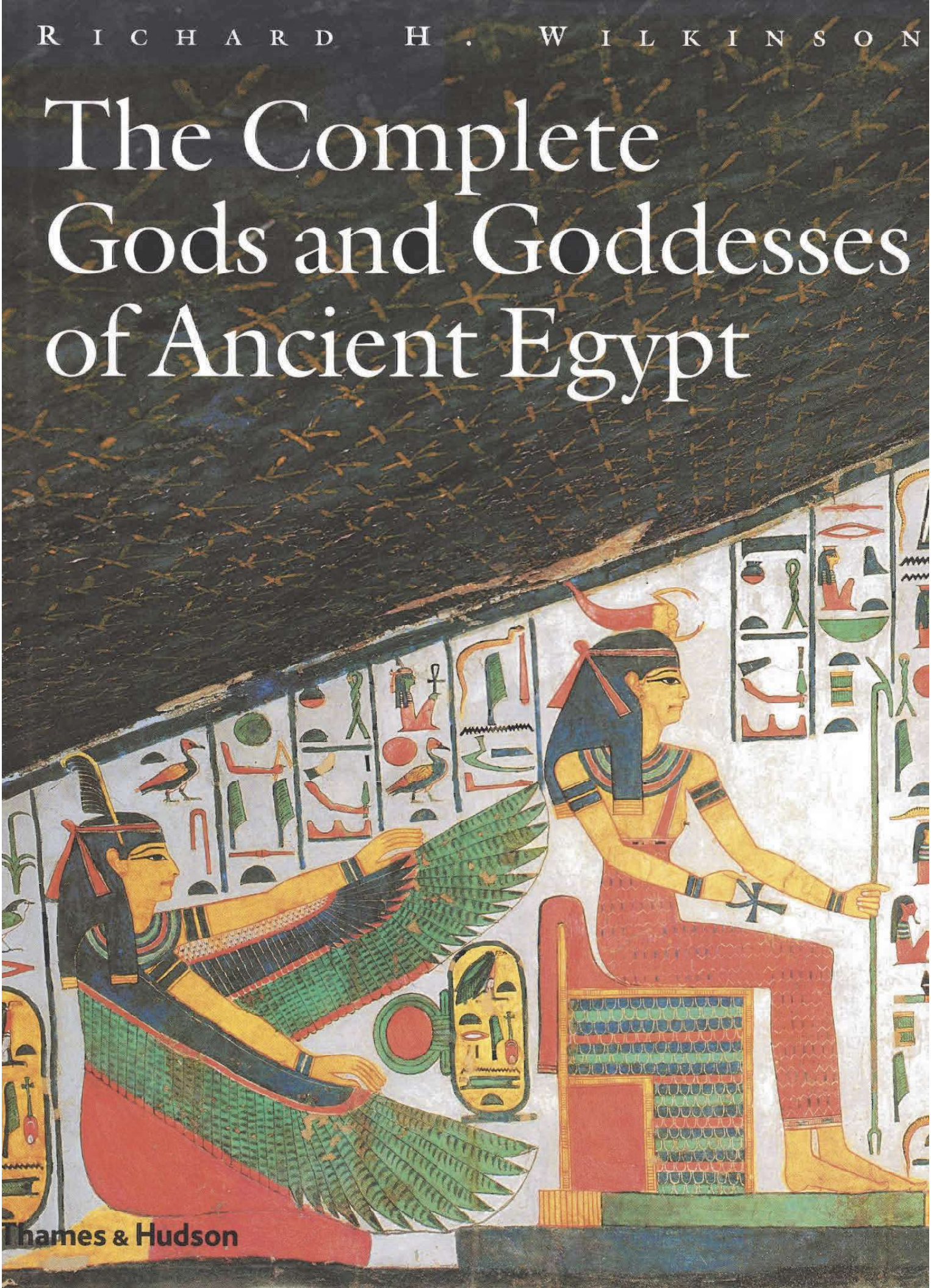
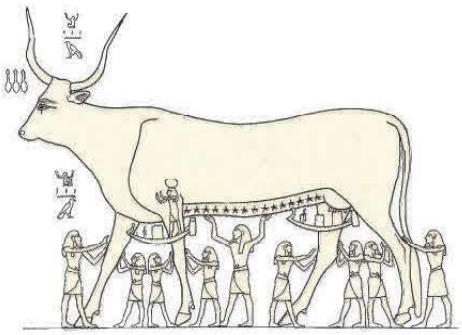
RICHARD H. WILKINSON

The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt



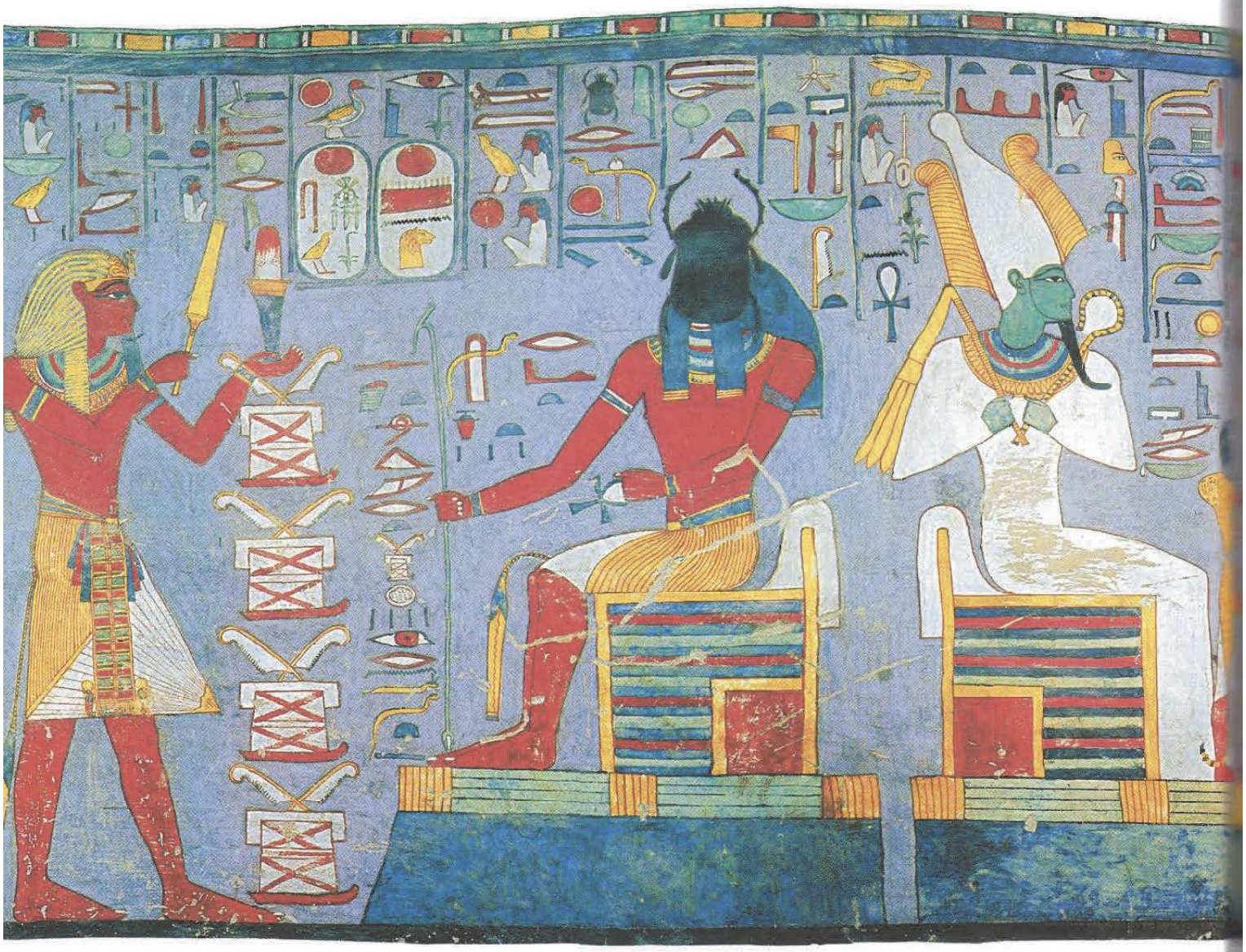
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So were gathered together…
All the gods and their kas *as well,*
Content and complete…

From the Memphite Theology

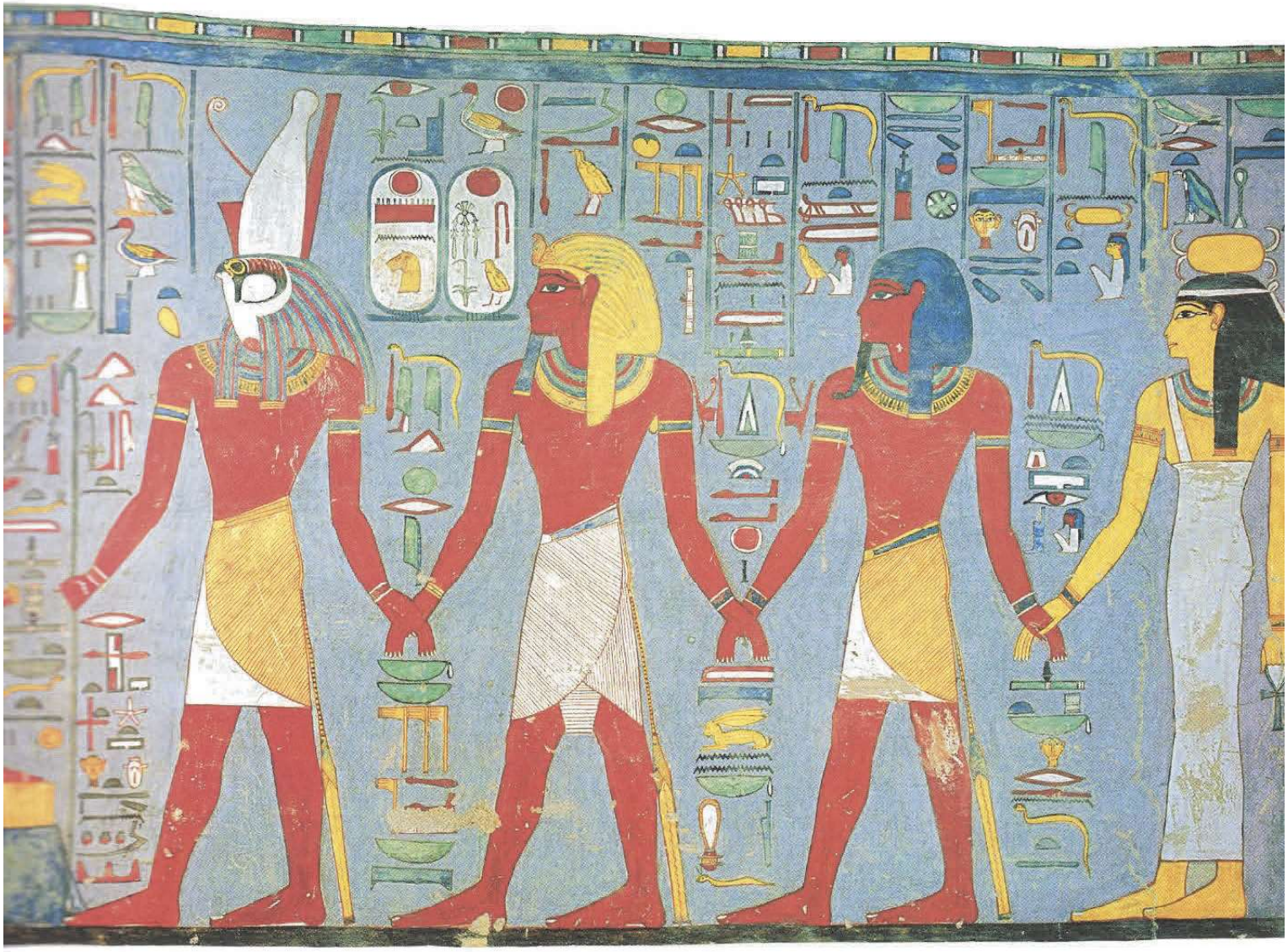
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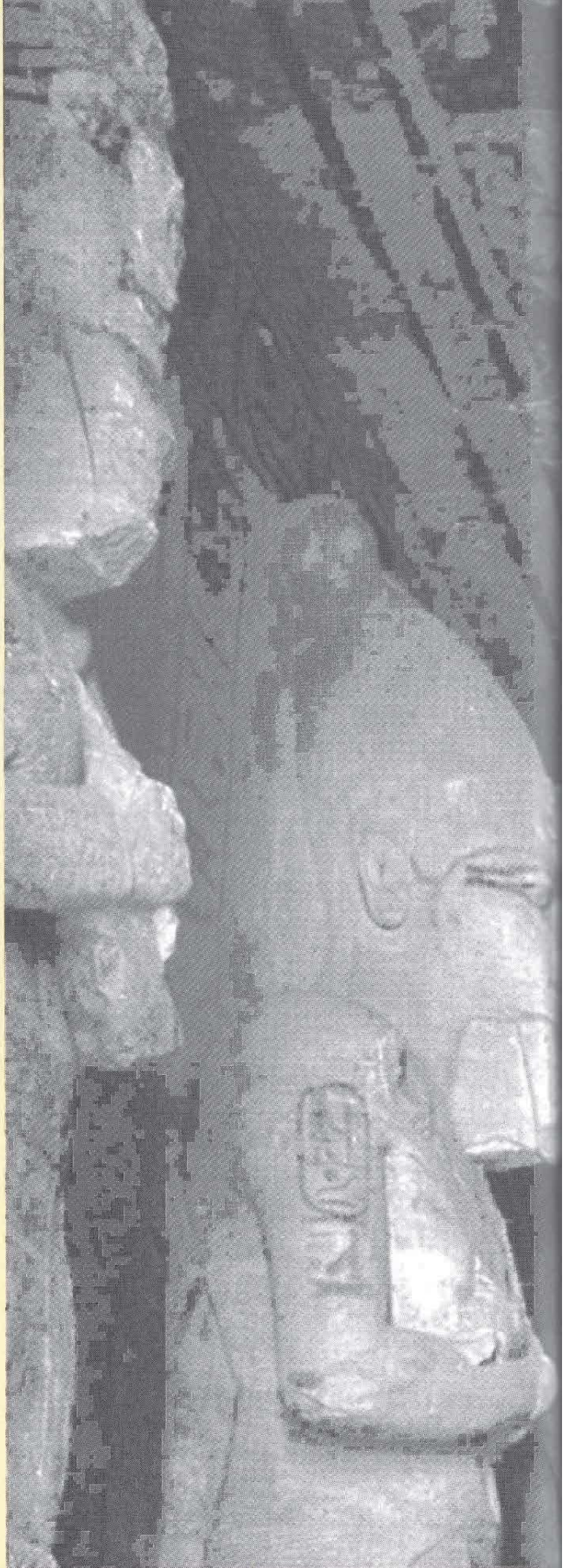
Goddesses of Ancient Egypt

Richard H. Wilkinson

With 338 illustrations, 132 in color



Thames & Hudson



Half-title: *The divine cow of the heavens and her supporting deities. Outermost shrine of Tutankhamun, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

Title page: *Ramesses I before the enthroned Khepri and Osiris – personifications of the solar and chthonic aspects of the Egyptian view of the cosmos. From the tomb of Ramesses I, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.*

Contents pages: *Caryatid pillars in the mortuary temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel associate the great monarch with the god Osiris through the king's stance and insignia.*

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Contents

Introduction:
Egyptian Religion and the Gods 6
Chronology 8
Map 9

I Rise and Fall of the Gods

Birth of the Gods 12
Rule of the Gods 16
Decline of the Gods 20

II Nature of the Gods

Forms of the Divine 26
Manifestations of the Gods 32
Egypt and Monotheism 36

III Worship of the Gods

Care of the Gods 42
Popular Religion and Piety 46
Relationships with the Divine 50

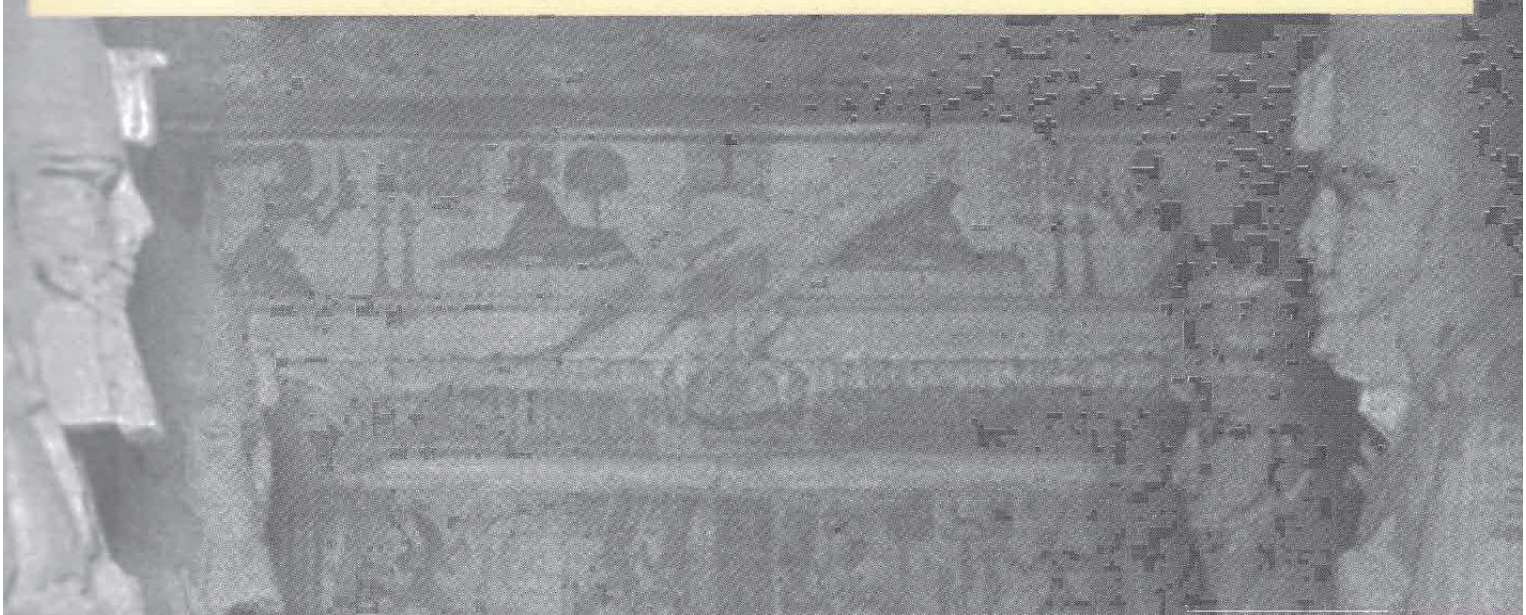
IV Kingship and the Gods

Between Gods and Men 54
Deceased and Divine 60
Kingship Among the Gods 64

V The Catalogue of Deities

Many Faces of the Divine 70
Groups of Deities 74
Male Anthropomorphic Deities 92
Female Anthropomorphic Deities 136
Mammalian Deities 170
Avian Deities 200
Reptile, Amphibian and Fish Deities 218
Invertebrate and Insect Deities 230
Inanimate Object Deities 236

Epilogue: A Lasting Legacy 242
Further Reading 244
Sources of Quotations 249
Illustration Credits 250
Acknowledgments 251
Index 252



Introduction: Egyptian Religion and the Gods



Three amulets representing (left to right) the goddess Taweret, the god Bes, and the god Thoth in baboon form. Late Period. University of Leipzig Museum.

The spiritual world created by the ancient Egyptians was a richly fascinating one which remains unique in the history of human religion. The character of that spiritual world was both mysterious and manifest, at once accessible and hidden, for although Egyptian religion was often shrouded in layers of myth and ritual it nevertheless permeated the ancient civilization of the Nile and ultimately shaped, sustained and directed Egyptian culture in almost every imaginable way. The deities of Egypt were present in the lives of pharaohs and citizens alike, creating a more completely theocratic society than any other of the ancient world. The truth behind Herodotus' statement that 'the Egyptians are more religious than any other people' is thus a broad one, encompassing literally hundreds of gods and goddesses, temples seemingly without end, and a mythology which was surpassing in its richness and complexity.

Like the members of any other human culture the ancient Egyptians were driven to find meaning in existence, but for them this goal was attained in theological ideas which posited a myriad gods that were believed to have created the world and to be involved in every aspect of its existence and continuance. The number of deities worshipped by the ancient Egyptians was indeed staggering, and almost 1,500 gods and goddesses are known by name, though fewer are known in detail. To the modern viewer this panoply of seemingly countless deities – including animal, human, hybrid and composite forms – with their kaleidoscopic symbols and attributes often appears strange and confusing at best and quite unintelligible at worst. Yet closer examination reveals a world of interacting gods and goddesses whose myths and representations weave an amazing tapestry, often of unexpected intellectual and artistic sophistication.



The 'Great Royal Wife' and 'Mistress of the Two Lands', Nefertari, presents a libation to the goddesses (centre right to left) Hathor, Serket and Maat. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Nefertari, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.

Our evidence for these deities is both ancient and extensive, comprising textual, architectural, representational and artifactual sources. Yet it is also surprisingly disjointed and fragmentary. Temples and tombs, the chief theatres for the enactment of religious ritual and the recording of religious beliefs, exist by the hundred and are the source of much of our knowledge of the ancient gods, though we lack temples from a number of periods and geographic areas. We learn also of Egypt's deities from the shrines, icons and other artifacts found in even the simplest homes at sites such as the ancient workmen's village at Deir el-Medina though, again, domestic settings are unfortunately underrepresented for many periods and areas. As a result of the uneven preservation of Egyptian sites and monuments, there are large gaps in the written texts at our disposal – leaving persistent questions regarding the gods and their worship. Nevertheless, the texts inscribed on the walls of Old Kingdom pyramids (which are the oldest religious writings in the world), and their later derivative texts, provide us with invaluable, if sometimes cryptic, evidence of the rich theological milieu of the ancient Egyptians.

Through the various sources at our disposal we know that some of Egypt's deities originated before the beginning of recorded time and survived to the very end of the ancient world – having been worshipped for fully three-fifths of recorded human history. Even when they were eventually replaced by later faiths, the gods of Egypt sometimes found new life, and their influence has persisted in many and remarkable ways – ranging from apparent precursors of minor religious motifs and stories to perhaps even the concept of monotheism itself.

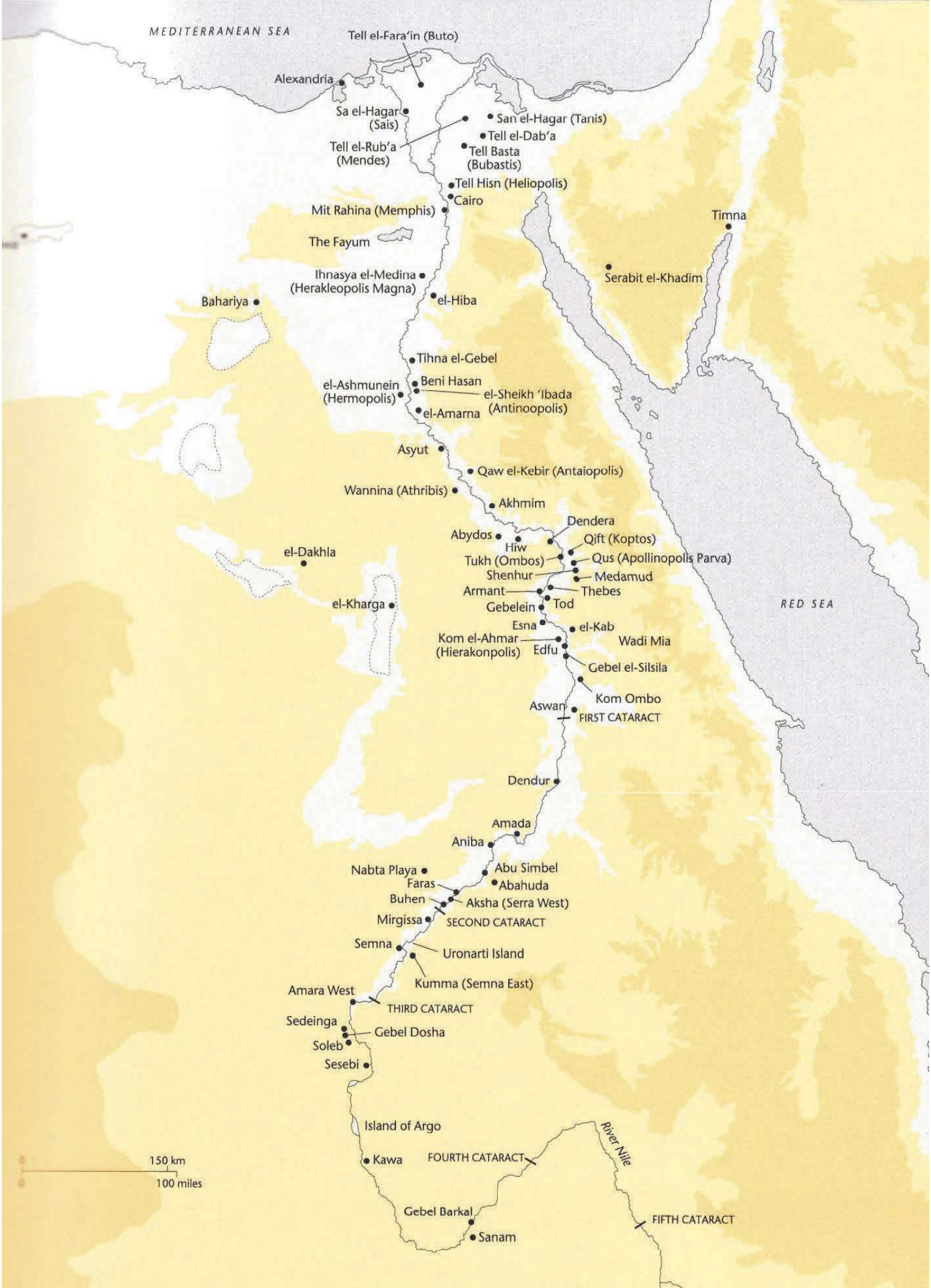


But in ancient times, for the Egyptians themselves, the gods were far more than the sum of all their myths and images. The monuments and artifacts which have survived give only glimpses of the great power of the Egyptian gods. While they lived in the minds of the ancient Egyptians their influence was prodigious. For many if not most Egyptians, they were the breath of life itself and it is only to the extent that we understand these ancient deities that we can understand the nature of ancient Egyptian culture and society: the lives and hoped-for afterlives of the Egyptians themselves.

Chronology of the Rulers

The precise dates of the Egyptian dynasties and of individual reigns are still the subject of much scholarly debate. The dates employed here are based largely on the chronology developed by Professor John Baines and Dr Jaromir Málek and put forward in their *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*. The so-called Amarna Period encompasses the reigns of Akhenaten, Tutankhamun and Ay in the 18th dynasty. Only the rulers discussed in the text are listed here.

Late Predynastic	**c. 3000 BC**
Early Dynastic Period	
1st dynasty	**2920–2770**
Narmer; Aha; Djer; Den; Semerkhet	
2nd dynasty	**2770–2649**
Raneb; Peribsen; Khasekhemwy	
3rd dynasty	**2649–2575**
Djoser	2630–2611
Old Kingdom	
4th dynasty	**2575–2465**
Sneferu	2575–2551
Khufu (Cheops)	2551–2528
Khafre (Chephren)	2520–2494
Menkaure (Mycerinus)	2490–2472
5th dynasty	**2465–2323**
Userkaf	2465–2458
Sahure	2458–2446
Shepseskare	2426–2419
Djedkare-Isesi	2388–2356
6th dynasty	**2323–2150**
7th/8th dynasties	**2150–2134**
First Intermediate Period	
9th/10th dynasties	**2134–2040**
11th dynasty (Theban)	**2134–2040**
Intef II	2118–2069
Middle Kingdom	
11th dynasty (all Egypt)	**2040–1991**
Montuhotep III	1997–1991
12th dynasty	**1991–1783**
Senwosret I	1971–1926
Senwosret III	1878–1841?
Amenemhet III	1844–1797
Amenemhet IV	1799–1787
Sobekneferu	1787–1783
13th dynasty	**1783–1640**
Wepwawetemsaf	
Sobekhotep	
14th dynasty	
Probably contemporary with the 13th or 15th dynasty	
Second Intermediate Period	
15th dynasty (Hyksos)	
16th dynasty	
Contemporary with 15th dynasty	
17th dynasty	**1640–1532**
New Kingdom	
18th dynasty	**1550–1307**
Ahmose	1550–1525
Tuthmosis III	1479–1425
Hatshepsut	1473–1458
Amenophis II	1427–1401
Tuthmosis IV	1401–1391
Amenophis III	1391–1353
Akhenaten	1353–1335
Tutankhamun	1333–1323
Ay	1323–1319
Horemheb	1319–1307
19th dynasty	**1307–1196**
Ramesses I	1307–1306
Sethos I	1306–1290
Ramesses II	1290–1224
Merenptah	1224–1214
Siptah	1204–1198
Tawosret	1198–1196
20th dynasty	**1196–1070**
Sethnakhte	1196–1194
Ramesses III	1194–1163
Ramesses V	1156–1151
Ramesses VI	1151–1143
Third Intermediate Period	
21st dynasty	**1070–945**
22nd dynasty	**945–712**
Sheshonq II	?–883
23rd dynasty	**c. 1070–712**
Osorkon III	873–745
24th dynasty	**c. 724–712**
25th dynasty	**770–712**
(Nubian and Theban area)	
Late Period	**712–332**
25th dynasty	**712–657**
Shabaka	712–698
26th dynasty	**664–525**
Psamtik I	664–610
27th dynasty	**525–404**
Darius I	521–486
28th dynasty	**404–399**
29th dynasty	**399–380**
30th dynasty	**380–343**
Nectanebo I	380–362
Nectanebo II	360–343
Graeco-Roman Period	**332 BC–AD 395**
Macedonian dynasty	**332–304**
Alexander the Great	332–323
Philip Arrhidaeus	323–316
Ptolemaic dynasty	**304–30**
Ptolemy I	304–284
Ptolemy III	246–221
Ptolemy IV	221–205
Ptolemy V	205–180
Cleopatra III	116–88
Cleopatra VII	51–30
Roman Era	**30 BC–AD 337**
Augustus	30 BC–AD 14
Tiberius	14–37
Diocletian	284–305
Byzantine Era	**337–641**
Theodosius	378–395
Valentinian III	425–455

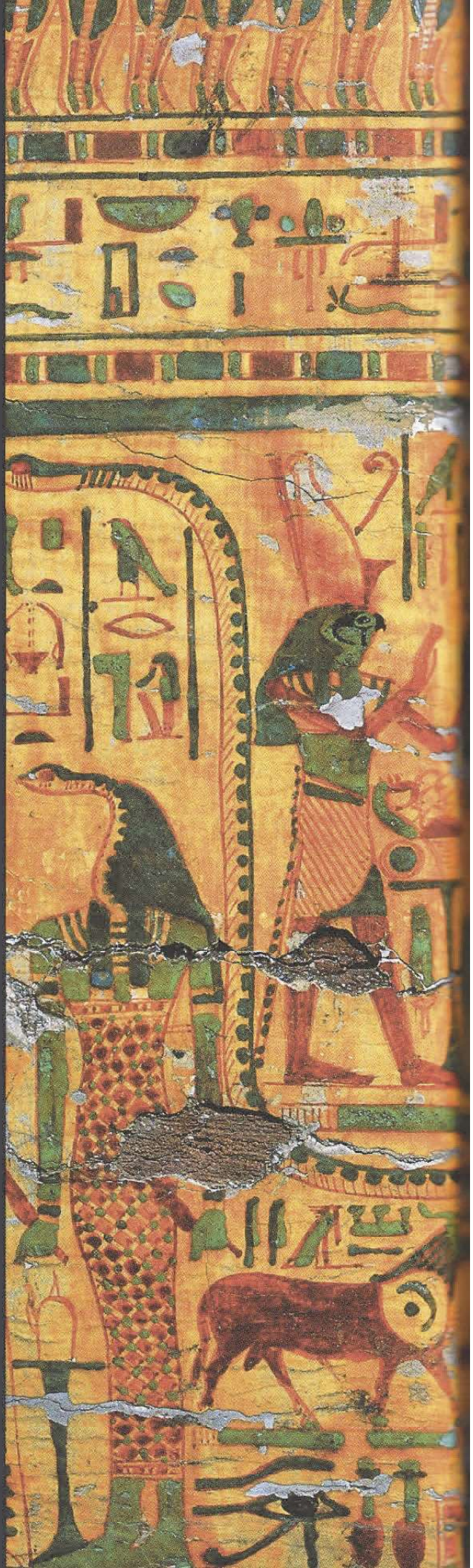

MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Tell el-Fara'in (Buto)
Alexandria
Sa el-Hagar (Sais)
San el-Hagar (Tanis)
Tell el-Dab'a
Tell el-Rub'a (Mendes)
Tell Basta (Bubastis)
Tell Hisn (Heliopolis)
Cairo
Mit Rahina (Memphis)
Timna
The Fayum
Serabit el-Khadim
Ihnasya el-Medina (Herakleopolis Magna)
el-Hiba
Bahariya
Tihna el-Gebel
el-Ashmunein (Hermopolis)
Beni Hasan
el-Sheikh 'Ibada (Antinoopolis)
el-Amarna
Asyut
Qaw el-Kebir (Antaiopolis)
Wannina (Athribis)
Akhmim
Dendera
Abydos
Hiw
Qift (Koptos)
el-Dakhla
Tukh (Ombos)
Qus (Apollinopolis Parva)
Shenhur
Medamud
Armant
Thebes
el-Kharga
Gebelein
Tod
RED SEA
Esna
el-Kab
Kom el-Ahmar (Hierakonpolis)
Wadi Mia
Edfu
Gebel el-Silsila
Kom Ombo
Aswan
FIRST CATARACT
Dendur
Amada
Aniba
Nabta Playa
Abu Simbel
Faras
Abahuda
Buhen
Aksha (Serra West)
Mirgissa
SECOND CATARACT
Semna
Uronarti Island
Kumma (Semna East)
Amara West
THIRD CATARACT
Sedeinga
Gebel Dosha
Soleb
Sesebi
Island of Argo
Kawa
FOURTH CATARACT
River Nile
Gebel Barkal
FIFTH CATARACT
Sanam
150 km
100 miles

'Hail Atum – who made the sky, who created that which exists…
Lord of all that is, who gave birth to the gods!'

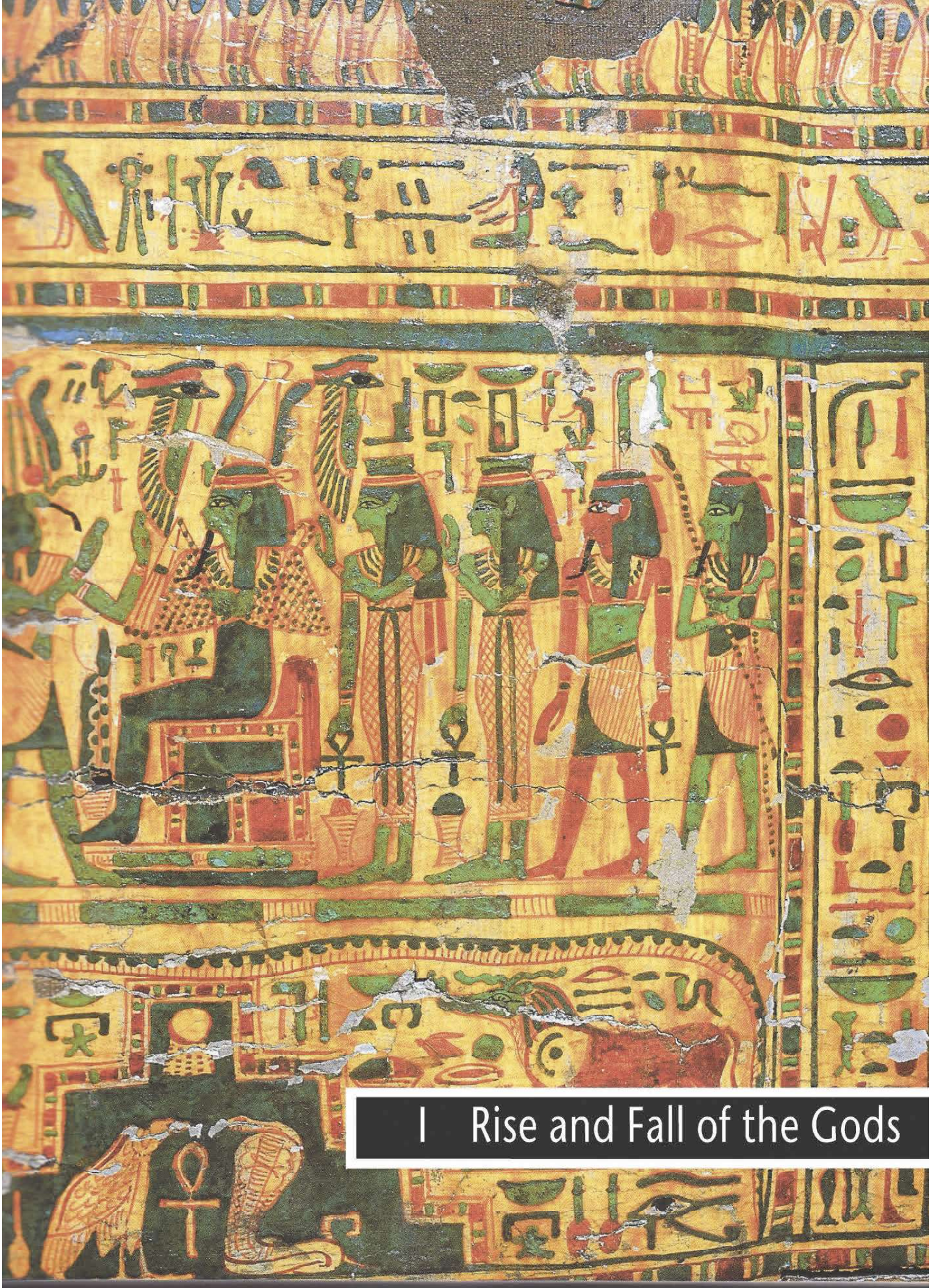
Book of the Dead, Spell 79

The origins of religion in ancient Egypt, and of the gods themselves, go back to dimly distant prehistoric times which may lie forever beyond our grasp in terms of any full degree of understanding. Yet, although we have no contemporary records to explain the evidence of these earliest prehistoric periods, archaeology and even myths recorded in later times have afforded us significant clues relevant to the birth of Egypt's gods. The evidence reveals a culture whose deities came into being as an inherent part of the world and as such could live and die and mythically were doomed to the same apocalyptic fate as the universe itself – time, for the gods, as for all other aspects of creation, would eventually run out.

But the tenure of the gods was still one of cosmic proportions and Egypt's deities, like those of most other cultures, held great power. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the myths of creation in which the development of the world was told in varying forms at Egypt's great religious centres. These stories exhibit a surprising underlying consistency of belief in deities which, while one with the universe itself, formed, shaped and ruled the physical world according to their own transcendent power.



The great god Osiris (seated) attended by (from left to right) Horus, Thoth, Isis, Nephthys, Shu and Heka. According to Egyptian mythology, Osiris was one of only two deities who had come into being who would eventually remain after the dissolution of the world. Detail, coffin of Nespawershefy, 21st dynasty, c. 984 BC, western Thebes. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



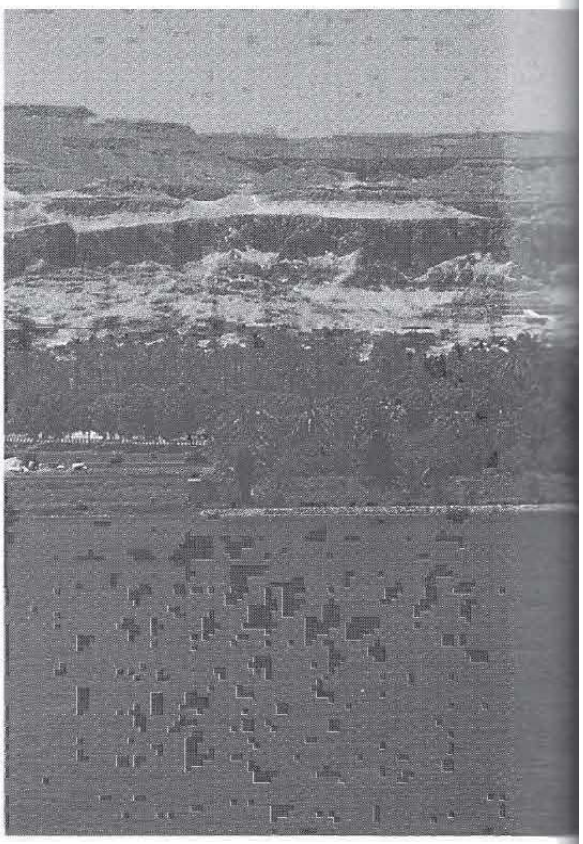
1 Rise and Fall of the Gods

Birth of the Gods

The genesis of the Egyptian gods goes far back into prehistoric times. These earliest beginnings occurred long before Egypt's existence as a nation state and the invention of writing, so we are forced to work with only non-written evidence, often from relatively uncertain contexts and settings. Although scholars of anthropology, prehistory and religion have struggled to analyze this formative stage in Egyptian religion, the available evidence remains difficult to interpret and is subject to differing opinions. Nevertheless, it would seem to suggest the presence of the concept of the sacred in the existence of apparent cult objects, in human and animal burials, and in areas where formal rituals appear to have been enacted. Whether such artifacts and sites actually reflect belief in a divine being or beings is unknown but, as various scholars have stressed, the care with which the dead were buried in the prehistoric period, and the afterlife belief implied by that care, certainly suggests that the necessary intellectual sophistication was present for such belief.



(Left) The 'Great White', an early baboon god from the Late Predynastic Period, c. 3000 BC. Egyptian Museum, Berlin.

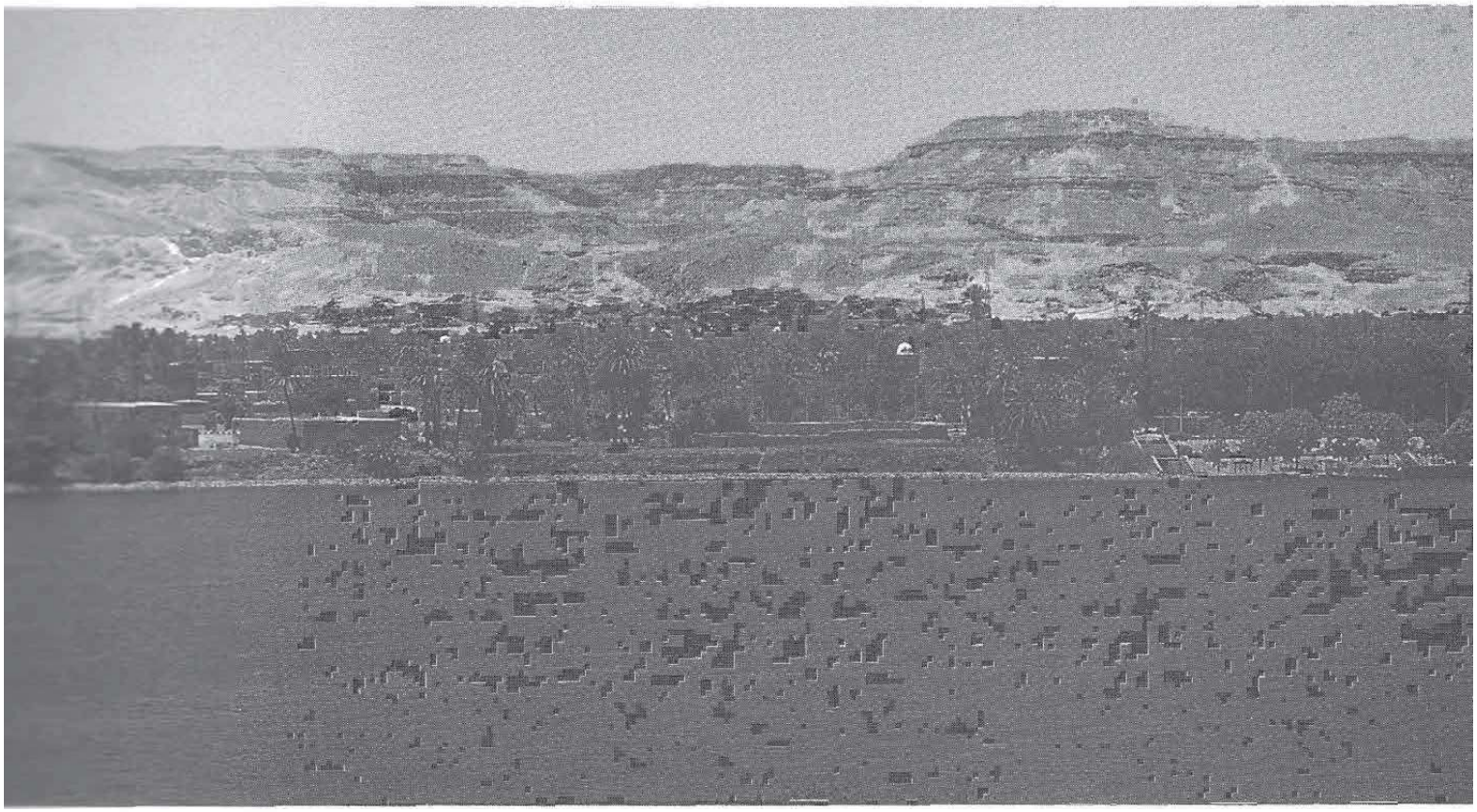


(Above right) The River Nile made the unification of Egypt possible at an early date and spread the knowledge and veneration of local deities over much greater areas. Western Thebes viewed from Luxor.

(Opposite) The celebrated Narmer Palette, obverse (right) and reverse (far right), shows that numerous zoomorphic deities and their symbols existed by the end of the Predynastic Period. The palette also shows the formal carrying of divine standards in the upper register of the obverse. From Hierakonpolis, c. 3000 BC. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Spirit, fetish, totem and god

Like most early humans the prehistoric peoples who dwelt around the Nile seem to have been reverential towards the powers of the natural world – both animate and inanimate. The former seem to have taken precedence in Egypt, although the recurrent star images found on the Gerzeh Palette and other artifacts from the later Neolithic Period (3600–3300 BC) may indicate that an astral cult developed early in Egypt. However, the first clear divinities we find in Egypt's archaeological record are in most cases animal deities such as the cow and the falcon: gods which represented aspects of the cosmos, yet which doubtless were believed to hold sway over human occupations and lives. By the late prehistoric period we find evidence of animals – especially dogs (or jackals), gazelles, cattle and rams – which were buried in what appear to have been ritual contexts, and also representations of animals which may signify some kind of animism or fetishism (the idea that animals, like humans, possessed 'spirits' which must be respected and propitiated). If these zoomorphic images are not merely totems of tribal groups and do signify manifestations of the divine in some way, they represent a significant stage in the development of the Egyptian gods. The idea that the divine might be manifest in animal form is a vital prerequisite for the animals which are shown acting in entirely human ways and which are the major representations of the Egyptian gods at the end of the Predynastic Period. The celebrated Narmer Palette which dates to this time









of transition (*c.* 3000 BC) provides clear examples of this situation. On its reverse the palette shows a falcon holding a captive and on the obverse a bull breaking down a city wall and trampling an enemy figure. Long-necked mythical serpopards are also depicted, and on both sides – doubtless indicating their importance – twin images of a cow-headed deity fusing human and bovine features surmount these scenes. Here and in other artifacts of this period we doubtless have zoomorphic deities, and it would seem that a good many were already extant.

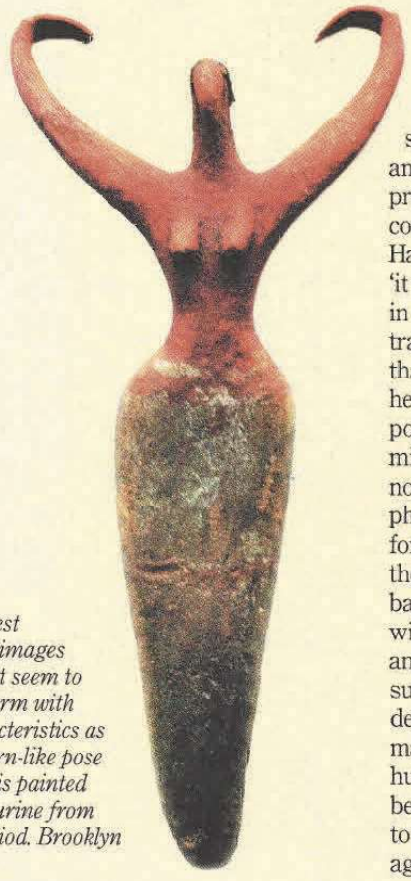
On the other hand, it is disputed whether deities in human form appeared in this early period or



(Opposite far left) Thousands of years after the birth of Egyptian religion, the horned headdresses of the great goddesses Hathor and Isis (shown here) reflect the importance of early cattle deities. 26th dynasty, from the tomb of Psamtik, Saqqara. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Opposite left) Several anthropomorphic deities existed in Egypt by the beginning of the historical period. Statue of the god Min from Coptos. Late Predynastic, c. 3150 BC. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Cattle Goddesses and Hunting Gods



Some of the earliest anthropomorphic images known from Egypt seem to fuse the human form with zoomorphic characteristics as in the curving, horn-like pose of the arms of this painted pottery female figurine from the Naqada II Period. Brooklyn Museum of Art.

In Egypt, cattle were particularly important in the development of religious belief. Recent study of the sites of Nabta Playa and Bir Kisseiba in the Sahara to the west of the upper Nile Valley has shown that cattle were perhaps venerated there long before they were domesticated around 7000 BC. The horn cores of cows were placed on burials in Tushka in Nubia as early as 10,000 BC, suggesting their association with afterlife beliefs and rituals, and this background fits well with the prevalence in dynastic Egypt of the imagery of cows in association with early goddesses such as Hathor, Nut and Neith. As Fekri Hassan has stressed, 'it is very likely that the concept of the cow goddess in dynastic Egypt is a continuation of a much older tradition of a primordial cow goddess or goddesses that emerged in the context of Neolithic cattle-herding in the Egyptian Sahara.' Hassan has also pointed out that as both the cow and woman gave milk, both shared an identity as a source of life and nourishment. It was also the mothers who gave physical birth and sustenance – in human or bovine form – that were the symbols of powers (such as the goddess Hathor) which brought the deceased back to life through spiritual rebirth. The burial pit with its food offerings was an image of the womb, and the contracted foetal position of the earliest surviving interments may have foreshadowed the desired rebirth. There is also evidence of very early male deities who seem to be associated with hunting and male fertility, and these gods may have been paired with the bovine goddesses in a parallel to the social conditions of the early Egyptian pre-agricultural, cattle-keeping and hunting cultures.

later. Crudely formed anthropomorphic figures of clay or ivory are found in the archaeological record of the Naqada Period and even earlier, but although they have been interpreted as deities, extensive study by Peter J. Ucko showed that a wide variety of uses and meanings of these figures is likely and none can be certainly accepted as representing a deity. By the beginning of the historical period we do have evidence of deities such as Min and Neith being worshipped in human form, although the concept of anthropomorphic deities seems to have been adopted only slowly in Egypt and was, in one sense, never complete, as Egyptian gods and goddesses frequently were viewed as hybrid forms with the heads or bodies of animals throughout Egyptian history. The goddess Hathor, for example, appears to have been one of the first deities to be given anthropomorphic form, but even she retained the horns of her sacred animal, the cow, and was frequently depicted in bovine form millennia after her appearance.

Primal and political needs

The development of the concept of individualized deities who held power over specific events and natural conditions is usually seen as concurrent with the development of the desire to gain some kind of control over the world and human vulnerability. In this the needs of early human societies were the same everywhere – and did not particularly change throughout history – though the immediate vulnerability of ancient humans to attacks by wild animals and the forces of nature may have gradually given way to the awareness of longer-term needs such as freedom from pain and want.

Once a central government arose around 3000 BC, perceived and real needs may have changed rapidly for the ancient population of the Nile Valley. National deities came into existence as well as the cult of the divine king; and as John Baines has pointed out, the emergence of monarchy and the resultant origin of the Egyptian state effectively transformed ancient religion by providing a new focus which unified its different goals and needs. Indeed, it might be said that from this point forward, the infancy of Egypt's deities had ended and more than 3,000 years of subsequent historical development would fail to radically change the underlying nature of Egyptian religion.

Rule of the Gods

It is one of the ironies of ancient Egyptian religion that although we must cope with a dearth of archaeological evidence regarding the origin of the gods, Egyptian texts of the later periods contain many clear yet often seemingly contradictory accounts of their mythic genesis, and rule of the cosmos. In recent years, many Egyptologists have come to feel that these varying accounts may not simply reflect the conflicting traditions of different cult centres, as has long been assumed, but can instead be seen as different aspects of an underlying understanding of how the world and its creator gods came into being. Certainly, there was no single, unified Egyptian myth of creation, but the major cosmogonies (stories of the origins of the universe) and theogonies (stories of the origins of the gods) associated with the most important cult centres may be more alike than is at first apparent.

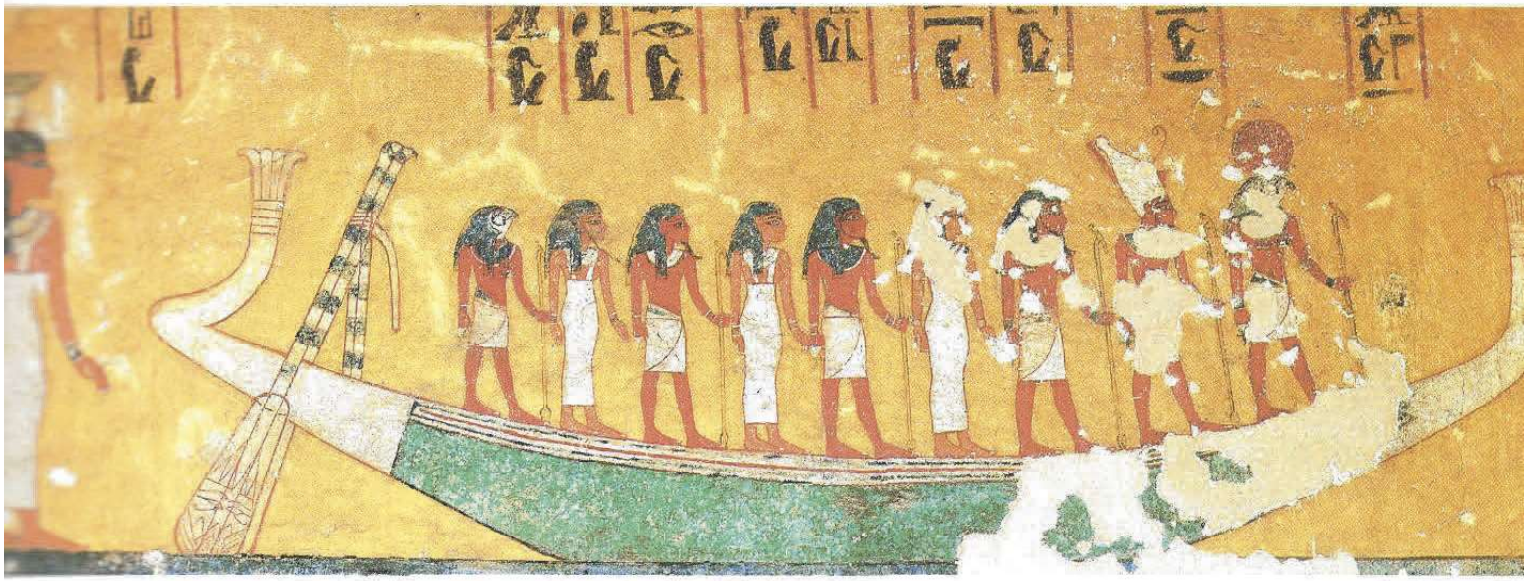
Latent power: the Hermopolitan view

At Hermopolis in Middle Egypt there existed a developed myth of creation by means of eight original deities – the so-called 'Ogdoad' or 'group of eight' who represented aspects of the original cosmos (see p. 77). Although most of the surviving textual evidence for this view of creation comes from the Ptolemaic Period, the ancient name of Hermopolis, Khemnu or 'eight town', is attested from the 5th dynasty (and may well go back earlier), showing the antiquity of the myth.

According to the Hermopolitan view the eight primordial deities existed in four pairs of male and female, each associated with a specific aspect or element of the pre-creation: Nun (or Nu) and Naunet, Water; Heh and Hauhet, Infinity; Kek and Kauket, Darkness; Amun and Amaunet, Hiddenness. These original 'elements' were believed to be inert yet to contain the potential for creation. James Hoffmeier has shown that interesting similarities exist between these elements and the conditions listed as immediately prior to the creation account in the biblical book of Genesis. In Egypt, however, the members of the Ogdoad were regarded as distinct divine entities and their names were grammatically masculine and feminine to reflect the equating of creation with sexual union and birth. They were



Remains of a temple dedicated to the gods of Hermopolis and Heliopolis by Ramesses II at the site later called Antinoopolis in Middle Egypt.



called the 'fathers' and 'mothers' of the sun god, since this deity was the focal point of ongoing creation in the Hermopolitan world view – as he was elsewhere.

Just as the beginning of the annual season of growth was marked in Egypt by the Nile's receding inundation and the emergence of high points of land from the falling river, so the Egyptians viewed the original creation event as occurring when the primordial mound of earth (see Tatenen) rose from the waters of the First Time. It was said that a lotus blossom (see Nefertem) then rose from the waters or from the same primeval mound; and it was from this flower that the young sun god emerged bringing light into the cosmos, and with it the beginning of time and all further creation.

The power of the sun god: the Heliopolitan view

Heliopolis, the chief centre of solar worship, produced a somewhat different mythic system built around the so-called Ennead (see p. 78) or 'group of nine' deities which consisted of the sun god and eight of his descendants. The Heliopolitan theologians naturally stressed the role of the sun god in their creation stories which focus, as a result, not so much on the inert aspects of preexistence but on the dynamic aspects of the resultant creation itself. The form of the sun god usually associated with this creation was Atum (see p. 98), who was sometimes said to have existed within the primeval waters 'in his egg' as a way of explaining the origin of the god. At the moment of creation Atum was said to have been born out of the primordial flood as 'he who came into being by himself', thus becoming the source of all further creation. The god next produced two children, Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture), from himself. Several versions of the story exist, but in all of them Atum's children are produced through the exhalation of the god's body fluids or



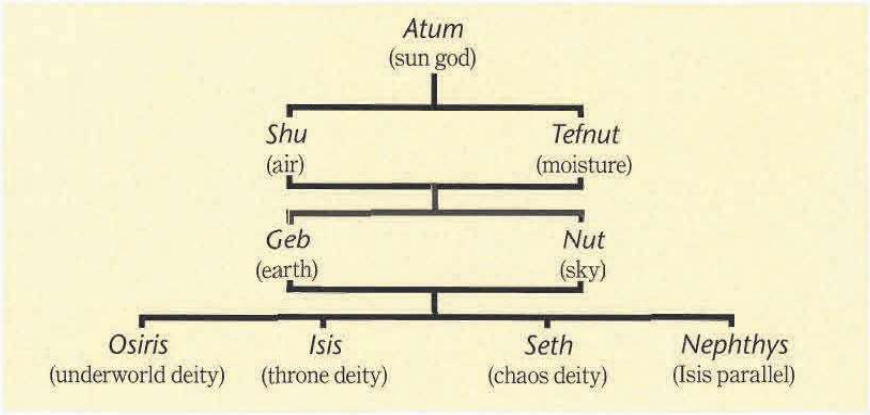
(Above) One variant of the Great Ennead or 'group of nine deities' which here consists of (right to left) the sun god Re-Horakhty with Atum and his descendants Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis and Horus. 18th dynasty. Tomb of Ay, western Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

(Left) A god raises the disk of the sun from the earth into the heavens. Central to the Heliopolitan theology, the sun also played a role in all Egyptian creation accounts. Late Period papyrus. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

mucus – either through the metaphor of masturbation, spitting or sneezing.

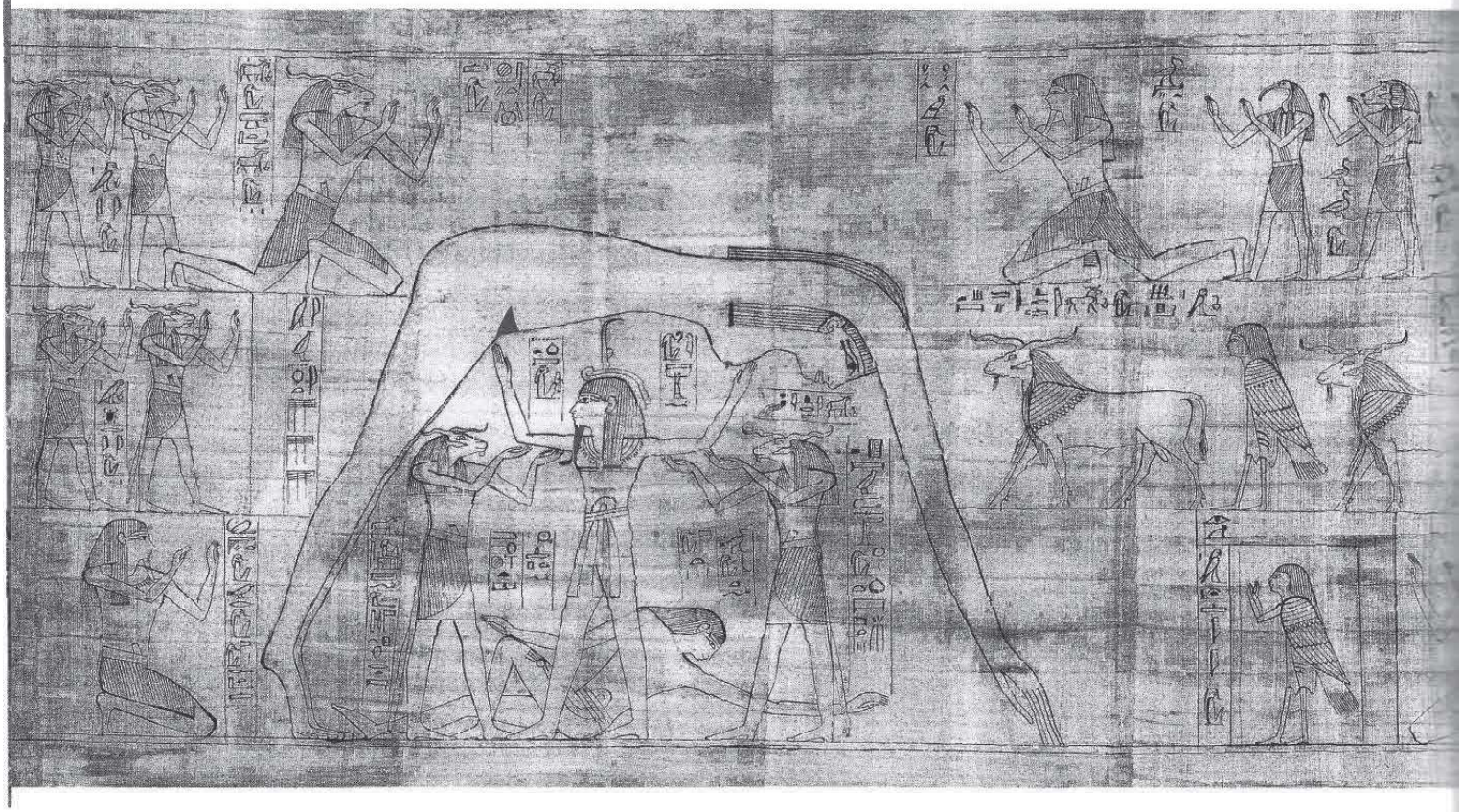
In turn, this first pair produced their own children, Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), who took their respective places below and above their parents, giving the creation its full spatial extent. Geb and Nut then produced the deities Osiris and Isis, Seth and Nephthys who viewed from one perspective represented the fertile land of Egypt and the surrounding desert, so that the key elements of the Egyptian universe were completed at this time. Frequently the god Horus, son and heir of Osiris and the deity most closely associated with kingship, was added to this group, thus supplying the link between the physical creation and societal structures. All these aspects, however, were viewed as simply extensions of the original coming into being of the sun god who lay at the heart of this world view and who was thus 'the father of all' and 'ruler of the gods'.

(Below) The air god Shu, assisted by other deities, supports the sky goddess Nut above her husband, the earth god Geb. 21st/22nd dynasty. Vignette from the Book of the Dead of Nesitanebtasheru. British Museum.

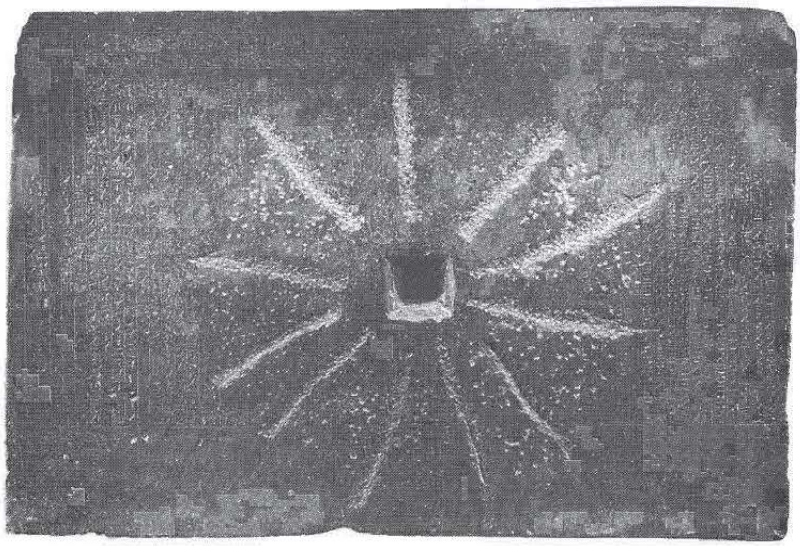


The power of thought and expression: the Memphite view

While the scholars of Heliopolis focused mainly o the emergence and development of the sun go Atum, the priests of nearby Memphis looked a creation from the perspective of their own god Pta As the god of metalworkers, craftsmen and arch tects it was natural that Ptah was viewed as th great craftsman who made all things. But there wa also another, much deeper, link between Ptah an the creation of the world which set the Memphi view of creation apart. The so-called Memphi Theology which is preserved on the Shabaka Sto in the Egyptian collection of the British Museu reveals this important aspect of the Memphite the logical system. While the inscription dates to th 25th dynasty it was copied from a much earli source, apparently of the early 19th dynas though its principles may have dated to even earli times. The text alludes to the Heliopolitan creati account centred on the god Atum, but goes on t claim that the Memphite god Ptah preceded the su god and that it was Ptah who created Atum and ul mately the other gods and all else 'through his hea and through his tongue'. The expression alludes t the conscious planning of creation and its executi through rational thought and speech, and this sto of creation *ex nihilo* as attributed to Ptah by th priests of Memphis is the earliest known examp of the so-called 'logos' doctrine in which the wor is formed through a god's creative speech. As suc it was one of the most intellectual creation myths t arise in Egypt and in the ancient world as a whole.



lies before, and in line with, the philosophical concepts found in the Hebrew Bible where 'God said, let there be light, and there was light' (Genesis 1:3), and the Christian scriptures which state that 'In the beginning was the Word [logos]...and the word was God...all things were made by him...' (John 1:1, 3). Like Atum, however, Ptah was also viewed as combining male and female elements within himself. This is seen in early texts, and in the latest period of Egyptian history the name of the god was written acrophonically as *pet-ta-heh* or p(et)+t(a)+h(eh) as though he were supporting the sky (*pet*) above the earth (*ta*) in the manner of the Heh deities (see p. 109), but also bridging and combining the female element of the sky and the male element of the earth in the androgynous manner of the primordial male-female duality Ptah-Naunet.





(Above) The Shabaka Stone bears an inscription which is our main source of knowledge of the creation myth developed by the priests of Ptah at Memphis. The stone, which was later used for grinding, dates to the 25th dynasty, c. 700 BC. British Museum.

(Left) The god Ptah who was said to have brought forth the world through thought and creative speech. Graeco-Roman Period. Decorated block, Karnak.

Mythic variants

As much as these three systems of cosmogony and theogony differ in their details and in the stress placed upon differing deities by their own cults, it is clear that they all share a similar approach to creation. Although the differing approaches were apparently never combined into one unified myth, stories existed for many of the individual myths which fitted into the same overall framework. In the stories stressing the solar origin of creation, for example, we find variants which proclaimed that the sun god came into being as a hawk or falcon (see p. 205) or as a phoenix (see p. 212), in the form of a child (see p. 133), a scarab beetle (see p. 230) or some other creature, but these all originated from the primeval waters or from the mound which rose from them. There are also variants of the manner in which the monad (the prime, indivisible entity) is said to have produced the rest of creation – a Middle Kingdom text found on coffins at el-Bersheh states of the 'All-lord': 'I brought into being the gods from my sweat, and men are the tears of my eye'; but these do not differ radically from those of Heliopolis considered above. To some extent all these stories appear as kaleidoscopic variations of core mythic elements, and may indicate an effort on the part of the Egyptian theologians to incorporate deities which had arisen in different parts of Egypt, or at different times, into existing mythic frameworks. It is often the nature of the creator deities and the basis of their power which is at issue in the varying stories of the origin and rule of the gods.

Decline of the Gods

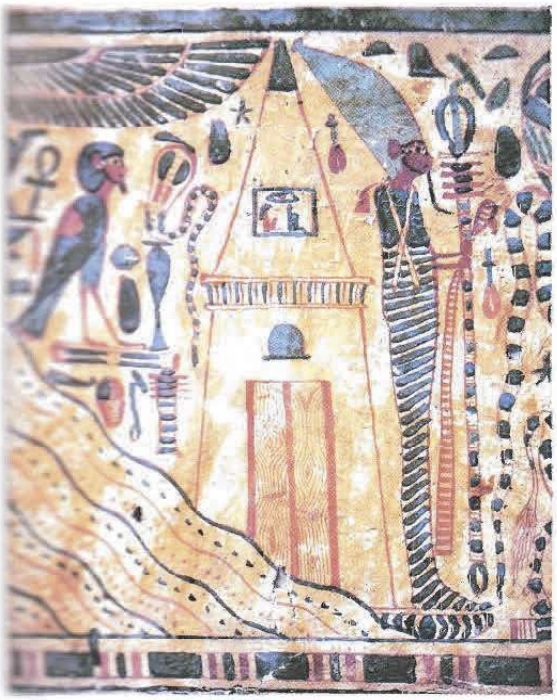
The Egyptians' ideas of the origin and nature of the cosmos help us to understand the ultimate decline of their deities – for the inherent vulnerability of the gods is an integral part of Egyptian mythology and one which has important ramifications for our understanding of the ancient religion. Perhaps as Egypt's gods were progressively anthropomorphized they increasingly took on the weaknesses and limitations of their human subjects. However, according to Egyptian theological speculation, the gods themselves could, and would, eventually die – though the evidence for this must be carefully assessed and understood in context.

Even gods can die

A number of Egyptian texts show that although the gods were not considered to be mortal in the usual sense, they could nevertheless die. This is clearly implied in the so-called 'Cannibal Hymn' of the Pyramid Texts, and is of great importance in the development of even some of the greatest cults of Egyptian religion – particularly those of the nether-world god Osiris and the sun god Re. Although the Egyptian texts do not ever specifically say that Osiris died – almost certainly because such a statement would be believed to magically preserve the reality of the god's death – they, and later Classical commentators, do clearly show that Osiris was slain at the hands of his antagonist Seth, and was mummified and buried. The great sun god Re was thought to grow old each day and to 'die' each night (though for the same reason, specific mention of the god's death is not found), and then to be born or resurrected each day at dawn. This concept is clearest in late evidence such as texts found in the temples of Ptolemaic date, but it was doubtless an



Despite his divinity, the death of the god Osiris plays a central role in Egyptian mythology. He is mourned by his sisters Nephthys and Isis as he lies on a funerary bier in this detail of a Roman Period gilt coffin. Graeco-Roman Period, c. 1st century BC. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



idea long speculated on by the Egyptians and is implicit in many of the representations and texts found in New Kingdom royal tombs. It is also found in several Egyptian myths which describe the sun god as immensely old and clearly decrepit. One spell from the Coffin Texts includes an overt threat that the sun god might die (CT VII 419), showing that the idea of his demise extends at least as far back as Middle Kingdom times.

Divine demise

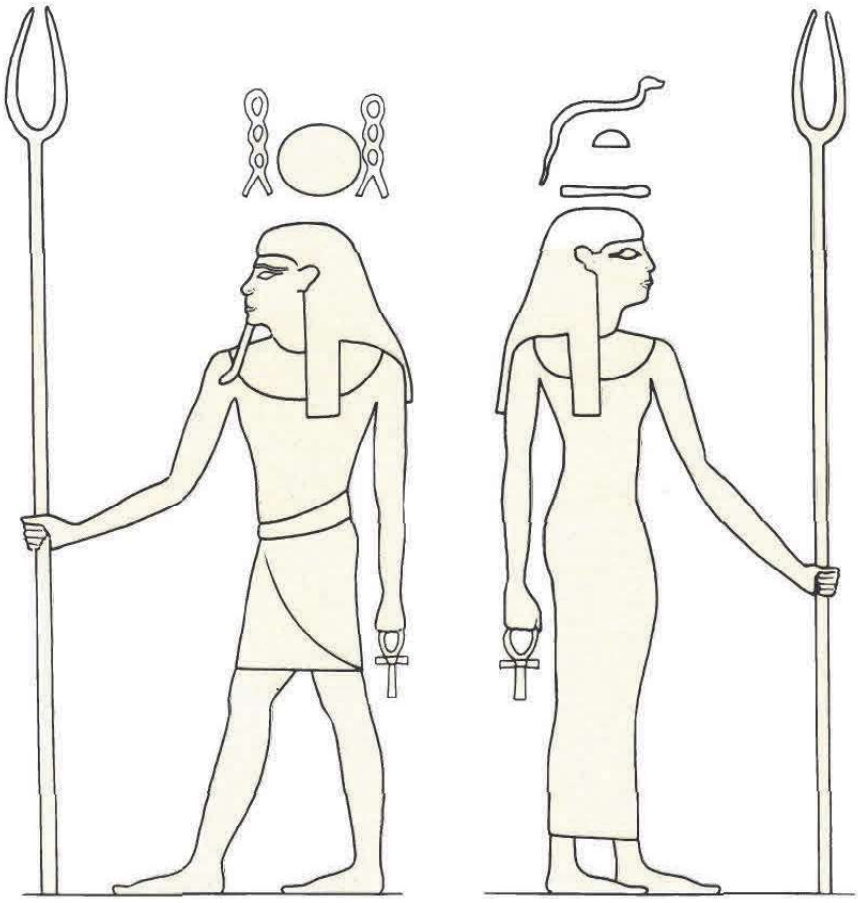
The principle of divine demise applies, in fact, to all Egyptian deities. Texts which date back to at least the New Kingdom tell of the god Thoth assigning fixed life spans to humans and gods alike, and Spell 154 of the Book of the Dead unequivocally states that death (literally, 'decay' and 'disappearance') awaits 'every god and every goddess'. Thus, when the New Kingdom Hymn to Amun preserved in Papyrus Leiden I 350 states that 'his body is in the west', there can be no doubt that this common Egyptian metaphorical expression refers to the god's dead body. Scholars such as François Daumas and Ragnhild Finnestad have shown that there are clues in late Egyptian temples that the innermost areas were regarded as the tombs of the gods. There are also various concrete references to the 'tombs' of certain gods with some sites – such as Luxor and western Thebes – being venerated as such from New Kingdom times at least. But all this evidence must be viewed in its proper context, for death need not imply the cessation of existence. From the Egyptian perspective life emerged from death just as death surely followed life and there was no compelling reason to exempt the gods from this cycle. This idea was aided by the fact that the Egyptians distinguished two views of eternity: eternal continuity (*djet*) and eternal recurrence (*neheh*). This is clear in statements such as that found in the Coffin Texts, 'I am the one Atum created – I am bound for my place of eternal sameness – It is I who am Eternal Recurrence' (CT 15). The gods could thus die and still remain in the ongoing progression of time. As Erik Hornung has stressed, the mortality of Egyptian gods 'enables them to become young again and again, and to escape from the disintegration that is the inevitable product of time'.

The end of time

Ultimately, a final end did await the gods. In Egyptian mythology it is clear that only the elements from which the primordial world had arisen would eventually remain. This apocalyptic view of the end of the cosmos and of the gods themselves is elaborated upon in an important section of the Coffin Texts in which the creator Atum states that eventually, after millions of years of differentiated creation, he and Osiris will return to 'one place', the undifferentiated condition prevailing before the creation of the world (CT VII 467–68). In the Book of the Dead this 'end of days' is even more clearly described in a famous dialogue between Atum and Osiris in which, when Osiris mourned the fact that he would eventually be isolated in eternal darkness, the god Atum comforted him by pointing out that only the

(Left) The god Osiris, wrapped in a mummy's bandages, stands beside a stylized tomb. Detail of coffin decoration. 21st dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Below) Neheh (recurrent time) and Djet (continuous time) personified as a god and goddess representing differing aspects of eternity in ancient Egyptian thought. Detail, outer shrine of Tutankhamun. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



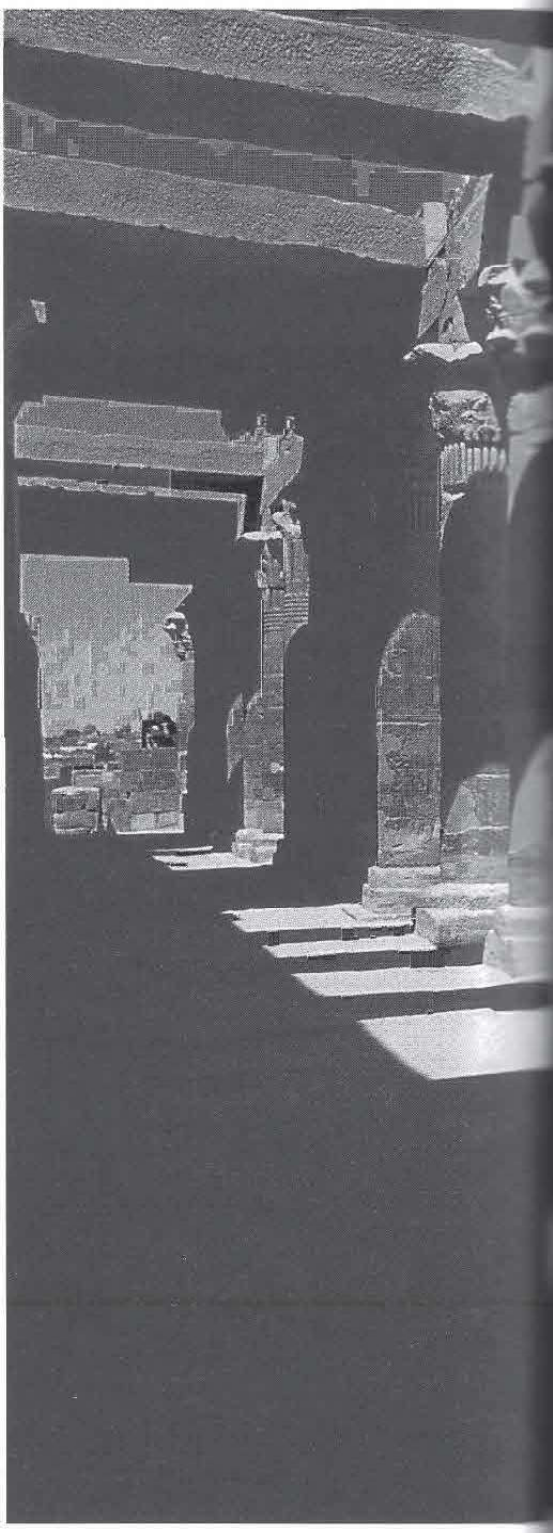
two of them would survive when the world eventually reverted to the primeval ocean from which all else arose. Then, it is said, Atum and Osiris would take the form of serpents (symbolic of unformed chaos) and there would be neither gods nor men to perceive them (BD 175). Despite their seemingly endless cycles of birth, ageing, death and rebirth, the gods would finally perish in the death of the cosmos itself, and there would exist only the potential for life and death within the waters of chaos.

Twilight of the gods

Historically, a veritable Götterdämmerung also awaited the Egyptian gods. The eventual rise of Christianity and later of Islam spelled doom for the old pagan religion, but it did not die easily. In AD 383 pagan temples throughout the Roman Empire were closed by order of the Emperor Theodosius and a number of further decrees, culminating in those of Theodosius in AD 391 and Valentinian III in AD 435, sanctioned the actual destruction of pagan religious structures. Soon most of Egypt's temples were shunned, claimed for other use, or actively destroyed by zealous Christians, and the ancient gods were largely deserted. But signs of their tenacity are evident in many historical records.



Isis-Aphrodite, a form of the ancient goddess widely worshipped in the Roman Period. Isis was one of the last of Egypt's deities to survive historically. University of Leipzig Museum.



As late as AD 452, under a treaty between the Roman government and native peoples to the south of Egypt, pilgrims travelled north to the temple of Philae and took from there the statue of the goddess Isis to visit her relatives, the gods in Nubia. This situation was remarkable, as Eugene Cruz-Uribe has stressed, because it occurred at a time when Roman law had prohibited the worship of the old cults and officially endorsed Christianity as the only religion of Egypt and the Empire. Clearly, in at least this outpost, and perhaps in others, and through secret worship, the old deities hung on for a time. By AD 639 when Arab armies claimed Egypt they found only Christians and the disappearing legacy of ancient gods who had ruled one of the greatest centres of civilization for well over 3,000 years. Yet, while the old gods had almost vanished, they left influences which would persist for thousands more years, as the Epilogue to this book shows.

The temple of Isis at Philae was one of the last strongholds of Egyptian paganism, functioning long after most temples had been closed by imperial decree.

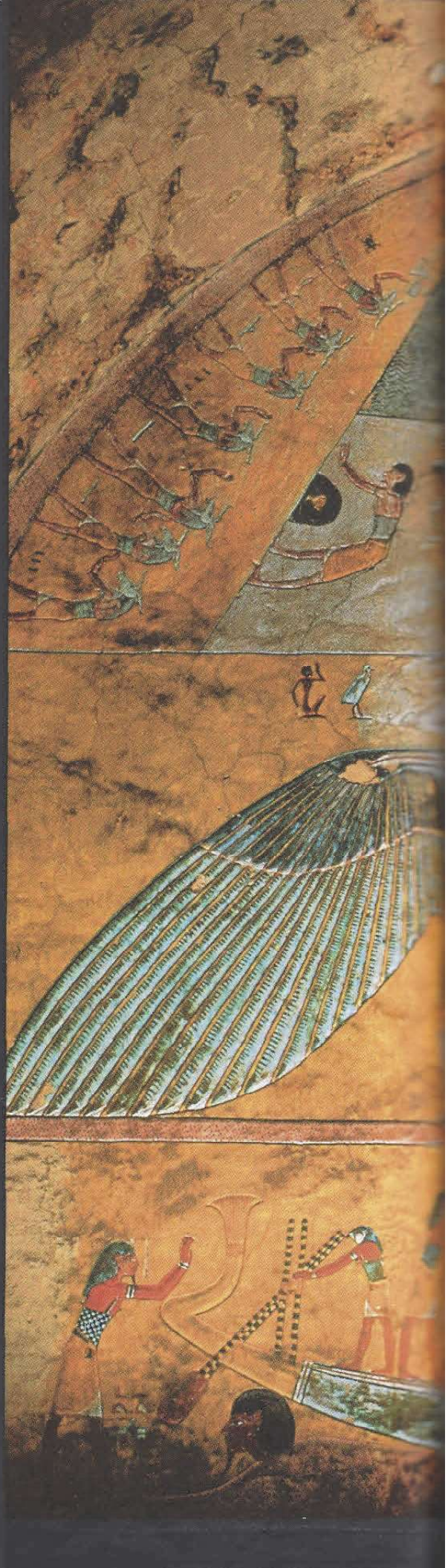


'Secret of development but glittering of forms,
wonderful god of many developments
All gods boast in him,
in order to magnify themselves in his perfection…'

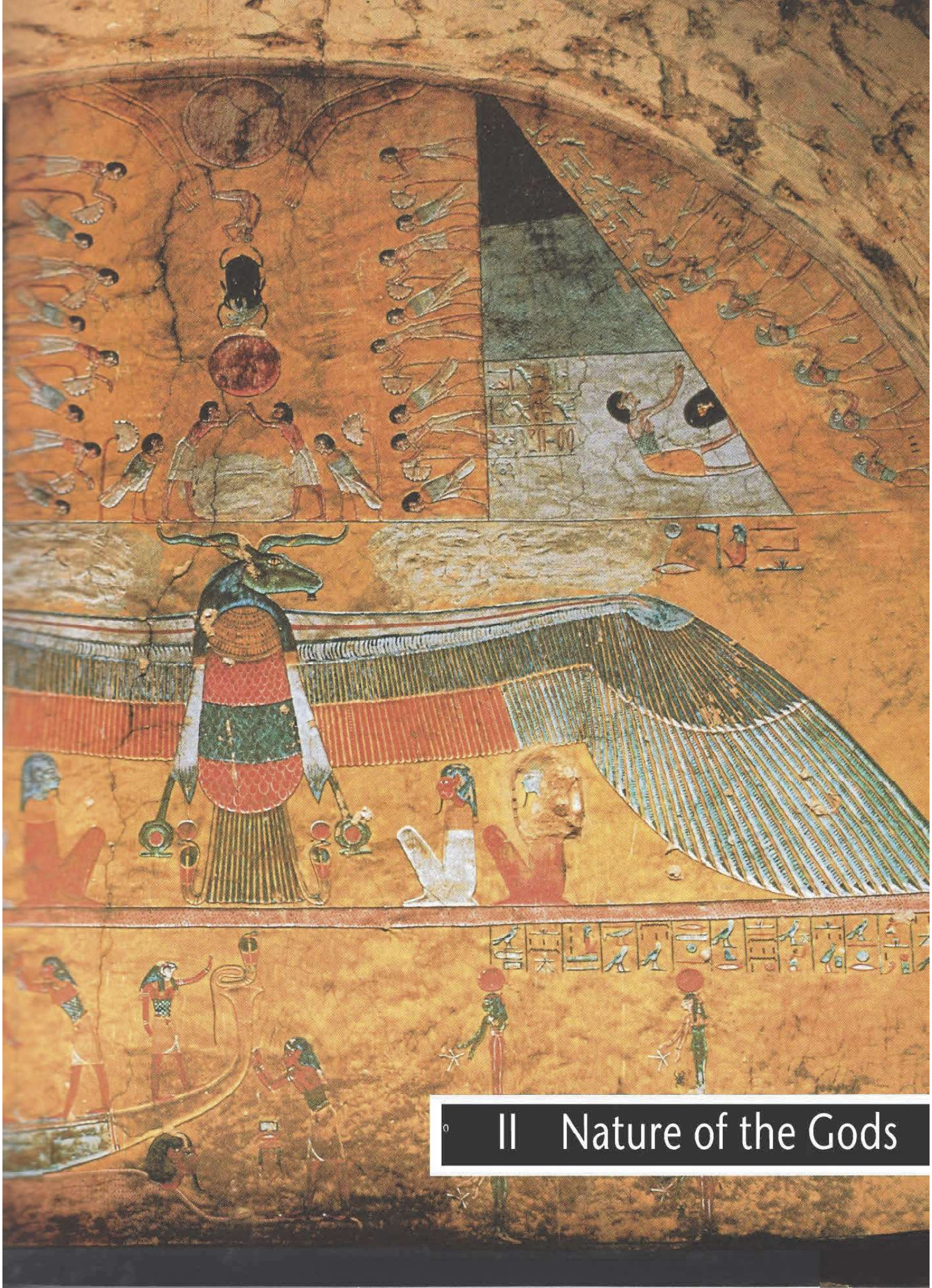
Papyrus Leiden I 350, trans. by James Allen

The nature of the gods is one of the most fascinating yet complex aspects of ancient Egyptian religion, for the very concept of 'god' had a much broader meaning in this civilization than in many others. The deities of Egypt had both human and elevated qualities, the latter often masked by strange animal appearances and seemingly bizarre roles, yet they commanded sometimes surprising heights of religious development.

There is no doubt that the ancient Egyptians honoured literally hundreds of deities. Was there, however, beneath this rampant polytheism, a recurrent insight leading towards an understanding of a unity among gods, a primitive idea of the manifestation of one god in many, or even true monotheism itself? Scholars have debated this question for generations, and only recently have convincing answers begun to take shape.



The daily birth of the sun god from the concluding representation of the Book of Caverns. The solar deity is shown in different aspects of his nature – as a sun disk, child, scarab, and ram-headed bird. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Queen Tawosret, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.



II Nature of the Gods

Forms of the Divine

The ancient Egyptians visualized their gods and goddesses in manifold ways, and this is demonstrated by the Egyptian word *netcher*, the etymology and original meaning of which are unknown, although examination of the word's use by the Egyptians shows that it actually encompassed a far wider range of meanings than the English word god. It could include deified humans (famous individuals, and from the 30th dynasty, those who had drowned) as well as what might be called spirits and demons, or in some cases even monsters such as the great chaos serpent Apophis. In fact, a determinative sign indicating 'god' (see box, Writing the Names of the Gods) could be added to the name of any unusual or exotic creature and even the Egyptians' hieroglyphs were themselves sometimes regarded as 'gods'.

(Below) Knife-wielding demons and demi-gods. Detail of funerary papyrus, Ptolemaic Period. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Opposite right) The human-headed, leonine-bodied sphinx personifies one form of 'hybrid' deity in which a human head is fused with the body of an animal. Sphinx of Amenemhet II. 12th dynasty. Louvre, Paris.

(Opposite far right) Osiride pillars, such as those within the temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, provide an example of deities which take anthropomorphic form. Such deities tend to be infrequently depicted in non-human forms.

Gods, spirits, demons and *bau*

In addition to their major gods the ancient Egyptians believed in various other types of supernatural beings which are often included in the category of minor deities. Even the earliest religious writings are peopled with frightening creatures (especially underworld monsters and demon-like beings) and throughout ancient Egyptian literature we find references to demons and spirits which seem to be similar to the djins and afrits of Arab culture. The ghosts or spirits of the deceased were also feared by the Egyptians and were known as *akhu*, a term which itself was also used of demons in the later periods. But the most feared, or at least most commonly feared, beings were the messengers and *bau* of deities. *Bau* were manifestations or emanations of a god. Often they occurred in groups and seemed quite generic, but they were also linked with specific deities who when offended, sent their *bau* to punish or trouble the offender. Magicians used their most potent spells and conjured the images of the most bizarre and frightening beings to combat these *bau* and hold them at bay.

Appearance of the divine

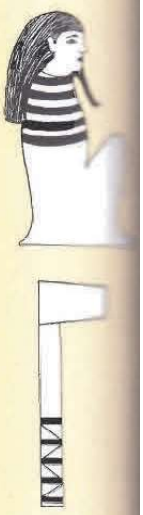
Despite the fact that the Egyptian pantheon appears to the outside observer to be filled with a veritable menagerie of gods, goddesses and other beings in an almost mindless variety of manifestations, for the most part Egyptian deities were conceived in logical types consisting of human (anthropomorphic), animal (zoomorphic), hybrid and composite forms.

Generally, the so-called 'cosmic' gods and goddesses of the heavens and earth such as Shu, god of the air, and Nut, goddess of the sky, were anthropomorphic in form, as were 'geographic' deities and those representing specific areas such as rivers, mountains, cities and estates. Certain others, not fitting these categories – some of them very ancient such as the fertility god Min – also took human form, as did deified humans such as deceased kings and other notables.

Zoomorphic deities were also common throughout Egyptian history. Perhaps the most ancient deity known in Egypt took the form of the falcon and the worship of animals as representative deities was especially prevalent in the latest periods. Gods associated with specific animal species were viewed as male or female according to their apparent or perceived characteristics. Male deities often took the form of the bull, ram, falcon or lion and female deities were often associated with the cow, vulture, cobra or lioness.

'Hybrid' or more accurately 'bimorphic' human and half-animal deities existed in two forms

Writing the Names of the Gods



The four main forms of writing the word 'god' in Egyptian hieroglyphs: (1) a seated deity; (2) a falcon, often on a standard; (3) a flag-topped pole; (4) a five-pointed star. All meant 'god' but appear in different contexts and periods.







The Egyptian word *netcher* or 'god' was usually written by means of one of a number of hieroglyphic signs which were added as 'determinatives' or group indicators at the end of names of deities, as well as being used alone. One of the commonly used signs found from Old Kingdom times was a seated divine figure (see illustration 1) which could be male or female and thus was used specifically for gods and goddesses. Variants of this sign which signified individual deities (in a few cases standing or depicted in some other position) were also used, especially in the New Kingdom and later periods. From much earlier times the word 'god' could also be written by means of a hieroglyph depicting a falcon (2) – sometimes on a perch – doubtless indicative of the great antiquity of many of the falcon gods of Egypt. The most commonly used sign for god, however, which was also very ancient, resembles in its developed form a flag atop a pole (see illustration 3) – the symbol of divine presence which fronted Egyptian temples and shrines back to predynastic times. As John Baines has shown, this sign has a complex history and may have developed as a means of signalling the presence of a deity without having a narrow, individual meaning associated with a specific divine power. Very late in Egyptian history the hieroglyph of a star (see illustration 4) could also be used to write the word god, but this is found only from the Ptolemaic Period on. All these signs could be written twice for dual numbers or three times for the plural 'gods' and sometimes in even larger numbers such as three groups of three signifying an ennead or group of nine gods: a writing which could also connote a 'plurality of plurality' or 'all the gods'.

– having the head of either a human or an animal and the body of the opposite type. Evidence for the former dates to at least the 4th dynasty with the sphinx as a human-headed animal, and on the 3rd-dynasty stela of Qahedjet (in the Louvre) a hawk-headed anthropomorphic god is the earliest known example of the latter type. The head is consistently the original and essential element of these deities, with the body representing the secondary aspect. Thus, as Henry Fischer pointed out, 'a lion-headed





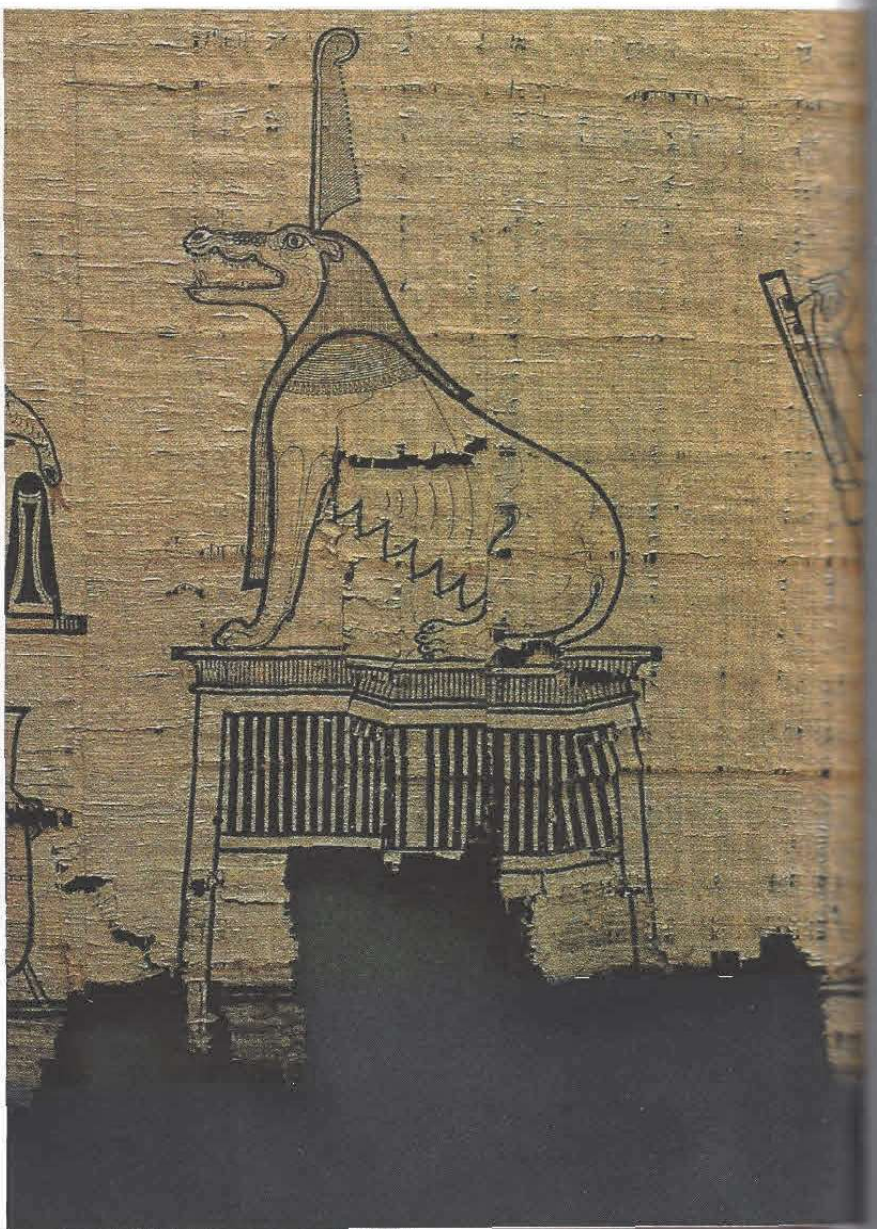
The lion-headed goddess personifies the most common type of 'hybrid' or bimorphic deity in which the head of an animal is fused with an anthropomorphic body. Graeco-Roman Period. Dakka Temple, Nubia.

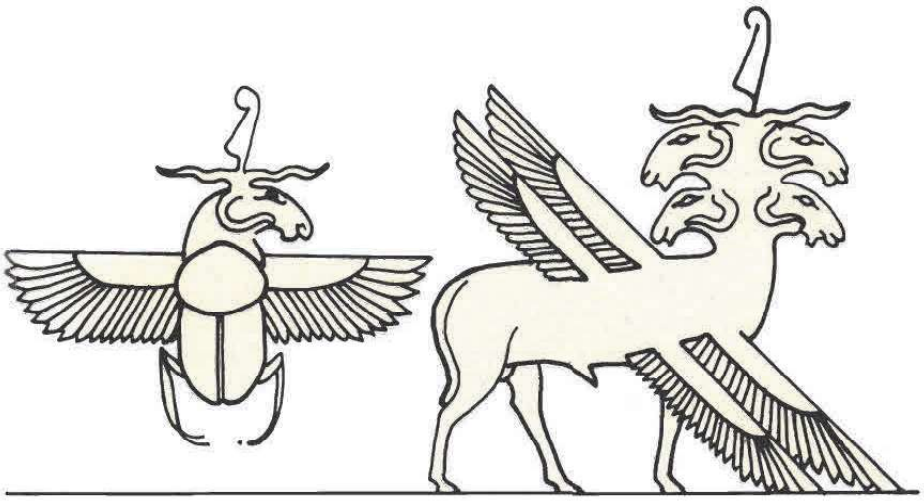
goddess is a lion-goddess in human form, while a royal sphinx, conversely, is a man who has assumed the form of a lion'.

Composite deities differ from the hybrid form by combining different deities or characteristics rather than representing an individual god in a particular guise. They may be made up of numerous zoomorphic or anthropomorphic deities, and range from baboon-hawks or hippopotamus-serpents to multiple-headed and -armed deities combining as many as a dozen different gods. Despite their bizarre appearances, there remains a certain logic to many of these polymorphic deities as seen, for example, by comparing the fearsome Ammut and the more benign Taweret: both are part hippopotamus, crocodile and lioness, but fused to very different effect.

A fixed iconography for a given god was uncommon, and some appear in several guises – Thoth was represented by both the baboon and the ibis and Amun by the ram or the goose. However it is rare for a deity to be found in human, animal and hybrid forms, for example the sun god Re was depicted as a falcon or a human with the head of a falcon but not usually in purely human form. The







Ram-headed scarab beetle and four-headed ram 'wind deities' provide examples of the kaleidoscopic manner in which the Egyptians produced composite deities. Ptolemaic Period, temple of Deir el-Medina.

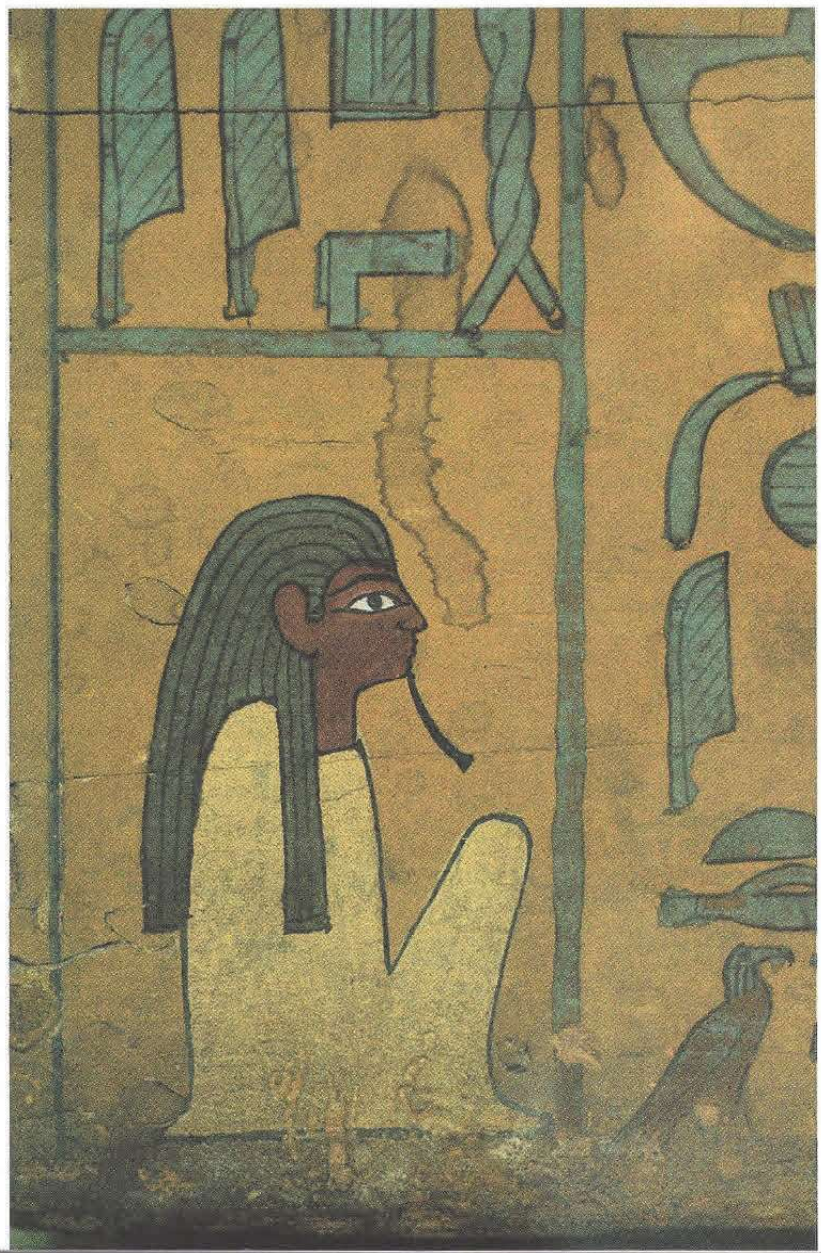
are some exceptions – the goddess Hathor could be represented in fully human form, as a cow, as a woman with the head of a cow, or as a woman with a face of mixed human and bovine features.

Divine identities

Ultimately it must be remembered that the various representations of the gods do not reflect the Egyptian concept of what their deities actually looked like. Their assigned forms were merely formalities, giving visible, recognizable appearances to deities that were often described as 'hidden', 'mysterious' or even 'unknown'. The physical form allowed cultic or personal interaction with deities, but their real identity was to be found in their own individual roles and characters, which were usually far broader than could be delimited by physical images or representations. Although many deities had clear

(Far left) Faience amulet of Taweret depicts the goddess in the composite form of a hippopotamus with the paws of a lion and tail of a crocodile. Third Intermediate Period, 21st–24th dynasty. Hurer Collection, San Bernardino.

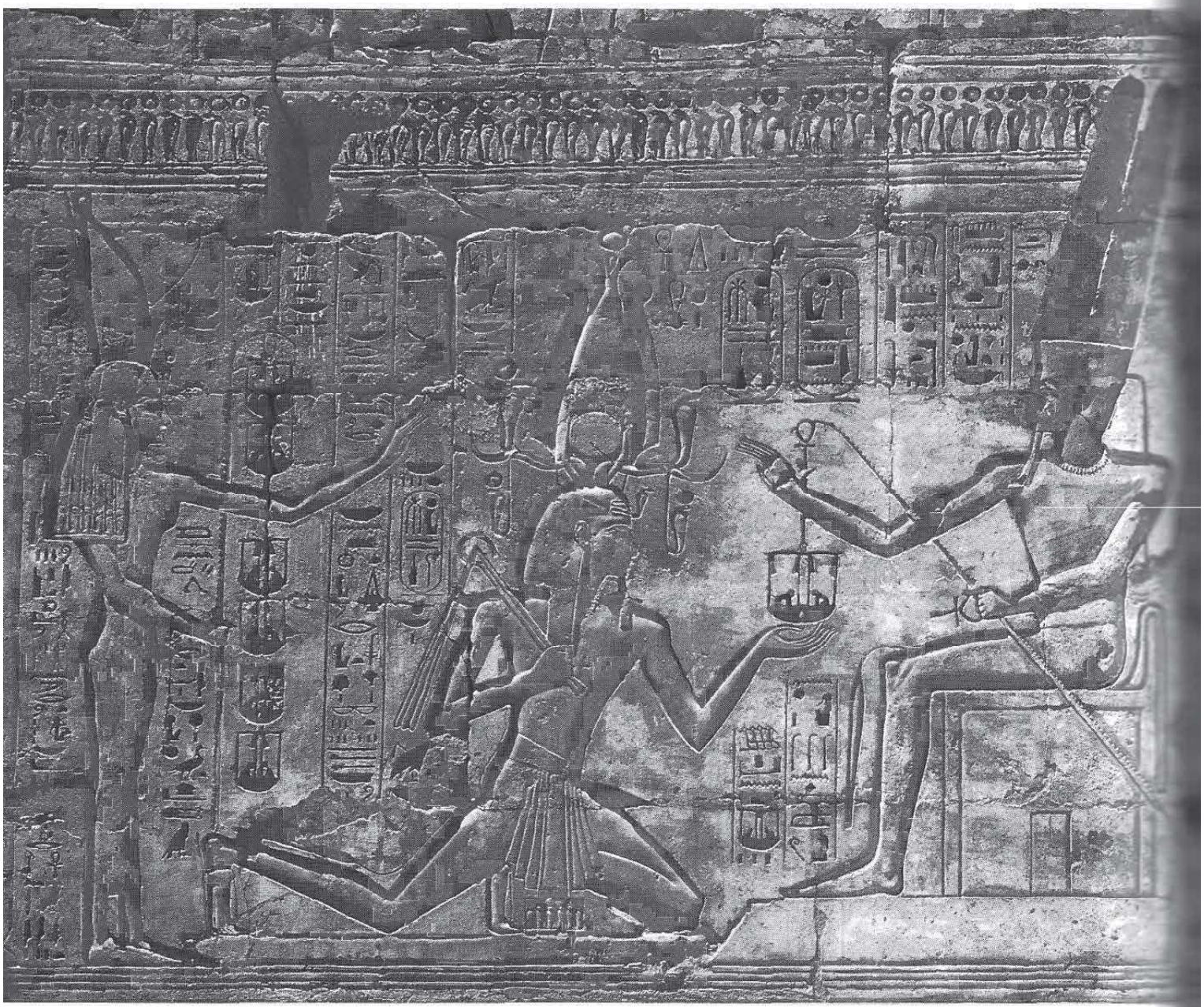
(Left) The Ammut or 'eater of hearts' fused various dangerous creatures into a fearsome composite deity of afterlife punishment. Graeco-Roman Period papyrus. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



Crouching deity in the hieroglyphic pose for 'god'. The Egyptians often used such generic images of deities – sometimes specified by name and at other times anonymous – to represent the idea of divinity, as the forms assigned to deities were not necessarily believed to depict their true appearance. Detail, painted coffin, 12th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

associations, such as that of Re with the sun, different deities could share the same associations – Atum, Re, Khepri, Horakhty and several other gods were all associated with the sun, for example. Conversely, many deities were associated with more than one characteristic. Most of the more important gods and goddesses had many different names showing their multiple identities – and some, such as Neith and Hathor, fulfilled several distinct roles, often without exhibiting any single identity which could be said to be clearly 'primary'. Generally, and often as a result of fusion of lesser deities, the greater the deity the wider the range of his or her associations and identities.

The characters of individual deities and their relationships with humanity could be widely different. Some deities were viewed as particularly helpful to humans. Thoth, Horus and Isis were all called *sunu* or 'physician', for example, due to their healing powers. But while many gods and goddesses were viewed as benevolent, others were regarded as being inimical towards humanity. Even some of those who were generally regarded as benevolent could be ambivalent in nature. This was especially true of female deities. Hathor, for example, was worshipped as a goddess of love, music and celebration, but she was also mythically typecast as a raging destroyer of humanity. In some cases deities exhibited different forms according to aspects of their nature, so that in her usual placid role the goddess Bastet appeared in the form of the cat, and in her more ferocious role in the guise of a lioness. Such ambivalence is not rare among the Egyptian gods, and it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether certain deities were worshipped despite or because of their potential hostility. Like their



human subjects, the Egyptian gods could eat and drink (sometimes to excess), they could work, fight, think, speak and even cry out in despair. They could interact well or poorly and could exhibit anger, shame and humour – often exhibiting distinctive personality traits as part of their identities.

Time and change

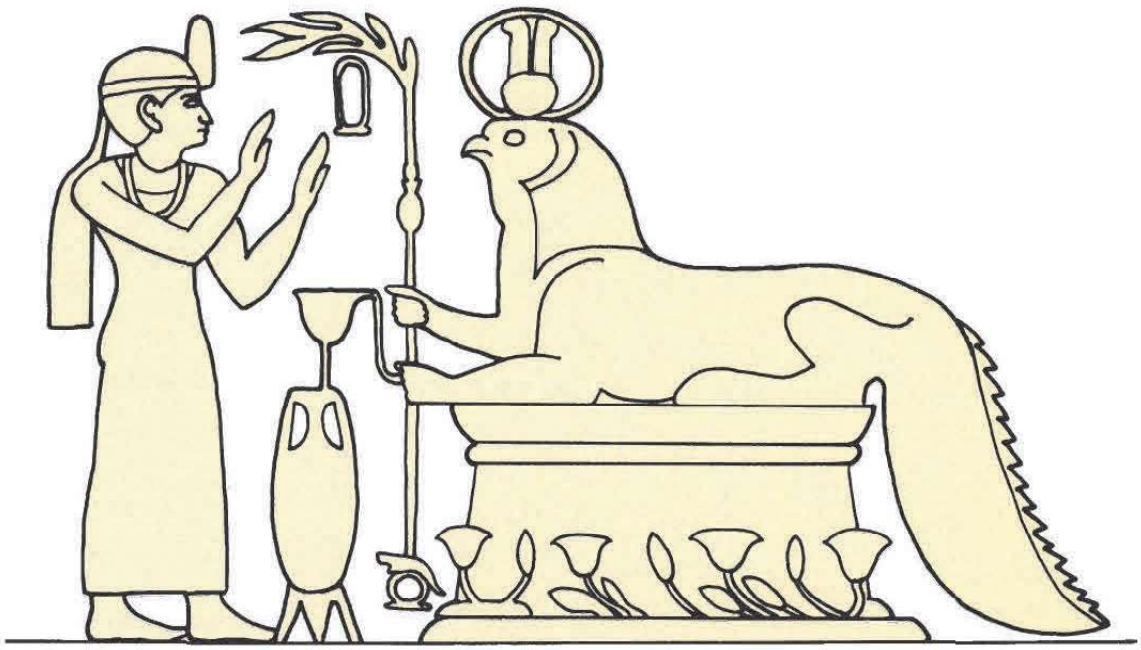
While every area of Egypt doubtless originally had its own god or goddess, many deities developed other regional associations through time – sometimes rising to the status of regional or national gods. The reverse could also occur, and some deities such as the god Montu eventually lost much of their area of influence and finally held revered but fairly limited local status. Although the area of origin of a deity often became the location of that god or goddess's chief cult centre, this was not always the case. While the centre of worship of the great god Amun was located at Thebes, for example, it seems that he was not himself of Theban origin.

Change could also affect the organization of gods. As time progressed, many of the cults of the major deities were organized into family triads of a 'father', 'mother', and 'son' – as with Amun, Mut and Khonsu at Thebes; or Ptah, Sekhmet and Nefertem at Memphis. This development effectively strengthened the position of some deities and meant that others, not included in important temple 'families', tended to be relegated to less important status and were less likely to receive cultic service.

Even the character or nature of deities could change with time, and perhaps the most dramatic example of this is found in the god Seth, whose perceived nature, popularity and importance fluctuated widely in different periods. The process of change often occurred in one of two ways – through the assimilation of a less important deity by a greater one or, more rarely, by the assimilation of a characteristic of a great deity by a lesser one. The god Osiris provides an excellent example of the first situation, as he took on many epithets and characteristics from deities which he assimilated during the wide-ranging spread of his cult. On the other hand, the often superlative role played by solar theology in Egyptian religion led to the association of many lesser deities with the sun god or solar characteristics. The phenomenon is especially noticeable in later periods, and in temples of the Ptolemaic Period we find Hathor, Isis, Horus, Khnum and other deities praised not only as the children of the sun god but also as solar deities in their own right with clear solar epithets and iconographic attributes. Egypt's gods were thus susceptible to change through time regarding their very natures as well as their relative importance.



The god Amun-Re (seated), with Mut (far left) and Khonsu (far right), grants endless jubilees to Ramesses III. While Amun rose to national prominence as a Theban god, he did not necessarily originate in the Theban area. Many deities underwent changes in the location and extent of their worship. 20th dynasty. Mortuary temple of Ramesses III, Medinet Habu, western Thebes.



Falcon-headed crocodile deity from Naqa, Upper Nubia. Although such deities seem to have been first worshipped in Egypt, the particular iconography of this god with human hands and leonine rear legs shows subtle changes which occurred with its assimilation into the Meroitic culture.

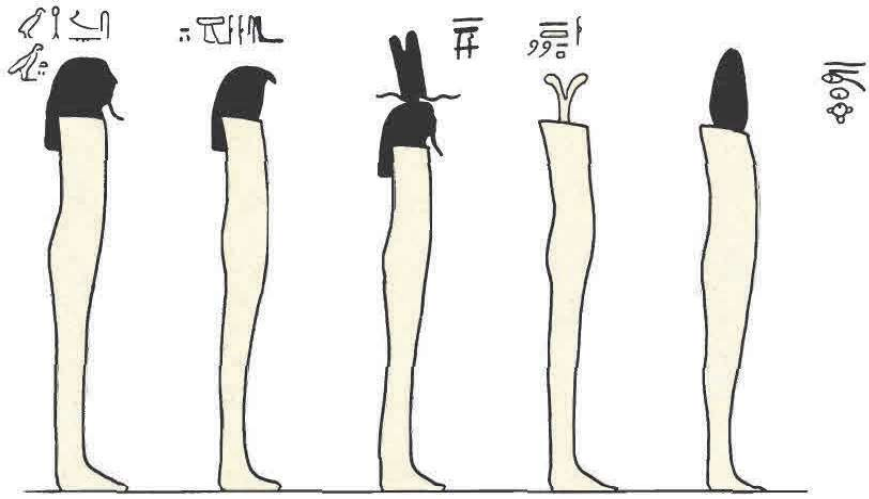
Manifestations of the Gods

God as many gods

In the Egyptian texts the gods are often said to be 'rich in names', and the multiplicity of names (and therefore manifestations) exhibited by individual deities provides an important example of the principle whereby one god may be seen as many. In the New Kingdom text known as the Litany of Re the solar god is identified in 'all his evolutions' as 75 different deities – including not only common forms of the sun but also female deities such as Isis and Nut. Osiris received prayers and litanies of praise under many names, and the mythological story explaining how his body was torn into pieces and scattered throughout Egypt provides an example of how one god could become many. Yet this example is unique and such a physical explanation for multiple instances and locations of a deity was not necessary for the application of the principle. In the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu we find that the goddess Hathor is represented by as many forms as there are days in the year (and each of these is actually named as two variant forms), but there seems to have been no mythic backdrop to this situation which would have required the Egyptians to posit many independent forms of the goddess. Perhaps the ultimate example of the multiplicity of divine names is to be found in the great god Amun, who was given so many names that the number was said to be unknowable.

Another aspect of the multiple names of individual gods can be seen in those cases where a given deity was regarded as the *ba* or manifestation of another. Of the god Khnum, for example, it was often said that he was the '*ba* of Re' or of Osiris and so on, so that a given deity was not only associated with another, but also took on further names and identities in this manner. As several scholars have pointed out, the form, name and epithets of Egyptian deities seem to have been variable almost at will, and are often interchangeable with those of other deities. But while it could be argued that in almost all these cases the various names and manifestations of deities are simply forms of the same underlying god or goddess, individual deities were manifest in often increasingly diverse ways showing a basic Egyptian predilection for the concept of one god as many.

Variant, individual forms of the sun god Re from the 'Litany of Re' inscribed in New Kingdom tombs exemplify the differentiating aspect of Egyptian theology. 18th dynasty. Tomb of Tuthmosis III, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.



Pantheism

Pantheism, the related idea that identifies all aspects of the universe with a god, is a concept that has appealed to a number of Egyptologists since the latter part of the 19th century. These include scholars of the stature of Edouard Naville and James Henry Breasted, who felt that solar pantheism was an important part of ancient Egyptian religion. Yet, more recently several Egyptologists have shown that Egyptian religion exhibits distinct traits which deny this equation. These are the self-imposed limitation of Egyptian religion, which clearly did not try to deify every aspect of creation and limitations in the number and types of forms which even the greatest gods are said to take. As Erik Hornung has written, 'Amun may appear in the most various forms, but never as the moon, a tree, or a stretch of water', and this list may be extended considerably. In fact, as Marie-Ange Bonhême has put it, the boundaries of the individuality of the Egyptian gods 'forbids certain manifestations so as to prevent a progression toward complete pantheism'; and although the vast number of deities found in Egyptian religion may be reminiscent of pantheism, the resemblance is superficial as Hornung rightly claims. For the Egyptians the creator god may have manifested himself in the creation, but he was certainly not absorbed by it.

Many gods as one

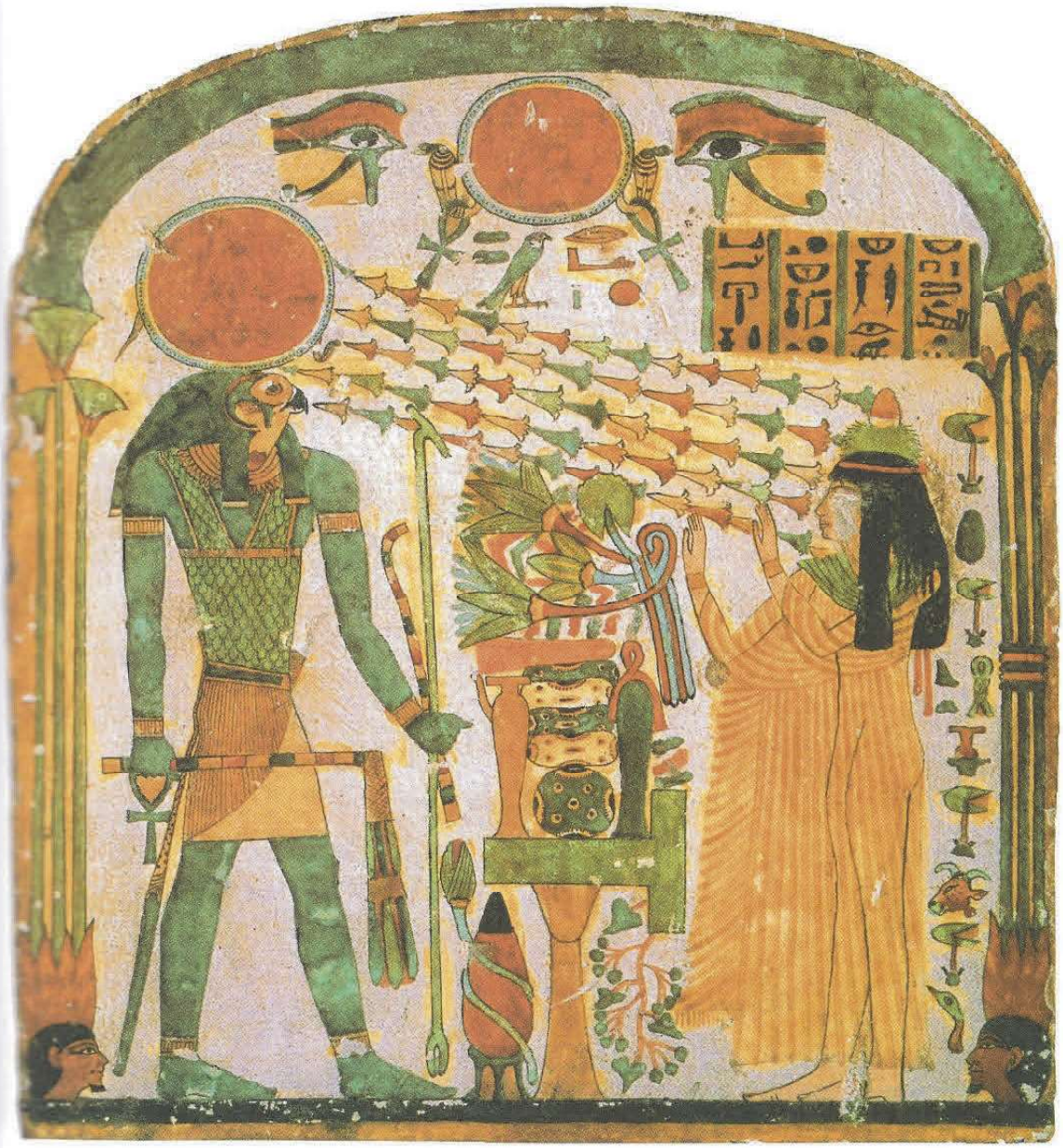
The ancient Egyptians seem to have formed groups among their deities since very early times. Although we cannot tell if the various deities depicted together on Pre- and Early Dynastic palettes and other artifacts were intended to represent groups of any kind, this might have been the case in some instances. However, by the time of the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom the grouping of gods and goddesses into enneads of nine (though sometimes more or fewer) deities is well established, as is the grouping of the Souls of Pe and Nekhen, or the Souls of Pe and Heliopolis and the 'Followers of Horus'. Even before the formation of these groups there seems to have existed a very early grouping of gods called simply the *khat* or 'body' – this is found in the Pyramid Texts

1041) but is probably much older, as it may be seen in the names of several early monarchs beginning with the 1st-dynasty king Semerkhet.

Many other smaller groups of deities such as the various triads, tetrads, pentads, hexads, hebdomads and ogdoads (see p. 74–79) were also formed, but there is no clear pattern in the development of these groups and certainly no gradual movement toward smaller groupings which might indicate some kind of preliminary progression toward monotheism. In the same manner, although the number three was utilized by the Egyptians to signify a closed system which was both complete and interactive among its parts, the many triads of deities which developed in Egyptian religion were in no way directly comparable to the Christian idea of the trinity. Egyptian groups of three deities were usually linked in a father-mother-child union, but this was never expressed as a unity, and each member of the triad preserved his or her distinct individuality as a separate deity.

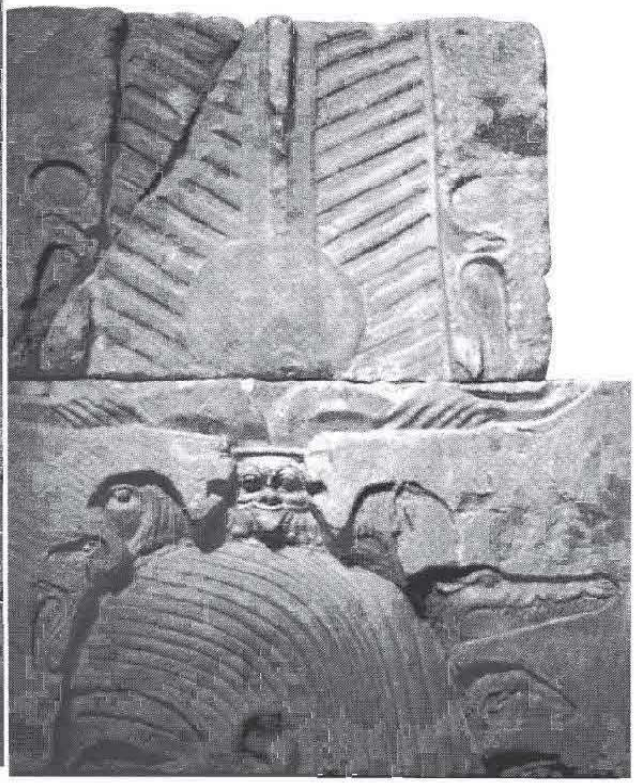
Syncretism

There is, nevertheless, a good deal of evidence for the Egyptian practice of linking or bringing together different deities into the body or identity of a combined god or goddess (sometimes, though not always, with 'composite' form). This was accomplished in several ways, most commonly by bringing deities together through the linkage of their names, creating composite gods such as Atum-Khepri, Re-Horakhty, and Amun-Re. Some of these syncretisms may be seen as simple combinations of similar deities or even different aspects of the same god – Atum-Khepri combined the evening and morning manifestations of the sun and Re-Horakhty formed a composite of two other important aspects or forms of the solar deity. In other



The solar god Re-Horakhty blesses a female worshipper with flower-like rays. The combined Re and Horakhty were joined into a new and powerful deity through a strong unifying or syncretistic trend in Egyptian religion. Stela of Tanetperet, Thebes, 22nd dynasty. Louvre, Paris.

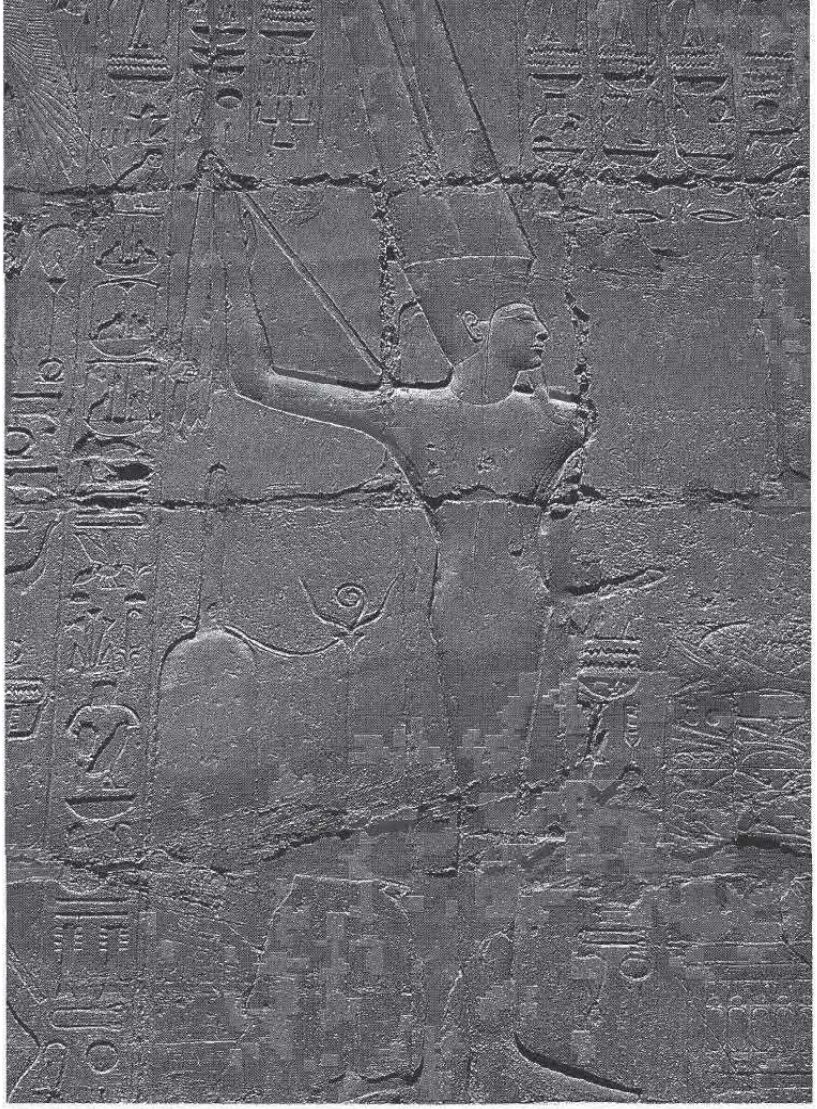




(Above) The great god Amun-Re (left), seen here receiving the gift of 'meret chests' from Ramesses II, represented the syncretism of two very different deities through the linking of the most powerful visible and invisible forces in the Egyptian cosmos. 19th dynasty. Temple of Amun, Karnak.

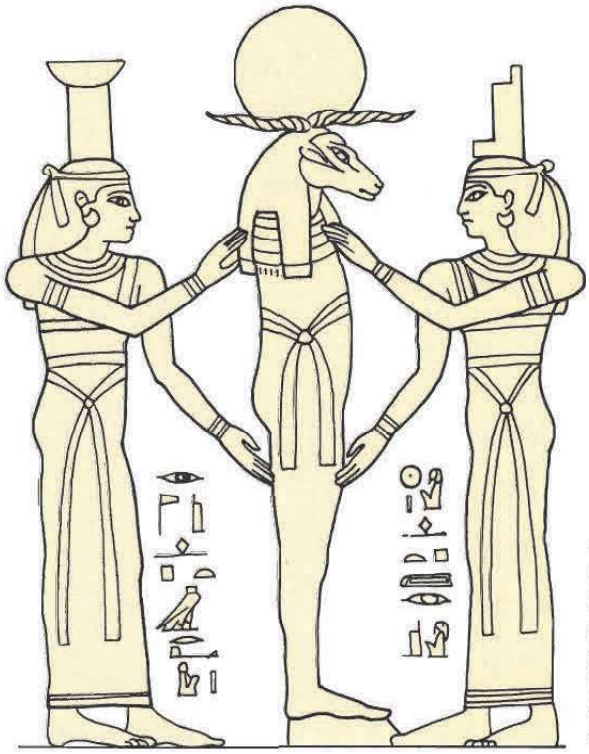
(Left) Symbolic representation of the syncretism of multiple deities. Decorated blocks, Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria.

cases, syncretism involved the linking of dei very different natures as with Amun-Re in the Egyptian theologians wished to combine and Re as a uniting of the greatest visibl invisible powers of the world. The practice also reflect the association of a local deity wi of the greater gods (as with Sobek-Re or Kh Re), often, as Hermann Junker first pointe with the name of the local god being placed b that of the external, and usually greater, g these cases the power and standing of the god were shared with the lesser deity, thoug arrangement also accorded more power external god in the local sphere. The process united two deities in this manner could also together three, four or even more deities as case of the syncretism of Ptah, Sokar and into one consummate funerary deity, or the Harmachis-Khepri-Re-Atum which brought to major solar-related gods. The same process also unite foreign deities with Egyptian o with the Asiatic-Egyptian Anat-Hathor an Meroitic-Egyptian Arensnuphis-Shu, as well great Ptolemaic hybrid deity Serapis who b together Osiris, Apis, Zeus and Helios.



(Right) Amun-Min linked the powerful god Amun with the fertility deity Min in a manner which strengthened the creative and procreative nature of Amun and gave ascendancy to Min. 19th dynasty. Temple of Amun, Karnak.

The purpose of syncretisms such as these was doubtless not to simply combine conflicting or competing deities as was assumed by many early Egyptologists. In many cases there clearly was no conflict between syncretized deities, and there is frequently no reason why the two or more united deities should not have been simply worshipped side by side, as Horus and Sobek were at Kom Ombo in the Ptolemaic Period or, in fact, as a great many of Egypt's deities were worshipped in multiple chapels in temples throughout the land from much earlier times. Rather, it is as if the Egyptians were acknowledging the presence of one god or goddess 'in' another deity whenever that deity took on a role which was a primary function of the other. But this indwelling does not mean that one deity was subsumed within another, nor does it indicate that the two deities became identical or that there was also an underlying movement towards monotheism involved in the process. Erik Hornung has shown that, properly understood, syncretism does not isolate but rather links different deities and often the process effectively creates a third god where there were originally only two.



The syncretistic image of Osiris-Re supported by Nephthys and Isis and explained as 'Osiris "resting" in Re and Re "resting" in Osiris'. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Nefertari, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.

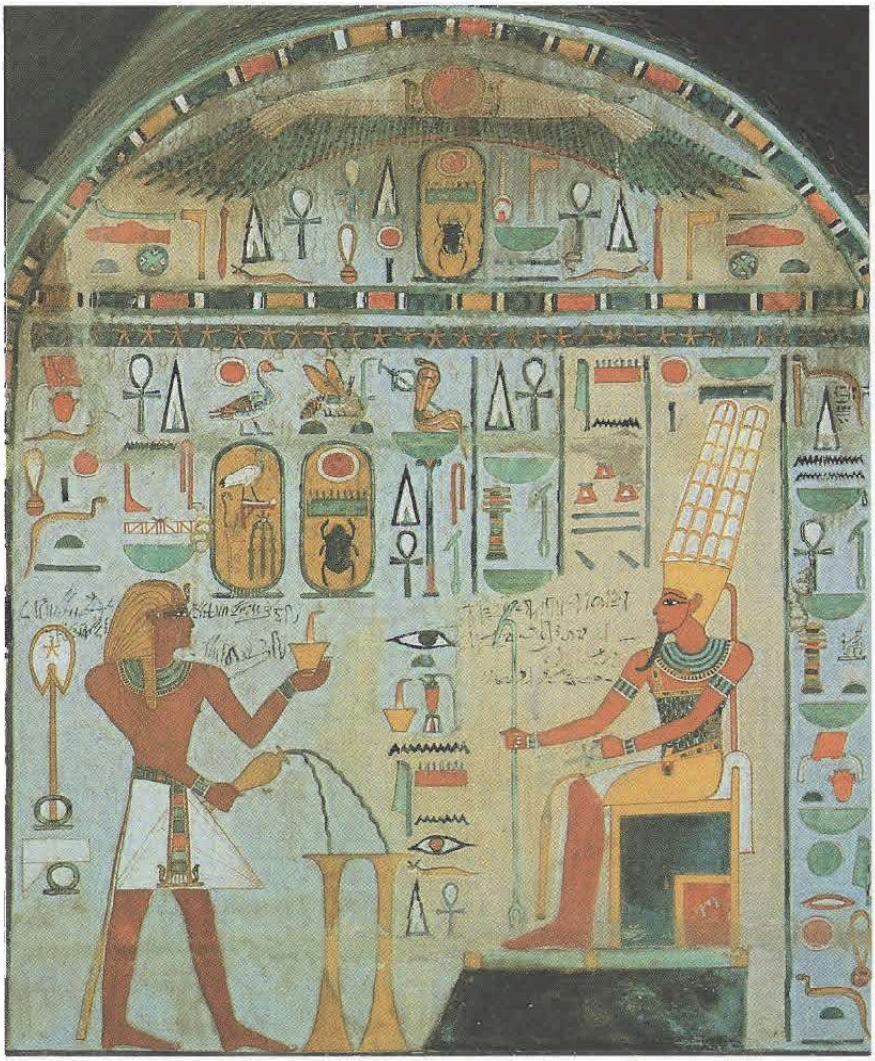
Egypt and Monotheism

In the 19th century a debate arose among Egyptologists which was to rage for many years and which is still not entirely over. The debate has centred around a fundamental aspect of Egyptian religion: were the ancient Egyptians at all times polytheists or were there times or even ongoing trends in which Egyptian religion moved slowly but inexorably towards monotheism?

Tuthmosis III (at left) offers incense and libation before Amun, the Theban god who rose to national pre-eminence during New Kingdom times. 18th dynasty. Chapel of Tuthmosis III from Deir el-Bahri. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Believers in One god or Many

In his early 1930s work *The Dawn of Conscience*, the American Egyptologist James Henry Breasted argued that the religion of the heretic 18th-dynasty pharaoh, Akhenaten – who attempted to do away with most of Egypt's traditional gods and to replace them with the worship of the solar disk or Aten (see p. 236) – was nothing less than a direct precursor of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheism of later history. From 1934 the German Egyptologist Hermann Junker went even further, suggesting that Egyptian religion had, in fact, originally been monotheistic and had only eventually degenerated into a morass of separate cults after the founding of the Egyptian state. Although the argument for this kind of primitive monotheism and the idea of a single, transcendent deity has long been discarded, the idea that the Egyptians did gradually develop monotheistic ways of thought has been more enduring. Some scholars have seen the successive rise of pre-eminent deities such as Re, Osiris and Amun as precisely this kind of development. Others have felt that the Egyptian word for god, *netcher,* used without reference to any particular god (which was especially common in Egyptian 'wisdom literature' or 'instructions' and in personal names which combined the word god with some other element) also demonstrated the idea of an underlying single god in Egyptian religion. In an influential work published in 1960 Siegfried Morenz drew these arguments together in support of the idea that behind the near-countless deities of the Egyptian pantheon there was, historically, among at least some Egyptians, a growing awareness of a single god.



But another side to the story appeared with the publication of an incisive study by Erik Hornung in 1971. Hornung systematically examined the question, and found no evidence for an ongoing movement towards monotheism. Of central importance, he argued that the word 'god' in Egyptian usage never appears to refer to an abstract deity of higher order than other gods but is rather a neutral term which can apply to any deity, or as Hornung expressed it, 'whichever god you wish'. In the same manner, personal names such as Mery-netcher, translated as 'whom god loves', could mean any god and may be found with many specified parallels such as 'whom Ptah loves'. From this perspective the various expressions of syncretism or the 'indwelling' of one deity in another do not present evidence of a move towards monotheism. While worshippers may have elected to venerate a given god above all others, this is merely henotheism, a form of religion in which the other gods remain. Finally, while it is true that at given times we find a supreme god at the head of the Egyptian pantheon and the other gods remain, the qualities of the supreme being are not limited to any one god, and even within the same period of time we find many gods being called 'lord of all that exists' and 'sole' or 'unique'. According to Hornung, only the 'heretic' Akhenaten clearly insisted upon an approach which affirmed One god to the exclusion of the Many.

Other scholars have looked at the context of Akhenaten's religious 'revolution' differently, however. In his 1997 work *Moses the Egyptian*, for example, Jan Assmann has pointed out that the



Painted limestone stela depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti with infant princesses. The disk of the solar Aten shines on the royal family in an expression of what was essentially a closed theological system. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

ious creation accounts developed by the Egyptians, and the ongoing process of syncretism, reflect two fundamental but different approaches to the paradox of 'the One and the Many' inherent in all ancient Egyptian religion. Assmann has characterized these divergent viewpoints as one of *generation* – by which the One produces the Many (as seen in Egyptian creation accounts), and one of *emanation* – in which the One is present in the Many (as seen in syncretism). These viewpoints existed concurrently in Egypt throughout most of the Dynastic Period, but in the religion of Akhenaten the concept of the emanation of the god Aten is not to be found. It is through generation alone that the Aten recreates the world and all that is in it. In this view, although visible and in that sense immanent in his creation, the Aten also transcended it in the manner found in true monotheism.



Part of the Great Aten Temple at Akhetaten (Amarna) represented on a talatat block found at el-Ashmunein. The great altar at the top is flanked by statues of the king bearing offerings in another expression of the carefully delimited nature of Aten worship. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



Statue base with excised cartouche of Amenophis III. The agents of Akhenaten removed even the name of the king's father (leaving only his throne name which was written without the name of Amun) in the widespread programme of eradication of the images and names of the Theban god. Luxor Museum.



(Below) The 'Restoration Stela' of Tutankhamun documenting the return to orthodox Egyptian religion and the restitution of the g Amun after the Amarna Period. Discovered in the temple of Amun at Karna Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Believers in the Many and the One

More recently, James Allen has suggested a synthesis of the two opposing views of Egyptology regarding Akhenaten's monotheism. One approach (accepted mainly by earlier Egyptologists) views Akhenaten's ideas as derivative of concepts present in Egyptian religion long before that king's reign, and the other (championed by Erik Hornung) sees Akhenaten's religion – especially his monotheism – as a radical innovation without any precedent whatsoever. Allen accepts evidence from both sides and provides a new perspective. While stressing that Hornung is certainly right in pointing to the distinction between Akhenaten's monotheism and earlier Egyptian understandings of god, Allen has shown that what was radical about Akhenaten's theology was not its proclamation of the oneness of god but its insistence on *exclusivity*. The polyvalent logic of Egyptian thought could easily allow an appreciation of the underlying oneness of god to coexist with traditional Egyptian polytheism. He suggests, in fact, that the best evidence for this is actually the phenomenon of syncretism which 'unites the view of god as simultaneously Many and One'. This is not to say that Egyptian religion was essentially 'monotheism with a polytheistic face' – and the perception of god as essentially One may perhaps have been limited to a few Egyptian theologians at any one time. But maybe for even ordinary Egyptians the experience of god could have been to some extent monotheistic – while they continued to view the world in polytheistic terms, they also identified their uniform notion of 'god' with a particular god in specific situations.

The advantage of this view is that while it accepts Hornung's valid criticism of many individual pieces of proof of Egyptian monotheism, it nevertheless allows evidence as to the attitude that does seem to lie beneath many Egyptian writ such as those found in the so-called Wisdom T As Allen has written, 'The authors of these t are not espousing a particular theology; t are giving expression to their appreciati humanity's relationship to the divine in gene not "this god" as in polytheism, or "the god" a

The Concept of Transcendence

The question of whether the ancient Egyptians ever believed in the concept of monotheism contains within itself another question – whether they developed the idea of a transcendent deity. Although earlier sweeping affirmations in this regard have not stood the test of time and scholarly analysis, the idea of transcendent divine ability – especially as manifest in the transcendence of space and time – may nevertheless be reflected in some of the Egyptian evidence.

As early as the Instruction for Merikare (apparently composed in Middle Kingdom times) we find the expression 'the god knows every name', indicating perhaps the idea of an omniscient god. By late New Kingdom times we find instances of the great god Amun being viewed in a manner which could indicate belief in his transcendent ability. One text states that 'Amun hears the prayer of one who calls to him, in a moment he comes from afar to the one who cries out to him'. A few other texts seem to echo this same attitude. While they may indicate only that Amun was being viewed as acting on a grander and wider scale than had been common before Ramessid times, there is no firm indication that the concept of transcendence was not involved. Certainly the Egyptian gods did not ultimately transcend time – as was seen in Part I – because like their human counterparts they were subject to old age and eventual demise. Nor could they fully transcend space, as they could not penetrate the outer regions beyond the created cosmos which Egyptian mythology explicitly states is uninhabited by the gods, or those regions of the Duat where the light of the sun god does not penetrate. Yet, despite these facts, it is possible that from the Egyptians' perspective, there was an idea of relative – if not absolute – transcendence in the religion of the late New Kingdom. The few texts which address the subject do seem to show that Amun was viewed as transcending space *within* the world in which the gods were created and functioned. We may also find, with the same god, texts which intimate the god's transcendence of even the bounds of the Egyptians' mythical cosmos. Papyrus Leiden I 350 says of Amun:

'He is hidden from the gods, and his aspect is unknown. He is farther than the sky, he is deeper than the Duat…'

In this text the 'unknowable nature' of Amun is the main issue which is stressed, yet the expression 'He is farther than the sky, he is deeper than the Duat' seems to indicate a view of the deity's transcendence of the cosmos itself and is not essentially different from the sentiment of the biblical Psalmist, long regarded by scholars as reflecting the transcendent omnipresence of the Hebrew God:

'Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where should I flee from your presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, you are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold you are there.'

Psalm 139:7–8

It is also possible to view the nature of Akhenaten's Aten as being transcendent in certain ways (see p. 236) and the fact that in the Late Period the solar ram was said to have not only four heads, but also 777 ears and millions of eyes, shows the idea of the greatly enhanced senses of the god in a practical, mythical manner. While this does not prove omniscience, it is not essentially different from the theological developments of later history which posit the idea of a God who sees even the smallest event.



The god Amun came to be revered as a deity whose nature included a transcendent aspect close to that of the monotheistic god of Judaism, Christianity or Islam. Detail, statue of Amun from Thebes. Luxor Museum.

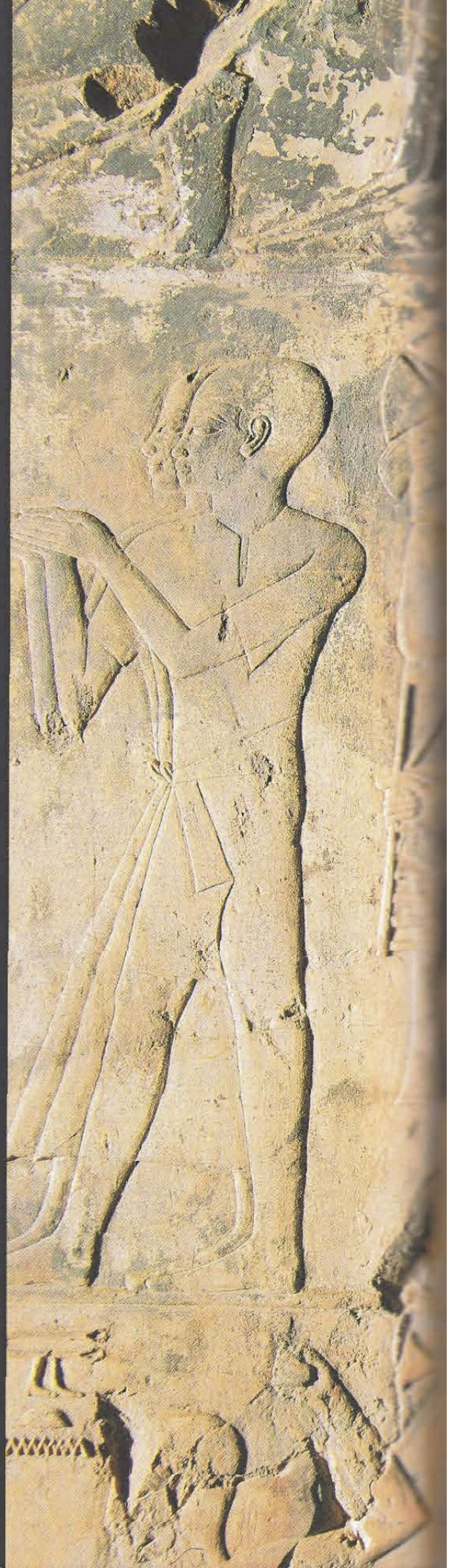
henotheism, but simply "god".' From this perspective, the Egyptians were in a sense both polytheists and monotheists, and the religion of Akhenaten may have had certain precedents in formal theology and even in popular attitudes which amount to the idea of god in the singular. Rather than its radical focus on one god, however, it was a dogmatic exclusiveness that set the religion of Akhenaten apart and that ultimately made his theology unacceptable to most ancient Egyptians. It would only be with the eventual rise of Judaism, Christianity and Islam that such exclusivity in the worship of the One would take hold, and in so doing, would historically spell the end for Egypt's Many.

'I decked the breast of the lord of Abydos with lapis lazuli and turquoise, fine gold, and all costly stones which are the ornaments of a god's body. I clothed the god with his regalia in my rank of master of secrets…'

Stela of Ikhernofret

The ancient Egyptians believed that the stability of the created world had to be carefully preserved through the upholding of their deities – for it was the care and sustenance of the gods and the maintenance of cosmic balance which kept chaos and non-being from encroaching upon and overwhelming the world. Thus, the Egyptian concept of religion centred far more upon individual and collective service of the gods and upon right actions than on abstract theological ideas, creeds or tenets of belief.

Collective worship of the gods involved constant service through the daily cleansing, clothing, feeding and entertainment of their images in formal temple settings as well as in a myriad festivals, rituals and mysteries. At a personal level, individuals in all sections of society had access to the gods which developed, especially in the later periods of Egyptian history, into a close relationship with the divine and eventually to the concept of personal salvation itself.

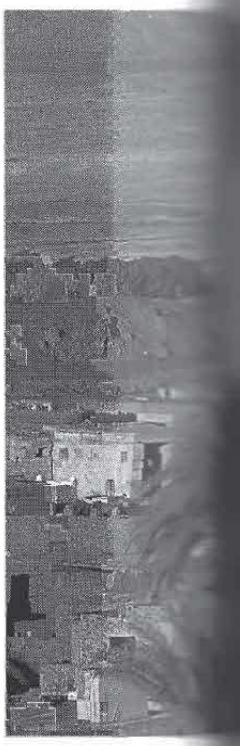


Offering-bearers present bread, beer, vegetables, meat, papyrus, flowers and other gifts to the ba *of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris. Tomb of Kheruef. 18th dynasty. Western Thebes.*



III Worship of the Gods

Care of the Gods



(Right) The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, western Thebes. Although used during the king's lifetime, such royal mortuary temples were designed for the ongoing care of the deceased and divine king.

(Far right) Inner sanctuary and shrine of the temple of Horus at Edfu. Ptolemaic Period.

From the very establishment of the ancient Egyptian state around 3000 BC, religion developed along two separate paths – which often ran in very different directions. On the one hand, individual veneration of the gods continued to develop its own stresses and focal points (which are considered in the next section). On the other hand, the founding of the monarchical state enhanced the development of state-favoured and subsidized cults which served the gods formally.

(Below) Female fecundity deity bearing stylized tray of offerings symbolically supplies the needs of the gods. Graeco-Roman Period. Temple of Montu, Medamud.

(Below right) Divine personification of 'United with Eternity', the mortuary temple of Ramesses III. 20th dynasty. Medinet Habu, western Thebes.

Houses of the gods

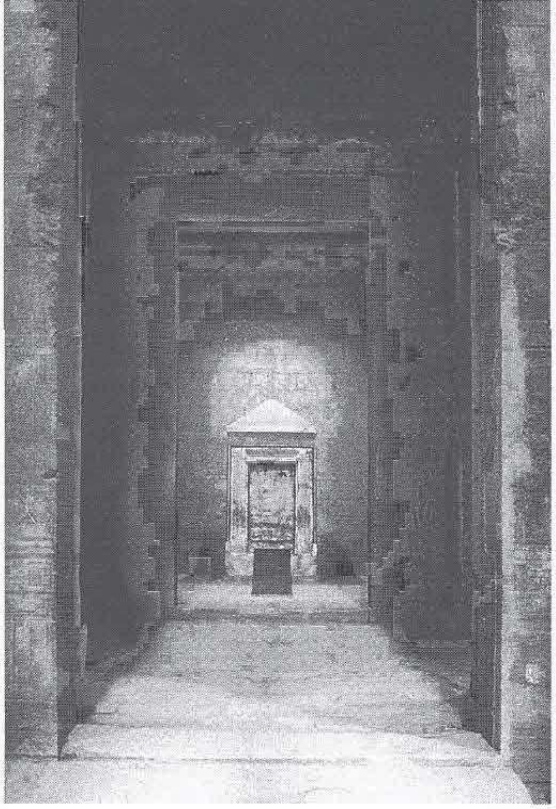
Unlike the gods of the ancient Greeks and some other cultures, Egyptian deities did not readily mix with their human subjects, and their interaction was usually found in specific contexts and areas, the most important of which was the temple. From the small reed huts of predynastic times to the towering stone structures of the New Kingdom and later periods, temples were the focal points of individual population centres and of Egyptian society as a whole. Unlike modern cathedrals, churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious structures, however, Egyptian temples were primarily designed for the worship of the gods. Worship could and did take place within them, but they primarily functioned as complex symbolic models of the cosmos, as interfaces between the physical and supernatural worlds, and as 'houses' of the gods for their care and provision – functions which overlapped to a considerable degree. Even though some deities had no temples of their own and others were not even represented as subsidiary deities in any temple, in a sense they were all represented by the temples, which functioned to preserve cosmic order and thus the gods themselves.





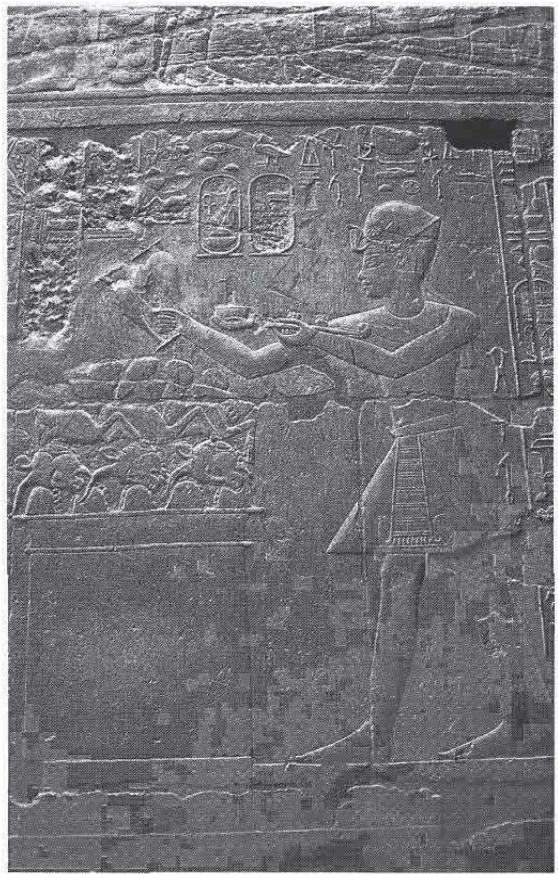
The physical form of the temple was shaped to this purpose. Sacred sites were ringed by *temenos* walls designed not only to exclude the profane but also to symbolically and even physically keep external unrest and chaos at bay. The outer temple wall defined an area not only sacred in the religious sense but also representative of the very sphere of life and order which existed within the initial chaos posited by Egyptian cosmography. The architectural programme and decoration of the temple proper furthered this model. Its axial progression in a sense symbolized the path of the sun, and the darkened inner sanctuary acted as a physical metaphor for both the darkness of night out of which came rebirth and the darkness of initial creation out of which sprang life and order in the beginning. These detailed cosmic models functioned like exquisite and perfectly regulated time pieces with the work of the king, and of the priests who represented him, providing the power to run them through the mystery of cultic service.



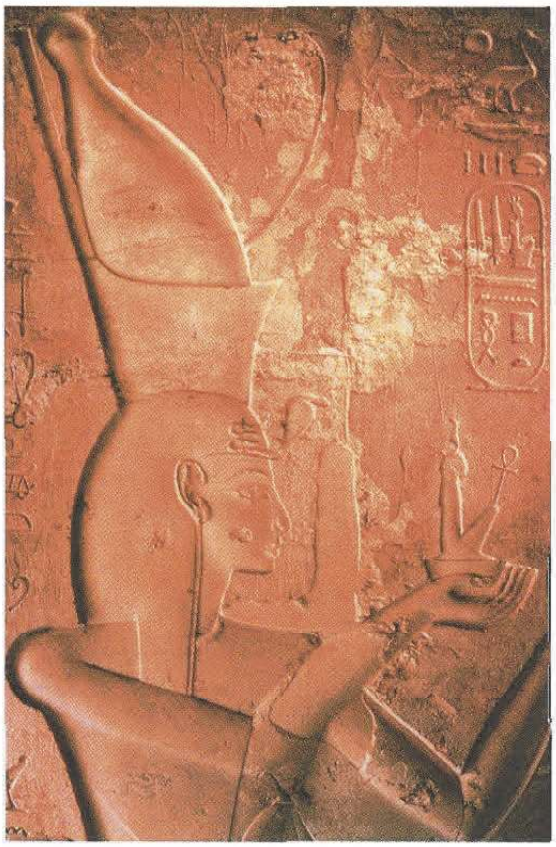


Temple service

The service and care of the gods was thus paramount not only to the Egyptians' sense of religious responsibility toward their deities but also to the continuation of existence itself. This was effected through the practice of rituals which supported the gods so that they in turn might be able to preserve and sustain the world. In fact, Dimitri Meeks has shown that a single common feature shared by the various beings called 'gods' by the Egyptians is that they were the recipients of ritual. These rituals were of many types but are most easily classified on a temporal basis. Viewed this way we may differentiate the daily ritual service of the gods which tended their basic needs; the occasional but regular rituals which were part of the recurrent festivals of the temple calendar; and finally, the non-regular rituals which were performed only on special occasions or under special circumstances. Rituals of the third class were naturally the least commonly enacted and are rarely depicted in temple scenes, while those of festival and daily rituals decorate the walls of many Egyptian temples. In virtually all cases, however, temple depictions of ritual service do not reflect the reality of the ritual but are rather an idealized representation in which the king and deity are the sole participants. Even in scenes where priests are represented – as in depictions of processions – they are clearly ancillary to the figure of the monarch, for the most fundamental aspect of temple service during the pharaonic period was that in theory, and hence symbolically, it was the king himself who performed all major actions of the service of the cult. This aspect of temple function was rooted in the mythic reality of the king as legitimate descendant and heir of the gods – concepts which will be examined later. However in actual practice it was, of course, the priests who acted as the king's surrogates and who usually performed the rituals involved in the care of the gods.



Amenophis III offers incense and a libation over a richly laden altar. 18th dynasty. Luxor Temple. Although usually represented by the priesthood, it was both a prerogative and a responsibility of the Egyptian king to supply the ongoing needs of the gods.



Usurped representation depicts the offering of a diminutive image of the goddess Maat – symbol of the Egyptian monarch's responsibility to maintain order, truth and justice – as part of the pharaoh's service of the gods. Tomb of Tawosret and Sethnakhte, 19th–20th dynasty, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

Images of the gods

The object of this service was the divine image, for the statue of the deity housed within the sanctuary of the temple was the focal point of the entire cult. As a result, the amount of work dedicated to the production of divine images was often considerable and the results doubtless awe-inspiring.

Although they were not considered to be the gods themselves, statues of gods and goddesses were believed to house the spirits or manifestations of the deities, and because of this they were treated as though they were alive. Divine images were taken from their shrines each day and washed, dressed in clean clothes, adorned with precious ornaments and censed. They were given offerings of food and drink – usually wine, milk or water – and then returned to their shrines. The distinction between the medium of the statue and the separate identity of the deity is clear in textual sources, however:

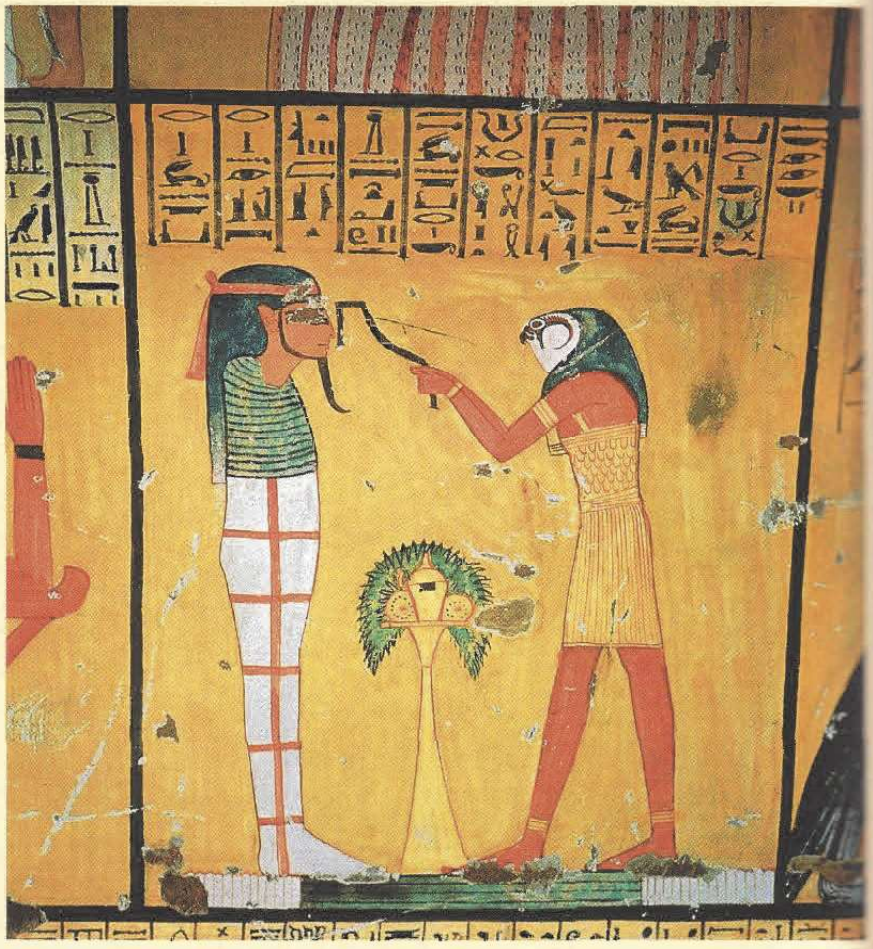
'The God of this earth is the sun in the sky.
While his images are on earth,
When incense is given them as daily food,
The lord of risings is satified.'

The Instruction of Any

The divine image was not only treated reverentially but was also the recipient of considerable gifts. For

Creating Bodies for the Gods

Cult images of the gods were produced from only the most permanent or symbolically significant materials, and the production of a divine statue was considered as an act of creation accomplished by human craftsmen with the help of the gods themselves. There was thus something of the supernatural about the divine image even from its initial design and fashioning at the craftsmen's hands. Mythologically, the skin of the gods was said to be of pure gold so divine images were often gilded or made entirely with the precious metal. Their hair was said to be like lapis lazuli so this semi-precious stone was often inset into statues of deities to signify their hair and eyebrows. Symbolic connections were also made with the deity by means of the materials used in its image – lunar deities, for example, often being inset with silver, which signified the moon. The connection between the image and the deity it represented was made total, however, through the rite of the 'opening of the mouth'. This ritual symbolically removed all traces of human origin from the image and instilled it with the emanation of the deity. At this point the image was believed to become the invisible deity's visible body on earth. As such it 'lived' and fulfilled the function not only of an intermediary but as the very nexus of interaction between this world and beyond.



'Opening of the mouth' scene, Tomb of Inherkha, Thebes.

example, Amenophis Son of Hapu, chief steward of Amenophis III, records that he donated 1,000 animals to a statue of the king. Royal gifts to the gods were even more prodigious, of course, and were often recorded in representations of the king presenting his gifts before the image of the deity to whom they were made.

On festival days or other special occasions the images of the gods were often placed in portable barques which were carried upon the shoulders of the priests and taken in procession to significant sites. These were often the temples of other deities, or their own outlying temples where the deity would simply take up temporary occupancy for the duration of the festival or special event.

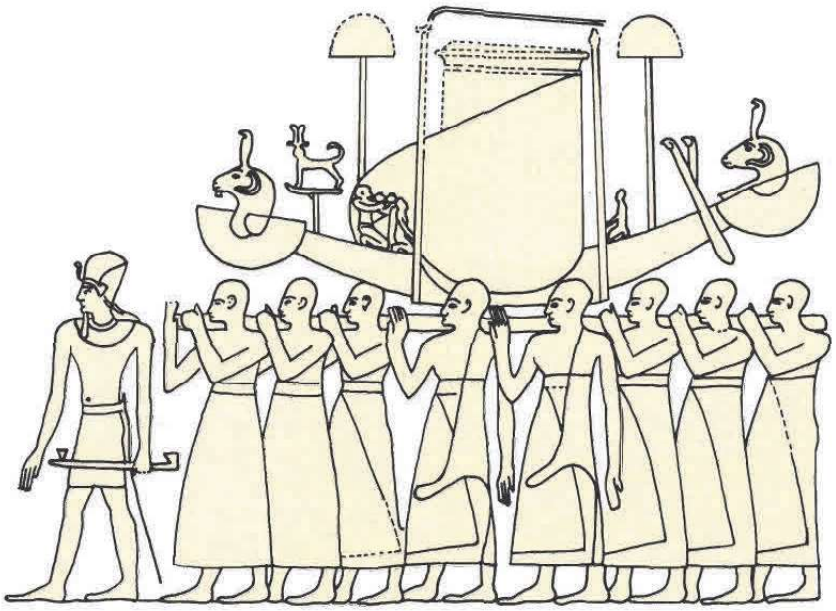
Festivals, rituals and mysteries

The festivals of the deities provided the structural framework for many of the important rituals focusing on the gods and on cultic or cosmic renewal. 'Festival calendars' or lists of ritual activities were inscribed on the walls and doorways of temples and often included the offerings to be made not only in the regular daily service but also on all the particular high days celebrated in the temple's cult.

Renewal is particularly important in these festivals as their purpose was ultimately directed to the same kind of rejuvenation or rebirth achieved each day in the constant solar cycle. Thus, one of the rituals performed on New Year's Day – also called 'the birth of Re' – and most fully recorded in Ptolemaic times involved carrying the statues of deities up to the temple roof. Here the god or goddess could see and be united with the rising sun in a moment of shared rebirth. Many of the same rituals and religious performances were enacted on a number of key festivals such as those of the first day of the first month (New Year) and the first day of the fifth month (celebrating the rebirth of Osiris). Some festivals had their own particularly focused meanings, of course, but renewal or rebirth was a predominant theme in a great number of them.

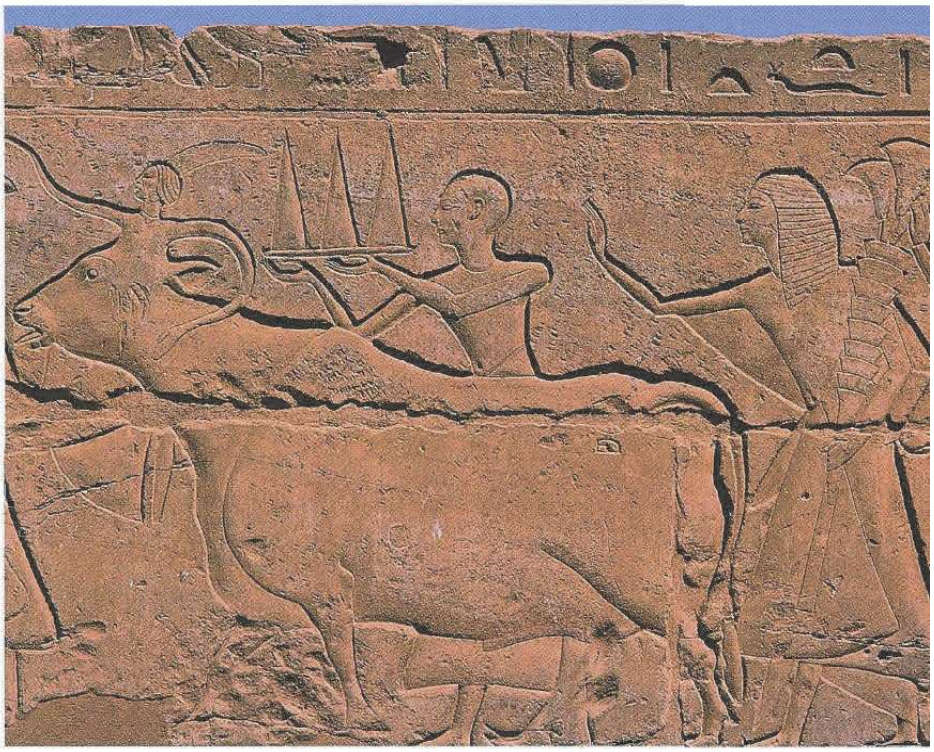
The power of the gods was also tapped and order maintained by means of rituals utilized on unscheduled special occasions. This could be the kind of ritual employed in the 'opening of the mouth' ceremony in order to animate a temple statue or it could be one with much wider application. The goddess Sekhmet, for example, was regarded as a potential bringer of plague and disease who sometimes had to be propitiated and her priests were often skilled in medicine. Placation could be accomplished through large-scale magico-religious rituals performed in the temples as well as through more focused rituals directed at individual sufferers. Thus rituals for the care of humanity ultimately also served to care for the gods.

Many aspects of the daily service, festival and special rituals were described by the Egyptians as 'mysteries' (Egyptian *shetau*). In fact, by virtue of its supernatural basis, any ritual might be said to be a mystery. More particularly, any part of a ritual which was conducted privately, beyond the view of the people at large, was given this name because it was also hidden and part of the secret knowledge of the priests and others who were skilled in its performance. A general atmosphere of secrecy was developed by the priesthoods as time progressed, but in reality the same priests sometimes performed similar rituals – such as the 'opening of the mouth' – in both hidden and open settings, and the boundaries between formal temple ceremonies and private ritual were probably blurred to some degree.



The divine barque of Amun, carried by priests and led by the king, in ritual procession. Shrine of Philip Arrhidaeus, c. 323 BC, temple of Amun, Karnak.

Procession with fattened bulls and offerings for the great Opet festival. 19th dynasty, Luxor Temple.



Popular Religion and Piety

Although the common people played little or no active part in the formal rituals conducted by the official cults, they had their own opportunities and avenues for worship of their deities. Herodotus' often quoted statement that the Egyptians were 'religious beyond measure...more than any other people' seems to have applied not only to the great temples with their multitudes of priests and elaborate service of the gods, but also to the piety of many ordinary people. But achieving a fuller assessment of popular religion in ancient Egypt is made difficult by a number of factors. As John Baines has stressed, on the one hand, the archaeological record is incomplete since far less is known of the religious practices of people living in towns, villages and rural areas than about the formal worship that took place in the cult temples of gods and kings. On the other hand, the archaeological record itself can be somewhat misleading. While a great deal of the ancient Egyptian material which has survived is religious in nature, the bulk of it was produced by and for the society's elite – the royal and noble families. Their religion was not necessarily the same as that of the common people, however, and in some cases it was clearly different. We do not know to what degree religious piety was present throughout Egypt's various social classes or to what extent this situation changed over time. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, a fair amount is known about popular religion – at least in certain areas and times – and we can only presume that what is known is indicative of the broader picture.

Access to the gods

In the earlier periods of Egyptian history there was often no clear distinction between the priesthood and other members of society, as temple service was conducted by individuals who, after their assigned rotation of duties, returned to secular work in their communities. However, in New Kingdom and later times when the priestly offices became professional and largely hereditary ones, the situation changed considerably, and we find a much greater gap between the population at large and those involved in formal service of the gods. Lay individuals could place votive offerings in the outer areas of temples, but the chief occasions during which they could approach the gods were public festivals. At these times lay people might witness the procession of a deity, although it would be from a decorous distance and usually the actual image of the god would not be visible to them. Those outside the priesthood had access to 'hear ear' shrines placed in the outer walls of many ples, and the colossal statues in front of their py were also readily accessible to the people as me tors of their prayers. In some temples the g could also be approached through oracles wh would answer important questions, and com people also had some access to the gods in le matters. This was sometimes accompli through specific movements of the god's port shrine barque while it was being carried in pro sion, when questions were addressed to the de Though we do not know how commonly this typ oracular manifestation occurred or how wide was accessible, it is probable that such guidan the gods was sought when the courts were not to settle a matter.

Another way in which the common people access to the gods was through dreams. For E tians, the sleeper temporarily inhabited the wor the gods, and dreams could thus often in contact with the gods. The best-known exampl this are found in the records of New King monarchs such as Tuthmosis IV to whom the G Sphinx spoke as a god in a dream, but even the humble commoner could dream of deities in same manner. Magical texts describe the mean of many such dreams which might be experien and we have ample evidence of dreams be actively elicited as means to understanding the of the gods.

Finally, we must not rule out other forms of ception, for the Egyptian gods could also be se through their fragrance, through sounds and other such ways. For the ancient Egyptian even wind felt on a person's face might be perceive the breath of a god or the passage of the air Shu. We should not altogether discount the ceived ability of the Egyptians to encounter gods in everyday contexts, although these may been viewed as of relatively less importance the potential for interaction with the divine foun the houses of the gods.

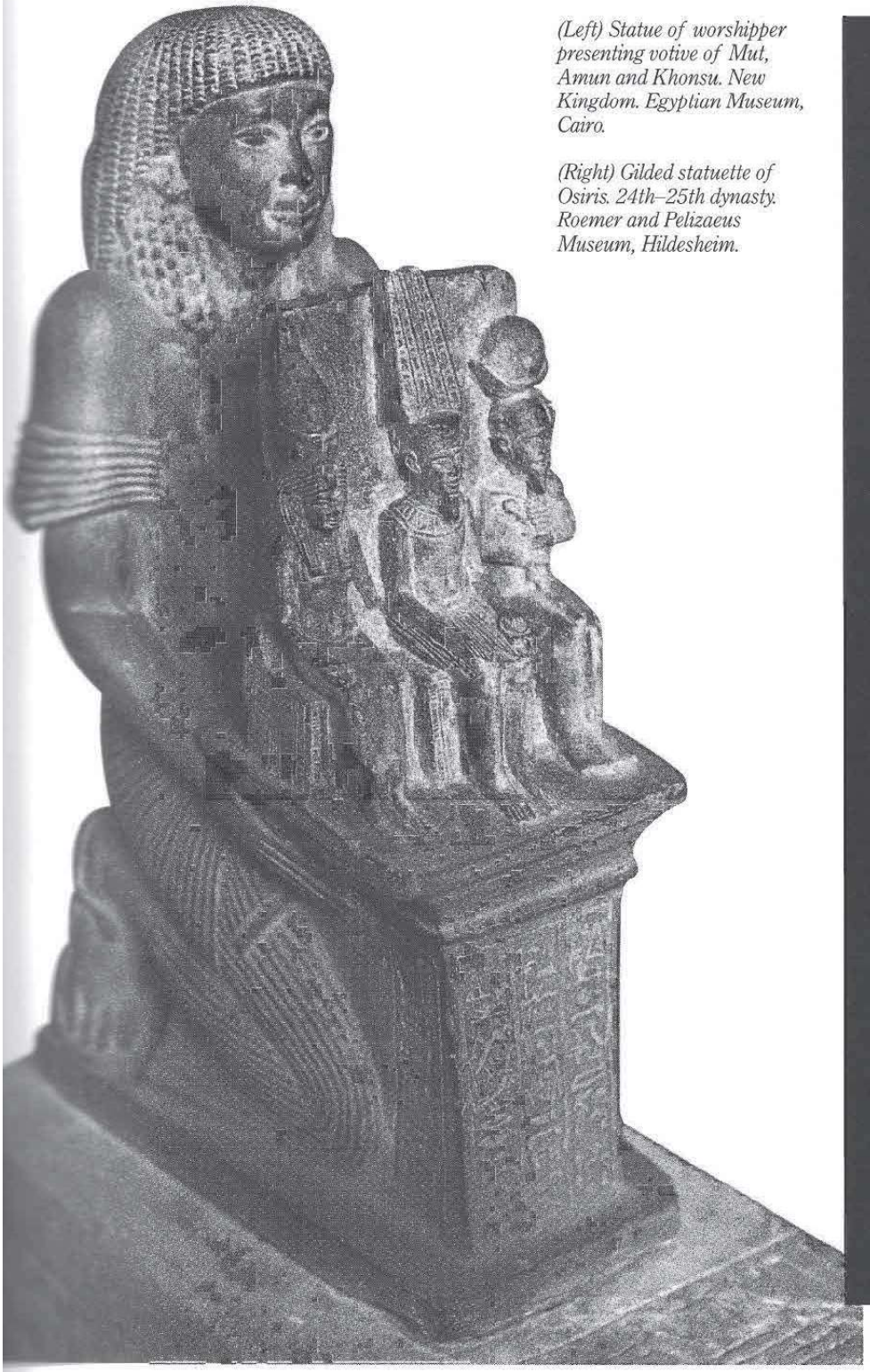
Gifts to the gods

Pious visitors to temples donated perishable of ings such as food, drink or flowers as well non-perishable gifts dedicated to the gods ran from simple trinket-like objects to finely carved painted statues and votive stelae. These latter represent the most important votive gifts foun archaeological contexts.

Statues given as gifts to the gods or placed shipfully before them were produced in la numbers in many periods. Most of the statues have survived from ancient Egypt are in fact pieces donated to the gods by kings, nobles, pr and various officers of the state, and even as co tive gifts from cities and towns. Such

statuary usually comprised individual or group figures of gods, sometimes with the inclusion of an intermediary royal or priestly figure, and these divine images could range from individually crafted works to mass-produced figures of gods and goddesses utilized by the less wealthy. In the Late and Ptolemaic Periods the private donation of votive bronze statues grew tremendously, and the development of casting techniques led to the production of countless metal images of deities and sacred animals for devotional purposes and as offerings to temples and shrines.

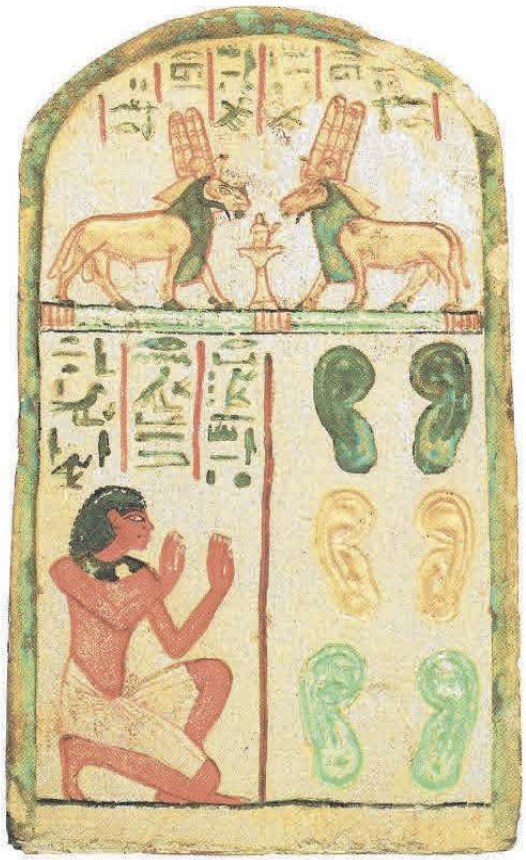
Votive stelae were of different types, though many bore texts requesting favours from the gods and sometimes gave thanks for their help when it seemed that a request had been granted. The styles of such stelae varied geographically and changed over time but usually depicted the donor, sometimes together with members of his or her family, worshipping the deity to whom the stela was dedicated.





(Left) Statue of worshipper presenting votive of Mut, Amun and Khonsu. New Kingdom. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Right) Gilded statuette of Osiris. 24th–25th dynasty. Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim.



Painted wooden 'ear stela' of Bai with three pairs of ears representing divine hearing of the worshipper's prayer. From Deir el-Medina. Ramessid Period. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

In New Kingdom times in particular, such stelae also often depicted one or more large pairs of ears as symbolic listening devices to ensure that the supplicant's prayers were 'heard' by the god. Such 'ear' stelae may be almost completely covered with these depictions or decorated with the representation of a single, huge, pair of ears – presumably increasing the 'auditory' effectiveness of the stelae.

Private worship and personal piety

From the Middle Kingdom onwards we find stelae showing the direct worship of Osiris by the deceased and a 'personal piety' movement began to develop, eventually resulting in more direct divine access for the common people – perhaps in contrast to the increasingly hereditary and professional nature of the priesthood. Thus, by New Kingdom times, in addition to the great temples staffed by courses of priests there were numerous small local shrines in which prayers could be offered or votive offerings left for the deity to whom the shrine was dedicated. In the workmen's village of Deir el-Medina in western Thebes there were shrines of this type honouring Amun, Hathor, Ptah, Thoth, Isis, Osiris, Anubis and other gods as well as certain deities of foreign origin such as Astarte and Qadesh. A shrine to Hathor excavated there provides an example of one apparently receiving the veneration mainly of women.

These local shrines show evidence of a good deal of use, but it appears that the religion of many Egyptians may have been dominated by the veneration of personal or local gods honoured in even smaller household shrines. Homes excavated at Deir el-Medina contained niches in which were kept the images of departed relatives and also of household deities – most commonly the god Bes and the goddess Taweret. These deities had the power to ward off evil, appearing on plaques or as amulets which were attached to household objects or worn on the person. While such plaques and amulets may be considered apotropaic or protective magic rather than worship *per se*, the two can hardly be separated, as the Egyptian gods figured prominently in all types of magical rituals and procedures aimed at procuring desirable conditions or avoiding undesirable ones. The wish to control or tap the supernatural powers of the cosmos was pervasive in the religions of the ancient world and Egypt was certainly no exception, for its vast pantheon provided a rich realm of possible allies in the practice of religious magic.



(Left) Worker's house at Deir el-Medina showing an architectural feature which may have served as both a bed and a domestic altar. 18/19th dynasty. Western Thebes.

(Right) Interior staircase of the Ptolemaic temple of Hathor at Deir el-Medina. The Egyptians presented offerings at such formal temples as well as at more modest local and household shrines.



Relationships with the Divine

It is in the writings of the Egyptians themselves that we gain our deepest insights into their attitudes towards their religion and to the gods. There is a considerable body of textual evidence to support the contention that for many Egyptians their personal religious outlook and belief in the gods extended well beyond mere superstition. To be sure, it is possible to see selfish and transitory human needs and desires beneath many of these texts, but the level of personal piety often appears high. Of particular value in this regard are texts found at Deir el-Medina. While the inhabitants of the ancient village of this site – the workmen and artisans who constructed the royal tombs of the New Kingdom – may not have been entirely typical of Egyptian society the texts they left do provide fascinating insights into non-formal religion and especially into the relationships of the Egyptians with their gods. But these texts are not our only written evidence.

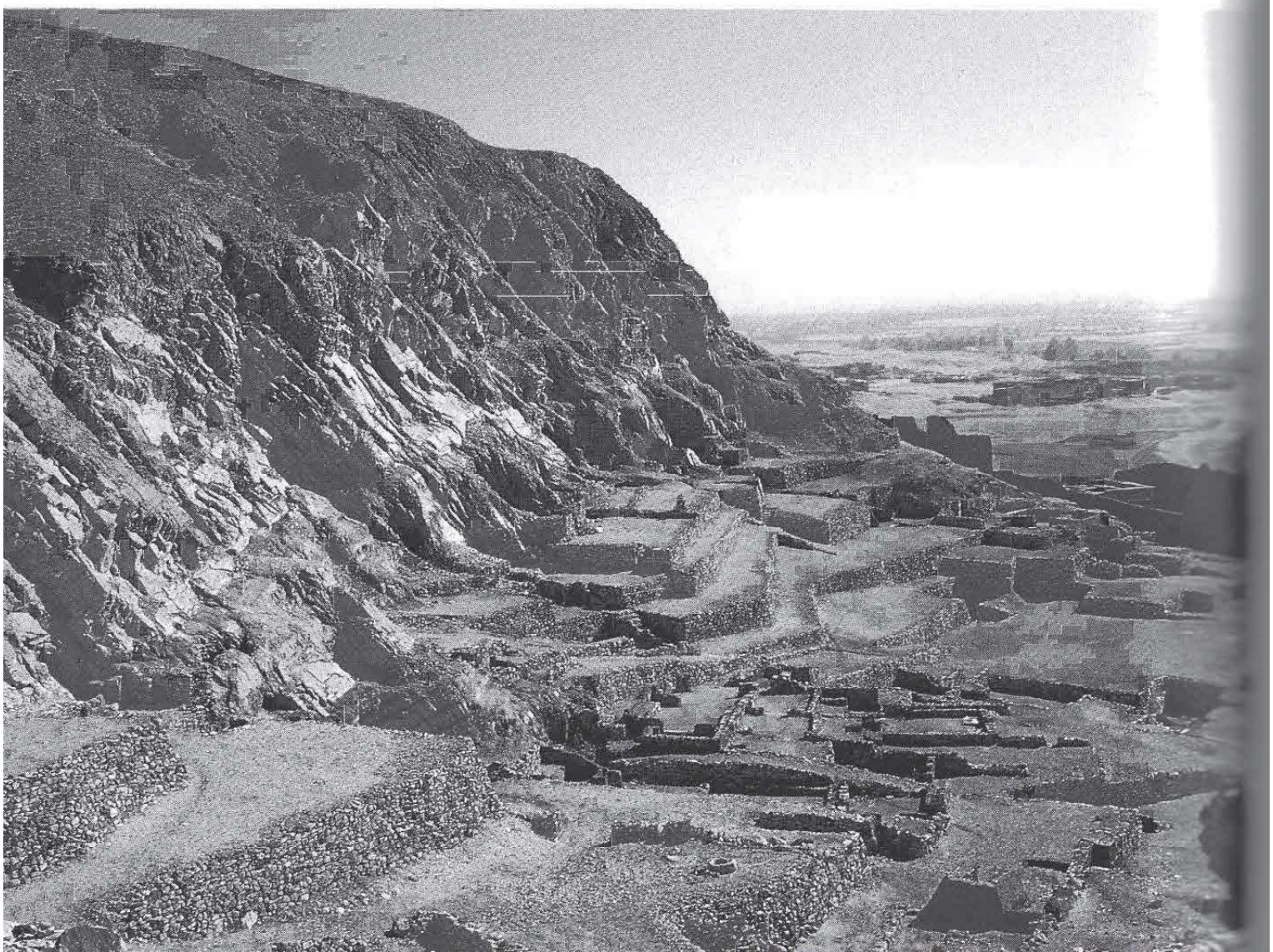
From even earlier periods we find texts of simple gratitude for answered prayers, hymns and poems of praise, and texts which request the help of the gods in humble but eloquent ways. Such, for example, is a prayer of the 11th-dynasty monarch Intef II asking for protection through the darkness of the night and for the continued gift of life. While the text is a formal one from Intef's tomb stela, it is remarkable in the personal nature of its invocation:

'Will you depart, father Re, before you commend me?
Will sky conceal you before you commend me?
Commend me to night and those dwelling in it,
So as to find [me among your adorers], O Re,
Who worship you at your risings,
Who lament at your settings.
May night embrace me, midnight shelter me
By your command, O Re...'

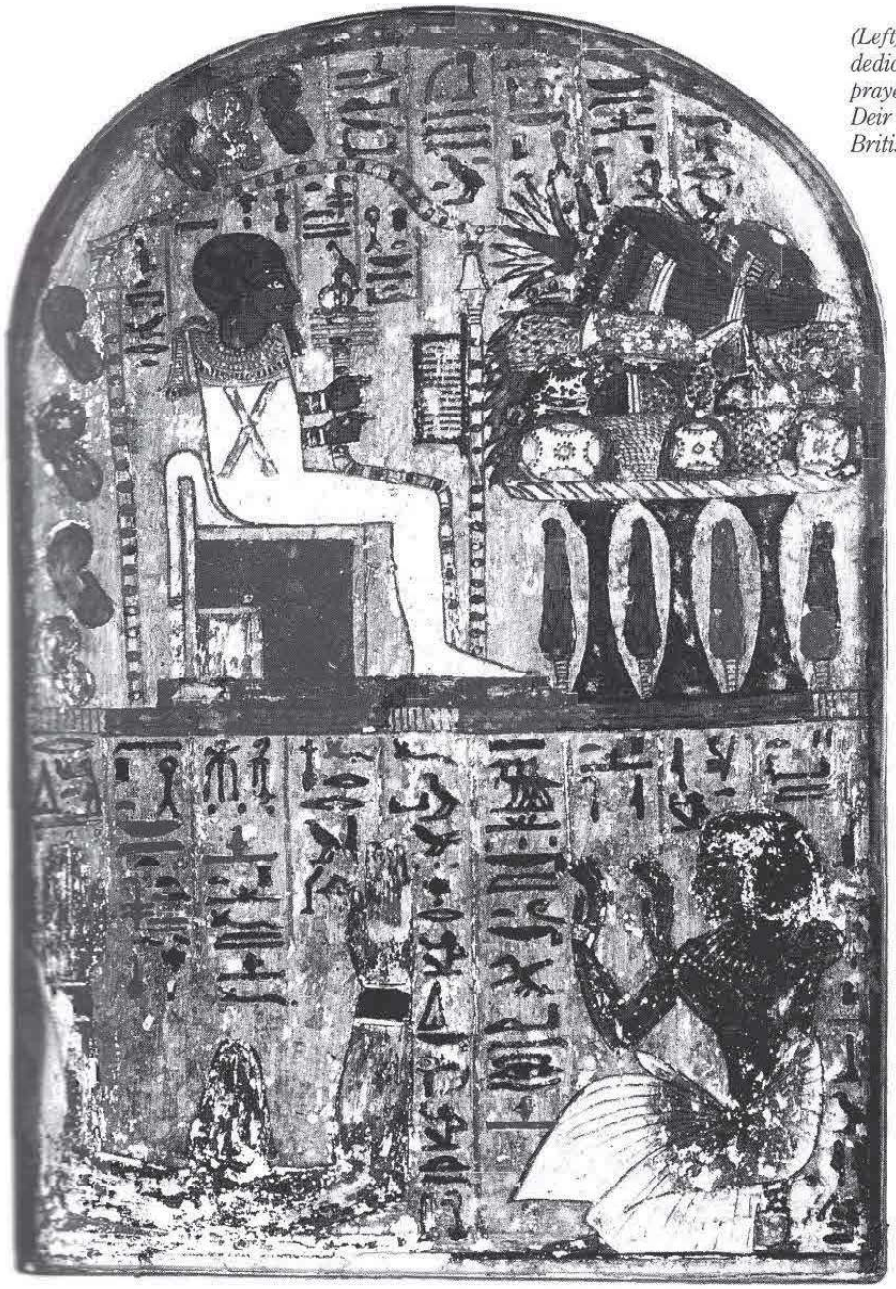
From a stela of Intef II, trans. by Miriam Lichtheim

A merciful and personal deity

Personal piety appears to have reached a high point in New Kingdom times – when it was believed that the gods could forgive human sins – and is perhaps most clearly seen in the so-called 'penitential texts' which have survived to us from Deir el-Medina. These range from formal compositions inscribed on carved stelae to simple graffiti and include inscriptions dedicating them to Amun, Ptah, Hathor

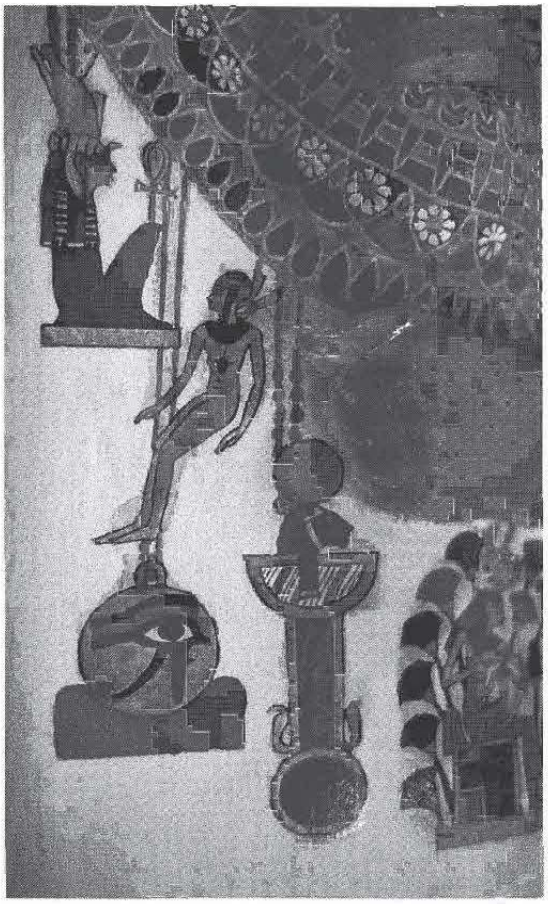


The remains of tombs, temples and dwellings at the workmen's village at Deir el-Medina, western Thebes, a key site for our knowledge of ancient Egyptian religion and everyday life.



(Left) Stela of Penbuy, dedicated to Ptah, with prayer-hearing ears, from Deir el-Medina. 19th dynasty. British Museum.

(Below) The Egyptians wished to continue their relationship with the gods in the afterlife. Painted amulets on cartonnage mummy case of the Lady Tentqerel. 22nd dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



Meretseger and other deities. In a good number of cases they demonstrate that – at least by New Kingdom times – the extent of the personal relationship possible between the common people of Egypt and even the greatest gods was considerable. Some of these texts preserve penitential inscriptions of considerable beauty not unlike that attained in some of the more famous Hebrew psalms. The votive stela of Nebre, for example, includes the following poignant words which underscore the Egyptian belief in the awareness and mercy of his god.

'You are Amun, the Lord of the silent,
Who comes at the voice of the poor;
When I call to you in my distress,
You come to rescue me,
To give breath to him who is wretched,
To rescue me from bondage...
Though the servant was disposed to do evil,
The Lord is disposed to forgive.
The Lord of Thebes spends not a whole day in anger,
His wrath passes in a moment, none remains.
His breath comes back to us in mercy,
Amun returns upon his breeze...'

Votive Stela of Nebre, from Deir el-Medina

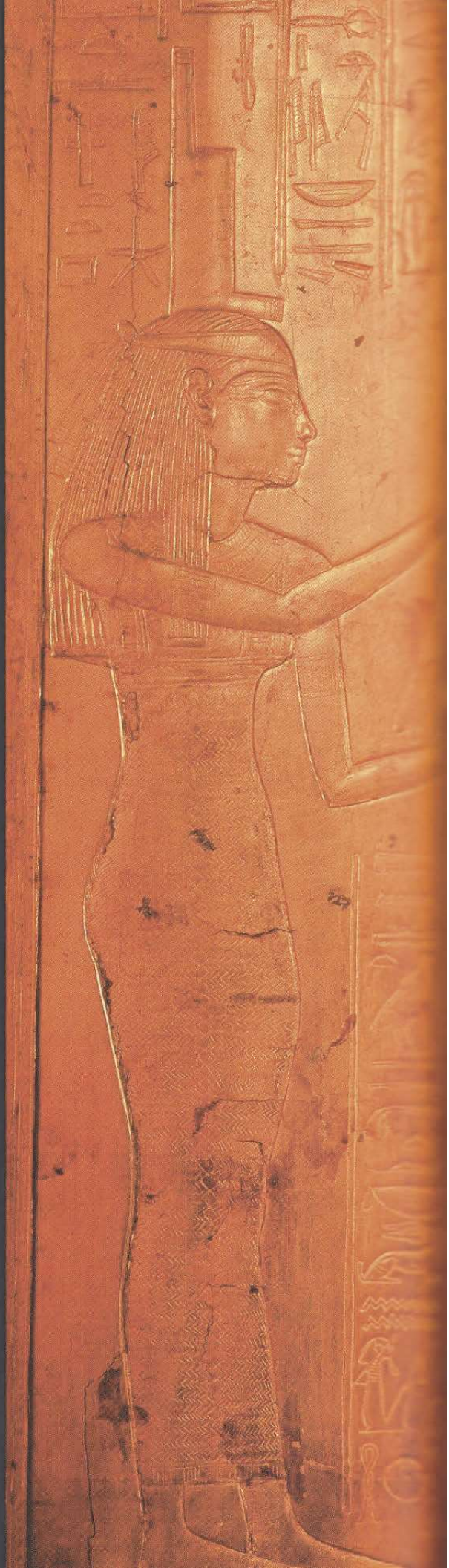
In the final era of Egypt's ancient history the supreme position of Isis and the wide range of her cult appear to have been due, to a very large degree, to the personal relationship of the goddess with her followers and the promise of salvation which was tied to this bond. Often this personal relationship with the deity is seen as purely a development of the Graeco-Roman era, but its precedents in Egypt are clear and provided a fertile ground for the eventual development of Isis worship as a road to personal salvation in later times.

'The king sits with those who row the bark of Re,
The king commands what is good and he does it,
For the king is the great god.'

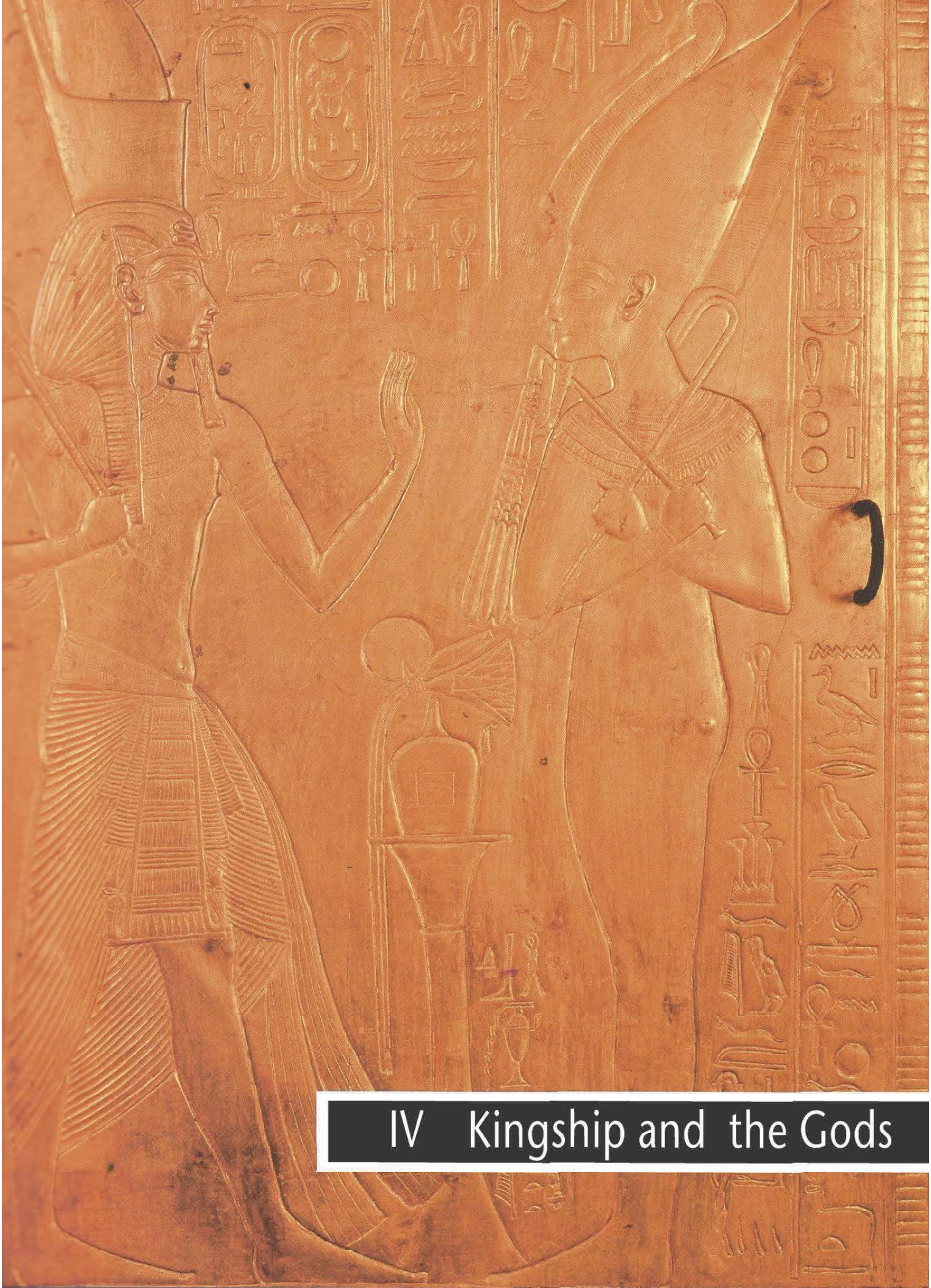
Pyramid Texts, Spell 274

The ideology of kingship was nowhere more highly developed in the ancient world than in Egypt; and perhaps at no time in human history was it more deeply intertwined with religious beliefs. To a good degree Egypt's gods cannot be understood without reference to the Egyptian institution of kingship. On the one hand the living king served as a bridge between the gods and humanity and could himself be deified to a certain degree, and on the other hand deceased kings were regularly deified as they sought to continue their kingship as gods.

Kingship also entered the divine sphere in an even more fundamental way. The institution was such an integral part of the Egyptians' view of their society that it was held to be as essential to divine society as the gods. In a classic example of humans creating gods in their own image the Egyptians organized their deities according to the pattern of their own monarchical society – a fact which holds a number of ramifications for our understanding of Egyptian religion and of the gods themselves.



The deceased Tutankhamun (centre), supported by the goddess Isis, before Osiris on the gilded door of the king's second shrine. Ideologically, the relationship between the kings and gods of Egypt was a complex one in which the monarch both served and participated in the divine sphere. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



IV Kingship and the Gods

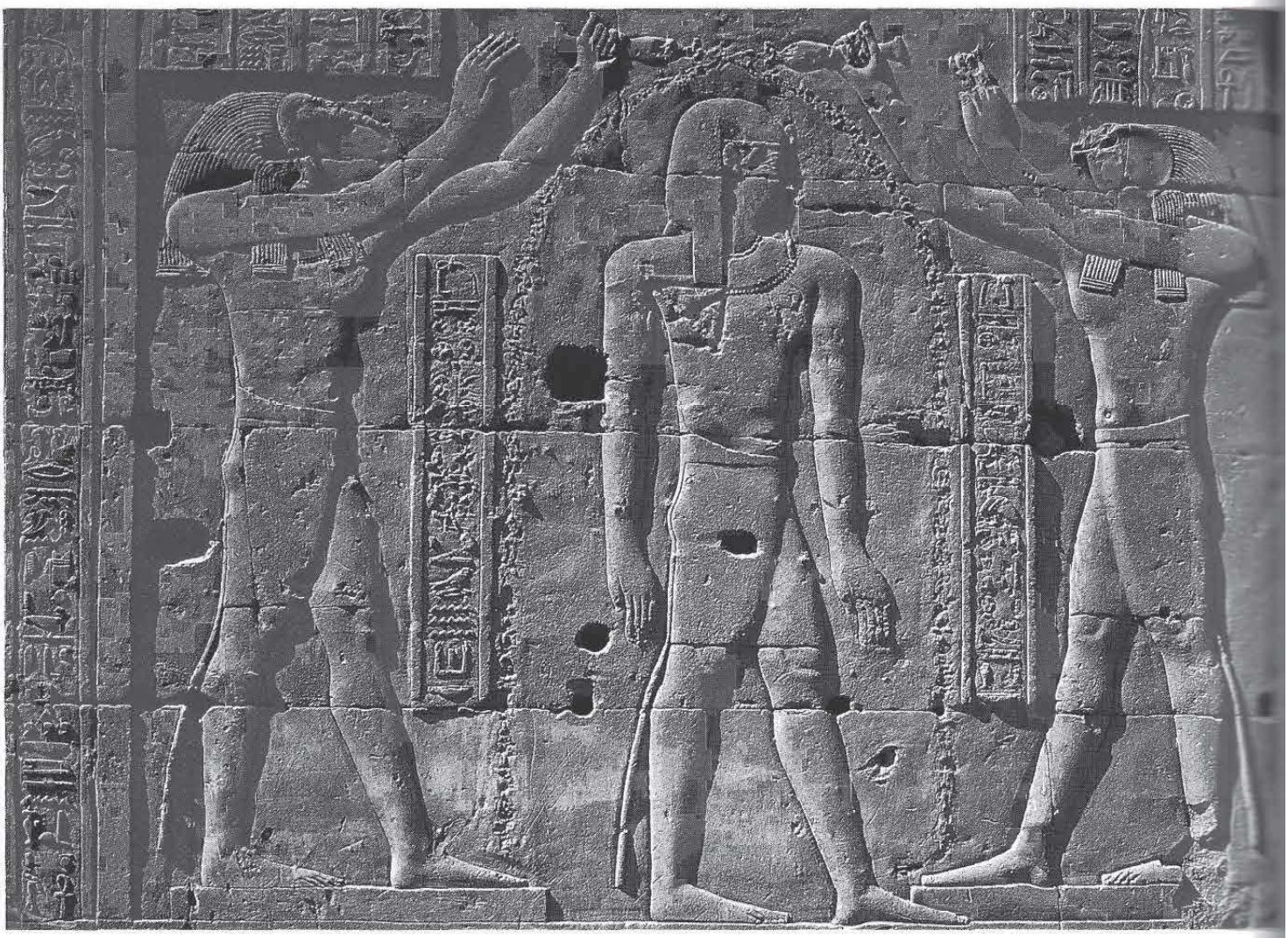
Between Gods and Men

Once Egypt had been united and a central government established, the cult of the living king seems to have been developed in addition to the cults of local and national deities. This fact tends to be taken for granted, but we know very little about how this situation came to be, and if or to what extent the early king was viewed as divine in his lifetime. Even in the later historical periods when evidence is clearer and more plentiful, there is disagreement among scholars as to the degree to which the Egyptian king was regarded as human, divine, or as both.

The gods Thoth and Horus pour water over the king in a ritual lustration. Temple of Horus, Edfu. Theologically, the Egyptian king stood between humanity and the gods in his monarchical role.

Kingship and divinity

That the living Egyptian king was viewed as divine certainly appears possible. In representations the king is depicted far larger than his human subjects and on the same scale as the gods themselves. Not only were monarchs said to be 'like' (Egyptian *mai*) or the 'image of' (Egyptian *tiet*, or *tut*) various deities, but the word *netcher* or 'god' was also frequently used as an epithet of kings. The formal titulary of the Egyptian king also spelled out his relationship with several key deities, indicating that he was not only viewed as the son of Re during his lifetime (from the 4th dynasty on), but also as the living manifestation or image of the falcon god Horus (perhaps from the beginning of the Dynastic Period). There are other important lines of evidence for this point of view. The myth of the king's divine birth, for example, was developed in the New Kingdom but was apparently not something invented by Hatshepsut, as is sometimes stated, and seems to have existed since at least Middle Kingdom times. Even before this, the underlying purpose of the complex genealogy of the gods constructed by the priests of Heliopolis may have been as much to establish the divine lineage and nature of the king as to establish the order of creation, a fact seen by Rudolf Anthes as early as the middle of the last century. As a result of this type of evidence

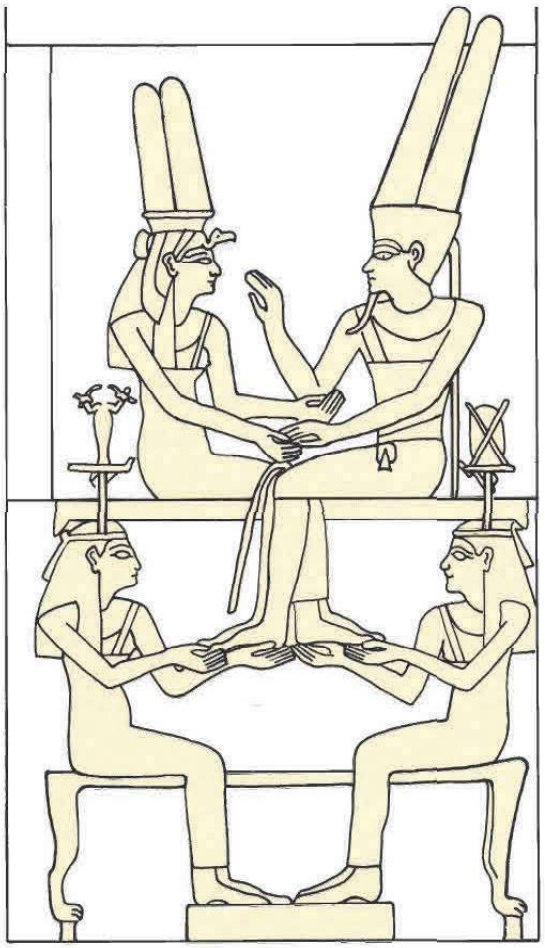


Henri Frankfort, in his important study *Kingship and the Gods*, and a good many other scholars, have believed that the pharaoh's rites of coronation and accession elevated him to identity with the gods.

On the other hand, this may not be the only conclusion that can be drawn from the sources which provide our information on Egyptian kingship. There is no doubt whatsoever that the living king was regarded as subservient to the gods and that in theory, and to some degree in practice, every king acted as their servant in the enactment of temple rituals. The evidence considered above may also be viewed in different ways. The frequent identification of the king with various deities could often be little more than hyperbole. Marie-Ange Bonhême has also recently pointed out that while the king's formal names may indicate an aspect of divinity in the monarch, they do not clarify the 'degree of divinity' which is involved. As early as 1960, Georges Posener showed that the image of the living pharaoh as a god-king is perhaps exaggerated by the royal and religious sources which aim to heighten the divine aspect of kingship. In popular literature and texts the Egyptian king is hardly portrayed as a god. He cannot work the miracles of his wise men and is certainly neither omniscient nor invulnerable in the way we would expect if he were truly regarded as divine. From this perspective it would seem that it was not the king who was honoured as a god but the incarnate power of the gods that was honoured in the king.

A divine duality

The truth is probably to be found in a balance of these views. From the human perspective the Egyptian king was viewed as one of the gods – he is called such and depicted along with other gods in divine scenes. On the other hand, it could be said that from a divine perspective the king was still



(Left) The god Amun, attended by the birth-related goddesses Serket and Neith, impregnates Queen Mutemwia, mother of Amenophis III. 18th dynasty. Luxor Temple.

(Below) Hatshepsut, accompanied by Tuthmosis III, offers to a divine image of herself. 18th dynasty. Decorated block, Chapelle Rouge, Karnak.



human and was, of course, subject to human frailties and mortality. This dual nature of the living king – human and divine – seems to be implicit in the *serekh*, the device in which the king's name was written from early times (showing the god Horus atop the royal palace), and in the royal titulary which was drawn up at the king's accession from Middle Kingdom times. The *nesut-bit* or 'two ladies' title preceded the king's formal throne name, and has long been interpreted as signifying only rulership over Upper and Lower Egypt. But it may refer, in fact, to the divine identity of the king in general (*nesut*) and the current human holder of the office in the line of kingly succession (*bit*). Beginning with Siegfried Morenz, a number of scholars have shown that the dual nature of the king may also be seen in contrasting *nesut* with another Egyptian word relating to kingship – *hem*, usually translated 'majesty'. The first word, *nesut*, refers to the divine power held by the king and used in the exercise of kingly roles, whereas the second word, *hem*, really refers to the idea of the individual in whom the divine power is incarnate. These two terms were sometimes used together (*hem en nesut*) meaning something like 'the incarnation of (divine) kingship'.

Accepting this duality amounts to a view of Egyptian monarchical ideology which understands the king as being in effect both human and divine during his lifetime. This apparent contradiction would have hardly been seen as problematic by the ancient Egyptians, whose theological systems contained many such enigmas. The apparent contradiction was resolved practically in the duality of the king's role – in essence, the nature of the Egyptian king depended upon the situation. The king represented the gods to his people as a god, and also the people of Egypt to the gods as a human. Theologically neither the divine nor the human realm could function without him.

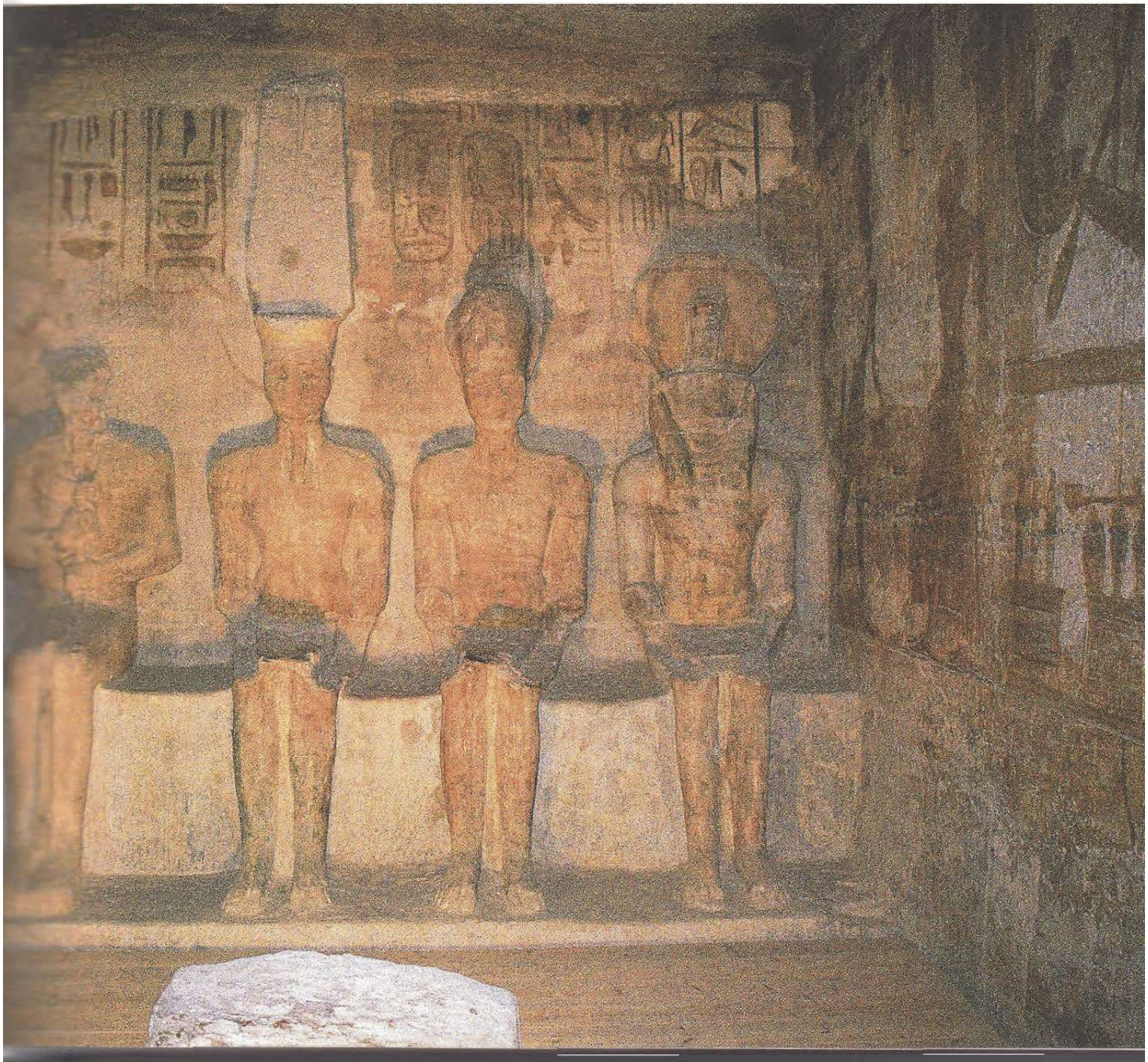


Black granite statue of Ramesses II, the great pharaoh whose images and works strive to personify the ideal of divine kingship, and who was declared divine in his own lifetime. 19th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Turin.

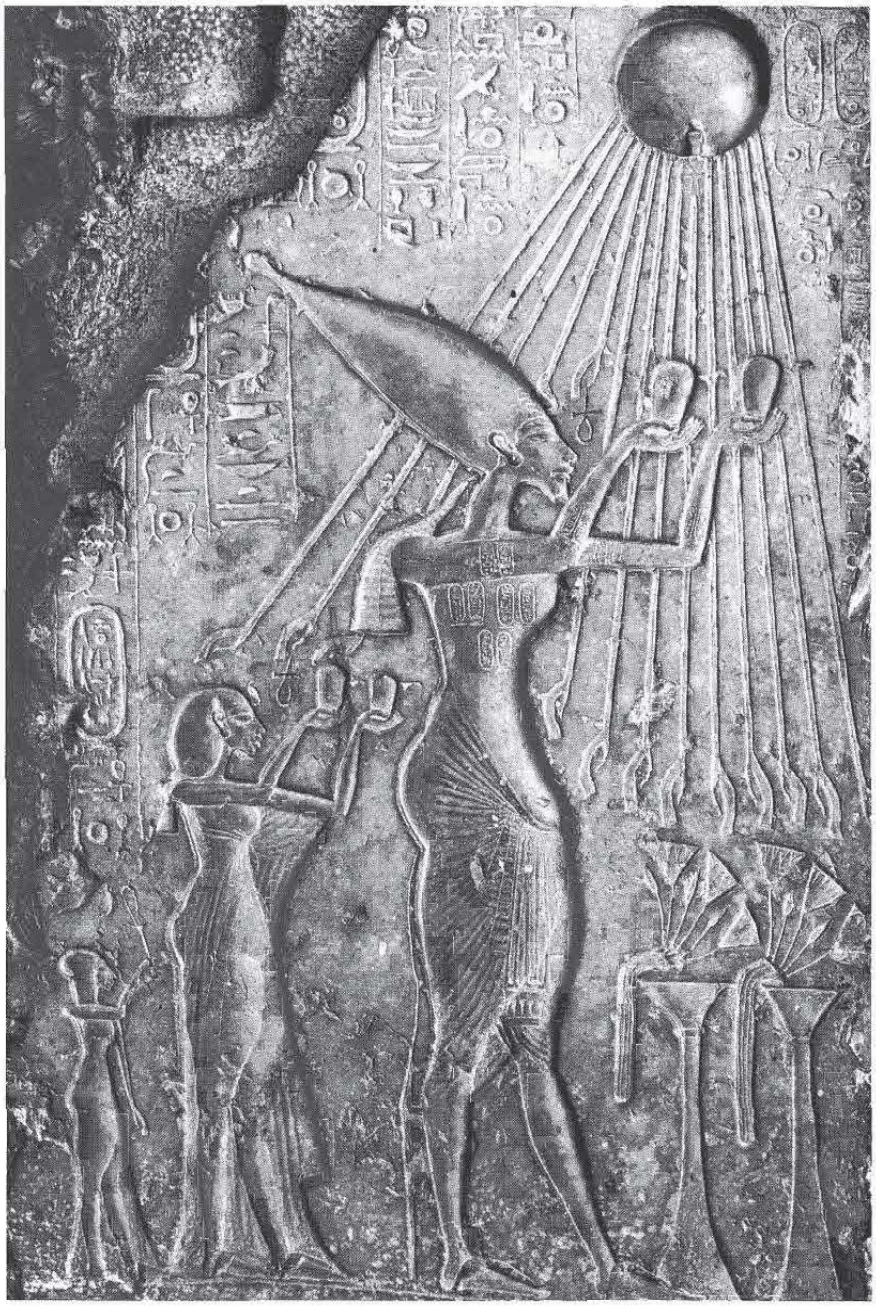
Deified in life

Despite the human-divine duality inherent in the reign of most Egyptian pharaohs there were instances when living kings do seem to have been declared fully divine within their own lifetimes. This was not the result of arbitrary theological or royal decree, however, and it seems clear that such kings usually 'earned' their immortality through long and successful reigns. The clearest evidence for this comes from the New Kingdom; although the exact details of the situation are not always clear, the living deification of Amenophis III and Ramesses II are relatively well attested. In the case of Amenophis III,[2] we find that towards the end of his reign this king began the increasing solarization of Egypt's major cults and of his own kingship. According to the reconstruction of events by Raymond Johnson and others, at the time of his Sed jubilee celebrated in the 30th year of his reign the king declared himself deified and merged with the solar disk as the Aten or as Re-Horakhty. From this time we find the king taking divine prerogatives in his representations such as those showing him with the curved beard of the gods, with the horns of Amun and wearing the lunar crescent and sun disk or presenting an offering before a statue of himself. Even here, however, the evidence of royal deification may not be what it appears on the surface. Betsy Bryan has pointed out that Amenophis may not have intended by his own deification to have transcended kingship on earth permanently and that the cultic and political uses of a divine ruler could have been limited to prescribed occasions such as the king's Sed festival.

Representations of living deified kings in the presence of deities show a level of equality which transcends that found in normal scenes of the king among the gods. In the inner shrine of the great rock-cut temple of Abu Simbel, for example, the deified Ramesses II had four statues cut to repre-



The sanctuary of the mortuary temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel holds seated statues of the gods Ptah, Amun, Ramesses and Re-Horakhty. Here, the figure of the king represents not only the god Osiris, but also Ramesses himself as god. 19th dynasty.



Akhenaten and his family present offerings to the Aten. The nature of Akhenaten's place in his own religion is not fully understood, but it seems that he and his family may have played some kind of divine role before his subjects. Limestone balustrade from el-Amarna. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

sent Ptah, Re-Horakhty, Amun-Re and himself, seated side by side. That the king is not simply depicted in the company of the gods is clear as the figures are shown as incontrovertible equals. It has even been suggested that in this group the king might be represented as an embodiment or manifestation of all these national gods. We can only be sure that in some circumstances the living Egyptian king could be declared divine in a manner which transcended the aspect of divinity which was taken on at the coronation. Whether this deification of the living monarch equalled that accorded deceased kings in permanency or in degree we may never know.

The nature of Akhenaten is also of particular interest in regard to the question of monarchical divinity but is difficult to ascertain. While some scholars have seen this king as taking the role of divine son of the god Aten, others have seen him as a member of a kind of divine triad which also included his queen Nefertiti. More recently, a number of Egyptologists have pointed out what appear to be associations with traditional Egyptian solar theology even within the Amarna Period. Eugene Cruz-Uribe has shown that just as Amenophis III may have been equated with the Aten, and his queen Tiye with Hathor, complex parallels may have been promulgated which suggested the equation of the living Akhenaten with the god Shu, Khepri and other solar deities, Nefertiti with Tefnut, and possibly, a royal daughter with the goddess Maat.

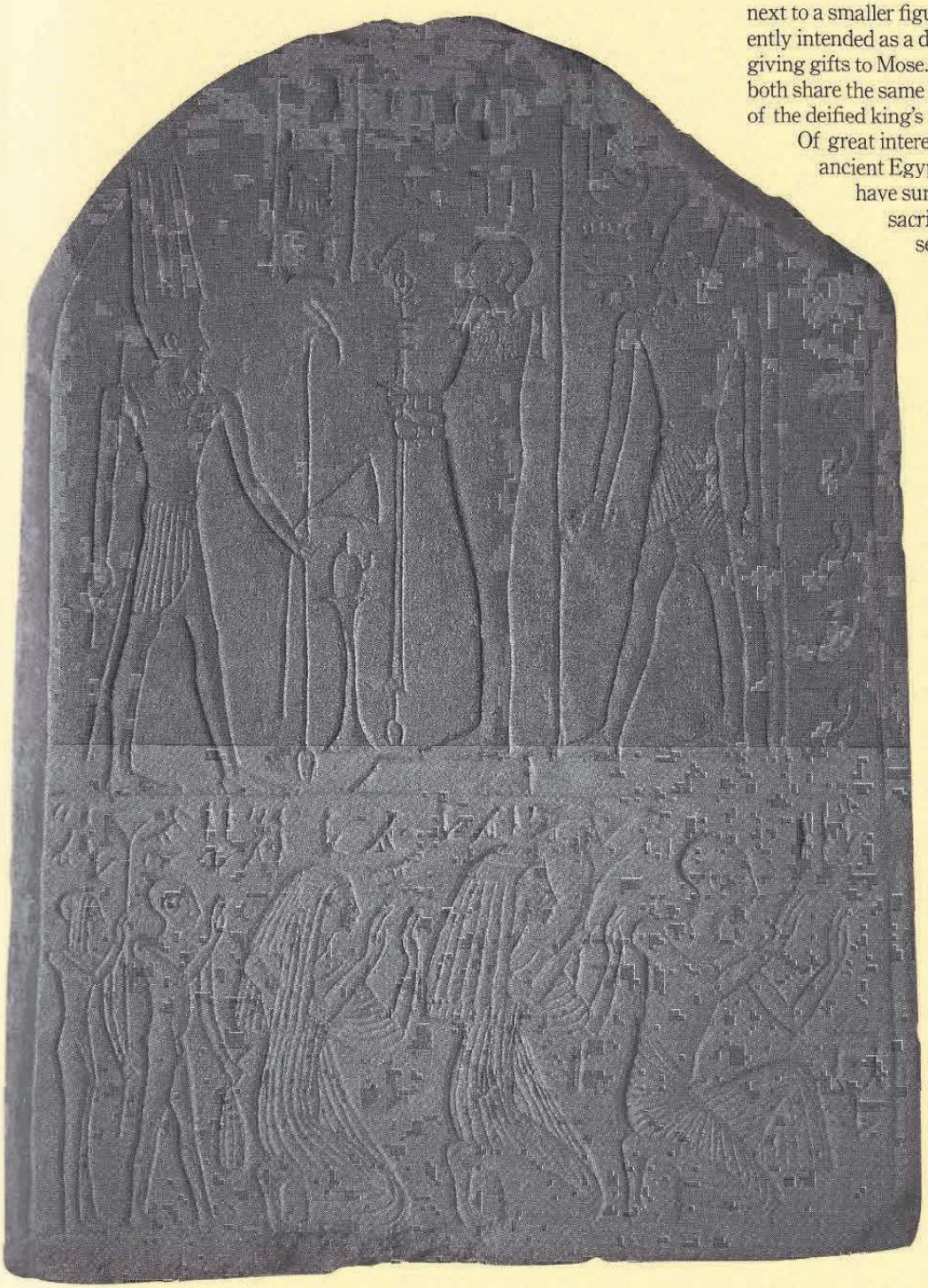


(Right) Statue of a statue of Amenophis III displays the king as a god and, on its rear face, the image of the human king prostate before the god Amun. Luxor Museum.

Divine Royal Statues

Statues of Egyptian kings functioned as integral parts of divine cults, often serving as intermediaries between the people and the gods within or at the entrances to temples and also – especially in later New Kingdom times – sometimes being regarded as divine themselves. Statues such as the titanic figure of Ramesses II set up in western Thebes – which was the subject of Shelley's poem 'Ozymandias' – were given special names, could own land, had their own attendant priesthoods, and were venerated as gods in their own right. A group of artifacts known as the Horbeit Stelae throw particular light on this phenomenon. The stelae, which were found in the eastern Delta near the modern Qantir, come from the region of Ramesses II's chief Delta residence and attest to the presence of a cult of several colossal statues of the king in that area. One of these stelae (that of Seti-er-neheh) depicts a statue of the deified Ramesses II along with the great gods Amun and Ptah in a manner which makes the importance of the statue unmistakable. Another stela (that of the military commander Mose) depicts Ramesses II in a unique manner. In its lower register the stela shows a colossal seated statue of Ramesses next to a smaller figure of the king (which is apparently intended as a divine manifestation of the statue) giving gifts to Mose. The statue and its manifestation both share the same name and show the divine nature of the deified king's image.

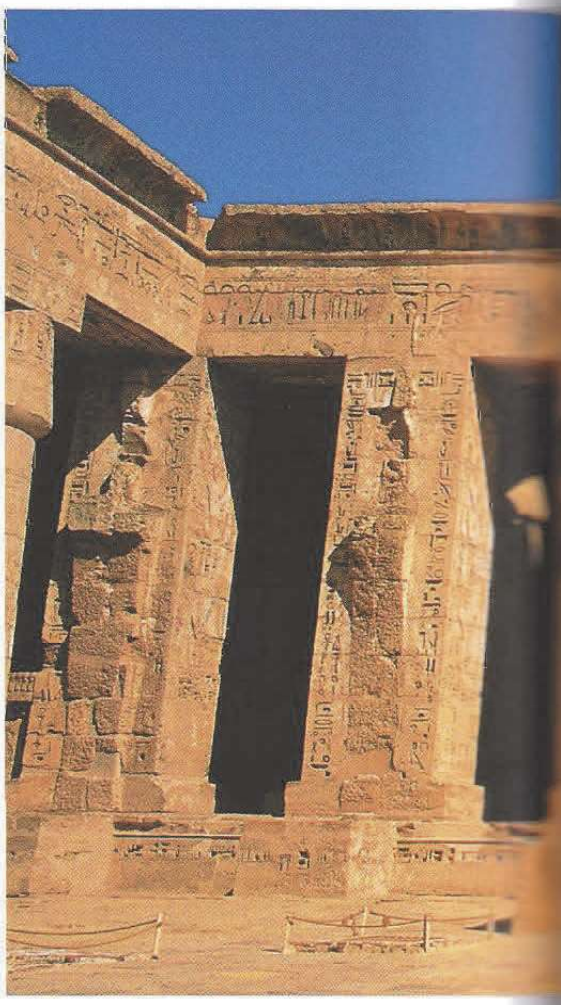
Of great interest for our understanding of ancient Egyptian theology are scenes which have survived to us of kings presenting sacrifices to deified statues of themselves. An example is found in the representation of Amenophis III offering to an image of himself in his temple at Soleb. Such depictions are based on the concept of dual (earthly and heavenly) roles played by the gods themselves. Beginning in the Old Kingdom we find evidence for the idea of deities being manifest both in the heavens or 'beyond' and in the physical sphere on earth, just as the living king was himself a manifestation of the earthly Horus as opposed to the god Horus in the heavens. Thus, a *king deified in his own lifetime* – within the physical sphere – could sacrifice to his own self as a deity in the spiritual sphere.



Stela of Seti-er-neheh shows the god Amun-Re (top left) before Ptah and a statue of the divine Ramesses II, 'Montu of the Two Lands'. From Horbeit. 19th dynasty. Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim.

Deceased and Divine





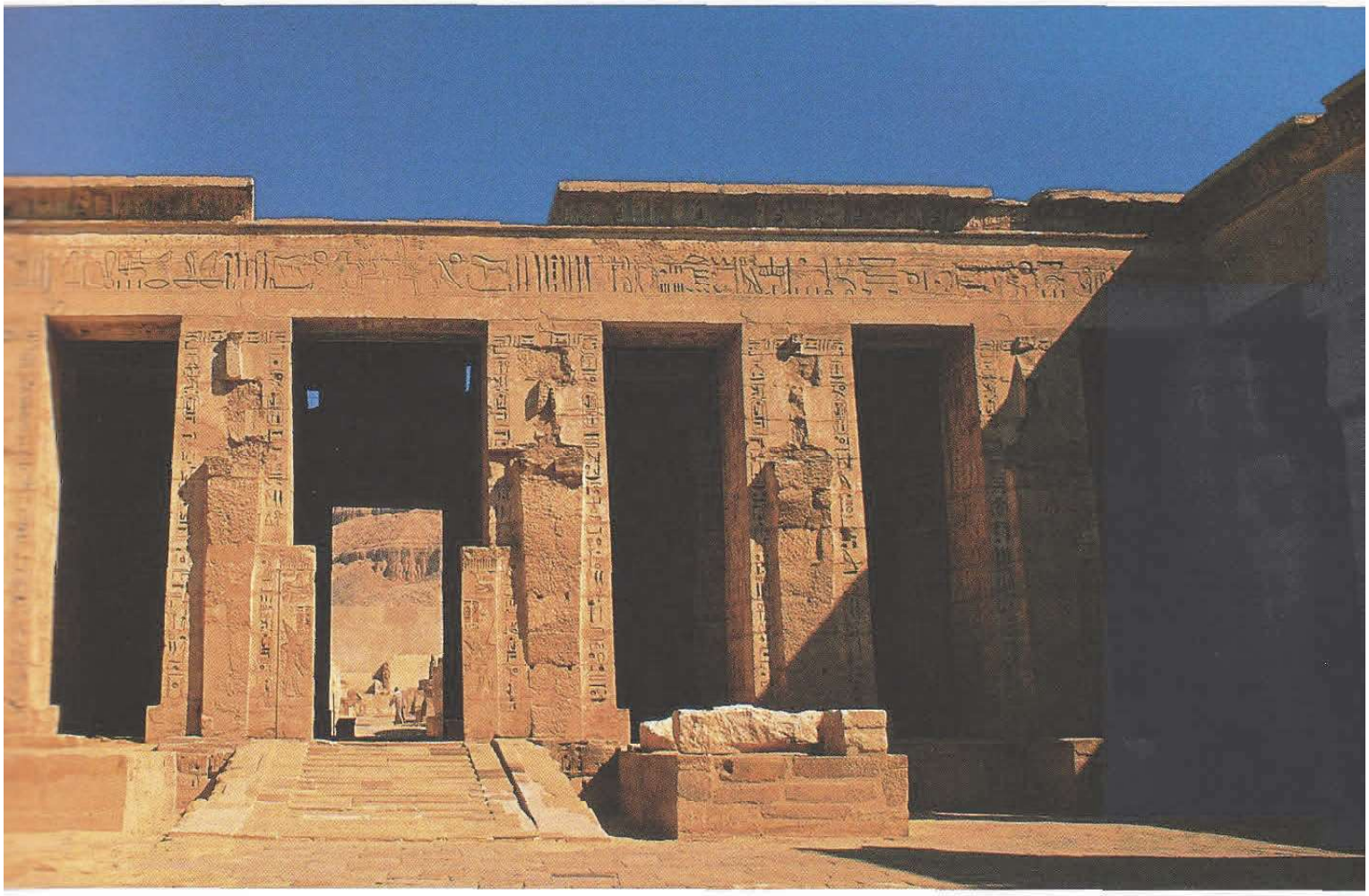
The intimate embrace of Ramesses III and the goddess Isis underscores the divine nature of the deceased Egyptian monarch. 20th dynasty. Tomb of Amenherkhepshef, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.

While what we might call full deification occurred for some monarchs within their lifetimes, it was usually in death that this state was reached and a good deal of evidence seems to show that the deceased Egyptian king was venerated as a 'full' god. A number of Egyptian queens were also deified in death – including the illustrious Ahmose-Nefertari of the 18th dynasty and later queens such as Arsinoe II, Berenike II, and Cleopatra III, V, and VII of the Ptolemaic Period. Although the situation is somewhat different for deceased queens and cannot be examined in detail here, a number of similarities certainly existed between the deification of kings and queens.

Dead kings as living gods

The close relationship between the deceased king and the gods may be seen in the textual and representational evidence associated with the royal mortuary cults from early times. The Pyramid Texts clearly attempt to place the deceased king on the same level as the gods – both by directly asserting that he is a god, and by stating that he 'is' Osiris, Re, or some other deity. In some cases the texts not only show the deceased king's parity with the divine cohort, but they also stress his ascendance over the other gods, showing that he is certainly not viewed as a minor deity in the afterlife. We do not know if these assertions of the deceased king's deity were originally statements of formally held belief or whether they represented a desired situation which was attempted through the use of the magical texts. The idea of the king's deified afterlife was certainly established by Old Kingdom times, however, and the same types of textual evidence are found in royal mortuary contexts throughout subsequent periods of Egyptian history. Representations of the deceased king in the presence of deities likewise indicate equality between the two from early times.

The very purpose of the royal mortuary cult seems to have been the affirmation of the deceased monarch's divinity, yet the specific nature of this divinity must not be overlooked. A number of years ago William Murnane showed, in a study of the texts and representations of the great mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, that much of the focus of the royal mortuary cult was on the ongoing reaffirmation of the king's divine kingship rather than eternal life *per se*. This conclusion was expanded in later studies of other mortuary temples dating back to the Old Kingdom, and it now seems clear that in many if not all cases the stress in all these royal mortuary establishments is on the



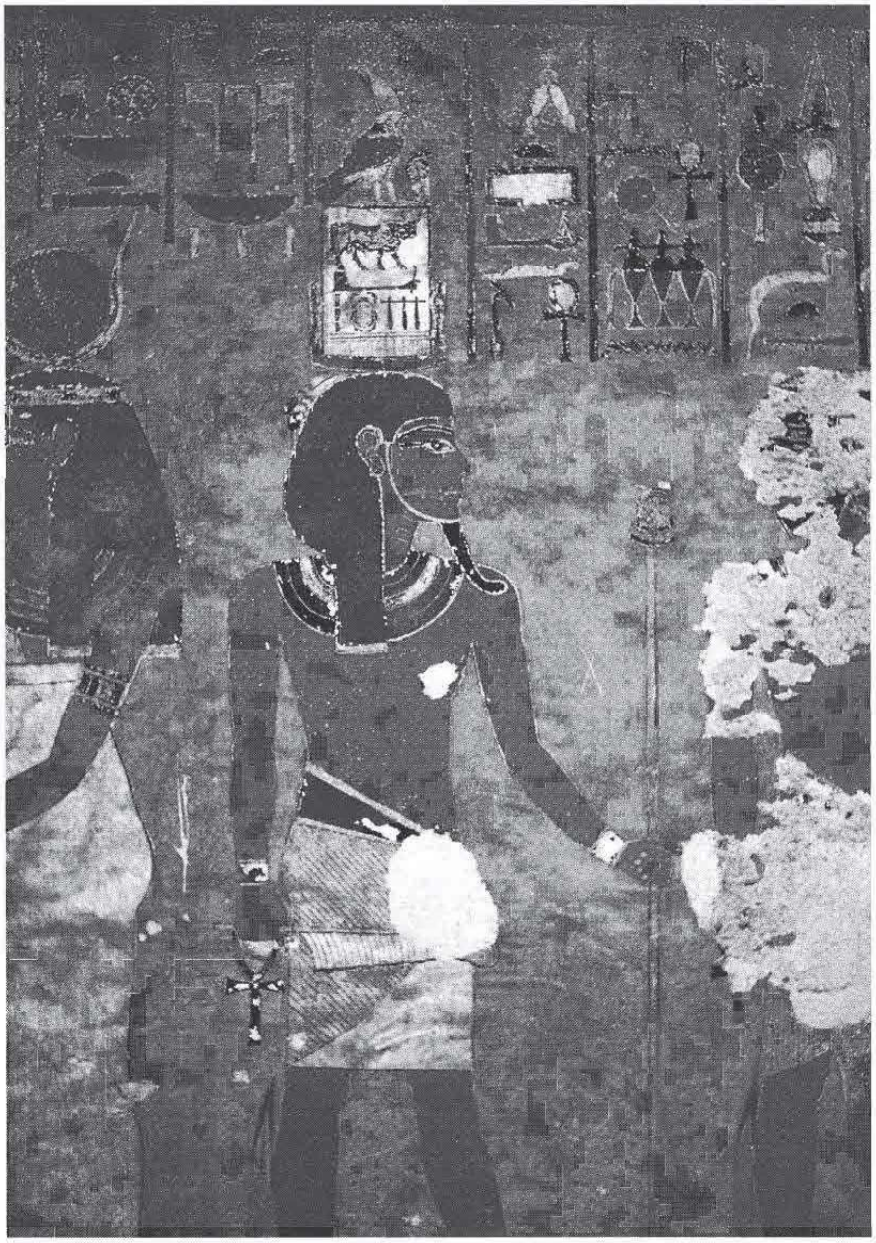
Peristyle court of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III with remnants of Osiride statues of the king. The royal mortuary temple aligned the deceased king with the gods Osiris and Re and also celebrated the divinity of the king in his own right. 20th dynasty. Medinet Habu, western Thebes.

continuation of the king's reign on a divine level in the afterlife. It must not be forgotten that even from a relatively early date – perhaps by the end of the Old Kingdom – funerary spells for the afterlife transformation to the divine became available to other classes of society. Nobles, and later others, could also aspire to become gods in the afterlife. It is unthinkable that these individuals regarded their afterlife state to be equivalent to that of the king or the great gods. It seems far more likely that what was envisaged for both commoner and king alike was an afterlife which represented a kind of divinized state of their own social stations in life. In the case of the deceased king, there were specific associations which might be seen as elevating his position above that of his earthly reign. This is seen particularly in the concepts of the royal ancestors, and of the king as Osiris and Re.

The royal ancestors

Although in reality Egyptian civilization was ruled by kings of many houses and families, Egyptian kingship ideology made use of a particular fiction in the form of the 'royal ancestors'. This represented a kind of monarchical family line reaching back through the ages and linking the living king with his deceased 'forebears'. This does not mean that direct lineage was implied – in fact the official genealogies omit unorthodox or aberrant rulers such as Hatshepsut or Akhenaten. However there was a kind of continuum between the living king, his 'forebears' and, ultimately, the gods who ruled as kings at the beginning of the world.

Some kings of the past were particularly venerated. Senwosret III of the 12th dynasty, for example, was remembered for his subjugation of the region to the south of Egypt and was honoured by a small temple built by Tuthmosis III some 400 years later at el-Lessiya in Nubia. Yet less illustrious rulers were also absorbed into the ancestral tradition upon their deaths, and most were chronicled in the king-lists inscribed in temples such as that of Sethos I at Abydos, where the cartouches of past rulers received veneration and offerings. Representations at a number of sites show that the ancestors also played an important role in various royal and religious rituals. Scenes carved under Ramesses II and Ramesses III showing the harvest festival of the god Min, for example, show statues of the royal ancestors being carried before the king. The statues, which are named in these New Kingdom scenes, include Menes, the legendary first king of the united Egypt. The oldest evidence for the royal ancestors preserve no names and shows simply the





(Above) Ka *figure of King Ay. The royal* ka *seems to have incorporated the royal ancestors, as well as the* ka *of the living king, and as such represented one aspect of the divinity of the deceased king. 18th dynasty. Tomb of Ay, western Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.*

(Above right) Engaged pillar statues of Hatshepsut as Osiris. 18th dynasty. Temple of Hatshepsut, Deir el-Bahri, western Thebes.

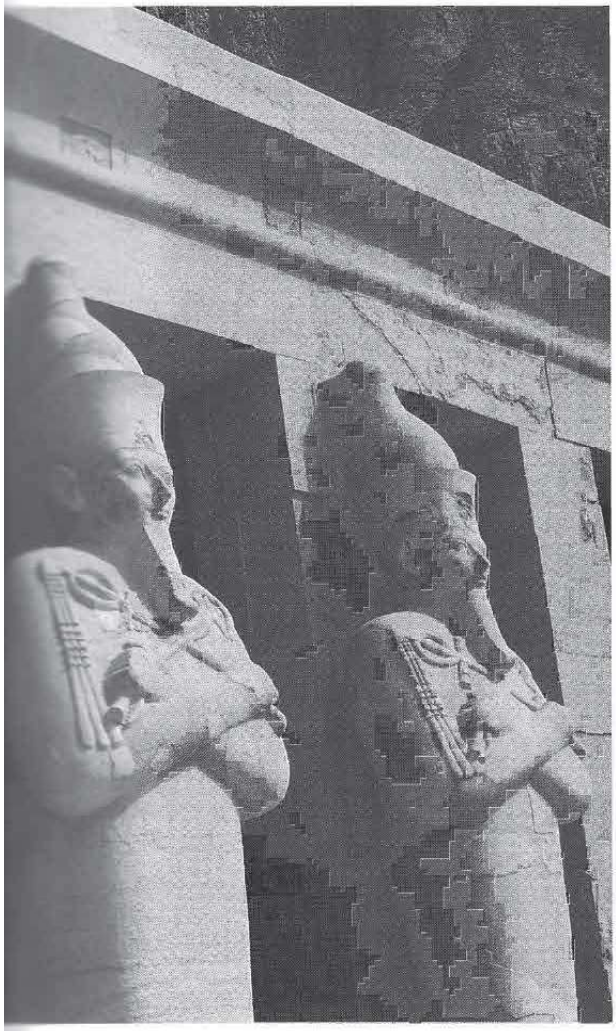
idea of a collective group of undifferentiated but deified ancestors. The royal ancestors were depicted as divine beings of a high order, and the deceased king was elevated in joining their ranks.

A particular aspect of the royal ancestors may be seen in the *ka* of the king. While the Egyptian word *ka* is usually translated as 'soul' or 'spirit' in general usage, the royal *ka* was more than just an individual spiritual 'double'. Lanny Bell, who has made detailed studies of the nature of the royal *ka*, has shown that it embraced the royal ancestors as well as the living king and was central to the Egyptians' concept of kingly accession. As Bell has written, the aspect of divinity attained by the living Egyptian king occurred only when he became one with the royal *ka* at the climax of the coronation ceremony. The royal *ka* was, in this sense, the symbolic and spiritual point of interface between the king and his deified ancestors.

The king as Osiris

Although the Egyptian sources equate the deceased king with several deities, there is a clear and constant emphasis throughout most of Egyptian history on the association of the king with the netherworld god Osiris. This was doubtless because the role of kingship fitted the Osiride mythology particularly well. Every pharaoh ceased to function as the earthly Horus – and son of Osiris – upon death and was identified by virtue of death with the deceased Osiris. He thus stood as predecessor in relation to the next living king as the mythical Osiris did to Horus. According to this symbolic metaphor, by becoming one with Osiris the dead king also became ruler of the afterlife region – switching realms, as it were, from rule over the living to rule over the dead.

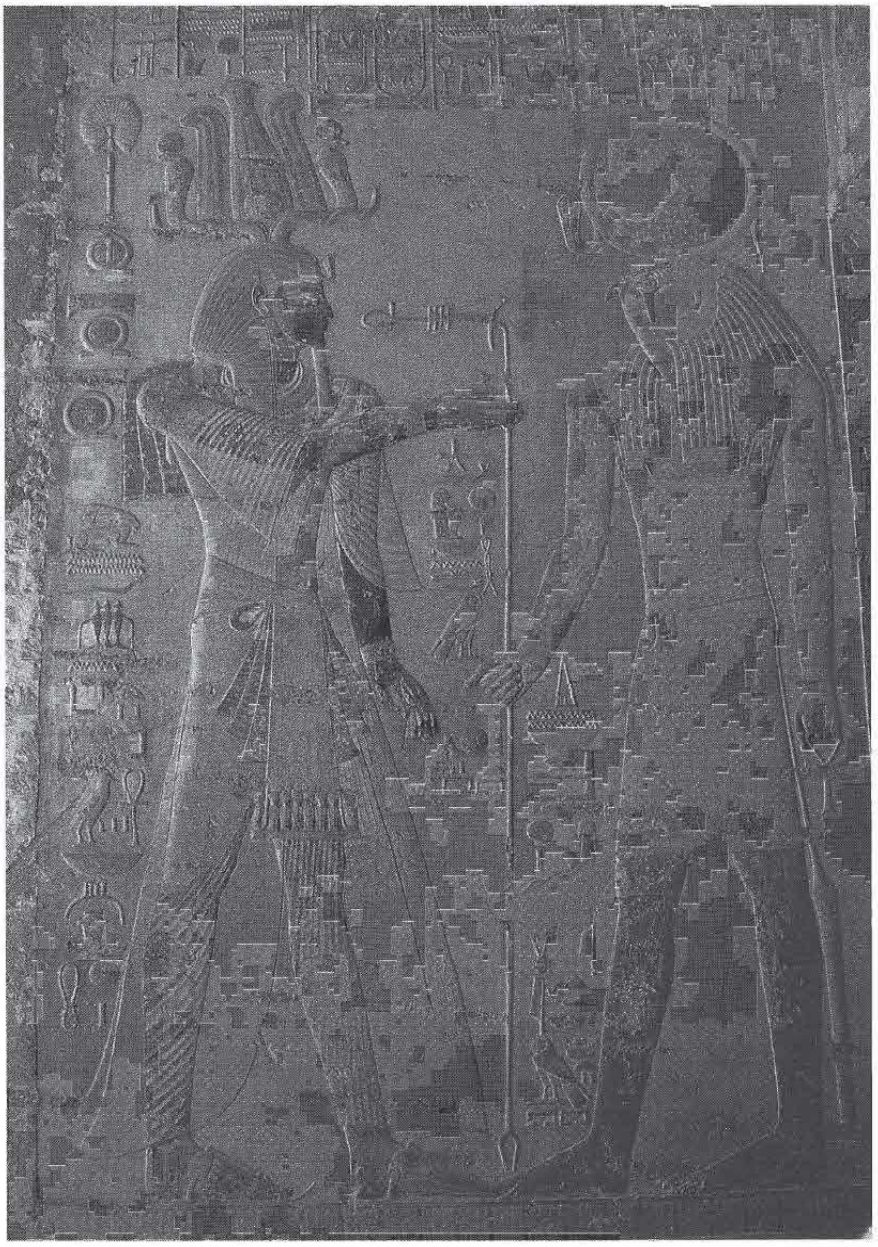
As time progressed royal mortuary iconography was increasingly adapted to this equation of the dead king with Osiris. We find this manifested in dozens of ways. Osiride insignia such as the crook and flail were placed on New Kingdom royal coffins, showing continued afterlife rulership with Osiris despite the absence of an earthly crown in the king's afterlife representations. Also, the figures of Isis and Nephthys were placed at either end of the royal



coffin or sarcophagus to fulfil the role of mourning for the deceased Osiris. The decoration of the royal tombs of the New Kingdom also stresses the fusion of the deceased king and Osiris, though to a large extent this is overshadowed by the symbolic association of the king with the sun god Re. However, some scenes, such as those found on the side walls and tympana of the 19th-dynasty royal burial chambers, focus on the fusion of Osiris (who came to be viewed as the mummy or corpse of Re at this time), the sun god, and the king.

The king as Re

Although the Egyptian king became one with Osiris upon death, he was also fused with the sun god Re. This idea is at least as old as the Osiride association and is strongly attested from the Pyramid Texts onward. The situation actually parallels that described between the king and the netherworld god. Just as the living monarch was held to be the son of Osiris but fused with the deity upon death, so the living king known as the 'Son of Re' could fuse with his father Re upon his entry into the afterlife. Deified queens were also frequently associated with the goddess Hathor (or later Isis-Hathor) who was seen as the daughter of Re.



Scene of Re-Horakhty (at right) greeted by Merenptah symbolizing the afterlife joining of the king and the solar god. Tomb of Merenptah, 19th dynasty. Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

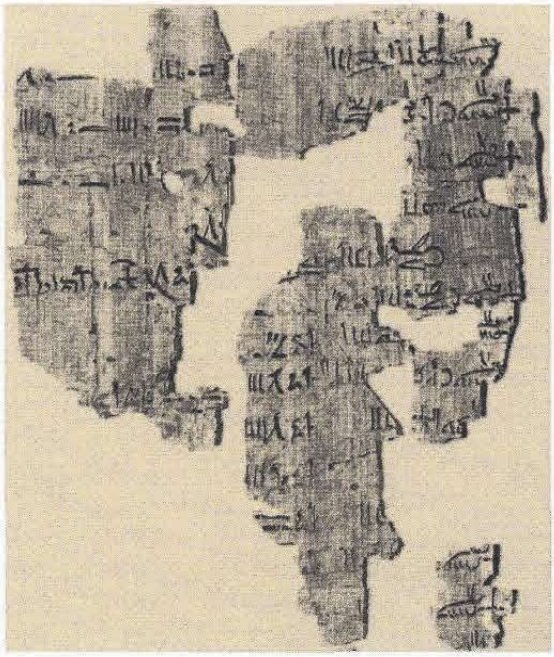
While the iconography associated with the body of the deceased king – i.e., the mummy, coffin, and sarcophagus – was associated primarily with Osiris, the imagery of royal tomb decoration as seen throughout New Kingdom monuments is primarily linked with the king's assimilation with the sun god. This assimilation or fusion involves the king's cyclic travel with Re into, through, and out of the netherworld regions in continuing renewal and rebirth. The imagery of solar assimilation may be varied, however. On the one hand the god-king is said to ride alongside Re in the celestial boat of the sun god and to act as a judge in the realm of Re, while on the other hand he is clearly said to be one with the solar god. Both are depicted iconographically, the latter when the name of Ramesses III is written within a solar image in that king's tomb. In either case, however, the deceased king's divinity is clear.

Kingship Among the Gods

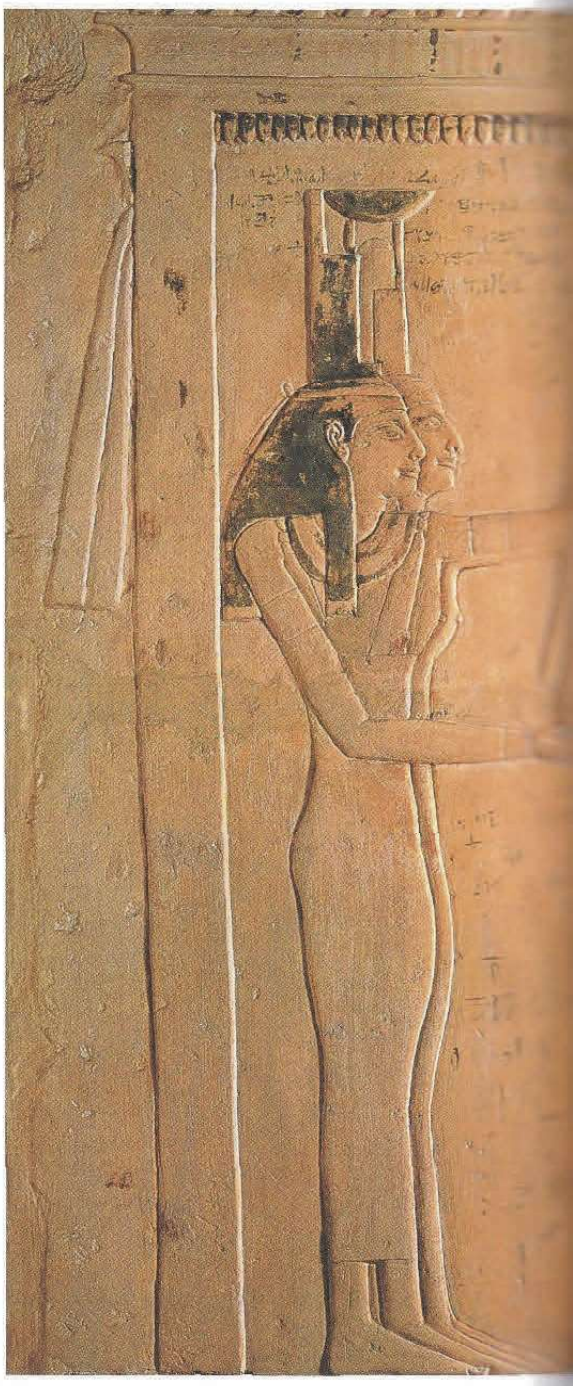
It is perhaps not surprising that the Egyptian king should aspire to retain his kingly role and office in the afterlife, but there is another aspect to the phenomenon of kingship among the gods. Textual and representational evidence clearly shows that the Egyptians envisioned their deities to be organized in a manner similar to human society, with the institution of kingship providing the governmental model among the gods themselves. Deities took kingly attributes and roles like those of their earthly counterparts, and the interaction between the two led to the concept of the 'king of the gods' which may have been of great importance in Egyptian theological development.

Gods as kings

Egyptian mythology is dogmatic that the institution of kingship was coeval with the rule of the gods. Thus, the king list preserved in the Royal Canon of Turin, which dates to the 19th dynasty, begins with a dynasty of 11 deities who ruled for over 7,700 years. Through creation Re became the king of gods and men and although he eventually tired and withdrew from the world he had made, he continued to hold sovereign power as god of the heavens. On earth, the rule of Re led to a royal succession among the gods themselves, and in the Canon the length of the reign of each god is given before the reigns of human kings. The texts state that eventually Osiris



Part of the Royal Canon of Turin, a fragmentary papyrus, written in hieratic, which preserves a list of gods, demi-gods, spirits, mythical and human kings who ruled Egypt from the time of creation. 19th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Turin.



became king of Egypt, and as the heir of Osiris Horus next took over his father's kingship. However, his own rulership took on even wider, cosmic, proportions as it was fused with the rule of Re and with that of the ancient falcon god Horus who was himself originally a cosmic deity. This level of kingship is made clear in the Coffin Texts:

'Horus...has become lord of the [solar] barque and has inherited the sky...
It is this Horus, the son of Isis, who rules over all the heavens and the gods therein.'

Coffin Texts VI 2[illegible]

Horus, in turn, became the link with the living human king. Although, according to its primary



The enthroned Osiris, attended by Isis, Nephthys, Horus and Thoth. As king of the netherworld, Osiris personified one aspect of kingship in Egyptian mythology. Scene from the cult chapel of Amenophis at Saqqara. 19th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Berlin.

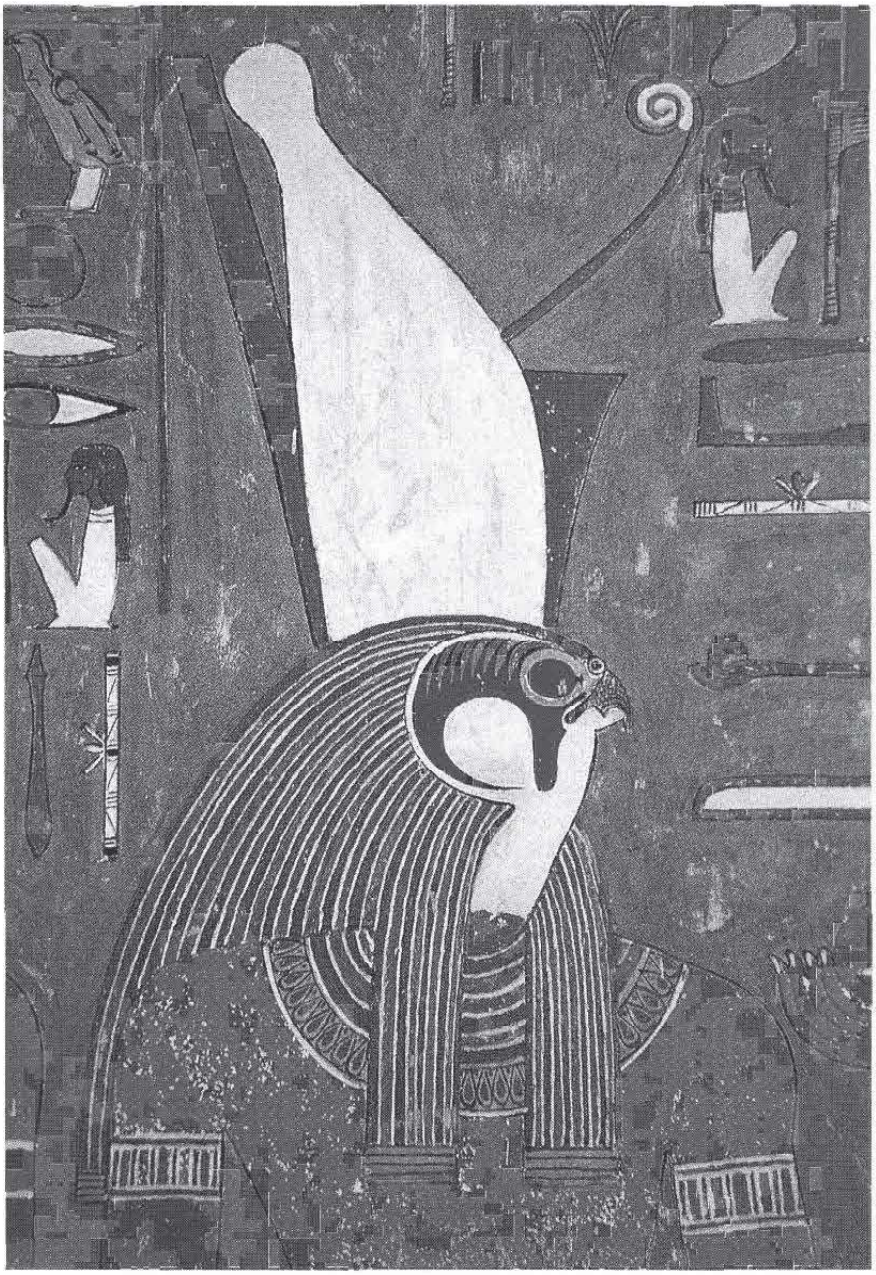
expression in the Heliopolitan theology, this story may be understood as much as an affirmation of the king's descent from the gods as a genealogy of divine kings, we must not lose sight of the fact that from an Egyptian perspective the myth links kingship to the gods just as much as it establishes it by means of the gods.

Hymns to the gods often name them as 'kings' – especially hymns of the later New Kingdom which also give deities many of the epithets used of kings such as 'royal ruler' and 'ruler of the Two Lands'.

Royal prerogatives of the gods

We find the idea of kingship among the gods depicted in a concrete fashion in the iconography employed in the representations of the gods in formal and informal contexts alike. This is particularly clear in the frequent use of royal insignias by deities. Egyptian gods were often depicted seated on thrones – especially Amun, revered as king of the gods in New Kingdom times, Re who ruled the heavens, Osiris who ruled the netherworld, and Horus. But many other deities were also depicted in this manner, and the image of the enthroned god or goddess is probably more commonly found in Egyptian art than examples of enthroned human kings – showing the motif's importance for the portrayal of deities.

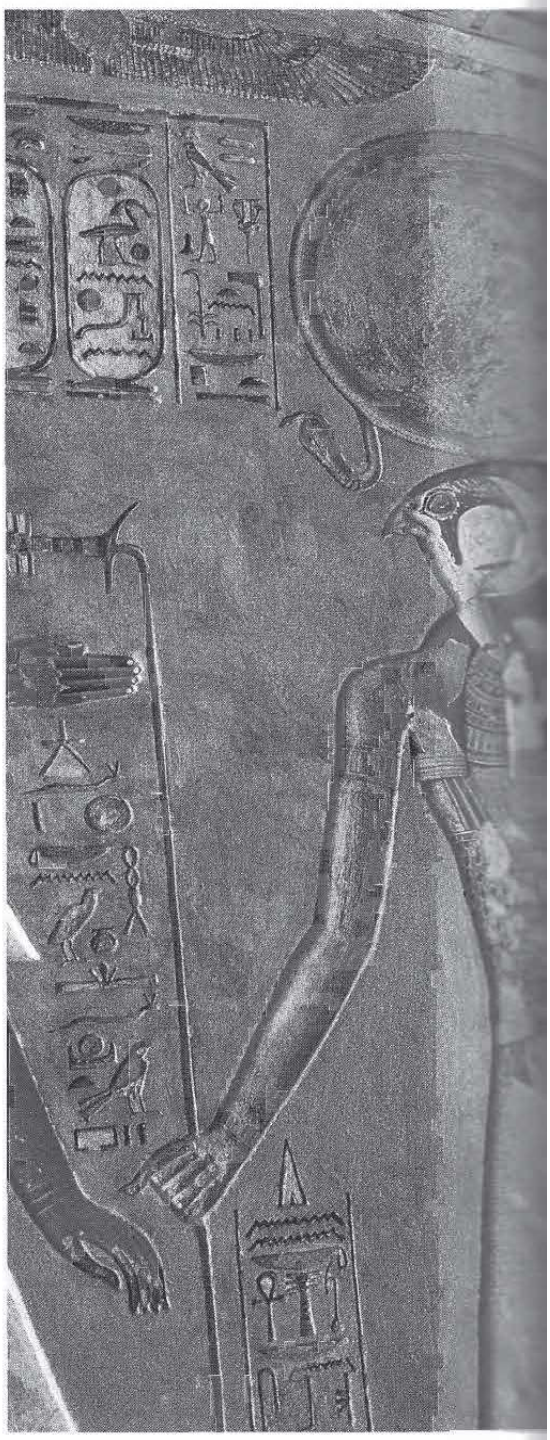
Crowns are also of great importance as elements in the representation of kings and gods.



Horus, shown crowned with the Double Crown of all Egypt, was mythological heir to Osiris and often personified the role of the living monarch. 18th dynasty. Tomb of Horemheb, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

Horus, Atum and Mut, for example, were commonly depicted wearing the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, while from the Third Intermediate Period youthful deities such as Ihy or Harpokrates may be shown wearing almost any of the various types of royal crowns. Likewise, royalty and deities both wore the uraeus emblem on these symbols of office and stature. Other typically royal insignias such as sceptres, staves and standards were also utilized in depictions of the gods. Although it could be argued that some of these objects were perhaps originally divine attributes utilized by the king (as for example the crook and flail of the god Andjety and later Osiris), the duality of their use still shows the interrelation of kingship and the divine roles of the gods.

The parallels between divine and kingly prerogatives do not end with physical items of insignia. Just as the personal birth and throne names of kings were usually placed within oval cartouches, the concept of gods as kings extended into this practice also and we find, for example, the name of Osiris written within the cartouche in Middle Kingdom times. It is an interesting aspect of Akhenaten's religion of the Aten that because the solar disc deity was interpreted as the true ruler of the universe, it was given a royal titulary (see p. 239) with his names being inscribed in cartouches. The Aten also celebrated his own royal jubilees so that the distinction between god and king was almost completely blurred in this period. While Akhenaten



may have had his own agenda for this fusion, it must be remembered that the idea of the god as king was not without precedent and that Akhenaten's innovation in this area was essentially one of degree rather than one of type.

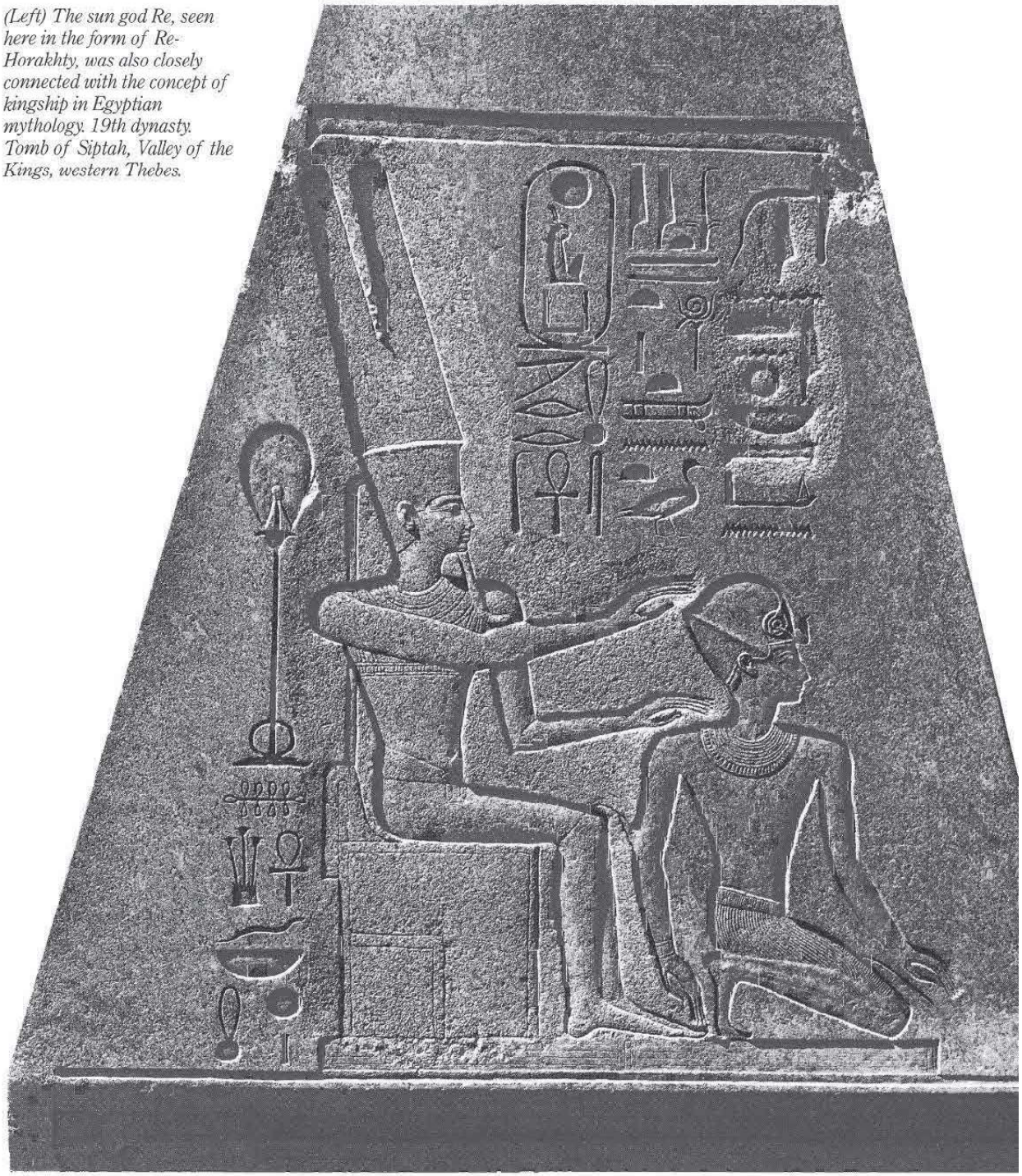
Kings of the gods

Although the attributes and roles of kingship are ascribed to many Egyptian deities, the portrayal of the highest god in a given period as king is naturally most common. In almost all eras of Egyptian history we find that one god or another rose to a pre-eminent position; this elevated role was attributed in turn to the ancient sky god Horus, the solar god Re, the hidden god Amun or the fused Amun-Re, and briefly but nonetheless actually to Akhenaten's favoured solar disk, the Aten. In the final age of ancient Egyptian history the pre-eminent position was occupied by Isis, the queen of heaven – and also, implicitly, monarch of the gods. In any period, the role of the king of the gods was a superlative one indeed, for while polytheistic religions are often viewed as lessening the importance of individual deities, the deity who ruled over the vast pantheon of ancient Egypt can only have been envisioned as transcendently great.

Amun-Re, often styled 'lord of the Two Lands' and 'king of the gods', crowns Hatshepsut on the pyramidion of one of her obelisks. 18th dynasty. Temple of Amun, Karnak.



(Left) The sun god Re, seen here in the form of Re-Horakhty, was also closely connected with the concept of kingship in Egyptian mythology. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Siptah, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

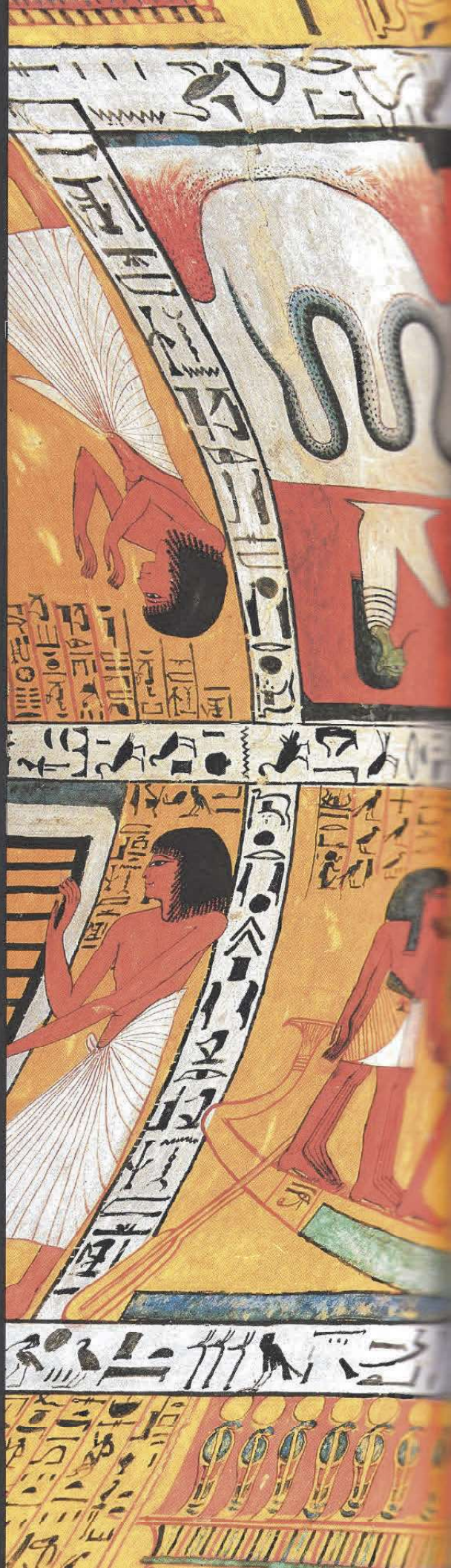


'Who does not know, Volusius, what monsters are worshipped by demented Egyptians?
One lot reveres the crocodile, another goes in awe of the ibis…'

Juvenal, Fifteenth Satire

Although Juvenal's diatribe against the Egyptian gods was not based on any depth of understanding of Egyptian religion, it nevertheless portrays the seemingly unintelligible array of gods and goddesses which characterized the pantheon of the Nile. But not even satire could exaggerate the vastness of this pantheon, which embraced hundreds upon hundreds of gods often as amazing in their forms as they were astonishing in their numbers. This range of form was particularly true of minor deities, 'demons' and the composite deities of later Egyptian religion, which often stretched the limits of the imagination in the variety of their hybrid natures. Yet for all their often bizarre appearances, these deities are never without a certain logic which appealed to the Egyptian mind and which personified its ideas of the divine with utmost clarity.

Despite their often alien outward appearances, the many gods of Egypt included deities whose characters, myths and even forms provide fascinating insights into the world views, concerns and ethics of a society which was great long before Juvenal's Rome was born and which would affect the world long after the gods of Rome were lost in time.



The noble Sennedjem, alone and with his wife, worshipping some of the many forms of deities in the Egyptian pantheon. 19th dynasty. Ceiling of the tomb of Sennedjem, Deir el-Medina, western Thebes.



V The Catalogue of Deities

Many Faces of the Divine

While excellent short surveys of Egyptian deities have been produced in the past which simply list the various gods and goddesses by name according to alphabetical order, such an arrangement is problematic for many readers. This is due to the large number of diverse spellings of Egyptian deities' names (such as Shed/Pashed, Mehet-Hatmehyt, etc.), often making it difficult to locate them and impossible when a deity is known only from its representation. More fundamentally, such listings may be limited because alphabetical arrangement obscures to some degree the very nature of the Egyptian pantheon. The various deities existed not in isolation but in dynamic relationship to one another by reason of their

List of Deities

The deities discussed in the book and their page numbers are listed below.

Accuser 84
Adad 101
Adorer 83
Aha 102
Aker 176
Akha 127
Akhu 26
Amam 102
Amaunet 136
Amenophis Son of Hapu 92
Ammit (see *Ammut*)
Ammut 218
Amonrasonther 94
Amun 92
Amun-Min 93
Amun-Re 93
Amunet (see *Amaunet*)
Anat 137
Anat-Hathor 34
Andjety 97
Anhur (see *Onuris*)
Anket (see *Anukis*)
Anqet (see *Anukis*)
Anubis 187
Anuket (see *Anukis*)
Anukis 138
Apedamak 176
Apep (see *Apophis*)
Apis 170
Apis-Osiris 171
Apophis 221
Apy (see *Ipet*)
Aquat 137
Arensnuphis 98
Arensnuphis-Shu 34
Arsaphes (see *Heryshef*)
Artemis 180
Asbet 83
Ash 98
Ashtoreth (see *Astarte*)
Asklepius 113
Astarte 138
Aten 236
Athtart (see *Astarte*)
Atum 98
Atum-Khepri 230
Baal 101
Baalat 139
Babi 196
Banebdjedet 192
Ba-Pef 102
Bastet 177
Bat 172
Bau 26
Behdety 202
Beheader of rebels 83
Beholder of the beauty of Re 83
Bekh (see *Buchis*)
Benu 212
Bes 102
Bestower of good 84
Bestower of powers 84
Blood-eater 84
Bone Breaker 84
Bringer of your offering 84
Buchis 172
Bull of the West 175
Cat of Re, the 221
Cavern Deities 80
Celestial Ferryman 104
Chespisichis (see *Khonsu*)
Commander of mankind 84
Dangerous One 84
Decider of the life span 113
Dedun (see *Dedwen*)
Dedwen 105
Dehenet-Imentet 224
Demolisher 84
Demons 81
Denwen 223
Disturber 84
Djehuty (see *Thoth*)
Djet 21
Dodecads 79
Double lion 180
Doubly evil 84
Duamutef 88
Dunanwi 200
Dyads 74
Eater of entrails 84
Edjo (see *Wadjet*)
El 101
Enneads 78
Erenutet (see *Renenutet*)
Ermouthis (see *Renenutet*)
Eye of Apophis 223
Eye of Re 178
Eye of the moon 200
Face behind him 84
Falcon deities 200
Far-strider 84
Fiery eyes 84
Fire-embracer 84
Flame 84
Foremost of Khem 203
Foremost of the divine booth 188
Foremost of the westerners 187
Foreteller 84
Gate Deities 81
Geb 105
Gengen-Wer 213
God of the morning 91
Great of Power 83
Great Tribunal 84
Great White 12
Green of Flame 84
Ha 106
Hadad 101
Hall of Justice, deities of the 84
Hand of Atum 141
Hap (see *Apis*)
Hapy 106
Harensnuphis (see *Arensnuphis*)
Har-hery-wadj 132
Harmachis 201
Harmachis-Khepri-Re-Atum 34
Har-mau 202
Har-pa-khered 132
Haroeris (see *Harwer*)
Harpokrates 132
Harsiese 132
Harsomptus 202
Harwer 201
Hathor 139
Hatmehyt 228
Hauhet 16
Hauron 108
Hayet 102
He who is in the place of embalming 188
He who is upon his sacred mountain 187
He whose face is behind him 104
He whose sight is behind him 104
Hebdomads 77
Hededet 230
Heh 109
Heka 110
Heket 229
Helios 219
Henet 213
Heqat (see *Heket*)
Her-ef-ha-ef 104
Heret-Kau 145
Hermuthis (see *Renenutet*)
Hery-bak-ef (see *Ptah*)
Heryshef 193
Hesat 173
Hor-em-akhet 201
Hor-merty 203
Horakhty 201
Horus 200
Horus bull of the heavens 91
Horus hidden behind the papyrus 132
Horus in the horizon 201
Horus of the strong arm 203
Horus-Shed 135
Horus son of Isis 132
Horus the Child 132
Horus the Elder 201
Horus the red 91
Horus the Uniter 202
Horus upon his papyrus plants 132
Horus who limits the Two Lands 91
Hot-foot 84
Hours of the Day Deities 83
Hours of the Night Deities 83
Hu 110
Iah 111
Iat 145
Igaret 83
Ihty 102
Ihy 132
Imentet 145
Imhotep 111
Imouthes (see *Imhotep*)
Imsety 88
Inanna 138
Inhert (see *Onuris*)
Inpu 74 (see *Anubis*)
Input 74
Ipet 184
Ipy (see *Ipet*)
Ishtar 138
Isis 146
Isis-Aphrodite 22
Isis cow 172
Isis-Hesat 174
Isis-Shentayet 175
Isis-Sothis 147
Iunit 150
Iusaas 150
Judgment Deities 84
Ka 62
Kamutef (see *Amun*)
Kauket 16
Kebehut (see *Kebehwet*)
Kebehwet 223
Kek 16
Khefthernebes 150
Khenty-imentiu 187
Khenty-irty 203
Khenty-khai 203
Khenty-khem 203
Khenty-khety 203
Khenty-sekh-netjer 203
Khenty-Tjenenet 139
Khepri 230
Kherty 193
Khery-bak-ef 124
Khnum 194
Khnum-Re 34
Khonsu 113
Khonsu in Thebes 113
Khonsu the Child 113
Khonsu the provider 113
Kneph 93
Lady of Punt 183
Lady of the Sycamore 183
Lion of Re (see *Eye of Re*)
Litany of Re 32

particular forms, characters, and roles and by means of the mythological groups which they formed. On the other hand, while many attempts have been made to organize the Egyptian pantheon by means of mythologically-based classificatory systems, no such scheme can be completely successful because of the fluid nature of the deities themselves. A god or goddess who might well be described as a 'cosmic' or 'ancestral' or 'underworld' deity could at the same time also be a deity associated closely with creation or kingship or any number of other aspects of existence.

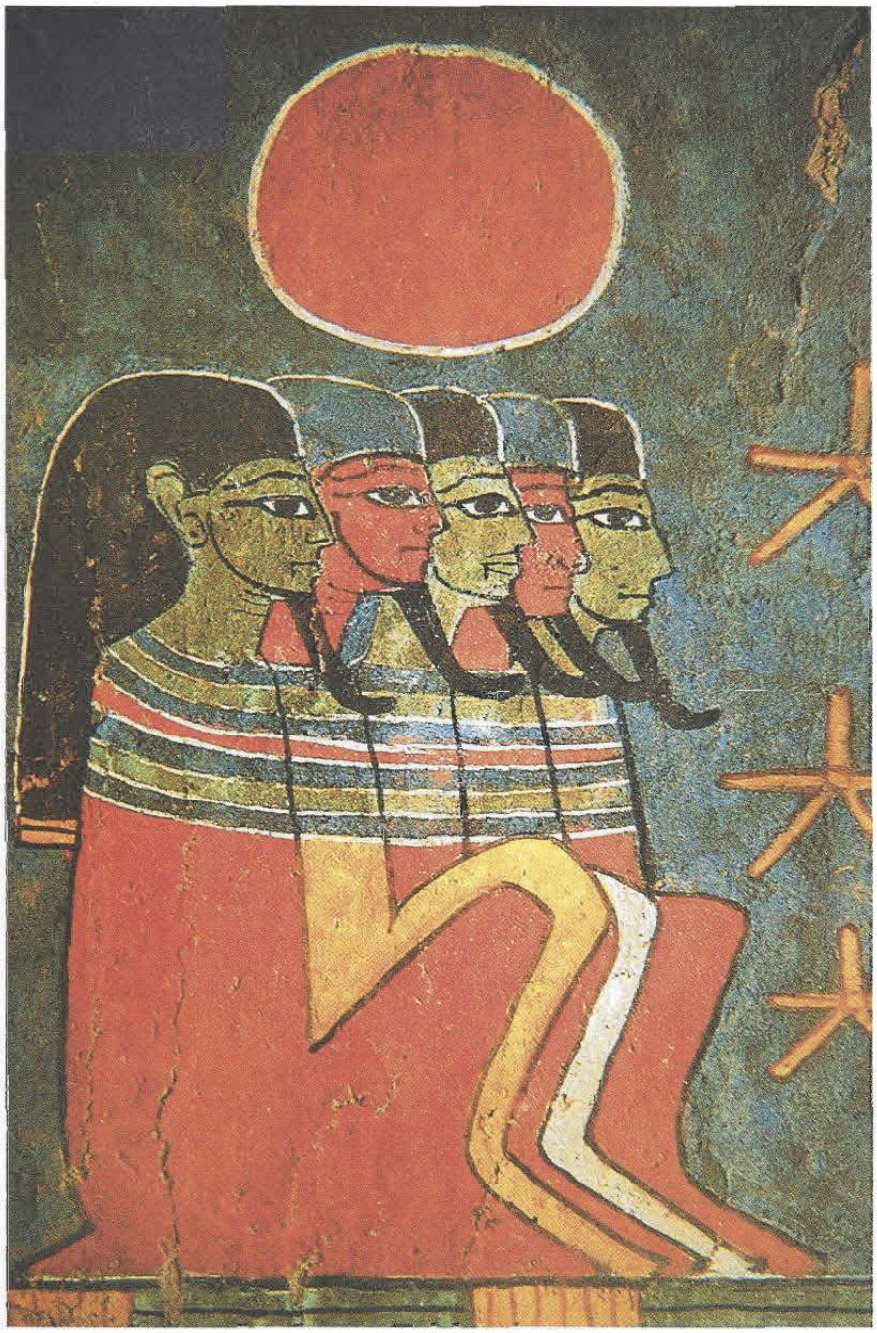
In this book, rather than simply utilizing an alphabetic listing, or attempting an arrangement of deities by their mythological roles, the many gods and goddesses included have been grouped by their appearance. This is to aid identification for the general reader and also to facilitate comparison and contrast of deities of similar types, such as leonine, bovine or serpentine gods. Even here it is impossible to create a classificatory scheme without some overlapping or ambiguity, but the system used minimizes redundancy and maximizes the reader's ability to view deities in useful contexts. The

Lord of the sacred land 187
Lord of the Two Lands 202
Lord of truth 84
Lotan (see *Yam*)
Ma-ha-ef 104
Maat 150
Mafdet 196
Mahes 178
Mandulis 114
Mefdjet 102
Mehen 223
Mehet-Weret 174
Mekhit 179
Menew 102
Menhyt 179
Meret-sekert (see *Meretseger*)
Meretseger 224
Merhyt 152
Merit 152
Merseger (see *Meretseger*)
Merul (see *Mandulis*)
Merwel (see *Mandulis*)
Mer-Wer (see *Mnevis*)
Meskhenet 152
Mestjet 179
Methyr (see *Mehet-Weret*)
Mihos (see *Mahes*)
Min 115
Min-Amun 115
Min-Hor 115
Mios (see *Mahes*)
Mistress of faience 143
Mistress of the night 83
Mistress of the offering 156
Mistress of turquoise 143
Mlysis (see *Mahes*)
Mnevis 174
Mnevis-Osiris 174
Mnevis-Wennefer 174
Montu 203
Moon 241
Much Beloved 77
Mut 153
Nahar (see *Yam*)
Naunet 16
Neb-ta-djeser 187
Nebet-hetepet 156
Neferhetep 133
Nefertem 133
Nehebu-Kau 224
Neheh 21
Nehemtawy 156
Neith 156
Nekhbet 213
Nem-Wer (see *Mnevis*)
Nemty 204
Neper 117
Nephthys 159
Nergal 126
Netcher 27
Nome Deities 84
Nosey 84
Nun 117
Nut 160
Ogdoads 77
Onuphis (see *Buchis*)
Onuris 118
Opener of the ways 191
Opet (see *Ipet*)
Osirapis 171
Osiris 118
Osiris-Apis-Atum-Horus 171
Osiris-Re 120
Osiris-Sepa 233
Osoromnevis 175
Over the Old One 84
Owner of faces 84
Owner of horns 84
Pakhet 180
Pale One 84
Panebtawy 123
Pashet (see *Pakhet*)
Pataikos 123
Peak of the West 224
Pedesi (see *Peteese*)
Pekhert (see *Pakhet*)
Pentads 77
Peteese 123
Pihor 123
Proficient leader 83
Ptah 123
Ptah-Naunet 19
Ptah-Nun 124
Ptah-Sokar 125
Ptah-Sokar-Osiris 34
Ptah-Tatenen 124
Qadesh 164
Qebesenuef 88
Qedeshet (see *Qadesh*)
Ra (see *Re*)
Raet 164
Raettawy (see *Raet*)
Re 205
Re-Horakhty 205
Re-Horakhty-Atum 208
Re-Osiris 206
Renenutet 225
Renpet 164
Repeller of the snake 83
Repulser of rebels 83
Reret 184
Reshep 126
Reshpu (see *Reshep*)
Royal ancestors 62
Ruler of the bows 187
Ruty 180
Sah 127
Sakhmet (see *Sekhmet*)
Satet (see *Satis*)
Satis 164
Sebegu 91
Sed 190
See whom you bring 84
Sefkhet-abwy 166
Segeb 102
Sekar (see *Sokar*)
Sekhmet 181
Selket (see *Serket*)
Selkis (see *Serket*)
Sep (see *Sepa*)
Sepa 233
Seph (see *Sepa*)
Serapis 127
Seret 183
Serket 233
Serpent who brings and gives 84
Serpent with raised head 84
Serqet (see *Serket*)
Sesha 74
Seshat 166
Set (see *Seth*)
Seth 197
Seven blessed ones 88
Seven cows 77
Seven Hathors 77
Shay 128
Shed 135
She of Armant 150
She of Chemnis 77
She on her boat 83
She who is over the spirits 145
She who loves silence 224
She who protects 77
She whose name has power 77
Shentayet 175
Shepet 185
Shesemu (see *Shezmu*)
Shesmetet 183
Shezmu 128
Shu 129
Sia 130
Silent One 77
Sky Bull 175
Slicer of souls 83
Sobek 218
Sobek-Re 219
Sobk (see *Sobek*)
Sokar 209
Sokaret 74
Sokaris (see *Sokar*)
Sons of Horus 88
Sopdet (see *Sothis*)
Sopdu 211
Soped (see *Sopdu*)
Sopedu (see *Sopdu*)
Sothis 167
Souls of Nekhen and Pe 89
Splitter of heads 83
Star Deities 90
Stars that know no rest 91
Storm in the sky 77
Suchos (see *Sobek*)
Sutekh (see *Seth*)
Suty (see *Seth*)
Swallower of shades 84
Tabitchet (see *Ta-Bitjet*)
Ta-Bitjet 235
Tait (see *Tayet*)
Tasenetnofret 168
Tatenen 130
Tatjenen (see *Tatenen*)
Tauert (see *Taweret*)
Taweret 185
Tayet 168
Tefen 74
Tefnut 183
Temsep 84
Tenemit 174
Tepy-dju-ef 187
Tetetenu 102
Tetrads 76
The one who crosses 91
Thermouthis (see *Renenutet*)
Thot (see *Thoth*)
Thoth 215
Thoueris (see *Taweret*)
Tjenenyet 168
Tree goddesses 168
Triads 75
Tutu 183
United-with-eternity 42
Unnut (see *Wenet*)
Uto (see *Wadjet*)
Wadjet 226
Wadj-Wer 130
Wadjyt (see *Wadjet*)
Wanderer 84
Waset 169
Water-smiter 84
Wememty-*snake* 84
Weneg 131
Wenenu (see *Wenet*)
Wenenut (see *Wenet*)
Wenet 199
Wepiu (see *Wepwawet*)
Wepset 228
Wepuaut (see *Wepwawet*)
Wepwawet 191
Weret-Hekau 180
Wer-kherep-hemu 124
White of Teeth 84
Who gives protection in the twilight 83
Who is given the tow-rope of the solar barque 83
Wind Deities 29
Wise, guardian of her lord 83
Wosret (see *Waset*)
Yah (see *Iah*)
Yam 228
You of the altar 84
You of the cavern 84
You of the darkness 84
Youth 84
You who acted willfully 84

(Right) New Kingdom jar representing the god Bes by means of his characteristic facial features. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Berlin.



(Below) Generic star gods depicted in the seated pose of the 'deity' hieroglyph. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Irynefer, western Thebes.

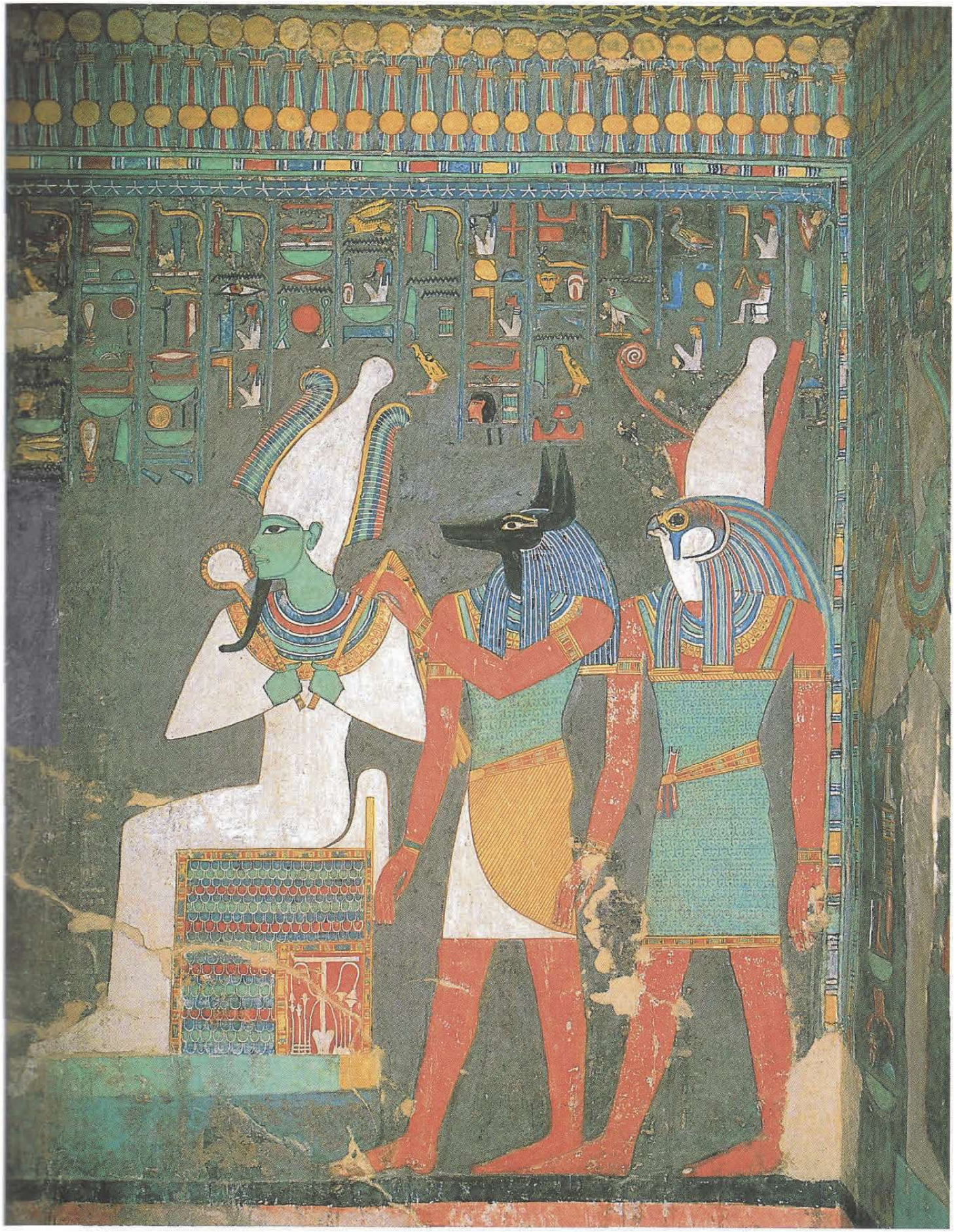


categories follow (with some modifications) those of the list of hieroglyphic signs printed in Sir Alan Gardiner's *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, which will be familiar to some readers and which allows the location of deities without frequent recourse to the Index. The categories utilized in the catalogue are: Groups of Deities; Male Anthropomorphic Deities; Female Anthropomorphic Deities; Mammalian Deities (which are divided into several sub-categories to aid identification); Avian Deities (divided into falcon deities and those represented by other avian species); Reptile, Amphibian and Fish Deities; Invertebrate and Insect Deities; and Inanimate Object Deities.

While many Egyptian deities could appear under several guises, almost all may be found more frequently in one particular (usually the oldest) form, and that has been the category to which the deity has been assigned. To avoid repetition and to allow full study of all aspects of a given deity, the various forms of any god or goddess are discussed under the single heading of the most characteristic form. Usually, the head of a given deity represents its characteristic nature and reflects its most frequently depicted form. Thus, if a deity appears as an animal it can be found in the catalogue under its relevant category. If it appears as a human with the head of an animal (such as the falcon-headed Horus or Re) it will, again, appear under the animal's category. Where a deity appears as a fully human male or female it will be listed in the respective anthropomorphic section unless the fully human form is a variant of a more common zoomorphic deity. Later Egyptian representations sometimes show all deities in purely human form, but in any event, deities are cross-referenced within the catalogue where any confusion of form might occur, and an alphabetic listing is provided for use where that is preferred.

While it would be practically impossible to provide a description of all known Egyptian deities within a single volume, the following catalogue provides a reference to all of ancient Egypt's major gods and goddesses and most of the minor ones. The catalogue is complete not in the sense of listing 'every deity' (because many gods are known to have existed which are unknown other than by oblique references in the ancient texts, such as 'the god who is there', and others are known by single mentions of their name alone but with no clue as to their identity or nature). Rather, the comprehensiveness of the following catalogue is a functional one in that coverage is provided of the whole range of types of deities found in Egyptian mythology.

(Right) The gods Osiris, Anubis and Horus in the Tomb of Horemheb, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.



Groups of Deities

Egyptian mythology contains many groups of deities but these are of two distinct types, although they overlap occasionally. On the one hand, there exist what might be called 'numerical groups' formed from the uniting of independent deities usually related in some symbolic manner. On the other hand, many other deities – which may or may not have individual names and identities – exist only as members of generalized 'regional groups'.

NUMERICAL GROUPINGS

Numerical groups are almost always composed of deities with distinct individual identities organized to make groups of a symbolically significant size. Some of these groups, such as triads, follow the pattern of family and kinship units while others, such as enneads, are more abstract, but all are evidently symbolic in terms of the number of deities involved. In some cases the process of grouping can be seen historically as certain deities were aligned for religious or even political reasons, though in other cases deities were evidently grouped together from very early times for reasons which are not always understood.

Dyads

Deities were often grouped in pairs as the phenomenon of duality pervades Egyptian culture and is at the heart of the Egyptian concept of the universe itself – though rather than focusing on the essential differences between the two parts of a given pair, Egyptian thought usually stresses their complementary nature as a way of expressing the essential unity of existence. The endless duality found throughout the cosmic, geographic and temporal aspects of the Egyptian universe (heaven-earth, existence-nonexistence, stasis-change, north-south, desert-fertile, day-night, etc.) is found in pairs of gods and goddesses which represented these and many other binary aspects of the world. Deities were also 'created' as counterparts to established gods and goddesses in order to form balanced, sexually paired couples, as may well have occurred in the following instances:

Male Deity	*Led to*	*Female Deity*
Sokar	→	Sokaret
Inpu (Anubis)	→	Input
Tefen	←	**Tefnut**
Sesha	←	**Seshat**

Almost invariably, dyads are composed of male and female elements such as these, though there are a



Divine figures were frequently depicted in pairs, either for the sake of artistic symmetry or in the symbolic juxtaposition of beings related in some way. Detail of 21st-dynasty coffin of Padiamen, Luxor Museum of Mummification.



few examples of sibling dyads of the same sex such as the brothers Horus and Seth and the sisters Isis and Nephthys. Sometimes too, deities may be mentioned together in pairs when their roles or areas of influence are clearly related. Thus, the lunar deities Thoth and Khonsu, the solar deities Re and Atum, the two deified brothers Peteese and Pihor, and many others may be grouped together in this manner. Another way in which Egyptian religion formed groups of two deities is when two gods are utilized to represent a larger group. This may be seen in examples of Thoth and Horus who are sometimes depicted together representating the four gods of ritual lustration, Horus, Seth, Thoth, and Nemty.

Triads

Groups of three deities are often aligned as members of a divine family of father (god), mother (goddess) and child (almost invariably a young male deity), with the triad of Osiris, Isis and Horus being the most prominent example. The Egyptian king sometimes functioned as the divine son or represented him in such familial triads. While not all combinations of three deities represent family groupings, this is the most common form. We find evidence of deities such as Amun and Osiris going from individual and independent gods to members of fully formed triads (in these instances, Amun-Mut-Khonsu and Osiris-Isis-Horus, respectively) without any evidence of groups of two – as Amun-Mut or Osiris-Isis – existing between the singular deities and their triadic groupings. On the other hand some deities which coexisted in pairs did eventually form triads which were only superficially regarded as families. This was evidently the case with Ptah and Sekhmet who were worshipped



Divine pairs were often depicted with the Egyptian king as their 'son', forming a family-based triad which strengthened the religious position of both its human and divine members. Tutankhamun (centre) with Mut and Amun. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



(Left) The tutelary goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nekhbet and Wadjet, crown the king. Dyads such as these often represent otherwise unrelated deities linked by their specific roles. Temple of Horus at Edfu, Ptolemaic Period.



(Right) The very loosely related deities Ptah and Sekhmet were united by their 'child' Ramesses II (centre, mythologically the god Nefertem) into a formal family triad. 19th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Below) Hathor, Mycerinus and the goddess of the Jackal Nome. Such non-family triads may link deities through their support of the king 4th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Below right) The four sons of Horus in their protective role on the coffin of Psusennes, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

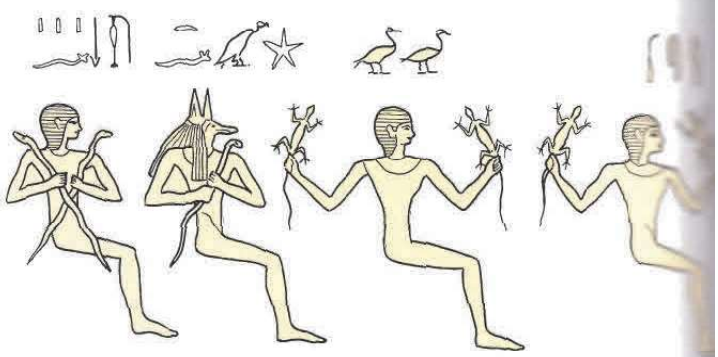


together at Memphis long before the god Nefertem was brought into their local grouping and the triad Ptah-Sekhmet-Nefertem was formed.

Other groups of three deities may have been formed for purely symbolic reasons. The number three was an important one signifying plurality – or unity expressed in plurality – for the Egyptians, and this is probably the underlying significance of many groups such as the important New Kingdom triad of Amun, Re and Ptah. Beginning in the time of Tutankhamun, and very commonly in Ramessid times, we find these three deities grouped by virtue of their status or importance in the pantheon. Sometimes triads are grouped together by rule alone. On the sarcophagus of the 21st-dynasty king Pinedjem II, three deities with the heads of a ram, a lion, and a jackal stand in the coils of a serpent. The deities are named as Re, Isis, and Anubis respectively, though a number of variants of this same motif occur in which the gods may be depicted with the heads of other animals or given other names. This would seem to show that the groups are simply representative of important afterlife deities – the number three representing plurality rather than any specific group.

Tetrads

In Egyptian symbolism the number four frequently signified the four cardinal directions and hence a kind of spatial or geographic totality. This significance is seen in the four 'races' of mankind: Egyptians (north), Near Easterners (east), Nubians (south) and Libyans (west) depicted in some New Kingdom tombs. It is also apparent in a number of groupings of four deities, such as the four supports of the sky which may be personified as four individual deities or groups of deities (see p. 78) aligned with the four points or quarters of the heavens. The connection is strong enough, in fact, that even when groups of four deities do not seem to originally have this symbolic significance it may become attached to them. Thus the mortuary deities known as the four sons of Horus may sometimes be aligned geographically in representational contexts although this is not always the case. While the concept of completeness associated with the number four may have sprung entirely from the totality encompassed by the concept of the four cardinal points, the symbolic use of the number is frequently one of completion without any specific directional overtones at all. In the underworld books four forms of a given god or groups of four deities are frequently found and thus depicted in vignettes in the papyri and decorations of the royal tombs. An interesting example of this kind of tetrad is found in Ramessid times when the god Seth was elevated to the extent that he was some-



times named along with the three great deities Amun, Re and Ptah. The four divisions of the Egyptian army were named after Seth and the other three deities in a group which clearly could be conceived as holding the symbolism of tactical or strategic completeness. While the members of dyads and triads are usually distinguished from one another in representational works, the deities found in groups of four are often undifferentiated – showing their apparently more 'generic' nature.

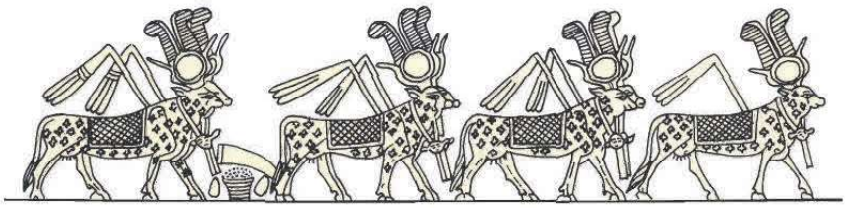
Pentads

Although not a common numerical grouping of deities, pentads are occasionally found in Egyptian mythology. The five 'epagomenal' days added at the end of the Egyptian year to raise the total of days from 360 (12 x 30-day months) to 365 were assigned as the 'birthdays' of the deities Osiris, Isis, Horus, Seth and Nephthys, making a distinct group of these related deities. In the Hermopolitan tradition the title 'Great of Five' was also applied to the god Thoth.

Hebdomads

While the number six does not seem to have held great symbolic significance for the Egyptians, the number seven is frequently found and, as the sum of three and four, may have been believed to embody the combined significance of these two numbers – plurality and totality. The number seven is therefore, not surprisingly, associated with deities in different ways. The sun god Re was said to have seven *bau* or souls, and several other deities were considered to be 'sevenfold' or to have seven forms. The many different manifestations of Hathor were frequently consolidated into a more manageable and comprehensible group of seven, but the fact that different groups of Hathors existed – comprised of different goddesses – shows that the sevenfold grouping was symbolically more important than the specific deities included. The number also appears in groups of different deities which were brought together. The company of gods revered at Abydos comprised seven gods, for example, and it is also probably not coincidental that the number of the 42 judges who sat in the tribunal of the afterlife to judge the deceased was a multiple of seven. The seven cows found in Chapter 148 of the Book of the Dead also provide a good example of this kind of group. While these bovines were sometimes identified as aspects of the goddess Hathor as the so-called 'seven Hathors' and individually named as 'Mansion of *kas*', 'Silent One', 'She of Chemnis', 'Much Beloved', 'She who protects', 'She whose name has power', and 'Storm in the sky', they usually bear no clear association other than that of their own grouping and the fact that they fulfilled a cosmic role as goddesses of fate.



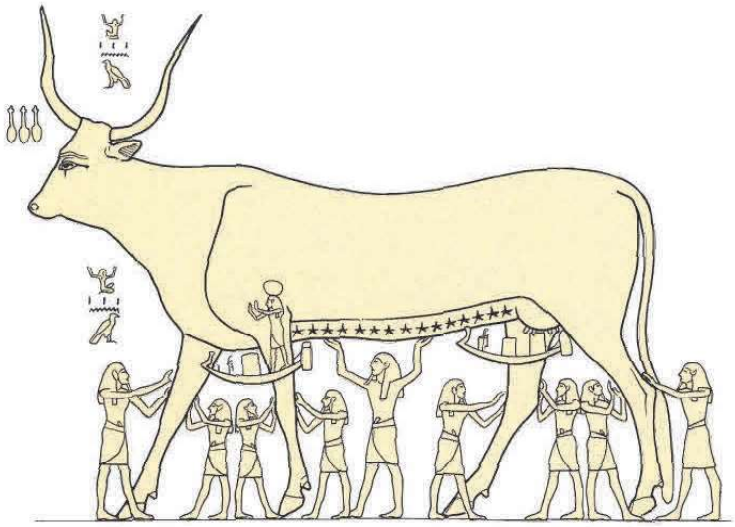


(Top) Hebdomad of the Seven Divine Cows, differentiated and named with their bull, vignette to Chapter 148, Book of the Dead of Maiherpri. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Above) The seven cows uniformly depicted and with the solar disk and plumes of Hathor with whom they were frequently associated. Third Intermediate Period. Papyrus of Nestanebettawy, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

Ogdoads

As four (symbolic totality) doubled, and hence intensified, the number eight is found in several groups of gods, as when the god Shu created eight Heh deities to help support the legs of the goddess Nut in her guise as the great heavenly cow. Although the names of the gods or goddesses in such groups may vary in the Egyptian texts, the fact that they always add up to eight deities shows that the concept of the group of eight was of greater importance than the specific deities which comprised the group. Ogdoads of eight deities often represent two sets of four or four sets of two gods and goddesses with the latter being more common. The greatest ogdoad – that of Hermopolis (see below) – provides a good example as it was composed of four pairs of primeval deities which



The eight Heh deities who, along with the god Shu, supported the divine cow who represented the heavens in one version of Egyptian cosmogony. Two of these deities supported each leg or 'pillar of heaven'. Outermost shrine of Tutankhamun, 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

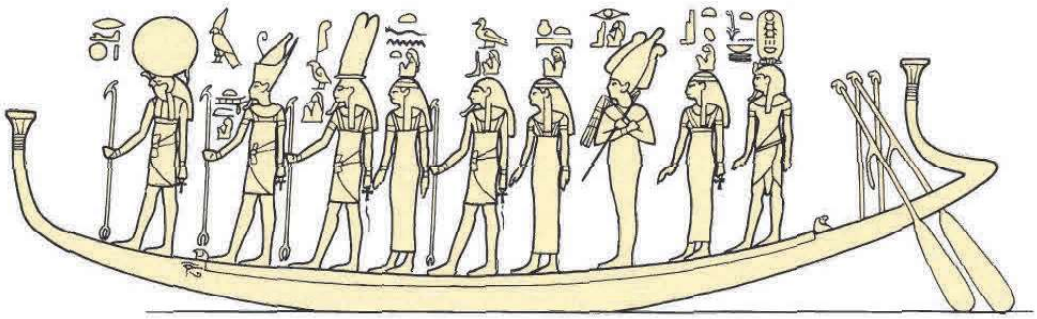
represented the sum of existence before creation. The Hermopolitan Ogdoad was visualized in the form of four frog-headed deities – and their four respective consorts or female equivalents who were snake-headed goddesses. The nature of these deities was based on the symbolic idea of these animals as chthonic beings and as creatures associated with water and hence the primeval flood from which the created world emerged. The individual deities comprising this ogdoad were:

God	*Goddess*	*Identity*
Nun	Naunet	Water
Heh	Hauhet	Infinity
Kek	Kauket	Darkness
Amun	Amaunet	Hiddenness or Wind

Although the four goddesses are clearly only linguistically feminine forms of the names of the four gods, they are nevertheless seen as necessary complements of the male deities. It is also interesting that the four aspects of the primordial cosmos personified by these deities also seem to appear later in the creation account of the Hebrew Bible. According to the various forms of the Egyptian myths, the eight beings or deities together formed the original mound which rose from the primordial waters, or the lotus flower, or the cosmic egg, which preceded the birth of the sun god. The main cult centre of this ogdoad was the ancient Khemnu or Khmun meaning 'eight town' (the modern el-Ashmunein which is also derived from the Coptic *shmun* 'eight') in Middle Egypt with which the god Thoth was also associated, so that it was later known by the Greek name Hermopolis. The Hermopolitan concept of the ogdoad was accepted throughout Egypt, however, and Medinet Habu in western Thebes was regarded as the 'burial place' of the eight primordial deities, a location to which the kings of Egypt came every ten years in the Graeco-Roman Period to honour their primeval ancestors.

Enneads

The Greek term *ennead* is the equivalent of the Egyptian *pesedjet* ('nine') which may refer to any group of nine gods. In the Pyramid Texts, for example, we find the Great Ennead (PT 1655, etc.); Lesser Ennead (PT 178); Dual Ennead (PT 121, etc.); plural enneads (PT 278, etc.) and even the seven enneads



(Above) Ennead of Heliopolis with the king as Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis. Second shrine of Tutankhamun, 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.



(Right) Nine geese probably representing the members of the Theban Ennead headed by Amun. Votive offering, 19th dynasty, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim.

(PT 511). As three (plurality) multiplied by itself, the number nine seems to have represented the concept of a great number and was used of many groups. Most commonly, the number appears in conjunction with the Great Ennead of Heliopolis which bound together nine 'related' deities. The group consisted of Atum, the so-called 'father' of the Ennead, his 'children' Shu and Tefnut, 'grandchildren' Geb and Nut, and 'great-grandchildren' Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys. A variant of this ennead included Horus the Elder as second-born after Osiris. Although this group may have been constructed by the priests of Heliopolis in order to incorporate Osiris and his related deities into their own theological system in a manner which placed the netherworld god at a lower position than their own sun god, together the various gods of the Heliopolitan Ennead nevertheless formed a group of great significance. The deities represented were not only those of creation but also of afterlife and, through Osiris and his eventual son Horus, of the ideology and mythology of kingship. Thus, the three areas which are arguably the most important concepts in ancient Egyptian religion were contained within the Heliopolitan Ennead.

Other cult centres constructed enneads of otherwise unrelated deities to which they awarded special veneration – as in the temple of Redesiyah in the eastern desert where Amun, Re, Osiris, Ptah, Isis and Horus were grouped into an ennead through the addition of three forms of the deified Sethos I. The number of deities in these groups did not always equal nine, however, as the Egyptian term *pesedjet* can have a generalized meaning. Although the members of enneads are often specified, the number most often represents a general, all-encompassing group. The nine gods who stand before Osiris in the sixth hour of the underworld thus represent the rule of that deity over all the netherworld gods, just as the 'nine bows' symbolize all Egypt's traditional enemies.

Dodecads

While twelve may have basic temporal significance relating to the hours of the day and night (and hence, for example, the 12 goddesses of the night hours), as a multiple of both three and four the number may also connote the combined significance of those smaller numbers. Relatively few groups of twelve occur in Egyptian mythology, however, one example being the four groups of three gods with the heads of ibises, jackals, falcons and phoenixes which represented the 'royal ancestors' of the cities Hermopolis, Nekhen, Pe, and Heliopolis respectively. These deities are sometimes found in vignettes accompanying Chapters 107 and 111–16 of the Book of the Dead, though often not all twelve of the deities are depicted.

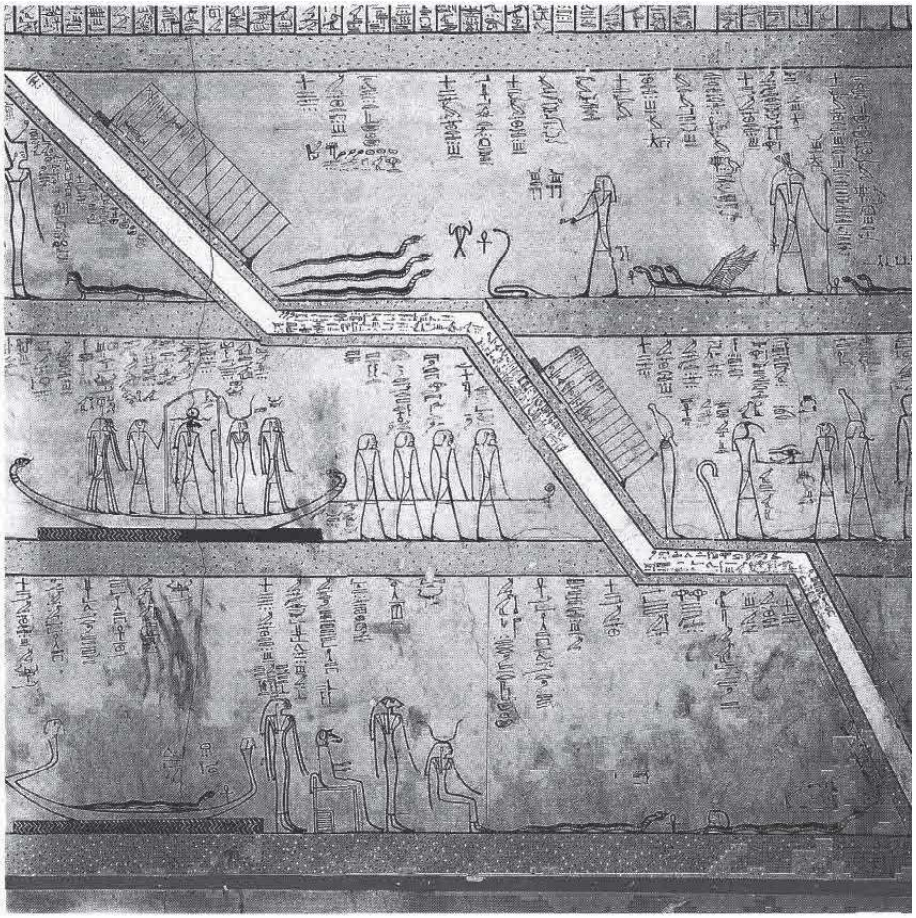
REGIONAL GROUPINGS

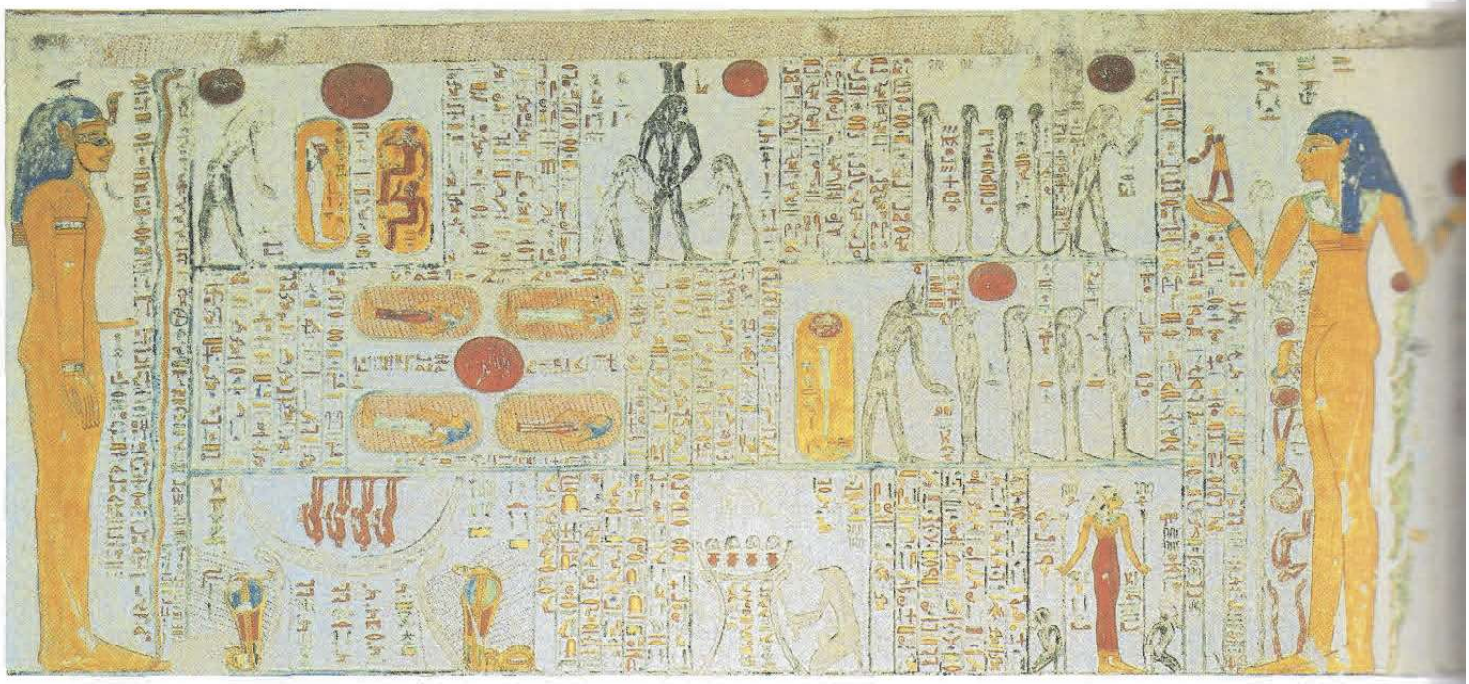
Regional groups of deities – meaning those of specific areas of Egypt, or of a given area of the cosmos such as star gods or netherworld deities – may or may not have individual names and identities. These groups could consist of any number of deities, and are often, in fact, of varying or indeterminate size. The category includes the deities of the hours of the day and night as these 'hour' gods and goddesses represented not only units of time but also parts of the cosmos as imagined by the Egyptians.



(Left) Turtle, bull and ram-headed deities guard a 'gate' of the underworld. Late Period sarcophagus of Djhutirdis, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

(Below) Netherworld deities associated with specific regions of the Beyond. Scene from the Amduat, tomb of Tuthmosis III. 18th dynasty, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.





Scene from the fifth section of the Book of Caverns in the Tomb of Ramesses VI, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes. According to this funerary work the netherworld contained a number of caves or caverns in which various deities dispensed punishment or assistance to the deceased. 20th dynasty.

Cavern Deities

According to the ancient Egyptian conception of the underworld, there existed a number of caves or caverns in the nether regions which contained various deities who were involved in the punishment of the wicked. These cavern deities were systematically enumerated in the so-called 'Spell of the Twelve Caves', a composition known from a papyrus of the time of Amenophis II (Cairo 24742), and from the walls of the southern chamber of the Osireion at Abydos. Part of this text (caves 8–12) was also included in the Book of the Dead since the 18th dynasty and is found as Chapter 168 in that work. The caverns are places of punishment and execution – usually by beheading – of the enemies of Re, but the deities in these texts also aid the justified dead. The first seven caverns contain alternating groups of three mummiform and three anthropomorphic deities, two being male and one female in each group. The eighth to twelfth caverns contain varying numbers of deities with the eighth cavern having seven individuals and groups, for example, and the ninth having as many as twenty. Beneath the representations of these cavern deities, their names and numbers are listed along with the offerings prescribed for them and in some cases the beneficent deeds the deities perform on behalf of the deceased, such as the ability to move freely in the underworld, or to have light, food and protection. Understandably, offerings were sometimes made by living Egyptians to these gods.

The deities of the tenth cavern are representative of the types of individual and group deities found in these texts:

Deities of the tenth cavern – Action performed for the deceased

Those who belong to the sunshine – give light.
Those who take hold – grant that the deceased be acclaimed.
The nine gods who guard those in the cavern – give the breath of life.
The nine gods whose arms are hidden – grant that the deceased be a worthy spirit.
The hidden goddess – grants that the deceased's soul be strong and his corpse intact.
The souls of the gods who became members of Osiris – grant that the deceased have peace.
Those who worship Re – grant the deceased not be turned back from any gate of the underworld.
Those whose faces are warlike – grant that the deceased be cool in the place of heat.

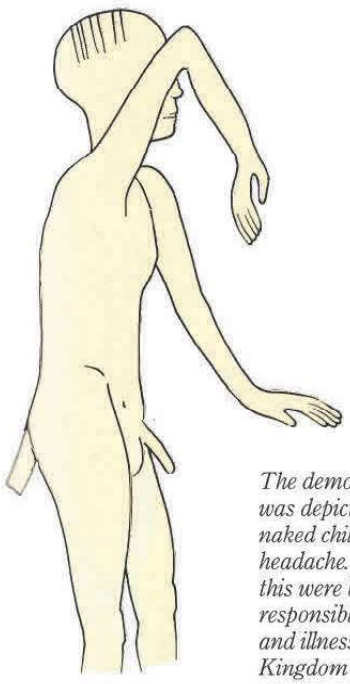
*Cavern Deities (from the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings)**

Cavern	*Representative Deities*	*Enemies of Re*
1	Serpent guardians of the Silent Region, Osiris	Beheaded, bound
2	Flame-breathing serpent, Osiris, deities in sarcophagi	Bound, decapitated, upside down
3	Aker, catfish-headed gods, forms of Osiris	Upside-down, females
4	Serpent Great One on his belly, forms of Osiris	Upside-down, bound, without *bau*
5	Nut, Osiris, Tatenen	Punished in cauldrons
6	Anubis, Horus, Osiris	Beheaded males, bound females, *bau* and shadows punished

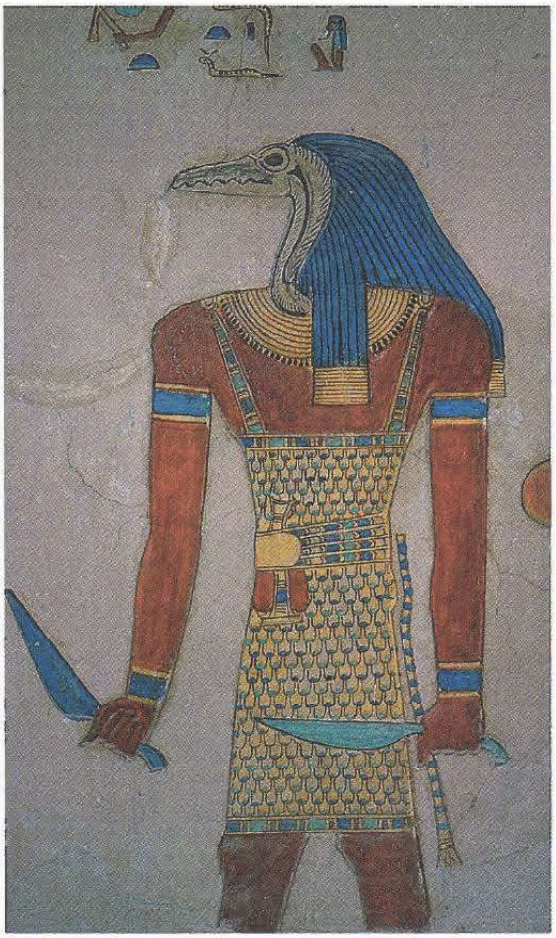
* Note: Other versions of the cavern myths present 12 caverns, but with many variant deities.

Demons

There is no Egyptian word which corresponds to the English word 'demon', but Egyptological literature often uses this term to describe what are also called 'minor divinities'. From the ancient Egyptian perspective, as Dimitri Meeks has shown, such minor deities were subordinate to the major gods and goddesses and performed specified tasks upon demand; and while the major gods tended to be more universal in nature, 'demons' were often defined by specific actions, behaviour and location. These beings were often associated with caves, pits and tombs and also with bodies of water – all of which were considered entrances into the underworld – and the greatest number of demons were, in fact, denizens of the beyond. These netherworld demi-gods constituted different categories. While some were clearly portrayed as frightening instruments of punishment for the damned, many were not inimical and may often better be classed as minor guardian deities such as the keepers of the various gates of the underworld. Some were creatures specifically tasked with the protection of the king or the deceased in the journey through the netherworld. These latter demons were also capable, of course, of aggressive behaviour in order to fulfill their protective roles. Such demons may be depicted zoomorphically but usually take human form or are portrayed semi-anthropomorphically with human bodies and the heads of creatures such as turtles, which were considered malevolent but whose power could be used for protection. A number of images of such demons appear in vignettes of the afterlife books and in some of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens.



The demon called Sahekek was depicted in the pose of a naked child with a bad headache. Demons such as this were believed to be responsible for many ailments and illnesses. From a New Kingdom ostracon.



Demons were often represented with the heads of fierce or fabulous creatures and many were depicted with weapons such as knives. The character of these minor deities could be protective or vengeful, however, as shown by the various funerary texts in which they appear. Tomb of Amenherkhepshef, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.

Demons could also be associated with the world of the living, however, and once again we find benevolent and malevolent types. The latter type included demons associated with Sekhmet and other great deities in their aggressive aspects, while more benevolent demons were often called upon to give protection from these. Interestingly, Egyptian texts show that it was possible for a demon to be freed from its subordinate role and responsibilities and to become a 'greater god' through a process of promotion, showing once again the difference between 'demons' and 'gods' was primarily one of degree rather than type.

Gate Deities

The Egyptian conception of the underworld included many gates, portals or pylons which must be passed by the sun god on his nightly journey, by the deceased king as part of the sun god's entourage (or fused with the god), and by the deceased who must pass these barriers in order to reach the place of afterlife existence. Different versions or accounts of the netherworld gates were preserved in the various funerary texts with over 1,000 deities depicted, but in all cases the barriers were guarded by minor gods who would allow only those who knew their secret names – and thereby had power over them – to pass.





(Right) The goddess Maat, tomb of Neferrenpet, western Thebes. As the daughter of the sun god Re, Maat was considered to personify the first hour among the various 'hours of the day' deities.

(Above and above right) Knife-wielding demons seated before 'gates' of the underworld. According to the New Kingdom Book of Gates, the Book of the Dead, and other texts, each underworld portal was guarded by at least one such demon. Tomb of Sennedjem, Deir el-Medina, western Thebes.

On the walls of the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings twelve pylons or gates were commonly incorporated into the funerary texts – such as versions of the Book of Gates – inscribed during the New Kingdom. Although each gate was depicted as an architectural feature, it was named as a goddess and protected by a fire-spitting serpent and by its own guardian deity. The fifth gate, for example, is termed 'she of duration', its serpent is called 'flame-eyed' and its resident deity is 'true of heart'. In the funerary papyri composed for nobles and others there is more variation. In Chapter 144 of the Book of the Dead, for example, seven gates are mentioned, each with its own god, a doorkeeper and a herald. Thus the seventh gate is watched by the god 'sharpest of them all', the doorkeeper 'strident of voice' and the herald 'rejector of rebels'. In other texts there are 21 gates known as the 'secret portals of the mansion of Osiris in the field of reeds', each of which is given a number of names or epithets and guarded by a zoo-anthropomorphic deity usually depicted seated and holding a large knife. The names of the gates are mixed in nature, being sometimes fearsome and sometimes innocuous as with Gate 14 'mistress of anger, dancing on blood' or Gate 3 'mistress of the altar'. The guardian deities are usually given terrifying or repulsive names such as 'swallower of sinners' or 'existing on maggots' in order to heighten their threatening effect – although in some cases they are unnamed in the texts, adding to the number of Egyptian deities known to have existed but impossible to catalogue.

The following shows the 12 gates as depicted in the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings:

Gate	*Representative Deities*	*Features of the areas*
1	The gods in the entrance, the 4 weary ones	4 cardinal points
2	Apophis, 2 enneads	Lake of fire
3	Goddesses of the hours, Osiris, Horus	Lake of life, lake of uraei
4	Gods of space and time, Osiris	Throne of Osiris
5	Osiris, Apophis, 12 restraining gods	Circular lake of fire
6	Osiris, the blessed and punished dead	Stakes of Geb
7	Lords of provision in the West	Fields of provisions
8	Fire-breathing serpent, sons of Horus, *ba* souls	Waters of the drowned
9	Deities with nets, Apophis	Area leading to 'emergence'
10	Apophis, face of Re, goddesses of the hours	Area of restraint of Apophis
11	Gods who carry the blazing light, baboons of sunrise	Area directly before dawn
12	Isis, Nephthys, Nun, Nut, the reborn sun	The primeval waters from which the sun emerges



Hours of the Day Deities

Each hour of the day was personified in Egyptian religious thought by a deity – all of which were associated with the sun in some way and many of whom were often depicted along with the solar god in representations of his day barque, the *mandet*. Although these gods and goddesses were clearly linked with units of time, they are grouped here – as are the hours of the night – as 'regional' deities, as each hour of the day and night was also a place – a physical part of the sun's transit across the sky or through the netherworld and the liminal areas of the two horizons. The first of these deities was Maat, the daughter of Re, and the others were descendants of the sun god or his servants or helpers:

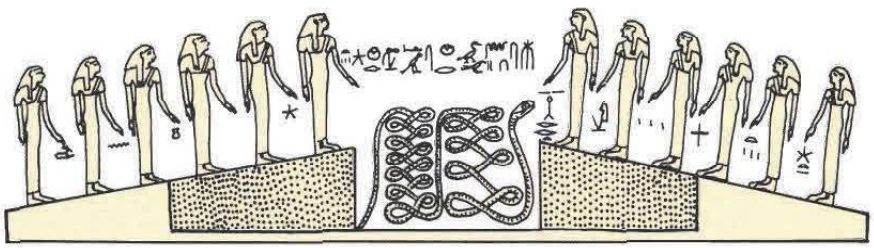
Hour	*Deity*
1	Maat
2	Hu (annunciation)
3	Sia (perception)
4	Asbet
5	Igaret
6	Seth
7	Horus
8	Khonsu
9	Isis
10	Heka (magic)
11	The god who is given the tow-rope of the solar barque
12	The god who gives protection in the twilight

Hours of the Night Deities

Each hour of the night (corresponding to a region of the netherworld) was represented by a goddess who was protective or assistive in nature, with a particular role according to her position in the topography of the underworld. All of the goddesses strengthened the sun god in some manner until the final hour when the twelfth goddess, 'beholder of the beauty of Re', witnessed the glorious rebirth of the rejuvenated sun at the night's end. Accordingly, the hour goddesses were given power by Re to control the life spans of all living things. George Hart has suggested that the ithyphallic figure called 'he who conceals the hours' that is depicted in the burial chamber of the tomb of Ramesses VI could symbolize the power desired by the monarch to negate the power of time that these goddesses might wield over the deceased king. The epithets of the goddesses are as follows:

Hour	*Epithet*
1	Splitter of the heads of Re's enemies
2	The wise, guardian of her lord
3	Slicer of souls
4	Great of power
5	She on her boat
6	Proficient leader
7	Repeller of the snake (Apophis)
8	Mistress of the night
9	Adorer
10	Beheader of rebels
11	The star, repulser of rebels
12	Beholder of the beauty of Re

The hour goddesses were not frequently depicted, but they appear in characteristically anthropomorphic form in some representations of the New Kingdom funerary texts known as the Book of Gates and the Amduat. In the burial chamber of the tomb of Ramesses I in the Valley of the Kings, for example, the twelve goddesses are represented in an illustration of the third division of the Book of Gates. The goddesses stand in two files, six on either side of a summary depiction of the netherworld, in the centre of which is a huge coiled serpent 'he who should be removed'. The goddesses each wear a five-pointed star on their heads but are undifferentiated except for their names and the alternating colours of their individual costumes.

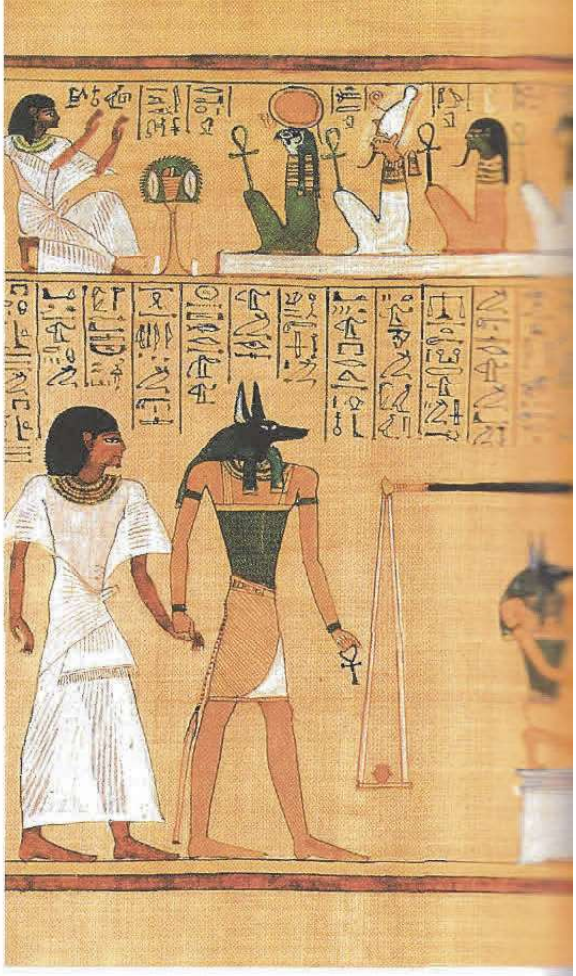


The twelve hours of the night were personified as goddesses in the Book of Gates where they were depicted in vignettes showing the twelve deities grouped around a twisting serpent which represented the endlessness of time.

Judgment Deities (Great Tribunal, Deities of the Hall of Justice)

References to an afterlife judgment by a tribunal of gods may appear as early as the Pyramid Texts (PT 317, 386, etc.). Such references are clear in the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts, and by the time the Book of the Dead became the chief funerary text, this judgment was seen as the crucial event in the deceased's entrance to the afterlife. Spell 125 of the Book of the Dead gives the so-called 'negative confession' or 'declaration of innocence' of the deceased before a tribunal of 42 gods who were the assessors who judged the dead in the netherworld Hall of Justice or 'Hall of the Two Truths'. The declaration takes the form of an address by the deceased to each judge – who is named along with the protestation of innocence regarding the specific crime judged by that god. The gods were listed according to their individual names and usually either a geographical area or some other identifying characteristic. Together, the 42 deities 'who hear cases' were apparently believed to represent all possible types of evil. The names of some of these deities are reminiscent of more well-known gods (such as Nosey of Hermopolis = Thoth; White of Teeth = Sobek) whom they may represent.

The council of assessor gods is frequently depicted in vignettes illustrating Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead, though only occasionally are all 42 of the gods shown. More frequently a representative selection of the deities is made. The gods may be shown squatting in the position of the 'seated god' hieroglyph, or standing, and may hold knives or *maat* feathers as symbols of their judicial power.

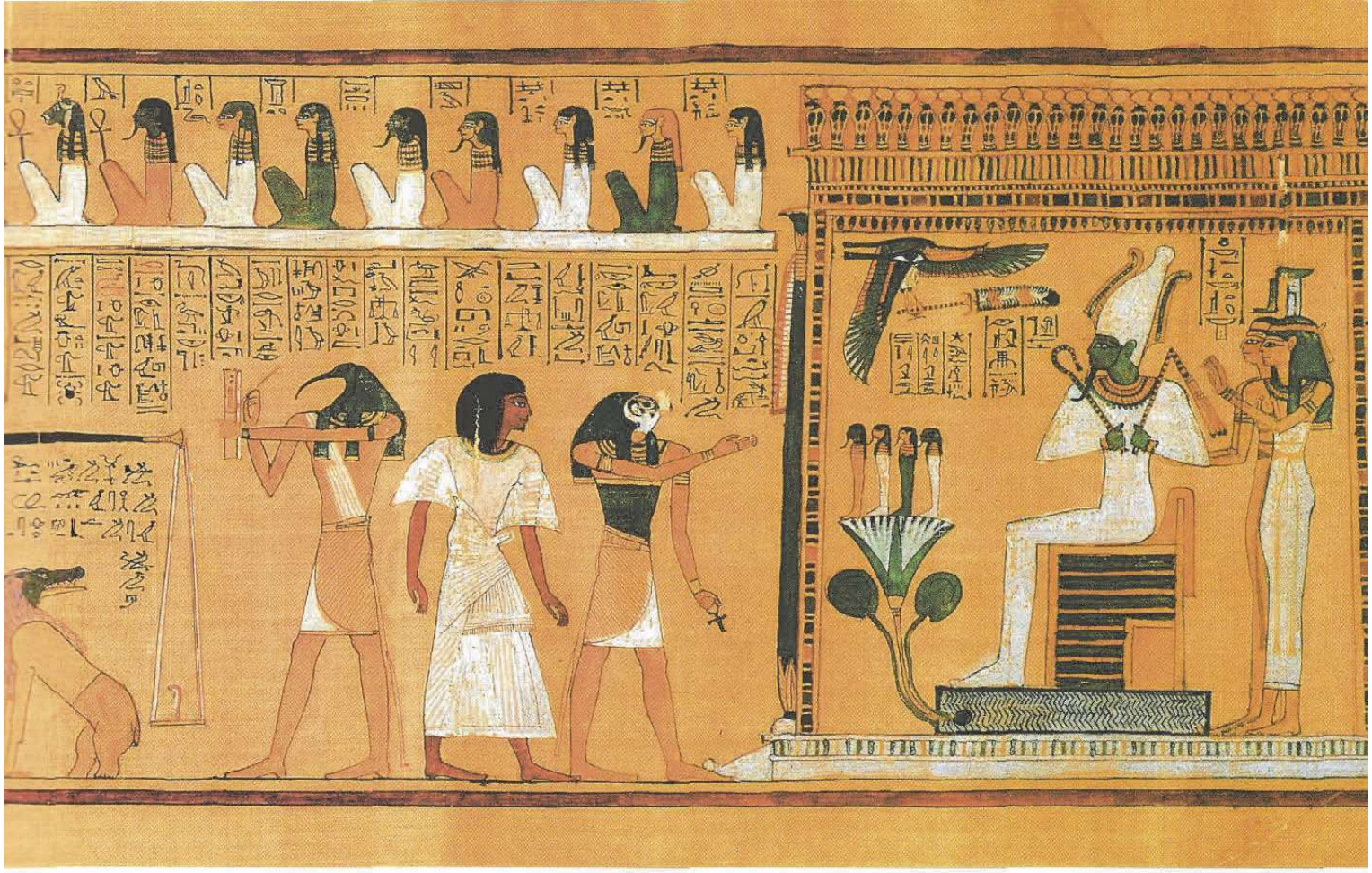


(Below) The 42 deities of the afterlife tribunal which judged the dead in the netherworld 'Hall of Justice'. Each deity was responsible for a particular crime which ranged from murder and rapaciousness to religious transgressions such as blasphemy or damaging the image of a god.

	Name of God	*Identification*	*Crime judged*
1	Far-strider	Heliopolis	falsehood
2	Fire-embracer	Kherara	robbery
3	Nosey	Hermopolis	rapaciousness
4	Swallower of shades	the cavern	stealing
5	Dangerous One	Rosetau	murder
6	Double lion	the sky	destruction of food
7	Fiery eyes	Letopolis	crookedness
8	Flame	Came forth backwards	stealing offerings
9	Bone Breaker	Herakleopolis	lying
10	Green of flame	Memphis	taking food
11	You of the cavern	the West	sullenness
12	White of teeth	Fayum	transgression
13	Blood-eater	the shambles	killing a sacred bull
14	Eater of entrails	House of Thirty	perjury
15	Lord of truth	Maaty	stealing bread
16	Wanderer	Bubastis	eavesdropping
17	Pale One	Heliopolis	babbling
18	Doubly evil	Andjet	disputing
19	*Wememty*-snake	place of execution	homosexuality
20	See whom you bring	House of Min	misbehaviour
21	Over the Old One	mau	terrorizing
22	Demolisher	Chois	transgressing
23	Disturber	Weryt	being hot-tempered
24	Youth	Heliopolitan nome	unhearing of truth
25	Foreteller	Wenes	making disturbance
26	You of the altar	the secret place	hoodwinking
27	Face behind him	cavern of wrong	copulating with a boy
28	Hot-foot	the dusk	neglect
29	You of the darkness	the darkness	quarrelling
30	Bringer of your offering	Sais	unduly active
31	Owner of faces	Nedjefet	impatience
32	Accuser	Wetjenet	damaging a god's image
33	Owner of horns	Asyut	volubility of speech
34	Nefertem	Memphis	wrongdoing, beholding evil
35	Temsep	Busiris	conjuration against the king
36	You who acted willfully	Tjebu	wading in water
37	Water-smiter	the abyss	being loud voiced
38	Commander of mankind	your house	reviling God
39	Bestower of good	the harpoon nome	doing ...?
40	Bestower of powers	the city	making distinctions for self
41	Serpent with raised head	the cavern	dishonest wealth
42	Serpent who brings and gives	the silent land	blasphemy

Nome Deities

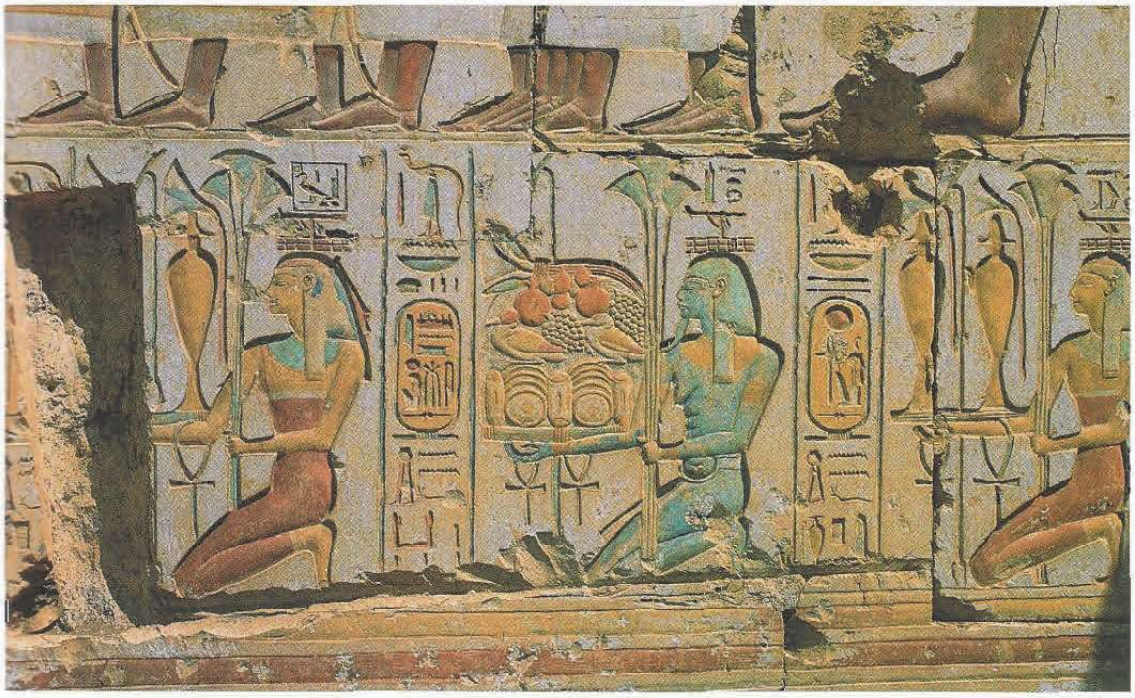
Egypt was traditionally divided into administrative districts which the Egyptians called *sepaut* and the Greeks *nomoi*, from which the word nome comes. For most of the dynastic era there were 22 Upper Egyptian provinces or nomes and in the later periods Lower Egypt was also divided into 20 nomes. Each of these nomes had its own emblem – usually that of its titulary deity/deities or some other distinguishing element – which was displayed upon a



pole or standard so that the nomes were recognized and named after their symbols, with names such as ibis, fish, or crocodile nome.

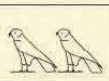
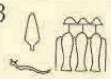
In the representations carved on the walls of Egypt's temples, the nomes were depicted as either female or androgynous figures, usually bearing the emblems of their districts on their heads. Their depictions show them processionally carrying offerings into the temple to signify the gifts of their areas to the upkeep and welfare of the god's houses. Usually the 22 nomes of Upper Egypt were depicted on the southern walls of temples and the 20 nomes of Lower Egypt were depicted on the northern walls.

(Above) The judgment of the deceased in the Hall of Justice from the 19th-dynasty Book of the Dead of Hunefer, British Museum. Hunefer is shown undergoing the weighing of the heart, before the throne of Osiris, and also kneeling before a variant of the Heliopolitan Ennead with certain additional deities. Other vignettes of the Book of the Dead show some or all of the 42 deities who were believed to oversee this judgment.

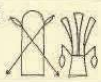
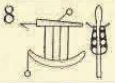
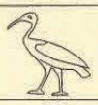
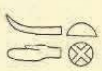


Fecundity figures personifying nomes, cities and estates – and sometimes identified with the king – are frequently depicted in Egyptian temples in the symbolic presentation of produce and offerings. 19th dynasty. Temple of Ramesses II, Abydos.

Upper Egyptian Nomes and their Deities

Nome		Name	Location (modern)	Major Deities
1		Ta-Seti	First cataract to north of Gebel el-Silsila	Khnum, Satis, Anukis, Isis, Horus the Elder, Sobek
2		Throne of Horus	Region of Edfu	Horus
3		Shrine	Kom el-Ahmar to north of Esna	Horus, Nekhbet, Khnum, Neith
4		Sceptre	Region of Armant and Luxor	Amun, Mut, Khonsu, Montu, Buchis, Sobek
5		Two Falcons	Region of Qift	Min, Seth
6		Crocodile	Region of Dendera	Hathor
7		Sistrum	Region of Hiw	Bat
8		Great Land	Region of Abydos and Ghirga	Khentamentiu, Osiris, Onuris
9		Min	Region of Akhmim	Min
10		Cobra	Region of Qaw el-Kebir	Seth, Mihos, Nemtywy
11		Seth	Region of Deir Rifa	Seth
12		Viper Mount	Region of Deir el-Gebrawi opposite Asyut	Nemty
13		Upper Sycamore and Viper	Region of Asyut	Wepwawet, Anubis
14		Lower Sycamore and Viper	Region of Meir and el-Qusiya	Hathor
15		Hare	Region of el-Amarna, el-Ashmunein and el-Bersha	Thoth, Ogdoad, Aten
16		Oryx	From Beni Hasan to north of el-Minya	Pakhet, Khnum
17		Jackal	Region of Samalut	Anubis
18		Nemty	Region of el-Hiba to opposite el-Lahun	Nemty
19		Two Sceptres	From el-Bahnasa to Biba	Seth, Mormyrus fish
20		Southern Sycamore	Region of Beni Suef	Heryshef
21		Northern Sycamore	Region of el-Wasta and Meidum	Khnum, Seneferu
22		Knife	From Atfih to region of Dahshur	Hathor

Lower Egyptian Nomes and their Deities

Nome	*Name*	*Location (modern)*	*Major Deities*
1 	White Wall	Region of el-Lisht and Memphis	Ptah, Sokar, Apis
2 	Foreleg	SW Delta around Ausim	Horus, Kherty
3 	West	NW Delta region west of Rosetta branch of Nile	Hathor
4 	Southern Shield	SW Delta N. and S. of Samadun	Neith
5 	Northern Shield	Region of Sa el-Hagar to coast	Neith
6 	Mountain Bull	Central Delta to coast	Re
7 	Western Harpoon	NW Delta region east of Rosetta branch of Nile	Ha
8 	Eastern Harpoon	E. Delta along Wadi Tummilat	Atum
9 	Andjety	Central Delta S. of Samannud	Osiris, Andjety
10 	Black Ox	SE Delta below Benha	Horus
11 	Ox count	East Delta around Tell el-Muqdam	Shu, Tefnut, Mihos
12 	Calf and Cow	NE Delta from Samannud to coast	Onuris
13 	Prospering Sceptre	SE Delta apex	Atum, Iusaas, Mnevis
14 	Foremost of the East	Eastern Delta S. of Port Said	Seth
15 	Ibis	NE Delta region of Damietta branch of Nile	Thoth
16 	Fish	NE Delta from Tell el-Rub'a to coast	Banebdjedet, Hatmehyt
17 	Behdet	NE Delta region around el-Balamun to coast	Horus
18 	Prince of the South	SE Delta around Tell Basta	Bastet
19 	Prince of the North	NE Delta E. of San el-Hagar	Wadjet
20 	Plumed Falcon	E Delta above Wadi Tummilat	Sopdu



(Right) The goddess Neith lustrates the jackal-headed Duamutef. Each of the four sons of Horus was protected by one of the four tutelary goddesses, Isis, Nephthys, Neith and Serket. In this way the viscera of the deceased received a double degree of protection. Decorated canopic chest. Third Intermediate Period. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The four sons of Horus, tomb of Ay, western Valley of the Kings, Thebes. This unique representation depicts the sons of Horus as seated mummiform figures wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt (at left, on the southern side) and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt (at right, on the northern side). 18th dynasty.

Sons of Horus

The earliest reference to these four gods is found in the Pyramid Texts where they are said to be the children and also the 'souls' of Horus. They are also called the 'friends of the king' and assist the deceased monarch in ascending into the sky (PT 1278–79). The same gods were also known as the sons of Osiris and were later said to be members of the group called 'the seven blessed ones' whose job was to protect the netherworld god's coffin. Their afterlife mythology led to important roles in the funerary assemblage, particularly in association with the containers now traditionally called canopic jars in which the internal organs of the deceased were preserved. At first the stoppers of these jars were often carved into the shape of human heads representing the head of the deceased, but from the 18th dynasty they were carved in the form of the four sons of Horus who had become the patron deities of their contents. Each deity was in turn said to be guarded by one of the funerary goddesses, though there was some variation in this linkage. The group may have been based on the symbolic completeness of the number four alone, but they are often given geographic associations and hence became a kind of 'regional' group.

The four gods were the human-headed Imsety who guarded the liver (and who was himself guarded by Isis); the baboon-headed Hapy who guarded the lungs (protected by Nephthys); the jackal-headed Duamutef who guarded the stomach (often protected by Neith); and the falcon-headed Qebesenuef, guardian of the intestines (who was often protected by Serket). The four gods were sometimes depicted on the sides of the canopic chest and had specific symbolic orientations, with Imsety usually being aligned with the south, Hapy with the north, Duamutef with the east and Qebesenuef with the west. They were also depicted on the long sides of coffins and sarcophagi with Hapy and Qebesenuef being placed on the west side while Imsety and Duamutef were placed on the east. During the Third Intermediate Period embalming practices changed and the preserved organs were returned to the body cavity, each with an amulet of its respective son of Horus attached. Later similar figures of the four



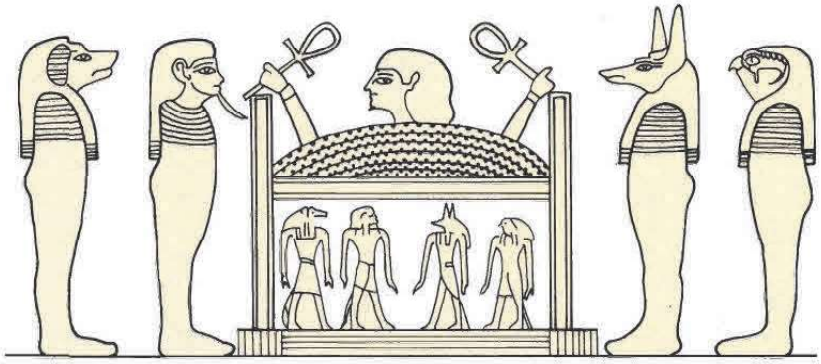
(Right) Limestone canopic jars with the heads of Duamutef, Qebesenuef, Imsety and Hapy. Originally, jars depicting the sons of Horus were made with human-headed stoppers but near the end of the 18th dynasty they were given the characteristic forms seen here. Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Name	*Appearance*	*Organ*	*Orientation*	*Tutelary Deity*
Imsety	Human	Liver	South	Isis
Duamutef	Jackal	Stomach	East	Neith
Hapy	Baboon	Lungs	North	Nephthys
Qebesenuef	Falcon	Intestines	West	Serket



gods were also often stitched onto the outside of the wrapped mummy.

In the vignettes of the various funerary texts the four sons of Horus could be represented in differing ways. In the Book of the Dead they may be shown as diminutive figures standing on a lotus blossom before the throne of Osiris, and on the third funerary shrine of Tutankhamun they appear as heads fused with the body of a protective serpent. In late New Kingdom times the sons of Horus were also represented as star gods (see p. 91) in the northern sky.



The four sons of Horus depicted as mummiform figures and as deities on a stylized mound. The four deities became increasingly important in the Egyptian mortuary sphere. Papyrus of Anhai, British Museum.

Souls of Nekhen and Pe

The sacred ancestral *bau* 'souls' of the Lower Egyptian city of Pe (Buto) and the Upper Egyptian city of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis) symbolized the predynastic rulers of the two regions and were regarded as powerful spirits or deities who served the deceased king and who also assisted the living king. In the Pyramid Texts the souls of Pe mourn the death of Osiris – the symbolic father of the king – and urge the vengeance of Horus – the living king – against Osiris' murderer (PT 1004–07); and the



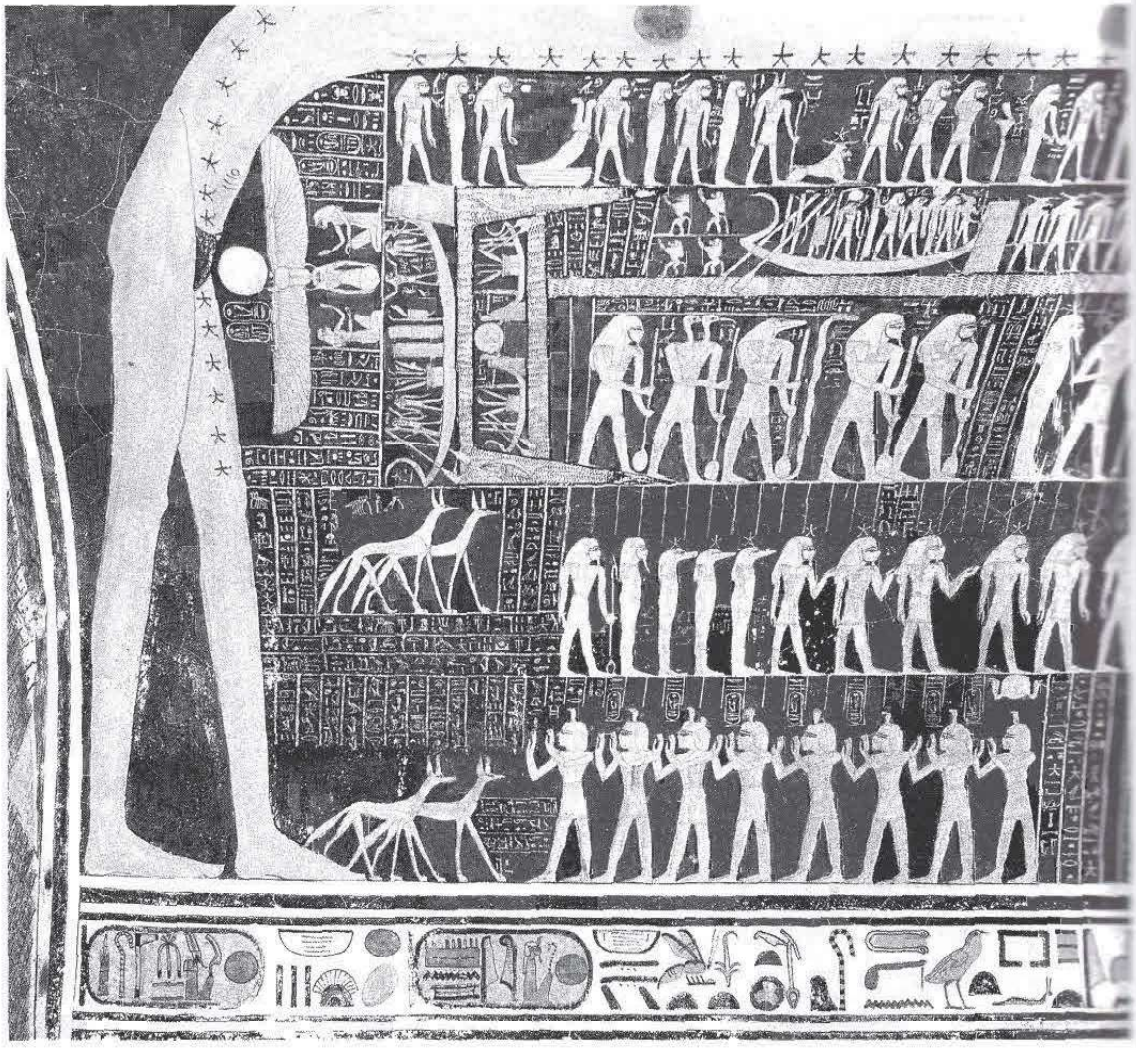
Ramesses I depicted between a falcon-headed 'soul' of Pe and a jackal-headed 'soul' of Nekhen. The bau *or souls celebrate the regeneration of the king who has also become a* ba. *Tomb of Ramesses I, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.*

souls of both areas are likened to stars (PT 904) who provide a gilded 'ladder' for the deceased king to climb into the sky (PT 478–79, 1253).

The souls of Pe are represented as falcon-headed and those of Nekhen as jackal-headed gods. They are both often depicted in the kneeling *henu* or 'jubilation' position as they salute the rising sun or participate in other celebratory rituals. In the tomb of Ramesses I in the Valley of the Kings they are shown flanking the king in this position, celebrating the rejuvenation of the king's *ba* or soul, as they themselves are *bau* or souls. In this particular representation, the written *henu* hieroglyph is visible in the inscription above the figures of the gods which are, in fact, simply hieroglyphs made large. In a similar representation from the 18th-dynasty temple at Buhen in Nubia, the falcon-headed gods of Pe are accompanied by an inscription which states 'May they give all life and power...[and] all stability which they have...' showing that the gesturing figures could also be symbolic of divine gifts. In temple scenes the souls of Nekhen and Pe (or masked priests) may carry the barque shrine of the god on poles placed upon their shoulders, or, as in the temple of Horus at Edfu, they may carry the enthroned god himself by means of carrying poles beneath his chair.

Star Deities

Egyptian astronomical texts and representations mention many gods and goddesses of the night sky – some representing planets as well as astral bodies – which are conveniently called star deities. Most important of these were the 'Imperishable Ones' representing the northern circumpolar stars which were visible each night, as opposed to the great majority of stars which appeared and disappeared from view according to the earth's orbital movements. These constant stars symbolized the idea of eternal survival for the Egyptians and it seems to have been the goal of early kings to join their number in the afterlife. Evidence for this early astral cult is clearly found in the Pyramid Texts alongside the solar theology which had achieved dominance before the 5th dynasty. The two approaches are not always successfully syncretized, so that the deceased king is said to be the morning star on the one hand, while he is also said to cross the sky in the

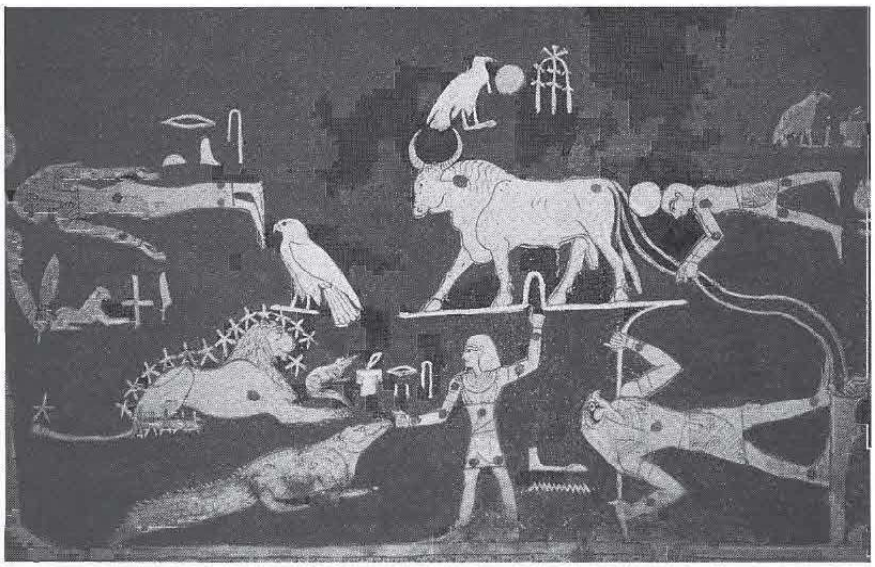


(Right) Part of the elaborate ceiling decoration of the burial chamber of Ramesses VI showing the overarching body of the goddess Nut, the newly born sun, and a number of netherworld deities and gods of the various hours of the day. The scene illustrates the New Kingdom composition known as the Book of the Day and shows the stars travelling along the inside of the sky goddess's body during the diurnal period. 20th dynasty. Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.

boat of the sun god. The growth of the cult of Osiris also led to the stars being called the 'followers' of that god, so that it is clear that the major theological systems attempted to incorporate the star deities into their own schemes.

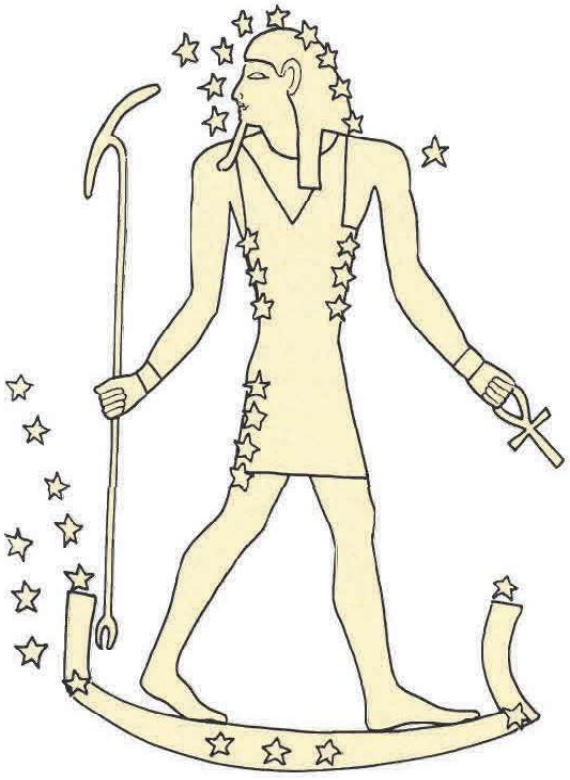
The brightest object in the night sky after the moon, the planet Venus (the 'morning star'), was viewed even from early times as an important deity; and from at least the Middle Kingdom the Egyptians recognized five of the planets which they called 'stars that know no rest' and which were represented as gods who sailed across the heavens in their own barques. These were Mercury (Sebegu, perhaps a form of Seth), Venus ('the one who crosses' or 'god of the morning'), Mars ('Horus of the horizon' or 'Horus the red'), Jupiter ('Horus who limits the Two Lands'), and Saturn ('Horus bull of the heavens').

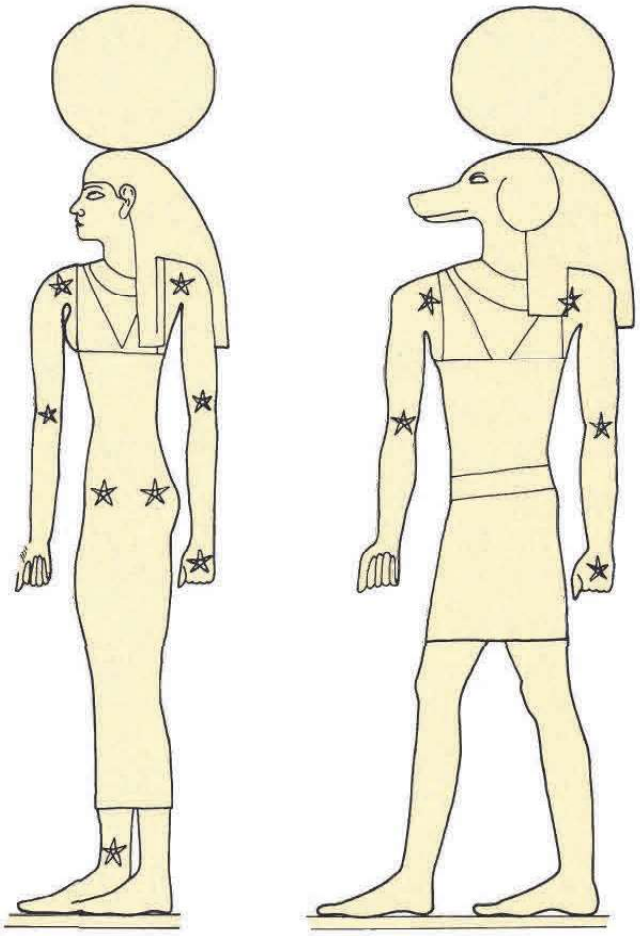
As time progressed, many of the brighter stars were mapped into constellations, though these have proved extremely difficult to identify in some cases. At the least, equivalents of the modern constellations of Orion, the Great Bear, and perhaps Leo and Draco are recognizable, however; and these and other groupings represented either standard deities within the Egyptian pantheon or unique astral deities with their own identities. Already by the Middle Kingdom complex 'star-clocks' or calendars had been constructed which divided the night sky into 36 decans or groups of stars which were visualized as 'star gods' who rose and moved across the sky in the course of ten days, the most important being Sirius (Sothis – see p. 167), whose rising approximated the beginning of the Nile's inundation. In several of the royal tombs of the Valley of the Kings – such as those of Sethos I and Ramesses VI – the night sky is depicted on the ceiling of the burial chamber and many of the important star deities are represented and named. At this time many familiar deities – such as the four sons of Horus – also appeared as star gods.



(Above) Personified constellations, ceiling of the burial chamber of Sethos I, Valley of the Kings, Thebes.

(Below) Three star deities including Imsety (centre – as a goddess), and Hapy (right). Tomb of Pedamenope, Thebes.





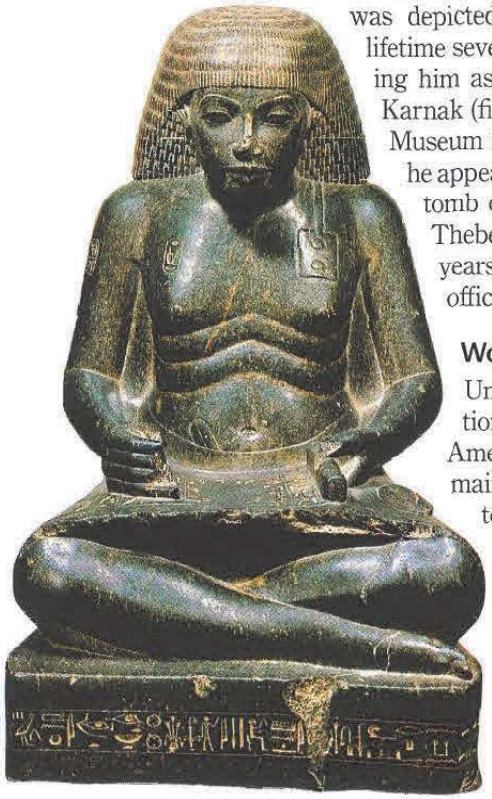
Male Anthropomorphic Deities

Amenophis Son of Hapu

Mythology

Amenophis Son of Hapu was born in the Delta town of Athribis *c.* 1430 BC and rose to distinction as a royal scribe and overseer of all the king's works under Amenophis III. He appears to have moved to the royal court at Thebes in about 1390 BC and lived there until a man of venerable age, having directed the construction of some of the greatest architectural wonders produced in ancient Egypt. Amenophis' works included not only the planning and construction of great monuments in the area of Thebes – such as the mortuary temple of Amenophis III and its great Colossi of Memnon – but also the temple of Soleb in Nubia and temples in other areas of the realm. Accorded great honour during his lifetime, after his death Amenophis was deified for his wisdom and in later periods for his healing powers. In these roles he was paired during Ptolemaic times, in Thebes at least, with Imhotep, the legendary 3rd-dynasty architect of Djoser.

Honoured during his lifetime with statues such as this one, and with his own mortuary temple, ***Amenophis Son of Hapu****, the master architect of Amenophis III, was deified after his life and venerated both for his wisdom and healing powers. Black granite statue, from Karnak. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*



Iconography

As a deified person Amenophis Son of Hapu was depicted only in human form. During his lifetime several granite statues were set up showing him as a scribe in the temple of Amun at Karnak (fine examples are now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Luxor Museum) and he appears in a beautifully carved scene in the tomb of his relative, the vizier Ramose, at Thebes. The Son of Hapu lived to be 80 years old, and a statue of him as an elderly official survives.

Worship

Unlike the more widely spread veneration of Imhotep, the worship of Amenophis Son of Hapu was limited mainly to the Theban area and can be seen to have grown in two stages. Even in his lifetime his importance led to the erection of a funerary cult temple next to that of Amenophis III on the west bank of Thebes. While small compared to the temple of the king, Amenophis' own monument was still of considerable size and larger than the temples of some kings in the same area. It was also the only private cult temple situated among the royal monuments in this location. A 21st-dynasty copy of a royal decree pertaining to the Son of Hapu's temple indicates that his cult continued to be celebrated for at least three centuries after his death. The veneration of the deified Amenophis as a god of wisdom and healing also saw a resurgence in the Ptolemaic Period. Together with Imhotep, chapels were dedicated to him in the temple of Hathor at Deir el-Medina and in Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri. The statues erected for him in the temple of Amun at Karnak were also utilized as intermediaries with Amun, and prayers were offered to them.

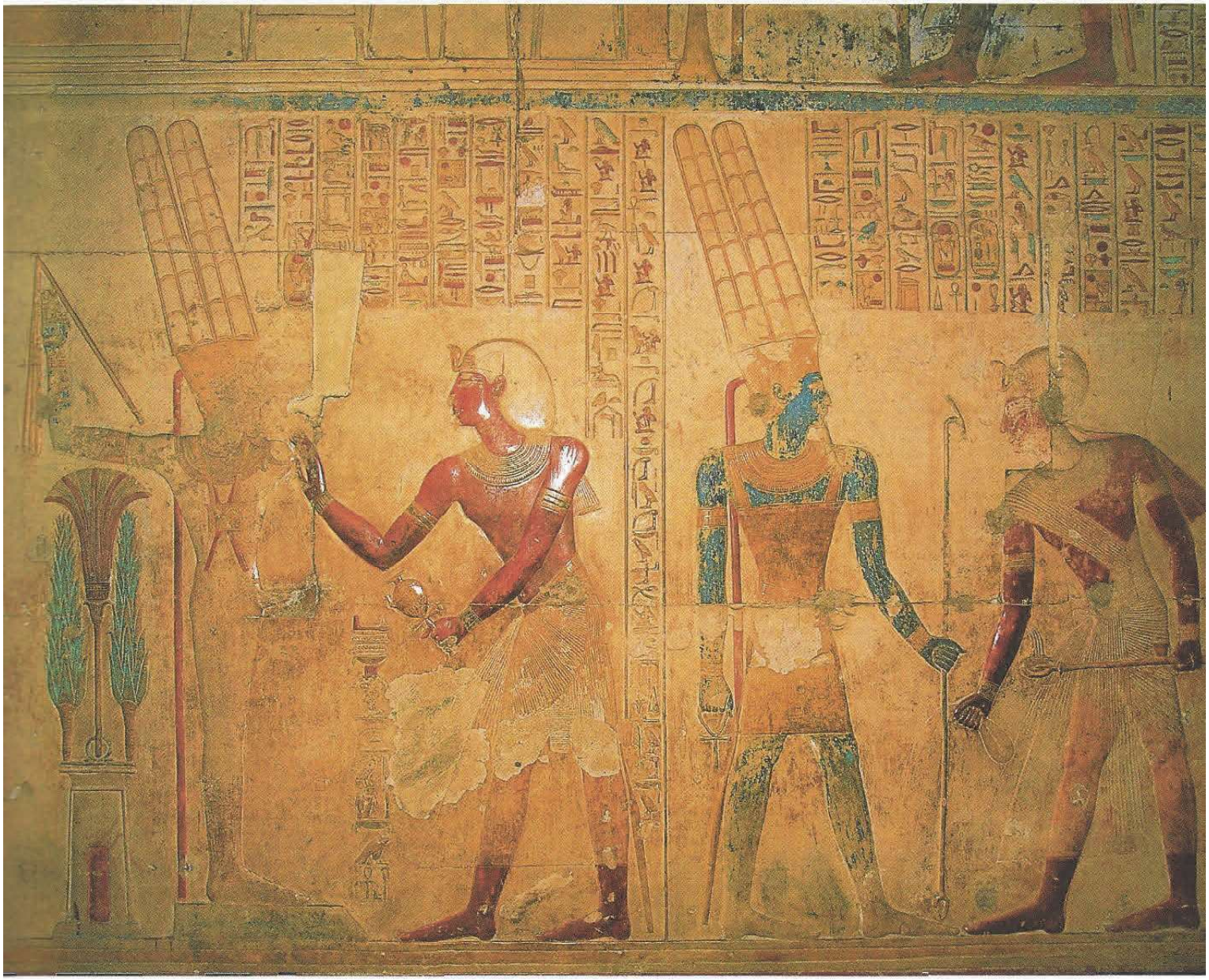
Amun, Amun-Re

Mythology

One of the most important gods of ancient Egypt, Amun is first mentioned, along with his consort Amaunet, in the Pyramid Texts (PT 446). He appears as a local god of the Theban region from at least the 11th dynasty when four rulers took the name Amenemhet or 'Amun is pre-eminent'. Within a century and a half Amun gradually displaced the old god of that region, Montu, and the ascendancy of the Theban kings in Middle and New Kingdom times eventually propelled him (as the combined Amun-Re) to the position of supreme god of the Egyptian pantheon. He was associated with two other deities who together made up the local divine triad of Thebes: his consort, the goddess Mut – who largely replaced Amaunet in this role – and the lunar god Khonsu who was worshipped as their son (see illus. pp. 31, 47). His character developed over the millennia into that of a rich and varied personality. The Egyptians themselves called him *Amun asha renu* or 'Amun rich in names', and the god can only be fully understood in terms of the many aspects which were combined in him.

Concealed god: The Greek writer Plutarch quotes the Egyptian chronicler Manetho as stating that Amun meant 'that which is concealed' or 'invisible', and the god was also commonly given epithets such as 'mysterious of form' – suggesting an essentially imperceptible nature – and it is possible that his name originally referred to Amun as the invisible power of the wind. While it is true that his name was written without a defining determinative, this was also true of some other creator gods, but the aspect of Amun as a mysterious, hidden god was primary to his nature.

Creator god: In addition to being a member of the Ogdoad, the group of eight primeval deities worshipped in Hermopolis (see p. 77), Amun was worshipped as *Amun kematef* or 'Amun who has completed his moment', a creator god in the form of



a snake which renewed itself. In this form Amun was said to predate the other members of the Ogdoad, and it was probably this form of Amun that Plutarch refers to as 'Kneph' – an eternal, self-engendering god worshipped by the inhabitants of Thebes. By the 18th dynasty Karnak Temple was said to occupy the 'mound of the beginning' where Amun brought the world into being; and a number of New Kingdom hymns extol Amun for creating the cosmos through his thoughts, an important step in the theological development of cosmogonic ideas.

Solar god: In the Book of the Dead Amun is called 'eldest of the gods of the eastern sky', an epithet reflecting both his primeval character and solar-associated nature, and an 18th-dynasty hymn to Amun preserved on a stela in the British Museum refers to Amun when he rises as Horakhty (see p. 201), directly fusing the hidden one with the visible sun. When he was syncretized with the god Re, as the composite Amun-Re, Amun took on a number of aspects of the solar deity, though these were clearly secondary to his hidden nature and the god was regarded as antithetical to the sun during the Amarna Period.

Fertility god: From the 12th dynasty, *Amun kamutef* – literally, 'bull of his mother' – was the ithyphallic form of Amun depicted in ritual scenes in the temples of Thebes and especially Luxor Temple. The epithet suggests both that the god was self-engendered – meaning that he begot himself on his mother, the cow who personified the goddess of the sky and of creation – and also conveys the sexual energy of the bull which, for the Egyptians, was a symbol of strength and fertility *par excellence*. In this ithyphallic aspect Amun was related to the fertility god Min (see p. 115) and is sometimes called Amun-Min.

The great god Amun-Re – depicted in both his normal anthropomorphic form (second from right) and as the ithyphallic Amun-Min (at left). ***Amun*** *was venerated in a number of roles but his identity as king of the gods and as a powerful fertility god were of primary importance in New Kingdom times. 19th dynasty. Temple of Sethos I, Abydos.*

Warrior god: It seems likely that some of the character of the old Theban war god Montu (see p. 203), whom Amun largely displaced, was absorbed by the ascendant deity. The Theban rulers of the 13th dynasty had made their city a rallying point against the invading Hyksos and, when the Hyksos were finally driven from Egypt (*c.* 1550 BC), it was Amun who received credit for the military victories of the time. Likewise, in the succeeding period of New Kingdom Empire Amun was not only said to instigate Egyptian expansion and to protect the Egyptian king in battle, but the 'lord of victory' and 'lover of strength' was specifically given credit for successful military strategy.

King of the gods: Pyramid Text 1540 states 'you have come, O king, as the son of Geb upon the throne of Amun', and from the Middle Kingdom the god was styled 'Lord of the thrones of the Two Lands' of Upper and Lower Egypt. The first known example of Amun's title 'king of the gods' appears on the 12th-dynasty 'White Chapel' of Senwosret I at Karnak and is used frequently thereafter. He was also called 'chief of the gods' in this same role of divine king. By Ptolemaic times Amun was directly equated with Zeus, and his Greek name Ammon sonther may be based on the Egyptian title *Amun-Re nesu netcheru*, 'Amun-Re king of the gods'.

Universal god: Unlike deities who were thought to personify the sky, earth or some other limited region or phenomenon, Amun was held to be a universal god who, at least in his developed theology, permeated the cosmos and all it contained. While a few other gods could be said to be 'universal' in nature, it is with Amun that we find a developed rationale for this claim. As the god 'who exists in all things' and the one in whom all gods were subsumed, Amun came particularly close to being a kind of monotheistic deity (see p. 38) and was sometimes revered as the *ba* or soul of all natural phenomena.

Iconography

Usually Amun was represented in human form wearing a short kilt (to which is often attached a bull's tail), a feather pattern tunic and a double-plumed crown. It has been suggested that these tall



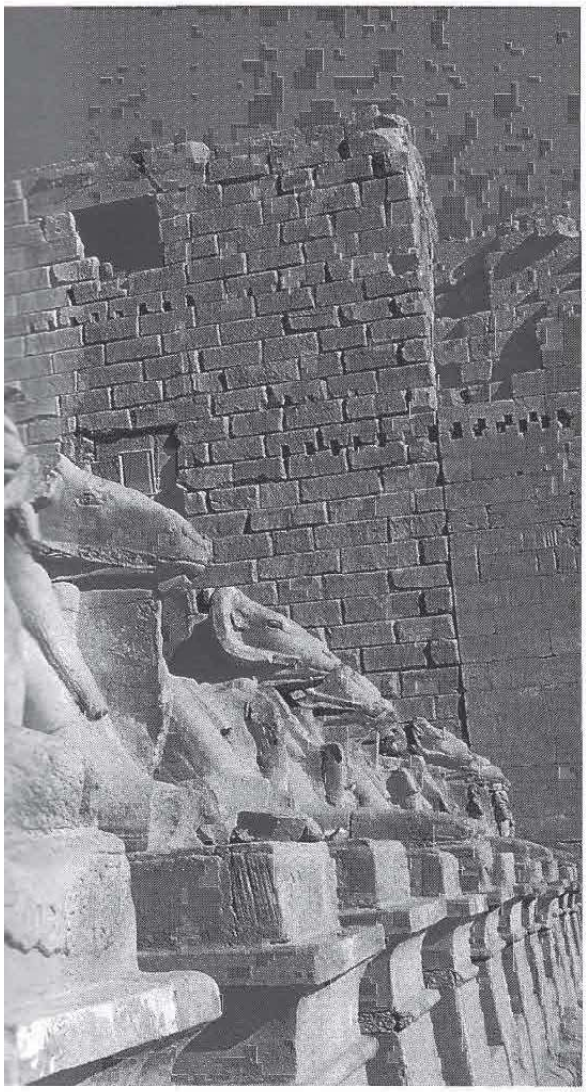
Ram-headed sphinxes, symbolizing the procreative energy and power of ***Amun****, line the western entrance to the god's great temple at Karnak. Erected by Ramesses II, each criosphinx originally held an image of the king protectively between its paws. 19th dynasty. Thebes.*

feathers were a way of representing Amun as a god of the wind – either as it could be seen ruffling the feathers or as it might be generated by feather fans – though this is purely speculative. The twin feathers would seem to reflect some aspect of the basic dualism which pervades Egyptian symbolism, and each feather was itself also frequently divided into the significant number of seven sections. Anthropomorphic images of Amun are found in two forms – with red and blue skin. The god's original colour was red, like that of most other gods, but after the Amarna Period (and apparently in some instances before), the god was also shown with a blue complexion, possibly in order to symbolize his aspects as a deity of the air and of primeval creativity. In depictions of the god standing, Amun is usually shown in a striding pose, though in his form of Amun-Min he stands with legs together, and as befitting his position as king of the gods, Amun is frequently also depicted seated on a throne.

Probably because of its procreative vigour, the ram (*ovis platyra aegyptiaca* – recognized by its curved horns) could symbolize Amun. The processional routes which led to Amun's chief temple at Karnak were flanked with prone rams or ram-headed lions symbolizing the god, and the great festival barque of Amun 'lord of the two horns' was decorated with rams' heads at its prow and stern. Occasionally, Amun is depicted as a man with the head of a ram, a form easily confused with that of the evening form of the sun god. The Nile goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) was also a symbol of Amun, probably because of its association with the creation of the primeval world (see Gengen-Wer); and for the same reason Amun also could be depicted as a serpent, though the iconographic use of this form is rare. Finally, in his solar-related form, combined with Re, Amun could also be associated with the lion, and the criosphinxes which represented him as ram-headed lions must be understood in this way.

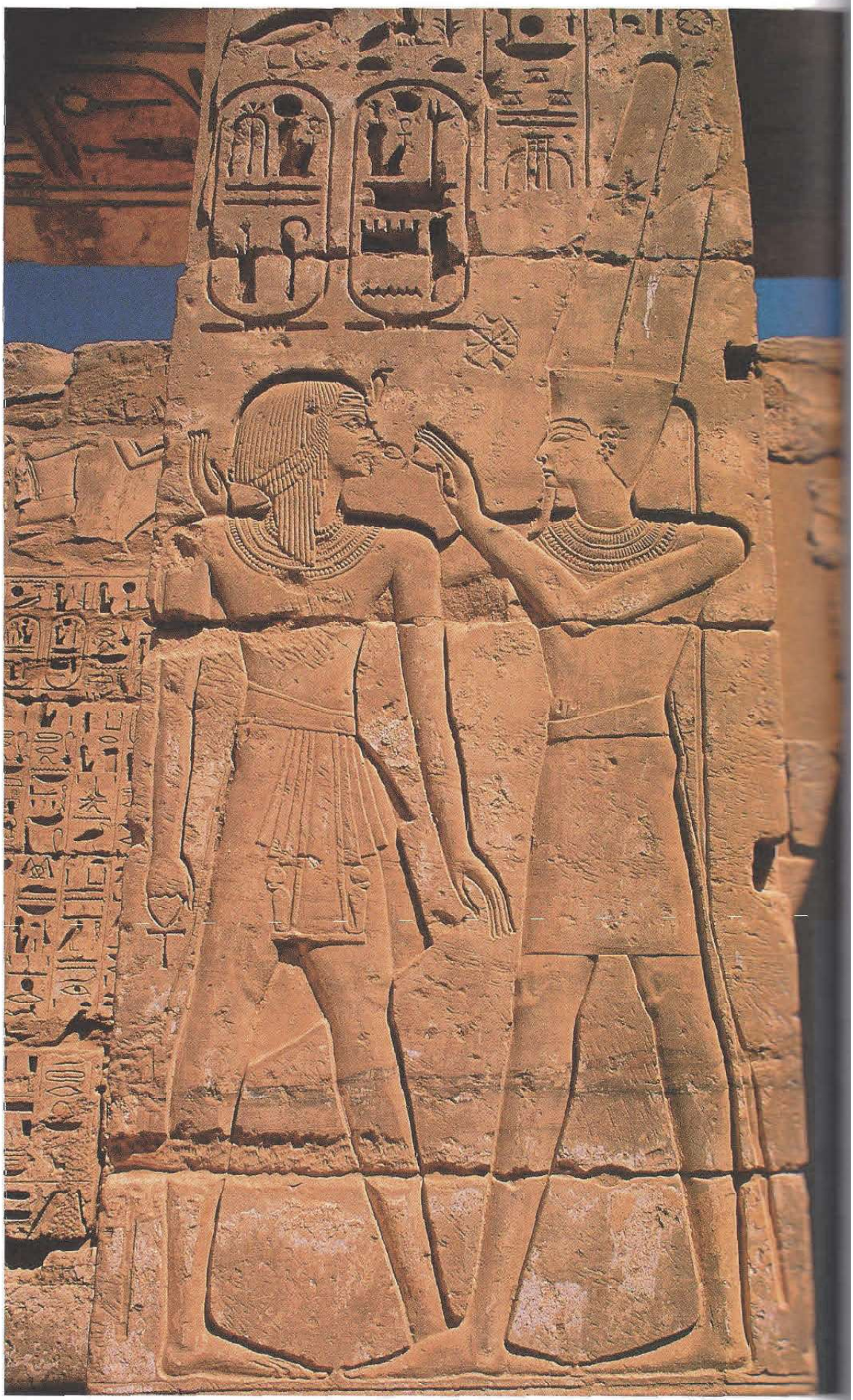


Amun-Re *in ram-headed form (at right) with the god Khnum. The two deities are differentiated by the curved horns of Amun and the straight or undulating horns of Khnum (reflecting different species of ram), as well as by the characteristic tall plumes of Amun.*



Worship

Although of great importance at Thebes during the Middle Kingdom, relatively little is known of the worship of Amun before the New Kingdom when the god rose to the position of supreme state god. The monuments which were built to him at that time were little short of astounding and Amun was worshipped in many temples throughout Egypt, though in Thebes itself, on the east bank of the Nile, two temples in particular were greatly enlarged in his honour. The main temple of Amun at Karnak – called by the Egyptians *Ipet-isut* ('most select of places') – remains the largest religious structure ever created and consisted of a vast enclosure containing Amun's own temple as well as several subsidiary temples of other gods. This complex was connected via a processional way with *Ipet-resyt*, the 'southern sanctuary' of Luxor Temple



*The god **Amun** (at right), in his role as supreme state god and named as 'Lord of the thrones of the Two Lands [of Upper and Lower Egypt]', grants the gift of life to Ramesses III. 20th dynasty. Mortuary temple of Ramesses III, Medinet Habu, western Thebes.*

which the god visited annually in the 'Beautiful Festival of Opet'. In this most important of Amun's festivals, the god's cult statue was taken to his southern temple to celebrate union with his divine consort Mut in the form of the ithyphallic Amun of Luxor who appeared in the guise of the fertility god Min. On the western bank of Thebes Amun also had smaller but theologically important cult areas in the temples of Deir el-Bahri, Medinet Habu and elsewhere that were also visited by the god in festival processions which crossed the Nile and travelled from one shrine to the next. In the New Kingdom and later Amun was incorporated into many Lower Egyptian centres, notably at Perunefer (the river port of Memphis) in the 18th dynasty, at Per-Ramesses in the 19th, and on a vast scale at Tanis in the eastern Delta where Karnak was almost virtually recreated during the 21st dynasty.

As a result of royal gifts following successful military campaigns during the New Kingdom and other sources of income, tremendous wealth flowed into the Theban cult centre of Amun, so that by the time of Akhenaten (*c.* 1353 BC) it is clear that the priesthood of Amun held a vast share of the wealth – and doubtless power – in Egypt. Whether this fact affected the religious revolution attempted by Akhenaten to any degree is unclear, but Amun certainly suffered the brunt of Akhenaten's religious 'reform', the names and images of the god being zealously erased from temples throughout Egypt. In the period of restoration which followed the Amarna interlude the prestige and power of Amun were rapidly regained. By the time of Ramesses III Amun's holdings extended to a full one-third of the cultivable land in Egypt; and by the close of the New Kingdom the first priest of Amun was powerful enough to rival the contemporary pharaohs who ruled from the north. During the 21st dynasty a practice had been established in which the daughter of the reigning king was consecrated to Amun as the 'divine wife of Amun', a custom which helped maintain the balance between Egypt's earthly rulers and her divine king. The Kushite kings of the 25th dynasty continued this practice, and their rule actually led to a resurgence in the worship of Amun as the Nubians had accepted the god as their own. Even after the invading Assyrians sacked Thebes in 663 BC, Amun still held great sway in the religion of Egypt; the god was sought out and honoured by Alexander the Great and, under the name of Zeus-Ammon, continued to be worshipped throughout the Greek and Roman Periods.

The worship of Amun also extended to the non-formal veneration of popular religion. The god was regarded as an advocate of the common man, being called 'the vizier of the humble' and 'he who comes at the voice of the poor' (see p. 51), and as 'Amun of the Road' he was also regarded as the protector of travellers. Most amulets of the god do not seem to predate the Third Intermediate Period but are often made of expensive materials and seem to have been worn in life, perhaps by the priests in his service. The god was well represented in the spells and charms of Egyptian magic and seems to have been especially regarded as a god who cured eye ailments. His power was also invoked in spells against scorpions, crocodiles and other dangerous creatures.

Andjety

Mythology

The god Andjety (Egyptian 'he of Andjet') was the local god of the 9th Lower Egyptian nome (see Nome Deities) centred at Busiris, the ancient Andjet or Djedu in the Delta. The deity seems to have been one of the precursors of Osiris in the sense that he was eventually absorbed by that god who took over his attributes and characteristics (see Osiris). In the Pyramid Texts he is one of the gods with whom the deceased king is identified, and juxtaposed with Anubis, ruler of the west as 'Andjety who presides over the eastern nomes' (PT 220, 1834). Judging by his insignia (see below) and the earliest textual evidence, it is possible that Andjety may have originally been a locally deified dead king of Busiris or somehow personified the concept of rulership. Andjety also had clear fertility aspects. Even in the Pyramid Texts we find the substitution of a stylized uterus for the two feathers in the writing of the name of Andjety which probably reflects these aspects in some way, and in the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom Andjety is also given the epithet 'bull of vultures', doubtless based on a mythological role as the consort of several early goddesses.

Iconography

Andjety was worshipped in anthropomorphic form, apparently as a deified ruler, and his iconography clearly demonstrates his influence on Osiris. From the beginning of the 4th dynasty he was depicted wearing a high conical crown decorated with two feathers very similar to the Atef Crown later worn by Osiris. Andjety also held two sceptres – a crook and flail – which likewise became Osirian insignia (see illus. p. 121).

Worship

The assimilation of Andjety by Osiris at an early date precludes a clear picture of the worship of the former god, but Andjety's position in the Pyramid Texts indicates a wide-ranging influence and worship of the deity in Lower Egypt in early times. He did continue as an independent deity after the rise of Osiris, but the two gods are seldom far removed in later times and from New Kingdom times may be combined, as in the funerary temple of Sethos I at Abydos where the king is depicted presenting

incense to Osiris-Andjety – a clear fusion of Osiris with the deity who was perhaps his most important forerunner.

Arensnuphis

Mythology

An anthropomorphic deity of Meroitic Nubia, Arensnuphis' origins are unclear, but the god seems to have been indigenous to the area to the south of Egypt. Unfortunately, the Egyptian interpretation of his name as *Iry-hemes-nefer* – 'the good companion' – suggests only a benign deity, and provides no real indication of his origins or essential nature. In the temple of Arensnuphis at Philae the god is called the 'companion' of Isis, but this title does not seem to be based in any mythological background. It is more important that he was equated with the Egyptian gods Onuris and Shu, sometimes being merged with the latter as the syncretic deity Shu-Arensnuphis.

Iconography

Arensnuphis was usually depicted in the form of a man wearing a feathered crown, sometimes holding a spear. His association with Shu (see p. 129) and Onuris (see p. 118) probably led to similarities of iconography shared by these gods. Arensnuphis could also be depicted in the form of a lion, though in this form he may not be distinguishable from other lion gods.

Worship

The cult of Arensnuphis is first attested in Nubia at Musawwarat el-Sufra east of the Nile's sixth cataract in the 3rd century BC. The god's worship spread into Egyptian Nubia during the Graeco-Roman Period, and a small kiosk was jointly built and decorated for him on the island of Philae by Ptolemy IV (*c.* 221–205 BC) and the Meroitic king Arqamani (*c.* 218–200 BC). Arensnuphis was also depicted in the temple of Dendur near the first cataract of the Nile where he is shown worshipped by the Roman emperor Augustus.

Ash

Mythology

The name Ash cannot be analyzed as Egyptian and the god is often thought to be of foreign origin. Nevertheless, Ash appears to have been an ancient god and is first attested on seals and inscriptions of the Early Dynastic Period. He was venerated as the god of Egypt's western desert region, including the outlying oases and the area of Libya or 'Tehenu', and this gave the god a somewhat dual nature as he was associated both with the barren desert regions and, at the same time, with the fertile oases. Because he was venerated as god of the desert, a close association between Ash and the god Seth occurred from quite early times. This connection was enhanced by the fact that Ash appears to have been the original deity of Ombos (with the epithet 'nebuty' or 'he of Nebut' [Ombos]), the Upper Egyptian town which also became a cult centre of Seth.

Iconography

Ash is normally depicted in fully anthropomorphic form, but the god may also be depicted with the head of a hawk, or because of his association with Seth (see p. 197), the appearance of that god. It is possible that he is represented as a lion, vulture and serpent-headed being on a late coffin, though this is uncertain and the god is seldom depicted in the later dynastic periods.

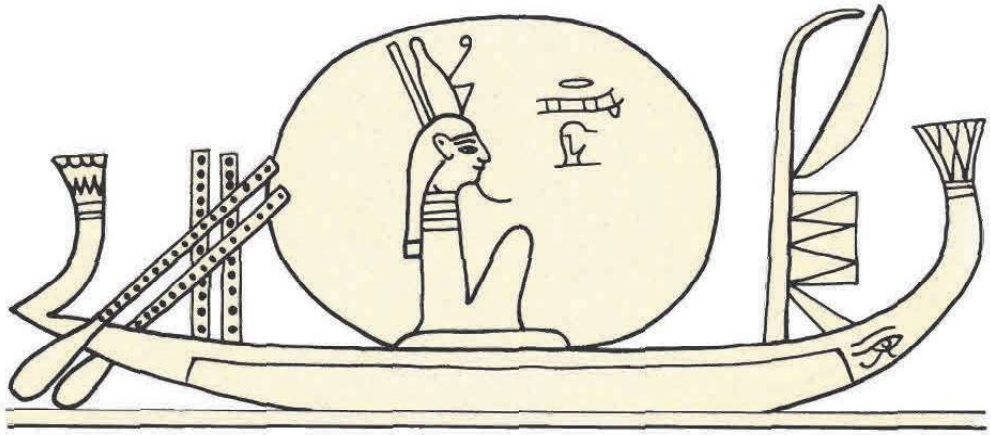
Worship

The god was without an established cult but he was depicted in certain temple scenes, as in the 5th dynasty pyramid temple of Sahure at Abusir.

Atum

Mythology

Atum was the great primeval deity of Heliopolis. His cult was a very ancient one and by the Old Kingdom he had risen to a very high level of importance in Heliopolitan theology. Atum is one

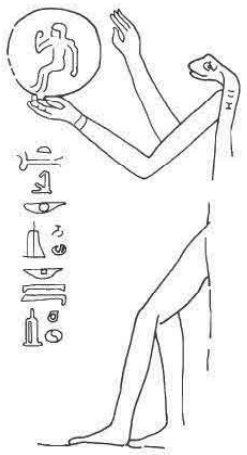


*The god **Atum**, his name written before him, seated within a solar disk on a divine barque. The image thus particularly reflects the important solar aspect of this deity. New Kingdom papyrus.*

of the eight or nine most frequently mentioned gods in the Pyramid Texts and we thus have a good deal of early information regarding the god's mythological roles and characteristics. His most essential nature is that of the 'self-engendered one' who arose at the beginning of time and who created the first gods through his semen – or, according to another story, through his saliva (see p. 17). Atum had many other facets, however. The word *tem* on which the name of the god is founded means 'complete' or 'finish' in both constructive and destructive senses, and this range of meanings fits well with a number of aspects of the god's nature.

Lord of totality: Atum was the monad – the one from whom all else originally came. One of the ways in which his name might be translated carries the idea of 'totality', and in the Coffin Texts and elsewhere he is specifically called the 'lord of totality' (CT III 27). From this perspective, everything which existed was a part of the 'flesh' of Atum, and every individual thing was said to be one of the millions of the god's *ka*s, a concept which not only stressed the god's primacy in coming before all else but also his importance as a universal god. By means of the magical formulae contained in the Pyramid Texts, the deceased king hoped to unite with Atum and thus become one with the supreme deity (PT 147).

Creator: According to the Heliopolitan cosmogony (see p. 17), Atum was god of the creative principle whereby the world was created from primeval chaos. In the Pyramid Texts the god was 'he who came into being' of himself (PT 1248), and this independence of prior causality was what allowed him to exist as creator. Atum's creative nature has two sides to it, however, because Atum can be seen as the one who completes everything and finishes everything. In this sense he is the uncreator as well as the creator. Thus, in the Book of the Dead, Atum states that at the end of the world he will destroy everything he has made and return to the form of the primeval serpent (BD 175).



***Atum** in serpent form and as – or with – the young sun. The god's primal aspect gave him associations both with creatures such as the snake and the image of the newly born sun. Papyrus, Brooklyn Museum of Art.*



*The god **Atum** (at right), invested with his distinctive Double Crown by Sethos I. 19th dynasty. Limestone relief, temple of Sethos I, Abydos.*

Father of the gods and the king: As the creator god Atum was the father of Shu and Tefnut, the first divine couple, and hence 'father of the gods' (PT 1521, 1546). According to the viewpoint of Egyptian mythology Atum copulated with himself to produce the first divine pair (PT 1248–49), with the hand utilized by the god in this act representing a personification of the female principle inherent within himself. Because the 'family tree' envisaged by the Heliopolitan theologians led from the god through Shu and Tefnut eventually to Osiris and his son Horus (see p. 18), Atum was also the genealogical father of the Egyptian king, and the Pyramid Texts make clear the father-son relationship was held to be a close one even from early times: 'O Atum, raise this king up to you, enclose him within your embrace, for he is your son of your body for ever' (PT 213).

Primal mound: Atum was not only viewed as the creator but also the original creation itself. He was thus the primeval mound which rose from the waters of creation and was represented in this aspect by the sacred *ben-ben* stone, which was worshipped at Heliopolis from the earliest dynasties and which may have originally been a meteorite or some other sacred stone.

The sun: Because the sun was regarded as a primary factor in the process of creation Atum was also linked to solar religion as the 'self-developing

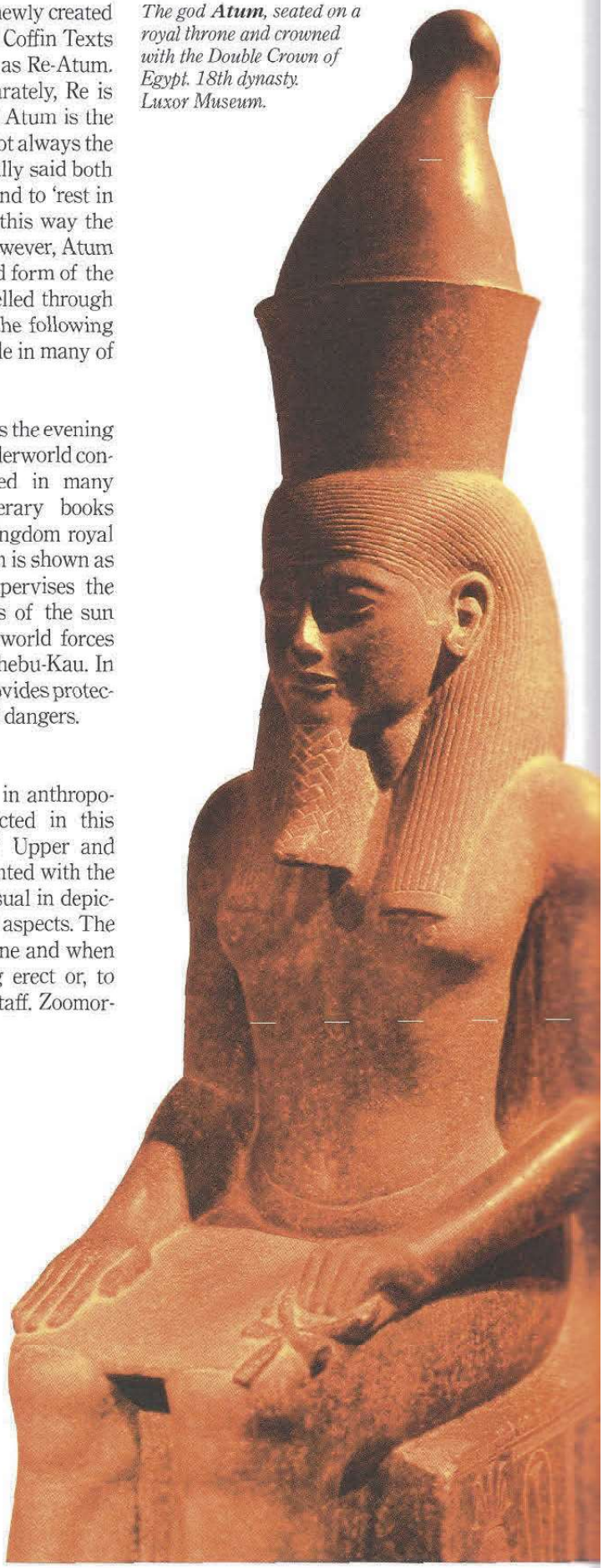
scarab' (PT 1587) who represented the newly created sun. In fact, in the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts Atum is often fused with the sun god as Re-Atum. When Re and Atum are viewed separately, Re is usually the rising sun of the day and Atum is the setting sun of the evening, but this is not always the case. In the Coffin Texts he is specifically said both to 'emerge from the eastern horizon' and to 'rest in the western horizon', so that he is in this way the complete sun. In funerary contexts, however, Atum was certainly more commonly the aged form of the sun which set each evening and travelled through the underworld before being reborn the following day. As such he plays an important role in many of the later mortuary books.

Chthonic god: As a primeval god and as the evening sun Atum had strong chthonic and underworld connections. His power is thus invoked in many netherworld scenarios. In the funerary books inscribed on the walls of the New Kingdom royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, Atum is shown as an aged, ram-headed figure who supervises the punishment of evildoers and enemies of the sun god, and also subdues hostile netherworld forces such as the serpents Apophis and Nehebu-Kau. In non-royal funerary texts Atum also provides protection for the deceased from netherworld dangers.

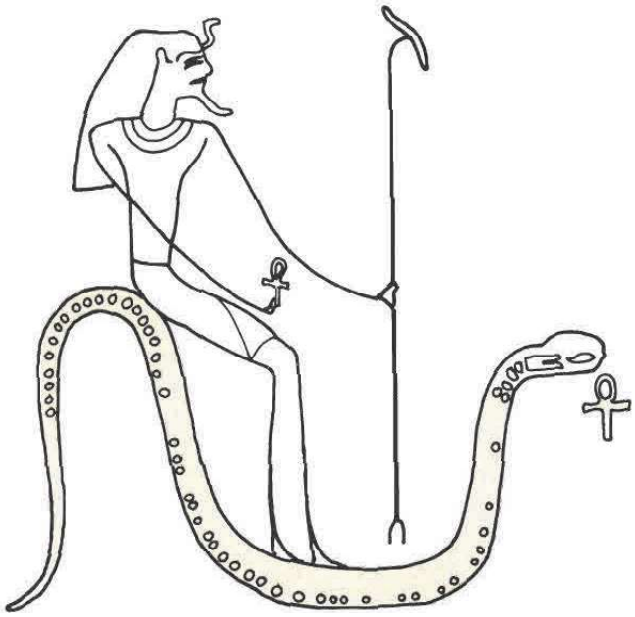
Iconography

Atum is most frequently represented in anthropomorphic form and is usually depicted in this manner wearing the dual crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. He may also be represented with the head of a ram, though this is more usual in depictions showing his solar or underworld aspects. The god is often depicted seated on a throne and when standing he may be shown standing erect or, to stress his aged aspect, leaning on a staff. Zoomor-

*The god **Atum**, seated on a royal throne and crowned with the Double Crown of Egypt. 18th dynasty. Luxor Museum.*



*The 'body' or 'flesh' of **Atum** upon a serpent from the seventh hour of the Amduat. Like the sun god Re, with whom he was associated, Atum was constrained to pass through the netherworld regions in the cycle of death and regeneration.*



phically, Atum could be represented or symbolized as a serpent in reference to his chthonic and primeval nature, and also, in other aspects, as a mongoose, lion, bull, or lizard, and as an ape – sometimes in this latter guise armed with a bow with which he shoots his enemies. In terms of his solar connections he may be depicted as a scarab, and the famous giant scarab statue which now stands by the sacred lake at Karnak was dedicated to Atum. Yet again, in terms of his primeval nature, Atum could also be represented by the image of the primeval hill, and in the First Intermediate Period 'Atum and his hand' appear as a divine couple.

Worship

Atum was perhaps the most important god originally worshipped at Heliopolis, although his cult was eventually eclipsed by that of Re (see p. 205). Atum retained a good deal of his importance, however. The god is often called 'Lord of Heliopolis', and even after the rise of Re his influence continued to be exerted in the solar cult centre. Atum's importance was by no means limited to the north, or to the Old Kingdom, however. It is Atum, along with the Theban god Montu, who escorts the king in New Kingdom representations in the temple of Amun at Karnak. Atum's close relationship with the Egyptian king is seen in many cultic rituals, and a papyrus dating to the Late Period in the Brooklyn Museum shows the god's importance in the New Year's festival in which the king's role was reconfirmed. Atum is relatively rarely encountered in the popular religion of ancient Egypt, but amulets and small reliquaries of lizards – which were one of his symbols – were worn in honour of the god in the Late Period.

Baal

Mythology

Baal was the West Semitic storm god, the equivalent of the Amorite deity Adad or Hadad, and the centrally important deity of the Canaanites. The Hebrew Bible records the ancient Israelites apostasizing interaction with this god, and Late Bronze Age texts found at Ras Shamra (the ancient Ugarit) on the Levantine coast show that by *c.* 1400 BC Baal had displaced the god El to become the most prominent deity in the local pantheon. Believed to be active in storms, he was known as 'rider of the clouds' and 'lord of heaven and earth'; he also controlled the earth's fertility. According to the surviving ancient Near Eastern myths, Baal vanquished Yam, the tyrannical god of the sea, but was eventually himself overcome by Mot, a personification of death, and descended into the underworld. Baal returned to life with the help of his sister-consort Anat in a manner similar to the death and resurrection of Osiris; and although the two gods do not seem to have been directly connected in Egypt, the similar background may well have aided Baal's acceptance there. His bellicose nature as god of storms meant that he was naturally equated with the Egyptian god Seth, and Ramesses II himself was said to appear at the Battle of Kadesh like Seth and 'Baal himself'.



Gold and silver foil-covered image of the Canaanite god ***Baal****. The god's name means 'lord' or 'master' and could apply to several deities with similar characteristics. Canaanite, c. 1900 BC.*

Iconography

Usually represented in anthropomorphic form, Baal was depicted as a powerful warrior, with long hair and a full, slightly curved Syrian-style beard. He wore a conical, funnel-like helmet with two horns attached at its base and often carried a straight-

bladed sword at the belt of a short kilt. The god was also often depicted grasping a cedar tree club or spear in his left hand and a weapon or thunderbolt in his upraised right hand. This imagery is common to many Near Eastern storm gods and may have been the origin of the later iconography of the Greek god Zeus. Baal's cult animal was the bull – symbolizing his power and fertility – and in Near Eastern art he is frequently depicted standing on the back of a bull.

Worship

By the 18th dynasty Baal worship had penetrated Egypt, and the god was formally served at several sites, an important cult centre being located at Baal Saphon near Peluseum in the northern Delta. He was also popular at Memphis and in several other areas, his popularity being attested in Egyptian theophoric names during New Kingdom and later times.

Ba-Pef

God of uncertain nature, though probably a deity of pain or woe, Ba-Pef means simply 'that soul', but the use of the non-specific name implies fear or taboo of mentioning the god's real name. In the Pyramid Texts the netherworld house of Ba-Pef 'wherein is woe' is mentioned, but no other details are given. There is some evidence of a priesthood of Ba-Pef in Old Kingdom times (in the tomb of Meresankh III at Giza), though the god does not seem to have been of great importance in any period.

Bes

Mythology

The name Bes (perhaps from the word *besa*, 'to protect') is a relatively late term used to describe what are really a number of deities and demons of Egypt, perhaps not all originally related, though all of similar form. Perhaps ten separate gods – Aha, Amam, Bes, Hayet, Ihty, Mefdjet, Menew, Segeb, Sopdu and Tetetenu – share similar, if not identical, characteristics making 'Bes' a complex and not always clearly understood figure. Although the developed deity came to be one of the most popular and widespread of Egyptian gods, little can be said with certainty of his beginnings. In the past different scholars have assigned him both African and Near Eastern roots, but this is unnecessary and the god is attested in Egypt – if somewhat indirectly – since Old Kingdom times. He (or related deities such as Aha: 'fighter') appears on scores of artifacts of Middle Kingdom date, but it is not until the New Kingdom and later that Bes figures and images become truly widespread and reflect popular acceptance of the developed deity.



Despite his appearance, which changed in many details over time, Bes was deemed beneficent to humans and he was accepted by all classes of Egyptians as a powerful apotropaic deity. He was especially associated with the protection of children and of pregnant women and those giving birth and often depicted alongside Taweret in this role. Just as the Bes figure subsumed various minor gods and demons, in later times he was himself syncretized with other protective deities, forming the 'core' of a composite deity whose elements included Amun, Min, Horus, Sopdu, Reshef and other gods. Mythologically, Bes could also be associated with Re, Hathor and Horus – sometimes as the combined Horbes – and a female form of the god, Beset, sometimes appears as the mother of Horus.

Iconography

While the appearance of the god has been compared with models as diverse as African pygmies and with prehistoric Libyan images, James Romano demonstrated a number of years ago that the origin of the Bes iconography is most likely to be found in the image of a male lion rearing up on its hind paws. Later aspects of the deity – from New Kingdom times – also display characteristics of achondroplastic dwarfism so that in his developed form the god is usually portrayed as dwarf-like with shortened legs and an enlarged head which is usually depicted from the front in two-dimensional representations. His mask-like and invariably bearded features frame large staring eyes and a protruding tongue, and he is often depicted with the mane of a lion and a lion's tail, which preserve his leonine origins. Some Egyptologists believe that these are remnants of an original iconography in which the



(Left) ***Bes*** *figures – typically brandishing knives or playing musical instruments – were often associated with the hippopotamus goddess Taweret, as on this arm panel from the chair of Princess Sitamun from the Valley of the Kings. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*



(Right) The leonine figure of this unguent jar from the tomb of Tutankhamun exhibits several aspects and attributes of the god ***Bes*** *and may have been chosen because of the lion's connection with Bes. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

god wore a lionskin cape rather than physically possessing these characteristics. After the New Kingdom Bes is sometimes depicted wearing the leopard skin worn in certain ritual contexts. For much of his history Bes is also frequently depicted wearing a plumed headdress and he is often given a large belly and sometimes protruding breasts – probably tying him to his role as a patron and protector of pregnant women.

Because Bes was believed to provide protection from snakes, he is frequently depicted holding or biting serpents, and in this form he assimilated, or was himself an avatar of, the demon Aha who strangled serpents in his bare hands. Representations of Bes also commonly carry musical instruments, knives, or the hieroglyphic *sa* sign signifying protection, as these attributes all reinforced the god's protective nature. Unlike other representations of the god, those showing him dancing with musical instruments or with snakes frequently show him in profile view as was necessary for indicating movement.

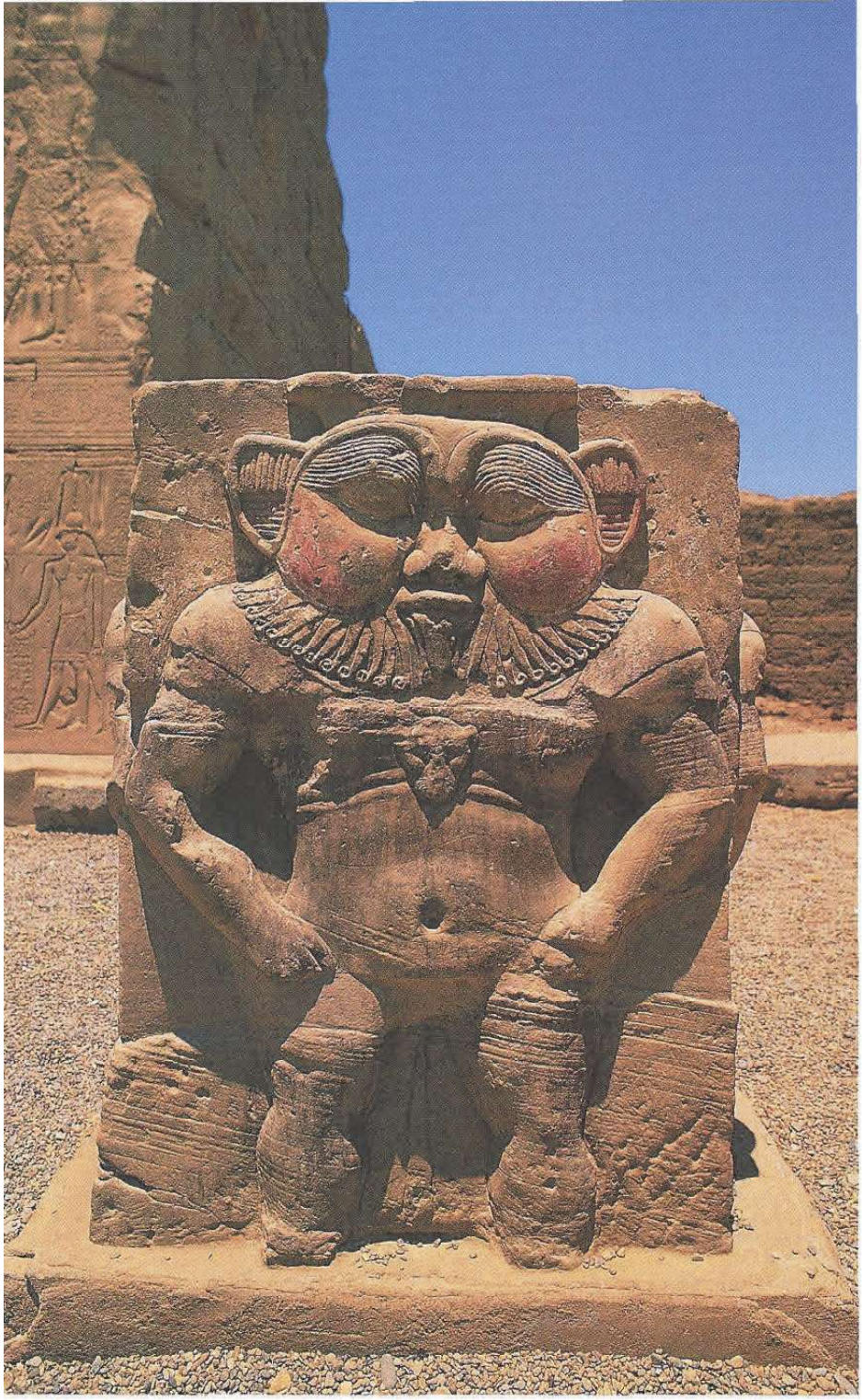
From the Third Intermediate Period on, images of just the head or mask of Bes occur both as independent amulets and as parts of other compositions – the power of the mask alone being clearly considered to be sufficient for protective purposes. Conversely, in his later composite form Bes is depicted as the head and sometimes body of a four-armed, winged and many-headed god with the tail of a falcon and the attributes of many of the deities with whom he was combined. In the Graeco-Roman Period images of the god sometimes carry a sword and circular shield to heighten his protective qualities or perhaps because he was adopted as a military deity. The effect is heightened in Roman times when he is sometimes shown wearing the full costume of a legionary.

Worship

Although not worshipped in any formal temple cult, Bes was widely venerated as a protective deity in the later dynastic periods of Egyptian history. The image of the god protected the mammisi or



Faience image of ***Bes*** *holding an infant in his role as protector of childbirth. The tall plumed crown of the god is common in his iconography from the 18th dynasty. Harer Collection, San Bernardino.*



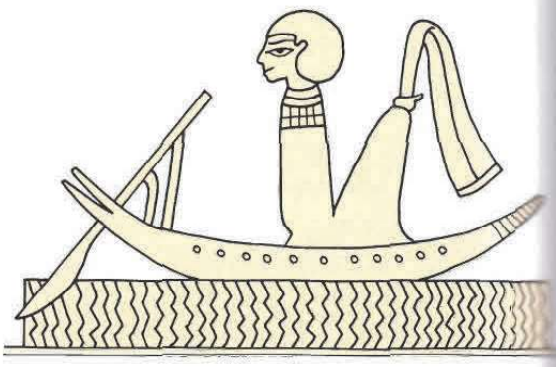
Protective images of ***Bes*** *such as this surmounted the columns of the Roman mammisi or birth house at Dendera.*

birth houses of temples in the Graeco-Roman Period and perhaps earlier, and the figure of Bes has also been found painted in rooms ranging from the palace of Amenophis III at Malqata to the workmen's houses at Deir el-Medina – perhaps all being rooms associated with childbirth or children. The vast range of objects upon which Bes was depicted and the large number of his images and amulets demonstrate his great popularity as a household deity. His image was incorporated into jewelry and his amulets were worn in life, and the god is frequently depicted on headrests and beds, where he protected the sleeper, as well as on mirrors, unguent jars and other cosmetic items, as unguents and cosmetics were used for protection from inimical influences as well as for adornment. In the same way, and in addition to the Bes-like figures of the so-called magical 'knives' or 'wands' of the Middle Kingdom, the image of Bes surmounted that of the infant Horus on many of the much later protective and healing-related plaques known as *cippi* of Horus. Individuals may have dressed in Bes masks or costumes to perform dances aimed at protection, and an example of a lion/Bes mask found by Petrie in a Middle Kingdom house at Kahun showed signs of frequent wear and repair, possibly indicating a professional role for the wearer. Another aspect of the god is prominent in Ptolemaic times from which we find 'incubation' or 'Bes chambers' with images of Bes and a naked goddess that seem to have been used in healing rituals.

The popularity of Bes spread well beyond Egypt, and images of the god have been found on ivory work from Cyprus, from Syria, and from Nimrud in Assyria.

Celestial Ferryman

The 'Celestial Ferryman' of Egyptological literature represents a deity of numerous names. Frequently attested in the Pyramid Texts, the god ferries the deceased king across the 'Shifting Waterway' (which may perhaps be identified with the ecliptic – the apparent path of the sun and planets through the heavens), to the abode of Re, or to the afterlife 'field of offerings' (PT 999, etc.). The divine ferryman is known as Her-ef-ha-ef 'He whose face is behind him' or by any of a dozen other names – many of which have similar meaning such as Ma-ha-ef 'He whose sight is behind him' – and which seem to be linked to his role. Less frequently attested in later periods, the god is sometimes depicted in the vignettes of the New Kingdom funerary texts seated or standing in his barque and being hailed by the deceased. In the Papyrus of Anhai he is shown, according to many of his descriptive names, with his head facing backwards.



Dedwen

Mythology

Originally a Nubian deity, Dedwen was known in Egypt from at least Old Kingdom times when the king is identified with 'Dedwen, who presides over Nubia' in the Pyramid Texts (PT 994, 1476). At a very early date Dedwen had come to represent not only Nubia but also its resources, and especially incense – which was imported into Egypt from the south. The god was thus identified as the supplier of incense for the gods and was also said to burn incense at royal births (PT 803, 1017).

Iconography

Depicted anthropomorphically, Dedwen was portrayed as a male deity, usually with no special characteristics and sometimes differentiated only by name. In the Old Kingdom his name was sometimes written with the hieroglyphic sign for a certain type of bird, but the god himself was not depicted in avian form or with the head of a bird. At Kalabsha Dedwen is depicted with the head of a lion, and the god could also be assimilated to Amun or Khnum in the form of a ram.

Worship

Apart from his association (through incense) with the cults of Egyptian gods and kings, the worship of Dedwen seems to have remained largely limited to Nubia itself. However, the god was honoured in many pharaonic temples built in Nubia. Dedwen was included, for example, with other deities in a small temple built by Tuthmosis III at el-Lessiya; and on the island of Uronarti near Semna, a temple (perhaps of Middle Kingdom origin) was dedicated to Dedwen and Senwosret III by Tuthmosis. A Late Ptolemaic granite chapel at Kalabsha, re-erected in the 1960s on the new site just south of Aswan, was also dedicated to Dedwen.

Geb

Mythology

A third-generation deity, the son of Shu and Tefnut, Geb was the god who personified the earth and was one of the most important of Egypt's primeval gods. His stature since early times is seen in the fact that he is one of the most frequently mentioned deities found in the Pyramid Texts, where he is often juxtaposed with Re or other gods who were of great importance in Egyptian afterlife beliefs. The god's power was sometimes inimical. Earthquakes came of his laughter and he could withhold his blessings in dry times or in barren areas. More importantly, as god of the earth *par excellence*, Geb could also represent the grave and it is stated in the Pyramid Texts, for example, that the deceased king 'will not enter into Geb' or 'sleep within his house' (PT 308). Geb usually had a more beneficent aspect, however. As god of the earth, grain was said to sprout from his ribs and vegetation from his back. He was also the source of fresh waters and ultimately all that the earth produced so that Geb was directly associated with the fertility of both the earth and livestock; and Hapy, bountiful god of the Nile inundation, was said to be the 'friend of Geb'.

As the son of Atum and Shu, Geb was the 'heir of the gods', and as father of Osiris, the mythical king, Geb also maintained a strong association with kingship. The Egyptian king himself was called the 'heir of Geb' and was said to sit upon 'the seat of Geb'. The god was thus involved in the transmission of kingship, and in the mythical story known as the 'Contendings of Horus and Seth' (preserved in the 20th-dynasty Papyrus Chester Beatty I), it is Geb who acts as the presiding judge in determining the rightful heir to the throne. This role of support for the king is present even as early as the Pyramid Texts where Geb champions the king as Horus over Seth.



*(Left) 'He whose face is behind him' is one of the many names of the god often called the '**Celestial Ferryman**'. Papyrus of Anhai, British Museum.*

*(Right) The enthroned **Geb** is represented in both the Red and White Crowns on this gold and lapis lazuli bracelet of 17th-dynasty Queen Ahhotep from western Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

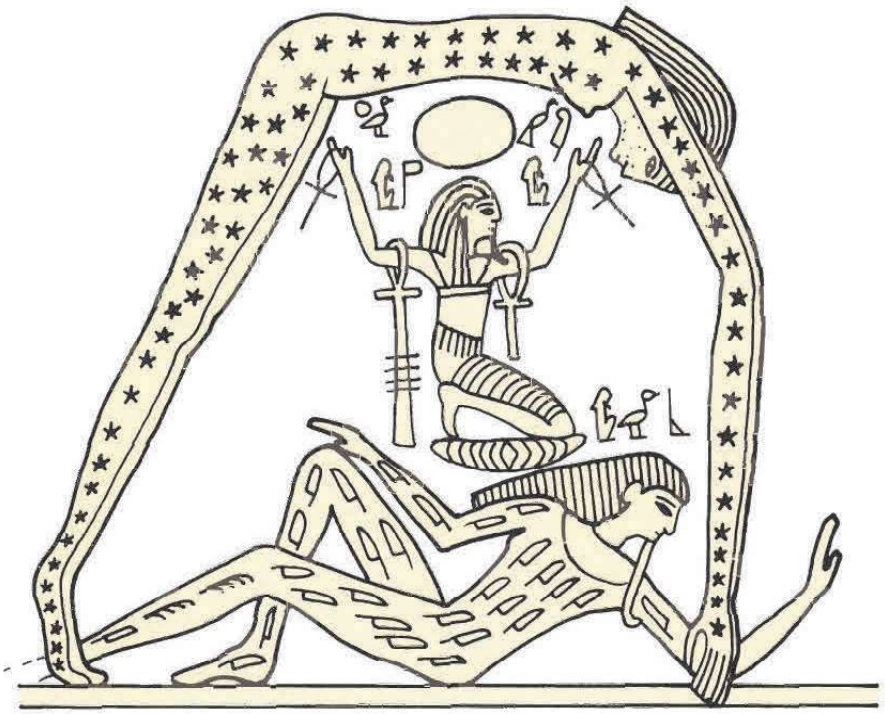
The late tradition, unattested before the 30th dynasty, that Geb lusted after his own mother and violated her upon his father's death, appears to have been based on the Greek myth of the usurpation of the place of Ouranos by his son Chronos whom the Greeks identified directly with Geb.

Iconography

As with other cosmic deities Geb was usually represented anthropomorphically. He may be depicted as a man wearing the crown of Lower Egypt, or in terms of his mythological role, reclining on his side supporting himself with one arm beneath the personified sky. In such scenes his phallus may be shown stretching upwards toward the goddess Nut, signifying their relationship. Geb's mythological associations meant that he could also be represented as a white-fronted goose (a creature associated with creation), however, or as a man with a goose on his head, and in the tomb of Ramesses VI Geb is represented with the head of a hare. In any of his forms Geb may be depicted with green skin in order to symbolize his fertile nature and the vegetation which springs from him, and in some cases his body is decorated with plants.

Worship

Although not honoured with a major cult of his own, Geb was represented in many temple scenes and was also important in some aspects of popular religion. The god was associated with healing and was particularly invoked in spells combating scorpion stings. His healing powers were wide-ranging, and one magical text describes how Osiris commanded Geb to restrain the malicious spirits which caused colds and fevers.



***Geb**, god of the earth, reclines beneath his spouse Nut from whom he is separated by the air god, Shu. The body of Geb is covered with hieroglyphs for 'reed' suggesting his fertile nature. Detail from the Papyrus of Tentamun, 21st dynasty. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Ha

Ha was a desert deity, of fairly limited importance outside the arid regions, but of some significance in the western deserts and their oases where he was thought to provide protection from enemies such as desert nomads and invading Libyan tribesmen. The god is attested as early as the 3rd dynasty and his association with the western regions increased as time progressed. Depicted anthropomorphically, Ha is recognized by the three hills of the hieroglyphic symbol for 'desert' or 'foreign lands' which he wore on his head. Sometimes he is depicted with a knife or bow as a symbol of his protective role. The titles of priests of Ha have survived, but little more is known of any cult of the god.

Hapy

Mythology

The god Hapy (to be distinguished from the son of Horus with the same name – see p. 88) was primarily identified by the Egyptians as the inundation of the Nile – its yearly flooding which brought fertility to the land through widespread watering and the new silt spread over the fields by the swollen river. While it is often stated that Hapy was purely this inundation rather than simply the Nile itself, there are some indications of overlap, so that it is sometimes possible to characterize the god as representing the divine power of the Nile in general. More usually, however, Hapy is clearly the Nile Flood and the inundation was called by the Egyptians 'the arrival of Hapy'. The Nile was both the primary source of life in ancient Egypt and, by virtue of its cyclic rhythm, a manifestation of cosmic order so that Hapy is thus called creator god and even 'father of the gods' due to his life-giving and creative ability. He was also appealed to as a caring father and a god who maintained balance in the cosmos. Although the Nile was usually predictable, occasional weather disruptions in sub-Saharan Africa meant that severe famine could result from occasional excessively low or high levels of flooding, and thus it was Hapy who held the key to this proper balance of flooding and fertility. As a result of his nature Hapy was called 'lord of the fishes and birds', and numerous crocodile gods and frog goddesses were in his retinue. The power of Hapy was also expressed as both chthonic and sexual. The Late Period Famine Stela expresses these ideas in stating 'It [the cavern which is the god's dwelling] is the house of sleep of Hapy... he brings the flood: Leaping up he copulates as a man copulates with woman...' – imagery which was



applied to many of the gods who represented aspects of fertility and primeval creation.

Iconography

Representations of Hapy usually show the god as a swollen-bellied man wearing an abbreviated belt or loincloth and with long hair and pendulous, female breasts. Often, the god was depicted with a clump of papyrus upon his head, and he is frequently shown carrying papyrus and lotus stems and bearing a tray laden with offerings. Most often he was shown with blue skin, though other colours are occasionally found. All of these attributes represented the fertility Hapy supplied and as such were interchangeable with those of other so-called fecundity figures (see p. 131). Beginning in the 5th dynasty (in the mortuary temple of Sahure), the lower registers of temple walls were often decorated with depictions of Hapy and other fecundity figures bearing offerings into the temple as gifts and sustaining supplies for the temple's divine owners. Statues showing Hapy bearing loaded offering trays were also made – sometimes with the features of the reigning king, thus linking the monarch with the fecundity deity.

Beginning in the 19th dynasty, reliefs portraying two figures of Hapy, one wearing the papyrus of Lower Egypt and the other the heraldic plant of Upper Egypt, and binding together the two halves of Egypt (symbolized by the respective plants being used as ropes around the *sema* or 'union' hieroglyph) were often carved on temple walls and on the bases of colossal seated statues of kings. An instance of Hapy depicted with the double head of a goose appears in the temple of Sethos I at Abydos.

Dual depictions of ***Hapy*** *– representing Upper and Lower Egypt – tie the symbolic plants of the two lands together in the sema-tawy motif. The corpulent bodies of the gods and the plants atop their heads suggest the bounty of the Nile's inundation which they represent. Throne decoration, colossal statue of Ramesses II, Luxor Temple. 19th dynasty.*



*The god **Hapy**, 'father of the gods', clasping symbols of life, receives the worship of Ramesses III in a scene of harvest and fertility. 20th dynasty. Mortuary temple of Ramesses III, Medinet Habu, western Thebes.*

Worship

Hapy was especially worshipped in areas where the Nile was particularly turbulent such as Gebel el-Silsila and near the supposed source of the Nile where the god was believed to dwell in a cavern in the vicinity of Aswan. Although it was said of Hapy that 'he has no shrines, nor portions, no service of his choice' (The Hymn to Hapy), he was widely venerated outside his cult centres and frequently depicted in the temples of other deities. One text, relating how 1,089 goats were sacrificed to Hapy, shows something of his importance. Many Egyptians celebrated the god's annual festival and composed hymns and paeans of praise to him.

Hauron

Mythology

The Canaanite god Hauron was a somewhat obscure deity of the desert and the earth, perhaps, according to Canaanite mythology, a son of Astarte. Hauron may have been a god associated with herdsmen and those who wandered the desert areas; in Egypt he was known as 'the victorious herdsman'. He is attested in Egyptian texts from Middle Kingdom times in the form of a Canaanite theophoric name, but the appearance of Hauron as an adopted Egyptian deity seems to date to around the time of Amenophis II at the earliest. The god was associated with the Great Sphinx at Giza, but the reason for the equation is not clear. Perhaps it was as a result of the presence of Canaanite or Syrian workers who were located in the area of the Sphinx, or it may have been as a result of some mythological connection which is no longer evident.

Iconography

Hauron was usually depicted in anthropomorphic form as an armed man, but he could also appear in other ways. In a famous statue in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo the god is represented in the form



of a falcon standing behind and protecting the crouching figure of Ramesses II who is shown as a child.

Worship

A temple or chapel of this god, the 'house of Hauron', was constructed in front of the Great Sphinx at Giza in New Kingdom times. Hauron also obviously entered Egyptian popular religion in his capacity of divine herdsman, as a spell to be cast over a field is known which invokes a number of deities – including Hauron – to protect cattle from attacks by wild animals.

Heh

Mythology

Heh was the personification of infinity – usually in the temporal sense of eternity. In hieroglyphic writing the figure of Heh was used to denote a million. The god was thus associated with the idea of millions of years and is sometimes paired with the female deity Hauhet representing the alternative Egyptian word for eternity, *djet*. Mythologically, however, Heh – along with his consort Hauhet – was a member of the ogdoad of eight primeval deities worshipped at Hermopolis Magna. The god was also associated with the myth of the 'celestial cow' who was supported by Shu and eight Heh deities – two at each leg – and with the solar barque which Heh lifted back into the sky at the end of its nocturnal journey through the netherworld.

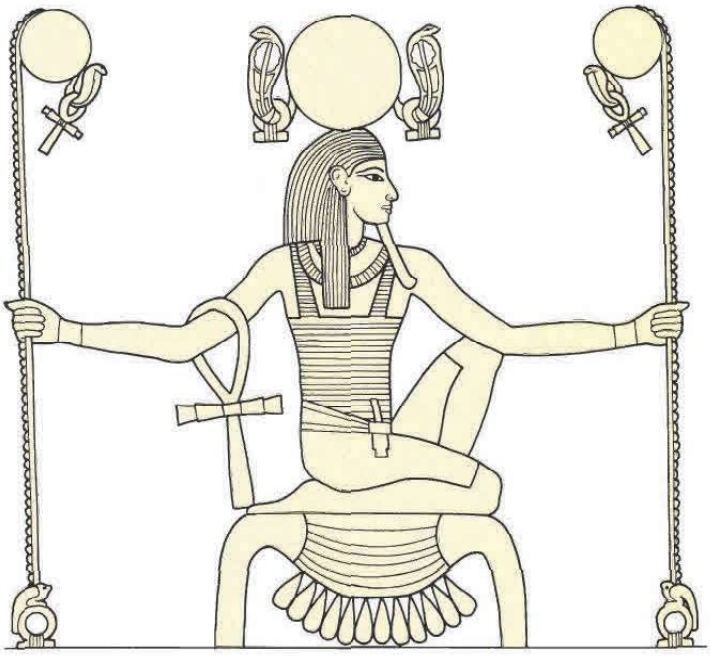
Iconography

Heh is depicted in male anthropomorphic form, with divine wig and beard, usually kneeling and

*(Below left) The god **Hauron** in falcon form. Statue of Ramesses II from Tanis, Egyptian Museum, Cairo. The statue base is inscribed 'Ramesses, beloved of Hauron'. 19th dynasty.*

*(Below) **Heh**, the personification of infinity, holds the notched palm branches which were the ancient method of recording time and thus the hieroglyphic signs for 'years'. Detail of decorated chair of Tutankhamun. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*





grasping in each hand a notched palm branch which was used for ceremonial time/record-keeping in the temples and was thus used as the hieroglyphic symbol for 'years'. Sometimes a palm branch is also placed on the god's head. In detailed representations the palm branches are given additional elements such as the tadpole glyph for '100,000' or the *shen* ring of 'eternity'. The god often kneels on a basket signifying 'all' or universality, and may have *ankh* signs suspended from his hands or arms. Heh deities may also be depicted in the mythological settings described above – supporting the celestial cow or the solar barque of Re.

Worship

These iconographic characteristics reinforced the use of the figure of Heh to express the wish of millions of years of life or rule, so that the god is frequently depicted in amulets from as early as late Old Kingdom times, and in royal iconography – especially on household or personal items associated with the king. A number of objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun, for example, were decorated with the figure of Heh, and these would indicate that the god's presence was an important addition to the New Kingdom royal funerary assemblage.

Heka

Mythology

For the Egyptians, *heka* or 'magic' was a divine force which existed in the universe like 'power' or 'strength' and which could be personified in the form of the god Heka. Mythologically, *heka* was believed to have existed from the time of creation and to have empowered the creation event so that the god Heka could likewise be seen as a creator god. At Esna, although doubtless based on a late popular etymology, his name is thus explained as 'the first work'. Magic empowered all the gods, and Heka was also a god of power whose name was tied to this meaning from the 20th dynasty onward by being written emblematically with the hieroglyph for 'power', although originally the god's name may have meant 'he who consecrates the *ka*', and he is called 'Lord of the *kas*' in the Coffin Texts (CT 261). Because of his great power the Pyramid Texts make it clear that Heka was feared by the gods themselves (PT 472), and he was said to accompany the sun god in his barque as well as to protect the god Osiris in the underworld.

Iconography

Invariably portrayed in anthropomorphic form, Heka was usually represented as a man, with the usual garb and curved beard of the gods. In the Late Period, however, Heka was venerated in the form of a child – as were several other male deities – and was thus shown accompanying various divine couples as their 'son' in a number of representations.

Worship

Like most deities representing areas or aspects of the cosmos, Heka was not served by a regular cult, though his role in religion was of considerable importance. He was naturally invoked in many magico-religious contexts and at Esna in Roman times, for example, a statue of the god was taken in procession from the temple through the surrounding fields to ensure their productivity. Heka also played a role in afterlife beliefs. Because he was viewed as a god of inestimable power, the Pyramid Texts directly claim his authority (PT 539) and the Coffin Texts contain a spell 'to become the god Heka' (CT 261).

Horus

see p. 200, *Avian Deities* section

Hu

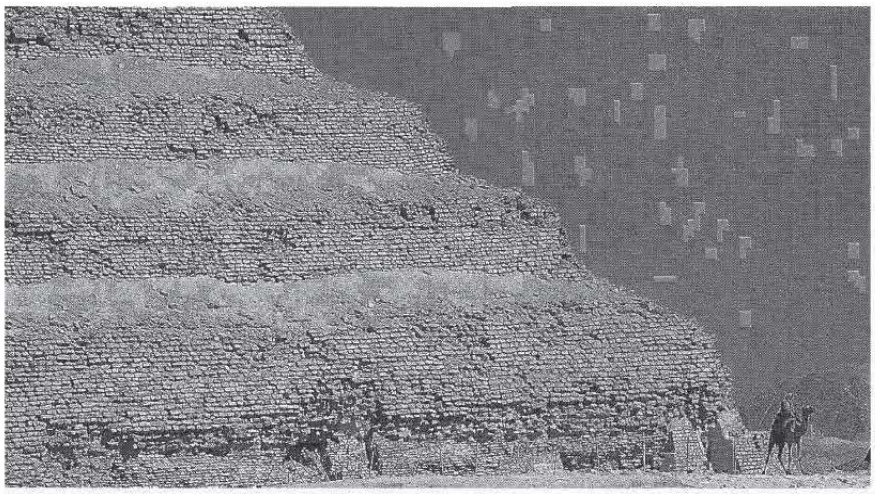
Hu personified the concept of 'authoritative utterance' and was thus closely connected to ideas of power and control. He was said to have come into being from a drop of blood from the phallus of the sun god and therefore was tied to the power of the pre-eminent deity Re. However, he is also closely linked – at least conceptually – with the Memphite idea of creation, in which the god Ptah created the universe through his own authoritative utterance (see p. 123). Hu is often found in connection with Sia, the personification of perception, understanding or knowledge, especially in contexts such as creation or the sun god's journey through the underworld. Hu's association with the netherworld and afterlife



is an early one. In the Pyramid Texts the god appears as the companion of the deceased king in the heavens (PT 251), and these texts repeatedly assert that the king assumes authority – in one instance explicitly saying 'authority [Hu] has bowed his head to me' (PT 697) – showing that the king maintains his monarchical authority and has power over the forces of the afterlife. Hu was rarely represented pictorially, but is sometimes depicted as an anthropomorphic deity and appears as such in scenes showing the boat of Re and his attendant deities in the underworld.

Iah

Iah was a lunar god whose name means 'Moon' and who is known from relatively early times. Originally an independent deity, he was later largely absorbed by Khonsu and is thus sometimes viewed as an adult form of that god and sometimes independently. Iah appears in the Pyramid Texts where the deceased king announces that the moon (Iah) is his brother (PT 1001) and father (PT 1104), but by New Kingdom times Khonsu and Thoth play more dominant roles as lunar deities. Nevertheless, Iah is found as an amulet and in other representations in later dynasties in which he is depicted as a standing man, often wrapped in the same manner as Khonsu, and wearing the same full and crescent moon symbols, though often these are surmounted by an Atef Crown with yet another disk above it. In addition to the divine beard, the god usually wears a long tripartite wig rather than the sidelock of Khonsu, and he may also carry a tall staff. To a somewhat lesser degree Iah was also fused with Thoth and he may be depicted as ibis-headed like that god. One of Tutankhamun's pectorals has a winged scarab holding up the boat of the lunar eye above which is a crescent moon and disc – imagery which could refer to Iah.

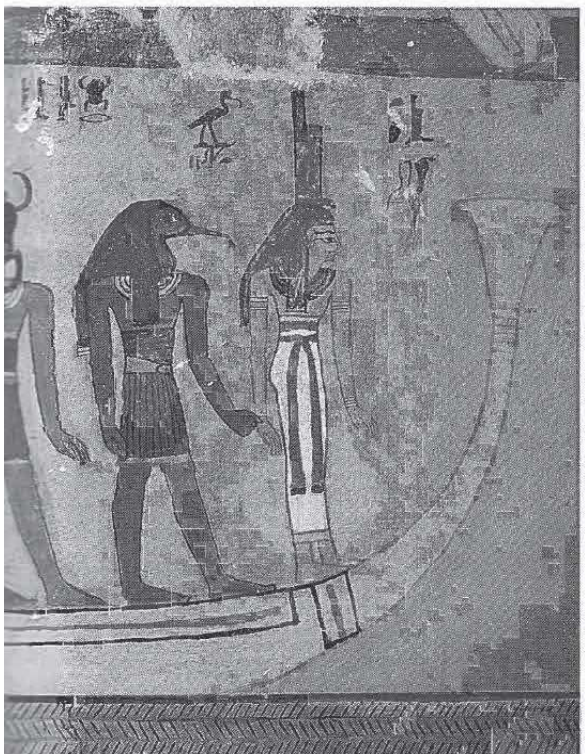


*Step pyramid of Djoser, Saqqara. The greatest accomplishment of the 'overseer of works' **Imhotep**, the step pyramid became the basis of the architect's lasting fame and eventual veneration.*

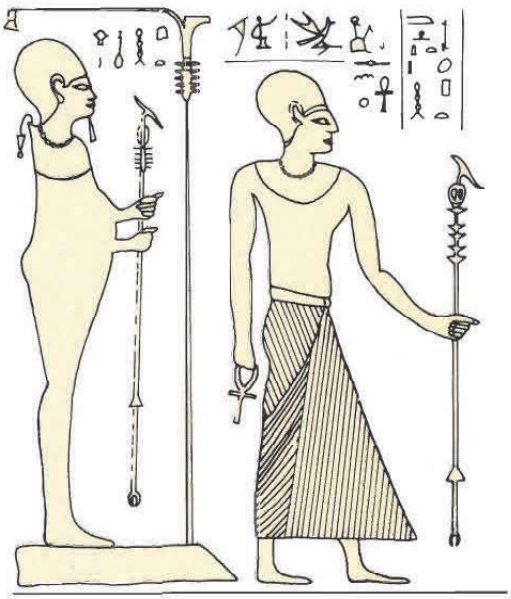
Imhotep

Mythology

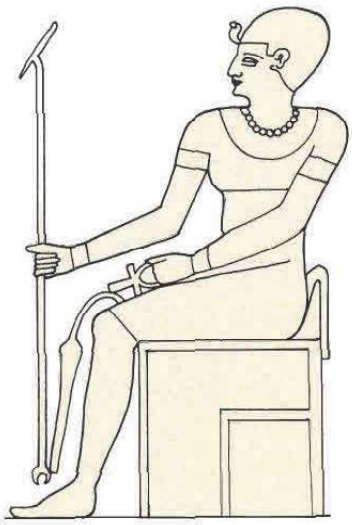
A high official of the 3rd dynasty, Imhotep is best known as the vizier and 'overseer of works' of King Djoser, for whom he constructed the great Step Pyramid complex at Saqqara – the first Egyptian pyramid and the world's first known monumental stone structure. Although apparently a commoner by birth, he served as a priest of Ptah and his connection with the god led eventually to the myth that he was the son of Ptah by a human mother named Khreduankh. During his lifetime Imhotep rose through the ranks of temple and government offices to become a high priest and courtier of great importance. In addition to his work as architect, he seems to have been a man of considerable learning associated with many other intellectual achievements and he became a patron of medicine, of writing and of knowledge in general. Although his medical achievements are not contemporaneously documented, the fact that Imhotep became known as a



*(Left) The god **Hu**, directly in front of the deceased, stands with Khepri, Thoth and Isis in this afterlife scene. 20th dynasty. Tomb of Inherkha, western Thebes.*



*(Right) The deified **Imhotep** (at right) shown before the craftsman god Ptah with whom he was often associated. Private stela, Saqqara. Late/Ptolemaic Period.*



(Right) The scholar and architect ***Imhotep*** *is often shown enthroned and accorded full attributes of divinity in images from the Late Period and Graeco-Roman era.*

virtual medical demigod within a century or so of his death seems to indicate that he may well have been a highly skilled physician. As a result of his reputation for learning, Imhotep was also linked to the cult of the god Thoth. The tomb of Imhotep has never been found, though it is possible that the large uninscribed mastaba numbered 3,518 at Saqqara is in fact that structure.

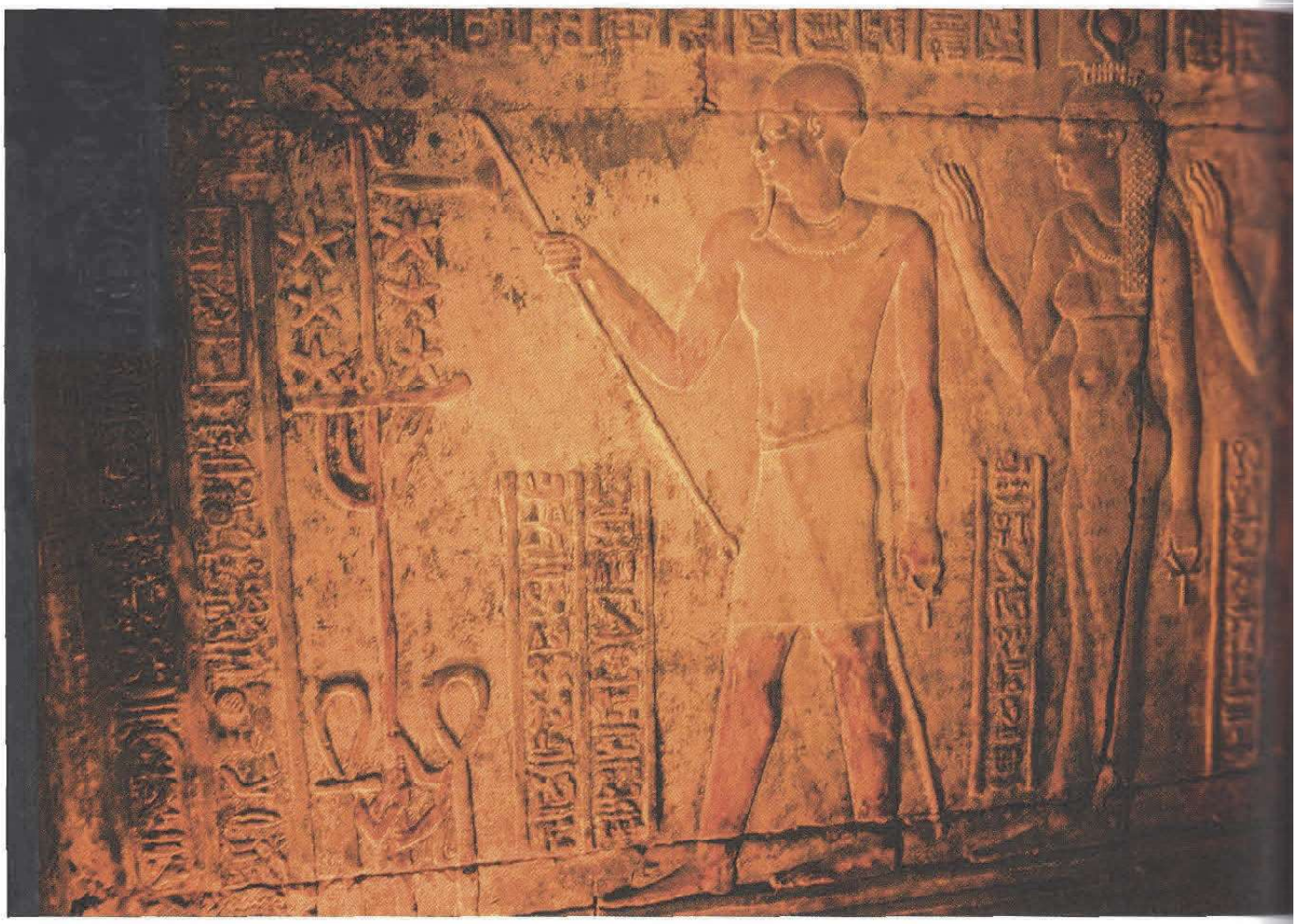
Iconography

Surviving statue fragments from Saqqara demonstrate that Imhotep was granted the unique privilege of being named alongside his king, Djoser, in formal statuary, but representations of the priestly architect are not known till much later. Nevertheless, from the Late Period onwards votive bronzes and other small sculptures as well as amulets of Imhotep were common. Usually he is depicted in scribal fashion, seated and wearing a long kilt and skull-cap or shaven head with a papyrus roll unscrolled across his lap to symbolize his scholarly nature and scribal patronage.

Worship

The veneration of Imhotep grew to deification in the Late Period and the Graeco-Roman era when his cult reached its zenith, and a number of shrines and temples were dedicated to the deified scholar. His main areas of worship appear to have been in the area of Saqqara, on the island of Philae, and at Thebes where he was also worshipped along with the deified 18th-dynasty sage Amenophis Son of Hapu at Deir el-Bahri and in the Ptolemaic temple at Deir el-Medina. An important inscription regarding him was placed in the temple of Ptah at Karnak by

(Below) In the Ptolemaic Period inner sanctuary of the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, ***Imhotep*** *was venerated along with the deified Amenophis Son of Hapu (not shown).*



the reign of Tiberius. His cult centres were places of pilgrimage for sufferers who prayed and slept there in the hope that the god would heal them or reveal remedies to them through inspired dreams. As the patron of medicine he was identified by the Greeks with their god of medicine, Asklepius, and his cult centre at Saqqara is called the 'Asklepion'. Mummified ibises were left by worshippers as votive offerings for Imhotep in the underground catacombs in this area, and pilgrims also left models of injured limbs or diseased organs there in the hope of being healed by the god. While Imhotep's position as a deified commoner was not unique in ancient Egypt, he was unrivalled in the high degree and widespread level of veneration he received.

Khonsu

Mythology

The god Khonsu was a moon god whose earliest attested character is considerably different from his later manifestation in New Kingdom Thebes where he appears as the benign son of Amun and Mut. In the Pyramid Texts he appears in the famous 'Cannibal Hymn' as a bloodthirsty deity who assists the deceased king in catching and slaying those gods that the king 'feeds upon' in order to absorb their strength (PT 402). Later the god appears to have been associated with childbirth, but it is in his role as an integral member of the all-powerful Theban triad (Amun, Mut, Khonsu) that Khonsu is best known. There Khonsu was primarily viewed as a lunar god, but he exhibited several different aspects, appearing among other forms as Khonsu *pa-khered* ('Khonsu the Child'); Khonsu *pa-ir-sekher* 'Khonsu the provider' (the Chespisichis of the Greeks); Khonsu *heseb-ahau* 'Khonsu, decider of the life span'; and Khonsu *em-waset nefer-hetep* 'Khonsu in Thebes' – apparently the most important Theban manifestation of the god. The various forms of the god interacted with one another as can be seen from the inscription known as the Bentresh Stela – inscribed in Thebes in the 4th century BC but purporting to record a pronouncement of Ramesses II some 800 years earlier. The stela tells how the Egyptian king loaned a statue of Khonsu *pa-ir-sekher* to the king of Bakhtan to aid in the healing of his daughter, Bentresh, and includes discourse between this form of Khonsu and the more senior Khonsu in Thebes. Although firmly associated with Amun and Mut at Thebes, at Kom Ombo Khonsu was regarded as the son of Sobek and Hathor, and at Edfu Temple Khonsu was linked to Osiris as 'the son of the leg', referring to the relic of the netherworld god said to be preserved at that site. As a moon god Khonsu was also sometimes associated with Shu, god of the air, and with Horus. Like Thoth, he participated in the reckoning of time and was believed to influence the gestation of both humans and animals. In the past the name of Khonsu was thought to be derived from the elements *kh* 'placenta' and *nesu* 'king' as a personification of the royal placenta, but it is now generally believed to be based on the verb *khenes* 'to cross over' or 'to traverse', meaning 'he who traverses [the sky]'.

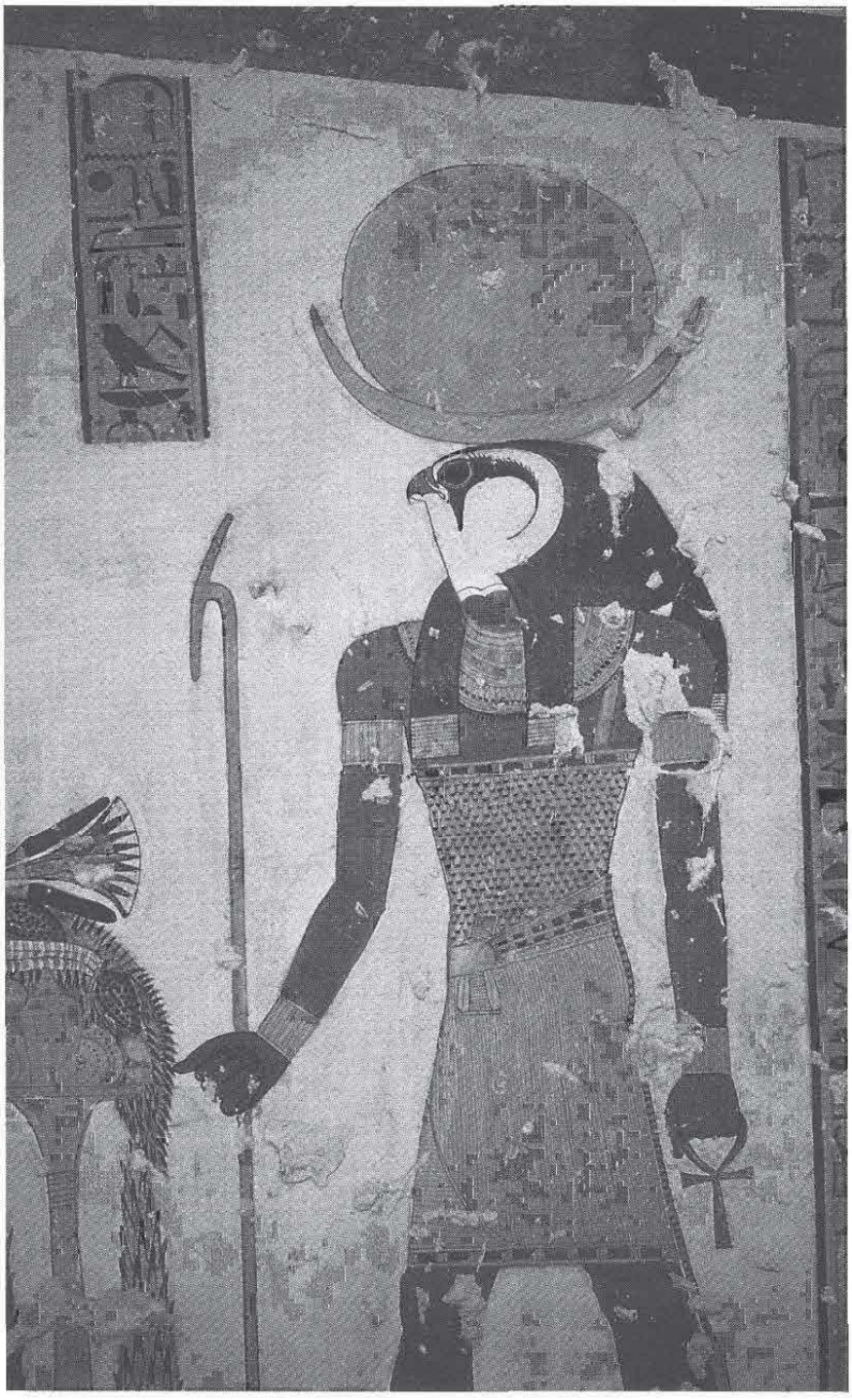
Iconography

Khonsu is usually depicted in anthropomorphic form – most often as a young man enveloped in mummy bandages or a tightly fitting garment, though his arms may be partially or completely unrestrained. He frequently wears his lunar symbol consisting of the full lunar disk resting in a crescent new moon upon his head; in his role as divine child of Amun and Mut he commonly wears the sidelock of youth, though he may also wear the curved beard of the gods. The god was often depicted holding the crook and flail associated with Osiris and Horus, and a *was* or *djed*-headed staff (see illustration below),



Black and red granite statue of ***Khonsu*** *with the features of Tutankhamun. The sidelock of youth and the curved divine beard are both characteristic of the god's iconography. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

but his most distinctive attribute is usually the necklace he wears with its crescent-shaped pectoral element resting on his chest and its heavy counterpoise on his back. This counterpoise is usually depicted in an inverted 'keyhole' shape and can be used to differentiate the god from representations of the god Ptah whose necklace counterpoise is of a different shape. As a sky deity Khonsu can also be depicted with the head of a falcon – usually differentiated from Horus and Re by the lunar disk and crescent. As a lunar deity one of his symbols was the *Cynocephalus* baboon, though Khonsu himself does not appear in this form as frequently as does the god Thoth. Small amulets representing Khonsu in human form are known from the later dynasties, as are plaques depicting the god in fully human or falcon-headed form, sometimes with his divine parents Amun and Mut, or like Horus, standing on the back of a crocodile on the healing plaques known as *cippi* (see p. 132).



***Khonsu** in his falcon-headed form with the characteristic attributes of disk and crescent moon. 20th dynasty. Tomb of Montuherkhepeshef, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.*

Worship

Khonsu had many sanctuaries throughout Egypt, but his main cult centre was Thebes. Begun in the 20th dynasty by Ramesses III and completed by a number of later rulers, the temple of Khonsu was erected within the precincts of the great Amun temple at Karnak. In certain of his festivals – such as the New Year's festival at the temple of Luxor where the god participated in the celebrations with his parents, Amun and Mut – the cult statue of Khonsu was transported from his precinct at Karnak on a sacred barque which was identified by a falcon's head at its prow and stern. The god processed along his own statue-lined avenue running from his temple to Luxor indicating his importance in this and other festivals. Khonsu's fame as a god of healing was also widespread and enhanced in later times by the fact that he was believed to have personally healed one of Egypt's kings, Ptolemy IV, who called himself 'beloved of Khonsu who protects the king and drives away evil spirits'.

Mandulis

Mythology

A local solar god of the Lower Nubian region, whose actual Egyptian name was Merwel, this god is usually called Mandulis – the Greek version of his name. Little is known of the god's origins or early history but his nature was undoubtedly solar, and a late text known as the 'Vision of Mandulis' equates him quite naturally with Horus and with the Greek god Apollo. He was also equated with the Greek Helios and at Philae he was called the 'companion' of Isis.

Iconography

Mandulis was depicted in anthropomorphic form wearing a crown of ram-horns, sun disks and cobras surmounted by tall plumes. He could also be represented in the form of a human-headed bird, not unlike the Egyptian *ba* bird, but wearing the god's complex characteristic crown.

Worship

Although he was worshipped throughout Lower Nubia, the best evidence for the cult of Mandulis is found at New Kalabsha where the god is represented along with various Egyptian deities on the walls of the re-sited Roman Period temple. The remains of a



(Left) The Nubian god ***Mandulis*** *in the form of a human* ba *but with his characteristic plumed crown. Ptolemaic Period. Temple of Kalabsha, Nubia.*

chapel dedicated to the god may also be seen adjacent to the eastern colonnade of the Great Temple of Isis at Philae.

Min

Mythology

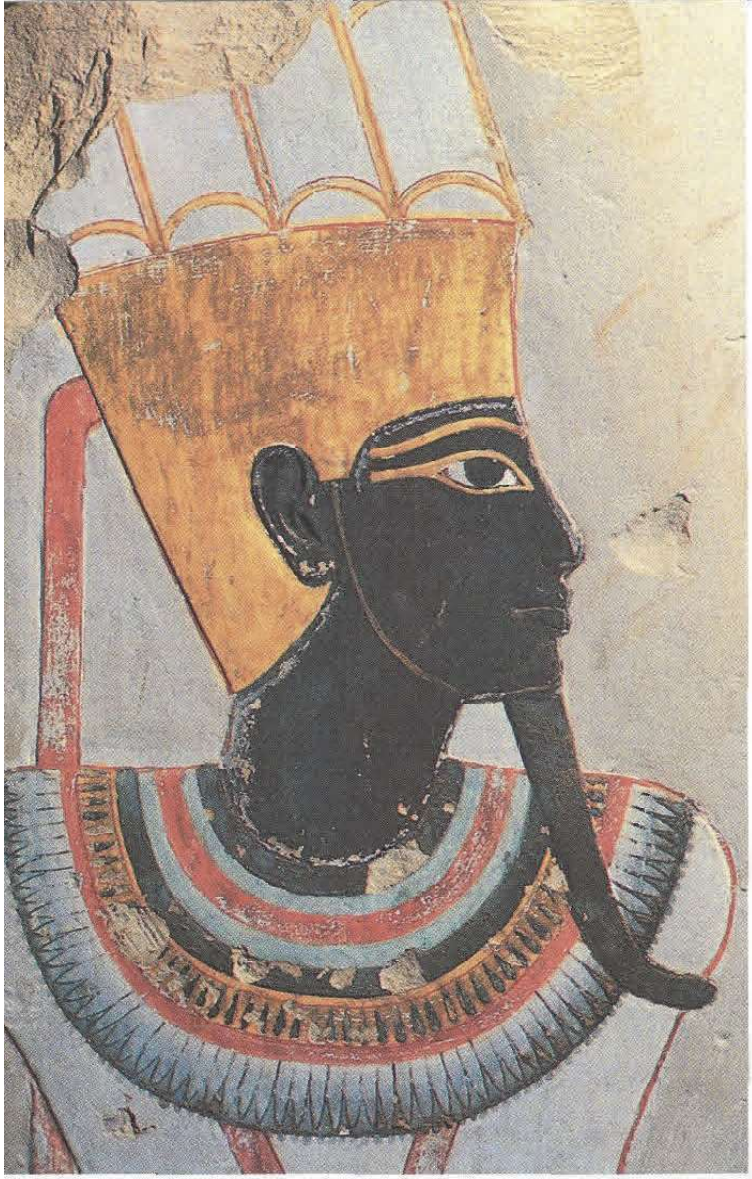
Min was one of Egypt's most ancient and enduring deities, functioning as the supreme god of male sexual procreativity and as a deity of the eastern desert regions throughout dynastic history. The origin of his name, Menu, is unknown and gives us no clue to his nature, though the Greek writer Plutarch claimed that it meant 'that which is seen', doubtless based on a similarity with a form of the verb to see. That he was already worshipped in predynastic times is seen in the early presence of his emblem and in the three apparently predynastic colossal statues of the god discovered by Petrie at Coptos in 1893 and now in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. Although not mentioned by name in the Pyramid Texts, Min may be the god referred to as the deity 'who raises his arm in the east', and a reference to the 'procession of Min' occurs in a 5th-dynasty tomb at Giza, showing that his cult was already established. He is also found in the Coffin Texts where the deceased associates himself with the 'woman-hunting' Min in order to possess the god's sexual powers. During the Middle Kingdom Min became associated with the god Horus as Min-Hor and as a result he was sometimes described as the son of Isis, though the association also led to Min being worshipped as the consort of Isis and father of Horus. As god of the eastern regions and because of his associations with sexuality and fertility, it was natural that Min gained as consort the Syrian goddess Qadesh whom he shared with the Syrian storm god Reshep. Of greatest importance to the mythological history of Min is the fact that during the 18th dynasty the god became increasingly associated with Amun of Thebes and became in essence the manifestation of Amun as primeval creator god, somewhat analogous to Atum's relationship with Re at Heliopolis. The Amun-Min association had direct political overtones, however, and from Middle Kingdom times the coronations and jubilee festivals of the pharaoh seem to have incorporated rituals of Min aimed at promoting the potency of the king. This form of Min revered in the Theban area was known as Min-Amun-*ka-mutef* or simply Amun *ka-mutef* 'Amun, bull of his mother'. The Greeks associated Min with their god Pan.

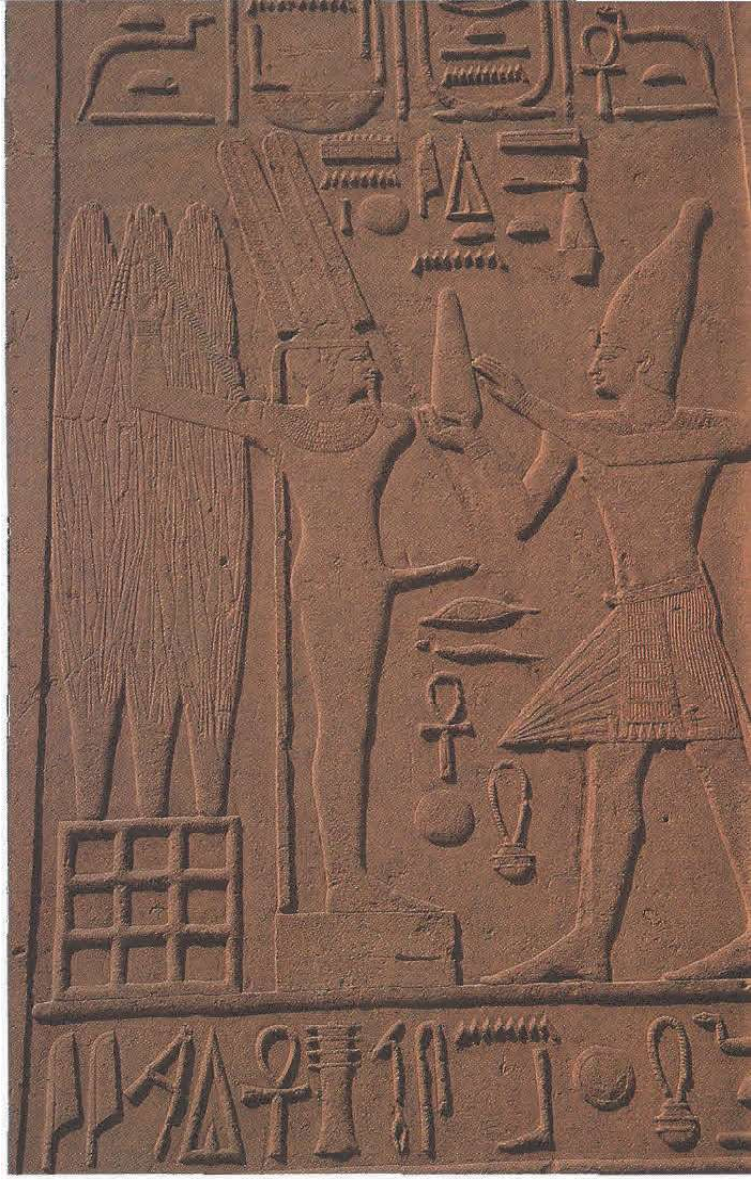
Iconography

Min was usually depicted in fully anthropomorphic form as a wrapped or mummified ithyphallic man standing upright and wearing a cap or crown to which long streamers are attached and surmounted by two tall plumes. His legs are always held tightly together – either as a result of his swathed body or in continuity of the form of the earliest sculptural representations of the god – and only his erect penis, held in his left hand, and right arm project from the wrappings enveloping his body. The god's right arm is raised with his hand extended upwards and appears to be held behind him in two-dimensional representations, though sculptural works make it clear that this is a result of artistic convention and the arm is in reality held upward at the god's right side. The gesture is not really understood, but may well be protective or smiting in nature, as this appears to be its meaning among several other Near Eastern raised-arm deities. Usually a flail is placed on or above the god's raised arm. Representations of Min may depict him with various other items such as a collar or pectoral and braces, but none of these items is a fixed attribute. In coloured representations the god's skin is always black, perhaps symbolic of the black soil which was the basis of all fertility in Egypt. Min was depicted as a falcon in the 5th Upper Egyptian nome, but this was not a standard aspect of the god's iconography, while in his cult centres of Gebtu and Khent-Min, the god was worshipped in

(Below) Bronze figurine of the god ***Min****. While the ithyphallic nature of the god clearly relates to his fertility role, the significance of his raised arm is not fully understood. Late Period. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*







(Above) Amun-Min, an aspect of Amun merged with ***Min****, whose black face symbolizes the fertile richness of the damp earth from which life sprang each year. Recut block of Tuthmosis III from Deir el-Bahri. Luxor Museum.*

(Above right) Senwosret I presents bread to Amun-Re in the form of ***Min*** *before a garden of lettuce which was a symbolic attribute of the fertility god. 12th dynasty. White Chapel of Senwosret, Karnak.*

the form of a white bull, which clearly represented Min's sexual potency. The cos lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) which was often depicted in pots or on offering tables with the god from the 6th dynasty through Roman times was also a sexual reference, as the milky white sap of the lettuce seems to have been viewed as symbolic of semen and the plant may have been considered an aphrodisiac. The strange emblem of Min may also be an iconographic clue to the god's original character, but it remains enigmatic, having been interpreted as everything from a fossil belemnite and a lightning bolt to the sliding bolt of the god's shrine.

Worship

Although Min was venerated throughout Egypt, two cities were particularly associated with the god. The oldest site is that called by the Greeks Coptos and the Egyptians Gebtu (the modern Qift, between Qena and Luxor) at the western end of the Wadi Hammamat which led to the mining regions of the eastern desert – and hence represented Min's role as a tutelary deity of that area. The original god of Gebtu may have been the ithyphallic Rahes who is called 'regent of the land of the South' in the Pyramid Texts, and it was this god that was represented with Min in falcon form on the 5th Upper Egyptian nome sign, though the creatures were later identified as Horus and Min. Archaeological evidence of the worship of Min dating to the Middle Kingdom has been found at Coptos as well as in the foundation deposits of a New Kingdom temple, though the surviving ruins are of Graeco-Roman date. The other major site associated with Min was Khent-Min or 'Shrine of Min' which the Greeks called Panopolis (the modern Akhmim, near Sohag), and the emblem of the nome standard in this area was the Min emblem itself. Khent-Min was the home of the high priest of Min Yuya, who was the father-in-law of Amenophis III and father of Tutankhamun's successor Ay, who built a rock-cut chapel to the god in that area. Min's role as a god of fertility was of understandable importance in an agriculturally dependent area such as ancient Egypt, so we find scenes such as a relief of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu where the king is

shown cutting wheat before Min; and the god's major festival, 'the coming forth of Min', which was celebrated at the beginning of the harvest season, was among the most important religious-agricultural festivals in Egypt. Amulets of Min occur from an unusually early date with one in gold being known from a 12th-dynasty burial at Abydos. Most amulets of the god date to the Late Period, however, and may have been utilized by men for the sake of the god's procreative powers.

Neper

The god Neper was a grain deity whose agricultural origin was an early one and who may well have predated that aspect of Osiris whom he resembled in several ways. The Coffin Texts mention Neper as a god 'living after he has died' (CT II 95), and the god was largely assimilated with Osiris as time progressed. The hieroglyphic writing of Neper's name includes the symbol for grain; and in a procession of deities carved in the reign of the 5th-dynasty king Sahure the body of the god is dotted to symbolize the grain which Neper represented. Because the harvest was so dependent upon the yearly flooding of the Nile, the inundation deity Hapy was said to be 'lord of Neper', but the god was honoured in his own right as an important deity of the harvest and prosperity. Neper was often associated with the cobra goddess Renenutet who also was a patron of the harvest. A cult centre of the god is known to have been constructed in the southern Fayum by Amenemhet III and IV.

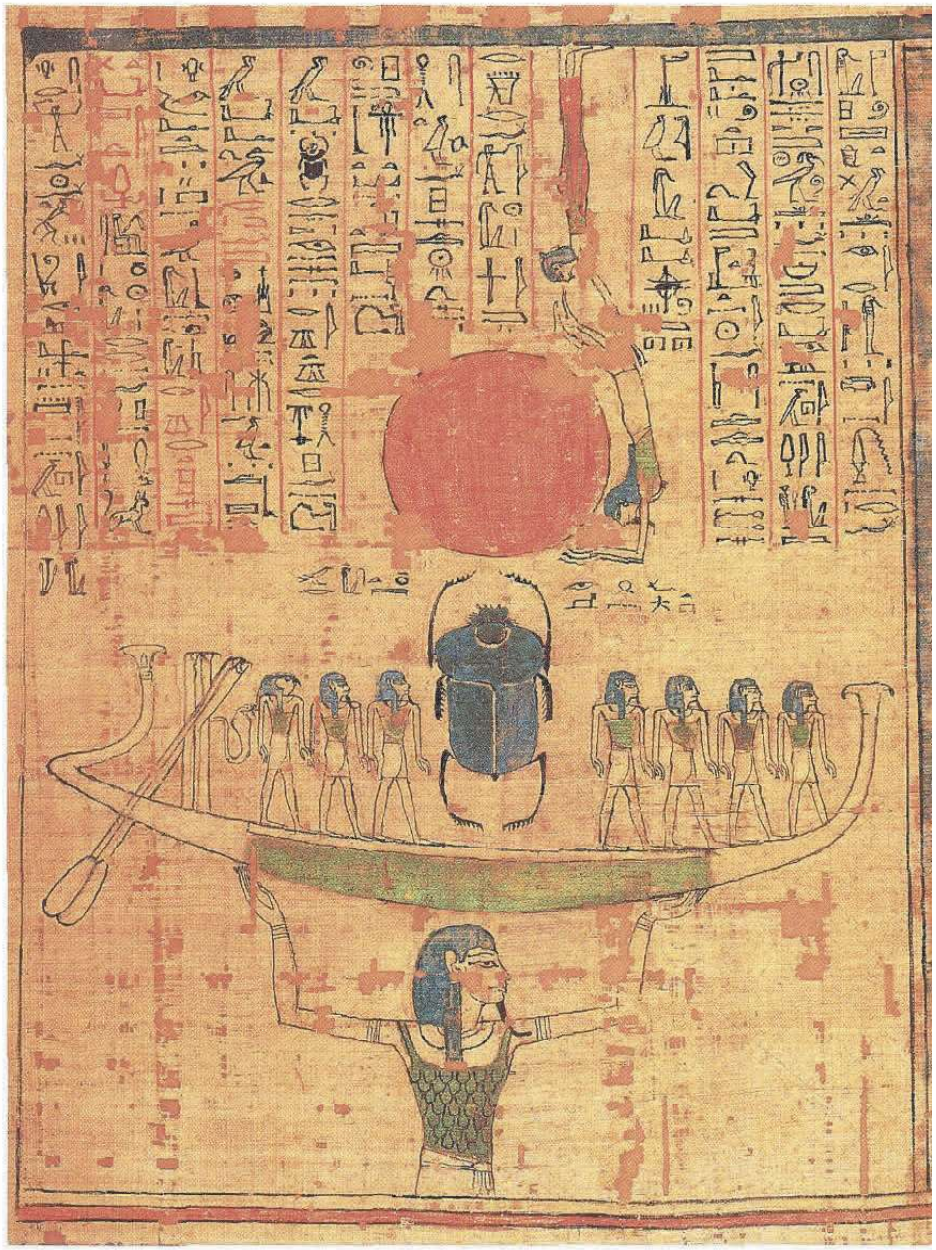
Nun

Mythology

Nun personified the primeval waters which existed at the time of creation and from which the creator sun god arose. He was thus called the 'father' of the gods, but this was mainly a temporal distinction as he bore no genealogical relationship to them. Like other members of the Ogdoad (see p. 77), he was essentially an element of the unformed cosmos and thus persisted as a feature of Egyptian religion but without any developed mythology. Nun, however, was considered to continue to exist outside the bounds of the created universe even after the world ceased to be. In this sense Nun was the hidden abyss and is referred to in this manner throughout the Pyramid Texts and in later literature more as a location than as a deity. The only relationship between this world and the outlying waters of Nun is found in the fact that beings such as stillborn babies and condemned souls who had no part in the afterlife were consigned to this area beyond existence. On the other hand, any terrestrial body of water could also be called Nun and we find the Nile River, sacred temple lakes, artificial pools and ponds, and even underlying ground water all called by the god's name or said to be his. The consort of Nun was Naunet who was really only a linguistic and logical complement to the god without any true individual identity.

Iconography

When Nun was depicted in scenes representing the creation or recreation of the sun god he was shown in anthropomorphic form as a large figure with the tripartite wig and curved beard of the gods whose upraised arms lift the sun (usually held in a boat) into the horizon from which it was reborn into a new day. This image appears both in the vignettes of funerary papyri and also on the walls of New Kingdom royal tombs such as that of Ramesses VI in the Valley of the Kings. The deep 'well' shafts and some steeply descending passages in some of



*The god **Nun** lifts the solar barque with the new-born sun from the waters of creation. The original creation was also mirrored in the cycle of the daily sunrise. Papyrus of Anhai, British Museum.*

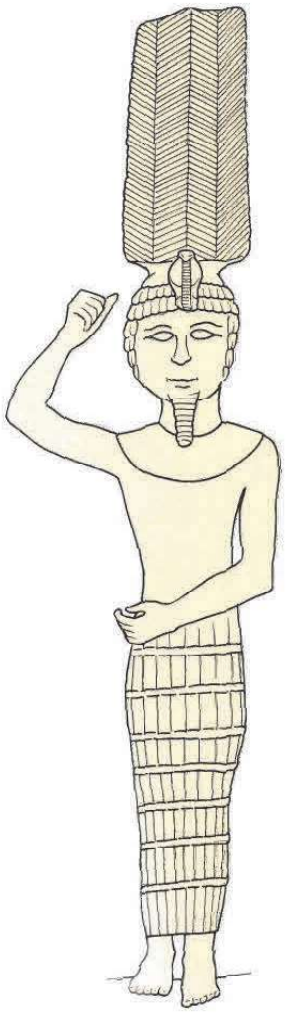
these New Kingdom royal tombs appear to symbolically descend toward the underlying waters of Nun in order to tie them to the underlying basis of creation and thus recreation and rebirth. Nun was also represented in another symbolic manner in the undulating mudbrick enclosure walls constructed around many temples. The convex and concave courses of these walls are believed to have represented the waters of Nun, symbolically depicting the outlying parameters of the universe which was modelled in the architectural programme of Egyptian temple design.

Worship

As an aspect of the precreated world Nun had no personal cult and had no temples, priests or certain rituals, though the ritual purification of the priests in the sacred lakes constructed within the precincts of temples came closest to this, as the pious ablutions not only physically cleansed the sacred officiants but also allowed them to rise, renewed by the waters of Nun.

Onuris

The warrior hunter god ***Onuris*** *in the pose of a spear-holding deity. Detail of a Late Period bronze dyad, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Budapest.*



Mythology

The Egyptian god Anhur, more commonly known by his Greek name Onuris, was a god of war and hunting originating in the Thinite region around Abydos. His name means 'he who leads back the distant one' and appears to be based on the mythical manner in which Onuris is said to have journeyed to Nubia in order to bring back the leonine 'Eye of Re' who became his consort as the lioness-goddess Mekhit. In this legend Onuris parallels the Heliopolitan god Shu who was also considered to have brought back the fearsome 'eye' as his own consort, Tefnut, though the meaning of the name Anhur suggests the story may have been original with him. In any event, Onuris was often equated with Shu and was also linked to the sun god under the epithet 'son of Re' who hunted and slew the enemies of his solar-deity father. Onuris was also associated with Horus. In the Ptolemaic Period Onuris was identified by the Greeks with their own war god, Ares, and the Romans also maintained this martial identity of Onuris as may be seen in a representation of the Emperor Tiberius on a column shaft in the temple of Kom Ombo which shows the Roman wearing the characteristic crown of the god.

Iconography

Onuris was depicted as a standing god, bearded and with a short wig surmounted by a uraeus and either two or four tall plumes. As 'lord of the lance' the god stands with his right hand raised as if to thrust a lance or spear, while in his left hand he often holds a length of rope perhaps symbolic of his role in capturing his lioness consort. In some cases the rope is not shown and the god may be represented grasping his raised spear in both hands, while in other cases neither spear nor rope are shown and the god is simply depicted with his arms raised as if he were holding these attributes. The iconography of the god clearly shows that he is intended to be seen as preparing to thrust his spear downward into a subdued enemy rather than in the act of throwing the spear. Onuris thus controls rather than simply attacks his enemies. The god is most frequently depicted wearing a long kilt which is often decorated in a feather-like pattern.

Worship

Although the original cult centre of Onuris was at This near Abydos in Upper Egypt, his main area of worship in later times was in the Delta town of Sebennytos (the modern Samannud) where he was venerated alongside or as a form of the god Shu. A temple of Onuris-Shu at this site has been dated to the reign of Nectanebo II of the 30th dynasty though worship of Onuris here would seem to have predated this structure. Silver and bronze amulets of the god occasionally occur in Late Period burials in different areas.

Osiris

'Hail to you Osiris,
Lord of eternity, king of gods,
Of many names, of holy forms,
Of secret rites in temples!'

'The Great Hymn to Osiris'

Mythology

Osiris was unquestionably one of the most important deities of ancient Egypt, figuring prominently in both monarchical idcology and popular religion as a god of death, resurrection and fertility. Both the meaning of the god's name and his exact origins are enigmatic. The etymology of the name Osiris (Egyptian Usir) is made confusing by its abbreviated hieroglyphic spelling, but a recent study concluded that it is most plausibly 'mighty one' (Egyptian *useru*). His birthplace was said to be Rosetau in the necropolis of the western desert near Memphis, but this is doubtless a mythical placement related to the god's funerary role.

The developing character of Osiris: It seems likely that Osiris was originally a fertility god with chthonic connections based in his identification with the earth, and that he was also associated at some point with the Nile's inundation, perhaps through its resultant alluvium and fertility. Yet the direct association of Osiris with agriculture seems to have occurred later. As time progressed and the cult of Osiris spread throughout Egypt, the god assimilated many other deities and rapidly took on

their attributes and characteristics. It seems probable, for example, that the god took over the story of an earthly ruler who was resurrected after his death from the ancient god Andjety of Busiris whose insignia were also the same as those used by Osiris. Many of the epithets accorded Osiris may also be seen to have been taken over from other deities. From the ancient jackal god Khenty-imentiu of Abydos Osiris took the title 'foremost of the westerners', and from Anubis he took the title 'he who is the god's tent', relating to the temporary booth of embalming, etc. Many of the titles and epithets applied to him also reflect the god's nature as a funerary deity, which if not original to Osiris certainly became central in his identity. Chief among these, the title *wenenefer,* from which the Greek name Onnophris was taken, probably means something like 'he who is in everlastingly good condition', showing the god's victory over the decay of death. His seemingly anomalous title 'Lord of the living' is also a purposeful denial of death and refers to those 'living' in the netherworld. An important development of Osiris, however, which went beyond his basic identity as a resurrected god and ruler of the underworld, was the role he played as judge of the dead.

The mythic cycle of Osiris: In the Pyramid Texts Osiris is of primary importance as one of the three most frequently mentioned deities along with Horus and Re. It seems clear that once Osiris began to rise to widespread importance the priests of Heliopolis incorporated him along with certain other deities into their own theological framework. The Osiride legends thus incorporate Osiris' 'siblings' Isis, Nephthys, and Seth as well as his son Horus, and represent the most extensive mythic cycle in ancient Egyptian culture. In their developed form the core myths were preserved by the Greek writer Plutarch in his work *De Iside et Osiride,* where essentially it is claimed that the god once ruled Egypt as a king until he was murdered and cruelly dismembered and scattered by his jealous brother Seth. Due to the loyalty and dedication of his wife Isis and with the help of their sister Nephthys, Osiris was found and revivified and became the god of the netherworld. Horus, the posthumously conceived son of Osiris and Isis, avenged his father's death by defeating Seth and in time became the king of all Egypt as the rightful heir of Osiris. This story had great appeal both as a theological rationale for the Egyptian monarchial system in which the deceased king was equated with Osiris and was followed to the throne by his 'Horus' successor, and also as a story which proffered the hope of immortality through resurrection – which had a universal appeal and was claimed at first by kings and eventually by nobles and commoners also. On the other hand, it is equally true that as a chthonic god Osiris retained a measure of fearsomeness and could be regarded with awe. The Pyramid Texts preserve this darker aspect of the god in spells which imply the king's protection from Osiris by Re, as do the Coffin Texts, which speak of Osiris as a threatening power in some cases, and the Book of the Dead – which along with the god's positive titles also lists epithets such as 'the terrible'. Overall, however, the human origin, vulnerability, and resurrection of the god and the emphasis on family devotion and loyalty which runs through the



Enigmatic depiction of ***Osiris*** *as a reclining ithyphallic figure associated with the sun god Re. The scene cannot be ascribed to a known funerary 'book' but appears in the tomb of Ramesses IX and in certain funerary papyri. Papyrus, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

Osiride myths meant that Osiris was viewed as a benign deity, who represented the clearest idea of physical salvation available to the ancient Egyptian.

The relationship of Osiris with other gods: Outside of the Osiride myths themselves Osiris was associated with several other deities. For example, the *ba* or soul of the god was thought to reside in the sacred ram Ba-neb-djedet which was worshipped in the Delta town of Mendes; and the Apis bull of Memphis, normally associated with Ptah, was seen as a manifestation of Osiris. A complex and particularly important relationship existed between Osiris and the sun god Re. Although Osiris was incorporated into the Heliopolitan theological system at a relatively early date, the god continued to grow in importance and by New Kingdom times his stature as an independent god was considerable, as is seen in titles which were applied to him such as 'lord of the universe', 'ruler of eternity' and 'king of the gods'. Osiris' position became, in fact, comparable to that of the sun god himself. He came to be regarded not only as the counterpart of Re in the netherworld, but also in some cases as the sun god's own body – so that Osiris and Re came to be considered as representing the body and soul, respectively, of a single great god. The solar cycle was thus imagined as the *ba* of Re descending into the underworld to unite with Osiris as his own corpse. Nevertheless, Osiris and Re maintained independent characteristics, identities, and realms. The fusion of the two gods was mainly a product of New Kingdom theological expression in specific contexts and Egyptian theology never totally overcame the dichotomy implicit in the idea of Re as lord of the heavens and Osiris as lord of the underworld. Osiris was also mythologically connected with the moon, however, though this was a relatively minor association. The ultimate fusion of Osiris with other deities occurred in the reign of Ptolemy I who introduced the hybrid Serapis as a fusion of Osiris, Apis and various Greek gods – an artificial creation which nevertheless become one of the most important deities of Egypt at the end of the dynastic age. The Greeks themselves associated Osiris with their own god Dionysus.

Iconography

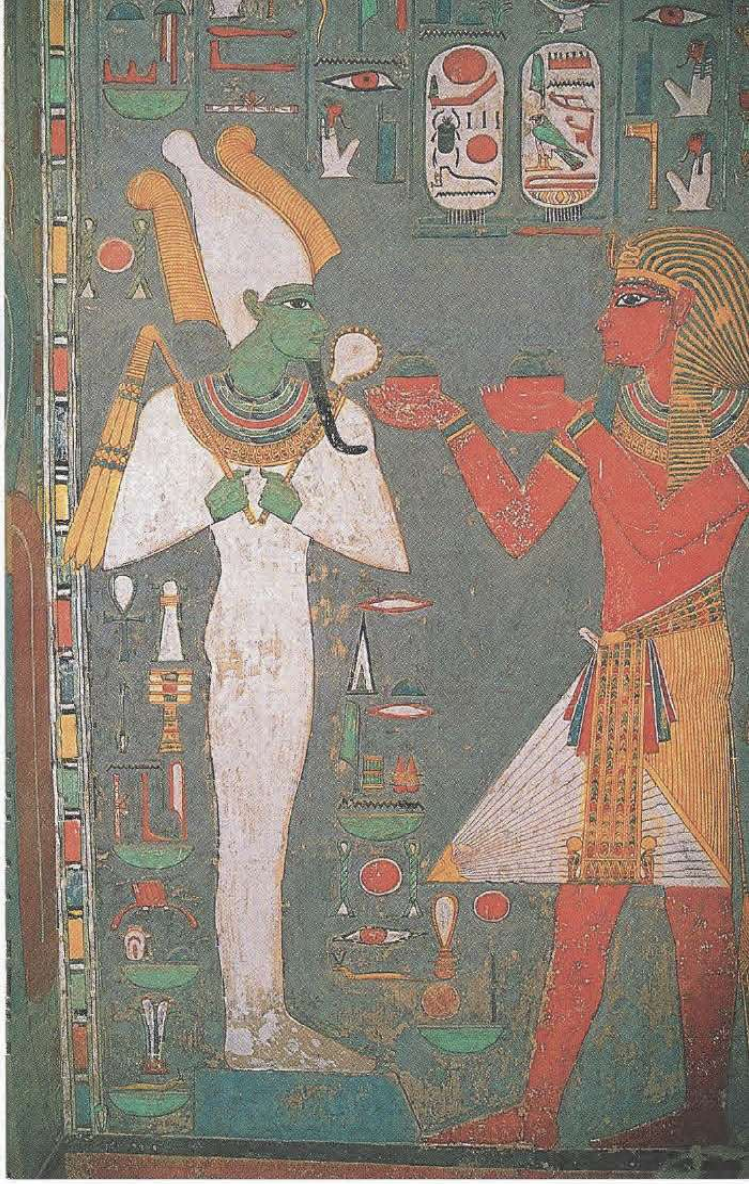
Osiris is usually represented in anthropomorphic form, as a human mummy whose skin may be white – perhaps to symbolize the mummy wrappings – or more usually black as the colour of chthonic deities and of the dark Nile alluvium, or green as representative of vegetation and fertility. The god is invariably depicted standing or sitting stiffly erect with both legs together and with his hands projecting from his wrappings to grasp the crook and flail which are his chief attributes. These items of regalia have been thought to represent pastoral implements, but the origin of the flail is not clear and it may have had other meanings. In any event, it seems more likely that both items were taken over together from royal regalia as they are present in representations of kings from the time of Narmer on. Sometimes the god holds a *was* sceptre, but this is clearly a later usage taken over from the iconography of other gods. Regional variation has been shown to affect the manner in which the regalia are held. In Middle Egyptian Osiride figures the arms are usually held at the same level, whereas in Upper Egypt they are frequently crossed at the wrists. The



Nefertari before the throne of ***Osiris*** *'Wennefer...ruler of eternity'. Diminutive figures of the four 'sons of Horus (or Osiris)' stand before the seated god. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Nefertari, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.*



(Left) The crook, flail and feathered Atef Crown, although taken over by Osiris, became unmistakable attributes of the netherworld god. Basalt statue of ***Osiris****, from the tomb of Psamtik, Saqqara, 26th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*



(Right) Horemheb before ***Osiris****. The pose (except that he is standing) and dress of the god are virtually identical to those in the statue opposite but are viewed according to the canons of Egyptian two-dimensional representation. 19th dynasty. Tomb of Horemheb, Valley of the Kings, western Thebes.*

earliest known representation of Osiris, which dates to the 5th dynasty (a partial representation on a block from the reign of King Djedkare-Isesi), depicts the god wearing a divine wig; but from the Middle Kingdom he is frequently shown wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt – possibly indicating his Upper Egyptian origin – and this crown is found in Osiride iconography throughout all later periods. Another crown closely associated with the god is the so-called Atef Crown – similar to the White Crown but with two side feathers and occasionally with horizontal horns and solar disks attached. This crown, either placed directly on the head or atop a royal wig, appears to have originated with the god Andjety, however, and to have a secondary association with Osiris. Osiris is sometimes shown wearing other crowns and, especially in later periods, these can be of complex, fused forms, but the White and Atef forms remain standard. From New Kingdom times the god is often shown wearing a broad collar and sometimes bracelets worn at the wrist. Later iconographic forms also often tend to incorporate an increasing amount of detail in their depiction of the god's mummy wrappings – as in instances showing bands crossed over the chest, a sash tied at the waist, a counterpoise attached to the broad collar, etc. The association between Osiris and the symbol known to the Egyptians as the *djed* column or pillar meant that the god was often depicted in the form of the *djed*, sometimes as a partially-personified pillar with human arms or as an anthropoid mummy with a *djed*-pillar head. Although the death of Osiris was never depicted in Egyptian art, the god is frequently shown lying on the funerary bier, mourned by Isis and Nephthys.

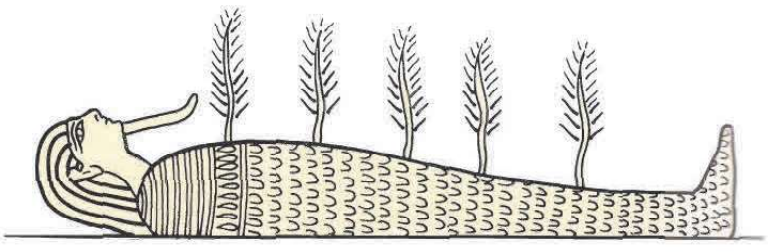
Osiris' close connection with kingship and his role as king of the dead mean that he is probably more often depicted enthroned than any other deity. In funerary scenes the deceased is thus frequently shown before the enthroned god who is supported, at his rear, by Isis and Nephthys (less frequently by Hathor as mistress of the west). When depicted in this seated manner, the god is sometimes shown with the diminutive figures of the four sons of Horus before him or, in other cases, the so-called *imiut* fetish.

Due to the gradual unification of solar and Osirian ideas during the New Kingdom, Osiris is also sometimes depicted in the syncretized form of Osiris-Re or Re-Osiris. Usually this fusion takes the form of a mummiform body (Osiris) with the head of a falcon, ram, or beetle (Re) as seen in the tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens, which depicts a ram-headed mummy identified both as 'Re resting in Osiris' and 'Osiris resting in Re'. The relationship between Osiris and Re is also seen in many representational works which juxtapose the symbols of the respective gods in the same composition – such as mummy and falcon, *djed* and sun disk, etc. Because Osiris was also mythologically associated with the moon, the god may sometimes be represented by the lunar disk – especially in depictions where this is shown with Anubis.

Worship

The cult of Osiris lasted well over 2,000 years. It was already well established by the end of the 5th dynasty when the god's name appears in both the Pyramid Texts and inscriptions in private mastabas, and flourished till the end of the dynastic age. It was also universal in that the god had many cult centres and was venerated throughout Egypt. Due to the mythical scattering of the dismembered body of Osiris, a number of sites claimed pieces of the god and were thus at least locally important centres of his worship. Such, for example, were Athribis which claimed the god's heart; and Biga, Edfu, Herakleopolis and Sebennytos which all claimed one or more of his legs. The most prominent sites linked with Osiris were Abydos and Busiris, the two locales most closely associated with the god and his chief cult centres in Upper and Lower Egypt respectively. Abydos, the ancient town of Abdju, represents the oldest known sanctuary of Osiris and the remains of an Old Kingdom temple of the god are still extant there. The area also boasted the Osireion, a symbolic 'tomb of Osiris' adjoining the temple of Sethos I, and the 1st-dynasty tomb of Djer which was traditionally venerated as the tomb of Osiris from at least New Kingdom times. The symbol of the Abydene area was a beehive-like container surmounted by two tall plumes which was interpreted to represent a reliquary containing the god's head. Busiris in the middle Delta was the Lower Egyptian counterpart of Abydos. Its ancient name was Djedu, the hieroglyphic writing of which contained two *djed* columns, and the later Greek name Busiris means 'house of Osiris'. The temple of the god at this site was also early as it is mentioned in Old Kingdom inscriptions and the cult centre was supposed to hold the burial of the god's backbone.

The worship of Osiris was as diverse in its manifestations as it was widespread in its extent. In the funerary sphere, the god was honoured in many different ways. Although the prayers for offerings in the tombs of courtiers of the Old Kingdom were at first addressed to Anubis, by the 5th dynasty Osiris had assumed an important role in private burials and the funerary texts came to reflect this with the standard opening 'An offering which the king gives to Osiris [on behalf of the deceased]...'. Of particular importance was the identification of the dead with Osiris so that deceased individuals of all classes came to be called 'the Osiris...' in which the person's name was added to that of the god. The god is found in many aspects of the funerary cult and is seen, for example, in the utilization of the so-called Osiris-bed in New Kingdom times. The corn- or grain-Osiris, corn-mummy or Osiris-bed, was a hollow frame constructed in the form of the god and filled with earth – usually Nile mud – in which seed grain was sprinkled. The frame was sometimes wrapped in linen winding sheets to complete the Osiride appearance of the effigy and the resulting germination of the seed corn was seen as a powerful symbol of the resurrective power of Osiris. In addition to its funerary usage the object was also used in religious festivals honouring Osiris such as the great Khoiak festival of the 5th month of the Egyptian year. Temple rituals and celebrations honouring Osiris were also diverse, though often opaque. We have evidence from as early as Old and Middle Kingdom times of some of these rituals, the most important of which was the annual festival of Osiris at Abydos. In this festival the cult statue of Osiris was carried from his temple to his traditional tomb in the area known today as Umm el-Qab or 'mother of pots' from the countless cups, jars, bowls and other pottery offering vessels left by ancient pilgrims. A stela of the Middle Kingdom official Ikhernofret now in Berlin describes aspects of this festival and is instructive in the clear stress placed on the 'mysteries' of the god which were extensive even by Egyptian theological standards. Osiris was certainly one of the most important of those deities honoured in the 'popular religion' of ancient Egypt, although surprisingly, amulets of Osiris are quite rare and only a few are known from



*Plants sprout from a mummy in a visual image reminiscent of the seeded 'grain-**Osiris**' figures which were sometimes placed in Egyptian tombs. Coffin detail, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.*

the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. Small bronzes of the god are more common, many made as pendents, and Osiris was, of course, frequently represented in funerary decoration. He was also invoked in many spells and protective texts, some of which were written in the form of royal decrees made by Osiris as king of Egypt.

Although the cult of Osiris grew by its own power and appeal throughout most of Egyptian history, it became especially widespread beyond the borders of Egypt in Graeco-Roman times due to its close link to the cult of Isis – who offered her followers a form of physical salvation based almost entirely on her role in the mythical drama of Osiris.

Panebtawy

Divine child of Haroeris (see Horus) and his consort Hathor-ta-senet-nefret at Kom Ombo, Panebtawy, whose name means 'the lord of the Two Lands', personified the pharaoh as the divine son of Horus the Elder and thus the rightful heir to the kingdom of Egypt. He was depicted as a young man with the sidelock of youth and with his finger placed at his mouth.

Pataikos

Mythology

Pataikos represents a type of minor amuletic deity named from a passage in Herodotus which mentions dwarf-like protective images with which the Phoenicians adorned the prows of their triremes. Herodotus thought that these dwarfish figures represented pygmies and wrote that they were similar to the statue of Hephaistos (Ptah) in Memphis. The Egyptian images so named may well have originated with the craftsman god Ptah as the epithet 'Ptah the dwarf' is known and dwarfs seem to be always present in Old Kingdom scenes of metal workshops.

Iconography

The Egyptian pataikoi are similar to the god Bes in appearance but have some distinctive differences. Like Bes they usually represent a small, short (and usually bow-legged) male with hands resting on his hips. They may also brandish knives and hold or bite snakes, but their overly large heads are without facial hair, and they do not have the enlarged eyes and prominent tongue associated with Bes. The figures have bald or closely-cropped human heads or sometimes the head of a falcon or a ram upon which they may wear a sidelock, a scarab beetle or an Atef Crown. In some cases pataikoi are two-headed or they may be represented back to back with other deities, notably Bes and Harpokrates (see Horus). The pataikoi themselves also often show affinities with Harpokrates, as when they are shown standing on crocodiles in the manner of that god.

Worship

Crudely produced amulets of Pataikos seem to appear in the late Old Kingdom, but it is not until New Kingdom times that clearly detailed examples are found and they then continue throughout the later dynastic periods.

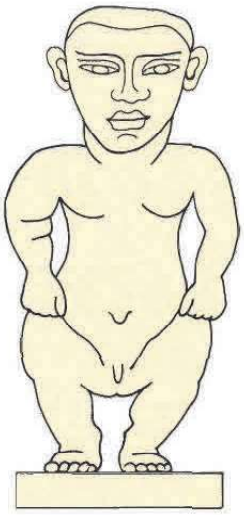
Peteese and Pihor

Peteese and Pihor were deified brothers who were worshipped as minor gods in the region of Dendur a little to the south of Aswan in Lower Nubia. The two brothers seem to have lived during or around the 26th dynasty and apparently were elevated to divine status as a result of drowning in the Nile and subsequently becoming associated with Osiris. The Emperor Augustus built a small temple to honour the brothers on the west bank of the Nile at Dendur which was moved to avoid flooding by the rising waters of Lake Nasser and which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Reliefs in the temple show Peteese and Pihor presenting offerings to the superior deity Isis.

Ptah

Mythology

Ptah appears to be one of the oldest of Egypt's gods and is attested representationally from the 1st dynasty onward. Nevertheless, the great god of Memphis was perhaps originally only a locally important deity whose influence developed and



*The dwarf god called **Pataikos** was associated with Ptah of Memphis but also had an independent existence as an apotropaic deity. Glazed amulet, British Museum.*



*The god **Ptah** embraced by Senwosret I. Detail of a pillar from Senwosret's destroyed temple at Karnak. 12th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

spread slowly over time. Even in the Pyramid Texts Ptah is mentioned only indirectly a very few times, though it is difficult to ascertain if this is due to an early relative lack of importance, a lack of function in the mortuary sphere, or the desire on the part of the Heliopolitan theologians to minimize the position of the Memphite deity. Mythologically, the consort of Ptah was the lioness-goddess Sekhmet, and her son Nefertem completed the major divine triad of the Memphite region. Eventually the god fulfilled several important roles.

Ptah, lord of Memphis: There is no doubt that the primary geographic association of Ptah was with the general region of Memphis. The founding of 'Ineb-hedj' or 'White Walls' – the city later called Memphis – as the administrative capital of Egypt at the time of the unification of the country around 3000 BC doubtless had a profound effect on the development of Ptah's importance, and the god soon became the chief deity of the area. By the Middle Kingdom Ptah was thus called 'Lord of Ankh-tawy', referring to the city of Memphis; and many scholars believe that the name Egypt itself is based on the Greek form of the Egyptian 'Hut-ka-Ptah', 'the temple of the *ka* of Ptah'. The Memphite locality was also the origin of several of Ptah's frequent titles such as Ptah *res-ineb-ef*, 'Ptah who is south of his wall', in reference to the position of the god's sanctuary beyond his temple's great temenos wall to the south of Memphis, and Ptah *khery-bak-ef*, 'Ptah who is under his moringa tree', referring to an ancient tree-god of Memphis who was absorbed by Ptah at an early date.

Ptah the craftsman: If Ptah was not originally a god of craftsmanship, this aspect of his identity was certainly an ancient one as it can be seen at an early date and then remains constant throughout the god's history. The artistic and cultural development of the Old Kingdom and the great increase in the number of craftsmen needed to serve the capital of Memphis and to produce the funerary goods needed for its necropoleis could well have been influential in the rise of the god. During the Old Kingdom the high priest of Ptah bore the title *wer-kherep-hemu* 'great leader of the craftsmen'; and while the god's name gives no firm clue to his origin, it is perhaps based on a root of later words meaning 'to sculpt' and thus related to his identity as a craftsman god. In this role Ptah was both the sculptor or smith of mankind and creator of the arts and crafts, and the Memphite deity of craftsmen became particularly associated with the dwarves who seem to have traditionally worked as jewellers and artisans in Old Kingdom workshops. Ptah was also clearly associated with other groups of craftsmen such as the workers of Deir el-Medina who constructed the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Naturally enough the Greeks and Romans associated Ptah directly with their own smith gods Hephaistos and Vulcan.



Ptah-Sokar-Osiris *figures such as this fused the creator god with the ancient mortuary deity Sokar and with Osiris. Late Period. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.*

Ptah the creator: As a result of his identification with craftsmanship, or concurrent with it, Ptah became a god of creation and was known as the 'sculptor of the earth' who, like the ram god Khnum was believed to form everything on his potter's wheel. More fundamentally, Ptah came to be known as the 'ancient one' who united in his person both the masculine primeval deity Nun and his feminine counterpart, Naunet, so that he was seen as the primordial deity whose creative power was manifest in every aspect of the cosmos. He was sometimes worshipped as Ptah-Nun or even Ptah-Naunet in this role, though the creative process was also attributed to the god alongside the old Memphite earth god Tatenen under the name Ptah-Tatenen. The story of creation as attributed to Ptah by the priests of Memphis – whereby the god was said to have created the world through his thought and creative word or command (see p. 18) – was one of the most intellectual creation myths to arise in Egypt and in the whole of the ancient world.

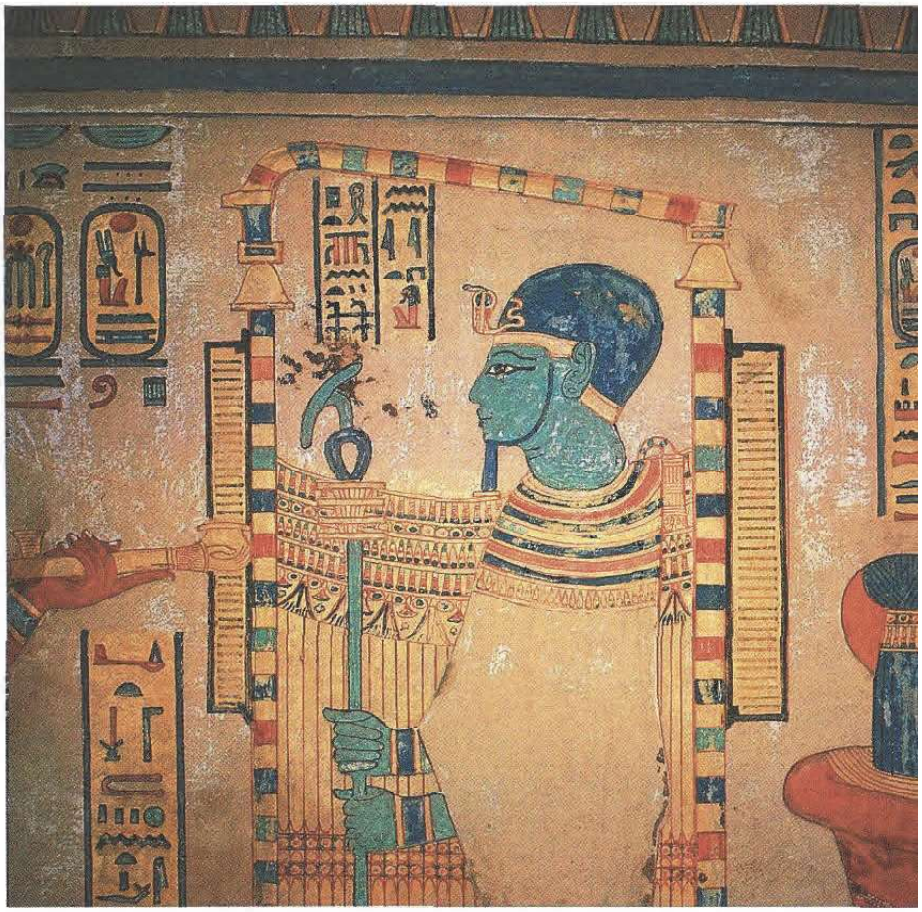
Ptah the chthonic and afterlife god: As a result of his proximity to the Memphite earth god Tatenen and the mortuary deity Sokar, Ptah took on some of the aspects of those deities. He was thus sometimes venerated in a creative, chthonic aspect as Ptah-Tatenen. Although Ptah himself was not frequently associated with the afterlife, as the composite deity Ptah-Sokar and later as Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, he gained considerable importance in this area also. The mummiform nature of Ptah in his painted and carved representations also must have served as a constant reminder of the funerary and afterlife associations of the god.

Ptah, hearer of prayers: As with most deities, the epithets accorded Ptah were wide-ranging and complimentary. Honourific titles such as *nefer-her* 'merciful of face' or *neb-maat* 'lord of truth' are often given to the god in inscriptions, but epithets extolling the god as a hearer of prayers seem to have had particular significance. Many votive stelae have been found in the area of Ptah's temple at Memphis and elsewhere in Egypt carved with representations of human ears and dedicated to the god as *mesedjer-sedjem,* 'the ear which hears', who would hear the petitions of his devotees. As both the god of craftsmen and hearer of prayers we find evidence of Ptah being beseeched by the workmen of Deir el-Medina such as one Neferabu who admits on a votive stela that he made a false oath in Ptah's name and subsequently lost his sight in some manner so that he begs 'the ear which hears' for forgiveness. On the perimeters of temples we also find shrines or chapels of the hearing ear which likewise served the purpose of transmitting the individual's prayers to the deity within the temple. The god Ptah often figures in these shrines, as in the one constructed at the entrance to the great mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu.

Iconography

The iconography of Ptah was particularly stable and persisted in essentially the same form throughout most of the dynastic age – beginning with the earliest known depiction of the god on a 1st-dynasty bowl from Tarkhan. Ptah was almost invariably represented anthropomorphically as a standing, mummiform figure with feet together and with his hands protruding from his tightly wrapped shroud to hold his characteristic sceptre (comprising a *was* sceptre surmounted by *ankh* and *djed* symbols). The god usually wears a close-fitting skull cap without any additional elements of headdress, though in his association with Osiris Ptah sometimes is depicted with a small disk atop his head flanked by the two tall plumes worn by that god.

From the Middle Kingdom onwards he wears a distinctive straight beard rather than the usual curved divine beard found on representations of





(Above) ***Ptah*** *within his shrine. The straight beard and particular style of necklace counterpoise at the god's back are distinctive attributes rarely seen with other deities. Tomb of Amenherkhepeshef, Valley of the Queens, western Thebes.*

(Left) Gilded statuette of ***Ptah*** *the creator from the tomb of Tutankhamun. The pedestal on which the god stands may represent the mound of creation or the craftsman's level and the hieroglyphic symbol for truth. 18th dynasty. Egyptian Museum, Cairo.*

other Egyptian gods. Ptah is also usually depicted wearing either what appears to be a large tassel at the rear of his garment or a broad collar which is balanced by a counterpoise hanging behind his back. This counterpoise is rounded at the top and sometimes flared at the bottom like a narrow, tube-like bell and is distinctive enough to allow even partial images of Ptah to be differentiated from similar representations of the god Khonsu who wears a key-hole shaped counterpoise. Usually Ptah is represented standing on a narrow plinth like one of the hieroglyphs used to write the word *maat* or 'truth' and which also resembles the measuring rod used by Egyptian workmen, or upon a stepped dias suggestive of the primeval mound. Frequently he is depicted within an open shrine.

The god was perhaps also depicted as a dwarf, as Herodotus claimed to see statues in this form in the temple of Hephaistos (Ptah) at Memphis (see Pataikos), and though these statues could also have been votive representations of dwarf workmen rather than the god himself, the god also appears in the form of a dwarf on some of the magical *cippi* (healing plaques) of the Late Period.

Worship

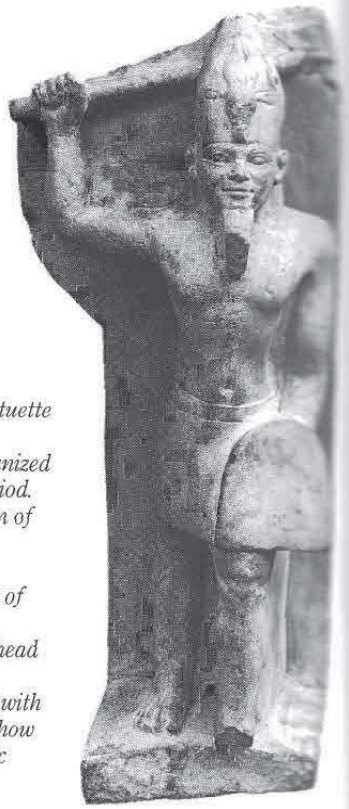
Although little remains of Ptah's chief temple at Memphis, surviving historical and archaeological evidence indicates that it was a great complex befitting a god who ruled supreme in his own area for well over 2,000 years. The present remains date mainly to New Kingdom times, though it is evident that there were structures honouring Ptah at this site at far earlier dates. It was also at Memphis that the sacred Apis bull, which served as a manifestation and intermediary for Ptah, resided with an important cult of its own. Although he was perhaps originally associated only with the Memphite area, the veneration of Ptah soon spread throughout Egypt and the god is represented in almost all major Egyptian sites. He had his own sanctuary in the precinct of the great temple of Amun at Karnak since at least Middle Kingdom times and this temple continued to be expanded and embellished throughout the rest of the dynastic age, showing a clear continuity in the god's importance and worship in Upper Egypt. Ptah was also venerated in Egyptian Nubia where his presence is found in a number of temples including those of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, el-Derr, and Gerf Hussein. The god's particular importance in New Kingdom times is also seen in his inclusion in the grouping of the major deities Re, Amun and Ptah (as seen in the statuary group in the shrine of the Great Temple of Abu Simbel) and in the names of a number of kings such as Merenptah (beloved of Ptah) and Siptah (man of Ptah), as well as high-ranking officials.

As the patron deity of craftsmen, Ptah was particularly venerated at sites such as Deir el-Medina where workmen and artisans lived; and as the god 'who hears prayers' he remained a favourite deity frequently addressed by the common people although amulets of the god are surprisingly rare. Of those that do exist the plaqueform amulets depicting the god flanked by Sekhmet and Nefertem are mainly of 26th-dynasty date and may have been utilized primarily in life rather than in funerary contexts. Ptah also played at least an indirect role in the funerary aspect of Egyptian religion by way of the 'opening of the mouth' ceremony performed on funerary statues and on the mummy of the deceased by the *setem*-priest who utilized a ritual metal chisel suggestive of the craftsman deity.

Reshep

Mythology

Reshep was the West Semitic god of war and thunder who was assimilated into Egyptian religion, along with various other Near Eastern deities, in New Kingdom times. The god was identified with the Mesopotamian deity Nergal, god of pestilence and warfare, and is attested in the Hebrew Bible and at ancient sites ranging as far afield as Spain. He was probably introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos and is first attested in names of foreign origin, but by New Kingdom times he was connected with Egyptian deities with whom he shared pestilent or martial affinities, especially Seth and the Theban war god Montu, though he retained his alien character and identity. The consort of Reshep was the goddess Itum who is mentioned alongside the god



(Right) Limestone statuette of the Syrian deity ***Reshep*** *with Egyptianized iconography. Late Period. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

(Far right) Depictions of ***Reshep*** *with his characteristic gazelle head ornament worn on a simple headband and with a Syrian-style beard show the god's West Semitic origins.*

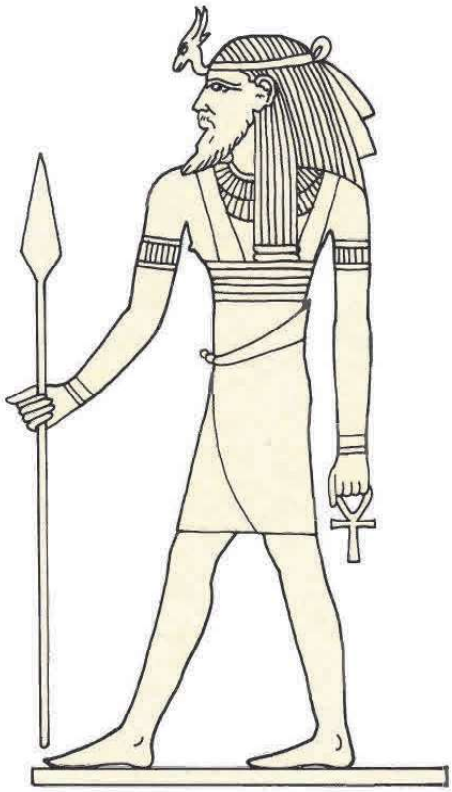
in Egyptian texts; however he was also associated with other Near Eastern deities, and was frequently venerated as part of a triad consisting of Min, Qadesh and Reshep.

Iconography

Always represented anthropomorphically, Reshep was depicted as a bearded god (usually with the full Near Eastern style beard), wearing a short kilt and the White Crown of Upper Egypt, which was often decorated with a long streamer and either the horns or complete head of a gazelle. This ornament may have reflected the god's desert origins or could have been a result of his identification with Seth, though in some instances Reshep may wear a uraeus in place of the gazelle emblem. Usually represented standing in striding stance, the god characteristically brandishes weapons of various kinds, most commonly a spear, mace, axe, or sickle sword in the right hand and in the left hand a shield or sometimes a *was* sceptre or *ankh* sign.

Worship

Reshep was worshipped in a temple at Memphis and perhaps in other locations where Asiatic peoples settled, though evidence of the god has been found throughout Egypt from the Delta to the Sudan. Well attested in New Kingdom times, he continues to appear well into the Ptolemaic Period both in temple lists and in artifacts of various types. Many bronze statuettes apparently depicting the god have been found as well as a single clearly identified stone statue, and he appears on numerous stelae – either alone or with other deities, particularly Min and the Syrian goddess Qadesh. The image or name of the god also occurs on many scarabs. The martial nature of Reshep made him an ideal royal deity, and his adoption in this way is seen in the famous stele set up by Amenophis II near the Great Sphinx at Giza and in other monuments of that king. His martial nature could also be turned to healing, and Reshep was sometimes named in spells to overpower inimical influences such as the demon Akha who was believed to cause abdominal pain.



Sah

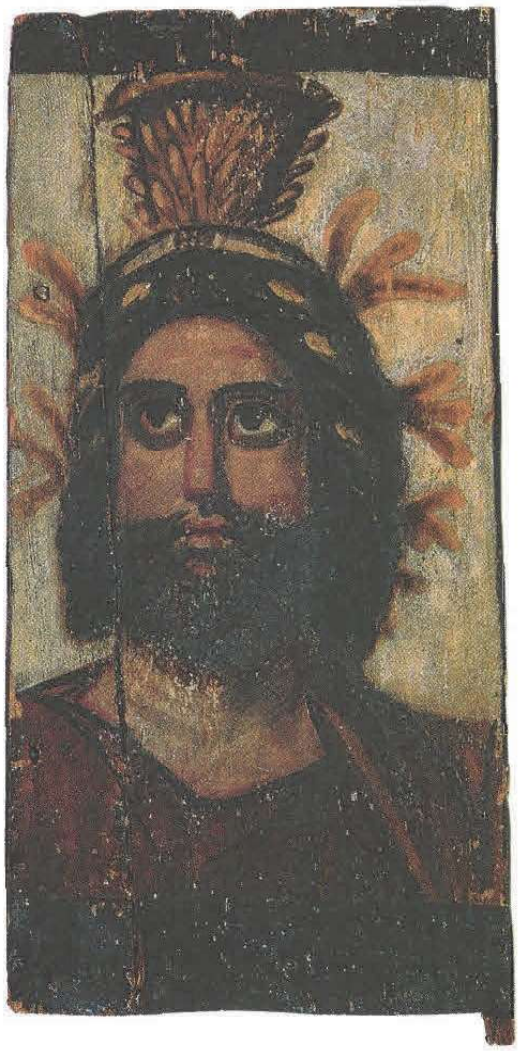
The god Sah personified the constellation of Orion – the most distinctive of all the constellations in the night sky. While not part of the 'imperishable' circumpolar stars, the constellation became important in Egyptian mythology especially as it rose directly before the adjacent star Sirius (the Egyptian Sothis) – the brightest fixed star which was utilized in the calculation of the Egyptian calendar. The constellation god was thus connected with the star Sothis from an early date and the two came to be viewed as manifestations of Osiris and Isis respectively.

Sah is mentioned quite frequently in the Pyramid Texts where he is called 'father of the gods' (PT 408), and the deceased king is said to enter the sky 'In the name of the Dweller in Orion, with a season in the sky and a season on earth' (PT 186). The association of Sah with Sothis is also clear in these early texts where the king is told, 'You shall reach the sky as Orion, your soul shall be as effective as Sothis' (PT 723). In the funerary texts of the New Kingdom Orion is said to row towards the stars in a boat and Sah is sometimes depicted in this manner in representations found in temples and tombs – as a god surrounded by stars who sails across the sky in a papyrus skiff.

Serapis

Mythology

The hybrid god Serapis was a composite of several Egyptian and Hellenistic deities introduced at the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period in the reign of Ptolemy I. The god thus answered the needs of a new age in which Greek and Egyptian religion were brought face to face and the new deity was created to form a bridge between the two cultures. Linguistically, the god's name is a fusion of Osiris and Apis, and a cult of Osirapis had in fact existed in Egypt before the rule of the Ptolemies, but to this Egyptian core were added a number of Hellenistic deities which predominated in the god's final form. Zeus, Helios, Dionysus, Hades and Asklepius all added aspects of their respective cults, so that Serapis emerged as a thoroughly Egypto-Hellenistic deity



(Right) The hybrid deity ***Serapis*** *wearing his characteristic modius or kalathos crown in the form of a grain measure. Panel from a triptych of Serapis, Isis and a private citizen. Roman Period, AD 180–200. J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu.*

(Below) The enthroned ***Serapis*** *wearing the triple Atef Crown. Detail from a late relief at Meroe.*



who personified the aspects of divine majesty, the sun, fertility, the underworld and afterlife, as well as healing. The mythology of Serapis was, therefore, the mythology of his underlying deities, but the aspects of afterlife and fertility were always primary to his nature. The consort of Serapis was said to be Isis, the greatest Egyptian goddess in Hellenistic times.

Iconography

The Hellenistic elements of Serapis dominate the god's iconography and attributes. He was portrayed in anthropomorphic form as a man wearing a Greek-style robe with Greek hairstyle and full beard and usually bearing a tall corn modius or measure on his head. In some depictions Serapis is also given curving ram's horns. Sometimes, as a result of the chthonic and fertility aspects of the god and his consort Isis, the two deities were depicted as serpents – one, with a beard, representing Serapis.

Worship

The cult centre of Serapis was the great Serapeum Temple at Alexandria which was regarded as a wonder and a site of pilgrimage throughout the Mediterranean world until it was destroyed by order of the Emperor Theodosius in AD 389. Other, smaller temples and shrines were dedicated to the god in locations throughout Egypt, and the god's cult was spread through much of the Graeco-Roman world by traders and converts. A Roman Period sculpted head of the god was found in London, and a temple of Serapis is even recorded in an inscription found at the Roman site of Eburacum (modern York) in England, showing that his importance was great enough to reach even the distant areas of the Roman Empire. In Egypt itself, however, the Egyptians never fully accepted the hybrid god and the evidence for his popular worship is considerably less than for other, traditional Egyptian deities.

Shay

Mythology

Shay was the personification of the idea of destiny in Egyptian religion and as such was the god of lifespan, or more broadly of fate and fortune. In the Instructions of Amenemopet, for example, it is said that 'none can ignore Shay', though this is meant in the abstract sense of the inevitability of fate rather than the imminence of a predatory deity. Shay could thus be invoked as much as an idea as a personified god, as may be seen in inscriptions from the reign of Akhenaten where the solar Aten is sometimes said to be 'Shay who gives life'. As a personified god Shay is sometimes mentioned along with certain goddesses such as Meskhenet and Renenutet who shared an affinity with his role, and in the Ptolemaic Period he was identified with Agathodaimon, the Hellenistic serpent deity venerated for his fortune-telling ability.

Iconography

Shay was rarely represented in Egyptian art, but he sometimes appears in the form of an anthropomorphic god in vignettes depicting the weighing of the heart scene in New Kingdom funerary papyri. In these scenes he is shown as an undifferentiated divine figure with the curved beard of a god but identified primarily by name.

Worship

Textual references to Shay and the few representations of the god which have survived indicate that he was recognized more as an abstract personification or conceptualization of destiny than a personal deity to be venerated or served.

Shezmu

Mythology

The god Shezmu was a deity of wine and oil presses with a strongly bipolar personality who could

equally bless or destroy. He is attested from Old Kingdom times on and in the famous 'Cannibal Hymn' of the Pyramid Texts (PT 403), Shezmu is the fearsome being who butchers and cooks the gods themselves that the king might absorb their strength. In the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom the god lassoes the damned and corrals them for slaughter, squeezing their heads like grapes in a bloody image of destruction (CT VI, 6). In the later texts of the Book of the Dead Shezmu also appears in connection with the nets which captured beings in the afterlife (BOD 153). Yet despite the apparent cruelty of his nature Shezmu could also be beneficent, and as god of the presses he provided wine, oil and perfumes. By the New Kingdom there is more stress on these positive aspects, and Shezmu became known as the provider of perfumes for the gods. The Book of the Dead also contains the statement, 'Shezmu is with you, he gives you the best of the fowl' (BOD 170). This role of beneficent provision finally became primary in the Graeco-Roman Period.

Iconography

Shezmu is not frequently depicted in Egyptian art but was usually shown in anthropomorphic form as the master of a press. One mythological papyrus of the 21st dynasty depicts hawk deities working the presses of retribution which must surely represent Shezmu, and the god may also be depicted in leonine form or with the head of a lion – an iconography in keeping with the more ferocious aspect of his personality. Some late representations also show Shezmu in ram-headed form.

Worship

There is some evidence that Shezmu already had a priesthood during the Old Kingdom, and by the Middle Kingdom his cult was certainly well established in the Fayum and probably elsewhere. As the benign aspect of the god's nature was increasingly stressed, he probably became more widely accepted as an ancillary in the cults of the other gods until, in Ptolemaic times, in temples such as Edfu and Dendera, special rooms for the production and storage of oils and unguents and other products used in temple service were presided over by Shezmu 'master of the perfumery'.

Shu

Mythology

Shu, whose name may mean 'emptiness' or 'he who rises up', was the god of the air and also of sunlight. In the Ennead of primary deities organized by the priests of Heliopolis, he was created by the demiurge Atum, either from his semen or mucus. Shu was husband of Tefnut, the goddess usually said to represent moisture, and the pair in turn produced Geb, god of the earth and Nut, goddess of the sky. According to Egyptian myth, Shu separated these two after Nut swallowed the constellations and Geb became angry with her for 'eating' their children. Shu is mentioned in the Pyramid Texts where the deceased king is purified in the 'lakes of Shu' which may represent mists and is said to climb up to heaven upon the 'bones of Shu' which are probably the clouds. The god was also associated with light – perhaps perceived as an aspect of the air – from Old Kingdom times, and even the arch iconoclast Akhenaten honoured the god who was said to dwell in the sun's disk. For reasons which remain unclear Shu was associated with the lunar deities Thoth and Khonsu, perhaps in terms of the light of the lunar disk, or because his wife Tefnut was often associated with the moon. The god was also sometimes equated with the protective deity Bes; but on the other hand, he had a darker aspect for in the netherworld he was said to operate an executioner's block, although he also helped protect the sun god from the serpent-fiend Apophis. According to one mythic story recorded on a Ptolomaic Period granite shrine, Shu ruled as king of Egypt for many years until he became weak and tired. Then he ascended to the heavens and took up residence along with the sun god Re.

Iconography

In his iconography Shu could be represented as a lion but is usually seen in human form as a god wearing a feather – the hieroglyphic symbol for his name – upon his head. He is often depicted with his arms raised supporting the sky goddess Nut and holding her apart from her consort Geb with the assistance of the magical Heh deities. The god also appears in certain other mythologically-based scenes such as that portrayed in the famous headrest found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. In that

(Below) ***Shu****, god of the air and of sunlight, is commonly identified by the tall feather worn on his head.*

(Bottom) ***Shu*** *was frequently depicted in Egyptian art holding the body of his daughter, the sky goddess Nut, above his son, the earth god Geb.*

