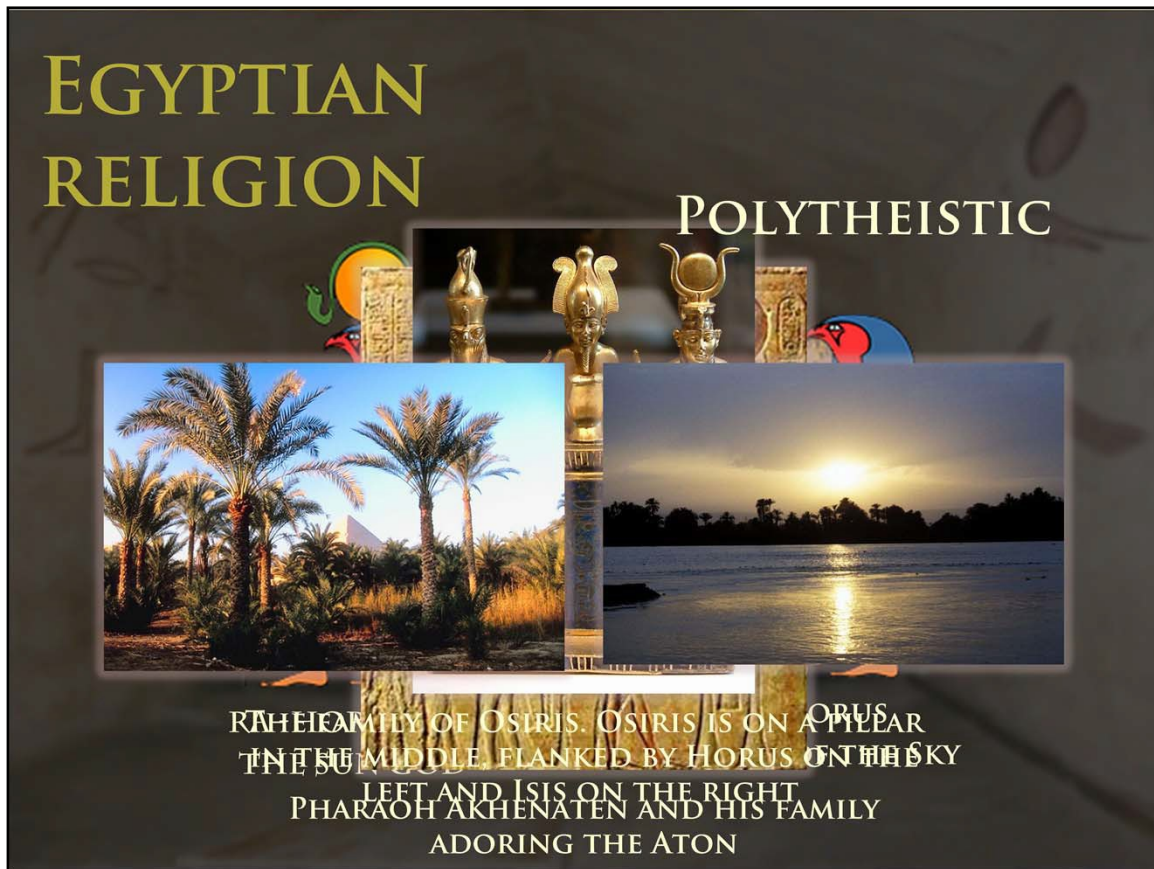


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Topic 2 Content: Egyptian Religion and Afterlife

Egyptian Religion

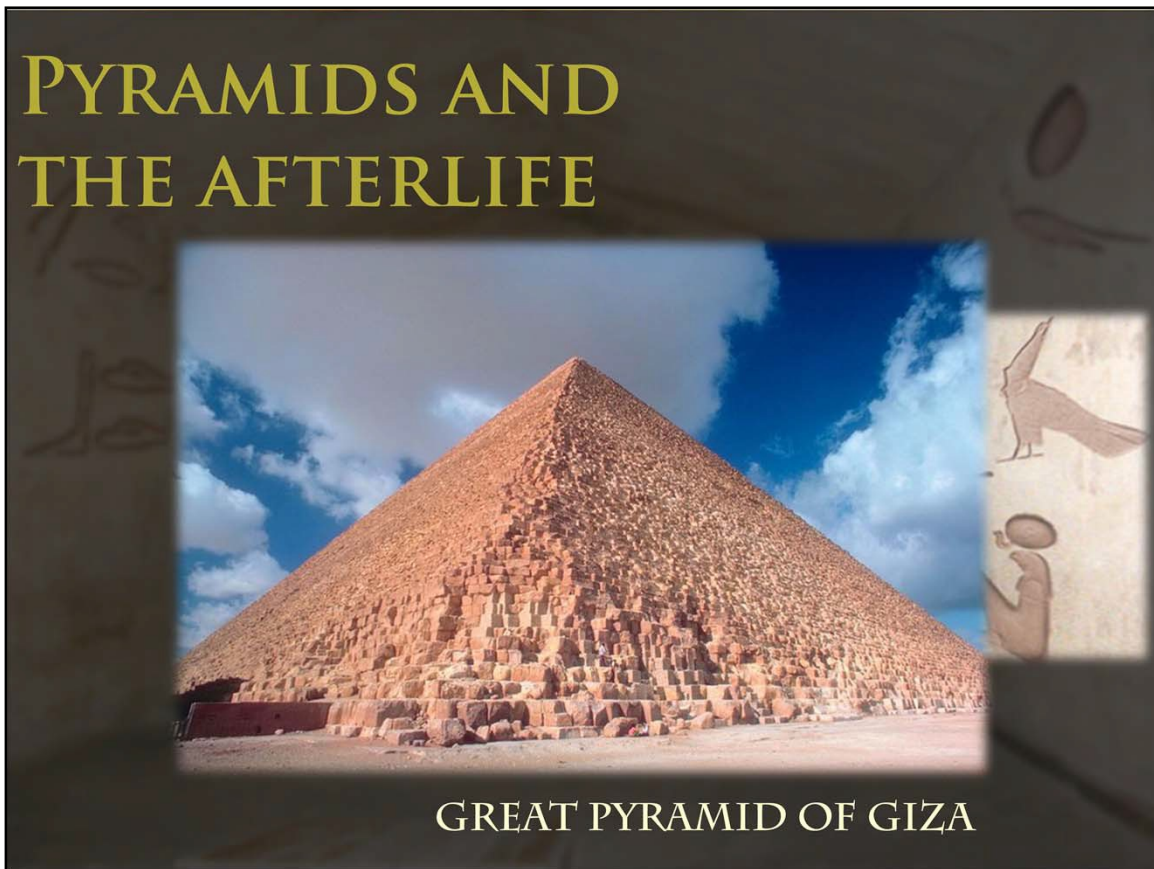


The Egyptians were polytheistic and worshipped multiple deities. Due to Egypt's reliance on weather and land for agriculture, the most prevalent gods were either sun gods or land gods. In ancient times, these multiple gods were used to explain natural phenomena like thunder or earthquakes. Depending on the ruling pharaoh, the sun god, Ra was sometimes combined with other gods, such as the case with Ra-Horakhty as shown here, to be a supreme god. Ra-Horakhty is the combined deity of Horus, the sky god, and Ra. Ra always wears a sun disk on his head, representing the sun. Ancient Egyptians believed that pharaohs were literal sons of the sun god. Other important Egyptian deities included Osiris, the god of the afterlife, and his wife, Isis, the goddess of family, nature, and magic. Natural occurrences, like the flood of the Nile, were attributed to the relationship between these two gods and their interactions with other gods.

During the New Kingdom, the pharaoh Akhenaten, also known as Amenhotep IV, and his wife, Nefertiti, worshipped Aton, the god of the sun disk as the one and only god. All other temples were closed and the worship of other gods was not tolerated. This harmed Egypt's empire and caused mass upset. The conflict caused by this change led to the loss of territory by Egypt, which was only slightly restored by Ramses II later.

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Pyramids and the Afterlife



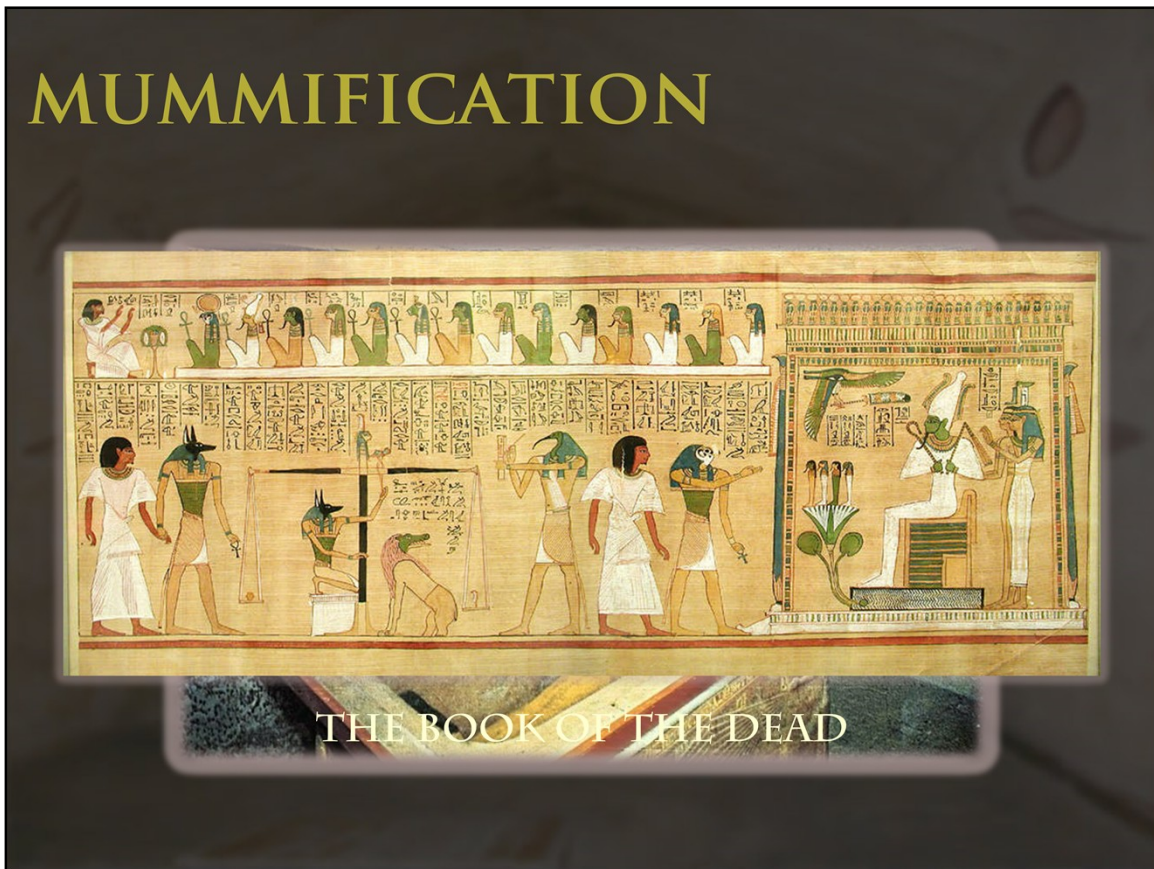
In the papyrus painting shown here, the goddess Ma'at weighs the heart of the deceased against a feather in the underworld. If the heart, or soul, is lighter, the deceased lives on in the afterlife. If the heart is heavier, the creature Ammit devours the heart. The god Anubis stands by as judge.

Egyptian pyramids were large, stone, pyramid-shaped structures built by royals as tombs and gateways to the underworld and afterlife. Some of the most famous remnants of this civilization are the Egyptian pyramids and most of those that remain today were built during the Old Kingdom.

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Mummification



Egyptians had strong beliefs about death and the afterlife. They believed that humans had a life-force, or *ka*, that left the body upon death, but still needed nourishment through food and drink and other earthly comforts, like furniture, games, and household objects, to continue after the death of the body. Funeral rituals were complex and were intended to prepare the deceased for the afterlife. During the New Kingdom, a text called *The Book of the Dead* was used during funeral rituals. This text contained spells that were supposed to help the deceased reach the afterlife.

Egyptians preserved the dead by mummifying the bodies of the deceased. Mummification involved the process of drying and wrapping dead bodies to maintain them for the next life. Typically, only the rich could afford to be mummified and the process was overseen by a priest who was paid by the family of the deceased. After the process was complete, the mummy was put in a case called a sarcophagus, provided with masks or other ornamentation, and placed inside a tomb. The first known evidence of Egyptian mummification dates back to about 3500 B.C., but mummification was so effective that many mummies, including those of many important pharaohs, are still preserved.