Ptah. Throughout the long history of Egypt, the god P. who was venerated especially in the royal residence of *Memphis[1], was one of the most prominent gods in the Egyptian religion, yet curiously enough not so much in Egyptian mythology above the local level. There was no cycle of P. as there was one of *Re or *Osiris. Like *Amun afterwards, P. was a typical local god whose cult acquired fame throughout the country because he was venerated in the royal capital. Hence several hymns and prayers[2] addressed to P. have come down to us, even though he was not very important in the national mythology.

The textual and iconographical material was first collected and described by M. Stolk[3] (1911), and afterwards most fully treated in detail by M. Sandman-Holmberg[4] (1946). One of the most important results of more recent research[5] is, that it can no longer be regarded as certain that the socalled "*Denkmal Memphitischer Theologie" dates from the OK, but that it should be placed in a later period, perhaps in Ramesside times[6]. The earliest references to creation through the word of P.[7], which became so well-known through Egyptological and religio-historical studies in the 20th century, are found in the Coffin Texts[8], and were probably taken from the Heliopolitan theology concerning *Atum.

This development in more recent research makes our image of P. much less complicated. Like many other local gods, P. of Memphis was accounted a creator-god, but not, at least not originally, in a verbal or sexual sense. He was the divine artist or craftsman, as appears from innumerable texts since the MK[9] and from the title of his high priest (*wr ḫrp ḥmwt* "greatest of the directorate of the arts", *Hoherpriester von Memphis). Although this title seems at first to refer to a profane function in the OK[10], yet it remains significant that the high priest of P. received this title in the 6th dynasty. Possibly, as suggested long since in the literature concerning P. and now advocated anew, even the name of P. may signify "fashioner" (Bildner)[11]. Ptah's artistic ability is proverbial: *Tutankhamon is "skilful as Ptah and wise as *Thot"[12]. Thot played his part in the well-known myths as the wise divine scribe, but it is conceivable that Ptah's rôle as divine craftsman was not worked out in the myths, because this would have given the great god of the royal residence too subordinate a place. Not only in the ancient capital did P. enjoy special veneration, but also in other places where much art work was done, such as *Karnak and *Deir el-Medineh[13].

P. is one of the few gods who are as a rule represented in anthropomorphic form. He seems to have the deified body that a human mummy has. Compared with other gods, the body of this divine craftsman is remarkable: "Three are all the gods Amon, Re and Ptah, whose equal is not. Who hides his name as Amon. He is Re in face. His body is Ptah."[14] At any rate, Ptah's garment is close-fitting like mummy wrappings. It is noticeable that the great god of Memphis, when not represented as *Tatenen, is generally shown wearing not a crown or wig, which might indicate a high status, but a close-fitting blue cap, such as smiths, craftsmen and other workmen sometimes wear in the mastabas of the OK[15]. Ptah is the only god to wear the straight beard, often called the

royal beard[16], which is not curved like the beard worn by many gods, *Osiris e.g., and that is longer than the short beard of officials. It is questionable though, whether P. is thereby characterized as a pharaoh because these usually wear such a beard. In any case, a reverse course of reasoning must also be considered. Since not all gods wear the curved beard, but some have a special beard such as *Sopdu or *Bes, it might be that the straight beard was the special beard of the divine craftsman P., that acquired royal dignity because the pharaohs adopted this fashion after the god of Memphis, their residence. P. is often richly provided with ornaments (*pectoral and menat) and with staffs (*ʿnḫ, wꜣs* and *ḏd*). Sometimes P. stands on the *maat-sign as a lord of the ordered world.

His familiar epithet *nfr-ḥr*[17] should rather be taken as "of merciful aspect" than as "fair of face", since there is no reason to assume that the Egyptians thought a god with an animal head uglier than a god with a human face. A figure in relief of Ptah-who-hears-prayer in the temple of *Medinet Habu[18] had an impressive inlaid eye, accentuating his benevolent aspect.

Since the MK Ptah is called King of the two lands. This does not imply though that P. was accounted a king of primordial times. Never is there any mention of a time of P., as there is of a time of *Atum, *Geb, *Osiris or *Horus[19]. P. is the god of the residence "who conducts the king to his great throne in his name of King of the two lands"[20]. As god of the residence the divine artist stands as it were above kingship, so that his name is set at the beginning of lists of kings. Another frequent epithet of P. in this connection is "he who is upon his great throne (*ḥr st wrt*)", which calls to mind the place in the temple of Ptah at Memphis where kings were crowned[21]. The epithet "south of his wall (*rsj ỉnb.f*)" locates P. in his famous temple – according to Herodotus II, 99 a large and admirable building – that lay south of the town of Memphis (*ỉnbw ḥḏ*). Ptah had an important function as god of destiny[22]. Various songs and prayers show that people experienced a sense of personal devotion towards Ptah[23].

So important a god as P. naturally has deep-rooted relations with other gods. Since the OK P. is connected with the Memphitic god of death *Sokaris, and since the MK Ptah, Sokaris and Osiris are bound up in a single trinity, the god Ptah-Sokaris-Osiris[24]. There is also a profound connection with Tatenen[25]. Since the NK we find connections between P. and various goddesses, particularly *Sakhmet, who are both daughter and beloved, the most common form of marital relationship in the Egyptian pantheon. Ptah was too important to be placed in a marriage relationship of the mother – son or brother – sister type. With Sakhmet and *Nefertem P. forms the Memphitic variant of the father – mother – son triad. Of those brought into a father – son relationship with P. the most well-known are the *Apis bull and the deified architect *Imhotep. Although characteristics of the sun-god are sometimes ascribed to P., he never really acquired an established relationship with *Re like Amun-Re, Sobek-Re, Re-Atum or Re-Harakhte.

[1] Ahmad Badawi, Memphis als Zweite Landeshauptstadt im Neuen Reich, Cairo 1947, 7ff. – [2] André Barucq et François Daumas, Hymnes et prières de l'Egypte ancienne, Paris 1980, 385–415. – [3] Martinus Stolk, Ptah, Berlin 1911. – [4] Maj Sandman-Holmberg, The God Ptah, Lund 1946. – [5] Junge, in: MDAIK 29, 1973, 195–204. Ulrich Luft, Beiträge zur Historisierung der Götterwelt und der Mythenbeschreibung, Studia Aegyptiaca IV, Budapest 1978, 146–152. – [6] Hermann A. Schlögl, Der Gott Tatenen, OBO 29, Freiburg-Göttingen, 1980, 110–117. – [7] Hermann Junker, Die Götterlehre von Memphis in: APAW 1939, Berlin 1940, nr. 23. – [8] CT VI, 268 o. – [9] Sandman-Holmberg, o.c., 45–56. – [10] Elke Freier, in: Altorientalische Forschungen 4, 1976, 5–34; cf. also Barbara L. Begelsbacher-Fischer, Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des Alten Reiches, OBO 37, Freiburg-Göttingen 1981, 126–151. – [11] Jürgen Osing, Die Nominalbildung des Ägyptischen, Mainz 1976, Anm. 676; cf. Assmann in: MDAIK 27, 1971, 16. – [12] Urk. IV, 2032, 6–7. – [13] Sandman-Holmberg, o.c., 233ff. – [14] pLeiden I 350, IV, 21–22. – [15] Cf. Zandee, in: BiOr 24, 1967, 40. – [16] Mötefindt, in: Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien 50, 1920, 133–140. – [17] Sandman-Holmberg, o.c., 108–111; cf. now Germond, in: Bulletin Société d'Egyptologie Genève 4, 1980, 39–43. – [18] Medinet Habu VIII, pl. 608. – [19] Jan Bergman, Ich bin Isis, Uppsala 1968; Helck, Manetho, 5. – [20] pHarris 44, 7; cf. Luft, o.c., 145. – [21] Bergman, o.c., 93. – [22] Sandman-Holmberg, o.c., 64–79. – [23] Barucq and Daumas, o.c. (n. 2), see int. al. p. 414: "Ptah mon coeur est plein de toi, mon coeur est paré de ton amour comme un marais l'est de boutons de lotus. J'ai fait ma maison à côté de ton temple." – [24] Cf. n. 6. – [25] Sandman-Holmberg, o.c., 188–193; Sigrid-Eike Hoenes, Untersuchungen zum Wesen und Kult der Göttin Sachmet, Diss. Bonn 1976, 197–201. H. te V.