



## Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt (Penguin History)

By Joyce A. Tyldesley



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In ancient Egypt women enjoyed a legal, social and sexual independence unrivalled by their Greek or Roman sisters, or in fact by most women until the late nineteenth century. They could own and trade in property, work outside the home, marry foreigners and live alone without the protection of a male guardian. Some of them even rose to rule Egypt as 'female kings'. Joyce Tyldesley's vivid history of how women lived in ancient Egypt weaves a fascinating picture of daily life – marriage and the home, work and play, grooming and religion – viewed from a female perspective, in a work that is engaging, original and constantly surprising.



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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Histories of women usually bring with them histories of women's world and women's work--in other words, the daily life of a culture. This look at ancient Egyptian women is no different. British archaeologist and researcher Tyldesley illuminates women's positions as cooks, washerwomen, dancers, mourners, weavers, priestesses, mothers, wives and--on very rare occasions--pharaohs. Tyldesley doesn't try to simplify a subject complicated by linguistic subtleties, lack of archaeological evidence, ancient propaganda and the orientalist mythology of seething harems that early excavators imposed on ambiguous digs. What she does, and does well, is give an idea of what evidence is available and, in accessible, slyly cheery prose, recreate how women (and men) shopped, dressed and ate ("the menus of the poor and less enterprising usually involved a fairly dull and rather flatulent rotation of bread, onions, lettuce, radish and pulses"). Most intriguing, though, are Tyldesley's all-too-brief initial observations of the standing of Egyptian women. For all its emphasis on tradition, Egypt differed from much of the worst of Graeco-Roman paternalism: women were important factors in a child's heredity, not just passive bearers of men's genetics; they could own property; make legally binding contracts; sue; and, most amazingly, live alone.

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From the Back Cover

During the dynastic period (3000 BC - 332 BC), as the Greek historian Herodotus was intrigued to observe, Egyptian women enjoyed a legal, social and sexual independence unrivalled by their Greek or Roman sisters, unrivalled, indeed, by women in Europe until the late nineteenth century. They could own and trade in property, work outside the home, marry foreigners and even live alone without the protection of a male guardian. Furthermore, women fortunate enough to be members of the royal harem were vastly influential, as were those rare women who rose to rule Egypt as 'female kings'. Joyce Tyldesley draws upon archaeological, historical and ethnographical evidence to piece together a vivid picture of daily life in Egypt - marriage and the home, work and play, grooming, religion - all viewed from a female perspective. She has an engaging eye for incidental detail and draws fascinating parallels and contrasts between the ancient and our modern world.

About the Author

**Joyce Tyldesley**, holder of a doctorate from Oxford University, is Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Archaeology, Classics, and Oriental Studies at Liverpool University, England. She is the author of **Hatchepsut: The Female Pharaoh** and **Daughters of Isis: Women of Ancient Egypt**.

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