

# Thebes, Egypt

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Coordinates: 25°43′14″N 32°36′37″E﻿ / ﻿

**Thebes** (pron.: /θiːˈbz/; <sup>[1]</sup> Ancient Greek: Θήβαι, *Thēbai*) is the Greek name for a city in Ancient Egypt, natively known as **Waset**, located about 800 km south of the Mediterranean, on the east bank of the river Nile within the modern city of Luxor. The Theban Necropolis is situated nearby on the west bank of the Nile.

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## Name

The Egyptian name of Thebes was *Waset* (ⲱⲥⲁⲧ) "City of the Sceptre". The name *Thebai* is the Greek designation of *opet*, the Egyptian name of the Karnak temple complex situated across the Nile, west of Thebes proper. Classical Egyptian *Ta-opet* became Demotic *ta-pe*, which was adopted in Greek as *thebai*, assimilated to the name of the Greek city. Due to its association with the Egyptian city, Greek Thebes also had a statue and temple of Ammon (Amun) from the 5th century BC.<sup>[2]</sup>

As the seat of the Theban Triad of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu, Thebes was known in the Egyptian language from the end of the New Kingdom as *niwt-imn*, "The City of Amun." This found its way into the Hebrew Bible as נַחֲמָן *nō' 'āmôn* (Nahum 3:8), probably referring to the Egyptian deity Amun-Ra, most likely it is also the same as נֹ ("No") (Ezekiel 30:14-16, Jeremiah 46:25). In Greek this name was rendered Διόσπολις *Diospolis*, "City of Zeus", as Amun in the interpretatio graeca became Greek Zeus Ammon. The Greeks surnamed the city *μεγάλη megale*, "the Great", to differentiate it from numerous other cities called Diospolis. The Romans rendered the name *Diospolis Magna*.

## UNESCO World Heritage Site

### Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis

Name as inscribed on the World Heritage List (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>)

<b>Country</b>	Egypt
<b>Type</b>	Cultural
<b>Criteria</b>	i, iii, vi
<b>Reference</b>	87 ( <a href="http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/87">http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/87</a> )





UNESCO region ([http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?search=&search\\_by\\_country=&type=&media=&region=&order=region](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/?search=&search_by_country=&type=&media=&region=&order=region)) Arab States

### Inscription history

**Inscription** 1979 (3rd Session)



Location of Thebes, Egypt in Egypt.

 <p><i>w</i>□<i>s.t</i> <i>City of the Sceptre</i><sup>[3]</sup> in hieroglyphs</p>	 <p><i>w</i>□<i>s.t</i> in hieroglyphs</p>	 <p><i>niw.t rs.t</i> <i>Southern City</i><sup>[4]</sup> in hieroglyphs</p>	 <p><i>iwnw-sm'</i> <i>Heliopolis of the South</i><sup>[5]</sup> in hieroglyphs</p>
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## History



Lithic core: Museum of Toulouse

Thebes was inhabited from around 3200 BC.<sup>[6]</sup> It was the eponymous capital of Waset, the fourth Upper Egyptian nome. Waset was the capital of Egypt during part of the 11th Dynasty (Middle Kingdom) and most of the 18th Dynasty (New Kingdom), when Hatshepsut built a Red Sea fleet to facilitate trade between Thebes Red Sea port of Elim, modern Quasir, and Elat at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. According to George Modelski, Thebes had about 40,000 inhabitants in 2000 BC (compared to 60,000 in Memphis, the largest city of the world at the time). By 1800 BC, the population of Memphis was down to about 30,000, making Thebes the largest city in Egypt at the

time. By the Amarna period (14th century BC), Thebes may have grown to be the largest city in the world, with a population of about 80,000, a position which it held until about 1000 BC, when it was again surpassed by Memphis (among others)<sup>[7]</sup>

With the 19th Dynasty the seat of government moved to the Delta. The archaeological remains of Thebes offer a striking testimony to Egyptian civilization at its height. The Greek poet Homer extolled the wealth of Thebes in the Iliad, Book 9 (c. 8th Century BC): "... in Egyptian Thebes the heaps of precious ingots gleam, the hundred-gated Thebes."

## Archaeology

In 1979, the ruins of ancient Thebes were inscribed by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage site. The two great temples the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, Luxor Temple (Arabic: الأقصر, *Al-Uqsur*, "The palaces") and al-Karnak (الكرنك), are among the great achievements of ancient Egypt.



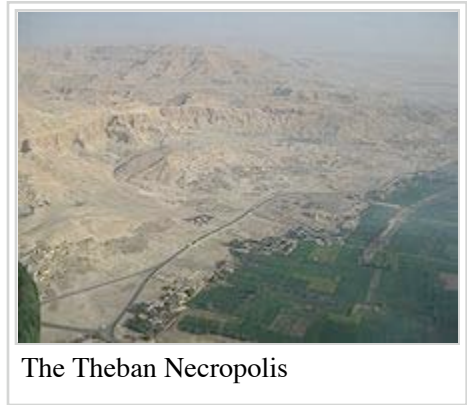
Luxor Temple

## See also

- Memphis, Egypt

## Notes

- ↑ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*. Merriam-Webster, 2007. p. 1588
- ↑ according to Pausanias, *Description of Greece* ix.16 § 1.
- ↑ Adolf Erman, Hermann Grapow: *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*. akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1971. p.259
- ↑ Wörterbuch, p.211
- ↑ Wörterbuch, pp.54,479
- ↑ http://www.ancient-wisdom.co.uk/egyptkarnak.htm
- ↑ George Modelski, "Cities of the Ancient World: An Inventory (-3500 to -1200) (<https://faculty.washington.edu/modelski/WCITI2.html>)"; see also list of largest cities throughout history.



The Theban Necropolis

## References

- ↑ Gauthier, Henri. 1925–1931. *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*. Vol. 3 of 7 vols. Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire. (Reprinted Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1975). 75, 76.
- ↑ Polz, Daniel C. 2001. "Thebes". In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, edited by Donald Bruce Redford. Vol. 3 of 3 vols. Oxford, New York, and Cairo: Oxford University Press and The American University in Cairo Press. 384–388.
- ↑ Redford, Donald Bruce. 1992. "Thebes". In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman. Vol. 6 of 6 vols. New York: Doubleday. 442–443. ISBN 0-385-42583-X (6-volume set)
- ↑ Strudwick, Nigel C., & Strudwick, Helen, *Thebes in Egypt: A Guide to the Tombs and Temples of Ancient Luxor*. London: British Museum Press, 1999, ISBN 0-8014-3693-1 (hardcover)/ISBN 0-8014-8616-5 (paperback)

## External links

- ↑ More information on ancient Thebes, a World Cultural Heritage site (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/87/>)
- ↑ Theban Mapping Project (<http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/>)
- ↑ Ramesseum/Ancient Thebes Digital Media Archive (photos, laser scans, panoramas) (<http://archive.cyark.org/ancient-thebes-intro>) , data from an Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities/CyArk research partnership
- ↑ ICOMOS Heritage at Risk 2001/2002 (<http://www.international.icomos.org/risk/2001/egyp2001.htm>)

Preceded by <b>Herakleopolis</b>	<b>Capital of Egypt</b> 2060 BC - 1785 BC	Succeeded by <b>Avaris</b>
Preceded by <b>Avaris</b>	<b>Capital of Egypt</b> 1580 BC - c. 1353 BC	Succeeded by <b>Akhetaten</b>

Preceded by <b>Akhetaten</b>	<b>Capital of Egypt</b> c. 1332 BC - 1085 BC	Succeeded by <b>Tanis</b>
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