THE FERTILITY FIGURINE PROBLEM: REINTERPRETING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PADDLE DOLLS, FAIENCE, AND CERAMIC FEMALE FIGURINES

Amanda Jane Shaffery
THE “FERTILITY FIGURINE” PROBLEM: REINTERPRETING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PADDLE DOLLS, FAIENCE, AND CERAMIC FEMALE FIGURINES

by

Amanda Jane Shaffery

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand the role of female figurines in ancient Egypt. Through the use of several key example types, paddle dolls, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3), the differences in use and function of these objects is discussed. These objects have previously been categorized as “fertility figurines”; however, as this dissertation demonstrates not all female figurines function in the same manner. Furthermore, this dissertation makes use of feminist and gender theory to formulate questions concerning the role of female figurines in ancient Egypt and the concept of fertility. Lastly, through the use of archaeological context, material, and iconography it is clear that paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines when found in tomb contexts were likely related to magical midwives and functioned as such. By contrast, the ceramic female figurines found within in domestic contexts may have functioned as “fertility figurines,” thus highlighting that nude representations of women may have had many uses in ancient Egypt.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents and parents. To my Mamie, who taught me to be creative. To my Pop-pop, who taught me to be kind to myself. To my Oma, who taught me to be brave. To my Opa, who taught me to be curious.

And to my mom and dad who without their support and unwavering faith in my abilities and my dream, graduate school and a dissertation in Egyptology would not have happened.
Introduction
Beginning in the Middle Kingdom (2030-1650 BCE)\textsuperscript{1} mostly nude, legless, and decorated female figurines began to be produced in a variety of materials. According to the most widely used research on these figures, they can be found in tombs, temples, and dwellings.\textsuperscript{2} There are numerous theories in regard to their function. Early scholars such as Herbert Winlock posited that, due to the nude and legless nature of the figurines, these representations of women must have functioned as concubine figurines for the deceased.\textsuperscript{3} Winlock would later amend his theory concerning one specific form of female figurine, the paddle doll, stating that when found in new condition in groups of ten, and associated with a deceased male, paddle dolls were concubines; however, if it was a single paddle doll and associated with a child, then it functioned as a toy.\textsuperscript{4} More recent scholarship by Geraldine Pinch suggested the female figurines functioned as “fertility figurines,” meant to aid living women with all things concerning pregnancy and child rearing;\textsuperscript{5} however, this designation does not account for differences in style, archaeological context, or material; and the definition of fertility is broad. This dissertation will use female figurines of faience (identified as Pinch’s Type 1) and ceramic (identified as Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) materials as comparand to the main focus, paddle dolls,\textsuperscript{6} in order to explore their function(s)

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\item \textsuperscript{2} Geraldine Pinch, \textit{Votive Offerings to Hathor}, (Griffith Institute, 1993), 225; Geraldine Pinch, “Childbirth and Female Figurines at Deir el-Medina and el-‘Amarna,” \textit{Oreintalia} 52, 3 (1983): 405-414.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Herbert Winlock, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom}, (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 207.
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ibid.}, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Pinch, \textit{Votive Offerings to Hathor}, 225.
\item \textsuperscript{6} While there are multiple forms of female figurines in various materials, such as stone and ivory, this dissertation was limited to paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) female figurines to demonstrate the variety of uses they may have had in ancient Egypt, and possible continuity in these uses between forms. Additionally, the corpus was limited to three types of female figurines as the scope of all female figurines was too large for one dissertation.
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in ancient Egyptian daily life and funerary contexts. In doing so, it will become evident that female figurines did not all function in the same manner and that some examples functioned as fertility amulets, whereas others were likely representations of what is best termed as magical midwives. These magical midwives may have possibly been utilized in a funerary context to aid the deceased in their rebirth.

The paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) of focus date from the 11th dynasty through the Second Intermediate Period (1650-1550 BCE). These specific types of the female figurines have been chosen as I believe they represent different aspects of fertility, and therefore demonstrate the various functions of the female figurines. Paddle dolls (fig. 1) are flat, paddle-shaped figures with emphasized pubic regions and small breasts. The heads of the figures are small, and lack detail, whereas the bodies are adorned in a checkered pattern garment that exposes the pubic region. Also depicted on the body are necklaces, bracelets, and diamond, or sometimes described as dot/dash, shaped patterns which may represent tattoos. Other possible tattoos are figural, typically depicting Ipi-Taweret, a protective deity (see fig. 4), or an animal, and are often found on the reverse of the dolls. Paddle dolls were produced during the 11th dynasty and are most often found in tomb contexts.

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7 “Chronology,” xix.


10 Ibid., 75.
By the 12th dynasty faience figures (fig. 2) (Pinch’s Type 1) were in production. These may have evolved from the paddle doll, and therefore the two forms possibly share a function. Faience figurines are often characterized as being of “good workmanship,”11 and have detailed faces with clearly marked eyes, mouths, and noses. They are legless, also known as truncated, with the arms straight down at the sides, and have diamond shaped tattoos. This form is also often adorned with jewelry, such as girdles and bracelets. Some examples are also seen holding or carrying children (see cat. no. AS48 and AS49). They are found in tomb contexts.12

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11 Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 198.
12 Ibid., 199.
The ceramic form (fig. 3) (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) has been considered to be “of crude workmanship”\(^\text{13}\) and examples are found in tomb, household, and temple contexts.\(^\text{14}\) They have been described as having “abbreviated faces” and “beaked” noses.\(^\text{15}\) These forms are also not as heavily decorated as the paddle dolls or faience versions, with often just their pubic mound being emphasized with a dotted design. Some examples also have dashes that may also be representative of tattoos on the thighs. The heads of the figures are different between Pinch’s Type 2 and 3. The Type 2 figurines have small heads with the hair modeled out of clay, whereas the Type 3 figurines have a wide, flat-topped head that often is incised with holes, possibly to attach hair made out of mud or clay beads and string. They can appear to be seated or standing.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 199.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 200.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 200.
Interestingly, the ceramic forms that are seated are occasionally depicted holding, or possibly breastfeeding, children (see cat. no. AS73).  

![Image of ceramic female figurine](https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148297/female-figurine?ctx=2f0675ae-66ae-48a3-ab43-654e7738c4a1&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.)

Figure 3-Example of a ceramic female figurine. Cat. no. AS54. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148297/female-figurine?ctx=2f0675ae-66ae-48a3-ab43-654e7738c4a1&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

It is my theory that these different forms of the female figurines may have performed a different function based on their archaeological context. I posit that paddle dolls and faience figurines were representations of dancers that served as magical midwives, specifically the women and the trainees specifically from the *khener*. It is possible that the *khener* members served as magical practitioners who were responsible for the apotropaic protection of the mother and child during pregnancy and childbirth. These women may have physically participated in the birthing process as well. This then makes paddle dolls and faience female figurines representing them a necessary part of rebirth as there is a connection between these two processes.  

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Concerning ceramic figures, I suggest that when found in domestic contexts they are truly representations of fertility and may have functioned as amulets to aid in pregnancy and breastfeeding; when found in tomb contexts, it is plausible that they may have also functioned as magical midwives to the deceased. My research focuses on these 3 types of female figurines to better understand their function in ancient Egyptian daily life and the rituals surrounding death. In doing so, providing a specific definition for fertility in an ancient Egyptian context is necessary, as well as proposing a different classification system for the various forms of female figurines produced during the Middle Kingdom through the Second Intermediate Period.

This dissertation explores several main research questions in order to delve into the fertility figurine discussion. Each of these questions has been influenced by gender and feminist theory, which is discussed at length in chapter 2. The research questions are as follows:

- **How do Egyptologists define “fertility”?** Is there only one definition of fertility among Egyptologists? How should we define fertility? How did the ancient Egyptians define fertility?
- **What is a female figurine?** Should they be classified as something else?
- **Using paddle dolls as a model, do all of these figurines function the same way?** How do we currently think about how they function?
  - Are they associated with birth? If so, how?
  - How do female figurines relate to funerary culture?
  - Could these figurines be associated with *khener* dancers, as suggested by a few scholars?
  - Could these figurines be associated with birth and the birthing process?
- **Is there a more holistic way to classify female figurines?**

These questions will serve as the guiding points for this dissertation. By exploring concepts, including fertility, it is my goal to establish a fuller picture of ancient Egyptian life, in particular the lives of women. Additionally, gender and feminist theory have proved useful in analyzing the historiography of the female figurine, and I will continue to use these paradigms to sift through the research concerning these figurines. Furthermore, material, archaeological context, and
iconography will be utilized as criteria for categorizing paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) as magical midwives and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) as fertility amulets in domestic contexts and magical midwives in a funerary setting.
Chapter 1: Historiography

Female figurines as a category have a varied historiography within Egyptology. These objects have been classified as everything from concubine figures, to children’s toys, to fertility figurines. The purpose of this section is to discuss these different theories regarding paddle dolls and female figurine function, and to note the progression of this field of study.

Paddle Dolls

As paddle dolls are the main focus of this study, it is fitting to begin with their historiography. Additionally, the historiography for paddle dolls is slightly different than that of faience (Pinch’s Type 1) and ceramic figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3). This is due to the early scholarship of paddle dolls in which they were not considered to be the same class of object as other female figurines. This current study recognizes that while paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic figures are all different, they are tangentially related. It is for this reason that these three forms of female figurines are being used within this dissertation.

Paddle dolls were first reported by John Garstang (1902-1904) and Herbert Winlock (1911-1931) in Beni Hassan and Thebes respectively.\(^1\) Garstang focused on the tombs of the elites,\(^2\) and Winlock’s main areas of focus were the Nebheptre mortuary complex and associated burials there.\(^3\) It is from these graves that they uncovered paddle dolls. Garstang described the figures as “another class of children’s toys,”\(^4\) and Winlock described the flat, oblong, figures as

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“barbarous looking things, whittled out of thin pieces of wood, gaudily painted, and with great mops of hair made of strings of little beads of black mud” resembling paddles (fig. 1).\(^5\)

![Figure 1-Paddle doll with hair. Cat. No. AS9. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544216, date accessed 7/2/21.](image)

As both scholars found the first examples of paddle dolls in the graves of children, and assessed that they showed signs of “hard use,”\(^6\) they assumed that they were toy dolls for the deceased.\(^7\) This assessment, combined with their shape, lead them to the name paddle doll. The categorization of paddle dolls as toys was largely accepted, until Winlock amended this conclusion in *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*.\(^8\) Winlock asserted that the figures when found in the graves of children, with signs of use, were toys. However, if paddle


dolls were found in groups of “ten dolls, all new and only a bit fly-specked,”⁹ in the grave of a man, then they were concubines¹⁰ for the deceased.¹¹ This shift in thinking regarding the figurines would create a long-lasting idea of the concubine figurine in Egyptology.

Though Winlock only briefly mentions that paddle dolls may have been concubines for the deceased, the idea that these representations of women were meant to magically serve the male tomb owner for eternity was linked to all other forms of the female figurine.¹² These ideas would then also become associated with the process of reinvigorating the deceased,¹³ for rebirth into the afterlife. The work of Geraldine Pinch¹⁴ provided the evidence necessary to link paddle dolls, and other female figures to fertility and ideas of reinvigoration and rebirth.

In her seminal work on female figurines, Pinch defined six types of female figures that she determined to serve a fertility function.¹⁵ The typology created within her larger work, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, has been adopted by the Egyptology community and utilized for many

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⁹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰ Concubine should be understood to mean “a ‘kept woman’, one who is to be available for intimate relations on the whim of her keeper” (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38426?rskey=xpoR4D&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, date accessed: 6/14/21) as detailed by Jennifer Hellum in “The Questions of Maid servant and the Concubine: Re-Examining Egyptian Female Lexicology,” in *Dust, Demons, and Pots Studies in Honor of Colin A. Hope Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 289, ed. Ashten R. Warfe, James C.R. Gill, Caleb R. Hamilton, Amy J. Pettman, and David A. Stewart, (Leuven, Paris, and Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2020), 269-278. Also of note Hellum states that many of the ancient Egyptian terms that have been translated as concubine, are female titles: “By definition, each of these terms has been attributed a sexual function in English. In an ancient Egyptian context, this is unwarranted. None of the texts specifically mention or allude to a sexual aspect; they are, rather, simply female titles or labels” (Hellum, 273).

¹¹ Winlock, 47.


¹⁴ Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 198-234.

¹⁵ Ibid., 225.
years.\textsuperscript{16} In terms of paddle dolls specifically, Pinch clearly states that the figures only serve as comparanda in her study and are not included in the typology.\textsuperscript{17} As paddle dolls do share some iconography with some of the figurines in Pinch’s study, they sometimes are considered fertility figurines as well.\textsuperscript{18}

Ellen Morris has done the most recent and comprehensive study concerning paddle dolls. Her work serves as a basis for my own interpretation of these figures and will be discussed at length. Entitled “Paddle Dolls and Performance,”\textsuperscript{19} Morris’ article analyzes the dolls from several angles and concludes that they were most likely representations of khener dancers. She begins by studying the most prominent source of paddle dolls, Asasif, specifically the area of Deir el-Bahari.\textsuperscript{20} Of Morris’ corpus, 81\% of those come from the tombs around Deir el-Bahri and the burial complex of Nebheptre.\textsuperscript{21} It is from one of these tombs, and the tomb of Unis-ankh (TT 413), that some insight into the nature of paddle dolls is gleaned.\textsuperscript{22} Based on the reported

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\textsuperscript{16} As this was one of the first comprehensive studies done on female figurines, other studies recognized and referenced it while sometimes utilizing their own classification system, such as work done by Angela Tooley, Joanne Backhouse, and Elizabeth Waraksa. Due to this it is evident that Pinch did provide one, easily recognizable classification system for female figurines.

\textsuperscript{17} Pinch, 198. Angela Tooley did incorporate them into her dissertation entitled \textit{Middle Kingdom Burial Customs: A Study of Wooden Models and Related Materials Volume 1}, (University of Liverpool, 1989), 307-311. Dr. Tooley has noted that her current research on female figurines is far more comprehensive, and therefore her original work will be referenced sparingly throughout this work. Tooley, personal communication, 11/24/19.

\textsuperscript{18} Examples of scholars who have addressed paddle dolls as fertility figures include: Carolyn Graves-Brown, \textit{Dancing for Hathor}, 60-61; Karin Roberta Kroenke, \textit{The Provincial Cemeteries of Naga ed-Deir: A Comprehensive Study of Tomb Models Dating from the Late Old Kingdom to the Late Middle Kingdom}, (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2010), 70; Ann Macy Roth, “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility,” 198.

\textsuperscript{19} Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 71-103.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 72-73.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 74-75.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, 75.
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findings in the article “The Tomb of Wnis-anx at Qurna (PM-No. 413)” the tomb held several wooden models characteristic of the end of the Old Kingdom and the early Middle Kingdom. Among these models, a possible paddle doll is described as follows:

“The sixth statuette (pl. LXXVIIb) is representing an armless women. The body is painted yellow, the face has big round eyes and the head is covered with black hair. The women is seated and probably the figure was fixed at the prow of the boat for a wooden nail is fixed in the incline base of the front. It is 12cm high.”

Some of the characteristics associated with this figure are reminiscent of paddle dolls, such as the armless nature of the figure, height, and hair; however, paddle dolls are not seated figures. Once the plate is consulted it is evident there was a paddle doll found in association with these figures; it is unclear if that paddle doll is the one described above. Morris has identified this as the earliest provenience for paddle dolls. The tomb dates to the 6th dynasty, thus indicating that paddle dolls were in production prior to the end of the Old Kingdom. Morris also states, based on Aly, that TT 413 provides evidence for paddle dolls being created in association with the local cult of Hathor. Aly himself is not clear about this association, and the subject would benefit from further research.

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24 *Ibid.*, 204. The cited quote has been taken directly from the article, including the grammatical errors.


27 Aly, “The Tomb of Wnis-anx at Qurna (PM-No.413),” 203-204.
Additionally, the tomb of Unis-ankh depicts dancers performing the so-called “mirror dance” (fig. 2)\(^{28}\) which has been associated with both *khener* dancers and the cult of Hathor, thus linking this tomb to the goddess.\(^{29}\)

Figure 2- Dancers performing the mirror dance in the tomb of Unis Ankh (TT 143), Old Kingdom. Image from Mohammad Saleh, *Three Old Kingdom Tombs at Thebes I*, 1977, pl. 3.

![Figure 2](image-url)

Figure 3- Dancers performing the mirror dance in the tomb of Mereruka, Saqqara, Old Kingdom. Image from *The Mastaba of Mereruka Pt. II*, ed. John Albert Wilson and Thomas George Allen, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, 1938, pl. 164 and 165.

Within the Theban area there are several other tombs in which paddle dolls were found, and several tombs for the priestesses of Hathor themselves. This location then indicated to Morris

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\(^{28}\) Also see fig. 3 for an image of the same dance from the tomb of Mereruka.

\(^{29}\) Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 76; 96. Aly, “The Tomb of Wnis-anx at Qurna (PM-No.413),” 202. The *khener* themselves will be discussed in chapter 7.
that paddle dolls were a Theban tradition and most likely associated with the cult of Hathor.\textsuperscript{30} Both of these points are vital to understanding paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), as it is possible that they began as a Theban tradition that then spread to other areas of Egypt, such as Lisht and Sheikh Farag.\textsuperscript{31}

Morris’ second piece of evidence is the diamond patterns that may be tattoos on paddle dolls. From the front, paddle dolls appear to be wearing jewelry, including necklaces and bracelets, and a checkered patterned garment. They also are sometimes adorned with diamond shaped designs, which have been deemed tattoos (fig. 4).

Figure 4- A close up of the diamond shaped tattoos that adorn the arms and public regions of paddle dolls. Cat. no. AS15. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/561887, date accessed 7/2/21.

Additionally, the reverse of paddle dolls are often adorned with images of animals or Ipi-Taweret (fig. 5), which are also generally classified as tattoos,\textsuperscript{32} though it is possible, as addressed in chapter 7, that these figural designs were intended to enhance the magical aspect of paddle dolls.

\textsuperscript{30} Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 77-79.

\textsuperscript{31} Angela Tooley, “Female Images During the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period: Truncated Figurines,” draft sent through personal communication, December 5, 2019, now published as “Afgeknotte vrouwenbeeldjes tijdens het Middenrijk en de Tweed Tussentijd,” Mehen 2020 (2020): 167-193. This is evidenced by the earliest known paddle doll dating from the Old Kingdom and having come from a Theban tomb. It should be noted that it is also likely, and possible, that other areas within Egypt already had a tradition of producing female figurines.

\textsuperscript{32} Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 82.
The same diamond designs were found on several female mummies from the Nebheptre burial complex (fig. 6), one of which, Amunet was designated as a priestess of Hathor.

Figure 5- An example of Ipi-Taweret on the back of a paddle doll. Cat. no. AS8. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/229003/paddle-doll?ctx=3ec6a4ea-09de-4a25-8505-01e1fc8f5757&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 1-Mummified arm of a woman from the North Court of the Nebheptre mortuary complex, Thebes. Image from Ellen Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” JARCE, 47, 2011, fig. 3.

Given Amunet’s distinction as a priestess of Hathor and the similarity between her tattoos and those of two other bodies found in the Nebheptre burial complex Morris notes: “It is therefore likely that the two other women in the north triangular court whose bodies also bore tattoos
served in a similar cultic capacity.”

The diamond shaped tattoos adorning the women may connect with dancers, specifically the *khener* as similar markings are seen on depictions of dancers, paddle dolls, and the women from the Nebheptre complex. This suggests that the women of the Nebheptre complex may have been the *khener* dancers which paddle dolls portray. Morris states:

“The tombs on and adjacent to Nebhepetre’s temple platform that we have discussed were provided with much of the same furnishings as co-occurred with the paddle dolls elsewhere in the cemetery (such as funerary models, offering trays, weapons, and cosmetic containers). This is the only area of the main Middle Kingdom cemetery surrounding the complex, however, in which female figurines were not found. Given that elsewhere in the Metropolitan Museum’s concession, paddle dolls alone occur in just over a quarter of the burials, the absence of figurines from all of these graves is indeed significant. What appears likely, then, is that the oft-tattooed women buried in the north triangular court and some of their counterparts buried within the temple proper did not need paddle dolls because they were paddle dolls—or rather the *khener*-women the paddle dolls portrayed.”

A final point of discussion concerning tattoos is that they may be tied to Hathor’s wanderings as the Solar Eye. In this role, Hathor wanders into Nubia and becomes connected with dances and fertility symbols, like tattoos, from the region. The Egyptians then further

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33 Ibid., 79.

34 Ibid., 81-82. These tattoos and their supposed connection to Hathor will be addressed in detail in chapter 6.

35 Ibid., 83.
connected these images with sex and fertility, and thus rejuvenation. This connection between rejuvenation/revivification of the deceased and female figurines will be discussed in chapter 3. Regardless of the questions surrounding the process of rejuvenation, these connections between Hathor, tattoos, and Nubia have also been used to suggest that paddle dolls may have Nubian connections, which Morris acknowledges, but as it is not the crux of her argument, other studies that detail this, such as Juan Carlos Moreno García and Maya Müller should be referred to specifically for paddle dolls and their relationship to Nubia.

From tattooing, Morris moves onto genital exposure. The garment that adorns the front side of paddle dolls ends just above their pubic region, thus displaying their pubic mound and vulva. According to Morris the obvious depiction of these regions further links paddle dolls to Hathor and dancers. The idea that genital exposure is related to Hathor stems from one of the goddess’ many epithets as “Lady of the Vulva.” The title itself comes from the myth, The


37 Ibid., 80-81. The theory that paddle dolls are of foreign origin is discussed below.


40 Ibid., 84-86.

Contendings of Horus and Seth, in which Hathor ritually exposes herself to her father Re in order to make him laugh. The purposeful display refreshes Re and lightens his mood, while simultaneously providing mythic origins for the dances of the khener and other dancing troupes. Genital exposure would have likely been the result of the acrobatic dances portrayed in tomb scenes, thus mimicking Hathor’s role in the myth. It is also believed that these dances are thought to have reinvigorated the deceased to aid in their process of rebirth. Once this concept of ritualized genital exposure is combined with the idea that dancers were tattooed in a manner that may have further linked them to Hathor, it is possible to see how tattoos, genital exposure, and dancing all became intrinsically linked together, and also to rebirth.

To further the connection between the khener and paddle dolls, Morris examines the checkered patterned garment that adorns the front of the figures. She notes that this pattern is quite rare in other Egyptian art, but there is an example in the New Kingdom tomb of Kenamun (TT 93) (fig. 7). More importantly, these women are labeled as members of the khener troupe, indicating that the dress of the paddle dolls was probably standard to the khener. From dress to demographics, Morris then goes on to explain the significance within the grouping of paddle dolls. Winlock had stated that when a group of ten or more dolls were found in the grave of a man, they should be designated as concubines. Morris responds to this by stating that

43 Ibid., 84.
44 Ibid., 87.
45 See Norman de Garis Davies, The Tomb of Ken-Amun at Thebes, (New York: Plantin Press, 1930), pl. XLI, A.
47 Winlock, The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes. Winlock does not provide information as to how frequently paddle dolls were found in this grouping, though it is recorded that the paddle dolls from tomb MMA816 were found in a group of five. In The Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt, Garstang does note “doll figures”
this grouping of paddle dolls was meant to represent a troupe of khener dancers. This includes a smaller doll (fig. 8) to possibly represent a girl in training to become a full-fledged member of the troupe. I agree that paddle dolls found in groups were representative of a khener troupe. I also agree with the assessment of the smaller paddle doll figures as khener trainees.


Figure 3- Smaller paddle doll, possibly a young girl who would have been an apprentice. Shown next to a fully sized paddle doll for scale. Image by Amanda Shaffery, The Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Egypt, 2019.

found together in different groupings, but it is unclear if these are paddle dolls. In the tomb of Baqta he notes that 12 “wooden dolls” and a model ox were found (Garstang, 233). In Tomb 424 Garstang reported “three decayed doll figures” (Garstang, 225), Tomb 654 had three wooden dolls (Garstang, 234), Tomb 767 had “fragments of doll figures, arms, etc” (Garstang, 239), and Tomb 843 had “two doll figures” (Garstang, 241). See *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, ed. Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 106. Morris clearly lists the groupings of paddle dolls in her article, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 90-91.

This idea of demographics directly connects to Morris’ sixth point, that paddle dolls are grouped to mimic the organization and function of actual dancing troupes. This then includes the troupe’s association with music.\textsuperscript{49} Often the figures are found in conjunction with clappers, mirrors, and magic knives (also known as birth tusks).\textsuperscript{50} All of these items could be considered part of the \textit{khener}’s kit\textsuperscript{51} (fig. 9) and have been depicted with dancers in tomb scenes\textsuperscript{52} and found within some tombs in Asasif (such as tombs 815 and 839).\textsuperscript{53} Clappers are the main focus of Morris’ argument, and she notes that they were integral to the so-called mirror dance, and were the usual instrument of the \textit{khener}.\textsuperscript{54} As the \textit{khener} were associated with the goddess Hathor,\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 94.


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 94. The \textit{khener} kit may have also functioned as, or been related to, the magician kit. This was established by J. Quibell as based on his findings from a 12\textsuperscript{th} dynasty tomb from the Ramesseum. The kit is published in J. Quibell, \textit{The Ramesseum}, (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1898), pl. III. See also J. Wegner, “A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in Middle Kingdom Egypt”, in \textit{Archaism and Innovation: Studies in the Culture of Middle Kingdom Egypt}, ed. David P. Silverman, William Kelley Simpson, and Josef Wegner, (New Haven and Philadelphia: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University and University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2009), 447-496.


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 95.

\textsuperscript{55} The connection between the \textit{khener} dancers and Hathor is explored further in chapter 7. It should be noted that there is an ongoing study being conducted about the \textit{khener} by Dana Bělohoubková, which will be used in future study of this topic once it is published.

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Morris interprets clappers as having this association with the goddess and her role in rebirth as well. In a later article concerning the role of clappers Morris states: “Beginning in the Second Intermediate Period, many hand-shaped clappers bear the serene visage of the goddess Hathor on their sleeve, thereby dispelling any mystery as to their ritual affiliation.” This then further links paddle dolls to clappers and the role of the *khener* dancer.

From their association with clappers, Morris moves on to discuss the relationship between paddle dolls, *khener* dancers, and mirrors. Mirrors are one of the objects associated with the *khener* and sometimes found in correlation with paddle dolls. Like clappers, mirrors are associated with Hathor as her image is often depicted on the handles of mirrors. Hathor is also connected to mirrors through their ability to reflect the sun. This harkens back to Hathor and her relationship with Re, thus furthering the connection between paddle dolls and Hathor and her role in rejuvenation and rebirth, and recalls the mythic scene of ritual genital exposure.

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58 Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 98.

The final piece of evidence discussed by Morris to fully connect paddle dolls to the
goddess Hathor is the shape of the dolls themselves. Paddle dolls resemble *menat* counterpoises
in shape (fig. 10).

Figure 5- An example of a *menat* necklace. Here you can see the shape of the counterpoise is
reminiscent of paddle dolls. Image from:
The *menat* necklace and counterpoise is associated with Hathor, and one of her titles was “Lady of the *Menat.*”\(^60\) *Menat* necklaces were also associated with sed-festivals and rituals revolving around the rejuvenation of the king, where they may have been used by dancers.\(^61\) This once again links paddle dolls to the role of *khener* dancers\(^62\) and Hathor’s role of rejuvenation. Additionally, dancing troupes were comprised of both men and women, and both sexes can be seen with *menat* necklaces in several of their dances\(^63\) as seen in figures 11 and 12. The men in these scenes, such as those in fig. 13, are Hathoric Ihy priests.

Figure 6- Hathor with a *menat* necklace at the king’s *heb sed* festival. Accession #E14327, Lisht North, 12th Dynasty, Middle Kingdom, reign of Amenemhat III, Musée du Louvre. Image from *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, ed. Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2015, cat. 44, 103.

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\(^61\) *Ibid.*, 100-101. Hathor can also be seen in multiple instances with the *menat* necklace such as: Lisht North, 12th Dynasty relief of the goddess Hathor, now in the Musée du Louvre, E14327, fig. 11, discussed in *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, ed. Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto, cat. 44, 103-104. See also Leslie Kinney, *Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom*.

\(^62\) For multiple depictions of dancers with *menat* necklaces see the tomb of Ramose (TT 55) (fig. 12), the tomb of Senet and Antefoqer (TT 60) (fig. 13) in the register above this (fig. 14) Hathor is mentioned as the “golden one”, the tomb of Wahka II at Qaw el-Kebir (fig. 15) may show a dancer wearing a *menat*, and from the tomb of Senbi at Meir, musicians can be seen wearing *menat* while performing (fig. 16).

Figure 7- Image of dancers with *menat* necklaces and sistra from the tomb of Ramose, TT 55. Image from Alison Roberts, *Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt*, 14.

Figure 8- Hathoric Ihy priests wearing *menat* necklaces and using clappers from the tomb of Senet and Antefoqer, TT 60. The text translates as: “Re appears […]” and “The inhabitants, adore you”. Image from Alison Roberts, *Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt*, 30.

Figure 9- Female dancers from the tomb of Senet and Antefoqer, TT 60. The text translates as: “The doors of heaven open and the god comes forth.” “Look! The Golden One (Hathor) has come.” Image from: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544545, date accessed 5/5/21.
Figure 10- Dancers from the tomb of Wahka II at Qaw el-Kebir. The necklace on the two women right of the acrobatic dancers may be a *menat*. Image from https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/qau/bigtombs/pl.xxiv.html, date accessed 6/15/21; published in W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Antaeopolis. The Tombs of Qau*. (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt. LI., 1930), pl. XXIV.

Figure 11- Musicians from the tomb of Senbi, Meir, Middle Kingdom. Image from *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, ed. Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto, fig. 69, 121.
According to Alison Roberts, “Ihy is one of the most unusual figures in the Egyptian pantheon. Though rarely shown in reliefs before the Greco-Roman period, this child of Hathor was known already in Old Kingdom times.” Most interestingly, Ihy is associated with birth as the “new-born child who breaks out of the primeval egg.” This imagery can also be taken as a metaphor for birth and rebirth, as well as a visual of creation.

It is then important to emphasize that dancing, and all of its ritual items, such as clappers, mirrors, and menat necklaces, were not gender specific items. Therefore, it is best to understand menat necklaces as items associated with Hathor and dancers in general, rather than one specific sex. Interestingly the shape of the menat counterpoise itself is very similar to the shape of paddle dolls. From that point it is tempting to say that because menat necklaces are linked to dancers, so are paddle dolls; however, menat necklaces also appear with the deceased in tomb scenes (fig. 17) and are seen with the living at festivals for ritualistic purposes (fig. 18), just like the khener. Due to this, it is evident that menat necklaces are not a dancing specific item, but maybe more generally a Hathoric specific item. By association then, if paddle dolls are intended to mimic the shape of menat counterpoises, they are then also possibly linked to Hathor.

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64 Ibid., 29.


Figure 13- Here a woman can be seen offering a menat to her deceased parents. Stela of the Overseer of the Herds Abkau and his wife Imemi, accession #N169, Musée du Louvre, 11th dynasty, Middle Kingdom, probably Abydos. Image from Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom, ed. Adela Oppenheim, Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Kei Yamamoto, cat. 193, 257-258.

Each piece of evidence presented by Morris, led her to the conclusion that paddle dolls are representations of khener dancers that would have aided the average Egyptian in their
connection to the goddess Hathor. While I do agree with Morris that paddle dolls are representations of *khener* dancers, I do not think the role of paddle dolls was to reinvigorate the deceased in the afterlife, as argued by Morris, but, as rather more specifically, to be the magical midwives to the deceased. This idea is something that will be discussed further throughout this dissertation. It should also be noted that this discussion will focus on the *khener* themselves and their role as possible midwives to the living. If paddle dolls were meant to represent *khener* dancers, then the role of magical midwife is perhaps what paddle dolls were meant to represent in tomb contexts.

In terms of the origin of paddle dolls, some scholars have suggested they have Nubian connections. This theory stems from the similarities in diamond-shaped markings, jewelry, and clothing on both Nubian C-group figures (fig. 19) and paddle dolls.

![Figure 14](image-url)

Figure 14- An example of a Nubian C-group figure that exhibits a similar diamond shaped pattern on her torso. Image from: Amanda Shaffery, the Nile Museum, Aswan, Egypt, 2019.

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C-group figures are found within Nubian graves and are made of clay. These same figures have also been compared to ceramic (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) and faience (Pinch’s Type 1) Egyptian female figurines. Concerning Nubian C-group figures, Jennifer Butterworth’s dissertation on the subject states that “C-group female figurines represented women and girls in positions of traditional power within the C-group and other communities.”70 This is much like the women of the Nebheptre complex, and paddle dolls; however, Butterworth explains that when examined more closely, the Nubian C-group figures and Egyptian paddle dolls and fertility figurines are more different than similar. She notes that C-group figures have several jewelry items not seen on Egyptian figures, such as “chockers, torques, necklaces with central dangling strands, and trident shaped- chest pieces.”71 The clothing between the figures that is generally stated as similar, is also vastly different according to Butterworth. Not only do Nubian C-group figures display a variety of clothing options, but these “long skirts, aprons or sporrans, wide belts, narrow belts with sashes, loincloths, or pubic covers,” are not similar to the garments seen on paddle dolls or the cowrie shell girdles seen on some female figurines.72 Finally, Butterworth also states that the figural tattoos of Egyptian female figurines, are not seen on Nubian C-group figures and some of the markings on Nubian C-group figures “suggest scarification produced during rites of passage as social identity markers.”73 These differences all indicated to Butterworth that “although the corpora appear to depict similar subject matter in similar ways, their functions and meanings were radically different.”74 Due to the iconographic differences in

70Ibid., 7.
71Ibid., 185.
72 Ibid., 185.
73 Ibid., 185.
74 Ibid., 186.
the figures, I agree with Butterworth’s assessment, that Egyptian female figurines are not the same as Nubian C-group figures.

Additionally, based on the work of Stuart Tyson-Smith it is unclear how much cultural sharing occurred between Egypt and Nubian in the 11th and early 12th dynasty. Tyson-Smith states that while there was interaction between the Egyptians and Nubians at this time, it was largely economically driven. Based on the grave goods of Nubian C-group people and the material finds from Egyptian forts in Nubia, it appears as though the two groups had limited interaction.75 This does not mean that cultural sharing did not occur, but rather it was very limited, and few items were shared. Scholars such as Juan Carlos Moreno García have suggested that textiles may have been one of these shared goods, and consequently, he suggests that paddle dolls, and by extension female figurines, were representations of multiple foreign groups.

In his article “Métaux, Textiles et Réseaux D’Échanges à Longue Distance Entre la Fin du IIIᵉ et le Début du IIᵉ Millénaires: Les “Paddle Dolls”, Un Indice Négligé?,”76 García suggests that paddle dolls, and by extension female figurines, were representations of a myriad group of foreigners, from Libyans to Nubians. García argued that the patterning of the paddle doll’s garment is the same pattern Libyans are depicted wearing in Egyptian art.77 More specifically, García likened paddle dolls to Libyan dancers, noting that the figures still would have been associated with Hathor, and therefore erotically charged via their foreign, and


77Ibid., 175. For examples see the tomb of “Khnumhotep II (tomb no. 3),” in Beni Hassan Art and Daily Life in an Egyptian Province, Naguib Kanawati and Alexandra Woods, (Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2010), 33-40; pl. 92-102.
Hathoric, associations. The association with Hathor is due to the goddess’ mythic wanderings. Based on iconographic details of foreigners, it is possible that the textiles chosen for paddle dolls were modeled after them, and examples of foreign textiles can be seen in the tombs of Beni Hasan. It is then plausible that foreign designs influenced the iconography of paddle dolls. The Egyptians had a complex relationship with foreigners and while it is a dissertation topic in and of itself, it is important to note this.

Zoltán Horváth explores the mythic wanderings of Hathor as the Solar Eye within his article, “Hathor and her Festivals at Lahun,” in order to better understand the religious festivals surrounding the goddess. Horváth notes that these wanderings were referred to in a Greco-Roman hymn to Hathor at the temple of Medamud, and it was in this much later version that the locations of Nubia and Libya were specified. Additionally, I am not aware of any Middle Kingdom sources which refer to the specific locations of Hathor’s journey as the Solar Eye. It was based on these wanderings that Egyptologists, such as García, asserted that the patterning on the dresses of paddle dolls and tattooing were indicators of possible Nubian or Libyan influence on female figurines. Because these wanderings were referred to only in myth, and only much

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78Ibid., 175. See also Alison Roberts, Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt, (Rochester and Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1995). Roberts discusses the connections between Hathor and the solar eye, and how this motif and Hathor’s role may have affected ancient Egyptian kingship and power. Though most of her evidence comes from the New Kingdom, Roberts does discuss the myth of Hathor as the solar eye and her role as both a protective deity and symbol of rebirth from the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts and Middle Kingdom literature, such as the Contendings of Horus and Seth. See also Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” who also bases her argument on Hathor’s role as the solar eye goddess.


80 Ibid., 140.
later sources provide the specific location of Hathor’s journey as the Solar Eye, the influence of Nubian culture on the Egyptians is unclear. Thus, based on the textiles of the paddle dolls, and the myths surrounding them and the goddess Hathor, it is unlikely that the concept of paddle dolls was of foreign origin, and far more likely that these designs were chosen to further evoke the goddess Hathor. It should be noted that dancers in the tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) (fig. 20) and Kenamun (TT 93) (fig. 7) do wear a similar costume to paddle dolls. While TT 192 dates to the New Kingdom, this similarity in dress cannot be ignored, and perhaps more importantly these dancers are not identified as being of foreign descent.81 TT 93 also dates to the New Kingdom, but it should be noted that it is possible through cultural change, that positions once done by foreigners, such as Nubian dancers, were now done by the Egyptians themselves.

Figure 15- Kheruef, TT 192 dancers performing at the sed festival of Amenhotep III. Image from The Epigraphic Survey, The Tomb of Kheruef Theban Tomb 192, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications: Chicago, 1980, pl. 33.

Through the work of Morris, it is clear that paddle dolls are intended to represent *khener* dancers and are linked to the goddess Hathor. The connection between the *khener* and the

81 See: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef Theban Tomb 192*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 1980), 46-49, 62-63. Based on the texts associated with the dancers, they are clearly associated with Hathor and the *sed* festival, as Hathor, the festival, and themes of renewal are referenced in several of the texts; however, no mention of a foreign place is made. For more on the sed festival see also Roberts, *Hathor Rising the Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt*, 24-32.
goddess is further emphasized by some of Hathor’s mythic associations, such as dances and genital exposure. It is also evident that paddle dolls, while they display potential foreign motifs, are of Egyptian origin. Based on the evidence collected for this dissertation, I would suggest that paddle dolls were representations of *khener* dancers that were intended to act as magical midwives to the deceased, just as the real life *khener* dancers may have acted as magical midwives for the living in antiquity.\(^82\)

**Faience and Ceramic Figurines\(^83\)**

As faience and ceramic female figurines were being excavated around the same time as paddle dolls, Winlock discussed the figurines as well. In *Excavations*, Winlock refers to these figurines as dancing girls, and notes their tattoos;\(^84\) however, this assessment of faience female figurines changed in *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom*. In this work Winlock proposes that faience female figurines could be concubine figures.\(^85\) Within this same work Winlock also references figures of “red-baked-clay” that were discovered in tombs, and deems these also fall under the category of concubine.\(^86\) Winlock does not refer to any clay figurines in *Excavations* and his idea that faience and “red-baked-clay” female figurines served the same function as paddle dolls, as concubines to the deceased, remained relevant within Egyptology.\(^87\)

\(^82\) This is detailed in chapters 3 and 7.

\(^83\) The decision to discuss these two types of figures together was based on their historiography. As faience and ceramic female figurines have been discussed as the same type of object, much of their historiography is linked.

\(^84\) Winlock, *Excavations from Deir el-Bahri 1911-1931*, 129.

\(^85\) Winlock, *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom*, 47.

\(^86\) *Ibid.*, 47.

There was a reassessment of the concubine theory done by Christian Desroches-Noblecourt in her work “‘Concubines du Mort’” et mères de famille au Moyen Empire.” Within this article, Deroches-Noblecourt analyzes the tattooing of female figurines and notices that in many examples (fig. 21)\(^88\) are adorned with cross-shaped tattoos. She notes this as being representative of Isis and Nephthys, as these same cross-shaped markings are found on the goddesses in tomb depictions. From there, she suggests that these female figurines were not intended to be concubines, but to magically act as the goddesses and reinvigorate the deceased.

Desroches-Noblecourt also explains that the nudity of female figurines, in conjunction with tattoos, may have helped facilitate this process of stimulating the deceased to reactivate his creative energy, thus helping in his rebirth.\(^89\) Additionally, Desroches-Noblecourt links depictions of New Kingdom women participating in mortuary rights to the cross-shaped marks (fig. 22).

\(^88\) Most examples of this are in limestone, which was predominantly produced in the New Kingdom to Late Period Angela Tooley, “Female Figurines of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Truncated (type 1) Figurines”, (poster presented at the 12\(^{th}\) International Congress of Egyptologists (ICE XII), Cairo, Egypt, November 3\(^{rd}\) -8\(^{th}\) 2019) and Angela Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the Conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur 49 (2020): 247.

Figure 21- A faience female figurine with a faint cross mark on her upper arm. Cat. no. AS51. Image from https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 22- An example of women possibly embodying Isis and Nephthys. The tomb of Djeserkareseneb (TT 38). Image from https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/djeserkareseneb38/e_djeserkareseneb_04.htm, date accessed: 6/15/21.

These women are explicitly associated with Isis and Nephthys in texts, and Desroches-Noblecourt correctly suggests that these women were meant to embody the goddesses in their role of helping to revive the deceased. As female figurines sometimes have these marks as well Desroches-Noblecourt suggested that female figurines were meant to magically embody Isis and
Nephthys to perform this same ritualistic purpose.\(^90\) While I agree with this idea of female figurines representing the goddesses Isis and Nephthys at the time of Osiris’ rebirth for New Kingdom evidence, I do not think this can be applied to all female figurines across time periods and contexts.

While there are some examples of Middle Kingdom faience female figurines with cross-shaped tattoos (fig. 21), it is impossible to know if they served the same function in the Middle Kingdom as they did in the New Kingdom. It is very likely that their function was similar, but as cultures shift, ideas surrounding female figurines may have as well. Second, I propose the need for a sexual stimulus as stated by Decroches-Noblecourt’s theory may not have been as vital in the process of rebirth.\(^91\) Yes, in the myth of Isis reviving Osiris, they are engaging in the physical act of sex, but it is likely that this is for the purpose of procreation, not Osiris’ rebirth. Third, in discussing a concubine theory it is important to define what a concubine is. For the purpose of this study a concubine should be understood as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* and used by Jennifer Hellum in her work on the lexicology of the term concubine: “a concubine is a ‘kept woman,’ one who is to be available for intimate relations on the whim of her keeper.”\(^92\) Hellum’s work delves deeper into the titles that have been translated as concubine.\(^93\) Lastly, it is important to reexamine our use of reinvigoration, for it is unclear if sex, or sexual stimuli, was

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\(^90\) *Ibid.*, 83-84.

\(^91\) See chapter 3 for further discussion.


needed for this, or if this process was more about transiting the deceased through the liminal space between life and death.

Decroches-Noblecourt’s interpretation of faience and ceramic female figurines would become cannon within Egyptology. These figures were no longer seen as concubines, but as sexual stimulates for the deceased. It is this idea that would then go on to be refined by Pinch as the fertility figurine. Pinch discusses both faience and ceramic female figurines within her typology and classifies them as Type 1 (faience) (fig. 23), Type 2 (ceramic) (fig. 24), and Type 3 (ceramic) (fig. 25) female figurines. As this classification system is still widely used within Egyptology, it is important to discuss Pinch’s work in detail.

Figure 16- An example of Pinch’s Type 1 faience female figurine. Cat. no. AS46. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544220, date accessed 7/2/21.

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94 For further discussion of reinvigoration see chapter 3.

95 This theory is not much improved, nor all that different than the concubine.
Figure 17- A faience example of Pinch’s Type 2 ceramic female figurine. Cat. no. AS54. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148297/female-figurine?ctx=2f0675ae-66ae-48a3-ab43-654e7738c4a1&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 18- An example of Pinch’s Type 3 ceramic female figurine. Cat. no. AS55. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148303/female-figurine-fragment?ctx=1a68e94a-4f34-4239-bff0-e83d308a7875&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Pinch’s Type 1 figurine is made of faience, stone (fig. 26), wood (fig. 27), or ivory (fig. 28). It should be noted that the figures made from these other materials do not all look the same, but they are related in their nude state and truncated nature. This contributed to Pinch

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96 Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 198.

97 For visual comparison see figs. 23, 26, 27, 28.
grouping them together as her Type 1. Pinch further describes these figures as being “women with small breasts, high waists, flat stomach and buttocks, and plump thighs.” She then divides this grouping into five subtypes based on hair style, and notes that most of these come from tomb contexts.

Pinch then goes on to describe her Type 2 figurine. These she notes are made of ceramic and are of “crude workmanship.” Type 2 figures are described as “spindly” and depicting “nude women with small breasts, slim waists, flat stomachs, fairly broad hips, and very prominent buttocks.” She notes that these figures have two main hairstyles, one that appears to show the hair tied back with a fillet (fig. 29), the other may show a perfume cone on top of the head (see fig. 24). Most interestingly, Pinch notes that when these figures are found complete, they often have a child clinging to their back, or are seated and holding a child (fig. 30). Pinch attributes Type 2 figures to tomb, temple, and “household” contexts.

The second variety of ceramic female figurine described by Pinch is her Type 3. Like the Type 2 figurine, Type 3 are described as being of “crude workmanship,” and as having a similar

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98 Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 198. It is of note that some of these materials may have been considered more “elite” than others, for example faience would have been more expensive than wood or stone, and ivory more prestigious than all three.


physique to the Type 2 figurine.\textsuperscript{106} What makes the Type 3 figurine unique is the headdress or hairstyle portrayed. The figures appear to have a mark on the forehead for a fillet, and then several holes in the head for perhaps hair (see fig. 25).\textsuperscript{107} It is based on this similarity in hairstyle (see fig. 24 and 25) that I suggest Type 2 and Type 3 figurines are related. Hair style is a significant distinction in the iconography of female figurines, for according to Angela Tooley’s recent work, different hair styles “are likely signifiers of who or what these otherwise anonymous women represent; the choice is not random. The diachronic development of truncated figurines reflects a shift in emphasis away from the generic performative ritualist\textit{(hnwrwt)} towards the specific (re)generative qualities of the daughter.”\textsuperscript{108} Tooley explicates this idea further stating:

“The quantity and variety of braided hairstyles found both on truncated figurines and on female sculpture throughout the Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period is significant. For instance, the Middle Kingdom female statuette inscribed for Rni-snb is titled \textit{nbt-pr}. Reniseneb wears a sidelock on a cropped scalp. Her title of ‘lady of the house’ indicates that she is an individual with independence and a degree of authority – she is not a child. That the sidelock on truncated figurines should not be interpreted as an indication of childhood or pre-adulthood is evidenced by their physique in general which

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\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 201
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is that of an individual who has reached sexual maturity, having transitioned through puberty."\textsuperscript{109}

While this applied to Tooley’s work on specifically truncated female figurines, such as the faience figures discussed in this dissertation, and not what is defined as Pinch’s Type 2 and 3, this is an excellent demonstration of how hairstyle can be incredibly influential in the interpretation and classification of female figurines.

![Figure 19](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544223)  
Figure 19- A stone example of a Pinch’s Type 1 figure. Image from: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544223, date accessed 5/5/21.

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, 264-265. Tooley further explains that this sexual maturity is an important note, for as Tooley states it is related to youthfulness, but not girls or girlhood. Truncated figures, such as the faience female figurines discussed here, are representations of “sexually mature females, possibly teenagers, who in modern societies might be classified as pre-adult but who in ancient societies were seen as young adults in prime physical condition, capable of conceiving and therefore symbolic of a liminal potency. Dependent on the context in which a sidelock is worn, it may denote youthfulness and a filial or generational relationship. In certain ritual contexts it may alluded to ritual service associated with renewal and rebirth” (265).
Figure 20- A wood example of Pinch’s Type 1 figure. Image from: https://collections.mfa.org/objects/143277/female-figurine?ctx=6962fb37-5185-4e11-9222-41f930a50134&idx=0, date accessed 5/5/21.

Figure 21- An ivory example of Pinch’s Type 1 figure. Image from: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/552477, date accessed 5/5/21.

Figure 22- Example of a Type 2 figurine with what maybe hair tied back with a fillet. Cat. no. AS74. Image from https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/308931, date accessed 7/2/21.
After a rather detailed description of the figures, Pinch concludes that the nudity of female figurines, combined with their emphasis of the pubic region, indicates that all female figurines fitting this description are fertility figurines. This connection between fertility and the figures described above, as well as the others in Pinch’s typology, is strengthened by the representation of children with some of the figures. From there, Pinch explains other theories pertaining to female figurines and refutes them. She begins with the idea that Type 1-3 figures represent dancers; however, she rejects this theory based on the fact that some Type 1-3 figures, and paddle dolls, do not have feet and are not shown in the act of dancing, which is a logical conclusion; one must have feet to dance. Pinch also acknowledges the similarities between Type 1 figurines, paddle dolls, and khener dancers in iconography and costume, though she asserts that because the genitalia is emphasized, then they cannot be khener in the act of dancing, but something else. Given the information Pinch had available at the time of her study, this

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110 This analysis includes three other types of female figurines with their own subtypes. These figures are not discussed here as I believe they are possibly a different type of object and more research is needed here. Angela Tooley has begun to tackle these different materials and forms of specifically truncated figures. See Angela Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the Conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur 49, (2020): 243-274.

111 Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 214.

112 Ibid., 214.
argument in its conclusions is correct. The faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) and paddle dolls do not have feet, most likely because their main role is not to dance, but I disagree that their genitalia is emphasized to focus on fertility directly. It is possible that the pubic region is emphasized to recall Hathor’s mythical genital exposure. The pubic region of paddle dolls and faience female figurines may then operate as a visual connection to Hathor and khener dancers performing movements that would have exposed their genitalia. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that the obvious genital exposure was perhaps a symbol of Hathor. Pinch also suggested that these figures represent khener dancers as midwives, but she did not elaborate on this. It is this theory that I will explore in detail.

From the idea of dancer, Pinch moves on to the idea that Type 1-3 figures were intended to help aid the deceased in the process of rebirth by serving as sexual stimuli. This she rejects based on the archaeological contexts she established for Type 1-3 figures. According to Pinch, these figures occur in temple, home, and tomb contexts, thus indicating that they cannot be sexual stimuli to male tomb owners if they occur in all contexts. I agree with Pinch’s rejection of this theory for the function of female figurines; however, I think further exploration into the sometimes dubious contexts of female figurines may be helpful in understanding their use.

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113 For more on interpreting symbols within archaeology see John E. Robb, “The Archaeology of Symbols,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27, (1998): 329-346. Robb states within the article that determining and understanding symbols from an archaeological perspective is almost a form of “codebreaking,” but that the process is incredibly complex (Robb, 341).


should be noted that not all female figurines have clear or accurate provenance, or dating, and this certainly affects the interpretation of them.

Other theories rejected by Pinch include the idea that the figures were meant to represent divine mothers and that they were used to aid in childbirth. The idea of the divine mother linked Hathor to the concept of a mother goddess that was popular during the 1920s. Pinch notes that she is unsure if the figurines were linked to the goddess Hathor. It is unclear if this applies to all six types of female figurines described by Pinch, or just a few. In terms of the theory first put forth by Brunner-Traut, and discussed below, that the figures were intended to portray women who had successfully given birth, Pinch suggests that this perhaps does not fully account for the erotic nature of the female figurines. I would argue that the apparent eroticism of the figures may not apply to all forms, and this will be discussed at length within this dissertation.

Furthermore, Pinch also denied that the figures served as votive offerings, as this provides a “narrow” function for the figures, which Pinch deemed to be a “mistake.” Pinch does propose her own theory that the figures are “fertility figurines.” It is for this reason that she does not discard the idea that the figures may have functioned as amulets to help

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117 During the 1920s there was a theory within archaeology that the cultures of the ancient Near East and Egypt stemmed from a Neolithic matrilineal culture. The emphasis on women and motherhood then survived in ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern cultures as a “divine mother” or “mother goddess” figure. These figures are all depicted naked with emphasized breasts and pubic regions and were thought to link to the earth and its fertility. Today, this theory is seen as antiquated as there is no evidence for this matrilineal culture. See Margaret A. Murray, “Fertility Figurines,” The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 64, (1934): 93-100 AND Carolynn Graves-Brown, Dancing for Hathor, (London, New Delhi, New York, and Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2010), 13-18.

118 Pinch, 215-216.

119 Ibid., 219-220.

120 Ibid., 223.

121 Ibid., 225.
aid the living in conception,\textsuperscript{122} for this would fall into her idea of fertility. Pinch defines fertility as pertaining to “the whole process from the conception of children to their successful rearing.”\textsuperscript{123} This is a broader definition that allows for multiple aspects of life, and rebirth, to fall into this categorization.

Elizabeth Waraksa is another scholar who has studied female figurines, however, with a focus on New Kingdom and Late Period examples made of ceramic and from the Mut Precinct in modern Luxor. She suggests that female figurines from this site were mass produced for magico-medical purposes.\textsuperscript{124} Within her dissertation, Waraksa begins with a critical analysis of Pinch’s fertility figurine theory. Her main critique is that Pinch does not discern context well, for as mentioned above, Pinch suggests that female figurines are found in all major contexts in ancient Egypt. Waraksa is correct to note that this does not distinguish between primary and secondary contexts.\textsuperscript{125} This would then complicate the provenance of the figure, as well as our understanding of function.

Once Waraksa established that she would not make use of the term fertility figurine and why, she moved on to a typology of the figures from the Mut Precinct, noting that the majority come from refuse pits associated with production.\textsuperscript{126} Waraksa also states that it was necessary for her to create a typology specifically for her corpus, as Pinch’s focuses on figures from the

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 217-218.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 225.

\textsuperscript{124} Elizabeth A. Waraksa, \textit{Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function}, (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2007), ii.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 22.
Middle to New Kingdoms, while Waraksa also considers Late Period figures. Of the six types she identifies, one overlaps with this study. Her Type 1 ceramic figure has also been identified in Middle Kingdom contexts and matches the description of Pinch’s Type 2 figurines. Thus, it is likely that these figures serve as examples of the continuation of the Middle Kingdom production of female figurines into the New Kingdom and Late Period. This does not mean that female figurines of the New Kingdom and Late Period functioned in the same manner as those of the Middle Kingdom, as there were likely some shifts in cultural ideas. From there, Waraksa discusses the manufacture of the figures including the types of clay used and the symbolic meaning behind any secondary materials used, such as faience beads for hair. These iconographic and contextual factors are only two aspects of Waraksa’s work, she also turned to textual sources in order to glean insight into the function of the ceramic figurines from the Mut Precinct.

As the figures of her corpus were ceramic, and many were coated in red wash, and often found broken in trash heaps, Waraksa concludes that these figures must be those mentioned in the magico-medical texts. There are two spells, Papyrus Turin 54003 rt. 13-16 and

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127 Ibid., 23. Waraksa’s corpus extends from the New Kingdom through the Late Period.
128 Ibid., 24-43.
129 Ibid., 26.
130 Ibid., 48-136.
132 Ibid., 145.
133 Ibid., 153-169.
Papyrus Leiden I 348 rt. 12,2-12,4\textsuperscript{134} that call for the use of a female figurine in order to draw out the ailment from the body of the patient.\textsuperscript{135} Both spells she cites clearly call for a “clay figurine of Isis,”\textsuperscript{136} which the generic female figurines cannot be classified as. Joanne Backhouse notes that while Waraksa’s theory is compelling, none of the texts Waraksa cites as evidence for this use describe, in detail, the figures used in magico-medical practice, nor are the figures in question representative of Isis.\textsuperscript{137} Due to this it is impossible to know if ceramic female figurines were intended to function this way. Furthermore, these texts call for an Isis figure, but the iconography of ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2) does not suggest a relationship to Isis. It is for these reasons that Backhouse rejects this theory put forth by Waraksa, and I agree with this rejection.\textsuperscript{138} Regardless of this criticism, Waraksa’s conclusion is still important. She concludes that the intentional breakage, archaeological context, and textual references to not only female figures, but figures in general,\textsuperscript{139} in magico-medical practices suggest that female figurines of the ceramic variety were intended for healing purposes.\textsuperscript{140} To fit this theory she interprets the emphasis on the pubic region and the sexual nature\textsuperscript{141} of some of the figures to be

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 169-175.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 157.


\textsuperscript{138} Joanne Backhouse, “Female Figurines from Deir el-Medina: A Review of the Evidence for their Function,” 36-38.

\textsuperscript{139} Waraksa, 176-189.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{141} By sexual nature she means naked. None of the female figurines that are defined as “fertility figurines” are shown engaged in sexual intercourse.
representative of a healthy person. While this theory is intriguing, given recent scholarship on nudity by Deborah Sweeney and Julia M. Asher-Greeve, it is unlikely. Sweeney and Ashery-Greeve note that there are various reasons to be nude in ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East, however health is not one of these reasons. That said this idea of what type of body represented health to the ancient Egyptians is intriguing.

Joanne Backhouse has created a comprehensive study of female figurines dating to the New Kingdom and excavated from Deir el-Medina now housed in the Louvre. Backhouse begins by clearly identifying her corpus and separating them into six figure types, and though none of these types are represented in this dissertation, her logic behind the typology is key. She has separated the figures based on style, material, and chronology, thus providing a more specific classification system for her already niche corpus. From there, she discusses the production of the figures having most likely been small scale for some of the figures, and large scale for others. Small scale production is suggested due to the lack of uniformity represented by figures that have been handmade, while others suggest large scale production made in molds. Though seemingly insignificant, the added information concerning production is important to understanding the function of these figures. As all are made of readily accessible materials, and

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142 Waraksa, 194.
145 Ibid., 23.
146 Ibid., 23-34.
147 Ibid., 34.
either by hand or in molds, this, Backhouse notes, would suggest that everyone has access to these figures. Furthermore, Backhouse suggests that because these figures were found in various mediums “to express the same motifs” that “the female form, was a central belief system of the community.”

Backhouse’s discussion of iconography is perhaps her most pertinent point as relates to this dissertation. Not only does she explain the different aspects of the figures in her corpus, such as their hair and wigs, but she also notes that though the figures are technically nude, they are adorned. According to Backhouse, the inclusion of jewelry and headdresses indicates that these figures were adorned for sex, and that these added elements are intended to “heighten their physical attraction.” Though this assessment does not break with the idea of the fertility figurine, it does raise questions about the nudity of the figures. Mainly, if the figures are adorned with jewelry, headdresses, and in the case of this dissertation, tattoos, are they nude? Backhouse also puts forth the idea that each of the different figure types she discusses held a different function. This is based on the variations in contexts and iconography. The suggestion that context affects function is key. Backhouse also posits that as many of the figures she studied are not specifically mentioned in magico-medical religious texts that they were utilized by women for women’s needs, and that these spells and rituals would have been transmitted amongst women orally. Backhouse’s suggestion, though specifically for New Kingdom figures from Deir el-Medina, that female figurines were used “by women in their own personal

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148 Ibid., 34.
149 Ibid., 35.
150 Ibid., 36.
151 Ibid., 37.
religious/magical/medical practise” is one that I believe can be applied to other female figurines as well. For the purpose of this discussion, it is likely that the ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) were used in this manner and this will be discussed in chapter 7.

Ceramic figurines have also been related to New Kingdom evidence by Emily Brunner-Traut and Emily Teeter. Both scholars have suggested that Pinch’s Type 2 and Type 3 female figurines are reminiscent of women depicted in the “wochenlaube,” or birth arbor, scenes (fig. 31). These scenes have been interpreted as the place in which birth occurred in ancient Egypt. Brunner-Traut also posits that if the “wochenlaube” was not the location of the physical birth, then it may have been a place for purification rituals after. The scenes themselves portray a seated woman breast-feeding, surrounded by two large trees and plants, being attended by other women. Her hair is tied back by a fillet, and she is clothed in jewelry. The women portrayed in “wochenlaube” scenes greatly resemble Pinch’s Type 2 and Type 3 ceramic female figurines. Emily Teeter expands on this theory, noting that the hairstyles of the women depicted in the “wochenlaube” scenes and those of ceramic female figurines are identical (see fig. 29 and 31).

This idea, and its implications, will be discussed in chapter 7.

152 Ibid., 37.
154 Brunner-Traut, 67-68.
155 Ibid., 67-68.
156 Teeter, Baked Clay Figurines and Votive Beds from Medinet Habu, 15.
Finally, Angela Tooley has studied female figurines at length, beginning with her dissertation *Middle Kingdom Burial Customs. A Study of Wooden Models and Related Materials. Volume 1.* Within this work, Tooley creates her own typology of female figurines, providing details about context, material, and iconography;\(^\text{157}\) however, as Tooley is currently reevaluating this work, her dissertation will not be the focus of this discussion, but rather her current research. As part of her ongoing study, Tooley has focused on the terminology we use to describe female figurines, specifically truncated versions or Pinch’s Type 1, and is reexamining them to determine a more accurate typology based in part on the hair style and iconography of the figures.

In her recent poster for the International Congress of Egyptologists, Tooley refuted the use of the term fertility figurine, instead asserting that these figures should be referred to as

truncated figurines, or simply as truncated. Tooley notes that this poster is intended to be an introduction to a larger series of articles and study of female figurines, which aims to reclassify and reinterpret the figures. It is for this reason that she begins with the terminology Egyptology uses to describe these figures such as fertility figurine, concubine figures, Beischläferin, and brides of the dead. Furthermore, she also asserts that the material and archaeological context of the figures is vital to function and interpretation. She elaborates on these ideas in her article “Afgeknotte vrouwen beeldjes tijdens het Middenrijk en de Tweede Tussentijd.” Here she rightly states that in using the term “fertility figurine” one assumes the function of these figures; however, they may not have been used in this way. Additionally, as the term “fertility figurine” is based on the work of Pinch, it does not account for the material and contextual nuances of the figures.

Tooley then uses this information, as well as decoration and form, to recategorize truncated figurines into three categories. 1. Early phase figures that date from the 12th to the mid-13th dynasties. 2. Middle phase figures dating from the 12th to the late 13th dynasties. 3. End phase figures dating from the mid/late 13th through the early 17th dynasties. Note that there is overlap between these phases, as some forms of truncated figures become more popular than

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158 Angela Tooley, “Female Figurines of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Truncated (type 1) Figurines”, (poster presented at the 12th International Congress of Egyptologists (ICE XII), Cairo, Egypt, November 3rd-8th 2019).

159 Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2 Hairstyles and the Conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” 243.


161 Ibid., 167.

162 Ibid., 167-168.

163 Ibid., 174-175.
others, and as the forms evolved over time. Paddle dolls are not included in this chronological system.\textsuperscript{164} She then describes the contexts, decoration, material, and form for each of these categories prior to proposing reinterpretations.\textsuperscript{165} She suggests that the hair-styles and body markings of the figures may be the key to better understanding their function, as these different hair styles are indicative of time period, as well as possibly the type of woman the figure is meant to depict.\textsuperscript{166} This is a topic that Tooley addresses more fully in her article, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and Conceptual Development of Braided Forms.”\textsuperscript{167}

Tooley begins this article with the very critical and important point that “not all female figurines are the same.”\textsuperscript{168} Tooley then introduces her corpus of 200 figures, and identifies 16 distinct hairstyles from that grouping.\textsuperscript{169} Of the 200 figures in her corpus, 158 have heads that exhibited three main styles with variations amongst them. These categories are tonsure (cropping/shaving) (fig. 32), trichotomy (sectioning into 3 parts) (fig. 33), and braiding (fig. 34).\textsuperscript{170} Each hair style type is determined by material, which Tooley notes is also geographically and chronologically sensitive.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 174-191.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 190-191.
\textsuperscript{167} Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the conceptual Development of Braided Forms.”
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 244-245.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 245.
Figure 25- An example of the tonsure hairstyle. Cat. no. AS52. Image from https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/c101007299, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 26- An example of trichotomy hairstyle from the front and the back. Cat. no. AS53. Image from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA52863, date accessed 7/2/21.
Figure 27- An example of the braided hairstyle. Cat. no. AS45. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/546858, date accessed 7/2/21.

For example, three braid style figures are mainly fashioned out of limestone, come from the Theban region, and date from the mid/late 13th dynasty through the 17th dynasty. This is vital for understanding how these figures changed to possibly reflect current cultural needs and ideas, and the needs of the individuals who used them. Tooley also notes that the hair style of those faience female figurines adorned with girdles, tattoos, and body chains, are reminiscent of paddle dolls and khener dancers, thus possibly connecting, at least early faience figures, to the khener as well as paddle dolls. Also of interest to this study is the sidelock hair style present on some faience figures. Tooley postulates that this is indicative of ideas of youthfulness for the purpose of associating their youth with sexual maturity and “(re)generation” renewal. These are adults using this blend of youth and maturity to associate with renewal. This idea, and its implications, will be explored further in chapter 3.

171 Ibid., 246.
172 Ibid., 247-249.
173 Ibid., 262.
Conclusions

Paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines have an interconnected historiography. The figures have previously been classified as “concubines for the deceased,” objects for revivification, and as “fertility figurines.” None of these classifications seek to describe the role of these figures in daily life, or what the process of rejuvenation meant. Current research by Morris and Tooley is beginning to look beyond the nudity of female figurines to understand their functions and role in the ancient world. It is this category of scholarship that this dissertation seeks to fall under.
Chapter 2: The Theoretical Models

Feminist and gender theory can be helpful in analyzing ideas of the individual in the present, and the past, particularly when we are discussing the body and lived experience. It is important to understand gender and feminist theories, as well as their uses within archaeology, anthropology, and Egyptology, for the purpose of this dissertation. The focus of this study is a subset of female figurines, which are representations of the feminine body, and perhaps Egyptian ideas of femininity and womanhood. To further explore these ideas, as well as the function of these figures, it is necessary to have a theoretical framework in which to discuss and study these objects. This chapter provides a detailed summary of my theoretical paradigms and how they function within my study, and how they may work for Egyptology as a whole. Lastly, it is important to state that these paradigms have not been applied to the study of female figurines previously.

Gender and Feminist Theory

As both gender and feminist theory will form the basis for my study on paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3), it is necessary to discuss these theories, as well as several key theorists in their development. This chapter also includes sections on how gender and feminist theory have previously been utilized in anthropology, archaeology, and Egyptology.

Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first authors of feminist theory\(^1\) and her work, *The Second Sex*, is her seminal treatise on feminism and women.\(^2\) As part of this work, de Beauvoir

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\(^1\) The importance of de Beauvoir’s work is two-fold: it establishes an idea of “other” and marginalization with regards to woman and jumpstarts First Wave Feminism; however, the goal of this dissertation is not to discuss the merits and disadvantages of the various feminist stages, theories, and forms. The importance of feminism to this dissertation is the concept of marginalization discussed by de Beauvoir.

explores the historical evidence for patriarchy, how this system came about, and how it has been used to subjugate women, and women’s bodies.³ De Beauvoir states that the main difference between men and women is the ability to become pregnant and give birth, and that this difference is the source for all conflict between men and women.⁴ This, de Beauvoir claims, led women to be classified as “other.” The ability to conceive and birth a child and to menstruate made women taboo, for they were too closely linked with nature. This ability to bear children still links women to nature and this idea is featured throughout academia,⁵ and social arguments. It should be noted that De Beauvoir was not a historian, but a philosopher and social theorist. Her idea that women are connected to nature through the ability to conceive and birth life was not a strictly historical argument, but rather a theory based on the distinction between those who can bear life and those who cannot. This difference between men and women led to divisions in power and the patriarchy.⁶

Additionally, de Beauvoir claims that these abilities were seen as a form of magic, thus simultaneously creating jealousy and fear within men of the creative potential inherent in women.⁷ Though these ideas are reflective of de Beauvoir’s time, her idea of “other” is

³ It is important to note that de Beauvoir is utilizing the evidence at her disposal, which was more limited in the 1940s, than the evidence of today. Furthermore, some of her theories, such as the ideas of an ancient matriarchy (76-80), are no longer supported.

⁴ de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 71-75.


⁷ de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 78-79.
important, for this concept of marginalization is key to understanding the position of modern and ancient women. It is this theory that will go on to be the main idea behind First Wave feminism.  

Here, it was important as it helps us understand the women portrayed in the form of paddle dolls and female figurines. These figures have been represented in an “ideal way,” one that is meant to convey a certain idea for their particular culture and time period. Egyptological discussions surrounding these figures tend to focus on their representation of the female body, and therefore, by de Beauvoir’s standards, these objects represent an “other” to the modern viewer. It is unclear how the ancient Egyptians thought of female figurines, but it is possibly that the primary function of the figurines was to demonstrate a complex system of symbols revolving around ideas of birth and rebirth.

Furthermore, de Beauvoir’s ideas on patriarchy very clearly emphasized the importance of fertility and reproduction in making women a marginalized group. I would argue, therefore, that to label these figures as “fertility figurines” or “concubines to the dead” makes them, and by extension the category of women they represent, “other.” In short, de Beauvoir’s theories are essential for reevaluating our modern classifications of some of these figures. And it is this revaluation capability that makes de Beauvoir’s work central to the arguments presented in this

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9 The historiography of female figures will be discussed at length within the historiography chapter.

10 It should be noted that “other” can also be interpreted as being non-male.

11 de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 67; 74-75.

12 I do not want to assume that all female figurines from the ancient world have been interpreted incorrectly; some were fertility figurines. This statement applies specifically to the figures of this study.
thesis, as these ideas surrounding the connection between women, magic, and nature, have shaped some of the research questions presented in the introduction.

Since de Beauvoir, feminism has continued to evolve, but the most applicable to this discussion is Cultural Feminism. Cultural Feminism is considered to be part of Second Wave Feminism, which centered on identifying the different struggles faced by women across different cultures.\(^\text{13}\) One of the main factors of Second Wave Feminism, and therefore Cultural Feminism, is the idea that women have been systematically oppressed by men, and subjugated to their violent tendencies such as war, imperialism, and corporate destruction of the environment.\(^\text{14}\) This was seen as a denial of the feminine aspects of nature, and from this formed the three basic aspects of Cultural Feminism. First, all women face acts of violence from men that directly correlate to oppression. Second, the violence empowers the patriarchy and supports systems, which in turn create a “female ethic.” Third, this “female ethic” is the main goal of Cultural Feminism.\(^\text{15}\) The “female ethic” is the idea that women are the bridge between men and nature, due to their ability to become pregnant.\(^\text{16}\) Cultural Feminism clearly echoes the ideas put forth by de Beauvoir in her work on feminism, but they are adapted to a modern world. It recognizes that not all female experiences are the same and that they vary across cultures and socio-economic status, but that women share these three concerns.\(^\text{17}\) The idea that women have different experiences based on culture and socio-economic status are important aspects of Cultural


\(^{14}\) Ibid., 168.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 168.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 168-170.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 172.
Feminism for thinking about archaeology. There is an overwhelming amount of evidence for the lives of elite women, and their experiences are often taken to be shared by all women in the ancient world; however, the life of an elite ancient Egyptian woman was not the same as a farmer or landless laborer, and it is likely that these women had very different lives, concerns, and realities. It is this idea that is important for this dissertation as the female figurines are not thought to be depictions of elite women in the traditional sense. Some female figurines, like paddle dolls, are representations of women that may have been in positions of power, while other female figurines, like the ceramic (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3), this is unclear. Additionally, female figurines were often used by non-elite and elite people.\(^\text{18}\)

Gender theory, though related to feminist theory, is not the same. It was first popularized by Joan Scott, within her article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.”\(^\text{19}\) In this article, Scott was working towards a theoretical model that could be applied to discuss the relationship between men and women, and how we as a culture, think of male and female, or gender.\(^\text{20}\) Within the work, Scott provides a multi-layered definition of gender, stating that gender is: “a constructive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”\(^\text{21}\) What this means is that gender is heavily influenced by cultural and social interactions. While this is a modern concept, it can still be applied to the ancient world. Ancient peoples had complex cultures with

\(^{18}\) These ideas do intersect with Third Wave Global Feminism as described by Donovan in Feminist Theory: Fourth Edition, 183-209.


\(^{20}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 42. It should be noted that Scott envisions each aspect of this definition of gender working together, but that they do not all exist simultaneously (Scott, 44).
their own standards, social structures, and ideas about what was masculine and what was feminine. The ancient Egyptians are no exception. It is very clear that the ancient Egyptians had ideas about gender, as their language is gendered, but this can be taken further to explore how the ancient Egyptians conceived of these concepts of masculine and feminine.

Additionally, according to Scott, gender is not only determined by social indicators of how women and men should behave, but also familial, political, and economic factors. These societal aspects will not be the same across different time periods, places, or cultures, and for these reasons gender can be conceived differently by different groups (of individuals). This also means that ancient Egyptian gender concepts in Middle Kingdom Egypt may not be the same as gender in the Old or New Kingdoms. Furthermore, different social factors also affect the individual, which is another aspect of Scott’s definition. Gender is an individual concept, interpreted by each person as they have been socialized with the above factors. Because gender is inherently a deeply personal aspect of identity, gender can fluctuate depending on a person’s interpretation of familial, political, and economic factors, which is what Scott’s definition emphasizes. To use this historically, “historians need instead to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate to their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations.” Historians must seek to understand the relationship between gender and society, for in doing so they will be able to employ gender theory as an analytical tool to further construct the past. Once again,

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22 Ibid., 44.
23 Ibid., 44.
24 Ibid., 38.
25 Ibid., 44.
Scott’s work indicates that to use gender historically, emphasis must be placed on how the ancient Egyptians conceived of gender. As the ancient Egyptian language is a gendered language, it is then clear that they did conceive of masculine and feminine aspects. These aspects in part are identified through which words in their vocabulary they deemed masculine or feminine. It is unclear though how much emphasis the ancient Egyptians placed on these qualities. In other words, how important was it to personal identity and a person’s place in society that they exhibit these masculine and feminine qualities. It is this performative aspect that ties into the work of Judith Butler.

Scholars, such as Butler, were critical of the theories put forth by Scott concerning gender, particularly the lack of emphasis on the individual. For this reason, Butler argued that the individual should be considered more fully within gender studies in her article “Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytical Discourse.” In order to support her theory that gender is so individualistic that it becomes a performance, Butler discusses drag and how these performances are gender being displayed on stage. Furthermore, Butler notes that each culture does condition men and women differently based on how they perceive masculine and feminine identities, but it is not the reason why gender is formed. The formation of gender, according to Butler, begins with the self as an internal system that is then affected by language and social and cultural standards. Due to this, gender is a personal identity performed by the individual and is

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flexible.\textsuperscript{31} It is this identity that is then expressed outwardly through dress, mannerism, discourse, and other actions.\textsuperscript{32} Furthermore, these “performances” can then be deconstructed, thus resulting in a better understanding of the cultural mechanism that is gender.\textsuperscript{33} In terms of ancient Egypt, the question then becomes what aspects of gender were prioritized in these performances, and therefore performed. By extension of this thought process, we must also question if individuals performed gender differently, thus creating women that exhibited masculine traits and men that exhibited feminine traits. Unfortunately, these questions of gender performance in ancient Egypt are beyond the scope of this study, and may not be able to be answered based on the evidence we currently have; however, the concept of what aspects of gender are performed, and when, is very applicable to female figurines.

The figures of this study that have been identified as concubines in past scholarship (discussed in chapter 1) are paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1). Morris has convincingly argued that paddle dolls are representations of women in a performative role, namely as \textit{khener} women. As this role is highly performative for a ritualized purpose, it is then plausible that these women were acting out one facet of femininity and female gender in ancient Egypt. In other words, \textit{khener} women are just one example of a woman’s role in a specific instance. This is much like what Butler described with drag being a public performance of gender. The \textit{khener} are a public and ritualized performance of women for a specific purpose. This purpose may have changed based on why the \textit{khener} were dancing, or their role in that moment. \textit{Khener} women performing at a funeral may be taken as displaying femininity for the

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, 337.

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, 336.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, 338.
purpose of mourning and aiding in the deceased’s rebirth, whereas *khener* women acting as magical midwives for the living are functioning in an apotropaic and protective manner. Through Butler’s work I would like to suggest that role of the *khener* women, and their associated representations as paddle dolls and faience female figurines, are examples of performative gender that is situationally based.

If these figures were representations of concubines, it then becomes a question of whether the *khener* members were also concubines. Based on extensive research into dancers by Lesley Kinney and Betsy Bryan, it is evident that they had many roles, concubine however, was not among them.\(^3^4\) Additionally, this idea of concubine as it applies to figures that have not been associated with the *khener*, such as the ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3), gender as performance may also be applicable. If these figures were meant to represent women who were pregnant, or attempting to become pregnant, this indicates that they were functioning as representations of women in a specific state of being. This instance is also unique to the female experience and can only be outwardly performed by someone who is biologically sexed as female. This suggests that these figurines are being used primarily by women, for women with fertility concerns. Additionally, many later versions of these figures are inscribed with appeals for children.\(^3^5\)

Though gender was being defined by Scott and Butler, the definition for sex, and the difference between sex and gender is also an important distinction. This confusing use of


terminology led to a distinct break between sex and gender, both of which were defined by Sonya O. Rose in *What is Gender History*? She states that gender is the socially constructed and culturally defined aspects that contribute to men and women and the “perceived difference” between them, whereas sex is the biological difference in the reproductive organs and function of men and women. This, Rose states, does not make gender and sex the same. Sex is a biological distinction, gender is an identity and analytical tool. In addition to this, Rose notes three main issues with gender theory. First, the use of gender and sex interchangeably was a problem in and of itself. For this created a confusion of terminology. Second, because gender is a socially and culturally defined aspect of identity, it is an interpretation of sex, which is biological. This then creates the issue of separating gender from the body, and therefore constructing a false idea that bodies are “untouched” by culture, instead they are defined by biology. This second problem directly relates to the third. Biology is science, which in most societies is also considered “nature.” By this logic, bodies have a pre-imposed gender upon them that is “scientific” and “natural,” thus providing a way for society to ignore homosexuality and transgender individuals. It is for these reasons that the break between gender and sex was so important to the field of gender history. Moreover, in breaking with sex, gender became a

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39 *Ibid.*, 21-22. Please note that these are modern distinctions and definitions that do not necessarily apply to the ancient world.


more useful analytical tool,\textsuperscript{42} for it was now possible to see bodies as “sites of political meaning” and how gender and bodies are represented throughout history.\textsuperscript{43} Rose is also careful to state that history is a reconstruction of the past, and when clearly defined and understood, gender is a way to ask new questions to better understand how to reconstruct the past.\textsuperscript{44}

**Gender Theory in Anthropology and Archaeology**

With regard to archaeology and feminism, Margaret Conkey’s article “Has Feminism Changed Archaeology?”\textsuperscript{45} encapsulates the issue. Though she primarily focuses on North American archaeology, her sentiments regarding the use of feminist theory in archaeology are applicable to other regions.\textsuperscript{46} She does note that feminist theory has been used differently by European and American archaeologists. In Europe, they tend to focus on the body, identity, and life cycle, whereas American archaeologists tend to focus on labor, gender roles, and status.\textsuperscript{47} This dissertation takes a more European approach. Despite this difference in focus, Conkey’s assertion that feminist theory can lead to greater objectivity in the study of ancient cultures is an important note for either approach.\textsuperscript{48} This idea forms the crux of Conkey’s article, and the basis for her argument that feminist theory should be used within archaeology. She states that because “feminist archaeology has taken up some of the epistemological and therefore procedural mandates of feminist thinking more widely,” such as recognizing “single-cause explanations

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 1.

\textsuperscript{45} Margaret Conkey, “Has Feminism Changed Archaeology?,” *Signs* 28, 3, (2003): 867-880.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 867.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 869.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 874.

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stripped of their social and political context,” and various other examples, 49 that this theoretical model allows for a more holistic approach to archaeology. 50 Conkey argues that with a greater focus on the evidence itself, and an awareness of how it has been interpreted by past scholars, we can be more objective in our research, which ultimately leads to a more complete history. 51 By this she means feminist theory can help the archaeologist, ancient historian, etc. recognize biases within their field, ask new research questions, and revaluate ideas and theories. For example, it is not too long ago that female figurines were considered to be concubine figures meant to serve the deceased male in the afterlife. This theory has been discussed at length in this dissertation, and by other scholars as well, 52 and serves as an example of an idea that has since been revaluated with respect to the study of female figurines. Conkey does note that this approach has been met with some resistance in archaeological circles, as it is seen as “peopling” the past too much. 53 I would counter this criticism of feminist theory in archaeology with a question: Aren’t we as archaeologists, ancient historians, and Egyptologists studying and striving to understand people?

49 The full quote reads: “Furthermore, feminist archaeology has taken up some of the epistemological and therefore procedural mandates of feminist thinking more widely: to resist single-cause explanations stripped of their social and political context; to eliminate research that leads to/endorse the exploitation of not just nature but of other humans; to democratize research, fostering views from “many whereas”; to be open to continuous revision, in theory, evidence, and interpretation; to favor theories that do not “disappear” complexity and heterogeneity; and, above all, to pursue continuous critical assessment of our key categories of analysis and key presuppositions.” (Conkey, 874).

50 Ibid., 874.

51 Ibid., 874.


53 Conkey, 874.
The concept of gender and how it can be used in archaeology is explored further by Kelley Ann Hays-Gilpin in her chapter “Gender.” Hays-Gilpin begins by stating that “thinking with gender can bridge many kinds of archaeological data to build more complete understandings of human history.” This statement summarizes one of the goals of this dissertation: to show that gender can be used to create a more complete picture of the ancient world. Additionally, gender can be seen as a metaphor that plays out in more than bodies, it can be found in other elements of culture as well, such as architecture, tools, etc. By this Hays-Gilpin is referring to elements of culture that can been deemed as masculine or feminine, but that are not obviously related to the human body. For example, the metaphor in ancient Egypt of the womb being a pot or vessel. A pot in and of itself is not a gendered object necessarily, but the cultural association between these two objects creates a gendered thing. Hays-Gilpin also provides a succinct and clear origin and definition of gender. She notes that the concept of gender emerged from linguistics and was then adopted by feminist scholars to discuss the relationship between men and women, and how this relationship affects culture; however, Hays-Gilpin warns that gender is not a set of fixed categories, for interactions are always

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55 Ibid., 335.

56 Ibid., 335-336.


shifting, thus the discourse about men and women and their interactions is constantly in flux. To use this archaeologically, one must acknowledge that even material things can be reflections of gender, and that “archaeologists, therefore, must engage with the concepts of reflexivity and materiality.” This then opens archaeological inquiry up to new questions and avenues of study, such as the archaeology of life cycles and hierarchy based on gender and age. Hays-Gilpin then emphasizes once again that gender can be used to discuss the past and the roles of women and men in ancient societies. Furthermore, this method of inquiry can go beyond physical remains to understand if and how objects are gendered as well.

The main work that establishes the importance of social anthropology and the need to interpret anthropological evidence is The Interpretation of Cultures by Clifford Geertz. Within the work, Geertz refers to the “thick description,” which is a phrase that he uses to describe the underlying cultural symbols, and their meaning, inherent in every cultural interaction. Geertz then provides two main examples to highlight what a “thick description” is, one from his anthropological work in Morocco, and another as a basic example of a social action with layers of meaning, the act of winking. Part of the reason for Geertz’s colorful explanation of the “thick description” is to emphasize the fact that to do anthropology, and to do ethnography, one

59 Ibid., 336.
60 Ibid., 337.
61 Ibid., 341-342.
63 Ibid., 6-10.
64 According to Geertz a Wink can indicate several specific messages between individuals such as, but not limited to, to conspire with someone, as part of a joke, and to mimic winking (Geertz, 6-7).
must interpret.⁶⁵ Everything that is observed by the social anthropologist is a multifaceted event, and one that is rife with cultural meanings, that are not always observable or obvious to the outside observer. In other words, a wink is not always just a wink. Geertz asserts that interpretation is just as much a part of anthropology as observation and argues that this is the main task of the anthropologist.⁶⁶

Geertz also explains culture as “an acted document,” which provides context for different interactions and occurrences.⁶⁷ In other words, culture is living evidence for the lives and daily instances of a people. These situations may not be written down, but they provide just as much, if not more, evidence of daily life amongst non-elite people than a written text. The issue for the archaeologist or ancient historian is that the peoples we study cannot be observed. Instead, we must rely on the evidence they have left behind in the form of text, tombs, temples, homes, refuse, etc. Despite this, the message of interpretation, and the need to interpret our evidence, is still applicable. Additionally, this description of culture is necessary to better understand gender in the ancient world and in a modern context as well. Though gender theory suggests that gender is just as dependent on culture as it is on the physical body, and on individual self-identification, it does not define or describe what culture is. It is for this reason that I will adopt Geertz’s idea of culture being a living, and ever changing, factor for a group of people, which then can provide the context for situations and actions of the individuals who ascribe to it.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, 9-10. While there have been multiple interpretations done of paddle dolls and female figurines, it is important to revaluate these studies with updated research and theories.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 10-14.
In terms of anthropology and other theoretical models, Geertz asserts that theory is just another form of interpretation. Thus, by taking a theoretical model, and adjusting it to a specific field of study, one can create a new interpretive framework. To Geertz, the point of theory is to be a new way to address culture. With this in mind, I am applying a blending of the gender theories described above to Egyptology. For the purpose of this dissertation gender is then a set of cultural norms ascribed to men and women based on their biological sex as male or female that is highly performatively. Men are expected to behave one way, and women another. These qualities are defined as masculine and feminine respectively, with a possible third category of androgyny in specific instances, such as Atum during his self-creation of the world. In the case of ancient Egypt, one is socialized as male or female based on their biological sex. This biological sex is meant to be understood as being determined by the genitals one was born with. For instance something that may have been considered as masculine is the ability to impregnate, whereas the ability to become pregnant was a feminine trait. This definition then plays into discussions of femininity and fertility discussed below. In terms of paddle dolls and female figurines, they have been understood within Egyptology as fertility figurines; however, the literature does not provide a specific definition of fertility, nor does it explain what, other than depicting female nudity, makes these figurines an example of femininity or fertility. Lastly, Geertz does give a warning to budding anthropologists: no matter how much they theorize or

69 Ibid., 27.

70 It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss or explore the possibilities of transgender individuals in ancient Egypt, nor the evidence of LGBTQ+ individuals. This is an entirely separate topic that could benefit from this definition of gender and from further studies on what the ancient Egyptians defined as masculine and feminine.

interpret a culture, “culture analysis is intrinsically incomplete.” I mention this here as a caveat; I recognize that in limiting my study to a select group of female figurines, I cannot speak for all figures labeled as such. Furthermore, without being able to observe these objects being used in ancient times, I cannot expect to fully understand all of the nuanced meanings these female figurines may have had in ancient Egyptian culture. My goal is to create a more complete and holistic interpretation and understanding of these figures, thus providing a basis for future study to discuss female figurines in all of their various forms.

As this dissertation is a reinterpretation of female figurines and paddles dolls, applying an interpretative framework, such as feminist and gender theory, is helpful for framing new questions and reevaluating theories. Lastly, Geertz, Conkey, and Hays-Gilpin suggest that in using theoretical models our research can be improved.

**Theory and Egyptology**

Lynn Meskell is perhaps the most vocal archaeologist and anthropologist in terms of theory and the importance of it for framing questions. She even notes in her work, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt*, that: “The study of Egypt has largely remained impervious to the incursions of theoretical developments in history and social sciences.” The entire first chapter of the work is dedicated to what Meskell calls, “The Interpretive Framework.” This chapter lays the groundwork for Meskell’s discussions on life in ancient Egypt and explicates her

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72 Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 29.


74 Ibid., 4.

75 Ibid., 1.
methodology, which she notes is based on archaeological, iconographic, and anthropological sources.\textsuperscript{76} This is key as it has very heavily influenced my approach to archaeological evidence.

Meskell also addresses several other theories, such as modernity and intertextuality; the main focus here is her use of gender theory. I would also like to add that since the publication of \textit{Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt}, Egyptology has slowly been adopting more theoretical models like gender and Queer theory.

Meskell’s use of gender theory comes later within \textit{Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt} through discussions of the erotic, sexuality, and the sexual self.\textsuperscript{77} Though using New Kingdom evidence,\textsuperscript{78} Meskell provides a prime example of how theory can be of use to Egyptology. She notes that gender theory defines gender as a socially constructed concept, whereas sex is defined as someone’s biological distinction of male or female based on one’s genitalia.\textsuperscript{79} Though Meskell rightly states that these definitions cannot be attributed to the Egyptians, as they are modern concepts, she acknowledges that the idea of gender and how one was meant to act in ancient Egypt based on that socially constructed distinction is still culturally appropriate to our study of ancient Egypt, and to the Egyptians themselves.\textsuperscript{80} This, Meskell believes is because one’s sexual expression fluctuates throughout one’s life, and is perhaps even altered based on social events, such as festivals. Concerning this Meskell states that:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{77} \textit{Ibid.}, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, 126.
\item \textsuperscript{79} This is the same distinction that was made by Sonya O. Rose and is employed here in this work.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Meskell, \textit{Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt}, 142.
\end{itemize}
“Sexuality and sex are a complex constellation of interrelated expressions and experiences influenced by a host of social and biological factors. It is also important, for instance, to consider the influence of time. Individual sexual identities are fluid and may change not only over the course of a lifetime, but also, for example in accordance with the rhythms of the festival calendar.”  

Furthermore, within Private Lives, Meskell makes a poignant point that within Egyptology there is a tendency to conflate what is sexual and erotic with what is fertility, as these concepts can overlap. For example, the interpretation of tattoos as evidence for dancers being sexual and erotic. The tattoos themselves are complex cultural symbols that may have multiple layers of meaning, including ties to fertility, magic, protection, and the erotic. If dancers are adorned with tattoos, this does not mean they are explicitly sexual, but rather that they are filling several cultural spaces for a specific purpose, such as a Sed-festival. Though just briefly mentioned, this statement is imperative for this dissertation, as I suggest that paddle dolls, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) functioned in specific cultural spaces.

This use of gender theory in Private Lives is a continuation of Meskell’s earlier work, Archaeologies of Social Life, which also introduces Meskell’s ideas on bodies and the individual. By the individual, Meskell is not referring to independent thought, but rather a

81 Ibid., 143.
82 Ibid., 141.
83 Tattoos and their interpretations are discussed in chapter 6.
person made up of a variety of social variables.\textsuperscript{85} Within \textit{Archaeologies of Social Life}, Meskell addresses multiple theories in regard to individuals and personhood, and ultimately concludes that through the use of multiple theories, primarily sociology, anthropology, and feminist theory, that it is possible for archaeologists to better understand concepts of personhood and the individual in the ancient world.\textsuperscript{86} Though directed at physical bodies and not representations of them, Meskell’s work can be applied to my work on paddle dolls and female figurines. For if female figurines and paddle dolls are to be understood as representations of women performing a specific task, then they in essence become symbols for those women and their various roles within society. This idea would be applicable to paddle dolls specifically as they are presentations of \textit{khener} dancers. Though it is important to remember that these are idealized images, culturally coded for a specific purpose.

Renata Landgráfová and Hana Navrátilová are another example of Egyptological use of gender theory. Within \textit{Sex and the Golden Goddess I}, Landgráfová and Navrátilová discuss the merits, and pitfalls, of gender theory, how this theoretical model has been utilized thus far within Egyptology, and how it can be used to better understand ancient Egyptian concepts of sexuality.\textsuperscript{87} They begin their work by stating that the Egyptians had no terminology for gender or biological sex, they simply had categories of male, female, and children who would have been socialized based on their biological sex.\textsuperscript{88} This then means that there are certain dangers to be

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}, 9-10.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Ibid.}, 50-52.

\textsuperscript{87} Renata Landgráfová and Hana Navrátilová, \textit{Sex and the Golden Goddess I}, (Prague: Charles University Prague, 2009).

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}, 23.
wary of when imposing our modern structure upon the ancient Egyptians, and in this specific case we may be adding in, or missing gender categories, that existed in their society. Also, by applying modern structures and thought to ancient Egyptian culture, we are ignoring that sexuality, and gender, can be expressed in diverse ways across time and cultures. These concerns caused Landgráfová and Navrátilová to raise an interesting question: should we even attempt to study subjects, such as sexuality and gender, in the ancient world, if we are already so biased on these topics? Their answer is yes, because “sexuality is also part of the cultural discourse about the body.”

Throughout their work, Landgráfová and Navrátilová are critical of how gender and sexuality have been studied thus far within Egyptology, noting scholars have focused on either painting the Egyptians as “chaste,” or as debauched sex fiends. In terms of female bodies, Egyptology has centered on the male perspective, and therefore has interpreted them via their importance to men. This critique includes Lynn Meskell. Landgráfová and Navrátilová specifically cite Meskell’s interpretation of female figurines in Archaeologies of Social Lives. Here, Meskell states that the figures are “concubines” for the deceased. This theory has been discussed within this dissertation, and as demonstrated here, the concubine theory expresses

89 Ibid., 23.
90 Ibid., 24.
91 Ibid., 24.
92 Ibid., 25.
93 Ibid., 27.
94 Ibid., 42.
Landgráfová and Navrátilová’s concern: that women have been interpreted based on their relationship with men. In the case of female figurines, they have been interpreted based on their possible association with the male tomb owner. This theory discounts female figurines found in the graves of women and children.

Additionally, as the ancient Egyptian written record was constructed by men for men, avoiding an interpretation of women via their importance to men is very challenging. In addition to these observations, Landgráfová and Navrátilová provide a brief historiography of studies done on ancient Egyptian women and each of their examples demonstrates a focus on similar topics, such as dress, beauty, motherhood, etc., which highlights one aspect of a woman, and usually pulls only from elite or royal evidence, as that is readily available.\footnote{by Landgráfová and Navrátilová, \textit{Sex and the Golden Goddess I}, 28-30.} Landgráfová and Navrátilová refer to these types of studies as approaching women “as a social phenomenon,” rather than as individuals who lived full lives in the ancient world.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 30.} In other words, a typical study of women in ancient Egypt makes them an “other,” rather than part of ancient Egyptian society. To combat this, Landgráfová and Navrátilová state that multiple lines of evidence from various types of sources must be incorporated to discuss women in a more holistic manner.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 28.} Though these criticisms and suggestions are all valid points, perhaps the most important criticism, according to Landgráfová and Navrátilová, is the lack of an Egyptological version of...
gender theory.\textsuperscript{99} Attempting to use a modern theory may not translate well to ancient Egyptian lives. It is this very issue that this chapter addresses.

Uroš Matić provides a summation of the state of gender in ancient Egypt, noting that Egyptology has made great strides in including these ideas and theories within research. Matić clearly states that gender in ancient Egypt was binary and determined by one’s genitalia,\textsuperscript{100} but notes that scholars have begun “to explore gender constructs beyond the “merely” binary.”\textsuperscript{101} As an example of this Matić uses Hatshepsut and Bata from the\textit{Tale of Two Brothers}.\textsuperscript{102} I would argue that Hatshepsut did not take on kingly regalia to change her gender, but to express her kingship. Bata did not remove his penis to change his gender, but to express his innocence,\textsuperscript{103} and perhaps evoke Osirid themes.\textsuperscript{104} In both examples, Hatshepsut and Bata were likely fulfilling social roles. Hatshepsut was fulfilling the role of a male king, and playing out the larger cosmological scheme of this, not changing her gender. In terms of gender theory, it may be more accurate to say that Hatshepsut was performing the role of king in a formal setting. Bata, who is a literary character and written from a male perspective may have been doing a similar thing in evoking Osirid themes of castration, loss, and eventual rebirth. Matić ultimately concludes that evidence of a “third gender” in ancient Egypt is “scarce”.\textsuperscript{105}

\begin{flushleft}
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 30.
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 175.
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 173-177.
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 177.
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{104} Susan Tower Hollis,\textit{The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”}:\textit{ A Mythological, Religious, Literary, and Historico-Political Study},\textit{ 2nd} edition, (Bannerstone Press, 2008), 113.
\hspace{2cm}\textsuperscript{105} Matić, “Gender in Ancient Egypt: Norms, Ambiguities, and Sensualities,” 178.
\end{flushleft}
In terms of examples of Egyptological works that have made use of gender theory, either explicitly or not, Lana Troy’s *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*,\(^{106}\) was one of the first to do so. Though Troy does not state that she is using gender theory as articulated by Scott and Butler, her description of the mythic prototype is clearly influenced by this model. Her argument centers on the idea that the ancient Egyptians explained their world through myth, and that this myth is a form of logic.\(^{107}\) This is what Troy refers to as the mythic prototype, which provides an explanation for three things: the organization of the cosmos, the relationship between the universe and humanity, and how people participate in the organization of the cosmos and interact with the world. This dynamic includes the relationship between humans and the inherent power of the cosmos.\(^{108}\) As part of this idea, myth is also understood as “an explanatory model,” and serves as the framework for which the Egyptians understood and explained their world;\(^{109}\) however, these ideas are not always clear to the modern observer, for as Troy notes, myth is further coded in symbolism meant to convey abstract concepts and meanings, which are culturally significant and time sensitive.\(^{110}\) This concept of the mythic prototype also ties nicely to the discussion of gender perhaps being more fluid to the ancient Egyptians in expression. If it is more important to the ancient Egyptians to uphold these larger

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\(^{106}\) Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, (Uppsala, 1986).


\(^{110}\) *Ibid.*, 9. This intricate system of symbols and myths then leaves the modern Egyptologists with more questions than answers, and can lead to misinterpretation of the evidence, which is what I propose occurred with the current scholarship surrounding paddle dolls and female figurines.
myths that establish their world than to have a strict sense of men performing male and
domestic things and women performing female and feminine things, then it is plausible that
these instances of gender fluidity do not break decorum, but serve a larger, cosmological,
purpose.

Once Troy establishes a definition for the mythic prototype, she begins to explore the
formation of the universe and the role of the androgenous deity, Atum. Androgyny, according
to Troy, is the embodiment of creation, as it is a representation of all things. In this sense,
Atum is both male and female through his role as a creator deity. This occurs through his
masturbatory act and subsequent swallowing of his semen. In masturbating, Atum is exhibiting
the male, or phallic energy of the universe; however, by swallowing the semen, Atum is
symbolically pregnant, thus exhibiting feminine, or “uterine energy,” thus making Atum
androgynous by modern Western definition. Troy states that the ability to possess both
“phallic” and “uterine energy” is what makes a creator deity androgynous and gives them their
creative power. This androgyny is key to understanding Troy’s mythic prototype, for from this
sexual ambiguity comes all other Egyptian life. It is also key to note that by having an

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111 For discussions of decorum see: John Baines, “Practical Religion and Piety,” The Journal of Egyptian
and Ancient Institutions,” Journal of American Research Center in Egypt 27, (1990): 1-23; Heather Lee McCarthy,
“The Osiris Nefertari: A Case Study of Decorum, Gender, And Regeneration,” Journal of American Research
in Tawosret’s Tomb,” in Sex and Gender in Ancient Egypt “Don Your Wig for a Joyful Hour,” ed. Carolyn Graves-

112 Troy, Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History, 11.

113 Ibid., 13.

114 It should be noted that these elements first appear in the New Kingdom; however, Troy’s use of this evidence is
gender theory.

115 Troy, Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History, 16.
androgynous creator deity, the ancient Egyptians demonstrate that they understood the need for both male and female reproductive parts for a successful creation. This is an important aspect of understanding birth and fertility in ancient Egypt.

Troy continues to explain that all beings were viewed as products of the creator deity, in this case Atum, and because of this, they retained some of the heka, creative energy associated with Atum. Within creation, Atum created the first male/female pairing of Shu (male energy) and Tefnut (female energy), and thus the dualistic system of ancient Egyptian myth was established. These male and female energies cannot be separated; they were not seen as contradictory to the idea of androgyny, or the mythic prototype, as the dual nature of male/female was just a change in perspective. In other words, male and female energies, as seen in Shu and Tefnut, and other male/female pairings in Egyptian myth, were a continuation of Atum and were imbued with his creative power. This then potentially provides a more accurate way of looking at men and women in ancient Egypt. Rather than being gendered male/female, persons exhibit male and female energies that are then associated with cultural norms. Genitalia may have very well been seen as an outward expression of these energies.

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116 While there are other creator deities, such as Ptah and Amun, and other creation myths, they are not featured in Troy’s work. She solely focuses on Atum and creation surrounding him.

117 Troy, Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History, 10.

118 Ibid., 12.

119 Ibid., 10-11.

120 Ibid., 12.

121 Ibid., 12.
pointed out by Meskell\textsuperscript{122} and others. It should also be noted that the ancient Egyptians may not have simply needed words for this, as it was understood that this is how the gods created people and how the universe functioned.

Lastly, Troy also asserts that the plurality of the dualistic system is not contradictory to the mythic prototype as described above, because these dualistic pairings were an extension of that schema.\textsuperscript{123} The dualistic nature of Egyptian myth is, in a sense, a breakdown of the act of creation into a more visible and understandable idea that can then be recreated in Egyptian myth and daily life. This then perpetuates the idea that all living things were imbued with some of the creative energy and potential of the creator deity. It is this creative potential of all beings that is a concern of this dissertation, for I believe that it allows for birth to happen in daily life, and it allows for rebirth to happen after death. Meaning, in order to understand fertility of both the living and the deceased, we must understand these acts as being part of the creative energy, or \textit{heka} in each person.

In contrast to Troy, Jean Li is very clear about her methodology in \textit{Women, Gender, and Identity in Third Intermediate Period Egypt: The Theban Case Study}\textsuperscript{124} as being a “feminist archaeological approach.”\textsuperscript{125} By this, Li means that her work recognizes gender and that it is part of the complex situations that make up ones’ social life and identity, while still acknowledging

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{122} Meskell, \textit{Archaeologies of Social Lives}, 97.
\bibitem{123} Troy, \textit{Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History}, 12.
\bibitem{125} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
\end{thebibliography}
power, class, and other social differences.\textsuperscript{126} This approach was chosen to avoid traditional Egyptological portrayals of women as “passive, sexualized beings whose identities were dependent on their male counterparts,”\textsuperscript{127} and instead to present women as their own individual selves. Beyond this, Li does not provide further detail concerning her theoretical model, or how it influenced her questions and research, but based on her case study of elite female tombs, it is clear that she was successful in her goal of refuting the pitfalls discussed in the above quote. She did successfully demonstrate the agency and power of Third Intermediate Period women in the Theban area. Due to this, Li was important to mention as a successful example of gender theory in practice within Egyptology, and her work, like Troy’s, serves as a model for how this paradigm can be an effective tool.

The works of Meskell and Landgráfová and Navrátilová provide examples of theoretical debate, whereas Troy and Li serve as practical examples for how theory may be of use. Unfortunately, none of the above discuss how this theory can best be framed for Egyptology. Landgráfová and Navrátilová mention that there is no gender theory for Egyptology, and this is part of the larger problem with theory: we are attempting to use modern language and methodologies to study and explain an ancient culture that does not share these modern ideas. And yet, there is much to gain by studying the individual and questions of gender in ancient Egypt. So how do we go about doing this?

**My Use of Theory: Fertility, Nudity, Sexuality, and Gender**

Fertility is a constant subject in Egyptological scholarship, and it was of great importance to the ancient Egyptians; however, Egyptology seems to lack a standard definition for this term.

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\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 6.
Within research concerning female figurines and paddle dolls, fertility is mentioned frequently, yet only one author, Geraldine Pinch, provided a definition for fertility. Since fertility has been applied to mainly discussions of women, and images of women, the term has somehow become conflated with the sensual and erotic. Female figurines have been termed “fertility figurines,” but many discussions surrounding them emphasize the sexuality of the figures. \(^{128}\) Scholars have been so intensely focused on the nude states of these figures and their iconography that no one has questioned how these elements relate to the concept of fertility.

According to Pinch, fertility is anything and everything having to deal with conception, birth, and raising children. \(^{129}\) Pinch’s definition was derived from her study of female figurines which equated nudity with sexuality, femininity, and fertility; however, recent studies on nudity by Deborah Sweeney and Julia M. Asher-Greve note that there are several reasons why someone could be naked, and not all of them relate these categories. Within their article “On Nakedness. Nudity, and Gender in Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian Art,” \(^{130}\) Sweeney and Asher-Greve note that nudity was situational and had a variety of purposes other than sex, or to convey a sexual message. \(^{131}\) One could be naked for status, age, and gender distinctions, nakedness as a sign of depravation or humility, practical and functional nakedness, erotic nudity, and ritual or


\(^{129}\) Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 225.


\(^{131}\) Ibid., 125.
symbolic meaning. Furthermore, Asher-Greve and Sweeney note that there is a difference between being naked and nudity. “Naked refers to unclothed bodies depicted in circumstances where nakedness reflects actual practice and is not intended as a ‘transcendent’ form,” whereas “nude refers to those depictions which are intended as symbolic ‘transcendent forms.’” In this definition nakedness occurs in art when individuals would have actually been naked in life, i.e. while working, breast-feeding, or giving birth. Nudity is defined to convey higher meaning, such as a person depicted unclothed for ritualistic purposes or to demonstrate a connection to a deity. The khener would fall into this category of nudity. For this reason, it is perhaps best to ascribe to Sweeny and Asher-Greve’s distinction of nude vs. naked for this dissertation. The khener as represented on paddle dolls and faience female figurines should be considered nude as they are functioning in a ritualistic capacity. The different purposes for being unclothed, as well as the difference between nude vs. naked raises a few questions: is nakedness/nudity related to the erotic? How does this affect our interpretation of images of women? Are female figurines actually naked or nude?

The answer to the first question of nakedness/nudity being related to the erotic is simple: being unclothed does not always equate to the erotic. In fact, according to Sweeney and Asher-Greve, “The erotic aspects of nudity in ancient Egypt are often hard to assess.” This is because what is and is not considered erotic is largely culturally defined and specific. It is also likely that scenes such as idealized tomb images are multi-layered in their meaning. The example given by Sweeney and Asher-Greve is female musicians in tomb scenes. The female musicians while

132 Ibid., 165.
133 Ibid., 133.
134 Ibid., 156.
naked in tomb scenes, may not have performed naked in life. It is likely that they are shown unclothed in order to distinguish them as musicians, and not funeral banquet attendees, thus indicating their difference in social status, or perhaps they are nude to indicate they are functioning in a ritualistic capacity associated with rebirth. It should be noted that other works on nudity in ancient Egypt, such as Ogden Goelet’s “Nudity in Ancient Egypt” have a different assessment of nudity and the erotic.\textsuperscript{135}

According to Goelet:

\begin{quote}
“Nudity, our primal state, evoked complex and subtle reactions among the ancient Egyptians. In their art and literature, the Egyptians used nudity to convey more than social status. The nude or partially nude human figure could express several emotions, serve cultic functions, or show a person’s age. Nudity reveals a fundamental characteristic of Egyptian culture- the intricate interweaving of subtlety and simplicity, the ability to see the complexities in the simple. Yet, at the same time, because they were also purposeful and matter-of-fact people, they used nudity deliberately, even with a measurement of restraint. This seeming modesty was an aspect of the ancient Egyptians that appealed most to the Victorians.”\textsuperscript{136}
\end{quote}

Goelet goes on to explain, like Sweeney and Asher-Greve, that there are several reasons why one could be nude: for work, to show one’s social status, to humiliate, and to be born or reborn.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135} Goelet, “Nudity in Ancient Egypt,” 20-31.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 20-25.
Goelet notes that: “Where women are concerned, nudity reveals more than their bodies: it also indicates a fundamental ambivalence about their place within ancient Egyptian society.”

Goelet then explains that female nudity was meant to sexually excite men and was intrinsically linked to fertility. Even when clothed, the ancient Egyptian woman was “leaving nothing to the imagination” in her tightly fitted sheath dresses, or bared breasts. Goelet states that this must be to promote ideas of fertility. Goelet’s ideas of female nudity stem largely from elite evidence, but it should be noted that there are images of non-elite women which depict aging women with sagging breasts, or women breastfeeding while at work making bread (fig. 1).

Though these images are rare, they are far from promoting the ideal, sexually potent, and fertile woman in her prime.

Figure 1- Here you can see a naked, older woman, with facial lines, and sagging breasts, breast feeding. Image from Deborah Sweeney and Julia M/ Asher-Greve, “On Nakedness, Nudity, and Gender in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamian Art,” in S. Schroer (ed.), Images and Gender: Contributions to the Hermeneutics of Reading Ancient Art (OBO 220), Fribourg/ Göttingen, 2006, 120.

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138 Ibid., 25.
140 Ibid., 26.
With regards to female figurines, Goelet refers to them as “concubine figures,” and goes on to suggest that even when found in the graves of women and children the ceramic figures were intended to “aid in supplying an erotic life in the afterlife.”\textsuperscript{141} Goelet’s reasoning for this is the nudity of the figures and the hairstyles, which he notes “play an important role in Egyptian eroticism.”\textsuperscript{142} In terms of tattoos, Goelet suggests that they are typically signs of servants or the lower class, but given the context of his writing it may be inferred that tattoos somehow add to the erotic nature of the figures.\textsuperscript{143} In his analysis of paddle dolls, Goelet notes that reproduction- and not just the erotic- was the main function of the dolls, as the pubic region is clearly emphasized. Goelet even states that a paddle doll in the Brooklyn Museum of Art has an erotic scene on its back (fig. 2). Combine this with the large tresses and prominent pubic region and clearly paddle dolls were intended to be erotic.\textsuperscript{144} The figure Goelet uses as evidence for this (fig. 2) does not have a sexual scene on the reverse of the figure. Instead, one can see Aha, a protective deity and possibly a precursor to Bes. My opinion of this figure is that Aha is present to protect the user during rebirth. This assessment hinges on if paddle dolls were intended to be representations of \textit{khener} dancers acting as magical midwives in a funerary context.

\begin{flushright} \footnotesize
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 26.  \\
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 26.  \\
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 26.  \\
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 26-27. \end{flushright}
Goelet also addresses the issue of semi-clothed depictions of women. He suggests that the Egyptians realized the erotic in the mostly nude figures. This means that the women adorned with jewelry and girdles were still seen as nude and were doubly erotic because of this “ancient equivalent of designer lingerie.”\(^{145}\) It is this type of work on ancient Egyptian female nudity that creates an impression of nudity equals erotic. This same idea of ancient lingerie is also addressed by Sweeney and Asher-Greve. Asher-Greve and Sweeney refer to this type of dress as “concealed nudity,”\(^ {146}\) and state:

“We suggest that the jewellery worn by images of nude women in both Egypt and Mesopotamia differentiates them from naked figures, stressing that although these

\(^{145}\) *Ibid.*., 27.

women are unclothed they are not physically deprived: they, or their family, or beloved, or master, can afford to buy jewellery. It is difficult to relate this jewellery to real-life practice: We imagine it could be rather scratchy when making love, or what if the threads broke and the beads sprang in all directions? We wonder whether, as for modern designer underwear, the point was to enjoy removing it."

This also raises the question: If female figurines are adorned with tattoos and jewelry are they truly naked? I agree with the statement that the figures cannot be considered naked if there is jewelry involved; however, parts of Asher-Greve and Sweeney’s reasoning are problematic. The idea that these jewelry items were meant to function as ancient lingerie, while possible, there is no ancient Egyptian evidence of this. There are ethnographic studies on the use of beaded girdles among the Swahili women. Here, women use the beads “to give their husbands added sexual pleasure during intercourse.” In ancient Egyptian contexts, sex scenes from formal ancient Egyptian art show the couple clothed or nude, not in girdles or beaded garments. This is the case in the tomb of Mereruka at Saqqara (fig. 3) and Khety at Beni Hassan (tomb no. 17) (fig. 4).

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147 Ibid., 163.
149 Ibid., 51.
There is also the possibility that the girdles worn by khener dancers and seen on female figurines were part of the ritual. These pieces of jewelry would have made sound as the wearer moved, just like a menat necklace or a sistra, thus adding to the musical element of the dancers’
I would also suggest that this could have added to the ritualistic atmosphere created by the dancers.

Gay Robins also addressed these questions of what was considered nudity and how it related to fertility in her article “Dress, Undress and the Representations of Fertility and Potency in New Kingdom Art.” Robins clearly states that the purpose of her research was to “consider the role of dress and the body in representing concepts of fertility, potency, and rebirth in New Kingdom Egypt.” While the main focus of this dissertation is a class of Middle Kingdom objects, the larger concepts and ideas presented by Robins are applicable. According to Robins, the desire for children is one indicator that fertility was important to the ancient Egyptians. The idea that there was a need for family to help work the fields, and later aid the deceased in the afterlife is evidence of this, but there were also mythological associations with family. Atum begets Shu and Tefnut, Isis and Osiris give birth to Horus, and so on. The deities of ancient Egypt were organized into families, which evokes the importance of fertility, and perhaps more importantly, family and familial ties. It should be noted that Robins does not explicitly define fertility, but based on her discussion of family, it is clear that she is discussing the human ability to reproduce.

In terms of dress and undress, Robins pulls from several pieces of evidence to note that female nudity is associated with fertility. She discusses female figurines, though she is not

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specific about which type of figurine, it likely that Robins is discussing New Kingdom evidence based on the contexts she lays out for the figurines. She states that more female figurines have been found in homes than burials and that these figures were often associated with family shrines. She suggests that these shrines may have been intended to convey the desire to continue the family line, thus ensuring that a family would exist for generations.\textsuperscript{154} I agree with this assessment of use for female figurines in a domestic sphere. Additionally, this ties into Robin’s main thesis that nudity could be intended to convey ideas of fertility; however, from this brief example I think it can also be stated that context should be considered when discussing the use of female figurines. For example, the female figurines Robins describes are functioning in an amuletic sense to ensure the fertility of the family, whereas a paddle doll in a funerary context may be ensuring the rebirth of the deceased, not the ability of the deceased to reproduce. Due to this, it may be possible that ideas of nudity and fertility are also based on time and place.\textsuperscript{155}

For a perspective outside of Egyptology, Stephanie Lynn Budin discusses the nude jar handles found in Mesopotamia.\textsuperscript{156} Budin begins by noting that there is a trend within scholarship to link the nude female to “sexuality, and ideally, a sexuality reserved for the use of males.”\textsuperscript{157} She also emphasizes that female figurines, though the examples of them are vast and cross cultural, are not all the same. She states that “like depictions of men, the image of the Nude Female must be understood within its own cultural context.” And that simply because the female

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 29-30.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 33.


\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 180.
figurines found in Ugarit are nude, just like the ones found in Deir el-Medina, does not make them the same. These figures operate within their own unique cultural sphere and have their own purpose based on those cultures.\textsuperscript{158} I agree with Budin’s statements and would argue further that even within the same culture the intended purpose and function of female figurines can, and may very well have, changed over time, or even by region. Meaning that the figures of the Middle Kingdom may not have had the same function as those of the New Kingdom.

Regarding nudity, Budin is discussing very specific jar handles from Kiš which she believes are early representations of the goddess Inana.\textsuperscript{159} The nudity of the figures is then specifically meant to evoke the goddess Inana and demonstrate her power as a goddess in general, as well as her role as a goddess of sex and war.\textsuperscript{160} Additionally, Budin proposes that the nudity depicted on the jar handles may have served as a cultural marker for the people of Kiš. At the time when these jar handles were being created, Kiš and other cities were being conquered by Uruk, and later Akkad. These nude female jar handles served as a distinct cultural marker of Kiš and their goddess.\textsuperscript{161} The symbols were then also adopted by their conquerors in order to show that they had assimilated into life at “their adopted city.”\textsuperscript{162} This then demonstrates three key ideas in terms of nudity and female figurines. Nudity is highly situational and culturally specific and female figurines are as well. Lastly, nudity does not always mean fertility. Here, the jar

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 180.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 191.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 192-193.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 193.
handles are more a symbol of culture rather than a form of apotropaic magic, or sex, thus showing that the nude female figure can function in a variety of ways.

If nudity, or even nakedness, does not always equate to sexuality, or fertility, then this criteria of defining female figurines as fertility figurines may not always be applicable in every context. Furthermore, this also means that nudity as defined by Sweeney and Asher-Greve, does not always reflect fertility in general. Instead, we must define human fertility based on the evidence we have from the ancient Egyptians revolving around their ideas of procreation. We know that being able to reproduce was culturally important for both men and women. We know that it was not exclusively a woman’s problem to worry about being able to procreate, and that men were just as concerned with this as well. For these reasons, human fertility in an ancient Egyptian sense should be understood as the ability of both men and women to be able to procreate. In simpler terms, fertility for men is the ability to impregnate, and for women it is the ability to become pregnant and have a successful pregnancy. Meaning, unless female figurines relate directly to becoming and remaining pregnant, as in the female figurine functions as an apotropaic amulet to facilitate pregnancy, the figure is likely not a fertility figurine.

In terms of gender, this discussion on fertility highlights that pregnancy and children were not just the concerns of ancient Egyptian women but were concerns of ancient Egyptian society as a whole. Both men and women were concerned with their procreative potential and therefore aspects of ancient Egyptian society, such as the Stela of Padisobek, and the medical texts, and votive phalli reflect that. Furthermore, it is clear that fertility cannot be defined as an aspect of womanhood, but was important to masculinity as well in ancient Egypt. For these reasons, fertility cannot be the defining facet of the ancient Egyptian woman and what it meant to be a woman in ancient Egypt, as fertility concerns may have been equally shared by men. In
terms of nakedness and nudity, for the modern Western person these two words are synonyms and there is a correlation between nudity and sex. It is possible then that images of nudity and nakedness in ancient Egyptian art are read with a degree of Western ideas. Sometimes people are naked for work, for practical reasons, for ritual, to distinguish social status, or to humiliate. The idea that a naked or nude woman depicts something erotic and sexual always, and in all cultures, does not account for the differences in nakedness and nudity, or cultural nuances in these states of being.

In summation, nudity can be erotic, but there are lots of other reasons in the ancient world to be naked, or nude, other than just for sex. In terms of female figurines, their nudity, I would argue is for ritualistic purposes. On a larger scale, our interpretation of women has been focused on women as fertile and sexual beings; however, women had other concerns in ancient Egypt, just as men did. Additionally, our discussion of women and fertility would benefit from a reminder that fertility was a concern of both men and women, and that in defining fertility as the human ability to procreate, which for men is the ability to impregnate, and for women it is the ability to become pregnant and have a successful pregnancy, it is a reminder that fertility is a gendered experience.

**Conclusions**

Gender and feminist theory are useful tools for the Egyptologist. The use of these paradigms can help to reevaluate long-standing theories, such as the idea of the fertility figurine or the concubine theory, and to create new research questions. These theories can also be useful in archaeological inquiry and “reading” the material culture, as suggested by Hays-Giplin. It is also possible to have theoretical discussions concerning terminology such as naked, nudity, and fertility which may help to clarify issues surrounding objects like female figurines.
Lastly, I propose that female figurines, like paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic figures are nude for ritualistic purposes, such as aiding the deceased in their rebirth and living women with pregnancy. Also, fertility should be defined as the human ability to procreate, which for men is the ability to impregnate, and for women it is the ability to become pregnant and have a successful pregnancy. Both of these ideas will be discussed further within this dissertation.
Chapter 3: Rebirth and Revivification in Ancient Egyptian Death

As female figurines have been associated with ideas of rebirth and rejuvenation of the deceased, it is necessary to discuss what these concepts mean. The basic definition of these two terms, which are used synonymously in Egyptological literature, is: the process of transitioning from death to life in the afterlife.\(^1\) How this process of rebirth is accomplished changes throughout ancient Egyptian history and is reflective of the culture at that specific time.\(^2\)

**Ideas of Rebirth**

There is much discussion in Egyptology as to how one was reborn into the afterlife and what this process may have entailed. It is important for this discussion as it is possible that paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) functioned as part of this process. While other scholars have suggested that female figurines were intended to reinvigorate the dead, it is also plausible that the figures served a specific and ritualistic function within the tomb and rebirth. This would have been to serve as magical midwives to the deceased, thus helping them be successfully reborn into the afterlife. To fully explore the role of paddle dolls and female figurines as magical midwives to the deceased, the relationship between birth and rebirth should be explored further.

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Heather McCarthy addressed the issue of rebirth for women; however, she suggests that the female deceased was gender fluid in order to be successfully reborn. She uses the tomb of Nefertari as a case study to demonstrate this point. According to McCarthy:

“The attainment of this state necessitated the absence of Ramesses II from her tomb. Once the queen adopted a masculine aspect and achieved a state of gender fluidity, she could then assimilate with both Osiris and the solar deity. This would allow her to assume the chthonic fertility of Osiris and to be reborn via what is essentially a sexual mode of regeneration (like the solar deity)- possibly interacting with her own feminine aspect in the process.”

To achieve this gender fluidity, Nefertari assumes grammatically male pronouns throughout her tomb. McCarthy gives the example of the epithet “true of voice.” Within the tomb, Nefertari is referred to as the masculine mꜣꜣt ḫrw and not the feminine mꜣt ḫrw. Also, Nefertari is depicted with the yellow-ish skin tone typical for females only once within her tomb. In all other tomb scenes Nefertari is shown with a range of skin tones “from a creamy pink-brown (with painterly flourishes such as shading on cheeks and nose) to a deep (and monochromatic) orange-brown or red-brown color, the same shades employed for male deities.” This grammatical and

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4 Ibid., 176.

5 Ibid., 191.

iconographic evidence combined with the “conspicuous absence” of Ramses II (Nefertari’s husband)\(^7\) suggested to McCarthy that in order for Nefertari to be reborn successfully these elements were necessary. Had Ramses II been present within the tomb of Nefertari, he may have impacted Nefertari’s “ability to regenerate” due to his higher status and expression of the “masculine aspect of kingship.”\(^8\) These pieces of evidence led McCarthy to the conclusion that gender fluidity may have been at play in the regeneration of Nefertari. While this theory is intriguing, it is derived from a specific context of New Kingdom royal evidence,\(^9\) and so it is unclear if this can be applied to all ancient Egyptian peoples across time and socioeconomic status. Additionally, as discussed by Ann Macy Roth, it is plausible that in general the deceased was not thought to have become gender fluid, but rather to synchronize with Osiris, who can be interpreted as an androgynous deity.\(^10\) This concept is discussed below.

Kathlyn Cooney’s “The Problem of Female Rebirth in New Kingdom Egypt: The Fragmentation of the Female Individual in Her Funerary Equipment”\(^11\) expands on McCarthy’s theory of rebirth and places more emphasis on the biological sex of the individual. According to Cooney, by the New Kingdom it was necessary for a woman to undergo an “explicitly sexual

\(^7\) Ibid., 193-194.

\(^8\) Ibid., 194-195.


\(^10\) Ann Macy Roth, “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility,” 199.

transformation” in order to be reborn into the afterlife.\textsuperscript{12} This idea stems from the innate male nature of rebirth, which uses the “power of masculine creativity in order to allow the rebirth of the deceased individual from death.” The power Cooney refers to is that of the male creator deities, specifically those such as Atum, who created the universe through a sexual act.\textsuperscript{13} However, if Atum is understood to be androgynous and expressing both “phallic” and “uterine energy”, which was suggested by Troy,\textsuperscript{14} during the process of creation, then it is possible that this is an example of \textit{heka} rather than masculine or feminine power.\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, it may have been more vital for the deceased, male or female, to possess some \textit{heka} in order to be successfully reborn, rather than explicitly male or female creative energy.

Also of note, much of Cooney’s evidence for this sexual transformation stems from the \textit{Books of the Dead}, and later Greco-Roman sources, which may not be applicable to Middle Kingdom contexts as the ideas surrounding rebirth and death may have evolved during that time. Lastly, Cooney explores the idea that young women are sexual stimuli in tomb scenes.\textsuperscript{16} These ideas begin with the myth of Osiris. Cooney analyzes this as a sexual rebirth because in some versions, Osiris masturbates himself back into existence. In these adaptations of the myth, which come mainly from Late Period sources, Isis is interpreted to be a sexual stimulus for Osiris to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Cooney, “The Problem of Female Rebirth in New Kingdom Egypt: The Fragmentation of the Female Individual in Her Funerary Equipment,” 1-3.
\end{itemize}
masturbate to, thus making her a “vessel for the conception” of Horus. I would argue that in this particular example of Isis and Osiris the resulting pregnancy was the focal point of the scene. Furthermore, as Isis is often depicted as a kite, the mythical and magical aspects of this interaction between Isis and Osiris may have been more important than the physical act of sex. This main idea of every image of a woman in a tomb, particularly those who are nude or semi-nude, serving as a sexual stimulus oversexualizes the study of women in tomb scenes.

Cooney’s reasoning for the sexual role of women within tombs goes beyond the correlation with Isis. She states that female images are intended to serve as wombs to help give birth to the male tomb owner. Cooney cites several authors for this idea, including Gay Robins, “Ancient Egyptian Sexuality,” and “Some Images of Women in New Kingdom Art and Literature,” and Ann Macy Roth, “The Absent Spouse: Patterns and Taboos in Egyptian Tomb Decoration.” These sources are noted here because in my reading of them, it was not explicitly clear to me that women served as a “womb” for male tomb owners. I agree that a magical womb to help facilitate the rebirth of the deceased may have been necessary. I do not

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think it was the role of the women depicted in the tomb to serve as this womb, but rather the
tomb itself functioned as the womb. The depictions of women, particularly dancers and
musicians may have added a magical and ritual element to the tomb itself. Thus, these women
were not wombs to the deceased but rather enhanced the ritual space that was the tomb. The
theory of tomb as womb is explored further below.

Ann Macy Roth presents another theory on the issue of rebirth in several articles and has
come to a very different conclusion: that rebirth into the afterlife mimicked the rituals and
process of real-life birth. Roth begins exploring the idea of rebirth and birth in her article on the
$pss-kf$ knives and their role in the so-called “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony. Here, Roth
explains that it is highly probable that the original function of the $pss-kf$ would have been to cut
the umbilical cord of a newborn. Therefore, $pss-kf$ knives would have served this same function
ritualistically for the deceased. To support the role of the $pss-kf$, Roth explores the Pyramid
Texts and the steps laid out within them for rebirth. This in turn also helped to explicate the
idea that rebirth to the ancient Egyptians was a symbolic birth into the afterlife.

To begin, it is important to note that $pss-kf$ knives (fig. 3) were part of a set which
included $ntrwi$-blades and four vessels. The kit (fig. 4), as noted by Roth, served as a whole unit
for aiding the deceased in the process of rebirth as described in the Pyramid Texts. These


24 Ibid., 120-122.

25 Ibid., 114-115; 121-122.
rituals would of course change from the Old to New Kingdoms, and therefore, the kit and tools used for the process of rebirth changed as well;\textsuperscript{26} however, evidence for the practical, everyday existence of the \textit{pšš-kf} comes from Predynastic graves.\textsuperscript{27} At this point the \textit{pšš-kf} was often made of flint, or another sharp stone.\textsuperscript{28} This helps to support Roth’s theory that these knives were used to cut the umbilical cord at birth, as for this task to be successfully done, the knife must be sharp. Additionally, this role may be indicated in the name \textit{pšš-kf}. Roth notes that \textit{pšš} is a participle for the verb “divide,” while this could refer to the bicornuate, or divided shape of the \textit{pšš-kf} knives, it is also likely that this hints at the idea that the \textit{pšš-kf} was intended “to divide” the mother and child.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{Figure 3- \textit{pšš-kf} blade. Image from: https://collections.mfa.org/objects/138933/magic-knife-peseshkef-inscribed-for-king-khufu?ctx=24ec455a-2311-4ab0-888d-3553389a4e8c&idx=0, date accessed 5/5/21.}

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, 117. By the late Old Kingdom the adze has taken the place of the \textit{pšš-kf}, a change that according to Roth is tied to statue rituals. This first instance of the adze replacing \textit{pšš-kf} occurs in the Pyramid Texts of Mernere (Roth, “The \textit{pšš-kf} and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 117-118).

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Ibid.}, 130-131. For placement and graves of these see Roth, “The \textit{pšš-kf} and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” Table 1, 131.

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Ibid.}, 113.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, 116; 123-124. \textit{kf} means flint and is a clear correlation to the material of the blades (Roth, 116).
In regard to the Pyramid Text spells that Roth associates with birth, she notes that they “represent birth and the cleaning of a newborn” and additional stages of infancy, such as teething.\(^{30}\) To explicate these ideas Roth uses spells from the pyramid of Unas. For example, when Unas is offered cake and wine, this is meant to represent teething and the need for the baby Unas to now chew and eat on his own, as he has been separated from his mother.\(^{31}\) Roth details her ideas concerning the Pyramid Texts and their relationship to birth more fully in her related article on ntrwi-blades (fig. 5). Like pšš-kf knives, Roth asserts that ntrwi-blades were intended to mimic “birth and maturation,” and they were part of the same set as pšš-kf knives.\(^{32}\) The specific spells that Roth is referencing for the correlation between birth and rebirth in the Pyramid Text are PT 26-27 in the pyramid of Unas,\(^{33}\) Barta’s A/B offering lists,\(^{34}\) and PT 1329-1330 in the pyramids of Pepi II and Queen Neith.\(^{35}\) These spells are intended to aid the deceased

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 120-121.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 120-121.


\(^{33}\) Ibid., 61-62. See Appendix A for the full text.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 62. See Appendix A for the full text.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 64. See Appendix A for the full text.
in an accelerated growth from birth to adulthood in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{36} Roth then details this process which begins with the deceased’s “connection to the placenta.”\textsuperscript{37} The placenta, Roth suggests, was represented by the $k3$, hence the plethora of spells associated with protecting the $k3$, and providing offerings to the $k3$ as well.\textsuperscript{38} After addressing the $k3$, Una’s summons his sons, and then there is a break in the text, which Roth suggests is the actual birth of Unas into the afterlife, as it is followed by purification spells (PT 26-27).\textsuperscript{39}

![Image of ntrwi-blades]

Figure 5- $ntrwi$-blades that are part of a larger $pšs$-$kf$ set. Image from: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA58404, date accessed 5/5/21.

Next, the $pšs$-$kf$ were presented to the deceased “to make firm the lower jaw,” a ritualistic step that Roth associates with the cutting of the umbilical cord.\textsuperscript{40} The $pšs$-$kf$ was then shown to the infant, or deceased in this case, to emphasize that they now must eat and drink on their own, a process that is impossible without a firm jaw.\textsuperscript{41} The final step in the birth aspect of the

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 61.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 62.

\textsuperscript{41} Roth, “The $pšs$-$kf$ and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 124.
sequence is the representation of the ntrwi-blades to clear the mouth. This is clearly associated with birth, as a new infant needs to have the mucus cleared from their mouth in order to breathe, and their palates are felt for abnormalities, such as a cleft palate. Additionally, this function of cleaning the newborn’s mouth may have given ntrwi-blades their shape, as some examples are shaped like fingers (see fig. 5). Interestingly, fingers are explicitly used at this stage of rebirth in the Pyramid Texts of Pepi II and Queen Neith.

The sequence after birth is followed by weaning and teething. This process included offerings made to the deceased so that they may now nourish themselves. This is the final step in Roth’s theory that rebirth process is an accelerated birth and growth of a child for the purpose of being reborn. These steps are facilitated by pšs-kf kits, as they would have been necessary for physical birth. It may then be possible to understand rebirth as a highly magical and symbolic process in which the deceased was born into the afterlife and then, with the use of the proper spells, experienced an accelerated growth. This would allow for the deceased to be reborn as an infant into the afterlife but enjoy their afterlife as an adult. Roth describes this process for the deceased king, which does have solar overtones, but it is plausible that the base idea of needing to be reborn and magically go through infancy to adulthood existed for everyone.

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43 Ibid., 63.
44 Ibid., 63.
45 Ibid., 64. PT 1329-1330.
46 Ibid., 62.
It must be noted that the same ideas of birth and rebirth are still relevant to Middle Kingdom rituals surrounding death. This is something that Roth emphasizes in her article on the ntrwi-blades stating that: “Old metaphors were rarely discarded, instead, they were embedded in successive new versions, intensifying the ritual’s effectiveness, deepening and enriching its meaning, and preserving the authority conferred by its age.”

This is an important point to remember when discussing rebirth, as it demonstrates how one can go from heavily coded symbols, like the use of the adze in the New Kingdom Opening of the Mouth ceremony to more literal birth imagery in the *Pyramid Texts*.

To fully explore these ideas of rebirth that she had proposed in her articles on the pšš-kf knives and ntrwi-blades, Roth published another article entitled “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility.” As the title suggests, this article not only deals with ideas of conception and fertility for the deceased, but also for the living, and how these ideas were related to ancient Egyptian beliefs surrounding rebirth. This correlation between birth and rebirth begins at the very basic level of needing a womb. For the deceased, this was accomplished through coffins and the tomb itself. Both were intended to function as ritual spaces that may have stood in for wombs, and therefore as spaces of renewal for the deceased. The metaphor of tomb as womb, as suggested by Roth, may indicate that the tomb literally can be

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49 Roth, “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility.”

read as the place of conception of the deceased.\textsuperscript{51} Other scholars, namely Mahmoud I. Hussein, have taken this concept one step further and suggested the burial chamber itself functioned as the womb, while the tomb shaft functioned as the vaginal canal, and the chapel above represented the vulva.\textsuperscript{52} Thus tombs were intended to “imitate the structure of the female sexual organs.”\textsuperscript{53} This then also serves to provide the deceased with a very literal vehicle for rebirth that, if this theory is true, clearly imitates the factors necessary for conception and for rebirth.

Roth also addresses the issue of female rebirth within this article and notes that while creation appears to be “overwhelmingly” male, this does not exclude women. Roth states that women would have synchronized with Osiris, just like men, and she suggests that this process was possible because of Osiris’ androgyny, rather than gender fluidity on the part of the deceased as suggested by McCarthy. Osiris’ androgyny may indicate that he can merge with the deceased regardless of their sex, and this would then allow for people of all socioeconomic statuses to be accounted for in rebirth. This idea is noted previously within this section, but is mentioned again because, according to Roth, it creates a new question: “who stimulated Osiris-Nofret to reconceive herself?”\textsuperscript{54} To Roth, the answer is simple, women reinvigorate themselves and acted “as her own husband, her own wife, and her own mother.”\textsuperscript{55} While this take on rebirth, or revivification, also seems overtly sexual, I believe that lies with Western views concerning

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 198.


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{54} Roth, “Father Earth, Mother Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility,” 199.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 199.
biological sex and bodies. Instead, this mode of self-creation, and self-rebirth perhaps should be interpreted as a form of fertility.

If fertility is understood as a human concern rather than a male or female specific issue, as argued within this dissertation, then the ability to reinvigorate oneself, is the equivalent of expressing one’s fertility in death. To put it simply, an individual needed to exhibit some fertility in order to magically revive themselves and be reborn. In order to facilitate this process, and jump start it, the deceased required the proper spells and burial equipment. This does not mean that rebirth and fertility are the same thing, but rather that it is likely that the ancient Egyptians thought of them as two parts of the same process. I theorize this based on the idea that rebirth is a reflection of actual birth, and that it would make sense that if one needed some type of fertility for life, one would need that same creative energy in death for rebirth. To this end, the creation and creative energy which were needed for conception were ultimately also needed for rebirth. It is for these reasons that the parallels between the Opening of the Mouth ritual, as described by Roth, and birth exist. These parallels are further explored by Roth in her article with Catherine Roehrig about the magical bricks found in some New Kingdom tombs.\textsuperscript{56}

In elite and royal New Kingdom tombs there are often niches for magic bricks, and occasionally four mud-bricks themselves are found in the burial chamber. These bricks are related to Book of the Dead Spell 151,\textsuperscript{57} and according to Roth and Roehrig, the bricks were intended to help magically birth the deceased into the afterlife, much like how a woman would

\textsuperscript{56} Roth and Roehrig, “Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth,” 121.

\textsuperscript{57} See Appendix A for the full text.
use birth bricks to give birth in life.\textsuperscript{58} While this dissertation focuses on Middle Kingdom and Old Kingdom evidence, this aspect of New Kingdom elite and royal burials demonstrates that ideas surrounding rebirth changed over the course of ancient Egyptian history. Despite this, there was still a connection to real life birth. Particularly interesting, as noted by Roth and Roehrig, is the fact that mud-bricks did not play a role in ancient Egyptian creation myths, nor were they associated with Osiris or temple rituals. Due to this, it is far more likely that the magical bricks associated with elite and royal New Kingdom tombs were a subset of funerary equipment that was attached to the ideas of birth and rebirth.\textsuperscript{59}

Though magical bricks were not mentioned in the \textit{Pyramid Texts}, there were actions that were meant to be repeated four times and deities that were connected to the four cardinal points, which the magical bricks were also connected to.\textsuperscript{60} Additionally, the goddess associated with the birth bricks is Meskhenet. The goddess was present for the birth of a child in order to decree their fate, and, importantly, she was also present at the weighing of the heart, a time when the deceased’s fate in the afterlife was determined.\textsuperscript{61} The presence of Meskhenet, and some variation of birth bricks in the \textit{Book of the Dead}, and the association with fate, is incredibly poignant for Roth and Roehrig’s theory that the magical bricks found within New Kingdom tombs were essentially the funerary version of a birth brick. Lastly, Roth and Roehrig state that: “After death, the bricks again served as support and protection during the metaphorical rebirth into the afterlife, and, finally they bore witness to the good or bad circumstances that had been decreed.

\textsuperscript{58} Roth and Roehrig, “Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth,” 121.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, 129.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, 134.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, 136.
for the person at birth, which affected the way his or her life was judged.” The protective function of the magical bricks in the New Kingdom is again a continuation of the function of birth bricks. Birth bricks were not only meant to be a practical tool for giving birth but were also meant to magically protect the mother and newborn child during childbirth and immediately after. This evidence linking birth and rebirth will be discussed later in this chapter; however, it is mentioned now as it brings Roth’s work full circle and punctuates her point: birth and rebirth are related.

McCarthy, Cooney, Roth, and Roehrig have all suggested different theories concerning the process of rebirth. McCarthy highlights royal evidence of the New Kingdom to suggest gender fluidity was necessary for women to be reborn successfully. Cooney perhaps adds to this idea with her work and the suggestion of women being re-sexed to be reborn; however, considering the contexts and possible function of paddle dolls and female figurines as magical midwives to the deceased, Roth’s theory of the deceased synchronizing with an androgynous Osiris is ascribed to here. This theory, along with Roth’s work on the Pyramid Texts and pšs-kf and ntrwī-blades, and her work on magical bricks with Roehrig, clearly suggests that birth and rebirth were not necessarily separate processes in the minds of the ancient Egyptians. Rather each individual was born into life and magically reborn into the afterlife. I would also suggest that both of these processes were highly ritualized and overlayed with magical symbolism that allowed for the living to safely and successfully give birth, and for the deceased to safely and successfully be reborn. In essence, birth and rebirth were perhaps similar to the ancient

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62 Ibid., 138.

Egyptians, and it was understood that one took place the realm of the living, while the other took place in the realm of the dead.

**Ideas of Birth**

*Papyrus Westcar* is one of the few written sources that details birth from ancient Egypt. While there are medical texts that discuss pregnancy, birth control, and spells for hastening the birth, none of the medical texts provide a snapshot of what birth was actually like. This leaves *Papyrus Westcar* as our only source for a narrated birth. This is likely because knowledge associated with birth and midwifery was transmitted orally. That said, there is a wealth of material culture surrounding birth that will also be discussed here.

Within the larger work known as *Papyrus Westcar* there is a story about the birth of three divine children who will become the kings of Egypt. This tale neatly displays the correlation between real-life birth and rebirth. The story begins by introducing the mother, Ruddedet, already in labor and struggling with the birth. Re hears her struggles and sends Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, Heket, and Khnum to help assist her as Ruddedet is giving birth to future kings. What is interesting about this particular grouping of deities is that almost all of them are also present in the process of rebirth as discussed above by Roth. Although Khnum is present in the *Pyramid Texts*, he has a less pertinent role for this discussion when compared to the other four

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64 While others exist, such as the divine Birth of King cycle from temples in Luxor and Deir el-Bahari and the inscriptions of mammisi from the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, these are all either royal contexts or Late-Period evidence. Though this evidence can be useful in discussing birth, it is unclear if this evidence can be applied to non-royal and earlier contexts, like Middle Kingdom birth bricks.

65 For a full translation of the story see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 220-222.

66 Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, 220.
deities and therefore is not a focus here.\textsuperscript{67} Isis and Nephthys clearly parallel their role in the resurrection and rebirth of Osiris in the birth of the three children. Isis stationed in front of Ruddedet to catch the child, while Nephthys placed herself behind Ruddenet to help support her.\textsuperscript{68} This imagery is similar to that of figure 7 where Isis and Nephthys can be seen reviving Seti I as Osiris.

![Figure 7- Isis and Nephthys reviving the deceased king, Abydos, Temple of Seti I. Here you can see how the positioning of Isis and Nephthys is similar to what is described in Papyrus Westcar, save for Isis who is in the form of a kite and attempting to become pregnant. Image from Dimitri Meeks and Christine Favard-Meeks, \textit{Daily Life of the Egyptian Gods}, (Cornell Press, 1996), 82.](image)

The main difference being that Isis is before the Osirid Seti I not for aiding in birth, but for procreation. The presence of Meskhenet again goes back to her role as one who decrees fate, in fact she proclaims that each child “will assume kingship in this whole land,”\textsuperscript{69} and she also

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\textsuperscript{68} Lichtheim, \textit{Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms}, 220.
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\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid.}, 220.
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serves as the personification of the birth bricks. Heket is the final deity present for the birth of
the children and it is her job to “hasten the birth,” meaning it is her role to ensure that the
children pass through the birth canal quickly and safely. The goddess is connected to frogs,
which were seen as symbols of fecundity due to the rate at which they reproduce. The connection
between frogs and birth is also seen on magic wands, segmented rods, and birth bricks. All of
these items are thought to have been part of the kit necessary to give birth safely and successfully
in ancient Egypt.

One of the more peculiar aspects of Papyrus Westcar is that the deities choose to disguise
themselves as dancers when they appear to Ruddedet and her husband, Rawoser:

“These gods set out, having changed their appearance to dancing girls, with Khnum as
their porter. When they reached the house of Rawoser, they found him standing with his
loincloth upside down. They held out to him their necklaces and sistra. He said to them:
“My ladies look, it is the woman who is in pain; her labor is difficult.” They said: “Let us
see her. We understand childbirth.” He said to them: “Come in!” They went in to
Ruddedet. They locked the room behind themselves and her.”

70 Roth and Roehrig, “Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth,” 131; Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,”
471-475.
71 Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Old and Middle Kingdoms, 220.
72 This birth kit is discussed later in the chapter. Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,” 473-476; Anna
 Willeke Wendrich, Jacco Dieleman, Elizabeth Frood, and John Baines, (Los Angeles: 2009), 8; Robert Ritner,
 “Household Religion in Ancient Egypt”, in Household and Family Religion in Antiquity, ed. John Bedel and Saul M.
The disguise of dancers suggests a few things: First, perhaps this was just a believable disguise, and Rawoser was so desperate to help his wife with her labor that he would have accepted help from anyone. Second, it is plausible that dancers may have functioned as magical midwives in ancient Egypt. This theory could play on the idea that dancers may have been thought to embody gods for ritualistic purposes.\(^{74}\) Additionally, the ancient Egyptian word used to describe the dancers is \(hnty\), which is often translated as “musicians,” \((\text{𓊚𓊃𓏏𓅯𓂻𓁐𓏼})\).\(^{75}\) Kinney addresses this in her work on dancers and states this may have been the generic term for \(khn\) members who were not performing a specific role, such as mourning.\(^{76}\)

The theory that members of the \(khn\) may have functions as magical midwives is by no means unique to this dissertation and is discussed by Geraldine Pinch, Ellen Morris, Christine Desroches-Noblecourt, Lesley Kinney, Hans Goedicke, and Ann Macy Roth,\(^{77}\) but it does provide an explanation as to why Rawoser would let these unknown people into his home to deliver his children. Also, this is one possible explanation for why Isis states that the gods understand childbirth. Of course, this could also be because the deities present in \(Papyrus Westcar\) were known deities associated with birth. Isis herself was a mother whose birth


\(^{76}\)Kinney, *Dance, Dancers, and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom*, 34.

\(^{77}\)Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 211-214; Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 85-86; Morris, “Middle Kingdom Clappers, Dancers, Birth Magic, and the Reinvention of Ritual,” 312-322; Desroches-Noblecourt, “‘Concubines du Mort’ et mères de famille au Moyen Empire,” 15-43; Kinney, *Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom*, 22-23; Goedicke, “Rudjet’s Delivery,” *Varia Egyptica*, 19-26; Roth, “The \(p\&s-kf\) and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 140-144. This is not an exhaustive list, but these are a good starting point for the theory that \(khn\) dancers were midwives.
experience featured prominently in ancient Egyptian mythology; however, given the material evidence from ancient Egypt, such as birth bricks published by Josef Wegener, it is clear that birth was heavily coded in magic and ritual. Much of this magic was centered on the deities present for the birth of the divine children in Papyrus Westcar.

In “A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Birth Magic in the Middle Kingdom,” Wegner details the multi-layered iconography of the birth brick (fig. 8), also called the Meskhenet brick in Egyptological literature due to the association with the goddess Meskhenet, and provides a detailed explanation of how these bricks may have been used in Middle Kingdom Egypt and functioned within a larger “magico-religious practice” surrounding birth.

Figure 8- The birth brick from South Abydos. Image from Josef Wegner, “A Decorated Birth-Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom,” 449.

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81 Ibid., 471-472.

82 Ibid., 448.
In terms of information about birth itself, and the aftermath of raising a child, the imagery on the Abydos birth brick provides evidence for this. The bricks are adorned with a series of heavily coded images\textsuperscript{83} that when explored provide a copious amount of information concerning the process of real-life birth. It should also be noted that this imagery quite nicely parallels what is seen in Middle Kingdom tombs.\textsuperscript{84} The birth brick from South Abydos has five preserved sides, each of which provides a different sequence of magical and protective elements. Side A is the base of the brick and depicts a mother sitting with her newborn, flanked by two attendants, and Hathor emblems on either side (fig. 9)\textsuperscript{85} and Sides B-E are adorned with the same figures seen on magic wands. Sides B and C have what Wegner refers to as “two bipedal deities” and Sides D and E have “a more complex combination of elements” featuring the same creatures seen on feeding cups and segmented rods.\textsuperscript{86}

Figure 9- Side A of the birth brick from South Abydos. Image from Josef Wegner, “A Decorated Birth-Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom,” cover image.

\textsuperscript{83} These are symbols that provide culturally significant information relevant to the time period, culture, and use of the object. See Robb, John E., “The Archaeology of Symbols,” \textit{Annual Review of Anthropology} 27, (1998): 329-346.

\textsuperscript{84} Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,” 485.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid.}, 451-452.

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Ibid.}, 452.
Side A is of particular interest and importance to this discussion of birth as this side displays the desired outcome of birth: the mother and child, safe, healthy, and sound. Not only is this a display of a successful outcome, but Wegner believes that Side A should also be read as “a complex visual spell” that expresses the “fundamental religious concepts of childbirth, motherhood, and the magical underpinnings of the human reproductive experience.” Part of this experience, Wegener posits, is hinted at with the presence of the Hathor emblems on either side of the mother and her attendants. He suggests that these emblems are present to indicate that the mother magically transforms into a goddess and evokes Hathor during birth. Wegner likens this phenomena to the Coffin Texts spells that call for the deceased to become different deities in order to be reborn, such as Osiris N. It may not be that women giving birth embodied the goddesses in a ritualistic sense, as dancers may have, but rather that their ritual spaces made them akin to goddesses associated with birth (Isis, Hathor, and Nut), which Wegner correctly notes is like the deceased synchronizing with Osiris. It is also plausible that this would have been done for added protection during birth, and possibly to appeal to those deities for assistance. Chrystal Goudsouzian addresses this issue and states that: “Egyptian women and their families likely took care to recreate myth-mirroring birthing space that would help ensure successful labor and bearing.” This is explicated through Hathor’s prominence on Side A of the birth brick.

87 Ibid., 455.
88 Ibid., 458.
90 Ibid., 88
According to Wegner, Hathor is present in her role of “Lady of the Sky,” the one who gives birth to the sun, and in her role of “Lady of the Sycamore,” the one who protects the west and the deceased. More importantly, these roles were associated with liminal moments of passage, which would include the moment before someone is born. At this point an individual is neither alive, nor dead, and so invoking a goddess that can control this tumultuous and dangerous time, for both the living and the deceased, would be a great asset. In order to gain control over a chaotic moment, such as birth, when so much can go wrong, invoking Hathor as “Lady of the Sycamore” makes sense. It is also important to note that the Hathor emblems are in the shape of trees branches, which Wegner posits are sycamores. This type of tree is potentially important to paddle dolls in particular and is discussed in chapter 4. Additionally, these emblems are blue in color and appear to be so to indicate turquoise, which evokes another aspect of Hathor, the “Lady of Turquoise.” Hathor’s role and connection to turquoise and, by extension, the color blue relates to rebirth and fertility, as discussed in chapter 4. Due to Hathor’s multifaceted representation on the birth brick from South Abydos, and the possible combination of her roles as “Lady of the Sky,” “Lady of the Sycamore,” and “Lady of Turquoise” on one object, Wegner suggests that Hathor transforms the birth brick into the specific place of the horizon where Re is reborn each morning. To summarize this idea Wegner states:


94 Ibid., 461.

95 Ibid., 461.
“Hathor’s manifestation as “Lady of the Sycamore” (associated with liminal moments of passage) becomes fused with her identity as “Lady of Turquoise” (linked with notions of fertility and rebirth). The resulting “sycamores of turquoise” become a horizon marker framing the place where the sun-god emerges from his uterine vessel. Hathor’s various aspects as a goddess of birth and fertility, as goddess of the sky, horizon, and association with turquoise become indivisibly bound in the imagery of these divine trees that flank the birth place of Re.”

This not only supports the idea that rebirth and birth were thought of by the ancient Egyptians as related, but it also links them to the birth of the sun god Re, thus demonstrating that both birth and rebirth functioned as part of the larger solar mythos.

The solar aspects of birth bricks do not end at the inclusion of Hathor in her various guises, or in the presence of the sycamores flanking the successful birth, but are also present in the use of the bricks. Wegner details how the bricks may have been squatted on by the mother to give birth and notes that the use of the bricks would have been very practical to help allow gravity to assist in the birth, more importantly to this discussion is the imagery that this creates. The mother, with her feet spread wide, and each one on a birth brick, a mother would squat and be supported by an assistant behind her, while another woman in front of the mother would act as a catcher for the child, this would create a visual of the horizon hieroglyph (𓆩). I would suggested that this imagery can take this analogy a step further and note that upon crowning, the

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96 Ibid., 455.
97 Ibid., 471-475.
98 Ibid., 465.
child and mother would form a visual of the sun breaching the horizon (𓊫). The Hathoric emblems also serve to “magically transform the location of human childbirth into a microcosm of the setting of the solar birth of Re himself,”\(^9\) thus indicating that the solar imagery found in tomb scenes and the Coffin Texts does not distance birth from rebirth, but further connects the two.

Lastly, Wegner notes that: “By combining apotropaic imagery with a scene of mother and newborn baby, the Abydos brick articulates a potent blend of magico-religious symbolism related to childbirth.”\(^1\) Interestingly, the symbols of apotropaic magic present on the birth brick mirror imagery that is seen on magic wands, small-spouted bowls thought to have functioned as feeding cups, and segmented rods, all of which Wegner posits are related to birth and the magical aspect of the birthing process.

![Figure 10- Side B of the birth brick from South Abydos featuring Ipi-Taweret. Image from Josef Wegner, “A Decorated Birth-Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom,” 454.](image)

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\(^9\) Ibid., 465.

\(^1\) Ibid., 455.
Side B is interesting to note as it may have Ipi-Taweret holding a knife (fig. 10). This is very similar to how Ipi-Taweret is represented on magic wands (fig. 11), which have been discussed by Stephen Quirke, Joshua A. Roberson, Robert Ritner, Ellen Morris, and other scholars as objects of protection and birth magic.

Magic wands are also found in Middle Kingdom burials, and according to Wegner, function as an extension of birth elements in rebirth practices and beliefs. In birth, magic wands served a

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101 Ibid., 454.


protective role\textsuperscript{104} and are often adorned with the goddess Ipi-Taweret (fig. 11),\textsuperscript{105} much like paddle dolls (fig. 12).

According to Ritner the image of Ipi-Taweret also unmistakably links magic wands to pregnancy and birth, as the goddess is associated with both aspects of a woman’s life.\textsuperscript{106} Stephen Quirke discusses this motif in more detail within his work on magic wands. He states that the hippopotamus-lion motif is “frequent,” meaning it occurs more than ten times in his exhaustive corpus of wands.\textsuperscript{107} Also, in some cases the wands name the figure of what Quirke called the hippopotamus-lion motif. These names are: “rr “boar,” perhaps for the feminine rrt “sow”


\textsuperscript{105} Ritner, “Household Religion in Ancient Egypt,” 177.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Ibid.}, 177.

\textsuperscript{107} Quirke, \textit{Birth tusks: the armoury of health in context - Egypt 1800 BC}, 326-327.
(including adult female hippopotamus)”\(^{108}\) and in two instances, “the hieroglyphic inscription \(irr\)” occurs.\(^{109}\) Quirke also notes that: “other image captions on this tusk give species names \((shtw, msh)\), deity name \((hk\).\), and the unparalleled \(hsm\).”\(^{110}\) Ipi-Taweret is not among these names, which could indicate that she is not the intended figure on paddle dolls, but rather this hippopotamus-lion motif is.

Additionally, the iconography of magic wands and birth bricks is mirrored on small-spouted bowls thought to have functioned as feeding cups (fig. 13) and segmented rods (fig. 14), which are associated finds to both magic wands and birth bricks. Interestingly, segmented rods also appear in a funerary context.\(^{111}\) As with the magic wands, both segmented rods and feeding cups were intended for the protection of the newborn and mother;\(^{112}\) however, Wegner also argues that segmented rods can function as “mini birth bricks,” as the rods are in four pieces, rectangular, and display the same apotropaic imagery seen on the Abydos birth brick, such as frogs, crocodiles, and lions.\(^{113}\) These similarities in symbolism led Wegner suggest that birth bricks, segmented rods, feeding cups, and magic wands, can be grouped together into what he terms the “birth kit.”

\(^{108}\) Ibid., 329.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 329.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 329-330. Quirke gives a specific wand with the species names listed as No.13 in his catalog.


\(^{112}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{113}\) Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,” 473-474. This evidence was courtesy of a personal communication between Wegner and Robert Ritner (Wegner, 474).
Wegner states that these birth kits were made up partially by the pregnant women, and the remaining, perhaps more magical elements, were provided by the “magical practitioner.” In order to create each individual birth kit, magical practitioners and expecting mothers would have met prior to the birth to gather all the necessary elements, which expanded beyond the items discussed above.\textsuperscript{114} Wegner also created lists of what the mother and the magical practitioner were responsible for respectively and they are as follows:

The mother: Meskhenet (birth) bricks, wands, feeding cups, amulets used by the mother and infant, and containers with the appropriate apotropaic imagery to hold the equipment.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}, 480-481.

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, 481-482.
The magical practitioner: snake-headed rods, wands, segmented rods, divine images, masks, divine standards, and birth spells.\textsuperscript{116}

This similarity in apotropaic imagery leads me to suggest that paddle dolls were intended to function as part of a “rebirth kit” in Middle Kingdom burial contexts. This is part of the larger theory put forth in this dissertation that paddle dolls in particular were intended to function as magical midwives to the deceased, and as this chapter argues, if rebirth is a mirror image of birth, than it is possible an individual would require a magical midwife to aid in the rebirthing process. Additionally, as magic wands and segmented rods, and later in the New Kingdom, birth bricks, were found in burials, it is plausible that these items were part of a “rebirth kit.”

This “rebirth kit” would have fluctuated over time, and across socio-economic status, but an ideal for the Middle Kingdom may have included: passages from \textit{Coffin Texts}, paddle dolls grouped as \textit{khener} troupe, a magic wand, a segmented rod, a container for the equipment, amulets to ensure a successful rebirth, and divine images/imagery within the tomb itself. Each aspect of this list correlates to something that Wegner identifies as being part of the “birth kit:” the passages of \textit{Coffin Texts} equate to birthing spells, paddle dolls served as stand-ins for the magical midwives, magic wands remained the same and served the same function, segmented rods were used for both protection, and potentially as “mini birth bricks,”\textsuperscript{117} amulets for the deceased function as the amulets for mother and child, and divine imagery can be found in the tomb art as seen on Side A of the Abydos birth brick.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, 482-483.

\textsuperscript{117} Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,” 473-474.
I would also like to add that clappers may have been part of a “rebirth kit” as well.

Clappers are found in funerary contexts alongside paddle dolls, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2) in the areas of Thebes, Abydos, Lisht, and Harageh.\(^\text{118}\) Ellen Morris explores this connection between female figures and clappers in “Middle Kingdom Clappers, Dancers, Birth Magic, and the Reinvention of Ritual,” stating that:

“Just as ħnr performers presided at births, however, they also danced at funerals – or perhaps more aptly at re-births. Such was only fitting, as both passages were closely overseen by the same goddess, who was not only the “hand of Atum” and the “lady of the dance” but also “she (who) may cause to give birth the one who is to give birth”, and – more somberly – the “mistress of the (Western) Desert”. Like the Hathoric ħnr -dancers, psś-kf knives also had a role in funerals and no doubt served the same purpose of facilitating the transition from this life to the next. This mirroring of rites and rituals associated with birth and rebirth –two transitions perhaps equally fraught with danger– is a characteristic feature of Egyptian mortuary culture and never more so than in the Middle Kingdom, especially towards the end of this era.”\(^\text{119}\)

In short, these elements were all intended for the protection of the mother and child and work to facilitate a much more complex magico-religious system than may have previously been

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thought. This system extends beyond the realm of the living and applied to the deceased and their transition to the afterlife, this idea is very neatly surmised by Wegner who is responding to the theories of Roth and Roehrig concerning the use of birth bricks in New Kingdom tombs:

“If so, this is part of a wider constellation of features that magically linked actual birth procedures with funerary religion. This represents an absolutely logical balance in the human experience of birth and death, tying mortal humanity with the eternal cosmic cycle of the birth and death of the sun god.”\(^{120}\)

**Conclusions: The Relationship Between Birth and Rebirth**

If midwives/magical practitioners were necessary for birth in the realm of the living, then the deceased may have also required a magical midwife for their transition into the afterlife. Paddle dolls filled this role at the start of the Middle Kingdom. As material preferences, and beliefs surrounding solar connections shifted and became more prevalent, paddle dolls were replaced by faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1). Faience female figurines of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period may have also been intended to fill this role of magical midwife for the deceased. As ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) are also sometimes found in funerary contexts, it is possible that these figurines may have also been intended to function as magical midwives to the deceased in this setting.

\(^{120}\) Wegner, “A Birth Brick from South Abydos,” 485.
Chapter 4: The Corpus of Figures and Materials

As this work is object-centered it was necessary to build a corpus of figures. My research focuses on paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines from several institutions including: the Penn Museum (PM), Brooklyn Museum of Art (BMA), Museum of Fine Arts Boston (BMFA), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (PAHMA), the Louvre (LU), and the British Museum (BM).¹ Each of these museums provided information concerning the archaeological context, material, and study photographs through their online digital collections. The purpose of this corpus is to garner more information concerning the material, archaeological context, and iconography of the figures—particularly their tattoos, as these all affect the use and function of these figures.

Paddle dolls are the main object of interest to this dissertation, and it is for this reason that they make up the majority of my corpus. Faience and ceramic figures are included as comparanda, as well as to demonstrate some of the theories put forth within this dissertation. In total the corpus is 77 figures, 44 of which are paddle dolls (table 1; cat. nos. AS1-44). The number of faience figures is 9 (table 2; cat. nos. AS45-53), and the ceramic examples total 24 (table 3; cat. nos. AS54-77).² While these are not all of the paddle dolls, faience, or ceramic female figures in known collections, this limited corpus provides a variety of figures to allow for comparison and trends in iconography to become visible. Lastly, the corpus was also limited by date. All examples included date from the Middle Kingdom through the Second Intermediate Period. This was done to focus on paddle dolls and possibly related materials. Though faience

¹ Due to restrictions from the Covid-19 Pandemic the corpus was limited to museum digital access only. Future research concerning these figures will include a larger corpus, and first-hand examination of figures.

² For a complete list of paddle dolls, their museums, and accession numbers please see Appendix B, Table 1, for faience female figurines, see Table 2, for ceramic figurines see Table 3.
and ceramic both continue to be used in the production of female figurines well through the New Kingdom, it is possible that the use for these figures changed over time to reflect shifts in cultural beliefs. As paddle dolls are not present in New Kingdom contexts, the corpus of faience and ceramic figures was limited to those produced during the same time period as paddle dolls.

The Importance of Material

The discussion of female figurines often focuses on iconography; however, the importance of material cannot be discounted. Why were some materials chosen over others? Do different materials denote different uses? Do different materials have mythic associations that would then convey a different meaning and purpose to the figures? This chapter serves as an introduction to these questions.

Paddle Doll Materials

Currently, there are no scientifically confirmed wood types for paddle dolls. This is due to the destructive nature and cost of the scientific testing that would be necessary to confirm wood types.³ It is evident that there are several types of wood paddle dolls may not have been fashioned out of: acacia may have been too hard and difficult to plane to the thinness of a paddle

doll and to shape correctly, \(^4\) ebony is too dark in color to be a plausible wood type for paddles, \(^5\) pine was used too infrequently in ancient Egypt to be suggested, \(^6\) and oak was far too rare. \(^7\) Additionally, while 2 wooden female figurines presented here have been tentatively identified as cedar and sycamore, these are visual identifications done by the curators at the time, and the museums cannot confirm this identification. Though it should be noted that studies on other Egyptian funerary equipment, such as coffins, other wooden female figurines like offering bearers and swimming girl cosmetic spoons, and models indicate that cedar and sycamore fig were the most common wood types for this purpose. \(^8\) It is based on this frequency and educated guesses that cedar and sycamore fig are suggested here as the wood types for paddle dolls.

Cedar (the most common is \textit{Cedrus libani}), was a foreign wood that the ancient Egyptians had access to through trade with Lebanon. \(^9\) It was known to the ancient Egyptians as \(\𓊬𓊤𓊭𓊤𓊤𓊬𓊤𓊨\). \(^10\) In addition to this species of cedar there are two others: \textit{Cedrus atlantica}, which comes from the Atlas Mountains, and \textit{Cedrus deodara}, which comes from India. It should be noted that it is more likely that \textit{Cedrus libani} is the type of cedar found in Egypt as indicated by

\(^4\) For more on acacia see Lucas and Harris, 431.
\(^5\) It should be noted that ebony is attested to in truncated wooden female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1). For more on ebony see: Lucas and Harris, 434-436.
\(^6\) For more on pine see Lucas and Harris, 438-439.
\(^7\) For more on oak see Lucas and Harris, 438.
\(^10\) Faulkner, \textit{A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian}, 49.7.
import records, such as the Palermo Stone.\textsuperscript{11} Examples of cedar being imported and used in ancient Egypt are attested from the Predynastic\textsuperscript{12} through the Ptolemaic Period.\textsuperscript{13} Cedar has a pinkish-brown color and is very durable. It is able to take a polish, is straight grained, and is also very aromatic, which may have been a draw for the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{14} The wood is from a cone-bearing tree and considered a softwood. Cedar is also known for its well-defined growth rings and its ability to dry out well.\textsuperscript{15} Another quality of cedar that would have made it desirable for the ancient Egyptians to use, is that it is naturally resistant to fungus and termites.\textsuperscript{16} The uses for cedar included furniture, coffins, monumental doors, and statuary.\textsuperscript{17} Additionally, while there are no paddle dolls that have been identified as cedar, there is a female figurine in the MET collections (fig. 1), that has been identified as such, so it is possible that other female figurines, including paddle dolls were made from cedar.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{14} Lucas, 349; Lucas and Harris, 432-433.


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, 235.


\textsuperscript{18} Dr. Janice Kamrin has stated that no wood analysis has been done on any of the female figurines or paddle dolls in the MET collection. This identification was listed on the accession card for #26.7.1416 and was the opinion of the
Within the realm of magic and myth, cedar is connected to rebirth and Osiris. These connections may stem in part from “The Tale of Two Brothers,”¹⁹ a 19th dynasty work that may have originally been part of an earlier oral tradition.²⁰ The myth has clear Osirid themes that may help us to understand the connection between Osiris, cedar, and rebirth. “The Tale of Two Brothers” clearly emulates the story of Osiris’ struggle with his brother, Seth, his death, and his rebirth through the story of Bata and Anubis.²¹ Susan Tower Hollis details these connections in

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¹⁹ The connection may also stem from Osiris’ time in Byblos during his myth where he becomes a tree in Byblos that Isis later finds. It is argued amongst Egyptologists if Osiris in Byblos was a later addition to the myth of Osiris, or if this association between the god and the location existed in dynastic times. According to Susan Tower Hollis, based on numerous Pyramid Texts, it is evident that Osiris did have a connection to Byblos. See Susan Tower Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”: A Mythological, Religious, Literary, and Historico-Political Study*, 2nd edition, (Bannerstone Press, 2008), 143-146 and Kurt Sethe, “Zur ältesten Geschichte des ägyptischen Seeeverkehrs mit Byblos und dem Libanongebiet,” *ZÄS* 45, (1908).


her work *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”: A Mythological, Religious, Literary, and Historico-Political Study.*

One of the main connections discussed is the “self-emasculaton” of Bata, and how like Osiris, the character is missing his phallus and then undergoes a type of death by entering the Valley of the "S." Tower Hollis explains that because Bata removes his penis and it is then eaten by a *nfr* fish that this is an obvious allusion to the myth of Osiris. This makes Bata an Osiris-like figure in “The Tale of Two Brothers.” Of particular interest to this discussion is Bata’s transition to life in the Valley of "S," which Tower Hollis asserts is an “Otherworld,” which could indicate that symbolically Bata is residing in the place of death. It is also for this reason that Bata’s heart is removed, to emphasize that he is deceased, and that the replacement of the heart is his means of rebirth. According to Tower Hollis, there are several sources, such as the “Shipwrecked Sailor,” that point to the loss of the heart meaning death. Additionally, multiple Coffin Texts and Pyramid Texts discuss the importance of the heart, and the need for the heart to remain with the body after death. To illustrate this, Tower Hollis notes that the placement of Bata’s heart is a clear association with “the motif of the god on the flower.” This motif is meant to convey “purification-regenerative connections” and “solar implications as well.”

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22 Ibid., 113.
23 Ibid., 116-120.
24 Ibid., 113, 131.
25 Ibid., 131-138.
26 Ibid., 132.
27 Ibid., 132-135.
28 Ibid., 139.
the god Nefertem is associated with the god on the flower motif and can be seen blossoming from a lotus (fig. 2). The imagery of the blooming lotus is associated with regeneration in both the Pyramid and Coffin Texts and it is meant to replicate the dawning of the sun each day.²⁹ In terms of “The Tale of Two Brothers,” this motif then serves to enhance the themes of rebirth and renewal within the story through connecting Bata to this well-known and widely used imagery of the god in the flower.

Figure 2- This is probably the most famous example of the god in the flower motif. It is of Tutankhamen, as Nefertem emerging from a lotus blossom. Image from: http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=14988, date accessed 6/20/21.

Tower Hollis also notes that Bata’s life is dependent on the ⲧ tree, which is again reminiscent of Osiris within a tree for his “continued existence.”³⁰ To explicate this, Tower Hollis points to Pyramid Text Spell 574, which references the “tree/sycamore, which encloses the god.”³¹ Furthermore, Osiris is often associated with trees, as well as vegetal growth, in general. It was common practice in ancient Egypt to plant trees in burial precincts, and this may

²⁹ Ibid., 139.
³⁰ Ibid., 139.
³¹ Ibid., 139.
be one way in which Osiris became connected to trees.\(^{32}\) Additionally, it has been suggested that the \textit{djed} pillar associated with Osiris is meant to represent Osiris encased within a tree.\(^{33}\) This then evokes the death of Osiris myth in which he floated down the Nile in a coffin that then turned into a tree. In later versions of this myth, the location of Osiris encased within the tree was Byblos, hence the Osirid/tree connections to that location.\(^{34}\) Regardless of the physical location of Osiris within the tree, it is clear that trees may be understood as symbols of rebirth and renewal, which would then make their wood a prime material for objects dealing with rebirth, such as paddle dolls.

As cedar has been used in the making of some female statues,\(^{35}\) and possibly a female figurine (see fig. 1) it is plausible that cedar may have been used for paddle dolls. Paddle dolls are found in tomb contexts, indicating that they were intended for the deceased to use, this connection to the afterlife may have been enhanced by the use of cedar, a material associated with Osiris. I would suggest that if paddle dolls were made from cedar that the material was chosen to amplify the figures’ magical connection to the afterlife and enhance their function as magical midwives to the deceased; however, cedar is not the only material that may have been suited for paddle dolls.

\(^{32}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 145.
\(^{33}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 146.
\(^{34}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 143-144.
Sycamore Fig, *Ficus sycomorus*, commonly referred to as sycamore by Egyptologists, was an indigenous wood in ancient Egypt, and is still found in modern day Egypt. The wood is pale, fibrous, and of poorer quality; however, it was frequently used in ancient times in statues and coffins. The tree has large branches and produces fruit. The trees are also frequently depicted in tomb scenes, particularly 18th dynasty tombs in Thebes,\(^\text{36}\) and was often used for tomb models and statues of the Middle Kingdom.\(^\text{37}\) A. Lucas notes that *Ficus sycomorus* is often referred to as the sycamore of the Bible and bears no similarity to the sycamore species that grow in colder climates.\(^\text{38}\) The ancient Egyptian word for the sycamore fig was *nht* (𓉔𓏏𓆭).\(^\text{39}\) It is of note that the BM has one paddle doll, cat. no. AS33, that is identified as sycamore fig in their digital collections.\(^\text{40}\)


\(^{39}\) Faulkner, 135.7.

\(^{40}\) This identification was not done scientifically, and the British Museum’s Assistant Keeper of the Department of Egypt and Sudan, Dr. Marcel Marée, notes that the distinction was made by the curators at the time. Dr. Marcel Marée, personal communication, 5/26/21. For the digital collection listing see: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA6460, date accessed 6/21/21.
If this is an accurate identification of wood type for paddle dolls, it then raises the question if all paddle dolls were made of sycamore. If there is a consistent wood type used for the figures, then it would be indicative of that material being chosen for a specific reason, most likely for the mythological and religious associations. Regrettably, as there has been no scientific testing, this cannot be assumed.

Sycamore has clear mythological associations with the goddess Hathor. One of Hathor’s many titles was “Lady of the Sycamore,” and many representations of the goddess depict her coming out of this tree (fig. 4) or emerging from it as a cow (fig. 5). Due to these

41 This title emerges in the Old Kingdom and is one of the titles associated with Hathor’s role as a funerary deity. See Wegner, “A Decorated Birth-Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom”, 459 and Roberts, Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt.

42 Roberts, Hathor Rising: The Power of the Goddess in Ancient Egypt, 106. This motif of the tree goddess is quite complex. In some instances, it is Hathor fulfilling this role as the tree goddess within the sycamore; however, many texts also support that this role can be filled by Isis and Nut as well. See Marie-Louise Buhl, “The Goddess of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” The Journal of Near Eastern Studies 6, 2, (1947): 80-97 and Nils Billing, “Writing an Image-The Formulation of the Tree Goddess Motif in the Book of the Dead, Ch. 59,” Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur 32, (2004): 35-50.

43 Richard H. Wilkinson, Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art, 90.
associations, sycamore fig trees are often represented in tomb art (fig. 6) and were planted near tombs.⁴⁴

Figure 4- The tree goddess motif. This image may be depicting Hathor within a sycamore tree. From the tomb of Sennedjem, TT 1, Deir el-Medina, Thebes. Image from Zahi Hawass, The Lost Tombs of Thebes: Life in Paradise, Thames and Hudson: New York and London, 2009, 188.

Figure 5- Hathor in her guise as a cow emerging from between two sycamores. From the tomb of Irynefer, TT 290, Deir el-Medina, Thebes. Image from Nils Billings, “Writing an Image- The Formulation of the Tree Goddess Motif in the Book of the Dead, Ch. 59,” Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur 32, (2004): 40.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.
By the New Kingdom, the *Book of the Dead* also mentions “twin sycamores of turquoise” that “were believed to stand at the eastern gate of heaven.”\(^{45}\) This imagery is also clearly visible on a birth brick from Abydos (fig. 7), dating to the Middle Kingdom.\(^{46}\) The vignette on the birth brick depicts a mother holding her newborn child, flanked by two attendants. Behind them are two chopped branches topped by Hathor emblems. Wegner has suggested that these emblems are meant to represent the two sycamores that mark the location on the horizon where Re is born each day, thus delineating this world and the otherworld.\(^{47}\) These sycamore trees are also mentioned in *Coffin Text* Spells 159 and 161, both of which state that Re emerges from “two sycamores (*nḥt*) which are of turquoise.”\(^{48}\) As these are clearly referencing the rebirth of Re at

\(^{45}\) *Ibid.*, 90.


\(^{48}\) *Ibid.*, 460.
dawn each day,\textsuperscript{49} it is then possible that both sycamore and turquoise ($mfr3\text{t}$)\textsuperscript{50} should be understood as representative of rebirth. Additionally, the birth brick not only links the sycamore to ideas of birth, but also faience ($\text{fnt}$).\textsuperscript{51} As faience was usually colored to look like turquoise,\textsuperscript{52} this could indicate that faience female figurines (Pinch’s type 1) are evoking the ideas of birth and rebirth associated with the material, or the color, as depicted on the birth brick. The associations between Hathor and turquoise will be discussed below.

Figure 7- A birth brick from South Abydos. Image from Josef Wegner, “A Decorated Birth-Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom,” cover image.

With the clear association of the sycamore fig with Hathor and her roles as a goddess associated with birth and fertility, and with the $\text{khener}$ dancers, it is likely that paddle dolls would have been made out of sycamore fig. Beyond this association with the goddess, many other funerary statues were made out of sycamore fig wood, suggesting that this was a common

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 460.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Paul T. Nicholson and Edgar Peltenburg, 178. They also note that it is meant to mimic lapis lazuli as well.
\end{itemize}
material for funerary equipment like paddle dolls. In choosing this material the Egyptians would have evoked these different Hathoric properties in order to help facilitate their rebirth into the afterlife. Unfortunately, this is conjecture as no paddle dolls have been scientifically tested for wood type. It is for this reason that two possible wood types are presented above; however, this discussion is still pertinent as specific materials were chosen for specific purposes when creating amulets and charms for magico-religious purposes. While I argue that not all female figurines are fertility figurines, they are all clearly serving some type of magical and religious function, and it is for that reason that the underlying symbolism of material must be explored.

**Faience as Materials**

As this dissertation proposes that early Middle Kingdom versions of the faience female figurines developed from paddle dolls, it is then necessary to discuss faience as a material. Technically, faience, or *thnt* as the Egyptians called it, is more accurately defined as Egyptian faience. True faience is a product of Faenze, Italy and is a type of tin-glazed ware also known as majolica. Egyptian faience is a “glazed non-clay ceramic,” which is comprised of “silica for the body material and an alkaline glaze using soda of some kind mixed with lime and silica.” The silica core could be comprised of quartz sand, though this was high in impurities that could affect the color of the faience, rock-crystal, which was a high quality and highly prioritized

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source of silica, or quartz pebbles, which were more accessible.\(^{58}\) Paul T. Nicholson also states that: “Analyses of faience glaze suggest that both quartz sand and ground quartz pebbles were used in its production. Given that both materials are used for the glaze it is not inconceivable that in areas with a ready sand source this might also be commonly used for the body material.”\(^{59}\) The alkaline was most commonly comprised of plant ashes and natron in pharaonic times, and this allowed for “the partial melting of the silica at lower temperatures than would otherwise be possible.”\(^{60}\) This is known as the “flux.”\(^{61}\) Nicholson also notes that the inclusion of lime may have come from “the burning of limestone or dolomite or it might occur naturally in certain sand sources.”\(^{62}\)

To obtain the coloring of the faience, colorants such as “copper oxide for the turquoise blue and cobalt for very dark hues,”\(^{63}\) would be added to the raw materials base of “silica, either from quartz pebbles or sand, natron as a flux and lime as a stabilising material.”\(^{64}\) The core materials on their own “would yield only a dirty greenish or brownish glaze.”\(^{65}\) The turquoise and cobalt blue colors were first seen in small objects, such as beads and amulets, in the

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 134.


\(^{60}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 134 and 135.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 135.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 135.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 135.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 135.
Predynastic Period. By the Middle Kingdom faience technology was incredibly diverse, and objects such as small vessels, amulets, beads, animal figures, and human female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) were being produced from the material and evidence from Lisht and Kerma suggests that there were Middle Kingdom faience factories at these sites.

In terms of mythological associations, faience is quite complex. As previously mentioned, the blues of faience were intended to mimic turquoise (\textit{mft3}) and lapis lazuli (\textit{hsbd}), both semiprecious stones with solar connections. For the purpose of this dissertation, turquoise and its solar and Hathoric connections are of particular interest. As turquoise was attractive to the ancient Egyptians for its color, it is also necessary to discuss the color blue (\textit{hsbd}). According to Lorelei H. Corcoran, turquoise and the color blue were associated with the dawning and setting sun, and there are several textual references which refer to the sun’s rays as being blue at these times. She specifically references the tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara

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68 \textit{Ibid.}, 181.
72 According to Lorelei Corcoran, \textit{hsbd} was the most common word for blue (Corcoran 41), though it should be noted that \textit{w3d} was also used for blue and the color green. See Faulkner, \textit{Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian}, 55.9.
where it is stated that “the land is strewn with turquoise by the setting sun.” Additionally, Corcoran notes that fields are also described as being blue in several texts, such as the Ptolemaic temple to Horus at Edfu, where it is stated that the “fields were made blue ($h$sd).” The importance of this color association with the fields and sun is that it is intended to magically represent life. In terms of Hathor, one of her many aspects is as a sky goddess. In this role, Hathor takes on the title “Lady of the Sky,” and it is her job to assist the deceased in their ascension into the sky so that they may be reborn at dawn. Additionally, Hathor also bears the title “Lady of the Horizon” ($bht$) for her association with the eastern sky, the rising sun, and rebirth. This is reflected in Coffin Text Spell 482 which states: “Hathor rises inside the horizon and she controls the sky, she makes the two lands content while her entourage is about her.” Further connecting Hathor to the sun and birth are the “numerous passages which link Re and Hathor” through “the concept of Hathor serving as a vehicle or uterus through which the young sun-god is regenerated.”

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75 *Ibid.*, 54. This was translated by Corcoran with assistance from J. Brett McClain, Senior Epigrapher, Chicago House, Luxor, Egypt (Corcoran, 55).


Lastly, according to Wegner, Hathor’s title “Lady of Turquoise” and her association with the semi-precious stone, and by extension faience and glass is connected to this role as a sky goddess. As turquoise is mined in the Sinai, it was linked with the eastern desert, the rising sun, and the place from which the sun god emerges each day. Hathor being the “vehicle” from which the sun god is reborn, is then associated with eastern Sinai deserts, and the place from which turquoise is mined. With the Abydos birth brick image in mind (see fig. 7), it is then clear that these associations with the sky, turquoise, and turquoise colored faience revolve around Hathor, and through her roles associated with birth and rebirth, these materials maybe as well. It is for this reason that faience may have been a choice material for some female figurines, and this material association could indicate a probable use for these figures.

Ceramic as Material

The most common materials used in ancient Egyptian ceramics are Marl Clays and Nile Silts. These materials are morphologically and geologically different. The Nile Silt are alluvial sediments found along the Nile. Marl Clays are primarily composed of calcium carbonate formed from limestone deposits between the Upper Cretaceous and the Miocene periods (100-38 million years ago) and are found beyond the oases to the west of the Nile River. The materials are also visibly different as the result of firing temperature and inclusions. The Nile Silts fire to

80 Ibid., 461.
81 Ibid., 461.
83 Ibid., 160.
84 There are other differences between the two types of clays, such as hardness and porosity (Lucas and Harris, 372-385).
a red to a reddish-brown or violet, whereas the Marl Clays fire to off-white, pink, yellow, and green hues, depending on temperature. As for inclusions, the Nile Silts are composed mostly of sand and straw, and the Marl Clays have small bits of calcium carbonate, such as limestone or shell. For the purpose of this paper, the concern is distinguishing the physical differences between the two types of clays, and utilizing these visible markers as possible indicators to identify the clays of the ceramic figures.

As of now, the specific clay of the figures has not been identified by any scientific studies, and thus only my visual interpretation can be utilized here. For this reason, museum photographs will be used in order to make suggestions as to the type of clay each figure is made of. This tentative visual identification is based on color for the majority of the figurines. The figures in this corpus represent both Nile Silt and Marl Clay indicating that there was no one preferred clay for these types of female figurines.

Figures 8 and 9 exhibit the reddish-brown color of Nile Silts once fired. The remaining ceramic examples may be identified as Marl Clays (fig. 10) as they are all off-white to yellow in color. Interestingly, figure 11 does have some breakage visible in the photograph. Once this image is enhanced (fig. 12), it is possible to see large chunks of inclusions that may be calcium carbonate, which is commonly found in Marl Clays. Lastly, figure 13 is listed as terracotta, which like ceramic, is a low-fired material thus making it fall into the category of a ceramic.

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85 Nordström and Bourriau, “Clays of the Nile Valley,” 164-165.

86 Ibid., 169.

87 Ibid., 176.

88 This was again due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and further research into the materials of ceramic female figurines is needed.

Also, the terms ceramic and terracotta can be used interchangeably, and it is for this reason that figure 13 is identified as a Marl Clay.

Figure 8- Nile Silt example. Cat. no. AS55. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148303/female-figurine-fragment?ctx=1a68e94a-4f34-4239-bff0-e83d308a7875&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 9- Nile Silt example. Cat. no. AS63. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148299/female-head-and-neck-fragment?ctx=07e414d4-af7c-4d23-95d1-f74ef99639d6&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.
Figure 10- Marl Clay example. Cat. no. AS54. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148297/female-figurine?ctx=37eb657a-1952-47b3-aa85-0fe2fae299ea&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 11- Marl Clay with breakage. Cat. no. AS57. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/556847, date accessed 7/2/21.
It is interesting that the majority of the figures collected for this corpus can at least be tentatively identified as Marl Clay based on color. This type of clay only exists in specific deposits within Egypt, whereas Nile Silt can be found anywhere and everywhere along the river.\textsuperscript{90} This then suggests that Marl Clay was being chosen as a preferred material for a reason.

Perhaps Marl Clay was chosen over Nile Silt to denote the importance of the figures, or possibly to distinguish between different forms of female figurines and their uses. According to Richard Wilkinson, the use of clay in general was meant to evoke ideas of fertility and rejuvenation. That is why clay figures would have been used in medical spells, and as the choice material for Osiris seed figures. Wilkinson also suggests that the breakable nature of the figures is why they were utilized in spells intended to inflict harm.\textsuperscript{91} As Wilkinson’s suggestions are dependent on concepts that have yet to be supported in a satisfactory manner, or rely on knowing the intended use of the figure, these are merely suggestions and not definitive answers as to why one type of clay would be chosen over another for these figures. Unlike wood or faience, clay as a material does not have well discussed mythological connections. Though it is important to note that Khnum was thought to have fashioned people on his potter’s wheel, thus suggesting people were made from clay by the gods.\textsuperscript{92}

**Classification Systems**

As previously mentioned in the historiography section, female figurines are most often classified by Pinch’s typology. This typology was an effective starting point for the reevaluation of female figurines, and arguably, has sparked greater interest in the subject. Angela Tooley did create a classification system with her dissertation, though as she is currently reworking her system and expanding her research on female figurines, this typology is no longer relevant.\textsuperscript{93}

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\textsuperscript{91} Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*, 65.

\textsuperscript{92} My thanks to Dr. Patricia Podzorski and Dr. Ellen Morris for suggesting this idea and discussions surrounding it.

\textsuperscript{93} Tooley, personal communication, 11/24/2019.
Tooley’s more recent work concerning the classification of female figurines, and her ideas on how a new typology could be created are relevant for this discussion.94

While Pinch does create some subcategories based on hairstyle within her typology,95 she does not account for material. My suggestion for further classification of female figurines is to first create separate categories based on material and form. From there, create subdivisions based on iconographic details, time period, and archaeological context. This method is very similar to what Tooley proposes for the classification of truncated female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1).96 Tooley states that she is using four “core criteria” in her analysis of truncated female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) as described below:

“a) material: Type 1 truncated figurines are found in faience, wood, ivory and limestone. b) form: Comprises the shape of attributes, such as body shape and size, truncation or leg shape, arm type, head or hairstyle type. c) decoration: Surface decoration in the form of jewellery, body markings and rarely, clothing. d) context: Comprises both spatial and temporal context; provenance, depositional context and dating”97


95 Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 199; 204; 207-209.


97 Ibid., 244.
In using material as one of the main elements in a new typology paddle dolls would be included as part of the female figurine corpus. Additionally, further distinctions in iconography could lead to a clearer understanding of different paddle doll designs. While all paddle dolls have the same basic shape, not all have the same garment patterns, tattoos, beads, or images represented on their reverse. In terms of faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), this would allow for greater variation in hairstyles, tattoos, and jewelry to be discussed at length, and could reveal that the function of these faience figures changed from the Middle Kingdom, to the New Kingdom, to the Late Period reflecting shifting cultural views. While there are many studies that mention ceramic female figurines, they typically focus on one or two forms of these figures, such as Emily Teeter’s study. To create a typology of these figures is outside the scope of this dissertation, though, like with faience female figurines, the ceramic variety would benefit from a larger study of all ceramic types of female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2-6) which separates them by their distinct iconographic styles and contexts. In reality, it is very likely that these ceramic figures were used for multiple things in ancient Egyptian daily life, from medico-magical uses, as suggested by Waraksa, to use as amulets for fertility, and possibly as magical midwives to the deceased.

This categorization by material first allows for greater distinction between the female figurines, as they were not just made of ceramic, wood, and faience, but stone, ivory, and

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98 Megan Clark, University of Liverpool, is currently creating a typology of paddle dolls in European collections. She presented her findings so far in a Zoom lecture presented by Swansea Museum, 5/12/2020.

99 This is being explored by Angela Tooley. See Angela M.J. Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” draft sent through personal communication, 12/2019, will appear in Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur. Further research regarding iconography pending.

100 Waraksa, “Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function,” 146-175.

101 Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 198.
string\textsuperscript{102} as well. I am unaware of any studies that focus on and highlight these materials, or forms of female figurines; however, these are yet three more categories that would benefit from further study. In using material as the first distinguishing factor in female figurine typologies, Egyptologists would create a more holistic approach to the study.

Chapter 5: The Importance of Archaeological Contexts

Frédéric Colin notes the importance of context as it relates to female figurines in his recent article “Des Femmes Nues Dans le Sahara Égyptien (Bahariya, 750-600 AV. Notre Ére).” Colin states that the study of female figurines would benefit from further discussion of archaeological contexts.\(^1\) While the corpus of Colin’s work focuses on New Kingdom figurines and their contexts, his emphasis on those contexts and his study of them highlights an important point: archaeological context is just as necessary to the study of female figurines as material and iconographical studies.

As this chapter focuses on the importance of archaeological context, a clear definition is necessary: archaeological context should be understood as the “matrix, provenance, and association of the finds.”\(^2\) This is affected by two factors: how the object was deposited in the ground, and the surrounding objects and history of the area.\(^3\) In the case of female figurines unfortunately much of this information is missing. This is because many of the figurines are now in private collections, or were excavated before details such as exact find spot were recorded.

Paddle Doll and Faience Context

In terms of paddle doll contexts, Ellen Morris’ work is the most recent to address this.\(^4\) Within her work, Morris refers only to the “excavated contexts” of paddle dolls, meaning that the unknown or suspected provenances of paddle dolls in museum collections are not included in her

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\(^2\) Brian M. Fagan, In the Beginning, (New Jersey: Person, 2009), 106.

\(^3\) Ibid., 106.

\(^4\) Megan Clark of the University College London is currently working on this as well in her dissertation.
discussion of context. The reasoning for this distinction between known, and recorded, excavated contexts and possible provenance is because paddle dolls found in museum and private collections are often of an “obscure origin.” This is the case for 20 out of 44 paddle dolls included in the corpus for this dissertation. These paddle dolls are not given any provenance in their collection records. While their contexts are obscured, these paddle dolls still provide important information regarding their material, manufacture, and iconography, which is why they are still included within the corpus. Of the remaining 24 paddle dolls, 4 are attributed to Sheik Farag, 7 to Naga el-Deir, 7 to Asasif, 1 to Khokha, and 5 to Thebes in general. While these paddle dolls are attributed to these sites, only 16 of the 24 are from known excavated contexts. The remaining 8 are only suspected to have come from those areas either due to a purchasing record- or the records of a donor. This corpus then serves as a demonstration of how complex the records and contexts of these figures are, as well as the range of sites that these paddle dolls are attributed to. Lastly, the find sites of Thebes, Naga el-Deir, Asasif, and Sheik Farag do coincide with Morris’ data. Within her study she also notes that paddle dolls have been attributed to Beni


6 Provenance is defined by the Archaeological Institute of America as “the origin, or history of ownership of an archaeological or historical object” and provenience as “the three-dimensional context (including geographical location) of an archaeological find, giving information about its function and date” (“Glossary,” Archaeological Institute of America, https://www.archaeological.org/programs/educators/introduction-to-archaeology/glossary/#:~:text=Provenance%20%E2%80%93%20The%20origin%2C%20function%20and%20date, date accessed 6/24/21). As the majority of female figurines are missing the three-dimensional archaeological context, and only general provide information, such as tomb number, provenance will be used throughout this dissertation.

7 Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 74.

8 Please see Appendix B, Table 4 for a concise version of this information.

9 Archaeologically, non-tomb contexts dating to the Middle Kingdom are very limited, meaning that this data could be skewed; however, until additional evidence is discovered discussions of paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) are limited to tomb-based data sets.
Hasan, Reif, and Akhmim.\textsuperscript{10} As el-Khokha is within the Theban necropolis, el-Khokha was associated with the cult of Hathor and was part of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley,\textsuperscript{11} thus el-Khokha fits into the narrative of paddle dolls being a Theban tradition.

In terms of faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), Pinch provides a list of finds sites, unfortunately many of these figurines are of unknown or questionable provenances.\textsuperscript{12} Her system groups her Type 1 into one category. This then includes figures modeled out of wood, ivory, and stone in addition to faience. Sites she associated with Type 1 are: Abusir, Abydos, Esna, Hawara, Deir el-Bersha, Deir el-Matariya, Lisht, Quban, the Theban area in general, Deir el-Bahari, Draʿ Abu el-Naga’, the Ramesseum, Kahun, Byblos, Faras, and Gebel Zeit. Contexts for these figures are noted as tomb, temple, and household spaces and a mixed date between the Middle Kingdom, the Second Intermediate Period, and the New Kingdom.\textsuperscript{13} The corpus of my study includes 9 faience female figurines. Of those, 6 are attributed to Lisht and date to 12th-13th dynasties. It should also be noted that the corpus was limited to figures attributed to the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, and known excavated contexts were prioritized.\textsuperscript{14}

Tooley notes in her more recent research that faience female figurines appear to first be manufactured at Lisht and were excavated from “the cemeteries surrounding the pyramids of

\textsuperscript{10} Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 74. Tooley also notes the find site of paddle dolls as being primarily the Theban necropolis and states that they may have formed an Upper Egyptian tradition of female figurine. See Tooley, “Female Images during the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period: Truncated Figures,” 3.

\textsuperscript{11} L’ubica Hudáková, The Representations of Women in the Middle Kingdom Tombs of Officials, (Liden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 488-489.

\textsuperscript{12} Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 226-227. See also Johan Beha and Sylvie Donnat, “Réflexions Autour de Deux Figurines (Paddle Doll et Apode) de L’Institut D’Égyptologies de Strausbourg,” 60.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 226-227.

\textsuperscript{14} Please refer to Appendix B, Table 5 for a concise version of this information.
Amenemhat I and Senwosret I.”

Based on their prominence at Lisht during the Middle Kingdom and later periods, Tooley suggests that faience female figurines began as a Northern/Lower Egypt tradition and then gradually became prominent in other areas.

Both paddle dolls and faience female figurines from the Middle Kingdom are found typically in tomb contexts as demonstrated by the corpus of material presented here (see Appendix A, Table 3 and Table 4), and because of this they need to be discussed not as objects related to life, but perhaps should be understood as occupying the liminal space between life, death, and rebirth. While paddle dolls were associated with the deceased from early on, it was not until Morris’ work that they were associated with the process of rebirth. In contrast, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) have been attributed to tombs, temples, and domestic spaces, and have not been examined by time period. Consequently, New Kingdom evidence for the context and style of faience female figurines has been attributed to the Middle Kingdom examples as well. This then creates a confusing, and incorrect, picture of faience female figurines being used in multiple ways, from conceiving children to raising children, in other words as all-purpose fertility figurines; however, based on this corpus it is far more likely that the faience female figurines of Lisht were meant to serve the same function as the Theban paddle dolls as they have been found in tombs. Additionally, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) share iconographic elements with paddle dolls that are related to birth and rebirth. There is also

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15 Tooley, “Female Images during the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period: Truncated Figures,” 5.

16 Ibid., 5.

evidence that in the early Middle Kingdom wood was a common and popular material for funerary objects, like tomb models, but by the late Middle Kingdom wood was a less popular material and faience became more prevalent.\textsuperscript{18} This could then indicate that the original function of the Middle Kingdom faience female figurine was not as a fertility amulet, but rather as another representation of the \textit{khener} dancer. This theory is explored at length throughout this dissertation, but it is important to note that both types of figurines have been found in tomb contexts and this is one of the elements that has led to the correlation between paddle dolls and faience female figurines.

In terms of rebirth, revivification, rejuvenation of the deceased, et. cetera, it has long been suggested by scholars such as Morris, Cooney, Roth, and others that the deceased would have needed to undergo some type of rejuvenation process.\textsuperscript{19} The tomb, and some of its accoutrements, were then meant to help facilitate rebirth. I believe this aspect of the interpretation of rebirth to be accurate. For the purpose of this discussion as it relates to context, the tomb/burial must be understood as being vital to rebirth, and I would argue one step further, that the tomb is representative of a womb.


The concept of the tomb as womb is not unique to this dissertation as it has been suggested by multiple scholars such as Huessein, Roth, Roehrig, and Onstine. Huessein argues within his article that the structure of the tomb is meant to emulate human female genitalia and that this space was meant to act as a magical womb for the rebirth of the deceased. Within his model the superstructure of the tomb is considered the vulva, the tomb shaft the vaginal canal, and the burial chamber, the uterus. This concept would then support the idea of the tomb being a place of rebirth, while also emphasizing the idea that the ancient Egyptians pictured their rebirth into the afterlife as a literal birth. According to Goudsouzian, the process included being within the womb, birth, and growing to adulthood at an accelerated pace. It is my theory that this process would also require a magical midwife to help physically birth the deceased into the afterlife, and it is this role that paddle dolls, faience female figurines, and certain ceramic female figurines fulfilled.

As this chapter focuses on context, the discussion would not be complete without an inclusion of the associated finds. In the case of paddle dolls and faience female figurines this included: clappers, mirrors, musical instruments, specifically sistra, magic wands, pottery, and cosmetics. Of these common finds, clappers, mirrors, sistra, and magic wands are all considered to be part of the khener kit previously mentioned in chapter 1, and several of these items are also

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22 Ibid., 28.


found in the proposed birthing kit detailed by Wegner in chapter 3. These items also functioned within the realm of magic and within the realm of birth. Morris details this association in her chapter on Middle Kingdom clappers and their role in childbirth. Within the chapter, she suggests that as clappers and dancers may have been present for the birth of a child, their role in the funerary sphere would have been intended to mirror these birthing rituals for the deceased, thus aiding in their rebirth. As Morris states: “This mirroring of rites and rituals associated with birth and rebirth- two transitions perhaps fraught with danger- is a characteristic feature of Egyptian mortuary culture and never more so than in the Middle Kingdom, especially towards the end of this era.” It is highly plausible that it would have been necessary for mortuary rites to mirror birth rites to help the deceased achieve their goal of being reborn. If clappers, mirrors, and sistra were present within the tomb, it would then also make sense that these items require a user, preferably someone familiar with the rites associated with birth. If the khener truly were also midwives, then paddle dolls and faience representations of them would have needed their tools in order to perform the necessary rites for the deceased to be successfully reborn. This would also explain the presence of paddle dolls in graves ranging from simple graves, like those of Sheik Farag, to the decorated tombs of Thebes.

Based on the tomb context of paddle dolls and faience female figurines, as well as their associated finds, it is evident that they are intended to function within the mortuary sphere. As

25 See Morris, “Middle Kingdom Clappers, Dancers, Birth Magic, and the Reinvention of Ritual”.

26 Ibid., 312.

27 Ibid., 312.

28 The work of Chrystal Goudsouzian focuses on piecing together real-world birth rites from the allusions to birth within funerary culture and texts such as the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead.
Morris has already established paddle dolls to be representations of *khener* dancers, and as this dissertation has shown, faience female figurines to be as well, it is then clear that these figures are intended to help with the rebirth of the deceased in some fashion. The exact process and manner of this rebirth is analyzed and discussed in chapter 3 and the role of the *khener* dancers in birth is discussed in chapter 7.

**Ceramic Context**

Since *Votive Offerings for Hathor*, ceramic female figurines have been studied by multiple individuals; however, most of these studies, such as Joanne Backhouse’s “*Scènes de Gynécées*” Figured Ostraca from New Kingdom Egypt: Iconography and Intent” focus on evidence from the New Kingdom, specifically the site of Deir el-Medina. Also, within these works, like the aforementioned example, female figurines are not always the central focus, but serve as comparanda. While these studies are important to understanding the New Kingdom usage and function of these figurines, they do not delve into the Middle Kingdom or Second Intermediate Period contexts of these finds. Furthermore, though tempting, to correlate New Kingdom beliefs with Middle Kingdom evidence, this process of extrapolating backwards into the past is not always the most productive for producing an accurate picture of a time period, lived experience, or history. Though this dissertation will make correlations between Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period ceramic figures and New Kingdom scenes, it should be noted that this is largely due to a lack of Middle Kingdom evidence concerning birth. Part of this problem is a lack of evidence concerning birth and the average ancient Egyptian person, and

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so this dissertation will make use of available evidence to suggest what birthing rituals may have looked like and how ceramic female figurines may have been part of this.

To delve into the contexts of ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3), we must first understand how they were discussed by Pinch. She places them in tombs, homes, and temple sites,\(^{30}\) which is accurate; however, like with faience female figurines, Pinch’s corpus is not particularly detailed as to where her information came from, making it impossible to know if she consulted purchasing records, excavation reports, or the archaeologists themselves to obtain this information concerning the contexts of ceramic female figurines. It is evident though that ceramic female figurines have a complex context data set.

There are 26 ceramic female figurines that can be defined as Pinch’s Types 2 and 3 in my corpus.\(^{31}\) Of these, 13 have definitive contexts, 3 of which are attributed to cemeteries. From the remaining figurines, 4 have questionable contexts, and the remaining 9 are of unknown provenience. From the 13 provenanced figures, 6 are from Deir el-Ballas.\(^{32}\) This is significant as Deir-el-Ballas is still undergoing excavations by Peter Lacovara and his team, and ceramic female figurines continue to be excavated from the site. According to Lacovara, the ceramic figures tend to be surface finds in the domestic areas of the site and can be dated to the Second

\(^{30}\) Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 200; 202.

\(^{31}\) These figures are described in the introduction and chapter 1; Pinch’s types are discussed in chapter 1.

\(^{32}\) Please see Appendix B, Table 6 for a concise layout of this data.
Intermediate Period. Some of these figures were discussed by Victoria Jensen in her dissertation on the burials from Deir el-Ballas.

The site of Deir el-Ballas was first excavated by George A. Reisner in the early 1900’s with funding from Phoebe A. Hearst and later the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (BMFA). It was during these first excavations that unspecified female figurines were found in the cemeteries of Deir-el Ballas. As these figures have not been described by a typology, it is impossible to know how these initial finds from the site fit into this discussion, or this corpus, but it is indicated in additional excavation reports that ceramic female figures were found in association with the palace area, surrounding homes, and “tomb fill.” Though her dissertation does not focus solely on the ceramic female figurines from Deir el-Ballas, Jensen mentions them several times throughout the work and notes possible uses for them. Of particular significance is the fact that Jensen rightly denotes a different purpose for the figurine depending on its context. She acknowledges that the figures may have held different functions that were designated by the spaces in which they operated. For example, Jensen notes that figures found within home contexts were most likely used to aid in birthing rituals, those found broken in trash heaps may have functioned as a form of apotropaic magic, and the ceramic figures found within tombs may have been intended to protect the deceased.

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33 Dr. Peter Lacovara, personal communications, 4/11/2020.


36 Ibid., 11.

37 Ibid., 11-12.
The contexts for the ceramic female figurines from Deir el-Ballas then appear to be tombs, temples, and houses, just as described by Pinch; however, Jensen’s dissertation provides some specific details that adds a layer of complexity to this. Out of the 8 specific contexts known Jensen mentions ceramic female figurines in 2 graves within homes in the workers’ village (Pit 187 and Pit 149), a structure west of the palace that is designated as part of Cemetery 500, House E, and 2 tombs. It should also be noted that the 2 tombs Jensen mentions have been dated from the reigns of Thutmose III to Amenhotep II (Tomb 1307) and the Second Intermediate Period to the reign of Thutmose II (Tomb 1319). These dates would then indicate that the partial figure found in Tomb 1307 is of New Kingdom origin, and the partial figure found in Tomb 1319 may be as well. As they are potentially from a very different time period, these figures may not have been functioning in the same manner as those ceramic figurines that can more securely be dated to the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period.

38 These include: Cemetery 1-200 which contained Tomb 21, Pit 149, and Pit 187. Cemetery 500, Cemetery 1200-1300, Tomb 1307, Tomb 1306, and Tomb 1319. For maps and more specific details see Jensen, The Cemeteries of Deir el-Ballas: Non-Elite Burials of the 17th-19th Dynasties and Their Relationship to the Royal Palace.

39 Jensen, The Cemeteries of Deir el-Ballas: Non-Elite Burials of the 17th-19th Dynasties and Their Relationship to the Royal Palace, 274-277; 297; 349-352; 399; 364.

40 Ibid., 350.

41 As previously mentioned within this dissertation, ancient Egyptian culture may have shifted to reflect new ideas and a changing world view, sometimes drastically even within a brief time period. The Middle Kingdom and the supposed “democratization” of the afterlife is an excellent example of this. Egyptology has characterized the Middle Kingdom as a transformative period where non-elite ancient Egyptians gained access to funerary rites and rituals; however, that does not appear to be the case. There is no indication that non-elites were ever barred from the afterlife, or did not undergo funerary rites, in the Old Kingdom. The difference is that during the Middle Kingdom elites began to express their status within their tombs and an emerging “middle class” began to dedicate their own shrines, offerings, etc. In other words, funerary culture blossomed and grew from the traditions of the Old Kingdom, rather than suddenly allowing any and all ancient Egyptians into the afterlife. It is my suggestion that this cultural change in the Middle Kingdom is just one example of this phenomenon. It is then highly probable that the ceramic and faience female figurines of the New Kingdom did not hold exactly the same meanings as those of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. It is for these reason that the partial ceramic figures mentioned within Jensen’s dissertation are excluded from this study. See: Zago, “Imaging the Beyond: The Conceptualization of Duat between the Old and the middle Kingdoms,” 208. See also: Willems, Harco, “The Coffin Texts and Democracy,” in Historical and Archaeological Aspects of Funerary Culture: Religious Ideas and Ritual Practice in Middle Kingdom Elite Cemeteries, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 126-229; Bickel, “Everybody’s Afterlife? “Pharonisation” in the
Though it is evident that some ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) have been attributed to tomb contexts, Jenson’s dissertation presents two special cases. Pit 149 appears to have been the grave of a child, and the other, Tomb 187, while initially believed to be a grave, shows no evidence of ever housing human remains. Pit 149 was first excavated by Reisner, who noted that the remains were already gone by the time of his excavations. The size of the pit suggested to him that only a child would have fit within the space. The pit held the head of a female figurine, a marl dish, a small juglet, and a wooden plank. The second “tomb,” or pit, 187 was found to contain an additional hole which contained two bricks, half a female figurine, half of a bivalve shell, and two faience rosette beads. These finds suggested to Jensen that Tomb 187 was not a burial at all, but rather a pit for ritual objects. Given that all of the objects found within the pit can be related back to birth in some manner, this is an excellent suggestion that I agree with. While Jensen does not give much detail about the bricks found within the pit, it is plausible that they were birth bricks which would have been used for the mother to stand on while giving birth as discussed at length by Wegner in his article, “A Decorated Birth Brick from South Abydos: New Evidence on Childbirth and Magic in the Middle Kingdom.” Additionally, the materials found with the brick are quite intriguing; half a female figurine, half of a bivalve shell, and faience rosette beads. If female figurines are intended


42 Jensen, The Cemeteries of Deir el-Ballas: Non-Elite Burials of the 17th-19th Dynasties and Their Relationship to the Royal Palace, 275.


44 Ibid., 275.


to aid in the process of giving birth, this figurine may have been a necessary part of the birthing rituals. As for the shell and the rosettes, these are elements often found in representations of *khener* dancers, suggesting that the protective qualities associated with these items were just as important as the *khener* themselves.\(^{47}\) It is also possible that Pit 149 was intended to function as an interment for ritual objects as well. Given that no human remains were found within Pit 149, and that it contained only a marl vessel, juglet, a partial female figurine, and wooden plank,\(^{48}\) there is nothing suggesting that these objects were not involved in a ritual of some kind. In fact, this may be evidence of a ceramic female figurine being used in apotropaic magic- or being part of an offering set,\(^{49}\) perhaps to ensure pregnancy or a safe birth. This would have been an appropriate use of a ceramic figurine like those discussed in this corpus, as I believe that when found in domestic spaces such as this, ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) may have functioned as fertility figurines. The connection between Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 figures and fertility is largely suggested by their context, such as the potential ritual item pits discussed here. Additionally, given the size of Pit 149\(^{50}\) and Tomb 187,\(^{51}\) it is possible that these were created for giving birth. Roth and Roehrig suggest that a hole may have been dug underneath the mother’s kneeling spot in order to catch any bodily fluids expelled during birth.\(^{52}\) As Pit 149 and Tomb

\(^{47}\) Often shells and rosettes are seen in the forms of girdles or jewelry on the figures.


\(^{49}\) This suggestion is based on similar finds from Gebel Zeit discussed within the next few pages.

\(^{50}\) 50cm deep and 170cm long (Jensen, 275).

\(^{51}\) The larger hole was 140cm, 172cm, 175cm, and 170cm on each side, and 50cm deep. The smaller hole was an additional 50cm deep and 170cm long and 65cm wide (Jensen, 275).

187 contained items possibly associated with birth rites, it is just as likely that they were the location of the birth as well.\textsuperscript{53}

The remaining figures Jensen notes in her dissertation come from household and temple contexts. While the building associated with Cemetery 500 may seem like a tomb context, there is no evidence of burials in this space. Instead, one of the rooms within the building was decorated with scenes of Hathor wearing a crown, and the female figurines were found with Nubian pottery.\textsuperscript{54} This may then have been a shrine to Hathor, or perhaps is better understood as being used as a ritual space in conjunction with the palace.

Temple and household contexts are by no means unique to Deir el-Ballas. Ceramic female figurines are found in these contexts at different sites across Egypt, such as Gebel Zeit. In their chapter “Figurines Féminines De Gebel Zeit (Égypt),”\textsuperscript{55} Georges Castel and Isabelle Régen discuss the main contexts of the ceramic female figurines from Gebel Zeit. The figures found at this site date from the 12\textsuperscript{th} dynasty through the 18\textsuperscript{th} dynasty, as Gebel Zeit had consistent occupation;\textsuperscript{56} however, the focus of the chapter is the Middle Kingdom figures, specifically those found within “the sanctuary.”\textsuperscript{57} In discussing this context, Castel and Régen break down the sacred space noting that there are two main deposits: one within the sanctuary walls that contained votive offerings, stela, and statues of gods, and secondary deposits around the

\textsuperscript{53} This idea was put forth in conversation by Dr. Patricia Podzorski.
\textsuperscript{54} Jensen, The Cemeteries of Deir el-Ballas: Non-Elite Burials of the 17\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th} Dynasties and Their Relationship to the Royal Palace, 297.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 30-32.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 20.
sanctuary area. These secondary deposits contained the female figurines, of which there are two main varieties dating to the Middle Kingdom present at the site. Both are ceramic, but one is a woman with a child, and the other is a woman alone. Finds associated with the ceramic figures include: clappers, amulets, stela, vases, and statues, all of which support the idea that Hathor was prominent at the site. Furthermore, the sanctuary was dedicated to three main deities: Horus as master of the deserts, Min of Coptos, and Hathor as Lady of Galena. Given the finds associated with the ceramic female figurines, and the presence of Hathor at the site, it is probable that these figures were used as votive offerings to the goddess.

As the ceramic figures of this corpus have demonstrated, the figures classified as Pinch’s Type 2 and Type 3 are found in sacred spaces, domestic contexts, and tombs. Due to this, it is clear that these figures were meant to function for the living and deceased, and therefore were most likely used in magic of some form that was dictated by their context. The question then becomes what was their use in daily life and death? Were these figures intended to heal, as suggested by Waraksa? Or were ceramic female figurines strictly for the purpose of fertility? I would propose that in sacred space contexts these figurines were part of an offering, or perhaps a ritual, in a domestic space, it is likely that they were intended to be birth amulets, and in a funerary context perhaps they functioned as midwives to the deceased. As ceramic is an

58 Ibid., 30.
59 Ibid., 32.
60 Ibid., 32-34.
61 Ibid., 32.
62 Ibid., 34. Please note that these finds from Gebel Zeit mirror the finds from Pit 149 at Deir el-Ballas.
63 Waraksa, Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function, 145; 153-169.
accessible material, it is possible that this made ceramic female figurines an economical choice for multiple purposes.

**Conclusions**

In emphasizing the individual contexts of paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figures, it is possible to see how they functioned in different spheres. Paddle dolls and faience figurines are found in tomb contexts, thus associating them with death and the transition into the afterlife. In contrast, the context of ceramic figures are much more flexible and they are found in sacred spaces, homes, and burials. Due to these drastically different contexts and realms of influence, it is evident that ceramic female figurines may have had multiple purposes for the ancient Egyptians, and context may have denoted how the figurine was to be used. Paddle dolls, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) demonstrate just how complex the context of female figurines can be, and that this is a fertile area for further study.
Chapter 6: Iconography and Tattoos

The imagery of paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) has contributed to the multitude of theories surrounding these objects, particularly Pinch’s idea that these figures are “fertility figurines;” however, as several other scholars such as Morris and Tooley, have noted, the iconography of paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines is far more complex than the discussions of their apparent nudity and tattoos might indicate. Furthermore, the tattoos represented on the figures are problematic in and of themselves, as tattoos have been interpreted by scholars such as Louis Keimer, Robert Bianchi,¹ and many others as only sexual symbols.

Paddle Doll Iconography

The front side of paddle dolls generally have a simple or “abbreviated” face, usually just depicting the eyes, though some examples had a clay or mud nose attached (fig. 1).

Figure 1- Paddle Doll example. Cat. no. AS7. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/141280/paddle-doll?ctx=181a6579-dda5-47d0-83f1-6e2b636011d5&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

As the corpus of provenanced paddle dolls is so small, it is unclear if this was a variation in style of paddle doll, or if this was standard practice. The neck is adorned with a series of painted necklaces, and just below that are two, minute breasts. The breasts are barely present on some of the paddle dolls, thus indicating that they are clearly not the focus. The arms of the paddle dolls are often short stumps, though some examples do show more elongated arms\(^2\) but never hands. Often on the upper arms/shoulders region there are several dots that form a larger diamond shaped pattern (fig. 2), these markings may be interpreted as tattoos as evidenced by several Middle Kingdom mummies that sport the same design.\(^3\) These women and their tattoos are discussed at length within this chapter. Some paddle dolls also had hair typically made of mud or ceramic beads that was attached either with twine wrapped around the head or by tying it to the figure through the use of small holes in the head (fig. 3). Due to preservation, the majority of paddle dolls do not have hair. This hairstyle is not seen in Middle Kingdom depictions of women, and thus may be indicative of paddle dolls representing women in a position as “other” in some way. This could be as \textit{khener} dancers, as wise women, as midwives, or some variation, or combination of all three of these positions.

\(^2\) See cat. no. AS3, AS5, AS16, AS17, AS18, AS19, AS22, and AS23 for examples of elongated arms.

Below the breasts is a usually red, black, and white checkered garment, which Morris suggests is reminiscent of the dresses worn by *khener* dancers.\(^4\) In looking at the costumes of dancers from the Old (fig. 4) and Middle Kingdoms (fig. 5), this is highly probable.

\(^4\) Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 86.
Figure 4- Old Kingdom Dancers example. From the tomb of Watekhathor, Dynasty 6, north wall. Image from: https://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/watetkhethor/e_watetkhethor_01.htm, date accessed 5/5/21.

Figure 5- And example of Middle Kingdom dancers. From the tomb of Antefoqer, TT 60, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12. Image from: https://www.osirisnet.net/tombes/nobles/antefoqer/e_antefoqer_04.htm, date accessed 5/5/21.
Additionally, this same pattern of garment appears to have been on the bodies of two tattooed women from the Nebheptre complex in Deir el Bahari. Catherine Roehrig provides more details about this garment:

“Just below the rib cage were impressions of a band, 3.5 cm wide, consisting of five rows of beads. The outer and center rows were composed of small wafer beads 2 mm in diameter. Two of these beads, made of brilliant blue faience, were found adhering to the body. Between the rows of wafer beads were two rows of tubular beads. This band was interpreted as a girdle that had been misplaced in the wrapping process, but a girdle of this width would have draped awkwardly around the hips. The impression of a similar band of beads was found in the same position on the body of Aashyt, a royal woman, who was also buried in the temple precinct. With two such examples, it seems likely that these beaded bands were correctly placed on the bodies. The position, just under the ribs, suggests the high waist bands of dresses worn by women in relief decoration of this period.”

It should be noted that this style of dress was common “in relief decoration of this period” as seen in fig. 6, so it is also possible that these dresses are not indicative of dancers, but rather the style of the time. The example provided (fig. 6) does not have the classic checkered pattern of a paddle doll garment; however, it is possible that this was originally painted onto the limestone.

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6 Ibid., 530.

7 Ibid., 530.

8 Without an in-person examination of the piece, this is conjecture. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, I was reliant on study photographs from online museum collections.
Figure 6- Dresses in tomb art. Image from: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/553293, date accessed 5/5/21.

The final element of the front side of paddle dolls is the emphasized pubic region, which are decorated with dots in neat rows. The small dashes in the pubic region may be indicative of pubic hair, despite the claims by some that these are tattoos.9 There is also often a small vertical line at the base of the pubic triangle, which may indicate the labia.

The reverse side of these figures are decorated, typically with intricate designs of dots and dashes, which are more tattoos.10 This patterning is often seen on the waist and buttocks and suggested, by Morris, to be tattoos reminiscent of girdles, like those worn by dancing girls.11 It is also possible that these markings are indicative of something entirely different. I suggest this based on the two tattooed women from the Nebheptre complex as they have the front of their...

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9 See Keimer, *Remarques sur la tatouage dans le Égypte ancienne*.


11 *Ibid.*, 79-80
abdomens tattooed with this same design (fig. 7). As many of these tattoos appear to be complex cultural symbols that with an elusive meaning, these are no different.

Figure 7- Diamond shaped patterns, possible representing girdles, on the dancers from the Nebheptre complex. Image from Catherine Roehrig, “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 533.

There are also two crisscrossed lines that stretch across the back of the paddle doll. These may represent the garment straps or beads. These crisscross designs look strikingly similar to the front of some dresses seen on dancers of the Old and Middle Kingdoms (see fig. 5). As some of the paddle dolls indicate these straps in only black or red ink, it may also be possible that these lines are evidence of scarification. As one of the mummies from the Nebheptre complex was scarred on her back with several lines in between her shoulder blades, and one that extended down to her buttocks, it is possible that these black or red inked lines on several paddle dolls are mimicking scars as seen on this woman (fig. 8).

12 Roehrig, “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 533-534.


14 Roehrig, “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 529.
Also present on the backs of many paddle dolls is a figure of the goddess Ipi-Taweret.\textsuperscript{15} She is usually holding a knife, for warding off demons.\textsuperscript{16} Often these images are deemed to be tattoos; however, as discussed below, it is likely that these images are not tattoos, but rather figural representations. As not all paddle dolls have this image of Ipi-Taweret, some have what appears to be Aha (or Bes) (fig. 9) or apotropaic animals, I posit that the figural designs on the objects are intended to act as a visual hint at their function. The apotropaic figure is similar to what is seen on magic wands, birth bricks, and segmented rods. This would then suggest a protective function for these figures that links them to the process of birth. Due to the archaeological

\textsuperscript{15} In this corpus 7 paddle dolls had visible examples of Ipi-Taweret. See Cat. nos. AS8, AS17, AS21, and AS22.

\textsuperscript{16}Morris, “Paddle Dolls and Performance,” 82.
context of these objects (tombs), the figural apotropaic images were likely intended to indicate that paddle dolls should be used to help in the process of rebirth. These small and seemingly insignificant images tie paddle dolls into the same sphere of birth magic as birth bricks, segmented rods, and magic wands discussed in chapter 3.

Figure 9- Aha on the reverse side of a paddle doll. Cat. no. AS18. Image from https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3145, date accessed 7/2/21.

Faience Figure Iconography

Faience female figurines are often referred to as “truncated” figures as they have no legs below the knee.¹⁷ The arms and hands of these figures are down at their sides with the finger-tips resting on the thighs. The faces of these figures are quite detailed with well-formed eyes, nose, and mouth, each feature is clearly represented and picked out in black. Like paddle dolls, faience female figurines are maybe decorated with tattoos.¹⁸ There seems to be a bit more variation in

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¹⁷ Angela Tooley, “Female Figurines of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Truncated (type 1) Figurines”, poster presented at: the 12th annual International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, Egypt, November 3rd-8th 2019.

¹⁸ Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 198.
the placement and designs of the tattoos on faience figures, such as on the thighs, arms, and torsos; however, many are the same motifs seen on paddle dolls. The upper arms are sometimes bare, and sometimes decorated with dots and dashes (fig. 10). These same dots and dashes appear on the thighs, and sometimes with diamond shapes (fig. 11). Some have dots that extend diagonally across the chest. These I am not convinced are tattoos, but instead propose they are garment straps (fig. 12) like those seen on the dancers in fig. 5, or perhaps beaded girdles. At the waist-line, the figurines are adorned with girdles. Below this, is an emphasized pubic region, decorated with dots in neat lines, that I again suggest are indicative not of tattoos, but pubic hair.

Based on the corpus compiled for this dissertation, it is evident that much of the tattooing on the front side of faience female figurines is on the thighs of the figure. The reverse of the faience female figurines is sometimes decorated with the girdle extending to the back, and other examples are plain. There is no evidence of an apotropaic figure adorning faience female figurines as seen with paddle dolls, nor is there decoration indicative of a garment or scarification. These small differences between faience female figurines and paddle dolls could be signs of shifting cultural beliefs.

Figure 10- Dots and dashes on the upper arms of faience female figurines. Cat. no. AS53. Image from https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA52863, date accessed 7/2/21.
Figure 11- Diamond shape tattoos on the thighs of faience female figurines. Cat. no. AS51. Image from https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 12- Criss-cross straps across the chest and abdomen. Cat. no. AS 46. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544220, date accessed 7/2/21.
The shared tattoo motifs are one of the reasons why I suggest that faience female figurines were a natural progression from the wooden paddle doll.\textsuperscript{19} During the Middle Kingdom wooden models and wood objects were common in tomb contexts until the late 12th dynasty. At this point there seems to have been a shift in favored material. Wood becomes gradually replaced with faience for some objects like female figurines.\textsuperscript{20} Additionally, faience female figurines are found in the same contexts as paddle dolls- tombs. Due to the shift in material, the almost identical tattoos and imagery seen on faience figures and paddle dolls, and the shared archaeological contexts, it is highly probable that the original function of Middle Kingdom faience female figurines was the same as paddle dolls. They were intended to serve as magical representations of \textit{khener} dancers in their role of magical midwife, and thus help rebirth the deceased into the afterlife. The differences mentioned above are signs that the earlier Middle Kingdom ideas surrounding rebirth were changing.

Faience female figurines have a wide range of hairstyles, which Angela Tooley posits is indicative of their use. Over a corpus of 200 faience female figurines ranging in date from the Middle Kingdom to the late New Kingdom, Tooley has identified three main hairstyles with substyles. Her main groupings are: tonsure (cropping or shaved), sectioning into three parts


(trichotomy), and braiding. There are 10 substyles of braiding and 6 substyles of the non-braided groupings. 21 Tooley asserts that these hairstyles are not random, but rather key to understanding the overall purpose for truncated female figurines. 22 I agree with this theory, but want to emphasize that it can only be applied to truncated figurines, like the faience ones discussed in this dissertation. 23 As for the meaning of some of the hairstyles, Tooley suggests that a sidelock (see cat. no. AS45) was meant to convey perpetual youthfulness and was perhaps connected to the ideas of the Heb-Sed festival. By the New Kingdom, during this event the royal princesses were associated with the goddess Hathor as the msw nsw and it was their role to “bring about the regeneration of the king.” During this ritual the princesses wore a sidelock. 24 This once again connects female figurines to ideas of rebirth. Additionally, all of the hairstyles mentioned by Tooley are also seen on dancers. 25 This then furthers the connection between female figurines and dancers at least in the Middle Kingdom.

**Ceramic Figure Iconography**
Geraldine Pinch described the types of ceramic figurines seen in this dissertation as “crude,” in the round, and of ceramic (fig. 13). The eyes of these figures are slits and, like paddle dolls, the emphasis of the figure is not on the face, but rather the body. The nose of the figures is


22 Ibid., 249.

23 There are also limestone and ceramic varieties of truncated figurines; however, the ceramic figures are not the same as those discussed within this dissertation.


25 Ibid., 255.
often described as “beaked,” and they are also known for their elaborate hairstyles.\textsuperscript{26} The hair of the ceramic figures in this corpus is the trichotomy (fig. 14) and possibly tonsure (fig. 15) as described by Tooley.\textsuperscript{27}

Figure 13- An example of a Pinch Type Two female figurine with tonsure hairstyle. Cat. no. AS58. Image from https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3861, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 14- Trichotomy hairstyle example. Cat. no. AS56. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544812, date accessed 7/2/21.

\textsuperscript{26} Pinch, \textit{Votive Offerings to Hathor}, 199-200.

\textsuperscript{27} Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the Conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” 245-246.
Hair is sometimes modeled from the same ceramic as the body of the figure (see fig. 14), or in some examples the heads are elongated with holes in them. In these cases, hair was made out of mud or ceramic beads that could be attached to the figure using these holes (fig. 16).

Figure 15- Tonsure hairstyle example. Cat. no. AS54. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148297/female-figurine?ctx=2f0675ae-66ae-48a3-ab43-654e7738c4a1&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 16- An example of a ceramic female figurine with the holes in the back of the head to attach hair. Cat. no. AS55. Image from https://collections.mfa.org/objects/148303/female-figurine-fragment?ctx=1a68e94a-4f34-4239-bff0-e83d308a7875&idx=0, date accessed 7/2/21.
These figures differ from the hairstyles of the faience figurines as they also depict a hair fillet around the forehead (fig. 17). This detail is one of four that separates ceramic figurines, known as Pinch Type 2 and 3, from paddle dolls and faience female figurines. Moving down the face, some of the figures also have large ears with piercings intended for actual earrings (fig. 18).28 Again, this is another major difference from paddle dolls and faience figurines, as these forms of the female figurine never were adorned with actual jewelry. Jewelry elements were done in paint or pigments on faience female figurines and paddle dolls. In terms of body some of the figures have legs, while others, such as figure 19, did not.

Figure 17- An example of the hair fillet seen on Pinch’s Type Two and Three ceramic figurines. Cat. no. AS56. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544812, date accessed 7/2/21.

28Pinch, Votive Offerings to Hathor, 199. Pinch also cites examples that were found with the earrings still intact and the figure was wrapped in linen.
Figure 18- An example of a Pinch’s Type Two with earring holes. Reverse side is shown to demonstrate that the holes are not eyes. Cat. no. AS75. Image from https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/265129, date accessed 7/2/21.

In all cases, they were not intended to stand on their own. This variation in body type is the third difference between ceramic female figurines, paddle dolls, and faience figures. It also suggests that these figures were not manufactured in one place or by one group of people, but rather possibly by individuals at home. The arms of the figures are also varied. Some are down at the sides (see fig. 16), others have stubs (fig. 19), and some appear to be holding an infant either on their back or at their breast (fig. 20). These children could be indicative of their function as fertility amulets, or perhaps show the desired outcome from birth (or rebirth), the mother or midwife holding the newborn child.
Figure 19- Pinch’s Type Three with stubs for arms. Cat. no. AS57. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/556847, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 20- An example of a ceramic female figurine with a child. Cat. no. AS73. Image from https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/170021, date accessed 7/2/21.

The rest of the body has the emphasized body art and pubic region associated with “fertility figurines.” The area surrounding the breasts and down to the navel is heavily decorated with dots. It has been suggested by Pinch that these dots are representative of tattoos or scarring. Below the navel, at the hips, are more dots, which may again be tattoos, or perhaps a girdle.\textsuperscript{29} The figures also have an emphasized pubic triangle, with the shape of the pelvis outlined.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 199.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 199.
Tattoos

The iconography of the figures discussed above has one major similarity: each figure has markings that have been interpreted as tattoos. To better understand these markings, tattooing in ancient Egypt must be addressed.

Much of the literature on tattoos is concerned with the process of tattooing and the tools used to create these markings. While this is important information, it will not be discussed here, as the iconographic elements of the tattoos, and how tattoos have been interpreted in relation to female bodies and female figurines is far more pertinent to this discussion. As a generalization, Egyptology often interprets tattoos on women, and on female figurines, as being erotic in nature. While more current studies, like those of Anne Austin, are changing this narrative, there is still an underlying current of the erotic in discussions surrounding tattoos and female bodies, even regarding figurines. This largely is due to how women, women’s bodies, and female figurines have been discussed in the predominately male-authored Egyptological literature. Most of these discussions focus on the nudity within Egyptian art and frame this as proof of concubines and prostitution (see chapter 2). In other words: sex sells, and tattoos just happen to be part of this branding. I disagree with that assessment of tattooing and instead suggest that the tattoos found on female figurines, and some female mummies, were intended to indicate their status within the khener troupe and/or their role within society. Below is a brief historiography of Egyptological discussions of tattooing, and briefly, some examples of how tattoos are discussed outside of the field. These largely anthropological works are used as a foil to the studies of

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tattooing done within Egyptology and serve as an example for how we can better contextualize ancient Egyptian tattoos.

One of the most comprehensive sources concerning tattooing in ancient Egypt is Louis Keimer. Keimer begins by discussing Predynastic figures which appear to be tattooed (fig. 21). He notes that while, at the time, there was no proof of mummified remains with tattoos from the Predynastic, these figures clearly display ornamental motifs on female bodies and therefore should be taken as tattoos or body paint.


In general, there are two designs seen on these figures: geometric shapes and animals. Both of which are also present in the pottery of the Predynastic. Keimer’s reasoning for beginning his

32 Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dans l’Égypte ancienne. Other scholars, such as Blackman and Hornblower have discussed tattoos, but only in a cursory manner.

33 Now there are several mummies from the Predynastic with tattoos that have been identified. See Renée Friedman, “New Tattoos from Ancient Egypt: Defining Marks of Culture,” in Ancient Ink, ed. Laris Krutak and Aaron Deter-Wolf, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 11-36.

34 Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dans l’Égypte ancienne, 6.

study on tattoos with the Predynastic figures was to establish a tradition of tattooing in ancient Egypt, for prior to Keimer, Egyptologists, such as G.D. Hornblower, had discussed tattooing as a Middle Kingdom phenomenon derived from Nubia. Disappointingly, Keimer’s work would be underutilized when discussing the origin of ancient Egyptian tattooing, and instead Robert Bianchi would reassert the idea that tattooing began as a Nubian tradition and then filtered into Egyptian culture by the Middle Kingdom. To be clear, Keimer did posit that there was a plausible connection between the tattoos of Middle Kingdom women and Nubian C-Group peoples, but he did not assert that tattooing was a foreign tradition imported into Egypt from Nubia as other scholars had. More recent scholarship on tattooing still discusses whether tattooing is an original tradition to Egypt. Based on the evidence discussed by Renée Friedman in her 2017 article on Predynastic tattooed mummies, it is evident that tattooing was part of Egyptian culture well before the Middle Kingdom. Additionally, Friedman suggests that each region developed their own unique style of tattooing based on geometric and figural designs seen within Predynastic pottery. With this evidence in mind, it therefore stands to reason that: “each cultural area developed its own tattoo traditions and techniques.”

The most useful piece of Keimer’s study is his first-hand account and work on the tattoos of the 11th dynasty mummy Amunet. Amunet is probably the most famous tattooed mummy from ancient Egypt and has been studied by scholars repeatedly and mentioned in almost every

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37 Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dans le Égypte ancienne, 6-7; 16-17.


39 Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dans le Égypte ancienne, 16-17.

40 Friedman, “New Tattoos from Ancient Egypt: Defining Marks of Culture,” 34.
study concerning tattoos. She was discovered in 1891 by Eugène Grébaut in the temple court of Nebheptre (Mentuhotep II) at Deir el Bahari.\textsuperscript{41} Her burial equipment named her as a priestess of Hathor (\textit{hmt ntr}); however, as Keimer was writing in 1948, many of his colleagues had interpreted female graves in this area to be the concubines of Nebheptre, and he was utilizing this scholarship.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, Amunet, and her tattoos, were immediately colored as sexual objects. Keimer does not dwell on this aspect and I would argue this made his study ahead of its time.

Though Keimer had only one day to examine the mummy, which is now housed in the Cairo Museum, his study is the most comprehensive.\textsuperscript{43} Prior to Keimer’s work, another scholar by the name of Dr. Fouquet had studied Amunet’s remains. On this Keimer states: “je suis convaincu que la description des tatouages de la dame Amounet est insuffisante et même en plusieurs points erronée.”\textsuperscript{44} Keimer then proceeds to discuss Fouquet’s work in a footnote, where he basically calls Fouquet a fraud and states that he presented falsified evidence to the Academy of Sciences in Paris. These assertions were all supported by Douglas Derry who assisted Keimer in his work on Amunet.\textsuperscript{45} Each tattoo was meticulously documented with photographs and drawings and then was described within the study. Keimer sorts the tattoos by body part and then by specific area. For example, the stomach tattoos are divided into those above the naval and those below the naval.\textsuperscript{46} He then proceeds to discuss the properties of the tattoos, such as their

\textsuperscript{41} Keimer, \textit{Remarques sur la tatouage dan le Égypte ancienne}, 8.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}, 10-12.
bluish color.\textsuperscript{47} While Keimer does provide very specific descriptions of the tattoos, for this discussion his interpretation of them is far more pertinent. Keimer states that the tattoos found on the priestess Amunet, and examples like them, such as those found on the two mummies discovered in the Nebheptre complex by Winlock in 1923, are the tattoos of Theban dancers.\textsuperscript{48} As Amunet and her companions bear similar markings, including an abdominal scar,\textsuperscript{49} Keimer asserts that the tattoos were markers of their profession. He also goes one step further and suggests that female figurines with these same markings should also be interpreted as Theban dancers.\textsuperscript{50}

At the time, female figurines, including paddle dolls, were considered to be “Brides of the Dead” made leg-less, and therefore defenseless, for serving the tomb owner.\textsuperscript{51} Keimer’s theory that these representations of women were in fact dancers, and not essentially tools for sexual gratification for the deceased, was almost revolutionary. After asserting that these figures, and therefore the mummies from the Nepheptre complex, were dancers, he then uses the term concubine as a synonym for dancer.\textsuperscript{52} While Keimer’s work is comprehensive, it does fall short of breaking the misconception that priestess, dancer, and concubine were all one in the same.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 13-15.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 14-15.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 15.


\textsuperscript{52} Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dans l’Égypte ancienne, 17.
Tattoo designs discussed by Keimer include the “points and lines” as seen on many paddle dolls and faience figurines and images of Ipi-Taweret. According to Keimer the “points and lines” can be interpreted in different ways; however, the main arguments up to this point had been that these tattoos functioned either as apotropaic magic meant to heal or possibly aid in childbirth, or that they were the physical markers of a prostitute.\textsuperscript{53} That said, I agree that images of points and lines were perhaps intended to function as a form of apotropaic magic. As for images of Ipi-Taweret, Keimer interpreted them to be symbols of overt female sexuality, which he oddly links to not only dancers and concubines, but pregnant women and mothers.\textsuperscript{54} He addresses the images of Ipi-Taweret specifically in relation to paddle dolls and to this he says:

“Ici le fait est indiscutable: ces planchettes en bois sont caractérisées par un sexe féminin indiqué de manière exagérée, par es tatouages de la même forme (points disposés en losanges) que ceux des deux momies thébaines et par de Thouëris traces sur le ventre ou près du triangle de Vénus. Sexe féminin accentué, Thouëris et tatouages dessinés sur les « poupées » en question semblent donc prouver que nous avons à faire à des concubines, prostituées, danseuses, etc., enceintes ou mères.”\textsuperscript{55}

Keimer does not provide further explanation. He does not elaborate on why he has emphasized the idea that images of Ipi-Taweret may also be used by pregnant women and mothers. Keimer does note that paddle dolls may have been used as magical tools by women.\textsuperscript{56} An idea which he

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 96-98.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 102.
leaves open for interpretation. I have interpreted this emphasis on pregnant women and mothers as indicating a new idea concerning the use of paddle dolls, one that Keimer wants other scholars to explore further. In this idea I partially agree with Keimer. Paddle dolls were magical tools; however, they were used for birthing the deceased into the afterlife and functioned as the midwives necessary for this process.

Keimer also discusses cross-shaped tattoos on some of the figures, such as the small corpus he studied from the Cairo Museum (fig. 22). The cross shaped tattoos are most often found on the kidneys just above the cowrie girdle; the meaning of these tattoos is unclear, and Keimer does not provide more interpretation on these beyond noting that they are similar to those seen on Nubian C-Group figures. Later, Desroches-Noblecourt interpreted these cross-shaped tattoos as symbols of Isis and Nephthys performing their role as mourners. She elaborates on this idea noting that family members would have been adorned with this symbol to stand in as the goddesses to help aid the deceased in their “reinvigoration.” Paddle dolls and faience female figurines are therefore performing this same role.

57 Ibid., 33-34.
58 Ibid., 33-37. Keimer also states that correlating the meaning of these cross-shaped tattoos to the Nubian C-Group examples is a precarious task as the two cultures may not have assigned the same symbolic meaning to these tattoos.
Lastly, Keimer’s work provides a useful discussion of what a tattoo is and what ancient Egyptian tattoos may have been used for. According to Keimer, not all things that are depicted on representations of bodies, or even bodies themselves, are tattoos. For example, scarification is a different form of body enhancement when done intentionally. To summarize, not all things incised, painted, or drawn on an image of a body must be representative of a tattoo. This is important to remember, as often clothing, such as hip girdles and the garment seen on paddle dolls, has been interpreted as tattoos. Keimer is also correct in questioning if the images of Ipi-Taweret on the backs of paddle dolls are representative of actual tattoos, or if they represent the apotropaic imagery associated with birth, as seen on magic wands. If this is the case, then this provides another link between paddle dolls and birth magic. The same idea then should also be applied to the markings on ceramic female figurines, and it should be questioned if these are

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60 Ibid., 65.

61 At this time a mummy with a tattoo of Ipi-Taweret has not been discovered, without this evidence it is then unclear if these figural depictions on paddle dolls were all representative of tattoos.
tattoos, scars, or some type of body paint. Additionally, this works nicely with one of the potential uses for ancient Egyptian tattoos: that there was a religious, superstitious, or medicinal purpose for the tattoos. Other uses are familial, as in to express familial connections, and, lastly, as purely decorative elements. The idea that the ancient Egyptians may have used tattoos for purely ascetic and decorative reasons cannot be ruled out. These categories are not specific to ancient Egypt; however, they are more probable uses for tattoos than to simply be sexual.

According to Robert Bianchi, ancient Egyptian tattoos are sexual and intended to be erotic. Bianchi begins by stating that tattoos had largely been ignored by Egyptologists before him because “of then-prevailing social attitudes toward the medium,” but then goes on to state that eroticism is most “undoubtedly associated” with tattoos. This analysis of tattoos then feeds into the idea that dancers were no better than concubines. Furthermore, Bianchi does provide a brief analysis of female figurines:

“small in scale, easily fondled, and intentionally rendered physically helpless, such statuettes were interred with the deceased to arouse his primitive sexual instincts and, by means of an elaborate religious conceit associated with Osiris, the God of Resurrection, to insure magically his rebirth.”

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Bianchi elaborates on this by stating that, by extension, mummies that are tattooed, such as Amunet, then have “an undeniable carnal overtone.”67 In other words: female figurines are tattooed and therefore sexual in nature, intended to please men and for the male gaze. By extension tattooed women, even if they are in the position of priestess as Amunet was, were also erotic and intended to excite men. By correlating female figurines with prostitutes and the real-life tattooed women of the Nebhepetre complex, he makes real life women and representations of women one and the same. This also ignores that female figurines are not exclusively found in the graves of men, but in the graves of women and children as well.68 If anything, Bianchi’s discourse on tattooing says more about the author than the tattoos, or representations of them. It is important to note that he concludes by stating that New Kingdom tattooing must have been “religious or secular in nature,”69 thus continuing a tradition of Egyptologists considering New Kingdom culture to be superior in some way, or the prime of ancient Egyptian history. Lastly, it is evident that Bianchi’s work perpetuates the idea that tattoos are sexual as it is cited in almost every article after its publication referring to tattoos.

Geoffery Tassie’s work on tattoos is probably the next most cited study on ancient Egyptian tattooing in the field. There are a few points made by Tassie that are helpful to this discussion, namely that there is no apparent word for tattoo or tattooing in ancient Egyptian. Additionally, there are no obvious references to the practice in the written record either.70 Both

67 Ibid., 22-23.

68 See chapter 5 for more about the contexts of female figurines.


of these are important points as it severely limits our interpretation of permanent tattoos and does not provide any solid evidence as to what these markings are indicative of, or how they functioned within ancient Egyptian culture. Instead, the study of tattoos and their function, much like female figurines, is left largely to conjecture.

Tassie also states that Middle Kingdom tattoos were for “physiological changes, reproductive capacity, and sexuality, whereas the Bes tattoos, which were originally a magico-religious New Kingdom Egyptian practice seem more concerned with protection during childbirth.” Tassie must also be given credit for beginning to move the discussion of tattoos and female figurines in the direction of magic, stating that:

“Thus tattooing, predominately of women, and the positioning of some tattoos, such a dot-dash designs, as well as Bes, and earlier Ipi-Taweret figures, on the thighs and/or the abdomen, strongly indicate that the tattooing practice was closely linked to female spheres of life, and indicate their possible protective functions to aid fertility or to protect the wearer from death in childbirth.”

The only problem with this is that using tattoos as a form of pregnancy and birth magic does not necessarily apply to dancers and priestesses. Why would dancers, musicians, and priestesses have tattoos related to birth if giving birth is not linked to their occupation? Is it because they themselves are magically linked to this process as midwives? As Tassie does not address these questions, or suggest that these tattoos may function to denote a woman’s role as midwife, this then still leaves the tattoos of dancers, musicians, and priestesses, as open to interpretation.

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71 Ibid., 93.
72 Ibid., 96.
Catharine Roehrig has also addressed the issue of tattooing, specifically on the two mummies discovered by Wilkinson in 1922. The crux of her study are two drawings that were completed by Wilkinson in conjunction with an examination of the bodies done by Douglas Derry in the 1922-1923 season. These drawings were previously unpublished. These drawings provide the first accurate depiction of the tattoos found on the women from Pits 26 and 23 in the northern triangular court of the Nebhepetre complex, and are combined with a previously unpublished list of associated finds. The objects included: fragments of funerary models, jewelry made of faience and one piece was made of electrum, wooden boxes, a funerary mask, and the knob of a coffin lid. The tomb cards, which are the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s excavation records, state that the occupant of Pit 26 was a “powerful old woman” based on her burial. Each of these finds indicates to Roehrig “that the occupants of the north triangular court were high status members of Mentuhotep’s (Nebheptre’s) court,” a statement that thus far had not been made in association with these tattooed women.

Roehrig proceeds to explain the drawings and notes several key peculiarities. First the left forearm of the individual from Pit 23 was not well preserved, due to this her tattoos are not completely represented. The individual from Pit 26 was missing her lower legs and feet, whether she was tattooed in these areas is unknown. Also with the individual from Pit 26, the tattoos

73 Roehrig, “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 527-536.
74 Ibid., 529.
75 Ibid., 528-529.
76 Ibid., 527-528.
77 Ibid., 528.
78 Ibid., 529.
present on the “inner surface of this woman’s (Pit 26) lower left arm are represented on her lower right arm.” This individual also displayed scarification on the skin of her shoulder blades, with one scar reaching down to the top of her buttocks. Both women had scars on their abdomen. All scars are also included in the drawings (figs. 7 and 23).  

![Figure 23- The second drawing done by L. Keimer. Image from Catherine Roehrig, “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 534.](image)

Roehrig also notes that the individual from Pit 23 had residue of silver and impressions of jewelry on her skin. This included markings for what could have been a broad collar, bracelets, and a faience band just below her rib cage. This type of jewelry is reminiscent of what is seen on paddle dolls (see fig. 3) and some faience female figurines (see fig. 10). Hence why the description of these drawings, and the drawings themselves are vital to this discussion. Not only do they provide a clear picture of what was tattooed on these women, but also they indicate that scarification was also practiced in ancient Egypt, and indicate probable standard garb for these

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80 *Ibid.*, 529-530. This style of dress was popular from women of the Middle Kingdom and can also be seen in fig. 6 (Roehrig. “Two Tattooed Women from Thebes,” 530).
women. Lastly, Roehrig is one of the first individuals to clearly state that these women held an elevated status.81 This makes Roehrig’s work, other than Keimer’s, the first to give an actual look at where these tattoos appeared on the individual bodies from the Nebheptre complex. She also provides evidence to debunk the idea that these women were intended solely for sexual pleasure, and instead rightly states that these women were of some importance. In terms of paddle dolls, the women look like the figures, a fact that cannot be ignored and supports Morris’ work.

Morris also discusses tattoos as a form of evidence for paddle dolls being representations of khener dancers. As the tattoos on paddle dolls clearly imitate the tattoos found on Amunet, the women from Pits 23 and 26, and others from Kubban and Hierakonpolis, then tattoos may be associated with the khener. By extension, these tattoos are then symbols of the khener troupe and the women associated with it, and their presence on paddle dolls thus indicates that these objects are meant to be representations of the khener.82 Morris’ discussion is specific to paddle dolls, but her argument makes sense and I agree that some tattoos are clearly related to the khener.

Within this same vein of studies related to tattoos is the collective work of Stan Hendrickx, Heiko Riemer, Frank Förster, and John C. Darnell. Their article “Late Predynastic/ Early Dynastic Rock Art Scenes of Barbery Sheep Hunting in Egypt’s Western Desert. From Capturing Wild Animals to the Women of the “Acacia House,””83 provides evidence for early

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81 Ibid., 530.
tattooed female figurines being connected to hunting, butchery, and the rituals associated with both activities. They also suggest that these objects were related to the real women of the “Acacia House.”\(^{84}\) The female figurines related to this study appear to predate the Naqada III Period (see fig. 21), and are different from later Predynastic female figurines with “dancing” arms (fig. 24).


Hendrickx et. al. note that only one example of the figurines in question has dancing arms, all others have stump or blob arms.\(^{85}\) The female figures are described by the authors as being “characterized by painted details of clothing (and/or tattoos) and jewelry; several of them still have the remains of applied “wigs”, and the contours of their eyes are heavily indicated in green.”\(^{86}\) The images depicted on these figures are floral motifs on the front and sides, which the group suggests had “Nilotic” connections, with animals on the back. Some of these animals are

\(^{84}\) *Ibid.*, 212.

\(^{85}\) *Ibid.*, 212.

\(^{86}\) *Ibid.*, 212.
Barbery sheep, and many of the figures show animals in hunting scenes. Due to this Hendrickx et. al. concluded that:

“The female figurines with their tattoos/ paintings of hunting scenes and possible Nilotic imagery reveal the same association of women, ritualized hunting, and Nilotic allusions as that present in the ritual tableaux on the “Gebelin Shroud” and in the Hierakonpolis “Painted Tomb.” In these scenes, the women appear to adopt mannered bodily poses of ritual performance, and the women often appear next to- and among- scenes of hunting, and butchery, and ritual navigation. In pharaonic Egypt, this association of women, hunting, and butchery appears again with the female musicians of the pr-šndt, “the Acacia House,” textually attested by the beginning of the Old Kingdom.”

The evidence gathered by Hendrickx et. al. would then suggest that the women of the Acacia House, who are depicted in the form of female figurines, are in a position of power. Interestingly, by the Old Kingdom the khener is also associated with the Acacia House. They also use Morris’ work on tattoos and paddle dolls to further connect female figurines to this position, and add that there are two paddle dolls that appear to have hunting scenes on them; one with a dog and an oryx, the other with a dog and a lion (fig. 25 and 26). Not only does this connect women of the khener and Acacia House with female figurines, but also inadvertently connects the female figurines of the Predynastic to the paddle dolls of the Middle Kingdom. I would also suggest one

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87 Ibid., 212.
88 Ibid., 212.
89 Ibid., 212-213.
90 Ibid., 213.
step further, that perhaps these women were involved in a form of ritual animism associated with hunting and butchery; however, as there are few depictions of these women, this is conjecture based on the limited evidence provided by Hendrickx et. al.

Figure 25- Keimer’s dawn of a paddle doll, accession #43o88b Cairo Museum, with a dog and an oryx. Image from L. Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dan le Égypte ancienne, 30.

Figure 26- Keimer’s drawing of a paddle doll, accession #43o88a Cairo Museum, with a dog and a lion. Image from L. Keimer, Remarques sur la tatouage dan le Égypte ancienne, 30.

Hendrickx et. al. also noted that the women of the khener and the Acacia house “may be associated with midwifery, and the ṡnḏt institution- through the acacia tree- may relate to the rebirth of the king.”\(^{91}\) To further this connection they state that the acacia also had gynecological

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 214.
properties and was associated with both Sekhmet and Hathor. These deities are believed to also be associated with the *khener* as detailed by Morris (see chapter 1). Furthermore, as previously discussed, dancers aid in the birth of the future kings of Egypt in the “Three Tales of Wonder” as the tale appears in *Papyrus Westcar*. It is also evident that the female figurines are “probably” representing “early Acacia House musicians,” and their different arm positions could be indicative of different ritual aspects, or different ritual moments. The ritual involvement of these women also extended beyond hunting and butchery to include the opening of the mouth ceremony, thus tying them to birth and rebirth. This evidence would then indicate that certain tattoos were perhaps markers of the *khener*, and therefore women of power who were associated with birth and rebirth. Or as less directly stated by Hendrickx et. al.:

“we may for the first time propose a new meaning for the painted female figurines that explains both the associations of the various elements drawn on the figurines. The association of women, Nile, and desert hunt/animal sacrifice present on many decorated ware vessels is present in the tattooed/painted figurines, and in the tableaux from the “Gebelin shroud” and the Hierakonpolis “Painted Tomb.” Differences in poses are consistent with the ritual of hunting and meat sacrifice being more complex and multifaceted than simply the slicing of a throat and a woman dancing in a pantomime dance.”

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Renée Friedman has also produced two articles of relevance to the subject of tattoos. Her first relates to the actual tools used in the tattooing, and perhaps provides the first real insight into who was doing the tattooing and for what purpose. Friedman detailed a synopsis of a basket found in the Predynastic cemetery HK43 at Hierakonpolis. The basket came from Burial 333 (fig. 27), which belonged to a woman between the ages of 40 and 50, and appears to be a tattooing kit, or as Friedman noted the basket “was crammed full of remarkable objects.”

The basket contained stone pendants, a small amulet with the face of a bearded man on it, red ochre, galena, a pebble for grinding, “a set of tools made of polished animal bone,” an ivory hair comb, “four gaming pieces (?) made of polished stone or clay inlaid with shell,” 3 flint “bladelets,” and a “hook-shaped object of shell that maybe a forehead pendent.” The bottom of the basket held a “leather bag” filled resins, “small cones of clay,” plant remains, and wood chips. Friedman and her team identified this last item as pot-pourri. The contents of this basket,

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combined with “the care and effort taken over this particular burial indicates that the deceased was a very important woman” who may have been a “witch doctor or wise woman (or alternatively hairdresser and aromatherapist).”

These finds all indicate to me that this woman was most likely a wise woman as suggested by Friedman, and the kit was most likely a magic or medico-magical kit that would have been used by this individual in her work. Friedman also notes these objects could be indicative of a hairdresser or aromatherapist as in older scholarship one of the words for “lector priest” or “priest,” irit-šni, was translated as hairdresser when the title was given to a woman. There is no ancient Egyptian evidence to suggest that the Egyptians themselves thought that a man and woman fulfilled this role differently, which is clearly evidenced by the basket from Burial 333. In terms of tattooing the basket contained “a set of tools made of polished animal bone,” which Friedman stated in a later article were most likely the tools used for tattooing. Combine the presence of these tools with the red ochre and galena also found within the basket and one would be able to make what is now commonly referred to as “poke” tattoos quite easily. As the tools for tattooing are found in what is possibly a magical kit, this would then also suggest that there is an element of magic to tattooing in the Predynastic, which is supported by the evidence of Henderickx et. al.

Lastly, I would be remiss to not discuss some of the other items within “A Basket of Delight The 2003 Excavations at HK43.” Beginning with the “four gaming pieces (?) made of

99 Ibid., 19.
polished stone or clay inlaid with shell.\textsuperscript{102} I would suggest that perhaps these are the pieces for a segmented rod, like those seen in the Middle Kingdom; however, as they appear to just be small squares (fig. 27), it is entirely possible that they are gaming pieces or something else entirely. My suggestion is based on the fact that there are four pieces, and the team is unsure of their function. I also would be inclined to suggest that they are within the basket for a specific magical purpose. Second, I want to address the 3 flint “bladelets” (fig. 28), as this is a Predynastic cemetery it is possible that these are examples of $ntr\dot{w}i$-blades and were intended to aid the woman in Burial 333 with midwifery and early rituals of rebirth. Though, these are incredibly small in scale, it is also possible that they served as $ntr\dot{w}i$ amulets. In comparison to the $ntr\dot{w}i$-blades seen in the $ps\dot{s}$-$kf$ kits of the Old Kingdom, the shape is very similar (fig. 29). Of course, this could also just be a convenient shape for small blades.

Figure 28- Contents of the basket from Burial 333, circled is a gaming piece and “bladelets” and tattooing needles. Image from: hierokonpolis-online.org, date accessed 5/5/21.

\textsuperscript{102} Friedman, “A Basket of Delights: The 2003 Excavations at HK43,” 19.
Friedman continued her research on tattoos as more evidence of this practiced was unearthed from Hierakonpolis. She begins by detailing tattooing in Egypt during the Predynastic. She notes that there are several mummies from the Predynastic that are tattooed with both geometric and figural designs.\textsuperscript{103} This then denotes that tattooing was a much older tradition in ancient Egypt than scholars had previously speculated.\textsuperscript{104} Additionally, Friedman believes that these tattoos were intended to function as symbols of “power and virility” and that the tattoos “in some way conveyed power or strength to the wearer or provided protection from the disorder inherent in the wild.”\textsuperscript{105} As the tattoos from the Predynastic appear on both women and men, this is a fair analysis of what these symbols may have meant culturally.

Friedman also notes that Predynastic figures display tattoos, but these figures are rare. To this Friedman states that “either tattooing was not a widespread phenomenon within Predynastic society or (more likely) that such potentially personal marks were not relevant within the context

\textsuperscript{103} Friedman, “New Tattoos from Ancient Egypt: Defining Marks of Culture,” 12-16.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 17.
for which such figures were made and used.”

As for this context she refers to, Friedman explicitly states that the tattooed Predynastic figures were representations of practitioners of magic:

“they instead represent the practitioners of magic: the musicians and dancers who performed at ritual hunting and butchery events that took place in conjunction with various other ceremonies, including those surrounding funerals and births.”

She does cite Henderickx et. al. for this conclusion as well as the evidence from Burial 333 at Hierakonpolis discussed above. I agree with this conclusion that tattooing was done by magical practitioners, but would add that perhaps these tattoos denoted status in some way as well in addition to the possible functions put forth by Friedman which include “therapeutic, protective, or transformative (among many other) reasons.” For as Friedman states, it may be impossible for us to know the extent to which tattooing was used as a cultural marker or symbol.

From Predynastic tattooing, Friedman moves on to discuss specifically instances of Middle Kingdom tattooing, and notes that Amunet was the first evidence of this. She also addresses the fact that the modern stigma surrounding nudity, particularly the nudity of female acrobats and dancers, greatly affected the interpretation of Amunet’s status. Instead, Friedman states that Amunet and others like her should be considered as being associated with “the cult of

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106 Ibid., 19.
107 Ibid., 19.
108 Ibid., 22.
109 Ibid., 22.
110 Ibid., 22.
111 Ibid., 24.
Hathor and the knowledge of the associated rites.”  

112 Tattoos, she notes, are still physical enhancements; they were not intended to be sexual but to “perhaps augment the wearer’s beauty and effectiveness,” 113 to which power can also possibly added to this list. If tattoos are thought of as symbols of status, or transformative in some manner, then perhaps certain tattoos would denote power as well.

With regard to female figurines of the Middle Kingdom, Friedman states that they “should broadly be understood within the general realm of fertility magic,” 114 this theory does not fully express that these figures are possibly representing women of a certain status. Within this discussion of female figurines Friedman provides evidence of real-life women from Hierakonpolis 27C (HK27C), that appear to have “had special standing in their community” as their grave goods consist of objects worn exclusively by tattooed women, such as leather headgear and loincloths. 115 This “special standing” that she is referring to is as a dancer and midwife. Both of which were ritually important stations of power inhabited by women of the khener and possibly other dancing troupes as well. Lastly, Friedman concludes her article with:

“The evidence available to date suggests these marks among women in the Middle Kingdom may have signaled initiation into certain cults, access to special knowledge, or were professions of faith, but this was probably not their only purpose.” 116

112 Ibid., 25.

113 Ibid., 25.

114 Ibid., 32.

115 Ibid., 32-33.

116 Ibid., 34.
This is most definitely the case, and therefore Friedman’s article serves as a turning point in Egyptology. No longer are tattoos a physical markers of the erotic, but rather they are symbols of a complex religious system that appears to have centered around women, magic, birth, and rebirth.

Anne Austin and Cédric Gobeil are perhaps the most well-known for current research on ancient Egyptian tattoos. Though their work focuses on New Kingdom evidence from Deir el-Medina, their research into the process of tattooing and the possible uses and functions must be discussed here. The pair note that because the tattoos on the individual at the center of their study are on highly visible places on her body, such as her throat and shoulders, that the tattoos were clearly done by another person and “were meant to be seen by the broader community as well.” This statement makes it seem as though these tattoos were meant to be community symbols denoting this individual as someone of some type of importance, which Austin and Gobeil eventually address. The authors state that as the tattoos seen on their mummy appear to be functioning as votive formulae and visual talismans that she was most likely a wise woman, and therefore someone of great importance to the community. I would suggest that these tattoos functioned as symbols of power for different magical and ritualistic realms occupied by women. Lastly, Austin and Gobeil do make an interesting correlation between tattoos and magic

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wands noting that many depict the same apotropaic imagery, thus furthering this idea that tattoos held magical significance.\textsuperscript{120}

Austin later revisited some of the work done in the article discussed above in a 2020 American Research Center in Egypt conference presentation.\textsuperscript{121} Within this paper, Austin provides a detailed historiography of research on tattooing before readdressing several key points. First, as the corpus of tattoos is growing, it is becoming more and more evident that symbolism and motifs are chosen for a purpose, and thus far no specific pattern has been uncovered. This is of course, mostly applied to New Kingdom mummies. Second, Austin notes that tattoos may extend outside the sphere of Hathoric connections and connotations. On this point I agree with her. There are plenty of reasons to be tattooed, even in the ancient world, and plenty of cults that may have used tattooing as a sign of status or connection to a deity. Third, Austin asks if tattooing connects to the afterlife at all, or if the practice was really only intended for the realm of the living.\textsuperscript{122} To this point it is useful to look outside of Egyptology, as other cultures, such as the Ibaloy of the Philippines believe certain tattoos will allow their ancestors to recognize them in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{123} This means that tattoos can occupy a space where they are for both the living and the dead. The last point made by Austin during her talk was the importance of ethnographic evidence from modern cultures outside of Egypt and how this is necessary to break our biases about tattoos. These symbols were not meant as sexual lures for the deceased, but

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 29.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Anne Austin, “Recent Evidence for the Practice of Tattooing in Ancient Egypt,” American Research Center in Egypt virtual conference (ARCE), April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
rather were dangerous, magical, and spiritual in nature, as was the process of tattooing in general.124 These tattoos were most often done by women, on women. This makes Austin one of the first Egyptologists to publicly state that ancient Egyptian tattoos were powerful, ritualistic, and spiritual symbols for and by women.125

Outside of Egyptology research on tattoos takes a very different tone. In most fields they are recognized as important symbols of culture, community, and in some cases spirituality. Analyn Salvador-Amores discusses tattooed mummies of the Ibaloy in the Philippines, and not once in this article is the sensual nature of tattoos mentioned. It is a refreshing, and far more anthropological, approach to the medium. Of course, Salvador-Amores is also working with a larger corpus and living accounts of tattooing as it is still practiced in a traditional manner in the Philippines. This is information that we will never have with an ancient culture; however, the purposes for tattooing amongst the Ibaloy can still be applied to the ancient Egyptians in a broad sense. According the Salvador-Amores:

“Tattoos function as painful rites of passage, bodily decoration, talismans against malevolent forces, marks of bravery, visible markers of religious and political affiliations in the community, and as symbols of status or affluence.”126

My question then is: why can’t ancient Egyptian tattoos function in all of these ways? What about the tattoos suggests otherwise, or a niche function? Ancient Egyptian tattoos may have

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125 Austin, “Recent Evidence for the Practice of Tattooing in Ancient Egypt.”

very well functioned in the myriad of ways, like those listed above, and there is nothing to suggest differently, but there is also no concrete evidence to confirm this theory. Without explicit textual evidence stating what tattoos were for, and how they functioned in different contexts, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that they were only sexual, or only ritualistic, or even only magical and never for personal decoration. The very specific contexts of certain female mummies and their titles, such as Amunet, and the female figurines of the Middle Kingdom are a highly specialized subset of evidence that suggests only one of the potentially multiple uses for tattoos. In this specific case, tattoos indeed served a magical function, and most likely also denoted status or rank within the khener troupe or larger community as suggested by Austen and Gobeil.

A second point taken from Salvador-Amores work is the idea “that tattoo designs varied from village to village.”\textsuperscript{127} This idea of regional variation could also be applicable to ancient Egypt. Different regions and villages may have had differences in tattooing style or favored designs. This is an aspect of ancient Egyptian tattooing that has not really been addressed thus far, as it was only suggested by Friedman recently. Through the work of Austin and others investigating mummies for tattoos, regional variation may be seen. As of right now, the corpus of ancient Egyptian tattoos is really too small to speak to this topic at length.

Some final thoughts taken from Salvador-Amores: she proposes that tattoos are “a kind of permanent “clothing.””\textsuperscript{128} This directly relates to the female tattooed mummies of ancient Egypt and female figurines as it once again calls into question their nudity. As discussed in

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 45.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 47.
chapter 3, is one really nude if they are covered in tattoos? If these markings are intended to serve as cultic or magical markers of power or position, then perhaps not. The tattoos themselves may have acted as a type of magical adornment or “clothing” that would have sent several messages to the viewer/observer. While we cannot be certain as to what these messages were, based on the other iconographic elements of female figurines and paddle dolls, as well as their context and material, I posit that the tattoos on these objects, and the women they may represent, were intended to convey status within the cult and dancing troupe. The tattoos might have served as visual markers as to where the woman was at in her training, and perhaps what services she could offer in terms of magical aid and midwifery. Lastly, Salvador-Amores makes a key final point that can be applied to the study of tattoos in any culture, ancient or modern: tattoos are an “invaluable” source of “information regarding the sociocultural beliefs, religious, and mortuary practices.”¹²⁹ This is something that cannot be overstated in the study of tattoos.

Also concerning tattooing in the Philippines, Lars Kurtak makes several key statements in his short chapter “Reviving Tribal Tattoo Traditions of the Philippines.”¹³⁰ Kurtak states that tattoos are thought of as a thing of beauty; each and every tattoo “is personally sacred” to the individual and relates to their heritage in some manner.¹³¹ I am not suggesting that tattoos in ancient Egypt were as personal as the tattoos Kurtak is discussing from the Philippines, but the idea that the tattoos are sacred is what is important. This idea of sacred tattoos recognizes that they are done for a purpose outside of adornment and beauty, and that these tattoos carry with

¹²⁹ Ibid., 53.


¹³¹ Ibid., 59.
them symbolic meaning that is unique to the culture in which they exist. Kurtak also states that “tattoos should be earned and not given freely” within Filipino culture,132 this I think can also be applied to ancient Egypt if tattoos were markers of status. We should question as to how these tattoos were earned, if they were earned, and why they were earned by the individuals who bear them.

Work on Iron Age tattoos from Eastern Europe and Russia also reveals a different approach to the medium than what is seen within the majority of Egyptological research. Svetlana Pankova discusses tattooed mummies from the Altai-Sayan Mountains in Russia, which come from the Pazyryk culture. She notes a key fact about the relationship between tattoos and status. It was originally believed that only high-status individuals amongst the people of this region were tattooed, as more tattoos are being uncovered it is clear this is not the case.133 This then serves as a warning about the assumption of tattoos and status. While I have proposed throughout this chapter that tattoos may have been indicative of status within a cult or dancing troupe in ancient Egypt, Pankova’s work demonstrates that with more tattooed individuals being identified and researched, this may not be the case at all. In fact, this emphasizes that ancient cultures may have used tattoos as purely personal adornment and that status had no impact on if an individual was tattooed or not.

Additionally, when discussing the Pazyryk tattoos, Pankova states that they “demonstrate generally the same characters and iconography as motifs placed on felt, leather, wood, and horn objects, including horse equipment and masks, garments and headdresses, leather pottery vessels,

132 Ibid., 59.

and coffins.” To my knowledge, there has only been cursory studies done linking Predynastic tattoos and pottery motifs in regards to ancient Egyptian tattooing. This link between other everyday objects and tattoos is one that should be explored further. This dissertation does make note of images of Ipi-Taweret that appear on magic wands and paddle dolls. Additionally, it is highly probable that the tattoos seen on individuals such as Amunet are also reflected in pottery and other everyday objects, such as discovery of a “twelve or thirteen year-old” girl in 2012 at Abydos who “wore a beaded headdress (bearing diamond designs similar to the tattoos discovered on dancers).” The correlation between this headdress and tattoos suggests that diamond designs existed elsewhere in ancient Egypt.

Within this same vein of tattoos being linked to everyday objects, Pankova also notes that repeated motifs should not be taken as mere decoration, but rather as “Indigenous mythological and world view ideas, personified in a developed and system of intelligible meaningful signs.” In other words, even if the tattoo designs are repeated throughout a culture on everyday objects, garments, and skin, this does not diminish their importance, but rather exhibits just how key these ideas and beliefs were to the culture choosing to represent them. Pankova takes this a step further and states that the tattoos of the Pazyryk “may be considered a kind of visual language in this nonliterate culture, because they seemingly communicated crucial information to members

134 Ibid., 87.
136 Morris, “Middle Kingdom Clappers, Dancers, Birth Magic, and the Reinvention of Ritual,” 289. This information was given via personal communication.
137 Pankova, “Identification of Iron Age Tattoos from the Altai-Sayan Mountains in Russia,” 87.
of local society.” While ancient Egypt was not a nonliterate culture, much of the population was, and therefore tattoos in ancient Egypt may have fulfilled this same function. This then also bolsters the idea that some tattoos in ancient Egypt were symbols that indicated one’s status as a wise woman or midwife to the larger community.

A similar idea amongst the meaning of tattoos is echoed by Lars Krutak in his study on tattooing in Papua New Guinea. Krutak states that the tattoos of villages in Papua New Guinea are “signs on skin” and “are not just pictures; they are stories about their lives [the wearers] and journeys through it.” This indicates that the traditional tattoos of Papua New Guinea were seen as cultural symbols that told a story to the viewer. In this case, tattoos were primarily on women and tattooing was done by women in conjunction with lengthy sea trading voyages, or *hiri*. During the *hiri*, it was believed that the eldest daughter of the boat owner, and several other daughters of crew members, were sequestered in order to ensure the safety and success of those on the trading voyage. During this time, the girls had several superstitions that they must follow, including getting tattooed. These tattoos signified their transition into womanhood and protection for the *hiri*. The tattoos associated with the *hiri* not only became visual symbols of womanhood, but also reveal that tattooing was a community event. In thinking about tattooing in ancient Egypt, the idea that tattoos are symbols of life is an idea that has been discussed in this dissertation, but it is also worth noting that tattooing very well may have been a community event. Because so little is known about the practice of tattooing in ancient Egypt, it is plausible that the act of being tattooed was a ritualized event that indicated someone was progressing to

138 Ibid., 89.
140 Ibid., 185-188.
the next stage of life or being promoted within a dancing troupe. It is also plausible that members
of the dancing troupe would have come together to witness an individual being tattooed. While
there is no evidence for this, there is also nothing to suggest that tattooing was a solitary event in
ancient Egypt. Furthermore, in discussing ancient tattooing it is important to ask questions such
as who was present for the tattooing process? Why? What did this mean for the larger
community? And what did these tattoos symbolize to the community as a whole? Some of these
questions are addressed by Anne Austin in her more recent research, but further study of this
may prove useful in breaking the stigma of tattoos and tattooing as symbols of the erotic.

Petar N. Zidarov has discussed tattoos in the context of female figurines. Zidarov’s area
of focus is Southeastern Europe, specifically Thrace and the tattooing traditions of that area,
which includes examples of female figurines dating to the sixth and fifth millennia BCE.141
While well before the Middle Kingdom Egyptian examples of female figurines discussed here,
Zidarov’s work makes several key points concerning possibly tattooed figures. First, he states
that the designs on the Thracian figures “are reminiscent of Thracian clothing and textiles.”142
To my knowledge this has not been examined in depth in regard to Egyptian tattoos. Keimer and
Friedman have discussed the similarities between pottery designs and Predynastic female
figurines, but beyond these brief correlations, no others have been made. And none have been
made concerning Middle Kingdom paddle dolls, faience female figurines, or ceramic figures.
Likewise, there have not been any studies specifically concerning clothing and adornment and its
representation in ancient Egyptian tattoos. This would be an area for further research. Second,
Zidarov meticulously states throughout his study that female figurines only display “possible

141 Petar N. Zidarov, “The Antiquity of Tattooing in Southeastern Europe,” in Ancient Ink, ed. Lars Krutak and

142 Ibid., 138.
motifs and compositions that could have been rendered as temporary or permanent body art.” 143

This is a very important caveat concerning the scholarship of ancient tattoos. The corpus of
tattooed bodies present in ancient Egyptian contexts, and other ancient contexts, is small. It is
therefore at this time it is not feasible to determine how widespread the practice of tattooing was
in the ancient world. Additionally, the statement is an important reminder that just because a
design is represented on a female figurine does not mean it was permanently imbedded in ink on
a woman’s body. These designs could be representative of scarification, body paint, or tattoos,
and this must be kept in mind when discussing body markings on figures. 144 Third, and perhaps
most importantly, Zidarov also notes that these markings are “culture-specific.” 145 This would
make it erroneous for comparisons between these Thracian examples of female figurines and the
corpus of Egyptian female figurines discussed here. While both cultures have a practice of nude
or semi-nude, depictions of women out of clay that exhibit body markings, they are not the same.
Each of these objects functioned within a highly culturally specific realm unique to that
individual culture. This is perhaps the most important point made by Zidarov within his study as
it shows that while other cultures are producing similar objects throughout the Near East and
Europe, these examples are across large swathes of time and multiple cultures with very different
conceptions of the world. This reaffirms the assertion put forth in this dissertation that female
figurines may not have functioned in the same manner across ancient Egyptian history.

143 Ibid., 141.

144 Ibid., 142.

145 Ibid., 142. This is also discussed at length by Luc Renaut, “What to Make of the Prehistory of Tattooing in
Europe?,” in Ancient Ink, ed. Lars Krutak and Aaron Deter-Wolf, (Seattle and London: University of Washington
Lastly, Lars Krutak also provides an example of a purely anthropological approach to tattooing in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{146} His study is entirely reliant on ethnography; however, it is of note for several reasons. First and foremost, it emphasizes the importance of first-hand accounts of tattooing in different cultures as this is valuable information. Interviews with community members provide insights into different stages of the tattooing tradition in the Balkans, such as what tattooing was like during Turkish rule, and how the practice of tattooing fell out of favor under communist rule.\textsuperscript{147} While an interview with an ancient Egyptian is not possible, the material culture is accessible. This means that the Egyptologists must let the evidence speak for itself rather than impose ideas on it in order to create a clearer picture of what tattooing traditions in ancient Egypt may have looked like, and what they may have been for.

Krutak’s study looks at specifically Catholic tattooing in the Balkans, which is comprised of both pagan and Catholic motifs. Much of the information regarding these symbols has been lost to time, but the practice of tattooing is still seen as a purely religious act.\textsuperscript{148} There is no evidence that tattooing in the Balkans was ever for therapeutic or ritualistic purposes and the interviewees of the study all emphasized that their tattoos were in honor of Jesus and a symbol of their faith and cultural identity.\textsuperscript{149} This is mentioned here because it also demonstrates that while we have copious amounts of objects from ancient Egypt, highly culturally specific ideas such as this elude us. Additionally, this raises the question of what tattoos were meant to indicate in


\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid.}, 152-153.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{Ibid.}, 153-154.

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Ibid.}, 153- 154.
ancient Egypt? I have suggested here that tattoos were markers of dancers, and perhaps also symbols of rank and power, but in reality, it may never be known why the ancient Egyptians tattooed some individuals and not others and for what purposes. It may be that tattoos were symbols of faith, as they are in the Balkan culture, or perhaps they were therapeutic, or symbols of magic. None of these theories can be discounted and none of them should be ignored.

A final note to take away from Krutak’s article is the sheer variety in names for tattoos. Within Krutak’s brief study there are 14 different names for tattoos alone. Many of these names are based on the concept of tattooing, such as “to prick” or “to sting,” while others are based on the tattoo designs themselves.¹⁵⁰ I mention this here as a suggestion for further studies on ancient Egyptian tattoos: is it possible that the word for “tattoo” in ancient Egypt is more abstract such as these examples? It has been mentioned in this chapter that there appears to be no word in ancient Egyptian that we can translate to as “tattoo.” Perhaps that is simply because none exists. It is likely that the ancient Egyptians could have used a variety of phrases to describe the process of tattooing, or a person that is tattooed, but in a more abstract sense. It is also just as likely that there is no written record of the practice of tattooing because the tradition was passed down orally. Despite this, it is important to discuss all avenues of possibility to garner a better understanding of ancient Egypt’s tattooing history.

Through looking at research on tattoos outside of Egyptology it becomes apparent that there is much more to the practice than the majority of Egyptological research on the subject would allow for. I would suggest that ancient Egyptian tattoos in certain instances, such as when adorning priestesses of Hathor or khener member, should be looked at as symbols of power and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 150-151.
indicative of important members of the community. This may be as a wise woman, a midwife, a dancer, or a combination of these roles.

**Scarification**

Scarification is often discussed in conjunction with tattoos, as both mediums of body enhancement are often found on the same individuals. This is exemplified by the women from the Nebheptre complex that are both tattooed and scarred. While there is no comprehensive Egyptological study on scarification that I am aware of, there is a plethora of anthropological work on the practice that provides insight into what scarification is and why it may have been a chosen medium of body enhancement. To begin, scarification can be defined as “the deliberate, and often painful modification of the body,”\(^{151}\) that can be done for several purposes: as rites of passage, “a hardening/trauma procedure,” intended to mentally fortify and mature a child, to make one sexually appealing, and to make one sexually appealing by proving that one is unaffected by disease.\(^{152}\) A study conducted by L.R. Ludvico and J.A. Kurland studied scarification in different modern cultures from 1800-1960 to determine the frequency at which these uses for the practice occurred. Their data suggested that “nonadaptive sexual selection,” or the process of undergoing scarification to be more appealing to the opposite sex\(^{153}\) was the most common use of the practice, globally.\(^{154}\) Based on this study, it is then likely that ancient scarification may have been intended to entice the opposite sex and was considered a mark of

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\(^{153}\) Ibid., 158-159.

\(^{154}\) Ibid., 166.
beauty; however, it should be noted that in some cultures in Africa in particular, scarification is used both as a cosmetic, beauty enhancer and as a rite of passage. In undergoing the scarification process, not only is the individual becoming more beautiful in the eyes of the community, but they are also entering a different phase of life. This use of scarification may be applied to ancient Egypt, particularly the women of the Nebheptre complex, as it is plausible that their scars were intended to mark them as dancers, and as a separate, or different, group within society.

More specifically, Roland Garve et. al. study scarification in sub-Saharan African communities which serve as a good source of ethnographic examples to compare with scarification practices in ancient Egypt. Garve et al. concur that scarification is used as a rite of passage, as a “hardening” experience, as “a nonadaptive sexually selected character,” and as proof that one can withstand pathogens and is therefore a good sexual partner. In the multiple communities cited within the article, it is clear that these categories of purpose can be elaborated on, and that scarification for purely aesthetic or medicinal purposes cannot be discounted. For example, the scars obtained as a rite of passage also convey a cultural message to the community and these symbols may “indicate cultural identity,” as seen in the Southern Sudan. Within this area two groups, the Nuer and Dinka, are easily identified by one another due to the highly culturally specific scarification methods used within each community. Additionally, it is noted

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155 Ibid., 166.
157 Ibid., 2.
158 Ibid., 1.
159 Ibid., 3. These scarification techniques have ultimately contributed to the ongoing civil war between the two groups, as one can easily identify their enemy when performing daily tasks such as hunting or gathering water (Garve et. al., 3).
by the authors that other Nilotic groups practice scarification as a marker of community as well. This is an important point as ancient Egypt falls within the category of a Nilotic group, thus suggesting that it is possible that ancient Egyptian examples of scarification are part of a larger and wider tradition within this region of Africa. Lastly, as suggested above, this furthers the idea that the scars found on ancient Egyptian mummies are markers of community; however, this can only be put forth as a hypothesis as the current corpus of material, i.e. scarred bodies, is not enough to determine the frequency, commonality, or possible importance of this practice in ancient Egypt.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Garve et al. are the images of scarification. The images seen here are on women from Southern Sudan (fig. 30 and 31) and are noticeably similar to some of the motifs seen on ancient Egyptian paddle dolls (fig. 32 and 33), ceramic female figurines (fig. 34), and faience female figurines (fig. 35).

Figure 30- Scars on the torso of a Toposa woman. Southern Sudan. Image from Garves et. al., “Scarification in sub-Saharan Africa: social skin, remedy and medical import,” 4.
Figure 31- Scars on the arm of a Toposa woman. Southern Sudan. Image from Garves et. al., “Scarification in sub-Saharan Africa: social skin, remedy and medical import,” 5.

Figure 32- The pubic region of a paddle doll. Cat. no. AS9. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544216, date accessed 7/2/21.

Figure 33- The chest region of a paddle doll. Cat. no. AS9. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544216, date accessed 7/2/21.
In terms of paddle dolls, in comparison to figure 30, the defined marks on the pubic region and across the chest of the paddle doll look strikingly similar to the dot-dash scars on the torso of the woman portrayed in the photograph. While it has been stated that pubic markings on paddle dolls are perhaps more likely to be indicative of pubic hair, this comparison between paddle doll and scarification markings demonstrates just how subjective the representation of tattoos and scars
are in art. As the torso of the woman from Southern Sudan and the paddle doll pubic region do resemble each other, the idea that these markings are representing scars cannot be discounted, but it also cannot be proven as fact. In terms of the dot-dash designs shown across the chest of the paddle doll, while they match the shape and placement of the scars shown in figure 29, they are also the same pattern of confirmed tattoos often seen on the arms of women identified as dancers. This once again demonstrates the subjectivity of identifying body modifications in art and serves as an interesting similarity. This same assessment can also be said for markings on ceramic female figurines.

In terms of faience female figurines, it is intriguing that these objects sometimes have what appear to be cross shaped tattoos, or possibly scars, on their upper arms (fig. 35), as seen on a woman in figure 31. Again, while it is tempting to see the image of the woman from the Southern Sudan and her cross shaped scar, and correlate that to the faience female figurine, there are several issues with this. First and foremost, this is extrapolating backwards. Taking evidence from a modern culture in the Sudan and applying it to ancient Egypt is fraught with disclaimers. The symbol of the cross most certainly does not have the same meaning, and therefore the reasoning behind the scar/tattoo is not the same. Additionally, as with paddle dolls and ceramic figurines, without mummified evidence of cross shaped scars or tattoos on actual bodies, it cannot be determined based on this cross-temporal comparison that the cross-shaped marks on faience female figurines are scars. Thus, once again, this demonstrates that it is impossible to determine what from a body modification may take, or if it even is a body modification, from art alone; however, these comparisons are mentioned here as it is interesting and worth noting for further study.
Beyond enhancing one’s beauty, scarification is often used in what is referred to as “adaptive sexual selection,” this is the idea that by creating a wound and purposefully infecting the wound with dirt, mud, or other unsanitary materials, that one could prove their reproductive value and strength. In cultures that practice this type of scarification, polygyny is often popular amongst the community. This is thought to be because individuals with multiple scars would be thought of as the most genetically advantageous partners and parents. Depending on where the scars are located on an individual there is a greater likelihood of them becoming infected, and therefore the placement of the scars also determine an individual’s beauty and value as a sexual partner. Additionally, in women, scars along the waist are meant to enhance the waist to hip ratio, thus heightening their attractiveness by emphasizing their fertility. While some ancient Egyptian figurines may correlate to these types of scars, thus making it tempting to say that the ancient Egyptians practiced a form of “adaptive sexual selection” with scarification, there is not enough evidenced of scarred bodies preserved in the ancient Egyptian record. Additionally, I am unaware of any written evidence of scarification in ancient Egypt, thus making any discussions on scarification as it related to ancient Egypt largely conjecture. Based on ancient Egyptian evidence, it is unlikely that scarification was practiced in ancient Egypt in an “adaptive sexual selection” model; however, it is mentioned here to demonstrate what scarification means to many cultures that practice it on a wide scale.


161 Ibid., 404.

162 Ibid., 405.
Conclusions

Discussions of the iconography of paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic figurines, have largely been dominated by their tattoos; however, in noting key differences between paddle dolls and faience female figurines and ceramic figures it is evident that these three different representations of women are not entirely the same iconographically, but perhaps better understood as related. Paddle dolls and faience female figurines in tomb contexts are representations of prominent women within the ancient Egyptian community, most likely the khener. The tattoos which adorn these figures are then a visual connection to the real life khener women. As members of the khener were likely midwives as well, the figural representations of Ipi-Taweret and other apotropaic figures on paddle dolls then provides another link to the khener, and to their role as midwives. By contrast, ceramic figurines as seen in this study may not always represent actual real-life women, but rather could be amulets to be used by women. Their function in domestic contexts would have been to aid in the process of becoming pregnant, pregnancy, and giving birth; however, when found in tombs, it is likely that ceramic female figurines may have also functioned as magical midwives.

In terms of the tattoos seen on paddle dolls and faience female figurines, these should be read as symbols of power and status within the khener troupe. While this cannot be proven, it is likely that these tattoos were given to women in the khener troupe to indicate their rank and position as well as to demonstrate their importance and abilities to the community. The tattoos seen on these women would have then been very clear visual indicators that they were members of the khener, perhaps how long they had been members for, and what they could and could not do. In other words, if they were trained as midwives or not and if they had any additional magical capabilities. I recognize that this is a lot of conjecture; however, without textual sources and/or a larger corpus of tattooed mummies, this theory may not be proven. For the remainder of
this dissertation female figurines with clear representations of tattoos should be understood as representations of important and powerful *khener* women.
Chapter 7: The Khener, Paddle Dolls, Faience Female Figurines, and Ceramic Female Figurines

Thus far this dissertation has proposed several ideas concerning paddle dolls, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figures. Based on archaeological contexts and iconographic elements it is evident that paddle dolls and faience female figurines are related. Both are found within burials. Both share the same iconography with similar tattooing and dress. And both were developed during the Middle Kingdom. Ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) by contrast are found in settlement sites, sacred spaces, such as temples, and burials. Iconographically, ceramic female figurines have some differences from faience female figurines and paddle dolls, such as the possible inclusion of the fillet on the forehead. They developed during the late Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period. This summation of differences points to these objects perhaps serving a different function based on their archaeological context. Paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) may be representations of khener dancers who functioned as magical midwives. Ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) may be fertility amulets intended to aid the living in becoming pregnant, carrying to term, and delivering the child(ren) successfully and magical midwives to the deceased.

The Khener as Midwives

Ellen Morris has successfully argued that paddle dolls were intended to function as representations of khener dancers.¹ Her theories and lines of evidence are discussed at length in chapter 1. Building on Morris’ work, it is possible that certain members of the khener troupe functioned as midwives who aided the ancient Egyptian people with childbirth. As rebirth was a

reflection of birth, it would then stand to reason that the deceased would also need a member of the khener to help them be reborn into the afterlife. I propose that paddle dolls and faience female figurines of the Middle Kingdom were the magical midwives to the deceased.

This theory first hinges on demonstrating that one of the duties of the khener troupe was to function as midwives. The khener as midwives is not a new idea and has been suggested by several scholars such as Roth and Kinney, but despite the suggestion, khener dancers as midwives is often overlooked in scholarship relating to female figurines. This may be because the evidence for this claim is lacking, and overall there is not much documented information about the khener, thus making much of this theory conjecture. Lastly, another hurdle in understanding the khener as midwives comes from early scholarship when the ancient Egyptian word for khener, hnr, was translated as harem. Suzanne Onstine successfully argued against this classification of the khener as harem members within her dissertation noting that there is no documentation of the khener having anything to do with sexuality, or any activities that can be, or should be, deemed as sexual, or erotic, in nature. The khener were present for Sed and Opet

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2 Roth, “The pšš-kf and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 139-144; Kinney, Dance, Dancers, and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom, 1-167.


festivals, both of which deal with the reinvigoration of the king and Amun at Karnak, thus linking the troupe to ideas of renewed energy and vitality. Additionally, Onstine notes that the troupe was also involved in the earliest account of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley as documented on the Red Chapel at Karnak. On the west side of the chapel, a group of women labeled as the \textit{hnr n hwt nfr}, “the Khener of the temple,” is depicted. These associations with the Beautiful Feast of the Valley and the Opet and Sed festivals point to the \textit{khener} being something important and influential to the success of these events. This would not be the case if the \textit{khener} were indeed a “harem” as suggested in early scholarship. Additionally, the role of the \textit{khener} at these festivals is very reminiscent of their role(s) in rebirth. Their purpose was to help facilitate the renewal of energy. This then begs the question: did the \textit{khener} have this association with renewal because of their intimate knowledge of birth? As this is not the goal of Onstine’s study, she does not make these connections, but does conclude that the \textit{khener} were a “musical troupe” that performed at these events and worked with the temple. The ideas surrounding the role of the \textit{khener} should be taken one step further and the \textit{khener} should be understood not merely as just dancers or musicians, but as magical midwives as well.

Though working with Old Kingdom evidence, Kinney’s work on dance provides several key points that support the idea of the \textit{khener} as midwives, and more insight into who the \textit{khener} were. Kinney begins by noting that the ancient Egyptians held dance in high regard and that there are so many depictions of the artform that she had to limit her study to the Old Kingdom.

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\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{5} Ib\textit{id.}, 12.
  \item\textsuperscript{6} Ib\textit{id.}, 14.
  \item\textsuperscript{7} Ib\textit{id.}, 7.
  \item\textsuperscript{8} Kinney, \textit{Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom}, 1.
\end{itemize}
Kinney also addresses the issue of an accurate translation of *hnry*. According to Kinney, *hnry* does not have a good English translation that fully encompasses all aspects of the group. The Wöterbuch translates the term as “concubine” and “harem” both terms have since been dismissed as translations. Additionally, Kinney adds to the argument against these translations noting that in the Old Kingdom the *khener* were associated with temples dedicated to female deities. This means that the women of the *khener* were in no way associated with an institution that had a need for concubines or a harem. To further separate the *khener* from this idea that they were associated with sex, Kinney also notes that men were part of the *khener* troupes as well as women. On the surface this seems to end the argument that the *khener* served as midwives; however, there is no clear indication that all members of the *khener* performed the same roles or held the same set of responsibilities. Kinney’s work demonstrates this as she proves that the *khener* was a highly hierarchical and institutionalized group with different subgroups reflective of their responsibilities.

There were several terms used for different members of the *khener*. Beginning with its origins as the Acacia House and its association with butchering and hunting, the *khener* had distinctions for different members based on their roles and responsibilities. *Khener* members associated with musician-priestess and impersonators of Hathor were referred to as *hnwy/[hnwy]*

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9 Ibid., 20.


and the male and female versions of the musician priestess of Hathor were $hnw.(t) \text{n}(t) hwt-hr$.\textsuperscript{15}

Note Kinney refers to these individuals as musician-priestesses because they worked with the temples in a performative role associated with religion. Other roles of the khener include: $imy(t)$-$r \text{m}\dot{a}tr(w)t$ “overseer of the mourners,” $m\dot{a}r(r/ywt)$ “mourners,” $h\dot{a}(w)/h\dot{a}t$ “male/female mourner,” $h\dot{a}(w)t \text{in sn}\dot{a}yt$ “female funerary performers of the (two) Acacia house(s),”\textsuperscript{16} $sm\dot{r}(w)t$ “the musical performers,”\textsuperscript{17} $\dot{h}b(w)t$ “the dancers,” $hs(wt)/m\dot{a}h(wt)$ “rythmitstts,” and $hn\dot{r}(w)t \text{n pr-}\dot{d}t$ “those who performed funeral services.”\textsuperscript{18} Funerary performers were further divided into the following categories: $m\dot{a}tr(w)t$ “mourners,” $h\dot{a}(w)t$ “performers,” and $\text{dryt}$ possibly meaning “Kites.”\textsuperscript{19} It should be noted that Kinney is unsure if the $\text{dryt}$ women were really part of the khener or if they were hired out the by troupe instead.\textsuperscript{20} Kinney suggests that members of the khener who did not have specific roles or sections to report to were simply called $hn\dot{r}/hn\dot{r}t$.\textsuperscript{21}

This discussion then demonstrates how organized and hierarchical the khener may have been. It


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 28-30.

\textsuperscript{17} Onstine translates $sm\dot{r}(w)t$ as “chanter/chantressess” (Onstine, The Role of the Chantress (SmAyt) in ancient Egypt).

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 34. This does refer to Isis and Nephthys.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 34.
was not a simple dancing troupe in which all members performed the same task. It was a well-organized institution that had a multitude of functions. The obvious flaw in this argument is that not one of the titles listed above explicitly states that the *khener* were midwives. Kinney addresses this as well.

*Papyrus Westcar* is the primary source that alludes to the relationship between dancers and midwives. Kinney begins by noting that nowhere in the tale does it explicitly state that the dancers in the story are part of the *khener* troupe; however, as the husband in the tale immediately asks for the dancers help in his wife’s labor, this suggests that dancers as midwives may have been commonplace. As it has already been mentioned, Papyrus Westcar refers to the disguised deities as ḫnyt, which is often translated as “musicians,” (𓊪𓊪𓊦𓊦𓊪) however Kinney notes that *khener* may also bear the title ḫkh3y “magicians,” which she argues associates the role of dancers and musicians with magicians and magic. This could be because the dancers were performing an act associated with magic, birth, or it could be because the audience understood the dancers to be gods and therefore powerful and magical.

The *khener* were also thought to be able to embody certain deities, chiefly Hathor. Certain members of the troupe would magically become the deity for ritualistic purposes. Kinney

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is careful to note that it is unclear if this was only in dress and name, like an actor taking on a role, or if this was a shamanistic role where the dancer was thought to actually be the goddess.\(^{26}\)

Embodiment is attested to in several instances where the priests claim a deity is speaking through them, but, according to Kinney, when it comes to dance this is usually discounted by Egyptologists.\(^{27}\) Kinney notes that shamanistic embodiment\(^{28}\) in dance is dismissed because it would require anthropological observation. Without an ethnographic example of these dances, and only inferring their meaning and probable purpose through tomb and temple scenes, does not provide a full picture of what ancient Egyptian dances were for;\(^ {29}\) however, it is likely that embodiment in the cult of Hathor was an integral part of the cult. Kinney states that:

“A significant ritual in the Hathoric cult was the presentation of the sacred emblems of the cult by a class of priestesses who impersonated the goddess. This presentation ritual involved the principal of embodiment, in which the divine essence of the goddess herself was understood to merge with her priestesses, allowing them, as manifestations of her, to bestow her blessings, favor, and good fortune on adherents of the cult.”\(^ {30}\)


\(^{27}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 37.


\(^{29}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 37.

\(^{30}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 38.
Additionally, the Middle Kingdom tombs of Senbi, Wahhetep, and Paheri from el-Kab all depict musician-priestesses embodying Hathor.\textsuperscript{31} This then supports the idea that members of the \textit{khener} may have been able to perform an embodiment of a deity. This role may have had certain amount of status and power that would have been associated with it. It is also possible that this embodiment was thought to make them closer to the gods, and therefore in possession of a certain amount of \textit{heka}, or magic.\textsuperscript{32} Both this association with the goddess Hathor and the ability to perform magical acts could have made the \textit{khener} ideal midwives. Kinney also proposes that the specific \textit{khener} members that performed embodiments held the title of \textit{hnywt}. This Middle Kingdom title stems from \textit{hni} “to alight” perhaps to indicate that the goddess has alighted in the priestess. This word is different from \textit{hnwt} as it is determined by the \textit{pa} bird, Gardiner sign list G40 (𓊖), which is the same sign used to determine \textit{hni}. This would then create a role reversal in \textit{Papyrus Westcar}; the goddesses are impersonating dancers, who typically embody them. As an added link between the \textit{hnywt} and the goddesses in \textit{Papyrus Westcar}, the deities are referred to throughout the tale as \textit{hnywt}.\textsuperscript{33}

Ann Macy Roth furthers the connection between dancers and midwives. She notes that the sign ⲥ Gardiner U31 is used as the determinative for \textit{hnrt}.\textsuperscript{34} Roth suggests that this sign, which has long been understood to represent the bicornuate uterus of a cow, may actually be

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 38.

\textsuperscript{32} Ritner, \textit{Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice}, 248-250.

\textsuperscript{33} Kinney, \textit{Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom}, 39.

\textsuperscript{34} Roth, “The \textit{ḥḥs-kf} and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 139. See also the discussion on rebirth in chapter 3.
representing the \( p\text{s}s\-kf \) knives used in childbirth.\(^{35}\) As there is other evidence of dancers being involved in childbirth outside of \textit{Papyrus Westcar}, namely the song in the tomb of the 6\(^{th}\) dynasty Princess Watekhathor, it is probable that the \( \tilde{\text{m}} \) sign was used as a determinative for \textit{khener} because of their association with birth.\(^{36}\) The tomb depicts several women dancing while the text around them representing their song clearly discusses birth (fig. 1).

![Figure 1- Watekhathor scene of dancers. Image from Ann Macy Roth, “The \( p\text{s}s\-kf \) and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 142.](image)

Roth highlights several key passages which read:

Top of the register: “But see! The secret of birth (\( m\text{s}\text{i} \)\( \tilde{\text{m}} \)! Oh pull!”

Bottom of the Register: “See the pot (\( krht \) \( \tilde{\text{h}} \))\(^{37}\) remove what’s in it! See, the secret of the \( \text{hnrt} \), Oh Four! Come! Pull! It is today! Hurry! Hurry! See,…is the abomination of birth (\( m\text{s}\text{i} \)\( \tilde{\text{m}} \)).”\(^{38}\)

\(^{35}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 139-144.

\(^{36}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 141-143.

\(^{37}\) This is normally written as \( \tilde{\text{m}} \)\( \text{l} \)\( \text{t} \) or as \( \tilde{\text{h}} \), see Hannig, \textit{Großes Handwörterbuch: Deutsch-Ägyptisch}, 2\(^{nd}\) edition, 1297.15.3.

\(^{38}\) Roth, “The \( p\text{s}s\-kf \) and ‘The Opening of the Mouth’ Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth,” 141.
This textual and visual evidence clearly links dance and the *khener* to birth. The pulling most likely refers to guiding the infant out of the womb and the pot is a metaphor for the womb, or perhaps the mother. Also, the mention of the four is interesting as four birth bricks were used during childbirth and there were four goddesses (plus Khnum) that attended the birth of the royal children in *Papyrus Westcar*, including Meskhenet. Lastly, Roth suggests that the dances about birth were performed by women, for women, which may be why there is not more explicit evidence of the *khener*, dancing, and birth.  

Meskhenet is also associated with the ē sign (U31) and it is often seen on the goddess’ headdress. As the goddess of fate and the personification of birth bricks as discussed in chapter 3, Meskhenet and her associations to birth, and rebirth, may also explain why the ē hieroglyph was used to determine *hnrt*.  

If the *khener* were indeed midwives, which the evidence above strongly suggests, then determining their name with the ē hieroglyph would clearly demonstrate this function. It should also be mentioned that the bicornuate sign was also used to determine words for baker, specifically roles dealing with *rtḥ* bread. This specific type of bread is mentioned in offering lists. Roth uses this evidence to support her theory that the ē represents the *psš-kf* and not the bicornuate cow uterus, as the same offering lists also mentions the knives.  

Also of note the sign is associated with Egyptian words for confinement, such as prison, but

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this idea may not be totally disassociated from birth as the womb was thought to be a place of confinement.

To summarize, the *khener* was a complex institution with varying roles and responsibilities. The group performed at Sed and Opet festivals which were places of rejuvenation. They were also clearly integral to funerals and funerary rites as determined by the *khener’s* association with the Acacia House as discussed in chapter 6 and the multiple titles associated with the various funerary roles. Their dances in the tomb of Watekhathor demonstrate that they were associated with real-world birth through song and dance, and as this appears in a tomb, this again reaffirms their funerary function. The use of the 𓄱 sign to determine *hnrt* once again ties the *khener* back to the sphere of birth and midwifery as the sign is also associated with the goddess Meskhenet and confined spaces. These different lines of evidence then provide ample reason to believe that one of the many roles of the *khener* was to assist in birth as both magical practitioners who provided apotropaic amulets and tools necessary for a safe birth, and possibly also as individuals who help deliver the child. As birth itself was not well documented in ancient Egypt, one may also assume that Roth is correct in her assumption that the dances surrounding birth were performed by women for women. Birth was a solely female experience, and because of this, not much is known about the process in ancient Egypt. Much of the information concerning birth would have been part of an oral tradition told by women; however, even with a lack of textual evidence for birth, it is a safe assumption that one would want, or need, someone to help in this process. This would have been a magical midwife, and the *khener* were possibly these midwives.43

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43 Doctors did not assist in birth unless it was absolutely necessary. Papyrus Kahun, also known and the gynecological papyrus does not mention obstetrics. This would also explain why in *Papyrus Westcar*, Ruddedet’s
The Khener, Paddle Dolls, and Faience Female Figurines

As Morris has successfully argued, paddle dolls are representations of khener dancers. The similarities in costume and body enhancement cannot be ignored, and her seven lines of evidence as discussed in chapter 1 are comprehensive, but the argument that paddle dolls are in fact khener dancers is not the argument of this dissertation. This dissertation postulates that one of the roles of khener dancers may have been as magical midwives, as discussed above. As paddle dolls may be representations of these magical midwives, paddle dolls then functioned as magical midwives to the deceased. It has also been noted several times within this dissertation that early faience female figurines dating to the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period were a continuation of the paddle doll tradition, and therefore these figures, from this specific time period, also functioned as representations of khener dancers and magical midwives to the deceased. It may also be that paddle dolls and faience female figurines worked much like shabtis in the sense that they would come alive for the deceased to perform their magical duties. I suggest this based on the archaeological context of paddle dolls and faience female figurines as discussed in chapter 5.

There are several pieces of evidence that prove this theory of paddle dolls and early faience female figurines as khener midwives. First and foremost, their archaeological context. When the archaeological context is known and well documented for these figures, both paddle

dolls and faience female figurines are found within tombs. This cannot be overemphasized or taken too lightly: tombs are a very different context, with a different purpose, than household or temple sites. These spaces were intended for the deceased to use and function within them, to aid in their rebirth into the afterlife, and to ensure a comfortable existence in the hereafter with offerings, servants, and anything else the deceased may have needed. It is for this reason that Middle Kingdom tombs were stocked with offerings, model boats and granaries, toiletries, etc. All of these objects served a distinct purpose for the deceased, whether that was to keep them fed, mobile, or clean, it would then also make sense for the ancient Egyptians to include specific spells and items in their tombs that would help facilitate their rebirth. Afterall, the whole point of the burial was to mimic a womb and the action of birth as discussed in chapter 3. Due to this, and the idea that for the ancient Egyptians rebirth meant a literal birth into the afterlife, it is highly probable that the ancient Egyptians believed that a magical midwife for the deceased was necessary.

The second piece of context that must be addressed more fully is the primary manufacturing sites for paddle dolls and faience female figurines. Paddle dolls have been established as a Theban tradition by Morris; Tooley has successfully shown that early faience figures were primarily produced at Lisht.44 This is also supported by the corpus discussed in chapter 4. While this would seemingly suggest that the Theban paddle doll is not related to the Lisht faience female figurine, I do not think this assumption is entirely accurate. Lisht is one of

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two known production sites for faience during the Middle Kingdom. The other site was Kerma in the Sudan. It is also of note that there is no evidence for faience female figurines being produced at Kerma, thus suggesting that Lisht may have been the sole formal producer of female figurines. This does contrast sharply with the sheer number of faience products attributed to the Middle Kingdom, which Gianluca Miniaci suggests is because these production sites do not account for individuals making faience in an informal, non-production center, in other areas of Egypt. Additionally, it is important to note that faience is a material that needs to be heated in a kiln between 800 and 1000° C, and this temperature can be met with a pottery kiln. As long as individuals had access to the materials necessary to make faience (silicate base, lime, ash, and colorants), there was nothing stopping production outside of Lisht and Kerma. In terms of faience female figurines and paddle dolls, this means that it is possible that the Theban tradition of paddle dolls was gradually replaced by faience versions of the figures throughout Egypt by individuals, and then followed by formal manufacture mainly happening in Lisht. This would have been a gradual process and is supported by the examples of paddle dolls and faience female figurines found outside of their main areas of production. Of course, the idea that the manufacture of paddle dolls gradually spread outside of Thebes and eventually transformed into the production of faience female figurines is conjecture, but this idea would account for the cessation of wooden model and paddle doll production and the vast examples of faience objects.


46 Ibid., 145.

47 Ibid., 149. For more on this subject see Gianluca Miniaci, “Faience Craftsmanship in the Middle Kingdom A Market Paradox: Inexpensive Materials for Prestigious Gods,” 139-158.

48 Ibid., 141.
in general in the Middle Kingdom. This theory would also further link paddle dolls and early
versions of faience female figurines and suggest that originally these objects served the same
function.

Similarities in iconography between paddle dolls and faience female figurines have also
been discussed in chapter 6, and these similarities are one of the main reasons why I suggest that
Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period faience female figurines are also magical
midwives to the deceased. If the argument is that the costume and tattoos of paddle dolls are the
same as dancers such as Amunet and her associates from the Nebheptre complex and
representations of khener dancers, then this must also be extended to faience female figurines of
this time period. As the iconography of paddle dolls and early faience female figurines is
similar, it would suggest that these objects shared a common meaning and therefore should be
interpreted in the same manner. Additionally, this dissertation has argued that the tattoos present
on both paddle dolls and faience figures are markers of their role as representations of khener
dancers. If these tattoos are indeed indicators of being part of the khener troupe and one’s status
in the khener troupe, this theory further ties both forms of female figurine to the khener;
however, the connection between the khener, paddle dolls, and faience female figurines is not in
question, it is the role of these figures in the tomb context.

Rebirth and birth were mirror images of each other in ancient Egypt, due to this the
khener were present for the birth of an individual and their death. As paddle dolls and faience
female figurines are found primarily in tombs and share iconography that makes them
representations of khener dancers, one must question why these objects were present in tomb

49 I cannot make claims that the New Kingdom faience female figurines were functioning in this same manner as
many ideas had evolved and changed between the Middle and New Kingdoms.
contexts. It is highly probable that these figures were the representations of the *khener*, magical midwives intended to help the deceased in their rebirth. This would then account for why these figures are found in the graves of men, women, and children, as well as the nature of their tattoos, their archaeological context as a whole, and their relationship with the deceased. Paddle dolls and early faience female figurines as *khener* magical midwives works well with what we know about ancient Egyptian rebirth as discussed in chapter 3. Additionally, the evidence as laid out within this dissertation supports the idea that the ancient Egyptians envisioned rebirth into the afterlife as a messy, complicated, and scary process. It is plausible that rebirth needed all of the necessary protective spells, amulets, and assistance required for a birth.

Lastly, paddle dolls and early faience female figurines may not be fertility figurines if they are representations of *khener* dancers as magical midwives, but rather are fertility adjacent. This does not discount that fertility figurines existed, but demonstrates that not all nude, or partially nude, representations of women may have been fertility figurines. As paddle dolls and early female faience figurines are a different category of object, I suggest that we should refer to these figures as magical midwives to the deceased.

**Ceramic Female Figurines**

If paddle dolls and early faience female figurines are magical midwives to the deceased, are there examples of fertility figurines as described by Pinch in ancient Egypt? The answer is

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50 For discussion of regeneration within the tomb also see also Tooley, “Notes on Type 1 Truncated Figurines. Part 2. Hairstyles and the Conceptual Development of Braided Forms,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 49 (2020): 243-274.
yes. Pinch’s Type 2 and Type 3 ceramic female figurines, when from domestic contexts, are an example of that.\textsuperscript{51}

Scholars such as Emma Brunner-Traut and Emily Teeter have suggested that Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 female figurines may be related to childbirth. Brunner-Traut bases this theory on the similarities between Type 2 and 3 female figurines and the “wochenlaube,” or birth arbor, scenes (fig. 2) found at Deir el-Medina dating to the New Kingdom.\textsuperscript{52}

![Figure 2- Ostracon of a woman nursing, or so-called “wochenlaube” scene. Image from: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA8506, date accessed 5/5/21.](image)

In her synopsis of the “wochenlaube” scenes, she notes that women can been seen breast-feeding surrounded by garden plants, with their hair tied back using a fillet, and being waited on by

\textsuperscript{51} There are also other female figurines dating to the Middle Kingdom that are made from limestone that explicitly have appeals for children written on them; these are clearly fertility figurines as described by Pinch. For examples see: “Figurine feminine,” https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cf010008789, date accessed 6/26/21 and “Statuette einer nackten Frau mit Kind (Frauenfigur),” http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t1.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleImageLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_3x4&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=2, date accessed 6/26/21.

\textsuperscript{52} Emma Brunner-Traut, \textit{Die altägyptischen Scherbenbilder (Bildostraka) der Deutschen Museen und Sammlungen}, 67-72.
attendants. She posits that these birth arbors would have been used for the actual birth, and perhaps for purification rituals after childbirth, and as a place for mother and child to rest before returning to daily life.\textsuperscript{53} This theory is expanded on by Emily Teeter in \textit{Baked Clay Figurines and Votive Beds from Medinet Habu},\textsuperscript{54} where she emphasizes the connection between the hairstyle of Type 2 and 3 female figurines, and the hairstyles of the women pictured in the “wochenlaube” scenes. She describes the hair as being “in a long braid” and lists several female figurines dating to the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate period with this hairstyle.\textsuperscript{55}

The connection between hair and birth is based on funerary texts referencing being reborn into the afterlife, myth, and medico-magical texts. These stress the need for knots to be loosened in order to ease the birthing process. This includes braids in the hair, for knots were magically seen as keeping things contained.\textsuperscript{56} As seen in chapter 3, much of the \textit{Pyramid Texts} are concerned with ensuring that the deceased is uninhibited in their rebirth, and there are multiple references to clearing a path. This same idea can also be seen in \textit{Papyrus Westcar} when Ruddedet’s husband wears his loincloth on his head. This is meant to not only show he is panicked, but also serves as a visual that he has undone the knots in his loincloth to ease Ruddedet’s labor.\textsuperscript{57} In the case of pregnancy, knots were used as magical tampons to prevent miscarriage, whereas undoing these knots would help ease a birth by magically opening the

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, 67-68.

\textsuperscript{54}Emily Teeter, \textit{Baked Clay Figurines and Votive Beds from Medinet Habu}, (Oriental Institute Publications: 2010).

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}, 15.

\textsuperscript{56}Chrystal Goudsouzian, \textit{Becoming Isis: Myth, Magic, Medicine, and Reproduction in Ancient Egypt}, (PhD diss., University of Memphis, 2012), 84-87.

\textsuperscript{57}Carolyn Graves-Brown, \textit{Dancing for Hathor}, 65.
womb.\textsuperscript{58} This may explain why the hair appears to be held back by a fillet on some of the female figurines, the knots may have been intended to ensure pregnancy and then by loosening them, the birth would begin or be eased. As it could also be argued that the knot of the fillet would prevent an easy labor, Jana Loose suggests the hair style associated with the female figurines and the “wochenlaube” scenes does not relate to childbirth, but breastfeeding.\textsuperscript{59} In either case, whether for childbirth or for breastfeeding, the practicality of tying the hair back cannot be ignored. While giving birth there are a multitude of things going on, it is stressful, it is scary, and magical midwives would need easy access to the child as they are being born. The last thing anyone needed to worry about is their hair. In the case of breastfeeding, ensuring that the infant has easy access to the breast is necessary, so again tying the hair back is a practical solution to this. This simple idea of practicality is often ignored in scholarship concerning birth, rebirth, and female figurines, but I do not think it can be overstated: having one’s hair tied back during childbirth or while breastfeeding just makes sense. Additionally, magically the tying of knots after birth may have been to aid in the healing process and stop additional bleeding.\textsuperscript{60}

Whether the hairstyle of female figurines is meant to depict a woman after having given birth, or a woman breast feeding, there is still a connection between the figures and motherhood. It is for this reason that Joanne Backhouse suggests female figures, especially those found in domestic and funerary contexts, are concerned with birth and rebirth, and were perhaps used as


\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., 288.

\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 288. Also suggested by Dr. Suzanne Onstine via personal communication 6/26/21.
amulets to wish for both children in this life, and a successful rebirth into the next.\(^1\) Backhouse also notes that hair was considered to be erotic, thus indicating that these figures are meant to be of a sexual nature as well; however, the ability to contain life and to give birth would have also been considered as a source of female power and identity in ancient Egypt.\(^2\) Even if female figurines, or images of women nursing in the “wochelnlaube” scenes, were meant to be erotic, they were also meant to exemplify the pinnacle of Egyptian femininity. I agree with Backhouse that certain female figurines are concerned with birth and that they functioned as amulets for successful pregnancy and birth in this life; and I also agree that each figure may have functioned differently depending on their archaeological context.\(^3\) I additionally suggest that the same type of figurines, such as the Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 ceramic variety discussed here, may have held a different purpose depending on the context in which it functioned.

Lastly, there are several ostraca, like figure 3, which depict a woman nursing in a “wochenlaube,” or birth arbor. The plant life surrounding the woman and child is consistent with the papyrus and blue flowers of other “wochenlaube” scenes, such as the one described by Pinch in “Childbirth and Female Figurines at Deir el-Medina and el-Amarna.”\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Joanne Backhouse, “Female Figurines from Deir el Medina: A Review of Evidence for their Iconography and Function,” 37.

\(^2\) Ibid., 37.

\(^3\) Ibid., 36.

Figure 3- Ostracon of a woman nursing. Image from: https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-mhm/web/object/3006018, date accessed 5/5/21.

This specific example shows a woman, wearing only a broad collar, hip girdle, bracelets, and anklets, sitting on a stool, nursing a baby. Once again, the dress, or lack thereof, is similar to what is seen on ceramic female figurines. This particular comparison piece resembles figures 4 and 5. Figure 4, like the woman pictured on the ostracon, has her hair tied back with a fillet, her breasts are clearly visible, and she is wearing a necklace. Figure 5 provides more of a full body image. Here the woman is seated, just like the woman depicted in the “wochenlaube” scene and she is holding an infant. She also is adorned with a necklace and bracelets. Though the figure is headless it provides a good example of how the “wochenlaube” scenes and ceramic female figurines are ichnographically similar.

Figure 4- Female figurine, Pinch Type 2. Cat. no. AS56. Image from https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544812, date accessed 7/2/21.
Additionally, it cannot be ignored that the “wochenlaube” scenes and ceramic female figurines are similar to the image of the woman holding her infant, flanked by her attendants, and Hathor standards from the birth brick from South Abydos (fig. 6).

When seen together, the birth brick scene, ceramic figurines, and the “wochenlaube” ostraca all appear to be depicting the similar, if not the same, situation: a woman who has just successfully given birth and is now breastfeeding. Due to this, it is likely that these scenes are also meant to convey the same underlying magic and amuletic meaning. As discussed by Wegner, this image
in particular from the birth brick should be read “as a complex “visual spell” expressing fundamental religious concepts of childbirth, motherhood, and the magical underpinnings of the human reproductive experience.”65 It is my conclusion that certain ceramic female figurines, and the later “wochenlaube” scenes, are part of this “human reproductive experience” as well. It is also interesting to note that these images range from the Middle Kingdom (birth brick), through the Late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period (ceramic female figurines), and the New Kingdom (“wochenlaube” scenes), thus suggesting that there was perhaps a continuity regarding ideas of giving birth, breastfeeding, and the women who have just undergone these events.

As there are examples of ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) from burial contexts (see cat. no. AS57, AS73, AS77), it is important to address these figures as well. These examples demonstrate my theory that ceramic female figurines, specifically Pinch’s Type 2 and 3, may have had different uses based on context. As there are some iconographic similarities in geometric designs that may represent tattoos and jewelry between these ceramic figurines, faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1), and paddle dolls, it is possible that the ceramic female figurines of tomb contexts also functioned as magical midwives. Cat. no. AS73 (fig. 7) is an example of this.

Cat. no. AS73 may have been part of a soul house. Petrie discovered several soul houses attributed to Rifeh; however, it is unclear which soul house or tomb specifically this figure was from.\textsuperscript{66} The figurine’s association with a mortuary object intended to mimic life may suggest that this figure was intended to function as part of the soul house and is not a “fertility figurine” as defined by Pinch, or perhaps this figure was meant to function as the magical midwife to the deceased within the more specific context of a soul house. This would perhaps create a visual image of the individual being reborn in their home as they were born at home in life.

Based on the iconography of the ceramic female figurines themselves, and their shared iconography with the birth brick from South Abydos and the “wochenlaube” ostraca of the New Kingdom, it is probable that these figures were intended to be fertility amulets. Additionally, as Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 ceramic female figurines are found within household contexts, sacred spaces, and tombs it is more likely that their function was context driven. Their context in conjunction with their material, ceramic, indicates that they were meant to be made by and used by anyone. These factors all indicate that the ceramic Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 female figurines are

\textsuperscript{66} Petrie, William Flinders, \textit{Gizeh and Rifeh}, (London: The School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1907), 14-20, pl. XII, pl. XXII a- e. See also Penn Museum records: https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/170021, date accessed 6/26/21.
not the same class of object as the magical midwives for the deceased discussed above, but perhaps they were intended to be more of an all-purpose female figurine. These figures were intended to aid a woman in becoming pregnant and having a successful pregnancy, and birth and also perhaps served the deceased as magical midwives.

**Conclusions**

Based on the archaeological contexts, iconographic, and material discussions presented throughout this dissertation, it is clear that paddle dolls, faience female figurines, and ceramic figurines may have served a variety of functions. Additional discussions of birth and rebirth highlight that these spheres were related and needed specific equipment to ensure their success. Based on this research, paddle dolls and early Middle Kingdom faience female figurines should be classified as representations of *khener* dancers. These women held multiple positions within the troupe and there is a strong line of evidence for their role as the magical midwives of ancient Egypt. As paddle dolls and faience female figurines are primarily found in tomb contexts, it then stands to reason that they are functioning as representations of *khener* dancers for a specific funerary purpose. This is not a fertility figurine, but the role of magical midwife is fertility adjacent.

Conversely, ceramic female figurines known as Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 figures appear to have function as fertility amulets, specifically for getting pregnant and successfully remaining pregnant and giving birth. It is also likely that these amulets were intended to magically aid in breastfeeding, as some figures are holding infants. This is then supported by the related materials, the birth brick from South Abydos and “wochenlaube” scenes of the New Kingdom, discussed here. For these reasons, Pinch’s Type 2 and 3 ceramic female figurines are examples of fertility figurines, and even more specifically, as pregnancy amulets when found in household
contexts. As some ceramic female figurines can be attributed to burials, it is likely that the ceramic figures served a different purpose here than in homes. This would suggest that as ceramic was a more accessible material that perhaps ceramic female figurines were more all-purpose than faience female figurines or paddle dolls; however, it is my suggestion that when found in tombs ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) also served as magical midwives to the deceased.


Chapter 8: Conclusion

The goal of this dissertation has been to explore the possible function of paddle dolls and their role in rebirth. As faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) may be related to paddle dolls, they have served as comparanda here. Through building on the work of other scholars such as Pinch, Morris, and Tooley (see chapter 1) I have suggested that paddle dolls and faience female figurines were representations of khener dancers. These women may have served as magical midwives to the living, and thus paddle dolls and faience female figurines would have served as magical midwives to the deceased. As paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines have been found in tombs, it is possible that these figurines then functioned as magical midwives to the deceased, though this purpose is context dependent.

The idea of the khener functioning as midwives and female figurines representing them in tomb contexts is not unique to this dissertation; however, the use of gender and feminist theory to reevaluate these figures is new (see chapter 2). These theories can be used to ask new questions concerning the figures and reassess theories surrounding them. Both gender and feminist theory influenced questions concerning the nudity of the female figurines discussed here and their role in rebirth and fertility. It was also suggested that fertility be understood as a human concern in ancient Egypt that was equally important for men and women. With this in mind fertility has been defined here as the human ability to procreate, which for men is the ability to impregnate, and for women it is the ability to become pregnant and have a successful pregnancy.

My theory suggests that paddle dolls, faience, and ceramic female figurines in burial contexts functioned as magical midwives to the deceased, which then requires an understanding of rebirth and birth (see chapter 3). The ancient Egyptians may have conceived of rebirth as a
physical birth into the afterlife that would have required immense magic to be successfully done, just as birth may have required. It has been suggested by scholars such as Roth and Roehrig that rebirth made use of similar rituals and items as birth. From there I have suggested that as one may require a magical midwife in life, it is plausible that one may require a magical midwife in death. Furthermore, it has also been suggested here that birth and rebirth were thought of by the ancient Egyptians as mirror images of each other. Both occupied liminal spaces that were fraught with danger, and both dealt with the transition of life from this liminal space into a new one, be that life or the afterlife.

The magical nature of rebirth and birth may be reflected in the materials chosen for female figurines like paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1) and ceramic figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) (see chapter 4). In terms of paddle dolls, they are made out of wood; however, as there has been no scientifically identified paddle doll wood type, only suggestions based on tentative identifications and known wood types of tomb models and other types of statues can be made. I suggest that paddle dolls may have been made out of cedar and/or sycamore fig. Interestingly, cedar has mythical connections to Osiris and ideas of rebirth and sycamore fig has associations with Hathor and her role in solar mythology as the vehicle for Re and as the “Lady of the Sky” and “Lady of the Sycamore.” Faience figurines have similar Hathoric connections through the color blue. As faience was intended to mimic turquoise, the material is then connected to Hathor in her roles of “Lady of the Sky” and “Lady of Turquoise.” These associations are also tied to the birth imagery as seen on the birth brick from South Abydos discussed by Wegner. In terms of ceramic, it is clear from this corpus that the types of ceramic figures studied here (known as Pinch’s Type 2 and Type 3) were made of Marl Clay and Nile Silt. Ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) may have served multiple functions, such as amulets to the living and as
magical midwives to the deceased, thus ceramic may have been chosen as an easily accessible material. Additionally, it is possible that ceramic was chosen for its possible connection with Khnum and his role in fashioning people on a wheel. These mythological associations demonstrate the importance of material and its value in discussions of female figurines. For this reason, I suggest that typologies of female figurines should be separated first by material, then context, and iconography.

To fully understand how female figurines may have been part of the ritual process that is birth and rebirth, their archaeological context must be explored (see chapter 5). Paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) are found in tomb contexts, as demonstrated by the corpus compiled for this dissertation (see Appendix B Tables 1 and 2), while ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) are excavated from domestic spaces, sacred spaces such has temples, and burials (see Appendix B Table 3). Due to these differences in context, I suggest that paddle dolls and faience female figurines were intended to be items for the deceased and function in a funerary capacity, whereas ceramic female figurines were perhaps more fluid in their function, and the space they occupied (domestic, sacred space, or burial) may have determined their function.

The iconography depicted on paddle dolls, faience (Pinch’s Type 1), and ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) are also an important factor in understanding their function (see chapter 6). All three share similar designs with dot/dash and diamond shaped markings which may be tattoos and indicators for jewelry like beaded girdles and necklaces; however, there are differences in hairstyle, state of dress, and the inclusion of children. Some faience and ceramic female figurines are depicted holding or carrying children, whereas paddle dolls do not have children with them. Lastly, as tattoos are such a large part of the iconography of paddle dolls and
faience and ceramic female figurines it is important to understand that tattoos may have held specific cultural meanings that distinguished tattooed individuals from others. This may have been to convey their status within society, or perhaps within the *khener* troupe, their magical abilities, or perhaps to distinguish them as part of a familial line. Anthropologically, many cultures have used tattoos for a variety of reasons and none of these should be discounted when discussing ancient Egyptian tattoos, as there is no written evidence concerning the practice. The same can be said about the practice of scarification in ancient Egypt, which may also be displayed on paddle dolls. As body enhancements, like tattoos and scarification, were also present on female mummies associated with Hathor from the Nebheptre mortuary complex, I would suggest that these body enhancements were perhaps indicators of their role in society.

The idea that paddle dolls and faience female figurines (Pinch’s Type 1) are representations of *khener* dancers is a well-established theory, but this dissertation suggests that members of the *khener* may have also served the role of magical midwife (see chapter 7). The *khener* were a well-organized and multi-purpose group in the ancient Egyptian community. This included functioning as mourners for the deceased, as performers at festivals, and as chanters. As the *khener* troupe functioned in multiple ways it has been suggested that they were also magical midwives to the living. This was largely based on *Papyrus Westcar*, but there is other evidence to suggest that the troupe is connected to birth. Roth for example has detailed this connection further. With the established connection between paddle dolls, faience female figurines, and the *khener* dancers, I would then suggest that paddle dolls and faience female figurines were intended to fulfill one of the roles of the *khener* within the funerary context, specifically as magical midwives. This same function also extends to ceramic female figurines (Pinch’s Type 2 and 3) that are found in burial contexts. For ceramic female figurines found in
domestic and sacred spaces, it is possible that these are amulets relating to fertility, birth, and breastfeeding that were intended to be used by the living to help with these processes. This dissertation draws on parallels between the ceramic female figurines and images of New Kingdom “wochenlaube” scenes to support this conclusion.

While this dissertation suggests several ideas, such as a definition for fertility and that context, iconography, and material are important factors in classifying female figurines, there is still more work to be done. As there are several other categories of female figurines that have not been considered here, creating a corpus and working on ivory, stone, string, and other ceramic forms of female figurines from different time periods, is something that requires further research. From there, a larger more complete typology of female figurines may be established and perhaps a better understanding of how these figures may have functioned in ancient Egypt can be gleaned.
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Appendix A

Pyramid Texts

As there are multiple translations of the Pyramid Texts available, I have included different translations of the pertinent texts cited by Roth here. Please note that each translator follows a different numbering system of the texts as well. Lastly, I did not undergo my own translations of these texts as they are not the focus of my paper.

Key:

Headings are bolded.

Offerings are in all caps.

My notes are in italics.

The Utterance that specifically names the psš-kf is highlighted.

The Offering Ritual of Unas as translated by James P. Allen

Libation:

Osiris, acquire for yourself all those who hate Unis and anyone who speaks bad of his name.
Thoth, go, acquire for Osiris: get the one who speaks bad of Unis’s name; put him in your hand.
Recitation 4 times: Don’t let loose of him: beware that you not let loose of him.
LIBATION.

Censing:

Someone has gone with his ka:
Horus has gone with his ka; Seth had gone with his ka;
Thoth has gone with his ka; the god has gone with his ka;
Osiris has gone with his ka; Eyes-forward has gone with his ka:
You too have gone with your ka.

Ho, Unis! Your ka’s arm is before you. Ho, Unis! You ka’s arm is after you.
Ho, Unis! Your ka’s foot is before you. Ho, Unis! Your ka’s foot is after you.

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2 Note Allen uses an alternate spelling of Unas to what was used within this dissertation.
Osiris Unis, I have given you Horus’s eye: provide your face with it. Let the scent of Horus’s eye disseminate you.

Recitation 4 times: Incense, fire.

**Cleansing the Mouth with Salt Water:**

These your cool waters, Osiris- these your cool waters, oh Unis- have come for your son, have come for Horus.

I have come having gotten Horus’s eye, that your heart may become cool with it; I have gotten it under you and your sandals.

Accept that outflow that comes from you: your heart will not become weary with it.

Recitation 4 times: Come, you have been invoked.

**COOL WATER; 2 PELLETS OF NATRON**

Condensed milk, condensed milk that parts your mouth,

Ho, Unis! May you taste its taste in front of those of the gods’ booths:

The spittle of Horus, condensed milk;

The spittle of Seth, condensed milk;

The reconciliation of the two gods’ hearts, condensed milk.

Recitation 4 times: Your natron-salt is among Horus’s followers.

**5 PELLETS OF NILE-VALLEY NATRON OF NEKHEB.**

Your natron is Horus’s natron;

Your natron is Seth’s natron;

Your natron is Thoth’s natron;

Your natron is the god’s natron;

Your natron is amongst them.

Your mouth is the mouth of a milk-calf on the day he is born.

**5 PELLETS OF DELTA NATRON OF SHETPET.**

Your natron is Horus’s natron, your natron is Seth’s natron,

Your natron is Thoth’s natron, your natron is the god’s natron;

Your natron is your ka’s natron, your natron is your natron’s natron:

This is your own natron amongst your brothers, the gods.
Your natron is in your mouth; you should clean all your bones and end what is (bad) against you. Osiris, I have given you Horus’s eye: provide your face with it disseminated.

1 PELLET OF NATRON.

The Mouth Opening Ritual of Unas as translated by James P. Allen

Ho, Unis! I fix your jaws spread for you.

THE FLINT SPREADER. This is the psš-kf

Osiris Unis, I part your mouth for you.

AN INGOT OF NILE-VALLEY GOD’S METAL; AN INGOT OF THE DELTA GOD’S METAL. These are the nṯrwi-blades which were made from some meteoric metal, also often called the god’s metal, or bj3.

Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which went away: I have gotten it for you that I might put it in your mouth.

NILE-VALLEY ZRW-SALT; DELTA ZRW-SALT. This begins the purification of the newborn Unas.

Ho, Unis! Accept Osiris’ Šjkw-mineral. Purification ends.

šJKW-MINERAL.

Here is the tip of the breast of Horus’s own body; accept (it) to your mouth.

A JUG OF MILK. This is representative of nursing.

Here is the breast of your lactating sister Isis, which you should take to your mouth.

AN EMPTY JAR.

The Offering Ritual commences here.

Here are Horus’s two eyes, black and white: take them to your countenance, that they may brighten your face.

A WHITE JAR, A BLACK JAR; LIFTING UP.

The Opening of the Mouth Meal as translated by James P. Allen

Content for you is the Sun in the sky, and he contents for you the Two Ladies.

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Content for you is the night, content for you are the Two Ladies.

Contentment is what is gotten for you,

Contentment is what you see, contentment is what you hear,

Contentment is before you, contentment is behind you,

Contentment is your lot.

A FRESH BREAD LOAF.
Osiris Unis, accept Horus’s white teeth, which provide your mouth.

A BOWL OF 5 ONION-HEADS. *This represents teething.*
Recitation 4 times: A king-given offering to the ka of Unis.
Osiris Unis, accept Horus’s eye, your bread loaf, and eat.

A LOAF OF OFFERING BREAD.
Osiris Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which escaped from Seth, which you should take to your mouth and which you should part your mouth.

1 QUARTZITE JAR OF WINE.
Osiris Unis, part your mouth with what is filled from you.

1 BLACK QUARTZITE JAR OF WINE.
Osiris Unis, accept the foam that comes from you.

1 BLACK QUARTZITE BOWL OF BEER.
Sun, your dawning- you in the sky, your dawning- is for Unis, lord of everything.
Everything is for your body, everything is for Unis’s ka, everything is for his body.

SWEEPING THE OFFERING TABLE.
Unis, accept Horus’s eye which you should taste.

1 “LION” CAKE. *Unas has transitioned from teething to eating solid food.*

O you interred, O you of the dark!

1 PORRIDGE-LOAF.

Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which you should embrace.

1 KIDNEY.

Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which escaped from Seth and was rescued for you: part your mouth with it.
1 WHITE QUARTZITE BOWL OF WINE.
Unis, accept the foam that comes from Osiris.

1 BLACK QUARTZITE BOWL OF BEER.
Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which was rescued for you: it cannot be away from you.

1 METAL BOWL OF BEER.
Unis, accept Horus’s eye: provide yourself with it.

1 BLACKEND BOWL OF BEER.

The Purification Rituals of Unas as translated by James P. Allen

Osiris Unis, gather yourself the water is in it.

2 BOWLS OF WATER.
Osiris Unis, accept Horus’s eye, which cleaned his mouth.

2 BOWLS OF CLEANSING NATRON.
Osiris Unis, accept Horus’s eye; gather it to your mouth.

THE “MOUTH WASHING” (MEAL); 1 LOAF OF BREAD, 1 JUG (OF BEER).
This aligns with cleaning the mouth and body of a newborn after birth.

The Opening of the Mouth as in Unas’s Pyramid from the Type B Offering List as translated by Samantha Edwards

A12, Utterance 39:
W., take for yourself the Eye of Horus for which he is gone. I have brought it to you
So that I may place it in your mouth.

ZWR OF UPPER EGYPT AND ZWR OF LOWER EGYPT.

A13, Utterance 43:
Take the two Eyes of Horus, the black and white one. Take them for yourself to your face so they may illuminate your face.

A WHITE h3ṣ JAR AND A BLACK h3ṣ JAR, RAISE UP.

6 Ibid., 26.

A white $hit$s jar of white $mnw$ stone, the right Eye. A $hit$s jar of black $mnw$ stone, the left Eye.

**A14, Utterance 46:**

To be recited 4 times: a boon which the king gives to the ka of NN. Osiris- NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus.

Your pꜣt cake so you may eat- the pꜣt cake of the offering […] so you may eat- the whole pꜣt cake.

**A15, Utterance 47:**

Osiris- NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus freed from Seth which you may take your mouth

And with which you may open your mouth. WINE, AND A $hit$s JAR OF WHITE $MNW$ STONE.

**A16, Utterance 51:**

NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus which may taste. A $dPt$ CAKE.

**A17, Utterance 53:**

NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus which you seek. KIDNEY SUET.

**A18 Utterance 54:**

NN., take yourself the Eye of Horus freed from Seth which was rescued for you.

Open your mouth with it.

WINE, A $hn$ CUP OF WHITE $MNW$ STONE.

BEER, A $hn$ CUP OF WHITE $MNW$ STONE.

**A19, Utterance 56:**

NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus which was rescued for you. It will not be distant from you.

BEER, A $hn$ CUP OF $BJ3$ METAL.

**A20, Utterance 57:**

NN., take to yourself the Eye of Horus. Provide yourself with it.

BEER, A $hn$ CUP OF $htM$ MATERIAL.
The Opening of the Mouth Ritual as in Pepi II and Queen Neith’s Pyramids as translated by James P. Allen

Recitation: receive your bread.

Recitation: […]

Recitation: your head is placed for you. Your head is set to the bones for you.

Recitation: Give him his eyes, that he may be content. THE OFFERING SLAB.

Recitation: Geb has given you your eyes, that you may be content.

[Recitation: Ho,] Osiris Pepi [Neferkare]! […] Horus’s eye. THE JAR OF WATER.

[Recitation: Ho, Osiris] Pepi Neferkare! I have come in search of you.

I am Horus: I have penetrated you mouth for you. I am your son,

Whom you desired: I have parted your mouth for you.

[Announce him to his mother, for she is bewailing him; announce him to her who unties with him.

How sweet is your mouth,] for your mouth has been adjusted for you to your bones.

Recitation 4 times: Osiris Pepi Neferkare, I have parted your mouth for you with the one who stole Horus’s eye. I FORELEG.

[Recitation: How sweet is your mouth for your mouth is adjusted for you to your bones. Your mouth is parted for you, your eyes are parted for you.

Ho, Pepi Neferkare]! Your mouth is parted with Anubis’ adze, the metal Striker that parted the moth of the gods.

Horus, open the mouth of this Pepi Neferkare! [Horus, part the mouth of this Pepi Neferkare!

Horus has opened the mouth of this Pepi Neferkare, Horus has parted the mouth of this Pepi] Neferkare, with that which he parted the mouth of his father, with that which he parted the mouth of Osiris: with the metal that came from Seth, the [metal] Striker [that parted the mouth of the gods. The mouth of Pepi Neferkare has been parted with it, and he goes and claims his body with the Big Ennead in the Official’s Compound in] Heliopolis and acquire the crown with Horus, lord of the elite.

Recitation: Osiris Pepi Neferkare, I have fetched you your son whom you love, and your mouth has been parted.

The Opening of the Mouth as translated by Raymond O. Faulkner

Utterance 20:

O King, I have come in search of you, for I am Horus; I have struck your mouth for you, for I am your beloved son; I have split your mouth for you. [I announce him to his mother when she laments him, I announce him to her who was joined to him. Your mouth is in good order (?). for I have adjusted your mouth] to your bones [for you]. Recite 4 times: O Osiris the King, I have split open your mouth for you with the…of the Eye of Horus.

1 FORELEG.

Utterance 21:

[Your mouth is in good order (?), for I split open your mouth for you, I split your eyes for you. O King, I open your mouth for you] with the adze of Wepwawet, [I split open your mouth for you] with the adze of iron which split open the mouths of the gods. O Horus, open the mouth of this King! [O Horus, split open the mouth of this King! Horus has opened the mouth of this King, Horus has split open the mouth of this King] with that wherewith he split open the mouth of his father, with that wherewith he split open the mouth of Osiris, with the iron which issued from Seth, with the adze [of iron which split open the mouths of the gods. The King’s mouth is split open with it, and he goes and himself speaks with the Great Ennead in the Mansion of the Prince which is in] On, and he assumes the Wrrt-crown before Horus, Lord of Patricians.

Utterance 22:

O Osiris the King, I bring to you your son whom you love, who will split open your mouth.

This is followed by Utterance 23, a libation spell and Utterances 26-33 which focus on the Eye of Horus.

Utterance 34:

Zmin, zmin which splits open your mouth! O King, taste its taste in front of them of the God’s Booth. What Horus spits out is zmin, what Seth spits out is zmin, what reconciles the Two Gods is zmin. Recite 4 times: You are purified in the company of the followers of Horus.

UPPER EGYPTIAN NATRON OF NEKHEB, 5 PELLETS.

This is then followed by Utterances 35-36 which are about purification.

Utterance 37:

O King, I fasten for you your jaws which were divided.

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PS₅-KF. Faulkner notes that the ps₅-kf was an instrument used to open the mouth.¹⁰

Utterance 38:

O Osiris the King, I split open your mouth for you.

GOD’S IRON OF UPPER EGYPT, 1 INGOT; GOD’S IRON OF LOWER EGYPT, 1 INGOT.

Utterance 39 begins the offerings.

Book of the Dead, Spell 151 as translated by Raymond O. Faulkner¹¹

Hail to you whose face is kindly, Lord of vision, one who is knit together for Ptah-Sokar and who is set on high for Anubis, to who whom Shu has given the Supports, kindly face who is among the gods! Your right Eye is the Night-bark, your left Eye is the Day-bark, your eyebrows are the Ennead, your vertex is Anubis, the back of your head is Horus, your fingers are Thoth, your braided trees is Ptah-Sokar, and you are before N, who is happy with the Great God, whom he sees in you; lead him on fair roads that he may obstruct the confederacy of Seth for you, and make his enemies fall beneath him before the Great Ennead in the great Mansion of the Prince which is in Heliopolis. May you take a fair road into the presence of Horus, Lord of Patricians, O N.

Words spoken by Isis: I have come as your protection, O Osiris, with the north wind which issued from Atum, I have let your throat breath, I have caused you to be a god, and I have placed your enemies under your sandals.

Words spoken by Nephthys: I have gone round about my brother Osiris N; I have come as your protection, and my protection will be about you for ever. Your call has been heard by Re, and vindication has been carried out for you, O son of Hathor, and your head will never be taken away. In peace! Arouse yourself!

FORMULA AT THE PRESENTATION OF A LIGHTED TORCH: O you who come to lasso, I will not let you lasso; O you who come to do harm, I will not let you do harm. I will harm you, I will lasso you, I am N’s protection.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE DJED PILLAR AMULET: O you who come seeking, reverse your steps; O you whose face is covered, I have illumined you covered place. I am he who stands behind the djed-pillar on the day when I should stand behind the djed-pillar, and I drive off the slayers, for I am N’s protection.

Words spoken by Anubis who presides over the god’s booth, who is upon his mountain, Lord of the Sacred Land: I have come that I may spread protection over N.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

Words spoken by the living soul of N: I give praise in the sky to Re when he goes to rest in the western horizon of the sky.

Words spoken by the living soul of the worthy spirit of N to Osiris: [What was to have been said has been omitted.]

THE PRESENTATION OF SHABTI: N says: O shabti, if I am summoned or counted of in the realm of the dead for any work, indeed obstacles are implanted there as man has many duties, whether to make arable the fields, to flood the banks or to convey sand from West to East; “Here I am” you shall say.

Words spoken by Imsety: I am your son, O N. I have come that I may be your protection, and that I may make your house to flourish and endure, in accordance with the command of Ptah and in accordance with the command of Re.

Words spoken by Hapy: I have come that I may be your protection. O N: I have knit together your head and your members, I have smitten your enemies beneath you, I have given you your head for ever.

Words spoken by Duamutef: I am your beloved son Horus, O N. I have come that I may protect my father Osiris from him who would harm you, and I lead him under your feet.

Words spoken by Qebehsenuef: I am Qebehsenuef, and I have come that I may be your protection, O N. I join your bones together for you, I collect your members for you, I bring your heart to you, I set it in its place in your body for you, and I have caused your house to flourish after you.

Coffin Text Spell 334 as Translated by Raymond O. Faulkner

Becoming the sistrum-player. O you [...], the Entourage which is about Re’, see, I go down [...]. I am that first seed of Re’; he begot me in the womb of my mother Isis [...]. powerful in the sky, mighty <on> earth. Such is my condition before my father Re’ and my mother [...]. I will be in this land in company with the living, I desire my [name( ?)] to be on their lips as the Sistrum-player, son of Hathor. They have worshipped me, and I am brotherly [...]. the love of me every day. I am the Lord of bread, one in charge of beer, and I hear <...>. Come, [...]. male and female providers of the food [...]. whose hands are what they give to me. They call to me and they open their doors and draw back their door-bolts(?) [...]. they extol] daily this my good name of Sistrum-player, a child in the speech of those who govern [...]. I am the first(-born) son of Re’, I am a child beloved of my mother. [I am(?)] the son of Nephthys, I have become great, I have become splendid; my side- lock will not perish in the bodies of [my] father or [my] mother [...]. I live,

I exist in very deed, I protect the patricians from the gods — and vice versa.

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I am the protector [...], I am extolled in this my name of Sistrum-player, acclamation is given to me in this my name of Khons. I will not perish in the sky with Re’ and with my mother Hathor; [I will nor be destroyed(?)] on earth with Re’ and with my mother Hathor. My name is on earth with the living; I am the Sistrum-player, the son of [Hathor], the sky and what is in it tremble, bowing down, the Two Lands quake [...] at the flash; those who are in their baskets are watchful, sitting on their coils, who live [...] and who guard the ways of the Eye of Re’-Atum and of the Entourage which is about Re’. I am watchful for the dangerous ones, the stiff-necked [...] who guard the ‘Sandal-of-Re’ bark. Down on your faces! Fear and tremble at me!

’See, I have come as Lord of the Entourage, and those who follow after the Enneads fear me, the awe of me is before me as the Sistrum-player, the son of Hathor. I am indeed the Great Seed, I have passed between her thighs [in] this [my name] of Jackal of the Sunshine. I have broken out of the egg, I have floated(?) on its white(?), I have glided on its yolk(?), I am the Lord of blood, I am a tempestuous(?) bull, my mother Isis conceived me, and she swooned under the fingers of the Lord of the gods when he broke into her therewith on that day of lifting(?) the mat(?) in [...] for(?) the Lord of the gods on that day of tumult before necks were knit on, before the heads of the gods were cut off, before the sun was firm on the horns, before the face of Bit was knit on. I came into being, I crept, I travelled around, I grew, I became high like my father [...] high ... he was high. My White Crown of fresh flesh was upon me, my ate/-crowns were on my brow, my terrible one was on my forehead, so that it might put the dread of me into the gods and the awe of me into the Entourage of Re’, for I am the Lord of dread, greatly majestic, and it is the god of plenty who raises me up [...]. I sucked from my mother Isis, I tasted her sweetness, and they (sic) beweep me, for they see me not; they mourn me, for they do not hear my voice. I am the child of my mother, I am a youth, the son of Hathor, I am the Inert One who was in the Abyss [...] my name and my place are known. I was seeking the place where I should be in this my name of Chaos-god, I found myself in Punt, I built a house there in my birth-place, while my mother was under her sycamore. I lingered( ?) [...] children of the great god. I rotted there, I grew brotherly there in this my name of one brotherly to men and gods. My putrefaction is myrrh, which my mother Hathor places for herself on her head; my smell is that of incense, [which my mother] Hathor [gives to herself] for her censing, my efflux is hkmw - oil which my mother Hathor puts for herself on her flesh; my head is her bundle which my mother <Hathor> puts for herself on her arm; my entrails are [her] necklace [which] my mother Hathor [puts for herself] on her throat; my hands are her sistrum which my mother Hathor gives to herself in order to give pleasure to herself therewith; my thighs are her -garment which my mother Hathor gives to herself [in order to clothe(?)] herself therewith; my belly [is her ...] which my mother Hathor [gives to herself] so that she may be knit together by it.
### Appendix B

**Table 1 - Catalogue of Paddle Doll Corpus**

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\(^1\) These question marks are present as these figures are listed in the museum digital catalog as having an uncertain date.

\(^2\) Study photographs of these can not be legally reproduced as they have been removed from the website.
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| AS28 | BM | EA22628 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS29 | BM | EA22612 | Thebes | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS30 | BM | EA6463 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS31 | BM | EA6462 | Thebes | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS32 | BM | EA6461 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS33 | BM | EA6460 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |

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| AS35 | BM | EA22631 | Thebes | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS36 | BM | EA23074 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS37 | BM | EA6464 | NA | NA | SIP? | NA | NA |
| AS38 | BM | EA23071 | NA | NA | MK | NA | NA |

3 In the digital collection these British Museum paddle dolls are listed as being from the Second Intermediate Period, however the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Egypt and the Sudan, Marcel Marée commented that EA 6460 actually dates to the 11th Dynasty, the Middle Kingdom, which then suggests to me that all the possible Second Intermediate Period paddle dolls from the British Museum date to the Middle Kingdom. Marcel Marée, Personal Communications, 5/26/2021.
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possibly 6-15074 pr
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Table 3- Catalog of Ceramic Figurine Corpus
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### Table 5- Faience Female Figurine Contexts

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### Table 6- Ceramic Female Figurine Contexts

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