Chapter Three

Egyptian Religion

"The Egyptian Religion"

Objectives:

1. Understand the functions of the local deities
2. Define anthropomorphism
3. Understand the evolution of religious ideas in Egypt
4. Understand Egyptian burial preparation

The Egyptian Religion

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HE WHO desires to know the religious notions which prevailed during the golden age of Egypt must follow a backward course and attempt to fathom the cults of that dark primeval age in which the "Two Lands," Upper and Lower Egypt, still existed independently side by side, before there was a unified Egyptian nation. Each city, town, and village possessed its own protective divinity and its sanctuary to which the inhabitants turned for assistance in days of need and danger as they constantly sought the favor of the god by means of prayers and offerings. In his hand lay the weal and woe of the community; he was the lord of the region, the "god of the city," who, like an earthly prince or count, controlled the destiny of his vassals and defended them from their enemies. How closely the god was bound up with his district is very well indicated by the fact that he frequently possessed no name of his own but was simply designated by the name of the site of the cult which belonged to him and in which he was worshiped. Thus the local divinity of the Upper Egyptian city of Ombos was "the Ombite," and the god of Edfu was referred to as "He of Edfu." Of course, each local god usually bore a distinctive name the original meaning of which we are now seldom able to determine. Thus the god of Memphis was called Ptah (Fig. 31, *a*); the lord of Thebes was named Montu; the ancient tutelary divinity of Herwer was Khnum (Fig. 31, *b*); in Coptos it was Min, and in Heliopolis it was Atum, who was worshiped. Familiar names among the female divinities are Hathor, the "Lady of Dendera" (Fig. 31, *c*); Neith, the goddess of Sais (Fig. 31, *d*); and Sekhmet, the protective goddess of Memphis (Fig. 33).

The function of these local patron deities was usually limited to their concern for their city, and they possessed no power beyond its limit. There were a few of them, however, who attained a more extensive sphere of influence along with the increase in importance of their native cities. In this manner some of them developed into district or even national gods and acquired dominating positions in the Egyptian pantheon.

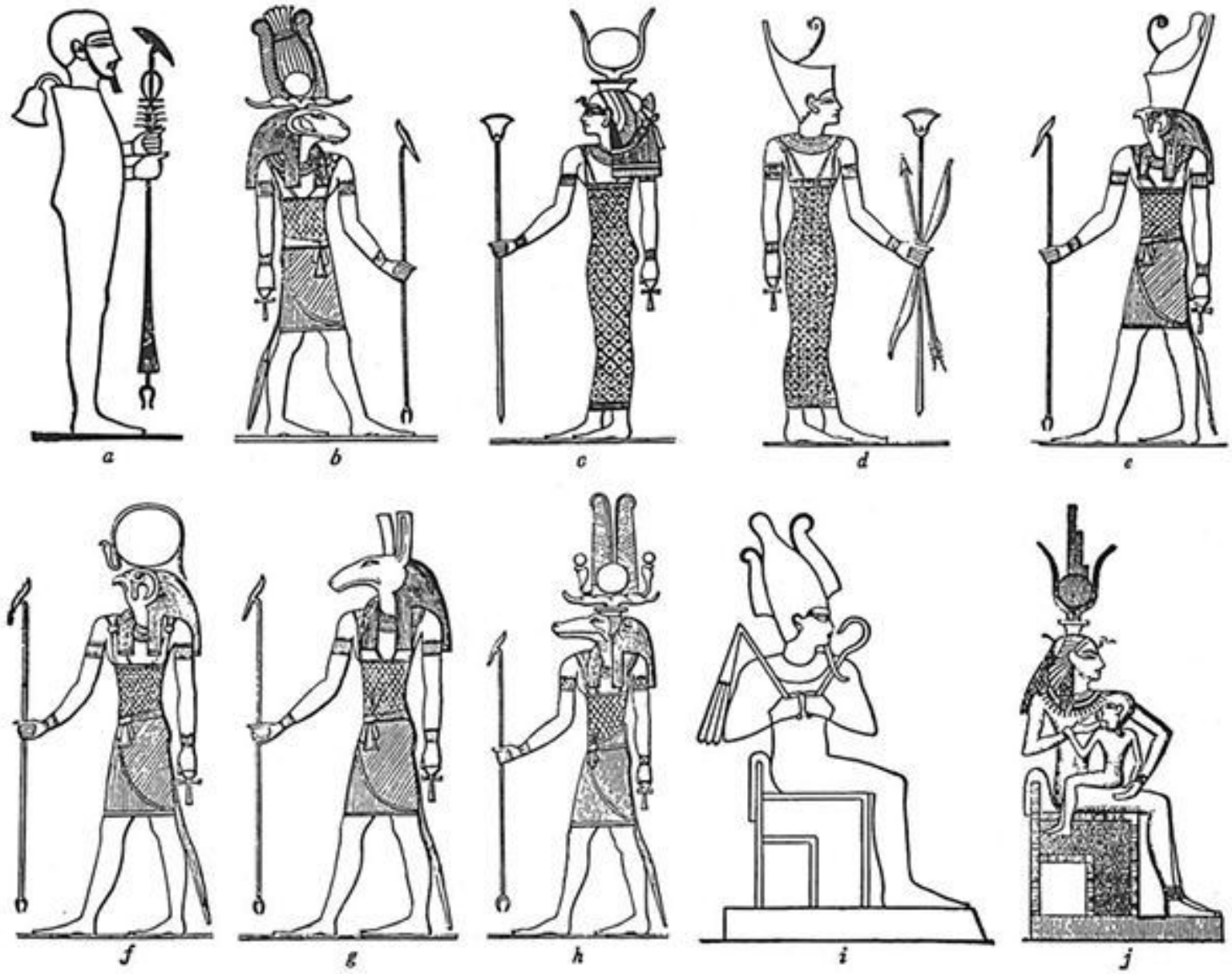

FIG. 31.—A SELECTION OF EGYPTIAN DIVINITIES: (*a*) PTAH; (*b*) KHNUM; (*c*) HATHOR; (*d*) NEITH; (*e*) HORUS; (*f*) RE-HARAKHTI; (*g*) SETH; (*h*) SOBEK; (*i*) OSIRIS; (*j*) ISIS SUCKLING HER SON HORUS

Thus, when Egypt still consisted of two separate kingdoms, the local gods of the religious capitals—Seth of Ombos and Horus of Behdet—came to be the protective gods of the two states; legend has preserved some memory of the wars which took place between the north and the south. As a pair of divine kings the two gods were supposed to have struggled with each other for a long time in order to determine which one should have the sovereignty over the Two Lands; but in the end a peaceful settlement was brought about between them under which each of them took as his share a half of the kingdom. When Egypt was later united into a single state, with Upper Egypt victorious over Lower Egypt, Horus became the national god, a position which he maintained through all successive ages (Fig. 31, *e*). The king was considered to be the incarnation of his patron lord Horus. Somewhat later, but still in the prehistoric era, when Egypt for the second time split into two independent kingdoms and established new capitals, the local divinities of these two cities—the vulture-goddess of Nekheb (Elkab) and the serpent-goddess of Buto—were elevated to the positions of national divinities, and their worship extended far beyond their original sphere of influence. In a similar manner the cosmic god Amun (Fig. 13) was transferred from Hermopolis to Karnak in the Eleventh Dynasty so that he eventually became the local god of Thebes and later, through identification with Re (Fig. 31, *f*), as "king of the gods," the national god of the New Kingdom.

It happened not uncommonly that the inhabitants of a city emigrated and founded a new home elsewhere. In such an event it is not surprising that they carried with them their patron deity and provided a new cult place for him in the new location. In other cases the people of one district became so impressed by the effectiveness with which some foreign divinity protected his community or the abundance of the blessings and miracles which he showered upon it that they began to make pilgrimages to his shrine or even to supply him with new temples in which, by the presentation of offerings, they also might win the benefits of his powerful favor. In this manner a god was occasionally transferred to a city where he had not originally resided. Sometimes he attracted a circle of worshipers away from the actual patron god of the town or even usurped the native god's position as the tutelary divinity of the city. It was perhaps in some such manner as this that the goddess Neith of Sais acquired

her shrine at Esna, or the god Khnum, who was really at home in Hypselis, near Assiut, was accorded worship in Herwer, Esna, and Elephantine.

Already at an early date the concepts of some of the local divinities were extended through emphasis on certain aspects of their character. Some of them in consequence came to preside over certain of the crafts and professions. The falcon-shaped Montu thus became a war-god; Min of Coptos came to be the patron of desert travelers as well as the god of fertility and the harvest. Ptah of Memphis, in whose province the distinctive art of Egypt originated in historic times, was the patron of all artists, metal-workers, and smiths. The powerful Sekhmet of Memphis became a terrible fire-goddess who annihilated her enemies, while Hathor of Dendera was converted into a goddess of love and joy. Horus the falcon became the sun-god who illuminated the world and who as a youthful hero engages in perpetual battle with his adversary Seth the storm-god (Fig. 31, *g*). Thoth of Hermopolis (Fig. 32) was a moon-god who had created the divisions of time and the order of the cosmos; he was also counted the inventor of hieroglyphic writing, the "lord of divine words," and the god of learning. The crocodile-god Sobek (Fig. 31, *h*) was naturally considered a water-god; he received worship as a patron divinity in towns the special weal and woe of which were peculiarly dependent on water, as was the situation on the islands of Gebelein and Kom Ombo, in the oasis of the Fayyum, or at the town of Kheny at the Nile rapids near modern Silsila. Thus local gods very frequently developed into patron deities of certain professions or into nature gods worshiped throughout the length and breadth of the land.

In addition to these "city gods," there was also a very considerable number of lesser gods, spirits, and demons, who were considered able at times to be of benefit or injury to men and whose favor it was necessary to court, as well as an important class of fairies who rendered assistance to women in travail and who could either hinder or accelerate childbirth. Various protective household gods of grotesque stature were worshiped under the name of Bes. Musicians, dancers, killers of snakes, they also presided over the toilette, the bedchamber, and the pleasures of love. Among the great host of other divinities it is possible to mention here but a few: gods and goddesses of the harvest, spirits who provided healing in times of illness, gods and goddesses of war.

If the inhabitants of a locality lived in peace and carried on friendly

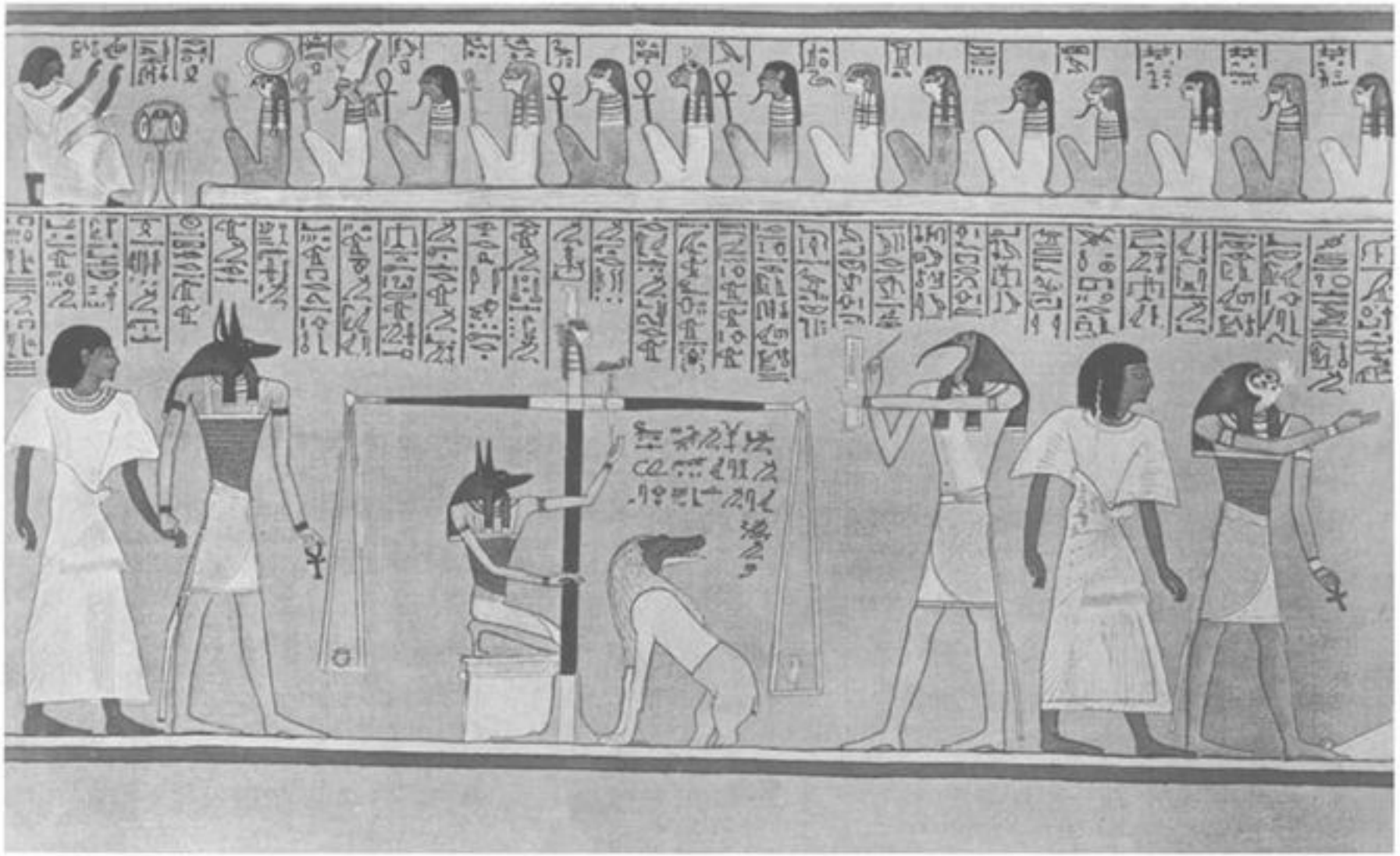

FIG. 32.—ANUBIS AND THOTH WEIGHING THE HEART AT THE JUDGMENT (BRITISH MUSEUM)

intercourse with its neighbors, it was natural that their patron gods should share their friendship. Like the men who worshiped them, they were accustomed to visit one another on certain days, and outside gods were frequently presented with special chapels and their own cults in the temple of a "city god." While the latter thus remained the chief god of his district, he was by no means the only divinity in it to receive the homage of its inhabitants. Instead, an entire circle of other gods and demigods stood beside him as his guests to share the praises and offerings of his worshipers. At a very early time, indeed, the priests undertook to bring various of these gods into some relationship with one another. As a result, it not infrequently happened that a goddess was assigned to the principal god of the city as his wife and a third divinity to the two of them as their son. At Karnak in Thebes, for example, the chief god Amun (Fig. 13) shared his worship with his wife, the goddess Mut, and their son, the moon-god Khonsu; in Memphis the tutelary god Ptah (Fig. 31, *a*) was given Sekhmet (Fig. 33) as a consort and Nefertem as their son; at Abydos, Osiris (Fig. 31, *i*), his sister-wife Isis (Fig. 31, *j*), and Horus "the son of Isis" constituted the "triad" or holy family.

Manifold though the Egyptian gods were in name, not less so were the outward manifestations which were attributed to them by their devotees. Most of them were somewhat crude and reminiscent of the fetishism which still holds in its clutches a large proportion of the uncivilized Negro tribes of Africa. The god of Busiris in the Delta was conceived as a pillar with the head and arms of an Egyptian king; the goddess Neith of Sais was a shield to which a pair of crossed arrows had been nailed. The god Ptah of Memphis and the harvest-god Min of Coptos, under whose protection stood the desert road which connected his native city with the Red Sea, were both worshiped as fetishes in semihuman form. However, the divinities were most frequently conceived in purely animal form: Sobek as a crocodile, the god of Mendes as a ram, Thoth of Hermopolis as an ibis, Khnum in the form of a ram; Horus in that of a falcon or sparrow hawk, while his adversary Seth was given the form of some kind of fabulous beast. The protective goddess of Buto was a serpent; that of Nekheb, like the goddess Mut of Thebes, was regarded as a vulture; while Hathor of Dendera was given the form of a cow.

These are all conceptions of the gods which at first thought appear to us not only inherently strange but even as utterly unworthy of a cultured

race. The Greeks and Romans reacted in the same manner when they became acquainted with Egypt, and they were free to express their contempt and scorn at finding such primitive religious ideas in a race so admirable for many of its achievements. Nevertheless, similar concepts were widely held by other civilized peoples, including certain of the Semitic tribes and even the earliest Greeks. The Semites found divinity in trees, stones, and animals; from the Greeks likewise we have any number of familiar myths which relate, for example, how Hermes, god of meadow and highway, manifested himself as a heap of stones, Apollo as a wolf, Zeus as a cloud, Artemis as a bear, Hera as a cow, while every student of classical mythology knows that the "sacred animal" of Athena was the owl and that of Zeus was the eagle.

It was customary to house the wooden statue of the divinity in the local temple in its own naos or shrine. On feast days the statue, still in its shrine, was carried in procession on the shoulders of the priests or transported on the river in a sacred bark. In addition, from the very earliest times a specimen of whatever species of animal happened to be sacred to a given temple—the animal in which the local god was accustomed to manifest himself—was kept and carefully tended in the sanctuary. The Greek traveler Strabo, who toured Egypt in the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus, has left a description of the crocodile sacred to the water-god Sobek which was cherished at Arsinoë, the capital of the Fayyum.

> It is fed with the bread, meat, and wine brought by the strangers who come to see it. Our host went with us to the lake, taking along a small meal-cake, some meat, and a small flask of wine. We found the animal lying on the bank; the priests approached and, while some of them opened his jaws, another thrust first the cake into his mouth, then the meat, and finally poured the wine after them. Thereupon the crocodile plunged into the lake and swam to the opposite shore.

In the later period, after the religion had lost more and more of its inner vitality, and the people clung increasingly to outward forms, they carried the animal cults to such extremes that they came to regard each individual of the species in whose form the divinity was believed to reveal himself as sacred and divine. These animals were considered inviolable; to kill one of them in a place dedicated to its species was punishable by the death penalty. In fact, so extreme was the religious zeal of this epoch that it became the custom to embalm each one of the sacred animals at

death and to bury it ceremoniously in special cemeteries dedicated to the purpose.

A forward step from crude fetishism was taken already in the prehistoric age when the Egyptian began to represent the divinity in human form. At that time the god appeared with a human face and figure and wore the same type of clothing as the Egyptians themselves. His head, like that of a prince or king, was adorned with a helmet or crown, while the simple skirt was decorated with the tail of an animal attached to the back of the girdle as had been the custom of the rulers of the primeval time. His insignia of authority consisted of baton and scepter, while a goddess regularly carried a papyrus blossom with a long stem. This new interpretation of divinity was bound to react on the more primitive fetishistic beliefs. The crude anthropoid fetish of Ptah developed into a youthful figure "beautiful of face," with shaven head, enveloped in a tightly fitting garment, and standing on a stair or terrace with a scepter grasped in both hands. Those divinities which had formerly been conceived as animals became transformed into human figures surmounted by the heads of the sacred animals from which they were derived. Sobek became a man with the head of a crocodile, Khnum a man with a ram's head (Fig. 31, *b*); Thoth was represented in human form with the head of an ibis (Fig. 32), Horus with that of a falcon (Fig. 31, *e*), while Sekhmet became a woman with the head of a lioness (Fig. 33).

In addition to the local divinities which were conceived in animal form, still other sacred animals were made peculiar objects of worship. The best known of these is the Mnevis bull, which was honored in Heliopolis, the Buchis bull of Hermonthis (Armant), the "phoenix" (heron) of Heliopolis, and especially the Apis bull of Memphis. According to the late Greek account, the last named was begotten by a ray of sunlight which descended from heaven and impregnated a cow, which would thereafter never be able to give birth a second time. The Apis bull was black with white spots, including a white triangle on the forehead and the figure of a crescent moon on the right side. He usually wore a red cloth on his back. As far back as the Old Kingdom we know that priests were assigned to him, but more extensive information concerning his nature or his cult has not survived. In later times, however, theological speculations sought to create a relationship between this highly esteemed bull and Ptah, the ancient god of Memphis. These eventually resulted in

the concept that Apis was the son of Ptah or, by a still more complex dogma, the actual image, "the living reincarnation of Ptah." In the New Kingdom, Amenhotep III caused the deceased bulls to be sumptuously interred in the necropolis of Memphis at Saqqara in mausoleums in the usual style of burial place. In the Nineteenth Dynasty, however, under Ramesses II, a magnificent mortuary gallery was laid out in which the sacred bulls were buried in splendid stone sarcophagi. This subterranean cemetery—a gallery nearly three hundred and fifty feet in length carved out of the solid rock, with a row of niches for the burials of the individual bulls—the so-called Serapeum, was highly venerated as late as the Ptolemaic period, when it attracted great hosts of pious pilgrims.

In general, our knowledge of the most popularly honored divinities is exceedingly limited; we are acquainted with their names and representations, but their nature and character are withheld from our understanding in spite of the multitude of poetic epithets which are applied to them in the hymns and liturgies. It is evident, however, that their gods were not merely the empty, shadowy figures to the Egyptians which they appear to us with our scanty information concerning them. Their ancient worshipers told many a tale of their exploits and marvelous adventures, and these myths will certainly have been elaborated, expanded, and reduced to writing in the bosom of the priesthood where they were principally cherished.

In addition to the local divinities whose activities were confined to a limited sphere on earth, there were other great powers who emerged in nature and embraced the entire world: heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, and the Nile. The sky was the "great god"; he was thought of as a falcon which spread his protective wings over the earth or over Egypt. His divine eyes are the sun and moon; when he opens them it is day, when they are closed it is night. The stars are attached to his body, the wind is the breath of his mouth, and the water is his perspiration According to another widely circulated myth, the sky is a goddess, sometimes known by the name of Nut. In primordial times she was closely embraced in the arms of the earth-god Geb, until the god of the atmosphere, Shu, separated them from each other by elevating Nut high above the earth on his uplifted arms and placing himself beneath her. From the union of Geb and Nut sprang a son, Re, the sun-god, and the most popular of the cosmic gods. He travels by day in his bark across the

celestial ocean as on the Nile, until at eventide he transfers to another boat in order to descend to the netherworld and there continue his voyage. He was also conceived as a falcon who soared through the sky with bright plumage or as a young hero who carried on a constant struggle with the hostile powers of darkness. As the god of the Upper Egyptian city of Edfu he is depicted as the sun disk with extended wings, a form in which he regularly appeared as a symbol of protection over the doors and elsewhere in the decoration of Egyptian temples.

The nature gods in general never developed a special cult of their own. Gradually, however, an exception was made in the case of Re, and it became customary to present offerings to him under the open sky. The kings of the Fifth Dynasty, who were popularly regarded as children of Re, dedicated to him near the capital of Memphis a unique temple inclosure the chief feature of which was a peculiar type of obelisk erected on a huge stone substructure.

The evolution of religious ideas tended in general toward some connection between the local divinities and the celestial powers; the priesthoods of the former obviously sought every opportunity to enhance the reputation of their gods. Thus the falcon-shaped Horus, who by this time had developed into the national god, became identified with the sky-god who, as we have seen, was regarded as a falcon also; he became in consequence the "great god" or "lord of heaven" and received the name Harakhti ("Horus of the Horizon"). In addition, he was identified with Re and henceforth regarded as the sun-god Re-Harakhti. It was but a natural result that Re also should receive the form of Horus, and he is accordingly depicted as a king in human form with the head of a falcon surmounted by the sun disk with pendent uraeus serpent.

In a similar manner other local gods who originally had no connection whatever with the sun and who had never manifested themselves as falcons, as, for example, the crocodile-shaped water-god Sobek, the ram-shaped gods Khnum and Amun of Karnak, were identified with Re and assigned in consequence the sun disk and the sacred uraeus serpent as designations of rank. The local divinities retained through this development all their old attributes, and the myths which had centered about them were perpetuated by tradition; the inevitable result was a bewildering confusion of tangled and often self-contradictory ideas in the Egyptian religion. Efforts were made in the theology to distinguish at least the

various sun-gods from one another; a distinct function was assigned to each one, according to which Khepri—the sun conceived as à scarab—became the morning sun and Atum was worshiped as the evening sun. Nevertheless, it does not appear that the learned priesthood ever succeeded in drawing up a comprehensive system of Egyptian theology.

A similar transformation may be followed among the local female divinities, who tended to become identified with the goddess Nut. So the cow-goddess Hathor developed into a sky-goddess, a fact which led to the logical if rather astonishing conclusion that Nut herself was a cow

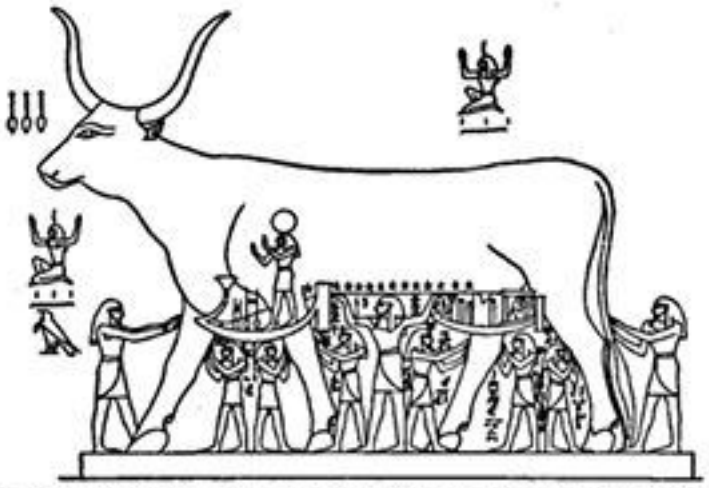

FIG. 34.—THE SKY-GODDESS NUT AS A COW (BIBAN EL-MULUK, TOMB OF SETHI I)

which was held fast by numerous gods and supported in position by Shu, the god of the atmosphere, while the stars were all attached to her belly, and the sun-god traveled in his bark along her body (Fig. 34).

Numerous other local gods whose character or appearance was not very sharply differentiated became identified at an early date. Hathor and Isis were thus considered as the same person, while Amun of Karnak, Min of Coptos, and later even Khnum of Elephantine were combined into a single divinity. The tutelary cat-goddess of Bubastis was equated with the goddesses Sekhmet and Pekhet, both of whom were lionesses, and all of them, in turn, were identified with Mut, the mother of the gods and the consort of Amun.

It certainly should not have been too much for a clever brain to have constituted some sort of order out of this mixture of diverse mythological

ideas. With some effort to combine the local gods and to conceive them as sun or sky divinities, the Egyptian might well have been drawn naturally to the conclusion that the adoration of ancient patron gods was an obsolete idea and that the worship of a small group of gods or even of one alone was the most reasonable point of view. But who would have possessed the courage to put such a theory into practice and to shelve the ancient cults in order to substitute a new one in their place? Would not the united priesthoods of the entire land have risen up against such an effort in order to defend the rights and individual prerogatives of their gods? Above all, how would the great mass of the people, who clung with deep veneration to the old gods of their homes without the slightest interest in a theological system, have received an announcement that the dominion of their divine protector was at an end and that he had been superseded by another to whom it was now ordered that they must address their prayers and present their offerings? And yet the day was not so far away when just such an attempt was to be ventured—an attempt to overthrow the gods of old and to replace them with a single god in heaven and on earth (see chap. xiv).

The Egyptians failed no less completely to achieve a consistent set of ideas regarding man's destiny in the life after death. Rooted deeply in the hearts of the people was at least the belief that death was really not the end of everything but rather that a man would continue to live on exactly as on earth, provided that the conditions necessary for continued existence were fulfilled. First of all, he must be supplied with food and drink; hence the anxious and constantly reiterated desire of the Egyptians to receive "thousands of loaves, geese, oxen, beer, and all the good things by which a god lives" in the life hereafter. To avoid suffering from hunger and thirst after death, each Egyptian provided his tomb with great jars filled with food and drink or, if he had the means, established endowments the income of which would secure for all time the necessities of life in the netherworld. If he had surviving children or other close relatives, piety demanded that they go forth on the great feast days to the cemetery in order to deposit food and drink offerings at the tomb. Nevertheless, all of these provisions were still insufficient. From the time of the Old Kingdom the walls of the tomb or at least of the coffin were covered with representations of all sorts of objects which by magic could be transformed into the actual products depicted, when they would become available to

serve all the physical needs of the dead. The same magical power was believed to be inherent in the relief sculptures or wall paintings in the tombs of the wealthy, where the deceased is shown seated at a richly decked offering-table (Fig. 35), or where he witnesses the butchering and dressing of the offering-cattle or the rows of peasant girls bringing up products from the mortuary estate.

Beyond all these efforts to provide for the deceased, still another device was employed to achieve the desired end. Again and again one encounters inscriptions in the tombs appealing to each and every visitor or chance passer-by to repeat certain prayers which would conjure up by magic everything required for the enjoyment and nourishment of the deceased. In addition to the articles of food and drink, these objects include various oils, ointments, and cosmetics for the eyes—all of which were frequently provided for funerary use in exquisitely beautiful vases—jewelry, clothing, and even weapons for the protection of the dead against

Fig. 35.—The Daily Meal within the Tomb (Thebes, Tomb of Djehuti)

his enemies, as well as numerous other things. In the course of centuries the number and variety of such funerary objects greatly increased; how manifold the tomb equipment of the dead became in the golden age of the pharaonic empire is best illustrated by the treasure from the tomb of Tutankhamun (pp. 228 f.), which contains several thousand objects.

Another important popular belief was combined with these notions of the life after death and the requirements for its support. Each man was believed to possess not only a body but also a soul which survived in the hereafter. This was believed to take the form of a bird or, at a later time, the form of a falcon with the head of the deceased. After death it was thought to depart from the dead body and to fly about freely in the world, though it could at will, especially at night when evil spirits walked abroad, return to the safety of the tomb. However, this could occur only if the body of the deceased was properly preserved and prevented from decomposition. In order thus to enable the soul to recognize the body to which it belonged, the Egyptians from a very early time devoted the most careful attention to the preservation of the body.

Still another of the favorite Egyptian beliefs concerning the dead was the idea that the departed could assume different shapes and by means of magical formulas transform himself into all sorts of beings, such as a serpent, a falcon, a lily, a ram, or even a crocodile, and in such a form to move about the earth by day. These beliefs later became known to the Greek historians and philosophers, but they were misunderstood and led to the erroneous conclusion that the ancient Egyptians, like the Hindus, had believed in the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul.

The so-called "ka" played an important role in the Egyptian mortuary beliefs. This was a kind of protective spirit or genius which was born simultaneously with the individual and was closely united to him throughout life. In fact, the ka did not share the experience of death but survived the deceased in order to quicken him with its own life-strength and to protect him from his enemies in the hereafter.

The dead, like the living, continued under the protection of their domestic gods, who concerned themselves with the burial and especially with the safety of the departed ones in the grave. There were, however, in many cities special mortuary gods, such as Khenty-Imentiu, "the First of the Westerners" (the dead), who was regularly represented in the form of a jackal. At a very remote time all these divinities receded into

the background in favor of Osiris. He was probably a deified king who had once ruled in the Delta city of Busiris and who had met a tragic and untimely death by drowning in the Nile. In the course of time his reputation and then his worship spread throughout Egypt, but the city of Abydos eventually became the chief place in which his cult was celebrated. The saga telling of his life and death became one of the most loved, as it was humanly the most universally comprehensible and appealing of all the stories of the Egyptian gods. Unfortunately, it does not exist in a homogeneous tradition in any native Egyptian text but only in an account recorded by the Greek writer Plutarch. According to his account, Osiris had once ruled as king of Egypt and had showered blessings upon his happy subjects. But he had a wicked brother named Seth, who had designs on his life and the throne. He concocted a conspiracy whereby he contrived by trickery in the course of a banquet to have his brother lay himself in an artistically wrought chest. Scarcely had Osiris taken his place in the casket when Seth and his seventy-two confederates sprang upon it, clapped down the lid, and cast it into the Nile, which bore it down to the sea. The waves eventually carried the chest and its contents to the beach near the Phoenician city of Byblos. Meanwhile Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, wandered throughout the world seeking the body of her husband. After she had located and with some difficulty obtained possession of it, she carried it back to Egypt and mourned the departed Osiris in private. Then she concealed the coffin and departed into the Delta marshes to Buto, where her son Horus was brought up. During her absence Seth, while on a wild-boar hunt, came upon the corpse of his hated brother and, after having in fury divided it into fourteen pieces, scattered the remains throughout the land. The faithful Isis, nevertheless, sought out all the dismembered pieces and buried them wherever she found them, erecting a monument over each one of them. That is the reason why so many different tombs of Osiris were known in Egypt. But after Horus had grown to maturity in the Delta swamps, he came forth to avenge the murder of his father, and a terrible battle ensued in which Horus won the victory. In the end Osiris, through the application of all sorts of magical devices by his pious son, was reawakened to life and henceforth ruled in the west as king of the blessed dead.

The death which according to the legend was suffered by Osiris at the hands of his false brother Seth became the portion of every human being;

but, just as Osiris had risen again, so could each man also begin life anew if only the same formulas were spoken and the same ceremonies performed by a faithful son which Osiris' son Horus had once spoken and performed for his father. In this manner the deceased would not only come to Osiris; he was believed actually to become Osiris himself. The entrance to the empire of Osiris depended on magical formulas and spells which must be recited or the knowledge of which must be intrusted to the deceased, in addition to which, however, a virtuous life on earth was likewise regarded as essential to the attainment of eternal life. To that end it was necessary for each individual to appear after death at a judgment in the presence of Osiris and before a court of forty-two judges to declare himself innocent of wrongdoing. Only after this had been accomplished and after the heart of the deceased had been weighed in the balance of righteousness before the god Thoth and found true, was he permitted to enter the world of the hereafter (Fig. 32).

While the concept of a final judgment reveals at least that the Egyptian possessed lofty ideals of conduct in his daily life, we have but little information about the religious thought and practice of the average man. Nevertheless, the meaning of such personal names as Ny-wy-netjer ("I belong to God"), Mery-Re ("Beloved of Re"), Hor-hotpu ("Horus is merciful"), or Ptah-em-saf ("Ptah is his protection") would indicate that from an early time the Egyptian entertained a sense of intimate contact with his god and believed that the god was not only near to him but interested in his welfare and to some degree like himself. The ancient books of "Teachings for Life" (p. 126) definitely connect the good life as conforming to the will of the god. While the numerous religious hymns are mainly concerned with praise of the god as the lord of heaven and earth, they likewise recognize him as a hearer of prayers who loves and approves of his people. Shortly after 1300 B.C., however, a striking development of personal piety is manifest, and for the first time in Egypt we find the conviction expressed that, even though man is disposed to evil, God is inclined to forgive; while God is bound to punish wrongdoing, his wrath is momentary and his mercy abundant.

Various ideas prevailed concerning the dwelling-place of the blessed dead. For the most part it was thought to be somewhere in the west, in the region of the sunset. It was also believed that the departed were transformed into the shining stars of the sky. Or they lived on in the

celestial fields of rushes, where, as formerly on earth, they cultivated the soil, plowed, sowed, and reaped, but where the grain grew to a height of seven cubits (twelve feet). This was truly a wonderful paradise for the Egyptian peasant. But since times changed for the ancient Egyptian also,

Fig. 36.—Ushabtiu (Oriental Institute Museum)

so that field labor came to be regarded as beneath his dignity, after the Middle Kingdom he caused to be placed in his tomb a series of mummiform figures provided with farm implements or sacred symbols in order that they might perform his duties for him (Fig. 36). Upon these ushabtiu was written the name of the deceased together with a magical formula

through which they were bought to life and enabled to perform their prescribed duties.

Another doctrine, which originally applied to the king alone, involved an attempt to unify the different conceptions of the hereafter. It was put into writing in the book entitled the "Book of What Is in the Netherworld" and in similar works. According to these texts, there is another earth beneath the familiar earth of men; it is covered by a sky, and through its entire length flows a stream (see p. 65). This netherworld is divided into twelve parts which correspond to the twelve hours of the night and which are separated from one another by great gates. The bark of the sun travels on the stream; in it stands the ram-headed sun-god surrounded like a king by his retinue, as he brings for a brief time light and life to the dark regions through which he fares. This nightly voyage is shared by the deceased, either as the companion of the sun-god or as that god himself, with whom he is thus sometimes identified and with whom he departs from the subterranean world at dawn to continue the journey across the celestial ocean in the bright light of day.

In the earliest times the dead were interred in the natural position of sleep, lying on the left side with knees drawn up against the body and hands before the face. In the Old Kingdom, at first probably in connection with the kings, it became the custom to lay the body in the tomb stretched out at full length. At the same time attempts began to be made to prevent the deterioration of the body by the art of mummification. So successfully was this accomplished that many mummies have preserved in an easily recognizable aspect the features of the deceased (Fig. 37). In the beginning mummification was, of course, exceedingly simple. The viscera were removed from the body, and the resulting cavity was filled with wads of linen cloth. The corpse was then saturated with natron and bound with linen wrappings. At a later period injections of cedar oil were also applied. In the course of time the technique of embalming underwent considerable development. It became the practice to remove the brain from the skull by the use of an iron hook, while resinous pastes were applied to preserve as fully as possible all the contours of the body. As far back as the Old Kingdom the viscera were interred in four vases; these were under the protection of four divinities who were responsible for guarding the deceased against hunger and thirst. In richer burials these vases were placed in chests constructed in the form of a chapel

FIG. 37.—HEAD OF THE MUMMY OF SETHI I (CAIRO)

and adorned with appropriate representations of gods and with religious inscriptions (Fig. 38). The process of mummification lasted no less than seventy days, after which, all the proper burial ceremonies having been completed, it was laid in the coffin and removed to the tomb (Fig. 39).

The form of the coffin was altered during the course of the ages. In the Old Kingdom it consisted of a simple rectangular chest of stone or wood. It was a favorite practice to give to it the form of a house with doors in order to symbolize the concept that the coffin was the house of the dead. During the Eighteenth Dynasty it was considered very desirable to construct the coffin in the form of a man or woman arrayed in the costume of the time or in mummiform (Fig. 40) and to decorate it with all sorts of religious pictures and inscriptions. A single coffin, however, was quite insufficient for wealthy people; they insisted on being buried within the innermost of a nest of three mummiform coffins, all of which were in turn placed within an outermost houselike construction, so that the mummy was incased in no less than four different coverings.

FIG. 38.—CANOPIC CHEST OF TUTANKHAMUN (CAIRO MUSEUM)

FIG. 39.—FINAL RITES BEFORE THE TOMB DOOR (THEBES, TOMB OF NEBAMUN AND IPUKY)

FIG. 40.—GOLD COFFIN OF TUTANKHAMUN (CAIRO MUSEUM)

Even for the nobles and the most wealthy people the grave in which the body was laid to rest was originally a simple trench excavated into the desert floor at sufficient height to be inaccessible to the water of the Nile inundation. A low mound of earth was heaped over it, before which a small court was laid out to serve as a cult place where offerings might be deposited for the benefit of the dead. It was from this type of grave that the mastaba, as the type of grave employed by the Old Kingdom officials is known to science, was developed. The mastaba consists of a rectangular superstructure built of sun-dried brick or limestone blocks; in addition, there is a vertical shaft or a stairway leading down to the underground burial chamber in which the body is deposited. The cult place lies on the east side of the superstructure; it is a court with a shallow niche, usually in the form of a door, marking the place which was believed to be at the same time the entrance to the tomb and that into the netherworld. A chapel was frequently erected in front of the niche; otherwise a proper cult chamber was constructed in the masonry of the mastaba in such a manner that the "false door" mentioned above was situated in its west wall. As time passed, the inner rooms increased in number as subsidiary chambers were added to the original one. The resulting development was a regular dwelling for the deceased, the walls of which were adorned with inscriptions and richly painted bas-reliefs. The deceased and the members of his family who were buried with him were represented by numerous statues placed in one or more rooms specially provided for the purpose, while figures of male and female servants made of stone or wood were included to care for the recurring needs of their master.

The tomb of the king was in the early period simply an especially large mud-brick mastaba of the type described, but a series of chambers was provided beneath it in order to accommodate his body and those of his retainers, together with all the necessary funerary supplies and equipment. This mastaba eventually developed into the step pyramid and thence into the true pyramid (Fig. 4), which from the beginning of the Old Kingdom to the end of the Second Intermediate Period remained the characteristic form of royal tomb.