

EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE. See LANGUAGES (EGYPTIAN).

EGYPTIAN LITERATURE. Writers in ancient Egypt produced a great quantity of texts that can be considered as "literature" in the sense that they partake in a tradition and were not composed simply to meet immediate needs of communication and finance. This entry consists of four articles. The first provides a broad, introductory survey of Egyptian literature. The second focuses on perhaps the earliest type of Egyptian literature—the biography. The second and third articles respectively cover two types of Egyptian literature that seem to have influenced Israelite (and therefore biblical) literature: love poetry and wisdom writings.

SURVEY OF EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

In this survey the term "literature" will be used in a broader sense to include all kinds of texts belonging to the written tradition of ancient Egypt but excluding actual

letters, receipts, files, and other documents that were not meant for tradition but for everyday use.

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A. Generalities

1. Definitions, Literaticity, and Poeticity. Literature in the narrow sense of aesthetic or fictional texts will be called *belles-lettres*. These texts are called "literary texts" in contrast to "nonliterary texts," which constitute the body of "functional literature." The criterion for attributing texts to one or the other corpus is their functional fixity. While some texts are meant to serve only one well-determined function, as is the case with magical spells or biographical tomb inscriptions, others, such as narratives, harper's songs, and wisdom texts, may serve several functions. The latter appear in different contexts because they are functionally nonspecific, that is, not permanently bound to a single context. This functional nonspecificity is our main criterion for determining the "literaticity" of a text, regardless whether it exhibits poetic form ("poeticity") or not (Assmann and Assmann 1983: 269–74). Poetic texts may in fact be found within both *belles-lettres* and "functional literature."

All Middle Kingdom (hereafter MK) texts belonging to *belles-lettres* are framed by a narrative which explains their setting. This interior frame may be interpreted as the intratextual substitute of the extratextual context which is lacking in the case of literary texts. This custom of framing literary texts has caused chronological problems. Most Egyptologists tend to identify the date where the author locates the plot (the literary date) with the time of the author himself (the historical date). The literary date may in most cases, however, point to a much earlier time than the historical date and may thus have a special, symbolic meaning (which has, of course, nothing to do with "pseudepigraphy" much less "forgery").

2. Institutional and Functional Frames. Institutions of literature, where books were produced, stored, and copied, were primarily the "House of Life" (Eg *pr ʿnh*; Weber *LÄ* 3:954–57) and to a lesser degree the school. Houses of Life were attached to the major temples. They served not only scriptorial, but also ritual purposes for the sake of "the preservation of life." Their primary concern seems to

have been the tradition of ritual and magicomedical knowledge, but the literary activities extended into the fields of education, wisdom, and belles-lettres on the one hand, and astronomy, cosmography, and "sacerdotal sciences" on the other. In the schools the main focus was on educational ("teachings") and administrative knowledge (model letters). Our main sources here are the ostraca from Deir el Medinah and papyri from the Memphite area. Officials typically assigned to the House of Life were the priests of Sakhmet—physician-scholars of broad erudition and magical competence (von Kanel 1984), who appear in the Bible (e.g., Gen 41:8; Exod 7:11; Dan 1:20) as *hartummim* (Eg *hrjw-tp*) and constitute the typical entourage of pharaoh (Quaegebeur 1985; 1987). This institutional frame accounts for the seemingly strange combination of wisdom texts, narratives, rituals, hymns, and magicomedical texts which typically occurs in each of the (rare) relics of, or references to, libraries: e.g., the Ramesseum find (a chest with books, 13th Dyn.; Gardiner 1955b), the Chester Beatty find (a group of papyri from Deir el Medinah, 20th Dyn.; Gardiner 1935) and the papyri from Elephantine (temple of Khnum, ptolemaic period) and Tebtunis (Roman period; Tait 1977; Reymond 1977), and the catalogues of temple libraries at el-Tod and Edfu, as well as the canon of 42 books described by Clement of Alexandria (Fowden 1986: 58–59).

There are four major functional frames, or "macro-genres," to be distinguished in Egyptian literature: temple, tomb, palace, and administration. Within both temple and tomb literature a distinction should be made between "recitation" and "knowledge" literature. The latter term refers to codifications of knowledge necessary for the priest to perform a ritual or for the deceased to resist the dangers and pass the trials of the netherworld. Under the notion of "palace," we subsume the body of official royal inscriptions, most of which do not occur in palaces but in (relatively) public spaces like temple outskirts, courtyards, rock inscriptions, etc. Biographical inscriptions of non-royal persons seem to address the same kind of public. They occur mostly on tomb walls and on temple statues. These genres are by necessity linked to the inscriptional or monumental form and therefore can be grouped together as "monumental literature." Bureaucracy seems to have been the most productive realm of all. The annual output of one minor temple office in the Old Kingdom (hereafter: OK) could amount to 120 m of papyrus. Bureaus of similar productivity were attached to palaces, various offices, granaries, workshops, and courts of justice. Quotidian administrative records should not be regarded as "literary," even in the broadest sense of the term, insofar as they do not belong to the Egyptian tradition by which is meant the body of texts intended for reuse or repeated reference.

3. "Poeticity": Formal Devices and Metrics. The basic formal principle in Egyptian literary compositions is semantic recurrence (LÄ 4:900–10), combining both continuous units and discontinuous units. The unit or verse corresponds to clauses of normal language, without any specifically poetical accentuation rules. Verse accent is identical with clause accent with the sole restriction that a "verse" may not contain fewer than two and more than three pitches or cola (Fecht LÄ 4:1127–54). A carefully

written literary manuscript may indicate verse stops by placing red dots above the line. Such verse points may occur in virtually every genre of Egyptian literature. Higher units of text organization, such as verse groups, stanzas, paragraphs, songs, or chapters, are also semantically defined. They may be graphically indicated by rubrics or other signs (Assmann 1983d). "Poeticity" is scalar; poetry differs from prose not in kind but in degree. A measure of poeticity is the recurrence of elements. The number of recurrent elements can be increased or decreased. Especially popular were songs with several short stanzas, each stanza beginning with the same line as a refrain. But the intensified use of imagery may also have been esteemed as a sign of poetical value.

4. Inscriptions and Manuscripts. In ancient Egypt there were two writing systems in use: *hieratic*, the cursive script, and *hieroglyphic*, the monumental script. In spite of the fact that *hieratic* developed out of *hieroglyphic*, they had to be learned separately. The Egyptian scribe was taught the hieratic script. Only artists went further and studied the hieroglyphs as well. A scribe was supposed to possess a reading competence in hieroglyphs; writing them required special training. Significant for hieroglyphic script is its iconicity: hieroglyphs retained (in opposition to almost all other scripts which started as picture writing) their pictorial character and thus belong as much to the sphere of monumental art as to that of writing (Assmann 1988a).

Hieroglyphs are the monumental script. Virtually all Egyptian monuments bear inscriptions. The extraordinary cultural significance of monumentality seems the most prominent feature of ancient Egyptian civilization (Assmann 1988b). The inscribed monument (tomb, statue, stela, offering table) bestows a "body" and a "voice" to the deceased. The hieroglyphic text is thereby always linked to a place and a person; it is "situationally bound" (in opposition to the "situationally neutral" character prerequisite of belles-lettres). All inscriptional literature is "eponymous" (produced in the name of a historical person) and "autothematizing": temple inscriptions refer to a king, tomb inscriptions to a deceased person.

Hieratic is the script for "manuscripts" on portable materials like papyrus, ostraca (limestone and pottery), and (more rarely) leather and wood. The demarcation line between hieroglyphic/monumental and hieratic/mobile communication is rather strict. There are virtually no texts pertaining to belles-lettres in hieroglyphic/monumental form, whereas in some exceptional cases, inscriptions pertaining to official literature were copied in papyrus (the Kadesh poem, the Kamose stela, the Berlin leather roll among others). In the genres of temple and tomb literature, however, the distinction between the monumental and the cursive is blurred, because the decoration of temple and tomb walls was carried out from manuscript prototypes.

There are three functions of recording to be distinguished: eternalization, publication, and storage. *Eternalization* is the function which is linked to the inscriptional form. It keeps a text present at a certain place, regardless of its readability for human eyes. Eternalization belongs to the "monumental sphere" as a sphere of eternal duration (in Egyptian: *dt* /djet/ "endurance" "unchangeability") into

which one may enter by erecting a monument. *Publication* is the function that addresses human readers (letters address specific readers), thus implying different kinds of readerships. For publication, either inscriptions or manuscripts may be used. The inscription on a royal stèle, for example, addresses visitors to a given place; the manuscript can reach distant readers. *Storage* is a function serving to keep texts and data permanently accessible. It is always linked to the manuscript form.

5. Forms of Transmission. Two kinds of transmission have to be distinguished: *productive* and *reproductive* transmission. Reproductive transmission affects *texts*, which are copied, epitomized, and in exceptional cases even commented on, whereas productive transmission is based on types or genre-specific deep structures (ÄHG, 1–94). Type-oriented text production achieves functional identity through being related to a specific situation and by virtue of a corresponding situational competence. Text-oriented reproduction achieves *formal* identity by the techniques of copying. A copyist may acquire the source text by reading it, by dictation, or from memory. Each method can give rise to different kinds of possible mistakes.

The Egyptian scribal culture does not seem to have developed more than very rudimentary methods of philological emendation (text control) and exegesis (sense control). Besides *textual* and *contextual* relationships between texts, there is also the possibility of *intertextual* relationship, which is based on texts (and not types), but in a productive way, producing new texts with (explicit or implicit) recourse to older ones. Intertextuality is most prominent in Wisdom Literature, where references to classical texts (such as the *Teachings of Ptahhotep*) occur even in late Egyptian instructions (like *Amenemope*). The notion of “classical” texts seems also to be restricted to Wisdom Literature. The two different lists of “classical authors” preserved from the Ramesside Periods contain names connected with wisdom texts (Assmann 1985).

A special problem of transmission is addressed by the terms “sacred literature” and “canonization.” Sacred texts are texts which not only deal with “sacred” matters but also possess in themselves a kind of sacredness. Sacred texts may thus be regarded as “verbal sanctuaries” of restricted access requiring special qualifications (purity, initiation) in their reciter. Most of the temple and tomb literature belongs to this category. Funerary literature was almost exclusively confined to the inaccessible parts of the tomb. This seems to be the only domain where, beginning perhaps in the Persian period (27th Dyn.), a process of *canonization* developed. At about this time, the body of mortuary spells was compiled within a “book,” fixed with respect to outer limits and interior arrangement.

An attempt at canonization in a somewhat different sense may, however, be observed in the transmission of literary texts during the Ramesside period. Only a limited selection of “Great Texts” seem to have been treated in the scribal curriculum and therefore survive in dozens of (mostly very corrupt) copies.

B. Genres

1. Belles-Lettres. a. Wisdom Literature. Wisdom Literature is the earliest and the most important genre of Egyptian belles-lettres and seems to have been considered

by the Egyptians themselves as the very quintessence and apex of their literature. (The “encomium of ancient writers” in pChester Beatty IV endeavors to show that a “book” is a far more glorious monument than a pyramid; the examples mentioned are sages appearing in wisdom texts.) There is no Egyptian term corresponding to Heb *hokmâ* (“wisdom”). Egyptian wisdom texts employ the word *maʿat* (hereafter *Maat*), signifying “truth, justice, righteousness, order.” Wisdom Literature consists of two major genres: “teachings” (Eg *sbʿjyt*) and lamentations (also comprising dialogues and prophecies). The teachings deal with *Maat* and the individual, the lamentations with society as a whole vis-à-vis the social and political norms of *Maat*.

Teachings date back to a time perhaps as early as the OK. Following the Egyptian tradition, the genre of teachings begins with Imhotep, the famous vizier of King Djoser of the 3d Dyn.; the “literary dates” of many preserved teachings point to the OK: *Instruction for Kagemni* (Snofru). *Instruction of Djedefhor* (4th Dyn.), *Instruction of Ptahhotep* (Iseki of the 5th Dyn.). All these dates may be literary fictions, but the possibility of an OK date for at least a part of these texts cannot be entirely excluded. Whereas teachings continue well into Hellenism (Lichtheim 1983; Sanders 1983), lamentations seem to be confined to the MK and to the Late Period. Late examples are: the Moscow Literary letter (Caminos 1977), demotic texts like the *Oracle of the Lamb* and the *Demotic Chronicle*, and the Greek *Oracle of the Potter*. Many of the (presumably) MK texts are, however, preserved on New Kingdom (hereafter: NK) mss (Neferti, Khakheperreseneb [AEL 1: 145–49], Admonitions [AEL 1: 149–63]).

b. Narratives. (1) Didactic. There are two narratives of the MK which show a very high level of reflection and have therefore been labeled “didactic” pieces (Otto 1966). These are the *Story of Sinuhe* and the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*. Both are situated outside Egypt. Sinuhe flees from Egypt to Palestine, where he achieves wealth, family, and social recognition, but returns to Egypt in order to be buried with royal favors (Loprieno 1988). The story reflects upon problems of intentionality (attributing the flight to the “plan of some god”), of the relationship between human and divine, commoner and king, individual and the social environment and the individual with the interior self (Eg *jb* “heart”). The story illustrates the basic conviction, typical of ancient Egypt, that there is an indissoluble bond between pharaonic dominion and life beyond death. The shipwrecked sailor (AEL 1:211–15) travels east and become stranded, after a shipwreck, as sole survivor on the shore of an exotic island, where he encounters a serpent god. The question which the serpent asks repeatedly and with increasing emphasis, “Who has brought thee to this island?”, requires the answer “god,” and thus points in the same direction as *Sinuhe*: divine intervention in human life. A special feature of this text is its concentric structure. Not only is there a *frame-story* motivating the main tale and providing it with a setting, but also an interior tale told by the serpent. Both tales have a consolatory and admonitory function. The serpent admonishes the sailor to survive solitude by self-control (*dôr jb*), the sailor admonishes an expedition leader to overcome fear by self-control.

From later tradition, only the report of Wenamun (Helck

LÄ 6: 1215–17; Loprieno 1988: 64; AEL 2: 224–30) may be compared with these MK stories. It is most closely related to Sinuhe in its imitation of a nonliterary form: Sinuhe is cast in the shape of a tomb biography, Wenamun in the shape of an official report. Wenamun addresses the same topic: an Egyptian outside Egypt. Wenamun travels to Byblos on an official mission to fetch lumber for the bark of Amun. His lord is none other than Amun himself, for the story takes place in the time of the Theban theocracy (21st Dyn.). The pretention and impotence of this regime are most amusingly ridiculed by the diverse failures of the hero to acquit himself of his commission.

The *Doomed Prince* (pBM 10060 = Harris 500 vso 4.1–8.15; Gardiner 1932: 1–9; AEL 2: 200–3) is another NK story dealing with the Egyptian abroad, but in a completely different, fairy tale manner. A prince is doomed to die by one of three destinies: the crocodile, the serpent, or the dog. He emigrates to Syria, marries a princess, and escapes his first destiny by her vigilance (the remainder is lost; pBM 10060 = Harris 500 vso 4.1–8.15). The allegorical story of the *Blinding of Truth* (pBM 10682; Gardiner 1932: 30–36) may be classified as “didactic” because of its strong moralizing tone. “Truth,” a man, is falsely accused of theft by his brother “Lie,” and blinded. But “Truth” begets a son with “Desire” (the name is only conjectural), who avenges his blind father before the tribunal. The story stresses the two fundamentals of Egyptian ethics: the superiority of truth over lies, and the son as avenger of his father (in which respect the story is an allegorical variant of the myth of Osiris).

(2) **Mythological Tales.** Contrary to what might be expected in Egypt, mythological tales belong not to religious but to “entertainment” literature, the only exception being the insertion of mythological episodes in magical spells, where they assume the function of mythical precedents. There are no nonmagical examples preserved antedating the NK. The most important text is *The Contendings of Horus and Seth* (AEL 2: 214–23) preserved on pChester Beatty I. In its present form, this text is an attempt at collecting various tales and episodes concerning the struggle of Horus and Seth for the succession to the throne of Osiris within the frame of an endless litigation. Six episodes appear to have originally been autonomous tales: (1) the offending and reconciling of Re (who is offended by Baba’s injunction: “Your shrine is empty,” and reconciled by Hathor (who shows him her pudenda); (2) the ruse of Isis who, in the guise of a beautiful girl, brings Seth to proclaim his own judgment (an etiology of the claw-footed god Nemti); (3) Horus and Seth’s combat as hippopotami (Säve-Söderbergh 1953); (4) the blinding and healing of Horus; and (5) the “homosexual episode” (this portion appears already in a late MK papyrus from Kahun, probably in a medico-magical context [pKahun VI, 12 recto; cf. Posener 1951b: 36.]).

Other tales are fragmentarily preserved: an early version of the *Myth of the Solar Eye* (pMoscow 167, ed. Caminos 1956: 40–50) and a story concerning the Syrian goddess Astarte (pAmherst 9; Gardiner 1932: 76–81; see also Helck 1983). The *Story of Isis and Re* (pTurin Pleyte and Rossi pl. 131.10–135.14 and pChester Beatty XI rto. [Gardiner 1935, pl 64]; ANET, 12–14) figures in a magical text. Common to these tales is a rather burlesque rendering of

the divine characters and actions, a feature also characteristic of Mesopotamian mythology. Very different in its exterior form of presentation is the *Myth of the Heavenly Cow* (Hornung 1982), preserved as an element of wall decoration in royal tombs, perhaps because of its proximity to cosmography. This myth gives an account of the “Fall,” or rather of the “Parting,” of the world, because it is the separation of heaven and earth, of gods and men, which, according to Egyptian concepts, marks the decline of the “Golden Age.” The *Tale of the Two Brothers* (Gardiner 1932: 9–30; AEL 2: 203–11; Blumenthal 1973: 1–17) is not a myth but rather a folk tale whose protagonists are gods. (The mythological links point to the 17th–18th nome of Upper Egypt, where Anubis and Bata appear together in cult legends.) The story resembles the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. Bata, a herdsman, is asked by Anubis, his elder brother and a farmer, to help him with the sowing (in Egypt the seed was stamped into the ground by cattle which were driven over the newly sown fields). Anubis sends Bata home to bring more seed, where the wife of Anubis tries in vain to seduce him. Later, she calumniates him before her husband. In its Egyptian version, the myth has an evident original meaning: the act of sowing puts the herdsman in a suspicious position, because he enters and even “inseminates” the farmer’s fields with his cattle. The tale, by its explicit exculpation of the alleged adulterer, helps to disambiguate the situation. On tomb reliefs of the OK there is even a song connected with the scene of sowing which alludes to the myth of Bata, the innocent shepherd (Assmann 1977a; 20–21).

(3) **Tales of Kings.** Apart from official inscriptions, narratives in which kings appear as protagonists are surprisingly rare: the *Story of Neferkare and the General Sisene* (pChassinat I = Louvre E 25351; Posener 1957) and the *Story of King Djedkare(?) and General Merire* (pVandier = pLille; Posener 1985) are tales situated in the distant past and critical of the pharaoh and his moral stature. In the first tale, Pepi II indulges in nocturnal escapades with homosexual implications and neglects law and order; in the second tale, Pharaoh breaks his promise to protect the widow and orphan of Merire, who has consented to die in his stead. With these tales, we are close to the anecdotes of Egyptian kings which appear in Herodotus’ history and reflect the oral tradition of the time. But in the *Tale of the Two Brothers*, the pharaoh also appears as an unprincipled dallier with his wives, courtiers, and appetites (Posener [1960] contrasts the negative image of the king in literary narratives with the elevated representation of divine kingship in official records).

Closer to official literature may have been the fragmentary *Story of Apophis and Seqenenre* (Gardiner 1932: 85–89; Goedicke 1986; LAE, 77–80). But here also, one is surprised to find Seqenenre, who to judge by the state of his mummy must have met a heroic death in a battle against the Hyksos, unable to find an adequate answer to the insulting challenge of the Hyksos king, who has complained about the noise of the hippopotami. The narrative contrasts sharply with a contemporary and official document, the stelae of Kamose, which glorifies the deeds of the victorious king.

Related to royal narratives is *The Story of King Kheops and the Magicians* (pWestcar [pBerlin 3033]; Blackman 1988;

LÄ 4: 743–45; AEL 1: 216–22; LAE, 16–30). Various tales about miracles worked by several magicians are followed by an account of the divine origin of the 5th Dyn.: the sun god begets triplets with Rud-djedet, the mortal wife of a provincial priest, and the triplets eventually ascend the throne of Egypt (Brunner-Traut 1988: 31–59). Kheops (Khufu) threatens the newborn future kings with persecution (like Herod in Matt 2), showing the typical unreliability of the “roi des contes” (Posener 1956: 10–13).

(4) **Satire.** Many of the ostraca and some papyri which contain series of drawings seem to give illustrations of fables (Brunner-Traut 1968) and fabliaux (Omlin 1973) existing only in oral tradition. Some of the fables recur in demotic and Greek texts more than a thousand years later (parallels have been pointed out by E. Brunner-Traut in various articles). Especially conspicuous is the theme of the “world turned upside down,” e.g., a mouse pharaoh conquering a town defended by cats (Brunner-Traut 1968: 4 with fig. 1) or a hippopotamus collecting figs in a tree (ibid. p. 5 with fig. 8). These pictures give an idea of what might have been Egypt's place in the “history of laughter” (see also HUMOR AND WIT [ANCIENT EGYPT]).

(5) **The World of the School.** Although the school is where most of the belles-lettres were transmitted and perhaps also produced, there are some texts or books which seem connected with this institution in a more particular way. The book *Kmjt* (“the sum”), which dates from the MK and which Posener was able to reconstruct out of hundreds of ostraca (Posener 1951a), has been convincingly identified as a schoolbook containing formulas of salutation, narrative passages, and maxims (Barta 1978). In the NK, the “satirical letter” (pAnastasi I; ANET, 475–79) served similar purposes, presenting a great variety of salutation formulas and information about the geography of Palestine and related subjects (Gardiner 1911; Fischer-Elfert 1986). The most characteristic feature of scholastic literature is found in the “miscellanies,” papyri containing model letters and literary exercises of all sorts. Miscellanies include eulogies; hymns and prayers; admonitions to the pupil not to become a soldier, or not to get drunk or indulge in similar debaucheries; satires of the trades (after the model of the *Instruction of Kheti*, perhaps the most famous classic of Egyptian literature [see Brunner 1944; Helck 1970]); and lists of commodities (Gardiner 1937; Caminos 1957). Real letters, a fair number of which have been found, exhibit the hallmarks of this scribal training (Bakir 1970), but they cannot be considered “literature” even in the broadest sense of the term. (Letters from the NK were published by J. Černý [1939] and translated by Wente [1967]. Letters to the dead were published by Gardiner and Sethe [1925].)

c. **Poetry.** (1) **Religious Poetry.** Hymns and prayers appear in both the genre of belles-lettres and the functional genre of temple literature. In spite of some common aspects, the two categories are distinct. The *Hymn to the Nile* (latest edition: van der Plas 1986), which appears in NK mss as one of the “classics” of MK poetry to be studied in school, is clearly a literary text. The hymn is didactic, depicting a great variety of phenomena from both nature and culture as manifestations and gifts of the Nile. The *Teaching for Merikare* (AEL 1: 97–109) closes with a beautiful hymn to the creator god. At the end of a passage, the

central theme of which is recompense and retribution, the author shows that god has always given, thus placing all human action in the role of response. The famous Cairo hymn to Amun-Re (ÄHG No. 87; ANET, 365–67) is a collection of hymns evidently intended more for literary than for liturgical purposes (the number of surviving ostraca indicates that the text was studied in school). Both texts praise “God” as the one and only creator and maintainer of the world, the other gods being merely part of the world, along with men and animals, heaven and earth, trees and plants. The hymns from Tell el-Amarna (ÄHG Nos. 91–95), which may well have been composed by King Akhenaten himself, continue in some way this tradition and may, in spite of their liturgical purpose, be placed among religious poetry because of their unusual perfection. The Leiden Papyrus J 350 contains a cycle of hymns to Amun, arranged by numerical puns as in some cycles of love songs. Some of these hymns, e.g., the hymn “200” (ANET, 368), mark the summit of Egyptian theological reflection (Assmann 1984: 274–77). These texts achieve a new concept of the oneness of “God,” in opposition to the virtually infinite multitude of “gods.” Instead of primacy—one divinity ruling others—there emerges the idea of abscondity—God being the hidden unity symbolized by the manifest multitude of divinities—to dominate theological discourse.

An important part of scholarly “miscellanies” is allotted to prayers (ÄHG Nos. 174–95) and among the exercises on ostraca are some of the jewels of Egyptian religious poetry (e.g., AEL 2: 110–14). These poems share the spirit of personal piety which dominates late Egyptian Wisdom Literature, exemplified in the *Wisdom of Amenemope* (AEL 2: 146–63; Assmann 1979).

(2) **Banquet Poetry.** Banquet or “entertainment” songs are linked with the Egyptian concepts (and customs) of “making holiday” (*jrj hrw nfr*), “following the heart” (*sms jb*) and “diversion” (*shmh jb*, lit. “cause the heart to forget” [Fox 1982; Assmann 1989a]). Two genres in particular seem to be connected with the banquet scene: love songs (see the article on EGYPTIAN LOVE SONGS below) and harper's songs.

Some 25 harper's songs have so far been identified (Assmann 1977b). With the exception of one song on papyrus—said to have been copied from the tomb of a king “Antef” (AEL 1: 194–97; ANET, 467)—all are preserved on tomb walls, accompanying the figure of a harper or lutist. They can be classified into two groups: (1) the “make merry” songs, which combine the motifs of *memento mori* and *carpe diem*, and (2) songs which assume the form and content of funerary liturgies. Only group (1) has been preserved—within the context of tomb decoration—the characteristics of its original situation: the festive banquet. The *memento mori* motif—in connection with an exhortation to enjoy life—occurs from the epic of Gilgamesh and the biblical book of Qohelet to late Egyptian festival customs as described by Herodotus (2.78) and in the Roman writers Horace and Petronius.

2. **Functional Literature.** a. **Temple literature.** (1) **Recitation literature.** The most archaic ritual papyrus, the “Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus,” discovered in a wooden chest along with literary works (*Sinuhe*, *Eloquent Peasant*, and wisdom texts) and medico-magical texts, con-

tains a ritual for the accession or jubilee of Sesostri I (Sethe 1929; Barta 1976). The papyrus is horizontally divided into a broader zone containing the text (139 lines referring to 47 scenes), beneath which runs a narrow strip with 31 pictures. The text of each scene begins with (1) the title of the scene and (2) its mythical interpretation, followed by (3) a direct speech, which is introduced by an identification of the (always divine) speaker and addressee, and (4) some notes concerning roles, objects, and places. Nos. 2 and 3 typically refer to the divine world, whereas No. 1 and the pictures refer to the cultic sphere, giving the names of priests, objects, and ritual actions. Two elements are very typical of the Egyptian cult: first, cultic communication is divine communication, man addressing the gods in the role of a god (Horus or Thoth) and uttering words which have the magical force of divine speech; second, cultic action is interpreted by the accompanying recitation as a mythical event taking place in the divine world ("sacramental interpretation"). But the myths are never coherently represented in cultic action, only alluded to in a very discontinuous manner. The coherence of the ritual is on the cultic level, not on the level of mythical interpretation (Schott 1945; Otto 1958).

A similar "dramatic text" is preserved on the Shabaka stone in the British Museum and forms the first part of the "Memphite Theology" (*AEL* 1:51–57), but this text refers exclusively to the mythical sphere. It gives an account of the development of the Egyptian kingdom (1st stage: two kingdoms under Horus and Seth; 2d stage: one kingdom under Horus at Memphis; see Junker 1941). Here, coherence is established on the mythical, not the ritual, level. We are dealing here with ritual and even dramatic representation of mythical events; this type of cultic performance seems to be exclusively connected with some of the major festivals, like that of Osiris at Abydos (see Schäfer 1904) or the *Triumph of Horus* as it was performed in Ptolemaic times in Edfu (Fairman 1974) and Philae (Goedicke 1982). The festival of "the birth of the god" (*mswt ntr*) was performed in the *mammisi* ("birth house," attached to the temples) in the form of a sacred drama consisting of a sequence of scenes and long speeches of gods (Daumas 1958; Sauneron 1962: 185–244). (For the general question of theater in Egypt, see Drioton 1942.)

Several papyri from the early Ptolemaic to the Roman period contain liturgies especially connected with rites and ceremonies of the cult of Osiris in Abydos. Most important among these texts, in terms of lyrical composition, is the *Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys* which exist in several versions (pBerlin 3008 [Faulkner 1935–38; *AEL* 3: 116–21; pBremner Rhind [Faulkner 1933]; pNew York Metropolitan Museum of Art 35.9.21, 38–54). Another important genre of recitation connected with the cult of Osiris is the so-called *glorification* (*sōhw*), several liturgical collections of which are preserved (Goyon 1974; Haikal 1972; Möller 1900; Smith 1987). The cultic setting of both lamentations and glorifications is the *Stundenwachen* (hourly vigil), an Osirian rite performed in the temples of Edfu, Dendera, Philae, and elsewhere (Junker 1910; Soukiassian 1982).

The purpose of the daily temple ritual is to tend to the cult image with fumigations, libations, unctions, and adorations (pBerlin 3055 [Moret 1902]), and to feed the god

(this aspect of the ritual has been preserved in the ritual for Amenophis I [pChester Beatty IX; Gardiner 1935, pls. 50–58 and pCairo CG 58030 + pTurin CG 54041]). In the Ramesside period, the scene of the offering of Maat, a symbol of truth, justice, and order to be established on earth by the king, gains a prominent place in the ritual. This scene by itself expresses the whole ideology of sacrifice, which, in Egypt, is based not on the idea of a communal meal, where the community of offerers or sacrificers share in the consuming of the victim (as in the Mesopotamian, Israelite, and Greek conception), but on the idea of exchange (in the sense of Mauss 1966), where humans render to the divinities what they have given, in order that they continue to give. Maat is what emanates from god in the form of vivifying and organizing energies, and it is rendered to one "who lives on Maat" as justice and ritual correctness. This idea is expressed in a long recitation, the "Litany of Maat," which accompanies the offering (*ÄHG* No. 125). The Litany originated in the cult of the sun god, but extended to other cults during the NK, especially that of Amun-Re, it is attested in the Ptolemaic period in numerous copies in all the major temples. Another prominent place in the daily as well as the festival ritual was allotted to the recitation of hymns, of which several hundred exist mostly on private (i.e., funerary) monuments. The hymns to the sun god and to Amun-Re show an especially great variety of form and theological evolution during the NK (Oswalt 1968; Assmann 1969; 1983a; 1983b; Daumas and Barucq 1980). The most explicit version of the myth of Osiris is to be found in a hymn to Osiris on a stela of the 18th Dyn. (*AEL* 2: 81–85). Hymns to the king exist on papyri from the MK (cycle of hymns on Sesostri III; pKahun [*ÄHG* Nos. 228–31]) and of the Ramesside period (Condon 1978). The "Loyalist Instruction" (*LAE*, 198–200), a wisdom text of the MK, begins with an elaborate eulogy of the king (Posener 1976).

A special place must be reserved to the (mostly penitential) hymns and prayers subsumed under the rubric *personal piety*. Some forerunners date back to the 18th Dynasty (Posener 1975), but as a literary phenomenon the movement belongs to the age of the Ramessides (13th–11th centuries). Personal calamity, sickness especially, is now interpreted as a case of divine intervention (Borghouts 1982; Griffiths 1988) in punishment for some crime which has to be publicly confessed in order to restore the disturbed relationship between the individual and the offended deity. Many of the texts show remarkable literary qualities in their poetic form and religious content, thus testifying to an oral tradition which may have originated during the Amarna age (14th century B.C.) as a period of persecution, during which the ancient cults were prohibited and adversity was explained as divine wrath and abandonment (Assmann 1984: 258–67).

(2) **Theological and Mythological Treatises.** Scattered among various genres of temple and even funerary literature (like spells, hymns, and architectural inscriptions), some texts display elements of a coherent theological system. Among the earliest examples are the "Theology of Shu" in Coffin Texts (CT) spells 75–83 (de Buck 1947; Assmann 1984: 209–15; Allen 1988: 13–27), and the "Theodicy" in CT spell 1130 (Assmann 1984: 204–8). CT spell 80 recounts how Atum floated unconscious in the

primeval waters and, in the act of becoming conscious, "becomes three" (CT II 39e). The ancient names of Shu and Tefnut, the twin children of Atum with their cosmic significations "air" and "humidity" (?), are translated in the new theologico-philosophical system as "life" and "truth" (Maat).

Thus, "life" and "truth," together with Atum (whose name expresses both the "totality" and "nonexistence" of being), constitute a primordial trinity foreshadowing similar conceptions in neo-Platonist cosmology. The theodicy of spell 1130 is a monologue in which the creator takes credit for four good deeds which he performed at the time of creation. In listing the four deeds, the god makes two assertions of prime importance: that he created all persons as equals; and that it was not he who taught humanity to do wrong; rather, people do wrong of their own volition (AEL 1: 131–33; ANET, 7–8).

It has been argued that the theodicy of CT spell 1130 may have been a response to that part of the *Admonitions of Ipu-Wer* (AEL 1: 149–63), which Otto has called *The Reproach to God* (Otto 1950; Fecht 1972). The most famous of Egyptian theological treatises is preserved in the second part of the Shabaka inscription (commonly referred to as the "Memphite Theology": Breasted 1901; Sethe 1929: 1–80; Junker 1940; ANET, 4–6; AEL 1: 51–57; Allen 1988: 42–47, 91–93), which recounts how Ptah created the world "through heart and tongue," i.e., by conception and proclamation, and how heart and tongue operate in nature. The text, which had formerly been dated to the OK, is now proved to be, at least in its final state, not earlier than the 13th century B.C. In the stress it lays on conception and speech as means of creation, it comes closest to the biblical account of creation (Koch 1965). Theban theology produced a similar treatise, which centers around the concept of "life": Amun vivifying the cosmos by means of his 10 *Bas*: *Bas* 1–5 are the vivifying elements: the sun, the moon, the air (Shu), the water (Nun), the fire (Tefnut); *Bas* 6–10 are the vivified beings: the royal Ka (humanity), the lion-and-bull (i.e., quadrupeds), the hawk (i.e., birds), the crocodile (i.e., fishes and reptiles) and the serpent (i.e., the dead and all chthonic animals) (ÄHG No. 128; Goyon, Parker and Leclant 1979: 69–79).

Many of the great hymns from the Ramesside period onward shows the same systematizing approach and may well be termed treatises (note ÄHG Nos. 127–31, 143–45; AEL 3: 109–15; Sauneron 1962). Architectural inscriptions of Ptolemaic temples often include very elaborate accounts of the mythical origin of the temple. Obviously, these inscriptions represent a larger body of mytho-theological literature which is otherwise lost.

b. Funerary (Mortuary) Literature. (1) **Funerary and Mortuary Service.** The funerary ritual exists only in the form of a sequence of pictures (Settgast 1963); the accompanying recitations are lost, except for a great variety of dirges, some of which are very expressive in their treatment of affliction and bereavement (Lüddeckens 1943). Much better preserved is the ritual of "Opening the Mouth," for which we have not only the pictures but also the spells (Otto 1960; Goyon 1972: 85–182). The ritual was originally intended for the "vivification" of statues and was later extended to mummies, objects, and even temples. It contains a very archaic section (scenes 8–21) where the

"shape" (*jrw*) of the deceased is captured by the sleeping son in an oneiric vision. (P. Munro [1984] interprets this part as the ancient ritual of regicide). The embalming, which took place in a separate building (*w'bt*) during the 70 days between death and burial (see also EMBALMING), was accompanied by the recitation of a collection of spells known as the "Ritual of Embalment" (Sauneron 1952; Goyon 1972: 17–84) as well as of the ceremonies of *Stundenwachen* (hourly vigil) comprising lamentations and glorifications (LÄ 6: 104–6). The offering cult in the tomb chapel was also accompanied by recitations, which appear as inscriptions on tomb walls but are also found on papyrus (LÄ 6: 998–1006). Many hundreds of these "glorification spells" (*s3hw*) exist. They complement the corpus of funerary literature in a fortuitous way, because they belong to a "productive" rather than "reproductive" tradition and thus reflect the development of funerary beliefs far better than the magical spells of funerary literature.

(2) **Funerary Literature.** The textual equipment of the dead is called "funerary literature" (Sethe *Pyr*). In the OK, it is restricted to the tombs of kings and appears from the end of the 5th Dyn. (e.g., pyramid of Unas: see Piankoff and Jacquet-Gordon 1974) in the form of hieroglyphic inscriptions on the walls of the hidden chambers inside the pyramid. More than 2,200 spells are known; together these constitute the so-called "Pyramid Texts" (PT; Sethe *Pyr*; Faulkner 1969), the most ancient corpus of religious texts. After the breakdown of the OK, the institution of funerary literature was extended to nonroyal use (a process called "democratization," or better "demotization"). Many of the PT survived embedded among a great number of new spells, the "Coffin Texts" (CT: de Buck 1935–61; Faulkner 1973–78; Barguet 1986), which were inscribed on the panels of wooden coffins of the MK. In the NK, a selection of these spells reappears together with new spells on papyrus scrolls known as "Books of the Dead" (BD; Naville 1886; Budge 1898, 1910; Faulkner 1985; Hornung 1979). During the NK, and until the Late Period, there is great variation among the individual scrolls: no two of them coincide. Only in the Saite or Persian period does this fluctuation give way to a more strictly canonized form, where the number and sequence of "chapters" become standardized (Lepsius 1842; Allen 1960). In the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, new compositions appear which are more adequate to the changed funerary beliefs of the period: the two "books of breathing" (Goyon 1972, 183–317) and the "book of traversing eternity" (Stricker 1950–56). Related documents are the collections of "glorification spells" (*s3hw*) which occur on separate scrolls or annexed to Books of the Dead, both in Hieratic and Demotic (Smith 1987) script (Goyon 1974).

The spells of the PT are still close to cultic recitations performed in the process of embalming, the funerary procession, and the mortuary cult. Probably all of them derive from "festival scrolls" (*h3bt*), though only the spells connected with the ritual of food offering (PT 26–203) can be attributed with any certainty to a cultic context. Many of these sequences of spells remain in liturgical use until the LP, when they reappear, copied not from the pyramids themselves but from other liturgical manuscripts in the temple library (Möller 1900). The principle of "sacramental interpretation" is very prominent in almost

all the spells. For example, in PT 373 the presentation of food is connected with the sacramental ideas of revivification (bodily reintegration) and ascension to heaven.

Spell 273–74, the famous “cannibal hymn,” gives a sacramental interpretation of some yet unidentified rite, wherein the king is said to “live on his fathers and to feed on his mothers” (*AEL* 1: 36–38). With the CT, the situation is different. Here one finds liturgical sequences of spells, some of which can be traced back to the PT and downward to liturgical papyri of the Ptolemaic period. Most of the spells serve some magical purpose for the deceased in the hereafter: “transformation spells” to transform him into every shape he desires, “food spells” to provide him with food, every kind of apotropaic spell to ward off dangerous demons, the “Book of the Two Ways” to guide him through the difficult topography of the netherworld (Lesko 1972), as well as the maps of the “field of Hetep,” the Egyptian paradise (Lesko 1971–72; Mueller 1972). Titles and postscripts, carefully written in red, give indications as to function, accompanying pictures, objects, actions, and success (“proved efficient, a million times”). This “bookish” layout of the texts contrasts most strikingly with the monumental austerity of the PT. The PT “eternalize” the oral recitations of the funerary and mortuary cult, the CT equip the deceased with all kinds of magical material and knowledge concerning the hereafter. The BD continues this development from funerary liturgy to magical book. The great innovation of the 18th Dyn. are multicolored vignettes, which come into standard use after the Amarna period (Munro 1988). With the *Book of the Dead*, the Egyptian idea of a post-mortem judgment has achieved its classical form (chaps. 30 and 125; see Yoyotte 1961; Brandon 1967; for representations, Seeber 1976, and Grieshammer 1970 for earlier stages). Another remarkable text is chap. 17 (= CT spell 335), which seems to be one of the very few Egyptian texts that received a “philological” treatment in the form of a commentary with numerous glosses written in red ink (Rössler-Köhler 1976).

(3) **Books of the Netherworld.** Whereas the PT are exclusively royal, the CT and BD are nonroyal. Only with the NK does a new body of texts appear which seem to function as exclusively royal funerary literature. These are the “books” which decorate the walls of the royal tombs. For the most ancient compositions, the “Amduat” and the “Litany of Re,” an origin in the solar cult is very probable. But some of the later compositions which do not appear in tombs until after the Amarna period may have been made expressly for the royal hereafter. All of them, however, are centered around the theme of the solar circuit in its nocturnal phase (when the sun god Re passed through the underworld) and may be better understood as codifications of priestly knowledge in connection with the solar cult.

c. **Magical Incantations.** Magic, following the *Teaching for Merikare* (*AEL* 1:106), was given to humanity as a weapon “to shield off the blow of what might happen.” Magic is always directed “against” something: snakes, scorpions, evil demons that might threaten a newborn child, and especially diseases. There is a very strong link between medicine and magic, and most of the preserved texts are medico-magical. But magic can also be directed against political enemies (Sethé 1926) or cosmic foes (pBremner

Rhind 22.1–32.12 [Faulkner 1933]) and is therefore not restricted to the private sphere (as opposed to the temple). Catalogs of sacred books mention compositions entitled “Manifestations of Re” (*b3w R'w*), which may well have been magical books of execration and protection. The literary importance of magical literature lies in the fact that it preserves many accounts of mythical episodes in a vivid and often even poetically structured narration (among the most important are “Re and Isis” [*ANET*, 12–14] and the texts on the Metternich stela [Klasens 1952]. For a very useful collection of translated spells, see Borghouts 1978).

d. **Codifications of Knowledge.** (1) **Onomastica.** Egypt cannot compete with Mesopotamia in its use of lists and tables for the systematization of knowledge. But this might be due to the scarcity of secular material. The Abusir Papyri from the archives of the funerary temple of Neferirkare Kakai (ca. 2470 B.C.) make ample and very careful use of tabular forms (Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival 1968; Posener-Kriéger 1976). Many of the spells of the CT and some of the chapters in the BD reflect these bureaucratic techniques in their arrangement. They are arranged in the same systematizing manner, listing the parts of the ferry boat (CT 398) or the fowling net (CT 474; see Bidoli 1976) and their mythical counterparts, the members of the body and their divine equivalents (BD 42) and the 42 assessors of the divine tribunal, their places of origin, and the specific sins which the deceased declares not to have committed (BD 125). Especially important is the “list of offerings” which developed during the first five dynasties. The first lists were documents of real funerary possessions and equipment, but soon such lists became standardized and developed into tabular representations of a very complex ritual of funerary offerings (Barta 1963).

The Egyptian Onomastica, catalogs of things arranged by their kind, contain “everything that Ptah has created, what Thoth has written down, heaven with its affairs, earth and what is in it, what the mountains belch forth, what is watered by the flood, all things upon which Re has shone, all that is grown on the back of earth” (Gardiner 1947: *Onomasticon of Amenemope*). The earliest example of this genre dates back to the MK, but the best-known composition, the onomasticon of Amenemope, is from the 21st Dyn. (11th century B.C.). These Egyptian “catalogs of the universe” have been compared with the closing chapters of the book of Job (von Rad 1960; Keel 1978: 24). There are strong connections between the onomastica and the “satirical letter” (pAnastasi I), which may be regarded as just a variant form of presentation for a similar albeit more specialized material. The latest onomasticon, dating from the 1st and 2d centuries A.D., was discovered by J. Osing on a papyrus from Tebtunis. Here, we are dealing with a real vocabulary, because the material is arranged in linguistic categories.

The famous king-lists date from the NK and exist in monumental form at Karnak (Redford 1986: 29–34) and Abydos (ibid: 18–20), as well as on a papyrus (the “Royal Canon of Turin”). The papyrus list is much more complete than the monumental versions and represents the kind of sources on which Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca* was based.

King-lists and annals have to be carefully distinguished from historiography; they contain no narration and thence do not attribute any specific meaning or signifi-

cance to the past, but are simply tools of time reckoning and chronological orientation (Redford 1986). Similar attempts at systematization and codification must have been undertaken for other fields of knowledge as well, but these are only indirectly attested. The beautiful reliefs in the solar sanctuary of Niuserre (5th Dyn. [Edel 1961–64]) and the reliefs of Thutmose III known as “Botanical Garden” (Porter Moss 1960–81, 2: 120) show a sophisticated level of biological knowledge. (The Punt reliefs in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari are similar.) A papyrus in Brooklyn with an ophiological treatise is still unpublished. The existence of legal codifications is, however, controversial (Allam 1984).

(2) **Medical and Mathematical Manuals.** Medical manuscripts exist in great numbers from the MK (pKahun, pRamesseum III, IV and V; and many medico-magical manuscripts) to Roman times (Reymond 1976). The most important manuscripts date from the NK, but may contain much older material (pEbers, pEdwin Smith, pHearst, pMedLondon, pMedBeatty VI, pCarlsberg VIII, and pMedBerlin 3038; a list is given in HO 1/2² §36 pp. 212–14). The manuscripts differ very significantly from each other in the extent of magical elements. Some are almost free of magic (pSmith, pEbers, pDemWien), some almost free of technical medicine.

Medicine was the domain of the priests of Sakhmet, who were assigned to the “House of Life” and combined the highest erudition in all fields of science with magical competence (von Känel 1984; Ghalioungui 1983). The medical manuscripts, especially pSmith and pEbers, are excellent examples of “scientific prose.” The individual sections follow strict formal patterns and often contain glosses written in red ink which explicate phrases and technical terms, or provide additional information or variant readings.

Mathematical manuals are attested from the MK onward (pRhind = pBM 10057 + 58 from the Hyksos period, copy of an MK original; five MK documents, others of Greco-Roman date). The NK is represented only by a section in pAnastasi I. The title of pRhind is of remarkable solemnity:

Exact reckoning. The entrance into the knowledge of all that exists, everything obscure, (. . .), every secret. (Peet 1923: 33; Chace et al. 1927: 49)

The manuscripts give collections of mathematical problems arranged in systematic order (Gillings 1972).

(3) **Cosmographies.** (a) **“Funerary” cosmographies in the royal tombs.** The “Books of the Netherworld,” which appeared as elements of wall decoration in the royal tombs since the reign of Thutmose I, can be viewed in two ways: (1) as the royal equivalent to the Book of the Dead, that is, as funerary literature (Barta 1985), and (2) as cosmographic codifications of knowledge about the netherworld and part of a “sacerdotal science” particularly connected with the solar cult (Assmann 1970). The earliest of these compositions are the *Amduat* (Hornung 1963–67) and the *Litany of Re* (Hornung 1975). The first is more descriptive, being an itinerary of the nocturnal part of the sun’s circuit; the second is more liturgical, consisting of laudations in invocations of the sun god. But the *Amduat* also integrates,

alongside descriptive passages, a great number of hymns and speeches into its cartography. Word and image are very closely related in this genre, the most striking feature of which perhaps being that it presents a vast amount of knowledge about the unknown in the same clear arrangement as the tables of Egyptian bureaucracy. There are no blanks in these maps of the netherworld.

After the Amarna period, other compositions of this type appear in the royal tombs: first the *Book of Gates* (Hornung 1980) and the *Book of the Heavenly Cow* (since Tutankhamun: Hornung 1982), later also the *Book of the Earth* (Piankoff 1953), the *Book of Caverns* (Piankoff 1946), the *Book of Nut* (Neugebauer and Parker 1960) and lesser documents (Hornung 1984). In these books, the descriptive and iconic parts recede in favor of the recitative parts, a distribution which might be indicative of their function as funerary literature (which is primarily recitation or incantation literature). One of these books, however—the *Book of Day and Night* (Piankoff 1942)—is exclusively descriptive but belongs to a recitative type, a cycle of sun hymns for each hour of the day, which occurs independently in contexts related to the solar cult (Assmann: “hourly ritual,” *ÄHG* Nos. 1–12). The whole composition appears only in the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu. This proves the affiliation of the entire genre with the solar cult and its pertinent priestly knowledge. A very prominent feature of this literature is its hermetism. These are texts which, until the end of the NK, virtually never occur outside the royal tombs, which were hermetically sealed.

(b) **Geographic manuals of the Late Period.** It is only in the Ptolemaic period that comparably exhaustive and systematic codifications of knowledge referring to the terrestrial sphere appear. There must have existed manuals of religious geography comprising all the nomes of Egypt and indicating for each of them its capital, reliquiae, god and goddess, priest and chantress, bark and canal, tree and holy hill, dates of principal feasts, taboo, serpent, cultivated land and swamps. These manuals must have served as sources for the various processions of nomes and related compositions which appear with striking uniformity in many of the great Ptolemaic temples (Osing discovered an exact parallel to parts of the Edfu list on three papyri from Tebtunis, which proves that there existed a uniform and canonized tradition of religious geography for all the temples of Egypt).

There also existed monographs dealing only with particular areas, but in a more comprehensive manner, inserting mythical traditions, illustrations, and the like; the pJumilhac for the 17th and 18th nome of Upper Egypt (Vandier 1962) and the famous papyri of the Fayyum (Lanzone 1896; Botti 1959) are examples. Another document of religious geography in tabular arrangement is the pTanis 2 (Griffith 1889).

Another field of sacerdotal science was time reckoning and astronomy. The dates of most Egyptian feasts were based on astronomical observation and calendaric calculation, which were therefore of prime necessity for the cult and secondarily for the administration. Astronomical tables of the hours of the night occur already in MK coffins (Neugebauer and Parker 1960). Catalogs of temple libraries and Clement of Alexandria mention many titles having to do with astronomy and chronology (Fowden 1986: 58–

59), but very little is preserved (Neugebauer and Parker 1960). Festival calendars, which form a regular part of temple decoration already in the NK, may be extracts from those chronologico-astronomical manuals.

Omen literature consists chiefly of oneiromantic (pChester Beatty III 1–11r; see Sauneron 1959; for Demotic sources, Volten 1942) and calendric manuals (calendric papyri with lists of lucky or unlucky days with mythological explanations: nine calendars, from MK onward [see Bakir 1966]; for Lunar omina, Parker 1959). A very typical example of what might be termed oracular literature are the *Amuletic decrees* of Dyn. 21–22, where the oracular decision of Amun-Re, the supreme deity, is recorded to protect any individual against all possible dangers coming not only from evil spirits, but also from major deities like Ptah, Thoth, Hathor, Sakhmet, and even Amun himself; the genre thus reveals a deep-rooted distrust and anxiety typical for this period, which extends even to the divine sphere (Edwards 1960). Security is only to be found in a supreme and transcendent deity far above the world, a deity whom the texts circumscribe in an elaborate panegyric letterhead with the titles of the instance which issues the decree (ÄHG No. 131).

3. Monumental Literature. a. Royal Inscriptions. Inscriptions recording royal deeds begin with the 11th Dyn. They manifest a new concept of kingship wherein the king is no longer a god but the incumbent in a divine office and therefore under continuous need of legitimation. His legitimation is based less on any dogma that the king is the incarnation or son of a god than on his deeds, which he therefore proclaims by inscriptions erected in public space. But the “publicity” is directed more to a divine than to a human public, because it is the divine world whose acceptance matters most. Thus, the new concept of kingship, inherited as it seems from the nomarchs of the First Intermediate Period (whose autobiographies, characterized by the same need for legitimation, mark the very summit of the genre), lies at the root of a literary genre which soon becomes productive of significant and carefully formed texts.

One of the first examples, a building inscription of Sesostri I, was even copied centuries later because of its literary merits (de Buck 1938; Goedicke 1974). The literary form of this text, which became normative until the Late Period, has been termed “Königsnovelle” (royal novella: Hermann 1938). A royal decision of far-reaching consequences and its successful realization is framed by a scene of consultation between king and councillors, where reasons are given for the royal action and the superior insight and providence of the king are demonstrated. But even inscriptions which are not couched in the form of a royal novella often show the same concern for careful substantiation of royal actions as, e.g., the boundary stelae of Sesostri III at Semna and Uronarti (AEL 1: 118–19).

Another prominent feature of royal inscriptions are panegyric amplifications of the royal “protocol” (the canonical sequence of five names and titles of the pharaoh). The earliest example occurs in the literary autobiography of Sinuhe (ÄHG No. 227), and hundreds of such “eulogies” occur in inscriptions of the NK. The eulogies develop two major themes: the king as warrior and as lord of temples and cults. During the NK there was a change in the general

pattern of interpreting historical events; in the light of the new “theology of will” underlying the “Personal Piety” movement, events tended to be seen as divine interventions. The most striking examples of this new sense of history are the documents recounting the Battle at Kadesh (van der Way 1984; Goedicke 1985; AEL 2: 57–72), where the victory of Ramses II is attributed to a personal intervention of Amun in his favor, and the Israel Stela of Merenptah (ANET, 376–78; AEL 2: 73–78), where the victory over the Libyans represents the execution of divine judgment in a heavenly tribunal.

The summit of this new theology of history is reached in the inscriptions of Ramses III, perhaps the most pious king on the throne of Egypt, who expressed his piety in a beautiful hymn to Amun-Re (ÄHG No. 196; Oswalt 1968: 148–54) and numerous inscriptions in the form of interlocutory speeches between god and king (Görg 1975). It is to the piety of Ramses III that pHarris I refers in a post-mortem account of royal actions—especially donations—with lists, invocations, prayers, and a historical review recounting the overcoming of chaos at the turn from the 19th to the 20th Dyn. (Erichsen 1933; ARE 4 §§182–412; ANET, 260–62). This section is the most elaborate example of an ancient tradition of restoration texts that begins with inscriptions of nomarchs such as Anchtfi of Moalla and Kheti of Herakleopolis, who boast of themselves as having saved their respective territories from starvation and turmoil. The idea of the ruler as savior was adopted in the *Prophecy of Neferty* (AEL 1: 139–45) for the royal ideology and subsequently exploited in royal inscriptions, but only when the historical situation actually motivated such an interpretation, as in the expulsion of the Hyksos (Hatshepsut: Speos Artemidos Inscription), the restoration of the cults after the Amarna revolt (Tutankhamen, Haremhab, Seti I), the disturbances at the end of the 19th Dyn. (Sethnakht Stela, Elephantine) and at other turning points (Assmann 1983e).

b. Biography. See the separate article on EGYPTIAN BIOGRAPHIES below.

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