

Women in Ancient Egypt

by

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The paper shows that, while there were general areas and specific incidents in which the ancient Egyptian women were considered the equal of the men, overall they had a secondary role to play, and it was in play, and sport and entertainment that this disparity was most obvious.

While women worked with the men, played with the men, achieved positions of power in common with the men and, in many ways, proved that they were the equals, if not the superiors, of the men, the majority of the women, for most of the time, appear to have been considered as adjuncts to, and objects of delight for the men.

When a lord and lady were being entertained, they sat together, both richly dressed, both waited upon by servants and both enjoying the spectacles, the music and the food. However, in most cases the servants were usually women, nude or scantily-clad women; the entertainers were most often women, again scantily-clad or naked, and the setting seems designed more for the delectation of the men than of the pair.

There is little evidence of the ladies indulging in strenuous sports such as hunting and when shown in pictures of fishing or fowling, the fairer sex is always shown in a secondary role, helping, assisting, supporting her lord, while he, depicted as being several times the size of his womenfolk, is shown performing the physical acts involved in catching fish or fowl.

Taken in total the evidence points to the women of ancient Egypt being more important as sex-objects than as equal partners in the life of the community.