

The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, golden bough, anthropology, Psychology, Religion study, magic study, spells

The story of Osiris is told in a connected form only by Plutarch, whose narrative has been confirmed and to some extent amplified in modern times by the evidence of the monuments. Of the monuments which illustrate the myth or legend of Osiris the oldest are a long series of hymns, prayers, incantations, and liturgies, which have been found engraved in hieroglyphics on the walls, passages, and galleries of five pyramids at Sakkara. From the place where they were discovered these ancient religious records are known as the Pyramid Texts. They date from the fifth and sixth dynasties, and the period of time during which they were carved on the pyramids is believed to have been roughly a hundred and fifty years from about the year 2625 B.C. onward. But from their contents it appears that many of these documents were drawn up much earlier; for in some of them there are references to works which have perished, and in others there are political allusions which seem to show that the passages containing them must have been composed at a time when the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were still independent and hostile states and had not yet coalesced into a single realm under the sway of one powerful monarch. As the union of the kingdoms appears to have taken place about three thousand four hundred years before our era, the whole period covered by the composition of the Pyramid Texts probably did not fall short of a thousand years. Thus the documents form the oldest body of religious literature surviving to us from the ancient world, and occupy a place in the history of Egyptian language and civilization like that which the Vedic hymns and incantations occupy in the history of Aryan speech and culture. The special purpose for which these texts were engraved on the pyramids was to ensure the eternal life and felicity of the dead kings who slept beneath these colossal monuments. [pg 005] Hence the dominant note that sounds through them all is an insistent, a passionate protest against the reality of death: indeed the word death never occurs in the Pyramid Texts except to be scornfully denied or to be applied to an enemy. Again and again the indomitable assurance is repeated that the dead man did not die but lives. "King Teti has not died the death, he has become a glorious one in the horizon." "Ho! King Unis! Thou didst not depart dead, thou didst depart living." "Thou hast departed that thou mightest live, thou hast not departed that thou mightest die." "Thou diest not." "This King Pepi dies not." "Have ye said that he would die? He dies not; this King Pepi lives for ever." "Live! Thou shalt not die." "Thou livest, thou livest, raise thee up." "Thou diest not, stand up, raise thee up." "O lofty one among the Imperishable Stars, thou perishest not eternally." Thus for Egyptian kings death was swallowed up in victory; and through their tears Egyptian mourners might ask, like Christian mourners thousands of years afterwards, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

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