

## Inleiding

Deze brochure behoort bij brochure 963 over de ziel. Wij laten nu enkele meningen volgen over de ziel van een mens.

Nieuw Nederlandstalig boekje over de Geest en de Ziel (door Johan Oldenkamp)

Velen hebben mij de afgelopen periode gevraagd wanneer ik weer een boek in het Nederlands ga schrijven. Daar ben ik vorige week mee begonnen. Het streven is dat er op vrijdag 5 december a.s. een bijzonder Sinterklaascadeau klaar zal zijn. In dat boekje leg ik in ieder geval alles uit over de Geest en de Ziel. Voor zover ik weet is dit nog niet eerder in het Nederlands uitgelegd. Velen gebruiken deze begrippen, maar eigenlijk weet niemand waar het echt over gaat. Wil jij niet langer bij de onwetenden horen, doe jezelf dan dit boekje cadeau. Ook geef ik daarin de correcte Nederlandse vertaling van de tekst van de wereldberoemde Smaragden Tafel, zoals besproken in de Pateo Nieuwsbrief nummer 116 van 18 november jl. ([link](#)).

In de Pateo Nieuwsbrief nummer 86 van 12 maart jl. ([link](#)) heb ik ferme woorden gebruikt om duidelijk te maken dat er vele praatjesmakers zijn die over de Ziel en de Geest praten of schrijven, maar in werkelijkheid compleet geen benul hebben wat beiden nu echt zijn. Evenzo wordt er vaak met het grootste gemak gesproken over geestloze mensen en over zielloze mensen. Maar als je niet eens weet wat de Geest en de Ziel echt zijn, wat weet je dan over mensen die daar geen verbinding meer mee hebben, of die verbinding misschien wel nooit hebben gehad? Wil je echt weten wat geestloze mensen en zielloze mensen zijn, lees dan dit nieuwe boekje. Daarin leg ik ook uit wat er met ons gebeurt wanneer het fysieke lichaam niet meer in leven is. En ook heb ik het over geesten en zielen zonder een fysiek lichaam. Alles is namelijk compleet logisch, mits je eerst echt weet wat zowel de Geest als de Ziel is.

# Ancient Egyptian concept of the soul

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(Redirected from [Egyptian soul](#))

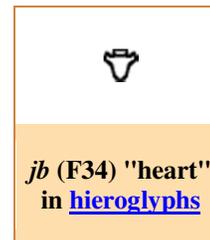
"Akh" redirects here. For the French hip-hop artist, see [Akhenaton \(rapper\)](#).

This article includes a [list of references](#), but **its sources remain unclear because it has insufficient [inline citations](#)**. Please help to [improve](#) this article by [introducing](#) more precise citations. *(December 2011)*

he [ancient Egyptians](#) believed that a [human soul](#) was made up of five parts: the *Ren*, the *Ba*, the *Ka*, the *Sheut*, and the *Ib*. In addition to these components of the soul there was the human body (called the *ha*, occasionally a plural *haw*, meaning approximately sum of bodily parts). The other souls were *aakhu*, *khaibut*, and *khat*.

- [11 Further reading](#)

## Ib (heart)



An important part of the Egyptian soul was thought to be the *Ib* (*ib*), or [heart](#). The *Ib*<sup>[1]</sup> or metaphysical heart was believed to be formed from one drop of blood from the child's mother's heart, taken at conception.<sup>[2]</sup>

To ancient Egyptians, the heart was the seat of emotion, thought, will and intention. This is evidenced by the many expressions in the [Egyptian language](#) which incorporate the word *ib*, *Awt-ib*: happiness (literally, wideness of heart), *Xak-ib*: estranged (literally, truncated of heart). This word was transcribed by [Wallis Budge](#) as *Ab*.

In Egyptian religion, the heart was the key to the afterlife. It was conceived as surviving death in the nether world, where it gave evidence for, or against, its possessor. It was thought that the heart was examined by [Anubis](#) and the deities during the *Weighing of the Heart* ceremony. If the heart weighed more than the *feather of Maat*, it was immediately consumed by the monster [Ammit](#).

## Sheut (shadow)

A person's [shadow](#) or silhouette, *Sheut* (*šwt* in Egyptian), is always present. Because of this, Egyptians surmised that a shadow contains something of the person it represents. Through this association, statues of people and deities were sometimes referred to as shadows.

The shadow was also representative to Egyptians of a figure of death, or servant of [Anubis](#), and was depicted graphically as a small human figure painted completely black. Sometimes people (usually pharaohs) had a shadow box in which part of their Sheut was stored.

## Ren (name)

As a part of the soul, a person's *ren* (*rn* 'name') was given to them at birth and the Egyptians believed that it would live for as long as that name was spoken, which explains why efforts were made to protect it and the practice of placing it in numerous writings. For example, part of the [Book of Breathings](#), a derivative of the [Book of the Dead](#), was a means to ensure the survival of the name. A [cartouche](#) (magical rope) often was used to surround the name and protect it. Conversely, the names of deceased enemies of the state, such as [Akhenaten](#), were hacked out of monuments in a form of *damnatio memoriae*. Sometimes, however, they were removed in order to make room for the economical insertion of the name of a successor, without having to build another monument. The greater the number of places a name was used, the greater the possibility it would survive to be read and spoken.

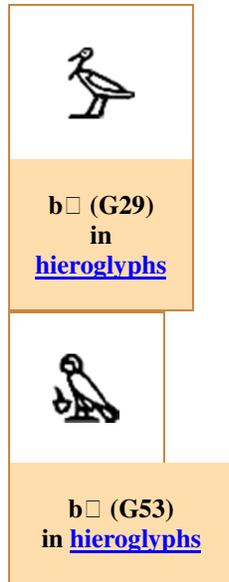
## Ba (personality)



Ba takes the form of a bird with a human head.



This golden Ba amulet from the [Ptolemaic](#) period would have been worn as an [apotropaic](#) device. [Walters Art Museum, Baltimore](#).



The '**Ba**' (*b*) was everything that makes an individual unique, similar to the notion of 'personality'. (In this sense, inanimate objects could also have a 'Ba', a unique character, and indeed [Old Kingdom pyramids](#) often were called the 'Ba' of their owner). The 'Ba' is an aspect of a person that the Egyptians believed would live after the body died, and it is sometimes depicted as a human-headed bird flying out of the tomb to join with the 'Ka' in the afterlife.

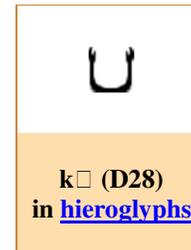
In the [Coffin Texts](#) one form of the Ba that comes into existence after death is corporeal, eating, drinking and copulating. [Louis Žabkar](#) argued that the Ba is not part of the person *but is the person himself*, unlike the soul in Greek, or late Judaic, Christian or Muslim thought. The idea of a purely immaterial existence was so foreign to Egyptian thought that when Christianity spread in Egypt they borrowed the Greek word *psyche* to describe the

concept of soul and not the term Ba. Žabkar concludes that so particular was the concept of Ba to ancient Egyptian thought that it ought not to be translated but instead the concept be footnoted or parenthetically explained as one of the modes of existence for a person.<sup>[3]</sup>

In another mode of existence the Ba of the deceased is depicted in the [Book of Going Forth by Day](#) returning to the mummy and participating in life outside the tomb in non-corporeal form, echoing the solar theology of [Re \(or Ra\)](#) uniting with [Osiris](#) each night.<sup>[4]</sup>

The word 'bau' (*b*), plural of the word ba, meant something similar to 'impressiveness', 'power', and 'reputation', particularly of a deity. When a deity intervened in human affairs, it was said that the 'Bau' of the deity were at work [Borghouts 1982].

## Ka (vital spark)



The **Ka** (*k*) was the Egyptian concept of vital essence, that which distinguishes the difference between a living and a dead person, with death occurring when the *ka* left the body. The Egyptians believed that [Khnum](#) created the bodies of children on a [potter's wheel](#) and inserted them into their mothers' bodies. Depending on the region, Egyptians believed that [Heket](#) or

[Meskhenet](#) was the creator of each person's Ka, breathing it into them at the instant of their [birth](#) as the part of their soul that made them be *alive*. This resembles the concept of [spirit](#) in other religions.

The Egyptians also believed that the *ka* was sustained through food and drink. For this reason food and drink offerings were presented to the dead, although it was the *kau* (*k*□*w*) within the offerings that was consumed, not the physical aspect. The *ka* was often represented in Egyptian iconography as a second image of the king, leading earlier works to attempt to translate *ka* as *double*.

## Akh



Akh glyph

The **Akh** (□*h* meaning '(magically) effective one'),<sup>[5]</sup> was a concept of the dead that varied over the long history of ancient Egyptian belief.

It was associated with thought, but not as an action of the mind; rather, it was intellect as a living entity. The Akh also played a role in the afterlife. Following the death of the Khat (physical body), the Ba and Ka were reunited to reanimate the Akh.<sup>[6]</sup> The reanimation of the Akh was only possible if the proper funeral rites were executed and followed by constant offerings. The ritual was termed: *se-akh* 'to make (a dead person) into an (living) akh.' In this sense, it even developed into a sort of [ghost](#) or roaming

'dead being' (when the tomb was not in order any more) during the [Ramesside Period](#). An Akh could do either harm or good to persons still living, depending on the circumstances, causing e.g., nightmares, feelings of guilt, sickness, etc. It could be evoked by prayers or written letters left in the tomb's offering chapel also in order to help living family members, e.g., by intervening in disputes, by making an appeal to other dead persons or deities with any authority to influence things on earth for the better, but also to inflict punishments.

The separation of Akh and the unification of Ka and Ba were brought about after death by having the proper offerings made and knowing the proper, efficacious spell, but there was an attendant risk of dying again. Egyptian funerary literature (such as the [Coffin Texts](#) and the [Book of the Dead](#)) were intended to aid the deceased in "not dying a second time" and becoming an *akh*.

## Relationships

Ancient Egyptians believed that [death](#) occurs when a person's *ka* leaves the body. Ceremonies conducted by priests after death, including the "opening of the mouth (*wpr*)", aimed not only to restore a person's physical abilities in death, but also to release a Ba's attachment to the body. This allowed the Ba to be united with the Ka in the afterlife, creating an entity known as an "[Akh](#)" (□*h*, meaning "effective one").

Egyptians conceived of an afterlife as quite similar to normal physical existence — but with a difference. The model for this new existence was the journey of the Sun. At night the Sun descended into the [Duat](#) (the underworld). Eventually the Sun meets the body of the mummified [Osiris](#). Osiris and the Sun, reenergized by each other, rise to new life for another day. For the

deceased, their body and their tomb were their personal Osiris and a personal Duat. For this reason they are often addressed as "Osiris". For this process to work, some sort of bodily preservation was required, to allow the Ba to return during the night, and to rise to new life in the morning. However, the complete [Akhu](#) were also thought to appear as stars.<sup>[7]</sup> Until the [Late Period](#), non-royal Egyptians did not expect to unite with the Sun deity, it being reserved for the royals.<sup>[8]</sup>

[The Book of the Dead](#), the collection of spells which aided a person in the afterlife, had the Egyptian name of the *Book of going forth by day*. They helped people avoid the perils of the afterlife and also aided their existence, containing spells to assure "not dying a second time in the underworld", and to "grant memory always" to a person. In the Egyptian religion it was possible to die in the afterlife and this death was permanent.

The tomb of Paheri, an Eighteenth dynasty [nomarch](#) of [Nekhen](#), has an eloquent description of this existence, and is translated by [James P. Allen](#) as:

Your life happening again, without your ba being kept away from your divine corpse, with your ba being together with the akh ...  
You shall emerge each day and return each evening. A lamp will be lit for you in the night until the sunlight shines forth on your breast. You shall be told: "Welcome, welcome, into this your house of the living!"

## See also

- [Ghosts in ancient Egyptian culture](#)

## Body and soul

The ancient Egyptian view of what made up a person is confusing. [1] The main constituents were the body, its ka, and its name which remained always in close proximity to each other even in the tomb, and the shadow, the ba, sahu and akh which were more mobile and independent.

In magical thinking the limits of a person are ill defined: things which we would pay little heed to could be of critical importance to an ancient Egyptian. How much of a person's essence is inherent in an image? Jilted lovers still tear up pictures of their former love, but they know that this cannot hurt anybody. An ancient Egyptian on the other hand believed that he could harm somebody by destroying his image or gain power over him by applying spells to things which had belonged to him.

Some of the terms below were at times (at least in our eyes) almost interchangeable, and they acquired new aspects during the three millennia of their use, changing their meanings. There are no proper unequivocal translations for them, though attempts have been made to equate them with modern psychological terms: The akh is referred to as the Id, the name as the Ego and the ka as the Super-ego. Like all such comparisons this one is only partially apt.

The body ( X.t ) and its mummy ( saH )

The mummy of Hont-m-pet; Source: eos Khnum, the sculptor who gives lives, created a child's body, the khat, X.t ( MdC transliteration X.t ) - together with its twin, the ka - on his potter's wheel and inserted them with the sperm into the mother's womb. The Egyptian view of the body was, from its conception to its death, mostly magical. The biological aspects of the body's functions, apart from the obvious ones everybody can discern, were largely unknown, instead it was populated and

surrounded with spiritual and demonic entities whose evil influence caused the diseases and ailments people suffered from.

The mummy of Hont-m-pet

Source: Smith, G. Elliot. Catalogue Général Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: The Royal Mummies.

Le Caire: Imprimerie de L'institut Français D'archéologie Orientale, 1912

The preservation of the body [6] by mummification in order to enable the deceased to enjoy a life after death was at first only performed on the corpse of the divine pharaoh, but became widespread as the notion of everybody being capable of having an afterlife took root. This afterlife was a continuation of life in the here and now: Tombs were decorated with scenes of daily life (above all during the Old Kingdom), things the deceased had used were left in their graves, and since the Middle Kingdom they were given servants in the form of little statuettes, ushabtis to stand in for them and perform their civic duties in the beyond.

The body, the X.t, after its transformation into a mummy, a saH, had to undergo the Ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth to have its senses restored as it was the body which had to justify itself before the judges of the underworld.

The sahu, saH (MdC transliteration saH), has been variously described as the spirit-body, as a self-defined psychic boundary or the repository of the soul (Budge). It was seemingly immortal and similar in form to the mortal body it sprang from.

Thou goest round about heaven, thou sailest in the presence of Ra, thou lookest upon all the beings who have knowledge. Hail, Ra, thou who goest round about in the sky, I say, O Osiris in truth, that I am the Sahu of the god, and I beseech thee not to let me be driven away, nor to be cast upon the wall of blazing fire.

Book of the Dead.[13]

The heart ( jb )

A special part of the body was the heart, jb (MdC transliteration jb), the essence of life, seat of the mind with its emotions, intelligence, and moral sense.

My heart, my mother; my heart, my mother! My heart whereby I came into being!

The prayer of Ani.[14]

The heart gave man 's life its direction. Enjoyment was closely tied to the sensations of the body. Following one's heart meant living a full life:

The west seeks to hide (i.e. death and its realm is forgotten) from him who follows his heart. The heart is a god, the stomach is its shrine.

The inscription of Nebneteru

M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, Volume III, p. 22

When the heart got tired the body died. When the deceased set out on his journey through the underworld, the jb as a record of his moral past was weighed by Anubis against a feather representing Maat. If found too heavy, the heart was devoured by the monster Ammit, destroying its owner for eternity [3].

The heart of Osiris hath in very truth been weighed, and his Heart-soul hath borne testimony on his behalf; his heart hath been found right by the trial in the Great Balance. There hath not been found any wickedness in him; he hath not wasted the offerings which have been made in the temples; he hath not committed any evil act; and he hath not set his mouth in motion with words of evil whilst he was upon earth.

Book of the Dead[15]

Heart scarab

Heart Scarab of Hatnofer,  
ca. 1466 B.C.E.; Dynasty 18, reign of Hatshepsut;  
New Kingdom  
Western Thebes  
Rogers Fund, 1936 (36.3.2)  
Source: Metmuseum website [8]

During the embalming the heart was not removed together with the other interior organs. A scarab was inserted into the mummy's bindings right above the heart in an attempt to prevent it from speaking out against its owner, lest my name appear stinking and putrid before the lord of the other world.

Heart scarabs, the earliest examples of which date to the 17th dynasty, [10] were often inscribed with texts from the 30th chapter of the Book of the Dead, but at times other texts were chosen, such as the one below which, with its invocation of Nut, is exceptional:

I have come and I have brought to you. I am your guide Nut. I open my wing and spread it over you. I keep your heart in its place: It will not be removed from your coffin until you come to life again, O blessed Tjatenbastet-tanedjemtjaut.

22nd dynasty

After Étienne Drioton, Une formule inédite sur un scarabée de coeur, BIFAO 41 (1942), p.100

The name ( rn )

The name, rn (MdC transliteration rn), is the foundation of a being as an individual. Only when it has a name, when it can be addressed and related to, does it begin its proper existence—with its name as its essence. The various aspects of the being are reflected in the different names it is given: In the Book of the Dead, chapter 142, Osiris had one hundred different names.

Names were closely bound up with magic. Knowledge of somebody's names gave one insight into his being and power over him, but speaking out a name could also be dangerous

It is the king who will judge the dead, accompanied by Hell's chief executioner He-who-must-not-be-named, on the day the revered gods are slaughtered.

Pyramid Texts 273-4 [16]

'True' names were often kept secret. In the Pyramid Texts (# 394) a god is mentioned whose name was not even known to his mother.

An adoration of Ra who rises on the horizon, when he makes his ba, the visible form of his soul, rise like a powerful ghost from the underworld—the shining spectre of Ra that is our physical sun; when he raises himself, rejoicing in the power of his ka; an adoration of Ra, his ba and his ka, when he has the sun-boat's steersman shove off from the east and head out into deep sky while addressed in these words by the Osiris X [9]:

Hail Ra!

Hail to your ba!

Hail to your ka!

The Osiris X knows our name, and the names of your ba and your ka in all their aspects.

Book of the Dead 15a.[16]

Erased inscription and picture of Hatshepsut, Luxor; Source: V.Easy  
An important part of ensuring the continued existence after death was the perpetuation of the name, in accordance with the Egyptian saying He lives whose name is spoken [4]. Especially important was that inscriptions of offerings crucial for survival in the hereafter, named the recipient.

Erased inscription and picture of Hatshepsut

Luxor

Excerpt. Source: V.Easy

The reasons for Thutmose III trying to obliterate all references to his stepmother 20 years after he came to power are unclear

Inscribing names in stone gave them permanence, and obliterating them was a kind of postmortem punishment or revenge: the person was assigned to oblivion. This was the fate post-Amarnan pharaohs had in mind when they erased inscriptions containing the name of Akhenaten.

The ka ( kA )

Unfortunately the ancient Egyptians never defined clearly what was meant by the ka, kA (MdC transliteration kA), or its female complementary, the hemset (Hms.t). The concepts may well have undergone changes over the millennia or had different meanings according to the social settings. kA has been variously translated as soul, life-force, will etc. but no single western concept is anything like it. Being written kA like the word for 'bull', a symbol of potency, the closest to it in English may be a 'life-creating force'. [5]

The ka was a constant close companion of the body in life and death, depicted throughout the pharaonic period following the king and bearing the royal Horus name.

The kas of Unas are behind him. His hemesets are under his feet. His gods are above him.

Pyramid Texts 273-4

After a transliteration and German translation on the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website, D. Topmann ed.

Altägyptisches Wörterbuch, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften => Pyramidentexte => Unas-Pyramide => Vorkammer => Ostgiebel => PT 273-4

According to pictures drawn during the 18th dynasty, the ka came into being when a person was born, often depicted as a twin or double, but, unlike the body it belonged to, it was immortal provided it received nourishment. Being a spiritual entity it did not eat the food but seems to have extracted the life-sustaining forces from the offerings, be they real or symbolic.

Ka statue of Harawibra, 13th dynasty; courtesy Jon Bodsworth Dying was referred to as going to one's ka. Upon the body's demise the ka rejoined its divine origin, but always remained in close proximity of the body. In Old Kingdom tombs false or ka doors were supposed to give this spiritual part of the deceased access to the world of the living. The kas were thought to reside in tomb statues.

Ka statue of Harawibra, 13th dynasty

The pair of arms on his head spell out kA.

Courtesy Jon Bodsworth

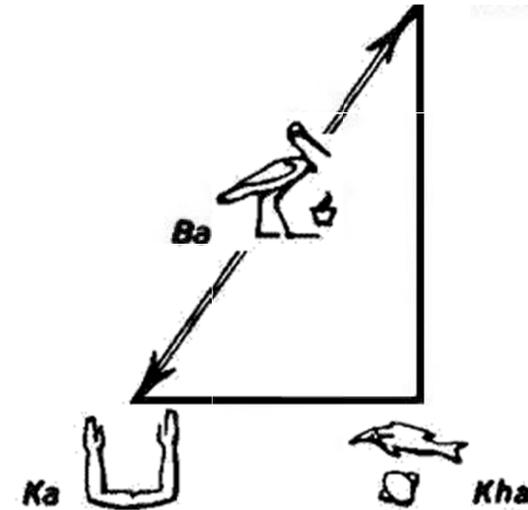
The ka as a life-sustaining force was contained in the food. The plural of ka, kaw, meant food offerings. The ka as recipient of food offerings is attested to since the late Old Kingdom.

During the New Kingdom the ka was seen to have different aspects:

The Osiris X, may he rest in peace, knows the names of your ka, the aspect of your soul that abides in the ground:

- Nourishing ka,
- ka of food,
- lordly ka,
- ka the ever-present helper,
- ka which is a pair of kas begetting more kas,
- healthy ka,
- sparkling ka,
- victorious ka,
- ka the strong,
- ka that strengthens the sun each day to rise from the world of the dead,
- ka of shining resurrection,
- powerful ka,

## effective ka. The Ancient Egyptian Conception of the Soul



Book of the Dead 15a.[16]

The ka has also been interpreted as meaning "will" somewhat in the sense Schopenhauer used it. It has been claimed that during the Late New Kingdom it was a hidden, transcendental god which was described as

Thy being is the infinite neheh [2]

Thy image is the unchanging djet [2]

From thy planning ka emanate all occurrences

Jan Assmann, Ägypten, Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur, p.280

The shadow ( Sw.t )

In a hot country like Egypt shadows were a blessing for those who could rest in them. Metaphorically, gods threw shadows too, shadows of protection: Kings were described as being in the shadow of the god. The holy sites at Amarna were called Shadow of Re. We can easily understand the divine shadow and its effects, but it is unclear what the function of the human shadow, Sw.t (MdC transliteration Sw.t), was.

Shadow and ba-bird; Source: Ägypten - Schatzkammer der Pharaonen  
In the light of the life-giving sun body and shadow are inseparable. But the pitch-black Sw.t was not an ordinary shadow of a body, it rather belonged to the world of the 'soul', moving independently of its body and partaking of the funerary offerings:

Shadow and ba-birds

Tomb of Irinifer, Thebes

Source: Ägypten - Schatzkammer der Pharaonen

O mighty One, when he is adored, great one among bas, greatly respected ba inspiring the gods with awe when he has appeared on his great throne: then may he prepare the path for NN, justified, his ba, his akh and his shadow (Sw.t), may they be well provided for.

The Papyrus of Nu (BM EA 10477)

After a transliteration and German translation on the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website

Unlike the body, the shadow was not bound to the grave and could go where the body could not. In New Kingdom tombs it was at times depicted leaving it accompanied by the ba-bird.

Let not be shut in my soul, let not be fettered my "shadow", let be opened the way for my soul and for my "shadow", may it see the great god,

E.A.W.Budge The Book of the Dead Chapter 92

May I look upon my soul and my "shadow".

E.A.W.Budge The Book of the Dead Chapter 89

On his journey through the underworld the deceased had to beware of many dangers. There are affirmations in the Book of the Dead that his akh power will not be taken from him, and that he will not lose his shadow:

My shadow will not be prevailed over

The Papyrus of Nu (BM EA 10477)

After a transliteration and German translation on the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website

One of the perils the shadow would meet was the Devourer of Shadows, one of the demons appealed to in the Negative Confessions:

O Devourer of Shadows who comes forth from the cave, I have not stolen.

pKairo CG 25095 (pMaiherperi)

After a transliteration and German translation on the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website

What would happen to the deceased if it fell prey to the Devourer is not known, though one may surmise that it would have spelled out his destruction and oblivion.

The ba ( bA )

Originally, gods who manifested themselves anonymously were called ba, later it became also the visible form a god assumed, thus the Phoenix was the ba of Re. Ba-bird, Tutankhamen, courtesy Jon Bodsworth

Ba-bird of Tutankhamen

Courtesy Jon Bodsworth

Excerpt

From the end of the Old Kingdom onwards the ba, bA (MdC transliteration bA), was the sum of the immortal forces inherent in human beings which made up his personality. It has been called a person's psyche and is generally translated as soul. But it was also in a way a corporeal, sexual being, which needed food and drink.

The ba was mostly represented in the form of a bird, generally with a human head and, according to grave images, often perching on trees planted by the tomb. It moved about, sometimes in the company of the shadow, but did not stray far. Every evening it returned to the body, reuniting with it and thus ensuring the body's continued existence in the afterlife.

Spells enabled it to assume any shape it wished. It seems to have had creative powers and was frequently depicted with an erect phallus.

Ithyphallic Amen-Re ba-bird

Ithyphallic Amen-Re ba-bird

Source: Samivel, The Glory of Egypt

Excerpt

The Osiris X knows the names of your ba, the form in which you travel our world - the sun.

Ba pure of body,

health-embodiment ba,

ba bright and unharmed,

ba of magic,

ba who causes himself to appear,

male ba,

ba whose warm energy encourages copulating.

Book of the Dead 15a.[16]

In Egypt's declining years Amen-Re is addressed as Hidden ba, who is revered, at the same time Bes Pantheos, a seven-headed daemon was a manifestation of the power of Amen-Re:

Bes with seven heads: he embodies the ba's of Amen-Re

Jan Assmann, Ägypten, Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur, p.282

The akh ( Ax )

According to the Pyramid Text #474 the akh, Ax (MdC transliteration Ax), belongs to the heaven, the corpse to the earth. The body is buried while the akh, the Shining One, ascends to the sky, becoming a star. It comes into being when ba and ka unite [12] and is the part of the person least bound to the rest, leaving it behind in the quest for immortality. Rising to the heavens king Unas joined the stars:

This Unas comes to you, O Nut,

This Unas comes to you, O Nut,

He has consigned his father to the earth,

He has left Horus behind him.

Grown are his falcon wings,

Plumes of the holy hawk;

His power has brought him,

His magic has equipped him!

The sky-goddess replies

Make your seat in heaven,

Among the stars of heaven,

For you are the Lone Star, the comrade of Hu!

You shall look down on Osiris,

As he commands the spirits,

While you stand far from him;

You are not among them,

You shall not be among them!

M. Lichtheim. Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings. Vol. 1  
- Pyramid Texts, Utterance 245

The gods as embodiments of eternal divine might and magical powers  
would best be described as akhu.

Shining Ra, in your celestial aspect, as an akh,

you are Atum within the sky,

an old man as you set on the horizon,

a judge within your palace - which is the heavens,

a king enthroned in the sunset,

and when you've sunk west into the underworld, a king down there as  
well.

Atum, ancient one, who first dawned from Nun, from the black deep of  
her primordial night.

Book of the Dead, chapter 15a.[16]

The pharaoh, having a divine nature, had always become an akh and  
joined the stars after the demise of his mortal shell, but after the Old  
Kingdom ordinary mortals too could attain this status when they became  
transfigured dead. [11]

Akh has been translated as spirit, ghost or as transfiguration. [7] -

Footnotes:

[1] Not that our own views are less so: many of us speak of the body  
and its resurrection without having a clear notion of what that entails. We  
speak of having a mind, spirit, and soul but are hard put when having to  
define what they are

[2] Neheh and djjet are dimensions of time. Assmann speaks of them (in  
analogy with the 'united double kingdom') as 'united double time', where  
neheh, the imperfect time dimension, is associated with change, Kheper,  
the One who Becomes, and djjet, the perfect aspect of time, is related to  
completion, Atem, the Perfect One.

[3] The final judgment was - in theory - not influenced by the social  
position of the deceased:

The west is the abode of him who is faultless,

Praise god for the man who has reached it!

No man will attain it,

Unless his heart is exact in doing right.

The poor is not distinguished there from the rich,

Only he who is found free of fault

By scale and weight before eternity's lord.

There is none exempt from being reckoned:

Thoth as Baboon in charge of the balance  
Will reckon each man for his deeds on earth.

Inscription from the tomb of Petosiris

M. Lichtheim Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume III, pp.45f

On the other hand, the knowledgeable were certainly at an advantage. Magic could protect a person, prevent the heart from disclosing any dark secrets, or bully deities into being lenient. Knowledge, or the means to acquire a semblance of it, went with social position.

[4] Inscription from the tomb of Petosiris, High Priest of Thoth, Hermopolis:

I built this tomb in this necropolis,  
Beside the great souls who are there,  
In order that my father's name be pronounced,  
And that of my elder brother,  
A man is revived when his name is pronounced!

M. Lichtheim Ancient Egyptian Literature Volume III, pp.45f

[5] This interpretation like the ones that follow it are mostly speculative. They reflect what some Egyptologists think rather than what the Egyptians thought.

[6] Rituals were of essence in achieving transfiguration, as is written in pBM 10208, the recitation of this ritual is effective for the one who recites it:

[Ritual for the transfiguration of Osiris in the necropolis, to be performed in the temple of Osiris-Khentamenti], the great god, lord of Abydos at all

feasts for Osiris and at all his epiphanies in the land, [which are performed in the sanctuaries, both for the transfiguration of his ba and the permanent preservation of his corpse (and that) his ba] shall shine in the heavens and his corpse endure in the underworld, that he may be rejuvenated at the beginning of the month, that [his son Horus] be constant [on his throne, (while) he is holding his office for all eternity].

from Papyrus BM 10208, 4th century BCE

after a German translation on the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website

[7] The verb belonging to the noun Ax, sAx, is just as difficult to pin down. "Glorifying", "making excellent" or "rendering effective" have been used as translations. In the tomb of Meresankh III at Gizeh the process of embalming is described as glorification by the embalmer. The unguent used was one of the means: I put you (i.e. the unguent) on the forehead of this Unas, so that you will make him comfortable under you, so that you will make him effective, that you will give him control over his body. The oil used in this case was best conifer oil.

The priests too helped to make the deceased perfect. In the mastaba of Hesi the actions of the lector priest are defined precisely: May he be glorified by the lector priest with the secret writing of the god's library on New Year's Day, the wag-feast, the sokar-feast, the great feast, the appearance of Min, the rekekhe-feast of the month, the half-month and daily.

The aim of these exertions was to make the deceased fit for the company of the gods. Ra-khuief is described in his mastaba as made excellent and splendidly furnished by the side of the great god.

(All examples are taken from the Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae website.)

[9] The name Osiris in writings found in tombs can refer to the deceased himself: the person has died and is being resurrected like Osiris.

[10] Cooney, Kathlyn M., 2008, "Scarab" in Willeke Wendrich (ed.), UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, Los Angeles.

[11] Mark Smith suggests that commoners probably always had access to glorification spells very much like the ones known from the royal Pyramid Texts (Smith, Mark, 2009, "Democratization of the Afterlife" in Jacco Dieleman, Willeke Wendrich (eds.), UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology, Los Angeles; <http://repositories.cdlib.org/nelc/uee/1147> accessed June 2009). Cf Religion of the People, Note 11

[12] According to James Allen, The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, p.7

[13] E. A. Wallis Budge, Papyrus of Ani - The Egyptian Book of the Dead, NuVision Publications, 2007, p.35

[14] Epiphanius Wilson, E. A. Wallis Budge, The Book of the Dead According to the Theban Recension, Health Research Books, 1968, p.25

[15] The Egyptian Book of the Dead, 1240 BC, THE PAPYRUS OF ANI Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge, accessed at [http://www.thenazareneway.com/ebd\\_book\\_2.htm](http://www.thenazareneway.com/ebd_book_2.htm), September 2003

[16] Jacob Rabinowitz, Isle of Fire, A Tour of the Egyptian Further World in English and Hieroglyphics, Invisible Books 2004, accessed at [http://www.invisiblebooks.com/isle\\_of\\_fire.htm](http://www.invisiblebooks.com/isle_of_fire.htm), March 2012

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Offsite links (Opening in a new window)

These are just suggestions for further reading. I do not assume any responsibility for the content of these sites

Metropolitan Museum of Art [8] Metropolitan Museum of Art

Ancient Egyptian Ba-Bird Ancient Egyptian Ba-Bird by Elaine A. Evans

The Essential Egyptian View of The Self Walk like an Egyptian by Ramona Louise Wheeler

Volgens J & M Henschel:

De ziel is dat deel van de menselijke geest dat daarmee verbonden is, en toch zelfstandig kan opereren. In de geest van de mens wordt de ziel genoemd. Des te helderder het Goddelijke in de menselijke geest leeft, des te meer vermogens zal de ziel ontwikkelene om het stoffelijke lichaam te beheersen.