

## Deities of Agriculture in Ancient Egypt

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### Abstract

Agriculture was the foundation of ancient Egypt; it helped the ancient Egyptians to turn dry lands into rich fields after the inundation of the Nile.

The ancient Egyptian paid a great importance to the agriculture due to two reasons; one of them was to afford his needs from food, drink, and clothes. The second was religious purposes, as he was farming to present different kind of offerings to the deities to protect and help him. Scenes of agriculture life started to be represented for the first time during the Old Kingdom and continued during the Middle Kingdom. During the New Kingdom they began to represent some deities accompanied the agricultural scenes in order to celebrate and protect the harvest, in addition to ensure plenty and good harvest in the future.

The aim of this study is to highlight the deities of agriculture whether appeared in the agriculture life scenes or not and to investigate the main roles which were played by these deities in the agriculture life especially those who appeared in its scenes and the reason of that. This study is depending on the descriptive and analytical methodology to achieve its aims.

The result of this study reveals that the ancient Egyptians worshiped a huge number of Egyptian deities, but only three deities appeared accompanied the agriculture life scenes during the New Kingdom, these deities are "Amūn" king of the deities and deity of fertility in ancient Egypt, "Rennutet" deity of the harvest and "Nepri" deity of the grain. Maybe this is because of the increase of their cult especially during that time.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Deities, Ancient Egypt, Religious, The Nile, Scenes, Offerings, Harvest.

### Introduction

Egyptian agriculture has a long history. It dates back to the dawn of civilization and remnants exist in a continuous 6000 year record (Allen, 1997). The artistic genius engendered by the Egyptian craftsmen to the superb conditions of many burial chambers, and the dry climate made it possible to reconstruct the history of the ancient Egyptian agriculture (Ikram, 2009).

The land of Egypt has played an important role in the history of civilization and this is due to the wealth which yearly accrues to the country from the produce of the soil (Brier and Hobbs, 2008). The results which the agriculturists of the Nile Valley have obtained, they owe however, not to any special skill or cleverness on their part, but to the inexhaustible fertility of the land (Erman, 1894).

The successful practice of agriculture was at all periods closely linked with the annual inundation and the seasons (Wilkinson, 2008). The ancient Egyptian agricultural year was divided into three seasons each one consists of four months (Mackenzie, 2014).

The first of these seasons was known as *zht*  or the flooding season (Rossini, 1992). After the flood receded, it left behind a layer of silt that spared farmers any extensive soil preparation (Shaw and Nicholson, 2008). The effectively fertilized the soil with new silts and washed away damaging salts, fertilizers and fallowing were generally unnecessary (Goodison and Morris, 1999). The land was then ready for planting and this was known as *pri*  or the planting season (Wetterstorm and Muray, 2001). Lastly, the harvest season known as *šmw*  (خطاب، ١٩٨٥). The first fruit of each harvest were reserved for the local deities and the temples (Jams, 2005). Min, popular throughout Egypt, was offered praise for each crop drawn from the

earth (Montet, 1980). Altars were sometimes erected to provide adequate ceremony, and granary officials, priests, or government representatives, were on hand for all harvests; the measured the crops for tax assessments (Smith, 1995). These celebrations were attended by entire districts, and the people gave thanks to the Nile deity Hapy and other agricultural deities such as Osiris deity of the agriculture, Rennutet deity of the harvest and Nepri her son deity of the grain (عبيد و عمر، ١٩٩٧).

### **Deities of agriculture that did not appear in the agriculture life scenes:**

Religion was a highly important aspect of the daily life in ancient Egypt. Many of the Egyptians' religious observances were centered on their observation of the environment, the Nile and agriculture (جيمز، ١٩٩٧). They used religion to explain natural phenomena, such as the cyclical flooding of the Nile and agricultural yields. As a result of that they began to give their deities a great role in the agriculture life (Hornung, 1996), but despite that some of them did not appeared in the agriculture life scenes such as Hapy, Osiris, Min and Isis (Marwan, 1989).

### **Hapy (Hapy) deity of the flood**

In fact, the ancient Egyptians never made the Nile a deity, though they identified its various effects with different deities. In this way they attributed to Hapy, a divinity associated with the concept of abundance, the phenomenon of flooding (محمد، ٢٠٠٤), and the energy of the waters which rejuvenated and fertilized the earth was linked to the myth of resurrection of Osiris (Siliotti, 2008).

The ancient Egyptians personified the inundation with the creation of Hapy who lived in the caverns of the cataract of the Nile, presided over by Khunum, and the annual flood was called "The arrival of Hapy" and was celebrated with great festivals and River processions (Hart, 2005). Every year Egyptian farmers would travel to his shrine at Elephantine and Aswan to pray for an adequate flood and a fresh supply of silt (Armour, 2001).

The ancient Egyptians depicted Hapy in unusual form combined between male and female features (fig.1), with a large belly and pendulous breasts, wearing a loincloth, ceremonial false beard and headdress formed of aquatic plants as the representation of the fertility of the Nile (Bonnet, 2000).

As the ancient Egyptian divided their country into two parts north and south, they divided the Nile into the deity of the Nile of the north and the deity of the Nile of the south (Wiedemann, 1897). The deity of the north Nile has a cluster of papyrus plants, while the deity of the south Nile bears upon his head a cluster of lotus plants (fig.1). When the two forms of Hapy are indicated in a single figure, the deity holds in his hand the two plants papyrus and lotus or two vases from which he was believed to pour out the two Niles (Budge, 1904). From the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards there were occasionally reliefs portraying two fecundity figures of Hapy, each holding and tying in a knot the long stem of the two plants lotus and papyrus round representing the union between Upper and Lower Egypt (Lurker, 1980).

Although the flood was the source of the country's prosperity, no temples or sanctuaries, were built specifically in honor of Hapy, but his statues-including some where the pharaoh himself is carved as the deity-and reliefs were included in the temples of other deities (Moret, 1927).

**Fig. 1:** Hapy deity of Upper and Lower Egypt. Temple of Ramses II at Abu-Simbel, New Kingdom.



After: Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*, 517.

**Osiris**  (*Wsir*) **deity of the grain**

Osiris was the greatest deity of the ancient Egyptians. In antiquity he was thought to have been a human ruler, teaching man the arts of civilization and agriculture. He introduced vine and corn-growing and was a symbol of fertility (Hunt, 1998). The role of the deity Osiris in agriculture wasn't a primal one but came naturally through the association of the motif of the murdered Osiris emerging as the dominate divine force in the Underworld and the cycle of seedtime and harvest (نور الدين، ٢٠١٠).

The famous Osiris myth is believed in its original form to have been devised to spread an understanding of agriculture throughout the land, explained in terms of the death and rebirth of the grain-deity Osiris (Kamil, 1984). The earliest reference to Osiris and grain occurs in the Dramatic Ramesseum papyrus dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in which Osiris was the barely which was beaten by the deity Set in the form of the ass (Darby, 1977). From other Middle Kingdom texts, the identification of Osiris with barely extends to analogizing him with the grain-deity Nepri (Budge, 1911).

The barely was planted here with a similar motive and result (Davies and Gardiner, 1973). Scharff has attempted to refer to a celebrated example in the tomb of Tutankhamun (Scharff, 1947). Carter described it as comprising a wooden frame molded in the form of Osiris, hollowed out lined with linen winding sheets and bandaged as a mummy (Marwan, 1989).

The earliest example from the New Kingdom, according to Scharff, is one which was found by Daressy in the tomb of *Msi-hr-pri* in the Valley of the Kings. Here the grain-Osiris was placed on a wooden stand in the shape of a bier which was covered with a reed mat; this in turn bore the linen cloth where on the "Osiris-figure" of the earth was laid (Daressy, 1938).

The motif of the continual cycle of crops and vegetation accounts for the color of the pigments used to represent the flesh of Osiris. His face and hands can be painted black to evoke the Nile silt from which the barely and emmer emerge; his flesh can appear green, the color of living vegetation and of the fields before the summer ripening of the crop (Marwan, 1989) (fig.2). One of the most important symbols which associated with Osiris, was the *djed* pillar  *dd* which entered the Osiris myth as the tree containing his coffin and was also connected with important festivals in his honor. The word *djed* meant "stability" (Armour, 2001).

**Osiris**  "*Wsir*" **deity of water**

Osiris was considered to be the deity of farming and greenery, and then became the deity of resurrection which related to the Nile flooding (Budge, 1911). In his aspect as a water-deity, Osiris was the personification of the falling Nile, or the Nile in winter, but he was nevertheless, the cause of the fertility of Egypt, which was personified by his wife Isis (Budge, 1911), who

helped him to teach his people the art of making agricultural implements and controlling the water of the Nile (Kamil, 1984).

Fig. 2: Osiris, his flesh is green. Tomb of Menna, TT 69 at Sh. Abd El-Qurna, Thutmosis IV to Amenhotep III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.



After: [https://osirisnet.net/dieux/osiris/e\\_osiris\\_01.htm](https://osirisnet.net/dieux/osiris/e_osiris_01.htm). Last accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

### **Min** "Min" deity of fertility

Min was one of the oldest of the Egyptian deities in ancient Egypt (Wenke, 2001). He was the ithyphallic deity (Gardiner, 1957), who causes the soil to be fertile (Erman, 1894). Eventually he became a vegetation deity, and one brief myth from the 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty described his curious activity of bringing rain to the desert (Armour, 2001). Both as vegetation and as bringer of rain to barren land, he was fulfilling his duties as deity of fertility (Marwan, 1989). Min was one of the few Egyptian deities whose iconography can be traced into the Pre-dynastic period. He was represented as a man; his skin and beard are painted black, the color of the Nile silt from which crops grew (Wenke, 2001). The color was therefore a symbol of life and fertility (Strudwick, 2007). He is represented standing holding a huge phallus in his left hand, in his right hand a whip or royal flagellum, two high plums rise from a low crown from which hangs a ribbon (Budge, 1934).

The most distinctive feature of Min is his phallus projecting out a right angle to his body, the symbol par excellence of the fertility deity (Hart, 2005) (fig.3). He is depicted beside a stylized lettuce, a power aphrodisiac, the effects of which are always obvious (لوركر، ٢٠٠٠).

The chief centers of his worship were at Coptos, the 5<sup>th</sup> province of Upper Egypt, Akhmim and in the Eastern desert (Hart, 2005). Min's role as an agricultural deity ensuring the fecundity of the crops is brought to the fore by the ritual of the king cutting a sheaf of emmer wheat. This is shown in the festival of Min on the second pylon of the Ramessum, and the second court of the temple of Medinat Habu, built by Ramesses III (Marwan, 1989). In this festival the king offered the deity the first ear of corn from the beginning of the harvest (Strudwick, 2007).

According to Brugsch this festival of Min was considered also a harvest festival (Brugsch, 1883) connected largely with the harvest festival of Rennutet deity of the harvest in ancient Egypt which was celebrated in the first month of the summer season, the first day of the birth of her son Nepri, deity of the grain in ancient Egypt (Sethe, 1919). During this festival, Min as a deity of

fertility was titled by  *k3-mwt.f* "The bull of his mother" (Otto, 1891). This title was also given to Nepri as a deity of harvest, so Min was deity of both fertility and harvest in ancient Egypt (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

Fig. 3: Bronze figurine of Min. Late Period, Egyptian Museum.



After: Wilkinson, *The complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 115.

As a deity of fertility and harvest, kings would offer the first fruits of harvest to him to ensure plentiful harvest, with records of offerings of the first stems of sprouts of wheat being offered during the Ptolemaic Period (Leibovitch, 1953). The ancient Egyptians used to put statues of Min in the fields, in order to protect and ensure the fertility of the land and the good harvest (Ogdon, 1985-6).

*Isis*  (3st) *deity of the flood*

Isis is well attested in the early sources and eventually became the best known of all Egyptian deities (Reford, 2001). She was the oldest of the old, the deity from whom all becoming a rose and the great lady-mistress of the two lands of Egypt who revived the Nile every year (Goodison and Morris, 1999). Year by year the Nile performed the miracle of inundation. If the Nile was sluggish. It was popularly believed that during the night, Isis shed tears and that as she sorrowed the Nile began rising. The river that seemed dead as Osiris was reborn as the living water (Witt, 1997).

Isis is represented anthropomorphically in the form of a woman wearing a long sheath dress and crowned with either the hieroglyphic 'throne' sign which represents her name or beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and most commonly in the later Dynastic Periods, with the horns and solar disk which she appropriated from Hathor (fig.4). The attributes she frequently holds, the sistrum rattle and menat necklace, were also taken from Hathor, but Isis often holds only the generic *ꜥnh* sign  and papyrus staff commonly depicted with other deities (Wilkinson, 2003).

The symbol of Isis in the heaven was the star *sepedt*, which was greatly beloved because its appearance marked not only the beginning of a new year, but also announced the advance of the inundation of the Nile which belokened renewed wealth and prosperity of the country (Budge, 1911). Already in the Pyramid Texts she was known by the great Isis. The inundation festival was celebrated on the banks of the Nile by priests of Isis with rites that must have been existed even in the Pre-historic days (Armour, 2001).

Isis cult began in the Delta, but as the Osirian Mythology developed, she became his wife. Isis is supposed to have civilized Egypt with her husband, teaching agricultural techniques to people (Bunson, 1991), so she was titled by the deity of cultivated lands and fields (Marwan, 1989).

Fig. 4: Bronze statue shows Isis suckling her son Horus. Late period, Berlin Museum.



After: Georges Posener, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (London, 1962), 24.

### **Deities of agriculture that appeared in the agriculture life scenes:**

In fact, the daily life scenes appeared for the first time from the Old Kingdom and continued during the Middle Kingdom especially the scenes of the agricultural activities which were very common during that time and they were considered to be from the most beautiful and attractive scenes (جيمز، ١٩٩٥). Later on, during the New Kingdom they began to represent some deities accompanied the agricultural scenes such as Amūn, Nepri and Rennutet in order to protect and celebrate the harvest on the walls. The subjects which were commonly used in these scenes were the products of the main crops such as corn, grain and grapes, which the ancient Egyptians used them to make bread and wine (Darby, Ghalioungui, and Grivetti, 1977).

### **Amūn "Imn" deity of fertility**

In fact, Amūn was considered to be one of the most important deities in the Egyptian pantheon. He was one of the members of the Ogdoad of Hermopolis who ruled the endless dark waters of chaos before the world was created (Wetterstorm and Muray, 1922). His temple at Karnak is the best surviving religious complex of the New Kingdom (Shaw and Necholson, 2002).

Amūn represented in different forms in ancient Egypt (Budge, 1904), but in the agriculture scenes he was represented in a human shape wearing a cap surmounted by two tall plumes holding in one hand the scepter *w3s*  and in the other the symbol of life "*nh*" (Wilkinson, 2008) (fig.5).

The cult of Amūn was known at an early date in the Pyramid Texts of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Up to the time of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Amūn was a deity of no more than local importance, but as soon as the princes of Thebes had conquered their rival claimants to the sovereignty of Egypt and had succeeded their city a new capital of the country their deity Amūn became a prominent deity in Upper Egypt, and was titled by "king of the deities" (Hart, 2005) and later on during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty he attained the position of supreme state deity (Budge, 1904).

Concerning the relation between Amūn and other deities it was believed that Amūn was a deity of fertility, and he titled by  *k3-mwt.f* which means (The bull of his mother) (Tobin, 2005). This title suggests both that the deity was self-engendered- meaning that he begot himself with his mother the cow personified the deity of the sky and of creation and conveys the sexual energy of the bull, which for the Egyptians was a symbol of strength and fertility (Wilkinson, 2008). In this ithyphallic form Amūn was related to the fertility Min who helps the fields to grow well in order to ensure the good harvest and is sometimes he was called Amūn-Min (نور الدين، ٢٠١٠). Here Amūn is represented as a man; his skin and beard are painted black symbol of life and fertility. He is represented standing holding a huge phallus in his left hand and in his

right hand a whip or royal flagellum, while upon his head he is wearing two high plums rise from a low crown (fig.6). As a deity of fertility and harvest, kings would offer the first fruits of harvest to Amūn to ensure plentiful harvest, with records of offerings (Wilkinson, 2003).

Fig. 5: Amūn in a human form. The Great Harris papyrus, 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, British Museum.



After: Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 13.

Fig.6: Amūn depicted both his normal anthropomorphic form (in the right), and in the ithyphallic Amūn-Min (in the left). Temple of Seti I at Abydos. 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.



After: Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses in Ancient Egypt*, 93.

**Nepri**  **Npri deity of the grain**

Deity of grain and form of Osiris in ancient Egypt (Broekhuis, 1971). He was the only possibility which would permit identification of the child with Horus is its occasional connection with the ithyphallic deity Min, who is also a deity of fertility and harvest (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

In fact the word Nepri in the Ancient Egyptian language means "Grain" (عرمان، ٢٠٠٩) and in the same time is the name of the deity who embodies it. As the result of that he became the deity of grain (السيد، ٢٠٠٣). There were short forms to write the word *Npr*  such as *npi* , which appeared at the end of the Old Kingdom, and *pi* which appeared during the New Kingdom at the time of Thutmosis III and Amenhotep II without n"  " (عرمان، ٢٠٠٩).

There are different forms for Nepri but in the agriculture scenes he is represented in the form of a child suckling from his mother Rennutet during the celebration of the harvest festival (fig.7) (Leibovitch, 1953). Here Rennutet played her role as the deity of the harvest to protect and take care of the crop which is represented in the form of Nepri the deity of grain in ancient Egypt (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

Beside his representation as a child, he is represented since the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the form of a person similar to what generally admitted being a Nile deity such as in the procession of deities and allegorical figures represented in a limestone fragment which once belonged to the causeway of Saḥure (Leibovitch, 1953).

Nepri is represented in the form of the Nile deity with the shape of a fat and flabby bellies man, which is the same appearance of some other deities that personifies different natural or

geographical manifestations as a symbol of welfare and growth; may be the full breast refers to that he carries the double traits of masculinity and femininity, i.e. fertility and vegetation growth. On this view, Nepri's body was covered with wheat (Marwan, 1989).

Fig. 7: A beaded necklace made out of gold representing Rennutet suckling the king in the form of Nepri. Tutankhamun, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom. Egyptian Museum.



نقلا عن السيد، الحصاد في مصر القديمة، لوحة ١٠٩

A cult center of the deity is known to have been constructed by Amenemhet III and IV in the south west of Fayoum, and it was used also as a cult center for Rennutet and Sobek (Wilkinson, 2008). Here it is concluded that the cult centers of Rennutet and Nepri were the same because both of them were represented as a deity of harvest, and the harvest festival of Rennutet was celebrated in the first day of the harvest season and this was the day in which Nepri was born (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

There are two festivals that were related to Nepri. One of them was celebrated in the first month of the winter season which is the time of preparing the land for agriculture. As a result of that he was titled by  $\overline{\text{nk nb tpy rnpt Npri}}$  *ink nb tpy rnpt Npri*, which means "I'm the master of the first year, Nepri" (الرشيدى، ١٩٩٨). The second festival was named by "The harvest festival". It was celebrated in the first day of the harvest season, the birthday of Nepri (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

Concerning the relation between Nepri and other deities, it was said that Nepri was often associated with his mother the cobra deity Rennutet who was also a deity of harvest and he took the title of  $\overline{\text{k3 mwt.f}}$  *k3 mwt.f* which means "the bull of his mother" who gives the crops the fertility and vegetation (Hart, 2005). They were represented together in the agriculture scenes, statues and a famous beaded necklace (fig.7) considered to be from the rare objects in the Egyptian Museum which dates back to the time of the king Tutankhamun, representing Rennutet with a head and two hands of a woman, while the rest of the body is in the form of a cobra, suckling the king as a child in the form of Nepri (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

The harvest was so dependent upon the yearly flooding of the Nile, so the inundation deity Hapy was said to be "Lord of Nepri", but Nepri was honored in his own right as an important deity of the harvest and prosperity (Wilkinson, 2008).

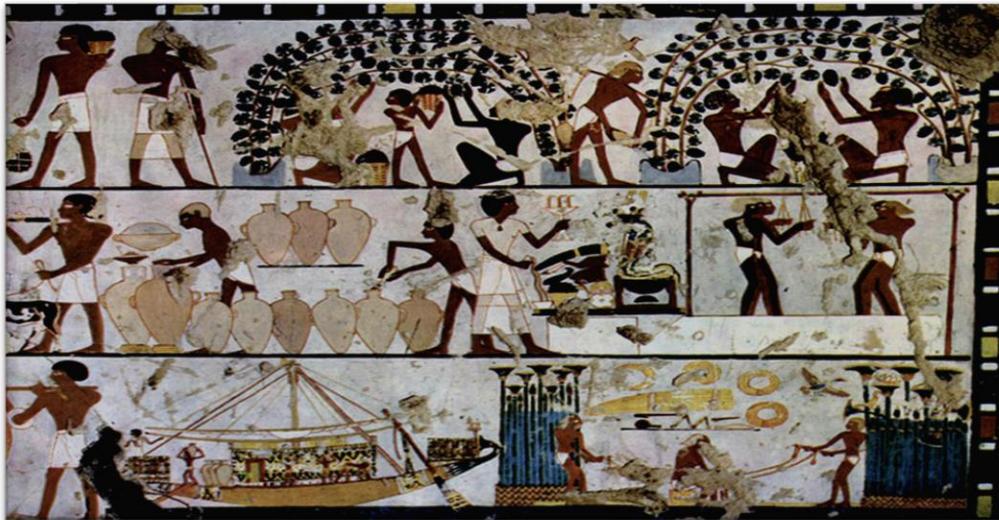
Rituals were said in honor of Hapy for good crops because he was the one who leads Nepri the deity of grain and a great festival was celebrated in Fayoum, in the first month of the winter season (عرمان، ٢٠٠٩). Nepri was largely assimilated with Osiris and both of them were known as deities of grain, symbol of resurrection in ancient Egypt (Hart, 2005). This is the reason of putting his statues inside the tombs or representing him on the walls of the tombs during that time (عرمان، ٢٠٠٩).

**Rennutet**  **"Rnn-wtt" deity of the harvest:**

The name of Rennutet appeared in the Pyramid Texts from the Old Kingdom (عبدالقصود، ١٩٩٠). Her name was written in different ways are accompanied by the determinatives of a cobra, a woman suckling a child, or an egg (Broekhuis, 1971). The most common way was *rnn-wtt* (الرشيدى، ١٩٩٨), which is composed of two elements *rnn* and *wtt* (Leibovitch, 1953). The name Rennutet is to be explained from the verbs, to fondle, to nurse or rear. The nursing and fondling of the king commence in infancy and lasts till his death. In other words, Rennutet is "the nurse" (Marwan, 1989).

The iconography of Rennutet, is found on walls or in statues from the New kingdom on wards. The deity is repeatedly depicted in the agriculture scenes as a cobra (fig.8). In this shape she may still bear emblems and even show human traits (القناوي، ١٩٨٨).

Fig. 8: A vintage with offerings to Rennutet in the form of a cobra. Tomb of *h<sup>c</sup>-m-w3st*, TT 261 at Dra' Abu el-Naga, Thutmosis III. 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.

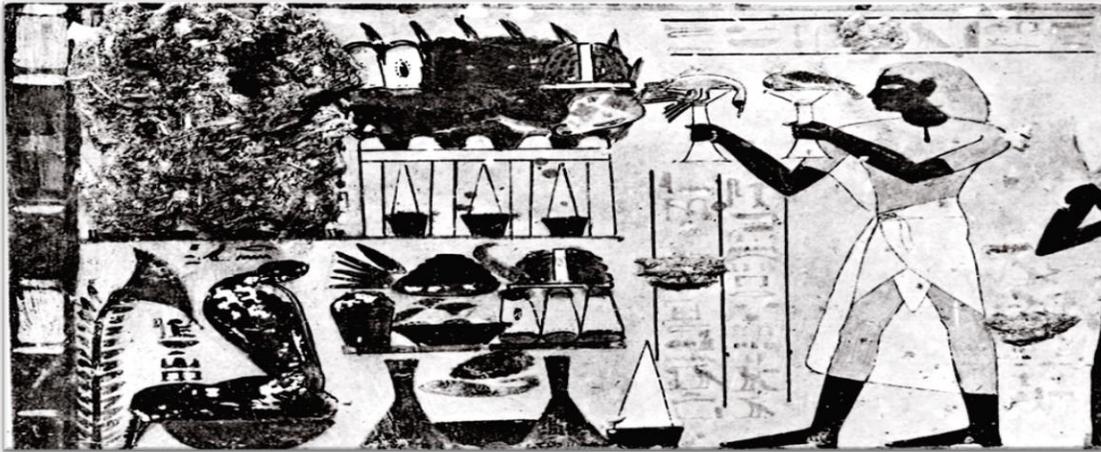


After: Mekhitarian, *Egyptian Painting*, fig. on 19.

In order to celebrate the harvest Rennutet sometimes represented in the form of a cobra (with a papyrus plant behind her as a sign of vegetation and generation in ancient Egypt) together with Amūn deity of fertility in ancient Egypt such as in the tomb of *dsr-k3-R<sup>c</sup>-snb*, TT 38 at Sh. Abd El-Qurna (fig. 9), but unfortunately the image of Amūn has been completely removed. Part of the text which originally separated Amūn from the pile of offerings included the name of Amūn, could still be identified at the time of discovery (Davies, 1983).

Rennutet as a cobra also has a gaze which vanquishes all enemies; but it can be beneficial force, nurturing the crops and providing the fruits of the harvest to the Egyptians. Under this aspect she can be associated with Osiris in the form of the agricultural deity *Nepri* and this, by extension, links here to the pharaoh's responsibility for the cycle of good harvests (Hart, 2005). Besides being depicted as a cobra and emphasizing her role as an embodiment of divine motherhood Rennutet can be represented as a woman, or a woman with a cobra's head suckling a child (fig.10) (أحمد، ٢٠١٦), sometimes wearing the Hathoric crown which consists of the sun-disc, two horns and two feathers (Bunson, 1991).

Fig 9: The owner of the tomb with offerings to Amūn and Rennutet. Tomb of *dsr-k3-R<sup>c</sup>-snb*, TT 38 at Sh. Abd El-Qurna, Thutmosis IV, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.



After: Wresziniski, *Atlas Zur Altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, I, Taf.142.

Fig 10: The owner of the tomb offers burnet offerings to Rennutet in the form of a woman with a cobra's head suckling her son Nepri in the form of a child. Tomb of *h<sup>c</sup>-m-h3.t*, TT 57 at Sh. Abd El-Qurna. Amenhotep III, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.



After: Wresziniski, *Atlas Zur Altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, I, Taf.189.

The cult of Rennutet didn't appear from the beginning of the ancient Egyptian history (Leibovitch, 1953). It is found in the Pyramid Texts; her tutelary nature is referred to when the king ascends to the sky in the hereafter to claim his heritage as a powerful monarch: Rennutet coalesces with his ureaus to provide the invisible flame that leaps from the cobra's mouth in places spread all over ancient Egypt (Hart, 2005).

The cult of Rennutet was found in places spread all over ancient Egypt. There is evidence of a cult to Rennutet existing from the Middle Kingdom onwards in the Fayoum, which seeming to have been of an important cult area of Rennutet (Shaw and Nicholson, 2002). It is a region of immense fertility which could fittingly be associated with this deity (Hart, 2005). Here she is closely allied to Fayoum's divine protector, the crocodile-deity Sobek and formed the triad Sobek, Rennutet and Horus (Shaw and Nicholson, 2002). Village chapels in the Fayoum illustrated the point that the worship of Rennutet had taken hold in the hearts of agricultural workers who were for the most part excluded from the ceremonies of the temples (Marwan, 1989).

We may suppose Rennutet to have been the protective genius of many villages, a little chapel or temple being built for her at Medinet Madi (Bresciani, 1980) by Amenemhat III that the deity might see to it that everything prospered (Broekhuis, 1971). This temple was completed by the king Amenemhat VI and enlarged during the time of the Ptolemies (السيد، ٢٠٠٣).

During the New Kingdom the cult of Rennutet spreaded largely in many places specially Thebes where a stela was found dating to the time of the king Ramesses II (fig.11), shows the viceroy of the king in Kush poured sacred water in front of Rennutet in the form of a cobra (Tylor, 1991).

Fig. 11: Limestone stela showing Setau, the viceroy of Kush pouring libation before Rennutet. Buhen, Ramesses II, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom, H. 50 cm.



After: Shaw and Nicholson, *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, 245.

In order to celebrate and protect the harvest the ancient Egyptians offered the deities traditional offerings such as bread, fruits, vegetables, birds, jars of wine, sheaves of wheat tied with quail birds and an untraditional offering called ‘arūset el Qamh or "the bride of corn" (fig.12) which was offered especially to Rennutet above the winnowing scenes to ensure plenty and good harvest in the future (Blackman, 1922).

Fig.12 The doll of grain from the tomb of dsr-k3-R<sup>c</sup>-snb TT 38 at Sh. Abd el-Qurna, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, New Kingdom.



After: Blackman, *Some Occurrences of the Corn-‘arūseh in Ancient Egyptians Tomb Paintings*, fig. XXVII (a).

### Conclusion:

Scenes of the agriculture life are considered to be from the most important daily life scenes that were represented largely upon the walls of the ancient Egyptians tombs. As the ancient Egyptians had a religious aspect, they believed that the deities were responsible for everything in their life and afterlife, and because of the agriculture was one of the most important activities for the ancient Egyptians, many deities were associated with it and some of them were represented accompanied its scenes on the walls of their tombs from the New Kingdom in order to help them in it. These deities played an important role in the agricultural life especially during the harvest season in order to protect and celebrate the harvest.

### Results and Discussions:

In spite of that the ancient Egyptians worshiped a huge number of Egyptian deities, only three deities appeared accompanied the agriculture life scenes during the New Kingdom, these deities are "Amūn" king of the deities and deity of fertility in ancient Egypt, "Rennutet" deity of the harvest and "Nepri" deity of the grain. Maybe this was because of the increase of their cult especially during that time.

Rennutet was the most common deity in the agriculture life scenes and most of the scenes represented her under the form of a cobra because reptiles were often drawn to such places in search of mice and other prey and in order to do her role as a protector of the harvest and to give the land its fertility.

Beside the cobra form of Rennutet, she is also represented in the agriculture life scenes in the form of a woman with a head of a cobra in order to combine between fertility and protection.

As a deity of motherhood and fertility Rennutet represented in the form of a woman with a head of a cobra suckling a child on her lap, this child may be her son Nepri or the king in order to provide him with food and protection. Here Rennutet played her role as the deity of the harvest to protect and take care of the crop which represented in the form of Nepri the deity of grain in ancient Egypt. The scenes in which Rennutet is represented as a cobra-headed deity suckling her child appeared only in the harvest festival scenes.

Papyrus plant was a sacred plant in ancient Egypt, so Rennutet sometimes was represented with some papyrus plants either in front of or behind her as a sign of vegetation and generation in ancient Egypt.

Offerings to the Deities were different in the form of bread, fruits, vegetables, birds, jars of wine or sheaves of wheat tied with quail birds in addition to a strange offering called the doll of grain was represented Rennutet in the invisible form and appeared over the winnowing scenes to ensure continuing agricultural bounty and general prosperity.

Nepri deity of the grain and form of Osiris in ancient Egypt appeared accompanied the agriculture scenes as a child suckling from his mother Rennutet. In this case Nepri represents grain symbol of resurrection in ancient Egypt.

Nepri was personifying the annual growth of grains, and the celebration of harvest was celebrating the birth of Nepri in first day of the harvest season.

There was a great relation between Nepri and Hapy deity of the flood and this was because of that the harvest was so dependent upon the yearly flooding of the Nile.

In spite of that the inundation deity Hapy was said to be "Lord of Nepri", Nepri was honored in his own right as an important deity of the harvest and prosperity.

Nepri was largely assimilated with Osiris from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards and both of them were known as deities of grain, symbol of resurrection in ancient Egypt. This is the reason of putting their statues inside the tombs or represented them on the walls of the tombs during that time.

Amūn deity of fertility and agriculture in ancient Egypt appeared accompanied the agriculture scenes in the form of a man wearing the two feathers as the deity of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Both of Amūn, Min and Nepri were titled by  "k3-mwt.f" which means (The bull of his mother). This title for the ancient Egyptians was a symbol of strength and fertility. The ithyphallic form of Amūn was related to the fertility deity Min who helps the fields to grow well in order to ensure the good harvest and as a result of that Amūn was called Amūn-Min.

Lastly it is concluded that all the scenes of the deities related to the agriculture life were in order to celebrate the harvest and to ensure the plenty of the crops in the future.

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