

Egyptian Cosmology

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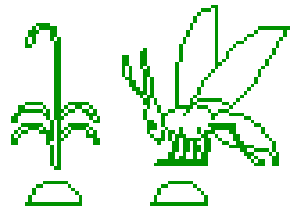
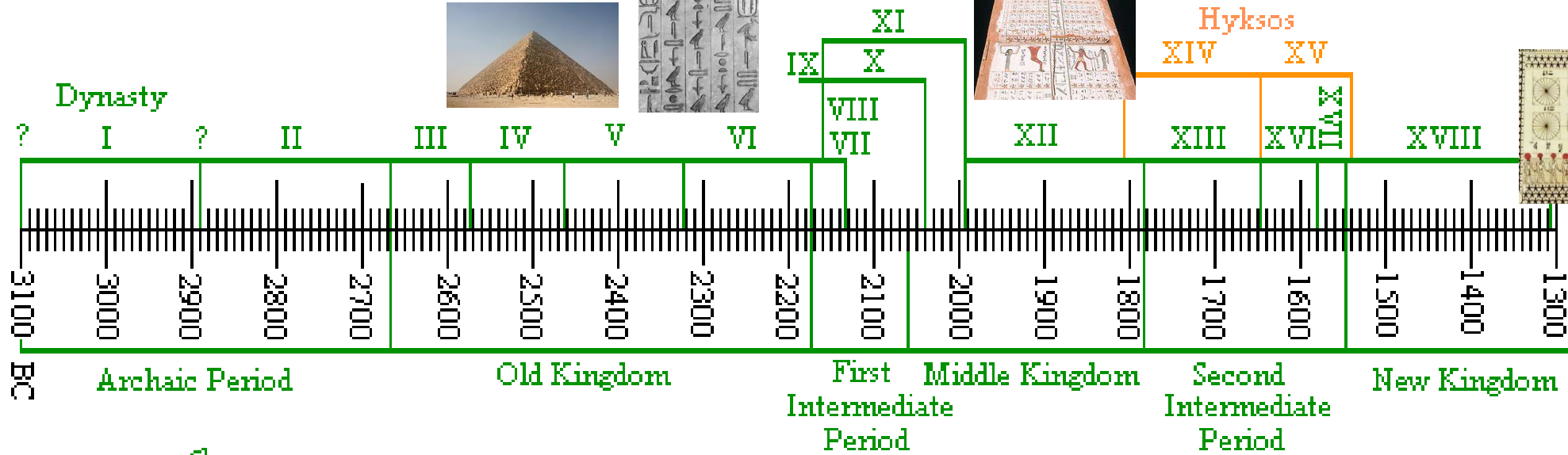
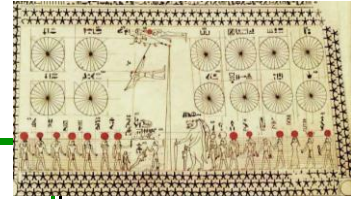
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Sky Theology



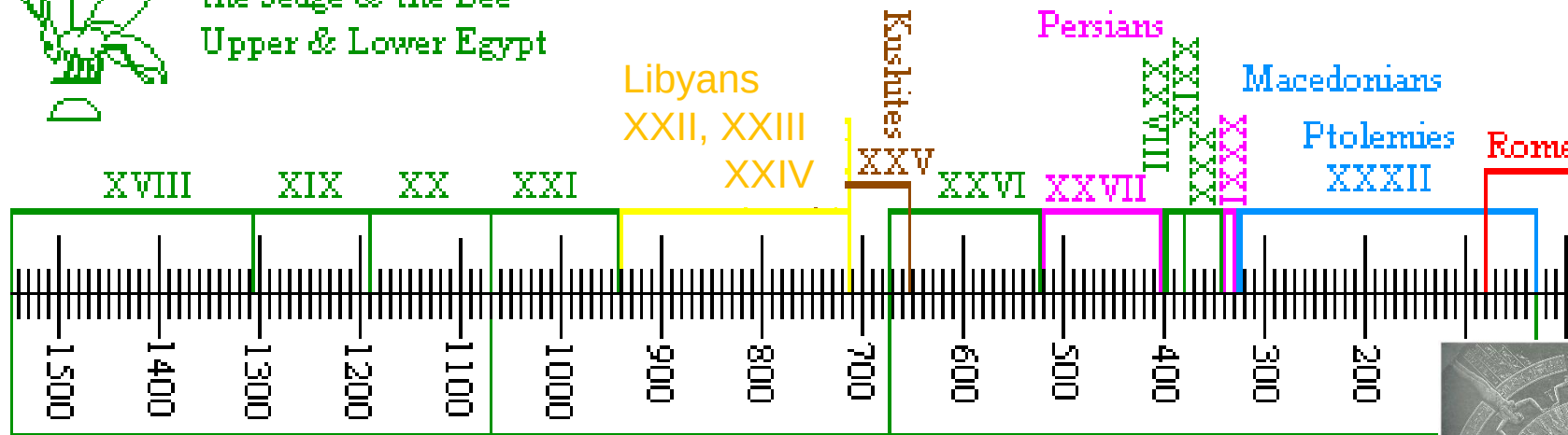
Stars and sacred time



the Sedge & the Bee
Upper & Lower Egypt



Images of
Planets

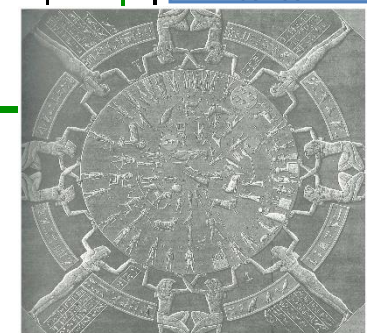


Loss of
Egyptian
sky



Cairo Calendar
Earliest known
appearance of
astrology

Dendera
Zodiacs



Cosmological Societies



Cosmological Societies – term used by the sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902-79) but probably derived from Henri Frankfort.

Jan Assmann writes:

[A] ‘cosmological society lives by a model of cosmic forms of order which it transforms into political and social order by means of meticulous observation and performance of rituals’.

Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, trans. Andrew Jenkins, New York: Metropolitan Books 2002, p. 207.

The Egyptian cosmological view.



This is cosmic geography, the Egyptian idea of place.

A vignette from the Greenfield Papyrus, The Book of the Dead of the priestess Nesitanebtashru (third intermediate period).

The world existed in a bubble surrounded by an ocean. The god $\check{S}w$ (Shu) kept the waters of the ocean falling to the flat earth. The earth ($t3$) also known as *gbb* – the god Gebb - existed in the middle of the bubble. The dome of the sky was *pt*, (sky) also the place of *nwt*, the goddess Nut. A similar place was considered to exist below the earth. This place was the *dw3t* (Duat) The sky at the bottom, in the Duat, was known as Naunet, *nnwt*.

Forms of Cosmological Societies

According to Jan Assmann there are **two varieties** of cosmological society



Divinatory (e.g. China, Mesopotamia, Rome) in which **signs, defined as exceptions to the rule', reveal the divine will.**

In the MA we are most familiar with this style of cosmology for it is one in which we all live. If a remarkable event happens in the heavens then it is considered a sign.

Science will comment, religious leaders will comment and astrologers will comment.

This is NOT the Egyptian cosmological view

Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, trans. Andrew Jenkins, New York: Metropolitan Books 2002, p. 207.

Another type of Cosmology - ORDERED



The Egyptian world view was that of the cosmos as order.

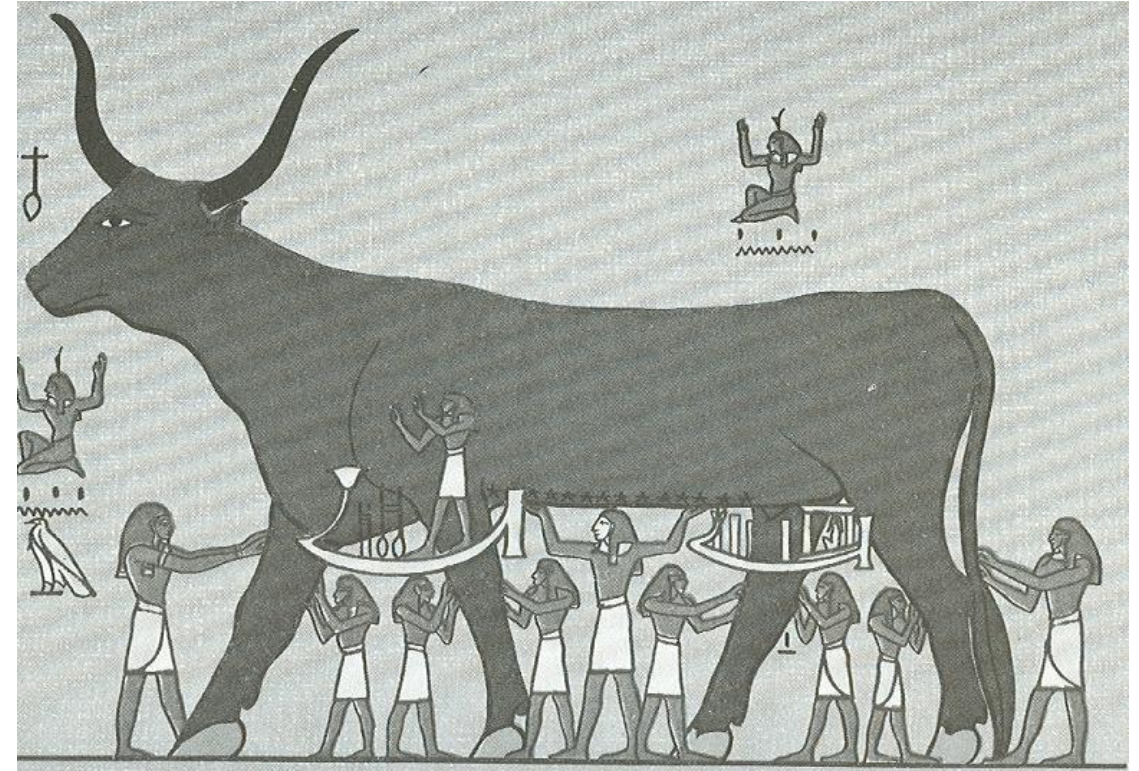
Unexpected events needed to be ignored.

To give them attention was to give them 'life' (due to the magical nature of statues and words) and thus such events if empowered would jeopardise the cosmos. The order of the cosmos was personified by *Ma'at*.

In the Egyptian world view the will of the gods, the king as well as all of humanity was bound up with the maintenance of the cosmic process – *Ma'at*.

Assmann: 'The ritual re-enactment of this process, preformed by the pharaoh, was designed not only to adapt the order of the human world to that of the cosmos but also, and indeed primarily, to keep the cosmic process itself in good working order'.

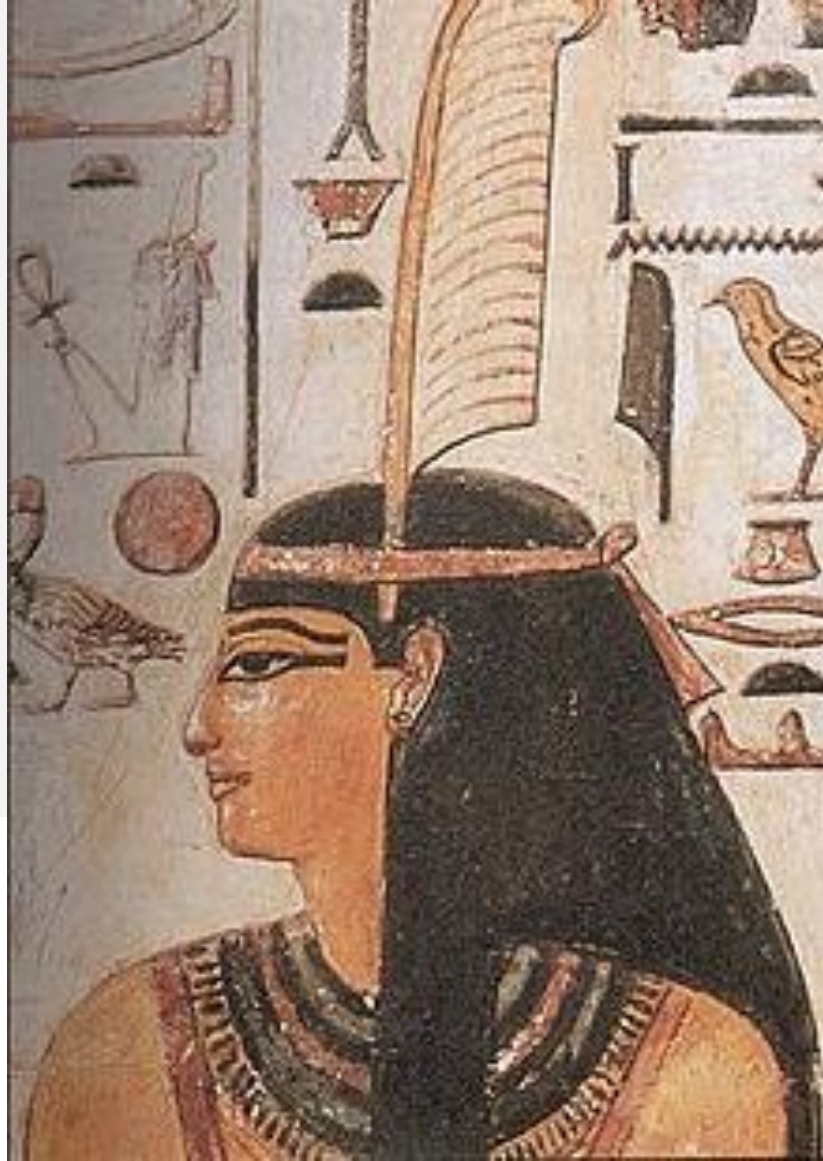
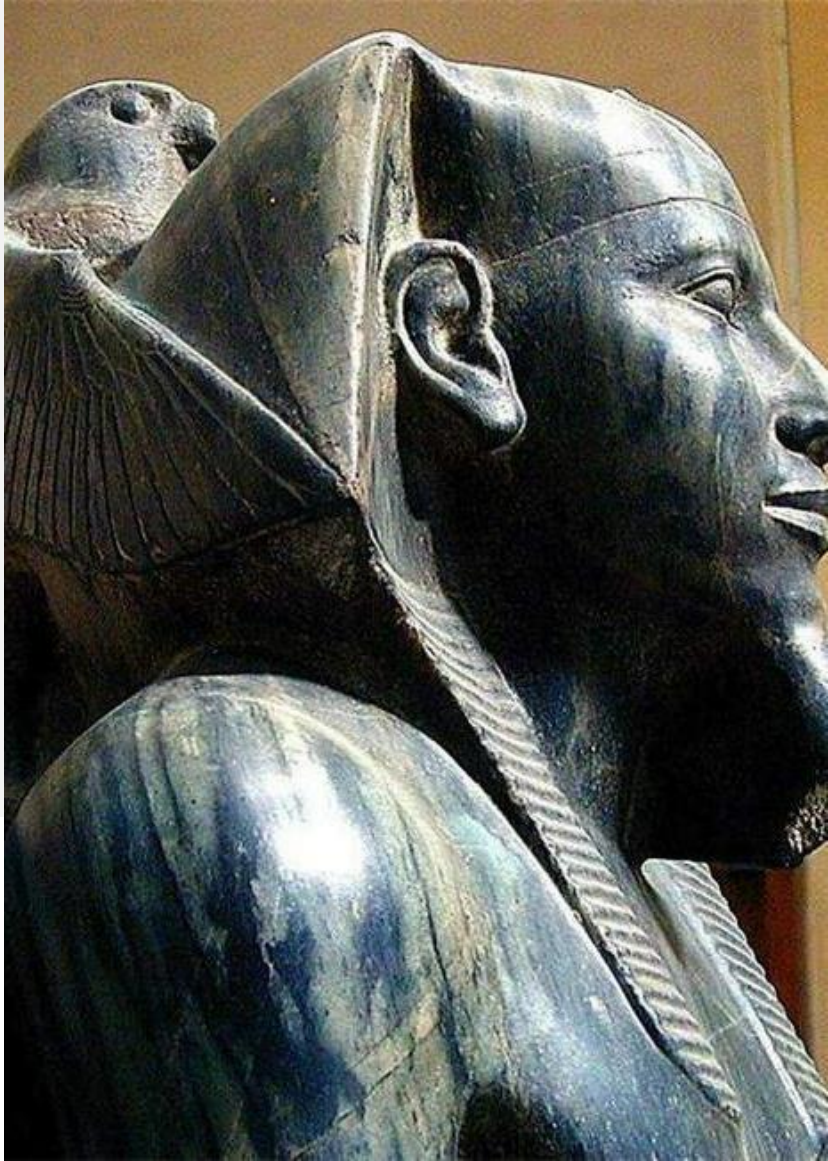
The lost of ORDER – after the Amarna period (1346-1332 BC)



The Book of the Heavenly Cow

Tombs of Seti I, Ramesses II, Ramesses III, Ramesses VI, and Tutankhamun.

This led to the Books of the Sky and different Books of the Dead



Anthropomorphic Cosmic Principles



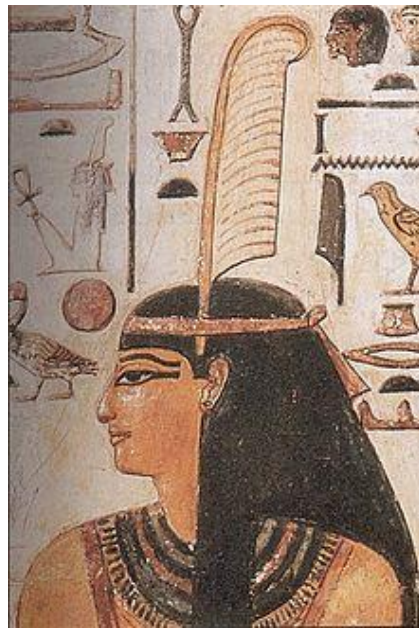
The Anthropomorphic Cosmic Principles: *Ma'at*, cosmic order

- The ordered cosmos personified as a goddess of truth, law and justice.
- A force which needed to be supported for it to be maintained.
- *Ma'at* imposed an the ethical behaviour, similar to the later **Stoic idea of maintaining personal calmness in order to maintain the balance of the state**. *Ma'at* thus represented the ethics which recognize the need to act in all circumstances for the upholding of the universal order.



The Anthropomorphic Cosmic Principles: *Ma'at*, cosmic order

- *Ma'at*'s symbol, the feather of truth, was placed in one pan of the balance used for the weighing of the hearts (*ib*) of the dead in their judgement by Osiris in his role as the god of the dead.
- Egyptian religion (they had no word for religion as it was simple life!) Life was seen as an expression of the need to maintain *Ma'at*, the ritual and routine of living the life of 'the quiet man'. Doing one's service to the temple and the state maintained this.



19 Dynasty – Seti I offering *Ma'at*



Horus – Edfu

The Anthropomorphic Cosmic Principles

The Brothers, Horus and Seth



Horus

North*, Lower Egypt, agriculture

Order
Civilization
The Eye
Law

The three superior
planets, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars

The civilizing force is thus associated with wisdom.

Insight, reason, as a from of an essential feature of
a civilised life. The lack of Horus is to live life blindly
to have no 'vision'.

Reason

Seth

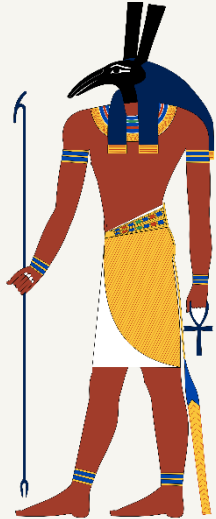
South*, Upper Egypt, hunting

Chaos
Barbarism
Testicles
Brute Force
Mercury

Aggressive force is thus associated with procreative
energy.

Strength, in its positive form seen as indispensable
feature of life. The lack of Seth is to be castrated.

Passion



Later, Plato
internalised these
cosmic principles
making them a
personal, mental
struggle.

* Originally Horus was from the south and thus Seth from the north.

Queen Hatshepsut, 'I united the two lords, that is, their parts, by ruling
like the son of Isis [Horus] and being strong like the son of Nut [Seth]'



The Egyptian View of Time

neheh



The scarab beetle was the symbol of salvation – Khepri.

Becoming and Being

Later Plato made this the foundation of his cosmology



djed



Raising the djed pillar,
Temple of Seti I,
Abydos, Egypt.



Ramses I burial chamber

From a shrine of Tutankhamun, a frieze of Isis knots combined with djed pillars



The Egyptian view of time – Becoming and Being

Cyclic (neheh) and non-cyclic time (Djet)

Neheh time is the never ending reoccurrence of the same. It is, according to Assmann, 'generated by the movement of the heavenly bodies and hence determined by the sun'. Neheh time is associated with *becoming*, and its symbol is the scarab beetle. Cycles come and go, birth and death, renewal but always **becoming**.

Djet time is not cyclic time but instead it is the concept of stability and lasting, as Assmann puts it, 'its symbols are stone and mummy, its god Osiris,... Djet is a sacred dimension of everness.. It is preserved in **immutable permanence**.' Osiris is lord of djet 'Wen nefer' which means '**he who lasts in perfection**'.

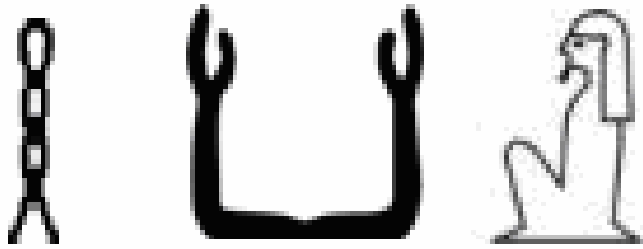
'Djet is time at a standstill, only in *neheh* does time move.'

Djet is thus the suspension of time, it is the representation of what we know now as **divine eternity or eternal time**.

Assmann, Jan, *The Mind of Egypt : History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002). P18.



Cosmic Principle: *Heka* 'magic'



The word translates as: 'He who activates the Ka'

Where the Ka is the 'will' contained in the soul.



"A Cat's Funeral", by John Reinhard Weguelin, 1886

[Note: It can be argued that this is the source of the idea expressed in Plato and later in Christianity that FREE WILL resides in the soul]



Heka

- The practice of magic was above all oral. – Knowing the name of your fear, or your enemy could give you power over that fear or person.

Removing a name, or the practice of ‘debaptizing’ a criminal meant that that person could no longer do any harm.

- The material world and *Heka* - Objects and statues could be used.
 - A statue could hold one’s *ka* after death
 - A small statue could be modelled in the shape of one’s foe and then destroyed.
 - A small statue could be used to magical transform and attack one’s rival.
 - A statue could also be a healing statue.
 - Amulets, to protect one from ill-fortune, were mass-produced.



Late Period Amulet
Phat.

The Egyptian Soul

One of Egypt's
gifts to humanity is
their notion of
soul, which was
adopted by Plato



Pyramid Texts

Contain the earliest writings on:

- The concept of soul.
- The ascent of the king's soul after death to the heavens.
- The adoration of the starry goddess of the heavens.

Additionally they are a complete corpus representing the entire mythology expressed in nine different versions which all reveal the same story features.

Samuel A.B. Mercer, *Literary Criticism of the Pyramid Texts* (London: Luzac & Company, 1956, pp. 9-10.



The King joins the Immortal Stars, the gods.

‘ I am a star which illumines the sky, I
mount up to the god that I may be
protected, for the sky will not be devoid
of me and this earth will not be devoid
of me for ever. I live beside you, you
gods of the Lower Sky, the
Imperishable Stars.’ (Faulkner §1454 – 1455).

The Multiplicity of the Egyptian Soul

The Egyptian Soul:

The *ka* – the vital life force

The *ba* – the moral essence

The *akh* – the transfigured spirit in the
next world.

The *ib* – the heart

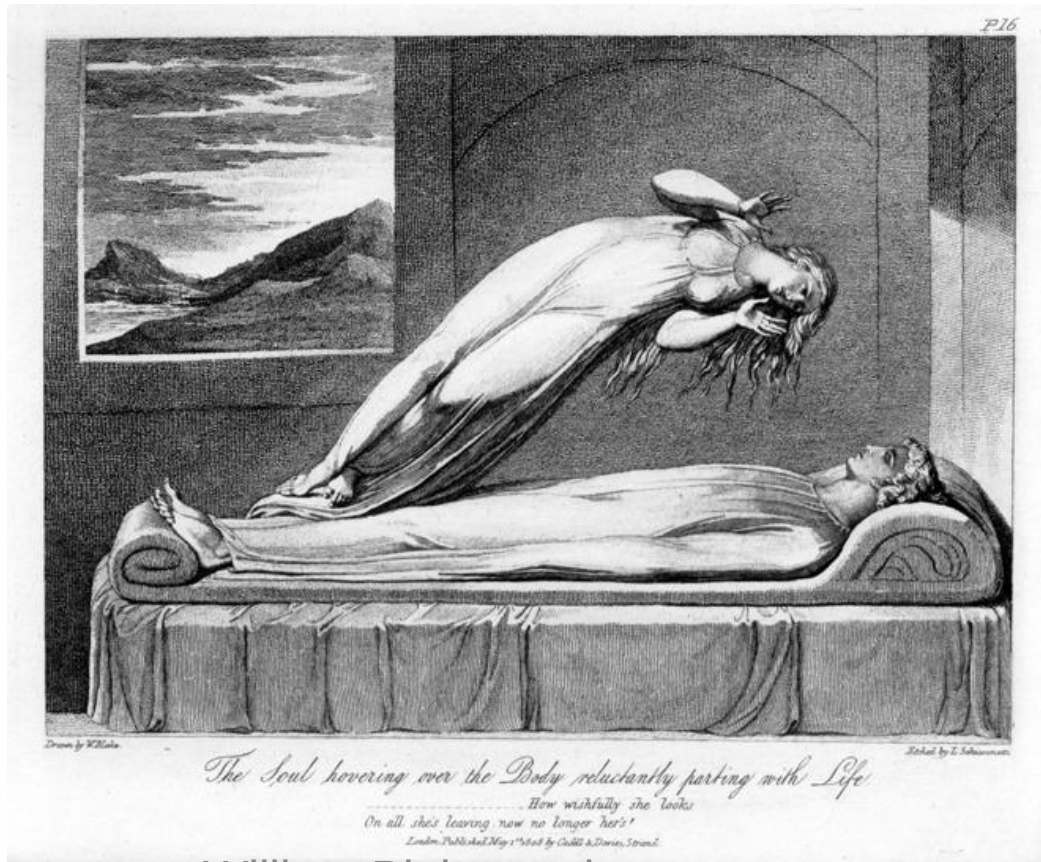
The *sheut* – the shadow

The *ren* – the given name



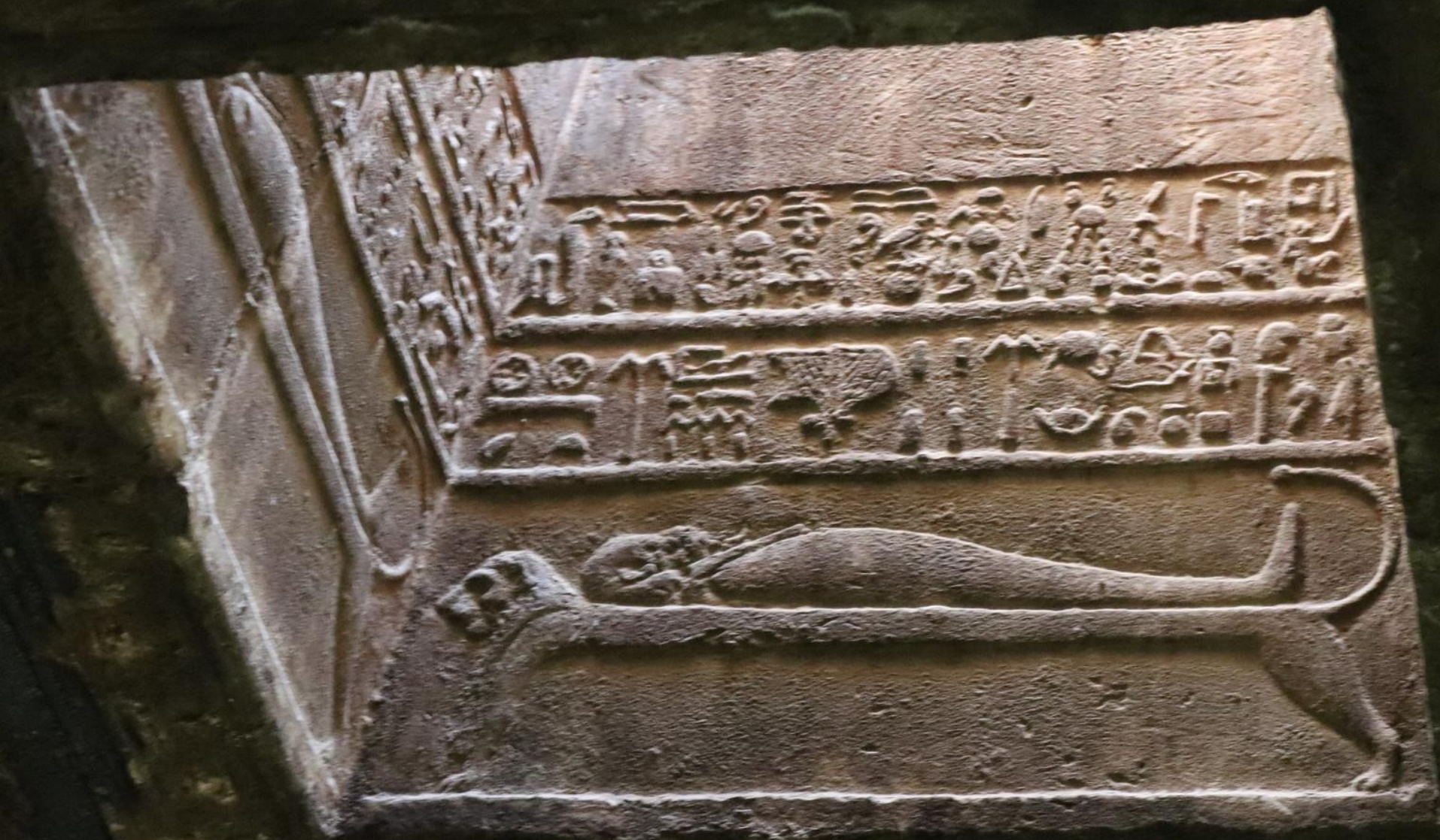
It is the Pyramid Texts that are our earliest writings on the ascent of the soul.

The adoption of this idea into the west, via Plato, has formed the foundation of the western view of the soul.



William Blake-soul ascent





Dendera – Eastern Osirian Chapel – inner chamber

The Egyptian Soul today

- The Egyptians gave the Western world the notion of soul - a complex, busy and eternal living cosmic concept that ascends to the stars upon the death of the body.
- The parts of the Egyptian soul are based on **phenomenological concepts** – that is what it feels like being alive and having to bury your dead.

- Seems to only depend on T at all
- something fishy going on → try glycerol prep methods?
look @ glycerol / EtOH alone
find way to take T, 120° C
find solid tbpDI
Does T control work? → + stand
Thy glycerol / EtOH alone
- ~~down~~ kinda dirty, spots
- few x far between but still
intensity ~10 K
Use oven, amber bottles w/ +
seal at 120 should reach

As such these parts of the Egyptian soul are still with us today:

- How important is your loved one's statue (picture)?
- How precious is their handwriting?
- How much do you want to remember their name?
- We no longer need to preserve the body, but why do we respect people's graves, even those of total strangers?



Summary

- Cosmos held together by forces/principles – *Ma'at* and *Heka*
- All things in dualism beginning with Horus (reason) and Seth (passion).
- Cosmos is alive
- Theory of magic – VIP for western esoterism.
- Becoming (*neheh*) and Being (*djet*) concepts of time.
- The eternal pharaonic soul – in *djet* time.
- The pharaonic soul ascends to the stars then returns to earth.
- Lessor souls are in *neheh* time – the unwearying stars. Produce the **Egyptian idea of reincarnation.**
- Plato internalises the Egyptian view of time and soul to provide:
 - The need to use reason over passion
 - The need to do good works
 - The ascent of a purified soul after many periods of reincarnation

Secondary sources

If you wish to explore this topic further:

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