

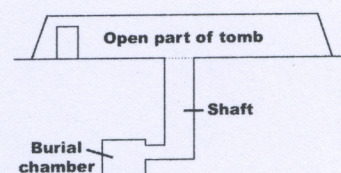


You Can Take It With You





The ancient Egyptians had very different ideas than we do today about what happened to a person when they died. To an ancient Egyptian, the **afterlife** was like life on earth and **things** such as food, clothing and even jewelry and furniture, were considered necessary for a happy eternity. Preservation of the physical body was also critical to the continuation of the individual after death. That is why the ancient Egyptians invented the process of **mummification**.

The final key element for a successful afterlife was a **tomb**. The ancient Egyptian tomb had two parts. A part above ground was open to the living and was a place for prayers and offerings for the soul of the dead. This part was often decorated with pictures or statues of the dead person, his family, activities of daily life, and religious scenes. Below ground was the burial chamber, the home of the dead, where the mummy, accompanied by food, clothing, furniture, jewelry, games, tools and weapons, would spend eternity.



The ancient Egyptians also believed that **magic** could be used to supply necessities in the afterlife. As in the real world, the Egyptians thought that survival in the afterlife depended on crops being grown, canals being dug, etc. However, they did not want to spend eternity working, so the Egyptians invented little magical figures called *shabtis*, whose job it was to jump up and go to work in place of the deceased person. See the **SHABTIS** handout for more information.

Amulets were another important magical element in a burial. Different amulets served to protect, sustain and nourish the dead. The *udjat* eye () also called the Eye of Horus, was an amulet used by both the living and dead to confer health and wholeness to the wearer. A **heart-shaped** amulet protected the heart of the deceased, while a *djed* pillar () the symbol of stability, magically conferred endurance.

Color and materials symbolism were both important in ancient Egyptian belief. The rich green of the Nile valley and the bright blue of the sky were associated with birth and rebirth. Yellow and red were the color of the sun and of blood. Hard and durable materials such as stones or gold magically conveyed these properties of incorruptibility and stability to the dead.

The Egyptians **loved their land** and the many **animals** and **plants** that lived in it. Animals appear in many different guises. Often, ancient Egyptian gods were associated with a specific animal, such as the goddess Bastet with cats or the gods Horus and Ra with the falcon. Animals also appeared in tomb paintings as pets of the deceased, so that a person would be able to spend eternity with their favorite dog or cat beside them.

Animals and parts of animals also appeared in tombs as **food**. Beef was the favorite, with duck or goose a close second. Fruits, vegetables and bread were also important in the ancient Egyptian diet. In addition to including actual food and representations of food in the tomb, models showing the production of food, such as a butcher shop or bakery, magically provided the dead with fresh groceries throughout eternity.