

Basic Detail Report



Egyptian Farmers

Date

late 19th to early 20th century (printed 1992)

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

gelatin silver print

Description

A group of Egyptian farmers, or fellaheen, stand below a palm tree at the edge of the cultivation. In the Egyptian Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2060-1785 BCE), the image of the soul of the dead taking its leisure beneath a tree is inimical, for danger lurks in the shadows. By the time of the New Kingdom (ca. 1560-1085

BCE), however, this had changed, and the soul of the dead is often shown drinking water in the shade of a palm. The goddesses Hathor and Nut, providing food for the souls in the Hereafter, were at times depicted as trees, and the dead man could desire a metamorphosis into a dom-palm - a manifestation of the potent fertility god Min. The fruit of the date palm was one of the chief sweeteners of the ancients, and, as in antiquity, all parts of the palm tree are still used by the Egyptians. The donkey appears to be the photographer's pack animal, the leather pouches being the carrying cases for the camera and the glass plates.

Dimensions

Sight: 12 x 9 1/2 in. (30.5 x 24.1 cm) Mat: 20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)