

Summary of the doctoral thesis

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„New Kingdom three dimensional representations of non-royal women”

All civilized societies believe in the significant role of women in building society and enhancing their position to be strong and effective in the community. In order to achieve that, women have been struggling for centuries to obtain its full exercise of personal rights. Yet, it is clear from both the pictorial evidences and written records that women in ancient Egypt enjoyed a privileged position in society, but there are still enough differences between Egyptian women and their ancient and modern sisters to be value writing about.

Recently, a growing attention has been given to study the social status of women in ancient Egyptian civilization. Numerous scientific articles and books have been published about this topic, and most of them concentrated on the royal women and queenship in ancient Egypt. These publications and monographs have not offset the acute lack of the information we have about women in ancient Egypt. In order to fill the gap, it is necessary to extend the scope of scientific research to include the non-royal women who formed with their counterparts the broadest segment of society.

Although, they were prominently represented in art and literature, little is known about non-royal women in ancient Egypt. The overall image that emerges from the literature is inadequate, because there are few literary evidences of their representations left; the most helpful and richest sources of information about their professions and activities are to be found in the art, especially the artwork associated with tombs: wall paintings, reliefs, statuary, and funerary models. In Egyptian art, representations of non-royal women may be divided into two main categories. One depicted elite women, who are usually identified by name and with one or more titles. The other presents non-elite women who usually remain anonymous. The elite women sometimes have monuments of their own, but they are represented much more frequently in the funerary monuments of their male relatives.

The study of three-dimensional representations of non-royal women, particularly in the New Kingdom, a time span of almost five hundred years of political stability and economic prosperity, which produced an abundance of artistic masterpieces representing non-royal individuals, certainly provides us with significant information and increases our knowledge about non-royal women's status in ancient Egyptian society.

The aim of the study is bilateral. First, to present a catalogue of the extant pieces. This has been implemented through a corpus of two hundred and thirty-two statues that has been dated to individual reigns of the New Kingdom and is arranged according to the composition of the statues. This corpus brings together the materials found in the museums all over the world with special attention to the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Second, to establish criteria for dating statues, which seem to have no specific dating criteria or provenance. The second aim has been achieved based on accurate analysis of the following four features:

Attitudes. Throughout the ancient Egyptian history, there were specific rules followed by artisans when producing artifacts, imposed by the religious and funerary beliefs. These rules committed them to produce restricted attitudes in their sculptures. Nevertheless, in the New

Kingdom, a new spirit began to flourish in art, a rich and diverse repertory of subjects challenged the rules of representation, and artists met the challenge through experiments with innovative positions. Numerous representations of women survive from this period witnessing this innovation and stylistic variation, particularly during the reign of Amenhotep III and his successors. Of the standing attitudes, the pose of a woman standing with the left foot forward and one arm hanging down by side, the other elbow bent, was one of the most common attitudes in the New Kingdom. It is well attested in the reign of Amenhotep III. As of the seated attitudes, especially group of two, the couple seated side by side and embracing each other was the most popular attitude in the New Kingdom particularly during the 18th dynasty. The figures usually represent husband and wife rather than a son or a mother. In the majority of statues, the man is placed on the right side of the woman, the symbolically dominant side of the group. There are, however, many exceptions.

The kneeling pose is attested in many statuettes showing a woman with a child or pregnant. This attitude characterizes pottery vessels that were produced in the 18th dynasty and are usually dated to the period spanning the reigns of Thutmose and or Amenhotep III. These vessels may have served as both containers in this life and servants in the afterlife.

Women are rarely represented in squatting attitude and always-depicted in-group. The laying pose is a specific shape of cosmetic spoons, especially in the form of swimmers. The women's body is nude or wears only a belt and is holding a container in the outstretched arms. The latter may be round, rectangular or cartridge shape or in the form of a duck, gazelle, fish or bouquet. They attested particularly in the second half of the 18th dynasty. They are made of wood, bone, ivory, or stone. The exact purpose of these devices is still unclear. Most were found in graves, but some have also been found in houses and palaces. They may have been used for presenting a liquid ointments and cosmetic essences.

Hairstyles. Hair and its fashion were important to the ancient Egyptians as symbols of wealth and social status as well as an enhancement to personal appearance. Alongside natural hair, there were the various styles of wigs that interested women most. The wigs were not only an essential head-cover for ceremonies and other important occasions, but they also reduced the risk of infestation by head-lice and protected the wearer against the sun. The analysis of women's hairstyles in the private statuary of the New Kingdom shows that they may be divided into two main types; the first is the traditional tripartite style, widespread in the first part of the 18th dynasty, and the enveloping style with various treatments of locks.

Costumes. In the course of New Kingdom, a special attention was given to the design and decoration of the women's attires. The analysis of non-royal women's costume during this period provided us with valuable information. The traditional sheath dress was still in use alongside other different costumes. It was in the New Kingdom that the great revolution in women's clothing came about. Sporadically, in the reign of Amenhotep III, there was a dramatic shift in the style of clothing. The attire became more varied and sophisticated. One of the most remarkable developments is the appearance of the voluminous pleated wraparound dresses. Some dresses cover only one shoulder, the other shoulder, and breast remaining bare, except when it concealed behind a light veil or the edge of the wrap or cloak.

The wraparound dress is still in wear in present day Egypt, particularly in places where tradition is respected. It is called "Melaya Laf". It consists of a large, rectangle wrap either plain or pleated (at least 200 centimeters long and 100 centimeters wide) worn over clothes for

modesty, warmth, and protection, usually decorated with embroidered strip. The dress with many varieties of drapery sometimes gave the impression of completely different clothing, also depending on the material of the cloth. Women's clothing was becoming elegant and unquestionably sexy during the New Kingdom. Dancing girls, musicians, like the young servants represented with no more to cover them than a belt around the buttocks and across the pubis, or a scanty kerchief for modesty.

Accessories. Since Predynastic times, the ancient Egyptians were interested in their personal adornments. They used to wear jewelry for different reasons such as personal adornment, sexual attractiveness, religious symbolism, as well as magical protection. Non-royal women in the New Kingdom wore different types of jewelry. The most common category of jewelry was the broad-collar composed of cylindrical beads strung vertically in rows. In the early 18th dynasty, it was enhanced by geometrical patterns such as zigzags and vertical banding. By the reign of Amenhotep III, a special design consisting of triangle figures resembling lotus flowers appeared particularly in the cosmetic spoons in a form of swimming girl. Necklaces, bracelets, armbands, anklets, and ear ornaments were presented in various types of designs and materials.

In general, the vast majority of the statues under study came from Upper Egypt. The largest number of the statues belongs to Thebes, where it was the political capital of the country for a long time during this period, Necropolis of Saqqara being one of the main sources, particularly in the late 18th and 19th dynasty, while Medinet el-Ghurob in Faiyum is another important source especially in the period of Amenhotep III/IV. These statues have produced to serve a rich and diverse repertory of subjects. They have been found in different contexts and surely served various purposes. Most were found in tombs, but some have also been found in temples, houses, or palaces. The statues are made of various materials: most frequently stone, particularly limestone and less frequently wood, pottery, or bronze. The surfaces of the statues were usually painted, or sometimes overlaid with gold foil, but only a few statues now preserve parts of this coating.

The statues were made in different sizes; there are statues in the life size along with the small statuettes. Although large, even life-sized statues are known, most are small, many being less than 50 centimeters in height. In addition to single figures, statues could depict groups, most commonly wife and husband with or without their children. The two figures of the couple often represented on the same scale, standing, or sitting. Texts on the statues often took the form of the offering formula developed for funerary contexts, but asking for different benefits.

Yet, it is obvious from studying of three-dimensional representations of non-royal women in the New Kingdom that they enjoyed a wider space of freedom and respect more than their predecessors. This is evident by, the large number and rich materials along with the highest quality of the statues, which have reached us from this time span.

This study is a part of a growing body of research on women in ancient Egypt, and it will constitute a base for the future research on similar topics.