

Mut

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Mut

Mut holds two spans in the modern twelve-deity birth calendar behind the site's **EGYPT** chip: **22–31 January and 8–22 September**. The bar glosses her as *the sky mother, fierce and sheltering* — a modern popular assignment, and one worth correcting on the spot, because Egypt's sky goddess was **Nut**, arched over the earth and swallowing the sun each evening. Mut (*Mwt*) is something else: her name is written with the vulture sign and is the ordinary Egyptian word for "mother". She is shown as a woman in a vulture headdress wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt — one of very few goddesses given that crown — in a long red or blue sheath dress, sometimes with wings folded down her arms, and in her dangerous aspect with the head of a lioness.

The god in Egyptian religion

Mut is the great goddess of **Thebes**, consort of [Amun-Ra](#) and mother of the moon god Khonsu; the three together are the **Theban triad**, and their three barques travelled together at the city's festivals. She absorbs an older Theban consort, **Amaunet**, the female counterpart of Amun in the Hermopolitan Ogdoad, who is displaced rather than deleted — Amaunet keeps a presence at Karnak long after Mut has taken her place.

Her house is the **Precinct of Mut** at Karnak, south of the Amun enclosure and linked to it by an avenue of sphinxes. Its defining feature is the *Isheru*, a crescent-shaped sacred lake wrapped around three sides of the temple — a form reserved for lioness goddesses, and the clearest sign that Mut was understood as one of them. Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III built there in the Eighteenth Dynasty, Taharqa added to it in the Twenty-fifth, and the Ptolemies were still working on it. Amenhotep III filled the precinct with granodiorite statues of the lioness [Sekhmet](#): more than seven hundred are known, and a long-standing scholarly suggestion that the original set numbered 730, two for every day of the year, remains a hypothesis rather than a demonstrated fact.

That lioness connection places Mut inside the **Eye of Ra** complex, the cluster of goddesses — Sekhmet, Hathor, Bastet, Tefnut, Wadjet — who are the sun's rage sent out and then coaxed home. The associated story is the **Distant Goddess**: the Eye leaves Egypt in fury for Nubia and must be persuaded or tricked back, and her return is celebrated with music, beer and deliberate drunkenness. The **Festival of Drunkenness**, kept on the twentieth day of the first month of Akhet, is attested at Mut's own precinct, where Betsy Bryan's excavations of Hatshepsut's "Porch of Drunkenness" recovered its physical setting. Sheltering and ferocious are the same attribute here, not two: the vulture spreading her wings over the king and the lioness in the desert are one goddess in two moods.

As "mother", Mut also gave the queen a theology. The reigning queen could be figured as Mut to the king's Amun, and the divine birth scenes at Deir el-Bahri and Luxor make royal conception a matter of Amun

visiting the queen — a claim about legitimacy dressed as a claim about parentage. Her name is written into royal names for the same reason: Mutemwia, Mutnedjmet, Ahmose-Nefertari's titles.

In the Greco-Roman period she is identified loosely with Hera as the consort of the king of the gods, though she never travelled the way [Isis](#) did. Her modern reception is mostly archaeological: the Mut precinct has been excavated more or less continuously since Margaret Benson and Janet Gourlay's season of 1895–1897 — one of the first excavations in Egypt directed by women — and by the Brooklyn Museum and Johns Hopkins expeditions since 1976.

Key dates

Date	Event
c. 2055–1650 BCE	Amaunet is the consort of Amun at Thebes; Mut's own cult is not yet prominent.
c. 1550–1450 BCE	Mut emerges as the principal Theban goddess in the early Eighteenth Dynasty.
c. 1473–1458 BCE	Hatshepsut builds in the Mut precinct; the Porch of Drunkenness is associated with her reign.
c. 1390–1352 BCE	Amenhotep III rebuilds the precinct and installs the Sekhmet statues; more than 700 survive.
c. 1353–1336 BCE	Akhenaten's agents attack Mut's name along with Amun's.
c. 1332–1290 BCE	Restoration under Tutankhamun, Ay and Horemheb.
c. 690–664 BCE	Taharqa of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty adds to the precinct.
332–30 BCE	Ptolemaic construction continues at the Mut temple.
391 CE	The Theodosian decrees end public cult at Karnak.
1895–1897 CE	Margaret Benson and Janet Gourlay excavate the Mut precinct.
1976 CE onward	Brooklyn Museum and Johns Hopkins expeditions work the site; the Festival of Drunkenness material is recovered from Hatshepsut's porch.
Later 20th century (<i>origin not documented</i>)	Mut is placed in the modern deity birth calendar with the January and September spans, glossed as a sky mother — a role that belongs to Nut.

In the Egyptian year

Mut's principal appearances are processional and fall in **Akhet**. She rode in the **Opet festival** in the second month of the inundation season, her barque following Amun's from Karnak to Luxor, and she crossed with him to the west bank for the **Beautiful Festival of the Valley** in the second month of **Shemu**. Her own distinctive observance is the **Festival of Drunkenness** on the twentieth day of the first month of Akhet — the first month, Thoth, at the very head of the civil year, when the flood was rising. Getting deliberately and ritually drunk at the turn of the year, to bring the furious goddess home gentle, is a piece of Egyptian religion that resists every attempt to make it decorous.

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