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MAAT. The ethical conceptions of “truth,” “order,” and “cosmic balance” are encompassed in the Egyptian term *maat*, and the personification of those principles is the goddess Maat (*M3’t*). The goddess represented the divine harmony and balance of the universe, including the unending cycles of the rising and setting of the sun, the inundation of the Nile River, the resulting fertility of the land, and the enduring office of kingship; she was considered to be the force that kept chaos (*isft*), the antithesis of order, from overwhelming the world. Hence *maat* was a complex, intertwined, and interdependent sense of ethics that tied personal behavior—such as speaking truthfully, dealing fairly in the market place, and especially sustaining obedience to parents, the king, and his agents—to the maintenance of universal order. To transgress one aspect of *maat* threatened to encourage chaos and overwhelm order. To live according to *maat* was also fundamental to personal existence. The *Instruction of Ptahhotep* (sixth dynasty) vowed: “There is punishment for him who passes over its [*maat*’s] laws.” The *Instructions for Merikare* (ninth dynasty) said: “Do *maat* so that you may endure upon Earth.”

Maat and the King. One of the primary duties of the king was to maintain the order of the cosmos, effected by upholding the principle of *maat* through correct and just rule and through service to the gods. In turn, the people of Egypt had an obligation to uphold *maat*, through obedience to the king, who served as the intermediary between the divine and profane spheres. The *Instructions of Kagemni* record “do *maat* for the king, for *maat* is what the king loves”; the negative confession that was recited by the deceased, as his or her soul was judged against *maat*, included the profession “I have not disputed the king.” The sense of fealty to the king and its association with personal responsibility for the balance of the universe may help explain why there are so few periods of social unrest in Egypt—for to act against the king was to risk the stability of the cosmos. The association of government and *maat* reached even the lower levels of government. Viziers who dispensed justice in the name of the king wore a pendant in the form of the goddess Maat, which both alluded to their association with the goddess and their inspiration to act justly.

One of the clearest indications of the association of the king and the goddess Maat was the ritual of her presenta-

tion to the other gods. This ritual, which symbolized the dedication of the king to uphold the principles inherent in *maat* is first attested in the New Kingdom reign of Thutmose III (r. 1504–1452 BCE), although textual references suggest that it may be traced to Hatshepsut. The greatest number of examples from the eighteenth dynasty come from the early reign of Amenhotep IV (r. 1372–1355 BCE), who assumed the poorly understood epithet *nh m m3 t* “Living as truth.” The presentation of Maat was commonly depicted on the walls of Ramessid-era temples, especially in areas that were accessible to the public, which suggests that the ritual served as a symbol of royal legitimacy. This sense of the ritual being a royal prerogative has been verified in that only kings, one queen (Nefertiti), and a few others of quasi-royal status (Prince Osorkon and the “Gods’ Wives of Amun” of the twenty-fifth dynasty and the twenty-sixth) have been depicted presenting Maat to a god in nonfunerary contexts (a few tomb scenes, however, show nonroyal individuals presenting the image of the goddess).

Kings were considered to be imbued with *maat*. From the Old Kingdom reign of Sneferu (fourth dynasty) onward, the concept of *maat* was a common part of the royal titulary; many kings claimed the epithets *nb m3 t*, “Possessor of *maat*,” and *h m M3’t*, “who arises in *maat*.” Most of the Ramessid kings compounded their prenomen or nomen with *maat*. From the time of Sety I onward, many kings were depicted presenting a rebus of their prenomen to the gods thereby directly equating themselves with *maat*.

The deity Maat pervaded the world of the gods. She was considered to be the daughter of the sun god Re and she was the Eye of Re, so parts of her body were equated with Re’s body. She was also the “food of the gods,” and the gods claimed to have “gulped down Maat.” Maat served as the archtypical food offering for the gods, as suggested by offering scenes in the tombs of Merenptah, Sety II, Twosret, Sethnakhte, and Ramesses III, as well as at the Small Temple at Medinet Habu where *nw* vessels (normally associated with wine or other liquid offerings) are shown presented to the god—yet the offering scene is labeled as presenting Maat. Thoth had an especially close association with Maat, and the two deities are often shown paired.

The Goddess Maat. Representations of the goddess Maat are attested as early as the middle of the Old King-



MAAT. The goddess Maat wearing the Feather of Truth in her headdress. She is weighing the heart of Userhet, an official during the reign of Sety I. This is a detail of a copy (by Norman de Garis Davies) of a painting in Userhat's tomb at Thebes (tomb 51), dating from the nineteenth dynasty. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 15.5.18)

dom, initially in theophoric names. She is shown in the form of an idealized female, wearing a sheath dress and her characteristic emblem—an ostrich plume (phonogram *m3'*)—on her head. The symbolism of the emblem is uncertain, although the same emblem is shared by the god Shu, who in some cosmologies is her brother.

Temples and Cult of Maat. Despite the great importance placed on Maat, there is no evidence for a temple dedicated to her that predates the New Kingdom construction of the temple to Maat at Karnak North by Amenhotpe III. Textual references suggest that other temples of Maat were located at Memphis and at Deir el-Medina. The Karnak structure was used for the coronation of Queen Hatshepsut and, perhaps, for the investiture of some kings. The Tomb Robbery Papyri indicate that the court that met to investigate the robberies of the royal tombs during the reign of Ramesses IX convened at the Maat temple. Although texts refer to priests of Maat in the ranks *w'b*, *hry-hbt*, and *hm-ntr*, nothing is known about a cult specific to the goddess. The title *i*, "overseer of the

domain of Maat," suggests that lands and resources were held by the Maat temple, but nothing more is known of their extent or administration. In temple cult-offering scenes, Maat usually stands behind the king or behind the recipient. She rarely acts as the recipient of offerings.

Maat and Funerary Beliefs. Both the goddess Maat and the conception of ethics inherent in *maat* are most closely associated in the funerary realm—for correct behavior during life was a requisite for eternal life after death. Spell 816 of the Coffin Texts relates that Maat was associated with the Opening of the Mouth ceremony. By the New Kingdom, Maat was credited with being able to grant a good burial, and she is invoked in *hṯp di nsw* offering formulas. Her association with rebirth is most clearly illustrated by Chapter 125 of the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (*Book of the Dead*), first attested in the reign of Amenhotpe II, which shows the weighing of the heart against a small figure of Maat (or the feather emblem) to evaluate the worthiness of the deceased. In the New Kingdom and onward, Maat was increasingly associated with sun

hymns and solar imagery, in reference to the deceased's union with the cycle of the sun and, hence, eternal rebirth. Maat, or a dual form (Maaty), was pictured in the solar bark with her father Re. Sun hymns on the portals of private Theban tombs, such as that of Neferhotep (tomb 49), refer to the deceased presenting Maat to the sun god. By the twentieth dynasty, Maat acquired distinctively funerary associations, particularly in Thebes, through her fusion with Imnntt, the goddess of the west. The Theban necropolis was referred to as *st M3't*, "the place of Truth," and "the place for those who have done Maat." The peak over the Theban necropolis was referred to as "the great peak of the West in this its name of Maat." Ramessid epithets of Maat included "Mistress of the necropolis"; "Mistress of the West"; and "Mistress of the West who resides in the necropolis." By the Ramessid period, the association of the deceased with Maat was so strong that the transfigured *akhs* (souls) were, like the god themselves, considered to consume and live upon *maat*.

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EMILY TEETER

MAGIC. [This entry comprises four articles: An Overview; Magic in Medicine; Magic in Daily Life; and Magic in the Afterlife.]

An Overview

The concept of "magic" has proved to be a most difficult category for modern Egyptology, with little agreement regarding the definition or scope of supposedly magical practices. The designation of "magic" has been applied subjectively to any actions or recitations deemed "non-religious" by individual authors. Following the early an-

thropological theories of James G. Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, 1910) and Bronislaw Malinowski (*Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, 1948), "magic" is most frequently distinguished from "religion" on the basis of the former's "blasphemous," threatening attitude (as opposed to "proper" humility) and its immediate, limited, and personal goals (contrasted with rites and prayers for general well-being). Unfortunately, such distinctions are inadequate for ancient Egypt, where a threatening attitude may be adopted in orthodox public rituals for general benefit, and identical texts and rites may serve either personal or general ends. Seeking to avoid this problem, many scholars have adopted the term "magico-religious," while others have urged the abandonment of any category of magic. A working definition of *magic* as "any activity which seeks to obtain its goal by methods outside the simple laws of cause and effect" has been proposed by Ritner (1993, p. 69) and adopted in subsequent reference works (M. Depauw, *A Companion to Demotic Studies*, Brussels, 1997, p. 109).

Justification for the retention of the concept derives not from modern Egyptology but from indigenous terminology. In the Christian period, the Coptic term *hik* was equated explicitly with Greek *mageia* and Latin *magia* as a designation for impious and illegal sorcery. Coptic *hik* is the descendant of pharaonic (*hq3*), whose pre-Christian associations were, however, neither impious nor illegal. Attested from the Old Kingdom through the Roman era, *heka* represented a primary cosmic force and, personified as Heka, the eldest son of the universal creator. In this capacity of child deity, Heka was venerated as the junior member of local triads at Heliopolis in the Old Kingdom, the Memphite necropolis in the New Kingdom, the western Delta in the Third Intermediate Period, and Esna in Hellenistic times. His pivotal theological significance, substantially formulated before the Middle Kingdom, was recognized well beyond these local cult sites.

As detailed in the recitation "To Become the God Heka" (Coffin Text Spell 261), Heka was believed to have been formed "before duality had yet come into being" as the force that at once animated, compelled, and protected the gods and subsequent creation. Antecedent to the Creative Word (Hu), Heka infuses the creator's projected images, or *ka*-spirits, with his "magical" vitality, in keeping with the likely meaning of his name as "He who consecrates the *ka*-spirit." Representing the principle of consecrated imagery, Heka is styled "Lord of *ka*-spirits" in Coffin Text Spell 261, and the association recurs in Spell 648, where the "millions of *ka*-spirits within his mouth" serve as "powers" which instill fear in the gods, create the mountains, and knit the firmament together. The description of Heka's empowered imagery "within his mouth" reflects the close link between Egyptian magic and the word,