CHAPTER 5
EGYPTIAN TEXTS

16: Hieroglyphs, from internal wall, Edfu

Language

“The Gnosis of man[kind] still awaits decipherment in Egypt, it is hidden in her glyphs and symbols… but that Gnosis will never yield its secret to those who persist in interpreting the symbols of the language of the gods into those lower forms [modern languages], forms intended for children [uninitiated] and not for men [Hermetic initiates].” GRS MEAD

We begin our esoteric journey with language itself. Many Mystery School teachers believe that the type of language used by a group of people will determine the way that group will think, act, even their moral outlook. RA Schwaller de Lubicz believed two forms of writing exist and they have their roots in the oldest ‘known’ civilizations on the planet. One is scientific/Aristotle, which evolved from Babylon and Sumeria but gained its greatest use in Greece. They use a rapidly written cursive and are languages that separated the subject and object. This form is common to all Western languages. Aristotle claimed that only reason (intellect, logic, skepticism and the mind) could discover the nature of our reality. Thus all knowledge to this group can be understood by the use of our thinking conscious mind. Our modern world is now dominated by scientific thinking.

The other is the Metaphysical/Pythagorean system that originated in Egypt and uses a form of picture writing. Western thinking has developed the concept that a piece of paper is not a chair, or a human is not a tree. This is the separation of things in an attempt to see what is different. The Eastern minds of Plato, Pythagoras and the Taoists claim, “What is one, is one. What is not-one is also one.” Thus they are looking for what is similar and for a connection of all things, something that is lacking in our modern world. Those that follow the scientific way of looking for what is different will also develop the idea that we can control nature because it and us are different. Pythagoras claimed that true knowledge was based not on the mind, but on revelation from forces in the universe. When one had purified themselves enough, the Gnosis (divine knowing) could enter the true mind (heart).
ancients taught that there is only One, the reason we see things as different is because we are caught up in the illusion of the world. The ancient ways teach us that we are nature, thus the need to get to know and love every part of it for it is just a part of ourselves. All of the techniques taught by the Aristotle school, using the mind to understand the world, would be avoided. This would include even the words used to explain their beliefs.

The Word

"We use not just words, but sounds full of efficiency, for that it's very quality of sound, the very power of the Egyptian names, have in themselves the bringing into act of what is said." Corpus Hermeticum

Words were seen as vital in the ancient world. The Egyptian creation mythology of Hermopolis relates how Tehuti was able to create simply by the sound of his voice. “I am the Eternal, I am Ra…I am that which uttered the word, I am the word.” In the Old Testament God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” St John’s Gospel begins, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” The Indian Upanishads say the world was created with the uttering of the primal sound. The Popul Vuh of the Maya claim there was only “immobility and silence in the darkness…then came the word.” In Guatemala, two gods said a word and immediately the earth was created.” The Nag Hammadi Gnostic text “Origin of the World” claims, “His thought was made complete by the word…and he created an androgynous being by means of the word.” The Book of Mormon in Jacob 4:9 says, “For behold by the power of His word, man came upon the face of the earth.”

The word usually translated into English from the ancient texts as ‘word’ was actually “Logos”, which was used to explain the combined power of words, speech and reason. Thus the word has a far greater meaning than simply the letters placed together to make a sound. Thinking something in the mind has power and bringing that forth using the mouth, combining the concept in the mind with the breath of life allowed for creation. Renaissance alchemist Henry Cornelius Agrippa wrote, “words carry not only the conception of the mind, but also the virtue of the speaker unto the hearers, that often they change not only the hearers but also other bodies and things that have not life, by the virtue of the speaker.” To the ancients the word is actually the spoken ideas of the heart. Thus the words used in creation “Logos” are far different than the words used by the average person. Writing is seen as the last expression of the mind.

Hebrew mystics understand that their alphabet are words of power, and their language is supposed to allow a connection to heaven. The Cabbala claims that speech is the medium of God’s revelation, which makes language itself sacred and an object of mystical contemplation. The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet are considered component parts of a ‘living language of universal light’, and part of the building blocks of creation. Heaven and earth can be connected through words.

A name is a representation of a concept and a material thing. Plato taught that words held the power of the thing. To the ancient mind, nothing existed before the word. Nothing lived until it was named, and once named it could be known. What could not be named did not exist because it could not be known. In Genesis, Adam gave the first names to all things. The symbolic significance is that once you know the name of something you can call upon its true essence. In a sense you are able to become one with that thing. To know the true name of something meant one could parallel creation and call that thing into existence. This is the basis of the discipline often referred to as magic.

The initiates in Egypt had to learn speak with “true sound of voice.” When an Egyptian priest spoke, “he used sound like an artist creating a word picture of marvelous strength and influence.” Every Egyptian (like us) was given a name or “ren.” While a name distinguishes one person from another it also holds a far deeper concept. The name is often considered to be one’s for a lifetime and can be found symbolically encircling a person by a “rope of light” or “infinite thread of eternity” called a cartouche. The rope of light (or life force) circled the name; thus one’s name was infused with energy and would be needed to be protected.

Each of the Neteru (gods) has a specific name and if one could learn that true name they can come in contact with those energies. To know the real name of a Neteru opened the possibility of the power of the Supreme. Come into direct contact with the Neteru and everything can be created or
destroyed. Of course these concepts of the incredible powerful use of words are for masters and high initiates who have learned many of the secrets of the universe. They can use their words as power, as they have learned what power is. To the average man or woman, words are a very different matter.

Knowledge and Words

“Those reading my books would find their organization very simple and clear when, on the contrary, it is unclear and keeps the meanings of its words concealed.” Corpus Hermeticum

Even with the incredible power that words can bring, they are not knowledge and truth. People usually only use words/language today to uphold their beliefs, patterns, and habits that allow them to keep their view of the world. A student of the mysteries knows that there are many views of the world, not just the one that someone believes, thus they will be very careful with the words they use or how they listen to the words of another. One must fully understand that words are not knowledge, but are used by the mystic as a symbol for what they have experienced (for the mystical experience can never be explained). Thus the paradox that words can lead to true knowledge, but are not the knowledge itself. The best way to learn about Switzerland, is by traveling there, while a travel guide (book knowledge and words) can help to provide background and preparations for particular experiences, but only by going there personally can the true wisdom be gained.

In fact (imagine an author writing this) most words are useless. Yet they lead to truth. Those few who have been fortunate enough to train with a real master will understand the following example. During a recent visit, my teacher began to answer my very deep questions of the universe with the most bizarre responses: a 73-year-old man’s hips and Oriental restaurants. When he was finished speaking and retired to his room, my African teacher replied, “did you get all that?” I looked perplexed. “He just answered every one of your questions.” By focusing only on his words, what I believed he was telling me with my mind, I came away empty with nothing. I was reminded that, “it doesn’t matter what he says, it's what you feel.” With that insight I was fortunate to have a second conversation with my teacher that week. This time I ignored what he was saying and instead “listened with my heart.” From a similar talk I now gained feeling, insight and wisdom because I was allowing his words to be a guide to my heart where the true knowledge resides.

A simpler example is when a person says, “I love you.” Taking the words at face value could lead to many problems. It could mean the person loves you, but depending on the tone, physical expressions and body language they could in fact be telling us they hate us. That is the danger of words. It would be better off to look for the feeling, what that person is really trying to convey not the specific words they are using to convey it. Thus when I speak about the magical power of the word, I mean used by those who are trained not only in the power of words themselves, but also in the exact way to use those words to provide knowledge.

Confucius considered that “while words contain genuine meanings which reflect certain absolute truths in the universe, most people have lost contact with these truths and so use language to suit their own convenience. This led, he felt, to lax thinking, erroneous judgments, confused actions and finally to the wrong people acquiring political power.”

The idea in the modern world that words are just symbols is very hard for the average person to agree with. Words have become our lifeline. In our era they have become fixed things, a table is a table. Everything in our world is what it is, they have no inner space, no life and no wisdom. Of course never mind suggesting to someone that physical objects do not really exist at all. That idea could not even be pondered, for the language that is used is for absolutes, thus modern use of words can only take a person to one view of the world. A language made up of pictures, like hieroglyphs, does not have this problem for the sign is immediately understood as a symbol that can convey all sorts of ideas, not just one fixed view.

A mystic knows that words are part of the great mystery of the universe, a universe that is not static and constant but always changing, always unknown thus always a new experience. Those who follow true wisdom are able to use words to help find the hidden meaning in not only the universe but in themselves. For one to accept words as absolutes "is to walk straight into the trap of ignorance and boredom – something which is meaningless and a stupid waste of time and energy."
The Japanese language sees no need for a subject and an object. They won’t say “I see the mountain” but rather “mountain seeing.” The act of seeing includes both aspects of the seer and what is seen.\textsuperscript{xvi} Languages like English add a lot of extra waste to our speech that could be used for other things. Roberto, a Brazilian shaman, taught me about the useless way people use words in English. A “deadline” is literally a line not to be crossed or face death. Every business in North America brings the energy of death to their employees when using this word. By saying “I don’t buy it” to someone of non-western background would likely gain a response that they were not selling anything. The phrase “I was so happy I jumped up and down” is incorrect. Actually we jumped up; the force of gravity brought us down unless we jumped onto something in which case we could have jumped down. Again a picture language is not concerned with these problems.

Hermetic means “sealed” or “tight.” The knowledge of Hermes was transmitted by pictures and symbols, for images could be “sealed in and made airtight.” Words created by letters do not have this quality, “as they are fragile things which lost their energies and changed their meanings, and are essentially unsuitable for transmitting knowledge of secret things.” Words can go wrong and provide the wrong message. A suggestion can be taken as criticism, a joke as an insult. Through a hieroglyphic symbol one gains the opportunity to become one with the picture they are working with.\textsuperscript{xv}

In truth the wisdom of Tehuti comes without words, and cannot be explained by words. Words are merely an attempt by our mystical side to explain the unexplainable. They are best seen as a doorway. The wisdom of Tehuti is Gnosis, the direct experience of wisdom. No one can tell you, no one needs to read it to you or explain it. You have an experience (which can include words of reading a book or hearing someone talk), but something inside without the need of words will respond with a feeling like, yes that is true (as I hope something in you will do after finishing this book). You could also get a revelation while just walking down the street.

However our modern world has been trained to think that if it can not be explained by words, it cannot be true. This is the exact opposite of true wisdom. “True knowledge cannot be turned into words. That knowledge was there for everyone. It was there to be felt, to be used, but not to be explained. Heightened awareness (altered consciousness) was an entrance, but even the entrance cannot be explained.”\textsuperscript{xvi}

I had an experience recently that I wish to share as a poem. “This afternoon I understood how poets could write six pages on a blade of grass. I placed a small stick in the ground to observe the shadow. As I observed the shadow I focused more upon the grass. Soon it became fuller and more alive. I could see the individual blades of grass that grow together in small clusters. The clusters gained an extra strength of colour and beauty. I could definitely feel a sense of love towards not just the grass, but each of the individual blades that I saw. Each blade seemed to sparkle, to offer its own light. What was amazing was the fullness of the strength of the colours and the depth of my personal feeling. As my focus returned to waking consciousness I saw the ground regain its ‘normal’ form. It was not full of bright beautiful grass, as I had just experienced. There were large patches of dirt, trampled down grass, and in fact few of the clusters I had observed. The sense of the grass being alive was gone. Yet in that previous moment, in that instant, all that existed in the whole universe was me and those blades of grass. Of course, in that moment, I myself could have been a blade of grass!”

How can you explain the feeling of seeing every blade of grass as an individual entity? The short poem I wrote on this experience is but a frail attempt at explaining the experience to someone else. However, once this wisdom is brought into our being, it cannot be lost. If it can be lost, then it is not true wisdom. Mystic Al-Ghazi learned this when all of his knowledge, kept as lecture notes were stolen and he replied, “knowledge that can be stolen is not worth having.”\textsuperscript{xvii}

Hieroglyphs
“Even though the writing has been interpreted by Egyptologists, they have little understanding of the thoughts and beliefs expressed in them, as modern English teachers have little understanding of the Hermetic philosophy enshrined in Shakespeare.” John Anthony West\textsuperscript{xviii}

The modern world “should not be too confident of our translations realizing that beneath the surface
In ancient society all over the world are found the strange picture writing known as hieroglyphs. The most famous are found in Egypt, but they are also found with the Mexican Maya, Asia, even in strange tablets discovered on Easter Island. While many today believe the hieroglyphs have been deciphered, this is not the case. Most modern scholars are only beginning to unlock the secrets of the hieroglyphs. The picture symbols are a link to the wisdom of the creation and were thought to be a divine gift from Tehuti, Neteru of wisdom.

The finding of the Rosetta Stone (a Greek tablet inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphs) in 1799 allowed for the beginnings of understanding the Egyptian language. Yet even Jean Francois Champollion, who followed the work of Akerblad and Tomas Young and was able to match modern letters with the Egyptian pictures, did not believe that he had revealed all that hieroglyphs conceal. He was looking for a second meaning to the glyphs, but he died before he could complete this new section of work. Subsequent scholars simply continued his original ideas.

Prior to the glyphs being deciphered most scholars believed that any civilization that was able to produce such incredible architectural wonders as the Egyptians must have had a high degree of knowledge. However, when the texts first began to be deciphered and the language seemed incoherent and unintelligent, the Egyptians were described as stupid. It has only been recently that the concept of Ancient Egypt as an advanced civilization is being looked at seriously.

Hieroglyphs (picture symbols) are the oldest and most important form of writing. In time new writing styles appeared in Egypt: Other Egyptian languages used were: Hieratic (a quick representation of glyphs similar to our writing compared to printing), Demotic (developed from Hieratic and was more script-like), and Coptic (the language of the Egyptian Christians who used the Greek alphabet and added six Demotic characters for sounds specific to the Egyptian language). Even though these other systems were in use, the respect for the hieroglyphs never waned. Hieroglyph is actually a Greek word made up of two roots, “hieros” (holy) and “glyphos” (carvings) thus they were holy script. The Greeks knew the power of the ancient picture writing, even though they could not read it. The Egyptians themselves called the script medu-neter (words of God). In fact the Corpus Hermeticum, written in Greek, advised the readers to not let the script of Egypt be translated to other languages to produce “writing in the greatest distortion and unclarity.”

Egyptian hieroglyphs have an alphabet of 24-28 letter/phonetic signs, where one sign equals a sound like in our alphabet. Bilateral signs are pictures that represent two or more sounds. The language also contains over 1000 pictorial/syllabic signs in which one picture represents an entire word. The signs all produce consonants, there are no vowels in Egyptian writing thus the pictorial signs were very helpful. If for example you were given the English consonants B and D, it could read as bad, bed, bid, bead, bod or bud. To differentiate a picture of a bed would follow the letters BD. You still wouldn’t know how the word sounds but you would still know what it represents. Sometimes the BD (phonetics) of the word would not be recorded and simply the bed (syllabic) would be provided. A syllabic is only needed when the preceding pictures represent sounds. To simplify pronunciation matters, modern scholars have agreed to a certain way to pronounce the hieroglyphs usually by adding an E between the consonants. This is by no means accurate, but is simply a way for us to pronounce the words we are seeing. Those not trained in the ancient mysteries of Tehuti will have no idea what the actual sounds were.

As Egyptologists worked on more and more documents, papyrus and stone carvings, a conclusion has been made. Most of the written material is non-religious, containing state documents, taxes or personal letters. They are easy for the scholars to translate and understand. However the religious documents seem untranslatable into workable sentences or ideas. This in itself should be a clue. Texts can be easily deciphered and understood, but religious texts are difficult to translate. Why? It is definitely showing that the religious writings are either offering another kind of knowledge or are written in a way to conceal the knowledge from the average person who read only the other types of documents. To truly begin to understand hieroglyphs, or any ideas of the ancient world one must have a background in the Mysteries and Hermeticism.
All sound is a particular vibrational frequency that can be expressed as a number. Everything material in the universe is actually a number. The teachings of sacred number and sacred geometry are imperative to the understanding of not just everything in the ancient world from architecture to language, but to all of nature itself. All language in the ancient world was linked with sacred number. Each letter or glyph provided a sound, which in turn could be represented by a number. The Hebrews used this method of the Cabbala when writing the original text of the Bible, as the book Cipher of the Genesis explained. Anyone not familiar with the Hebrew Cabbala number system will be unable to properly translate to most of the Old Testament’s information. Since all modern renditions of the Old Testament, including most modern Hebrew texts, were translated without knowledge of sacred number they create versions far apart from the initial concepts and ideas of the writers.

Egyptian hieroglyphs were very much ruled by the aspects of sacred sound and number. It can best be understood that words and letters are batteries that are stored with energy and can be brought into the physical world. The ancient field of understanding the numeric value of words was called gematria. It was related to music as sacred music is a component of sacred sound, number, geometry and harmonics.

Vowels
“In Egypt the priests when singing hymns of praise of the gods employ the 7 vowels, which they utter in due successions, and the sound of these letters is so euphorious that men listen to it in place of the flute and lyre.”

Demetrius, Roman writer

Why were there no vowels in the Egyptian writing? We know they existed in the spoken language. There was a key reason for their omission and it is completely misunderstood by the Egyptologists. Modern scholars view the same reason for the omission of vowels as for the different paint on glyphs. Scribes got sloppy, ran out of time, and attempted to make the job easier by omitting the least important parts if the writing. Actually the vowels are the MOST important part of the writing (hence the opposite of what most believe). Rudolph Steiner claimed that consonants represented the sound of the external, while the vowel represented the sound of the inner.

When you have the vowels present, you have the true sound of the word. You will know all, for the sound itself is creation. Sound is vibration, vibration is number, and number is in direct connection to the energies of the universe. To know sound, especially the vowels, was to have true power. It was by use of the ‘vowels’ that the Egyptians could carry out their incredible healing and purification of the
body, mind and spirit. The seven vowels are the sounds of the seven chakras of the Eastern traditions and the seven planets of the western alchemic tradition.

To control a word, to know its proper name, meant control of the thing. The word creates the power. Words are but symbols for wisdom, but in the hands of a trained master who can use those energies properly - they become energy, not the doorway to it. Because of the power involved, the Egyptian masters needed to hide that power from those who were not trained to handle it. If you can learn how to manifest something, it is just as easy to make an apple to share as a nuclear missile to destroy. One's moral character, intelligence, and especially their heart would have to be closely watched as the training progressed to see if one would be able to handle the power with Maat (truth, order, harmony).

The Hermetic axiom “hide the secret in plain view” means that the information could not be completely hidden. Those who wish to follow the wisdom need to have some of it available to them at all times. The writings would give you the consonants H and T so you could understand mentally what was being written about, but it was up to you through personal study to determine the vowel to be inserted. Each vowel will provide a completely different sound, different vibration and therefore a different energy. It would become a personal journey of understanding the sound, word, symbol, number, and the stopping of the conscious mind to understand which vowel sound was indeed the correct vowel. Is the Egyptian word for Horus (HR) Heru, Hara, Hera, Hure or the many other possibilities? Only through personal work with all of the possible names could the doorway to what the symbol referred to be opened. Once known and used in personal mantra the growth of the pupil towards that energy and wisdom would be rapid. Many scribes would have learned the writing system, what glyphs to insert for texts they were writing but may never have known the actual vowels that ‘lived’ between their drawn consonants.

How powerful are the ancient vowel sounds? To the Hebrews the name Jehovah is not supposed to be spoken. The question is why? The Hebrews themselves have no satisfactory answer, and the few that know do not want to share the secret. The vowels may be the answer. By taking the vowel sounds in alphabetic order we have: ah, a, e, i, o, ooo, and u. By saying these seven vowels backwards quickly produces a sound similar to Jehovah. Perhaps the word was never to be spoken because the Hebrew name of God contains all of the vowel sounds.

The purpose of the hieroglyphs is to pass on a wealth of information, but not too much. At different stages of personal development we will be able to unlock different secrets of the hidden wisdom. We have to do the work, and then use our learned insights with the glyphs. This would protect the power of a word from falling into the wrong hands. The same wisdom that can heal can also destroy. To believe information was very powerful and place it in a secret code would make it nearly impossible to understand for those not willing to spend their lives to translate it. To accomplish such a task, a master (who already acquired the wisdom) could check the moral character of the apprentice and weed out those likely to use the power for actions against the harmony of the universe.

Wisdom Revealed

So how can one begin to read hieroglyphs? It will require a tremendous amount of effort. One must first work with symbol, sound and number. There is a final part of the puzzle that has only been mentioned briefly, which is meditation.

“Hieroglyphic text of Egypt, few of us will ever properly read. They demand the heightened state of consciousness that today some people experience after years of meditative practice.” When Japanese samurai write their texts, they are in a meditative state for potentially hours before they begin. Before I create copies of the Ancient Egyptian texts, I meditate. By mediation I am referring the ability to use any activity to shift the consciousness away from the material, physical world.

At the Cross-group of Palenque in Mexico, I was looking at the reliefs in the temple area. Today all that is seen are worn and eroded inscriptions. I wondered what the reliefs looked like before they were eroded and were full of colour. Following a short meditation, I began some Egyptian chanting. The relief seemed to grow to life, and become real. The figures became alive and colours began to appear. Things became much clearer and I took a photo. Even the photo reveals extra colour and
shape. I did this for only fifteen minutes, but imagine if I had done it for five hours? Perhaps the entire relief would not only have appeared, but the actual meaning of the carvings would surface. This is a good example of the state required for Egyptian hieroglyphs.

With the right state of mind, correct sounds, patience and understanding, the insights can be revealed after hard work. My teacher, Sahu Omri, claims that if you follow these procedures, “The glyphs will jump out at you, perhaps even surround you as a hologram. You will not longer be reading them, you will be a part of them.” It is quite a feeling to have an event like this happen to you, as occurred with some carved Egyptian glyphs.

The glyphs can be read like words in a book, but they have a deeper meaning. This is what the Corpus Hermeticum referred to when warning of the Egyptian script being translated into the Greek script. By learning the different disciplines suggested in this chapter you might be able with time to unlock the secret mysteries of the Egyptian hieroglyphs personally.

**Pyramid Texts**

While most are familiar with the Egyptian Text referred to as the Book of the Dead, it is a late comer by Egyptian standards. The oldest religious document in the world is the Pyramid Texts. They are found carved into the walls of small pyramids at Saqqara, the most famous for Unas, Pepi I and Teti. The glyphs are coloured turquoise or green (thus relate to the heart chakra), and are written in vertical rows that do not include any drawings or pictures (as appear in later texts). The glyphs themselves are pure, meaning they include all of the information needed within them.

The texts are the teachings for the ancient Followers of Horus from nearby Heliopolis (Annu). Some in fact believe that the texts go far beyond just Egyptian wisdom but are in fact remnants of texts and ideas from a time long before Egypt. Wallis Budge even claims that the layout of the texts gives the impression that the scribes themselves did not fully understand what the glyphs were carving and, “the general impression is that the priests who drafted these copies made extracts from several compositions of different ages and having different contents.” Some believe the Pyramid Texts are the Egyptian copies from their predecessors of Atlantis. A Book of the Dead is nearly impossible for the non-mystic to understand, but the information in the Pyramid Texts is a sheer mystery for modern translators. Passages make no sense, words and letters exist that translators have found in no other Egyptian text.

“They weren’t carved in stone as nonsense…no one will fully understand the meaning of the texts until translating them on an esoteric basis.” Many writers today are focusing only on astronomical information that they are finding in the text, but like any great Hermetic work there are some 72 layers of information. These scholars have found but another of the layers. There are some who believe that the Egyptians themselves were facing a similar problem. Some believe that the Pyramid Texts are a translation of works from other cultures to which even the Egyptians had trouble understanding. That could explain why signs and words exist only here, for the Egyptian translators had to come up with something to express ideas that they had not been introduced to. I believe that it is possible that the Pyramid Texts could be the conglomeration of all the religious traditions of the world at the time. The synthesis of all the world’s knowledge might in fact be found on the walls of pyramids in Saqqara, and are detailed in full in Volume 3.

**Coffin Texts**

The Coffin Texts appeared late in the Old Kingdom, evolved out of the Pyramid Texts, and focused on Osiris and Horus. It describes how Hours, as the divine falcon, goes to the Duat to defeat Set and allow for the rebirth of Osiris. This is a book of the light of Horus and how it can be used to “reveal the mysteries” and allow the meeting of Osiris. It was the first time a distinct text that described a journey in the underworld was listed. From this text emerged the Book of Two Ways, which was the first to provide pictures (called vignettes) along with the hieroglyphs. It describes the two routes to the afterlife (water or land), which are separated by the island of fire. It provided a map to the mansions of Tehuti and showed the way to Field of Hotep (peace). It also was the first text to describe the path of Ra through the twelve hours of the day and night of the Duat. These two texts became the forerunner to all Middle and New Kingdom funerary texts.
Middle/New Kingdom Books

When tomb building shifted to the Valley of the Kings a number of texts were placed on the walls made to look like great unrolled papyrus. Three texts are related: The Book of What is in the Duat, Book of Gates, and Book of Caverns. Each of these texts describes the journey of the Sun through the Duat during the twelve hours of the night. Along the way, the challenges or hindrances to this journey are listed. Of course we are Ra traveling in our own solar boat as we face the challenges and pitfalls on our own journey to light. The transformative nature of these works are symbolized by most ending with Khepera, who represents the inner light that comes from our darkness. Other texts of this period are the Book of Aker (or the earth), The Litany of Ra, The Book of the Divine Cow, the Book of Day and Night (appearing astronomically on the tomb ceiling) and the Book of the Dead.

During this period a new type of literature, called Wisdom texts, were found. These are teaching tools, written as father to son, in which moral or life behaviour was handed out (Dr. Phil would be impressed). These texts were listed as short series of lines, like small poems, that likely often rhymed to allow for easier memory. They were the basic tenants how to live one’s daily life in order to find favour from the Neteru. One of the most famous is the Instructions of Ptah-hotep, while a famous story is that of Sinue.

Funerary books were found in the tombs of the average population. These included the Book of Opening the Mouth which was 28 ceremonies to keep one’s human faculties (eating, senses, talking) in the afterlife in order to partake in the funerary feast that followed the entombment of the mummy. The Liturgy of Funerary Offerings is 114 ceremonies that involve presentation of food, drink, oils, clothing etc to the deceased, who is arriving in the afterlife with their functions restored. These texts were not true Egyptian teaching in its pure sense for they are attempting to keep a person’s individuality and life in the next world. As mentioned in mummification, the Egyptian temples taught the need to awaken and experience the truth of the cosmos, not to want to continue this world of illusion again and again.

Another great text, the famous 42 Books of Tehuti, is often mentioned but it has not been found. The Hermetic literature is thought to be derived from these texts, including the Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Emerald Tablet of alchemy. Clement of Alexandria listed what he believed were the titles of the 42 books that included hymns, astrology, geography, the building of temples, ritual, law and medicine. It is thought that these were the highest teaching that could be provided in book form in the temples. They were claimed to be written in strange symbols which could alter a person’s consciousness to allow them to reach the abode of the gods. Some Legends claim that the symbols were infused into what are now called Tarot cards.

Late in the Egyptian period, temple priests began to place the equivalent of card catalogues upon the walls of new built temples like found at the Temple of Horus at Edfu. No one today is quite sure what these texts actually were or what they specifically contained, or if any have actually been discovered. Many papyrus have been found from the Greek and Roman period that are less religious in nature but provide much knowledge and information. They include papyrus on medicine, temple building, sacred number, magic, protection etc.

Book of the Dead

(section originally appearing here has now moved to volume 3)
Mead vol. 3 p.326
ii Berendt p.45; Baigent, Michael *Ancient Traces* (Penguin 1998) p.206
iii Baigent p.203; Houston, Jean *The Passion of Osiris and Isis* (Ballentine 1995) pp.116-17; Berendt p.44
iv *Corpus Hermeticum* Book 15
v Crowley p.109; Houston p.132
vi Agrippa, Henry Cornelius *Three Books of Occult Magic* pp.208, 215
vii Crowley p.25
viii Crowley p.110; Agrippa p.209
ix Ashby *Egyptian* p.89; Lamy p.19; West Key p.65; Crowley pp. 110-11
xi *Corpus Hermeticum* 16:2,
xi Mares, Theun *Return of the Warriors* (Lionheart 1995) pp.53-54
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