

EVOLUTION OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION REFLECTED IN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN

by

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EVOLUTION OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION REFLECTED IN TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

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Religion was vital to Ancient Egyptian life; even foreign rule could not change the Egyptians' need to express their conviction in their deep rooted religious beliefs. By looking at Egyptian divine temples from the New Kingdom to the Graeco-Roman era (~1550 B.C. – A.D. 395), you can see that architecture and decoration alterations in response to changes in the current practicing religion making it possible to determine during which time period some features were constructed. This study will look at changes in religion to determine identifiable characteristics that should appear in the temple design and decoration. The research will conclude that the presence of *mammisis* (birth houses), Serapis, extensive animal mummification, and temples dedicated to a goddess are reliable characteristics that may help to date a temple that was constructed during the Graeco-Roman period.

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INTRODUCTION

Admired by all who have seen them for thousands of years, the majestic temples of Egypt hold a mysterious allure. Enamored with the romanticism of a dead religion that was once intensely practiced by its inhabitants, many scholars have tried to unravel the mystery of the beliefs of the people of ancient Egypt. Religion was an incredibly important aspect of Egyptian culture during a time when chaos ruled the land and balance was a sign of divinity. Places of religious worship in Egypt have vastly changed over time, starting with a circle of seemingly ordinary rocks at Nabta Playa (Hendrickx and Vermeersch 2000) and progressing through to the construction of breathtaking temples that have captivated and drawn in a multitude of tourists.

Egypt has seen its fair share of conflict, both winning and losing. With conflict comes outside influence and a means of diffusion. Incorporating different foreign cultural aspects into one's own culture frequently occurs during these times of interaction. Diffusion can often be traced in the material remains acquired from a site. However, changes in a culture can occur internally as well, rather than as the result of outside influences. These changes are often more gradual than those that occur due to diffusion. Taken together, these two methods of change resulted in an evolution of religious practices in ancient Egypt.

By comparing Egyptian temples from the New Kingdom to temples from the Graeco-Roman era, it is possible to see changes in temple architectural layout in response to changes in the current religious practices. Observing these changes that are reflections of cultural changes may allow us to deduce when the temple was constructed, or at least when that specific aspect of the temple was created.

Table 1. Egypt chronology used with main religious trend that occurs. (dates from Shaw 2000)

PERIOD	DATE	DYNASTIES	MAIN RELIGIOUS TREND
Second Intermediate Period	1650 - 1550 B.C.	15th - 17th	polytheism
New Kingdom	1550 - 1069 B.C.	18th - 20th	monotheistic tendencies (Amun-Ra), personal piety
Third Intermediate Period	1069 - 664 B.C.	21st - 25th (Nubians)	mother-child relationship, 'god's wife', triad popularity
Late Period	664 - 332 B.C.	26th - 30th, 1st - 2nd Persian Period	continuation of New Kingdom practices
Ptolemaic Period	332 - 30 B.C.	Macedonian, Ptolemaic	creation of Sarapis, birth houses
Roman Period	30 B.C. - A.D. 395	Roman	Isis very popular, full-blown monotheism

A HISTORY OF EGYPT

Egypt's New Kingdom (c. 1550 – 1352 B.C.) emerged after the chaos of the Second Intermediate Period, during which Egypt had been ruled by the Hyksos and divided into two lands. The major identifying feature of the beginning of the New Kingdom is the reunification of the Egypt by Ahmose, King of Thebes. Betsy Bryan describes the beginning of the New Kingdom as, “mainly a continuation of forms and traditions that had never been entirely disrupted by the internal squabbles of the Second Intermediate Period” (Bryan 2000:207).

The New Kingdom was a time of tradition until we reach the Amarna Period (c. 1352 B.C.), lasting only about twenty years, when drastic changes in the religion suddenly occur. Amenhotep IV promoted a drastic change in the religion as well as moving the capital of Egypt from Thebes to Akentaten, commonly known as Amarna. During this period Jacobus Van Dijk states, “The traditional gods were banned completely and a campaign was begun to remove their names and effigies (particularly those of Amun) from the monuments” in favor of complete devotion to Aten, ‘the living one, Ra, ruler of the horizon who rejoices in the horizon in his identity of Ra the father who has returned as the sun-disc’ (Van Dijk 2000:270).

With Tutankhamun's accession to the throne, the new religion involving the sole worship of Aten was revoked and the traditional temples, capital (Thebes), and gods were restored with the installment of the Restoration Stela. In Richard Wilkinson's opinion, "If the Amarna Period can only be seen as a decisive downturn for the fortunes of most of Egypt's cults, the following Ramessid era was characterized by recovery and unprecedented growth. Ramesses II (1290 – 1224 B.C.) is credited with building more temples than any other monarch in Egyptian history" (Wilkinson 2000:25). Sety I, however, was the one to restore the traditional temple inscriptions that had been previously removed during Amenhotep IV's reign (Van Dijk 2000).

The Third Intermediate Period lasted from 1069 – 664 B.C. and consisted of "major political upheaval and a weakening of the economy" (Taylor 2000:325). A division of the realm once again occurred in the midst of the disorder. During this period, rule ceased in the royal line and moved through a series of "men [who] held the offices of chief general and high priest of Amun" (Taylor 2000:327) until it fell to the Libyan line of Sheshonq in the north while the Theban high priests of Amun controlled Upper Egypt (Wilkinson 2000). The Third Intermediate Period saw a large population of Libyans within all aspects of Egyptian life, including among the high military ranks. John Taylor highlights the vast differences between these two cultures when he states, "The Libyans [were] non-literate and semi-nomadic with no tradition of permanent building [whereas the] the Egyptians [were] literate, sedentary, and with a long tradition of formal institutions and monumental construction" (Taylor 2000:334). From 747 – 664 B.C., Egypt fell to Kushite rule. The Kushite rulers tried to use the Egyptian religion and cultural traditions as a means to be recognized by the people as authentic pharaohs. They attempted a revival of the artistic, literary, and religious trends of the Old Kingdom (Taylor 2000).

Following the Third Intermediate Period was the Late Period (664 – 332 B.C.) (Lloyd 2000a). The beginning of this period consisted of the Saite Dynasty (664 – 525 B.C.), a native Egyptian ruling group (Lloyd 2000a). The following Persian rule began with an attempt to imitate the “pharaonic style of rule” by building and elaborating on many Egyptian temples (Wilkinson 2000:27) and maintaining the Egyptian legal system (Lloyd 2000a). However, many revolts of the Egyptian people led the Persians to destroy numerous temples in response (Wilkinson 2000).

Alexander the Great’s invasion of Egypt was the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period (332 – 30 B.C.) (Lloyd 2000b). When observing Alexander the Great’s response to Egyptian culture, Wilkinson says that, “on his orders, repairs were carried out to temples damaged in the Persian devastation of 343 [B.C.], and his legacy to Egypt was to prove both extensive and lasting” (Wilkinson 2000:27). Egyptians regarded Alexander the Great as their savior for removing the Persian’s from rule. Like when the Persians began their rule, the Ptolemaic rulers constructed temples to the Egyptian deities in an attempt to gain the recognition of the Egyptians as their king (Wilkinson 2000).

The well-known victory of Octavian over Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII marks the fall of the Ptolemaic Period and the rise of the Roman Period (30 B.C. – A.D. 395). Wilkinson describes the Romans as taking an approach to gaining Egyptian approval similar to that of the Ptolemaic kings, “Like the Ptolemaic kings, the Romans who followed them desired to adopt Egyptian models both for the purposes of their own legitimation and acceptance with the Egyptian priesthoods and people, and ... to preserve the social and economic stability within the area which provided much of Rome’s grain supply” (Wilkinson 2000:27). He claims, “The inwardly focused and exclusive nature of the later Ptolemaic and Roman period temples would

have much to do with the ultimate demise of Egyptian religion” (Wilkinson 2000:27). Due to popular Roman interest in Egyptian society, several sculptures and monuments were removed from Egyptian temples to be taken to Rome. Eventually, however, Christianity was accepted as the official religion of the Roman Empire and the Egyptian religion was slowly forgotten.

EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Egyptian religion was often changing in many subtle ways, especially after the failure that was the Amarna Period. Stephen Quirke does a great job in explaining the fluidity of Egyptian religion and what the observance of these changes can tell us.

The character of an Egyptian deity is much more that of a name that seeks to delineate an area of reference in a little-known world, in which the area delineated – in other words the area of interest to the speaker – may overlap with other areas without replacing them. Thus it is possible to appreciate the hiddenness of divinity simply as Amun ‘the hidden’, and it is possible for the Egyptian to appreciate divinity in the power and light of the sun simply as Ra ‘the sun’; if the Egyptian wishes to combine in his approach to the godhead both ever-present invisible power and radiant heat and light, then it is possible to pronounce this third way of specifying god in the formula Amun-Ra. This fusing or merging is called syncretism by Egyptologists... The deities thus tell us what areas concerned the Egyptians, what captured their attention from one age to the next. (Quirke 1995:17)

Egyptian religion was undeniably a polytheistic religion for the first half of its existence, but it contained a certain amount of fluidity to it, going through many changes before Christianity replaced it as the main religion around the mid-first century A.D. with persecutions occurring from the mid-third century onwards (Peacock 2000). Around the beginning of the New Kingdom, there was a definite shift in thought towards a more monotheistic form of religion. This is most easily seen when viewing the Amarna Period (Van Dijk 2000); however, due to the vast amounts of information pertaining to this time frame and the uniqueness of it, the Amarna Period will be excluded from this analysis.

As Jacobus Van Dijk states, common Egyptian thought during the New Kingdom hinting at new, monotheistic preferences was, “if the sun-god was the primeval creator, then all the other gods had emerged from him and were therefore aspects of him” (Van Dijk 2000:266). The king had been seen as an intermediary between the people and the gods, and “maintained cosmic order by means of temple ritual, and carried out their [the gods] will by his government” (Van Dijk 2000:304). The gods hardly ever revealed themselves directly to the people, but only ever to the king. After the Amarna Period, the position of the king in relation to divinity was drastically altered in the people’s minds. Van Dijk describes the issues that occurred after the Amarna Period as a time when the dispute between polytheism and monotheism was finally solved. “Amun-Ra became the universal, transcendent god, who existed far away, independent of his creation; the other gods and goddesses were aspects of him, they were his immanent manifestations” (Van Dijk 2000:305). Amun-Ra was now the true king of Egypt who “revealed his will directly to every human being and intervened directly in events of everyday life and in the course of history” (Van Dijk 2000:305). This form of religion, termed ‘personal piety’, greatly minimalized the role of pharaoh while turning Amun-Ra into a personal god, able to interact with all people (Van Dijk 2000).

According to Stephen Quirke, another characteristic of religion during the New Kingdom was to dedicate a temple to a specific triad of deities, generally of the form of a holy family: god, goddess, and divine child (i.e. Osiris, Isis, and Horus) (Quirke 1995). This form of worship dedicated to a triad reflected the Egyptians belief in the interconnectedness of everything and a binary way of thinking; day cannot be understood without regarding the idea of night. Quirke demonstrates this form of thinking when he states,

Each Egyptian deity brings our attention to a particular concern of Egyptian life, whether protection or love or physical creation, but this focus is generally

achieved with reference to another part of our experience; Horus cannot be the embodiment of order unless the observer also has a notion of Seth, embodiment of disorder, and Shu and Tefnut cannot embody dryness and moisture without reference both to the creator Atum and, perhaps more importantly, to one another. (Quirke 1995:48)

The interconnected network occurring within the existence of all things established a certain amount of reliance between many different aspects of life. As Quirke states, “The notion of most fundamental importance is that relations between things, rather than the things themselves, are to be expressed as divine” (Quirke 1995:48). Binary opposites are thought to complement one another and are required to achieve full understanding; one cannot exist without the other and it is, therefore, necessary to consider each when attempting to comprehend it in its entirety.

With the emergence of the Third Intermediate Period, several changes occur within the religion. John Taylor highlights the two main distinguishing factors of this period as being “the diminished importance of the king and the prominence of women in cult activities. One aspect of the loss of the unique status of the king... was that the performance of the temple ritual... was no longer his sole prerogative; from the end of the New Kingdom it was increasingly the clergy who carried out this task” (Taylor 2000:354). ‘God’s wife of Amun’ became a highly important role, her status nearing the king’s own status in the 23rd Dynasty (Taylor 2000).

At this time, an emphasis was placed on mother-child relationships, centering on the triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus and Amun, Mut, and Khons. Taylor elaborates with, “A major manifestation of this ‘mammisiac’ religion is the importance increasingly attached to divine triads, with the child-god (identifiable with the king) as offspring of two other deities” (Taylor 2000:356). This established a stress on family and solidified the king’s position as being secondary to that of the gods.

The Late Period consisted of a continuation of the New Kingdom form of religion and worship (Lloyd 2000a). The conquering Ethiopians, however, gave emphasis to Amun, as the god who ‘guides the king on all his noble undertakings’, Isis and several others in their worship and constructions (Morenz 1992:242). Morenz claims, “The Ethiopians by no means preferred a monotheistic cult of Amun to the profusion of the Egyptian pantheon, whose various members are frequently encountered in their temple reliefs” (Morenz 1992:242).

Several very distinct additions occur with the arrival of the Ptolemies: emergence of *mammisis* (birth houses) and the creation of Serapis (Lloyd 2000b). The birth house was a “small peripheral temple, invariably placed at right angles to the main temple...used to celebrate the rituals of the marriage of the goddess (Isis or Hathor) and the birth of the child-god” (Lloyd 2000b:406). The birth house was also used to stress the divine relationship between the king and the gods (Wilkinson 2000).

Peacock highlights Serapis’s creation and relation to Zeus with, “a new god called Serapis was invented with the object of giving a greater degree of political and religious unity. Unlike the traditional pharaonic-period deity Osirapis, from whom he derived, he is shown not as an animal but as a bearded man, not unlike Zeus: of all the Egyptian gods, he is most similar to a Greco-Roman god” (Peacock 2000:429). Quirke describes Serapis as “the Greek rendering of Egyptian ‘Osir-Apis’, that is, the Osiris (i.e. deceased) Apis, a term used... to refer to the Apis bull at Memphis through which Ptah and the creative forces of the earth could be served in this world” (Quirke 1995:177).

In the Greeks’ approach to Egyptian religion, Peacock says, “The Greeks identified their own gods within the Egyptian spectrum. Thus, Horus was equated with Apollo, Thoth with Hermes, Amun with Zeus, Hathor with Aphrodite, and so on” (Peacock 2000:429). With large

amounts of positions open for intermediaries, there were a good amount of people who knew both languages; with this, and the fame of the Egyptian religion among the Greeks due to their diminishing faith in their own gods, many temples now catered to both languages (Lloyd 2000b).

Another noticeable change in the religion was the sudden practice of mass mummification of “certain species animal and bird for burial in catacombs” (Quirke 1995:175). As Egyptian gods tended to have animals counterparts whose form they could take on if they so wished, this led to a custom of mummifying large quantities of animals as another way to worship the gods (Peacock 2000). This practice flourished in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Quirke 1995). The animals were considered to be a manifestation of the deity who could act as an intermediary to be used as an oracle (Baines 1991).

Peacock describes religion during the Roman period as, “Rome inherited pharaonic religion, on which a classical gloss had been superimposed, largely during the preceding Ptolemaic period” (Peacock 2000:428). Serapis carried on his fame when the Roman period arose and Isis, sometimes identified with Hathor, also became incredibly popular (Peacock 2000). Quirke explains that at this time, there were no longer just monotheistic tendencies, but a full blown monotheistic religion. “The conversion of Egypt and the Roman Empire severed any concrete links to the traditions of Pharaonic civilization in the perception, naming and depiction of separate aspects of divinity; all gods were now one, not the visible sun-disk of Akhenaten but the hidden universal power to which, in the Egyptian pantheon, Amun comes the nearest” (Quirke 1995:180).

TRADITIONAL TEMPLE

As Shafer argued, “Ancient Egyptian society [was] comprised [of] the gods, the king, the blessed dead, and humanity, a community that encompassed earth, sky, and netherworld. These three realms converged in temples and cohered in rituals. There the power was tapped, chaos was bridled, and cosmic order was renewed” (Shafer 1991:1). In describing the need for ritual, he went on to say that,

Time, however, was not so stable a dimension of order as space. Egyptians experienced time as a spiral of pattered repetitions, a coil of countless rebirths. The purest moment of sacred time was the first, the moment of creation, when the existent and its order emerged from the nonexistent and its aspect of disorder. Subsequently, time... proved to be vulnerable to chaos...Because of order’s ongoing vulnerability to chaos, Egyptians needed to conceive of creation not as a single past event but as a series of “first times,” of sacred regenerative moments recurring regularly within the sacred space of temples through the media of rituals and architectural. (Shafer 1991:2)

In Snape’s words, “the temple is a recreation of the landscape of creation, the place where, at the ‘first time,’ land arose from the waters of chaos and order (*maat*) was created from chaos” (Snape 1996:29). Recreating the earth’s creation became a daily ritual that was repeated within the temple at both sunrise and sunset, morning and night.

Unlike mortuary temples whose devotion was to the dead King, divine temples are more isolated structures, lacking any tombs or supporting structure (Murray 2002). Four standard elements were usually utilized in the construction of divine temples built during the New Kingdom through to the Roman Period: pylon, courtyard, hypostyle hall, and sanctuary (Snape 1996). Snape, however, claims that these were merely used as a guide rather than a strict set of rules to be followed. The King was regarded as the living god (reincarnated) whose sole purpose was the defeat of chaos leading to the maintenance of order. This task was thought to be carried out through the construction of these temples and the performance of the sacred rituals (Snape

1996). Very little variation ever occurs in this main temple layout. Small individual temples may be added outside of the main temple, but the traditional layout of the main temple does not vary.

METHODOLOGY

Choosing a sample of Egyptian temples to study can be a difficult task since, for a variety of reasons, many Egyptian temples have survived only partially intact and are missing many of their original elements and decorations. Therefore, the sample used in this study has been chosen specifically to include temples from both the New Kingdom and the Graeco-Roman which have survived relatively intact to the present day. Further, it is important to use temples for which the entire layout is available as many Egyptian temples have only been partially excavated by archaeologists. For these reasons, the temples used for this study come from Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia and include several temples from each of the periods under consideration. The temples to be examined are Abu Simbel, Karnak, Luxor, and Medinet Habu, which have been dated to the New Kingdom, and Edfu, Dendera, Philae, and Kom Ombo from the Graeco-Roman Period (Figure 1). All of these temples were major temples at the time of their construction until many years after.

This study was a visual analysis using pictures from a variety of literary and internet sources, so the data is limited to what pictures could be found rather than a first-hand visual analysis of the temples. A characteristic was only recorded to be present at a temple if visual proof was available. The temples analyzed were temples that have already been dated. The results would identify key characteristics that can be used to help date other temples that are not well known to the Graeco-Roman Period.

Determining factors that will be analyzed:

- Presence of *mammisi* (birth houses)
- Triad presence in the form of god, goddess, and child or emphasis on family
- Emphasis on goddess or ‘god’s wife’
- Practice of mummifying animals for burial in catacombs
- Appearance of the god Serapis

Birth houses first appeared in the fourth century B.C. during the Ptolemaic period (Quirke 1995). It is “a special, independent structure located within the temple precincts in which the mysteries associated with the birth of a god’s offspring were celebrated... Mammisis were present in all the major Graeco-Roman temples” (Wilkinson 2000:73). These birth houses were always placed at a right angle to the main temple and were usually surrounded by colonnades with intercolumnar screen walls (Lloyd 2000b). The inner walls are often decorated in relation to the birth of the god-king and hymns dedicated to the members of the triad and the divine child (Wilkinson 2000). The birth house was used as a way to give divine sanction to the king’s right to rule.

Near the end of the New Kingdom, during the Third Intermediate Period, there was an increased emphasis on the divine family in the form of god, goddess, and god-child. There should be an increased occurrence of this in temple decoration using triads other than that of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu as was present in earlier Egyptian temples. The divine family should feature highly in the birth houses of the Graeco-Roman period as decorations being related to the birth of the child-god. With this emphasis should also be an emphasis on the nurturing of the child-god by the mother-goddess.

Also occurring near the end of the New Kingdom was an increased importance in the 'god's wife of Amun' and the goddess role. The position of 'god's wife' held power near to that of high priest until it diminished in importance some time later (Quirke 1995). An increased dedication of temples to goddesses should be an indication that an increased importance of powerful women was occurring.

With the reign of the Ptolemies, Serapis was created as a way to ease Greek colonists into Egyptian culture, becoming the principle god of Alexandria (Quirke 1995). Serapis drew upon the characteristics of many different Egyptian and Greek gods displaying cultural syncretism (Lloyd 2000b). Serapis would only be present in heavily Greek populated areas, such as Alexandria or Memphis.

During the Graeco-Roman period, the practice of mummifying animals and birds that had god counterparts became popular. The increased importance of these animals as manifestations of gods and potential oracles led to their mass mummification burials. During the Graeco-Roman period, these mummifications should be seen in relation to temples of gods who have animal counterparts.

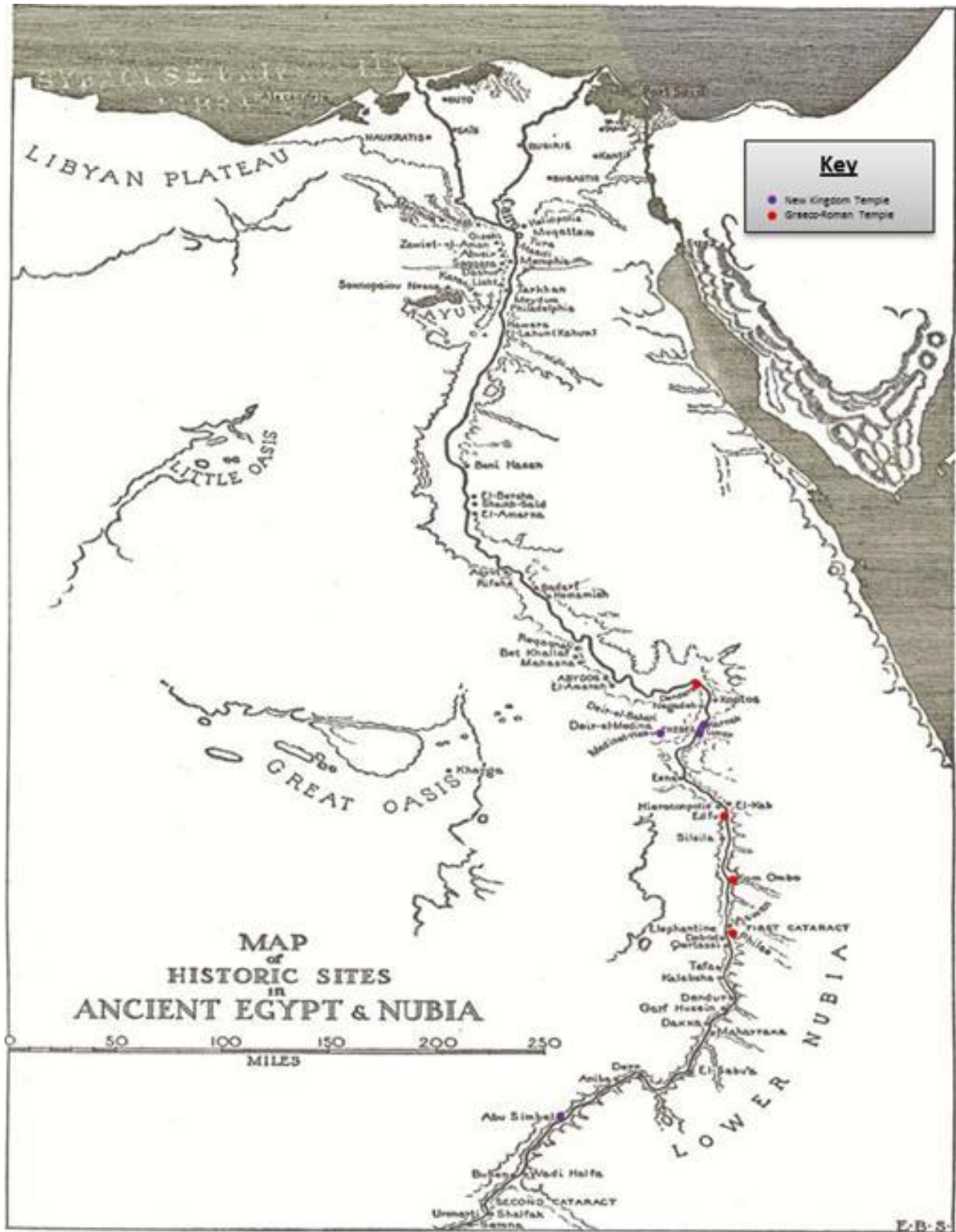


Figure 1. Map of Ancient Egypt and Nubia sites. Temples used in study indicated. (Adapted from Smith 1968)

RESULTS

The most distinctive difference that can be seen between New Kingdom temples and Graeco-Roman temples is the emergence of the *mammisi*, or the “birth houses”. The presence of a birth house on a temple’s grounds is an indicator that, even if the main temple itself was not built during the Graeco-Roman period, at least the birth house was built during the Graeco-Roman period. These birth houses may be linked to the birth rooms that some New Kingdom temples have to celebrate the “divine conception and birth of the kings”; however, a complete temple dedicated to this purpose does not occur until the Graeco-Roman period (Wilkinson 2000:73). All of the major Graeco-Roman temples contain birth houses within their grounds providing a sure marker for dating a temple to this time period (Wilkinson 2000). All of the Graeco-Roman temples analyzed in this study contained birth houses, with Dendera having two, while none of the temples dating to the New Kingdom contained birth houses. Perhaps these birth houses were of importance to the Graeco-Romans because they emphasized life more than death, unlike the Egyptians (Lloyd 2000b).

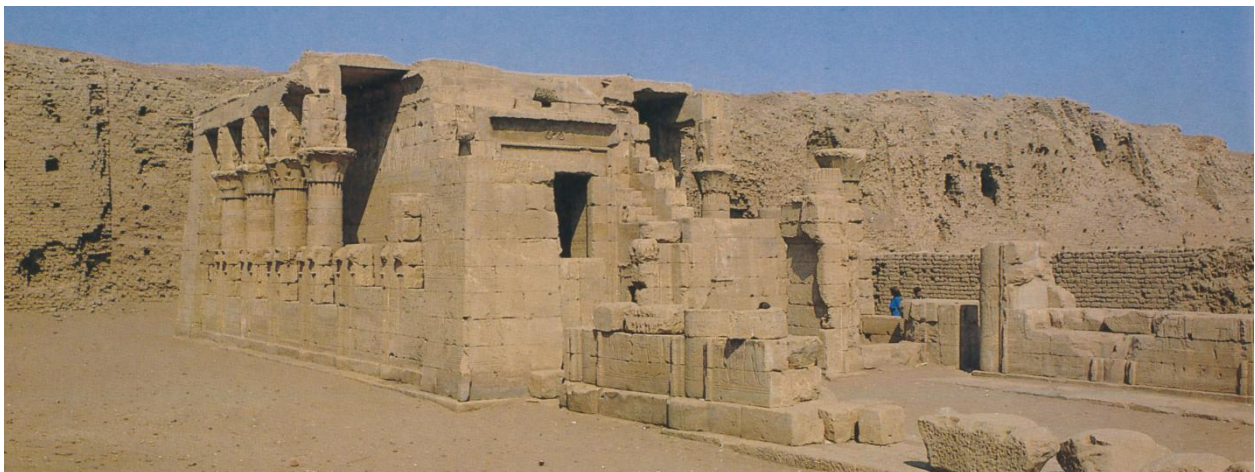


Figure 2. Example of a typical style *mammisi*. Located at Edfu. (Magi 1990)

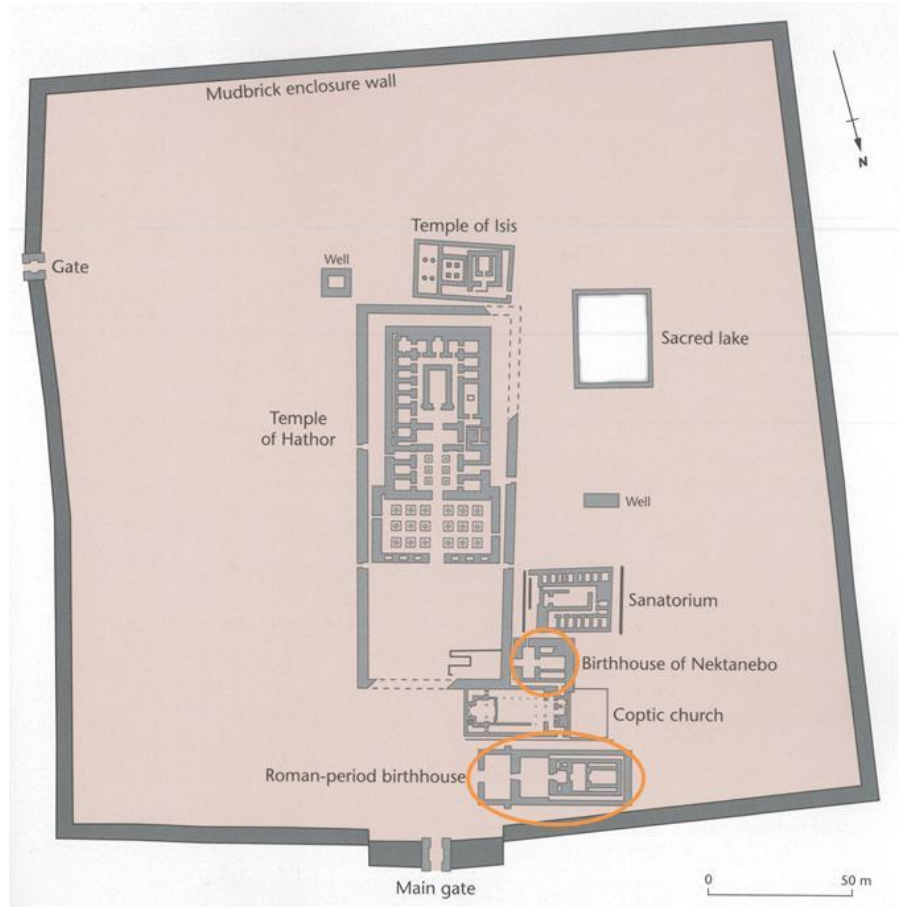


Figure 3. Dendera with both of its two *mammisi* indicated. (Adapted from Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 8.2.2)

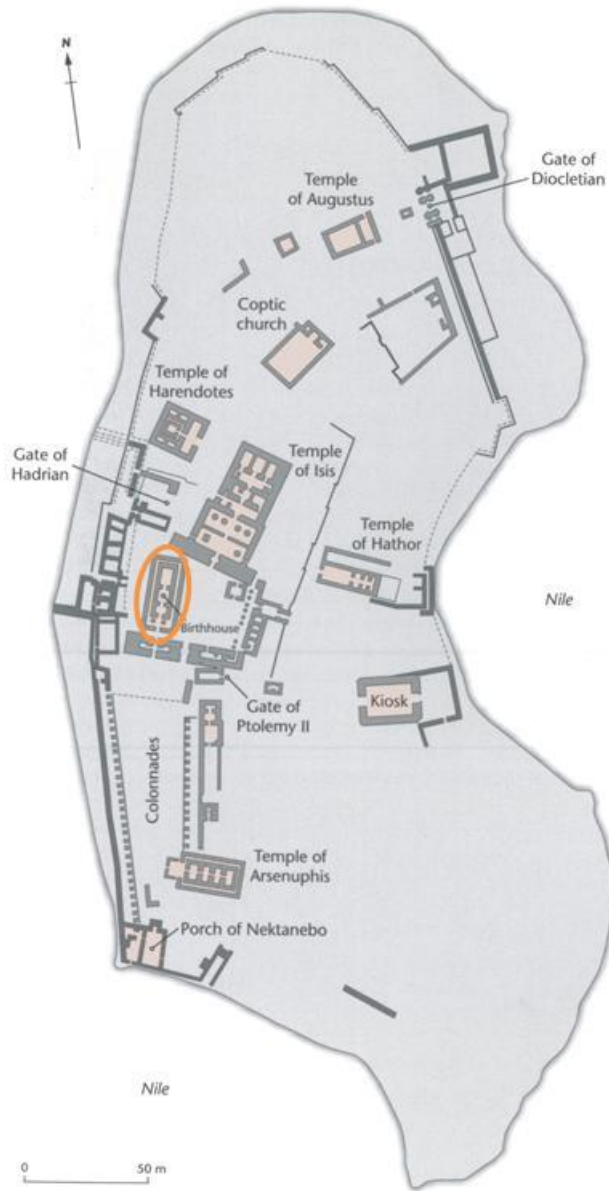


Figure 4. Philae with *mammisi* location indicated. (Adapted from Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 8.10.2)

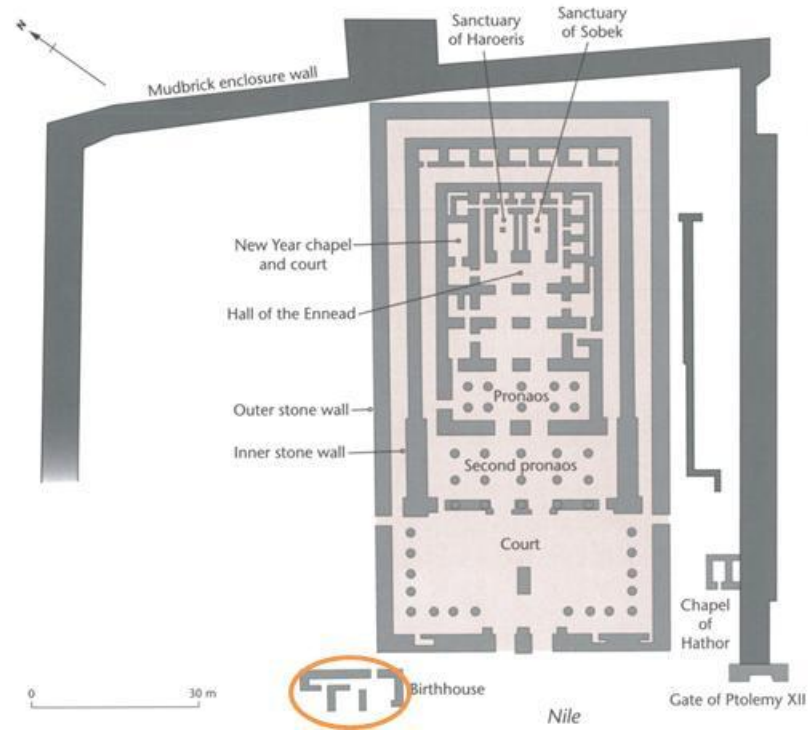


Figure 5. Kom Ombo with *mammisi* location indicated. (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 8.8.1)

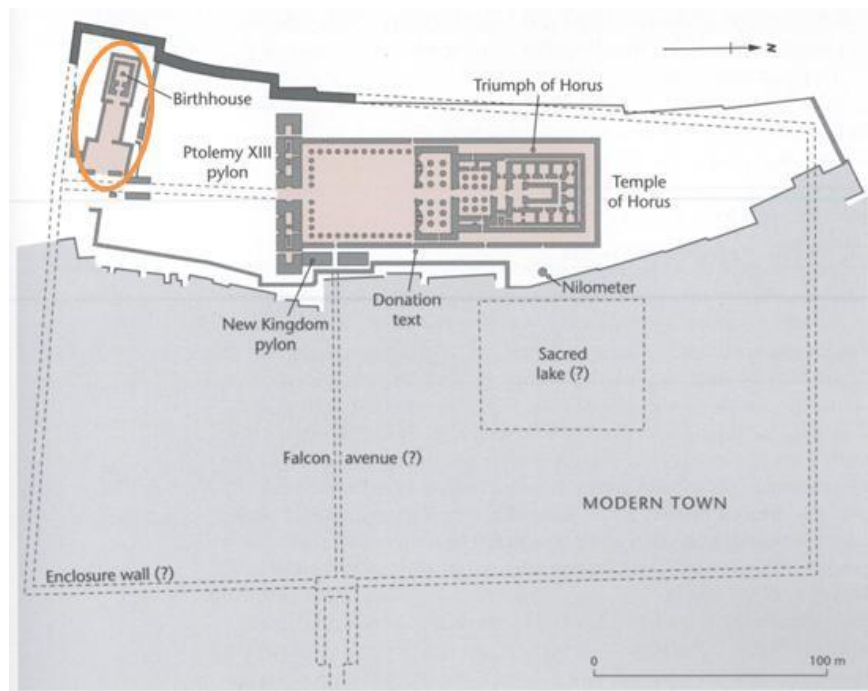


Figure 6. Edfu with *mammisi* location indicated. (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 8.7.1)

An emphasis in the divine family as god, goddess, and child-god occurred shortly before the beginning of the Graeco-Roman period. This likely occurred as a means of giving divine ordinance to the pharaoh as being the ‘living Horus’ and, therefore, having the right to rule. This emphasis probably then led to the development of the birth houses. This stress on the divine family can be seen in the portrayals of the triad or in depictions of the child-god suckling from the mother-goddess. This characteristic was more difficult to find visual data for and data could only be found for its presence at Edfu (Figure 7). It should also be noted that it was not uncommon for earlier representations (before the Graeco-Roman Period) of an Amun triad to be present (Figure 8), but non-Amun triads do appear to be present during the Graeco-Roman Period and lacking in earlier periods (Figure 7).

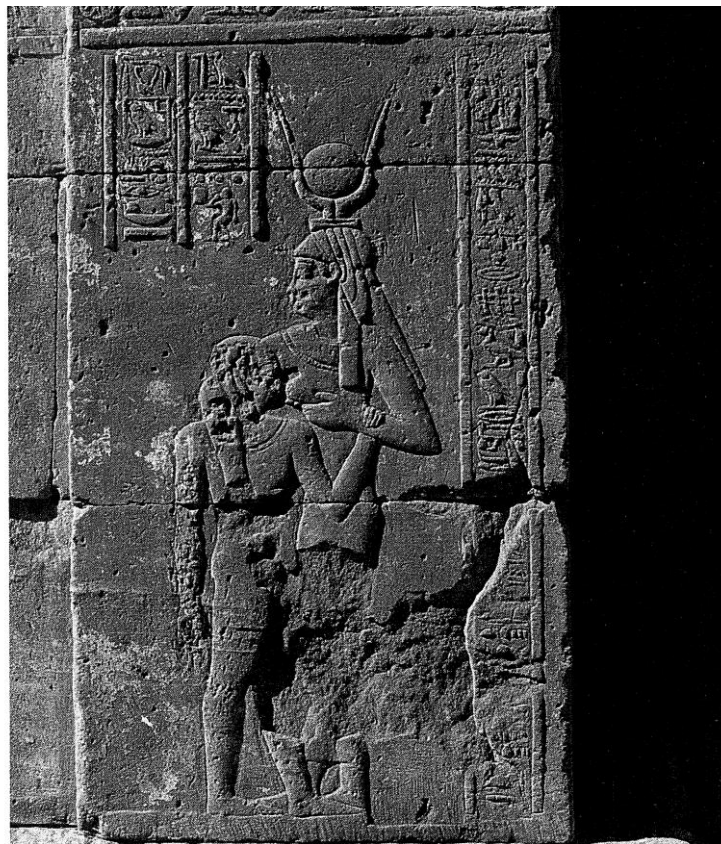


Figure 7. Depiction from the birth house at Edfu of Hathor and Horus. (Finnestad 1997: Figure 91)

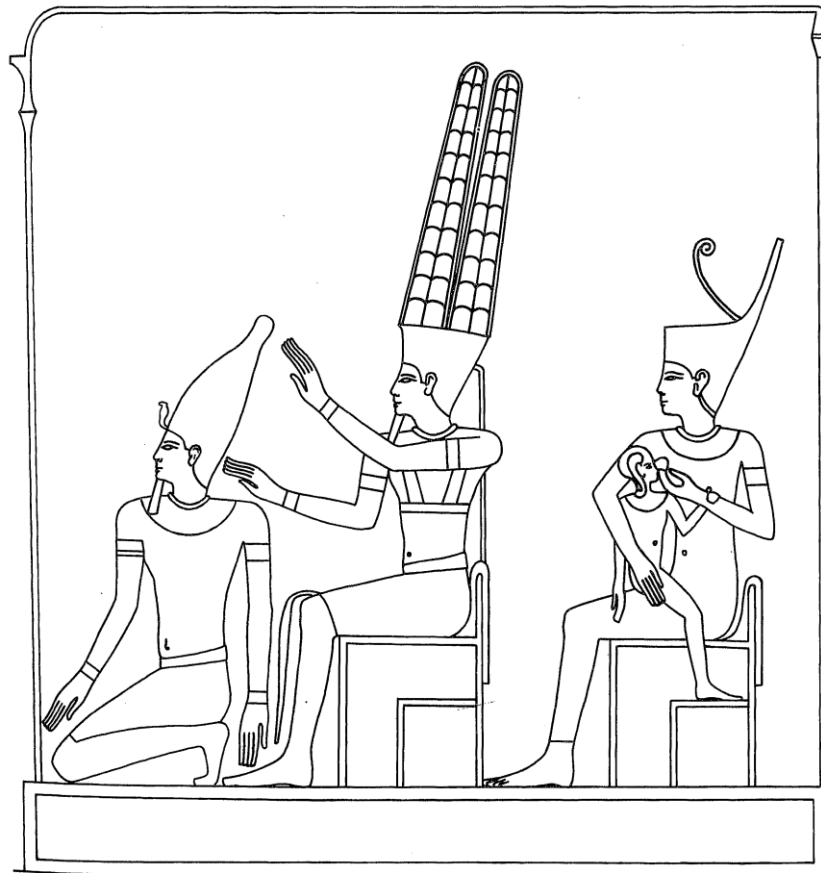


Figure 8. Karnak, Amun-Re and the newborn king suckling his mother, Amunet's breast. (Bell 1997: Figure 54)

The heightened importance of the mother-goddess, women, and 'god's wife of Amun' can be seen in the increased amount of temples dedicated to goddesses. All of the New Kingdom temples in this study are dedicated to gods with several containing minor temples dedicated to a goddess, such as the temple of Mut at Karnak. The shrine at Luxor dedicated to Isis is a Roman addition, noted by the presence of Serapis (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004).

Two of the Graeco-Roman temples of this study, Dendera and Philae, have main temples that are solely dedicated to a goddess. Two other Graeco-Roman temples, Kom Ombo with a shrine of Hathor and Kalabsha which was a joint dedication to Isis, Osiris, and Horus-Mandulis,

have minor temples dedicated to a goddess. It was uncommon to dedicate the entire temple complex to a goddess before it appears in the Graeco-Roman Period.

During the Graeco-Roman period, it became a popular part of religious practice to worship a deity's animal counterpart as a vessel for the deity and then mummifying after it had passed on. Animal mummifications occurred by the thousands during this time and were often placed in catacombs located in temples of that deity. A popular example of this are the animal catacombs located at Saqqara, containing cats (associated with Bastet), dogs or jackels (associated with Anubis), and baboons (associated with Thoth). Of the temples used in this study, Kom Ombo was the only temple to contain mummified animal remains. The Hathor chapel (Figure 10) at Kom Ombo contains mummified crocodiles (associated with Sobek) (Figure 11).

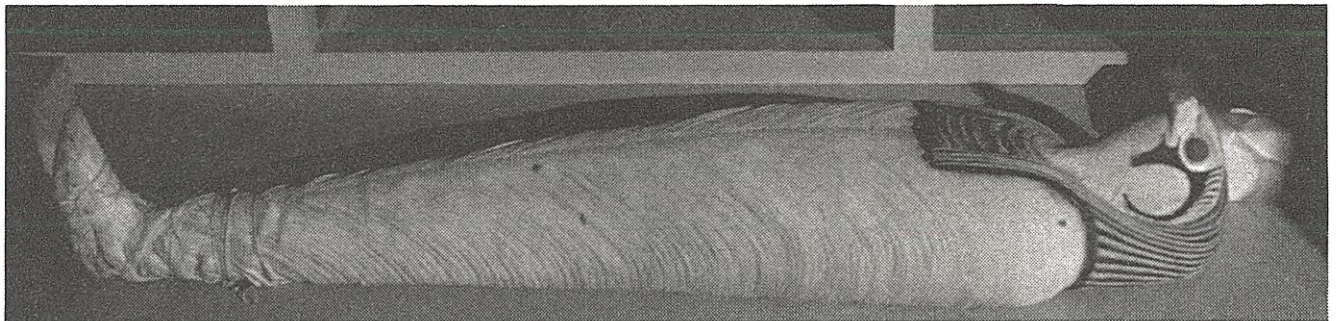


Figure 9. Example of a mummified falcon (associated with Horus). (Silverman 1991)

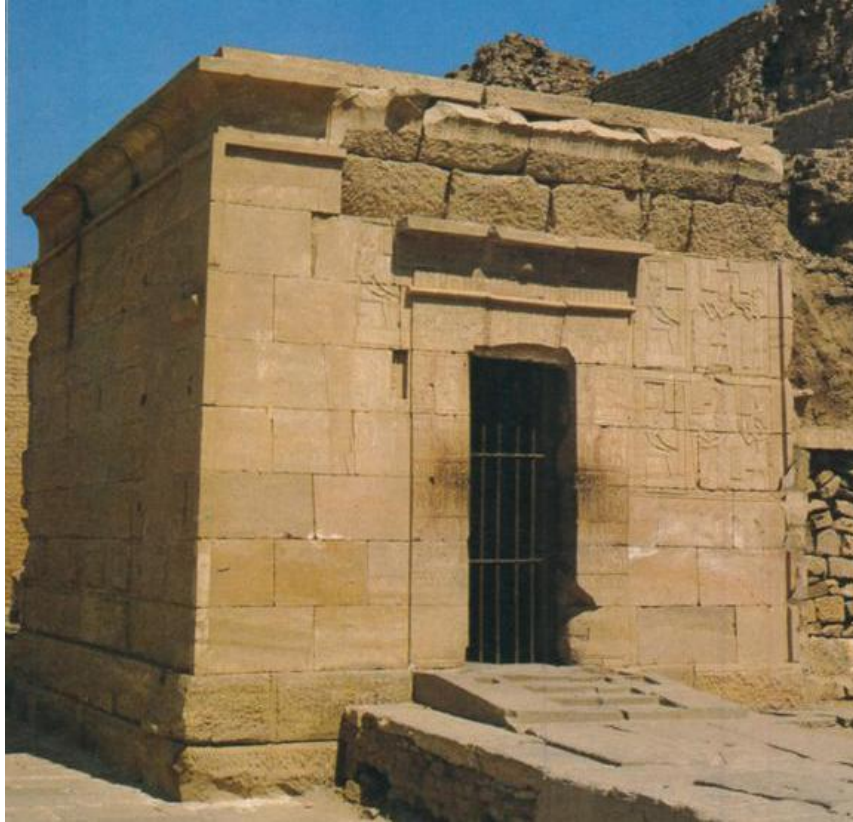


Figure 10. Hathor chapel at Kom Ombo containing mummified crocodiles. (Magi 1990)



Figure 11. Mummified crocodile from Kom Ombo. (Fuller 2008)

Serapis (Figure 11) was created in the early Ptolemaic period and, if present, means that the image dates to at least the time of Ptolemy I. Serapis provided a way to ease the Greeks into the Egyptian culture by providing them with something a little more familiar to them, to lessen the possible culture shock. Serapis was visually similar to the depictions of many of the Greek gods. When the Romans invaded, Serapis maintained popularity with them as well. However, he never gained popularity with the native Egyptian population. At Luxor, a small brick temple dedicated to Serapis (Figure 12 and Figure 13) was constructed by Gaius Julius Antoninus during the Graeco-Roman Period (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004). Luxor was the only temple used in this study to exhibit the presence of this characteristic.

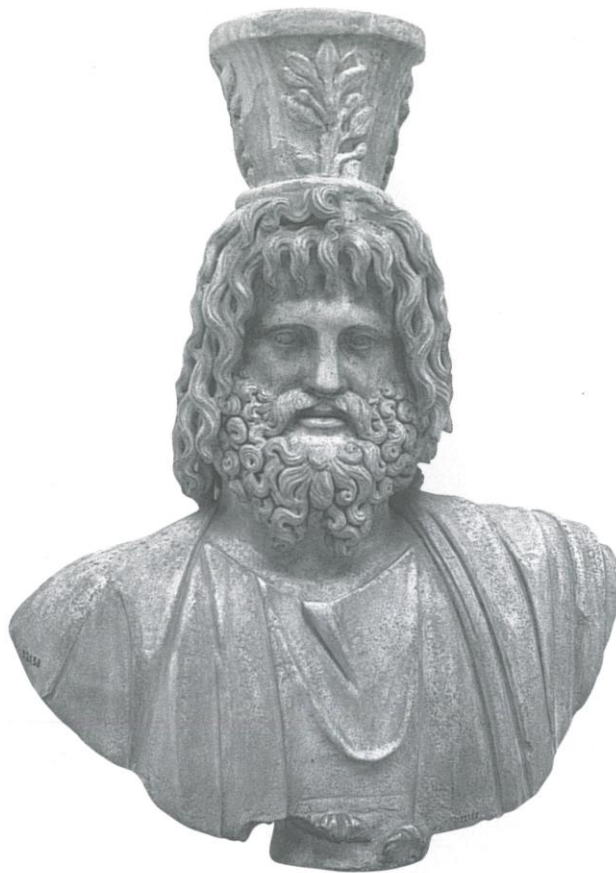


Figure 12. Bust of Serapis. (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 1.4.3)

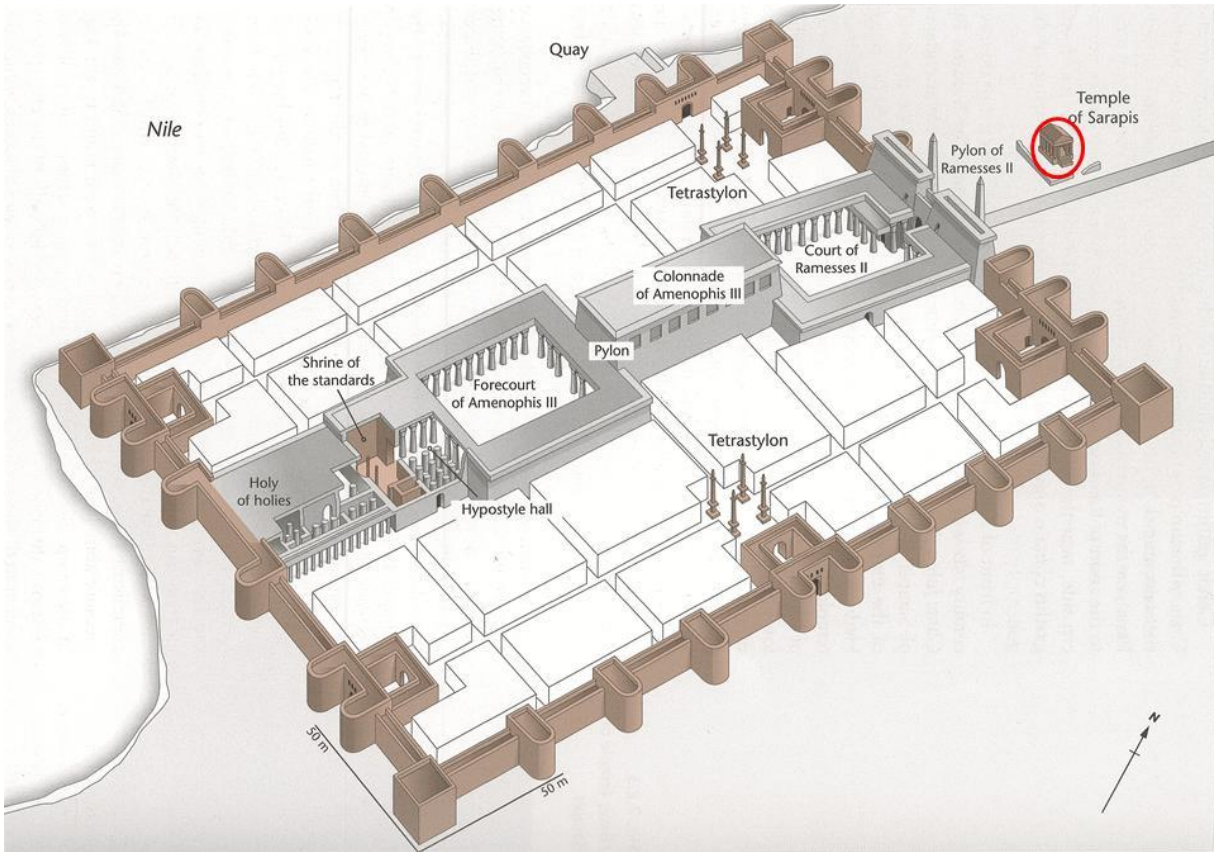


Figure 13. Layout of Luxor with the Temple of Serapis indicated. (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004)



Figure 14. Temple of Serapis at Luxor with statue of Isis still partially present. (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: Figure 7.2.3)

Table 2. Presence of determining Graeco-Roman Period characteristics.

	New Kingdom Temples				Graeco-Roman Temples			
	Abu Simbel	Karnak	Medinet-Habu	Luxor	Kom Ombo	Edfu	Dendera	Philae
Birth house					X	X	X	X
Triad presence/Family emphasis						X		
Goddess emphasis (major temple)							X	X
Mummified animals					X			
Serapis				X				

*Note that the Serapis temple at Luxor is a Graeco-Roman addition.

CONCLUSION

There are several identifiable factors that are reliable in distinguishing Graeco-Roman features from earlier temple features and can be used to tie changes in Egyptian religion to what can be seen in the temple decoration and architectural layout. The presence of *mammisis* (birth houses), Serapis, extensive animal mummification, and temples dedicated to a goddess are all factors that relate to religious changes occurring during the beginning of the Graeco-Roman period. Birth houses were used to provide the new foreign rulers divine ordnance as rulers of Egypt. Serapis was created as a buffer between the Greeks native religious beliefs and the new ‘foreign’ ideas of their new home in Egypt. Extensive animal mummification started to occur because of the increased maintenance of living animals who had divine counterparts and could be used as oracles and a means of deity worship because of this connection. Finally, the increased popularity and importance of women and, by extension goddesses, led to the high occurrence of temples dedicated to a main goddess. These are all easily identifiable characteristics that can place that feature, and possibly the entire temple if it is not a reconstruction or added construction done at a later date, to the Graeco-Roman period.

The presence of a triad in a temple, however, may be a deceiving factor to use because the triad of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu was used before the idea of triad and the emphasis on the

divine family became popular. The fluidity of Egyptian religion and the frequent reconstruction and additional building implemented by rulers during all the periods makes it difficult to fully rely on decoration and temple layout to date when a temple was constructed. One temple can have parts that date to the Old Kingdom and parts that date to the Graeco-Roman era right next to each other. Perhaps, it would be more reliable to look at the stylistic traits used in each part of the temple to date it rather than what the designs themselves are saying; but these characteristics may help to confirm the date of a Graeco-Roman temple.

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