

## The Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt

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**AMAUNET** "The hidden one." Female counterpart of Amun who was worshiped in Karnak and depicted as a woman wearing the crown of Lower Egypt.

**AMUN** "The hidden one." Creator-god of Thebes (Diosopolis Magna), who was connected with the sun-god Re, and who as "Amun-Re King of the Gods" became one of the most important gods of the Egyptians. He was worshiped principally at Karnak, where he formed a triad with Mut and Khons, but also elsewhere. He was usually shown as a human being wearing a cap and two plumes. As a fertility god, he was also linked with Min. His animals were the ram and the gander.

**ANAT and ASTARTE** West Semitic goddesses who were often worshiped together in Egypt in Ramesside times. They were connected with Seth, the divine foreigner of the Egyptian pantheon. Goddesses of warfare, related to the army and horses, they were portrayed carrying shield and weapons, usually in Egyptian dress, but also shown riding on horseback in the nude. They were worshiped mainly in the eastern Delta but also at Memphis (biblical Noph, modern Mit Rahina) and elsewhere.

**ANUBIS** "Puppy" (?). The divine embalmer, worshiped in several places as Lord of the Necropolis. He was depicted as a human being with a dog or jackal head, or as a recumbent dog or jackal.

**ANUKIS** Goddess of the region of the First Cataract. She was the divine daughter (rather than the usual son) in the triad of Elephantine, where she was worshiped together with her father and mother, Khnum and Satis. Elsewhere, for example at Komir near Esna, she was worshiped independently. She was represented as a woman wearing a crown of feathers or, more rarely, as a gazelle.

**APIS** Sacred bull with markings on his hide and a sun-disk between his horns, worshiped in Memphis, who became a manifestation or "herald," of Ptah. Other sacred bulls were Mnevis, worshiped at Heliopolis (biblical On) as a manifestation of Re, and Bukhis, worshiped at Armant (Hermonthis, Iuny) as a manifestation of Montu.

**APOPIS** The snake enemy of the sun-god Re. Con-

sidered to be a demonic dragon and not a god, he was not worshiped anywhere.

**ASTARTE**, see under **ANAT**

**ATEN** "Sun-disk." He became a deity in the time of Akhenaten, who made him his sole and exclusive god. He was initially depicted with a hawk's head, but this was soon replaced by the image of a sun-disk with rays terminating in human hands often extending symbols of life toward the king and his family. (See next chapter.)

**ATUM** "The completed one" and "the one who is not," according to the dual meaning of his name. Primeval creator-god depicted as a human being wearing the double crown and worshiped at Heliopolis as head of the Great Ennead ("Nine Gods"), consisting of Atum, Shu, Tefenet (Tefnut), Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys.

**BAAL** West Semitic god introduced into Egypt during the time of the Hyksos and closely connected with Seth, the divine foreigner in the Egyptian pantheon. He was depicted as a Syrian, wearing a pointed beard, a conical headdress, and foreign dress. Baal, or the foreign Seth, was worshiped at Memphis, in the eastern Delta, and elsewhere.

**BASTET** "She-of-Baset," one of the many Egyptian lioness goddesses, worshiped in Baset or Bubastis (Tell Basta, near modern Zaqaziq in the Delta). In the first millennium BCE, she specialized as the friendly and appeased counterpart of the dangerous lioness goddess Sakhmet and was rendered as a cat or as a woman with the head of a cat.

**BES** God of the bedroom, connected with sexuality and fertility, but also a protective family god who repels evil, especially at night and at the birth of a child. He was primarily worshiped in private homes and had no special cult center. He was depicted as a dwarf with a masklike face, and often with a crown of feathers, a lion's mane, or exotic coiffure.

**BULLS**, sacred, see **APIS**

**DEDWEN** Anthropomorphic god presiding over Nubia and its products, such as incense. Despite being a Nubian, he was usually rendered in normal Egyptian form. In Nubia his cult is attested in al-Lessiya and Uronarti.

**ENNEAD**, see **ATUM**

**GEB** God of the earth. He was separated from his

consort Nut, the goddess of the sky, by his father Shu. Geb is "father of the gods," especially of Osiris, and "prince of the gods" as heir of Atum. He was depicted in human form. He was worshiped at Heliopolis and elsewhere.

**HAPY** "Inundation." Personification of the fecundity of the Nile and therefore typified as an obese human figure that was sometimes interpreted as being androgynous.

**HATHOR** "House of Horus." One of the most universal Egyptian goddesses, who was worshiped in many temples. She was the goddess of women, dance, drunkenness, and sexual excitation, but she was also identified with the desert plateau where the dead were buried. She was usually rendered as a woman with cow horns and a sun-disk on her head or as a cow, but she was also shown as a lioness or as a tree-goddess.

**HAURON** West Semitic god introduced into Egypt during the New Kingdom, where he was identified with the Great Sphinx at Giza as Hauron-Harmakhis. He was depicted as a sphinx or a falcon. He was worshiped at Giza and elsewhere.

**HEKA** "Magic." Personification of magic or creative energy. He was depicted in human form in the sun bark, together with Hu, or "authoritative utterance," and Sia, or "planning percipience," all aspects of the creator-god. Heka was also worshiped as a divine child, especially in the western Delta and at Esna (Isna, Iunyt, Lato-polis).

**HORUS** "The distant one" (?). God of the sky and of kingship. Depicted as a hawk or falcon, or as a man with a hawk's head. He absorbed several local gods with hawk form and was linked with the sun-god as Re-Harakhty, "Re-Horus-of-the-horizon," and with Osiris and Isis as Harpocrates, "Horus-the-child," or Harendotes, "Horus-who-protects-his-father," or Harsiese, "Horus-the-son-of-Isis." He was worshiped in many places, among which the oldest may have been Nekhen (Hierakonpolis, Kom al-Ahmar).

**IMHOTEP** Deified official of King Djoser of the Third Dynasty. He was later considered to be a patron of scribes, healers, sages, and magicians, and was regarded as the son of the god Ptah and of a woman called Khreduankh. He was portrayed as a human being sitting on a chair with an open papyrus roll on his lap, and was worshiped at Memphis and Thebes.

**ISIS** Sister and wife of Osiris and mother of Horus. She was a mother goddess but she also specialized in protective magic. Like Hathor, with whom she is often identified, she became one

of the most universal goddesses of Egypt. She was usually shown as a woman with the hieroglyph for "throne" on her head. She was the subject of major cults on the island of Philae in the First Cataract, and at Bahbayt al-Hagar (Hebyt, Iseum) in the Delta.

**IUSAAS** and **NEBETHETEPET** "She comes, being great" and "mistress of the vulva." Pair of goddesses, personifying the male and female organs. Iusaas was represented as a woman with a scarab on her head, Nebethetepet as a woman with either the crown of Hathor (cow horns and sun-disk) or a naos-sistrum on her head. Both of them were consorts of Re-Atum, and were called "Eye of Re" and "Hand of Atum." They were worshiped at Heliopolis in a temple called Hetepet, and elsewhere.

**KHEPRI** "He who is coming into being." Form of the morning sun (the other forms being Re, the midday sun, and Atum, the evening sun). Usually rendered as a scarab, symbol of spontaneous life but also occasionally in human form with a scarab for a head. He was worshiped at Heliopolis and elsewhere.

**KHNUM** Ram-headed creator god who was worshiped in the cataract area around Elephantine, where he formed a triad with the goddesses Satis and Anukis. Other important cult centers were at Esna and at Herwer near Hermopolis in Middle Egypt. He was known as a creator god, not only because of the procreative powers of the ram but also because he molded gods, men, and animals on a potter's wheel.

**KHONSU** "The wanderer," or "He who comes and goes." Moon-god who was usually depicted as a child wearing the sidelock symbolic of youth but sometimes also with a hawk's head. In both cases he wore the sign of the moon on his head. In the triad of Karnak, he was the divine child of Amun and Mut. He had an important temple in the precinct of Amun at Karnak.

**MA'AT** Personification of cosmic and social order. Shown as a woman with an ostrich plume on her head. Daughter of Re and, like many other goddesses, often called Eye of Re. She had a temple in the precinct of Montu at Karnak, but she was also worshiped in many other temples.

**MERET** Divine songstress and musician. The two Meret goddesses are usually depicted with raised arm and with the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt on their heads. Although they played an important role in ritual on the divine level, they had no local cult center.

**MIN** Mummiform god with erect penis, wearing a

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cap with two plumes, and right arm raised with a flail. He was chiefly a fertility god, but he also protected the tracks in the Eastern Desert; he was worshiped at Koptos (Qift, Gebtu) and Akhmim (ancient Khem, Panopolis).

**MONTU** Ancient principal god of the Theban area, who was specialized as a war god during the New Kingdom. Normally shown as a hawk-headed man, wearing the sun-disk, usually with a double uraeus, and two plumes. He was worshiped at Karnak and in the neighboring towns of Armant, Tod, and Medamud.

**MUT** "Mother." The name of this goddess was written with a hieroglyph depicting a vulture, symbol of femininity and motherhood. She was usually shown as a woman wearing the double crown, but as she was often identified with Sakhmet, she could also be depicted as a lioness-headed woman. From the Eighteenth Dynasty on, she was the consort of Amun. Her most important temple was at Karnak, where she had a separate precinct south of Amun's.

**NEFERTEM** God of the lotus that appeared from the primeval waters at the beginning of the creation. He is usually represented as a human figure with a lotus on his head or as a child sun-god seated on the lotus. In Memphis he was the divine child in a triad with Ptah and Sakhmet.

**NEITH** Primeval goddess, sometimes said to be both male and female. Goddess of war and hunting, who usually wore the Red Crown of Lower Egypt or an emblem consisting of two crossed arrows and a shield. Her most important cult centers were Sais and Esna.

**NEKHMET** "She of Nekheb (Elkab)." Tutelary goddess of Upper Egypt who, together with Wadjjet, the goddess of Lower Egypt, protected the king. She was depicted as a vulture or as a woman wearing the "vulture cap," sometimes surmounted by the White Crown of Upper Egypt flanked by two ostrich plumes. Her most important temples were in the area of Elkab.

**NEPHTHYS** "Mistress of the House." Depicted as a woman with the hieroglyphs of her name on her head. Inseparable sister of Isis, whom she helps to protect Osiris. Often said to be childless herself she played the role of the divine wailing woman and wet nurse. She was nominal consort of Seth, with whom she was worshiped in Middle Egypt.

**NUN** Personification of the primeval waters, who was before and outside the organized cosmos and, hence, called "Father of the Gods." He was sometimes depicted as a human being, whose

lower body was hidden in unfathomable depths and upon whose hands the bark of the sun-god was raised aloft from the waters at sunrise. With Naunet, his female counterpart, Huh and Hauhet, Kuk and Kauket, and Amun and Amaunet, he and they formed the Ogdoad (Eight Gods) of Hermopolis, who embodied the characteristics of the world before creation.

**NUT** Sky goddess depicted as a nude woman arching over the earth-god Geb. At night the sun-god entered her body through her mouth to be reborn from her womb in the morning; hence, she became a goddess protecting the dead. She also was sometimes described as a sow giving birth to her children, the heavenly bodies, and then swallowing them. She had no special cult center but was worshiped with her children Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys, and with other members of the Ennead, at Heliopolis.

**OGDOAD**, see **NUN**

**ONURIS** "He who brings the distant (goddess)."

The name referred to the myth of the Solar Eye who had gone to the south and was pacified and brought back by Onuris. He was rendered as a man wearing a crown of four plumes and carrying a spear, or sometimes a rope, suggesting the capture of the wild lioness who became a peaceful cat. He was often identified with Shu, but his role in the myth of the Solar Eye could also be played by Thoth. He was worshiped with the local lioness-goddess Mehit in the area of Abydos (Araba al-Madfunna) in Upper Egypt; another cult center was at Sebennytos (Sammannud) in the Delta.

**OSIRIS** God of regeneration usually shown in the form of a mummy wearing the crown of Upper Egypt flanked by two ostrich plumes and carrying the *heqa* scepter and the flail. He was killed by his brother Seth but was resurrected by Isis to become lord of the underworld, his son and reincarnation, Horus, ruling on earth in his place. He was also a god of the resurgent vegetation. His most important cult centers were Abydos and Busiris (Abusir in the Delta).

**PTAH** "Fashioner." Divine craftsman who created the cosmos with heart (thought and will) and tongue (word). Shown as a man wearing a close-fitting garment like a mummy and a close-fitting blue skullcap like the craftsmen whose patron god he was. He did not wear the usual curved beard of the gods but a straight one. He was worshiped at Memphis, where he formed a triad with Sakhmet and Nefertem, and elsewhere.

**QADESH (QUDSHU, QEDSHET)** Semitic goddess in-

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roduced into Egypt during the New Kingdom. Her name was an epithet of West Semitic goddesses: the Holy One. She was depicted as a nude goddess, and unlike most Egyptian deities, she was shown nude in full frontal view, standing on a lion with both lotus flowers and snakes in her hands, thus expressing exotic sensuality. Qadesh is attested from various places, but she had no important cult center.

**RE** Sun-god, worshiped as creator and sustainer of the cosmos, traveling in a bark along the sky by day and through the underworld by night. He was usually depicted in human form with a sundisk on his head, but often also hawk-headed (as Re-Harakhty, "Re-Horus-of-the-Horizon") or ram-headed (as the nocturnal sun who unites with Osiris). He was combined with many other gods and worshiped in many places, but especially at Heliopolis as Re-Atum and Re-Harakhty and at Karnak, which was termed "Southern Heliopolis" (the southern counterpart of the "real" Heliopolis in the north), as Amun-Re.

**RENUKET** "Snake who nourishes." Goddess of the harvest who nursed both the king and the grain god, Nepri. Depicted as a cobra or as a woman with a snake's head, she had a special cult at Madinat Madi (Narmouthis) in the Faiyum. She survived the disappearance of the Egyptian religion to become a Christian saint, Thermuthis, the daughter of the pharaoh who raised Moses.

**RESHEP** West Semitic god introduced into Egypt during the New Kingdom. Depicted as a Syrian wearing a pointed beard, a conical headdress with a gazelle's head attached to its front, and a short skirt with tassels, he carried a shield and spear and brandished a battle-ax. Attestations of his cult are found all over Egypt, but he had no important cult center.

**SAKHMET** "The most powerful one." One of the many forms of the Eye (or Daughter) of Re, usually depicted as a woman with the head of a lioness. Often worshiped at the entrances of wadis, especially in Upper Egypt; she was said to have halted there on her journey back from Nubia, to which she had retreated after a quarrel with her father, Re. Her principal cult center was Memphis, where she became the consort of Ptah and mother of Nefertem. As the Eye of the Sun she was destructive and beneficent at the same time, spreading as well as curing disease and protecting the king and his subjects as well as attacking his enemies.

**SATIS** Goddess of the region of the First Cataract,

where she was worshiped as the consort of Khnum and the mother of Anukis in the triad of Elephantine. She was rendered as a woman wearing the crown of Upper Egypt flanked by two antelope horns.

**SELQET (SELKET, SELKIS)** "She who causes (the throat) to breathe." Protecting and healing goddess, depicted as a woman wearing a water scorpion on her head. If she had a special cult center, it may have been in the western Delta at Kedam, between Sais and Buto (Tell al-Fara'in).

**SESHAT** Goddess of writing, learning, and libraries. Depicted as a woman often wearing a panther skin and with her special five-horned emblem (which has not been successfully explained), above her head. No special cult center is known.

**SETH** God of confusion, who murdered Osiris and fought with Horus, but who also repelled the dangerous Apopis snake. The divine foreigner in the Egyptian pantheon. He was shown as a fabulous animal (the so-called Seth-animal) or as a man with that animal's head. He was worshiped at Ombos (Naqada) in Upper Egypt and elsewhere until his demonization in late times.

**SHAY** Personification of "destiny" (translation of Shay). Protecting god and also an aspect of the human person, he was depicted as a man and also as a snake. He had no special cult center but was worshiped locally in temples with other deities.

**SHED** "Savior." Name or epithet of Horus and of several other deities. This helper of humanity in times of distress was recognized as a distinct deity from the New Kingdom on, and was shown as a naked child, often with the head of a gazelle attached to his forehead. He was worshiped at Dayr al-Madina in western Thebes and elsewhere.

**SHU** God of the void between heaven and earth and of the air and light that filled the void, and therefore often shown separating his children Geb and Nut. He and his sister, and wife Tefnut, were created by Atum through masturbation and expectoration. As the first exclusively male being, Shu had some aggressive and bellicose traits and as such was connected with Onuris. Depicted as a man with a feather on his head or with a lion's head, he was worshiped at Leontopolis (Tell al-Muqdam in the Delta) and elsewhere.

**SOBEK** God of swamps and rivers, and of fertility—embodying both the beneficial and the dangerous aspect of the water; son of Neith. He was rendered as a crocodile or as a man with a croco-

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dile's head, and was widely worshiped, especially in the Faiyum and at Kom Ombo.

**SOKAR** Sokar was a god of death and resurrection, like Osiris, and a god of craftsmanship, especially metalwork, like Ptah. He was depicted as a man with a falcon's head but occasionally also as a man wearing a crown consisting of a sun-disk, double ostrich plumes, and ram horns, like Tatenen. He was worshiped at Memphis, especially in its vast necropolis, but through his links with Osiris his cult spread to many other places.

**TATENEN** God of the depths of the earth. From the New Kingdom and combined with or identified with Ptah, this deity is often associated with the primeval hill, his name being interpreted as "Risen Land." Depicted as a man wearing a crown consisting of a sun-disk, double ostrich plumes, and ram horns. He was worshiped in the Memphite area and elsewhere.

**TEFENET** Daughter of Atum, sister and consort of Shu, Eye of Re. The first female being, who had to be appeased with wine, music, and dancing so she would not turn into a fierce lioness. She was represented as a woman, a lioness, or a woman with the head of a lioness, sun-disk, and uraeus. She was worshiped at Leontopolis and combined with various local goddesses in many other temples.

**THOERIS** "The great (goddess)." Popular protective goddess, especially for women in childbirth and young mothers; known under several names. Shown as a composite being with the body of a pregnant hippopotamus with pendulous human breasts, the paws of a lioness, and the tail of a crocodile. Sanctuaries at Thebes and elsewhere.

**THOTH** Moon-god, scribe of the gods, god of learning and writing, and god of wise government. As the divine arbitrator he mediated in the conflict of Horus and Seth. He was depicted as an ibis or a man with a head of an ibis, or as a baboon. He had two principal cult centers, in Upper and Lower Egypt, both called Hermopolis.

**WADJIT** Tutelary goddess of Lower Egypt who, together with Nekhbet, goddess of Upper Egypt, protected the king. She was represented as a cobra, and was also shown as a woman with the head of a lioness and a cobra on her forehead. She was worshiped at Buto in the Delta.

**WEPWAWET** Protective god who opened the ways for the king and for the dead, depicted as a standing black jackal. He was worshiped at Asyut (ancient Lykopolis) and at Abydós, where he was usually divided into an Upper Egyptian and a Lower Egyptian Wepwawet and where he was linked with the funerary god Osiris.