



# Art and Eternity

THE NEFERTARI WALL PAINTINGS CONSERVATION PROJECT 1986 — 1992

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**MIGUEL ANGEL CORZO  
AND MAHASTI AFSHAR  
EDITORS**

*A joint project of*  
THE GETTY CONSERVATION  
INSTITUTE *and the*  
EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES  
ORGANIZATION

THE GETTY  
CONSERVATION  
INSTITUTE



**Egyptian  
Antiquities  
Organization**



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## THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

The Getty Conservation Institute, an operating program of the J. Paul Getty Trust, is committed to raising public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage worldwide and to furthering scientific knowledge and professional practice in the field of conservation. The Institute conducts research, training, documentation, and conservation activities in several major areas including objects and collections, archaeological sites and monuments, and historic buildings and cities.

FRONT AND BACK COVER: MIRROR IMAGES ON THE NORTH SIDE AND SOUTH SIDE OF CHAMBER G, EAST WALL, IN THE TOMB OF NEFERTARI. WEARING HER FULL CROWN OF A VULTURE HEADDRESS WITH DOUBLE PLUMES, NEFERTARI MAKES SUMPTUOUS OFFERINGS OF INCENSE, FOOD, AND COWHIDE TO OSIRIS (FRONT COVER) AND ATUM (BACK COVER) WHO SIT BACK-TO-BACK IN THE CENTER.

FACING TITLE PAGE: CAMPSITE OF SCHIAPARELLI EXPEDITION AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE VALLEY OF THE QUEENS, WESTERN THEBES, EGYPT (1904). PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN.

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## Conservation of the Wall Paintings of the Tomb of Nefertari

PROJECT MEMBERS 1986-1992



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Farouk Fawey el-Daewy



CONSERVATION TEAM MEMBERS, APRIL 1992. LEFT TO RIGHT: FRONT ROW, LAURA MORA, PAOLO MORA, ABD EL-RADY ABD EL-MONIEM, LORENZA D'ALESSANDRO, GIUSEPPE GIORDANO, SAYED EL-SHAHAT. BACK ROW, GIORGIO CAPRIOTTI, LUIGI DE CESARIS, STEPHEN RICKERBY, ADRIANO LUZI, CHRISTINA VAZIO, AHMED-ALI HUSSEIN.





NEFERTARI'S THIRTY-THREE-FOOT HIGH COLOSSUS STANDS NEXT TO THE PHARAOH RAMESSES II ON THE FAÇADE OF THE SMALL TEMPLE AT ABU SIMBEL. RAMESSES DEDICATED THIS TEMPLE TO THE GODDESS HATHOR AND THE DEIFIED NEFERTARI. IT IS A MONUMENT TO THE EXCEPTIONAL STATUS ENJOYED BY HIS FAVORITE WIFE. THE QUEEN IS CROWNED WITH HATHOR'S EMBLEMATIC COW HORNS AND SOLAR DISK.

## Dynasties of Ancient Egypt

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Late Predynastic Period	ca. 3000 B.C.E.
Early Dynastic Period (Dynasties I–II)	2920–2575
Old Kingdom (Dynasties III–VI)	2575–2134
First Intermediate Period (Dynasties VII–XI/1)	2134–2040
Middle Kingdom (Dynasties XI/2–XII)	2040–1640
Second Intermediate Period (Dynasties XIII–XVII)	1640–1532
<b>New Kingdom</b>	
DYNASTY XVIII	1550–1307
DYNASTY XIX	THE RAMESSIDES 1314–1196
	Rameses I
	Sety I
	<b>Rameses II</b> <b>reigned 1290–1224</b>
	Merneptah
	Amenmes
	Sety II
	Siptah
	Twosre
DYNASTY XX	1196–1070
Third Intermediate Period (Dynasties XXI–XXIV)	1070–712
Late Period (Dynasties XXV–XXXI)	712–332
Macedonian-Ptolemaic Period	332–30 B.C.E.
Roman Period	30 B.C.E.–395 C.E.

ALL DATES ARE APPROXIMATE.  
 AFTER JOHN BAINES AND TAROMIR  
 MÁLEK, *ATLAS OF ANCIENT EGYPT*,  
 OXFORD, 1980.



WORKMEN EXCAVATING IN THE VALLEY OF THE QUEENS, SCHIAPARELLI EXPEDITION, CA. 1904. THE ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION IN EGYPT DISCOVERED SEVERAL UNKNOWN TOMBS IN THE THEBAN NECROPOLIS, INCLUDING THE TOMB OF NEFERTARI.

## Foreword

MOHAMED IBRAHIM BAKR

Egyptian civilization reaches back five millennia to the beginning of recorded time. Its history is one of remarkable cities, from pharaonic Memphis and Thebes to Hellenistic Alexandria and Islamic Cairo, producing an unrivaled accumulation of cultural wealth. Today Egypt's antiquities not only reflect the accomplishments of its own people but have also come to embody the imagination and aspirations of all civilization.

The tomb of Nefertari is among the most precious and fragile of Egyptian monuments. Depicting Nefertari's journey to immortal life, its wall paintings are exquisite, exhibiting some of the most superb craftsmanship that has survived from the age of the New Kingdom. But from the moment of their discovery in 1904, admiration for the quality of these remarkable paintings was tempered by distress over their precarious condition. Indeed, if the wall paintings had continued to deteriorate, the world would have suffered an incalculable cultural loss.

The Nefertari Conservation Project, jointly conducted by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization and the Getty Conservation Institute, must by all measures be judged a resounding success. The wall paintings have been rescued from destruction and have recovered much of their original glory with their historical integrity intact. In the process, we have learned technical lessons that can guide conservation scientists as they preserve other monuments exhibiting similar problems. An additional and significant benefit is the new expertise acquired by the Egyptian conservators who participated in the project. The experience they gained will aid in the conservation of Egyptian cultural heritage for decades to come.

All these accomplishments were made possible by the mutual respect and understanding that forms the foundation of the partnership between the Egyptian Antiquities Organization and the Getty Conservation Institute. Critical, too, was the thoroughness of the Getty Conservation Institute's approach to conservation, and the patience with which it proceeded from analysis to treatment. The cooperative spirit and comprehensive conservation program characteristic of the Nefertari Conservation Project provide a model for future collaborative endeavors.

The Egyptian Antiquities Organization's task of preserving the nation's vast cultural wealth is as formidable as it is rewarding. In carrying out my responsibilities as chairman, I have been most fortunate to have had the continued support of His Excellency Farouk Hosni, Egypt's minister of culture, whose interest in the Nefertari project made its completion possible. I am particularly indebted to Miguel Angel Corzo, director of the Getty Conservation Institute, who initiated the project and has displayed an inspiring and energetic dedication to it ever since.

An expression of deep appreciation is, of course, due to Professors Paolo Mora and Laura Sbordoni Mora and the conservation team, who labored tirelessly on the project's behalf. To them, and to the many others who contributed their skill and love to preserve this unique monument, I offer my lasting gratitude.



NEFERTARI TOMB ENTRANCE AT THE TIME OF ITS DISCOVERY IN 1904. PHOTO:  
COURTESY OF THE MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN.

## Introduction

MIGUEL ANGEL CORZO

When Ernesto Schiaparelli discovered the tomb of Nefertari in 1904, he opened the door to one of the most beautiful examples of pharaonic wall paintings ever found. As he looked closer, however, he saw that considerable damage had already been done to the paintings. At that time, this renowned Italian explorer could not have imagined the major international effort that would take place some eighty years later to rescue and preserve his discovery. During the course of these last six years a vast international, multidisciplinary team of conservators, scientists, and technical specialists has devoted its energy and efforts to the preservation of what is certainly one of the world's most important cultural heritage sites. This report presents the results of the joint activities undertaken by the Getty Conservation Institute and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization to conserve the wall paintings of this extraordinary tomb in the Valley of the Queens in Egypt.

In 1987 *Wall Paintings of the Tomb of Nefertari: First Progress Report* was published by the Getty Conservation Institute and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization to present the initial results of the collaborative project that had begun two years earlier. The tomb's history and archaeology as well as previous interventions at the site were presented in that publication, which also included discussions of the geology of the region and of the tomb, information on biological activity and microclimatic conditions within the tomb, the first reports on pigment and plaster analyses, preliminary color measurements, a non-destructive testing study, and the initial condition survey. That progress report set the stage for the first major intervention that was about to take place in the tomb: an emergency consolidation of damaged areas. There were, at the time, many pending issues: a clear comprehension of the causes of the damage in the wall paintings, the length and extent of the total conservation effort, and the approaches and treatment methods to be utilized. There was also an accepted understanding that the commitment to save the wall paintings had to be directed toward ensuring their survival to the high standards already established for all of the Getty Conservation Institute's projects. The goal of emergency consolidation was to protect the tomb from further damage while a detailed treatment protocol was being established.

In 1988, when the emergency consolidation was finished, both organizations decided to continue the work. The final treatment was conceived and undertaken over a series of campaigns that started in 1988 and concluded in 1992. The conservation efforts of the tomb are now virtually complete.

If first-time visitors to the tomb become astonished when they see the wall paintings and notice no visible signs of the delicate and painstaking work that has been done, this would please the conservators enormously. One basic principle guiding every aspect of the conservation effort was that of minimum intervention. Because the colors of the tomb seem so exceptionally brilliant, it may be hard to believe that they are original. But this is unequivocal: not one drop of new paint was added to any of the surfaces. Instead, after conservation and cleaning, the wall paintings have recaptured their original magnificence. Another important principle applied during the conservation effort is that of reversibility of treatment, so that the

original surfaces are kept intact. All the materials and techniques used in this project took this principle into account.

The conservation of the wall paintings in the tomb of Nefertari embody not only these principles but also the Getty Conservation Institute's approach to its projects in general, which includes teamwork by specialists from many disciplines and the participation of local conservation groups. Having a partner of the stature and dedication of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization was certainly a major asset in this project, and helped to guarantee that this collaborative venture would succeed as a true milestone in international cooperation.

This second and final progress report on the conservation of the wall paintings of the tomb of Nefertari illustrates how science and conservation contribute to preservation efforts in general, and at this site in particular. The threads running throughout this report are a systematic, in-depth approach to problems, a determined search for their solutions, and a careful and well-documented application of prescribed treatments. The collective contributions of each member of the Getty Conservation Institute's conservation team is represented in this report whether as author, researcher, or helper. The report as a whole covers four major areas: the historical and iconographic context of the work; scientific analyses, documentation, and conservation techniques; plans for the future; and a guide to source materials for further research.

In his fascinating overview, Christian Leblanc brings fresh insights to the archaeology of the Valley of the Queens, including discoveries about the lives of pharaonic workmen. During his work in the Valley, Dr. Leblanc called the conservation team's attention to a stratigraphic column that helped the scientists penetrate the mystery of salt mobilization in the tomb, demonstrating the value of multidisciplinary contributions.

In her article on the tomb's iconography, Mahasti Afshar elegantly integrates the two essential aspects of any object or site: its aesthetics and its meaning. The information that may be gleaned from her examination of the tomb's iconography is clearly important for scholars and Egyptologists, while bringing all readers a better understanding of the funerary beliefs and customs of ancient Egypt.

Stephen Rickerby's article on the original painting techniques and materials in the tomb reflects the conservation

team's collective work during the life of the project. It is a tribute to the ancient artists and artisans who worked there, it is also a tribute to Mr. Rickerby's deep understanding of the tomb and his profound reflection and research on the subject. An alumnus of the Courtauld Institute of Art's wall paintings conservation program in London, Mr. Rickerby's knowledge brings to the reader a very intimate glimpse at how the ancient tomb decorations were executed.

Egyptian paintings have always been the subject of fascination. In this report they are also the subject of erudition. The international team of scientists contributing to the analyses of pigments and plasters included: Saleh Ahmed Saleh from Cairo University; Eduardo Porta and Antoni Palet from the University of Barcelona; and Frank Preusser, Dusan Stulik, Michele Derrick, Eric Doehne, and Michael Schilling from the Getty Conservation Institute. The results of their analyses confirm some previous findings in relation to pigments and shed new light on binding media, varnishes, and plasters.

Professors Paolo Mora and Laura Sbordoni Mora's article on the conservation program reflects not only the authors' long-term dedication to the conservation of the tomb of Nefertari, but also their skillful direction of a large group of conservators simultaneously seeking solutions to a complex set of problems. The systematic course they chose, their reliance on scientific analyses, and their careful, respectful, and consistently professional intervention add to the well-deserved worldwide recognition they have achieved for their efforts.

Michael Schilling's precise color measurements and their significance are outstanding examples of how science can support conservation work. Mr. Schilling's carefully structured method of sampling and recording color represents a first-time contribution to pharaonic wall paintings.

From the outset it was recognized that a photographic record of the progress of conservation work in the tomb would not only allow a record of interventions for comparisons at a later date, but would also serve as an important tool for tracking evidence of deterioration in the future. Guillermo Aldana photographically documented the condition of the wall paintings before and after each conservation campaign. His extensive work over the past six years is described in Mahasti Afshar's article on the history of photodocumentation of the tomb since its discovery.

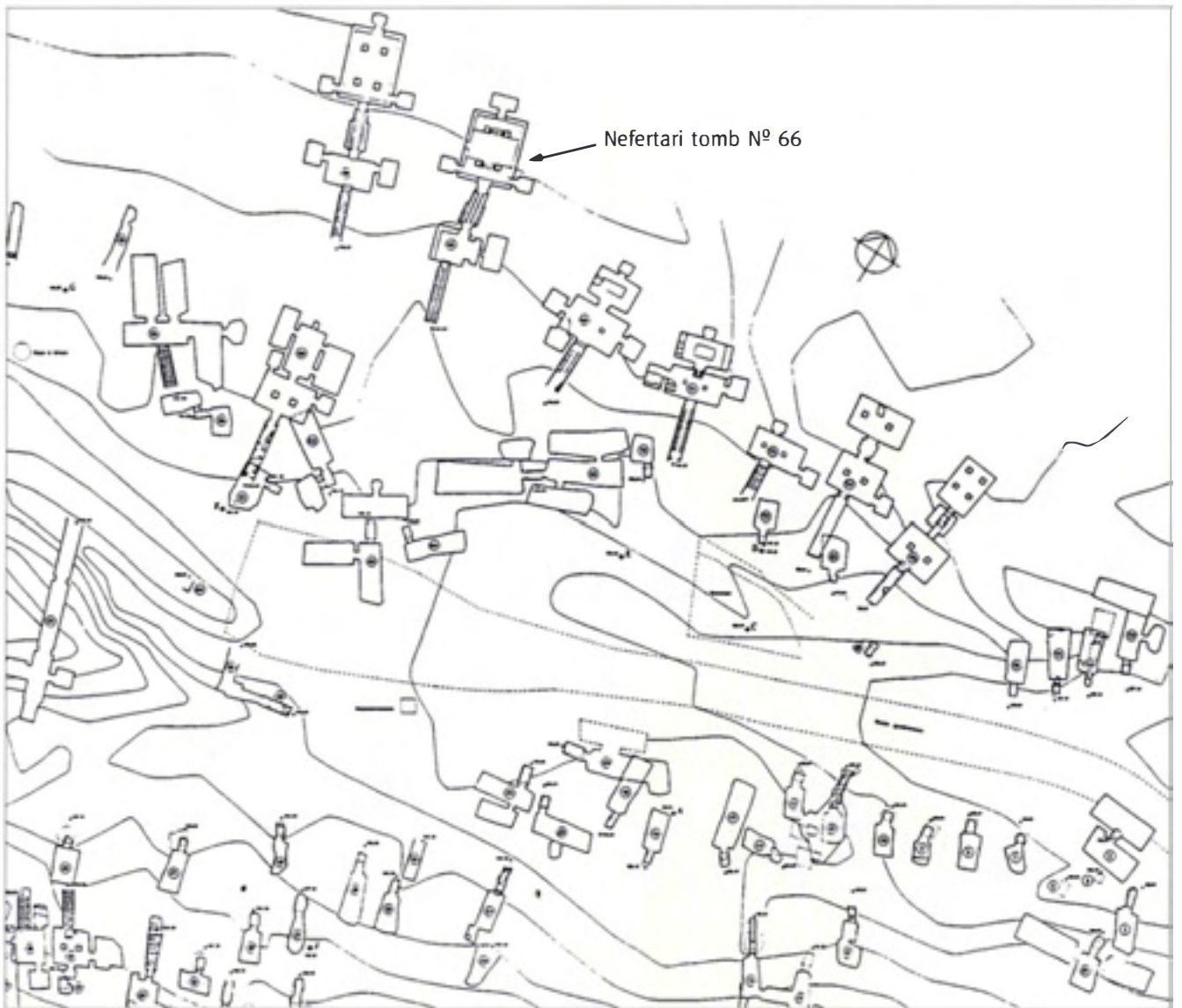
The environmental monitoring of the tomb during conservation and particularly after the work was finished provides ample information on the dangerous effects of unrestricted visitation of the tomb. Shin Maekawa's article not only maps out the dynamics of the tomb's environment but also raises a flag of concern. The tomb cannot be opened to the public under its present circumstances unless one is prepared for the gravest consequences: renewed mobilization of the salts and subsequent damage to the wall paintings. While conservation science advances rapidly toward new technologies, alternative means of visiting the tomb such as the use of high-resolution television monitors are being considered.

For the growing body of scholars, scientists, and conservators, Mahasti Afshar's closing article provides a bibliographic guide that will facilitate future research into the wall paintings of Nefertari and their conservation.

A work of this nature benefits from all who participate in it. Frank Preusser, as scientific coeditor of the report, guided much of the research and contributed his suggestions for content and clarity. Neville Agnew, as the Getty Conservation Institute's special projects director and the report's coeditor, oversaw the Nefertari project and continues his thoughts on the future in the conclusion of this report. Mahasti Afshar, as coeditor, brought the same degree of professionalism, enthusiasm, and dedication to this publication that she brings to all her projects. Special thanks are due to her.

In 1985 I participated in the initial conversations about the Nefertari project. In 1986 I was privileged to see the tomb for the first time. Like so many before me I was struck by the beauty of the paintings and appalled by the damage. Today, more than ever, these wall paintings are likely to survive for future generations. I would like to pay tribute to all the project members listed in this report who have in their own way contributed to this venture and to all those who, although unlisted, have contributed by virtue of their understanding and dedication to the preservation of one of the world's most significant cultural sites. May all who read these pages not only find information but also elation at the discovery of the marvel that is the tomb of Nefertari.





ABOVE. VALLEY OF THE QUEENS  
SHOWING THE TOMBS OF QUEENS  
AND ROYAL CHILDREN. MAP PREPARED BY YVES LAURENT, UNITÉ ASSOCIÉE NO. 1064 OF CNRS.  
RIGHT. PLAN OF THE TOMB OF NEFERTARI.

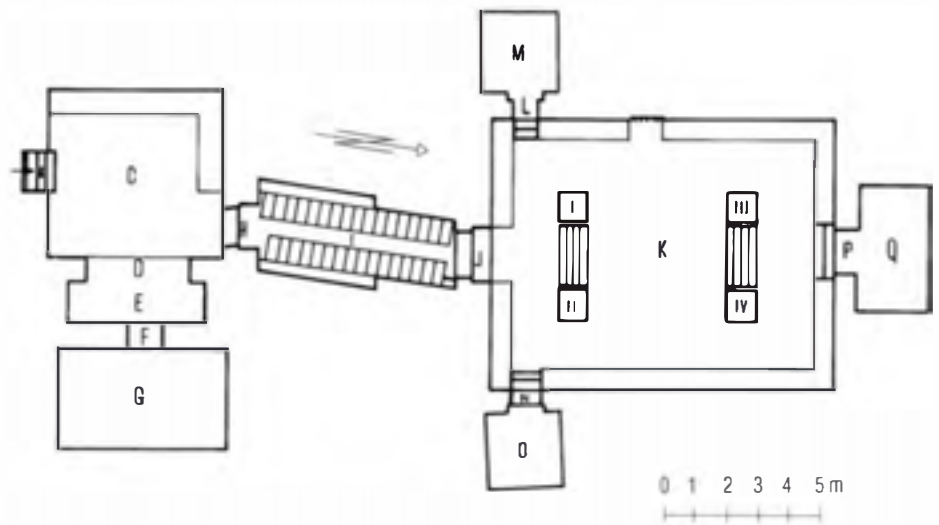




PLATE 1, PRECEDING PAGE. BOTTOM OF STAIRWAY I, LOOKING NORTH INTO THE BURIAL CHAMBER K. MA'AT, THE GODDESS OF TRUTH AND COSMIC ORDER, PROTECTS NEFERTARI WITH HER OUTSTRETCHED WINGS. THE QUEEN'S CAROUCHES APPEAR ON THE LINTEL AND THE DOORJAMBS.

PLATE 2. CHAMBER G, NORTH WALL. NEFERTARI PAYS HOMAGE TO THOTH, THE IBIS-HEADED GOD OF SCRIBES AND LEARNING. SHE STANDS NEXT TO A WATER JAR AND A WRITING PALETTE. THE HIEROGLYPHIC TEXTS ARE COPIED FROM CHAPTER 94 OF THE BOOK OF THE DEAD.











PLATE 3, PRECEDING PAGE. OSIRIS AND ANUBIS FLANK THE EAST WALL OF CHAMBER E. THE BEETLE-HEADED KHEPRE, THE GODDESS HATHOR, AND RE-HERAKHTY ARE ENTHRONED IN CHAMBER E, WITH NEKBET AS A VULTURE ABOVE THE LINTEL. OSIRIS APPEARS IN THE BACKGROUND IN CHAMBER G.

PLATE 4, ABOVE. THE LINTEL AT THE ENTRANCE TO CHAMBER E. NEKBET, THE VULTURE GODDESS OF THEBES, SPREADS HER WINGS AND GRASPS THE SYMBOLS OF ETERNITY IN HER CLAWS.

PLATE 5. VIEW OF THE BURIAL CHAMBER LOOKING NORTHEAST. THE GODDESS HATHOR EMBRACES NEFERTARI ON THE WEST FACE OF COLUMN I.



PLATE 6, ABOVE. ANUBIS, THE JACKAL-HEADED GOD OF EMBALMING, RECUMBENT ON A SHRINE.

A WINGED COBRA PROTECTS NEFERTARI REPRESENTED BY HER CARTOUCHE.

PLATE 7, LEFT. MA'AT PROTECTS NEFERTARI'S CARTOUCHE WITH HER OUTSTRETCHED WINGS. NEITH, CROWNED WITH A SCORPION, AND HATHOR, WHO WEARS A CROWN OF HORNS ENCLING A SUN DISK, SIT ENTHRONED TO THE RIGHT.









THE FOUR FACES OF COLUMN II,  
CHAMBER K:

PLATE 9, FAR LEFT. HORUS IN-  
MUTEF IN A PRIEST'S LEOPARD-  
SKIN GARMENT, SOUTH FACE.

PLATE 10, LEFT. ISIS HOLDING AN  
ANKH TO NEFERTARI'S NOSTRILS,  
GIVING HER THE BREATH OF LIFE,  
EAST FACE.

PLATE 11, BELOW LEFT. OSIRIS  
WEARING THE ATEF CROWN AND  
HOLDING A FLAIL AND A CROOK,  
WEST FACE.

PLATE 12, BELOW RIGHT. THE *DJED*  
PILLAR—OSIRIS'S BACKBONE AND  
A SYMBOL OF RESURRECTION,  
NORTH FACE.

PLATE 8, PRECEDING PAGE. VIEW  
OF THE BURIAL CHAMBER LOOKING  
SOUTHEAST. THREE GUARDIAN  
SPIRITS SQUAT IN THEIR CAVERNS  
ON THE EAST WALL. RIGHT TO  
LEFT, COLUMNS I AND II FACING  
THE SARCOPHAGUS AREA.

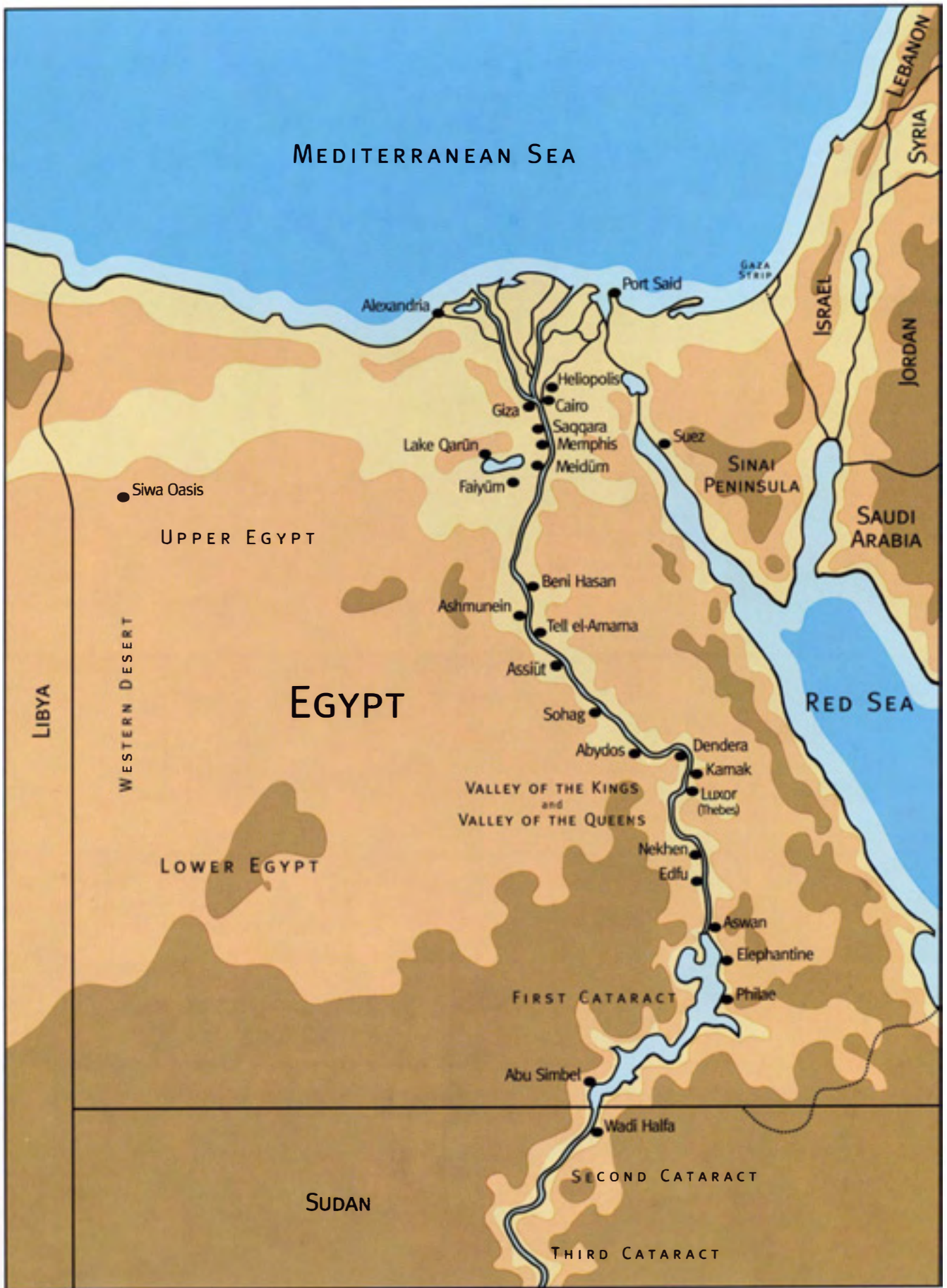


PLATE 13, BELOW. SWORD-  
WIELDING GUARDIAN OF A CAVERN  
IN THE DOMAIN OF OSIRIS.

PLATE 14, RIGHT. NEFERTARI  
(FAR LEFT); FUNERARY GOD-  
DESSES NEPHTHYS AND ISIS  
FLANK THE MUMMIFIED OSIRIS  
IN RAM-HEADED FORM.

PLATE 15, BELOW. THE SEVEN  
SACRED COWS, GODDESSES OF  
FATE, AND THE BULL OF THE WEST  
PROVIDE NOURISHMENT FOR  
NEFERTARI IN THE HEREAFTER.





# The Valley of the Queens and Royal Children: History and Resurrection of an Archaeological Site

CHRISTIAN LEBLANC

## Geography of the Valley of the Queens

In western Thebes, nature has modeled one of the most fascinating landscapes in the world. Its backdrop is a boundless plateau—the Libyan tableland—which has been progressively shaped by thousands of years of erosion to become a desert wilderness of unspeakable serenity and, quite literally, eternity. The total aridity of this landscape is in sharp contrast to the luxuriant vegetation that covers the neighboring valley, fertilized by the nourishing Nile. The contrast in topography offers no transition at all: On one side life is renewed by the cycle of seasons. On the other the land is burned by an implacable sun. Dominating the scene is a natural pyramid the ancient Egyptians have named *Ta Dehenet* (The Summit), a symbol of death but also of hope for cosmic revival.

At the southern end of the holy mountain of Thebes, behind Medinet Habu and not far from the village (the actual Deir el-Medineh) formerly occupied by the workmen of the pharaoh, is a vast wadi (Fig. 1). At the center of this dry valley, several princes, princesses, and queens were buried during the period between the Eighteenth and Twentieth dynasties. This well-known archaeological site, bearing the ancient name of *Ta Set Neferw*, has been known since the nineteenth century by the modern name of the Valley of the Queens.

The geographical setting of the necropolis includes several depressions, all of them converging at the ancient bed of the main wadi, which is closed off in the west by a rocky bar and ends in a deep vertical break, forming a sort of grotto. Here, when rain poured down in ancient times, the



OPPOSITE. MAP OF EGYPT SHOWING SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE. FIGURE 1, BELOW. THE MAIN WADI IN THE VALLEY OF THE QUEENS. ARROW INDICATES TOMB NO. 66, THE TOMB OF NEFERTARI. PHOTO: ALBERTO SILIOTTI.



FIGURE 2, RIGHT. *SPEOS* DEDICATED TO PTAH AND MERESGER AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE VALLEY OF THE QUEENS. PHOTO: A. SILIOTTI.

FIGURE 3, BELOW. ERNESTO SCHIAPARELLI. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN.



water would back up and become temporarily contained at the lower end of the wadi by a dam built during the Rameside era. In antiquity, this grotto bore the name of *Mw-en-pet* (Water of the Sky), a term used to identify a place where the rain had left significant traces. In January 1990, after a very strong downpour, the basin of this grotto turned into a temporary water reservoir, thus revealing the dam's original function and explaining the meaning of the term given to it in pharaonic times.

The eastern edge of the Valley of the Queens is marked by the presence of a *speos*, a site dedicated to Ptah, god of the workmen, and to Meresger (The One Who Likes Silence), goddess of the Theban mountain and protector of the dead and the necropolis (Fig. 2). This monument, dating from the New Kingdom, was located along the path taken by the workmen on their way to the necropolis. The *speos* contained numerous ex-votos, which are now kept at the Museo Egizio in Turin, Italy, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and at the Louvre in Paris, as well as reliefs which are directly sculpted on the wall. Some of these, still in situ, have suffered irreparable damage.

### Archaeological Background

To our predecessors in the nineteenth century or even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the abandoned site of *Set Neferw* (Place [where rest] the Royal Children)<sup>1</sup> presented a ruined landscape. Its disorderly appearance is due

both to the ravages of time and to human interventions: ancient vandalism, secret excavations, and successive plundering.

In 1903 when the Turin Museum, under the direction of Ernesto Schiaparelli (Fig. 3), obtained authorization from the Egyptian Antiquities Service to undertake research in the necropolis, only fifteen tombs were known and controlled. Prospecting and exploring the main and lateral wadis until 1905, the Italian expedition found several new tombs. Forgotten for more than 3,000 years, the “houses of eternity” of Nefertari (The Great Royal Wife of Rameses II) and princes Khaemwast and Imen-her-khepshef (sons of Rameses III) thus reappeared. Many exceptional finds resulted from those three years of hard labor by Schiaparelli's team and have justified the renown of the Valley of the Queens ever since.

At the beginning of this century the practice of archaeology was still largely considered an adventure. Undertaken as a sort of treasure hunt, it possessed neither the technical sophistication nor the scientific methodology to contribute to the science of archaeology as we know it today. These expeditions were far removed from the current practice of patiently gathering field data in order to progressively reconstitute the torn pages of history concerning a civilization, or even a particular site.

However, certain archaeologists of the past did pave the way toward more organized research methods, and Schiaparelli is certainly among them. The report of his cam-

paigns in the Valley of the Queens remains a primary reference (Schiaparelli 1923). It not only contains the quint-essential inventory of the excavation and the documentary record of the recently emptied tombs, but it also presents a logical approach to all the historical stages of the necropolis. Schiaparelli's photographs demonstrate the use of modern methods to document changes in the explored parts of the Valley. Small paths leading to the main tombs were prepared, entrances to the sepulchers protected, and numbers assigned to the funerary pits. This was the work of both a scientist and a curator who wished to provide a clear vision of a site that was already becoming known as a major place for tourism in western Thebes.

Today the management of an archaeological region implies a collaboration between various disciplines. In western Thebes the Egyptologists, who coordinate operations, must assume all the immediate tasks and handle whatever problems may occur. The necessity for a multi-disciplinary team, which applies to many areas of research,

has become a rule here without which nothing could be accomplished. Archaeologists, along with geologists, topographers, architects, anthropologists, conservation scientists, and other specialists, are all required to gather, analyze, treat, and reconstitute, to whatever extent possible, all the elements of a dislocated puzzle. It is then left to the Egyptologist to decipher and interpret the facts and events that have left an imprint on the specific environment being studied.

It was in this spirit of cooperation that the Egyptian Antiquities Organization and the Unit of Associated Research (URA 1064) at France's National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) decided in the 1970s to undertake a new series of research in the Valley of the Queens. A general investigation of the necropolis was planned. It consisted of the systematic clearing of all the tombs, archaeological and architectural surveys, documentary registration of all the tombs of the Ramesside era, and an extensive operation of clearing the surface, which was indispensable for enhancing the site as well as for mapping its topography and ancient settlements.<sup>2</sup> In 1991 the Getty Conservation Institute and the URA collaborated in redesigning the access path leading to the tomb of Nefertari and rearranging its entrance area to make this site more compatible with the general landscape.

### Chronology of the Royal Necropolis

The Valley of the Queens was first occupied for funerary purposes in the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1580 B.C.E.). About sixty tombs were excavated in the slopes of the Valley between the reigns of Thutmose I and Amenhotep III and IV, indicating the popularity this location had and would continue to have for many centuries to come. During the New Kingdom, the plan of a tomb was very simple: A vertical shaft, carved into the limestone of the mountain, gave access to a burial chamber. The walls were never painted. Sometimes notches, prepared on two opposite sides of the shaft, made it easier for a person to climb in and out. This ingenious device was particularly helpful during excavation for removing debris from the funeral shaft, which was filled after the funeral took place, and was even more useful during the time of the funeral, when the sarcophagus and furnishings were carried down into the chamber, as is shown on an ostracon at the Fitzwilliam Museum (Fig. 4). Another



FIGURE 4. OSTRACON SHOWING NOTCHES DOWN THE SHAFT OF A TOMB AND ACCESS TO THE BURIAL CHAMBER. DRAWING AFTER ALEXANDER BADAWI.





FIGURE 5. PLACE OF TRUTH,  
THE VILLAGE OF THE PHARAOHS'  
WORKMEN AT DEIR EL-MEDINEH.  
PHOTO: CHRISTIAN LEBLANC.

less frequently used way to enter a tomb was a staircase, which was also filled with debris after the funeral.

The tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty had two principal variations: a plan with one burial chamber reserved for one or two persons, and a plan with several chambers dedicated to a single family. The first plan was often changed at a later date, however, by adding other chambers. From the Ramesside period on, tomb plans underwent a complete modification, and were designed as actual underground apartments, each with a descent, a hall, a funerary chamber, and secondary rooms. This plan, adopted by Rameses I and Seti I, was further developed under the reign of Rameses II when it was extended on two levels, as in the tombs of Twy, Nefertari, and others. At the time of Rameses III the tomb was again modified, its narrow, rock-cut corridors recalling the panpipe configuration of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, but on a smaller scale.

Unlike the sepulchers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, those of the Nineteenth and Twentieth dynasties are decorated with painted reliefs. Carefully chosen by the priests, the scenes adorning these tombs were taken from an iconographic lexicon primarily inspired by the Book of the Dead.

Parallel to their architectural evolution, the distribution of the tombs in the necropolis also became increasingly organized during the Nineteenth and Twentieth dynasties. During this period the main wadi was divided into sectors in which each family undertook its own program of tomb building. Thus the sepulchers contemporary to the reigns of Rameses I and Seti I are grouped on the southern slope of the mountain, whereas the tombs of the wives and

daughters of Rameses II may be found on the northern slope. Finally, the small rock-cut corridors of at least five sons and two queens of the reign of Rameses III are distributed along the southwestern mountain.

### Craftsmen of the “Houses of Eternity”

It is not easy for a modern visitor, struck by the beauty and freshness of the wall paintings of certain tombs, to imagine how the pharaohs' workmen lived. It is known that at Thebes during the period of the New Kingdom, these men formed a community settlement on one of the buttresses of the famous Mountain of the West, not far from the two royal necropolises. That small village was named *Set-maât* (Place of Truth, Fig. 5). Its ruins were exhumed after long years of work by the French Egyptologist Bernard Bruyère (Bruyère 1930). There, in that isolated place more than thirty centuries ago, were architects, draughtsmen, sculptors, and painters—a specialized staff in charge of the execution of all official commands, particularly concerning the “houses of eternity” of the king, his wives, and also his children (Vallbelle 1985).

The study of the tombs as well as the archaeological clearing and renovations in the Valley of the Queens has provided information of interest concerning the organization of the work fields. By studying the unfinished sepulchers, one can quickly gain an understanding of the different stages of work. Tomb No. 45, for example, suggests that quarrymen and plasterers worked at nearly the same time. As soon as the initial excavation of an ante-



FIGURE 6, TOP. OSTRACON SHOWING A QUARRYMAN AND THE TOOLS OF HIS TRADE. DRAWING AFTER N. PECK.

FIGURE 7, ABOVE. HAMMER AND CHISEL USED FOR CUTTING TOMBS INTO THE ROCKY HILLSIDE.

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN LEBLANC.



chamber had begun, the walls and slanted roof of the stairwell received a coat of plaster to smooth the surfaces. In tomb No. 38, attributed to Queen Sat-rê, wife of Rameses I, evidence of the next stage of work can be seen. Here the plasterer, having finished his task, turned his position over to the draughtsman, who traced a cartoon of the scene in red paint. This drawing was subsequently corrected by the chief draughtsman, who painted over the sketch with a black outline.

The tomb of an anonymous queen (tomb No. 36) shows the results of work by another craftsman, a sculptor who carefully modeled all the sacred images in plaster. The reliefs of these images would then be painted in a rich palette by the colorist. Thus the work of decorating the tomb took place as an ongoing series of tasks, with groups of specialized craftsmen appearing to have performed their work in rapid succession.<sup>3</sup> During the work, the tomb interiors were illuminated by oil lamps with salt added to the vegetable oil to prevent smoke (Černý 1973a).

Among all the tradesmen involved, it was undoubtedly the quarryman who had the most thankless task to fulfill. A caricature on an ostracon shows a man holding a wooden hammer with which he is about to strike a metal burin to remove splinters of limestone from a wall (Fig. 6). Tools such as these and many others—including mortar boards, brushes, and small sticks with cords used by plasterers—may be found in museums (Fig. 7). These implements were controlled by scribes who would check the tools in and out as the workmen left and returned to the village after a long day's labor.

In addition to tools, interesting information has also been gathered concerning other materials used in the finishing of the tombs, especially the colors used by the painters. Ochre, found in situ, as well as oxides were pulverized and mixed in cupels (small cups), which also served as palettes. The reception of supplies necessary to proceed with the work is related in certain texts, such as two inscriptions written in black ink on the bench of the antechamber in Nefertari's tomb (Fig. 8). They record the delivery of plaster of equal quantity of the two "sides" of the team.<sup>4</sup> These texts provide supplementary and instructive information about the organization of the work. Divided into two groups—left and right—the plasterers shared their task, each one taking charge of half of the walls of the sepulcher.

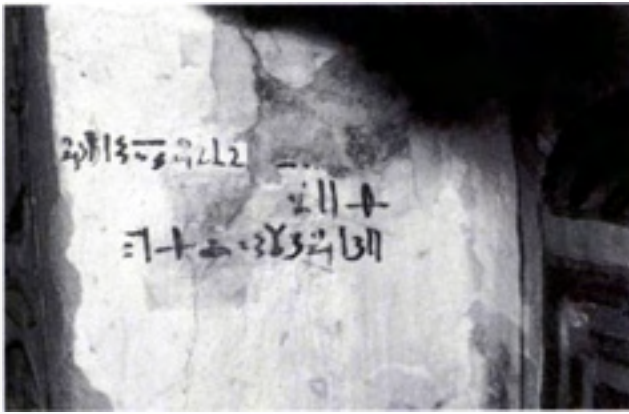


FIGURE 8, LEFT. HIERATIC INSCRIPTION IN A NICHE ON THE WEST WALL OF CHAMBER C, RECORDING THE DELIVERY OF PLASTER TO TWO DIVISIONS OF LABORERS. PHOTO: MOHAMED EL-BIALY.



FIGURE 9, BELOW LEFT. RECENTLY RESTORED DWELLINGS OF THE WORKMEN OF *TA SET NEFERW*. PHOTO: A. SILIOTTI.

On the sociological level, a great number of documents survive that provide insight into the lives of these workmen (Černý 1973b). The essential source of these comes from the ancient settlement of Deir el-Medineh itself. These very rich records contain some scathing anecdotes. Diggings undertaken in the Valley of the Queens at the beginning of this century have provided complementary archaeological evidence. One of these is the ostrakon hinting at the existence of a hamlet, evidence of which had disappeared by the time of Schiaparelli's expedition in the necropolis (Schiaparelli 1923). Patient research undertaken on the site ever since has yielded the ruins of several small dwellings, verifying the content of the ancient text.

The workmen's huts were built on the northern side of the main wadi, slightly to the west of the tomb of Nefertari. These shelters were evidently equipped only with what was absolutely necessary to satisfy basic needs. Three of the dwellings, which were recently restored, sheltered a few families of craftsmen, as can be seen from the archaeological finds excavated in situ or nearby (Fig. 9). These include ostraca with inscriptions or

drawings of daily activities; pottery, bowls, and cupels for mixing colors; and nuclei of yellow and red ochre. Also found was a small stela showing one of the craftsmen, a certain Pa-neb-akou, paying homage to a falcon-headed god and the deified Amenhotep I, who was venerated by the community living at Deir el-Medineh.

According to certain documents from the Ramesside period, it seems that these houses were considered real estate that were owned and could be disposed of by the craftsmen who occupied them. That is how a certain Nakht-en-mwt, living under the reign of Rameses II, was able to donate his house situated in the Valley of the Queens to his two daughters, Tasaket and Tamake; and another of these workmen, Imenemipet, son of Twy, was said to be the owner of one of the dwellings in the same place, according to the Papyrus Abbott 5-4 (Peet 1930).

Yet it is most probably ostrakon No. 57047 of the Turin Museum which sheds the most light on the conditions faced by the workmen at the necropolis of the Valley of the Queens. In the year 22 during the reign of Rameses III, the workers of the hamlet in the Valley, who were apparently harassed and deprived, and received only meager rations of food, ceased all activity in the tombs. The result was the quick intervention of the vizier, who forced them back to work. As a record of social history, this document is exceptional, being the first to suggest an organized workers' protest—in fact, a general strike (Leblanc, *Ta set neferou*, Vol. 2, in press).

The working conditions in the Valley of the Queens evidently became progressively worse during the years 28 and 29 of Rameses III's reign. Documents show Neferhotep addressing a request to the vizier, informing him of the precarious conditions of the teams working in two of the tunnels being prepared for Rameses III's sons:

We lack everything. All the provisions are completely used up which are in the treasury, in the granary, and in the stores. And it is not an easy thing to lift up the stone *den*. Six measures of grain have been taken from us and [in exchange] we have been given six measures of dust. May our Lord give us the means of surviving, for we are dying, truly, we do not live anymore. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Repeated requests answered only by false promises eventually led the discouraged and starved craftsmen to abandon their work. In this context, robbery and plunder ensued, multiplying and ending at last with a general sacking of the Theban necropolis. Isolated actions, such as Paneb's vandalizing of Henoutmire's tomb (No. 75) were followed by organized plunder, occasionally supported by high state officials. Several investigative commissions were designated under the reigns of Rameses IX and Rameses X to contain these serious disorders. The result of this inquest is rather distressing, and yet the list of vandalized and burned tombs lengthened with the plundering of the tombs of queens Isis, Nesmwt, and Bakwrenro (Peet 1920).

### The New Kingdom: Funerary Artifacts

At the end of the New Kingdom, many tombs had been sacked and emptied of their precious furnishings. Yet in the disturbed context of the funerary chambers, some beautiful relics occasionally escaped the eyes of ancient and even modern thieves, providing valuable sources of study for today's archaeologists and conservators. The systematic clearing of the Eighteenth Dynasty funerary pits and Ramesside tombs has brought to light some objects of exceptional quality and historical interest. These include pottery with geometric designs (Prince Baki's vase, for example) or animal decorations, such as the jar now reconstituted with its frieze of three horses. These pots often contained food offerings and were sealed with mud stoppers. Those found in tomb No. 22 still bear the print of gazelles on both sides of Amenhotep III's cartouche.

Among other recovered remains of funerary equipment are some beautiful canopic jars (which contained entrails) and their stoppers. These include the limestone canopic jars of Nebiri from tomb No. 30; stoppers representing the faces of Merytre and Wrmertwes, two ignored princesses contemporary to the reign of Amenhotep III; and a superb alabaster stopper found in Twy's tomb (No. 80). The latter is one of the rare portraits of this queen who was both the Great Royal Wife of Seti I and the mother of Rameses II.



FIGURE 10. USHABTI IN GLAZED WARE BELONGING TO QUEEN TWY, GREAT ROYAL WIFE OF SETI I AND MOTHER OF RAMESSES II. PHOTO: A. SILIOTTI.

The numerous figurines called *ushabtis* (literally, “answerer”)—made of stone, glazed ceramic, or wood—were believed to be essential for a deceased person to become an Osiris (Fig. 10). One of these belonged perhaps to princess Hatnefer, owner of tomb No. 72. Others, such as those of Queens Nefertari and Bentanta (elder daughter of Isis-Nefret and Rameses II), were made of wood covered by a coating of resin on which was inscribed a version of chapter VI of the Book of the Dead, or a summary of the queens' titles. When these writings were lacking, only the name of the deceased was inscribed, as for example on the *ushabti* of Bentanta, who is represented wearing the dress of the

FIGURE 11, RIGHT. NEFERTARI PLAYING *SENET*. CHAMBER C, SOUTH WALL.

FIGURE 12, BELOW. NEFERTARI'S SANDALS WERE AMONG THE FEW OBJECTS NOT LOOTED BY ANCIENT ROBBERS. PHOTO: A. SILIOTTI.



living. During this period, games, votive weapons, and an ample wardrobe were added to the indispensable goods of the deceased called “those who joined eternity.” An ivory knucklebone painted red, and little sticks ending with a fox head or fingers; elements of the *senet* game immortalized by a scene in Nefertari’s tomb (Fig. 11); arrows and harpoons for the pleasure of hunting or fishing; a pair of sandals artfully interlaced, belonging to the favorite wife of Rameses II (Fig. 12)—all these are representative samples of the full panoply of belongings considered necessary to the deceased in his or her journey in the netherworld.

It was in the sepulcher of Prince Rameses (tomb No. 53) that scattered fragments of a red granite statue were found in 1986, probably cut up by plunderers. The only known portrait of the young son of Rameses III, the statue has been partially reconstructed by the patient and scrupulous work of archaeologists (Nelson and Hasanein, in press).

Despite these valuable finds, however, a disturbing fact has been observed during the years of research in the

necropolis: the nearly total disappearance of the princely and royal mummies buried during the Ramesside era in the Valley of the Queens. Except for a mummified foot part belonging to Queen Nefertari, no human remains have been found in their original context. It seems rather unlikely that all these mummies were systematically destroyed by the plunderers. It is known, however, that mummies were sheltered outside of the Valley of the Queens by the official authorities toward the end of the New Kingdom to protect them from further damage. Who knows if a secret hiding place, comparable to the one prepared for the dead kings that was discovered in 1881 in Deir el-Bahari, might not be hidden in the Theban mountain, a place where one day their royal wives and children could be discovered?

### The Third Intermediate Period

The history of the Valley of the Queens does not end with this question. Far from being abandoned after the vicissi-

tudes that put an end to the Ramesside era, the Valley became the site of renewed activity during the Third Intermediate Period. Once the necropolis came under the control of the clergy of Amon, it underwent an interesting evolution, characterized by an almost complete reuse of funerary pits from the Eighteenth Dynasty and even of the Ramesside-era tombs which had belonged to queens and princes. Excavations of the tombs have revealed evidence of the dead and of their families with whom they were buried following the Ramesside period. Undoubtedly, these people were not of high rank. Although they were connected to the Theban priesthood, the men and women interred during this period had never occupied important functions. A rather well-represented group, however, was related to the agricultural estate of Amon. Some of them were gardeners or flower cultivators, others perfumers, thus confirming that these occupations were considered complementary and of equal rank. Among others buried here were measurers and land surveyors in the estate of Amon, stewards of the necropolis, and even priests.

The excavated tomb furnishings of this period provide researchers with interesting information. It is particularly fascinating to discover how the contents of the tombs change from the Third Intermediate Period onward. First, the number and quality of furnishings decrease compared to the importance and diversity of supplies provided for the dead of the New Kingdom. From the Twenty-first Dynasty on, the rich funerary vessels, the furniture, games and weapons, basketwork, and even the jewels nearly or totally disappear from the sepulchers. On the other hand, the strict outfitting of the dead themselves evolves: multiplication of sarcophagi; more ornaments and bead networks, such as the beautiful and complete set found in tomb No. 15; and a greater number of *ushabtis*. Though still in use or sometimes replaced by miniature coffins, the canopic jars of this period have only a symbolic character; jars found in the burial chamber of a certain Pairyah (tomb No. 12) are still of good workmanship. It does not appear that this change could have resulted from sackage or even from the state of poverty in which the country would find itself. On the contrary, the evidence tends to indicate that the origins of this phenomenon, which was not particular to the Valley of the Queens alone, had a more profound spiritual significance. Clearly, earthly goods were considered to have less of a place in the afterworld than they had previously. This is because the Egyptians of this period had a different conception of death.

## The Roman and Early Christian Periods

If no significant event seems to have left its mark on the Valley of the Queens at the time of the Ptolemies, the Roman period, with its plentiful remains, opens a new chapter in the history of the site. Turned into a popular cemetery at the beginning of the Roman Empire until the middle of the fourth century, the ancient *Ta Set Neferw* came under the authority of the Memnonia, the administrative arm of western Thebes, and was driven by a powerful funerary institution (Bataille 1952). Already obstructed by the many dead buried during the Third Intermediate Period and the Saït-Persian time (525–352 B.C.E.), the necropolis underwent a new transformation, the main consequence of which was a near systematic reorganization of the pharaonic sepulchers. To make space for the new occupants, undertakers would often enlarge ancient tombs. In the burial chambers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, for example, underground passages enabled a person to go from one sepulcher to another. In certain tombs made for Ramesside queens, such as tombs Nos. 33 and 34, new rooms were dug into which the deceased were piled up. Probably reunited according to the place where they used to live, the dead gradually filled the ancient “houses of eternity” of *Ta Set Neferw* by tens if not by hundreds.

Funerary traditions, though less elaborate than in pharaonic times, persisted. Mummification remained common, though it was definitely carried out with less care than before. After being prepared for burial, the body was then wrapped in a series of shrouds and covered by a breastplate or shroud decorated with painted mythological scenes. The dead who had the advantage of being buried in terracotta sarcophagi, as those in tombs Nos. 13 and 53, were rare. Their much reduced funerary equipment was limited to ceramic vessels and, most rarely, to canopic jars and *ushabtis*.

When the first anchorites and monks settled in the deserts of Thebaïd, Christianity was not far from becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. From the second half of the fourth century until the sixth and seventh centuries, conversions were frequent and religious buildings spread out along the Nile Valley. At western Thebes anchorites, hermits, and monks lived on El-Qurn called the “Holy Mountain” now covered by cells and monasteries: Saint Isidore the Martyr at Deir el-Medineh, Saint Mark at Qurnet Murai, Saint Anastase at Djeme, Saint Phoebamnon at Deir

el-Bahari, Saint Epiphanius and Saint Cyriacus at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna, as well as the Deir el-Bakht at Dra Abul Nagga, considered to be one of the most important convents of the region.

In this context, the history of the Valley of the Queens also made its contribution. Although the site had lost its earlier function as a necropolis, a very different sort of religious activity eventually came to occupy its landscape. At first a few isolated anchorites settled in the ancient *Ta Set Neferw*, which progressively became the shelter of part of the Coptic community of Thebes. In the heart of the necropolis certain tombs were converted into small chapels for meditation or prayer. Others were used as simple dwellings by the reclusive monks. Toward the seventh century, as the new religion became more structured, the monks settled in the Valley and built the Deir Rumi on the abandoned site of a small Roman sanctuary. This building became the central element of a monastery surrounded by hermitages such as those on the heights of the small Valley of Prince Ahmose and on the slopes of the Valley of the Dolmen, where thousands of years before, the pharaohs' workmen had worshipped Ptah and Meresger.

### A History Lost and Rediscovered

The early Christian epoch marked an irreversible decline in the history of the Valley of the Queens, a fading of memory that only accelerated with time. Gradually abandoned by "The Men Thirsty of God" and deserted by the few Arabs who had found shelter in gloomy dwellings there during the Middle Ages, the Valley of the Queens finally lost its identity. It became one of those desolate areas of western Thebes with a forgotten past that would only be reawakened by the nineteenth-century pioneers of Egyptology and then brought to life again in the twentieth century by an international generation of archaeologists and conservators. Dedicated to the preservation of the tomb of Queen Nefertari, today's experts have taken steps to ensure that at least one extraordinary "house of eternity" will never sink into oblivion again.

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### Notes

1. This translation is supported by epigraphic and archaeological evidence collected during the author's research. For further information, see Leblanc 1989a:14–20.
2. Since 1984 this activity has been largely supported by Madame Germaine Ford de Maria, patroness of the Renovation of the Valley of the Queens.
3. For a detailed description of painting techniques in the tomb of Nefertari, see Rickerby, this volume. Also note, Volume 2 of Leblanc's *Ta set neferou*, in press.
4. On the division of labor, see Rickerby, this volume, p. 45.
5. Ostrakon No. 16991, verso, lines 7–12, The Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago.

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- 1989a Architecture et évolution chronologique des tombes de la Vallée des Reines. *BIFAO* 89:227–248.
- 1989b *Ta set neferou. Une nécropole de Thèbes-Ouest et son histoire*. Vol. I. Cairo.
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## Iconography of the Nefertari Wall Paintings

MAHASTI AFSHAR

*L'Art est un défi à la mort.*

André Malraux, *Les Voix du Silence*

As you stand before a wall painting in the tomb of Nefertari, the wall seems to disappear, leaving only a window to the beyond. Here darkness gives way to eternal light and life. A star-studded sky hangs overhead where, according to ancient Egyptian myths, Osiris, the sun god, sailed his barque each night. In a momentary suspension of disbelief, your perception of time and space shifts, and brilliant images of classical beauty parade before your eyes with the power of truth. The aesthetic experience of viewing Nefertari immortalized, death transfigured into life, is one of being enveloped in a universe of perfection.

The images that adorn the tomb's chambers and passageways reflect inherited religious and artistic traditions in both content and style. As such, they are formal as well as formulaic. In accordance with the artistic conventions of the period, the protagonists are shown as youths whose slender bodies betray no sign of defect or age, and events are depicted with no spatial depth. The combined effect of idealized forms and lack of perspective creates a noncorporeal aesthetic. But in the overall use of space, and in their special treatment of Nefertari herself, the paintings also achieve a sensual quality, which is what makes them so unique. Paint and plaster seem to hang like a curtain against a stage on which Nefertari's drama unfolds without end. This is the one Egyptian tomb that comes closest to representing the home, the "house of eternity" that it was meant to be; yet Nefertari's tomb bears no images that



OPPOSITE. NORTH WALL OF THE BURIAL CHAMBER K. ANUBIS, THE JACKAL-HEADED GOD OF EMBALMING; HATHOR, THE FUNERARY GODDESS; AND OSIRIS, GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD, ENTHRONED.

recall the queen's life on earth, a life that ended around 1255 B.C.E. There are no references to her husband, Rameses the Great, nor to her six or seven children, nor to her daily life or times.<sup>1</sup> For in the tradition of royal tombs of Egypt, the iconography of this tomb reveals only the mysteries of the afterlife.

The paintings are accompanied by hieroglyphic inscriptions copied from the Book of the Dead,<sup>2</sup> a funerary text of about 174 formulaic chapters, or "spells." The repetition of the formulas by either Nefertari or the divinities ensures her regeneration and continued safety in the hereafter. The texts and images are based on the myths surrounding the death and resurrection of Osiris, the god of fertility, the sun, and the underworld. Osiris was also embodied as the river Nile—called the "Efflux of Osiris"—whose annual flooding ensured survival, and as the pharaoh, who incarnated the eternal rhythm of divine rule. Osiris thus represented cyclical regeneration in multiple forms: as vegetation, the sun, the afterlife, the Nile, and kingship.

Several traditions became grafted together over time to produce a composite legend of Osiris. According to one tradition, Osiris, the son of Geb (the earth god) and Nut (the sky goddess), was once a mortal king. Osiris's brother, Seth, envied his power and plotted his death. Seth tricked the king into climbing into a chest, and then flung him into the Nile. Their sister Isis was inconsolable. After a tireless search, she found the drowned king on the riverbank. In another account, Seth is said to have cut up Osiris's body and scattered the parts across Egypt. Such

was Osiris's powers of fecundity, however, that wherever his parts fell, they generated abundant crops. Isis and her sister, Nephthys, collected the body parts, sat in deep mourning, and pieced Osiris back together. Isis, shaped as a kite, gave him breath with the breeze issuing from her protective wings. Then she fashioned Osiris's missing phallus out of clay and conceived the falcon-headed god Horus from him.

Thus revived, Osiris became lord of Duat, the netherworld, while Isis, the "sister whom Osiris loved on earth," gained renown as a devoted sister, wife, and mother goddess. Seth captured the throne and tried to kill Isis's child, Horus, but failed against his sister's immense magical powers. In the battles that ensued, Horus vindicated his father, defeated Seth, and became king. He came to embody the daytime sun, and Osiris came to represent the sun at night. Horus was thus the living pharaoh, and Osiris the deceased king. The sky was conceived as an ocean across which Horus sailed in a barque during the day. At dusk, he sank into the western desert and, in the form of Osiris, sailed east all night across the subterranean waters. Death and life, father and son, were thus conceived as cyclical transformations of the same solar phenomenon. To die as the father meant to be reborn as the son.

The doctrine of resurrection did not apply to Osiris alone. Eternal life was originally deemed possible only for royalty but, beginning in the early Middle Kingdom, every human being could hope to achieve immortality. There were two requirements: one concrete, the other symbolic.





FIGURE 1, OPPOSITE. CHAMBER C, SOUTH WALL, WEST SIDE. NEFERTARI PLAYING *SENET*. THE GAME FREES HER SOUL, THE HUMAN-HEADED *BA* BIRD, TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE TOMB DURING THE DAY. HER LIFE FORCE, THE *KA*, KNEELS IN AN ACT OF VENERATION.

FIGURE 2, ABOVE. CHAMBER C, WEST WALL (UPPER REGISTER). LEFT TO RIGHT: AKER, THE EARTH GOD; THE BENU BIRD; NEPHTHYS; NEFERTARI LYING ON A BIER, MASKED AND MUMMIFIED; ISIS; MILLIONS OF YEARS; THE NATRON LAKE; AND TO THE FAR RIGHT, A *WEDJAT*, THE EYE OF HORUS.

First, the body and its internal organs had to be preserved intact for future restoration; this was attempted through embalming and mummification.<sup>3</sup> Second, the deceased had to gain admittance into Duat and to partake of Osiris's essence. This drama was acted out through mortuary ceremonies that were reinforced by the power of funerary objects and tomb paintings that came to life through a process of sympathetic magic. In the end, the deceased—whether male or female—was believed to be identified with Osiris and was resurrected body and soul in the netherworld.

Tomb paintings reflect both religious and magical sentiments. In the tomb of Nefertari, they tell a wishful tale of encounters between the queen and supernatural beings during her perilous, otherworldly journey. She offers them worship and sacrifice; they in turn grant her divine favors. This is a religious worldview, suggesting a universe animated by spirits who may be persuaded through gifts and prayers to act on the supplicant's behalf. A magical worldview also operates here, since the symbolic reenactment of the scripted wall paintings is expected to produce desired results automatically and mechanically. In sum, Egyptian funerary art is an interpretation of religious thought with the power of magic. Artists in this tradition share the qualities of both priest and shaman. Their craft serves to spell out the quest for transcendence, as well as to provide the spells that will help achieve that end.

The tomb of Nefertari is oriented along a twofold axis. Like the river Nile, its geographic course is south-north. But its ritual axis is east-west, corresponding to the course

of the sun. An undecorated descent leads slightly north-west into an entrance hall that has a recess area and an auxiliary chamber to the east. An oblique descent leads directly north into the burial chamber which has four central pillars and three small chambers on the west, north, and east (Leblanc, this volume; Maekawa, this volume). All interior walls are decorated with a view to ensure Nefertari's transition into immortality. Their overall scheme can be summarized as follows: In the upper chamber complex, the queen's body is preserved, and she is granted a place in Duat by the divinities who greet her. At the top of the stairway, she starts her descent into the burial chamber with new occult powers in her possession. In the lower chamber, she undergoes an ordeal of passage through the dreadful gates and caverns of the netherworld. Having successfully completed this journey, her body is restored by Horus officiating as a priest. She is then incorporated into the netherworld and united with Osiris.

Two scenes in the entrance chamber signify Nefertari's state soon after death. On the west side of the south wall, she sits enthroned in a shrine playing *senet*, her parted garment revealing her nakedness from neck to toe (Fig. 1). As an eschatological ritual, this otherwise common pastime frees her psychic force, the human-headed *ba* bird, to wander outside the tomb during the day before returning to dwell in the mummy at night. Farther to the right, her life force, the *ka* soul, is shown kneeling with arms upraised in a gesture of veneration. She is shown barefoot everywhere except on this wall, where she wears sandals. The texts and vignettes in this chamber are from chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead.

On the upper register of the west wall, Nefertari is shown lying on a bier as Osiris, masked and mummified in a shrine (Fig. 2). The figures on this wall ensure that her body is kept intact. Wearing their falcon form, the divine mourners Nephthys and Isis flank her shrine. Their chief role in funerary art is to protect the coffin and the canopic jars that hold the deceased's internal organs.<sup>4</sup> Their mythical

success with Osiris in the past is expected to be repeated here with Nefertari, who is called The Osiris. Aker, an earth god who guards the western and eastern horizons in the underworld, appears in the far left corner. Iconographically, Aker is represented as the symbol of the horizon—a sun disk on a tract of land—supported by two lions seated back-to-back on an east-west axis. The two lions guard the entrance and exit to the underworld and signify “yesterday” and “tomorrow.” The *benu* bird, a blue heron associated with resurrection, is perched between Aker and Nephthys. It is one of the most refined images adorning the tomb. A kneeling figure representing Millions of Years, a reference to eternity, sits next to Isis, holding a palm branch. As if to imply that only a fragment of Nefertari’s mummy has survived, a badly damaged symbol of the natron lake appears to the right, natron being a preservative substance that was used in embalming. In the far corner is a *wedjat*, the Eye of Horus, the most potent symbol of protection against evil. Horus’s left eye—the moon by some accounts—was stolen by Seth during their battle over the kingship of Egypt. Healed and restored to Horus, it came to be called The Whole One, signifying soundness. It is a human eye with the markings of a falcon’s cheek underneath and was commonly used as an amulet.

The chief figure responsible for the preservation of the body was Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the dead (see Pl. 6). He performed the embalming ceremony, conducted the rites of the “Weighing of the Heart” in the Hall of Judgment before Osiris and the forty-two gods,<sup>5</sup> and guarded the tomb at night. Despite heavy paint loss, one can make out the figure of Anubis in his characteristic recumbent form on the north wall of the entrance chamber. Imsety, Hapi, Duamutef, and Qebsenmuf, the four sons of Horus who protect the body’s internal organs, flank Anubis in pairs.<sup>6</sup> They are in charge of the liver, the lungs, the stomach, and the intestines, respectively.

Next to the stairway entrance, on the north corner of the east wall, Osiris stands mummified in a shrine, holding a crook and a flail, symbols of authority. His skin is painted green to signify resurrection, and he wears his Atef crown, a headdress that combines the Upper Egyptian crown with the double plumes that were the characteristic headdress of Amon, the supreme god of Thebes in the New Kingdom. Osiris is described as one “Dwelling in the West, Wen-nofer, King of the Living, Great God, Ruler of the Assembly of the

Gods, Lord of Eternity, Ruler of Infinity who Resides in the Sacred Land.” He addresses Nefertari with these words: “I give to thee eternity like Re, my father.” On the wall of the passageway to the east of Osiris, a similar exchange takes place between Nefertari and the funerary goddess Selket depicted at right angles to Osiris, whose scorpion crown signifies her association with the scorching heat of the sun. The encounters continue with a host of other deities around the recess chamber. The common formula reads: “I give to thee a place in the Sacred Land; may you be joyous in the Place of Truth . . . the Osirian, the Great King’s Wife, Nefertari . . .” All the deities are richly bejeweled with crowns, collars, necklaces, armlets, anklets, or bracelets, and invariably each one holds a *was* scepter, the symbol of authority, in one hand. The gowns of both male and female deities are held up by shoulder straps that leave their breasts bare. Female deities wear long gowns in red or green—the red bead-net dress being the most intricately crafted among them (Fig. 3). When not shown in mummiform, male deities wear identical attires with short skirts.

The deities thus encountered are Isis (Fig. 4; wearing a crown of cow horns enclosing the sun disk; elsewhere her crown is a throne, indicating her status as mother of the divine king), Khepre (Fig. 5; the beetle-headed god of the morning sun), Hathor, “House of Horus” (Fig. 6; whose sign is a falcon in a square; as a bovine sky goddess she is also crowned with cow horns), Re-Herakhty, “Horus-of-the-Horizon” (Fig. 6; Horus as god of the morning sun, crowned with the sun disk encircled by a uraeus—a symbol of kingship in the form of a rearing cobra with inflated hood), Harsiese,<sup>7</sup> “Horus-son-of-Isis” (Fig. 7; Horus as a mortuary god wearing the white-and-red double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt), and the war goddess Neith (crowned with a shield, a bow, and arrows). Ma’at, the goddess of cosmic order and truth, whose crown is an ostrich feather, flanks the passageway into an antechamber to the east. On the lintel above, Nekhbet (Pl. 4), the patron goddess of Thebes, appears in her vulture form with outspread wings, clutching the symbols of eternity in her claws.

One of the most exquisite groups of images appears in the above-mentioned antechamber.<sup>8</sup> On the north side of its west wall, Nefertari is shown making an offering of linen to Ptah (Fig. 8), the ancient creator-god of weaving and crafts. Looking out through a window from inside a shrine,



FIGURE 3, ABOVE. STAIRWAY I, SOUTH WALL, WEST SIDE. THE GODDESS NEITH WEARING A RED BEAD-NET DRESS. HIEROGLYPHIC SYMBOLS OF OCCULT POWERS APPEAR BEHIND HER.



FIGURE 4, TOP RIGHT. CHAMBER E, NORTH WALL. ISIS, SISTER AND WIFE OF OSIRIS, LEADING NEFERTARI.



FIGURE 5, MIDDLE RIGHT. CHAMBER E, EAST WALL, NORTH SIDE. KHEPRE, THE BEETLE-HEADED GOD OF THE MORNING SUN.



FIGURE 6, BOTTOM RIGHT. CHAMBER E, EAST WALL, SOUTH SIDE. HATHOR, "HOUSE OF HORUS," WHOSE SIGN IS A FALCON IN A SQUARE; AND RE-HERAKHTY, "HORUS-OF-THE-HORIZON," CROWNED WITH A SUN DISK ENCIRCLED BY A URAEUS.

FIGURE 7, RIGHT. CHAMBER E, SOUTH WALL. HARSIESE, "HORUS-SON-OF-ISIS," WEARING THE DOUBLE CROWN OF (WHITE) UPPER AND (RED) LOWER EGYPT.



FIGURE 8, FAR RIGHT. CHAMBER G, WEST WALL, NORTH SIDE. PTAH, THE ANCIENT CREATOR-GOD AND GOD OF CRAFTSMEN, STANDS MUMMIFIED IN A SHRINE, HOLDING A WAS SCEPTER WITH A DJED PILLAR AT ITS NECK.



Ptah says he is old, but he always makes himself young; he is one who "will not decay." Because of his eternal youth, he is painted green. On the north wall, Nefertari comes before Thoth, the ibis-headed god of scribes and of learning who wears his typical white sash across his chest (Pl. 2). The text copied from chapter 94 of the Book of the Dead explains the scene: "Formula by which the Osiris may obtain the water jar and the palette from Thoth in the necropolis . . ." Nefertari offers homage to the god who is enthroned before an inkstand and a scribal palette. "Bring me the water jar," says Thoth, "the tablet, this scribe's box of Thoth and the secrets it contains." A frog of uncertain identity squats on the vessel. In the inscription, he is associated with swamps. The east wall bears a double image of Nefertari making sumptuous offerings of food, incense, and cowhide to Osiris and Atum, who sit back-to-back, separated by a magic fan of protection (see pg. 42; and cover). Like Osiris before him, the one described as "Atum, Lord of the Two Lands, the Heliopolitan, the Great God, Lord of the Sacred Land," declares, "I give thee eternity like Re . . . infinity in life, lastingness . . . fortune . . . and joy."

One of the most popular scenes in the tomb of Nefertari appears on the south wall of this chamber. The space is evenly divided into three horizontal registers. In the upper two, the Seven Sacred Cows and the Bull of the West, "Lord of Eternity," appear before tables laden with green fodder (Pl. 15). This is a vignette from chapter 148 of the Book of the Dead. The cows are the goddesses of fate who will nourish the queen with "bread, beer, and all that is useful for the soul" in the afterlife. Each cow is named separately: "Lady of the Universe, Sky-storm, You from the Land of Silence, You from Khemmis, Red-hair . . ." Below them are the four rudders that signify the cardinal points. They are a means of orientation and transportation



FIGURE 9. STAIRWAY I, WEST WALL, NORTH SIDE (LOWER REGISTER). ISIS KNEELING ON A SYMBOL OF GOLD, ROLLING THE SUN DISK.

across the cosmic oceans. Nefertari, the “Lady of Two Lands,” completes the scene on the south corner of the adjacent wall. She stands in a gesture of adoration in her transparent white gown, wearing lotus-bud earrings, a wide golden collar, and a vulture crown surmounted by a sun disk and double plumes. Of all her portraits, this is perhaps the most accomplished. It is certainly the most widely reproduced (Pl. 14). Behind her, Isis and Nephthys appear again, flanking a ram-headed Osiris.

Bunches of lotus and papyrus, heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt, respectively, appear on the inner walls of the stairway that leads to the burial chamber. These plants allude to a creation myth according to which, in the beginning, all that existed was Nun, “Father of the Gods,” a still and lifeless body of water that was enclosed in darkness. Then a mound emerged from this watery chaos. On this primordial island floated a lotus bud (or a papyrus plant). When its petals opened, they revealed the infant sun god, Horus, spreading his beneficent rays over the world. This event, called the First Occasion, gave rise to the creation of the cosmos and all the living things in the universe.

At the top of the stairway, Nefertari appears with her newly acquired powers in preparation for the ordeal that awaits her below. Hieroglyphic symbols of “infinity, life, lastingness, fortune, and joy . . .” that mark the divinities (cp. Fig. 3, Neith; and pg. 42, Atum) are inscribed in a vertical line behind her. The use of space in this descent area is outstanding. The compositions on the two stairway walls are identical. On the upper triangle of the west wall, Nefertari brings oblations and offerings of food before Isis, Nephthys, and Ma’at (Neith replaces Nephthys on the opposite wall). On the lower register, Anubis guards Nefertari’s coffin. Below him, Isis kneels on a symbol of gold, and rolls the sun disk (Fig. 9; Nephthys mirrors her on the east wall). Under the ceiling in the north corners, a guardian spirit personified as a winged cobra protects Nefertari’s cartouche in a superbly crafted, undulating form. Dressed in red with a feather in her head, Ma’at, the “Daughter of Re,” stretches her blue-and-green wings above the entrance to the burial chamber: “I protect my daughter, the Great King’s Wife, Nefertari,” she declares (Pl. 1). Both doorjambs are inscribed with the queen’s name and titles, “The Osirian . . . Lady of the Two Lands, Nefertari,





FIGURE 10. CHAMBER K, WEST WALL. GUARDIANS OF THE SECOND GATE OF THE DOMAIN OF OSIRIS.

Mery-en-Mut<sup>9</sup> . . .” Thus invigorated by divine powers, Nefertari enters the sarcophagus chamber and approaches the first gate of the Domain of Osiris.

Five of the twelve known gates of Duat are represented in the tomb, starting with the west side of the south wall. Each gate is guarded by three ferocious spirits who threaten to annihilate intruders. There is a doorkeeper and a guardian with swords in hand, and a herald bearing an ankh, the paramount symbol of life (Fig. 10). All alone, Nefertari must demonstrate occult knowledge by naming each gate and its guardians in order to pass through safely. Working like magic charms, the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the walls copied from chapter 144 of the Book of the Dead provide her with this vital information: “Formula by which to know the Gates of the Domain of Osiris in the West and the divinities who are in their caverns . . . The First Gate. The name of its doorkeeper, Downward of Face, Numerous of Forms; the name of its guardian, Small of Ear; the name of its herald, Shouting Voice.” After pronouncing the name of each spirit, Nefertari declares: “I am one of veritable character who brightens the yonder when I have come to thee, Osiris, who resides in the west . . . I will establish my

name in Ra-setau.<sup>10</sup> Hail to thee, Osiris . . . by thy power and thy strength I am powerful in Ra-setau . . . Thou traversest heaven and thou conveyest thyself towards Re . . . I shall not be hindered by the black walls of the passages of the Gate of the Sleeping Face.”

Next to the fifth gate, on the east side of the north wall, Nefertari offers worship to Anubis, Hathor, and Osiris (see pg. 30). Before her is an offering stand and the four sons of Horus in mummiform. The final phase of the journey is depicted between the northeast corner next to this scene, and along the east wall up to the stairway entrance. With help from chapter 146 of the Book of the Dead, Nefertari has to negotiate ten knife-wielding guards who squat mummified inside the underworld “caverns,” by correctly pronouncing their names. Four caverns on the east wall have suffered much paint loss, giving prominence to an odd humanlike red genii in the center (Pl. 13). A crocodile-headed spirit called “The Great Embracer” is depicted inside the last cavern on the south wall. The text reads, “The Loud-voiced, who awakens with shouts, who cries out terror, great of esteem, fearful for those who are in it.” Having emerged from the ordeal intact, Nefertari is now ready for the final act.



FIGURE 11, ABOVE. COLUMN I, SOUTH FACE. HORENDOTES, HGRUS OFFICIATING AS A PRIEST, CLAD IN A LEOPARD-SKIN GARMENT.

FIGURE 12, ABOVE RIGHT. COLUMN II, EAST FACE. ISIS EXTENDING AN ANKH TO NEFERTARI, GIVING HER THE BREATH OF LIFE.

FIGURE 13, RIGHT. CHAMBER M, EAST WALL, SOUTH SIDE. NEFERTARI MUMMIFIED, BARE-FACED, AND CROWNED.

Resurrection occurs within the four columns enclosing Nefertari's sarcophagus whose broken lid of pink granite lies pieced together in the Museo Egizio in Turin. Surrounded by precious funerary objects, almost all of which were robbed in antiquity, the queen lay here with her head to the west, so that her eyes would open to the rising sun each day. On the south faces of the columns through which the sarcophagus first passed, Horus appears in two forms, Horendotes<sup>11</sup> and Horus Iun-Mutef,<sup>12</sup> each clad in an officiating priest's leopard skin. In real life, the eldest son of the deceased, burning incense and sprinkling sanctified water before the coffin, would have performed the last rites to restore the body. On the east column, Horendotes (Fig. 11) declares: "I am thy son, thy beloved one, who has gone forth from thy limbs. I have come and I have tied thy limbs together for thee. I have brought to thee thy heart, my father Osiris who resides in the west." On the east face of this column, Isis holds Nefertari's hand and extends an ankh to her nostrils, the ultimate gesture of giving the breath of life (Fig. 12). On the west column, Horus Iun-Mutef (Pl. 9) addresses his father, "Mayest thou cause that thy daughter, thy beloved one, the Osirian . . . Nefertari . . . rest within the great council of gods who follow Osiris, to whom are assembled the lords of the Sacred Land."

The funerary goddesses appear on different column faces, embracing Nefertari in a gesture of ritual intimacy and endearment. The goddess Neith is omitted, most likely inadvertently. Osiris himself appears as a monumental *Djed*<sup>13</sup> pillar on all the inner faces of the columns facing the sarcophagus (Pl. 12). The *Djed* is a complex symbol whose origin and significance are unknown. But by the time the Book of the Dead was compiled, it had come to represent Osiris's backbone, which is to say, resurrection.

Wrapped in red, a mummified Nefertari stands inside the southeast corner of the small chamber to the left (Fig. 13). She looks alive, happy, and radiant.

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## Notes

1. For Nefertari's biography see Gaballa (1987:10–17) and Maher-Taha (1987:18–23). Bianchi (1992:43 ff.) has proposed that Nefertari was the daughter of Ay and the

younger sister of Nefertiti (Akhenaton's wife) and Mutnodjmet (Horemheb's wife).

2. The Book of the Dead is preceded by other funerary texts including the Pyramid Texts of the Fifth Dynasty and the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom. The most notable of extant versions is the Theban recension. Translations in this article are from Thausing (1971).

3. For a concise survey of ancient Egyptian funerary beliefs and customs, see Romano (1990).

4. So-called by the Greeks after Canopus, Menelaus's pilot, canopic jars were containers in which the internal organs of the deceased, removed and wrapped at the time of embalming, were preserved.

5. The scene is absent in the tomb of Nefertari, though it was among the most popular scenes in the Book of the Dead. It shows the heart of the deceased being weighed in a balance against a feather of Ma'at, Truth. As the deceased recites the Negative Confession before the forty-two gods, denying all wrongdoing, Anubis adjusts the plummet, and Thoth writes down the verdict. A grotesque demon, the Eater of Hearts, would receive the heart in the case of a negative verdict. Otherwise, Horus would present the deceased to Osiris as one "true of voice," suitable for admission into the netherworld.

6. The four are commonly represented on the stoppers of canopic jars with the heads of a man, an ape, a jackal, and a falcon, respectively.

7. Greek for "Horus-son-of-Isis." This form of Horus developed to legitimize his claim to being a son of Isis and Osiris. In the Pyramid Texts, he conducts the "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony that brings the dead king to life.

8. This chamber (chamber G in GC1 plans) was photographically reproduced in the exhibition titled *In the Tomb of Nefertari: Conservation of the Wall Paintings*, which opened at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, November 12, 1992.

9. Literally, "Beloved of Mut." Mut was the preeminent goddess of Thebes and in time, the principal wife of Amon.

10. A reference to the necropolis, which is regarded as a place of rest, whereas Duat, the netherworld, is a place of passage.

11. The Greek version of Harnedj-itef, "Horus, his Father's Savior." It refers to his victory over Seth in capturing the throne of Osiris.

12. Literally, “Pillar of his Mother.” It was due to Isis’s success in saving her child from Seth that he was able to vindicate Osiris.

13. The word means “stability” or “continuity of power.” The symbol is attested before the rise of Osiris’s cult.

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