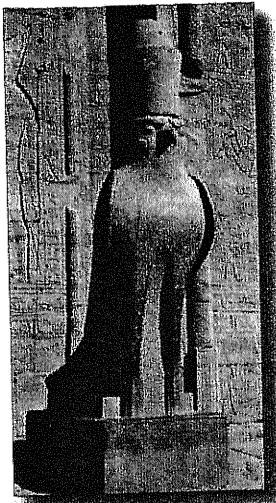


The Egyptian Gods

Egyptian Religion

The religion of the ancient Egyptians was a mixture of many beliefs. Egyptian **mythology** taught that the sky was a goddess named **Nut** who stretched over the earth. At other times, it was believed the sky was a very large cow. Six different gods represented the moon. Mixing conflicting beliefs is called **syncretism**. This did not bother the Egyptians. To them, these different beliefs were all valid ways of describing nature.

A Land of Many Gods



Horus, the
God of Light

Egyptian gods took many forms. From earliest times the most important god was **Re**, or **Ra**. He was the god of the Sun. Re was worshipped by all Egyptians. Other gods were worshipped only in certain cities or regions. In the Old Kingdom, he became the official god of the nation. However, the Egyptians worshipped over 2,000 different gods. The most common forms were animals. **Horus** was portrayed as a falcon. **Anubis** was the judge of the dead. He had the head of a jackal. Other gods combined parts of many animals. **Tawert** was the goddess of childbirth. Her body was made up of the body parts of a hippopotamus, crocodile, and lioness. Live animals associated with gods were often kept and worshipped. For example, crocodiles represented the god **Sobek**. They were worshipped and lived a life of luxury in the temple pool of Crocodilopolis. When they died, they were made into mummies. They were placed in tombs like humans.

Sometimes the Egyptians turned real people into gods. The **pharaohs** were worshipped while still alive. A few pharaohs or great men were so well-liked that they were worshipped after they died. For example, the builder of the very first pyramid, **Imhotep**, was considered a god of wisdom.

Worshipping

Most ancient Egyptians had only limited access to **temples**. These were places where the gods were worshipped. They might only see the statues at festival time. The priests would bring out the images and carry them around the city on their shoulders. However, the Egyptian people could always express their devotion to a god or goddess by owning small **amulets** or statuettes. Sometimes furniture was decorated with the face of a god or goddess. For example, the image of **Bes**, one of the gods of the family, was placed on eating utensils or children's cradles. Also, there were parts of the temples set aside for people who wanted to make special appeals to the gods. Sometimes, gods were called upon to grant special requests. Water poured over the image of **Hor-pa-khered** was believed to have special power to cure poisonous bites and stings.



The Sun God Ra



Sobek was the god of the Nile. Crocodiles were so feared, they were worshipped as gods.