Egypt

Kemet



Ra’s barque sails the sky by day and the underworld by night

Osiris murdered, restored, lord of the dead and of rebirth

Isis raises Horus in the marshes of the Delta

The heart weighed against the feather of Ma’at

20 FIGURES TO FIND IN THE LAND

THE NILE VALLEY

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The Eye of Horus — the wedjat, symbol of healing and protection

INTRODUCTION

Egyptian Mythology Field Guide

Names, attributes, and narratives from ancient Egypt's creation stories, its gods and goddesses, its sacred creatures and its stranger tales — organised so each entry can be used as a search target in deliberate pareidolia practice.

For ancient Egyptians, the sky was the arched body of the goddess Nut and the earth was the reclining god Geb. Few traditions picture land and sky so directly as bodies.

Egyptians saw the sky as the goddess Nut arching over the earth god Geb, with the sun passing through her body each night to be reborn at dawn.

CONTEXT

How Egypt Held Its Myths

Egyptian religion lasted some three thousand years and was never a single fixed system. Different cities — Heliopolis, Memphis, Hermopolis, Thebes — told creation differently, and gods merged and changed over time. Myths survive mainly in temple and tomb inscriptions, funerary texts and later Greek accounts.

Few traditions picture land and sky so directly as bodies.

SOURCES

The Pyramid Texts (c. 24th century BCE), the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead preserve funerary spells and myths. The Memphite Theology records Ptah's creation. The Contendings of Horus and Seth (a papyrus of the 12th century BCE) tells the struggle for the throne. Plutarch's On Isis and Osiris (1st–2nd century CE) gives the fullest connected Osiris story.



Myths survive mainly in temple and tomb inscriptions, funerary texts and later Greek accounts

AN EGYPTIAN PRECEDENT

Egyptians saw the sky as the goddess Nut arching over the earth god Geb, with the sun passing through her body each night to be reborn at dawn. They saw constellations as gods, the Nile flood as the arrival of Hapi, and the river's course as the axis of the world. The land and sky were read as figures.



Ra battles the serpent Apep in the underworld, the sun's barque illuminating the darkness

THE FEATURE

Ra

Sun god; falcon-headed with a sun disc.

Sails across the sky by day in his barque and through the underworld by night, battling the serpent Apep before rising again.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A boat; a disc with a serpent around it.

Anubis

Jackal-headed god of embalming.

Guides the dead and weighs the heart against the feather of Ma’at.

LOOK FOR IN THE LAND

A reclining jackal; a set of scales.



Anubis weighs the heart against the feather of Ma’at

THE TWO BEST FIRST TARGETS

1. The Nile and its Delta as the lotus or the papyrus — the emblems of Upper and Lower Egypt. 2. Nut, the arched sky goddess. Strong alternates: the serpent Apep, the falcon Horus, and the scarab Khepri.



I · CREATION

I The First Time

The waters of Nun, the first mound and the first gods.

Above: The primeval mound rises from the limitless water of Nun — the first land

Nun and the Primeval Mound

Benben

The dark waters and the first land.

Before creation there is only Nun, the limitless water. A mound of earth rises from it — the first land, on which creation begins, as fields re-emerge after the Nile flood.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A single hill rising from water.*

Atum of Heliopolis

Ennead

The self-created god.

Atum creates Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture); they bear Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), whose children are Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys — the Nine (Ennead).

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A figure on a mound; two figures beside.*



Shu stands between them, lifting the arched body of Nut away from Geb

Shu Separates Geb and Nut

Air holds sky from earth.

Shu stands between them, lifting the arched body of Nut away from Geb, who reclines beneath.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *An arched figure over a reclining one, with a standing figure between.*

Ptah of Memphis

Creator by thought and word.

In the Memphite Theology, Ptah creates the world by conceiving it in his heart and speaking it with his tongue.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A mummiform figure holding a staff.*

The Lotus Birth of the Sun

Hermopolis

The sun rises from a lotus.

In the Hermopolitan tradition a lotus rises from the primeval waters and opens to reveal the young sun god.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A lotus flower opening on water.*



II · GODS & GODDESSES

II The Gods of Kemet

Many of them with animal heads — strong silhouettes.

Above: The gods of Kemet, many of them with animal heads — strong silhouettes

Osiris

God of the dead and of rebirth; green-skinned, mummiform.

Murdered by his brother Seth and restored by Isis, he becomes ruler of the underworld, where he judges the dead.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
>
> *A wrapped figure holding crook and flail.*



Great goddess of magic and motherhood, her wings spread protectively

Isis

Great goddess of magic and motherhood.

Searches for Osiris's body, restores him, and raises their son Horus in the marshes of the Delta.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
>
> *A winged woman; a mother nursing a child.*

Horus

Falcon god of kingship.

Avenges his father against Seth, losing an eye that is restored — the Eye of Horus (wedjat), symbol of healing.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
>
> *A falcon; a stylised eye.*



III · CREATURES & SYMBOLS

III Sacred Beasts

Serpents, scarabs and composite guardians.

Above: Serpents, scarabs and composite guardians

Apep (Apophis)

Giant serpent of chaos.

Tries each night to swallow the sun's barque in the underworld; defeated anew each dawn.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A vast coiling serpent.*

Khepri

Scarab beetle of the rising sun.

As a scarab rolls its ball of dung, Khepri rolls the sun across the sky at dawn.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A beetle pushing a sphere.*



Perched on the first mound at creation; later linked by Greek writers to the phoenix

Bennu

Heron of creation and renewal.

Perched on the first mound at creation; later linked by Greek writers to the phoenix.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A long-legged heron on a mound.*



The Great Sphinx at Giza — lion with a human head, guardian of the plateau

The Sphinx

Lion with a human (royal) head.

The Great Sphinx at Giza guards the plateau; in the Dream Stele, it promises the throne to Thutmose IV if he clears away the sand.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A recumbent lion with a human head.*

Taweret

Hippopotamus goddess protecting childbirth.

Part hippopotamus, lion and crocodile; household protector of mothers and infants.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A standing hippopotamus figure.*



IV · THE UNUSUAL AND ODD

IV Stranger Narratives

Tricks, trials and the oldest tales of travel.

Above: Seth tricks Osiris into lying in a beautiful chest, seals it and throws it into the Nile

The Murder of Osiris

Plutarch

The coffin on the Nile.

Seth tricks Osiris into lying in a beautiful chest, seals it and throws it into the Nile. It drifts to Byblos and is enclosed in a tree; Isis brings it home, but Seth scatters the body in fourteen pieces across Egypt.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A chest on a river; a tree enclosing a shape.*



Ra sends his Eye as the lioness Sekhmet to punish rebels

The Destruction of Mankind

Sekhmet's rampage.

Ra sends his Eye as the lioness Sekhmet to punish rebels. To stop her, the gods flood the fields with beer dyed red; she drinks it, sleeps, and wakes as gentle Hathor.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A lioness beside a red-tinged plain.*

Isis and the Secret Name of Ra

Magic through cunning.

Isis fashions a snake from earth and Ra's spittle; it bites him, and she will heal him only if he tells her his secret name.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A small serpent at the foot of a figure.*

The Shipwrecked Sailor

Middle Kingdom tale

An island and a giant serpent.

Cast ashore on a magical island, a sailor meets a huge, gold-scaled serpent who treats him kindly and foretells his rescue; the island then vanishes beneath the waves.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *An island with a great serpent coiled upon it.*

The Weighing of the Heart

Book of the Dead, Spell 125

The judgement of the dead.

The heart is weighed against Ma'at's feather. If it is heavy with wrongdoing, it is devoured by Ammit, part crocodile, lion and hippopotamus.

> LOOK FOR IN THE LAND
> *A balance; a crouching composite beast.*

A NOTE ON RESPECT

Ancient Egyptian religion changed over three millennia and between cities; versions differ. Names are given in common modern forms. Present readings of ancient texts as interpretations.

The plates in this issue are interpretive illustrations, not historical artefacts.



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