

Egyptian mythology

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Egyptian mythology is the collection of myths from ancient Egypt, which describe the actions of the Egyptian gods as a means of understanding the world around them. The beliefs that these myths express are an important part of ancient Egyptian religion. Myths appear frequently in Egyptian writings and art, particularly in short stories and in religious material such as hymns, ritual texts, funerary texts, and temple decoration. These sources rarely contain a complete account of a myth and often describe only brief fragments. Inspired by the cycles of nature, the Egyptians saw time in the present as a series of recurring patterns, whereas the earliest periods of time were linear. Myths are set in these earliest times, and myth sets the pattern for the cycles of the present. Present events repeat the events of myth, and in doing so renew maat, the fundamental order of the universe. Amongst the most important episodes from the mythic past are the creation myths, in which the gods form the universe out of primordial chaos; the stories of the reign of the sun god Ra upon the earth; and the Osiris myth, concerning the struggles of the gods Osiris, Isis, and Horus against the disruptive god Set. Events from the present that might be regarded as myths include Ra's daily journey through the world and its otherworldly counterpart, the Duat. Recurring themes in these mythic episodes include the conflict between the upholders of maat and the forces of disorder, the importance of the pharaoh in maintaining maat, and the continual death and regeneration of the gods. The details of these sacred events differ greatly from one text to another and often seem contradictory. Egyptian myths are primarily metaphorical, translating the essence and behavior of deities into terms that humans can understand. Each variant of a myth represents a different symbolic perspective, enriching the Egyptians' understanding of the gods and the world. Mythology profoundly influenced Egyptian culture. It inspired or influenced many religious rituals and provided the ideological basis for kingship. Scenes and symbols from myth appeared in art in tombs, temples, and amulets. In literature, myths or elements of them were used in stories that range from humor to allegory, demonstrating that the Egyptians adapted mythology to serve a wide variety of purposes.