

Now it's your turn!

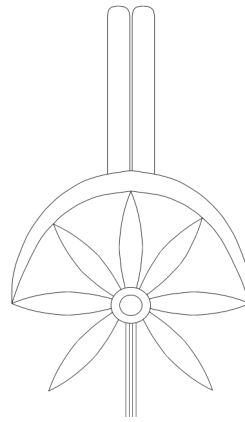


Can you find the above image in Sha-Amun-em-su's coffin? It represents her *ba*, one of the parts which for ancient Egyptians composed human beings, gods and animals. The *ba* was responsible for the individuality, an active and dynamic element which after death is separated from the body. It is depicted as human headed bird, being responsible for the passage of the dead person to the Netherworld.



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### **SESHAT**

The Seshat Research Group in Egyptology is the first Brazilian research group dedicated specifically to Egyptian archaeology. It congregates scholars and graduate students involved in research projects on funerary religion, landscape, art, new technologies and the Egyptian collection of the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro, among other themes.

These projects are related to research and other activities of the Division of Archaeology of the Museum's Department of Anthropology. The Seshat Research Group in Egyptology includes scholars and students from various universities in Brazil and also Portugal, Spain and France.

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## **Sha-Amun-em-su an Ancient Egyptian singer**



## Who was Sha-Amun-em-su

Sha-Amun-em-su was a woman who lived in ancient Egypt around 800 BC. Based on the inscriptions in her coffin's lid we were able to learn not only her name, but also her position. She was a singer priestess in the Temple of Amun in Karnak. She belonged to a feminine elite of temple singers who participated in the ceremonies enchanting hymns and prayers during the festivals and daily rituals in honour of Amun-Re.

She lived in ancient Thebes (modern Luxor) where today the remains the Temple of Karnak are, one of the biggest religious centres of ancient Egypt. There worked a variety of people, among them, priests, scribes, singers, musicians, administrators and other functionaries.

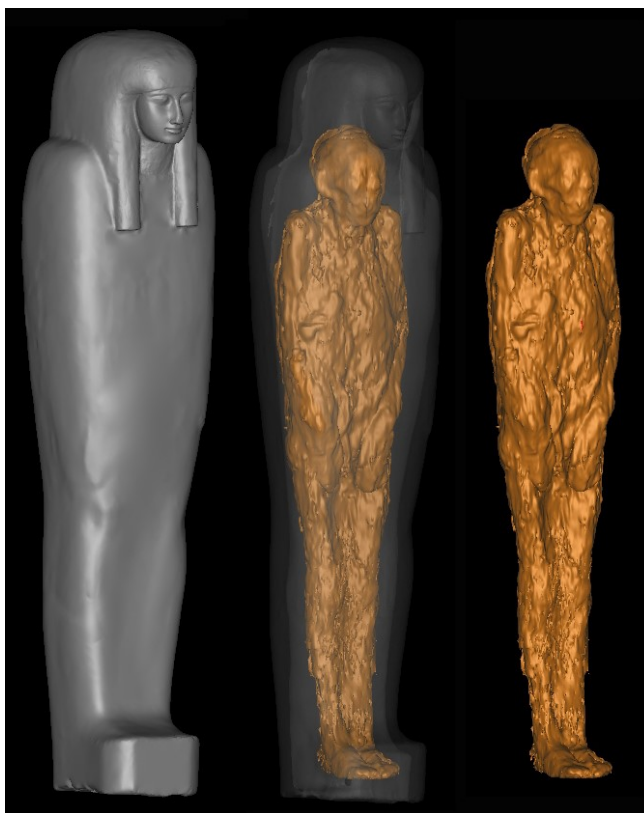
There were many categories of singers. According to the inscriptions on Sha-Amun-em-su's coffin, she was part of the main group of singers at Karnak, named *heset*. These were lead singers which sometimes were accompanied by a choir of women.

The singers were not obliged to be in the temples all the time. Many participated only in the ceremonies. They were prepared to their duty since childhood. The future singers were adopted by senior ones, which became their tutors.

We do not know who Sha-Amun-em-su's adoptive mother was. However, there is a coffin now at Cairo Museum which belonged to a temple singer named Merset-Amun. In her coffin there is a mention to her adoptive mother which was called Sha-Amun-em-su. Although we do not have much information about Sha-Amun-em-su's Family, they were probably part of a religious elite which had priestly positions in ancient Thebes.

## How did she look like?

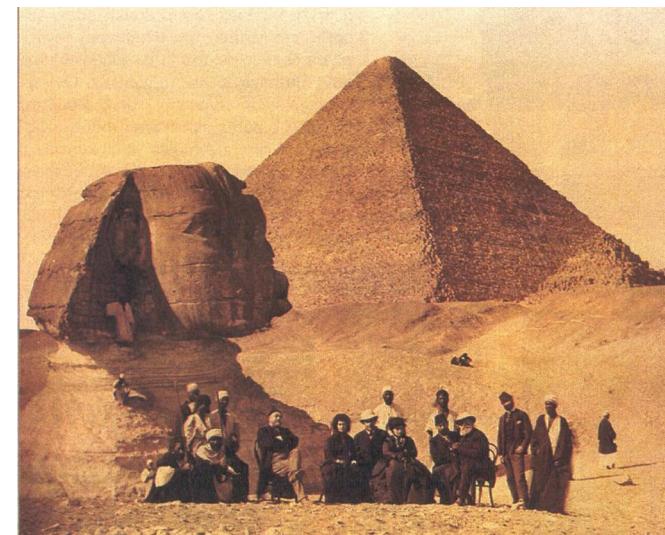
The coffin of Sha-Amun-em-su was never opened after sealed by ancient Egyptian priests almost 3000 years ago. In 2004, the coffin was taken to a medical clinic to be CT scanned. After that we were able to examine the mummy's condition and to find amulets put under her bandages by embalming priests during the mummification process. These amulets had a magical function, to protect the deceased in the trip to the Netherworld. Sha-Amun-em-su died at approximately 50 years old by a still non-determined cause.



CT image with Sha-Amun-em-su coffin and the mummy



Title and name of the Singer Sha-Amun-em-su



D. Pedro II and cortege visiting th Pyramids in 1876

In 1876, when Emperor D. Pedro II visited Egypt by the second time he earned a gift from Qediva Ismail, king of Egypt, the sealed decorated coffin of Sha-Amun-em-su. It is said the Brazilian Emperor used to leave the coffin upstanding near a window at his office. During a windy storm the window would have been opened breaking the right side of the coffin, which was later restored.

The singer's coffin was held in the Palace until the Republic Proclamation in 1889, and subsequently transferred to the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro.