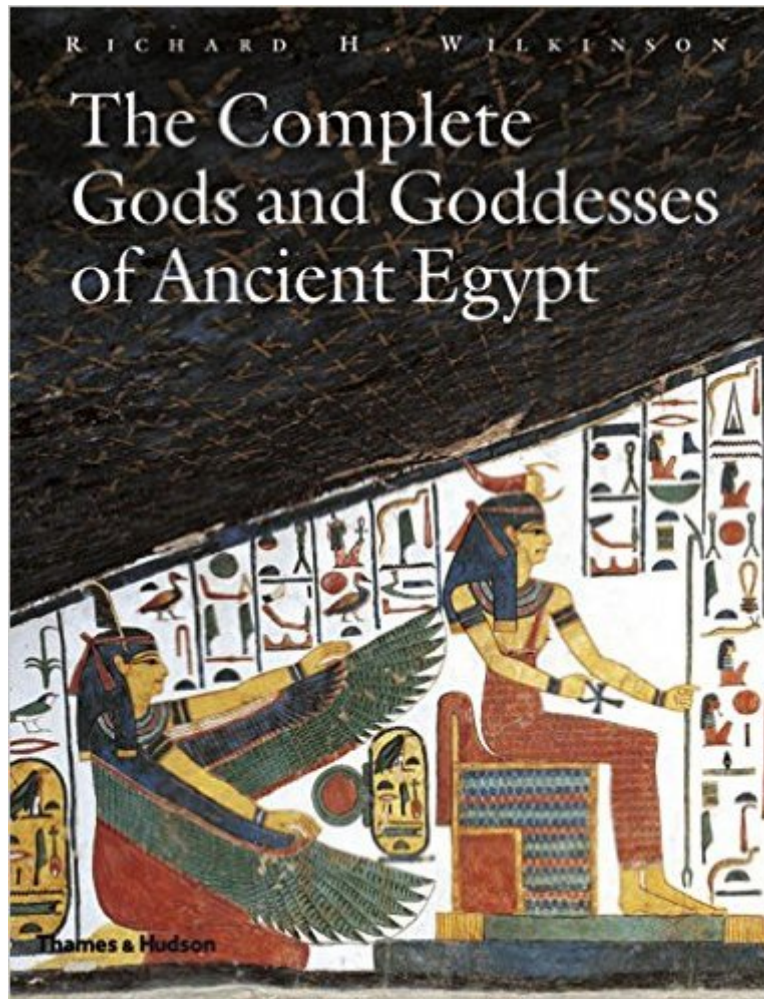


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# The Complete Gods And Goddesses Of Ancient Egypt



## Synopsis

Worshiped for over three-fifths of recorded history, ancient Egypt's gods and goddesses are among the most fascinating of human civilization. The lives of pharaohs and commoners alike were dominated by the need to honor, worship, and pacify the huge pantheon of deities. From lavish tomb paintings and imposing temple reliefs to humble household shrines, countless tributes throughout Egypt reflect the richness and complexity of their mythology. This book examines the evolution, worship, and eventual decline of the numerous gods and goddesses—from minor household figures such as Bes and Taweret to the all-powerful deities Amun and Rethat made Egypt the most completely theocratic society of the ancient world, and made Egyptians, according to Herodotus, "more religious than any other people."

• "Rise and Fall of the Gods" considers the origins of Egypt's deities, their struggles to control cosmic forces, and their eventual decline.

• "Nature of the Gods" examines the forms, appearances, and manifestations of the deities, as well as the transcendence of preeminent deities such as Amun.

• "Worship of the Gods" introduces the rituals and mysteries of formal Egyptian worship, including the importance of temples and festivals.

• "Kingship and the Gods" discusses the all-important position of the king, who served as a bridge between the gods and humanity.

• "The Many Faces of the Divine" is a unique catalogue of Egypt's gods and goddesses grouped according to their primary forms, discussing their iconography, mythology, and worship, and their influence over time. With hundreds of illustrations and specially commissioned drawings, this is a comprehensive and authoritative guide to the deities that lay at the heart of Egyptian religion and society. 400 illustrations, 170 in color

## Book Information

Series: The Complete Series

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Thames & Hudson; 1st Edition edition (May 26, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0500051208

ISBN-13: 978-0500051207

Product Dimensions: 8 x 1.2 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (31 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #205,930 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in [Books > History > World >](#)

## Customer Reviews

Richard Wilkinson's latest book (he has previously written "Reading Egyptian Art," "Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art," and "The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt") presents the reader with an impressive selection of all the major gods and goddesses, and many of the minor ones, of ancient Egypt. Although hardly "complete" in the technical sense (Wilkinson discusses "only" 500 of Egypt's 1500 or so deities, and much more could be said about the ones he does discuss), the book is fairly "complete" in a practical sense: most gods that most readers want to look up, will get at least a brief mention. For example, you will find here the 24 Hours of the Day and Night, 12 (of 21) Gates of the Underworld, all 42 Gods of Judgement, and all 42 (hmm... there's that number again!) Nome Deities. The book begins with twelve brief essays (4-6 pages each) on Egyptian religion, covering such topics as creation myths, manifestations of divinity, temple and popular worship, and divine kingship. The essays are thoughtful, informative, and up-to-date with current scholarship. I wish they had been longer, because they deserve to be expanded at greater length than the book allocates to them. The rest of the book, some 180 pages, is devoted to a "Catalogue of Deities," organized by biological shape (anthropomorphic male and female, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, and inanimate objects). This is a great idea, but it could have been taken even further. A visual index of shapes would make lookup much easier, and would only take an additional page or two. A name index is, of course, provided. Why not give a hieroglyphic index as well? Going to the individual entries, Wilkinson generally provides information about the mythology, iconography, and worship of each deity. The deities are generously illustrated, with line drawings and photographs. Again, I would wish that many of these entries could be expanded, both in terms of discussion and in terms of visual iconography. This is not a criticism of Wilkinson; it just reflects the practical limitations of the book. To summarize, Wilkinson's "Gods and Goddesses" is a very well-written, thoughtful, accurate, beautifully produced and illustrated reference on the religion of ancient Egypt. In terms of coverage it is somewhere between a handbook and an encyclopedia. I am very glad to have it in its present form, and I only wish that it had been much longer, since it is clear that Wilkinson has more to say about this subject than could fit into the covers of the present book. I would gladly pay double the price to have a truly complete encyclopedia of Egypt's gods from this author.

I agree with the other reviewers - beautifully illustrated, mostly in full color. It is comprehensive yet particularly the first half of the book is easy to read in its entirety. The first part of the book covers general concepts of Egyptian Religion and the deities. The second covers individual deities in detail. I had been looking for a book on Ancient Egyptian religion and deities which was neither outdated in its ideas, nor sterile or boring, nor full of fluff, nor overwhelmed with dense detail, nor assumed detailed prior knowledge of anthropology, archeology or African/Near Eastern history and religion. This book is it. It is beautifully clear and explains how Egyptian views of each deity changed over time. It clearly presents for each deity what syncretism occurred (merging with other gods or the adoption of other gods' attributes) with time. It contains some of the most recent thinking on how the Egyptians might have viewed their own deities. My only minor negative would be that there are no references or footnotes in the text itself for the expert. However, within the body of the text, the author does mention which academics advanced which important concepts and coupled with the extensive and detailed bibliography arranged by subject matter at the end of the book, this minor gripe is assuaged. The binding and quality of the book, its print, and illustrations are beautiful - it would make a lovely gift for someone. Easy to read for both the beginner and the non-beginner in this area, but full of crystal clear detail for one who wants a good reference book even for more advanced students of religion.

Compiled and written by Richard H. Wilkinson (Professor and Director of the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition), and enhanced with 338 illustrations (132 in full-color), *The Complete Gods And Goddesses Of Ancient Egypt* is a straightforward introduction to Egyptian mythology and iconography, offering comprehensive details about both major and minor deities. Organized into five general categories (Rise and Fall of the Gods; Nature of the Gods; Worship of the Gods; Kingship and the Gods; and The Catalogue of Deities), *The Complete Gods And Goddesses Of Ancient Egypt* is a first-rate, strongly recommended resource and reference for writers, historians, and lay readers curious about the mythologies of the Egyptian culture over a period of more than two thousand years.

When I first got this I was intending to learn more about the Egyptian Gods & Goddesses from a mythological perspective. I thought that I was purchasing a book about the Egyptian Gods that were stories similar to the Greek Gods. I was looking for something purely mythological. If that is what you are looking to do, this book is not for you. However, if you are looking to study the Gods & Goddesses from a purely historical sense, then I would highly recommend this. Most of what I read

is the historical origins, such as where each deity was created & by what group of people. There is a section that provides a catalogue of the deities which lists each deity, their area of origin, what they represented in the mythology, their appearance, & the most common form of worship to each deity. An example would be Anubis. It discusses that he was a funerary god, a possible origin of why Anubis is given the form of a jackal, & which Egyptian nome worshipped him the most.

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