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**The Ancient Egyptian Concept of *Maat*:
Reflections on Social Justice and Natural Order**

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The Ancient Egyptian Concept of *Maat*: Reflections on Social Justice and Natural Order

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Abstract:

The ancient Egyptian conception of *Maat* includes connotations of ‘order’, ‘harmony’, ‘rightness’ and true witness. It is used in a wide range of religious, ethical and cosmological contexts. *Maat* as a goddess and idea constituted a fundamental touchstone of ancient Egyptian religion and social life. It emphasized harmonious cooperation as a social idea but also represented the constant cosmic struggle against chaos and disorder. The structural aspects of *Maat* moved beyond normative descriptions and came to reinforce individual piety, intercessory and confessional patterns of prayer, ‘lay’ religious associations and the emergence of saviour cults that became prominent from the Late Period onward.

For modern thinkers, *Maat* provides a useful reflection point on human justice and its relationship to nature and the environment. Beyond the intergenerational justice required by the ecological need for sustainability into future generations and the intra-generational demands of social justice, we too need to conceive of the deeper interconnection between the human and natural orders.

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The Ancient Egyptian Concept of *Maat*: Reflections on Social Justice and Natural Order¹

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1. *Maat*: A Unique Formulation

The nearest concept to that of 'justice' in Egyptian is the notion of *maat*,² which is personified as a goddess, the daughter of Atum, and after the 18th dynasty as the daughter of Re, who establishes *Maat* at the time of creation.³ However, *maat* is a more fluid and pervasive concept than either that of 'justice' or 'truth', and certainly was more than a unitary goddess with precise functions. *Maat* also includes connotations of 'order', 'harmony', 'rightness' and true witness.⁴ It is used in a wide range of religious, ethical and cosmological contexts.⁵ Indeed *Maat* constitutes a fundamental touchstone of Egyptian religion and social life.⁶ It "describes the relation between the government and the gods, the standard established for the Netherworld, and the ultimate force operating the cosmos", thereby reinforcing "the sense of stability desired by the Egyptians."⁷ Siegfried Morenz has accurately grasped the implications of this concept:

¹ The views of the Research Papers are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, position or policies of the *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*. Bearing in mind the controversial debates now occurring in Cultural Studies, International Relations, Strategic Studies, and East-West Studies, the editors endeavour to publish diverse, critical and dissenting views so long as these meet academic criteria.

² Various transliterations as *ma'at*; *m3t*, *m3ct*, *mayet*. For the sake of clarity, *maat* shall be used when referring to the general concept, *Maat* when discussing the personalised goddess. As we shall see, this division is artificial and does not conform to Egyptian distinctions.

³ Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p7, p39; Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Isralit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p199, footnote 43.

⁴ For historical changes in connotation, see Aantes, Rudolf "The Original Meaning of *M3c HRW*", *JNES*, 13 (1954), pp21-39.

⁵ Wilson, John A. *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, Chicago: Chicago Uni. Press, 1951, p48; James, E.O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1958, pp183-4; Sauneron, Serge *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, London: Evergreen, 1960, pp29-30. For *maat* as cosmological order, see Bleeker, C.J. *De Beteekenis van de egyptische Godin Ma-a-t*, Leiden: author publication, 1929, pp36-37.

⁶ Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p7.

⁷ Goff, Beatrice L. *Symbols of Ancient Egypt in the Late Period: The Twenty First Dynasty*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, p180.

Maat is right order in nature and society, as established by the act of creation, and hence means, according to the context, what is right, what is correct, law, order, justice and truth. This state of righteousness needs to be preserved or established, in great matters as in small. Maat is, therefore, not only right order but also the object of human activity. Maat is both the task which a man sets himself and also, as righteousness, the promise and reward that await him on fulfilling it.⁸

Rundle Clark goes so far as to suggest that *maat* is the “earliest approach to the concept of Nature as understood in Western thought.”⁹ *Maat* is intimately involved with the fecundity associated with Osiris, as noted in *Coffin Text* 330:

Whether I live or die I am Osiris,
I enter in and reappear through you,
I decay in you, I grow in you,
I fall down in you, I fall upon my side.
The gods are living in me for I live and grow in the
 corn that sustains the Honoured Ones.
I cover the earth,
 whether I live or die I am Barley,
I am not destroyed.
I have entered the Order <Maat>,
I rely upon the Order,
I become the Master of the Order,
I emerge in the Order,
I make my form distinct . . .¹⁰

The problem here, of course, is that the term ‘nature’ in normal modern European thought is an extremely diverse concept, and one which cannot even be easily correlated with earlier Greek concepts such as *cosmos* or *physis*.¹¹ In the modern period the concept of nature at the both the philosophical and scientific levels has turned out be very complex. We therefore need to study the implications of *maat*, interpreted as ‘nature’, with extreme caution.

It is true, however that the concept of *maat* may have arisen from a physical image which was then extended to the social world:

⁸ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London, Methuen, 1973, p113.

⁹ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p143.

¹⁰ Translated in *Ibid.* p142, brackets added.

¹¹ See Williams, Raymond *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev. ed., edited by Tony Bennett et al. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, pp238-240. For parallels between

Basically, it is probably a physical term, "levelness, evenness, straightness, correctness," in a sense of regularity or order. From that it can be used in the metaphorical sense of "uprightness, righteousness, truth, justice." There was a real emphasis on this *ma'at* in the Middle Kingdom in the sense of social justice, righteous dealing with one's fellow men. That was the main theme of the story of the eloquent peasant, which comes from this period. Throughout his pleadings the peasant demanded from the high official simple justice as a moral right. Just dealing had its minimum in the conscientious carrying-out of responsibilities. . . . justice was not simply legal commerce but was the seeking-out of good in relation to need: ferrying across the river the poor man who could not pay and doing good in advance of any known return.¹²

There is a connection between the basic physical and social meanings of this term. Thus *maat* "as the term for justice referred to 'order', the law-governed nature of the cosmos, but at the same time could refer to the 'basis' or foundations of order as virtually substantial."¹³ John Baines has summarised the concept of *maat* as "both the harmonious cooperation which was projected as a social ideal and the constant struggle to maintain the cosmos against the forces which threatened it."¹⁴

For modern thinkers, *maat* provides a useful reflection point on human justice and its relationship to nature and the environment. Beyond the intergenerational justice required by the ecological need for sustainability into future generations and the intra-generational justice of social justice, we also need to conceive of the deeper interconnection between the human and natural orders. The ancient Egyptians had a unique and beautiful image of this connection in the Goddess Maat, viewed as "perfection in both cosmic and human order."¹⁵ Today, we have only weaker concepts joining these human and natural orders: the contested theory of an anthropic universe

Maat and the Greek goddess Metis, see Faraone, Christopher & Teeter, Emily "Egyptian Maat and Hesiodic Metis", *Mnemosyne*, 57 no. 2, 2004, pp177-207.

¹² Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977, pp108-9.

¹³ Springborg, Patricia *Royal Persons: Patriarchical Monarchy and the Feminine Principle*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p233, following Hornung, Erik *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines, London: Routledge, 1982, pp213-214. See also Anthes, Rudolf "The Original Meaning of *M3c HRW*", *JNES*, 13 (1954), p23-24.

¹⁴ Baines, John "Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation", in O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, p12.

¹⁵ O'Connor, David "Egypt's Views of 'Others'", in Tait, John (ed.) *'Never had the Like Occurred': Egypt's View of Its Past*, London: UCL Press, 2003, pp178.

(in which by definition the laws of the cosmos must be structured to allow for life, intelligence and eventually, ‘us’ as observers) or the heavily criticized concept of Gaia, the idea of a self-correcting feedback in biological and ecological systems that sustains life on the Earth.¹⁶ Neither of these theories has overcome the stronger Darwinian image of a savage world in which competition to propagate drives natural selection, and where humans are able at will to appropriate and destroy natural environments to the point of irreversible change. Yet the search to provide some linkage among cosmic, natural and human orders remains at the heart of much ancient and modern philosophy. Reflections from one major and long-lasting civilization may provide insights into how these relationships may be conceived of in creative rather than reductionist ways.

2. Maat as Social Order and Social Justice

Maat was a core concept helping establish norms of social justice. Jan Assmann has suggested that the “generic term for the totality of all social norms” was *maat*, indicating a kind of “connective justice” that was a touchstone of all of Egyptian civilization, but which came to be explicitly formulated in the Middle Kingdom (circa 2050-1650 BCE).¹⁷ This is seen in some of the literature of this and later periods. The entire text of *The Eloquent Peasant* (dating back to before 1800 BCE) can be taken as a lesson on the responsibility of judges and high officials. This may have been one of the purposes of the scribes who composed and transmitted the work, though it also has

¹⁶ Barrow, John D. & Tipler, Frank J. *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, Oxford: OUP Paperbacks, 1988. For the Gaia hypothesis, see the overview in *New Scientist*, “James Lovelock and the Gaia Hypothesis,” 2013, <https://www.newscientist.com/round-up/gaia/>.

¹⁷ Assmann, Jan *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University, 2003, pp127-128.

humorous and ironic aspects.¹⁸ One of the finest metaphorical comparisons for the utility of justice is found in the First Petition of the peasant:

When you go down to the sea of justice¹⁹
And sail on it with a fair wind,
No squall shall strip away your sail,
Nor will your boat be idle.
No accident will affect your mast,
Your yards will not break.
You will not founder when you touch land,
No flood will carry you away.
You will not taste the river's evils,
You will not see a frightened face.²⁰

From the large number of surviving Middle Kingdom manuscript copies of this tale, it seems to have been a highly popular account in which an apparently rustic peasant is able to instruct the high state official who would judge him.²¹ The fundamental theme of the story, however, remains that of *maat*.²² The irony of the text, showing the humorous situation through the peasant's eloquent speeches, is also used to consistently delineate the proper conduct of officials, who should be 'repellers of evil' but who have fallen to the level of 'a wretch of a washerman.'²³ However, it must be remembered that one of the features of Egyptian thought was the notion of 'perfect speech', which embodied truth and justice to the point of becoming an empowered utterance (see further below).

¹⁸ Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p169. On the emergence of moral norms and wisdom literature for Egyptian officials as protectors of social justice, see Breasted, James Henry *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Scribner's Sons, 1912, p216, p230, pp238-239.

¹⁹ *M3't* (*maat*), 'justice', allowing a word play with the next line *m3'w*, 'fair wind', as noted in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p183, endnote 10.

²⁰ *The Eloquent Peasant*, lines 54-61, translated in *Ibid.*, I, p172.

²¹ Parkinson, R.B. "Literary Form and the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant", *JEA*, 78 (1992), p164, p168.

²² *Ibid.*, pp172-3, p176. See also Assmann, Jan *Maat: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Agypten*, Munchen: Beck, 1990, pp48-51.

²³ Parkinson, R.B. "Literary Form and the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant", *JEA*, 78 (1992), pp174-175.

R. B. Parkinson rightly notes that in this context it is not possible to disentangle the values of rhetoric and justice.²⁴ It is from this context that we can see how the words of the peasant can be described as that which “comes forth from the mouth of Re himself.”²⁵ Similar sentiments will be found in Late Period biographical literature. The following is the image of a just man found in the statue inscription of Harwa, High Steward of the Divine Consort of Amun:

A refuge for the wretched,
A float for the drowning,
A ladder for him who is in the abyss.
One who speaks for the unhappy,
Who assists the unfortunate,
Who helps the oppressed by his good deed;
The one honoured by the King, Harwa.²⁶

Similar sentiments are expressed in the Sarcophagus-lid inscription of a certain Wennofer, a prophet of Osiris and royal scribe:

I was true-of heart, impartial, trusted,
One who walked on the water of god.
I was one praised in his town,
Beneficent in his nome,
Gracious to everyone.
I was well-disposed, popular,
Widely loved, cheerful.
I was self-controlled in the year of distress,
Sweet-tongued, well-spoken.
I was a good shelter for the needy,
One on whom every man could lean.
I was one who welcomed by the stranger,
A helpful adviser, excellent guide.
I was one who protected the weak from the strong,
So as to be a ferryboat for everyone.
I was a worthy noble who did the gods' wish,
I was gracious to his companions.
I was open-handed to the have-not,
My heart did not say, "Give me!"
I was one who loved justice,
Who hated wrongdoing,
For I knew the god abhors it.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., p176, correcting the formulation put forward by Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p169.

²⁵ Parkinson, R.B. "Literary Form and the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant", *JEA*, 78 (1992), p177.

²⁶ Statue, Berlin Museum 8163, on the front of the body, lines 8-9, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p26.

The hieroglyphic representations for the goddess *Maat* and her associated mythic role come from two different aspects. In one she is represented as a sister to Shu, a god of air and light, and in this role *Maat* can be seen as “the power nourishing and renewing the sun-god,” associated as a “buttress of air” sometimes identified as a throne base.²⁸ In this context she seems to be assimilated to the goddess Tefnut, at least in a section of the *Coffin Texts*.²⁹ Spell 80 of the *Coffin Texts* also includes the following injunctions:

And the Abyss said to Atum:
Kiss your daughter Order [Maat],
put her to your nose,
so will your heart live.
Never let her leave you, let Order, who is your daughter,
be with your son Shu, whose name is Life.
You will eat (*sic* MSS.) with your daughter Order,
while your son Shu will lift you up.³⁰

Elsewhere *maat* is associated with a fixed measure of land, which in turn is a mythical reflection of the primeval hill which emerged as the origin of Egypt and of worldly order.³¹ The god who first climbed this mound can be variously interpreted, either as Re, the main creator god, or as another builder god such as Ptah.³² In either case, this is also a primary type for kingship as the creator, maintainer and guardian of order. Mythically, the first institution built on this primal land was a temple. From this

²⁷ Sarcophagus-lid Inscription of Wennofer, from Saqqara, Cairo Museum 29310, lines 2-3. translated in *Ibid.*, III, p55.

²⁸ Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p172, p180-1. See also Goff, Beatrice L. *Symbols of Ancient Egypt in the Late Period: The Twenty First Dynasty*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, p181.

²⁹ *Coffin Texts II* Spell 76 32-b-e, translated in Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p189. See also Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p45.

³⁰ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p46, slant brackets added.

³¹ Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, pp173-4. For more general usages, see Faulkner, R.O. *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962, pp101-102.

³² Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p177; Reymond, E.A.E. *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple*, Manchester: Manchester University

perspective the building of any temple was an imitation and repetition of the creation of the world: as such, the temple is both a centre and focus of physical and spiritual integration.³³ The primordial temple is prior to history. Indeed, temples may have an important role in recording historical events and sanctifying them. In the Ptolemaic period, for instance, “the Edfu temple claimed to be the heir and direct descendant of the original temple which came into existence before the dawn of history.”³⁴ *Maat* is sometimes represented as having descended to earth in this early period when the Primeval Gods directly ruled Egypt and there was no falsehood in the land.³⁵ It will be no surprise, then, that temples and cult practices are intimately connected with *maat*, both as social justice and the creative renewal and maintenance of world order. This sense of justice included a strong component of tradition: in large measure the “past was normative,” with the pharaoh attempting to recreate some kind of primordial balance.³⁶

A desire to unite conceptions of order, morality and power may lie behind the coincidence that the supreme gods in both the Egyptian and Greek worldviews bore a daughter, *Maat* and *Dike*, both of which are personified forms of justice, though the particular forms and interpretations of these concepts varied across the two cultures. Both concepts are part of a pre-scientific and pre-reductionist mode of thought in which *Dike* and *Maat* “constitute the all-inclusive calculus of the Universe, but which

Press, 1969, p43, p50; Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p61, p66.

³³ Knipe, David M. "The Temple in Image and Reality" in Fox, M. (ed.) *Temple and Society*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988, pp108-112; Turner, Harold W. *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, p26.

³⁴ Reymond, E.A.E. *The Mythical Origin of the Egyptian Temple*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969, 1969, p268.

³⁵ Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p75, following *Edfou* V.85.13-15.

³⁶ Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977, p26.

nevertheless, as living and impersonal powers, possess *mana*-like character.³⁷ *Dike* is directly related to her sisters, *Eunomia* as good government or good law and *Eirene* as peace, from at least the time of Hesiod.³⁸ Gods held to be supreme in the world as well as the final arbiters of order in human societies came to be associated with concepts which personify good order, justice and harmony. In this way both Greek and Egyptian thought arrived at values suitable to extended political organisations with an agricultural base impacted by the development of tiers of social stratification and emergent class structures. It is not necessary to posit here a strong historical influence from Egypt to Greece, in spite of some reflections in Greek legends supporting this idea, and revisionist scholarship aimed in this direction.³⁹ There are, furthermore, very real differences between the diverse ways that *Dike/Themis* and *Maat* are articulated in Greek and Egyptian societies. In Greek thought the gradual disassociation between *mythos* and *logos*⁴⁰ allowed a rationalisation of concepts of justice, a disassociation necessary before the commencement of a critique which would otherwise have been conceptually difficult as well as counter-indicated as

³⁷ Van Der Leeuw, G. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, I, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967, p30.

³⁸ Hesiod II.901-3.

³⁹ Several prominent figures in early Greek history are said to have visited Egypt, beginning with Menelaus, who in the *Odyssey* stayed a considerable time in Egypt and accumulated valuable possessions which he brought back to Greece. Odysseus himself was said to have visited Egypt in the company of roving pirates, though we should not place too much reliance on these legends, Stubbings, Frank H. "The Recession of Mycenaean Civilization", *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd rev. ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1975, Vol. II, Part 2, Chapter 27, p354. Later visitors include Hecataeus of Abdera (likely), Solon (possible), Herodotus (likely) and Plato (improbable) in order to benefit from Egyptian learning, especially from the wisdom of her priests. In later periods we know of Polybius, Strabo, and Juvenal visiting or residing in Egypt, though by second century some of these visits might be better termed 'site-seeing'. A useful overview of early contacts will be found in Boardman, John *The Greeks Overseas: Their Early Colonies and Trade*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1980, pp111-153. For a controversial, and highly speculative, account of early 'African' influence on Greek culture, see Bernal, Martin *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1987. For a useful corrective within the context of modern political debates, see Adeleke, Tunde *The Case Against Afrocentrism*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011, pp89-93,

⁴⁰ Nilsson, Martin P. *Greek Piety*, trans. H.J. Rose, N.Y., W.W. Norton, 1969, pp70-91.

impious. Such rationalising views would have undermined the ‘cosmological empire’ which underpinned Egyptian kingship.⁴¹

Even in Greece of the fourth century BCE such public discussion could be dangerous, as demonstrated by the charges of *asebeia* levelled at both Socrates and Aristotle, though political motives were involved in the drafting of both charges. In Egyptian thought, however, the physical, cosmological, social and ethical aspects of *maat* remained part of a fundamentally religious schema. Indeed, *maat* was such a pervasive concept that it was difficult to subject it to logical criticism. A certain rejection of normative and traditional values does occur in a small number of Egyptian texts, e.g. *The Dispute of a Man with His Soul*. However in this latter text neither the ‘soul’ (*ba*), with its concern for justice and good conduct leading to a blessed next life, nor the complaints of the man concerning present suffering, constitute either atheism or relativism. Indeed, the lament underlying the text is the hope of a better life, in spite of present problems. It has a clearly ironic framework and an educative purpose using a dialectical approach.⁴² The conclusion of the dispute, after the fourth poem cited by the soul, seems to end on a note of partial reconciliation, with the *ba* willing to rejoin the man even if he lacks the wealth for costly funeral preparations.⁴³

⁴¹ Assmann, Jan *Maat: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Agypten*, Munchen: Beck, 1990, p30.

⁴² Goedicke, H. *The Report about the Dispute of a Man with His Ba*, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1970, pp38-59. See the translation in Faulkner, R.O. "The Man Who was Tired of Life", *JEA*, 42 (1956), pp21-40.

⁴³ See Williams, R.J. "Reflections on the *Lebensmüde*", *JEA*, 48 (1962), p56; Erman, Adolf *The Ancient Egyptians: A Source Book of Their Writings*, trans. A. Blackman, N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p92. For a view emphasising more sceptical elements, see Kanawati, Naguib *The Tomb and Its Significance in Ancient Egypt*, Cairo: Foreign Cultural Information Dept., 1987, pp48-51. For a negative view of death, see the posthumous address of a dead wife to her husband in the funerary inscription of the sistrum-player Taimuthus, a contemporary of Ptolemy XIII Auletes, in Reymond, E.A.E. *From the Records of a Priestly Family from Memphis*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, no. 20.17-21. The wife, who probably didn't write the inscription herself, liberally instructs her husband 'Mayest though be never weary of drinking, eating (and) banqueting, of devoting yourself to a lusty passion, of merry-making (and) following thy heart's desire every day. Do never ponder over in thy heart. What (for) are (then) the years upon the earth?' (lines 15-16).

3. Religious and Moral Dimensions

Beneath these general articulations of *maat*, it is possible to detect a deeper pattern of understandings which show a close correlation of meaning across separate spheres of the Egyptian world experience. Whether as part of their view of the cosmos, part of the nature of the Two Lands, or as part of the proper relationship between persons, *maat* remained an essentially positive image which is contrasted with destructive and fearful alternatives. *Maat* was not just a normative concept, but was deeply embedded in social and religious practice. Furthermore, it remained a central symbol, as distinct from an integrated and logically consistent concept, in Egyptian sensibility.

In the world order, as we have seen, even the gods live by *maat*. In Utterance 573 of the *Pepi I Pyramid Texts*, where the king prays for admittance into the sky, we are told: “For Pepi is one with these four gods: Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef, Kebhsenuf, Who live by *maat*.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, the gods are said to feed on *maat*, which is reflected in the daily rituals whereby the gods are offered a figure of the goddess, together with food and drink.⁴⁵ In cosmological sequences *Maat* is one of the offspring gods held to the nostrils of Atum/Re to allow him to breathe and be strong, and indeed, it is said that he would eat of his daughter *Maat*.⁴⁶ This complex imagery goes so far as to call *Maat* the *k3* (ka) of Re: “Ma-a-t is the power by which Re lives.”⁴⁷ Likewise, Amen-Ra is said to rest on *Maat*.⁴⁸ In the ceremonies at Edfu, an

⁴⁴ Translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p49. These four gods are the sons of Horus, who guard the Canopic jars of the burial.

⁴⁵ Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1977, p14.

⁴⁶ *Coffin Texts* II 76 35b-36c translated in Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 1985, p191, see also p177; Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p27, p43.

⁴⁷ Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p126.

⁴⁸ Budge, E.A. *Egyptian Religion: Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, N.Y.: Bell Publishing, 1954, p50.

image of *Maat* was presented to the sun-god after the chanting of a hymn in praise of Re and just after the summoning of the gods to their feast.⁴⁹ *Maat* is also presented to Amen-Re in the *Abydos Decree of Seti I at Nauri*.⁵⁰

The religious function of *maat* seems to include a kind of promise, or hope, for humans concerning the ultimate justice and rightness of the cosmos in which they existed. In general terms the gods were directly involved in redressing injustices,⁵¹ both in this life and after death. By the Ramesside period *maat* is still emphasised in spite of the knowledge that injustice occurs in everyday life:

Maat is a great gift of god,
He gives it to whom he wishes.
The might of him who resembles him,
It saves the poor from his tormentor.
Do not make for yourself false documents,
They are a deadly provocation;
They (mean) the great restraining oath,
They (mean) a hearing by the herald.
Don't falsify the oracles in the scrolls,
And thus disturb the plans of god;
Don't use for yourself the might of god,
As if there were no Fate and Destiny.
Hand over property to its owners,
Thus do you seek life for yourself;
Don't raise your desire in their house,
Or your bones belong to the execution block.⁵²

The gods not only give and maintain *maat*, they themselves receive it. Part of the normal cult for most major gods was the offering of meals to the gods, in theory by the pharaoh, in practice by suitably pure priests. This included “two symbolic acts, the offering of incense and the offering of *Maat*, the return to the god of his bounty and

⁴⁹ Blackman, A.M. & Fairman, H.W. "The Consecration of an Egyptian Temple According to the Use of Edfu", *JEA*, 32 (1946), p90.

⁵⁰ In Griffith, F. "The Abydos Decree of Seti I at Nauri", *JEA*, 13 (1927), pp195-197.

⁵¹ ERMAN, Adolf *The Ancient Egyptians: A Source Book of Their Writings*, trans. A. Blackman, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p302.

⁵² *The Instruction of Amenemope*, British Museum Papyrus 10474, Chapter 20, lines 5-20, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, pp158-9.

the universe where his power reigned.”⁵³ This offering and receiving of *maat* goes beyond mere reciprocation, beyond the giving and receiving of benefits and goods, but rather establishes a progressive set of nested relationships among the gods, the pharaoh, the priests and the people.

Likewise, certain gods are directly involved in actions of judgement in the Hall of Maat, especially the ‘*maati*’, which are the two goddesses Isis and Nephthys,⁵⁴ here associated as dual forms of the goddess Maat. The judgements presided over by Osiris, Thoth and Anubis, where the heart of the deceased is weighed, usually involved the image of a counter-balance on which is placed a feather, itself one of the main images associated with the goddess *Maat* and relying once again on an image of sustaining lightness.⁵⁵ Thoth seems to have had a special role as a judge, in large measure due to his role as record-keeper, scribe, source and preserver of wisdom and order. *Maat* is sometimes represented as his wife.⁵⁶ In a prayer to Thoth, on the statue of Haremhab in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thoth is described as “lord of writing, lord of Khum, Who determines *maat*, who embarks Re in the night bark.”⁵⁷ The prayer continues:

For I am a just one of God since being on earth,
I satisfy him with *maat* every day.
I have shunned wrong-doing before him,
I never [did evil] since my birth;

⁵³ Sauneron, Serge *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, London: Evergreen, 1960, p84. Due to the centrality of the concept of kingship, 'every religious ceremony and ritual was in a sense royal ritual', Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p76.

⁵⁴ Budge, E.A. *Egyptian Religion: Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, N.Y.: Bell Publishing, 1954, p152. Elsewhere we find other paired gods associated with the notion of justice and truth as the 'maati', e.g. in the *PT* <=Pyramid Texts> 317 ab (spell 260) the gods Tefen and Tefnut seem to have this role, see Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, Shirun-Grumach 1985, pp178-180.

⁵⁵ Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p172.

⁵⁶ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p109, pp172-173, p225.

⁵⁷ *A Prayer and a Hymn of General Haremhab*, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, p101.

Indeed, I am a gentle one before God,
One wise, one calm, who listens to *maat*.⁵⁸

These scenes of judgement and justification of the individual after death involve the weighing of the dead person's heart against a feather, “the symbol of Maat or ‘Truth’”.⁵⁹ Then and only then, if the person has passed this test, will they have continued existence. By the time of the Late Period this notion of judgement takes on strongly moral tones, and goes beyond merely prescriptive concerns with ritual conduct or mortuary customs.⁶⁰ Likewise, judgement also ceases to be absolute and involves the notion of a person doing well in terms of the situation that life had provided them.

The Declaration to the Forty-Two Gods, which are denials of ‘evil’ behaviour, is expressed in more normative terms, and gives some idea of the specific items of behaviour which were good and bad acts.⁶¹ But this procedure of purification is not distinct from moral concerns. As noted by Erik Hornung:

Each denial of a specific form of injustice cleanses another layer of the earthly taint, bringing forth unblemished justice - *maat* - and ensuring the purity of the deceased, a requirement for a blessed life in the Beyond. 'I am pure!' Four times this simple cry echoes through the Hall of Justice, and this is sufficient for the deceased 'to be purged of all the evil he has done,' . . . Magic is at work here: not as a substitute for ethically spotless behaviour, but rather as an additional measure available to men in the most dangerous episode of human existence.⁶²

Magic is not inherently opposed to religion in Egyptian conceptions of the divine, and is one of the foundations of the gods’ power and creativity. Likewise, texts, drawings

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Shorter, Alan W. *The Egyptian Gods: A Handbook*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p54.

⁶⁰ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p247.

⁶¹ See Chapter 125 'The Judgement of the Dead' from *The Book of the Dead*, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, p124-132, based on the Naville edition. This includes a declaration of innocence and two interrogations by the gods.

⁶² Hornung, Erik *The Valley of the Kings: Horizon of Eternity*, trans. David Warburton, N.Y.: Timken Publishers, 1990, p150.

and statues often have a performative ritual function that means that they must be used carefully.⁶³

This blending of magical power and ethical concerns is also seen in specific formulas found in *The Book of the Dead*. The following, for example, concerns the heart as witness:

O my heart of my mother,
O my heart of my mother,
O my heart of my being!
Do not rise up against me as witness,
Do not oppose me in the tribunal,
Do not rebel against me before the guardian of the scales!

You are my *ka* within my body,
The Khnum who prospers my limbs.
Go to the good place prepared for us,
Do not make my name stink before them,
The magistrates who put people in their places!
If it's good for us it's good for the judge,
It pleases him who renders judgement.
Do not invent lies before the god,
Before the great god, the lord of the west,
Lo, your uprightness brings vindication!⁶⁴

Here there seems to be a fear that the heart will inform against the dead person. Though this is described as “inventing lies,” there remains a certain ambiguity in the phrase “if it's good for us it's good for the judge.” There seems to be a fear of bad faith here, that the heart and the mind of the person will not be in accord in this most formidable of tests. “My heart of my mother” refers to the original heart with which the person was born,⁶⁵ and may include some notion of original wholeness which was lost at a later stage. Another example of this blending of magical practices and ethical standards is found in *Coffin Text* 228, the “Spell for becoming the first to enter and the

⁶³ Indeed, Egyptian magic associated with notions of creation and protection, and seems to correlate in many ways to Malinowski's idea of 'ritualized optimism', Pinch, Geraldine *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1994, pp9-17. See also Ritner, Robert Kriech *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993.

⁶⁴ Chapter 30B "The Heart as Witness" from *The Book of the Dead*, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, p121, based on the Naville edition.

last to leave among the banqueters at the feast of Osiris” to which was added an extra comment by the scribes of the Twelfth Dynasty:

If anyone learns this spell he will complete one hundred and ten years of life, of which the last ten will be without weakness and impurity, without transgression or lies, and he will finally consume meals beside that helpful god, every day.⁶⁶

The spell, then, guarantees purity and a life without transgression - it is a magical means which supports morality. As noted in the Edfu texts:

Everyone who enters by this door, beware of entering in impurity, for God loves purity more than millions of possessions, more than hundreds of thousands of fine gold. His food is Truth, he is satisfied with it. His heart is pleased with great purity.⁶⁷

Examples of the blending of magical power with moral norms are extremely numerous in Egyptian contexts. For example, in the Edfu temple, the *Legend of the Winged Disk* text, after describing the battle of Horus and Seth, climaxes with the statement that the image of the Winged Disk is to be placed in every temple throughout Egypt, and the instruction that “a winged beetle in writing is to be placed on the breast of the king on the day of trouble, the appropriate spell is to be recited, and as a result the king will not be afraid and his enemies will be destroyed immediately.”⁶⁸ This is only in part a piece of ritual magic. It also emphasises the moral doctrine that Horus the Behdetite is the true, justified, overlord of Egypt, and “that he can and does protect the king.”⁶⁹ In the Edfu texts there is a very strong

⁶⁵ Ibid., 1976, II, p121.

⁶⁶ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p160, following *Coffin Texts III*, Spell 170.

⁶⁷ Text E. vi. 349, 4-6 = Chassinat, E. *La Temple d'Edfou*, in Fairman, H.W. "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian temple", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, 37 (1954), p201. For the important of purification rituals, and their correlating presence with symbols of life and power, see Gardiner, A.H. "The Baptism of Pharaoh", *JEA*, 36 (1950), pp3-12.

⁶⁸ Fairman, H.W. "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian temple", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, 37 (1954), p195. See also Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, pp93-4.

⁶⁹ Fairman, H.W. "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian temple", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, 37 (1954), p195.

identification of the King with Horus, a trend which was one of the bases of Egyptian views reinforcing the divine nature of kingship.⁷⁰

In the end, moreover, it is the just person who prospers, even when poor, in one account being given the clothes and funerary items of a rich man who did not pass this moral judgement. Indeed, the theme of moral worth becomes an integral part of Egyptian autobiography,⁷¹ which we would expect since most of these autobiographies are part of the wall decorations for private tombs, and therefore are intimately connected with future expectations for the dead. *Maat* is an essential feature of these accounts.⁷² The just reward for the moral person is once again tied into cosmic notions:

But justice (lasts) forever and goes down into the necropolis with him who renders it. When he is buried and joined to the earth, his name is not wiped out on earth, but he is remembered for goodness. That is a principle of divine order.⁷³

This affirmation of moral worth is found even in the Old Kingdom, though there it is often associated with fulfilling specific social roles in relation to individuals of high authority, to town and nome (province), to family and society at large. The inscription of Nefer-Seshem-Re from the 6th Dynasty, found on the false door of his tomb at Saqqara states:

I have come from my town,

⁷⁰ Griffiths, Gwyn J. "Egyptian Nationalism in the Edfu Temple Texts", in Ruffle, John et al. (ed.) *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H.W. Fairman*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979, p175; Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, pp75-6, p80. The dead king, of course, is usually identified with Osiris, and during the Ramesside period with Amun as well, Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p104. For tensions between the divine nature of kingship as an institution and the human nature of individual kings, see O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, ppxxiv-xxvi; Baines, John "Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation", in *Ibid.*, pp6-11.

⁷¹ Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p4.

⁷² See Lichtheim, Miriam *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*, Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992, pp9-102.

⁷³ *The Eloquent Peasant*, B307-11, translated in Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977, p84.

I have descended from my nome,
I have done justice to its lord,
I have satisfied him with what he loves.
I spoke truly, I did right,
I spoke fairly, I repeated fairly,
I seized the right moment,
So as to stand well with people.⁷⁴

We find this connection between life after death, the goodwill of the gods, and moral order expressed even more clearly in the *Instruction Addressed to King Merikaret*⁷⁵:

Make firm your station in the graveyard,
By being upright, by doing justice,
Upon which men's hearts rely.
The loaf of the upright is preferred
To the ox of the evildoer.
Work for god, he will work for you also,
With offerings that make the altar flourish,
With carvings that proclaim your name,
God thinks of him who works for him.⁷⁶

4. Maat as Royal Justice and State Order

Maat as rightness and moral order is central to notions of the legitimate rule of the Two Lands, and is found reflected in pharaonic administrative and judicial accounts. The fertile 'Black Land' (as Egypt was called) was especially blessed, with the Nile being given for its sustenance, in direct contrast to the desert Red Land and other countries which had to rely on rainfall, and whose inhabitants were deprived, grumbling and nomadic.⁷⁷

Maat was an essential attribute of the Egyptian state and one of the chief functions of the pharaoh was to ensure 'right dealings in relation to persons and

⁷⁴ Section I of *Inscription of Nefer-Seshem-Re Called Sheshi*, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p17.

⁷⁵ Surviving in papyri from the 18th Dynasty, though probably reflecting an earlier tradition of the late Middle Kingdom, see *Ibid.*, I, p97.

⁷⁶ *Instruction Addressed to King Merikaret*, lines 126-132, translated in *Ibid.*, I, p106.

⁷⁷ Velde, H. Te. *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, pp111-3.

situations.⁷⁸ Thus *The Great Sphinx Stela of Amenhotep II* at Giza can speak of Amun's relation to the pharaoh Amenhotep II in the following terms:

He [Amun] placed his daughter [Maat] upon his breast,
He fastened the uraeus upon his head,
He crushed the Bowmen under his feet.
The northerners bow to his might.
All the countries are under his fear.⁷⁹

Here, perhaps, we see the more aggressive aspect of Egyptian foreign policy, with Egypt assuming its rightful pre-dominance over neighbours, especially those to the north, south and west.⁸⁰ This notion of kingship was a 'type' embedded in ritual by relating the pharaoh to the victorious Horus, who needs to defeat Seth as part of the establishment of proper order:

They gave Isis' son his foe,
His attack collapsed,
The disturber suffered hurt,
His fate overtook the offender.
The son of Isis who championed his father,
Holy and splendid is his name,
Majesty has taken its seat,
Abundance is established by his laws.
Roads are open, ways are free,
How the two shores proper!
Evil is fled, crime is gone,
The land has peace under its lord.
Maat is established for her lord,
One turns the back on falsehood.⁸¹

Furthermore, these ancient conceptions were not entirely static: conditions of fertility, fecundity, victory and rightness had to be revitalised and renewed, particularly after times of troubles. Here the victorious pharaoh had a special role, through normal

⁷⁸ Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977, p82, see also p84.

⁷⁹ Translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, II, p40 (bracketed explanations added).

⁸⁰ For ritualised displays of the triumphant pharaoh killing enemies, common in temple reliefs, see Baines, John "Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation", in O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp13-14.

⁸¹ *The Great Hymn of Osiris*, from the Stela of Amenmose, Louvre C 286, the Eighteenth Dynasty, Middle Kingdom, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, II, p85.

rituals and special festivals, such as the *sed* (*s'd*, *sjed*) festival,⁸² in which the “re-establishment of social order” was “nothing but the reconsolidation of Ma-a-t, the world law, instituted for all time at the creation.”⁸³ Here we see the meeting of political and cosmological images: thus even the relatively weak central power of Egypt under Ramesses XI (7th century BCE) could call itself the ‘Renaissance Period’ in an attempt to claim that a full renewal of order, stability and fecundity had occurred. These assertions were made in spite of the virtual split between Upper and Lower Egypt into two separate spheres of influence due to the power of the High Priests of Amun at Thebes, who for the first time also had positions of military power in the south.⁸⁴

Through this conception of *maat* we find a loosely-defined but powerful notion of moral and social order, which acts as central criteria for a related value-system. Like the gods, the pharaohs and important state officials are said to rule by, with, and in *maat*. Judges at all levels give decisions through *maat*, and we have representations from later periods with judges wearing an image of *Maat* around their neck.⁸⁵ Thus from the Fifth Dynasty on, viziers bear the title of ‘priests of maat’ (*hm-ntr ma'at*), a title entirely consistent with the need for them to act also as chief judges.⁸⁶ Likewise, a high official who served under Sesostris III and Amenemhet III (Middle Kingdom) can call himself on his funerary stele “man of justice before the

⁸² Bleeker C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p92, p121.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p8.

⁸⁴ Kitchen, K. A. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt 1100-650 B.C.*, Warminster: Ares and Phillips, 1986, pp248-254.

⁸⁵ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p125.

⁸⁶ Bdedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, pp3-4, pp10-11; Aldred, Cyril "The Amarna Period and the End of the Eighteenth Dynasty", in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge: CUP, 3rd ed., 1973, Vol. II, Part II, p76; Hayes, William C. "Egypt: Internal Affairs from Tuthmosis I to the Death of Amenophis III", *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1973, Vol. II, Part I, pp355-356; Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p12, p125.

Two Lands; straight and true like Thoth.”⁸⁷ The language applied to persons are direct parallels with the qualities of gods in their primordial and world-sustaining roles: for an individual to act corruptly while fulfilling the role of a judge would be not just an action against persons, it would also be an impious undermining of the prerogatives of the gods and of universal order. Thus the Nauri Decree included particularly harsh penalties if judges were remiss in their duties in relation to the Estate of Osiris: such an offending judge was to be beaten, lose his post, and then become a cultivator attached to the “House of the god.”⁸⁸ It is not certain whether this corresponds to a penal enslavement, or a status more equivalent to the *hierodouloi* (sacred temple slaves) of the Hellenistic period, but it clearly involved loss of privilege and loss of freedom.

It was thought that only with this moral and orderly rule that Egypt could continue in peace and stability. In this conception of the state even the poor man could find justice, as demonstrated by *The Eloquent Peasant*, which abounds in a joy of the peasant's rhetorical skill. As we have seen, its main theme was the importance of truth and the value of trying to secure justice: the peasant is willing to put his case, even though it is against a powerful man, and though the case goes before the court and the pharaoh himself. The story certainly shows a concern for the upholding of law and the proper conduct of officials.⁸⁹ Having been written and retold as the criterion of justice, it reflects a standard which had real social force as an expectation and criterion for criticism, in spite of exceptions. Likewise, the rarity with which poor individuals would be able to take such direct and effective actions against their superiors did not

⁸⁷ *Stela of Sehetep-Ib-Re*, Cairo Museum 20538, Recto lines 4-5, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p126.

⁸⁸ Bedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, pp30-31.

reduce the impact of this concept on Egyptian judicial procedures, which probably continued into the Ptolemaic period.

Egyptian courts, using demotic language and known as *laokritai*, continued down into the Ptolemaic period, with some native Egyptian legal procedures perhaps extant even into early Roman times.⁹⁰ In many cases native priests comprised the Egyptian court system, especially if administering justice on sacred land, or in the region of large temples.⁹¹ Thus S. Allam can note that native courts of justice (now evolved from administrative councils, *qnbt*, into courts of judges, *n3 wpty.w*) “continued into and survived throughout the Hellenistic period.”⁹² Even Hans Wolff, who argues that the dual structure in the Ptolemaic period was part of a consciously created legal programme (mainly developed by Ptolemy Philadelphus) admits that “the old national law of the Egyptians” stood side by side with an evolved Greek form of Hellenistic practice.⁹³ Furthermore, the encapsulation of concepts in Demotic Egyptian, the language of these courts, helped “in preserving also the legal ideas on

⁸⁹ Blackman, A. 'Preface', to Erman, Adolf *The Ancient Egyptians: A Source Book of Their Writings*, trans. A. Blackman, N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1966, pxxx. See above.

⁹⁰ Allam, Schafik "Egyptian Law Courts in Pharaonic and Hellenistic Times", *JEA*, 77 (1991), p109, pp121-126; Rostovtzeff, M. *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, London: OUP, 1972, II, p913; Samuel, Alan E. *From Athens to Alexandria: Hellenism and Social Goals in Ptolemaic Egypt*, *Studia Hellenistica*, 26, Lovanii, 1983, pp114-5. The instruction by Darius I to the satrap Aryandes that he have Egyptian laws down to the reign of Amasis codified, Burn, Andrew Robert *Persian and the Greeks: The Defence of the West, c. 546-478 B.C.*, London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1962, pp105-6 and Diodorus I.95.4-6 also suggest that Egyptian codes were still in active use through the Persian period. On the problem of several codes in force 'side by side' in the Hellenistic world, see Peremans, W. "Égyptiens et étrangers dans l'organisation judiciaire des Lagides", *Ancient Society*, 13/14 (1982/1983), pp147-159; Pestman, P.W. "The Competence of Greek and Egyptian Tribunals According to the Decree of 118 B.C.", *BASP*, 22 (1985), pp265-269; Rostovtzeff, M. *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, London: OUP, 1972, II, p1094. For a use of Egyptian law in regard to Egyptians by a Roman prefect during the early 2nd century A.D., see *P. Oxy.* 3015, lines 1-11, through this may have been something of an innovation at that time.

⁹¹ Wolff, Hans Julius "Law in Ptolemaic Egypt", *American Studies in Papyrology*, 1 (1966), p74; Edgerton, W.F. "The Government and the Governed in the Egyptian Empire", *JNES*, 6 (1947), pp155-156.

⁹² Allam, Schafik "Egyptian Law Courts in Pharaonic and Hellenistic Times", *JEA*, 77 (1991), p126, following *P. Michigan* 347; contra Wolff, "Plurality of Laws in Ptolemaic Egypt", *RIDA*, 7 (1960), pp199-200ff.

⁹³ Wolff, Hans Julius "Law in Ptolemaic Egypt", in *American Studies in Papyrology*, Vol. 1 (1966), pp67-73, following *UPZ* II, 162 & *P. Tebt.* I, no. 5.

which the traditional patterns of documents had been formed.”⁹⁴ In the Ptolemaic period, an official called an *eisagogeus* or his bailiff, acted as liaison between the local courts and the crown administration.⁹⁵

One of the advantages of the tightly controlled and centralised administrative system of dynastic Egypt was that even middle and relatively high administrators might find their decisions and actions reviewed, while in the New Kingdom the vizier’s office had a special role in stopping bureaucratic corruption.⁹⁶ Possibly less effective efforts to set up strict judicial procedures and impose the death penalty for serious administrative crimes are also found in the royal ordinances of the Ptolemaic period.⁹⁷ The emphasis on upright behaviour which forms a central theme in all of the ‘Instructional Literature’ suggests that corruption posed a significant danger to the effectiveness of the largely distributive economy of Dynastic Egypt. In periods of disruption, the corrupt misdirection of resources could be conducted on a major scale. For example, during the periods of Ramesses VII and VIII there appears to have been a “growing corruption of sections of the administration (and inadequate oversight by the kings)” which resulted in 6,000 sacks of grain being pilfered over 10 years “from temple-revenues by a ship’s captain and his accomplices.”⁹⁸ Even without corruption, seasonal fluctuations or bad harvests could be serious problems for workers relying on

⁹⁴ Ibid. p76.

⁹⁵ Allam, Schafik "Egyptian Law Courts in Pharaonic and Hellenistic Times", *JEA*, 77 (1991), pp124-5.

⁹⁶ See Van Den Boorn, G.P.F. *The Duties of the Vizier: Civil Administration in the Early New Kingdom*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1988; Van Den Boorn, G.P.F. "Wd^c-ryt and Justice at the Gate", *JNES*, 44 (1985), p19, pp23-24.

⁹⁷ See Turner, E.G. & Lenger, Marie-Thérèse *The Hibeh Papyri*, Part II, London, Egypt Exploration Society, 1955, p76, tabulating *P. Hib.* II, 198, vii, lines 148-160. A *phylacites* who did not convey a brigand to the police station, or indeed any person who obstructed the capture of the brigand, would find himself subject to the same penalty as the brigand, presumably on the basis of being treated as an accomplice, see *P. Hib.* II, v, lines 85-100 and comments by the editors, *Ibid.*, p98, p100. Similar procedures applied to negligent policemen, see *Ibid.*, p99.

⁹⁸ Kitchen, K. A. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt 1100-650 B.C.*, Warminster: Ares and Phillips, 1986, p246 following the *Turin Indictment Papyrus*, translated in Peet, T.E. "A Historical Document of Ramesside Age", *JEA*, 10 (1924), pp116-127. For a slightly variant translation and interpretation, see Gardiner, A.H. "Ramesside Texts Relating to the Taxation and Transport of Corn", *JEA*, 27 (1941), pp60-62.

grain rations as the main part of their 'salary': workers at Deir el-Medina sometimes suffered serious delays in monthly rations, leading to strikes and other social problems during the Twentieth Dynasty.⁹⁹

The ability of illiterate people to get a village scribe to write a petition to be placed before higher officials was of some importance in allowing the complaints of the poor to limit excessive abuses. This procedure may at times have moderated the power of local officials: thus under Horemheb a royal decree allowed viziers to act as high judges at Memphis and Thebes.¹⁰⁰

Documents of appeal, and cases where the complaints of even lowly workers caused higher officials to investigate a case, show that these processes were rare but not unique.¹⁰¹ Thus, the documents relating to the workmen at Deir-el-Medina show that even a workman such as Penanuket could threaten to appeal to the Pharaoh and the vizier if lower level officials, such as the Necropolis scribe or the head workman, did not take actions in regard to criminal activities.¹⁰² Of course, this worker was a skilled craftsman engaged in the important religious task of preparing tombs for the royal family, and this may have given him preferential access to high officials.

Although local or petty crimes were usually tried by a tribunal of local officials and leading persons, perhaps led by a scribe or a foreman, in the New Kingdom it was only the Vizier who could apply the death penalty, at least during times of peace.¹⁰³ In a highly hierarchical and authoritarian state such as Egypt, these

⁹⁹ Antoine, Jean-Christophe "The Delay of the Grain Rations and its Social Consequences at Deir El-Medina in the Twentieth Dynasty: A Statistical Analysis", *JEA*, 95 (2009), pp223-234.

¹⁰⁰ Aldred, Cyril "The Amarna Period and the End of the Eighteenth Dynasty", in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge: CUP, 3rd ed., 1973, Vol. II, Part II, p73. Special officials called the 'scribe of Pharaoh' had a role in keeping the Pharaoh informed of major cases, Allam, Schafik "Egyptian Law Courts in Pharaonic and Hellenistic Times", *JEA*, 77 (1991), p114.

¹⁰¹ Bedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, p32.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p33.

¹⁰³ Cerny, J. "Egypt from the Death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-First Dynasty" in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1975, Vol. II, Part 2, Chpt 35, pp624-5; Bedell,

regulations suggest a real moderation of the use of state power. Nonetheless, appeals or successful defences would not be easy. There were no doubt many corrupt and venial officials who ensured that their subordinates were well-controlled. Generally, such appeals would be more effective if they were part of collective action, or indicated a systematic grievance which would eventually reveal corruption in economic or administrative affairs.

The entire system was still rather oppressive. Within the criteria of exploitation, developed from either a humanitarian or neo-Marxist viewpoint, it harboured severe failings, though authoritarian in tenor rather than totalitarian in nature.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, punishments were harsh in the New Kingdom period. Punishments included fines, beatings, temporary detention and torture to procure evidence, returning of stolen property at hundred-fold rate, branding, enslavement (sometimes extended to the wife and children of the criminal), and the death penalty.¹⁰⁵ By modern standards these penalties are draconian. What is of interest, however, is the careful respect for procedure, the regulation of officials, and the fact that only the highest authorities could punish with death. As noted by William Hays, speaking of the period from Tuthmosis I to the Amenophis III: -

Testimony presented at court was usually given under an oath taken in the name of a god or of the king and often accompanied by a statement of the penalties to be inflicted in the case of perjury. Complete impartiality, strict adherence to the law, precedent, and rules of procedure, and an earnest endeavour to arrive at the truth from a careful assessment of the evidence were the ideals around which the trial system current in the Middle and New Kingdoms were constructed.¹⁰⁶

Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, p21.

¹⁰⁴ For influential early texts on these issues, see Wittfogel, Karl A. *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957 and Ste Croix, G.E.M. de *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquest*, London: Duckworth, 1981.

¹⁰⁵ Bedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, pp18-22, p146, pp186-188. See in detail Peet, T.E. *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977.

¹⁰⁶ Hayes, William C. "Egypt: Internal Affairs from Tuthmosis I to the Death of Amenophis III", *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1973, Vol. II, Part I, p357.

The *Instruction Addressed to King Merikaret* suggests that in maintaining justice one should be cautious of punishing wrongfully, and goes on to say: “Do not kill, it does not serve you. Punish with beatings, with detention. Thus will the land be well-ordered.”¹⁰⁷ The exception to this reluctance to use capital punishment was treason, where “God smites the rebels in blood.”¹⁰⁸ In cases of political opposition which did not reach the level of overt treason, oases such as El-Kharga were sometimes used as places of banishment.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, we find the commander and Theban high priest Menkhperre (circa 1043-1039 BCE) seeking reconciliation with various interests in Thebes, recalling exiles from the oases and renouncing the use of the death penalty in all but exceptional cases.¹¹⁰

There were practical reasons for the restraint of blatant force and oppression in the administration of the Egyptian state. Unremitting labour, on which Egyptian economy was based, was highly regulated from the lowest to the highest. Through control of the skills of its people, Egypt was able to produce the surplus which supported all elements of Egyptian civilisation. Upon this relatively narrow margin of available resources, human and material, the power of the state was supported. In such a setting, social consensus and social co-operation were highly prized and necessary, both as means and goals. One of the few ways such exploitative societies can gain this consensus and cooperation is through mechanisms that provide resilience in the face

¹⁰⁷ Surviving in papyri from the 18th Dynasty, though probably reflecting an earlier tradition of the late Middle Kingdom, see Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, I, p97, see *Instruction Addressed to King Merikaret*, lines 45-50, *Ibid.*, p100.

¹⁰⁸ *Instruction Addressed to King Merikaret*, lines 48-52, translated in *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cerny, J. "Egypt from the Death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-First Dynasty", in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1975, Vol. II, Part 2, p657.

¹¹⁰ Kitchen, K. A. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt 1100-650 B.C.*, Warminster: Ares and Phillips, 1986, pp260-261.

of discontentment and rebellion, usually under a broad ruling ideology which creates a sense of 'rightness.'¹¹¹

5. Structural Patterns within the Maat Construct

Egyptian governance, in its aspirations if not its reality, sought a moral basis for its dominion. This moral order was that of *maat* and a constellation of related ideas, shared by the gods, the pharaoh, his subjects, and presumed to underlie the natural world. Conceptually, *maat* was not divided in the same way as early Greek religion apportioned its spheres of powers and functions among different gods and into the separate domains of the underworld, the seas, the heavens and the earth.¹¹² For early Greek thought, including Herodotus' world view, the prime element of cosmic moral order (*dike*) was based on allotted boundaries which should not be overstepped hubristically.¹¹³ Rather, in Egyptian thought the different gods, though with specific attributes, did not have the same unique identities as the Greek gods of the classical period, and often take on a wide range of the attributes of other divinities. These syncretic trends did not usually extend as far as a permanent equation or identification, but tended towards transitory and dynamic relationships.¹¹⁴ This could sometimes be seen as dangerous for the worship of a particular deity: it is resisted in a priestly invocation to one local god with the formula: "I have not assimilated (*stwt*)

¹¹¹ Implicitly understood as a moral concern modifying an otherwise authoritarian system, see De Selincourt, Aubrey *The World of Herodotus*, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1962, pp219-220.

¹¹² This division was probably an important step towards the development of non-religious world views. See Homer *Iliad* XV.187-188; Zeus as divider-up of the natural world, see Aristides Oration XLIII *Regarding Zeus* 14. See also Aristides Oration XLV *Regarding Sarapis* 23-4; Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p26; Cornford, F.M. *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, London: Edward Arnold, 1912.

¹¹³ Lloyd, Alan B. "Herodotus' Account of Pharaonic History", *Historia*, 37 (1988), p28.

¹¹⁴ Hornung, Erik *The Conception of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, pp91-93; Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p141.

your colour [= individuality] to [that of] another god.”¹¹⁵ All the gods contribute in the generation and sustenance of a regulative order in which *maat* is as important as their individual powers.

Individual cosmologies, as well as different hymns emphasising piety to a particular god, tended to distribute these roles rather differently to individual gods through varying mythic schema. The Heliopolitean, Hermopolitean Memphitic, and Theban cosmologies differentially emphasized Ra, Thoth, Ptah, Amun or Khnum.¹¹⁶ The general framework of creation out of chaos, of order based on kingly rule, the centrality of justice and truth, and the need to avoid disorder, social chaos and falsehood remained fundamental.¹¹⁷ In general terms, *maat* is always in conflict with “chaotic forces” (*isfet*), which are always overcome.¹¹⁸ Such cosmological patterns could be used to emphasise the pre-eminence of particular cities or temple complexes, which could therefore claim to be supreme cult centres and unifiers of political authority, i.e. these centres could provide a “centripetalising function.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *Papyrus Berlin 3055*, 5 cited in Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p141.

¹¹⁶ For a brief overview, see James, E.O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1958, pp147-154.

¹¹⁷ O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp.xvii-xxi.

¹¹⁸ O'Connor, David “Egypt’s Views of ‘Others’”, in Tait, John (ed.) *‘Never had the Like Occurred’: Egypt’s View of Its Past*, London: UCL Press, 2003, p160, p178.

¹¹⁹ Wheatley, Paul *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins of the Ancient Chinese City*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971, pp229-230, pp257-8.

Figure 1: Dimensions, Aspects and Processes of Maat (Primary Positive Image, accumulated by New Kingdom and Late Period)

Narratives x Aspects	Order	Rightness	Justice	Daughter of Amon/Re; Symbol
Existence	World Order.	Balance in the Two Kingdoms, (Egypt), seasons in order.	Social Order and Everyday Security.	Goddess and Symbol.
Creation and Re-creation	Aspect of first creation.	Creation of the blessed Black Land (primordial), Renewal of fertility.	Good rule under unification of north and south, cycles of kingship, recognized rule.	Breath and food of creator god(s).
Maintenance	Gods live by and feed on Maat.	Pharaohs rule/live by Maat.	People fed, regulated, joyous	Maat given & received by gods, pharaoh, priests and officials.
Judgement and Future Expectations	Court of the Gods. Osiris, Anubis & Thoth judge the heart – dividing of persons, continued existence, benign afterlife for those who pass the test.	Pharaohs, officials & judges rule by Maat, uphold right. Make good the bad situation. Rule not arbitrary.	Judges fair, poor can appeal. Future life justification, based partly on truth and moral conditions.	Maat as tool and measure of judgement and truth.

Each of these different levels forms structurally similar patterns: *maat* is a kind of order which is both a necessary attribute for a good life and also the basis of moral judgement. What appears as order in the world, as rightness in organisation of the land, as justice in everyday life, are all symbolised and visualised through the concept and symbol of the goddess *Maat*. As such, cosmological order, religious rule and personal ethics are intimately interconnected and mutually supported in Egyptian

mentality. One way of summarising and linking these levels is presented in *Figure 1* (above). This multi-tiered approach to *maat* is partly inspired by the work of Jan Assmann, though Assmann gives a more theoretical breakdown.¹²⁰

These attributes and cosmological processes are reflected in the imagery associated with the goddess *Maat*. First, she is not so much a separate goddess with a strong, individual character, but an aspect associated with all the major gods and goddesses. She is almost, but not quite, an abstraction, a symbol which is involved in a very wide range of temples and cultic activities. Hence, the division between *Maat* as a goddess and *maat* as a concept is arbitrary, and if taken as intrinsically significant would be misleading. As well as having her own cult and temples from the Fifth Dynasty onwards,¹²¹ *Maat* is also associated with gods such as Amon-Re, Horus, and Osiris. In the Ptolemaic period ‘Justice’ is sometimes given as a name of Isis.¹²² Likewise, Ptah is also called ‘the lord of Maat.’ A. Erman has construed one of the memorials in the Theban cemetery to indicate that “one man testified that Ptah punished him with blindness, because he swore a false oath by this god.”¹²³

Maat is regularly associated with the divine pharaoh, often forming part of his name or epithets, while *maat* is also seen as “unifying itself with just kings.”¹²⁴ Kings have phrases concerned with *Maat* embedded in their titular formulas; for example, Merneptah is said to be ‘Rejoicing-in-Maat,’ and to be ‘Content with Maat.’¹²⁵ Even the reformist pharaoh Amenhotep IV (later on renamed as Akhenaten), regardless of

¹²⁰ Assmann, Jan *Maat: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Agypten*, Munchen: Beck, 1990, p38, Table 1; Assmann, Jan "State and Religion in the New Kingdom", in Simpson, William Kelly (ed.) *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989, pp55-88.

¹²¹ Hornung, Erik *The Conception of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J.Baines, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p75.

¹²² See *OGIS* 83, line 6, Ptolemaic period only.

¹²³ In Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p55.

¹²⁴ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p120.

¹²⁵ *Israel Stela*, Cairo Museum 34025, Verso, Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976, II, pp74-77.

his attempt to supersede gods such as Amun, Ra and Ptah, was found associated with phrases such as ‘content with *Maat*’ and ‘who lives by *Maat*,’ and in association with Aten was ‘The Ruler of Maat who came from eternity,’¹²⁶ though there may have been a shift of this concept within his theological system to something closer to the notion of ‘Truth.’¹²⁷

Maat is also something given by the gods to the king: “I [Horus] give thee maat into thy heart so that thou mayest exercise it towards all the gods.”¹²⁸ The Horus name of Smendes was ‘exalting in Truth’ (Ma’at), while Shoshenq’s Nebty name (one of the five great names taken by pharaohs) meant “Appearing in the Double Crown like Horus-son-of-Isis, contenting the Gods with Truth.”¹²⁹ Osorkon II’s Horus name was ‘Strong Bull, beloved of Truth’ (Ma’at), using the same name taken by Ramesses II.¹³⁰ Likewise, personal names for the New Kingdom period are attested which include the term *maat* a part of their formation.¹³¹

As such, it is not surprising that *Maat* by herself is not a high personalised goddess with a strong individual cult, and does not have a large number of major temples dedicated to her as the main god.¹³² However, as noted by Erik Hornung we have some evidence of her cult. She had:

¹²⁶ In Stela S, one of the later group of inscriptions cut into cliffs bordering El-Amarna, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, pp28-49; *The Short Hymn to the Aten*, Section 1, based on the version found in the Amarna tomb of Apy, translated in Ibid. p91; *Hymn to the Aten and the King*, East Wall, column 4, from the Tomb of Aye, translated in Ibid., II, p93; *The Great Hymn to the Aten*, West Wall of the Tomb of Ay, in Ibid., II, p99.

¹²⁷ Kemp, Barry J. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, London: Routledge, 1989, p266.

¹²⁸ *Edfou*, I, 521, Ptolemy IV, quoted in Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p121.

¹²⁹ Kitchen, K. A. *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt 1100-650 B.C.*, Warminster: Ares and Phillips, 1986, p288.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p313.

¹³¹ Hornung, Erik *The Conception of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p76.

¹³² In the region of Thebes, for example, only one full temple of *Maat* is found, a subsidiary building to the northern Karnak temples, but the image of *Maat* is portrayed dozens of times in numerous religious scenes, along with two statues, see Porter, B. & Moss, R. L. B., *Topographical Bibliography*

. . . her own priesthood from the Fifth Dynasty at the latest, and, in the New Kingdom, temples in a different number of places. In the Theban area we find a "scribe and overseer of the cattle of Maat" in the cortege of the vizier Ramose, and the "herds" of her temple in Thebes are mentioned in a Rammessid tomb. Evidence for a cult of her in the delta includes the title "scribe of the temple of Maat" on a stela from the delta capital of the Ramessids now in Hildesheim and the offering formula on the door jamb of the vizier Paser, both dating to the reign of Ramesses II.¹³³

Maat emerges as much more than a minor goddess with narrow functions. Rather, *maat* is a symbol almost as ubiquitous as that for life (*ankh*), one that retains a highly religious underpinning and acts as a type of sanction for all with which it is associated. Likewise, Hapy, the goddess of the Nile and its flood, has limited roles in terms of separate images and individual cult places, but forms part of a ubiquitous worldview.¹³⁴

6. Times of Disorder and Other Counter-Images

The wide-ranging aspects of *maat* can be appreciated by looking at what happened in Egypt when such justice or truth is not present or has been undermined. A false or bad pharaoh could bring disaster on the land and its people. Here it was not kingship itself but the individual ruler who would be held to be at fault. Thus we find in the *Admonitions of Ipu*, from the First Intermediate Period when the Old Kingdom's unified power began to decay, the following lamentation: -

Progeny still comes forth from the wombs of the women of Egypt but one does not find it [playing?] in the road. It is rapine and violence against the weak that these gods

of *Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs & Paintings*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, II, pp11-13, p135, pp511-516, p512.

¹³³ Hornung, Erik *The Conception of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, pp75-76.

¹³⁴ See Baines *John Fecundity Figures; Egyptian Personification & the Iconography of a Genre*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1978; Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p150. See further *Hymn to Hapy*, Section XII.6ff translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1973, I, p207, preserved in various New Kingdom ostraca and papyri, e.g. *Papyrus Sallier II, P. Anastasi VII, P. Chester Beatty V, Ostr. Golenischeff, ostrakon ODM 1176*, but probably deriving from earlier Middle Kingdom texts, see *Ibid.*, I, p205; *Ibid.* I, p208; *Famine Stela*, On Sehel Island, lines 2-5, translated in *Ibid.*, III, pp95-6.

(the recent kings) have wrought. There has been no true pilot in their time. Where is he? Does he sleep perchance? Behold, one sees no sign of his almighty power!¹³⁵

Such rulers, often for various political reasons, might have their cartouches desecrated in generations following their death. The Egyptian language was able to distinguish the individual king from the divine nature of kingship: ‘*hm*’ = literally ‘the body’ refers to this individual, while ‘*niswt*’ proclaims the king’s divine nature.¹³⁶ Dietrich Wildung goes so far as to suggest that “in actuality, it turns out that divine kingship was limited to a king after he had died, or to a king while he was alive only during the time of his official performances.”¹³⁷ This may be an exaggeration. A large portion of the king’s day was concerned with official duties, and studded with numerous ritual performances, trends which deepened during the numerous festival periods. It seems likely that this would lead to a certain charismatic conflation in the case of successful and active kings such as Ramesses II.¹³⁸ It is also possible that from the New Kingdom onwards the king’s Ka “could on occasion be identified with his kingly office.”¹³⁹

On the other hand, dynastic contests, even assassination attempts against individual pharaohs such as the one against Ramesses III,¹⁴⁰ show that high-ranking

¹³⁵ In Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp68-69.

¹³⁶ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p37.

¹³⁷ Wildung, Dietrich *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt*, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1977, p3.

¹³⁸ See Habachi, L. "Features of the Deification of Ramesses II", *ASAE*, 52 (1954), pp443-4, 479-559; Kitchen, K.A. *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1982.

¹³⁹ Fariman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p99. For the controversial argument that that royal *ka* came to represent an abstract understanding of the king’s office, which came to be collective entity for kingship itself, see Springborg, Patricia *Royal Persons: Patriarchal Monarchy and the Feminine Principle*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp64-65, p70 and Bell, Lanny "Luxor Temple and the Cult of the Royal Ka", *JNES*, 44 (1985), pp251-94.

¹⁴⁰ For the 'harem' conspiracy, see Redford, Susan *The Harem Conspiracy: The Murder of Ramesses III*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008; Trigger, B. G. et al. *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*, Cambridge: CUP, 1983, p187, p223. H.W. Fairman observes 'that revolutions and conspiracies are relatively unheard of', but also notes that any persons gaining control of Egypt would seek to legitimate themselves in traditional terms, Fariman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke,

Egyptians at least were perfectly willing to distinguish between the position and the person. This dualism is seen most clearly in images from the New Kingdom where the king is sometimes represented in “priestly capacity” confronting “his own divine image.”¹⁴¹ In general, ancient conceptions of the potency of the king needed to distinguish between the individual character and the power of the *office* as such.¹⁴² The Egyptian people certainly did not mistake their individual kings for gods in the literal sense, though Akhenaten may have wished to conflate these boundaries.¹⁴³ Apparently, in later periods the Egyptians could joke about the drunkenness of Amasis,¹⁴⁴ while stories preserved in Herodotus, if ultimately of Egyptian origin, suggest that for the common people fabulous myths concerning previous pharaohs were quite common.¹⁴⁵ However, at least through to the first millennium BCE, legitimation remained couched in religious terms.¹⁴⁶ Even in the Ptolemaic period, a “bad king is an enemy of the gods, *theoisin echthros* in Ptolemaic documents, the bringer-back of chaos,” which may be equivalent to the demotic phrase *bwt ntr(w)*, “the abomination of the gods.”¹⁴⁷

S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, p77. Views on the nature of kingship could have institutionalised a tendency to not record such conspiracies, generating a collective 'normative amnesia'.

¹⁴¹ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p40.

¹⁴² Van Der Leeuw, G. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, I, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967, pp115-121, p214.

¹⁴³ Springborg, Patricia *Royal Persons: Patriarchal Monarchy and the Feminine Principle*, London: Unwin, 1990, pp46-47.

¹⁴⁴ Van Der Leeuw, G. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, I, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967, p120; Avdiev, V.I. "Egyptian Traditions in Herodotus", *Revue d'Histoire Ancienne*, 139 (1977), p189.

¹⁴⁵ Herodotus II.111 & II.121; De Selincourt, Aubrey *The World of Herodotus*, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1962, pp218-219; Baines, John "Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation", in O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, pp19-21.

¹⁴⁶ Baines, John "Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation", in O'Connor, David & Silverman, David P. (eds.) *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, p16.

¹⁴⁷ Turner, E.G. "Ptolemaic Egypt" in Walbank, F.W. et al. (eds) *The Cambridge Ancient History: Vol. VII, Part I: The Hellenistic World*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1984, p132, and footnote 32. See *P. Tebt* 768, lines 2-3 of 116 B.C., where the Greek phrase 'the hated of heaven', is applied to an embezzling tax collector.

From the Egyptian perspective, when the administration rules without *maat*, each person seeking their own way, then the time of troubles descends on the land, with the temples being empty or destroyed, the offerings not made to the gods, Egyptians killing each other, and foreigners entering the land at will. Images of such times can be found widely in the literature and art of Egypt from the First Intermediate Period onward. An example is the portrayal of starving peasants on the causeway leading to the pyramid of King Wenis at Sakkarah, while other documents speak of carnage, fear and terror.¹⁴⁸ These powerful images of disorder, drought and famine, the very counter-images of *maat*, are more than historical memories of times of low inundation, of the intermediate periods, or the times of foreign invasion (though Egyptian history did indeed fluctuate between periods of strong centralization versus periods of chaos and fragmentation).¹⁴⁹ They come to constitute a separate pseudo-historical genre, which does not always refer to specific historical events but is a moral discourse couched in dramatic imagery.¹⁵⁰

We can see an early vision of this kind of discourse in *The Admonition of Ipuwer* (*Papyrus Leiden* 344), from the Middle Kingdom:

Lo, the face is pale, the bowman ready,
 Crime is everywhere, there is no man of yesterday.
 Lo, the robber - - - everywhere,
 The servant takes what he finds.
 Lo, Hapy inundates and none plough for him,
 All say, "We don't know what has happened in the land."
 Lo, women are barren, none conceive,
 Khnum does not fashion because of the state of the land.
 Lo, poor men have become men of wealth,
 He who could not afford sandals owns riches.
 Lo, men's slaves, their hearts are greedy,
 The great do not mingle with their people ['when they rejoice'].
 Lo, hearts are violent, storm sweeps the land,
 There's blood everywhere, no shortage of dead,

¹⁴⁸ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p100.

¹⁴⁹ See O'Connor, David "Egypt's Views of 'Others'", in Tait, John (ed.) *Never had the Like Occurred': Egypt's View of Its Past*, London: UCL Press, 2003, p165.

¹⁵⁰ Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p149-150.

The shroud calls out before one comes near it.
Lo, many dead are buried in the river,
The stream is the grave, the tomb became stream.
Lo, nobles lament, the poor rejoice,
Every town says, "Let us expel our rulers."
Lo, people are like ibises, there's dirt everywhere,
None have white garments in this time.
Lo, the land turns like a potter's wheel,
The robber owns riches, [the noble] is a thief.
Lo, the trusted are like -----
The citizen [says], "Woe, what shall we do!"¹⁵¹

The theme of foreign invasion is taken up further on in this text:

Lo, the desert claims the land,
The nomes are destroyed,
Foreign bowmen have come into Egypt.¹⁵²

It is precisely at these times, of course, that the individual, whether priest, noble or peasant, will be the victim of force or bad luck, unable to appeal to a judge or arbiter, with even the gods turning their faces from the land.

At the cosmological level these stories entail notions of chaos, night, destruction, and an improper defeat (only temporary) of Amun or Horus. However, this chaos forms part of a longer creative cycle often represented on temple or tomb walls:

Characteristically, the processes of cosmogony and cosmic renewal are opposed by chaotic force of Isfet, which concentrates its powers upon especially crucial and simultaneously vulnerable points – the 'birth' of the creator, the 'growth' of cosmos, and the first sunrise, that vitalizes it; and the 're-birth' of the sun god, his appropriate 'burial,' and regeneration in the nether world. In this context the display of hostile yet defeated foreign enemies equates with the demonic forces that oppose, unsuccessfully, cosmic processes; and again, the image of the 'bad' foreigner is more appropriate than that of the 'good' in this context.¹⁵³

The images associated with the idea of primordial chaos include various serpent forms, the most significant of which is the great snake Apophis.¹⁵⁴ It is interesting to

¹⁵¹ *The Admonition of Ipuwer*, Section 2.2-10, translated in *Ibid.*, I, p151.

¹⁵² *The Admonition of Ipuwer*, Section 3.1-2, translated in *Ibid.*, I, p152.

¹⁵³ O'Connor, David "Egypt's Views of 'Others'", in Tait, John (ed.) *'Never had the Like Occurred': Egypt's View of Its Past*, London: UCL Press, 2003, pp174-175

¹⁵⁴ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp89-90; Goff, Beatrice L. *Symbols of Ancient Egypt in the Late Period: The Twenty First Dynasty*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, p205.

note that elsewhere dragons and snakes represent both renewal and the “non-manifest”: in Indian mythology the dragon Vrta must be destroyed by Indra in order to save the world and “create it anew.”¹⁵⁵ We have Egyptian representations (from the Seventh Division of the *Book of What is in the Otherworld* of knives and ropes making the giant snake Apophis powerless, though this does not imply his final destruction.¹⁵⁶ There are also more positive serpent images in Old Kingdom mythology, such as the great serpent which Atum will become when the universe reverts “to a primary state of undifferentiated chaos” once more.¹⁵⁷ Yet it is exactly this undifferentiated aspect which the creator or High God must overcome in order to allow the universe to be born.¹⁵⁸ We also find on occasions in the Old Kingdom the representation of the Cosmic Serpent, called ‘Provider of Attributes,’ encircling the city of Hermopolis. It is possible that the body of the snake represents a conceptualisation of the border of the city, between the protected human world of order and what lies beyond, though this was only possible due to Atum’s victory over the serpent.¹⁵⁹

At least from the time of the New Kingdom, the god Seth does not represent the appropriate counter-image to *maat*; on the contrary, his contest with Osiris and Horus is part of the world story which allows renewal, succession and the final victory

¹⁵⁵ Eliade, Mircea *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969, p164. See also Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p54 and Van Der Leeuw, G. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, I, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967, p66. For accounts of sea monsters and serpents in Near Eastern religion, also associated with chaos, see James, E.O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1958, pp200-1.

¹⁵⁶ From the tomb of King Tutmosis III, c. 1430 B.C., see Kemp, Barry J. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, London: Routledge, 1989, Figure 15, p49. For positive and negative images of serpents, see Piankoff, Alexandre *The Tomb of Ramesses VI*, N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1954, I, Figure 80, pp276-7.

¹⁵⁷ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p52. See Spell 175b in Allen, Thomas George (trans.) *The Book of the Dead or Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, p184.

¹⁵⁸ Rundle Clarke, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p54.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp52-3, pp170-171. See *Pyramid Texts* no. 229 in Faulkner, R.O. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Clarendon: OUP, 1969.

of moral order. Although Seth is characterised as an ‘enemy’ associated with storm, illness, confusion and uncontrolled violence, he is not originally a direct personification of evil.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Seth seems to emerge as part of a balancing myth, in which his exaggerated claims are limited in favour of Horus: Seth himself is humiliated, weakened, forced to accept the new order, but he is not destroyed. Instead, in *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, a New Kingdom text, Seth ends up being placed on the barque of the sun to protect it against the attacks of Apophis during the night hours.¹⁶¹ Indeed, in the cunning attributed to Seth, as well as to comic aspects of one account of his defeat by Isis where he consumes his own semen, he seems to have some element of the trickster and ‘necessary-destroyer’ within his make-up.¹⁶² The related Osiris, Horus, and Seth stories can thus be viewed as an ‘ordering’

¹⁶⁰ Velde, H. Te. *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, p63, pp68-69; James, E.O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1958, p180; Brunner-Traut, Emma "Altägypten - Ursprungsland des mittelalterlich-europäischen Drachen?", *Fabula*, 26 (1985), pp72-79. We can note in passing that from the human perspective the gods are not always kind. Thus in amulet decrees gods such as Sakhmet and Bastet are viewed as unfriendly and fierce, and that humans even need magical protection from the actions or emanations of major gods, Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, pxxi. See for example document L.4 = British Museum 10320, lines 1-5, translated in *Ibid.*, p27, and document L. 2. = British Museum 10251, Recto, lines 60-65. This latter magical decree also writes of keeping its owner safe from the gods of the northern region and from the gods of the eastern and western desert edges, document L. 2 = British Museum 10251, Recto, lines 25-32, in *Ibid.*, p15. It is clear from other papyri that even gods like Amun, Mut, and Khons need propitiation, see L. 7 = British Museum 10730, lines 5-10, translated *Ibid.*, p47. In Greek magical papyri of the second-fifth centuries A.D., we likewise find the need to constrain or threaten one god by the greater power of another, see Nock, Arthur Darby "Greek Magical Papyri", in Nock, A.D. *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, I, pp185-6.

¹⁶¹ Goff, Beatrice L. *Symbols of Ancient Egypt in the Late Period: The Twenty First Dynasty*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, pp205-207; Velde, H. Te *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, pp99-108; Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p209. Horus and Seth can even be envisaged together fighting Apophis, Velde, H. Te *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, p71. The goddess Maat is also often represented as having a place on the Solar barque, e.g. Ray, J.D. *The Archive of Hor*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976, Demotic Text 18, Recto, line 6

¹⁶² Velde, H. Te. *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1977, p43, p59, p67; Velde, H. Te. "The Egyptian God Sethe as a Trickster", *JARCE*, 7 (1968), pp37-40; Goedicke, H. "Seth as a Fool", *JEA*, 47 (1961), p154. For the trickster figure in other cultures, see Hynes, William J. & Doty, William G. *Mythical Trickster Figures*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama, 2009; Radin, Paul *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956.

mythology.¹⁶³ By the end of the New Kingdom Seth can be called *nbd*, – that is, evil. However, this seems to be in connection with his rage and power during his battles both with Osiris and Apophis.¹⁶⁴

This notion of cosmological balance may have emerged early in Egyptian thought: archaic representations on the early smaller Hierakonpolis Palette and from the Gebel el-Arak knife handle seem to suggest a sense of balance between powers in conflict.¹⁶⁵ It is only later that we find some generalised connection of Seth with chaos symbols such as Apophis and Typhon, possibly associated with the invading Hyksos, while in the Ptolemaic period the Greeks are said, occasionally, to bring disorder of a Typhonian type.¹⁶⁶ Within this worldview evil “does not belong to creation at all” – rather it is chaos, inaction and non-being which are counter-posed to the notion of the

¹⁶³ Velde, H. Te. *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, pp81-3, p95, p98.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p101. For the more negative images acquired during the Persian and Ptolemaic period, see *Ibid.*, pp148-9.

¹⁶⁵ Kemp, Barry J. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, London: Routledge, 1989, Figure 14, p48.

¹⁶⁶ Velde, H. Te *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, pp103-106; Eddy, S. K. *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near-Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334-31 B.C.*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, p284, p287, p310; Nock, Arthur Darby "Greek Magical Papyri", in Nock, A.D. *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, I, p188; Griffiths, Gwyn J. "Egyptian Nationalism in the Edfu Temple Texts", in Ruffle, John et al. (ed.) *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H.W. Fairman*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979, p177; James, E.O. *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1958, p180. See also Manetho Frag. 79 and *Songs of Isis and Nephthys* 2.19-2.23, translated in Faulkner, R.O. "The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus-I", *JEA*, 22 (1936), p123. Originally, Seth may have been viewed as a somewhat positive god who had control of the foreign lands and foreigners, but after invasion of the Hyksos, and later on the loss of the New Kingdom empire, this positive aspect was eroded and gave way to a 'demonisation' of Seth, see Velde, H. Te *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, p62, p72, p109, p111, p121, p132, pp138-151; Griffiths, Gwyn J. "The Interpretation of the Horus Myth of Edfu", *JEA*, 44 (1958), pp75-85. Foreign invaders from the Hyksos onwards are associated with Seth, Smith, Jonathan Z. "Wisdom and Apocalyptic", in *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978, p75.

good and fair, *nofret*.¹⁶⁷ The root words of *nfr* and *nfrw* involve concepts of beauty, fairness, the true, the good, as well as that which is youthful and vital.¹⁶⁸

7. The Justified and Good Life

It is in the context of overcoming but not destroying Seth that Osiris and Horus are vindicated and justified before the court of the gods, just as in judgement after death a person is vindicated “if the quality of his life is in harmony with Ma-a-t.”¹⁶⁹ The significance of *maat* as order and justice at this cosmological level is shown most clearly in *The Great Hymn to Osiris*, where the Council of Gods is unified in and through *maat*:

The Ennead was jubilant:
"Welcome, Son of Osiris,
Horus, firm-hearted, justified,
Son of Isis, heir of Osiris!"
The Council of Maat assembled for him
The Ennead, the All-Lord himself,
The Lords of Maat, united in her,
Who eschew wrongdoing,
They were seated in the Hall of Geb,
To give the office to its lord,
The kingship to its rightful owner.
Horus was found justified,
His father's rank was given him,
He came out crowned by Geb's command,
Received the rule of the two shores.¹⁷⁰

Horus, here, represents not just an individual victory, but a collective representation of order, justice and legal process, which triumphs over brute force, revealing an inner

¹⁶⁷ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p60. Thus both Maat and Seth belong in the solar barque, one representing Re's 'truth and justice', the other his dangerous but necessary 'anger and aggression', Velde, H. *Te Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, p108, following P. Beatty I, 16, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Bleeker, C.J. "The Religion of Ancient Egypt", in Bleeker, C. & Widengren, G. (eds.) *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, Vol. I, p52.

¹⁶⁹ Bleeker, C. J. *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, p7.

¹⁷⁰ *The Great Hymn of Osiris*, from the Stela of Amenmose, Louvre C 286, the Eighteenth Dynasty, Middle Kingdom, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, II, p82.

unity intimately bound up with the unification of the Egyptian state.¹⁷¹ This can be seen from material preserved in the Delta Cycle of legends, which are concerned with the upbringing of Horus as a child. The child had been poisoned, either by the bite of a scorpion or snake, and Thoth makes the comment that the entire universe will be out of order, the sun standing still and the crops not growing, until Horus recovers.¹⁷² Likewise, these cycles show that greed and baseness have short-term benefits, but cannot endure.

Here Osiris, as a god who has suffered harm but been vindicated through his wife and son, was often treated as a god of “refuge, sympathy and invisible power.”¹⁷³ These roles along with his special connection with the next world and cycles of fecundity were central to the Egyptian cult of ancestors and the funerary cult. In the form of Osirapis, later transformed into Sarapis, this god would continue to play a special protective role for Egyptians in the Late Period and then during Ptolemaic times.¹⁷⁴

The concept of justification is also crucial across cosmological, ethical and political domains. The use of *Maat* in the phrase *m3' hrw* shows once again an interlocking of religious, mythic and personal concerns. As noted by Irene Shirun-

¹⁷¹ Griffiths, Gwyn J. *The Conflict of Horus and Seth from Egyptian and Classical Sources*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960, pp146-148; Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p208; Griffiths, Gwyn J. "The Interpretation of the Horus Myth of Edfu", *JEA*, 44 (1958), pp75-85.

¹⁷² In Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p192.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p179.

¹⁷⁴ Woess, Frederich von *Das Asylwesen Ägyptens in der Ptolemäerzeit und die spätere Entwicklung*, München: C.H. Beck'sche, 1923, pp40-41; Samuel, Alan E. *From Athens to Alexandria: Hellenism and Social Goals in Ptolemaic Egypt*, *Studia Hellenistica*, 26, Lovanii, 1983, p86; Fraser, P.M. "Current Problems Concerning the Early History of Sarapis", *Opuscula Atheniensi*, 7 (1967), p23, p42; STIEHL, R. "The Origin of the Cult of Sarapis", *Hist. Rel.*, 3, 1963/4, pp21-33; Hornbostel, Wilhelm *Sarapis*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973. For the miraculous ancient account, see Tacitus *Histories* IV.83 and Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 28. A critical account will be found in Clement of Alexandria *The Exhortation to the Greeks*, IV.43-44. A range of other ancient sources are discussed in Brady, T. A., *The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks, 330-30 B.C.*, Columbia: University of Missouri, 1935, pp9-10. John E. Stambaugh rightly notes that this god was Hellenised under the early Ptolemies, but was probably based on the cult at Memphis for Osiris-Apis, Stambaugh, John E. *Sarapis Under the Early*

Grumach, the term is usually translated as “justified, vindicated” as the acclaim given the righteous, but also had connotations such as “triumphant, cosmically potent.”¹⁷⁵ The phrase is commonly used of a dead person from the Middle Kingdom onwards,¹⁷⁶ with the imputation of moral worth, or added as an epithet to a deity’s name. Not just Horus or Osiris, but other gods including Isis are given this title.¹⁷⁷ The phrase is used of a pharaoh taking possession of Egypt, as in the case of Sesotris III, and in the New Kingdom period can also be used of the triumphant Horus.¹⁷⁸

Counter-images found a place in the after-life of the individual. Contrary to the superficial impression of Egyptian mentality that could be derived from too direct an interpretation of the large number of surviving funerary monuments, the Egyptian was not obsessed with death or life, but with certain kinds of death, certain kinds of life. Avoidance of disease and harm in earthly life was paramount, and the ordinary Egyptian might hope for “the good ways of life and health,” with the preservation of a long lifetime through to a “good old age.”¹⁷⁹ The death of the body in this life was of course a great loss and caused suffering, but what was to be avoided at all costs was the utter destruction of the *ba* which could occur if the tests in the Hall of Justice were failed.¹⁸⁰

Ptolemies, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972, pp88-92, a view also found in Fraser, P.M. "Current Problems Concerning the Early History of Sarapis", *Opuscula Atheniensia*, 7 (1967), p23, pp42-43.

¹⁷⁵ Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p179.

¹⁷⁶ Anthes, Rudolf "The Original Meaning of *M3c HRW*", *JNES*, 13 (1954), p21.

¹⁷⁷ *The Stela of the Priest Horemkhauf*, from Hieraconpolis, Metropolitan Museum 35.7.55, line 6, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, I, p130.

¹⁷⁸ Shirun-Grumach, Irene "Remarks on the Goddess Maat", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1985, p179.

¹⁷⁹ Amuletic decree L. 7 = British Museum 10730, lines 25-30, translated in Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, p48. See also T. 1 = Turin Museum 1983, Recto, lines 10-20, translated in *Ibid.*, p52.

¹⁸⁰ For the destruction of the *ba* by the Devourer, see *Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire (Setne II)*, 2.6-9, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p140. The *ba* concept is complex, and may have evolved over time in Egypt. At the least, it seems to have derived from a concept of freedom of movement, and

Much of the later literature reveals an intense love of all facets of human life, from the mundane to the sublime, but it was also hoped that ‘the justified’ person would find their home in a new blessed world, just as there was hope for a measure of continued wholeness for the *ba* and *ka* in their existence by a properly prepared burial.¹⁸¹ Indeed, for Egyptians even through to the Ptolemaic period, the provisos for the passing on of property often included the condition that the deceased received a proper burial, possibly an extension of the idea that the new king had to legitimate his rule by ensuring the proper funeral and mortuary cult of his predecessor.¹⁸² Of course, this concern for proper burial did not necessarily extend to respect for the tombs of other families. Not only were tomb-robbers willing to violate burials, but evidence from Deir el Medina shows that the villagers were willing to re-use the tombs of ordinary persons “for various purposes such as storage, or usurping earlier vaults for their own interment.”¹⁸³ These trends of re-using tombs, or stones from old tombs, continued down through the Ptolemaic into the Roman period.¹⁸⁴

As noted above, in the social world the counter-image to that of *maat* is a time of troubles and chaos in the Two Lands. This is usually associated with famine, political conflict, the closing of temples, failure to carry out the cult, low Nile levels,

comes ‘to represent the man himself, the totality of his physical and psychic abilities’, Zabkar, Louis V. *A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*, Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1968, p3, see also p162. For other punishments or harm which might come to the *ba*, see Ibid. pp105-106. It seems generally true to suggest that the ‘Egyptians were literally panic-stricken as to what might be done or might happen to them after their deaths’, Gardiner, Alan H. *The Attitude of the Ancient Egyptian to Death and the Dead*, Cambridge: CUP, 1935, p24. In detail, see Zandee, J. *Death as an Enemy, According to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions*, N.Y.: Arno Press, 1977, pp10-40.

¹⁸¹ See Zabkar, Louis V. *A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*, Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1968, pp106-114.

¹⁸² Morrenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p195; Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, pp98-100, p104; Kanawati, N. *The Tomb and its Significance in Ancient Egypt*, Cairo: Prism Archaeology Series, 1987, pp30-32. For not being buried by children as a curse, see *UPZ I*, 1.

¹⁸³ Meskell, Lynn "Deir el Medina: Archaeology vs. Texts", *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers*, 29 no. 2 (1994), p107.

¹⁸⁴ Reymond, E.A.E. *From the Records of a Priestly Family from Memphis*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, pp15-16.

invasion, and inversions of the social and 'natural' order. This notion of inverted rightness can be seen through a counter-image to normal harmonious life found in graffiti in the workmen's village near the Valley of Kings, discussed by John Romer: -

As if emphasizing this subtle understanding of the individual and the social order, there are many deliberate inversions of the conventions in the drawings that the villagers made for their amusement. We find a mouse in his chariot sternly directing an army, but facing the wrong way, and similar scenes tell us that the mouse's chariot is carrying him off to fight a war with the cats, who usually lose . . . In the village scenes, similar havoc is created by the reversal of roles, with anthropomorphic coronations and party scenes showing mice dressed in clothes and attended by cats.¹⁸⁵

The irony and humour of these drawings precisely relies on what was thought to be unusual and notable. They are relatively rare in Egyptian art, and seem to include elements of satire and irony, as well as erotic images.¹⁸⁶ It is these counter-images which deliver a strong reinforcement for the normative role of *maat* by providing a direct commentary on how one should react when justice fails during periods of chaos and disorder.

The meaning of this disorder takes on apocalyptic dimensions before eventual restoration of order. The elements of these prophecies, drawn on materials from 1900 BCE onwards, have been analysed by Jonathan Smith who offers the following schema in their narratives:

'(A) (1) The prophet came before the king and proclaimed to him all that he asked concerning that which was to come. (2) And these are the words which he spoke on that occasion.
(B) (3) Behold the people are in confusion because there is disorder in the land. (4) Social relations have become reversed. (5) Religious obligations are ignored. (6) The natural cycle is overthrown. (7) Foreigners have appeared and are acting as if they were Egyptians. (8) The whole world is upside down, even the gods are affected. (9) The gods have abandoned Egypt. (10) The land of life has become a land of death.
(C) (11) But then shall come forth a great king sent by the gods. (12) The foreigners shall be driven out. (13) All relations will be restored. (14) All that is good will return to the people, the land and the gods and Egypt will again be a land of life.

¹⁸⁵ Romer, John *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharaohs*, N.Y.: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, p96.

¹⁸⁶ For the context of these and other examples, see Graves-Brown, Carolyn *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt*, London: A & C Black, 2010, pp107-109; Smith, W. Stevenson *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. By W.K. Simpson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, pp392-393.

(D) (15) Thus the prophet finished speaking before the king and was greatly renowned for the wisdom which he had spoken.¹⁸⁷

It can be seen that at the cosmological level, in the life after death, in the state system, and in personal life *maat* and its constellation of counter-images form a deep structure in the mentality of Egyptians. It is reflected in their official and private literature, in their cult and funerary practices, in their education and social activities. These conceptions and behaviours were already prominent in the Middle Kingdom, and continued through the New Kingdom and Late Periods.

At the level of popular and religious culture, they persisted in demotic and 'nationalistic' literature through the Persian occupation, and then on into the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods.¹⁸⁸ This demotic literature of the Ptolemaic period continues to expand and "may approach the size of the Greek corpus."¹⁸⁹ Likewise, the continuance of local Egyptian court procedures, some aspects of village administration, and the traditional conduct of religious institutions, meant that the indigenous value system persisted as the focus of expectations in the social life of ordinary Egyptians. Interference with this everyday system of values by the Persians and then the Ptolemaic administration was seen as a form of oppression. It could be

¹⁸⁷ Smith, Jonathan Z. "Wisdom and Apocalyptic", in *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1978, pp75-76.

¹⁸⁸ Eddy, S. K. *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near-Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334-31 B.C.*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, pp282-3, pp287-290; Lloyd, A.B. "Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt", *Historia*, 31 (1982), pp33-55; Lloyd, Alan B. "Herodotus' Account of Pharaonic History", *Historia*, 37 (1988), pp40-41. See for example *The Prophecy of Nefer-rohu*, translated in Wilson, John A. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Princeton N.J., Princeton University Press, 1955, pp444-6 and the Sesostris Legend as represented in Diodorus I.53-58, also the well-known *Demotic Chronicle* and the *Oracle of the Potter*. For challenges to the idea that these texts are necessarily anti-Hellenic, see Samuel, Alan E. *From Athens to Alexandria: Hellenism and Social Goals in Ptolemaic Egypt*, *Studia Hellenistica*, 26, Lovanii, 1983, p73; Préaux, C. *Le monde hellénistique: La Grèce at l'Orient de la mort d'Alexandre à la conquête remain de la Grèce*, (323-146 av. J.-C.), 2 vols., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978, pp395-396. See also McCown, C. C. "Hebrew and Egyptian Apocalyptic Literature", *HThR*, 18 (1925), pp398-403. The second story of Setne Khamwas, though written in demotic, shows distinct features borrowed from Greek motifs, Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p126.

¹⁸⁹ Samuel, Alan E. *From Athens to Alexandria: Hellenism and Social Goals in Ptolemaic Egypt*, *Studia Hellenistica*, 26, Lovanii, 1983, p109.

resisted or accommodated in a wide variety of ways, of which armed revolt was only one option (see below).

8. Popular Mentality and Social Discontent

The evolution of specific religious and ethical concerns is difficult to trace. It is possible that a heightened sense of disorder and insecurity had developed in the Late Period, leading in turn to a greater emphasis on personal salvation and the search for direct means whereby an individual might find safety or refuge. Speaking of the village of workmen at Deir el-Medina, John Romer suggests that towards the end of its existence there was a marked change in mentality:

The huge public image of a strong, calm state that offered all the security of a pious feudalism reflected conditions that had not existed at Thebes for a long time. Slowly, during the first century of life at the tombmaker's village, the mood had changed. Individuals started to appear, people who worried, prayed to personal gods, recorded personal experience rather than bland sentiment, and who were, perhaps, more superstitious (for they had sensed the unknown). These people would go to their graves not merely the happy servants of the state machine assured of their place in the next world by the status of the man they served on earth, but as individuals who had provided themselves with their own magical passports and amulets for their journey and who, once they had arrived with the gods, would stand singly before them for judgement.¹⁹⁰

John Romer, of course, is extrapolating from the case of a rather unique village of specially skilled workman, whose ideas do not necessarily reflect the more widespread concerns of ordinary Egyptians.¹⁹¹

However, evidence from oracular amuletic decrees in the Late New kingdom¹⁹² shows a wide range of everyday anxieties:

¹⁹⁰ Romer, John *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharaohs*, N.Y.: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, p96.

¹⁹¹ See Edgerton, W.F. "The Strikes in Ramesses III's Twenty-Ninth Year", *JNES*, 10 (1951), pp137-145.

¹⁹² Circa 929-730 B.C., Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, pxiii-xiv. These are narrow strips of papyri which are rolled up and placed in small containers and then worn as protective charms, *Ibid.*, pp xvii-xix.

Dangers encountered in travel and in daily life figure prominently. Apart from those which occurred on special occasions, such as when making a pilgrimage to the shrine of some deity, there were the more regular risks of accident when sailing by boat, walking along the river-bank or riding in a horse-drawn vehicle. Reptiles constituted an ever-present hazard to the traveller no less than to other persons attending to their daily tasks; it is not surprising therefore to find protection from stings of snakes and scorpions and the bite of a crocodile mentioned in very many of the texts. Less expected perhaps is the assurance, which is also common, of safety from injury caused by the fall of a thunderbolt or the collapse of the wall of a building. In so far as they were a normal element in daily life, dreams may be included here, and it is interesting to note that assurance is given not only that the owner's own dreams but also the dreams which another person might dream about him or her would be good.

Witches and wizards were an ever-present source of trouble, whose evil machinations required to be countered by the aid of magic. They might be Egyptian or foreign, Syrians, Nubians, Ethiopians, or Libyans.¹⁹³

The importance of dreams in this magical worldview can be seen in amulet decrees where a god can state for the owner of the amulet that "I shall make every [dream], which someone else has seen for her, good."¹⁹⁴ Even more explicit is the amuletic decree which promises:

We shall make every dream, which she has seen, good; we shall make every dream, which she will see, good; we shall make every dream, which any male, any female, or any person of any kind in the whole land has seen for her, good; we shall make every dream, which any male, any female, or any person of any kind in the whole land will see for her good; we shall say with regard to them (something) good.¹⁹⁵

Similar fears are expressed in relation to oracles: in another one of these protective amulets we find the idea that the person will be kept safe from "every grievous message and every evil oracle."¹⁹⁶

Analyses of the ostraca from Deir el-Medina also show some of the first recorded 'strikes' (perhaps better conceived of as provoked withdrawals of labour), with disturbances especially common during the Twentieth Dynasty. They indicate

¹⁹³ Ibid., pxx. For magicians, see for example L.1 Verso lines 35-41 = British Museum 10083 in Ibid., p10. For a fine example of a letter in which the power of the gods was used in order to bring someone back in safety from a journey, and in which symbolic participation in the procession Amenophis is involved, perhaps through written petitions placed before the cult image, see *B.M. Papyrus 10417*, translated in Blackman, A.M. "Oracles in Ancient Egypt" (2), *JEA*, 12 (1926), pp184-185.

¹⁹⁴ L.2 = British Museum 10251, Verso, lines 45-49, translated in Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, p21.

¹⁹⁵ T. 1 = Turin Museum 1983, Recto, lines 15-30, translated in Ibid., p52.

¹⁹⁶ L. 6 = British Museum 10587, Verso, lines 40-45, translated in Ibid., p430.

that the community came under severe economic pressure during the late New Kingdom.¹⁹⁷ This view of a changing mentality may be over-schematised, but is supported by more than just the increased use of magical amulets by ordinary persons.¹⁹⁸ Pascal Vernus, in particular, has argued that the strikes of this special group of workmen are a symptom of a much wider social unrest which becomes evident during the Ramesside period with the Great Tomb Robberies, the corruption in the Khnum temple at Elephantine, and the conspiracy against Ramesses III. All indicate a crisis in values which undermined the legitimacy of the ruling class and correlated with a growing need for personal access to the divine.¹⁹⁹ These strikes also have some elements of demonstrations over inadequate redistribution of food resources, with a range of temples in Thebes being possible sources of supply.²⁰⁰ Such strikes and ‘abandoning the place of work’ are major correlates of ‘flight to the temple’ actions, and are the social basis of later asylum-seeking behaviour. Taken in combination with the broader problem of flight from a place of work, in Greek *anachoresis*, these ‘strikes’ become a significant aspect of social resistance during the Hellenistic period.

¹⁹⁷ Faulkner, R.O. "Egypt: From the Inception of the Nineteenth Dynasty to the Death of Ramesses III", *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd, ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1973, Vol. II, Part 2, Chpt. 23, p246; Cerny, J. "Egypt from the Death of Ramesses III to the end of the Twenty-First Dynasty", in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1975, Vol. II, Part 2, p624; Janssen, J.J. "Absence from Work by the Necropolis Workmen of Thebes", *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kulture*, 8 (1980), pp127-152; Eyre, C.J. "A 'Strike' Text from the Theban Necropolis" in Ruffle, John et al. (ed.) *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H.W. Fairman*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1979, pp80-91. For a Ptolemaic example of a withdrawal of labour, i.e. flight by slaves in stone quarry, see *P. Hib.* I, 72.

¹⁹⁸ Lindsay, Jack *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, London: Frederick Muller, 1970, p305; Jacq, C. *Egyptian Magic*, trans. J.M. Davis, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1985, pp53-59. See further Bonner, Campbell *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, London: OUP, 1950.

¹⁹⁹ See Vernus, Pascal *Affaires et scandales sous les Ramsès. La crise des valeurs dans l'Égypte du Nouvel Empire*, Paris: Pygmalion, 1993, pp159-162.

²⁰⁰ See Kemp, Barry J. "Temple and Town in Ancient Egypt", in Ucko, P.J. et. al. (eds) *Man, Settlement, and Urbanism: Research Seminar in Archaeology and Related Subjects*, London: Duckworth, 1973, p659. Note that *P. Turin* 1895 + 2006 records the collection of taxes in grain in places south of Thebes, with a considerable portion of the grain being turned over to the mayor of West Thebes, presumably acting as a storage and redistribution point, in Gardiner, A.H. "Ramesside Texts Relating to the Taxation and Transportation of Corn", *JEA*, 27 (1941), pp22-26.

Although evidence is not consistent across all historical periods, there appears to be an increase in personalised forms of piety from the late New Kingdom onward, as well as a growing emphasis on oracles and dreams in the everyday life of individuals and the state.²⁰¹ An example is the record of a dream of a certain Somtutefnakht, who, having served with the Persians in their battles against Alexander the Great, was then inspired to return to his home-town and resume priestly service to the God Harsaphes at Hnes in the 16th nome of Upper Egypt.²⁰² A dream vision is also part of the propagandistic account of the god Khons preserved on the *Bentresh Stela*: on this occasion a dream vision of the god to the prince of Bakhtan (Bactria?) allows the return of the healing statue of the god to Thebes. A dream command is also a component in the propagandistic *Famine Stele*, supporting the claims of the temple of Khnum of Elephantine.²⁰³ The late demotic account, *Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire (Setne II)*, has a sequence in which a woman has a dream in a temple in order to receive healing for infertility; her dream instructions resulted in the birth of an exceptional child.²⁰⁴ Later in the same story, the magician Horus-son-of-

²⁰¹ Faulkner, R.O. "Egypt: From the Inception of the Nineteenth Dynasty to the Death of Ramesses III", *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1973, Vol. II, Part 2, pp217-251, pp248-251; Bleeker, C.J. "The Religion of Ancient Egypt", in Bleeker, C. & Widengren, G. (eds.) *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, Vol. I, p46, p51; Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, pxiv; Shafer, Byron (ed.) *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths and Personal Practise*, London: Routledge, 1991; Ray, J.D. "A Pious Soldier: Stele Aswan 1057", *JEA*, 73 (1987), pp169-180; Baines, John "Practical Religion and Piety" *JEA*, 73 (1987), pp79-98; Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, pp213-230; Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p82. See further Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987.

²⁰² *Stele of Somtutefnakht*, Naples Museum 1035, lines 6-15, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, pp42-3.

²⁰³ *The Bentresh Stela*, from Karnak, Louvre C 284, lines 24-25, translated in *Ibid.*, III, p93; *Famine Stela*, On Sehel Island, lines 17-20, translated in *Ibid.*, III, pp98-9.

²⁰⁴ *Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire (Setne II)*, 1,1-10, translated in *Ibid.*, III, pp138-9. A funerary inscription of Taimuthis, sistrum-player of Ptah, contemporary to Ptolemy XIII Auletes, records 'a revelation' whereby the god Imhotep instructed her and her husband to construct some sort of dedication, presumably a statue, in return for the hoped for birth of their first son, see Reymond, E.A.E. *From the Records of a Priestly Family from Memphis*, Vol. 1, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, inscription no. 20.8-12.

Paneshe was inspired by a dream within a temple to find a book of magic with which to protect the Pharaoh from the sorceries of the Nubians.²⁰⁵ In the same general way, the tomb inscriptions of Petosiris, regardless of the problem of their exact dating, do emphasise this pious trend for the Late Period of Egyptian expression. They demonstrate an emphasis on the “way of God,” promoting “a life of rectitude, piety, success, and happiness.”²⁰⁶

9. Personal Piety and Prayer

These trends indicate the development of a commonplace piety which is more than a literary type. This issue is important, because it demonstrates that *maat* is invoked as much more than a legal fiction, ritual norm or a literary topos. On this basis, it is worthwhile briefly exploring the nature of personal piety in the limited resources which reflect on the individual’s use of religion in ancient Egypt. Ashraf Sadek has suggested that already in the Old and Middle Kingdoms ordinary people “had their beliefs and could often practice their rites outside the official priesthood and temple cult.”²⁰⁷ At the same time, this wider participation in early periods would have been limited. It is likely that “in comparison with the New Kingdom, private and non-élite participation must have been small and indirect.”²⁰⁸ The clearest evidence for an articulated form of personal piety emerges from the New Kingdom onwards.

A small number of prayers, mainly located within the limits of the Nineteenth Dynasty (circa 1350-1200 BCE), begin to suggest a sense of vulnerability and

²⁰⁵ *Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire (Setne II)*, 5.9-15, translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p146.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, III, p45. For the limited success in fusing Egyptian and Hellenic artistic traditions in some of the artwork of the tomb, see Smith, W. Stevenson *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. by W.K. Simpson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, pp421-422.

²⁰⁷ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p10, p42. See also Posener, Georges "La piété personnelle avant l'âge Amarnien", *R.d'E.*, 27 (1975), pp195-210.

²⁰⁸ Baines, John "Practical Religion and Piety" *JEA*, 73 (1987), p73.

dependence on the divine.²⁰⁹ This can be seen in the fact that even Amen-Re can be spoken of in one stela from a small brick temple, probably used by the workers of the Theban necropolis, as “The august God who hears prayer; Whom comes at the voice of the distressed humble one; Who gives breath to him that is wretched.”²¹⁰ This stela was dedicated by the draughtsman Nebre and his son, and indicates a strong sense of having been saved by the god, even “Though the servant was disposed to do evil, Yet is the Lord disposed to be merciful. The Lord of Thebes passes not a whole day wroth.”²¹¹ This stela demonstrates “confidence in the might and mercy” of the god.²¹² In ostraca of the 18th dynasty, Amon-Re can be viewed as a lord of mercy.²¹³

In the same context, swearing falsely in an oath using the name of a god could bring direct punishment, specifically blindness.²¹⁴ This is found in a stela inscription in which a man swore falsely by Ptah, ‘Lord of Truth,’ who then caused the liar “to behold darkness every day.”²¹⁵ Like other gods, Ptah sometimes had the image of the goddess *Maat* offered to him by the king, as in an inscription found in the royal palace at Memphis.²¹⁶ Hence, the taking of a false oath was indeed an abomination against

²⁰⁹ Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p82. See the translations in Erman, Adolf "Denksteine aus der thebanischen Gräberstadt", *Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaft*, 49 (1911), pp1086-1110.

²¹⁰ Berlin Museum no. 23077, discussed in Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p83.

²¹¹ In *Ibid.*, p85. See also Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 1985, p216.

²¹² Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p227.

²¹³ O. Caire 12224, translated in Posener, Georges "La piété personnelle avant l'âge Amarnien", *R.d'E.*, 27 (1975), p201.

²¹⁴ Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Israelit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p216; Breasted, James Henry, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, p354.

²¹⁵ British Museum, no. 589, in Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p88.

²¹⁶ Petrie, W.M. Flinders *Memphis*, London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909, Vol. II, p19, where J.H. Walker translates and describes Plate XXIV. For use of the nomenclature 'Lord of Truth' for Ptah, see Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp104-105.

truth (*ma'at*) and against the Lord of Truth, Ptah.²¹⁷ The inscription closes with a request for the god to be merciful, and implies an early doctrine of repentance.²¹⁸ A similar sentiment is expressed by a person who swore a false oath by the moon (the Luna-Thoth). It is preserved in a stela which has a depiction of a barque, and the worshipper bearing a portable shrine.²¹⁹

These inscriptions proclaim the greatness of the god, with a public avowal designed to appease the god as well as proclaim his or her greatness. Similar accounts of blindness and an invocation of the mercy of the god are found with regard to Khonsu (Turin no. 299), Luna-Thoth (Turin no. 318) and Thoth (Turin no. 279), indicating an approach to great as well local gods.²²⁰ The intimate nature of these devotions is captured by part of an inscription on a small wood shrine, this time dedicated to Amun:

Mine eyes behold Amun at his every feast,
That beloved God, who hearkens to humble entreaties,
Who stretches forth his hand to the humble,
Who saves the wearied.²²¹

This apparent change in temperament may be simply an artefact of the uneven evidence at our disposal, while Battiscombe Gunn suggests a possible Semitic influence brought in from Syria,²²² an idea which is possible, bearing in mind the Aramaic and Semitic groups found in Memphis and Elephantine, and the rise of cults

²¹⁷ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p211. For the legal implications of false oaths in Egyptian judicial procedures, see Bedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, p142; Wilson, John A. "The Oath in Ancient Egypt", *JNES*, 7 (1948), pp129-156.

²¹⁸ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p103.

²¹⁹ Turin no. 284, in Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p89.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp90-92.

²²¹ Turin no. 913, translated in *Ibid.*, p92.

²²² *Ibid.*, p93.

to Baal and Astarte in Egypt, especially during the New Kingdom.²²³ It also is possible that these types of inscriptions were most common in the Nineteenth Dynasty and originate in a particular class of artisans and scribes employed near Thebes.

Yet their presence suggests the need to treat with caution the idea that the great institutional gods suffered a loss of pious belief by ordinary Egyptians, and remained formal cult centres entirely reliant on royal and priestly involvement.²²⁴ The limits to this viewpoint are apparent in the fact that major gods continue to be approached for healing and personal help. Thus, although deified officials from the past such as Imhotep and Amenhotep might become popular sources of aid, requests to major gods including Amun, Sebek and Khons continued to be made from the Late Ramesside through to the Ptolemaic period.²²⁵ Furthermore, although the names of gods *per se* are rarely used in personal nomenclature, names recording positive aspects of major deities are common, and do not usually lead back to minor gods such as Bes and Taweret.²²⁶

Other texts provide confirmation of this theme of personal connection with the gods for the Late Ramesside period. Documents from the scribe Dhutmose ask directly for aid from Amun.²²⁷ Although written in a rather formulaic way, a number of late Ramesside Letters speak of calling on the gods to look after the addressee of

²²³ This was part of a wider influx of persons and ideas which occurred during the 'imperial' period when Egypt control Syro-Palestine, Vernus, Pascal *Affairs et scandales sous les Ramsès. La crise des valeurs dans l'Égypte du Nouvel Empire*, Paris: Pygmalion, 1993, p160.

²²⁴ Contra Erman, Adolf *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Griffith, Boston: Longwood Press, 1977, p75. For the domestic role of divinities such as Renenet and Taweret, see Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp121-128.

²²⁵ Ray, J.D. "Papyrus Carlsberg 67: A Healing-Prayer from the Fayum", *JEA*, 61 (1975), p186. For a statue of Amenhotep as an intermediary to Amun at Thebes and related inscriptions, see Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p45, pp278-279. On the statue where a papyrus on the scribe's knees had been worn smooth, probably due to the 'repeated rubbing, by countless hand of the faithful', see *Ibid.*, p46.

²²⁶ Baines, John "Practical Religion and Piety" *JEA*, 73 (1987), p95-96.

²²⁷ Ray, J.D. "Papyrus Carlsberg 67: A Healing-Prayer from the Fayum", *JEA*, 61 (1975), p186.

the letter, often in the opening lines.²²⁸ The call for aid can also be widespread, embracing the entire range of gods; for example, the expression telling “every god and every goddess by whom I pass to give you life, prosperity, and health, a long lifetime, and a good ripe old age,” or similar.²²⁹ This expression may owe its usage to the custom of uttering prayers while passing wayside shrines or even the exteriors of major temples.²³⁰ Other documents ask the addressee to pray to the gods, especially Amun, to keep Dhutmose safe, or to bring him back safely from a dangerous trip.²³¹ Although sometimes dealing with pragmatic issues, some of these letters contain religious sentiments along with concern over the well-being of the recipient,²³² suggesting that these religious formulations are more than routine linguistic usages. A letter from the chantress of Amon-Re, in particular, is most concerned that grain has not been made available for the divine offering, and that the god “will have done every (sort of) bad thing with me,”²³³ suggesting more than a bureaucratic concern.

In general, these Late Ramesside letters “show a picture of a community trying to protect one of its endangered members by praying for him.”²³⁴ These intercessory prayers are sometimes connected with a rite which involved ‘taking water’ to the

²²⁸ See *P. Turin* 1972, translated in Wente, Edward F. *Late Ramesside Letters*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, p24.

²²⁹ For example, *P. Leiden*, I, 370, translated in *Ibid.*, p27; *P. British Museum* 10300, translated in *Ibid.*, p55; *P. Turin* 1974 + 1945, translated in *Ibid.*, p56. The documents of the scribe Dhutmose are probably to be dated to the reign of Ramesses XI, *Ibid.*, pp1-4.

²³⁰ See Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p215. A striking series of 50 tiny wayside shrines will be found on the route from the Village of workmen to the King's Valley at Deir el-Medina, Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp75-6.

²³¹ 'Please tell Amon to bring me back', or 'back alive', see *P. Leiden*, I, 369, translated in Wente, Edward F. *Late Ramesside Letters*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, p18; *P. Turin* 1974 + 1945, translated in *Ibid.*, p56. Similar formulations are also found in *P. Turin* 1973, translated in *Ibid.*, p20; *P. British Museum* 10326, translated in *Ibid.*, p38; *P. Geneva* D 192, translated in *Ibid.*, p51. Dhutmose was involved in the Nubian campaign of general Paiankh, *Ibid.*, p9, p12.

²³² See for example *P. Phillipps*, translated in *Ibid.*, pp47-48.

²³³ *P. Geneva* D 191, translated in *Ibid.*, p72.

²³⁴ Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p213.

god.²³⁵ This may correlate to a procedure known from the fourth century BCE whereby water was kept in or near divine statues and could then be drunk as part of a cure,²³⁶ once again indicating that the gods are not remote and could be invoked by relatively simple procedures. Some stelae, covered with magical healing formulae, were erected with a hollow basin attached, so that water could be poured over the stone, and then collected and drunk or applied externally.²³⁷

Although intercessory prayer, except for prayers made for the sovereigns or for dead persons, was not yet part of the official cult,²³⁸ it nonetheless represents the public and social face of religious conceptions which were much more than formal or ritualistic. Nor were priests (and later on the *hierodouloi*, sacred slaves and the *katochoi*, those detained by the gods by dreams or other signs)²³⁹ of the Hellenistic period the only ones who established a particular relationship with the gods. Dhutmose describes himself as the 'faithful servant' of the god, and a core word here seems to be *b3k*, meaning "a layman who honoured a certain god by, for example, setting up a stela to him or participating in his religious rites."²⁴⁰ In contrast to most

²³⁵ Ibid., p214.

²³⁶ Ray, J.D. "Papyrus Carlsberg 67: A Healing-Prayer from the Fayum", *JEA*, 61 (1975), p18. Water cures in various forms are today common in Christianity, but are also found in some Japanese temples.

²³⁷ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp284-285, following Seele, K.C. "Horus on the Crocodiles", *JNES*, 6 (1947), pp43-52, Plates I-III. See also Thompson, Dorothy J. *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p89.

²³⁸ Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Isrealit-Groll, S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p218.

²³⁹ Briefly but accurately characterized as 'people under a restraint, to whom the god had in some way indicated that he had need of their service', Ray, J.D. "The House of Osorapis", in Ucko, P.J. et al. (eds.) *Man, Settlement and Urbanism: Research Seminar in Archaeology and Related Subjects*, London: Duckworth, 1972, p699.

²⁴⁰ Sweeney, Deborah "Intercessory Prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible", in Isrealit-Groll S. (ed.) *Pharaonic Egypt*, The Hebrew University: Magnes Press, 1985, p214, following *Late Ramesside Letters* 30, 8 & 28, 4. It is unlikely in this context that the term *b3k* can be merely a metaphor indicating the humble position of a petition writer, as in the phrasing of some Middle Kingdom documents, see Hughes, G.R. "A Demotic Letter to Thoth", *JNES*, 17 (1958), pp7-8. For the role of religious associations operating in temples, see Cenival, François de "Les associations dans les temples égyptiens d'après les données fournies par les papyrus démotiques", in Derchain, P. (ed.) *Religions en l'Égypte hellénistique et romaine*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969, pp5-19.

Greeks, Egyptians were “willing to humble themselves in front of their gods” and the concept of being a servant was often linked to notions of humility and justice.²⁴¹

These factors, as well as the numerous small shrines found at Deir el-Medina, indicate the presence of early religious associations or self-help societies, similar to those found from the Late Period (26th Dynasty) through to Roman times.²⁴² Ashraf Sadek has suggested that the evidence from the small chapels shows that some kind of simple organisation, comprising twelve people (due to seating arrangements in the benches in the chapels), may have helped organise the informal cultic activities around these shrines, thereby forming the precursors of the later religious associations.²⁴³ The matter is controversial and the evidence circumstantial, but if these early signs of popular cultic activity do not indicate full-blown associations, they may nonetheless demonstrate the gradual emergence of informal religious activity needed to allow these associations to form. These lay people and their associations may also have contributed to the upkeep of these temples.²⁴⁴ From the Saite period onwards, cult associations were attached to particular gods and performed the function of ‘friendly societies.’ They formed a link between popular religious participation and formal cults.²⁴⁵ Religious associations continued through the Ptolemaic period, and remained active in the Fayum from the late Ptolemaic period down until Roman imperial times, making dedications to various forms of Isis, Anubis and Apollo.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ Sadel, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p209.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p79.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp80-81.

²⁴⁴ Sauneron, Serge & Lorton, David *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, p72.

²⁴⁵ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp286-287. For example, temple administrations sometimes allowed these groups to use a room within the temple complex, see *Ibid.*, p286.

²⁴⁶ See Bernand, Étienne *Recueil des Inscriptions grecques du Fayoum*, Cairo, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1975-1981, III, nos. 171, 172, 204 & 205.

Speaking of the period down to the death of Ramesses III, R. O. Faulkner can therefore correctly suggest:

But beside the state cults and the worship of exotic deities there grew up among the humble folk a very personal relationship to the gods and a consciousness of sin which is something new in Egyptian religion. The deities so worshipped and addressed in humble prayer were Amun, Ptah, Haroeris, Thoth, the Moon, Isis, Meretseger the patroness of the Theban necropolis, and the deified king Amenophis I. Amun, for example, is invoked as 'that beloved god who harkens to humble entreaties, who stretches out his hand to the humble and who saves the wearied', while of Amenophis it is said, 'whoso enters to thee with troubled heart, he comes forth rejoicing and exulting'. Nothing comparable with this personal relationship between the deity and the worshipper has been noted during other periods of Egyptian history.²⁴⁷

James Henry Breasted saw in such testaments a more general trend between 1300-1100 BCE: "a development toward deep personal confidence in the goodness and paternal solicitude of God, resulting in a relation of spiritual communion him."²⁴⁸

Breasted suggested that this "earliest known age of personal piety in a deep spiritual sense degenerated under the influence of sacerdotalism into the exaggerated religiosity of Graeco-Roman days in Egypt."²⁴⁹ Extreme caution needs to be used in the application of such decline models, and if anything the Late Period saw a stronger emphasis on the nexus among morality, ritual and magic than before. Breasted inferred that in this period a new awareness of god's presence had developed even in the context of formal ritual. He argued that in tomb inscriptions from this period there was a stronger emphasis on morality, and that even in daily life a person could express the following hope: "I desired that it might be well with me in the Great God's

²⁴⁷ Faulkner, R.O. "Egypt: From the Inception of the Nineteenth Dynasty to the Death of Ramesses III", in Edwards, I.E.S. et al. (eds.) *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed., Cambridge: CUP, 1973, Vol. II Part 2, Chapter XXIII, p248.

²⁴⁸ Breasted, James Henry, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, p6.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

presence.²⁵⁰ For Breasted, this piety is at first not given to new minor gods, but to the two dominant theologies attached to Re and Osiris.²⁵¹

It is difficult to judge from the available evidence the exact historical development of patterns of person piety. However, a text from the Theban area gives strong expression to the notion of a caring and listening god concerned with the needs of people, and even with birds, mice, and worms:

Who cometh to the silent,
Who saveth the poor,
Who giveth breath to every one he loveth, . . .
Give to me [thy] hand,
Save me,
Shine upon me,
For thou makest my sustenance.
Thou art the sole god, there is no other,
Even Re, who dawneth in the sky,
Atum maker of men,
Who heareth the prayers of him who calls to him,
Who saveth a man from the haughty,
Who bringeth the Nile for him who is among them,
Who leadeth - for all men,
When he riseth, the people live,
Their hearts live when they see him
Who giveth breath to him who is the egg,
Who maketh the people and the birds to live,
Who supplieth the needs of the mice in their holes,
The worms and the insects likewise.²⁵²

This trend correlates with a somewhat wider, and chronologically longer, aspiration that the gods will be 'hearing gods' than that proposed by Gunn for the period 1350-1200 BCE.²⁵³ This can be seen in evidence from Memphis. Large numbers of ex-voto tablet offerings have been found at Memphis with images or models of ears on them.

Although some anatomical representations found in offerings may be indications of

²⁵⁰ Breasted, James Henry, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, p170, following an Aswan tomb inscription, Breasted, James Henry *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1906-7, I, 357.

²⁵¹ Breasted, James Henry, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, pp170-171, contra Erman, Adolf *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Griffith, Boston: Longwood Press, 1977, p75.

²⁵² Berlin Statuette, no. 6910, translated in Breasted, James Henry, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912, pp349-350.

prayers hoping for recovery from disease or the loss of function of specific organs, the context of some of these tablets suggests a different purpose. Found beneath the foundation bed of sand from the time of Ramesses II in the West Hall of Ptah, many of these votive images of ears are directly associated with Ptah and indicate that Ptah will be the ‘hearer of prayers’ and the receiver of petitions.²⁵⁴ Ear models remain common as dedications into the Hellenistic period, and the epithet of a hearing or listening god persists into the Roman Empire.²⁵⁵ An inscription found in the temple of Merenptah at Memphis, made by the scribe Mahui, confirms this view of Ptah with the words: “Adoration to the Ka of Ptah, lord of truth, the great one of might, the hearer of petitions.”²⁵⁶

The social standing of most of these dedicants to Ptah at Memphis range from the middle to lower levels of society, including “middle rank administrators and craftsmen down to porters, soldiers or stone-cutters.”²⁵⁷ Noting that Amen-re Harakhte at Karnak is also called he ‘who hears prayer’, Ashraf Sadek suggested that the temple of Amen-re and the temple of Ptah at Memphis both had rear chambers to their main temples, and that “rear temples were perhaps official provision for popular worship of the great state gods close to the main temples of the official cult.”²⁵⁸ The evidence, though suggestive, is too limited to be generalised into the view that such rear chambers were regularly used for popular cults.

²⁵³ Extending the view of Gunn, Battiscombe "The Religion of the Poor in Ancient Egypt", *JEA*, 3 (1916), p82.

²⁵⁴ Petrie, W.M. Flinders *Memphis*, London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909, Vol. I, p7, discussing Tablets nos. 10, 15, 22, 25, 30. Tablet 49 has 376 ears, no. 48 only 110. See also Plates IV. no. 2 & Plates IX-XIII in *Ibid.* See also Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p17, p106. Such ear stelae were quite popular in the New Kingdom, *Ibid.*, pp245-255. For a partial listing of the ear stelae from the Ptah enclosure at Mît Rahîna, see Porter, Bertha & Moss, Rosalind L. B., *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs & Paintings*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, Vol. 3, Part 2, p834.

²⁵⁵ Fox, Robin Lane *Pagans and Christians*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986, p127.

²⁵⁶ Plate XIII, no. 30, translated by J.H. Walker in Petrie, W.M. Flinders *Memphis*, London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909, Vol. I, p19.

²⁵⁷ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p19.

These factors suggest a vigorous personal and local religious life only partly tied to major religious structures and temples. Once again, a static conception of religious space focused on a few formal monuments does not capture the nature of religious life extending from the New Kingdom through the Late Period and down into Ptolemaic times. Indeed, as revealed in documents ranging from the fourteenth through to the 2nd century BCE, some Egyptian gods have shown themselves to have a direct moral function in punishing transgressions, and in bringing healing and security to their worshippers. Ptah and Isis both emerge as gods often invoked in ways which suggest a direct and personal connection with their worshippers.

One popular god in the New Kingdom even virtually fits the description of a saviour god. The god Shed, with staff and bow, and sometimes associated with Isis, is invoked in one inscription from Amarna: “may he (= Shed) rescue . . . for him his head, may he hear him whenever he calls.”²⁵⁹ Shed was thought to give security and protection to his followers: the name Shed, derived from the term *sd*, from the time of the New Kingdom indicating a saviour or protector.²⁶⁰ In another instance Shed is said “to make magic protection on this house, very greatly.”²⁶¹ Yet Shed had no official cult, and no temple has been discovered dedicated to him.²⁶² Indeed, the prevalence of these popular cults, including the worship of Bes, Toeris, Shed, Isis and Amen-Ra in the workmen's village of El-Amarna shows that this personal connection with such gods was hardly touched by the reforms of Akhenaten.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Ibid., pp17-18.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p38.

²⁶⁰ Loukianoff, G. "Le dieu Shed: L'Évolution de son culte dans L'ancienne Égypte", *BIE*, 13 (1931), p70; Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p129.

²⁶¹ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Haldesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p208.

²⁶² Ibid., p129.

²⁶³ Aldren, Cyril "The Amarna Period and the End of the Eighteenth Dynasty", in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge: CUP, 3rd ed., 1973, Vol. II, Part II, p89; Kemp, Barry J. "The Amarna Workmen's

In some of these accounts, mercy, justice, beauty and intoxication all combine in what must be taken as an intimate sense of religious experience.²⁶⁴ Similar linkages between beauty, mercy and grace are also ascribed to Thoth in a stele from Deir el-Medina:

(A1) Thoth [baboon] lord of eternity, who creates the everlasting (B2) giving praise to Moon-Thoth, obeisance to the merciful one, I give him adoration to the height of heaven. I exalt your beauty, that you may be gracious to me, may I see your mercy, and behold how great is your grace. You did cause me to see darkness of your making. Make light (?) for me, that one may see you, for life and health are in your possession, and one lives by your giving it.²⁶⁵

Even if these words represent a literary simulation, they nonetheless suggest the words with which one can approach the god. The ideal was clearly understood as a type of direct and personal relationship which devotees could hope for. The common use of the nomenclature 'beautiful of face' was more than routine.²⁶⁶ It indicated the highly attractive nature of the particular god who was the focus of adoration:

The gods are often said to possess *nfrw* = 'beauty', or that they are 'fair' (*nfr*) of face. *Nfr* means 'good, beautiful'. *Nfr* is a remarkable word, because it signifies not only ethical 'good', but cosmic 'good' as well. Often *nfr* means that which is ethically correct. . . . But also the youth, the marriageable maiden, the colt are *nfr*, because they are young and possess unbroken vitality."²⁶⁷

Bearing in mind Amun's official and popular roles, it is clear that "in him the national cult and popular piety found a unifying factor."²⁶⁸

Village in Retrospect", *JEA*, 73 (1987), pp32-36. See further Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, pp39-41.

²⁶⁴ Ostraca 12202 from Western Thebes, translated in Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p86. See further Posener, G. "La piété personnelle avant l'âge Amarnien", *R.d'E.*, 27 (1975), pp195-210, plates 18-21. Beauty was also a defining characteristic of divinities in Greek thought, and was one of the main ways of recognising gods in dreams, Mussies, G. "Identification and Self-Identification of Gods in Classical and Hellenistic Times", in Van Den Broek, R., Baarda, T. & Mansfeld, J. (eds.) *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, p4.

²⁶⁵ Tosi, M. & Roccati, A. *Stele e Altre Epigrafi di Deir el Medina*, Torino, 1972, Stela no. 50046, translated in Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p112.

²⁶⁶ See Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p105.

²⁶⁷ Bleeker, C.J. "The Religion of Ancient Egypt", in Bleeker, C. & Widengren, G. (eds.) *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, Vol. I, p52.

²⁶⁸ Sadek, Ashraf Iskander *Popular Religion in Egypt During the New Kingdom*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987, p90.

A related question is to what extent such religious impulses were limited to the Twentieth, Nineteenth and Eighteen Dynasties. It is possible, rather, that there emerged a peak of a personal piety which was a more general aspect of Egyptian ritual before this time. Foreshadowed to a small extent during the Middle Kingdom, it then may have persisted from the 20th dynasty down into Late Dynastic and Ptolemaic times. Ashraf Sadek has suggested, on the basis of the evidence discussed above, that “popular religion” in Egypt “can be shown as widely attested in both space and time, on a scale not previously documented.”²⁶⁹

This idea is supported by examples from Late Period Egypt. A stela from the royal palace at Memphis, probably associated with the reign of Apries,²⁷⁰ seems to express a strong personal connection with god Ptah: -

(1) Adoration to Ptah, the lord of truth, the creator of all that exists, and a kissing of the earth to his *ka*, by the royal scribe, the superintendent of the house Amenhetep, (2) deceased. He says, I have come into thy presence, Ptah South-of-his-wall, the noble one of the gods; I have beheld thy beauties and my heart is glad. (3) How joyful art thou in thy beautiful plans. I wrought truth for thee in my heart, for I knew that it is that with which thou art satisfied. I approached not (4) fraud in my heart, I have not associated myself in wrong-doing. Grant that my name be in thy temple, and that it may flourish (5) in men's mouths daily, and that my statue may be established in it (the temple), in order that I may be carried in procession with thy praised ones who are in thy temple, and that I may inhale (6) the incense, which comes forth in the presence and the oblations upon thy altar-table, and that I may behold thy Majesty on each occasion (7) of thy appearance at the time of all thy festivals. Behold, I am praised by the beautiful-one-of-face, the lord of truth (?). (8) A happy old age to the *ka* of the royal scribe, the superintendent of the house, the superintendent of the granary Amenhetep. (9) This was made by his son beneficent of heart, and true of heart, the scribe Piay.²⁷¹

This inscription is fascinating in that it brings together several central themes: the desire for direct association with god, the shift to the heart rather than ritual action as the focus of reward, and the association of the deceased's name and image with the cult and its processions, allowing his involvement with the god after death. The son,

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p293.

²⁷⁰ The exact dating remains uncertain, Kamil, Jill *Sakkara and Memphis: A Guide to the Necropolis and the Ancient Capital*, 2nd ed., London: Longman, 1985, p168.

as a scribe, and the dead father as an elite member of Memphitic society, are far from average individuals, but the document indicates a genuine celebration of the greatness and beauty of Ptah and his works. On the lower half of this stele the son shares these sentiments, speaking of Ptah's beautiful face.²⁷²

Furthermore, as can be seen from the evidence from *The Archive of Hor*, the Serapeum papyri and the nature of the *hierodouloi* and self-dedicants in the Ptolemaic period, similar types of dedication, perhaps now conceived in even more contractual terms, certainly emerge by the Ptolemaic period.²⁷³ This may be the birth of a different religious sensibility with parallel features, rather than the appearance into the historical record of an otherwise hidden continuity. Yet the scale of this religious sentiment should not be underestimated. For example, within the galleries of the mummified baboons at Saqqâra, there are some hundred graffiti, most of which speak of the writer as the 'worthy servant' of Osiris the Ape, of Osiris-Apis, or Thoth.²⁷⁴ Such graffiti suggest a piety which extends well beyond a few unique individuals like Hor or Petosiris. The important point here is not the simple phrasing of the graffiti, but the pilgrimage probably made to participate in these animal cults, and the fact that these people felt the need to leave public testimonials. Likewise, Papyrus Carlsberg 67 of 5 BCE suggests that such forms persisted into the later Hellenistic period. The document seeks healing for a certain Tshenesi from Sebek lord of Tebtunis, to drive out "corruption from her bones (and) the disease from her limbs."²⁷⁵ What is particularly interesting about this document is that it involves a curse on any person

²⁷¹ Plate XXV, translated by J.H. Walker in Petrie, W.M. Flinders *Memphis*, London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909, Vol. II, p21.

²⁷² Plate XXV, translated by J.H. Walker in *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p21.

²⁷³ For further Pre-Ptolemaic examples, see also Hughes, G.R. "A Demotic Letter to Thoth", *JNES*, 17 (1958), pp1-12 and *B.M. Papyrus 10417*, translated in Blackman, A.M. "Oracles in Ancient Egypt" (2), *JEA*, 12 (1926), pp184-185.

²⁷⁴ H.S. Smith in Emery, W.B. "Preliminary Report on the Excavations at North Saqqâra, 1968-9", *JEA*, 56 (1970), p8.

who should remove the document from the sanctuary, a procedure also mentioned in Hellenistic sources,²⁷⁶ suggesting that the document itself was a necessary condition of healing. The document is referred to by the term *mkmk*, which normally has the Greek equivalent of *hypomnema*, suggesting an almost legal relationship between supplicant and god. J.D. Ray argued “that the writer has applied legal terminology to right something which he considers abnormal, something in conflict with the principle of *m3't*.”²⁷⁷ The personal prayer in this document may demonstrate influence from Mesopotamia or the Near East.²⁷⁸ This is a distinct possibility considering the presence of Near Eastern groups and cults in Lower Egypt from at least the Twentieth Dynasty onwards (as noted above). However, this influence was not interjecting an entirely alien worldview into Egyptian religion. Rather, such influences aided a shift in usage of the cult which was already implicit in the New Kingdom trends of Egyptian popular mentality.²⁷⁹

10. Emerging Saviour Cults: Late Dynastic Period to the Hellenistic Age

This shift towards a personal and confessional religion were deepened in the Hellenistic period. Some of the most important gods of the Hellenistic period had extended and evolving relationships with their worshippers.²⁸⁰ Isis was originally, for example, not so much a mother-goddess as “the ‘throne woman’ personifying the

²⁷⁵ P. Carlsberg 67, lines 10-11, translated in Ray, J.D. "Papyrus Carlsberg 67: A Healing-Prayer from the Fayum", *JEA*, 61 (1975), p183.

²⁷⁶ P. Carlsberg 67, lines 1-16, translated in Ibid., p183, see also p187, following Macrobius *Saturnalia* I.23 and Ammianus Marcellinus *Res Gestae* XIX.12.3.

²⁷⁷ Ray, J.D. "Papyrus Carlsberg 67: A Healing-Prayer from the Fayum", *JEA*, 61 (1975), pp184-5.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p188.

²⁷⁹ Contra the implications of Spalinger, Anthony "The Limitations of Formal Ancient Egyptian Religion", *JNES*, 57 no. 4 (1998), pp241-260, who under-estimates the degree to which formal institutions can be used for private purposes.

²⁸⁰ See for example *Stele Aswan 1057*, Demotic Text, lines 3-5, of the Ptolemaic period, translated in Ray, J.D. "A Pious Soldier: Stele Aswan 1057", *JEA*, 73 (1987), pp169-180.

sacred coronation stool charged with the mysterious power of kingship.”²⁸¹ Other accounts suggest that Isis was once a cosmic deity, “either a goddess of heaven and mother of the Sun-god, or the embodiment of the fertile land of the Delta.”²⁸² Yet through the mythic role of protecting Osiris and Horus, her powers became greatly extended. Certain syncretic trends may have prepared the cult of Isis for a much wider role in the Hellenistic period:

This became most apparent in the case of Isis who from being the source of vitality as the 'throne-woman', personifying the sacred stool charged with the mysterious power of knowledge, became the prototype of the life-giving mother and faithful wife. It was she who taught her brother-spouse, Osiris, the secrets of agriculture, sent him on his civilizing mission, discovered his dismembered body after he had been slain by Seth and caused it to be reassembled and reanimated by his posthumous son, Horus, whom she had conceived from his restored body. Originally, however, she was not a Mother-goddess, for this was primarily the role of Hathor in Egypt, and it was not until Isis acquired her attributes, together with those of Nut and Neith, that she was virtually equated in the Hellenistic period with the Magna Mater of western Asia and the Graeco-Roman world. Then as 'the goddess of many names' she became the most popular of all the Egyptian divinities and was identified with the allied foreign goddesses, Silene and Io, Demeter, Aphrodite and Pelagia, while Osiris occupied a relatively subordinate position in her syncretistic mysteries.²⁸³

Isis came to be connected both with the idea of ‘fate’ and with the protective ‘uraeus-goddess’.²⁸⁴ It was probably this identification as a goddess mastering fate which allowed her association with the concept of Tyche, and even as an ‘inaugurator of time’.²⁸⁵ By late Hellenistic times she evolved into an ideal saviour goddess whose cult spread throughout the Mediterranean and guaranteed safety on the seas.²⁸⁶ She

²⁸¹ James, E.O. *The Ancient Gods: The History and Diffusion of Religion in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960, p81.

²⁸² Heyob, Sharon Kelly *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, p37.

²⁸³ James, E.O. *The Ancient Gods: The History and Diffusion of Religion in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960, pp296-7. See also Heyob, Sharon Kelly *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp1-2, pp43-44. Isis in turn would be associated with saviour-goddesses such as Demeter and Kybele, Bleeker, C.J. "Isis as Saviour God", in Brandon, S.G.F. (ed.) *The Saviour God: Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Edwin Oliver James*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963, p11.

²⁸⁴ Ray, J.D. *The Archive of Hor*, London: Egyptian Exploration Society, 1976, p157.

²⁸⁵ See *Ibid.*, Demotic Text 3, Recto, lines 4-6.

²⁸⁶ *P. Oxy.* 1380; Fraser, P.M. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, Vol. I, pp20-21 & Vol. II, pp54-6, footnotes 125-6; Witt, R.E. *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, London: Thames and

emerges as the mistress of healing and divination, fit even to teach her son Horus/Apollo these matters.²⁸⁷ Isis is often associated with Sarapis as his consort.²⁸⁸ In the Hellenistic period she was also viewed as a defender of suppliants.²⁸⁹ That there is a moral as well as ritual component to this is made clear in one of the texts from *The Archive of Hor* which notes that “Isis speaks truth to those who are true.”²⁹⁰ As noted by J.D. Ray, it is not a big step from the type of devotion found in Hor of Sebennytos to the protection offered the worshipper Lucius in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (the second century CE novel) through his relation to the goddess.²⁹¹

This saviour role for Isis did not rest solely on a Hellenistic reinterpretation of the role of the Egyptian goddess. The saviour function of Isis was already implicit in her Egyptian role as dutiful wife to Osiris and protective mother of Horus.²⁹² C.J. Bleeker rightly notes that of the all the Egyptian divinities “she can best claim this title of honour” as a saviour goddess.²⁹³ Hence ‘saviour’ and ‘benefactor’ were epithets that come to be applied to Isis without restriction.²⁹⁴ In part, she can take up this saviour role because of her great magical power: she supposedly even knows the secret name of Re.²⁹⁵ In the Roman period this aspect of Isis as a saviour goddess would be transformed in a strongly ‘penitential’ aspect, with devotees confessing and

Hudson, 1971, p20, pp185-197. See in general Dunand, Françoise *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, 3 vols, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973.

²⁸⁷ Diodorus I.25.2-6.

²⁸⁸ Stambaugh, John E. *Sarapis Under the Early Ptolemies*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972, p41.

²⁸⁹ Ray, J.D. *The Archive of Hor*, London: Egyptian Exploration Society, 1976, p157.

²⁹⁰ Demotic Text 8, line 18, discussed in *Ibid.*, p157.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p157, following Apuleius XI.6.

²⁹² Plutarch *Concerning Isis and Osiris* 12-13; Heyob, Sharon Kelly *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp1-2.

²⁹³ Bleeker, C.J. "Isis as Saviour God", in Brandon, S.G.F. (ed.) *The Saviour God: Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Edwin Oliver James*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963, p1.

²⁹⁴ Springborg, Patricia *Royal Persons: Patriarchal Monarchy and the Feminine Principle*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p218. See also *UPZ*, I, 78, lines 23-26; Wilcken, Ulrich *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit: I*, Berlin-Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1927, p36-37.

²⁹⁵ Bleeker, C.J. "Isis as Saviour God", in Brandon, S.G.F. (ed.) *The Saviour God: Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Edwin Oliver James*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963, p5.

doing penance for sins they had committed against the goddess.²⁹⁶ Osiris, too, at least in his traditional pre-Hellenistic form, was a saviour of sorts, but one saved through the ritual assimilation of the dead person to Osiris, thereby assuring salvation in the afterlife.²⁹⁷ These factors suggest a certain continuity of personal piety from Late Period times into the Ptolemaic and Roman ages.

To legitimate their rule, Egyptian rulers of the Late Period would often appeal to traditional values and national self-esteem. In this context it is true to argue that the “fourth century was an age of piety; genuine piety, but piety consciously exploited by the ruling class.”²⁹⁸ Indicators of this include the emphasis on oracles, a large demotic literature with nationalistic overtones,²⁹⁹ the propagandistic cult of ‘the statues of the Pharaoh’ (*twtw n Pr-c3*),³⁰⁰ the prevalence of cults of mummified animals, the use of magical procedures and magic amulets and a distinct moral emphasis in religious literature of the period.³⁰¹ It is also possible that the emergence of religious associations (cult-guilds) within Egyptian temples, with something of the complexion of mutual-help societies, is the reflection of a religious age suffering from sustained

²⁹⁶ Heyob, Sharon Kelly *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, pp64-66, following Ovid *Epistulae ex Ponto* I.1.52-52 & Juvenal *Satires* VI.522-29 & 535-41.

²⁹⁷ Brandon, S.G.F. "The Ritual Technique of Salvation in the Ancient Near East", in Brandon, S.G.F. (ed.) *The Saviour God: Comparative Studies in the Concept of Salvation Presented to Edwin Oliver James*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963, pp24-28, p33.

²⁹⁸ Ray, J.D. "Egypt: Dependence and Independence (425-343 B.C.)", in Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Helen (ed.) *Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Synthesis*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, 1987, p86, see also p89.

²⁹⁹ See Perry, B.E. "The Egyptian Legend of Nectanebus", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 97 (1966), pp327-333.

³⁰⁰ Ray, J.D. "Egypt: Dependence and Independence (425-343 B.C.)", in Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Helen (ed.) *Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Synthesis*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, 1987, p86.

³⁰¹ ERMAN, Adolf *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Griffith, Boston, Longwood Press, 1977, p177; RAY, J.D. "Egypt: Dependence and Independence (425-343 B.C.)", in SANCISI-WEERDENBURG, Helen (ed.) *Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Synthesis*, Leiden, Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, 1987, pp88-89. The scale of these cults should not be underestimated. The number of ibises buried at North Saqqara is in the order of four million, with perhaps ten thousand buried each year, see Ray, J.D. *The Archive of Hor*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976, p138.

insecurity, a trend which continued into the Hellenistic Age.³⁰² Miriam Lichtheim, basing her assessments on the biographical and 'Instructions' wisdom literature of the Late Period, summarises some of these trends:

The autobiographical inscriptions of the Late Period reveal a mentality and a piety that are traditional and yet subtly different from the attitudes of the past. There is less optimism and more concern. It is no longer assumed that righteous living guarantees a successful life. Success and happiness are now thought to depend entirely on the grace of the gods. The individual can achieve nothing without their help; but the will of the gods is inscrutable. Yet life was not prized any less. Piety itself demanded that life should be enjoyed. Thus, enjoyment of life is a basic theme of the autobiographies. And the exhortation to value life remains central to the moral code of the Instructions.³⁰³

11. Magic, Ethics and Predestination

The use of funerary and magical amulets in ancient Egypt amounts to much more than mere superstition. The use of amulets involved symbols and words that made use of *heka*, or magical utterances. These invocations and symbols first belonged to gods, not just as objects, but as something inherent in their nature which allows them to make all enemies and illnesses powerless.³⁰⁴ Such magic is used in their cosmic struggles – for example, Ra against the monster Apophis – and are portrayed creative and victorious acts. Thus 'magical' and 'ethical' concerns are related as part of world order, where right and power become one. Similar schemata of thought, using

³⁰² Ray, J.D. "Egypt: Dependence and Independence (425-343 B.C.)", in Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Helen (ed.) *Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Synthesis*, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut Voor Het Nabije Oosten, 1987, p89; Rostovtzeff, M. *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, London: OUP, 1972, II, pp1061-5; Cenival, F. de "Les associations dans les temples égyptiens d'après les données fournies par les papyrus démotiques", in Derchain, P. (ed.) *Religions dans l'Égypte hellénistique et romaine*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1972, pp5-19.

³⁰³ Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p5. See earlier examples concerning judgement of the individual, Lichtheim, Miriam *Maat in Egyptian Autobiographies and Related Studies*, Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992, pp109-127.

³⁰⁴ Budge, E.A. Wallis *The Mummy: A Handbook of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology*, London: KPI, 1987, p292. See also Pinch, Geraldine *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, pp9-17; Bedell, Ellen D. *Criminal Law in the Egyptian Ramesside Period*, Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms, 1973, p1, p11; Bleeker, C.J. "The Religion of Ancient Egypt", in Bleeker, C. & Widengren, G. (eds.) *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, Vol. I, p58.

utterance and invoked powers to defeat ‘all foes’ are found in the ideology of royal kingship at Edfu, as well as magical Demotic and Greek papyri of the Hellenistic period.³⁰⁵ In *The Illustrated Magical Papyrus of Brooklyn*, for example, the enemy is not just a specific list of animals and monsters, but the magical procedure described involves specific oral formulas against ‘all things bad and deadly.’³⁰⁶ The use of empowered utterance in these contexts seems to parallel some broader concept of ‘right voice’ or ‘just speech’ which itself had an effective power.³⁰⁷ In a different context, the daily rituals, though visually portrayed on the Egyptian temple walls, involved “the actual performance of such ceremonies and the recitation of the accompanying formula” which “was naturally regarded as more efficacious than sculptured representations and mere written words.”³⁰⁸ These rituals would have included chanting, recitation, music and perhaps even the equivalent of simple masked dramas, though surviving examples of such masks are rare.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Fairman, H.W. "The Kingship Rituals of Egypt" in Hooke, S.H. (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958, pp87-91. Virtually all Greek magical papyri use invocations or chants as key ritual components, see for example the Chants to invoke Apollo in *PGM I.296-331*; *PGM II.1-17*, & *PGM II.81-140*, in Betz, Hans Dieter (ed.) *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986, pp10-17. See also Gager, John G. "A New Translation of Ancient Greek and Demotic Papyri, Sometimes called Magical", *Journal of Religion*, 67 (1987), pp80-86. For a concise account of some aspects of the later Greek papyri of the second to fifth centuries C.E., see Nock, Arthur Darby "Greek Magical Papyri", in Nock, A.D. *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, I, pp176-194.

³⁰⁶ Sauneron, Serge *Le Papyrus Magique Illustré De Brooklyn*, Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1970, p7, p18, p19, p24. The document can only be generally dated to an intermediate range between the Saite and Ptolemaic period, *ibid.* pp3-4.

³⁰⁷ Budge, E.A. *Egyptian Religion: Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, N.Y., Bell Publishing, 1954, p170. This authoritative speech is sometimes linked with genuine sight or understanding, *Sia*, Springborg, Patricia *Royal Persons: Patriarchal Monarchy and the Feminine Principle*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, p45. In the Hebrew tradition words could also be effective and creative, being considered as deeds or acts, especially in a prophetic context, Lindblom, J. *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973, p51.

³⁰⁸ Blackman, A.M. & Fairman, H.W. "The Consecration of an Egyptian Temple According to the Use of Edfu", *JEA*, 32 (1946), p87.

³⁰⁹ See Gillam, Robyn Adams *Performance and Drama in Ancient Egypt*, London: Duckworth Publishers, 2005, p62, p136; Fairman, H.W. *The Triumph of Horus: An Ancient Egyptian Sacred Drama*, London: Batsford, 1974; Fairman, H.W. "Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, 37 (1954), pp165-203.

A related way of seeking safety was through obedience to a proper moral order and recognition that the will of the gods and a person's individual fate could not be escaped. This 'fate' usually involved the notion of a fixed life-span, though later mortuary inscriptions sometimes reveal a great bitterness at the untimely death of young children or infants.³¹⁰ By the late New Kingdom there were also fears that a god or some other magical influence could "catch a person off his guard and cause his death although it was not so preordained,"³¹¹ indicating a sense of heightened insecurity. The minor god Meskhenet may be 'a personification of fortune,' while in the Papyrus Anhai two gods named Shai and Renenet have been interpreted as 'destiny or fate' and 'good fortune' respectively.³¹² The distinctions between these roles are not clear, but seem to balance a moral order where personal responsibility and some level of predestination exist side by side with a sense of uncertainty. We also hear in the Memphite theology of the *Hemsut* as 'Fates' involved in the creation of life and growth, while in popular religion the 'seven Hathors' had a role in prophesying the future of a new born child.³¹³

This sense of predestination is also found in the calendars of lucky and unlucky days. In these calendars up to one third or more of the days might be ones of ill omen, as demonstrated in texts such as Papyrus Sallier IV and Papyrus BM 10474.³¹⁴ Although in general a person's individual actions may not be determined,³¹⁵

³¹⁰ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p71, p76. See also Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, pp9-10.

³¹¹ Edwards, I.E.S. (ed.) *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, Fourth Series, Vol. I, London: Trustees of British Museum, 1960, pxxi, following his translation of T. 2 (Turin Museum 1984), Recto lines 13-20.

³¹² Ruiz, Ana *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, N.Y.: Algora Publishing, 2001, p161; Budge, E.A. *Egyptian Religion: Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, N.Y.: Bell Publishing, 1954, pp166-7.

³¹³ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p64; Bleeker, C.J. "The Religion of Ancient Egypt", in Bleeker, C. & Widengren, G. (eds.) *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, Vol. I, p51.

³¹⁴ Discussed in Romer, John *Ancient Lives: Daily Life in Egypt of the Pharaohs*, N.Y.: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, p112. See also Dawson, W.R. "Some Observations on the Egyptian Calender of Lucky and Unlucky Days", *JEA*, 12 (1926), pp260-4.

there was a sense of a set allotment of life and of strong external influences on individuals. In the Ptolemaic period this may have converged on Greek notions of *tyche* and the even more negative *atropos*,³¹⁶ both of which indicate the very real limits of human ability and knowledge. A demotic document of the Greco-Roman period, *The Lion in Search of Man*, tells a humorous animal fable in which the god Shay, personifying fate, humbles a proud lion by arranging affairs so that the lion is rescued by a mouse which the lion had laughed at earlier in the story.³¹⁷ Although the story has a moral point, it also indicates that the strongest of beings can become a victim. By the end of the Ptolemaic period, *P. Insinger* could represent the wise man as one who “is capable of enduring reversals of fortune and remains confident of vindication.”³¹⁸

12. Conclusion: Living by Maat

Late Period evidence suggests the desire for an escape from anxiety through acceptance of the limits of a precarious human existence. More widely, what emerged was not only the concept of *maat* as a symbol of universal order, but as something that needed to be fought for in proper words, actions and human choices. It represented the only way an individual could be justified, in this life and at the time of judgement. This escape was not through happiness, but persistence in rightness despite all that was wrong with the current times. It was only this victory of the right, conceived

³¹⁵ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, p137.

³¹⁶ Aalders, G.J.D. H. Wzn. "The Hellenistic Concept of the Enviousness of Fate", in Vermaseren, M.J. (ed.) *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979, pp1-8; Nilsson, Martin P. *Greek Piety*, trans. H.J. Rose, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1969, pp86-7; Marlowe, John *The Golden Age of Alexandria: From its Foundation by Alexander the Great in 331 to its Capture by the Arabs in 642 A.D.*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1971, p85. See also Pownall, Frances S. "Condemnation of the Impious in Xenophon's *Hellenica*", *HTR*, 91 no. 3 (1998), pp275-276.

³¹⁷ *The Lion in Search of Man*, Leiden Demotic Papyrus I 384, lines 18, 12-33 translated in Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, III, p159.

through the core concept of *maat*, which would then allow the existence of the necessary conditions for human happiness. The interrelation of these different aspects and dimensions of *maat* and its counter-images is summarised in *Figure 2* below.

Figure 2: Maat's Counter-Images (narratives of non-existence & chaos)

Narratives by Aspects	Inversion of Order	Lack of Rightness	Lack of Justice	Gods and Rituals
Existence	World of Chaos	Disorder in Egypt and other lands, invasions and revolts – gods desert the land.	Time of trouble. No one knows their place. Role reversals.	Apophis, Isfet as rising chaotic forces.
Creation and Re-creation	Destruction without creation.	Destruction of dynasties, peoples, and agriculture.	Arbitrary deaths, murder, disease. Children die before their time.	No proper burials.
Maintenance	End of cyclic eternity.	No flood, Two Lands not renewed.	People starve, temple rituals and cults collapse.	Victory of the 'Adversary', at least for a time.
Judgement and Future Expectations	Devouring of the <i>ba</i> of those who fail the test, annihilation of the soul.	Extreme penalties, rebellion, sacrilege, bribery, lies, corrupt officials.	Death of the <i>ka</i> , corruption of the heart.	The Devourer (as tool of judgement).

These negative images (as found in *Figure 2*) summarise some of the important narratives found in wisdom and moral literature from the New Kingdom onwards (see above). In times of political disorder, we find a break-down of administration and law in the land. This leads to political collapse, a lack of personal safety and morality, with many individuals behaving in an evil fashion. The final consequence is their condemnation through the 'weighing of the heart' after death. As shown above, such

³¹⁸ Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, III, p185.

conditions might have some historic foundation in times of invasion, in the Intermediate Periods, or in times of successive low inundations of the Nile.

However, these moralizing accounts formed a specific poetic genre with strong moral overtones which were independent of specific historical episodes. Likewise, if the court of the gods had not truly judged Horus the victor in his contest with Seth, then the proper type for the just rule of the victorious pharaoh uniting and renewing the Two Lands of Egypt would not have been mythically established. This is not the simple dualism of right versus wrong, engaged in eternal battle, nor a perfect world created by omnipotent gods. Jan Assmann has rightly noted that *maat* should not be interpreted as a 'just world order' or cosmos of the Greek type, nor yet as a world order created by a transcendental god of the Old Testament type.³¹⁹ Rather, justice as an active process being sought and fought for at all levels is at the core of the meaning of *maat*, and not simply 'justice as world order'.³²⁰

The absence of *maat* stops re-creative cycles which otherwise allow the productive immortality of gods and continued normal life of persons. Without *maat* the gods are weakened, (re-)creation stops, and for persons the future becomes linear, leading to death without renewal. Conceptually and ethically, the possibility of true death and non-existence in the realms of the after-life has a major moral role, dividing the preferred from the hated, the sacred from the abhorred, and the good from the bad. The *ba* and *ka* were both aspects of the individual, the *ba* the spiritual entity which could rise to move between the world of the life and death (often represented by a bird with a human head), while the *ka* was a kind of double representing the person's life force: after death both could be destroyed if the person failed to pass judgement when their heart was weighted against a feather (representing *Maat*).

³¹⁹ Assmann, Jan *Maat: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Agypten*, Munchen: Beck, 1990, p34.

One of the key differences between Greek and Egyptian notions of justice is that though both had strongly religious underpinnings, Greek thought had been subjected to the analysis and criticism of philosophy, rhetoric, sophistic thought, and the continual analysis and social critique provided by a rapidly evolving body of poetry and complex theatre. These influences were not truly secularising,³²¹ since that would have involved a massive move away from religious institutions and cultic practices, as well as an overt distinction between political power and religious authority. Such a dichotomy does not occur even in the Hellenistic Age. Rather, there was a stream of rationalism and social criticism (via the early Cynics) which provided alternative viewpoints, and later opened up onto a religious ‘pluralism’ and eclecticism rather than widespread agnosticism or atheism.³²²

Egyptian thought, on the other hand, though not static, remained in a strongly symbolic religious mould, with the closest approach to philosophy being found in the reflective forms of the more developed wisdom literature. These ‘Instructions’ however, remain imbued with religious and traditional considerations, and are often focused on outcomes in the afterlife. Here the strongly rational and dialectical critiques of the Academy, Lyceum, the Stoa and the Garden were missing. Instead, an evolution towards the ethical as religious and vice-versa may be found. It is accompanied by a sub-theme of religious magical practices, used as a further protection against all things of harm, conceived generally as ‘the adversary’. Even when a certain scepticism about the world order is detected, one in which the god is “questioned or even reproached for the seeming unreasonableness or injustice of the

³²⁰ Ibid., p34.

³²¹ See for example Connor, W.R. "Hiera and Hosia': Sacred and Secular in the Classical Athenian concept of the State", *Ancient Society*, 19 (1988), pp161-188. See further Part 1 above.

³²² For one attempt to address the issue of ‘belief’ in polytheistic religion, with different levels of plurality and ‘mental Balkanization’ see Veyne, Paul *Did The Greeks Believe in their Myths?: An Essay in Constitutive Imagination*, trans. P. Wissing, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

world,”³²³ this is done in an attempt to understand the causes for current conditions. It is rarely an attack against the existence of the gods or their power. In the end, such scepticism remains an ethical quest, one that seeks the reconciliation of human suffering with a sense of the wholeness of the world order. The advantages and practicality of justice are noted in various Egyptian wisdom texts – for example, *Ptahhotep*, lines 84-98.³²⁴

In the end, the cosmic order, the gods and cultic practice remained the underpinning and guarantor of this sense of justice.³²⁵ In an age of limited medical and physics knowledge, with numerous threats to human happiness and endeavour, we find a deep-seated vulnerability to which the institution of *maat* is a powerful counter-balance. Further, although the Egyptians were capable of implicit logical thought, as demonstrated in their mathematical, medical and astronomical texts, they tended to embellish their philosophical thinking in a highly patterned ‘symbolic-calculus’ which was an effective form of reflection, but one which did not aid the search for the roots of physical as distinct from cosmological causation.³²⁶

However, *Maat* was much more than a normative or explanatory schema. It also directly affected personal and social action, as well as being a central conceptual measure in judging and resolving conflicts.³²⁷ This can be seen in the continuity

³²³ Rundle Clark, R.T. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, p71.

³²⁴ In Frankfort, H. et al. *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977, pp99-100.

³²⁵ Morenz, Siegfried *Egyptian Religion*, trans. A. Keep, London: Methuen, 1973, pp12-15.

³²⁶ In general, see Anthes, Rudolf "Affinity and difference between Egyptian and Greek Sculpture and Thought in the Seventh and Sixth Centuries B.C.", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963), pp60-81; Baines, John "Communication and Display: The Integration of Early Egyptian Art and Writing", *Antiquity*, 63 (1989), pp471-82; Baines, John *Fecundity Figures; Egyptian Personification & the Iconography of a Genre*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1978; Hornung, Erik *The Conception of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. J. Baines, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. For an alternative explanation based on the unique Egyptian environment, see Garven, Kenneth M. "Causal Origins of Egyptian Conceptual Thinking", *BACE*, 4 (1993), pp7-16. For the cognitive structure of Egyptian thought, see Megally, M. "Remarques épistémologiques à propos des approches au problème di rationnel égyptien", *Chronique d'Égypte*, 70, 1995, pp84-98.

³²⁷ Assmann, Jan *Maat: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Agypten*, Munchen: Beck, 1990, pp35-6.

underlying Egyptian law, and the way Egyptian traditions reacted to the Persian occupations. Although political leadership changed, as had the realities of Egyptian involvement in the international scene, certain continuities of everyday life and of the Egyptian religious system remained relatively intact till the early Hellenistic period. The moral instructions of *Papyrus Insinger* (1st century A.D.) still instructed “persons to keep silence in cemeteries, to be content with their station in life, and to remember that the gods would judge the goodness of people with traditional weights and balances.”³²⁸ Traditional emphasis on a proper funeral and burial is maintained, as is the idea that the gods ensure the equilibrium of the world.³²⁹ Likewise, the demotic *Papyrus Dodgson*, dated to circa 200-150 BCE, contains oracles which accuse certain Egyptians of moral lapses, including drinking wine during ritual periods, of consorting with money lenders, and committing oppression against local people.³³⁰

Nathaniel Reich suggested that the “ancient Egyptian had a great sense for justice at all times in his history,” a trend which persisted down to the Ptolemaic period.³³¹ S. K. Eddy argued that this evidence shows that:

Egyptian religious resistance to Hellenism was based on two concepts: insistence on the continuity of divine kingship by a native Pharaoh, and insistence on the maintenance of justice and morality in this world. While this was no more than men wanted elsewhere, one must understand that Egyptian rebels demanded Egyptian institutions - their opposition was closely akin to modern nationalist agitation.³³²

The last point, formulating these sentiments as akin to nationalism, is contentious, since attachment to an indigenous king was directly based on religious, social and

³²⁸ Eddy, S. K. *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near-Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334-31 B.C.*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, p267.

³²⁹ P. *Insinger* 2.11 & 4.17, translated in Lexa, François (trans.) *Papyrus Insinger: Les enseignements moraux d'un scribe égyptien du premier siècle après J.-C.*, 2 vols., Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926.

³³⁰ P. *Dodgson* A.12-21, 24-26, B5-11, C29, translated in Griffith, F. L. "Papyrus Dodgson", *PSBA*, 31 (1909), pp100-109.

³³¹ Reich, Nathaniel Julius "New Documents from the Serapeum of Memphis", *Mizraim*, 1 (1933), pp38-9.

³³² Eddy, S. K. *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near-Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334-31 B.C.*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, pp271-272.

ethical concerns, rather than any explicit awareness of Egyptian national identity outside of its formulation as a divinely established kingdom. Yet alongside the realities of Ptolemaic power, there was also the inertia of a complete social, economic and religious system which formed the basis of indigenous resistance, whether organised in actual revolts, or expressed in a wide range of acts of social non-cooperation.³³³ It would also become a major focus for the later religious thought and literature of the Ptolemaic period. This interpretation is supported by sections of the *Demotic Chronicle*, which explicitly judged the rule of pharaohs by their loyalty to *maat* and the law, with failures in kingship leading to the disaster of the Persian conquest of 343 BCE.³³⁴

At first, Alexander the Great and the early Ptolemies may have been viewed as liberators from Persian domination. Yet in spite of considerable efforts by the later Ptolemies to represent their kingship as both Graeco-Macedonian and Egyptian, they could not retain the mantle of legitimacy based on rule in accordance with the principle of *maat*, which lay at the heart of the Egyptian conception of a powerful and justified kingship. The decline of the *maat* paralleled the decline of the Ptolemaic kingdom, though external geopolitical factors based on the rising Roman power were in the end decisive.

In today's world, one can wonder whether current fragmented notions of natural and social order are adequate to ensure national let alone global justice. There is a discernible lack of powerfully integrative symbols that might bring together

³³³ For the diverse patterns of resistance which made government responses of repression an unsustainable solution in the long term, see Biezunska-Malowist, Iza "Formes de résistance dans l'Égypte grecque et romaine et l'attitude de gouvernement", in Yuge, Toru & Doi, Masaiki (eds.) *Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity*, Tokyo: The Society for Studies on Resistance Movements in Antiquity, 1988, pp239-245.

³³⁴ Assmann, Jan *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University, 2003, pp378-379; Eddy, S. K. *The King is Dead: Studies in the Near-Eastern Resistance to Hellenism 334-31 B.C.*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, pp291-2; following *Demotic Chronicle* II.4-25.

political, developmental and environmental needs in a way that can mobilise genuine mass support and understanding. *Maat* remains an inspiration in linking an active view of right and truth across cosmological, natural, political and religious orders. Not only the gods, but the people, lived by *maat*. In the twenty-first century, we may need to do the same.

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