

Mother, Daughter, Wife Mother of the King



Titles of Royal Women in ancient Egypt often revolved around their relationship to the King. Such as Mother, Wife or Daughter of the King, among other titles. Mother of the King has been recorded only since the first dynasty but was enacted even before then and was a medium in which to transfer the power of the office.



Figure I: Mother of King 'Pepy II',
Regent Ankhnes-meryre II

In modern times we might view the premise of titles for women revolving around their proximity to the king demeaning but in Ancient Egypt, the King and thus the women who made him King were highly regarded.

The office of Kingship is viewed as both male and divine however, it is the office that is divine, not the person holding the position. It is divine only through the Mother and the Sun-God, also known as divine conception.

Given that it is the Mother of the King that makes the office divine, when her son becomes king she is venerated. Typically viewed as an earthly incarnation of the Goddesses, almost certainly Hathor but linked to other goddesses as well such as Isis, Nephthys and others. She typically has significant religious and or political power, with several examples of Queens ruling in their own right as regents for their young sons. One such example is Queen Ankhnes-meryre II (Figure I) who did rule in her own right as regents and Queen Tiye, a powerful queen of the eighteenth dynasty, she was the mother of Akhenaten and was deified after death alongside her son - she was worshipped as a goddess on par with Hathor, who is one of the oldest Goddesses in Ancient Egypt (Figure II).



Figure II: Queen Tiye, Mother of
Akhenaten

In a time where the Divine was everything, to interact with them directly and to influence the legitimacy of the office of kingship - the highest position in all of Egypt - was a great power and often the Mother of the King was venerated. She was also, likely, the Wife of the King, a powerful position in its own right and ideally also a Daughter of the King also, three's are incredibly important to the Ancient Egyptians and they viewed events as cyclical, so to start as and reach the other was greatly impactful.

Bibliography:

- Arnold, D. (1996). *The Royal Women of Amarna : Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Roth, S. (2009). Queen. *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, [online] 1(1). Available at: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3416c82m> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2025].
- Figure I: Statue of Queen Ankhnes-meryre II and Pepy II - <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/zh-CN/objects/3446>
- Figure II: Head of Queen Tiye, ÄM 21834, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, Amenhotep III., ca. 1388–1351 BC © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung / Sandra Steiß - <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/neues-museum/collections-research/collection-highlights/>

