African Queens: The Unknown Voices of the Archaeological Record Raena Gamble, The College of Wooster, Archaeology Program, Art and Art History Department

Introduction

The perspectives of Black/African women are marginalized throughout the archaeological record. To help with this gap, lanalyzed 3 African Queens, Iyoba Idia of Benin, Kandake Amanishakheto of Kush, & Oueen Nefertiti of Egypt and how their artifacts demonstrate their status.

Theorv

Black Feminist Theory, or the methodology that combines anthropological theory, ethnohistory, oral history, material culture, Black/Africandescendant feminisms, critical race, & African Diaspora theories(Battle-Baptiste 2011:29)was the primary theory for this project. Other theories like gender & feminist theories exclude female & women of colors perspectives. BFM allows the narratives of Black/African women to be brought to light. African studies was also highlighted since researchers disregard African history outside of evolution & Egypt



Figure 1.1: Commemorative Head of Queen Mother (The British Museum 2021)

supernatural (Bortolot 2003).

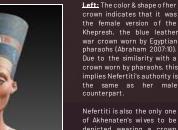


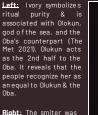
Figure 1.5: Bust of Queen Nefertiti (Egyptian Museum Berlin 2021)

Left: Metal heads were known to represent Benin monarchs exclusively. Another unique aspect of the headdress is the coral beading wrapped around the entire piece. Elite figures sho wed their ties to the palace with the beads. Coral beads also symbolize rovalty, authority, wealth, & prestige (Fadipe 2021) Left & Right: The 4 marks

(ikharos) serve as identity markers for sculptures depicting women & Figure 1.2: Queen Mother Pendant

foreigners (Preston 2010). The 2 scars between her eves allude to medicinefilled incisions that were Mask: woba (The Met 2022) the source of Idia's power





exclusive to the king (Abram 2007:10), but woman is committing the act. These scenes do not depict actual events

hut shows her as an ever-triumphing pharaoh (Carnev & Muller 2020:38)



Figure 1.6 Stela of Kandake Amanishakheto (State Museum of Egyptian Art 2021)



Figure 1.3: Close-up of Figure 4.3a - with Nefertiti smiting an enemy (Museum of Fine Arts Boston 2021)

Left: Amanishakheto stands between the goddess Amesemi & the lion aod Apedemak. The iconography further suggests that the citizens perceived her as a divine since Amanishakheto is the same height as Apedemak, & Amesemi (Asante & Mazana 2004:302).

Her crown has 2 long, curling ram horns, reminiscent of the ram god Khnum, 2 feathered crownsof Amun, & 2 uraei (Eltze 2017:74). These elements are royal & deific icons that associate the queen wearing them with the legitimacy & power of the godsrulers who came before (Eltze 2017:74).

Right: Depicts the god Amun, the supreme god of Nubia with the head of a ram; the ram also symbolizes power & prestige (Putnam 1994:53). In Kush culture, public display of adornment on one's body is as an indicator of one's social status (Eltze 2017-62) Kandake Amanishakheto wearing iewelry that displays a powerful image reveals her elite standing. A tiny uraeus on top of the ram's head also displays

authority because a

uraeus symbolizes

royalty(The Met 2022)



Figure 1.4: Shield ring with a ram's head on a wide collar, c.200 B.C.E. Gold, Munich Ant, 2446b (State Museum of Egyptian Art. 2021)

Conclusion

Artifacts from lyoba Idia, Kandake Amanishakheto, & Oueen Nefertiti demonstrate the power these queens held during their reigns. From the analysis of these items and their design choices, including choice of material, and added symbols, it is unmistakable that these artifacts illustrate that these queens had tremendous authority and were more than the wives of pharaohs and kings. However, due to the marginalization of Black/African women's perspectives throughout archaeological and historical research, their stories get lost, which is why Black Feminist Theory and African studies are important to allow the narratives of African history and Black/African women to be seen.

Left: The color & shape o fher crown indicates that it was the female version of the Khepresh, the blue leather war crown worn by Egyptian pharaohs (Abraham 2007:10). Due to the similarity with a crown worn by pharaohs, this implies Nefertiti's authority is the same as her male counterpart

depicted wearing a crown, indicating that she was more with co-regent Akhenaten. rather than another wife (Middleton 2004:675)