



God's Wife of Amun



Background

The earliest instance of the 'God's wife' title comes from the Middle Kingdom; however, it was in reference to 'God's wife of Min', which was more associated with non-royal women in the cult of Min.

God's Wife of Amun was first used for Ahmose-Nefertari, the chief wife of Ahmose who had just reunified Egypt after expelling the Hyksos. In giving his Chief wife this title, he gave her both religious and state power; however, the main point of the title was to solidify his role as the King.

Religious Role

The title was given to the Chief wife or the mother of the Pharaoh, in which she is the earthly incarnation of Mut (Amun's divine consort) meaning she symbolises the female creative principle and the womb of the cosmos. To uphold this position as the head of the cult of Amun, she must perform certain rituals and duties such as presenting offerings (such as food, incense and jewellery) to the statue in order to keep balance whilst also singing hymns and playing the sistrum to awaken the God- reinforcing the harmony.

Political Power

Ahmose-Nefertari ruled alongside her son and grandson with the title, having powers over estates, land and resources linked to the cult of Amun- having control over economic avenues for the temples and the cult itself. During the New Kingdom the coronation of Hatshepsut, who had previously been a holder of the title, expanded the political powers to hold greater government standing and the ability to order decrees over taxation whilst grounding the title the Kingship itself.

Legacy

From the later third intermediate period the title began to gain most of its power, the women in the 25th and 26th dynasty holding power (almost full rule) of Upper Egypt with their own ceremonies and coronations. However, due to the shift to foreign rule from the Persian Conquest the title lost a lot of its power as patriarchal stereotypes were forced into the Egyptian ruling system. By the Ptolemaic era the title had all but disappeared.



Bibliography

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