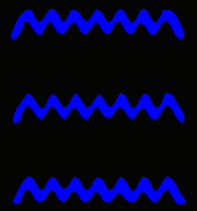
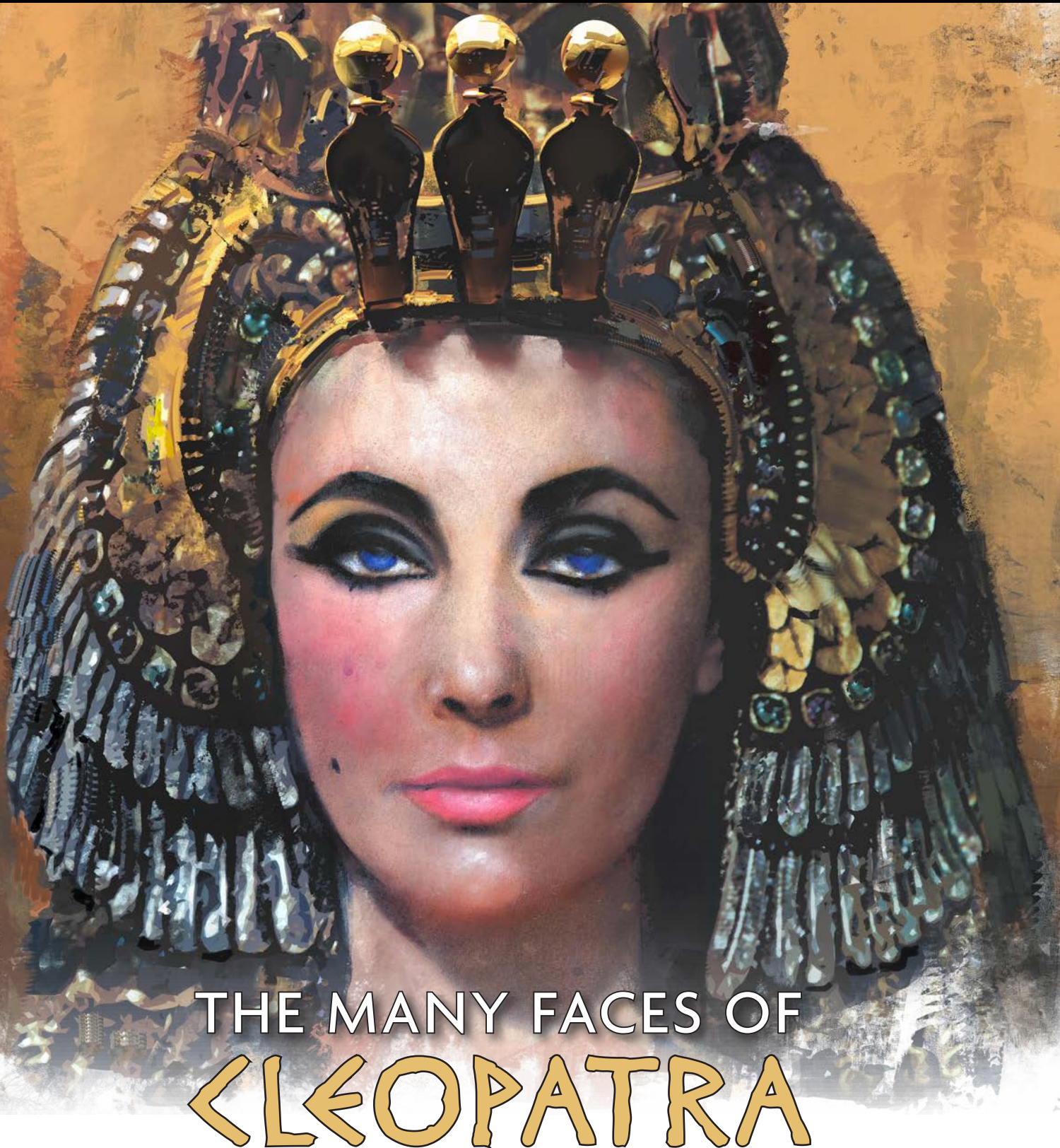


# NILE



BECAUSE YOU LOVE ANCIENT EGYPT



THE MANY FACES OF  
CLEOPATRA

## NILE MAGAZINE FEATURE EXHIBITION

**EGYPT OF GLORY** is a unique touring exhibition from Turin's Museo Egizio that is shared between two European venues: Amos Rex in Helsinki, Finland, and the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, Estonia.

Featured here is one of the stars of the Amos Rex exhibition: a sandstone double statue of Panhesy and his wife Tarenu (Museo Egizio Acc. No. 3053). It may have come from their tomb (TT 16) in the Dra abu el-Naga section of the Theban necropolis as a focus for offerings and prayers.

The married couple lived during the reign of Ramesses II (ca. 1250 B.C.), although Panhesy served the cult of another pharaoh who ruled around 250 years earlier: Amenhotep I.

During the Ramesside era, Amenhotep I was regarded as a powerful oracle whose statue was carried in procession through the Theban community. This was the opportunity for villagers to ask Amenhotep's statue for guidance or help. Professor Suzanne Onstine, director of the University of Memphis mission working in TT 16, explains that "it was Panhesy's job to carry the statue and perhaps even interpret the god's response."

Additionally, Panhesy held the title of "overseer of the chanters of the offering table of Amun" and Tarenu was a chantress in the cult of Amun, probably at Karnak Temple, which was directly across the river from their tomb.

Enjoy the full article on **EGYPT OF GLORY** from page 36.



*Handwritten text on a small plaque or label in front of the statue, likely providing details about the artifact.*

PHOTO: ALEKSI TIKKALA / AMOS REX

# NILE



6

## QUEEN NEITH

**Jeff Burzacott**

The ancient Egyptian royal family just got a little bigger, thanks to an Egyptian mission at Saqqara. An anonymous queen's pyramid now has an owner, and King Teti's wife has her name back after thousands of years of oblivion.

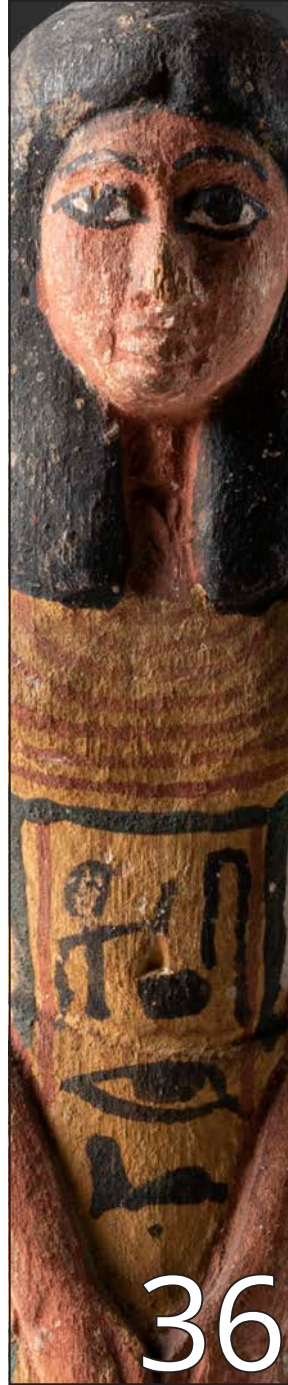


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## RAIN

**Jun Wong**

It's fair to assume that the Egyptians would have appreciated the occasional bout of rain—so why was it treated with indifference or even considered a nuisance?



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## EGYPT OF GLORY

**Jeff Burzacott**

Two European cities separated by a short stretch of water are the settings for the latest touring exhibition from Turin's Museo Egizio. We'll showcase some of the most spectacular treasures, and give you all the information you need to appreciate them.



55

## UNDERSTANDING EGYPTIAN ART

**David Brügger**

The reliefs are wonderful, but what do they mean? The tomb chapel of the 5th-Dynasty courtier Kaninisut provides a great setting to understand the real purpose of Egyptian art, and the narratives that it reveals.

# NILE

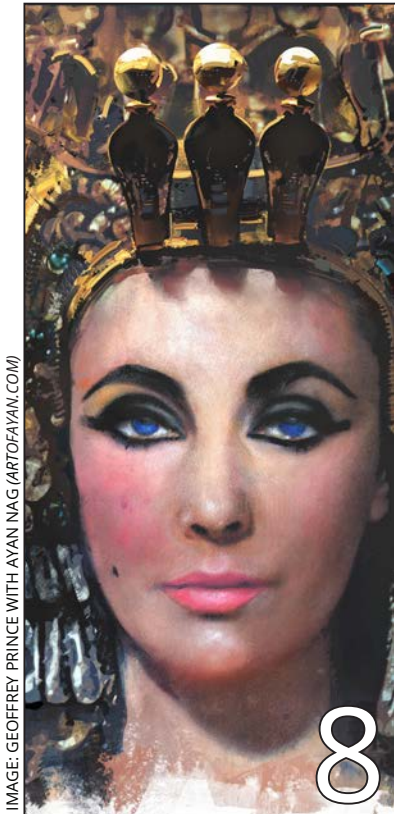
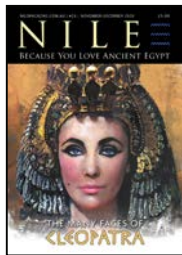


IMAGE: GEOFFREY PRINCE WITH AYAN NAG (ARTOFAYAN.COM)

## COVER STORY



### AN ALMOST GREEK THING

Geoffrey Prince

The choice of Israeli actress Gal “Wonder Woman” Gadot to play Cleopatra for an upcoming movie drew claims of “whitewashing” and follows a long tradition of white Cleopatras, including, most famously, Elizabeth Taylor. But was Cleopatra white after all? A look at her background provides clues as to how Egypt’s most famous queen really looked.

#28 (FINALLY)  
NOV.–DEC. 2020

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## FROM THE EDITOR

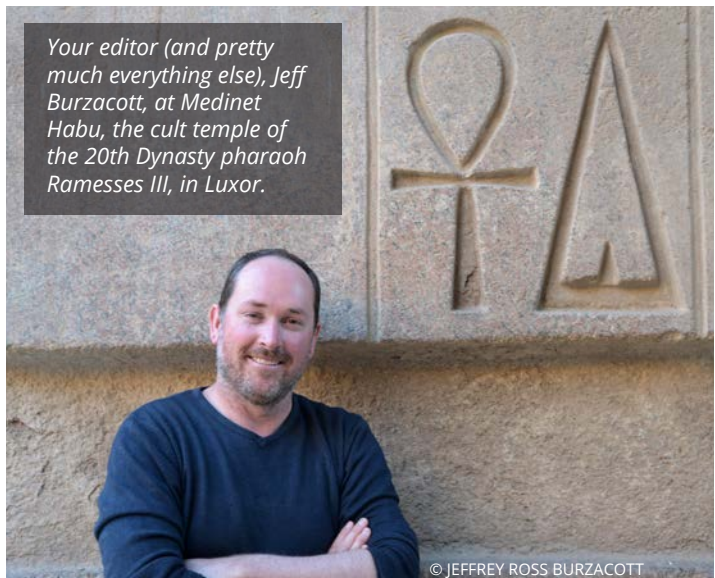
**SO, WE HAD A CHOICE.** As different waves of you-know-what swept around the world and created massive disruptions to the **NILE** Magazine operation, there were two paths we could take. We could cut corners to save time and costs (like some magazines have), or we could go the other way, and invest *even more* into creating a premium publication, where every issue becomes a collector’s edition.

You won.

This issue is a testament to our commitment to giving you a sumptuous magazine that reminds you of why you fell in love with ancient Egypt in the first place. After all, Egyptian art was both informative and fabulous—why shouldn’t your favourite Egyptology magazine be as well?

And you can be part of the small team that brings **NILE** to life. Not many people are aware that the **NILE** team consists of Christian Casey (Egyptian language expert), William Joy (who generously shares with you the Peggy Joy Egyptology Library), and yours truly. That’s it. We all volunteer our time to bring **NILE** to you, and with big plans to make your magazine even bigger and better, we’re putting the call out for volunteers. If you would like

*Your editor (and pretty much everything else), Jeff Burzacott, at Medinet Habu, the cult temple of the 20th Dynasty pharaoh Ramesses III, in Luxor.*



© JEFFREY ROSS BURZACOTT

to open up future **NILEs** and be able to say, “I did that,” head to [nilemagazine.com.au](http://nilemagazine.com.au) and look for the “Volunteer” button. I look forward to chatting with you.

Welcome to issue #28. As we say here at **NILE**, “stay positive, test negative.”

Jeff Burzacott ☰  
[editor@nilemagazine.com.au](mailto:editor@nilemagazine.com.au)

# INTRODUCING QUEEN NEITH

## THE CULT TEMPLE OF TETI'S THIRD WIFE DISCOVERED AT SAQQARA



PHOTO © AHMED GOMAA

Saqqara, 17 January, 2021. Excavations continue in the cemetery near King Teti's pyramid (the rounded mound in the background). The Egyptian mission has unearthed the cult temple of Queen Neith, a previously unknown wife of

Teti's. Neith's heavily-plundered pyramid is on the right. Saqqara is most famous for Djoser's Step Pyramid, shown in the background. Founded over 300 years before Teti and Neith's, the Step Pyramid was the first ever built.

**W**e'd suspected for a long time that King Teti had another wife—Egyptologists had already unearthed her pyramid; we just didn't know her name.

King Teti, the first ruler of Egypt's 6th Dynasty (ca. 2345 B.C.), had at least three daughters who were designated as the "king's eldest daughter", meaning that each one was the child of a different wife. The pyramids of two of Teti's queens—Iput I and Khuit II—are located around 100 metres north of the king's own monument at Saqqara. For a long time, however, the definitive identity of the third queen remained a mystery.

That mystery started to unravel in 2008 when Egyptologist and then antiquities minister Zahi Hawass announced the discovery of a small pyramid not far from those of Teti's two known wives. You can see the stunted remains of the pyramid's stepped core in the top-right of the above photo. Thanks to ancient stone robbing



"King's Wife,  
His Beloved,  
Before the Lady,  
Neith"

Text discovered on an obelisk from Queen Neith's cult temple at Saqqara.

only the bottom five metres remained of the original structure that once gleamed with a smooth, white limestone casing, around 14 metres high.

Deep underground, the burial chamber had been plundered in antiquity by robbers who had apparently carried away anything carrying the owner's name. Only a wrapped but badly-rifled mummy remained, along with a few golden fragments—the sad remnants of what was undoubtedly a sumptuous royal burial.

The pyramid's burial chamber walls were also mute. Pyramid Texts inside queens' pyramids wouldn't appear for another 30 years when King Pepi II had them carved into the burial chamber walls of his wife, Queen Ankhesenpepi II.

Initially, Hawass suspected that this pyramid might have belonged to Teti's mother, Queen Sesheshet, but a recent discovery reveals that it was built instead for a queen named Neith. Teti's mysterious third wife now had a name.



1

Gadot, who was recently named one of Time Magazine's 100 most influential people, announced that she would star as the legendary queen of the Nile, taking her place in a cinematic history that reaches as far back as 1899, with Jeanne d'Alcy as "Cleopatre", and continues through Theda Bara (1917), Claudette Colbert (1934), Vivien Leigh (1945), and most famously, Elizabeth Taylor (1963), among others. The film, to be released by Paramount Pictures—who also released the 1934 art deco masterpiece "Cleopatra" starring Colbert—will be directed by Patty Jenkins, who is behind the "Wonder Woman" film franchise. (Continued page 12.)

(LEFT)

**CLEOPATRAS FROM STAGE AND SCREEN**

More than 2,000 years after she ruled Egypt and wooed the Roman republic, Cleopatra has been the subject of countless playwrights, poets and filmmakers. Egypt's last queen tends to be portrayed in two ways: the femme fatale and the wanton seductress (you can thank the Romans for that). While this is a very narrow view of the queen's success in governing Egypt and protecting it from invasion (for a while, at least), it does provide great dramatic fodder for screenwriters. Presented here are four of Cleopatra's most iconic depictions on stage and screen—all of them lily-white:

1. French actress Sarah Bernhardt first performed in *Cléopâtre* before a Parisian audience in December 1890. The play apparently took some liberties with the details; a contemporary review pointed out that in this version, "Antony does not kill himself; he is stabbed by Octavius's orders, and expires in the arms of Cleopatra, who then places the asp on her breast, and this being a slow death, she slowly laments, and falls dead across Antony's body. The death (says the Times correspondent) is not dramatic."
2. Theda Bara portrayed the queen on film in 1917. Its lavish sets made *Cleopatra* one of the most expensive film ever made at that time.
3. Claudette Colbert starred in 1934's *Cleopatra*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Possibly the most sensual and chic version to appear in film, Colbert's *Cleopatra* spends much of the film wearing as little as possible.
4. Vivien Leigh's 1945 take on the famous queen was the first film to appear in colour. *Caesar and Cleopatra* was filmed in England, which turned out to be rather cold and drafty on set compared to the ancient Egyptian climate for which the actors were dressed.

Throughout the ages, Egypt's most famous queen has provided generations of artists with larger-than-life stories of romance, seduction, civil wars, splendour, tragedy and death. Throughout this article, we'll look at how the face of Cleopatra has changed over the centuries, starting with portraits commissioned in her lifetime, and presumably approved by Cleopatra herself.

1st Century B.C.

(OPPOSITE)

**THE FACE OF CLEOPATRA?**

This is without doubt one of the most beautiful busts to emerge from the 1st-century B.C. Shockingly beautiful in life, the stone has a faint sparkle in the light.

Although uninscribed, this bust is fascinating in that it matches near-identically the facial features of the 'Cleopatra' bust in the British Museum (Acc. No. 1879,0712.15). The mouths are identical, and from chin to eyebrow, the match is perfect. Only the eyes differ as one has carved eyes while this one awaits inserts. Both busts were discovered in Rome.



2



3



4



© CENTRALE MONTEMARTINI, ROME. ACC. NO. MC1154

“Now, the statues of Antony were torn down, but those of Cleopatra were left standing, because Archibius, one of her friends, gave Caesar two thousand talents in order that they might not suffer the same fate as Antony’s”  
—Greek historian Plutarch, ca. A.D. 100.

*Perhaps this black basalt statue is one of those that, according to Plutarch, were spared by Caesar Augustus. Just over a metre tall, it is now one of the masterpieces in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg.*

*The statue depicts a Ptolemaic queen striding in a long, tight-fitting dress, wearing a full, tripartite wig. She holds a horn of plenty in her left hand and the ankh—the hieroglyph of life—in her lowered right hand (not shown here).*

*Originally identified as Arsinoe II, the sister and wife of King Ptolemy II (3rd century B.C.), it is now considered more likely to be a portrait of Cleopatra VII herself.*

*This identification is based primarily on the unique triple uraei (rearing royal cobras) on her brow that were characteristic of Cleopatra VII alone. The three uraei possibly represent Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt, and territories outside of Egypt.*



COLLECTION: STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM, SAINT PETERSBURG. ACC. NO. 3936. PHOTO © SERGEY SOSNOVSKIY

their 275-year reign, few Ptolemies died a natural death.

Many historians dangerously oversimplify the Ptolemaic dynasty. While its ancestry is indeed Greek, it is important to note that the Ptolemies did at one time intermarry with the Seleucid dynasty with, ironically, the introduction of the first Cleopatra to the family, Queen Cleopatra I Syra, (the Syrian) wife of Ptolemy V in 194 B.C.

The Seleucid dynasty from which she came was another chunk of Alexander’s vast territory claimed by one of his generals—in this instance, Seleucus I. His empire included Anatolia, Persia, the Levant (which at one time encompassed present-day Syria, Lebanon,

Jordan, Israel, Palestine and most of Turkey) Mesopotamia, and what are now Kuwait and Afghanistan.

It is also especially important to note that in 80 B.C., the two-century long line of Ptolemies that began with Ptolemy I, ended; Ptolemy XI was lynched by an outraged Alexandrian mob over his involvement in the death of their popular queen, Berenice III.

The queen was in power after the death of her father (and Ptolemy XI’s uncle) and was forcibly married to Ptolemy XI so that he could gain control of the throne. Berenice, however, refused to share the throne, and after less than three weeks of joint rule, she was dead. So too, thanks to the mob, was Ptolemy IX. Now, with the last





*Viri Nobilissimi ac Pictoris Excellentissimi PETRI PAULI RUBENI Inuent  
Olim Discip. Guil. Patroels. Antuerpiensis fecit. Francofurti ad Moenum. 1633-*

COLLECTION OF PETIT PALAIS, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS OF THE CITY OF PARIS. ACC. NO. GDUT8367(2)

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety..." (Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra). Centuries of artists, in every medium, have been inspired by Cleopatra, and hundreds (and hundreds, and hundreds) of formally-recognised works of art feature her. From the romantic heroine (as above) to the femme fatale (of the belle epoch through art deco), to the epitome of luxury on which

Egyptomania thrived, Cleopatra proves herself a tenth Muse.

This 17th-century etching was based on a painting by French artist Pierre Paul Rubens. Cleopatra appears in the multi-layered finery of the day (European winters were harsh, even for the well-off). Instead of just one deadly asp, Rubens has chosen to place a pair of snakes writhing around each other on Cleopatra's low square neckline.



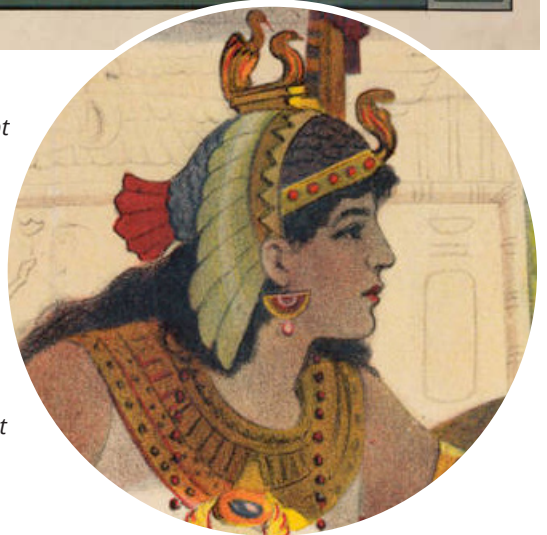
COURTESY OF THE HUNTINGTON, JAY T. LAST COLLECTION. ACC. NO. PRIJLC\_ENT\_000019

(ABOVE)

At the turn of the last century, few people could afford to travel to Egypt in person. The only contact they had with Egypt was, therefore, through literature, art and entertainment—including circus spectaculars like this, put on by the famous Barnum and Bailey in 1912.

This poster for the show sees Cleopatra, wearing the vulture headdress of queens and goddesses, reclining on pillows as she watches the arrival of Mark Antony and his soldiers. To complete the exotic scene, a leopard rests at her side, and an Egyptian temple and pyramids stand in the background.

It is interesting to note that this particular traveling Cleopatra show debuted at Madison Square Garden just one week prior to an important votes-for-women rally. A large number of circus women attended the rally—enough for the *New York Times* to run the headline “Circus Women Also Want The Suffrage” (March 31, 1912). One wonders if ‘Cleopatra’ herself attended.



(OPPOSITE)

Larger than life, this breathtaking oil on canvas measures over 13 feet (4 metres) tall, allowing the viewer to be immersed in the colour, texture and decadence (as well as the occasional eroticism) that was Egyptomania at its height in the late 1800s.

Swedish artist Julius Kronberg (1850–1921) was commissioned to create the painting in 1879 to flank a similarly sized window in Sweden's famed Tistad Castle, where it remained for the next 130 years. The artist took his inspiration from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, which had been published in Sweden for the first time in 1825.

Kronberg captured the tragic moment where, rather than

become a war trophy for Octavian to parade in Rome, Cleopatra chooses to commit suicide with her handmaidens, Charmion and Iras. As Cleopatra reaches for the snake to press to her breast, Iras lies already dead on the floor and Charmion writhes in agony, giving us a prelude of Cleopatra's immediate fate.

Despite the queen's overwhelming grief over Antony's earlier death, and the dreadful task ahead of her, in her final moments Cleopatra comes across as strong and resolute. By denying Octavian his prize, Cleopatra remains Cleopatra.

Currently Kronberg's Cleopatra is currently on loan to the Minneapolis Institute of Art (L2019.64).



© GEOFFREY PRINCE

# HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN?



© MANNA NADER—KAIROINFO4U

## COMMENTS ON AN UNDERREPRESENTED PHENOMENON

**IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT ANCIENT EGYPT OWED ITS GREAT** fertility to the river Nile, with rainfall being a relatively rare occurrence. Indeed, iconographic depictions of rain are virtually unattested throughout the 3,000-year-long pharaonic era. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that rainfall would have been appreciated in the Egyptian climate. It presents a respite from the constant heat and dust, provides an easy source of fresh water, and contributes to the availability of pasturage.

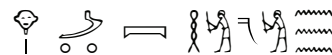
Much of our evidence for rain in ancient Egypt originates from literary sources, which surprisingly afford rain a negative connotation. Scholars have noted that rainfall was typically regarded with indifference, or at worst, was considered a nuisance or a disaster.

One such reference appears in Papyrus Chester Beatty III, discovered at Deir el-Medina, the village of the Theban royal tomb builders, in 1928. The papyrus dates to the 19th-Dynasty reigns of Kings Ramesses II and Merenptah

(ca. 1220 B.C.), where the scribe interprets various dreams as good or bad omens. Dreaming about rainfall, it seems, was a bad sign:



*“If a man sees himself in a dream,*



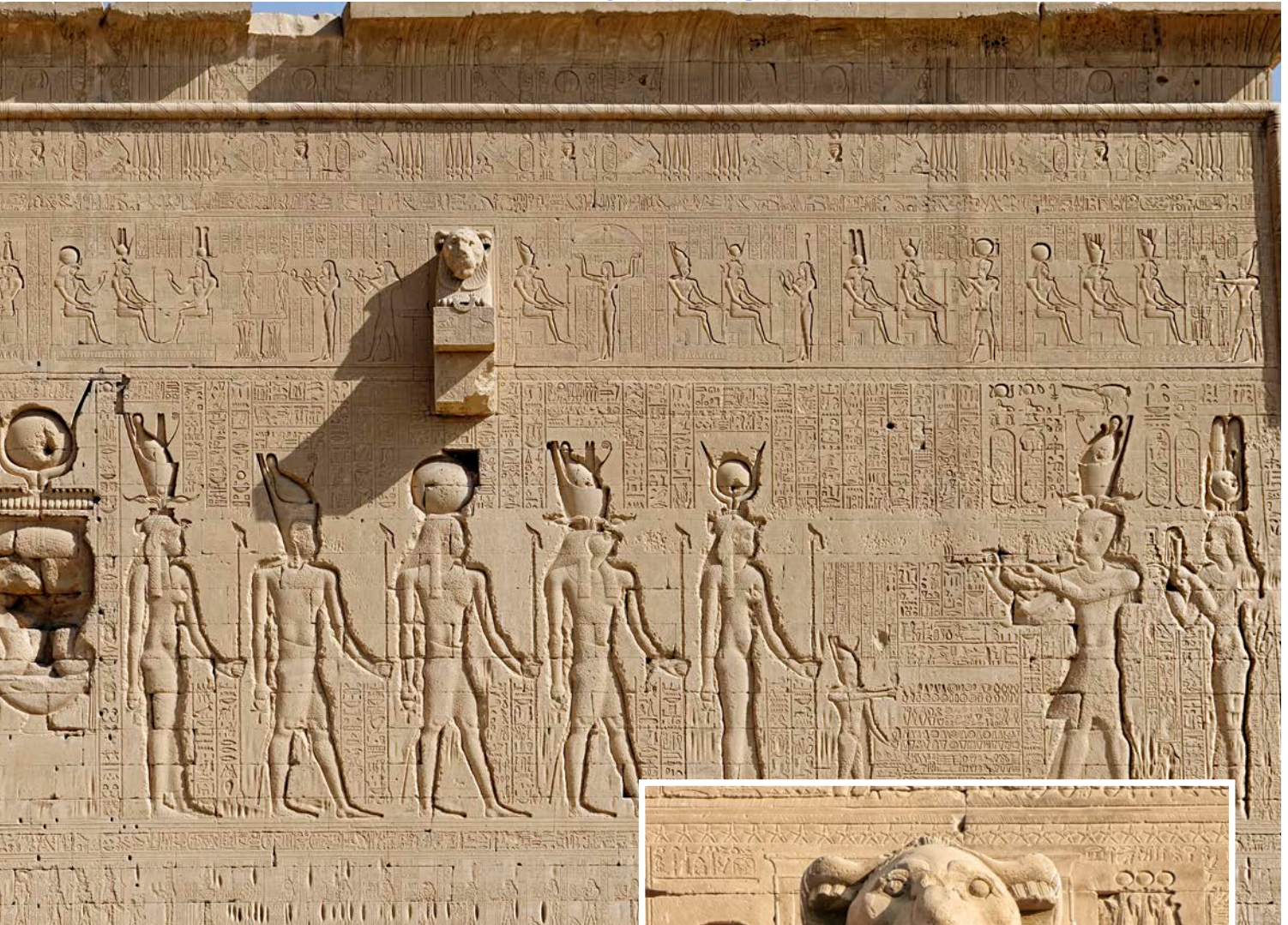
*seeing the sky raining,*



*Bad; (it means that) words are coming up against him.”  
(i.e. “disputes are coming against him.”)*

(Papyrus Chester Beatty III, British Museum, EA 10683,3.)

On the First Pylon of Ramesses III’s cult temple at Medinet Habu (20th Dynasty, ca. 1160 B.C.), the god Amun-



**WATER FEATURES IN CLEOPATRA'S TIME  
(ABOVE)**

*This is the rear, southern wall of Dendera Temple showing, at far left and right, Cleopatra VII and her young son Caesarion (portrayed as an adult), who became the queen's co-regent as Ptolemy XV. The royals are greeted by a procession of gods, above which are two lion-headed waterspouts which drained rainwater from the roof, pouring out like a waterfall.*

**(RIGHT)**

*This waterspout is on the western wall of Dendera Temple. Beneath it are two depictions of Hapy, god of the Nile flood. Here they represent Upper and Lower Egypt, and tie the symbolic plants of the Two Lands together in unity. The plants atop their heads suggest fertility and abundance, and point to the rich bounty brought on by the Nile's annual inundation.*

*Perched above the unity symbol is the benu—the sacred bird of Heliopolis and a powerful symbol of renewal. In typical Egyptian fashion, rainwater was both a problem to solve as well as a blessing.*

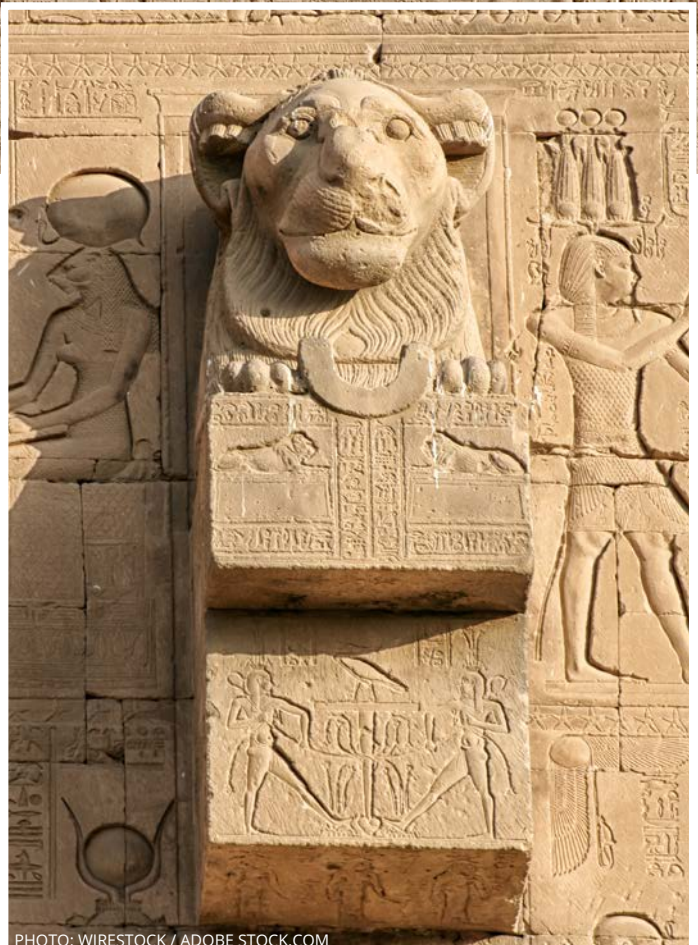
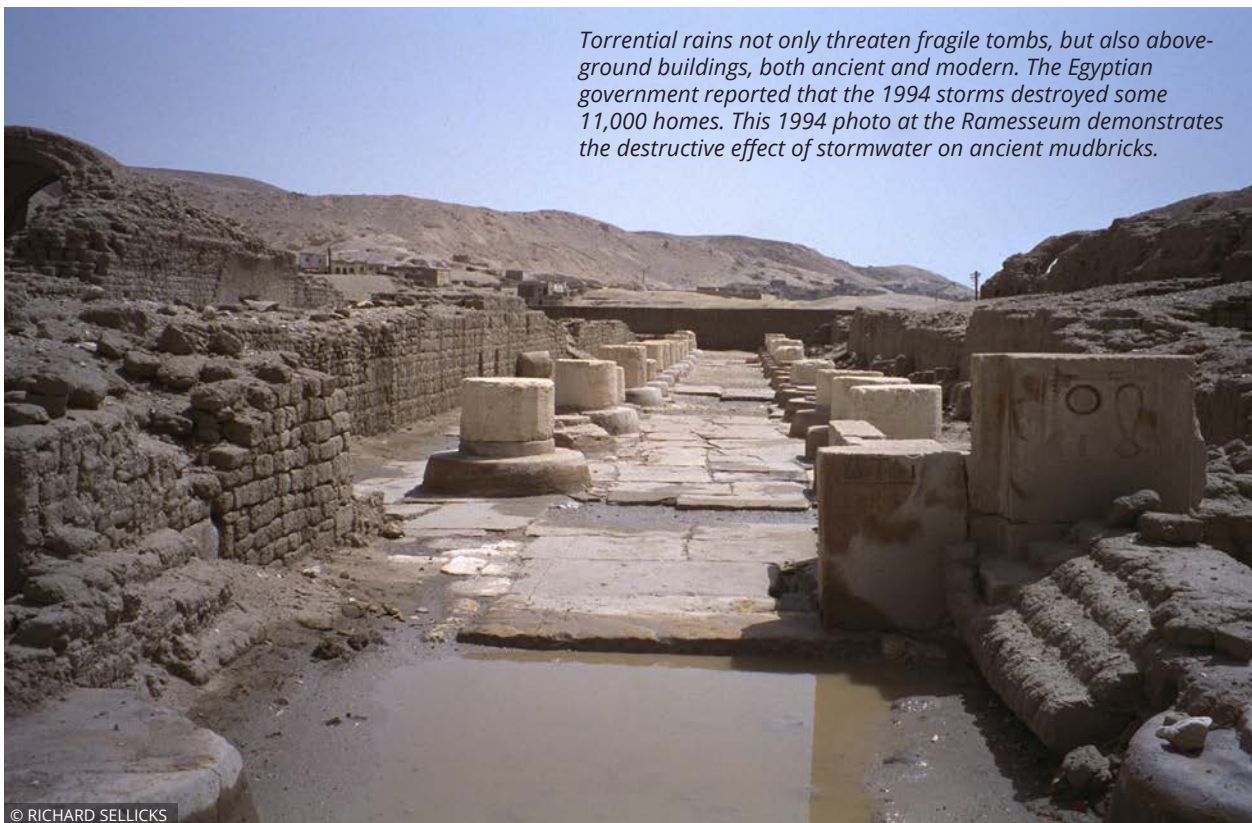


PHOTO: WIRESTOCK / ADOBE STOCK.COM

Torrential rains not only threaten fragile tombs, but also above-ground buildings, both ancient and modern. The Egyptian government reported that the 1994 storms destroyed some 11,000 homes. This 1994 photo at the Ramesseum demonstrates the destructive effect of stormwater on ancient mudbricks.



© RICHARD SELICKS

Recent environmental studies indicate that climatic conditions in ancient Egypt were far more dynamic than previously assumed. In fact, frequent and prolonged wet periods left their imprints throughout the pharaonic era, at times altering the course of its history. Studies in the Egyptian deserts also reveal much about populations that relied much on rainfall for their subsistence. This, in turn, has opened up the opportunity to revisit some long-held assumptions regarding the ancient Egyptians' relationship with rain.

### CLIMATE IN ANCIENT EGYPT: AN OVERVIEW

For much of Egyptian prehistory, its climate was drastically different from the characteristic hyperaridity of today. During the Mid-Holocene Wet Phase (ca. 7550–4050 B.C.), the region experienced a cooler, wetter climate featuring heavy monsoon rains. Its landscape was characterised by a “Green Sahara”, with an assemblage of mammals more akin to areas in East Africa today. Winter rainfall in Lower Egypt was likely crucial to the initial influx of Near Eastern domestic grains, which consisted of crops reliant on the availability of water from November to April.

The rise of Dynastic Egypt (ca. 3100 B.C.) coincided with the increased aridity that came at the end of the Green Sahara period. This change in the climate might have aided centralisation by driving population toward the Nile Valley. Nevertheless, certain population groups, such as the desert nomads, would have remained heavily reliant on rainfall. Until today, Bedouin populations navigate the Eastern Desert based on knowledge of where rainfall will occur at different times of the year.

Due to its proximity to the Red Sea, the mountainous Eastern Desert receives considerable precipitation that

allows groundwater to be recharged periodically. Rainfall is scarcer in the Western Desert, although its geomorphology allows water to be uncovered at shallower depths. The availability of water in the desert had a direct bearing on life in the Egyptian heartland as they enabled access to trade routes and mineral resources. At Wadi Mia, around 55 km east of Edfu, pharaoh Seti I commissioned a well to aid travellers, as well as provide water for workers in the Kanais gold mines:



“He (Seti I) said, ‘How painful is a way that has no water!’



What are travellers to do to relieve the parching of their throats?...



I will make for them the means to sustain them...?’



Now after his majesty had spoken these words to his own heart...



Stone workers were ordered to dig a well in the mountains...’



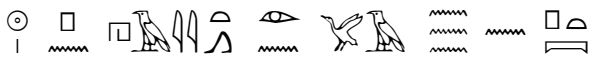
The Tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34) in the Valley of the Kings was built 15 metres above the valley floor, where a water-worn gully meets the top of the valley's cliff face. The above photo looks along the gully towards the valley.



Such a spot is highly vulnerable to floodwaters cascading down from the gully, so a series of dams were built in the watercourse to protect the royal tomb (above). And it worked—Thutmose III's tomb was never flooded.

Furthermore, the Coffin Texts detail how Isis demanded a cloudy sky and foggy earth to serve as protection against the threat of Seth, her murderous brother.

Various graffiti and ostraca from the New Kingdom make reference to “water of the heavens”, which seemingly served as a landmark to Theban residents. Scholars have interpreted these as either waterfalls or temporary lakes resulting from heavy rainfall, with the latter being favoured by most. For instance, a graffito in the Valley of the Queens, dated to the reign of the 19th-Dynasty pharaoh Merenptah records a rainfall event that took place in the first month of *shemu*—the dry harvest season that ran from May to September:



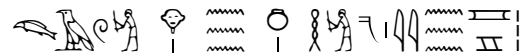
“On this day of the descent by the water of the heavens.”

Graffiti and ostraca recording rainfall events have been found throughout the Theban region, but particularly around the Valley of the Kings, as well as the Valley of the Queens, and appear to commemorate atypical rain that took place outside of the winter months.

Egyptian magical texts also supplied rain with favourable associations, such as in the Berlin Papyrus which specified the use of rainwater in making an ointment to help treat inflammation:



“Another (remedy): metal of heaven (meteoric iron),



pounded with rainwater,



anoint patient therewith.”

(Papyrus Berlin 3038. Remedy 88. Neues Museum, Berlin. ca. 19th Dynasty, 1250 B.C.)

The Hungarian Egyptologist László Kákósy surmised that rainwater was regarded by the Egyptians as having special powers due to its rarity.

In Egyptian theology, rain is most often identified with Seth and his foreign counterparts. The Marriage Stela of Ramesses II commemorates the marriage of the Egyptian

*A waterspout in the shape of a worried-looking lion in the Brooklyn Museum, New York.*

*This limestone piece is a sculptor's model for a waterspout that would have been positioned on a temple roof or wall, such as the examples from the Temple of Hathor at Dendera shown on page 25.*

*The large pour spout is under the lower jaw, and the lion's front two paws stretch out below, enclosing a trough that carried water away from the building.*

*In addition to channeling rainwater down off the roof, the lion served a protective purpose. Waterspouts such as this one were believed to have magical qualities. Similar to sphinxes, the leonine images guarded the structures they adorned (although this particular lion's anxious appearance looks less than intimidating).*

*Downpours were always a problem, and lion-headed waterspouts were used in Egyptian architecture as early as the Old Kingdom, although stylistically, this piece was made much later, probably around the Saite Period (Dynasty 26, ca. 664 B.C.), or even later into the Ptolemaic Period.*



BROOKLYN MUSEUM, CHARLES EDWIN WILBOUR FUND, ACC. NO. 35.1311

from the roof. This installation would become common throughout the subsequent periods—they were found at the pyramids of Middle Kingdom rulers, and well-preserved examples can be found on New Kingdom and Graeco-Roman temples (see above and also page 25). Inscriptions from Ptolemaic temples suggest that the waterspouts were regarded as symbolic guardians against the god of chaos, Seth, and other inimical forces.

The Valley of the Kings was also subjected to occasional flash flooding during the New Kingdom, as evident by sediments deposited at tombs and painted decoration being stripped from the lower parts of walls (see page 34). As a result, systematic efforts were made to prevent rainwater damage. Above the tomb of Thutmose III (KV 34), for instance, a series of dams was designed to retain and drain away water through a gorge (page 30). At the Valley of the Queens, there is also evidence for protective dams intended to prevent flood damage to tombs (page 35).

Further away from the Theban necropolis, these rain episodes were contributing to another defining achievement of the New Kingdom—the opening up of old waterholes and desert routes, which facilitated extensive trade and conquests. At Wadi Bairiya, around 20 km south of Luxor, ancient footprints preserved by rain-washed sediments suggest that there was considerable rainfall in the desert during the 18th Dynasty.

Starting from the Late Period (ca. 747 B.C.), extensive networks of aqueduct shafts known as qanats were used to harvest rainwater in the Egyptian oases. By the Roman period, many irrigation systems in the oases drew their water solely from the qanats, which enabled agriculture in areas previously deemed too arid for cultivation. Furthermore, recent studies have presented substantial evidence of rain-fed agriculture in Roman Egypt through earthworks known as karms, which consist of artificial hillocks used to retain runoff rainwater. The karms are especially effective



# EGYPT *of* GLORY

## One Exhibition—Two Locations

In 1824, not long after French scholar Jean-François Champollion cracked the system of how to read ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, he headed to the northern Italian city of Turin. Champollion was desperate to pore over the Egyptian collection that had been recently purchased by the King of Sardinia from Bernardino Drovetti, the French Consul in Egypt.

The Drovetti collection—over 5,000 objects—was still being unpacked at the Palazzo dell'Accademia delle Scienze when Champollion arrived. On seeing some of the incredible objects, Champollion wrote to his brother, Jacques-Joseph, with his breathless first impressions:

“I will tell you in one sentence from the country: ‘Questo è cosa stupenda’ [This is an incredible thing!], I did not expect such wealth... [and] this is still only part of the collection: there are still two or three hundred cases or packages to be opened.”

The collection of the Museo Egizio has expanded many times over since then, and today, the original building that Champollion visited houses the largest collection of Egyptian antiquities outside of Egypt. So when the Museo Egizio puts on an exhibition, you know it's going to be good.

*Egypt of Glory* was launched in October 2020 and is unique for a travelling exhibition in that it is running in two locations at once: over 500 artefacts are divided between Amos Rex in Helsinki, Finland, and the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, Estonia. After a couple of covid-induced pauses, both venues are again open for visitors to safely marvel at the incredible skill and deep convictions of the ancient Egyptians.

### MODEL OF A BOAT

WOOD

FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD—MIDDLE KINGDOM (ca. 2160–1650 B.C.)

PROVENANCE: ASSIUT (?)

MUSEO EGIZIO ACC. NO. S. 1209

*This image is from the Amos Rex exhibition in Helsinki.*

*Small model boats were often found in the tomb furnishings of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom. They usually symbolised the deceased's pilgrimage to Abydos, the traditional burial place of Osiris, the netherworld god of rebirth.*

*Behind the model boat is a kneeling statue of the 18th-Dynasty pharaoh Amenhotep II. For a detailed description of this statue, see page 40, and for more on model boats, see the example currently at the Kumu Art Museum, on page 54.*





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**STELA OF THE COURTIER NIANKHINPU**


LIMESTONE

6TH DYNASTY (ca. 2345–2181 B.C.)


PROVENANCE: GEBELEIN, UPPER EGYPT





MUSEO EGIZIO ACC. NO. S. 14092

On the west bank of the Nile, around 30 km south of Luxor, two rocky hills rise from the desert and give the area its modern Arabic name, el-Gebelein (“the Two Mountains”) as well as its Old Kingdom Egyptian name, Inerty Inpu 

Anubis was the god who presided over the mummification rituals and guided the deceased to the afterlife, so including his name as part of yours was a way of both glorifying the god and sending a wish for Anubis to provide his blessing and protection. Pictured above, seated at an offering table is Niankhipu 

This beautifully-crafted limestone stela from Niankhipu’s tomb was likely part of a false door, which acted as a threshold between the living world and the realm of the dead to allow the tomb owner’s ka-spirit to receive offerings left in the tomb chapel.

Niankhipu is depicted here, sharing a seat with his wife, Djefas 

The couple sit side-by-side before an offering table laden with half-loaves of bread, with other offerings surrounding the table such as  “fowl”,  “bull”,  “ibex” and  “oryx”. The list of food and goods continue in columns of hieroglyphs to the right.

This stela is an extraordinary example of 6th-Dynasty art produced for nobles in regional areas, well away from the royal court at Memphis

# KUMU ART MUSEUM

## ART MUSEUM OF ESTONIA, Tallinn

ESTONIA'S FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ART draws its artefacts from impeccable stock: the Museo Egizio in Turin. Paolo Marini, curator at the Museo Egizio and traveling exhibition coordinator (shown below), says that it provides an opportunity to see the world through the eyes of the ancient Egyptians: "Thanks to the selection of beautiful items, it will now be possible to understand the way Egyptians interpreted their reality, how they saw the lush Nilotic landscape, and how they imagined the Netherworld." On the one hand, the items tell the story of the ancient Egyptians' world, and, on the other, each is a work of art in its own right.

In just over a century, the Art Museum of Estonia has grown from a single building into an art institution with five separate museums across Tallinn, each with a distinct focus for their collection. The Kumu Art Museum is the newest, opening in 2006 and purpose-built as the Art Museum's main building.

The following pages showcase just a tiny handful of the over 200 Egyptian artefacts on show in Tallinn for *Egypt of Glory*.



*Paolo Marini, Museo Egizio curator, points out details on the coffin of Khonsuirdis during the opening tour of "Egypt of Glory" at the Kumu Art Museum. For more information about Khonsuirdis, see page 52. Photo: Karel Zova.*



**DUMMY CANOPIC JARS**  
 LIMESTONE  
 THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD (ca. 1076–722 B.C.)  
 FINDSPOT: VALLEY OF THE QUEENS  
 ACQUISITION: SCHIAPARELLI EXCAVATIONS,  
 1903–1906



**T**hese 3,000-year-old fakes were just as good as the real thing.

For the ancient Egyptian, having a functioning body in the afterlife ideally meant having a well-preserved body in this one. To ensure that the body would dry out nicely, the vital organs, needed for life beyond the grave, had to be removed and preserved separately.

It was a messy business. The four major organs were removed, dried out in salty natron and wrapped in linen packages. These were then placed in containers known today as canopic jars.

From the 19th Dynasty on (ca. 1300 B.C.), the jar stoppers were crafted in the form of one human and three animal-headed gods. These heads represented the four ‘Sons of Horus’; guardian deities that were each called upon to safeguard one precious embalmed organ.

Falcon-headed Qebehseuef looked after the intestines, Hapy, with the head of a baboon, protected the lungs, jackal-headed Duamutef (not shown here) watched over the stomach, and Imsety, with a human head, safeguarded the liver.

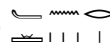
In ancient Egypt, just as today, traditions evolved, and some two centuries later—a time known as the Third Intermediate Period—the embalmed organs were wrapped and returned to the body, making it more ‘whole’. Canopic jars continued to be included as part of the burial equipment, however, to ensure the protection of the Sons of Horus.

These are known as “dummy jars”, and while the lids of the jars shown here are removable, the cavities inside are not large enough to hold an organ.



© MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN

#### SHABTI OF HUNERO



WOOD

NEW KINGDOM, ca. 1539–1076 B.C.

### OUTSOURCING

The ancient Egyptian idea of the afterlife developed the unfortunate possibility that the dead might have to carry out agricultural labour. Even the royals weren't above having to get their hands dirty in the hereafter. This unpleasantness, however, could be avoided simply by creating small figurines of the deceased that could be called upon to magically perform the work on behalf of their owner. These were called shabtis and were a regular feature of tomb equipment from the Middle Kingdom (around 2000 B.C.) to the end of the Ptolemaic Period in 30 B.C.

Over time, the design of shabtis tended to mirror the current fashion for coffins, and so most shabtis are mummy-shaped, but in the New Kingdom, some shabtis showed the deceased dressed like the living, such as this example made for a man named Hunero.

Rather than carrying the usual agricultural implements for work in the hereafter, Hunero sports his festive best, including a lappet wig and white linen dress with half-sleeves, and completes the look with a broad collar. The style of Hunero's outfit, together with the position of his hands, placed flat on the apron over his dress suggests that Hunero lived during the New Kingdom's 19th Dynasty. This is the family line that produced Ramesses II, most famous for the temples at Abu Simbel, his cult temple, The Ramesseum, at Luxor, and his "triumph" in battle at Kadesh against the Hittites.

It may be that portraying Hunero as a living man was designed to signal his transformation into an eternal being—a *sah*—with a magic formula designed to revive the dead painted on his long apron.

The text associates Hunero with Osiris, the netherworld god of rebirth, and reads, "To make live, the Osiris Hunero, True of Voice". This tells us that Hunero has faced judgement before Osiris and has declared himself to be free of any wrongdoing. Just to be sure, Hunero's heart, which carried the weight of his deeds in life, was balanced against the feather of truth. This is a *fait accompli*. Hunero's heart is pure; he has spoken truthfully (hence, "True of Voice"), and is free to go on to a glorious fate in the afterlife.

When shabtis first appeared within burial ensembles, it was in small numbers—often just one—acting as a body substitute for its owner. It was during the New Kingdom that they came to be regarded more as the deceased's deputy or servant and tools appeared in their hands. Eventually, the number of shabtis that were put into a single grave could be counted in the hundreds.



as Egyptologist Gay Robins states, “was used to encode information for the viewer to read”. We will see how in Kaninisut’s offering chapel, all of these conventions support a double narrative, serving the owner’s after-life ambition.

### WHO WAS KANINISUT?

Kaninisut was a high official and sem priest who lived during the late 4th or early 5th Dynasties (ca. 2500 B.C.). While the hieroglyphic text in his tomb chapel states that he was the “king’s son, of his body”, the location of his tomb suggests that he was unlikely to be a genuine prince. In Kaninisut’s tomb, “king’s son” was an honorific title, and Kaninisut’s primary role appears to be that of a *sem* priest, holding a significant role in the royal funerary cult.

Visitors stepping through the low entrance into Kaninisut’s offering chapel are immediately met by a majestic figure of the tomb’s owner, which presents an ideal occasion to consider the arguably primary convention of Egyptian art: the canon of proportions.

### PROPORTIONS

It’s an interesting fact that while we all know the stiff-looking “walk-like-an-Egyptian” stance, in reality, it doesn’t exist anywhere in Egyptian art. What the popular pose *does* do, however, is parody the unusual way the Egyptian elite portrayed themselves.

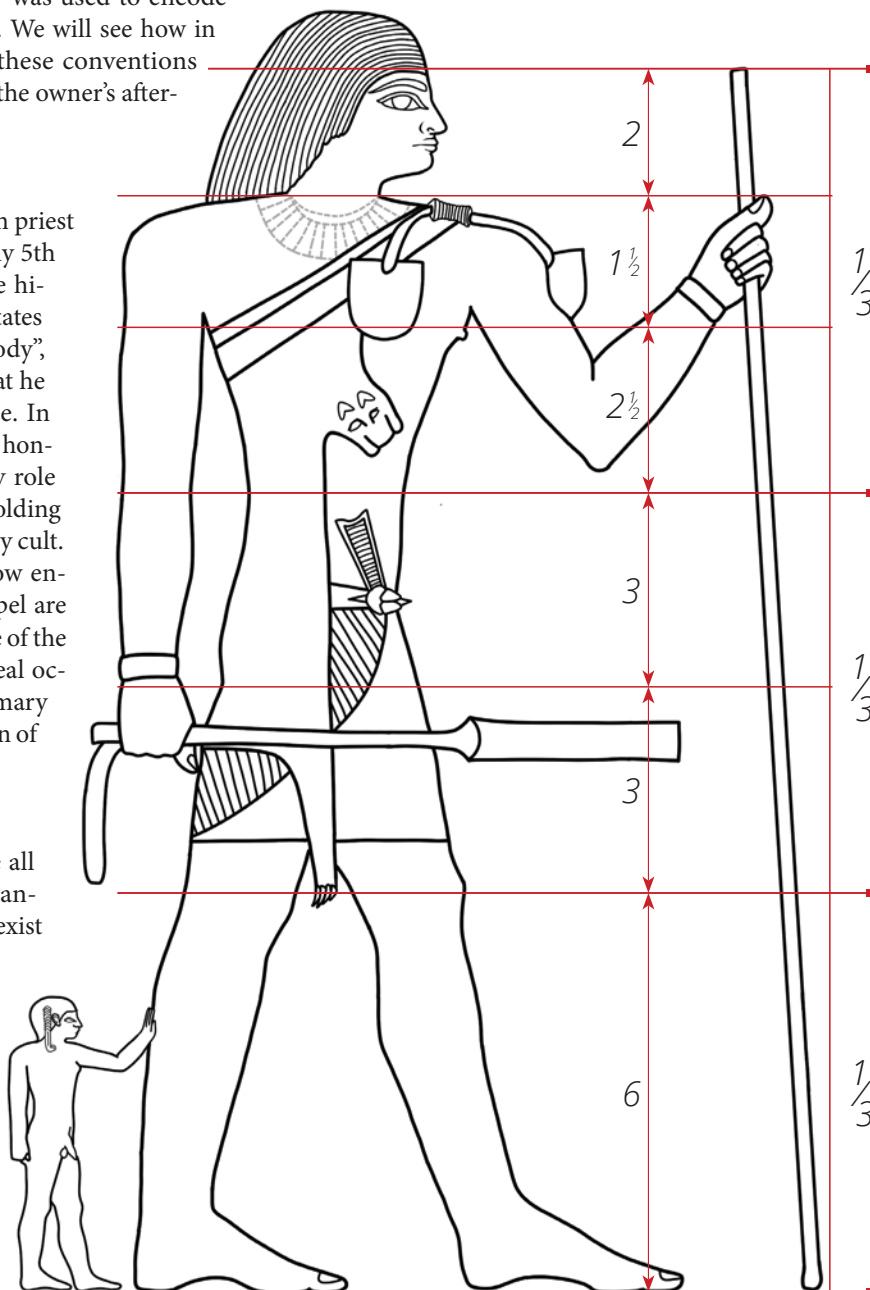
For the Egyptians, the formal stance likely provided a sense of order and balance, and was governed by a standardised set of ratios that ensured consistency. So successful was this artistic tradition that to the casual observer, ancient Egyptian art appears unchanged over thousands of years.

These ratios relied on creating a unit of measurement, such as the fist. The image of Kaninisut to the right demonstrates how the various parts of the body were measured in multiples of that unit. While the canon of proportions was supported by grid systems in the later periods, only guidelines were attested in Old Kingdom.

### ASPECTIVE IMAGES

Beyond the proportions, a second notion defines the Egyptian image, the aspective, or, as Egyptologist Melinda Hartwig puts it, “the way in which images are rendered in their most characteristic aspect”. This meant that the image of a person was actually a composite of body parts, combining multiple viewpoints within one picture.

A look at Kaninisut’s profile (above and page 55) illustrates the concept: the head is in profile while the eye and eyebrow are in frontal view. Below that, the nose and lips return to a profile aspect, with the lips slightly shifted to the front to be completely recognisable.



On his tomb chapel’s north wall, Kaninisut is shown holding a rod of authority in his left hand and a sceptre in his right. The proportions of his figure conform to a proportional system that became canon during Egypt’s Old Kingdom. According to this canon, the human figure was subdivided into six sections, each measured as a multiple of a unit determined by the deceased’s fist. A person from foot to knee should be six units long, which is one-third of the total height of the figure. The head was two units high, measured to the forehead, which allowed for different kinds of crowns or headdresses.

The conventions regarding the rest of the body further illustrate the aspective: the shoulders are broad, frontal and symmetrical, and the torso is at full width so that collars, necklaces and garments can be shown in full view. One nipple, however, is in profile. The waist and legs are in profile, and two “left” feet are shown from the inside, displaying the arches and a big toe. These latter observations introduce another core principle of Egyptian representation: the idealisation.





The main scene on the chapel's west wall features Kaninisut and his wife Neferhanisut facing their two sons, Horwer and Kaninisut Junior, and daughter Wadjethetep.

"It was the intention not only to perpetuate the one buried there, but with him his family and his whole house.... In the same way as Kaninisut's soul animates his likeness, the other persons depicted on the wall are animated by their souls and attend to their duties."—Hermann Junker, 1931.

between words and pictures: "Egyptians considered text and image as complementary... only producing full meaning when associated with each other."

### SCALE AND STATUS

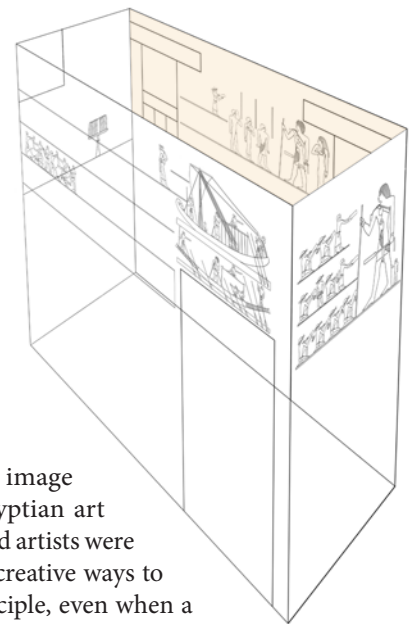
So far, the question of relative scale has only been touched on. One of the basic principles of Egyptian art is the concept of functional scaling: the depiction of people with a more important function at a larger scale than people who are less relevant in the scene. Toby Wilkinson describes this scaling as "designed, above all, to reinforce the established social order."

Standing behind Kaninisut is the tiny figure of his son, Horwer, shown as a naked child touching his father's thigh. Overlooking the scene is a diminutive relief of Kaninisut's wife, Neferhanisut, placed on the adjacent false door's jamb (presumably through lack of space on the north wall, see page 57). On the west wall, however, where the couple faces its family and household, Neferhanisut's height almost equals that of her husband. Ann Macy Roth notes that, at this time, women were depicted at an average—possibly natural—85% scale compared to their husbands. While the size difference may reflect real life, it has more to do with ownership of the tomb chapel rather than gender. As Roth states, "such a reduction might be simply a matter of decorum, giving the male head of the household prece-

dence in his own tomb chapel."

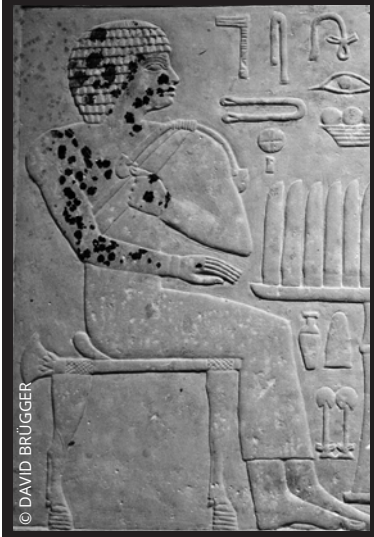
### ORIENTATION

The fundamental image orientation in Egyptian art was to the right, and artists were forced to develop creative ways to maintain this principle, even when a person needed to be facing left. Take, for example, the standing figure of Kaninisut in the "Taking Account" scene on the north wall (page 59). As per convention, we see him holding a long staff in his forward (left) hand and a *sekhem* sceptre in his rear (right) hand. Compare it with the scene from the west wall (opposite), where Kaninisut faces to the left. Now the forward arm corresponds to his right arm, and the rear arm to his left. To maintain the sceptre being held in his right hand and the staff in his left, the artists simply swapped the hands around. Kaninisut's right arm now bears his left hand and his left arm uses his right hand. As Gay Robins writes in *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art*, "this then tells the viewer that the staff is actually held in the left hand and the sceptre in the right." Additionally, with the sceptre now in Kaninisut's right hand, it is shown passing behind his body (even though that right hand is on his left arm).



The west wall of the chapel is flanked by two false doors. The southern door (right) is the primary portal with an offering platform on the floor in front of it (see page 57). Both doors have been damaged by thieves in search of treasures behind them.

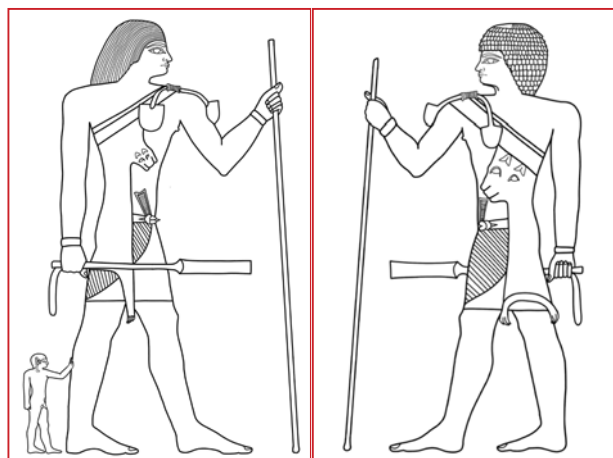
Kaninisut wears his best formal wear for eternity: a short, curled wig and a long garment tied at the shoulder. He sits before a table stacked with half-loaves of bread.



© DAVID BRÜGGER



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Kaninisut's staff is always in his left hand, regardless of which arm that hand is on.

Facing the couple and in various sizes, expressing the importance of their role, all members of the household are neatly distributed spatially in “registers”. Every single figure (as remarkably in the entire room) is named. Junker states that “it was the intention not only to perpetuate the one buried there, but with him his family and his whole house”: first their children, then the scribes in the top row, the priests of the dead in the middle and finally a bottom row of servants bearing offerings. The latter might relate not to the couple’s representation but to the ritual meal on the right-hand false door, as suggested by their larger scale incompatible with the household hierarchy and the continued register line running under the feet of the masters.

Being on the same wall did not necessarily mean belonging to the same scene, as will be discussed later.

### SUSTAINABILITY IN THE AFTERLIFE

The left-hand false door is traditionally seen as the main offering place. Its focal point is the so-called libation slab with a highly standardised scene where the deceased is seated in front of a “ritual meal” (see above). The representation gives a few characteristic examples of how objects were treated in two-dimensional art.

While the table is shown in profile, the offerings on its top are positioned vertically, packed neatly to suggest abundance. The traditional chair is also depicted in profile with two legs representing those of a bull and a seat with a floral decoration in front view. A brief look on the hieroglyphs reinforces the idea of plenitude, underlined by the repeated sign  $\text{𓆎}$  (“thousand”).

The source of this abundance is illustrated on the opposite, eastern wall (above), which gives us precious insights on scene orientation. Although scenes so far have been convergent, with the central figures facing each other, the processions depicted on this wall are divergent, positioned back-to-back and going in opposite directions. In the bottom register, a procession of offering bearers run to the right in the direction of the west wall and its false doors. As Gabriele Pieke emphasises in *Art of the Old Kingdom*, “the arrangement of innumerable offering bearers... immediately creates a visual abundance as well as a variety of forms”.

The origin of the procession might well be the slaughtering scene above on the right, where the *plat de résistance*

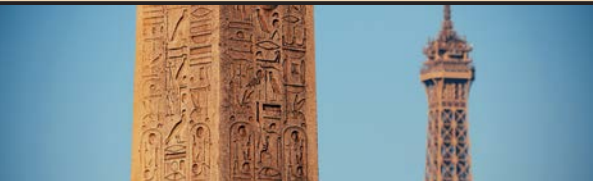
# NILE

## COMING UP



### THE SCARABS OF AMENHOTEP III AND TIYE

Kelee Siat looks at Amenhotep III's commemorative scarabs which boasted of his achievements, and also prominently featured his principal wife, Queen Tiye.



### THE LUXOR OBELISK AND ITS VOYAGE TO PARIS

Transporting the Luxor obelisk from Egypt to Paris was one of the great engineering triumphs of the 19th century. Bob Brier explains how Apollinaire Lebas did it.



### DEAD BUT NOT GONE

Juan Aguilera Martin looks at ancestor worship at Deir el-Medina, the village of the royal tomb builders. The dead and the living needed each other in equal measure.



### THE BLUE LOTUS

Khadija Hammond looks at the blue lotus (actually a water lily) and its place in ancient Egyptian myth and medicine—along with its central role in living forever.

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“Go little booke, God send thee good passage,  
And especially let this be thy prayere,  
Unto them all that thee will read or hear,  
Where thou art wrong, after their help to call,  
Thee to correct in any part or all.”

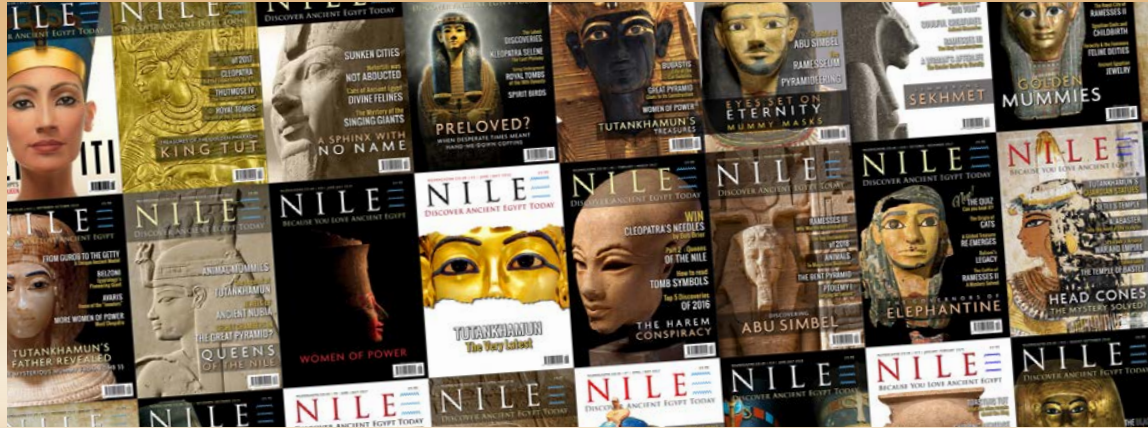
CHAUCER'S *Belle Dame sans Mercy*.

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# NILE

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"Get 'Em When They're Young," they say. Digital subscriber Bruce Mironov of New Jersey with his granddaughter, Corinne, and his iPad version of NILE Magazine. On the wall behind are some of the photos that Bruce has taken on his Egypt adventures. Want to be part of a future issue? Send your photo of your own NILE time to [editor@nilemagazine.com.au](mailto:editor@nilemagazine.com.au).