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# Changes in the Afterlife

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### Historical Background

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Following the death of Ramesses XI, c. 1069 BCE, the 20th Dynasty and the New Kingdom came to an end. For much of the next four centuries Egypt was a politically divided land. In the 21st Dynasty, a line of kings ruled from Tanis in the Delta, while a family of army commanders simultaneously controlled Upper Egypt from Thebes. These southern rulers, who were probably of Libyan ancestry, added religious authority to military supremacy by assuming the title of high priest of Amun. Although nominally under the authority of the Tanite kings, they were in reality virtually independent. This dual rule was interrupted c. 945 BCE when Sheshonq I, founder of the 22nd Dynasty, took the throne. This royal line was also of Libyan descent and Sheshonq and his immediate successors exercised direct control over the whole of Egypt. But after about 850 BCE the political map of the country became increasingly fragmented, as small kingdoms and principalities proliferated (23rd–24th Dynasties). This situation led to tensions, and there was periodic unrest and even internal conflict. In the late eighth century BCE, the 25th Dynasty, a line of rulers from Nubia strongly imbued with Egyptian traditions of religion and kingship, took control of Egypt through a mixture of political maneuvering and military conquest (Török 1997:144–169). Although they acquiesced in the continued government of the principalities by individual dynasts, the Nubians were a cohesive influence, imposing stronger control over Egypt and overseeing a revival in cultural traditions.

The Libyan pharaohs adopted the titles and external trappings of Egyptian kingship, but the nature of their rule differed from that of their New Kingdom predecessors. The kings at Tanis reigned as overlords, tolerating other princes and even “kings” elsewhere in the land (Leahy 1985:58–59). Thus the unique character of the pharaoh, previously a hallmark of the Egyptian state, was no longer maintained, and some of the formal attributes which had previously distinguished the rulers from their subjects ceased to be royal prerogatives (Jansen-Winkel 2000:7). Below the kings, the chief wielders of power in Egypt now combined the

two functions of army commander and high priest, a situation manifested at the major centers of Thebes, Memphis, and Herakleopolis, as well as in important Delta towns such as Mendes. Names and titles on monuments testify to the strong presence of Libyans in positions of influence (Jansen-Winkeln 1994:78, 79–80). Many of these people were the descendants of groups who had moved into Egypt in the later New Kingdom, settling particularly in the Delta and around the mouth of the Fayum region (Jansen-Winkeln 2000: 10; Leahy 1985:55–56). By the 21st Dynasty these Libyans constituted a military aristocracy, controlling most of the army. The priesthood also continued to wield great influence, though here the evidence suggests that families of Egyptian origin maintained the dominant position (Jansen-Winkeln 2000:11).

The period of Libyan domination is characterized by an inward-looking attitude on the part of the rulers, coupled with the establishment of more fortresses and garrisons along the Nile, which has suggested a concern with the forcible control of the Egyptian populace (Jansen-Winkeln 1994:83). The scale of Egypt's foreign contacts appears to have diminished and there are signs that its prestige abroad declined. At home, the economy appears to have been under pressure, as manifested in a reduction in new monumental building projects and the recycling of building stone, sarcophagi, and funerary trappings on a hitherto unprecedented scale (Jansen-Winkeln 1995).

The profile of the population is difficult to assess, but on the basis of textual evidence there appears to have been a preponderance of Libyans in the north and Egyptians in the south (Leahy 1985:56; Taylor 2000:345–346). The possibility of some kind of ethnic division on geographical lines may be reflected also in certain cultural differences – for example the use of different cursive scripts in the north and south of Egypt (Jansen-Winkeln 2000:10, n. 39; Leahy 1985:59). Such phenomena pose questions regarding the extent to which the Libyans were assimilated into Egyptian society and culture, and the degree to which they promoted change (Jansen-Winkeln 2000:4–3; Taylor 2000:346). Throughout this period other changes are manifest in Egyptian society (such as a rise in the status of women: Naguib 1990), in religious practices (the development of *mammisiac* religion), in craftsmanship (notably advances in the manufacture of *faience* and metalwork: Bianchi 1990; Hill 2007; Ziegler 1987), and in mortuary practices. It is the last of these areas that forms the subject of this chapter.

### **Attitudes to Death and Analytical Approaches**

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The ancient Egyptians' attitude to death and the afterlife is one of the chief defining aspects of their culture. The written sources point to the existence of varied concepts of death itself, ranging from threatening enemy to welcome homecoming (Assmann 2005:23–234). It was regarded not as the end of human existence, but as a transition to a new state of being. Both the living and the dead simultaneously occupied places in the cosmos, as parts of a social framework in which contact remained possible (Assmann 2005:238). Indeed, the parameters of earthly life were transposed to the afterlife, and the living owed a duty of care to the dead (Assmann 2005:339). Basic human needs – food, drink, comforts, sexual pleasures

– still required to be satisfied. Sustenance could be guaranteed by various methods: through the physical supply of food and drink in the grave, by means of a cult which ensured a regular replenishment of offerings, or by the provision of magical substitutes (models and images). Texts also reveal that one's place in the earthly society was to be perpetuated in the next world. Social status, gender, and family or professional affiliations could be defined in the mortuary sphere, primarily by the use of the written word, but also through the spatial arrangement of graves, the structure and materials of which the tomb was made, and the type and quantity of grave goods. As a general principle the community of the dead was physically separated from the dwellings of the living, in a special environment, often – though not invariably – located on the western side of the Nile. Such “mortuary landscapes,” which occur throughout Egypt, were often in use for millennia. Excavations and recording of these spots and the complex patterns of use they reveal can provide the basis for analyses of the societies that created them.

The Egyptians' basic approach to the phenomenon of death was not unique to their culture. What distinguished them from other societies was the investment of huge resources in funerary monuments (Assmann 2005:409), a practice which has been termed the “mausoleum culture” (Baines and Lacovara 2002:7). The ideal involved prominent display in the form of substantial and durable mortuary monuments, usually accompanied by extensive use of text and image. The corpse, before it was placed in the tomb, underwent special treatments which transformed it from a corruptible earthly body to a perfect and enduring eternal one, suitable for the next stage of existence. This stage involved a more penetrating integration into the cosmos than was possible during life on earth. Successful attainment of this goal was thought to be greatly facilitated by the performance of mortuary rituals, by enabling the eternal perpetuation of those rituals, and by personally equipping the individual with an armory of written knowledge and objects of magical use (Assmann 2005:237–406). The importance attached to written word and image accounts for the wealth of statuary, body trappings, papyri, and other “grave goods” which distinguished the elite burial.

The same basic notions of life after death pervaded the whole of society, and the variations between the burial practices of elite and non-elite in Egypt do not appear to point to major differences in belief. Rather they reflect differing levels of expenditure on resources. Through the principle of *pars pro toto* a humble person could have a miniaturized version of the grand sepulcher of a high official: “The basic form of a monumental tomb could be reduced to a tiny false door; mortuary offerings to a couple of drops of water and a prayer, embalming and mummification to a few daubs of oil and some cheap bandages” (Assmann 2005:411).

Because of their costliness, the more conspicuous signs of conformity to this ideal were available only to the elite – always a small proportion of the population (Assmann 2005:409–410; Baines and Lacovara 2002:5). Historically, the attention of Egyptologists has focused on these elite remains to a disproportionate extent, at the expense of the more numerous but less visually impressive traces of humbler mortuary practice, a phenomenon which has been properly criticized as the “tomb problem” (Richards 2005:49–52). To arrive at a well-balanced understanding, it is important to examine not just the elite burials but the full range of

mortuary activity within individual sites and throughout Egypt as a whole (Richards 2005:2, 49). Egyptology as a science has been slow to adopt this approach, and it is only in quite recent years that the picture has begun to change, with mortuary evidence being used to elucidate particular periods and sites. This work involves spatial analyses of cemeteries, plotting the distribution of graves, and quantitative and qualitative analysis of grave goods – the variability of which may permit hypotheses about economy, ethnicity, gender, age, and social status (Bard 1994; Meskell 1999; Richards 2005; Seidlmayer 1990). Such studies have concentrated notably on the burials of the pre-literate era, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom (as represented at the craftsmen's community of Deir el-Medina: Meskell 1999; Smith 1992), since for all of these excavation has been carried out in a systematic fashion, with recording which at least approaches adequacy. There is, unfortunately, a lack of this type of analysis for the first millennium BCE (Richards 2005:73), partly because of the plundering of many of the cemeteries dating to that time and to the often inadequate reporting of such excavation as has been carried out – factors which frustrate attempts to seek potentially meaningful patterns in the data. The difficulty is compounded by the imbalance existing in the archaeological record between the Delta and the Nile Valley, a problem at all periods but a particularly critical one in the Third Intermediate Period, when many important developments were taking place in the north of Egypt, little of which can be traced in the mortuary archaeology (Taylor 2000:331). Apart from the royal necropolis at Tanis, information about burials in the Delta at this time is limited to rare discoveries such as the elite cemetery at Tell el-Balamun (Spencer 1999:70–2, 90, pls. 78–80, 104b; 2003:20–30, pls. 18–30), while the relative abundance of material from Thebes threatens to dominate studies, exacerbating an already distorted picture. Moreover, the range of questions to which answers can be sought is limited by the fact that grave goods appear to have been generally less numerous and less variable in the first millennium BCE than at earlier times (Aston 2003).

For the moment it is most convenient to concentrate on a diachronic approach, looking at the main changes in burial practice which distinguished the Third Intermediate Period from earlier eras. This chapter considers four areas in which change can be observed: royal burials, the use of mortuary landscapes, the treatment of the corpse, and the provision of cult and grave goods.

### **Royal Burials: Isolation and Integration**

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In the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, royal burials represented the maximum investment of resources to enable a single individual to enter the afterlife. The king's burial was monumental, conspicuous, and different from those of his subjects in its architectural form, in the richness of its provisions, and in the religious texts and images with which the ruler was equipped. These factors reflected the distinction which existed between ruler and subject in the earthly life, a distinction which was to continue in the next world. At the same time elements of the royal burial represented an ideal to which others might aspire. Through time there existed a dynamic relationship between king and subject which found expression

in mortuary practice, non-royal individuals progressively gaining access to elements which had previously been restricted to the king (Forman and Quirke 1996:134). An early manifestation of the trend was the “democratization of the afterlife,” which began at the end of the Old Kingdom (Forman and Quirke 1996:65). This involved the non-royal person acquiring the status of “an Osiris” after death and attaining access to certain funerary texts and to kingly attributes which were painted in the object friezes on coffins (Baines and Lacovara 2002:10). The distinctive architectural form of the royal tomb, the pyramid, remained beyond the reach of persons of lower status until the New Kingdom. It was then relinquished by the kings and was taken over by private individuals for their tombs (Baines and Lacovara 2002:10). Despite these “usurpations” of royal prerogatives, the boundary between ruler and subject was maintained. Thus in the New Kingdom, the king’s posthumous destiny was to be alone united with the sun god in his journeys, as expressed in the texts and images of the royal Books of the Netherworld, a source not routinely available to his subjects at that time.

During the New Kingdom the body of each pharaoh was buried separately in an elaborate rock-cut tomb in the Valley of the Kings (Hornung 1990). Although the valley formed part of a larger mortuary landscape, the Theban necropolis, access to it was restricted. The royal tombs had no architectural superstructure as had the earlier pyramids, but the mountainous peak of el-Qurn (or Qurnet Murai), which dominated the Valley, may have served as a collective “natural pyramid” (Hornung 1990:26–27). The Books of the Netherworld, which detailed and magically enacted the dead king’s participation in the sun god’s cyclical journey of rejuvenation, were carved and painted on the tomb walls, on the shrines, and on the sarcophagi inside (Hornung 1999). The cult of the ruler was maintained in a structure called a “Mansion of Millions of Years” (conventionally referred to by Egyptologists as a “mortuary temple”) which was physically separate from the burial place, and which had often begun to function during the king’s lifetime (Haeny 1997). Queens and royal children were buried in less elaborate tombs (sometimes in collective sepulchers such as tomb 5 in the Valley of the Kings, made for the children of Ramesses II: Weeks 2006) and, exceptionally, in the tomb of the king himself. At this time the elite members of society were accommodated in rock-cut burial shafts with cult chapels above (as at Thebes) or in temple-style tombs (as at Saqqara). The cult place and burial place for the king’s subjects were thus united; religious texts and images for the elite were drawn chiefly from the Formulae for Going Out by Day (popularly known today as the “Book of the Dead”), a source not extensively used for kings. Officials might be buried at the place where they had held office, at the royal residence, or in their town of origin. Sub-elites had simple burials without a conspicuous cult setting, at the place of their abode and often in part of the same mortuary landscape as persons of higher status.

Only a few kings’ tombs of the Third Intermediate Period are known, but they exemplify a new pattern. The royal necropolis of Tanis, excavated by Pierre Montet, yielded substantial remains of the burials of several pharaohs of the 21st and 22nd Dynasties, together with those of some of their courtiers and relatives (Montet 1947–1960). These tombs and their contents illustrate the key changes which had affected royal burials since the New Kingdom (Lull 2002). The tombs

are situated not in a distinct “mortuary landscape,” but in the settlement at Tanis, and within the enclosure wall of a major cult temple, that of Amun (the tombs lie in the southwest corner of the precinct, to the right of the entrance to the temple). The tombs were not separate units but formed groups, having been perhaps originally planned as family sepulchers for related rulers. Architecturally they are not distinguished either by massive scale or by monumental form, being much less imposing than previous royal tombs, although a large mudbrick enclosure of undetermined form was built around them in the reign of Sheshonq III (Brissaud 1987:16–18, 25). The only portions of the individual tombs to survive are the subterranean burial chambers, and these were not rock-hewn but built of stone blocks because of the difficulty of reaching workable bedrock in the Delta terrain. The superstructures, now destroyed but probably comprising a pylon gateway with a small courtyard and chapel, appear to have been located directly above the burial chambers. Royal cult place and burial place were thus once more united, as they had been in the pyramid complexes of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, breaking with the tradition of the New Kingdom, in which the cult was maintained in a physically separate temple.

Changes in the siting and architecture of the royal tombs were matched by innovations in the manner of their occupation and provisioning. The king’s burial place was now no longer reserved to him alone; the tomb of Psusennes I at Tanis had twin sepulchral chambers, intended for the king and queen (the latter apartment was later occupied by Psusennes’ successor, King Amenemope), and high-ranking members of the court were accommodated in adjacent chambers. The mortuary realm thus reflected the contemporary situation in the world of the living, where the distinction between king and subject was diminishing. Changes also affected the religious interpretation of the royal burial place. The extensive passages and chambers of the New Kingdom royal tombs had mirrored the sun’s nocturnal journey, culminating in the burial chamber, where the rebirth of the solar deity and the king took place, as indicated in the texts and images on the walls. The comparatively tiny Tanite tombs do not attempt to reproduce this narrative, either in their architectural layout or in the images and texts they contain. Most of the great compositions of the New Kingdom (the books of Gates and Caverns and the Litany of Ra) are absent, though there are extracts from the *Amduat* and the *Book of the Earth*. A further departure from precedent is seen in the greater prominence of the *Book of the Dead* in the royal tombs, a notable innovation being the depiction of the weighing of the heart of the king (from spell 125), a scene usual in non-royal tombs of the New Kingdom but never employed previously in that of a pharaoh (Lull 2002:254–247). Not only are the king’s funerary texts a pale reflection of those of the New Kingdom, the extracts which he adopts are also found on the coffins of non-royal persons, as exemplified by the painting of a scene from the *Book of the Earth* on a priest’s cartonnage case (Quibell 1898:pl. 28). It is striking that no new royal mortuary texts are introduced to maintain the distinction of the king from his subjects.

Finally, although the bodies of the 21st- and 22nd-Dynasty kings were mummified and provided with funerary masks, amulets, and jewelry broadly similar to those of the New Kingdom, the range of grave goods placed in the tombs was much reduced. Many items of burial equipment, from stone sarcophagi to small

amulets and pectorals, were recycled pieces which had been extracted from earlier burials for reuse. All this suggests not only a shortage of material resources but also a weakening of the ideological basis of the royal burial. The only really striking innovation of the time in this respect is the intensified linking of the dead person with the god Sokar-Osiris, as manifested in the introduction of anthropoid coffins with falcon heads, attested for Sheshonq II and Takelot I at Tanis, and also for the high priest and “king” Harsiese, buried at Medinet Habu (Hölscher 1954:8–10).

Besides the necropolis at Tanis there are few remains of royal burials of the Third Intermediate Period. The only identifiable ones of which physical traces survive are a queen’s tomb at Leontopolis, the tomb of “King” Harsiese at Medinet Habu, and the sepulchral chapels of the God’s Wives of Amun at the same site (Hölscher 1954:8–10, 17–30; Lull 2002:165–168, 170–173). The Medinet Habu tombs are located within the temple precinct, beside the processional axis, as at Tanis. In the 22nd Dynasty some persons of high status also had burials which reflected the royal model. Sheshonq, son of Osorkon II, and his descendants were buried in stone-built tombs erected close to the enclosure wall of the temple of Ptah at Memphis (Badawi 1957). At Tell el-Balamun, in the Delta, other high-ranking (but not royal) individuals were interred in a group of tombs close to the enclosure wall of the main temple, and two of these were even provided with falcon-headed coffins (Spencer 1999:70–72, 90; 2003: 20–30). Though such instances are rare, they may once have been commoner in the Delta, where preservation of organic remains is poor. Yet even such evidence as we have points clearly towards the blurring of distinction between royal and high elite burials. It would appear, then, that the physical isolation of the royal tomb was counterbalanced by a closer integration of the king’s person among his subjects.

### **Mortuary Landscapes: Continuity, Adaptation, Management**

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The extent to which non-royal persons trespassed on the funerary prerogatives of the king should not be exaggerated, however. The majority of elite individuals, as well as those of humbler status, found burial in one of the cemeteries, or “mortuary landscapes,” which were associated with every major settlement, and also with many minor ones. Since these sites were often in use for millennia, their structures and patterns of use were shaped by a wide range of factors.

The location of burials could reflect the hierarchy of the living: “A necropolis was a community in death, where the distribution and architecture of tombs partially modelled elite organization” (Baines and Lacovara 2002:9). Examples of this concept include the ranks of prefabricated court mastabas in the 4th-Dynasty cemetery beside the Great Pyramid at Giza, and the arrangements in provincial cemeteries such as that at Bersha, where the subordinates of Middle Kingdom governors were interred in subsidiary graves “at the feet of their lord.” This “hierarchical” distribution could also be reflected in the allotting of zones of a cemetery to persons of a particular social status, as at Beni Hasan. Sometimes persons who held the same occupation might be buried in a particular place (Baines and Lacovara 2002:9). Arrangements of tombs could also reflect family connections,

the grave of one important ancestral figure “attracting” the burials of relatives and descendants. Tombs or shrines of particularly venerated individuals likewise formed foci for burials, as exemplified by the Middle Kingdom shrines close to the cult place of Heqaib at Elephantine (Baines and Lacovara 2002:9). Even more powerful were the influence of temples or the settings for regular religious festivals. Thus mortuary chapels were erected at Abydos close to the Osiris temple, while 18th-Dynasty officials buried at Thebes located their tombs with reference to the mortuary temples of their kings (Helck 1962; Kampp-Seyfried 2003: 2) or to the cult temples of Karnak across the river. At different times, access to certain areas of a necropolis would be restricted (Baines and Lacovara 2002:19–20), helping to concentrate burials elsewhere. With the passage of time there was an ever-increasing need to adapt to the pre-existing landscape and to react to prevailing economic pressures. This led to the frequent reuse of older tombs, either by adding new burial chambers or by taking over looted ones (or both), and the “infilling” of unused space between existing graves or monuments. The development of every cemetery was potentially controlled by some or all of these factors.

For the Third Intermediate Period, the Theban necropolis is the only mortuary landscape for which anything approaching a complete picture exists. Extending along the desert edge for approximately 3 km, it is typical of many burial locations in that different areas were preferred at different periods. Patterns of use at Thebes were rendered more complex than elsewhere because the site incorporated several discrete precincts of royal burials and numerous sites of cult activity. In addition some spots in the necropolis acted as administrative centers. These places served both to attract and to repel burials at different times.

In the Third Intermediate Period, cult places exerted a particularly strong influence on the siting of burials. At Thebes, as at Tanis and Memphis, persons of the highest status were buried within or close to temple complexes. During the first phase of the period, the 21st Dynasty, the most favoured spot was the bay of Deir el-Bahri, in which stood the temples of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, and Hatshepsut (Niwinski 1988). The importance of the place lay in its being the focus of the cult of Hathor, protectress of the Theban necropolis, and the setting for the key events of the annual Festival of the Valley (Naguib 1990:246). High-status burials were placed in tombs of earlier date or in newly cut but undecorated sepulchers in the cliffs near the temples, though not within the enclosure of that of Hatshepsut (Niwinski 1988:28–29). These included the bodies of many members of the ruling family, including “King” Pinedjem I and his descendants, and numerous other individuals of the Theban clergy. However, the concentration of burials at Deir el-Bahri seems to have occurred mainly in the later years of the 21st Dynasty and to have been related to a reorganization of the Theban necropolis which involved the gathering of mummies of high-status individuals from various other locations (Niwinski 1988:26, 29).

In the 22nd Dynasty, the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of Ramesses II, became the focal point for high-status burials at Thebes (Nelson 2003; Quibell 1898). Within the enclosure of the temple and in adjacent areas of the necropolis many new tombs were constructed. Unfortunately, robbery and poor preservation have wrought havoc, making it hard to recover details, but it is apparent that the tombs possessed brick-built chapels, some with stone fittings and internal



decoration, and beneath, shafts leading to small burial chambers containing usually only two interments (Quibell 1898). It is noteworthy that these tombs did not respect the integrity of the New Kingdom monument which sheltered them; there was substantial remodeling of the temple in order to accommodate the tombs there (Nelson 2003:90–92). During the 22nd Dynasty the temple enclosure of Medinet Habu also came into use as a spot for elite burials. Here were constructed the tombs of Harsiese, the high priest of Amun who adopted kingly status, and others for the God's Wives of Amun, as mentioned above (Hölscher 1954:8–10, 17–30). They were located before the entrance pylon of the main temple, beside the processional way, as had been the royal tombs at Tanis. High-status burials continued to be made at Medinet Habu in the 25th and 26th Dynasties, and during the same period the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri acquired renewed importance as a burial place for the Theban elite (Sheikholeslami 2003).

Throughout the whole of the Third Intermediate Period other persons of official rank were buried in the old rock-cut tombs of the Middle and New Kingdoms in the cliffs facing the river. New shafts were sunk in the courtyards of these tombs and inside the cult chapels; these shafts again led to small chambers accommodating only two or three burials. Above ground there was little visible trace that these tombs were in current occupation. No significant alterations were made to the original wall decoration in the chapels, but sometimes brick structures were added, containing wooden stelae to mark the cult setting for the new occupants (Winlock 1922:32).

Since few tomb superstructures from this period survive at Thebes, the identity of the persons buried is usually only accessible from inscriptions on the coffins or the few other objects placed in the burial chamber. Thanks largely to the uncontrolled exploitation of the necropolis to form collections of antiquities in the early nineteenth century, it is difficult to reconstruct original assemblages and to deduce the principles by which the burials were grouped. Family association is the most clearly demonstrable, with husband and wife seemingly the basic unit, sometimes with children in the same burial place (Carnarvon and Carter 1912:24–26; Habachi 1958:338–345). In some reused tombs, four or more generations of one family were buried successively (Schiaparelli 1924:185–205). In the Deir el-Bahri temple, members of the powerful clans of Montemhat, Besenmut, and related families were interred for many generations, apparently in small groups of three or four, each in separate chambers located beneath the temple floors, as though the monument acted as a gigantic tomb complex (Sheikholeslami 2003:136). This spot, indeed, perhaps succeeded the Ramesseum as the chief focus for burials of the highest elite, since in both places persons related to the royal families of the time were buried.

It is difficult to discover the rationale underlying the location of burials in older tombs. There is no evidence from any New Kingdom tomb at Thebes to indicate that the later occupants were related to the original owners (though this possibility cannot be excluded). In the Late and Ptolemaic periods, access to existing sepulchres was controlled by a necropolis administration, of whom the *wsh-mw*, or “choachytes,” are perhaps the best-documented officials (Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:200–202). Besides caring for the mummies entrusted to them, these officials were responsible for providing tombs, either for building them or for managing

the reuse of older sepulchres which had been partitioned among different families. The archaeological finding of family group burials of the fourth to third centuries BCE, reusing tombs such as those of Ankh-hor (TT 414), bears this out (Vleeming 1995:251). Although the archives of the choachytes do not stretch as far back as the Third Intermediate Period, it is a reasonable deduction that a similar organization existed then (Strudwick 2003:185). Substantial family-based burial groups dating to the 25th Dynasty and probably even earlier have been found in older tombs, notably those of two 20th-Dynasty princes in the Valley of the Queens (Schiaparelli 1924:185–205)

Burials did not always remain undisturbed in their tombs. Although an eternal and immutable burial may have been regarded as the ideal, in practice interments were moved from place to place and sometimes gathered into communal tombs (Baines and Lacovara 2002:25). This was probably a regular feature of necropolis management, but it is one which written sources say little about. The placing of large numbers of individuals in particular tombs is often termed “mass burial” and is regarded as characteristic of the Third Intermediate Period (Jansen-Winkel 2000:9). However, it is important to distinguish the focusing of large numbers of burials in one place over a short period from long-term accumulation over several generations. Many of the group burials of this period were probably assembled gradually (as were those of the Montemhat and Besenmut families at Deir el-Bahri). At Thebes the only convincing cases of real “mass burial” (i.e. the simultaneous interment of large groups) in this period are the caches of the late 21st and early 22nd Dynasties. The “Royal Cache” at Deir el-Bahri seems to be the result of a major reorganization of the Theban necropolis, involving the official dismantling of the royal burials of the New Kingdom and the reinterment of the mummies in a few easily guarded spots – a process which, for once, is backed up by written sources (Jansen-Winkel 1995; Reeves 1990). Into this cache were also placed the bodies of many members of the Theban ruling elite of the 21st Dynasty, while other members of the Amun clergy were placed in the tomb known as Bab el-Gasus (the “Second Cache”), having perhaps been gathered from various tombs in other parts of the necropolis (Niwinski 1988:28–29). After the beginning of the 22nd Dynasty there is not much evidence at Thebes for the creation of caches in consequence of the clearance of older tombs. There are signs, slight but telling, that many elite burials from the 22nd Dynasty onwards remained undisturbed to the end of the Pharaonic period and even into the early nineteenth century. This suggests that an efficient cemetery organization may have been operating at Thebes throughout much of the Third Intermediate Period.

Largely missing from the picture at Thebes (and most other sites) is knowledge of the burials of non-elite persons. Nineteenth-century accounts mention tombs filled with large numbers of bodies, wrapped but without grave goods, and these possibly represent some of the missing element of the population, but they were not reported in detail and cannot be dated securely. More reliably dated to the Third Intermediate Period are surface burials in the sand which have been found close to foci of higher-status interment, such as the bodies in simple coffins discovered on the terraces at Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el-Bahri (Steindorff 1949).

The Memphite necropolis, which is so rich in burials of the Old Kingdom, New Kingdom, and Late Period, has yielded remarkably little of the Third Intermediate

Period. At Memphis itself is the small group of tombs of very high-status persons, mentioned above, which were built close to the enclosure wall of the great Ptah temple. But it is only at Saqqara that larger numbers of burials have been attributed to this period, and the dating of many even of these is uncertain, on account of the meager grave goods and simple coffins provided for the dead (Raven 1991, 2001:11–12). Clearer evidence of mortuary activity from this period has been found in the region of the Fayum entrance. This area, dominated by the city of Herakleopolis Magna and the frontier town of el-Hiba, was a major military and administrative focus in the Third Intermediate Period. The cemeteries reflect this, and offer instructive parallels to mortuary activity elsewhere. At Herakleopolis itself stone-chambered tombs for elite individuals of the 22nd Dynasty were built within the city (Perez-Die and Vernus 1992:20, 39–77, fig. 11–28, Lam V–VIa, XIII–XXVI). Third Intermediate Period burials have also been found at the neighboring sites of Lahun and Sedment, often reoccupying older tombs (Naville 1894:13–14, pls. VII–IX, XI; Petrie 1890: pls. XXIV–XXVI; 1891: 24–28, pls. XXVIII–XXIX). It is not clear whether the persons buried here lived in Herakleopolis itself or in smaller peripheral settlements. There are signs of similar mortuary activity at el-Hiba, but here only a few Third Intermediate burials have been identified; others perhaps remain to be found or have been destroyed by later reoccupation. At Meidum, north of the Fayum entrance, the Old Kingdom royal monuments which were a conspicuous feature of the cemetery became a magnet for burials of the 22nd Dynasty and later periods, which have been found among the debris of the pyramid face and in the brickwork of the mastaba of Nefermaat (Petrie et al. 1910:22, 37, pl. 28). Other Old Kingdom tombs there were also reused at this time (Petrie et al. 1910:22, 24, 35).

A rare instance of a well-recorded “poor” cemetery of the Third Intermediate Period is that of Matmar, located on the east bank of the Nile south of Asyut (Brunton 1948:73–90). Here a long series of burials from the Predynastic to Coptic eras stretched along the desert edge as far south as Qau. At Matmar itself over five hundred graves of the 22nd–25th Dynasties were closely packed in one spot, and most were found to be undisturbed. The graves were simple pits, the bodies showing few traces of mummification, and grave goods were predominantly beads and amulets. Although these factors suggest that the dead were of relatively low status, it is noticeable that they were buried separately and not in “mass graves.”

### **Treatment of the Body**

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For millennia the physical body was central to Egyptian concepts of the afterlife. Formal disposal of dead bodies can be traced back in the Nile Valley as far as 55,000 BCE. A diversity of special treatments of the corpse begins to be attested about 3500 BCE and developed over the following millennia. From about 2500 BCE onwards, written sources come to our aid, providing insight into the motivations underlying the formal treatment of the dead. These sources indicate that the individual was conceived of as a composite of different aspects, including the physical body and the non-physical *ka* and *ba*. The connectivity between these

aspects was broken at death and had to be restored for existence to continue. Since the human form was the physical base and the focal point for all the aspects of existence, it had to be transformed into a new kind of body in order to continue its role (Assmann 2005).

The preparation of the corpse for this transformation involved a series of operations (Taylor 2001:46–91). First came purification – in practice the purging of the body of corruption products. This required surgical treatment – the opening of the body to extract perishable internal organs – and desiccation to remove all the fluid content and render it sterile, without the possibility of bacterial activity to enable decomposition. After these processes, the corpse consisted of little more than skin, bone, hair, and muscle tissue. Next came a “rebuilding” (Assmann 2005): filling the cavities with linen, sawdust, lichen, or resin, anointing the surface, and performing cosmetic treatments. Some of the materials used were believed to have magical qualities and helped to confer divine status on the deceased. Texts emphasize the divine nature of the bodily members of the individual, and indicate that at the end of the process he had become wholly divine. The only internal organ which was routinely left *in situ* was the heart, regarded as the centre of the individual’s being. Liver, lungs, stomach, intestines, and sometimes kidneys were separately preserved and were usually deposited in canopic jars or a chest, placed in the grave near the body. In the final stages of preparation the body was wrapped in layers of linen and carefully fashioned into an eternal image, with an idealized mask covering the head. This form would be reanimated on the day of burial by means of the ritual of “Opening the Mouth”; its appearance was a visible declaration of the divine status which the individual had thereby attained.

The time and resources which were devoted to this treatment varied. At one end of the spectrum was a simple, non-invasive drying and wrapping of the corpse, which probably took only a few days. The more elaborate procedures could occupy seventy days, a canonical time-span which was probably dictated less by practical necessity than by astronomical phenomena which were associated with the notion of rebirth (Hornung 1990:136). It is this process which is now termed “mummification” (a word which is applied loosely to a variety of treatments of the corpse and which does not correspond directly to any ancient Egyptian term). Like the structure of the tomb and its contents, the treatment of the body could be simplified to meet the availability of resources, without apparent detriment to the dead person’s posthumous existence. Herodotus’ account of mummification, written in the fifth century BCE, indicates that it was chiefly the purification and rebuilding parts of the procedure that were simplified to reduce cost, and archaeological evidence bears this out – many bodies are found not to have been eviscerated and lack oils and resins, yet have usually undergone wrapping and fashioning into the canonical form. At most periods, it seems, the external appearance of the treated body was the most crucial desideratum; as with tomb fittings and grave goods, a simulacrum could be substituted for the real thing.

In the Third Intermediate Period the treatment of elite bodies is distinguished by innovations. Elliot Smith’s examination of bodies of the 21st-Dynasty priests of Amun from Thebes revealed a range of new treatments which modified and

supplemented the basic process just mentioned (Smith 1906). Packing materials, such as linen, mud, and sand, were inserted beneath the skin through openings to restore substance to the limbs and face (usually shrunken and distorted through the loss of subcutaneous fats during the desiccation process). Elaborate cosmetic treatments were applied to the surface of the body; artificial eyes were inserted into the orbits and the eyelids raised to make the deceased appear alive and conscious; the skin was painted red for men and yellow for women (reflecting iconographic conventions); and the hair was carefully adorned, sometimes with extensions. The organs extracted from the abdomen and thorax were returned to the body cavity in wrapped bundles, usually accompanied by wax figures of protective deities. The wrappings of the body were elaborate but a mask was usually omitted, except in burials of the highest elite.

From these changes it is apparent that restoring the physical integrity of the corpse had assumed a greater importance than before. There was now a more emphatic connection between the actual corpse within the wrappings and the eternal image of the transfigured deceased. The coloring of the skin recalls the painted outer surface of earlier funerary statues (an item now rarely supplied in elite burials). The eternal image was now coincident with the actual surface of the corpse, and the wrappings served to conceal this image, not to act as its outer layer. There is here a change from earlier practice where the iconography of the rejuvenated individual was represented by the body's outer trappings, notably by the mask placed over its head. The function of the mask was not only to effect the divinization of the bodily members, it also enabled the wearer to see (Assmann 2005). It is probably significant that these masks, which were a regular feature of elite burials in the New Kingdom, became a rarity in the Third Intermediate Period, when they were provided chiefly for the kings buried at Tanis and persons of very high status such as the army commander *Wendjebauendjed*. The ability to see was fulfilled instead by the innovation of placing artificial eyes under the eyelids. These moves, together with the new custom of returning the preserved viscera to the chest cavity, perhaps reflect a desire to place all crucial bodily organs under the direct control of the person. The motivations for these changes are not immediately apparent from written sources, and can only be speculated on. Was the greater self-sufficiency given to the dead a measure of compensation for the decline in the practice of mortuary ritual at the tomb (below)? Was there also a practical reason for the placing of all crucial organs within the body – to prevent their loss in the event of the mummy being transferred from one resting place to another, a phenomenon characteristic of the time?

In the 22nd Dynasty many of the methods just described continued in use for elite burials, but with the passage of time features such as the subcutaneous packing and the coloration of the skin were abandoned. Moreover in the 25th Dynasty the secreting of the organs within the body cavity began to give way to placing them either in canopic jars again or in packages on the thighs, within the wrappings. All of this suggests a return to earlier principles. The idealized image of the resurrected deceased appears to have been transferred once more from the actual surface of the corpse to the external trappings. In the 22nd Dynasty this outer layer of the mummy was often a cartonnage case. Fabricated from sheets of linen impregnated with glue and plaster, this type of case was rather like a mask

extended to cover the whole body. It served simultaneously as the inner coffin and the outer surface of the mummy.

In sub-elite burials a much simpler treatment of the body is attested throughout the Third Intermediate Period. Of over five hundred bodies excavated at Matmar only four revealed any traces of mummification, and this was confined to the packing of the thoracic and pelvic cavities (Brunton 1948:80). There were no signs of the more elaborate treatments mentioned above. Bodies of the 22nd–25th Dynasties found by Petrie at Lahun were wrapped but had few trappings, and the bandages contained only “black dust and bones” (Petrie 1891:28), suggesting that no formal preservation had taken place. Low-status bodies of the same general period interred in New Kingdom tombs at Saqqara also appeared to have been merely wrapped without either excerebration or evisceration (Walker in Raven 1991:69–71). In all these instances, the wrappings alone provide any semblance of formal treatment, and in this the lower-status people of the Third Intermediate Period do not differ significantly from their counterparts in other periods. This may suggest that the fluctuating customs of body treatment among the elite did not penetrate to them.

### Cult and Grave Goods

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The provision for a mortuary cult was at all periods an important aspect of preparations for the afterlife. Food and drink were often placed in the tomb, but these were only tokens and could not supply the deceased in perpetuity. Ideally, a cult place was required – a chapel above the burial chamber or nearby, in which the relatives of the deceased would present offerings to a statue which embodied the *ka* of the owner. Alternatively the cult could be maintained via the priests of the local temple or at a memorial chapel, separate from the tomb (Baines and Lacovara 2002:8). Before the first millennium BCE, however, the tomb was the principal setting for the cult, and should relatives or priests cease to perform the necessary rituals, the deceased was equipped with the means to perpetuate his own cult through the media of written word, images, and models.

After the New Kingdom, the role of the tomb as the chief focus of the mortuary cult diminished. The tombs themselves were less conspicuous and relatively few possessed a dedicated cult place. Some high-status individuals interred at the Ramesseum in the 22nd Dynasty had chapels with wall decoration and an offering table (Quibell 1898:8), but these were rare. Even rarer were tomb statues to serve as the focus for the mortuary cult, though there is evidence that these were sometimes made of mud and hence may not all have survived (Nelson 2003:91). For most persons of rank who were buried at Thebes at this time the paraphernalia of cult was reduced to a small wooden stela bearing a painted scene. These show the deceased, usually without spouse or other relatives, offering directly to Ra-Horakhty (or, less often, to Osiris), as though to emphasize that the well-being of the dead now depended more on the gods than on the living (Leprohon 1988:165). In keeping with this, the temples of the gods now assumed a more prominent role as the setting for the cult of the dead, a change that is manifested in the increased number of statues representing non-royal persons that were set up in

the temple courtyards from the 22nd Dynasty onwards. As their inscriptions and iconography reveal, these statues were not merely votive in function but were intended to serve as recipients of mortuary offerings.

This shift of emphasis away from the tomb is paralleled in the changing character of the grave goods which were buried with the dead. In earlier periods a wide range of items could be provided. Typical classes of grave goods found in the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms include coffins, canopic containers, shabtis, papyri, models, amulets, jewelry, clothing, furniture, cosmetic items, professional tools, weapons, games, musical instruments, and food and drink (Smith 1992). Variability in the range of goods that were provided, and in their number and quality, has allowed deductions to be made about the social and economic status of the dead, and can permit investigation of issues such as individual choice in the selection of items for the grave (Meskell 1998: 366). In the Third Intermediate Period the range of grave goods was much reduced, even for the elite. Provisions (food and drink) are rarely found, depriving the archaeologist of the pottery containers which at other periods are such valuable indicators of date and which form the basis for quantitative analyses. Also absent now were domestic and professional goods and most objects of "daily life." The majority of burials contain only those items which were made specifically to be deposited in the grave (Richards 2005:85): coffins, and for the elite, canopic containers, shabtis, an Osirian figure, funerary papyri, and a stela. This contraction of the burial outfit may not necessarily imply economic impoverishment. The images and texts which appear on the funerary objects of the first millennium BCE perhaps to some extent obviated the need for other personal items which had customarily been used to confirm the identity of the deceased and to assist their passage to the afterlife (Pinch 2003:443).

This dramatic simplification of the burial ensemble hampers attempts to trace social patterning through variability. In elite burials little qualitative difference can be observed between the grave goods of men and women, although Quibell commented on an apparent variation in the quality of shabtis in Theban pair burials, with the poorer ones allotted to the wife (Quibell 1898:9–10). Such evidence must be treated with caution; uniformity in the quality of coffins made for men and women has also been observed for the Middle Kingdom (Willems 1988:50–51). Yet when viewed from a diachronic perspective, the Third Intermediate Period does appear to display a more consistent equality of mortuary provisions for males and females. High-status women now had their own stelae and funerary papyri, instead of having to "share" those made for their husbands, as in the New Kingdom (Niwinski 1989:17; Smith 1992:201). Quantitatively, the coffins designed for women appear to be no less numerous than those made for men (a contrast to the situation in the Middle Kingdom: Willems 1988:51), and they were also closely similar to those of men in shape, material, and iconography.

If social patterning is difficult to recognize from the available evidence, changes can be observed in the ideological status of the objects which were still provided. As the decoration of tombs became rarer, the coffin came to bear the greatest cargo of religious iconography and texts for the dead (Niwinski 1988:15, 18). Coffins provide an index of change which pervades all levels of society. The silver inner coffin of the 21st-Dynasty king Psusennes I, found at Tanis, resembles that

of Tutankhamun in its traditional design, with a human face and feather-patterned body, but that of Sheshonq II, made a hundred years later, looks radically different. The human face of the transfigured king has been replaced by a falcon head, suggesting an identification with Sokar-Osiris, while the feathered design of the body is confined to borders framing figured scenes of the sun god and other deities. The coffins made for the non-royal elite of the early Third Intermediate Period (21st Dynasty) were usually anthropoid in shape, and of wood. Their surfaces were covered, inside and out, with a profusion of small scenes, figures of deities and religious emblems, the principal theme being that of the unity of the gods Ra and Osiris as the key to resurrection (Niwinski 1988: 15). In the arrangement of these images in compartments and long strips, the coffins display an affinity with the tomb chapels and funerary papyri of the late New Kingdom, and the desire to condense a large amount of material into a limited space is also reflected in the complex images used, which frequently convey meaning on several levels. In the 22nd Dynasty, major changes in coffin design are clearly traceable. Solar and Osirian mythology is still alluded to, but the profusion of small images is replaced by simpler designs, and contrasting color schemes play a stronger role than before. The mummy is encased in an envelope of cartonage, painted and sometimes gilded, which acts as the external surface of the transfigured deceased. The depiction of the maternal sky goddess Nut on the interior surfaces of the wooden coffins which enclosed the mummy emphasized the notion that the coffin projected around the deceased a personal microcosm, in which he played the role of the creator god about to emerge from the womb of the sky goddess. The change of designs from the 21st to the 22nd Dynasty echoes that noted above in the coffins of the kings buried at Tanis, and raises the possibility that new aspects of mortuary practice were developing in the Delta before spreading southwards into Upper Egypt (Taylor 2003:104).

The carefully designed programs of images on coffins find their counterpart in the decline of text in the mortuary world of the Third Intermediate Period. In earlier times the elite burial made prominent use of text, inscribed on the walls of the funerary monument, on stelae, coffins, and grave goods, including papyri. These texts were of two main types, defined by Assmann as mortuary literature and mortuary liturgies, their roles being respectively to equip the tomb owner with knowledge for his personal use, and to perpetuate desired cult acts and destinies through the agency of the written words themselves (Assmann 2005:238). In the mid-eleventh to mid-ninth centuries BCE, elite burials still contained texts on papyri. Two rolls were provided, one containing selections from the Book of the Dead, the other consisting of a varied assemblage of images and texts from different compositions. When compared with the lengthy Books of the Dead of the New Kingdom, many of these texts are brief, and after about 850 BCE the custom of providing them on papyri ended, and would not be resumed until the seventh century. A shadow of the tradition survived through the medium of coffin inscriptions, but even the finest specimens from Thebes carry little beyond repetitive formulae requesting offerings. The few specific spells from the Book of the Dead on coffins are full of errors and omissions. Outside Thebes, access to inscriptional material was apparently even more limited. Coffins from Lahun show well-written inscriptions for elite owners (Petrie 1890:21–23, pl. XXV) but



the content of the texts is formulaic and often partially unintelligible (Petrie 1891:26–27). Does this reflect indifference to tradition or a loss of reliable textual source material? The latter is perhaps less likely since a vigorous revival of the funerary text tradition began in the 25th Dynasty.

In view of the fact that many classes of funerary equipment disappeared from use at this period, it is somewhat surprising that canopic jars continued to be provided in many elite burials, particularly since the custom of replacing the embalmed viscera within the body had rendered the jars functionally redundant. Sets of empty jars, or even dummy jars carved of stone and wood, have often been found, inscribed with the owner's name and titles (Taylor 2001:73). The explanation may lie in a perception that four jars of this shape were an essential part of a properly appointed burial and therefore should not be omitted. It is perhaps the only instance in this period of the provision of a magical substitute, and raises the possibility that the dummy jars played a part in the burial ritual of which we have no other record.

Besides coffins and canopic jars, the item of burial equipment which remained most consistently in use at this time was the shabti, but this also underwent changes. In the late New Kingdom, thirty to forty shabtis would have been considered a large supply for one person, but in the 21st Dynasty the standard number increased to 401 (365 “workers” – one for each day in the year – plus thirty-six overseers to control every gang of ten) (Schneider 1977:I, 319–320). To meet this demand the figures were now regularly mass-produced in faience or pottery and the quality of the individual statuettes declined. The figures continued, as before, to bear the name of their possessor, but there was a subtle difference. The inscribed name was now a stamp of ownership, not an indication of identity. Whereas earlier shabtis functioned as substitutes for their owner and in some sense enshrined the being of that individual, like a tomb statue, those of the Third Intermediate Period were “depersonalized,” as evidenced by their designation as *hmw*, “servants” or “slaves” (Schneider 1977:I, 319–330). As mere chattels of their master they were no longer eternal images of the deceased in his/her divine state. This repositioning may explain a change in the form of the boxes used to house the shabtis. Those which were used in the later New Kingdom were shaped like shrines, appropriate for images of the transfigured deceased; but in the Third Intermediate Period the tops of the end-boards were often rounded off, the lids were flat instead of bowed, and the sides fixed vertically instead of inclined (Aston 1994:pl. 4 [6], pl. 5 [1, 5], pl. 6 [1–5]). The intention seems to have been to remove the resemblance to a shrine, while remaining functional – as though to deprive the figures inside of divine status, to which they were not now entitled.

The reduction in the range of grave goods is balanced by a growth in the provision of amulets. Until the end of the New Kingdom the range of amulets placed with the body was limited, but in the 21st and 22nd Dynasties there were a greater variety of amulet types and an increased number of specimens per burial. Deity figures became common, and types of amulet previously restricted to royal burials (such as the headrest) were more widely used. This trend continued and blossomed fully in the Late Period. The amulets which appear in burials during this growth-phase include types made specifically for mortuary use, but also several kinds which appear to have been made to be worn in life: faience figurines and

pieces of jewelry (plaques, rings, etc.) representing deities such as Bastet and Sekhmet in cat and lion form, the dwarf-like Pataikos, associated with childbirth, and also amuletic strings and cowry shells (Quirke 2005:122–123). These objects are found at settlement sites as well as in graves, perhaps suggesting an increasing closeness between the world of the living and the mortuary realm.

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## Conclusion

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The Third Intermediate Period appears as a phase of minimalization in burial customs. The decline of the elite tomb as the principal focus of the mortuary cult and the reduction in the range of grave goods seem to reflect a change in the significance attached to funerary provision, rather than a simple response to economic pressure. The lack of long-term preparation for death contrasts with the practices of earlier periods when mortuary monuments must have been planned and constructed during the eventual owner's lifetime. It has been suggested that this was related to changes in the profile of the population, and more specifically to the influx of Libyans into Egyptian society. Lacking an ancestral tradition of creating permanent monuments for the dead, the Libyan rulers in Egypt can perhaps be said to have neglected mortuary practice (Leahy 1985). There are certainly no conceptual innovations in burial ritual or provision which could be attributed to them, and the picture which the evidence paints is one of mechanical adherence to concepts which were perhaps not fully understood. The lack of development at royal level perhaps deprived the lower strata of society of the aspirational impetus to imitate, leading to stagnation.

It is only in the final phase of the Third Intermediate Period, the 25th Dynasty, that innovation in the mortuary world appears, and it is innovation which depends heavily on a renewal of past traditions. There was a revival of the pyramid form for the burials of rulers (albeit these were located in their Nubian homeland), and elite persons in Egypt were again able to construct grand monumental tombs. The funerary text tradition was reborn and restructured, with the reintroduction of the Pyramid Texts and a new "edition" of the Book of the Dead. Further development is manifested in a continued closeness of mortuary and temple cult. Private statues continued to be set up in temples, while the role of the coffin as funerary image (and counterpart to the temple statue) evolved. Inner coffins represented the divinized deceased with new elements taken from the canons of sculpture (back pillar and plinth), and this iconography was also adapted for shabtis and Osirian statuettes placed in the tomb. These developments marked the completion of a cycle of cultural change. As happened repeatedly in ancient Egypt, the past provided the seed from which new life would grow.

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