Gods and Goddesses

The Egyptian pantheon included hundreds of deities: many originated as local gods who became the focus of important cults, while some were borrowed from other cultures. Some deities were merged, or ‘syncretized’ with each other, blending their attributes, sometimes allowing a lesser god to take on the distinction and importance of a greater one. Most of the major, or universal, deities represented cosmic forces, such as the sun or the flood, or were associated with the mysteries of human life, such as birth and death.

Aker
The earth god Aker was the divine personification of the eastern and western horizons, which signified the entrance and exit into and out of the Netherworld, Aker was important in funerary texts and imagery. He was represented as two lions sitting back to back, or as a piece of land with a lion or a human head at each end (one facing east and one facing west).

Amen
By the New Kingdom (c.1550–c.1069 BC) Amen had achieved the position of head of the state pantheon. His national significance was due to the emergence of local Theban rulers who were successful in reuniting and ruling the whole of Egypt after a period of disruption. An early Twelfth-Dynasty inscription in the jubilee chapel of King Senusret I (c.1920 BC) at Karnak describes Amen as ‘the king of the gods’. His pre-eminence also had much to do with his amalgamation with Re, the ancient sun god of Heliopolis, to create the deity Amen-Re. He was also combined with the fertility god Min, to form the god Amen-Min or Amen Kamutef (‘Bull of his Mother’).

Amen’s name means ‘the Hidden One’ and one of his epithets was ‘mysterious of form’, although he was usually represented in human form wearing a tall double-plumed headdress. He could also be envisaged as a ram — Ovis platyra — with horns curving inwards close to the head. In a hymn on Papyrus Leiden 1,350, he is described as the ‘Great Honker’ — a primeval goose.

From at least as early as the Eleventh Dynasty (c.2055 – c.1985 BC) Amen’s chief cult centre was the temple at Karnak in Thebes, where he was worshipped with his consort, the vulture mother-goddess Mut, and their child the lunar deity Khonsu. As early as the Fifth Dynasty (c.2550 – c.2345 BC) he appeared in the Pyramid Texts accompanied by a consort named as Amaunet.

Anat
As a goddess of war, Anat was believed to protect the king in battle. Thus she was often depicted with a lance, axe and shield. She also wore a tall crown surmounted by feathers.

Anat is an excellent example of the Egyptian acceptance of foreign deities into their pantheon of gods, because she actually originated in Syria-Palestine as
Anubis
The god of embalming and cemeteries, Anubis was an ancient deity to whom prayers for the survival of the deceased in the Afterlife were addressed during the early Old Kingdom before Osiris rose to prominence as the god of the dead. Anubis continued to assist in the judgement of the dead and accompanied the deceased to the throne of Osiris for the ritual of the Weighing of the Heart. He was also the patron of embalmers. Anubis had several epithets including 'Foremost of the westerners' (i.e. the dead buried on the west bank of the Nile); 'he who is upon his mountain' (i.e. the desert cliffs overlooking the cemeteries); ‘Lord of the Sacred land’ (i.e. the desert in which the burials were located); ‘the one presiding over the god’s pavilion’ (i.e. the place where embalming took place, or the burial chamber); and ‘the one who is in the place of embalming’.

Anubis was depicted as a jackal or as a man with the head of a jackal. Priests who prepared bodies for burial and conducted burial ceremonies are thought to have impersonated the god by wearing jackal masks. Since jackals were common scavengers in Egyptian burial sites, the honouring of Anubis in this guise may have represented a way of protecting the dead from molestation.
Astarte
This goddess appears to have been almost interchangeable with Anat. She was also associated with war (particularly with horses and chariots), and was thought to protect the king in battle. She was of Syrian origin, and there is no evidence for her cult in Egypt before the Eighteenth Dynasty (c.1150–c.1295 BC).
She was usually represented as a naked woman riding a horse and wearing the atef-crown or bull's horns on her head. She was variously regarded as the daughter of Re or of Ptah, and was thought to be one of Seth’s consorts.

As a funerary deity, Atum’s presence is significant on the walls of non-royal Theban tombs of the New Kingdom (c.1550–c.1069 BC) such as that of Sennedjem, c.1300 BC.

Atum was the self-engendered creator god who arose from the primordial waters of chaos, Nun, in order to form the primeval mound and to bring the elements of the cosmos into being. As the head of the so-called Ennead (or nine gods), he held the title ‘Lord to the Limits of the Sky’. His cult centre was at Heliopolis, and he was regarded very much as a solar deity (at some stage he was syncretized with the pre-eminent sun god, Re, in order to form the combined deity Ra-Atum).

Atum was very much associated with kingship, and was believed to lift the dead king from his pyramid to the stars. Later, as a result of the gradual democratization of funerary religion, he came to be regarded as the protector not only of the king but of all dead people on their way into the Afterlife.

Atum was usually represented as a man wearing the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, although he could also be portrayed as a snake. Additional animals were deemed sacred to him, including the lion, bull, mongoose, lizard and dung beetle.
aba
This most dangerous, Baba was believed to murder humans and feed on their entrails. He was associated with reversion and virility—especially those who died. Sometimes his penis was used to be the bolt on the doors of aven, and at other times it was the aven on the ferry in the Netherworld. He is believed to be able to ward off aces and to control darkness and turbulent waters. He is represented as a baboon.

Eye of Re
According to this strange concept, the eye of the sun god was in fact separate from him and could act independently. In the myth of The Destruction of Humankind it manifested itself first as Hathor and then as the more ferocious divine female force, Sekhmet.

The Eye was also identified with the cobra goddess Wadjet, one of the protective female deities of kingship, who appears rearing up at the front of the royal headdress, ready to spit poison at the king’s enemies. This rearing snake is known as the uraeus.

Geb
As the divine personification of the earth, Geb was a god of fertility. For this reason, he was sometimes coloured green and was visualized with plants growing out of him. He was often depicted reclining beneath the arched body of

Hathor
A mother goddess, Hathor was associated with love, fertility, sexuality, music, dance and alcohol. She was sometimes represented entirely anthropomorphically, in the form of a cow, or as a woman with cow’s ears. When in human form, her headdress could be one of cow’s horns with a solar disc, or a falcon on a perch. She was also a sky goddess, and was regarded as a vast cow who straddled the heavens, with her four legs marking the four cardinal points.
In various contexts she was honoured as ‘Lady of the West’ or ‘Lady of the Western Mountain’, ‘Lady of Byblos’, ‘Lady of Turquoise’ and ‘Lady of Faience’. The ‘west’ or ‘western mountain’ refers to the place of the setting sun and thus, by analogy, the realm of the dead. Byblos was a port on the Lebanese coast, important for Egyptian trade and particularly in the importing of cedar wood, since Egypt had no native timber for the construction of boats or large buildings. Egypt exploited turquoise mines from Predynastic times, especially in the Sinai Peninsula (a temple to Hathor has been found at the mining site of Serabit el-Khadim). Faience was a much-used glazed ceramic material composed primarily of crushed quartz or quartz sand, and usually a blue or green colour (perhaps a cheap imitation of turquoise).

Like Isis, Hathor was considered to be the mother of the falcon deity Horus, and thus of the king (who was closely identified with Horus). Her name means ‘the House of Horus’. However, inscriptions on the temple of Horus at Edfu refer to Hathor marrying this deity. The king was sometimes depicted being suckled by the goddess in cow form, as shown by a wonderful statue in the Cairo Museum from Deir el-Bahri of the Eighteenth-Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep II (c.1427–c.1400 BC) enjoying just such sustenance. Although she was sometimes identified with the Eye of Re, she appeared on other occasions as the sun god’s daughter.

From the Old Kingdom (c.2686–c.2181 BC) Hathor’s chief cult centre was at Dendera. Her festivities appear to have been suitably debauched. An emblem of her cult was the sistrum (or rattle), which would have been shaken as part of the ritual proceedings. The existing temple on this site dates to the Graeco-Roman Period, and is dedicated to the triad Hathor, Horus and Ihy, Hathor’s son, who played the sistrum in her honour.
Horus

He king of Egypt was closely identified with Horus from the beginning of dynastic history (c.3100 BC). The god as represented as a falcon, or with the head of a falcon, and one of his most ubiquitous symbols was the ‘Eye of Horus’ (the udjat- or wadjat-eye). In one version of the myth of The Contendings of Horus and Seth, Horus had both his eyes gouged out. In other versions he lost (and then regained) only his left eye. As the weaker of the two, it came to be associated with the moon while the right eye was associated with the sun. Because in both instances his eyesight was eventually cured, his eye came to symbolize healing (udjat literally means ‘sound’). It was used as a protective amulet, symbolizing strength and perfection, and also represented the waxing and waning moon.

Horus’s name means ‘He Who is Above’, and is probably linked to his status as a god of the sky and to the high soaring of the falcon. As ‘Horus in the Horizon’ he was called a Horemakhet and in this capacity he was amalgamated with the solar deity Re to become Re-Horakhty.

From the Late Period (c.747 BC) he appeared in his child form, Hor-pa-khered (whom the Greeks called Harpocrates) on a form of stela known as a cippus of Horus. He was usually depicted treading crocodiles underfoot and grasping snakes, scorpions and other such dangerous creatures. It is always clear that he was intended to be a child because he was pictured naked, sporting a particular hairstyle known as the ‘side-lock of youth’. The idea behind this aspect of the god was that since Horus as a young boy had managed to survive certain dangers, a ritual could be performed using his image to protect children from similar threats (or perhaps to cure snake bites and scorpion stings). Water was poured over the cippi (which were covered in spells), causing the liquid to be imbued with their magical potency, so it could be ritually imbibed or applied.

Horus was honoured as an element of the divine triad at the cult centre of Abydos, but he is most associated with the temple at Edfu (ancient Mesen), where he was worshipped as part of a triad with his consort Hathor and their child Harsomtus. He was also closely associated with Hierakonpolis (‘Town of the Hawk’, ancient Nekhen) in the south and a town called Behdet in the Delta. As ‘Horus of Behdet’ he was represented as a winged sun disc.

**As the god of kingship, Horus was often shown wearing the combined Red and White Crowns of Lower and Upper Egypt, as on this column at the temple of Kom Ombo.**

**The ‘Eye of Horus’ is a ubiquitous emblem in ancient Egyptian art. It symbolized healing, wholeness, strength and perfection. New Kingdom.**
Huh/Heh
The frog-headed god Huh was the personification of formlessness and infinity. His consort was the snake-headed goddess Haubet. He was often represented anthropomorphically holding in each hand a palm-rib (the hieroglyph for ‘year’).

Isis
Like Hathor, Isis was a mother goddess and was identified more specifically as the mother of Horus, and thus of the king. The image of her suckling Horus (especially found in the form of numerous bronze figurines dating to the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods) is reminiscent of the Christian mother-and-child icon.

Isis tended to be represented as a woman with a throne, or solar disc between cow’s horns, on her head. She was sometimes regarded as the personification of the throne: the hieroglyph for her name is the image of a throne, and her lap came to be seen as the throne of Egypt. She was also frequently depicted with huge, sheltering wings. She was part of the Emnead of Heliopolis, and as consort to Osiris and mother of Horus, she appeared in the triad of deities worshipped at Abydos. Her best-known cult centre was on the island of Philae, on the southern border of Egypt, near Aswan. She was particularly closely associated with magic. Her ability to heal and to transform herself into any guise she desired are evident in the myths about her. Two important manifestations of this goddess were the ‘Great White Sow of Heliopolis’ and the Isis-cow which gave birth to the sacred Apis Bull of Memphis. Her following eventually spread beyond Egypt, to Syria, Palestine, Greece and throughout the whole Roman Empire, and she was worshipped until well into Christian times.
Several species of dung beetle are found in Egypt, but the large sacred scarab, Scarabaeus sacer, is the one most commonly represented in ancient Egyptian art.

Khepri
The god Khepri (which literally means 'He who is Coming into Being') was a creator and solar deity. He was represented as a scarab or dung beetle, or as a beetle-headed man. The choice of a dung beetle to portray a creator god and the manifestation of the rising sun is significant because of the activities of such a beetle. It was observed to roll its eggs in a ball of dung along the ground, and the ball was identified with the sun. The baby beetles were seen to emerge from the dung, as if life was emerging from the primeval mound, and so dung beetles were hought capable of spontaneous creation.

From the Middle Kingdom (c.2055–c.1650 BC) onwards the scarabiform amulet was very popular, and was worn in bracelets and necklaces. Scarabs were used as funerary talismans, and were placed over the heart of the deceased to keep it from confessing sins during its interrogation.

Khnum
Khnum was an ancient deity represented as a man with the head of a ram, or in entirely ram form. The type of ram used to portray him was the earliest one to be domesticated in Egypt – the Ovis longipes – which had curly horns extending horizontally from the head. The ancient Egyptian term for 'ram' was ba, which was also the word for a concept akin to our 'personality' (possibly those non-physical attributes which make any one human being unique, or perhaps the moral essence of a person's motivation and movement). It may well then have been thanks to the ancient Egyptian love of puns that Khnum came to be regarded as the ba of the Sun god Re, and so this deity was represented with a ram's head while passing through the Netherworld in his solar barque.

Certainly the ba of the dead appeared to be more mobile than their ka ('spirit'). Connected with Khnum's capacity as a creator god was his role as patron deity of potters, and his association with the fertile soil, the annual inundation and the Nile cataracts. His chief cult centre was situated on the island of Elephantine, at the first cataract at the southern border of Egypt. Another important temple to Khnum was located at Esna. Here his consort was the lioness-goddess Menhyt. And it was here that the Festival of the Potter's Wheel was celebrated each year.
Khonsu was depicted as a young man usually wrapped in the bandages of a mummy or other tight-fitting garment and carrying the royal crook, flail and sceptre.

**Khonsu**

The son of Amon and Mut, Khonsu’s name means ‘wanderer’, which probably refers to the passage of the moon across the sky, as he was a lunar deity. In the late period, he was also considered an important god of healing. His chief cult centre was at Thebes.

**Kuk**

The frog-headed god Kuk was the personification of darkness. His consort was the snake-headed Kauket.

**Min**

As a god of fertility, Min was represented in semi-mummified human form, his left hand holding his erect phallus and his right arm raised. The key feature of his headdress was two tall plumes. The emblems of his cult were the lettuce and an unidentified shape which could possibly be a door-bolt, a barbed arrow, a lightning bolt or a pair of fossil shells. He was a particularly

Nefertem

This deity was associated with the lotus blossom, and was represented in male human form with the blue lotus (*Nymphaea caerulea*) on his head (see *Plants and Flowers in Mythology*). His headdress sometimes also incorporated two plumes and two necklace counterpoises.

The *Creation Myth of Hermopolis Magna* states that the sun rose from the primeval lotus flower, and Nefertem was
In this scene from the New Kingdom papyrus Book of the Dead of Ani, the sister goddesses Isis and Nephthys kneel with their arms raised in the posture of worship and adoration. c.1400 BC.

with her consort Seth and their child Sobek, the crocodile god. As a mother goddess she was given the epithet ‘Great Cow’ (as were the goddesses Nut and Hathor). She was also considered a creator goddess and as such was equated with the primordial waters of chaos, Nun.

Together with Isis, Nephthys and the scorpion goddess, Selket, she was a funerary goddess: they each protected one of the ‘Four Sons of Horus’ who in turn looked after the internal organs of the deceased. Neith was specifically associated with the jackal-headed Duamutef who protected the stomach and upper intestines. She was also linked with the linen mummy bandages because she was believed to have invented weaving.

Nephthys
In later mythology, Nephthys was regarded as the mother of the jackal-headed god of embalming, Anubis, as a result of a union with Osiris. She was the sister of Isis, Osiris and Seth (of whom she was also thought to be a consort). She appears to have been an aide to her better-known sister Isis. Like her, Nephthys was usually depicted in human form, but could also be represented as a kite. Her name means ‘Lady of the Mansion’, and her headdress consisted of the hieroglyphs for this epithet (a basket on top of the enclosure wall of a grand house).

Nephthys was associated with the head of the deceased or the coffin (in collaboration with Isis at the foot). She was also one of the protective canopic deities: she protected the baboon-headed son of Horus, Hapy, who in turn guarded the lungs of the deceased.

Neith
A particularly ancient goddess whose main cult centre was at Sais in the Delta, Neith rose to particular prominence during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 BC), when Sais was the home of the ruling family and the capital of Egypt. Her emblem was a shield with crossed arrows, emphasizing her association with warfare (the Greeks later identified her with their goddess Athena). This symbol has been found on objects dating all the way back to the First Dynasty (c.3100–c.2890 BC). She is usually depicted wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. Neith formed a triad

Nefertem was worshipped at Memphis the son of god Ptah and the lioness-goddess Sekhmet, so he was sometimes pictured as lion-headed. He was also occasionally referred to as the son of the goddess Bastet or, to complicate utter further, as the son of the cobra-goddess Wadjet at Buto.

Nefertem as ‘the lotus blossom which before the nose of Re’ (Utterance 36). His universal importance is pressed in his title ‘Protector of the two Lands’ (khener tawy), referring to Upper and Lower Egypt.

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Nun

Nun was the divine personification of the primordial waters of chaos, which preceded creation. He was described as the ‘oldest father’ and ‘maker of humankind’. After creation had taken place, chaos was believed to continue to exist beyond the edges of the universe, and in the Netherworld, and was the place of social outcasts and demons.

The mudbrick enclosure walls of temples were sometimes constructed in curved courses (pan bedding), which resulted in a wavy effect. This was possibly meant to imitate the waters of Nun, the temple itself symbolizing the universe (see Temple Architecture). Nun was also thought to be present within the context of the temple, in the form of the sacred lake.
Nun could be represented as a baboon, or with a frog’s head, or in an entirely human form, with a beard. In the latter guise he was often depicted holding the solar barque aloft. His consort was the make-headed goddess Naunet.

Nut

The goddess Nut was the divine personification of the sky. According to the Heliopolitan creation myth, she was one of the children of Shu and Tefnut, and the sister and consort of Geb, the earth god. The darkness at night was explained by the belief that Nut swallowed the sun in the evening and gave birth to it at dawn, so it spent the eight hours travelling through her body. This image was often depicted on the ceilings of tombs and on the undersides of sarcophagus lids, expressing the belief that Nut divinely personified the offin and burial chamber. Because the sun was said to be born from her each morning, the deceased might be reborn from her into the Afterlife.

She was usually shown as a woman arching over the earth, but could also be represented as a cow. The ‘Divine Cow’ was believed to carry Re, the sun god, on her back each morning.

Osiris

God of the dead and the Afterlife (as well as of rebirth and fertility), Osiris was represented in a mummified anthropomorphic form, often holding a crook and flail, and with the atef-crown (described as ‘sky piercing’) on his head. His skin could be green or black (signifying fertility or the thick black Nile silt), or white (the colour of the linen mummy bandages). One of his emblems was the djed-pillar, a symbol of stability, which was equated with his backbone and was particularly revered at his cult centre of Busiris (ancient Djedu) in the Delta.

In the papyrus Book of the Dead of the priest of Amon-Re, Chehnumose, the djed-pillar, considered to be the embodiment of Osiris’s backbone, is semi-personified: ankh’s hang from its arms and it holds aloft an encircled snake. 21st Dynasty.
The chief cult centre of Osiris was his legendary burial place (and consequently an important pilgrims’ destination) Abydos (ancient Abdjw), where he was worshipped together with his sister-consort Isis and their son Horus, and where an annual festival was held in his honour. He was a member of the important Ennead (nine gods) of Heliopolis (see Creation Myths), a genealogy that appears for the first time in the Pyramid Texts of the Fifth Dynasty. These were found – as the name implies – on the interior walls of certain pyramids. Epithets applied to Osiris included ‘eternally good’ and ‘foremost of the westerners’ (that is the dead, who were thought, like the sun, to enter the Netherworld in the west). He was assimilated with two Memphite deities, the creator god Ptah, and the hawk-headed funerary deity Sokar, forming the syncretized funerary god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris.

The deceased king of Egypt was identified with Osiris from at least the Fifth Dynasty (c.2494–c.2345 BC). By about 2000 BC, a democratization of funerary religion had begun to take place, and dead people other than the king were also identified with Osiris.

Ptah

Recognized as the chief deity of the city of Memphis, Ptah was worshipped as part of a triad with his consort the lioness-goddess Sekhmet and the lotus-god Nefertem. At a later stage, Imhotep, the deified architect of Djoser’s Step Pyramid Complex at Saqqara, was regarded as a son of Ptah (see Deification of Mortals). As chief creator god, Ptah was regarded as the patron deity of craftsmen, and so was an important figure at Deir el-Medina, the village of craftsmen who were responsible for the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. At Memphis, the High Priest of his cult held the title ‘Great Over-seer of Craftsmen’ (wer kheren hemw).

Ptah was represented in human, semi-mummified form, wearing a skullcap and holding a staff which combined the was-sceptre of power, the djed-pillar of stability and the ankh-sign for life. From the Middle Kingdom (c.2055–c.1650 BC) onwards he was depicted with a straight beard.

During the Old Kingdom (c.2686–c.2181 BC) Ptah was merged with the Memphite hawk-headed funerary deity Sokar, creating the god Ptah-Sokar. This composite deity went on to become Ptah-Sokar-Osiris in the Late Period. Wooden, mummiiform, hawk-headed figures of this god were often placed in tombs as part of the funerary equipment.
th good reason, the ancient Egyptians
considered the sun to be a potent life
corce; together with the annual
indation of the Nile, it was
ponsible for their successful harvests.
was the pre-eminent solar deity.
His cult centre was at Heliopolis
alled Iunu by the ancient Egyptians
ow a suburb of modern Cairo)
ere an extremely powerful priesthood
licated. From the Fourth-Dynasty
ign of Djedefre (c.2566–c.2558 BC)
wards, one of the king's five names
as introduced with the epithet "Son of
", emphasizing the association of the
g with the god. The focal point of
Re's cult was the obelisk, or "benben
stone (deriving from the verb "weben" to
shine forth").
In the myth of the Destruction of
Humankind, Re is described as having
the bones, flesh and hair of an old man,
but his divinity is evident because they
are of silver, gold and lapis lazuli (the
last was considered especially valuable
by the ancient Egyptians because it had
to be imported from as far away as
Badakhshan in north-eastern
Afghanistan). This description may be
that of a cult statue, such as would be
found in the "naos" or shrine of each
temple, housing the very essence or
potency of the deity in question. The
myth also states that he was self-created,
coming into being in Nun, the
primordial waters.
Re was frequently represented
anthropomorphically, but with the head
of a ram or a hawk wearing a sun-disc
headdress. As the sun god, he was
thought to voyage across the sky in a
boat during the twelve hours of daylight,
and through the Netherworld during the
hours of darkness. In another version of
the myth of his nightly journey, he was
swallowed by Nut, the sky goddess, and

\textbf{\small\textbullet\ The royal title 'Son of Re' is written with the}
\textbf{\small hieroglyphic signs of a duck (meaning 'son') and}
\textbf{\small a solar disc. Karnak.}
travelled through her body to be reborn each morning.

The sun god was ubiquitous and powerful. By the process of syncretism, Re was amalgamated with other deities such as Amun, becoming Amun-Re, and Horus, becoming Re-Horakhty ('Horus of the Two Horizons'). Or he might be identified with other gods; one of the texts inscribed on the walls of some tombs in the Valley of the Kings during the New Kingdom (c.1550–c.1069 BC) is the 'Litany of Re', in which Re is identified with Osiris, god of the dead.

Sekhmet
The goddess Sekhmet was the ferocious aspect of female divinity, whether of Hathor, Bastet (the cat goddess of Bubastis in the Delta) or the mother goddess Mut whose temple at Karnak was filled with statues of Sekhmet by the Eighteenth-Dynasty king Amenhotep III (c.1390–1352 BC): it is thought that there was one for each day of the year. She was associated with war and battle, and helped the king to vanquish his enemies. Her name literally means 'the Powerful One', and she was visualized, appropriately, as a lioness, or at least as a woman with the head of a lioness. She wore a sun disc identifying her as the daughter of Re.

Sekhmet played an important role in the capital city of Memphis, as the consort of the creator god Ptah and the mother of Nefertem.

Seth
Seth was Osiris's 'wicked' brother and, as such, was a member of the Heliopolitan family of gods and goddesses. He was associated with chaos, infertility and the desert, but in certain geographical areas (such as the north-eastern Delta) and at certain times in Egyptian history, he was highly honoured. There were kings of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, for example, whose names derived from his, such as Seti and Sethnakhte. His worship recognized that chaos had to be acknowledged before order could be seen to exist, and though the desert was an arid and dangerous place it was also of enormous value to the Egyptians (particularly for its natural resources such as gold, amethyst and turquoise). The god had an important cult centre at Naqada in Upper Egypt. Tradition maintained this had been the place of his violent birth from the sky goddess Nut.

Seth was represented in the form of an animal that cannot be conclusively identified: it had a long curved snout, pricked, flat-topped ears, a canine body and a forked tail. He was sometimes shown as a man with this animal's head. It is possible that this animal may have belonged to a species that is now extinct but it is more likely to have been fabricated to produce a disconcerting appearance for a deity associated with trouble and barrenness. Seth could also be represented as a pig, a donkey or a hippopotamus (see The Contendings of Horus and Seth).

Shu
The divine personification of air as we as sunlight, Shu's name probably means 'He who Rises Up'. Although he was thought to bring the sun to life each morning and to protect it against the serpent demon Apophis in the Netherworld, he was also often associated with the lunar deities Thoth and Khonsu. Perhaps improbably, he was additionally thought to be the leader o
ick of demons that threatened to torture the deceased. He was represented in human form with a feather on his head, and was often depicted standing between his offspring, Eb (the earth god) and Nut (the sky goddess), supporting the latter. He could so be visualized with the head of a lion, and it was in this guise that he was revered as an 'Eye of Re', and was worshipped at Leontopolis (Tell el-Huqdam) in the Delta.

Sobek

The crocodile god was represented either as the reptile itself or as a man with the head of a crocodile. Sobek was worshipped in the Fayyum and at the temple of Kom Ombo. Sobek was associated with the might of the Pharaoh, and in the form of Sobek-Re he was worshipped as a manifestation of the solar deity. His consort was Hathor and his son, elsewhere said to be the son of Amun and Mut, was regarded as their child.

- Incorporated into the design of this ivory headrest found in the tomb of Twiakhmun is Shu, the god of air, who here supports the head of the sleeper rather than his usual load, his daughter Nut, the sky goddess.

- The ancient Egyptians worshipped Sobek in the form of a crocodile, or with the head of a crocodile, in the hope that this would help to protect them from the hidden dangers of the River Nile. Kom Ombo.
Sokar
This god was associated with the earth and fertility, but particularly with death and the cemetery of the capital city of Memphis. His funerary association led him to be syncretized with Osiris, and his Memphite importance resulted in his syncretism with the chief deity there, Ptah—hence the invention of the god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris. Sokar’s association with Ptah also meant they shared the same consort, the lioness goddess Sekhmet.

> In his role as scribe and messenger of the gods, Thoth was usually represented as a man with the head of an ibis.
19th Dynasty.
Valley of the Kings.

\[\text{\textbullet One of two colossal granite statues of Thoth, the god of wisdom and writing, represented as a baboon. They are all that remains of the once great temple at Hermopolis Magna. 18th Dynasty.}\]

In the Pyramid Texts, Sokar is described as the maker of ‘royal bones’. He was represented as a mummified man, sometimes with the head of a hawk. Wooden statuettes of him were placed in tombs together with a host of other funerary equipment. He could also be portrayed as a mound of earth surmounted by a boat containing the head of a hawk.

Sokar’s chief cult centre was at Memphis. During the festival held there in his honour, his devotees wore strings of onions around their necks. Onions were certainly used in the embalming process—their skins or whole bulbs were placed over the eyes or stuffed into the ears or the body cavity. Today onion is used to disguise nasty smells, and in folklore it is believed to combat infection.

Tefnut
As one of the cosmic deities of the Ennead, Tefnut was the divine personification of moisture. To tie in with the imagery of symmetrical pairs, when her brother-consort Shu was associated with sunlight, Tefnut was associated with the moon.

Like Shu, Tefnut could be regarded an ‘Eye of Re’, and as such was represented with a lioness head (and worshipped at Leontopolis). She also appeared in the form of a rearing cobra in which case she was identified with the aurochs on the front of the royal headdress. When depicted in human form, she wore a sun disc encircled by cobra on her head.
Toth
The god of wisdom and the scribal session, Thoth manifested himself as a baboon, an ibis or a man with the head of an ibis. He was frequently represented ordering important proceedings, such as the ‘Weighing of the Heart’ ceremony which was believed to take place after death. He was also closely associated with the moon, so was often pictured wearing a lunar disc and incense on his head.

His chief cult centre was that of Hermopolis Magna (ancient Khmun; modern el-Asmunein) in Middle Egypt, where all that remains today are two large statues of baboons erected by the eighteenth-Dynasty king Amenhotep III (1390–c.1352 BC). These statues are extremely impressive; they are sculpted in great blocks of quartzite, are about 17m (15ft) tall (excluding the bases), and weigh about 35 tons each.

During the Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BC), Thoth was identified with the Greek god Hermes; for this reason the city of Khmun became known as Hermopolis (the city of Hermes).

adjet
The ancient goddess Wadjet was nearly always portrayed in the form of a cobra wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. Egyptians regarded the cobra as a symbol of sovereignty. Wadjet had her cult centre at Buto in the Delta. Her name means ‘the Green One’ or ‘She of Papyrus’. Together with the vulture goddess Nekhbet (whose cult was based at El-Kab in Upper Egypt) she was loved to protect the king. One of the god’s five names was her nebty or ‘two lies’ name, referring to these two particular goddesses. Wadjet appeared as uraeus (‘she who rears up’) on the god’s forehead, poised to spit venom at unsuspecting enemy. She was also sometimes represented as a lioness.