Heket was a goddess associated with birth, depicted as a frog-headed woman or as a frog. Some of the early images of frogs, associated with fertility due to their plentiful supply after the inundation, might be ascribed to Heket. She first appears in the Pyramid Texts, helping the king ascend to the sky (PT 1312). The first text associating her with childbirth is the portion of the Middle Kingdom Westcar Papyrus that deals with the divine birth of the kings of the 5th Dynasty. In it, Heket "hastens" the final stages of labor. Thus, the term "servant of Heket" has been interpreted as identifying midwives.

Images of Heket are incised on the magical wands made of either hippopotamus or elephant ivory, which were popular in the Middle Kingdom. These were used in rituals to facilitate childbirth and to protect families. Thus, Heket was also a protective goddess of the home. Her image was also a popular amulet, particularly in the New Kingdom.

Remains of a temple to Heket have been found at Qus in Upper Egypt, where she is the wife of Haroeris, a version of Horus. Reference to another temple to her is found in the texts of the early Ptolemaic tomb of Petosiris at Tuna el-Gebel. The temple was said to be at Herwer, possibly modern Hur, located near el-Ashmunein. Doubtless other chapels and temples existed that were dedicated to her, including domestic shrines. However, there is no archaeological evidence for these. In addition to having her own cult places, Heket is also shown in other temples, such as Sety I's temple to Osiris at Abydos, and of course is prevalent in birth houses or mammisi that are a component of later temples, which are particularly well preserved in temples of the Ptolemaic era.

References and Suggested Readings
