

EGYPTIAN PANTHEON

Nile Valley 1000 km long, 10 - 20 km wide, surrounded by desert

Periodic floods between July and October brought mud and silt that were the basis of the valley's fertility

Period of influence extends from 5000 B.C. (pre-Dynastic period) to 30 B.C. (beginning of Roman domination)

2613-2134 Old Kingdom (lower Egypt, effectively Nile Delta) included centres of Heliopolis (Isis, Osiris, Horus) and its capital, Memphis (Ptah). Construction of large pyramids, solar temples, obelisks.

1991-1550 Middle Kingdom extended to the first cataract of the Nile, at Elephantine. Notable centres Hermopolis (Thoth) and the new capital, Thebes. Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt.

1550-1070 New Kingdom extended to the fourth cataract of the Nile. Akhenaten (14th C.) institutes monotheistic worship of Aten, the solar disk, and moves capital to Tel-el-Amarna; polytheism returns after his death. Capital then moves to Avaris (Tanis), City of Ramses on the Nile Delta. Major construction at Luxor (Valley of the Kings) and Karnak.

715 foreign rule from Ethiopia

662 Egypt conquered by Assyria, freed by 609

343 conquered by Persia

332 conquered by Alexander the Great, beginning of Ptolemaic rule

30 beginning of Roman domination; temple construction continues to 370 C.E.

GODS OF HELIOPOLIS

Atum/Atmu/Tmu - Creator god, sometimes depicted as "the primordial mound". Arose from Nu(n), the primordial ocean of Chaos, and mated with himself to produce the first couple, Shu and Tefnut (in some versions, Hathor is their mother). Identified with Ra, the Sun God, from the earliest times. Personified the setting sun, and the sun before rising.

Ra (Re): The Sun, and Sovereign lord of the sky. Humanity was formed from his tears. In his old age (see Isis), men plotted against him, and he sent his divine Eye (in the form of the goddess Hathor, associated with Sekhmet) to slaughter humanity until he relented. Nut in the form of a cow took him to the vault of heaven, where he sails in his celestial boat by day, and battles evil in the underworld by night. He is born in the morning as a child, and dies in the evening as an old man. A triple god: "I am Khepera in the morning, I am Ra at noon, I am Tmu at even."

Khepera: The scarab beetle, god of the rising sun, who pushes it before him like a ball.

Shu (Air) and Tefnut (Moisture) twins, usually depicted as lion-headed. Children of Ra, or Atum. Mated to produce:

Geb (Seb) (Earth) and Nu(t) (Sky). In the Creation myth, they held each other tightly together, until Shu put himself between them, raising Nut up until only the tips of her fingers and toes touched Geb. Nut swallows the Sun at night, and gives birth to it in the morning. She is sometimes depicted as covered with stars. Geb lies beneath her, straining to reach her, and his undulations are the hills and valleys. Geb is frequently

associated with a goose, particularly the "Great Cackler", the mate of the Goose that laid the World Egg. Nut is frequently depicted with the head of a snake, or a cat. They had five children:

Osiris (Ausar): "the fat green man", associated with the constellation Orion. A god of vegetation who taught men agriculture (including brewing and wine-making), music, and religion. Later he became Lord of the Dead.

Set(h): Father of metallurgy. Later associated with evil: embodiment of the night, the desert, non-Egyptian lands, and the cruel sea. Prematurely tore himself from his mother's womb. His skin was white and his hair was red. Depicted in human form with the head of an unidentified animal (perhaps an ass or anteater). His jealousy led him to plot to kill Osiris.

Isis (Auset): "the Great Goddess", "the Divine Mother", "the mistress of charms and enchantments", "the Mother of the Gods", "the Living One". Her symbol is the throne; in some ways she is the embodiment of it. According to legend, she was originally a woman "who possessed words of power", and who tricked Ra in his feebleness to reveal his secret name to her, and she became a Goddess. Married to Osiris, and mother of Horus. Taught women to grind corn, spin flax, weave cloth, and taught men medicine. She is associated with the star Sothis (Sirius), whose rising coincided with the annual flood, and with the Morning Star.

Nephtys: twin sister of Isis. "Lady of the House", her hieroglyphic, a basket above a palace, is a symbol of her name. Associated with the Evening Star. Married to Set, but barren and wanting a child, she disguised herself as Isis, got Osiris drunk, and slept with him. From their union came Anubis. Isis and Nephtys usually are depicted together, behind Osiris, in the Hall of Judgement, and at the heads of sarcophagi of ordinary people, sometimes in the forms of hawks.

Horus the Elder (Haroeris): In some versions, son of Ra. A sun god and sky god, usually appears in the form of a falcon or hawk. Father (by Isis) of Canopic gods Hapi (ape-headed, North, small viscerae), Tuamautef (jackal-headed, East, heart and lungs), Amset (human-headed, South, stomach and intestines), and Qebhsennuf (falcon-headed, West, liver and gall bladder). Later confused with Horus the Younger (Harpocrates).

Horus (Heru, Harpocrates): Son of Isis and Osiris, avenger of Osiris, and occupies his throne. Conceived after Osiris' death, he is stunted from the waist down. Depicted as a child, often with a finger in his mouth (silence). Suffered as a child (bitten, burnt, stung, etc.). Osiris appeared to him frequently, and taught him the use of arms to avenge him by making war with Set. Many battles between Horus and Set, in which Horus temporarily lost his Eye of the Moon, and Set his genitals. War dragged on; Set took it to tribunal of the Gods, claiming Horus was illegitimate, until Horus proved otherwise and became ruler of the two Egypts.

Anubis (Anpu), son of Osiris and Nephtys. Depicted as a jackal, who opened for the dead the road to the underworld. Abandoned at birth, he was found and raised by Isis. Assisted Osiris in civilizing the world, and assisted in his burial rites. Messenger of Osiris.

OTHER MAJOR GODS AND GODDESSES:

Thoth (Djehuti): Hermopolis. God of divine intelligence, who ordered the Creation of the world. Scribe of the gods, inventor of arts, sciences, and mathematics. Depicted as ibis-headed (a pun on his name) or as a baboon, sometimes with the head of a dog. When Ptah mated with Nut, Ra was so infuriated with her faithlessness that he forbid her children be born in any month of the year. This was when the Egyptian year was 360 days. Thoth gambled with the moon for 1/72 of her light, and by winning became a moon god. Nut's children (Osiris, Horus the Elder, Set, Isis, and Nephthys) were born on the five days thus gained.

Maat: Hermopolis. Wife of Thoth, who assisted him in the Creation. A goddess of justice, who weighs the deceased's heart in the underworld. Her symbol is a red ostrich feather.

Ptah: Memphis. Smith-god, protector of artists and artisans. Created the world (in some versions, under the instructions of Thoth, with the assistance of Khnum, the ram-headed potter god associated with the primeval waters).

Hathor (Athy): Dendera. Cow-headed sky goddess; her solar disk and horns were adopted in depictions of Isis, with whom she became associated. Originally described as the daughter of Ra and wife of Horus. Protectress of women, goddess of joy and love. According to some texts, she created the world. She nourishes the living with her milk, and provides meat and drink for the dead.

Sekhmet: Memphis. Lion-headed goddess of fire, consort of Ptah, and mother of Imhotep, the deified architect of the first pyramid (c. 2670 B.C.). A goddess of war and terror; her arrows pierce hearts, the desert winds are her breath. "The Eye of Ra", destroyer of humanity, and punisher of evildoers in the underworld. Destructive incarnation of Hathor.

Bast(et): Bubastis. Cat-headed goddess (originally a lioness), representative of the ripening heat of the sun, as opposed to Sekhmet, who represents its destructive nature. Sometimes associated with the moon. A goddess of pleasure, music, and dance.

Neith (Net): Sais. Self-created virgin war goddess, mother of Ra. An ancient goddess, thought to have come from Libya. Her symbol is two crossed arrows on an animal skin. She was later associated with the domestic arts, and the weaver's shuttle became her symbol.

Taueret: Thebes. Goddess of childbirth and maternity, in some versions, the wife of Set. Depicted as an upright hippopotamus with sagging breasts, holding the hieroglyphic sign for protection.

Amon/Amun Thebes (c. 1800 B.C.E.) "The hidden one". Ram-headed "king of the gods" who absorbed many of Ra's characteristics, as Amon-Ra. God of fertility, patron of Pharaohs. A primeval Creator god who re-emerged in the 12th Dynasty to become the state god. As Egypt moved towards monotheism, he absorbed the names and titles of the old Egyptian gods.

Components of the Whole Person

khat -	the physical body, which is liable to decay
sahu -	the incorruptable spiritual body, into which the khat is transformed
though	prayers and ceremonies on the day of burial
ab -	the heart, seat of the power of life, and source of good and evil thoughts
ka -	the "double", the abstract personality having a separate existence (one is said to "go to his ka"); can dwell in statues, and eat food offered to it
ba -	the soul; dwells in the ka, has form and substance. Reanimates and converses with the khat, changes shape, can go to the spiritual world. Liable to decay if not fed.
khaibit -	the "shadow"; has independent existence from the body, eats funeral offerings;
	associated with or dwells near ba
khu -	the "spirit", or "intelligence" (aura?); the shining, translucent covering of the body
sekhem -	the form; exists in the spirit world, associated with ba and khu
ren -	the name; exists in the spirit world