

The social status of women in ancient Egyptian Art as Goddesses.



مقالة بحثية

* سالى كمال الدين أحمد كامل الهجرسي
* الدارسة بمرحلة الدكتوراه، قسم تاريخ فن ، كلية الفنون الجميلة، جامعة حلوان.
البريد الإلكتروني: sallyelhagrassy@hotmail.com

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الملخص:

This article presents a group of the most important and influential Egyptian deities, that were mentioned in several historical sources, artwork created by the ancient Egyptians (both sculptures and depictions) and are present in some of the most renowned museums of the world. It also uses the artwork to identify the social position of women in ancient times. Although they date back to thousands of years ago, it is still evident that they were civilized and ahead of their time as they used the same lens to view both men and women. They believed everybody had a significant role to play and assigned many of the crucial duties to both men and women. This is, without a doubt, one of the reasons behind the greatness and sophistication of the ancient Egyptians and it surely distinguished them from others at the time. All sources confirm that women were very respected and valued in ancient Egypt. Hence, the fact that women were able to reach high ranks such as becoming goddesses, who were sanctified and worshipped across the entire country. The people threw festivals in their honor, gave them offerings, and prayed for them, and sought advice. Moreover, it was strongly believed that the goddesses protected people from any evil that may harm them, and provided them with strength, health, stability, beauty as well as guided them into their resurrection and journey to the afterlife. They also believed that the goddesses greatly impacted natural events and phenomena.

Goddesses 'social position 'ancient Egyptians.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

1. Introduction

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Amaunet, Amunet, Imnt, Amonet, Imentet, Imentit, Amenet, Amentet, Amentit, Ament(Image 1)

Goddess of: Air, Wind, Invisibility The female equivalent of the greater god Amun; whose name means "the hidden one." She and her partner Amun were worshipped in Karnak in the New Kingdom period. She was also linked with him in the creation myth of Hermopolis, thus she is one of the primeval deities. Amaunet was one of the eight deities in the Ogdoad(*) and is commonly seen taking the form of a woman with an Egyptian cobra for a head. She is also frequently seen with the sign of the west, thus

awarding herself the title "She of the West", and she was associated with the iusaaset(*) which resulted in her becoming the mother of all creation who owns the tree from which life emerged and returns.

Anuqet, Anaka, Anqet, Anoukis, Anukis, Anket, Anukit, Anuket, Anjet (Image 2)

Goddess of: Lower Nubia and the cataracts of the Nile

Anuqet was the goddess of the Nile River specifically in the southern area of the Elephantine Island(*), and its inundation, as her tall crown of reeds indicates. She, Khnum, and Satet made up the divine family who protected the Nile cataract region and it is believed that the two tributaries of the river are Anuqet's outstretched arms. She is commonly seen with the body of a woman and either the head of a gazelle or wearing the ostrich feathers headdress. In other cases, she is simply a gazelle. Her association with swift-moving objects is due to her association with the speed of the river's flow, and this gave her a different form: holding a papyrus scepter and the symbol of ankh(*). Many believed the annual flooding can only commence after the Festival of Anuket, a festival held in several parts of Egypt where people threw coins, jewelry, gold, and other precious gifts to honor her and to thank her life-giving waters and for a year of bountiful harvest in the fertile agricultural lands. Eating of certain fish meat, which was considered a taboo throughout the whole year due to the sanctity of the fishes, was allowed during this period. This gave her the title "the embracer" as she became associated with the Nile as it nourishes the fields through its flood's byway of rich silt deposits, however, this title was associated with lust, and so she became associated with cowrie shells that resembled the female copulation organ. Her epithets include "She Who Embraces", "Nourisher of the Fields", "Giver of Life", "Lady of the Sky", "Princess of the Gods" and "She Who Shoots Forth", nevertheless, she has a darker epithet which is "She Who Strangles" revealing her dual nature and partly due to her association to Hathor in Thebes. She was worshipped more predominantly in Nubia with her temple and cult following based in Elephantine.

(*)Elephantine Island: The starting point of the Nile's journey towards Egypt (Abu Island in the past)

(*)Ankh: hieroglyphic symbol that was most commonly used in writing and in Egyptian art to represent the word for "life"

Bastet, Bast, Ubastis, Ubasti, Ubaste (Image 3)

Goddess of: Cats, the home, fire, sunrise, music, dance, pleasure, sexuality, fertility, family, pregnancy, children, protection, ointments, warfare

Bastet, who was one of the most loved goddesses in Egypt, specifically lower Egypt, is believed to be the personification of the soul of Isis. She was represented as many different things including a woman with the head of a domesticated cat, a lioness, a solar disk, an ointment jar, or as a desert sand-cat. She is seen holding a sacred rattle, a small bag over her left shoulder, a sistrum in her right hand and has figurines of kittens surrounding her. She also possesses the Utchat(*) or the Uraeus(*). She was viewed as "The Sacred Cat" and Egyptians placed a high regard for cats because of her. Her priests deemed cats to be holy animals in her temples and when they died, they were mummified and presented to the goddess as an offering and throughout the late period, countless bronzes of cats were dedicated to her in her capacity as a protector goddess bestowed with magical skills. Bastet assisted Ra in his nightly travels across the sky in his boat of a million years. Her role in fertility eventually made her the goddess of the moon. Bastet had many titles, some of which are "the lady of the east" due to her protective nature, "the tearer" due to her destructive nature and "the female devourer". She also acquired the title "the Lady of the Flame" when she protected Ra against Apep. Several temples and statues were built to her honor in the cities of Memphis, Heliopolis (where she was considered as daughter of the creator god Atum), and Herakliopolis(*). However, of all the cities, she was admired the most in Bubastis(*). Bastet even had her very own festival which was named after her 'Bast Festival'. This celebration honored the birth of the cat goddess Bastet. It was at her cult center of Bubastis, and it drew approximately 700,000 people in huge ships singing songs and dancing as they head to the city and upon reaching Bubastis, great sacrifices were made. Herodotus claims that Bastet's festival was the most elaborate and popular in Egypt. Egyptologist Geraldine Pinch, citing Herodotus, claims, "women were freed from all constraints during the annual festival at Bubastis. They celebrated the festival of the goddess by drinking, dancing, making music, and displaying their genitals" (116). This "raising of the skirts" by the women, described by Herodotus, exemplified the freedom from normal constraints often observed at festivals but, in this

(*)Utchat: a sacred symbol in the form of an eye that is worn for protection.

(*)Uraeus: a symbol of protection in form of a cobra.

(*)Herakliopolis: a city in Ancient Egypt

(*)Bubastis: A city in the east of the Delta, which was named after Bastet.

case, also had to do with fertility. Herodotus places the number of attendees at the festival as over seven hundred thousand, and although this may be an exaggeration, there is no doubt the goddess was one of the most popular in Egypt among both sexes and so it could be an accurate number. The festival revolved around dancing, singing, and prodigious amounts of wine were drunk in honor of Bastet, thanking her for gifts given and asking for future favors. This festival went by different names including "Festival of Bast", "Procession of Bast", "Bast Goes Forth from Bubastis", and "Bast Guards the Two Lands". The festival continued until the destruction of the city in 350 B.C. by the Persians, and what remains today are just ruins to remind us of its one-time glory and splendor.

Hathor, Het-hert, Hetheru, Hathoor (Image 4)

Goddess of: Sun, sky, moon, the east and the west, fertility, moisture, agriculture, underworld, beauty, music, dance, joy, motherhood, love

Hathor was one of the most famous goddesses of Egypt due to how momentous her following was, and she was viewed as a royal goddess. As she had evolved into several other goddesses with similar functions, it became theorized that all goddesses were different forms of Hathor. For the most part, she is portrayed as either a woman with the head of a cow or with two curled cow horns that hold a solar disc and sometimes along with the uraeus, a sistrum(*), a papyrus reed, a menat(*), a mirror, and a sycamore tree. She is often illustrated as different animals such as a hippopotamus, a falcon, a cobra, or a lioness. At her main cult center of Dendara she was linked to the god of the sky The Horus of Edfu, as her name which means "House of Horus" implies. She was involved in many mythological systems, which contributed to her large cult following. She was also the goddess of birth and regeneration, thus linking her to the mother of the pharaoh. Tekh Festival or The Feast of Drunkenness was a festival dedicated to Hathor ('The Lady of Drunkenness') and commemorated the time when humanity was saved from destruction by beer. According to Egyptologist Carolyn Graves-Brown, the festival began in the Middle Kingdom (2040-1782 BCE), and was most popular in the early New Kingdom (c. 1570-1069 BCE). Graves-Brown describes the central part of the festival as depicted on a 'Porch of Drunkenness' in the Temple of Mut at Karnak: "It seems that in the Hall of Drunkenness, worshippers got drunk, slept, and then were woken

(*)Sistrum: a musical instrument used in religious ceremonies. **HATHOR**

(*)Menat: a necklace composed of many rows of beads and an amulet, that was a symbol of divine protection. **HATHOR**

by drummers to commune with the goddess Mut [who was closely linked with Hathor]" (169). Participants would lessen their inhibitions and preconceptions through alcohol and experience the goddess intimately upon waking to the sacred drums. Another festival that celebrated her was the Hathor Festival. Held annually at Dendera, the main site of Hathor's cult, this festival celebrated the birth of the goddess and her many blessings. It was similar to the Tekh Festival in many aspects. This festival dates from the Old Kingdom and was among the most anticipated festivals in ancient Egypt. The cult of Hathor was extremely popular, and the celebration was well-attended wherever it was held. As with the Tekh Festival, participants were encouraged to over-indulge in alcohol while engaging in singing and dancing in honor of the goddess. There may also have been a sexual component to the celebration similar to the Tekh Festival, but this interpretation, while not at all inconsistent or incredible, is not universally accepted.

Heket, Heqet, Heqat, Hekit, Hegit, Heget, Hequet, Heqtit, Hqt, Hgtyt (Image 5)

Goddess of: Life, creation, childbirth, fertility

Heket was often portrayed as either a woman with the head of a frog, a frog at the end of the phallus, or simply just a frog and an Ankh. This is because frogs symbolized life and fertility to the ancient Egyptians since the annual inundation of the Nile brought fertility to the barren lands and spawned millions of frogs. She stands for the creation and rebirth of life and was associated with Khnum and Osiris. Heket was mostly illustrated in her human form in temples, while amulets depicted her in animal form. She was also associated with the flooding of the Nile, the germination of corn, and the final stages of a woman's labor. As such, she gained the title "She Who Hastens the Birth" along with other titles such as "Eye of Ra" and the "Mother of Gods". Pregnant women often wore her amulets and scarabs bearing her insignia (usually a frog on top of a lotus plant) to ensure her help and protection during labor. Her priestesses were known to be midwives, as was the goddess herself. Midwives often call themselves "Servants of Hequet". In the middle kingdom, ritual ivory clappers and knives had her name inscribed on them to protect homes from evil, especially during childbirth.

Isis, Auset, Aset, Eset (Image 6)

Goddess of: Magic, fertility, motherhood, death, healing, rebirth, wind

She was both the mother goddess and goddess of the dead, thereby, she linked this world and the next. Although she probably had no special cult center of

her own at first, with the rise of the cult of Osiris she was worshipped throughout the country. A significant feature that made Isis very popular from the new kingdom onward was her possession of special magic powers in her capacity as a protecting goddess. Isis is illustrated as a woman wearing a long sheath dress with a headdress bearing an empty throne that symbolized the loss of her husband along with her role as the seat of power of the pharaoh. Often, she is with her child son, Horus, and is also often seen holding a lotus flower. She was also depicted as a woman with a headdress of a solar disc and horn and occasionally she was portrayed as a woman with outstretched wings. Her symbol in the heavens is the star Sept (Sirius). She is the patron of hawks, swallows, doves and vultures while cows, snakes and scorpions are her sacred animals. She is the first daughter of Geb (the god of the earth) and Nut (the goddess of the sky) and was born on the first day in the first year of creation. She became the most powerful of all the deities in ancient Egypt by dethroning and outsmarting Ra who was uncaring towards his people and caused them great suffering. Aware of this, Isis, being the people's goddess who helped them, devised a plan to usurp the throne. She mixed some of Ra's saliva with mud and created a very poisonous snake. The snake bit Ra and caused him great pain. Isis offered a cure for his predicament to which Ra eventually agreed. However, Isis told him that she would need his true name to perform the ritual. Reluctant at first, Ra gave in and as the goddess was performing her magic, she uttered his true name. Ra was healed, yet the power over life and death was transferred to the goddess and was used to benefit the people.

Maat, Mayet, Ma'at, Ma'at (Image 7)

Goddess of: Divine order, balance, morality, truth, reality, justice

Maat represented everything structured, as the meaning of her name "that which is straight" suggests. Her principles are mandated by every king and maintained by both the state of Egypt and the world. Those who ignored her principles awaited judgment in the Hall of Maat(*) in the afterlife. She is often depicted with one ostrich feather protruding from her crown, an ostrich feather headdress, or with the feather itself for a head. Occasionally, she is depicted with wings and tends to hold a scepter and the ankh symbol in her hands. She was associated with both the scales and the primeval mound where the creator God stood at the beginning of time, as it is believed that she set the world in order after the creation (especially the behavior of stars, the seasons, the mortals and even the deities) and continued to do so by providing order where darkness

and chaos once ruled. Some of her titles are “Lady of the Hall of Judgment”, “Lady of the Heavens”, “Queen of Earth”, and “That which Is True”. She is believed to be the antithesis of life in upper and lower Egypt – where one is a fertile valley and the other a barren desert. In this aspect, she emphasized her role as the protector of good and the destroyer of evil as well as the maintainer of balance. As daughter or eye of Ra, she is believed to have chartered the course which the sun god follows in his journey across the skies. All the rulers respected her, however, her most fervent followers included the pharaohs Akhenaten and Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut even built a temple to her honor in Karnak near the precinct of Montu and named her throne Ma’atkare which translates into ‘justice is the soul of Re’. As the goddess of justice, she is the patron of judges who all wore small pendants of her as a sign of her authority over them.

Meretseger, Mertseger, Merseger, Mereseger (Image 8)

Goddess of: the Theban Necropolis

Meretseger was the goddess of the Valley of the Kings, which was the primary Necropolis in Thebes where pharaohs were buried. She was the protector of the dead and also the patron of tomb builders as they made the royal burial place in Deir El-Madinah. Her name means “she who loves silence”. Meretseger is usually portrayed in a cobra form with her head and arms protruding from the hood of a snake, a coiled cobra, a snake with three heads (cobra, woman, and vulture), a normal woman, or a scorpion with the head of a woman. She lived by the pyramid-shaped western mountains that overlooked the tombs which were later named after her “Dehenet Imentet” meaning ‘Peak of the West’ making her “The Lady of the Peak”. As a deity, she is usually described as a merciful yet feared goddess, and most people stepped lightly around her. To appease her, many tomb workers offered her stelae. She was one of the few deities that valued repentance, which greatly impacted Egyptian mythology, and despite enacting punishments on those who committed crimes, swore false oaths, and raided tombs through venomous bites from snakes, stings from scorpions or immediate blindness, she also revoked her punishment for repentant sinners by curing them from the results of her wrath, which is why she was a very special goddess as she was the only one whom Egyptians asked for mercy and forgiveness. Her following was centered in the city of Waset (4th Nome, upper Egypt), and the village of workers at Deir El-Medina. Because of this, she was associated with Ptah, the god of artisans who decorated royal tombs.

Two temples to honor Ptah and Meretseger were built around the valley. However, she did lose her cult following when Thebes was no longer the location for the primary necropolis because her function was specific to that area.

Mut, Maut, Mout (Image 9)

Goddess of: Sky, protection, and motherhood

Mut, whose name means “mother”, is the Mother goddess and the Queen of all Gods whose following started in Waset in Thebes, and when Thebes became the national capital, the local Theban gods and goddesses became national deities. As a national deity, she became extremely popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, especially during the reigns of the pharaohs Hatshepsut and Nefertari Merytmout (Known as “Nefertari, Beloved of Mut”, the chief wife of Rameses II.

She is commonly represented as a woman wearing a vulture headdress and the Double Crown due to the fact that ancient Egyptians viewed the vultures as nurturing mothers with protective powers. She was also seen with vulture heads projecting from her shoulders or with a papyrus scepter in her hand. She, her husband Amun, and their adopted son Khonsu, the moon god, formed the Theban divine triad, and Amun and Mut were viewed as the king’s parents from the Eighteenth Dynasty onward. As lady of Asheru, she had a cult center of her own at Karnak with a crescent-shaped sacred lake. As she was a self-created goddess, she was sometimes seen as a male deity which earned her the epithet “Mut, Who Giveth Birth, But Was Herself Not Born of Any”. This maybe because ancient Egyptians believed that there were no male griffon vultures (males and females are almost similar in appearance). Mut was associated with numerous goddesses with whom she shared similar functions. This association generated other composite deities such as:

- Mut-Isis-Nekhbet: winged goddess with the feet of a lioness, an erect penis, and three heads; a head of a lioness wearing Min’s double plumed headdress, another wearing the double crown of Egypt, and a head of a vulture wearing the red crown of lower Egypt.

Bast-Mut-Sekhmet: another three-headed deity, one head of a lion in a plumed headdress, another is a woman wearing the double crown and the last is a vulture wearing the double plumed headdress. Her role here was to protect the dead.

She was also worshipped as Mut-Temt, Mut-Wadjet-Bast, or Mut-Sekhmet-Bast-Menhet. Mut’s presence dates back as far as the time of chaotic Nun. Her temple, “Hwt-Mwt” (*), was positioned to the south of

(*)Hwt-Mwt: means “the estate of Mut” **MUT**

the great temple of Amen-Ra and might have been decorated with an avenue of sphinxes approaching it. She was worshipped in her temple with the titles: "Mut, the Great Lady of Isheru, the Queen of the Gods, and the Lady of Heaven". Mut was associated with Amun and became the Eye of Ra when Amun became the sun god, Ra. During the new kingdom, Mut was celebrated in the Opet festival in Thebes, which was one of the most important festivals in ancient Egypt. As part of the festivities, her statue is sailed around Isheru, the crescent moon-shaped revered lake at her temple at Karnak. Her union with Amun was celebrated too, in fact, every new year festival the statue of Amun was transported from Luxor to Karnak just to visit her. The priests would first wash and dress the statue of Amun and then carry it out of the temple and through the streets of Thebes which were lined with people waiting to see the god. The statue was then transported to Luxor, by foot in earlier times, and later on a barge. Once at the temple of Luxor, the king would enter the presence of the god in the inner sanctum and emerge forgiven of sins and rejuvenated to continue his reign. The festival was observed during the Middle Kingdom but grew in popularity in the New Kingdom of Egypt, where, in the 20th Dynasty, it was celebrated for twenty days. As at other festivals, the state supplied the people with food and drink, distributing bread, sweets, and beer while the crowds waited their turn to ask the god a question. The statue of Amun would answer these questions through the agency of the priests who would either interpret the god's answer or 'tip' the statue one way or another to indicate a positive or negative response. Another festival that celebrated Mut was the Wadi Festival or The Beautiful Feast of the Valley. Similar in many ways to the Qingming Festival in China and the Day of the Dead in Mexico and elsewhere, the Beautiful Feast of the Valley honored the souls of the deceased and allowed for the living and dead to celebrate together while, at the same time, honoring Amun. The statues of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu (the Theban Triad) were taken from their temples to visit the mortuary temples and necropolis across the river. People visited their departed loved ones at their tombs and brought bouquets of flowers, food, and drink offerings. Egyptologist Lynn Meskell describes the focus of the celebration: "The Beautiful Festival of the Wadi was a key example of a festival of the dead, which took place between the harvest and the Nile flood. In it, the divine boat of Amun traveled from the Karnak temple to the necropolis of Western Thebes. A large procession followed, and the living and dead were thought to commune near the graves which became houses of the joy of the heart on that occasion." (cited in Nardo, 99-100) Images of the deceased were carried in the procession so their

souls might join in the festivities and were left in the tombs when the festival was completed. As Meskell notes, "in this way a link was forged between celebrating the gods and the dead in a single all-encompassing event" which brought the past into the present and, through the eternal gods, on into the future. The Beautiful Feast of the Valley was among the most popular in Egypt's history and was celebrated from at least the Middle Kingdom on.

Neith (Image 10)

Goddess of: weaving, other domestic arts, war, hunting, red crown in lower Egypt

Neith is titled "The Mother of all Gods" and "the Great Goddess" due to the meaning of her name which is the water that is associated with the creation, and the fact that she is believed to have been self-created at the time of creation. Neith was worshipped in the Memphite area during the old kingdom as a protector of the kings. She was the wisest of the gods. In fact, she is believed to be the only one to have created a solution as to who would succeed Osiris as king of Egypt. She suggested, to which the majority agreed, except Seth, that Horus should succeed as king and in consolation, Seth could take two Semitic goddesses.

Neith was the goddess of war and hunting, dating back as early as the pre-dynastic period of Egypt. As such, she was responsible for blessing weapons for warfare, hunting, and warding off evil spirits in tombs. This gave her the epithet "Mistress of the Bow, Ruler of Arrows" and made her emblem a shield with crossed arrows, as well as a spider and an ankh. She was also seen as an arbitrary participant in many wars because of her military prowess and impartiality. She protected canopic jars together with Isis, Nephthys, and Serket, and was the guardian of the funerary bier of the pharaoh, and Duamutef who guarded the stomach of the deceased. It is believed that mummy wrappings were "gifts of Neith". She was also the protector of men and women and the guardian of marriage; however, she is believed to be eternally virgin, and able to procreate without male assistance, and has sired many children. She was even depicted in a male form despite being predominantly female. She may have created the serpent Apep, the enemy of Ra, by spitting into the primordial waters of Nun. In upper Egypt, she was portrayed as a lion-headed woman and was also depicted with the head of a snake or a cow which led to her association with Hathor and Nut. Neith is commonly portrayed as a woman carrying a scepter, two arrows, or a weaving shuttle while wearing the double crown of upper and lower Egypt. Rarely, she might also be depicted suckling Sobek, her son the crocodile god. Despite losing her following in the

Middle and the early New Kingdom, she regained it in the 19th dynasty and her cult center stayed in Sais near the Delta Nile, where a temple was built in her honor. As she hailed from Sais, she was able to peak in popularity in the 26th dynasty due to the kings at the time being from Sais. Eventually, she was promoted to the status of a creator goddess in Esna and wore the Crown of Lower Egypt. She was also widely celebrated in a festival known as “Feast of the Lamps” where multitudes of colorful lights were lit at night. This festival united the entire nation as people lighted candles and oil lamps at night to mirror the sky and bring earth into harmony with the realm of the gods.

Nekhbet, Nekhebet, Nechet (Image 11)

Goddess of: Motherhood, childbirth

Nekhbet is a goddess who predates the dynastic period of ancient Egypt. Her cult center and grand temple were mainly found in Nekhebet (also referred to as El Kab, which was in the third nome of upper Egypt) and Nekhen and her name means “she of Nekhebet”. A birth house, a series of small temples, a sacred lake and some cemeteries were also made for her. As her popularity grew, she was able to become a patron of the pharaohs and gained the position of the goddess of Upper Egypt. One of her roles in this position was protecting and suckling the royal child. Later, when Egypt united into one, Nekhbet and Wadjet, her twin sister who represented Lower Egypt, also represented the Uraeus and were the protectors of Egypt. The two goddesses were believed to be present during the crowning of pharaohs and their symbols were found on the crown itself. Of her many forms, the most common was the head of a vulture, a woman wearing a vulture headdress, or simply a white vulture representing purity. This came from the ancient Egyptian belief that all vultures were females that can adopt children as Nekhbet was chosen to adopt a city. In fact, her priestesses, known as muu, wore robes made of vulture feathers. She was also depicted holding the shem(*) and the royal flail(*). Nekhbet was closely associated with the snake goddess Uto, her lower Egyptian counterpart, and with the goddesses Mut and Tefnut. Like most deities, she had a fierce side as well. She was the protector of pharaohs (especially in wars) and the common people as well and was showcased with outstretched wings above royal images as an indication of protection. In the story of Horus and Set, when Horus was pursuing his enemies in the form of a winged, burning disc, both Nekhbet and Wadjet were on each of his sides for security. As well as the fact that she

was one of the protectors of Ra in his sojourns across the sky, especially from his enemy, the serpent Apep. She was viewed as a mythical mother of the divine aspect of Pharaoh himself, thereby, she became the goddess of motherhood and gained the titles “Mother of Mothers” and the “Great White Cow of Nekhebet”. She also earned the title “Eye of Ra” thus linking her to other goddesses of the same title including Bastet, Tefnut, Sekhmet, Hathor, Isis, and of course, Wadjet. Her titles also included “White Crown” as she was represented as a woman wearing an Atef crown(*).

Nephthys, Nephtys, Nebthwt, Nebhwt, Nebthet, Nebet-Het (Image 12)

Goddess of: Mourning

Nephthys was mentioned in the Ennead(*)

of Heliopolis as the daughter of Geb and Nut and the sister of Osiris, Seth, and Isis. When Ennead and Ogdoad merged, she was one of those who assisted the sun god, Ra in his boat as he journeys across the sky. Her name means “mistress of the house” and it refers to her title “Lady of the Mansion”, as it points out her role as the head of the household of God, and how she protects the female head of every household. Her other title is “Friend of the Dead” due to her affiliation with the afterlife and the fact that she comforts the relatives of the dead. In fact, the wailing and crying of mourners were called the “Hawks of Nephthys” at the time. Despite her alleged infidelity and affair with Osiris, she has remained very close to her sister Isis, and even helped her in retrieving the scattered limbs of Osiris and with his resurrection. Nephthys and Isis always appeared together in funerary rites representing night and day, life and death, and even growth and decay. Together, they protected, mourned, and revived the dead. Nephthys also performed an important function as one of the four canopic goddesses. Like most funerary goddesses, who represented the normal transitioning of life and death, she is found in the ends of coffins, sarcophagus, and shrines for protection and to assist in the afterlife. She is also portrayed as a hawk, a falcon, a kite, or a woman with outstretched wings. She is typically illustrated as a woman wearing a long dress and carrying a basket on top of her head with a scepter and ankh in her hands. She was also depicted with the hieroglyph of her name above her head and sometimes she is pictured releasing her fiery breath and incinerating the enemies of the pharaoh. Nephthys was also the patron of witches and magicians as she was able to bestow the ability to see beyond what is hidden by the moonlight to pharaohs and she was worshipped by nursing

(*)Atef Crown: white crown signifying Upper Egypt. **NEKHBT**

(*)Ennead: a group of nine deities linked with the creation myths in Heliopolis. **NEPHTHYS**

mothers because she was believed to have nursed Horus. This link to Horus made her one of the important guardians of his canopic jars guarded by Horus's four sons, and she even guarded Hapi, the god who protected the jar that contained the lungs of the dead. She is also believed to be the personification of the idea of darkness and everything it entails. Her following is referenced in texts that date as far as the old kingdom and is concentrated in the cities of Heliopolis and Abydos. Her formal cult centered in lower Egypt and her major areas of worship were in Iunu, in the 13th Nome of Lower Egypt, Senu, Hebet, (Behbit), Per-mert, Re-Neferet, Het-sekhem, Het-Khas, Ta-kehset, and Diospolites. Evidently, she was revered throughout the whole of Egypt.

Nut, Neuth, Nuit, Newet, Nwt (Image 13) Goddess of: Sky and heavens

Nut is one of the most important goddesses in Egypt. She is a member of the Ennead and is represented as a woman with black or dark blue skin with her body hovering over the horizon and leaning over her husband Geb who is lying down as earth. Her body is covered in stars, and it was believed that at night, Nut and Geb would meet as the goddess comes down from the sky causing darkness. During storms, Nut came a little closer to Geb and caused weather disturbance. Their father Shu, by the orders of the sun god Ra, separated them from what was a tight eternal embrace. If Shu relented on his job, the eternal order would be disrupted causing unbelievable chaos. It was also believed that all the heavenly bodies went through Nut's body, and that she bore the sun every morning and swallowed it every evening. The texts showcasing this belief claimed: "her backward part is in the east, her head is in the west," or: "The sun appears between the thighs of Nut." The concept of bearing the sun every day was also applied to Ra as it was believed that she gave birth to him every sunrise and swallowed him every sunset. As a mother who rebirths Ra every day, she became connected with the tombs, the underworld, and the idea of resurrection. Her association with Ra was further solidified in the Book of the Dead, where she was mentioned as the mother figure of the sun god. As mother night, she is the unconscious luna or moon, a representation of the feminine, emotional body. It is also thought that the four limbs of Nut point in the four cardinal directions – north, south, east, and west. Her name even signifies the sky and became the basis of the English words' night, equinox, and nocturnal. She was also painted on the inside of the lids of the sarcophagus and coffins, protecting its content until the deceased is reborn, and as she was seen as a friend to the dead and even protected the soul as it

journeyed through the afterlife. In one myth, the soul of the pharaoh would enter her during death and would only come out at the time of resurrection. Among the major concepts of the sky goddess Nut, she was usually the image of a naked woman with her body arching over the earth, feet and fingertips touching the ground, as she is shown in many tombs and temples. Of her many forms, one is as two crossed arrows against the skin of a leopard associating her with the air, rainbows, and sycamore tree, and the other is as a sow whose breasts are ready for the children (piglets in the form of stars) to suckle. Each morning, she would swallow the piglets to give way to the sun. She can even be depicted as a woman carrying a pot (representing the sky) on her head. Other times, she is a cow goddess named the Great Kau, from which all creations were born, and it was believed that her udders were used to pave the Milky Way Galaxy. Her eyes represented the sun and the moon. In this aspect, she assimilated some attributes of Hathor. As a great solar cow, she carried the sun god, Ra, when he retired from his duties as king of the earth. In her several roles, she was known by many titles including "Coverer of the Sky", "She Who Protects", "Mistress of All", "She who Bore the Gods" and "She Who Holds a Thousand Souls". In another myth, she is the mother whose laughter was the thunder and whose tears were the rain. A ladder known as 'Maqet' which Osiris stepped on and climbed to enter the kingdom of the skies and the dwelling of his mother Nut, was her sacred symbol. This symbol may be found in tombs for protection of the deceased and to invoke the help of the deity of the dead. No temples were built to her honor as she is the representation of the entire sky. However, throughout history she remains as one of the most cherished deities in Egypt and people threw many festivals for her including the "Festival of Nut and Ra" and the "Feast of Nut". Moreover, The Epagomenae are the five days at the end of the year that are added in line with the solar year of 365. According to the myth, when Nut became pregnant by her brother Geb at the beginning of the world, it so enraged Ra (Atum) that he decreed she would not give birth on any day of the year. Thoth, however, played a game of senet with the moon god Iah (Khonsu) in which he gambled, and won, five days' worth of moonlight. He took this moonlight and created the five "super-added days" which Nut could give birth in. On the first day, she gave birth to Osiris, on the second Horus the Elder, on the third Set, on the fourth Isis, and on the fifth Nephthys. These days were considered a potent time of transition by the Egyptians who saw them as either auspicious or ominous depending on the deity born on a given day. The third day, when Set was born,

was thought especially unlucky, and Plutarch reports that business was not transacted on the third day and people would fast until evening. The Epagomenae were not festivals, although observances could be conducted and, no doubt, rituals were performed in temples, but still are counted among others because they formed the transition in the cycle of the year between the old and the new. Following the Epagomenae, the Wepet-Renpet Festival was again observed, and a new year was begun.

**Renenet, Termuthis, Ernutet (Image 14)
Goddess of: Harvest, fertility, Protector of country, pharaohs, and other deities**

Renenet is a powerful goddess from the Delta who was depicted as a woman, a cobra, a lion's head, like Hathor in her form of the "Eye of Ra", or a woman with the head of a cobra that wears a solar disk or the double plumed headdress. In the underworld she became a fearsome fire-breathing cobra who could kill with one gaze. However, the ancient Egyptians had no reason to fear her, as she offered them protection in many areas of their life. Her name may derive from the words "rnn" (to bring up, or nurse) and "wtt" (snake), but others have suggested that "rntt" can mean "fortune" or "riches". A further possibility is that the first syllable is "rn", translated as "name". This would certainly fit with her role in naming children, but those who support this view tend to translate her name as "she who is in the name" which does not actually fit the rest of the hieroglyphs. This brings us to another possibility, as some sources refer to a separate snake goddess named Renenet, who was a goddess of nursing. They may well be one and the same, or they could have been merged over time, but it is also possible that the two were simply confused by historians. Renenet gave every newborn baby a secret name that held great significance, as many Egyptians at the time believed that in order for a person to enjoy eternal life their image and their name must survive. This granted her the epithet "She Who Rears". She was the protector of children and kept them safe from curses. In fact, the child was said to "have Renenet upon his shoulder from his first day". This linked her to Meskenet as she oversaw labor. Shai, the goddess of fate, and Renenet were often associated with Thoth and were occasionally named "the hands of Thoth". Ramesses II stated that he was the "Lord of Shai and Creator of Renenet" as an indication of his power to control his own fate. In the litany of Re, in the new kingdom, she appears in the underworld as the "Lady of Justification", associating her with the goddess Ma'at. Renenet also protected the harvest as snakes were seen during harvest time

protecting the crops by hunting the rodents who would threaten the crop. This gave her the epithets "Goddess of the Double Granary", "Lady of The Fertile Land", "Lady of Granaries", "Nourishing Snake" and "She who nurtures with good things and brings plentiful food". By the New Kingdom, her power extended to the mummification ritual during which she imbued the mummy wrappings with magical power, and in the Ptolemaic Period this role was honored with the epithet "The Lady of the Robes.". Amenemhet III and Amenemhet IV dedicated a temple to Renenet, Sobek, and Horus at Dja (now Medinet Madi) which was expanded during the Ptolemaic Period. In this temple an annual harvest festival was held in her honor during which a quantity of the best quality produce was dedicated to her, and throughout Egypt, shrines were built in her honor in areas where wine was brewed. Renenet was also linked to the coming of the inundation and by the late period, she presided over the eighth month of the ancient Egyptian calendar. From the early period, she was seen as protector of the pharaoh in the netherworld, and she even imbued his clothing with power which repelled his enemies. Her cult was prominent in the Faiyum at the time of the Twelfth Dynasty and in Thebes during the New Kingdom.

Sakhmet, Sakhmet, Sekmet, Sekhmet, Sachmet, Sekhet, Sacmis (Image 15)

Goddess of: Sun, war, destruction, plagues, healing

One of the oldest and most powerful deities who was a member of the Memphite triad(*) , where she formed a divine family with Ptah and their son Nefertem. She was also closely associated with the goddess Mut in Thebes. Amenophis III had several hundred granite statues of Sakhmet set up in Karnak. As a sun goddess, she is connected to the scorching heat of the sun and was given the name "Nesert" which means flame. She was linked with the desert where the sun is more prominent because of her epithet "The Red Lady". She is often shown as a woman wearing a red dress with the head of a lioness and a sun disc circled by a cobra on her head and holding the ankh when seated. When standing, she is holding the papyrus scepter symbolizing Lower Egypt. However, some scholars believe that she was a deity introduced to Egypt from Sudan because there are plenty of lions in that area. In the myths, she is the goddess whose name means "the mighty one", who destroys the enemies of the sun-god Re. She also supports the king in fighting the country's enemies, and a text reads: "His arrows fly after enemies like the arrows of Sakhmet". Sekhmet is associated with the

(*)Memphite triad: cult center in Memphis. SEKHMET

pharaoh and protects them during war as the warrior goddess of Upper Egypt. She gained the title "The Mistress and Lady of the Tomb", "The Gracious One", "The Destroyer of Rebellion", "The Mighty One of Enchantments" and "The Scarlet Lady" due to her blood lust, in fact, celebrations and sacrifices are often offered to the goddess to appease her after the war and end the destruction. She is believed to be a closely related aspect of Hathor. When Hathor was sent to the earth when Ra plucked her out of his brows, she turned to Sekhmet to avenge her father because the humans have not been true to the principles of Ma'at. However, she became so violent that she slaughtered humankind without limit and drank their blood. She became the fiercest of all goddesses. Ra, afraid of his daughter, poured 7000 jugs of beer and pomegranate that dyed the Nile River red to resemble blood that the goddess swiftly drank. She became so drunk that she slept for three days. When she awoke, she had returned to her docile self as Hathor. Humankind was saved from the wrath of Sekhmet and it was celebrated and commemorated every year. She is also associated with another feline and leonine goddess, Bastet. Sakhmet is known as goddess of the west, wearing red and Bastet is named the goddess of the east, dressed in green. She was mentioned numerous times in the various spells of The Book of the Dead as both a creative and vicious force as while she may bring about disease and plague to those who wrong her as the lady of Pestilence, Sekhmet has her healing and protective aspects as well. She was the patron goddess of all healers and physicians, in fact, her priests were very skilled doctors, and that resulted in the gruesome "Lady of Terror" becoming the benevolent "The Lady of Life". She is best known as the protector of Ma'at, hence, her title: "The One Who Loves Ma'at and Who Detests Evil".

Satet, Satjit, Sates, Sati, Setis, Setet, Satit, Sathit, Satis (Image 16)

Goddess of: Hunting, archery, war, fertility

Satis, whose name means "she who pours out", or "she who shoots forth", presumably due to the flooding of the Nile that originates from the region of Awan (ancient city of Swenet found in the southern edge of the country) and is believed to be a result of the masturbation of Atum. Her true function is in fertility who grants the desires of those who search for love. She is also the goddess of women and love. Her original hieroglyph is in the form of the shoulder knot; however, it was transformed into an arrow piercing the skin of a cow. She was presumably worshipped in the island of Elephantine from the early old kingdom. Satet is the wife and consort of the creator god and guardian of the source of the Nile, Khnum and the

mother of Anuket, the goddess of the Nile. She is occasionally depicted as a funerary goddess and is seen as a woman offering pure water in jars that is used to cleanse the dead of their sins, and with this, she is often illustrated with a star on her head as She was associated with the star Sirius – known as Sothis, which is the personification of the star, Sept. This star signals the annual inundation of the Nile – the primary role of Satis. The pure water originates from the underworld but is brought out through the Nile. She is also illustrated as a woman wearing the conical crown associated with upper Egypt and it is attached to an antelope, gazelle horns, or ostrich plumes. A uraeus may also be seen bound to the crown. Her other forms include a fast-moving antelope or gazelle. Her symbol, the arrows (signifying the river current), granted her the title "She Who Runs Like an Arrow" as she also protected the pharaoh from enemies by shooting arrows to kill them. She is often seen wearing a simple sheath dress and carrying the ankh, the symbol of life. Satet, along with Khnum and Anuket, created the triad of the Elephantine deities in Abu Island, whom all work to guard the Nile. She was also the guardian of cataracts and the southern border of Egypt, as well as the provider of "the cool water that comes from Elephantine.". Her other titles include: "Mistress of Nubia" as she is originally of Nubian origin, "Mistress of the Punt country", "Guardian of the Southern Frontier of Egypt", and "She of Sehel" due to a large following on the Island of Setet. The temple dedicated to her was extended again and again over a millennium. She was once thought to be the daughter of Ra and performed the duties as one of the Eyes of Ra. According to one myth, at the 'Night of the Teardrop', Isis would shed a single tear which is caught by Satis. She will then pour it into the Nile causing the yearly flood. When Khnum was assimilated by Osiris, Satis became Isis and Anuket became Nephthys. She was also linked to Hathor – another goddess of love and fertility. Her cult following is centered in Setet Island in the Elephantine region where a temple is built to her honor. Recent discoveries reveal she may have been popular in Lower Egypt basing on certain items dug up in Saqqara.

Selket, Serkis, Serket, Selchis, Selcis, Selkhit, Serqet, Selkit, Selkis, Selqet, Serkhet, Serquet (Image 17)

Goddess of: medicine, magic, healing, fertility, and animals

Selket is a scorpion goddess and is showcased as a woman with a scorpion head, a woman with a scorpion on her head that is always ready to strike, or a scorpion's tail with the head of a woman. She is known to have healing abilities from poisonous

snakes, scorpions, and bees, and she is believed to protect pregnant mothers and children from them. In one myth, she protected the goddess Isis and her infant son Horus from Set. Moreover, she is also depicted as a protector of the deities from the great snake-demon known as Apep, and even participating in his eventual capture. Her main role was enforcing what is right and punishing what is wrong. She was given the titles "Lady of The Beautiful Tent" and "The Mistress of The Beautiful House" because she became a protector of the tents of the embalmers. She is also one of the protectors of Qebesenuf and the canopic jar which was used to hold intestines. This duty resulted in her close association with several other deities who performed the same duties such as Isis, Nephthys and Neith. Her tight association with Isis and their related roles caused some historians to understand her simply as an aspect of Isis rather than as a goddess on her own. Some believe she is a form of Isis whose dominant cult following dates back as far as the first dynasty. Sometimes, her name is associated with the scorching heat of the sun. Together with Neith, she became one of the guardians of the marriage union by watching the sky and ensuring that no one will disturb Amun, the creator god, and his wife. She protects the dead by preventing their bodies from stiffening caused by poisons and fluids and guiding them into the afterlife. Although Seshat had a large following of priests, no historical reference or artifact can prove that there were any temples built to her honor, thereby, they might have been destroyed without leaving any trace of their existence.

Seshat, Sesat, Seshet, Safkhet, Sesha, Sesheta, Seshata, Sefkhet-Abwy, Safekh-Aubi (Image 18)
Goddess of: writing, architecture, accounting, astrology, astronomy, mathematics, historical records, and surveying.

It is said that Seshat invented writing, but it was her spouse, Thoth who taught writing to the people. Her following dates back as early as the second dynasty. Her name means "she who Scrivens" or "she who scribes", and she is known as "Mistress of the House of Architects" and "Seshat, Foremost of Builders", hence, she is usually seen holding tools such as wound cords and stretching them for surveying land and structures. She was known as the "Mistress of the House of Books", and "She who is Foremost in the Library" due to the fact that she guarded the god's library. She also became the patron of all earthly libraries and librarians, and her priests were always guarding the most important knowledge and preserved it throughout the millennia which resulted in her being the goddess of history too. Hence, she is often seen arranging Thoth's scrolls and spells. She

is typically depicted wearing a long sheath dress made of leopard, cheetah, or wildcat skin that resembled that of funerary priests. She also often wears a headdress made of a stylized papyrus plant, symbolizing the role of the papyrus plant as paper for ancient Egyptian writing. The papyrus plant may be seen with six spurs resembling that of a seven-pointed star. In some cases, her head may be seen with a seven-pointed star over two inverted horns that looked like a crescent (in homage to her moon god husband, Thoth) with two falcon feathers. As the stylus paper is connected to the seven-point star, Seshat gained the epithets "Sefket-Abwy" meaning "She of seven points" or "Seshat opens the door of heaven for you". She is also known as "afekh-Aubi" which means "She who wears the Two Horns." and is derived from when the crescent moon degenerates into two horns. Titles such as "lady of ground plans and writing" clearly indicate her nature and function. She is sometimes seen as holding the palm stem that bears notches or the scribe's pen and palate in her hands. This signified her role as record keeper of the passage of time. In fact, she is a royal scribe who keeps track of the rule of the pharaoh including his achievements, and triumphs. She also records all the speeches the pharaoh has made especially during the crowning ceremony and approves the record of foreign captives and supplies acquired in military campaigns. She is often also seen offering palm trees to the pharaoh to signify a long reign. Her most important function in this aspect is recording the pharaoh's regnal years and jubilees. She was also involved in the ritual of the foundation of temples from very early times and was specifically associated with establishing the temple's ground plan as she assisted the pharaoh in the ritual of stretching the cord (The mason's line used to measure the dimensions of the building) that will serve as basis for laying the foundations of a temple and other significant structures. As a funerary goddess, it was believed that she had the ability to keep the memories of the deceased alive by maintaining a tab of the happenings of their lives and she had the power to grant the pharaoh immortality by writing his name in the Tree of Life. There is no evidence of a temple ever built to her honor. However, there is proof of her following because in the fourth dynasty on his slab stela, Wep-em-nefret was known as the overseer of the royal scribes and priest of Seshat whose principal sanctuary was found in Heliopolis. Seshat hailed from lower Egypt yet her following embraces the whole nation. Seshat even helped pharaohs celebrate 30 years of reign in the sed festival in the New Kingdom. This festival honored the king and revitalized him. It was held every thirty years of the king's reign in order to ensure he was still in harmony with the will of the

gods and physically fit to rule Egypt. The festival began with a grand procession held in front of priests, nobles, and the public. The king would need to run around an enclosed space (such as the temple complex at Saqqara) in order to prove he was fit and, in later eras, would fire arrows toward the four cardinal directions as a symbol of his power over the land and his ability to bring other nations under Egypt's influence.

Tefnut, Tefnwt, Tefnuit, Tefnet, Tefenet (Image 19)

Goddess of: She is the goddess of moisture, dew, and rain. She is also a lunar goddess connected to humidity. Likewise, as the daughter of Ra, she is also a sun goddess associated with dryness.

Tefnut is a member of the nine Ennead deities in Hermopolis, and she is sometimes connected to Tefen as they attend to their duties in the hall of Ma'at. Originally, she was the lunar (left) "Eye of Ra" linking her to the moon, dew, mist, and rain and even her name meant "she of moisture" and has been associated with the English words 'moist' and 'spit'. However, she later became the solar (right) "Eye of Ra" associating her with the lack of moisture and dryness. As the protector of the sun god, she acquired the titles "Lady of the Flames" and "Uraeus on the Head of all the Gods". Such role, she shared with several other goddesses including Sekhmet, Bastet, Isis, Hathor, Mut, Wadjet and Nekhbet. Out of the Ennead deities, she is the first one to be attached to a female nature, as other gods were believed to have a duality in nature. Moreover, she is the first mother after the creation. She is often depicted as a woman with the head of a lion or as a simple woman or lioness, and rarely she takes the form of a cobra. She consistently wears the solar disc circled by two cobras and the Uraeus in any form she takes. She is also seen holding the scepter (signifying power) and the ankh (signifying the breath of life). Tefnut and Shu were the first divine couple in the Heliopolitan myth. It is even said that Atum created them either by masturbation or by spitting. In various mythological cycles, Tefnut acquired a cosmic character of her own. Her cult centers are mainly in Hermopolis and Leontopolis, but she is worshipped throughout all of Egypt. In Buto, Tefnut and her husband, Shu were worshipped as the flamingo-looking children of the king of lower Egypt that were believed to be mythical representations of the sun and the moon. In Leontopolis, she is a lioness who differs to Sekhmet for having pointed ears instead of round. There are no excavated remains of her temples because she was a cosmic deity. However, many scholars believed that she had temples built to her name that only her priestesses and the pharaoh himself can

enter after a ritual of purification in the deep stone pool.

Tawret, Tuat, Taueret, Tauret, Taurt, Taweret, Tawaret, Tuart, Ipy, Ipet, Opet, Reret, Thoeris, Toeris (Image 20)

Goddess of: maternity, childbirth, fertility

Tawret was initially a dangerous deity with nurturing and protective qualities. Her name means "She who is great". She was depicted as a pregnant hippopotamus standing upright, with the back of a crocodile and the limbs of a lion. Her function as mother goddess associated her closely with Isis. She was also seen as a hippopotamus with one arm resting (a symbol of protection) and the other carrying an ankh or an ivory knife used to drive away evil spirits. As she resided in the northern sky abode of her husband, Apep, she became known as Nebetakhmet or "Mistress of the Horizon". In some legend, Apep could only come out during the night, so Tawret was considered the evil that dwelt during the day. However, during the old kingdom, her role significantly changed from an aggressive force into a protective deity. She became the mother goddess who became the wet nurse of the pharaoh. Eventually, her nurturing role extended to all households as she helps both the rich and the poor. She is protective of her young thus becoming one of the patrons of childbirth. She is also able to ward off evil spirits who intend to harm a baby and mother during childbirth. She may also be seen as a woman wearing her headdress bearing the Sa for protection. Pregnant women often carried her amulets to protect their unborn child and so she became of assistance in matters of pregnancy and sexuality, thus, forming a link between her and Hathor. In fact, her depictions are often motifs to birth beds. Tawret was also associated with magic wands and knives, often made from hippopotamus ivory, which was used to fend off evil especially during labor. Faience vases likened to her shape are used to serve milk in order to add extra potency to the drink. Her fertility duties focused on the inundation in Gebel El-Silsila. She is mentioned in The Book of The Dead as the protector of the mountain paths in the West that led to the Underworld. She even guided the recently deceased souls into passing securely into the dangerous and risky land of Osiris. Her area in the northern sky and her hippopotamus appearance linked her to Set. She is believed to be a concubine of Set who is loyal to Horus. In one of the myths, she helped Isis protect her young child from the attacks of Set by trapping him in the northern sky. She was also related to Sobek probably because of her crocodile features. In this form, she has a small crocodile on her back. Sometimes, she is the wife of another demon god,

Bes, who is linked to childbirth. Her cult achieved significant importance until the Ptolemaic era and late period, especially in Karnak.

Wadjet, Uadjet, Ua Zit, Wadjit, Wedjet, Wdjet, Uajyt, Edjo, Uto, Udjo, Buto (Image 21)

Goddess of: the personification of lower Egypt

Wadjet is one of the older deities whose following dates as far back as the predynastic period. She was initially a local deity in the area named "Per-Wadjet". Over time, she became the patron goddess of lower Egypt, and later, she represented the whole of Egypt. Her name roughly translates into "the green one" or "the papyrus-colored one" presumably because of the green shade of the skin of the cobra. She is usually portrayed as a woman wearing the red crown of lower Egypt. Wadjet may also be seen as a woman with the head of either a cobra or a lion, or a winged cobra. She may also be depicted as a rearing cobra ready to strike, symbolic of her protective functions of the pharaoh. Wadjet and Nekhbet (her twin sister and representation of upper Egypt) formed the uraeus (Two cobras around the sun disc) in the crown of the pharaoh(*)

. They united Egypt and were found on the crown of the Pharaoh's "neby" indicating his rule over the two lands. They are thought to protect the king and are embodied in the crowns as Upper and Lower Egypt. She had many sacred animals including the cobra, the ichneumon (a mongoose-like animal), and the shrew (tiny mice). Both the ichneumon and the shrew were sacred to Horus, and during the Late Period, Egyptians mummified them together inside the Wadjet statues. The ichneumon represented day and the shrew represented night according to traditional Egyptian beliefs. Wadjet is highly revered all throughout Egypt but her cult centers are found in the twin ancient towns of Pe and Dep where Buto was found. Her temples were created as far back as the old kingdom, a testament to her ancient roots.

Werethekau, Weret-hekau, Urthekau (Image 22)

Goddess of: Crowns and snakes

Werethekau is commonly affiliated with magic. Her name means "great magician". She was the wife of Re-Horakhty and commonly wore his symbol (the sun disc) on her head along with a cobra on her brow. She is showcased as a lion-headed goddess, or as a snake with the head of a woman. In the pyramid text she is specifically associated with the divine uraeus and with the crown of lower Egypt. From the time of the New Kingdom, she was known to be present at the coronation of the kings, on whom she bestows her

protection. She also nurtured the royal child. Werethekau was known as "She Who is Rich in Magic Spells" prompting some to suggest that she was a form of Isis. She is associated with Wadjet and Sekhmet and the story of the "Eye of Ra". Werethekau also protected the sun god and acted as a wet nurse for the pharaohs. The pharaoh, in part, derived his right to rule from his mother, who would normally be the previous king's great wife. As a result, it was sometimes suggested that the queen became the goddess when she bore the next pharaoh. This myth was referred to by Hatshepsut, a female Pharaoh, to help support the legitimacy of her rule. Due to how she was a powerful symbol of protection, her name, along with the symbol of a snake, often appears on magical weapons buried with the dead to help them protect themselves in the underworld. Her name also appears on ivory knives which were supposed to protect pregnant and nursing women.

Anat, Anant, Anit, Anti, Anthat, Antit (Image 23)

Goddess of: Goddess of fertility, sexuality, love, and war.

Anat was an ancient Canaanite deity who by the end of the middle kingdom, became famous in Egypt. She was known by so many names and titles, some of which are: "the Virgin" or "the Wanton" because of her lust for sex and war, as well as "The Fairest Daughter-Sister of Baal", "the Lady", "the Destroyer", "Strength of Life", and "the Lady of the Mountain" but most notably "Anat-her" (Agreeable Anat), "Herit-Anta" (Terror of Anat), and around Elephantine (first nome of Upper Egypt) the Hebrew "Beth-Anath" (House of God). She was typically represented with either a spindle or a spear. She was popular in the northern delta area, and during the second intermediate period (the Hyksos period), But her worship suggests that there had been a slow migration of people from the Levant for some time before the Hyksos invasion. Although the pharaohs of the new kingdom were hostile to the Hyksos culture, she was not rejected when the Hyksos were repelled and Egypt was reunified under Amose, in fact, Ramesses II had adopted Anat as his guardian in battle and expanded a shrine to Anat when he undertook the restoration of Tanis. He also named his daughter, who later became his wife, "Bint-Anat" which means the daughter of Anat.

Mafdet, Mefdet, Maftet (Image 24)

Goddess of: Judgement, justice, execution

Mafdet was one of the first feline goddesses, predating even Bastet and Sekhmet. She was the

(*)Crown of the pharaoh: a unification emblem and royal insignia of the whole of Egypt. **WADJET**

protector against venomous bites of snakes and scorpions (probably due to the fact that cats are killers of snakes and scorpions). In fact, in the old kingdom, she is depicted as the protector of Ra whose weaknesses included snakebites and scorpion stings. She is usually invoked in rituals of those afflicted by the deadly venoms. She is frequently represented as a woman with the head of a cheetah, and sometimes she had the head of a cat, a lynx, a leopard, a panther, or even a mongoose. Some of her symbols include rope, pole, and blade of execution. She was the protector of pharaohs, along with their chambers, tomb, and any other sacred places because her sharp claws were like that of the harpoon(*)

of the pharaoh. She was the goddess of execution and would often be seen as a feline running up the side of the staff of executioners. She is believed to rip out the hearts of wrongdoers and personally deliver them to the pharaoh's feet in the same manner that a cat delivers her catch to her owners. Because of this, she earned the epithet "Avenger of the King". "Great Cat", "Lady of The House of Life", and "Slayer of Serpents" are some of her other known titles. She began ruling over the judgment hall of Duat during the New Kingdom and decapitated rebels and enemies. Information and text on the cult following of Mafdet have been scarce. In fact, the more recent goddess, Bastet, another feline deity in the form of a lioness who protects the king and the pharaoh, may have eclipsed Mafdet's popularity and assimilated her functions. Evidence of her existence is still present as her images can be found on the personal items of pharaohs and the beds where they were mummified.

Meskhenet, Mesenet, Meskhent, Mesket, Meshkent (Image 25)

Goddess of: Childbirth, rebirth

Meskhenet, whose name means "birthing place" is known as the creator of Ka(*)

, and so many worshipped and prayed to her to bless them with smooth childbirth. Ancient Egyptians were believed to be very family oriented. However, since infant mortality in those times was high, the coming of a baby presented both a reason for jubilation and fear for parents. She was often seen as a divine midwife, and many women used birthing bricks to deliver a baby as the bricks were a representation of the goddess. This sealed her association with other goddesses of childbirth like Hathor and Tawret. She was connected to Shai and Renenutet as they handled the fate and names of newborn children, respectively. Meskhenet was the patron and protector

of newborns and mothers. In fact, in one of the stories in the tomb of Hatshepsut, she said that Meskhenet promised to protect her like Ra. She is often portrayed as a woman with a brick head or as a brick with the head of a woman protruding from it. In the story of Radjeddet and her triplets found in the papyrus of Wescar, she assisted in their birth and foretold their destiny as future pharaohs. In the fifth dynasty, the triplets Sahure, Userkaf, and Neferirkare Kakai were the first pharaohs. She may have also been represented in the "Book of the Dead" as a cubit-with-head(*)

. Her most seen symbolic headdress included two loops on top of a vertical stroke that resembled a cow's uterus. Meskhenet also plays a significant role in the Hall of Judgement and together with Shai and Renenutet, stayed near the scale where the people's hearts will be judged against the feather of Ma'at. She is believed to testify on the character of the deceased while living. Moreover, she also assisted with the rebirth of the soul after judgment, and she became the first wife and consort of Andjety, god of the rebirth in the Underworld, a role eventually assimilated by Osiris. This also signifies that she is a protective deity from birth to death. She did not have a specific following nor temples and was not associated with any region or city, but her importance was present in songs and on the birthing bricks found all over the country.

Naunet, Nunet

Goddess of: The primordial abyss to the underworld Naunet represented the sky over the primeval ocean as the feminine counterpart of Nun(*)

in the Ogdoad theology of Hermopolis. She may in fact be a primeval form of the sky goddess Nut. Naunet was infrequently represented as a personified deity and is not usually mentioned without Nun, although she is occasionally portrayed as the mother of the sun god and the composite deity Nun-Ptah. With Nun, they represented the underground streams and sacred lakes that are found in the country. Together, they do not have a specific cult center, yet they represented sacred lakes and underground streams that are known to be found in the country. She is represented as a woman with the head of a snake, mainly a cobra, and is depicted as the one who freed all creations to pursue their individual life cycles, which gained her the title "the Mother of all Mothers". She protects the twelve veils of negation that are believed to be flaws of the original creation. Access to these gaps would lead to the void that was Nun.

(*)Harpoons: They are what protect the pharaoh from his enemies in the Underworld. **MAFDET**

(*)Ka: a part of the soul of man to which Meskhenet will breathe into each person at the moment of his or her birth. **MESKHENET**

(*)Cubit-with-head: A tile ending with a woman's head. **MESKHENET**

(*)Nun: the primeval waters of chaos **NAUNET**

She embodies the primal womb – where cycles of life, death, and rebirth continue for all creatures and beings. In Khumunu, she is believed to be the goddess who supported the mountains that helped support the sky where the sun god was born from the watery abyss.

Pakhet, Pachet, Pehkhet, Phastet, Pasht (Image 26)

Goddess of: Motherhood, war

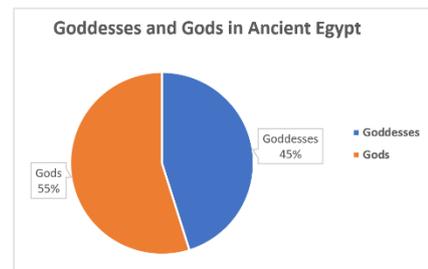
Pakhet is the goddess of war and her following was mainly found during the Middle Kingdom in Beni Hassan (Al Minya). Pakhet was commonly described as the unified form of Bastet (lower Egypt) and Sekhmet (upper Egypt). She became a deity on her own when Bastet took the form of a domesticated cat and Sekhmet as a fearsome lioness in the middle kingdom. Pakhet was considered to be less domesticated than Bastet but less ferocious than Sekhmet. Her name had meant “she who tears” or “she who snatches” which was suggestive of her fierce nature. She took the form of a lion, a desert wildcat, or the form of a woman with a lion’s head. She also was commonly seen wearing a solar disc as part of her crown. She acquired many roles from Bastet such as protector of mothers, thus making her the goddess of motherhood. She was also a huntress and was given the name “Night Huntress” as she was believed to wander the desert at night to catch her prey. This made her associated with desert storms, presumably due to her connection to Sekhmet. She is believed to use her sharp eyes and pointed claws in killing snakes, venomous creatures, and vermin. Many people assumed she was also the goddess of the night because of this. She also had the epithet “Goddess of the Mouth of the Wadi” which was originated by the way many lions lurked in Wadis(*) to stalk the prey that is drinking water. She was also referred to as “She Who Opens the Valley”, which was assumed to originate from the flooding that occurs in the narrow valleys of Al Minya due to storms in the area. She was illustrated as a lioness standing over her fallen prey on amulets which were commonly worn for protection and fertility to represent the subdued chaos that she was. In the middle kingdom, the pharaoh Hatshepsut built an enormous shrine underground dedicated to her in Al Minya (now Beni Hassan), and thousands of mummified cats were buried there.

Mehit-Weret, Mehet-Weret (Image 27)

Goddess of: water, creation, rebirth, sky

Mehet-Weret’s name means ‘great flood’ or ‘great swimmer’, as she embodies the celestial waters

navigated by the heavenly bodies, for Egyptians viewed the upper atmosphere and the heavens as a body of water with the horizons as its banks. Mentions of her date back as far as the Pyramid Texts of Unas. She had several roles as a goddess including water, creation, and rebirth deity. However, her main role is the mother of the solar system and the personification of the Sun. Her association with Ra (sun god) caused her to be affiliated with fertility and the creation of life, and her association with water caused many to believe that she was responsible for the annual Nile flood. She is usually portrayed as a cow, with the solar disk between her horns, lying on a reed mat or atop a shrine, with a blanket draped across her back as well as other marks of divinity (e.g., a flail), but also as a cow-headed woman. Spell 17 of the Book of the Dead portrays Re as being born every day “from between the buttocks of Mehet-Weret,” and Mehet-Weret is also said to lift Re up between her horns.



The above pie chart illustrates the ratio between the most significant gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt crosschecked between the sources used. The number of the significant deities of this research sample is 62, out of which, 34 were male while 28 were female. This accounts for 55% and 45% respectively, as represented in the chart. The number of gods surpassed the number of goddesses as they account for over half the chart. Nevertheless, with just a 10% difference between the two, it is obvious that women were not perceived as inept, in fact, they seem to be undeniably valued, particularly in relevance to the time period and in comparison to other ancient civilizations that did not give women an equally important status as men, as well as the fact that all the remains and reliefs of the ancient Egyptian women and men seem to have been designed with the same manner, in terms of material, size, and preservation, such as the artwork mentioned in this article. Thereby, it is evident that women were well-respected and treasured by ancient Egyptians for many reasons but doubtlessly because of their protective and motherly nature, as well as the constant support they provided which is also depicted in many ancient Egyptian remains that are present till

(*)Wadi: an area of water near the border of the desert. **PAKHET**

this very day. It should also be mentioned that their enduring and unwavering personalities also played a huge role in their importance. Interestingly, not only were they closely equal in number to the male deities, but as discussed above in detail, they were also given very powerful and essential roles, and they proved to be extremely influential thereby they were cherished were not perceived as inept, in fact, they seem to be undeniably valued, particularly in relevance to the time period and in comparison to other ancient civilizations that did not give women an equally important status as men, as well as the fact that all the remains and reliefs of the ancient Egyptian women and men seem to have been designed with the same manner, in terms of material, size, and preservation, such as the artwork mentioned in this article. Thereby, it is evident that women were well-respected and treasured by ancient Egyptians for many reasons but doubtlessly because of their protective and motherly nature, as well as the constant support they provided which is also depicted in many ancient Egyptian remains that are present till this very day. It should also be mentioned that their enduring and unwavering personalities also played a huge role in their importance. Interestingly, not only were they closely equal in number to the male deities, but as discussed above in detail, they were also given very powerful and essential roles, and they proved to be extremely influential thereby they were cherished and worshipped widely and till this very day, people still talk about them, even millenniums later, call that influence

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Ancient Egyptian Gods

Aker- God of the horizon	Amun- God of wind, Air	Anhur- God of war, patron of the Egyptian army	Anubis- God of embalming, underworld, Mummification, afterlife, the patron god of lost souls and the helpless.
Aten- God of the Sun	Atum- God of the God of Creation. He was the first God to exist on the earth and he created all the gods and the universe.	Baal- God of thunder	Bes- Protector of pregnant women, children and the household.
Four Sons of Horus (Hapi, Amset, Duamutef, Qebehsenuef)	Geb- God of earth	Hapy- God of fertility, Nile	Heka- God of magic, Medicine.
Horus- God of sky, war, hunter, kingship.	Ihy- God of playing the sistrum	Imhotep – Medicine	Khepri- God of creation, the movement of the sun, life and resurrection.
Khnum- God of the Nile inundation from Elephantine	Khonsu- God of moon, time	Maahes- God of war, protection, weather, knives, lotuses, devouring captives, horizon.	Min- God of fertility, harvest, rain.
Monthu- God of war	Nefertum- God of sun god of lower Egypt	Nun- God of the waters of chaos out of which Re-Atum began creation.	Osiris- God of the dead, vegetation, resurrection into eternal life, protector, inundation, ruler of the underworld, afterlife.
Ptah- God of wisdom, craftsmen, pottery, creation	Ra- God of sun, light, radiance	Resheph- God of war, thunder	Seker- God of the dead
Set- God of chaos, evil, storms, desert, darkness.	Shu- God of air, atmosphere, dry winds, space, light.	Sobek- God of crocodiles	Thoth- God of wisdom, writing, knowledge, time, fantasy, speaking, inventions and moon. Arbitration, magic and the judging of the dead.
	Wepwawet- God of war	Mnevis - Sacred bull deity	

(*)

(*)الثقافة الكنفوشوسية: مجموعة من المعتقدات والمبادئ في الفلسفة الصينية تتمحور مجملها حول الأخلاق والآداب وطريقة إدارة الحكم والعلاقات الاجتماعية ثم إنتقلت إلي المجتمعات الغربية

Images



Image (1)

Amaunet

Place: Luxor

Description: Bas relief of Amunet wearing the Deshret crown and carrying a staff papyrus.



Image (2)

Anuquet

Museum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Period: New kingdom. 19th dynasty. ca. 1336–1250 B.C.

Material: Steatite

Size: Height: 8.2 cm | Width: 4.6 cm | Depth: 5.5 cm

Description: the head of the goddess Anuquet



Image (3)

Bastet

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: Late period. ca. 664 – 332 B.C.E.

Material: copper alloy

Size: Height: 15cm

Description: Bastet, the cat-headed goddess depicted standing and wearing a dress, the ousekh necklace, and holding aegis and a sistrum



Image (4)

Hathor

Museum: Brooklyn Museum, New York

Period: Late period to Ptolemaic period. ca. 664-30 B.C.E. or later

Material: Bronze, gold, electrum

Size: 7 1/2 x 1 7/16 x 2 7/8 in. (19 x 3.7 x 7.3 cm) mount (display dimensions): 10 x 2 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. (25.4 x 6.4 x 8.9 cm)

Description: Striding bronze figure of Hathor, a cow-headed goddess. She is wearing a lappet wig crowned with horns, sun-disk, uraeus on sun disk, and tall feathers behind the disk. This figure's eyes are inlaid with electrum and gold.

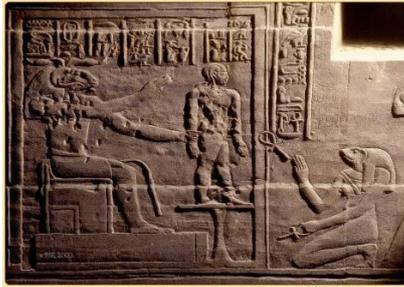


Image (5)
Heket



Image (6)

Isis

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: late period. 664 – 332 B.C.

Material: copper alloy and gold

Size: Height: 56.2 cm

Description: Isis suckling the child god, while seated. She is wearing the cow horns headdress that have the solar disc in between.



Image (7)

Maat

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: Late period. 664 – 332 B.C.

Material: copper alloy and metal

Size: Height: 7 cm

Description: Maat is depicted squatting and is crowned with an ostrich feather



Image (8)

Meretseger

Museum: Brooklyn Museum, New York

Period: New kingdom. 18th dynasty or later. ca. 1479–1400 B.C.E., or later

Material: Sandstone, pigment

Size: 14 x 4 5/8 x 8 7/8 in. (35.6 x 11.7 x 22.5 cm)

Description: Meretseger in the form of a snake-headed (specifically a cobra) woman with the body of a coiled snake. She wears a tripartite wig and is crowned by a ka sign that embraces a solar disc.



Image (9)

Mut

Museum: Egyptian Museum, Turin, Italy (Museo Egizio)

Period: New Kingdom. 19th dynasty. 1279–1213 B.C.

Material: Stone and granite.

Size: 170 x 113,5 x 94 cm

Description: Statue of Ramesses II sitting between the goddess Mut and the god Amun



Image (10)

Neith

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: Late period. ca. 664 – 332 B.C.

Material: copper alloy, metal and gold. Technique: veneer, inlaid

Size: Height: 23 cm

Description: Neith depicted standing without her scepter, crowned by the royal red crown, while wearing a necklace, uraeus, and the Ousekh collar.



Image (11)

Nekhbet

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: Late period. 26th dynasty. 664 – 525 B.C.

Material: gilded copper alloy and metal

Size: Height: 25.8 cm | Width: 4.6 cm | Thickness: 7.5 cm

Description: Nekhbet depicted wearing a tripartite wig, atef divine crown, and the Ousekh necklace

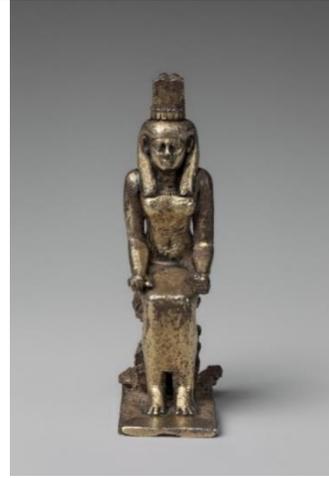


Image (12)

Nephthys

Museum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Period: Late Period. 26th dynasty. ca. 715–650 B.C.

Material: gilded silver

Size: height: 6.4 cm, width: 2 cm, depth: 4 cm

Description: the goddess Nephthys seated on a throne that has an inscription that reads: "words spoken by Nephthys, who embellishes the chapels, who gives life, prosperity, health and a long life to Mereskhonsu, justified.". Most likely, this statue was a pendant used in temples and was probably owned by Mereskhonsu who might have worn it for protection.



Image (13)

Nut

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: Third intermediate period. 23rd dynasty. 730 – 745 B.C.

Material: wood. Technique: painting, stucco, varnish

Size: Height: 31 cm, Width: 29 cm, Thickness: 2.6 cm

Description: a worship scene where a woman is worshipping Rê Horakhty, and in the background, Nut is representing the sky and stars.



Image (14)

Renenetet

Museum: Egyptian Museum, Turin, Italy (Museo Egizio)

Period: Late period. 722–332 B.C.

Material: bronze and metal

Size: 10 x 2,5 x 5 cm

Description: Statuette of the goddess Renenetet



Image (15)

Sakhmet

Museum: The Louvre, Paris

Period: New kingdom. 18th dynasty. ca. 1391 – 1353 B.C.

Material: diorite

Size: Height: 231 cm, Width: 58.5 cm, Depth: 108 cm

Description: Sakhmet, the lion-headed goddess, seated and wearing the uraeus solar disk, tripartite wig, Ousekh necklace and holding the ankh sign.



Image (16)

Satet

Museum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Period: Middle Kingdom. 13th dynasty. ca. 1748-1741 B.C.

Material: Quartzite

Size: Height: 161.3 cm, width: 167.6 cm, depth: 10.2 cm

Description: in this relief, Sebekhotep III can be seen offering nemset vessels containing water to the goddesses Anuket (on the right) and Satet (on the left). The goddesses, in return, also present him with the ankh signs, symbolizing life.



Image (17)

Selket

Museum: Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Period: New kingdom. 18th dynasty. 1337 – 1347 B.C.

Material: Gilded wood

Size: Her statue: Height: 19.2 cm, length: 26 cm, Depth: 10.5 cm - the shrine: height 90 cm

Description: the golden shrine contained four canopic jars that contained Tutankhamun's internal organs. Four goddesses can be spotted standing on the sledge, one of whom is Selket (to the south). She is spreading her arms to protect the king and is covered entirely in gold, her brows and eyes lined with black, and she is wearing a scorpion headdress as well as a pleated linen dress.



Image (18)

Seshat

Museum: Brooklyn Museum, New York

Period: Middle kingdom. 12th dynasty. ca. 1919-1875 B.C.E.

Material: limestone

Size: 20 11/16 x 23 1/4 in. (52.5 x 59 cm)

Description: this relief can be found at the pyramid temple of Senwosret I. on the right, the goddess Seshat is depicted seated, while on the left her epithet is incised.



Image (19)

Tefnut

Place: Necropolis of Thebes, Valley of the kings, Egypt

Period: New kingdom. 19th dynasty

Description: The lion-headed goddess Tefnut is depicted alongside the god Ptah.



Image (20)

Tawret

Museum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Period: Ptolemaic Period. 332–30 B.C.

Material: Glassy faience

Size: Height: 11 cm, Width: 3.3 cm, Depth: 4.8 cm

Description: The blue faience statuette of the goddess Tawret is meant to scare away demons. The post present on the head probably supported a sun disk crown, surmounted by horns or feathers and the symbol in front of her paws is probably the Sa Amulet.



Image (21)

Wadjet

Museum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Period: Late period. 26th dynasty. 664–525 B.C.

Material: Leaded bronze

Size: Height: 63 cm

Description: a large statue of Wadjet in a form of a seated woman with the head of a lioness.



Image (22)

Werethekau

Museum: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Period: New Kingdom. 18th Dynasty. Reign of Thutmose IV. 1400–1390 B.C.

Material: Cedar

Size: Height x width: 22.5 x 29 cm (8 7/8 x 11 7/16 in.)

Description: a wooden panel, originally the arm of a throne found in the tomb of Thutmose IV. He is depicted as a sphinx crushing his foreign enemies, from one side, and from the other is seated and guarded by the deities Weret-Hekau and Thoth.



Image (23)

Anat

Museum: The British Museum

Period: 19th dynasty

Material: limestone

Size: Height: 75 cm, Thickness: 8 cm, Width: 48 cm

Description: Qeh and his family worshipping the goddess Anat



Image (24)

Mafdet

Museum: Brooklyn Museum, New York

Period: Ptolemaic period. 3rd century B.C.

Material: Limestone

Size: 11 x 16 1/8 x 3 3/4 in. (28 x 41 x 9.5 cm)



Image (25)

Meskhenet

Museum: The British Museum

Period: 19th dynasty

Material: painted papyrus

Size: Length: 67 cm (frame), Width: 42 cm (frame)

Description: a scene from the hall of judgement, that shows the deities, Renenutet and Meskhenet, observing the proceedings.



Image (26)

Pakhet

Description: temple of Pakhet In Al Minya



Image (27)

Mehit-Weret

Museum: The Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Period: Dates back to the 18th dynasty, from the reign of King Tutankhamun

Material: stuccoed and painted gilded wood, in the form of sacred animals whose eyes are inlaid with colored glass paste, while the surface of the bed is made of fibers covered with a layer of stucco. Size: Height: 188 cm, width: 128 cm, length: 208 cm Description: Mehet-Weret, the cow goddess carved onto a Funerary Bed that was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings by Carter and Carnarvon. This bed may have been intended to carry the deceased king throughout his journey to his eternal destination in the afterlife.