

When we observe the collections of Egyptian artifacts formed by the Viscountess of Cavalcanti and Eva Klabin Rapaport from a scientific perspective, what we initially have is a reflection of the antiquarian phase of nineteenth-century archeology. At that time, archeological sites in Egypt were being explored with no scientific method, as archeology was not yet consolidated as a discipline. It was a time when famous European explorers and travelers acquired items deemed beautiful, exotic, or admirable with the aim of establishing national collections, most notably in European museums, as well as private ones, for the enjoyment of their owners.

Many of the artifacts taken from Egypt at this time formed famous collections, such as the ones at the British Museum, the Louvre, and the Egyptian Museum in Turin. Others ended up being sold in Europe, swelling an art market that was driving the emergence of collections around the world. This is the origin of both collections in this exhibition, as evidenced by the purchase documents both for the pieces acquired in Germany by the Viscountess of Cavalcanti in the nineteenth century and the artefacts acquired by Eva Klabin Rapaport in the twentieth century, probably from collections formed in the nineteenth century.

Although the objects in these collections are lacking in any archaeological context, as the place of origin of most of them cannot be ascertained, they are equally important, as they bear material witness to Egypt's past. In studying them, we can focus on different aspects, such as the choices of materials, the production techniques used, their material and symbolic value, their use and circulation in society, and, above all, their magical and religious associations.

United here for the first time, the two collections complement each other and show quite clearly the Ancient Egyptians' conceptions of and preparations for the afterlife. The ancient people from the Nile Valley believed that to guarantee future existence in the agrarian paradise of Osiris, or in other mythical versions of eternal life, it was necessary to build a tomb, or "house of eternity" as they called it, prepare and preserve the body through mummification, put together a funeral trousseau, perform ceremonies on the day of the burial, and maintain continued worship thenceforth, which involved the family of the deceased leaving daily offerings in the tomb chapel.

Over three millennia these beliefs about the world after death underwent a series of changes. This prompted modifications to funerary architecture and embalming methods, which became more complex. The items needed for the afterlife also changed, going from everyday objects to pieces made especially for the tomb. As for the ceremonies on the day of the burial, these were also altered, as was the method of worship in the tomb chapel, which was rarely maintained for more than two or three generations.

When we observe the procedures carried out by the Egyptians to ensure immortality, materialized in the artifacts in both collections, we have a clear vision of a society that spared no effort to achieve its goals. However, this was not the case for all Egyptians, since only those who had the means could invest intensively in these tasks.

The opportunity to observe how the preparations for eternal life were modified, thanks to the fine artifacts on display, will provide visitors to the exhibition with an overview of the funerary religion of the Ancient Egyptians. It was a broad-based religion that included beliefs and practices relating to a range of aspects from the sphere of death and the deceased. Discovering and appreciating these collections, brought together here for the first time in perfect harmony, is also a way of valuing the heritage of Ancient Egypt on Brazilian soil.

