



Dear

Thank you for booking your **Religion and Ritual session** for schools at the Egypt Centre. Work sheets will be ready on clipboards with pencils for your group. The students will not be expected to work alone but will take part in the activities with the Museum's trained activity leaders. Teachers and students may bring cameras but we do not allow flash photography in the museum galleries, due to conservation issues regarding safe light levels.

The activity leaders are mainly unpaid volunteers and although all activities are museum led we do ask that you ensure the students are supervised at all times. Students need to be divided into 2 groups when they arrive.

### **Upstairs group: *the House of Life***

- *Illustrated talk on religion and ritual* by the Curator Carolyn Graves-Brown (30 min activity)
- *Religious and ritual Significance of Senet* (30 min activity)
- *Religious and ritual Significance of Materials* (30 min activity)

### **Downstairs group: *the House of Death***

- *Mummification, Opening of the mouth ceremony* (30 min activity)
- *Weighing of the Heart* (30 mins activity)
- *Survival in the Afterlife* (30 mins activity)

The students will then take a 30 minute break for lunch and then swap over groups after lunch. After the activities are finished they will have an opportunity to look around the galleries and fill in a worksheet based on the information given. They will be encouraged to think about religious and ritual significance of the objects.

A £2 a head charge is made for the students who attend the activity day at the museum to cover costs. We also have a gift shop selling 'Egyptian' merchandise starting from 30p. Please could you make cheques payable to *Swansea University*.

We look forward to seeing you and hope you enjoy your visit to the Egypt Centre. Any comments on how we can improve our service to you will be gratefully received.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Goodridge  
*Assistant curator*

## The Religious Significance of Materials – Notes for Teachers

### Carolyn Graves-Brown

Materials were chosen not simply for their functional properties but also for their religious significance. Materials had religious significance because of their association with the gods. Reasons for the associations are intertwined but may be summarised as:

- The gods tended to be immanent in nature. That is they were a part of stone, wood, plants etc.
- Materials had qualities which paralleled those of the gods. For example, a certain colour of a material might parallel an aspect of divinity.
- The process of creating objects from materials was considered very similar to the creation of people, and rebirth after death and thus contained religious symbolism.

### The Immanent Nature of the Gods

*And so the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, of every kind of thing which grows...*Memphite Theology (translation by Wilkinson p 82)

The gods were not separate from nature but a part of it. They were therefore present in materials such as rocks, plants, etc.

### Qualities of Gods Paralleled in Materials

The gods could sometimes be recognised by their scent, as when Amun approached Queen Ahmose to conceive Hatshepsut and was recognised by his divine aroma. Scent was also associated with revival and thus rebirth. Therefore scented plants such as certain woods, e.g. cedar, were particularly prized.

The colours of some materials were also associated with gods. Shiny qualities of faience, gold, etc. were associated with rebirth and gods. The gods were said to have a shining appearance and the re-born dead, the *akhu* or transfigured ones, also had shining qualities. At certain periods of Egyptian history, coffins (and shabtis) were lacquered to give a shiny appearance (look in the *House of Death* for examples). For further information on colour symbolism see Wilkinson.

Certain materials also had durable qualities. Gold does not tarnish and so is an eternal metal. Stone is very durable and thus, it has been suggested, was chosen as the material for the manufacture of vessels to put in graves during the early Dynastic period. It has also been suggested that the stone vessels copy the form of the pottery examples.

### The link between creation of objects and life after death

In ancient Egypt, there were strong similarities between technology and revival after death. In today's western societies technology is often considered a separate area of activity. The Egyptians did not divide up their areas of life and death in the same way in which we do. Our partitive view of technology seems in fact to be quite recent, stemming from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Alison Roberts points out, the Egyptian word *msj* means both to create a statue and to give birth.

For the Egyptians technology was so bound up in other sectors of life, including the religious that priests held titles as both master craftsmen and as convenors in life and death. The *Sem* priest performed the opening of the mouth ceremony, which was not only carried out on mummies but also statues. Blackman has suggested that since the title *Sem* was a title of the high-Priest of the Memphite Ptah, the ceremony may have originated from sculptor's workshops (Ptah was a god of craftsmen). The purpose of the opening of the mouth was to revive the senses of the mummy/statue to make it come alive.

Ptah as a god of craftsmen was therefore important in Egyptian religion. In the *House of Death* we have a number of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures which were put in the graves of the dead. The combination of three gods associated with creation would help ensure the rebirth of the dead person.

Alison Roberts sees links with metallurgy and the *Book of Night*, an Egyptian religious text concerning death and rebirth. In the 12<sup>th</sup> hour is the 'opening the ball' in the sense of a ball of clay. This could be interpreted as the activity carried out in the lost wax technique (*cire perdue*). In addition the 'seizers' in the sixth hour may be likened to those seizing the moulds from the fire.

From at least the Middle Kingdom Khnum the potter is said to create both humans but also other life on his potter's wheel. The kiln is linked to the womb (Dorman 2002, 119).

The blessed dead that is those that were reborn, were often described in parallel to statues, as though they were made from stone. Mineralization of the deceased body is described in both the *Pyramid Texts* and the *Book of the Dead* (Blackman 1927, 191), and is related to the statue-like quality of gods. For example, in Papyrus Westcar, god-children are described as stone statues (Berlin 3033. 10.5–10.11.1; Parkinson 1997, 117–118).

## Stone

Scarce and hard to work stones were often used where softer more plentiful stone would have sufficed. Some of the stone vessels in the *House of Life* are made from breccia, a particularly difficult material to work. It therefore seems there were non-functional aspects to choice of stone.

Several chapters of the *Book of the Dead* specify which stones were to be used for which amulets. Clearly using the correct material had more than aesthetic considerations.

Rebirth and stone are familiar ideas in Hellenistic, Islamic and Western alchemy. The contribution made by the Egyptians to alchemy is much debated (Roberts 2000, 218-225).

Statues made of stone can be brought to life and even flint seems to have properties of rebirth (flint artefacts, often unfinished, are placed in Old Kingdom tombs and in the pottery burials of new born infants at Deir el-Medinah; a scene of flint working occurs at Beni Hasan in the tomb of Amenemhet.

In Graeco-Roman text, precious metals and stones were used to reanimate Osiris in the goldsmith's workshops at Dendera where Egyptologists believe statues were reanimated.

The colour of particular stones also had religious connotations. Pale coloured stones were considered pure, which might account for the high number of pale stone vessels in early dynastic graves. Certain black stones were associated with Osiris and the black silt left by the

annual flooding of the Nile, and therefore with rebirth. Red stones were associated with the god Seth and also with rebirth (see Wilkinson for more information on colour symbolism).

Stone also has connotations of hardness and durability. It can thus be further linked with gods. The durability of stone vessels may suggest why stone as opposed to pottery examples were popular in elite graves of the Early Dynastic. The front half of the serpent of Bakhau Mountain was therefore of flint. Flint is also sharp and certain deities could shoot fire or flint knives from their eyes.

## Wood

Since the gods were immanent in nature they could be present in trees and other plants. Trees in general symbolise eternal life. Their roots go down into the primeval water from which all natural life has sprung. From the New Kingdom the idea of the tree goddess is particularly prevalent. Trees had particular characteristics that could be associated with a protective female goddess. Indeed, the Egyptian name for sycamore, which later became the Egyptian name for all trees, meant 'to protect'. Trees, and the goddesses were similar in that they could in certain cases issue a white sap or milk, they both had nurturing qualities (trees can give shade).

Certain incense bearing trees had further qualities. Their scent was associated with revival. Thus, Hatshepsut made much of her trip to Punt to collect exotic items such as incense trees which she brought back to Egypt for the gods. Incense was also said to be 'the fragrance of the gods'.

Various trees, particularly the sycamore, are associated with tree goddesses, particularly Nut and Hathor. Other trees were sacred to other gods. The willow was sacred to Osiris. Horus was connected with acacia and Wepwawet with tamarisk.

Wood was also of course used in construction and furniture making. The tamarisk or zizyphus was to be used for the making of shabtis. Burial in a wooden coffin could be regarded as a return to the womb of the mother. Coffins associated with Nut and Nut and other goddesses strongly associated with trees.

## Papyrus

Plants in general have properties of life and rebirth. Their greenness is associated with the annual rejuvenation of the Nile. Ptah in particular is often shown with a green face and is called *nefer her*.

The phrase 'Land of Papyrus' was used in ancient Egypt to mean Lower Egypt. The plant was so associated with Egypt that in the *Tale of Sinuhe* the hero says 'what can fasten the papyrus to the mountain?'

Papyrus reeds were used for: stalks bundled together to make boats, inner bark used for sail cloths, matting, blankets and ropes; cattle grazing; paper; medicine.

Papyrus pillars were said to hold up the sky. Hathor, Bastet and Neith are particularly associated with papyrus. Hathor sometimes appears as a cow with papyrus between her horns. The *ukh* staff, a papyrus stem crowned with two feathers, was a fetish associated with this goddess.

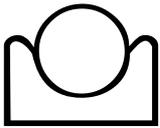
Papyrus amulets were used by the living as well as the dead. They have been found at the town sites of Ashmunein and Balamun.

In temple and tomb scenes papyrus stalks are shaken in rituals. The sound of the sistrum was also said to be like that of rustling papyrus.

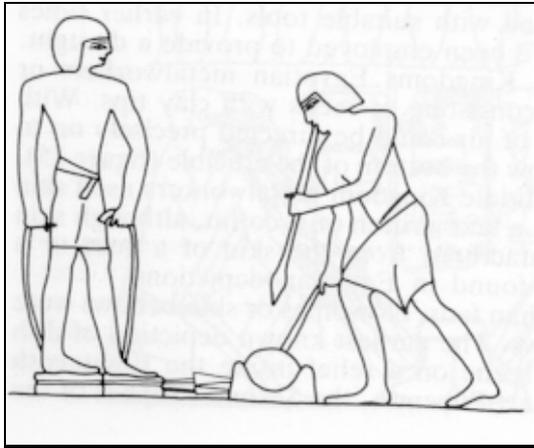
## Metal

Depictions of metalworkers melting metal are often shown on tomb walls as the akhet sign. Symbolically, the sign was connected with the sun, which went down in the evening and arose in the day. The raising and setting of the sun was also likened to human birth. Thus the manufacture of metal had religious significance.

Metal smelting was closely connected with kings who boasted of smelting certain metals. The king himself was at least partly a god and so it would be natural for him to control the smelting of metal. The extraction of metal ores was also in the hands of kings.



The akhet sign showing the sun coming up on the horizon between two mountains. Notice it is also the shape of a head on a headrest and see it is on the metal working scene below.



*Two metalworkers, using a bellows and blowpipe for melting metal. From the tomb of Puyméré at Thebes (reproduced in Scheel, B., 1989, Egyptian metalworking and tools. Shire Publications).*

Certain metals were particularly linked with gods. For example it was said that gold was the flesh of the gods and silver was their bone. The sun god Re was sometimes referred to as ‘the mountain of gold’. Hathor was often called ‘The Golden One’. As stated above, gold was also important because it did not tarnish and for its shininess. All these reasons may explain why mummy masks were sometimes gilded (see *House of Death*) and why embalmers workshops were known as ‘The House of Gold’.

The first iron to be used by the Egyptians seems to have been meteoric iron. This naturally had magical connotations. Its Egyptian name was *biš*, which also means wonder. It was thought to have come from heaven (Roth 1993). In the *Pyramid Texts* *biš* is said to have come from Seth. The bones of Seth were sometimes said to be made of iron. It was therefore important in the *Opening of the Mouth Ceremony* when an adze with an iron blade was used.

## Glass

Glass in ancient Egypt was called ‘the stone that flows’ as it flows when heated up. When it was first introduced it was often cut like a stone, rather than moulded. It therefore seems likely that it took on the qualities of stone. In ancient Egypt, it is also sometimes called *tjehnet*. See section on faience for the meaning of this.

## Pottery

Clay is a primeval substance which recalls the original creation and the annual flooding of the Nile. Corn mummies, that are figures of Osiris made of mud and filled with grain, were placed

in tombs. The Haris Papyrus mentions an egg of clay which could be thrown at crocodiles to ward them off. Egyptian women gave birth on clay 'birthing bricks'. Magical bricks of clay were also placed in New Kingdom royal tombs.

Khnum fashioned mankind on a potter's wheel as is shown in the great hymn at Esna. Certain depictions of the 12<sup>th</sup> Hour in the *Book of Night* (an ancient Egyptian book of rebirth) show the scarab beetle sitting on a stylised potter's wheel (Roberts, 2000, 162-163)

### **Faience**

The Egyptian name for faience was *tjehnet* which means shiny or scintillating, like the moon and stars. See above for why this was associated with religion. The epithet *tjehnet* was bestowed on many gods and kings. Faience was also associated with the goddess Hathor who held titles 'Mistress of Turquoise' and 'Mistress of Faience'. She was associated with light, rebirth and fertility. It seems that faience was not just used as a poor substitute for lapis lazuli but was deliberately chosen for its religious connotations. Many of the faience objects in the *House of Life* thus have religious connotations.

### **Wax**

Upstairs in the Egypt Centre is a wax embalming plaque. Beeswax is a natural preservative and thus would be a suitable substance to use in mummification. Additionally the modelling qualities of softened beeswax would have made it a suitable material. It is also clear that the ancient Egyptians believed beeswax to have special magical qualities (Raven 1993). It was not only used in mummification but also execration rites, love charms and other magical rites. This might have been partly because of the preservative qualities of beeswax but perhaps also because of its inflammable nature. It may also have been considered magical as it came from bees, in themselves magical animals, which were thought to spontaneously generate from dead bodies or dung.

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## Colour (*Iwen*) and Symbolism

“ O Elder who sees his father, keeper of the book of Thoth

Bring me the mud of Aker (an earth god), in which is Seth

Bring me the waterpot and palette in that writing-kit of Thoth.

And the secrets of their contents. See, I am the scribe!

Bring me the rotting of Osiris with which I may write”. This is an extract from the *Book of the Dead*.

*The mud of Aker in which is Seth = Red. Bring me the rotting of Osiris = Black.*

Black and red were the two colours that were used in Egyptian writing. In tomb decoration the lines of the figures were drawn first in red and then any corrections were made in black

**BLACK (*Kem*)** – The colour black was made from carbon compounds such as soot, ground charcoal or burnt animal bones. The black residue from the inside of cooking pots was often removed and used.

- Black was the colour of death and the night but also fertility, resurrection from death and, paradoxically, life itself.
- Black was the colour of Khol, the stuff they used to put on their eyes.
- Black Nile mud = Fertility God of the Nile, often seen with a black face. See statue of Montuhotpe II with black face. Was he a black pharaoh? Or was this a symbol of fertility and resurrection? Coffins of the Late Period are often painted black as a symbol of resurrection, and many heart scarabs are also black!
- Black also symbolises Egypt = *Kmt* = The black Land.
- Black stone seems to have been considered a particularly potent symbolic substance and was almost always the material chosen for the magical healing statues commonly inscribed with vignettes and spells during the Macedonian and Ptolemaic periods.

### Objects at the Egypt Centre:

Black Heart Scarabs.

Black faces and decoration on Ptah Sokar Osiris figures.

Black decoration on bed legs, coffin fragments.

Sarcophagus of Amenhotep Son of Hapu.

**RED (*Deshet*)** – created from naturally occurring oxidised iron and red ochre. Red was associated with fire and blood, but could also represent regeneration, as in the use of henna in a funerary context.

- Red = Hostile desert = the bad god of chaos Seth, who had red hair and red eyes.
- Used to represent the colour of skin.
- *Deshet ib*, literally means red of the heart.
- It is thought that the Egyptians wore red carnelian during festivals, and would paint their bodies with Henna.

### Objects at the Egypt Centre:

Wooden Seth figure.

Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures.

Lots of patterns including the Bes bed legs and lots of coffin fragments.

Carnelian belt.

**WHITE (*hedj*)** – created from calcium carbonate, chalk and gypsum.

- White suggests purity. Due to its lack of colour white was the colour of simple and sacred things.
- The name of the city of Memphis meant ‘white walls’. White sandals were worn at holy ceremonies.
- The material most commonly used for ritual objects, such as the embalming table for the Apis bulls in Memphis, was white alabaster.
- White was also the heraldic colour of Upper Egypt.

### Objects at the Egypt Centre:

White Offering stand. White limestone ‘Aba’ statue.

**YELLOW (*Khenet*)** – was created by the Egyptian artists using natural ochres or oxides. From the New Kingdom onwards, arsenic trisulphide was used.

- Both the sun and gold were yellow and shared the qualities of being imperishable, eternal and indestructible. Thus anything portrayed as yellow in Egyptian art generally carried this connotation.
- The skin of the gods was believed to be made of gold. Thus statues of gods were very often made of gold.

**Objects at the Egypt Centre:**

21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin and fragments.

Bit of gold on the mummified hawk.

Golden faces of the mummy masks.

Coffin fragments painted yellow.

**BLUE (*irtiu*)** – created by combining iron and copper oxides with calcium and silica.

- Blue was symbolic of the Nile and its crops.
- Amun was often shown with a blue face to symbolise his role in the creation of the world.
- The hair of the gods was said to be made of lapis lazuli and in many of the opening of the mouth ceremonies both Anubis and the mummy have blue hair.

**Objects at the Egypt Centre:**

The goddess figurine with blue hair.

Faience objects.

Lapis lazuli chunk.

**GREEN (*wadj*)** – created from malachite, a naturally occurring copper ore. Of course, it's a symbol of naturally growing things.

- Early texts refer to the afterlife as the field of Malachite.
- The skin of Osiris was frequently painted green. In the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty the bandages on the face of some mummies were painted green.
- The Eye of Horus is usually covered green because of its positive connotations.
- Green was the colour of healing and wellbeing.
- Wadjet 'the green one' was the name of the serpent of Lower Egypt.

**Objects at the Egypt Centre:**

Green Wadjet Eyes.

Green Scarabs.

Green face of Osiris.

## Senet (The Passing Game)

The game dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. It died out, like much of ancient Egyptian culture, with the Christian era. The earliest known examples of *senet* boards come from 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty tombs at Abu Rawasch, though it probably dates to the Predynastic times. There are over 120 games known in museums throughout the world.

*Senet* may well have been a game played in everyday life, for fun. However, it also seems to have had a religious meaning, regarding funerals and Hathoric rites connected with funerals. Often games of *senet* were placed in tombs. Tutankhamun, for example had 4 games in the tomb with him.

*Coffin Text* spell 405 states that *senet* is a means of the dead communicating with the living. In 1019 the mobility of the deceased in the necropolis is compared to a god travelling across a *senet* board.

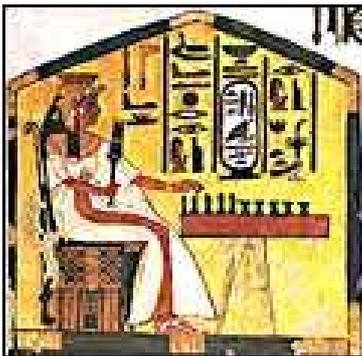
The game of *senet* was connected with obtaining the afterlife. On several tombs from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards the deceased is shown playing against no visible opponent. They may be playing against the powers of the beyond.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty scenes of *senet* playing were often incorporated into the text of the *Book of the Dead* chapter 17. The beginning may be translated as: *Spell for going forth by day, assuming whatever form one will, playing senet, sitting in a pavilion, going forth as a living soul...* Illustrations associated with the *Book of the Dead* chapter 17 sometimes show the deceased playing *senet*.

Piccione believes that *senet* was played in or near the tomb in a pavilion. There are graffiti *senet* boards in tombs, presumably for games played by the living. At Beni Hasan there is a graffiti *senet* board near a depiction of a game painted on a tomb wall. Piccione suggests that the game allowed the living to contact the dead.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty the game of *senet* was described on sets of papyri describing the journey through the underworld called 'The Great Game Text'. Such an example is P. Turin 1.775. It has been suggested that living people played *senet* to achieve unity with the sun god before they died. 'The Great Game Text' mentions boards in which all the squares are decorated.

The 30 squares of the *senet* board are also associated with the lunar month. It is usually agreed that the squares had metaphoric meanings associated with the afterlife. We cannot be certain but the following suggestions are usually given: the counters may represent the *ba* travelling between heaven and earth.



Queen Nefertari playing senet

Many boards do not have decorated squares. Boards of the Old and Middle Kingdom sometimes had numbers but from the New Kingdom onwards certain squares were decorated with religious symbols. These were not always the same on every board.

On some Old and Middle Kingdom boards each player had seven pieces but by the New Kingdom each player had five pieces. In the earlier games you would start on the House of Rebirth.



This is the House of Rebirth. Sometimes there is frog on this square since frogs are to do with birth.



The House of Happiness or House of Rejuvenation.



The House of Water or the Waters of Chaos. One of the game texts says of square 27: "I seize his gamepieces so that he might drown together with his gamepieces. I throw him into the water." People who failed to achieve the afterlife would be drowned in the waters of the netherworld.



The House of the Three Truths.



The House of Re-Atum.

(Some versions have Isis and Nepythys instead of two seated men).

The replica of the board in Tutankhamun's tomb has the standard funerary offering on it showing it was made for the tomb. Such formula are often put on boards from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards.

It seems that one of the rules used to be that if you landed on the last three squares you would have to throw the right number to exit- a 3 for the third square, a 2 for the second square and a 1 for the last square.

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# Mummification & the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony

## A 'Brief Guide' to Mummification.

Most people were buried in pit graves in the hot dry sand and this mummified the body naturally. However, as building techniques improved the wealthy had larger tombs built to house the many grave goods that they wanted to use in the Afterlife. This posed a problem as damp crept in and caused the body to rot quickly and so the mummification process developed. The process described here is the 'deluxe' method that only the wealthy could afford and would have taken 70 days to complete.

- Soon after death the body of the deceased was brought to the mummification tent, per-nefer, which means "the beautiful house" or the place of mummification. Why do you think mummification was performed in a tent? (Answer: The tent would protect the body from the heat, and allow air to pass through; taking away the bad odours that would accumulate.)
- The embalmers washed the body with sacred water, which was taken from a sacred local lake.
- First the brain was removed. A chisel was passed up a nostril and through the ethmoid bone into the cranial cavity, and using a spatula the brain was cut into small pieces. A hooked rod was inserted, and turned to make the brain liquefy in order to extract the brain through the nostrils. After that, they cleaned the skull cavity with palm wine, stuffed it with linen and poured resinous liquid into the skull. The Egyptians didn't know what the brain was, they just threw it away!!
- Next an incision was made, using a sharp piece of flint, on the left side of the abdomen and the internal organs, except the heart, were removed. The thoracic and abdominal cavities were cleaned and rinsed with palm-wine, gum-resin and vegetable matter and then treated with natron and ointment.
- Each organ was soaked in natron for 40 days before being bandaged and placed in one of four canopic jars. These take the form of the Four Sons of Horus and each one protects a particular organ:

INTESTINES – Placed under the protection of Queb-es-en-uf in the jar with the head of a Hawk.

STOMACH – Placed under the protection of Du-a-mut-ef in the jar with the head of a Jackal.

LUNGS – Placed under the protection of Hapy in the jar with the head of a baboon.

LIVER – Placed under the protection of Imset in the jar with the head of a man.

- The cavities are then 'stuffed' with linen parcels of natron, to speed up the drying process, and sawdust to absorb liquids.
- The final stage in the embalming process was the treatment of the whole body with natron for 40 days. Natron is a naturally occurring substance found in the ground in Egypt. It's a bit like salt and bicarbonate of soda. This would help to dry any fluids that are lying on the body.
- The temporary stuffing packages and the natron dried the body, and were changed regularly by the embalmers. After the 40 days, the body was taken out of the natron and the temporary stuffing packages were removed from the thoracic and abdominal cavities. The chest and abdominal cavity were washed with palm wine and re-stuffed with fresh dry materials; these included aromatically perfumed cloth packing, Nile mud, myrrh, cassia, linen, resin, saw dust, and one or two onions.
- The incision was stitched closed with linen string and the body was anointed with cedar oil. The mouth, ears, and the nose were sealed with bees wax or linen in molten resin, which may have also played some part in preventing or delaying insect attack and in masking the odours of decomposition that would have accompanied the mummification process.
- The body was then wrapped with linen. The aim of the wrapping was to preserve the mummy. Binding was used to keep the wrapping tight and in place. The wrapping process, starting with the fingers and toes, and then the rest of the body would take 15 days.
- As the embalmers were wrapping the body they would sew amulets, protective magical charms, into the bandages. An amulet or charm was worn to give the wearer protection or power. Different amulets were connected with different powers. The living wore amulets for magical power or protection and the dead wore amulets wrapped up in their mummification bandages or laid on the outer surface to protect and aid them on the journey to the After Life. Sometimes amulets were drawn on the bandages themselves, which in turn became protective amulets. Amulets occur as early as Pre-dynastic times (c5500 BC) and were made of many different types of materials such as stone, metal, glass, or more commonly, faience. The materials were chosen for their supposedly magical properties and where a particular amulet is placed on the body was important

Our evidence for mummification comes from two sources; written documents and the mummies themselves. (See Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus below.)

### **Mummification Written Sources:**

‘The mode of embalming, according to the most perfect process, is the following:- They take first a crooked piece of iron, and with it draw out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion, while the skull is cleared of the rest by rinsing with drugs; next they make a cut along the flank with a sharp Ethiopian stone, and take out the whole contents of the abdomen, which they then cleanse, washing it thoroughly with palm wine, and again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics. After this they fill the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spicery except frankincense, and sew up the opening. Then the body is placed in natron for seventy days, and covered entirely over. After the expiration of that space of time, which must not be exceeded, the body is washed, and wrapped round, from head to foot, with bandages of fine linen cloth, smeared over with gum, which is used generally by the Egyptians in the place of glue, and in this state it is given back to the relations, who enclose it in a wooden case which they have had made for the purpose, shaped into the figure of a man. Then fastening the case, they place it in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall. Such is the most costly way of embalming the dead.

If persons wish to avoid expense, and choose the second process, the following is the method pursued:- Syringes are filled with oil made from the cedar-tree, which is then, without any incision or disembowelling, injected into the abdomen. The passage by which it might be likely to return is stopped, and the body laid in natron the prescribed number of days. At the end of the time the cedar-oil is allowed to make its escape; and such is its power that it brings with it the whole stomach and intestines in a liquid state. The natron meanwhile has dissolved the flesh, and so nothing is left of the dead body but the skin and the bones. It is returned in this condition to the relatives, without any further trouble being bestowed upon it.

The third method of embalming, which is practised in the case of the poorer classes, is to clear out the intestines with a clyster, and let the body lie in natron the seventy days, after which it is at once given to those who come to fetch it away’. (Source: Herodotus. *The Histories*.)

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‘When a person amongst them dies, all his relatives and friends, putting mud upon their heads, go about the town lamenting, until the time of burying the body. In the meantime they abstain from bathing and from wine and all kinds of delicacies; neither do they wear fine apparel. They have three manners of burial: one very costly, one medium and one modest. Upon the first a talent of silver is spent, upon the second twenty minae, but in the third there is very little cost. Those who attend to the bodies have learned their art from their forefathers. These, carrying to the household of the deceased illustrations of the costs of burial of each kind, ask them in which manner they desire the body to be treated. When all is agreed upon, and the corpse is handed over, they (that is, the relatives) deliver the body to those who are appointed to deal with it in the accustomed manner.

First, he who is called the scribe, laying the body down, marks on the left flank where it is to be cut. Then he who is called the cutter takes an Ethiopian stone, and cuts the flesh as the law prescribes, and forthwith escapes running, those who are present pursuing and throwing stones and cursing, as though turning the defilement [of his act] on to his head. For whosoever inflicts violence upon, or wounds, or in any way injures a body of his own kind, they hold worthy of hatred. The embalmers, on the other hand, they esteem worthy of every honour and respect, associating with the priests and being admitted to the temples without hindrance as holy men. When they have assembled for the treatment of the body which has been cut, one of them inserts his hand through the wound in the corpse into the breast and takes out everything *excepting the kidneys and the heart*. Another man cleanses each of the entrails, sweetening them with palm-wine and with incense. Finally, having washed the whole body, they first diligently treat it with cedar oil and other things for over thirty days, and then with myrrh and cinnamon and [spices], which not only have the power to preserve it for a long time, but also impart a fragrant smell. Having treated it, they restore it to the relatives with every member of the body preserved so perfectly that even the eyelashes and eyebrows remain, the whole appearance of the body being unchangeable, and the cast of the features recognisable. Therefore, many of the Egyptians, keeping the bodies of their ancestors in fine chambers, can behold at a glance those who died before they themselves were born.’ (Source: *Diodorus Siculus*.)

**Why did they mummify?** We cannot be sure. However, most people fear death. From Palaeolithic times man began to develop a dread of death and to believe in an afterlife. This meant that care and ceremony were applied to the burial of the dead, and many of the accoutrements of daily life were interred with the bodies. Grave robbing started in Egypt as soon as there were rich graves to be pillaged of their contents. This practice, together with the accidental disturbance of earlier graves in cemeteries as they continued to be used, exposed some bodies and enabled the Egyptians to observe the natural mummification which had taken place. This may have helped to crystallise the belief that in order to survive death it was of paramount importance that the body should continue to exist so that the soul could re-enter it and partake of earthly pleasures.

Mummification was particularly necessary for rich people who wanted to be buried in coffins. If you put a body in a coffin rather than straight into the hot dry sand, it is more likely to rot. So, to preserve it, mummification was necessary. For the Egyptians, the body was also important as the place where the soul could rest, thus it was necessary to preserve it.

The body was also important as a *sab*, a carefully crafted item, like a statue.

### **Why were bandages used?**

The method of encircling the limbs and digits with layers of fine linen which was impregnated with resin became the standard practice in the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom. More recently evidence has emerged that the practice may have even started in the Pre-Dynastic Period. Over the past five years the Hierakonpolis Expedition, under the direction of Renee Friedman, has been excavating a cemetery (HK43) of Pre-Dynastic Hierakonpolis' working class inhabitants. Among the 260 burials so far uncovered there have been found some which reveal evidence for what may be the very beginnings of artificial mummification. This took the form of wrapping the head and hands with pads of linen. Pottery found in association with these burials indicates a date no later than Nagada IIb (c. 3600BC). From the evidence collected so far it appears that this practice of padding the hands and feet was restricted to women. No males were found treated in this fashion.

- Bandages were used to give the body a 'shape' more recognisable as a human being.
- Bandages were used to hold the body together, to stop it falling apart.
- The Egyptians also had the idea that hiding an object gave it sacred significance.
- Bandages, like other textiles, also had magical significance.

**Why was the heart so important?** Probably the most interesting aspect of the ancient Egyptian's concept of the heart is that their ancient beliefs remain with us today, not as science, but within the very fibre of our emotions, our poetry and our song lyrics. When we refer to our hearts in regard to love, or any other emotion, we are invoking a living memory of the ancient Egyptian belief system. The Egyptians believed that the heart, rather than the brain, was the source of human wisdom, as well as emotions, memory, the soul and the personality itself. Notions of physiology and disease were all connected in concept to the heart, and it was through the heart that God spoke, giving ancient Egyptians knowledge of God and God's will. For this reason it was considered the most important of the body's organs. However, despite the ancient Egyptian's seemingly advanced medical and surgical knowledge, the heart's role in blood circulation was not precisely understood. It was felt that from the heart, channels (*metu*) linked all parts of the body together. These channels delivered not only blood, but also air, tears, saliva, mucus, sperm, nutriment and even bodily waste. In fact, the only real function of the brain was thought to be to pass mucus to the nose, so it was one of the organs that were discarded during mummification.

### **Selection of Amulets and their religious significance**

A special kind of scarab, known as a **heart scarab**, was placed in the wrappings of Egyptian mummies approximately over the heart. It was larger than the scarabs worn as seals or as amulets by living people, and it was generally made of stone, as decreed by the Book of the Dead, which also ordained that it should be put in a gold setting. Tutankhamun's heart scarab, which was suspended from his neck on a strap of gold wire, was placed near the navel. It was made of black resin mounted on an inscribed gold plate with a cylindrical eyelet at the head end for the suspension strap. A figure of a heron (*Ardea cinerea* or *Ardea purpurea*) in polychrome glass was inlaid on the back of the beetle.

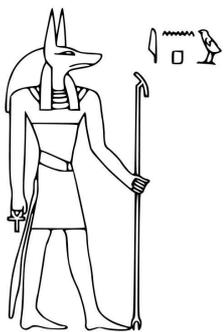
As a rule, the main purpose of a heart scarab was to prevent the heart, which the ancient Egyptians regarded as the seat of intelligence and emotion, from giving evidence against the deceased owner in his judgment before Osiris. It was generally inscribed with a spell from the Book of the Dead (Chapter 30 B) and it was from the words in the spell that part of its magical power was thought to be derived. But a heart scarab was not intended solely for use on Judgment Day. It was the symbol of the creative power of the sun-god and, through that power, it was supposed to restore life to the heart of the dead person. Furthermore, in the hieroglyphic script, the word meaning "transformation, metamorphosis" was written with the scarab sign, and the heart scarab was believed to provide the deceased with the means to transform himself into one of the various living creatures, which included the heron, enumerated in the transformation spells of the Book of the Dead (Chapters 76-88).

**The Ankh** - What it was intended to represent remains a mystery to Egyptologists. Some have speculated that it was a stylized womb. Sir Alan Gardiner speculated that it represented a sandal strap, with the loop going around the ankle. The word for sandal strap was also spelled , although it may have been pronounced differently. No single hypothesis has yet been widely accepted.

The ankh appears frequently in Egyptian tomb paintings and other art; it often appears at the fingertips of a god or goddess in images that represent the deities of the afterlife conferring the gift of life on the dead person's mummy. The ankh symbol was often carried by Egyptians as an amulet, either alone, or in connection with two other hieroglyphs that mean "strength" and "health." Mirrors were often made in the shape of an ankh. Sometimes, in art, the Ankh was shown being touched by a god onto a person, which usually symbolised conception.

**The Djed Pillar** - The Backbone of Osiris: Chapter 155 of the Book of the Dead associates the Djed with the backbone and vertebrae of Osiris. Budge states that the oldest form of Osiris' spinal column was probably represented by part of the back bone with portions of the ribs attached to it. He suggests that as time went on it was drawn on a stand with a broadened base to form what we see as the Djed. Even when pictured without the ribs attached, four vertebrae supported by a stand take on the appearance of the Djed:

**The Role of the god Anubis** – When the Osiris worship came to power, Osiris took over many of Anubis' jobs as caretaker and protector of the dead. As this happened, Anubis became 'He Who is Before the Divine Booth', the god of embalming who presided over the funerary rituals. The funerary *stm* priests would wear a mask of the jackal god during the mummification process, symbolically becoming the god for the rituals. Anubis is also given the title 'assessor of hearts' indicating his role as judge.



The god of embalming and mummification, who was depicted as a black coloured jackal (or dog) or a man with the head of a black jackal or dog. As the god of mummification and associated with the dead, the jackal would have been ideal animal to link with. Anubis was also a protector of the mummified body, and a sentinel, which would have linked in with the jackal prowling along the desert edge and cemeteries protecting all within from the forces of chaos. Anubis, the jackal god depicted here, led the dead from one world to another and was also the god of the first mummification. Anubis was caretaker and protector of the dead.

He is called 'He Who is Before the Divine Booth', the god of embalming who presided over the funerary rituals. The funerary *stm* priests would wear a mask of the jackal god during the mummification process, symbolically becoming the god for the rituals. Anubis is also given the title 'assessor of hearts' indicating his role as judge.

Wooden statues of recumbent Anubis jackals or dogs were sometimes put among New Kingdom funerary furnishings, Others are known from non-royal burials where they are put on the lid of a canopic jar. In the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, wooden jackals were often placed on vaulted tops of rectangular outer coffins and a large number survive from Thebes. The tail would hang over the end of the coffin.

According to legend Anubis was the son of Nephtys and Osiris and practised his embalming skills for the first time on his father. It is likely that embalmers wore animal headed masks, at least in the more public aspects of their work.

The title *tepy-dju-ef* ('he who is upon his mountain') presents him as god keeping watch over the necropolis from a vantage point.

Anubis is frequently cited as he who is in *wt* or *wt* town on many funerary stela and also in the Book of the Dead. It has been suggested that this refers to his Oasis (Jequier- Foulles de Licht p 52) as that is where jackals retreat to when in the desert.

Anubis is also given the title *nb tA dsr*, 'lord of the sacred land'. According to Gauthier, this originally meant the necropolis of Abydos, sacred to Osiris. It later came to mean all burial places. Other funerary gods such as Hathor, were referred to as 'lords of the sacred land'.

**To do:** Find Anubis on the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin you can see him checking the scales.

**The importance of the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony:** When an ancient Egyptian died, he was not buried into the ground, mourned and then forgotten. Nor was his grave simply visited at certain times and some token words spoken over it, so that once again he is forgotten until next visit. The ancient Egyptians believed that ritual existed which would bring sensory life back to the deceased's form, enabling it to see, smell, breathe, hear and eat, and thus partake of the offering foods and drinks brought to the tomb each day. The ritual that would re-animate the deceased was called The Opening of the Mouth ceremony. It was an important ritual in both funerary and in temple practice. The Opening of the Mouth originated as a ritual to endow statues with the capacity to support the living ka, and to receive offerings. It was also performed on cult statues of gods, kings, and private individuals, as well as on the mummies of both humans and Apis bulls. It was even performed on the individual rooms of temples and on the entire temple structure. The effect of the ritual was to animate the recipient (or, in the case of a deceased individual, to re-animate it). The ritual allowed the mummy, statue or temple, to eat, breathe, see, hear and enjoy the offerings and provisions performed by the priests and officiants, thus to sustain the ka.



*This picture shows Aye, dressed in a leopard skin, performing the ceremony of the 'Opening of the Mouth' before the mummy of Tutankhamun.*

The son and heir of the dead person, or the **Sem- priest**, usually performed this ritual. The ceremony was performed so that the mummy's senses were restored so it might eat, speak, see, smell and hear again. This was also practised on statues and figures of the dead. The tool in Aye's hand is an adze, usually used by carpenters to carve wood. This touched the mummy's mouth and eyes, while spells were chanted to regain the senses.

The Opening of the Mouth was an elaborate ritual involving:

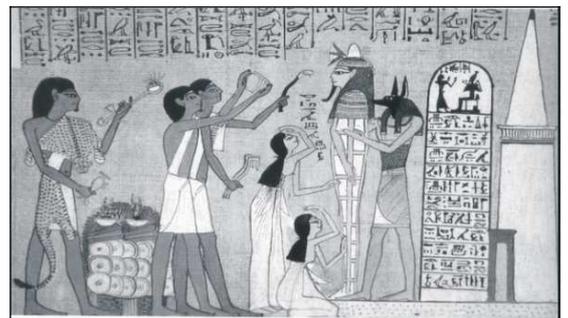
**Purification** - Holy water is poured from vases

**Incense** - The *Sem*-Priest holds an incense burner

**Anointing with oils**

**Chanting spells** from the *Book of the Dead* while female mourners wail before the mummy.

**Pointing objects** at the mummy - The adze. Sometimes the right leg of an ox was used.



New Kingdom depictions show the mummy placed upright in a patch of clean sand at the entrance to the tomb. Remember the ceremony was performed on statues and tomb walls as well as the mummy itself.

**The role of the sem priest:** The *sem* Priest performed the opening of the mouth ceremony, vital for an mummy to be able to survive in the next life. Remember that the ceremony was performed on statues and tomb walls as well as the mummy itself.



**The role of the Devourer:** It was to devour the heart of those who didn't pass the test in the Hall of Judgement. Ammit (also known as Ammut and Ahemait) was the personification of divine retribution. She sat beside the scales of Maat ready to devour the souls of those deemed unworthy. Those unfortunate enough to fail the test would suffer the feared second death, and have no chance of the blissful life of the field of reeds instead roaming restlessly for eternity. Thankfully, the judge Osiris was not too

harsh, and the prosecutor Thoth was a pretty enlightened guy. The deceased made a negative confession (ie they listed the large number of evil things they had never been guilty of) and then their heart was weighed against the feather of Maat (justice or balance). It was not necessary to be totally good, just reasonably well balanced. There were also a number of spells and amulets the deceased could use to increase their chance of success.

Her name, is generally translated as "Devourer", but could also be the chilling "Bone Eater", and she was known as "Devourer of millions" leading to the suggestion that the god Am-heh was one of her aspects. Some scholars have linked Ammit with the Hippopotamus goddess Tawaret, because of the similarities in their appearance and their role in fighting evil. According to some traditions, she lived by the scales of justice, but other sources suggested that she (like Am-heh) lived by a lake of fire into which the souls of the guilty were thrown. According to these traditions, she did not devour the souls, but protected the lake. This has led some to suggest that she may be linked to Sekhmet due to her leonine characteristics and her role in protecting a lake of fire.

She was generally depicted as a demon with the head of a crocodile, the torso of a wild cat and the hindquarters of a hippopotamus. However, she also took human form.

Ammit was never worshipped, and was not strictly a goddess, but her image was thought to ward off evil. She was the personification of all that the ancient Egyptians feared and a reminder to live by the principles of Maat. Although she was referred to as a demon, she was in reality a force for order. Moreover, each person was at least given the chance to defend their life before being consigned to eternal damnation.

**To do:** Look for the Devourer on the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin

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## Canopic Jars



*Late Period lid depicting Duamutef.*



*New Kingdom lid depicting Imsety*

*Late Period jar and lid. The owner is Psamethbek, a Late Period name. The inscription can be translated as 'Utterance of Serket, protection for him who is in me, Qebhsenuf. The father of the God (priest) Psametek, son of Wben-ab, adorer of the God, musician'. Qebhsenuf is usually shown with a falcon head, it is probable that this canopic jar has the wrong lid.*

The Egypt Centre has one jar with lid and base and four canopic jar lids on display in the House of Death. We also have a number of lids in store.

The term 'canopic' comes from the incorrect belief that such jars were connected with human headed jars worshipped as personifications of Kanopus, a Greek hero regarded as a form of Osiris by the people living in Canopus in the Delta. However, canopic jars used to contain internal organs had no connection with Kanopus. The ancient Egyptians called these jars 'jars of embalming' and they were used to contain internal organs removed from bodies in the mummification process.

The earliest known occurrence of the preservation of internal organs separate from the body is the burial of Hetepheres at Giza in the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (c. 2600 BC). Her innards were stored in a travertine box divided into four compartments. Later chests were made in the shape of a shrine.

In the later 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty burials, each of the four internal organs which were removed, were put in individual jars, each guarded by one of the Four Sons of Horus, deities who also guarded the four cardinal points and supported the deceased king. Interestingly, there is evidence that one of the Four 'Sons', Imsety, was originally conceived of as female (some Egyptologists have suggested others too). The earliest known canopic jars were those made for Queen Meresankh III (c.2500 BC) at Giza. Such jars were usually made of pottery, travertine or limestone and had hard shallow, convex disc-shaped lids and most were undecorated. The jars were usually placed in canopic chests.

The Four Sons of Horus comprised Imsety, Duamutef, Qebhsenuf and Hapy. Imsety, the human-headed deity generally protected the liver; Hapy, the ape headed deity generally cared for the lungs; Duamutef with the jackal head usually looked after the stomach; and falcon headed Qebhsenuf usually looked after the intestines. However, this association of particular deities with particular organs may have varied from time to time and region to region. There are exceptions to the traditional pattern.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Intermediate Period (2181-2055 BC) the jars started to be given stoppers with human heads. Innards were at the same time sometimes wrapped in bundles with human faces. By the late Middle Kingdom a set of canopic equipment would consist of an outer stone container and a wooden inner one holding four jars with human heads.

By the later 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty the jars started to have the heads of the Four Sons of Horus. They were made of clay, wood or stone. Occasionally blue glazed faience was used.

By the Third Intermediate Period (1069-747 BC) the innards were returned to the body sometimes with models, usually in beeswax, of the Four Sons of Horus. Dummy canopic jars were still sometimes put in rich burials. Such jars were fully functional but empty. By this period Duamutef and Qebhsenuf sometimes appeared with the heads of falcon and jackal respectively (in contrast to their earlier associations. This is probably not a mistake but rather an alternative tradition).

Canopic jars can be seen under the funeral bier of Tashay in the Egypt Centre (W650) despite the fact that at this date jars would not have been used (see also EC1055).

The practice of putting the innards in the jars was reintroduced in the late 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the latest known canopic jars date to 589-570 BC.

### **Further Reading**

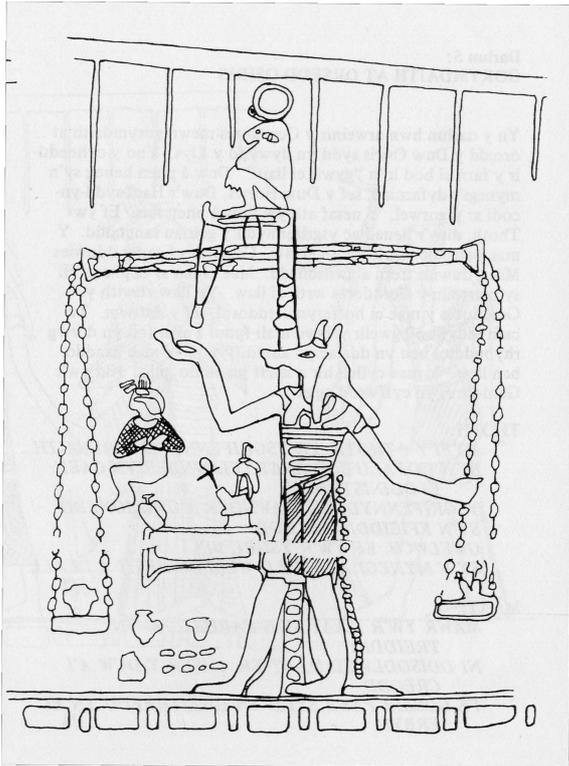
Dodson, A. 1994. *The Canopic Equipment of the Kings of Egypt*. Kegan Paul International: London and New York

Reisner, G. 1967. *Canopics*. Cairo

Taylor, J.H. 2001. *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Publishing

## Weighing of the Heart

The importance of the Weighing of the Heart scene and the two depictions of it in the *House of Death*.



In this scene the deceased is judged by their heart being weighed against truth and cosmic order, i.e. Ma'at. If their heart was heavy and they were thus not 'True of Voice' the heart would be eaten by the Devourer. The Devourer is shown in the scenes of Osiris enthroned and Osiris on the Mound.

This vignette, together with that of the deceased being led before the enthroned Osiris and the jubilation scene, may all be considered part of the larger judgement theme, related to Chapter 125, 'the declaration of innocence' of the *Book of the Dead* and additionally Spell 30, the 'Chapter of the heart' (Yoyotte 1961, 44). The weighing of the heart scene is central in that it shows the actual judgement of the deceased upon which their afterlife depends.

This scene is central in that it shows the actual judgement of the deceased upon which their afterlife depends. The theme of judgement of the dead first appears in the *Pyramid Texts* (e.g. *PT*, 316-319, Faulkner 1969, 69), but largely as a royal right. By the Middle Kingdom it also appeared in non-royal context (Yoyotte 1961).

Scenes of the weighing of the heart occur as early as the 11th Dynasty (Seeber 1976, 67) but are more common in the New Kingdom in tombs, papyri and on coffins. The representation usually illustrates Chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead*. Although this chapter describes judgement, it does not include the weighing of the heart as such. The judgement takes place before 42 gods and the deceased proclaims their declaration of innocence, denying all sins. The importance of the heart is made clear in Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead* which is a plea for the heart not to say negative things about the deceased.

Obviously the heart and Ma'at are central to this scene. In our scene, Ma'at appears in the right of the balance as a squatting woman, but in some other weighing scenes a feather represents her. The heart is on the left. Since Ma'at was considered the embodiment of justice, viziers in

charge of law courts in ancient Egypt were called ‘priest of Ma’at’. Additionally, the hall in which the judgement took place was known as the ‘hall of two truths’ (*maaty*)<sup>1</sup>.

The importance of the heart is made clear in Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead* which is a plea for the heart not to oppose the deceased before the tribunal. The heart was the essence of the person, their seat of intellect and emotion. For meanings relating to the heart in ancient Egypt see Naguib (1994, 105ff) and Piankoff (1930). Several chapters of the *Book of the Dead* reveal the fear that one’s heart might be taken or destroyed. This explains why the heart was not removed from the body during mummification. A heart scarab with Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead* might also be put in with the mummy. The Egypt Centre has an example on display in the amulet case in the House of Death.

The type of scales represented here is the equal arm balance. In use, such balances operated by placing a measure weight in one of the pans and the item to be weighed in the other until the two are balanced by the level bar. Here, the cords of the balance are hung with what resembles a string of beads. On some representations e.g. the Papyrus of Nany (Foreman and Quirke 1996, 141) these are actually amuletic *djed* and girdle of Isis symbols.

Thoth sits on top of the scales with the moon-disc and crescent emphasising his lunar role. He is here shown in ape form (he appears elsewhere on the coffin with the head of an ibis). His importance in the weighing of the heart scene is shown in texts where he is a judge and the scribe who records the result. His position on top of the scales suggests that he is the personification of judgement, particularly as Ma’at sometimes occupies this position (Seeber 1976, 68). He is particularly identified as the indicator of balance, the plummet (Manassa 2006, 127).

Anubis with the dog or jackal-head, stands in front of the scales. Anubis is sometimes given the title ‘he who is over the scales’ (Seeber 1976, 154) or, as early as the *Pyramid Texts* (DuQuesne 2005, 465), ‘assessor of hearts’ and ‘overseer of the tribunal’. His role as a judge and his epithet ‘assessor of hearts’ are discussed by Willems (1998). Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty Thoth or Horus took the role as deity in charge of the weighing proceedings, during the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty Anubis takes on this role. Two parallel lines meaning ‘true of voice’ are positioned near Anubis’ left foot. ‘True of voice’ indicates that the deceased has been found suitable to enter the afterlife.

Under Anubis’ raised arm are two small figures. The higher one has a lotus blossom in their hair and probably represents the dead person about to be reborn, though on the papyrus of Nany the figure is painted black, which suggested to Foreman and Quirke (1996, 141) that this is the deceased’s shadow<sup>2</sup>. However, here it is shown with crossed arms and the net covering alluding to Osiris. The deceased was linked with Osiris on death. Some depictions are more explicitly Osirian and show the figure holding a crook and flail. Others show this figure as a child (Seeber 1976, 101-104). The lotus flower is additionally a symbol of rebirth and appears elsewhere on this coffin on the head of the deceased. These symbolic references suggest that the figure indeed represents the deceased waiting to be reborn. The figure is typical of the 21st Dynasty (Seeber 1976, 102).

Underneath the figure is Ma’at with a feather on her head. She sits on a rectangular block, which is the personified birth brick, Meskhenet. In ancient Egypt women squatted on birthing bricks

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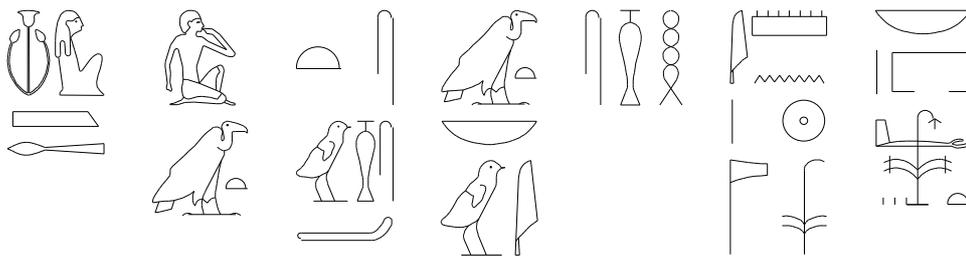
<sup>1</sup> For more information on the meaning on Ma’at which can be loosely translated as truth and order see: Teeter (1990); Hornung (1992, 131-146).

<sup>2</sup> Black is also a symbol of Osirian fertility and hence rebirth.

in order to give birth. In 2001 an actual archaeological example was found, from Middle Kingdom Abydos (Weger 2002). Such bricks would have been used as a pair to support a woman giving birth. Despite the lack of actual bricks, others are shown ichnographically, for example at the Hathor temple at Dendera (Nunn 1996, pl. 9.1). Roth and Roehrig (2002) believe the presence of the birth brick in the weighing of the heart scenes may stem from the idea that a person's life is mapped out at birth on their birth brick by Thoth, which is taken into consideration on the day of judgement. According to the demotic story of Setne II, at judgement a man's deeds are judged according to that which was mapped out for him by Thoth (Seeber 1976, 86-88; Roth and Roehrig 2002, 137). There are suggestions from the New Kingdom onward that Meskhenet was a goddess of fate (Roth and Roehrig 2002, 136). The bricks also had a protective function (Roth and Roehrig 2002, 132). Seeber (1976, 83-85) further explains the metamorphosis of the brick into the goddess Ma'at. Birth bricks were sometimes personified with a female head. The inclusion of Ma'at emphasises the judgement role. Hence Ma'at sits on our brick. The birth brick itself alludes to the rebirth of the deceased and similar items are placed in tombs (Roth and Roehrig 2002).

If the deceased is found wanting her heart will be eaten by the Devourer. If the deceased is successful she will be able to declare 'I am pure, I am pure, I am pure.' This triumphal image appears on our next scene.

An inscription begins above the left arm of the jubilant priestess and ends to the right of Thoth atop the scales. It reads:



*nb pr šmꜣyt*

*ꜣImn*

*hs*

*Mw.t-nb-iw*

*s.t-iw-hs*

*Mw.t*

*mꜣ hrw*

‘Lady of the House, the Chantress Iwesemhesetmwt, true of voice’.

**To do:** Look at the two depictions of the weighing of the heart scene in the downstairs gallery.

## Tashay's Shroud W649-656



These pieces of shroud were probably cut up from a complete example to make them more saleable to a collector! They were purchased by Sir Henry Wellcome at auction in 1931.

The piece illustrated on this sheet shows the weighing of the heart scene. The meaning behind the scene is explained on the sheet on Spell 125 of the *Book of the Dead*. The dead lady, Tashay, shown on the left is being judged. Her heart is weighed against truth in order to see if she may have an afterlife. Thoth in the form of a baboon sits on top of the scales. Horus, with a hawk's head, and Thoth, with an ibis' head, are shown checking the scales. Compare the scene here with the weighing of the

heart scene on the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin in this gallery.

The shroud has recently been dated by the lady's hairstyle to 140-160 AD. Because of this late date, the pictures on the shroud show Graeco-Roman influence. For example you can see that the woman, Tashay, is shown facing the front. She is shown in Greek dress. The gods, however, are typically Egyptian

The piece has been published in: Griffiths, G. Gwyn, 1982, Eight Funerary Paintings with Judgement Scenes in Swansea Wellcome Museum. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 68, 228-252.

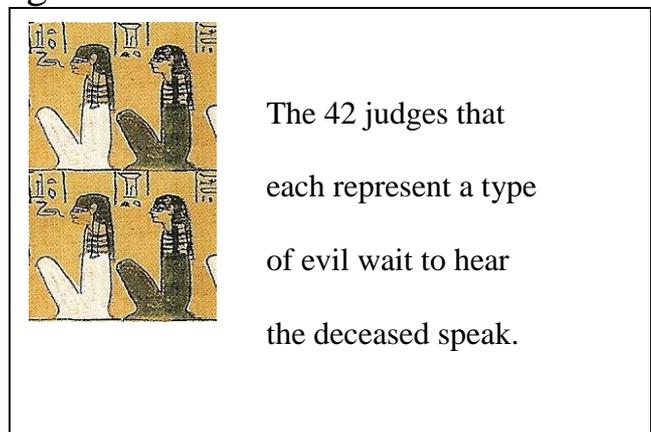
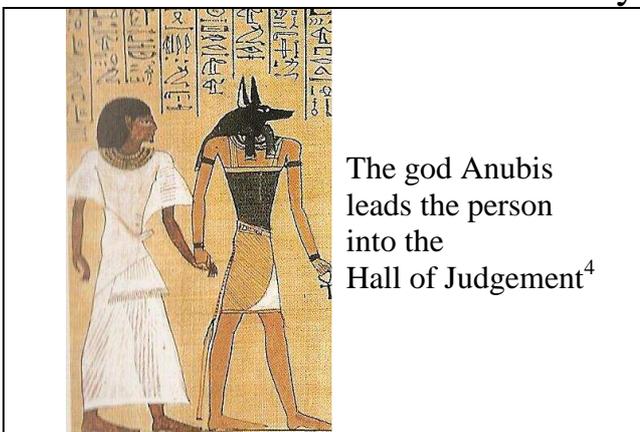
Copyright: Egypt Centre 2006

# WEIGHING OF THE HEART

To an Egyptian the heart was considered to be the source of wisdom, emotions and memories<sup>3</sup>. The brain was believed to play no part other than as a filler for the head. The heart was considered to be the most important organ in the body, therefore it was left in the body during mummification. The deceased would, on his journey to the afterlife to join the god Osiris, be judged by a tribunal of gods in the hall of justice

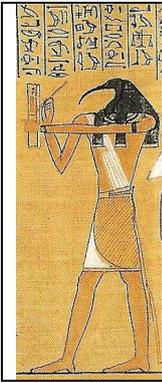
1. If the heart should be accidently removed during mummification, it was
  - a) *Discarded*
  - b) *Put in a canopic jar*
  - c) *Sewn back into the body*
2. What was used to ensure that the heart did not speak against its owner?
  - a) *Bandages*
  - b) *A heart scarab*
  - c) *Natron salt*
3. Some of the judges carry a symbol to show that they represent justice and follow the example of the god Ma'at. What is the symbol?
  - a) *A flower*
  - b) *A wig*
  - c) *A feather*
4. Spell 125 that enables the deceased to declare his innocence before the judgment comes from the:
  - a) *The dead sea scrolls*
  - b) *The Book of the Dead*
  - c) *The gods*
5. Who is the god of the afterlife?
  - a) *Anubis*
  - b) *Osiris*
  - c) *Seth*
6. The feather is the symbol of:
  - a) *Truth*
  - b) *Harmony*
  - c) *Ma'at*

## The Journey through the afterlife....



<sup>3</sup> Shaw, I and Nicholson, P (1995) *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London: The British Museum Press: 122-123.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkinson, RH (2003) *The complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd: 84-85



The god Thoth  
is going to record  
the proceedings



Ammut the devourer  
who is part  
crocodile, lion and  
hippopotamus waits  
to see what is going  
to happen

The heart of the person is going to  
be judged by weighing it against the  
feather the symbol of truth and  
harmony.



If the person has  
been bad then  
Ammut will eat the  
person's heart.

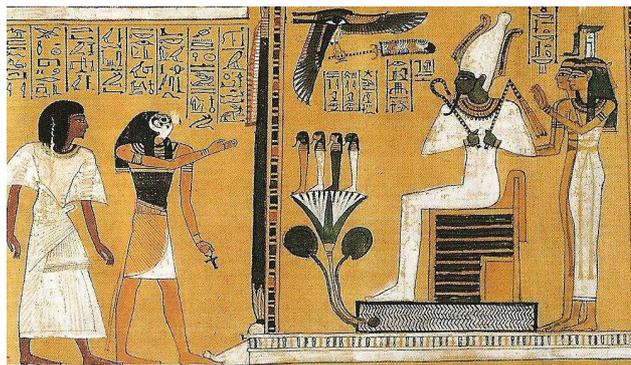


What do you think?  
Has the person been  
good?

We will all say a spell to stop Ammut from devouring our heart if we are judged badly.

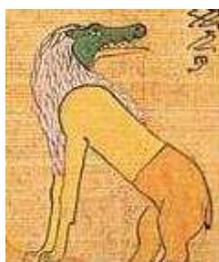
O my heart which I had from my mother! O my heart of  
different ages! Do not stand up as a witness against me,  
do not be opposed to me in the tribunal, do not be hostile  
to me in the presence of the keeper of the balance, for  
you are my *ka* which was in my body, the protector who  
made my members hale. Go forth to the happy place  
whereto we speed, do not tell truths about me in the  
presence of the god; it is indeed well that you should  
hear!

If the person has been good then their heart will be returned to them and the god Horus will lead the person to meet Osiris and his sisters Isis and Nephthys.



On the coffin in the centre of the gallery, can you find the weighing of the heart scene?

Can you also find and count the pictures of Ammut the devourer?



Ammut who is part crocodile, lion and hippopotamus is known as the devourer.

If you could create a devourer what three animals would you choose?

\_\_\_\_\_

Draw your devourer here

What is the name of your devourer \_\_\_\_\_

# Survival in the Afterlife

The ancient Egyptians had several ideas about the afterlife.

- One was that life in ‘heaven’ would be the same as life on earth. Therefore, they could be called to perform work in the fields, especially after the floodwaters of the inundation had subsided. They could be called to irrigate the fields and rebuild canals etc. The shabtis would have been able to perform these tasks for them.
- Another idea is that the deceased went up to become one of the imperishable stars (the ones revolving around the pole).
- Another is that they became one with Re the sun god and sailed with him across the sky in his day boat and in the underworld in his night boat.

**To do:** Find the depiction of Re in his night boat in the upstairs gallery.

Very often the afterlife was considered not a perpetual life but as a continuous cycle of life and death. Just as the sun arose each morning and then died at night, just as the Nile flooded each year bringing destruction and then life, so the deceased died and was reborn each day. The sun, sometimes called the *ba* of Osiris, had to return to Osiris to be reborn each day. Similarly the *ba* of the deceased had to return to the mummy to be reborn. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Hour of the Amduat (in the underworld) Re and Osiris reunite to be reborn. This idea is shown on our 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin where the combination of Re and Osiris is repeated again and again.

**To do:** Look at the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin and for instances of Re and Osiris combined.

The Egyptians believed there were different types of beings: The gods, the blessed dead, the damned dead, the living (which included animals)

## How to survive the Afterlife:

The blessed dead were those that had been judged *True of Voice*. They became an *akh* and were immortal. *akh* were considered shining (like the gods). In the section on the parts of the body below there is more information on the *akh*.

There were lots of different things which could be done to help you become an *akh*. These are a few:

- Making sure you were a good person<sup>5</sup>
- Making sure you are mummified
- Putting things which will encourage rebirth in your tomb (things to do with human procreation, shiny things, etc.)
- Making sure no harm comes to you (this can be carried out by spells, coffins, etc.)
- Making sure you answer the right questions to the gods to get through the Afterlife
- Making sure your needs are provided for (see below)
- Making sure you were buried near the king or other important person

**To do:** Look at the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty coffin downstairs. Find the picture of the lady musician who has just been found *True of Voice*.

**To do:** Look at the shiny things in the downstairs gallery (the coffin, shabtis, cartonnage coverings and faience). Why do you think these things were put in burials?

In ancient Egypt the dead had to be provided for. They had to be fed and housed but also had to eat. They were provided for in a variety of different ways. They could be fed by:

- Spells written on papyri, tomb walls or coffins
- Items with the offering formula written on (mainly stelae)
- By the living reciting the offering formula for the dead (*the Voice Offering*)
- Real food and drink
- Models or pictures of food and drink

**To do:** Look in the House of Death and find examples of 4 different ways in which the dead could be fed<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> There is a separate sheet on the judgment of the deceased, i.e. The Weighing of the Heart

## The parts that make up a person

The Egyptians considered the human to be made up of separate elements, physical and non-physical, that had to be kept in harmony to ensure a good life on earth and an afterlife. A person is made of: a **body** (*khat or sah*), **heart** (*ib or HAty*), **shadow** (*shwt*), **name** (*rn*), the **ka** and the **ba**. The whole of the Egyptian's elaborate funerary preparations were devoted to preserving these elements throughout eternity. The Egyptians also believed that the dead had to be judged to make sure they could go to the Afterlife. After death the person who kept all these elements of personality together and was successful in judgment<sup>7</sup> became an **akh** (blessed dead) or if not were condemned to eternal death as a **mut** (dead person). The living feared the **mut** as they were considered hostile to the living because they were denied an afterlife. All active beings in the universe were classified as **gods** or **goddesses**, **akh spirits**, **mut-dead** or **living people and animals**.

### The Body

The physical body was considered essential for the deceased continued existence. The body was not expected to be physically active after death but was preserved to serve as the physical base to house the **ka** and **ba**. Mummification was developed to preserve a perfect image of the deceased and not just to preserve the body as it had been in life. A secure burial place was needed to preserve the mummified body. Statues of the tomb owner were sometimes placed in the tomb to act as a substitute for the body. Some people say the reserve heads also acted as a place for the soul to rest.

In ancient Egypt, the corpse (*khat*) was especially prepared for the afterlife so that it was not simply a deceased person, the shell of a loved one, but rather a new, specially made artefact especially designed for life after death – Not just an organic piece but a crafted artefact. It was made in the similar way that a statue is made, into something divine, a *sah*. Some Egyptologists have discussed how in death the corpse is first fragmented and then put back together as a divine entity.

### The Heart

The heart was considered the centre of the person. The Egyptians believed all parts of the body were connected to the heart and the heart could communicate to them all. All intelligence and memory was believed to stem from the heart. Great care was taken to preserve the heart during mummification and many spells in the *Book of the Dead* ensured the deceased had control over the heart so that it could not be taken away or turned against them. Further magical protection was provided in the form of heart amulets and heart scarabs.

The importance of the heart is made clear in Chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead* which is a plea for the heart not to say negative things about the deceased. The judgement takes place before 42 gods and the deceased proclaims their declaration of innocence, denying all sins.

There are two names for the heart in ancient Egypt: *ib* and *HAty*. The *ib*, was inherited from the mother (heart of my mother) and the *HAty* ('my heart of transformations/forms'), which is weighed against the feather of truth. Both forms are used on the heart scarab.

**To do:** Look for a heart amulet and heart scarab in the amulet case in the *House of Death*. Which chapter of the *Book of the Dead* is carved on the heart scarab?

### The Ka

The **ka** was the life force of an individual. It existed at the moment of birth and was the conscience, guardian and guide of a person. There are pictures on temple walls of the **ka** being made for the person on the potter's wheel as well as their earthly body. It served as a 'double' when the person died and remained in the tomb. The term for death was 'going to one's **ka**.' The **ka** required everything the person had enjoyed in life and so had to be provided with food and drink offerings, shade, clothing and perfume. The **ka** did not physically take the offerings but took its vital life preserving properties.

<sup>6</sup> We have separate sheets on *Offering Trays* and *The Voice Offering* and these are also covered in *Food and Drink*

<sup>7</sup> We have a separate sheet available on judgement, i.e. The Weighing of the Heart

Egyptian tombs consisted of 2 elements, the **burial place**, where the body was housed, and the **funerary chapel**, in which the offerings to sustain the deceased were presented and received by the **ka** of the deceased. The **ka** was thought to be able to leave the body in order to receive nourishment and could rest in a statue of the deceased, which was set up in the chapel (or a temple). This enabled the **ka** to receive food offerings.



The **ka** is represented in hieroglyphs as a pair of up-raised hands.  
The king could have several **kas** but other people only had one.

### The Ba

Before the Middle Kingdom (before 2040 BC) only gods and kings were said to have a **ba**. The **ba**, which could separate from the body at death, is able to eat, drink, speak and move. It was the means in which the deceased could travel and leave the tomb. The **ba** had to return each night to the tomb in order to be reunited with the body or else the deceased would perish.



The **ba** is similar to the idea of 'personality' which made a human being unique, but there is no exact English equivalent to the term. The **ba** is depicted as a human-headed bird that allows the soul of the person travel within and beyond the tomb.

**To do:** Find the **ba** birds on display and the **ba** of the lady musician on the coffin in the *House of Death*.

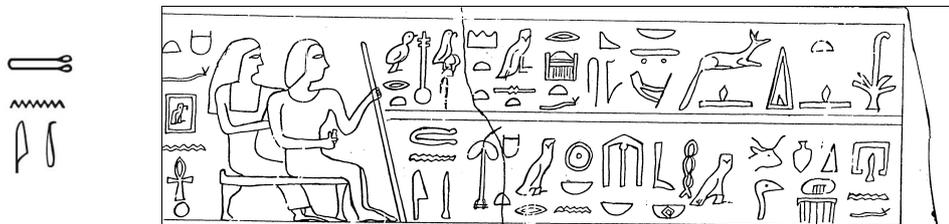
**The Name (rn)** was considered to be a living part of a person and was very important. It was believed that as long as a person's name was said they would be immortal. A great horror was to have your name removed or destroyed. A penalty for a serious crime was to have your name changed to bring misfortune.

There is a story in which Isis gains power over Re by getting him to tell her his secret name. She takes her aged father's saliva and mixes it with earth and turns it into a snake. The snake bites Re. None of the gods can heal him but Isis offers to help if Re will tell her his secret name.

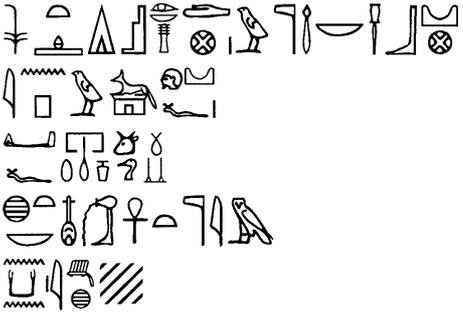
Most ancient Egyptian names contain a meaning to ensure the well being of the owner (e.g. Nefertiti 'a beauty, or perfect one, has come'). Many kings have names to express the protection of a god (Amenhotep 'Amun is content'). The name Tutankhamun means 'Living image of Amun'.

The name was written on funerary objects and placed within the tomb in order for the dead person to live forever in the afterlife. Placing the name of the deceased on a statue meant the deceased was provided with a substitute body in which to receive food offerings and exist. It was important to place the name on the coffin or cartonnage covering to act as a substitute for the mummy.

**To do:** Find the tomb owner Tjenty's name on the stone lintel in the *House of Life*



Because the name was important to the ancient Egyptian we encourage our visitors to recite the offering formula:

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>An offering which the king gives to Osiris, Lord of Djedu, great lord good lord of Abydos</p> <p>To Anubis upon his mountain</p> <p>So that he may give a voice offering of bread beer ox fowl alabaster linen</p> <p>Everything good and pure on which a god lives</p> <p>The ka of the revered one 'N'</p> |
|--|---|

**The shadow** (*shwt*) was also an essential part of a human and in New Kingdom (1550-1069 BC) tombs the black shadow of the deceased was often shown leaving the tomb with the *ba* bird. An individual was inseparable from his or her shadow, which mirrors every movement. The shadow protected the owner from harm and was believed to be very powerful and could move at great speed. If anyone behaved badly, there was a potential threat of their shadow being devoured by a demon known as the 'shadow gobbler' which was a catastrophe because a person could not exist without their shadow. As Egypt was a very hot land the Egyptian word for shadow also meant 'shade' and 'protection.'

### The Akh

These aspects of an individual can achieve the state of the *akh*. The *akh* is created through a good life and proper funerary arrangements. The *akh* has to make a perilous journey through the underworld and was judged by the gods before passing to the 'Field of Reeds', or other version of Egyptian heaven. During mummification amulets were placed on the body and spells were chanted to protect the *akh*. The collective name for funerary texts was *sakhu*, 'that which makes an *akh*'. The *akh* were the 'transfigured ones', the blessed dead. The word suggests an idea of light, or shininess.

**To do:** Find the funerary texts in the downstairs gallery (you will find them on the *Book of the Dead* and on the coffins)

All ancient Egyptians aimed to exist as an *akh* and enjoy eternal life after their death. The ancient Egyptians believed the dead were capable of intervening in the world of the living. Letters were sent to dead relatives, addressed as *akh*, asking for help with a problem that could not be solved.



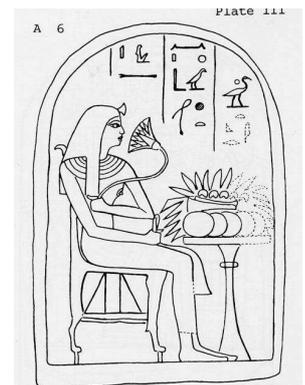
The word *akh* was written with the sign of the crested ibis bird. In the Ramesside Period, mummy boards often show the deceased as an *akh*- if male wearing a beard. The deceased is dressed in white linen fringed and pleated garments.

**To do:** Find the *akh ikr n Re* stela in the *House of Death* gallery

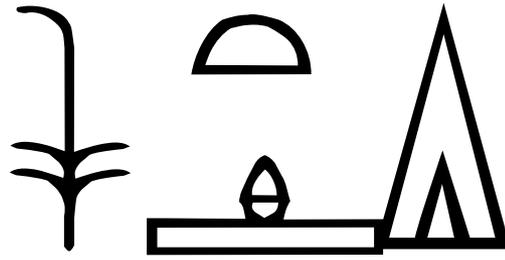


### A232 *Akh ikr n Re* stela

This stela shows that the Egyptians believed it was possible to communicate with the deceased. The stela is addressed to the *Akh ikr n Re* (The divine/effective spirit of Re). About 70 are known from chapels of tombs and houses of the New Kingdom and seem to have been a means of communicating with the dead.



## The Offering Formula



The beginning of the offering formula appears on lots of things in the Egypt Centre. See how many you can find. It is written above and sometimes occurs from left to right and sometimes right to left. It reads *betep di nesu*, 'an offering which the king gives'. The first sign above, the plant like glyph on the right, is the sign for *nesu*, 'king'. The sign for the king comes first even though the Egyptians would have said it *betep di nesu* because the king is very important. The two signs in the middle, one above the other, read *betep* which means offering. The word comes from the word meaning 'to be satisfied'. The glyph at the bottom shows an offering mat with a piece of bread upon it. The triangular sign on the right is *di*, meaning 'to give'.

The king was called upon to give offerings on behalf of his people since only he could intercede on their behalf with the gods.

The full offering formula then goes on to ask the various gods, usually Anubis and Osiris, to make sure the deceased are provided for in the afterlife. Bread and beer are nearly always mentioned. You can see simplified versions of the formula on the display boards in the Egypt Centre, such as the one to the left of the case in which the reserve head is displayed.

The Egyptians believed that the *ka* soul of the deceased had to be fed in the afterlife. This could be done by providing food and drink at the tomb, through making depictions of food and drink, through writing down offering formula or simply by reciting the offering formula.

# SURVIVAL IN THE AFTERLIFE



Osiris

Ancient Egyptians believed that in the universe there were three types of beings: the **gods**, the **living** and the **dead**.<sup>8</sup>

It was important to the ancient Egyptians that once their life on earth was over that they should survive in the afterlife and join Osiris who was the king of the afterlife.

There were **seven** things that made up a person during life and it was important these things survived in the afterlife.<sup>9</sup>

## The Body and the Heart

Let us see if you can choose the things which were important to prepare the body and heart so they would survive in the afterlife. Tick the boxes against the correct things:



Mummification



Opening of the Mouth<sup>10</sup>



Stamping of the Foot



Weighing of the Heart<sup>11</sup>



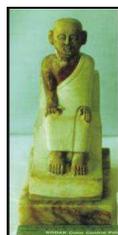
It was essential for the body with heart to survive on earth, so offerings of food could be received and spells that were written on the walls of the tomb or on the coffin could be used. Egyptians believed that you thought with your heart.

## The Name

It was important that your name survived into the afterlife. The person's name would be written on a number of objects and it was considered very bad if your name was rubbed out. See if you can name the objects below that may have had a person's name written on them.



12



13



14

C \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Everyone knows the name Tutankhamun, but did you know it contains the name of a god called Amun? Amun was one of the greatest gods that existed in Egypt. It was a good thing for the king to have the name of a god as part of his name.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, J.H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 15-39.

<sup>9</sup> Shaw, I and Nicholson, P. (1995) *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London: The British Museum Press. p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ikram, S. and Dodson, A. (1998) *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd. p 17.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkinson, RH (2003) *The complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson Ltd. p 84-85.

<sup>12</sup> Egypt Centre, *Coffin*, W1982. Available from <http://www.egyptcentre.org.uk/egypt.asp?page=item&itemId=W1982>

<sup>13</sup> Egypt Centre, *Statue*, W489b. Available from <http://www.egyptcentre.org.uk/egypt.asp?page=item&itemId=W489b>

<sup>14</sup> Egypt Centre, *Stela*, W1041. Available from <http://www.egyptcentre.org.uk/egypt.asp?page=item&itemId=W1041>

### The Ka

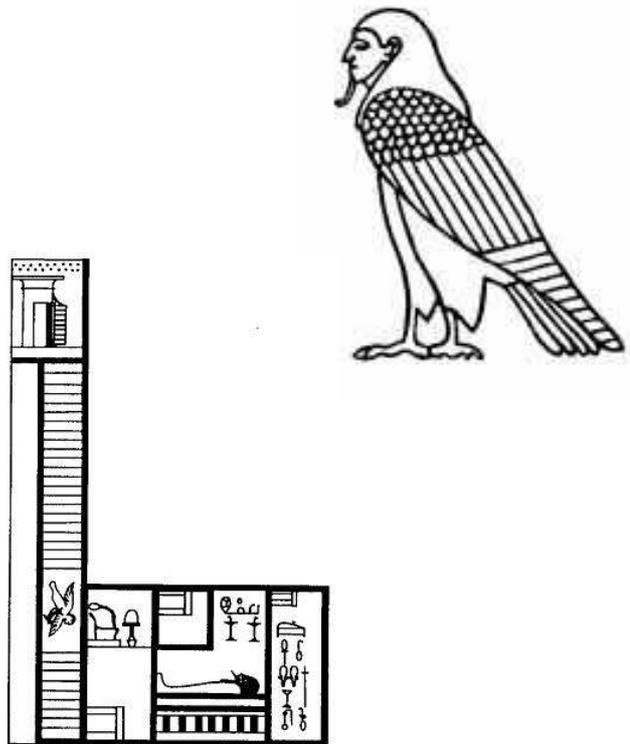
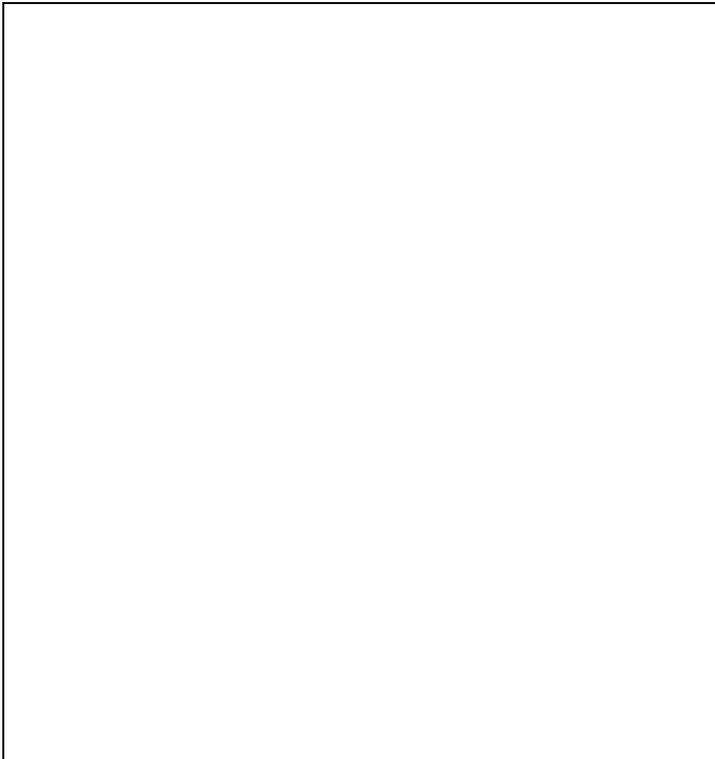
The ka is the 'life force' of the person. It stayed with them from the moment they were born and remained with them in the afterlife.<sup>15</sup> The ka, however, needed food to survive so offerings were made to feed the dead person's ka. See if you can name the following and put a tick beside the ones that may have been given as offerings.



### The Ba

The *ba* is thought to be the personality of the person.<sup>16</sup> So it is all the things that make each of us different. It was believed that a dead person's ba could leave the tomb as long as it returned by night. To do this the ba took the form of the ba-bird. It had the body of a bird and the face of a human.

**When you get back at school draw your own ba bird in the box below.**

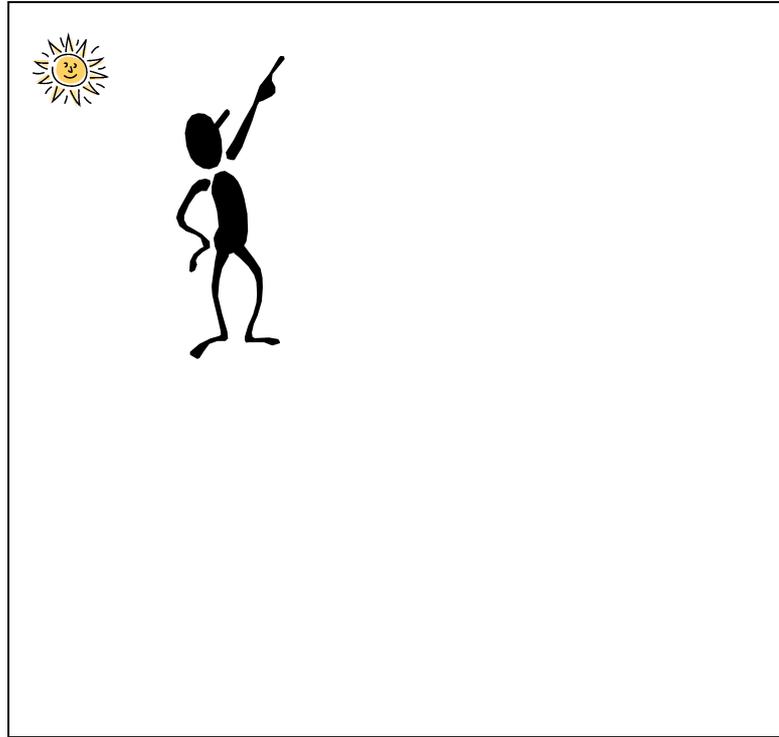


<sup>15</sup> Shaw, I and Nicholson, P. (1995) *The British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London: The British Museum Press. p. 146.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, J.H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 20-23.

## The Shadow

A person's shadow was also an important part of a person as it followed them everywhere.<sup>17</sup> It was thought that the shadow followed the ba bird from the tomb every day. Have you ever noticed how your shadow follows you about? Let us have a look at the shadow of two people below and then see if you can draw a shadow for the person in the box below.



Let us go back and see if you can remember the parts that make up a person and then you can write them down below.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



Finally the seventh part was the ancient Egyptians belief that if all these things were in place the blessed dead became an immortal (*Akh*).<sup>18</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Taylor, J.H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 23-24

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, J.H. (2001) *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 31-32.

## Religion and Ritual Worksheet

### *House of Life*

1. Materials were chosen not simply for their functional properties but also for their religious significance. Materials had religious significance because of their association with the gods. The colours of some materials were also associated with gods. Look around the gallery and describe the religious significance of an object including its material and colour symbolism.

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2. Look for the *senet* game pieces. What material are they made of?

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Describe the religious significance of the game *senet*.....

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3. Look in the Amarna case at the imagery of the king Akhenaten. Why is his appearance symbolic of his religion?

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4. Look for the Tjenti stela. What is the function of this stela?

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*House of Death*

1. Look for the canopic jars what are their function?

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.....  
.....

2. Which amulets perform the same function as canopic jars?.....

3. What is the purpose of the *Heart Scarab*?.....

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.....  
.....

4. Look for animal mummies. Why are these animals mummified?.....

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.....

5. Who performed the Opening of the Mouth Ritual?.....

What was the purpose of the ritual?.....

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.....  
.....

6. Name the Gods and their role in the Weighing of the Heart ritual?

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7. What is the purpose of the Devourer?.....

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.....  
.....

8. Describe the importance of each element that the ancient Egyptians' believed makes up a person:

a. The body.....

b. The heart.....

c. The shadow.....

d. The name.....

e. The *ka*.....

f. The *ba*.....

9. Describe the *Akb*?.....

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.....