

The celestial underworld or mysterious beyond Geography of the Beyond

Far from being obsessed by death, Egyptians hoped “to do everything [they] were accustomed to doing on earth” by thwarting the non-existence of the body and its vital functions.

Different versions of the “afterlife”

The most ancient of known funerary texts—the Pyramid Texts—were written circa 2150 BCE for the sole benefit of the king, who alone was promised eternal glory.

However, after the First Intermediate Period, around 2033 BCE, everyone was entitled to glorious immortality by identifying with the god Osiris. This process was described in the Coffin Texts, chapters of which were included in the “Book for Going Forth by Day,” otherwise known as the Book of the Dead.

Surviving entities

The body itself was not resurrected after death, but some of the deceased’s vital functions could be perpetually regenerated. Upon death, certain entities—the ka and ba—were liberated from the body. Their simultaneous survival in various sectors of the Beyond was an indispensable condition for eternal life, as was preservation of the deceased’s corpse and name.

The body as sanctuary

Survival after death meant preventing the destruction of the body at all costs. It had to remain intact in order to house an individual’s surviving entities when they returned to the world of the living. The technique of mummification, attested since roughly 3100 BCE, was employed to that end right up to the Roman period



Cercueil ext de Sopi

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