Hermes Trismegistus

Hermes Trismegistus (Greek: Ἡρμῆς Τρισμέγιστος, Ἡρμῆς Ἐπτάθρυστος, “thrice-greatest Hermes”; Latin: Mercurius ter Maximus) is the purported author of the Hermetic Corpus, a series of sacred texts that are the basis of Hermeticism.

Contents

- 1 Origin and identity
- 2 Thrice Great
- 3 Hermetic writings
- 4 Hermetic revival
- 5 In Islamic tradition
- 6 In the Bahá’í writings
- 7 New Age revival
- 8 Popular culture
- 9 See also
- 10 Notes
- 11 References
- 12 Further reading
- 13 External links

Origin and identity

He may be a representation of the syncretic combination of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth.[1] In Hellenistic Egypt, the Greeks recognised the congruence of their god Hermes with Thoth.[2] Subsequently the two gods were worshipped as one in what had been the Temple of Thoth in Khemnu, which the Greeks called Hermopolis.[citation needed]

Both Thoth and Hermes were gods of writing and of magic in their respective cultures. Thus, the Greek god of interpretative communication was combined with the Egyptian god of wisdom as a patron of astrology and alchemy. In addition, both gods were psychopomps; guiding souls to the afterlife. The Egyptian Priest and Polymath Imhotep had been deified long after his death and therefore both gods were psychopomps; guiding souls to the afterlife. The Egyptian Priest and Polymath Imhotep had been deified long after his death and therefore both gods were worshipped as one in what had been the Temple of Thoth in Khemnu, which the Greeks called Hermopolis.[citation needed]

A Mycenean Greek reference found on a Linear B clay tablet at Pylos [5] to a deity or semi-deity called TI-RI-SE-RO-E, Trisherus (the “thrice or triple hero”[6]) could be connected to the later epithet “thrice wise” “Trismegistos”, applied to Hermes/Thoth. On the same TN 316 tablet as well as other Linear B tablets, found in Pylos and Knossos, appears the name of the deity “Hermes” as E-MB-A, but not in any apparent connection with the “Trisherus”. This interpretation of poorly understood Mycenean material is disputed, since Hermes Trismegistus is not referenced in any of the copious sources before he emerges in Hellenistic Egypt.

The majority of Greeks, and later Romans, did not accept Hermes Trismegistus in the place of Hermes.[citation needed] The two gods remained distinct from one another. Cicero noted several individuals referred to as “Hermes”: “the fifth, who is worshipped by the people of Pheneus [in Arcadia], is said to have killed Argus, and for this reason to have fled to Egypt, and to have given the Egyptians their laws and alphabet: he it whom the Egyptians call Thyej.[7] In the same place, Cicero mentions a “fourth Mercury (Hermes) was the son of the Nile, whose name may not be spoken by the Corinthians.”

Part of a series of articles on Hermeticism

Hermetic Religion

Mythology

Hermes Trismegistus

Thoth
Poimandres

Hermetica

Corpus Hermeticum

Kybalion

Influence and Influences

Hermetic Movements

Rosicrucianism

Orders

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor

Hermetic Brotherhood of Light

Ordo Templi Orientis

Topics in Hermetism

Qabalah

Occult and divinatory tarot

Hermetists and Hermeticists
name may not be spoken by the Egyptians." The most likely interpretation of this passage is as two variants on the same symcretism of Greek Hermes and Egyptian Thoth or sometimes other gods; both these very good early references in Cicero (most ancient Trismegistus material is from early centuries CE) corroborate the view that Thrice-Great Hermes originated in Hellenistic Egypt through symcretism with Egyptian gods (the Hermetica refer most often to Thoth and Amun).[8]

Hermes Trismegistus, floor mosaic in the Cathedral of Siena

The Hermetic literature added to the Egyptian concerns with conjuring spirits and animating statues that inform the oldest texts, Hellenistic writings of Greek-Babylonian astrology and the newly developed practice of alchemy (Fowden 1993; pp.58â€“68). In a parallel tradition, Hermetic philosophy rationalized and systematized religious cult practices and offered the adept a method of personal ascension from the constraints of physical being, which has led to confusion of Hermeticism with Gnosticism, which was developing contemporaneously.[9]

As a divine source of wisdom, Hermes Trismegistus was credited with tens of thousands of writings of high standing, reputed to be of immense antiquity. Plato's Timaeus and Critias state that in the temple of Neith at Saïs, there were secret halls containing historical records which had been kept for 9,000 years. Clement of Alexandria was under the impression that the Egyptians had forty-two sacred writings by Hermes, encapsulating all the training of Egyptian priests. Siegfried Morenz has suggested (Egyptian Religion) "The reference to Thoth's authorship... is based on ancient tradition; the figure forty-two probably stems from the number of Egyptian names, and thus conveys the notion of completeness." The Neo-Platonic writers took up Clement's "forty-two essential texts".

The Hermetica is a category of papyri containing spells and initiatory induction procedures. In the dialogue called the Asclepius (after the Greek god of healing) the art of imprisoning the souls of demons or of angels in statues with the help of herbs, gems and odors, is described, such that the statue could speak and engage in prophecy. In other papyri, there are recipes for constructing such images and animating them, such as when images are to be fashioned hollow so as to enclose a magic name inscribed on gold leaf.

Thrice Great

The origin of the description Trismegistus or "thrice great" is unclear. Copenhaver reports that this name is first found in the minutes of a meeting of the council of the Isis cult, held in 172 BCE near Memphis in Egypt.[10] Fowden however asserts that the earliest occurrence of the name was in the Athenagora by Philo of Byblos circa 64–141 CE.[11] Another explanation is that the name is derived from an epithet of Thoth found at the Temple of Esna, "Thoth the great, the great, the great."[2] The date of his sojourn in Egypt in his last incarnation is not now known, but it has been fixed at the early days of the oldest dynasties of Egypt, long before the days of Moses. Some authorities regard him as a contemporary of Abraham, and some Jewish traditions go so far as to claim that Abraham acquired a portion of his mystical knowledge from Hermes himself (Kyiabanon).

Many Christian writers, including Lactantius, Augustine, Giordano Bruno, Marsilio Ficino, Campanella and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola considered Hermes Trismegistus to be a wise pagan prophet who foresaw the coming of Christianity.[12][13] They believed in a prisca theologia, the doctrine that a single, true theology exists, which threads through all religions, and which was given by God to man in antiquity[14][15] and passed through a series of prophets, which included Zoroaster and Plato. In order to demonstrate the verity of the prisca theologica Christians appropriated the Hermetic teachings for their own purposes. By this account Hermes Trismegistus was either, according to the fathers of the Christian church, a contemporary of Moses[16] or the third in a line of men named Hermes, i.e. Enoch, Noah and the Egyptian priest king who is known to us as Hermes Trismegistus,[17] or "thrice great" on account of being the greatest priest, philosopher and king. [17][18]

This last account of how Hermes Trismegistus received the appellation "Trismegistus," meaning "Thrice Great," is derived from statements in the The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus, that he knows the three parts of the wisdom of the whole universe.[19] The three parts of the wisdom are alchemy, astrology, and theology, The Pyrmander, from which Marsilio Ficino formed his opinion, states that "he called him Trismegistus because he was the greatest philosopher and the greatest priest and the greatest king."[20]

Another explanation, in the Suda (10th century), is that "He was called Trismegistus on account of his praise of the trinity, saying there is one divine nature in the trinity."[21]

Hermetic writings

The Asclepius and the Corpus Hermeticum are the most important of the Hermetica, writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, which survive. During the Renaissance it was accepted that Hermes Trismegistus was a contemporary of Moses, however after Casaubonâ€™s dating of the Hermetic writings as no earlier than the second or third century CE, the whole of Renaissance Hermeticism collapsed.[22] As to their actual authorship:

... they were certainly not written in remotest antiquity by an all wise Egyptian priest, as the Renaissance believed, but by various unknown authors, all probably Greeks, and they contain popular Greek philosophy of the period, a mixture of Platonicism and Stoicism, combined with some Jewish and probably some Persian influences.
Hermes Trismegistus is described in the Corpus Hermeticum in a Euhemerist fashion, as a man who became a god, or as a man who was the son of a god.[citation needed]

**Hermetic revival**

During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, known as Hermetica, enjoyed great prestige and were popular among alchemists. The "hermetic tradition" consequently refers to alchemy, magic, astrology and related subjects. The texts are usually divided into two categories: the "philosophical" and the "technical" hermetica. The former deals mainly with issues of philosophy, and the latter with practical magic, potions and alchemy. Spells to magically protect objects, for example, are the origin of the expression "Hermetically sealed".

The classical scholar Isaac Casaubon in De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI (1614) showed, through an analysis of the Greek language used in the texts, that those texts which believed to be of ancient origin were in fact much more recent: most of the "philosophical" Corpus Hermeticum can be dated to around AD 300. However, flaws in this dating were discerned by the 17th century scholar Ralph Cudworth, who argued that Casaubon's allegation of forgery could only be applied to the texts of the seventh century. Furthermore, modern scholars have also found Casaubon's failure to acknowledge the codification of these treatises as a late formulation of a pre-existing oral tradition. According to Cudworth, the texts must be viewed as a terminus ad quem and not a quo.[24]

**In Islamic tradition**

Sayyid Ahmed Amiruddin has pointed out that Hermes Trismegistus has a major place in Islamic tradition. He writes, "Hermes Trismegistus is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in verse 19:56-57. "Mention, in the Book, Idris, that he was truthful, a prophet. We took him up to a high place". The Jabriyan corpus contains the oldest documentable source for the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus, translated, for the Hashemite Caliph of Baghdad, Harun al-Rashid the Abbasid. Jâbîr ibn Hayyân (Gerber), a Shiite, identified as Jâbîr al-Sufi, was said to have written the Al-Qur'an. Ibn 'Ali's great grandson. For the Abbasids and the Alids, the knowledge of Hermes Trismegistus was considered sacred, and an inheritance of the Ahl al-Bayt. These wonderful writings were recorded by the Ikhwan al-Safa, and subsequently translated from Arabic into Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, Russian, and into English by Isaac Newton, revising illumination in men of these great human civilizations. These profound teachings enabled the Arabs to contribute to the inventions mentioned in the educational project 1001 Inventions and enabled other great civilizations to further advance the greatness of mankind. In our writings, the Master of Masters, Hermes Trismegistus is identified as Idris (prophet) the infallible Prophet who traveled to outer space from Egypt, to heaven, where Adam and the Black Stone he brought with him when he landed on earth in India[25] originated. According to ancient Arab genealogists, Muhammad the Prophet, who also is believed to have traveled to outer space on the night of isra and mi'raj to the heavens is a direct line descendant of Hermes Trismegistus. Ibn Kathir said, "As for Idris...He is in the genealogical chain of the Prophet Muhammad, except according to one genealogist. Ibn Ishah says he was the first who wrote with the Pen. There was a span of 360 years between him and the life of Adam. Many of the scholars agree that he was the first to speak about this, and they call him Thrice-Great Hermes [Hermes Trismegistus][25]; Ahmad al-Buni considered himself a follower of the hermetic teachings and his contemporary Ibn Arabi mentioned Hermes Trismegistus in his writings. The Futuḥat al-Makkiyya of Ibn Arabi speaks of his travels to vast cities (outside earth), possessing technologies far superior then ours[26] and meeting with the Twelfth Imam, the Ninth (generation) from the Third (the-Husayn the third Imam) (Amiruddin referring here to the Masters of Wisdom from the Emerald Tablet), who also ascended to the heavens, and is still alive like his ancestor Hermes Trismegistus.[57]"

See also: Idris (prophet)

Antoine Faivre, in The Eternal Hermes (1995) has pointed out that Hermes Trismegistus has a place in the Islamic tradition, though the name Hermes does not appear in the Qur'an. Hagiographers and chroniclers of the first centuries of the Hegira quickly identified Hermes Trismegistus with Idris.[28] The nabi of surahs 19.57 and 21.85, whom the Arabs also identified with Enoch (cf. Genesis 5:18â€“24). Idris/Hermes was termed "Thrice-Wise" Hermes Trismegistus because he had a threefold origin: the first Hermes, comparable to Thoth and Thot, a "civilizing hero," an initiator into the mysteries of the divine wisdom that animates the world: he carved the principles of this sacred science in hieroglyphs. The second Hermes, in Babylon, was the initiator of Pythagoras. The third Hermes was the first teacher of alchemy. "A faceless prophet," writes the Islamicist Pierre Lory, "Hermes possesses no concrete or salient characteristics, differing in this regard from most of the major figures of the Bible and the Qur'an.[29] A common interpretation of the representation of "Trismegistus" as "thrice great" recalls the three characterization of Idris: as a messenger of god, or a prophet; as a source of wisdom, or hikmet wisdom from hokmat; and as a king of the world order, or a "sultanate." These are referred to as, مَحَمَّدُ إِبْنُ مَرْيَمَ (saville bin me)".

In the BahÃ‘Ã‘ writings

BahÃ‘/Ali Ah, founder of the BahÃ‘/Ã‘ Faith, in a Tablet identifies Idris with Hermes. [30] He does not, however, specifically name Idris as the prophet of the Sabians.

**New Age revival**

Modern occultists suggest that some Hermetic texts may be of Pharaonic origin, and that the legendary "forty-two essential texts" that contain the core Hermetic religious beliefs and philosophy of life remain hidden in a secret library.

In some trance "readings" of Edgar Cayce, Hermes or Thoth was an engineer from the submerged Atlantis, who also built, designed or directed the construction of the Pyramids of Egypt.

Spiritualist writer Tom DeLiso claims that Hermes Trismegistus taught him in out-of-body states[31] and that Hermes Trismegistus is a newer incarnation of Thoth. Both are conscious energy constructs without bodies.[32]


In the Ägypten sequence, John Crowley both observes and parodies the New Age interest in Hermetica, as well as through his portrait of the Law chapter, suggests a Hermetic resuscitation of Herren. Moreover...

Within the occult tradition, Hermes Trismegistus is associated with several wives, and more than one son who took his name, as well as more than one grandson[citation needed]. This repetition of given name and surname throughout the generations may at least partially account for the legend of his longevity, especially as it is believed that many of his children pursued careers as priests in mystic religions[citation needed].

**Popular culture**

In the novel Heres by S J Parris one of the central themes is the search by Giordano Bruno for a lost work by Hermes Trismegistus.
In the videogame Persona 3 a character named Junpei wields a persona named Hermes which later morphs into Trismegistus.

In the 1983 movie The Keep, Hermes Trismegistus (Scott Glenn) battles his ancient foe Molesar in the keep that was his prison, when Wermacht troops unwittingly release him while subjugating Romania in 1941.

See also
- Alchemy
- Astrology
- Emerald Tablet
- Hermetic (disambiguation)
- Hermetica
- Hermeticism
- Hermetic Qabalah
- Kybalion
- Occultism
- Herbert Silberer

Notes
- ^ (Budge The Gods of the Egyptians Vol. 1 p. 415)
- ^ Pylus Tn 316
- ^ (votum) S civile L (ibens) M ereto - Heroes and HERO cults
- ^ De natura deorum III, Ch. 56
- ^ Mercurius unus Caelo patre
- ^ Dan Merkur, Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth.
- ^ (Scull p. 322)
- ^ Copenhagenaver, Hermetica, p. xlviii
- ^ Copenhagenaver, Hermetica, p. xii
- ^ (Yates Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition pp. 2â€“3)
- ^ Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis, p.46. Wheeler, Brannon. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002
- ^ Thomson, Ahmad. Dajjal,page 10
- ^ http://ahmedamiruddin.wordpress.com/
- ^ Kevin Van Bladel, The Arabic Hermes. From pagan sage to prophet of science, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 168 "Abu Mas'harâ€™s biography of Hermes, written approximately between 840 and 860, would establish it as common knowledge."
- ^ (Faivre 1995 pp. 19â€“20)
- ^ Hermes Trismegistus at Wisdomdoor / Reality Creator Books
- ^ Hermes Trismegistus at Wisdomdoor / Reality Creator Books

References
- FestugÃ¨re, A.-J., La dÃ©Ã©lation d'HermÃ¨s TrismÃ©giste. 2e Ã©d., 3 vol., Paris 1981.
- Fowden, Garth, 1986. The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind. Cambridge: Cambridge University

Further reading


External links

Corpus Hermeticum along with the complete text of G.R.S. Mead's classic work, Thrice Greatest Hermes.
Hermetic Research is a Portal on Hermetic study and discussion.
Dan Merkur, "Stages of Ascension in Hermetic Rebirth"
Pimander - Latin translation by Marsilio Picino, Milano: Damianus de Mediolano 1493.
THE DIVINE PYMANDER of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus in English
Online Galleries, History of Science Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries High resolution images of works by Hermes Trismegistus in .jpg and .tif format.
The Great Pyramid and the 153 Fish in the Net Mathematical Explanation of where he got his name

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

CACIORGNA, Marilena (Werner Herstatt)
CACIORGNA, Roberto (Werner Herstatt)