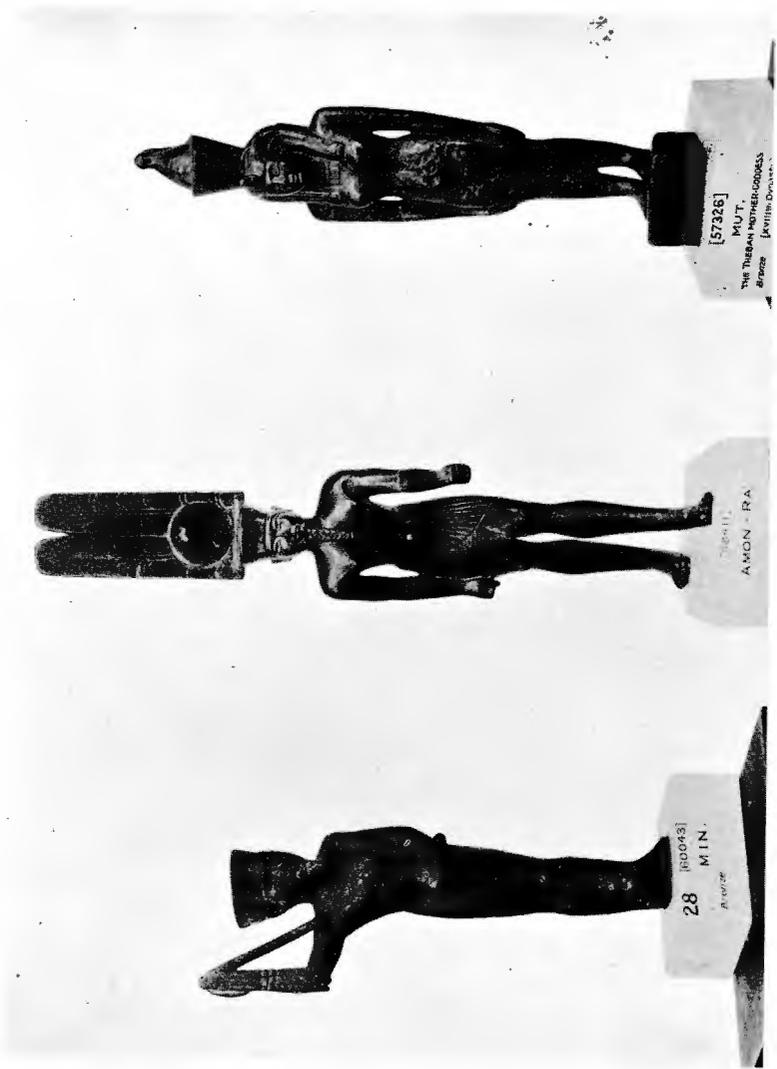


AN INTRODUCTION TO
EGYPTIAN RELIGION



BRONZE FIGURES OF AMON-RĀ, MUT, AND MIN
 in the British Museum (Nos. 38411, 37326, 60043). The figures of Amon-Rā and Mut are both of the XVIIIth Dynasty; that of Min is later. [front]

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AN INTRODUCTION TO EGYPTIAN RELIGION

An Account of Religion in Egypt
 during the Eighteenth Dynasty

BY

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THERE has long been felt the need of a short popular introduction to the religion of ancient Egypt, and the present little book is an attempt to supply that want. But first a few words as to its scope. It is a brief study of one period only, that of the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Dynasties, and only main lines are followed out. Within these limits, however, the book aims at presenting the subject in the light of to-day's knowledge, for research during the past twenty years has brought us slowly but surely nearer to the religious mind of the Egyptians.

The author intends the book to serve a double purpose, that is, to be of service both to the general reader and to the student beginning Egyptology. Thus, for the sake of the former, he has tried to make the chapters as simple and non-technical as possible, with the hope that the reader who knows nothing whatever of Egypt may feel enlightened and not confused when he reaches the final page. The principle, also, of basing the whole description upon quoted monuments is intended to demonstrate *how* our knowledge is obtained. For the sake of the student, on the other hand, a bibliography is given at the end of every chapter, setting out the publications in which he may examine the various monuments for himself, together with the most important books and articles dealing with the matters discussed in the preceding chapter.

Lastly, the attitude taken by this book to ancient beliefs is frankly sympathetic, and, in the author's opinion, needs no apology.

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XIth Dynasty.

XIIth Dynasty, beginning about 2212 B.C. } Middle Kingdom.

Dynasties XIII-XIV, beginning about 2000 B.C. }

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My sincere thanks are due to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to reproduce numerous illustrations from their Guide-books, to Mr. Sidney Smith, Keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, for permitting me to publish the photograph on Plate I, and to the following authorities for their great kindness in allowing me to use other illustrations: Dr. A. M. Blackman, Sir Ernest Budge, Professor Adolf Erman, Professor F. Ll. Griffith, Dr. H. Schäfer, Mr. N. de G. Davies, the Cairo Museum, and the Egypt Exploration Society. Further, I am indebted to Professor Erman and Dr. Blackman for permission to quote (on p. 74) a passage from the excellent translation of the Cairo Hymn to Amon, contained in *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* (English edition of Professor Erman's book, *Die Literatur der Aegypter*, prepared by Dr. Blackman, p. 284), and finally to the firms of Messrs. Methuen, Black, Constable, and Hachette for kindly supplying blocks.

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. A. M. Blackman, to the late Dr. H. R. Hall, to Mr. Sidney Smith, his successor as Keeper of the Department, and to my colleagues, Messrs. S. R. K. Glanville and C. J. Gadd, for much encouragement and many helpful criticisms and suggestions.

ALAN W. SHORTER.

CHAPTER I

FROM time immemorial the religion of the ancient Egyptians has enjoyed a remarkable popularity among people who were, or are, in large part ignorant of its nature and scope. To the Greeks and Romans the priests and temples of the Nile valley preserved beneath their solemn exteriors the deepest mysteries of Heaven and Earth, while in modern times the Egyptian religion is continually termed "fascinating" by those dabblers in Oriental ideas who still hope to draw great secrets from it. The growth, however, of scientific study has now put a stop to wild surmise in this as in many other fields, and the religious beliefs of the Egyptians must take their stand among the religions of the world, and with them be carefully and systematically examined. And what is the result? When we have stripped off the glamour of the past and the misunderstandings of centuries, we find ourselves confronted by no outlandish thing, but with a chapter which falls easily into its place in the history of man's religion from the beginning. If, therefore, we are to gain an accurate comprehension of what men in ancient Egypt thought about their gods and the spiritual world, we must first lay aside any notion that their ideas were "curious" or "quaint". Their beliefs, rightly understood in their own setting, were neither quaint nor more curious than our own; in both cases we are dealing with human beings who have provided some sort of

answer to the problem of existence, and so, though we may not ourselves accept the beliefs held in those far-off times, yet we are bound to estimate and judge them rightly to the best of our ability.

How, then, are we to accomplish this task, and where shall we seek our information? Let us briefly describe the sources for study. First, there are the accounts given by certain ancient Greek authors, the most important being Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Strabo. The details told us by these writers are often of extreme value, but they take us only a short way upon our journey. Herodotus may describe a religious festival and Plutarch present us with the only systematic version of the Osiris legend, but these Greeks were not equipped for an estimation at their true value of the facts which they were able to collect. Visiting Egypt in its last decline, and with no accurate knowledge of its history and language they naturally could not discern the elements, originally distinct, which went to make up a legend, or realise the long development and intermingling of cults which had placed the Egyptian gods in the positions in which they found them. Nearly 3,000 years had passed since Menes founded the First Dynasty of Kings, when Herodotus, the earliest Greek authority, visited Egypt about 450 B.C.

No, the basis of our inquiry to-day can only be the evidence left us by the Egyptians themselves. And of what does this evidence consist? The gigantic temples erected in honour of the gods, the countless tombs of the dead, the inscriptions and religious scenes upon the walls of both, the papyri containing religious texts, innumerable objects from tombs and the mummies

of men and women for whom they were made, all these provide an immense mass of material on which to work, indeed more than that bequeathed to us by any other ancient religion. Yet the very extent of this material and the nature of it are liable to lead us astray. We are faced throughout with an endless repetition, with a slavish reproduction of what had gone before by each succeeding generation of Egyptians, with a stereotyped and oppressive formality. We are in danger of accepting the evidence at its face-value alone, without perceiving the action and interaction which lie beneath the surface. In the younger days of Egyptology a certain composition, known as *The Book of the Dead*, was regarded as the source *par excellence* of information regarding Egyptian religious beliefs; it is now a matter of common knowledge that behind the *Book of the Dead* lies a long chain of development from earlier compositions, and that its theology is far from being as plain as people thought.

From all this it will be readily understood that for studying the religion of ancient Egypt a full knowledge of the Egyptian language is absolutely necessary. No student is competent to conduct original research into the subject unless he is *himself* capable of reading the religious literature, whether as temple-inscriptions, or as texts on tomb-walls or papyrus, and of forming his own conclusions as to their meaning and significance. It is not enough to be a first-rate archæologist, scholarship is essential also, and only the patient labour of scholars during many years has enabled us, at the present day, to gain a picture which approaches some sort of completeness.

We have chosen for the subject of this book the

religious experience of Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty, a period extending from about 1580 to 1321 B.C., or roughly 260 years, during which she reached the zenith of her power and realised the splendour of world-empire. Over 1,600 years had passed since the foundation of the First Dynasty, and already two great eras of Egyptian civilisation, the Old and Middle Kingdoms, had known their days of glory and now lay buried in the dust when the people of the Nile Valley entered upon their third and mightiest period of development. Hence the question of religious origins¹ will only be introduced when absolutely necessary, and we shall aim at presenting the reader with a clear picture of the Egyptian religion as it was believed and practised at a time in history of which we know more than any other, rather than at expounding the intricate foundations on which it had been built.

If, then, this picture interests him, the reader will perhaps feel inclined to follow the story back to its earlier chapters in the books indicated in our bibliography.

At the close of the Middle Kingdom, when the central government had drifted into weakness and the land was in a state of division and unrest, there had swept down upon Egypt those hordes of Semitic foreigners known to History as the Hyksôs, the "Shepherd Kings", who for at least 100 years ground the Nile Valley under their sway.

But at Thebes, in Upper Egypt, arose a house of princes who were destined to bring deliverance to their afflicted countrymen. Little by little they

¹ On the whole question of the development of the Egyptian religion in pre-historic times see Professor Sethe's new and brilliant book *Urgeschichte und Älteste Religion der Ägypter*.

succeeded in winning independence, until they were at last in a position to launch full force against the oppressor. After years of weary fighting through several generations, the leadership was obtained by Prince Aahmose about 1580 B.C., and from that time onward victory was assured. The Hyksôs were shut up and besieged in their Delta fortress of Avaris. The city fell, and the relentless Aahmose pursued them into Palestine and again dealt destruction among them. Yet even now his task was not ended, for there were also Egyptians at home who refused to accept his authority and whom he was forced to put down with a strong hand. But at last all was over, and the warrior-prince found himself Pharaoh of a united Egypt. The hated foreigners being expelled and rebels at home crushed, he was able to spend his remaining years in repairing the ruins of the past and in laying a foundation for future prosperity. The glorious Eighteenth Dynasty had begun.

Now we find, on examination, that the documents which have come down to us from his reign are fairly representative of the Royal or State Religion, and of the King's dealings with his gods. It will therefore be useful to make these documents the basis of our whole discussion, supplementing them afterwards by the evidence of later times as we trace out the religious history of the Dynasty. As we have pictured Aahmose seated in splendour on the throne of his ancestors, flushed with the glory of victory and, as it were, looking through an opened door to the future supremacy of Egypt, we shall do well to begin by considering the position and aspect of a Pharaoh as conceived by the Egyptian mind of the time. For this purpose let us

study a stela (1) of King Aahmose, which was found in the southern part of the great temple of Amon at Karnak, and discuss portions of the inscription carved upon it. The text begins :—

“The Horus : great in forms.

The Two Ladies : beauteous born.

The Horus of gold : uniter of the Two Lands.

King of Upper and Lower Egypt : Neb-pehty-Rā’ (the meaning of this name is: “Rā’-is-lord-of-might”).

Son of Rā’ beloved of him : Aahmose, may he live for ever !” The predominant fact contained in three out of the five italicised titles, which were assumed on his accession by every Pharaoh from ancient times,¹

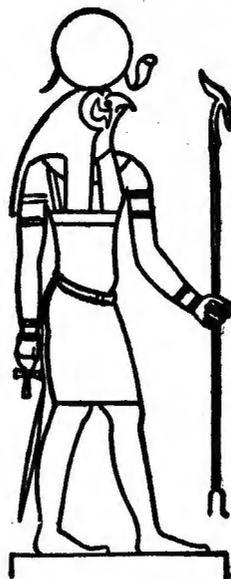


FIG. 1. Rā’.

¹ Only the italicised titles remained the same for every king, the names appended, e.g. “great in forms”, were chosen by each monarch as he wished.

is that the king is identified with the god Horus and called the son of the god Rā’. Horus was the old falcon-god, who early became the dynastic god of Egypt, the especial protector of Pharaoh who was his own embodiment on earth, his representative in fleshly guise. Horus had, in the beginning of history, become identified with the sun-god Rā’ himself (Fig. 1), and we know that Pharaoh was throughout historic times High-priest of a sun-religion, as well as being both son and earthly embodiment of the great solar deity, as this titulary (2) informs us. Moreover, when the king died he returned to the fiery orb from which he had come forth, there to enjoy eternal bliss in the company of Rā’ and his divine following. A passage from an Egyptian tale (3), in which the death of Amenemhēt I, the virile founder of the Twelfth Dynasty, is described, will illustrate this idea :—

“In the thirtieth year, on the seventh day of the third month of Inundation, the god entered his horizon. The King of Upper and Lower Egypt *Sehetep-ib-Rā’* flew to the sky and was united with the sun, the body of the god was merged with him who made him.”

Such was the future life, according to the sun-religion, but in the religion of Osiris ideas were different, as we shall see later on.

The stela of Aahmose continues :—

“Son of Amon-Rā’, of his body, beloved of him, his heir unto whom his throne has been given.”

In these words we are introduced to the god who will dominate our studies throughout this book, and to whose greatness the mighty ruins of ancient Thebes bear witness. Although an exceedingly ancient god, whose history has only recently been disentangled (4),

he does not appear to have played a leading part during the first period of Egyptian history, known as the Old Kingdom. As is well-known, in ancient religions, the power and popularity of gods were almost always decided by the political position enjoyed by the places in which they were worshipped. Consequently, in the Old Kingdom, when the capital and royal seat were set at Memphis in the north, the State Religion remained under the influence of that city and of neighbouring Heliopolis, from which latter centre we now know that sun-religion in Egypt drew its vigour. When, however, after a period of anarchy, a new royal line sprang up which had its home in the Theban district, and inaugurated the second great era of Egyptian civilisation known as the "Middle Kingdom" (about 2212-1700 B.C.), a new competitor entered the divine field, the god Amon, whose home was the new line's ruling seat, Thebes in Upper Egypt, the Luxor of modern times. Even now, however, his rise to power was not fully consummated, but nevertheless his future was secured. In later days, when the Theban princes were at last able to throw off the hated Hyksôs yoke, they at once saw in Amon the giver of their victory.

Who, then, was Amon? He was a deity representing air and wind, the "cosmic element" which first created life amid the inert chaos which had prevailed before the universe was fashioned. Later on, however, he borrowed the characteristics of a god, Min, the centre of whose worship was at Akhmîm and Coptos, and like him is generally depicted as a man wearing a head-dress from which rise two tall ostrich plumes (Plate I, and Fig. 4), and sometimes also, like that god, standing with sexual member erect (thus emphasising his

generative powers) and right hand raised, holding the whip or flagellum (see Plate I).

But no deity who aspired to the position of State god could hope for success unless that position was in harmony with the vast body of solar doctrine on which the kingship of Egypt was built, and to accomplish this end there was only one way, to identify him with the sun-god himself. Throughout the development of religion in Egypt most gods were at some time or other identified with the sun-god, even though they were to remain comparatively unimportant, for their priests wished to co-ordinate local mythology with that of the sun-god (e.g., as Creator), and to confer on their own deities the status which only association with his primeval authority could give. Amon, therefore becomes Amon-Râ', the whole of solar doctrine is applied to him, and from now on he is officially a sun-god. Hence Amon-Râ' himself, like the ancient sun-god, becomes the physical father of Pharaoh, an idea which we shall see exploited later on in a feud for possession of the crown. Further, being Amon's son, the King is also his heir and receives the throne as a direct gift of the Theban god, whose temple was built in a place called "Thrones-of-the-Two-Lands" (i.e. of Upper and Lower Egypt), the modern Karnak near Luxor.

Returning to the inscription of Aaḥmose we read :—

" Good god in very truth, strong of arms, in whom is no falsehood. Potentate, who is like Râ', twin children of Geb, his heir rejoicing in gladness."

In the first of these epithets we are able to note a careful distinction on the part of the Egyptians between Pharaoh and other gods. Divine though he was the

“ class ” of his divinity was limited during life, he could not be termed “ great god ”,¹ which was the frequent epithet applied to the sun-god in early times, and later to Osiris. He was an earthly manifestation, not a primeval spirit, and so remained a “ good god ”, a beneficent and divine ruler, divinely appointed. But the fact that he was divine rendered him free from mortal failings, and in theory, at least, he possessed infallibility in all his actions.

In our study up to now we have met and considered two important deities, Rā' and Amon, and now the mention of Geb, and of Pharaoh as his “ twin children ” and “ heir ”, leads us to consider a third, perhaps the most powerful of all, Osiris. Side by side with the sun-religion from very early times had existed a second religion which was entirely distinct, the worship of the god whose continual death and resurrection were manifested by the Nile as it yearly dwindled and swelled again to inundation, spreading over the fields its fertilising mud ; from this soil sprang the luxuriant crops and vegetation, and these, too, typified the dying and reviving god. As the ages passed Osiris drew under his influence other deities who originally were quite unconnected with him. Set (Fig. 2), god of Ombos, became his evil brother who murdered him and hewed his body into pieces, scattering them over Egypt ; Isis became his faithful wife who recovered his body and by her magic power brought him back to life ; Horus was his son who avenged him against Set, after defeating that god in bloody conflict. The only full and connected account of this legend is

¹ In the Old Kingdom this title was given both to the living and the dead King, but later it was reserved for the dead King alone.



FIG. 2. Set.

preserved in the works of the Greek writer Plutarch (5), and the reader, if interested, should study it there. For the rest we have to depend on stray references to the story in Egyptian religious and magical texts. This worship, the centre of which was at Busiris in the Delta, had spread widely in early times until it came into direct conflict with the teachings of Heliopolis, and it always remained the favourite among the common people until the close of Egyptian history. But an official solution of the difficulty was reached during the Old Kingdom, and the solar and Osirian mythologies were reconciled by theological argument. Henceforward King and people alike officially accepted both points of view, notwithstanding the fact that the future life as conceived by the worshippers of the dead god was

originally an underworld existence, quite different from the celestial hereafter accorded by Rā' to his adherents ! But the Osiris legend supplied yet another detail to the pageantry behind Pharaoh and his throne. Although Horus had defeated Set in battle, the arch-enemy even advanced against him a claim to Egypt, the kingdom of his brother Osiris. This case was tried before the council of gods at Heliopolis under the presidency of Rā'-Atum, with the result that Horus was pronounced victor, as the lawful successor to his father, and Geb, the earth-god, awarded him the kingdom. Henceforward every King in receiving Egypt received the earth-god's heritage, and like Horus, his ancient prototype, was hailed as his " heir ". The strange title, " twin-children of Geb," however, refers not to Horus, but to Osiris and Isis, who, together with Set and his consort Nephthys, were believed to have been in primeval times the children of Geb, the earth, and Nut, the sky, and here Pharaoh is identified with the first two, who are mysteriously united in his person.

Having now gained some idea of the religious background of the Egyptian kingship, we will leave the Karnak stela for a while and turn to another monument which will illustrate the practical result of Pharaoh's piety towards his gods. In the limestone quarries at Turra, not far from Cairo, on the east bank of the Nile, a certain chancellor called Nefer-pert caused two stelæ to be carved on the cliff-face, to record the opening of new quarries by Aahmose under his direction.

The main text (7) runs as follows :—

" In the twenty-second year under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, son of Rā',

Aahmose, given life, galleries were opened afresh and fine white limestone was taken out for his houses of millions of (years),¹ for the house of . . . for the house of Ptaḥ . . . , the house of Amon in the Southern Harim, and in every monument which his Majesty made for him. Stone was dragged by oxen which the Asiatics (?) brought from the lands of the Palestinians. It was done under the direction of the Hereditary Prince and Count beloved of (his lord) . . . the watchful (superintendent) of the Lord of the Two Lands in adorning monuments of Eternity in (very) great (numbers), the confidant of the Good God, the Treasurer of the King of Lower Egypt, the Sole Companion, the Superintendent of the Treasurers, Nefer-pert."

Like the rulers of all ages and peoples, the kings of Egypt were accustomed to show their devotion to the gods by erecting temples in their honour, and at no time in Egyptian history did this building activity reach a more splendid pitch than during the Eighteenth Dynasty.² Did we possess no examples of these shrines to-day, the countless inscriptions carved in quarries throughout the land would yet prove sufficient indication of Egyptian energy in this direction. For dwelling-houses only sun-baked brick was used, but for the divine mansions the finest stone obtainable, in order that they might truly be " temples of millions of years."

Now the first deity whose name is preserved in the instance here quoted is Ptaḥ, god of Memphis, who

¹ i.e. " everlasting ".

² On the whole the temples of the Nineteenth Dynasty are more massive, but they often fall far below those of the preceding dynasty in design and execution.

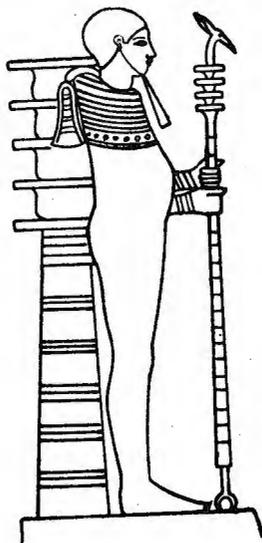


FIG. 3. Ptah.

is always depicted as clad in close-fitting garments from which his hands project, holding a sceptre (Fig. 3). He was an extremely ancient god with a cult quite distinct from either solar or Osirian systems, and the British Museum possesses a copy of a very early mystery play in which Ptah is represented as the Creator of the Universe (6). It is thought¹ that the original text, of which this is a Twenty-fifth Dynasty reproduction, dates as early as the beginning of the historic period, when, owing to the premier position of Memphis, Ptah also had his turn as deity *par excellence*. At all periods, however, he was regarded as an important god, perhaps owing to his close connection with arts and crafts, his High-priest bearing the title "Chief of the master-craftsmen."

¹ See p. 5 of Sethe's book mentioned in Bibl. 6.

The famous sacred bull Apis was also bound up with the worship of Ptah, being venerated as his incarnation (Fig. 7).

With the mention of the Temple of Amon, we are brought straightway to consider the temples¹ of Luxor and Karnak, perhaps the greatest monuments of this Dynasty. The Southern temple, that of Luxor, was known as the "house of Amon in the southern harim", and the present building, with the exception of the granite chapel of Tuthmosis III, was erected by Amenhotep III. At Karnak, however, which was called "Elect of Places", extensive ruins have been unearthed which date from the Middle Kingdom, the earlier Temple of Amon, which was remodelled and eventually replaced by the Eighteenth Dynasty Kings. Aahmose, the founder of the Dynasty, carried out building works there, and the contributions of his successors increased in size and magnificence as time went on, until the temple of Amon became the most gigantic shrine of the ancient world (Plate VII). The piety of monarchs, moreover, did not stop here. They often presented the shrines of Amon with objects for use in the cult of the god, as the remaining portion (8) of the Karnak stela quoted above states Aahmose to have done. Among other things he gave "great crowns of gold" (for the adornment of images), "necklaces of gold and silver combined with lapis-lazuli and turquoise," "great vessels of silver rimmed with gold," "sphinxes of silver," and, most important of all, "His Majesty commanded to make a great barge upon the river, called 'User-hat-Amon',²

¹ For a description of a typical Eighteenth Dynasty temple see below, P. 33.

² Meaning "Powerful is the countenance of Amon". For the use of this barge see below, p. 42.

of real cedar of the best of the trees, to perform (his) happy voyage (at the beginning of the year)."

At the head of Amon's priesthood (9) stood the high priest who, besides his important spiritual functions, eventually succeeded in obtaining control over the temple treasury, and the estates with which monarchs had endowed the god.

Since, also, Amon was a god of markedly sexual character, a number of concubines was attached to his temple (as also to those of certain other deities), and of these the high priest's wife was the chief, bearing the title "chief concubine of Amon." These concubines were really the priestesses who made music before the god in temple services (10).

Now we have seen above (p. 9) that Amon was



FIG. 4. Amon-Ra.



THE STELA OF TETI-SHERI FROM ABYDOS
(After Ayrton, Currelly and Weigall)



regarded as the physical father of Pharaoh, and in order to become this it was believed that he appeared to the reigning queen in the king's likeness and begot the heir to the throne.¹ It followed naturally, therefore, that the queen became Amon's consort, bearing the title of "god's wife" and standing at the head of the concubine priestesses. We find this title given to the queen at the very beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Aahmose-*nefertiri*, the queen of Aahmose I, being termed "god's wife" as well as "chief king's wife" in the stela of Abydos. In this capacity the queen on special occasions actually officiated in person as priestess of Amon, making music with a rattle² "before his beautiful face" (11).

It must not be forgotten that theoretically the king, as high priest of Amon and of all other gods as well, was supposed himself to perform all the temple services throughout the land; actually, of course, his place was taken by the high priests and priests of the gods in question, except on the most important festivals. The fiction, however, that Pharaoh was sole officiant was preserved down to the very end of Egyptian history, his gigantic figure dwarfing all others in the reliefs upon temple walls, in which he alone is represented as the mediator between men and gods and the recipient of divine favours.

In the foregoing discussion we have gained some idea of Pharaoh's position and of his relations with the gods and their temples. It now remains for us to learn something about his relations with that

¹ See below, pp. 72 and 74.

² Known as the *sistrum*.

shadowy multitude which forever dominated the Egyptian's life and thought, the dead.

In the sacred district of Abydos, where the god Osiris was buried, King Aahmose built a shrine and a pyramid (12) in honour of his grandmother, Teti-sheri, although that queen was actually buried far away at Thebes. Our admiration for her grandson's piety is somewhat modified by the discovery that the pyramid is built of the débris from the excavation of the king's own "false tomb",¹ which lies not far away, but we shall find great interest in the finely carved stela (13), or round-topped tablet, which originally stood opposite the entrance of this shrine, and in the inscription which it bears (Plate II). Let us begin with a translation of the latter, leaving the sculptured scene to be considered later in the discussion to which the text will lead us.

"Now it happened that His Majesty was sitting in the pillared hall, (even) the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neb-pehty-Rā', son of Rā', Aahmose, given life, the Hereditary Princess, great in favour, great in charm, King's Daughter, King's Sister, God's Wife, Chief Royal Wife, Aahmose-*neferty* (may she live!) being with His Majesty. And they were conversing together, seeking benefits for the departed, even the pouring of water, offering upon the altar, and enriching the offering table at all calendrical festivals, at the new moon festival, at the monthly festival, at the 'going-forth of the Sem-priest', at the 'evening meal', at the festival of the fifth day of the month, at the festival of the sixth day of the month,

¹ His tomb at Thebes has not been found. On the "false tomb" see below, p. 124.

at the 'Haker' festival, at the 'Wag' festival, at the festival of Thōth, at all calendrical festivals of Heaven and Earth."

And his sister spake, answering unto him: "Why hath one recalled this? Wherefore hath one held this language? What hath come to thy heart?" And the king himself spake unto her: "I have been thinking about the mother of my mother and the mother of my father, even the Chief Royal Wife, the King's Mother, Teti-sheri, justified. Her tomb and her cenotaph are even now upon the soil of the Theban and Thinite districts, and I say unto thee that my Majesty hath desired to cause a pyramid and a shrine to be made for her in the Sacred Land, in the neighbourhood of my Majesty's monument. Its lake shall be dug, its trees planted, and its offering-bread appointed; it shall be furnished with people, endowed with lands and equipped with herds, ka-priests and lector-priests being at their duties and every man knowing his rule."

Now His Majesty uttered this speech when this (work) was in process of completion (?). His Majesty did this because he loved her exceedingly; never did the kings who were aforetime the like thereof for their mothers!

Now His Majesty stretched forth his arm, bent up his hand, and made for her "An-offering-which-the-king-gives" unto Geb and the great Ennead and the little Ennead . . . (and to Anubis), who is in the god's booth; thousands of bread, beer, oxen, fowl, cattle . . . for (the spirit of) . . ."¹

The inscription opens with a conversation which

¹ The last part of the text can only be read in parts and the rest is broken away. The spirit of Teti-sheri is, of course, meant.

took place between Aahmose and his sister-wife, as they sat in their palace, the subject being their duty to departed ancestors, and we cannot do better than try to understand what they are saying. They speak of "the pouring of water, offering upon the altar, enriching the offering-table", and go on to mention a list of occasions on which these things are to be done. This passage may be considered a good summary of what dead people expected from their survivors. In spite of definite beliefs regarding a state of bliss and peace in the after-life, there persisted throughout Egyptian history an equally definite conviction that the spirit of the dead person could not hope for survival unless guaranteed material support from those whom it had left behind.¹ Unless this support, in the form of food and drink, was brought regularly to the tomb, the spirit might be driven by starvation to come out and raven through the land, perhaps haunting the members of its neglectful family for the rest of their lives. Most people of means, therefore, were careful to make a contract during life with the priesthood of some local temple, who would guarantee for their souls the necessary nourishment. They would arrange that on all important festivals some portion of the offerings laid before the gods would be assigned, after use by the latter, to the tombs of their clients. Hence the royal pair in their discussion mention the most important festivals on which the dead must be provided with food, and the list is that usually found in most tomb inscriptions of the period.

If, then, such pious devotion to the departed was expected, as it was from the earliest times, in the case

¹ See below, pp. 58, 59.

of ordinary people, what must be done by Pharaoh, the supreme human being, for his illustrious ancestors? He, too, must see that offerings do not fail at their tombs, that the latter are kept in good repair, that the special priests attached to temples erected for the worship of dead kings are properly maintained. To do this for the vast multitude of departed monarchs was of course an impossibility, but something, however small, was generally done for those of outstanding importance. Among the latter class stood Teti-sheri, to whose son and daughter was born the prince destined to free Egypt from its oppressors, Aahmose himself. Regarded, therefore, as the great ancestress of the Dynasty, it was her above all that its founder chose to honour, and the inscription proceeds to tell us how, although she was actually buried at Thebes and already had a monument at Abydos, he elected to build a cenotaph in the form of a pyramid and a shrine, where offerings could be made to her soul. The building completed, Pharaoh himself performs the first oblation to the dead queen. We see him in the scenes sculptured at the top of the stela (Plate II), standing before his grandmother, by a table heaped with food, performing the ritual actions of "stretching forth the arm and bending up the hand", as described in the text. He pronounces the magic words, "an offering which the king gives," and straightway the spirit is enabled to come down and partake of the banquet. Those words go back in origin to the time when tombs and mortuary endowment were the privilege only of great nobles of the court, often being the gifts of the reigning Pharaoh. When elaborate mortuary customs spread to the common people the

old formula, "an offering which the king gives," was retained without alteration, and ever after remained the opening words of the magical rite by which food-offerings were made over to a departed spirit.¹

It will now be seen that our consideration of the monuments of King Aahmose has taught us something about three main factors of ancient Egyptian religious life; the divine kingship of Pharaoh, and his relations with the gods and with the dead. We have, then, before us a religion which is concerned on the one hand with divine beings and the blessings which they can grant during life, and on the other with a host of dead people and the world of death which they inhabit. In the following chapter it will be our aim to learn more of gods and goddesses and the worship paid to them, of religious ideas in general, and lastly of the fourth and perhaps greatest factor of religion in the Nile Valley, the feelings of the individual himself towards death and his own preparation for a life beyond the grave.

¹ It will be noticed in the example translated above that the "offering-which-the-king-gives" is not made *directly* to the spirit but to certain gods (here Geb and Anubis, as well as two companies of nine gods), the idea being that they in their turn would grant offerings to the dead person. This was the form taken by the formula from the Middle Kingdom onwards (14).

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CHAPTER II

WE have already given a short description (pp. 8 and 14) of the manner in which the gods Amon, Min, and Ptaḥ are represented on Egyptian monuments, and now the reader will find it useful to familiarise himself with the forms of some more of the principal deities.

Amon, lord of Karnak, reigned in conjunction with two other deities, his consort Mut, and his son Khonsu. Among the interchanging developments of the Egyptian religion one of the strongest impulses had always been the formation of triads. We have already seen (p. 10) how Osiris had become linked with Isis as his wife and Horus as his valiant son ; a similar process had brought the three Theban deities together.

The goddess Mut, whose name means " Vulture ",¹ is usually depicted as a nude woman wearing on her head the double crown of Pharaoh (see Plate I). This crown consists of two parts, the red and white diadems which were worn by the kings of Lower and Upper Egypt respectively in prehistoric times, and which, after the union of the two countries under one ruler, were ever afterwards worn by Pharaoh both together. The double crown, or one of its component parts, was worn by a number of divinities who, being regarded as kings and queens in the realm of gods, were represented with an earthly king's insignia. With the

¹ Mut was a Vulture goddess, and is often represented in the form of that bird.

rise of Amon to power Mut also increased in popularity, until her temple called "Asher" (1), which was situated south of the great Amon Temple at Karnak, became a shrine of the first rank.

The god Khonsu, the third personage of the Theban triad, was of a more complex nature. It is probable that his name means "Placenta-of-the-king," and that in origin he was what his name implies, the placenta being revered as the king's ghostly twin, with which Pharaoh's existence was mysteriously bound up (2). At any rate one of the two forms in which he is usually represented on the monuments is that of a handsome young prince, as will be seen from Plate III, which reproduces the upper portion of an exceedingly beautiful statue of him found at Karnak, belonging to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty. He wears upon his head a tight-fitting cap (similar to the actual embroidered specimen found in the tomb of Tutankhamon), from the front of which rises the sacred uræus-snake, symbol of royalty. Upon his right shoulder falls the sidelock of plaited hair which was always worn by young princes, and on his chin is a stiff plaited beard, the latter being an ornament of the most sacred importance, carried only by gods and kings. The kingly nature of Khonsu is also demonstrated by the whip and shepherd's crook held in his hands, all three of which were insignia of the king in very early times. Round the god's neck, over his flat bead collar, hangs a necklace known as the *menit*, an object which was at once an ornament and a sacred rattle, and was closely connected with certain deities, especially the goddess Hathor. The *menit* also possessed magic powers, and, if we see Hathor holding out the beads towards a king, we know

that she is thereby giving him blessing and prosperity. To complete the description of our statue of Khonsu, we should add that, in addition to the whip and crook, he holds before him a sceptre compounded of three common symbols, \dagger (*ankh*) signifying "life", \ddagger (*ded*) signifying "stability" or "duration", and the *was* \uparrow , a sceptre often carried by gods. On his head Khonsu generally wears the moon-disc within a crescent in his capacity of moon-god (3), not only when he is depicted in human form but also when he alternatively appears with the head of a hawk. As will be seen at once, the hawk form is borrowed from the sun-god, in the usual process of "solarisation" to which the majority of Egyptian gods were subjected at one time or another (see above, p. 9).

The sun god Rā' (see Fig. 1) is generally represented as a hawk-headed man, with a sun-disc surrounded by a serpent on his head. The primeval sun-god Atum, however, is always in human form, wearing the double crown of Egypt. Both these gods, as well as Amon, and nearly all other male deities, are clad in a short kilt from which an animal's tail hangs down behind. This simple dress (4) was originally that of the king, afterwards being transferred to the gods, for, as the king and his organised state grew and developed in early times, the tendency had been to assign the "make-up" of kingship and earthly government to the divine realms also. It is entirely natural for mankind to think of the spiritual world in terms of its own humanity. This dress was retained by both king and gods down to the close of Egyptian civilisation in Roman times.

If now the reader will turn to Plate IV, he will find reproduced there a scene painted on papyrus in which the family of Osiris is represented. The events here depicted are taking place in the god's judgment hall, in his underworld kingdom, and will be considered later on when we come to examine the religion of the tomb. At present we are only thinking of the way in which the gods are represented. On the extreme right we see Osiris himself enthroned. He is tightly swathed in wrappings, for he is a dead god, from which protrude his two hands grasping the whip, crook, and *was* sceptre (see above, pp. 26, 27). In the coloured original of this picture the god's flesh is painted green, in order to remind us that he yearly comes to life in the green vegetation of Egypt, and we may compare the use to-day by the Church of green vestments and altar array to symbolise growth in the Christian life. Upon the head of Osiris is set the *atef* crown which, although worn by certain other gods, and also by the king at special times, is an ornament with which Osiris, above all, is represented. It consists of the crown of Upper Egypt, a tall white cap probably made of cloth, attached to which are the two feathers which signify truth. His sister-wife Isis, and his other sister Nephthys stand behind the great god's throne, clasping him in an affectionate manner, wearing on their heads the hieroglyphs with which their names are written in Egyptian,  for Isis and  for Nephthys respectively. According to the Osiris legend Nephthys had been the consort of Set, the god who slew his brother Osiris, and it may be mentioned here that he is always represented in human form with a pig's (?) head and curiously upstanding ears (Fig. 2). Further to

the left is Horus, son of Osiris, leading the scribe Ani by the hand. He is shown, as always, with a hawk's head, being in origin the ancient falcon-god, as we have already seen (pp. 7, 10). If we could move further left again along the papyrus, we would encounter an ibis-headed god busily engaged in writing (a picture of him will be found as Fig. 5). This is the great god



FIG. 5. Thōth.

Thōth, the seat of whose worship was Hermopolis, a town in Middle Egypt, which is to-day called Eshmūnēn. He was believed to have discovered the art of writing, and was revered as patron of learning in all its branches. In later times the Greeks saw in him their own god Hermes. Beyond him, again, there kneels beside the scales a jackal-headed deity, Anubis, god of the tomb and embalmer of the dead (see Fig. 12).

Finally, before finishing this short account of the principal Egyptian gods, the reader must be introduced to the goddess Hāthor. Although in her original form a cow, this goddess very frequently appears in human shape wearing a cow's horns and sun-disc on her head. Her chief shrine was at Denderah in Upper Egypt,

where to-day her beautiful temple, built in Ptolemaic and Roman times, is one of the traveller's goals. In her cow form she is sometimes shown giving a young king her milk to drink, or else presiding over the great Theban necropolis she gazes sadly out of the western

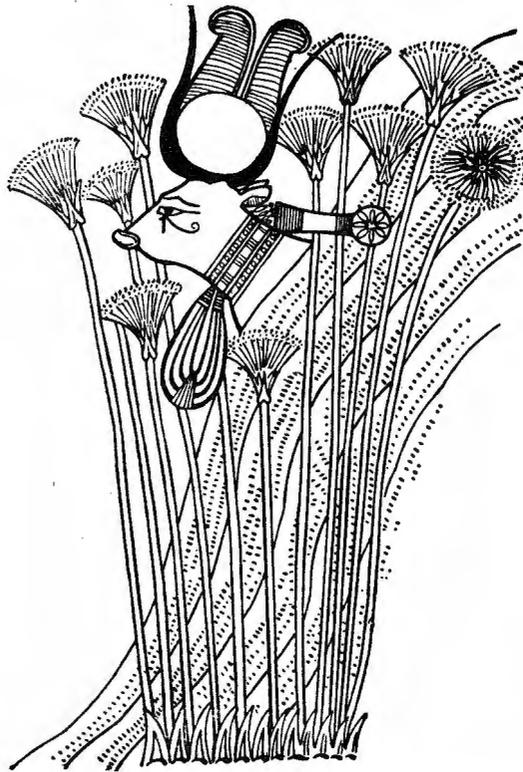


FIG. 6. Hathor looking out from the Necropolis.

marshes across the land of the dead (Fig. 6). Further afield she was the kindly spirit of the burning Sinai mines, where the workmen toiling for copper and turquoise built shrines in her honour and carved prayers to her upon the rocks.

Now the mention of gods and goddesses who appear under non-human forms will probably lead the reader to inquire exactly what part was played by animals, birds, and reptiles in the construction of the Egyptian pantheon. What is the significance of the fact that we find many deities associated or identified with one or other of these creatures? If we could see within the minds of the Nile dwellers in the very beginning of things we should probably find a process of thought somewhat as follows. When primitive man first became aware of a supernatural world outside himself he naturally saw gods and spirits in the things around him; birds, animals, reptiles, and trees became for him objects of veneration. The particular class of creatures venerated would naturally vary with the district; in the Fayoum it would be the crocodile-god, at Assiût the wolf-god called Wep-wawet ("Opener-of-roads"), and so on. But, as the religious ideas of early men developed, they began to conceive their gods as beings in human shape, although unfettered by ties of earth. Thus two conceptions of divine beings would exist side by side until, as a compromise, a third and final stage was reached, in which the god was represented with human body but animal head. Let us consider some of these deities.

We have already mentioned the hawk-god Horus, associated with the sun, but there is yet another form of the sun-god which we shall meet constantly, the scarab-beetle (5). This beetle is accustomed to collect a ball of dung for food, and to roll it between its legs until it can dig a cavity in the ground wherein to devour it. The Egyptians, confusing this food-ball with the pear-shaped ball of dung in which the female lays

her egg, and which she buries in the earth till hatching time, saw in the scarab-beetle a particular form of the sun-god called Khepri, who every day rolled the ball of the sun across the sky from east to west. A living beetle came from the dung pellet, apparently self-produced; life also came because of the sun, and the sun-god, like the scarab, was "self-produced". Again, the jackal (6), which was seen prowling among the cemeteries, became the guardian spirit of the tomb, Anubis, the special protector of the dead (see Fig. 12). Yet other important half human deities were Khnum, the ram-headed god of Elephantine; Sebek, the crocodile-god of the Fayoum; Hathor, the cow-goddess, and ibis-headed Thoth.

Under the above conditions the intelligent Egyptian was evidently able to imagine a god in spiritual form on the one hand, and as locally manifested in some particular work of his creation on the other. This explains the practice of "animal-worship", a feature of ancient Egypt with which most people are acquainted. For example, at Memphis, Heliopolis, and Hermonthis a sacred bull was kept which was considered to be a manifestation or incarnation of the local god, quite separate from that god's existence as a free spirit. Thus the worship of these bulls, Apis (Fig. 7), Mnevis, and Buchis, as they were respectively called, was far from being grossly material as some would have us think; on the contrary it contained the idea of divine incarnation in a primitive form.

Now that we have become more closely acquainted with the Egyptian gods, let us turn to consider the temples which formed their earthly habitations and the scene of the worship paid to them.



GRANITE STATUE OF KHONSU (Cairo Museum)



Plate V presents a fairly complete view of a typical Egyptian temple of the Eighteenth Dynasty, a form which was preserved unaltered down to the end of Egyptian history.¹ It will be seen that the building has been cut in half along its axis, the nearer portion being stripped of its roof and pruned down until it

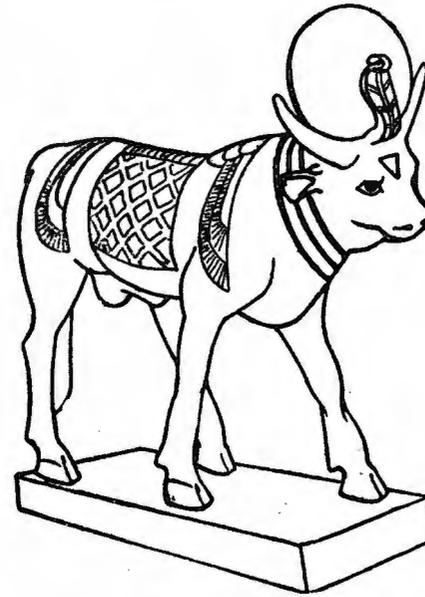


FIG. 7. Apis.

consists only of a ground plan, the further portion being left untouched and therefore offering a sectional view.

We approach the temple on the right up an avenue flanked by ram-headed sphinxes, and are soon standing before the entrance which opens between two huge towers. These towers, known as "pylons", give almost the appearance of a fortification, and, set up in

¹ The temple is shown here in its simplest form. There were often, however, great enlargements of the general scheme.

great slots let into their outer face, rise tall flag-staves made of wood from the Lebanon, from the top of which flutter bright-coloured pennons. In the thickness of the pylons are staircases leading up to their flat roofs, and the inner and outer faces of the towers are carved with huge reliefs of Pharaoh smiting his enemies with uplifted mace. Between the pylons are big doors of heavy wood.

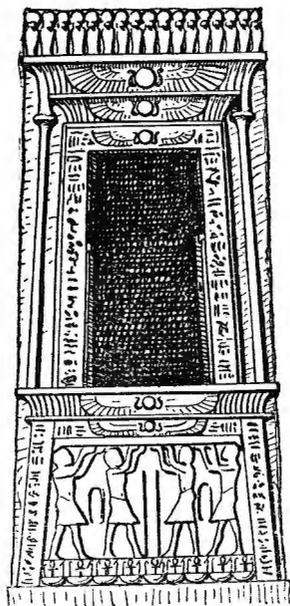


FIG. 8. Sanctuary shrine from the temple of Philæ (now in Paris).

Within the temple precincts we find ourselves standing in an open court surrounded by a colonnaded porch, the columns being shaped and brilliantly coloured to represent either lotus or papyrus plants growing out of the water. From the court a few shallow steps lead to the transverse columned hall known as the "hypostyle", dimly lighted by clerestory windows,

and thence we pass to the "Holy of Holies" itself, which consists of a single chamber entirely unlighted, in which stands the shrine of the god. The shrine (Fig. 8) is made either of stone or wood, but in either case is closed by two folding wooden doors, bolted and sealed with a clay seal. Within is kept the cultus-image of the god, a figure only a few feet in height, made of costly wood covered with splendid gold leaf and inlaid with semi-precious stones. Instead of a shrine there would often be a large model boat, made of wood and standing on a stone pedestal; the image would then be inside the boat's cabin, which was covered by a veil. To the Egyptians the river Nile was the chief means of transport, and so they naturally thought of their gods as traversing the heavenly regions by similar means. Most important of all was the boat of the sun-god Rā', in which he daily sailed across the sky, and in which during the night he threaded the winding course of the infernal river through the caverns of the Underworld. There is yet one more detail in the "Holy of Holies" which must be noticed; on our walk through the temple we have seen the walls adorned with coloured reliefs, showing magnificent religious processions, the king offering to the gods or slaying his enemies, but here the reliefs show various stages of the ritual daily performed before the god, the king being represented as officiant. We shall return to these representations later.

Grouped around and behind the "Holy of Holies" are many other chambers, some of which are chapels dedicated to deities associated with the god of the temple. Thus in a temple of Amon there are chapels of Mut and Khonsu, and sometimes others dedicated to gods not

so closely connected with him. Other chambers are used as repositories of vestments, sacred standards, boats and utensils.

The priesthood of a temple was divided into two main classes (7), the higher of the two bearing the title *hm-ntr*,¹ which we render as "prophet", the lower *w'b*, meaning "the pure". In addition to these there were "fathers of the god", a rank not including the *w'b*-priests, and "lectors", who were classed with the *w'b*-priests (8).

This temple staff was divided into four "watches" (the sun-god's boat being in mind), each of which served for four weeks, that is, one lunar month. At the end of such a period the outgoing "watch" was accustomed to provide an inventory of the temple effects which would be checked by the incoming shift and declared correct. The main duties of the priesthood were the general care of the temple and the celebration of various divine rites, and here we must stop to consider the forms of worship employed.

Now in the religion of Egypt, as in that of all other ancient peoples, the worship of its gods was conducted by means of "ritual", that is by the recitation of certain words accompanied by appropriate actions. The use of visible ceremonies has always been and always will be man's most natural form of worship, but, owing to mental development, the values of ritual as practised to-day by the Christian Church are different from those possessed by ceremonial among primitive peoples. Christian ritual is largely symbolic; at Mass the altar and celebrant are censed in order to signify the extreme purity which must surround the Eucharistic Sacrifice,

¹ Literal meaning: "god's servant."

and, at the beginning of the service, the congregation is sprinkled with a few drops of holy water to remind them that they must approach with a pure heart. But when incense was burnt or water sprinkled in an Egyptian temple the act itself was considered efficacious, the incense *did* fumigate and purify, and the water *did* cleanse the persons or objects to which they were applied. Thus the Egyptians, being at an earlier stage of religious understanding than ourselves, naturally had the material and human side of worship uppermost in their minds.

The object to which all temple-worship was directed consisted of the god's cult-image (see above, p. 35), which stood within the shrine in the "Holy of Holies", and the Egyptian mind believed the divine presence to inhabit it, while at the same time the god remained a free spirit. This was the view of intelligent persons, but to the common people the image must have been the god himself. An interesting light is thrown on this indwelling of the cult-image by the god in a passage (9) occurring in the account of Ptah's creation of the universe mentioned above (p. 14), where it is said of that god: "He fashioned the gods, he made towns, he founded nomes, he set the gods in their seats of worship, he established their bread-offerings, he founded their chapels, and he made their bodies like what was pleasing to their hearts. So the gods entered into their bodies of all kinds of wood, all kinds of mineral, all kinds of clay, and of all other things which grow upon him¹ in which they have taken form." Thus the cult-images, made of various materials, became the earthly expressions of the gods at the very beginning of time.

¹ Ptah is here thought of as the earth.

The daily temple service took place in the "Holy of Holies", to which only Pharaoh or the priests were allowed access, organised worship being confined to them and entirely withheld from the populace. The latter were only allowed within the outer court on great festivals, when there was a free distribution of food, and the most which they would see at any other time was the sacred boat of the god when carried on the shoulders of his priests in some outdoor procession



FIG. 9. Boat-shrine carried by Priests. (After Lepsius.)
(From *Luxor and its Temples*, by permission of A. & C. Black, Ltd.)

(Fig. 9), the image being then, of course, concealed in the cabin. The actual form taken by the daily service was that of the god's toilet, the statue being fumigated, washed, anointed, and dressed, and finally presented with a meal. This liturgy was almost the same in all Egyptian temples, although certain variations were required by the different gods, and modern study has proved that both it and certain funeral ceremonies

were based on a form of service performed centuries before in the Sun-temple at Heliopolis in prehistoric times. Just as in the Church to-day certain sections use old mediaeval rituals, while others employ the modern Roman use, so the ritual of the great temples of ancient Egypt was based on "Heliopolitan use". We cannot stop here to discuss the complex history of Egyptian ritual (the reader will find the most important literature on the subject in the bibliography (10)), but it is instructive to note once again the application of solar principals to other deities originally quite unconnected with the Sun.

Now we are very fortunate in possessing to-day two "service-books" of ancient Egypt, which, if we so wished, would enable us to perform the actual ceremonies once enacted daily within the "Holy of Holies". In the beautiful temple (11) built by King Seti I at Abydos and dedicated to Amon, Osiris and other gods, the walls of the various chapels are carved with pictures illustrating the stages of the ritual, accompanied by the liturgical text appropriate to each. In addition to this source of information, there exists a papyrus (12) in the Berlin Museum which contains the liturgy celebrated daily on behalf of Amon at Karnak. The Abydos example belongs to the early Nineteenth Dynasty and the papyrus to the Twenty-second, but, although long separated by time and intended for different deities, the ritual which they contain is substantially the same, and must have been that used earlier in temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty. We know, too, that it remained unchanged down to Roman times.

Now the Abydos version in its series of illustrations

represents the king only as officiating, according to the accepted fiction, but the Berlin papyrus, which was probably meant for actual use by the priests, is entitled : "Here begin the chapters of the god's service which are performed for the temple of Amon-Rā', king of gods, in the course of every day by the acting High-Priest". Let us describe the scene.

First the celebrant enters the sanctuary, alone, for no other may assist in this solemnity, and kindles a light in his censer. The Egyptian censer (Fig. 10)¹ was not of the swinging kind, but consisted of a long metal object shaped like a human arm, in the hand of

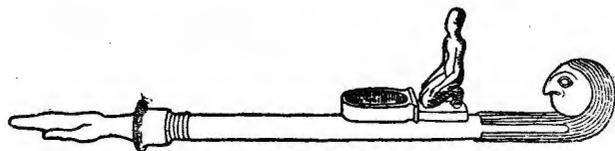


FIG. 10. Bronze Censer. (Hilton Price Collection.) The receptacle in the middle is intended to store the incense.

which a small vessel for the incense was fixed. Reciting the words of the liturgy, the celebrant advances towards the shrine containing the god's image, and, when this initial purification of the sanctuary and of himself is completed, proceeds to break the string of papyrus and clay seal which secure the bolts of the shrine doors, draws back the bolts, flings open the wooden doors and beholds his god face to face. "The two doors of Heaven are opened!", he recites, "the two doors of earth are unclosed, Geb gives greeting, saying unto the gods who abide upon their seats : 'Heaven is opened, the company of gods

¹ For a good specimen see the British Museum example, No. 41606.

shines forth ! Amon-Rā', Lord of Karnak, is exalted upon his great seat ! The Great Company of gods is exalted upon their seats ! Thy beauties are thine O Amon-Rā', Lord of Karnak !'" Overcome by the splendour of Amon the celebrant falls down and, lying prone, "kisses the ground" before the shrine. Rising again he intones a hymn of praise, and then presents the statue with scented honey and fumigates it with incense. The preliminaries of the service are now completed, and, after taking the statue out of the shrine and standing it on a little pile of sand, the priest begins the most important section of the liturgy, the actual toilet of the god. First he washes the image with water from special vessels exclaiming : "Purified, purified is Amon-Rā', Lord of Karnak ! Take to thee the water which is in the Eye of Horus ; assigned to thee is thine eye, assigned to thee is thy head, assigned to thee are thy bones, established for thee is thy head upon thy bones in the presence of Geb !" Again he censens the image and now puts a white head-cloth on its head and arrays it in other cloths of green and red, crowning it with its special diadem, placing sceptres in its hands, and bracelets and anklets on its arms and legs. After this the statue is anointed with more unguent, and its eyelids painted first with green and then with black cosmetics. The celebrant now replaces the divine statue in its shrine, and sets a liberal repast of food and drink on a table before it, burning yet more incense in his censer, probably in order that the secondary nature¹ of the meal may be conveyed to the

¹ By this term I mean the spiritual nature of the food which alone the god would consume. The material and visible substance was afterwards either eaten by the priests, or taken by them to the tomb-chapels of private persons (see above, p. 20).

god by means of the incense smoke. The liturgy is now finished, the shrine doors are bolted and sealed, and, after sweeping the floor to obliterate his own footprints (13), the king or high priest leaves the sanctuary.

Besides the daily liturgy, an elaborate calendar of feasts was observed in the temples of the land, and at Thebes the most important was the great festival of *Ôpet* at the New Year, on which the god *Amon* was conveyed up the river in his gorgeous barge from the temple of *Karnak* to his "Southern *Harîm*" in the temple of *Luxor*. Later on we shall have more to say about the god of Thebes. Meanwhile we must turn to consider that other side of the Egyptian religion, a side which played a greater part than the worship of *Amon-Râ'*, the state-god, in the minds of the masses, the religion of *Osiris* and the tomb.

We saw in the first chapter of this book (p. 11) how, many hundreds of years before the Eighteenth Dynasty, in early days, the myth and worship of the god *Osiris* had proved a serious rival to the sun-religion of *Heliopolis*, until the latter was forced to merge its system with that of the dying and reviving god. During the passage of centuries the latter's power had continued its steady increase, and now in the Eighteenth Dynasty, when we look into men's ideas of life after death, we find that both the Sun-god and *Amon*, who has usurped his place, must yield to the sovereignty of *Osiris*. As he had himself triumphed over death and decay, even so he could enable his followers to do the same. Moreover, *Osiris* was now firmly established as supreme judge of the dead, and in his judgment-hall, before

the assembled gods, the heart of every dead man and woman must be weighed in the scales against truth. On the result of that dreadful trial and the decision of *Osiris* the whole future of the soul depended. The religion of the tomb was the faith by which the average Egyptian lived.

The mass, however, of contradictory beliefs regarding life after death, the innumerable ceremonies connected with burial and maintenance of the dead man's existence afterwards, and the vast amount of material which ancient Egypt has left for our study make a full and complete account quite impossible within the limits of this book. We can at best pursue the main thread, and the following seems the most suitable method of doing so. Egypt is the land of tombs; the cliffs on either side of the Nile are honeycombed with "houses of Eternity", the walls of which are covered with delicate sculptures or paintings illustrating the beliefs and practices of ancient Egypt concerning life after death. Let us take one of these tombs belonging to our period and learn what we can from its pictures and inscriptions.

At *El Kâb*, about half-way between Thebes and the first cataract, *Paḥery*, Count of *El Kâb* and of *Esneh*, a grandson of the great military and naval officer "Aaḥmose, son of Abana" who had fought with King *Aaḥmose I* against the *Hyksôs*, caused his tomb to be prepared in a sandstone cliff, probably early in the reign of *Tuthmosis III*. Like most rock-cut tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty and later a levelled platform has been made before the entrance (see Fig. 11), and from this we enter a long chamber leading into a niche containing three statues seated side by side, *Paḥery*,

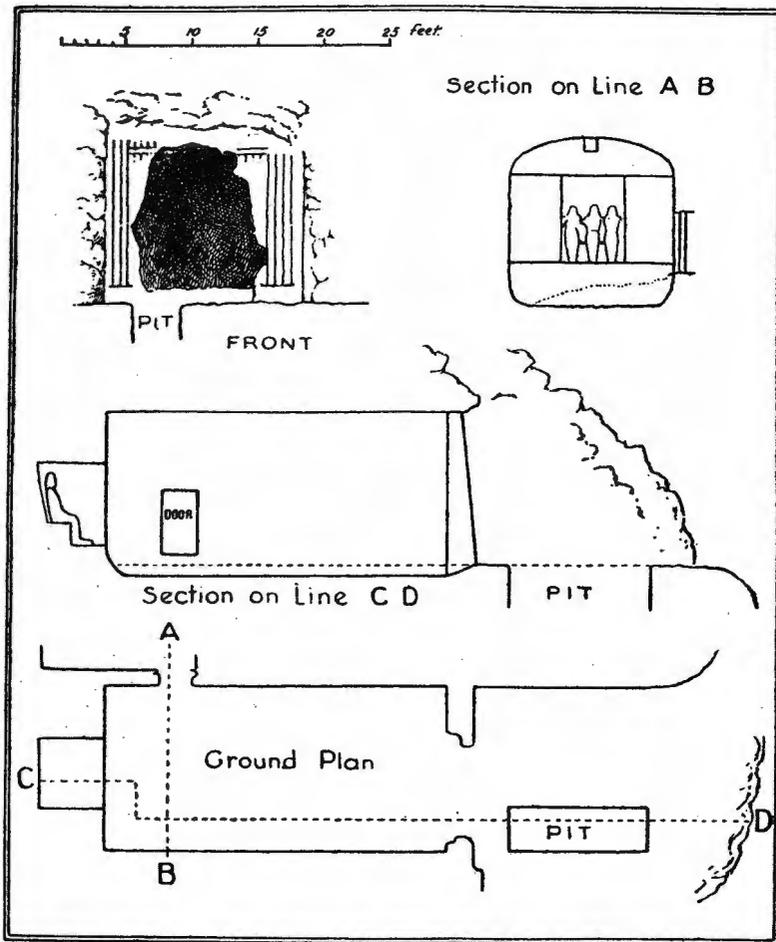


FIG. 11. Plan of Paḥery's Tomb. (After Griffith and Tylor.)

his mother Kem, and his wife Ḥent-er-neḥeḥ (whose name means "Mistress-forever"!). A vertical pit has been sunk in the outer court, leading to the burial chamber, in which the dead man's mummy was originally placed. Outside the tomb sculptures have

been executed in sunk-relief, and inside the walls are decorated with scenes and inscriptions carved in relief and painted, while the ceiling is covered with an elaborate diamond pattern and ornamental hieroglyphs. As we stand without on the platform we see, on the rock-wall, Paḥery represented as kneeling with arms lifted in adoration (14). He has come out of his tomb, and, facing towards the land of the living, recites a prayer to Nekhebet, the goddess of El Kâb, the words of which are inscribed above him. After praising her he says: "[Grant me] my mouth for speech, my feet for walking, mine eyes for beholding thy [brightness] in the course of every day, that I may enjoy the benefit which thou givest me. Grant thou that I may explore the beautiful west¹ in the course of every day." More prayers, now much damaged, are inscribed on either side of the entrance, to Amon-Râ', Ḥathor, Horus of Nekhen (El Kab), and probably Nekhebet and Osiris, and after observing these we pass into the main tomb-chamber.

On the west wall is a large and complicated scene occupying three-quarters of the wall's length (15), of which a portion is reproduced in Plate VI. On the extreme left stands Paḥery himself, holding a long staff and sceptre of office, and accompanied by three servants, one of whom carries a small stool and his master's sandals. The Prince has come to perform his official duty as "inspector of the fields of the southern district", and an inscription tells us that he is "viewing the season of summer and the season of winter, and all the occupations which are carried on in the field". Before him in four long registers

¹ The realm of the dead.

are depicted these "occupations", so important for students to-day who study the social life of the Egyptians, and, to make it all even more interesting, short hieroglyphic inscriptions preserve for us the actual conversation of these busy people! At the top men are bringing in the harvest, and a team of oxen are treading out the grain, while their driver sings a threshing song: "Thresh for yourselves! Thresh for yourselves! O oxen thresh for yourselves, thresh for yourselves! Straw to eat, and grain for your masters! Don't be slack, for it's cool weather!"

Lower down men and women labourers are gathering flax, while in the register below this are scenes of ploughing and sowing. Some men who are busy hoeing hold the following conversation:—one says: "My friend, buck up with the work! Let's finish in good time!" To which another self-righteously replies: "I shall do more work than is necessary for the Prince. So shut up!" Behind these groups Paḥery's charioteer stands with his master's chariot, and a pair of very restive horses whom he urges to keep still.

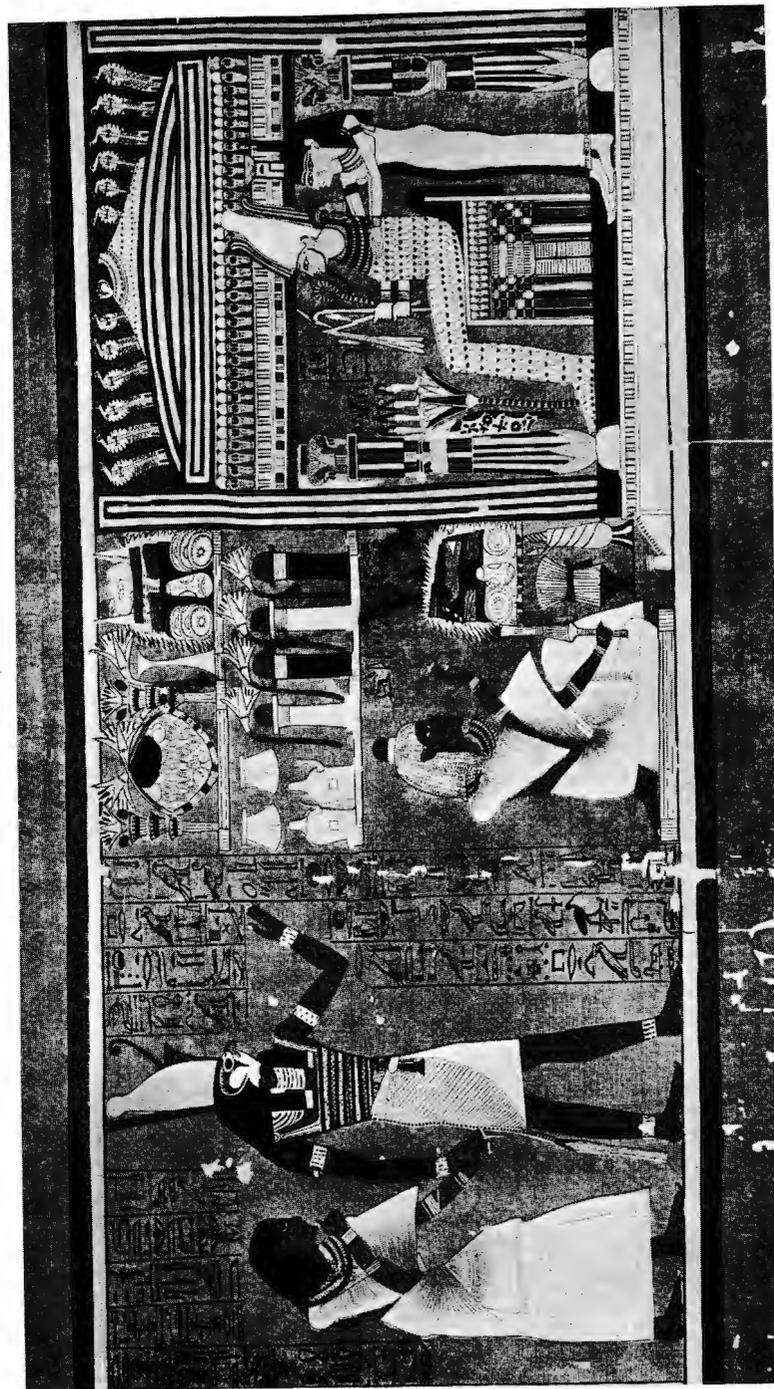
In the bottom register we see the noble engaged in the registration of cattle which are being driven before him in large numbers, and on the right we see him again seated in great state, receiving a large consignment of gold from the mines in the Eastern Desert. The foremen of the miners appear before him with their returns, and these are carefully weighed and entered up by scribes under Paḥery's watchful eye.

On the centre portion of the west wall the great official sits, dandling on his lap the little Royal Prince Uadjmose, and receiving gifts from the servants on

his own estate, as was the custom in Egypt on New Year's Day; in an arbour lower down Paḥery together with his wife, who affectionately clasps her arm around his neck, receive produce of fruit, vegetables, flowers, and fowl from their estate, while in the lowest register he watches marsh-men catching fish and birds.

As yet we have only described one section of the painted reliefs in this tomb, there are others showing Paḥery's funeral, religious ceremonies at his tomb and elsewhere, and rich banquets offered to him, his wife and a host of relations and friends. But before passing on to them, let us ask ourselves some questions. Why are all these pictures executed? What was their significance to the ancient Egyptian, to Paḥery himself? It should be realised at once that the *primary* intention was certainly not to produce a beautiful tomb, or to delight future generations who might visit it. Such ideas were undoubtedly present, but they played a very minor part. No, practical considerations underlay this application of artistic talent, and the pictures were put there to *do* certain things which would benefit the dead man. Their significance is what we would term "magical". Now the key to our understanding of this idea is to grasp the fact that, according to the Egyptian mind, the intangible thing which we may call "life-force", i.e. that which makes a creature "live", was not confined to those products of nature which are universally acknowledged to be "alive", the kingdoms of plant, fish, reptile, bird, and animal, etc., and the human race itself. The Egyptian went further than that, he believed that this "life-force" was not denied to the works of his own hands. A model bird or snake made of clay, or a picture of one

carved in relief, could be as *real* as the actual creature, and, moreover, do as much good or damage. But before this could happen the object in question must be subjected to an influence called *Hike'*, a word which we render "magic". This *hike'* was a supernatural force available both to gods and human beings. The gods influenced each other and mankind by means of *hike'*, and mankind in its turn was able to bend the divine beings to its will with the help of the same powerful agent. A good illustration of this idea may be found in the well-known legend of Rā' and Isis (16), which, though preserved to us in a late papyrus, is undoubtedly of much earlier date. According to this story Isis obtained her position as a goddess by fashioning a magical clay serpent and placing it in the Sun-god's path. When bitten by it the god could not cure himself, for the snake was not of his creation. Isis then drew near and offered to heal Rā', if he would tell her his secret name which nobody knew, and which would give unlimited powers to the person acquainted with it. Held thus to ransom, the Sun-god was forced eventually to give in, and Isis became the mightiest of goddesses. Before, however, a lifeless picture, statue or model, like the clay serpent of Isis, could be filled with *hike'* and so become active, some sort of magical rite had to be performed in connection with it. Hence there was a very real danger that representations of living or inanimate things, made with no magical intent, could be charged with *hike'* by some other person and used to harm the original owner. At an earlier period of Egyptian civilization this was felt very strongly, and care was frequently taken to carve the hieroglyphic signs of birds and animals in inscriptions without legs, so that



THE DECEASED BEFORE OSIRIS IN THE HALL OF JUDGEMENT (Papyrus of Ani, British Museum)



they would be quite useless to any evil-minded being who wished to employ them for his or her own purposes !

Now we can understand and appreciate the meaning of those beautiful painted sculptures on the walls of Pahery's tomb. Their object is to secure for him in the after-life the eternal enjoyment of the happiness there depicted. These pictures were "real" to the ancient Egyptian in a sense in which no picture is real to us. Their magic power will enable the great official to live again the days of his earthly existence, to inspect the peasants working in the fields under his charge, to receive in state the gold brought from desert mines, to sit once more banqueting with his wife and family, to continually accept the food-offering heaped before him by his children, and always to enjoy the benefit of various religious rites performed at his funeral. Dr. Gardiner, in his "Tomb of Amenemhēt" (17), has fitly quoted the words of Keats, addressed to the figures on a Greek vase :—

"Fair youth, beneath the trees thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !"

Further, these pictures of servants, food, etc., do not merely become "animated", they become fully equivalent in value to the originals of which they are copies. The sculptured servants on the tomb-walls are flesh and blood, and the varieties of food represented change to real food at the dead man's will. Moreover, these pictures possess a great advantage over the

originals themselves, for they are everlasting, and, even if a dead person's family should prove unfaithful, or the offerings at his tomb fail for some other reason, the pictures on the walls continue to supply all wants. The possibilities of such an idea were endless. When a new temple was built model tools were buried under the foundations in order to keep the building in good repair. Wax figures of people were made and tortured so that calamities might befall the actual persons, and in the practice of magic arts for laudable purposes the same principles applied.

We may now return to those sculptured scenes in the tomb of Paḥery which illustrate the religious ceremonies, and consider various points as they occur. First let us take the procession on the day of burial, occupying the innermost part of the west wall (18). We see the mummy of the dead man resting on a lion-headed couch within a shrine-like funeral sledge (19), which is drawn by two oxen assisted by men who grasp the rope in their hands. They are accompanied by two individuals with raised arms, evidently reciting a part of the service, and by a priest burning incense in a censer. Above them run the words: "Making a goodly burial for the Count Paḥery, conveying the Count Paḥery, the justified, up to his tomb in the Necropolis in peace, in peace before the Great God. Proceeding in peace to the Horizon, to the Field-of-Reeds,¹ to the Underworld, to lead to (any) place where this Count Paḥery may be." Behind the funeral sledge walks a woman who is called "the great Kite", and before it another who is called "the little Kite"; these are two women, perhaps hired mourners like the sobbing

¹ The next world.

crowd also depicted in many tombs, who impersonate the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, who were believed to have taken the form of kites when they made lamentation over their dead brother Osiris. Further back still walks a "Chief Lector", holding a roll of papyrus and uttering the words: "In peace, in peace before the Great God!" And behind him tread two personages of high rank with staves in their hands, evidently friends come to the funeral.

Since we have here before us the picture of Paḥery's mummy being conveyed to the tomb, let us think for a moment of the custom of mummifying dead persons which was so prevalent in Egypt from very early times. We shall have to discuss later on the part played by mummification in Egyptian beliefs, but for the present let it suffice to say that the welfare of a person's soul in the next world was in some way closely bound up with the preservation of his earthly body from corruption as it lay in the tomb. The art of mummification reached its highest pitch during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, and the process employed may be briefly described as follows (20). First the brain was removed through the nose by means of a metal probe, and the face coated with resinous paste. After this the viscera were taken out of the body through an incision made in the left side (the heart, however, being left in place attached to its large vessels), separately embalmed and enclosed in four jars, each of which enjoyed the protection of one of the four sons of Horus, the gods Mesta, Ḥapi, Duamutef, and Kebeḥsennuf. The body was now immersed in a salt-bath for many days, at the end of which it was taken out, washed, and thoroughly desiccated, smeared with molten resin, and finally

bandaged from head to foot with amazing skill. A mask made of coarse linen coated with glue and plaster and painted in tempera colours in a lifelike manner was often fitted over the mummy's head, and it was then placed in a wooden coffin (or several fitting inside one another) shaped and painted like a human being, and was ready to take its place in the tomb. Such, in brief, was the preparation of a private person's mummy, but the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amon has shown the magnificence which surrounded a sovereign's burial (21). For him the outer coffins were of wood overlaid with gold-leaf, the inner coffin of solid gold decorated with exquisite cloisonnée, the mask set upon the head of gold £5,000 bullion-worth, and all enclosed in a great stone sarcophagus. Private persons also, if of great wealth or enjoying royal favour, could afford coffins of this sort, like Iuaa and Tuaa (22), the parents of Queen Tiy, whose coffins of carved wood covered with gilt stucco and inlaid with coloured glasses and semi-precious stones are in the Cairo Museum, or sometimes their pockets could run to an outer stone coffin of human shape, like the beautiful one of sculptured black granite in the British Museum (23), made for Mery-mose, Viceroy of Nubia under Amenhotep III. But the most important thing to be said about embalming is that it too, like the other funeral ceremonies, was a religious rite. In two papyri (24) of the Græco-Roman period a portion of the ritual performed is actually preserved to us, and contains the words recited by a priest while the body was being anointed and the various limbs bandaged, while in the tomb of Thay (Nineteenth Dynasty) at Thebes we have several pictures (25) of the workshop, with the attendant

priest holding his service-book and reciting while the embalmers are busy at their task. During part of the process the chief embalmer, wearing a jackal-mask, impersonated the god Anubis, because that god had embalmed Osiris and so was supposed to embalm every dead person (26). Embalming took place not in a building, but in a sort of booth, which in the case of wealthy people would be erected specially for them. For poorer people, however, who could not afford this luxury, but who could afford to be mummified in some way, there were probably permanent establishments, again in the form of booths, to which the bodies were brought.

In the scenes from the "Book of the Dead" in which Anubis is embalming the body (e.g. Fig. 12),



FIG. 12. Anubis embalming the dead.

the mummy is often shown lying on a lion-headed couch, like that on which Pahery's mummy rests in the funeral procession. This couch evidently had an important significance, and Pharaohs possessed three different kinds, one lion-headed, another cow-headed, and a third hippopotamus-headed, as we know from specimens found complete in the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amon, fragments in that of Horemheb, and pictures in the tomb of Seti I (27).

Returning to the funeral procession we find two other items. Preceded by a priest burning incense a group of four men are carrying a chest containing requisites for the dead man. In the tomb of Amenemhet these men (although two only are represented there) are labelled "the nine courtiers", and head the funeral procession. Finally, there are two more "courtiers", bearing papyrus blossoms with long stalks, and followed by three men who are dragging a strange-shaped object upon a sledge. This object is named the *Tekenu*, and from other representations it seems that it consisted of a crouching man wrapped up in an ox-hide, but the exact significance of it is much disputed. It is possible that we have here what was once a human sacrifice now merely portrayed by actors (28).

At last the cortège arrives at the tomb, and here it is greeted by a couple of strange individuals called *Muu* who are always shown capering about, performing some sort of ritual dance.

The mummy is now taken from its coffin sledge and, before the door of its "eternal house", the solemn ceremony of "Opening the Mouth" is performed (29). It is not depicted in our tomb and so we will turn to an excellent illustration of it which occurs in a papyrus

copy of the Book of the Dead (Fig. 13). In front of the tomb stands a priest wearing a jackal-mask and embracing the mummy which stands upright, while the dead man's wife and daughter mourn piteously before it. Behind stand two priests sprinkling water and holding certain sacred instruments, two of which are shaped like adzes and a third as a serpent with a ram's head. Behind them stands a third priest

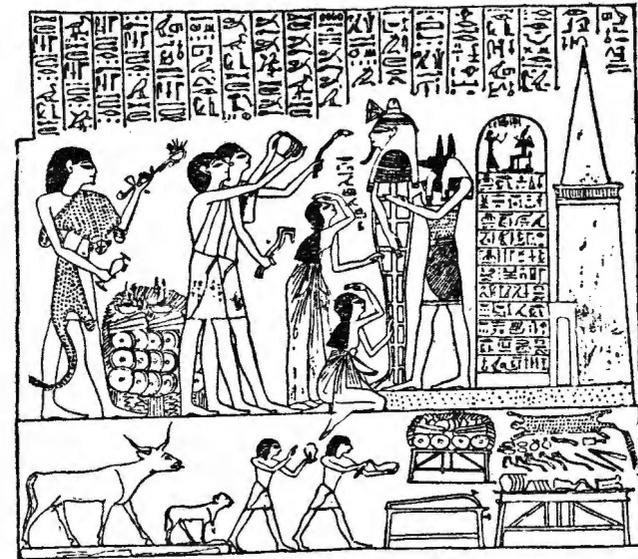


FIG. 13. Ceremony of Opening the Mouth. (Papyrus of Hunefer, British Museum.)

clad in a vestment of leopard skin, burning incense in a censer and pouring water on a table of offerings. In the lower register we see a cow and her calf. Men have cut off one of the latter's front legs (the poor creature is alive), and are hurrying away with it towards a table on which are set the sacred utensils for the service. The object of the ceremony of "Opening

the Mouth" is to animate the mummy. The embalmer has exerted all his skill toward making the human body imperishable, and as far as possible an exact likeness of the deceased when alive. Now this inert body must be called to life by magic (*hike*), even as Osiris had been called to life after being embalmed. The mummy's face is touched with certain magic instruments, and with a haunch of meat, sometimes, as here, cut from the living animal, offerings are made and incense burnt. The whole ceremony is modelled on the Osiris legend, and so among the officiating priests are impersonators of Anubis and Horus, the latter bearing the title of "Beloved Son". Originally the ceremony of opening the mouth had been used only for the animation of a statue of the Sun-god or his embodiment the king, to identify it with the divinity or monarch whom it represented, and had been closely related to the ritual toilet and meal which belonged to the old solar religion, the Osirian ideas having crept in later. By the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty, however, the ceremony was used for the animation not only of the statues and mummies of private persons, but also of certain amulets (30), among them the powerful "heart-scarab", which was enclosed in the mummy's bandages. It was a way of applying *hike* to a seemingly inanimate object.

In the remaining scenes of this section we see depicted the mysterious voyage to Abydos, which all the holy dead were supposed to perform. There they would make supplication to Osiris, "Lord of eternity," and implore protection and sustenance for their souls in the hereafter. Accordingly, we see Paḥery kneeling before the dead god as he sits in his shrine, and with arms uplifted in worship he prays: "Hail to thee!

August god, lord of the Thinite nome, great in Abydos!
I have come unto thee, my lord, in peace. Be thou gracious to me, for thou possessest food-offerings. Hearken thou to my call and perform that which I say, for I am one of thy worshippers!"

In the tomb of Amenemḥet¹ the actual river-journey is shown with considerable detail, the mummies (?) of the dead man and his wife sitting stiffly side by side in their boat, which is being towed by another in front.

The last scene in the tomb of Paḥery of which we shall speak is that on the north end of the east wall (31), which represents Paḥery and his wife seated before a table of offerings while a favourite son, vested as priest in a leopard skin, pronounces the magic words: "An offering which the king gives," which will enable his dead parents to partake of their food. But the tomb-owners are not the only people who enjoy this banquet; Paḥery's parents and grandparents are present, with a host of other relatives and friends who, whether already dead or not when this tomb was made, intended to share in the sepulchral feast!

Finally we are brought up to the back wall of the niche (32), which is sculptured with seated figures of Paḥery, his wife and mother, and with many lines of hieroglyphic inscription setting forth the Count's admirable virtues, and praying for a blissful existence in the hereafter. The original form of this back-wall niche was a dummy door sculptured in stone, generally termed by Egyptologists a "false door", and through it the spirits of the dead were able to pass out in response to the formula, "An offering which the king gives," pronounced by the officiating priest. And this brings

¹ Pl. XII.

us to a vital question. Hitherto we have used vague terms, such as "dead man" or "spirit", in speaking of Paḥery. But what really did people become after death? For what sort of being was this elaborate funerary equipment prepared, these beautiful magical reliefs sculptured, and food-offerings brought to the tomb on festivals by the mortuary priests? Was Paḥery now a spirit, a ghost, or simply a mummy? We shall not be able to give a very concrete answer to these questions, but we can at least examine the probabilities.

It seems that the Egyptians believed in two entirely different forms of continued existence after death, originally quite distinct but now inextricably confused in their minds. According to one idea it was the corpse itself which still represented the deceased as in life, and which would reap the enjoyments of future existence. Consequently everything possible was done to render it incorruptible; it was carefully mummified and loaded with protective amulets, and all the embalmer's skill was expended with one object, that of making the dead body an exact replica of the living person. At some time or other life would be given back to those dead limbs, and so the spirit must be able to recognise its old earthly house and find its various members still in serviceable condition. According to the second idea the future life was not lived on an earthly plane at all, but either in the "Field of Iaru" (Field of Reeds), the domain of Osiris where the dead would enjoy a glorified agricultural existence resembling that of Egypt, in which the wheat and barley grew to prodigious height and the heavenly Nile never failed to rise, or else in the sky in company with the Sun-god with whom the dead

would sail in his celestial boat and reign forever. Although originally separate, these two conceptions of continued existence, in the realms of the Sun-god and of Osiris respectively, are entirely fused together by the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Now the part of the dead person which was able to enjoy this blissful after-life was called the *ka*, and endless controversy has raged as to its exact significance (33). The word is generally translated "double", as there is strong reason for believing that the *ka* was an unearthly replica of a person, coming into being at the time of his birth but existing in the spirit-world. When the person died he "went to his *ka*", joining it in the next world. There the *ka* looked after him, obtaining sustenance for him. There is, however, an alternative view held by certain scholars that the *ka* was not a "double" at all, but rather a "protecting spirit", a sort of genius attached to every human being. But whatever the *ka* really was, and whatever the part which it originally played in the religion of the tomb, it is certain that by the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty, with which alone we are concerned in this book, the *ka* was believed both to exist in the next world, enjoying the blissful after-life, and yet at the same time to be living in the tomb, inhabiting the deceased's portrait-statues and receiving the food-offerings brought by his relations, while the dead body itself, the mummy lying below in the tomb-shaft, was just as much the recipient of food-offerings and in equal measure took part in the blessed after-life. This lamentable confusion of thought did not, of course, trouble the Egyptians in the least! Further there was, unfortunately for us, a second spiritual entity to be reckoned with called the *bai*,

another form of "soul" and always depicted as a human-headed hawk (Fig. 14), sometimes fluttering down the tomb-shaft to revisit the mummy. The *bai* may have been the outcome of a different trend of thought from that which conceived the *ka*, but in the period which we are studying it simply co-existed as an alternative form which a person could take after death.



FIG. 14. The *Bai*. (Hilton Price Collection.)

Lastly, we cannot close this brief account of funerary beliefs without a few words on the paraphernalia placed with a mummy in the tomb (34). Most interesting of all was the *ushabti* figure, the little image made in mummy form and intended to carry out for his master all arduous labour in the world beyond the grave, made of stone or wood¹ and often an object of considerable artistic merit. It was intended to represent the deceased himself. Then there was splendid furniture made of

¹ Faience *ushabtis* did not become frequent till the Nineteenth Dynasty.

precious woods and ivory, sets of toilet utensils, and magnificently illuminated copies of the Book of the Dead (35) on papyrus, that collection of spells which would help the dead to overcome difficulty and peril on their way to the celestial abodes. The book was called by the Egyptians: "The Chapters of Coming Forth by Day," and was the descendant of much older religious works which had originated many centuries earlier. There are few Egyptian collections which do not possess some copies of the book, written on papyrus and generally illustrated with pictures, the latter often being beautifully drawn and coloured, as in the papyri of Nekht and Ani in the British Museum¹. The papyrus copies often run to a great length, in the case of Ani 78 feet, and never contain the whole work, but only a selection of chapters arranged in varying order. The edition of the Book of the Dead used during the Eighteenth Dynasty² had been prepared by the priestly colleges of Heliopolis, an important

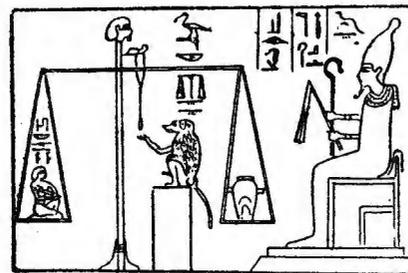
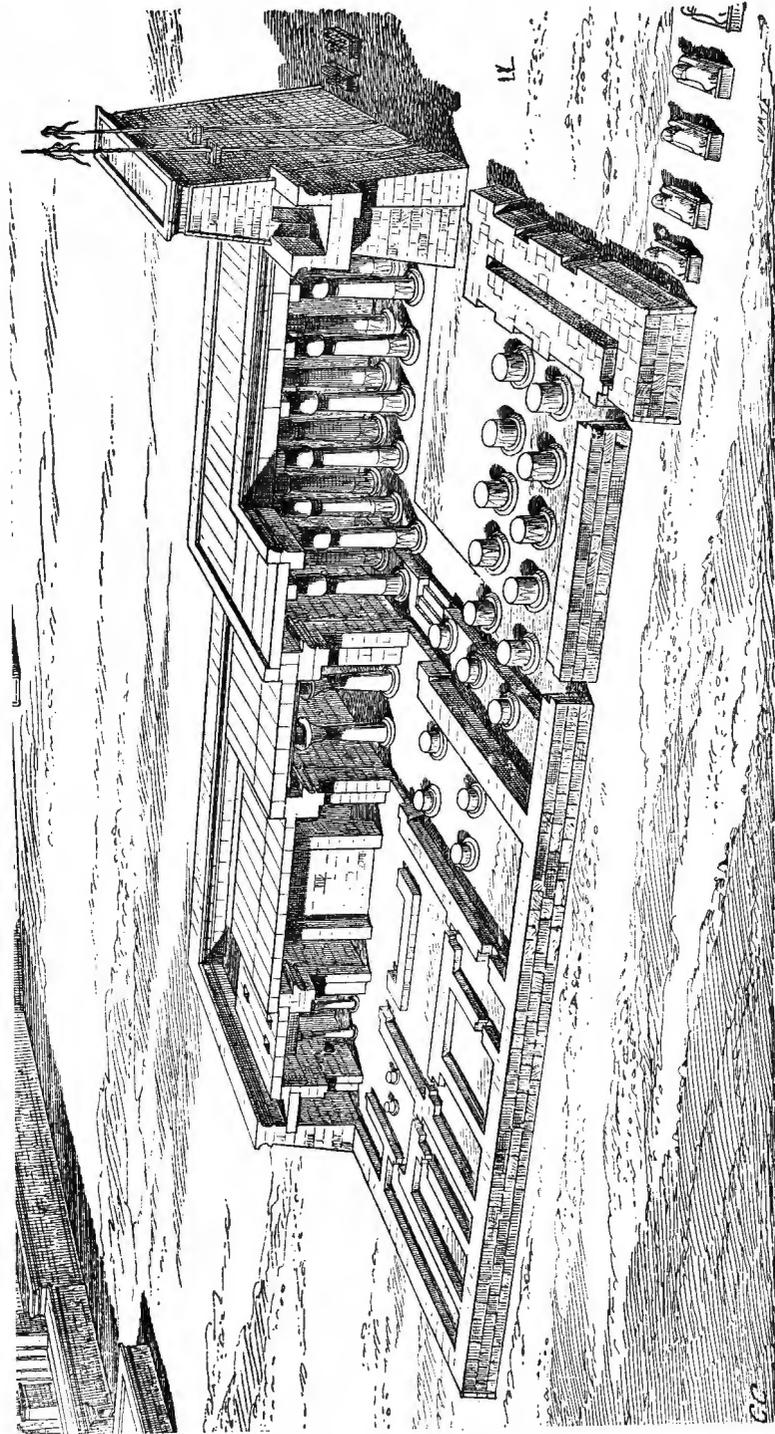


FIG. 15. Thoth weighing the heart before Osiris. (Papyrus of Nebsei, British Museum.) In this case the dead man himself, instead of the feather of Truth, is shown in the other pan of the scales.

¹ The Museum contains the finest known copies of the Book of the Dead.

² A later edition, in use during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty and onwards, is known as the "Saite Recension".

fact which will be referred to again later on (p. 90). The most famous part of the book is the well-known scene depicting the judgment after death, in which the deceased person's heart is weighed by Anubis in the scales against a feather, symbolic of truth, in the presence of Osiris enthroned as judge of the dead (Fig. 15). Lastly there were amulets, made of semi-precious stones or gold, which were inserted in the bandages of the dead person during the process of mummification, while an officiating priest recited spells charging them with magic power. Discoveries like that of the tomb of Iuaa and Tuua show what the burial equipment of nobles of high rank was like, while the amazing find of Tut-ankh-Amon's tomb has enabled us to realise the glories which surrounded Pharaoh in his eternal sleep. With the poor, however, it was in Ancient Egypt as it is in our world of to-day and always will be. There was no splendour for *them*, simply burial in the bare earth, perhaps in some inferior coffin, or else in a public tomb, together with a few pitiful funerary objects. The poor man would indeed be lucky if he was embalmed at all; very often he was not, as we know from excavation at El 'Amarneh, where poor burials are often found beneath the floors of houses. Yet these people, too, clung to the hope of a continued existence of some kind, although they were denied the pomp of the wealthy classes, and we may believe that the gods were merciful.



RESTORATION OF A TEMPLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH OR NINETEENTH DYNASTY (After Petrot and Chipiez)

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- (32) Paheri, pl. ix. Text in SETHE, *Urk*, iv, pp. 111 ff.
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CHAPTER III

ABOUT forty-five years had passed since the death of Aahmose and now the son of Amenhotep his successor, the Pharaoh Tuthmosis I, was drawing near his end. Behind the old man stood a series of splendid achievements. At the head of his armies he had penetrated to the third cataract in Nubia and thoroughly organised that province as a dependency of Egypt. He had marched northwards with his men through Palestine and Syria as far as the river Euphrates, thus laying the foundation of Egypt's Asiatic empire. At home the divine sanctuaries were not neglected, and with the able assistance of his chief architect Ineni the king had carried out great building projects in the temple of Karnak, erecting there pylons and obelisks, and a splendid hall of cedar pillars. Fully justified were his words to the priests of Abydos (1) :—

“ I am an excellent King to whom offerings should be made, one unique in valour whose name should be remembered in return for what I have done in this land, even as ye know. It is no lie in your sight, nor is there exaggeration therein. I have made monuments for the gods, I have made glorious their sanctuaries for the future, I have beautified their temples and I have set up that which was in ruins. I have gone beyond what was done aforetime. . . . I have done more than other kings who were before me have done. The gods have joy in my time and their temples are in festival. I set the boundaries of Egypt as far as that which the sun encircles ;

I caused those who were in terror to be victorious, driving away evil from them ; I made Egypt the chief and all other lands her slaves ! ”

Pharaoh indeed deserved a peaceful finish to his reign, but it is probable that his last days were overshadowed by gloomy forebodings. There was a problem to be solved which since those far off times has so often disturbed the peace of ruling houses—succession.

Tuthmosis I was a grandson of Aahmose on his father's side, but his mother had been an inferior wife, apparently not of royal blood. Now this was a serious weakness in Tuthmosis' claim to the throne, for in Egypt descent was traced through the mother, and so important was it that the blood of the line should flow in her veins that it was almost a rule for Crown Princes to marry their sisters or half-sisters, and thus strengthen their right to succeed. Tuthmosis had overcome the difficulty in this very way, he had married his wholly royal half-sister, a princess directly descended from Aahmose I and of the same name, the daughter of Amenhotep I and a wife of royal blood. This meant that his heir by her would be a fully legitimate successor, and thus his own position was assured. Yet the only one of his children by Queen Aahmose to survive was a girl, Ka-maāt-Rā' Hatshepsut, royal princess and heiress of the line, but unable to succeed because she was a woman ! Now the old king had also one surviving son called Tuthmosis, born to him by an inferior wife, and hence the only way to solve the problem which had arisen was to marry him to Hatshepsut and crown him Pharaoh by right of marriage, even as he himself had been crowned. This was done, and the prince acceded to the throne on his father's

death as Tuthmosis II, a young man of frail health and little energy (2).

But Hatshepsut! Lovely and charming, as she herself confidently assures us, she yet was made of the stuff of kings, a born ruler of men. She must have been incapable of playing second fiddle to anyone, but during the life of her husband, to whom she bore two daughters, her ambition seemingly slept. Even when, at Tuthmosis' early death, she was left with a problem of succession exactly similar to that which had confronted her father, she did not yet put forth her strength. She possessed no son by Tuthmosis II, but there was a young boy, a third Tuthmosis, born to her husband by an inferior wife, who was now being trained as priest in the temple of Amon at Karnak. There was nothing for it but to give him the throne by marrying him to Neferurā', the royal heiress, her eldest daughter by Tuthmosis II. In this manner Pharaoh Tuthmosis III, the future conqueror of the world, was crowned king. But his time was not yet.

Now Hatshepsut must have realised to the full the strength of her own position and the weakness of her stepson's. She also knew that her own exceptional will-power, coupled as it was with great feminine charm, would enable her to secure the support of an influential party of nobles if she chose to take the momentous step which presented itself to her mind. And toward the taking of this step no influence can have been so great as that of her favourite, Senmut, steward of the great Theban temple of Amon and one of the finest administrative brains which ancient Egypt ever produced. We shall never know whether he was in love with Hatshepsut, or whether he merely sought

power for himself, but there can be no doubt whatever that his counsels were her guide. By the time that the foundations of her temple at Deir-el-bahri were laid, a few years after her husband's death, she had ceased to be merely "God's Wife and Chief Royal Wife", and was now "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ka-maāt-Rā'". Tuthmosis III had been pushed into the background and a woman had proclaimed herself Pharaoh!

In this way, surrounded by a powerful faction devoted to her cause, the great queen began her reign of quiet prosperity, and among her followers we are not surprised to find Hapuseneb, high priest of Amon at Thebes, and now created Vizier. One would be quite justified in saying that, without the support of the Amon priesthood, Hatshepsut's ambition could never have been realised. It must be remembered also that Senmut was steward of that god's estates, a position in which he had been able to rise until the vast property of the temple was entirely under his management, to which high function he had added innumerable other offices under the patronage of Hatshepsut. Thus a combination of the supreme pontiff of the State God with a first-rate business man, who was in charge of all that god's material possessions, must have been well-nigh irresistible.

At last firmly established upon the throne, Hatshepsut could turn her attention to great achievements which would perpetuate her name. Throughout the land Senmut as her chief of works started a campaign of building, while to far distant Punt¹ an expedition was sent down the Red Sea to bring back incense, rare

¹ Somaliland.

trees and other luxuries for the new temple which she planned to build.

Now during the Old and Middle Kingdoms the king had always been buried in a pyramid, beside which a funerary temple was built where worship could be paid to the dead Pharaoh and food-offerings brought for his consumption. But the disadvantages of such a system were only too apparent. Robbers could violate the tombs during periods of unrest, and then what availed a splendid cenotaph? If the body of Pharaoh was to remain intact, an arrangement must be found by which the tomb would be separated from the temple and its whereabouts unknown.

By the time of the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Dynasties the Royal Pyramid had dwindled to a small solid structure of crude brick under which the funeral chambers were cut in the rock, the chapel being hewn in the cliff-face beneath or built alongside the pyramid, or else arranged within it on ground-level (3). It was Amenhotep I, the successor of Aahmose, who took the important step of finally separating the tomb from the chapel in which the funeral cult was carried on, causing the former to be cut in the rocky hill of Dra'Abu'l-Negga at Thebes, while the funerary temple rose in the desert plain below.

From now onwards this remained the custom, and along the plain arose temple after temple devoted to dead Pharaohs, who themselves lay at rest in corridor tombs cut in the cliffs behind, generally in that desolate valley known so well to the modern world as the "Valley of the Tombs of the Kings".

In this series of funerary temples Hatshepsut now intended her own to have a place, and soon, under the

direction of herself and the active Senmut, arose a marvel in stone, perhaps the most beautiful sanctuary of ancient Egypt. At Deir-el-bahri is a natural amphitheatre in the steep limestone cliffs of red-gold which rise sheer from the plain, where at midday the reflected sunlight is so dazzling that the eye cannot bear it. This was the site chosen by the queen for a temple of three terraces, with cool chapels cut into the rock-wall, and exquisitely proportioned limestone colonnades. A visit to this quiet shrine, the monument of a great queen, forms part of every tourist's programme to-day, but I wonder how many realise the stupendous piece of propaganda which it contains! For Hatshepsut and her party understood at once that some official explanation of her action was required, some attempt to soften down what must have seemed to the ordinary Egyptian a woman's monstrous usurpation of that supreme position intended by divine law for man alone. And so two things must be made clear to the Egyptian people, first that from the beginning the gods had chosen her to be Pharaoh, and secondly that her father, Tuthmosis I, in some special way had himself planned that she should ascend the throne. In order to encourage the latter idea the queen's name was associated at every turn with that of her father. His body was moved from his own tomb in the Valley of the Kings to that of Hatshepsut, where it was laid in a stone sarcophagus originally intended for the queen, but which had to be altered to receive the wooden coffin containing Tuthmosis' mummy (4). In another sarcophagus Hatshepsut herself would be buried, so that father and daughter would lie side by side in death. In addition to this, her mortuary temple at Deir-el-bahri was made to

serve for her father as well as for herself, and there his funeral cult was celebrated in a special chapel, before a magnificent "false door" of red granite, now in the Louvre. But this was not enough. The gods, too, must play their part in establishing their daughter on the throne of Egypt, and so on the walls beneath a shady porch of her temple were carved and painted in delicate relief, for all the world to see, the pictures and inscriptions which tell of her divine birth, and of her predestination by Amon Lord of Karnak for the Double Crown of her ancestors.

The reader will recall that on pages 7 and 9 of this book we mentioned that from the earliest times the sun-god Rā' was regarded as the physical father of the king of Egypt, and that in later days, when Amon of Thebes was identified with Rā', he too became the father of every monarch. The explanation was that, since Pharaoh was not only the god's son but also his very embodiment (see p. 7), it followed that the god himself begat the next heir to the throne and so on, and it was precisely this ancient idea that Hatshepsut wished to bring before people's minds as emphatically as possible and turn to her own advantage. Let us visit her temple and read the story as it is told there in word and picture (5).

First of all Amon calls the gods together in order to tell them of his great intention. We see him enthroned in majesty, the tall plumes upon his head, a sceptre and the symbol of life in his hands. Before him are marshalled twelve chief gods and goddesses: "Osiris, chief of the West"; "Isis, lady of Heaven and mistress of the Two Lands"; "Horus, son of Isis, great god, lord of eternity"; "Nephthys, mistress of all the gods"; "Set, the great and living

god", "Hathor, lady of the West and mistress of the Two Lands"; "Menthu, lord of Thebes"; "Atum"; "Shu, son of Rā'"; "Tefnut, lady of Heaven"; "Geb, the father of the gods"; and lastly "Nut who bare the gods". All carrying sceptres and the symbol of life they stand awaiting the words of their sovereign, who thus proclaims his affection for Queen Aahmose in strong terms:—

"He speaketh unto these gods with regard to the heritage of the Lord¹ of the Two Lands: 'I have loved the consort beloved of him,¹ even Aahmose, the Royal Mother of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ka-maāt-Rā'² given life . . . I have given unto her³ all low-lands and all high-lands . . . I have united for her the Two Lands in peace . . . She buildeth your temples and maketh glorious your sanctuaries . . . she establisheth your shewbread and keepeth fresh your drink-tables . . . Therefore send down the dew of Heaven in her time, cause exceeding high Niles to come for her in her time, and surround her with your protection of life and well-being! . . .'" Then follows a stern threat: "As for him who shall speak against the name of her Majesty, I will compass his death straightway!"

And the assembled gods with one voice reply: "We have come that we may surround her with our protection of life and well-being!"

The audience is ended; Amon rises and goes to find the god Thōth, that he may pursue his inquiries concerning Queen Aahmose, for all things are known

¹ The old king Tuthmosis I.

² The throne-name of Hatshepsut, who is not yet born.

³ Queen Aahmose.

to the ibis-headed god. To Amon's question Thōth replies: "This maiden of whom thou hast spoken . . . , her name is Aaḥmose. She is more beautiful than any woman in this whole land, and she is the wife of the sovereign, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Aa-kheper-ka-Rā'¹ given life forever!"

In order that he may secure access to the queen without alarming her, Amon now changes himself into the form of her husband the Pharaoh, and, led by Thōth, proceeds to the chamber where she sleeps. We may picture the awakened girl, startled by the signs of approaching deity, the subtle fragrance which ever accompanies the Lord of Karnak, who is "more eminent of nature than any god, over whose beauty the gods rejoice. He to whom praise is given in the Great House, who is crowned in the House of Fire. He whose sweet savour the gods love, when he cometh from Punt². Richly perfumed, when he cometh from the land of the Matoï. Fair of face, when he cometh from God's land" (6). Thus the great god came, and "he found her as she rested in the beauty of her palace. She awoke at the perfume of the god and laughed in presence of his Majesty. He straightway came unto her and greatly desired her, he gave his heart to her, and he caused her to behold him in his divine form after he had come into her presence. She rejoiced to behold his beauty and his love passed into her body; the palace overflowed with the perfume of the god, and all his savour was that of Punt". Presently the queen speaks to him: "My lord, how great indeed is thy might! It is precious to behold thy countenance,

¹ The throne-name of Tuthmosis I.

² The land of incense and fragrant gums.

for thou hast endowed me with thy glory and thy dew pervadeth all my body." And Amon-Rā' replies, telling her of the brilliant future which their child is destined to enjoy: "Khenemt-Amon Ḥatshepsut is the name of this daughter whom I have planted in thy womb . . . She shall exercise this beneficent kingship over all this land. My soul shall be hers, my power shall be hers, my high respect shall be hers and my crown shall be hers! She it is who shall rule the Two Lands and she shall lead all living folk . . . I have united the Two Lands for her in all her names upon the Horus-throne of the living, and together with the god of the day¹ I will surround her with my protection always." With these words the divine lover leaves the palace, and hastens away to interview the ram-headed god Khnum who fashions the bodies of men and women upon his potter's wheel, and now commands him to make the body of Ḥatshepsut. Straightway the potter begins his task (Plate VIII), and as the magic wheel whirls round and the clay takes shape beneath his deft hands, he chants the blessings which he gives to the divine daughter:—

"I have come to thee to fashion thee better than all the gods!
I have given to thee all life and well-being, all stability
and all joy of heart before me;
I have given to thee all health and all lowlands;
I have given to thee all highlands and all people;
I have given to thee all food and all sustenance;
I have given thee to shine forth like Rā' upon the throne
of Horus."

The work is done, and now on the potter's wheel stands the baby Ḥatshepsut while Ḥekt, the frog-headed

¹ Every day had its special protecting deity.

wife of Khnum, kneels down and holds up to her the *ankh*, symbol of life. The baby H̄atshepsut, we said—but there are *two* figures of her on the wheel, and moreover they are both boys! The first of these strange facts is at once explained when we remember that the second figure represents her *Ka*, that mysterious being, whether protecting genius or second self, which accompanies people during life and beyond the grave. The second fact, that in both cases H̄atshepsut is represented as a boy, is due to her claim that she reigned as *king*, not queen; in fact we know that she actually appeared in public dressed as Pharaoh, even wearing a false beard, and in her inscriptions she is constantly referred to as a man! Thōth now acquaints Queen Aah̄mose with her high destiny as the favourite of Amon and the mother of H̄atshepsut (Plate VIII), and Khnum and H̄ekt come forward to conduct her to the birth-chamber. There the event which is to give Egypt her greatest queen takes place amid celestial jubilation. Queen Aah̄mose sits upon a throne which rests on an enormous lion-headed couch,¹ the latter in its turn standing on a second great couch beneath it. She has in her arms the new-born child, while before her on the couch kneel divine midwives, who hold in their hands some of the numerous *kas* to which a Pharaoh was entitled. Beneath the lower couch stand two hideous creatures who are always closely connected with birth; they are Bes and Taurt (see Figs. 16 and 17). Bes is represented as a repulsive little dwarf with a shaggy mane and long tail; Taurt has the head and body of a hippopotamus, the hindquarters of a lioness and the tail of a crocodile! These two creatures were

¹ Suggesting, of course, the idea of birth.

regarded as exceedingly benevolent deities, and in the homes of common folk enjoyed a greater popularity than many of their more dignified colleagues. The remaining spectators are mostly human and animal-headed genii; among them the jackal-headed spirits of Nekhen (to-day El Kab) and the hawk-headed spirits of Buto, who are the souls of the rulers of those two



FIG. 16. Bes.

districts in prehistoric times. But more illustrious beings are also present; Isis and Nephthys stand behind Aah̄mose, and Amon-Rā' himself dominates the scene. Yet even more important than these, Meskhent, goddess of birth, proclaims from her throne the blessings which she will bestow upon the royal child, health, riches, food, the celebration of jubilee festivals and eternal

joy in company with her *ka*. We should but weary the patient reader were we to describe the subsequent events, how the baby princess was presented to the King of the Gods, how, when she was grown to a girl,



FIG. 17. Taurt.

Tuthmosis I set her before the great nobles of the court and demanded their allegiance to his daughter, how in splendid pomp she visited the ancient shrines in every part of Egypt and conversed with the gods, how finally with elaborate and impressive ritual the Double Crown

was set upon her head and she reigned as Pharaoh "on the Horus-throne of the living" (7).

Years passed away and Tuthmosis III was no longer a boy. Winlock describes him as "a short, stocky young man, full of fiery Napoleonic energy, suppressed up to now, but soon to cause the whole known world to smart". In him Hatshepsut had met her match, and at last, seizing his opportunity, he struck the blows which ruined Senmut and then the rest of the queen's supporters one after another. Even the sculptures of their tombs were smashed by the king's officers.

In the twenty-second year from the death of Tuthmosis II, Tuthmosis III was reigning alone, and Hatshepsut was dead. How she died we shall probably never know, but no sooner had she passed away than the pent-up fury of twenty-two years burst forth, and throughout the length and breadth of Egypt the figure and name of Hatshepsut were erased. On the walls of her temple at Deir-el-Bahri her sculptured form was relentlessly chiselled down, and her beautiful statues dragged out and broken up into pieces.

Tuthmosis had won his rightful position, but it is amusing to see that he evidently felt some difficulty in keeping his head above the flood of Hatshepsut's propaganda. He seems to have thought that a public justification of *his* actions also was required, and the result was an inscription at Karnak containing a remarkable story (8). He tells us that, while he himself was still a stripling in the priesthood of Amon's temple, and had not yet even been raised to the rank of prophet (see p. 36), his father Tuthmosis I was officiating one day at a great service in the hall of cedar columns at

Karnak. Presently the image of the god, hidden in the cabin of the sacred boat, was borne forth from the "Holy of Holies" on the shoulders of the priests and began to make a circuit of the hall. Suddenly the boat stopped before the young priest and the god spoke to him, granting him in that very moment a vision in which he "flew up to Heaven as a hawk" and was there solemnly crowned king by the sun-god himself, receiving from him the various splendid epithets of his royal titulary.

Some historians have accepted this story as literally true, and have seen in it a brilliantly staged *coup d'état* arranged between the young Tuthmosis and the priests of Amon. If this is so, then the history of the Tuthmosides must run somewhat differently from the narrative given by us above, and it is necessary to fall back on Professor Sethe's elaborate theory of the *Thronwirren*. But there are serious difficulties in the way, and the simpler reconstruction seems much the more probable. Anyhow, it is extremely unlikely that there is any truth in Tuthmosis' claim, for, if it is true, why did he not publish it till the forty-second year of his reign? Also it is hard to understand this whole-hearted support of Tuthmosis by the priesthood of Amon at an early stage when we remember that it was largely their influence which enabled Hatshepsut, his rival, to claim the kingship a few years later. We are therefore quite safe in saying that the story is a piece of politico-religious propaganda, on a par with Hatshepsut's efforts in the same direction. Nevertheless this imaginary account of how a Pharaoh was chosen by divine oracle is the forerunner of what was later to become a common method of deciding important questions. In the

Nineteenth Dynasty, under Rameses II, the high priest Nebunef (9) was nominated to that rank by oracle of Amon, while, later still, judicial cases (10) were decided by placing the written briefs before the image of Amon-Rā', when the image would nod its moveable head in favour of one or the other party! The oracle-story of Tuthmosis III foreshadows that complete domination of the State by the priesthood of Amon-Rā' which was to come in the future.

Fifty-eight years had passed since the death of Hatshepsut, and in a series of sixteen campaigns Tuthmosis III had beaten Syria and Palestine into complete submission, organising them together with Nubia as the Empire of Egypt. His vigorous successor, Amenhotep II, had crushed a great revolt in Asia and returned with rebel kings hanging head downwards from the prow of his boat, soon to be clubbed to death in the presence of Amon-Rā'.

Egypt was now a world-power, and into her treasuries poured the tribute of the nations. Amon-Rā' of Karnak, the giver of victory to Pharaoh as his son, had become a god of world-wide influence, and his temple at Thebes was yearly increasing in wealth and power. Yet Amon's throne was not as secure as his priesthood imagined.

On the desert plateau of Gizeh, near the three pyramids which still form one of the wonders of the world, crouches the Sphinx, a lion with the head of a man, sculptured out of a mass of natural rock. It belonged to an age very far removed from the Eighteenth Dynasty, being probably the work of Khafra',¹ builder of the second Pyramid, and was intended to represent Pharaoh as

¹ He reigned early in the third millennium B.C.

a man-headed lion wearing the royal head-dress, and the uræus-cobra of royalty on his forehead. Over a thousand years later it was still the custom to represent Pharaoh in art as a sphinx, but the great Sphinx of Gizeh had taken on a new aspect. Not very far away was the hoary city of Heliopolis, the city of the sun, where Amon of Thebes seemed but a usurper to the priests of the ancient god who had dominated Egypt in early days. To the Egyptians of this later time the Sphinx appeared to be an image of the sun-god Horus in lion-form, and was known to them as "Harmachis", that is, "Horus-in-the-horizon." Between the paws of this huge monster stands to-day a tablet of red granite (11), sculptured at the top with scenes, like all Egyptian royal stelæ, and underneath with a long hieroglyphic inscription recounting a marvellous adventure which befell Tuthmosis IV, the son and successor of Amenhotep II, in the days when he was still a prince. "His Majesty was a child," says the text, "Like Horus, the child in Chemmis.¹ His beauty was like (that of) the Champion-of-his-father,² the sight of him like the god himself. The army rejoiced through love of him, as did also the royal children and all the great men."

Now the prince, accompanied by one or two companions only, was wont to take his pleasure in "casting at a target with spears (?), hunting lions and desert-game, and coursing in his chariot, his horses being swifter than the wind", and in the heat of midday would take his siesta in the shadow of the Sphinx, "the

¹ The place in the Delta where Isis was supposed to have given birth to Horus after the death of Osiris, and where the child was reared.

² i.e. Horus, as avenger of his father Osiris.

very great statue of Khepri."¹ "Now it happened on one of these days that the king's son Tuthmosis came coursing at the time of midday, and rested in the shadow of this great god. Then a sleep and slumber seized him at the time when the sun was at the zenith, and he found the majesty of this august god speaking with his own mouth, as speaks a father to his son, saying: "Regard me! Behold me, my son Tuthmosis! I am thy father Harmachis-Khepri-Atum, and I give to thee my kingdom on earth at the head of the living. Thou shalt assume the White Crown and the Red Crown upon the Throne of Geb, the hereditary Prince." And the condition on which this promise of the throne rested was to be the removal of the desert sand which had half-buried the Sphinx in those ancient days, just as was the case in modern times until a few years ago the Egyptian Government had the monument completely cleared. The end of the story is lost, but we may assume that Tuthmosis hastened to fulfil the condition, and that, when in after years he ascended the throne, he set up a stela in the first year of his reign to commemorate his vision and to honour the great Sphinx, to whom we see the king offering wine and incense in the scene sculptured at the top of the stela (Fig. 18). There is one point, however, that should be made clear, and that is that the stela is certainly not an Eighteenth Dynasty document, but a product of much later times.² Hence it is possible to form two opinions with regard to the monument, either that it reproduces an *actual stela*

¹ As will be noted further on in the story, the Sphinx was identified with *all* forms of the sun-god.

² Probably between the Twenty-first and Twenty-sixth Dynasties.

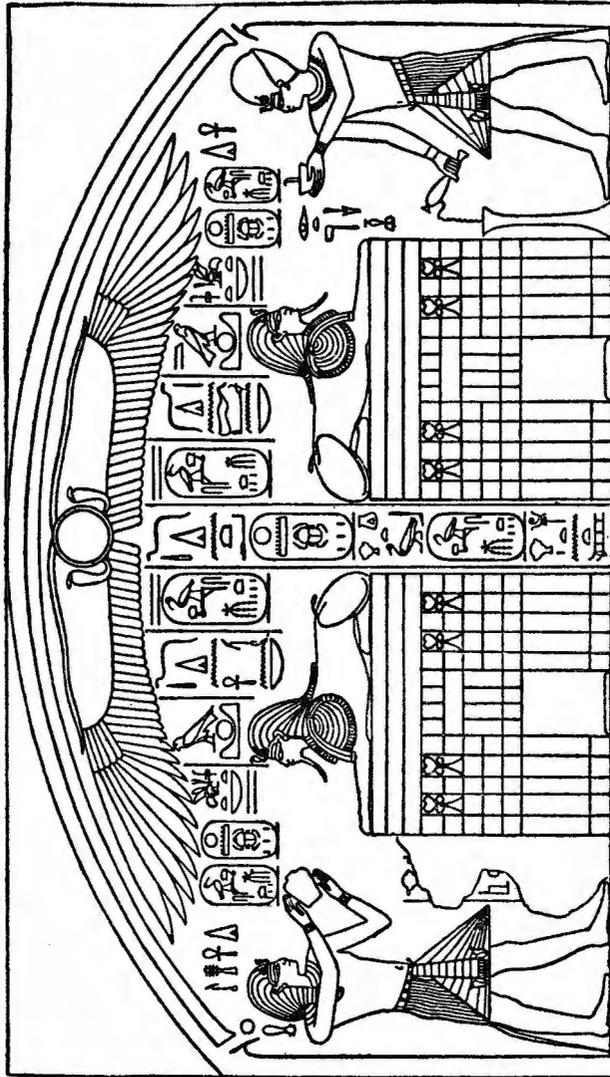


FIG. 18. Tuthmosis IV offering to the great Sphinx of Gizeh (scene from the sphinx-stela).

set up by Tuthmosis IV and which had somehow become damaged and required renewal, or else that it was set up for the first time by the priests of Heliopolis in the

later period, to record a *tradition* or *old legend* which had long been current concerning Tuthmosis IV. But, whichever way we interpret it, I think that we may be quite sure of an Eighteenth Dynasty basis to the story, and, as we shall see later on, it is all in keeping with certain other facts known to us concerning Tuthmosis and his reign. Nor is this story of Tuthmosis IV and the Sphinx of Gizeh the only one of its kind, for, on a fragment of a stone vessel found near by, are inscribed the opening lines of a narrative describing an adventure of Amenmose, eldest son of Tuthmosis I. This adventure was in all probability very similar to that which befell Tuthmosis IV at a later date, and the only conclusion which can be drawn from the evidence is that a strong influence was at work in the neighbourhood for advancing the glory of Harmachis, the Sphinx of Gizeh. Whence came this influence? Surely from Heliopolis not far away, where the god of gods was worshipped, the primeval sun-god beside whom all other deities were after-creations. The rise of Amon, god of Thebes, must have proved gall and bitterness to the Heliopolitan priests, and despite the fact that every effort was made on the part of the Theban authorities to show that their god was in reality identical with Rā'-Atum, the Heliopolitans of course felt strongly that the latter alone should occupy the first place. And this movement to give back to the sun-god his rightful heritage was destined to culminate, before very long, in a religious revolution so complete that orthodox religion in Egypt was to be temporarily swamped. We will tell this story in the next chapter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY TO CHAPTER III

- (1) Text in SETHE, *Urk.* iv, pp. 101 ff.
- (2) The reconstruction of events followed here is the most recent, that of WINLOCK in *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, New York, 1928, ii, pp. 46 ff. For other views see a good summary in H. R. HALL, *The Ancient History of the Near East*, pp. 286 ff., and references given there.
- (3) WINLOCK, *JEA.* x, p. 273.
- (4) WINLOCK, *JEA.* xv, pp. 56 ff.
- (5) The scenes and texts are reproduced in NAVILLE, *The Temple of Deir El Bahari*, vol. ii, pls. xlvi ff.; the texts alone, and recollated, in SETHE, *Urk.* iv, pp. 215 ff.
- (6) Cairo Hymn to Amon. For translation see ERMAN-BLACKMAN, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 282 ff.
- (7) Many years later King Amenhotep III followed the example of Hatshepsut, and devoted a room in the temple of Luxor to reliefs depicting his own miraculous birth as son of Amon-Rā and Queen Mutemuia. They closely resemble those of Hatshepsut at Deir-el-bahri, and Amenhotep must have ordered their execution rather for his own gratification than owing to any political necessity. For reproductions see GAYET, "Le Temple de Louxor" in *Mémoires publiés par les Membres de la Mission Archéologique Française au Caire*, xv (1^{er} Fasc.), and a useful handy account by COLIN CAMPBELL, *The Miraculous Birth of King Amon-Hotep III.*
- (8) Text in SETHE, *Urk.* iv, 155 ff.
- (9) G. LEFEBVRE, *Histoire des Grands Prêtres d'Amon de Karnak*, p. 118.
- (10) See A. M. BLACKMAN, *JEA.* xi, pp. 249 ff., and xii, pp. 176 ff., where the records of such oracles are translated and discussed.
- (11) Reproduced in LEPSIUS, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, iii, pl. lxxviii. The most recent collation of all copies by ERMAN, *Sitzungsberichte Königlischen Akademie*, Berlin, 1904, pp. 428 ff.

CHAPTER IV

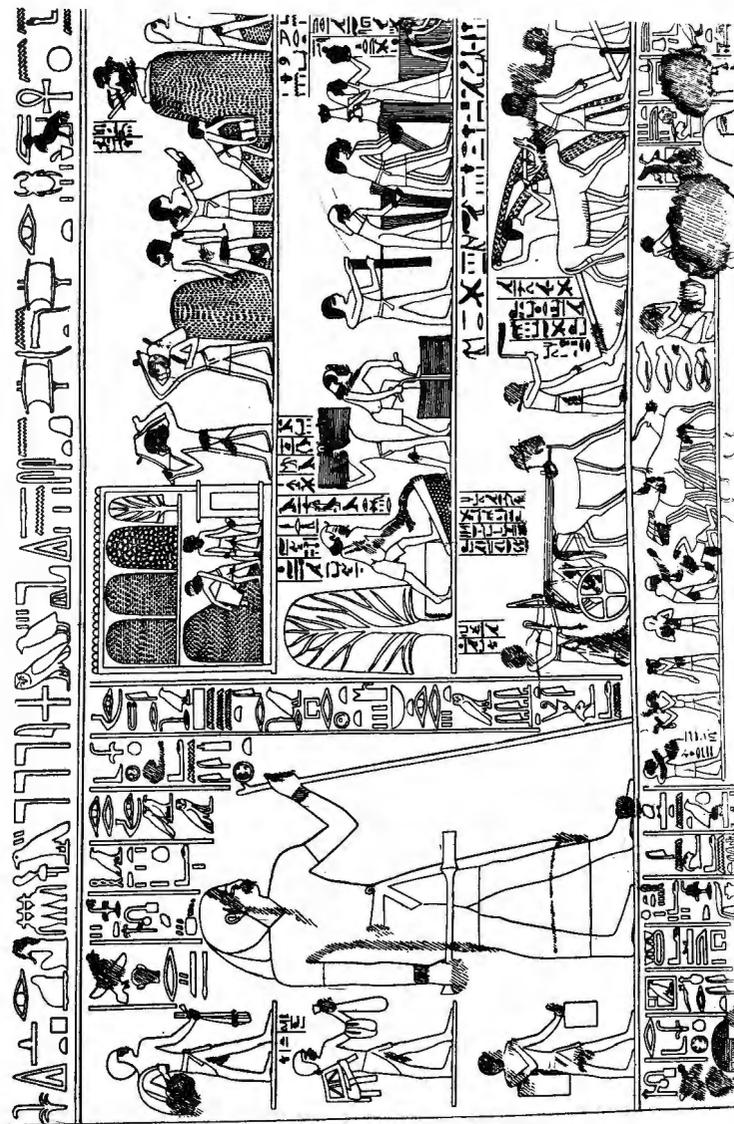
WHEN Amenhotep III, son of Tuthmosis IV, succeeded to the throne of Egypt he entered upon a reign of peace and plenty. Except for an early expedition into Nubia conducted by Amenhotep in person, and a later disturbance there quelled by his viceroy, the Pharaoh was not called upon to take up arms. In great magnificence he reigned in his own Egypt while the world paid homage. His empire extended from the river Euphrates down beyond the Fourth Cataract in Nubia, and outside the limits of the empire itself other world powers sought to make Pharaoh their friend. Thus the kings of Babylon and Mitanni¹ were continually in correspondence with him, as we know from the clay tablets on which their letters were written, and which were found at El 'Amarneh some years ago (1). Pharaoh no longer found himself the ruler of an isolated state but an international figure, the hub of the civilised earth.

It was this broadened vision of the world and Egypt's place in it that formed the fertile soil from which, a few years later, extraordinary plants were to spring. The mainspring of the movement, the return to sun-worship, was indeed ancient in the extreme, but the strange course which it eventually took would not have been possible at any other period of Egyptian

¹ A kingdom north of the Euphrates, with the ruling family of which Tuthmosis IV, Amenhotep III, and his son contracted marriages.

history. The years of foreign conquest under successive kings had not only extended the bounds of Egypt and the dominion of Pharaoh, they had enlarged the empire of the gods as well. No longer was Amon-Rā' the god of Egypt alone; as the giver of victory to Pharaoh his son he had enlarged his power over other lands, and in Egyptian eyes was rapidly approaching the position of world-god. So it seemed on the surface, yet in reality Amon-Rā' of Thebes was no more than a mask concealing an older and far more illustrious deity. It will be remembered that when, through political circumstances, the local god of Thebes found himself suddenly raised to be the State-god of all Egypt, he was at once identified by his priesthood with Rā', the sun-god, and given all that god's attributes and ancient prestige (see above, p. 9). Henceforward Amon was Amon-Rā', to all intents and purposes a sun-god, although he continued to retain his own form and special characteristics. Eventually the High Priest of Amon at Karnak found himself the head of the priesthods of all the Egyptian gods throughout the country, in charge also of the huge treasuries and estates of Amon's temple, and sometimes even occupying civil posts of the highest importance, as when Queen Hatshepsut appointed Hapuseneb to the supreme office of Vizier. A large part of the spoil and slaves won in Asiatic campaigns was assigned to Amon, together with a goodly share of the yearly tribute of the empire, and his domains were not confined to Egypt itself, but included three towns in the Lebanon. His fame spread far and wide; in Canaan he was worshipped as the equal of Baal and Ashtoreth, and his temples arose in the cities of Syria, Palestine, and far south

PLATE VI



COUNT PAHERY INSPECTING AGRICULTURAL WORK
Scene from his tomb at El Kâb, after Griffith and Tylor.

in Nubia at various places, including Napata which was destined to be the god's stronghold in the closing years of Egyptian history. Amon stood forth as universal god; his titanic shrines at Thebes, resounding ever with the chant of priests and priestesses and blazing alike with gorgeous ritual and pageantry of kings, had become the concrete expression of the nation's religious life. Multitudes of pilgrims visited the Theban temples and purchased as souvenir of their pilgrimage some *objet de piété*, perhaps a scarab bearing the impressive words: "Rest to the heart is found only in the House of Amon." Adoring crowds thronged the streets to witness the outdoor processions of the god, especially the great festival of Öpet, at the New Year, on which Amon, his consort Mut and his son Khonsu, were born aloft from Karnak in their sacred boats upon the shoulders of the clergy, to be conveyed southward on the Nile in magnificently adorned barges to visit the temple of Luxor, Pharaoh himself officiating at the ceremonies amid the wild enthusiasm of the populace.

We have said that the attainment of the kingship by a Theban house had made Amon State-god, and that the subsequent progress of successive Pharaohs to a premier position in the world of that time had taken the Theban god along with them. Yet it was in this fact of Amon's dependence upon the royal power that his weakness lay, a weakness which at last was to result in a complete overthrow of "the king of the gods". The reader will recall that in Chapter I it was shown that the whole background of the Egyptian kingship was solar, that Pharaoh was both the son of the sun-god Rā' and his embodiment on earth, and that the throne

on which he sat was the throne of the hawk-god Horus. So ancient were these traditions, and so deep-rooted in the Egyptian mind was the association of Pharaoh with the sun, that it was impossible for Amon to step into the sun-god's shoes without proclaiming himself as another form of his predecessor. Thus, as he followed the rising fortunes of the king, it was inevitable that his position as sun-god should be more and more stressed, and that as sun-god he should receive more and more honour. But he was not really a sun-god at all! And none can have appreciated that fact more fully than the priests of Rā'-Atum at Heliopolis, the ancient home of sun-worship in Egypt and the centre of national religion in earlier times, before the rise of Amon. Throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty they did not cease to exert their influence on religious thought, and it is a significant fact that the edition of the Book of the Dead which appeared at this time was the work of Heliopolitan theologians. Amon plays no part in the Book, but the chief deities are Rā' and Osiris, as they had been in the earlier texts from which the Book of the Dead was compiled. A second indication of the continued and increasing strength of the sun-religion was the worship of the god Mentu, in his town of Hermonthis a short way south of Thebes, now the little town of Armant. This god originally had the head of a bull, but he had become solarised very early and henceforward bore a hawk's head surmounted by two tall plumes, being regarded as another form of Rā'-Horus (Fig. 19). His sacred animal, however, remained a bull until the end, but this in its turn was known as "the living soul of Rā'". The kings of the Eleventh Dynasty had come from

Hermonthis, and from that time the town began to grow in religious importance. Under the Eighteenth Dynasty its nearness to the great capital city helped to increase this importance rapidly, and it soon became the centre of sun-religion in Upper Egypt corresponding to Heliopolis in the north. Indeed the very name of the town in Egyptian, *Iun-shema'*, means "Heliopolis



FIG. 19. Mentu-Rā'.

of Upper Egypt". A third example of the influence of Heliopolis has been already seen in the story of Tuthmosis IV (and also, probably, in another story of Amenmose, son of Tuthmosis I) and the Sphinx of Gîzeh. And the culmination of this movement was to be a complete return to sun-worship, that extraordinary religious revolution under King Amenhotep IV,

better known as Akhenaten. Let us follow the developments which led up to it.

A certain word had long been in use to denote the visible sun. This word was *aten*, and the *aten* had naturally come to be regarded as the abode of the sun-god himself, so that we find expressions such as "Rā' and his Aten". Thus the word comes to mean the glowing disc of the sun from which Rā' shines forth to the world. Imagine our surprise when we find Tuthmosis IV, in an inscription upon a large memorial scarab (2), claiming that his victorious strength abroad is due to Aten, with no mention of Amon at all! This interesting document reads as follows:

"The princes of Naharin, bearing their gifts, behold Menkheperurā', as he comes forth from his palace, they hear his voice like (that of) the son¹ of Nūt, his bow being in his hand like the son¹ of the successor of Shu. If he rouses himself to fight, Aten (going) before him, he will destroy the mountains, trampling down the foreign countries, treading unto Naharin² and unto Karoy,² to cause the foreign countries to be like subjects, in order to contribute to Aten forever!"

Hitherto "Aten" had been merely a name for the physical sun-disc in which the sun-god lived. But in this text the word Aten is used for the first time as a name of the *sun-god himself*, and to the series of names by which he had been known from primeval times, Rā', Atum, Horus, and Harakhte, is now added a new one, "Aten." During the reign of Amenhotep III the use of this name becomes very frequent indeed,

¹ i.e., Pharaoh is here thought of as the son of the god Geb and the goddess Nūt. The "successor of Shu" is of course Geb.

² The Northern and Southern boundaries of the Egyptian empire, in Syria and Nubia respectively.

and the king seems to have called the palace which he built on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, "Aton Gleams"; we know also that he gave this title to the royal barge, in which he sailed with his queen Tiy upon the pleasure lake attached to this palace, and even occasionally added the words to his own name in the cartouche. Thus there is strong evidence that by now had arisen a cult of Aten as a deity distinct by himself, and we know for certain that a temple of Aten existed at Thebes in the reign of Amenhotep III. What are we to infer from these facts? Surely nothing else but that in the eyes of the king the national importance of the sun-god was growing by leaps and bounds. As we have already hinted, this was inevitable. Sustained on his throne by a wealth of tradition dominated throughout by the sun-god, himself his very son and earthly embodiment, and, finally, raised through foreign conquest to be "lord of all that the sun-disc (*aten*) encircles" (a title used on the monuments with increasing frequency during the Eighteenth Dynasty), the Egyptian Pharaoh was unconsciously beginning to appreciate once more the indissoluble bonds uniting himself to the sun-god, a relationship which could never be claimed by Amon of Thebes, State-god and giver of victory though he was.¹ Nevertheless, had events proceeded along a normal course it is highly probable that this altered feeling would have resulted in no great

¹ Tuthmosis IV, Amenhotep III, and Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) all married princesses of Mitanni, a country in Northern Mesopotamia, and therefore, according to some authorities, we should see foreign influence in this growth of sun-worship. But the evidence is insufficient, nor is there any definite reason for regarding Queen Tiy herself as of any but Egyptian origin.

national change. But fate had willed it otherwise, for when, in 1376 B.C.,¹ Amenhotep the Magnificent died after a reign of thirty-six years, the Double Crown and sceptres of power were assumed by a man who was at the same time a religious fanatic, a poet—and mad!



FIG. 20. Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and their daughters under the rays of Aten. (Relief in Berlin Museum.)

Eldest son of Amenhotep and Queen Tiy, and now at least twenty-four years old, Nefer-Kheperu-Rā' Wā'-en-Rā',² Amenhotep IV inherited all the luxurious nature of his father, but combined with it a strong abnormality both in mind and body (Fig. 20). His forehead was receding, and his head projected far

¹ For the last four years of his reign his son was associated as co-regent.

² "Beautiful are the forms of Rā', Rā' is alone."

back suggesting that he was hydrocephalus; his features were thin and the jaw long and drooping, his arms were slender and his body and legs resembled those of a woman, while the deep sunken eyes smouldered with internal fires above a languid and sensuous smile. This was the monarch who now from the throne of the empire proclaimed himself high priest of Horakhte-Aten, and threw himself into a violent campaign of furthering the interests of this new form of the sun-god.¹ Straightway building operations were begun at Thebes to enlarge the shrine of Aten, which had been erected during his father's reign and probably even earlier, and colossal statues of the new king were set up in its precincts. One glance at these monstrosities informs us that we have to deal not only with a religious reformer, but also with an artistic revolutionary, for here in these statues are the physical abnormalities of the reigning Pharaoh reproduced and exaggerated with a morbid enthusiasm. For the first time in the history of art we find ourselves face to face with realism for realism's (not art's) sake. Although this is not the place to say much upon the artistic side of Amenhotep IV's reign (some important references will be found in the bibliography) (3), it is useful to know the main facts in order to appreciate fully the nature of the religious revolution which developed with it. And there can be no doubt whatever that æstheticism was the keynote of the period. But a new movement in art had already begun earlier in the Eighteenth Dynasty, just as had

¹ It is important to note that one of Amenhotep IV's titles—"Wearer of crowns in Hermonthis"—implies that he was crowned there. Also, his uncle Anen, brother of Queen Tiy, who was Second Prophet of Amon at Karnak, was also High-priest of Mentu at Hermonthis.

the new move towards sun-worship, and like the latter would in all probability have reached no astonishing climax without the stimulus of Amenhotep IV. It has always been held that the heretic king himself must have played a great part in advancing Egyptian art to the pitch which we find at El 'Amarneh, especially in its more eccentric manifestations, but how great that part was remained unknown till the discovery, a short time ago, of the colossal statues mentioned above. They clinch the matter, for, although set up during the early years of the king's reign, they are conceived in the most extreme form ever taken by the art of "the 'Amarneh Age", and thus prove that the driving force behind this new art was actually Amenhotep IV himself.

Events now moved swiftly. The new king turned his eyes towards the towering shrines of Amon, to whom the whole world paid homage, and resolved that this upstart deity should usurp the sun-god's place no longer. With one stroke he tumbled Amon from his throne, closed his temples and dispossessed his priesthood. On every temple wall the figure of Amon was hammered down by the king's commissioners, and his name erased from all inscriptions throughout the land, including those on the walls of private tombs. Even the honoured name of the king's father, Amenhotep, was not spared, for it mentioned the hated god. This last difficulty applied, of course, to the reformer himself who was also called "Amenhotep" (meaning "Amon is content"), and he therefore was forced to change his name to one more in keeping with his religious ideas. Henceforth he reigned as "Akhenaten", the name by which he is best known to-day, and which means, "It is well with the sun-disc," almost a trumpet

note proclaiming the victory of the primeval god. Yet this was not all. Akhenaten had another idea in his head, for his erasures did not stop with the name of Amon but went on to remove the names of all other gods as well, even the word "gods" itself being frequently obliterated!

This idea, presented to us for the first time in history, was *monotheism*. Certainly foregoing ages had known the conception of a supreme god in whom all other gods were absorbed or with whom they were identified, but no one had gone so far as to assert

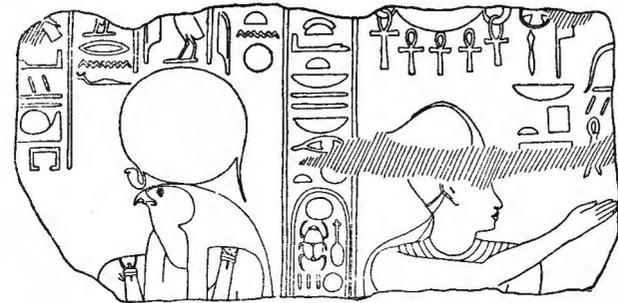


FIG. 21. Aten shown as Hawk-headed. Relief from Aten-temple at Thebes, now in Berlin Museum. It originally belonged to the reign of Amenhotep III, but was later surcharged with the name of Akhenaten.

the existence of one sole god and to deny the existence of any other. It was this momentous step that Akhenaten took; for him Aten was the Supreme Being, the only ruler of the universe, whose glory was shared by no one else, to whom alone mankind owed obedience and worship. Beside him all other deities were false, and the memory of them must be removed from men's minds.

Now, as soon as we have fully realised the importance of

this new religious idea by which Akhenaten was inspired, we at once inquire in what form and shape he imagined his god to exist. Did he accept as a matter of course one of the traditional conceptions of Egyptian deity, or did his originality show itself in this matter as in so many others? During the reign of Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III, the god Aten, at that time only a by-form of the sun-god, was identified with "Rā'-Horus-of-the-Horizon" (in Egyptian Rā'-Horakhte), and as such was represented as a hawk-headed man wearing the sun-disc upon his head. (Fig. 21) (4). This conception was almost certainly retained by Akhenaten when he first ascended the throne, but before long he had replaced it by an entirely new one, the adequacy and simplicity of which cannot but call for our admiration. Henceforward the supreme god was not pictured in man's image but as he himself actually was, the glowing disc of the sun, the source of all life. From this disc extend downwards in all directions a multitude of rays, each ray ending in a human hand which caresses the king and his family who stand beneath (Figs. 20 to 22). Further, as we shall more fully understand later on, Aten was regarded as a heavenly *king*, and so there hangs over the front of his disc the uræus-cobra, emblem of kingship. No better symbol of the divine sun in his primeval nature could have been chosen, no idea more capable of being understood by the simplest mind.

But Akhenaten was determined to be more explicit still concerning the doctrines which he taught, and resolved that the very name by which the new god was called should explain exactly who and what he was (5). Thus beside the raying disc were written,

enclosed in two cartouches like those of a Pharaoh, the titles of Aten: "Lives Rā'-Horus-of-the-Horizon, rejoicing in-his-name-of-'Shu-who-is-Aten'." This is a careful statement of Aten's divine nature; he is identical with the old sun-god Rā'-Horakhte, whom everybody knows, and also the same as the god Shu. That this formula was not invented during Akhenaten's reign, but was applied to the Aten as early as the time of Amenhotep III, we know for a fact, but it was Akhenaten who promulgated the use of it so widely that it confronts us innumerable times upon his monuments. Here, for the first time in the history of religion, we meet the crystallisation of religious beliefs into a formal and concise definition, that is to say a *creed*.

By this time, however, as may be readily understood, the city of Thebes had become an inconvenient seat for the reforming Pharaoh. On the one hand the fierce hostility of the dispossessed priesthood of Amon-Rā', and on the other the close proximity of vast temples erected to the glory of that god, together with the great Necropolis on the west bank which daily testified to the beliefs of past generations, must have persuaded Akhenaten to move his capital elsewhere. In the sixth year of his reign we find the king and his court settled at Tell el 'Amarneh, 250 miles north of Thebes. At this place on the east bank, where the golden cliffs, which in Egypt hem in the Nile on either side, sweep back to form a great amphitheatre in the desert bordered with a strip of brilliant green cultivation, Akhenaten built his new city (6). Here, on virgin soil, the worshippers of the one true god should dwell undisturbed, and in the inscriptions of seventeen great boundary stelæ, which



the king caused to be hewn out of the cliffs on both sides of the river, he swore an oath never to leave this district which he had dedicated to Aten, and which he named Akhet-aten, "The Horizon of the Disc." Along the desert edge soon arose royal palaces, splendid

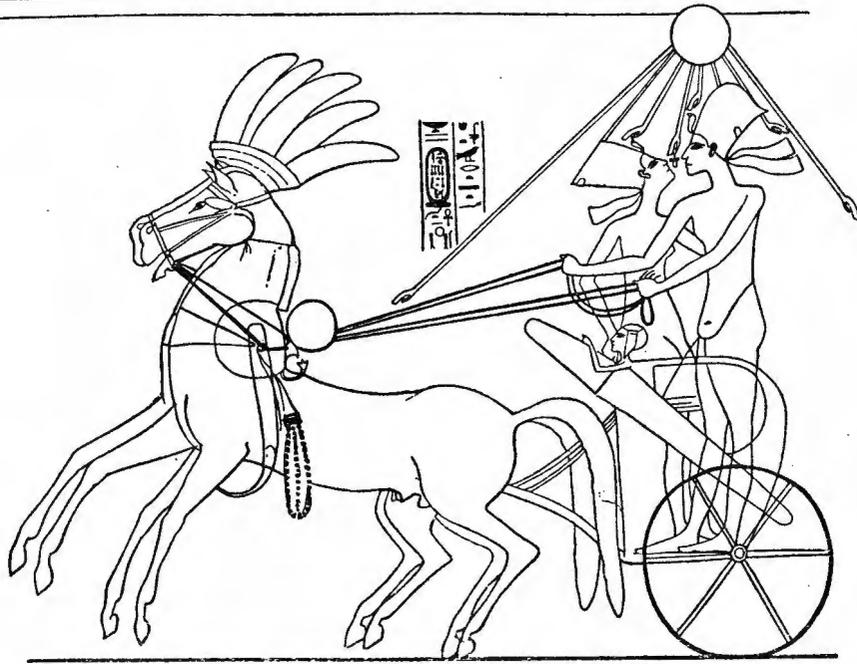


FIG. 22. Akhenaten and Nefertiti driving in their chariot. (Scene at El 'Amarneh, after N. de G. Davies.)

houses for the nobility and temples to the Disc, while, in the cliffs behind, workmen prepared the tombs (7) in which Pharaoh and his court would one day rest. A noble, addressing Aten in a religious hymn, describes the new city in glowing words (8) : "He (the king)

hath made for thee great Akhet-aten, the rich in love, lady of favour, abounding in wealth, in whom is the sustenance of Rā'. One rejoiceth to behold her beauty, for she hath been adorned and made beautiful ; the sight of her is like looking at Heaven."

In the "Horizon-of-the-Disc" Akhenaten and his queen, Nefertiti, moved amid a brilliant society, driving abroad in their chariot (Fig. 22), followed by acclaiming crowds, either to officiate at some sacrifice in the great Aten temple, or to attend some more material festivity. In this way the years of Akhenaten's reign slipped by, the king engaged in endless visits to altar and to banqueting-hall, basking in the generous warmth of his god and seemingly oblivious of, or at any rate incapable of arresting, the doom which threatened the Egyptian empire in Syria and Palestine. While the Hittite forces moved relentlessly south, the wandering tribes of the Khabiri invaded and plundered from the east, and the Syrian dynasts themselves fought and betrayed each other, the successor of generations of empire-builders sang hymns in "The-Horizon-of-the-Aten". Let us now turn aside to examine in detail this religion which was to wreck temporarily the great structure of Egyptian world-empire.

It would be well to begin, I think, by remarking that a very great deal of imaginative nonsense has been written on the subject. Writers have presented Akhenaten to modern readers as a saint inspired by a religion of love, teaching mankind for the first time the immeasurable beneficence of God, and pointing them to a new relationship with the Creator which was marked by a deep spirituality hitherto unparalleled in the ancient world. He is made, in fact, an untimely

precursor of the Christian revelation. Such wild statements, however, are not only ridiculous in the extreme, but can only be founded on a superficial examination of the evidence. The classic source from which we draw our knowledge of Akhenaten's conception of the Deity is the famous hymn (9) to Aten, found inscribed on the walls of the courtiers' tombs at El 'Amarneh, and which, in all probability, was composed by the king himself. It begins :—

“Thou dawnest beautifully in the horizon of Heaven, the living Aten, the first to live ! Thou dawnest in the eastern horizon and fillest every land with thy beauty. Thou art lovely, great, glittering high above every land, thy rays encompass the lands unto the extent of all that thou hast made ! Thou art Rā', thou reachest unto their end and subjectest them to thy beloved son.¹ Thou art afar off, yet thy rays are upon earth. . . .”

The worshipper passes on to describe how all life depends upon Aten. When he sets in the evening mankind lies down to sleep, but when he shines out again in the morning sky the earth comes back to life and men rise up to work : “They wash their bodies, they take their clothing, their hands praise thy rising, and throughout the land they do their tasks.”

Even the animals and plants thrive happily in the radiance of Aten :—

“All cattle are content with their herbage, the trees and herbs are green, the birds fly from their nests, their wings praise thy *Ka* ! All wild beasts dance upon their feet, all flying and fluttering things come to life when thou hast dawned for them !”

¹ Akhenaten.

Aten is the source of all life, and it is he who creates the child in his mother's womb, sustaining him with nourishment until the day of his birth. Then, in contrast, to show how even the meanest creature is likewise the product of Aten's loving care, the poet tells of the chick within its egg, how the sun-god wakes it to life with his quickening power so that it breaks the egg, and comes out :—

“To chirp with all his might (?). He goeth upon his feet after he has come forth from it.”

In this fatherly manner the sun-god cares for his creatures, but his activity is not confined to Egypt. In what is perhaps the most remarkable passage in the hymn, we read :—

“How manifold are thy works that are hidden from me, sole god, beside whom there is none other ! Thou hast fashioned the earth at thy desire when thou wast alone, even all mankind, cattle and all wild beasts, and all (creatures) that are upon earth, that walk upon their feet or go on high flying with their wings.

“The foreign countries of Syria and Kush,¹ and the land of Egypt—thou settest every man in his place and suppliest their needs, each man possessing his food, and reckoned is his lifetime. (Their) tongues are divided in speech and their form likewise ; their skins also are distinguished, for thou dost distinguish the foreign peoples.

“Thou makest the Nile in the Underworld and bringest it forth at thy pleasure to give life to the people, even as thou hast made them. . . . As to all distant nations, thou makest that whereon they live. Thou hast set a Nile² in the sky, so that it may descend for them and make waves upon the mountains like the Great Green³ to wet their fields in their

¹ Nubia.

² A poetical description of rain.

³ The Mediterranean Sea.

districts. How excellently made are thy designs, thou Lord of Eternity! A Nile in the sky . . . for foreign peoples and all animals of the desert that go on foot, and the (real) Nile, it cometh forth from the Underworld for Egypt!"

No one acquainted with the overbearing attitude of imperial Egypt towards the rest of the world, as expressed in hymns of victory or lists of foreign conquests, can fail to be surprised at the breadth of vision underlying the passage just quoted. Foreigners as well as Egyptians are the objects of divine care, and their wants are supplied with equal faithfulness. Syria and Kush are mentioned in one breath with Egypt, and in fact are put first!

The hymn concludes:—

" . . . Thou art in my heart, there is none other that knoweth thee save thy son *Nefer-kheperu-Rā'-wā'-en-Rā'*, whom thou hast caused to be wise in thy designs and in thy strength! The earth came into being by thy hand even as thou hast created them. When thou hast dawned they live, and when thou settest they die. Thou thyself art length of days and one liveth in thee. Eyes are fixed upon thy beauty until thou settest; then all labours are set aside when thou settest on the right.¹ . . . Thou raisest them² up for thy son, who came forth from thy body, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt who liveth on Truth, Lord of the Two Lands, *Nefer-Kheperu-Rā'-wā'-en-Rā'*, son of Rā' who liveth on Truth, lord of diadems, *Akhenaten* of long life, and for the Great Royal Wife beloved of him, Lady of the Two Lands, *Nefer-neferu-Aten-Nefert-ity*, who liveth and is young for ever and ever."

Now the first thing which strikes us on reading this address to Aten is, as we have said before, the emphasis which is laid upon the beneficence of the god and his

¹ i.e. the west.

² Mankind.



[Photo, Gaddis and Seif

THE TEMPLE OF AMON AT KARNAK, LOOKING NORTH-EAST

boundless love towards all his creatures, from man himself down to the chick within its egg, and this theme runs through all the religious inscriptions of the El 'Amarneh tombs. Undoubtedly at no other period before or after the reign of Akhenaten do we find such insistence upon the love of the supreme god, and in this respect we are able to claim Akhenaten's religion as an astonishing advance on the ideas of orthodox Egypt, and in fact of the rest of the nearer East until developed Judaism. But one thing must be made quite clear, and that is that such ideas do not occur *for the first time* in Egypt during Akhenaten's reign. There are a number of passages in earlier religious literature which can be quoted as emphasising the loving nature of the god addressed, and in particular we have the great hymn (10) to Amon-Rā' preserved on a papyrus in the Cairo Museum, and belonging to about the time of Amenophis II, which in certain passages closely resembles the hymn to Aten, so closely in fact that it is impossible not to conclude that the composer of the latter (presumably Akhenaten himself) was re-adapting them. Thus the hymn to Amon shares with the later hymn to Aten a strong likeness to the CIVth psalm, recounting in turn the god's manifold creations and care for all forms of life, and even describing, in the same way as the Aten hymn, how he has created the various races and made their colours different. This latter sentiment, with its surprisingly benevolent attitude towards the foreign world, can be readily understood if we carry our minds back to what was said in the earlier part of this chapter concerning the imperial expansion of Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty, and the consequent broadening of the Egyptian

mind to receive the idea of a *world-god*, first Amon-Rā' and now Aten. Without this gradual widening of vision, as a result of empire, which had preceded Akhenaten, the leap to complete monotheism would have been impossible. Yet we may rightly regard Akhenaten as the first and only Egyptian to hold out to men the conception of one *sole* god, whose principal attribute was an all-embracing love for the works of his creation—only we must remember that for this new departure the stage was already set.

Another novel feature of the Aten religion was the fashion in which Aten was represented, the abandoning of the human or semi-human forms with which Egyptian gods had been depicted in art since the earliest times. In a passage on one of his boundary stelæ Akhenaten speaks of his god as: "He who fashioned himself with his hands, whom no artificer hath known." Thus it seems that the king did not consider himself justified in depicting the sun-god in any other way than he actually appeared to human eyes, that is to say, as a glowing disc from which streamed bright rays ending in symbolic hands which bestowed his gifts. But if we imagine that Akhenaten's unearthly conception of deity went any deeper we are grossly mistaken. To this intense individualist Aten appeared simply a divine counterpart of himself, a celestial king reigning in Heaven, smiling down benignly on the King of Egypt. At every turn the kingship of Aten was heavily emphasised. The sun-disc always showed the sacred uræus-cobra, symbol of royalty, hanging from it; his names were always written in cartouches, and he was actually supposed to celebrate the ancient Sed-festivals of jubilee at the same time as Akhenaten

himself! (11) In Egyptian mythology the sun-god had always been thought of as a heavenly king, possessing to a boundless degree the attributes of Pharaoh, but never until the time of Akhenaten was this aspect of the god made so much of. It was all in keeping with the exaggerated part which Akhenaten himself seems to have played in the religion which he attempted to force upon Egypt. The reader, if he turns back to Chapter II of this book, will find described there the appearance of an ordinary Egyptian tomb, with its brilliant wall-paintings illustrating the life which the dead person hoped to live in the next world, and his relations with Osiris, god of the dead and dispenser of good things to his followers. But during the reign of Akhenaten the whole of this is literally wiped out, and entirely new customs take the place of the old. Osiris and his *confrères* are forgotten, there are no scenes at all of the future life, and the personal element is much reduced. Instead, the walls of the tombs at El 'Amarneh, in which the high officials were buried, are covered with prayers and adorations of the Aten and the king, the latter himself dominating the scenes. On every hand we see him in these famous painted reliefs, driving with his queen and the royal daughters to the temple of Aten, performing splendid sacrifices in the temple court beneath the sun's bright rays, leaning from his palace balcony to bestow gold collars upon the owner of the tomb who stands below amid a servile and fawning crowd, or else seated in state, vested for a moment with the imperial authority of his great predecessors, receiving the tribute of the nations. In tomb-scenes of orthodox times we are well accustomed to see the dead man seated beside his

wife, perhaps with many friends and relations also present, partaking of an endless funeral repast. But here, in the tombs of El 'Amarneh, the dead person's family life is completely shelved for that of Pharaoh. Again and again he appears in pleasant scenes with Nefertiti his queen, the little princesses clambering about their parents, intimate pictures of Pharaoh's home life which are never found at any other period, and indeed were quite unthinkable according to orthodox Egyptian canons of conventional reserve and propriety. It is as if the Egyptian Pharaoh had suddenly stepped down from his platform of aloof divinity, and was now in these pictures enthusiastically trying to convince people that he was a human being. And yet this same king, in every other way possible, was forcing on Egypt a conception of himself as god which was even more exaggerated than the claims of his orthodox ancestors. He is supreme god upon earth, equal in rights and powers to Aten in Heaven, equal, too, in love and beneficence. All earthly beings depend upon his bounty, for he is "maker of fate, creator of good fortune, lord of burial and giver of old age" (12), he is "the fate who giveth life" (13), and "the great Nile of the whole land through beholding whom they live" (14), "millions of Niles pouring forth water daily . . . my god who made me, by whose *Ka* I live!" (15), as well as Rā' himself (16). But above all Akhenaten claimed to be the only source from which his courtiers could draw knowledge of Aten; "Thou art in my heart," he says in his hymn, "there is none other that knoweth thee save thy son *Nefer-kheperu-Rā'-wā'-en-Rā'*. Thou hast caused him to be wise in thy designs and in thy strength." Likewise the courtiers love to draw attention to the king as their

prophet, "My lord taught me and I do his teaching," says the Divine Father Ay,¹ "my life consists in adoring his *ka*, I am satisfied in following him" (17). Pharaoh was indeed the teacher, but to what last end did his teaching lead? We have now to examine that part of his religion which shows the greatest insufficiency of all, its attitude towards life after death. And that attitude may best be expressed by one word—silence. Of a life lived for ever in some blissful domain, like the Heaven of Rā' or the Underworld of Osiris in the old religion, there is literally no mention whatever. Osiris and the other gods of the dead could not be tolerated by this fanatical monotheist, although on his *ushabti* figures (18) his name is still preceded by the title "Osiris" as under the old régime, but here in all probability simply equivalent to the term "deceased", just as he continually used the word *Maāt* "Truth" to denote the principle and not the goddess. In the whole necropolis of El 'Amarneh there are only two representations of funeral rites, and one (19) of these is in the tomb of Huya (20), who was a high official in the personal service of Tiy, the queen-mother. Here we see the mummy of Huya, set up apparently outside the tomb, wearing the unguent-cone upon its head and the formal beard. Behind the dead man his wife and another woman are making lamentation, while in front a *Sem*-priest pours libation from a vase upon a heap of offerings (meat, vegetables and flowers). The whole scene recalls at once the well-known ceremony of "Opening the Mouth", described above on pp. 54 ff., but here there are no pictures of the sacred instruments used for that purpose, or of Anubis embracing the

¹ Afterwards King of Egypt.

deceased. It is merely the presentation of funerary offerings to a dead person. Above runs an inscription : " May there be performed for thee an ' Offering-which-the-king-gives ', consisting of thy bread and beer of thy house, may there be poured for thee libation of water from thy cistern . . . may food be placed for thee upon the altar for thy *ka* . . . may thy name be remembered, O Superintendent of the Royal Harêm and Treasurer Huya ! " Accompanying this picture are others showing the funeral cortège and tomb furniture, beds, chairs, a chariot, wine-jars, etc. (21).

Now the inscription translated above contains almost the sum of Atenistic teaching about life after death, as expressed in the sculptured tombs of El 'Amarneh. As one carefully examines the prayers for welfare beyond the grave which are preserved there, one is irresistably drawn to the conclusion that the religion of Akhenaten did not hold out to its followers the hope of any sort of survival other than a ghost-like existence in the tomb. That is to say, only the most material portion of the old orthodox funerary beliefs was retained, and nothing new added to make up the deficiency. During this eternal existence in the tomb Panehsy, chief servitor of the Aten, prays to Akhenaten that he may grant him " to behold the Living Aten when he dawns, and to adore him ", and that he will allow him " to receive bread that has gone up in the Presence at every festival of the Living Aten in the House ¹ of the Benben " ; likewise he prays to Nefertiti for " an entrance in favour and a going forth in love, and a good remembrance in the presence of the king " and among his court (22). Again he prays : " May

¹ A name for the Aten-temple.

he (the king) grant a happy old age and a journey with favour to the mountain ¹ of Akhetaten, thine everlasting seat " ; " may he grant a long lifetime (or simply ' duration ') of beholding thy beauty, without ceasing to behold thee every day " ; and to Nefertiti " that the children of thy (Panehsy's) house may pour libations to thee at the door of thy tomb-chamber " (23).

It will be clear at once that these prayers simply reproduce the age-old wish for a plentiful supply of food and drink in order to keep the *ka* alive in the tomb, asking especially for a share in the good things which have been heaped on the altar in a god's temple, here of course that of Aten, or else, a novel feature, offered up before the king himself. Nearly all prayers of this kind are made in one breath to Aten and the *kas* of the king and queen, and it is manifestly evident that in the religion of this time we witness a violent stressing of the very ancient idea, long become a fiction (see above, pp. 21-2), that the king was the giver of mortuary equipment and of all food offerings made to the dead. Moreover, judging from petitions such as the examples quoted above (pp. 110-11), in which the deceased pleads for " an entrance in favour, etc. " and " a long lifetime (or ' duration ') of beholding thy beauty, " ² it would seem that Akhenaten's courtiers hoped that after death they would still in some mysterious way be in the following of the king, eternally enjoying his favour and continued popularity among the nobles. Nor can we fail to be reminded by this of the old Pyramid

¹ The cliffs behind El 'Amarneh in which the tombs were cut.

² These petitions have, apparently, a double application ; on the one hand they refer to the person's lifetime, and on the other to his existence after death.

Age, fifteen hundred years earlier, during which the kings were buried in mighty pyramids, surrounded by the tombs of their illustrious followers who still thronged around them in the "place of silence"; the old tradition, always present to some extent in Egyptian funerary beliefs, is now revived by Akhenaten and emphasised *ad nauseam*.

This, then, was immortality as taught by the new faith. From the darkness of his rock-cut tomb the dead man would daily come out at sunrise to behold his god glowing in the sky. His spirit would still be dependent on his king as during life, and by his favour he would enjoy forever offerings of food and drink in his "house of eternity", the tomb. But nothing more than this was promised. No other kind of immortality could be hoped for. Beside the grand ideas of the old religion, which pictured a judgment before Osiris and an abode in his kingdom, or a splendid journey through the sky in the boat of Rā', the teachings of the Atenists seem meagre and intensely material. It is interesting, however, to note how, in a tomb¹ (24) which belongs to the beginning of Akhenaten's reign, and in which Osiris and all the principal Egyptian gods are still retained, the sun-god is addressed as the bestower of a very real life to the dead.

The passage runs as follows :—

"Thou hearest the cry of him who is in the coffin. Thou raisest up those who are lying on their sides. Thou feedest truth unto him who possesses it, refreshing nostrils with its content . . . thou art come as Aten, the Power of Heaven . . . thou shinest forth for those who are in darkness, those who are in the caverns rejoice . . ."

¹ At Thebes.

The text refers, of course, to the old mythology, according to which the sun-god passed through the caverns of the Underworld during the hours of the night, waking the dead to life once more by his quickening radiance. But for the Aten faith the idea was developed no further during succeeding years, as it might so well have been, and the religion of the tomb remained till the end of the revolution a woefully insufficient thing, shorn of its previous attractions and apparently strongly agnostic.

With regard to the temples at Akhetaten and the services (25) performed in them the rock-tombs of El 'Amarneh provide us with some interesting information. There was apparently one main temple in the city, and this, since images of the god Aten were not made, apparently did not possess a "Holy of Holies" like the usual Egyptian temples. The carved tomb-reliefs, in fact, represent the services taking place in the open court of the temple, beneath the spreading rays of the Sun himself. The form of liturgy, however, as far as we can tell, seems to have been little different in principle from the traditional methods of worshipping the gods. Since there was no image there could not, of course, be the toilet ceremonies usually performed on such an object, but the offering of a meal to the god, which formed the basis of all temple-ritual in Egypt (see p. 38), remained the same, and unguents and flowers were presented also. Thus we see (26) Akhenaten accompanied by Nefertiti, who assists her husband in the ritual, and even by the princesses, who rattle sistra, standing before offering-stands piled high with meat, vegetables and flowers, burning quantities of incense on the rising clouds of which the essence of the food and drink will ascend to Aten, or extending over

the oblation the sacred baton, a gesture which accompanied the act of consecration by which a sacrifice was finally made over to the god. As usual it is Pharaoh himself who is represented as officiating, Mery-Rā', high priest of the Aten, occupying a subordinate position in the ceremonial.

During recent years archæologists have been excavating the ruins of the city of "The Horizon-of-the-Disc". It is the only place in Egypt where one may obtain an idea of a complete Egyptian town, for, since all secular buildings were erected of mud-bricks, towns were simply rebuilt again and again upon the levelled ruins of their predecessors, and so have not survived to the present day. El 'Amarneh, however, was abandoned soon after its founder's death, and the desert sand which was blown in and eventually covered everything up has preserved for over three thousand years the city of Akhenaten. To-day we can walk through its deserted streets and study countless things which reconstruct before our eyes daily life in the Egypt of that time. We can walk through a private house and admire its light and cool design, piecing together the fragments of brilliant paintings on plaster that have fallen from ceiling and walls, or examine the bedrooms, bathrooms, and sanitary arrangements. Even more absorbing to some are the ruins of the great temple of Aten, sadly plundered of its stone for building purposes, and now scarcely more than a ground-plan, or the North Palace of Pharaoh, with its zoological section and wonderful wall-paintings, or the residence

of Maru-Aten, with its ornamental lake to gladden the hearts of Akhenaten and his Queen.

Here indeed was no city of ascetics, but a pleasure-city, where banqueting and festivity never ceased! The art of El 'Amarneh with its exquisite presentation of nature's creations on the one hand, and its sensual style on the other; the religion which concentrated on the love and goodness of Aten with only a very material conception of the god himself, and but little assurance beyond this life; the luxury and gaiety of the court at El 'Amarneh as we are able to reconstruct it from tomb-pictures and excavation; and, most of all, the abnormality of Akhenaten himself who dominates the age—poet, æsthete, individualist to the point of egomania, and possibly even morally degenerate (27), lead us to make the following estimation of the remarkable religious movement which we have been studying. The religion of the Horizon-of-the-Disc, although rooted in a faith centuries old, had become the fantastic creation of one man's brain, empty of solid value and abounding in sentimentality, a creed for those who make merry without thought of the future, like gnats dancing out their day of life in the sun-beams which he worshipped.

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- (9) There are two versions, a longer (DAVIES, vi, pp. 29 ff.) and a shorter one (DAVIES, iv, pp. 26 ff.). The former is followed here. A translation of the whole hymn will be found in ERMAN and BLACKMAN, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 288 ff.
- (10) Translation in ERMAN-BLACKMAN, op. cit., pp. 282 ff. See also the famous hymn to the sun-god on the stela of Suty and Hor in the British Museum (No. 826), belonging to the reign of Amenhotep III. For translations see BREASTED, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 315 ff.; and WOLF, op. cit., pp. 111 ff. The text published by PIERRET in *Rec. de Tr.*, i, pp. 70 ff., and by BUDGE (with translation) in *Tutankhamen, Amenism, Atenism, etc.*, pp. 46 ff.
- (11) See GUNN, op. cit.,
- (12) Text in DAVIES, vi, pl. iii.
- (13) " " ii, pl. viii.
- (14) " " ii, pl. xxxvi.
- (15) " " v, pl. ii.
- (16) " " ii, pl. viii.
- (17) " " vi, pl. xxv.
- (18) Catalogue of them in BOURIANT, op. cit., p. 8.
- (19) The other instance is in the Royal Tomb at El-Amarnah, and shows the King and Queen mourning for their dead daughter, Meketaten. Published in BOURIANT, op. cit., pls. vi-xiii.
- (20) DAVIES, iii, pl. xxii.
- (21) " iii, pls. xxii-xxiv.
- (22) Texts in DAVIES, ii, pl. ix.
- (23) " " ii, pl. xxi.
- (24) Published by DAVIES in *JEA.* ix, pp. 134 ff.
- (25) A. M. BLACKMAN, "A Study of the Liturgy Celebrated in the Temple of the Aton at El-Amarna" in *Recueil d'Études Égyptologiques Dedicées à la Mémoire de J. F. Champollion* (Centenary Volume, 1922).
- (26) DAVIES, i, pls. xxv and xxvii.
- (27) NEWBERRY in *JEA.* xiv, p. 7.

CHAPTER V

SEVENTEEN years had passed since the death of Akhenaten, and in this short space three Pharaohs had reigned upon the throne of Egypt. When Akhenaten died in 1362 B.C. his new religion died with him, and, although maintained feebly under Smenkhkarā' and Tutankhamon, his successors, it was finally abandoned as the official religion by the latter, who completed the triumph of Amon and the old gods by making Thebes once more the capital of Egypt. After his reign of ten years, and the five years of Ay who followed him, the throne was ascended by Horemheb, formerly a general in the army and, apparently, not a man of royal birth. Yet he was Egypt's saviour, for this king whose grave and resolute face is well-known to us to-day, acceding to the throne late in life and equipped with a wisdom born of contemplating the inefficiency of his predecessors, set himself to repair the ruins of the country. With her Asiatic Empire almost vanished, and her own internal affairs in chaos, Egypt provided a stern problem for any ruler. But Horemheb faced it undaunted, devoting his reign to a drastic reform of the administration, the officials of which had become hopelessly corrupt during the negligent rule of Akhenaten, and to restoring the worship of the ancient gods.

That the jubilation of Amon's priesthood at their triumph and reinstatement was unbounded we can

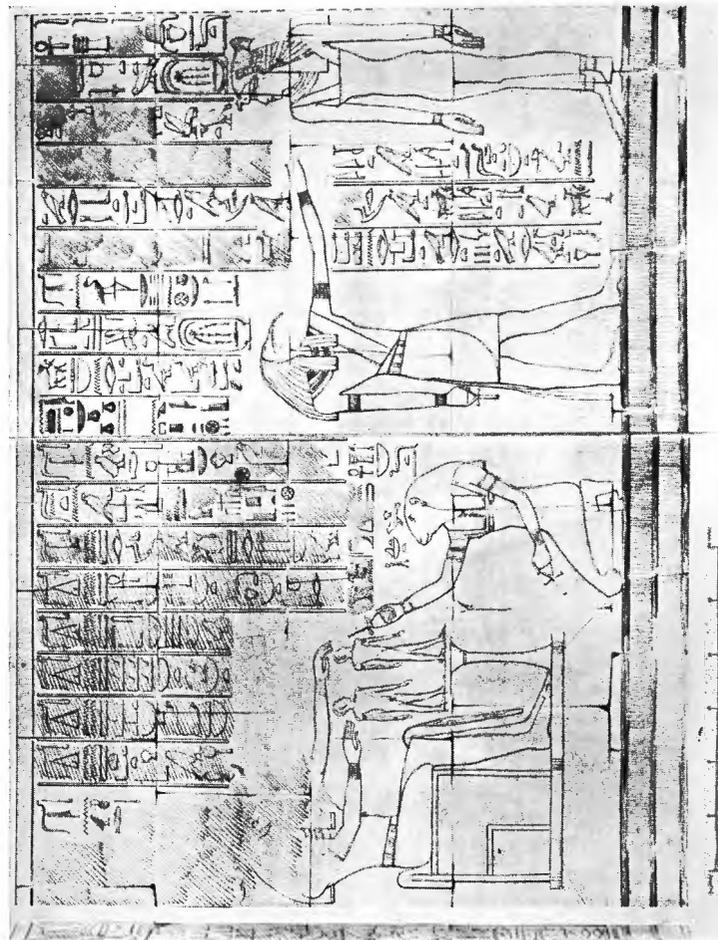
have no doubt, and the priests of all other gods must likewise have rejoiced. Even the clergy of Heliopolis could not have been sorry to return to the old régime, for, although Akhenaten's religious revolution had been rooted in their doctrines, he had obviously gone far beyond their plans, ending up with a religion of his own creation and foreign to their traditional ideas. When Horemheb died and was succeeded by Rameses I, first king of the Nineteenth Dynasty, all was ripe for a strong counter-reformation. Rameses I reigned only for one year and his place was taken by his son, Men-maāt-Rā' Seti I, the first great monarch of the Second Empire. Egypt itself being now, thanks to Horemheb, stable and in order, the young Pharaoh could turn his warlike eyes towards the lost empire in Palestine and Syria, and before long launch against those countries the full tide of his strength. Once more on the temple walls of Karnak we see the victorious figure of Pharaoh, towering above the battle in his chariot, with his mighty bow drawn back to drive death upon the foe. Yet neither Seti nor his successor, Rameses II, were able to do much more than establish Egyptian power in Palestine; the Hittites were by this time too firmly entrenched in Syria for Egypt to recover that part of her lost possessions.

At home Seti was now able to turn his attention to building, and in the numerous works carried out by him for the honour of religion he stands before us as perhaps the most pious of all Egyptian Pharaohs. Already his father, Rameses, had planned to erect at Karnak a columned hall, the immensity of which would dwarf without exception the temples of his ancestors, but it remained for Seti to carry into effect

the major portion of the design. The great Hypostyle Hall of the temple of Amon-Rā' at Karnak is a sight which no traveller can ever forget, with its central aisle, seventy-eight feet in height, of papyrus-flower columns, and its two side aisles, of columns shaped like bundles of papyrus buds, running up to a height of forty-six feet. Sculptured everywhere with the figures of gods and kings painted in brilliant colours, and lighted only by beams filtering through clerestory windows far above, this gigantic hall must have borne splendid witness to the supreme triumph of the god of Thebes. Yet it is at Abydos that Seti has left to us what is claimed by some as the most beautiful temple in Egypt, dedicated to Amon, Osiris and other deities, and to the funeral worship of himself, the noblest of shrines for the dead god of eternity. The exquisitely modelled reliefs and inscriptions are the finest products of Egyptain art, while our knowledge of temple ceremonial is increased by the scenes of worship with which the various chapels are adorned (1).¹ Further, there is one more attraction for us in this building, the famous king-list of Abydos. About this time the primitive tombs of the hoary kings of the First Dynasty, who had lived and died two thousand years before, were being re-discovered and put into repair, and so Seti seized the opportunity of doing honour to his ancestors in the temple which he was erecting nearby. Thus in sculptured relief we see him worshipping the cartouches of all the kings since Menes, and read there what rich food-offerings Seti has ordered for the maintenance of their spirits; bread and beer, beef, fowl, and incense.

Although much occupied in enlarging the shrines of the ancient gods, Seti did not forget the day when

¹ See above, p. 39.



KHNUM FASHIONING HATSHEPSUT AND HER KA; THOTH ADDRESSING QUEEN AHMOSE
(After Naville)



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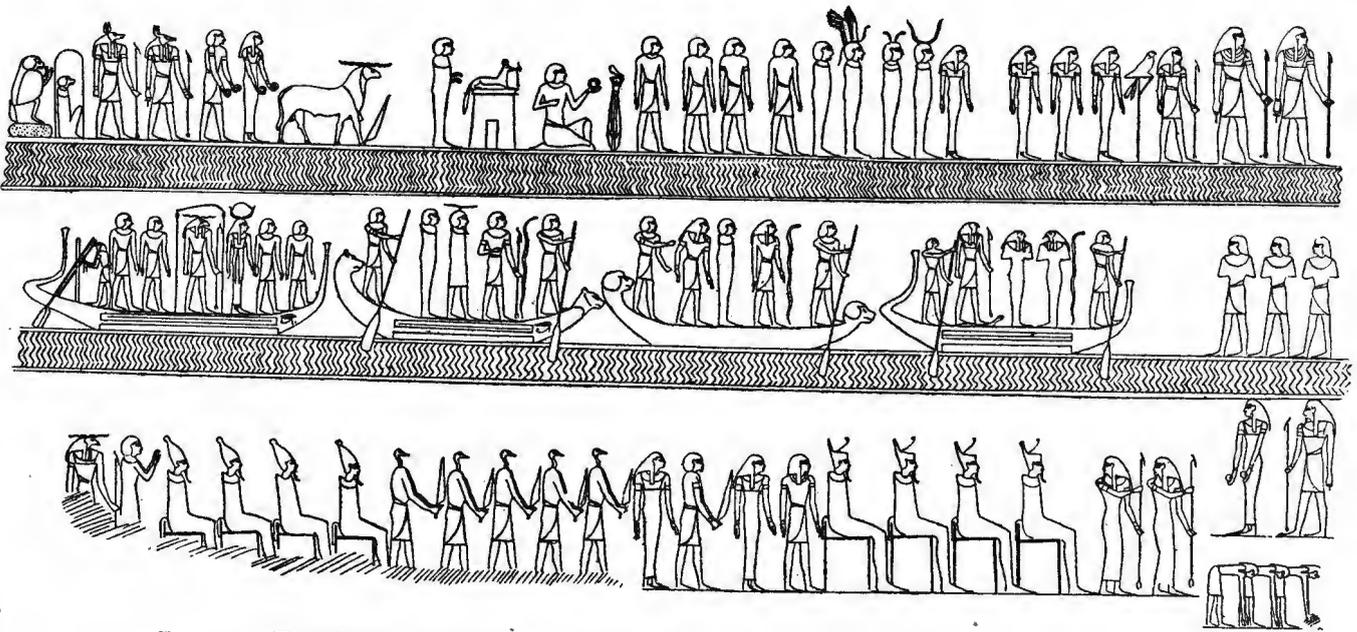


FIG. 23. The Sun-god being towed through the Underworld in his boat. (Tomb of Seti I.)

he himself was destined to join them. In the dreary Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, where so many Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty lay buried, he planned that he too should sleep, and caused a sepulchre to be prepared, like all his designs, on the grandest scale. As we enter this tomb, cut in the living rock, and penetrate deeper and deeper through sloping passages and pillared halls, we seem to be descending into the very realms of the dead. On either side the coloured sculptures (2) of the walls show Pharaoh in the presence of the gods, or else the sun-god in his ship voyaging through the caverns of the Underworld. This voyage is the subject of the religious texts which cover the walls, extracts from "The Book of what is in the Underworld" (*Am Duat* in Egyptian), which describes how the sun-god's boat journeys through the twelve sections into which the nether regions are divided, corresponding to the twelve hours of the night (Fig. 23). In this dread journey the god encounters the spirits of the dead, to whom he gives life and light, and also malevolent demons and gigantic serpents who attempt to bar his progress. But the power of Iuf-Rā,¹ as he is called in this book, is invincible, and by the recitation of spell after spell he clears away all obstacles, thus enabling the dead person also, who is supposed to accompany him, to emerge safe and sound from the ordeal. This priestly composition had already been employed in the tombs of certain Eighteenth Dynasty kings, and from now on it became increasingly popular, together with a second work known as "The Book of Gates" (3), which dealt

¹ i.e. "Body-of-Rā," for he is really supposed to be dead during his underworld journey.

with more or less the same subject. As the visitor to the tomb of Seti I walks down its sloping galleries he becomes more and more oppressed by the legions of underworld deities and demons on either side, sure signs of the decay of religion in Egypt and its degradation to "mumbo-jumbo". It is with a sense of relief that he emerges at last into the sarcophagus chamber, its roof a huge plan of the sky painted with constellations of stars and pictures of the gods who dwell therein. The coffin (4) of Seti, which once stood in this chamber, is now preserved in the Soane Museum, in London (Lincoln's Inn Fields), a magnificent thing of translucent alabaster, carved with a complete copy of the "Book of Gates", the pictures and hieroglyphic signs having been originally filled with a blue paste. The mummy of the Pharaoh himself lies in the Cairo Museum, so that it is possible for people of this present age to look on Seti's face, wonderfully preserved and marked with noble peace, as on the day, over three thousand two hundred years ago, when he was laid to rest upon the figure of Nut, the sky-goddess, which adorns the floor of his sarcophagus. Yet it was at Abydos that Seti raised the most remarkable monument of his devotion to the past, the strange building known to-day as the "Osireion", which lies immediately behind his funerary temple. This building consists of a large subterranean hall, to which a sloping passage leads down from ground-level. The hall, which is built of sandstone with rose granite piers to support the roof, contains an island surrounded by an artificial water-channel, with two flights of steps leading down to the water. Beyond the hall is a large chamber shaped like a sarcophagus, the roof of which is sculptured

with representations of the sky-goddess Nut, and religious texts. Now the whole conception of the Osireion is that of a "false tomb" like that of Aahmose I (see above, p. 18), which should stand on the hallowed soil of Abydos, and procure for the dead monarch all the blessings which actual burial at Abydos would ensure, albeit his body rested far away in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes.¹ Further, this false tomb was designed as an eternal embodiment of the old mythology; the water in the subterranean channel represented the watery mass of Nūn, which had existed before the creation of sky and earth, while the island rising out of it was none other than the legendary hill, the first part of the earth to rise above the primeval waters. On this hill Rā', the Creator, had stood, and every morning at sunrise he stood there again, and so this hill became a symbol of resurrection, for the rising of the sun from the world of darkness was symbolic of life's victory over death. In the course of time men came to believe that Osiris himself was buried on this hill, a suitable place for the tomb of the dying and reviving god, and it is quite usual for Egyptian pictures to show him sitting enthroned on the top of a double flight of steps, which are again intended to represent the primeval mound (Fig. 24). Thus we are able to interpret the Osireion (5). On the island with its double flight of steps the body of Pharaoh would lie, enthroned like Rā', the Creator, above his universe, and like Osiris on the hill of resurrection,

¹ It was always customary for folk who could afford it to erect some sort of monument to themselves at Abydos. Compare also the journey to Abydos which people were supposed to perform after death, described above on p. 56.

victorious over death and decay. It was a majestic conception, the final and supreme apotheosis of the King of Egypt, and with it we may fittingly bring our story to an end. The religion of Egypt was now firmly set for ever upon the road which it was to follow until the passing of the ancient world. Nothing was in store for it save a gradual but sure decadence. True,

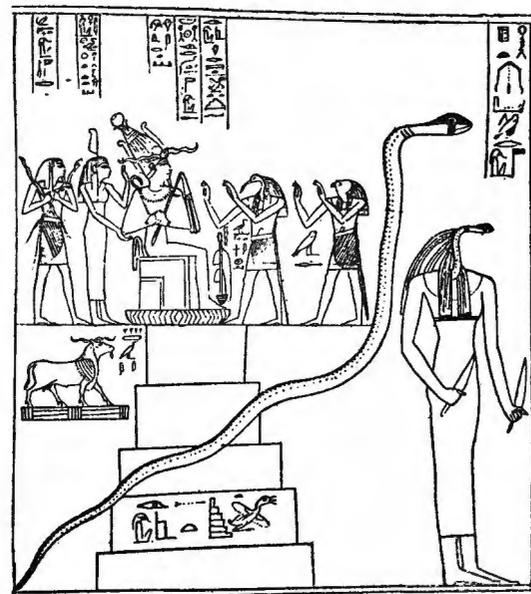


FIG. 24. Osiris enthroned on a flight of steps. (Greenfield Papyrus, British Museum.)

that yet more and more huge temples were to be built by succeeding Pharaohs, and that the myriad gods of Egypt should wax more and more secure in the unchanging loyalty of their earthly subjects, but as every king lived and died so the religious vitality of the Nile valley ebbed away. The days of the ancient

East were numbered, and the sceptre of its power was bequeathed to Western hands. As we stand in the hypostyle hall of the beautiful temple of Hathor, at Denderah, product of the Græco-Roman age, thirteen hundred years later, we see once more upon the roof the goddess Nut and all the host of heaven, and still on every wall Pharaoh, vested as of old, performing the same religious ceremonies which have been in use since the days of Menes, only now he is the Roman Emperor, Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Caligula, and Nero ! Egypt is no longer a constructive force ; she is living out the evening of her life in peace, her eyes fixed upon the glories of the past. Soon a new faith was to come, in which all the threads of ancient man's religion were to be gathered up, none being lost. In the deserted temples of Egypt the overthrown shrines were used as Christian altars (6), and where once the sun-god's son had offered to Rā', Amon, and Osiris, the incense rose before the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

Now that we have finished our survey of the Egyptian religion, let us endeavour to reduce what we have learnt to the simplest terms, and from these determine Egypt's place in the religious history of the world.

The Egyptian religion may be divided, like all religious systems, into two main divisions : that which is concerned with man's relation to the gods, and that which directly concerns his own well-being. In the first case we are confronted with the essence of "religion" itself, the consciousness that some being or beings superior to man are in existence, and the conviction that such beings must be propitiated and adored. Since man can only be aware of the supernatural through the material world in which he lives, it follows that in his primitive state he understands his gods as personifications of the principles of Nature ; life and death, generation and production, all these forces become the deities who rule the universe. And, as we have seen, the gods of Egypt were no exception to the rule, but provide ample demonstration of it. Thus, the whole history of the Egyptian religion may be summarised as a struggle for supremacy between two great elements of Nature, the Sun (Rā', Atum, Horus) and the god of the soil, vegetation, and the Nile (Osiris). It was always the sun-god who held the State-religion, whether as Rā' himself, or as Amon who had usurped his place, while the devotion of the

people as a whole was given to Osiris more than to any other one deity. Needless to say, among the hundreds of Egyptian gods there were countless other actions and reactions, all of which must be appreciated by the student who approaches the subject in detail, but these are of minor importance beside the mighty struggle between the sun-god and Osiris. And we know that in the end it was Osiris who won, for his cult and that of his wife, Isis, dominated Egypt in Greek and Roman days, even spreading abroad over the Roman Empire in foreign lands; while it was nominally out of a mixture of Osiris and the bull-god, Apis, that the Ptolemies manufactured their very dull Serapis to be the patron-deity of Egypt in their time. Moreover, it is almost certainly true to say that this deep rooted belief in Osiris, the god who had died and yet triumphed over death, prepared Egypt well for Christianity, and made easy the acceptance of the Gospel message.

When we come to consider the second of the two parts into which we have divided religion, that which concerns man's own well-being, we are immediately struck by the fact that the majority of an ancient Egyptian's aspirations were directed not to this life but to the world beyond the grave. It is true that the Egyptians wished for the usual amenities of life, the pleasure, freedom from care, and length of days which all mankind desire, but the bulk of their religious activities were expended on preparation for the day of burial, and for eternity after that. This characteristic of the Egyptians must have strongly impressed all foreigners who visited the country, and who saw the never-ceasing labour devoted to mummification and

the production of tombs and funerary furniture. "Because there were no graves in Egypt" cry the Israelites to Moses, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?"¹ Yet this overwhelming attention to death and burial can be readily understood as an especially strong expression of an idea common to all religions. That idea is the attainment of immortality, the conviction that after death life can continue in some form or other. Now in Egypt for this continuance of the dead, in addition to certain necessary preparations made by the dead person himself during his lifetime, some measure of co-operation was also required from the living; the body must be mummified, spells and prayers recited, food and drink brought regularly to the tomb. In this way arose the cult of the dead which exists to some extent in all religions, whether it be ancestor-worship among African tribes, or prayers for the faithful departed in the Christian Church. Moreover, since there was in progress, as we have seen, a continual struggle for mastery between the sun-god and Osiris, even so there was a struggle between the two kinds of immortality which these deities respectively could confer. In earlier times it was believed that the king and his court would pass to a brilliant life in the sky, sailing with Rā' in his boat, and enjoying the glories of the Heavens. But this belief had gradually given way before the growing power of Osiris, the dead god who reigned in the Underworld beneath the earth and who there assigned to the souls their portions in his following. The result in the end was a fusion of the two ideas, as we have seen (p. 59), but most important for us as we begin to study

¹ Exodus xiv, 11.

Egyptian religion is to realise the simple principles which governed these beliefs. For the keynote of them all is the desire for life and yet more life; as Rā' gained it every morning when he conquered the fiends of darkness, storm, and rain, to emerge glorious in the sight of men; as Osiris, slain yearly in the falling Nile and dying vegetation, yearly revived triumphant in verdance and fertility. And by the potent ceremonies of the tomb man also could possess himself of this life-stream which seemed to run throughout the Universe, even as the followers of most religions to-day direct their attention principally to this end. Further, the religious practice of the Egyptians, as we are able to reconstruct it, is in no way unique, yet is most valuable for the correct understanding of the history of worship and ritual. Man's natural method of expressing his devotion to the gods, that is, by outward rites and ceremonies, is richly illustrated by the monuments of Egypt, which enable us to approach the ancient scenes so closely that even now, after thousands of years have passed, the solemn movements of Pharaoh or priest amid the steaming incense are re-enacted before us, while our ears still catch the tinkle of many *sistra*.

Lastly, we have seen political forces at work, moulding the faith of these ancient men and leading them this way or that, in the same way that the religious history of Europe has been influenced and developed by the movement of kings and nations.

There is one more question, however, which may be asked, and that is: "What is known of the standard of conduct produced among the Egyptians by their religion?" We may, of course, reply that to be dogmatic on such a matter is well-nigh impossible,

but that on the other hand there exists evidence of a very definite realisation of right and wrong, and of duty to the gods and to one's neighbour. The CXXVth chapter of the Book of the Dead (generally known as "The Negative Confession"), in which the dead person denies, in the presence of the gods, that he has committed forty-two specified sins which cover the range of human conduct, would be sufficient to show this, while the desire of the dead to appear, by means of self-laudatory inscriptions, paragons of every sort of virtue at least indicates the existence of an ideal. In addition to all this, we have the celebrated papyri containing precepts on good behaviour generally,¹ the said precepts being put in the mouths of grave old men who sternly admonish their young and frivolous readers. At the same time, however, it must be borne in mind that neither the Egyptian nor any other ancient religion had fully evolved a doctrine of justification by *works*. The chief assurance of divine favour in this life and of bliss after death was not a man's upright conduct, but the performance of certain religious or magical ceremonies which were efficacious of themselves, and could even outweigh his own faulty character. For the gods were not only to be implored; the whole paraphernalia of rite and ceremony must be employed to *force* them to do man's will.

During recent years the study of the ancient East has come into its own, and people have realised the futility of attempting to understand world-history

¹ e.g. the Precepts of Ptah-hotep and Kagemni.

without paying attention to the great ages of civilisation in Egypt and Mesopotamia, which preceded those of Greece and Rome. Yet more than this, science has awakened to the fact that Egypt, because its climate has so richly preserved the treasures of the past, provides an unparalleled field for the study of human culture, an unique stage on which we moderns can watch the splendid drama of civilisation acted in noble style and generously produced. In this book I have endeavoured to present one act of that great drama, and shall be satisfied if the reader is able to feel as a reality the faith which inspired the shrines of imperial Egypt.

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