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# UCLA ENCYCLOPEDIA *of* EGYPTOLOGY

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## THOTH جوتي

*Martin A. Stadler*

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## THOTH جوتي

Martin A. Stadler

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*The Egyptian god Thoth is best known as a god of writing and wisdom, a lunar deity, and vizier of the gods, but was also a cosmic deity, creator god, and warrior. Being one of the oldest deities of the Egyptian pantheon, he is attested in many sources from the earliest periods of Egyptian history up to the Roman Period. The etymology of his name remains unexplained, possibly due to the name's antiquity. Perhaps it is his age as a divine figure that led to a rather confusing mythology with a series of contradicting traditions concerning his descent and his reputation as a benevolent versus atrocious or mistrusted deity. Under the influence of Hellenism, he transformed into Hermes Trismegistos in Roman times and lived on as such well into the European renaissance.*

يعرف المعبود المصري جوتي باعتباره إله الكتابة والحكمة، إله القمر ووزيرا للآلهة، ولكنه كان أيضا إله كونيا، الإله الخالق، والمحارب. ابتداءً كان من أقدم الآلهة المصرية، حيث تأكد ظهوره في العديد من المصادر بداية من أقدم الفترات التاريخية المصرية الي العصر الروماني، وبقي أصل اسمه مبهما وربما يرجع ذلك الي قدم الاسم، إن شخصيته المعقدة والأسطورية هي أيضا شاهدا علي قدمه، وربما أدي تاريخ تحوت الطويل كشخصية مقدسة الي اللبس بين الأساطير والتقاليد المتناقضة حول أصوله وسمعته كشخصية كريمة في مقابل معبود مريب ، وتحت تأثير الفترة الهلنستية تحول الي المعبود هيرمس ترسمجستوس في العصر الروماني، واستمر علي هذا النحو لفترة طويلة في عصر النهضة الأوروبية. حول أصل وسمعته كرجل مقابل الخيرين يثق المعبود.



The ancient Egyptian god Thoth is usually termed “god of wisdom,” “scribal god” or “divine scribe,” as well as “lunar deity” or “divine vizier.” These functions set Thoth apart from most other gods and thus may be regarded as typical for him, but at the same time they are reductionist. Thoth is attested from the earliest historical periods onwards: he already plays a prominent role in the oldest religious texts of Egypt, the Pyramid Texts, and continues to appear almost everywhere in Egypt up to the end of Egyptian religion some 4000 years later (cf. Budde et al. 2002), transforming into the Hermes Trismegistos of

late antiquity, and living on as such well into the European renaissance (Fowden 1993; Stadler 2009: 1 notes 2, 34 - 35, for further references). Throughout this long period the god is overwhelmingly present in a vast body of documentation that yields an extraordinarily colorful picture of the god’s nature and functions within the Egyptian pantheon. The more data and sources are collected the more Thoth’s picture becomes blurred and it seems that he embodies almost every possible aspect one could imagine a god to have within Egyptian mythology: in addition to the characterizations mentioned above, he is found acting as a cosmic deity, a

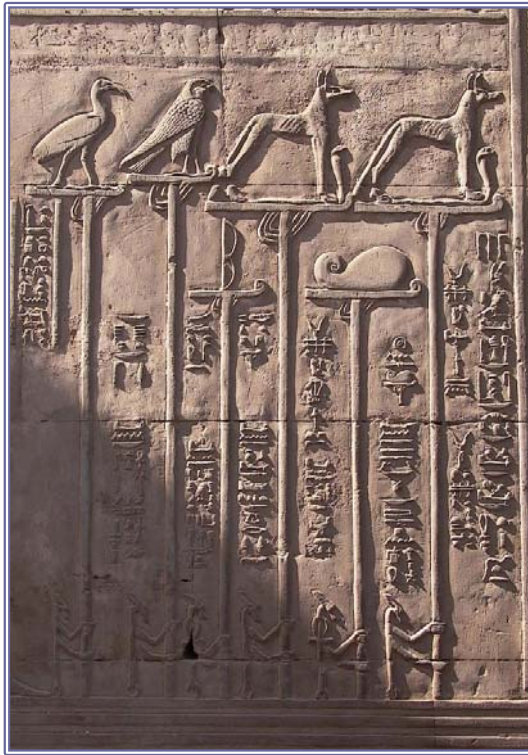


Figure 1. Standards accompanying the king. Temple of Kom Ombo, reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (between 170 and 127 BCE).

primeval creator, and a warlike divinity. From this it may be concluded that Thoth may be one of the oldest deities within the Egyptian pantheon, which may be one of the reasons why his Egyptian name, *Dhwtj*, cannot be explained satisfyingly (for a summary of the discussion see Stadler 2009: 32 - 34, 171), as the theonym's etymology may reach back into periods for which no written sources are available.

### Iconography

Thoth's manifestations are of two main types: as an ibis or ibis-headed man, and as a baboon. On Pre- and Early Dynastic palettes the king is accompanied by a series of standards. Often on one of them stands an ibis designated as the Lord of Hermopolis, i.e., Thoth, in his later, canonized form (fig. 1; Stadler 2009: 357ff.). The typical writing of "Thoth" in the Pyramid Texts is the ibis on a standard (𓂏), which suggests that the ibis is

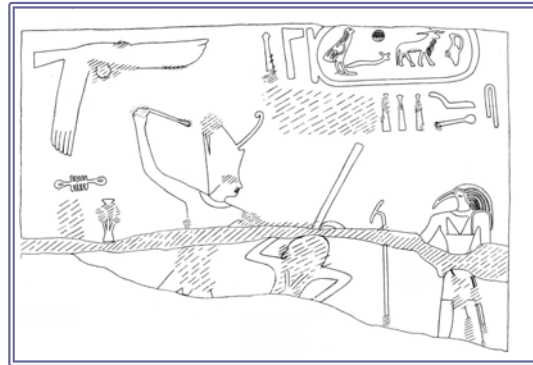


Figure 2. Khufu smiting an enemy in front of an ibis-headed god. Rock relief in Wadi Maghara, Sinai.

already the deity's normal iconography as early as the Old Kingdom. Therefore these early depictions could also be interpreted as attestations of Thoth. For example, a rock relief from the Sinai, carved during one of the mining expeditions of Khufu's reign, shows the king smiting an enemy in front of an ibis-headed god. This would be the oldest known depiction of Thoth in ibis-headed form (fig. 2; Gardiner and Peet 1952 - 1955: no. 7). However, there is no caption specifying identity, which leaves some uncertainty, because in Egypt a deity can take different shapes, or a certain shape can be taken by different deities. Accordingly, in most cases the ibis does denote Thoth, but very rare exceptions do occur (Zivie 1980: 118; some are to be deleted from this list, others should be added: the guardian of the first gate in the netherworld is an ibis-headed man in Spell 144 of the *Book of the Dead* [e.g., Lapp 1997: pl. 74], and Kheribaqef appears in the same shape on a Ptolemaic sarcophagus [Jørgensen 2001: 277]). It is hard to say whether the ibis-iconography of deities other than Thoth always aims at assimilating the depicted god to Thoth—for example, the souls (*hꜣw*) of Hermopolis are shown as ibis-headed figures (Faulkner 1985: 109). That is certainly not a coincidence, Hermopolis being Thoth's chief cult-center. Therefore, it may be speculated whether the representation of an ibis-headed goddess should be associated with Thoth, but this remains a hypothesis for which only circumstantial evidence can be adduced

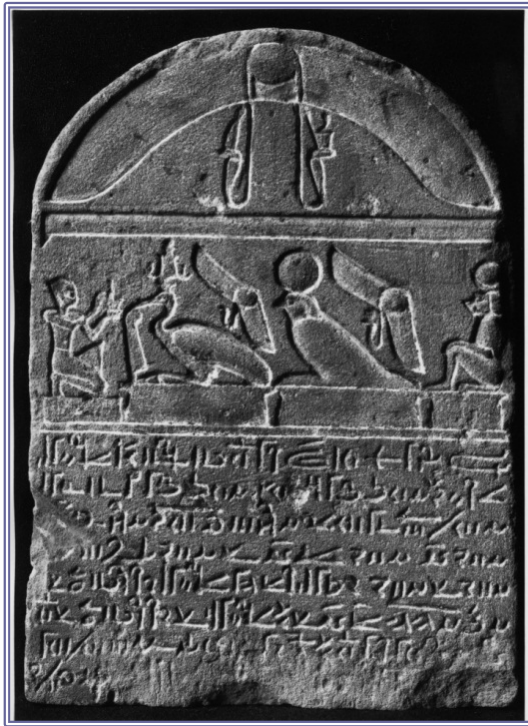


Figure 3. Stela showing the king offering to presumably three manifestations of Thoth. Sandstone. Dendara, 30 BCE – 14 CE. Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 22468.

(Stadler 2004).

Usually the squatting baboon, its hands on its knees, is to be identified as a theriomorphic transformation of Thoth, sometimes with the lunar disc and crescent on its head (fig. 3; see Stadler 2009: 310 for further references to that stela). The statue of a baboon in the cult chamber of the baboons at Tuna el-Gebel, the Late to Roman Period necropolis of Thoth’s cult-center in Upper Egypt, shows this iconography (Kessler 1998: 35, pl. 9). On votive stelae, inscriptions identify the squatting baboon, its hands on its knees, as “Lord of Hermopolis” (e.g., Stewart 1983: pl. 16, no. 27). Conversely, the baboon is quite often found not to represent Thoth. For instance, baboons adoring the rising sun may be an early manifestation of the Hermopolito-Theban ogdoad (Zivie-Coche 2009: 173). Furthermore, one of Horus’s sons, Hapi, is shown as a man with an ape-head, which is not easily distinguished from a baboon’s head. The depiction of a striding, baboon-headed

man in a ritual scene from Tuna el-Gebel does not show Thoth, either (contra Kurth 1986: 511), but the deceased sacred baboon (Derchain 1961: 18, pl. 10. Kessler 1998: 84ff.), in much the same manner as an ibis-headed mummy represents the deceased sacred ibis (Morenz 1962: pl. 2).

Both the ibis-headed man and the baboon are associated with Thoth’s scribal role, whether it be that he records the results of the judgment after death (figs. 4 and 5), assigns a long reign to the king, inscribes the king’s name on the *ished*-tree (fig. 6), or that scribes represent themselves as being under the protection of the deity in the form of a baboon (fig. 7). Whereas Thoth as an ibis-headed man is quite standard, the ape-headed man who presumably stands for Thoth is rather exceptional, as in the judgment scene on the Theban coffin lid BM EA 6705 (fig. 8; first century CE; Riggs 2006: 328, fig. 1).

Besides the ibis and the baboon, Thoth can manifest himself in three other forms (excluding derivatives of the aforementioned baboon- and ibis-iconographies, such as an ibis-headed lion, fig. 9; Chassinat 1928: 284 n.1). A particular cult image of Thoth, which Thutmose III donated to the temple of Osiris at Abydos, and which bears the epithet *sh̄m n̄trw*, “power of the gods,” is uniquely worshipped in the guise of a *sh̄m*-scepter (fig. 10; Stadler 2009: 399 - 403). There are, additionally, some indicators suggesting that the falcon can also represent the god. Although the falcon tends to be a rather generic symbol for the divine in general, it might also express overlappings with Horus (cf. fig. 3; Stadler 2009: 308 - 312; von Lieven 2010: 569). Finally, Thoth is rarely depicted purely anthropomorphically (Budde et al. 2002: 640). One such example is found at Hermopolis from the reign of Sety II (Roeder 1959: 168, 182, pl. 63a). There Thoth is shown, wearing the lunar disc and crescent, on the doorway of the Amun-temple’s pylon. Since the relevant caption calls him “of Ramesses, beloved of Amun” (i.e., Ramesses II), it has been assumed that this is a personality distinct from the standard Thoth.



Figure 4. Judgment after death, with the ibis-headed Thoth recording the result. Vignette of Spell 125, *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer, Papyrus London BM EA 9901, 3.

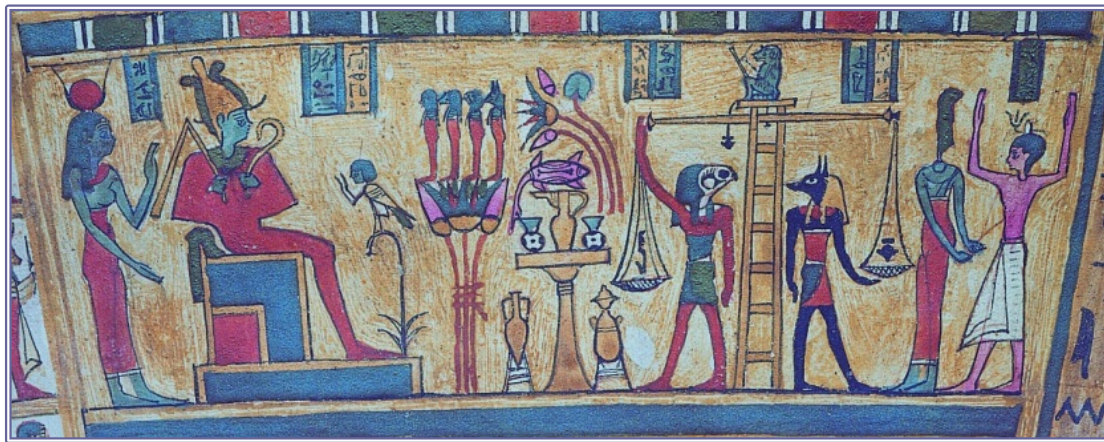


Figure 5. Judgment after death, with Thoth as a squatting baboon atop the scale recording the result. Detail from a mummy breastplate, third to first century BCE. Antikensammlung des Martin von Wagner Museums der Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg A 201.

However, a series of anthropomorphic depictions such as that at Karnak (fig. 11) suggests that all such representations should be identified as Thoth himself rather than postulating different manifestations of Thoth. Perhaps they serve to emphasize Thoth's lunar aspect, because both the lunar deity Khons and Iah-Thoth (Moon-Thoth) can also appear as a man wearing the lunar disc and crescent on his head (Epigraphic Survey 1970: 607; Budde 2000: 172). Considering Thoth of

Pnubs in ritual scenes, either striding or enthroned and usually wearing the four-feathered crown above a wig with short curls (i.e., in a Shu-, Onuris-, or Arensnuphis- iconography), the anthropomorphic iconography might sometimes also refer to Thoth in the *Myth of the Solar Eye* and his role in bringing back the sun-god's daughter to Egypt (fig. 12; cf. Lewczuk 1983: 57ff. Roeder 1913 - 1930: pl. 75).

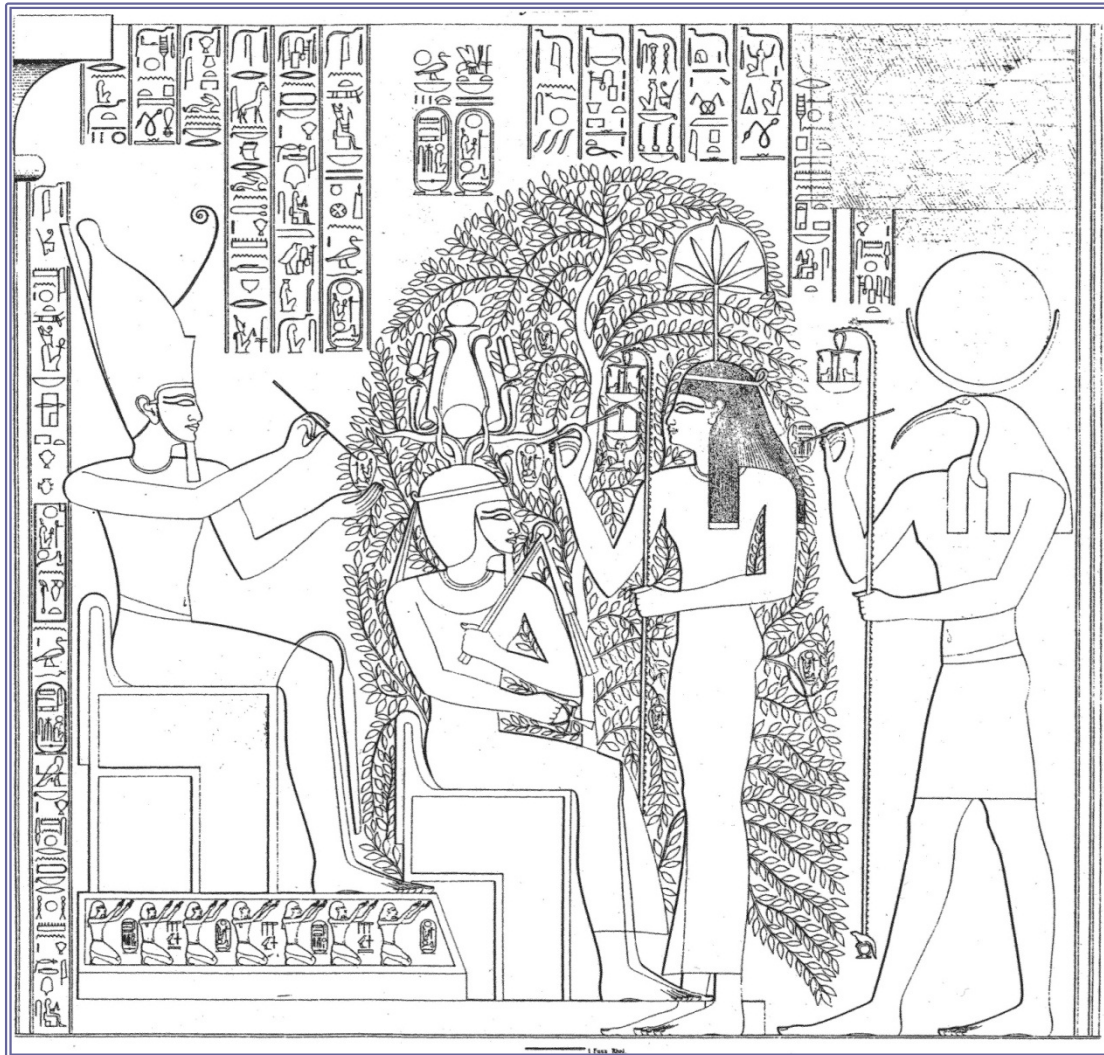


Figure 6. Thoth, Atum, and Seshat write the name of Ramesses II on the leaves of the *ished*-tree. Relief in the Hypostyle Hall of the Ramesseum, West Bank, Luxor.

### *Mythology*

Contrary to Osiris, on whom a biography can be written, despite variant traditions, as though he had been a real human being (Smith 2008 ff.), Thoth does not allow for the establishment of such a mythological biography, because there are highly contradictory sources pertaining to his coming into being (Meeks 2006: 256 - 258; Stadler 2009: 146 - 161), and none of them can be categorized as primary without reservation. Thoth is termed as having been autogenously born, having no mother, but other sources describe him as a son of goddesses (Nut,

Neith, Rat-tai, goddess of Imet, or an unspecific “Great One” [*wrt*]), or having emerged from the cranium of Seth after Seth had been impregnated with Horus’s semen. The Bubastis tradition has it that Thoth is the child born from Seth’s rape of Horit, who subsequently delivers into the water an egg, later found as a baboon by a black ibis (Meeks 2006: 24, 256 - 260). The tradition thus appears as an attempt to bring together various versions and to explain the two forms of Thoth. When Thoth is engaged in activities concerning Osiris’s corpse, and is involved in



Figure 7. The scribe Nebmertuef before Thoth in baboon-form. Paris, Louvre E 11154.

of the world's creation. Nonetheless, Thoth can act as a creator god (Stadler 2009: 161 - 172), for which a particular iconography—a naked ibis-headed man whose toes are jackal heads—may have been developed (Quaegebeur 1992), or he can be perceived as the creator's intellectual capacity and faculty of speech, through which everything is conceptualized and called into being, qualifying Thoth for his intimate relationship with language and texts (Volkhine 2004).

It seems as though Thoth is a deity without a “childhood,” because there is no tradition for his growing up except for indirect hints that refer to his rejuvenation as a lunar deity (Stadler 2009: 203 - 208), but that



Figure 8. Judgment after death, with the baboon-headed Thoth handling the scale, together with the falcon-headed Horus on the lid of Soter's coffin. BM EA 6705.

Osirian funerary rituals, he appears as Osiris's son. This, however, should be taken as a functional term of kinship, since it was a son's duty to bury his father. Indeed Thoth shares such a filiation with Anubis. Thoth hatching from an egg is an occasionally repeated Egyptological conjecture that lacks evidence. It goes back to an unproven connection between the two stones from which Thoth emerges, according to Spell 134 of the *Book of the Dead*, and the egg shells of the primeval egg, which were kept in Hermopolis as relics

rejuvenation is, of course, a cyclical and cosmic one. Whenever Thoth appears in action there is no reference made to his being, or having been, a child. He is always presented as an adult. Again contrary to Osiris his relationship to a goddess is not essential to his identity—indeed it is even less so than that of Amun to his consort, Mut, in Thebes or Horus of Edfu to Hathor, although in Hermopolis he is coupled with Nehemetaway (Parlebas 1984). His affiliation with Nehemetaway, however, merely seems to





Figure 9. Thoth as an ibis-headed lion with the goddess Wadjet. Relief from a column of the pronaos, temple of Edfu.

somewhat in competition with Anubis as embalmer—and as an archetypical lector priest (Stadler 2009: 124 - 134, 430 - 440). One source implies that, according to a Letopolitan tradition, Thoth was not exactly free of blame in the murder of Osiris, whom he, together with Horus, killed accidentally during the primordial battle against the cosmic enemies, Thoth actually completing the murder (Meeks 2006: 18, 235 - 237). Such a violent action is not alien to Thoth, surprising though it may seem for the “god of wisdom.” He predominantly appears as a slaughterer of inimical beings in the older sources (particularly those of the Old Kingdom) and this feature was retained



Figure 10. Sety I worshipping Thoth as a *shtm*-sceptre and as an ibis on a standard. Relief in the temple of Sety I, Abydos.

follow a general trend of systematizing the gods in triads and has little if any impact on his mythology. Elsewhere Thoth appears with Seshat (see fig. 6), who shares with him the characteristic of scribal competence (Budde 2000).

Thoth’s intervention is a necessary component of all the major Egyptian complexes of myths: in the Osiris-myth he participates in the mummification rites—usually reciting the spells, but also being

throughout Egyptian history (Derchain 1962: 39; Spiess 1991: 55ff., 139ff., 166ff.; Servajean 2004: 142 - 144; Stadler 2009: 328 - 333). It is therefore not surprising that Thoth himself is injured during the struggles of Horus and Seth for the succession of Osiris (Quack 1996). In this myth, however, most sources describe him as the judicial expert in the lawsuit between the two contenders. Either he is featured as a judge himself, or his knowledge is requested by other deities who ask for his



Figure 11. Relief of Merenptah making an offering to Thoth, Karnak.

opinion when having to decide who should succeed Osiris (Stadler 2009: 333 - 340). In some texts Thoth is referred to as “chief judge” (ibid.: 332 with n. 43). This allows his identification with the vizier in the divine sphere, just as on earth the vizier is the chief judge in Egypt (an etiology of Thoth’s vizierate is discussed below). The association does not exclude describing, or identifying, the king’s actions as those of Thoth even in Ptolemaic and Roman captions (Derchain-Urtel 1981), nor is it a late development, because already in the Pyramid Texts the king plays the administrative role of Thoth, is his

son, or receives his help (Stadler 2009: 139 n. 107, 334 - 336). It is in the myth of Horus and Seth as reported in Papyrus Chester Beatty I (Broze 1996) that Thoth exclusively fulfills scribal duties—his most prominent role from the Middle Kingdom onwards. To conclude from this text that Thoth is a divine but subaltern secretary who receives orders rather than acts through his own power (Posener 1962; Quaegebeur 1988; Volokhine 2004) overlooks the weight that the other deities assign to his juristic assessments (Stadler 2009: 337 - 340).

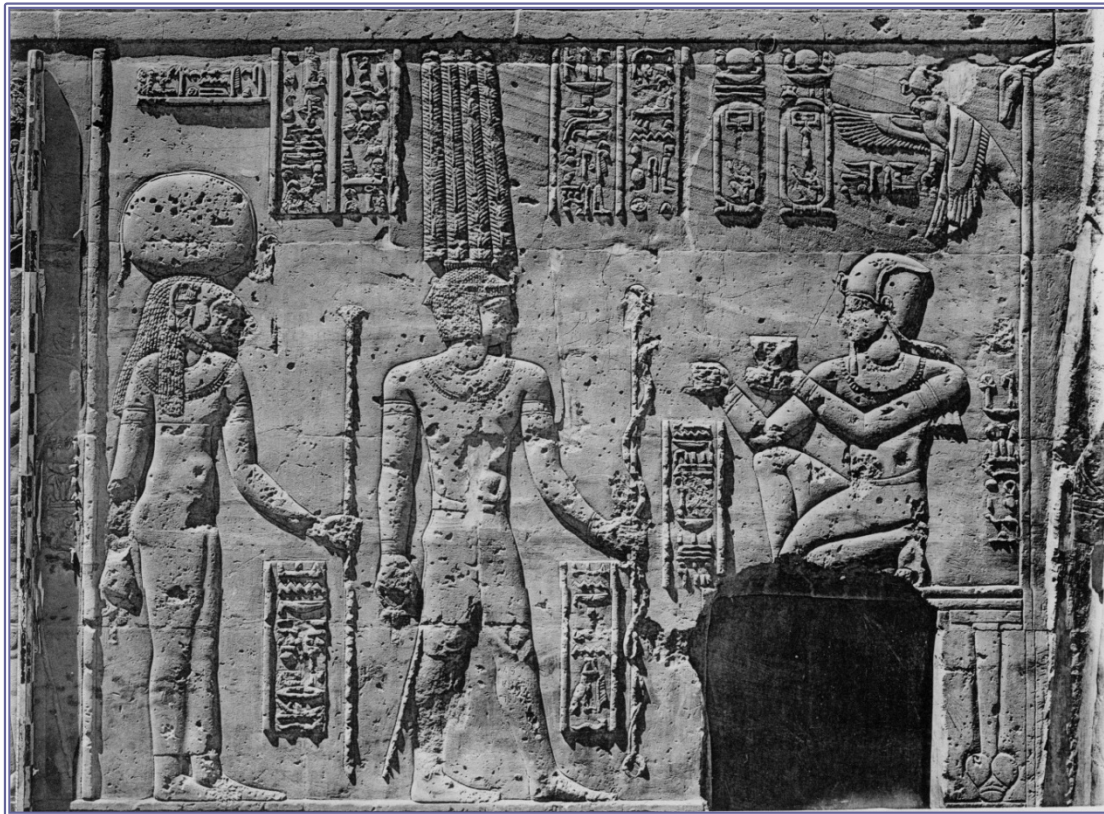


Figure 12. Thoth of Pnubs in an Arensnuphis-iconography and Tefnut, the Solar Eye, receive offerings from Augustus. Sanctuary of the temple of Dakke, Nubia.

In the course of the battles of Horus and Seth, Horus's eye is injured. The injured eye is subsequently healed by Thoth. In many of Thoth's epithetical captions, this mytheme has been associated with his achievement in the *Myth of the Solar Eye*. There the sun-god sends him out to retrieve his daughter, who is her father's eye. Having been insulted, she has left Egypt in a rage for Nubia, and it is Thoth's duty to appease her and convince her to return to Egypt. The myth can be reconstructed from many allusions in a multitude of temple inscriptions and other religious texts—the Pyramid Texts, the Coffin Texts, and the *Book of the Dead*, among others—and was widely used as a source of metaphors and epithets in later temple inscriptions (Stadler 2009: 235 - 319), but is narrated in its most comprehensive form in a Demotic papyrus (Hoffmann and Quack 2007: 195 - 229, 356 - 360).

Because the sun-god's daughter appears in the shape of a lion in the *Myth of the Celestial Cow* (Hornung 1982), the Egyptians perceived some connections between the *Myth of the Solar Eye* and the *Myth of the Celestial Cow*, particularly concerning the leonine goddess. Thoth's role in the latter myth, however, is quite different from his role in the former. In the *Myth of the Celestial Cow*, which is one version of the mytheme of a rebellion against the sun-god some time after the world's creation (see Smith 2000 for a survey of the various implementations; see also Guilhou 2010), the sun-god retires to the sky and appoints Thoth, being the vizier (*tstj*), as his representative (*stj R*)—an appointment endowing Thoth with the power to send (*h3b*) those who are greater (or older) than he to command the primeval gods and to drive back (*n'n*) foreign peoples (*h3w-nbw*). Thus the sun-god creates the ibis (*hbj*) and the baboon (*n'n*) of Thoth by means of a pun. In

Spell 175a of the *Book of the Dead*, a dialogue between the solar creator (here named Atum) and Thoth is preserved and best understood in the context of the *Myth of the Celestial Cow*. Atum complains about the rebels and asks the advice of Thoth, who promises to solve the problem and introduces mortality to mankind (Stadler 2009: 370 - 380).

Thus, Thoth is not an unequivocally beneficent god, but also a god who was distrusted at times. Possibly connected with his aforementioned lunar aspect (also see Stadler 2009: 200 - 218) and the phenomenon of the lunar month comprising a little less than 30 days, he can be accused of having stolen from the offerings and of having disturbed the cosmic order. Such an accusation was developed for instance in a “hymn” to Thoth found in papyri Chester Beatty VIII and Greenfield and in the charge raised by Baba against Thoth according to Papyrus Jumilhac (see discussion in Stadler 2009: 343 - 351). This charge of theft is quite delicate, as he is also responsible for ascribing the offerings to the gods (Schott 1963).

#### *Cult and Worship Considered from a Historical Perspective*

The competing and contradicting traditions of Thoth’s mythological origins as well as his actions at a very early stage of the world’s creation may suggest that the god’s historical roots go very deep. As pointed out above, there are depictions of ibis-deities on Pre- and Early Dynastic objects, but it is not clear whether they actually represent Thoth, although it is highly likely. The search for his original cult center does not yield results that are beyond doubt and based on unequivocal sources. From the Old Kingdom onward there are two principle cult centers, Hermopolis Magna (anciently *Hmnw*) in the 15<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome (*Wnw*, the hare-nome), and Hermopolis Parva (anciently *Pr-Dḥwtj-Wpj-Rḥwj*, “House of Thoth Who Has Divided the Two Companions,” at least in the first millennium BCE) in the 15<sup>th</sup> Lower Egyptian nome (the ibis-nome; Zivie 1975). This parallelism may indicate an intentional

systematization by the Egyptians. Passages in the Coffin Texts (later incorporated in the *Book of the Dead*) suggest that the ibis-god Thoth may have usurped Hermopolis Magna from a baboon-god, *Hedj-Wer*, by adopting the baboon as another of his manifestations, yet the reconstruction of such an etiology remains highly speculative (Stadler 2009: 189 - 200). Still, the 15<sup>th</sup> Lower Egyptian nome has the ibis as its standard, which might point to this area being the true home of the ibis-god.

Of the Thoth-temples at Hermopolis Magna and Parva not much has survived (Roeder 1959; Spencer 1989; Zivie 1975). At the end of the eighteenth century, the Napoleonic expedition saw at Hermopolis Magna the remains of a pronaos that disappeared thereafter. Horemheb built a pylon there that was three-fourths of the height of his Ninth Pylon at Karnak—an impressive monument for a presumably provincial town (Spencer 1989: 15 - 16; 65). Merenptah erected a temple of Amun in the sacred precinct, but, surprisingly, according to the dedicatory inscription it is Thoth who gracefully accepts this offering and thus dominates over Amun (Roeder 1954: 319 - 374). Ramesses III built several monuments and an enclosure wall there and also “multiplied the divine offerings” (Grandet 1994: 305). Nectanebo I subsequently commissioned the restoration of the temple of the goddess Useret-Nehemtawy, Thoth’s consort, as well as a 110-meter-long, 55-meter-wide extension of the Thoth temple (Roeder 1954: 375 - 442). Perhaps this work could not be finished during Nectanebo’s reign and was accomplished in the late fourth century BCE (cf. Lefebvre 1923 - 1924 I: 80; *ibid.* II: 32; see also Winter 2005: 208 - 213).

Lacking religious texts from the site, little in specific can be said regarding any cult of Thoth that might have been celebrated there (Leclère 1991): the tomb inscriptions of the fourth-century BCE high priest of Thoth, Petosiris (Lefebvre 1923 - 1924; Cherpion, Corteggiani, and Gout 2007), are not very informative on that point. Despite such a dearth of information from Hermopolis Magna, the city was anciently considered one

of the chief intellectual centers, possibly because of Thoth's image as god of writing and wisdom (Stadler 2009: 68 - 94). Yet, a closer examination of the available religious texts does not support the view that Thoth's cult center dominates other Egyptian cities as a place where holy texts were found (ibid.: 94 - 109; but see Gestermann 2010: 282 - 283, for a more optimistic point of view).

In almost any Egyptian sanctuary a "Thoth-area" can be identified, but just two additional temples dedicated to Thoth are selected for discussion here, because they show how their Thoth-mythology is oriented towards their environs. At Qasr el-Aguz an early Ptolemaic temple of Thoth is preserved. His particular form there is that of Thoth "the face of the ibis has said" (*Dḥwtj ḏd-ḥr-p3-ḥb*) and of Thoth-*setem* (*Dḥwtj-stm*). The former designation refers to the deceased sacred ibis at Hermopolis Magna and has both oracular and funerary connotations; the latter is not as easily translated. It might refer to Thoth as the libationer (*stj mw > stm*) or Thoth as *se(te)m*-priest and thus presents Thoth as a ritual performer, especially in his function of libationer. Both epithets point to nearby Medinet Habu, where the Hermopolitan ogdoad was believed to be buried and where regular libation rites were performed (Volokhine 2002). In the Nubian temple of Dakke, Thoth's role in the *Myth of the Solar Eye* is prominent (Roeder 1913 - 1930). Therefore, in this temple he is associated with Shu and Arensnuphis, the brother gods of the

Dangerous Goddess, who is the Solar Eye (see fig. 12). Both deities are equally involved in appeasing and bringing back the leonine goddess.

### Sources

Thoth appears virtually everywhere—in the major religious corpora (Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, *Book of the Dead*, and temple inscriptions), literature, and in the visual arts, as pointed out above. One major source not been mentioned so far is a text entitled by the modern editors *Book of Thoth* (Jasnow and Zauzich 2005), which may be the mysterious and powerful writing often referred to in Egyptian literature (Stadler 2009: 68 - 70). It has survived in numerous manuscripts and is a dialogue between a wisdom-seeking disciple and a master—Thoth according to the editors—and thus it may be a precursor to the Hermetic writings. Quack has disputed such an interpretation and maintained that the text is the ritual for the initiation to the scribal profession and that the disciple speaks with at least four persons, none of whom are Thoth (Quack 2007 a and b). However, the respondents' designations can be seen as *antonomasias* for Thoth. During an initiation rite such as Quack has proposed we can imagine that the participants took on mythic roles, therefore possibly including those of Thoth and a disciple engaged in a dialogue (Stadler 2009: 240 - 241).

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## Bibliographic Notes

There are five and a half monographs on Thoth, the oldest one in Russian by Turaev (1898). The most influential treatment has been Boylan (1922), who tried to be comprehensive and to cover all time periods and all aspects of the god in just 200 pages—a rather audacious attempt, but nonetheless a laudable achievement. Bleeker (1973) devotes only the lesser part of his 171-page book to the deity, thereby reducing Thoth's role too much to that of a conciliator and justifier, and remaining quite superficial, as pointed out by Derchain (1975). Given the overwhelming documentation, which exceeds the grasp of any single individual, a study of Thoth requires a particular methodological sensitivity. In writing about him authors nowadays confine themselves: 1) to a certain period, usually up to the end of the Middle or New Kingdoms (e.g., Spiess 1991); 2) to a certain corpus of material (e.g., Stadler 2009, who identifies the allusions to Thoth in the *Book*

of the Dead and aims at explaining them by adducing further Egyptian sources); or 3) to both a certain period and a certain corpus of material (e.g., Derchain-Urtel 1981, who studies the royal epithets in Ptolemaic and Roman temple inscriptions that link the king to Thoth). Without saying that the works cited above necessarily fall into traps, it must be stated that every approach has its disadvantages. Research confined to a certain period may exclude sources that are only attested after the chosen time frame (due to the hazards of preservation) and that may therefore distort the picture. Research confined to a certain corpus of material, even when further sources are consulted to contextualize the study's core corpus, might be stuck in presuppositions and, by being imprisoned in a vicious circle, miss new aspects that do not concur with the ready-made idea of Thoth. Finally, research of both abovementioned types combines all the aforementioned risks. Kurth (1986) and Budde et al. (2002) list a representative selection of attestations.

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- Figure 1. Standards accompanying the king. Temple of Kom Ombo, reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (between 170 and 127 BCE). Photograph by the author.
- Figure 2. Khufu smiting an enemy in front of an ibis-headed god. Rock relief in Wadi Maghara, Sinai. (Gardiner and Peet 1952 – 1955: pl. 3.)

- Figure 3. Stela showing the king offering to presumably three manifestations of Thoth. Sandstone. Dendara, 30 BCE – 14 CE. Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 22468. (© Ägyptisches Museum SMPK Berlin.)
- Figure 4. Judgment after death, with the ibis-headed Thoth recording the result. Vignette of Spell 125, *Book of the Dead* of Hunefer, Papyrus London BM EA 9901, 3. (© The Trustees of the British Museum.)
- Figure 5. Judgment after death, with Thoth as a squatting baboon atop the scale recording the result. Detail from a mummy breastplate, third to first century BCE. Antikensammlung des Martin von Wagner Museums der Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg A 201. (© Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg.)
- Figure 6. Thoth, Atum, and Seshat write the name of Ramesses II on the leaves of the *ished*-tree. Relief in the Hypostyle Hall of the Ramesseum, West Bank, Luxor. (Lepsius 1849 – 1858: 169.)
- Figure 7. The scribe Nebmertuef before Thoth in baboon-form. Paris, Louvre E 11154. (© The Louvre Museum, Paris.)
- Figure 8. Judgment after death, with the baboon-headed Thoth handling the scale, together with the falcon-headed Horus on the lid of Soter's coffin. BM EA 6705. (© The Trustees of the British Museum.)
- Figure 9. Thoth as an ibis-headed lion with the goddess Wadjet. Relief from a column of the pronaos, temple of Edfu. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 10. Sety I worshipping Thoth as a *sh̄m*-sceptre and as an ibis on a standard. Relief in the temple of Sety I, Abydos. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 11. Relief of Merenptah making an offering to Thoth, Karnak. (Porter and Moss 1972: 128 No. 465). Photograph by the author.
- Figure 12. Thoth of Pnubs in an Arensnuphis-iconography and Tefnut, the Solar Eye, receive offerings from Augustus. Sanctuary of the temple of Dakke, Nubia. (Roeder 1913 – 1930: pl. 127.)