

The OCCULTISM of ANCIENT EGYPT

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THE OCCULTISM OF ANCIENT EGYPT

Few peoples can have been more fascinated by the occult than were the ancient Egyptians. The mystery of Death was for them as much cosmic as human. Indeed, they looked upon the whole material universe as an immense sarcophagus in which Osiris, the "Good Being", lay imprisoned, paralyzed and deprived of his divine powers. In their Mysteries the best of them strove to transcend their limitations. Their magnificent **Book of the Dead** is a testimony to their resolute intention to abolish the boundary between Life and Death, to erase the line of demarcation between the terrestrial world and the world beyond. It reveals their aspirations towards a more intense life on all the planes of being, on earth and in other dimensions, and shows their determination to colonize, as it were, the regions beyond the grave.

Was this the irrational undertaking of a nation of lunatics? Yes, if we cling to a short-sighted materialism, to a narrow and rigid dogmatism or to the pretentiousness of a science that claims to explain everything. But no, if we adopt the standpoint of the occultist who sees in that attempt an eager search after the secrets of the universe and the quest for a Wisdom that would allow the highest possibilities of the human soul to be realized. Ancient Egypt was steeped in an atmosphere of magic. In the silence of her sanctuaries a few of her noblest men and women, carefully selected, were privileged to lift the curtain that hid the mystery of human destiny from the eyes of the profane and thereby to throw a bridge from our world to the world beyond. The knowledge accumulated by this élite was the admiration of the other nations.

Many philosophers and scholars of the ancient world, drawn thither by the fame of Egypt, came to her temples to receive both scientific knowledge and mystical illumination. Porphyry relates how Pythagoras, furnished with a recommendation from Pharaoh Amasis, presented himself to the priests of Heliopolis, who sent him to those of Memphis, who in turn directed him to those of Thebes, where he was made to undergo hard and painful trials. The way in which he overcame these trials aroused the admiration of his teachers. According to Iamblicus, the sage of Samos spent twenty-two years in the temples of Egypt. There

he studied the Science of Numbers, which he afterwards taught with celebrated brilliancy to his disciples. Thales studied in the sanctuaries of Memphis. Democritus passed five years in the company of Egyptian priests, thanks to whom he made a thorough study of astronomy and geometry. Plato, accompanied by Eudoxus, spent thirteen years in Heliopolis, in whose temples both of them studied geometry, theology and the priestly science. The geographer Strabo relates how at Heliopolis he was shown the house where Plato and Eudoxus had stayed. And, he adds, they must both have been very patient in these studies, for the priests who taught them were not given to much talking. As to Lycurgus and Solon, they devoted themselves to the study of the science of legislation and the government of peoples at **Sais**, the place where the famous statue of Isis was found with its inscription: "I am all that has been, all that is, and all that will be, and my veil no mortal has ever lifted".

A small book entitled **Crata Repoa**¹ gives us information about the Initiations conferred in the temples of ancient Egypt. First published in Germany in 1770, with no name of author or printer, it was reprinted in 1778 in Berlin. At the beginning of the 19th century Bailleul, a Freemason, published a French translation of it in Paris. We read in this book that in order to enter the mysterious association called **Crata Repoa**, the candidate had to be recommended by one of its Initiates. He was sent to Heliopolis, then to Memphis and finally to Thebes. He was circumcised, subjected to a special diet and obliged to spend several months in an underground place, alone with his thoughts. At the end of this retreat, he was conducted into a gallery where he was made to learn by heart certain maxims carved on pillars of Hermes. After this, the **Thesmosphores** (Introducer) led him into a cave where he was blindfolded and had his hands tied. He had to answer a series of questions and his nerves were put to the test by the artificial production of the sounds of thunder and hail. Then, having promised to observe the rules of **Crata Repoa** which were communicated to him, he was made to kneel before the Hierophant and, with the point of a sword at his throat, was compelled to take an oath of fidelity and secrecy. Then the bandage was removed and he was given instruction mainly in the art of healing. Having now become a **Pastophoris**, an Initiate of the first degree, he received the password **Amun** which meant "Be cautious" (**Crata Repoa**, French

1 This title is incorrectly given as **Crata Nepoa** in *Isis Unveiled* (II 364) and *The Secret Doctrine* (III 293/V 290).

translation, 22). We must remember that Amon or Amun, together with Moot or Maut (the Divine Mother) and their son Khons or Khonsu, constituted the Great Triad of Thebes and that his name is usually translated as "the Hidden One".

If the neophyte proved his intelligence during a year of study, he had then to undergo a severe fast. Next, he was taken to a room where beautiful women served him with delicacies and tried to rouse his sexual desire. If he remained insensible to their advances and passed successfully through other trials, he was raised to the degree of **Neocoris**. The king himself took a part in the ceremony of the third Initiation, which conferred on him the title of **Melanophoris**. The sovereign invited him, if he did not feel ready to face the tremendous trials that awaited him, to accept a crown which he held out to him. Knowing that he had to refuse it, the neophyte cast it down and trampled it under foot. At once the monarch, crying shame upon him, dashed on him and feigned to strike him on the head with an axe. The priests threw him to the ground and then, swathed in wrappings like a mummy, he was carried into a room called the "Sanctuary of the Spirits" where he had to promise to observe certain rules, in particular always to abstain from the desire for revenge and to assist any other Initiate when his life was in danger. He spent the following eighteen months studying in the crypts of the Temple, after which he was permitted to undergo the trials of the fourth degree of Initiation. Armed with a sword and a shield, he had to defend himself against a group of assailants wearing hideous masks. Overpowered by the number, he was dragged into a room where all the Initiates were assembled, including the King and the **Demiurgos** (the head of **Crata Repoa**). After other trials, the name of the "Great Lawgiver", **Iao**, was communicated to him, and he became a **Chistophoris**².

To be raised to the rank of **Balahate**, that is to say, to the grade of an Initiate of the fifth degree, he had to attend a kind of theatrical performance during which Seth (Typhon in the Grecian myth), under the guise of a horrible monster, was slain. Seth, he was taught was the personification of fire, "one of the most terrible agents", without which, however, nothing in this world can be accomplished. He was told that he had therefore to learn how to use this fire by subduing its violence (**Crata Repoa**, French translation, 36).

During the sixth Initiation, the **Thesmosphores** led the

² H. P. Blavatsky writes **Kristophores** in *Isis Unveiled* (II 365) and **Kristophoros** in *The Secret Doctrine* (III 293/V 290).

aspirant to the "Gates of Death" through which he passed into the room where he had previously endured the trials of the third Initiation. This room, which was full of mummies and coffins, was the working place of the **Parakistes** (those in charge of the opening of the corpses to be mummified) and of the **Horoi** (the embalmers of mummies). He was informed that some of the coffins he saw there contained the mortal remains of Initiates put to death for having betrayed **Crata Repoa**. Threatened with the same fate in case he too should break his oath, he had to take a new obligation. Then, passing through the "Gate of the Gods", he entered another room where he was taught a ritual dance representing the course of the planets. At this sixth degree of Initiation, he received the title of **Astronomer**.

It was only with the consent of the King and of the **Demiurgos** that he could be raised to the rank of **Prophet**, in other words, of an Initiate of the seventh and last degree. He was then led by night into certain houses called **Maneras** (dwellings of the **Manes**) where he was given a cross that he always had to wear. According to H. P. Blavatsky, this cross was a Tau (the Egyptian cross) which, at his death, had to be laid upon his breast (**Isis Unveiled** II 365). Having now become a **Hierophant**, he had free access to the library of the Temple where he could study all the secret books.

By means of a rigorous training, the neophytes gradually developed occult powers. According to Proclus, they obtained the vision of the "Gods" (Planetary Spirits). It was essentially by their own efforts that, helped by the laconic teachings of the Hierophants, they qualified themselves for the various Initiations. In the whole of the ancient world these Initiations were conferred in subterranean places. This, Mme. Blavatsky tells us, is what used to take place on the Mount of Olives and in Crete. In this island the aspirant used to be confined for twenty-seven days in an underground place and would then undergo terrible trials. Pythagoras was initiated there by the Curetes, the priests of Cybele, the Mother of the World (**Theosophical Glossary**, art. Curetes). This goddess is the same as Isis who, according to Subba Row, is the sixth cosmic principle, the "Great Cosmic Virgin" or "generative power of the Universe" who "generates ideation in the universal mind" (**Esoteric Writings** 229). In this sense Isis is the same as Hathor, another goddess of the Egyptian Pantheon. However, in another meaning, she comes after Hathor in the process of cosmic evolution. While Hathor represents the dawn of the manifestation of the Universe, Isis is, as

it were, the day that follows this dawn, "Nature already formed", the two goddesses being "one except in the matter of time". In this second sense Isis, like the biblical Eve and the Kabbalistic Binah, is the "mother of all that lives", while her son Horus personifies the physical world (**Theosophical Glossary**, art. Cow-worship).

In the sanctuaries of Ancient Egypt it was possible to go through the whole cycle of Adeptship. There the supreme Mystery God was Osiris who, according to H. P. Blavatsky, symbolized esoterically the "creative manifested Power", and mystically, the seventh principle in man (**Collected Writings** VII 189, 190 1st note). The Sun, the "external manifestation of the Seventh Principle of our Planetary System", was called the Eye of Osiris. If we are to believe the ancient Egyptians, it is the source of the faculty of spiritual clairvoyance, while the lower psychic states, diseases and lunacy are due to lunar influence. **The Secret Doctrine** explains this harmful action of the Moon by the fact that the latter represents the Fourth Principle of our Solar System, corresponding to Kama, the passional principle of man (**The Secret Doctrine** III 142, 143/V 154, 155).

The aspirant to the highest degree of Initiation had to face "the most dreaded as well as the most trying of all horrors". However, if he bravely "lifted the veil of Isis", he had nothing more to fear and henceforth "no longer dreaded to meet face to face the inhabitants from 'over the dark river'" (**Collected Writings** I 115).

In the course of this final Initiation, the aspirant's soul was guided by the Hierophant through the lower regions of the astral world. If he came successfully through his trials, he "had the right of releasing **seven suffering souls**". Then, clothed only in his radiant body (the **Anandamayakosha** of the Vedanta), he soared into spiritual regions and received the WORD, "with or without the 'heart's blood' of the Hierophant". In fact, since murder belongs to the province of Black Magic, the Initiator was never killed. He himself put an end to his earthly life only if he communicated the supreme "WORD" to the new Initiate. For in any one country, only one Initiate had the right to know this WORD. Consequently, there was never any bloodshed but only a transfer of "life spiritual and divine" (**The Secret Doctrine** III 272, 273/V 271, 272). This life was called the "Sa of Life" by the ancient Egyptians and Shekinah by the Kabalists. At this final Initiation, in ancient Egypt as well as in other countries, there was performed the "Mystery of the **putting to death of**

Chrestos in the mortal body with its animal passions, and the resurrection of the Spiritual Man as an enlightened Christos . . . at the moment when the rays of the morning Sun poured forth on the entranced body of the candidate and were supposed to recall him to life, or his **new rebirth**" (**Collected Writings IX**, 271, 272).

Among the ancient Egyptians the descent into hell that had to be made by the candidate for the final Initiation was called "the way of Ro-Setau" ("the door of the ways"). Ro-Setau (which Mme. Blavatsky wrote as **Rustu**) was regarded as the "gate of entrance" of Amenti, the abode of Osiris, whereas the "gate of exit" (leading to reincarnation) was known as **Amh** (**Theosophical Glossary**, art. Amenti). Ro-Setau was described as a passage along which the aspirant to Initiation had to make his way in order to discover the "Mysteries of Isis". For this region was regarded as the dwelling-place of that goddess. Ro-Setau was also the "place of the two brooders" (Isis and Nephthys). The aspirant, in growing darkness and in an atmosphere that became more and more oppressive, had to fight against all kinds of monsters and obstacles. Passing through various doors whose thresholds were watched over by fierce guardians, he fought "against his enemies, darkness, his sins, his misdeeds". Then he soared to lighter regions of Ro-Setau and, having become the "Lord of Ro-Setau", finally reached a spiritual world, the Field of the Blessed (S. Mayassis, **Mystères et Initiations dans la Préhistoire et Protohistoire**, 93, 94). After going through increasingly luminous regions called Ser, Anrutef and Maat's Pond, he ended his exploration of the invisible worlds in Aanroo, also called the Field of Offerings, the Field of Reeds and the Field of Galingales, that is to say, in the Elysian Fields of the ancient Greeks (the Devachan of theosophical literature) (S. Mayassis, **Le Livre des Morts de l'Égypte ancienne est un Livre d'Initiation**, 527).

We learn from Mme. Blavatsky that, long before the Christian era, Alchemy in both its spiritual and material aspects was taught in the temples of Egypt as well as in almost every other country, particularly in China. It was practised in the Hellenic sanctuaries from the days of the Argonauts. For, says Mme. Blavatsky, quoting Suidas to support her statement, the Golden Fleece was in reality an alchemical treatise written on the skin of a ram (**Collected Writings XI** 535, 536). The Initiates of ancient Egypt knew "the existence of **two elixirs**, the great and the small". The latter was used in order to achieve the trans-

mutation of metals and the rejuvenation of the physical body. The great Elixir, "which was only symbolically an elixir, conferred the greatest boon of all: **conscious immortality in the Spirit**, the Nirvana throughout all cycles" (**Collected Writings XI 538**). To try to reach this conscious immortality is the same as to go in search of the "**Word** or the **ineffable name** of which Moses said that there was no need to seek it in distant places" for it lies within ourselves (**Collected Writings XI 543, 544**).

Genuine Alchemy remained secret. In the third century of our era, the Emperor Diocletian caused all the books on Alchemy in Egypt to be sought out and destroyed. The **Smaragdine Tablet** is the only genuine Hermetic book that remains. As regards all the other so-called alchemical writings found nowadays in the public libraries and museums of Europe, Mme. Blavatsky declares them to be "nothing but questionable hypotheses of certain mystics of various times, left halfway on the road of the great Initiation" (**Collected Writings XI 534, 536, 537**).

According to Subba Row, the myth of Osiris was "the great central mystery of Egyptian occultism". He regarded Horus, in one of his meanings, as "the regenerated spirit of man". And, he adds, it is to him that Isis "unveils herself and reveals the mysteries of human existence" (**Esoteric Writings 229, 231, 233**).

Osiris was the personification of the Logos. His shadow was called Seth by the ancient Egyptians, just as the occultists of ancient Greece gave the name of Typhon to the dark aspect of the God of their Mysteries. As Mme. Blavatsky says, Seth represented the lower cosmic quaternary (the four rupa planes). He was "the terrestrial and material envelope of Osiris, who is the indwelling spirit thereof". In other words, in the Egyptian Mysteries Osiris was the symbol of the universe "as an ideation" and Seth was the personification of the same universe "in its material realization". In another sense, Seth represented the four lower principles of man that constitute his personality, Osiris being then the symbol of the higher human triad (Atma-Buddhi-Manas). Being a personification of the "ever conflicting and turbulent principles of differentiated chaotic matter, whether in the Universe or in Man", Seth was viewed as the obstacle, the opposition, the resistance hindering the development of spirituality. This friend of darkness and adversary of the candidates for Initiation is charged, in the Book of the Dead, with being one who "steals reason from the soul", an accusation that is justified, for he personified the passions (**Theosophical Glos-**

sary, art. Typhon). This is why H. P. Blavatsky states that the Great Pyramid, built long before Cheops, was desecrated by the latter when, diverting it from its original use as a place of Initiation, he consecrated it to the cult of Seth-Typhon (**Collected Writings IV 287**).

As we know, Seth kills his brother Osiris and cuts him into fourteen pieces. Then, he remains in darkness, sunk in evil, for Osiris symbolizes the luminous divine part of man, while he himself represents the **kama rupa**. And so the murder of Osiris esoterically meant the destruction of spirituality in the human soul dominated by its passions. The colour associated with Seth was red, which is precisely the colour attributed to the **kama rupa** in **The Secret Doctrine**. The murderer of Osiris was execrated by the Egyptians who regarded him as the god of Evil, of storm and hurricane and of the burning sand of the desert. As Mme. Blavatsky says, "Osiris is the ideal Universe, Shiva the great Regenerative Force", and Typhon is "the material portion of it, the evil side of the god, or the Destroying Shiva" (**Theosophical Glossary, art. Crocodile**). And long before Moses, the goat, an animal sacred to Seth, played the part of the scapegoat over which the Egyptians confessed their sins before driving it away into the desert (**Theosophical Glossary, art. Typhon**).

Horus was called the "avenger" of his father Osiris, for, as soon as he grew out of infancy, he engaged in an endless and ruthless fight against Seth. In this case Horus represents the human soul which, having attained to a certain maturity, fights fiercely against its lower tendencies. In this struggle, Seth tears out the eyes of Horus and Horus emasculates him. Now, the eye of Horus, the **udja**, written **outa** (or **uta**) by Mme. Blavatsky, is nothing else, she says, than the Third Eye (**Theosophical Glossary, art. Thoth**). And so, like the Eye of Shiva, its Hindu equivalent, it is the organ of spiritual sight. It was active in the men of the Third Race. Then, in proportion as humanity lost its primitive purity by letting itself be dominated by its passions, it has gradually become atrophied and transformed into the pineal gland. Moreover, Seth is the "fire" which man cannot dispense with and which he must not destroy but has to learn to control, as was taught in **Crata Repoa**. Consequently Thoth, who personified the teaching given by the Hierophants of ancient Egypt (**Collected Writings XI 534**), intervenes not only to give back his vision to Horus but also to Seth his virility.

Like her husband Osiris, Isis had a lower aspect personified by her sister Nephthys, the wife of Seth. Nephthys represented

the lower Astral Light, the dark side of the Shakti, as did the black Kali of the Hindu Pantheon. Her son Anubis was the Lord of Hades, the "nether world". Being a psychopompic deity, he introduced the souls of the dead into that world. He was therefore related to sexual generation for, if we accept what Mme. Blavatsky tells us, Hades meant the human womb as well as the astral world (**Theosophical Glossary, arts. Anubis, Hermanubis**). This implies a belief in reincarnation.

Mme. Blavatsky states that the ancient Egyptians held this belief and that, like Theosophists, they distinguished in the human being seven components or principles: the physical body, **Ka** (the vital principle), **Khaba** or **Khaibit** (the etheric double or **linga sharira**), **Akh** (the terrestrial intelligence or Lower Mind), **Ba** (the Higher Soul or Higher Mind), **Sa** (Buddhi), and Osiris (the divine principle or **Atma**) (**Collected Writings VII 189, 190; Isis Unveiled II 367**). Such was the esoteric classification. However, exoterically the Egyptians divided man into three parts: the spiritual part (the seventh and sixth principles), the "spectral soul" (the fifth, fourth and third principles) and the gross body (**prana** and **sthula sharira**). In their practice of magic, white or black, they evoked the "spectral soul" (**Collected Writings VII 224**).

The acquisition of the Eye of Horus was a decisive step in the spiritual ascent. Once he was possessed of it, the mystic became known as **Ma-Kheru**. He was said to be henceforward in harmony with the laws of cosmic equilibrium personified by Maat, the goddess of Justice and Truth. This goddess was present at the judgment of the dead. On one side of a great pair of scales Anubis or Horus placed the heart of the dead man, and on the other a representation of Maat or her hieroglyph, an ostrich feather. If the two sides were evenly balanced the dead man was "justified". In other words, he was regarded as having played on earth the part assigned to him by Maat, the divine order. Thus, this Goddess appears as the personification of Dharma. There was a custom related by Herodotus that used to remind the wealthy Egyptians of the thought of death and of the need to prepare themselves for this **post mortem** judgment. While a banquet was in progress, he says, a wooden figurine representing a corpse in a coffin would be shown to the guests.

To give someone the Eye of Horus was the same as to purify him and to confer on him spiritual sight, endowing him at the same time with a strength which enabled him to vanquish hostile beings and to protect himself against the "violence of Seth's

arm". The following words written on a papyrus are obviously those of an Initiator addressing his disciple: "I have come, I have brought you the Eye of Horus so that you may equip your face with it, that it may purify you and that its perfume may be on you" (**Texts of the Pyramids** 20, quoted by S. Mayassis in **Le Livre des Morts de l'Égypte ancienne est un livre d'Initiation**, 345). In the language of the Hierophants of ancient Egypt, to be perfumed meant to be spiritual, luminous like the Gods. For it was believed that beings of great spirituality emit a delicious perfume.

The **Karest** or **Karust** which was represented by the embalmed mummy, an "image of the resurrection" and a "symbol of immortality", was the Egyptian equivalent of Christ, that is to say, of the Initiate. The mystics of ancient Egypt gave the appellation of **Ma-Kheru**, the "Word of Truth", to the one who had made of this Word the law of his life. This was the title given to Horus whom we may therefore regard as the forerunner of Christ. Like the latter, he was the "Messenger of the Word of Truth, of the Logos" who makes "divine nature manifest itself in humanity" (**Collected Writings** VIII 197, 198, 199). In the **Book of the Dead**, we read that the human being spiritually regenerated (by Initiation) declared himself to be **Khem-Horus** and to have caused Benoo (the Phoenix) to appear by his words. This implied that he was the maker of his own regeneration, for Khem-Horus was held to be the author of his own birth. As to Benoo, also called the Rech ("the red one"), it was, so Mme. Blavatsky informs us, the "symbol of self-creation and resurrection through death" and of the "divine Ego in man" (**Theosophical Glossary**, art. Benoo). And we can read in the papyrus of Pa-di-Amon, kept in the Cairo Museum, that this bird "came into being through himself" (Alexandre Piankoff, **Mythological Papyri**, Bollingen series XL 3, I 113).

The priests of ancient Egypt had a profound knowledge of the invisible worlds and of their inhabitants. Their representations of elementals (subhuman beings) and elementaries (depraved and mischievous dead) in papyri, paintings and sculptures, have led to the erroneous belief that they worshipped cats, dogs and all kinds of monsters and creeping beings (**Collected Writings** VI 195). **Khou** was the name given to the astral body (**The Secret Doctrine** III 243/V 244) or rather the "animal soul" (**Collected Writings** VII 189). This term was used to designate a human being after his death. It was said that the dead were led for judgment before Osiris, in the "Palace of

Truth". The best among them, the "Justified **Khous**", had a happy life in Aanroo (Devachan) before reincarnating. The others, the "Unjustified **Khous**", which are the same as the elementaries of theosophical literature, continued their egoistic and coarse existence in the lower regions of the astral world. Being composed of **Kama Rupa** and of the "dregs of Manas", they were much dreaded, as are the "bhutas" in India. The exorcist priests sometimes intervened to deprive some of them of their freedom of action, in order to protect the living against their mischievous activities (**The Secret Doctrine** III 241 *et seq.*/ V 243 *et seq.*; **Collected Writings** VII 190). Cats were sacred on account of the connection that was held to exist between them and the goddess Bastet, whose function it was to defend Ra against Apophis, the Serpent of Evil. Bastet was represented in the form of a woman with the head of a cat, holding a sistrum in her right hand. This instrument was used in the Egyptian temples, as Mme. Blavatsky tells us, in order to produce "**magnetic currents, and sounds**" during the ceremony of "**purification of the air**" (**Theosophical Glossary**, art. Sistrum).

The Egyptian mystics viewed the spiritual ascent as a union of the human soul with the Divine, a hierogamy which, they said, gave birth to the "twin soul" or "double soul", the Rebis of Alchemy. This mystical union was believed to be the result of the "embrace" of man by the Divine. Consequently, the God Ra (the Logos) was called the Great Embracer. Thus, the regeneration of man was conceived as produced by the penetration into him of the divine light symbolized by the rays of the sun. The human soul "osirified", that is to say, divinized, was called the Great Cat, for they held that it had destroyed its impurities in the way that a cat exterminates small noxious animals.

There is no doubt that the allegory of the journey of Ra, the Sun, was connected with the teachings given during Initiation in the Egyptian sanctuaries. According to this myth, the Sun appeared each morning at the eastern horizon, behind Mount Manu. Passing between two sycamores, it sailed into the sky towards the occident in Meandjet, the "ship of the millions of years". At night, it continued its journey in another vessel called Mesektet (or Sektet), below the horizon, crossing the Tiaou or Douat, that is, the invisible world. Having travelled through the twelve regions of the Douat, it reappeared in the orient at the dawn of the following day. The journey in the Douat was strewn with difficulties. During the twelve hours of this nightly passage, the thresholds of twelve doors were crossed, these doors being

most probably symbols of the stages passed through by the soul of the aspirant to Initiation when he had to explore the astral world down to its very depths. At the fourth hour of this descent into hell there began the crossing of a sandy desert peopled with monstrous creatures. The vessel now assumed the appearance of a sleigh which moved with difficulty along a dark and narrow passage hemmed in with sheer walls, where the difficulties became even greater after the fifth hour. It was only at the sixth hour that the travelling became easier and that, the sand having been replaced by water, the sleigh lost its runners and once more assumed the form of a vessel.

The aspiration of every Egyptian mystic was to become one of the crew of the solar vessel. But only those were admitted into it who had divinized themselves and had become "followers of Ra". Once accepted into the company of the "Luminous Ones" (the Gods or Planetary Spirits), they participated with them in the government of our Solar System. Thus, to take part in working the solar vessel meant to become a collaborator of the Logos, one of the protectors of humanity who constitute the "Guardian Wall" of which Mme. Blavatsky speaks in **The Voice of the Silence**. Having become qualified to man the solar vessel, the Initiate was no more subject to the cycle of reincarnations. He was henceforth a **Ma-Kheru**, an appellation which has been variously translated as 'justified', 'just of voice', 'triumphing over his enemies'. "Embraced" by Ra (who played in Egypt the part held in India by Shiva, the Great Guru) and "suckled" by Isis or Hathor, he drew his power from the "milk of life" of Isis, or the "Sa of Life", or again "Ra's liquid", that is, the spiritual energy called Kundalini by the Hindus. As with the Holy Grail and the Philosopher's Stone, it was said that this energy conferred health, power and felicity. In Egyptian iconography, the suckling of king Amenophis the Second by the Goddess Hathor is an illustration of this esoteric tenet. It means that this Monarch-Initiate received strength and wisdom from the Mother of the World or the Shakti (the Alaya of Tibetan Buddhism), the cosmic principle of which, as we read in **The Secret Doctrine**, Buddhi is a ray. The "Sa of Life" was said to be projected by the Eye of Horus, in other words, by the Third Eye. We should notice that, according to **The Secret Doctrine**, this Third Eye is connected with the centre of force at the top of the head (the **sahasrara chakra**), which is itself related to Buddhi, and that the "electro-spiritual force" which is Kundalini is identified by Mme. Blavatsky with Buddhi "considered as an active instead

of a passive principle (which it is generally, when regarded only as the vehicle or casket of the Supreme Spirit, ATMA)" (**The Voice of the Silence**, Fragment I v. 38 and note 24). The "Sa of Life" was regarded as a luminous fluid issuing from the sun (the symbol of the Logos) and was represented by the ostrich feathers that adorned the heads of some of the gods as well as the kingly head-dress. The fluid Sa was thought to enter into the Pharaohs, thus making them divine. Hence their immense ascendancy over their people.

The Pharaoh was elected from among the priests and warriors. In this latter case, he became a priest and was taught as such. During his enthronement he was "embraced" by the reigning king or, failing him, by the high priest. Two priests purified him by an aspersion with "water of life". The Sed Feast, as this ceremony was called, was repeated many times during the reign of the sovereign, for its aim was to charge him with the "Sa of Life". We read in some papyri: "Water is thrown upon you by the Eye of Horus", which leads us to think that the Sa fluid (Kundalini) was projected upon the Pharaoh by the Third Eye of the priests entrusted with his "purification". Having been cleansed in this way from his impurities, the king was regarded as belonging henceforth to the "divine race". Mme. Blavatsky tells us that at Philae there is a bas-relief representing "two Gods-Hierophants, one with the head of a hawk, the other **ibis-headed**", in the act of pouring onto a person who is standing between them "a double stream of water (the water of life and new **birth**)", in which we can distinguish a series of small anastomosed crosses. This, she says, is the allegorical representation of the awakening of an aspirant who has just been initiated when, lying on a wooden tau and with his head illuminated by the rays of the rising sun, he comes out of the trance into which he had been plunged three days before (**Collected Writings IX 273, 274**). In a similar bas-relief found at **Kôm-Ombô** (Ombos) in Egypt, we see Thoth and Horus performing this purifying rite (**Collected Writings IX 273**). We must point out that in the ceremonies of Initiation which took place in the temples of ancient Egypt, priests and priestesses played the parts of the Gods, Goddesses and other sacred personages.

The pillar Djed (or Dad) with its four capitals, the "spine of Osiris", which was erected with the help of ropes during the Sed Feast after the crowning of the Pharaoh, was most probably a symbolic representation of the channel of the "Serpent-Fire" (Kundalini) in the axis of the backbone. Its erection into the

vertical position presumably represented the awakening of Kundalini when it rose up the **sushumna nadi** of the Pharaoh.

During his enthronement, the Pharaoh received in succession the white crown (that of Upper Egypt or the Southern Country) and the red crown (of Lower Egypt or the Northern Country). Together they formed the Pschent which symbolized not only the union of the sovereignties over the two countries, but also "the presence of Deity in death as in life, on earth as in heaven" (**Theosophical Glossary**, art, Pschent). This double crown was called "The Lady of Power" and "The Lady of Flame"; it was the symbol of the union of the two worlds, the visible and the invisible, and also of Pharaoh's dual activity, that is to say, the activity of a divinized man exercising his functions both in the invisible worlds and on earth. The union of the two crowns on the head of the Pharaoh had therefore a mystical as well as a political significance.

"Embracing" the king's head, these crowns were believed to pour on him the spiritual fluid with which they were both charged. Immediately after putting on the Pschent, the Pharaoh sat down on the throne. This gesture was highly significant, for the throne was the symbol of Isis³. To sit down on it had then the allegorical meaning of sitting on the knees of the goddess in order to be treated by her as her son and to be "suckled" by her. Which, in plain words, meant, as we have seen, to receive power and wisdom from the Mother of the World (Alaya). The latter, according to **The Secret Doctrine**, is "the Self of a progressed Adept", the man "strong in Yoga" being "able to merge his soul with it" (**The Secret Doctrine** I 49, 47/I 80, 78/I 121, 119). The following affirmation which we can read in an old Egyptian papyrus is an allusion to such a union: "I made of myself a double (a counterpart) of the goddess Isis and her power has made me powerful" (quoted by S. Mayassis in **Le Livre des Morts de l'Egypte ancienne est un livre d'Initiation**, 160).

During the Sed ceremony, the transfer of the vital fluid to the new sovereign was carried out also by breath and magnetic passes. The ancient Egyptians were unacquainted with kissing. The nearest to it in their customs was to bring the two faces close to one another and then to rub them one against the other. During the scenes of Initiation, kisses of this kind were bestowed lavishly upon the neophyte, who thus absorbed the fluid of life with the breath of the Hierophant.

3 The hieroglyph of the name "Isis" is a throne.

In the course of this same ceremony, the Hierophant transferred "the fluid of life and of divine force" to the Pharaoh by magnetic passes performed on the nape of the neck and along the back (S. Mayassis, *loc. cit.* 424). According to the Egyptologist Moret, the priest took the Pharaoh in his arms and passed his open hand over him, along the nape and back. The transmitter of fluid stood behind the one he was filling with energy. That is why, in the Egypt of the Pharaohs, to stand behind somebody was synonymous with acting as his protector.

The Egypt of the Mysteries, the "double kingdom of the lily and the papyrus", has left a dazzling trail behind it. It captivated the Ancients, and its fascination is still alive in our own day. The traveller who journeys through this land, the home of the Sphinx and once the high place of the Holy, cannot fail to marvel at the monuments, bas-reliefs and paintings that he discovers there. These remnants of a remarkable civilization are a living witness to the refined culture, the vast knowledge and the mystic fervour of a people who, across the span of centuries, are still able to move us by the beauty of their works of art and to uplift us by their myths rich in esoteric meaning, for they are the veiled expression of the most authentic and the loftiest Science of Initiation.

