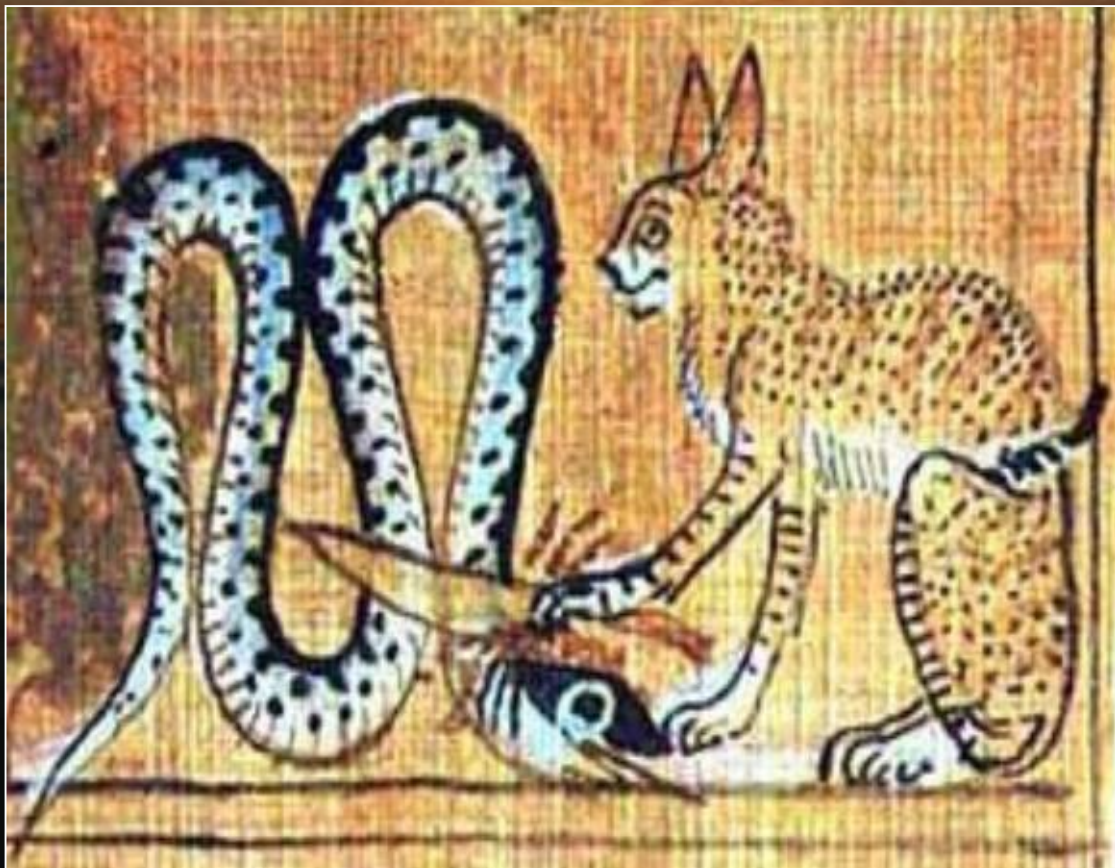


GOOD HEAVENS TODAY



TEP ZEPI THE FIRST TIME

Hermetic Order of the Temple of Starlight®

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**Who is he? He is Osiris;
and as for all that is,
that is eternity and everlasting,
and as for eternity, that is day,
and as for everlasting, that is night.[i]**

TEP ZEPI, THE FIRST TIME

some notes by Jack van Eijk

I have come to this sacred place, the region of 'the First Time', to be a soul, a Ka, a spirit, a dweller in this land.[ii]

'Tep Zepi, the First Time, is a central concept in ancient Egyptian religion.' Jeremy Naydler in his book Temple of the Cosmos[iii] did say some sensible things about it and he indicated how much this concept was intertwined with the magical and ritual practice of the Egyptians. As a practitioner of ceremonial magic, in particular Egyptian, and so from a different perspective, I feel a need to share with you my own findings about Tep Zepi.



First we have to determine what is the proper meaning of this First Time. Looked at superficially it is a mythological era of the first creation, the era of the adventures of the gods, the mythical events that created a pattern of

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and a standard for later times, a golden age before, as it is said: 'rage or clamour or strife or uproar had come about'. In this view it would mean that it all took place in the past, that Tep Zepi is mytho-historical time. The creation is in this conception after all something that is situated at the start of the timeline.

However, that is not the case, it is not the way of thinking of the Egyptians old. The fact is, Tep Zepi is not situated in the domain of linear time, with a past, a present and a future, but in a domain that is called by Naydler 'nontemporal' of 'transtemporal time', just to give it a name. Because, you see, it is in fact simply a way of experiencing, a 'state of mind'. Our own myths and fairytales, our own 'once upon a time', we do not experience as a real past, as history. I mean, Snowwhite is not 10 years ago, or a hundred years ago, in fact it is not 'ago' at all, but it is enacted in the timeframe of the narrator and listener, just ask your kids! A better way of expressing would possibly be: frozen time, although that suggests that nothing is happening and that's really not the case. I think it important to empathise with this outlook of the Egyptians, to get the feeling of this, to experience it ourselves somewhat more closely.

Dreamtime

Possibly closer to home is the ritual practice of the Roman-Catholic Church. How a mythical event can be experienced as a living reality (and so will be a fact in the now to the consciousness), can be illustrated by the ritual of the Eucharist. In linear thought the Last Supper has of course occurred in the past, but mythotypically that makes no sense at all: the Last Supper is completed time and again in an unending present, in what I clumsily called frozen time. 'Hoc est enim Corpus meum; hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti: mysterium fidei'. For this is my body and this is the chalice of my blood, the new and eternal testament, mystery of the faith.

And although they quarreled some time over this issue in the beginning, the churchfathers were adamant about it (and from a mystical point of view they were absolutely right): this is not a symbolic act. The so-called 'transsubstantiation', the transition of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of the Son of God, is again and again occurring factually. And the communicant who is the subject of this sacrament, has put him/herself in a state of mind, has assumed a level of consciousness, yes, has even attained a state of being, in which this mystery, this secret of the faith, becomes a reality in the present. It reminds one of the remark made by Mircea Eliade: 'One is always contemporary with a myth during the time when one repeats it.'[v]

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All this is really not that much different from the Egyptian Coffintext, which refers to the 'now' of the sacred act:

**'What is it: this time in which we are?
It is the burial of Osiris
and making his son Horus ruler.'**

Because this is also, just like the coming of the Christ in the Eucharist, *novi et aeterni testamenti*, a new and eternal testament, where the death of Osiris, through the occurrence and origin of evil, to wit the hand of Seth, at last turns into the magnificence of Osiris' son, the radiant solar Horus. In every case: Aboriginal, Catholic, Egyptian, it is about the restoration of harmony in the cosmos, preferably on a higher, that is to say a more spiritual level. Eternity and everlasting.

It is this same 'state of mind' or this 'level of consciousness' that was realised when the Egyptian priests invoked the First Time. I think that it would be interesting, in connection with this, to have a look at the Egyptian words for time. It concerns two words, which is often the case in ancient Egypt if one tried to give expression to a complex notion, that is to say two contrasting words that complement each other at the same time: Neheh and Djet. (This Djet not to be confused with the Djet-column which means 'stability') They both mean 'time', but also 'eternity'. According to Assmann[vi] these words are connected to resp. Kephri and Atum, that is to say to 'change' and 'completion'. Elsewhere - see the opening poem - they are connected to day and night, that is Ra and Osiris, with the same intention. Hornung characterizes them as: 'continuum and discontinuum, fleeting and stationary time'.[vii]

**'You unite with neheh-time
when it rises as the morning sun,
and with djet-time
when it sets as the evening sun.'**[viii]

From my point of view it would mean that Neheh-time indicates the normal time and Djet-time: completed time, unchangeable, and probably also 'fulfilled' time in the biblical sense. The same does apply to the second meaning of the words, 'eternity'. Now Neheh is an eternity that stretches out

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from a central point forever forward and forever backward, and so stays linear.

And Djet is an eternity as an eternal NOW, that is to say a 'state of being' that we know as trance-time, or mystical time.

to me it is clear that in the poetic lines mentioned above, it is a matter of transition from normal time to Sacred Time. It is obvious that Sacred Time goes together with Sacred Space. I will not elaborate on this. But of course it is as with time: it is non-space, or trans-space. Just as with time it's not so much a spatial as well a spiritual dimension.

Intermezzo: What's the use of knowing?

I have always thought it important to be as profound as possible on all aspects of ritual and I especially mean the details, if you can call them that. If it is drawing a circle, or raising a chalice, making any gesture, speaking a word, it doesn't matter, it should be perfect on the level of performance you can manage. I mean, somewhere in your mind there are all those associations, all fragments of knowledge, that you need to be fully aware of with every step you take in ritual. But of course you don't drag a whole active encyclopedia with you in your mind, large parts of it are dormant or else you wouldn't be able to act anymore. It is just not possible to call up all scraps of information you've gathered all your life with every step you take, it is not working like that. We use, what in psychology is called: 'Gestalt'. That is to say an overall image or conception, a compression of all the information, feelings, thoughts etc. that belong to that situation, or action, or object. And the more information has been processed, so to speak, into this Gestalt, the richer it will be.

So in my reasoning, when or I should say, to the degree to which you are able to connect a meaningful Gestalt to every detail of the ritual, your heart and soul will rise to the occasion, power will surge and the Gods will come down to you.

Magical Personality

When I said that Tep Zepi is in essence a state of mind and a level of consciousness it goes without saying that it can be used in ritual. In fact we are doing that already when our Magus tells us 'to walk out of Time, out of Events and

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out of Space'. But to make it really effective we have to integrate the concept of Tep Zepi with our Magical Personality. As soon as we enter ritual we have as it were to switch on this special 'time-space discontinuum' inside us.

I myself do visualise it inside my head in the form it once took in the sacred Egyptian script, where 'djet' could be pictured as: a circled snake, almost closed but with a small opening between mouth and tail, and in this sacred space Osiris, standing or lying down.[ix]

**I have passed through the Duat
I've seen my father Osiris
I've scattered the gloom of the night...
I have become a sah,
I have become an akh,
I have become equipped,
Oh all you gods and akhs,
make a way for me...[x]**

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[i] Coffin Texts, IV, 276.

[ii] From: R.T. Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in ancient Egypt, Thames & Hudson reprint 1993.

[iii] Jeremy Naydler, Temple of the Cosmos, Inner Traditions, Vermont, 1996.

[iv] Bruce Chatwin, the Songlines, Penguin Books, 1988.

[v] Mircea Eliade, Myth, Dreams & Mysteries, Harvill Press 1960. This book, together with 'The Sacred and the Profane' by the same author is, to my opinion, a must for every occultist. Eliade masterly succeeds in connecting depth psychology, philosophy and religion, at the same time giving shape to a new understanding of the meaning of myth, symbol and ritual for modern times.

[vi] Jan Assmann, The search for God in ancient Egypt, Cornell, 2001.

[vii] Translated from Erik Hornung, Die Nachtfahrt der Sonne, Artemis & Winkler, 1998.

[viii] Translated from Jan Assmann, Zeit und Ewigkeit im alten Ägypten: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Ewigkeit, Heidelberg, 1975.

[ix] W. Budge, An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary, Dover, New York, 1978.

[x] W.Budge, Papyrus of Ani, Dover 1967

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JACK VAN EIK

Jack van Eik was a second degree adept and a founder member of the Hermetic Order of the Temple of Starlight.

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