

Egyptian Religious Philosophy

Entranceway, East Wall

The Generation of the Light Body

VERSE I

Unis becomes the primary serpentine life force
That absorbs his seven serpents

That manifest as the seven yoked attributes at his seven vertebrae
Nine times three sanctified attributes obey these words

Unis comes back as he absorbs myrth, he receives myrth,

He is blessed with myrth, he is brought back with myrth

Unis takes on your power sanctified attributes

As he turns he yokes your spiritual faculties

The west wall of the entranceway presents a sequence of vivid descriptions of the physical world, introducing the primary forces in the night sky as if they were in motion, turning the sky to the moment of the unstoppable rising of water as the greening force of life rising on earth. The force of the water is then conflated with semen, the rising water that brings life. The first verse on the second wall pursues this idea, turning the text away from the outer world to the inner body. The life force in the sky and in the water is now within. The language in this opening verse is clear and precise. Something is happening. The verse follows and refines the meaning of what the crocodile is. It is the primary serpentine life force: pure brilliant light, *ishw*, burning, shining brilliant light. It is the animating energy of life. Here this energy as it exists in the body is not only conjured but mapped. The verse goes at once into specifics,

visible at a glance. This is a mathematical schema, and it has to do with snakes.

The first verse on the east wall of the entranceway presents the major clue to this earliest historical religious system. The verse announces that there is a primary serpent, and that it absorbs seven serpents and yokes them at seven vertebrae, and that the serpents are awakened and activated by the reading of the text itself, and by the burning of incense. These are recognizable instructions, and they indicate that this is a ritual text with a practical purpose, for the detailed map of internal serpents is a familiar one. It unmistakably presents the esoteric physics and physiology of Tantra, which uses the serpent metaphor in a geometrical schema in which patterns of energy in the body are arranged as seven primary nerve centers called *chakras* (Sanskrit for "circles") along a central channel that correlates to the spine. The Tantric practitioner attempts the manipulation of these bodily energies, keyed to the reading of a religious text and the burning of incense. The goal of Tantric practice is to awaken the serpent sleeping within the central channel and draw it up through the chakras to the crown of the head, in order to release it as practice for the moment of death, an exercise intended to open the mind to omniscience, a capacity to see all things as jewellike, interrelated, and pure.

In the Egyptian text the serpent is awakened in the body and rises to the top of the head, where it is prompted by ritual words to leave the body at death. The final verse in the antechamber describes the jewellike diamond realm where the serpent will dwell, having become the eye, pure perception. A later verse within the pyramid describes the nature of this eye:



It is created for him from the fire of his serpentine light body . . .
Its essence is an eye thrust out.
With it we see the holy aspects revealed. You it burns.

And elsewhere:

Rise, rise, the serpentine light body burns in your skull.

In both traditions the rising of the inner serpent generates tremendous heat within the body. This is what is described in verse 2 on this wall as the rising of the *shining, burning life force* that is *the essence of the eye*. It is well documented that enough people have achieved the result of Tantric practice in life to demonstrate that the Pyramid Texts describe something real. In the early twenty-first century American researchers are wiring Tantric practitioners in the mountains of North India to track the rise of electrical energy to the head as the practitioners pass the threshold of death.

That Tantra is the religious system that came out of Egypt is captured in the name itself. *Tantra* is a hieroglyphic phrase: *ta* (earth), *mr* (sacred), *ta-mr* (the sacred ground, the pure land). Tantra is *al-chem-y*, the Egyptian (*chem*) thing. In its essence it is physics: the perception of the hidden background of all life as pure energy, in flux, like golden light, like fire. It is the cultivation and refinement of the flow of energy within one's own body, the inner serpent, the refinement of the energy in the human body into light. The flesh is the lead, the light is the gold. The name *ta-mrta* is used to describe this process in a ritual formula in verse 8 on the west wall of the antechamber:

The ritual words for the *ta-mr*, the holy ground,
Dam the dam of the reassembled reassembled joined to the light
within the canal canal.
Secret are the ways to take, not broad the banks for rising, the
bank is scorching hot,
To cross the beaten Milky Way

The canal as the channel of the electrical energy in the spine is connected with the Milky Way, the river of light in the sky, for in Tantra you do not go to heaven, you become it. The light body's absorption into the universe is expressed in a variety of tropes and images, a microcosm/macrocsm

schema where it "lives in the form of every star." The *macroanthropos*, the mystically expanding human form, is both diffuse, as the entire universe, and specific, as the headless giant body of light, Orion. The "union with the mother" that takes place within the monument is union with the sky itself, Whitman's "the merge," a metaphor for absorption into infinity. The power of the metaphor lies in the reversal of an essential taboo, much as the central metaphor of Christianity is not actual cannibalism but a mystery involving the absorption of the divine essence. In this earlier religious system the divine essence is not external but within. It is the composition of one's own body.

The *Vajra-yama*, the lightning vehicle, is the Sanskrit name for Tantra. The crocodile as the picture that defines the hieroglyphic word for lightning is the Egyptian word for *vajra* (lightning). The lightning in the Egyptian version is both metaphorical and real, the desert thunderstorm, "the bull of double brilliance" that prompts life out of the dead land. Thus, although the missing first words on the east wall of the entranceway, restored from the parallel text in Senwosret-Ankh, have been translated

Unis is the nau snake, the leading bull.

He swallows his seven snakes

it is appropriate that the lines be reinterpreted as:

Unis becomes the primary serpentine life force
That absorbs his seven serpents



For the snake *is* the bull. The bull *is* the life force. Bull and *ka* are the same word. This iconography does not belong to a primitive alien world of ancient Egyptian animal gods swallowing snakes but to the highly refined Tantric practice of physical and mental concentration in which the force of the generative serpentlike nerve energy is awakened in the lower body and reversed up the spine to the crown of the head. As Robert Thurman, a scholar of the Vajrayana, recently observed, "The founder of Mahayana Buddhism in India was *Nagarjuna*. The name means *informed by snakes*. Where do the snakes come from? Are they from Egypt?" That Tantric practice was well-known in antiquity is demonstrated by passages in Plato and elsewhere:

In the Timaeus, Plato proceeds to describe . . . a channel which passes through the center of the spine . . . the false eros draws the seminal fluid down the spinal channel, the transcendence of false eros must end this downward flowing . . . There are seven seats, or chakras . . . along the way down or up . . . The Greek belief in the Timaeus can be traced to a period before Plato . . . connected with the Pythagorean and Orphic . . . schools . . . the Orphic poet Pin-dar . . . [and] Heraclitus himself influenced by Orphism . . . [and in Aelian where] the spinal marrow of a man slithers out of his body as a serpent when he dies.

—McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, 208

The procreative fluid with which the psyche was identified [is] the spinal marrow believed to take serpent form . . . in the Orphic version the serpent was called Chronos . . . when asked what Chronos was, Pythagoras answered that it was the psyche of the universe.

—R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 249ff

The first verse on the east wall of the entranceway proceeds in a series of puns on the word for "myrth," as though the quality of myrth becomes active through the punning verb. From the bottom of the fourth column to the top of the fifth the word for "myrth" is repeated over and over—*antia, antin, antin*—as the incense is shaken over the body. A rapid sense of spinning and a rising current of sparking energy in the spine arise in Tantric meditation. Intuition associates this violent power with lightning, the agent of the creation of life on earth:

Lightning storms in the atmosphere provided energetic ultra-violet light which transformed methane, hydrogen, nitrogen and carbonic gases into the proto-molecules . . . deposited by torrential rains into the primal seas out of which life arose.

—Robert Lawlor, *Sacred Geometry*
(London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 30

