

Ptah -2-

God of creation, the arts and fertility



Ptah, in the form of a mummified man, standing on the symbol for Ma'at, holding a scepter or staff that bears the combined ankh-djed-was symbols.

Hieroglyphs Name



Major cult center: Memphis

Symbol: the **djed** pillar, the bull

Consort: **Sekhmet**

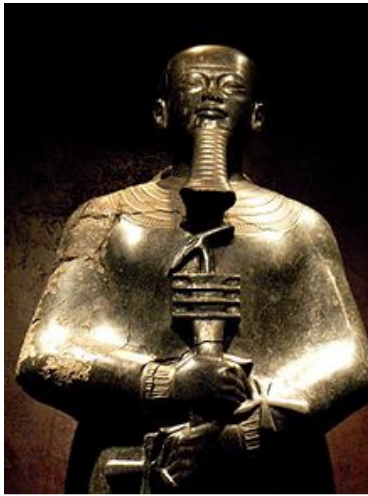
Parents: none (self-created)

In mythology, Ptah (/pəˈtɑː **Egyptian:** *pth*, probably vocalized as *Pitah* in ancient Egyptian) is the **demiurge** of Memphis, god of craftsmen and architects. In the triad of **Memphis**, he is the spouse of **Sekhmet** and the father of **Nefertum**. He was also regarded as the father of the sage **Imhotep**. The Greeks knew him as the god **Hephaestus**, and in this form **Manetho** made him the first king of Egypt.

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Origin and symbolism



Statue of Ptah - Egyptian Museum of Turin.

Ptah, is the patron of craftsmanship. Also all metal working, carpenters, shipbuilders, and sculpture. From the **Middle Kingdom** onwards, he was one of five major Egyptian gods with **Ra, Isis, Osiris** and **Amun**.

He wears many **epithets** that describe his role in Egyptian mythology and its importance in society at the time:

- *Ptah the beautiful face*
- *Ptah lord of truth*
- *Ptah master of justice*
- *Ptah who listens to prayers*
- *Ptah master of ceremonies*
- *Ptah lord of eternity*

Ptah is the creator god par excellence: He is considered the **demiurge** who existed before all things, and by his willingness, *thought* the world. It was first conceived by Thought, and realized by the Word: *Ptah conceives the world by the thought of his heart and gives life through the magic of his Word*. That which Ptah commanded was created, with which the constituents of nature, fauna, and flora, are contained. He also plays a role in the preservation of the world and the permanence of the royal function.

In the **Twenty-Fifth Dynasty**, the **Nubian** pharaoh **Shabaka** would transcribe on a **stela** known as the **Shabaka Stone**, an old theological document found in the archives of the library of the temple of the god at Memphis. This document has been known as the Memphite Theology, and shows the god Ptah, the god responsible for the creation of the universe by thought and by the Word.

Representations and hypostases

Like many deities of **ancient Egypt** he takes many forms, through one of his particular aspects or through **syncretism** of ancient deities of the Memphite region. He is sometimes represented as a dwarf, naked and deformed, whose popularity would continue to grow during the **Late Period**. Frequently associated with the god **Bes**, his worship then exceeded the borders of the country and was exported throughout the eastern **Mediterranean**. Thanks to the **PHOENICIANS**, we find figures of Ptah in **Carthage**.

Ptah is generally represented in the guise of a man with green skin, contained in a shroud sticking to the skin, wearing the divine beard, and holding a sceptre combining three powerful symbols of Egyptian mythology:

- The *Was* sceptre
- The sign of life, *Ankh*
- The *Djed* pillar

These three combined symbols indicate the three creative powers of the god: power (was), life (ankh) and stability (djed).



Stucco relief of Ptah with staff and ankh and djed. Late Period or Ptolemaic Dynasty, 4th to 3rd century BC.

From the **Old Kingdom**, he quickly absorbs the appearance of **Sokar** and **Tatenen**, ancient deities of the Memphite region. His form of Sokar is found contained in its white shroud wearing the **Atef** crown, an attribute of Osiris. In this capacity, he represents the god of the necropolis of **Saqqara** and other famous sites where the royal pyramids were built. Gradually he formed with Osiris a new deity called Ptah-Sokar-Osiris. Statuettes representing the human form, half-human, half-hawk, or simply in its falcon form will be systematically placed in tombs to accompany and protect the dead on their journey to the West. His Tatenen form is represented by a young and vigorous man wearing a crown with two tall plumes that surround the solar disk. He thus embodies the underground fire that rumbles and raises the earth. As such, he was particularly revered by metalworkers and blacksmiths, but he was equally feared because it was him who caused earthquakes and tremors of the earth's crust. In this form also, Ptah is the *master of ceremonies* for **Heb Sed**, a ceremony traditionally attesting to the first thirty years of the Pharaoh's reign. The god Ptah could be opposite the sun god Re, or **Aten** during the **Amarna period**, where he embodied the divine essence with which the sun god was fed to come into existence, that is to say to be born, according to the Memphite mythological texts. In the *holy of holies* of his **temple** in Memphis, as well as in his great sacred boat, he drove in procession to regularly visit the region during major holidays. Ptah was also symbolized by two birds with human heads adorned with solar disks, symbols of the souls of the god Re: the **Ba**. The two Ba are also identified as the twin gods **Shu** and **Tefnut** and are associated with the djed pillar of Memphis. Finally, Ptah is embodied in the sacred bull, **Apis**. Frequently referred to as a *herald of Re*, the sacred animal is the link with the god Re from the **New Kingdom**. He even received worship in Memphis, probably at the heart of the great temple of Ptah, and its death was buried with all the honors due to a living god in the Saqqara. Ptah was assimilated by the Greeks to the god **Hephaestus** and then by the Romans to **Vulcan**.

Development of the cult



Colossal statue of the god Ptah-Tatenen holding hands with Ramses II found at Memphis - Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

As god of craftsmen, the **cult** of the god Ptah quickly spread throughout Egypt. With the major royal projects of the Old Kingdom, the **High Priests of Ptah** were particularly sought after and worked in concert with the **Vizier**, somehow filling the role of chief architect and master craftsman, responsible for the decoration of the royal funerary complexes.

In the New Kingdom, the cult of the god would develop in different ways, especially in Memphis, his homeland, but also in **Thebes**, where the workers of the royal tomb honoured him as patron of craftsmen. For this reason, the oratory of *Ptah who listens to prayers* was built near the site of **Deir el-Medina**, the village where the workers and craftsmen were confined. At Memphis, the role of intercessor with men was particularly visible in the appearance of the enclosure that protected the sanctuary of the god. Large ears were carved on the walls, symbolizing his role as *god who listens to men*.

With the **Nineteenth Dynasty**, his cult grew and he became one of the four great gods of the empire of Ramses. He was worshipped at **Pi-Remises** as master of ceremonies and coronations. With the **Third Intermediate Period**, Ptah returned to the centre of the monarchy where the coronation of the **Pharaoh** was held again in his temple. The **Ptolemies** continued this tradition, and the high priests of Ptah were then increasingly associated with the royal family, with some even marrying princesses of blood, clearly indicating the prominent role they played in the Ptolemaic court.

Main places of worship

<i>Temple dedicated to</i>	<i>Location</i>
Ptah	Pi-Ramses
Ptah	Memphis
Ptah who listens to prayers	Memphis
Ptah whos is south of his Wall	Memphis
Ptah-Sokar	Abydos
Ptah-Sokar	Kom el-Hettan (Thebes)
Ptah who listens to prayers	Deir el-Medina (Thebes)
Ptah	Karnak (Thebes)
Ptah	Gerf Hussein (Nubia)
Ptah lord of truth	Abu Simbel (Nubia)

Photos



Profile of the god Ptah - Relief of the small temple of Hathor at Memphis



Colossal triad representing Ptah-Ramses II-Sekhmet – Gardens of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo



Pectoral of Tutankhamun representing the young king between the goddess Sekhmet and Ptah – Egyptian Museum of Cairo



Statuette of Ptah-Sokar-Osiris – The Louvre



Votive stele dedicated to the god Ptah in the temple of Deir el-Medina. New Kingdom, XX Dynasty, c. 1150 B.C.

