

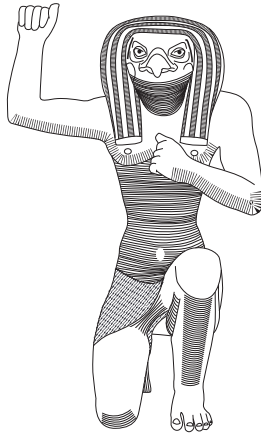
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Gender in Ancient Egypt

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The study of gender in ancient Egypt may well be said to have begun with Herodotus, who devotes a few sections of his Book II on Egypt to an examination of gender roles and relations (e.g. II: 35–36, 46, 60, and 64; see Lloyd 1976:146–159, 272–276, 287–291). Like so much of his Book II, Herodotus’ notes on gender reflect his basic presentation of Egypt as exotica; he was primarily concerned with showing Egyptian gender roles and relations to be the opposite of those in Greece and thus presented his material in such a way as to make this point. But Herodotus worked in ways not dissimilar to those of modern scholars on gender: he proceeded from the evidence that he had available to make generalizations, and then theorized on the reasons behind what he found in his sources. Moreover, Herodotus’ areas of concern – gender in the home, in family relations, in religion, in the marketplace – predict to some extent the preoccupations of modern scholars of gender, and outline some of the areas in which archaeology can use gender to improve our understanding of ancient Egypt.

Gender is, in its most basic sense, the set of social constructions relating to, arising from, and imposed upon biological sex. Although often used as a synonym for biological “sex” or even “women,” the category of “gender” goes well beyond either of these (for gender in general, see the survey in Meade and Wiesner-Hanks 2004). Historically, the study of the wider category of gender developed from feminist research devoted to restoring women to a history from which they had often been excluded. Feminist historians came to realize that this was not necessarily enough: women needed to be considered within a larger context of gendered relations and roles, and the basic category of “women” itself could be simplistic and reductive, as its meaning shifted in response to social, cultural, and even biological factors. An important moment in gender studies came with the publication of feminist historian Joan Scott’s “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” (Scott 1986); the priorities that this essay outlines have proven extremely prescient in terms of the concerns of scholarship on gender today. Gender does not exist in isolation, though, and Scott had already begun to envision gender as part of a larger group of categories (including class or status, race or ethnicity,

and age) essential for historians in any field. Although research on gender has gone far beyond the immediate program outlined in Scott's article (note, for example, the problems with the category of gender itself summarized in Meskell 1999:67–77), it remains deeply indebted to its insights and foresights. Scott's area of concern was modern history, but her article can still be read with great profit by those who study in gender in ancient Egypt.

Egyptian evidence for gender is complex and extensive: the Egyptians presented themselves in specifically gendered ways through a complex system of gendered divisions that, for the most part, followed on the divisions of biological sex (Robins 2001). The language of the Egyptians was gendered, and texts provide much of the important evidence for gender, helped by the language and writing systems' gender-specific nature. The visual representations that the Egyptians made of themselves are marked for gender in many ways: physical manifestations of biological sex, cultural gender markers (clothing and accessories, hair, for which see Robins 1999), gendered color code for skin (usually dark reddish brown for men, yellow or light brown for women), and a status-based size and position coding that can reflect gender difference (Robins 1994). The archaeological record reveals complex gendered differences in the material culture – gendered artifacts, practices, and spaces, as well as the physical remains of the ancient Egyptians themselves. This array of evidence for gender in ancient Egypt, though, is frequently ambiguous and often hard to interpret as a whole; it has been more common to focus on a single area of investigation: women. Even the specific study of women in ancient Egypt is a relatively new endeavor, with substantial effort only appearing in the past two decades. The central work in this regard is Gay Robins's *Women in Ancient Egypt* (1993), still an essential reference, and now supplemented by over a decade's worth of more recent scholarship. Certainly, the position of women in Egypt has long been commented on as unusual and different from the situation in other ancient Mediterranean civilizations. Women did occupy a visible and autonomous position in Egypt, and this was considered characteristic of Egypt even in ancient times. As a result, there has tended to be much generalization about and idealization of women's position in ancient Egypt, especially in the more popular literature.

It is important, however, to remember that ancient Egypt was a male-dominated society: women were excluded from administration and rule in all but the most exceptional circumstances. Royal women attained their status by a relationship to a male king, and the few women who managed to rule as king did so as regent to a young son or brother and with the support of senior male officials. The most extensively documented example of a woman who ruled as king is Hatshepsut, the daughter and widow of kings who ruled as regent for her stepson Thutmose III in the 18th Dynasty (Roehrig et al. 2005). Visual and textual representations of Hatshepsut give an idea of the exceptional nature of her position as king: the varying depictions of her with female or male body and attributes and the confused (or deliberately complex) use of male and female referents in her texts attest to the challenges she faced in being a woman occupying a traditionally male position. Royal and elite women often held certain official positions of power, such as the office of God's Wife of Amun, instituted under Ahmose-Nefertari in the early New Kingdom, which gave great resources and influence to its holder

and increased in power through the Third Intermediate Period (Graefe 1981). Elite women occupied formal priestly offices in earlier periods, but by the New Kingdom such offices had disappeared, and elite women mainly occupied the positions of “musician” to a particular god or goddess, a trend continuing well into the Late Period (Onstine 2005). The lives and activities of elite women were the best documented of ancient Egypt but were probably the least representative. The majority of women in ancient Egypt at all levels of society had, as primary duties, the administration of a household and the care of children, and women also worked within and outside the home in a variety of capacities, the most common being farming. Whatever their status, women in ancient Egypt shared some common roles and expectations: most ancient Egyptian women were expected to marry and have children. Marriage was a core gendered relationship in the lives of almost all ancient Egyptians; women and men of all levels of Egyptian society were expected to marry. Marriage itself, though, was a relatively informal relationship that was documented mostly by contracts to secure property or ensure support of women (especially in Demotic documents of the later periods) (Johnson 2003). Parents were often involved in initiating and facilitating marriages, which tended to take place within local class and occupational groups, but both men and women could have input in their own choice of partner. Women had a number of property and inheritance rights in the context of marriage (Pestmann 1961). Divorce was, at least in the periods for which we have good documentation, relatively easy and common, and its frequency could lead to a complex of relationships from successive marriages. In spite of the relative informality of marriage and ease of divorce, the married household was a central social unit in ancient Egypt. Within this unit, motherhood was an important role for women, with the precedent and model of the goddess Isis as guide and aid. Much of Egyptian medicine and magic was related, directly or indirectly, to facilitating motherhood in some way (e.g. Nunn 1996:191–197). There were women who lived independently of the expectations of marriage and motherhood, but these were rare, or are at least poorly attested and understood.

The necessary attempts to restore the lives of women to the historical record have left the roles of men in ancient Egypt, and concepts of maleness and masculinity, relatively unexamined, although men are as much a part of the overall concept of gender as women. One could argue that Egyptology in the past was almost entirely a study of ancient Egyptian men and that further work is unnecessary, but the study of “men” as a gendered category important for a wider understanding of Egyptian society needs to be considered. The study of men in the context of gender studies has recently come to prominence, but it initially raised concerns that the rise of “masculinity studies” could become a potential threat to decades of progress in feminist research. However, an emerging body of theoretical literature on men from a gendered perspective addresses these concerns and makes it clear that masculinity studies has great potential (see, e.g., Connell 2005). For ancient Egypt, the topic is very new (though see already Meskell and Joyce 2003:95–127), but, given the predominance of men in much of ancient Egyptian life, masculinity studies have much to offer the study of gender in ancient Egypt (see Wilfong 2007 for a general discussion of masculinity studies and Byzantine Egypt). The category of “man” was largely a normative one in ancient

Egypt and there were privileges and advantages to being a man in Egyptian society. But the men of ancient Egypt were also subject to a range of instabilities and anxieties: economic class, social position, ethnicity, and other factors could affect any man's situation. Social, political, and familial relations between men, as well as relations between men and women, were fraught with potential threats to status and identity. Men lived within gendered constraints and expectations just as complex as those for women: there were things that men did (and did not do) that reflected and affected Egyptian concepts of maleness and masculinity. The gendered expectations for a king (to rule, to father a male heir to succeed him, to play the roles of both Osiris and Horus, etc.) might differ in specifics and scale from those of an official, a scribe, a priest, a soldier, or a farmer, but there were common elements throughout. Men at all economic levels were subject to gendered expectations: to marry, beget children, and support a family; men were expected to fill their male roles and positions in society as their fathers did before them. The potential for failure in any of these male roles and expectations lurks beneath text and image in ancient Egypt, only occasionally manifesting itself in visible anxieties.

Concentration on men and women might suggest that these were the only gender categories that existed in ancient Egypt, but the situation was more complex. Although gender categories often followed along the lines of biological sex (which modern genetics shows is not always so clear-cut itself, cf. Meskell 1999:73–74), there was latitude for movement between gender categories in exceptional circumstances. Men could become “women”, as Bata in the New Kingdom Tale of Two Brothers describes himself after cutting off his own penis (Lichtheim 1976:207), while women could take on masculine attributes, such as the occasional images of goddesses with royal beards (e.g. Niwinski 1989:227), representations of the goddess Mut with an erect penis (Leitz 2002:251), or the images of Queen Hatshepsut with a male body (Keller 2005). Ambiguous body types in representational art could also have religious significance, such as the feminized but male “fecundity figures” (Baines 1985b) or the representations of Akhenaten that combine feminine and masculine traits (Montserrat 2000:42–48). But intermediate or “third” gender categories also existed in ancient Egyptian thought: the eunuchs and hermaphrodites known from other Mediterranean cultures (Vittmann 1998; Wilfong 1997:87–89), but also uniquely Egyptian categories that are only now beginning to be understood (DePauw 2003). In looking at evidence for gender in ancient Egypt, it is also easy to miss instances in which gender is ambiguous or absent, yet such cases do occur. Although representations of humans in ancient Egypt are almost always graphically gendered through details of body and costume, there is a subset of material that seems to be deliberately ungendered. The New Kingdom anthropoid “ancestor busts” from Deir el-Medina include good examples, not surprising since they could serve as points of contact for both male and female deceased relatives (Friedman 1994:114–117). Burials of the dead sometimes contain gendered ambiguities or confusions (e.g. mismatched sex of coffins and bodies), while funerary representations of the dead in an idealized state, particularly those of anthropoid coffins, often also show no signs of gender (Wilfong 1997:17–19). The gender of the dead for much of ancient Egyptian history is subject to ambiguities of various kinds: although the dead participate in

gendered activities (including sexual intercourse, for which see Willems 1996:311–314), and are shown as gendered in two-dimensional art, the ambiguous three-dimensional figures and the wide reference to all dead (in the Pharaonic period) by way of a male god's name (Osiris) may reflect an ambivalence not yet fully understood.

Much of the foregoing comes to us through textual and representational evidence; the archaeology of gender in ancient Egypt is a relatively new endeavor that is only beginning to yield its results. The potential for archaeological investigation of gender in ancient Egypt is enormous – indeed, archaeological evidence is crucial for an overall understanding of gender in ancient Egypt. Given that the vast majority of Pharaonic period archaeological remains so far found in Egypt are funerary in some way – cemeteries, tombs, individual burials – funerary remains are, for now at least, the most extensive source for the archaeological examination of gender in ancient Egypt. Not only does study of mortuary material get us closest to the physical remains of the ancient Egyptians themselves, but the Egyptians' own emphasis on mortuary practice also guarantees the significance of this material.

In burials, bodies provide the most direct evidence of biological sex. Embalmed bodies are, of course, the most easily sexed, although the sexing of adult skeletons can be done with a high degree of probability in all but the most atypical of cases (Compton 1997). Likewise, embalmed bodies can usually yield the most information about gender issues, through the preservation of skin and other tissues, although again skeletal remains can be impressively informative (e.g. Nunn 1996:64–81). The Egyptians aspired, through most of the Pharaonic period and beyond, to the preservation of the body through mummification, and there are an enormous number of embalmed bodies to survive from ancient Egypt. The investigation of mummies through X-ray, dissection, CT-scans, and other forms of examination reveals a wealth of detail about health and means of death that can have gendered implications. Simple examination can reveal such obviously gendered conditions as circumcision (Nunn 1996:169–171) or recent pregnancy, while more detailed investigation and analysis can reveal a variety of conditions and diseases that are gender-related in some way. Further, the post-mortem treatment of bodies often reveals gendered practices (e.g. the gilding of nipples and genitals in Late Period mummies: Riggs 2005:123–124). In addition to their roles as sources of information on biological sex and gender-related health issues, human remains can also provide a wide range of information on gendered occupations, activities, and traumas as manifested in the body. Such data are only beginning to be the subject of investigation in general, and are relatively under-exploited for the study of gender, but promise to be a significant area for future work. Most occupations involving any kind of repeated physical activity leave traces in the body, and analysis of such traces correlated with gender could prove highly significant. Non-occupational activities and overall life style could likewise manifest themselves in bodies in ways that gender could help illuminate (Nunn 1996:56–57, 171–178). Analysis of injuries found in ancient Egyptian human remains can give a wealth of information about gendered activities and vulnerabilities. Battle-related injuries are perhaps the most widely studied forms of physical injuries from the ancient world; such injuries manifest themselves mostly in male bodies, not

surprisingly given the exclusively male make-up of the military in ancient Egypt. Examples such as the mass burial of soldiers of the 11th Dynasty at Thebes (Winlock 1945) show the kinds of pre- and post-mortem injuries that men were subject to as a result of their military activities. Battle-type injuries, however, are not entirely limited to men; one can note the group of bodies from Kerma of Middle Kingdom date examined by Joyce Filer in which men and women in nearly equal numbers exhibit skull injuries of a type consistent with battle wounds (Filer 1997:64). A number of interpretations can be applied to a case of this sort, and other factors (status, occupation, etc.) may be in play as well, but clearly there is much material here for gendered interpretation. Future gendered analysis of injuries in human remains will want to be aware of the possibilities of gendered patterns of abuse. Certain kinds of physical trauma which are associated with spousal abuse in modern populations may well have analogues in ancient remains: forearm breakage, for example, which is noted in the Abydos Middle Cemetery, may have resulted from attempts to ward off blows (Richards 2005:168).

Beyond physical remains, the most common kinds of gendered analysis of mortuary contexts involve the study of grave goods, often done in conjunction with the study of associated human remains. By determining the biological sex of the body, one can make gendered associations based on the contents of individual burials. This can lead to comparison of burials across groups, cemeteries, even different sites involving the interpretation and evaluation of grave goods. In recent years, a number of studies of Predynastic and Early Dynastic burials have begun to look seriously at the implications of gender and grave goods. Given the relative paucity of textual evidence from these periods, such archaeological evidence is often the only source of information on gender. Analysis of early funerary contexts can be done on the level of individual burials (e.g. Burns 1995 for a single grave at Gurob), a cemetery (Savage 2000 for cemetery N7000 at Naga ed-Der), or across a range of cemeteries (as in Hassan and Smith 2002). These examples have the value of including non-elite material, but burials and cemeteries at any status level and of any period in Egyptian history can be studied in this way. One could take, as a nearly random example for analysis, two intact New Kingdom burials from Garstang's excavations at el-Arabeh, E178 and E294 (Garstang 1902:26–27 and pls. 18–20). In E294, a man and woman were found buried together in a stone sarcophagus also containing a number of grave goods (mostly pottery, with a few scarabs and tools); the excavation report notes two potentially significant facts for a gendered analysis – more grave goods are associated with the woman than the man, and one of the pots bears an inscription with a Semitic name. E178 is a group burial, again in a stone sarcophagus, of two women and a man. The contents again are mostly pottery, with the addition of jewelry (including a scarab showing the god Bes) and a pottery vessel in human form. In the absence of a full record or access to the finds themselves, we are left with speculation, but these two burials raise the kinds of questions about gender that archaeologists will want to ask of other finds – what are the reasons for the gendered disparities in grave goods, and what are the gendered relations between the individuals in these burials?

By far the most wide-ranging and sophisticated gendered analysis of non-royal burials in ancient Egypt is to be found in the work of Lynn Meskell on the

cemeteries of the New Kingdom workmen's village at Deir el-Medina (Meskell 1999:esp. 136–215, and many other publications). Meskell has performed exhaustive and theoretically informed analyses of individual burials, groups of burials, cemetery areas, and the Deir el-Medina burial ground as a whole, examining them not only for gender, but also for class, ethnicity, and age – indeed one of the most useful contributions of this study is to show how all of these factors are interrelated and need to be studied in connection with each other. Meskell's study showed status variations in different parts of the cemetery, suggestive patterns in child burials, and varying associations of gender and grave goods. One of her objectives is to go beyond generalization about populations to look at the lives of individuals from this evidence, and the examples pursued in detail raise fascinating questions about gender roles and relations at Deir el-Medina.

Elite burials, of course, provide much more information than non-elite burials and can be especially revealing when examined for gender-related issues. Stuart Tyson Smith's exhaustive catalogue of intact elite Theban burials of the 17th–18th Dynasties (1992) shows a significant disparity in the grave goods that can be assigned to men versus those assignable to women. This is precisely what one would expect given the greater status and wealth of men, but the specifics of the gendered property and, perhaps just as significantly, what things were presumably held in common are less predictable and make for interesting investigation. Lynn Meskell (1998) has taken one of these burials, that of Kha and Merit, and subjected it to a much more exhaustive analysis of the gendered and common goods, filtered through her wider study of the Deir el-Medina burials as a whole. Elite burials of the post-New Kingdom era reflect significant gendered changes in practice and also, perhaps, in belief about the afterlife. More and more, women came to be buried independently of men and identified independently of men as well. One finds an increase in funerary papyri specifically for women and grave goods made for women without reference to male relatives. Although issues of decorum had long dictated that women appear alone in funerary monuments of which they were the primary beneficiary (Robins 1993:172), after the New Kingdom there are so many more examples of women appearing alone that there seems to be a wider social tendency at work. Theban elite burials of the Third Intermediate Period illustrate the increasing separation of men and women in the funerary realm. Men still dominated in terms of quality and number of funerary equipment and treatment, but elite women came to have more individual funerary material than before and one finds many more individual burials of women than previously. This trend among elite burials carries on through the Late Period and into the Graeco-Roman period, when burials and funerary equipment reflect a highly gendered transformation of the deceased into the afterlife (Riggs 2005:41–94).

Royal burials followed many of the trends in elite burials, but of course had their own highly distinctive features. The best-preserved royal burial of the Pharaonic period is evidently that of the 18th-Dynasty king Tutankhamun, whose small tomb was packed with a wide variety of material that is relevant for the study of gender (for the tomb of Tutankhamun in general, see Reeves 1990). Tutankhamun's own body was prepared for eternity in a highly gendered way, with his penis bound erect to symbolize his procreative and thus regenerative

powers in the afterlife, and the representations of Tutankhamun in the tomb are explicitly gendered as well. Tutankhamun's surviving clothing, jewelry, and regalia were all gendered, and specific to his role as king. But the king did not rest alone in his tomb – he was accompanied by two mummified female fetuses or neonates – possibly his own children – and hundreds of images of gods, goddesses, and members of the royal family that are gendered in specific functional ways. Protective goddesses, often winged, surround the king's mummy on all sides in jewelry, coffins, sarcophagus, and shrines, as well as his viscera in an elaborate canopic ensemble where the goddesses are repeated again and again. The protective significance of the goddesses in Tutankhamun's tomb is a highly gendered trait: enclosing protective activity is largely the domain of female deities, and Tutankhamun's tomb reveals a most complex protective system. Conversely, the male gods that accompany the dead king refer to his procreative and regenerative powers, or they offer protection of a more pointed and direct kind, as in the image of the god Anubis guarding the "Treasury." The images of Tutankhamun and his wife Ankhsenamun together, in particular those on the small gold shrine, show the king and his wife enacting gendered roles in a variety of domestic and ritual situations that reflect both real-life relationships and afterlife aspirations. Artifacts relate to the king's relationships with female relatives – the balls of hair and mud that may commemorate the king's marriage and the lock of hair belonging to the king's grandmother Tiye (Fletcher and Montserrat 1997). Other family-related artifacts attest to Tutankhamun's extended family heritage through male and female relatives – personal items of Amarna princesses versus the "official" productions of earlier kings. One could go on with a gendered analysis of Tutankhamun's burial almost indefinitely – it is an extraordinarily rich field.

Burials are not always so easily interpreted in terms of gender. An example of the complexities of gendered archaeological investigation of Egyptian royal burials can be found in the well-known post-Amarna royal burial in KV55. This tomb, discovered by excavator Theodore M. Davis in 1907, might have almost been set up as a cautionary example of the pitfalls of gendered interpretations of burials. Davis found, near the entrance of this tomb, a dismantled gilded shrine belonging to Queen Tiye, and, moving from this fact, he read each successive find in the tomb as further indication of Tiye as the ultimate occupant of the coffin found in the burial chamber. A compliant doctor identified the human remains in the coffin as female, and Davis published the find as *The Tomb of Queen Tîyi* in 1910. Of course, these remains have long since been conclusively identified as male, and the burial as that of Akhenaten (or, less likely, that of his putative successor Smenkhare) with a miscellaneous collection of grave goods salvaged from a variety of male and female Amarna royals. But it is perhaps wrong to fault Davis overmuch, given the atypical nature of his find. The shrines of Queen Tiye (then of a type unparalleled, but subsequently mirrored in the set of shrines in the tomb of Tutankhamun) made his initial assumption that KV55 was the burial-place of Tiye entirely plausible. His interpretation of the burial's vulture necklace as a queen's vulture crown is understandable given this preconception, the frequency with which royal women wore vulture headdresses, and the relative lack of good parallels to this class of artifact prior to the subsequent discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. The female-headed canopic jars (probably made for Queen Kiya), the other

objects inscribed with other names, and the apparent lack of a king's beard on the coffin must have seemed like further confirmation of his identification. The post-Amarna effacement of names and images merely added to the overall confusion of the find. Davis's mistaken identification, which has had wide-reaching repercussions, is a useful cautionary example: the excavator must be sensitive to issues of gender in the course of excavation, but not draw conclusions until all of the evidence is accounted for.

Another royal burial of the 18th Dynasty with strong gendered elements has likewise provoked confusion, as much from modern gendered expectations as from the problems of the find itself, and this is the Theban burial of three foreign wives of Thutmose III (Lilyquist 2003). The problems with this find begin, of course, with the fact that it first came to be known from artifacts that started to appear on the antiquities market in 1916 – what seemed to be a substantial portion of the burial ensembles of three women described as wives of Thutmose III. The bulk of the artifacts were acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and were published by H. E. Winlock as *The Treasure of Three Egyptian Princesses* in 1948. This material inspired speculation and invoked charged narratives of harem life that reflected more twentieth-century gendered expectations than the mundane realities of the lives of royal women in the 18th Dynasty. But the find was not as simple as it initially appeared: nearly a third of the artifacts attributed to this find have turned out to be modern forgeries, and it was only in 1988 that the site of the find itself was properly investigated. Christine Lilyquist's 2003 definitive publication of this material finally places the artifacts in the context of their findspot and also allows a more precise understanding of the women originally buried with this material – neither Egyptian nor “princesses,” they were minor wives of Thutmose III with Semitic names. The recent publication of this important find invites a wider gendered analysis of the women, their circumstances, and their time in a way that is only now possible.

Even without grave goods or human remains, mortuary sites can reveal rich gendered analysis, especially the elaborately decorated and programmed tombs of elites and royalty. Such tombs sometimes show an interplay of image and text that reveals the gendered afterlife expectations or aspirations of the tomb owner. David O'Connor (1996) has subjected the Old Kingdom tomb reliefs of Pepyankh/Heny the Black at Meir to a subtle gendered reading, which reveal Pepyankh's expected gendered roles in the afterlife as a husband and procreator and hint at the complexities of the Egyptians' understanding of post-mortem sexuality. In a similar fashion, Heather McCarthy (2002) has “read” the Theban tomb of Queen Nefertari against the representations in the queen's own small temple at Abu Simbel to show her gendered transformation in the tomb – she takes on a male procreative role to identify with Osiris and Ra for a successful afterlife rebirth and transformation. The royal tombs of New Kingdom kings themselves are often filled with images relating to the male kings' rebirth and regeneration in a gendered, procreative role. On a more mundane level, numerous elite tombs show scenes of daily life that reproduce or develop on themes of gendered relations and occupations in the afterlife as a mirror or amplification of such roles and interactions in life. Funerary representations of daily life, of course, cannot always be taken literally, and the gendered aspects of such images are sometimes open to

ambiguous interpretation, perhaps none so controversially as the reliefs of the joint Old Kingdom tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. Its largely unparalleled scenes of the two male tomb owners kissing and embracing have led to their identification as brothers (Moussa and Altenmüller 1977), then twins (Baines 1985a), a homosexual couple (Reeder 2000), and the most recent and provocative reading (by David O'Connor: see Wilford 2005) of the two men as a pair of conjoined twins. Even in more traditional representational programs, complex gendered relationships can be conveyed by, for example, presence or absence of a spouse (Roth 1999). Tomb decoration is likely to continue to provide a lively area for gendered research for years to come.

For the Egyptians, tombs were “houses for eternity,” but the daily life activities of ancient Egyptians and how they related to gender can better be seen in the remains of houses and related structures used by the living. Unfortunately, the archaeological investigation of the houses and, by extension, settlement sites of Pharaonic Egypt has considerably lagged behind investigation of mortuary sites. In large part this is due to nature of the sites themselves – typically under or impinged upon by modern settlements – but it is also the result of the prior emphasis of archaeological research in Egypt on funerary remains. Nonetheless, a small but significant group of settlement sites have been excavated in Egypt and, with a dramatically increased interest in settlement archaeology, this trend is likely to continue and expand. This is certainly welcome for the study of gender in ancient Egypt: many of the gender roles and relations of Egyptian society were enacted within or in connection with settlements. In addition to the houses in which individuals and families lived, worked, and interacted, settlement features such as administrative buildings, royal residences, public spaces, markets, and temples are also areas in which gender was a factor. However, most archaeological investigation and analysis has concentrated so far on houses and domestic structures, and these are the most immediately appealing for the study of gender.

One of the most important excavated settlement sites of Pharaonic Egypt is Tell el-Amarna (ancient Akhetaton), the short-lived capital founded by King Akhenaten. The brief life and subsequent abandonment of the site have provided an extraordinary level of preservation and documentation that allow a wide range of investigations (Montserrat 2000:55–94). For many decades, patient and painstaking excavation has revealed a wealth of archaeological material that will ultimately provide unparalleled insights into the minutiae of daily life in an Egyptian capital city. For the study of gender, most work on the Amarna material has concentrated on houses, particularly the large, elite “villas” of the main city. These houses show considerable consistency in structure that suggests the interplay between space and gender (Koltsida 2002). Earlier excavators tended to see spaces in the Amarna villas as reflective of a separation of men and women in domestic space roughly parallel to that found in Islamic households of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; more recent study, however, suggests a more subtle gendered sharing of spaces within the household (Koltsida 2002:185–188). Such conclusions cannot, of course, be made solely from the remains of the villas on the ground, but must take into consideration contemporary textual and representational evidence as well. Material culture remains abandoned in the structures, however, do suggest potential gendered space uses that will repay future

investigation. Moreover, the site of Amarna is important for the wide range of its domestic spaces – from palaces and the elite villas, to the middle-range and poorer dwellings – and has great potential for the investigation of gendered space across class and status levels. Although Amarna itself is somewhat atypical as a “new” settlement of short duration, its remains may show trends reflected throughout its region or even throughout Egypt as a whole.

Indeed, the majority of settlement sites to survive from Pharaonic Egypt are in some way atypical: in addition to the “planned” town at Amarna, one finds most often purpose-built communities of limited duration, primarily workers’ villages. These kinds of settlements tend to survive and be more accessible archaeologically in ways that “regular” towns do not. In layout, however, they may not be typical of towns in Egypt in general: these settlements are usually walled or contained, of regular plan, and their houses tend to exhibit more uniformity of style, size, and plan than those of a town like that at Amarna. Workers’ settlements, particularly sites constructed to house the workers constructing royal tombs at Lahun (in the Middle Kingdom) and Deir el-Medina (in the New Kingdom), have proven particularly rich in material culture remains and in surviving architecture, in part because they were relatively short-lived and ultimately abandoned like Amarna. These sites have also yielded a large amount of textual material documenting their daily activities as well as the wider concerns of their inhabitants – an important supplement to the archaeological material, especially as far as the study of gender is concerned.

Workers’ settlements like Lahun and Deir el-Medina housed male workers and administrators along with their families; so men and women lived together and interacted in these towns in ways that illustrate gendered roles and relations. The dwellings in both of these towns tended on the whole to be compact and regular in plan; domestic space doubtless had gendered dimensions, but there was less overall space and thus probably less potential for separate gendered areas and greater likelihood of gendered patterns of sharing of space. Food preparation areas tend to have associations with women, while the reception areas near the entrance of the houses are sometimes connected with men, but there was doubtless more mixing of use within the house as a whole. Artifactual material found in context in houses can be helpful but must be read carefully. Do the caches of tools associated with male occupations found at Lahun (groups 7 and 9: Petrie 1891:12–13, 15, and pls. 13–14) suggest a gendered association with their findspots, or do the accompanying artifacts (pottery and a scarab in 7; pottery, a mirror, and jewelry in 9) suggest instead that these were caches of mixed-sex family items, left at the abandonment of the structure against a planned return? Decorated portions of houses or constructions within houses have likewise suggested gendered interpretations, but are ambiguous. The frequent use of decoration in the houses at Deir el-Medina and the not uncommon presence of a decorated feature known as a *lit clos* (Meskell 1999:99–102) almost certainly have significance for gender, but their exact meanings are not always clear and their interpretation often colored by the preconceptions of the investigator. A good example of the pitfalls of interpretation is found in the female figurines that emphasize sexual characteristics earlier known to Egyptologists as “concubines of the dead,” in spite of the fact that these are commonly found in domestic contexts and often in association with women and

children as well as men (Pinch 1983; Trimble 1995). Indeed, all kinds of male and female figures that emphasize sexual characteristics, usually identified as “fertility figures” and commonly found in domestic as well as temple and funerary contexts, are themselves an important source for gender but are often highly ambiguous in interpretation (Pinch 1993). A good example of the potential problems of such evidence can be found in the identification of structure S. E. VIII at Deir el-Medina as a possible “brothel” primarily on the basis of a wall painting of a dancer in the front room, doubtless also colored by the interpretation of the “Turin Erotic Papyrus” from Deir el-Medina (Omlin 1973) as showing scenes from a brothel. The sources and problems of both of these approaches are dealt with by Janaa Toivari-Viitala (2001:147–152). Often the very ambiguity of the remains seems to encourage such speculations.

Textual evidence will sometimes give clues as to the gendering of space in these workers’ settlements that is not immediately apparent from the archaeological record. Thus a text reveals the existence of a gendered space that apparently existed in or outside of Deir el-Medina, and may reflect similar demarcations elsewhere. An ostrakon from Deir el-Medina at Chicago refers to a location designated as “the place of women” (Wilfong 2000), apparently beyond the settlement “walls” frequently referred to in Deir el-Medina texts. This ostrakon records that eight women visited this location “while they were menstruating,” a clear indication of the nature of the “place of women” as a place of menstrual seclusion well attested in other premodern cultures. Absence rosters of the village workers also attest to the times of individual women’s menstruation as an excuse for absence from work, presumably because of these trips to the “place of women”. (See Toivari-Viitala 2001:162–168 for a comprehensive look at the evidence for menstruation at Deir el-Medina from these documents.) The data in these documents together with the coincidence of the eight women menstruating at the same time in the Chicago ostrakon show extraordinary evidence of village-wide menstrual synchrony in the small, close settlement of Deir el-Medina. Although the named “place of women” is attested only at Deir el-Medina in this Chicago ostrakon, other instances of menstrual space are attested in Egyptian evidence. In later periods, women’s menstrual space is brought inside the house: both Greek and Coptic documents refer to the “space beneath the stairs” as being a women’s space associated with menstruation (Wilfong 2002:77), and this may well reflect earlier practice that will warrant future investigation. Otherwise little is known of women’s menstrual practices in ancient Egypt, and future investigators of settlement sites in Egypt should be aware of the potentials for archaeological evidence of these practices (e.g. Ehrenberg 1989:35), material that has doubtless been overlooked in the past by excavators unable or unwilling to recognize it. Indeed, it may someday be possible to locate the Deir el-Medina “place of women” in the Theban hills around the site.

Clearly workmen’s villages like Lahun and Deir el-Medina provide major sources for the study of gender in ancient Egypt, but their typicality will always remain subject to debate. What seems clear from both the textual and archaeological remains of these sites, though, is that their populations maintained a gender balance comparable to that of the population of Egypt at large and that they provide useful information about gender roles and relations in Egypt in general.

This is probably true of most of the settlement sites known from ancient Egypt, but there are certain kinds of sites that were (or are thought to have been) gender-restricted in some way, and thus provide another angle on the gendered investigation of settlement sites. Military barracks, mining camps, even certain kinds of settlements for temporary workers are often thought to have been single-sex institutions, and the archaeology of such sites may confirm or dispute this idea. One might note, for example, the distinctive “galleries” found in the recent excavations of the 4th-Dynasty settlement at Giza (Lehner 2002), which are convincingly shown to have served as barracks or dormitories for up to 2000 temporary workers. All of the admittedly scant evidence for these workers suggests an all-male workforce, served and provisioned by an all-male or mixed service staff; but the distinctive form of the galleries is dictated by both the single-sex nature of the population living in them and their temporary status (i.e. most of these workers would have rotated off to live with their families). One might look at a very late (Byzantine period) example of a different sort of settlement that is often assumed to be for an all-male population – the gold-mining camp at Bir Umm Fawakhir (Meyer 2001 for the first seasons of excavation). This remote camp is made up of over a hundred small stone structures in a desert wadi off the Wadi Hammamat – in an area mined for gold as early as the New Kingdom. The standing Byzantine camp is a distinctive form of settlement unlike contemporary Nile Valley settlement sites, and some of its features could well have gendered significance, for again we have a population commonly assumed from the available evidence to have been an all-male community. But other factors certainly contribute to the difference of this settlement: its remote location, its use of stone rather than mudbrick (owing to local availability of materials), its secured nature (with apparent guard huts and controlled access) due to the main activity of the site (mining for gold) and possibly also to the nature of its inhabitants (the miners may have also been prisoners or debtors). Although well past the Pharaonic period, Bir Umm Fawakhir points to potentials of sites of earlier periods, not the least of which being the nearby Wadi Hammamat itself. Although the Wadi Hammamat is primarily studied for the texts of its many graffiti, the presence of these texts *in situ* makes them archaeological artifacts of considerable relevance to the present study. The attestation of an (apparently) all-male desert expedition of the late 11th Dynasty, for example, in the accounts of the expedition to quarry a sarcophagus for Mentuhotep IV has potential for gendered analysis (Wadi Hammamat graffiti 110, 113, 191–192 in de Buck 1948). The striking account of the men of the expedition facing a pregnant gazelle which gives birth on the stone for the king’s sarcophagus lid and is then promptly sacrificed gives a vivid vignette of the complex interplay of gender in the context of the desert landscape. Certainly, landscape archaeology in Egypt also has great promise for gender study as well.

The foregoing has been but a small sample of the kinds of gendered analysis and interpretation of archaeological material possible for Pharaonic Egypt. In many ways, this effort is still in its earliest stages – with both the excitement of discovery and the uncertainty of lack of precedent that this implies. Clearly there is much to be done by scholars interested in the archaeological study of gender in ancient Egypt, but even those archaeologists not specifically or solely interested in gender have a part to play in this endeavor. The field archaeologist will need

to give greater attention to the recognition and recording of archaeological evidence for gender, while all archaeologists will want to take gender into account as a factor in wider interpretations of their data. Ultimately, gender must be understood, alongside status, class, race, ethnicity, age, and other factors, as a key component of ancient Egyptian life.

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