

When Rome and Greece were young, Egypt (Kemet) was already an old civilization of several thousand years. In 3100 BCE, it formed into a nation of two great states from many small ones. Upper Egypt was the southern area around the undulating Nile River. Lower Egypt was the northern delta area, mostly swampland.

Kemetic religion stayed relatively constant from 3100 BCE to 954 BC, except for the Amarna Revolution in 1370 when King Amenhotep IV forced Kemet into the monotheistic worship of the sun as Aton. King Tutankhamen later was to restore the polytheism tradition. Kemet was a land of cycles and repetition with its yearly Nile flooding that guaranteed constant harvest and economic security. This security was reflected in a faith with few vengeful deities or deities of conquest and war. Maat (Truth and the right order of things) ruled the heart of the land, it's pharaohs and priestly class.

Kemetic religion originally developed from regional deities of nature. Each city has its patron deity. When Kemet unified into the two states, so did its various myths. The Gods became the Great Family, and there are many versions to each deity's story surviving today.

The rites of Kemet were full of songs, dance, chanting, incenses and offerings. Temples had their morning, noon and nighttime rights, each rite being said correctly and precisely to ensure divine favor. There were yearly holidays, holy days and festivals, with processions, meals and revels such as the New Years Celebration August first, when the Nile brought her life giving waters to the land and the star Sirius rises just before dawn. People would flock to the shores to see great ritual dramas unfold, with actor-priests playing the parts and parades of boats bedecked with gilded statues.

The people had a special love for life, and so death and the afterlife were major concerns for all, not just the pharaoh who built pyramid burial chambers. If an Egyptian lived their life in accordance with the laws of Maat, Osiris would permit them to continue their journey into the afterlife. The life-death-resurrection mystery rites of Osiris were played out during the month of Koiak. While much of the festival was somber, mourning the death of Osiris, the end of the festival was very joyous with the triumphant crowning of Horus as king, the dethronement of Set and the restoration of Osiris as king of the underworld all with the special assistance of Isis.

The afterlife was parallel to the station of the person as they lived; a pharaoh was still a pharaoh, a slave still a slave. The land would be perfect, with perfect farming conditions, no plagues, no pests, no famine and no warfare. Working conditions for slaves, land owners and farmers would be light, happy and prosperous. There would be food and drink aplenty.

There were very complex rites regarding death. Body embalming took many weeks with specific rituals at each portion of the process. Once the embalming was over, the body was carefully entombed with all manner of items the person would need in the afterlife. If a family could not afford lavish grave goods, clay substitutes were used instead. Early graves were simple bodies laid out in the fetal position. Burial grounds laid out far away from the Nile in dry sandy soil would naturally dry out the body. Later funerals became complex, with entire tombs carved out of rock faces, layered sarcophagi, and temples built solely for the use of the dead's spirit.

Kemet saw great change after 1000 BCE. Kemet had no supply of iron for weapons, and there were conquests by the Libyans, the Sudanese, the Assyrians and the Persians until Alexander the Great ruled in 332 BCE. He embraced many Kemetic beliefs, and became the High Priest. Alexander left no heirs, and one of his leading generals, Ptolemy I, began the Ptolemaic dynasty, which did not end until the death of Cleopatra in 30 CE with the invasion of the Romans.

The Ptolemies brought greatness to Kemet at time when they could not compete as an armed nation. Its greatest resource was grain, not iron. It became an intellectual center and Alexandria housed the largest library of the time. Kemetic deities gained new names, like Aset who became Isis (pronounced "ees-ess" in the Greek tongue). Anubis became Hermanubis. Even new deities were created like Serapis.

When Julius Caesar added Egypt to the Roman Empire, they added the Greco-Kemetic forms to their line-up of "oriental" mystery religions. Roman women were encouraged to attend Isian Mystery rites, while their husbands attended Mithras rites. Temples to Isis sprang up all over Europe, most famously in Londinium (London), Paris, Pompeii, and Rome. Germany had several, usually next to the underground temples of Mithras. These temples sold

their own temple wines, and terra cotta wine containers have been found all over Europe with the name of Isis inscribed on them. When Christianity blossomed, it was deep rivals with Isis and Mithras and it was not uncommon for a Roman soldier to have participated in all rites of all three.

Christianity finally ended Kemetic religion, but it was slow to do so in Kemet itself. Egyptian Christians (Copts) had their own ideas of the divine world, and many a leader was deemed heretical. Christians found refuge within the Pagan temples and stories survive about the generosity of Isian priestesses towards Christian followers, written by Christian writers. Pagan temples thrived even after Constantine declared Christianity the state religion and even after Theodosius declared Pagan faiths to be illegal in 381 CE. The last active Pagan temple to be closed was on the island sanctuary of Philae in 593 CE. In 693 CE Egypt was taken over by Arab Muslim invasions. The followers of Mohammed tore down many statues, just as the previous Christian inhabitants did.

Egypt continues to be a predominantly Muslim country today, though a renewed interest in ancient history and tourism has now brought about efforts to preserve ancient treasures. Despite the enthusiasm shown for Kemetic finds, the Christian Coptic Church still struggles for equal rights and the preservation of their own ancient churches.

Outside of Egypt, the world has been enchanted with the Kemetic belief system. When Napoleon found the Rosetta Stone, modern man discovered a way to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics into Greek, and then into English. Pyramid texts were translated and published. In the early 1900's, the discovery of King Tut's tomb brought ancient Egypt into the spotlight, with museum tours and secret societies such as the Golden Dawn adopting Kemetic forms. In the 1970's, The Fellowship of Isis was founded in Ireland, and Isis found an entire new body of admirers. Web sites such as [www.kemet.org](http://www.kemet.org) have much to offer, and authors like deTraci Regula, writer of *Mysteries of Isis*, publish wonderful books regarding Egyptian faith.

#### A listing of Kemetic Gods and Goddesses

Ammut:	“Devouress of the Dead” who ate the hearts that failed the scales of Maat.
Amun:	Sun deity of Thebes.
Anubis:	“The One in Front of the Gods” and “Lord of the Sacred Land”. Guide dog of the dead and officiator of the mysteries. The “spiritual sleuth-hound”.
Apis:	Creator God of Memphis, born of the Isis Cow after being struck by lightning.
Apophis:	Chaos and non-existence, a giant snake that waits for Ra when the sun-boat sinks below the skyline. He is easily charmed by Set.
Aten:	“Disk of the Sun”
Atum:	A form of Ra who's semen mixed with Shu (air) and Tefnut(moisture) to make Geb and Nut.
Bastet:	Daughter and protectress of Ra. Famous cat Goddess.
Bes:	God most loved by common-folk, a huge bellied dwarf. God of prosperity of the family and children.
Geb:	Earth, shown lying down with erect penis, holding wife Nut in the sky. He transmits the throne (Isis) to kings.
Hathor:	Cow goddess aspect of the Universal mother and wife of Horus. Sexual love, joy, music and dance. Seen by the Greeks as Aphrodite.
Horus:	God of the distant sky/heavens. “He on High” and “One Far Off”. His name “Harsies” means “Horus son of Isis”. As the reclamer of his father's throne he is “Haroeris”, Horus the Elder.
Imhotep:	An Egyptian vizier who became deified because of his skill in architecture, healing and medicine. The Greeks saw him as Asclepius.
Isis:	Goddess of royal motherhood and magic. Known as the “throne” or “seat of power”.
Khnum:	Ram God that created men from the potter's wheel.
Khonsu:	Moon God named “the Wanderer”. Child of Amun-Ra and Mut (Thebes). At Karnak, he was known for healing and exorcism.
Maat:	Goddess of “truth” and the balanced order of things.
Meret-Seger:	Cobra Goddess “She who Loves Silence”, guardian of tombs.
Min:	God of procreative sex and fertility
Neith:	Creator Goddess of Sais, mother of Sobek, “Lady of bows and arrows”. Often thought to be Diana/Artemis.
Nekhbet:	Protectress of royal children

Nephthys: “Mistress of the Palace/Temple”, mother of Anubis with Osirus. Protector of canopic containers and funerary beds.

Nun: Primal watery chaos.

Nut: The Great Celestial Cow. Her strong body prevents chaos from attacking Egypt.

Onwris: Bearded, spear carrying hunter god.

Osirus: King of the Underworld and over the eternal cycles of life and death.

Ptah: Creator and craftsman god of Memphis. He “spoke” things into creation much as the Greek “Logos”.

Re/Ra: Sun god of Heliopolis, emerged from the primordial waters fully formed.

Reneunutet: “Lady of the Threshing Floor”, a cobra goddess who protects the ripening of harvests.

Sekhmet: “Powerful One”, lioness protector of Memphis and consort of Ptah. She is known for lapping up the blood of those she seeks out to destroy.

Serapis: Greco-Kemetic deity of the grain. “Osorapis” is a mix of Osirus and Apis. Had many characteristics of Zeus, Dionysus and Hades, and was consort to Isis.

Seth/Set: Elemental forces of chaos, storms, battle and the sound of thunder.

Shu: Air, sunlight

Sobek: Crocodile god of instant destruction to one’s enemies, total victory.

Sokar: Memphis hawk god of resurrection.

Tawaret: The pregnant hippo of childbirth, “Lady of the Horizon”.

Tefnut: Moisture. Created from semen of Atum.

Thoth: Vizier of the sun god, scribal knowledge and science, also assisted with the scales of Maat because he could not be bribed.

Wapwawet: “Opener of the Ways”, wolf headed assistant to Anubis who opened the mouths of the dead.

Kemetic rites are done often during the hours of the day to acknowledge the constant movement of deity in all facets of living. Rites can be said at awakening, morning cleansing, first meal, during work, noon-hour/lunch, finish of work day, arrival home, dinner, dish washing, relaxation time, and going to bed. Rites can be simple a simple sentence or a complex ritual.

Quick morning words of Awakening  
Hail Osirus, Hail Osirus, Hail Osirus  
I awake from dreamy sleep!  
Hail Isis, Hail Isis, Hail Isis  
I feel your wings beside me!  
Hail Horus, Hail Horus Hail Horus!  
Morning light on my face!  
Hail Ra Hail Ra Hail Ra  
Bless my day with abundance!

Quick blessing before a new task  
Anubis, bless my soul, my spirit, my body!  
Isis bless my soul, my spirit, my body!  
Maat bless my soul, my spirit, my body!

Quick blessing before a meal  
Welcome to my table  
Welcome to my home  
Welcome to the throne of my soul  
Isis! Isis! Isis!