

Fashion Depictions of Non-Elite Women in the Tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El Gebel as a Culture Heritage

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Abstract:

Fashion has become an important part of human identity and culture. Clothes were the simple and basic way of representing identity and social classes. Clothing strikingly characterizes the social structures and epochs in their ongoing change through its many functions and qualities. Therefore, historic and ancient clothes are layered with hidden insights.

The depiction of daily life scenes in Ancient Egyptian tombs reflects their ideas, concepts, messages and lifestyle. The clothing fashion of men and woman of several levels of ancient Egyptians were depicted in the tomb's wall from all periods of ancient Egypt. The tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El-Gebel in Minia which includes a variety of dress styles is a good example of those tombs.

This study aims to highlight the different depictions of non-elite women dresses in the tomb of Petosiris through classification of the different groups of female dresses according to their activities and occupations at the tomb scenes. This study depends on a descriptive and analytical methodology to achieve its aims. Results of this study reveal that fashion in clothes itself is a sort of continuous cultural heritage expressing the identity and social class of its owner.

Keywords: Non-elite women, Fashion, Petosiris tomb, Ancient and Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Introduction

Clothes might carry many important signs according to their shape, color, fabric, decoration and techniques expressing the identity over ethnicity, age, religion, education and social class (Akdemir, 2018). Ancient Egyptians were extremely interested in fashion and its changes (Strouhal, 1996). In the tomb scenes, the costumes and styles of women from the Upper Classes were copied by those who belongs to the Lower Classes (Brewer, 2007).

The study of ancient Egyptian women sometimes isn't clarified that texts and monuments were produced by men. Although some elite women may have been literate, there are no surviving texts, except possibly some letters, that are known to have been written specifically by or for women (Robins, 1997). The images of women found on monuments were almost certainly produced by men since no professional female artist is attested

anywhere. Thus, what we know about women represents a male point of view, and women do not speak directly to us (Redford,2001).

Non-elite women in this study may be identified as women without inscribed noble titles or names, wearing clothes of lower or middle class and lastly earning money from humble occupations (Kilany,2007).

The tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El Gebal is one of the most significant temple tombs¹ Late and Ptolemaic Periods in Egypt as the number of decorated tombs with some daily life scenes during this period is very limited comparing to those of the Ancient Egyptian. (Dodson,2008). The tomb dates to the late 4th and early 3rd centuries. It is a family tomb of Petosiris the high priest of the god Thoth at Hermopolis at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period (Lefebvre,1924). The tomb shows a mixture of Egyptian and Greek influences in its architectural and decoration (Helck,1985).

It is known that the present can be the mirror of the past. Clothing itself is a sort of cultural heritage. The heritage of dress is safeguarded through eras however it needs considerably more care to preserve that heritage for future generations (Wild,2003). Fashion heritage, its origin, development, and purpose have received little attention from researchers. It is often associated with the history of museums and exhibitions, companies and luxury fashion houses. In December 2018, the House of Chanel organized a big fashion show in the Egyptian Section of the Metropolitan Museum at New York. It was inspired by the ancient Egyptian dresses. It was a real hit for Chanel.

Many studies focused on dress and fashion throughout ancient Egyptian time and the Graeco- Roman period (Robins,1993), (Vogelsang,1993), (Rowlandsom,1998), (Entwistle,2000), (Brewer,2007) and (El Tiebi,2018). They discuss the clothing different types in Ancient Egypt, its construction and how they were made, based on surviving garments.

This study aims to highlight the depiction of different styles of dress of the non-elite women in the tomb of Petosiris and relate them with our heritage today. The objectives of this study are summarized in displaying the different scenes of women fashion in the tomb of Petosires, classifying the different group of fashion according to the female occupations or activities and lastly detect and explore the continuous tradition of women fashion till our modern time. It depends on a descriptive and analytical methodology to achieve its aims.

Ancient Egyptian Dress

Dress in Ancient Egypt was so simple according to men and women. Man was commonly dressed in short kilts while women were dressed in long and tabular fitting robes with or

¹It was known as the temple tomb because of its façade resembles that of the temple of Dendera (نور الدين،1999).

without shoulder straps. The straps were sometimes represented as if they went between breasts; however, elsewhere they were depicted as quite broad and covering both breasts.

They were wearing elaborately pleated tunics and a profusion of fringed shawls and scarves that were tied in a variety of ways to enhance the figure. Sometimes the length of the dress denoted the social class of the wearer (Robins,1997). The sheath dress was often referred to by modern scholars from all the various styles of women's costume which depicted in Egyptian art. It was worn by all classes of women, including queens and goddesses (Barber,2021).

Thus, the standard apparel of women was the sheath dress, which could be worn strapless or with two broad shoulder straps. Then over time Egyptian fashion became increasingly elaborate. (Vogelsang,1992). Most examples of these dresses reach the ankles, and most sources depict women wearing impossibly tight and impractical dresses, suggesting that the representations are idealized to emphasize the sensuality of the female body (Smith,1998). Even though the dress was represented as if it was quite form-fitting, revealing the outlines of the hip and legs, the real examples that have been excavated are much looser. (El Tiebi,2018).

During the New kingdom, when Egypt extended its political influence east into Asia, Egyptian fashion changed radically. With the influx of trade and ideas from the east. Fashions became more varied, changed more quickly, and often took an eastern flavor (Houston,2002). Women and men of the upper classes for example, wore layers of fine, nearly transparent kilts and long- or short-sleeved shirts that tied at the neck, or draped themselves in billowing robes of fine linen that extended from neck to ankle and were drawn in at the waist by a sash². It is a piece of cloth wrapped around the body or around the waist. The best examples of these garments were heavily pleated, and some were ornamented with colored ball fringe (Wilkinson,2005). Vogelsang-Eastwood (1992-1993) believes that there were not only one but many versions of the wraparound dress, made from one or two lengths of cloth. In all cases, the garment consisted of a large rectangle of linen, with a fringe along one side (Bingen,2007).

As the climate of Egypt is warm, it influenced the style of dress, the Egyptians adapted simple styles as it mentioned and comfortable materials in which to dress from the Old Kingdom to Ptolemaic times (Bunson,1991). The primary fabric used by the Egyptians for clothing was linen. Because it is very hard to dye, most clothes were off-white, so color was added with heavy beaded collars and other jewelry (Arnold,2003). It was woven in numerous weights, from "royal," through fine thin, thin cloth, and smooth ordinary cloth. Wool was less frequently used (Rosaling,1986). Examples of cotton have been found in Ptolemaic contexts, but cotton was commonly produced in Egypt only from the Roman period onward. Only occasional examples of imported silk have been found from the Ptolemaic period (Rowlandson,1998).

²The sash is a length of cloth usually worn around the waist, or upper part of the body (Vogelsang-Eastwood,1993).

For most of the Ancient Egyptian period, women wore their hair or wigs long and straight; after the 18th Dynasty the hairstyles became more elaborate (Baines,2002). These wigs were made of human hair or plant fiber. ³Both genders wore copious amounts of perfumes and cosmetics made of ground minerals and earth pigments. Fashion statements were made with accessories such as jewelry and ribbons (David,2007).

Dress in the Graeco-Roman period

Ptolemies and Romans introduced into Egypt a new set of cultural and social values, which had a considerable impact on the social and legal status of women and children. As in most societies, fashion in Egypt changed over time; different clothes were worn at different seasons of year, and by different sections of society (Nifosi,2019). The Roman style was built on intricate draping rather than the cutting of the garment. The women wore a variety of tunic and stola ensembles. As the tunic was the basic garment for both genders and classes, there was the Greek version which was known as the chiton worn by both men and women (Motaal&Ebied,2022). There was also the cloak or the so-called himation that was worn over the tunic as an outer garment of various lengths (Abrahams,1964). It was worn by both males and females indoors or outdoors (Vogelsang-Eastwood,1993).

Fashion served as a social indicator in the Graeco-Roman period that cleared the differentiation between the elite from the commoners through jewelry and adornments (Wild ,2003). In all periods, women's dresses may have been enhanced by colorful bead netting worn over the top (Rooijakkers,2011). In the Roman period, Egypt became known for the manufacture of fine clothing. Sandals of leather or basketry are the most attested types of footwear (Rowlandson,1998).

In Graeco-Roman Egypt, fashion was characterized by simplicity and functionality, designed for comfort in hot climate. Linen was the predominant fabric, valued for its lightness and breathability. The Romans used different materials in their clothes, the same kinds of materials in more than one garment. The stola⁴ was sometimes made of wool, silk or linen (Gaubert,2020). Wool was the most used material, particularly during the Roman era. Most clothing for daily use, and undoubtedly the common clothes of the poor were made of dull or unmarked wool and displayed the colors of the fabric naturally or purr poor-quality (Barber,2021).

³Wigs not only for fashion but also to protect the hair or bale scalp from dust and the heat of the sun (Brewer,2007).

⁴Stola; was the primary outdoor garment for married women in ancient Rome. (Cleland,2007)

Scenes of Women Fashion at the Tomb of Petosiris

Through detecting the representations of non-elite women at the tomb of Petosiris, this study has classified those scenes into three categories according to the activities of women; the first group is the harvest scenes, the second group is the offering bearers' scenes, the last group is mourning scenes.

A-Harvest scenes:

The ancient Egyptian economy depended heavily on agriculture, that is why they depicted agricultural activities in their tombs, such as plowing, sowing, and harvest. (Bagnall,2008). According to the scenes harvest was the only activity that women were involved in. Females working at the agricultural services were regarded as low-class members. They seem to be poor and very simple people (Robins,1993). Women were housewives and they worked as part timers in the season of the harvest to improve the income of their families. (Kilany,2007)

On the eastern wall of the pronaos, in the upper register there is a harvest scene fig. (1) showing a peasant who uses his sickle to cut the grain and a child who garters the wheatears and bring them to a woman which may be his mother (Darwish&Lilian,2019). For the woman's fashion, she wears a wrapped long dress. She is presented with a male child in the harvesting scene. The Egyptian customs have allowed women to perform agricultural work in the fields. As it seen here in the tomb of Petosiris. She is wearing a long-wrapped tight dress and holding a bag on her shoulder, with a curly medium Greek wig (Rowlandson,1998).



Figure (1)

B- Offering Bearers scenes

The pronaos of the tomb is decorated with daily life scenes in a hybrid Greek/Egyptian style, while the walls of the naos only carry religious scenes represented in traditional style. (David,2002). Even though it could be seen an exception in the lower register of the western and eastern walls which show the procession of offering bearers in a mixed style of art as seen in figures (2-7) which resembles the daily life scenes of the pronaos in a mixed Graeco-Roman iconography (Bagnall,2008). In this context there are two kinds of scenes here representing women fashion the first one is representing woman with fashion ethnical difference and the second scene shows a mother fashion dress.

The first representation of the female fashion in the offering bearer's category is located at the lowest register of the western and eastern walls of the naos (Rowlandson,1995). There is a traditional depiction of men and women are carrying offerings. They carry vessels, sacrificial animals such as oryxes, ibexes, and bovids, bouquets of flowers, lotuses, fruit and others (Cherpion,2007). The lowest register of the east wall shows a traditional depiction of men and women carrying offerings to Sishu. Those people were distinguished by their facial features, hairstyle, and dress characterizing the ethnically diverse population of Graeco-Roman Egypt. They were from different cultural identities, Libyans, Nubians or Ethiopians and Greeks (1998، نصحي). Women wear long wrapped dress with two or only one strap. The dresses were designed without sleeves to help them in holding the offerings, whatever in their hands or above their heads as could be seen. They wear different shapes of short wigs which are practical in the hot climate (Strouhal,1996).

Scenes of offerings 'bearers in the western wall of the naos



Figure (2)



Figure (3)



Figure (4)

Scenes of the offering's bearers in the eastern wall of the naos



Figure (5)



Figure (6)



Figure (7)

The second representation of the female fashion in the offering bearer's category located at the western and eastern wall of the naos of Petosiris tomb. The scenes depict mother-bearers with their children. The dresses have a sash drawn in the waist as a shawl to cover the baby from the hot and maybe while they are feeding them as in figures (8- 12) a bag tunic such as this one in figure (10) which used as a baby carrier to keep the baby child in it during their works. The bag -tunic was passed down through different eras to become favorable dress for Egyptians in modern era for clear reasons such as looseness and allowed to the free movement especially in work and fit to the hot weather in Egypt (Janssen,1975). In upper Egypt the Galabyia a new version of the bag -tunic became the basic cloth to time being for men and women but in different design (Ebied,2016).

The artist in these depictions put some emotional hints such as a mother kissing her child to represent the motherhood relation by showing the maternal love in the look of their

eyes and making them very close such in these scenes. As could be seen in figure (8), the child is being held by his mother's right arm. The duty of mother doesn't interfere with her work. So, the amazing design of her dress as bag tunic to help her holding her child while catching at the same time the offerings.

Scenes of mothers' bearers in the western wall of the naos



Figure (8)



Figure (9)



Figure (10)



Figure (11)



Figure (12)

Scenes of mothers' bearers in the eastern wall of the naos



Figure (13)



Figure (14)



Figure (15)

C- Mourning Scene Category

In the south wall of the pronaos, in the scene of a bull sacrifice (fig,16) even though the style which appeared in the garments, hairstyle and poses are depending on the Greek style. the gesture of the veiled woman seems to be Egyptian than Greek gesture (Venit,2016). The family of the deceased is in front of the tomb. They are wearing here the cloak which is pulled up over their heads to cover them when they are overcoming by emotion to hide their sadness. Despite the existence of Greek formal elements in this scene, the shown moment remains Egyptian, because in Egypt the sacrifices help the deceased in achieving the eternal life (Zein,2021).



Figure (16)

Discussion and Results

From the previous scenes, the study can discuss certain ideas. Tomb art was probably meant to be interpreted on several levels. The most basic was its literal depiction of daily life: scenes of harvest provide details about agriculture (fig 1), images of different crafts. The clothes worn from the ancient Egyptian period until the Graeco-Roman period reflect many aspects of their lives (Ikram,2011).

The sources from which scholars can learn about women present several gaps and biases that make it difficult to obtain a complete picture of ancient Egyptian society and the place of women within it. Most of the extant evidence was produced by and for the king and the elite. Although textual and representational materials of the elite include images of the non-elite, those were produced specifically to serve the purposes of the elite and provide limited information about the nonelite (Vogelsang,1993).

Although the artist in the magnificent tomb of Petosiris gives a great interest of the non-elite women, the tomb reflects the first impact of Greek art and culture of Egypt. Some aspects, such as the use of profile, echelon, and stance, hark back to a Nilotic past, but the musculature, individual likeness, irregular spacing, and costume point to the advent of a classical Greek style. The reliefs are important in demonstrating how, at the beginning of Ptolemaic period, in contrast to what was to come later (Rowlandsom,1996).

The scenes in this tomb represents a great inspiration as well as regarding the way the figures dressed, giving a great variety of fashion for female. It improves that dress is not only material for covering the body but also seen as an artifact. Dress is therefore considered to be a cultural and social indicator.

The tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El-Gebel represents a fashion show for all community classes. The combination between Egyptian and Greek civilization results a new form of fashion. Women wore a variety of tunic and stola ensembles.

The tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El Gabel is one of the tombs that has witnessed different times of foreign occupations. It includes a hybrid style of art in its decoration. The combination between Egyptian and Greek civilization results a new form of fashion (Dodson,2008).

In Ancient Egypt, linen was by far the most common textile. It helped people to be comfortable in the subtropical heat (Lutz,1986). The fashions of the ancient Egyptians were made for not only beauty but also comfort. Egyptian fashion was created to keep cool while in the hot desert (Green,2001).

The scene of harvest in the tomb of Petosiris proved that the customs have allowed women to perform agricultural work in the fields. Harvest was the only activity that women were involved in relating to agricultural services.⁵

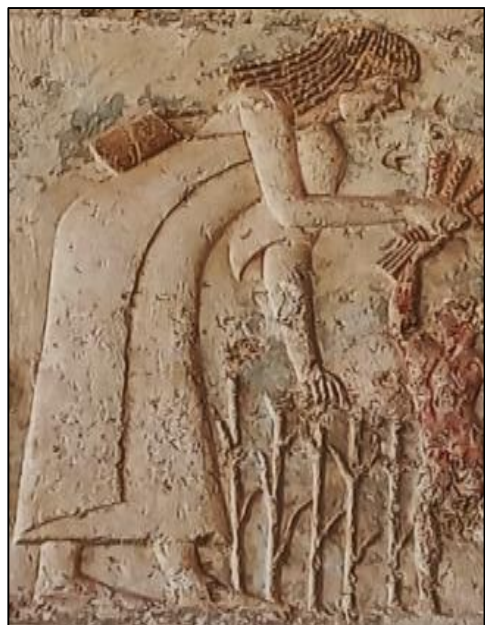
The diversity of dress's style emphasizes the artist interest of the different duties of women. The clothes of women in the tomb reflect the close relation between a mother and her child. according to her job and help her in another way to do her motherhood role. A wife and mother had many daily tasks beginning with the sunrise. Even though men held the place of authority, women kept the home functioning; whether they did so personally or supervised the works of servants. Women in Ancient Egypt had great rights than in any other civilization. (Silverman,1997). It reflects that woman is an important part of the society. All through different ages she can be able to do many roles at the same time.

The diversity of dresses and poses of the mother with her child was not designed haphazardly by the artist, it was apparently according to the age of the child as could be seen in figures (9) and (12) the newborn babies were hold by mothers wearing the bag tunic or a shawl⁶ as a baby carrier to keep them safe and as a cover help in feeding them. While the bigger ones were held on mother's shoulders as it is in figures (11) and (13). The young boys could be seen standing beside their mothers help them as in figure (1) in the harvest scene and with the female offerings bearers as in figures (10) and (15). Figure (14) shows how was the mother afraid about her son and held his hand. Even though being mothers, the artist was interested in showing them with tight warped robes showing their beauty.

Fashion heritage renews the relationship between the past and the present with its technological innovations. Clothing is a visible means of expressing ideas and ideals. The study proved that most of survival clothing in time perhaps has deeply rooted in ancient Egyptian civilization. Although it may differ in their design and motives today, they all are keeping the main elements of an older Egyptian style. Examples of this heritage can be noticed in the cross-bag, baby carrier and the facial veil that cover the women faces during funeral. Even The depictions of motherhood emotions keep the same way of showing the reality of mother's feelings towards her baby as it presented in figure (8). The continuity and similarity of fashion heritage through past and present will be seen in the following figures (17-26):

⁵The agriculture role of women in the Graeco-Roman period is divided into two sections, the participation of women in agricultural work, The women's possession of agricultural land and their management (Motaal,2019).

⁶Shawl is used to describe an outer garment worn by both men and women. It consisted of an oblong, square or rectangle of cloth which only covered the upper part of the body (Janssen,1975).



Figures (17)



Figure (18)



Figures (19)

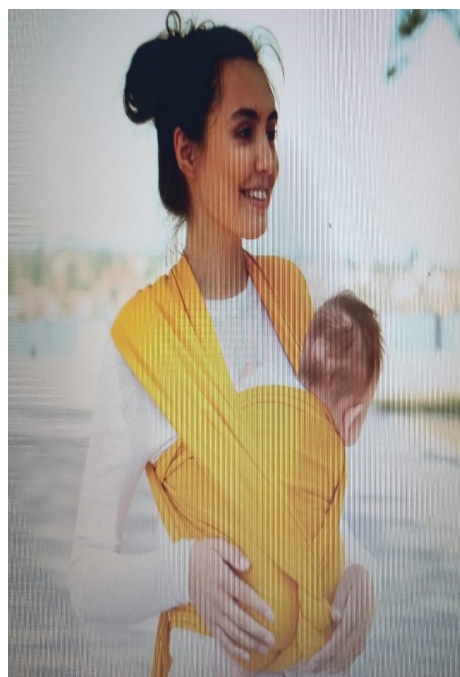


Figure (20)



Figures (21)

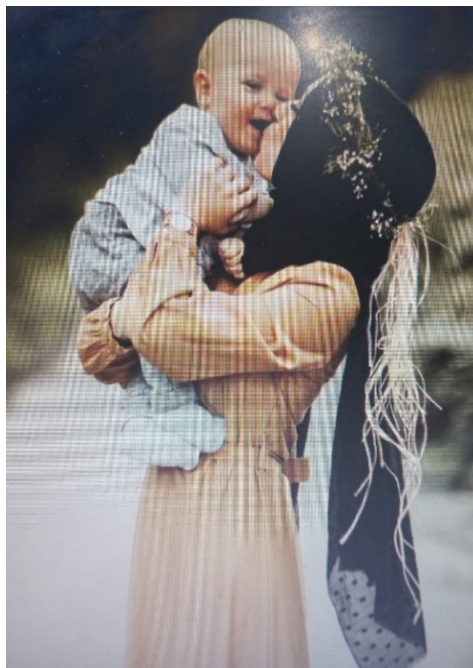


Figure (22)



Figures (23)

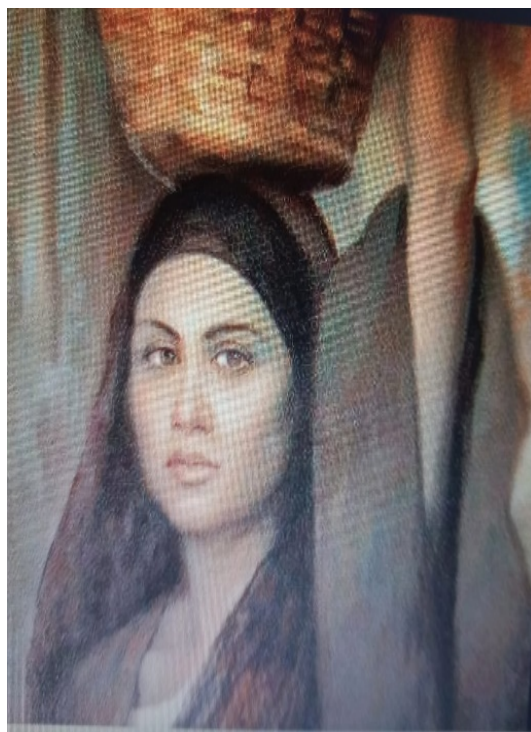


Figure (24)



Figures (25)

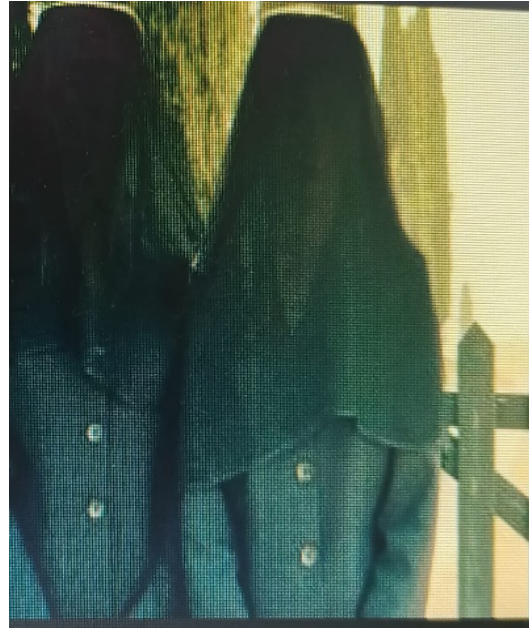


Figure (26)

Conclusion

From the previous the following points can be concluded:

This study managed to highlight the female fashion of non-elite women in the tomb of Petosiris at Tuna El-Gabal. This study counted more than ten figures for female fashion during the Egyptian and the early Hellenistic Period.

Female fashion depiction in the tomb of Petosisiris were classified into three categories including harvest scenes, offering bearers scenes and mourning scene.

Concerning harvest scene there are representation of female fashion consists of a woman with her practical dress for working reflects the interest of the artist by the details such as the shoulder hanging bag which she holds to help her.

Concerning offering bearers' scenes, they are representation of women wearing the warped robes with different styles of wigs reflecting ethical diversity during this period. Moreover, there scenes of mother' fashion which diverse according to the age of her child, that it could be noticed of a woman wear a bag tunic as a baby carrier to help her in holding her child during her work reflecting the various duties of the mother and how she could make balance between all her responsibility. This scene shows how was the fashion interested with all the daily life details.

Concerning mourning scenes, it represents a veiled woman trying to cover her sadness by the veil which was worn by the widow of Sishu reflects that even the way of showing

emotions still the same up till now, that women take a shawl or scarf to wear in the funerals to cover her face as a kind of sad appearance.

There are many features of women fashion of this study may be still detected as a culture heritage of our modern days such as (figures; from 17 to 26) which reflects the greatness and the pioneer of our ancestors. The diversity of dress style according to the status of the women as being single or married and even the mothers dress different according to the age of the child which appear in the bag tunic and the baby carrier. The cross bag in figure (1) proved that fashion heritage is characterized by continuity between past and present. The veil which wearing by women in funeral which still until now to cover sadness as in figure (16). The artist in the tomb of Petosiris is interested with all the details of each occupation, attitude and even the feelings which show the relation between mother and her child in the way of mother look to her child with love and kissing him as in figure (8). The artist show the strength of women and how they are holding heavy offerings as in figures (7&15) and in sometimes also with her child as in figure (13). All that shows the high value of fashion heritage.

Clothes may deepen our appreciation of the many various roles that dress plays in ancient art. Yet current literature often provides 'snapshots' of this appreciation, showing only a few garments in use. A detailed examination of dress can provide more profound insights into an ancient garment. Further studies are required to conduct a comprehensive project about the cloth heritage of ancient Egyptians and find out the possibilities to make a full benefit using our heritage to create an international ancient Egyptian brand based on our fashion heritage.

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مناظر الأزياء لطبقة النساء دون النخبة في مقبرة بيتوزيريس بتونا الجبل كتراث ثقافى

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الملخص العربى

تعتبر الأزياء بمثابة مرآة للتراث الثقافى للمجتمع، فهى تحديد لهوية كل إنسان ودوره ومكانته على مر العصور. و تعد مناظر الحياة اليومية في المقابر المصرية القديمة هي إنعكاس لرؤيتهم وأفكارهم وتقاليدهم، فلابد أن الأزياء تعتبر في جوهرها لغة تتحدث بالنيابة عن الإنسان وتقوم بتوصيل العديد من المعرفة لنا. تعتبر مقبرة بيتوزيريس بتونا الجبل مثال واضح وفعال لعرض مختلف أنماط الملابس سواء للرجال أو النساء على حد سواء. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إلقاء الضوء على تصاوير مناظر الأزياء لطبقة النساء دون النخبة اللاتى لا ينتمين إلى طبقة النبيلات بالمقبرة كتراث ثقافى ويتم توضيح ذلك من خلال عرض لصور مأخوذة من المقبرة ومضاهاتها بمثلها في تراثنا المعاصر. كما يتضح مدى ملاءمة ملابسهن وفقا لاختلاف ما يقومون به من أعمال وأحوال متباينة. وقد تحققت أهداف الرسالة من خلال إتباع الباحثين للمنهج التوصيفى التحليلى و كان من أهم النتائج التي خلصت إليها الدراسة وجود مظاهر متعددة في أزياء النساء دون النخبة كتراث ممتد إلى يومنا هذا مما يؤكد أن هناك الكثير من التاريخ الخفى وراء الأزياء و أن ما نرتديه في يومنا الحالى ما هو إلا جزء من تراثنا الثقافى الذى يمتد عبر العصور مما يدل على أصالته وعراقتة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأزياء-طبقة النساء دون النخبة-مقبرة بيتوزيريس-مصر القديمة واليونانية الرومانية