

Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt

This book is a vivid reconstruction of the practical aspects of ancient Egyptian religion. Through an examination of artifacts and inscriptions, the text explores a variety of issues. For example, who was allowed to enter the temples, and what rituals were performed therein? Who served as priests? How were they organized and trained, and what did they do? What was the Egyptians' attitude toward death, and what happened at funerals? How did the living and the dead communicate? In what ways could people communicate with the gods? What impact did religion have on the economy and longevity of the society? This book demystifies Egyptian religion, exploring what it meant to the people and society. The text is richly illustrated with images of rituals and religious objects.

Emily Teeter, PhD, is a Research Associate and Coordinator of Special Exhibits at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. She has curated temporary and permanent exhibits of Egyptian art at the Oriental Institute Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago. The author and co-author of a wide range of popular and scholarly publications, her most recent books include *Ancient Egypt: Treasures from the Collection of the Oriental Institute*, *Egypt and the Egyptians*, and *The Life of Meresamun: A Temple Singer in Ancient Egypt*.

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Chronology of Ancient Egypt

The history of ancient Egypt is divided into thirty-one dynasties. The individual dynasties are grouped into three kingdoms, separated by intermediate periods. A Predynastic Period preceded Dynasty 1. The division of Egypt's history into dynasties was devised by Manetho, a third-century BC priest-historian. In many cases, the divisions between dynasties are arbitrary. This chronology is based primarily on Shaw 2000.

All dates prior to 664 BC are approximate.

Early Dynastic Period (Archaic Period): Dynasties 1–2 **3100–2686 BC**

Consolidation of the Egyptian state.

Old Kingdom: Dynasties 3–8 **2686–2125 BC**

Dynasty 3: 2686–2613 BC. First large-scale stone funerary monuments for kings and stone mastaba tombs for nobility.

Dynasty 4: 2613–2498 BC. Construction of pyramids in Lower Egypt. Increase in documentation for religion and culture through wall reliefs and written texts.

Dynasty 5: 2497–2345 BC. Appearance of Pyramid Texts that explicate the king's afterlife. Elaboration of private tombs, wall reliefs, and tomb furnishings.

Dynasty 6: 2345–2181 BC. Height of Old Kingdom tomb decoration.

Dynasties 7–8: 2181–2160 BC. Many ephemeral rulers.

First Intermediate Period: Dynasties 9–11
2160–2055 BC

Fragmentation of the state and the rise of local power centers.

Middle Kingdom: Dynasties 11–14
2055–1650 BC

Dynasty 12: 1985–1773 BC. Rise of the god Amun at Thebes.

Second Intermediate Period: Dynasties 15–17
1650–1550 BC

Incursion of people from western Asia into Lower Egypt.

The New Kingdom: Dynasties 18–20
1550–1069 BC

The “Golden Age” of ancient Egypt; foreign conquest and great building projects in Egypt and Nubia. Detailed documentation of religious and funerary beliefs in decorated tombs, papyri, and funerary objects.

Dynasty 18: 1550–1295 BC. Period of great building and expansion of the temples in Thebes. Expansion of the Karnak Temple, construction of the temples at Deir el Bahri, the core of the Luxor Temple, the Small Amun Temple at Medinet Habu, and the Aten temples of Amunhotep IV/Akhenaton. Establishment of royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens.

Dynasty 19: 1295–1186 BC. Expansion of the Karnak and Luxor Temples; construction of the Ramesseum (Rameses II).

Dynasty 20: 1186–1069 BC. Construction of Medinet Habu (Rameses III). Last period to use the Valley of the Kings as a royal cemetery.

Third Intermediate Period: Dynasties 21–25
1069–664 BC

Period of political decentralization of the country. During Dynasty 25, Egypt was ruled by Nubian kings. Period of fine coffins, elaborate mummification procedures, mythological papyri, and rise of animal cults.

Saite Period: Dynasty 26
664–525 BC

Period of renaissance in arts and building; construction of large private tombs at Thebes.

Late Period: Dynasties 27–31
525–332 BC

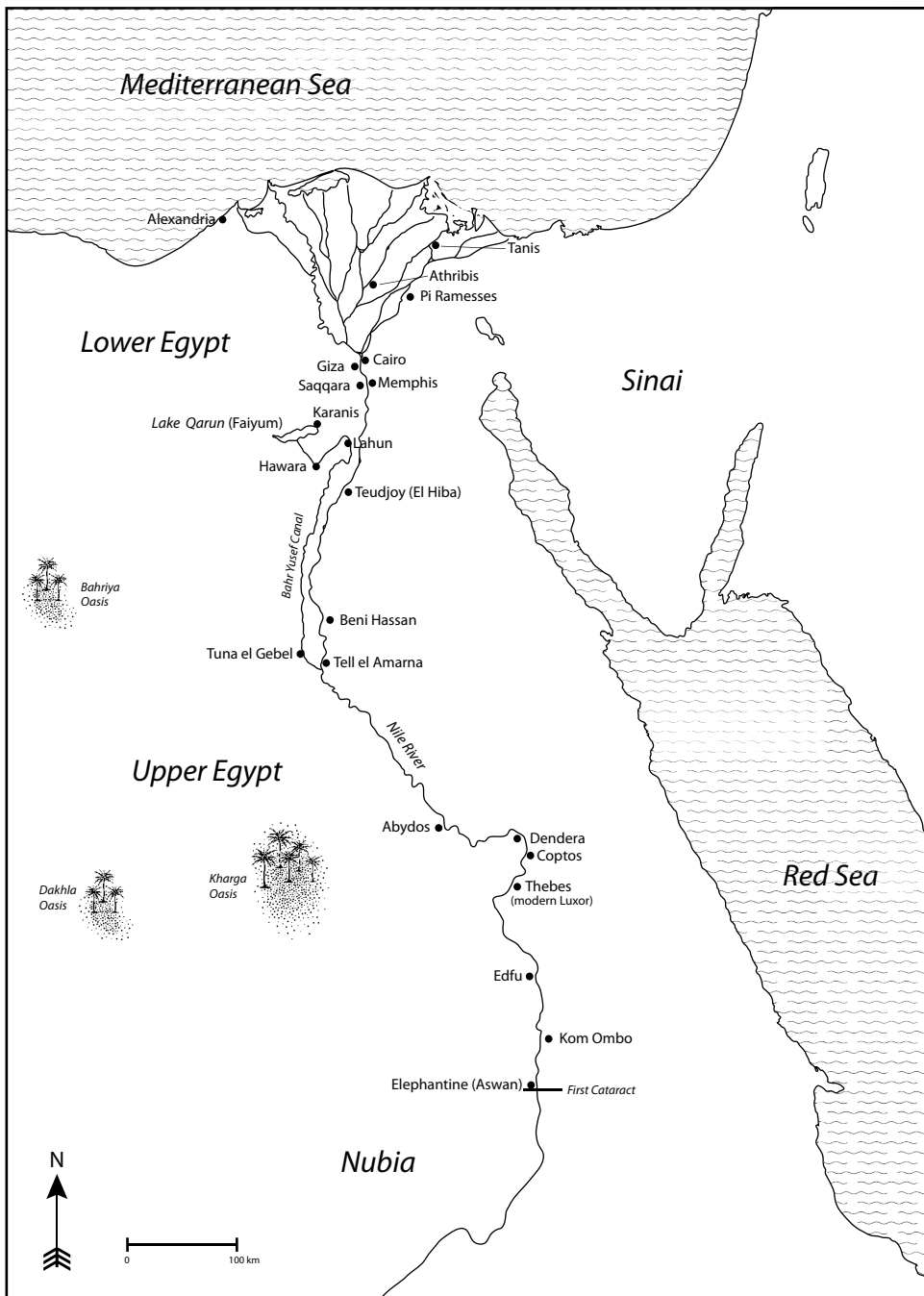
Period of native rule interrupted by two Persian dominations.

Ptolemaic Period
332–30 BC

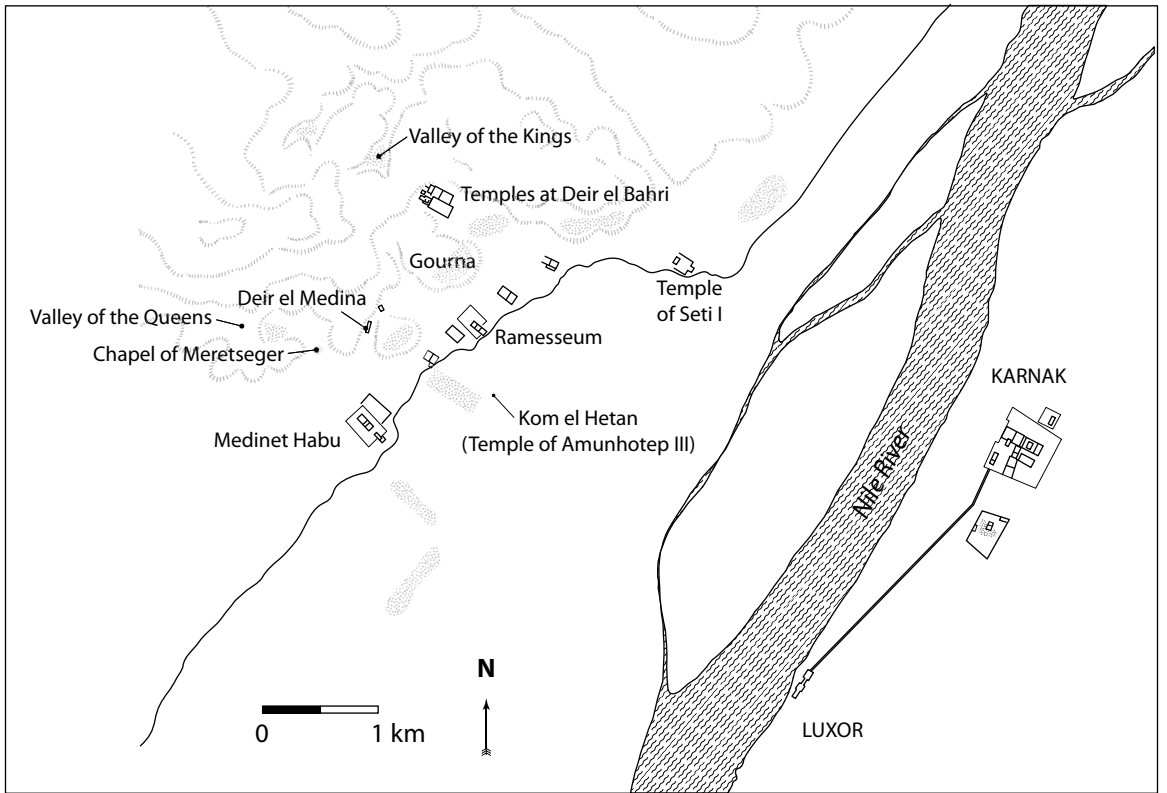
Following the death of Alexander the Great, Egypt was deeded to his general Ptolemy after whom the Greek period in Egypt is named. Continuation of most religious traditions.

Roman Period
30 BC–AD 395

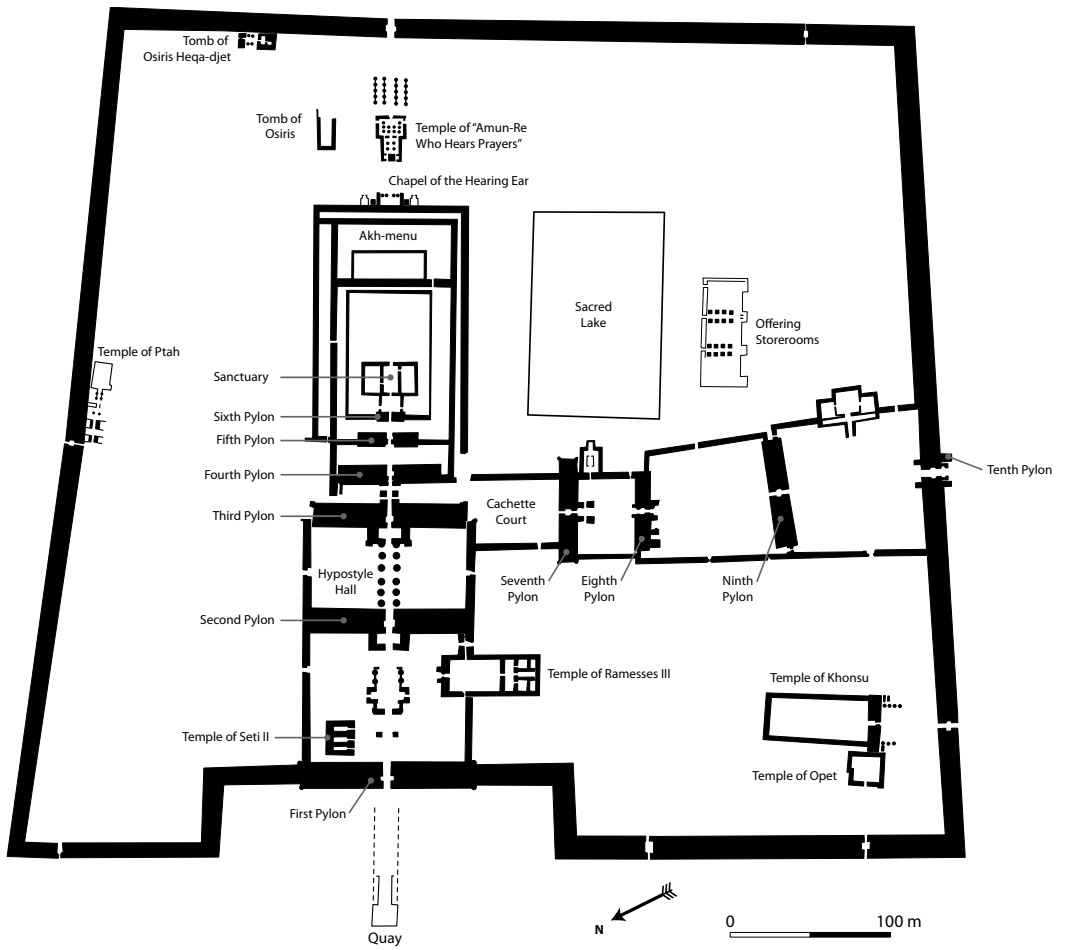
With Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, Egypt was annexed to the Roman Empire.



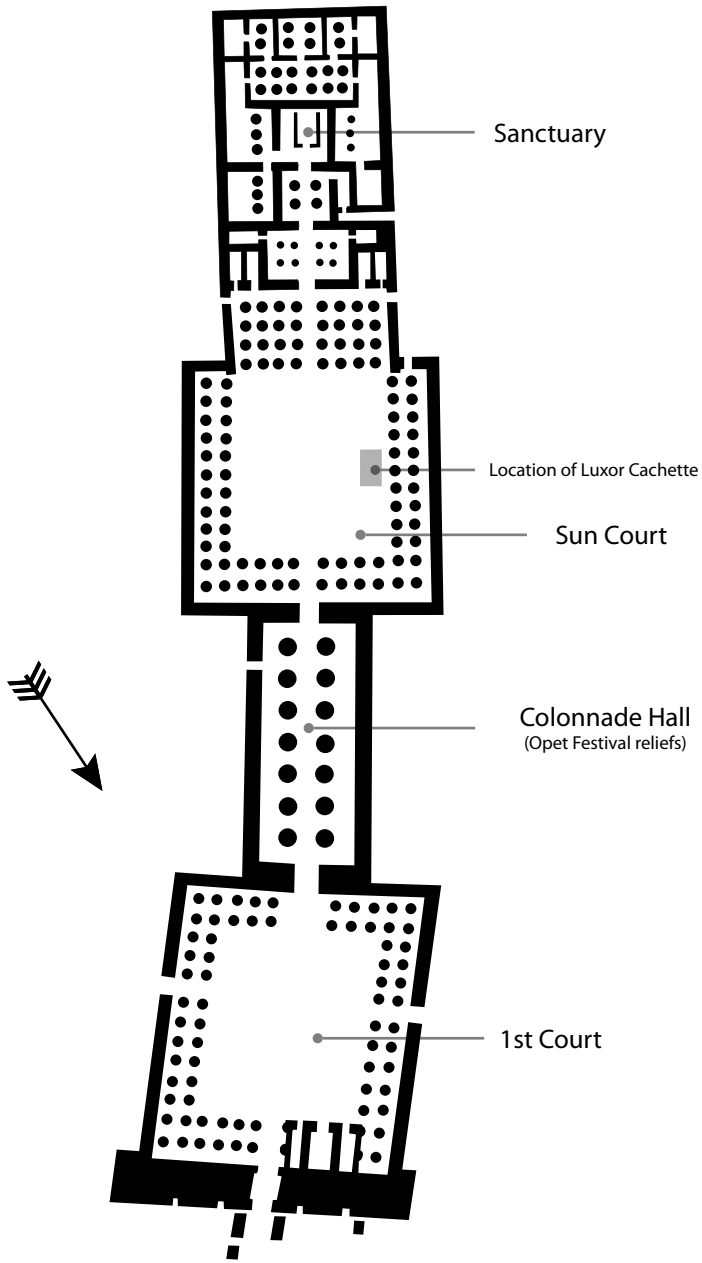
Map 1. Egypt



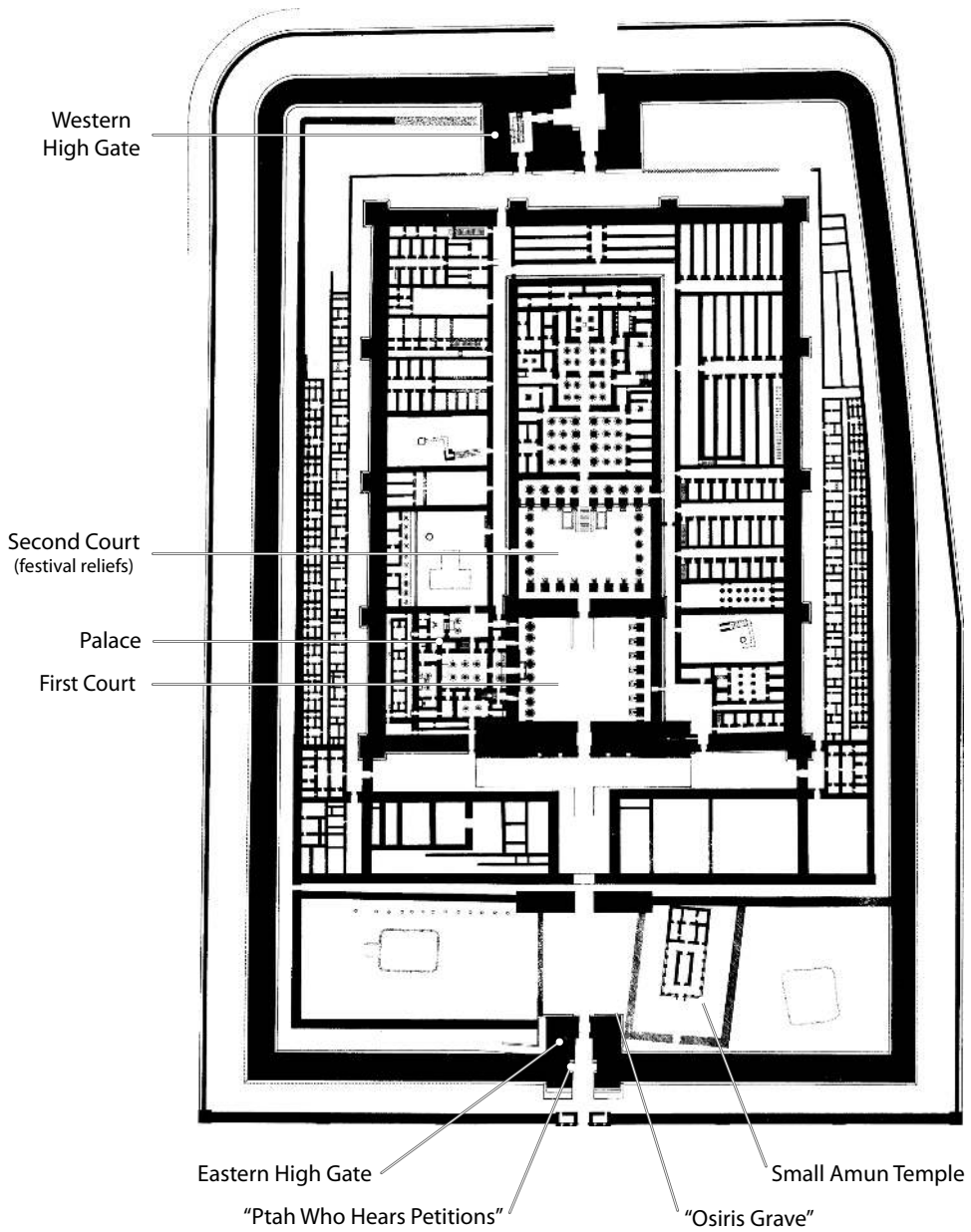
Map 2. Thebes



Plan 1. The Karnak Temple



Plan 2. The Luxor Temple



Plan 3. Medinet Habu