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## Brides of the Dead in Ancient Egypt

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### Abstract

*Brides of the Dead are small statues of naked women with incomplete legs and were commonly buried with male, female and children burials. They were believed to be symbols of regeneration and fertility. They have been found in the burials among funerary equipments as early as the predynastic period. Early Egyptologists mistakenly identified them as concubines intended to provide the spirits of men with an eternity of sexual pleasure. Recent studies show that both men and women used these figures to ensure fertility as they guaranteed the deceased's sexual power in the afterlife. These female figurines were traditionally tattooed with dots, dashes and lozenges. The earliest intimations of these tattoos patterns came from clay figurines dating to roughly 4000BCE. The most likely accepted view of the dotted tattoos found on the abdomen, thighs and pelvic region of the figurines. This paper aims to be a descriptive and an analytical study of the origin, patterns, materials, terminology, accessories and tattoos of the so-called 'brides of The Dead' in ancient Egypt, and searching for their functions and ritualistic role in the Egyptian burials.*

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**Keywords:** Brides of the dead, Concubine figurines, Fertility figures, Tattoos, Female figurines.

### Introduction

Brides of the dead are figurines of nude females which known from almost all periods of ancient Egyptian history and occurred in a variety of contexts from the predynastic period onwards. They were small and portable, averaging approximately 15 cm in height. They were fashioned from clay, faience, ivory, stone, and wood. The common ancient Egyptian terms for these female figurines are 'rpyt', 'is sjn' or 'sjnt'; terms specifically for clay figurines include *sjn n 3st*, *rpyt nt sjnt*, and *rpyt 3st*. Formerly interpreted largely as 'concubine' figures, 'fertility figurines' and

'female figurines'. They were often highly stylized, emphasizing the sexual characteristic of the figure, such as the breast, hips and pubic area. They were also regarded as symbols of magical protection and medical healing.<sup>1</sup>

It was believed that such figurines were put in the graves of men to satisfy their sexual needs in the afterlife. More recent studies have pointed out that they were also found in women's graves, they were discovered in the full range of excavated sites in Egypt such as temples, tombs and settlement sites as at Tell el-Amarna.<sup>2</sup> Moreover they could be regarded as middle class art and not a royal privilege traditionally presented for both royal and private tombs as well.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately these figurines did not get the attention they deserved among a huge amount of tombs, temples, pyramids and artifacts exhibited in museums all over the world. Many are obscurely published or not published at all.<sup>4</sup>

## Literature Review

### Brides of the Dead Forms and Patterns in Ancient Egypt

Although most brides' figures take the form of a naked woman, clothing is indicated on a few examples. Particularly sculptured with wigs, tattoos patterns, jewelry, girdles of shells stung together, small waists, prominent breasts and pubic area. The style of the wigs were varied from short, tripartite wigs or the so-called Hathor wigs (**Figure1**).<sup>5</sup> Some figures hold or suckle a child, or have a child next to them on a bed, the so-called the type of 'Isis and Horus' (**Figure2**). The majority of them was portrayed with no feet and was not intended to stand upright, although some figures could be supported by the legs of the bed they based on.<sup>6</sup> Few rare examples were fashioned in a seated (**Figures 3,4**) or kneeling position.

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<sup>1</sup>Waraska, E.A. (2008). 'Female Figurines (Pharaonic Period).' *Journal of the UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1033 (1), Los Angeles. Available at <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz000s3mm6> [26 January 2013].

<sup>2</sup>Stevens, A. (2006). *Private Religion at Amarna: The material evidence*, 305. Oxford: Archaeopress.

<sup>3</sup>Teeter, E. (2011). *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*. 88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup>Teeter, E. (2010 ). *Baked Clay Figurines and Votive Beds from Medinet Habu*. 10. Chicago: Oriental Institute.

<sup>5</sup>Desroches-Noblecourt, C. (1953). 'Concubines du Mort. et Mères de Famille au Moyen Empire.' *BIFAO* 53: 7-47.

<sup>6</sup>Waraska, E.A. (2008). 'Female Figurines (Pharaonic Period)'.1; Saleh, M. (1987). *The Egyptian Museum Cairo*. 80. Germany: Verlag Philipp von Zabern. Mainz.

Other unique representations of these brides' statuettes which dated back to the predynastic period are modeled from pottery and characterized by small heads, with beak-like face on long necks, expanding to shoulders. Their breasts are prominent while the waist is gracefully curving into uplifted arms with hands turned in and pointed (Figure 5).<sup>7</sup> Similar figurines dated back to the same period were discovered with missing heads and one arm of each. Their bodies are adorned with abnormal tattoo patterns which resemble abstract decorations appeared on certain predynastic vessels (Figure 6).<sup>8</sup>

Paddle dolls are a type of brides' figurines appeared as early as the predynastic period (4000 BC), and particularly in Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BC). These dolls were made of wood and seemingly follow a convention for the female figurines, emphasizing the hips, hair and tattoo patterns. They were usually painted with a geometric pattern of dots and dashes. These patterns may reproduce tattoos or represent clothing or jewelry. Some have hair composed of unfired clay and faience beads strung on flax fiber (Figure 7).<sup>9</sup>

### **Brides of the Dead Materials and Manufacture**

Brides' figurines were commonly related to standardized types within chronological periods. Their uniformity and decoration in a variety of materials indicate mass production at provincial, royal or temple workshops were the most likely locale for their production. These figurines were fashioned from clay, faience, ivory, stone and wood, but most of them were made from faience and clay. Clay figurines could be modeled or molded of Nile silt, marl clay, or local desert clay, and were frequently painted. Some marl-clay figures of the Middle and New kingdoms were decorated with faience or metal jewelry, and headed by colored linen and beaded hair or wig.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Gleann, E. & K.G. Anne (1997). *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Art*. 121. Fig. 53a. Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum.

<sup>8</sup>Verner, M., L. Bares & B. Vachala (1997). *Ilustrovaná Encyklopedie Starého Egypta*. 19. Praha: Univerzita Karlova.

<sup>9</sup>Winlock, H. (1932). *Excavations at Deir el-Bahari, 203*. Pl.38. American Philosophical Society; Barguet, P. (1953). 'L'Origine et la Signification du Contrepoids de Collier-Menat.' *BIFAO* 52: 101-102.

<sup>10</sup>Pinch, G. (1993). *Votive Offerings to Hathor, 200-203*. Oxford: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum.

Faience brides' figurines were molded and had darker coloration to emphasize the eyes, nipples and hair, as well as to indicate jewelry, tattooing and in certain cases patterned clothing.<sup>11</sup>

Ivory brides' figurines were very rare which were carved and polished from one the lower canines of a hippopotamus (**Figure 8**). Most of them appeared to be crudely made, but the carving is precise and the limbs were well formed and smoothly finished. The emphasis on the eyes, breasts, hips and pubic area are stylistic rather than due to poor execution.<sup>12</sup> Stone figurines were carved and sometimes painted in different colors or in a single pigment such as black to emphasize hair, jewelry, garment and tattoo patterns.<sup>13</sup>

Wooden brides' figurines, including the so-called 'paddle dolls', were carved and painted with a geometrical pattern of dots and dashes in black and different other colors that may represent clothing and jewelry. The elaborately wooden brides were flat and follow the convention of the traditional female figurines, emphasizing the hips, hair and tattoos. Some have hair composed of unfired clay and faience beads strung on flax fiber.<sup>14</sup>

### **Brides of the Dead Historical Development**

Brides' figurines were among the oldest depictions of human sculptured portraits in ancient Egypt as early as the Badarian period (5500-4000 BC). They were found within the funeral equipments of royal and non-royal burials. In the Old Kingdom (2686-2181 BC), female figurines were rarely discovered either in the tombs or in the settlement sites. During the Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BC), a great number of brides' figurines were found. They were varied in patterns, colors and materials. The New Kingdom record (1550-1069 BC) is similar to that of the Middle Kingdom. Through the Third Intermediate and Late periods (1069-332 BC), a typical new pattern appeared in the form of a naked woman lying on a bed, occasionally with a child by the legs. The brides' figurines were continued to be found in the burials, especially the pottery figures. At this period Egypt was an important cultural melting-pot, influenced by earlier

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid. 199.

<sup>12</sup>Muscarella, O. (1974). *Ancient Art: The Norbert Schimmel Collection*. 170. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern; Valentin, F.J. and Bedman, T. (2013), "The Tomb of the Vizier Amenhotep-Huy in Asasif (AT 28): Preliminary Results of the Excavation Seasons 2009-2912". in: *Archaeological Research in the Valley of Kings and Ancient Thebes. Papers Presented in Honor of Richard H. Wilkinson*, edited by Pearce Paul Greasman, Vol. I, The University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition, 181-200, Fig.8.

<sup>13</sup>Waraska, (2008). 'Female Figurines (Pharaonic Period)'. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Pinch, G. (2006). *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. 127. London: British Museum Press.

periods of Egyptian history and the cultural contacts with the Near East. Many terracotta female figurines represented in relief on a rectangular plaque have been discovered. They resembled earlier brides' figurines in their nakedness, coiffures, tattoo patterns and occasionally having an infant next to their bodies.<sup>15</sup> During the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (332 BC-395 AD) various types of these female figurines were known especially that with a child. Some figures were sculptured with oversized organs and are characterized by unfinished feet, large naval and the pronounced pubic triangle with the small tic marks depicting hair. Flinders Petrie described them as 'massive forms of extreme coarseness', while Teeter called them 'pug-ugly'.<sup>16</sup> In the Coptic era (395-641 AD) brides of the dead were often very simple, rough and their sexual organs are clearly depicted.<sup>17</sup>

Similar brides' figurines were also found in other civilizations such as in Greece. Joan Reilly proposes that the tiny 'doll' figure of a mature, limbless, nude woman, seen held by young or adolescent girls on Athenian grave monuments is not a doll but a religious votive. She argues that the scene illustrates the child performing a ritual dedication at menarche, a ritual to assure the child's healthy development into a functioning, mature woman.<sup>18</sup>

Similar female figurines were found in the ancient Roman Byzantine cemetery in Khirbet es-Samra in Northern Jordan. They were known as the 'Samra Dolls', made from plastic and the available evidence date them to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Others were exhibited in museums in Syria and Turkey. The figurines were related to funerary practices or symbols of virginity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Rotté, E. (2012). 'Egyptian Plaque Terracottas of Standing Nude Women from the Late Period: Egyptian Heritage or Foreign Influences.' Newsletter of the Coroplastic Studies Interest Group (CSIG). Winter 7: 13-15.

<sup>16</sup>Teeter, (2011). Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt. Ibid. 89.

<sup>17</sup>Shaw, I. & P. Nicholson (1995). The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt. 265-266. London: British Museum Press.

<sup>18</sup>Reilly, J. (1997). 'Naked and Limbless: Learning about the Feminine Body in Ancient Athens.' In: A.O. Koboski-Ostrow & C.L. Lyons, Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology, 154-174. London: Routledge.

<sup>19</sup>Nabulsi, A.J. (2012). 'The Khirbet Es-Samara Plaster Figurines.' Newsletter of the Coroplastic Studies Interest Group (CSIG). Winter 7: 9. Figure 1.

## Brides of the Dead Terminology

There is no specific term for brides of the dead in ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, several terms for clay female figurines have been recently identified.<sup>20</sup> Many trials were made to find connections between the surviving texts and such artifacts. As texts are the most formative type of source. A spell from Papyrus Turin 54003, rt. 13-16 for warding off venomous snakes.<sup>21</sup> The spell calls for a *sin n 3st*, *sin*, *sin n 3st*, which can be translated as 'clay figurine of Isis'.<sup>22</sup> Another spell to relieve a stomachache, ritual 12, 2-12, 4 from Papyrus Leiden.<sup>23</sup> The spell calls for the words to be spoken over a *rpyt nt sint*, 'a clay bride figurine', and for the pain to be transferred into this *rpyt 3st* or 'female figurine of Isis', namely *rpyt*, *rpyt nt sint*, *rpyt 3st*.<sup>24</sup> The term *rpyt* may be understood as a generic one applied to female images of different sizes and materials, including magical figurines.<sup>25</sup> Inscribed brides' figurines were very rare, only three examples were known, each bearing an appeal for a child. The wording of the appeals is indicative of a funerary context. In one case, the magical offering formula the so-called '*hṯp di nswt*' formula is depicted, suggesting an additional role for these brides in a tomb setting.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Waraska, E. (2009). Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function. 150-174. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg.

<sup>21</sup>Papyrus Turin 54003, is a single sheet of papyrus with unknown provenance, and was presented in facsimile with transcription, transliteration, translation and commentary by Alessandro Roccati in 1970. Roccati dates the text of the papyrus to the late First Intermediate period and early Middle Kingdom.

Roccati, A. (1970). Papiro Ieratico N.54003: Estratti Magici e Rituali del Primo Medio Rgno. 12-20. Turin: Edizioni d'Arte Fratelli Pozzo.

<sup>22</sup>Waraska, E. (2009). Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function. Ibid. 123-130.

<sup>23</sup>Papyrus Leiden was found in Memphis, written in Hieratic script and dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> Dyn. It was kept in Leiden museum since 1826. The text of the papyrus is written in Middle Egyptian with Late Egyptian influences. It was first published in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but the fullest and most recent treatment is the doctoral thesis of Joris F. Borghouts.

Pleyte, W. (1866). Étude sur un Rouleau Magique du Musée de Leide; Traduction Analytique et Commentée du Pap. 348 Revers. Leiden: Brill; Borghouts, J. (1971). The Magical Texts of Papyrus Leiden I 348.1-25. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>24</sup>Waraska, E. (2009). Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function. Ibid. 149-150.

<sup>25</sup>Eschweiler, P. (1994). 'Bildzauber im alten Ägypten : die Verwendung von Bildern und Gegenständen in magischen Handlungen nach den Texten des Mittleren und Neuen Reiches.' *Orbis biblicus et orientalis* 137. 31-32. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag.

<sup>26</sup>Pinch, G. (1993). Votive Offerings to Hathor. 217-218.

## Methodology

This paper aims to be a descriptive, and an analytical study of the origin, patterns, materials, terminology, accessories and tattoos of the so-called 'brides of the dead' in ancient Egypt, and searching for their functions and ritualistic role in the Egyptian burials.

## Results and Discussion

Brides of the dead in ancient Egypt are a very unique class of sculptured artifacts, but their exact function has remained indefinite. They have been categorized as 'toys', 'dolls', 'concubines' or 'fertility figurines'. Most of these terms were based on their iconography which highlighted their sexual organs, materials as well as tattoo patterns pierced on their pelvic regions and thighs. Tattooing may have been a mostly gender-specific in ancient Egypt, as tattooing seems to be a female province.<sup>27</sup> Owing to the legless of most of these figurines, this could either be to limit the figurine's capability to leave the tomb, or to point out the erotic parts which serve their concept.<sup>28</sup>

These brides' figurines were thought to serve as male tomb owners' magical sexual partners in the next life. According to later discoveries, it has been established that the female figurines could be placed in the tombs of men, women and children as well as deposited in tombs, domestic and temple areas.<sup>29</sup>

Another theory on the function of brides' figurines is the 'votive fertility figurines' suggested by Pinch.<sup>30</sup> The images of the figures and their discovery in temples dedicated to Hathor and domestic burials, as well as the textual evidence and the few inscribed brides' figurines asking for the birth of a child. This thesis has been expanded to put brides' figurines in a broader range of magico-medical rituals and not exclusively related to rebirth and fertility issues. Magical spells calling for female figurines of clay and wood reveal that such artifacts were ritually manipulated in certain rites to repel venomous creatures and heal stomachaches. It was

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<sup>27</sup>Poon, K.W.C. & T.I. Quickenden (2006). 'A Review of Tattooing in Ancient Egypt'. *The Bulletin of the Australian Center for Egyptology (BACE)* 17: 123-136.

<sup>28</sup>Pinch. (2006). *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. 126.

<sup>29</sup>Waraska, (2008). 'Female Figurines (Pharaonic Period)'. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Pinch, G. (1983). 'Childbirth and Female Figurines at Deir el-Medina and el-'Amarna'. *Orientalia* 52: 405-414; Pinch, (1993). *Votive Offerings to Hathor*. 218.

suggested that these figurines are thus best understood as a part of ritual kit applicable to a range of magico-medical rituals.<sup>31</sup>

In a shaft that dated back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Dyn. (1795-1650 BC), and may be belonged to a doctor or a magician, a box was found containing papyri, including magico-medical spells for protecting women and children. Next to the box, there were found five faience female brides, a paddle doll, magical wands<sup>32</sup> and a wooden figurine of god Bes.<sup>33</sup> In this case, it seems that the artifacts found in the tomb belong to the context of protective rituals through investing the fertility brides' figurines with magical power.<sup>34</sup>

One significant aspect of brides' figurines is their pattern of breakage. Although some figurines were found in perfect state of preservation, many display a clean break through the arms and torso-hip region. Such breakage could be indicative of deliberate destruction, which most likely occurred as a result of a ritualistic magical use of the brides. Thus this breakage may indicate their temporary utility.<sup>35</sup> Some Egyptologists suggested that the ritual breakage cannot be an overall rule, while the others like Anna Stevens who indicated that such breakage and burning of brides' figures from Amarna resulted from exercising certain magical rites that done as a domestic religion in the site.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of fertility was of major importance in Egyptian life, literally to have children was a matter of life and death to the Egyptian family,

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<sup>31</sup> Waraska. (2009). Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function.. 150-174; Pinch. (2006). Magic in Ancient Egypt. 131.

<sup>32</sup>These curved amulets were inscribed with texts, figures of protective deities and mythical animals that were thought to have magical and protective powers for its owners. These wands were offered to women, especially to young mothers, to protect them and their children against demons bearing sickness.

Altenmüller, H. (1986). 'Ein Zaubermesser des Mittleren Reiches.' *Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur (SAK)* 13: 2-20.

<sup>33</sup>God Bes was the patron god of household, private life of women, childbirth, sexuality, subsequent children, dancers and musicians. He was commonly represented in the form of a dancing dwarf.

Romano, J.F. (1980). 'The Origin of Bes Image.' *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 2: 39-56.

<sup>34</sup>Pinch, (1993). Votive Offerings to Hathor. 217-223.

<sup>35</sup>Jacquet, J. (2001). Karnak-Nord IX. Fouilles de L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale 44. 62. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale; Kemp, B. (1995). 'How Religious were the Ancient Egyptians?.' *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 5 (1): 25-30.

<sup>36</sup>Stevens, A. (2003). 'The Material Evidence for Domestic Religion at Amarna and Preliminary Remarks on its Interpretation.' *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 89: 158-161.



especially for the agricultural production. Thus human fertility was traditionally maintained by protective rituals, medicine and magic.<sup>37</sup> Brides' figurines were one of these fertility sources for the dead in ancient Egypt. Some funerary spells stated that a man will be able to have sex with his wife and beget children in the afterlife. Spell 576 of the Coffin Texts is a spell for helping the deceased in enjoying sex in the other world.<sup>38</sup>

Awakening in the afterlife may be expressed in terms of rebirth or regaining sexual potency. Motifs of naked or semi-naked female figures in ancient Egyptian conventional art either depicted on wall paintings or on artifacts as brides' figurines, from the predynastic period to the Coptic era, embodying the idea of fertility, birth and regeneration.<sup>39</sup>

Brides' figurines were closely associated with deities attached to the entire cycle of fertility, childbirth and delivery. Goddess Isis who was regarded as the protective mother-goddess, resulted from her role in the Myth of Osiris and Horus. Moreover she was a protector of children both unborn and infants, as well as marriage and childbirth.<sup>40</sup> Both Taweret and Bes were connected with pregnancy, childbirth and infants and were worn by women as amulets and wands in different forms. God Bes was not limited to children and pregnant women, but he was considered as the protector of female province, especially the dancing girls and female musicians who were tattooed by the image of Bes on their thighs for protection, seductive and erotic purposes.<sup>41</sup> Goddess Taweret was occasionally painted on brides' figurines, an example of headless wooden paddle doll (2000-1800 BC), was painted with the image of Taweret seeking for her supernatural protection for the bride's owner.<sup>42</sup>

Goddess Hathor was the patron deity of love, music, dance, sexuality, fertility, childbirth and motherhood in ancient Egypt, and closely related to fertility figurines which were found in great number within the precinct of Hathor's chapels. Additionally the *menat* collar, one of the emblems of

<sup>37</sup>Robins, G. (1994-1995). 'Women and Children in Peril: Pregnancy, Birth and Mortality in Ancient Egypt.' *A Modern Journal of Egyptology (KMT)* 5 (4): 29.

<sup>38</sup>Pinch. (2006). *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. 124.

<sup>39</sup>Robins, G. (1996). 'Dress, Undress, and the Representation of Fertility and Potency in New Kingdom Egyptian Art.' In: N.B. Kampen(ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Egypt*, 30-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>40</sup>Manniche, L. (1997). *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*. 53-58. London and New York: Kegan Paul International.

<sup>41</sup>Kamal, S.M. (2009). 'A New Concept of Tattoo in Ancient Egypt.' *Journal of Faculty of Tourism and Hotels-Fayoum University* 4 (1 March): 75-79.

<sup>42</sup>Pinch, (2006). *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. 127. Figure. 67.

goddess Hathor was commonly worn by most of brides' figurines.<sup>43</sup> Mut as a mother goddess, Selqet and Nephtyht as protective goddesses were also associated with the concept of Brides' figurines.

Some female figurines were identified as goddesses, especially those of terracotta and dated back to the predynastic period the well known as 'bird lady', (Figure 5). It is completely difficult to determine whether the figurine is a goddess or a human. This mythical combination between the bird facial features and human body could be to benefit from the supernatural power of this figure for the sake of her owner.<sup>44</sup>

The cowrie shell served as a protective health amulet for women due to its resemblance to the female private area. These amulets were worn strung as girdles by women from different social classes such as noblewomen, dancers and musicians. They were also worn as amulets or tattooed on the bodies of brides' figures (Figures 9, 10).<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

Brides of the dead in ancient Egypt were representations of human fertility as they were found in male, female and children burials. They were placed to guarantee eternal rebirth, symbolizing the sexual aspects of regeneration. Being in settlement sites could be believed to enhance women fruitfulness and men potency, while their presence in the burials, would guarantee the deceased's sexual power in the afterlife regardless of his gender, social status or age, as human fertility was such a critical issue in ancient Egypt. It seems that these brides were meant to be erotic and seductive figurines as nudity and semi-nudity had a sensual and erotic effect.

Brides' figurines could be classified as fertility artifacts in accordance with their discovery site. They could be kept in settlement quarters to encourage the continuing fertility of the household. They could be given as an offering at shrines dedicated to goddesses like Hathor, an icon in sexual and birth related matters.

The position of brides' arms if not raised, they were commonly crossed over their breasts, waists, or holding their breasts and rarely touching their nipples. Others were stretching their arms till their tattooed waists or

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<sup>43</sup>Tyldesley, J. (1995). *Daughters of Isis : Women of Ancient Egypt*. 253. London: Penguin Books.

<sup>44</sup>Petrie, F. (1901). 'The Races of the Early Egypt.' *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 31: 248-255.

<sup>45</sup>Tyldesley, J. (1995). *Daughters of Isis : Women of Ancient Egypt*. 259.

thighs. All these attitudes were most probably done deliberately to highlight the most erotic parts of the female figurines.

The material and tattoo patterns of the brides may have been indicated to their significance and role in ancient Egypt. Most brides' figurines were made from blue faience or clay, as the blue color was symbol of eternal resurrection and renewal. Thus regenerating the tomb owner, while clay refers to rebirth and revival as it was thought that god Khnum was fashioning the infant baby from clay on his potter wheel.

The dots and dashes of tattooing may hold protective and fertility promoting significance. These designs of tattoos may also were a quest for spiritual and medical protection.

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**Figures**



Figure 1. Blue faience bride's figurine, JE 47710 Cairo Antiquity Museum, 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Theban Necropolis, Tomb of Neferhotep (TT316).



Figure 2. A clay bride's figurine holding an infant over her right buttock, with tattoo patterns and tripartite wig, Middle Kingdom date, Berlin Museum no. 14517

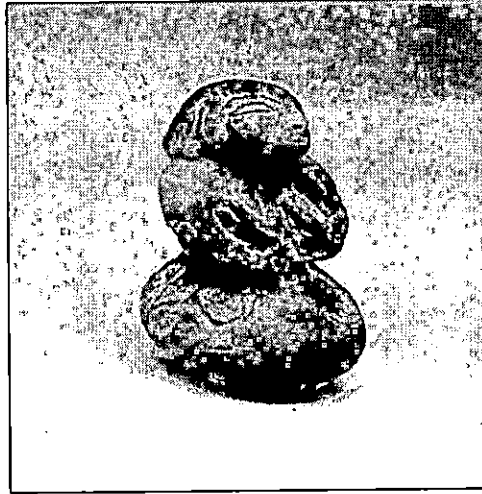


Figure 3. A clay seated bride's figurine, Predynastic date, late Naqada II and early Naqada III, the Metropolitan Museum of Art

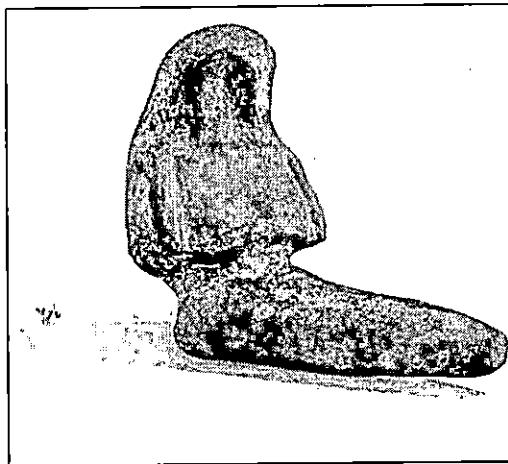


Figure 4. A clay seated bride's figurine, with rough triangular head and a pinched nose, predynastic period.

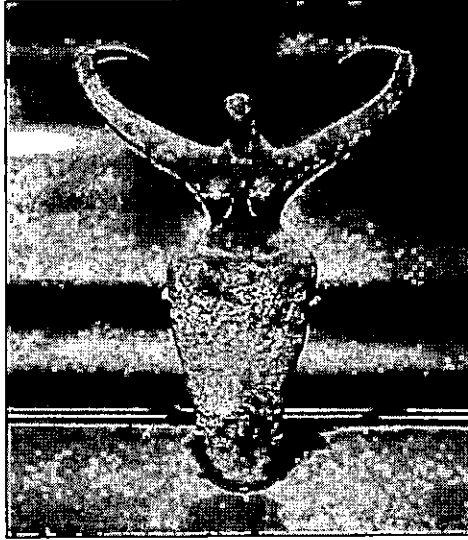


Figure 5. A pottery bride's figurine, whose small head depicted with beak-like face on long shoulder and the arms uplifted with hands turned in and pointed, predynastic period, Naqada II date, Brooklyn Museum.

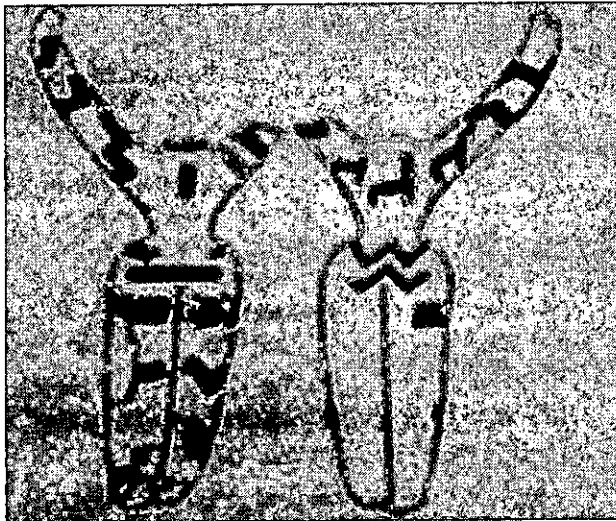


Figure 6. Two brides' figures whose bodies are adorned with abnormal tattoo patterns which resemble abstract decorations appeared on certain predynastic vessels.





Figure 7. A wooden paddle doll, painted with a geometric pattern of dots and dashes, tattooed to represent clothing or jewelry, having a wig composed of unfired clay and faience beads strung on flax fiber, Middle Kingdom date

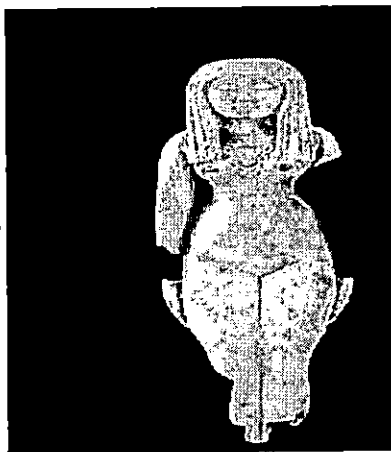


Figure 8. An ivory bride's figurine with a tripartite wig, prominent breasts and tattoo patterns on the chest as a necklace of shells, with the image of a cat, probably presenting goddess Bastet, Third Intermediate period.



Figure 9. A blue faience bride's figurine, with tattoo patterns on chest, thighs and pelvic region, Middle Kingdom date, Louvre E. 10942.



Figure 10. A blue faience bride's figurine, tattooed with dots, dashes and the cowrie-shell girdle on the pelvic region and thighs, Middle Kingdom date.