

# *Ancient Civilisations influenced by the Feminine Principle:*

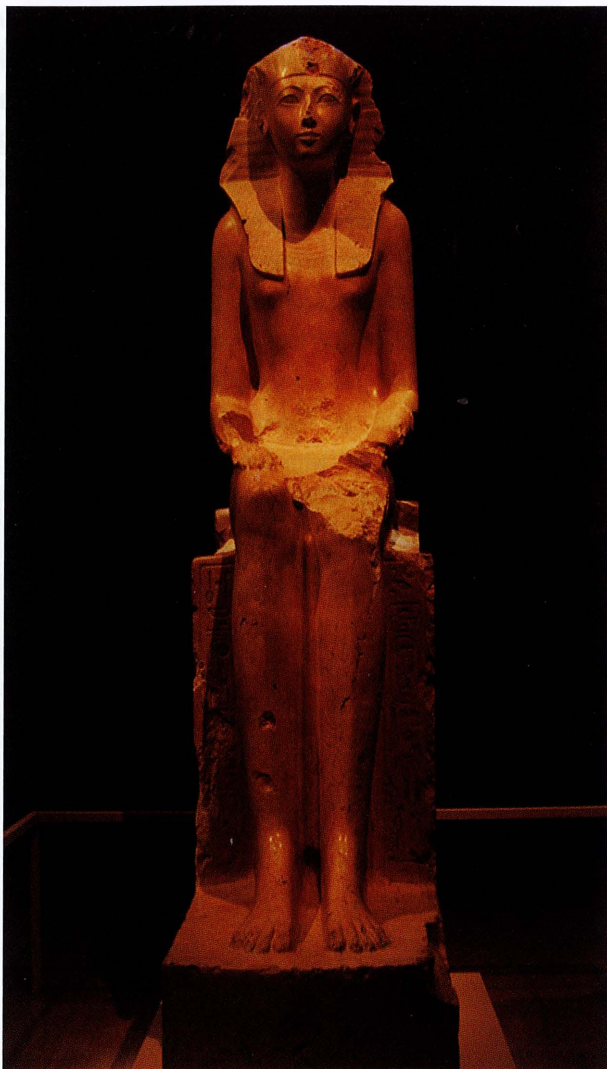
## The Egyptians

By Valerie Dupont, SRC

Obviously we cannot ignore Egypt, part of civilisation where women had an important and well-known role since its very beginnings during the 4th millennium BCE. With the Egyptians, as with the Hittites, war was rarely an end in itself. It was instead an art required to protect itself from bellicose neighbours rather than a social principle. Egypt had actually very few expansionist aims, to become masters of the world rarely featured in the ambition of Pharaohs. What was more important in their eyes was maintaining territorial integrity and harmony in particular, and at all levels i.e. social cohesion, balance between the divine and the human, community interest...

Consequently, male domination was not justifiable. The military did not enjoy special attention. The principle of Life was far more important than that of Strength, and before being a warrior, the Pharaoh was a living god guaranteeing the smooth running of nature's cycles.

Hence the first concern in Egypt was primarily religious order. In religion, there were numerous, active if not pre-eminent goddesses, and priestesses who played a significant role. They made the active feminine principle constant and ubiquitous. In art, the woman is present everywhere especially in the Old Kingdom where she is represented having her arm around the husband she



Red granite statue of Queen Pharaoh Hatshepsut, Egyptian Museum, Cairo.  
Photo AMORC Tour

seems to be protecting, in an attitude that is everything but passive.

In fact, we can say that Egyptian art is one of the most feminine there has ever been, quite soft, and stressing the prettiness of women of course but also that of men. Even the most authoritarian of kings are actually represented with fine and soft features, with supple muscles. They are dressed and adorned with a variety of jewels that take on sacred meanings. In contrast to what we notice in other

contemporary civilisations, manhood is not heightened. Basically, their importance is placed elsewhere rather than in the expression of strength. It is found in the harmony they exemplify. In the first place, they stress that this harmony can only manifest through a sensitive femininity, even among men.

Egyptian art is passionate about balance even in its gigantic architectural constructions in which the desire for harmony is constantly present. When we dig a little bit further, we realise that this femininity so evident everywhere artistically is also reflected on a social level. Researchers have largely shown that the various functions, whether main or secondary, and normally reserved for men, were held by women: physicians, scribes, priestesses, artisans, poets or pharaohs whose skills, far from being questioned, were recognised from the Old Kingdom up to the Ptolemaic

**Legally, women had the right to own and manage their belongings, and they had a personal name**

period. Only during the Middle Kingdom, a very troubled period of Egyptian history, did the situation of women seem to be in decline. Is that a consequence or a coincidence? This period also is the "wildest". It appears to us as the least pleasant, the least radiant in the long evolution of this country.

Legally, women had the right to own and manage their belongings, and they had a *persona* name. The transmittance of the name and property operated in a matrilineal as well as patrilineal way. In addition, the right of the woman was not determined by a *materna* statute and recognition, as is the case in other societies. From the moment of birth, a young girl enjoyed the same legal prerogatives as a boy. Perhaps in fact, the privileges went beyond that of boys, if we believe the statements of Greek authors like Sophocles and Euripides who paint a picture of male Egyptians as "staying in a corner of their home while the woman dealt with all the business of the household."

Of course, we should take these assertions in a relative light since they came from those whose women were obliged to stay cloistered at home, withdrawn from public life (this relativity also applies to the Etruscans, as we shall see.) It was a Greek pharaoh, Ptolemy Philopator, father of Cleopatra, who decreed laws with the view of restraining the rights of women in Egypt, which shows that in this period, they had equal rights with men, and were perhaps even dominant.

The weight of this female tradition had to be more powerful because even after the various waves of conquest that flooded Egypt, it was maintained with strength. In this country up to a more recent age, women, whether peasant, Jewish, Christian, or Moslem, were to enjoy more significant rights than in other parts of the world. In Egypt, for example, some Gnostics are said to have stated that the one God was in reality a goddess, which was revealing of the thinking prevalent at the time.

Returning to Ancient Egypt in regard to the highest office of Pharaoh, we can conclude that the feminine aspect predominated because the sovereign could only legitimise his power by marrying the daughter of the king, his own sister. He needed this symbolic union to become



Baker Djehuty and Wife Ahhotep Artist Anonymous (Egypt).



"mother and father" of Egypt, by virtue of the Law of Maat or the Law of Harmony. But conversely, and contrary to the situation when a man did not accede to the throne, a woman did not need a male counterpart in order to rule. She automatically joined the two aspects of mother and father within the one person.

This supremacy was particularly evident during the reign of Arnenophis III who, on bas-reliefs representing the family, always figures with Queen Tiy and the young princesses, but never with the princes, even though the young Akhnaton was already performing an official role. This phenomenon was again accentuated under the reign of Akhnaton himself.

Numerous women, pharaohs by title or regents, played a decisive political role. The most famous of these was Hatshepsut. Considered for a long time to be a "wicked" rivalling usurper of her nephew Thutmose III,

This peaceful interaction existed with other pharaohs but is typical of the female way

she is slowly regaining favour with historians. The more that is discovered about her, the more they realise that she was an exceptional ruler, who exercised a beneficial influence over all echelons of power: artistic, political, diplomatie, and economic. The country experienced a

period of peace during her reign, and an expansion, not a military one - even though she was vigilant enough to maintain an army in readiness - but in a commercial sense. There is no doubt she cleared a positive path for her nephew, thereby contributing to his training as a wise ruler. With Hatshepsut, Egypt's glory came about more in a cultural

way rather than through force of arms, as evidence from the famous expedition to Punt suggests. This peaceful interaction existed with other pharaohs but is typical of the female way.

Egyptian history is littered with women crowned as



Tomb Valley of the Kings 14 is a joint tomb, used originally by female Twosret and then reused and extended by the male Setnakhte.



pharaohs. In some cases, these are only suppositions, as for example Merit-Neith who reigned perhaps a little after the legendary Menes or Khenet-Kaous from the Fifth dynasty. Others are more certain as with Nitocris (6th dynasty), Neferu Sobek (12th dynasty) and Taousert. The latter succeeded Sethi I. According to some evidence, her reign, although little known, seems to have been characterised by peace and prosperity. It could also be that Nefertiti was associated with the throne of Akhnaton, under the name of Semnekhare. Many other women, even though they were not pharaohs, exercised power as regents and spouses, and in every age. The period that owes most to women is no doubt that of the 18th dynasty, at the beginning of

No twist of fate  
thwarted her  
will, even during  
extremely  
troubled times

the New Kingdom, marking the undeniable pinnacle of Pharaonic civilisation.

There are firstly the three exceptional figures who presided over its development, all three from the family that shook off the Hyksos yoke, even if history only retains the name of the male surrounding them, the brilliant liberating Pharaoh Ahmosis. There's Teteisheri, the grandmother, Ahhotep the mother and Ahmes-Nefertari the sister (or cousin?) and spouse. About the first we do not know her exact activities other than the praises she received from her grandson for what she had achieved against the Hyksos. We are just left with conjectures.

Ahhotep had a better-known role because she guaranteed the continuity in power of three successive kings. No twist of fate thwarted her will, even during extremely troubled times. With her husband killed at war, she had to assume power alone. She rallied the people as did the noble Theban, unified the country, and reigned while her first son Kamosis fought against the invaders. Perhaps upon the death of Kamosis and because Ahmosis was too young, she personally led the army because it received the grand golden flies as military decorations posthumously rewarding her valiant soldiers. In a stele at Karnak, the young pharaoh proclaimed accordingly:

*"Praise the lady of the land...  
who makes decisions for people...  
Who is in touch with events,  
who unites Egypt;  
She gathered her leaders whose  
cohesion she assured;  
She brought back its fugitives,  
she regrouped its dissidents;  
She pacified Upper Egypt,  
she pushed back its rebels!"*

However, her daughter and daughter-in-law Ahmes-Nefertari is said to have excelled her. She raised such a popular fervour that she was even made divine and her worship was one of the most notable in Thebes. Senior advisor to the husband Ahmosis who directly involved



Relief representing the divine adorer Nitocris 1st daughter of Psammetichus 1- in Karnak Egypt.

her in his rule, she acted both at the level of religious organisation in which there was much to do after the transition of Hyksos, and on an economic level. It was she, for example, who revived the use of abandoned quarries and built the royal necropolis.

She received the title of "wife of the god Amon", after that of the "second prophet of Amon". In regard to the first duty, she was so prestigious that those who received her after they gradually became the true rulers of the Thebaid, and were authorised to pass on as royalty as regulars in favour of the god. It is thought that Ahmosis, who had been confronted by rival factions struggling for power, reinstituted the idea of a theogamic succession somewhat forgotten at the time, in order to preserve his dynasty. But it is significant that he chose the female line to do this: he was well placed to know at what point the result would be favourable!

At the death of her spouse, Ahmes-Nefertari pursued his work and assured a favourable regency for the young Amenophis I. Amenophis, once reaching his majority, continued to ask for her assistance. It is thought that they collaborated with the priest initiates to redevelop forgotten rituals, among other things! There were other great queens during the 18th dynasty,

among them Hatshepsut, mentioned earlier, but also Tiy, mother of Akhnaton and wife of Amenophis III. The latter is reputed to have been the greatest ruler of the dynasty. How many are aware that this monarch actually suffered from many physical troubles and precarious health?

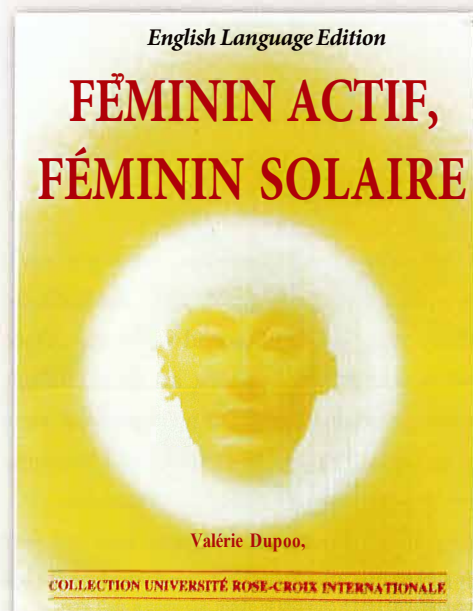
In the light of this knowledge, we have a better understanding of what the fundamental political and cultural role of Tiy had to be, as confirmed by a series of texts.

Lastly, Nefertiti achieves the culminating point of a queen's power.

Akhnaton, the heretic pharaoh, had her directly linked with his power, as a symbol of the One God, the same title he had.

It has to be said that the activity of women at that time in Egypt's history - a direct involvement and not covert as we have been led to believe - made this one of the most beautiful, radiant and solid periods. The 18th dynasty was and will remain as the reference point of this magnificent civilisation. Never has such completeness been achieved since, while Egypt remained one of the most feminine of civilisations ever, particularly because of its predominant values such as the desire for Harmony represented by Maat, and whose Pharaoh was to guarantee it until the Ptolemaic period. ❧

**The 18th dynasty was and will remain as the reference point of this magnificent civilisation**



The above article is reprinted from:

## WOMAN: THE ACTIVE SOLAR POLARITY

By Valérie Dupont

Translated from French by Joe van Dalen

Many civilisations have, over the centuries, compared the male principle with the active, while the female was presented as passive. By extension, the male was often considered to be positive and the female negative, physiologically as well as intellectually and spiritually. Such ideas have largely contributed to the suppressing and denying of what it is to be a woman. Women have always actively worked to participate in the progress of Humanity, shedding their light on the arts, sciences, politics, philosophy and spirituality.

**ONLY AVAILABLE AS A DIGITAL BOOK through Rosicrucian Books  
on our website \$11.95**