

# TUTANKHAMUN

## AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE PHARAOHS

### **ANCIENT EGYPTIAN BELIEF ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE**

Ancient Egyptians had a highly developed view of the afterlife with many associated funerary rituals. A person was thought to be made up of different components, including the body, the heart and spiritual aspects (such as the ba). When a person died these components separated and to be reunited. Thus the body was preserved by mummification, and then reanimated so that the ba could re-join it and the person could enter the afterlife.

The Egyptians thought of the afterlife as taking place in the realm of the gods. To reach this realm the dead person had to make a journey and amulets and instructive text were placed in tombs, on and near the mummified body to guide the person safely through the challenges. As part of the journey to the afterlife, the dead person was led into a hall of judgment by Anubis (god of mummification) and their heart, which contained a record of their conduct in life, was weighed against a feather representing Ma'at (the Egyptian concept of Right and Order). A heart that weighed less than the feather was a pure heart, not weighed down by bad deeds. The owner of such a heart was allowed to continue on their journey to the afterlife. On the other hand, a heart heavy with the guilt of a bad life weighed more than the feather and was eaten by the monster Ammit - part crocodile, part lion, part hippopotamus. Since Egyptians believed the heart to be the centre of reason and emotion, a person without a heart ceased to exist.

Once a person's spirit entered the afterlife they would need things such as food and drink to sustain them, games to amuse them and jewellery to wear. Indeed, anything a person had used or valued in life could be placed in their tomb in its original form, as a replica or model, or as a painting. In addition, statuettes were provided (initially models of people working and later small figures known as shabtis) to undertake any physical work demanded of the tomb owner by Osiris, god of the underworld, in the afterlife.

The aim of every Egyptian was to attain a state of peaceful, eternal existence in the afterlife. The wealthy were able to ease this process by paying for their bodies to be artificially preserved, tombs to be constructed as a safe resting place for their mummy and belongings and elaborate rituals performed on their behalf. Mummification was undertaken for about 1% of the ancient population. For the remainder of society, the same beliefs were followed but the actual burial was on a much simpler scale.