

**A HANDBOOK OF  
EGYPTIAN  
RELIGION**

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A Handbook of Egyptian Religion by Adolf Erman

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Handwritten note:  
Doubtless  
Griffith's name?

A HANDBOOK  
OF  
EGYPTIAN RELIGION

BY  
ADOLF ERMAN

WITH 130 ILLUSTRATIONS

Published in the original German edition as a handbook, by the  
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TRANSLATED BY  
A. S. GRIFFITH

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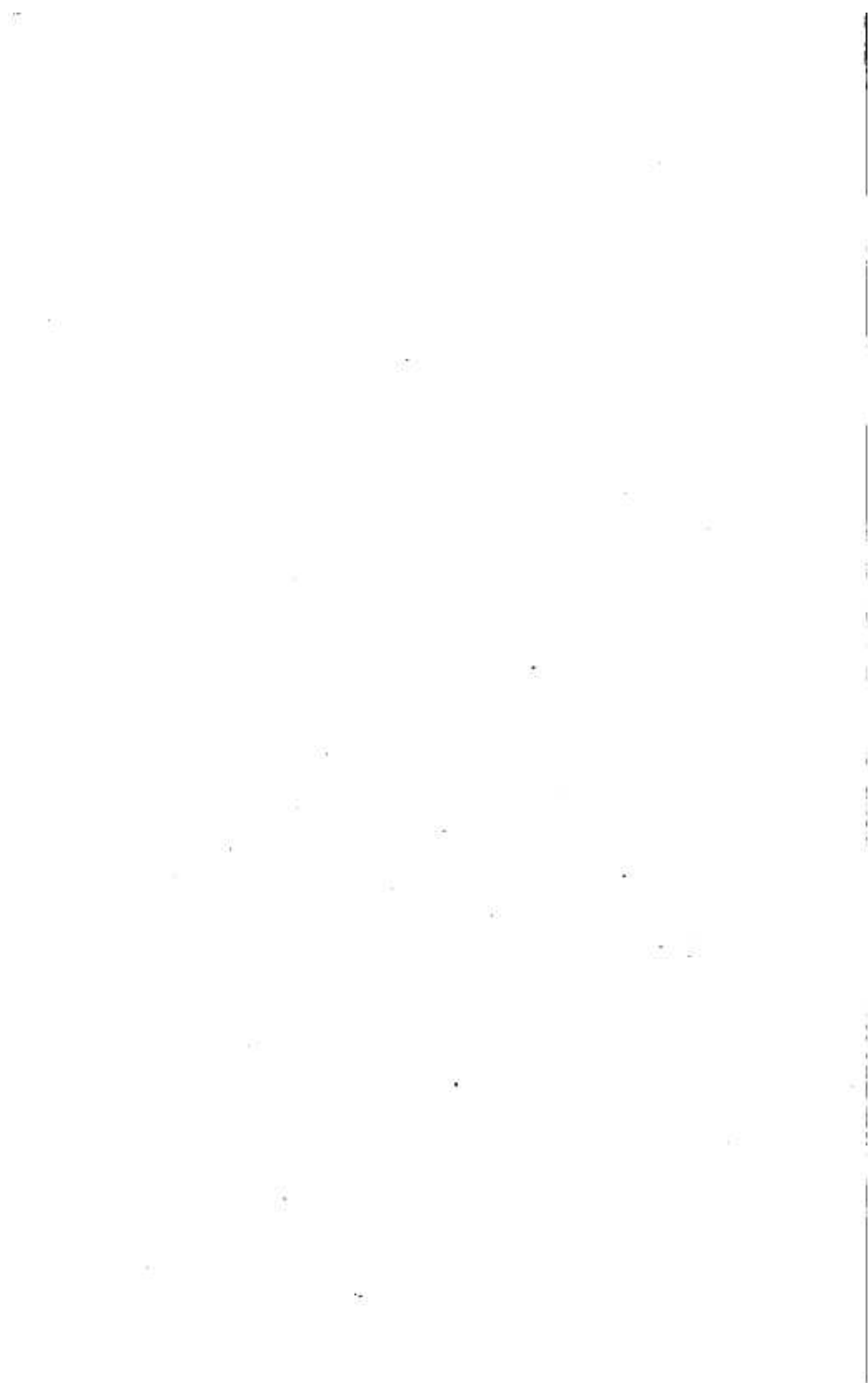
## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THE volume here translated appeared originally in 1904 as one of the excellent series of handbooks which, in addition to descriptive catalogues, are provided by the Berlin Museums for the guidance of visitors to their great collections. The handbook of the Egyptian Religion seemed especially worthy of a wide circulation. It is a survey by the founder of the modern school of Egyptology in Germany, of perhaps the most interesting of all the departments of this subject. The Egyptian religion appeals to some because of its endless variety of form, and the many phases of superstition and belief that it represents; to others because of its early recognition of a high moral principle, its elaborate conceptions of a life after death, and its connection with the development of Christianity; to others again no doubt because it explains pretty things dear to the collector of antiquities, and familiar objects in museums.

Professor Erman is the first to present the Egyptian religion in historical perspective; and it is surely a merit in his work that out of his profound knowledge of the Egyptian texts, he permits them to tell their own tale almost in their own words, either by extracts or by summaries. His pages are particularly free from theory, and no theory is needed to engage our attention when the facts and views disclosed are so attractive.

The author has written a special preface for the English edition, and has modified one or two points in his text as regards the degree in which burnt sacrifice was customary. A few of the illustrations that were in the original have been omitted, and their places taken by others. Mr. Hilton Price has especially to be thanked for his generosity in lending blocks employed in the catalogue of his collection.

F. LL. GRIFFITH.





## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book has no pretensions to erudition, neither is it one that will afford a systematic representation of its subject; still less is it exhaustive. My endeavour has been to exhibit to a wide circle of readers the development and decay of a great religion through more than three thousand years, and for this task I had only a limited space at my disposal. Any discussion of disputed points was thus out of the question, and I had also to withstand the temptation to linger over points of special interest. The most important phenomena could only be sketched in outline, and where I have cited details in order to render the picture more intelligible, I have been forced to choose almost at random from the abundant material which lay ready to my hand. Other writers undoubtedly would often have differed from me in their choice.

A greater difficulty lay in the immature condition of these studies. Of the religions of the ancient world there is perhaps no other for which we possess such an amount of material, so endless and impossible to grasp, as we do for this. It is in fact too great, and in addition to this our comprehension of the ancient religious writings is still very incomplete. All the insight and labour devoted by Brugsch, Budge, Lange, Lefébure, Lepage Renouf, Lepsius, Maspero, Moret, Naville, Turaieff, Wiedemann, and many others, to the investigation of Egyptian religion, or to its description, have hitherto resulted in little more than the preliminary orientation of this intricate domain, and it will require many more decades of hard work before we shall be able to obtain a clear view. At the present time, therefore, any one who wishes to construct a picture of Egyptian

religion must make the sketch complete all round, and in so doing must call imagination to his aid more frequently than is desirable. I must therefore ask that too much importance may not be attached to this book; I have represented the Egyptian religion as it appears to me after thirty years' study of its monuments, but I am aware that I am not in a position to insist strongly on every feature of the picture.

And one more remark. I considered it advisable to present this sketch of Egyptian Religion as it appears to an unprejudiced observer, who knows nothing of the theories of the modern science of religions; the reader will here find nothing of animism, or fetishism, of chthonic deities, nor yet of medicine men. The facts should first be established and without prejudice, before we attempt to fit them into a scientific system.

The illustrations to the German edition were drawn by Herr Alfred Bollacher, under the guidance of Professor Schäfer.

ADOLF ERMAN.

*Steglitz, April 1904.*

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