

## *Evidence of healing and purifying water properties in ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom and the Ramesside Period*

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**Keywords:** Healing, purification, Egypt, New kingdom, ritual, personal religion, magic, Ramesside period.

### **Introduction**

The main aim of this paper is to present a wider insight into the importance of water in religious rituals within ancient Egypt during the New Kingdom and Ramesside period, but also in magic and medicine.

Many New Kingdom depictions within ancient Egyptian art show the image of the king or pharaoh being purified with water by the gods. This ritual was used in order to legitimatise the king's place on his throne. In addition, water purification rituals were common among the priesthood; the sacred lake at Karnak is an example of the significance of water in official religious practices, such as festivals, which are linked with the sacred barques.

However, in the domestic context, offering tables for pouring liquids as well as 'lustration stones' were found in archaeological sites of high importance as Deir el-Medina or Tell el-Amarna (Stevens, 2003: 155 and Stevens, 2009: 5). This evidence allows experts to reconstruct their ancient daily life, but also to gain a better understanding of the so-called 'personal religion', which consisted of direct contact with a/the divinity through the display of different religious practices (Luiselli 2014: 105). There is plenty of evidence from these two archaeological sites mentioned above during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties.

It could be said that the official performance will be contrasted with the domestic one, trying to provide a whole perspective of the use of water for different purposes.

This paper intends to clarify the close relationship between water —its healing and ritual properties— and religion, magic and medicine.



Figures 1, 2 and 3: (Top left corner) Lustration stone from Amarna (Stevens 2003:155). (Top right corner) Offering table from Deir el-Medina (UCL/UC14446). (Bottom image) Scene of purification of Ramesses II (19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) from Karnak temple (South part of the Western interior path).

### **Conclusion**

Water in ancient Egypt played an important role in the two ambits of religious practices, both the official and the domestic. Religion and magic were closely related with regards to the use of water as a purifying and healing element but also as a nourishing offering.

However, evidence is fragmentary and spread throughout Egypt, which creates a problem when it comes to providing a holistic view of Egyptian religious practices.