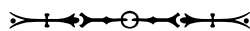


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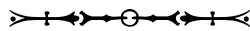
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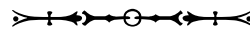
Each issue of the *Rosicrucian Digest* provides members and all interested readers with a compendium of materials regarding the ongoing flow of the Rosicrucian Timeline. The articles, historical excerpts, art, and literature included in this *Digest* span the ages, and are not only interesting in themselves, but also seek to provide a lasting reference shelf to stimulate continuing study of all of those factors which make up Rosicrucian history and thought. Therefore, we present classical background, historical development, and modern reflections on each of our subjects, using the many forms of primary sources, reflective commentaries, the arts, creative fiction, and poetry.



This magazine is dedicated to all the women and men throughout the ages who have contributed to and perpetuated the wisdom of the Rosicrucian, western esoteric, tradition.



May we ever be worthy of the light with which we have been entrusted.



In this issue we explore the initiatic and mystical character of ancient Egypt, one of the most significant sources of the esoteric heritage of the Western World, and of the Rosicrucian tradition.

# ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST

No. 1 - 2007

Vol. 85 - No. 1

## Official Magazine of the Worldwide Rosicrucian Order

Established in 1915 by the Supreme Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, CA 95191.

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ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST (ISSN #0035-8339) is published bi-annually for \$12.00 per year, single copies \$6.00, by the Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., at 1342 Naglee Ave., San Jose, CA 95191. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ROSICRUCIAN DIGEST at 1342 Naglee Ave., San Jose, CA 95191-0001.



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# EGYPT AND THE PRIMORDIAL TRADITION

Christian Rebisse, F.R.C.

From *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries*

Questions have often arisen regarding the origins of Rosicrucianism. Although a consensus of researchers places its historical beginnings in the seventeenth century, we are of the opinion that the genesis of this movement dates from much farther back. Such was the belief of the German alchemist Michael Maier. In his work *Silentium Post Clamores* (1617), he described Rosicrucianism as having arisen from the Egyptians, the Brahmans, the mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace, the Magi of Persia, the Pythagoreans, and the Arabs. Several years after the publication of the *Fama Fraternalitatis* (1614) and the *Confessio Fraternalitatis* (1615), Irenaeus Agnostus, in *Chlypeum veritatis* (*The Shield of Truth*, 1618), felt no hesitation in declaring Adam to be the first representative of the Order. The Rosicrucian manifestos likewise made reference to the same source: “Our philosophy has nothing new in it; it conforms to what Adam inherited after the Fall, and what Moses and Solomon practiced.”<sup>1</sup>

## The Primordial Tradition

Adam, Egypt, Persia, the Greek sages, and the Arabs were conjured up for good reason by Michael Maier. He alluded to a concept that was very widespread before the coming of Rosicrucianism. This concept—the Primordial Tradition—first appeared in the Renaissance,<sup>2</sup> especially after the rediscovery of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a group of mysterious texts attributed to an Egyptian priest, Hermes Trismegistus. From

him, this idea of a primordial revelation, of which Egypt was the cradle, would have considerable repercussions.

Our intention is not to describe Egyptian esotericism in full, but rather to indicate how this heritage was transmitted. The route connecting Egypt to the West is long and offers a varied landscape. We will not discuss all of its details, because this description

would occupy an entire volume. However, certain salient points will allow us to understand Rosicrucian origins. While engaging in this undertaking it is necessary to follow a trustworthy guide, and Hermes appears to be the character most noted in the ancient writings. Indeed, the history and myths relating to this individual are particularly rich in information concerning our purpose at hand.

Since antiquity, Egypt’s civilization has been much admired. Its mystery schools, which acted both as universities and monasteries, were the guardians of its wisdom. These schools experienced a distinctive flowering under the rule of Akhnaton (1353–1336 BCE), especially after he introduced the concept of monotheism. The Egyptian religion is particularly intriguing because of its mysterious cults. Although Hermes had some of his origins in Egypt, in the god Thoth, he was primarily a Greek god. He was the son of Zeus and of the nymph Maia. The Greeks considered him the god of shepherds, thieves, merchants, and travelers. He was also the inventor of astronomy, weights and measures, the musical scale, the art of



Michael Maier, *Symbola aureae mensae duodecim nationum*, 1617.

gymnastics, and the cultivation of olive trees. Most of all he was the messenger of Zeus and the shepherd who guided the dead toward the world of Hades. His attributes were a caduceus and winged sandals.

In the Egyptian pantheon, Thoth enjoyed a special illustriousness. He was shown as an ibis-headed man or as a baboon (cf. the *Book of the Dead*). Equipped with a palette, reed, and papyrus, he was always ready to transcribe the words of Re. He was the very epitome of a scribe; he was described as the inventor of hieroglyphs. Thoth was the protector of scribes, the teacher of medicine, astronomy, and the arts. He knew the secrets of magic; he was the initiator. On the statue of Amenhotep, son of Hapu, a high official and favorite of Amenhotep III (ca. 1360 BCE), it is written: “. . . but into the divine book, I have been initiated. Of Thoth, I have seen glory, and among mystery, I introduced myself.”

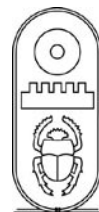
In a period as far distant as the Old Kingdom (2705–2180 BCE), Thoth was already described as the messenger of the gods, a characteristic he preserved when passing into the Greek world in the guise of Hermes. In his capacity of judge, he stood between Seth and Horus. He was the protector of the eye of Horus.

In the Middle Kingdom (1987–1640 BCE), he personified wisdom. He was particularly honored in Hermopolis, and the priests of this city attributed to him the *Book of the Two Ways*, a text which described the voyage to the afterlife. The inscriptions found in the sarcophagi of this period also mention a “divine book of Thoth.” At the beginning of this period, Thoth appeared as the writer of sacred writings, the all-knowing teacher, the one who knew the secret magical rites. It is also reported that the sacred texts were found at the foot of his statue. This symbolic theme is found much later in the story describing the discovery of the tomb of Hermes Trismegistus by Apollonius of Tyana. In the *Book of the Dead*, Thoth plays the role of judge when weighing the heart of the deceased.

In the New Kingdom (1540–1075 BCE), Akhnaton (1353–1336 BCE) abolished the ancient pantheon when instituting the cult of Aton. Even so, Thoth preserved certain prerogatives during the pharaoh’s reign. After the disappearance of the founder of Egyptian monotheism, Thoth regained his qualities of all-knowing sage and the teacher of secrets. During this period, writings of an occult character became important. This is undoubtedly why H. Spencer Lewis regarded Amosis, the pharaoh who introduced this period, as being the organizer of the school of initiates that later gave rise to the Rose Cross. Moreover, he thought Hermes was a sage contemporary with Akhnaton. The occult knowledge of the Egyptians was considered secret. It was transmitted by “houses of life,” sometimes called “mystery schools.”

The opinions of the specialists are divided regarding the importance of occultism and magic in the time of the pharaohs. Erik Hornung, an Egyptologist at the University of Basel, feels that too many historians have taken an overly positivist approach regarding this matter. He declares that it is “undeniable that at the beginning of the New Kingdom, at the latest, a spiritual climate propitious to the emergence of Hermetic wisdom dominated.” Emphasizing the important role of Jan Assmann, who concentrated on this subject while studying the Rameside period, he added that at present “there prevail conditions much more favorable to the discovery of Hermeticism’s possible Egyptian roots.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Late Kingdom (664–332 BCE), Thoth was considered to be the teacher of magic. A stele calls him “twice great,” and he is presented sometimes as “thrice (very) great,” or even “five times great” (cf. the *Story of Setne*). In the Ptolemaic period, the Greeks and Romans were fascinated by Hermopolis and its cult of Thoth. There developed at this time an original synthesis between the Egyptian civilization and the Hellenistic culture.



## The Greeks and Egypt

Considerable evidence relates to the relationships between the sages of Greece and of Egypt. In the fifth century BCE Herodotus visited Egypt and conversed with the priests. In his history he discusses the Osirian mysteries celebrated at Sais. For him, the mysteries of Greece owed much to Egypt. Comparing the Greek and Egyptian pantheons, he observed that certain divinities of his country had their origins among the pharaohs.

There existed a strong tradition which claimed that the great sages of ancient Greece obtained knowledge from their Egyptian teachers. It was claimed that many among them were initiated into the mysteries, thus assuring the transmission of Egyptian learning into the Greek world. Among them Herodotus spoke only of Solon (ca. 640–558 BCE). In *Timaeus* and the *Critias* Plato (427–347 BCE), who himself had gone to Egypt and remained there three years, spoke of the discussions that Solon had with the Egyptian priests. In *The Republic*, he also emphasized the prestige of the Egyptian priests. Furthermore, he mentioned Thoth in the *Phaedrus*. Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato, made Egypt the source of philosophy and indicated that Pythagoras went there to be instructed. Apollonius of Rhodes (295–ca.230 BCE) claimed that Hermes, by way of his son Aithalides, was the direct ancestor of Pythagoras.

Diodorus Siculus (80–20 BCE) provided the greatest amount of information concerning the influence of Egypt upon the sages of Greece. He based this partly upon what he had gathered in his encounters with the Egyptian priests, and partly upon the *Aegyptiaca*, a work by Hecataeus of Abdera.

Diodorus stated first of all that Orpheus traveled to Egypt and was initiated into the Osirian mysteries. After returning to his homeland around the sixth century BCE, he instituted new rites that were called the Orphic mysteries. Diodorus also stated that rites observed in Eleusis by the Athenians were similar to those of the Egyptians.

Plutarch (ca. 50–ca. 125 CE) later remarked that the Orphic and Bacchic mysteries were really of Egyptian and Pythagorean origin. Diodorus also reported on the travels of Solon and of Thales of Miletus (624–548 BCE), who visited the priests and measured the pyramids. Plutarch declared that Thales brought Egyptian geometry back to Greece.

Diodorus also claimed that Thales urged Pythagoras to go to Egypt, and it was in this country that the latter conceived the concept of the migration of souls. Iamblichus later added that Pythagoras had studied in the Egyptian temples for twenty-two years, and, after having received this training, he established his own school in Crotona, Italy, and he taught what he had learned in the Egyptian mystery schools. Finally, Diodorus reported that in the fifth century Democritus (ca. 460–370 BCE), discoverer of the atom, was taught by the geometers of the pharaoh, and then initiated in the Egyptian temples.

One of Plato's followers, Eudoxus of Cnidus (ca. 405–355 BCE), a mathematician and geometer, also made the voyage to the land of the Nile. While there, he was initiated on both the scientific and spiritual levels. Pliny specified that he would report in his country some important astronomical knowledge, as those which related to the exact duration of the year (365 $\frac{1}{4}$  days). His hypothesis of homocentric spheres constituted the point of departure of traditional astronomy. Plutarch, a member of the sacerdotal college of Apollo in Delphi, where he was high priest, also sought knowledge along the banks of the Nile. While there, he was initiated by Clea, a priestess of Isis and Osiris. In his book *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch spoke of the "works called Books of Hermes" and emphasized the importance of Egyptian astrology. He also reported that many authorities declared Isis to be the daughter of Hermes.

## Thoth-Hermes

In drawing a parallel between Zoroaster and Moses, Diodorus introduced a concept that would be in considerable vogue in the

Renaissance, where he spoke of a *philosophia perennis* transmitted by way of the great sages from the beginnings of time. Beginning in the second century BCE, the Greeks claimed that Thoth had for a son Agathodemon, who himself had engendered a son named Hermes. The latter, considered to be the second Hermes, was called *Trismegistus*—that is, “Thrice-greatest.” Thus, in the third century CE the Greeks adopted Thoth, giving him the name of Hermes and describing him as *Trismegistus*—“Thrice-greatest.”

As Thoth was the teacher of speech and writing, it was natural that the Greeks made him the father of Homer, their greatest poet. In the third century CE, Heliodorus indicated that Homer was the son of Hermes and an Egyptian priest’s daughter. Eventually each era added some detail, and little by little was forged the concept which stated that Egypt was the source of wisdom and knowledge.

### Alexandria

With the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 333 BCE, the assimilation of the Egyptian culture by the Greek world was accelerated. The focus of this activity occurred in the city of Alexandria, founded in 331 BCE, where the waters of the Nile mixed with those of the Mediterranean. A crossroads of Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, and Christian cultures, it acted over the centuries as the intellectual center of the eastern Mediterranean. Therapeutae, Gnostics, and various other mystical movements developed around this city. Its library, enriched by more than 50,000 volumes, gathered together all of the knowledge of the era. Alexandria was also the crucible where Greco-Egyptian alchemy flourished.

The city gave birth to a new science in the form of alchemy, a continuation of ancient Egyptian practices that was transformed and revived by Greek thought. Its originality consisted of offering a concrete and universal discipline free from the grasp of religion. Hermes Trismegistus, represented by Alexandrian alchemists as being the founder of this art, became the new transmitter of the

ancient tradition. However, we should note that alchemy already existed in China and India. Among the Alexandrian alchemists, Bolos of Mendes (100 BCE) was a notable figure, often being described as the founder of Greco-Egyptian alchemy.

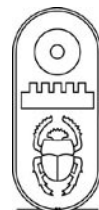
In 30 BCE, Alexandria became the capital of the Roman province of Egypt. The Romans assimilated the Greco-Egyptian Hermes with Mercury, their god of commerce and travelers. Mercury-Hermes was the messenger of the gods, the conductor, or guide of souls. Rome rapidly adopted Egypt and its cults.

### The Corpus Hermeticum

Three centuries before the Christian era, texts that are now called the *Hermetica*—because their authorship is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus—began to take shape. This literature expanded considerably from the first century BCE, and in the Nile Delta region the composition of the *Hermetica* continued until the third century CE. Written in Greek, an Egyptian form of esotericism is quite apparent. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 220 CE) spoke of the forty-two books of Hermes which the Egyptians carried about in their ceremonies. Iamblichus attributed 20,000 books to Hermes, whereas Seleucus and Manetho mentioned about 36,525.

The most celebrated, written between the first and third centuries CE, are the seventeen tracts which were gathered together under the title of *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>4</sup> They are composed primarily of dialogues between Hermes, his son Tat, and Asclepius. The first of these treatises, *Poemandres*, discusses the creation of the world.

The *Asclepius* is also an important text as it describes the religion of the Egyptians and the magical rites they practiced for attracting cosmic powers meant to animate the statues of the gods. Finally, the fragments of *Stobaeus* constitute the third group of the *Hermetica*. These are composed of thirty-nine texts and consist of dialogues between Isis and Horus



regarding the creation of the world and the origin of souls. These texts, generally attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, claim to be translated from the Egyptian. In truth, they contain few authentic Egyptian elements. They are essentially characterized by Greek philosophy, but also by Judaism and Zoroastrianism. They do not compose a coherent whole and present numerous doctrinal contradictions.

### **Pax Romana**

Among the Greeks the influence of Egypt was felt primarily through its literature, but among the Romans the influence took a different twist. The latter were not content to travel to the land of the pharaohs. In 30 BCE, after the suicide of Cleopatra and the conquest of Egypt by Octavian, the country became a Roman province. At the beginning of the first century CE the Romans controlled the Nile valley. They embraced its culture, and the emperor was compared to a pharaoh. The conquerors adopted certain rites of the land they had taken, and the cult of Isis found a home in Rome.

Rome adopted Egyptian architecture. Even now we can admire one of the last remnants of this era, the pyramid of Caius Cestius. Another, now vanished, was erected in the necropolis of the Vatican. The city also bristled with numerous obelisks taken from Karnak, Heliopolis, and Sais. Visitors to Rome may still admire more than ten of them. The existence of an Isiac college is attested around 80 BCE. By 105 BCE a temple consecrated to the worship of Isis was located in Pompeii. The Iseum in the Campus Martius, which included a temple dedicated to Isis and Serapis, remained the most important evidence of the presence of Egyptian cults among the Romans.

But the encounter of the two religions did not pass smoothly, and Caesar barely favored the gods of Egypt. Virgil (70–19 BCE) and Horace (65–8 BCE) described the battle of monstrous divinities, as Anubis brandished his arms against Neptune, Venus, and Minerva.

Ovid (43–17/18 BCE) saw things in a more flattering light. The cult of Isis was tolerated in Rome, and Nero (37–66 CE) introduced some Isiac feast days in the Roman calendar. Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE) constructed a temple for the Egyptian Hermes.

In the second century CE the *Pax Romana* established peace throughout the Mediterranean world. In this era, we find a veritable passion for past civilizations: the Hindus, Persians, Chaldeans, and above all the Egyptians. Fascinated by Egyptian temples that were still in operation, rich Romans flocked to the land of the pharaohs. Apuleius, a Latin writer intrigued by the mysteries, also went there. In *The Golden Ass* he described for us the Egyptian mysteries in his colorful manner.

### **Alchemy, Magic, and Astrology**

Along with alchemy, magic and astrology assumed greater importance. Claudius Ptolemy (ca. 90–ca.168 CE), a Greek living in Alexandria, wrote the *Tetrabiblos*, a treatise that codified all the principles of Greek astrology (with Egyptian and Chaldean influences): signs, houses, aspects, elements. Ptolemy was not merely an astrologer, he was also an astronomer to whom we owe geocentrism and the theory of the epicycles which dominated science until the seventeenth century CE. It was Ptolemy who transmitted Greek astronomical knowledge to the West. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 213 CE), a Greek church father, drew in his *Stromateis* a portrait of the Egyptian astrologers of his time who always had to be ready to recite the four astrological books of Hermes.

Olympiodorus (fifth or sixth century CE) presented alchemy as a sacerdotal art practiced by the Egyptians. The Leiden and Stockholm papyri (second century CE) depict the metallurgical procedures as effectively being linked to magical formulas.<sup>5</sup> In the third century CE, Zosimos of Panopolis settled down in Alexandria so as to dedicate himself to alchemy. The first well-known alchemical author, he bestowed upon this science his



concepts and symbolism. But his alchemical writings do not simply revolve around laboratory work; they also discuss the transformations of the soul and entail a mystical quest. Alchemy expanded so greatly in the third century CE that Emperor Diocletian, disturbed by a possible devaluation of precious metals, promulgated an edict prohibiting the practice and condemning alchemical texts to the flames.

## Neoplatonism

Neoplatonists were considerably interested in Egypt. Iamblichus (ca. 240–ca. 325 CE), who was initiated into the Chaldean, Egyptian, and Syrian rites, is an enigmatic individual. Some extraordinary powers were attributed to the “divine Iamblichus,” the head of a Neoplatonist school. While in prayer, his body was said to rise more than ten cubits from the earth, and his skin and clothing were bathed in a beautiful golden light.

Egypt held a chosen spot in his writings. In *De Mysteriis* (On the Egyptian Mysteries),<sup>6</sup> Iamblichus presented himself in the guise of Abammon, a master of the Egyptian sacerdotal hierarchy and an interpreter of Hermetic teachings. He also promoted theurgy and Egyptian divinatory practices. A little later, another Neoplatonist, Proclus (412–485 CE), also strongly affected by theurgy, believed himself to be part of the “chain of Hermes.” He had great influence on Sufism and on such Christian thinkers as Johannes Scotus Erigena, Meister Eckhart, and many others.

Nevertheless, this era saw Egypt fading away before an ever-expanding Christianity. Alexandria played an important role in the

many controversies that marked the beginnings of this religion newly imposed by Constantine. In the third century CE, the Egyptians abandoned hieroglyphs and adopted the Coptic script for transcribing their language. The Copts adapted the secret knowledge of the pharaohs to Christianity. Soon afterwards, Emperor Theodosius promulgated an edict against non-Christian cults, thus marking the end of the Egyptian clergy and their ceremonies.

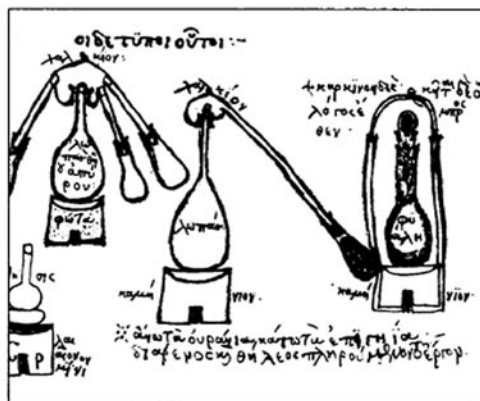
## The Christians Before Hermes

Christianity, which began to gain in influence, was not unaware of Hermes. In the middle of the second century CE a kind of Christian Hermes appeared in the pages of a book entitled *The Shepherd*, whose author was said to be Hermas.<sup>7</sup> It is a Roman work in which Hermas, the “messenger of penance and penitent,” took the form of a prophet. *The Shepherd* is an apocalyptic work in which

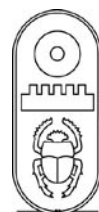
all the conventions of the genre are found. In the early Church Jesus is often presented as a shepherd, a role that is also attributed to Hermes. Yet in this instance it is not Jesus that Hermes designates, but the “angel of the penance.” Considered for a long time to be an integral part of the canonical scriptures, *The Shepherd* passed to the status of apocryphal scripture at

the beginning of the fourth century.

The Church fathers generally loved to delve into mythology so as to disclose the beginnings of the Gospel. Hermes Trismegistus continued to garner respect among them. Lactantius (250–325 CE), in his *Divinarum Institutionum* (Divine Institutions), saw Christian truth formulated before the advent of Christianity in the



Alambics and vases for digestion, in *Symosius*, a Greek alchemical manuscript (National Library, Paris), taken from *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*. (Collection of Ancient Greek Alchemists), by M. Berthelot.



*Corpus Hermeticum*. He placed Hermes Trismegistus in the first rank of Gentile prophets who foresaw the coming of Christ.

St. Augustine (354–430 CE), the Father of the Church, in his *City of God*, a fundamental treatise of Christian theology, made Hermes a descendent of God. He had read the *Asclepius* in the translation by Apuleius of Madaura, but even though he admired Hermes Trismegistus, he rejected the magic revealed in this work. Clement of Alexandria liked to compare Hermes-Logos to the Christ-Logos.

Emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363 CE), the nephew of Constantine, attempted a brief return to the worship of the mysteries. He enacted measures against Christians and restored paganism. Influenced by Neoplatonism, he extolled ancient theurgy. This return was brief, however, and by 387 CE the Christian patriarch Theophilus undertook the destruction of the Egyptian temples with the idea of transforming them into places of Christian worship. Nonetheless, on the island of Philae an Egyptian temple continued to function. It was not closed until 551 CE, by order of Emperor Justinian.

It will be noted that the Egyptian temples remained active between the first and sixth centuries CE—that is, during the period which covers the composition of the *Hermetica*. It is often remarked that these texts are pessimistic regarding the future of the Egyptian religion, which leads us to think that they were written in an Egyptian setting by a priestly class. Fragments from the Egyptian wisdom may repose in the *Hermetica*, but they are expressed in an indirect fashion, having been submitted to the process of Hellenization.

Alexandria had been the starting point where Egyptian teachings entered the Greek and Roman worlds. It was where the ancient tradition was reformulated by way of alchemy, astrology, and magic. This point of departure, after having scattered such wisdom into a greater portion of the East, was already

disappearing by the sixth century CE, and the Arabs now took up the torch.

## The Sabaeans

Alexandria was seized by the Arabs in 642 CE, a date which marks an end to this city's days of glory. However, the conquest of this city was not the Arabs' first encounter with esotericism. Rather, they had been aware of Hermes long before this time. For example, they had learned from the Sabaeans, inhabitants of the mythical kingdom of Sheba, which was supposed to be a place of earthly paradise. In ancient times it was also called *Arabia Felix* (Happy Arabia) and was said to be the land of the phoenix. Centuries later Christian Rosenkruz was supposed to have visited the area so as to gather together the marvelous knowledge deposited there. The Bible states that the queen of this land, the queen of Sheba, visited King Solomon. Although the location of her land was not specified in the Old Testament, the Koran indicates that it was in southern Arabia (modern-day Yemen).

The Sabaeans were notable astrologers, and Maimonides indicated that this knowledge assumed a predominant role among them. Tradition claims that the magi who greeted Christ came from this legendary land. The Sabaeans possessed both the Hermetic alchemical writings and the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Being knowledgeable in such subjects, it is they who introduced science into Islam, although they themselves evolved on the fringes of this religion.

The Sabaeans claimed to have originated with Hermes to whom they dedicated a special cult. They produced some books whose contents, they claimed, had been revealed by Hermes, such as the *Risalat fi'n-nafs* (Letter about the Soul) and the *Liturgical Institutions of Hermes* by Thabit ibn Qurrah, an eminent figure of Sabaeism in Baghdad (ca. 836–901 CE).

## Idris-Hermes

The seventh century CE signaled the beginnings of Islam. Although the Koran did

not make any reference to Hermes, the hagiographers of Islam's early centuries identified the prophet Idris, mentioned in the Koran, with Hermes and Enoch. This assimilation helped to link Islam with Greco-Egyptian traditions. In Islam, Idris-Hermes is described as both a prophet and a timeless personage. He is sometimes compared to al-Khadir,<sup>8</sup> the mysterious intermediary and sage who initiated Moses and who plays a fundamental role in Sufism as a manifestation of the personal guide.

Abu-Ma'shar, an eighth century CE Persian astrologer who became celebrated in Europe by the name of Albumazar, drew up an account tracing the genealogy of Hermes. This text, which had immense influence in the Islamic world, distinguished three successive Hermes. The first, Hermes Major, lived before the Flood. Identified with Thoth, he is described as the civilizer of humanity, as he had the pyramids constructed and engraved the sacred hieroglyphs for future generations. The second Hermes lived in Babylonia after the Flood; he was a master of medicine, philosophy, and mathematics. He was also the initiator of Pythagoras. Finally, the third Hermes is described as having continued his predecessors' work of civilizing society. As a master of occult knowledge, he transmitted alchemy to humanity.

### The Emerald Tablet

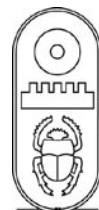
In the same era there appeared the *Emerald Tablet*, a text which assumed an important place in the tradition. The oldest known version, in Arabic, dates from the sixth century CE. Many are those who cite this text without really knowing it; therefore, we feel that it would be useful to present it in its entirety.

*True, without falsehood, certain and most true, that which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below for accomplishing the wonder of the one thing. As all things are created from one, by the will and command of the one United who created it, so all things*

*are born from this one thing by dispensation and union. Its father is the sun, its mother is the moon, the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth. This is the father of all perfection in this whole world. Its power is perfect when it is changed into earth; so you should separate the earth from the fire, and the subtle from the thick or gross but lovingly with great understanding and discretion. It ascends from earth to heaven and from heaven again to earth and receives again the power of the Above and the Below. Thus you will have the splendor of the whole world. All lack of understanding and lack of ability will leave you. This is of all power the most powerful power, for it can overcome all subtlety and can penetrate all that is solid. Thus was the world created. Thus many rare combinations originated, and wonders are wrought, of which this is the way to work. And thus I am called Trismegistus, having the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world. All that I have said concerning the work of the sun is fulfilled.<sup>9</sup>*

This work is attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, a philosopher and thaumaturgist of the first century CE. As Julius Ruska has shown, the text comes to us through the translation composed by Sagiyyus, a Christian priest of Nablus. It appears in *Kitab Sirr Al-Haliqa* (The Secret Book of Creation) by Balinus (the Arabic translation of the name Apollonius).<sup>10</sup>

In this book, Apollonius relates how he discovered the tomb of Hermes. He claims to have found in this sepulcher an old man, seated on a throne, holding an emerald-colored tablet upon which appeared the text of the famed *Emerald Tablet*. Before him was a book explaining the secrets of the creation of beings and the knowledge of the causes for all things. This narrative would recur much later in the *Fama Fraternitatis*.



## Arab Alchemy

The role of the Arabs as transmitters of alchemy to the West in the Middle Ages is generally well known. They also left us with a vocabulary distinctive to this art (*al kemia*, chemistry; *al tanur*, athanor; etc.). Yet Islam's role is not simply limited to that of transmission, as the Arabs conceptualized it in a form which, afterwards, was to assert itself everywhere.<sup>11</sup> Their alchemy was not only an art of the laboratory, it was also meant to unveil the hidden laws of Creation, and it comprised a mystic and philosophical dimension. Although Arab alchemy claimed to be of Egyptian origin, its practice occurred after the Arab conquest of Egypt in 639 CE. They received Greek alchemy through the Syrians, but their first masters in this art were the Persians, who had inherited the Mesopotamian esoteric traditions.

The first known Arab alchemist, the Umayyad prince Khalid ibn Yazid (?–704 CE), was initiated by Morienus, a Christian of Alexandria. Within a short time alchemy spread throughout the Islamic world and the Greek treatises were quickly translated. The most illustrious figure of Arab alchemy was Jabir ibn Hayyan (died ca. 815 CE), known in the Western world as Geber. He advanced the fundamental concepts of the great work, and his reflections led to a spiritual alchemy on a grand scale. He is also credited with numerous discoveries in alchemy.

The Jabirian Corpus is said to contain more than 3,000 treatises, most of which are apocryphal. They were probably the work of a school which formed around his teachings. Arab alchemy had many masters, of whom we will mention only a few: abu-Bakr Muhammad ibn-Zakariya', called al-Razi or Rhazes (850–923 CE); Muhammad ibn-Umail al-Tamimi, called Zaidith the Elder (tenth century); abd Allah al-Jaldaki (fourteenth century). Before long their texts penetrated Europe

through Spain and profoundly affected the Latin West.

## Magic and Astrology

Magic also occupied a central position in Arab spirituality. Islam made use of magical letters, much like the Hebrew Qabalah, for penetrating the Koran's secrets. Moreover, Arab magic, which Christian Rosenkreuz informed us much later was none too pure, encompassed a wide range: astrology, medicine, talismans, etc. Astrology was ever-present in the Islamic world. Although suspect due to its pagan origins, it developed significantly from the eighth century, when the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy was translated into Arabic.

Astrology, in the era of al-Mansur, the second Abbassid caliph (754–775 CE), was not only indebted to the Greeks, but also came under the influence of the Hindus, Syrian Christians, Judeo-Arameans, and undoubtedly the Essenes. In general, the various esoteric teachings played a fundamental role in Islam, particularly in the Shi'ite environment, as shown by Henry Corbin.<sup>12</sup> It is easy to understand why Christian Rosenkreuz came to the Arab lands to gather the essential elements from which he was to construct the Rosicrucian Order.

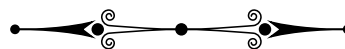
## Eastern Theosophy

Around the ninth century ibn-Wahshiya, in a treatise entitled *The Knowledge of the Occult Unveiled*,<sup>13</sup> presented many occult alphabets attributed to Hermes. He also made reference to the four classes of Egyptian priests descended from Hermes. Those who belonged to the third class—that is, the children of Hermes Trismegistus' sister—he called *Ishraqiyun* (“of the East”). Some years later, Sohrevardi (?–1191), one of the greatest Islamic mystics of Persia, revived the expression *Ishraqiyun* (signifying “Eastern theosophists”) to describe the masters who had experienced Illumination. Philosophy and the mystical experience were inseparable in his mind, and in his *Book of Oriental Wisdom*<sup>14</sup> he described the chain of past initiates, the Eastern theosophists.

For him this experience was tied to Hermes, whom he made the ancestor, the father of the sages. These ecstatic philosophers, described as the “Pillars of Wisdom,” were Plato, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, and Mohammed. What makes Sohrawardi particularly interesting is that, in contrast to the authors we have discussed until now, he did not seek to establish a historical human filiation between Hermes and the sages of the different traditions, but a celestial initiatory filiation based on inner experiences.

The heritage left by Hermes Trismegistus is manifold. Its treasures (alchemy, magic,

and astrology) constitute essential elements of traditional esotericism and have traversed many civilizations. Nonetheless, the latter have always considered Egypt to be the Mother of all traditions. In the Middle Ages, this ancient heritage penetrated the West, and by the time of the Renaissance it took on a new aspect in constituting what is generally called “Western esotericism.” It then developed in a special way so as to reach a critical threshold on the brink of the publication of the Rosicrucian manifestos.



## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Gorceix, *La Bible des Rose-Croix, traduction et commentaire des trois premiers écrits rosicruciens* (1614-1615-1616) (Paris: PUF, 1970), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Antoine Faivre, *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 33. English edition: *Access to Western Esotericism*, vol. 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); and *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*, vol. 2 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Erik Hornung, *L'Égypte ésotérique, le savoir occulte des Égyptiens et son influence en Occident* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2001), 27. English edition: *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Hermes Trismegistus, trans. André-Jean Festugière, vols. 1-4 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1946-1954). See also A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. 1, “L'astrologie et les sciences occultes;” vol. 2, “Le Dieu cosmique;” vol. 3, “Les doctrines de l'âme, le Dieu inconnu de la gnose” (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950). English editions of the *Hermetica* include: *Hermetica: the Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English Translation*, trans. Brian P. Copenhaver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); *The Way of Hermes*, trans. Clement Salaman et al. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2000); and *Hermetica*, ed. and trans. Walter Scott, 4 vols. (New York: Shambala, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the Greek alchemists, see Marcellin Berthelot, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs* (Paris: G. Steinheil, 1887-1888). Regarding the history of alchemy, see Robert Halleux, *Les Textes alchimiques* (Turhout, Belgium: Brépols, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> Iamblichus, *Les Mystères d'Égypte*, ed. and trans. Édouard des Places, S.J., Correspondant de l'Institut (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966). English edition: Iamblichus, *On The Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke et al. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Hermas, Le Pasteur, with Introduction and Notes by Robert Joly (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, coll. “Sources chrétiennes,” no. 53 bis, 1997). English edition: Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible)*, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Corbin, Henry, *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabi* (Paris: Aubier, 1993), 32, 49-59, 73, and 77. English editions: *Creative imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, trans.

Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); and *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, with a new Preface by Harold Bloom (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Translation from the Latin Vulgate of the 14th century. Variants of this text (in Arab, Latin, and French) may be found, along with Hortulanus' *Commentary* (Hortulanus, 14th century) and a translation of Apollonius of Tyana's *Book of the Secret of Creation* (Pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana, *Kitab SIRR al-khaliqah*), in Hermes Trismegistus, *La Table d'Émeraude et sa tradition alchimique*, with Preface by Didier Kahn (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994). English edition of Hortulanus: *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus*, including the Commentary of Hortulanus, trans. Patrick J. Smith, Alchemical Studies Series 5 (Edmonds, WA: The Alchemical Press - Holmes Publishing, 1997).

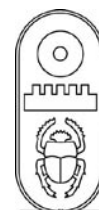
<sup>10</sup> Julius Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1926). Concerning this text see also Françoise Hudry, “*De Secretis Naturae* du PS. – Apollonius de Tyane, traduction latine par Hugues de Santala du *Kitab SIRR Al-Haliqa*,” *Chrysopoëia of the Société d'étude de l'histoire de l'alchimie: Cinq traités alchimiques médiévaux: Ps.-Apollonius de Tyane (Balinus): De secretis naturae (Kitab sirr al-haliqa); Ps.-Arnaud de Villeneuve: De secretis naturae; Flos florum (Le livre de Roussinus); Valerand du Bois-Robert: Épître à Madame de Bourgogne; Épître à Maître Abraham* (Paris: S.E.H.A.; Milan: Archè, 2000); *Chrysopoëia* Tome 6, 1997-1999, with Notes and Introduction by Sylvain Matton, 1-20; and Hermes Trismegistus, *La Table d'Émeraude*, with Preface by Didier Kahn (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Lory, *Alchimie et mystique en terre d'Islam* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1989). Concerning this subject also see Georges C. Anawati, “L'alchimie arabe,” and Robert Halleux, “La réception de l'alchimie arabe en Occident,” in *Histoire des sciences arabes*, t. III, *Technologie, alchimie et sciences de la vie*, under the direction of Rashed Roshdi, Paris, Le Seuil, (1997): 111-141 and 143-154.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> *La Magie arabe traditionnelle*, with Preface by Sylvain Matton (Paris: Retz, coll. “Bibliotheca Hermetica,” 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Sohrawardi (Suhrawardi, Yahyá ibn Habash), *Le Livre de la Sagesse orientale*, ed. Christian Jamet, trans. Henry Corbin (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1986).



# THE 42 NEGATIVE CONFESSIONS

*E. A. Wallis Budge*

**O**ne of the best-known sections of the Book of the Coming Forth by Day (The Book of the Dead) in the Papyrus of Ani is the Negative Confession. The forty-two Gods and Goddesses of the Nomes of Egypt conduct this initiatory test of the soul before the scale of Ma'at. In this translation by pioneering Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge, we hear the initiate's assertion of blamelessness before the Court of Osiris. For clarity, divine names and city names in parentheses have been added to the 1895 text of Chapter 125 from Budge's 1913 edition.

1. Ani saith: "Hail, thou whose strides are long (Usekh-nemmt), who comest forth from Annu (Heliopolis), I have not done iniquity."

2. "Hail, thou who art embraced by flame (Hept-khet), who comest forth from Kheraba, I have not robbed with violence."

3. "Hail, Fentiu, who comest forth from Khemennu (Hermopolis), I have not stolen."

4. "Hail, Devourer of the Shade (Amkhaibit), who comest forth from Qernet, I have done no murder; I have done no harm."

5. "Hail, Nehau, who comest forth from Re-stau, I have not defrauded offerings."

6. "Hail, god in the form of two lions (Ruruti), who comest forth from heaven, I have not minished oblations."

7. "Hail, thou whose eyes are of fire (Arfiem-khet), who comest forth from Saut (Asyut), I have not plundered the god."

8. "Hail, thou Flame (Neba), which comest and goest, I have spoken no lies."

9. "Hail, Crusher of bones (Set-qesu), who comest forth from Suten-henen

(Herakleopolis), I have not snatched away food."

10. "Hail, thou who shootest forth the Flame (Utu-nesert), who comest forth from Het-Ptah-ka (Memphis), I have not caused pain."

11. "Hail, Qerer, who comest forth from Amentet, I have not committed fornication."

12. "Hail, thou whose face is turned back (Herfha-f), who comest forth from thy hiding place, I have not caused shedding of tears."

13. "Hail, Bast, who comest forth from the secret place (Bubastis), I have not dealt deceitfully."

14. "Hail, thou whose legs are of fire (Ta-retiu), who comest forth out of the darkness, I have not transgressed."

15. "Hail, Devourer of Blood (Unem-snef), who comest forth from the block of slaughter, I have not acted guilefully."

16. "Hail, Devourer of the inward parts (Unem-besek), who comest forth from Mabet, I have not laid waste the ploughed land."

17. "Hail, Lord of Right and Truth (Neb-Ma'at), who comest forth from the city of Right and Truth (Ma'ati), I have not been an eavesdropper."

18. "Hail, thou who dost stride backwards (Tenemiu), who comest forth from the city of Bast, I have not set my lips in motion against any one."

19. "Hail, Sertiu, who comest forth from Annu (Heliopolis), I have not been angry and wrathful except for a just cause."

20. "Hail, thou being of two-fold wickedness (Tutu), who comest forth from Ati (the Busirite Nome), I have not defiled the wife of any man."

21. "Hail, thou two-headed serpent (Uamemti), who comest forth from the torture-chamber, I have not defiled the wife of any man."

22. "Hail, thou who dost regard what is brought unto thee (Maa-antuf), who comest forth from Pa-Amsu (Panopolis), I have not defiled myself."

23. "Hail, thou Chief of the mighty (Her-uru) who comest forth from Amentet (Nehatu), I have not caused terror."

24. "Hail, thou Destroyer (Khemiu), who comest forth from Kesiu, I have not transgressed (the law)."

25. "Hail, thou who orderest speech (Shet-kheru), who comest forth from Urit, I have not burned with rage."

26. "Hail, thou Babe (Nekhenu), who comest forth from Uab (Heqat), I have not stopped my ears against the words of Right and Truth."

27. "Hail, Kenemti, who comest forth from Kenemet, I have not worked grief."

28. "Hail, thou who bringest thy offering (An-hetep-f), I have not acted with insolence."

29. "Hail, thou who orderest speech (Sera-kheru), who comest forth from Unaset, I have not stirred up strife."

30. "Hail, Lord of faces (Neb-heru), who comest forth from Netchfet, I have not judged hastily."

31. "Hail, Sekheriu, who comest forth from Utten, I have not been an eavesdropper."

32. "Hail, Lord of the two horns (Neb-abui), who comest forth from Saïs, I have not multiplied words exceedingly."

33. "Hail, Nefer-Tmu, who comest forth from Het-Ptah-ka (Memphis), I have done neither harm nor ill."

34. "Hail, Tmu in thine hour, who comest forth from Tattu (Busiris), I have never cursed the king."

35. "Hail, thou who workest with thy will (Ari-em-ab-f), who comest forth from Tebu, I have never fouled the water."

36. "Hail, thou bearer of the sistrum (Ahi), who comest forth from Nu, I have not spoken scornfully."

37. "Hail, thou who makest humanity to flourish (Uatch-rekhit), who comest forth from Saïs, I have never cursed God."

38. "Hail, Neheb-ka, who comest forth from thy hiding place, I have not stolen."

39. "Hail, Neheb-nefert, who comest forth from thy hiding place, I have not defrauded the offerings of the gods."

40. "Hail, thou who dost set in order the head (Tcheser-tep), who comest forth from thy shrine, I have not plundered the offerings to the blessed dead."

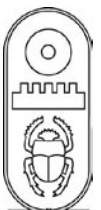
41. "Hail, thou who bringest thy arm (An-af), who comest forth from the city of Ma'ati, I have not filched the food of the infant, neither have I sinned against the god of my native town."

42. "Hail, thou whose teeth are white (Hetch-abhu), who comest forth from Ta-she (the Fayyum), I have not slaughtered with evil intent the cattle of the god."

“. . . I have tried thee. . . Advance thou, in very truth thou hast been tested."



*Detail of a Coffin.* The god Thoth, or Djehuti in ancient Egyptian, was the Scribe of Judgment. When the deceased made the Negative Declaration asserting a life well-lived, Djehuti took notes. [From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.](#)



# ANCIENT TEXTS ON THE EGYPTIAN MYSTERIES

**T**he initiatic and mystical character of ancient Egypt is attested from the time of the Pyramid Texts (Old Kingdom – ca. 2350 BCE) through the Greco-Roman era. Ancient authors consistently considered Egypt the font of ancient wisdom, and described the mysteries and initiatic character of the Egyptians. Here are selected passages from ancient Egypt and the classical world on the Egyptian mysteries, adapted for modern readers.



Entrance to Karnak Temple, Luxor, Egypt. Painted by H. Spencer Lewis during Egyptian trip of 1929.

“O King, thou didst not depart dead; thou didst depart living, so thou sittest upon the throne of Osiris, thy sceptre in thy hand, thou commandest the living; Thy sceptres are in thy hand, commanding those of secret places.”

– *Pyramid Texts* (Old Kingdom – ca. 2600–2400 BCE)<sup>1</sup>

“A stairway to heaven shall be laid down for him, that he may ascend to heaven thereon; he ascends on the smoke (incense) of the great censuring; ... he flies as a goose; he alights as a scarab, upon the empty throne which is in thy boat, O Rē.”

– *Pyramid Texts* (Old Kingdom)<sup>2</sup>

“When they have addressed this God whilst rowing along his boat, they cry out, and they bring him to rest in the Field of the Nepertiu Gods who are in the following of Osiris. If these scenes be done in writing according to the similitudes which are in the hidden places of the palace, and if a person hath knowledge of these words ... they shall act as magical protectors ... upon earth, regularly, unfaillingly and eternally.”

– *Amduat*, Second Hour  
(New Kingdom ca. 1560–1060 BCE)<sup>3</sup>

“Whosoever knoweth these things, being attached to his place, shall have his bread with Ra. Whosoever knoweth these things, being a soul and a spirit ... shall never enter the place of destruction.”

– *Amduat*, Third Hour (New Kingdom)<sup>4</sup>

“The hidden Circle of Amentet, through which this great god travelleth and taketh up his place in the Tuat. If these things be made with their names after the manner of this figure which is depicted at the east of the hidden house of the Tuat, and if a man knoweth their names whilst he is upon earth, and knoweth their places in Amenti, he shall attain to his own place in the Tuat, and he shall stand up in all places which belong to the gods whose voices are *maat*, even as the divine sovereign chiefs of Ra, and the mighty ones of the palace, and this knowledge shall be of benefit to him upon earth.”

– *Amduat*, Ninth Hour (New Kingdom)<sup>5</sup>

“Here is the opening of the book of the worship of Rē in the [Fullness of Being], of the worship of Temt in the [All-that-is]. The person who understands this work founded upon the Earth, like a porcelain figure at sunset, which is Rē’s triumph... Anyone who has knowledge on Earth, has knowledge after death.”

– *The Litany of the Sun* (New Kingdom)<sup>6</sup>

“I was introduced into the Divine Book, I beheld the excellent things of Thoth; I was equipped with their secrets; I opened all the passages; one took counsel with me on all their matters.”

– Inscription on a statue of Amenhotep, son of Hapi (19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty–New Kingdom)<sup>7</sup>



“If this Chapter be known by the deceased he shall become a perfect Spirit-soul in Khert-Neter, and he shall not die a second time, and he shall eat his food side by side with Osiris. If this Chapter be known by the deceased upon earth, he shall become like unto Thoth, and he shall be adored by those who live. He shall not fall headlong at the moment of the intensity of the royal flame of the goddess Bast, and the Great Prince shall make him to advance happily.”

– *Book of the Dead*  
(Saite Period Version, 600–500 BCE)<sup>8</sup>

“On this lake they perform by night the show of his [the unnamed] sufferings, and this the Egyptians call Mysteries...”

– Herodotus (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)<sup>9</sup>

“The ceremonies and rites of Osiris agree in everything with those of Dionysus, and that those of Isis and Demeter are one and the same, differing in nothing but the name. . . . The feigning of Hermes to be the conductor of souls was derived from the old Egyptian custom that he who brought back the dead body of Apis (when he came to the place), delivered it to him who represented Cerberus. . . .”

– Diodorus Siculus (ca. 90–30 BCE)<sup>10</sup>

“These philosophic priests . . . gave up the whole of their life to the contemplation and worship of divine natures and to divine inspiration; . . . through contemplation, science; and through both, [they procured] a certain

occult exercise of manners worthy of antiquity.”

– Chaeremon the Stoic (1<sup>st</sup> century CE)<sup>11</sup>

“For the illumination, which is present through the invocations, is self-appearing and self-subsisting;...and goes forth into manifestation through the divine energy and perfection....By such a purpose, therefore, the gods being gracious and propitious, give forth light abundantly to the Theurgists, both calling their souls upward into themselves, providing for them union to themselves in the Chorus, and accustoming them, while they are still in the body, to hold themselves aloof from corporeal things, and likewise to be led up to their own eternal and noetic First Cause...”

“For when we become entirely soul, and are outside of the body and soaring on high with all the gods of the nonmaterial realm, we occupy ourselves with sublime visions.

“The [Egyptian priests] do not, by any means, contemplate these [sacred] things with the reasoning faculty alone, but they also teach that, by means of the sacerdotal theurgy, the aspirant may mount up to the higher and more universal, and those conditions established superior to Fate and to God the Creator (Demiurgos), neither becoming attached to the realm of matter, nor taking hold of anything else besides only the observing of a proper time.”

– Iamblichus of Chalcis (ca. 245–325 CE)<sup>12</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> *Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 213, section 134-135. Adapted from Samuel A.B. Mercer. *The Pyramid Texts*. New York, Longmans, Green, 1952, 58. In public domain.

<sup>2</sup> *The Pyramid Texts*, Utterance 267, Section 365-366. Adapted from Mercer, 89.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from E.A. Wallis Budge. *The Book of Am-Tuat*. (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1905), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge. *The Gods of the Egyptians* (Chicago: Open Court, 1904), Vol 1: 214.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from E.A. Wallis Budge. *The Book of Am-Tuat*, 187-188.

<sup>6</sup> Edouard Naville, *La Litanie du Soleil: Inscriptions Recueillies dans les Tombeaux des Rois à Thèbes* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1875). Translation adapted for modern readers.

<sup>7</sup> Translation in James H. Breasted. *Ancient Records of Egypt*. Vol 2: 374 section 915.

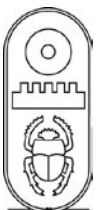
<sup>8</sup> *Book of the Dead*, Chapter 135 (Saite Period Version) Translation in E.A. Wallis Budge, *Book of the Dead*. [www.lysator.liu.se/~drokk/BoD/Papyrus\\_Ani.txt](http://www.lysator.liu.se/~drokk/BoD/Papyrus_Ani.txt)

<sup>9</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories* Book 2:65, 170-171, trans. G. C. Macaulay (1890; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1914).

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Diodorus Siculus, “On Egypt” Book 1:7. *The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, trans. G. Booth (London: Printed by W. McDowall for J. Davis, 1814), 1:58, 95.

<sup>11</sup> Chaeremon, cited in Porphyry, “On the Abstinence from Animal Food,” Chap. 4 in *The Select Works of Porphyry*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London: T. Rodd, 1823).

<sup>12</sup> Iamblichus, *Theurgia or the Egyptian Mysteries*, trans. Alexander Wilder (New York: The Metaphysical Publishing Co., 1911), chap. 4, 55 and 58-59; chap. 12, 204-205; and chap. 16, 257.



# THE INITIATORY PROCESS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

*Max Guilmot, Ph.D., F.R.C.*

**D**r. Max Guilmot, F.R.C. was a Belgian Egyptologist on the staff of the *Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, Brussels*. He was also a Corresponding Member of the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, Paris*, and member of the *Société des Gens de Lettres de France*. For many years he was also a consultant to the *Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose*. The Preface below was written by *Ralph. M. Lewis, F.R.C., former Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC and Director of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*.

## Preface

Just what is initiation? A distinction must be made between its procedure, that is, its functional operation, and its *purpose*. This purpose is a state or condition of *preparation*. The preparation consists of a series of tests and trials of the initiate to determine worthiness of elevation to a higher religious or social status. This preparation is likewise a form of instruction—a teaching, usually in symbolic form—of a specialized knowledge.

The functional aspect of initiation is its ritualistic structure. The importance of the testing of the initiate is impressed upon the individual in a *dramatic* form. In other words, the purpose and what is expected of the initiate are enacted. This form of initiation has an emotional impact upon the individual, which a dialectical or rhetorical discourse alone would not have.

The dramatic incidents of the initiation are intended to play upon the whole emotional gamut of the individual. They may arouse, for example, fear, anxiety, momentary depression, and ultimately, pleasure to the extent of ecstasy.

True esoteric initiation, as performed today by orders of a mystical, metaphysical,

and philosophical nature, incorporates those fundamentals of initiation, which can be traced to initiations conducted in ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece, and certain sects in the Middle Ages.

Induction into the ancient mystery schools was always in a form of initiation. The gnosis, the special knowledge that was to be imparted to the candidate, was considered to be of a sacred nature. It was thought that the knowledge was of divine origin revealed through oracles and priests or priestesses. Thus initiation in its ancient character was a synchronism of religion, metaphysics, and what we may term moral philosophy.

The subject matter of the initiation revolved about mysteries common to the average person of that time—mysteries, however, that still challenge the reason, intelligence, and the imagination of modern persons. These were the origin of the universe; of humanity; of the nature of birth and death; of the manifestations of natural phenomena; and life after this one. The knowledge imparted to the initiate verbally and by symbolism, and also by the enactment of ritualistic roles, was meant to enlighten the initiate with regard to these mysteries.

Since the knowledge was sacrosanct, it was not to be defiled by revealing it to the uninitiated, unprepared, and unqualified individual. Consequently, solemn oaths were exacted from the candidates to never divulge what was experienced during the initiation.

Much is heard of the fact that such initiations were performed thousands of years ago in Egypt. However, because of their sacred vows, substantially little has descended to us today as authentic material indicative of the true rites of such initiations. The

Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, under the direction of the Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, a worldwide cultural, educational, and initiatic organization, is proud to present this translation from hieroglyphic texts relating such a traditional initiation.

This presentation has been made possible through the excellent research and ardent labors of the noted Egyptologist, Dr. Max Guilmo, to whom we extend our profound thanks.

—*Ralph M. Lewis*

## Part 1: Phases Of Existence

*Verily, I am the one who dwells in the Light;*

*(Yes), I am a Soul that came into being*

*Born from the body of the god!*

*(Yes), I am a falcon that dwells in the Light,*

*That finds its power through its (own) light*

*And through its (own) radiance!*

*(O Osiris!)*

*Lord of Manifestations,*

*Great and Majestic,*

*Here I have come!*

(Coffin Texts)

It is not sufficient to let ourselves be swept away by the tides of existence. The stream of life is often fraught with danger that we must successfully overcome. To fail means that we are condemned to be just caricatures of human beings.

The human journey begins as soon as the child receives a name at birth. The bestowing of the name marks the advent of a new existence. Ancient people believed that the one who had no name was not truly born.

The first main obstacle—the advent of puberty—is accompanied by physical as well as psychological metamorphoses of such a nature that a new being seems to emerge from the protective shell of childhood.

Marriage also heralds a new phase of existence. Does not the life of the couple require the creating of a subtle and permanent harmony between bodies and souls—a mutual metamorphosis?

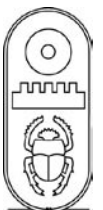
As for the slow process of aging, this also presents new problems. Faculties become impaired. From then on life demands less room. In order for it to subsist without a feeling of despair, it must have wisdom. Finally death comes. We must face it without fear and, without regret, give life up.

Thus birth, puberty, marriage, aging, and death depict unavoidable trials. Whether we face them happily or despairingly, whether we celebrate them or let them go unnoticed, they map the path of human life. With each test overcome, a new phase of existence begins. At the end of each season of life, the outline of a new being emerges.

It is true that today humanity has too much of a tendency to not celebrate the various stages of life we must go through. We no longer feel with the same acuity how much we change with each trial we overcome. Little by little, we become unconscious of our metamorphoses. By smoothing out the path of our lives, by removing all obstacles from our itineraries, we deny truth; we lie to ourselves. Lost in a fallacious fog of the soul, we fall out of step with the indispensable vital cadence. Today, the distressing questions concerning the meaning of life stem mostly from the loss of this existential rhythm.

Quite the contrary, ancient peoples and civilizations felt strongly how important it was to celebrate each phase of life. However, their “transitional rites” were not only “feasts” to commemorate the accession to a new stage of existence. By performing them, the whole community induced a victorious entry into a new phase of life through a series of power-generating acts. To enter (Latin: *in + ire*) a new stage of life, with the help of the community and through the power of ritual, meant to become initiated.

There exist—a most important fact—initiations into death. Death, the great transition, is the ultimate initiation. All peoples in the world demand that the neophyte undergo the trial of death and experience its pangs in order to be reborn.



## The Mysteries

Such is the purpose of these secret doctrines and practices called Mysteries, which were common to the Mediterranean world, especially ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt.

Ritual was introduced to change the quality of the novice's soul, to raise one's consciousness to a superhuman level, and to make an eternal being out of each soul personality. Thus the rituals of Adonis or Tammuz in the Near East, of Osiris in Egypt, of Orpheus in the Greek Islands, of Dionysus in Hellas—all depict death and resurrection so that one may symbolically experience a superhuman state and eternal life.

Psychologically, these practices resulted in a true victory over our human fear of death. Through initiatory death, they were absolutely convinced that we would be spared the pangs of death, which is our common human experience. In fact, they had been saved because they had been initiated.

## The Site of Abydos

We must first go to Abydos in order to meet the initiates of ancient Egypt. A most holy city, Abydos, situated between Asyut and Thebes, sheltered one of the oldest necropolises in history. There lay the first kings (starting 3200 BCE). A constant religious piety added to it cemeteries of every period, along the Libyan cliff, despite the fall of empires. It is no wonder, then, that nine-tenths of the funerary steles of the Middle Kingdom (2052 BCE–1778 BCE) exhibited in the museums of Europe come from Abydos!

How can we explain this three-millennium entanglement of necropolises and this prodigious depository of documents? The fact is that the city was twice venerable. Originally the last resting place of the early pharaohs, it became, at the beginning of the second millennium, the guardian of the head of Osiris the Savior, who led human beings to immortality.

The most precious part of the divine body dismembered by Seth, the God of Evil,

lay in this holy place of Egypt, sheltered in a shrine surmounted by two feathers. The Holy Sepulcher was built at the south of the city, in a place called Peker. At the north stood the great sanctuary of Osiris, erected at the dawn of history—beginning with the First Dynasty—remodeled, destroyed, and rebuilt several times; all that is left of it today is an outline, hardly visible, on the site of its successive ages.

And yet, together with the Holy Sepulcher, this temple was the crucible of the Osirian faith. The inestimable relic—the head of Osiris—conferred upon it an unequalled aura of holy power.

Has the mind of the masses changed so much? Paris has protected its unknown hero in its triumphal arch. Moscow has preserved the remains of Lenin. It seems that each city draws its strength from the legacies of its great dead. Was not Osiris, whose resurrection promised eternal life to every pious human, the greatest of them all?

So Egypt wished to die in Abydos. To die near the god, to rest in the peace emanating from the Holy Sepulcher, to experience the miracle of resurrection in its shadow was the dream of an entire people, from century to century.

Alas, there is nothing left of Abydos today except ruins and a single bastion: the sanctuary of Seti I and the strange edifice adjacent to it called the *Osireion*.

## Part 2: The Osireion Of Abydos

This structure is undoubtedly the most mysterious in the Valley of the Nile. Its construction began during the reign of Seti I (Nineteenth Dynasty, 1300 BCE) and was entirely underground when originally built. It comprises a long dark corridor leading into a hall filled with water. From the center of this basin rises a rectangular esplanade, a kind of island surrounded by heavy pillars of pink granite, to which two staircases lead.

What can be the purpose of this extraordinary architectural complex? Would it be a cenotaph of Seti I, whose name is inscribed

in the entrance corridor and in the central hall? It is possible, as the walls of the corridor are covered with funerary inscriptions, such as in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings; in addition, a spacious empty room, reminiscent of the ones in the pyramids of Sakkara and laid out on the east side of the Osireion, conjures up images of a huge sarcophagus.

Nevertheless, three or four centuries after its construction, this edifice was looked upon as a place dedicated to the worship of Osiris. Many are the archeological clues that seem to support this hypothesis. First, the esplanade rising out of the water-filled central hall and provided with two staircases was undoubtedly thought to be the primordial mount itself where death was vanquished at the dawn of time. There, according to tradition, Osiris lay in his sepulcher. Second, the two cavities hewn in the pavement of the esplanade undoubtedly had the purpose of housing the sarcophagus of the god and the holy shrine containing his viscera—perhaps his head. Finally, circular pits, unearthed around the central hall and still filled with fertile soil, used to shelter verdant trees, symbols of the eternity of Osiris resuscitated.

We can now see the purpose of the Osireion: Seti I wanted sacred rites to be performed in Abydos in order to ensure his immortality near Osiris and, at the same time,



Central Hall, Osireion of Abydos

to perpetuate the worship of the great god. Therefore, the royal cenotaph was an Osirian tomb as well.

### The Osireion: A Replica of the Sanctuary of Osiris in Abydos

We must not confuse this sanctuary with the main sanctuary north of Abydos, whose ruins are still scattered in the place known as Kom el Sultan.



Sarcophagus No. 67, Saite Period. Unpublished. Archeological Museum, Marseille.

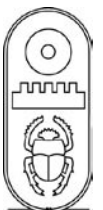
Rare are the documents that mention this illustrious site. However, the few descriptions of it, which they provide, shall soon reveal a surprising fact. There is, in the Museum of Archeology in Marseille, a sarcophagus that has depicted upon it a rounded knoll crowned with four trees guarded by two ram-headed gods.

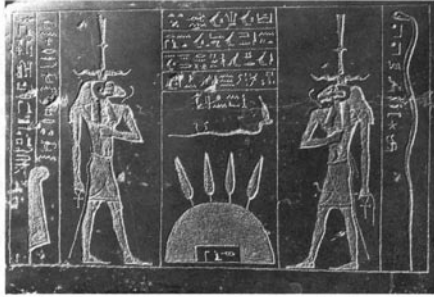
Without any doubt, Osiris lies under this knoll. His name is inscribed there, and the beginning of the inscription above the picture reads clearly:

*This is the knoll that hides  
Within (the Body) decayed;  
It is the holy Place  
Of Osiris who dwells in the West.*

The knoll and the four trees therefore allude to the famous sepulcher of Osiris. But right away, the esplanade of the Osireion comes to mind—symbolizing also the primordial mound and lifting above the waters the sarcophagus of the god—as well as the trees of eternal regeneration which framed the central hall.

Would the Osireion of Seti I be an imitation of the large ruined temple of Abydos? If ever confirmed, such a fact would be of decisive importance, because all initiatory progression in the famous lost sanctuary could, in such a case, be conceived as well in the architectural complex of the still-standing Osireion. Thus the latter would preserve intact the exact reproduction of the decor





Details of Sarcophagus No. 67, Marseille. Unpublished.

where the most secret practices of the pharaonic era took place—making it unique in ancient Egypt and even in the history of ancient civilizations.

We can now conclude that:

1. On the sacred domain of Abydos, the great temple of Osiris is completely destroyed. However, several documents (for instance, the *Papyrus of Ani*, plate 10, or the *Papyrus Greenfield*, plate 108, in the British Museum) preserve its main characteristics: Under a mound surrounded by trees was a basin filled with water where pillars supporting the roof of the sanctuary stood; and from the center of this basin emerged a terrace with two staircases on which lay the mummy of Osiris.

2. This description, no matter how brief it may be, immediately arouses a comparison with the Osireion built by Seti I—which seems to be an exact replica of the lost temple. We can still find today the basin, the pillars, the esplanade with its double staircase, the two cavities arranged to house the sarcophagus and the shrine containing the viscera, and, finally, the pits where verdant trees used to frame the whole sanctuary buried underneath the sand. All these archeological data point to the fact that Seti I intended to reproduce the architectural complex of the great temple of Osiris in Abydos.

3. Hence the conclusion that since the Osireion seems to be a copy of the destroyed temple, all the details of the texts pertaining

to this temple can be transferred, without risking too much error, to the architectural complex of the still-standing Osireion of Seti.

### Part 3: Initiations In Abydos

First of all, we must know whether or not secret initiations were conducted in Egypt, especially in Abydos. In this regard, an ancient text dating back to ca. 2000 BCE, quite unknown up to now, seems to give an affirmative answer:

*To follow the god to his abode,*

*In his tomb . . . .*

*Anubis sanctifies the hidden mystery of Osiris*

*(In) the sacred Valley of the “Master of Life” (Osiris).*

*(It is) the mysterious initiation*

*Of the Master of Abydos!*

What could be plainer? The god Anubis, the jackal of the necropolises, participated in the unfolding of a “mysterious initiation,” conducted by Osiris, the master of Abydos. Therefore, it is toward this holy place that one must walk in order to conceive—with the help of Egyptian texts of various dates and sources—how the initiatory process unfolded at the time of the pharaohs.

### The Great Journey—Anubis, the Conductor

Anubis welcomes the postulant at the threshold of the sacred domain. He is a “dreadful-looking god,” relates the Roman author Apuleius after the initiation he went through in the second century CE, “a god that serves as a messenger between the world above and the infernal world below, with a face half black and half gold, his head held high, and proudly stretching his dog’s neck.”

He is above all the Mystery. A hieroglyphic sign shows him lying on a large chest. This chest conceals the viscera of Osiris. The texts refer to it as “the mysterious coffin,” for behind its walls, at the dawn of history, a prodigious event occurred: the rebirth of Osiris—and eventually of all the dead—owing to the power of the rites that Anubis created.



Mask of Anubis used for rituals

If, from the tomb of Tutankhamen, a striking black jackal has emerged—lying on a chest containing the viscera of the king—it is assuredly to immortalize the vigil of the god who discovered rebirth and to drive away those who have no knowledge of these secrets:

*Secret, secret chest; hidden, hidden (chest),  
That one does not know, that one does  
not know,  
Never, never!*

Therefore, it is not death that this coffin conceals. In fact, Anubis depicts resurrection. This jackal whose head (according to Apuleius) appears half black and half gold (the colors of death and rebirth) is, to the initiate, the god of hope.

It is with hope that we must see him come to the threshold of the necropolises. To all the dead and to all candidates for initiatory death, Anubis bestows the very breath of life which the Hereafter exhales:

*I am the Jackal of Jackals,*

so Anubis proclaims in the Book of the Dead,

*I am the luminous Air  
Which carries away the breaths  
Before the Venerable Ones,  
Up to the confines of the Heavens,  
Up to the ends of the Earth!*

At this moment, Anubis assumes his full role: He becomes “Conductor”—such as Hermes in Greece—and “Opener of paths.”

## Darkness and Doors

To every initiate, the progression toward illumination has the same prelude: the long crossing, under the guidance of Anubis, of the sacred domain. Then the solemn entrance into the sanctuary, which in this case has become the temple of initiation, follows:

*Entrance into the temple  
Of Osiris in Djedu (=Busiris),*

can be read in the *Coffin Texts*, which afterward maintain an animated dialogue, an excerpt of which follows:

## Guardian:

*Who is the one who enters  
Inside the sanctuary  
Of Osiris in Djedu? . . .  
Who approaches this Soul? . . .  
Whence does he come, the one  
Who ascends toward this Soul  
That a high knoll conceals?  
—Secret thing  
That we know not!*

## Postulant:

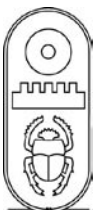
*Open to me!  
Verily, I am someone worthy of esteem,  
I am someone who (knows) how to keep  
a secret,  
I am a servant in the temple of Osiris! . . .  
Open to me!  
I am a (human) who knows  
Its magical formula,  
I was initiated into these (secret things),  
And did not repeat (them)  
To the uninitiated.*

At the door of the temple, the candidate is addressed and the intention is unveiled: this mortal being wants to “ascend” toward the Holy of Holies, center of spirituality where the Osirian Soul radiates; the candidate wants to approach the sacred knoll under which the God Savior lies. And here comes the answer of the traveler, voiced in a peremptory tone:

*Let the doors be opened to me!  
I have not repeated what cannot be known.  
I am someone who (knows) how to keep  
a secret.*

Then the doors open. However, the initiatory itinerary shall adapt itself to the plan of each sanctuary. For example, in Busiris the candidate crosses the entire temple before reaching the Holy of Holies; in Abydos, one goes directly underground toward the aquatic hall where the tomb is immersed.

Important variations in the texts result from this, and the Book of the Dead tries to reconcile them:



*For me, the gates of the Heavens  
(= the door of the sanctuary)  
Have opened wide;  
For me, the gates of the Earth  
Have opened wide;  
For me, the bolts of the (god) Geb  
Have been unlocked.*

How can one not remember the Osireion of Abydos? In Abydos, a subterranean passage of approximately 100 meters in length was conceived by a people careful, in its architecture, to accustom the soul to forget the illusions of the world. To forget one's temptations, to go down into this Earth, meant the same as to regain the energy that life had used up.

Is Earth not the welcoming matrix where the tree takes root to prepare its fruit? Is she not the mysterious Mother who wears on her body rocks and plants, beasts and humans? Every living thing draws life from her, and every thing returns to her at the time of death. In the maternal entrails, all being lies dormant, waiting to be reborn. When people die, they also return to this matrix, similar to the embryo, and there prepare for rebirth.

All humanity has felt—and still experiences—the creative power, the inexpressible mystery of Earth, our Mother. First the initiates know that to go down inside her body, to lose oneself in her darkness, is to regain life. The long psychic night of the initiatory process is a return to the sources. It is there that humans shall bathe themselves and emerge, “awakened,” in illumination!

The Book of the Dead proclaims the miracle thus: “Thy face is open in the abode of Darkness!”

Nevertheless, before opening one's eyes to the Great Light, one must travel a dark land where nothing alludes to earthly existence. Before we may acquire higher knowledge, humans—whether dead or alive, during the initiation or after death—must first forget Earth and its illusions.

But here we ask for that which we wished for while we were alive: We want to eat and

to drink; to love and to breathe. Fools! In the Hereafter—or during the initiatory process, which reflects its essence—we shall not receive our ration of beer nor our love desires. Nevertheless, we shall be given a matchless treasure: peace of Heart and the almighty power of Mind.

The dramatic entrance of Humanity into the Mystery is considered, in the Book of the Dead, as one of the most striking documents of universal literature. To the Creator of the World, Atum, the trembling creature says the following words:

***The Initiate:***

*O Atum, (tell me)*

*Why (then) have I traveled to the desert?*

*The fact is that there is no water, there is no breeze.*

*(This land) is deep, deep,*

*Dark, dark,*

*Without limits nor frontiers!*

***The God:***

*There, thou shalt live with thy heart at peace.*

***The Initiate:***

*But one cannot, over there, Satisfy love!*

***The God:***

*(It is there that) I have placed*

*The powers of Mind*

*Instead of water, breeze,*

*And pleasure of love;*

*And peace (of) mind*

*Instead of bread and beer . . . .*

***The Initiate:***

*And what will be (my) lifespan?*

***The God:***

*Thou shalt live for millions and millions  
(of years);*

*(Thy life) shall last for millions (of years)!*

So much bliss after the solitary journey! To successfully complete this passage, especially for the initiate, was the main thing; for at the end of the road—in the Hereafter or in the initiatory temple—God shall await his creature:

*Thou standest at the portals*

*That keep the crowd away;*



*The one in charge of the threshold  
Comes out (and walks) toward thee.  
He grabs thy hand;  
He takes thee toward Heaven  
Close to Geb, the Father!  
(This God) exults  
When thou approachest;  
His hand, he gives (it) to thee;  
He gives thee a kiss,  
He takes thee in his arms.  
At the head of the Souls  
He assigns a place to thee.*

In this excerpt from the Pyramid Texts, the deceased king, resuscitated in Heaven, obtains from the god the sublime rendezvous. However, in initiatory rituals, it will be on Earth, in the darkness of the Holy of Holies, that the human, “justified,” during a theatrical appearance, shall see God face to face.

#### **Part 4: Justification or Preparation for the Holy Night**

What did all the details of this extraordinary holy game consist of exactly? Before entering the Hall of Judgment, the candidate undergoes a “preparation.” Apuleius again expresses his thoughts freely on the subject.

A master of “inspired mien . . . with a truly superhuman expression,” first reads sacred writings which are pulled out from a hiding-place, at the end of the sanctuary.

The reader “instructs the initiate in the preparation necessary for the initiation.” Was the future initiate required to keep secret what is about to be learned? To accept henceforth to live according to Ma’at (Truth-Justice)? To engage the Self at once, without remission, in the eternal life?

“Remember,” Isis says, “and keep forever engraved deep in thy heart the fact that thy whole career, till the

end of thy life, down to thy last breath, is pledged to me.”

Consequently, a promise was exacted. The obligation was probably taken inside the sanctuary, perhaps in the hypostyle. In its austere shadows and with no one within hearing, the candidate thus prepared the inner Self for the great “Mysteries of the Holy Night.”

Here the candidate, taken by the hand of a guide, is led into the last room, to the very end of the night. Let us imagine at that time the sacred emotion of the candidate! The famous Hall of Judgment—which the funerary papyri locate in the Hereafter—had its replica on Earth: the place of initiatory trial. It is the mysterious Holy of Holies. There the weighing of the souls shall take place. There, a balance, the Scale of Justice, stands.

*On this day when the mistakes are counted  
In front of the universal Master.*

Does not Paheri, one initiate among so many others, recall the prestigious event in his biography:

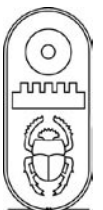
*I was called, placed on the Scale;  
I left (the Room),  
Weighed, faultless, and saved.*

Next to the implacable flail of Justice, venerable masters are waiting. These persons, masked in this case, have become the gods of Judgment. Here are Thoth, the ibis; Anubis, the jackal; Horus, the falcon. The light of the torches carves fierce features on their faces; like fleeting images of a fantastic dream, their profiles move on the walls, animated by the fire flickering in cups. The candidate remains motionless on the threshold.

“In the middle of the night,” Apuleius says mysteriously, “I have seen the Sun shine with sparkling radiance. I have approached the gods . . . and I have seen them face to face!”



Priest reading before a candidate; tomb of Kom-el-Choufaga (Alexandria)



These gods are demanding. Each one of them is now going to ask questions. Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead seems to have kept a dramatic memory from the examination. First, the gods speak to the Guardian of the Threshold:

*“Have him come!” they command.*

Then, speaking to the candidate:

*Who art thou?*

*What is thy name?*

*Which way didst thou go?*

*And over there, what didst thou see?*

The visitor gives his name. He states what he has seen. Then the gods speak in chorus:

*Do come and cross this threshold for  
the Hall of Ma’at!*

The candidate moves forward. However, one’s eyes remain fascinated by a holy and white form.

What are those faces covered with ibis or jackal masks, compared to the radiant human face of the messenger of hope? Behind the scale, here he is, Osiris—wrapped tightly in his immaculate shroud, holding the scepter and the flail.

The candidate bows. He salutes the Savior:

*Osiris! I have come here to see thy perfection,*

*And my two hands (are raised),*

*Glorifying thy true name!*

Thoth, the omniscient ibis, then invites him to proceed:

*Come nearer . . . To whom shall I announce thee?*

The visitor, in mighty voice:

*Announce (my coming)*

*To the (god whose dwelling*

*Has a) roof of flames,*

*Walls of live serpents,*

*And a floor (like) a river!*

This god is Osiris! He bows his head as a sign of acquiescence. Led by Horus, the falcon, the candidate advances amid

the moving flashes in the Hall of Ma’at. Before the throne of Light, the candidate proclaims complete innocence:

*Greetings to thee, great god,*

*Who is master of Ma’at! . . .*

*I know thee,*

*(Yes), I know thy name,*

*And I know the name(s)*

*Of the forty-two gods*

*Who are (there), with thee . . .*

*I did no wrong*

*Toward humanity . . .*

*I did no evil . . .*

*I am pure, I am pure,*

*I am pure, I am pure!*



Sacred Lake, Karnak.

Paheri, Prince of El Kab in the Eighteenth Dynasty, in his biography states that he was “examined” and found “faultless” and finally “saved.”

The scale carries, on one of its dishes, a symbol of the Soul—the soul of the candidate laden with all its actions—and on the other, a feather, the counterweight of Justice, the majestic symbol of Ma’at!

Then the god Thoth records the weighing. It is in consonance with Ma’at; in truth, this soul is all filled with Ma’at!

The scale has spoken, and Osiris proclaims:

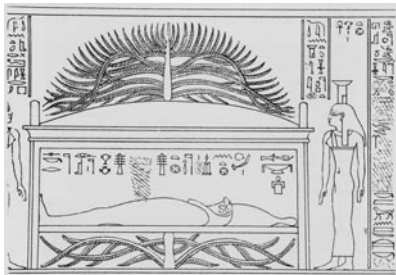
*I grant thee (the title of) “Just,” “Triumphant.”*

*In Ma’at (the Truth), thou art initiated!*

(Papyrus T32, Leiden)

It is the decisive moment when the human blends with Ma’at. Here the initiate becomes the incarnation of Ma’at.

If Egypt was great—and still remains so—it is because it guided the first steps of Humanity toward a greater light. Everyone can, through appropriate behavior, identify with Ma’at, the harmony of the world. Everyone can become a part of Ma’at and attain glorification in its eternity.



Osiris being resuscitated under the Holy Tree; Dendera.

*I have entered into Ma'at  
(The Harmony of the World),  
(Yes), I carry Ma'at,  
I am master of Ma'at!*

(Coffin Texts, 4, 330)

## Regeneration

After the candidate had proved worthy, a bath washed away all memory of human status. A spiritualization through rituals followed spiritual promotion. By entering the holy water of the original sea and then coming out of it, just as a new Sun on the first day of creation, the human being was reborn without past, without sin, with the eternity of a star:

*Here we are ready to live again, . . .  
we read in a solar hymn,  
. . . we have entered  
The primordial Sea.  
It has restored vigor  
To the one who begins (his) youth anew.  
(Let the old man) take off his clothes.  
(Then) another one puts them on!*

Numerous are the basins in Egypt which adjoin the temples. It is there that the rites of lustration were conferred upon the masters, and initiations were probably performed there also.

The necropolis of Abydos still shelters such a basin concealed in the strange construction of the Osireion. But here is the important thing: To reach the tomb of Osiris on the aquatic esplanade, the visitor first had to

step down into the holy water in order for sins to be washed away. No other site still standing in ancient Egypt seems better arranged for initiations.

Now let us imagine the splendor of this hall when the roof was still on, as the heavy architraves testify. The water in the basin glistens under the fleeting glimmers of the lamps and torches. Masked officiating ecclesiasts surround the initiate. Clothes are relinquished—the impure clothes that cloaked the old person. The initiate slowly steps down into the original sea and is enveloped in holy water. As a mother, she welcomes him. Like a setting Sun, the candidate goes down into the abyss and then emerges from it as a Sun, resuscitated.

Having become Osiris—through justification—and likened to Ra (the Sun)—through regeneration—the initiate climbs the twelve steps of the Osireion leading to the august esplanade. Among the heavy pillars protecting the dead God, the candidate receives new clothes: white linen veils.

## Part 5: The Illumination

The initiate awaits the manifestation from the Holy One, submitting the Self, and waits. This waiting period is very important, for the longer and the more submissive it is, the more striking the revelation of the Holy Thing will appear when the time comes. In the initiatory process, the epiphany is an apotheosis, a godlike state. It is through it that the heavy door of the subconscious opens up:

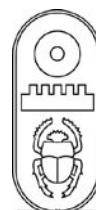
*The brightness of the Light  
Has fallen upon my steps!*

Such is the cry of deliverance which the *Coffin Texts* conceal.

Upon the dark esplanade, the gold catafalques of Osiris the Savior sparkle with tawny reflections that become alive under the torches. Just



Deceased wearing the crown in his left hand, and led by Anubis; Louvre, Paris.



remember the cry of admiration that was uttered when those of Tutankhamen were discovered!

The doors of the sepulcher will soon open up; then, the divine sarcophagus and its holy relics will appear.

Robed in white linen, the candidate still awaits. All that has been learned about Osiris—his suffering, his death, and the resurrection he has promised to humanity—all that the mind has piously conceived, shall suddenly be revealed in the Light. Then a shock will result from the confrontation, a blow to the soul that will seal the pact between human and god. A new being shall enlighten the world.

Thick bushes surround the Osirian tomb. They stand as verdant witnesses to the god's resurrection. They embrace the body. They give their strength:

*The living plant grows green!*

an inscription proclaims;

*When it becomes green the earth becomes green also!*

*See, Osiris repeats his youth!*

In this high place of worship, on this island of Ma'at (Cosmic Order and Truth), the god asserts his youth; he resuscitates. The foliage bears witness to his resurrection.

Around the candidate, the priestly officers move about, preparing the opening of the



Stela of the priest Oun-Neferi; British Museum, No. 808, limestone. Unpublished. The priest, having reached the top of the stairs, opens the naos housing the Osirian shrine.

holy sepulcher. Their names cast a magic spell; a few are known, such as Guardian of the Gates, Pure Archivist, Master of the Throne (Papyrus T32, Leiden).

The ritual of the apparition of Osiris, the Savior, was undoubtedly quite long. Did it include dialogues similar to those that were exchanged in front of the Scale of Ma'at? A few invocations, scattered throughout the texts, lead us to believe so:

*Osiris!*

*Hail to thee!*

*(thou who are lying) under (thy) secret shelter,*

*Thou whose heart has stopped!*

(Coffin Texts, 7, 111)

These appeals—and many others—remind one of bits of lost scenarios.

And then the solemn voice of the god resounds in the temple:

*Let him advance toward me . . .*

*Let him see my wounds!*

(Coffin Texts, 1, 142)

To see the wounds of the Savior, the wounds of Osiris through whom humanity is saved! To the religious soul, no other apparition can equal that of the great god, resuscitated!

The heavy bolts of the catafalques burst forth from their ties. The golden doors half-open amidst the green foliage:

*For thee the doors of the Horizon*

*Of the Next World open up!*

(Papyrus T32, Leiden)

Behold the god! Behold, at the bottom of the sacred coffin, Osiris being reborn through the power of the ritual! His head is crowned, his body is peaceful, and his shroud immaculate. His whole countenance is majestic.



Incense Offering Burner. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

*The postulant whispers:  
Great God,  
I am thine offspring  
Contemplating thy Mystery.*

(Book of the Dead, 44)

“To contemplate the ‘Mystery’” is to participate in it, and it is also to resuscitate as Osiris. It is to become an Osiris. It is a crucial moment and the flashing zenith of a human life! An initiate is born. Holiness infuses the person. To Holiness, the human is bound.



Replica of the Osirian Sepulcher. Isis (the bird) is being fecundated by Osiris. (Cairo)

*Thou seest the funerary chamber,  
(The god) in his pristine form,  
(Yes), Osiris in his shroud,  
In the place of embalming.  
Thou seest the glorified Body,  
Lying on its funerary bed,  
(Yes), the noble Mummy  
On its couch exposed!*

(Papyrus T32 Leiden)

An officiating master, no doubt, has just chanted in a sing-song voice the sacred words above. Through sublime vision, human and God are henceforth united. There now the mutation of humanity—real and inexpressible—is realized. It is the mystical union that, after Egypt, so many centuries shall attempt to describe without ever being able to give to the language the incomparable radiance of a soul’s dawning.

The initiate, following the tracks of Osiris, is bound to the god Osiris. Through initiation, the initiate has already experienced

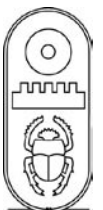
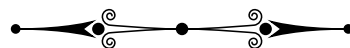
death and resurrection. The initiate’s eyes are already being filled with divine light—the eternal Light of the Savior. The initiate is also a Luminous One; the initiate is Illuminated:

*Verily, I am the one who dwells in the Light.  
(Yes), I am a Soul that came into being  
Born from the body of the god!  
I am one of these gods and one of these souls  
That dwell in the Light . . .  
(Yes), I am a falcon that dwells in the Light,  
That finds its power through its (own) light  
And through its (own) radiance!  
To the far ends of Heaven I travel back  
and forth,  
And there is no one to oppose me . . .  
(O Osiris!)  
Lord of Manifestations,  
Great and majestic,  
Here I have come!  
And the Hereafter for me has opened up;  
The paths in Heaven, (the paths) on Earth,  
For me have been opened,  
And there is no one to oppose me!*

The great Falcon takes wing. Its dark silhouette nobly delineates itself before the solar disc. The initiate must not linger in an illusory world. It is mandatory to tear oneself away from its forms. Toward the Light, the candidate ascends to become real. No one will stop the flight of the great Falcon. The human being has given up an old cloak by crossing the Threshold of Illumination.

One day, all of humanity, following the initiatory path, shall imitate the flight of the Bird of Light. At this final stage, Humanity shall be “realized.” Thus, according to the Divine Will, the mysterious goal of the human adventure shall be attained. All shall be fulfilled.

*(O Osiris)  
Lord of Manifestations,  
Great and majestic,  
Here I have come!”*



# ANCIENT EGYPT AND MODERN ESOTERICISM

*Jeremy Naydler, Ph.D.*

**W**hat is it about ancient Egypt that people today find so fascinating? Jeremy Naydler suggests that what really draws people to Egypt is less the great monuments and works of art than the religious consciousness that produced them. This religious consciousness of the ancient Egyptians exposes a tension in our own culture between the world view of modern scientific materialism on the one hand and a worldview that would connect us once again with the reality of the spiritual dimension. Looking back to the ancient Egyptians, we find that their awareness of the interior realms of gods, spirits, and archetypal images strikes a surprising chord with our own deepest longings. This essay is based on a talk given at the Theosophical Society, London November 27, 2003.

*Jeremy Naydler is the author of two full-length studies of ancient Egyptian religious consciousness: [Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred \(1996\)](#) and [Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts: the Mystical Tradition of Ancient Egypt \(2005\)](#).*

## **The Fascination With Ancient Egypt**

Today there seems to be an unprecedented fascination with ancient Egypt. We see evidence of this in the unceasing flow of books on ancient Egyptian history, culture, and art; in the seemingly inexhaustible TV coverage that ancient Egypt attracts; in the amount of journals and magazines, both scholarly and popular, dedicated to widening our understanding of the civilization; in the plethora of societies devoted to studying and celebrating it; in the numerous lecture courses being given in the adult education departments of our universities; and, not least, in the huge amount of tourists visiting Egypt each year. We might well ask: What lies behind this modern fascination with ancient Egypt?

Certainly the Egyptians produced some monumental buildings and stunning works of art, the grandeur of which makes the achievements of contemporary civilization seem paltry by comparison. Were we to attempt to build a replica of the Great Pyramid, I doubt that we would succeed.

We are good at mobile phones, washing machines, freeways and airplanes, but I don't think we could manage to construct the Great Pyramid, nor for that matter the temple at Karnak, nor the tombs of the Valley of the Kings. It somehow isn't in us to do the sorts of things the Egyptians did. We aren't motivated that way and have neither the patience nor the skill.

Could it therefore be due as much to our own deficiencies as to their genius that we feel attracted to the Egyptians? They did things that are to us extraordinary, almost superhumanly extravagant and at the same time deeply mysterious. While there are of course many things about the Egyptians that we can relate to, fundamentally they were *not like us*.

It seems to me, therefore, that in order to answer the question as to what lies behind our fascination with Egypt, we need to go beyond our feelings of awe and wonder at the great monuments and works of art, to the less comfortable feeling of ancient Egypt's utter strangeness, its *otherness*. There is something about Egypt that can strike us as positively *uncanny*.

This is especially the case when we encounter the religious world of the Egyptians, populated as it was by a multitude of gods and spirits. Despite the reassuring images of "daily-life" Egypt which are presented to us in the media and in popular books by Egyptologists, we can often feel that the ancient Egyptians inhabited a world that

was disturbingly different from our own. In order to understand that world, and to understand the consciousness of the people whose world it was, we need to stretch our imaginations away from everything that is familiar to us today.

### **Thutmose III's Coronation and Career Examined**

There was recently (in the autumn of 2003) a particularly lavish drama-documentary series on ancient Egypt on TV. It reconstructed famous episodes from ancient Egyptian history with the aid of large casts, including actors who were supposedly speaking ancient Egyptian (made to seem all the more authentic by adding English subtitles).

One of the programs in the series was on Thutmose III's campaigns against the Syrians, his capture of the cities of Megiddo and Kadesh, and other spectacular military triumphs. It included an authoritative voice-over assuring us that the reconstructions were based on hieroglyphic inscriptions at Karnak. Needless to say it was all absolutely riveting, and the thousands (or hundreds of thousands?) of viewers must have felt themselves to be witnessing virtually the real thing—Egypt as it truly was.

The approach that was taken followed that which has been taken time and again by Egyptologists, in which Thutmose is presented as a great warrior and empire builder, somewhat akin to Napoleon, conceiving of bold and daring plans, and leading his armies from one victory to another.<sup>1</sup> The “Napoleonic” image of the Egyptian king is given credence by the fact that Thutmose III was indeed a daring and shrewd military commander, who significantly extended the overseas territories of Egypt and added vastly to the wealth and power of his country.

But if Thutmose III was a figure who we feel inclined to compare with Napoleon, then we must also take care to remember that there were important differences, not just between the two personalities, but between the two

cultures in which they lived. In ancient Egypt the kingship was not simply a political office, but was also religious. Even for a warrior king such as Thutmose III, the relationship to the invisible world of gods and spirits was fundamental not only to his power and success, but also to what it meant to be the king of Egypt.

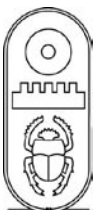
There is an interesting document that has come down to us that gives us some insight into what the kingship of Egypt actually entailed. It is a coronation text of Thutmose III in which he claims to have had a mystical encounter with the sungod Amun-Ra that was, as it were, woven into the coronation ceremonies. The key features of this experience were that the king transformed himself into a falcon, flew up to heaven and there had a vision of Amun-Ra, was infused with the god's spiritual power and assimilated into himself “the wisdom of the gods.” This is how the text reads:

“He [Amun-Ra] opened for me the doors of heaven and unfolded the gates of the Akhet [a place of spiritual transformation]. I rose to heaven as a divine falcon and saw his secret image in heaven. I worshipped his majesty. . . . I was infused with all his akh-power [luminous spiritual power] and instructed in the wisdom of the gods.”<sup>2</sup>

This text confronts us with a rather different image of Thutmose III from the favored Napoleonic stereotype. The text itself could go back to 1504 BCE, but it is similar to much older Egyptian texts (the so-called Pyramid Texts) found on the inside of certain Fifth and Sixth Dynasty pyramids, some 800 years earlier. There we find the same themes of the king of Egypt transforming into a falcon and flying up to the sky, where he has a vision of Ra, and becomes inwardly infused with the solar light and the wisdom of the gods.

### **Shamanism and Ancient Egypt**

Anyone familiar with the literature of shamanism will recognize a shamanic undercurrent to this type of mystical



experience. One might say that it has a shamanic “prototype,” for in this literature we read of initiations in which the shaman transforms into a bird (often an eagle), flies up to the sky and becomes inwardly illumined after encountering the Great God, and then returns to his tribe with a newly acquired spiritual knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

Seen in this light, it would appear that during the coronation rites of the king, Thutmose III had an experience similar to a shamanic initiation, and was thus in touch with a dimension of reality that was beyond anything Napoleon knew. Because it does not fit our preconceptions of how we would like to see the great warrior Thutmose, it has been “screened out” of the mainstream portrayal of the king. It has indeed been screened out of the mainstream portrayal of Egyptian culture as such. Within Egyptology, there is still a great reluctance to accept that either mysticism or shamanism existed in ancient Egypt: this is the line taken by most Egyptologists today, with just one or two exceptions. So it is hardly surprising that the media follow suit.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, behind the fascination with ancient Egypt today I would suggest that there is a deep longing to reconnect with precisely the aspect of ancient Egyptian culture that is oriented towards spiritual realities. This longing may be more or less conscious in those people who feel drawn to ancient Egypt, and many may wish to deny any such longing. But as time goes on and it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore the spiritual foundations of ancient Egyptian culture, so it may also become harder to ignore what it is in the culture that works so mysteriously to draw people to it.

It is as if ancient Egypt has a certain karmic role to play in our times, and that this role is to expose the tension in our own culture between, on the one hand, our allegiance to the worldview of modern science, that seeks to account for everything in the world, past and present, in materialistic terms, and, on the other, a longing to escape

from the confines of this worldview and reconnect with spiritual realities once again.

Put in more general historical terms, this tension could be seen as living between our habitual deference to the worldview inaugurated by the religion of Judaism and the philosophy and scientific rationalism of the Greeks on the one side, and an underlying sense of dissatisfaction with the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman foundations of Western culture on the other.

Undoubtedly the latter have determined the way in which the consciousness of the West has developed over the last 2,500 years. But if we look back to Egypt with a sensitivity towards the spiritual matrix within which the Egyptians lived, then we may find that the pre-Judaic and pre-Greek consciousness of the Egyptians was a consciousness that strikes a surprising chord with our own deepest longings.

### The Imaginary Versus the Imaginal

The tension that I have referred to in our own culture and sensibility has been noted by Erik Hornung, one of the most eminent contemporary Egyptologists who has specialized in the study of ancient Egyptian religious literature. He is also one of the foremost apologists for the non-mystical interpretation of ancient Egyptian religion. In his book, *The Secret Lore of Egypt*, he takes on the question of the relationship between ancient Egyptian religious life and those Western esoteric traditions that see Egypt as the source of an initiatory wisdom.

To this end, Hornung makes a distinction between “Egyptosophy” and Egyptology proper.<sup>5</sup> For Hornung, “Egyptosophy” involves projecting onto ancient Egypt an ill-founded wish to see it as a repository of spiritual knowledge.

Egyptology, by contrast, shows us that there were no mysteries, no esoteric or initiatory teachings or practices in ancient Egypt. Western esoteric streams like Alchemy, Gnosticism, the Hermetic Tradition, Rosicrucianism, which in their different ways see their roots as going back to ancient Egypt, are all dealt with by Hornung in a summary



and deadpan manner. Chapter by chapter he sets out to demonstrate that their understanding of Egyptian religion has been tainted by illusory fantasies and fails to correspond with the facts as revealed to us by modern scholarship.

Hornung's stance is that Egyptology studies *real* Egypt, whereas "Egyptosophy" constructs an "imaginary Egypt" which bears only a rather "loose relationship to historical reality."<sup>6</sup> Hornung's approach is very much that of the modern rationalist for whom what is real and what is imaginary form two sides of an irreconcilable opposition. It is scarcely surprising to find that, as a modern rationalist, Hornung fails to refer to—let alone utilize—an important distinction that many modern esotericists, as well as depth psychologists, make. It is the distinction between what is merely "imaginary" and what is "imaginal."

### The Imaginal Realm

Whereas, what is imaginary is the product of personal fantasy and may therefore be regarded as subjective, what is imaginal gives access to a transpersonal content that has an objective reality, *even though* it may not correspond to any historical fact or physical event.<sup>7</sup> The imaginal realm, or *mundus imaginalis*, as it is often termed, has an existence that is independent of those individuals who become aware of it. It thus possesses an ontological status that has a universal validity that the products of a person's private fantasies do not achieve.

Even people with the most slender knowledge of ancient Egypt will be aware that their world was populated by a very large number of gods and goddesses. These were essentially invisible beings who were given imaginative forms which were then represented in sculpture and painting.

If the question arises as to whether the Egyptians would have regarded these beings as imaginary or imaginal, we hardly need pause for an answer. It is quite obvious that these deities were regarded as both real and powerful agencies by the Egyptians, and that

it would have seemed to them most unwise to ignore their objective existence.

Whereas the "Egyptosophist" would concur with the Egyptians in seeing the gods as real entities, most Egyptologists would be far less willing to do so. As one specialist put it, they are to be regarded rather as the product of "vivid speculation" that is likely to "disappoint the modern enquiring mind" than as pointing to any objective reality.<sup>8</sup>

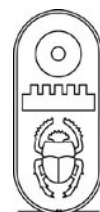
We are therefore entitled to ask where the problem of interpreting ancient Egyptian religion really lies. Is it with the so-called "Egyptosophists" projecting an imaginary Egypt onto real Egypt, or with the Egyptologists who are unable to recognize that, for the Egyptians, literal and historical reality was not the only reality: "imaginal" reality was just as real as hard-and-fast historical "facts."

### Reality is both Visible and Invisible

So let us once more return to Thutmose III and his campaign against the Syrians. Undoubtedly, Thutmose III was a great warrior. But when we ask, "How did he learn to become such a great warrior?" the Egyptian answer would be that he was taught by the god Seth and encouraged by the goddess Neith.

Figure 1 shows the two deities instructing the young king. Both were renowned for their violent disposition—they were both warrior deities. If Thutmose III was a great warrior, then it was not, according to the Egyptians, by virtue of his human qualities as much as by virtue of his having been infused with the energy of these two deities.

For the Egyptians, there was a world of archetypal energies or powers that had to be called upon in order for the king to be a great warrior. Reality was for them twofold in this sense: it was both visible and invisible. What we see portrayed in Figure 1 is Thutmose III with two invisible beings. We could of course dismiss these beings as imaginary, but if we were to do so then we would no longer be seeing the world of the



Egyptians as the Egyptians themselves saw it. For them, these invisible beings were *imaginal* in precisely the sense that they were objectively real.

Let us stay with Thutmose III. A very different situation is portrayed in Figure 2. Here there are no invisible deities represented. We see a relief of Thutmose III in the midst of battle with the Syrians. The king is depicted as a veritable giant, grabbing the hair of forty-two paltry Syrians who are shown in three ranks of fourteen, with their arms outstretched, begging for mercy. In his right hand, the king holds a mace, with which he is about to dispatch them with one blow. They are all on their knees, helpless before the superhuman power of the king.



Figure 1. Thutmose III, instructed by Seth and Neith. Neith is represented abstractly in front of the king, holding a was sceptre.

One might be tempted to say that this hardly represents a realistic picture of the pharaoh doing battle with the Syrians, for, as we all know, it would be impossible for one man to grab hold of the hair of forty-two warriors and slay them all with one blow. The image, however, is evoking an *imaginal reality* that every pharaoh embodied, or sought to embody. This imaginal reality was portrayed from the very earliest dynastic period, and was represented consistently throughout Egyptian history as something far more than simply a picture celebrating a pharaoh's military victory.

### Evocation of Imaginal Archetypes

To understand such an image we have to see its primary purpose as religious: it was not so much meant to record a historical event as to

magically evoke an imaginal archetype. While the image may have been engraved upon stone after the event, it was—precisely in so far as it served a religious function—present at the imaginal level and was utilized at that level to determine the outcome of the pharaoh's campaign.<sup>9</sup>

The magical efficacy of these images (for this is just one of a large number, from the very earliest dynasties, in the same genre) is due to the fact that they align the pharaoh with greater than human cosmic forces. What the pharaoh is shown as enacting is a cosmic battle between *Ma'at* (cosmic order, truth, and justice) and *Isfet* (cosmic disorder, untruth, and injustice). It is this archetypal reality that was made to supervene and, as it were, impress itself upon the historical events in order to make the pharaoh's power truly godlike and to assure him of victory.

Figure 3 shows a relief carving in the same genre, made about three hundred years after the reign of Thutmose. It portrays the pharaoh Merenptah almost single-handedly defeating the invading Sea Peoples. Surrounding the king is an aura of calm, quiet confidence, while the invading Sea Peoples are in total chaos.

Once again, what is portrayed here is the archetypal reality that each successive pharaoh actualizes. And in so doing, he manifests a spiritual energy-field on the physical plane. The kings of Egypt may have been great warriors, but their prowess did not rely solely on physical might. They also operated with magic, and it was as much through magic as through military skill that they defeated their enemies.<sup>10</sup>

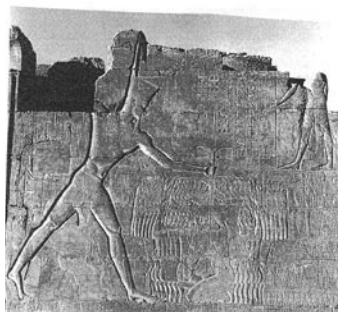


Figure 2. Thutmose III about to slay forty-two Syrians. From a relief at the temple of Karnak.

The mythological source of these images of the king single-handedly defeating the enemies of Egypt is the defeat of the cosmic python, Apophis, every day at midday and every night in the middle of the night.<sup>11</sup> Apophis is the

form taken by the cosmic forces of chaos, darkness, and disorder that would swallow up the light- and life-giving sungod Ra on the god's journey across the skies.

Sometimes Apophis is attacked and defeated by Ra's son Horus, sometimes by Seth. In Figure 4, it is Seth who stands on the prow of the sunboat and strikes the opposing serpent. Seth is here the protector of the principle of light, personified in the falcon-headed sungod, just as he was the instructor of Thutmose in the arts of war. Thutmose III was both the defender of Amun-Ra and his protégé and representative in his campaigns against the enemies of Egypt in the east.



Figure 3. King Merenptah defeats the Sea Peoples. © 1968 Oxford University Press.

The association of the king of Egypt with the sungod Ra has a further significance. In the coronation text of Thutmose III, to which we have already referred, the king was infused with the luminous spiritual power (the *akh*-power) of the sungod in a mystical experience of union with the mysterious essence of the lord of light and life.

This “solarization” of the king was an important initiatory event that was undergone not only at his initial coronation but in subsequent coronation ceremonies, particularly those of the Sed festival. The king was therefore more than just Ra's representative on earth, for he also mystically embodied the solar principle. One of the purposes of the Sed festival was to renew the inner union of the king with the solar principle.<sup>12</sup> In a



Figure 5. Amenhotep III is in the role of Ra as he sails with his wife in a ritual during his Sed festival.



Figure 4. Seth, on the prow of the sunboat, defeats Apophis.

representation of the Sed festival of king Amenhotep III, the king is clearly fused with the sungod in a ceremony that involved his sailing in a replica of the sunboat with his wife, who is probably in the role of the goddess Hathor (Figure 5).

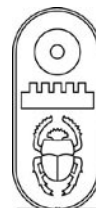
## The Hidden Realm

On an inner level, this ritual sailing of the king occurs in the heavens. Just as in the coronation text of Thutmose III, the king flies up to the sky in order to worship Ra and be filled with his *akh*-power, so the context of the ritual sailing is cosmic. The ancient Egyptians understood that to become enlightened one must become aware of that which is cosmic in one's own nature. One must realize that there is something deep within human nature that is essentially not of this earth, but is a cosmic principle.

The cosmic being who presided over Ra's diurnal voyage across the sky was the heavenly goddess Nut. It was she who gave birth to Ra each morning, and who received him into herself again in the evening. Each evening, when Ra entered her interior realm, he entered the secret and wholly invisible world that the Egyptians called the *Dwat*.

The *Dwat* was conceived as being on the other side of the stars that we see when we look up at the night sky. The stars were imagined as being on the flesh of the goddess Nut, and the *Dwat* was in some sense behind or within the world of which the stars demarcated the outermost boundary.<sup>13</sup>

It was not just the sungod, however, that



entered the *Dwat* at the end of the day. All creatures were believed to return to the *Dwat* at the end of their lives, pass into its dark interior, and were born from it again, just as the sungod was born from the *Dwat* each morning. There was thus a very important mystical threshold between the outwardly visible cosmos—the stars on Nut’s body—and what exists invisibly in her interior. It is a threshold we all come to when we die, when everything becomes concentrated in a single point, and then disappears from view.

Figure 6 shows the stages of the sungod’s night-journey through Nut’s body, as he travels from death to rebirth. Knowledge of this interior world of the *Dwat* was considered by the Egyptians to be the most important, most profound knowledge, for people living on earth to acquire. The *Dwat* was not only the realm of the dead, but also the realm of the gods and spirits and, furthermore, the realm from which all living things emerge.<sup>14</sup> All life issues from the *Dwat*. To know this mysterious interior world was to become truly wise, because then one knew both sides of existence—the invisible along with the visible.

It is interesting that Thutmose III had the complete text and illustrations of the most comprehensive guide to the *Dwat* (The Book of What is in the Underworld) painted on the inner walls of his tomb in the Valley of the Kings. As his coronation text reminds us, this was a king who was “instructed in the wisdom of the gods.” Unlike Napoleon, Thutmose III was initiated into a deep spiritual knowledge. It is not without significance that the name Thutmose means “born of Thoth,” the god whom the Greeks identified with Hermes, and from whom one of the most important

of the Western esoteric traditions—the Hermetic Tradition—derives its name.

### The Three Tasks

I have tried to show that the Egyptians lived with an awareness of a dimension of reality that is best described by the term “imaginal”—a non-physical yet objective reality that we become aware of through the human faculty of imagination. For the Egyptians, the agencies and powers that can be reached through contact with the imaginal world are far more potent than anything merely physical, because through them physical reality can be transformed.

Thus we have seen how Thutmose III called upon Seth and Neith to infuse him with a superhuman martial energy that enabled him to go to war with an irresistible ferocity. In battle after battle, he and his accompanying priests could also magically invoke the

imaginal reality of the defeat of the powers opposed to the sungod and *Ma’at*, both of whom the pharaoh represented, indeed embodied, on earth. It was this according to his own account that brought Thutmose his victories.<sup>15</sup>

I have also tried to show that the Egyptians lived with an understanding that we are not just terrestrial beings; we are also cosmic. As such, our spiritual fulfillment is only possible in a cosmic setting. This understanding is to be found from the earliest sacred literature (the Pyramid Texts), to the coronation text of Thutmose III and the *Book of the Dead*, where, for example, such mystical episodes as flying up to the sky, seeing the image of the sungod, boarding the sun-boat and/or becoming inwardly “solarized,” are all recorded.<sup>16</sup>

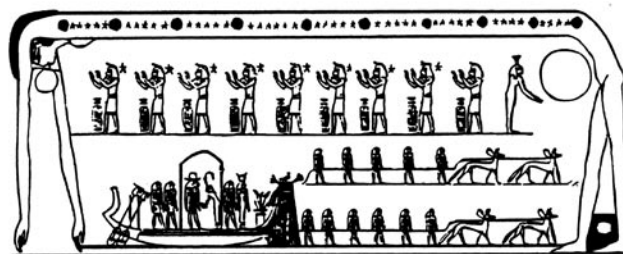


Figure 6. The sky-goddess Nut conceals within her body the mysterious inner region known by the Egyptians as the *Dwat*.

Finally, I have suggested that the Egyptians had an orientation towards the world of the dead (the *Dwat*) that saw it as being the source of the most profound wisdom concerning the nature of reality. There is a remarkably rich metaphysical literature concerning the *Dwat*, knowledge of which was evidently regarded as relevant not only to the dead but also to the living.<sup>17</sup> All of this was “mainstream” ancient Egyptian religious consciousness.

### **The Egyptian Consciousness goes Underground**

At the end of the Egyptian era it went “underground,” moving from the temple to the private household, and then to the small group meeting in secret, from whence it would pass into various esoteric traditions.<sup>18</sup> Thus in the Alchemical tradition, there is a particular focus on the imaginal realm of archetypes and the path of inner transformation; in the Hermetic tradition there is a concentration on the realization of our cosmic nature; while in Gnosticism we find a particular emphasis on the invisible hierarchies of the spirit world. These three Western esoteric streams could be understood as each preserving in their different ways the ancient Egyptian wisdom into the next cultural era.

Meanwhile the emerging mainstream culture with its Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman basis increasingly rejected the old consciousness. The world became more and more impermeable to the divine, archetypal, and imaginal presences. In Judaism the notion of idolatry—which would have been incomprehensible to the ancient Egyptians—came to dominate the religious consciousness, while the Greeks and Romans saw the gods slowly fade away and become less and less easy to communicate with.<sup>19</sup> The new consciousness meant that people experienced the world going through a kind of solidification, so that it was no longer able to transmit the radiant energies of the divine.

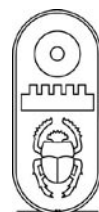
At the same time there emerged an increasing sense that human beings were simply terrestrial beings, and, consequently, our happiness was conceived less in cosmic terms and more in terms of satisfying our physical needs, desires, and comforts. The material world had to be mastered to this end, and this, in time, became the great project of science and technology, which involved an almost complete forgetfulness of our cosmic origins.

It also involved a forgetfulness of that part of human existence that belongs between death and rebirth. There was a growing identification of the human being solely with the life that we lead between birth and death. Already, both the Greek and Judaic conceptions of life after death expressed the conviction that the soul survived as a pale and ghostly reflection of its former self. As the ghost of Achilles says in Homer’s *Odyssey*, “the senseless dead” are “mere shadows of men outworn.”<sup>20</sup> This view, so very different from that of the Egyptians, culminated in the modern idea that there simply is no existence at all after death. Modern scientific materialism is founded upon a total ignorance of the spirit world.

At the beginning of this essay, I proposed that ancient Egypt exposes a tension in our own culture, and that in so doing we can see its karmic role today. The reason why it may be helpful to see Egypt in these terms is because we are now coming to the end of the Greco-Roman/Judeo-Christian era. It has achieved its purpose, which was to make us more individuated, more self-rather than god-centered in our soul-life, and thus more free.

### **Becoming Aware again of Inner, Spiritual Realities**

But now there is a need to become aware again of inner, spiritual realities—but to become aware of them grounded in our own sense of self and with a clear and discriminating intelligence with which we can once more turn toward them. So I would



suggest that it is here that the profound karmic relationship is working between ancient Egypt and the new era that is beginning to unfold before us.

While our relationship to ancient Egypt is certainly based upon our acquiring a deeper and more accurate knowledge of its culture and religion, the relationship is by no means simply in the direction of the present to the past. It is also about how the past can support us in forging our own future by helping us to reengage with the spiritual dimensions which were so intrinsic to people's experience in times of old.<sup>21</sup>

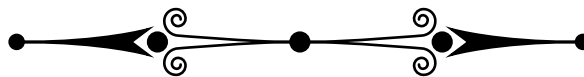
What ancient Egypt can do today is to provide both the impetus and the anchorage for a modern esotericism. By esotericism I mean knowledge of inner realities. There is no question of "going back" to ancient Egypt. It is rather the case that by wrestling with ancient Egyptian sacred texts, we are drawn *down* to a deeper level of awareness that we need to make more conscious. And feeling this need, we are driven to find our own new relationship to the spiritual dimension.

As I see it, there are three tasks ahead for contemporary esotericism. The first is to grow into a fully felt and participative relationship with the imaginal worlds that stand behind the physical. We need constantly to work at dissolving the density of the physical and literal world. We need to loosen its solidity in order to see through to the luminous world of spirits, gods, and archetypes that are its invisible matrix. They are, in a sense, the "dream" of the world that our modern, all too wide-awake consciousness has destroyed. There is a need today to return our waking consciousness to this dream, by bringing it

once more into a living relationship with the imaginal dimensions of the world.

Along with this comes the second task, which is to expand our conception of ourselves beyond the confines of the earth by developing a sense that the cosmos that surrounds us is not just dead matter, but full of soul. To do this, we need not so much to work *against* as to work *through* the materialistic conceptions that permeate modern cosmological thinking. We can develop once again a feeling for the soul-qualities of the planets and constellations, for the whole world of the stars. And the more we are able to do this—the more we are able to connect with the "world soul" or *anima mundi* as it used to be called—the more will we be able to reconnect again with our own cosmic nature.

I see the third task as being once more to become aware of the realm of death as the other half of life, as much a part of our existence as sleep is a part of our life between birth and death. It requires that we see this realm of death not so much as a place that we go to after we die, as a realm that we inhabit—or one might say *inhabits us*—alongside the world of the living. The world of death can be understood as a completely interior world, and yet despite the fact that it has no dimensions, it is not necessarily inaccessible to consciousness. For its interiority ultimately coincides with our own. The more we become aware of the source of what arises in our own consciousness, the more do we extend our consciousness towards this deeply interior realm of death. And in extending our consciousness towards it, we extend our consciousness towards that other half of existence without which we cannot fully participate in life.<sup>22</sup>



## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Comparison between Thutmose III and Napoleon was first made by J. H. Breasted, in *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), chap. 16. Since then, it has been reiterated many times. See, for example, Leonard Cottrell, “The Napoleon of Ancient Egypt,” in *The Warrior Pharaohs* (London: Evans Brothers Ltd, 1968), chap. 6; and Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 109-110.
- <sup>2</sup> Quoted in Jan Assmann, “Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt,” in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 142n41.
- <sup>3</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (London: Arkana, 1989), chap. 4.
- <sup>4</sup> For Egyptology’s denial of shamanism in ancient Egypt, see Jeremy Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts: The Mystical Tradition of Ancient Egypt* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2005), 15-17.
- <sup>5</sup> Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> Henry Corbin, “*Mundus Imaginalis*, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal,” in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, trans. Leonard Fox (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 1-33.
- <sup>8</sup> George Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), x.
- <sup>9</sup> See Jeremy Naydler, *Temple of the Cosmos: the Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1996), 107-120.
- <sup>10</sup> As Christian Jacq, *Egyptian Magic*, trans. Janet M. Davis (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985), 99, explains: “On the field of battle, the pharaoh’s enemies are not merely human. They are possessed by a hostile force against which the pharaoh must use magical weapons. Before any battle, one must proceed to put a spell on one’s enemies, part of the official techniques of war practiced by the State. The sacred model for this is supplied by the rituals which the priests celebrate in the temples for the purpose of fighting the enemies of the Light.”
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-99. For the double defeat of Apophis, see *The Book of the Day and The Book of the Night*, in A. Piankoff, *The Tomb of Ramesses VI*, Bollingen Series 40/1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 389-407.
- <sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the solarization of Amenhotep III at his Sed festival, see W. Raymond Johnson, “Amenhotep III and Amarna: Some New Considerations,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 82 (1996), 67ff. See also Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 87ff.
- <sup>13</sup> Naydler, *Temple of the Cosmos*, 26 and 215-217.
- <sup>14</sup> W. Brede Kristensen, *Life Out of Death: Studies in the Religions of Egypt and of Ancient Greece*, trans. H. J. Franken and G. R. H. Wright (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992), 28, comments: “The world of death secreted greater powers and contained richer possibilities than the world of finite experience. It was the basis for the whole existence which we are apt to call worldly life.”
- <sup>15</sup> The “Annals” at Karnak, recording Thutmose III’s campaigns, are couched in mythical and theistic language. The king is described as acting in consort with Amun-Ra against the “wretched enemy”—implicitly identified with the forces of cosmic chaos. The mystical

fusion of king and sungod is even more explicit in the so-called “poetical stela” of Thutmose III found at Karnak. Both texts are translated in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2:30-39.

<sup>16</sup> *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, trans. R. O. Faulkner (London: British Museum Publications, 1972), chap. 130.

<sup>17</sup> Alison Roberts, *My Heart, My Mother* (Rottingdean: Northgate, 2000), 174-178. It is explicitly stated in The Book of What is in the Underworld (Amdwat), div.1, that the text is “useful for those who are on earth” and similar indications can be found in *The Book of the Dead*, which has been compared by Terence DuQuesne, A Coptic Initiatory Invocation (Thame: Darengo, 1991), 52n112, with the *Tibetan Bardo Thodol*—a text clearly intended for spiritual practice.

<sup>18</sup> Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), chap.7; and David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), chaps. 5 and 6.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Plutarch’s essay, “The Decline of the Oracles,” in Plutarch, *Moral Essays*, trans. Rex Warner (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 31-96.

<sup>20</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rieu (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), 188.

<sup>21</sup> In a series of lectures on the relationship of Egyptian mythology to modern civilization, Rudolf Steiner, *Universe, Earth and Man*, trans. Harry Collison (London: Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co., 1941), 250ff., makes the following statement: “What we call ‘future’ must always be rooted in the past; knowledge has no value if not changed into motive power for the future. The purpose for the future must be in accordance with the knowledge of the past, but this knowledge is of little value unless changed into propelling force for the future.”

<sup>22</sup> This text, “Ancient Egypt and Modern Esotericism” © Jeremy Naydler, 2006 is reprinted with permission of the author. All Rights Reserved.

### Illustration Sources

1. Thutmose III, instructed by Seth and Neith. Drawing from a relief carving at the temple of Amun, Karnak (18th Dynasty) from Adolf Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Dover, 1971), 282.

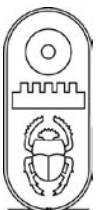
2. Thutmose III about to slay forty-two Syrians. From the rear of the seventh pylon, Temple of Amun, Karnak.

3. King Merenptah defeats the Sea Peoples. Drawing from a relief carving from A. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 286, fig. 11. Reprinted with permission.

4. Seth, on the prow of the sunboat, defeats Apophis. From the Papyrus of Her Uben (B). A. Piankoff, *Mythological Papyri* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), 75, fig. 54. Reprinted with permission.

5. Amenhotep III is in the role of Ra. From the Tomb of Kheruef reproduced in J. Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts* (Rochester Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2005), 206. Reprinted with permission.

6. The sky-goddess Nut conceals within her body the mysterious inner region. From the abbreviated version of the Book of Night on the ceiling of the sarcophagus chamber of the tomb of Ramesses IX, Valley of the Kings, from Erik Hornung, *The Valley of the Kings*, trans. David Warburton (New York: Timken, 1990), 79. Every effort has been made to find the copyright owner.



# EGYPT: TEMPLE OF ALL THE WORLD

*The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West.* Erik Hornung, translated by David Lorton. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, 229 pages. (ISBN: 0-8014-3847-0)

*Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts: The Mystical Tradition of Ancient Egypt.* Jeremy Naydler. Rochester VT: Inner Traditions, 2005, 466 pages. (ISBN : 0-89281-755-0)

*The Egyptian Mysteries.* Arthur Versluis. London and New York: Arkana (Routledge - Penguin), 1988, 169 pages. (ISBN: 1-85063-087-9)

*Reviewed by the staff of the Rosicrucian Digest*

“**D**ost Thou not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is the Image of Heaven; or what is truer still, the transference, or the descent of all that rule or act in Heaven? And if more truly still it must be said, —this land of ours is a Temple of all the World.”<sup>1</sup>

It was a commonplace among virtually all ancient commentators in the Greco-Roman world that Egypt was “the fountainhead of esoteric knowledge and wisdom.”<sup>2</sup> Herodotus (484–ca. 425 BCE), Plutarch (46–127 CE), Chaeremon of Alexandria (1st century CE), and Iamblichus (ca. 245–ca. 325 CE) all testify to this. Pythagoras (582–ca. 507 BCE) studied in Memphis and may well have been initiated into the Mysteries himself.

Those closest to ancient Egypt in time spoke of its deep mystical and esoteric wisdom, coupled with efficacious and profound initiatory practices, a source of true power: “For that its very quality of sound, the true power of the Egyptian names have in themselves the bringing into reality that which is said.”<sup>3</sup>

This view persisted during the next millennium in the literature of the Roman Empire in the East and in the Islamic world. When this legacy was rediscovered in the West during the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance, Western scholars accepted the classical commentators at their word.

Renaissance thinkers saw in the Greco-Roman mysteries and in their Egyptian sources, a connection to the *Prisca Theologia* (the underlying original world spirituality). For ensuing centuries, scholars, such as the esotericist and polymath Athanasius Kircher, S.J. (1602–1680), continued to pour over Egyptian materials seeking this wisdom.<sup>4</sup>



*Egyptian Mystery School, by H. Spencer Lewis.*

Early modern Egyptologists continued to hold traditional viewpoints of the ancient sources; however, by the end of the nineteenth century this had changed radically. Standard academic Egyptology now viewed the Egyptians as practical and materialistic, uninterested in theory or transcendence, and utterly devoid of mysticism, initiations, or any deep spirituality: “a pleasure-loving people, gay, artistic, and sharp-witted, but lacking in depth of feeling and idealism.”<sup>5</sup> While scholars agree that major rituals and public festivals (participated in by all) took place throughout the history of Pharaonic Egypt, the approach denying genuine Egyptian mysticism or esoteric initiations prior to Alexander’s conquest in 332 BCE is still the mainstream view among academic Egyptologists today.

The three books reviewed here represent three aspects of the reevaluation of the mystical, esoteric, and initiatic character of



ancient Egypt in the academic world. Rosicrucians and others on the Hermetic path have never had any doubts as to the initiatic and mystical aspects of Pharaonic heritage. Indeed, the pioneering works of Frater Max Guilmot, Ph.D. demonstrate this admirably.<sup>6</sup>

## Egyptology Distinguished from Egyptosophy

Erik Hornung's *The Secret Lore of Egypt* is not a revisionist work on ancient Egyptian mysticism. Hornung, Professor Emeritus of Egyptology at the University of Basel, and Jan Assmann, a German Egyptologist and Archaeologist, are arguably the two leading mainstream academic scholars of Pharaonic Egyptian religion today. Both continue to hold the view that "Egyptian religion then appears to be a matter of faith, the product of imaginative reconstruction rather than that of mystical practice."<sup>7</sup>

Hornung's work is a fascinating exploration of the field he terms "Egyptosophy," (the *wisdom* of Egypt), that is, the opinion that "the land of the Nile was the fount of all wisdom, and the stronghold of hermetic lore."<sup>8</sup> He carefully contrasts Egyptosophy with Egyptology (the *study* of Egypt)—which in his view studies the historical record of Egypt. Egyptosophy for Hornung is still "the study of an imaginary Egypt viewed as the profound source of all esoteric lore. This Egypt is a timeless idea bearing only a loose relationship to the historical reality."<sup>9</sup>

Hornung is the first major Egyptologist to take the wisdom tradition connected with Egypt seriously as a pervasive phenomenon in the West, even if continuing to deny the reality of its historical source. His work complements the emerging studies in Western Esotericism by Antoine Faivre and others. However, as Dr. Jeremy Naydler points out, even these scholars of esotericism limit themselves by relying too heavily on the academic establishment's rejection of actual mysticism in pre-Hellenistic Egypt.<sup>10</sup>

Regardless of one's position on the definition of the origins of Egyptian wisdom, Hornung's *The Secret Lore* remains a valuable resource for the Egyptian mystical ideal throughout Western history.

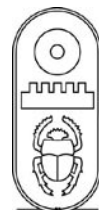
## Hornung Provides a Summary of the Impact of the Idea of Egypt on the West

Written in condensed fashion, the book systematically presents movements, individuals, and ideas that have followed the wisdom of Egypt. Hornung gives the reader much substantive material to stimulate further research and reading, and each chapter provides an effective overview of a particular phase of the evolution of Egypt's impact on the Western world.

Moving from Pharaonic times, Hornung reviews the Egyptian wisdom tradition in the classical world and its influence on astrology, alchemy, Gnosticism, Hermetism, magic, and the Isis Mysteries. He then traces this through succeeding eras. The book also discusses the impact of this tradition on Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and many other groups, continuing to the present day.

While maintaining his belief in the distinction between these two approaches to Egypt, Hornung is remarkable among Egyptologists for according a valuable role to Egyptosophy. His final words ring more true today than when Hornung first penned them:

"The impending turn of the millennium nourished hopes of new spiritual light for humankind in the aspirations of many. Egypt will surely play a role in such developments in many forms: Pharaonic Egypt and the esoteric-Hermetic Egypt. There has been increasing talk of the relevance of the Hermetic Weltanschauung [worldview] as a point of view that can contribute to making sense of our modern world by seeking a direct connection with the original wisdom of the oldest cultures and with the core idea of all esoteric thought, according to which the ancient wisdom continues to be valid even in a world that has been transformed.



“All Hermetism is by its very nature tolerant. Hermes Trismegistus is a god of harmony, of reconciliation, and transformation, and he preaches no rigid dogma. He is thus an antidote to the fundamentalism that must be overcome if we desire to live in peace.”<sup>11</sup>

*The Secret Lore* is a valuable source book for the Western tradition of Egyptian Wisdom and is useful for casual readers and researchers alike.

### **Restoring an Acceptance of Ancient Egyptian Mysticism**

Dr. Jeremy Naydler’s reworking and publication of his doctoral thesis is the best example to date of why it is no longer tenable to hold the older academic viewpoint that mysticism and initiations did not exist prior to Hellenistic Egypt. In *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts*, he presents a magisterial study of both the history of viewpoints on Egyptian mystical practice and a case study in a shamanic interpretation of the texts found in the Pyramid of Unas.

A philosopher, cultural historian, and scholar of religious studies, Naydler earlier published a very valuable study of the Egyptian experience of the Sacred in *Temple of the Cosmos*,<sup>12</sup> which is accessible to both specialist and general reader. In *Shamanic Wisdom*, he succeeds in the same way, negotiating the difficult task of producing a work that is, at one and the same time, a serious scholarly statement and an engaging and enjoyable read.

*Shamanic Wisdom* has several goals. The first is to refute the academic Egyptological presupposition that Pharaonic Egypt had no tradition of mystical practice. A second is to give a case study of just how such texts can reveal their mysticism. Naydler also seeks to awaken the spiritual dimension within us and with which the Egyptians were so familiar.

### **How Egyptology Came to Reject Ancient Egyptian Mysticism and Initiations**

The five chapters of Part One, “Mysticism in Ancient Egypt,” and the last chapter of Part

Two, “The Recovery of Ancient Egyptian Mysticism,” constitute an excellent introduction to the evolution of viewpoints on Egyptian mysticism from ancient times to the present. Naydler introduces the reader to the ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and modern sources on all sides of the issue. Taking a transdisciplinary approach, he argues that the sources supporting ancient Egyptian mysticism have a foundation in fact, using the tools of historical, cultural, literary, religious, and phenomenological analysis.

Naydler traces the origins and reasons for academic Egyptology’s rejection of the idea that there was mysticism in ancient Egypt. One is the Western assumption that “the way to attain reliable knowledge is through science rather than through religious or mystical experience, and that science was a product of Greek, not Egyptian civilization.”<sup>13</sup>

In parallel studies, it is interesting to note that the work on the pre-Socratic philosophers being done by Peter Kingsley also undercuts the roots of this assumption, demonstrating that these Greek “founders of logic, math, and science,” were themselves initiates, and that their knowledge and wisdom were derived from their mysticism.<sup>14</sup>

A second example is the Western myth of progress in which it is vital for “our” approaches to be superior to those of the peoples of distant antiquity. Swayed by this presupposition, Egyptology and other disciplines today are guided by this mythos:

“The assumption that modern materialistic science provides the only sure path to acquiring knowledge, and that true knowledge began with the Greeks, not the Egyptians, to a large extent rests on a second deeply rooted assumption: that human history constitutes a steady progress not only of knowledge, but also of social organization and psychological and spiritual maturity. . . . Thus the idea of progress not only works to our advantage, but it also disadvantages the past, for the earlier the culture, the more primitive it must have been. This contrasts with the way ancient

cultures tended to view the past, which was that history involves a gradual decline from an original golden age in which human beings lived in harmony with the gods.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Dissenting Scholars Study the Initiatic and Mystical Character of Ancient Egyptian Texts**

Naydler skillfully narrates this portion of his study as a detective story of how the academic rejection of the initiatic character of Pharaonic Egypt came to be. He also traces the exceptions to this trend, including the pioneering work of René Schwaller de Lubicz, demonstrating the vital symbolic character of Egyptian civilization,<sup>16</sup> and the Egyptological work of Alexandre Moret during the 1920s, which interpreted several Egyptian rituals as initiatory experiences.<sup>17</sup>

Although mainstream academics have not yet been swayed, *Shamanic Wisdom* chronicles lonely voices among modern scholars who acknowledge the place of initiations and mysticism within Egyptian life and religion, including Sotirios Mayassis<sup>18</sup> (1950s); Walter Federn<sup>19</sup> (1960s); Edward F. Wente,<sup>20</sup> Arthur Versluis,<sup>21</sup> and François Daumas<sup>22</sup> (1970s–1980s); and W. Brede Kristensen<sup>23</sup> and Alison Roberts<sup>24</sup> (1990s–2000s). Readers could hardly find a better introduction, summary, and guidebook through this vital field.

### **The Pyramid Texts of Unas are Examples of Shamanic Mysticism**

The second task of *Shamanic Wisdom* is equally well laid out. Dr. Naydler analyzes the *Pyramid Texts* from the Pyramid of Unas (Fifth Dynasty, some 4,350 years ago).<sup>25</sup> Through transdisciplinary analysis, four chapters demonstrate the uses of these texts (over and above their funerary uses) in an initiatic, mystical, and shamanic context, revealing them to be a means to “die before you die,” a pivotal purpose in shamanism.

Thoroughly referenced and illustrated, this work provides an invaluable contribution to the dialogue about the mysteries of ancient Egypt. Scholars, seekers, and all those

interested in Pharaonic spirituality would be hard pressed to find a better introduction to the history of the Western view of Egypt’s mysticism, and to a modern transdisciplinary approach validating the age-old view of ancient Egypt as a repository of primordial mysticism and wisdom.

This insight is not purely of academic interest. While not advocating a literal revival of Pharaonic religion, he suggests, in much the same way that the Rosicrucian Order adapts the ancient tradition to our own day, that:

“. . . the study of ancient Egyptian religion may lead us to conceive of a task that we have to fulfill in the present day.

This task is to open ourselves once more to those realms of spirit that we are presented with in the mystical literature of Egypt. This could lead to the possibility of a new Egyptian-inspired

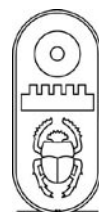


*Akhenaten*, by Margaret Mary Ducharme, S.R.C.; in the Johannes Kelpius Lodge, Allston, MA.

Renaissance, in which Western spiritual culture is given fresh vigor by connecting to its Egyptian roots. . . . The study of ancient Egyptian religion paradoxically points us toward our own future, which is surely to develop new capacities of consciousness that would awaken us once more to the spiritual realities of which the mystical literature of ancient Egypt speaks.”<sup>26</sup>

### **The Initiatic Message of the Egyptian Mysteries**

Just what the spiritual and mystical import of such attention to the Egyptian model would be, is the subject of Arthur Versluis’s 1988 volume, *The Egyptian Mysteries*. A Professor of American Studies at Michigan State University, he is a leading voice in academic esoteric studies in North



America, and has compiled an impressive bibliography on esotericism and mystical spirituality.<sup>27</sup> Currently the editor of the online journal, *Esoterica*,<sup>28</sup> he is also the founding president of the Association for the Study of Esotericism which brings together scholars and students from across North America and promotes dialogue with European esoteric scholars and institutions.

Versluis does not care to debate the question of the Egyptian source of wisdom and spirituality; rather, he chooses to begin this volume with a clear assertion of the ancient viewpoint:

“There can be little doubt that whatever traditional symbology and metaphysics remain in the West today can be traced back to ancient Egypt, that land whose people, said Herodotus, were ‘scrupulous beyond all measure in matters of religion.’”<sup>30</sup>

Seeking what might remain of the *Prisca Theologia* for us today, Versluis analyzes the major characteristics of the Egyptian spiritual viewpoint. In Part One, he looks in turn at the concepts and practices represented by: Ma’at, the Primal Ennead, Isis, Osiris, the Second Death (when one becomes an *Akh*, an Effective of Voice), Typhon, Hermanubis, Ra—the Sun, the Two Lands, Sacred Language and Hieroglyphs, the Mysteries, and Apocatasis (the restoration of all things). Part Two then delves into Initiation—its nature and practice in ancient Egypt and today.

### **The Egyptian Mysteries in a World Context**

The prose is spare and telegraphic. Versluis writes as an initiate, sometimes ending with the phrase, “More than this we cannot say.”<sup>31</sup> As he ranges through the topics of Egyptian mystical spirituality, his discussion is informed by his own considerable erudition of world esoteric and exoteric traditions, including Sufi, Hindu, Buddhist, and Judeo-Christian mysticism. Each chapter says just enough to give sufficient information and, more importantly, to inspire readers to go within for their own reflections.

That is one of the secrets of this little book. While it is scholarly and connects Egyptian themes to world spiritualities, it is also very personal and individual. In the chapter on the Great Restoration which must follow the *Kali Yuga* (the end of all things), Versluis reminds us:

“And indeed, if we succeed, if we tread that ancient path primordial, regardless of the blindness of our time, regardless of our distance from ancient Egypt, our lives can still reflect the Divine Sun, our world can still be translucent and alive—for that ancient path can never vanish, though it can for us be obscured. Yet if we enter upon it, it shall ever be the same, as it was and is, and ever shall be. And when it is so for us, each as individuals: *that*, that is the true Restoration, the true *Apocatasis*. All else is anticlimactic.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Initiatic Character of Ancient Egypt**

In addition to the Mysteries of Egypt and its initiations, Versluis reveals an Egypt much nearer the *Zep Tepi* (First Times). As did Schwaller de Lubicz, he conceives of Egypt as an initiatic culture in its totality, manifested most clearly in its spirituality. His sections on initiation discuss what can be salvaged from the ancient world, moving from the nature of initiation and symbolism in Egypt and throughout the world, to the work necessary for initiation, and finally to initiatory possibilities in our current age.

Writing from the point of view of one at the end of an age, Versluis masterfully guides readers as candidates through this initiatic volume. It is the type of book that accomplishes what it is about. It is a kind of initiation into the Egyptian Mysteries it discusses. This will take place, as do all initiations, according to the mode of the readers and their times.

*The Egyptian Mysteries* offers in true mystical fashion, only what is necessary for others to follow the path by one who has “done the work.” It is very unusual to experience such writing, at one time scholarly and mystical; however, in company with Peter Kingsley and a few others, Dr. Versluis has

produced a living text to introduce the Egyptian Mysteries, much as his later *Theosophia* does for the Judeo-Christian-Islamic path of the heart.<sup>33</sup>

It seems fitting to conclude our consideration of these three works on the Initiatic and Mystical tradition of ancient Egypt, with Versluis's final invitation to his readers at the end of *The Egyptian Mysteries*.

This is the purpose of the Mysteries for all who participate in their work and worship:

"All initiation transmutes as one passes through its transmission; tradition is a *mediatrix*. Initiate and symbol converge to reveal the immutable Origin, and every moment is initiatory, for those with eyes to see.

"Let us begin."<sup>34</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> "Asclepius (The Perfect Sermon)," in *Corpus Hermeticum*, 24.1, translation adapted from G. R. S. Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, vol. 2 (1906; repr., York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 1992), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom in the Pyramid Texts: The Mystical Tradition of Ancient Egypt* (Rochester VT: Inner Traditions, 2005), 22.

<sup>3</sup> "The Definitions of Asclepius unto King Ammon," in *Corpus Hermeticum*, 16.2, translation adapted from Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, vol. 2, 170. See note 1.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of ancient and Renaissance attitudes toward Egypt, see Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 20-23, and accompanying bibliographical notes on 348-352. For classical sources, see also Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 19-25, and for Renaissance views, 83-91.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 24c; cited in Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 36. For a survey of modern academic Egyptology's views on this subject, see Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 23-44, and accompanying bibliographical notes on 352-356.

<sup>6</sup> Max Guilmot, "The Initiatory Process in Ancient Egypt" trans. Michelle Ziebel (1978; San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient & Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, 1997). Dr. Guilmot also published articles on similar subjects in the *Rosicrucian Digest*, including "Ancient Egypt's Concept of Immortality," (March 1965), and "An Initiatory Drama in Ancient Egypt," (December 1971); and in French, *Connaissance et intuition: réponses de l'Égypte ancienne: énergie invisible, guérison spirituelle, dédoublement, précognition* (Bruxelles: Servranx, 1991); *Les initiés et les rites initiatiques en Égypte ancienne* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1977); and *Le message spirituel de l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris: Hachette, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 50. The best known works of these authors on ancient Egyptian religion are: Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: the One and the Many*, trans. John Baines (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Erik Hornung, *Abnaten and the Religion of Light*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); and Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Erik Hornung, *Secret Lore*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 326.

<sup>11</sup> Hornung, *Secret Lore*, 201.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremy Naydler, *Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred* (Rochester VT: Inner Traditions, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean tradition* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *In the Dark Places of Wisdom* (Inverness, CA: Golden Sufi Center, 1999); and *Reality* (Inverness, CA: Golden Sufi Center, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> Rene Schwaller de Lubicz, *The Temple of Man: Apet of the South at Luxor*, trans. Deborah Lawlor and Robert Lawlor, 2 vols. (Rochester VT: Inner Traditions, 1998). An introduction to Schwaller's work may be found in John Anthony West, *The Serpent in the Sky* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Alexandre Moret, *Mystères égyptiens* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1922).

<sup>18</sup> Sotirios Mayassis, *Le Livre des Morts de l'Égypte Ancienne est un Livre d'Initiation* (Athens: Bibliothèque d'Archéologie Orientale d'Athènes, 1955); and *Mystères et initiations de l'Égypte ancienne*. (Athens: Bibliothèque d'Archéologie Orientale d'Athènes, 1957).

<sup>19</sup> Walter Federn, "The 'Transformation' in the Coffin Texts: A New Approach," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 19 (1960): 241-57

<sup>20</sup> Edward F. Wente, "Mysticism in Pharaonic Egypt?" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41 (1982): 161-79

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Versluis, *The Egyptian Mysteries* (London and New York: ARKANA, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> François Daumas, "Le fonds égyptiens de l'hermétisme," in *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: Actes du Colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve* (11-14 March 1980), ed. J. Ries, 3-25. Louvain-la-Neuve, France, 1982; "Y eut-il des mystères en Égypte?" in *Le Bulletin Annuel de "L'Atelier d'Alexandrie"* 1 (1972): 37-52.

<sup>23</sup> W. Brede Kristensen, *Life out of Death: Studies in the Religion of Egypt and of Ancient Greece* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Alison Roberts, *My Heart, My Mother: Death and Rebirth in Ancient Egypt* (Totnes: Northgate Publishers, 1995).

<sup>25</sup> "The Pyramid of Unas," Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid\\_of\\_Unas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_of_Unas).

<sup>26</sup> Naydler, *Shamanic Wisdom*, 329.

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.arthurversluis.com/>.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/>.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.aseweb.org/>.

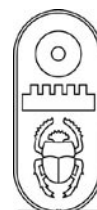
<sup>30</sup> Arthur Versluis, *Egyptian Mysteries*, 3. See note 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Versluis, *Theosophia: Hidden Dimensions of Christianity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Versluis, *Egyptian Mysteries*, 148. See note 21.



# THE ROSICRUCIAN EGYPTIAN TAROT

*In 1933, H. Spencer Lewis, Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, from 1915 - 1939, published these twenty-two cards of the Tarot's Major Arcana as part of the Kabbalah Unveiled series by "Fratres Aquarius, Scribe." Long unavailable, they provide a blending of the traditional Tarot themes with Egyptian symbolism.*



⌘ 1. The Magus ⌘



⌘ 2. The Gate of the Sanctuary ⌘



⌘ 3. Iris-Urania ⌘



⌘ 4. The Cubic Stone ⌘



⌘ 5. The Master of the Arcanes ⌘



⌘ 6. The Two Ways ⌘



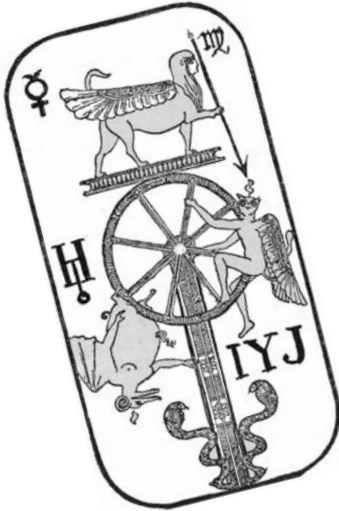
♁ 7. The Chariot of Osiris ♁



♁ 8. The Balance and the Sword ♁



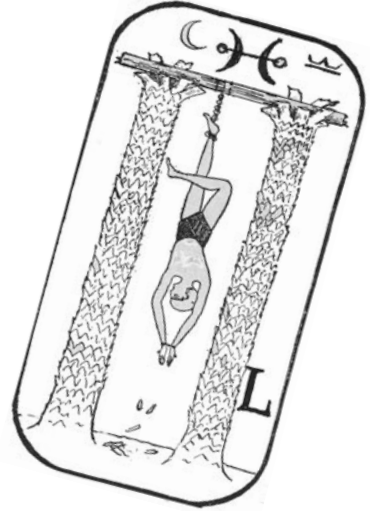
♁ 9. The Veiled Lamp ♁



♁ 10. The Sphinx ♁



♁ 11. The Tamed Lion ♁



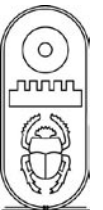
♁ 12. The Sacrifice ♁



♁ 13. The Reaping Skeleton ♁



♁ 14. The Two Urns ♁





⌘ 15. Typhon ⌘



⌘ 16. The Thunder-Struck Tower ⌘



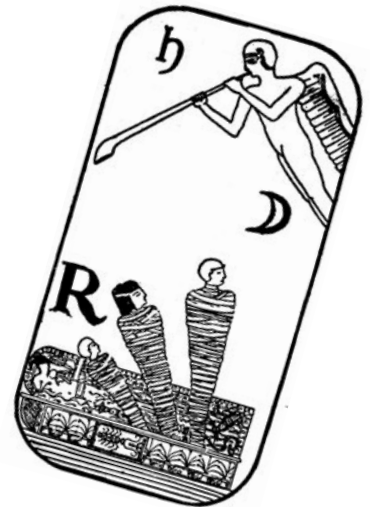
⌘ 17. The Star of the Magi ⌘



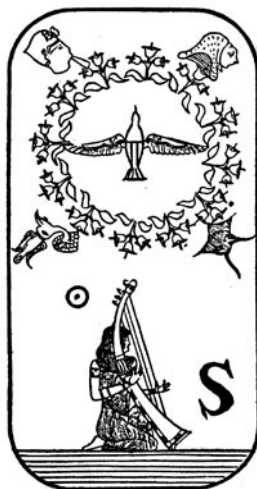
⌘ 18. The Twilight ⌘



⌘ 19. The Dazzling Light ⌘



⌘ 20. The Rising of the Dead ⌘



⌘ 21. The Crown of the Magi ⌘



⌘ 22. The Crocodile ⌘



# HIDDEN HARMONIES: REDISCOVERING THE EGYPTIAN FOUNDATIONS OF THE ROSICRUCIAN PATH

Steven Armstrong, F.R.C.

Traditional histories of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC usually begin with the description of the creation of a unified mystical body by the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III during the Eighteenth Dynasty of New Kingdom Egypt. As H. Spencer Lewis put it in 1929, it “was Thutmose III who organized the present physical form followed by the present secret Brotherhood and outlined many of its rules and regulations.”<sup>1</sup> The text goes on to caution that it “must not be construed that the word Rosicrucian, or any variation of it, was used by, or applied to this ancient brotherhood, . . . rather that the modern manifestation of this ancient tradition is found in the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, which derives its principles and objectives from it.”<sup>2</sup>



*The Enchanted Garden*, by William Thornton, F.R.C.

Recent research has rediscovered another aspect of this foundational event which has gone, if not completely unknown, then unremarked upon for a very long time, and which sheds new light on a significant feature of the Rosicrucian tradition.

In the archives of the Rosicrucian Research Library in San José, the Order has a copy of the venerable records of ancient Egypt as compiled by James H. Breasted in 1906. In

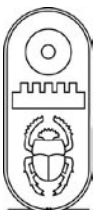
this collection of documents, there is mention of a historical appointment of an individual to be the head of the united priesthoods of Egypt during that time. That much is not surprising. However, the details reveal something unexpected.

## Houses of Life Carried on the Mystical Work of the Temples

As we know, the priesthoods of Egypt were not only concerned with external Temple duties. Attached to most of the Temples was a “House of Life” (*Per Ankh*) where documents were kept, and seekers were trained in the Mysteries, including medicine, dreams, and other practices.<sup>3</sup> Hermetic historian Garth Fowden points out that the “sacred books of the ancient Egyptian priests were copied out in the ‘Houses of Life,’ which served, subordinate to their primary cultic purposes, as temple scriptoria or libraries. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

In many cases, among these volumes were the forty-two volumes attributed to Thoth (later known as Hermes Trismegistus). The Christian Gnostic and teacher Clement of Alexandria testifies to having seen a procession carrying books from such a collection (around 200 CE) containing works on the gods, astrology, hieroglyphs, hymns, prayers, spiritual training, and medicine: “then forty-two books of Hermes indispensably necessary; of which the six-and-thirty containing the whole philosophy of the Egyptians . . . and the other six, which are medical. . . .”<sup>5</sup>

Much of the literature and teachings from the Houses of Life are probably those we have received today in Hellenized form as the practical (or technical) and philosophical *Hermetica*, including the *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>6</sup> The Houses of Life were much more than a



priestly apprenticeship. They were the true mystical heart of each priesthood.

### The Unified Priesthood Included both Exoteric and Esoteric Work

The appointment of an individual to be the head of all of the Egyptian priesthoods unified not only the priestly orders in their external manifestation, but also brought into harmony and union the mystical component as well—the esoteric work which centered around the *Per Ankhbu*. In this way, the traditional Rosicrucian statement of the unifying of these into one Mystical Order is consistent with external historical facts as well as inner spiritual truths.

### New Facts Uncovered about the Unification of the Mystical Orders

What is fascinating, and apparently unremarked upon at least in recent times in connection with Rosicrucian history, is that this historic appointment and unification was not the sole work of Thutmose III. The unification appears to have taken place during the joint reign of the co-Pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, roughly 1479–1458 BCE. Further, it was Hatshepsut's own trusted vizier and supporter, Hapuseneb, the most important man in Pharaoh Hatshepsut's entourage, who was appointed as "Chief of the Prophets of North and South," which title is found on his statue in the Louvre.<sup>7</sup>

As Breasted explains, "The formation of the priesthood of the whole land into a coherent organization, with a single individual at its head, appears here for the first time. This new and great organization was thus, through Hapuseneb, enlisted on the side of Hatshepsut."<sup>8</sup>

Breasted gives further translations of Hapuseneb's appointment from the inscription found on the Louvre statue. This appointment

was made during the joint reign, and we can assume that it was with the full consent of both rulers. The alternation of masculine and feminine may result from later alterations in the text, or it may indicate both rulers' actions: "Lo, *his* majesty was in *his* palace [. . .] of the king's house, Hapuseneb, whom *her* majesty [. . .] before millions; whom *she* magnified among the people because of the greatness of the excellence of. . ."<sup>9</sup> (italics added)

Breasted himself, perhaps due to the presuppositions of his times, seems to have resisted or vacillated about the idea that Hatshepsut was involved with the appointment, later arguing against the evidence of the inscriptions: "Hapuseneb, the first High Priest of Amon who occupied the position at the head of the new sacerdotal organization, was grand vizier under queen Hatshepsut, but it is more likely that her husband, Thutmose III, effected this organization than that she should have done it."<sup>10</sup>

This opinion may well have influenced others in the early twentieth century.

The viewpoint excluding Hatshepsut from significant religious activity connected with Amun did not survive the twentieth century. By 1984, German Egyptologist Jan Assmann wrote of the joint religious work of the two Pharaohs: "Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III founded and propagated not a new religion, but a new form of Amun religion that was enhanced by the fourth dimension"<sup>11</sup> [of Divine spontaneity and action in the world and in devotees.—Ed.] He then goes on to connect this evolution with the Atenism of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, seeing more continuity than is often supposed.

In this, as in many other areas, Pharaoh Hatshepsut was prescient when she said, "Now my heart turns to and fro, in thinking what the people say, those who shall see my



*Hatshepsut Bead.* This small Egyptian Blue bead bears the cartouche of the controversial ruler of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut. From the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

monument in after years, and shall speak of what I have done. . . .”<sup>12</sup> We continue today to recover the full significance of her reign.

### **Balance of Energies Revealed at the Heart of the Rosicrucian Tradition**

H. Spencer Lewis’s description of the Order’s foundation was focused on other issues, and this joint aspect was not noted at that time; however, with this rediscovery, we have a notable confirmation of Rosicrucian history; further, this striking rediscovery of Hatshepsut’s role at the beginning of the Rosicrucian Path reveals a pattern in Rosicrucian history that may have gone previously unnoticed. The necessary balance of the feminine and masculine energies are present at the very creation of the mystical lineage we hold dear. The genesis of the united spiritual tradition that manifests today in the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC was a cooperation of the most powerful woman and man of the Two Lands, for the common good.

Once this pattern is recognized at the beginning of the unification of the ancient Egyptian Houses of Life, it can be seen to be replicated throughout Rosicrucian history. Within just about a century, Akhenaten and Nefertiti are represented over and over as jointly offering their work and worship to the Aten. The harmonious balance of the feminine and the masculine is a feature of the Amarna period, and may account for many of the changes in artistic style during the period. The tradition that Akhenaten had learned in the House of Life at the Temple of the Sun in Heliopolis (On or Annu) bore fruit in the Aten spirituality he shared with Nefertiti.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Origins of AMORC are also a Joint Work of May Banks-Stacey and H. S. Lewis**

The same balance and harmony, which we have rediscovered at the foundations of

this Path, have been manifested time and time again, and most notably at the beginning of the current cycle of Rosicrucian work. Christian Rebisse reminds us that H. Spencer Lewis considered Mrs. May Banks-Stacey “cofounder of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae-Crucis.”<sup>14</sup>



May Banks-Stacey

During 1907–1908, when Lewis confided in her about some of his mystical experiences, she told him that “he had probably rediscovered the knowledge acquired in his past lives . . .” and “. . . that he had surely belonged to a mystical fraternity like the ‘Rosicrucians of Egypt,’”<sup>15</sup> (one of the factors which led Lewis to his “Journey to the East” in Toulouse in 1909).

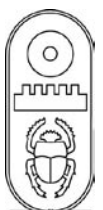
Mrs. Banks-Stacey was a mystic and an initiate of India and Egypt.<sup>16</sup> During her journey to Egypt she was told that she would be instrumental in bringing the tradition back to North America. On November 25, 1914, she presented Lewis with a birthday present: “a magnificent red rose, a little chest, and some documents on which he recognized the same Rosicrucian symbols that he had seen in Toulouse in 1909.”<sup>17</sup>

They then “decided to pool their efforts, and so on December 20, 1914, they published an announcement in the *New York Sunday Herald* inviting people interested in Rosicrucianism to join them.” Mrs. Banks-Stacey, H. Spencer Lewis, and several others then formally inaugurated the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC on February 9, 1915, in Manhattan.

The Rosicrucian Masters were clearly insistent that the same balance from the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III be present at the founding



*Akhenaten*, by Danny Pyle, F.R.C.



of AMORC. Mrs. Banks-Stacey had been told when she was initiated into Rosicrucianism in India that, although she was named legate for America, the organization would not be founded until 1915, with a French lineage.<sup>18</sup>

In similar fashion, H. Spencer Lewis had held an introductory meeting in December 1913. Although twelve people attended, all declined to sign the charter that Lewis had created.<sup>19</sup> With the information we have rediscovered about Hapuseneb and the first united mystical bodies, we can see that the Rosicrucian Masters were insistent: it was to be the joint mission of May Banks-Stacey and H. Spencer Lewis, fulfilling the ancient mandate from the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty—a dynamic and unmistakable symbol of Rosicrucian principles.

### Balance of Feminine and Masculine Energies Necessary for Rosicrucian Work

The fullness of humanity, that is, the complementary balance of feminine and masculine energies, is necessary for harmony to

exist and for the Rosicrucian work to prosper. For thousands of years this has manifested in examples of cooperation such as: Stepmother and Son—Hatshepsut and Thutmose III—who established this form of the Tradition; through the loving work and worship of husband and wife—Akhenaten and Nefertiti; and in the cofounding of AMORC (1915) by spiritual friends and coworkers—May Banks-Stacey and H. Spencer Lewis; and in countless other examples.

With this rediscovered insight into our ancient cofounders, Pharaohs Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, we truly have the tools to manifest the goals enunciated in the Fourth Manifesto, the *Positio Fraternitatis*:

“Such openness encourages the coming of a Culture of Peace, founded upon integration and cooperation, to which the Rosicrucians have always devoted themselves. As humanity is one in essence, its happiness is only possible by promoting the welfare of all human beings without exception.”<sup>20</sup>

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> H. Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers with Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order*, 1954 ed. (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929), 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 44n.

<sup>3</sup> University College London, “Ancient Egypt: Knowledge and Production—The House of Life,” Digital Egypt, <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/museum/museum2.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (Miscellanies), bk. 6, chap. 4, 35-37. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 2 (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885-96). [www.earlychristianwritings.com/clement.html](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/clement.html).

<sup>6</sup> For the best study of the probability of this connection, see Garth Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*. See note 4.

<sup>7</sup> Newberry, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 22:31-36.

<sup>8</sup> James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Dynasty* (1906; repr., New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 160-162.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 161. While part of this gender switching may be later interpolated revisions, as the name of Thutmose II was inserted into the text, it may also indicate that this was the action of both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.

<sup>10</sup> James H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), 319n1. In *A History of Egypt* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1909), 272, Breasted mentions the fact that Hapuseneb was both Hatshepsut's

vizier and the head of the united priesthoods, placing this power on Hatshepsut's side, seemingly weakening his own argument for sole action by Thutmose III.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-244.

<sup>12</sup> Hatshepsut, quoted on her obelisk at Karnak, after translation in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 27.

<sup>13</sup> From discussions in the online RCUI Course, “Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Ancient Mystery Schools,” facilitated by Grand Master Julie Scott (San Jose, CA: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, Inc., Fall 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Christian Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries* (San Jose, CA: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., 2005), 161.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>16</sup> For the materials on May Banks-Stacey, see *Ibid.*, 159-163, 175-176, 217.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>20</sup> Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient & Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, *Positio Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*, (San Jose, CA: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., 2005), 19, <http://www.rosicrucian.org/publications/positio.pdf>.

# MYSTICAL INITIATION

*Christian Bernard, F.R.C.*

**E**Christian Bernard serves as *Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC worldwide. In this essay from [So More it Be!](#) he discusses the definition of *Mystical Initiation* as it manifests today in continuity with ancient initiatory practices.*

Whether people are aware of it or not, their ultimate purpose is to evolve toward Perfection and to prepare their soul for receiving knowledge of the mysteries. How? By pursuing the path of Initiation, for this is the only path that leads one to “Know Thyself.” But what is mystical initiation? Where does it begin? Where does it end? What is its purpose? And what is its nature?

First of all, we must understand clearly that initiation is not something that is exact, nor is it an event fixed in time. It is a process continuing from incarnation to incarnation that must lead us to self-realization, but only at the end of a very long inward development. This means therefore that each of our thoughts, words, and deeds is an initiation in itself, because each contributes to the Great Work that has been going on within us since the dawn of time. From the moment we believe that the soul exists and that it evolves through the medium of the physical body, we are obliged to admit that every physical or mental activity we perform on this earthly plane is included in this evolution.

As I have just mentioned, the evolution of consciousness is in itself an initiatory process which continues life after life. Consequently, we initiate ourselves daily into the purpose of existence through the medium of everything we think, say, or do. Nonetheless, it is true that when we speak of initiation, we generally refer to something other than the purely objective state of consciousness that we experience over a period of hours.

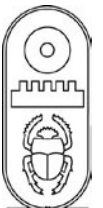
When the term *initiation* is used in the Rosicrucian teachings, it designates most often the exceptional experience which every mystic hopes to have eventually upon the path of Knowledge. One of the most beautiful definitions of this mystical experience is expressed as follows on the cover of each monograph which symbolically marks the passage from one degree to another in the studies of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis:

“Initiation brings into the realm of reason the purpose, and into the realm of emotion the spirit of one’s introduction into the mysteries.”

This phrase contains the keywords which enable us to meditate deeply upon the meaning to be ascribed to the initiatory process taking place within us. According to this definition, the process involves both the realm of reason and the realm of emotion. This clearly shows that initiation as a whole is not limited to just one aspect of our being. We often have a tendency to think that mysticism applies solely to that which is metaphysical—in other words, to that which lies beyond the physical. However, it is important to have a clear understanding that mystical evolution operates within both the material world and the spiritual world.

Moreover, this is the reason why human beings cannot experience true happiness if they orient their life towards one of these two worlds to the exclusion of the other. But, first and foremost, Rosicrucian mysticism must lead us to the state of happiness, for this very state provides proof that we have understood the profound meaning of life.

When the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis states that our purpose is to become aware of our spirituality gradually through initiation, it does not mean that we must set aside materiality. If we accept the principle that one of our goals is to prove to



ourselves that mind has mastery over matter, it stands to reason that this mastery must apply to the material world.

Since the Cosmic has made earthly incarnation a condition indispensable to human evolution, it seems logical to think that the physical and objective aspect of our existence is a reality necessary for the realization of the Divine. Of course, the most important thing is to understand clearly that the earthly world is only a means and not an end, and that it is only the finite material out of which we build towards the Infinite.

At our present level of spiritual evolution, we cannot function effectively on the earthly plane without feeling and satisfying certain desires based upon the material aspects of existence. This is the reason why asceticism is not a valid initiatory path in the realm of mysticism. Only the great adepts have attained a state of consciousness that enables them to transcend effortlessly the dependency we all have upon this world.

When individuals are nearing the state of Perfection, their conscious activity is directed so much towards the higher planes of Cosmic Consciousness that they actually feel detached from all earthly desires. But we must fully realize that we have not reached this point as yet and that such a detachment is the result of a natural evolution of the soul. As for most human beings, it is absolutely impossible for them, from one day to another, to live on this material plane while denying all legitimate needs that must be satisfied.

### **The Goal Which Initiation Enables us to Reach**

This leads me now to define the goal which initiation must enable us to reach, and which is the basic experience that makes the definitive realization of such a goal possible. Rosicrucian Tradition has always taught that this goal is to achieve the state of Perfection which the Christs of the greatest religions of the world have achieved upon Earth and which Rosicrucians call the *Rose-Croix state*.

Although this is a true goal, it takes a long time for, as I just mentioned, we are still too far removed from this state to hope to attain it in this incarnation. Consequently, we must not pretend through our behavior that we are very near to this state. Also, let us be modest and set for ourselves an initiatory goal that is truly in keeping with our abilities. It is the most effective way to evolve and avoid the snare of illusion.

Too many disciples of religious, philosophical, or pseudomystical denominations have a tendency to pattern their behavior after the lives of the great avatars of the past, as understood by them. Among other ideas they strongly believe that physical or mental crucifixion is a necessity upon the path to mystical regeneration. I am convinced that all those who think this way and try to make others believe it also are mistaken. Only the Great Initiates have been granted the right and the strength to bear the karmic cross of humanity upon their shoulders. At our present level of evolution, the weight of our own cross is ample and it is our duty to lighten the burden as much as possible.

A wrong interpretation of some religious texts could lead us to suppose that it is only out of suffering that the Light may burst forth. Nothing seems to me further from the truth, for then the God of Love spoken of by the adepts of these texts does not exist. We know that Universal Love is a reality that many mystics have experienced through the process of initiation. Therefore, we are essentially right when we declare that suffering, even if it is true that it has an initiatory purpose, has never been and will never be a cosmic requirement for evolution. In fact, I firmly believe that the day will come when humans, freed from ignorance, will experience more happiness than unhappiness.

Although suffering is a means of evolution, it is not compulsory in the process of initiation. It is true that the experiences that ensue are initiatory in nature, but the reason they are so is because of the increased

awareness they create within us, and not because of the fact that we experience them as suffering. To think otherwise would be tantamount to saying that people must necessarily experience war so as to learn that they are happiest when they live in peace.

It is easy to understand that if the Cosmic had decreed that we should experience every possible kind of suffering to become initiated into the great truths of existence, it would have thereby decided to make self-destruction the fundamental principle of evolution. Such an idea is absurd, for it is contrary to the basically constructive nature of natural and universal laws. We see, therefore, that those who make physical and mental crucifixion the basis of initiation are in complete contradiction with the overall plan of Creation. Their error lies in the fact that they try to apply a mystical state (on an objective plane) which can only be experienced on the spiritual plane and solely by those who have attained Christ Consciousness.

### **The State of Consciousness Through Mystical Initiation**

It remains now to define the state of consciousness which we must seek to experience from this moment on, through mystical initiation. As previously stated, our goal is not to achieve the Rose-Croix state, because we are still too far removed from it in our present incarnation. Rather, the desired state consists in having a conscious awareness of our soul—in other words, of our spiritual identity.

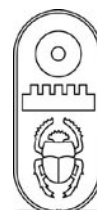
We all know that a soul essence permeates all of our cells and makes us into living and conscious entities. Yet simply knowing this is not enough for us to reach the heights of mystical fulfillment. We must experience it and be able to live consciously in this essence, independent of our objective faculties. Therefore, I believe that the first mystical initiation Rosicrucians must prepare themselves to receive is the one which enables them to see and feel themselves no longer as a body animated with a soul, but as a soul animating a body.

What is emphasized throughout the Rosicrucian teachings is the importance of practicing exercises geared to developing psychic centers. However, this is not done strictly with the goal of acquiring certain mystical powers, even though it is true that they contribute much to it. First of all, such exercises enable each of us to experience our own conscious duality and to prove to ourselves that we are definitely body and soul, matter and anti-matter, substance and essence.

In connection with this, psychic projection, as presented by the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, is primarily intended to reveal the state of consciousness which we experience when our psychic body is separated from our physical body. Such a state of consciousness enables the individual experiencing it to contemplate the realms of the soul without having to endure the limitations of the body. This does not mean that the psychic self and the spiritual self are entirely the same and that when we experience one we necessarily experience the other. This means that any projection experiment initiates us into the existence of the soul, for the psychic body is an emanation of our soul essence, whether it is inside or outside the physical body. Therefore, it is impossible to experience consciously a separation between the physical and psychic selves without being initiated into the cosmic reality of the spiritual self.

### **Ancient Egyptian Initiation Culminates in Initiatory Projection**

The ancient Egyptians understood this, and that is why the initiations enacted in their temples included a culminating phase when candidates experienced initiatory death—that is, projection. Such an experience caused these candidates to experience a conscious separation between their physical body and their psychic body, thus enabling them to acquire the intellectual and emotional certainty that they were truly a spiritual entity incarnated into a material individuality. Everything was planned so that this initiatory death and the ensuing symbolical rebirth



would remain forever engraved in their mind and emotions.

Here we see the origin of mystical initiation, inspired by the Rosicrucian definition, as was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Once the Initiates had regained awareness of their mortal body, forever marked by what they had seen in the kingdom of immortality, they felt impelled by a desire to objectify to the fullest degree the state of consciousness they had experienced. From that day forward, their initiation became the anchor of their life, and secretly, deep within their soul, they knew that mysticism would bring to them the revelation of the mystery of mysteries.

The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis is the traditional repository of the Egyptian mysteries and the initiatory path we must follow to have access to them. This path has been set forth by all the Initiates who, with the passing of the centuries, have bequeathed to the Order the fruit of all the efforts they have put forth so as to make mystical initiation something tangible and transmissible. These Initiates were not all perfect and did not pretend to be so, but some among them have become perfect, for we cannot spend lifetimes in sowing seeds of Light for others without one day picking the rose of our own Illumination.

Those Initiates are similar to the Rose-Croix and are now an integral part of what is traditionally called the Great White Lodge. In addition to the great work they are doing in serving the collective soul of humanity, they are also the custodians of the Rosicrucian Tradition. This cosmic mission was not imposed upon them. They voluntarily chose it, for, by having made the Rosicrucian ideal the foundation of most of their earthly incarnations, they are the most qualified to ensure that this ideal remains in all its pristine purity and is accessible to all seekers of goodwill.

As I stated earlier, the first great initiation that Rosicrucians must prepare themselves

to receive is the one that will enable them to experience their soul, with a clear conscience and full knowledge of the facts, in the silence of their sanctum or any other place conducive to cosmic attunement. Nevertheless, it is obvious that such an experience, however significant it may be, does not constitute the summum bonum of the initiatory process which we are following under the auspices of our Order. We must acquire mastery over it afterwards and be able to repeat it as often as we wish, for it is impossible to someday achieve the Rose-Croix state if we have not learned how to act as easily on the spiritual plane as on the material plane. The perfect Initiates I have just described have attained this mastery and thereafter work on the level of cosmic causes, whereas when it comes to us, we only act upon the earthly effects.

Some will say that such beings do not exist, that they have never seen them, that they are only the product of an imagination that draws from the unreal the strength to support an overly weighty reality. To those people, I shall simply answer: There are none so blind as those who do not want to see and none so deaf as those who do not want to hear.

### **The Rose-Croix Bequeath Knowledge Through Illumination**

Rosicrucians are convinced of the existence of these Rose-Croix, for they have bequeathed to us all the knowledge they have gained through Illumination. From the intellectual standpoint, we rediscover in the teachings of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis all the knowledge they have accumulated on how cosmic and natural laws work within all of Creation. From an emotional standpoint, they have bequeathed to us the splendor of our convocation and initiation rituals. Lastly, they have bestowed upon us the right, the power, and the duty to attune with the cosmic planes where they are situated.

The preceding remarks now lead me to define what the Supreme Initiation is, towards



which each Rosicrucian is heading. As adepts of the Rose-Croix, we all belong to an Order that, since the day that our Earth was initiated into the Primordial Tradition, constitutes one of the visible organizations to which the Invisible Masters of the Great White Lodge constantly lend their support and inspiration. The Supreme Initiation which we can and must receive during one of our incarnations will elevate us from the status of a Rosicrucian to that of a Master of the Great White Lodge.

Having reached this state of consciousness, we shall understand that all traditional movements are indeed only different crosses upon which the same rose must unfold. We shall become one with Cosmic Harmony and from the plane of consciousness that shall be ours, we will receive the power to express it upon Earth. The overall plan of Creation will be revealed to us and we shall know the ecstasy of those who think, speak, and act in the name of God and for the welfare of humanity as a whole.

### **The Temple in the Depth of our Being**

The Temple in which we shall one day receive this Supreme Initiation does not belong to this world. It lies within the very depths of our being, for it is within this Human Temple that the Ark of the Covenant, which has never ceased to unite humanity with our Creator, rests forever. As for the one

who will make us a Rose-Croix, this is none other than our Inner Master, and the Supreme Officers who will serve this Inner Master will wear upon their hearts the symbol of all the virtues that we shall have demonstrated in the world of humans. However, prior to receiving this wondrous Initiation, each of us must understand and realize that Rosicrucians, throughout the incarnations they devote to their mystical ideal, are at once the neophyte, the initiator, and the initiate within the triangle of their own birth, life, and death.

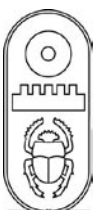
I shall close this chapter with a translation of the inscription on the tomb of Amenhotep, High Priest of Amon during the reign of Thutmose III, a pharaoh who played an essential role in our Order's traditional origins. I hope with all of my heart and soul that the day will come when each of you will rediscover yourself as you read these words of wisdom:

“I was named second Prophet and I was able to contemplate the Holiness of the Master of the Gods; with my initiation, I have known all mysteries because every portal has opened before me. The Guardians have guided my steps to allow me to catch a glimpse of God, for sincere was my mouth and skillful were my fingers until the time came for me to lie down in the tomb.”

So Mote It Be!



Mural in the Grand Temple, Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, CA.



# ROSICRUCIAN IMPRESSIONS OF EGYPT

**R**osicrucians have always been fascinated by Egypt, the font of our spiritual lineage. Below are some Rosicrucian reminiscences of the Two Lands, from the Nineteenth through the Twentieth centuries.

A red sky burned over Egypt, —red with deep intensity of spreading fire. The slow-creeping waters of the Nile washed patches of dull crimson against the oozy mud banks, tipping palms and swaying reeds with color as though touched with vermilion, and here and there long stretches of wet sand gleamed with a tawny gold.<sup>1</sup>

—Marie Corelli, S.R.C.

The sacred dung beetle was believed to be capable of self generation. The self-fertilized eggs were packed into a ball of manure, rolled across the sand toward the rising sun and in due time a metamorphosis would occur and new life would emerge. . . . Thus the scarab became the symbol for the soul that transformed itself through the cycle of evolution.<sup>2</sup>

This journey of evolution is the course that every soul must navigate. Hatshepsut, the fifth king of the 18th dynasty, was the first to publicly record the scarab on her tomb walls in its transformational role in the Egyptian book of the afterlife which is called the *Am-Duat*.<sup>3</sup> I encountered this powerful text in the tomb of her successor, Thutmose III, and it was through this ancient story that the course for my evolution was charted.

—Debby Barrett, S.R.C.

I resolve, to survive the wilderness  
And set the captive free  
From the fear that binds the self to —  
inconstancy  
I cast my eyes above  
Tomorrows promise, I seize today  
For visions fade, and autumn shades  
Those who sleep  
On Lotus Land.<sup>4</sup>

—Mary E. McRae Reed, S.R.C.

As ever, Egypt points past curiosity, compelling the individual to move from the shadow's reflections to Light. . . . Yearning has yielded to knowing. Egypt's melodies and rhythms now evoke *gnosis*, allowing Egypt and the individual to be One, living in stillness beyond words. The journey home begins and ends in Egypt.

—Kathy Coon, S.R.C.

The day before we returned home we...went into the second pyramid, Khafre's. We went into the burial vault chamber and there were only a few quiet people there. And I wondered, I wondered—who built the Pyramids?

I felt a strong urge to put my hands and forehead on the chamber wall and so I did. And then I said to myself mentally, "Who are you? Who built this place? And then a voice in my head answered, "Welcome Back."

—Vic Zeller, F.R.C.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Marie Corelli [Mary Mackay], *The Secret Power* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1924). Corelli, a Rosicrucian, was an immensely popular author at the turn of the last century.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Carmela Betro, *Hieroglyphics: The Writings of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Leslie J. Bockol, trans. S. Amanda George

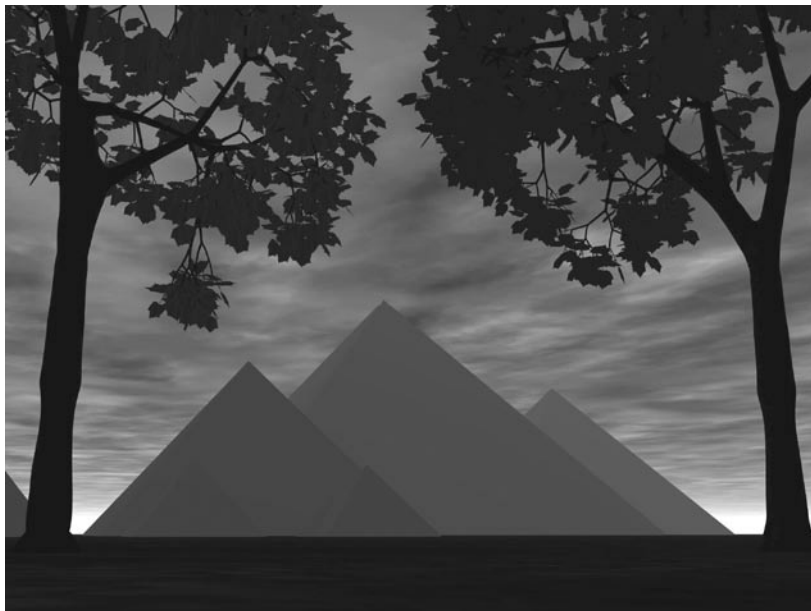
(New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 116.

<sup>3</sup> Erik Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, trans. David Lorton (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Mary E. McRae Reed, excerpt from "The Journey," unpublished poem, 2005.



*Horus Raises a Ladder to Heaven*, by Victoria Franck Wetsch, S.R.C.



*Ancient Egypt*, by James Collins, F.R.C.

A M O R G



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