# COMMEMORATION IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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Commemoration is a main feature in Ancient Egyptian culture. Judging by the remains left to us, an incredible amount of energy was devoted to commemorating people. The very great majority of what is preserved in collections of Egyptian antiquities, now dispersed all over the world, belongs to this category, for more than 90% of it is mortuary art, art for the dead. This applies also to those monuments of Ancient Egyptian culture still to be seen in Egypt. Pyramids and rock tombs were constructed to honour the memory of human beings who had lived upon earth, and who were looked upon as gods by the living Egyptians. Even the temples were not solely for the gods in a stricter sense. These temple complexes were full of buildings, chambers, reliefs and statues to commemorate the deeds and the essential being of the pharaoh and his officials. A considerable proportion of the buildings we call temples are not temples to the gods but commemorative temples, so that for instance we speak of the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri (Ill. 1), of the Ramesseum in western Thebes, the temple of Seti I at Gurnah, the temple of Ramses II at Abydos, the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, the great temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel and the small temple of Nefertari at Abu Simbel, etc.

Egyptian art, architecture, sculpture, painting and decorative art were devoted to the service of *(1) The gods and their temples, (2) The pharaohs and their temples and palaces* and *(3) The departed and their eternal homes*. What other Egyptian art there was, or at least has been preserved, is negligible compared with the above. It is true that comparatively little is left of the palaces with their furnishings where the pharaohs resided in their lifetime. Now it might be suggested that what has happened to be preserved gives but a distorted image of all that there was. Yet the copious results of present-day excavations seem to confirm our impression that commemoration of the dead was the great pre-occupation of an Egypt full of pyramids and funerary offerings.

Handbooks of Egyptian religion have always treated not only the cult of the gods that we named in the first place here, but also the royal cult and the cult of the dead. It has always been assumed that the cult of the king and that of the dead form a part of the religion. Taking a definition of religion given by Geertz the latter two can indeed be included: "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz: 1966, 4). Even if one were to consider this sociological definition of religion one-sided because it takes too little account of the belief

in beings and forces, that is to say in gods, one can hardly exclude the Egyptian cult of the king and of the dead from their religion. The Egyptians often called kings and dead persons gods (nṯrw) in express terms. Spiro (1966, 96) defined religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings". The nature of the beings men believe in is so varied and sometimes so complex that one may hesitate to employ the simple predicate "superhuman". They are experienced as different from mankind, sometimes almost totally, but sometimes more or less; usually their quality and capacities are superior to those of human beings, but this need not be so in all cases (cf. Van Baaren: 1973, 38). We therefore allow full place to the royal cult and the cult of the dead as constituent parts of the Egyptian religion. One might call pharaohs and glorified dead commemorated figures in Ancient Egypt.

During his life in the exercise of his function, and indeed after his death also, the pharaoh was accounted an intermediary between gods and men. He is the appointed figure upon whom the mantle of priesthood falls. He delegates this function largely to officials, who worship the gods in his name, but the pharaoh is the priest on account of his divine nature, often formulated as "son of god", e.g. of Re, and it is as such that he can perform the rituals. The pharaoh may also be worshipped by men as a god during his lifetime, in the shape of a statue. It would take us too far to go into details regarding the cult of the living pharaoh. Here let us draw attention to the peculiar yet striking phenomenon that he worships himself, at least his divine self. This would seem an extreme example of conceit and self-idolatry, yet it is not actually so.

A relief in the great temple of Abu Simbel shows us a pharaoh, the king of the two lands User-maat-Re Setep-n-Re ( = Ramses II), sacrificing to Ramses-mery-Amun ( = Ramses II) (Ill. 2). Obviously then Ramses II is worshipping Ramses II. We note however that the worshipper and he who is worshipped bear different names, and that these names are respectively the fourth and the fifth name of Ramses II. A closer iconographical inspection makes it clear that the worshipper and he who is worshipped are indeed not identical. He to whom a sacrifice is offered is adorned with a sun disk and has a curved horn around his ear. These are the characteristics of his divine nature. Thus Ramses II is not worshipping simply himself, but his divine self.

For a full understanding of the innumerable texts in which the living pharaoh is called the perfect or incarnated god (*nṯr nfr*), we must bear in mind that the meaning of the Egyptian word we are accustomed to render as "god" (*nṯr*) includes god revealed in symbols, but also extends to the symbols that reveal the god (Assmann: 1977, 756). We must therefore take into account that the pharaoh is said to be god in the sense of an instrument or bearer of revelation and not in the sense of author of revelation (cf. Van Baaren: 1951, 22 ff.). We take it that the living pharaoh was adored as god just as a statue or an animal could be god. Though the Egyptians used the word god in a very wide sense, this does not mean they could not distinguish between god in a stricter sense and his image if they so desired. The true form and the true essence of the authors of revelation was always regarded as hidden. The Egyptian religion did not claim that a direct meeting was possible between man upon earth and his god in the sense of author of revelation (cf. Hornung: 1971, 117-124).

A superficial reading of such an Egyptian text as beginning students of Egyptian, not only in the State University of Groningen, but in many other universities as well, have

been and are still confronted with might suggest the opposite: Does not the Shipwrecked Sailor (Lichtheim: 1973, 211-215) upon an uninhabited island meet with a superhuman being, a snake who among other things predicts his future or, if preferred, reveals it? Yet this meeting does not take place in the world of men, but upon the island of the soul (*ka*). Afterwards this island sinks into the waves again as the snake had predicted, so that it is not possible for people simply to go there and behold the superhuman being and speak with him face to face. Not only the name of the island, but also other data as for instance the three days that the shipwrecked sailor passes sleeping in a bower upon the island before meeting with the serpent suggest that this meeting with a divine being is to be compared to the face to face meeting a man will have in the hereafter with his god or gods according to Egyptian texts. The status of this tale is rather a doubtful matter. It is usually rightly regarded as a tall story of adventure rather than as a careful account of a meeting between man and god. It may well be a fairy-tale with symbolic overtones.

Neither is the afore-mentioned relief in Abu Simbel intended to show that Ramses II actually met and saw his divine self. He is offering to a statue of his divine self, as also appears from the base upon which the throne is placed. Nor does the depiction of gods in Egyptian art pretend to be a direct representation of their true form. Images of gods are conventional signs, hieroglyphs or ideograms that can be read by knowledgeable persons so that they know which god, whose essence is fundamentally hidden, is meant.

The divine aspect of the pharaoh can be depicted in various manners. Well-known examples are the Royal Colossi, whose dimensions already evoke the supernatural and divine self of the pharaoh (Ill. 3). Colossi of one and the same pharaoh bear different names, thus distinguishing various divine identities in the pharaoh. The four imposing Colossi of Ramses II before the temple at Abu Simbel are renowned. It is said that a picture of these memorable figures (Ill. 4) had a permanent place over the famous sofa in the consulting-room of Sigmund Freud.

Another example of the way the divine essence of a pharaoh could be depicted is the sphinx (Ill. 5). Egyptian gods are often represented with a human body and an animal head. In the case of the sphinx we see the reverse: the body is that of a lion and the head the human head of the pharaoh. I cannot explain this, and have not found any satisfactory explanation in the relevant literature either. In this respect the sphinx may be compared to the depiction of a dead person's human and divine soul as a bird with a human head (Ill. 6). At any rate the idea that the pharaoh, though he has a human face, is different from humans upon earth is expressed by giving him an animal body. The high placing of the ears on sphinx heads, producing an animal, cat-like expression, already gives these heads a superhuman appearance, at least if we try to see them with the eyes of the Egyptians, who in contrast with the members of some other cultural communities did not at once associate the animal with the sub-human or demonic, but could connect it with the divine.

Of course very many images have also been preserved of the pharaoh in human form with human proportions, from all periods of Egyptian history, that attempted to represent him as human and divine in one and as a figure of commemoration. A large part of the Egyptian royal cult coincides with the cult of the dead. Naturally the cult of the deceased pharaoh can be regarded as pertaining to the royal cult as well as to the cult of the dead.

Regarded from the outlook of modern western forms of culture and religion the Egyptian cult of the dead seems a very strange phenomenon indeed. We admire the treasures

from the tomb of Tutankhamun or the pyramids of Gizeh, but we cannot understand what could have induced the Egyptians to invest so much labour and capital, so much devotion and artistic feeling in mortuary art and cult of the dead. Hardly anything is left of Egyptian temples and divine images from the Old Kingdom. Practically all the Egyptian art preserved from that period, the architecture, the sculpture, the reliefs and the decorative art, is mortuary art so that, however profane it may sometimes appear to be, it is "visible religion". The same applies, be it to a lesser extent, to the other periods of Egyptian history. Wooden or stone images of people, for instance, are practically always images of the glorified dead that were placed in tomb or temple (Ill. 7 and 8).

It has often been attempted to interpret the mortuary art and the cult of the dead in terms of our modern materialistic consumer's society, and it has been supposed that the Egyptians believed that after death life as on earth could be continued in the tomb or in the realm of the dead, and that for this reason eternal homes were prepared for the dead, filled with food and drink and valuables, as much as desired and as much as possible, and that the object of the mortuary cult with its special priests (the servants of the ka-soul) and sacrifices to the dead was to maintain the blessed life forever. This approach would leave the Egyptians little other motivation than the completely stupid idea that you can take it with you. But the the matter is not so simple, though there will have been stupid people in the Egyptian culture as in others.

The Egyptian teachings regarding death, to be distinguished from the instructions for the conduct of life or wisdom literature, consist of the very extensive funerary literature of the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead and so on and yield little or no ground for supposing that the Egyptians believed life after death to be no more than a simple continuation of life upon earth. Sometimes a strenuous effort is made to give an impression of how it might be, and then it cannot be avoided to describe life after death in terms that are largely derived from life upon earth, but the texts constantly testify to the conviction that life after death will be different from life upon earth. Images of life after death crowd one another out. Terrifying situations are evoked and paradisical conditions described. There is an interchange of coarsely voluptuous and deeply spiritualized conceptions. In literature and art an attempt is made again and again to describe that life after death. Yet what Hornung (1971, 255) writes in his book about the Egyptian gods, can mutatis mutandis also be said of life after death: "Aber die Sprache, die es an Reichtum des Ausdrucks mit den Göttern aufnehmen könnte, ist nicht gefunden". This was of course pronounced by a non-participant, but the well-known Egyptian multiplicity of approach pointed out by Frankfort (1961, 18 f., 91, 121) already suggests that the Egyptians must have been more or less aware of a gap between their theological pronouncements and images and the reality in which they believed. Just as the Egyptians when giving shape to their gods knew that the true nature and the true form of the gods was hidden (*sšt3*), they also knew that the true nature and form of the life after death was hidden.

The many gifts, sometimes placed in the graves in overwhelming quantities, afford no self-evident testimony to a belief that life in the hereafter is a simple continuation of life upon earth and that the dead required these gifts and used them. Of recent years many people have seen funerary gifts from the grave of Tutankhamon when they were exhibited not only in Egypt but also in Russia, Japan, America and Western Europe. One of these gifts was a handsome folding chair (Ill. 9) (Cairo JE 62035; Tutankhamun: 1976, nr. 11).

The remarkable thing is that this folding chair cannot be folded up, so that it could not be used in an afterlife as a simple continuation of Tutankhamon's life upon earth. The folding chair is not a useful article of furniture. It has the appearance of an actual folding chair, but it is the idea of such a chair, a model. It is a materialization of the idea of life after death. Real articles of daily use that were placed in the graves if they were considered good enough, also had the function of models. Real food could be placed in a grave, but it could also be put there in the form of wooden or stone models, or even in the form of a word in the list of offerings. All these forms are contributions to the model situation of the spiritual world the dead are in.

The quantity of funerary equipment gave rise to the idea that the belief existed that you could take it with you. If modern researchers came to this opinion, it is not so strange to suppose that this idea may also have been held in Ancient Egypt and that also the ancient Egyptians may sometimes have talked one another into it. The opposite, however, has also been said in Ancient Egypt. That you cannot take it with you is expressly stated in the song of a harper: "Lo, none is allowed to take his goods with him (Lichtheim: 1973, 197). Similar pronouncements elsewhere, e.g. in "The Conversation of the Desperate Man with his Soul" clearly show that these were not the isolated words of a lonely doubter. Besides, how could such a thought be copied on papyrus and even graved upon the walls of for instance the tombs of Antef and Pa-aton-em-heb if it had not found a response in the whole context of Egyptian culture (Ill. 11)?

A comparison between the offerings to the dead and those to the gods can in a sense be instructive here. In many religions sacrifices are made to the gods (Van Baaren: 1975, 37 ff.). This does not mean though that the believers always believe that the gods have need of such gifts and use them. This might also be said of the Egyptian offerings to the dead, and in a more general sense of the cult of the dead and mortuary art.

It is a fact that for many centuries the Egyptians deposited many grave-gifts in many graves. Art for the dead raised the artistic achievements of Egyptian culture to a great height. The rise and florescence of what has been called the earliest Hochkultur der Menschheit, is if not entirely yet to a very great extent due to the effort expended upon art for the dead. The idea might indeed be advanced that the first great crisis in Egyptian culture was caused through the collapse of the Old Kingdom owing to the excessive and one-sided exertion for the cult of the dead, and that, to give another example, the grave robberies which particularly in the 20th dynasty took place on a large scale may be regarded as attempts by persons and groups to correct on their own hook the attribution of the budget, the lion's share of which went to the cult of the dead (Morenz: 1969, 59).

Yet if the eternal habitations of the Egyptians, the pyramids, mastabas and rock graves with all their content did not serve for the continuation of life upon earth, then what was their purpose? What was the incentive of the cult of the dead? The term "eternal homes", scarcely found in Egyptian texts, has become familiar through the Greek writer Diodorus Siculus (1, 51):

> "For the inhabitants of Egypt consider the period of this life of no account whatever, but place the greatest value on the time after death *when they will be remembered* for their virtue and while they give the name of lodgings to the dwellings of the living thus intimating that we dwell in them but a brief time, they call the tombs of the dead *eternal homes* since the dead spend endless eternity in Hades; consequently they give less thought to the furnishing of their houses but in the manner of their burials they do not forgo any excess of zeal."

The time after death is so important because then "they will be remembered for their virtue (arete)". The motive of remembrance so as not to disappear into oblivion is also frequently found in Egyptian texts. On a stela in Leiden (Ill. 12) (AP 67; Schneider en Raven: 1981, 65) we read an eternal supplication in plain terms from the lips of the dead:

> "O you who live upon earth and belong to the train of Osiris the Chief of the Westerners and to that of Upuaut, the Lord of Ta-djeser, you, all prophets, all purification priests, all prophetesses, male and female musicians, all you in Abydos in the nome of This, who are beautiful and young, remember me in this temple..."

Osiris, the god of the dead, is sometimes called "Lord of remembrance in the Hall of Justice" (Louvre C 286, cf. Lichtheim: 1976, 81).

Even if we consider it a misrepresentation to say that according to the Egyptians life after death was a simple continuation of life upon earth, yet we would not deny that they believed in what is sometimes called the objective reality of life after death. To gods, the dead, and other beings also they assigned an individual reality. We must add here though that they distinguished two separate states in reality: being and non-being (*ntt* and *ỉwtt*). Being is ordered and created reality; non-being is the unordered reality of before creation and is in principle outside creation, even though non-being may encroach upon being and cause a rumpus there. Gods and dead persons who are venerated or commemorated belong to Being. If gods or the dead turn away from mankind this may be dangerous, not only for the gods or the dead themselves, but also for humans. Remembering and commemorating the dead need not necessarily be done by mankind, other beings can also perform this service. Thus funerary offerings may be made to one or more gods, e.g. Osiris, that he or they may give offerings to the deceased. So-called objective reality alone does not make much sense in the Egyptian view of life. The individual isolated reality of the non-glorified dead or the damned is meaningless, it is haunted, demoniacal and is not. The dead who are commemorated by no-one, neither man nor god, fall away from being. They land in the sphere of non-being, to lead a life of their own and go haunting, as appears in the story of Khonsu-em-hab and the Spirit (Lefebvre: 1949, 168-177). Therefore it is right that men upon earth remember the dead and perform the rites of their cult. Therefore too it is understandable and ethically acceptable that, as in the above quotation from the stela of Emhat, the dead appeal to the living to commemorate them.

Naturally the funerary cult was also a matter of social prestige and standing, that might in a sense be compared to the potlatch of the Indians (cf. Morenz: 1969, 9). We know that Egyptians who could afford it already had a tomb made and furnished during their lifetime, so that it was ready to shelter their mummy. Not only was this done, it was also the proper thing to do according to the ethical teacher Ani (Lichtheim: 1976, 138):

> "Do not go out of your house,
> Without knowing your place of rest.
> Let your chosen place be known,
> Remember it and know it.
> Set it before you as the path to take,
> If you are straight you find it.
> Furnish your station in the valley,
> The grave that shall conceal your corpse;
> Set it before you as your concern,
> A thing that matters in your eyes.

Emulate the great departed,
Who are at rest within their tombs.
No blame accrues to him who does it,
It is well that you be ready too.
When your envoy comes to fetch you,
He shall find you ready to come
to your place of rest and saying:
"Here comes one prepared before you."
Do not say, "I am young to be taken,"
For you do not know your death."

Ani does not merely present his pupil with a memento mori. He encourages him to emulate the great departed, who are at rest within their tombs, and to raise a monument for himself, i.e. to do his best himself to become a commemorated person and not to leave this to others. He seems to be aware of the ethical problem posed here, for he adds: "No blame accrues to him who does it." For a full understanding of the cult of the dead it must be added here that usually a tomb was not prepared and furnished on the initiative of the person concerned, but upon the initiative of the pharaoh. We repeatedly see this proudly stated in funerary inscriptions. The courtier Sinuhe relates at the end of his tale of adventure:

> A stone pyramid was built for me in the midst of the pyramids. The masons who build tombs constructed it. A master draughtsman designed in it. A master sculptor carved in it. The overseers of construction in the necropolis busied themselves with it. All the equipment that is placed in a tomb-shaft was supplied. Mortuary priests were given me. A funerary domain was made for me. It had fields and a garden in the right place, as is done for a Companion of the first rank. My statue was overlaid with gold, its skirt with electrum. It was his majesty who ordered it made. There is no commoner for whom the like has been done. I was in the favor of the king, until the day of landing (i.e. death) came."
>
> (Lichtheim: 1973, 233).

The Egyptian mortuary art, to which both qualitatively and quantitatively the very great majority of Egyptian art belongs, is "visible religion". It is not, however, simply the expression of a cult which takes a special or abnormal interest in death. Art for the dead is really art for life. It is a protest against death and transience. The striving is to perpetuate, to hold fast, to keep in memory the lives of humans and animals. Human beings and animals are not destroyed or burned when they have died. In so far as possible they are preserved and mummified and laid to sleep in graves as costly and as beautiful as can be managed. Tombs and funerary gifts evoke respect for the dead who rest there, so that they remain commemorated figures for relations and descendants and can continue to work weal, although they have died.

The Egyptian culture and religion had respect for life that was accounted of value and that was particularized in individuals. The individual name must be preserved and commemorated for thus it remained a part of Being. This was the purpose of preparing tombs and setting up statues in the temple. The following inscriptions come from block statues (Ill. 13):

> "He (my son) has made my statue to let my name live on, so that I am still remembered after a long time."

> "Your statue has been brought into the temple of Thoth, inscribed with your name that you may have daily remembrance in the temple of Thoth" (Otto: 1954, 60).

With regard to these and other similar texts Eberhard Otto has remarked that according to him this very matter-of-fact explanation of ancient rites, of temple statues, funerary equipment etc. was characteristic of the final phase of Egyptian culture and that it shows "eine tiefe Resignation gegenüber dem ursprünglich kräftigen Glauben an die Wirksamkeit solcher Anstalten" (Otto: 1954, 61). It is not only in the Late Period, however, that such things are said about remembrance. We quoted above from the stela of Emhat (Ill. 12) where the deceased entreats the living to remember him, and this dates from the Middle Kingdom. As we saw above, commemoration forms the heart of the cult of the dead because it saves the deceased from becoming a lonely wandering ghost and retains him in the community of ordered being as one who is remembered. We doubt, however, that there was originally a firm belief in the automatic functioning of funerary art and mortuary cult to enable the dead to continue life in the other world after their death. Here we touch upon what is sometimes called the magical element in rites and upon magic. We cannot discuss this matter thoroughly here, but it is too important to neglect it altogether, and we will make a few remarks about it in connection with the well-known and important depiction of the judgement scene (Seeber: 1976, passim). Word and image of Spell 125 (Ill. 14) of the Book of the Dead anticipate the ideal situation, that the heart of the deceased upon the balance is in equilibrium with the feather of Maat, the symbol of order and justice, and that he is led on to Osiris and justified. The mythologoumenon of justification at the trial is applied to the dead person by name, who is represented as a memorable figure in this memorable situation. It is a request, an attempt at persuasion, a profession that the deceased may be justified as represented. I do not see, however, that the Egyptians believed that depositing in the grave a Book of the Dead containing int.al. the text and vignette of Spell 125 would automatically bring about the justification of the deceased.

Naturally many participants in the Egyptian religion, as mutatis mutandis may be the case with participants in other religions, may have had a vague idea that it was not a bad thing if religious specialists "did something" and that it might quite well be beneficial in some mysterious manner, without really troubling to realize what that "doing something" really was. We may well ask whether and in how far all these people who were given a Book of the Dead in their tomb knew what was in it. There is every reason to suppose that the Book of the Dead with its many copyist's errors was often already abracadabra for the copiers. On such a level, which the ethnologist Jensen (Jensen: 1951, 267 ff.) has called "Anwendung" of religion, must we place the belief in the automatic effect of ritual and cult, but this does not imply that there is no doubt at all that the Egyptian cult of the dead and funerary art "in der Ausgangslage ex opere operato also zuverlässig wirkend gedacht waren" (Morenz: 1975, 193). The story of the rich man and the poor man in the Setna novel (Lichtheim: 1980, 139), sometimes regarded as the Egyptian version of the New Testament story of the rich man and poor Lazarus, in which the rich man by contrast with the poor man has a very bad time in the hereafter, although he was buried with pomp and circumstance and with the ritual laments, is not merely an example of decay of the funerary cult owing to ethical reflections. At all times the Egyptians have been aware of the relative effect of funerary offerings for continuation in the afterlife. Grave-gifts are the material form of that which is the core of the matter: remembering the dead. All the same it cannot be concluded from the many Egyptian texts of the first millennium B.C. where

remembering the dead upon earth is greatly stressed, that in that period belief in life after death was gradually being superseded by resignation and agnosticism. Attaching value to being well remembered upon earth and belief in life after death are not mutually exclusive. The following inscription in a tomb of the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000 B.C.) was found in practically the same words on an image of the Saite period (c. 600 B.C.).

> "Every noble man who shall do good among men and surpass his sire therein will be lasting upon earth and be a spirit of the dead in the necropolis. His remembrance will be good in the city"
> (Otto: 1954, 162).

The Egyptians did indeed sometimes go so far as to say that life after death and remembrance are one, i.e. that he who lives is after death a commemorated figure, who continues to form part of Being, as was said above. "The life of those who are yonder consists in this, that their names are pronounced", or "A man lives when his name is pronounced", or "To glorify a spirit of the dead (i.e. fulfil the rites of the cult of the dead) is to commemorate his Ka (i.e. soul or name)". In general human terms, for to commemorate is something all men can understand, they thus casually expressed what according to them was the core of the cult of the dead and the core of life after death. It is certainly a hazardous attempt to summarize a specific ritual of a specific religion in condensed everyday words that all people can understand, for thus one shows the relativity of that faith and that cult, whereas each faith and each cult has unique and absolute pretensions.

It is most fascinating to observe that the Egyptian culture, which afforded such an enormous and unique effort for mortuary art and cult of the dead, yet left space for critical and relativating voices, as appears for instance from the following quotation, *The Immortality of Writers*, that dates from the New Kingdom and seems to have come from a tomb (!) at Deir el Medineh. Some of these famous writers were represented in a tomb at Sakkara (plate 11).

> "As to those learned scribes,
> Of the time that came after the gods,
> They who foretold the future,
> Their names have become everlasting,
> While they departed, having finished their lives,
> And all their kin are forgotten.
>
> They did not make for themselves tombs of copper,
> With stelae of metal from heaven.
> They knew not how to leave heirs,
> Children (of theirs) to pronounce their names;
> They made heirs for themselves of books,
> Of Instructions they had composed.
>
> They gave themselves (the scroll as lector)-priest,
> The writing-board as loving-son.
> Instructions are their tombs,
> The reed pen is their child,
> The stone-surface their wife.
> People great and small
> Are given them as children,
> For the scribe, he is their leader.
>
> Their portals and mansions have crumbled,
> Their ka-servants are (gone);

Their tombstones are covered with soil,
Their graves are forgotten.
Their name is pronounced over their books,
Which they made while they had being;
Good is the memory of their makers,
It is for ever and all time!

Be a scribe, take it to heart,
That your name become as theirs.
Better is a book than a graven stela,
Than a solid 'tomb-enclosure'.
They act as chapels and tombs
In the heart of him who speaks their name;
Surely useful in the graveyard
Is a name in people's mouth!

Man decays, his corpse is dust,
All his kin have perished;
But a book makes him remembered
Through the mouth of its reciter.
Better is a book than a well-built house,
Than tomb-chapels in the west;
Better than a solid mansion,
Than a stela in the temple!

Is there one here like Hardedef?
Is there another like Imhotep?
None of our kin is like Neferti,
Or Khety, the foremost among them.
I give you the name of Ptah-emdjehuty,
Of Khakheperre-sonb.
Is there another like Ptahhotep,
Or the equal of Kaires?
Those sages who foretold the future,
What came from their mouth occurred;
It is found as (their) pronouncement,
It is written in their books.
The children of others are given to them
To be heirs as their own children.
They hid their magic from the masses,
It is read in their Instructions.
Death made their names forgotten
But books made them remembered!'' (Lichtheim: 1976, 176-177).

This text still speaks for itself after thousands of years. As alternative to funerary art and cult of the dead and having progeny who could carry out the rites, the critical intellectual sets the writing of books: ''The children of others are given to them to be heirs as their own children'' and ''Books made them remembered''.

It would seem appropriate here to end with a quotation from the book of one of these commemorated figures of Ancient Egypt, Ptahhotep, who lived in the Old Kingdom when the pharaohs had pyramids built for themselves in order to be remembered (Pap. Prisse 15, 2, cf. Lichtheim: 1973, 72):

''Gentleness is a man's memorial
For the years after the function''.

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## *List of Illustrations*

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2. Labib Habachi, Features of the Deification of Ramesses II (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Ägyptol. Reihe, Bd. V), Glückstadt 1969, Pl. IIa.
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5. Götter-Pharaonen. Ausstellungskatalog, Mainz 1978, Tf. 25.
6. Leiden AHqqd (Courtesy National Museum of Antiquities).
7. Leiden AH 113 (Courtesy National Museum of Antiquities).
8. Leiden AST 9 (Courtesy National Museum of Antiquities).
9. Tutankhamun. Ausstellungskatalog, Mainz 1980, Tf. 11.
10. Leiden AST 31 (Courtesy National Museum of Antiquities).
11. Leiden K 6 (Courtesy National Museum of Antiquities).
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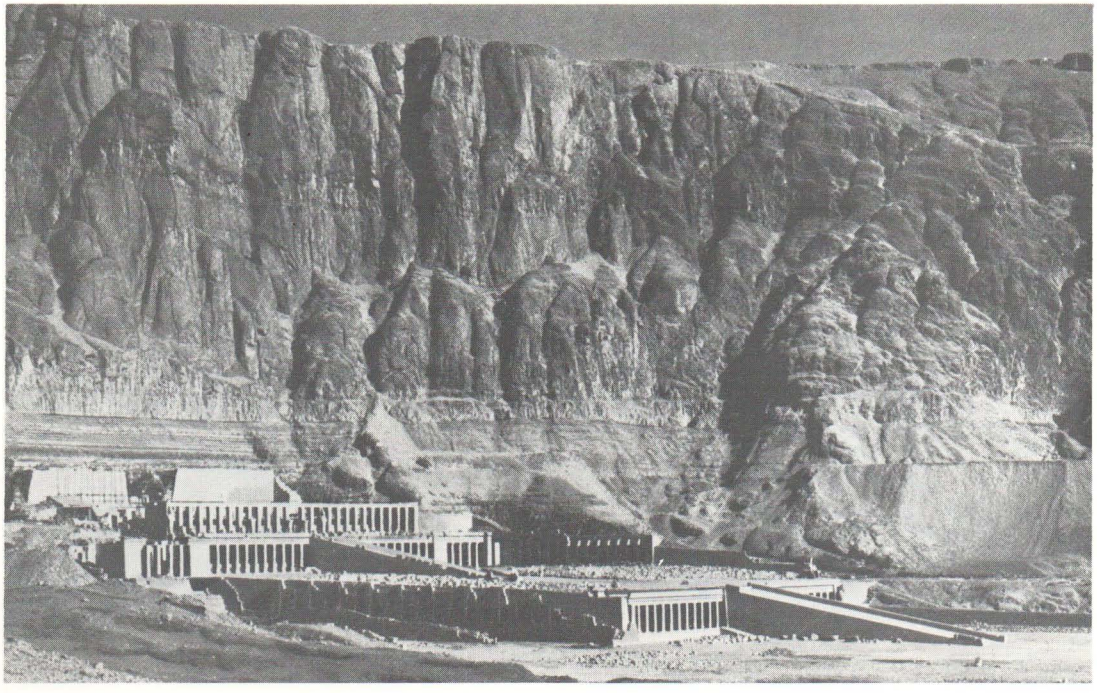
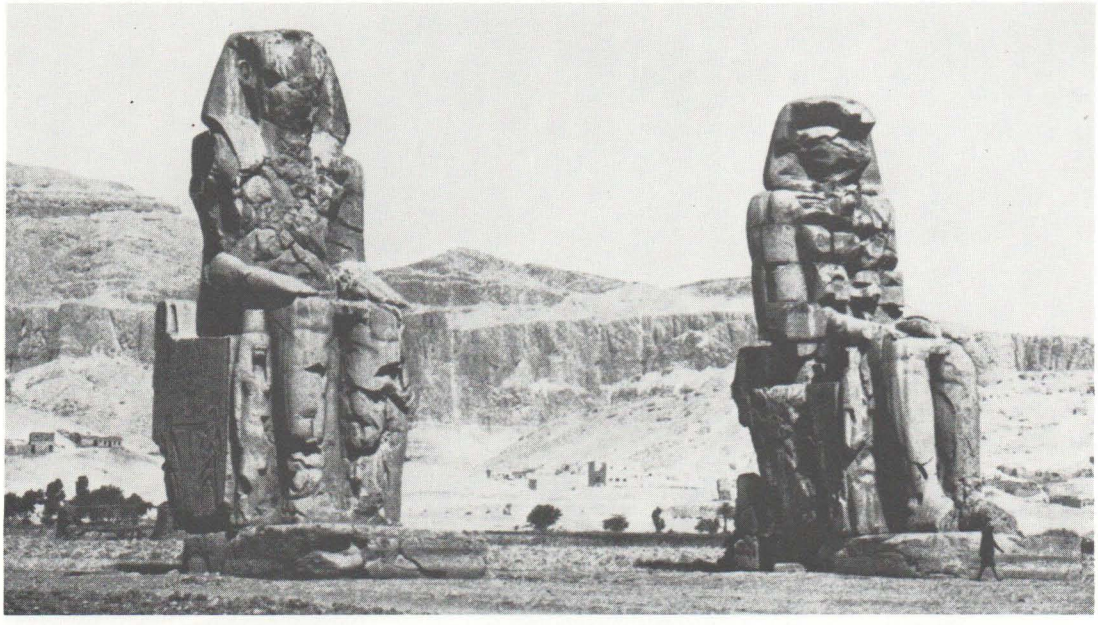


1. Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri.

2. Ramses II venerating Ramses II.



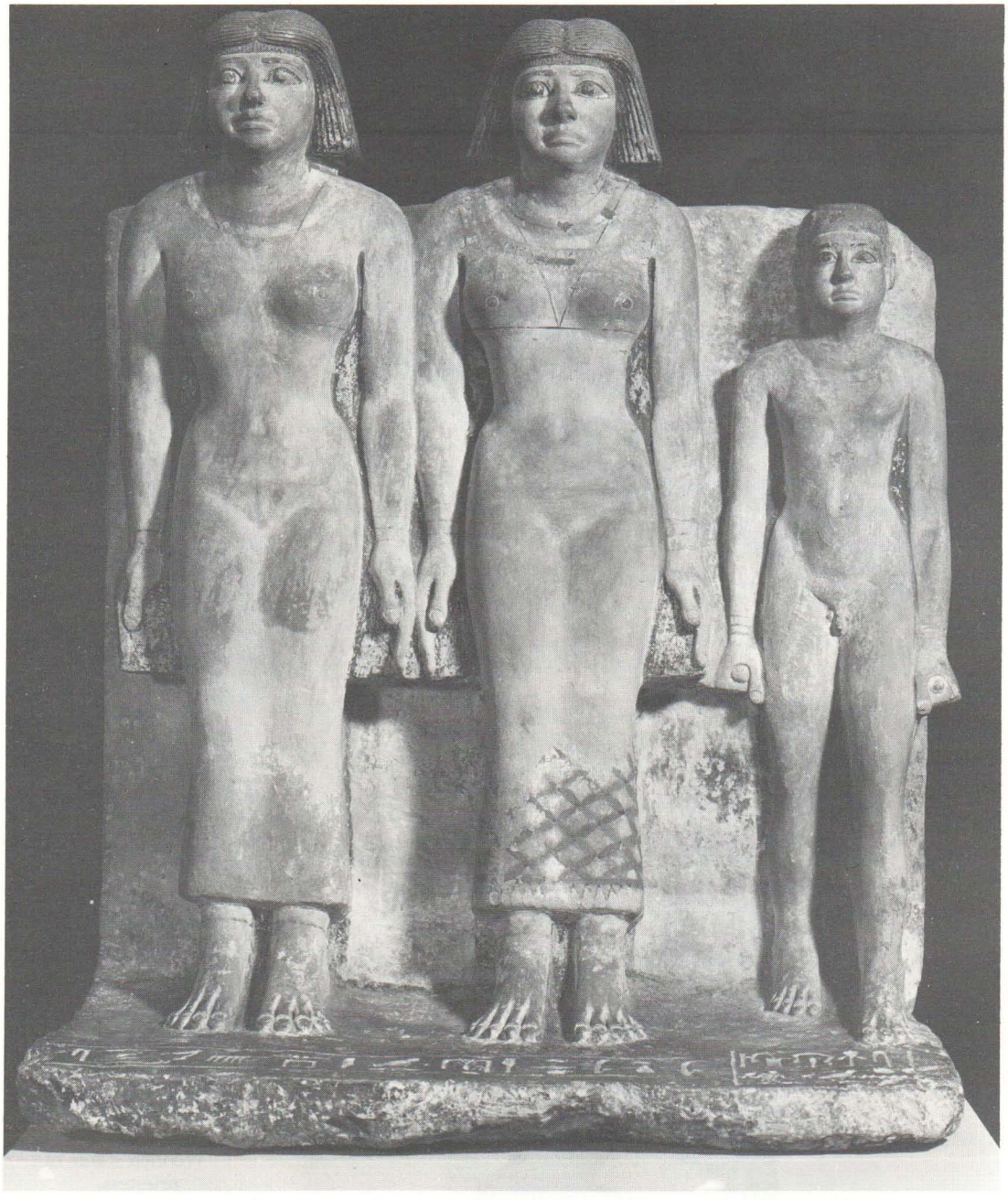
3. Memnon's Colossi representing Amenhotep III.

4. Colossi of Ramses II at Abu Simbel.

5. Royal sphinx representing Amenhotep I.

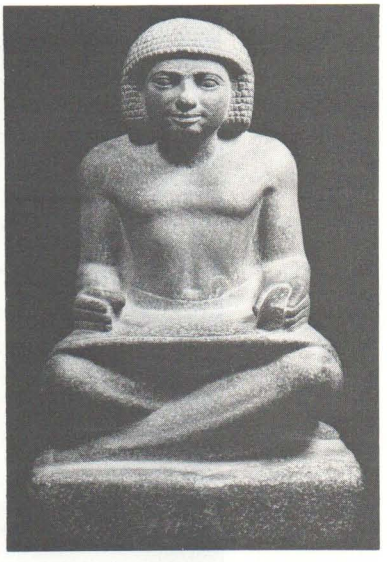
6. Soul as a bird with human head.

7. Wooden statue of priestess.

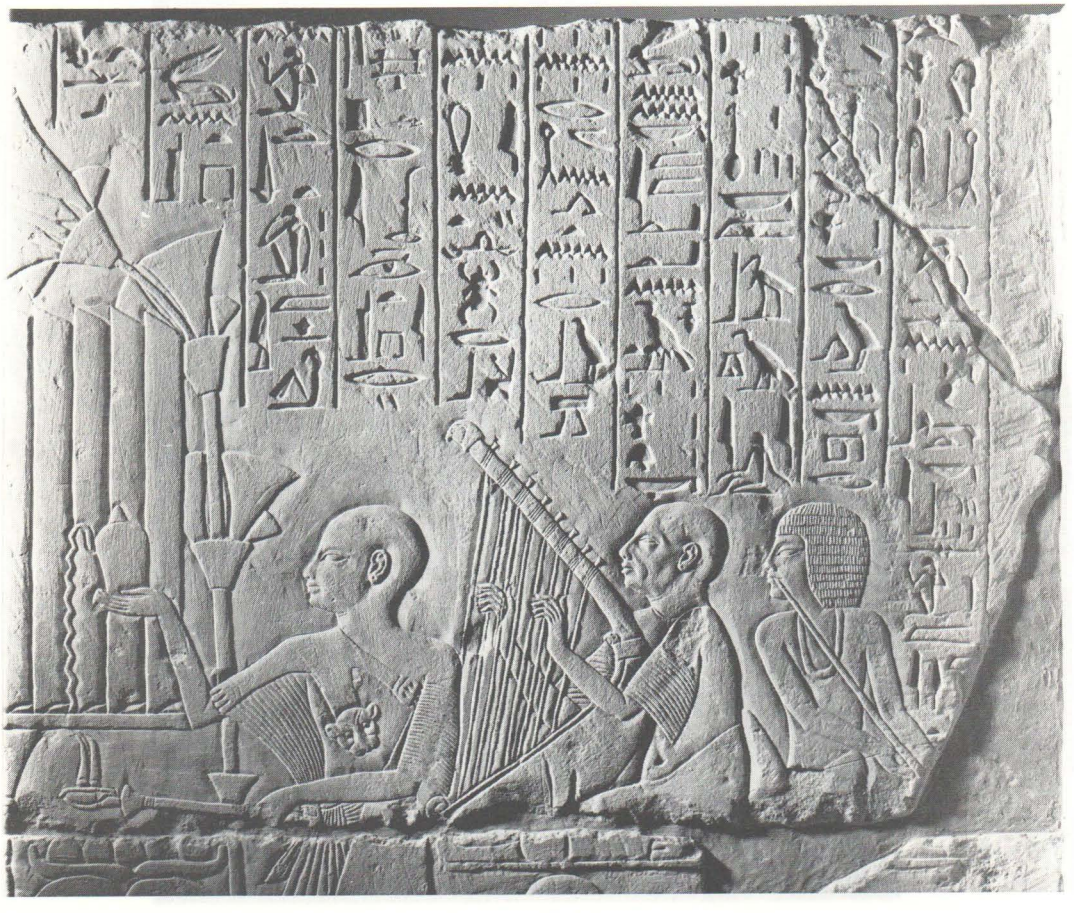


8. Limestone statue representing a woman as mother of a child and as wigmaker.

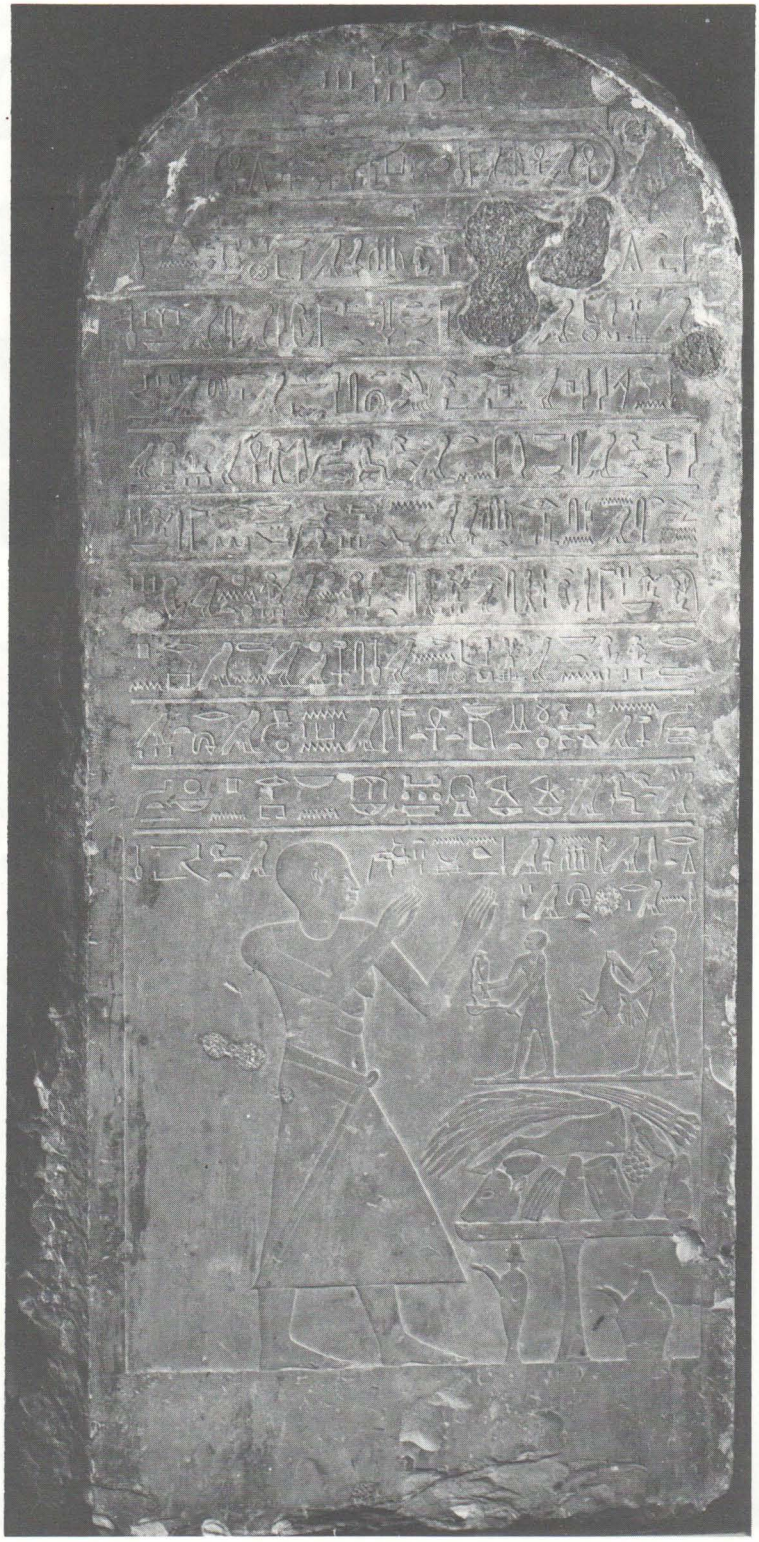
9. Folding chair of Tutankhamun.



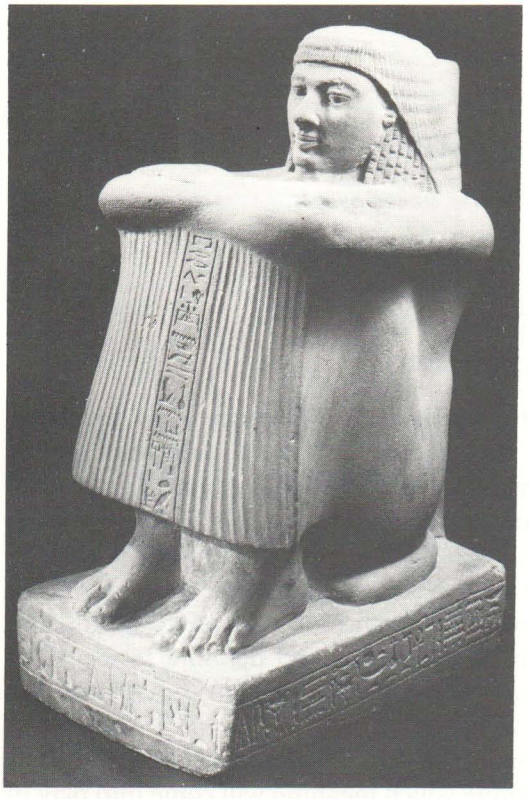
10. Scribe.



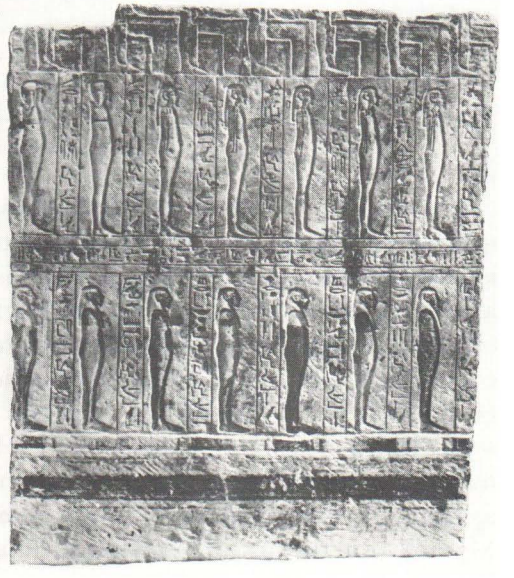
11. Harper with his song.



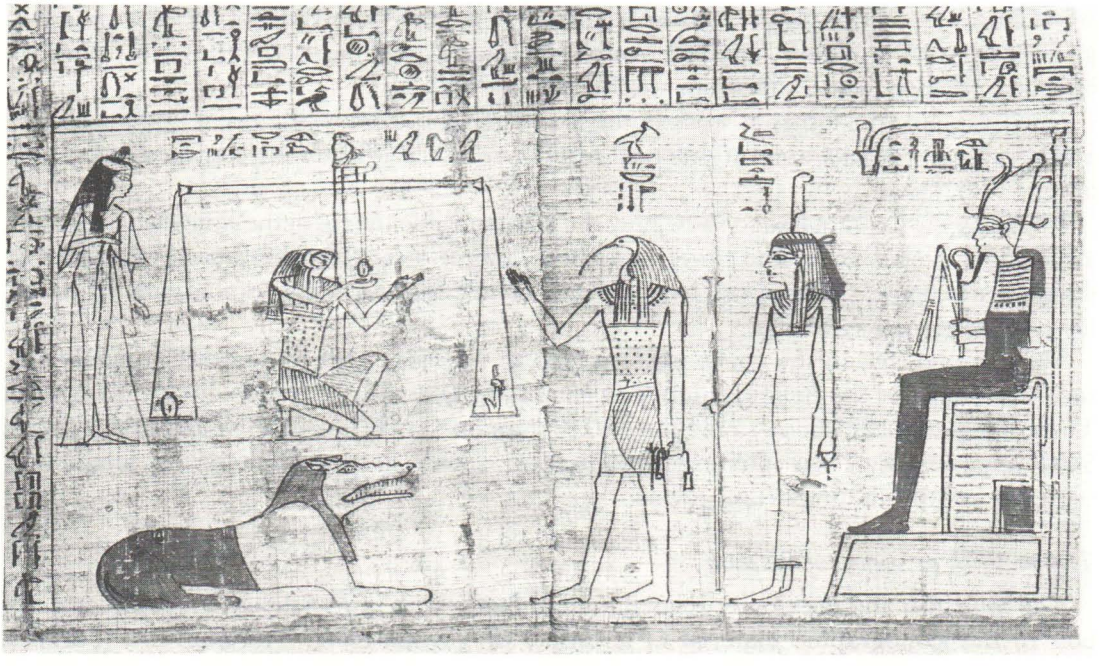
12. Stela of Emhat.



13. Bloc-statue.



15. Some famous Egyptian writers.



14. Judgment of the dead.