
Ancient Egyptian Religions

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Egyptian History (1)

- Tribes in the Nile River basin were politically unified in 3400 BC.
 - Egyptian folk religions lasted for 11 periods and 32 dynasties.
 - The organizational priesthood maintained the religion
 - Strong emphasis on the afterlife.
 - Amon was the chief god
- Pantheon of 741 gods increased to 2000 deities under Pharaoh Tuthmosis III (1480-1426 BC)
- Pharaoh Amenhotep (died 1337 BC, changed name to Akhenaten) declared the sun god, Aten, to be Egypt's only deity.
- Moved capital from Thebes to Tell el Amarna (300 miles south)
- Next Pharaoh (Tutankhamun?) reverted to polytheism and moved the court back to Thebes

Great Rift Valley



Egyptian History (2)

- Assyrians conquered Thebes (674 BC)
- Persians subjugated Egypt (539 BC)
- Alexander the Great of Macedon (356-323 BC) conquered Egypt and introduced Greek gods.
- Octavian of Rome defeated Mark Antony at the naval Battle of Actium (Greece). He claimed Egypt (30 BC) and introduced Roman equivalents of Greek gods.
- Christian missionary work starting AD 30s
- Muslim conquest of Egypt AD 641

Battle of Actium 31 BC

September 31 BC -
August 30 BC



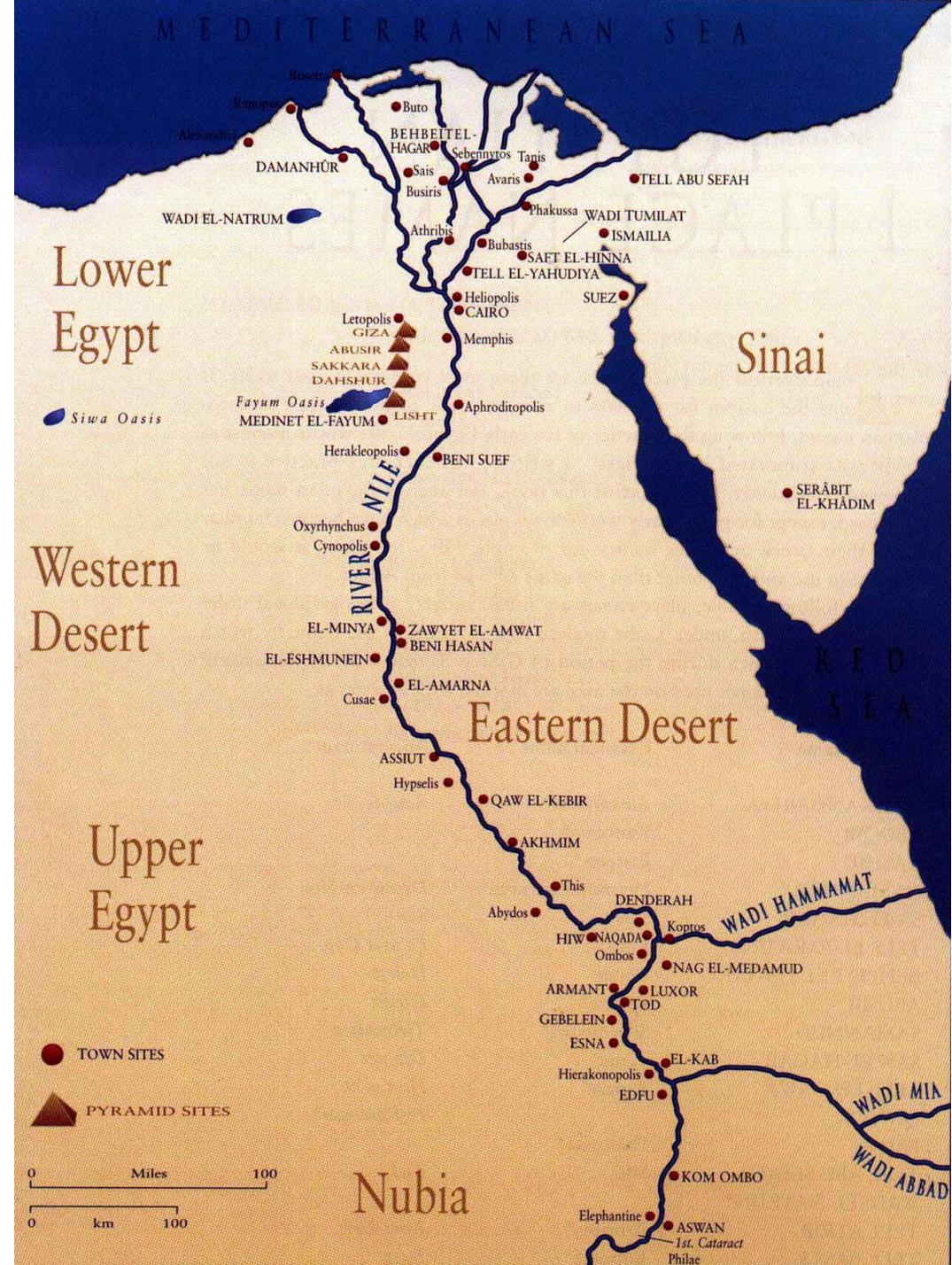
Egyptian Religion (1)

- God – generally polytheist but monotheist during the reign of Akhenaten (13th century BC). Deities include Anon, Anubis, Horus, Isis, and Maat.
- Geography – the Nile region of northeast Africa, including part of the Great Rift Valley
- Timeframe
 - Beginning – Traditional Egyptian religion can be traced back to 3400 BC, with writing and a central government. Artefacts trace Egyptian religion back to 6000 BC.
 - End – Christianity was made the official religion of Egypt in the late 4th century. Arab Muslims conquered Egypt in the 640s, and Egypt remains majority Muslim to this day



Egyptian Pantheon

Ancient Egypt



Egyptian Beliefs (1)

- Creation myths
 - Heliopolitan – Atem-Re arose from watery chaos and made the air and moisture gods, who then made the earth and sky gods, who then made Osiris, Set, and other Egyptian deities.
 - Memphite – Supreme god Ptah created Atem-Re.
 - Hermopolitan – Thoth, the god of wisdom, fashioned creation from a primordial ocean
- Scripture
 - Pyramid texts
 - Egyptian Book of the Dead
 - Book of Am Tuat
 - Demotic magical papyrus
 - Burden of Isis



Ancient Egyptian Creation Story

- Egyptian sky goddess Nut



Egyptian Beliefs (2)

- Pharaohs ruled the nation, mediated between the people and the gods, and performed sacred rituals to maintain *maat* (truth, justice, order, and cosmic balance).
 - Lord of the Two Lands – upper and lower Egypt
 - High Priest of Every Temple
- Priests and priestesses served the god of their temple (under their care) using complicated rituals. This opposed socio-political chaos and aided the passing of the dead to the next world.
- Gods
 - Anthropomorphic – took the form of animals or human/animal
 - Cosmic – represented heavenly bodies (sun god)
 - Abstract/ideological – represented universal concepts



Egyptian Temples

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Egyptian Beliefs (3)

- Man – nine parts, one physical and eight semi-divine
 - Khet (appearance)
 - Ka (sustenance) – the life force that lingers in tombs or statues
 - Ba (animation) – human-headed bird brings air/food to deceased
 - Khaibit (shadow) – detached from Khet but stays near Ba
 - Akh (transfigured spirit) – an immortal being living on in spirit-body
 - Sahu (spirit body) – incorruptible, dwells in heaven
 - Sekhem (bodyless personification of the Ka.
 - Jb (heart) – center of thought and moral awareness
 - Good people – jb lives with the gods
 - Evil people – jb consumed by demoness Ammut.
 - Ren (true name) – essential part of the individual

Egyptian Beliefs (4)

- Sin
 - *Maat* – truth, justice, order, and cosmic balance
 - Morality determined one's fate but also that of the whole nation.
- Salvation
 - It was hard to be cleansed from transgressions - Magic spells might help, and good deeds decreased the weight of guilt
 - But these were not enough
- Rituals surrounding death were critical
 - Collecting objects to bury with the deceased when death came
 - Performing rites and mummifying the body after death

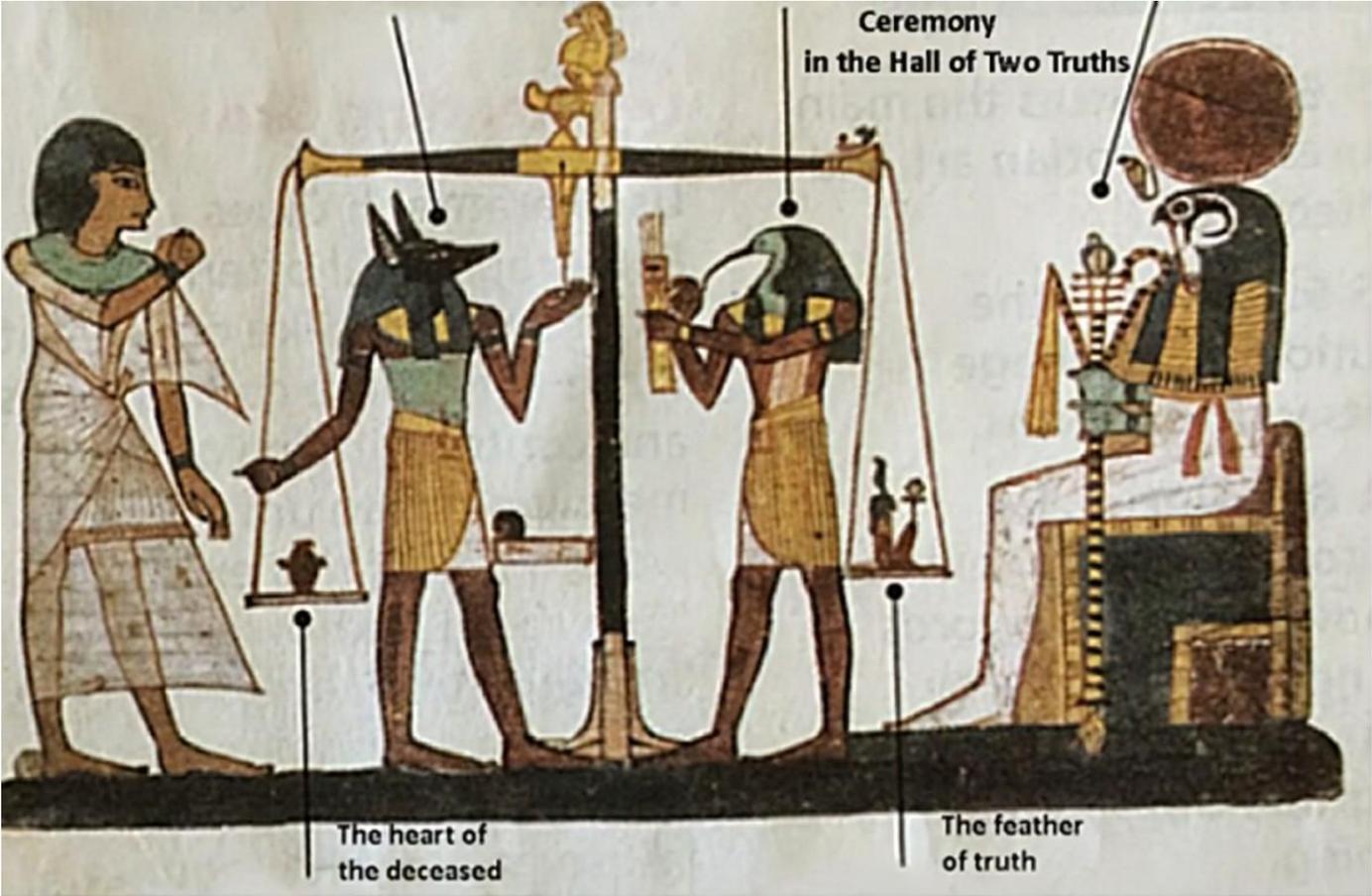
Anubis taking man across the River of Death



Egyptian Beliefs (5) - Afterlife

- The deceased goes before a tribunal of 42 gods in the Hall of Two Truths.
- Anubis sets the scales to weigh the heart against the feather of Ma'at.
- Negative confession – the dead asks to be separated from his sins
- If the heart is heavier than a feather due to evil deeds, Amemet (part crocodile, part lion, part hippopotamus) consumes the heart, and the person ceases to exist.
- If the heart is lighter, Osiris welcomes the person into the next world
- Mummies in the underworld (Nu) could enter new life if Ra shines his sunlight into Nu's darkness and speaks magic words from the *Book of Gates*

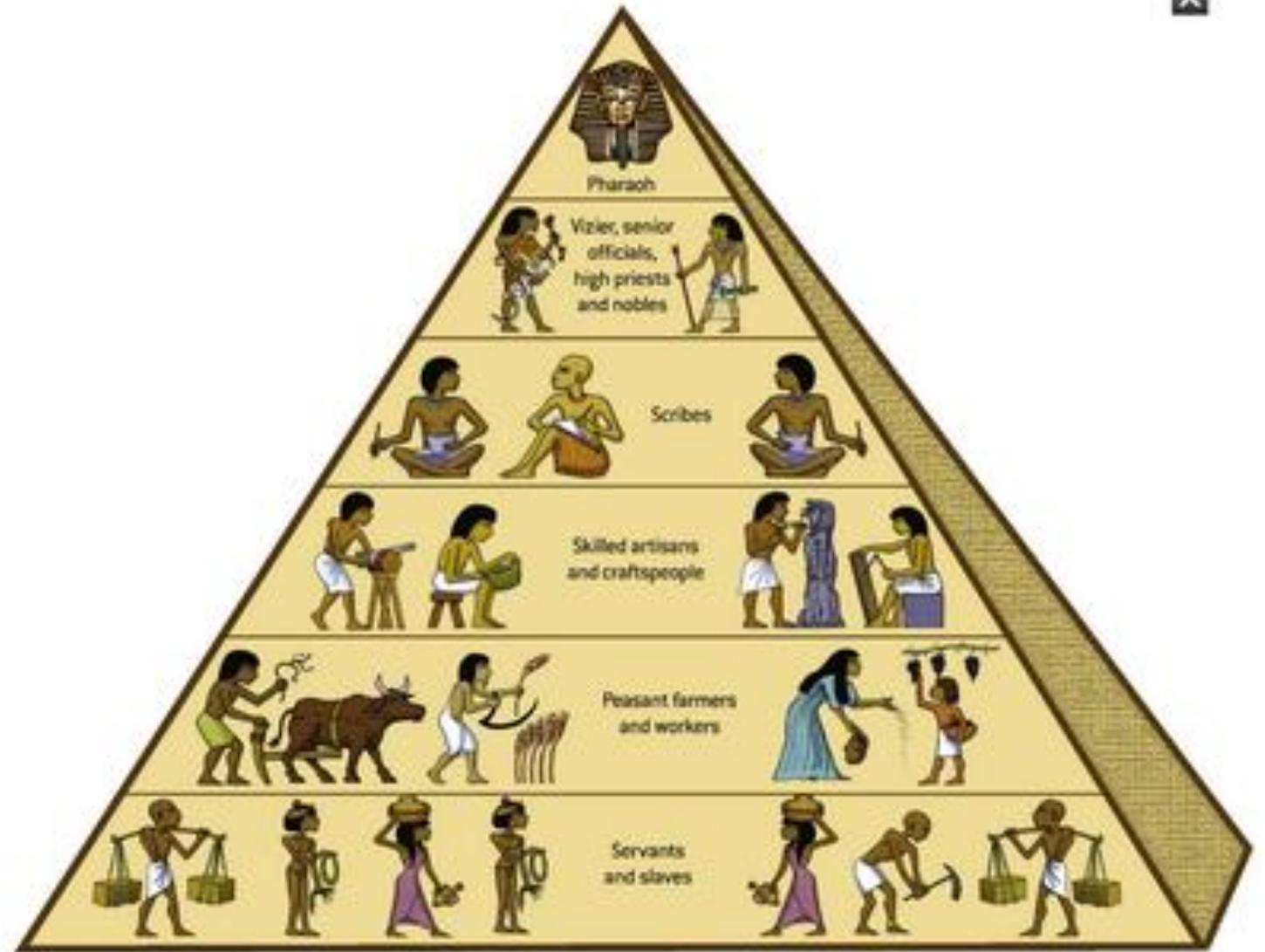
Weighing of the heart



Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (1)

- Ka is the life force that separates the living from the dead
- Bu is the distinctive manifestation of the individual, which had to be reunited with the Ka for the person to be transformed into an immortal spirit.
- Special Priestly Requirements
 - Wear only linens or plant-based garments (cotton, no wool)
 - Hygiene – shave heads and bodies daily, wash several times per day
 - Sexual abstinence during temple duties

Egyptian Society



Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (2)

- Cats (miut)
 - The most sacred animal
 - Protected the house from snakes and vermin
 - Statues of cats outside buildings warded off evil spirits
 - Evidence of cats as household pets in 2000 BC
 - Egyptian parents often named their daughters after cats
 - When a cat died
 - The owner mourns and shaves his/her eyebrows in grief
 - Killing a cat was a capital offense
- Temples
 - Cultus – dedicated to the worship of a specific deity
 - Mortuary - dedicated to honor a deceased pharaoh



Ancient
Egyptian Cat
gods

Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (3)

- Cursing
 - Images or names of the enemy were made in wax or drawn on papyrus
 - Images were spat on, trampled, stabbed, burned, and soaked in urine
- Magic
 - Spells had two parts – words spoken and actions done
 - Involved music, dance, gestures, and letters carried on the body
 - Magic was best done in the morning and the magician had to be ritually clean.
 - Included potions, amulets, metal or ivory wands, figurines
 - Often needed fragments from the body of the intended victim, such as hair or nail clippings
 - Magicians - Anyone could do limited magic
 - Lector priests – protected Pharaoh, healed
 - Scorpion charmers – rid areas of poisonous reptiles and insects

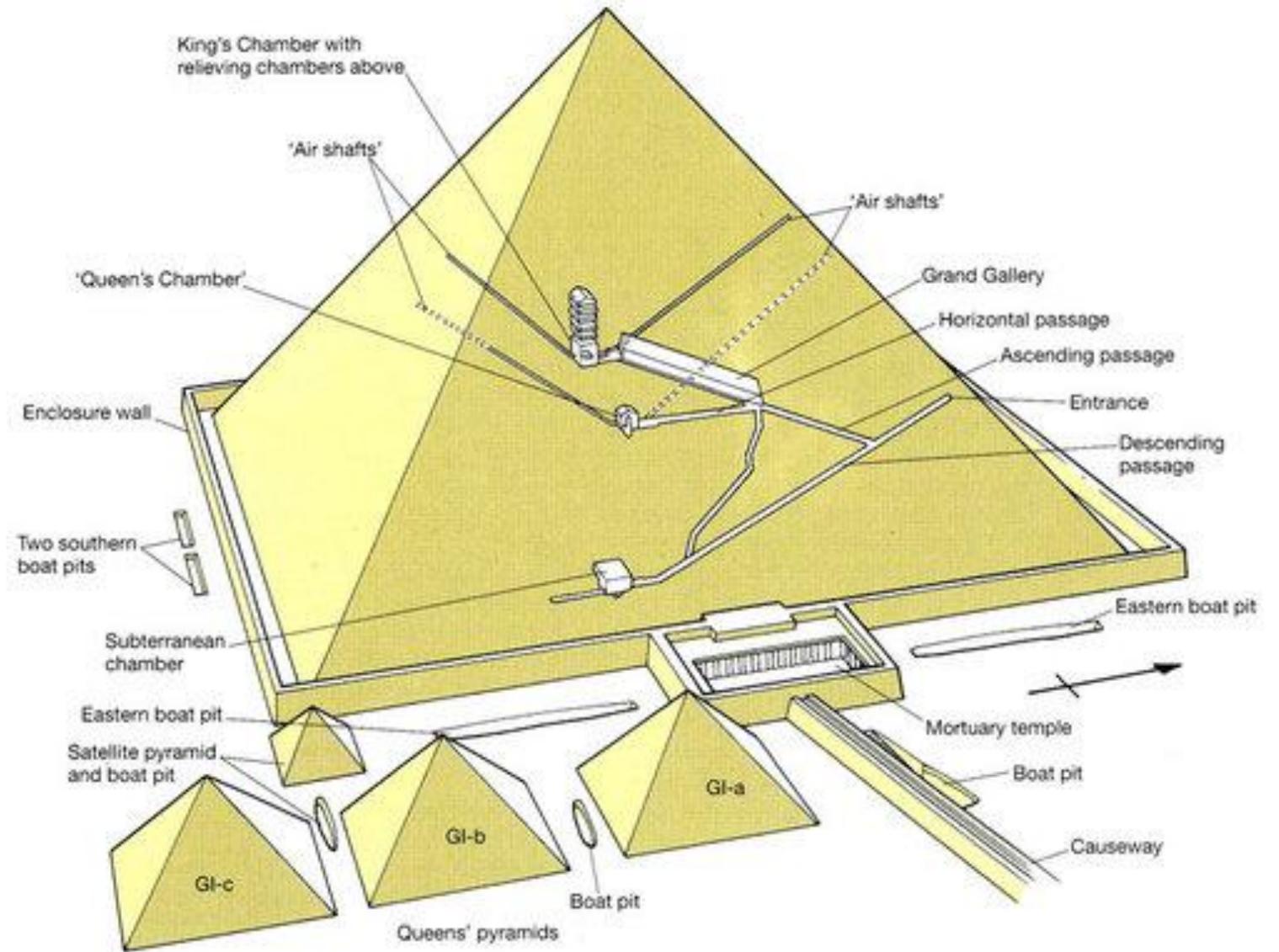


Egyptian Magic

Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (4) - Pyramids

- Burial mounds for deceased pharaohs
- West bank of the Nile River, the direction of the setting sun
- Heliopolis – the oldest center of the sun god cult
- Types
 - Step – allows the spirit of the deceased pharaoh to climb up to the sky
 - Sloping
- Workers were craftsmen, not slaves
- Pyramidal complex includes the main pyramid and outlying smaller pyramids or tombs (*mastabas*)

Architecture of Pyramids



Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (5) - Mummification

- Process
 - The corpse is washed in a special shelter and then taken to an embalmer, who wears a jackal mask to simulate Anubis.
 - Internal organs are removed through an incision on the left side.
 - The brain was removed through the nose using long hooks
 - Organs dried and individually wrapped in linen strips
 - Body packed with salt for drying for 40 days
 - Body washed again and filled with linen, sawdust, and spices
 - Cedar oil injected into rectum
 - Body wrapped in linen bandages and soaked in resin
 - Body placed in three stacking, body-shaped coffins
 - Items left in the coffin that the deceased might need during the journey to the next life, including food, wine, clothing, model boats and houses, tools

THE PROCESS OF MUMMIFICATION



Mummification Process



Egyptian Distinctive Beliefs (6) – Opening the Mouth Ceremony

- To whom - Old Kingdom pharaohs, Middle and New Kingdom the general wealthy population
- Opening of the Mouth Ceremony
 - Enables the deceased to make full use of their bodies, including all their senses, in the next world.
 - People believed Ptah and Horus opened the mouth
 - The officiating priest makes offerings and touches the lips of the deceased with tools

Egypt Today

- Egyptian Reconstructionism - information is gained by studying scholarly sources of information on ancient Egypt, and working directly with the gods themselves
- Akhet Hwt-Hrw - research, study and practice of ancient Egyptian wisdom with an emphasis on its magical techniques
- International network of kemetics
- Kemetic Orthodox faith

Kemetic Shrine

By Mezaenaset - Original publication:
<https://www.kemet.org/community/shrines/> Immediate source:
<https://www.kemet.org/node/199>, Fair use,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73274729>



Conclusion

Discussion

References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006