



- *Ptah master of ceremonies*
- *Ptah lord of eternity*

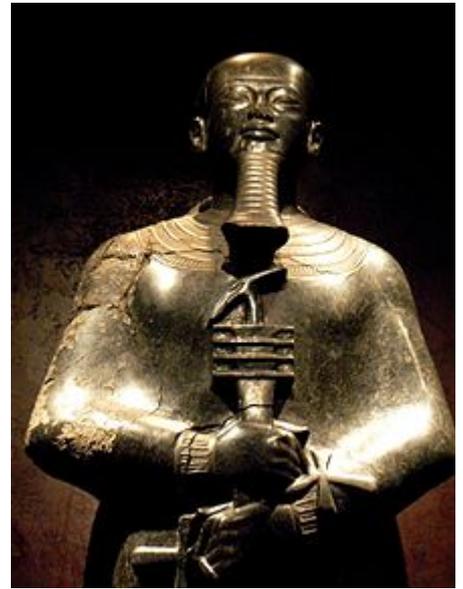
## Representations and hypostases

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. Sometimes represented as a dwarf, naked and deformed, his 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. Through dissemination by 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 ancient Egyptian religion:

- 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).



Statue of Ptah - Egyptian Museum of Turin



Stucco relief of Ptah holding a staff that bears the combined ankh and djed symbols, 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 patron deity 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. Systematically, statuettes representing the human form, half-human, half-hawk, or simply in its falcon form of the new deity, began to be 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 he 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 correspond with the sun deities 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/theological 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 identified as the twin gods Shu and Tefnut and are associated with the djed pillar of Memphis.<sup>[3]</sup>

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 upon the death of the animal, was buried with all the honours due to a living deity in the Serapeum of Saqqara

## Development of the cult

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, 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 housed. At Memphis, the role of intercessor with humans 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 prayers*.

With the Nineteenth Dynasty, his cult grew and he became one of the four great deities of the empire of Ramses. He was worshipped at Pi-Ramesses 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 royal blood, clearly indicating the prominent role they played in the Ptolemaic court.

## Main places of worship

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

## Photographs



Pooh, Phoh, Loh (Lunus, le dieu-Lune, Sélène), N372.2, Brooklyn Museum



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



Crenelated model tower depicting god Ptah holding a was-sceptre before an offering table, on the reverse is a woman (? high priestess) in adoration before ears symbolizing the deity, 18th Dynasty, from Harageh, Egypt, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London



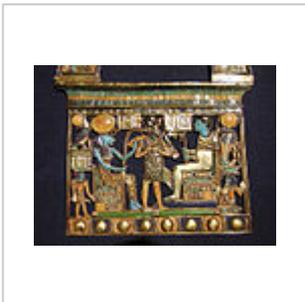
Stela of Irinefer, Servant in the Place of Truth. 19th Dynasty. From Tomb 290 at Deir el-Medina, Egypt. The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London



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.

## Legacy

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The English name *Egypt* derives from an ancient Egyptian name for Memphis, *Hikuptyah*, which means "Home of the Soul of Ptah". This word entered Ancient Greek as *Αἴγυπτος* (*Aiguptos*), which entered Latin as *Aegyptus*, and which developed into English as, *Egypt*.

## See also

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- Osiris
- Apis
- Nefertem
- Sokar

- Kothar-wa-Khasis

## References

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1. "Ptah" in the American Heritage Dictionary(<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/Ptah>)
2. Ancient Egyptian, a linguistic introduction, pg 34(<https://books.google.com/books?id=kW8Mzji0XRgC&printsec=frontcover&dq=ancient+egyptian+loprieno&hl=en&sa=X&ei=1bTFT62UFNHM6QG53djYBg&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=ptah&f=false>)
3. Cf. J. Berlandini, *Contribution à l'étude du pilierdjed memphite*, p.23-33 et pl. 1 A & pl. 2 A

## Literature

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