

WOMEN *of the* NILE



ROSICRUCIAN
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

WOMEN OF THE NILE

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WOMEN
of the NILE

FOREWORD

*Jill Freeman, Director
Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*

The Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum is pleased to present the traveling exhibit, *Women of the Nile*. With over 3,000 artifacts in the Museum collection from which to choose, we wanted to focus on a select group of pieces that would bring a subject to life. The decision was made to highlight the women of ancient Egypt because there is still so much to learn. The exhibit presents over 100 cherished artifacts that create an intimate portrait of the lives of ancient Egyptian women.

Such a complex society and topic deserve a more thorough study than we can hope to present in the current exhibit and catalogue. Nevertheless, it is our hope that you come to appreciate some of the unique roles women played in the temple, palace, home, and afterlife.

We know the subject of ancient Egypt continues to fascinate the world. The 150,000 visitors who tour the Museum annually, the dozens of traveling exhibits that continue to break attendance records at national museums, and the ceaseless excavations in the Nile Valley all attest to the enduring interest in this most remarkable of ancient civilizations.

The current project represents the dedication of many talented professionals to whom we now extend our thanks. This exhibit could not have progressed without the steady, guiding hand of Dr. David Pinault, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and World Religions at Santa Clara University, and the expertise of our panel of Egyptologists: Professor Cathleen Keller, Near Eastern Studies Department, University of California, Berkeley; Dr. Gay Robins, Professor of Ancient Egyptian Art, Emory University; and Dr. Emily Teeter, Associate Curator, Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago. We thank museum curator Lisa Schwappach for her tireless work; the

Harer Family Trust, which loaned select pieces to this exhibit from its extensive private collection; and our traveling exhibit coordinator, Shirley Howarth, with the Humanities Exchange. We also wish to acknowledge the efforts of exhibit designer Nick Nichols, American Musical Theatre of San Jose; and text editor Christine Capen-Frederick. An additional thank you to the staff at Rosicrucian Park for all of their hard work and dedication.

In addition, the support of our sponsoring organization, the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, and its president, Kristie Knutson, has proven invaluable. For over 60 years, the Rosicrucian Order has shared its collection of ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian artifacts with the world. The organization has devoted considerable resources to the Museum, thereby providing a unique environment which promotes

learning, reflection, and preservation of the past.

It is my hope that this exhibit and its accompanying catalogue will serve both to offer a new appreciation of ancient Egyptian culture and to provide an introduction to the work of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum. In addition to sponsoring various research projects, our Museum offers educational programs on ancient cultures and public lectures on current archaeological excavations in Egypt and elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, we are planning a number of new exhibits that will highlight treasures from our collection as well as artifacts on loan from other institutions.

The opening years of the 21st century promise to be an exciting time for our Museum. I invite you to join us and share in the excitement and sense of discovery available to those who explore the mysteries of the world's oldest civilizations. ♀

*“ . . . artifacts that create
a beautiful and intimate look
at the role of women in ancient
Egypt and their quest for
spiritual significance.”*

FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Kristie E. Knutson, President and CEO
Rosicrucian Order, AMORC®*

Over the years, many people have asked me what an educational and metaphysical organization is doing running an Egyptian museum. It's a question well worth exploring.

The answer lies in our conviction that the universe functions according to natural laws that underlie and harmonize the diverse phenomena of our existence. According to Rosicrucian tradition, it was in the mystery schools of ancient Egypt that men and women first began the systematic process of observing the world around them to discover the nature of these laws and their application to human needs in everyday life. Mystical initiates worked to nurture within themselves the same symmetry, harmony, and beauty they perceived in the larger world without—a reflection of the natural law “as above, so below.”

From the ancient Egyptian mystery schools to the present, the history of spirituality can be understood as a process whereby thoughtful individuals have questioned and struggled with accepted social and religious dogmas so as to discover for themselves their own personal philosophy, their unique connection to the Divine. Such a struggle has demanded personal courage, freedom of thought, and a profound tolerance and appreciation for different views.

It is our conviction that studying the past and its remains encourages a process of reflection, in which the individual applies insights from ancient cultures to foster his or her own spiritual growth. Such encounters, when properly encouraged, can become the first step in a path of knowledge. It is possible for us to develop a personal philosophy that employs the wisdom of the past in a way that addresses our profoundest needs in the present.

It is our hope that the objects selected for inclusion in our present exhibit, *Women of the Nile*, will encourage the process of thoughtful introspection described above. Pause to admire the sinuous strength of the crouching cat in bronze (RC 1574) or the grace of the girl holding the cosmetic spoon (RC 1682) and you will sense the lingering presence of artisans gifted with the powers of keen observation and appreciation of life. Study the exhibit's limestone funerary stela (RC 1746), with its depiction of the deceased breathing deeply of the lotus flower's perfume, and be reminded of the universal hope for a fullness of life that extends beyond death. The motifs reflected in Egyptian art are themes that continue to concern us today.

Such concerns inspired H. Spencer Lewis, the individual who in 1915 founded the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, in North America. A keen student of ancient history, Lewis traveled several times to Egypt and collected artifacts on his journeys—artifacts that provided the core for our present collection. In 1927, the Order established its headquarters in San Jose, California—site of the present-day museum and Rosicrucian Park.

Today there are close to 200,000 active Rosicrucian students worldwide, and over the past 75 years many hundreds of thousands of individuals have been students of the Rosicrucian teachings. From the beginning, both men and women have played an equal role in the Rosicrucian Order, without regard to religion or race.

Our exhibit, *Women of the Nile*, is intended to provide both an introduction to ancient Egypt and an opportunity for you to learn more about the Rosicrucian Order and the many projects that we sponsor. May this exhibit stimulate in our visitors a desire for continued growth and learning. 🌿



THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER AND ANCIENT EGYPT

*Dr. David Pinault, Research Consultant
Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*

Visitors to the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum will notice at once that the collection gives special attention to the pharaoh Akhenaten, the controversial “heretic king” known for his attempt to reform Egyptian religion.¹ An entire gallery is dedicated to the Amarna Age, as the art of Akhenaten’s reign is called. At the gallery’s entrance is a replica portrait statue of the pharaoh, his face set in a remote and enigmatic smile. Dominating the Amarna artifacts is a painting entitled “The Love Idol,” depicting Nefertiti, Akhenaten’s queen; the work was executed by H. Spencer Lewis, the former Imperator or head of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC (Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis). Visitors who enter the Amarna Gallery might well be led to wonder: what is the reason for the Rosicrucian Order’s interest in Akhenaten in particular and ancient Egypt in general?

The Order’s focus on Egypt was stimulated by Lewis, who is credited by Rosicrucians with re-establishing the Order in North America beginning in the year 1915. Like many other spiritual seekers, Lewis saw Egypt as a source of wisdom long since lost in the West. Fascinated by the Pyramids of Gizeh, he suggested that they might have been built under the supervision of refugees from the vanished continent of Atlantis.² But Lewis was interested not so much in the supposed Atlantean origins of the pyramids as in the purpose of these monuments. For him the Great Pyramid was created as a place of initiation. According to Lewis, the ancient Egyptian “mystery schools” made use of this structure, with its awe-inspiring passageways and chambers, to guide selected candidates on a journey through labyrinthine darkness that would culminate in mystical illumination. The King’s Chamber at the pyramid’s heart was not a burial site but a place of spiritual rebirth for worthy individuals.³

To put this claim in perspective it is necessary to understand Lewis’ vision of ancient Egyptian history. In his writings he outlined what he saw as an ongoing struggle between the forces of polytheism and monotheism, the former led by the temple priesthood, the latter by the mystery schools under the direction of certain enlightened pharaohs. Lewis characterized the priesthood as grasping and opportunistic, eager

to persecute any freethinking individual who dared to question the dominant polytheism of the day. The mystery schools he described as a refuge for those who glimpsed a more pure and sublime vision of the divine. In this reading of Egyptian history, the New Kingdom pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty played a special role in encouraging the dissemination of mystical insight.⁴

The Rosicrucian understanding of this spiritual struggle credited Tuthmosis III with having organized Egypt’s mystical freethinkers into “the first real Secret Brotherhood of Initiates.”⁵ This brotherhood is believed by Rosicrucians to have been the true point of origin of their Order, even if it did not bear the formal Rosicrucian title. Tuthmosis is said to have met privately with selected mystics to convey to them the esoteric dimension of Egyptian religion. These esoteric insights involved the god Osiris, his death and rebirth. More will be said about this below.

But of all the pharaohs it was Akhenaten to whom Lewis gave special emphasis. Akhenaten tried to substitute devotion to the Aten (the divine force associated with the sun) for the traditional polytheism of his time. In the process he founded a city in Middle Egypt, Akhetaten (known in later times as Amarna), as the center of the new religion. By doing so he antagonized the priestly guardians of the powerful Amon-cult in Thebes. Aten-worship flourished for less than 20 years. Shortly after Akhenaten’s death, the city was abandoned and traditional worship was reinstated.

Lewis interpreted Akhenaten’s reign as the public eruption of the ongoing struggle between corrupt polytheists and beleaguered mystical initiates. He regarded the city of Amarna as a gathering site for spiritual adepts. In this view Akhenaten was not only a king and religious reformer but also a Rosicrucian Grand Master.⁶ According to Lewis, it was this Amarna monarch who created the rose-and-cross symbolism so vital to later Rosicrucian thought. Akhenaten, asserted Lewis, “was passionately fond of his Persian Rose Garden and wandered in it daily for study and inspiration It was his great love for the rose and its resemblance to the human soul in process of evolution that made him adopt it as an R.C. [Rosicrucian] symbol.”⁷

At Akhenaten’s death the leadership of the Rosicrucian movement is said to have passed to a legendary figure whom Lewis identified as Hermes

“the thrice great.”⁸ At this point the public assertion of monotheism and mystical insight inaugurated by Akhenaten was forced to become secret once more. The spiritual adepts once gathered at Amarna were now scattered throughout the Nile Valley and beyond into the Mediterranean world. Spiritual instruction could only be conveyed from places of hiding. This interpretation reflects the Rosicrucian view of mystical history as comprising alternating cycles of open manifestation and veiling.

Like all historical interpretations, Lewis’ was selective; it drew heavily on a particular view of Akhenaten popularized in the early 20th century by Egyptologists James Breasted and Arthur Weigall. Unlike later revisionist critics of Akhenaten, who accused the Atenist reformer of being a brutal and intolerant totalitarian, Breasted and Weigall praised Akhenaten as a gentle idealist.⁹ Lewis quoted both these authors in his own assessment of the pharaoh. He cited Breasted’s characterization of Akhenaten as “the world’s first individual,” praising the pharaoh for his iconoclastic independence of thought; and he quoted at length from Weigall’s text *The Life and Times of Akhnaton*: “Like a flash of blinding light in the night time, the Aton stands out for a moment amidst the black Egyptian darkness, and disappears once more—the first signal to the world of the future religions of the West. One might believe that Almighty God had for a moment revealed himself to Egypt.”¹⁰

In his correspondence and publications Lewis referred repeatedly to Weigall’s biography. He seems to have been drawn especially to Weigall’s portrait of Akhenaten as a solitary preacher of “an enlightened nature-study” and as a precursor of Jesus Christ.¹¹ The link between Jesus and the Amarna king seems to have worked powerfully on Lewis’ imagination. In one of his books he suggested that Jesus might have journeyed to Egypt to be initiated within the pyramid of Khufu.¹² If so, then both Jesus and Akhenaten belonged to an ongoing initiatic chain or succession of visionaries. These visionaries throughout history are said to comprise an order or association which any spiritually minded individual might aspire to join. In this sense Lewis’ vision emphasized the humanity of Jesus rather than his divine status as savior or intercessor. The Rosicrucian emperor’s portrait thus echoes the Adoptionist doctrine espoused by some early Christians of the 3rd century, who saw Jesus not so much as the Word made flesh but rather as a man who had been elevated to godhood—a view that could be interpreted in such a way as to place Christ’s transfiguring experience within the reach of all.¹³

Another source used by Lewis was a work entitled *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, by G.R.S. Mead, a theosopher and translator of Coptic Gnostic texts from antiquity.¹⁴ Mead was a scholar and mystic who saw it as his mission to make the insights of Greco-Roman Hermeticism available to the general reader. *Thrice Greatest Hermes* was published in 1906, shortly before Lewis’ establishment of the Rosicrucian Order in North America. Hermeticists believed that there exists a hidden cosmic sympathy linking the heavenly and earthly realms, a sympathy alluded to in the Hermetic phrase “as above, so below.” Our world is seen as fallen but capable of redemption via a process of manifesting and perfecting the occult links between the two realms. As individuals discover these links they transform both themselves and the cosmos to which they are sympathetically attuned—and in this sense Hermeticism shares affinities with alchemy.¹⁵

For Hermeticists the revealer of these insights was Mercury or Hermes, revered as the gods’ messenger to humankind. Greeks who settled in Ptolemaic Egypt equated Hermes with Thoth, the scribe of the gods, and named him Hermes Trismegistus, “thrice greatest” Hermes. Lewis incorporated aspects of Hermeticism by quoting extensively from Mead’s translation of the Hermetic treatise *Poemander* and by naming Hermes Trismegistus as Akhenaten’s successor to leadership of the Rosicrucian movement.¹⁶

I referred earlier to Lewis’ belief in Egypt as a repository of lost wisdom. The nature of this wisdom is elucidated in the writings of Max Guilmot, a Belgian Egyptologist who was also a member of the Rosicrucian Order’s International Research Council and a consultant to the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose. In a text entitled *The Initiatory Process in Ancient Egypt*, Guilmot claimed that Egyptian religion offered something vital that is presently missing from the lives of most people in today’s industrial society: a sense of ritual. Guilmot argued that 20th century individuals are cocooned by material comforts and out of touch with the universal cycles of spiritual growth. The result is that we are unmindful of the necessary life-stages through which we must pass.¹⁷

The myth of Osiris, according to Guilmot, remedies this lack. Osiris underwent suffering, death, and resurrection; for Guilmot, this Egyptian god is a paradigm (or the manifestation of an archetype, in Jungian terms) of universal human experience. If we are to make sense of the changes and suffering we undergo in life, if we are to acquire the ability to see death as transition rather than annihilation, then we must find a way to assimilate ourselves to the experience of Osiris.

THE ROSICRUCIAN ORDER AND ANCIENT EGYPT

The genius of Egyptian religion was to actualize the Osiris myth in the form of ritual. Early Egyptian funerary literature (the *Pyramid Texts*) equated the pharaoh with the dead god: the mortuary ritual addressed the king as Osiris. According to the prayers recited by the embalmers and priests, the sarcophagus lid was to protect the pharaoh's mummified corpse just as the sky-goddess Nut once spread herself protectively over the murdered deity (for this reason the interiors of many coffin lids were painted with figures of Nut). Later Egyptian literature (the *Coffin Texts* and the *Book of the Dead*) "democratized" this process, so that the myth of Osiris, and the reassurance of a blessed afterlife, came to be extended explicitly to nobles and commoners alike.¹⁸

Guilmot's interpretation of the Osiris myth-ritual complex emphasized its initiatic potential, to be applied to the living as well as to the dead. Those who undergo an Osirian ritual in this life have been initiated into the mysteries of death and what lies beyond; they can accept and embrace the necessary stages of existence. Here Guilmot seems to have followed the lead of ancient authors such as Herodotus and Plutarch, who interpreted the Osiris myth in terms of the Greek Demeter cult and the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Guilmot's text is especially useful in that it openly identifies the existential conditions addressed by Rosicrucian initiation: modernity and the experience of contemporary urban life, with its attendant qualities of pluralism, anonymity, and individualism. A characteristic of modern society is that it does not prescribe a worldview for its citizens. This is both the joy and the terror of today's urban landscape. One has the challenge of freedom, the ability to sculpt one's own worldview as a spiritual work of art.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes human beings as animals that continually seek the reassurance that there is meaning to the events that befall them. It is not enough for us simply to be the passive recipients of sensory phenomena; instinctively we look to give shape to what we experience, to give it meaning, to seek therein a pattern that may guide us.¹⁹ Guilmot might well have agreed with Geertz's description of humanity, adding the assertion that initiatic ritual addresses the anxieties of modern life by offering a reassuring vision that integrates the afterlife with this life, the heavens with the earth: "as above, so below."

Linked to the experience of modernity is another intellectual and literary current that shares certain affinities with the Rosicrucian vision: Romanticism. This term can be defined in various ways; here I speak

of it as a 19th century movement (one that is very much with us today) that privileged emotion over reason as a source of wisdom. In this sense Romanticism can be construed as a reaction against the limitations of 18th century Enlightenment rationalism. Also characteristic of Romanticism is the belief that sensitive persons can use their emotional insights to break the barriers of time and make contact with the spirits of like-minded individuals from other eras, as well as with the universal divine force that has attracted and inspired mystical seekers throughout the ages. Thus the Rosicrucian emphasis on initiation can be termed Romanticist insofar as it links the individual initiate of the present day with the same source of wisdom that guided the genius of Osiris, Akhenaten, and Jesus alike.²⁰

I would argue, too, that the Romanticist impulse helps explain the Rosicrucian Order's interest in acquiring Egyptian artifacts. Just as the English poet Keats once mused over a "Grecian Urn" from antiquity and thereby divined truths unlimited by distance in time, so too did H. Spencer Lewis believe that contact with ancient Egyptian artifacts had the potential to make spiritual experience from the past available to individuals in the present. In describing the scarabs, ushabtis, and figurines collected during the 1929 Rosicrucian tour to Egypt, the Emperor made clear that these were not merely inanimate objects but rather "real relics associated with the ancient schools of mysteries."²¹ The special worth of these "real relics" from antiquity is related to what is known as "psychometry." For Rosicrucians this term refers to the possibility of a glimpse into the past when coming into physical contact with an object that has been handled by another individual. With the proper training a 20th century contemplative is said to be able to touch an artifact from Egypt's past—a bowl, perhaps, or a cup that had once been in daily use—and in the process experience a strong feeling of contact with the object's original owner from long ago.²²

This concept helps explain the Order's role in supporting archaeological excavations at Akhenaten's city of Amarna in the 1920s. For years the London-based Egypt Exploration Society had sponsored work at Amarna; but a shortage of funds threatened to prevent the Society from reopening the site after the end of the First World War. At this moment the Rosicrucian Order played a vital role. H. Spencer Lewis contacted the members of the Order, urging them to donate money to the Society so that the discovery of Amarna could proceed. In exchange the Exploration Society

gave a number of finds from the excavation to the Order; these donations later comprised the core of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum's Amarna Gallery.²³

"The life and work of Akhenaton is of extreme interest to us," explained Lewis in a letter addressed to the senior archaeologist in charge of the Amarna excavations. "We might say in the words of his own hymns and those of his high priests that we pay constant 'adoration' to him."²⁴

The Egypt Exploration Society was well aware of the special significance that Amarna held for the Order. In a letter to Lewis which acknowledged the Order's desire for artifacts associated with Akhenaten, the Society's secretary, Marie Buckman, wrote as follows: "I shall endeavor to obtain for your headquarters such a selection of objects from the forthcoming excavation as you indicate . . . [N]ot one thing from El-Amarna is held by our Staff as valueless; the smallest bead or bit of broken pottery, or a mud-sealing to a jar, or scrap of rope or broken tool is equally saved and packed with heedful care and devoted to careful study. Even as you, we know the psychometric influence from these human documents of ancient experience which bridge the centuries and come unhandled to our touch since laid down by those other hands 3,300 years ago. It quiets the heart to think, to see, to touch them—and some of us doubtless feel dimly dream-like memories."²⁵

In numerous exchanges of correspondence dating from the 1920s and 1930s between the Boston and London branches of the Egypt Exploration Society, frequent acknowledgment

is made of the fact that the Rosicrucian Order was a leading patron and financial supporter of the Amarna excavations in the interwar period.²⁶

The Order's interest in Amarna and the spiritual dimension of ancient Egypt is apparent as soon as one enters Rosicrucian Park. Designed as a haven from the rush of traffic in the street, the park offers visitors a view of large-scale reproductions of ancient art-reliefs showing Akhenaten in his chariot and the caressing rays of the sun-disk—in a quiet setting of papyrus plants, palm trees, and water splashing from a fountain. Within the museum the contemplative mood is sustained in the twilight ambience of the Amarna Gallery, where one wall is dominated by Lewis' "Love Idol" painting. This work can be understood as an attempt to visualize one moment from the life of the Amarna court: Queen Nefertiti poses on her throne as a sculptor struggles to capture her likeness in the now-famous portrait bust. The painting is an evocation of the aesthetic environment of the Amarna Age as visualized by the Rosicrucian Emperor.

As one tours the gallery and the objects on display—a delicately articulated line of gazelles, a finely shaped torso, a hand extended in benediction—it is good to recall the Rosicrucian conviction that contact with such art permits contact with the sensibility that created these works. Artwork as invitation: the viewer is encouraged to ponder the ancient worldview that made such beauty possible. ♀

(See pg. 48 for footnotes.)



Situ/ae, RC 11, ar

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

DATES	TIME PERIOD	REFERENCED QUEENS AND RULERS
6500-3050 BC	Predynastic	
2920-2575 BC	Early Dynastic Period	Neith-Hotep Mer-neith
2575-2134 BC	Old Kingdom	Nitoqerty Meresankh III
2134-2040 BC	First Intermediate Period	
2040-1640 BC	Middle Kingdom	Nefrusobek
1640-1532 BC	Second Intermediate Period	
1550-1070 BC	New Kingdom (1550-1307: 18th Dynasty)	Ahmose-Nefertari Hatshepsut Tiyi Nefertiti Nefertari Tawosret
	(1307-1196: 19th Dynasty)	
	(1196-1070: 20th Dynasty)	
1070-712 BC	Third Intermediate Period	
712-332 BC	Late Period (712-657: Kushite Period)	Shepenwepet I Amenirdis I
	(664-525: Saite Period)	Nitoqerty Amenirdis II Shepenwepet II
332-30 BC	Ptolemaic Period	Arsinoe II Cleopatra VII
30 BC-AD 395	Roman Period	

Based on the chronology of Baines and Málek, *The Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1980, pg. 36-37.

INTRODUCTION

*Lisa Schwappach, Curator
Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum*

Until recently, the role of women in ancient Egypt has received little attention. There are two principal reasons for this oversight. First, the most enduring and, indeed, the most visible monuments from pharaonic Egypt are those concerned with public life and funerary activities. Private dwellings, where women played the central role in family, domestic, and religious activities, are often more difficult to identify and study for evidence of the activities within.

The second reason concerns the direction that scholarship took following the establishment of Egyptology as a discipline in the wake of Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798. With the deciphering of the hieroglyphic writing system in the early 19th century, scholars concentrated their efforts on the broadest outlines of Egyptian civilization: establishing political chronologies, reconstructing dynastic history, and documenting royal works such as temples and royal tombs, all of which imparted invaluable information concerning the dynastic sequence. Lost in this pursuit was the sphere of domestic life. Since this was the sphere of the women, only those exceptional women who established for themselves a place in the dynastic sequence came to the attention of the scholars.

Such oversight was archaeological as well as textual. Just as historians focused on the succession of kings, so too did excavators focus on the massive temples and lavish tombs that were easy to find, as archaeologists had only to follow the local looters. These sites also promised quick returns in the form of treasure: gold, sarcophagi, and colossal statues to grace the European museums and private collections of wealthy sponsors. Homes and town sites were largely ignored: just as they lacked in riches, these

sites were devoid of inscriptions, as well. Nothing of interest was believed to be in the domestic sites.

The shift in interest of textual scholars and archaeologists from dynastic to daily life, from treasure hunting to meticulous documentation, has been accompanied by a growing awareness of the importance of women in ancient Egypt. Past excavations are being re-examined for the role played by women in the activities associated with a given site. Artifacts are being re-evaluated for their meaning. Household archaeology has become a major concentration of the field. The search is on for the long-lost voice of the ancient Egyptian woman.

The artifacts described in this catalogue highlight aspects of ancient Egyptian life that were overlooked in the formative years of Egyptology. The Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum's exhibit, *Women of the Nile*, show-

cases over 100 pieces from our collection, as well as important pieces borrowed from the Harer Family Trust.

Our exhibit reviews four important aspects of women's life experience in ancient Egypt: homelife (including domestic work, marriage, and child-raising); the temple (including women's role in temple worship, and as goddesses in the Egyptian pantheon); the palace (women in politics); and the afterlife (which includes the importance of the afterlife to women

as well as men, and the role played by protective goddesses in the journey to the underworld). Through these four focus categories, we hope to explore the lives of these ancient women.

The home was the foundation of the Egyptian economy. All the goods necessary to the home had to be produced there and the surplus would be traded for other products the home could not produce. One of the most important of the home industries was the production of linen, which was such an important commodity that it could be used much like money. Household industries such as this were considered

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INTRODUCTION

a woman's area of responsibility. The importance of this work is reflected in the title "Mistress of the House." This term connoted power rather than anything condescending: "Mistress" in the ancient Egyptian language was the same as the word for "Lord," but with the feminine ending. Social custom in ancient Egypt mandated that the man was not to tell a woman how to run her household. His domain was the outside world; hers was the household.

Egyptian society considered women and men to be of equal importance. In contrast to the view prevalent in certain other societies of antiquity, women were not regarded as property. While marriage was regarded as the natural condition for all adults, women entered this state as full partners. The man and woman were seen as two halves of a whole. If the couple divorced, her property was hers alone, and the man had to give her one third of their community property. The Egyptians knew that their women had better rights than elsewhere in the world known to them, and they refused to send Egyptian women to foreign lands to form marriage alliances until very late in their history.

One of the most important responsibilities of the ancient Egyptian woman was the bearing and raising of the children. The Egyptian concept of life and death absolutely required the procreation of children, for it was the children who took care of their elders in old age and assured their afterlife in the form of a proper burial. The child mortality rate in ancient Egypt was as high as 50 percent before the age of five, so the protection of her children's health was no easy task for the Egyptian mother. Besides her other tasks, the Egyptian woman was the spiritual protectress of her home. She ensured that her children wore the proper amulets for their health and safety. In the case of illness, she would use home remedies and seek advice from other women who had been in similar difficulties. When these resources failed, she would summon a physician who was well equipped with both medical remedies and the spells required to avert the unwelcome attention of divine forces.

Women's roles, however, were not limited to the home. They had responsibilities to the gods, as did the men. But worship was not seen as separate from secular concerns, for the sacred permeated daily life. In the Old Kingdom women were most commonly named as priestesses of a goddess rather than a god; but by the time of the New Kingdom they were also enrolled in the service of male deities, although the priestesses' titles had diminished in importance. The

highest-ranking titles were held by elite women and passed from mother to daughter. In the Late Period, however, priestesses with the title of "God's Wife" virtually ruled Egypt from the city of Thebes, in place of the ruler who lived to the south, in the region of Kush.

The goddesses of Egypt give testimony to the rank of women in society. Unlike the female divinities in other societies, Egyptian goddesses were not mere appendages of their husbands. They were strong individuals in their own right. One of the dominant images of the goddesses is that of the caretaker, whether as a mother or healer. There is a darker side to this image: a goddess could also be a destroyer, as can be seen in the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet. As a destroyer (and healer), Sekhmet was depicted as a lion, but in her benevolent and gentle manifestations she was portrayed as the cat goddess, Bastet.

Within the royal palace, women played a role both human and divine. The Egyptians had no word for "queen," instead calling the wife of the king the "King's Wife." The basic task of the King's Wife was the same as that of any other woman, to be a mother. But just as the king was considered to be the living embodiment of the god Horus, his principal wife was associated with the divine and had a role to play. Among the insignia she wore was the vulture headdress signifying the goddess Nekhbet, divine protectress of Upper Egypt. On certain occasions the King's Wife also wore a uraeus ornament suggestive of the cobra goddess Wadjet, identified with the northern realm of Lower Egypt. Thus both the king and the King's Wife served to represent the living presence of the divine among their people. This male-female presence was thought to ensure cosmic balance (referred to as Ma'at, which in turn was personified as a goddess).

Sovereign rule was normally not considered possible for women: this was the male prerogative. But just as the goddesses made their own decisions, so did the queens, and several of them did in fact reign in their own right. The King's Wives were almost always of royal blood themselves, and some decided they had as much right to rule as their royal brothers. Often, this occurred at the end of a dynasty, as no one would really object if there was no royal male heir. The case of Hatshepsut (one of the most famous of women pharaohs) was different, insofar as she acted as ruler and regent for Thutmose III; but to accomplish this she had to declare herself legally a man.

The presence of the feminine is evident throughout the Egyptian afterlife. It was through the magic wrought by the goddess Isis that her husband

Osiris successfully underwent mummification and thereby achieved immortality. The myth of his death and resurrection served as a paradigm for all who face death: men and women alike prayed that they might attain the blessed afterlife made possible for Osiris by his wife's devotion.

Goddesses intervened benevolently on behalf of the individual throughout the stages of death. Winged Nephthys and the scorpion-deity Selket protected the mummy's organs. The sky-goddess Nut spread herself over the body of the deceased in an act of protection. And Ma'at, goddess of truth, judged the heart of the deceased to enable the person to achieve immortality.

Women had the same access to the afterlife as did men. A daughter could bury her parents just as well as a son, but as men had more access to areas outside the home, such as the workshops where funerary goods were made, they often had higher quality grave goods.

The women of ancient Egypt were accepted in Egyptian society as being necessary to the balance of society. Women brought life to the world, they nurtured that life and protected the home. Moreover, they appeased the gods and goddesses; sometimes they ruled; and they opened the way to the afterlife. Egyptian women were not passive in the roles they played in ancient society, and they had just as profound an effect on the culture as the men. What we know of their lives is relatively little compared with what remains to be discovered; but future research will continue to shed light on the women of ancient Egypt.

I hope that you will enjoy this exhibit and leave with increased knowledge and appreciation for the often overlooked citizens of the fascinating land of Egypt, the *Women of the Nile*. ♀

In addition to the previous acknowledgments, I would like to thank Fabienne Haas for her invaluable assistance in preparing this exhibit.

**Cosmetic Spoon
Held by a Girl**

Wood and pigment

L: 21.9 cm

18th Dynasty

RC 1682

This spoon was used to hold cosmetics for mixing in the bowl. The style of carving on the young girl who holds the bowl displays the fluidity of form typical of the Amarna

Period. The use of the adolescent girl motif may be an oblique reference to Hathor, the goddess of sexual beauty.



HOMELIFE

Lisa Schwappach, Curator
Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum

The Egyptians had a strong sense of duality both in their religious and secular lives, and women held a separate but equal place in this social organization. They fulfilled many responsibilities and at times were the foundation of their society. They ran the home, controlled the household industries, bore and raised children, and protected their family from threats both physical and magical. For this reason, women were seen as having their own unique purpose in the world which balanced the role played by men. All Egyptians were expected to marry and start a household. First marriages were usually arranged by the parents at the age of 12 or 13, but divorce was common, and divorcees could then choose their next mate.

The household was the basis of many Egyptian industries, such as weaving and brewing beer. The running of the household was the exclusive domain of women. An ancient Egyptian book of proverbs, *The Instruction of Ani*, tells the reader, "Do not control your wife in her house, when you know she is efficient. Do not say to her, 'where is it? Get it!', when she has put it in the right place. Let your eye observe in silence, then you will recognize her skill." A good housewife saw that her household produced a surplus of items, which she traded for other items and luxury goods. Many of these objects were then worn by the "Mistress of the House," as she was called, to advertise her talent to the community. While it was the male's duty to work outside the home, it was not unusual for a woman to take over her husband's business affairs when he was out of town.

One of the most important goddesses to the Egyptian woman was Hathor (RC 64), patroness of beauty and sexual love. Because of these associations, Hathor was also seen as a fertility goddess. A woman would honor her daily by applying makeup and wearing jewelry (RC 5194). The most common makeup was eyeliner, or kohl, which was applied to the rim of the eye and then drawn out from the

corner. A woman's hair was also an important attribute and was styled meticulously. If the hair was not thick enough to style in the current fashion, she would wear a wig or add braid extensions (RC 2446). Hathor often appeared as the handle of mirrors, assisting the Egyptian woman in her daily cosmetic ritual (RC 1240).

The creation of children was an essential duty for Egyptian men and women. Children supported their parents in old age and assured proper burial. Women were usually held responsible for infertility. Fertility figures were common and used to magically encourage pregnancy (RC 256). Some of these figures have been found with inscriptions to the goddess Hathor, requesting a child. Pregnant and nursing women

Woman on a Bed

Painted terracotta

New Kingdom

L: 14.7 cm

Harer Family Trust

The woman lies naked on the bed wearing an elaborate wig with an unguent cone on top. Two snakes flank her body on the bed. Often called concubines, such works are in reality fertility figures. Some show a child with the woman, while in others, she has attributes of fertility goddesses such as Hathor. Similar figures are also found in the Levant.



HOMELIFE

came under the protection of the hippopotamus goddess Taweret. Chambers believed to be birthing rooms have been found in the sites of Amarna and Deir el-Medina. Figures of Taweret (RC 63) and her companion god Bes (RC 217), the protector of children and people in vulnerable positions, were painted on the walls of these rooms.

Once a woman had successfully given birth, she would be separated from the community for 14 days, and then welcomed back with her child in celebration. Part of this celebration involved dressing the woman in an elaborate wig and jewelry, and a mirror is almost always seen in images of the room. This is probably because the Egyptian word for “life” and “mirror” were both pronounced “ankh.” This ceremony was probably intended to symbolize her being placed back under the protection of Hathor. The child was now under the protection of the god Bes, who was depicted as a dancing dwarf. Both of them could also claim the protection of Isis, the personification of the Good Mother.

Egyptians believed that hostile forces could injure people or make them ill. To guard against these forces, people of the household wore protective amulets of gods or goddesses. Most people had a favorite god or goddess. Most popular with women were the goddess Isis with her son Horus; Bastet, the gentle and protective cat goddess; and Hathor. The warrior goddess, Neith (RC 1806), has been associated with the rule of Egypt from the Early Dynastic Period, and remained a protective goddess with tomb equipment. Sekhmet (RC 1605), the fierce lion-headed goddess, a favorite of all Egyptians, was

a renowned healer of disease. Additionally, pregnant women always honored Taweret, and children always honored Bes.

The infant mortality rate in ancient Egypt was very high. It is estimated that 50 percent of children died by the age of five. A mother had to be constantly vigilant to keep her child alive. Folk remedies were common. If the mother was not producing enough milk to feed her baby, milk from a healthy mother would be placed in a medicine bottle to magically stimulate the flow of milk (RC 549). If a child had a fever or illness, milk could be placed in a jar shaped like Bes to cure the child (RC 217). The tying of knots to break fevers was also a common remedy.

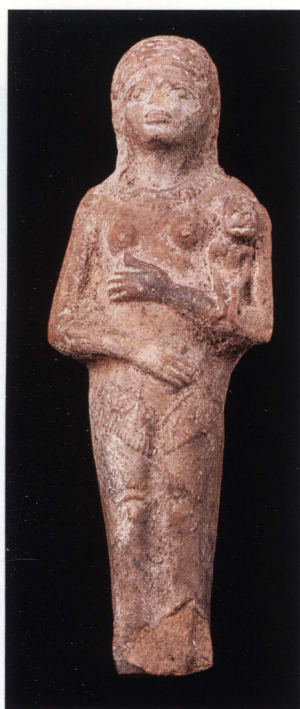
Living threats included snakes, crocodiles, and scorpions, for which Isis, the powerful goddess of magic and the personification of the Good Mother, was particularly helpful. It is perhaps significant that one of her symbols is the *Tyet* knot. In the Roman Period, Isis’ son Horus also took on this protective role.

If a child were to die, the mother would have one more duty: burial. The last contact a mother had with her child was the anointing with perfumes just prior to sealing the tomb (RC 22). The sense of loss felt by the ancient Egyptians is poignantly expressed in this Late Period funerary inscription:

“Harm is what befell me when I was but a child!—I was driven from childhood too early!—The dark, a child’s terror, engulfed me, while the breast was in my mouth!”



Bes, RC 300



Reclining Woman with Child

Ceramic
H: 14.8 cm
Late Period
RC 1809

This doll was created to lie on a model bed, which would be painted with protective motifs such as the god Bes or red and yellow snakes. This is believed to depict a successful childbirth. Egyptians believed that the desired result could be magically created by depicting it in model form.

Woman with Two Children

Wood
Middle Kingdom
H: 10.5 cm
Harer Family Trust

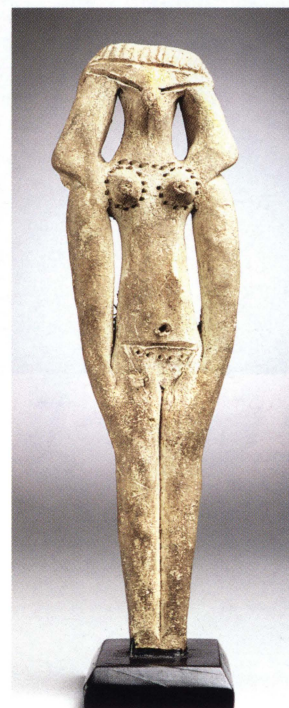
The woman is standing with one baby cradled rather awkwardly to her breast, while a larger child clings to her back with its arms over her shoulders. Representations in the round of a woman with more than one child are rare at any time in ancient Egypt.



Female Figure

Wood, with traces of paint
H: 21.3 cm
Middle Kingdom
RC 1571

This figure's voluptuous curves hint at a fertility purpose. Originally identified as representations of concubines, fertility figures have been found in the tombs of men, women, and children. Fertility was seen as necessary for rebirth after death. The lack of feet gave this figure a submissive attitude.



Fertility Figure

Ceramic
H: 16 cm
Second Intermediate Period
RC 256

Although the style looks strange, many of this figure's characteristics are paralleled by other fertility figures. The incised marks around the waist represent a cowrie shell girdle. The marks around the breasts probably represent body art. A necklace is clearly represented. The tripartite hairstyle is commonly shown on nursing women.

FERTILITY AMULETS



Bes

Faience
H: 6.7 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 637

Bes

Faience
H: 3.9 cm
Third Intermediate
Period
RC 300

Bes

Faience
H: 1.6 cm
Late 18th Dynasty
(from Amarna)
RC 1186

Bes

Faience
H: 1.7 cm
Late Period
RC 2028

Bes

Faience
H: 6.8 cm
Late Period
RC 1426

Hekat Stamp Seal

Steatite
L: 3.3 cm
New Kingdom
RC 1108

Because of the numerous frogs in Egyptian marshes, the frog goddess Hekat was venerated as a deity of abundance and fertility. The reverse side bears a reference to the goddess Wadjet and royal titles.

Mother and Child Seal

Glazed steatite
H: 1.9 cm
13th Dynasty
RC 1103

The mother is nursing a child on her lap in a classic Egyptian image of motherhood.

Taweret

Faience
H: 5.4 cm
Third Intermediate
Period
RC 63

Taweret amulets were intended to protect the mother and child.

The above Bes amulets were worn by children as protection from bad luck and accidents.

Taweret

Faience
H: 1.5 cm
Late Period
RC 2030



Healing Stela

Limestone
H: 42.2 cm
Roman Period
RC 2991

Horus, the son of Isis, is depicted on this stela standing on crocodiles and holding serpents, showing his dominion over them. Bes overlooks the scene, adding his protective powers. Water would be poured over the relief to be drunk by a bite victim for a cure.

Fragmentary Taweret Medicine Bottle

Painted ceramic
H: 10.1 cm
New Kingdom
RC 549

Taweret (Taurt) was the hippopotamus-shaped protectress of pregnant and nursing women. This medicine bottle was created with holes in the breasts. If a woman's milk was not flowing to feed her infant, milk from a healthy mother would be poured in and allowed to flow out of Taweret's breasts. This was thought to release the mother's milk.



Bes Medicine Bottle

Nile silt
H: 15.2 cm
Late Period
RC 217

This Bes bottle was used for medicine. A child who was ill would be fed milk or medicine out of this bottle in the belief that the child would be cured. Because of Bes' protective properties, many household items were decorated with Bes figures.



The God Bes

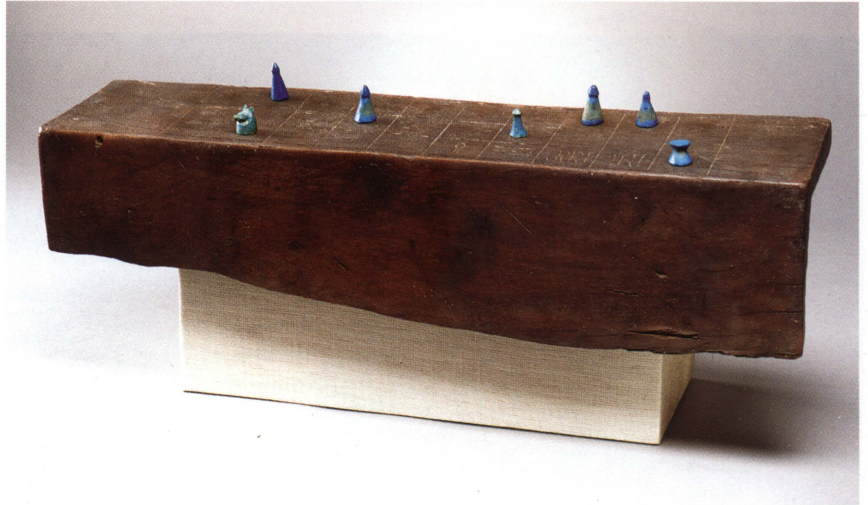
Bronze
H: 15.9 cm
Saite Period
RC 1651

Bes was a protective god who looked after people in vulnerable positions, particularly children. He was believed to ward off evil. This Bes figure stands on a papyrus column, giving this fetish the form of a wand.

Senet Board Game

Wood
L: 53.3 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 1261

The game Senet was very popular with Egyptians. Everyone from the king to the lowest peasant played this game from childhood. The object was to move the pieces around the board first, hopefully landing on the square called "good," and avoiding the bad squares.



Faience Ball

Faience
D: 4.4 cm
New Kingdom
RC 562

This ball is pierced to allow stringing. It is similar to the balls that were suspended in the hair of girl acrobats who performed at parties, helping to change their center of balance to give them greater agility in their performances.

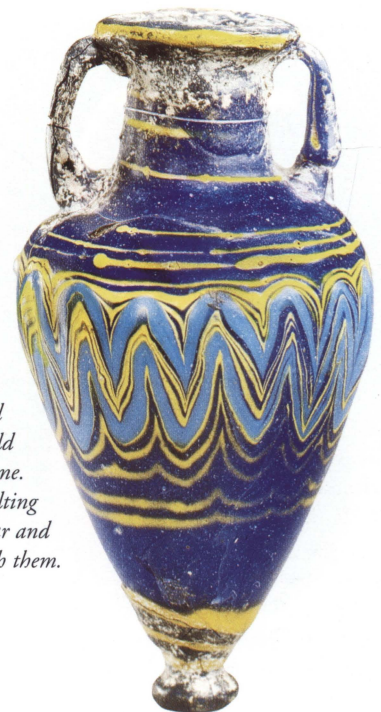
Marbles

Glass, faience
D: 1.8 cm; 2.3 cm
Roman Period
RC 1116; RC 1117

Glass Amphora

Core-formed glass
H: 8.7 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 382

Glass perfume containers were first used in the 18th Dynasty. Such a jar would hold precious ointment or perfume. The jar's colors were applied by melting colored glass rods onto the jar and dragging a stick through them.





Girl Mirror

Bronze

L: 20.2 cm

New Kingdom

RC 16

The adolescent girl motif was very common in the New Kingdom. Mirrors were one of the items associated with Hathor, the goddess of physical beauty. Mirrors were carried by women as an aspect of the fertility rituals that followed childbirth.



Kohl Jars

Calcite; anhydrite

H: 6 cm; H: 4.5 cm

New Kingdom; Middle Kingdom

(jar on the right from Qurneh)

RC 26 (left); RC 1231 (right)

These jars contained the eyeliner so apparent in Egyptian portraiture. Until the Middle Kingdom, all kohl jars were squat. Eyeliner was applied with the fingers. The kohl stick was invented in the New Kingdom, and tubular jars appeared.



Hairpin, Comb, and Hair Extensions

Wood, human hair, and linen

L: 14.4 cm; L: 8.9 cm; L: 14 cm

New Kingdom; Middle Kingdom;

New Kingdom

RC 574; RC 1579; RC 2446

This set of hairdresser's materials aided a woman at her dressing table. Ancient Egyptians regarded thick hair as the ideal. Braided hair extensions were often added to wigs to enhance a woman's appearance. The pin would be used to hold a wig or extensions in place.



Alabastron

Core-formed glass
H: 10.2 cm
Late Period
RC 1800

This tube was used to hold perfume or makeup. A spoon was used to extract the precious substance from the bottom of the tube.

Hathor Handled Mirror

Steatite and bronze
L: 19.8 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 1240

This mirror handle is decorated with the face of the goddess Hathor and the Egyptian symbol and word ankh, meaning "life." As ankh was the word for both "life" and "mirror," this handle comprises a pun. The dual meaning of the word may explain the use of mirrors in post-childbirth ceremonies.



Lion-headed Earrings

Gold
D: 3 cm
Ptolemaic Period
RC 2006

Faience Earrings

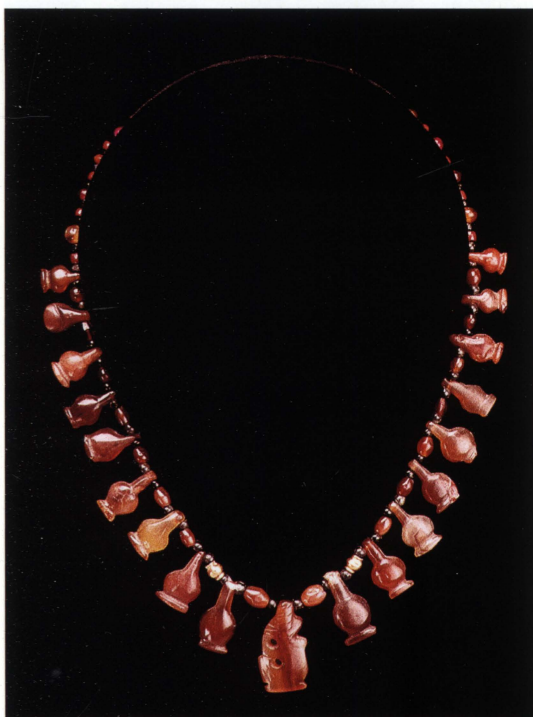
Faience
L: 3 cm
Modern setting
RC 2051

Peniannular Earrings (4)

Jasper
D: 1-3 cm
19th Dynasty
RC 1095

Small Bracelet

Serpentine
D: 7 cm
Predynastic Period
RC 1122



Lotus Seed Necklace

Carnelian, jasper, serpentine, and gold

L: 44 cm

18th Dynasty

(reported to be from Deir el-Bahri)

RC 5194

This necklace would have been worn by a very wealthy woman. Since cut stones, such as diamonds, were unknown in the ancient world, certain uncut stones were regarded as the most valuable. Carnelian represented the blood of Isis, as well as being attractive, which added to its value. The necklace's style is similar to the delicate jewelry of the Middle Kingdom.



Network Necklace

Faience

L: 27 cm

Late Period

RC 92

A necklace such as this would represent the better-quality jewelry of a woman from the non-royal middle class, to be worn on festival days or other special occasions.

Openwork Ring

Faience

D: 2.5 cm

Third Intermediate Period

RC 1781

This ring depicts the goddess Ma'at seated in the midst of a double lotus blossom motif.



Wedjat Eye Finger Ring

Faience

D: 2 cm

Late 18th Dynasty

RC 77

The wedjat eye was the eye of Horus. In Egyptian mythology, the eye was thought to be so powerful that it restored Osiris from the dead. The wedjat was seen as a protection against malignant powers and was worn in life and death.





Lotus Vessel

Faience

H: 9.9 cm

New Kingdom

RC 2058

As the first plant to emerge from the primordial marsh, the lotus symbolized life from death for the ancient Egyptians. Many objects of daily use were decorated with spiritual symbols, as was this vessel.

Knotted Cord

Cordage and plaster

L: 14.3 cm

Date unknown

RC 1172

Knots were of magical significance to many ancient cultures. The Egyptians believed that knots could seal good or bad luck, and also that the tying or cutting of a knot could end pain or a fever. This could be one of these magic knots.



Ancestor Bust

Egyptian blue*

H: 6.3 cm

19th Dynasty

RC 242

Ancestor worship in ancient Egypt took many forms. At the site of Deir el-Medina, ancestor busts were found in household niches. This small figure appears to be a model of one of these ancestor busts. The breasts make it clear that a woman is represented. This probably represents the female ancestors of the owner as a group, rather than one single woman.

*An early glasslike substance.



Hathor Cylinder Seal

Faience

L: 3.6 cm

15th Dynasty

RC 1109

This very unusual seal bears the face of Hathor with reversed ankhs below her ears. The curvilinear designs are very common in the Hyksos Period.

AMULETS

**Wedjat Eye**

Faience
H: 4.4 cm
Third Intermediate Period
RC 2136

**Wedjat Eye**

Faience
H: 4.7 cm
Third Intermediate Period
RC 1089

**Djed Pillar**

Faience
H: 10.4 cm
Saite Period
RC 50

**Cornflower**

Faience
H: 4.1 cm
Late 18th Dynasty
(from Amarna)
RC 1184

**Ankh**

Faience
H: 1.5 cm
Late 18th Dynasty
(from Amarna)
RC 1199

Standing Sekhmet

Diorite

H: 81 cm

18th Dynasty
(presumably from Thebes)

RC 1605

Pharaoh

*Amenhotep III ordered that
up to 730 images of the
goddess Sekhmet be created
and installed in his mortuary
temple to beseech her healing
help for his illnesses. These
were later moved to Karnak.
This is presumed to be one of
these. In her right hand,
Sekhmet holds an ankh;
in the left, a lotus.*



TEMPLE LIFE

Dr. Emily Teeter, Associate Curator
Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

Women played an important and central role in temples. They held a wide variety of positions, from sacred singers and dancers to the highest clerical posts in the country. Egyptian priestesses were not organized into monastic orders, for as was true of so many aspects of Egyptian culture, the secular and sacred aspects of Egypt had no strong dividing line. Priestesses married and had families. Sacred offices were often passed from mother to daughter. The concept of vestal virgins was completely foreign to the Egyptians, for there was no direct link between ritual purity and celibacy. On the contrary, sexuality and reproduction were the hallmarks of their religion which was based upon fecundity and regeneration. Erotic and overt sexual images were everywhere in the temple, echoing the theme of the ongoing regeneration of the cosmos. The title “God’s Hand” was an overt reference to the ability of the priestesses to sexually stimulate the god, and hence to ensure rebirth.

Priestesses did not generally wear clothes that distinguished them from other women, although some higher ranks of priestess wore a distinctive vulture headdress topped with two tall feathers and a sun disk.

In the Old Kingdom the most common title held by women was “Prophet of the goddess Hathor,” or “Priestess of the goddess Neith,” suggesting that priestesses were more commonly in the service of goddesses than of gods. By the New Kingdom women often served in the temple of male deities. In this period, women generally held lower ranking titles in the clerical bureaucracy, serving as singers or dancers. These positions, especially that of singer, were strongly bureaucratic and were divided into ranks, the highest being the “Singer in the Interior of the Temple,” indicating that these women had greater access to the deity. Many of the women of this highest rank came from elite families. These singers chanted and played music which was considered to be

pleasurable to the deity of the temple. The most important instrument used by the priestess was the sistrum (RC 1765, RC 2245), a rattle which, when shook, produced a metallic clanging sound. This was often used in accompaniment with a *menat*—a beaded necklace which, when shook, produced another percussive tone. Other instruments, such as clappers (RC 1681), much like modern castanets, were also used to amuse the deity.

Priestesses who bore the exalted title “God’s Wife” are known from the early New Kingdom into the Persian period. These women, who were sisters, wives, or daughters of pharaohs, were considered to be the consort of the god Amun, the most important and influential deity of the time. In the 25th and early 26th Dynasty, these women were the virtual rulers of Egypt, deputized by the pharaoh who lived far south in Nubia. Some of the God’s Wives also held the title “First Prophet of the god Amun”—a position with tremendous economic and political authority.

GODDESSES

The Egyptians worshiped a great number of deities, and goddesses were an important part of the pantheon. Female deities are attested as early as their male counterparts, one of the earliest being the face of the cow-eared goddess Bat on the top of the Narmer palette. One of the most important goddesses of the Old Kingdom was Hathor (RC 2221), a goddess of myriad associations,



Seated Sekhmet

Faience
H: 7 cm
Saite Period
RC 1510

This seated image of the goddess Sekhmet was probably a votive figure for a temple. The throne on which she is seated is decorated with the papyrus of Lower Egypt and the lotus of Upper Egypt, symbolizing unity. She was the protector of the king in battle.

TEMPLE LIFE

including nurturing, dancing, music, and regeneration. Shown as a woman with cow ears, or as a cow, she was venerated throughout Egyptian history. Neith (RC 1806), who was usually shown as a woman with the double crown of Egypt, was another of the earliest attested deities. She was associated with the protection of the king, her emblems (arrows and a shield) echoing her role. Sekhmet, shown most often as a woman with a lioness' head (RC 1, 112, 1510, 1601, 1605) was a god of tremendous ambivalence. Her fiery nature and potential destructive powers inherent in her lion form are mentioned in the myth of the Destruction of Mankind in which Sekhmet, as an agent of the god Re, was diverted from killing mankind by becoming drunk on blood-colored beer. Yet her powerful nature could also be channeled as a potent protective power, and it was believed that she had the ability to cure disease. A closely related goddess named Bastet, shown as a woman with a cat head, was often shown carrying a situla (RC 11), a container for cool water or milk used in offering rituals.

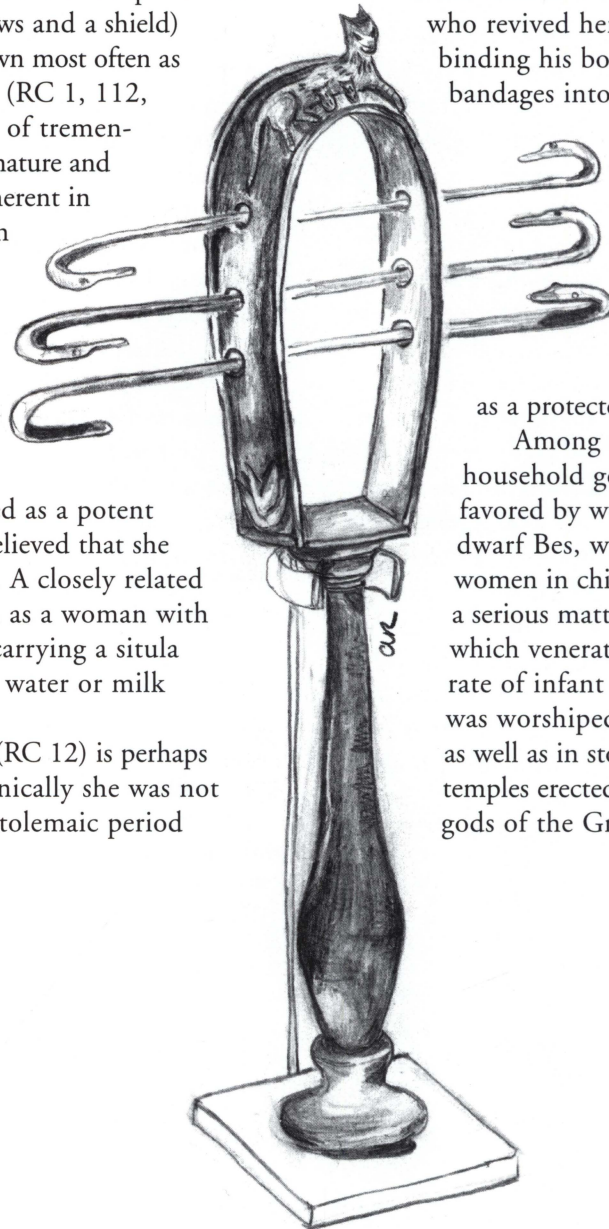
Although the goddess Isis (RC 12) is perhaps best known to the public, ironically she was not a prominent deity until the Ptolemaic period

when temples were built specially in her honor. Her cult at Philae was the last of the functioning pagan temples. It was closed by decree of the Byzantine emperor in the 6th century A.D. In the pharaonic period, Isis was a fairly colorless deity known best as the dutiful wife-sister of the god Osiris, who revived her murdered husband, binding his body together with linen bandages into the archetypal mummy.

Innumerable bronze statuettes show Isis with her son Horus on her lap (RC 125), as the classic image of the protective mother. In this later period, magical spells were associated with Isis

as a protector against sickness and evil.

Among the most popular of the household gods, and one especially favored by women, was the humorous dwarf Bes, who was the protector of women in childbirth and of children, a serious matter in an ancient society which venerated children, yet had a high rate of infant and maternal mortality. Bes was worshiped in small household altars, as well as in stone shrines erected alongside temples erected to other, more formal, gods of the Greco-Roman period. ♀



Sistrum, RC 1765

Sekhmet

Bronze
H: 13.9 cm
Ptolemaic Period
RC 1

The very first object ever collected for the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum. This figure is a very simple representation of the goddess.



Seated Leonine Goddess

Bronze
H: 30.2 cm
26th Dynasty or later
RC 1601

Based on the type of headdress on this figure, the goddess Wadjet is probably represented rather than Sekhmet. While she was usually represented as the uraeus, in later times Wadjet became associated with the Eye of Ra, the first female being ever created. The lion was long associated with this being.



Small Sekhmet

Faience
H: 8.8 cm
Late Period
RC 112

This small but lovingly detailed image of the goddess Sekhmet includes an inscription on the back plinth, identifying her as the beloved of Ptah and healer. This image was created to serve as a votive figure or an image for a household altar.





Cat Head

Bronze
H: 6.3 cm
Late Period
RC 2243

This bronze head was originally part of a composite statue, no doubt dedicated to the goddess Bastet, "She of Bast." The ear is pierced to hold an earring. It demonstrates the ability of the ancient craftsman in creating lifelike animal images.

Bastet Cat Image

Bronze
H: 11.8 cm
Saite Period
(said to be from Zagazig)
RC 1574

This is a votive figure of the goddess Bastet, intended for one of her temples in Lower Egypt. Note that the tail is curved around the right side, as is usual, and the ears are pierced for jewelry.



Votive Cat

Wood, gilt, and glass
Saite Period
H: 16.9 cm
(said to be from Karnak)
RC 96

This figure was probably a votive offering to the goddess Bastet, a benevolent and procreative goddess. This cat was originally gilded, although most of the gilt has deteriorated. Notable is the remarkably lifelike eye made of glass.



Face of Hathor

Faience

H: 4 cm

Greco-Roman Period

RC 636

This image of the goddess Hathor was intended to be placed within the handle of a sistrum. Hathor was often represented as having the face of a human with the ears of a cow, giving her an unusual elongated face.

The Goddess Neith

Wood, with traces of pigment

H: 47.1 cm

26th Dynasty

RC 1806

This elegant image of the goddess Neith was probably a cult figure. The details of her dress can still be seen. Neith is one of the most ancient goddesses of Egypt, associated with the rule of Lower Egypt. Her fetish was a set of crossed arrows and a war shield, hinting at her early identification as a warrior.

GODDESS AMULETS

Ancient Egyptians would wear these amulets to place themselves under the protection of the goddess displayed.



Bovine-headed Hathor Amulet

Faience
H: 4.9 cm
Saite Period
RC 64

Hathor with Wadjet Amulet

Faience
H: 3 cm
Ptolemaic Period
RC 1193

Kitten Amulet (Bastet)

Faience
H: 1.1 cm
Late Period
RC 2027

Fully Bovine Hathor Plaque

Ceramic
H: 3 cm
Late Period
RC 2502

Sekhmet Amulet

Faience
H: 3.5 cm
Late Period
RC 2026

Isis Nursing Horus

Bronze (marble seat modern)
H: 21.4 cm
Ptolemaic Period
RC 125

This image is of Isis, the paradigm of the perfect mother in the later phases of Egyptian civilization.

Her headdress and wig are elaborately detailed. This was probably created to be a votive offering at a shrine.



Marble Isis and Horus

Marble
H: 13.5 cm
Greco-Roman Period
RC 12

The worship of Isis became very popular in the Roman Period, when her worship was one of the so-called Mystery Cults. Isis was so popular that a temple was dedicated to her in Roman London. The symbol on Isis' head is the throne, Auset in ancient Egyptian, from which her name derives.





Palette of Ritual Oils

Faience
L: 11.6 cm
New Kingdom
RC 1241

This container was used to hold special oils that had religious significance in the temple. The sacred oils, usually aromatic, were stored in the containers awaiting use. The reservoirs are shaped like lotus blossoms.



Situla

Bronze
H: 13 cm
Late Period
RC 11

The situla was used as a container for sacred water or oils in temple worship. The middle register of this situla is decorated with images of goddesses, including Hathor.



Hathor Staff Finial

Bronze
H: 12.1 cm
Late Period
RC 2221

This bronze staff finial is rich in symbolism. The head of the goddess Hathor is emerging from the lotus, thought by the Egyptians to be the first plant to grow. She wears the sun disk between her horns on her headdress. Uraei appear to either side of her. Originally, this piece was richly inlaid.

Clappers

Ivory
L: 14.1 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 1681

Music was important in daily life and in the temples. Sets of clappers would be slapped together in the palm of the hand by priestesses. Clappers often represented the goddess Hathor. These may as well, as one of her epithets was "The God's Hand."



Stela of a Songstress of Amun

Wood
H: 41.5 cm
26th Dynasty
RC 1606

The title of "Songstress of Amun" was common to women in the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Periods at Thebes. The lady for whom this stela was made, Ta-sa'ay-ky, was the daughter of a boat captain.



Sistrum

Bronze
H: 20.8 cm
Roman Period
RC 1765

The sistrum was the basic instrument of musical worship in Egyptian temples and was first associated with Hathor. This is decorated with a cat nursing her kittens, a clear reference to the cat goddess Bastet, who was closely associated with Hathor, the Lady of Dendera. This sistrum is probably from the Greco-Roman world, rather than Egypt proper.

Adoration of Mut Relief

Limestone
H: 17.1 cm
19th Dynasty
RC 2974

A priest is shown adoring the goddess Mut, who holds an ankh and a papyrus scepter. On her head is the combined crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Mut was a member of the Theban triad, with Amun-re and Khonsu.



Mut or Isis Relief Fragment

Quartz sandstone

H: 31.8 cm

Late to Ptolemaic Period

RC 1967

The image of a goddess can be clearly seen, the pigment still vivid. She is being embraced by the arm of a god, all that remains of that figure. Unfortunately, the headdress of the goddess is not visible, preventing sure identification.



Relief Fragment

Limestone

H: 14 cm

19th Dynasty

RC 2245

The woman in this relief is carrying a sistrum, a musical instrument necessary to temple worship. The sistrum was shaken much like a rattle, and was only used by women. The sound was thought to soothe the powerful gods, enabling humans to enter the temple to worship. The sistrum was originally dedicated solely to Hathor.

Royal Sistrum

Faience

H: 24.3 cm

26th Dynasty

RC 1731

This sistrum, decorated with the face of Hathor, includes the cartouches of the Saite king Wa-ib-re Psamtik I. It may have been used in ritual by the God's Wives Amenirdis II or Princess Nitogerty, the daughter of Psamtik I. These women ruled the city of Thebes, and much of Egypt, in place of the king in Sais.



THE PALACE

*Dr. Gay Robins, Professor of Ancient Egyptian Art
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Egyptian kings, apart from a handful of exceptions, were always male. They were, however, surrounded by a number of royal women—mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters—some of whom were more important than others. The majority of secondary wives, sisters, and daughters were not shown or named on royal monuments and only a few are known today because of chance survivals of other types of material. By contrast, kings' mothers and principal wives are found in monumental contexts, and often had their own estates with male officials to administer them. In addition, a few kings' daughters—in the main those born to a king's principal wife—appear on royal monuments and other items in association with the king.

Evidence shows that the king's principal wife was often his sister or half-sister and, since offspring from these unions are recorded, we know they were consummated relationships and not simply ritualistic in function. To explain them Egyptologists developed the "heiress" theory, which proposed that the right to the throne passed through the royal female line but that power was exercised by the man the "heiress" married. Thus for the male "heir" to succeed his father, he had to marry his sister to legitimize his right to the throne. For such a theory to be true, one would need to demonstrate an unbroken line of descent from one king's wife to the next, but in fact such a line does not exist and the "heiress" theory must be abandoned. It is more likely that royal brother-sister marriages are modeled on divine brother-sister unions, such as those of the deities Shu and Tefnut, Geb and Nut, and Isis and Osiris.

Other kings' wives who do not have the title "King's Daughter" can be assumed to come from non-royal families. The parents of these women are rarely named, but when they are, we find that they belong to the elite class that provided the officials who administered Egypt's bureaucracy. It seems likely that secondary wives would have been drawn from official families, but these women remain, for the most part, unknown to us today. Some of these women, however, bore sons who became kings. These women appear on their sons' monuments with the title "King's Mother."

The status of a king whose mother was a secondary wife is no different from that of a king who was the son of the previous king's principal wife. For the royal woman, however, ascent of her son to the throne raised her position from one of obscurity to one of prominence. In fact, Ramesses III was probably murdered as the result of a conspiracy led by a royal woman who wanted to put her son on the throne instead of the designated heir.

The reason for the importance of the king's mother and his principal wife lies in their ritual role. Just as the king was the bearer of divine kingship, so these two women were bearers of divine queenship (RC 1586). The two cannot be considered separately because in many ways they are indistinguishable. Apart from the title "King's Mother," they use the same titles and insignia, and they appear in the same types of scenes. They are in fact two aspects of the female principle found in the concept of Kamutef that relates to divine renewal. This concept is best illustrated by the daily cycle of the sun god. Every evening, the god impregnated the sky goddess as she swallowed him in the western sky, and every morning he was born again in the east in a cycle of eternal renewal. The sky goddess was thus both consort and mother. The identification of the king's mother and wife as aspects of this divine role provided for the cyclical renewal of the divine aspect of the king.

The divine aspect of queenship was displayed by the various insignia that these two royal women shared with goddesses: the vulture headdress, the uraeus (RC 107) and, from the late 18th Dynasty, the horns and sun disk of Hathor. They also sometimes carry the ankh, symbol of life, which was a divine attribute secondarily accorded to the king. In addition, the women were associated with the goddesses Hathor and Ma'at. In scenes showing the king giving audience in the palace, he is sometimes accompanied by his mother or wife, sometimes by an image of Hathor or Ma'at, suggesting that the royal women enacted the roles of these goddesses.

Other scenes depict the king's mother or wife accompanying the king when he is performing ritual activities before a deity. Although in many cases she is not shown doing anything, she sometimes offers or

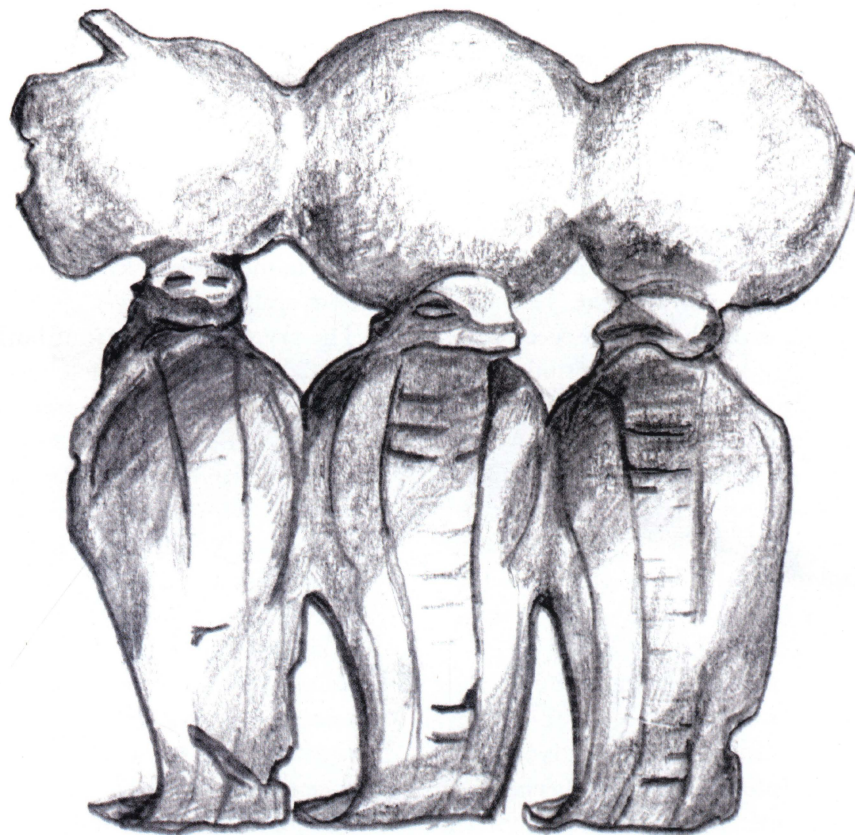
THE PALACE

shakes one or two sacred rattles (sistra) (RC 1731) to pacify and please the deity. The royal wife who is most consistently seen performing divine ritual with the king is Nefertiti (RC 736), consort of the “heretic” king Akhenaten. Akhenaten abandoned the traditional gods of Egypt and worshiped only the Aten or sundisk, whose representative he was on earth. The prominence of Nefertiti may have arisen to compensate for the lack of goddesses in the new belief system. Together Akhenaten and Nefertiti may have represented the first male and female couple brought into being by the creator god as the initial act of creation—a role traditionally played by the divine pair Shu and Tefnut (RC 1609).

Nefertiti’s prominent role and her occasional use of kingly crowns has led to the suggestion that she may actually have become Akhenaten’s co-regent at the end of his reign, but the evidence is inconclusive.

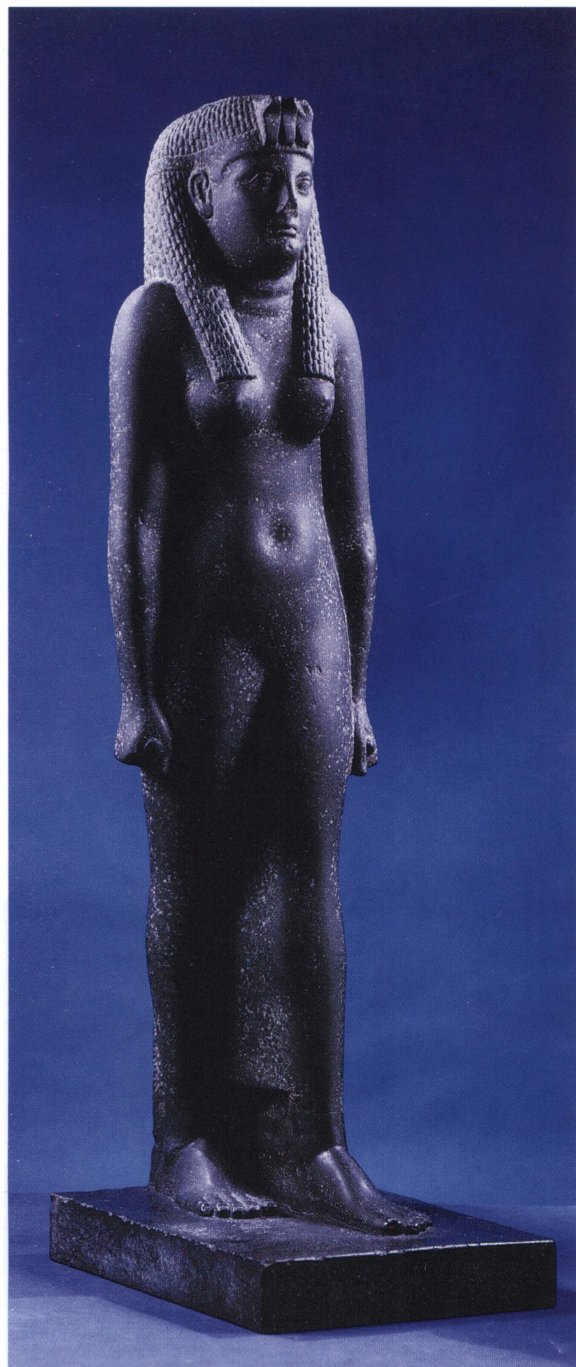
However, we do know of a few royal women who ruled as king during the years of ancient Egypt’s history. Three of these had brief reigns only: Nitoqerty, at the end of the 6th Dynasty; Neferusobek at the end of the 12th Dynasty; and Tawosret at the end of the 19th Dynasty.

Today, the best-known female ruler is Hatshepsut, who ruled during the 18th Dynasty as senior co-regent together with her nephew Tuthmosis III. Hatshepsut is famous for the impressive funerary temple that she built at Deir el-Bahri on Thebes’ western bank. Royal women were particularly prominent during the rule of the Greek Ptolemaic dynasty, descendants of Alexander the Great’s general, Ptolemy. The last Ptolemaic ruler was the famous Cleopatra VII, who committed suicide after she and Mark Anthony were defeated at the Battle of Actium by the Roman forces of Octavian.¶



triple uraeus, RC 107

an



Ptolemaic Queen

Granito-diorite
H: 105 cm
3rd century BC
RC 1582

This beautiful figure of a Ptolemaic queen is currently identified as Arsinoe II, although some controversy exists. Although the figure is clearly Ptolemaic, it appears to be based on a well-known statue of Amenirdis I, a God's Wife of Amun. Arsinoe II was deified after her death by her husband, Ptolemy II.

Queen Tiye Kohl Tube

Faience
H: 12.2 cm
18th Dynasty
RC 1808

Kohl tubes were an essential part of the daily cosmetic ritual. The name of the royal couple was thought to be amuletic. This kohl tube is decorated with an inlaid paste with the names of Amenhotep III and his Great Royal Wife, Tiye. Queen Tiye was greatly respected for her political acumen, and King Akhenaten, her son, was advised by foreign rulers to consult her for her expertise.



Triple Uraeus

Bronze, some gilt remaining
H: 4.9 cm
25th-26th Dynasty
RC 107

The triple uraeus is first attested in the reign of Amenhotep III on a representation of his wife, Tiye. This may have been worn with the vulture headdress to combine the attributes of two goddesses, Wadjet and Nekhbet. It is a royal headdress and may be seen on the brow of the "Ptolemaic Queen," shown at the left.



Stela of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari

Limestone

H: 17.3 cm

19th Dynasty

RC 1586

Queen Ahmose-Nefertari of the early 18th Dynasty was deified as a dynastic founder in her life and after. This small votive stela was created in the 19th Dynasty, centuries after her death, to honor her and the son shown with her, Ahnes-sa-pa-iry.

Hatshepsut Cartouche Bead

Egyptian blue*
(metal modern)

L: 2.3 cm

18th Dynasty

RC 1114

This bead is decorated with the cartouche of the female pharaoh, Maat-ka-re Hatshepsut. This queen of Egypt ruled with the titles of a king following the death of her husband, Tuthmosis II, and during the minority of her nephew, later the great King Tuthmosis III. As Egypt had no word or custom for ruling queen, she took on the male titles and dress.



Plinth Fragment

Fine limestone, traces of pigment

L: 9.8 cm

18th Dynasty

RC 2228

This fragment contains the cartouche of Nefertiti, the Great Royal Wife of King Akhenaten. The pharaoh's name appears in the cartouche above. Traces of red pigment remain in the incised hieroglyphs.





Balustrade Fragment

Limestone with traces of pigment

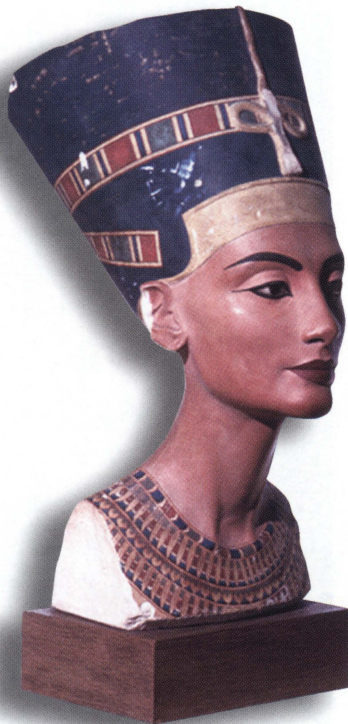
H: 23.2 cm

18th Dynasty

(presumed to be from Amarna)

RC 1609

This architectural element, presumably from Amarna, includes cartouches of King Akhenaten and his wife, Nefertiti. Akhenaten's change from polytheism to monotheism transformed the role of the royal family. The queen became a central figure in ritual. The reverse side of this piece, shown to the right, was, sadly, altered by modern forgers with a copy of a stela in the Cairo Museum.



Replica of the Nefertiti Bust

Modern replica

H: 50.2 cm

RC 736

Created in the 1920s, this is one of three direct replicas authorized by the Berlin Museum (which houses the original). In scale and pigment it accurately reproduces the original in Berlin.

Coffin of Ta'awa

Wood, linen, gesso, and paint

L: 174 cm

26th Dynasty

(presumably from Thebes)

RC 2071

This lovely coffin is of a woman from an important family.

Most of the men were priests of Montu, Lord of Thebes. Ta'awa's name was a pet name, probably "Little Ta'awa" to her family, based on the spelling. This and the fact that she lacks important titles hints that she may have died while still young. Her coffin is, however, of the best workmanship, showing her value to her family and her status.



AFTERLIFE

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That the ancient Egyptians believed in a life after death is so obvious a truism that it hardly needs stating. Throughout virtually all of the dynastic period, the strongest, most recurring theme regarding death, as preserved in the monuments of ancient Egypt, was its transitory nature—a state that could be overcome by means of the appropriate stratagems, both material and ritualistic, so that the deceased would enter into a new and eternal existence. From their lofty vantage point, the beatified and contented deceased (*Akhu*) were in a position to affect the material world. However, the discontented or wronged deceased could become peevish, even dangerous, and needed to be placated with funerary offerings or with written (and probably oral) reminders that their behavior was unjustified. In a Late New Kingdom papyrus now in Leiden we read a letter from a widower to his deceased wife, named Ankhiry. He wishes to remarry, but his dead wife's spirit (*Akh*) is causing trouble of an unspecified type. He points out to her that he had been very solicitous during her lifetime by not taking another wife, providing the best of care when she fell ill and the finest wrappings for her burial. It was not his fault that he was out of town on royal business when she died.

It is also widely recognized that, over Egypt's long history, what an individual Egyptian expected to encounter after death changed dramatically. Although the earliest cemeteries in Egypt date from the period before writing was invented, we can assume from the fact that the dead were interred with possessions such as food and drink, that the men and women of this time believed in some type of post-mortem existence which required ongoing sustenance. The remains of funerary meals in cemeteries may relate either to the celebration of the funeral or to an ongoing practice of feeding the dead. Whether the dead of this period were believed to possess any continued existence outside the tomb is uncertain; however, the practice of locating cemeteries

well away from local villages suggests that the deceased were not felt to be trustworthy neighbors. It is interesting to note that among the predynastic burials, those of women and children are often better provisioned than those of males—particularly in certain types of burial goods, such as amulets (RC 2136, 1089), which occur only rarely in the burials of men.

With the beginning of the dynastic period in Egypt and the establishment of a stable and highly stratified society, it seems that afterlife expectations depended upon one's social position. Furthermore, women's expectations were modeled upon those of males of their own social class. Judging from the fact

that the tombs of Old Kingdom rulers, and those of some of their most important female relatives, were constructed in the form of pyramids, while those of the nobility and lesser officialdom (not to mention less important members of the king's own family) were in mastaba



Ptolemaic Mask

Gilded cartonnage

H: 40 cm

Ptolemaic Period

RC 101

Gold was associated with the sun god, who rose daily from the Underworld. Solid gold was obviously very expensive, so masks were often made of linen soaked with plaster and then gilded. This mask is protected by images of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys.

form, it is likely that not only their level of prosperity in the afterlife, but the nature of their afterlives were quite different.

Private individuals, even those belonging to the highest nobility, do not appear to have aimed as high (quite literally) as the king and his major wives. Inscriptions in the mastaba tomb of the Princess Nisedjerkaï request that “she be buried in the necropolis of the West after a good old age and travel upon the beautiful ways, upon which an honored one travels well”—boons desired by both Egyptian men and women of the period. It is interesting to note that, while the *Pyramid Texts* make it clear that the goals of the king (and his queens) include joining the gods in the East of the sky and the circumpolar stars in the North, those of his subjects are all connected with the West. Even in death, separation of the highest elite is preserved.

Another indication of the nature of the hereafter that appears for the first time near the end of the Old Kingdom is the identification of the non-royal dead with the god Osiris, Lord of the Dead. Women also became an “Osiris” after they died, a circumstance which led to their being ministered to by their “wife” Isis. To effect this magical transformation, several criteria had to be satisfied. First, steps had to be taken to preserve their remains in such a fashion that their spirit (*Ba*) would recognize them, and they would have the means to travel and rejoin their surviving personality (*Ka*), which had departed from the body at the moment of death. Once these spiritual entities had been accessed, and the appropriate rituals performed, the deceased attained a state of veneration (*Akh*), as one among the honored dead who had the power to influence the living. Yet even though the deceased had attained this status of *Akh*-hood, they still needed to be nourished so that they could continue to exist for eternity. To this end the deceased herself (and her survivors) arranged for the maintenance of a funerary cult, which provided continual sustenance (in the form of food and drink offerings), purifications (burning incense), and prayers to enable the deceased not merely to exist but to flourish in the afterlife (RC 1732).

The center of these activities was, of course, the tomb. The Egyptian tomb had two basic components: the chapel, where the offering rituals were carried out; and burial chambers, which contained the physical

remains. In decorated tomb chapels belonging to male officials, their wives were also depicted; however, the husbands of women who possessed their own tombs—such as Queen Meres’ankh III (a wife of King Khafre) or Watethathor (a daughter of King Teti, who was married to the Vizier Mereruka)—never appear in the tombs of their wives. This phenomenon may be explained by the necessity for depicting the female tomb owner in the dominant position in the tomb (such as receiving offerings in the main chapel). The conventions of Egyptian art discouraged the subordination of a male to his female partner. Burial chambers of the Old Kingdom were usually reserved for a single occupant—hence the multiple vertical shafts present in individual mastaba tombs, where the body was further protected by a wooden coffin, placed within a rectangular stone sarcophagus. A depression in the floor of the burial chamber contained the canopic chest, a square vessel used to house the internal organs removed during mummification (RC 2251).

From the Middle Kingdom on, however, burial chambers frequently accommodated the burials of a couple, additional members of the family, and occasionally those of the family retainers. Most of our information for non-royal burial practices of this period comes from provincial cemeteries, where rock cut (or “cliff”) tombs were the norm. The painted wooden coffin of the Lady Mesehti (RC 2822) probably came from such a tomb at the site of Asyut in Middle Egypt. The coffin’s form, and its decoration and texts which closely parallel those of men buried at the same site, demonstrate that she expected to enjoy the same status as her male contemporaries: a fine burial in the local necropolis and protection by (and association with) gods such as Osiris, Anubis, Re, Shu, and Tefnut. By the Middle Kingdom, even mid-level officials could expect to be associated with the gods after death (a privilege accorded only the king in the Old Kingdom) and could arrange for the *Coffin Texts* to be inscribed in their coffin interiors. The same practice was accorded females, with appropriate textual alterations to reflect the change in gender. As in the Old Kingdom, there is little, if any, difference between coffins executed for men and women. The earliest funerary figurines called *ushabtis* (RC 523), which make their first appearance



ancestor bust, RC 242

at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, are likewise undifferentiated on the basis of the owner's gender.

This “unisex” approach to funerary equipment begins to change in the New Kingdom, becoming even more pronounced in the Ramesside Period, though the general afterlife expectations continued to remain the same as those of their male contemporaries. From the 18th Dynasty on there was a general tendency towards greater elaboration of the funerary “kit” at the expense of “daily life” contributions to the burial assemblage. Ushabtis increase in number and quality of execution; coffin decoration becomes increasingly dense; canopic jars acquire lids in the form of the protecting “sons of Horus” (RC 2251); and so forth. With this increase in elaboration came increasing differentiation based on gender. Thus female coffins (RC 487, 2071) and funerary masks of the New Kingdom and later exhibit skin colors, hand positions, and wigs and headdresses (as opposed to headcloths) that distinguish them from their male equivalents. Women's ushabtis (RC 523) are similarly differentiated. In the case of the “daily life” style of the innermost lids of the 19th Dynasty coffins, the flowing garments worn by women are easily distinguished from the male kilts.

However, with respect to the funerary texts of the New Kingdom and later, the principle of equal afterlife expectations remains in force. The best known religious text of the New Kingdom, *The Book of the Dead*, was inscribed on often profusely illustrated papyri and placed in the burial chamber of its owner. While the depiction of the deceased varies according to his or her gender, the types of spells deemed appropriate for males and females do not. Similarly, the funerary stelae of the times feature both men and women as the honorific focus (RC 1746).

In later periods of its history, Egypt came under the influence and eventual rule of foreign powers: the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The Egyptian attitude towards death began to change. The British Museum preserves the stela of Taiemhotep, the wife of a priest of Ptah at Memphis, who died in childbirth at the end of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt. Her funerary monument, more than any other contemporary document, demonstrates a changing attitude towards death—not as a transitory state leading inevitably (assuming the necessary rituals were carried out) towards a glorified (or at least pleasant, given her relatively high social status) eternal existence—but as “a land of sleep, wherein the inhabitants sleep in mummiform (RC 22). They awake not to see their brothers . . . their fathers or their mothers and their hearts forget their wives and children . . . As for death, ‘Come!’ is his name. All those whom he summons to him come to him at once, though their hearts are afraid . . .” Her inscription ends with a heart-wrenching plea: “O you who come to this graveyard, Place incense on the flame for me and water at every feast of the West.”

This sad and fearful view of death has been explained by scholars as applying to Egyptians of all periods who suffered an untimely or premature death. After all, 2,000 years earlier, Princess Nisedjerkai had asked for burial in the West following a “good old age.” Yet it is interesting that not before this time such an expression is commemorated in stone, thus making permanent the feelings of sadness and loss that accompany any death of a loved one, regardless of the inducements presented by the life to come. ♀

Funerary Stela

Painted limestone

H: 41 cm

First Intermediate Period
(said to be from Sakkarā)

RC 1732

A husband, wife, and at least two of their children are depicted on this relief stela. Unfortunately, most of the inscription is too damaged to read. The position of the wife, embracing her husband, is typical of the supportive role in representations. The couple's daughter can be seen clinging to her mother's skirt, while the son stands in front.





Husband and Wife Funerary Relief

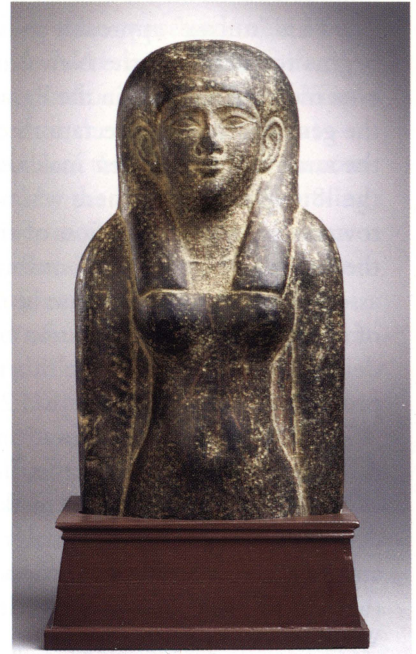
Flint occluded limestone
H: 48.2 cm
First Intermediate Period
RC 2069

The man and wife in this relief have unusually equal status in this stela, and the position of the figures is also rare. The full inscription, not shown, identifies the woman as "Senet, the wife whom he loves." The poor quality implies this relief was unfinished, though the inscription is complete.

Figure of a Lady

Gray green schist
H: 23.5
Ptolemaic Period
(probably from Karnak)
RC 1603

Figures such as that of this lady were often created as votive figures to be placed in the temple after the person's death. The inscription on the back plinth is an offering formula to the god Amun of Karnak. Her name, which would have been low on the plinth, has not survived.



Stela of Several Ladies

Limestone
H: 45.1 cm
19th Dynasty
RC 1746

The top register of this stela is dedicated to the woman on the right, the Mistress of the House Tawy, with her unnamed daughter to the left. The lower register would normally include offering formulae for this woman, but instead displays another woman who receives offerings from her son, Ramose, and an unnamed daughter.



Servant Model

Wood, gesso, and paint
H: 21.8 cm
First Intermediate Period
(from Akhmim)
RC 482

Servants were thought to be needed in the afterlife, so representations of servants were taken into the tomb. As only women processed grain, this servant, who is grinding grain in a saddle quern, would have been very necessary. Her double-strapped white dress is edged with red paint.



Funerary Boat

Wood, gesso, and pigment

L: 36.1

Middle Kingdom

(from Meir)

RC 480

Funerary boats could serve several purposes in the afterlife. The most common was simple transportation. This boat was intended to take the deceased to Abydos, a town associated with resurrection. The wife of the deceased can be seen next to the coffin, in her role as mourner, and representative of the protective goddess Isis.



Ushabti of a Mistress of the House

Painted wood

H: 20.1 cm

19th Dynasty or later

RC 523

This ushabti, or answering figure, was created to serve a Nebt-Pr, or Mistress of the House named Tay-hmt. The figure holds tools in the crossed hands.



Female Head

Fine limestone

H: 9 cm

18th-19th Dynasty

RC 1811

Canopic jars were intended to hold the organs of the deceased in the tomb. This figure was probably a stopper for the canopic jar of a woman, in whose image the stoppers were carved. The artistry of the carving is impressive; the woman represented was probably of very high station in life.

Wesekh Collar

Faience

L: 54.5 cm

26th Dynasty or later

RC 1773

This hawk-headed broad collar would be placed over the chest of the mummy. Collars of this type had procreative properties, and so were worn in life as well as death.

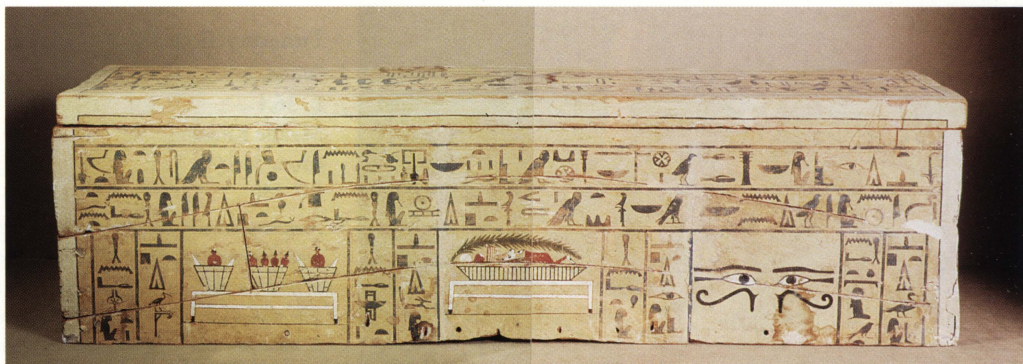


Coffin of Mesehti

Wood, gesso, and paint
L: 179 cm
Middle Kingdom
(probably from Asyut)
RC 2822

The eyes on the side of this coffin were intended

to enable the Lady Mesehti to see the sunrise in the east. The outside of this coffin is decorated with representations of offerings, including meat, breads, and bottles of beer. The overall design makes it possible to conclude that this coffin is from Asyut. The west panel is currently missing, but may be in the Brooklyn Museum collection.



Canopic Jar and Lid

Banded calcite
H: 37.5 cm
26th Dynasty
(from Sakkara)
RC 2251

Part of a set of four canopic jars created for a priest named Psamtik, this jar is inscribed as being protected by the goddess Neith. In her earliest incarnation, a goddess of war in Lower Egypt, she became one of the protectresses of the tomb, together with her sisters Isis, Nephthys, and Selket.



Roman Mask

Painted plaster
H: 19 cm
Roman Period
RC 2231

This mask of a woman was probably kept in either the household or as part of a funerary monument. Romans, like Egyptians, practiced a form of ancestor worship.

This mask has both Roman and Egyptian features, showing a fusion of the two cultures.



False Door of Henut

Limestone
H: 77.5 cm
Late 6th Dynasty
RC 1735

This false door was meant for the tomb of the Lady Henut, pictured in the center seated before a table of offerings. The role of the false door was to list the name and title of the tomb owner, and allow the Ka to receive offerings. The quality of the inscription shows that this door was made at the very end of the Old Kingdom, close to the First Intermediate Period.

Tyet Amulets

Wood; faience

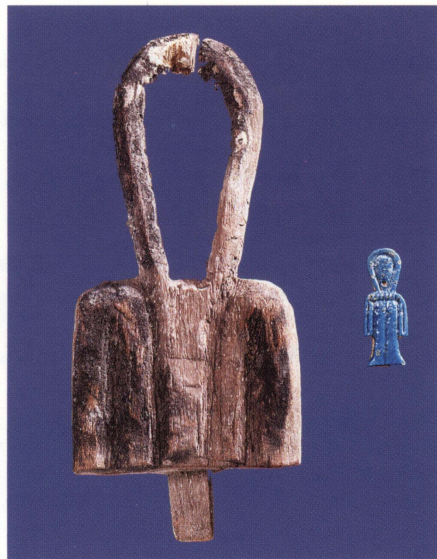
L: 12 cm; L: 2 cm

Late Period; 26th Dynasty

RC 577; RC 43

The largest of these Tyet knots is an architectural element, possibly from a piece of furniture, as evidenced by the dowel on the bottom. The smaller is of faience and pierced to be worn as jewelry. The

Tyet knot was a favorite fetish of the goddess Isis. Knots were magical to the ancient Egyptians.

**Funerary Cone**

Ceramic

H: 9.5 cm

New Kingdom

(probably from Thebes)

RC 505

Funerary cones were used to decorate the door frames of tombs in Thebes of the New Kingdom. This cone is from the tomb of the wife of the Third Prophet of Amun.

Coffin Mask of a Woman

Painted wood

H: 24.3 cm

19th Dynasty

RC 487

The features of this "Westerner," as Egyptians called those who were in the next world, are preserved in this fragment from an anthropoid coffin. A lotus blossom is draped across her head, symbolizing regeneration.

**Mummy of a Child**

Linen, cartonnage

L: 95 cm

Greco-Roman Period

RC 22

While children were highly valued in Egypt, it is rare to see so rich a burial for a child. This child was between four and six years old when she died. The black material on the gilt mask is not dirt; it is the perfume that the mother anointed her child with as one of the last acts before the tomb was sealed forever.

FOOTNOTES: THE ROSICRUCIANS AND ANCIENT EGYPT

¹ The phrase "heretic king" was popularized by Donald Redford in his study *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

² H. Spencer Lewis, "A Visit to a Mystery School," *Rosicrucian Digest*, May 1935, p. 133; *The Symbolic Prophecy of the Great Pyramid* (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1936), pp. 163-180.

³ H. Spencer Lewis, *Symbolic Prophecy*, pp. 61-62; "A Visit to a Mystery School," *Rosicrucian Digest*, May 1935, pp. 134-136.

⁴ H. Spencer Lewis, "A Visit to a Mystery School," *Rosicrucian Digest*, May 1935, pp. 133-135.

⁵ *History of the Rosicrucian Order*, (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1963), p. 2.

⁶ For the reference to Akhenaten as a Rosicrucian "Grand Master," see P.E. Boggia, "El-Amarna's Ever Unfolding Rose," *Rosicrucian Digest*, September 1941, p. 308. See also H. Spencer Lewis' reference to Akhenaten as "our venerated Rosicrucian Grand Master" in his essay describing a Rosicrucian trip to Egypt, *Rosicrucian Digest*, July 1937, p. 224.

⁷ H. Spencer Lewis, "The Authentic and Complete History of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis," *The American Rosae Crucis*, vol. I (January 1916), p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹ For interpretations of Akhenaten's reign that are critical of the Amarna pharaoh, see Redford, *op. cit.*, and Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 262-287.

¹⁰ Lewis quoted from the works of both Breasted and Weigall in the article cited in footnote 7, p. 8, p. 10. See James Breasted, *A History of Egypt* (New York: Bantam, 1967), p. 331, and Arthur Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923), p. 101, for the source of each quotation.

¹¹ Weigall, pp. 102-128.

¹² Lewis, *Symbolic Prophecy of the Great Pyramid*, pp. 139-140.

¹³ For a discussion of Adoptionist theology see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 175-176.

¹⁴ G.R.S. Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes: Studies in Hellenistic Theosophy and Gnosis* (Kila, Montana: Kessinger Publishing reprint, 1992), 3 vols.

¹⁵ For an introduction to Hermetic thought see Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹⁶ Although he did not acknowledge Mead as the source, Lewis quoted at length from Mead's translation of the Poemander in his discussion of Hermes Trismegistus. Compare Lewis' *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers* (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1929), p. 69 with Mead, *Thrice Greatest Hermes*, vol. 2: Sermons, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷ Max Guilmo, *The Initiatory Process in Ancient Egypt* (San Jose: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, 1978), pp. 1-28.

¹⁸ R.T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 48-50.

¹⁹ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 87-125; for the question of meaning see especially pp. 99-110.

²⁰ For a discussion of Romantic thought and poetry see the article by Kurt Weinberg in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), s.v. "Romanticism," pp. 717-722.

²¹ "The Emperor's Monthly Message," *The Mystic Triangle*, May 1929, p. 99.

²² Sylvia Webb, "Psychometry As An Aid to Archeology," *Rosicrucian Digest*, August 1984, pp. 24-28. "The concept that someone could be sensitive to emanations from an inanimate object," argues Webb, "goes back hundreds of years"; in support of her argument she cites authors ranging from Democritus to Paracelsus and Franz Anton Mesmer.

²³ *The Triangle* (San Francisco: Rosicrucian Order, AMORC), January 24, 1921, pp. 3-4; "What Rosicrucians are Doing," *Rosicrucian Forum*, vol. 5 (February 1935), p. 116; letter from the Egypt Exploration Society to H. Spencer Lewis, 15 August 1922, noting the shipment of artifacts to the Rosicrucian Order "by a very direct route from Tell el-Amarna, via Alexandria, via London." A copy of this letter is preserved in the files of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

²⁴ H. Spencer Lewis to Thomas Whittemore, 3 October 1921. A copy of the letter is preserved in the files of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum.

²⁵ Marie Buckman to H. Spencer Lewis, 7 September 1921.

²⁶ Of particular interest are the following exchanges of letters between Marie Buckman (secretary of the American branch of the Egypt Exploration Society in the 1920s and early 1930s) and Mary Charlton Jonas (secretary of the English branch): Buckman to Jonas, 19 August 1921; Jonas to Buckman, 23 September 1921; Buckman to Jonas, 1 January 1931; Buckman to Jonas, 2 April 1931; Buckman to Jonas, 27 April 1932. Also noteworthy is Buckman's letter of 6 April 1922 to members of the Rosicrucian Order and the Egypt Exploration Society soliciting donations for the 1922 excavation season at Amarna. All these letters are on file at the archives of the Egypt Exploration Society in London; copies of these letters have recently been filed at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum in San Jose. I thank Dr. Patricia Spencer, secretary of the Egypt Exploration Society, for her assistance in making the London archives available to me.



MAP OF ANCIENT EGYPT



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