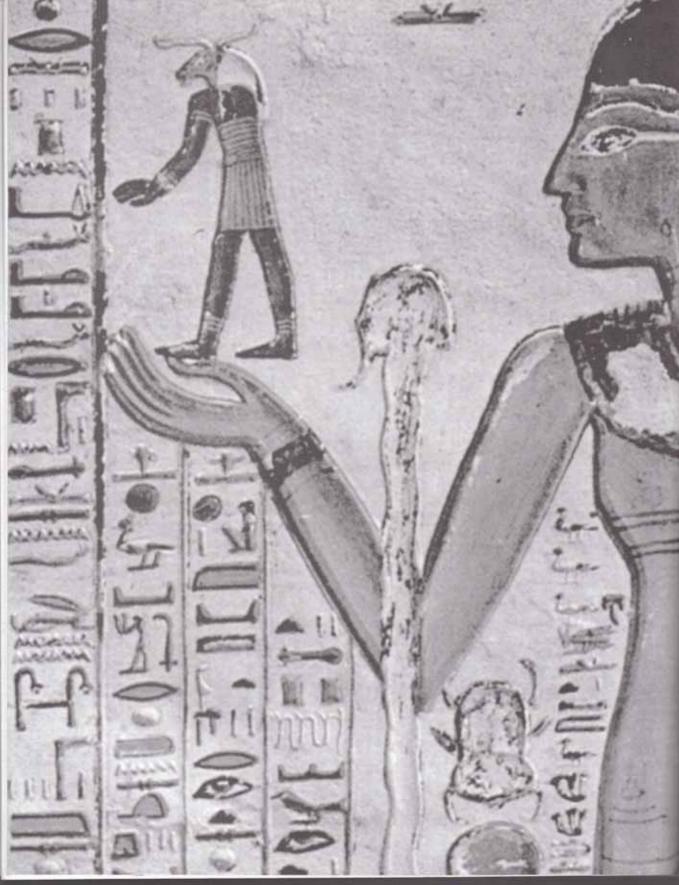
Yet there are also important differences. As we shall see in Part 3, Seti's temple harmonizes with the nocturnal cycle of the sun whereas Hatshepsut's temple—like the beautiful threefold temple of Queen Nefertari at Abu Simbel—has more affinity with the sun's daytime cycle from dawn to dusk than with the night passage.

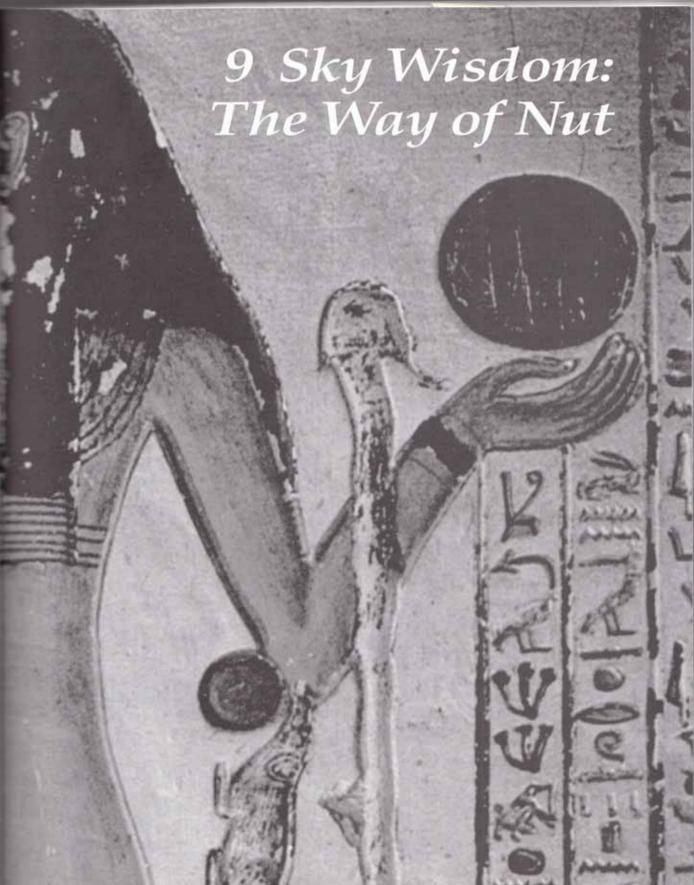
At Seti's temple in Abydos both the architecture and the decoration seem to spring from the king's profound wish to rebuild a living connection with the ancestors, a connection, moreover, which is deeply rooted in the heart and power of the female life-bearers.

Such a wish is perfectly understandable, given that this connection had been brutally severed in Akhenaten's reign. Responding to Akhenaten's trinitarian view of the daytime celestial solar Creator, Seti here sets out a threefold view of the world appropriate for Osiris and the night. articulating it with such clarity and precision that there could be little room for misunderstanding its true nature. In this wonderfully executed temple, planned to the smallest detail, Seti restored the crucial connection with the past. And by means of a great pathway leading through successive halls and chambers, the Egyptians once again were brought to the place where light shines in the darkness, to that awesome threshold of meeting with the royal torch-bearers who had all upheld the traditions of Egypt.

Part 3 Celestial Body: Sacred Cosmography







To some readers the Ancestor Ritual may seem a predominantly masculine concern, even though Isis-Hathor appears at the heart of the ritual. Certainly the two surviving versions of the Ancestor Ritual were both composed for a male ancestral ruler—Amenhotep I—but they do not necessarily give a balanced view of ritual life in the 19th Dynasty. For we are always dependent on the often unrepresentative finds of excavators for our knowledge about ancient Egypt.

Clearly though his mother, Ahmose-Nefertari, was also highly honoured as a powerful ancestral queen during the Ramessid period. In one of the versions of the Ancestor Ritual she is named together with her son as a recipient of offerings. And we need but look at a 20th Dynasty private tomb scene at Deir el-Medina showing Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari, her face painted black, seated at the head of two rows of male and female past rulers, to appreciate how strongly the Egyptians sensed the connection with their female predecessors.

But it could be argued that it is still the mythical pattern of Horus succeeding Osiris upon the throne of the earth god, Geb, which predominates here. That it is Osiris's resurrected powers and the triumph of Horus over Seth which are uppermost in the ritual.

But this is only half the story—the 'earth' half—for Geb's partner in the Heliopolitan Ennead is the sky goddess Nut, his heavenly counterpart and the mother of Osiris. Heaven too has her 'way of the heart' corresponding directly with this earth ritual of transformation, though, as we shall see, her way does not always appeal to her male partner.

To discover this celestial 'way of heaven', however, we must look at texts and representations on ceilings in Ramessid royal tombs at Thebes, and also in that puzzling subterranean edifice known as the Osireion, close OSIREION MAIN TEMPLE

Above 76 Plan showing the spatial alignment of the Osireion with the main temple at Abydos. The second transverse chamber, with representations of Nut on the ceiling, is located directly behind the inner Osiris hall of the temple

Previous page 75 The sky goddess Nut holding the ram-headed sun god in one hand and a solar disk in the other (Scene from the Book of Caverns in the tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes) to Seti's temple at Abydos. The discussion of Seti's temple in earlier chapters made no mention of this other building located behind it.

Yet undoubtedly this subterranean edifice, built like an Osirian gravesanctuary deep within the chasm of earth, had profound meaning for the Osirian temple complex as a whole; and holds crucial clues about the cosmic meaning of the Abydos temple, as well as the Ancestor Ritual.³

Today the Osireion lies in a forlorn waterlogged condition, its roof having long since caved in, and its columns and walls continually eroded by rising ground water (pl 79). Nevertheless, the excavators' reports make it clear that originally it appeared from the outside like a large mound surrounded by a grove of trees—yet one more mound to add to that long list of sacred mounds known throughout the ancient world.⁴

The entrance into its interior is through a doorway constructed close to the northwestern corner, the gateway to the Underworld. As in the royal tombs at Thebes, leading downwards into the interior is a long sloping passage, which was decorated with scenes from the Underworld Books during the reign of Seti's grandson. Merneptah. Eventually a second passage is reached, branching off to the left. This gives access to a large transverse chamber covered with texts from the Book of the Dead and overshadowed by a figure of the sky goddess, Nut, carved on the roof.5

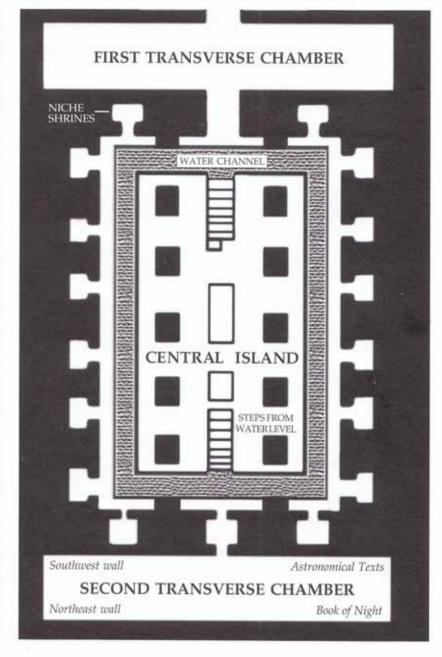
Through this chamber an enormous hall is reached, the deepest, most mysterious chamber anywhere to be found in Abydos. A stone 'island' once rose up in its midst, surrounded on all sides by water which flowed into specially prepared channels. Upon the island were ten rose granite pillars supporting the now collapsed roof; and at each end there was a staircase descending into the water. Two

cavities, one oblong and one square, were cut into the island's floor between the pillars, recalling the way in which, in some royal tombs at Thebes (including Seti's tomb), the sarcophagus was placed in a sunken area cut into the floor of a columned hall deep within the tomb.

But who or what originally lay shrouded on the island in this strange, mysterious cavern is unknown. A royal burial as such it cannot have been, since this took place in the royal tomb at Thebes. Yet there is no mistaking the Osirian nature of the architecture. Nor the fact that whoever, or whatever, lay in the centre of this island would have rested on the fluctuating subsoil waters, and would have been drawn into the annual rhythm of the Nile inundation waters lapping around the island, waters that began to rise dramatically at midsummer and then gradually ebbed away as the season of Peret 'Coming Forth' approached in the regular rhythm of the year.6

This subterranean floating island buried within a mound provides the deep earth counterpart to the Osirian temple above, the holy underground cavern entered from the Northwest, which enshrines the mysterious renewal of life, of reincarnation—a mound, moreover, which, when seen from outside, was a place around which vegetation grew, springing from the risen earth like grain growing from the mummiform body of Osiris (pl 28).

But our goal lies within the room beyond the island. This transverse chamber, separated from the island by a channel, seems to have been totally maccessible, and most of the decoration on its walls has long since been moded by the rising water. It is, however, the part of the Osireion mated closest to the temple above, its wall being perfectly aligned with the inner Osiris hall of the overground



temple (pls 76, 79). And here, thankfully preserved on the sandstone ceiling, are two figures carved during Seti's reign, which show the Heliopolitan sky goddess Nut arching her body across the ceiling to form the great vault of the sky.

In the scene on the ceiling's southwest side she is raised aloft by her father Shu, an act that brings light 77 Detailed plan showing the transverse chambers and central island of the Osireion at Abydos

again into the world at dawn (pl 143). The globe of the sun rolls on her feet as she gives birth to this light from between her thighs; another globe is by her mouth as she prepares to swallow the western sun at the close of day. Near her mouth there is also a great

winged solar disk, a cosmic image associated with both the celestial sun god and the triumphant Horus of Behdet in his combined solar and hawk aspects, whose important cult centres lay in the Delta and at Edfu in the South. Usually the outspread wings of this visionary cosmic bird encompass the sky as he hovers overhead, watchfully gazing down to earth, guarding all that exists. But in this scene of Nut his wings hang down in a position of rest.

He is in repose, close to the yawning black hole into which the sun and stars are sucked at evening, swallowed by the great sky mother who ejects them from her vulva at dawn. For her alternately death-bringing, life-giving motions are the way of the celestial order, the regular course and movement of the vast starry circuit. And to elaborate on this starry pattern, decanal star lists have also been included on either side of Shu, setting out the times of various celestial movements.

Alongside this image of Nut raised by Shu is another arched figure of the goddess covering the northeast ceiling. Here, however, she holds King Seti within her arms in a cosmic embrace. And beneath her star-spangled body is not Shu raising her aloft, but rather a sequence of scenes showing the sun god's passage through the gates of the night-a journey known today as the Book of Night (pl 83). It is this journey which is carefully aligned with the inner Osiris hall of the overground temple, albeit concealed deep within the Osireion.

Here in the innermost part of the Osireion both day and night have been symmetrically juxtaposed in these two images of Nut on the ceiling. And the accurate alignment of these scenes with the inner Osiris hall is hardly a spatial coincidence. Rather it is a hint that these reliefs of Nut are

78 Detail from the relief of Nut on the southwest half of the ceiling in the second transverse chamber of the Osireion at Abydos. The goddess is about to swallow the setting sun shown at her mouth, initiating his journey of death and rebirth through her body

deeply linked with the inner mysteries of Seti's overground temple.

It is imperative, therefore, to explore these texts and images in greater depth, starting with the sun's entry into the arms of the mother goddess at dusk. The next eight chapters explore the meaning of this hidden night journey made by the sun, a journey which will take us through the terrifying gateways of the goddess as shown on the ceiling's northeast side. Then in chapter 18 we arrive back at the dawn scene of Shu and Nut on the southwest side.

UNWEARYING STARS: THE SUNSET WAY

In both images of Nut, dusk and the approach of night are associated with the head and arms of the goddess as she bends towards the west, stretching to take the sun and stars into her cosmic embrace. Beyond the feet of the goddess when she is raised by Shu, Seti also placed key inscriptions, part of the Book of Nut, about the meaning of dying and living, of rising and setting in this heavenly circuit ruled by the mother goddess. One of these texts, known as the Dramatic Text, is factual and succinct about the meaning of this incessant starry rhythm:

It happens that one star dies and another lives every decade of days.⁷

For only by one star relinquishing its place in the heavens can another star be born again at dawn. Dying and living, ascending and descending, this is the pattern of existence weaving through the New Kingdom view of the celestial order. It is an order,





79 View of the Osireion showing the massive columns which surround the central island. On the right, the entrance to the second transverse chamber is just visible and in the background can be seen the back wall of the main temple

moreover, which complements that other view of the stars so beloved of the Old Kingdom Egyptians—a view centred on the Imperishable Stars of the northern sky, eternally swinging around the Pole Star, stars which never rise or set—and to which the Osirian king ascends as described in Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts.

In short, these 'dying and living' stars are the decanal stars, rising and setting with the sun in the awesome sky realm ruled by Nut which borders on total darkness, its outermost limits profound and obscure, remote from sunlight.

Seen so clearly, in the brilliant Egyptian night sky, the sweeping movement of these stars, flowing round a great heavenly circuit in the train of the sun from East to West, provided a way of measuring out the civil year with its twelve months of 360 days divided into three seasons (plus five epagomenal days). And these stars also marked out the hours of darkness from sunset to sunrise.

Ranged in a belt slightly south of the ecliptic, just beneath the Zodiacal constellations, each of the decans—which comprised 36 separate star groups—rose with the sun in successive ten day cycles, beginning with the midsummer appearance of Sirius (or Sothis), the star of Isis, which inaugurated the Egyptian New Year. Each decan was guarded by its own individual genie; and as each star group rose in the East, so another decanal star set in the West, its work of telling the hours at an end.

Why a decanal star needed to sink down and die is also explained in the Dramatic Text, as well as in the demotic





commentary on the text preserved in the later Carlsberg Papyri. After it sets, it first enters a period of rest, coasting in the West, during which it is also still visible though its work of telling the hours is at an end. Then it is seen no more as it disappears into the mysterious realm of the Dwat which the sun also enters at night.

Dwat has been translated as 'Underworld' or 'Netherworld' in this book but it is important to remember that the Egyptians understood the Dwat's location in various different ways. Sometimes they perceived it as part of the cosmic circuit in the night sky; sometimes as the interior of Nut's body. But equally it could be the chthonic earth realm of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris which Re entered during his night journey.

However this realm is interpreted, the texts make clear that, at any one time, seven decanal stars are in the Dwat, each one spending a period of 70 days there (a period corresponding with the behavioural pattern of Sirius, the star of Isis, and with the length of the mummification process). During this time all the impurities of the worn star body drop to the ground, 'its evil falls to earth', so it is said in the text. And during this process of death and rebirth, each star is totally bereft of either name or identity:

There is no speaking the name of the one loosening for 70 days.

But miraculously each star is also preserved in this place of purgatory. For after the period of purification is at an end, each one dissolves into a liquid state caused by redemptive tears falling. These tears create a great lake of renewal for the new star life, which swims around in the life-giving waters in the form of a fish.

Such tears bring release from suffering, creating wetness and new life for each decanal star. And it is also clear that each star must undergo this deep, dark journey of purgation within the Dwat in order to strip away everything old and worn. Only in this way can a new star body be born again, coming forth pure and living, ready to rise in the East once more at dawn.

The life of a star begins in the lake. When it begins in the water, it begins as a fish. It flies upward from the Great Green as an image. So the stars live.⁸

Clearly, the behaviour of Sirius (Sothis), the star of Isis, is the protovpe for all the decanal stars. But the constellation of Orion too is crucially important in the decanal cycle. This is the star group of Osiris, portrayed in astronomical reliefs as a striding man forever looking behind him, perhaps to make sure his sister-wife. Sirius-Isis, is indeed following him. Closely linked with Sirius in the heavens, the Egyptians associated the rising of Orion in the southern sky, after its period of invisibility, with the coming of the inundation. And undoubtedly the fate of Osiris is interwoven with this decanal cycle of living and dving.

FLIGHT OF THE BIRDS: THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

This starry way of purification and redemption, of living and dying, is also harmonized with the annual return and disappearance of the migratory birds, as told in inscriptions located beyond the head of Nut in plate 78, that is in the northwestern outermost limits of the sky, beyond the bounded circuit of sun and stars.

These inscriptions tell about the migratory birds which fly to Egypt each year, lured back by the green abundance of nature on which they feed. Twice a year vast numbers of these birds winged their way through Egypt, once at the beginning of the Egyptian springtime season of Peret and once towards its close, as they made their journeys between Europe and central and southern Africa. But

the Egyptians also gave a peculiar twist to these migrations in the inscriptions here in the Osireion, overlaying them with a religious significance which only they could do. For, after these migratory birds have alighted 'beneath the brightness of the sky', it is said that they take on the shape of Egyptian Ba-birds—those birds which leave and return to the body at will—becoming 'humanheaded' and 'bird-shaped', speaking with human tongues:

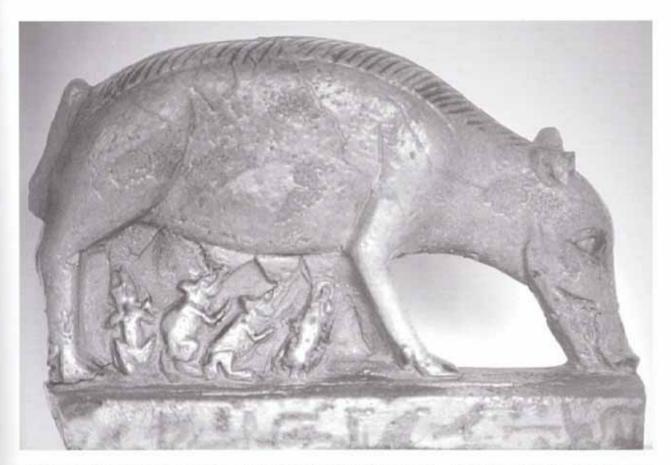
These birds have the faces of humans and the forms of birds; and the one thereof speaks to the other in human speech. Now after they come to eat herbage and to feed in Egypt, they alight under the brightness of the sky and assume their shapes as birds.⁹

Once transformed, they are ready to take their flight across the body of Nut, like the Ba-birds shown swooping through the night sky on the interior of coffin lids. In one example, in the British Museum, a human-headed Ba-bird is named significantly 'the great god who comes forth from the Dwat', and perches beside the shoulder of Osiris—a bird who has taken the same flight of death and rebirth as the stars in their night-time journey.¹⁰

BIRTHING THE SUN: THE SUN MOTHER

This starry way is also the way of renewal for the sun god, who passes through death and darkness in the *Dwat* to resurrection and new life. However, his night journey is only summarily dealt with in the texts near Nut's mouth in plate 78. It is said that when Re (identified here with Horus) enters the West in the first hour of the evening he is transfigured and purified in the arms of his father Osiris.

A radiance shines forth from him in this welcoming embrace which initiates his entry into the *Dwat* along with the stars. Then, in accordance with the alternating rhythm of creation, the



text describes his return to existence as 'the great god in Behdet', born in Upper Egypt as the white-crowned king of the South, who has travelled through the female body:

It is in her first hour of evening that the majesty of this god enters. He becomes transfigured, he becomes beautiful in the arms of his father Osiris. He is purified therein. The majesty of this god sets in life in the Dwat in her second hour in early night. The majesty of this god gives commands to the Westerners and cares for those in the Dwat. The majesty of this god goes forth on earth again, having come into existence in Upper Egypt. His strength is great again like at the first time of his creation. He comes into existence as the great god in Behdet. It s to the boundaries of the firmament of beaven, to her arms that the majesty of this god travels. He enters her . . . in the night, in the hour of middle night and be travels in the darkness whilst these stars are with him.11

Brought to birth as the white-crowned, victorious solar hawk, the protector of Osiris and those in the West, 'the great god of Behdet' soars forth as creator from the darkness of the *Dwat* to give light to the world. Or, as the text near Nut's thigh says of Re, 'He is strong . . . when he goes forth' at his appearance, which coincides with the great birth of sun, moon and decanal stars in the annual course of the year.

However, such an appearance is not restricted to the sun god, for as we shall see in the following chapters human death and rebirth is also based on this annual cycle of the sun and stars. So too, like all humans, the Egyptian king follows this recurrent cycle of death and rebirth through the mother goddess.

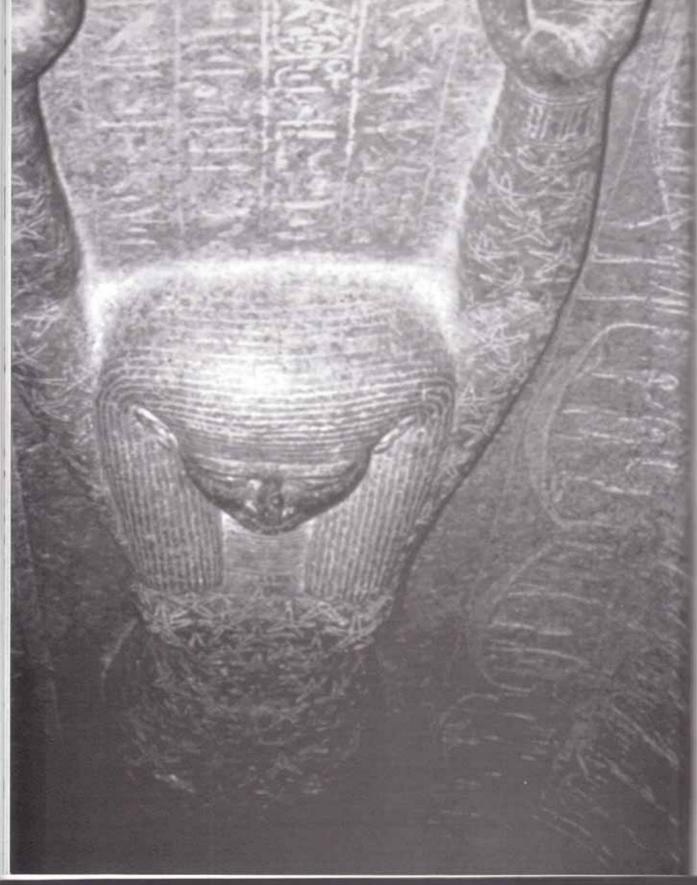
Understandably perhaps, this way of Nut holds little appeal for those on earth, particularly her partner, the

80 The sky goddess Nut depicted as a sow suckling her piglets (Faience statuette in the British Museum, London)

earth god, Geb. Horrified he watches her outrageous destruction of their children as she swallows them each night, and, in a quarrel with Nut recorded in the *Dramatic Text* he disparagingly calls her the 'Sow who eats her piglets'.¹²

But to no avail. The way of this great mother beast is upheld by their father, Shu, the air god of Heliopolis, and he warns Geb not to interfere, since Nut not only gives birth again to those she devours, but also protects each one of these stars throughout its ordeal. 'Not one among them falls', he says. All are safe and contained by the great Mother.

Although Nut's deeds may seem incomprehensible to those on earth,



Left 81 Outstretched figure of Nut sculpted in high relief on the interior of the sarcophagus lid originally made for Seti I's grandson, Merneptah but later usurped by King Psusennes I. Lying in his coffin, face to face with the rebirth goddess, the king, her son, is reborn through her (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Right 82 Figure of Nut on the interior of the 26th Dynasty sarcophagus lid belonging to the god's wife, Ankhnesneferibre. The journey of death and rebirth through Nut's body is indicated by the sun-disks located at her throat, her vulva and her lower limbs (British Museum, London)

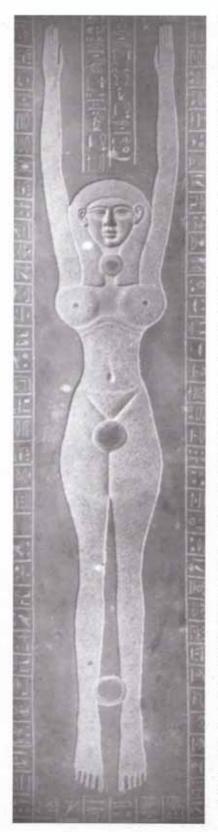
nevertheless there is reason and order in her ceaseless activity and constant protection for those in her care.

GODDESS POWER THE INNER JOURNEY

Yet more information about this night journey through the body of the mother goddess is set out in a unique text known as the Shadow Clock Text, which is inscribed beyond Nut's feet in the scene when she is raised by Shu.

It is supremely important, since it is the only known text which so unequivocally correlates the twelve hours of the night with twelve different interior parts of Nut's body—twelve stations of the divine female body through which the sun passes each night.

The first two hours are spent outside her body, beginning in the first hour at her hand. The second hour is at her lip, the third her tooth, the fourth her throat, and the fifth her breast. Unfortunately the hieroglyphs for the sixth and seven parts of the body are difficult to interpret, though Dimitri-Meeks has suggested that these may refer to the lungs and liver.14 Then comes the eighth hour at her gall bladder, the ninth hour at her intestines, tenth hour at her vulva and then, after the damaged name of the eleventh station, comes the twelfth hour at ber thigh. Like the chakras linked with different parts of the body in Eastern

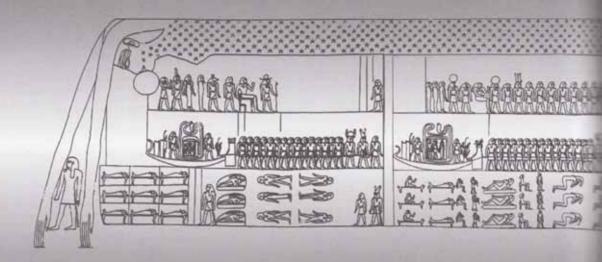


religions, so these stations are sometimes marked by individual sun-disks strung along Nut's body (pl 82).

Clearly, Seti I was concerned to locate these highly significant texts and images about death and rebirth through Nut close together on the same ceiling of the Osireion. But why should he have wanted to set out correspondences between the night hours and the body of the goddess, other than the obvious explanation that Nut's act of swallowing the sun each night inevitably meant a journey through her interior?

In fact, what lies behind these correspondences are complex Egyptian notions about the relationship between the body's internal organs and the processes of death and rebirth—notions which are perhaps difficult to comprehend for a modern mind schooled to understand the body simply as a physical entity. To the Egyptians, however, the body was sacred, and increasingly throughout the New Kingdom there was a tendency to emphasize a wisdom related to the body—whether in the form of a cult image or the human body itself.¹⁵

The Shadow Clock Text represents a less widely known strand of ancient Egyptian body wisdom, though to appreciate its content fully we need now to correlate these twelve regions of Nut's body with events in the twelve night hours as shown in the Book of Night on the other half of the ceiling in the Osireion. Manifestly, Seti saw such a connection between them, or why else would he have placed the Book of Night across on the other side of the ceiling from the Shadow Clock Text? And once these texts and images are seen together, what emerges is a powerful Egyptian teaching based on the inner female body, a map of body energy, so to speak, in which each interior part of Nut is at the same time a cosmic place of transformation culminating in glorious rebirth at dawn.



83 The earliest known appearance of the Book of Night is the incomplete version inscribed by Seti I on the ceiling of the second transverse chamber in the Osireion at Abydos.

This would have shown all twelve hours of the nocturnal journey. But Seti I did not live to finish the decoration of the transverse chamber and only the first seven hours were completed, although traces survive of preliminary work for the next hours.

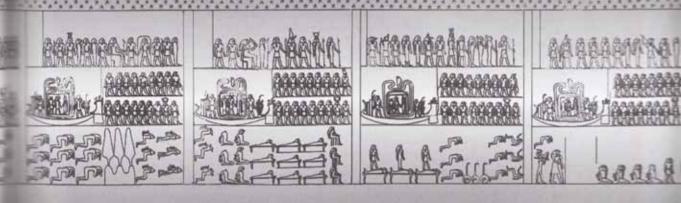
The journey begins at sunset in the west, in the arms of the sky goddess Nut and the second and third hours are at her lips and teeth. During the fourth hour, which is associated with the throat of the goddess, the travellers then pass inside her body.

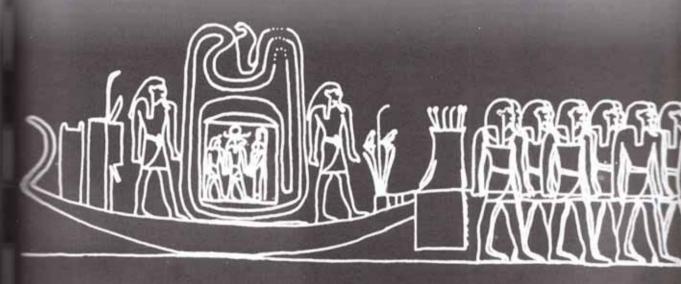
So the processions of figures, in the three registers beneath the sky goddess, are to be understood as entering her body. The middle register shows repeated images of the sun god, Re, sailing with Maat through the night hours in the sunboat, towed by the Unwearying Stars. Above this there is a 'celestial' register showing the divinities associated with each hour. The theme of the bottom register—which portrays the successive stages of post-mortem transformation—is human experience after death.

This remarkable night journey retained the devotion of Seti's descendants and appears on the ceilings of Ramessid royal tombs at Thebes and subsequently in 22nd Dynasty royal tombs at Tanis.

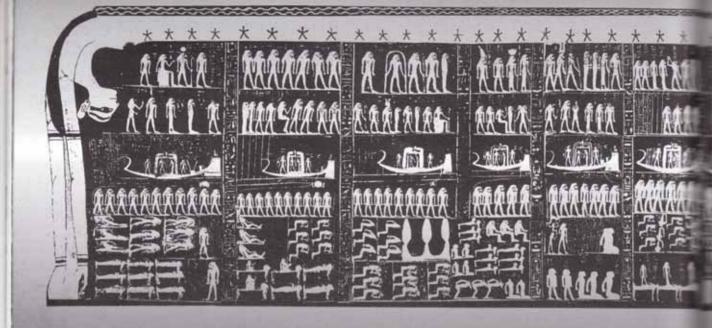
By the time of the 25th Dynasty the Book of Night (like the Underworld Books) began to be included in the decoration of private tombs at Thebes; and extracts from the journey continue to appear on much later sarchophagi dating from the Ptolemaic era.







10 Through Raging Gateways: The Book of Night



A RE YOU NOT AWARE, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven, or, to be more precise, it is the place where all the operations which rule and activate the celestial powers are transferred and projected here below. If the truth be told, our land is indeed the temple of the whole world. (From the Asclepius or Perfect Discourse of Hermes)

We have dwelt at length on the inscriptions surrounding Nut in the scene when Shu raises her aloft. But now, if we are to go more deeply into the meaning of this rebirth process through the great cosmic mother, we must turn to the outstretched figure of Nut embracing King Seti on the northeast half of the ceiling. For here, in the space enclosed by her body, is a sequence of scenes showing Seti standing together with Re and Maat in a boat cabin around which a huge serpent coils (pls 83,84). Rearing up behind Maat is another serpent, instantly evoking her snake character as she offers a 'life'-sign to the sun god.2 Manifestly Re lives from this goddess sailing with him, accompanied also by the gods Hu 'Word' (or 'Command')

and Sia 'Understanding' (or 'Intelligence') in the boat, which is towed by the decanal 'Unwearying Stars'.

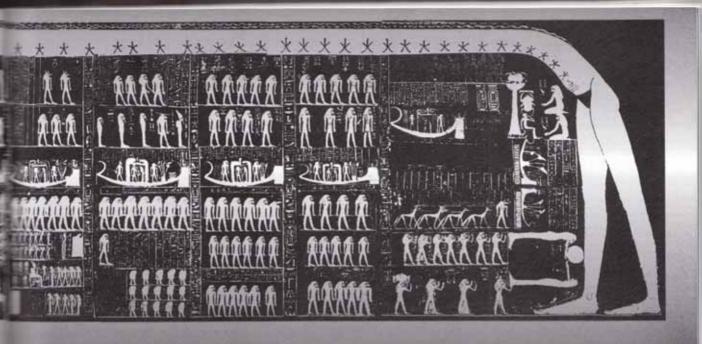
Such a grouping instantly recalls those vivid scenes in Kheruef's tomb at Thebes, portraying Queen Teye and Amenhotep III being towed in the evening sun-boat during the first Sed Festival, when ritual dances were also performed for Hathor, the starry night-time goddess who brings the king to dawn.³ Nor is the comparison irrelevant: the texts accompanying this nocturnal journey at Abydos clearly identify it as a journey through the female gateways of rebirth.

These scenes in the deepest chamber of the Osireion are the earliest known version of the Book of Night, an illustrated cosmographic text describing the path of rebirth as the crew of the solar boat pass through terrifying gateways during the twelve hours of the night. These terrifying gateways through which they pass are female, the hours of the night are also female, and the terrain through which they travel is the divine female body.

Seti-undoubtedly in response to Akhenaten's denial of rebirth through the mother goddess and the rejuvenating power of darkness in the solar circuit—is the first king known to have revealed this journey through the female gates. And that he sets it out alongside an image of Nut as the daytime goddess being raised aloft by the Heliopolitan air god Shu (pl 143) is profoundly significant.

Such a juxtaposition suggests that the king was intent upon reaffirming that the Heliopolitan daytime cosmos upheld by Shu, so beloved of Akhenaten in the early phase of Amarna religion, must be reunited with the mysteries of the night. The rhythm of the seasons, the alternation of day and night, the exit and entrance of the stars from the *Dwat* during their purificatory journey—all the different, contrasting phases of the Heliopolitan starry circuit of renewal—must never again be severed from one another, as had happenend in Akhenaten's reign.

This was a crucial message of the Memphite Theology (chapter 1) and the same theme seems to have been hammered home in these two different carvings of Nut on the ceiling of the Osireion. The Heliopolitan creation of



Atum and his Ennead must relate to a world in which bodies are shaped, vivified and renewed.

In a world inhabited by deities and humans alike, this particular starry way of renewal had profound meaning not only for the Pharaoh but also for all humankind. This is made clear in the introduction to the *Book of Night* which says that the sun god comes:

In order to judge the inhabitants of the Dwat, to know the condition of the Westerners and to provide for all the small cattle which he has created.

In contrast to *Underworld Books* like the Amduat, the Book of Night places great emphasis on human existence. For, in addition to the divine beings shown in the upper register, humans appear in various phases of rebirth in the scenes beneath the solar boat. The destiny of the Pharaoh and the fate of all humans in the afterlife are closely interwoven in this nocturnal voyage.

This particular night journey also leads us to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. For the Egyptians themselves clearly associated each of the night hours with certain chapters

in the Book of the Dead or, as they themselves called it, the book of Coming Forth by Day. Nor was this a late development, even though the main evidence comes from inscriptions in much later 25th and 26th Dynasty private tombs at Thebes.⁶ There is a much earlier, if sadly damaged version, correlating the night hours and the Book of the Dead chapters, in Hatshepsut's 18th Dynasty temple at Deir el-Bahri, where it is juxtaposed with the Hour Ritual for the twelve hours of the Book of Day.⁷

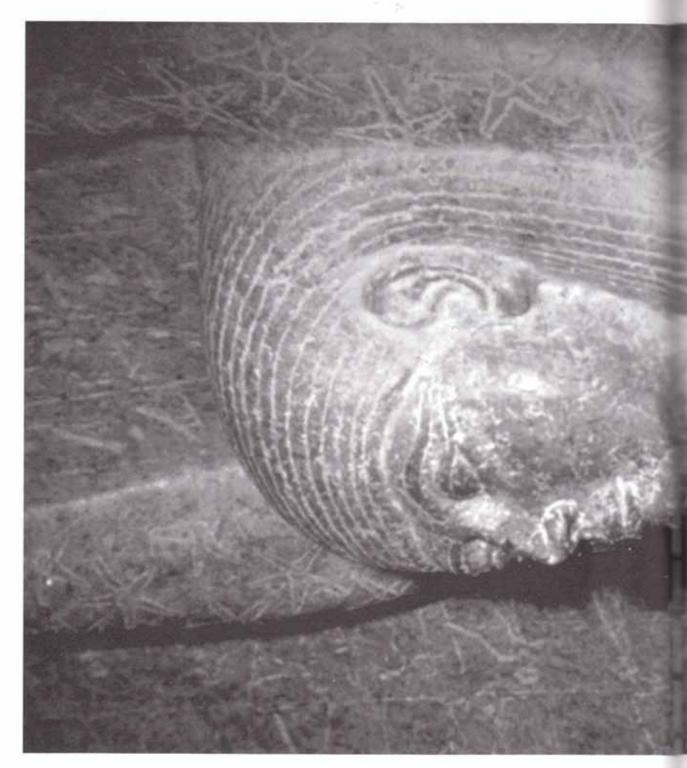
Although these 'correlation texts' have long been noted by scholars, there has never been a thorough exploration of the relationship between the Book of the Dead, the twelve night hours and the rebirth process in the Book of Night.8

But the link is crucial. For without knowledge of its context—the soul's death and rebirth journey—the Book of the Dead could easily strike a modern reader as little more than a motley assortment of invocations and hymns to different deities, various spells for transformation, judgement texts, and question-and-answer spells which

84 The Book of Night on the ceiling of the sarcophagus chamber in Ramesses VI's tomb at Thebes. The vertical lines give the names of the female gateways through which the sun-boat travels. Unlike Seti I's version in the Osireion, Ramesses VI is not included in the boat with Re and Maat. There are also variations in the sequence, notably the seventh hour is placed before the sixth hour. The description in this book is based on Seti's version as far as possible

perhaps reflect initiation rites into various craft professions. Individual funerary papyri contain only a selection from the total range of chapters; and the sequence in which the chapters appear varies from papyrus to papyrus during the New Kingdom. Hence it is very difficult to discern a coherent pattern from the Book of the Dead chapters alone, which anyway were never intended to be 'read' like a book with a beginning and an end.9

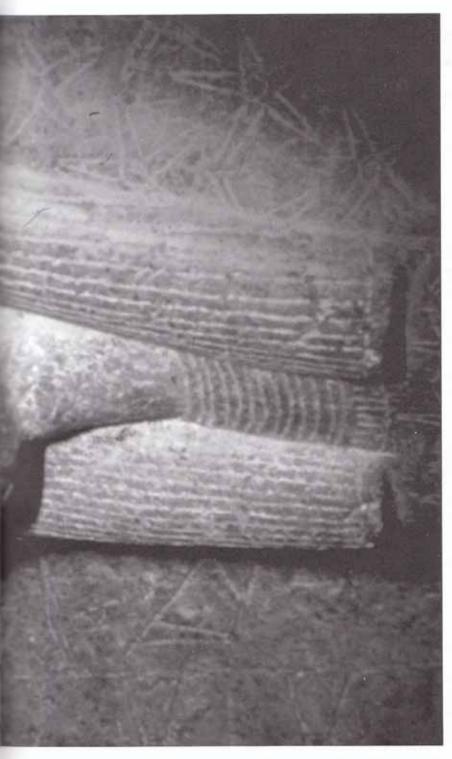
Obviously the Egyptians themselves knew the context of the different chapters, for simply to have chanted invocations to different deities without knowing their purpose within the overall solar circuit would surely have been to weave a web of chaos and



confusion—precisely the kind of disorder opponents of the solar circuit loved to create. So much so, that texts like the *Amduat* constantly stress that knowledge and understanding are vitally important for anyone entering the way of transformation in the sunboat. For us, too, a full appreciation of

the Book of the Dead will also depend on understanding its wider context.

Not only is this night journey linked with the Book of the Dead. As we travel



through the twelve night hours, we shall also equate what is shown there with the themes and progression of the Ancestor Ritual. Indeed, so exact are the correspondences between this particular temple ritual and the Book of Night, that one is led to the inescapable conclusion that the Book of Night was 85 A side view of the figure of Nut in plate 81 showing the sky goddess arched over the interior of the coffin originally carved for Merneptah, the grandson of Seti I (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

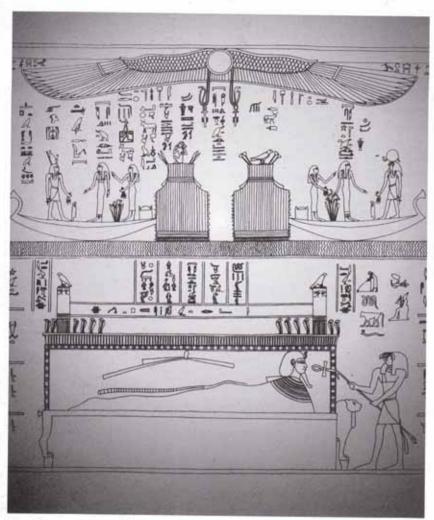
the heavenly esoteric 'map' for the ritual. In other words, each time the Egyptian ritualists enacted the Ancestor Ritual in the temple, channelling power in ceremonies which took them to the Osirian ancestral spirits and the very source of Heliopolitan creation, they were also mirroring that heavenly path of rebirth through Nut in the Book of Night. Knowledge of what happened in the Book of Night was-as the Egyptian Underworld Books constantly assert-useful for a person on earth as well as for those who are entering a post-mortem existence in the Dwat. And what happened through the heavenly night hours also found its ritual counterpart in the temples on earth.10

All this is also eloquently stated by Hermes in the much later Hermetic text quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Ancient Egypt was indeed the projection below of the order of things above—was, in an extraordinarily intricate way, a reflection of the celestial realm.

This truth was evidently known to Seti I at Abydos, for the correspondences between the *Ancestor Ritual* journey through the temple below and the night journey through the heavenly Nut above beautifully exemplify this 'as above, so below' maxim beloved of the later Hermetic practitioners.

CALL OF AWAKENING: THE SPHINX KING

But to return now to the Book of Night itself on the Osireion ceiling. To the left of Nut's arms in the Osireion version there is an elaborate tableau with two paired scenes in its upper part: a similar tableau occurs in the tomb



86 A reconstruction of the introductory tableau to the Book of Night in the 26th Dynasty tomb of the Theban priestess, Mutirdis. The priestess is shown in the sun-boat before Atum (left) and Re (right) but unlike Seti I, in the earlier version, Mutirdis does not offer Maat to Re. In the scene below, Horus brings life and 'awakening' to the recumbent Osirian king

of Ramesses VI and also in a 26th Dynasty private tomb at Thebes (pl 86). In King Seti's version the left scene shows the king standing in the sun-boat, offering a tiny figure of Maat to the sun god in the presence of a goddess.

This offering symbolizes the zenithal union of Re with his daughter in the daytime cycle; and it is matched on the right with the king and goddess, again in the sun-boat, now facing towards Atum, the evening god of the West. His presence heralds the sun's movement away from the zenith, the sinking towards the western horizon in order to enter the arms of the mother goddess.

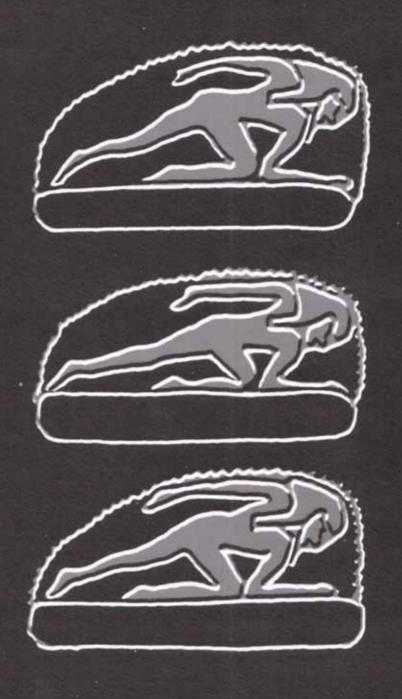
Beneath these two scenes is a highly unusual representation of the Egyptian king as an Osirian figure reclining, sphinx-like, on a bed guarded above by twelve serpents, 'the uraei who make protection'. 11 Given that the structure above the bed resembles a palace facade, and that there are clothing and regalia beneath the bed, we have to imagine that the Osirian king

is here lying on his bed in the intimacy of the palace, protected by his fire-spitting serpents—a setting which recalls the episode in the Memphite Theology after Osiris is rescued and brought to dwell in the palace at Memphis as an ancestral ruler.

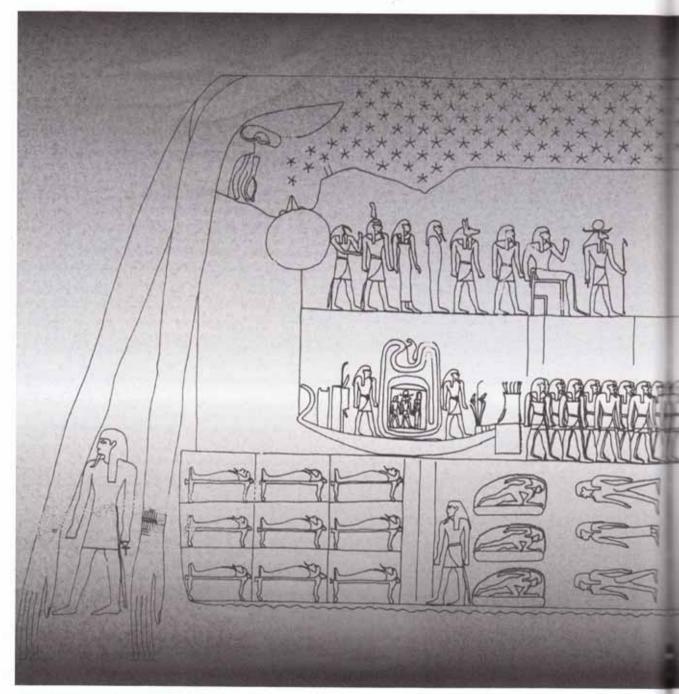
Clearly though he is neither dead nor sleeping here, as Horus appears before him, giving him signs of life, power, and stability. Furthermore, his sphinx-like pose resembles that of the humans rising from their beds in the fifth hour of the Book of Night, when they begin to 'awake' in their journey of rebirth. Indeed, such an 'awakening' is expressed in the hieroglyph above the reclining king which emphatically declares that he is 'awake'.

Taken as a whole, these three scenes encapsulate the sun's journey from the zenith of the noonday sky through to evening time in the West and then to this 'awakening' in the dark time of the night. And, like the 'call of awakening' to salvation so prevalent in Gnostic texts, here in New Kingdom Egypt a scene of awakening is similarly placed at the beginning of the king's night journey.12 Awake for serpent power and the extraordinary journey which Seti is about to make with Re and Maat in the sun-boat through the twelve hours of the night, through the female gateways of renewal in the Book of Night.

This night journey through the female gateways is a journey of rebirth which goes ever deeper into the secrets of mortal existence, regeneration and rebirth. It follows a pathway through the body of Nut, travelling through different zones where specific faculties of the human being could be renewed—or what in modern terms might be called the different physical, psychological and spiritual bodies of a person. When each zone is crossed, so that part of the human being belonging there is completely restored and renewed.



11 Doors of Darkness: Renewing Images

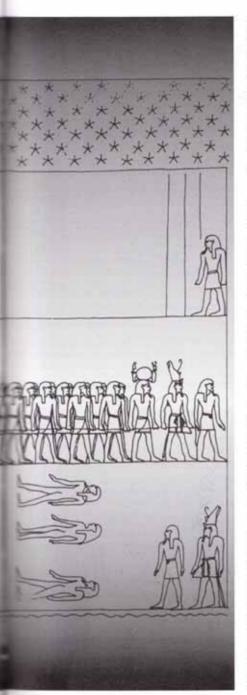


Above 88 Nut embraces King Seti I during the first hour of the night. The second hour starts at her mouth, and the sun-boat is now towed by the decanal 'Unwearying Stars' through this second hour. Previous page 87 The 'Inert Ones' of the second hour of the night (Book of Night, Osireion, Abydos)

A FTER ENTERING the arms of Nut in the first hour of the night, as portrayed so beautifully in the scene of Seti between the arms of the goddess in the Book of Night (pl 88), the sun then reaches Nut's mouth to begin the processes of bodily renewal. And it is clear that all the healing and

strengthening of the various bodily parts, described in the second and third hours of the Book of Night, take place at the entry to Nut's mouth, ending at her teeth in the third hour.

It is not until the second hour that the name of the gateway through which the boat passes is given in the text



beneath Nut's mouth. This gateway is:

Lady of trembling, high of walls, preeminent one, Lady of destruction, who foresees aggression and repels the raging, who saves the robbed from the one who comes from afar. Lady of terror.

Initiated by the maternal embrace at

dusk, 'the shining bull, King Seti, given life, who is with the Unwearying Stars' has entered the shuddering paroxysms of the terrifying female in the West, the great animal soul of the world whose power to regenerate through the heart dominates in this cavernous female realm. And initial contact with her realm, as the gateway's name implies, arouses trembling and great fear.

THE SECOND HOUR GATEWAY: LADY OF TREMBLING

Passing through this gateway to the second hour the king is guided by the 'Bull of Light'. He sees beneath him nine mummiform figures named 'The Transfigured Ones', 'The Mummies' and 'The Dead', lying on their lion beds. Watching over them is Sia, who commands them to:

Count your hearts, receive your offerings

To the right of them are three more groups, in each case a woman placed between two men. Named as 'Inert Ones', 'Punished Ones' and 'Those of the Opposite Sky', they are swimming and lying, caught in various phases of a renewal process-like the process which Hathor's child, Ihy, endures as an 'Inert One' in the primal waters before being reborn as a radiant child of the goddess.1 Sunk in their deadly sleep, they lie there, passively surrendering to their fate, some in a state of great suffering, watched by the king who appears behind Sia here in the lowest register. Again the god commands them, this time saying:

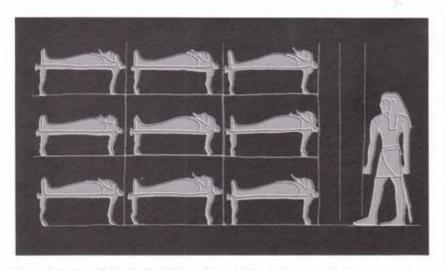
Measure your banks, lift up your legs.

Such words instantly recall the invocations to the lifeless cult image of Amun-Re (and the ancestral king identified with him) at the beginning of the Ancestor Ritual (page 75). The priests sprinkle the renewing water of Nun, and chant invocations imploring that sight and other bodily functions be restored to the royal god of Egypt so that he can come to his food offerings, which are all identified with the Eye of Horus. 'Receive your head, unite with your bones', he is told. And indeed Sia speaks similar words both to the group of deities shown in the upper register and to those towing the sun-boat in the middle register. 'Receive your heads, gather your bones, receive your offerings'.

What we are seeing here in the Book of Night, as in the Ancestor Ritual, is a renewal of bodies, the reawakening of inert, lifeless forms. They are being told by Sia that they have not died when they entered the mother goddess, but rather that they have to take command again of all their bodily functions. Hence, as each person begins the journey in the West, their first experience is a renewal and strengthening of all parts of the body in the 'Image' realm, a true renovatio, analogous to the mummification process and also to rites for cult statues in the temple cult.

One of the Book of the Dead chapters correlated with the first night hour is chapter 22 which is specifically for regaining a mouth in the realm of the dead. Such an empowering of the mouth was also important in the Opening of the Mouth Ritual, performed both for cult statues and the lifeless mummy to restore the powers of speech, sight and hearing to the body. Hence, as the night journey begins, so this Book of the Dead chapter perfectly complements the initial phase of 'gathering together' the body's faculties.

Bodily reintegration is also the theme of chapter 71 of the Book of the Dead, parts of which were chosen for the second, third and fourth hours of the night. This chapter invokes seven different deities, beginning with the hawk rising from the deep, asking for release and deliverance, for strength and vigour, and culminating in a



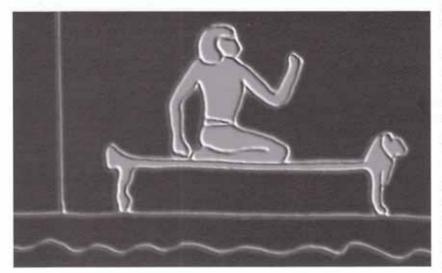
Two details from Seti's Book of Night in the Osireion (above) 89 The god Sia, 'Understanding', commands the mummiform figures lying on lion beds during the second night hour (below) 90 an 'Awakened One' from the third night hour

request for air to breathe, sight for eyes and a rising to join 'my own image'. Plate 92 shows the hawk rising forth from the primal waters guarded by the primordial cow goddess Mehet-Weret 'the Great Flood'. Water is full of purity and renewing power; and through Mehet-Weret's watery element the body is strengthened and restored to new life.²

Initially then, both in the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual, all the faculties of the body have to be renewed and the body gradually reunited with its different members. And this 'gathering together' serves as the secure foundation on which the whole journey ultimately rests. For it is only after their bodies have been renewed that the night travellers can proceed further in their journey, towards the mysteries of animation, vitalization and regeneration of life in the depths of the night.

THE THIRD HOUR GATEWAY: SHE WHO LIGHTS THE FIRE

Onwards the Bull King travels with Maat and the sun god into the third



Facing page 91 The sun-boat travels through the third night hour. Various male and female figures appear in the register beneath, including the 'Silent Ones' seated holding a finger to the mouth in the gesture of silence. They are all in various stages of bodily renewal (Book of Night, Osireion)

hour, guided now by the 'Bull of the Two Lands' through the gateway to the third hour called:

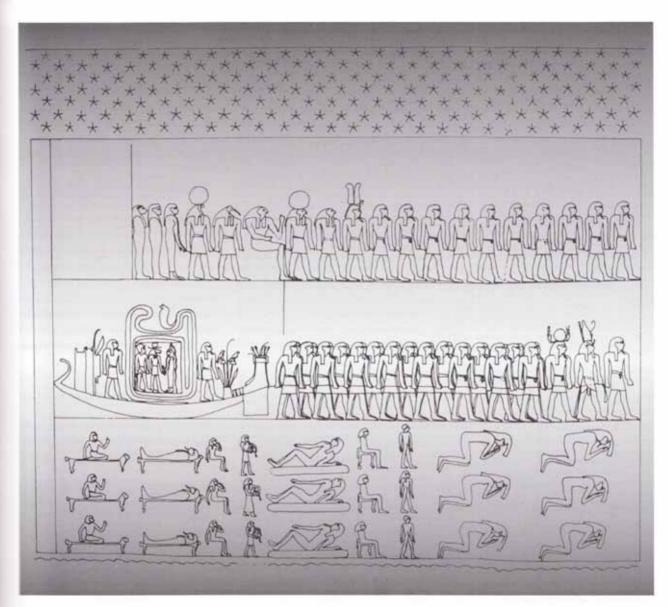
She who lights the fire, the quencher of embers, with sharp flames, quick in killing without hesitation. She from whom there is no protection. She by whom one cannot pass without harm. The one who rears up towards her lord.

The trembling and terror of the gateway to the second hour have now been replaced by an experience of intense heat and flames. And it is the time when the king confirms his power to the guide of the hour:

O Bull of the Two Lands...I am divine, I am an Akh, I am powerful and I am seated on the throne of Atum...make a place for me amongst you so that I may sail with Re in the Dwat.

Here the Pharaoh proclaims his transformation into a divine being—an Akht—just as in the Ancestor Ritual, the god-like power of Amun-Re is confirmed in the various rites which gather together all his bodily faculties at the beginning of the ritual.

In the register beneath the solar boat, sit and lie various human beings on their lion beds in different phases of transformation: the 'Awakened Ones', the 'Sleeping Ones', the 'Slent Ones' seated with a finger to the mouth in a gesture of silence, and the 'Revived Ones'. Next come the 'Floating Ones', the 'Transfigured Ones' and the 'Shadows'. Then there are three people named 'Those of the Field', and three more called perhaps 'Those of the Channels', all with their bodies bent forward and with hair cascading over their faces. Attracted



towards waking and sleeping in the maternal arms, all are caught in various phases of the rebirth journey, deep in the inner recesses of the even-tide, just like Ihy, the son of Hathor in his journey of rebirth.

This night journey of the Egyptian Pharaoh is strangely reminiscent of that gloomy and perilous realm of the 'Mothers' into which Goethe's Faust descends, where all is 'lonely drift' and 'waste and solitude'. This is the home of the mysteries of Formation, transformation, Eternal

Mind's eternal recreation' guarded by the Mothers around whom 'float all forms of things to be', though bodies they see, not only 'wraiths'. Here, as Goethe says, stir all the manifold 'lifeless images of life', in the realm where fates are ordained.

THE FOURTH HOUR GATEWAY: SHARP OF KNIVES

But it is with the Egyptian descent further into the terrors of the night that we are primarily concerned, and arrival now at the gateway of the fourth hour guided by 'He who divides the offerings'. Here the terrifying female manifests as:

Sharp of knives, Mistress of the Two Lands, who destroys the enemies of the Tired Heart (an epithet of Osiris), who arouses trembling before the Sinless One, who removes wrong-doing.

Here both the gateway's name and the guide imply a shift towards the protection of Osiris from his enemies and the provision of food. The female 'sharp of knife' now manifests against those opposed to Osiris, for it is only when the Sethian enemies of Osiris have been vanquished that he can truly 'set himself in motion' and send forth his Ba.

This shift to a different zone is also seen in the register beneath the sunboat, where there is a large sign indicating a hilly region planted with trees, signposting a terrain where vegetation grows and flourishes. The trees are a sure sign that the 'life' or fertile Ka-realm has been reached, the place where food and nourishment are obtained. Near this hilly location are various dwellers of the banks and

Below 92 Mehet-Weret, the great cow goddess of the primordial flood, protecting the Horus hawk as he rises from the waters. This scene is also the vignette for chapter 71 of the Book of the Dead which contains invocations to different deities asking for release from binding and oppressive forces. Parts of this chapter were correlated with the second, third and fourth night hours (Scene on the sarcophagus of Sennedjem, Egyptian Museum, Cairo) rivers, as well as some nameless beings with fish-heads and their arms tied behind their backs.

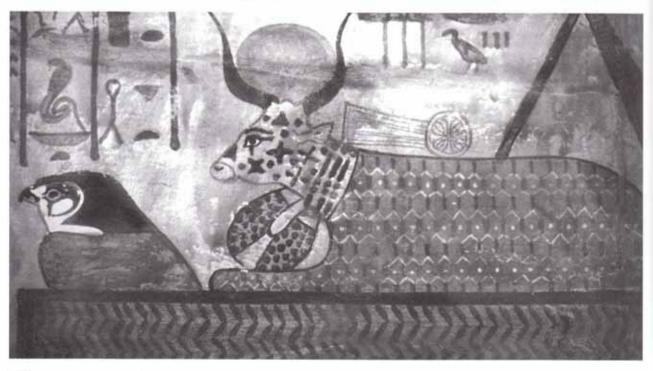
Strangely, though, these inhabitants of the fertile region appear to be weeping. To the left of the hill-sign are groups of people called 'Those of the Banks', 'Those of the Shores' and 'Those of the Riverside', who all crouch forward with dishevelled hair, and hands held to their faces in the gesture of mourning. Like the people of the fields and channels at the close of the previous hour, their names suggest they inhabit a canal-landscape belonging to the inundated land. And obviously, too, this transition to a fertile realm in the fourth hour is a time of some disorder and confusion.

It has been suggested that these people are the deceased, lamenting because of the sun's absence.³ But other elements in the fourth hour may imply a different, more active, explanation of their weeping. Beyond the hill-sign come the curious beings with fish-heads—their fettered state suggesting conflict in the fourth hour,

and as they are not named it is hard to know whether they are the night travellers themselves appearing as fish-like creatures, or whether they are hostile forces lying bound and fettered. Certain fish in the dark depths of the river were regarded as Sethian creatures, so they may be intended as hostile Sethian opponents who have been overcome.

But remembering the Book of Nut's account of how the decanal stars, in their journey of renewal, enter a fish-like state in waters created by falling tears (page 102), it is equally possible that these bound creatures are meant to encapsulate the renewal process here in the fourth hour. Certainly, this transition to a fertile region—through the gateway where the enemies of the 'Tired Heart' are destroyed—is a dangerous time in the night journey, a time to fight against oppression and hostile forces roaming through this potentially fertile land.

Significantly, the Book of the Dead chapter correlated with the fourth hour of the night is the opening part of



Right 93 The sun-boat travels through the turbulent fourth night hour. The shift from the renewal of bodies in the previous hours to the 'Life' realm is symbolized by the hill-sign planted with trees in the lower register. On the left are weeping inhabitants of the river-banks. On the right are bound figures with fish-heads, indicating the conflict and turmoil when Horus rises to power during this hour. In the upper register stand divine figures associated with Osiris (Book of Night, Osireion)

chapter 71, which, as already described, has as its vignette a representation of Mehet-Weret, the great cow goddess of the primordial flood. In this chapter the deceased person calls upon different deities seven times, asking for health and deliverance and it begins with an invocation to the hawk rising from the deep (pl 92):

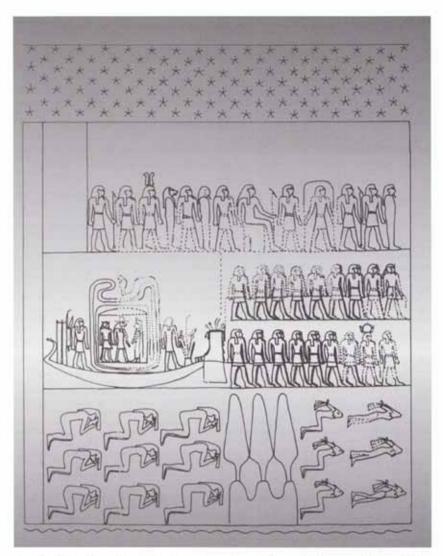
O you hawk rising from Nun, Lord of the Great Flood, make me flourish as you make yourself flourish.

Then follows the response of the creator god ordering that the person should be unfettered:

Release him, loose him, put him on earth, grant his desire: so says the One-faced Lord concerning me.

Next come six more invocations to different deities, including Horus, son of Isis, Thoth, and Osiris-all the deities involved in the emergence of Horus as the defender and successor of Osiris after his fierce struggle with Seth when his Eve was damaged and had to be restored.4 Also invoked is Sobek in the midst of his river-bank, and Neith in the midst of her riverine land. And each invocation is followed by the same response of the One-faced Lord, concluding at the end of the chapter with a request to come forth intact 'on that day of reckoning with the Robber [Seth]'.

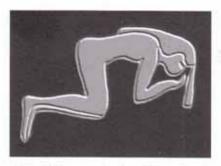
This chapter of the seven magical utterances, with its beginning appropriate for the fourth night hour, is



about release from those binding and hostile forces which Horus had to encounter in his struggle with Seth. And the bound pose of the fish-like creatures in the Book of Night suggests a similar binding and releasing happens in the fourth hour of the night when the fertile aquatic regions are reached.

This is probably also why the riverside dwellers are weeping, for it is well-known that the conflict of Horus and Seth arouses much distress. For example, in the stories of the Metternich Stela and Socle Behague about how Horus was bitten by poisonous creatures, Horus is said 'to moisten the banks with the liquid of his eyes and the saliva of his mouth', and the marshland dwellers come to lament with Isis. Moreover, it is clear that the mythological background for such stories is Seth's abuse of Horus during their struggle.⁵ Other texts relate how Isis too appears with dishevelled hair because of her son's misfortunes at the hands of Seth.⁶

All this may help to explain why these lamenting people appear in the Book of Night. They weep and mourn because of the terror and confusion in their aquatic habitation caused by the struggle with Sethian creatures. And it is along these disorderly ways that each and every human, each and every



divine being, must travel in order to reach the fertile nurturing regions which lie beyond.

The choice of the deities in the upper register for the fourth hour is also informative. As well as a mummiform god called the 'Veiled One' there is also a figure with the title Died, The One who is Stable'. Both are names which would have instantly brought to mind Osiris. The 'Veiled One' perhaps refers to the concealment of the death or wounds of Osiris-only initiates were allowed to see the weariness of Osiris. who must be protected from his enemies.7 Died (the Stable One) is an obvious allusion to the Djed pillar and the raising of Osiris from the inertia and inactivity he has fallen into because of Seth's wicked deeds against him. Also shown are a god called 'The-One-who-is-in-his-Shrine' and an enthroned goddess called 'She who is Seated', a name which almost certainly refers to Isis as the throne goddess and mother of Horus.

Seen together with the fettered beings in the lower register these deities

Left 94 The weeping inhabitants of the river-banks. Below 95 The transition to the fish-like bound existence (Fourth hour. Book of Night, Osireion)

Facing page 96 The travellers awake during the fifth night hour. Turned now on their stomachs, with their heads raised, they appear in an animate state, though complete freedom of movement is still denied them (Book of Night, Osireion)

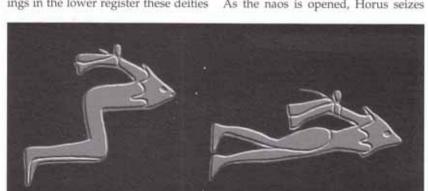
in the upper register leave little doubt that this fourth hour is the time when Sethian forces, hostile to the fertile renewing processes of life, try to constrain travellers on the night journey.

Just as Horus transforms himself into a powerful fertile successor of Osiris through his struggle with Seth and raises his father into a stable existence within his shrine, so those sorrowful humans travelling in the fourth hour must battle through opposition in the terrifying gateway of sharp knives.

We can trace the same progression in the Ancestor Ritual after the renewed Amun-Re has been brought to his food offerings, all identified with the Eye of Horus. It is at this point that the ritualists bring the heart of the sacrificial beast. First, however, the priest (representing Horus) draws back the bolt of the naos, which he identifies with Seth's phallus. And as he pulls out this bolt, so he recites:

I am Horus, O my father Osiris, who seizes the phallus of Seth for you with his hand.

As the naos is opened, Horus seizes

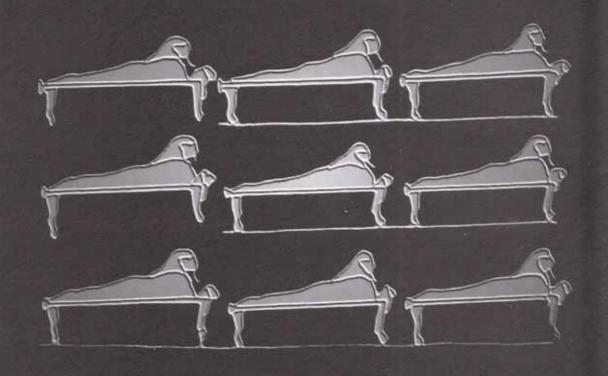


hold of Seth's phallus. The turbulent power of Seth is arrested and controlled, in order that Osiris may rest in his shrine, restored to a harmonious stable existence.

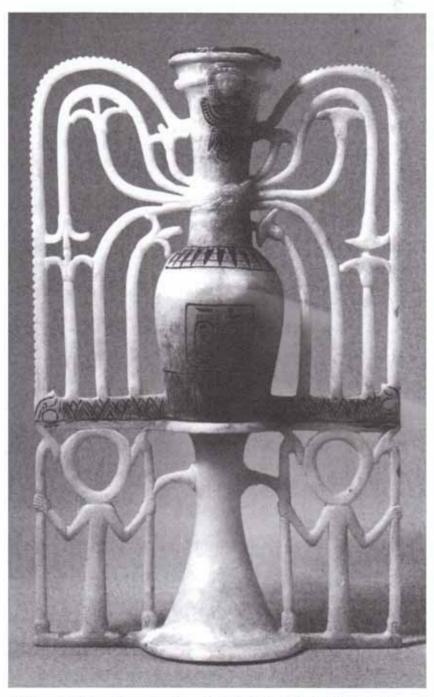
Then follows the chant celebrating how Horus rests in the arms of Osiris and the lunar god Thoth brings him his Eye, a sign that Seth's ascendancy has come to an end, that the enemy who threatens this frontier region has been overcome.

The fourth hour then is a time of great instability. Its gateway separates the physical world from the 'Life'realm-and gives access to a region fraught with difficulty, where dangerous forces lurk, opposed to the fertile renewal of life. Here in this 'Life'-realm, all the regenerative powers of Isis. Horus and Osiris begin to stir and Sethian forces, opposed to the process. now manifest. If a person is to 'awaken' fully to food and new life in the fifth hour, these enemies lying in wait must first be overcome. The Djed has to be raised, the 'Stable One' must be brought into his shrine. Like Horus. the night travellers must spend this fourth hour contending with the snares of the Sethian enemy-escaping the 'Robber' so that they can progress further towards the paradisal place of new vitality and life.

The 'body symbolism' of the Book of Night-the turbulent fourth hour occurs 'at the throat'-further enhances the meaning. Entry proper into Nut's body only really begins in the fourth hour when the sun reaches her throat, the region of the body where air is transmitted and the digestive processes start as food is taken down into the body's interior. That this is also the hour when there is a distinct shift towards themes of fertility and life in the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual is surely significant. For this fourth hour is the crucial transitional zone leading to the mysteries of regeneration in the nutritive 'Life'-realm.



12 Life Wakes Green: Reaching the Heart



97 The vital throat-breast region of Nut's body is traversed during the fourth and fifth night hours. The fecundity and Hathorian life in this female body region are also symbolized in the design of this alabaster unguent vase which is decorated with white lotus petals at its base. The vase resembles the hieroglyphic nefer-sign meaning

'vitality' which depicts the trachea and heart. It is also shaped like a female torso with two breasts modelled on the rounded part above Tutankhamun's names. On the vase's neck is a Hathor face and bead collar, with a mandrake, a blue lotus flower and buds beneath (Vase from the tomb of Tutankhamun at Thebes, Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

GUIDED BY the 'True of Face'—or as one version has it, the 'True of Heart'—the boat sails through the gateway of the fifth hour of the night. But here, instead of the aggressive female guardian of the gates in the early hours, the travellers encounter a beneficent female, whose name sounds distinctly royal in tone. She is:

Lady of the sky, Mistress of the Two Lands, the Relishing One, Lady of the Entire Land, Great of Awesomeness.

And this shift of emphasis to the propitiated aspect of female divinity continues through to the seventh hour—the darkest time of the night.

HATHOR-MAAT: THE FRUITFUL BREAST

To understand this part of the journey, it is also important to remember that the night travellers have now journeyed from Nut's throat to the breast region of her body, traversing territory therefore which was deeply significant in Egyptian body wisdom.

The throat, or more especially the trachea, was seen as closely connected with the heart and lungs. Together the trachea and heart form the hieroglyphic nefer-sign meaning 'vitality'; and the trachea and lungs form the zema-sign meaning 'unite', which appears in the 'Union of the Two Lands' motif frequently used to decorate the sides of royal thrones and elsewhere.

Of great importance too is the association of 'vitality' (nefer) with Hathor and Maat, the two solar goddesses intimately connected with the throat and heart.¹ Amun-Re is said to 'wear Maat' like an amulet at his throat, she rests on his breast. And guarding this vital region of his body she becomes his nourishing food:

Your food is Maat, your drink is Maat Your bread is Maat, your beer is Maat²

Nurturing the vital life of the solar god, Maat manifests in the nutritive Right 98 The sun-boat travels through the fifth hour time of awakening in the "Life'-realm. The abundance and proliferating power of nature in this vital hour are symbolized by the people seated on plants in the bottom register (Book of Night, Osireion)

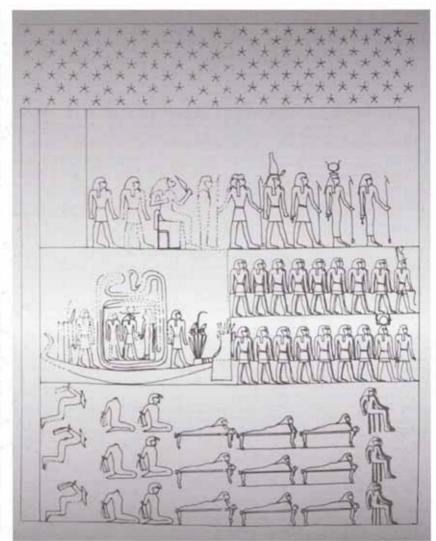
throat region when food offerings are brought. So, when bringing the god offerings, the king invokes the goddess who assists the ingestion of food:

Receive Maat so that you may satisfy your heart. This your Meret-goddess, who does not leave you. The throat is before you every day so that you may live from her.³

But as both are daughters of Re, Maat cannot be separated from Hathor. The guiding influence of Maat needs the energizing vitality and life-blood of Hathor to maintain her way of the world. Hathor's connection with the throat is mentioned in later texts at Dendara. She is the goddess who 'frees the throat when it is constricted' and in one scene when the king offers a drink to Hathor, the Upper Egyptian Meret-goddess stands behind him named as 'Mistress of the throat'. 5

Hathor's connection with this neferregion of the body is beautifully illustrated in the decoration of an alabaster vase from Tutankhamun's tomb, which is shaped like a nefer-sign and also a female torso (pl 97). Resting on a stand flanked by two 'life'-signs, it has the Upper and Lower Egyptian plants entwined around its tracheal column. On the vase's neck, there is a Hathor face with a bead collar, bemeath which is incised a pendant of blue lotus buds and a mandrake. The base is decorated with white lotus petals symbolizing vitality and life.

And lest there should be any doubt about the vase's meaning, breasts have been delicately sculpted above the names of Tutankhamun on the body of the vessel. Art could not



speak more clearly about the fecund Hathorian life flourishing in this *nefer*region of the female body.

GATEWAY TO THE FIFTH HOUR: LADY OF THE SKY

The 'vital' throat and breast region of Nut's body represents the interface between the physical body and the 'Life'-realm. So it is not surprising that when the night travellers reach the fourth and fifth hours, there should be such emphasis on nutritive vitalizing power in both the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual. But as a threshold of transition it is also a perilous place of

conflict. Here Sethian forces, hostile to fertility and life, still seek to prevent further passage into the vital part of the body, potentially upsetting all the nutritive and breathing processes. These constricting turbulent forces, inimical to the way of Maat, have to be confronted and overcome, both by Horus if he is to succeed Osiris as the food-giver of Egypt, and by the night travellers on their journey of rebirth.

The first nine images in the bottom register of the fifth hour of the Book of Night show bound beings, including decapitated figures named as 'the followers of Seth' who have obviously sought to oppose the renewing



process in this hour. But the condition of the travellers has changed: they are now clearly living beings, lving on their stomachs with raised heads (pls 96, 98). Although they are still not completely liberated, they are nevertheless in a very different phase from the earlier hours-they are awake now, able to move their heads, and turn on their stomachs. The travellers' newly-acquired 'plant' or 'Ka'-nature is also visually suggested by the three groups of three people who are shown seated on plants to the right of them, sprouting and blooming again in this burgeoning, vivifying life-realm, feeling the power of green shoots surging through their bodies (pl 99).

The section of chapter 68 of the Book of the Dead equated with the fifth hour vividly describes how the heart and other parts of the body now pulse with power in a paradisal existence:

I have power (sekhem) in my heart, I have power in my heart, I have power in my eye, I have power in my legs...I have power in all my body, I have power over my invocation offerings, I have power over water, I have power over air...

It is a vital Hathorian existence, for the chapter then continues further by describing the paradisal life which the initiate enjoys seated with Hathor beneath her tree:

I eat white emmer bread, my beer is the red grain of Hapy in the pure place. And I sit beneath the branches of the tree of Hathor, foremost of her spacious disk, when she travels to Heliopolis bearing the books of the divine words of the writings of Thoth. I have power in my heart, I have power in my heart.

Sometimes the vignette shows a person kneeling before Hathor seated by her sacred tree of life, the sign and symbol of her life-giving power. In other versions the goddess is in a shrine, which is being opened to Left 99 Initiates in the fifth night hour of 'awakening', seated on plants symbolizing their vital existence amidst abundant green nature (Book of Night, Osireion)

Right 100 In the upper part of her funerary stela Takha—a chantress of Amun—adores Osiris, Isis and Nephthys. Below she receives water and food from the cow-headed Hathor, 'Lady of the West' appearing in her sycamore tree. Linked to the fifth night hour, chapter 68 of the Book of the Dead describes the blissful existence enjoyed by those seated beneath Hathor's sacred tree (19th Dynasty, Florence Museum)

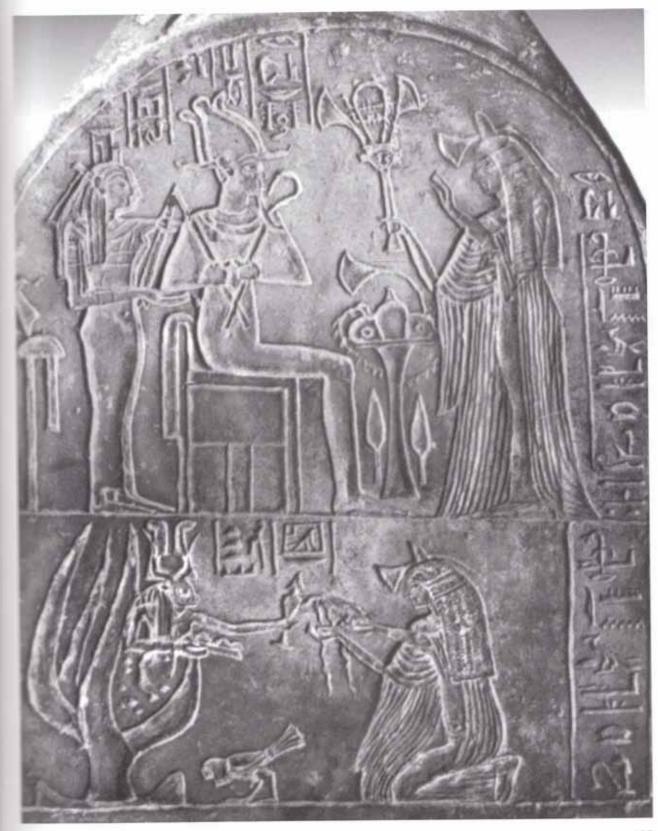
reveal the divine bearer of life, sexual desire and vitality. Manifestly, it is during this fifth hour of the night that power returns to the hearts of the travellers, so that they can now sit in pure bliss, eating food in the holy place of the 'Lady of Life', the place of green growth and happiness (pl 100).

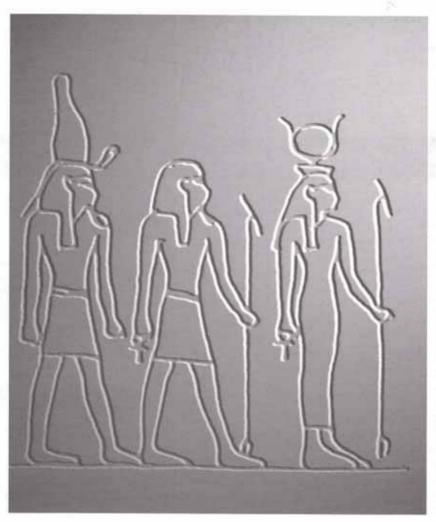
A tree as such is not shown in the Book of Night's fifth hour. But the green state of the travellers is emphasized by the nine people seated on plants in the fifth hour (pl 99). They dwell here in a night realm where Hathor, the great tree goddess, awakens the desire for new life. They feel her power of renewal, they revel in her delights (pl 100). But they also experience Maat's essential guidance in the sunboat above, for it is she who directs Hathor's powerful heart energy into fruitful ways of transformation.⁶

HEART RITUAL: NIGHT JOURNEY

So in the fifth hour, as the night travellers journey into this nefer-region of Nut's body, they enter the vitalizing territory of Hathor-Maat, where the heart becomes charged with energy and strong emotion, and its rhythmic beat is felt throughout the body. But how well does all this correspond with the equivalent phase of the Ancestor Ritual?

Certainly the heart is the focus of the main ceremony after the shrine





Above 101 The upper register for the fifth hour emphasizes deities associated with crowning, most obviously, 'His Brow is Crowned' (the figure on the left) appearing here with 'Sweet of Heart' and 'She who Raises her Father' Facing page 102 A 'sailing' Ba stands above her inert mummy in the sixth hour of the night when complete freedom of movement to travel between heaven and earth is restored to the night travellers (Book of Night, Osireion)

has been opened in the ritual. Directly after the chant praising Horus in the arms of Osiris ends, a new invocation begins for the rite of 'Bringing the Heart' to the god, a rite which restores the pulsing seat of blood, heat, warmth and desire

to the radiant new solar ruler in the palace. Now he feels his predecessor's fertile heart energy powerfully throbbing through his body, which has come to him through his secret incestuous union with his mother Isis (page 77).

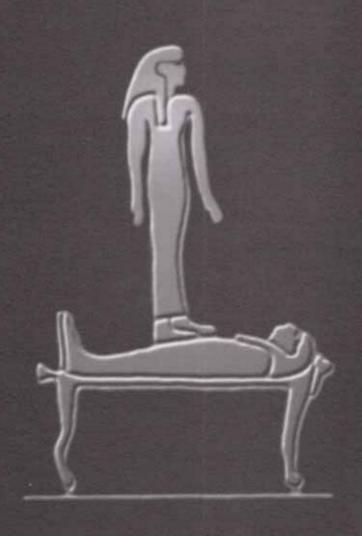
And with this power flowing though his body it can be said that Horus, the fertile Bull-of-his-Mother, has taken the place of his father in every way. Without this activation of the heart, which Sethian forces struggle so hard to prevent, there would be neither food nor fertility in the Ka-realm.

This secret mysterious rite, in which Isis and Horus, mother and son, incestuously unite their hearts together, ensures the transference of Osiris's fertile power to Egypt's new ruler. Just as in the Ancestor Ritual entry into the 'Life'-realm involves confrontation with Sethian forces and a union of hearts between Isis and Horus, so for the human travellers in the Book of Night, awakening to new life is an intense experience of travelling to a fertile heart region after hostile forces have been overcome.

The triumph of Horus as Moon Eye in the previous hours now ensures an 'awakening' to new life for those of the travellers who have won through to the beautiful vital realm of the fifth night hour.

At this point in the journey the human travellers' fate is closely bound up with the rise to rulership of the serpent-crowned Horus. This connection continues into the sixth hour and its full significance is explored in the next chapter But already in the fifth hour of the Book of Night, the divine companions in the register above the sun-boat include a kingly figure named 'His Brow is Crowned' who wears the White Crown and uraeus. Nearby stand male deities called 'Flame' and 'The Sweet of Heart' as well as a Hathorian goddess called 'She who raises her Father', who is holding a 'life'-sign (pl 101).7

Yet, however blissful such an awakening into a beautiful fertile green realm may be, it is not the end of the journey. The humans in the Book of Night still lie partially bound on their beds, still denied complete freedom of movement. Moreover, to the Egyptians, the heart was not simply responsible for feelings of pleasure and contentment, for vitality and green life. It was also the organ directly connected with the procreation and conception of new life.8 And it is this 'generative' heart which now becomes fully active during the dark time of the night in the sixth hourthat time of fiery regeneration which could blast as well bless.



13 Seed and Flame: Regenerating Life

As through the fifth gate called simply, but evocatively, 'The Lady of Life', so the life-giving function of the goddess is again reiterated in the gateway's name. And here, in the sixth hour of the night, guided significantly by 'Horus on the Tree', the capacity to manifest power, not least sexual power and movement, has returned to the bodies of the 'image' realm'

GATEWAY TO THE SIXTH HOUR: THE LADY OF LIFE

Such is the message of the three figures shown in the lowest register, a woman between two men, who each hover above a mummy lying on a lion bed, like the Ba hovering above a body. The text declares at this point:

The living Bas are sailing, the corpses are sailing in their places.

Life, sexuality and movement have now returned to the fully revitalized body, which is in possession of all its Ba-power, moved now by love and desire. For it is the Ba which enables a person to manifest feeling and desire outwardly towards others. Likewise, it is the Ba which facilitates movement between heaven and earth.

Moreover, reference to the 'sailing Bas' suggests that wind, the breath of life so necessary for human existence, has reached these regions. Now the Ba is able to move between heaven and earth. No longer partially bound as in the fifth hour, the night travellers can travel freely with the sun.

The soaring Ba celebrates this freedom of movement in the opening lines of chapter 68 of the Book of the Dead, correlated with the sixth night hour. We have already seen how this chapter describes the paradisal existence beneath Hathor's tree of life and its middle section equated with the fifth hour (page 124). Now the opening lines become all-important: The doors of the sky are opened for me, the doors of the earth are opened for me, the bolts of Geb are opened for me... the mouth of the Pelican is open for me...and I go forth into the day to the place where I desire to be

The great doors of Geb open, the mouth of the Pelican opens for the initiate, who experiences the fullness of power to go forth into a radiant new existence.

Such power to direct the body in every way shows that the heart, the bearer of life, is fully functioning again in the world. And with this manifestation of Ba-power comes also the desire to become sexually active again and create new life. Hence it is not surprising that the fiery goddess Hathor should manifest in this paradisal place during the fifth and sixth hours of the night. Nor is it any more surprising that Seti I should be shown kneeling



before Hathor as a Ba-bird at Abydos asking for 'charm' and 'attraction'. (pl 40). She is the 'Lady of Life', the sexual goddess who gives vitality to human existence, a green goddess now alive in the depths of the night.

Such a rebirth encompassing sky and earth also recalls the manifestation of the Ba in the Coffin Texts:

My head reaches to the sky

My head reaches to the earth

I am one whose heart is powerful

My Ba belongs to me, the Bas belong to me

I am a procreator who creates,

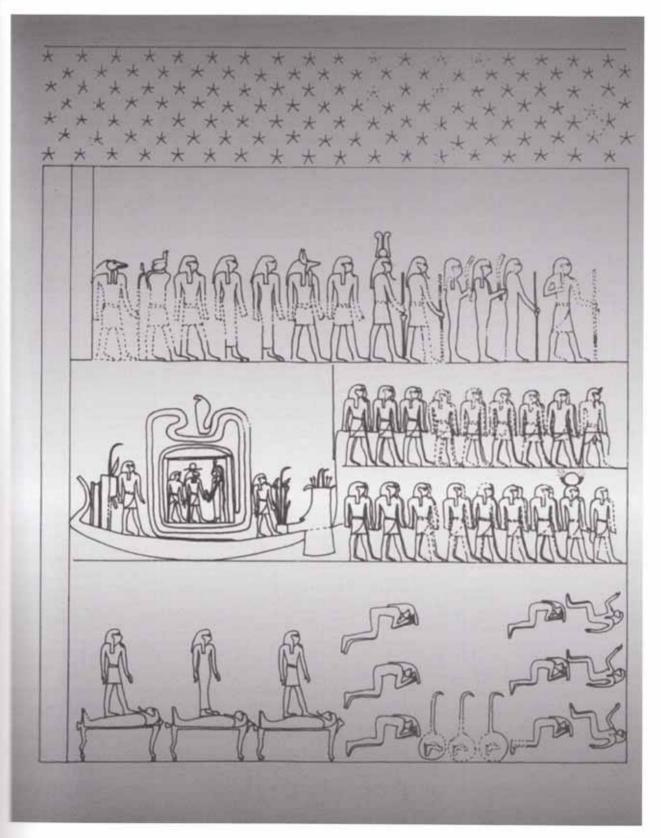
My seed is the seed in this one and that one

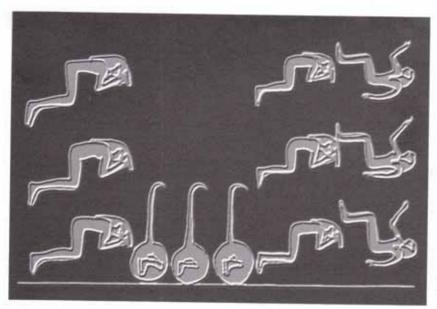
Here the procreative Ba spans both heaven and earth. And this spanning of sky and earth is a recurrent theme in Egyptian funerary texts, linked with the streaming forth of the fluids of Osiris and his mysterious rebirth in the form of his son Horus, who appears as the 'great Ba of Osiris' (page 78).

It is clear from such Coffin Texts that the power of the Bas and their semen creates pregnancy and a new child. And just as Osiris is able to send forth his Ba-soul to create a new existence in the form of Horus, so these 'souls' sailing in the depths of the night need to rise up and inundate the earth with life, need to bring forth a new shining

Left 103 One of the fiery furnaces in which enemies are destroyed in the sixth night hour. However, fiery destruction was seen as interwoven with life in ancient Egypt, so such furnaces were also the vessels of rebirth and new life (Book of Night, Osireion)

Facing page 104 The sun-boat travels through the sixth night hour when 'the living Bas sail and the corpses sail in their places'. In the lower register a female hovers above her body between two similar male figures, indicating their power to separate freely from the body and procreate new life. While the body remains below, the Ba rises. On the right the weeping 'Wandering Ones' tend their fiery furnaces of destruction and life (Book of Night, Osireion)





being in order to continue on their journey through the night.

Indeed, they sail towards the seventh hour, towards the crucial scene symbolizing 'regeneration'. Here a man joyfully raises a figure on high, whilst above them kneels another person, bent over with a lock of hair falling forwards (pl 114, page143). In some versions these are clearly shown to be a man, woman and child, and above this group one word is written—'Creation'.³ One word, but one which speaks volumes about the mysterious regeneration of new life in the depths of the night.

However, between the sailing Bas of the sixth hour and the seventh hour scene of regeneration comes a set of somewhat unexpected images, which strikes a note of discord in the night journey. Yet we cannot ignore it.

To the right of the 'sailing Bas' a group of three people called the 'Wandering Ones' now appear, bending forward with their dishevelled hair cascading over their faces (pl 105), exactly like the person above the child in the seventh hour scene of regeneration. In front of them are three furnaces with flames spitting forth, burning their contents which appear

as bound enemies in some versions. On the other side of the furnaces come three more people, perhaps called the 'Seizers', then three more entitled 'Those at the Limits'. Manifestly, here is a place of intense heat and flames in the depths of the night—an encounter with fiery destructiveness.

But why should the 'Wandering Ones'—who have the same name as the demons of Sekhmet in magical spells—appear like mourners here?⁴ And why should such a scene of destruction be shown between the 'sailing Bas' and the joyful group of regeneration in the seventh hour? Is this sixth hour, when the procreative 'living Bas' sail, a time solely of destruction?

Certainly, the divine beings standing in the upper register of the sixth hour suggest otherwise, for they are associated with crowns, flames and new birth. They include a serpent-headed god called 'Lord of the Uraeus', a female named 'Crowned One', and a serpent goddess called 'Mekerit'. Another deity appears to be the divine prototype of birth in this sixth hour for he is called 'He who comes into existence in Nun', alluding to Atum at the dawn of creation. There is also a

Left 105 Detail from the sixth night has showing the 'Wandering Ones', the furnaces, the 'Seizers' and 'Those at Limits' (Book of Night, Osireion)

Facing page 106 The procreation of child through seed and flame by a second through seed and flame by a second through seed and flame by a second through the second

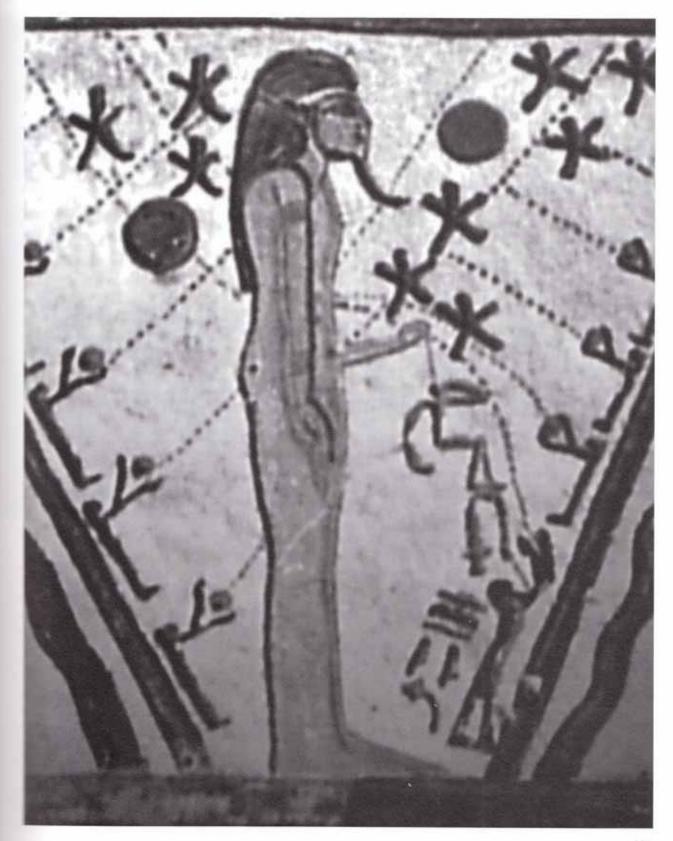
goddess called 'Meskhet', whose identity is uncertain; but it is surely significant that the writing of her name in Ramesses VI's tomb indicates that the scribe understood it to mean 'the One who gives Birth' (mst).⁵ And finally comes a male figure called 'the Elder', the one who has grown old, but who rests amidst the secrets of regeneration here in the sixth hour. He knows his ageing is but the prelude to new birth in the flame of becoming.

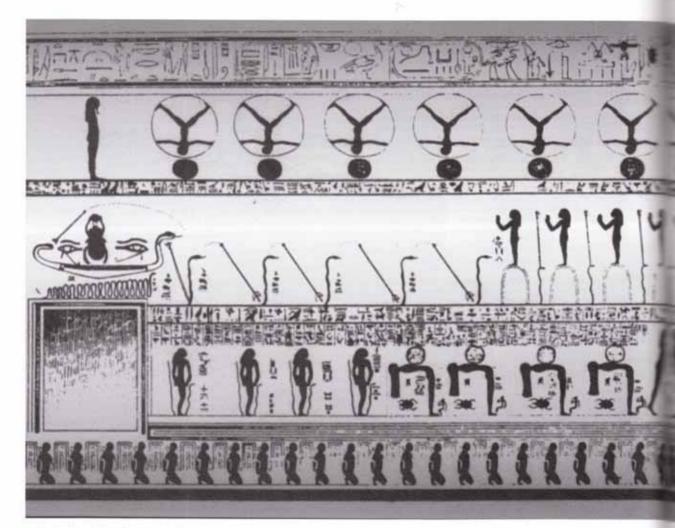
The reason why the flames of destruction burn in the lower register becomes clearer if we consider how the ancient Egyptians saw the procreation of a child. They believed that both semen and fire, moisture and heat were essential for the generation of new life.

This is made amply clear in the vignette of an ithyphallic god standing between two sloping lines forming a funnel containing the hours of the night, which is shown in several Ramessid tombs (pl 106). Below his phallus, and connected with it by a dotted line representing semen, are two hieroglyphic signs, the first depicting a child, the second a flame. According to the accompanying text:

This god is like this: he procreates the flame.

Moreover, this fiery seed is also an agent of destruction because it is shown being received by a small male





called the 'Bloody one' who then places the fire amongst the damned.6

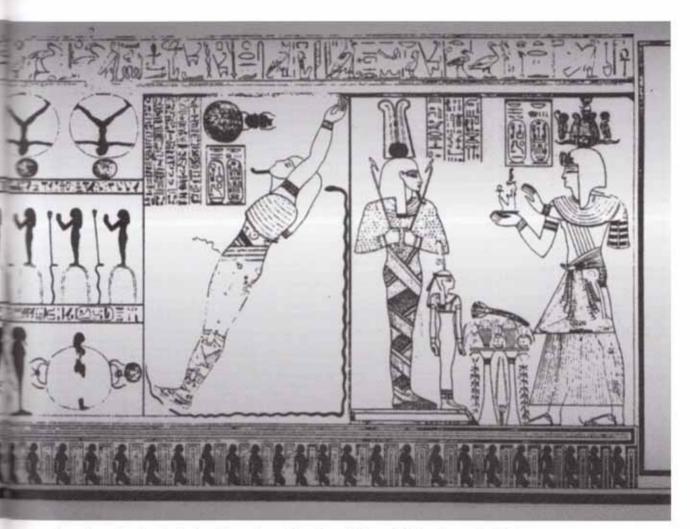
There is another group of scenes about regeneration, which unites together the creation of a child with the fiery destruction of enemies and mourning (pl 107). These reliefs are located on the wall of a corridor in Ramesses IX's tomb at Thebes, which also has a version of the Book of Night on its ceiling.7 We have already seen one of these reliefs earlier in the book, showing Osiris with erect phallus stretched out in the necropolis mound surrounded by a great serpent (pl 24). The accompanying cryptographic text refers to 'the birth of this great god', and here, without any doubt, is the awakened Osiris from whose phallus flow the fertilizing streams bringing fertility and life.

Immediately to the left of him are three registers. In the middle one is the solar boat, with its prow and stern ending in a serpent. Within it sails a scarab beetle between two great eyes. Before the boat are five more snakes, each one pierced by an arrow, overcome by the power raying from the arrow-shooting eye in the sun-boat which annihilates them in flames. To the right of the snakes are praisers standing on mounds, and before each praiser is yet another snake, again struck by an arrow.

The word for 'shooting with arrows' in Egyptian is stj, which also means 'kindle light' and 'set fire to'. By

further word play it could also be associated with the verb 'ejaculate' 'impregnate' (stj). The Egyptians loved to establish deeply connected meanings through word play, and we see this tendency here, albeit visually, in the juxtaposion of the ejaculating Osiris with the 'arrowshooting' act of the solar Eye against enemies.

But it is the sequence in the lower register which most sheds light on the Book of Night's sixth hour. Four females appear, each one treading on a snake incarnation of Apophis, the sun god's menacing enemy. Like Isis in the Underworld Books, when she appears in the sun-boat slaying the Apophis snake during the night with her magic



so these four females, including 'the One who binds together', all hold fast the solar enemy. Then come four more figures leaning backwards with their long hair flowing downwards, completely absorbed in the moment of ejaculation. They seem to be male, for each has an erect phallus (now hacked out), which is connected by a dotted line, representing semen, to a red human child beneath. From each mouth another dotted line leads to a black scarab beetle, remininscent of the Heliopolitan Atum spitting forth Shu and Tefenet from his mouth (page 85). To generate a child is like the dawn of Heliopolitan creation, the ejaculation of seed which bears the life essence of the cosmos itself. But it is a form of creation which needs the solar flame. For rolling across the chest region of each figure is a solar disk, warming and energizing the heartsource of creative activity—in true Memphite fashion, uniting seed and flame.

Yet although these figures appear distinctly male, their true nature is decidely more complex, since each of their names is written in feminine form. Male though they may be in appearance, their essence is undoubtedly female. representing a true conjunction of opposites, the perfect androgynous state in the creation of a child. And as they unite together, so the four females beside them tread underfoot the dreaded Apophis snake,

107 The destructive and creative aspects of regeneration during the sun god's night journey. Whilst the fiery Sun Eye in the solar boat shoots arrows to vanquish enemies, the procreative seed power of Osiris manifests in the necropolis mound, the realm of Sokar. In the register beneath the boat four androgynous figures, including the 'Mourning One', lean backwards, engaged in the creation of a child. On the left four female figures bind Apophis, the enemy of Re. Destruction and life co-exist as male seed and fiery flame unite together in the mysteries of regeneration. The connection with Memphis is highlighted by the adjacent scene on the right showing the king offering Maat to Ptah 'Lord of Maat', accompanied by the goddess (Line-drawing of reliefs in Ramesses IX's tomb at Thebes)

controlling the danger during this time of procreation.8

But it is one of their names which holds such a surprise and takes us straight back to the 'Wandering Ones' weeping round their fiery braziers. Alongside the 'Contented One', the 'Protectress' and an unnamed figure comes none other than the 'Mourning One'. Here, in the very midst of regeneration in the darkness, next to scenes showing the destruction of enemies, is a weeping being. And it leaves not the slightest shadow of doubt about the link between mourning, the destruction of enemies and the generation of a child.

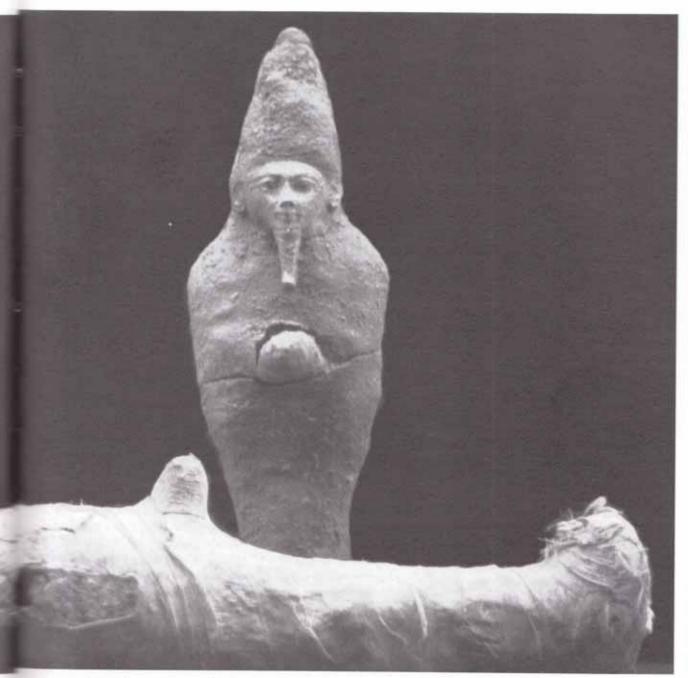
Nowhere is this destructive-creative process so clearly shown as in these rare scenes in Ramesses IX's tomb. It is also referred to in the accompanying texts of the lower register, which say these beings are in the 'places of destruction' where 'they accomplish manifold transformations'. That this is a dangerous place is made abundantly clear by Ramesses IX, the Osiris King himself, in the inscription over the lower register. He calls on the gods in the following of Osiris to:

Come to me, so that you may do for me
What you have done for Osiris,
So that you may save me
From the messengers of Baba.
For I am Atum
When he arose alone in Nun,
I am the child
Of the heavenly cow [Mehet-Weret],
For the heavenly cow is the Wedjat-eye
Of the god with great magic. 10

The king asks to be saved from the messengers of the baboon god Baba, who may harm his phallus. To regenerate like Osiris, the king needs his phallus intact, so that he can rise renewed like Atum from Nun and be reborn as the child of the heavenly Mehet-Weret cow, who is the 'Wedjateye of the god with great magic'. This Mehet-Weret is the heavenly cow who

wears Hathor's menit-necklace around her neck, the cow of the primordial flood who is none other than the Wedjat-eye (pls 92,134).

Need we look further to know how deeply involved the fiery magical Sun Eye is in this rebirth from Nun, the waters of regeneration? Or to know why the serpent goddesses stand in the upper register of the sixth hour in the Book of Night, close to the 'One who comes into existence in Nun'? Both male seed and the fiery flame kindled for generation are needed for a new birth. And in the Book of Night, a way of rebirth ruled by the goddesses, it is not the power of seed but rather the creative power of flame and the

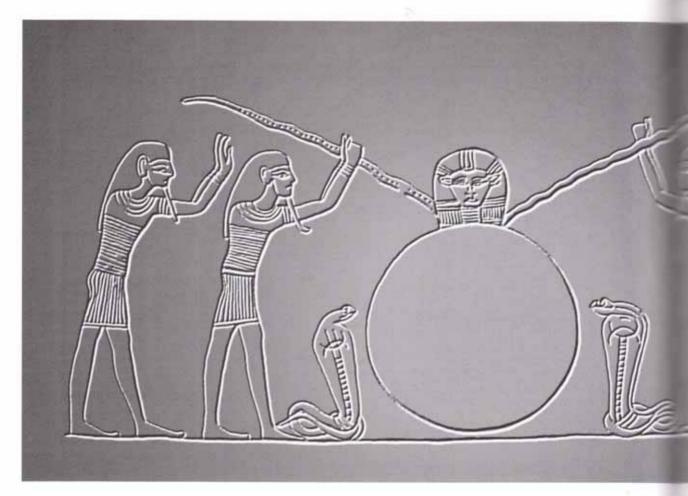


destruction of enemies, which is shown during the sixth hour.

These scenes in Ramesses IX's tomb meach deep into the mysteries of regeneration in the night, and it is little monder that most of the inscriptions here on this corridor wall are in cryptographic writing. The sacred process they describe is so profoundly secret, so mysterious, to the extent that, when it is shown in the Book of Night, it is scarcely possible to disentangle the real meaning of the sixth hour 'Wandering Ones' and 'Seizers' around their fiery furnaces in the Book of Night, so hidden is the allusion to regeneration. But it is perhaps clear now why the furnaces of destruction

108 Phallic grain figures of Osiris which were originally placed in Ptah-Sokar-Osiris containers for rebirth (National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden)

are shown when the 'living Bas sail' towards the seventh hour people of regeneration. For these night travellers are passing through the flames of new birth, encountering the fiery



109 Hathor as the fiery generatrix in the cycle of death and rebirth. On the far right the arms of Naunet (Nun's female counterpart) hold a sun-disk. Next comes a ram-headed elder, watching as Atum and the 'Seizer' hold fast Hathor's serpent-like arms, binding her volatile power. The goddess appears above a womb-like disk flanked by two uraeus-serpents called the 'Devouring One' and the 'Flaming One'. Further to the left in the same register (not shown here) a winged black scarab beetle emerges from a disk (Scene in the Book of the Earth in the sarcophagus chamber of Ramesses VI's tomb at Thebes)

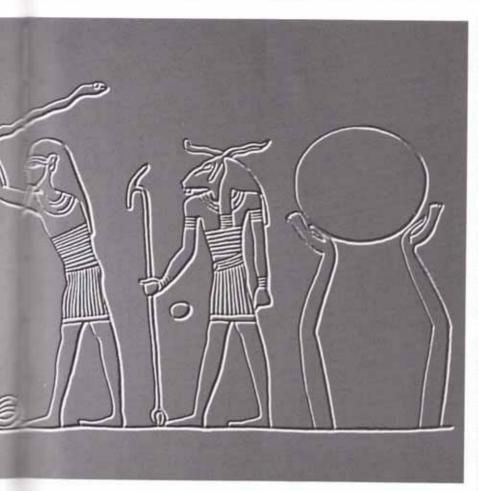
destruction and heat from which new life arises.

Such an encounter with flame also recalls the close of chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead when the initiate identifies with Isis who appears with hair falling over her face. At first it seems that Isis must be mourning for Osiris. But then the text goes on to mention the conception of new life, the destruction of enemies, and the fiery red uraeus of Lower Egypt. In fact, the goddess encountered here is the procreative Isis in flame, her dishevelled hair untidily falling over her face, free from any restrictive bonds which could impede the powerful process she is engaged in.

I was Isis when you found me, whilst my hair hung dishevelled over my face and the hair of my head was ruffled. I have conceived as Isis, I have engendered as Nephthys. Isis drives away those who await me...I am Wadjet, the lady of flame.¹¹

Evidently the 'lady of flame' seeks more than just the fiery destruction of enemies—once again we see how interwoven are life and destruction, the green and the red, in the realm of the fiery goddess.

Nor should we forget that the gateway of this sixth hour in the Book of Night is called 'The Lady of Life'. Close to destruction there is always life. And tears, too, though they may flow because of grief, are also creative, a sign of generation and new life. Have we not already seen in the Book of Nut how redemptive tears fall for the decanal stars creating a great lake of renewal (page 102). And how humankind arose from the tears of the creator god? (page 24). Clearly, these fiery vessels in the Book of Night serve a double function, having an aspect not shown here, perhaps too numinous to be represented in the Book of Night, but



known to all those initiated into the secrets of rebirth in the sixth hour.¹²

In short, these crucibles of destruction are also the fiery vessels of new life and birth, the flame kindled during the act of generation, which must be controlled if it is to produce new life.

There is a rare portrayal of the beneficent fiery generatrix on a wall in the sarchophagus chamber of Ramesses VI, beneath the Book of Night on the ceiling (pl 109). It forms part of a royal composition known today as the Book of the Earth and is located to the right of a large winged black scarab emerging from a sun-disk in the mysteries of transformation. It shows a tage sun-disk flanked by twin uraeus-serpents called 'the Devouring One' and 'the Flaming One'. On the externe right of this disk are the arms of

Naunet, goddess of the primordial waters and the female partner of Nun, holding yet another solar disk. Facing towards the disk guarded by serpents is a ram-headed figure. He leans like an Elder on his sceptre, watching intently as the fiery snake-like arms extending upwards from the disk are grasped by Atum and a male called 'Seizer'.

And as this focus of solar fire and heat is seized and held fast, it is the unmistakeable face of Hathor which magically appears above the womblike disk. A flame which can be all-consuming and destructive has here become the positive heat of transformation. For this is not the raging, wandering goddess intent on destroying enemies but rather a 'Contented One', whose presence

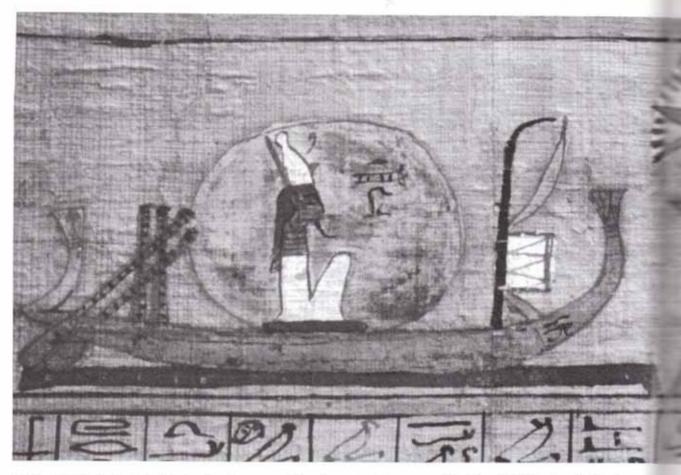
ensures that the flames of destruction now become the source of life. 14 Moreover, the configuration of deities here—the female partner of Nun, the Elder, Atum and, not least, the solar serpent eye goddess, all recall not only that night regeneration from Nun in Ramesses IX's tomb described above but also the deities inhabiting the upper register of the sixth hour in the Book of Night.

It is essential to understand the connection between seed, flame and the generation of a child, because without a clear notion of fire's central place in this process, it is all too easy to miss the significance of the fiery furnaces interposed between the sailing Bas and the seventh hour group of regeneration in the Book of Night. Those seeking to know the mysteries of regeneration by night-to know the nature of Bapower-must enter this fierce heat of transformation, experiencing its destructive and creative power in order to be reborn into new life.15 Hence, all the imagery when the 'living Bas sail' in the sixth hour, sparse and cryptic though it may be, is intended to evoke this fiery matrix of life and death, generation and destruction.

REBIRTH AND RITUAL: SPANNING WORLDS

And as we might expect by now, the ceremonies and chants at this stage in the Ancestor Ritual all encapsulate this manifestation of generative Ba-power spanning heaven and earth. After Horus has received his heart in the ritual, Geb then opens the great doors of the four cardinal directions for him, so that he can ascend in all his Ba-power, 'glorious as Re, powerful and equipped as a god'.

The powerful new solar ruler in the Ancestor Ritual goes forth in complete freedom, able to travel in the 'sky with Re' or in deep earth with the 'Unwearying Stars'. He is, in short, a fully-functioning procreative Ba who



spans heaven and earth. But he is something more. He is a ruler deeply interwoven with the resurrected power of his Osirian predecesor. The next ritual invocation proclaims his ancestral predecessor as the risen lord of the Red Crown, the ruler of Lower Egypt. Like Osiris, he is no longer a passive force, floating helplessly in the waters, but rather a ruler capable of generating fertility and new life, of manifesting Ba-power in the form of the reigning Horus king (page 78), a ruler who has united with the fiery Hathorian Isis to generate new life.

The very next act of this new Horus ruler in the ritual is to travel to the fiery sun altars of Heliopolis, to the cult centre of Atum, the source of food for both the living and the dead, where the manifold deities have gathered at the place from whence they came. It is a journey to the source of creation, and he comes as the solar fiery lord of rituals, empowered by the serpent goddesses. Uncoiling in flame on the king's brow, these fiery uraeus serpents have risen up to generate new life and fertility for the whole of Egypt, once again repeating the cycle of death and rebirth.

The section of the Book of the Dead equated with the sixth night hour—chapter 68—echoes these themes. After telling how the great doors of sky and earth open for the revitalized initiate of Hathor, it goes on to describe the blissful existence beneath her tree and the journey with her to Heliopolis. She is the 'foremost of her spacious disk' and she travels to Heliopolis bearing the divine writings of Thoth (page 124). In the equivalent sixth hour scene in the Osiris shrine at

Abydos, it is Thoth who is shown holding his snake-staff towards the mummiform Seti I, its two crowned uraeus snakes coiling around the plants of Upper and Lower Egypt (pl 50). We can only guess at what might be contained in these secret writings of Thoth carried by Hathor. Yet it is not hard to imagine that their sacred words would have revealed something about these mysteries of seed and flame, of life and sexual generation, known to all who travelled in the sixth hour depths of the night. 16

BREATH OF LIFE: FLAME OF BECOMING

All this also brings us to the difficult problem of identifying which part of Nut's body should be equated with the sixth hour with its fiery furnaces of destruction and regeneration. Dimitri



Meeks has suggested that the sixth hour organ might be the lungs and there are a number of reasons why this seems plausible.¹⁷

Certainly the ancient Egyptians cannot have been ignorant of the close relationship between the lungs and the organ of the fifth hour, the heart. New Kingdom medical papyri demonstrate that Egyptian doctors were taught a systematic knowledge of human anatomy and physiology which, although elementary, was clearly empirically based. And because mummification always involved severing the lungs from the heart, the ancient embalmers, must have known how these organs are connected together by the pulmonary veins and arteries. Since the only other connection of the lungs is with the trachea there can be little doubt that they were

aware of how the lungs supply air, the vital breath of life, to the heart and thereby to the rest of the body. Moreover, according to the Book of Night, the sixth hour is the time when 'the living Bas are sailing, the corpses are sailing in their places', and sailing, as every Egyptian sailor knew, is an activity needing at least a breath of wind. So this 'sailing' may well include an allusion to the 'wind' passing in and out of the lungs in breathing.

But from the ancient Egyptian perspective there is another compelling reason why the lungs should be considered as the sixth hour organ. And here we must return once again to Egyptian notions about the generation of life. We have already seen how moisture and fire, semen and flame, were regarded as essential. But a third element was also seen as needed to Above 110 Vignette from chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead. Atum, the creator god of Heliopolis, sails towards the uraeus serpent, Wadjet, Lady of the Devouring Flame, the Eye of Re, entwined in papyrus plants. Beneath her is a lion and behind, a flame in a brazier. The text describes how Atum and the initiate journey towards the glittering birthgiving regions she guards (Papyrus of Ani, British Museum, London)

generate life—air, the breath of being. Surprisingly, the best evidence for this connection between air and procreation comes from Akhenaten, of all Egyptians the least sympathetic to the mysteries of the night. In his Great Hymn to the Aten he includes an 'embryological' section which makes perfectly clear the air's importance for maintaining the life of the unborn child. Praising the celestial solar life-



giver of the Amarna cult, Akhenaten invokes the divine power who sustains life in the womb through his breath:

Who makes seed grow in women

Who creates people from sperm,

Who nurtures the child in his mother's womb...

Nurse in the womb,

Who gives breath to nourish all that he made. When he comes from the womb to breathe, On the day of his birth,

You open wide his mouth, You supply his needs.

When the chick in the egg speaks,

You give him breath within to sustain him.18

Manifestly, according to Akhenaten, not only semen and flame, moisture and warmth, are necessary for the maintenance of life, but air as well. To breathe the air is to be born again, and Akhenaten presents here an embryological wisdom which conforms in every way to Egyptan ideas about conception and birth.

Indeed, we find just such an allusion to air when Isis, manifesting as a bird, joyfully 'creates breath with her wings' to conceive Horus from Osiris and raise 'the weary one's inertness' (pl 25). Her wings beat to provide the 111 Scenes of metal-working from the 18th Dynasty Left 111a A foundryworker smelts metal in a crucible which resembles the hieroglyph of the sun rising in the horizon mountain (18th Dynasty tomb of Puimre at Thebes)

Below 111b Scenes showing foundryworkers melting metal. A centrally placed inscription (not shown here) makes it clear that the work is under the control of the king, Thutmose III. At the top the workers use foot-bellows to increase the temperature of the furnace. In the scene below they have dropped the cords that inflate the bellows. The metal in the crucible has evidently melted and they now remove it from the fire using a two-person

conditions necessary for conceiving new life.¹⁹

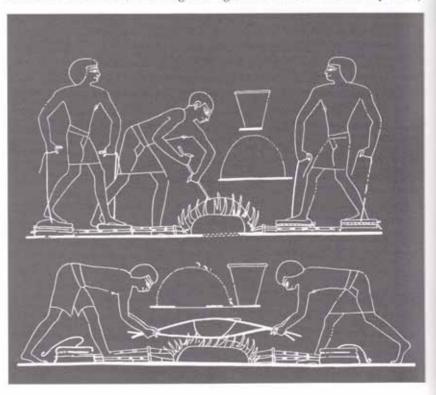
All this suggests that air, the breath of life, would have been an essential element together with fire during that time of regeneration and new birth in the sixth hour of the night. And the lungs would also fit with the Book of the Dead chapter chosen for this hour which extols the opening of the gates of heaven and earth, allowing the

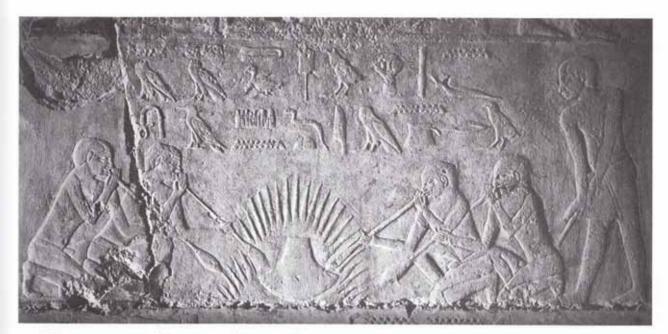
carrying 'shank'. At this moment there must be no delay or the metal will solidify; and this may well be why those who carry the shank are urged to 'seize' the crucible (see plate 112). The iconography in plate 109 may well be intended to echo this critical moment (18th Dynasty tomb of Rekhmire, Thebes)

Right 112 Four metal-workers smelting metal in a furnace. Each holds a blowpipe to make more air in order to obtain the necessary heat. Watching the process is an older supervisor, leaning on his staff, who orders them to 'seize' when the smelted metal is ready for pouring (Relief in the Fifth Dynasty tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara)

generative Ba to manifest in the fullness of power. Travelling through the realm of the air god Shu, who separates sky and earth, the procreative Ba enjoys freedom of movement in both these worlds. This ability to 'unite' two lands, is also represented by the trachea and lungs of the zema-sign, the 'Union of the Two Lands' (pl 113).

Yet unless we realize all the background to this sixth hour, it is perfectly





possible to pass over this vague description of the Bas as 'sailing', without fully appreciating why such an allusion to air should be so important here. For it inescapably points to the presence of the life-breath in this sixth hour region. And it also means—as Meeks suggested—that the lungs were probably the organ of Nut's body associated with the sixth hour

If this association with the lungs is correct, then enclosed in the throatchest-lungs region of Nut's body are all the animating powers needed for the regeneration of life, powers connected with the nourishing fluid of the blood, with warmth and air, the breath of life. As the procreative dynamic Bas soar forth in the sixth hour, so the night travellers experience the fiery source of life and destruction in this generative realm of Nut's body.

FIERY FURNACES: CRUCIBLES OF LIFE

There is one other important layer of meaning to the fiery furnaces of the Book of Night's sixth hour: their hidden connection with metal-working. This metallurgical aspect comes out best in the name of the three figures to the right of the furnaces, 'the Seizers', a name which takes on a much deeper significance if linked to the Egyptian metallurgical practice of melting metal in a crucible.²¹

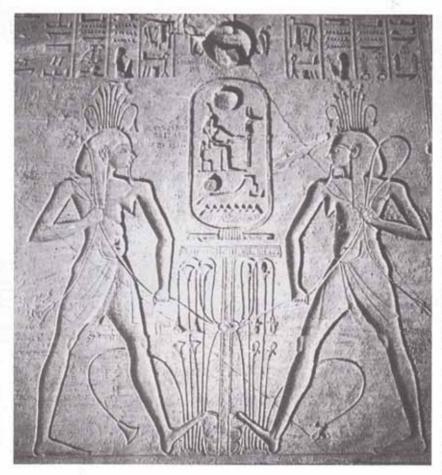
Private tomb scenes sometimes show metal-workers lifting molten metal in a crucible from a furnace (pl 111). These metal-workers must 'seize' the carrying-shank quickly in order to pour the metal into a mould as it soon solidifies once away from the heat. Hence they too are 'seizers' surrounding a furnace just like the 'seizers' in the Book of Night.

But it is an Old Kingdom tomb relief that gives the clearest hint of a metallurgical meaning. Four metal-workers surround a smelting furnace, using blow-pipes, as was customary in Old Kingdom times, to create more air. They are supervised by an older man holding a staff, whose words to the workers refer to the hot flames and the smelting process. Finally, he orders them to 'seize'. In other words, they are to take the crucible from the flames in order to pour the metal.²²

Such a grouping around a furnace uncannily recalls the activity of Atum and the 'Seizer' when they grasp Hathor's snake-like arms as she rises above the fiery sun disk in plate 109. Here also an 'elder' holding a staff intently supervises the process.

To those familiar with Egyptian metal-working processes their activity must have looked for all the world like two metal-workers seizing a red-hot crucible containing volatile molten metal. Of metal-working as such there is not a single word in the accompanying text, for the mysteries of Egyptian metallurgy, as we shall see later, were closely guarded secrets. But it would not be at all surprising to find such an analogy between metal-working and the fiery solar womb because Hathor is said to be the divine source of precious ores, especially copper and gold.

And for those who doubt that the Egyptians associated metal-working with the solar cycle it is but necessary to consider a scene from Puimre's 18th Dynasty tomb at Thebes (pl 111a). In a rare direct analogy with sunrise, the act of melting metal in a crucible has been made to resemble the hieroglyphic mountain of light, the horizon from which the sun rises at dawn.



Other veiled references to foundry activity can be detected in the Book of Night sixth hour. In the foundry scene from Rekhmire's tomb the two metalworkers are shown pulling on cords to inflate foot-bellows (pl 111b, top). Pushing down their feet would then force the air out along the pipes into the fire, supplying the extra air essential for the furnace to be hot enough to melt metal.

So it is interesting to find that one of the divine companions in the upper register of the sixth hour is called 'He of the Cords'. Given that the living Bas sail in this hour, his name could refer to boat ropes. But equally, in this hour when air is so desperately needed, it may be associated also with the cords of a foot-bellows.

It is interesting, too, that the two figures representing the inundation god, Hapy, in the 'Union of the Two Lands' motif in plate 113 also pull on cords—plant cords. The curious angle of their feet on the lungs suggests they too may be working the lungs like metal-workers, using the lungs like bellows in order to create the maximum amount of air for uniting the two lands.

If the sixth hour fiery furnaces do have this metallurgical connotation then they also shed a very different light on the images of 'mountains' and 'greenness' in the fourth and fifth night hours. As well as being the domain of Seth, the fiery god whose destructive impulses so threaten the night travellers in their journey, mountains were also where the Egyptians obtained the minerals and ores which blossomed in beautiful colours like plants growing from the

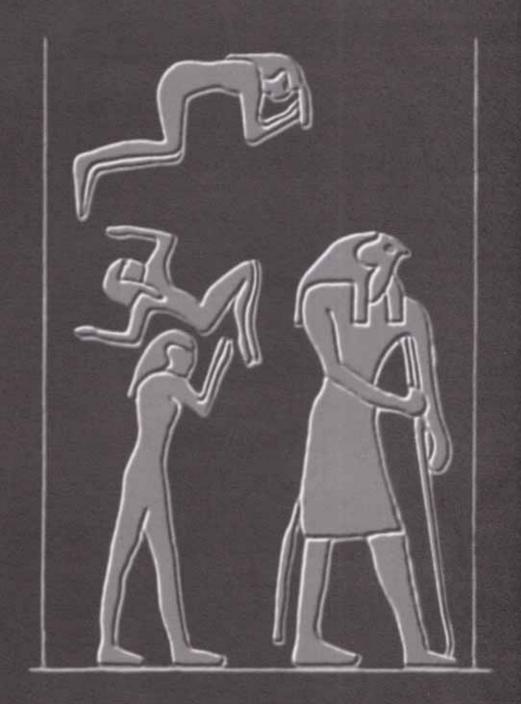
Left 113 Named as Hapy, the god of the annual inundation, paired fecundity figures of Upper and Lower Egypt bind the plants symbolic of the two parts of the country to the hieroglyphic sign for 'union', which represents the trachea and lungs. Above is a sun-disk and the cartouche of Ramesses II (Relief on a colossus at the entrance to the large temple at Abu Simbel)

Right 114 The regeneration of life in the seventh hour symbolized by a man joyfully raising aloft a perfect child. Above them another figure bends forward with hands held to a falling lock of hair like the weeping 'Wandering Ones' and 'Seizers' in the sixth hour. On the right stands Horus, leaning on his staff, as the protector of his father, Osiris. He is a child grown strong, who has integrated Seth's strength and boundless power to safeguard the borders and limits of Egypt (Book of Night, Osireion)

earth. Green was also the distinctive colour of malachite, the important ore from which copper was obtained by applying heat. And the quest for metals in a mountainous region was fruitless unless blessed by the goddess most strongly present in the fifth and sixth hours of the night—Hathor, the green 'Lady of Life' who presided over the rich ore-bearing lands and was herself identified with the metals she gave.²³

The Book of Night is not primarily a metallurgical treatise. But its use of metal-working to symbolize aspects of human transformation was clearly much more than just a metaphor. The operations performed by the metal-workers—the masters of fire—were themselves seen as numinous transformations in the cycle of 'becoming'.

The ancient Egyptians never saw metallurgy as a secular craft activity, separable from religious concerns. And how could it have been, when the divine patrons who presided over the working of metals were precisely the Memphite deities so closely interwoven with death and rebirth?



14 Born in the Dark: Behold the Child

Now the seventh hour described as 'Smiter of the confederates of Seth'. Now the fruit of the labouring sixth hour manifests in the scene of 'regeneration', with its group of three figures which we have already described—male seed and female flame in the completion of sexual regeneration (pl 114, previous page).

GATEWAY TO THE SEVENTH HOUR: LADY OF THE HOLY AND MYSTERIOUS

The figures of the companions in the upper register above the sun-boat are damaged in the Osireion, but in other versions they include 'She who gives birth to her son', 'He who comes into being in the dark' and the 'Iba-dancer', who elsewhere is known to dance in honour of the sun. Within this dark interior of the goddess, a child has come to birth in the lifeblood of the female, ready to begin a new shining existence in the solar circuit.

The Book of the Dead chapter equated with this seventh hour is chapter 74. which is a poignant short invocation to Sokar encapsulating the liberation of the Ba-soul from the body:

May you do what you wish to do, O Sokar... I shine in the sky... Though I am inert, may I walk on the riverbanks... in the realm of the dead

Though the body remains earthbound and inert, a new liberated Ba goes forth, free to walk on the 'riverbanks', protected from the dangerous beings inhabiting this region. Manifesting as a Ba capable of unimpeded motion, the night traveller now has complete freedom to leave or return to the physical body at will, which is left in an inert state. And this out-of-the body experience also releases tremendous power, power to regenerate existence anew in the solar circuit

like the reawakened Osiris and Isis. Just as a live plant comes forth from an apparently lifeless seed, and Horus comes forth from Osiris, so the Ba now soars from the body which is viewed as a seemingly lifeless corpse.

This liberation is also celebrated in the beautiful chant of the Ancestor Ritual, immediately following the king's service at the Heliopolitan sun altars. The chant praises Atum, Re-Harakhti and the child Horus-Re, who became 'the oldest of the old' and is reborn again from Isis and Osiris. He becomes a youth, he becomes Re, living his lifetime through all its different transformations from birth to old age with his mother Isis in the solar cycle of becoming-a child who comes forth from the sweet libation of Osiris on the east side of the watery Great Green and breathes the east wind (page 80). And it is followed, in the ritual, by a glorification of all those sailing in the boat of Re, for this lifetime of Horus now belongs to the circuit of the sun, fulfilled within the processes of time.

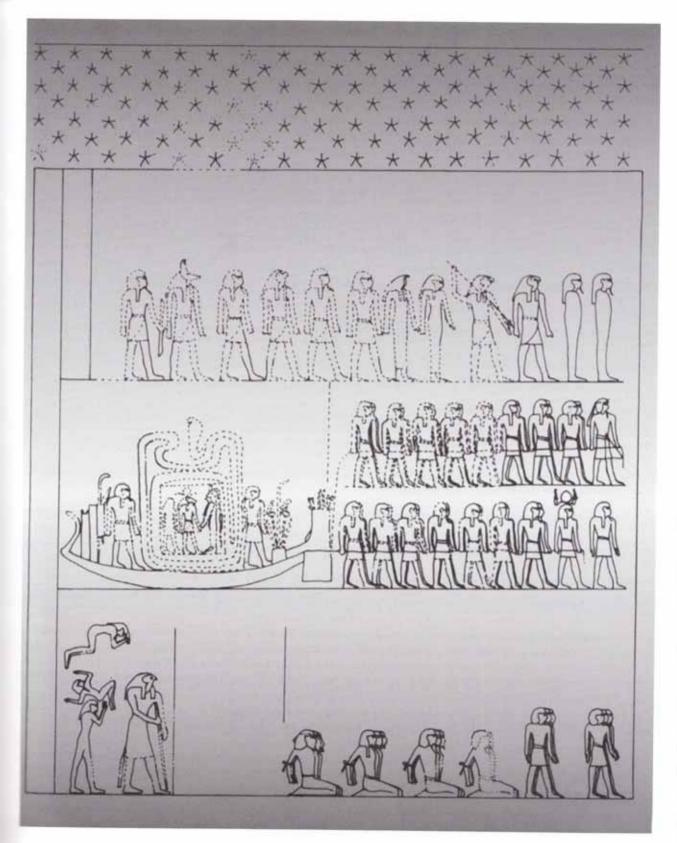
As encapsulated in the relief of the Hathorian Isis making music with her sistrum at Abydos (pl 51), this chant of the temple ritualists glorifies the rebirth of Osiris as Horus and the manifestation of the powerful Ba of transformations. It intimately connects the powers of growth in a human lifetime with the sphere of the dead, for although this lifetime of Horus from birth to death is lived in the light of the sun, the deep processes which sustain his transformational changes in the solar circuit are ultimately grounded in darkness and death. They are rooted in the hidden mysterious powers of Isis in her serpent flame and Osiris who mysteriously recreate new life from an apparently lifeless form.1

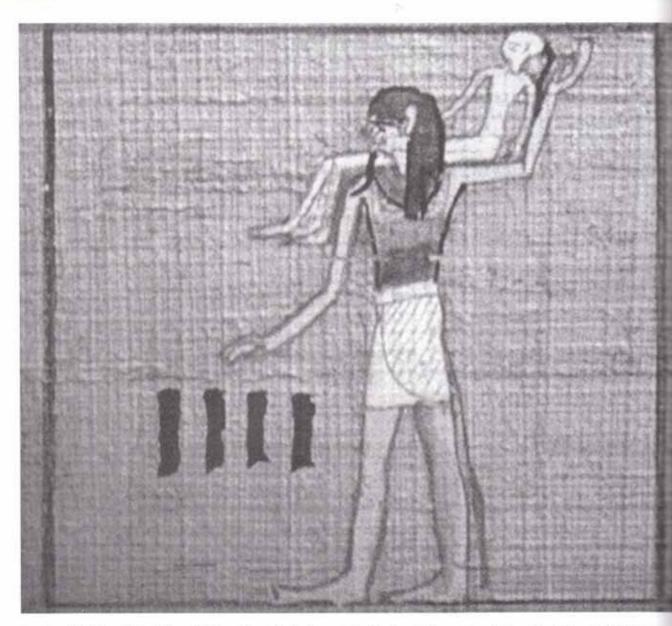
Now too it is perhaps clear why an Iba-dancer should be needed here in the seventh hour of the Book of Night. 115 The sun-boat travels through the seventh night hour, the completion of regeneration in the 'Life'-realm when a new child comes forth in the darkness, as shown in the lower register. This birth also represents the reconciliation of opposites, the Red Land and the Black Land, the domains of Seth and Horus respectively, represented by two groups standing on the far right of the lower register. These are united by the power of Horus the Elder who leans on his staff surveying bound captives (Book of Night, Osireion)

He is there to dance for the risen sun child, to dance in the darkest time of the night when the new child comes into being through the fiery gateways. brought to birth within a process which manifests both as destruction and life. In essence the seventh hour represents the completion of existence in the 'life' or generative realm. All the faculties and powers associated with growth and decay, with desire, feeling and sexuality, have become active again, culminating in the appearance of a new shining being, whose lifetime from birth to death is so gloriously celebrated in the Ancestor Ritual. It is the complete fulfilment of regeneration in the 'life' realm

This termination of all disharmony is symbolized by the other group of scenes in the lower register of the seventh hour. Alongside the regenerative family and their child stands Horus, triumphantly leaning on his staff, surveying a group of bound captives representing the traditional enemies of Egypt—the Asiatics, the Libyans, the Medja and the Nubians. Horus has become the big child, leaning on his staff like Horus of Letopolis, identified completely with his father Osiris, as can be understood from his words:

You are the rebels who have bound my father Osiris. My father Osiris has caused that I should strike your enemies [the enemies of Egypt] as Khenty-Irty [Horus, the hawk god of Letopolis]. Hence it is he who strikes you.





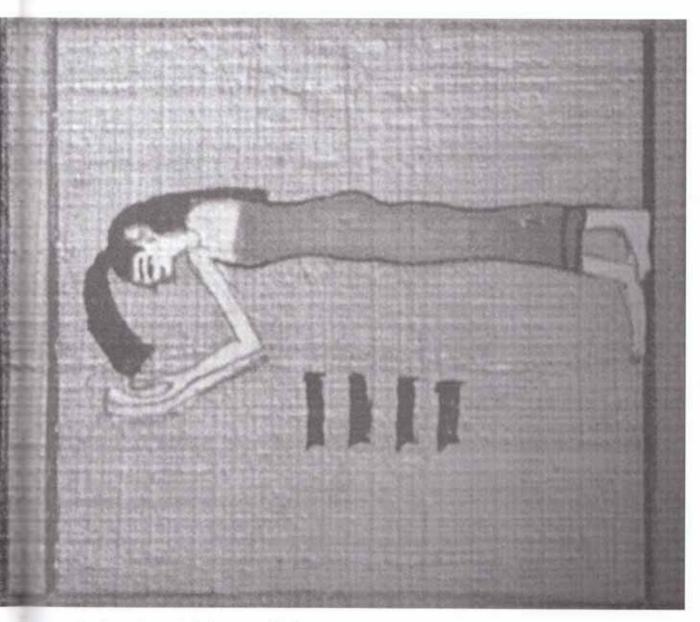
As the defender of his father Osiris, Horus has indeed suffered blindness at the hands of Seth—like the eyeless hawk god worshipped in Letopolis at the apex of the Delta—in order to gain the power and sexual maturity which he needs, both to rule Egypt and protect the realm of Osiris from hostile forces.

But now all opposites have been united into a totality, all discord has been brought to an end in the 'Life'realm as Egypt's enemies kneel before Horus in the hour of glorification. This conciliation is encapsulated by the two standing groups next to the captives. who are called 'the People of the Desert' and 'the People of the Black Land'. The Red Land and the Black Land, the domains of Seth and Horus respectively, stand together here, under the gaze of the ruling Horus of Letopolis.

This is a sure sign that the reconciliation of Horus and Seth is now a reality, that the two gods are 'at peace', for although the rule of Horus is total, it is nevertheless the co-operation of both these gods which ultimately guarantees the stability of Egypt.²

LIVER KNOWLEDGE: LIFE STORY

As in the previous hour it is far from clear which part of Nut's body the travellers have reached during this seventh hour. Dimitri Meeks has suggested that it may be the liver, particularly as the liver is sometimes



mentioned together with the heart in Egyptian texts.³

In an invocation to the feline goddess Sekhmet-Bastet at Edfu, she manifests as a propitiated goddess, content both in heart and liver:

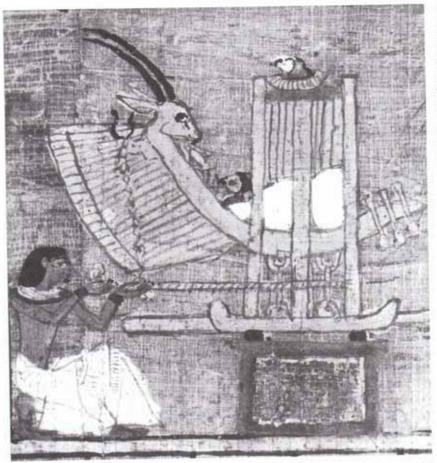
Content, content of heart is the sovereign, Content, content of heart is Bastet, Content, content of liver is the sovereign.⁴

Moreover, the liver appears to be associated with the defeat of the enemies of Osiris in the procession of reliquary urns shown in Hathor's Graeco-Roman temple at Dendara.⁵

But it is the appearance of Isis as the mother goddess of Horus-Re, both in the Ancestor Ritual chant and in the relief at Abydos, which makes this correspondence with the liver even more convincing, for her connection with the liver is well-known. In the mummification rites she, together with the human-headed Imsety, guards the liver. Furthermore, in the Litany of Re, the liver of Re is equated

116 The creation of a child by the inhabitants of the Eighth Cavern, as shown in chapter 168 of the Book of the Dead. A man carries a child on his shoulder. On the right is a female lying prone, with her hands held to her cascading hair like the females in the Book of Night (Scene from the 19th Dynasty papyrus of a scribe and priest called [?]-en-Mut, British Museum, London)

with 'the Living One' (Ankhet), which is sometimes an epithet of Isis. It is also the name of a hippopotamus goddess



associated with birth and destiny.⁶ Hence the liver could well be the seventh hour organ influencing this culminating moment when life is raised and a child's lifetime from birth to death is perceived in the 'Life' realm.

To our modern sensibilities it seems strange that the liver, of all bodily organs, should be associated with the regeneration of a child. It is true that the liver, unlike most other bodily organs, will grow back to its original size even if part of it is removed. But although this would make it a highly appropriate body-symbol for regeneration, there is no evidence that the ancient Egyptians knew about these extraordinary regenerative capacities.

More pertinent, perhaps is the Egyptian belief, perceptively described by Dimitri Meeks, that a person's character or true nature could be perceived in the liver.7 This makes it clearer why the liver might be the organ of the seventh hour. For, as the Ancestor Ritual shows, what is celebrated here is not just the birth of Horus-Re, but rather the whole course of his unique lifetime from birth to death, the whole pattern of his fate and his power of transformation, as he grows and changes through all the different phases of his life in the cycle of becoming-a lifetime which arises from his defeat of Osiris's enemies and his reconciliation with Seth. All this, it seems was a closely guarded secret of the liver.

This final reconciliation of opposites, together with the glorification of the child, marks the culminating moment of regeneration in the seventh hour of

Left 117 The sacred boat of Sokar is the vignette for chapter 74 of the Book of the Dead. At the prow is an averted antelope's head, an animal of Seth. Its 'turned head' suggests the mastery of Sethier forces which have now been integrated within the rebirth cycle (Papyrus of Ambritish Museum, London)

Facing page 118 Detail from the eighthour of the Book of Night—the hour which inaugurates entry into the primordial Osirian realm—showing Horus 'Protector of his father' bringing life to Osiris. The white-crowned god of the dead is seated on a throne beneath which an enemy lies prostrate and bound. He is nameless in the New Kingdom scenes but later versions identify him as Seth Fettered in cords he is unable to disrupt this life-giving process in the Osirian realm (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

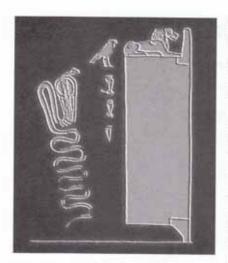
the Book of Night. So far those on the night journey have seen renewal through water and rebirth through fire. Progressively, there has been the strengthening of the body, the restoration of stability and fertility in the heart realm, and the regeneration of new life.

But this is not the end of the story. Tempting though it might be to stay in these paradisal realms—in the fire of desire with its entry into the boat of Re—this new birth in the depths of the night has another purpose. Because the heart is capable of more than regeneration: it is also the potential source of those Hathorian qualities which impel Horus towards remembrance and service of the ancestral dead (see chapter 5).

So having drawn to itself all the powers enabling it to separate from the body, the Ba-soul now prepares to enter the primordial transformations of the ancestral realm of Osiris. Attracted beyond the vegetal cycle of regeneration and bliss in the 'Life'-realm, the travelling Ba-soul is drawn towards the primordial sphere, flying onwards to the source of primal light in the further regions of the night.



15 Feeding Osiris: The Returning Dead



THE EIGHTH HOUR of the night journey brings a major shift towards the ancestral Osirian realm. And in sharp contrast to the fifth, sixth and seventh hours, the female once again manifests her aggressive side. This is already evident in the name of the gateway—'the Leader who fights for her Lord'.

GATEWAY TO THE EIGHTH HOUR: THE LEADER WHO FIGHTS FOR HER LORD

The night travellers have now moved on to the region of Nut's gall bladder. This is the small organ located below the liver, where bile produced by the liver is temporarily stored and used to assist digestion. And, as might be expected in this bilious region, the journey takes on a martial character once again during the eighth hour.

This shift in the journey is also highlighted in the text dealing with the progress of the sun-boat. It says that 'The Majesty of this god sails and swerves from the way' when entering through the eighth hour gateway. And here the guide who assists the sunboat is none other than 'Horus of the Netherworld'.

Now, after the mysteries of human procreation, generation and rebirth have been experienced in the previous gateways, the journey deepens into a realm of service and redemption for the blessed dead dwelling with Osiris.

Seti I's rendering of the Book of Night in the Osireion is unfinished, providing only fragments of the eighth and later hours. The rest of the night journey must be traced in the tombs of later kings and we shall focus mainly on Ramesses VI's version.

In the lower register of the eighth hour, Horus is shown bringing a sign of life to his enthroned father Osiris, who sits triumphantly wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt. Above Osiris are all the sleepers, wakers and transfigured ones from the second and third hours of the journey, their arms now raised in adoration for the god they surround, proclaiming their existence in the Osirian realm.

Beneath the throne a nameless enemy lies captive and bound, unable to prevent life reaching Osiris, unable to inflict a second death upon him (pl 120). His bound state is a sure sign that hostile forces have to be held in check when entering before Osiris. For anyone seeking the presence of Osiris needs the raying Eye of Horus to overcome the forces which prey on those in this region. As in that earlier entry into the 'life' realm during the fourth hour, so here too, in the eighth hour, forces inimical to Osiris must be contained and bound.

The Book of the Dead chapter for the eighth hour is chapter 28 which seeks to ensure that the heart is not taken from a person in the realm of the dead:

O Lion, I am a weneb-flower and the shambles of the god is what I abhor. Let not my heart be taken away from me by those who fought in Heliopolis.

It is an appropriate counterpart to the eighth hour when the image of the enemy is recalled, lying bound beneath the throne of Osiris.

The Ancestor Ritual exactly follows this sequence in the Book of Night. After the glorification of the Horus child and Left 119 The gateway to the ninth hour guarded by a rearing uraeus snake, a hawk, more snakes and a recumbent lion (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

Facing page 120 The sun-boat travels through the eighth and ninth hours. During the eighth hour Horus brings life to Osiris. Above Osiris are two rows of praisers whose names indicate that these are the risen dead from the second and third night hours. In the ninth hour Sia appears in the lower register calling the blessed ones forth to receive their food offerings. Again these are the risen dead from the second and third hours (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

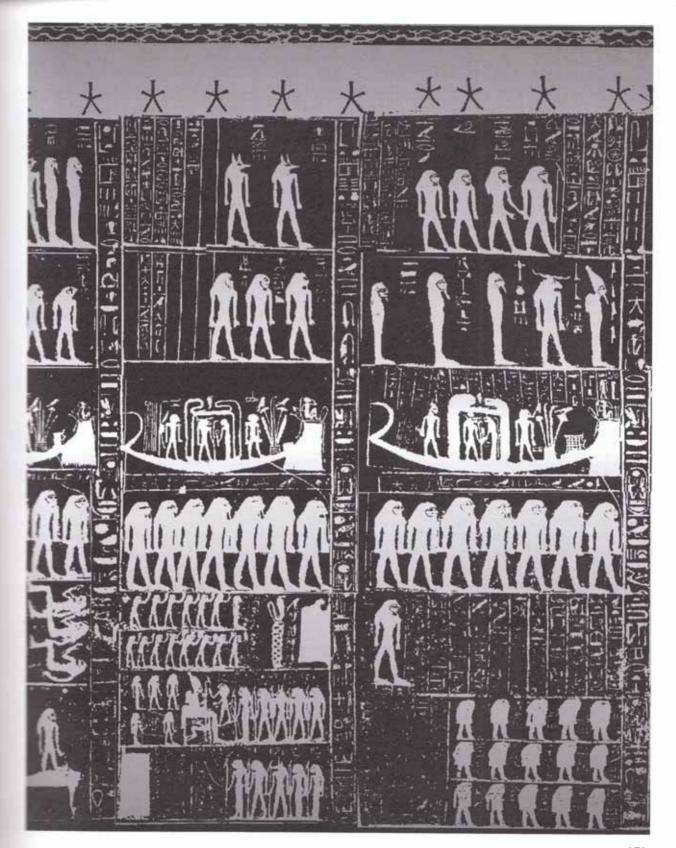
the occupants of the sun-boat, the reversion of offerings then takes place. The priests sprinkle water over the offerings, chanting in honour of the White Crown and the purificatory inundation waters. Praised too are Thoth and Ptah because the ancestral Osirian king has brought them the Red and White crowns of a united landcrowns which 'wash' and adorn them. Just as the White-crowned Osiris appears triumphantly seated on his throne in the eighth hour of the night. so too the ancestral ruler has reached his throne in the ritual by bringing these crowns to Thoth and Ptah.

GATEWAY TO THE NINTH HOUR: SHE WHOSE FLAME IS PAINFUL

Next 'the Beloved of the gods who are in the necropolis' passes through the gateway named 'She whose flame is painful' guided by 'This Ba'. The text here celebrates the radiant light which now surrounds the Osirian dead as the sun god enters to tend their needs:

O shining rampart, hear the words of the underworld dwellers. Tend to the needs of those who are in the *Dwat*.

And for a second time in the night journey, Sia commands this company of the dead in their various stages of rebirth. Now, in this transfigured realm, he tells the blessed ones that



they are to come forth from the Nile inundation waters to receive their food offerings on land. They have become the blessed ancestral companions of Osiris, purified souls whose hearts have been examined by Anubis and whose existence now harmonizes with the annual rhythm of the seasons. Furthermore, Sia ordains (pl 121) that wrong-doers amongst them will not see the god's light, all of which evokes that weighing of the heart in the court of the afterlife, when Anubis adjusts the scales as deeds of a lifetime are weighed and assessed:

Below 121 Sia calls forth the blessed ones, whose hearts have been weighed by Anubis, to receive their food offerings. They have all now become ancestral companions of Osiris—the justified ones—in the following of the god in the house of hearts (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes) Words spoken: Your Bas protect you and Anubis examines your hearts... Wrongdoers amongst you... you shall not behold your god. O you the inert ones and you who are carried by the inundation waters, you swim with the flood. You reach the land...it is granted to you to receive your barley. What you do is your duty to guard Wennefer... The justified amongst you are in the following of Osiris and in front of him as his ancestors. Your offerings are given you, the sun is before your eyes, the wind is in your nose.

Air, light, and sustenance—all have now reached Osiris and the justified dead, who come forth from the purificatory waters to reach earth like Osiris in the Memphite Theology. All are now called to partake in their food offerings and see the sun shining in their night realm, whilst wrong-doers are rejected. And

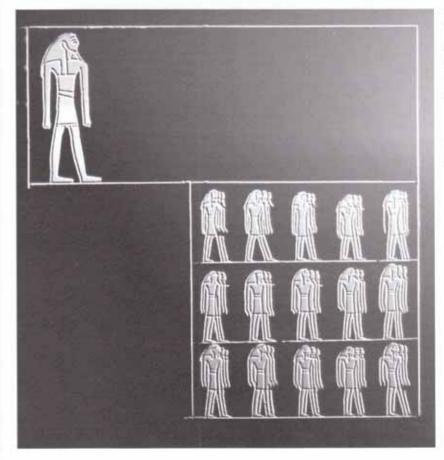
they, in their turn, promise that they have not done any harm by declaring:

We have come from our land, we came down from our nome, we have not done any harm...in the realm of the Silent One, our lord. We love the god who is at the head of our gods... Horus has placed us before Osiris so that he will not be alone.

Both fear and reverence for the Osirian dead were always mingled in Egyptian consciousness-fear that contact with them might harm the living, or that they might intervene negatively in life on earth. Yet these same ancestors were also a powerful source of sustenance and growth, coming forth from the waters to transform Egypt into a black and fertile land again. They were the guardians of Egypt's prosperity, so that their approval and co-operation were essential for the living. Hence their compassionate declaration when they receive their food that they have not done any harm in these lonely regions, where Horus has come to bring salvation for those who might otherwise be left floating helplessly in the turbulent waters.

Once again the Ancestor Ritual again closely follows this sequence of a journey to the ancestral dead. After the chant honouring the White Crown, priests light the candles held by the four torch-bearers, transforming the temple chamber into a blazing place of fire and light.

This is the critical ninth hour moment in the Book of Night when the radiance of the sun god, the 'shining rampart' surrounds Osiris; and when Sia commands the blessed company of the Dead to come forth from the inundation waters and receive their food. The corresponding chant, in the Ancestor Ritual glorifies the sacred flame of the Eye of Horus and the protector who has come to bring food to all the ancestral rulers who have served Egypt. Each one is named in turn, as this illustrious





company come forth to partake in their meal with the reigning king.

Here, in the Osirian nexus of a lifetime, the candles blaze up to the ramparts, illumining the whole throng of ancestral beings, all those purified ones with whom the Pharaoh shares his mortal existence, the companions of all who have been, who are and will be, in the great flow of time. In subject, as in structure, the Ancestor Ritual exactly corresponds with this celestial journey in the Book of Night. Humans and Pharaohs alike, all have become companions of Osiris receiving their food in this glorious ninth hour.

Similarly, in the inner Osiris shrine of Seti I's temple at Abydos, the corresponding scene shows the ancestral king seated at his offering table before Thoth, who calls him to his earth

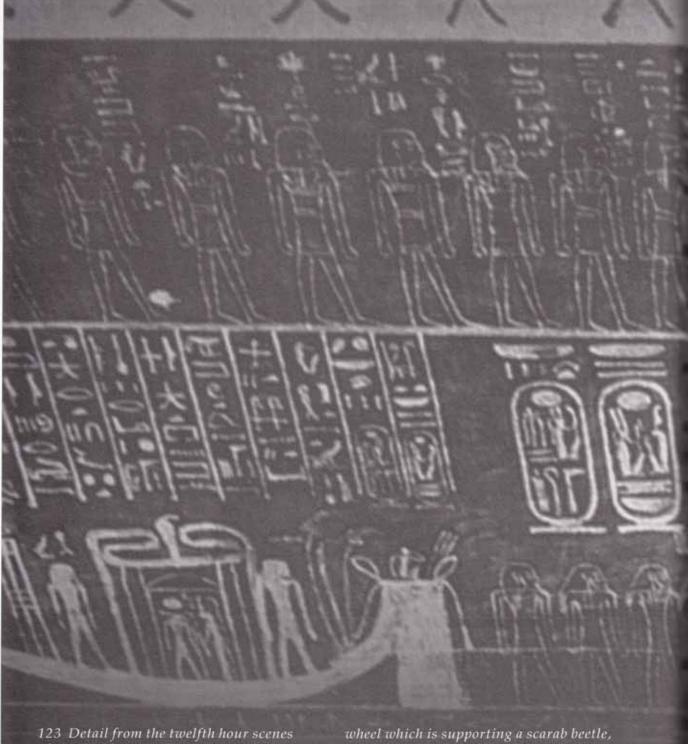
realm for food and purification by the inundation waters (pl 53). Also linked with the ninth hour is chapter 26 of the Book of Dead with its fervent Osirian prayer for retaining the heart in the realm of the dead:

May my heart be mine in the House of Hearts, may my heart be mine in the House of Hearts. May my heart be with me and at rest there.

For it is the heart which carries the deeds of a lifetime. And it is the purity of the heart which determines whether a person enters the blessed company of Osiris or is condemned to an existence beyond the glimmer of life-giving light, without water or food.

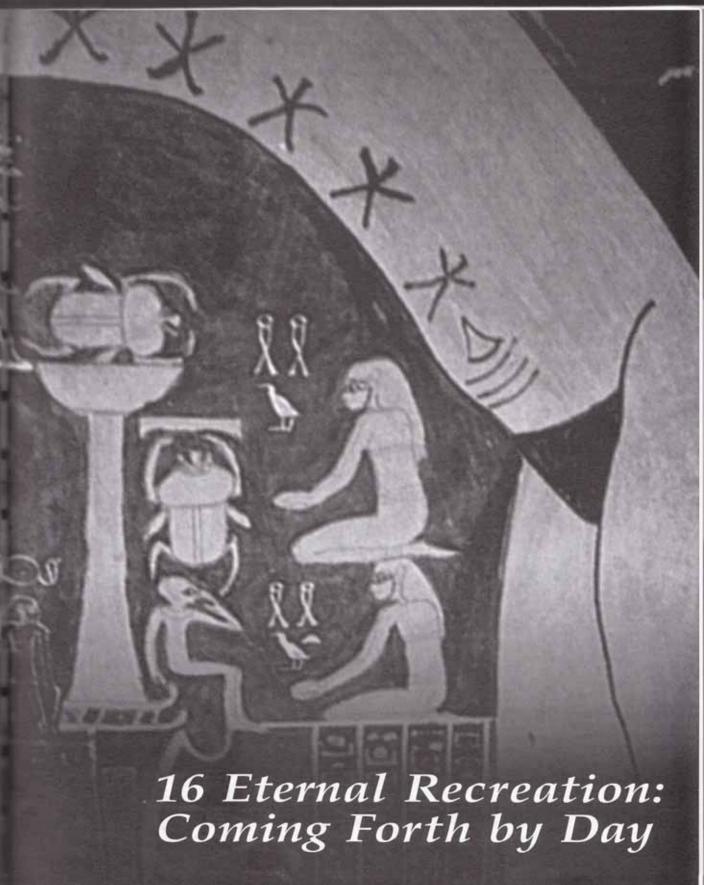
As Sia sternly says in the Book of Night's ninth hour, 'Anubis examines your hearts...the wrong-doers amongst Above 122 Vignette from chapter 26 of the Book of the Dead, equated with the ninth hour of the night. A chapter of the heart, it begins with the words 'May my heart be mine in the House of Hearts'. Holding her heart, the lady Taameniu kneels before her Ba, which wears a Djed-symbol of 'stability', symbolizing her stable existence within the realm of Osiris (Ptolemaic papyrus of Taameniu, British Museum, London)

you... shall not behold your god'. This may serve to remind us that the ninth hour was correlated with Nut's intestines, the place in the body where food is digested and non-assimilable elements rejected. Presumably it is no accident that the ninth hour—the time when the purified Osirian dead receive and digest their food offerings—is also the moment of final rejection for those who are hostile to the way of Osiris.



123 Detail from the twelfth hour scenes of sunrise showing the 'Becoming' of the cosmos at the completion of the night journey. The male-female pair from the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, Huh and Hauhet, 'Endlessness', kneel before a potter's

wheel which is supporting a scarab beetle, an image of 'Becoming'. Their arms reach out towards a second scarab and a young child, emphasizing the biological dimension of this cosmic rebirth (Tomb of Ramesses VI)





Now the Solar Boat enters the gateway called 'Lady of Fear'—
again an epithet of the uraeus—in the tenth hour known as 'the Raging One', that awesome threshold of fear. Guided by a crocodile-headed god called the 'Good Fortune of his Mother',¹ the night travellers have reached the birth-giving region of Nut's vulva.

GATEWAY TO THE TENTH HOUR: LADY OF FEAR

In the lower register stand identical figures of the justified ones, all defined by a single feature—the divine beard which each one wears. It symbolizes the divinized state they have attained here, the realization of their divine nature (pl 125). The accompanying text declares that their mummification bandages have been removed:

Your head-covering has been taken away, your bandages have been undone, and there will be no removal of your bread.

This shows that the mummification rites were for certain phases only during the rebirth journey, not for the ultimate destination of a person in the afterlife. For here it is quite clearly stated here that the bandages have been thrown off, the head-covering removed. All are cast away.²

There is no longer any need for individuals to retain a link with their mummiform body during this further stage of liberation. The preservation of the body, so essential for the survival of the Ka and Ba in the previous night hours, is no longer a prerequisite for existence in the tenth hour.

One of the divine beings in the upper register is called 'the One who nurtures his Father', which means that the child has become the father of the man, the son is now the nurturer of his begetter. There is a complete identification of father and son through the mystery of unification. When the two are experienced as one, complete and perfect in unity, so the divine nature is realized whilst travelling onwards to the place of dawn and pure light. Such a unity is also recognized in the text of the justified:

Those who adore Re on earth, and those who cense the gods in the *Dwat*, will be in the following of this god.

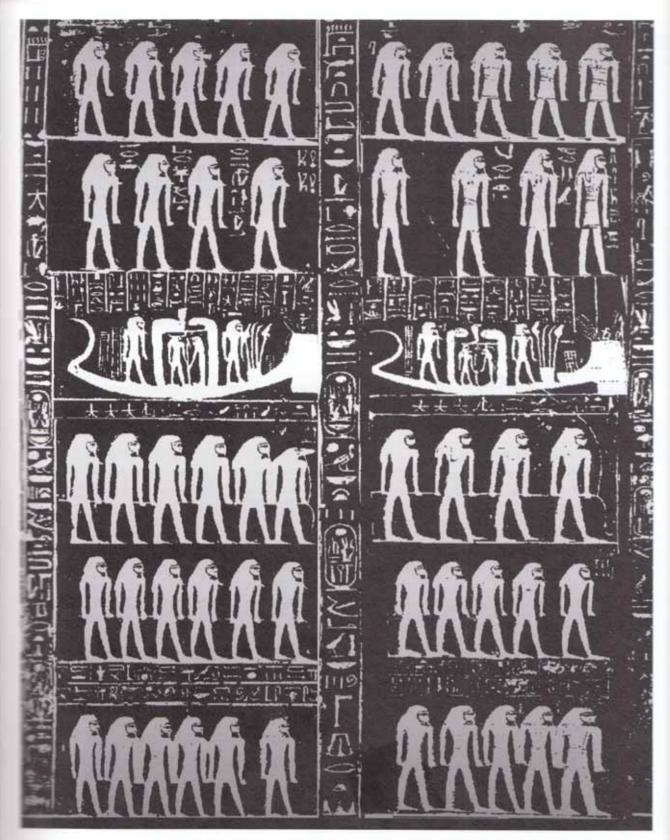
It proclaims the unity of the living and the dead, the unity between those who worship Re on earth and those Left 124 Vignette from chapter 25 of the Book of the Dead for 'making a person remember his or her name in the Dwat' which was correlated with the tenth night hour. Taameniu holds out a papyrus scroll to a standing god and ensures that her name will be remembered forever (From the Ptolemaic papyrus of Taameniu, British Museum, London)

Right 125 The sun-boat travels through the tenth hour and eleventh hour. The night travellers in the lower register of the tenth hour are all identical and each wears a beard symbolizing the divinized state This is the hour when they are released from the mummification bandages and experience the unity of all existence through the power of the name. Their appearance is similar in the eleventh hour but in the upper register stand divine beings associated with fiery rebirth, including 'He who loves the female Unique One' [the uracus] and Benben, the name of the sacred stone in Heliopolis, the source of cosmic creative energy (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

performing rites for the deities in the Dwat. All alike will be in the following of the sun god. It also confirms the central importance of ritual action. To perform a ritual is to uphold the way of Maat, the ordered form of the goddess herself in the cyclic movement of life and death. And it is instructive that 'the One who raises Maat' stands amongst the divine beings in the upper register.

By performing ceremonies like the Ancestor Ritual in the temples on earth, each and every ritualist merges in a glorious unity with those in the afterlife, existing together with them in the following of 'this god' according to the way of Maat. And we need look no further than this for confirmation that the ancient Egyptian ritualists were initiates of the highest order in the heavenly mysteries of death and rebirth, steeped in knowledge of the afterlife during their lifetime on earth.

Corresponding with this tenth hour is chapter 25 of the Book of the Dead for



'making a person remember his or her name (Ren) in the Dwat':

A name has been given to me in the Per-Wer. My name has been remembered in the Per-Neser on that night of counting the years and telling the months. I am this builder. I sit on the eastern side of the sky. As for any god who is not following behind me, I shall declare his name to those who are yet to be.

It is an invocation honouring the power of memory and the knowledge of names. To know your name is to know who you really are. Hence the name—the Ren—no less than the body, the Ka, the Ba and the Akh, was an integral part of an individual, encapsulating a person's pure essence. And here in the tenth hour it is this essence which is held and remembered, together with the vast cosmic knowledge of all those who have lived in the past and who will live in the future (pls 124, 126).

Transported along the heart's pathway through the ninth hour, the Osirian initiates have reached this tenth hour place of memory at Nut's vulva. For not only are the moral deeds of each individual 'inscribed' upon the heart; it is also the seat of consciousness and memory. As spell 62 of the Coffin Texts relates:

Your heart will be placed in the interior of your body, so that you remember again what you have forgotten.³

During the tenth hour the essence of a person's existence is experienced in the glorious state of unity reached through the heart. Empowered by memory at this sacred place of birth, the initiate comes to understand the mystery of totality in which all contrasts are subsumed, all opposites dissolved. And such knowledge of the vulva as a place of wisdom resurfaces in a much later demotic Book of Thoth when Thoth's disciple longs to enter this region:

The vulva is impatient for the teaching: may I enter its threshold.⁴ This female threshold, attuned to the power of 'remembering' and 'naming', to the glorious unity of existence, is the place where the pure essence of each individual is powerfully present just before Re goes forth at dawn. And standing there too in the upper register of the tenth hour is 'the One who causes Breath', who knows the secrets of divine utterance. For without breath nothing can be voiced, nothing named.

The midwife Isis calls out the name of the royal child immediately before he slides forth into her waiting arms at birth, according to one of the Tales of Wonder in the Westcar Papyrus. Similarly, when Nut is about to give birth to the sun, the night travellers experience the mystery of the name, the creative power of the voice and breath, when the rosy redness of light begins to dawn upon the waiting world.⁵

GATEWAYTOTHEELEVENTHHOUR: SHEWHOPROTECTSHERLORD

Empowered by sound and memory, the travellers journey on to the eleventh hour, guided by the crocodile-headed 'Gold of the Gods' through the gate called 'She who protects her Lord'. Again the justified ones appear in their divinized state in the lower register.

But here the divine companions who stand above the sun-boat bear such names now as 'the One with the Holy Eye', 'Benben', 'the Brilliant One', and 'He who loves the female Unique One', who can be none other than the uraeus Eye of Re. The night initiates tremble on the very threshold of Heliopolitan creation, the solitary Benben hill of origins where all the living and the dead are reabsorbed into the flame, the seed fire of Atum and his fiery female companion.

Released into the radiance of creation, surrounded by brilliant dazzling light, the night travellers unite with cosmic creative activity, with the process of the Heliopolitan cosmos called forth 126 The 'god's wife', Aset, daughter of Ramesses VI, adores her cartouche bearing her sacred name (Pyramidion of Aset, British Museum, London)

again and again at dawn. It is a dangerous fearful time as the travellers come forth between the legs of the goddess in this eleventh hour. Courage and strength are needed to contend with the forces which are let loose when the sun is born. When the god rises in his sacred Eye, appearing with his fiery protectress, punishing powers are unleashed. 'He who prepares the Braziers' stands in the upper register next to 'Flame in his Mouth', ready to vanquish enemies who might inhibit this new birth. And though this initiatory fire, no less than the fire in the sixth hour, is slaving, to pass safely through its flames is to be granted rebirth.

Such a fiery rebirth is also the theme of chapter 24 of the Book of the Dead for this eleventh hour, called 'spell for bringing magical power to the Osirian initiate'.

I am Atum-Khepri who created himself
On the thigh of his mother Nut,
Who gives jackals to those in Nun,
Dogs to those in the divine tribunal.
See, I have joined with this magical power,
Whoever has it and from wherever it came,
Swifter than hounds and quicker than light.

Strengthen your rope in the north wind
As you sail through the Dwat,
On the Lake of Flames.
Gather together this magical power
From whoever has it and from wherever it came,
Swifter than hounds and quicker than light.

You who bring the ferry-boat of Re.

Transform yourself into a heron,

The mother who created you.

The gods are silent—your mother

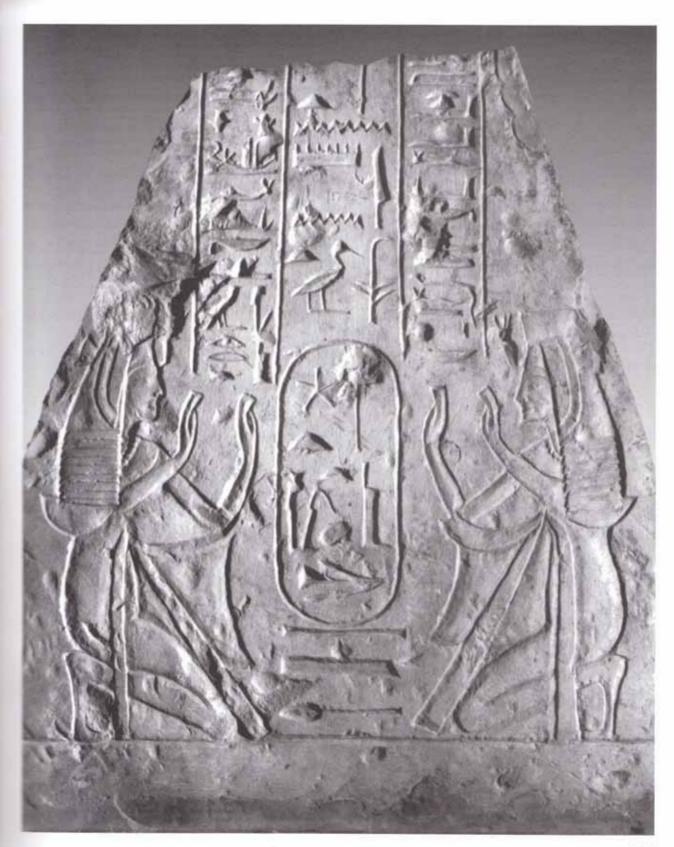
Has made you warm for the gods.

Now there is given me magical power

From whoever has it and from wherever it came,

Swifter than hounds and quicker than light.

Born from Nut, the slippery moist initiate becomes a channel for the



dynamic energy infusing creation, experiencing complete identification with the magical power (heka) of the creator, Atum-Khepri.⁶ Enflaming the beginning and end of all time, the fiery source of cosmic existence streams forth, encompassing the living and the dead in an all-embracing unity, brought to perfection in time.

Through their service of Osiris the night travellers are now granted the supreme vision of cosmic rebirth at the eleventh hour in 'the following of this god', seeing the radiance of Re and his uraeus companion shining at dawn. Towed by the 'Unwearying Stars' and guided by 'Gold of the Gods', those in the sun-boat come to see that nothing in the world dies, that death is not destruction but change and becoming, a transmutation of all beings in a recreated world. And their spiritual rebirth from Nut begets cosmic creative activity anew.

Such a return to the primal source of unity is also celebrated at the close of the Ancestor Ritual, in the great invocation to the Heliopolitan creator Atum, who embraces the ancestral king and shines forth as the Benben-stone in the Benben temple of Heliopolis. Each Heliopolitan divine name is chanted in turn in the ritual, resounding in a cosmos which comes into existence through sacred utterance and magical power. And as this cosmos streams forth, so it is grounded in the ritual service of the solar Horus ruler, who ensures that all the deities in Heliopolis flourish and live.

GATEWAY TO THE TWELFTH HOUR SHE WHO REPELS THE DESTRUCTIVE ONES

There is nowhere further to journey, only return—a return towards earth and sunrise, to speech and breath, to rebirth with the moon in the place of beauty through the gateway called 'She who repels the destructive ones'.

This is the twelfth hour rebirth on Nut's thighs when the sun rolls down to her feet in the hour named 'She who sees the beauty of Re', guided by the crocodile-headed god 'the Primordial One of the Lower Sky'. This too is a rebirth, encompassing both sun and moon; and here the divine companions

bear such names as 'He who guards the Landing', 'He who guards the Shadow', 'Wind of the Mouth', and 'He in the midst of the Moon'.

The activity of Maat in the sun-boat changes in this twelfth hour. In contrast with the previous two hours, when she is seen making the *nini*-gesture of welcome before Re, here she offers him a great *Ankh*-sign of life. Now that the birth is accomplished, and 'life' in all its beauty and wonder has safely returned to the world, it is no longer necessary for her actively to beckom and urge him forth with her sacred gesture.

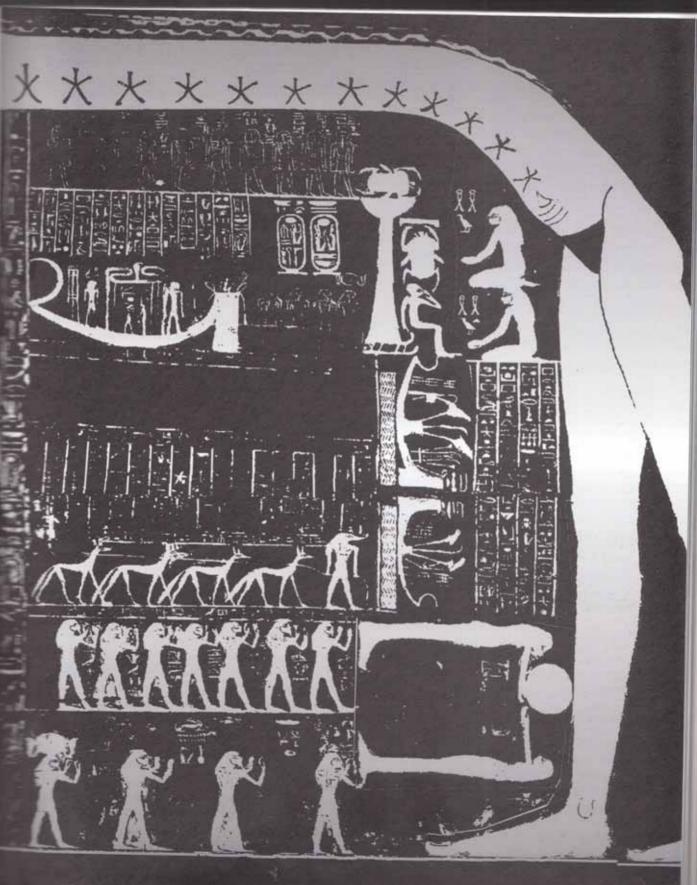
This birth is above all an aquatic birth in the primal waters of Nun, the source of all life. And as the day surges forth so the waters of the inundation rise anew, embodied by 'He who is in his Flood' in the upper register.

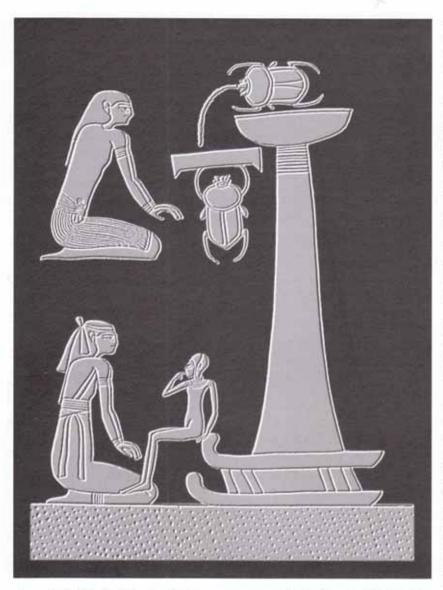
Now we understand why an aquatic creature—a crocodile-headed god—should be the guide through the tenth to the twelfth hours in these birthgiving regions of Nut. The crocodile always had an ambivalent character in ancient Egypt. Lurking in waters it could strike without warning, seizing its victims in its terrifying jaws. But it also had a benign aspect, manifesting as the regenerative god Sobek, the protector of children.

Hence it is a crocodile deity, familiar with the watery ways, who guides the night travellers when they are finally

Left 127 The crocodile god who guides the sun-boat through the critical tenth to

twelfth hours of birth in the primordia waters (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)
Right 128 The sun-boat in the twelfth hour when Re is finally visible to those or earth. Whereas in the previous two hours Maat has been beckoning Re forth with her nini-gesture, urging him through the difficult passage of birth, here in the twelfth hour she now offers a great Ankhsign of life symbolizing the completion of the journey in the primordial realm (Tomof Ramesses VI at Thebes)





Above 129 Detail of the twelfth hour showing the stylized potter's wheel supporting Khepri in the Book of Night version in a corridor of Ramesses VI's tomb

released, beautiful and shining, from the fiery body of the goddess. 'Go and grasp' say the crocodiles in spell 482 of the Coffin Texts, when the initiate 'foretells the festival of coming into being of the protector of the land' and Hathor is seen rising in the eastern horizon. This is the time to 'go down' and secure the mooring.⁷

But the travellers needs the guidance of the crocodiles as well, for it is not all beauty and light. Nor do all attain this glorious rebirth. Ominously present in the upper register of the twelfth hour is 'He who causes enemies to be forgotten', ensuring their memory is effaced and all traces of life annihilated. Also in the lower register are 'He who judges according to his knowledge', 'He who severs heads', the 'Frightening of face' and the 'Trapper of the sky'. The nets of this trapper ensnare those opposed to the way of the sun-boat, those who must be caught and contained when a new day dawns. For there are always negative

forces seeking to oppose the process; and ultimately it is only the purified ones who attain this blessed rebirth in the East.

Nor has the West been forgotten at this glorious moment of sunrise. A divine being called the 'One who brings the gleaming sky', a name usually referring to the setting sun, stands in the upper register. Likewise jackals appear towing the solar boat, praised in a great invocation to the guardian spirits of the western horizon and Heliopolis. These are the black jackals who protect the 'two great rocks in the midst of the western Great Green', guiding those who seek initiation in the way of the West.⁸

Also honoured are the 'Two Kites' of the divine boat, the two sisters, Isis and Nephthys, who constantly hover in this horizon realm, resting and working at their appropriate time.

Similarly, the Ancestor Ritual closes with a horizon hymn to the sun god, which praises both the ancestral king and the living Horus ruler appearing transfigured together in the golden rays of light. Here in this mediating horizon realm where worlds meet and separate, West and East are beheld as a unity at the glorious dawn of creation reached through the Osirian realm (pl 128). And once again the ritual and the Book of Night correspond exactly in their progression.

This rebirth is encapsulated in the images enclosed by Nut's vulva and legs. Just as the sun was at the entrance to her body in the first three hours of the night, in her embracing arms, at her lips and teeth, so the last three hours all happen at the exit of her body, beginning with birth from her vulva in the tenth hour.

Enclosed by the curve of Nut's body, close to her vulva, a potter's wheel is shown on a sledge (pl 129). Upon the wheel lies a scarab beetle with, in some versions, a stream of liquid flowing from its head as if to evoke the creative fluid flowing from Atum when he ejaculates Shu and Tefenet at the dawn of 'Becoming'. This liquid flows upon a sky sign below, which is supported by another scarab beetle with a seated child underneath. The presence of a sledge seems strange here until it is recalled that this is also the hieroglyph tm used in the word 'completion' and in the name of Atum.⁹ This wonderfully conveys the 'Becoming' of the cosmos experienced at the completion of the night journey as Atum's creative liquid issues forth and the divine sun is reborn.

Kneeling in praise before the wheel are the primordial male-female pair from the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, Huh and Hauhet, 'Endlessness', honouring this unceasing recreation of the world. When we remember also that in the much later Hermetic ascent of the soul after death, described for example in the Hermetic text known as the Poimandres, the soul sheds its bodily garment, passes through the realm of growth and decay, discards its evil passions and vices, and finally soars up to the Ogdoad, then the presence of this Ogdoadic pair here at the close of the Egyptian path of rebirth takes on even greater significance. For in many respects this Hermetic journey closely corresponds with the much earlier Egyptian path of rebirth into the 'Ogdoadic nature'. 10

Beneath this scene are the day and night boats opposite the thighs of the goddess, symbolizing the separation of day and night at dawn. Then at Nut's feet stand Isis and Nephthys, the birth attendants who actively aid the rising, supporting the new-born sun securely in their arms when he comes forth from Nut's body in the twelfth hour. Graphically enclosed by Nut's body these scenes encapsulate the phases of cosmic birth at the close of the night journey, when the goddess is in her powerful time of labour and delivery.



In some versions of the scarab and child scene it is accompanied by the words 'opening the ball', specifically in the sense of a round ball made on the potter's wheel. Such an 'opening' resonates with the description of the scarab beetle opening his ball of dung to 'swim in his redness' described in the Book of Nut.¹¹ And it is also, of course, an 'opening' which the new-born child must make when leaving the female body. The whole process of Heliopolitan rebirth is here likened to the opening of a ball of clay formed by a potter, as if to emphasize

Above 130 The two divine midwives Nephthys (left) and Isis (right), the traditional birth attendants in ancient Egypt, hold the newborn sun. The Book of Night is a transformational way of the heart in which the cycle of 'Becoming' is woven together with the biological processes of birth from the mother

the close link between this journey of rebirth and the craft wisdom of the ancient Egyptian deities.¹²

Similarly, the text accompanying the worshippers in the lower register declares that the sun goes forth from the Dwat and 'descends from Tatenen', who, as the Memphite god of the 'risen land', represents the demiurgic activity of Ptah upon the primeval mound. As Ptah had insisted so firmly in the Memphite Theology, day dawns here also at the close of the Book of Night to reveal a Heliopolitan cosmic creation, shaped and formed in harmony with Egyptian craft practices and rituals. For it is, above all, the shaping work of the hands which engages the heart; and it is the heart which is the core of this rebirth journey through the mother goddess.

Not surprisingly chapter 67 is the Book of the Dead chapter chosen for the twelfth night hour, with its joyful description of 'opening the Dwat' and going down into the sun-boat:

The cavern is opened for those who are in Nun and those who are in the sunshine are released. The cavern is opened for Shu, and if he comes forth, I will come forth. I will go down into the earth-opening... for I have grasped the lashings in the house of him who is in charge of the mooring-posts. I will go down to my seat which is in the boat of Re... the great one who rises and shines in the waterway of the lake.

The gates have opened, the boats of night and day are safely moored, Shu has separated night and day, and the sun is securely held by the divine midwives Isis and Nephthys who appear at Nut's feet. The night travellers have landed and are ready to descend into the glorious boat of Re and go forth by day.

There is, however, one more divine presence who needs to be mentioned here. Standing in the lower register of the twelfth hour, next to the divinized king on one side and the 'Lord of Life' on the other, is Wennefer (Osiris), his hands raised in praise, devotionally greeting the rising sun in this glorious cyclical rebirth. This is the moment when his sister-wife Isis appears as a midwife in the eastern horizon, rising gloriously with the sun. Like the star Sirius rising just before dawn at the start of the New Year, so the goddess appears here with her sister, Nephthys, to assist the birth of a brilliant new day.

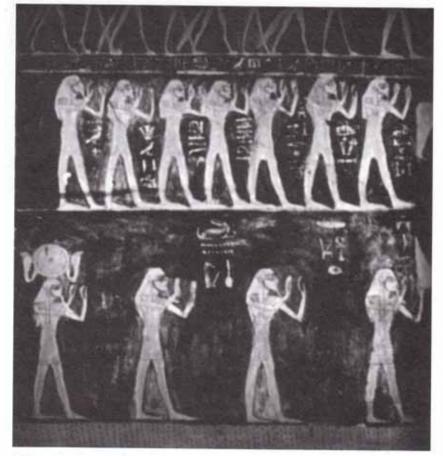
Manifestly, their brother Osiris also returns with these waters of rebirth—Osiris Wennefer, who is truly the foundation and source of this rising new life. The rising up of Osiris is implicit whenever the waters pour forth again and so, at this twelfth hour time of watery rebirth, life can indeed be seen returning from death, watched by the god whose rites and beauty lie in the darkness.

And after such a journey through the night, it is a glorified, illumined earth upon which Re shines—the glorious dawn sun god coming forth 'in order to make the people live, all cattle and serpents that he has created' as is said at the very end of the Book of Night.

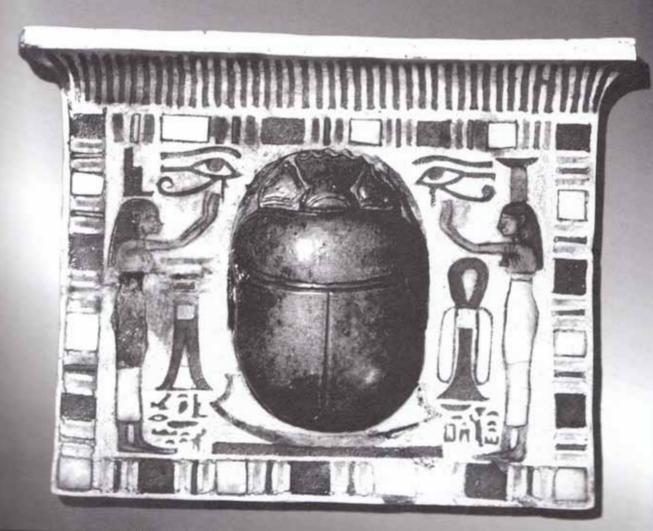
It is a revelation of all that it means to be human and alive on earth, brought to birth through the gates of the destructive-beneficent goddess. Such is the way of eternal rebirth shown in the Book of Night.

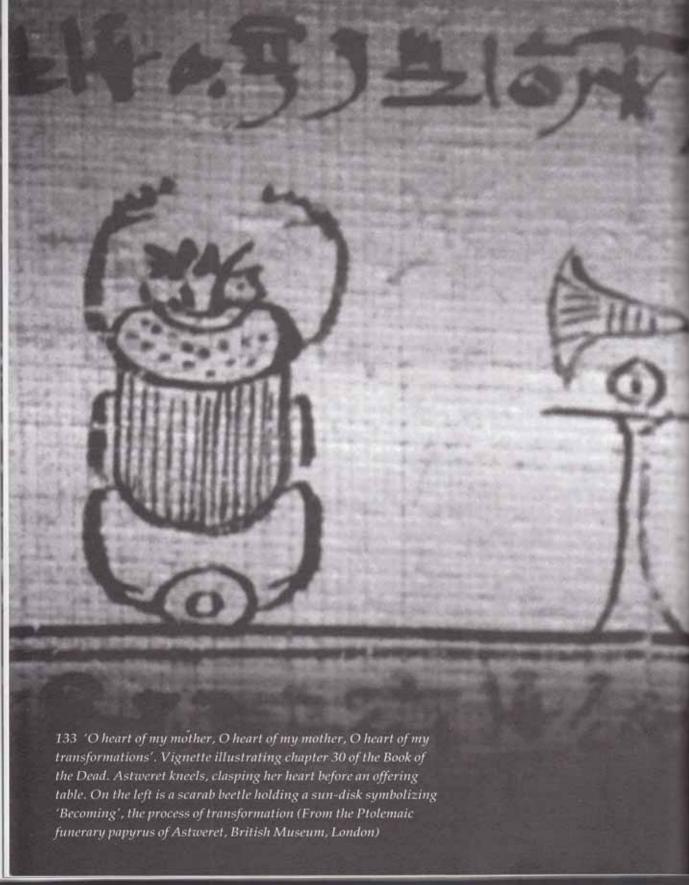
Below left 131 Life returns from death as Osiris Wennefer (second from the left in the lower register) praises the rising sun, held by his two sisters Isis and Nephthys in the eastern horizon (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

Facing page 132 Isis and Nephthys praise a heart scarab which has chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead inscribed on its underside beginning with the words 'O heart of my mother, O heart of my mother, O heart of my transformations' (Pectoral incorporating a heart scarab for a lady called Ptahemheb, British Museum, London)



Part 4 Serpent in the Sky: The Eye Body







17 As Above So Below: Rebirth Through Ritual

THAT WE HAVE TRACED through the twelve hours of the Book of Night is the re-creation of the world within the sacred body of the goddess Nut. Seeking the flame-the heart in the darkness which leads to new birth-the Egyptian night travellers journey through the inner organs of the sky goddess to return to the Heliopolitan source of primal unity and rebirth. Like the chakras in the Tantric tradition, each part of Nut's body becomes a place of transformation and this means that the initiate not only experiences death and rebirth as a process of time spanning the twelve night hours, but also rediscovers the renewal of the world within the sacred space of the female body.

Named in each hour gateway, the power roused in this night journeylike the kundalini serpent power invoked in Tantric ritual—is that fiery destructive-beneficent female energy which for New Kingdom Egyptians meant above all the manifestation of the Memphite serpent eye goddess Hathor-Sekhmet.1 Just as hers is the power to move the sun through its heavenly daytime circuit, so too she moves the night travellers through her fiery gates of destruction and life towards the source of primordial unity and rebirth in light. When roused this female energy can be all-consuming and destructive. But if handled with a high degree of awareness and control, it can also be the positive fire of transformation and rebirth. And this also explains why Maat's presence is so necessary in the sun-boat when travelling through these terrifying night gateways. For, as the Sed Festival scenes of King Amenhotep III in Kheruef's tomb at Thebes show so clearly, it is Maat who guides and channels the dangerous power of Hathor during the king's night journey of rebirth.2

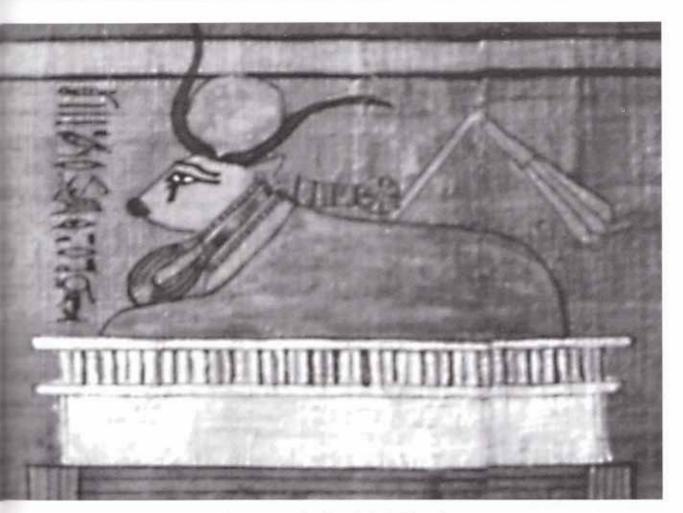
To make this night journey is to activate fiery female energy in order to traverse the regions of transformation



and rebirth. Following the path of the sun and stars inside Nut's body, the initiate enters the eternal process of rebirth through the mother goddess. And it is highly significant that during the New Kingdom and later, Nut appears on the interior of coffin lids, directly above the body of the deceased, receiving and giving birth again to a person as for the sun.3 By the time of the Third Intermediate Period, moreover. Hathor is shown as Nut's counterpart on the floor of the coffin. The wish is quite clearly to enter the protection of these goddesses so that there will be no death forever.

When we put together all the evidence from the Shadow Clock Text, the Book of Night and the related Book of the Dead chapters, the Ancestor Ritual, the Memphite Theology and the seven scenes in the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos, what we find is a path of transformation strongly focussed on the heart and female energy in the continuing act of creation.

The existence of the world depends on the sky goddess, Nut, who perpetually takes back the dying sun into her body and gives birth from her vulva again at dawn—an alternating rhythm energized throughout by the loving-destructive Memphite serpent eye goddess Hathor-Sekhmet, whose power traces a course of inner fire through the body of the sky goddess. This night journey is one of the fundamental deep processes underlying mythology, liturgy, ritual and sacred architecture during the New Kingdom.



a process in which the twelve hours of cosmic night are ritually transposed into seven stages of transformation enacted in a threefold temple (see Table 2, page 176–7).

FESTIVAL RITES: THE THREE SEASONS

The sun's death and rebirth journey, travelling with the decans through the twelve night hours, can also be seen as a symbolic ritual journey through the twelve months of the annual cycle. The three seasons of the Egyptian year, Akhet, Peret and Shemou—'Inundation', 'Coming Forth', and 'Harvest' or 'Summer'—were not simply divisions of time but derived their significance from the cycle of food production. Food is, after all, a crucial

element in both the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual. And since it is the recurrent rhythm of the seasons which ensures the food-supply, the cycle of death and rebirth also depends on the changing seasons of the year.

The night journey begins with the 'gathering together' of bodies in the watery element—called Nun in the Ancestor Ritual and connected with Mehet-Weret ('the Great Flood') in the corresponding Book of the Dead chapter for the second to fourth hours (pl 134). This was the watery time of the year following midsummer when the flood was at its peak during the four months of the Inundation season. Significantly, the third month, Athyr, was the time when Seth murdered Osiris, a deed traditionally located on the riverbanks

134 Mehet-Weret, 'Eye of Re', wearing Hathor's menit-necklace and horned headdress, reclines on a plinth. Before her is the sacred left eye, the Moon Eye, associated with Horus. This manifestation of the solar 'Great Flood', belongs to the phase of watery rebirth during the second, third and fourth night hours when Horus rises to power from the deep, with all his bodily faculties renewed and intact (Vignette from the 19th Dynasty papyrus of Ani, British Museum, London)

of Nedyt which caused great weeping and mourning.⁵ The ancient Egyptians never elaborated much on Seth's terrible act, but it is precisely in this third hour that mourners associated with the fields and riverbanks begin to appear in the Book of Night.⁶

The Osirian ceremonies during this inundation time culminated in the fourth month, Khoiak, and included hacking up the earth to prepare it for sowing—a rite which chapter 175 of the Book of the Dead associates with injury to Seth. Then on the last day of Khoiak the Djed-pillar was raised with great ceremony. It is surely no coincidence that fish-like bound creatures appear in the fourth hour of the Book of Night—the hour when the might of the Eye of Horus gained victory over the enemies of the 'Tired Heart'. Or that the 'Stable One', the Djed, manifests amongst the fourth hour deities in the upper register.

Then came the season of 'Coming Forth', when the waters retreated and plant life surged forth, with its promise of crops bringing new food for the people. Greenness returned to Egypt and the risen power of Osiris was visible for all to see in the growth of vegetation. This made the beginning of the fifth month a cardinal turning-point in the year, presided over, during the New Kingdom, by a snake deity called 'Uniter of Kas'.

It is during the fifth hour of the night that the travellers 'awaken', experiencing the mysterious erotic power which moves the heart as they surge forth seated on plants amidst abundant nature. And in the seventh hour—the time of completion and regeneration—a child 'comes forth' in the darkness, raised aloft upon a man's arms.

At the beginning of the seventh month, Phamenoth, came the important 'Festival of Raising the Sky' which although Memphite in origin was also celebrated at Thebes. The precise details of the rites are unclear, but according to a Ptolemaic religious text, the temple initiate raises an arm in the House of Ptah during this festival—a gesture evoking Shu's separation of sky and earth.⁷ This ritual gesture of the seventh month festival brings to mind the raised arms of the man supporting the regenerated child in the seventh night hour (pls 114 116), when

Horus has delimited the boundaries of Egypt and the triumphant Ba, capable of complete separation from the body, safely traverses the sky and the riverbanks with complete freedom of movement. Indeed, it suggests that the man raises his arms in the Book of Night not only to carry the child but also as a potent ritual symbol from the House of Ptah, alive with meaning, expressing the separation of heaven and earth, the Ba and the body, at this time of new birth.

Lastly came the season of maturation, Shemou, the time of harvest. The ninth month, Pachons, opened with the festival of the snake goddess, Renenutet, the food-bearing harvest deity who crackled and coiled in the ripe grain as 'Lady of Food Offerings'.

No sooner had burnt offerings been made to her than the next great seasonal festival of the ninth month took place at Thebes when the king strode forth in the procession of Min-Bull-of-his-Mother to cut the first sheaf of the harvest grain in honour of the regenerative bull god. He performed this harvest rite in the presence of a long line of ancestral rulers who had regenerated themselves anew in the reigning Horus king.8 Similarly, it is in the ninth hour of the night journey that Sia calls forth the purified Osirian ancestral dead to receive their barley as justified ones, blessed with grain from the harvest.

The mysterious tenth hour of the Book of Night expresses the complete unity between the living and the dead. Likewise in the tenth month of the year, Payni, the 'Beautiful Feast of the Valley' was celebrated at Thebes, when the sacred boat of Amun-Re left the land of the living on the east bank at Thebes and journeyed across the water to Hathor's temple at Deir el-Bahri in the realm of the dead in the West. It was a time of great importance for the Theban populace, a Hathorian time of rebirth amidst much feasting in the tombs of

loved ones—in a festival which, like the tenth night hour, united the living and the dead.⁹

As the year drew to its close in scorching heat, the Egyptians yearned for the return of the inundation. In Eviphi, the eleventh month, Hathor, 'Gold of the Gods', sailed from Dendara in a great river procession to unite in glory with the ruling Horus hawk god of Edfu-a journey which was believed to ensure the return of the inundation waters.10 Likewise, in the eleventh hour of the Book of Night, guided by the male 'Gold of the Gods', the night travellers follow the path of the burning summer sun, returning towards the source of cosmic flame in light and heat.

Finally, during the twelfth month, the return of the inundation waters signalled the great New Year festivities celebrating the renewal of the annual cycle. Similarly, in the twelfth hour, consumed in the seed fire of Atum and his uraeus companion, the travellers are reborn at dawn.

Much might be learned from a more detailed comparison between the Book of Night and the seasonal year, with all its many different rituals. But if it is right to see an analogy between the ritual cycle of the year and the journey through the night—between seasonal festivals and human experience of rebirth—then to be reborn through the body of Nut is also to become attuned to the whole rhythm of the three seasons and their associated rites. 11

MYSTERIOUS METALS: BIRTHING IMAGES

The Book of Night is a complex, manylayered journey through death and rebirth and there remain further dimensions to be explored within its threefold structure.

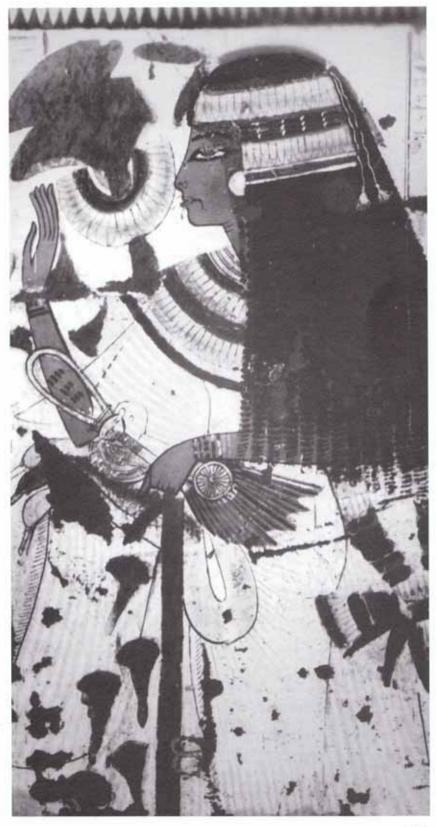
A link with metallurgical activity has already been mentioned in connection with 'the Seizers' surrounding the sixth hour furnaces. And there is further 135 A Ramessid ancestral worshipper, the beautiful chantress of Amun, Henuttawy, robed in Hathorian apparel. A huge garlanded Ankh-sign of life is slung over one arm, and she also holds ducks, a loop sistrum and menit-necklace as she participates with other members of her family in the cult of the ancestral king Thutmose I and a female royal figure who is probably Queen Ahmose but may be Ahmose-Nefertari (Relief in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Userhet at Thebes)

evidence for such a link in the twelfth hour which uses the strange phrase 'opening the ball' in the sense of a ball of clay (page 163). But when and in what context would a ball of clay have been opened in Egyptian craft work?

Here it is necessary to describe the ancient technique of lost wax casting (cire perdue) used by the Egyptians for producing metal statues and other objects, especially those made of bronze. Clay or a clay mixture was used to coat a model made of beeswax, giving it the appearance of a clay ball. This ball was then heated so that the wax melted and ran out. Then the molten metal was poured into the mould and allowed to cool. Finally-like the scarab beetle, Khepri, breaking open his ball at dawn-the clay mould or 'ball' was opened or broken away to reveal the perfect metal form within.12

In fact, it seems likely that the whole process of rebirth described in the Book of Night was closely identified with the creation (msj) of a living metal statue. Nor is this analogy so strange, if looked at in the light of Lucius's initiation into the mysteries of Isis-Hathor in the Golden Ass of Apuleius.

During his travails Lucius had to experience the full extent of his bestial Sethian nature, but was finally released from his suffering on the shores of Cenchreae after seeing a wonderful vision of the snake-crowned great goddess shaking her sistrum as she rose from the sea at night. Subsequently he served in the temple of the



goddess until finally he was initiated, appearing gloriously crowned and robed at dawn, holding a flame before the crowd of people, 'as when a statue is unveiled, clothed like the sun', ¹³

The process of making a statue by the lost wax technique is threefold in essence. First comes the creation of a form or likeness in wax-a 'gathering together' of an 'image' body as in the first phase of the Ancestor Ritual and the Book of Night. This is followed by 'vitalization' when the metal is heated and then the volatile molten metal is poured into the mould-paralleling animation by the 'heart' deities in the 'Life' realm. The end phase is reached when the perfect image is revealed after the mould has been brokenlike the reborn dead casting off their casing of mummy bandages in the tenth night hour of the Book of Night.14

It is a 'birth' process, moreover, which the Egyptians obviously compared to human birth, for the word msj means both to 'create a statue' and to 'give birth' (page 25). Biological gestation in the womb also has three phases, inaugurated by the 'formation' or 'gathering together' of the embryo. This is followed by the foetal stage of 'quickening' or 'animation' and finally comes the 'maturation' phase leading to birth. 15

Bruno Stricker has discussed in great detail how an embryological wisdom seems to be expressed in the texts and images of the Book of the Earth, which are located on the walls of Ramesses VI's burial chamber at Thebes. 16 Certainly, it easy to see why such apparently obscure themes might have been included here, given that the threefold rhythm of foetal development seems to be implicit also in the centrally placed Book of Night on the ceiling above.

AKHENATEN'S LIGHT: SETI'S NIGHT

In the aftermath of Akhenaten's reign, who ignored this maternal rebirth process and denied everything connected with the darker side of life, it is not surprising that Seti I should have favoured the night journey through the raging female gateways, placing it on the ceiling of the innermost chamber of the Osireion, nearest to the inner shrines of his overground temple for the cult of the ancestors. For this is a way of rebirth embracing the deep connection between the living and the dead.

Nevertheless, the extent to which Seti explicitly gave out this teaching at Abydos is breathtaking. Relinquishing usual Egyptian reticence about all things sacred, he left clues everywhere. It is as if he were determined to ensure that this way of rebirth should be perfectly enshrined forever in its ritual and cosmic entirety for Egypt and be preserved for posterity.

First, we see it set out in the Ancestor Ritual sequence of scenes in the overground temple. Then it appears again, in its heavenly setting in the Book of Night in the neighbouring complex of the Osireion. And as these goddesses of the night return here at Abydos with ever greater clarity, so it gives some inkling about the breach which Akhenaten's daytime cult of the Aten must have made in Egyptian religious consciousness. And how far apart Seti was from his Amarna predecessor.

For what Akhenaten's reign proclaimed was that the Heliopolitan cosmic vision, seen at the end of the night journey through the female gates in the Book of Night, was in reality his every day. With the Aten in his heart he beheld the source of creation streaming forth anew every day at dawn, awakening sleepers from their slumber to radiant new life. In short, the journey through the dark female gateways was unnecessary for those seeking such a glorious vision.

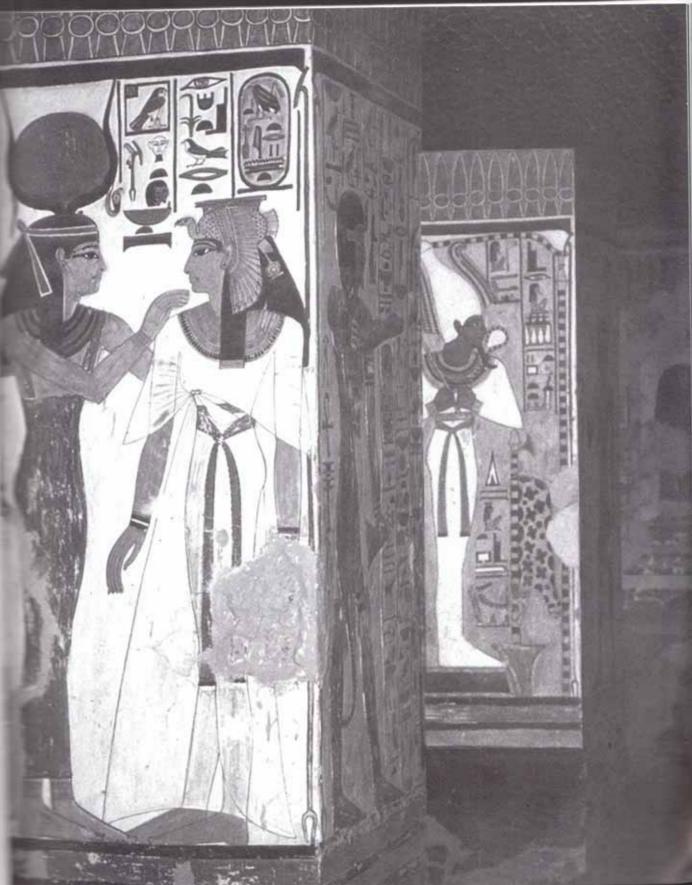
For to those seekers of the Father's celestial realm of Light and Life, such gateways could seem indeed to be a 136 View through Queen Nefertari's four-pillared burial chamber in her tomb at Thebes. On a pillar in the foreground Hathor embraces the queen. In the background stands Osiris

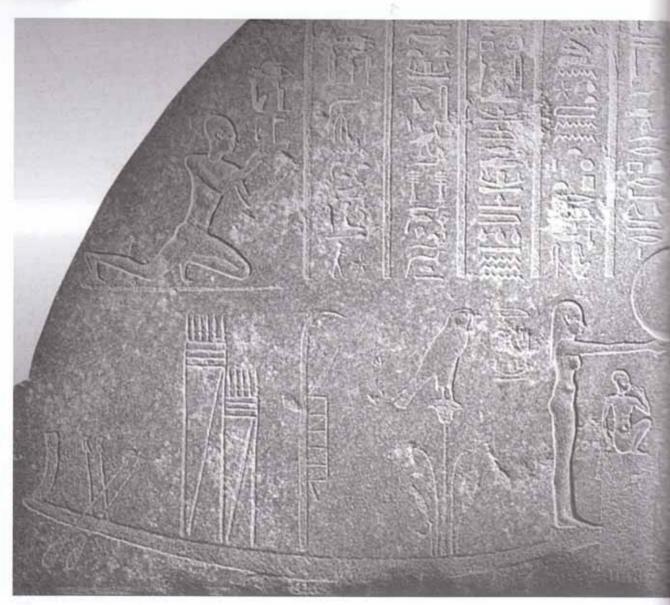
descent into a world of change and mutability, a profound and horrid darkness, binding the solar king to the conditions of fleshly existence, mortality and generation, to the path of the decanal stars. We need but turn to some of the Gnostic writers, with their abhorrence of the female womb, to see how such female dwellings, often associated with mountains and caves, have long been a source of profound discomfort to seekers of eternity.¹⁷

The split between Akhenaten and those Egyptians committed to a path of transformation harmonizing with the 'living and 'dying' decanal stars, marked a profound religious crisis during the New Kingdom. Whereas most Egyptians held to the path of Re and Osiris, Akhenaten developed a vision of divine unity independent of temporal contingencies and the workings of the decans.

His successors pulled back from the road he had embarked on, with all it implied for Egypt, not least severance from the female heart, the ancestors and the Osirian realm of death. Akhenaten's reign had all too clearly exposed the dangers lurking in the threefold day and ascent to the noonday zenith. Where that could lead to if not united with the dark night sky had been bitterly experienced.18 Consequently, the Book of Night could never be a guide for those seeking eternal liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth, from the earthly conditions of change and mortality.

And Seti I, in particular, the first Pharaoh to be shown with star maps on the ceiling of his tomb at Thebes, seems to have been deeply concerned to reconnect the sun, the moon and decanal stars, to show that path of





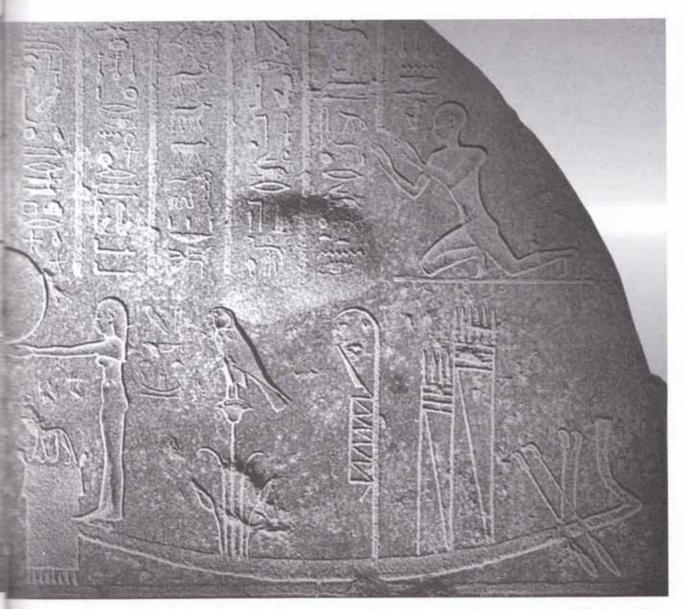
descent from the zenith of the sky to awakening in the the depths of the night (pl 86)—to provide a response of the heart to Amarna religion. What Seti restores here is a celestial way of rebirth, reconcilable not only with the circuit of the sun from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn, but also with the cycles of the moon, the decanal stars, and a human lifetime on earth from birth to old age. In the texts and images of the Book of Night enclosed by Nut in the Osireion, the sidereal way of living and dying, the great

seasonal rhythm of sun, and moon and stars returns again, together with its fiery goddesses.¹⁹

HEAVEN AND EARTH: THE TEMPLE WAY

There is another important conclusion to be drawn from our exploration of the Book of the Dead chapters associated with each hour of the Book of Night. For it is often thought that this night journey—like the journeys shown in the various Underworld Books such as the Amduat—relates solely to the

afterlife. After all, these journeys often appear in tombs in a funerary context, they follow the course of the setting sun through the night, and their content is quite clearly nocturnal. The modern mind finds it difficult to comprehend how such texts and images might relate to life. It is much simpler to categorize them as 'funerary', seeing them as esoteric teachings about the afterlife completely separate from the concerns of living Egyptians. However, this exclusive focus on the afterlife has also meant that the



question of mystical initiation in ancient Egypt rarely surfaces in scholarly books about Egypt.

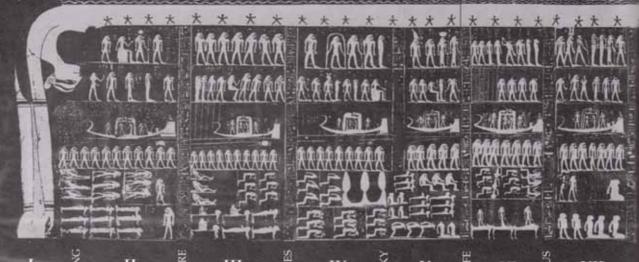
And here we touch upon a highly emotive issue, for the idea that living Egyptians might have been deeply concerned to enter states where they experienced the unity of all, where they became one with all, has far-reaching implications. There is much at stake here, not least because it is often maintained—especially by Classical and Hermetic scholars—that this preoccupation was a relatively late

development amongst Gnostic and Hermetic groups in Hellenistic Egypt, and a far cry from the experience of the earlier Egyptians, with their huge pantheon of strange deities which seemingly precluded unity.

Accepting that ancient Egyptian religion involved a journey of return to primal origins—and that the ancient Egyptians practised rituals in their temples aimed at such a rebirth—necessitates a complete re-evaluation, not only of the *Underworld Books*, but also of ancient Egypt's possible

137 The continuity of the Book of Night tradition during the Late Period is exemplified by this twelfth hour scene showing Isis and Nephthys holding the rising sun. It appears on one end of the priest Djedhor's sarcophagus from Saqqara dating to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period or shortly before (Louvre Museum, Paris)

contribution to much later religious developments including the Hermetic tradition. In particular, it must raise serious questions about the methodological adequacy of studying Hermetic and Gnostic texts—many of which



Travelling with the sun-boat the 'deceased' arrive in the arms of Nut in the west

Reintegration of the body. The deceased appear in various stages of renewal

LIPS

Godlike state of the king proclaimed on throne of Atum. Mourners appear

TEETH

Arrival at mountains. Strife with Sethian enemies. Weepers on riverbanks

THROAT

Awaking to greenness of new life pervaded by powerful heart energy of goddess

> BREAST/ HEART

middle of

chapter 68

 v_I

The living Bas 'sail'. 'Wanderers' and 'Seizers' surround furnaces

?LUNGS

start of

chapter 68

VII

Child raised showing regeneration is completed Integration of Seth into social order

?LIVER

chapters 22 and 59

ENTRANCE to the temple bearing offerings

NOTE

To facilitate Table 1 and with the Book of Night in the Osireion, the sixth and seventh hours of the Ramesses VI Book of Night have been transposed in this concordance

chapter 71

I RENEWAL OF IMAGE RULER

Amun-Re's bodily reintegration

together with the deceased king.

Then the god called to his meal

Shabaka renews

the tradition.

Praise of Ptah

chapter 71

chapter 71

start of

2 JUSTIFICATION Horus grasps the power of Seth and is embraced by Osiris

> Horus wins victory in fight with Seth



3 REGENERATION Exchange of hearts and manifestation of Ba-power

Uraeus crowning, rescue of Osiris, and praise of Ptah

chapter 74

4 GLORIFICATION of the lifetime of Isi child. Transfiguration in the solar circuit

> Praise of the beneficent Mistress of Life



IMAGE REALM: REINTEGRATION

LIFE REALM: REGENERATION

Nakht, British Museum, London) of the Book of the Dead in the papyrus of life (Vignette accompanying chapter 103 go agis-and a large Ankh-sign of Below left 138 Adoration of Hathor as life

(Egyptian Museum, Cairo) the ceiling of the sarcophagus chamber Thebes where the Book of Day appears on in dmot e'XI essesmaA ni berevoosib Re' in her womb. The ostracon was pl 140). The goddess is carrying 'the little in the first hour of the Book of Day (see Hathor giving birth to her child at dawn sketch on an ostracon for the scene of Facing page 139 Artist's preliminary

body shown in the Book of Night and

its effect in the heavenly realm.

with a phase of this celestial journey. ticular shrine, corresponded exactly each cult statue housed within a par-Dead chapters. Each part of the temple, associated with particular Book of the

in the temples must have been very Ancestor Ritual papyri that the reality manifold deities, it is clear from the offering over and over again to all the aoh who is shown on the temple walls, And although it is always the Pharperformed with great precision, had chanted, each ceremonial rite that they So too each sacred invocation they

mention the different temple clergy Ritual, as the instructions specifically aoh, who performed the Ancestor have been the priests, not the Phardifferent. On most occasions it must

during their lifetime on earth. the process of death and rebirth the power to experience consciously tant for living Egyptians, giving them funerary context, was deeply impor-Nut, though normally shown in a heavenly journey through the body of the slightest shadow of doubt that this Book of the Dead. As such, it leaves not teaching of the Book of Night and the rebirth, deeply versed in the esoteric turn to primal origins and cosmic been initiates into the mysteries of rewhile still alive on earth, must have And this means that these ritualists, who performed each ceremony.

> Ritual. It is the heavenly pattern mir-'map'-appropriate for the Ancestor celestial counterpart—or celestial conclude that the Book of Night is the ences between them, we can but For so striking are the correspondwith the New Kingdom Ancestor Ritual. so concerned to match the Book of Night is the main reason why we have been

rored on earth in a ritual.22

of dying and being born again whilst which they could practise the wisdom the post-mortem process, a way in living could experience the realities of no means the only way) in which the Ancestor Ritual was one way (and by and the dead. In short, a ritual like the a cosmos embracing both the living about the sacred order of the cosmos, but also instructed living Egyptians was not simply for use in the afterlife, tombs, as well as the Book of the Dead, how the knowledge set out in royal ancient Egypt. And it enables us to see way of ritual' might have operated in able what is needed to show how the thousand years later, we have availhave survived, So, more than three different copies of the Ancestor Ritual By the most fortunate of chances, two

sun's heavenly journey through Nut's were also simultaneously following the formed these temple ceremonies, they Whenever Egyptian ritualists peralive on earth.

> Egyptian religion. might have been influenced by earlier little or no consideration of how they derive from Hellenistic Egypt-with

to the radical conclusion that Amduat and the Book of Gates and came addenda and offering formulae in the amined the phraseology of various mysticism in ancient Egypt.20 He extional wisdom in an article about Edward Wente challenged the convenquestion of initiation. In particular, for a less dismissive approach to the been Egyptologists who have argued Although in a minority, there have

human time,21 limitations imposed by the barriers of this life now without reference to the could have been genuinely experienced in the netherworld with attendant rebirth The realities of death and movement into

practice these would never have been ni aguodile ,'laulir lo yew' a bna netherworld—a 'way of knowledge' provided 'two ways' for entering the ritual-oriented Book of Gates probably knowledge-oriented Amauat and the Moreover, he suggested that the

cerned the real state of the case, And it remarks that he undoubtedly dis-Nevertheless, it is obvious from his known ritual with the Book of Gates. Wente did not go on to compare any entirely separate.



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9 NAMING THE SOURCE

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VICESTOR RITUAL TRANSFORMATION: SEVEN PHASES OF

CHAPTERS BOOK OF THE DEAD

> CLOCK MODVHS

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Chapter 67

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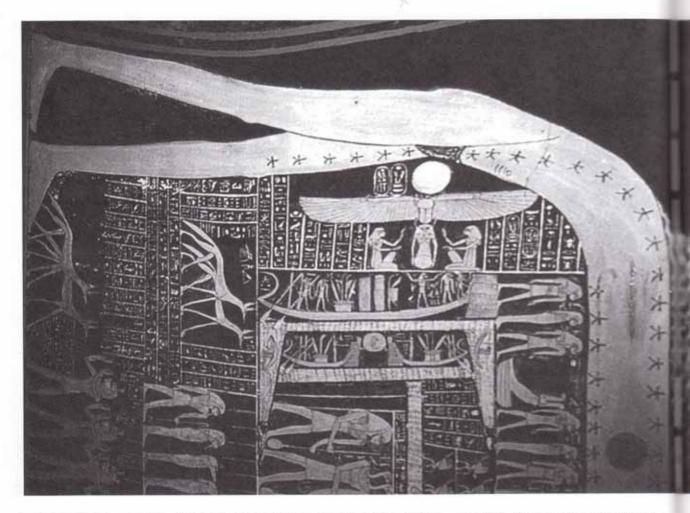
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18 Nurturing Beauty: Lighting Flames



There seems, however, to be one major discrepancy between the themes in the Ancestor Ritual and in the Book of Night.

We have already encountered, in the Ancestor Ritual (page 84), the dramatic moment when—after the ancestral souls have come forth to receive their food offerings—the torch-bearers extinguish their flames and utter a powerful invocation to the returning Eye. This is that great Eye who forever desires to bring forth new life, the goddess who always returns. 'What does it matter if the Wedjat-eye enters Manu . . . She returns, she returns, the Eye of Horus in peace'.

But where is this returning Sun Eye mentioned in the night journey through Nut? Initially, it seems that she is missing from the Book of Night, for the equivalent ninth hour texts and images appear to make no reference whatsoever to Hathor, no hint of her return from the West when Sia commands the justified souls to come forth to receive their food.

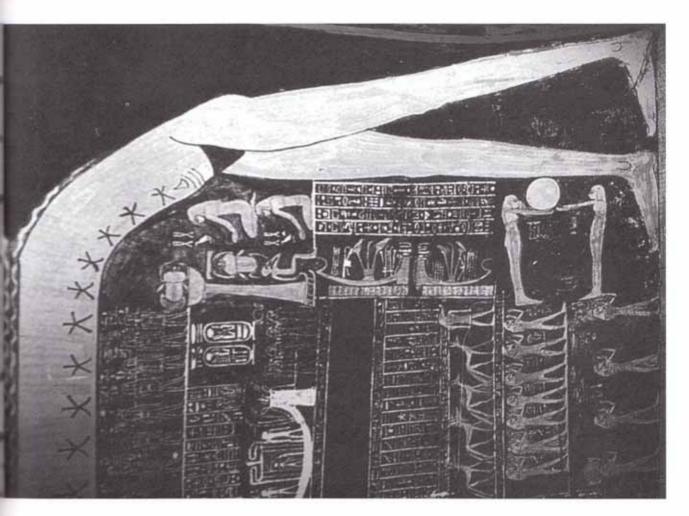
To understand this puzzling absence we must turn once again to Egyptian notions about the sun's journey by night and day.

The crucial ninth hour of the night is named as 'She who creates Harmony' in the Book of Nut and as 'The One who protects her Lord' in the Book of Night. According to the Book of Nut, it is the time when Re prepares to leave the Dwat and the turning towards dawn begins. Moreover, the opening text of the Book of Day relates that this ninth

hour of the night coincides in time with the first hour of the day called 'She who raises the beauty of Re'.²

Dealing with the sun's journey through the daytime hours, the Book of Day is the counterpart to the Book of Night, as shown in Ramessid royal tombs where the double elongated body of Nut frames these two celestial 'books'. Together they provide a cosmography of the heavenly regions by day and night (pl 140).

As we have already seen the night hours are also specifically equated with different regions of Nut's body in the Shadow Clock Text in the Osireion (page 105). During the ninth hour the sun is at her intestines, the tenth hour is at her vulva, the reading of the eleventh hour station is imprecise, but



the twelfth hour is clearly spent rolling down Nut's thighs towards her feet to be completely born at dawn.

According to the Underworld Books it is not until the twelfth hour that the sun god finally leaves the Dwat to take his place in the day-boat; and it is only then that he is actually visible in the eastern horizon to those on earth. This is also confirmed by the liturgical hymn for the fourth hour of the day in the Hour Ritual (ie the hour which corresponds with the twelfth night hour). The hymn declares that this is the awesome hour 'when the sun-boat is seen', a time of great danger when the sun's enemy Apophis tries to prevent the sun from rising amidst the great flames shooting from the fiery serpent eye.4 Before this twelfth hour of the night and the fourth hour of the day is a time of great mystery and secrecy, for the sun is still invisible to those on earth, making his transformations in the horizon region during his rebirth from the goddess.

But what is crucial, from the ninth night hour onwards, is this important synchronism with the day hours, so that the daytime and night-time cycles overlap when the sun enters the transitional horizon realm enclosed by Nut's vulva and legs—the place of the mysteries.⁵

So at the same time as the night travellers swim with the flood to reach land and food in the ninth hour of the Book of Night, the first hour of the day is already dawning in the daytime cycle, when the birth goddess begins her time 140 The beginning of the Book of Day and the end of the Book of Night as juxtaposed on the ceilings of Ramessid tombs at Thebes. Here, in the burial chamber of Ramesses VI, the opening of the Book of Day is on the left. It shows the birth of the sun in the first hour of the day, the hour corresponding to the ninth night hour. Enclosed by the legs and body of the sky goddess Nut, a female figure is bearing a child in her womb, flanked by two birth attendants. Above are the winged scarab beetle and a solar disk near Nut's vulva. Below, standing in a boat with arms upraised, is Nut's father Shu, the god of the first breath. This birth is also liturgically celebrated in a hymn for the first hour of the day inscribed in sacred buildings at Thebes. On the right, juxtaposed with these scenes, is the birth of the sun in the corresponding sequence in the Book of Night (Tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

of labour to bring the new sun child into the world amidst great danger.

And here, graphically portrayed in the scene for the first hour of the Book of Day, the birth goddess appears in all her glory, directly beneath Nut's vulva (pl 142), a serpent mother, no less, who according to the hymn for the first hour nurtures the Ka-life of the child within her embrace and gathers together his powers.⁶

Her name is not revealed in the Book of Day but everything suggests that this is a rare icon of Hathor bearing the young sun-child in her womb, flanked by her two birth attendants whose presence indicates she is labouring to bring forth new life? Above her flies the winged scarab beetle, Khepri, the 'Becoming One', with a solar disk in front of him located near Nut's vulva.

In a boat beneath her stands Shu, the Heliopolitan god of the first cosmic breath and manifest life, and the parent of Nut and Geb (pl 141). His upraised arms seem to support the dawn goddesss in her birth pangs but they also symbolize his separation of sky and earth, an act which also brings about the division of day and night anew each morning as dawn breaks upon the waiting world. Beneath Shu come the evening and day boats, where the two sisters Isis and Nephthys stand. Their arms reach out towards the divine child enclosed in the disk

between the boats, supporting him as he safely lands, ready to pass through the whole course of a lifetime during the twelve hours of the day.

Patently different levels of divine birth and passage to dawn have been interwoven in these scenes. On one level they portray the critical cosmic stages of birth in the eastern horizon. But the sequence is also deeply human, for it unfolds according to the archetypal pattern of all human biological birth from the female body.

It begins with the powerful expulsive movements of the womb which are needed to propel the child into the birth canal towards the vulva region of the goddess. Then, as the child is delivered, so the first short breath of cosmic air is drawn, the gift of Shu, when the head emerges and separation from the female body begins. Finally comes the 'landing' into the waiting arms of Isis and Nephthys, the divine attendants who safely deliver a child at birth.⁸

Such is the daytime process in the eastern horizon which is synchronized with the later stages of the night journey from the ninth hour onwards. And perhaps now we have some inkling as to why that threshold of the ancestral dead at the close of the ninth hour is also at the same time the gateway of life in the first hour of the day, the place where a new incarnation returns to earth, brought

by the goddess of love and desire. Return to life is through the door of death, presaging that view of human existence which echoes right through the Greek philosophers: 'we live their death and we die their life'

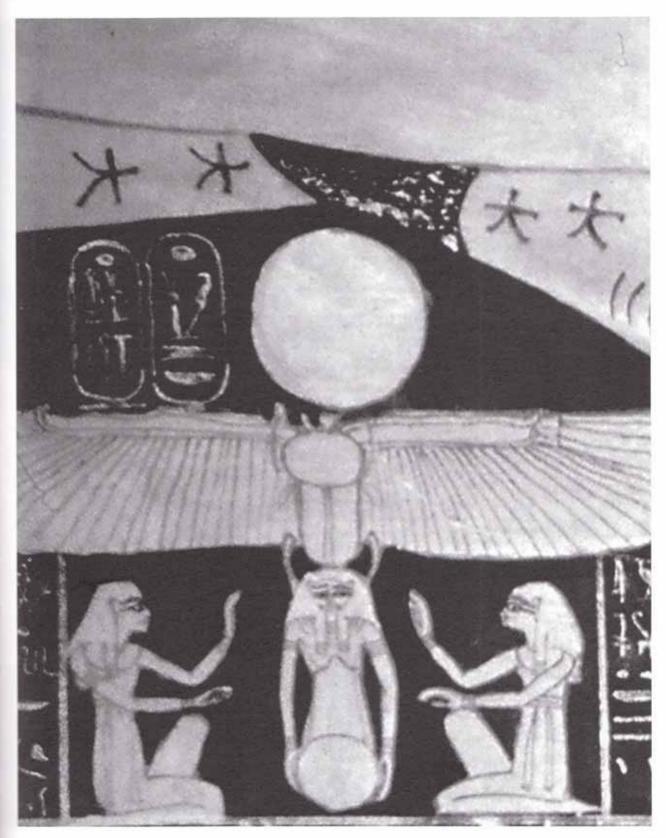
This truth is seen by those who travel in the sun-boat through the gateways of the raging-beneficent goddess in the night. And it is seen by the ritualists in the temple when they extinguish their flames for the ancestral dead in the Ancestor Ritual and utter their great prayer of trust in the returning goddess. Glittering in the dawning sky, she is praised both by the living on earth and by those in the Dwat, the goddess who brings to birth a new world at dawn. A glorious moment of cosmic unity is experienced as these worlds of the living and the dead merge and meet in the ninth hour of the night.

It is important to realize that Hathor herself manifests differently in this crucial transition zone, depending on whether she is to be seen as a night or day goddess. From the perspective of those living on earth in the daytime cycle, she appears bearing the young

Left 141 Shu, the god of the first breath, raises his arms as if to support the goddess who labours to bring forth new life in the eastern horizon. He is also the god who separates sky and earth, causing the division of night and day at dawn. The scene beneath Shu shows Isis and Nephthys in the day and night boats holding the risen sun who has safely landed, ready to begin the whole course of a lifetime during the hours of the day from dawn to dusk (Book of Day, tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

Facing page 142 The birth-giving goddess in the eastern horizon. She is not named here but the full-face depiction, extremely rare in Egyptian painting, suggests that this is Hathor. In a sun-hymn dating to Haremhab's reign, Hathor is specifically named as the mother in the eastern horizon bearing the young Re within her. He is 'vital and young in the sun-disk within your mother Hathor' (Book of Day in the tomb of Ramesses VI at Thebes)

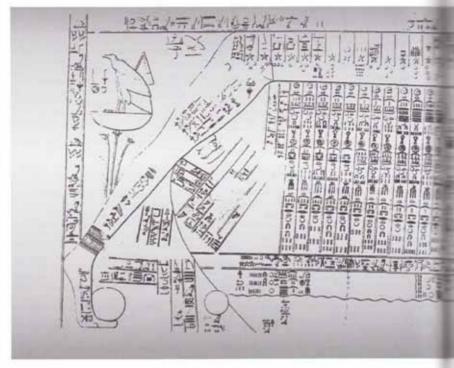




sun child in her womb, nurturing his Ka-life in the secrecy of the eastern horizon (pl 142). To those Bas making their night journey through the Dwat she appears as the celestial cow of the starry night heavens, the returning Eye goddess emerging from the Western mountain wearing her symbolic menitnecklace of attraction (pl 70), the vital goddess of desire, through whom life is continually born anew at the close of the night.

Such a return is envisaged in plate 144 which shows Hathor emerging from the western mountain. In front of her are four eyes and four oars from which hang crowned serpents, guardians of the four directions. At her rear, within the mountain is a masculine figure named as the 'Great God, the Lord of Sky and Earth, who makes everything which is'. He is shown holding a huge sun-disk raying light towards a female worshipper and her Ba. Taken together, these images surely relate to the night journey, to the return of the goddess in the dawning day, as experienced by the Bas travelling through the night hours.

This crucial synchronism between the day and night hours is also conveyed by the concluding scenes of the Book of Night, which, as might be expected, closely resonate with the daytime birth sequence although neither the birth goddess nor Shu is shown. Graphically enclosed by the vulva and legs of Nut's body these scenes encapsulate the phases of cosmic birth when Atum and his fiery female companion bring the

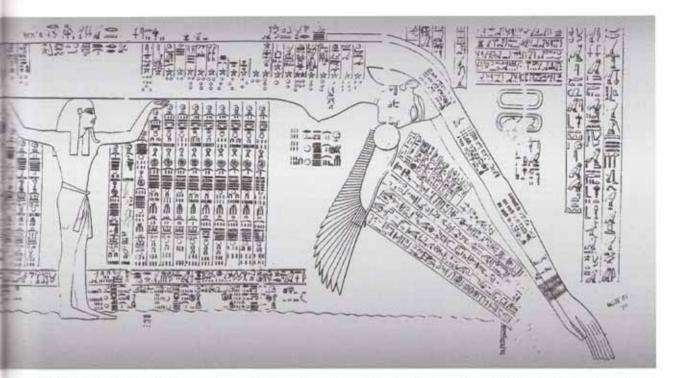


world into existence at the close of the night journey whilst the goddess is in her powerful time of labour and delivery. What the Book of Night shows us is cosmic rebirth at the close of the night. But if we were simultaneously to shift worlds and see this process from the perspective of the living by day then it would appear like that beautiful incarnation of new life which Shu raises aloft in the Book of Day.

In essence, the overlap between night and day represents a double-sided process. In the Book of Night there is the rebirth by night of the purified souls who have passed through the sphere of Osiris and whose journey towards the cosmic source of light and exit from the body of the goddess is the theme of the later night hours. Simultaneously, in the Book of Day, there is the incarnation of the new sun child by day, held and sustained in Hathor's womb, the deep source of being and life where all forms rise like the young sun at dawn from the maternal waters.

Not only does the synchronism of this double-sided process account for the invocation to the returning goddess in the Ancestor Ritual; it also explains why Seti placed a huge scene of Shu raising Nut at the dawn of day on the opposite side of the ceiling to the Book of Night. For beyond this scene, in the





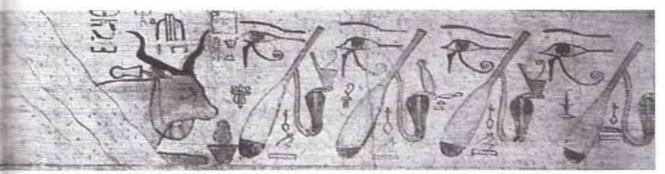
main hall of the Osireion, is the central 'floating' island with ten pillars and a staircase on each side—a raised island reminiscent of that great staircase shown in the concluding scene of the beautiful papyrus of Anhai when the chantress worships the dawn of creation (pl 145).

Probably Henri Frankfort was right to see this island in the Osireion as an architectural symbol for the primeval hill rising from Nun, the risen earth from which a new creation comes into being, a depository of creative energy powerful enough to carry anyone who might be buried there through the crisis of death to rebirth.⁹ From the ultimate reabsorption of all beings into their primal origins comes new birth and creation at dawn.

In all this cycle of descent and return we seem remarkably close to the ancient doctrine concerning reincarnation, which Socrates reminds Cebes about in the *Phaedo*, namely that 'the living have come from the dead no less than the dead from the living'. ¹⁰ Generation, Plato tells us in the same tract, is not a straight line stretching after death into a remote immortality but rather a circle always returning upon itself. ¹¹ Coming to life again is a return from the dead and from all we have seen of the synchronism between

Above 143 Shu, the Heliopolitan air god, supports the body of his daughter Nut. Surrounding them are mythological texts dealing with the passage of sun, moon and stars, as well as star charts giving the names of decans with the times of their risings (Southwest ceiling of the second transverse chamber in the Osireion)

Below 144 The return of the goddess is shown in this scene of Hathor at the entrance to the western mountain. In front of her are four sacred eyes associated with the cardinal directions and four oars with crowned serpents hanging from them. The chantress of Amun, Pashebutenmut and her Ba worship a raying sun-disk held by the 'great god the lord of sky and earth who makes everything which is' (Papyrus of Pashebutenmut, British Museum, London)



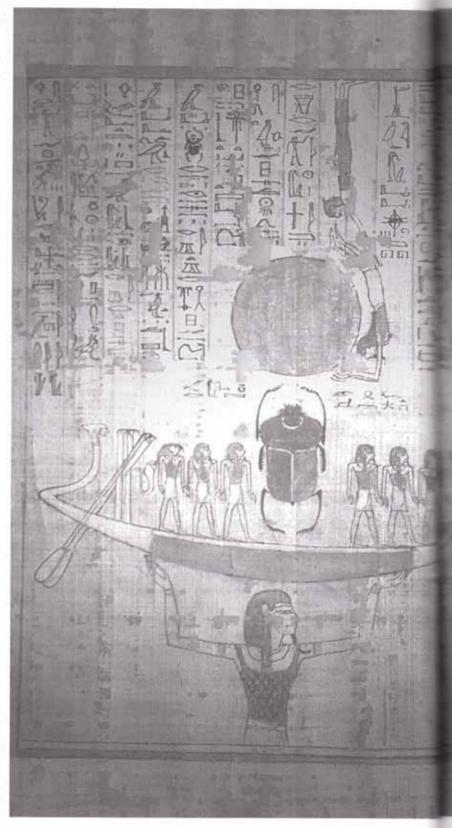
the Book of Day and the Book of Night it seems that this was also the belief of the ancient Egyptians.

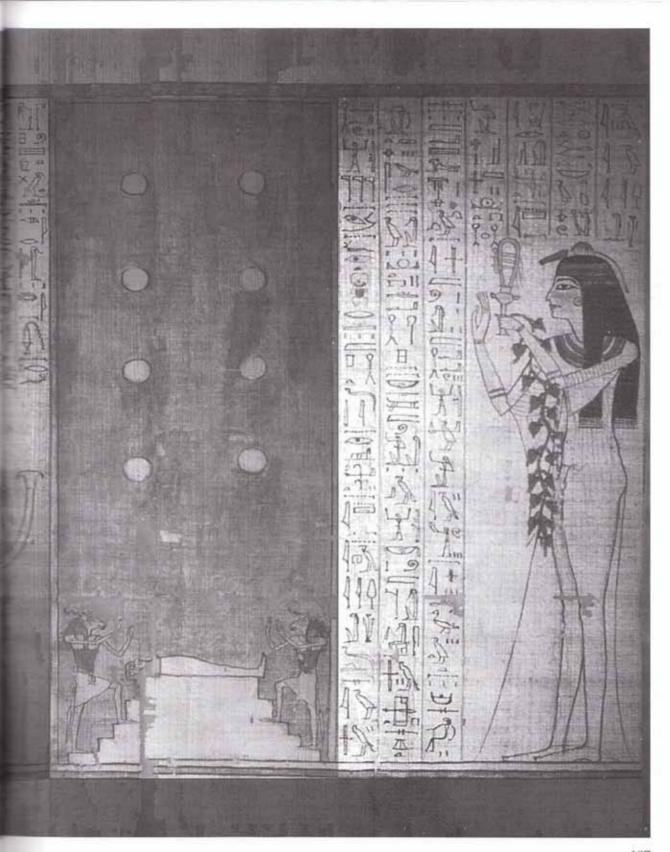
For when people died in ancient Egypt they were not seen as ceasing to exist but rather as going out of sight for a time, later to be reborn like the decanal stars on their redemptive journey of purification and rebirth, returning from the dead like the migratory birds which ceaselessly disappear and reappear again.

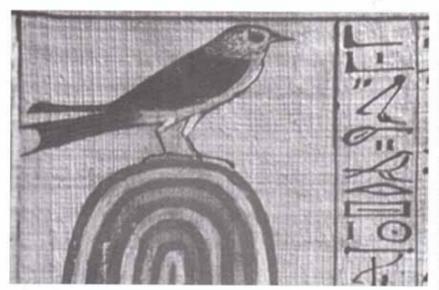
Hence it is a mistake to see the Egyptian funerary cult of the ancestors simply as some sort of commemoration of a past generation. Far more it was a necessary union with the so-called dead whose life was going to manifest itself again. And it was the dead who held the mysteries of the coming creation. They were not outside life. They had not transcended life and

145 Anhai, a chantress of Amun, shakes her sistrum in praise of the glorious rising sun. To her left ram-headed gods stand on either side of her mummy lying at the top of a great staircase, symbolizing the return to the primordial hill of origins in Heliopolis. Anhai sees this return harmonized with the coming of light as the solar boat containing the scarab beetle Khepri, 'Becoming', is raised aloft.

Above the scarab is the solar disk supported by Osiris, the 'encircler of the Dwat'. He is shown upside down, supported by his mother Nut, who hangs suspended from a sky sign above. Like the close of the Ancestor Ritual when the Osirian king returns to Atum at the dawn of creation, so the inverse poses of Osiris and Nut here suggest a similar process of emanation and return at sunrise in the cycle of cosmic death and rebirth. From the ultimate reabsorption of all beings into their primal origins comes new birth and creation. Also deeply significant is the presence of the chantress Anhai as a Hathorian musical praise-giver. True to the wisdom of Memphis, her joyful presence shows that the emanation of Heliopolitan creation at dawn is united with the power of the praising heart and creative voice (Concluding scene from the papyrus of Anhai, British Museum, London)







Above 146 Swallow perched on top of the primordial mound, an image associated with chapter 86 of the Book of the Dead, the chapter for being 'transformed into a swallow'. In this chapter the reborn initiate is associated with the daughter of Re and the lighting of a flame in the horizon (21st Dynasty papyrus of Ankhesenmut, Egyptian Museum, Cairo) Facing page 147 Thoth holding two solar cobras entwined in the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt. His snake-staff became the emblem of Hermes known as the caduceus. The Greeks identified Thoth with Hermes Trismegistus or Hermes the 'Thrice Great'. Thoth himself is referred to as 'Thrice Greatest' in Egyptian texts (Relief in the inner Osiris shrine of Seti 1's temple at Abydos)

death—they were deeply interwoven with life itself—and this cycle of reincarnation, of which they were a part, also brought with it the renewal of the seasons, the return of all animals and plant life.

Yet why endlessly return and appear, if only to disappear again? To those for whom repeated rebirth seems like condemnation to an endless round of suffering and return, Geb's horror at Nut's pitiless eternal creation and destruction of her star children in the Dramatic Text (page 103) may seem eminently understandable. And so it might

be were Hathor to be forgotten, the goddess of the heart who sets torches ablaze, and by their blazing light seeks out the darkest corners of the world for the life she longs to bring back into existence.

Spell 294 of the Coffin Texts tells how Hathor, the fiery one, ascends in flame to the ramparts of the sky to clothe her initiate in the form of a swallow, who then travels across the sky, revelling in all the delights and food of a golden existence within her temple:

The shape of a swallow is given to me by the Flaming One, Lady of the Isles, who ascends in flame upon the ramparts of the sky. My head and my back are lapis lazuli, my belly is electrum, my neck is gold...I have eaten the grain fruit, I have born witness within the temple of Hathor, I have travelled across the sky with the cat and this land is beneath me by means of my sandals.¹²

What we have here is yet another vision of the fiery flame being lit for Hathor, the trembling dancing goddess whose impulse for life lives on and on, through all the vicissitudes of death, hurrying to the very limits of the sky in order to entice souls into generation, to draw back the Ba-birds to the food and pleasures of living existence,

to light the flame of life again to behold the beauty and wonder of Egypt.¹³

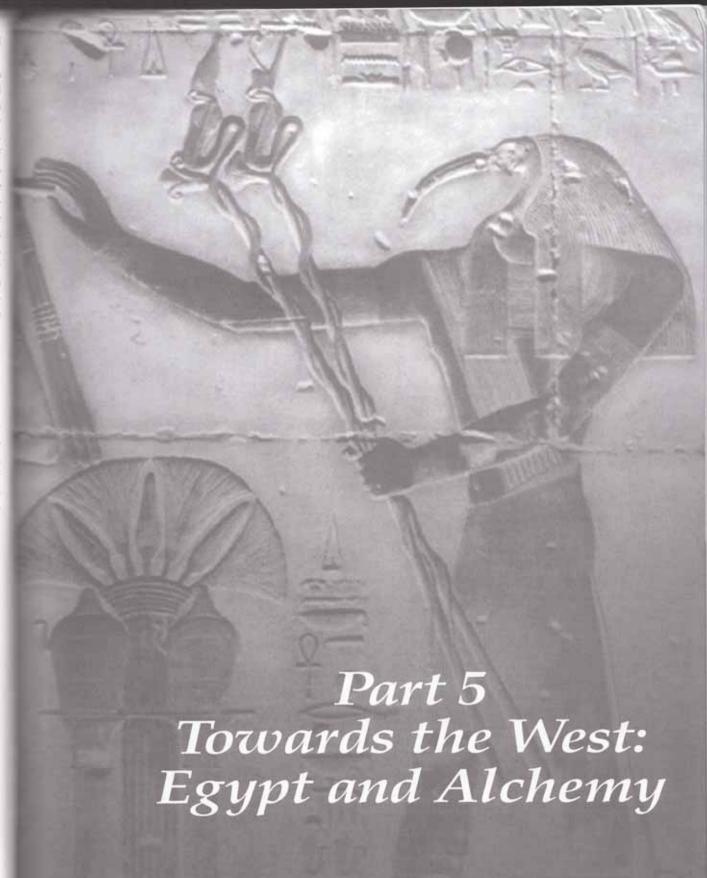
In the same way, when the Hathorian Egyptian queen gives birth to her royal son in the birth sequence shown on New Kingdom temple walls, the new light appearing in the world is celebrated by the hawk-headed souls of Pe (Buto) and the jackal-headed souls of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis) who have all congregated near the queen's birthgiving throne. Coming from the ancient cities of North and South, this collective body of the ancestral rulers, gathers together to welcome the new king. Each bends one knee and beats his chest with his fist to give a whooping sound of jubilation, greeting the royal arrival with the words:

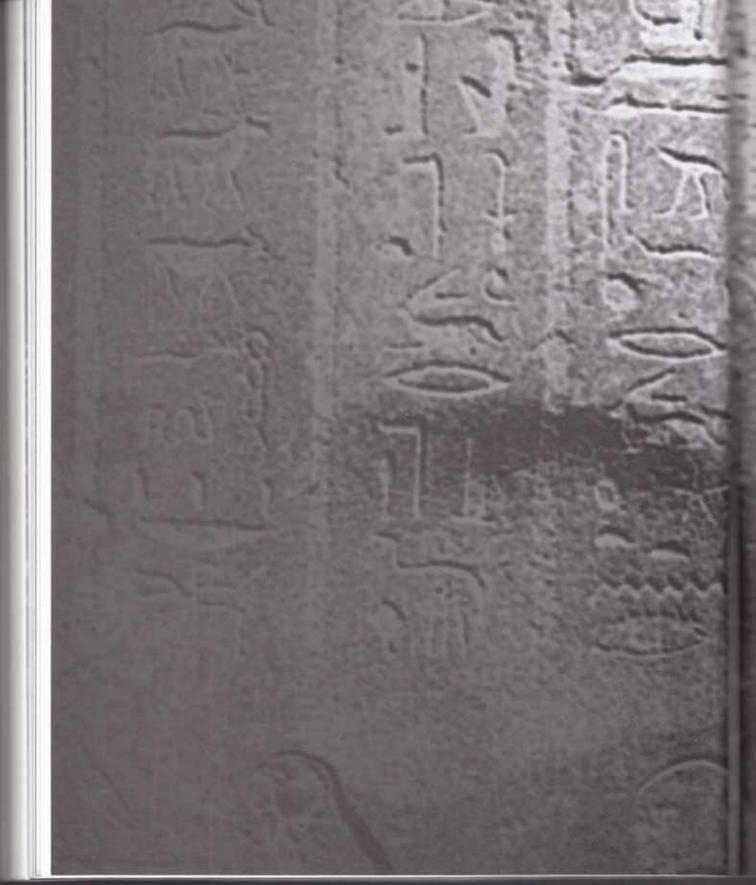
She has taken a flame, Giving birth. O come forth, lord of strength. The flame

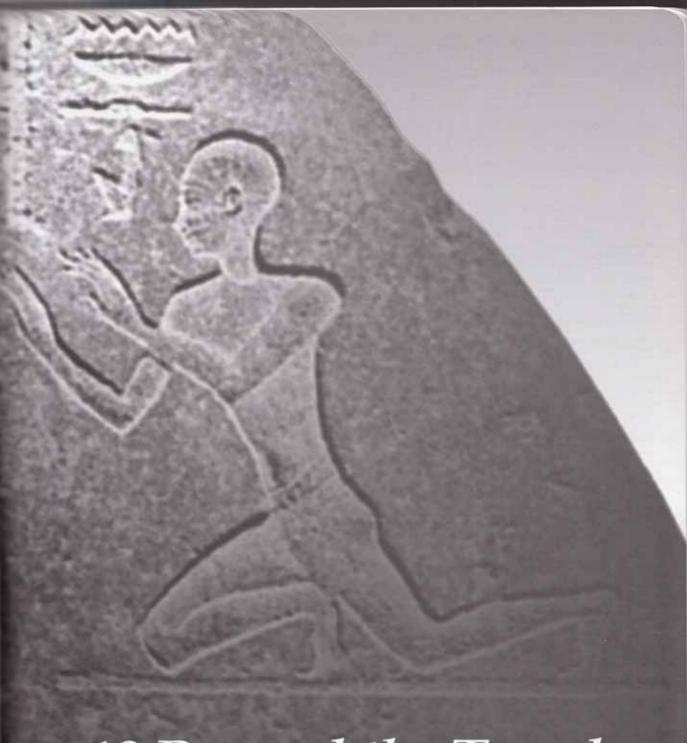
Then Hathor is shown bringing the child and his *Ka* before Amun-Re so that he may kiss his newly-born infant.¹⁴ Once again the queen of Egypt, blessed by Hathor, has 'taken the flame' to bring new life back into the world, blessed by the whole body of the ancestors.

And it is little wonder that Hathor is so central in these famous birth scenes. For without this goddess of cave and mountain, the mistress of the 'House of Flame', there would be no desire to enter the world at birth, to continue this unceasing cycle of descent and return. For it is she, the dynamic power of attraction, the flame of life, who fuels the longing to return to life once more. Ceaselessly looking for new souls to bring into incarnation, hers is the desire which energizes the cosmos.

'What does it matter if the Eye enters the mountain of the West?' declares the Ancestor Ritual. 'She returns, she returns. The Eye of Horus, in peace'. The goddess returns, Hathor returns, she returns.







19 Beyond the Temples Transmitting Rebirth THIS BOOK HAS BEEN primarily L concerned with the death and rebirth mysteries in ancient Egypt during the 19th and 20th Dynastiesthe Ramessid era lasting about three centuries which ended, according to conventional chronology, around 1000 BC. From that time onwards, although Pharaonic culture persisted, native kings rarely ruled Egypt again. Yet if we take seriously the view that religious traditions do not simply die out, but rather change and transform, then it remains to ask what became of this death and rebirth knowledge in later times?

Undoubtedly there were changes. We need but look at what was happening in King Seti's temple at Abydos during the Roman period to realize that this was not the Egypt of the Pharaohs. By that time Egypt had become little more than a province of the Roman Empire, and in an age when society no longer found its focus in a resident king, the traditional royal ancestor cult had long since ceased at Abydos. Rather the 'voice' that was now heard within the temple walls, revealing the mysteries of the 'headless Osiris', belonged to the oracle of Bes-that strange dwarflike deity who bestowed fertility, protected women in childbirth and guarded the body of Osiris. His was the power which drew pilgrims in great numbers to an oracle renowned throughout Egypt until its closure in the fourth century AD.1

However, the changes had begun long before. We have seen that the Book of Night was a heavenly path of rebirth, open to commoners as well as to kings. Nevertheless, during the New Kingdom it was shown only on royal monuments which suggests that it was still closely guarded esoteric knowledge under royal authority. In an age when the Pharaoh's vital force still governed every aspect of communal life, the Egyptian people were still

intimately connected with their ruler during this journey of death and rebirth.²

The Book of Night's restriction to the royal sphere seems to have continued during the Third Intermediate Period, for the only known versions occur in the tombs of 22nd Dynasty kings at Tanis in the Delta.

LATE PERIOD: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

By the seventh century BC, however, when the Nubian kings had pushed northwards to rule Egypt and were followed by the 26th Dynasty rulers who came from Sais in the Delta, there was a new and dramatic development.

This was a time which saw a great revival of Egyptian culture and tradition, including the recopying of the Memphite Theology. And it was then that extracts from the Book of Night began to be included in private tomb decoration at Thebes. For example, in the seventh century tomb of the priestess Mutirdis, two representations of Nut, resembling Ramesses IV's royal version, adorn her sarcophagus chamber ceiling.³

Clearly, at a time when the high priestess of Amun-Re, the 'god's wife', exercised great power at Thebes, sometimes acting as virtual ruler in Upper Egypt, the Book of Night's way of rebirth could be given out by the priesthood and other individuals. Nor was this usurpation of a royal privilege confined to the Book of Night. Some 26th Dynasty private sarcophagi are shaped like a New Kingdom royal sarcophagus. Theban officials of high rank built their tombs in Asasif, surrounded by walls incorporating the palace-façade motif, as if to indicate that a king dwelt there.4 And, of course, it was during this period that the correlation between the twelve night hours and certain Book of the Dead chapters were set out in the tomb of Pestjenfi and elsewhere.5

Evidently the trend continued in the Ptolemaic era: the Book of Night appears on several private sarcophagi. A typical instance is Djedhor's opulent sarcophagus from Saqqara, dating to around the time when Greeks began to rule Egypt, which has the Book of Night's closing scene portrayed at one end.⁶ Moreover, Djedhor himself is now included, kneeling devotionally in praise beside the cosmographic text describing the sun's rebirth (pl 148).

No New Kingdom Pharaoh had ever appeared in such a pose, and it is a revelation that a Memphite priest could show himself so obviously interwoven with the mysteries of solar rebirth. In this Late Period depiction we glimpse the growing separation between the priesthood and the Pharaoh -between ruler and priest-which would have been unthinkable in New Kingdom Egypt. And although the Greek kings may have embraced the official cults and customs of Egypt, building and embellishing temples in true Pharaonic style, they could not reverse the profound changes that had already taken place in Egyptian social relations over the preceding centuries.

LETTERS FOR BREATHING: MATERNAL EMBRACES

It might be argued that all these later Book of Night representations were nothing more than a relic from the past, a mechanical copying of images which were archaic and well-nigh obsolete in meaning by Graeco-Roman times.⁷ But there are several good reasons for thinking otherwise.

Consider the funerary composition called the Second Letter for Breathing, a text accessible only to scholars which is preserved in demotic papyri dating to the first and early second century AD.⁸ It was placed with the mummy in the coffin, usually beneath the head,

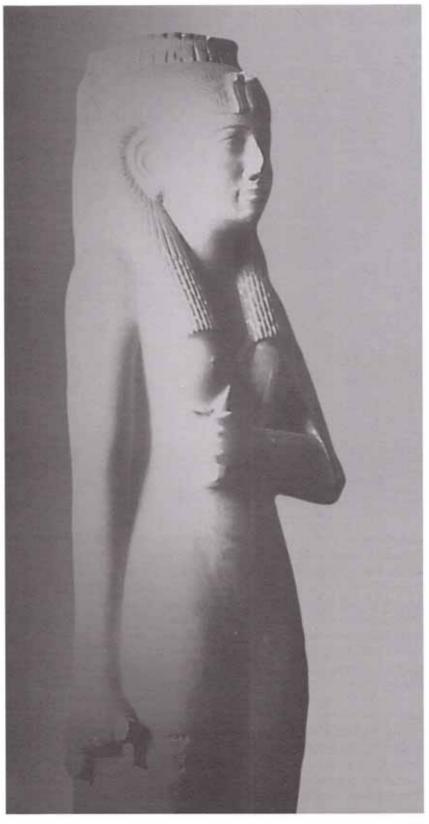
149 Statue of the god's wife of Amun, Amenirdis I, 25th Dynasty high priestess at Thebes and daughter of the Nubian ruler Kashta (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

and seems to originate from Thebes as all the known copies belonged to either priests or priestesses from the Theban area.⁹

Why such a document should have appeared in Roman Egypt is far from clear. But perhaps, just as Akhenaten's reign had galvanized Seti I into restating the Osirian cult at Abydos, so the trauma of living under Roman rule might have compelled the Theban 'houses of life' to set down the age-old death and rebirth tradition once again in writing. Hence, regardless of what might happen to the funerary cults on earth, the dead could rest assured that they took the necessary death and rebirth knowledge with them into the West.

The document has been described as a kind of 'passport', ensuring the deceased entry to the afterlife. But it is more. For here, despite the passage of more than a thousand years, preserved remarkably intact, is the same journey of rebirth through Nut, following exactly the same phases of transformation that we have already seen in the New Kingdom Ancestor Ritual. Admittedly, the phraseology is different. The Second Letter's incantations are much closer to chapters of the Book of the Dead than to the Ancestor Ritual itself. Nor is there any mention of the Pharaoh, which is perhaps why the document's authentic connection with the earlier royal ritual has remained unnoticed.10 Yet by staying alert to the progression of themes, it becomes clear that the old ritual form had maintained itself with remarkable tenacity in Roman Egypt.

However, knowledge is never simply the repetition of a formula but, above all, an experience. And this Second Letter for Breathing is a most moving



and beautiful expression of the death and rebirth journey through Nut. It opens by praising the coffin in which the dead person dwells. Or rather the seven coffins, made of gold and silver from the mountains, as well as five different kinds of wood including the sycamore.

These sevenfold divine emanations are all called to 'come' and enclose the deceased. They form a fragrant vault of heaven, the mansion of the coffin goddess Nut who, together with the 'Lady of the Seven' (Hathor), embraces, covers and shelters her Osiris child lying within her. Like the initial 'gathering together' of Amun-Re's bodily members in the Ancestor Ritual so these seven substances create a container for the rebirth process. Enclosed safely within this vessel the dead person enters the mysteries of the 'stone', the coffin which holds the secrets of life and rebirth. As the Second Letter 's closing invocation says:

To you comes the stone, to you comes the stone... To you comes the Great-of-Magic ... To you comes the body which goes forth from the mountains... O sarcophagus, O sarcophagus, O mother, O mother... Come to Osiris N (or Hathor N) so that he (or she) may enter into you always. 11

Rebirth and the stone—these are familiar themes in Hellenistic, Islamic and Western alchemy (see below). But clearly they were also associated with Egyptian rebirth through the coffin goddess Nut.

After these seven divine substances have 'come', the coffin-dweller must next face conflict at the lunar threshold. Nine times Thoth is invoked for stability and victory over the Sethian enemies of Osiris.¹²

Such control is needed to provide a stable foundation for the ensuing restoration of the maternal heart—that 'heart of the mother' which brings such exultant freedom of movement when the Ba separates from

the body, and the 'lord of Heliopolis' opens wide the gates of sky and earth. Charged with self-renewing energy the traveller, reborn as Sekhmet's child, manifests in a fully deified state, having become a powerful progenitor of all the deities in Heliopolis, one who 'lives from the rituals'. Reactivating the heart generates a new creation.

Like a lion the traveller enters the sun-boat. Then comes the experience of a completely new solar birth within the egg as an ibis of Thoth. ¹³ It is a glorious rebirth in the realm of living, maturing and growing old, animated by the sweet breath of Amun. ¹⁴

Such a rebirth now impels the traveller towards the centre of Hermopolis, Thoth's sacred city, where the inundation waters flow in great abundance guarded by the justified ancestors. 15 Here Thoth's initiate, a vigorous ruler of the cardinal directions, lives in the annual rhythm of the inundation's ebb and flow, drinking pure water and receiving food offerings. More than one thousand years earlier, Thoth had appeared before Seti I at Abydos calling forth the inundation to purify the ancestral regenerated king seated at his offering table (pl 53). Furthermore, in the much later Ptolemaic Famine Stela, carved on a rock on Sehel Island south of Aswan, a priest of Imhotep-or perhaps Imhotep himself-journeys to Hermopolis to seek a cure for the famine and drought that had plagued Egypt for seven years. His intent is clear. He goes to discover the secrets of renewal, the 'flow of the inundation waters' and also to find the 'hidden wonders to which the ancestors had made their way'.16

Similarly, in the Second Letter, the coffin-dweller has also reached these ancestral waters. Again it is the ninth hour, the time of sun-rise when light transfigures the dawning world. And one version includes a hymn praising the primordial mysterious power who

comes to guide the resurgent soul along the ways of the *Dwat* for the going forth by day.¹⁷ It is Re, in all his manifold names, 'the lord of the secret casket belonging to Isis, the great one, the divine mother, belonging to Hathor, the great *Ihet*-cow who brings Re into the day, and to the two sisters who remain close to their lord'. These words read like an exact commentary on the scene of Hathor giving birth to Re in the *Book of Day* (pl 142), the mother of the sun in her morning rising, flanked by the two ladies.

Right to the end the document faithfully follows the pattern of the earlier ritual. Next comes the 'Litany for the preservation of the name', glorifying the coffin-dweller's complete unity with Osiris as Heliopolitan cosmic life streams forth anew. Then comes the moment when a hypocephalus is placed beneath the coffin-dweller's head to create a glowing halo of flame and heat throughout the body 'as the *lhet*-cow did for her son Re'. ¹⁸

Quickened by this magical body warmth, Nut's child slides forth onto the birth bricks, born like the young Re in the Book of Nut, to whom the goddess gives birth whilst squatting on bricks like all ancient Egyptian women in labour. Finally, the Second Letter closes with invocations to the 'stone', the coffin and the great mother goddess who guards the secrets of breathing, the mysteries of entering and going forth. Those precious seven substances brought at the start of the rites have ultimately become the vessel for creating new life.

Such a summary cannot convey the feeling or power of the Second Letter's beautiful invocations to all the different deities. These must be read in their entirety to be fully appreciated. But it shows that the ancient journey through Nut was still very much alive in the Theban funerary cult right down through Roman times. Moreover, although



expressed very differently, each phase in the coffin-dweller's journey corresponds exactly to the transformational pattern of the Ramessid Ancestor Ritual. Their sequence of themes is identical. In other words, the royal ritual for the ancestors and the journey of the deceased in the coffin were one and the same: both were the rite of rebirth through the body of the sky goddess.

We know very little about New Kingdom burial rites and liturgy so it is quite possible that the Ancestor Ritual may have been composed from an already existing funerary text similar to the Second Letter, adapted for use in royal temples. We have the New Kingdom temple ritual. We have a Roman period funerary document. But the possible links with New Kingdom funerary rites are lost— or perhaps still awaiting discovery.²⁰

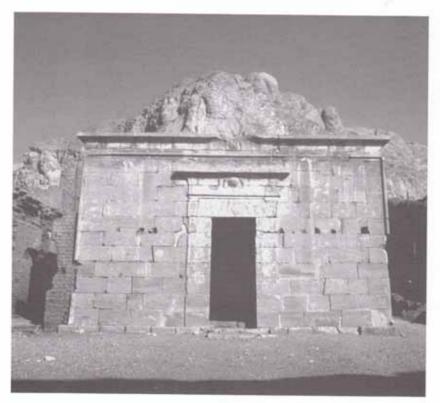
ANCIENT ORACLES: ANCESTRAL BUILDERS

What is absolutely clear, however, is that the ancestral dead were still perennially interwoven with the cults on earth in Graeco-Roman Egypt. This is beautifully described in the Ptolemaic Book of Traversing Eternity which gives the fullest details of the deceased's participation in a whole host of earthly cult festivals through the three seasons, including the offering

Above 150 Relief of a squatting goddess giving birth within a naos flanked by two cow-headed helpers. Originally a solar disk may have been in the space between her feet. Temple relief from the Ptolemaic period or later (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

feast in the ninth night hour.²¹ Nevertheless, the sacred landscape at Thebes had undoubtedly changed. Instead of the Valley of the Kings and the royal mortuary temples, it was the necropolis of Deir el-Medina and Djeme at Medinet Habu which had emerged as the most important places in the cult of the dead.

Yet although the sites of the cult may have changed, the great goddess on whom death and rebirth essentially



depended had never altered. Ptolemaic rulers still felt impelled to dedicate a temple to Hathor at Deir el-Medina; she it was who presided over the necropolis. And still the cult image of Amun-of-Luxor made his river crossings from Luxor to the West Bank so that offerings could be made on the ancestral altars.²² Regeneration rites, links with the ancestors and continuity of the family were still very important, perhaps even more so under the impact of Rome's system of provincial rule.²³

But in keeping with the move away from an omnipotent king, the most honoured ancestors of all were no longer the 18th Dynasty rulers Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari. Instead, it was Imhotep, the pioneering Old Kingdom architect of King Zoser's Step Pyramid at Saqqara, who was now revered as a deified sage, the son of Ptah, a saviour and healer presiding over the popular dream oracles and cult of the dead. His cult was profoundly important,

not only in Memphis and Alexandria, but also at Thebes and elsewhere. In Hathor's temple at Deir el-Bahri, for example, the main sanctuary was extended further into the rock to incorporate a shrine for him. The Ptah temple at Karnak was another of his holy places.

Known to the Greeks as Asclepius, Imhotep shared the Deir el-Bahri sanctuary with Amenhotep-sonof-Hapu who had lived in the 18th Dynasty reign of Amenhotep III and who, like Imhotep, was renowned as a master-builder.24 In one scene in Hathor's Deir el-Medina temple, Amenhotep-son-of-Hapu sits with his mother, who is crowned like a New Kingdom queen. Mother and son appear together as if they were reincarnations of Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari, taking on the form and function of the archetypal New Kingdom royal ancestors.25 Here at Thebes people could come to their shrines to consult the dream-oracles

Left 151 View of the temple at Deir el-Medina dedicated to Hathor-Aphrodite and Maat. The site was sacred to Hathor at least from New Kingdom times, though the present temple was built in the reigns of Ptolemy IV and his successors

Right 152 View in the Hathor temple at Deir el-Medina. There is a Hathor-pilaster on the left

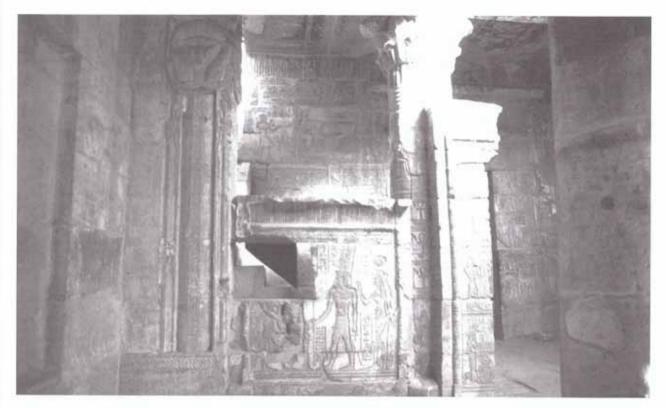
or for incubatory sleep under the protection of these ancestors who, though no longer royal, bestowed healing, offspring and all the blessings a suppliant could desire. Through their incubation oracles they could also reveal the secrets of death and rebirth.²⁶

Described in texts as children of the scribal goddess Seshat and Thoth, both Imhotep and Amenhotep were ancestors whose names were long remembered. And it is surely no coincidence that, like their patron Thoth, during their lifetime they had both been skilled in numbers and measurements, building and writing.

However, much more than physical 'building' skill was meant in this Egyptian tradition. For becoming a 'builder' belonged to the path of rebirth through the mother goddess. As chapter 25 of the Book of the Dead relates, a person became a 'builder' when his or her name was remembered (page 158)—a member of a building community already mentioned in the Pyramid Texts connected with Nut and Seshat:

Nephthys has collected all your members for you in this her name of 'Seshat, Lady of Builders' . . . you have been given to your mother Nut in her name of 'Sarcophagus'. She has embraced you in her name of 'Coffin'.²⁷

To be an ancestor was to be born again through Nut, the coffin goddess, and to have one's name written by Seshat, 'Lady of Builders'. It was to be a 'builder' like the revered Imhotep and Amenhotep, serving and sustaining



the tradition of death and rebirth throughout the generations, renewing Ptah's creation.²⁸

CULTIVATING WISDOM: THE WAY OF THOTH

There is another inescapable presence which influences this 'community of builders'—Thoth, the god 'who knows' in every sense of the word. Indeed the Second Letter for Breathing purports to be written with his own hand as the divine scribe. Nor is it the only Book of Thoth concerned with death and rebirth wisdom in Roman Egypt.

There is another important text, a dialogue between Thoth and his pupil 'He-who-wishes-to-know', preserved in several demotic papyri from the Faiyum mostly dating to the second century AD. At the time of writing publication of these papyri is still in progress, but there is enough information in the editors' preliminary report

to suggest that Thoth is teaching his pupil about those mysteries of rebirth through Nut which had been practised in Egypt for centuries.²⁹

It is by no means a straightforward teaching, however, for it is as if the Hermopolitan divine scribe and lord of wisdom deliberately seeks to veil his meaning through allusions to the scribal art and its symbolism whilst taking his pupil on a guided journey.

It begins with Thoth instructing his pupil about the innate wisdom of animals. But the dialogue soon moves to the *Dwat* and entry into the solar boat. After establishing that his body is ready, Thoth's pupil then pleads to learn about the 'claw which fastens', the 'weapons' he needs and the 'nurse who nurtures language'. Hence he seeks to know about the animal way of death, as well as sustenance from a female counterpart of Thoth.

This must be Seshat—that 'Lady of Builders' already mentioned in the

Pyramid Texts. Thoth tells his pupil he must know how to attract an elusive female called 'Foremost of the Mouth'. who may have to be asked many times before she will open the gate. Entering her realm is difficult, so the pupil must become like Thoth himself when he enticed the raging Sun Eye back to Egypt. Thoth is referring here to the myth of the Goddess in the Distance, inscribed in Graeco-Roman temples and even translated into Greek during the third century.30 In this myth the Sun Eye, usually called Hathor or Tefenet, manifests as a raging lioness roaming the Nubian desert. In order to entice her back to Egypt the sun god sends Thoth and Shu, who appear as baboons, delighting her with their songs and dances. Thus they transform her rage so that she returns to Re as the joyful goddess Hathor, restoring Egypt once again to life and fertility.

Clearly, Thoth is teaching his pupil about entry into those raging night gates we have already encountered in the Book of Night. His pupil must know how to handle the beneficentdestructive goddess if he is to turn her face so that her power can take him through the gateway.

Clearly the goddess must have 'come quickly', because Thoth next tells his pupil that he need not be afraid of entering the water to find the book. From this watery realm the pupil arrives in a quite different landscape called the 'Seven fields of He-who-understands-the-Two-Lands'. Hence Thoth must be guiding his pupil across that difficult threshold which Horus also faced when seeking to gain control of a united Egypt. Like all those other followers of Horus, Thoth's pupil must know how to rise from the waters to take possession of the Two Lands if he is to enter fertile regions.

Great bounty awaits the wise cultivator, though care is needed when handling the storerooms' intense heat, lest an inexperienced seeker 'burns his fingers'. Those who know how to sow and reap, to 'work the fist', however, will gather a rich harvest, planting on the Bas of Re. Much that is obscure in this section becomes clearer if it is remembered that 'finger' and 'phallus' were interchangeable symbols in the struggle between Horus and Seth. Moreover, 'working the fist' perhaps refers not only to the scribal art but also to Atum's creative act, when he brought Shu and Tefenet into existence by masturbating and letting his seed fall into the water. Hence though he is apparently describing the scribal skills, Thoth at the same time conveys that Seth's ascendancy has ended and that there is a new creation in these fertile life-giving regions sustained by the Bas of Re.31

Gradually Thoth leads his pupil ever deeper into the ancestral wisdom. His pupil asks to drink 'sweet water' from the 'well of the wise'. Like all those other travellers who have drunk from the purifying waters, Thoth's pupil has reached the ancestral river-source of life. And any doubt that Thoth is here teaching the mysteries of rebirth through Nut is finally swept away when his pupil now desires to enter the threshold of the vulva:

The vulva is impatient for the teaching, May I enter its threshold.

He has become like a little child, needing nourishment from his mother's milk: 'Behold my mouth is open, may one give me milk.'

Where else in ancient Egypt do we find such a regeneration linked with the female body – or such a journey to the birth-giving regions of the female? Only in that heavenly journey of rebirth through the body of the sky goddess Nut, which we have traced from New Kingdom times.

When Thoth has finished his instruction the disciple's cry confirms beyond doubt that he has been taught the secrets of regeneration:

You have caused that I become old, I being young of birth. You have given to me the means of becoming a youth.

Remaining true to his New Kingdom predecessors, whose path of rebirth had closed with the power of the praising voice, Thoth's newly regenerated disciple now praises the solar creator. He is one who understands 'the barking of dogs and the screaming of vultures', those creatures who accompany the birth of the sun. He declares that he will praise Thoth during a festival of Imhotep before Osiris in the temple of *Heseret* and raise his hand to the 'thrice-great one'.

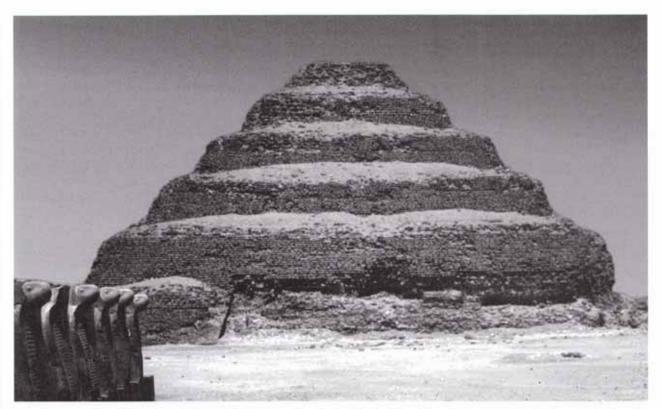
Hermopolis would have been the scene of the disciple's thanksgiving, since Heseret had long been a name of Thoth's Hermopolitan cult centre.³² And as he utters his joyful praise during Imhotep's festival, he will become like one of Thoth's baboons, those Right 153 King Zoser's Third Dynasty Step Pyramid at Saqqara, the work of Imhotep, architect, healer and sage who was later deified

early morning greeters of the rising sun—yet one more dawn worshipper in the long line of 'builders', which stretched right back through priests like Djedhor at Memphis (pl 148) to the New Kingdom temple clergy in Seti I's temple at Abydos when they performed their Ancestor Ritual and finally to Imhotep himself. He it was who stood at the head of this building tradition, the great ancestral power who forever generated new cultivators of Thoth's wisdom to ensure that Egypt's waters flowed. 33

TEACHING THE TRADITION: HERMETIC CIRCLES

However, the whole atmosphere of Thoth's teaching here seems a world away from New Kingdom Egypt. Indeed its style seems distant even from the world of the Memphite priests with their opulent sarcophagi displaying Book of Night scenes, for its text is much more personal than anything we have previously encountered. In this respect it is more like the 'philosophical' Hermetic treatises from Roman period Egypt in which a pupil receives illumination from a teacher and breaks out into a hymn of praise at the end of the teaching. These treatises were associated with Hermes Trismegistus, the 'thrice-great one', who was an incarnation of the Greek god Hermes identified with Thoth.

Yet although the form may seem alien, the content of Thoth's dialogue is completely Egyptian. It is as if his eager pupil is undergoing some kind of initiation or private illumination ritual in the ancient wisdom of death and rebirth.³⁴ Thus, the mysteries of Nut, originally restricted to the temple and funerary cults, seem to



have become the object of revelation to a chosen initiate, a much more intimate experience transmitted from teacher to pupil as from a father to a son.³⁵

Where Thoth transmitted his knowledge is not stated. Presumably, given that his pupil says he will go to the Hermopolitan temple to make his thanksgiving, it was not in a temple. And perhaps we have here a rare glimpse into the teaching methods of some Egyptian priests in Roman Egypt, who, under the aegis of Thoth, taught the ancient Egyptian religion outside the temples.36 From one point of view this represents the culmination of a gradual separation of religious life from its close connection with the Pharaoh. But it can also be seen as a new wave of development in the death and rebirth tradition.

Until recently scholars have tended to associate the decline of ancient Egyptian religion with the gradual closure of the temples and the rise of a Christian church hostile to the old traditions, especially from the fourth century onwards. The ancient temples, it is argued, had become increasingly fossilized in their cult practices and their priesthood more concerned with creating arcane symbolism than with meeting the needs of a multicultural society undergoing great upheavals in a land ruled from far-off Rome.

And even though the ancient cults continued in isolated enclaves like Philae and Abydos right up to the sixth century AD, there was certainly a steady decline in the old religion making it easy to conclude that it eventually withered away completely, once the temples had closed.³⁷

In his most illuminating study of Roman Egypt, however, David Frankfurter puts forward a very different view, arguing that ancient Egyptian religion persisted far longer than previously supposed. Emphasizing the resilience of native cults in the fifth and sixth centuries, he suggests that there were, in fact, priests deeply committed to traditional ways who shifted their activity away from the temples to local villages and houses.³⁸ Hence the ancient rites could have evolved into new forms of experience, perhaps enacted in small groups as in Hermetic circles.

Frankfurter describes how various religious 'associations' were formed to support the worship of different deities. There were also professional mortuary guilds responsible for the mummification rites. One such guild, at Kysis in the Kharga Oasis, flourished into the fifth century.³⁹

It does not seem very plausible that the guilds were simply concerned with the preservation of the physical body and had entirely forgotten the rebirth mysteries of the coffin goddess. It seems more likely that they were still instrumental in transmitting Egyptian 'craft-secrets'. Certainly the crafts appear to have retained their religious character during the fourth



century. We know, for example, that a small guild of ironworkers from Hermonthis made an annual pilgrimage northwards to Hathor's temple at Deir el-Bahri where they held a ritual banquet and sacrificed a donkey.⁴⁰

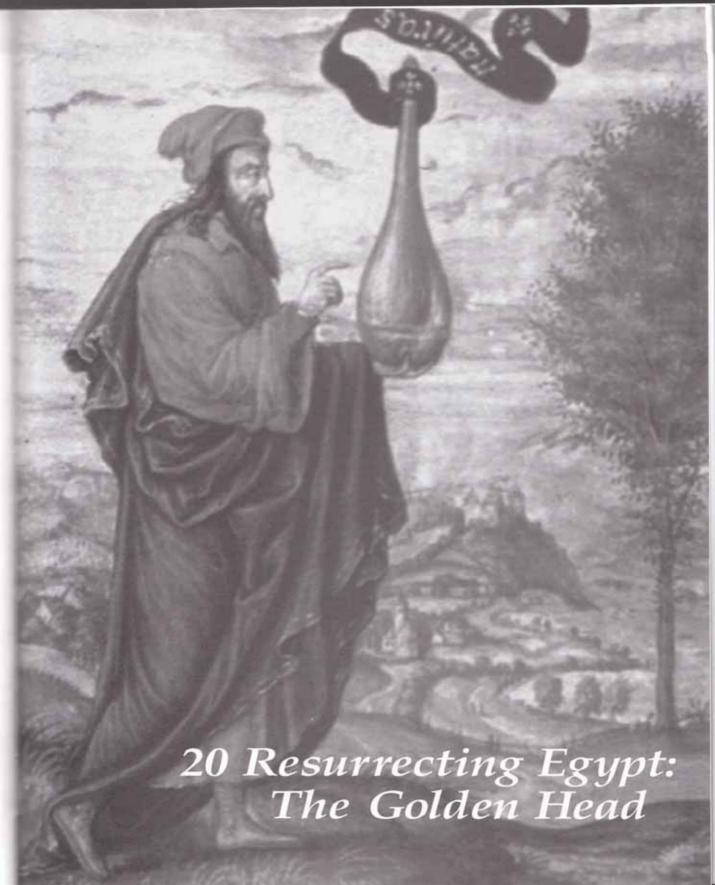
Hence Thoth's eager disciple in the demotic Book of Thoth may well have been part of a much more extensive, if heterogeneous, movement, involved in the preservation of ancient Egyptian wisdom, continuing long after Egypt became Christian. Certainly there was another group in Roman Egypt who showed a deep interest in the mysteries of transformation and regeneration-the early alchemists, whose work was rooted in knowledge about minerals, metals and precious stones, especially the secrets of gold. And if we go more deeply into what is known about the early Egyptian alchemists and their later successors, very similar conclusions begin to emerge. Again we can follow the shift away from traditional ritual settings, this time into an alchemical milieu which was profoundly influenced by ancient Egypt's rebirth wisdom.

Western alchemists in every age have always said that their practices originated in the temples of ancient Egypt. And although this assertion has often been challenged, the alchemists may not have been so wrong after all. The next two chapters explore evidence that the ancient Egyptian tradition of death and regeneration, with its rich ritual life, did not die out, but was carried forward by alchemists. There is a strong tradition concerned with death and rebirth in Islamic and Western alchemy, and if the alchemists were right about the origin of their craft we might reasonably expect to find evidence of ancient Egypt's ritual symbolism in alchemical material from later times.

This is much more than a longstanding controversy about the origins of alchemy. For if it can be proved that Egyptian religious tradition was Above 154 The gods Horus and Thoth purify Heruben, a temple priestess and grand-daughter of the Theban high priest Menkheperre (Late 21st Dynasty papyrus, Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Facing page 155 An alchemist points to the flask he holds at the beginning of the alchemical process which involves working with the living power of nature (Second illustration in the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, British Library Harley MS 3469)

transmitted into alchemy there are important implications for our understanding of the history of Western culture. The alchemists' claims about their Egyptian roots may have been repeatedly ridiculed but no one disputes that alchemy was an important current in the development of medieval and Renaissance Europe. So to search for the ultimate fate of Egyptian religion is to explore not only the origins of alchemy but also the extent of Egyptian influence on modern Western culture.



In the Ancestor Ritual, in the New Kingdom Book of Night, and in the much later Second Letter for Breathing, the feeding of the risen dead, purified by the inundation waters, marks a crucial stage in the rebirth process. The striking parallels in a much later Graeco-Egyptian alchemical text, the Dialogue of the Philosophers and Cleopatra, have already been mentioned in chapter seven—how Cleopatra describes the dead lying in Hades, waiting for the waters of rebirth to come and revive them so that they can be reborn and flower again in the springtime.

This alchemical text—which Carl Jung noted had all the 'characteristics of a regeneration mystery'—also compares the dead coming forth with the birth of a child from its mother's fiery womb. And it goes on to describe the spiritual rebirth which takes place when the house has been sealed and 'the statue erected, filled with light and divinity'.¹

At such moments the dialogue seems for all the world like a Greek transmission of the ancient Book of Night journey of death and rebirth through the sky goddess Nut, associated with temple rituals and cult statues, even if the Greek mode of expression and the lack of any direct reference to ancient Egypt urge a cautious assessment of Egyptian influence.

We know nothing about the life of Cleopatra, nor whether this was a pseudonym of a female alchemist identifying herself with the great queen Cleopatra. But although she is not the only significant female alchemist to be encountered in Graeco-Egyptian alchemy, it was a male writer whose works were most frequently quoted in later times.

The famous alchemist Zosimus probably lived at the end of the third century AD. He was born in Akhmim, a large city not far north of Abydos, then known as Panopolis. He is known to have visited Memphis in search of

alchemical metallurgical knowledge and it is fascinating to note the traces of Memphite wisdom in an alchemical work entitled *The True Book of Sophe the Egyptian*, which has been attributed to Zosimus.²

In describing the nature of wisdom, this work contrasts the 'celestial' and the 'mineral' sun, a contrast which would have been very familiar to Akhenaten and other New Kingdom Egyptians. The text says that there is one kind of wisdom which 'seeks none of the material and wholly corruptible bodies, for it acts without subjecting itself to any change'. Such a wisdom is to be distinguished from one which must be actively rescued and brought forth, being 'the divine soul enchained in the elements', or 'the divine pneuma mingled with flesh'.

Then the text compares these two kinds of wisdom with the two different suns. One is the celestial right Eye of the world, the other is the mineral sun made of copper, which when purified becomes a king on earth.

For as the sun is the blossom of fire, and the celestial sun is the right Eye of the cosmos, so also copper, when purification makes it blossom, is an earthly sun, a king upon earth, like the sun in heaven.³

Such words in an alchemical text attributed to Zosimus, not least the mention of the celestial sun as the right Eye of the world, have a strangely familiar ring about them, as might be expected if the text does in fact originate from an alchemist who grew up on the banks of the Nile, surrounded on all sides by ancient Egyptian temples.

Later alchemists speak in a similar vein, identifying the earthly heaven in which the terrestrial sun rises with the female, who is sometimes described as the Queen of Sheba. She is, like Hathor at Memphis, the medium surrounding the sun, the male encompassed by the female.

Akhmim, the native city of Zosimus, was an important cultural centre in Roman times, with a flourishing Greek literary community well-documented by historians of late antiquity.4 Less well-known, however, are Akhmim's decorated tombs, probably dating to the second or early third century AD, which still preserve traditional Osirian funerary scenes-the weighing of the heart, the journey in the sun-boat, and mummification rites. Alongside one relief, showing worship of the sacred head of Osiris, stands the tomb owner, proudly dressed in his Roman toga, holding, like the wise sage Imhotep, a papyrus scroll in his hand.5 Hieroglyphic texts are rare in these tombs, but words could hardly express more eloquently than these scenes the preservation of Osirian religion here in Zosimus's birthplace.

Akhmim always had a reputation as a city strongly adhering to the ancient deities in late antiquity, so it is possible that such Osirian burial rites persisted until the persecutions by Christians in the fifth century.⁶ After that it must have been increasingly difficult to follow the ancient customs openly.

Whether Zosimus actually practised alchemy in third century Akhmim is not known. But during his lifetime there was clearly a proliferation of alchemical groups which included the renowned female alchemist Theosebia, a priestess and alchemical 'sister' of Zosimus.⁷

Thus a strongly established alchemical tradition was flourishing little more than a century after the time when Thoth's disciple experienced his initiation into the mysteries of heavenly rebirth (chapter 19). And it is exemplified by an unusual bronze statuette of Osiris inscribed with alchemical symbols, which perhaps dates to the fourth century.⁸

How the tradition subsequently continued in the face of a fiercely intolerant Christian church is difficult to know. 156 A young alchemist climbs amidst the tree of life to pluck its fruits while beneath the tree two philosophers stand in a meadow where golden flowers bloom. The surrounding scenery shows a group of bathing women watched by a king and his courtiers. The imagery suggests the 'awakening' of sexuality and renewal amidst abundant green vegetation, like the much earlier Egyptian renewal beneath Hathor's sacred tree in the night journey (Detail from the sixth illustration in the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

But presumably a low profile would have been sensible. Its survival can be surmised, however, from the work of a certain Olympiodorus in Alexandria, for whom the tomb of Osiris was the image of alchemy.⁹

When alchemy does resurface in the Islamic period, it is striking that it is once again centred on Akhmim. One of Akhmim's most famous ninth century inhabitants was the 'brother of Akhmim', Dhu'l-Nun the Egyptian, the reputed founder of the Sufi Order of Builders, who was a great Sufi teacher linked with alchemy and Hermeticism in later medieval sources. As Peter Kingsley observes, Dhu'l-Nun 'clearly stood in the same line of tradition as Zosimus from Panopolis'. 10 It would be all too easy to pass over Dhu'l-Nun's Sufi links with 'builders' as something entirely unconnected with his Egyptian origins. But in the light of the ancient Egyptian building tradition, it is probably more accurate to say that Dhu'l-Nun, a major transmitter of alchemical knowledge, stood in the same line, not only of Zosimus, but also of all those other much earlier ancient Egyptian 'builders' who had died to be reborn again.

TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM: PHILOSOPHIZING ALCHEMISTS

One of the earliest alchemical texts known to European alchemists was



the Turba philosophorum or 'Assembly of the Philosophers', which was written in Latin and was very influential in 16th and 17th century Western alchemy. Scholars have traced the Arabic prototype of the Turba back to alchemists who lived in Egypt around the tenth century AD. In particular, Uthman Ibn Suwaid from Akhmim, who lived around the year 900, has been named as the possible source. Hence the Turba philosophorum takes us right into the heartland of

Egyptian alchemy at Akhmim where a strong alchemical current seems to have flowed over the centuries.¹³

The Turba's title refers to a gathering of ancient philosophers presided over by Pythagoras, in which they engage in debate about the nature of the world and matter and their views are expressed in a collection of some seventy tracts or 'sermons'. Clearly the ideas put forward in the Turba contain Greek and other doctrines. But in some cases entire passages can be traced

back to the ancient Egyptian beliefs about death and rebirth already explored in earlier chapters.

The 58th sermon describes how an old alchemist is restored to a state of eternal youth beneath the great fruit-bearing branches of a 'white tree' around which a house is built surrounded by dew. This is a famous motif in later Western alchemy, and the text states that if a man of a hundred years is placed in the house for a period of 180 days:

That old man will not stop eating the fruit of that tree, until the completion of the number of days, until that old man becomes a youth. O how wonderful is nature which transforms the soul of that old man into the body of a youth, so that the father is become the son.³⁴

Such a restoration of youth is precisely what Thoth's initiate experienced in second century Roman Egypt so it is interesting to find a similar experience described in this much later alchemical text stemming from Akhmim.

The connection between this alchemical tree of life in the *Turba* and ancient Egyptian religion did not escape Ingolf Vereno in his commentary on two other important Arabic alchemical manuscripts. Vereno points out the similarities between the *Turba's* tree and the much earlier fruitful sycamore tree in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*,¹⁵

His comparison can be taken several steps further, however, for we have already seen how this beautiful Hathorian tree belongs to that blissful time of renewal during the fifth night hour when, blessed by the goddess, the whole of nature begins to grow and flourish again.

The connection between ancient Egypt and the *Turba* does not end there. The theme of rebirth is immediately taken up again by the next speaker, Theophilus, in the following 59th sermon. Here, however, Theophilus is concerned with the fruitful womb, with the volatile raging

powers which have to be wrestled with before there can be maturation, fruitfulness and the birth of new life.

This is precisely the theme of the sixth hour in the Book of Night-that time when the wind blows as the generative living Bas sail, encountering the fiery source of destruction and life in their quest to 'bear fruit'. Theophilus first describes how certain fruits come earlier from that perfect tree and flourish in the early summer. He compares this ripening, quickening process, which needs the summer heat. to 'the woman who flees', who will not be dominated by her male partner. He, in turn, loves her in her rage, and stays awake contending with her until finally they embrace. In this way, says Theophilus, God brings children to maturity, giving as many as he pleases.

Clearly this tract is concerned with the fiery volatile feminine power—the 'woman who flees'—with whom the male must sexually unite if new life is to be generated.

And initially it might seem that Theophilus is referring to the well-known Greek idea of the 'wandering womb' which was thought to be an independent organ, roaming about inside the body causing all kind of discomfort. Hence the need for the male partner to 'stay awake' whilst contending with this 'fleeing woman', if her womb is to become moist again and bear much fruit.

But we have encountered this ragingbeneficent volatile power at a much earlier date, when the 'Wandering Ones' surround their fiery furnaces of destruction and life in the sixth hour of regeneration in the *Book of Night*. Moreover, this 'woman who flees' in the *Turba* behaves exactly like the Egyptian goddess of regeneration, Hathor-Sekhmet.¹⁷ Nor indeed were the Egyptian doctors ignorant of the 'wandering womb', since there is a cure for making the uterus return to its position in an Egyptian magical text.¹⁸ Hence, although we cannot exclude the possibility that Theophilus is basing his speech on Greek medical knowledge and mythology, the origins of his knowledge about the regenerative 'woman who flees', coming directly after a passage about the restorative tree of life, are probably far more complex. For when we look closely there is an identical sequence of themes in the fifth and sixth night hours of regeneration in the ancient Egyptian tradition.¹⁹

Moreover, immediately after this passage about the 'woman who flees' Theophilus declares that 'the dragon never dies'. He then goes on to describe a woman who overcomes the dragon in a fierce battle by means of the 'weapons' and 'poison' which pervade her body. The more the dragon binds himself to her, the more he is cut into pieces by her feminine weapons, until eventually he is changed into blood which dries in the sun and his venom then appears. The end result is that the 'hidden wind' manifests.

It is unnecessary to look to a Hindu myth about the 'poison maiden' who kills men in her embrace to explain this episode, which was richly illustrated in later Western alchemical manuscripts. 20 For the Ptolemaic Papyrus Jumilhac describes how the fiery uraeus snake, Isis-Hathor, fought the confederates of Seth on the mountain of the Oxyrhyncus nome, one of the nomes of Seth. Her venom entered their bodies and their blood fell on the mountain, so producing a red substance in the region (perhaps a red ochre pigment or minium). 21

All this recalls the four females binding the Apophis snakes during the conception of a child in the scenes in Ramesses IX's tomb (pl 107). These enemies, unfruitful powers opposed to fertility and new life, have to be bound and overcome if there is to be any hope of attaining fiery rebirth and release from their snares. Magical weapons are needed, like those used

by these four females. And when this dragon is overcome in the *Turba*, so the 'hidden wind' manifests.

Next in the *Turba* comes the embryological 60th sermon, describing the conditions necessary for the conception of a child and the development of the embryo in the maternal womb. This requires that sperm is generated from blood and desire. And

When a man has slept with a woman the seed is nurtured by the moisture of the womb, and through the moisture and warmth of the blood, so that after forty days and nights the seed is formed (into a child).²²

Without the womb's moisture and warmth the seed could not survive, nor could the child grow. According to the *Turba* warmth, air and moisture are pre-requisites for foetal development, but if everything becomes over-heated then there is destruction. All this, of course, is distinctly Egyptian.

In short, everything we know about regeneration in ancient Egypt fits the requirements of renewal set out here in the *Turba*. Of course, the philosophers of the *Turba* express their views in a philosophical style completely foreign to the ancient Egyptians. But if we look behind their words to the meaning, then it seems that what we have here is a resurfacing of Egyptian ideas about the different powers which need to be brought into relationship, often with great difficulty, for the fruitful regeneration of life and creation of a child.

SPLENDOR SOLIS: THE ROYAL ART

These themes in the *Turba* are echoed in one of the most important works in Western alchemy—the *Splendor Solis* attributed to Salomon Trismosin which first appears in the West during the late sixteenth century.²³

This work has already been briefly mentioned in connection with the



rescue of the drowning Osiris in the Memphite Theology, because one of the illustrations in the Splendor Solis shows a king, the drowning Rex marinus, being rescued by his royal son (pl 157). It could have come straight from ancient Memphis, so accurate is its portrayal of the episode in the Memphite Theology, when the drowning Osiris is rescued 157 In the background the drowning Rex marinus calls for help whilst in the fore-ground stands the king's son, his renewed form. He holds a sceptre surrounded by seven stars in one hand and a golden apple upon which a dove perches in the other. The scene recalls the rescue of Osiris in the Memphite Theology (Seventh illustration in Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis, British Library Harley MS 3469)

Table 3

The twenty-two illustrations of a version of Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis dating from 1582 which is now in the British Library (London, Harley MS 3469). Though there are other influences, particularly from the Jewish tradition, the underlying

pattern of regeneration in the Splendor Solis closely corresponds with the ancient Egyptian journey through Nut. In another of his writings, Salomon Trismosin states how he found the 'treasure of the Egyptians' during his alchemical travels.











The four scenes above show the first phase of renewal. 1 Two philosophers stand before the alchemical temple. 2 The alchemist points to his flask indicating the start of the work. 3 A knight bestrides twin fountains spouting red and white water, the colours of the Egyptian Double Crown. He appears here like Horus whose lunar Eye rules the first phase of Egyptian renewal. 4 Sol and Luna, king and queen stand together. Just as the purification of Amun-Re as ruler of Egypt belongs to the initial renewal of bodily forms, so here the appearance of a royal couple completes this first phase.





Left, below and next page 5-11 The seven 'parables' illustrating the second phase of regeneration 5 Two alchemists enter a mountainous region beside a riverbank, a landscape associated in the Book of Night with the conflict between Horus and Seth and entry into the 'life' realm'. The face of a crescent moon floats in the water. Court intrigue is represented here by the Jewish Queen Esther standing before King Ahasuerus together with the rivals Mordecai and Haman in the scene beneath. 6 The Tree of Life. 7 The Rex marinus. 8 Rising from slime 'the Ethiopian' meets his heavenly queen. 9 The royal hermaphrodite symbolizing the union of the heavenly king and queen. 10 Dismemberment of the 'golden head', the eternal foundation of life.









The Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin

11 Entering the fiery crucible of regeneration 12–18 The first of the seven flasks shows the regenerated child. Each of the flasks is presided over by a planetary deity as a ruler of destiny and they represent the seven planetary spheres through which the winged

soul descends after being released from the crucible of transformation. The background scenes typify each planetary realm. The second appearance of a king and queen in the flasks of Mercury and Moon (17–18) completes this second phase of regeneration

















Below 19–22 Rebirth—the third phase of the alchemical journey 19 A scorched moon, symbolizing heat united with the lunar element, enters the earth. 20 The play of children expressing the

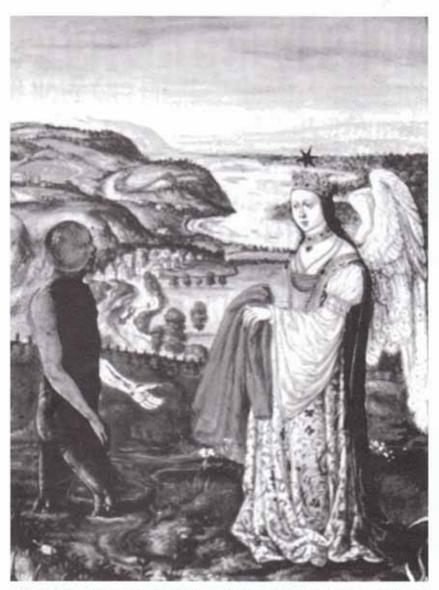
fruitful multiplication of life. 21 Nine ladies wash and dry clothes to extract the purified 'spirit of the quintessence'. 22 The splendour of the sun—Splendor Solis—rising over a morning landscape.











and Horus appears as the triumphant ruler at dawn. The illustration shows a drowning king calling out for help, whilst standing in the foreground is the renewed ruler carrying an orb and sceptre surrounded by seven stars.

The picture accompanies a passage describing how the king of the earth sinks into the depths of the waters and is revealed again at dawn in his renewed form, crowned with three precious crowns and shone on by the moon and sun.

Of course the representational style in this beautiful painting, from the British Library Harley manuscript of Splendor Solis dating from 1582, is very different from ancient Egyptian art and the drowning of Osiris seems never to have been represented in pharaonic times—indeed the Egyptians were always reticent about even mentioning the actual circumstances of his death. But with this theme of the drowning king and his renewed son, it is almost as though we were transported back in time to ancient Memphis.

Salomon Trismosin himself obviously thought he was transmitting the

158 Like Horus meeting Hathor-Isis after his violent conflict with Seth, the 'Ethiopian' rises from black muddy water radiating vitality to meet his heavenly queen (Detail from the eighth illustration in Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

'treasure of the Egyptians'. Elsewhere he describes how he learnt the art of alchemy in Italy and Germany, and tells the reader

Then I went away from Venice to a still better place where kabbalistic and magical books in the Egyptian language were entrusted to my care. These I had carefully translated into Greek and again into Latin. There I found and collected the treasure of the Egyptians'.²⁴

Regardless of whether Trismosin's discovery of kabbalistic and magical books is a genuine biographical account or an allegory of the alchemical quest, it is easy to dismiss his claim as yet another example of a Western alchemist seeking to trace his roots back to Egypt—another deluded seeker trying to propagate the 'great Egyptian illusion' described by the Renaissance scholar Frances Yates.²⁵

But it is not so simple. Trismosin's work has a strangely authentic ring about it, echoing the rescue of Osiris in ancient Memphis. Nor is this an isolated theme, for there is an uncanny resemblance between the Egyptian death and rebirth journey through the sky goddess Nut and the entire sequence of symbolic images in Trismosin's Splendor Solis—a sequence which has as its central theme the regeneration of life and the creation of a child.

Not all of the book's twenty-two illustrations can be discussed in detail here, but enough of the transformational process must be described to show that Trismosin may not have been at all deluded about the Egyptian origins of his profound work. For astonishing though it may seem, the

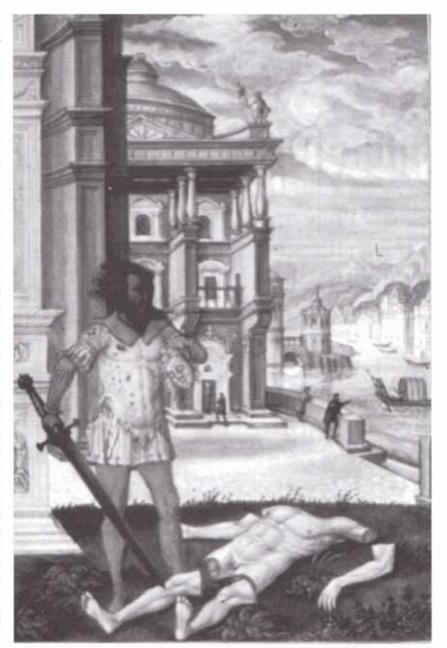
159 A dead man lies on the ground whilst his murderer holds up his severed golden head. Trismosin's text refers to a vision of Zosimus but the theme goes back to the 'headless Osiris' and Seth's murder of his brother (Detail from the tenth illustration in the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

Splendor Solis may well represent a genuine and exceptionally coherent transmission of ancient Egyptian rebirth wisdom.

Trismosin's first four illustrations are concerned in different ways with preparing a secure material foundation for the subsequent regenerative process. Strikingly, the third illustration shows a knight bestriding twin fountains, from which flow two streams of water coloured red and white. Emblazoned on his shield are the words: 'Make one water out of the two waters'.

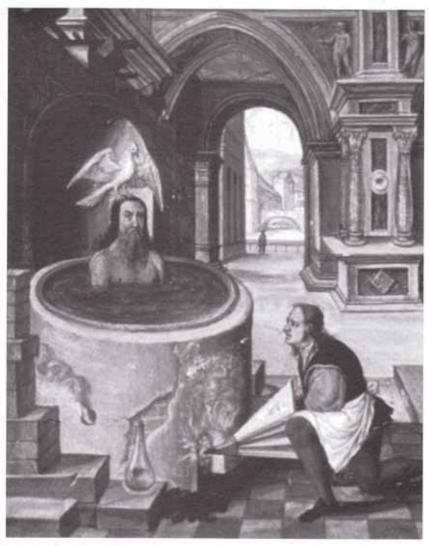
The red and the white—the colours of the Double Crown worn by Horus as ruler of a united Egypt—must become one in this initial phase. Similarly, the lunar Eye of Horus rules the initial phase of the Egyptian rebirth journey when the body is reintegrated and all its powers gathered together. The completion of this first phase is represented by the king and queen, Sol and Luna, in the fourth painting. And here the queen holds a banner inscribed with the words 'the virgin's milk'.

Next comes a sequence of seven images portraying the regeneration of life. In the fifth illustration this shift in the process is represented by a mountain which is being mined for its ore by two miners near a riverbank. In one version of the Splendor Solis two trees grow from the mountain's sides and mountain goats leap amongst the rocks. Again there are echoes of the distant past, since a mountainous region near a riverbank also features in the fourth hour of the Book of Night—at the entry to the 'life' realm, after all the



bodily faculties have been restored in the previous hours.

Floating in the river is a crescent moon with a human face and directly beneath is a scene of the biblical queen, Esther, standing in front of the Persian king, Ahasuerus, in the presence of the two rivals, the virtuous Mordecai and the wicked Haman. But why this particular Biblical scene should be included here is not at all obvious—until we remember that in the Egyptian tradition a conflict between two rivals, Horus and Seth, holds the key to entry into the 'life' realm. Then the reason for the Splendor Solis scene becomes much easier to understand: the Jewish story about Queen Esther—which incorporates themes of suppression, the survival of the Jewish people, concealment, trickery, sexual love and conflict



between two male rivals-appears to have replaced the Egyptian struggle with Sethian forces. Nor is this substitution at all surprising for, as discussed later, the Jews were extremely important in the transmission of alchemy. And once the Egyptian tradition of death and rebirth started to be transmitted by non-Egyptians, it is not surprising that other cultural elements crept in, sometimes making it hard to recognize the original source. But the Esther story is an authentic adaptation of the Egyptian rebirth journey since, as in Egypt, a court struggle involving two male rivals, under the influence of the moon, marks the en-

try into the regenerative 'life' realm.

The next illustration of the Splendor Solis (pl 156) is concerned with the propagation of life. A young man is shown climbing amidst the gold and green leaves of the fruit-bearing tree of life, which has a golden crown around the base of its trunk. He holds out one of its branches towards two elders standing beneath, in a meadow where golden flowers bloom. In the surrounding scenery a king and courtiers appear on a balcony looking at a sensual group of naked bathing women. The whole atmosphere of the scene suggests the awakening of human sexuality and 'fruit-bearing' 160 The alchemist's regeneration in a heated cauldron. According to the Turba philosophorum warmth, air and moisture are needed for the conception of a child and new life. Here a fellow alchemist uses his bellows to provide these conditions. As in the Egyptian regenerative sixth night hour when the Ba manifests, so here the white dove on the alchemist's head symbolizes the winged nature of his rebirth (Detail of the eleventh illustration in the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

activity beneath the fertile tree of life, growth and renewal.

Such a turquoise and gold tree takes us straight back to that tree in the Turba philosophorum beneath which the alchemist is rejuvenated. It is also mentioned in an Arabic alchemical manuscript which describes how the primary source of the elixir is to be sought from a tree with branches of emerald and leaves of gold standing in the west of an Egyptian temple.²⁶

But such images reach much further back into ancient Egypt than this Arabic manuscript. For there are 'the two trees of turquoise between which Re goes forth' mentioned in the Book of the Dead.²⁷ Even more to the point, here in this journey of regeneration, is the 'awakening' beneath Hathor's sacred tree in the Book of the Dead chapter for the fifth night hour, when the renewed initiate revels in all the sensual pleasures bestowed by the life-giving goddess before travelling on to the regenerative sixth hour.

Next in Trismosin's sequence comes the rescue of the *Rex marinus*, already described on page 205, with its manifestation of the renewed ruler.

This is followed by the meeting with an angelic winged female figure who hands a robe to a dark-bodied man rising from the slime (pl 158). In the coloured versions of this illustration one of his arms is painted white and the other arm is tinged with red—the red and the white associated with the crowned Horus in Egypt. Rising from

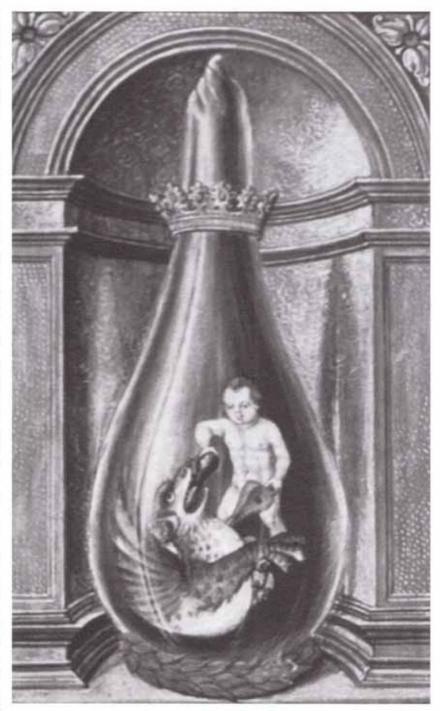
161 The child of regeneration pours liquid into a dragon's throat, tempering the fiery forces of untamed nature. Similarly, when a child manifests in the Egyptian seventh night hour Horus also appears prevailing over his Sethian enemies (Detail of the twelfth illustration in the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

the dark marshy waters, the black male exudes vitality as he comes to meet the radiant heavenly queen who, according to the text, 'led him with her to heaven'. She too has her counterpart in ancient Egypt—those fiery serpent goddesses who, together with Isis, empower the reborn Horus ruler in the mysteries of regeneration. Their heavenly reunion is symbolized in the angelic figure of the ruling hermaphrodite holding an egg in the following ninth illustration.

So far we have been following what seems to be a European Renaissance version of the Egyptian revitalization process, a process which must occur if the regenerative powers are truly to manifest in the sixth night hour. But the next three illustrations in *Splendor Solis* turn to the fate of the dismembered deceased king himself, who is the eternal foundation of new life.

The tenth illustration shows a dismembered corpse lying on the ground, with his murderer standing beside him carrying his severed head (pl 159). Trismosin's text refers to a vision of Zosimus, who saw a dead man whose 'limbs were cut off, and his head was of fine gold but sundered from the body'. This death is drastic and its resemblance to the dismemberment of Osiris scarcely needs elaborating. Indeed, the severed head of Osiris in Abydos is mentioned in a much earlier Egyptian demotic invocation to the god and there is a Greek magical papyrus, in which Osiris is described as 'headless'.28

But the tradition has much earlier roots in ancient Egypt. Already in the



21st Dynasty a headless mummy is seen on a sarcophagus now in the Louvre²⁹ and the restoration of the deceased's head occurs in both the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead.³⁰ So it is perhaps not surprising that later alchemists sometimes refer to themselves as the 'Children of the Golden Head'.³¹

However the most startling description of this 'headless Osiris' tradition is probably the dream-vision of Zosimus to which Trismosin briefly refers in his text.³² Zosimus describes how he



162 (above) and 163 (facing page) The second appearance of a king and queen in the Splendor Solis. The White Queen and the Red King are shown in the sixth and seventh flasks of Mercury and Moon at the completion of the regeneration phase (The Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

saw a bowl-shaped altar at the top of fifteen steps where a priest called Aion stood. The priest tells Zosimus how he has submitted himself to unendurable torment and how a man came in the early morning and dismembered him, drawing off 'the skin of my head with the sword which he was holding'.

Then Zosimus falls asleep again and sees once more the bowl-shaped altar, this time filled with bubbling liquid and presided over by the same priest who has now become 'a man of copper'. In the liquid Zosimus watches large numbers of people 'burning and yet alive'. And he is told that those who wish to obtain spiritual perfection come here to this cauldron of punishment and transformation to 'become spirits, having escaped from the body'. And just such a heated bath of transformation, in which the spirit is released from the body, is the theme in the next illustration of Trismosin's Splendor Solis (pl 160).

Here the alchemist appears in a hot bath with a shining white dove perched upon his head, symbolizing the release of the spirit from the body. A man kneels beside the cauldron, applying bellows vigorously to the fire in order to provide air for the flames. Thus all the conditions necessary for the alchemist's rebirth are present—air, warmth and moisture. These, as we know from both the *Turba philosophorum* and ancient Egypt are essential for the renewal of life.

Regeneration is undoubtedly the theme here. The next illustration shows a boy, hermetically sealed in the warmth of a flask (pl 161). He holds bellows whilst pouring liquid into a dragon's throat, so tempering the desiccating forces of untamed nature. Together, these two illustrations convey the human threefold life-cycle from childhood to old age, represented by the old alchemist in his cauldron, the mature man applying bellows to the fire, and the child fighting the dragon.

It is not at all hard to see this boy in the flask as a Renaissance version of that glorious seventh hour Egyptian rebirth, when a solar child appears, invested with power to grow and transform through all the phases of human life. Moreover, this is a child capable of containing the Sethian dragon's heat and fire within a sealed and ordered realm. For, as Isis well knew, there cannot be fruitful creative life without control of this boundless fierce energy. The flask containing the boy and the dragon is the first in a sequence of seven flasks. The contents of these flasks symbolize the conditions which are needed for the successful conjunction of the released spirit and the dissolved body. This is achieved through the agency of fire.³³

In the Harley version each flask appears in an ornamental niche, surrounded by scenes conveying the different planetary realms. Above each flask is the corresponding planetary god or goddess riding in a chariot, which has the zodiacal signs ruled by that planet on its wheels. The sequence starts with Saturn, then Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury and finally the Moon.³⁴

This is not a journey enclosed within the seven Egyptian coffins, but rather a descent through the seven planetary spheres towards earth, a progressive fixation of the volatile spirit released in the bath of regeneration. In the same way that the Egyptian Ba was able to travel freely between sky and earth, so the alchemist now possesses the power to draw down the life of the seventh heaven to earth, and to soar forth again safely through the seven realms which are subject to the planetary rulers of destiny.³⁵

Hence, although at first sight these flasks may seem to be awkward obstacles in our comparison with the Egyptian rebirth journey, the similarities in meaning shine through. For the power to release the heavenly Ba from the body, to soar through the realms of sky and earth, lay at the heart of the sixth and seventh hour fiery rebirth process. Indeed, it lay at the heart of all Memphite craft activity —the work of making statues 'live'. And though represented very differently these seven flasks encapsulate the power to travel between heaven and earth.

By contrast, the printed versions of Splendor Solis emphasize the importance of the sun and heat in the process, rather than the planetary rulers. The first three flasks, all unsealed, have flames beneath them, unlike the other four unheated sealed flasks. ³⁶ Warmth is therefore needed until the fourth flask when the fourth degree of heat is obtained. Alchemists sometimes compare this fourth degree with the heat of the sun, and significantly the fourth flask's planetary ruler in the *Harley* version is the Sun.

Thus the regenerated child must progress through the ardours of fire towards purification and fixation in the enduring qualities of the sun. Or as Trismosin says about the first flask, the generation of a mortal being from the initial seed 'takes place in a seven-fold manner with the influence of the sun's heat'. And it culminates in the manifestation of a powerful fiery form, freed from all impurities, radiating warmth and inner light.

This fiery completion is the alchemical reddening, the rubedo, represented by the Red King standing in the seventh flask next to his White Queen in the sixth. Yet their appearance is by no means inevitable, for controlling the heat at every stage is fraught with difficulty. The vessel has to be firm, the heat not so severe that it blasts and destroys the whole work. Even so wise an alchemist as Zosimus, after experiencing his dream-vision of the cauldron, describes how he subsequently lost his way whilst mounting the seven steps associated with the degrees of heat. His guide is suddenly consumed by fire and Zosimus also falls into error at the third step.37

But if this sevenfold process is completed successfully, then the iridescent colours of the peacock's outspread tail appear in the fifth flask of Venus. This striking bird symbolizes the rebirth of enduring beauty, warmth, colour and life, the reddening through the strength of fire at the heart of the process. This is the *rubedo* which, like the beautiful solar Isis-Hathor

shaking her sistrum in ancient Egypt (pl 46), confers the power to make the whole earth grow, mature and blossom—it is the rainbow bridge to the realm beyond shown in the last four illustrations.³⁸

This final stage begins with an image of the moon sinking into the earth, entering the subterranean realm to radiate the earth's substance and root the fiery transformational process in living fertile soil. According to the text this entry of the moon will 'turn the matter black'. But it is not simply the moon here entering the earth. Its top is scorched with solar heat, symbolizing the sun's presence in the lunar element when fire and earth unite together during this final stage of the alchemical work.

In sequence and in theme Trismosin's rebirth journey precisely follows the Egyptian Book of Night pattern of death and rebirth. For in Egypt too, after the regenerated child has been raised on high in the seventh hour, so the lunar Eye of Horus, united with the sun, enters the kingdom of Osiris, bringing salvation and light to the ancestral souls dwelling in this latent 'black earth' realm. They are the hidden source, the deep ground of existence, giving fertility and life to the whole land of Egypt.

In Trismosin's sequence this entry of the solarized moon in the black earth is followed by a beautiful scene of fruitful multiplication (pl 165). A group of children play in a room watched over by a woman with a child seated on her lap. In the background a female figure hovers in an open doorway, whilst in the foreground children playfully draw along a child lying on a cushion, which is symbolically shaped like a chrysalis to suggest the rebirth of life. Elsewhere in the room a young man plays with another child, whilst a bird perches on the floor before them.

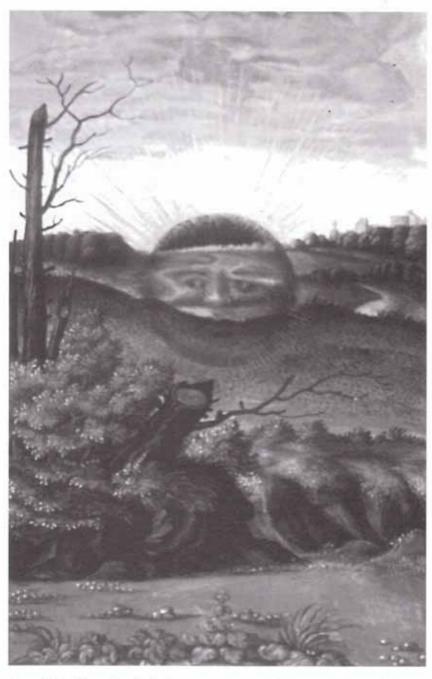
It is a wonderful earth place, ringing with laughter and children's play. It is



also a beautiful Western evocation of that Hathorian gateway of incarnation and return, a place of 'fruitfulness' and new birth seen at the close of the ninth night hour, when the solar Horus has entered to serve in the Osirian 'earth' realm of the ancestral spirits and day is beginning to dawn in the East (chapter 18).

Next come the nine ladies shown washing clothes—purifying, whitening and cleansing them, like the end phase of the lost wax process when a metal statue is finally cleansed and polished. The text compares this female work to the emergence of the 'spirit of the quintessence' and 'the real philosophical sublimation by which the perfect whiteness is achieved'.

Such a purification was also experienced by the regenerated souls at the



close of the Egyptian night journey. These were the purified, resurrected ones whose spiritualized bodies returned to the source of Heliopolitan creation and light at the dawn of time. And such a dawning is also the theme of the final image in the Splendor Solis sequence (pl 166) which shows the sun rising in the horizon to illuminate a

morning landscape—a beautiful vision of the 'splendour of the sun'.

This brief description of Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis can hardly do justice to the wonderful illustrations of the Harley manuscript which must be one of the finest treasures in the British Library. There is nothing haphazard about its choice of imagery. Left 164 The moon, its head scorched with solar heat, enters the earth to 'turn the matter black'. Like the lunar Eye of Horus entering the ancestral Osirian realm with the sun in the eighth night hour, a warm moon descends to the primordial earth realm. Trismosin says that the 'law of nature requires that the body be changed into water'. (Detail from the nineteenth illustration of the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

Each symbolic image is set in a lovely landscape, palace or temple, every intricate detail of which has been chosen to correspond with the theme. And extraordinary and strange though Trismosin's sequence may seem, it is in reality no stranger than the corresponding Egyptian night journey of death and rebirth.

There are differences, of course, especially the inclusion of the Biblical story of Queen Esther in the fifth illustration. Furthermore, the choice of twenty-two images perhaps reflects the kabbalistic influence Trismosin himself mentions when describing his discovery of the Egyptian wisdom.³⁹ Indeed, such an influence of Jewish esotericism is hardly surprising, for the connection between alchemists and Jews goes back a long way, represented above all by that revered alchemist of Hellenistic Egypt, Maria the Jewess, whom Zosimus loved to quote.⁴⁰

Ancient traditions change and develop in the course of time, adapting to different circumstances and conditions as they must if they are to survive. Not only do they acquire new accretions but also new explanations for the different processes, so much so that it is sometimes difficult to recognize the primary sources from whence they came. One such development was, of course, that the later alchemists, unlike the ancient Egyptians, readily mingled technical alchemical knowledge about working metals with their descriptions of spiritual death and regeneration. No ancient Egyptian would ever have been Right 165 Children play in a nursery, watched over by a man and a woman who holds a child on her lap, whilst another woman hovers in the doorway. There is great increase and fruitfulness when this stage is reached. This children's room recalls Hathor's dawn gateway of incarnation in the Egyptian rebirth journey (Detail from the twentieth illustration of the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)

so explicit, for, as Zosimus states, the Egyptians were forbidden to reveal their metal-working secrets and it was left to the Jews to divulge them openly.⁴¹ Hence it is not surprising to find traces of Jewish influence in Splendor Solis.

But despite these non-Egyptian elements and its Western mode of expression, the essence of this death and rebirth journey in Splendor Solis, seems to be unmistakably ancient Egyptian in origin. The symbolism may have changed, and Trismosin's commentary may have become more 'technical'. Moreover, there has been some reworking of the ancient tradition in the Harley manuscript to include the seven planetary rulers. But what concerned Salomon Trismosin in his alchemical work were the secrets of death and rebirth, the mysteries of transformation and regeneration, and the discovery of light in the depths of darkness. These concerns remained an intense preoccupation among alchemists from the end of antiquity through to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and beyond. But they had also been the concern of all those ancient Egyptians who made their night journey through the body of Nut, in search of the mysteries of 'becoming earth'.

AKHMIM: TERRA INCOGNITA

All this is more than just a question of tracing the history of alchemy or proving that there was some continuation of ancient Egyptian traditions.



The later alchemists, seeking to protect their practices from misuse by the profane, were often deliberately obscure in order to hide their meaning. Their works were veiled in arcane symbolism and sometimes, to preserve the secrecy of their art, they would even place pictorial images in the wrong sequence, though this does

not seem to apply to the Splendor Solis. Hence it is little wonder that it is sometimes difficult to discern any meaning or coherent pattern in alchemical works. But once the connection with ancient Egypt is recognized, then the Egyptian rituals of death and rebirth can help to shed fresh light on the seemingly bizarre alchemical imagery and stages of transformation. Nor is this a one-way process—details in later alchemy may also sometimes illuminate obscurities in the ancient Egyptian transformational journey.

At first sight it it is difficult to believe that the Egyptian rebirth wisdom could have been transmitted right down to early modern times. But the alchemists have always said that their tradition came from ancient Egypt, and the content and sequence of Trismosin's Splendor Solis suggests that they were right.

Is it then so fanciful to suppose that the 'Egyptian books' which so excited Salomon Trismosin on his travels were in fact Arabic alchemical manuscripts. like the Turba philosophorum, transmitting the long-hidden wisdom of ancient Egypt? It was the Arabs who came into contact with the wisdom of the ancient world, including the ancient Egyptian heritage, after the conquests of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries. And it was the Arabs who transmitted this wisdom into the West, for it is well-established that the Western alchemists of the Middle Ages learnt their art from the Arabs of Spain and Sicily. Arabic influence in Europe during the later Middle Ages, especially in Spain, transformed medieval culture. And during the Renaissance, at the time when the Splendor Solis surfaced in the West, a new wave of Byzantine alchemy reached the West, bringing with it many manuscripts originally written in Arabic.

There are, of course, many gaps in our present knowledge about how the ancient Egyptian rebirth wisdom may have been transmitted in Coptic Egypt after the decline of the temples, and how it could have survived for such a long period of time before emerging again in Arabic alchemical writings. 42

Further research may well reveal more about these questions. All that is possible here is to trace, in a partial and fragmentary way, a likely line of transmission from ancient Egypt. Undoubtedly it was a complex evolving process, with many accretions, adaptations and changes taking place along the way, as the ancient tradition passed through native Egyptian, Jewish and Greek alchemists in Hellenistic Egypt, and the much later Arab alchemists who did so much to transmit alchemy to the West. Moreover, Babylonian influence amongst the alchemists cannot be ignored.

From Islamic times onwards we are on safer ground, for the Arabic transmission of alchemy into the West is beyond doubt. Clearly the Arabs living in Egypt still had access to knowledge about ancient Egyptian religion, and it would seem that those early Arab alchemists living in Akhmim, not far north of Abydos, must have played an important role, though their activities still remain obscure at present.43 Future research in this direction will surely find much to tell us about the transmission of the 'black earth' tradition within and beyond Egypt, since many early Islamic alchemical texts have survived which, although little known in the West, are likely to reward closer investigation.44

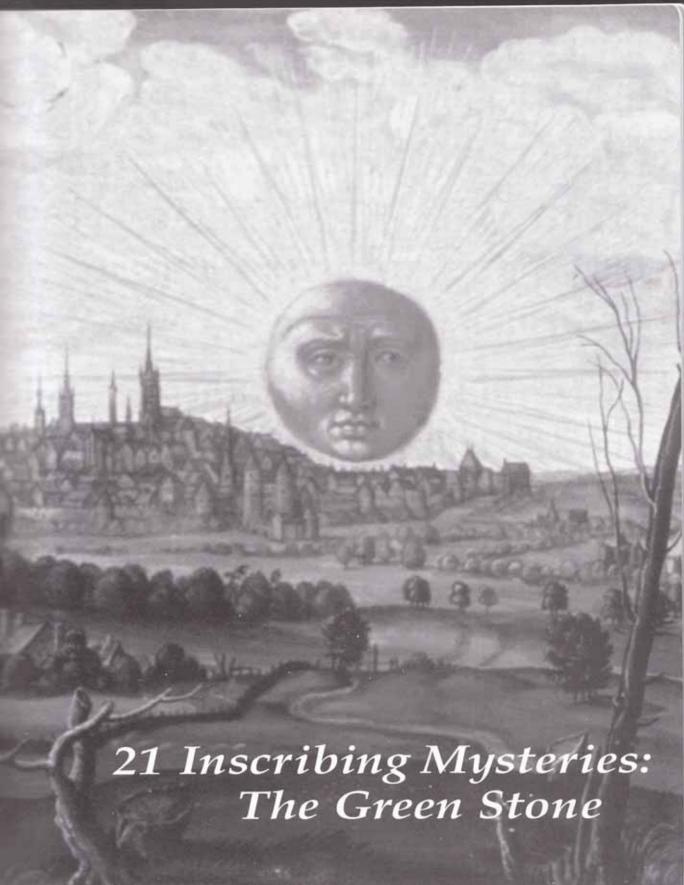
Nor should we overlook the importance of oral teaching groups and ritual practices as ways of passing on ancient esoteric knowledge. The oral and ritual transmission of ancient wisdom has always been as important as the written word in the history of alchemy and Hermeticism. Indeed, the twenty-second Sermon of the Turba philosophorum says as much when it refers to a statement of Pythagoras that no one can understand what philosophers have said in their works without consulting the wise.45 Real knowledge could never come simply from reading books but had to be acquired through contact with a teacher.

Amongst the alchemists such instruction often took place in small groups like those led by the 'sister' of Zosimus, Theosebia. These by their very nature have left little trace, making their existence difficult to prove. In fact, Zosimus reproached Theosebia for keeping her teachings secret, saying that she should make it avilable to all, and not restrict it to those who had been initiated into her groups. 46 At times, moreover, such groups probably went underground in the face of general hostility and persecution. Yet Akhmim's continuing importance as an alchemical centre for such a long period points to the preservation of alchemical knowledge there over the centuries.

But the principal conclusion of the present chapter is that a recognizable pattern of transformation—which is first set out in Seti I's temple complex at Abydos and reappears again in the Second Letter for Breathing in Roman Egypt—startlingly recurs in Salomon Trismosin's influential Splendor Solis. Though the artistic styles may have changed and other influences may have crept in, still the sequence of themes in Splendor Solis remains amazingly constant, uncannily replicating the Egyptian way of death and regeneration.

And in the light of everything that the alchemists have said about the origins of their tradition, it is implausible simply to explain away this European sequence as merely a similar response to universal life-cycle challenges or some spontaneous eruption of the collective unconscious, entirely unconnected with ancient Egypt. The similarities are so striking that such explanations seem scarcely credible. Salomon Trismosin, whoever he may have been, knew what he was doing and knew very precisely the source of his wisdom.

Facing page 166 The splendour of the rising sun illuminating a morning landscape at the completion of the great work (Detail from the twenty-second illustration of the Splendor Solis of Salomon Trismosin, Harley MS 3469, British Library)



Of your religion only fables, and your children in later times will not believe them. Nothing will survive save words engraved on stones to tell of your pious deeds.

The Asclepius1

Scholars have been very reluctant to take the alchemists' claims seriously. Are they really to believe that inscribed stones telling about the alchemical sacred art existed in secret chambers of Egyptian temples as the alchemists stated? Not one, it is argued, has so far come to light. And even though there has been a welcome trend in recent years to recognize ancient Egyptian influence in the Hermetic texts from Hellenistic Egypt,2 such has not been the fate of the alchemical literature, even though these two branches were never really separateboth were associated with Hermes Trismegistus and both attributed texts to him.3

Writing about ancient Egyptian religion at the beginning of this century, Adolf Erman was adamant that alchemy was never practised in New Kingdom Egypt and this has remained the general view down to the present day. Even Garth Fowden, who willingly acknowledges the native Egyptian content in Hermetic writings and the influence of the Egyptian priesthood in Hellenistic circles, nevertheless remains unconvinced of a genuine alchemical stream flowing continuously from ancient Egypt. 5

At the most it has been acknowledged that ancient Egypt probably influenced later so-called 'technical' alchemy, which was concerned with a whole range of dyeing and metallurgical crafts. On the other hand, so-called 'philosophical' alchemy is usually considered to be the product of Greek thought about the material world originating in Hellenistic Egypt.

This distinction between Egypt's contribution to 'technical' alchemy, on

the one hand, and 'philosophical' alchemy arising from Greek thought on the other, originated with Marcellin Berthelot, the nineteen century French scientist and statesman who amongst his many other achievements collected and published several volumes of early alchemical texts.

Berthelot distinguished three periods in the beginnings of Graeco-Egyptian alchemy. Firstly there was the period of technical prescriptions, probably influenced by the metallurgical practices of ancient Egyptian craftsmen. Next came the philosophical period, inaugurated in all likelihood by Bolus of Mendes during the second century BC, which saw a confluence of Judaic, Gnostic and Greek ideas amongst the alchemists at the beginning of the Christian era. Then followed the third period of alchemical writings proper, especially those composed by Zosimus and later commentators.6

Berthelot's scheme, in which ancient Egyptian religion is noticeably absent, has been extremely persuasive and hard to challenge. Ingolf Vereno, for example, in his impressive publication of two important Arabic alchemical texts, having made many comparisons with ancient Egyptian religion, still holds to the belief that alchemy is Gnostic mysticism allied with the Greek science of nature (Physika), albeit clothed in ancient Egyptian symbolic language.7 In other words, ancient Egyptian wisdom was at most a veneer used by the alchemists to disguise the Gnostic roots of their tradition.

Scholars, it seems, have become completely mesmerized by Berthelot's scheme, accepting it without question. In doing so, however, they have lost sight of ancient Egypt as a vital current flowing through the alchemical teachings.

According to Berthelot's scheme the ancient Egyptians influenced only the technical side of alchemy. Yet a one-sided emphasis on material technology was completely alien to the Egyptian view of life. The ancient Egyptians never understood minerals and precious stones as simply 'inert material' which could be manipulated for technical purposes. Such minerals and stones revealed divine life and power, like the plants and vegetation which grew from divine bodies. They were gifts from the Memphite deities, especially Ptah, Hathor and Sokar.8

Moreover, there was no separation between craft knowledge and temple life. The high priest of Memphis, for example, was called 'Supreme Leader of Crafts', indicating his responsibility for all the officials and craftsmen working in the great workshops attached to the temples, where statues and other cult objects were made.⁹

Nor should we forget that making a statue in ancient Egypt was a birthgiving process. The Egyptians, like the later alchemists, drew on analogies from human life to describe what happened in the craft process. For, as we have already seen, the Egyptian word msj means both 'to give birth' and to 'create objects'. Hence to link the ancient Egyptians solely with 'technical' alchemy is to misunderstand the whole basis of their ancient craft practices.

Although in a minority, there have been prominent Egyptologists who have urged a less dismissive approach to the whole question. Not long before his death François Daumas stated his own views about why alchemy should be traced back to ancient Egypt. He asked whether it was entirely coincidental that the earliest known 'technical' alchemical papyri, dating to the third or early fourth century AD, were found in Egypt at Thebes. Or that the names of adepts cited in alchemical texts were Greek transcriptions of genuine Egyptian names. And he went on to list numerous

compelling reasons for linking alchemy with ancient Egypt. 10

Then there is Philippe Derchain's study of inscriptions in the 'atelier of the goldsmiths' in Hathor's temple at Dendara.11 These include texts concerned with the materials and techniques used in the production of cult statues and they mention the substitution of different materials to give the appearance of gold. Derchain compares this process with later alchemical procedures and suggests these inscriptions belong to a much more extensive body of Egyptian craft knowledge now lost. They are, he believes, a precursor of the technical alchemical manuscripts found in Egypt.

Unlike the magical tradition, where there have always been obvious links between Pharaonic and Graeco-Egyptian magic, it has been hard to trace a continuous evolution from ancient Egypt through into later alchemy, partly because the ancient Egyptians rarely set down their metallurgical knowledge in writing.12 Hence these inscriptions at Dendaraa cult centre well-known to Islamic alchemists in Egypt-represent an important link with later technical alchemical practices.13 And, together with the Egyptian evidence about death and rebirth described in chapter nineteen, they provide compelling evidence for the existence of Egyptian knowledge akin to later alchemy in the Graeco-Roman period.

Given that the alchemists themselves were deeply concerned with the mysteries of death, transformation and rebirth, it is strange that for many years the whole controversy should have been dominated by scholars so obviously unfamiliar with the traditions of ancient Egypt.

Why should we disbelieve such revered ancients as the Egyptian Zosimus of Panopolis (Akhmim), when he declares that the Egyptian priests were guardians of alchemical



knowledge? Or be so incredulous when he states that the tradition came from Hermes and other Egyptians and that the priests preserved copies of alchemical books in the temples? How can it be right for scholars to have dismissed the evidence of a native Egyptian about the origins of his spiritual tradition, without having first familiarized themselves with the transformational beliefs and practices of ancient Egypt?

For contrary to popular belief, alchemy was never simply concerned with metallic transmutation It was, as we have seen in the *Splendor Solis*, also about spiritual transformation, death and rebirth. And here at the end of a book, which has been primarily about the Osirian power of 'becoming earth', we cannot do better than turn to that famous alchemical-hermetic document known as the *Emerald Tablet*.

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS: WAY OF THOTH

Declaring itself to be a revelation of Hermes Trismegistus, the *Emerald* Tablet ably summarizes the essentials

167 Thoth leads Inherkau into the presence of Osiris (Relief in the tomb of Inherkau at Deir el-Medina)

of the alchemical process, and its vivid aphorisms were much cited by later adepts of the 'royal art', as alchemy is often described. However, there is no agreement amongst scholars about the origins of the text, which is known from both early Arabic and Latin alchemical treatises.¹⁵

The alchemists themselves said that these precious sentences were discovered on a slab of emerald held by the entombed Hermes. ¹⁶ Interestingly, a tenth century alchemist, Ibn Umail, described how he visited an Egyptian temple and saw a stone figure sitting in a doorway, holding a tablet inscribed with alchemical symbols. It is thought that this may have been a statue of the revered Imhotep, seated with his inscribed papyrus roll probably in a temple near Saqqara. ¹⁷

Indeed there is much in the Emerald Tablet to connect it with ancient Egypt, for the 'green stone' can be traced much further back than Ibn Umail. In a Gnostic text from Nag Hammadi, Hermes



168 The moon god Thoth acclaiming King Seti I (Relief on a pillar in Seti I's tomb at Thebes)

instructs his pupil, his 'son', to carve the sacred book in hieroglyphs on stelae of turquoise and place the book in the temple of Diospolis (Thebes).¹⁸

Such green stones are totally in keeping with still earlier ancient Egyptian tradition. The rubric accompanying the text of chapter 30B of the Book of the Dead—'O heart of my mother, O heart of my mother'—says that it was found in a secret place in Hermopolis, 'beneath the feet of the Majesty of this god (Thoth)' by the king's son Hordedef during the reign of King Menkaure, the builder

of one of the pyramids at Giza. And the rubric also specifies that this chapter must always be inscribed on a scarab made of green stone—a veritable ancient Egyptian 'emerald tablet'.

Nor is this the only Book of the Dead chapter said to have been found in a secret place. The chapter concerning the four torches lit for the Osirian dead (page 84) was also said to have been discovered by Hordedef in a secret chest in a temple in Hermopolis—again the sacred city of Thoth. So there is nothing un-Egyptian about the fabled origin of the Emerald Tablet.

Nor is the manner of its discovery the only way in which it conforms with ancient Egyptian tradition. For if we compare the Emerald Tablet with the transformational path of death and rebirth in the New Kingdom Ancestor Ritual and Book of Night there are some striking correspondences. In its closing words the Emerald Tablet declares itself to be the threefold wisdom of the world enunciated by Hermes Trismegistus. This name, the 'thrice-great', is applied to Hermes in the Hermetic texts from Egypt in the Roman period. But the epithet 'three times great' is already attached to Thoth in Egyptian texts from the second century BC.19

As we have seen, Thoth was a crucial figure in the New Kingdom transformational tradition and earlier chapters have described how this wise moon god of ancient Egypt participates in the transformational process associated with 'becoming earth' in the Osirian realm. So it should be no surprise that his much later Hermetic counterpart, Hermes Trismegistus, sanctions a threefold way of transformation based on uniting together 'the power of things superior and inferior', and insists upon the wisdom of 'converting into earth'.²⁰

Twice Thoth appears in the sequence of seven scenes on the walls of the inner Osiris shrine at Abydos. First he is shown holding his Egyptian snake-staff-which was to become the caduceus of his later Hermetic counterpartacclaiming the ascendant solar King Seti (pl 50), telling him that he is blessed on the throne of his father, the sun god Re. In this ascent of the Horus ruler both Sun and Moon, male and female, do their work. First comes the triumph of Horus over Seth, associated with his victorious Moon Eve that has been healed with the help of Isis and Thoth. Then follows union with the fiery solar goddesses-the vital Eye of the Sun-symbolized by the snake-staff Thoth holds towards the king.

Out of this fierce struggle to reconcile all the opposites of the situation, there emerges a crowned resplendent king united with his serpent queen, whose rise to power holds the key to the renewal of Osiris and regeneration of the life forces. Only by uniting together all the potentialities contained in sky and deep earth can this rising Horus gain his serpent crowns, and thereby also raise up his father Osiris to new life. The consummation is rebirth in the seventh night hour when a child is gloriously reborn, and when the durable, universal rule of Horus manifests as he holds sway over all the enemies of Osiris. In this way

Horus truly becomes the son of the sun god Re, so epitomizing that aphorism of the *Emerald Tablet*, 'Its Father is the Sun'.

But it is the female deities who guard the life of this 'child of the work'—to adopt an alchemical phrase. It is the lunar goddess Isis, shaking her sistrum

The Emerald Tablet

In truth, certainly, and without doubt whatever is below is like that which is above, and whatever is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.

And just as all things proceed from the One, meditated by the One, so all things are born from this one thing by adaptation.

> Its Father is the Sun and its Mother is the Moon. The Wind carries it in its belly. Its nurse is the earth.

It is the father of every miraculous work in the whole world. Its power is perfect if it is converted into earth. Separate the earth from the fire and the subtle from the gross, softly and with great prudence.

Ascend from earth to heaven and descend again from heaven to earth, and unite together the power of things superior and inferior.

In this way you will acquire the glory
of the whole world
and all darkness will leave you.
This is the power of all powers,
for it conquers everything subtle
and penetrates everything solid.

Thus is the world created. From this, and in this way, wonders are made.

For this reason I am called Hermes Trismegistus, for I possess the three parts of wisdom of the whole world.

> Perfect is what I have said of the work of the sun.

as an incarnation of Hathor, who watches over the lifetime of this warm, alive Horus-Re when he is regenerated anew from death. A lifetime which, according to the great hymn of praise in the Ancestor Ritual, is fanned by the sweet breezes of the east wind blowing across the waters

of the Great Green—or, as the Emerald Tablet puts it, 'Its Mother is the Moon, the Wind carries it in its belly'.

In the second scene showing Thoth in the Osiris shrine at Abydos, he calls Seti to partake in his food offerings as a buried earth king, acclaiming the king's 'earth' existence (pl 53). Here the threshold leading to the primordial 'earth' realm of Osiris has been crossed. For Seti now rules as an Osirian king in a fertile earth realm which is entered through the power of the Ba to separate from the body. His existence here admirably illustrates the line in the Emerald Tablet, 'Its power is perfect if it is converted into earth'.

The Seti who rises as the solar Horus to reign as the son of Re is manifestly the very same king who sinks down into his 'earth' existence. Both belong to an indivisible process, ultimately united by the goddesses of the heart. As the Emerald Tablet says: 'Ascend from earth to heaven and descend again from heaven to earth, and unite together the power of things superior and inferior'. Paradoxically, both the ascending and descending phases of the journey are bound up with the fiery Seth. The god who brings death to Osiris is the very same force with which Horus must contend

when rising to new life. His turbulent power must be separated out, harnessed and eventually integrated before it can become a useful force within the cosmic order—the subtle must be separated from the gross.

And these two scenes at Abydos also illuminate the famous doctrine

proclaimed in the Emerald Tablet, 'Whatever is below is like that which is above and whatever is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing'. This 'above and below', so beloved of alchemical and hermetic practitioners, is powerfully exemplified in the correspondences between the Book of Night and the Ancestor Ritual—the mirroring of the heavenly cosmos in a ritual on earth (chapter 17).

But it is also present in these two scenes of Thoth and Seti at Abydos. For in both the Egyptian sequence and the alchemical text, there is a son of earthly origins who ascends to the sky and then returns again to permeate earth. Like all those who follow the pathway through Nut-whether in this life or the next-the solar ruler, through this ascending and descending journey, is brought to ultimate perfection when the sun rises at dawn and a cosmos is recreated. 'Perfect is what I have said of the work of the sun', the Emerald Tablet succinctly concludes.

REBIRTH OF THE WORLD: RENAISSANCE IMAGES

At the close of the Emerald Tablet Hermes Trismegistus declares that he possesses a threefold wisdom of the world. Such words could have been spoken by his ancient Egyptian counterpart, Thoth, for as shown in chapter eight, the temple Seti I built at Abydos is also based on a threefold wisdom.

The three worlds tradition lives on in Western alchemy, as exemplified in the beautiful engraving from the early seventeenth century shown in plate 169, which is strangely reminiscent of the three worlds of ancient Egypt.²¹

At bottom right, the alchemist stands in his subterranean laboratory beside his apparatus, including a small oven within which a flame burns. He guards the element of fire, the secret flame, necessary for the whole process to happen. On the left an adept wades in the watery element, catching the dew of heaven which falls through the air into his rounded pot. In the background is a launderer's basket and an outspread cloth, symbolizing the purification and cleansing needed at the beginning of the alchemical 'work'.

All the four elements of fire, water, air and earth are brought together in the imagery here. And, as in ancient Egypt, shaping and working material substances—doing Ptah's work—provides the secure foundation for the whole alchemical *opus*. The natural world must first be prepared and its contents purified to create a stable vessel.

Above this first realm appears a winged mother standing on a pedestal inscribed with the words: 'THIS IS WISDOM'. Like Isis-Hathor in Egypt, she is manifestly a bearer of vital life in a threefold world, for she carries a child within her womb shone on by the sun and moon, representing the conjunction of Sol and Luna in the flask or female vessel. So at the heart of the whole work is the maternal source of growth, movement and life.

And it is obvious that the intention of the two alchemists below is to create the conditions necessary to sustain the life within her, to develop matter into a foetal becoming. For as the *Turba philosophorum*, with its roots in Egypt, has already told us, warmth and moisture are essential for foetal growth.

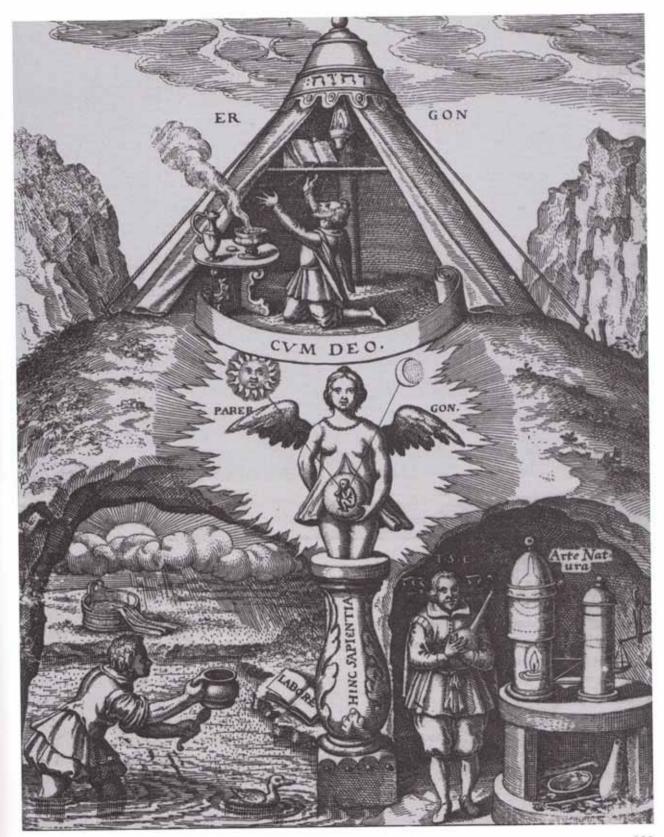
Hence it is to her that the male adept beneath raises his pot, filled with water which has now become a generative source of life. So too the other male alchemist tends the flame creating heat and warmth, without which the winged mother would be unable to bear life in her mysterious realm of regeneration. 169 The three realms of transformation in an early seventeenth century alchemical engraving. At the bottom two alchemists work with the elements of the physical world. The heat and moisture they provide sustain the life of the child shown in the womb of a winged mother in the second realm of regeneration. This conception leads to spiritual illumination in the third realm as the alchemist ecstatically prays to God beside his tent. Inscribed on its vinnacle is the Hebrew name of God, the Tetragrammaton, showing that this regeneration is accomplished through the power of the sacred name, a tradition which can be traced back to ancient Egypt. The placing of these three realms on a human skull indicates that there can be no regeneration without death (Engraving by Merian in Theophilus Schweighardt's Speculum Sophicum Rhodo-Stauroticum, 1618.)

The goal of the entire process is reached in the third realm above, where the alchemist kneels in a state of exaltation before his tent, reaching the heights of spiritual illumination indicated by the words 'WITH GOD' written beneath him.

The child conceived in the middle realm has led to an experience of divine unity which alchemists laboured long and hard to achieve, often with great difficulty.

In this ecstatic worshipper there is more than a hint here of those much earlier ancient Egyptian adorers at the close of the night journey, who, having passed through the fire of regeneration and new birth, experienced the mystery of unification at daybreak when Re appeared to give light to the world.

As in the Splendor Solis, the influence of Jewish esotericism is also clearly visible, this time in the four Hebrew letters, the Tetragrammaton symbolizing the sacred Name of God, inscribed on the pinnacle of the tent. The alchemist here prays to God like the Israelites in the desert or the kabbalist in his tent. But his prayer is also close to ancient Egyptian experience, for already in Egypt it was the





170 Accompanied by a male baboon, an animal sacred to Thoth, the chantress of Amun, Henuttawy, kneels in adoration at the glorious rising of the sun (Vignette from the papyrus of Henuttawy, British Museum, London)

power of the divine Name, the holy utterance, which recreated the world.

The figures in this Renaissance engraving seem to live in a strange symbolic landscape. But with reflection it soon becomes obvious that the artist set the scenes in the upper part of a human skull, so that each figure exists in a certain part of this head region.²² The lowest realm is set in the eye sockets; and the pedestal supporting the female is situated at the bridge of the nose. Then comes the generative female life-bearer herself shining at the centre of the forehead—the place

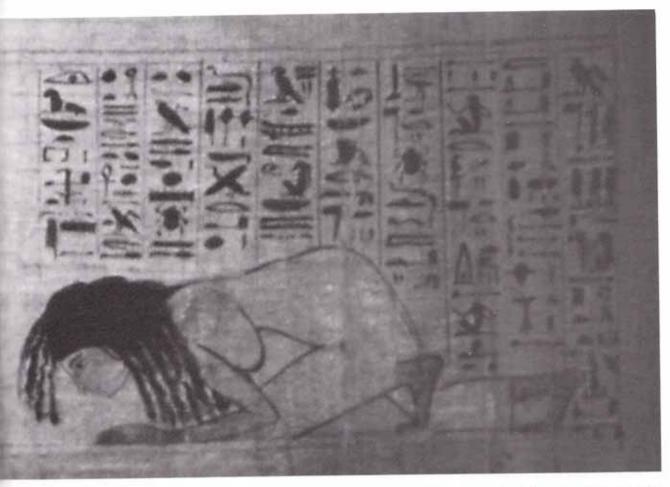
of the uraeus in ancient Egypt, and the third eye in Hindu and Buddhist yoga traditions. Finally the praying alchemist in his tent resides at the crown. This skull shape is a sombre reminder of death, recalling the alchemical saying: 'No generation without corruption'.

Like the ancient Egyptians before them, the alchemists knew that in the midst of generation and new life there is death, that there can be no new birth without death. The style of this seventeenth century Western alchemical engraving of the three worlds bears little resemblance to the sacred art of ancient Egypt but shows more than a trace of the old Egyptian threefold wisdom discussed in this book with its female life-bearer, the mother of the heart, holding the centre. 'O heart of my mother, O heart of my mother, O heart of my transformations'.

ALCHEMICAL RENEWAL: REBIRTH OF EGYPT

The realization that alchemy arose within ancient Egyptian religion changes and complicates the study of its origins. An entirely new approach to the problem of ancient Egyptian influence in Hellenistic Egypt is clearly needed, which re-evaluates not only the alchemical tradition but also the origins of Hermetic and Gnostic texts. And there is undoubtedly still much to be learned about the transmission of alchemy into the Islamic world.

Accepting the native Egyptian origins of alchemy shatters Berthelot's historical scheme, on which the edifice of twentieth century alchemical



scholarship has rested. But there are wider implications. For it also reopens the whole controversy arising from Isaac Casaubon's philological bombshell of 1614—his apparent proof that the Hermetic writings cannot have been the work of the wise ancient Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus, since they were demonstrably written in Christian times.²³

This 'devastating exposure', as Frances Yates called Casaubon's claim, has long been used to invalidate the Renaissance tradition of alchemical-hermetic links with ancient Egypt. And those in the Renaissance who obstinately clung to their old beliefs, refusing to accept Casaubon's 'proof' that the Hermetic texts did not contain ancient Egyptian wisdom, were chided for their ignorance and

their ancient predecessors scorned for perpetrating a great illusion.

But now we begin to see that it was Casaubon and his followers who were the deluded ones, dazzled by the Greek philosophical style and unaware of the ancient Egyptian death and rebirth mysteries which were sometimes obscured by later non-Egyptian modes of expression. Ironically, the Greeks were much better informed about the history of their time and never lost sight of how much their civilization owed to their much more ancient neighbour across the sea.

As for the Egyptians themselves, it is clear that there were some, at least, who accurately foresaw the fate of their ancient traditions. This chapter began with part of the moving lament contained in the Hermetic text known as the Asclepius, in which Hermes Trismegistus foretells the demise of Egypt, the 'temple of the whole world'. Hermes foresees a time when Egyptian worship will become ineffectual and the gods, leaving the earth, will go back to heaven; they will abandon Egypt. But after predicting this time of desolation, the lament concludes with a beautiful promise of Egypt's restoration.

'Then the demiurge ... will bring back the world to its first beauty, so that this world may again be worthy of reverence and admiration, and so that God also, creator and restorer of so great a work, may be glorified by the people of that time in continual hymns of praise and blessing. That is what the rebirth of the world will be: a renewal of all good things, a holy and most solemn restoration of Nature herself.'

Historical Periods and the Pharaohs of the New Kingdom

ARCHAIC PERIOD			NEW KINGDOM		
Dynasties 1-2 c 3150-2686 BC			Dynasties 18-20 c 1570-1070 BC		
OLD KINGDOM (PYRAMID AGE)			Third Intermediate Period c 1069-664 BC Dynasties 21-25		
Dynasties 3-6 c 2686-2181 BC			LATE PERIOD		
First Intermediate Period c 2181-2040 bc Dynasties 7-10			Dynasties 26-30 c 664-332 BC		
MIDDLE KINGDOM			GRAECO-ROMAN PERIOD		
Dynasties 11–12 c 2040–1782 BC			Ptolemaic Dynasty		
Second Intermediate	Period c 1782-1570 BC	Dynasties 13–17	Roman Emperors		30 BC-323 AD
DYNASTY 18	с 1570-1293 вс	Tutankhamun	1334–1325	Siptah	1193–1187
Ahmose	1570-1546	Ay	1325–1321		1187–1185
Amenhotep I	1551-1524		1321-1293		
Thutmose I	1524–1518			DYNASTY 20	c 1185-1070 BC
Thutmose II	1518-1504	DYNASTY 19	c 1293-1185 BC	Sethnakhte	11851182
Thutmose III	1504-1450	Ramesses I	1293–1291	Ramesses III	1182–1151
Hatshepsut	1498-1483		1291–1278	Ramesses IV	1151-1145
Amenhotep II	1453-1419	Ramesses II	1279-1212		1145-1141
		Memeptah			
Amenhotep III		Amenmesse			
Akhenaten	1349-1334	Seti II	1199–1193	Ramesses XI	1098-1070

NOTES—Short Bibliography

Note: Sources appearing here are cited more than twice in the notes; all others receive full entries in the notes.

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NOTES—Abbreviations

- AcOr Acta Orientalia ediderunt societates orientales batava danica norvegica svecica. Leiden and Copenhagen.
- ASAE Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte. Cairo.
- BIFAO Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale. Cairo.
- CdE Chronique d'Égypte. Bulletin périodique de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth. Brussels.
- CT A de Buck, The Egyptian Coffin Texts. 7 vols. Chicago 1935-1961.
- DE Discussions in Egyptology. Oxford. EAT See bibliography.

- GM Göttinger Miszellen. Beiträge zur ägyptologischen Diskussion. Göttingen.
- JARCE Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt. Princeton.
- JEA The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. London.
- JEOL Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch genootschap 'Ex Oriente Lux'. Leiden.
- JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Chicago.
- JWCI Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute. London.
- MDAIK Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo. Wiesbaden.

- OMRO Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden. Leiden.
- Or Orientalia, Nova Series. Rome.
- PT K Sethe, Die altägyptischen Pyramidentexte. 4 vols. Leipzig 1908-1922.
- RdE Revue d'Égyptologie publiée par la Société française d'Égyptologie. Paris.
- Urk K Sethe and W Helck, Urkunden der 18. Dynastie. Leipzig and Berlin 1906-1958.
- VigChr Vigiliae Christianae.
- ZÄS Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde. Berlin and Leipzig.

Notes to Introduction (pages 2-6)

- 1 The literature about Amarna religion is extensive see, for example, JP Allen, 'The Natural Philosophy of Akhenaten' in J P Allen et al, Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt. New Haven 1989, 89-101; Assmann, Solar Religion, 67-9, 80-90; E Hornung, Akhenaten and the
- Religion of Light. Transl. by D Lorton. Ithaca, N.Y., and London 1999; Roberts, Hather Rising, 132-68.
- 2 Amun as creator god in a threefold world is discussed by Assmann, Solar Religion, 174-89. On developments in Ramessid Amun theology, ibid. 133-55, 190-210.
- 3 For this scene at Karnak and the mediating role of the daughter goddess see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 54-64.
- 4 See Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 57-9. The list is described in S Sauneron, The Priests of Ancient Egypt. Paperback Edn. New York 1980, 138-9.

Notes to chapter 1 (pages 10-20)

- 1 Papyrus Harris 500: Recto 2,6-2,9 = W M Müller, Die Liebespoesie der alten Ägypter. Leipzig 1899, 18 (with pl.4). Translation in Lichtheim, Literature 2, 189 (No 5).
- 2 The Egypt Exploration Society's Survey of Memphis (director David Jeffreys) has been investigating the ancient capital's early history. Originally the city lay much closer to the desert edge, but as the Nile moved eastwards so the city moved with it. Unfortunately the early remains lie buried well below the water-table. so it may be many years before excavations are possible. For the New Kingdom Memphite necropolis at Saggara and its tombs of important post-Amarna royal officials, see G T Martin, The Hidden Tombs of Memphis. London 1991. Other studies on New Kingdom Memphis include I van Dijk, The New Kingdom Necropolis of Memphis: Historical and Iconographical Studies. Groningen 1993; A-P Zivie (ed), Memphis et ses nécropoles au Nouvel Empire. (Paris 1988). The Saggara tomb of Tutankhamun's wet-nurse, Maia, was discovered in 1997, see A Zivie, Egyptian Archaeology: Bulletin of the Egypt Exploration Society 13 (1998), 7-9. For the evidence indicating Tutankhamun returned to Memphis rather than Thebes, van Dijk, op.cit. 190-1.
- 3 Papyrus Sallier 4: Verso 2,6-7. Translation from R A Caminos, Late-Egyptian Miscellanies. London 1954, 334.

- 4 Papyrus Sallier 4: Verso 4,2-3. Caminos, ibid. 335.
- 5 The etymology of Ptah's name is uncertain.
- 6 For dwarfs and metallurgy in general see Eliade, Forge and the Crucible, 105. For Old Kingdom dwarfs as jewellers, V Dasen, Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece. Oxford 1993, 118-22. Dasen suggests Ptah's dwarf aspect may symbolize his role as creator god rather than craft god, ibid. 92. Her statement that 'metalworking never developed a mythology of its own in Egypt' is surely incorrect, ibid. 121.
- 7 Hathor was the chief deity at Serabit el-Khadim and Timna in the Sinai, where turquoise and copper respectively were mined. She also had a shrine at Gebel Zeit on the Red Sea coast, where galena was obtained. For Hathor's cult in mining localities see Pinch, Votive Offerings, 49-77, with bibliography. For Ptah's cult at these sites, Pinch, ibid. 73; M Sandman Holmberg, The God Ptah. Lund 1946, 220-1.
- 8 Papyrus Leiden 1.350.4,21-2. J Zandee, De Hymnen aan Amon van Papyrus Leiden 1 350. Leiden 1947, 87 with pl 4.
- 9 BM EA 498. Translation and bibliography in Lichtheim, Literature 1, 51-7, where the text is included with other Old Kingdom compositions (for the dating problems below n.10). See also Allen, Genesis, 42-7, 59-61, for the section about Ptah's

- creation. Allen describes Ptah's role here as the bridge between the intellectual principal of creation and its materialization in the substance of the created world.
- 10 There is no agreement about when the Memphite Theology was first composed. Some scholars date it to the Old Kingdom, e.g. H Altenmüller, Lexikon der Äguptologie 1 (1975), cols.1068-9. It is also discussed as an archaizing 25th Dynasty composition by F Junge, MDAIK 29(2) (1973), 195-204. For a New Kingdom dating see HA Schlögl, Der Gott Tatenen nach Texten und Bildern des Neuen Reiches. Freiburg and Göttingen 1980, 110-17. He summarized the different scholarly views, ibid. 111-13. Creation through the heart and word is described already in Middle Kingdom texts, usually with Atum or Re as the creator god. However, unlike the Memphite Theology, this earlier creator exists in a primordial realm rather than in a culturally organized world, see Assmann, Solar Religion, 169-71. Moreover, as Susanne Bickel notes, a defining feature of the New Kingdom creator, in contrast to earlier periods, is his status as king, S Bickel, 'Changes in the Image of the Creator God during the Middle and New Kingdoms' in Eyre (ed), Proceedings, 170-1. Given that the Memphite Theology places Ptah's creative role firmly

- within the framework of Egyptian kingship it would seem that it belongs to the New Kingdom or later.
- 11 James Allen rightly observed that, unlike the competing systems of thought amongst early Greek philosophers, the theological traditions of Thebes, Heliopolis and Memphis were not rival theologies, Genesis, 62-3. On the other hand one wonders what prompted the Memphite Theology's author to insist so firmly that Atum's creation depended on Ptah's work. This insistence would be perfectly understandable if related to Akhenaten's exclusion of the Memphite deities from the Amarna cult. For the influence of Heliopolitan creation theology on Amarna religion, see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 136-8, 156-7 with further references.
- 12 This section in the Memphite Theology brings to mind the Poimandres, an important Hermetic text in which the Nous-god of life and light brings forth the Demiurge as a god of fire and breath who fashions the seven governors. Then, united with the Word, this Demiurge, who is closely involved with the material world, sets his creation in motion, translated in Copenhaver, Hermetica, 1-7. On the similarities between

- the Memphite Theology, the Poimandres and other Hermetic texts, E Iversen, Egyptian and Hermetic Doctrine, Copenhagen 1984, 29-33, 39-40. The Memphite Theology has also been compared with the Biblical creation through the Word in St John's Gospel e.g. Frankfort, Kingship, 29. See, however, Assmann, Solar Religion, 171-3, for differences between the Biblical and Memphite versions.
- 13 Eliade, Forge and the Crucible, 101-2. For the importance of 'magic' (heka) and 'word' see Ritner, Magical Practice, 17, 35-57. Magic by word, by rite, or by material were the three fundamental ways of working with heka in ancient Egypt, Ritner, ibid. 40, 247-9. Hence this emphasis on Ptah's creation through sound, his responsibility for Egyptian rituals and his making of cult statues in the Memphite Theology.
- 14 Papyrus Ebers 100,7 = H Grapow, Die medizinischen Texte in hieroglyphischer Umschreibung autographiert. Grundriss der Medizin der alten Ägypter 5. Berlin 1958, 4 (No 854i).
- 15 Papyrus Ebers 99,5 = Grapow, ibid. 1 (No 2). Papyrus Ebers includes different categories of medical practitioners, namely the 'amulet-man',

- the 'doctor' and the 'priest of Sekhmet', who all seem to have examined patients by feeling different pulse points located along the body, see Ritner, Magical Practice, 53.
- 16 The importance of creative naming in the formation of Egypt's sacred temples and towns is conveved in a text in the Edfu temple. It is described as a writing made by Thoth in accordance with the speech of the heavy flood, 'an enunciation of the mounds of the first time'. This naming involves complex word play linking myth and geographical places, see RB Finnestad, Image of the World and Symbol of the Creator: On the Cosmological and Iconological Values of the Temple of Edfu. Wiesbaden 1985.
- 17 See E Hornung et al. Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen. Freiburg and Göttingen 1982; English translation in A Piankoff, The Shrines of Tut-Ankh-Amon. New York 1955, 27-34. Hornung suggested it was composed either immediately after Akhenaten's death or at the earliest in Amenhotep III's reign, possibly with some reworking of earlier material, op.cit. 79-81.

Notes to Chapter 2 (pages 22-7)

- 1 For the androgynous creator god, often Atum, J Zandee, 'The birth-giving Creator-God in Ancient Egypt' in A B Lloyd (ed), Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths. London 1992, 169-85. Zandee emphasized that the god acts without female assistance. But note that from the 19th Dynasty onwards Atum's female companions, Iusaas and Nebet Hetepet, are often named. For these goddesses see J Vandier, RdE 16 (1964), 55-146; RdE 17
- (1965), 89-176; RdE 18 (1966), 67-142.
- 2 Cf also the Egyptian notion that the heart derived from the mother. Also the belief among Greek doctors that a child's bones derived from male seed, and the flesh and skin from the mother, D Müller, Or 35 (1966), 249-50; Stricker, Geboorte van Horus 2, 169-71. According to Hesiod in Works and Days (Il. 60ff), it is Hephaestus (the Greek Ptah), Athene, Aphrodite and the

Argus-slayer who together create the beautiful form of Pandora. Hephaestus moulds clay and water together and infuses this with a human voice and vigour, making 'the face like the immortal goddesses'. Athene teaches her the art of weaving and clothes her body; whilst Aphrodite bestows on her grace and all the pangs of desire and longings, adorning her with gold necklaces, see R Lattimore, Hesiod: The Works and Days. Ann Arbor 1959, 25-7.

- 3 Published by R O Faulkner, The Papyrus Bremner-Rhind (British Museum No.10188). Brussels 1933. There are two versions of the myth (called The Book of knowing the transformations of Re and overcoming Apophis) inserted in the text. Translation in R O Faulkner, JEA 23 (1937), 172; JEA 24 (1938), 41-2; Allen, Genesis, 27-30. The quotes here are from the first version.
- 4 The Scroll of Driving Back Apophis (Papyrus Bremner Rhind 26, 10-11) occurs on a statue-group from Ramesses III's reign, É Drioton, ASAE 39 (1939), 57-89.
- 5 Cf also the 22nd Dynasty Berlin Hymn to Ptah, W Wolf, ZĂS 64 (1929), 17-44, which includes praise of the primordial god's transformations, the formation of land after Ptah has stood upon it, and the emergence of forms from the primal waters: 'When you stood up on the land in its

- inertness, it then drew together, you being in your form of Tatenen...you took the one whom your mouth engendered and your arms created from the waters', ibid. 26. Translation also in Allen, Genesis, 39-40; Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen, 322-33.
- 6 Spell 331 for 'becoming Hathor', CT 4, 173f-175f. The goddess also describes how she gives her tears during this creative process.
- 7 Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions 2, 258-81. For this line, ibid. 276,5.
- 8 Ibid. 265, 5-11.
- Quoted in G Bachelard, The Psychoanalysis of Fire. Paperback Edn. Boston 1968, 56.
- 10 K Sethe, Zur altägyptischen Sage vom Sonnenauge, das in der Fremde war. Leipzig 1912, 18.
- 11 For the absence of Hathor's traditional symbols in Amarna religion, Roberts, Hathor Rising, 156-8.
- 12 There was a long Memphite tradition of a bare sycamore tree in contrast to the fruit-bearing sycamore. The Puramid Texts describe a tree which shelters the deities. with 'branches dried up, its interior burnt' (PT §1485). Both R Moftah, ZÄS 92 (1965), 40-7 and E Hermsen. Lebensbaumsymbolik im alten Ägypten. Cologne 1981, 74-85 associate this bare tree with Hathor 'Lady of the Sycamore' as the Giza necropolis goddess. Cf also a New Kingdom stela in Florence showing Hathor rising from a bare tree (pl 100 of this book). These examples are also discussed in Othmar Keel's study of Egyptian tree goddesses, O Keel, Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden: Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder. Freiburg and Göttingen 1992, 86-7.

Notes to chapter 3 (pages 30-6)

- 1 For return to the mother's embrace in the West and the Ka-cycle of renewal see Assmann, Liturgische Lieder, 56-60, 147, n.34; Roberts, Hathor Rising, 92-6.
- 2 CT 4, 168c, 169a-b. Quoted in te Velde, Seth, 81.
- 3 Griffiths, (ed), Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride, 137-47 (Chs.13-19).
- 4 For Osiris's cult see, for example,
- J Gwyn Griffiths, Lexikon der Ägyptologie 4 (1982), cols.623-633; J Gwyn Griffiths, The Origins of Osiris and his Cult. Leiden 1980; R T Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt. London 1978, 97-180; M Zecchi, A Study of the Egyptian God Osiris Hemag. Imola 1996.
- 5 The literature on personal piety is extensive, for bibliography see

- Assmann, Solar Religion, 1 n.1, and 190ff.
- 6 Published by A Erman, ZÄS 38 (1900), 30-3.
- 7 Louvre C286. Translation in Lichtheim, Literature 2, 81-6. For these lines, ibid. 83.
- 8 See E Hornung, Das Amduat: Die Schrift des verborgenen Raumes. 3 vols. Wiesbaden 1963-1967.

Notes to chapter 4 (pages 38-44)

- 1 Frankfort, Kingship, 25. For the date of the original text, above chapter 1, n.10.
- 2 James Allen separates the 'dramatic text' about the rulership of Horus from the text's final twelve columns concerning Ptah's creative role and the cycle of kingship at Memphis. He considers the latter to be 'largely independent' mythological themes, Genesis, 44-5. Similarly L B Mikhail, GM 75 (1984), 19-20 rejects any organic unity in the text. Kurt Sethe,
- who placed the text's composition in the Archaic Period, has been one of the few Egyptologists to treat the text as a whole. He described it as an Osirian dramatic play accompanied by explanatory texts, and compared it to a medieval mystery play, Dramatische Texte zu altaegyptischen Mysterienspielen 1. Leipzig 1928, 16-19.
- 3 On the conflict of Horus and Seth see te Velde, Seth, 27-80; Roberts, Hathor Rising, 98-112.

- 4 For the drowning king's rescue in an alchemical work called Splendor Solis see chapter 20 with pl 157.
- 5 The earlier section describing Osiris's rescue is very damaged and is usually restored from the end version. But, as Sethe noted, the preserved hieroglyphs indicate that the two accounts were not entirely identical. In the first version there is not enough space for the statement about Osiris joining the solar circuit when he enters

the Memphite secret gates, Sethe, op.cit. 41 (c). However, this omission accords with the

pattern of Memphite transformation, for Osiris only unites with the solar circuit after the 6 Frankfort, Kingship, 33.

manifestation of 'the Mistress of Life', see chapter 6.

Notes to chapter 5 (pages 48-56)

- 1 Hornung, Valley of the Kings, 55.
- 2 For the association of Dier's tomb with Osiris already in the Middle Kingdom see A Leahy, JEA 75 (1989), 55-7.
- 3 Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions 2, 327, 7-11.
- 4 Ibid. 2, 326, 4-5.
- 5 Ibid. 2, 325, 4-5.
- 6 On the Ba in general see L V Zabkar, A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts. Chicago 1968. The capacity to emanate dread and attraction like Hathor-Sekhmet is a manifestation of Ba-power. For the inimical aspect of the Ba see Zabkar, ibid. 85-9.
- 1 Publication of the shrine in Calverley, Temple of King Sethos 3, pls 35-42. The number of scenes in the shrine is seven, a magical number connected with rebirth see Herbin. Parcourir l'éternité, 335. For the number seven in Egyptian magic see also T DuQuesne, At the Court of Osiris: Book of the Dead spell 194. London 1994, 46; Roberts, Hathor Rising, 16.
- 2 For renewal in the mother's embrace, above chapter 3 n.1.
- 3 On the importance of the four Horus sons and bodily reintegration see J Assmann, JEA 65 (1979), 68-77.
- 4 On the Horus and Seth conflict, above chapter 4 n.3.
- 5 See Hathor Rising, 82-6, 92-6 for

- 7 On the importance of Hathorian attraction and serpent power at the Pharaoh's crowning, Roberts, Hathor Rising, 40-50.
- 8 Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions 2, 327,13-328,7. Cf also Osiris embracing Horus as his successor in the Ritual of Amenhotep I (chapter 7, pp 76-7 with n.14). Such an archetypal embrace confirms the transmission of rulership to the acknowledged heir. Hatshepsut also describes how she is embraced by her father Thutmose I before the assembled court and appointed as his successor, Urk.4.255-9; Roberts, Hathor Rising, 4.
- 9 This sexual power of the youthful Ramesses is encapsulated in a damaged representation of him standing with the Hathor cow in his temple at Abydos. Though only partially preserved, the accompanying inscription describes the king as being with 'the women in the company of the beautiful ones' like Min-Kamutef, A el Hamid Zayed, ASAE 57 (1962), 137-42, fig 5. For Hathor as 'mistress of the nfrwt' see F Daumas, ZAS 95 (1968), 10 §19(l.5), 11 n.75. For Min impregnating the nfrwt see H Gauthier, Les Fêtes du dieu Min. Cairo 1931, 139-41.

Notes to chapter 6 (pages 58-69)

Amun-Re-Bull-of-his-Mother and the regeneration of Egyptian kingship.

- The west-east interpretation of these two reliefs (rather than the east-west order of the previous four reliefs) is based on my correlation of the seven reliefs with the phases of the Ancestor Ritual (see chapter 7).
- 7 A Mariette-Bey, Abydos, description des fouilles exécutées sur l'emplacement de cette ville 1. Paris 1869, pls 44-5. This scene shows Seti accompanied by his young son Ramesses making a food offering invocation for the Memphite deities.
- Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 3, 281. Text re-edited by R Reitzenstein in Zur Geschichte der Alchemie und

des Mystizismus. Göttingen 1919, 15-16. Translation also in A I Festugière, Hermétisme et mystique païenne. Paris 1967, 241. Festugière dated the composition to the end of the third century AD (ibid. 210). Reitzenstein linked this theme of rebirth through the blessed waters with Iranian ideas (op.cit. 21). Although he was initially in favour of ancient Egyptian influence in Hermeticism, he later changed his views, arguing that it was more Iranian in content. His remarks illustrate the tendency among scholars earlier this century to look elsewhere than Egypt for the roots of the Hermetic tradition (see Part 5).

Notes to chapter 7 (pages 72-88)

1 Lanny Bell discussed the scene of Horus purifying Seti (pl 48) and the scene of Isis and the Inmutef priest before Seti (pl 51) in connection with

episodes in the Ritual of Amenhotep I, INES 44 (1985), 283-4. His correlation of the two scenes with specific rites in the ceremony differs from

my interpretation in this chapter.

2 One papyrus is in the British Museum (Papyrus Chester Beatty No 9), published by Gardiner, Hieratic

- Papyri 2, pls 50-4. The other papyrus is in two separate fragments: one in the Cairo Museum and the other in the Egyptian Museum, Turin, see W Golénischeff, Papyrus hiératiques 1. Cairo 1927, pls 24-7; E Bacchi, Il rituale di Amenhotpe I. Turin 1942. There are also shorter, and less complete, versions of the ritual in the hypostyle hall at Karnak (Seti I) and in the Medinet Habu temple (Ramesses III). These have been published by H H Nelson, JNES 8 (1949), 201-32, 310-45.
- 3 Nelson, ibid. 343, suggested the ritual, as preserved in the Chester Beatty papyrus and in the Cairo and Turin papyri, was composed in Ramesses II's reign from older texts relating to the Theban cult of Amun. But he noted that the Karnak reliefs indicate that a version must have existed already in Seti's reign. My proposed correlation of the ritual with the seven scenes in Seti I's inner Osiris shrine at Abydos supports Nelson's hypothesis. Seti's version need not necessarily have been performed for Amenhotep I, but it must have followed a very similar ritual pattern. See also Fairman 'Kingship Rituals', 100-4, who preferred to describe the Amenhotep I ritual as 'a ritual of the royal ancestors'. He maintained it would not have been restricted to Amenhotep I's cult.
- 4 Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri 1, 105. H Nelson suggested the ritual could have been performed in a temple dedicated to Amenhotep I's cult on the West Bank at Thebes, JNES 8 (1949), 345. For the suitability of Seti I's mortuary temple at Qurna for performance of the Ancestor Ritual see below chapter 8 n.1.
- 5 Cf the vertical inscription behind Seti when he receives insignia from Wepwawet in pl 49: 'As long as the King, the Lord of the Two Lands, Menmaatre, appears upon

- the throne of Horus, the chief of the Robing Room, the chief of the House of the Morning, so he will lead all the living like Re for ever'. Similarly, in the Ancestor Ritual, offerings are given to 'the Ka of the King, the chief of the Robing Room, the chief of the House of the Morning', Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri 2, pl 52 (Recto 6, 11-12). There are phrases from the rite of 'Bringing the heart of the god' inscribed in the Abydos temple, see Gardiner Hieratic Papyri 1, 86. Extracts from the invocation to Atum also occur in several places, see below n.25.
- 6 A St G Caulfeild, The Temple of the Kings at Abydos. (Sety 1.). London 1902, 2. See also A R David, Religious Ritual at Abydos (c.1300 BC). Warminster 1973, 289-90. David discussed the Amenhotep I ritual in connection with the Abydos temple. Like H Fairman she called it a ritual of the royal ancestors, and also suggested where it might have been enacted in the temple. However, she did not analyze the ritual in any detail, nor did she associate it specifically with the seven scenes in the inner Osiris shrine. It should be noted that her proposed route through the temple differs from my interpretation in this chapter.
- 7 Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri 1, 101. H Fairman rejected the idea that the Amenhotep I ritual incorporated all the elements of a single ritual. He described it rather as a partial selection of certain episodes used in a variety of rituals and festivals, 'Kingship Rituals', 100-1.
- 8 For this ritual see J C Goyon, Confirmation du pouvoir royal au nouvel an [Brooklyn Museum 47.218.50]. 2 vols. Cairo 1972 (Text). Brooklyn and Cairo 1974 (Plates).
- 9 F Daumas, ASAE 51 (1951), 393-6.
- 10 Like H Fairman (above n.3) I prefer not to restrict the ritual to Amenhotep I's cult in Ramesses II's

- reign. Hence it seems preferable to substitute the names of Amenhotep and Ramesses with Osiris (royal ancestor) and Horus (ruling king) in order to bring out the meaning more clearly.
- 11 For bodily reintegration and the assembling of godlike powers, see Assmann, Liturgische Lieder, 345-9.
- 12 In the Cairo version of the Ancestor Ritual, the ancestral Queen Ahmose- Nefertari is named together with her son Amenhotep I as a recipient of the food-offerings brought to Amun-Re. Cf also Jacobsohn, Dogmatische Stellung, 40-2, for the relationship between the royal ancestor and the ruling king in this opening episode. He noted that in the Cairo papyrus it is the living Horus ruler (Ramesses II) who restores Amenhotep I (identified with Amun) to new life. (This corresponds with the first scene of Horus purifying Seti (identified with Amun) in the Abydos shrine). By contrast, in the Chester Beatty papyrus it is Amenhotep I who renews Amun in his threefold manifestations, thus emphasizing the ancestral king's mediation on behalf of Ramesses, the reigning king. Jacobsohn suggested the Chester Beatty papyrus might be a later version, reflecting Theban theological developments in the cult of Amun-Kamutef during Ramesses II's reign. His analysis seems far preferable to Gardiner's dismissal of the Cairo papyrus as a serious distortion of the ritual, Hieratic Papuri 1, 101-2.
- 13 The association between the Akhstatue resting in the cult shrine and the horizon embrace of Horus and Osiris was noted by E Otto, Das ägyptische Mundöffnungsritual 2. Wiesbaden 1960, 169. See also F Friedman, JEA 71 (1985), 90-2, for the importance of 'the theoretical shrine just behind the false door' in

- Egyptian funerary architecture as the place where the Akh-statue was housed (ibid. 86-91). In the Abydos temple this Akh-shrine is not 'theoretical', but is accessible through the opening at the back of the first Osiris shrine.
- 14 This embrace of Osiris and Horus in the ritual is similar to Seti I's embrace when he presents Ramesses as his successor before the royal courtiers (see p 54 with n.8). Both Horus in the Ancestor Ritual and Ramesses are possessors of 'vitality' (nfrw). Both are incarnations of the virile palace god Amun-of-Opet. And in both versions there is a connection with the sun god Re.
- 15 See Jacobsohn, Dogmatische Stellung, 42 n.6, 49, for this part of the ritual and the mystery of Bull-of-his Mother (Kamutef). For the regenerative heart as the link between the ruling Horus (Kamutef) and his ancestors see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 82-96.
- 16 This transference of the ancestral ruler's procreative life forces to Horus, is expressed in Spell 967 of the Coffin Texts: 'Osiris has gone to his Ka and has given me his house and his seed, so that I may procreate with it', CT 7, 182e-f. Cf also a passage in the Metternich Stela: 'Horus, you have your phallus, you are the 'Bull-of-his-Mother' (Kamutef), the avenger of his father, who cares daily for the nourishment of his children', CE Sander-Hansen, Die Texte der Metternichstele. Copenhagen 1956, 57 (154-6).
- 17 Here I have followed the Cairo version of the invocation. This calls on both Amun-Re and King Djeserkare (Amenhotep I) to rise up as King of Lower Egypt when the Horus ruler (Ramesses II) brings food offerings. It emphasizes the power of the reigning king to cause

- his Lower Egyptian predecessor to 'rise' again and, by implication, manifest his generative power when food is brought. By contrast, in the Chester Beatty papyrus, it is the reigning king, the palace ruler Amun-of-Opet, who is praised when his predecessor, Amenhotep I, brings the food offerings.
- 18 Spell 94 which is a spell for 'separating the Ba from the body', CT 2, 67c-70c. See also D Müller, Or 35 (1966), 267-8.
- 19 In the Late Period this 'waking' of the regenerative Osiris as the living youthful ruler is associated with Osiris Hemag, see Zecchi, Osiris Hemag, 79-81,120-1.
- 20 Translation also in Assmann, Liturgische Lieder, 57.
- 21 Cf also a scene in Seti I's mortuary temple at Qurna (Room 5), showing the Inmutef priest burning incense before the king as a 'censing for Re'. Behind Seti stands a female who embraces him, saving: 'Behold I am around you. I am your temple, your mother'. Her head supports a Ka-symbol within which is written the temple's name, L Christophe, BIFAO 49 (1950), 170-1. Like Isis-Hathor, she is his temple, his enclosing mother, who nurtures the transfigured solar king dwelling within her. This role of Isis playing her sistrum, associated with the lifetime of Horus-Re from birth to old age, also recalls the Late Period cult of Neferhotep in the Upper Egyptian seventh nome and its town Hut-Sekhem, 'temple of the sistrum', situated between Abydos and Dendara. As a threefold god-child god, living Ba and Osiris-Neferhotep is associated with the whole lifecycle of birth, procreation and regeneration, see P Collombert, 'The Gods of Hut-Sekhem and the

- Seventh Nome of Upper Egypt', in Eyre (ed), Proceedings, 291-2.
- 22 The inclusion of this chapter in a temple ritual shows that the Book of the Dead was not solely a 'funerary book' for the afterlife, but was also used by the living on earth (see chapter 17).
- 23 H Jacobsohn associated the returning Eye here with the Moon Eye, Dogmatische Stellung, 44. However, the returning Eye in the solar cycle is usually associated with the sun, so Gardiner's suggestion that this refers to the Sun Eye seems preferable (Hieratic Papyri 1, 90). See also n.24.
- 24 Cf Assmann, Solar Religion, 22, for the left Eye or Moon Eye normally associated with the sun god's entry into the West. Exit and return, however, are with the Sun Eye. For the identification of the Eye of Horus with the Eye of Re, te Velde, Seth, 46-7.
- 25 Extracts from this chant are inscribed in several places in the Abydos temple, Calverley, Temple of King Sethos 1, pl 13; 2, pl 19; 3, pl 32; 4, pl 51. For other examples elsewhere, see LV Žabkar JEA 66 (1980), 130-6. Cf also a scene of Seti offering to himself (wearing the White Crown) seated in a shrine with Osiris (pl 66). As in the Ancestor Ritual, it perfectly encapsulates the complete identification of the reigning king as cult celebrant with his Osirian ancestors in the West.
- 26 The Cairo and Turin papyri end with this hymn to Amun. By contrast, the Chester Beatty papyrus closes with a song to the setting sun, and the remainder of the papyrus is seemingly an addendum specifying the food offerings and litanies for special Theban feast days. Also included are specific chants to be used when the Eye of Horus was filled on the sixth day of the month.

Notes to chapter 8 (pages 90-2)

- 1 Seti I's mortuary temple at Qurna also seems ideally designed for the enactment of the Ancestor Ritual. Leaving aside Ramesses II's solar court to the north, its most important features are: 1) Amun's central barque shrine. Behind is a pillared room with a false door set against the west wall. 2) The cult chapel of the deified Seti (Room 5), located off the hall in front of the barque shrine. 3) The shrine of Seti's
- father, Ramesses I, located on the south side as an integral part of the temple. Ramesses I appears here as an Osirian ruler wearing the White Crown.
- 2 Calverley, Temple of King Sethos 3, pl 49.
- 3 Ibid. vii where it is stated that these areas were the only ones to be completely carved and painted in Seti's reign. 'It would thus seem that the most important parts were the first to be
- finished, the painters starting on the west and working their way eastward'.
- 4 For the three levels in Ramessid Theban tombs see K J Seyfried, 'Entwicklung in der Grabarchitektur des Neuen Reiches als eine weitere Quelle für theologische Konzeptionen der Ramessidenzeit' in J Assman et al.(eds), Problems and Priorities in Egyptian Archaeology. London 1987, 219-53.
- 5 See Roberts, Hathor Rising, 118-28.

Notes to chapter 9 (pages 96-105)

- 1 See chapter 7 n.12. For the posthumous role of Ahmose-Nefertari as mediatress during the Ramessid period see A M Roberts, Cult Objects of Hathor: An Iconographic Study 1. (Unpublished thesis Oxford 1984), 75-82.
- 2 Relief in the tomb of Inherkhau at Deir el-Medina, B Bruyère, Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1930). Cairo 1933, pl 9.
- 3 Publication of the Osireion in H Frankfort, A de Buck and B Gunn, The Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos. 2 vols. London 1933. Though the Osireion reliefs belong to the reigns of Seti I and Merneptah, some scholars have suggested it is an Old Kingdom building (see Frankfort et al, ibid. 1, 23 n.2). Frankfort, however, dated the building to Seti I's reign, and similarly B Kemp in Lexikon der Ägyptologie 4 1982), cols. 622-3.
- 4 See Frankfort's description, op.cit. 1, 30. Frankfort thought the central island would have been roofed over originally. But cf D Eigner, Die monumentalen Grabbauten der Spätzeit in der Thebanischen Nekropole. Vienna 1984, 166, 171-2 for the suggestion that it may have been open to the sky.
- 5 The representations are very dam-

- aged but Gilles Roulin has recognized a version of the Book of Night, LdN 1, 5-6.
- 6 Borings made by the Egyptian Antiquities Department in the 1940's indicated that an underground conduit had been built beneath the central axis of Seti's overground temple to conduct Nile water from a canal to the Osireion, O R Rostem, ASAE 50 (1950), 70 and pl 3.
- 7 Scholars refer to the texts surrounding Nut as the Book of Nut. The Dramatic Text is translated in EAT 1, 67-80 with pls 33, 51-4; E Hornung, Zwei ramessidische Königsgräber: Ramses IV. und Ramses VII. Mainz 1990, 93-4. The lines quoted here are damaged in Seti's version, but are preserved in the later demotic commentary, EAT 1, 68,8.
- 8 EAT 1, 75-6 with pl 53. Ibid. 68 for other descriptions of a star's life in the lake of tears. I have preferred E Hornung's translation 'as an image' ('als ein Bild'), op.cit. 94, rather than R Parker's 'out of the (previous) form'. Cf 'coming forth as an image' in Book of the Dead chapter 71 where the same word znn is used, EAW Budge, The Chapters of Coming Forth By Day or the Theban Recension of the Book of the

- Dead 2. London 1910, 13 (l.6).
- 9 EAT 1, 65 and pl 50 (Text Ee). See also Hornung, op.cit. 93; Allen, Genesis, 1 for this text.
- 10 BM EA 22942A. 21st Dynasty coffin of Ahmose from Thebes.
- 11 EAT 1, 62, with pls 48-9. For the sun god visiting the netherworld like a migratory bird see Hornung, op.cit. 96(54).
- 12 EAT 1, 67, with pl 52.
- 13 Ibid. 1, 82-3, with pl 32.
- 14 See Meeks, 'Le foie, Maât et la nature humaine', 149-51. The uterus is not equated with the night hours, though its function was clearly known to the Egyptians. The heart was the organ primarily associated with conception and procreation; and it was the union of two hearts which created new life see D Müller, Or 35 (1966), 247-74. Although there are descriptions of the male anatomy, linking the testicles and the heart, it is very unclear how the Egyptians perceived the connection between the heart and uterus.
- 15 For the development of the idea from the 17th Dynasty onwards that the king was an 'image' of Re on earth, in the sense of a cult image, see E Hornung, 'Der Mensch als 'Bild Gottes' in

Ägypten' in O Loretz, Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen. Munich 1967, 134-5. Changes in the methods of timekeeping during the Ramessid period also reflect this interest in 'body wisdom'. Ramessid star clocks began to show the position of the stars relative to the human body, see the chapter by G J Toomer in J R Harris (ed), The Legacy of Egypt. Oxford 1971, 48-51.

Notes to chapter 10 (pages 108-12)

- 1 Quote from the Asclepius or Perfect Discourse of Hermes see A D Nock-A-J Festugière, Corpus Hermeticum 2, Paris 1945, 326; Copenhaver, Hermetica, 81.
- For Maat and serpent power see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 32-6.
- 3 Ibid. 26-36, for discussion of the Sed Festival scenes in Kheruef's tomb associated with Hathor and the king's nocturnal rebirth.
- 4 The Book of Night in Ramesses VI's tomb was first published by A Piankoff, Le Livre du Jour et de la Nuit. Cairo 1942. For a comprehensive publication of all known versions see now G Roulin. Le Livre de la Nuit: Une composition égyptienne de l'au-delà. 2 vols. Freiburg and Göttingen 1996 (hereafter cited as Roulin, LdN); English translation in Piankoff, Tomb of Ramesses VI Texts, 409-28, although this must now be revised in the light of Roulin's publication. There is another version of the Book of Night in the Osireion dating from Merneptah's reign. It also appears in the Theban tombs of Ramesses IV, VI, IX; and in the Tanite tombs of Osorkon II and Shosheng III. From Dynasty 25 onwards, versions occur in Theban private tombs (TT132, TT33, TT410); on blocks from the nilometer of Roda; and sarcophagi CG29305, JE48446, JE48447, Louvre D8, Louvre D9, Berlin 49, Vienna 5 and CG29792, mostly dating from the Ptolemaic period, see Roulin, LdN 1, 1-25.
- 5 For Akhenaten's identification with Shu see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 163-4.

- The night hours are correlated with Book of the Dead chapters in the 26th Dynasty Theban tomb of Pestjenfi (TT128), see W Schenkel, MDAIK 31 (1975), 149-58; E Graefe 'Das Stundenritual in thebanischen Gräbern der Spätzeit' in J Assmann et al. Thebanische Beamtennekropolen: Neue Perspektiven archäologischer Forschung: Internationales Symposion Heidelberg 9-13.6.1993. Heidelberg 1995, 86-9. Professor Graefe kindly sent me an offprint of his Heidelberg paper, in which he lists the twelve night hours together with their equivalent Book of the Dead chapters. For a partial list of the night hours and Book of the Dead chapters in the 26th Dynasty tomb of Bakenrenef at Saggara see R Buongarzone, Egitto e Vicino Oriente 13 (1990), 89-90.
- 7 Hatshepsut's correlation of the Book of the Dead chapters with the night hours is partially preserved on the northern side of the ceiling of the 'Southern Hall of Offerings' on the temple's upper terrace. The texts on the ceiling's southern side list the twelve hours of the day, together with a complementary sequence of twelve hymns for each hour known as the Hour Ritual. This Hour Ritual is also the liturgical counterpart of the Book of Day (see chapter 18). Part of the ceiling has collapsed, and the fragmentary texts are being reconstructed by the Polish Mission working at Deir el-Bahri, see M Barwik, 'The so-called 'Stundenritual' from Hatshep-

- sut's temple at Deir el-Bahari' in Eyre (ed), Proceedings, 109-17.
- 8 Eg Winfried Barta queried whether the night hours listed in Hatshepsut's temple should be linked with the Book of Night, since the hour names differ from those in the Book of Night and the Amduat, Barta, Jenseitsbücher, 108 n.447. But the Egyptians referred to the hours by different names, even in the same composition. For instance, in different versions of the Amduat, the ninth night hour is called 'the one who protects her lord', or 'the one who protects her eye' or 'the adorer who protects her lord'. The important point is that the night hours (and their related Book of the Dead chapters) are treated on an equal basis with the day hours and the Hour Ritual on the ceiling of Hatshepsut's Hall of Offerings. The Hour Ritual is undoubtedly the liturgical counterpart of the Book of Day; and in Ramesses VI's tomb the Book of Day is juxtaposed with the Book of Night. Hence these Book of the Dead chapters must surely have some relevance for the Book of Night. See below chapter 18 n.3 for the relationship between the Books of Day and Night.
- 9 For the correlation between Book of the Dead chapters 77-88 and twelve different manifestations of Re during the day see H Brugsch, ZÄS 5 (1867), 21-6. Also P Barguet, Le livre des morts des anciens égyptiens. Paris 1967, 98; J Naydler, Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient

Egyptian Experience of the Sacred. Rochester 1996, 65-6. For the relationship between certain Book of the Dead chapters and initiation rites of various craft professions see Assmann, 'Death and initiation', 144-6.

10 Some Egyptologists argue that the New Kingdom Underworld Books have no ritual significance, e.g. Barta, Jenseitsbücher, 151-4, although he acknowledged that they may have derived from earlier unknown ritual practices. By contrast, in her review of Roulin's book, Marilina Betrò queries whether the Book of Night really was a funerary composition at all. She suggests it may have belonged with the theological literature concerning the king's relationship with the sun god, Or 67 (1998), 516. See, however, chapter 19 of this book for the Book of Night's relationship with funerary texts concerned with Nut as coffin goddess.

11 For this scene see Roulin, LdN 1, 259-61. As well as its royal associations, the uraeus is a well-known protective image in Egyptian magical rites. Uraeus serpents guard the cardinal points in temple ritual at Edfu, and also repel enemies and demons at night, see Ritner, Magical Practice, 224 with n.1042.

12 For the 'call of awakening' in Gnostic texts, H Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity. Paperback Edn. Boston 1963, 80-6.

Notes to chapter 11 (pages 114-20)

- 1 For Ihy in the regenerative waters see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 29-32.
- 2 See below n.4. For the deceased's appearance as a cult image made of gold and precious stones Aufrère, L'uni vers minéral 1, 343-4 with reference to Book of the Dead chapter 172. For a decanal star's rebirth as an 'image' see chapter 9 with n.8.
- 3 See Roulin, LdN 1, 155-7. Roulin interprets the fourth hour differently. He suggests the bound figures represent the deceased temporarily hindered in their night passage because of the sun's absence. His interpretation omits the Osirian allusions, especially the reference to protecting Osiris in the gateway's name and the fish-like state of the bound beings. A mountainous region is a landscape associated with the triumph of Horus over his father's enemies, see Smith, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri, 35
- (1.5), 58 (1.6 (b)). Similarly, a riverbank is the setting for the rescue of Osiris, the 'Tired Heart', in the Khoiak festivals, Herbin, Parcourir l'éternité, 313, 346, 356. Moreover, the Book of the Dead chapter 71 for this hour refers to release from hostile forces lurking in deep waters. Fish were not always regarded negatively, but for fish as Sethian creatures see te Velde, Seth, 26.
- 4 For these seven utterances of chapter 71 see Ritner, Magical Practice, 46-7. There is a discussion of Mehet-Weret in E Hornung et al. Der Ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen. Freiburg and Göttingen 1982, 96-101.
- 5 Borghouts, Magical Texts, 62-3 (No 91). Also te Velde, Seth, 37-8 for the conflict of Horus and Seth as the mythological background of the Metternich Stela and Socle Behague. Cf also Book of the Dead chapter 123

- for the initiate's identification with Thoth, who stops the fighting of the rivals, 'wipes away their weeping' and 'seizes the buri-fish'.
- 6 Cf a description of the dishevelled Isis, appearing like a mourning woman with her hair in disarray, like the hair of her son Horus when Seth ruffled his hair during their fight in the great valley, Borghouts, Magical Texts, 31 (No 44).
- 7 For this translation of 'Veiled One' see Roulin, LdN 1. 143(6). Alternatively it may refer to a helper of Osiris, perhaps Anubis. Cf a passage in a Ptolemaic ascension text, 'Raise yourself, Pillar in Busiris. He who veils his head has hidden your form', T DuQuesne, At the Court of Osiris: Book of the Dead spell 194. London 1994, 30 (n.47). 'The one who veils his face' also appears when the initiate approaches the temple of Osiris in the Book of the Dead, DuQuesne, ibid. 22.

Notes to chapter 12 (pages 122-6)

- 1 For an illuminating discussion of the heart-trachea connection represented by the nefer-sign see Bergman, 'Quelques réflexions', 8-14.
- 2 The 'offering of Maat' text in Amun-Re's cult is published in A Moret, Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Égypte d'après les Papyrus de Berlin et les textes du Temple de Séti Ier, à Abydos. Paris 1902, 138-47. For Maat's association with the throat see Bergman, Ich bin Isis, 182-90.
- 3 H Junker and E Winter, Das Geburtshaus des Tempels der Isis in Philä 2. Vienna 1965, 293, 1-4;

- Bergman, *Ich bin Isis*, 187. (Speech of the king whilst offering Maat to Amun).
- 4 H Sternberg-el Hotabi and F Kammerzell, Ein Hymnus an die Göttin Hathor und das Ritual 'Hathor das Trankopfer Darbringen' nach den Tempeltexten der griechischrömischen Zeit. Brussels 1992, 28.
- 5 Ibid. 71. For the Meret-goddess associated with Maat see Bergman, Ich bin Isis, 185 n.1.
- 6 See Roberts, Hathor Rising, 33-6.
- 7 The goddess named 'She who raises her Father' in the upper register is perhaps connected with the incestuous union of
- hearts between Isis and Horus, when Horus manifests as both father and son, the agent of his own rebirth. Cf a passage in Seti I's dedicatory stela for his father Ramesses I at Abydos, describing Ramesses I with his family: 'The mother of the god, her arms are round him like Isis. She has united with her father. All his brothers and sisters are in their places', Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions 1, 113, 6-7. 'Mother of the god' is an epithet of Isis as partner of the regenerative god Kamutef. See also above chapter 7 nn.15-16.
- 8 See D Müller, Or 35 (1966), 247-74.

Notes to chapter 13 (pages 128-142)

- 1 The translation of the sixth hour guide's name is problematic, and there are various possibilities. E Hornung translates a similar phrase in the Amduat as 'Horus of the terrace', see Roulin, LdN 1, 182-3. Probably the epithet is intentionally ambivalent, though an allusion to Horus on the terrace would not be out of place in this sixth hour of the 'Lady of Life'. Perhaps it refers to the mining 'terraces' in Sinai where life-giving turquoise was obtained from Hathor, see Aufrère, L'univers minéral 1, 29.
- 2 (Spell 576), CT 6 191f-k. See also the discussion of D Müller, Or 35 (1966), 260-70. For the Ba and sexual activity in the afterlife, Žabkar, Ba Concept, 101-3. For the association of the heart and Ba see M Malaise, Les scarabées de coeur dans l'Égypte ancienne. Brussels 1978, 57. Cf also a passage in the Book of Nut concerning Re's sexual

- potency and the heart: 'He brings into existence his heart and his sexual power', EAT 1, 51 with pl 45 (Text K). For the heart as the regenerative organ in the tale of The Two Brothers see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 88-91.
- 3 For the identity of the three figures see Roulin, LdN 1, 129, 221-2. He compares them with the three figures carrying a child in the third night hour, and also with a group shown in the vignette for Book of the Dead chapter 168 (see pl 116). Other parallels include a statuette of the regeneration goddess, Menkheret, raising aloft Tutankhamun wearing the Red Crown. She is also represented in a similar pose in Seti II's tomb.
- 4 Roulin, LdN 1, 200-1, prefers not to connect the 'Wandering Ones' with Sekhmet's demons. He interprets them as afflicted mourners wandering in the sixth hour because of the sun's ab-
- sence, like the riverine people in the third and fourth hours. For Sekhmet's entourage, including the 'Wandering Ones', see Borghouts, Magical Texts, 15 (No 15), 17 (No 20). Also ibid. 12-13 (No 13), for a 'Book of the last day of the Year' in which these wandering demons inhabit a riverine locality: 'I will not fall for your slaughtering, you who are in the meadows. I will not fall for your slaughtering, you who are on the borders of the river. Hail ... chief of the wandering demons . . . Wadjet is propitiated ... Horus, sprout of Sekhmet, (put yourself) behind my flesh, so that it is kept whole for life'.
- 5 It may also be an allusion to Meskhenet, the female personification of the birth-bricks on which a woman squats whilst giving birth.
- 6 The scene has been discussed by Stricker, Geboorte van Horus 2,

- 101-4; J van Dijk, JEOL 26 (1979-80), 12-14. Van Dijk quotes several passages concerning Horus-Re's birth in fire, including part of a hymn on an ostracon from the Valley of the Kings: 'O infant who came forth from the phallus, O child of fire with gleaming rays'.
- 7 These scenes are discussed by E Hornung, 'Eine aenigmatische Wand im Grabe Ramses' IX' in J Osing and G Dreyer (eds), Form und Mass: Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten. Festschrift für Gerhard Fecht. Wiesbaden 1987, 226-37. The Book of Night appears three times in Ramesses IX's tomb, Roulin, LdN 1, 11-13.
- 8 Cf also the androgyny of Isis described in her speech to Osiris in Papyrus Louvre 3079, col.110, l.10: 'I played the role of a man although I am a woman, to let your name live on earth, for your divine seed was in my body', W Spiegelberg, ZÄS 53 (1917), 94-5.
- 9 Hornung, op.cit. 236 (with n.44) translates 'the Nude One' (h3jt), although he notes it can also mean 'the Mourning One'. I have associated the figure with 'mourning', though 'nudity' would also be appropriate. The weeping 'Wandering Ones' are also naked in the Book of Night's sixth hour.
- Translation from Hornung, op. cit. 233.
- 11 The explanatory gloss of chapter 17 connects this dishevelled appearance of Isis with the time when she ruffled her hair in Sokar's shrine, see the edition of U Rößler-Köhler, Kapitel 17 des ägyptischen

- Totenbuches: Untersuchungenzur Textgeschichte und Funktion eines Textes der altägyptischen Totenliteratur. Wiesbaden 1979, 235. In the Underworld Books Sokar's cave is the dark mysterious region of rebirth.
- 12 Cf an important cosmographic text which refers to Re's rebirth during the sixth hour in the Dwat: 'The baboons, who announce Re when this great god is born in the sixth hour in the Dwat... they dance for him and leap in the air, they sing for him, make music...' Quoted by Assmann, Solar Religion, 24-5.
- 13 The Book of the Earth was published by A Piankoff, La création du disque solaire. Cairo 1953. These scenes are also illustrated in Piankoff, Tomb of Ramesses VI Plates, pls 130-1; Hornung, Valley of the Kings, 86 (54). The only complete version of the Book of the Earth is in Ramesses VI's tomb. However, Piankoff also identified part of the first tableau in the same room in the Osireion which has Seti I's version of the Book of Night on the ceiling, see Roulin, LdN 1, 2-3.
- 14 For this scene see also Stricker, Geboorte van Horus 4, 424-6. Stricker compared the action of the gods holding the snakes with the churning of the Sea of Milk in the Indian Mahabharata.
- 15 Cf also the nocturnal dances in Amenhotep III's Sed Festival (tomb of Kheruef), performed for Hathor as rebirth goddess. An accompanying song tells about the fiery furnace in which seeds brought by the garnerman are ground and roasted, so that the 'sharp-clawed one' may

- go forth, see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 28 and pl 34. Fire and grain (seed) are also linked in a hymn to Hathor at Dendara. This compares 'the female miller', grinding the grain for an intoxicating drink, with the female who nurtures 'the lord of the gods, the flaming one of the Bas of Heliopolis', see H Sternberg-el Hotabi and F Kammerzell, Ein Hymnus an die Göttin Hathor und das Ritual 'Hathor das Trankopfer Darbringen' nach den Tempeltexten der griechisch-römischen Zeit. Brussels 1992, 24 (n).
- 16 Fiery flames and the Ba's sexual activity are mentioned in Spell 75 of the Coffin Texts: 'My Ba shall not burn... I beget and my Ba begets. When my Ba copulates with the people in the Island of Flame, I myself copulate with the goddesses', see Žabkar, Ba Cancept, 102.
- 17 Meeks, 'Le foie, Maât et la nature humaine', 150. He suggests that the problematic hieroglyphic sign for the sixth hour organ may be a variant writing of the zema-hieroglyph meaning lungs.
- 18 M Sandman, Texts from the Time of Akhenaten. Brussels 1938, 94, 11.10-14. See Stricker, Geboorte van Horus 2, 104-9 for air and fertilization. Cf also Spell 80 of the Coffin Texts, in which the air god Shu gives life to the 'egg in the womb', CT 2, 33c.
- 19 The demotic First Letter for Breathing refers to the vivifying breath of Isis when she revives the Ba of Osiris for a second time, see J Quaegebeur, 'Diodore I,20 et les mystères d'Osiris' in DuQuesne (ed), Hermes Aegyptiacus, 161-5.

- 20 Jan Bergman noted the parallelism in Egyptian texts between the gift of air to pregnant women and its gift to sailors navigating their boats, 'Quelques réflexions', 11.
- 21 Roulin, LdN 1, 202, tentatively inteprets šfdw as 'those who are
- seized' in the absence of the sun god. I have preferred an active meaning for their name.
- 22 The scene is discussed in A M Moussa and H Altenmüller, Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep. Mainz 1977, 135.
- 23 Aufrère stresses the im-

portance of the mineral rich desert region, presided over by Hathor, where Horus must assert his dominion through the power of his Eye, L'univers minéral 1, 9-10, 36-7.

Notes to chapter 14 (pages 144-8)

- 1 For Sokar's rebirth as the youthful solar Horus, the 'little Re', see C Graindorge-Héreil, Le dieu Sokar à Thèbes au Nouvel Empire 1: Textes. Wiesbaden 1994, 248-50. Cf also a litany for Isis-Hathor in the ceremony for the going forth of Sokar from his sanctuary, preserved in Late Period papyri. After lengthy invocations for the rebirth of Sokar-Osiris and the defeat of his enemies, there is the litany for the goddess when the solar boat goes forth. It also praises the egg manifesting on the canal when the lady of the horn arrives in joy, see J C Govon, RdE 20 (1968), 67-9.
- 2 Post-New Kingdom examples of the Book of Night reflect Seth's demonization during the Late Period. Whereas in earlier versions the eighth hour bound captive beneath the throne of Osiris is nameless, he is subsequently identified as 'the vile Seth', see Roulin, LdN 1, 255.

- Seth's demonization is discussed by te Velde, *Seth*, 140-51. For Letopolis and the reconciliation of Horus and Seth see te Velde, *ibid*. 70.
- 3 Meeks, 'Le foie, Maât et la nature humaine', 150-1, 153-4.
- 4 É Chassinat and M de Rochemonteix, Le temple d'Edfou 3. Cairo 1928, 301, 4-5. See Meeks, op.cit. 153. Cf also the following lines from a magical text against the plague of the year: 'Don't you take this heart of mine away, this heart of mine for Sekhmet. Don't you take my liver away for Osiris', Borghouts, Magical Texts, 16 (No 18); Meeks, op.cit. 153.
- 5 See Meeks, op.cit. 148-51. In the Dendara temple procession reliefs, Osiris is associated with the liver as the relic of the eleventh Upper Egyptian nome. Elsewhere the eleventh nome is connected with the reconciliation of Horus and Seth, as well as the vanquish-

- ing of Osiris's enemies. Meeks discusses these themes in connection with the liver and the seventh night hour. Clearly the defeat of Osirian enemies is one aspect of this hour. But so too is the regeneration of a child's lifetime, and hence the liver could also be connected with Isis and other life goddesses (below n.6).
- 6 See E Hornung, Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen 2. Geneva 1977, 143 n.476; Meeks, op.cit. 147 with n.10.
- Meeks, op.cit. 154-6. Meeks also refers to the episode in the tale of The Two Brothers when Bata is regenerated as a bull. His wife, seeking to destroy her husband's life, requests that the animal should be slaughtered so that she can eat its liver. In this way she hopes to annihilate the forces which enable Bata to regenerate himself. See also Roberts, Hathor Rising, 91 for this episode.

Notes to chapter 16 (pages 156-64)

- 1 For alternative translations of the guide's problematic name see Roulin LdN 1, 291.
- 2 Roulin, LdN 1, 304, translates 'fnt as 'mask'. See, however, D Meeks, Archéo-Nil 1 (1991), 13n.43 who translates the word as the 'head-covering' which the deceased removes in the sun god's presence.
- 3 (Spell 62). CT 1, 265e-f. For the connection of heart and memory see J Zandee, Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions. Leiden 1960, 175-6; J Assmann, JEA 65 (1979), 70-1. Zandee noted that it is memory which safeguards a person's identity in the hereafter.
- 4 See chapter 19 for discussion of

- this Book of Thoth.
- 5 For this role of Isis in the Westcar Papyrus see Lichtheim, Literature 1, 220-1.
- 6 For heka 'magical power' and Atum's creative power, Ritner, Magical Practice, 17.
- 7 (Spell 482). CT 6, 48c-49d. Other variants have either 'lions' or 'jackals' giving the orders. For

- numerous references to the crocodile and rebirth see Roulin, LdN 1, 291.
- 8 J Darnell is preparing a new translation of this difficult cryptographic text about the Spirits of the West. See, however, the translation of T DuQuesne, DE 40 (1998), 87-9. For the role of the jackal and Anubis in initiation see T DuQuesne, Jackal at the Shaman's Gate: A Study of Anubis Lord of Ro-Setawe. Thame 1991.
- 9 For M Betrò's identification of the object supporting the scarab as a potter's wheel (piatto del tornio) rather than an altar, see Or 67 (1998), 522. The lines at the top of the pedestal perhaps indicate the pattern made when the wet clay runs down as the wheel is turned. Roulin, LdN 1, 349-50 discusses this group of scenes with bibliography.
- 10 For other examples of the Ogdoad at sunrise, Roulin, LdN 1, 350-1. For the soul's entry into
- the region of the Ogdoad in the Hermetic *Poimandres*, see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 6. In an accompanying note Copenhaver refers to the Hermopolitan Ogdoad. *ibid*. 118.
- 11 EAT 1, 48 with n.39, and pl 44, Text E.
- 12 For 'opening the ball' as an allusion to the ancient Egyptian lost wax casting technique used in the fabrication of statues, see chapter 17, p 171.

Notes to Chapter 17 (pages 168-78)

- 1 It is to be expected that the power of the Eve goddess would be allimportant in a night journey involving humans, for Egyptian texts emphasize the relationship of humans to the 'eve' and their creation from the Eye's falling tears (see chapter 2). For similarities between Egyptian religion and the Tantric tradition see T DuQuesne, 'Raising the Serpent Power: Some parallels between Egyptian Religion and Indian Tantra', in DuQuesne (ed), Hermes Aegyptiacus, 53-68. Also Roberts, Hathor Rising, 66-7 for comparisons between Hathor and the Tantric goddess, Shakti.
- 2 For Maat's guidance of Hathorian energy during Amenhotep III's Sed Festival see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 32-6. Cf also a scene in Ramesses IX's tomb showing the king offering Maat to Ptah (accompanied also by Maat), which is next to a representation of the reawakened Osiris on the necropolis mound (pl 107). Such a juxtaposition connects the way of Maat with Osirian regeneration in the realm of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris.
- 3 Nut as coffin goddess is mentioned already in the Pyramid Texts, though it is only later that
- she is actually represented on a sarcophagus or coffin, see the numerous examples cited by A Rusch, Die Entwicklung der Himmelsgöttin Nut zu einer Totengottheit. Leipzig 1922. J Allen suggested that her original character, as revealed in her name, is the 'oval' (nwt) enclosing the body of her son Osiris, Allen, 'Reading a Pyramid', 25. There is an unusual speech of Nut preserved on a private statue in Kheruef's 18th Dynasty tomb, see J Berlandini, La statue thébaine de Kherouef et son invocation à Nout' in C Berger, et al. Hommages à Jean Leclant 1: Études pharaonigues. Cairo 1994, 389-406. Nut describes how she embraces Kheruef who is raised to the sky like the stars in her body. He becomes a 'noble', as well as an ancestor and adorer of Re in the day boat. Berlandini associates this 'noble' status with rebirth and the inundation waters described in the Coffin Texts, ibid. 399-400. Such a rebirth also occurs in the Book of Night. This speech of Nut on Kheruef's statue, together with the Sed Festival dance scenes invoking Hathor 'Gold', shown elsewhere in Kheruef's tomb,
- emphasize the power of the goddess in solar regeneration during the last decade of Amenhotep III's reign.
- 4 Barta, Jenseitsbücher, 186-7 noted the importance of the decanal year cycle associated with the twelve night hours in the Underworld Books, although he did not extend this to include the rhythm of the three seasons.
- 5 For the third month as the time when Seth assassinated Osiris see Herbin, Parcourir l'éternité, 354.
- 6 Roulin, LdN 1, 132 compares these third hour weepers with Osirian mourners in the Book of Caverns, although he rejected a specifically Osirian meaning for the Book of Night weepers.
- 7 For this festival Herbin, Parcourir l'éternité, 162, 361. See also J Berlandini, RdE 46 (1995), 29-31, 40, for fluctuations in the festival's date during the Ramessid period, when it was also celebrated in the sixth month culminating on 1 Phamenoth (seventh month).
- 8 For the harvest festival and Min-Bull-of-his-Mother see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 84-6 with further references.

- 9 Discussion of the festival in S Schott, Das schöne Fest vom Wüstentale: Festbräuche einer Totenstadt. Wiesbaden 1953. It was still celebrated at Thebes in the Ptolemaic era, D Montserrat and L Meskell, JEA 83 (1997), 194. It is also mentioned in the Ptolemaic Book of Traversing Eternity, Herbin, op.cit. 51-2 (II,18-21), 67(VII,4), 362-3.
- 10 See Roberts, Hathor Rising, 14-15.
- 11 This seasonal rhythm also underlies the Ptolemaic Book of Traversing Eternity, in which the Ba of the deceased person is able to partake in a whole range of festivals throughout the three seasons, Herbin, op.cit. 377-9.
- 12 The lost wax process is described in A Lucas, (revised by J R Harris), Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries. Fourth edition. London 1962, 221.
- 13 For Lucius's initiation and ancient Egyptian Underworld Books see E F Wente, INES 41 (1982), 177, 179. Also Assmann, 'Death and Initiation', 152-4.
- 14 The connections between the making of statues, rites for cult images, and the sun god's night journey have hardly been investigated at all. But W Barta noted the references to the opening of a shrine and rites for the cult image in the Amduat's eleventh hour, Jenseitsbücher, 153; Hornung, Amduat 1, 182; ibid. 2, 176 (fourth scene), with n.2. Osiris Hemag's regeneration in Late Period texts is also linked with precious metals, see below chapter 21 n.8.
- 15 Cf also Aufrère, L'univers minéral 1, 320-1 for numerous words

- associated with 'birth' applied to the mountains where precious stones and metals were 'born' or engendered.
- 16 Geboorte van Horus 1 (1963), 10-11.
- 17 Not all Gnostic writers had a negative view of the feminine. See, however, the Gnostic work known as The Paraphrase of Shem from the Nag Nammadi library in I M Robinson (ed), The Nag Hammadi Library in English. Paperback Edn. San Francisco 1981, 308-28. The cosmos is imagined as a huge matrix; and the redeemer called Derdekeas must descend into the Underworld to face the 'wrathful womb' and the powers of darkness in order to release the light. Disguised as a great beast, he persuades the womb to allow heaven and earth to come into being so that light may rise forth in a new creation. The writer's attitude towards the female is essentially negative. She is an ignorant power who has to be tricked and overcome. Hers is 'an unclean femininity' and the soul's horror at female nature is expressed when she 'turned her dark vagina and cast from her the power of fire which was in her from the beginning through the practice of darkness' (ibid. 320). Interestingly, this Gnostic text was discovered at Nag Hammadi, not far therefore from Hathor's temple at Dendara, with its disfigured Hathor faces on the temple columns. Yet despite the negativity, the references to the womb's 'staring eve', to rebirth as a fish and falling tears suggest the writer was still deeply influenced
- by ancient Egyptian religion, which he was perhaps rejecting in his work.
- 18 On the other hand Henri Frankfort referred to the 'dreariness of the texts' in the Osireion, and suggested that Akhenaten's reforms were totally justified, describing Seti's restoration of tradition as a 'blind alley', Frankfort et al. Cenotaph 1, 31.
- 19 Clearly rebirth through Nut was known already in the *Pyramid Texts*. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the night and day hours occurred already in Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahri temple (above chapter 10 n.7). But there are no known representations of the *Book of Night* before the 19th Dynasty.
- 20 JNES 41 (1982), 161-79. For a survey of scholarly views about initiation and the solar cult see J Baines, JARCE 27 (1990), 10-15.
- 21 Wente, op.cit. 178. He also pointed out how the ideas of Walter Federn have generally been ignored by Egyptologists, ibid. 161. Federn thought that certain transformational spells in the Coffin Texts were for use by the living in initiation rites, JNES 19 (1960), 241-57. Jan Assmann also associates the Underworld Books with the sphere of the living and suggests they originated in the royal solar cult, see 'Death and initiation', 135-59, esp.154-5.
- 22 For a comparison between the Ancestor Ritual and the deceased's journey of rebirth through Nut as coffin goddess in the demotic Second Letter For Breathing see chapter 19.

Notes to Chapter 18 (pages 180-88)

1 EAT 1, 50-1 with pl 45. For the ninth hour's name as 'She who Creates Harmony' (shtp n s) see the translation of E Hornung, Ägyptische Unterweltsbücher. Zürich and Munich 1972, 488. Shtp means to 'propitiate' in the sense of calming and transforming a wrathful deity's anger in order to

- create harmony. For rites of propitiation associated with Hathor see Roberts, Hathor Rising, 54-64.
- 2 See Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen, 97. The first hour text states, 'The majesty of this god comes forth in the hour whose name is She who raises the beauty of Re. This is the hour of She who creates Harmony'. The Book of Day was published by A Piankoff, Le livre du jour et de la nuit. Cairo 1942; English translation in Piankoff, Tomb of Ramesses VI Texts, 389-407. For bibliography see E Hornung, Altägyptische Jenseitsbücher: Ein einführender Überblick. Darmstadt 1997, 92-4.
- 3 I have preferred to follow Piankoff's approach and treat the Book of Day and the Book of Night as one work. Some scholars regard them as separate compositions, classifying the Book of Day as a 'book of the heavens' with the Book of Nut, and the Book of Night as a 'book of the netherworld' like the Amduat and other Underworld Books, e.g. Barta, Jenseitsbücher, 107-10, 133-9; Roulin, LdN 1, XVI n.9. But see Marilina Betrò's review of Roulin's book, in which she observes that the juxtaposition of the two books in Ramesses VI's tomb is unlikely to be coincidental, Or 67 (1998), 510, 517. She notes that divine guides in the Book of Day also appear in some of the night hours. Furthermore, the Book of Night's introductory section refers to the Book of Day's twelfth hour text.
- 4 For this fourth hour day hymn see Assmann, Ägyptische Hymnen, 100-1. The twelve hymns of the Hour Ritual form the liturgical counterpart to the Book of Day showing the sun god's journey through the twelve hours of the day, see Assmann, Solar Religion, 26-8. Also above chapter 10 n.7 for the Hour Ritual in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri.

- 5 James Allen discusses the Akhet as a region below the visible horizon, through which the sun passes in the hour between its emergence from the Dwat at first light and its appearance in the day sky at dawn, see 'Reading a Pyramid', 26. Thutmose III describes the Akhet as a place of initiation in an inscription at Karnak. The king transforms himself into a divine hawk and is taken up into the horizon to see the mysteries there: 'He opened for me the doors of heaven, and unfolded the horizon gates. I rose to the sky as a divine hawk and saw his secret image in the sky. I worshipped his Majesty ... Re himself established me by distinguishing me with the crowns on his head, and securing his uraeus on my brow...I was equipped with all his Akh-power and instructed in the wisdom of the gods like Horus'. From Urk.4.159,11-160,7. Cf also the treatise concerning the king's role as solar priest preserved in Theban temples. It refers to the king's knowledge of the secrets concerning Re's birth in the eastern horizon, Assmann, Solar Religion, 17-20, 24-5. For the birth process and the 'mysteries', ibid. 44 n.32. See also below n.7.
- 6 For this hymn see Assmann, Agyptische Hymnen, 97-8; Liturgische Lieder, 150-9. For the dominant role of the uraeus snakes and fiery crowns in the Hour Ritual, Assmann, Solar Religion, 35.
- 7 There are several good reasons for identifying the childbearing goddess as Hathor rather than Nut. Firstly, it would be unusual to show Nut twice, given that her body already encloses the scene. Secondly, full-face representations of Nut are highly unusual in New Kingdom sacred art. Thirdly, a New Kingdom solar hymn specifically names this horizon mother as Hathor: 'Hail to

you, who are brilliant and alert, Atum-Harakhti. When you appear in the horizon of the sky, praises to you are in the mouths of everyone, you being vital and young in the sun-disk (jtn) within your mother Hathor', Urk.4. 2095, 4-7. Cf also Hathor as birth goddess of the mysteries in a demotic liturgical refrain (P Berlin 6750): 'Come goddess (of) mystery, giving birth, Hathor', at each repetition of which Hathor's name is followed by a different epithet, Smith, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri, 98. The word for 'mystery' here is (jtn) and there is probably an intentional word play with the name of the sun-disk (jtn). The tradition is old. Already in the Sixth Dynasty tomb chapel of princess Watetkhethor at Saggara, there are Hathorian dance scenes celebrating the 'secret of birth', see I van Lepp, 'The role of dance in funerary ritual in the Old Kingdom' in S Schoske (ed), Akten des vierten internationalen Agyptologen Kongresses München 1985 3. Hamburg 1989, 385-94; A M Roth, JEA 78 (1992), 141-3.

- 8 For Isis and Nephthys as divine midwives, see the episode in the Westcar Papyrus when the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty are born, Lichtheim, Literature 1, 220.
- 9 Kingship, 152-3. Cf also Frankfort et al. Cenotaph 1, 27-31.
- 10 Plato, Phaedo, 72A.
- 11 Ibid. 72B.
- 12 Extracts from CT 4, 46f-47d.
- 13 Numerous Coffin Texts and Book of the Dead chapters associate Hathor with rebirth in the East. It is important not to confuse this horizon rebirth when the flame is lit with that earlier time of regeneration in the dark fifth and sixth hours of the night. Spell 45 of the Coffin Texts describes the rebirth as an anointing by Hathor: 'Trembling befalls the eastern horizon, announced are

the paths of its remoteness to this Osiris N who has come forth as Re and is exalted as Atum, after Hathor has anointed him, after she has given him life in the West like Re, day by day', CT 1, 191d-192d.

14 For this birth scene see H Brunner,

Die Geburt des Gottkönigs: Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos. Wiesbaden 1964, pl 9 (Text 102).

Notes to chapter 19 (Pages 192-200)

- For the Bes oracle at Abydos, see Frankfurter, Religion, 124-31, 169-75. D Meeks, Archéo-Nil 1 (1991), 11 notes the oracle's connection with the 'headless Osiris' tradition.
- 2 Cf M Betrò's remarks about the Pharaoh's prominence in the Book of Night, Or 67 (1998), 515-16. She notes the emphasis on his understanding of the night mysteries and his special relationship with the sun god. Geraldine Pinch's detailed study of New Kingdom votive offerings to Hathor also confirms this New Kingdom centrality of the king. Though one might expect these offerings to be part of an alternative system of practices in popular religion, she concludes they reflected the involvement of king and state in every facet of life, Votive Offerings, 358. However, there are some signs of a distancing from royal authority, even in the Ramessid period. Cf the 19th Dynasty dream of Djehutyemheb, in which Hathor commands him to build his tomb. Previously it would have been the Pharaoh who issued such orders, K-J Seyfried, Das Grab des Diehutiemhab (TT 194). Mainz 1995, 72-3 (Text 120), 114 n.456; also J Assmann, RdE 30 (1978), 45-6.
- 3 J Assmann, Das Grab der Mutirdis. Mainz 1977, 88-9 and pl 39. For the version in Ramesses IV's tomb, Roulin, LdN 1, 20.
- 4 See A J Spencer, Death in Ancient Egypt. Harmondsworth 1982, 187-8, 241. Also Assmann, Solar Religion, 7, 28-30, for the spread of esoteric knowledge during the Saite period. The social changes connected with this development are not fully

- understood, but the emergence of the Theban theocracy in the 21st Dynasty must surely have been an important factor.
- 5 See above chapter 10 n.6. It was also during the 26th Dynasty that the Book of the Dead chapters were arranged in a fixed order for the first time.
- 6 For this dating of Djedhor's sarcophagus (rather than the 26th Dynasty in PM 3 2(2) (1979), 765-66) see K Mysliwiec, BIFAO 81 Supplement, Cairo 1981, 92-3; Roulin, LdN 1, 23-4.
- 7 This argument is sometimes used to explain occurrences of the *Pyramid Texts* in Late Period tomb inscriptions. However, Jan Assmann has pointed out that *Pyramid Texts* were still being used in late mortuary liturgies and were by no means obsolete, J Assmann, 'Egyptian Mortuary Liturgies' in S Israelit-Groll, *Studies in Egyptology presented to Miriam Lichtheim* 1. Jerusalem 1990, 24.
- Translation in Goyon, Rituels funéraires, 233-317. For the text's dating, ibid. 193-4. There is also a First Letter for Breathing attributed to Isis, ibid. 213-32. On the importance of these Letters for Breathing as links between Pharaonic funerary compositions and later Hermetic texts as well as the Isis mysteries see J Quaegebeur 'Diodore I, 20 et les mystères d'Osiris', in DuQuesne (ed), Hermes Aegyptiacus, 180-1. Quaegebeur also compared the First Letter for Breathing with an alchemical treatise in which Isis instructs her son Horus', ibid. 180.
- 9 Goyon, op.cit. 192-3.
- 10 Goyon described the occurrence of the 'Litany for the preservation of

- the name' in the Second Letter as a gradual 'democratization' of the ancient royal tradition, op.cit. 201-3. However, he did not connect the Second Letter as a whole with the Ancestor Ritual.
- 11 Goyon, op.cit. 284. See also S Schott, RdE 17 (1965) 81-7 for this closing invocation to Nut.
- 12 Goyon, op.cit. 248-50. Before these invocations to Thoth, the coffindweller invokes several deities of the West to turn their faces towards him (or her).
- 13 Activation of the heart = Goyon, op.cit. 253-8; entry into the solar boat, op.cit. 259.
- 14 New birth in the life-cycle from birth to death, Goyon, op.cit. 259.
- 15 Goyon, op.cit. 260-2.
- 16 Translation and bibliography in Lichtheim, Literature 3, 94-103. Scholars disagree about whether the text refers to a priest of Imhotep or Imhotep himself. Lichtheim favours the former, ibid. 100-1, n.5. However, D Wildung thinks that it is Imhotep as the chief priest of the Ibis-priesthood, Egyptian Saints, 70; Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep, 150-2. Similarly also Y Haiying, 'The Famine Stela: A source-critical Approach and historical-comparative Perspective' in Eyre (ed), Proceedings, 516-17. For the possible relationship of this seven year famine with the Biblical story of Joseph, see Haiying, ibid. 519-20.
- 17 Goyon, op.cit. 264-7.
- 18 Op.cit. 276-80. The text is an adaptation of Book of the Dead chapter 162. Cf also D Meeks, Archéo-Nil 1 (1991), 9-10 for chapter 162's connection with the

- hypocephalus and the 'headless Osiris' tradition.
- 19 For this birth on the bricks see Goyon, op.cit. 282. For Re's appearance on the birth-bricks in a demotic commentary on the New Kingdom star texts surrounding Nut, see EAT 1, 48. These commentaries probably date to the second century AD and originate from the Faiyum town of Tebtunis. They are therefore contemporary with the Second Letter.
- 20 H Fairman noted that sections of the New Kingdom Ancestor Ritual occur in the Hall of Offerings in the Edfu temple, 'Kingship Rituals', 101. Evidently the ritual was still known in Graeco-Roman times.
- 21 The text has been re-edited by F R Herbin, Le livre de parcourir l'éternité. Leuven 1994. For the Bas of the deceased able to visit Egyptian temples and partake in the cults, see Smith, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri, 87 I 5(a) with n.368.
- 22 For Hathor as funerary goddess at Deir el-Medina in the Ptolemaic period see D Montserrat and L Meskell, JEA 83 (1997), 193-7. Also Goyon, op.cit. 299-301 for the visits of Amun-of-Luxor to Djeme and the West Bank.
- 23 See the discussion of McCleary, 'Ancestor Cults at Terenouthis', 221-31, esp.226.
- 24 For the cults of Imhotep and Amenhotep see Wildung, Egyptian Saints; Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep. For their cults at Deir el-Bahri also J Karwoski, J Winnicki, and E Brecciani, MDAIK 39 (1983), 93-105.
- 25 Wildung, Egyptian Saints, 100-1. Wildung (Imhotep und Amenhotep, 78) noted the similarities between Imhotep's festival calendar, which celebrated important events in his lifetime, and that of Amenhotep I in the Ramessid period. He also observed the close proximity in their birthdates: Amenhotep I was born on 3 Shemou day 11, and Imhotep on 3 Shemou day 15/16.

- 26 See Wildung, Egyptian Saints, 92-7 for Amenhotep as healer. For Imhotep, ibid. 43-55. See also D I Thompson, Memphis under the Ptolemies, Princeton 1988, 209-11 for Imhotep's role as a beneficent god at Memphis. Cf also Peter Kingsley's remarks about the link between dream-oracles and death and rebirth in Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri and Pythagoreanism, Ancient Philosophy, 286-8. There is little direct evidence for the soliciting of dreams within a temple before the Ptolemaic period, although a New Kingdom royal craftsman from Deir el-Medina, Qenherkhepeshef, who owned a book of dream interpretations, states that he slept in temple precincts, S Quirke, Ancient Egyptian Religion. London 1992, 136. Cf also the 19th Dynasty dream-vision of Diehutvemheb (cited above n.2).
- 27 PT §616.
- 28 In the demotic version of the Memphite Theology Imhotep acts as the scribe transmitting Ptah's wisdom to the people through his writings, Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep, 79-80. He is the guardian of the Memphite craft tradition, and the text goes on to describe Imhotep's burial as Ptah's son. Cf a statue of Imhotep showing him holding a papyrus roll and accompanied by a baboon, the sacred animal of Thoth, god of scribes, Wildung, Egyptian Saints, 54. For the association of Thoth and Imhotep as lords of healing and wisdom in Ptolemaic Memphis, see D Thompson, Memphis under the Ptolemies. Princeton 1988, 211. For Imhotep, son of Ptah, as renewer of Ptah's creation cf a hymn to Imhotep in the Ptah temple at Karnak, Lichtheim, Literature 3, 106.
- 29 R Jasnow and K-T Zauzich, 'A Book of Thoth', 607-18. My discussion here is provisional and relies entirely on the editors' preliminary remarks. Clearly, until the text is

- published in its entirety, its full significance cannot be properly assessed. For example, the editors mention a speech of 'He-who-isupon-his-back' (Osiris) with the pupil (ibid. 608), but it is not clear in their paper when Osiris makes this speech nor what its theme is. Nevertheless, I have included the text in this book, because it seems to be another important link in the transmission of Nut's death and rebirth wisdom in the Roman period. Most of the manuscripts date from the second century, but the Berlin version perhaps dates to the first century BC, ibid. 607. For a preliminary discussion see also J-P Mahé, VigChr 50 (1996), 353-63, who kindly sent me proofs of his article before publication.
- 30 This myth of the Eye of the Sun (or Goddess in the Distance) was inscribed in Graeco-Roman temples, see H Junker, Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien, Berlin 1911. It was also one of the most important texts in demotic literature, see the translation in F de Cenival, Le mythe de l'oeil du soleil. Sommerhausen 1988. For the suggestion that the text was recited or performed in Roman Egypt, ibid. VIII. There is a Greek translation in a papyrus dating to the third century AD, S West, IEA 55 (1969), 161-83. See also Jasnow and Zauzich, 'A Book of Thoth', 618; Frankfurter, Religion, 245 with n.21.
- 31 For Thoth's sacred writings as the 'Bas of Re' or 'emanations of Re' see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 58-9. The connection of the scribal art and regeneration clearly goes back a long way. Cf Book of the Dead chapter 68 describing how Hathor's initiate accompanies her to Heliopolis when she carries the sacred writings of Thoth (see chapter 12). See also Walter Federn's discussion of certain Coffin Texts, in which a person becomes the scribe of a deity, including Hathor. Federn suggested

these were initiation spells used to induct a living person into a 'secret society', as preparation for postmortem existence in the other world, INES 19 (1960), 254. For the finger as the fiery phallus of Seth see te Velde, Seth, 49-50. Cf also Book of the Dead chapter 99, in which the traveller refers to 'quenching his finger' when requesting that the Eye be given to him, J Navdler, Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred. Rochester 1996, 235-6. Scribal red ink could also be associated with the blood of Seth, Aufrère, L'univers minéral 2, 655-6. For Seth throwing the writings of Thoth into the river see Papyrus Jumilhac 17, 4-5; Vandier, Le papyrus Jumilhac, 129.

- 32 W Helck, Lexikon der Ägyptologie 2 (1977), col.1171.
- 33 The editors of the Book of Thoth interpret it as a successor to Underworld Books like the Amduat and the Book of the Two Ways, Jasnow and Zauzich, op.cit. 615-16. Similarly, J-P Mahé discusses the journey of Thoth's pupil as an underworld journey in the Dwat, contrasting it with the ascensional heavenly 'way of immortality' in Egyptian Hermetic texts, VigChr 50 (1996), 354. However rebirth through Nut was a 'heavenly' way of rebirth, and Mahé's statement that the Hermetic ascent was 'due to the evolution of Hellenistic cosmology and beliefs' is far from certain. The Egyptians described entering Nut's heavenly body as an entry into the Dwat.
- 34 The editors do not link the text with existing cult practices but see it rather

as a work of the Egyptian houses of life, written primarily for educated scribes. They suggest it may have been recited at festivals, Jasnow and Zauzich, op.cit. 616. But cf Garth Fowden's comments about the limitations of interpreting Egyptian Hermetic texts solely as literary texts to be read (Lesemysterien), Egyptian Hermes, 149-50. Fowden suggested that they reflect far more the transmission of knowledge within small groups dedicated to spiritual illumination. Such groups functioned outside a temple cult regulated by special priesthoods. But see L Kákosy, 'Hermes and Egypt' in A B Lloyd (ed), Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J.Gwyn Griffiths. London 1992, 258-61 for the view that there were close links between Hermetic groups and the temples. For the Hermetic teacher-pupil relationship see Fowden, op.cit. 156-60.

- 35 For this more intimate relationship with the deities see also a Roman period tomb relief at Terenuthis, showing the deceased person holding Anubis by a tether. Roger McCleary suggested that this need not necessarily imply a diminution in the role of Anubis, but rather that he had become more accessible to his adherents, 'Ancestor Cults at Terenouthis', 224.
- 36 Discussions about the transmission of Egyptian religion in Roman Egypt often focus on the activity of priests in taking their wisdom into the world and values of Hellenism, as reflected in the 'philosophical' Hermetic texts, Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 166-8; Frankfurter, Religion, 222-4. However, the Egyptian 'book

of Thoth' implies that private spiritual instruction also occurred in the Imhotep cult. Cf also a dream vision of Thessalus of Tralles which took place in a Theban temple chamber after he had persuaded a priest to assist him. In his vision he converses with Imhotep-Asclepius, Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 162-5. L Kákosy suggested the vision occurred in the Ptah temple at Karnak, op.cit. 259. Referring to the Thessalus story, David Frankfurter observed that some priests had begun to offer private divination experiences as 'freelance' versions of the temple oracle cult, Religion, 181.

- 37 As Robert Ritner noted, the Ptolemaic and Roman periods have often been regarded as the 'death' stage of Egyptian culture, a view which fortunately now seems to be in a process of revision, R K Ritner, 'Implicit Models of Cross-Cultural Interaction: A Question of Noses, Soap, and Prejudice' in J H Johnson (ed), Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond. Chicago 1992, 284-5.
- 38 Frankfurter, Religion, 198-237, passim.
- 39 Ibid. 72-3.
- 40 See A Lajtar, The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 21 (1991), 53-70. Latjar noted that the ironworkers visited at the beginning of Tybi, and he suggested the donkey sacrifice may have been a Sethian ritual connected with the Osirian feast of Khoiak, ibid. 67-9. The inscriptions are in a niche of the upper terrace's west wall. See also Frankfurter, Religion, 64,72; R S Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity. Paperback Edn. Princeton 1996, 269.

Notes to chapter 20 (pages 202-16)

1 See above chapter 6, n.8 for Festugiére's dating of the text to the end of the third century AD. Cf also the listing of the precious ores and stones in the Ptolemaic Famine Stela which is surely not included simply as an inventory. Earlier in the inscription Imhotep had journeyed to Hermopolis to seek the secrets of the inundation waters. Hence this listing suggests that his quest also renewed Ptah's mineral realm. According to the text these minerals were found in the Elephantine region presided over by the inundation god Khnum, Lichtheim, *Literature* 3, 98. For Imhotep as renewer of Ptah's realm see above chapter 19, n.28.

2 For the problem of whether the

True Book of Sophe (Khufu) the Egyptian should be attributed to Zosimus see Mertens, Alchimistes grecs 4(1), LXVII-LXIX. Zosimus is not named in the title, although a Greek fragment of the work attributes it to Zosimus. Another alchemical treatise associates it with an earlier Egyptian alchemist (Pseudo)-Democritus, also known as Bolus of Mendes. Despite this uncertainty regarding the original source, the work was clearly linked with native Egyptian alchemists.

- 3 Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 3, 206-7.
- 4 For Panopolis as a cultural city in late antiquity see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 174; R S Bagnall, Egypt in Late Antiquity. Paperback Edn. Princeton 1996, 109, 272-3.
- 5 See K P Kuhlmann, Materialien zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Raumes von Achmim. Mainz 1983, pl 36 a-b. In his introduction Kuhlmann remarked on how little attention has been paid to Akhmim (Panopolis), a town which Plinius described as one of the largest in Egypt, ibid.1. It is therefore to be welcomed that an international symposium 'Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest' was held at Leiden University in December 1998, the papers of which will be published in due course.
- 6 Cf Klaus Kuhlmann's remarks about the possible survival of Egyptian burial customs until the fifth century in Akhmim, op.cit. 80, n.383. His view contradicts E Wipszycka's statement that Panopolis had become predominantly a Greek culture by the end of the fourth century, and that the only knowledge about ancient Egyptian religion was preserved in Greek literature, Aegyptus 68 (1988), 163.

- 7 For Zosimus at Akhmim see Mertens, Alchimistes grecs 4(1), xiii-xiv. For the dating of Zosimus to around 300 AD, ibid. xv-xvii. For alchemical groups in the time of Zosimus see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 125-6, 173-4, 188.
- 8 See S Ratié, La revue du Louvre et des Musées de France 30 (1980), 219-21. She tentatively suggested a fourth century date for the object, noting also the connection of alchemy with the Osirian mysteries in fourth century Egypt. The Leiden and Stockholm alchemical 'technical' papyri from Thebes were evidently produced either at the end of the third century or beginning of the fourth century AD, see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 169-70.
- 9 It is not known when Olympiodorus lived. Some scholars have identified him with the fifth century historian by the same name. He has also been identified with the sixth century Alexandrian Neoplatonist but this now seems unlikely, see Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, 60-1 with n.32. His writings include references to Zosimus and Maria the Jewess. Discussion of Olympiodorus in J Lindsay, The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt. London 1970, 361f. Lindsay identified him with the fifth century historian.
- 10 Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, 390 n.56. For the importance of Dhu'l-Nun in the transmission of alchemy, Kingsley, ibid. 388-90. L Kákosy relegated the tradition that Dhu'l-Nun learnt his knowledge in the Akhmim temple to the realm of fable, 'Das Ende des Heidentums in Ägypten', in P Nagel (ed), Graeco-Coptica: Griechen und Kopten im byzantinischen Ägypten. Halle 1984, 76. Whether Dhu'l-Nun's knowledge

came from an actual temple in Akhmim, however, is not really the point. What the tradition does is to link him with an alchemical school at Akhmim which clearly existed. Kingsley refers to the connection between Dhu'l-Nun and Ibn Suwaid, also from Akhmim, who may have been responsible for the Arabic prototype of the Turba philosophorum. Ibn Suwaid wrote a work refuting accusations against Dhu'l-Nun, Kingsley, op.cit. 389-90.

- 11 See J Ruska, Turba philosophorum: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Alchemie. Berlin 1931.
- 12 For discussion of the Turba's connection with Ibn Suwaid in Akhmim see P Kingsley, IWCI 57 (1994), 9-13; Ancient Philosophy, 58-9. Also M Plessner, Isis 45 (1954), 331-8. Cf also J Ruska's observations about the Egyptian origins of the Turba. He dates it to the end of the 10th or beginning of the 11th century, Ruska, Turba, 318-20. Ruska's remarks about the early development of Islamic alchemy in Egypt, especially his assertion that the Arabs must have felt a total lack of inner connection when they encountered the 'senile' products of Egyptian culture, indicate how closed the minds of scholars have been to ancient Egyptian culture and heritage. Ruska believed the great developments in Islamic alchemy occurred in Persia, Turba, 292. See also above chapter 6, n.8 for scholarly emphasis on Persian influence in Hermetic works.
- 13 For ninth and tenth century Arab alchemists in Akhmim see Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, 59 with n.28, 388-90. He suggests there was a continuous tradition of alchemy in Akhmim from the

third and fourth centuries AD (the time of Zosimus) down into the early Islamic period. Cf also Akhmim's importance in an Islamic tradition about the three Hermes. The first lived before the flood in Upper Egypt and built the temple, that is the mountain, at Akhmim. The second lived in Babylon and his pupil was Pythagoras. The third lived after the flood in the town of Misr and wrote a book about alchemy, see Vereno, Studien, 243-4. Vereno was puzzled by the identification of the temple at Akhmim with a mountain, ibid. 243 n.259. But it conforms with genuine ancient Egyptian beliefs about sacred origins, for Egyptian temples were said to come into being when the 'mounds of the first time' appeared, above chapter 1 n.16.

- 14 Ruska, Turba, 246. Ingolf Vereno suggested the 180 days refers to the period from the Winter solstice to the Summer solstice which, according to Plutarch, represented the time between the death of Osiris to the birth of Horus, Studien, 303-4.
- 15 Vereno, *ibid*. 303-4. For a fruitful white tree in ancient Egypt cf Hathor's sycamore fig tree which oozed a milky white liquid (see chapter 2 p 26).
- 16 The 'wandering womb' in Greek and Gnostic thought is discussed by P Fredriksen, VigChr 33 (1979), 287-90. Also A A Barb, JWCI 16 (1953), 214 n.23 for references to Graeco-Egyptian incantations and amuletic texts for returning the womb to its place.
- 17 See Roberts, Hathor Rising, 10-13.

 Cf also the important GraecoRoman myth of the Goddess in the
 Distance which was translated
 into Greek (above chapter 19
 n.30). The evidence suggests
 there was also a whole tradition

- about the Eye/wandering womb/ sun-disk in ancient Egypt.
- 18 Papyrus Ebers 94, 7-8; F Lexa, La magie dans l'Égypte antique 2. Paris 1925, 111(27).
- 19 The 17th century alchemist Michael Maier associated the 'woman who flees' with the fleeing Atalanta in Greek myth, as encapsulated in the title of one of his works, see I Godwin, Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens: An Edition of the Emblems, Fugues and Epigrams, Grand Rapids 1989, 9. Several of Maier's emblems in this work are taken from the Turba, including the tree of life beneath which the old man is renewed, HME de Jong, Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens: Bronnen van een alchemistisch Emblemenboek. Utrecht 1965. 117-21.
- 20 M Plessner, Isis 45 (1954), 333 associated the woman killing the dragon with the Hindu myth.
- 21 Papyrus Jumilhac 3,7-12; Vandier, Le papyrus Jumilhac, 114. See Aufrère, L'univers minéral 2, 658 for red pigments associated with the dried blood of Seth and his allies; and also with the blood of Apophis ibid. 655.
- 22 Ruska, Turba, 247.
- 23 The illustrations in this chapter are all from from the Harley manuscript in the British Library (Ms Harley 3469). See also the edition of J Godwin, Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis. Introduction and Commentary by A McLean. Grand Rapids 1991, with bibliography.
- 24 This description of Trismosin's travels is in Splendor Solis: Alchemical Treatises of Solomon Trismosin. Translation with explanatory notes by J.K. London 1920, 87. Also Patai, Jewish Alchemists, 270, although Patai omits the final sentence about Trismosin's discovery of the

- 'treasure of the Egyptians'.
- 25 Yates, Giordano Bruno, 21. Although Frances Yates was enormously sympathetic to the Hermetic tradition and did so much to set out its enormous impact during the Renaissance, she still could not bring herself to believe that Hermetic and alchemical texts might have derived from ancient Egypt.
- 26 See Vereno, Studien, 302.
- 27 Book of the Dead chapters 109, 149. See also O Keel, Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden: Drei Fallstudien zur Methode der Interpretation altorientalischer Bilder. Freiburg and Göttingen 1992, 72-4 for further references. Keel traces the two trees motif through into the Roman period.
- 28 For the demotic invocation see F.Ll.Griffith and H Thompson, The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden. London 1904, 134-5 (XXI,2-3); H D Betz (ed), The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells. Chicago 1986, 229. See also the commentary of T DuQuesne, A Coptic Initiatory Invocation PGM IV 1-25. Thame 1991, 23(42) for a parallel Coptic invocation. The Ptolemaic Book of Traversing Eternity mentions a previously unknown 'Festival of recovering the head of Osiris' on the banks of Nedyt, Herbin, Parcourir l'éternité, 61 (V,13), 314. A priest associated with the recovery of Osiris's head is also attested, see Herbin, ibid. 228 (VI,22). For the 'headless' Osiris in a Greek magical papyrus, Betz (ed), op.cit. 103.
- 29 See J Berlandini, OMRO 73 (1993), 41, pl 4. Berlandini also discusses two New Kingdom headless shabtis and other examples (ibid. 30, 40, pl 3), suggesting they all relate to the Osirian deceased's power of regeneration

- (revirilisation), *ibid*. 33-5. This interpretation also applies to the 'headless' man in *Splendor Solis*, for his regeneration is the theme of the next two illustrations.
- 30 See the discussion of D Meeks, Archéo-Nil 1 (1991), 6-11. The importance of the Abydos symbol (pl 43) as a reliquary containing Osiris's head seems to be post-New Kingdom, Meeks, ibid. 8 with n.24; J Berlandini, OMRO 73 (1993), 31 n.33.
- 31 Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 3, 146 (III.x.). Berthelot attributes this alchemical text to Zosimus. But cf Mertens, Alchimistes grecs 4(1), LIII-LIV who thinks the text may date to a different epoch.
- 32 For bibliography and commentary on Zosimus's vision see Mertens, ibid. 35-42, 207-225. Also C G Jung, Alchemical Studies. Princeton 1967, 59-65; Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 120-1. Trismosin refers to Zosimus as Rosinus in his text. For this name as a corruption of Zosimus, see C G Jung, Psychology and Alchemy. Paperback Edn. London 1980, 452 n.37.
- 33 A detailed discussion of the images in the flasks is not possible here. However, Trismosin's accompanying text is concerned with the application of heat to change the original nature of different substances in order to facilitate their union and the creation of new beautiful forms. In this difficult fiery process bodies can be rendered incorporeal and incorporeal substances can be made corporeal, as when a soul is drawn into a body or a human being is generated from the spirit of the seed. This mystery of mingling different substances to create a living vessel was also fundamental in Egyptian alchemy, as described by Maria the Jewess, see Patai,

- Jewish Alchemists, 67. In all likelihood though its roots lie much further back in the craft wisdom of ancient Memphis, with its concern for the Ba-body relationship and the mysteries of creating and animating statues.
- 34 It is difficult to say when this descent through the planets may have been incorporated into the Egyptian death and rebirth tradition, but perhaps already in the early Roman era after Babylonian planetary wisdom had been introduced into Egypt in the late Ptolemaic period. The order of the planets in Splendor Solis is 'Chaldean' rather than the 'Egyptian' order found in Plato. In the Chaldean system, which became standard from the second century BC, the sun is located in the middle of the seven planets, whereas in the 'Egyptian' order the position of the sun is between Mercury and the moon, see Yates, Giordano Bruno, 152. The mingling of Egyptian death and rebirth wisdom with planetary and astrological knowledge is evident in a complex relief on the ceiling of Petosiris's tomb in the Dakhlah Oasis, dating to approximately the second century AD or later, I Osing et al, Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry. Mainz 1982, pls 40-1, with p 100. Four nude winged goddesses support the celestial sphere, in which the zodiacal signs and planetary symbols are shown, together with Egyptian motifs including a winged scarab beetle in the West and a figure of Horus on the crocodiles. The zodiacal sign of Cancer is located in the southeast and Capricorn in the north part of the ceiling. According to Mithraic tradition, and stated also by Porphyry, these two zodiacal signs are the
- gateways of descent and return, through which a soul is born into mortal existence (Cancer) and then returns to the eternal world (Capricorn), see J Osing et al, ibid. 100; K Raine, Blake and Antiquity. London 1979, 8, 14-15. However, normally Capricorn is the southern gate and Cancer the northern one of descent and birth. Their reversed locations here on Petosiris's ceiling would suggest that these gates have been equated with Egyptian ideas of birth and death, for in Egyptian religion South=East and birth, and North= West and death. Also shown outside the zodiacal band are numerous birds, recalling the migratory birds mentioned in the Egyptian Book of Nut, who come to Egypt from the outermost reaches of the sky and fly as Ba-birds across Nut's body in their journey of death and rebirth (see chapter 9).
- 35 The notion of the soul ascending and descending through seven spheres, the 'fall to earth' and subsequent return, occurs already in the Egyptian Hermetic tract known as the Poimandres, Copenhaver, Hermetica, 1-7. Here man is given the power of the seven governors created by the demiurge, who envelop the sensory world with their circles. He descends through these spheres to unite with Nature and take on a mortal body through the power of sexual love. At the close of the treatise he soars through these spheres again, discarding all evil and enters the glory of the 'Ogdoadic' nature. Garth Fowden notes the parallels between the Poimandres and Zosimus's visions, Egyptian Hermes, 122.
- 36 The seven flasks are illustrated in J Godwin, Salomon Trismosin's Splendor Solis. Introduction and commentary by Adam McLean. Grand Rapids 1991, 45-57.

- 37 Mertens, Alchimistes grecs, 4(1), 43-5. These seven steps of heat, which Zosimus mounts after seeing the cauldron of regeneration, are perhaps comparable with the seven flasks for the degrees of heat in Splendor Solis.
- 38 Cf the lovely description of plants and precious stones becoming more radiant and beautiful through fire in the Dialogue of the Philosophers and Cleopatra, Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 3, 282; A J Festugière, Hermétisme et mystique païenne. Paris 1967, 241-2.
- 39 The twenty-two illustrations resonate with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which were crucially important in Renaissance Kabbalah. However, although this kabbalistic influence is likely, it should be noted that twenty-two was also an important number in Zosimus's visions. Initially, he mounted fifteen steps when he met the priest presiding over the mysteries of dismemberment and regeneration. Subsequently, he mounted seven steps associated with the actions of heat.
- 40 For the role of the Egyptian Maria the Jewess in Hellenistic alchemy see Patai, Jewish Alchemists, 60-91. See also Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 36-7 for Jewish influence in Graeco-Egyptian Hermetic texts.

- 41 For Zosimus's remarks see A-J Festugière, La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste 1: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes. Second edition. Paris 1989, 276-7. For the mining of minerals and metals as a royal prerogative see also Aufrère, L'univers minéral 1, 316-18.
- 42 There are many problems tracing alchemical activity between the decline of the Hellenistic era and the rise of Islamic alchemy, not least what happened to alchemists in Coptic Egypt. But, as Raphael Patai pointed out with reference to Jewish alchemists in the same period, even though there is little solid evidence, there are indications that it must have continued, Jewish Alchemists, 95. For a fragmentary alchemical Coptic treatise, which must once have belonged to a collection of alchemical recipes dating to a time when the Arabs were already in Egypt, see L Stern, ZÄS 23 (1885), 102-19.
- 43 Cf R Halleux, Les textes alchimiques.
 Turnhout 1979, 65 for a tradition transmitted by Morienus that the first Arab alchemist was Khalid ibn Yazid ibn Mu'awiya who received his knowledge in Egypt between 675 and 700. This tradition has been doubted, but Halleux remarks that an early Arab alchemical connec-

- tion with Egypt is not implausible. For the survival of Egyptian religion in eighth century Coptic magical texts mentioning Horus, Isis, Amun and Thoth in their traditional roles, see L Kákosy, 'Das Ende des Heidentums in Ägypten' in P Nagel (ed), Graeco-Coptica: Griechen und Kopten im byzantinischen Ägypten. Halle 1984, 74.
- 44 For Arab knowledge of ancient Egypt see below chapter 21 nn.13, 17. For Imhotep known to Arab scholars of the tenth century as both physician and alchemist see Wildung, Egyptian Saints, 76-8; Imhotep und Amenhotep, 110-14.
- 45 Ruska, Turba, 207. For oral transmission amongst the alchemists, Ruska, ibid. 319-20. S Aufrère refers to the importance of Upper Egyptian towns like Akhmim, Dendara, Coptos and Edfu in the oral tradition. These towns had a long connection with mining, metallurgy and the mysteries of transformation, L'univers minéral 2, 803.
- 46 For Zosimus's alchemical 'sister',
 Theosebia, as a founder of secret
 alchemical groups see Fowden,
 Egyptian Hermes, 125. Some of the
 modes of transmission into the
 West are discussed by DuQuesne
 in 'Egypt's Image in the European
 Enlightenment', 32-51.

Notes to chapter 21 (pages 218-225)

- 1 For an English translation of the Asclepius see Copenhaver, Hermetica, 67-92. For the destitution and subsequent restoration of Egypt, ibid. 81-3.
- 2 The history of the debate is summarized by Copenhaver, Hermetica, xlv-lix. He pays tribute to Jean-Pierre Mahé's important work on the Nag Hammadi Hermetica

which has influenced how the Greek and later Hermetic treatises are now perceived, especially their connection with Egypt ibid. xliv-v, lvi-vii. See also P Kingsley, JWCI 56 (1993), 1-24 for the Egyptian roots of the Hermetica. Garth Fowden takes a more cautious approach, Egyptian Hermes, 73-4, although he noted that

the Egyptian element must be greater than has previously been allowed. For the reluctance of western scholars to acknowledge Egypt's contribution to Hermeticism see also E Iversen, Egyptian and Hermetic Doctrine. Copenhagen 1984, 26-9.

3 Scholars often distinguish between the 'philosophical' Hermetic texts associated with Hermes Trismegistus and the 'technical' treatises dealing with alchemy, astrology and natural history, even though there are alchemical texts attributed to Hermes. For the artificiality of this distinction see B Vickers, *Ambix* 41(1) (1994), 45-7. The Egyptian alchemist Zosimus refers to Hermetic texts, Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 120-6.

- 4 A Erman, Die Ägyptische Religion. Berlin 1909, 182. Erman's approach obviously influenced scholars like I Hammer Jensen who cited Erman in rejecting the idea that alchemy might originate in Egypt, Die älteste Alchymie. Copenhagen 1921, 3-5.
- 5 Fowden dismissed Daumas' opinion that alchemy originated in ancient Egypt as 'a rather optimistic view of the evidence', Egyptian Hermes, 67 n.88. Similarly he made light of the alchemists' claim that their learning came from Egypt, ibid. 68. He described alchemy as a 'creation of the Hellenistic and Roman mind', and clearly finds it difficult to believe that alchemical treatises reflect deep religious experience, ibid. 90.
- 6 Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 1, 200-2; M Berthelot, Les origines de l'Alchimie. Paris 1885, 21-45. Berthelot's scheme is also set out by Eliade, Forge and the Crucible, 146.
- 7 Vereno, Studien, 327-31, 337-9. It is unfortunate that Sydney Aufrère in his important work about Egyptian metals, minerals and sacred beliefs played down the ancient Egyptian roots of alchemy, and insisted that the Gnostics were responsible for giving the early alchemical 'science' a higher aim, L'univers minéral 2, 804. Similarly, Peter Kingsley cited Gnosticism as the crucial influence on Zosimus and later Arab alchemists at Akhmim. He suggested that mythological ideas about the underworld, especially the idea of

fire in the earth, derived ultimately from Pythagorean and Orphic sources which found their way to Akhmim through the Gnostics, Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, 64-8. Such an interpretation omits the ways in which ancient Egyptian religion, including the long tradition about the sun in the Dwat/earth, might have survived in Egypt itself during later periods, see above chapter 17 n.17, for the relevance of ancient Egyptian religion in the interpretation of Gnostic texts.

- 8 Cf the Late Period cult of the regenerative Osiris Hemag associated with minerals and the wrapping of the awakened god in precious material and costly stones, Zecchi, Osiris Hemag, 85-7, 79-81, 105-6, 116-17, 119-21.
- Cf the following New Kingdom titles of a priest who was 'Greatest among the seers of Re at Thebes, sem priest, supreme leader of crafts of Ptah, superintendent of the priests of all the gods and first priest of Amun', M Sandman Holmberg, The God Ptah. Lund 1946, 226-7. For the Memphite craft deities and their links with death and divinization, Aufrère, L'univers minéral 2, 363-6. As Terence DuQuesne notes the connection between smithcraft and the Egyptian priesthood has hardly been investigated, 'Egypt's Image in the European Enlightenment', 35. He cites the very early priestly title of 'iron arm of the Great House', ibid, 35 n.15.
- 10 F Daumas, 'L'alchimie a-t-elle une origine égyptienne?' in Das römisch-byzantinische Ägypten. Akten des internationalen Symposions 26.-30. September 1978 in Trier. Mainz am Rhein 1983, 109-18. Daumas challenged Berthelot's view that the ancient Egyptian contribution to alchemy was purely technical and that 'philosophical' speculations came later. He argued

that a 'theory' of alchemy had existed from New Kingdom times. For Garth Fowden's dismissal of this view, above n.5. See also T DuQuesne's discussion of alchemy as an ancient Egyptian tradition, 'Egypt's Image in the European Enlightenment', 32-51.

- 11 P Derchain, CdE 65 (130)(1990), 219-42. For Derchain's comments on the link with alchemy, ibid. 222-3, 232. Daumas also quoted a passage from the Ramessid Harris Papyrus, describing how copper ingots brought from Atika were placed beneath the Pharaoh's window. These had the 'colour of gold of the third quality'. As Daumas observed, tinting copper to give it the appearance of gold was known to later alchemists, and he suggested the Egyptians were also familiar with this technique, Daumas, op.cit. 116-17.
- 12 Cf Zosimus's remarks that Egyptian metal-workers were forbidden on royal orders to divulge their secrets, above chapter 20 n.41.
- 13 An Arab alchemical treatise, one of the few known alchemical texts specifically attributed to Hermes, mentions Hermes of Dendara in a dialogue between Hermes and Osiris. It states that the text was found beneath a statue of Artemis in a crypt at Dendara. It also includes an accurate description of the four faces of a statue in the temple. oriented towards the four cardinal directions. Whoever composed the text possessed excellent knowledge of the Dendara temple, with its characteristic four faces of Hathor (Artemis) at the top of the temple columns, see Vereno, Studien, 160. Vereno suggested the text was a reworking of an older Greek composition written when the Dendara cult was still in existence, ibid. 333-4. However, such a Greek origin is by no means proven.

- 14 For Zosimus's remarks about the symbolic nature of the writings on Egyptian temple stelae, see A-J Festugière, La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste 1: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes. Second edition. Paris 1989, 278(5). An earlier Egyptian alchemist, Bolus of Mendes affirmed that alchemy existed in ancient Egypt, Berthelot, Alchimistes grecs 3, 57-8.
- 15 For the Arabic and Latin sources of the Emerald Tablet see J Ruska, Tabula Smaragdina: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur. Heidelberg 1926. For his remarks on its Egyptian connection, ibid. 164. Also D Kahn, Hermès Trismégiste: La Table d'Émeraude et sa tradition alchimique. Paris 1994, ix-xxvii. For a summary of the scholarly debate about the tablet's origin, Vereno, Studien, 27-8.
- 16 The accounts of its discovery vary. Some versions say it was discovered by Alexander the Great in the tomb of Hermes. Others maintain it was Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who took the tablet from the hands of the dead Hermes in a cave in Hebron.
- 17 Ibn Umail is one of the earliest sources for information about the ninth century Egyptian Sufi Dhu'l-Nun, the 'brother of Akhmim', who was strongly connected with alchemy, see Kingsley, Ancient Philosophy, 389, (also above chapter 20 n.10 for Dhu'l Nun). Bruno Stricker carefully traced the details of Ibn Umail's account back to a statue of Imhotep in a temple at Saggara which must have been visited by the Arab author on two occasions, AcOr 19 (1943), 101-37. See also Wildung, Imhotep und Amenhotep, 110-23. For the identification of the statue with Imhotep and Imhotep's

- importance for Arab alchemists, Wildung, ibid. 113-14. Ibn Umail's account of his visits forms the preface to his alchemical treatise The Silvery Water and the Starry Earth, and its inclusion at the beginning of his work suggests he was linking himself with the Egyptian alchemical tradition. In the treatise itself he quotes from the work of Maria the Jewess, for whom our chief source is Zosimus, see Patai, Jewish Alchemists, 68-9. Patai makes the point that Ibn Umail seems to have been in possesion of 'books' by Maria that were unknown to other alchemical authors.
- 18 J-P Mahé, Hermès en Haute-Égypte 1: Les textes hermétiques de Nag Hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins. Quebec 1978, 33-5, 82-3, 126. Translation also in J M Robinson (ed), The Nag Hammadi Library in English. Paperback Edn. San Francisco 1981, 296.
- 19 For Thoth as 'three times great' and the likely Egyptian origins of the name Trismegistus, see J Quaegebeur, 'Thot-Hermès, Le dieu le plus grand!' in Hommages à François Daumas 2. Montpellier 1986, 525-44.
- 20 For evidence of a Hermetic cult in Thoth's city of Hermopolis see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 175-6. Hermes is shown holding his snake-staff (the caduceus) in a Roman period tomb painting at Terenuthis in the Delta. He guides an initiate (the tomb-owner?) towards a niche containing scenes of Anubis, as protector of the necropolis, and the tomb-owner, Isidora, seated at her banquet, McCleary, 'Ancestor Cults at Terenouthis', 224, 231 (pl 23.2). For the importance of ancestor cults at this Graeco-Roman site, ibid. 226. McCleary noted the mingling of Egyptian and Greek

- imagery in the tomb scenes concerning death and the afterlife, and suggested it reflects 'the tailoring of Egyptian mysteries for the understanding and adherence of foreign initiates' during the second century AD, ibid. 229.
- 21 For a commentary on this engraving see also the catalogue for an exhibition in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica Amsterdam, The Silent Language: The Symbols of Hermetic Philosophy. Amsterdam 1994, 42-3(No 19). For the 'three worlds' in Renaissance Kabbalah and Hermeticism, Yates, Giordano Bruno, 121-2.
- 22 I am indebted to Francis Gladstone for pointing out the skull's significance here.
- 23 For the importance of Casaubon's dating of Hermetic texts, and his role in establishing a time framework for modern scholarship see Yates, Giordano Bruno, 398-431; Copenhaver, Hermetica, I. Casaubon proposed that they were composed partly from the writings of Plato and the Platonists and partly from Christian sacred texts. For Yates this 'death of the Hermes Trismegistus of the Renaissance' released seventeenth century thinkers from magic, although she went on to say that scholars have still not reached agreement about how much genuine Egyptian teachings the texts in fact contain (ibid. 431).
- 24 It is not known when the Asclepius was composed, nor which historical events might have prompted the writer to lament about Egypt's demise, see Fowden, Egyptian Hermes, 38-44; Copenhaver, Hermetica, 238-40. Fowden rejected the idea that it refers to Christian persecution of the ancient Egyptian cults.

Sources of the illustrations

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- 3 Isis shaking her sistrum before Amun-Re—photo AMR
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- 8 Statue of Meryt, Leiden Museum Inv.AST.2—photo AMR
- 9 Ostracon of craftsmen worshipping Ptah—after J Ruffle, Heritage of the Pharaohs: An Introduction to Egyptian Archaology. Oxford 1977, 173 (illustration 131). Old Kingdom metal-workers—after P Duell et al, The Mastaba of Mereruka 1. Chicago 1938, pl 30. Scenes from the tomb of Rekhmire—after N de G Davies, The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re' at Thebes 2, New York 1943, pl 53 (leatherworkers), pl 54 (beadmaking), pl 55 (carpenters), pl 60 (sculptors)
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