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# ANCIENT EGYPT.

## THE WATER LILIES OF ANCIENT EGYPT.

IN this paper we consider what was described in an offering to the Sun-god Horus at Denderah, as "the flower which was in the beginning, the glorious Lily of the great water."

Much confusion exists among writers on the subject from the time of Herodotus onwards, and it has been rather an interesting puzzle to unravel some of the errors which have been copied from one work to another. The best accounts are those by Raffenu-Delile about one hundred years ago, and more recently Goodyear and Conard, the latter of whom has cleared up many obscurities. It seems as if the botanists on the one hand had ignored the archaeologists, and these in their turn did not appreciate botanical distinctions. Hence arose confusion. Architects are worse still, for I once asked a distinguished ecclesiastical architect to tell me something about lotus and papyrus ornamentation, and his reply was: "Oh! we call them all papyrus"! We hear people speak of the "sacred lotus of Egypt," whereas no lotus was anciently so called; others tell of the sacred lotus of India or Japan, which is not a lotus at all, but belongs to another species. I want as far as I can to clear this up, and then to describe why and how the various water lilies have been used so as to enter largely into the life of Ancient Egypt.

The Nymphaeas or water nymphs all belong to the botanical order Nymphaeaceae, and of these none were confined to Egypt. The sacred lily of Japan belongs to another order, the Nelumboneae, and is quite distinct, and has not been seen in Egypt for a very long period, though Herodotus describes it as growing there when he wrote 2,300 years ago. Although most of them have disappeared, both the white and blue water lilies are to be found in the still waters of the Delta of the Nile to this day, and in some places much farther south. In England we have two representatives of the same order, *N. Alba* and *Nuphar Lutea*, which are familiar enough: but our progenitors of 6,000 years ago do not appear to have discovered their artistic potentialities. The Nymphaea (Figs. 3, 22) has a large leaf cleft nearly to the centre, like our pond lily, floating on the water. The bud has an envelope of four calyx leaves or sepals, which entirely encase the bud until it opens: and as it expands the more delicate texture and colour of the flower shows itself. In this way, when seen from whatever point of view, the opening flower shows three dark green spikes, symmetrically divided, forming a background to the coloured petals. As the bud expands, the sepals curve downwards. The ovary has a rayed stigma of bright yellow colour, from the base of which numerous flattened yellow stamens diverge. When the flower comes to

seed, the ovary becomes bulbous, like a poppy (Fig. 51), and sinks under water; whereas, during the period of flowering the stem is erect. The leaf stalks spring from the root (Fig. 17), and the leaves always float on the surface. The seed pod is like that of the poppy, having a similar rayed stigma (Fig. 51), and containing within it numerous dark small seeds.

#### *The White and Blue Lotus.*

The two *Nymphaeas* found in the palmy days of Ancient Egypt were the *N. Lotus* and the *N. Caerulea*, *i.e.*, the white and the blue varieties. They vary somewhat in form and in their habits; both were extensively used for decoration, as I shall describe later. The blooms of the *N. Lotus* (Figs. 4, 6, 7) are fragrant, the odour being "piquante," usually pure white, but there is a variety termed *Rosea* (Fig. 5) with rose-coloured petals found among them. And in one of the coloured wall paintings of an early dynasty I find this clearly depicted. There is a specimen in Kew Gardens marked *N. Lotus*, of a lovely red throughout, except the stamens which are yellow and spring from the summit instead of the base of the ovary.

The *N. Caerulea* (Figs. 1, 2, 3) is what is called a heavenly blue, and that, too, sometimes shades off into pink just as our forget-me-nots have a trick of doing. The odour is extremely sweet and "suave" (Savigny). The white lotus opens in the afternoon or evening and closes by mid-day, whereas the blue *nymphaea* opens in the morning and closes at night. The Moon has been styled, "the lover of the lotus," *i.e.*, the night-blooming one, on this account.

#### *The Red Lotus.*

There is another *Nymphaea*, the *Rubra*, the red lotus of India (Fig. 18), confined to British India and Bengal, which has the same characteristics, the only difference being that the stigma is sixteen- instead of eight-rayed. It is of a brilliant ruby colour throughout, and is the lotus of the Hindu *padma* prayer, "as the full moon with its mild light opens the buds of the water lily." The blue and white forms (Cunningham) remain more or less above water for a period of four days. On the first of these the flower appears as a bud just rising above the surface: on the second it is half open and quite clear of the water: on the third it is fully open and still more elevated: on the fourth it remains fully expanded, but rests on the surface, and on the following day it is quite submerged. The mature flowers remain tightly closed during the day, and are wide open all night, until about ten o'clock next morning, when they are completely shut until late in the evening. The *N. Rubra* flowers keep their petals open above the water for five days, and closed at night, then sink under water without shedding them.

#### *The Japanese Nelumbium.*

Now the sacred lotus of Japan, which has been erroneously called also the Egyptian lotus, is different in many respects (Fig. 8). The *Nelumbium speciosum* formerly grew in Egypt, according to Herodotus, though some modern writers dispute this. Delile however supports his statement that it was so. Called by the Ancients the "Bean of Egypt," it is best known by its peculiar obconical receptacle, which has been likened to the rose of a watering can, or a pepper box, which remains erect out of the water. The leaf stalks spring from the root, having large peltate

leaves centrally fixed, and the long flower stalk rising several feet out of the water bearing a large, solitary, fragrant flower of pure white, or bright rose colour. Some are white with rose tipped petals. The bud has a series of overlapping sepals like



7. *NYMPHAEA LOTUS.*

Outline of type specimen in Smith's Herbarium, Linnean Society. 4/5 size.

scales, not of uniform size: and does not therefore show the characteristic three sepaled appearance of the lotus. The calyx leaves drop away and disappear as the flower opens, leaving enormous white or pink corollas like single peonies, shining

out among a dense mass of large round leaves. The dried stalks of the leaves of the Nelumbo were used to make wicks for the lamps in the Chinese and Japanese temples,—possibly also in Egypt.

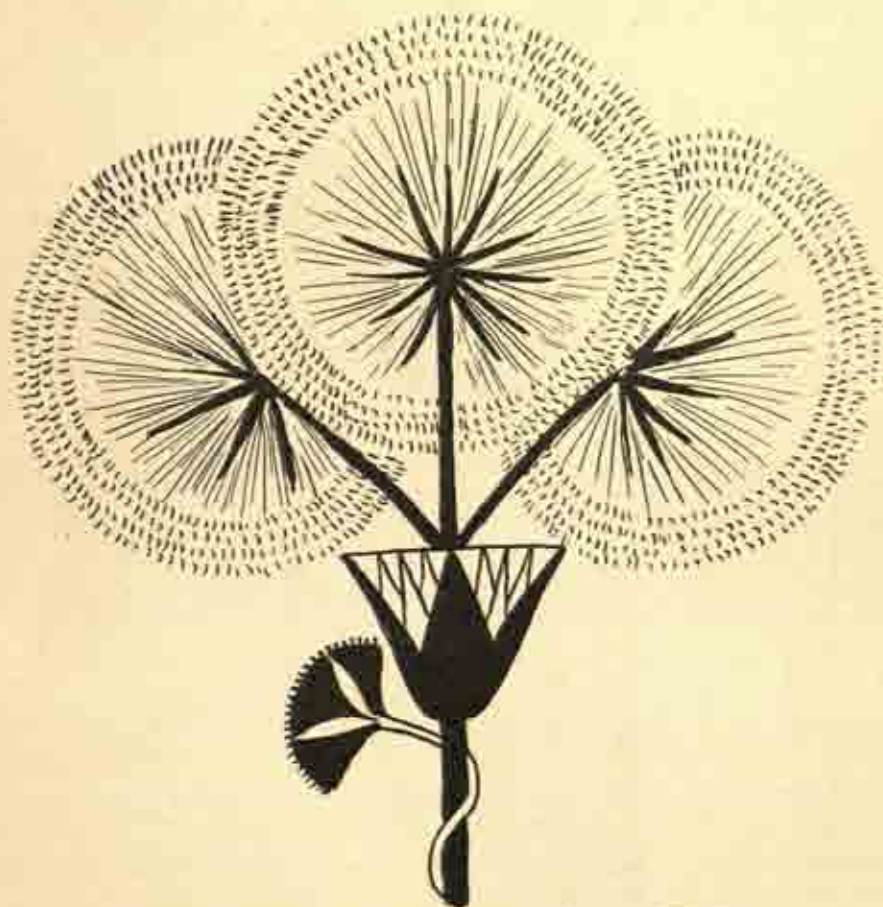


*N. NELUMBUM SPECIOSUM*, SACRED LILY OF JAPAN.  
Red flower.  $\frac{1}{3}$  size.

*The Lotus Seeds.*

The seeds of the Nelumbium are about the size of small acorns, pleasant to the taste and used for food, but not to the same extent as the seeds of the Nymphaea, which are still used in Egypt and West Africa. The loaves made from the seeds and roots in Egypt were termed lily loaves, and appeared on the tables of the

Egyptian kings of the XIXth dynasty. They are very nutritious and contain starch, proteid, and oil; the tubers are almost solid starch, and are eaten boiled or roast, like potatoes. Sonnini (*Travels in E.*, 1777) says, in his day they were sold ready dressed and at a very low price in the streets of Rosetta, where the lower class of people ate them in large quantities. Only the seeds of the lotus and blue lily are said to be so used in Egypt. They are prepared by the fruit being laid in heaps until the soft parts decay, the seeds and kernels are then easily separated, washed clean, dried and stowed away to be ground in hand mills,



6. THREE PAPYRUS HEADS ARISING FROM A LOTUS. (Wilk. 611.)

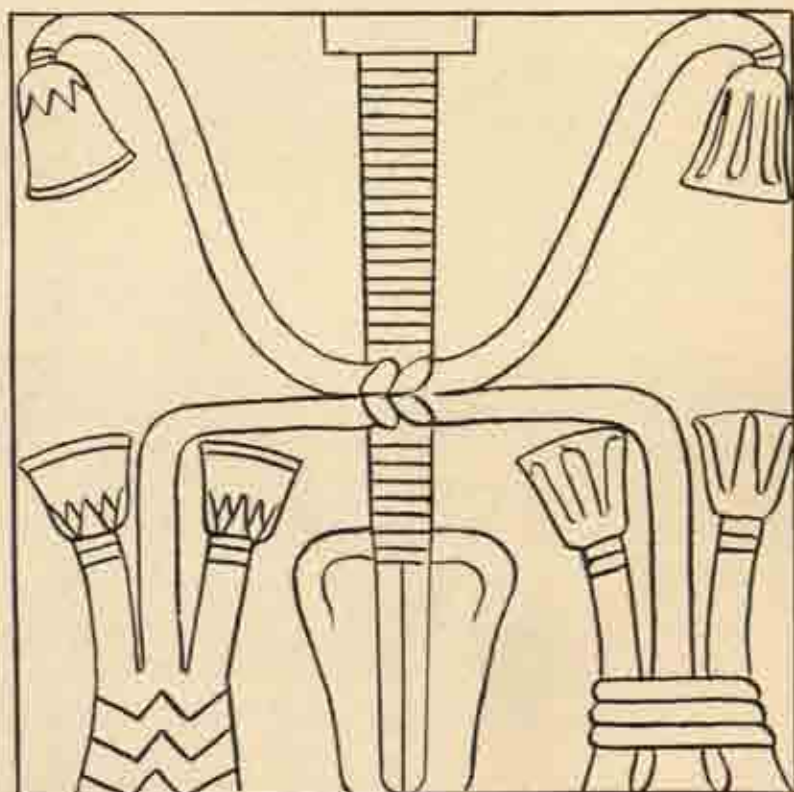
The use of the seeds in making bread, and the mode of sowing them by enclosing in a ball of clay and throwing it into the water may probably explain the text, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." The lotus seeds come up annually: the *Nelumbo* takes from five to seven years sometimes to germinate (Sir David Prain). The fable of the nymph Lotis who was transformed into a tree bearing her name is in no way connected with water lilies. This lotis or lotos tree (*Zizyphus lotus*) is a moderate sized, thorny tree with reddish fruit containing a sweet nut, the jujube tree, from which a "divine nectarous juice" was made. Homer tells us that when Ulysses sent his men to see what the "melancholy, mild-eyed lotus eaters" were like,

"What man of themsoever of that sweet thing did eat  
 Had no will to bear back tidings, or to get him back again ;  
 But to bide with the lotus eaters for ever was he fain,  
 And to eat the lotus for ever, and forget his returning day."

(W. Morris' translation.)

*The Artistic Adaptations.*

The *Nymphaea* lotus is the one flower of all others which probably gave birth to Art as we find it exemplified in some of the most ancient monuments. A study of it will give the key to the adaptation of the beauty of plant form to all kinds of decorative work up to the present day.



10. LOTUS (LEFT) AND PAPYRUS (RIGHT) KNOTTED AROUND THE SIGN OF UNION,  
 SYMBOLIZING THE UNION OF NORTH AND SOUTH EGYPT.

From the Throne of Khofra, the earliest example.

But I ought to say a word about another plant which is closely associated with the lotus in Egyptian Art, that is the papyrus, which entered largely into the decorations of the ancient Egyptians. The large fan of the papyrus head is here grouped with the lotus in Fig. 9. The *Cyperus papyrus* grew in great abundance in former days in Egypt and, as a Government monopoly, was a source of considerable revenue. Its use for making paper can be dated back to the IIIrd dynasty. It ceased to be used for the purpose about A.D. 700. Besides being copied for ornament, it was sometimes used to deck the statues of the gods, as well as for food.

The very name of water nymph seems to denote a mystic origin, and we shall find how closely the lotus in its various forms has been associated with sacred symbols and conceptions of purity and beauty, from the days when it was adopted

by the ancient Egyptians many thousand years ago. The plant remains the same as then: the beauty it has given birth to survives also.

Although the *Nelumbo* has been spoken of as the Egyptian lily, we find no evidence of its having been employed in the decorative work of that country, except on very rare occasions, at any period of its history, as it was less adapted for artistic work than the white and blue *Nymphaeas* were.

It has struck me as a curious fact that the more beautiful of these plants should have found no permanent place in the monumental records of Egypt; and



11. THE UPPER AND LOWER NILE HOLDING THE PAPYRUS AND LOTUS STEMS, TWISTED AS IN FIG. 10. Statue of *Rameses II.*, *Luxor.*

the only explanation I can offer is that the inherent beauty and grace of the outlines of the *Nymphaea* have, by their very simplicity, established a certain principle or type where the more complex structure of the handsome *Nelumbo* has failed.

How far the lotus was an object of worship seems doubtful, but from an early period we find it closely associated with Egyptian gods and kings. There seems to



be no trace of using the lotus at Hierakonpolis or in the Royal Tombs of Abydos. Apparently, the earliest dated example is in the group on the sides of the throne of Khafra in the IVth dynasty. To symbolise the union of all Egypt, the lotus plant of the South and the papyrus of the North were intertwined round the hieroglyph of union (Fig. 10). This group was expanded in the XIIth dynasty by adding the figures of the Upper and Lower Nile, Hapi in two aspects, as holding the respective plants (Fig. 11), and this group was continued as a standard decoration for royal thrones in the XVIIIth dynasty and onwards. The Nile-god in his two forms is likewise shown in the large group with altars covered with fish and plants found at Tanis, commonly called the fish offerers. Later figures show a single statue of Hapi with an altar before him, covered with lotus and wild ducks, as under Tehutmes III, and the well-known figure in the British Museum, dedicated by Sheshenq.



12. HAPI SEATED ON THE  
BLUE LOTUS.  
Bronze, Cairo.

13. HAPI SEATED ON THE  
WHITE LOTUS, SURROUNDED  
BY THE BLUE LOTUS.  
Bronze, Cairo.

The inscriptions call him "Hapi, father of the gods, lord of sustenance, who maketh food to be, and covereth the two lands of Egypt with his products: who giveth life, banisheth want, and filleth the granaries to overflowing." In the hymn chanted at the great Nile festival, we find in the 12th verse: "When thou art risen in the city of the Prince—then is the rich man filled—the small man (the poor) disdaineth the lotus—all is solid and of good quality—all herbage is for his children. Doth he forget to give food, prosperity forsaketh the dwellings—the earth falleth into wasting sickness." This serves to indicate that while the lotus afforded ordinary food for the poor, they were very willing to have some of a better sort.

*The Lotus in Religion.*

The lotus stands alone as the plant to which was assigned by the ancient Egyptians the mystic habitation of the spirits of the blest, and as a symbol of life and immortality as well as of resurrection. Hence we find bronze figures of Horus on the lotus (Figs. 12, 13), and, among the paintings, one representing Horus rising from a lotus flower. This drawing is intended to indicate the Nû, that watery abyss from which the lotus sprang on the morning of creation, and whereon he is still supposed to bloom. According to Maspero, in the beginning Râ was the sun whose fires appeared to be lighted every morning in the East, and to be extinguished at evening in the West. But how could the sun have existed in the Nû (*i.e.*, the waters beneath the primordial ocean) without either drying up the waters or being extinguished by them? The identification of Râ with Horus cleared up this difficulty. The god needed only to have his right eye closed in order to prevent his fires from coming in contact with the water. He is said to have shut up his disc within a lotus bud, whose petals safely protected it. The flower had opened on the morning of the first day, and from it the god had sprung suddenly as a child wearing the solar disc upon his head.

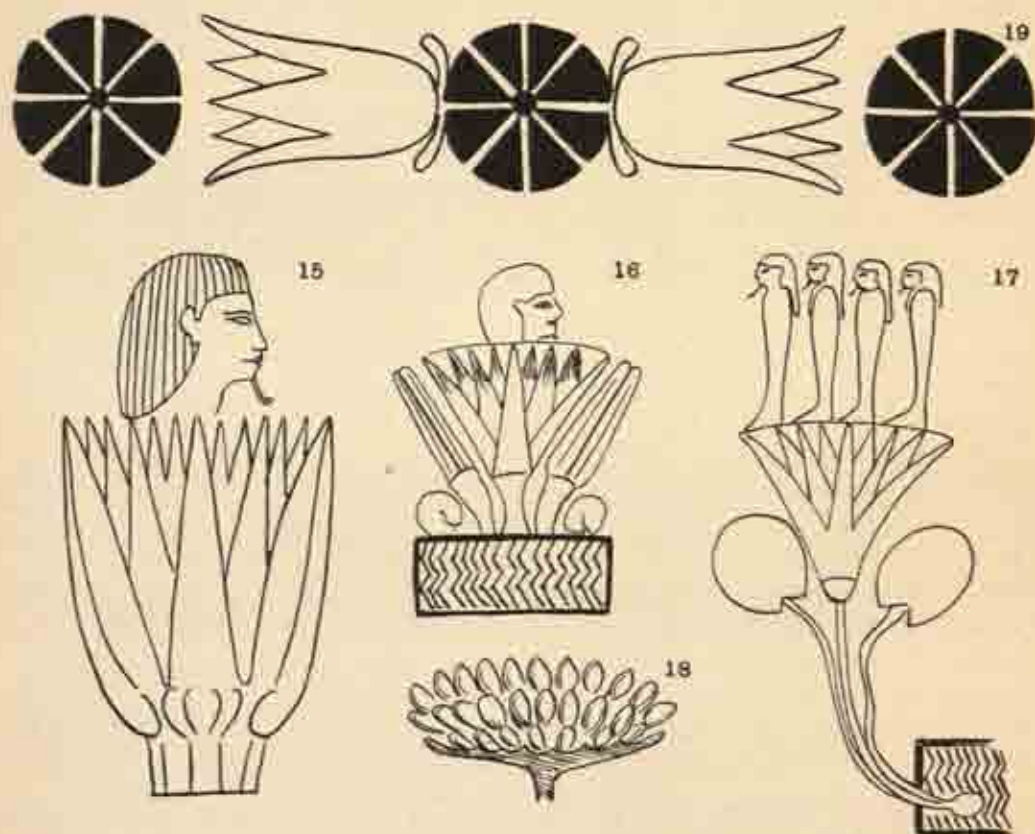
Another of the gods we find associated with the lotus, one of the Memphite triad, Nefer-Tem or Nefer-Atmu (Fig. 14) who appears with the lotus flower upon his head. As a god of the rising sun, we find the deceased after being transformed into a lotus, addressing him thus: "I am the pure lotus which springeth up from the divine splendour that belongeth to the nostrils of Râ," and again, "Hail, thou lotus, thou type of the god Nefer-Tem! I am one who knoweth you . . . . and I am one of you." The vignette of the first version is a lotus, and that of the second a lotus plant with a flower and buds growing out of a pool of water (Figs. 15, 16), and out of the flower springs a human head (*i.e.*, the head of the deceased).

The fruit of the lotus is an emblem of Isis or Abundance, and is so dedicated by Egypt (Foucart). The association of the lotus with the life-giving sun is but another example of the sacred character which was one of its attributes. The lotus as a symbol of life or resurrection, is shown by its constant association (Fig. 17) with the genii of Amenti (*i.e.*, the Lower World), the genii of the dead, and the children of Osiris and Horus. A representation on the wall of the temple of Dar el-Medcenah at Thebes shows the four genii of Amenti standing before Osiris on an open lotus flower (Wilkinson, ed. Birch, III, p. 468) and in the Papyrus of Hunefer (Fig. 17) the lotus is shown growing out of a pool at the feet of Osiris.



14. NEFER-TEM, WITH BLUE  
LOTUS ON THE HEAD.  
BRONZE. CAIRO.

In those countries where Brahma and Buddha were worshipped, we find the deities often seated on a lotus flower, usually the *Nelumbo* (Fig. 18). In Japan it was the emblem of purity, inasmuch as it was never disfigured by the muddy waters in which it often grew. Vishnu is shown as holding in one of his four hands a lotus flower as a type of creative power; while Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, was termed "lotus born" from having arisen from the primordial ocean upon its blossom. Birdwood tells us that when the whole earth was covered with water Vishnu lay asleep, extended on the serpent Ananta ("the infinite") and while he

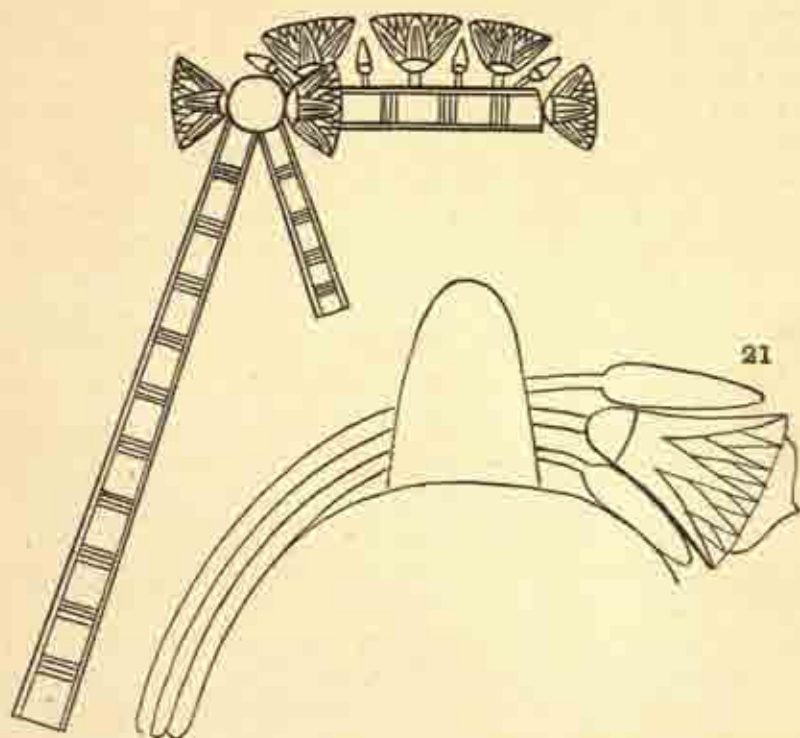


15. HEAD OF THE DECEASED IN HIS LOTUS TRANSFORMATION. Papyrus of Antonkh.  
 16. HEAD OF THE DECEASED ON A LOTUS WITH BUDS AND LEAVES IN A POOL. Papyrus of Any.  
 17. FOUR SONS OF HORUS ON A LOTUS WHICH RISES OUT OF A POOL AT THE FEET OF OSIRIS.  
 Papyrus of Hunsifer.  
 18. INDIAN LOTUS OF BUDDHA. Red petals.  
 19. HEADBAND OF PRINCESS NEFERY. Early IVth dynasty.

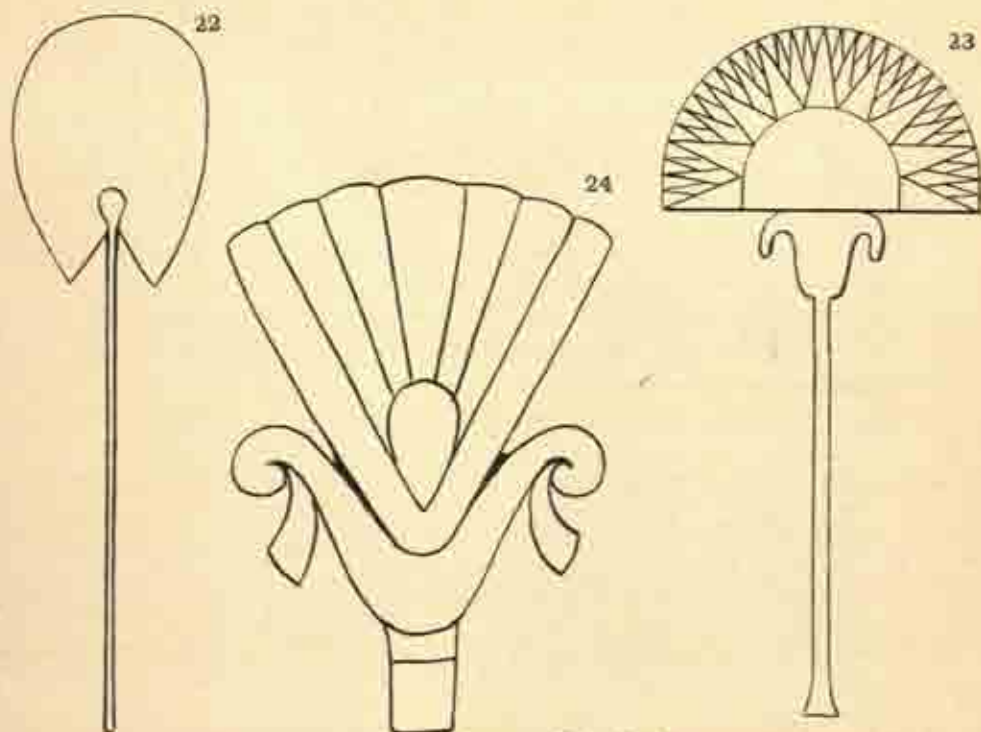
slept, a lotus sprang from his navel, and from its flower came Brahma. It seems, therefore, clear that, if I may coin a word, the odour of its beauty made itself felt before the natural forms of the plants began to be utilized in Art, just as the "odour of sanctity" serves for both the shadow and the substance.

#### *The Lotus in Daily Life.*

The Egyptians were very fond of flowers, and acknowledged Min as their God of Gardens, corresponding to the Greek Pan. The blue lotus was probably more common, the white one most cultivated in gardens; and it seems likely that the

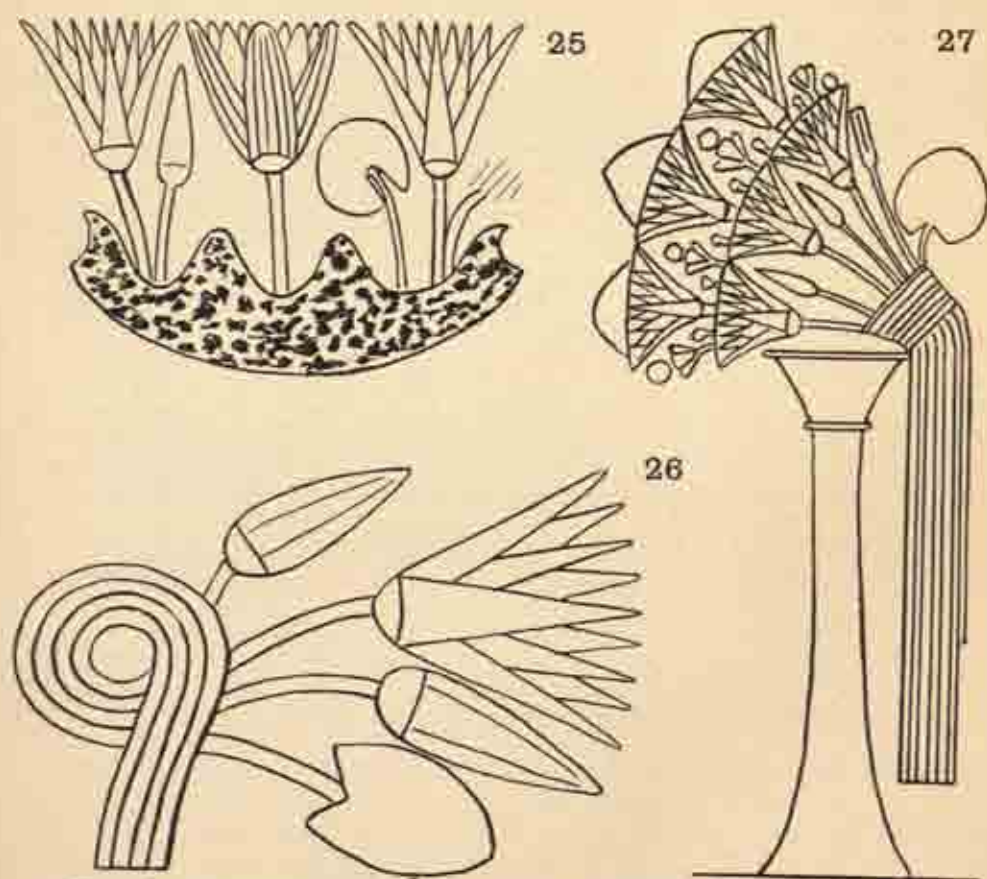


20. HEADBAND WITH LOTUS FLOWERS. XIIth dynasty. (Newberry: *El-Bersah.*)  
21. LOTUS AND BUDS PUT THROUGH THE CONE OF HAIR ON THE HEAD.  
XVIIIth dynasty. (Prisse.)



22. LOTUS LEAF FAN. XVIIIth dynasty. Deir el-Bahri.  
23. SUNSHADE OF LOTUS PATTERN. Deir el-Bahri.  
24. PALMETTO DEVELOPMENT OF LOTUS. XVIIIth dynasty. Tell Amarna.

greater frequency with which the blue one was depicted is owing to the fact of its being a day flower, while the white one only opening at night would be less accessible to the artists of that day. On the other hand, the more fragrant white or rose lily fresh from the gardens would be better adapted as an evening ornament for the ladies at their entertainments, as we see so often depicted, where the guests had each a lotus flower or rose bud placed in the hand, and this was retained throughout the feast; servants also brought necklaces of flowers. Composed chiefly of the lotus, a garland was also put round the head (Fig. 20), or a single lotus bud or full blown flower was so attached as to hang over the forehead (Fig. 21). Many of these made up into wreaths and other devices were placed in the room to



25. WHITE LOTUS BETWEEN BLUE LOTUSES, IN PORPHYREY BOWL WITH SPOUTED EDGE. Tomb offerings. XIIIth dynasty.

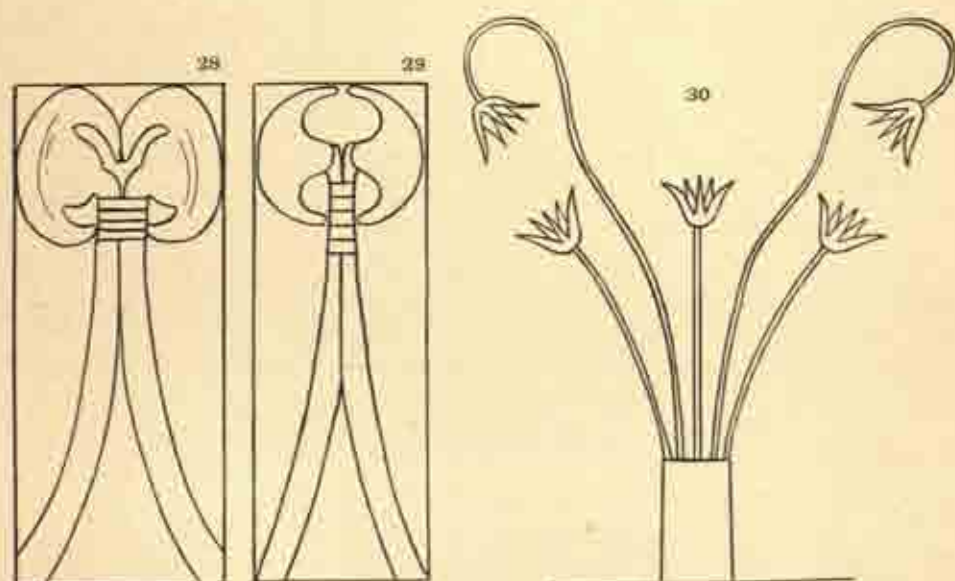
26. LOTUS GROUP ON OFFERINGS TO THE DEAD. XVIIIth dynasty. Deir el-Bahri.

27. LOTUS GROUP ON AN ALTAR OFFERED BY SETY I. Abydos.

be in readiness for use, and servants constantly brought fresh flowers from the garden to supply the guests as their bouquets faded.

So fond were the Egyptians of flowers, and so desirous to grace their gardens with profusion, that they even exacted contributions from nations which were tributary to them. They carried this fondness for them still further by painting the water lilies among the fancy devices on their walls, on their dresses, furniture, chairs, boats, fans (Fig. 22), sunshades (Fig. 23), or indeed anything they wished to ornament, and they even composed artificial flowers termed "Aegyptiae." Moreover, the lotus was constantly associated with all the Osirian funeral ceremonies: with religious

offerings for the dead (Figs. 25, 26), or placed alone on an altar before the gods (Fig. 27), as well as presented to the divinities protecting the dead: thus, it was the symbolical flower of death and resurrection, as I have already mentioned. This could, however, only apply to the *Nymphaea*, as the *Nelumbo* does not sink and rise again day by day. "The use of flowers in funeral decorations seems to have been very prominent in the XIXth-XXIst dynasties. The custom was to lay wreaths and semicircles of lotus flowers on the breast of the enwrapped corpse, until the sarcophagus was quite packed with these floral tributes. Flowers of the *Nymphaea Cerulea*, on stalks about a foot long, were fastened between the bands encircling the mummies of Rameses II and the priest Nibsoni, and scattered singly all over them. Breast wreaths, consisting mostly of petals and sepals of the same plant, sometimes also with petals of the *N. Lotus*, were found in the coffins of Rameses II, Amenhotep I, Ahmes (1580 B.C.), the priest Nibsoni, the princess Nesi-Khonsu, from the XXth and XXIst dynasties found at Deir el-Bahri



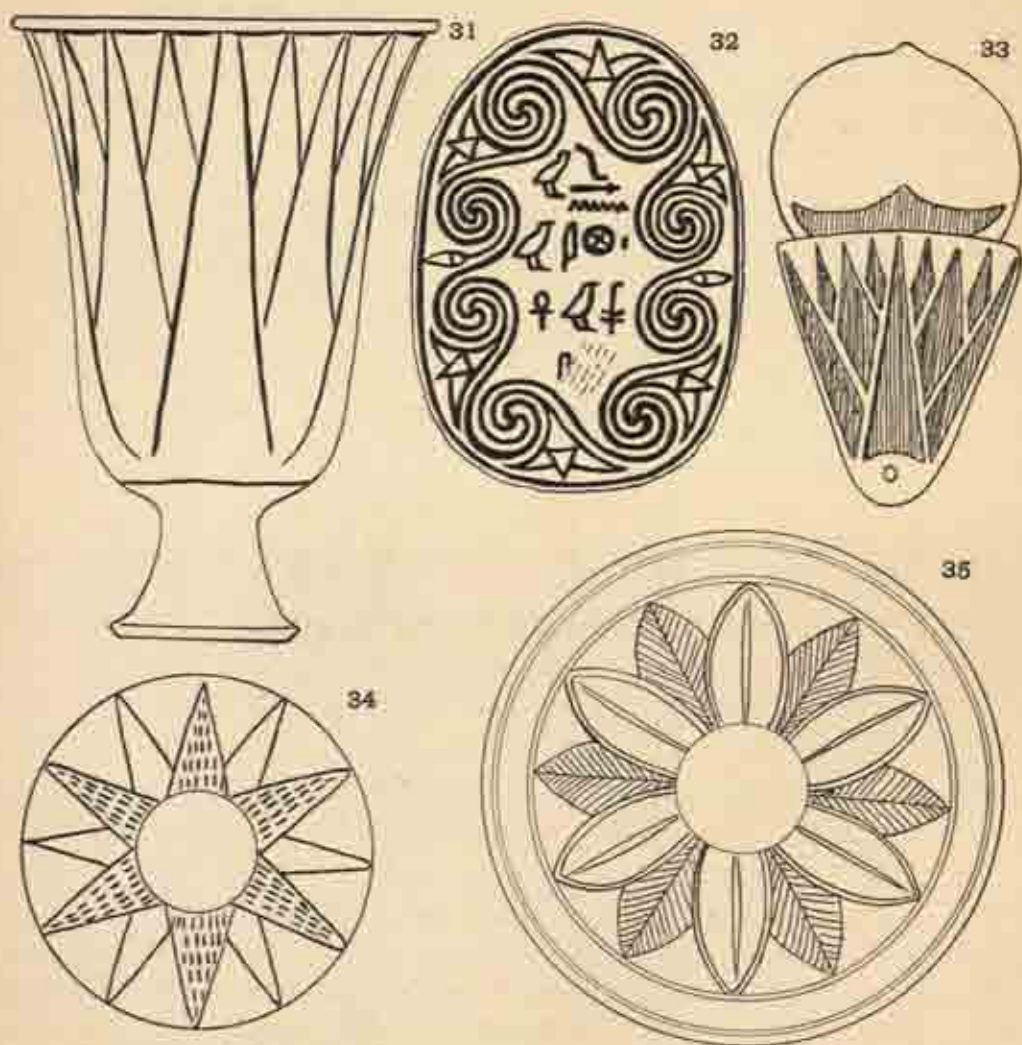
28. TWO LOTUS OR PAFYRUS HEADS TIED. Tomb of Ka-aper. IVth dynasty.  
 29. SIMILAE. IVth dynasty. Saqqara.  
 30. LOTUS GROUP ON GRANITE COLUMN. Rameses II. Memphis.

(Thebes) in 1881. These are probably the 'Egyptian wreaths' of Pliny and Plutarch, the 'lotus garlands' of Athenæus. Most of these plant remains date from 1500 to 1200 B.C., but those of Rameses II were renewed about 1100 B.C., for in moving these sarcophagi at that time into their secret resting place in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, that of Rameses II was accidentally broken: a new coffin and new floral decorations being then provided."—*Muschler*.

As the ancient Egyptian religion died out, the *Nymphaeae* have to a large extent ceased to be cultivated in gardens, just as in India and Japan the *Nelumbo* has almost disappeared along with Buddhism, except where nurtured in old Temple gardens by the priests. These facts seem rather to indicate a definite relation to former religious rites in both cases.

It will be seen from the illustrations of the lotus proper (Figs. 1-7) and the *Nelumbo* (Fig. 8), that the former is the only one which fully explains its adaptation to decorative art. The inflorescence of the *Nelumbo* is never found in any

Egyptian work as a sacred emblem, and the seed vessel never appears. On the other hand, if you observe the arrangement of the petals and the drooping calyx leaves of the blue or white lily, and especially the buds of the same plants, their exact likeness to the earliest representations known is evident. The same applies to the rayed stigma, which both in its fresh and dried state gives us the figure of the Egyptian rosette (Princess Nefert) (Fig. 19). This is also shown in a section.



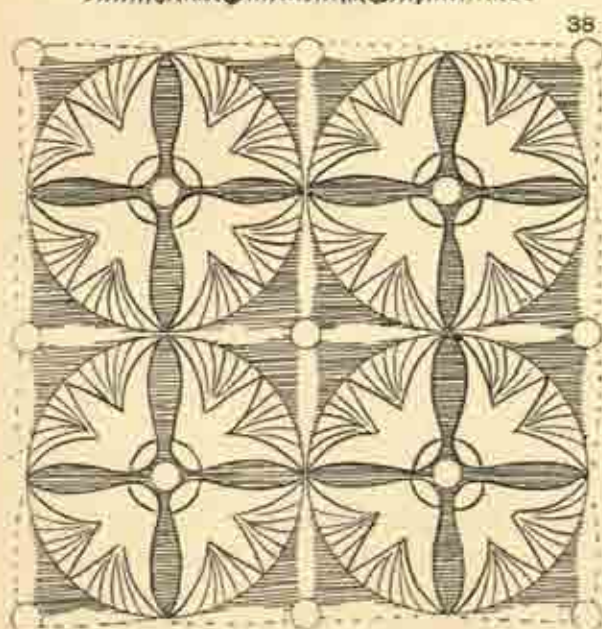
31. BLUE GLAZED LOTUS CUP. Nubé. University College. 5: 8.  
 32. SCARAB WITH SCROLLS AND LOTUS; OF THE MARSHAL OF THE CITY, AUSDOWNH. Turn. 5: 2.  
 33. WOODEN LID OF TOILET BOX. University College. 5: 8.  
 34. OUTSIDE OF BLUE GLAZED BOWL. XVIIIth dynasty. University College. 5: 8.  
 35. OUTSIDE OF STEATITE DISH. Roman. University College. 5: 8.

The palmette (Fig. 23) is the ovary stigma combined with the lotus flower. This was used in Egypt some 2,800 years before it was seen in Assyria.

The inherent love of beautiful forms and of drawing them was, as Petrie says, a great force among the Egyptians, and made Egypt the birthplace of the world's best ornament.

*The Lotus in Formal Ornament.*

In the very earliest Egyptian work there is found a combination of the spiral and geometric forms, while we find before the IVth dynasty the lotus represented on pottery, and in the IVth dynasty the group of two tied lotus flowers, which continued till the XVIIIth dynasty (Figs. 28, 29). At this remote period of the world's records the traditions of religion and of art were so carefully handed down from one generation to another, that according to the best authorities, it is almost impossible to trace the gradations from the crudest to the more advanced forms.

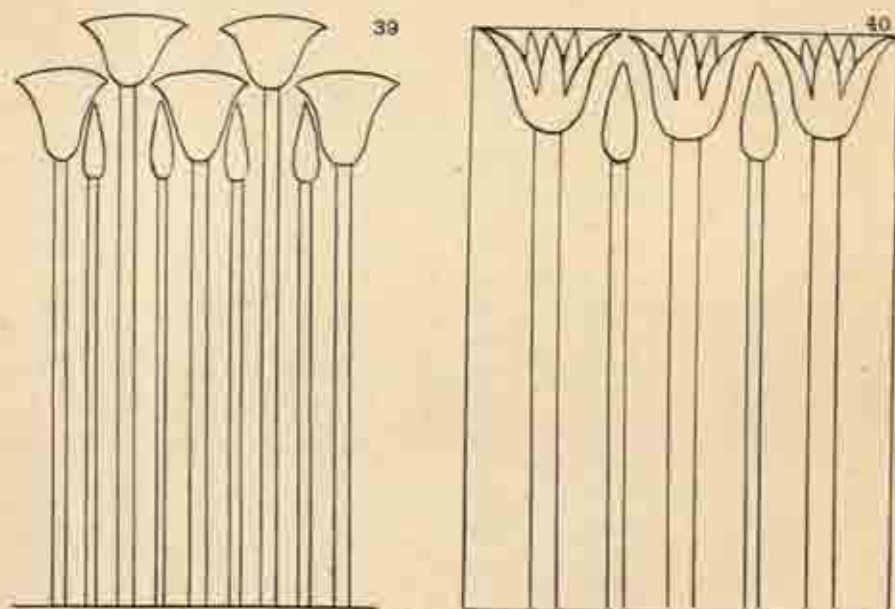


36, 37. BORDERS OF LOTUS FLOWERS. } XVIIIth dynasty.  
38. QUADRUPLE LOTUS GROUPS. } Prisse.

Plato ascribes this seeming changelessness in the Egyptians to the fact that the forms represented in the temples patterns of virtue, which were appropriated by the priests, and that no artist or painter was permitted to depart from the traditional and invent new ones, that these works of art discovered later were moulded in the form of 10,000 years before, so that the ancient sculptures and paintings underwent little, if any, change during these long ages. It was not until the time when conventionalism began to tell, that decadence took place as I shall try to show later.



We have not time to go into geometrical decoration, except so far as it is associated with the subject of this paper. The lotus has been held to explain the concentric rings which have been so beautifully drawn on the scarabs of the VIth dynasty, and even earlier than this. These spirals are said to represent (Fig. 32) the wanderings of the soul, but as Prof. Petrie asks, how could the soul go both ways at once? To my mind tendrils more probably gave rise to this form of ornament, and the endless spirals may fitly represent eternity, as we know that the ancient Egyptians believed in the immortality of the Soul. We find in this example of the XIIth dynasty the flower of the lotus introduced with excellent effect (Fig. 32), and later in a more geometrical combined form as in this (Figs. 36, 37). This combination was employed in a great variety of ways, but no examples have been found of circular decoration before the XVIIIth dynasty. Among them the most beautiful type was with contiguous circles, each containing four lotus flowers (Fig. 38). The rich effect of the insertion of these is very marked. The lotus



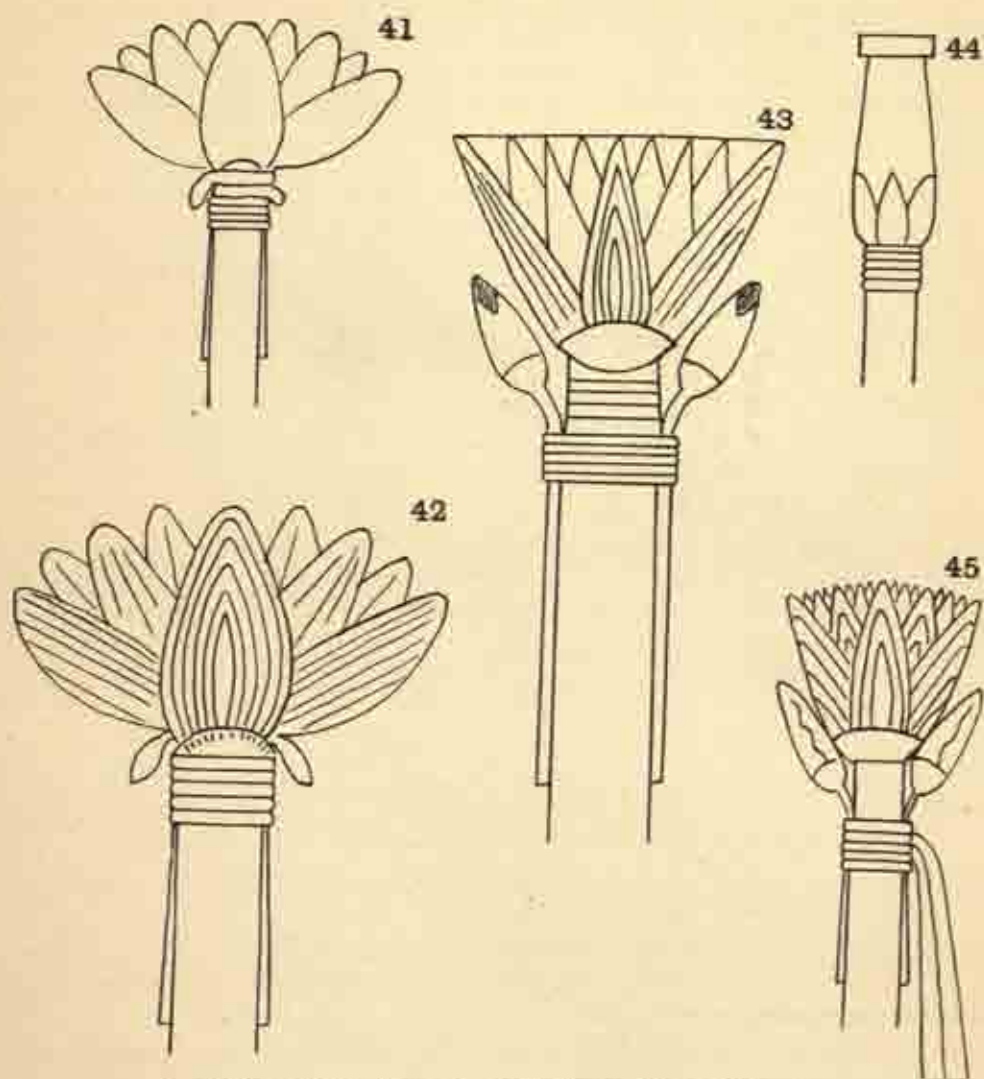
39. CLUMP OF PAPYRUS. Tomb of Debahen. IVth dynasty. (L.D. ii, 35.)

40. MATING OF LOTUS PATTERN. Tomb of Rashepes. Vth dynasty. (L.D. ii, 64.)

occasionally is figured with six sepals, as Figs. 34, 35; but the circle alone is never found divided into six parts, as in Assyria and Syria, but always four or a multiple of that number. Probably they never used compasses at that period.

The earliest known delineation of lotus alone is on some prehistoric pottery found at Koptos. It is crude but quite correctly drawn and easily recognisable as the sepals of the blue lotus. On the head-band of the statue of Princess Nefert, which is no doubt familiar to you, of the IVth dynasty, we have the blue lotus shown, combined with the rosette derived from the lotus as I have already explained (Fig. 19). As the lotus flower was emblematic of eternal youth, we find it commonly on charms of all kinds—in fact it is seen on almost every article the Egyptians possessed. The cups were usually copied from the lotus flower, as Fig. 31. An ornamental box with lid in the British Museum from Thebes about 1050 B.C. gives a good idea of lotus wood carving, and the lotus lid of a box is shown here (Fig. 33). Some of the jewellery, headdresses and ornaments are beautiful examples of fine lotus work of that period. Later on, the artistic skill

assumed a more mechanical style and evinced less individuality. That devotion of the workman to the work he loved, and which he represented so faithfully, a marked feature of the Japanese also, decayed by degrees, as other nations implanted new ideas and new methods upon it. Some writers have thought the rosette pattern was derived from the daisy, as in some examples, especially on embroidery work, the yellow centre is shown. This is quite possible, though the lotus rosette is almost universal.



41, 42. WHITE LOTUS CAPITALS. Vllth dynasty. Zowyet el-Meyetin.  
 43. LOTUS CAPITAL OF AMENHOTEP II. Thebes.  
 44, 45. LOTUS CAPITALS OF AMENHOTEP III. Thebes. Ali Prisse.

As a border pattern the lotus was not used before the XVIIIth dynasty, where we find it delineated in a somewhat formal manner (Figs 36, 37). But long before this, in the XIIth dynasty, the whole plant of the lotus was employed as a decoration both on architecture and sculpture, and later it was of a more free character, tending to become less natural and more conventional. And next we find it becoming in the Ptolemaic period more stiff still, being represented by parallel lines both for the lotus and papyrus. Then more complicated forms came in, leading to

the Greek anthemion (derived from the Egyptian), and other complicated evolutions. It is quite possible the Greek palmetto arose from the lotus also, as well as the fleur-de-lys. Many other flowers were thus introduced which do not concern us here.

Now we come to the adaptation of the lotus plant to architecture, and we are at once struck by the fact that Egypt affords by far the most ancient examples: it was in fact its birthplace. The lotus motive is characteristic of the finest examples



46. WHITE LOTUS CAPITAL WITH BLUE LOTUS FLOWERS ABOVE.  
47. BLUE LOTUS CAPITAL. Both 7th dynasty (?). Memphis.

of Egyptian architecture, and the variety is great. The conventional forms of the lotus which have been multiplied almost indefinitely in every direction, invariably convey the idea of the flower or the plant, and to this day in a large proportion of the best designs one can trace this influence.

The earliest delineation of the lotus flower is stated by Miss Murray to be on the tomb of the Sheikh el-Beled at Sakkarah (Fig. 28), but it looks to me more like papyrus. It often is carved on mastabas, as Fig. 29. There is a typical lotus

capital in wood of the VIth dynasty described by Prisse d'Avennes (Figs. 41, 42), which clearly is taken from the white lotus to which the buds and flower exactly correspond. Prof. Petrie gives a photograph of the white lotus capital of the Vth dynasty found at Memphis (Fig. 46). Of the same age is also the blue lotus capital (Fig. 47). At the Temple of Karnak we find some beautiful examples of the adaptation of the lotus flower to the capitals of some of the enormous granite columns of Tehutmes III (Fig. 48). The calyx is there without the flower, and is only one step removed from the Greek Ionic capital, and about 1400 B.C. this modification was actually used in Egypt, some 800 years before it appeared in Greece.

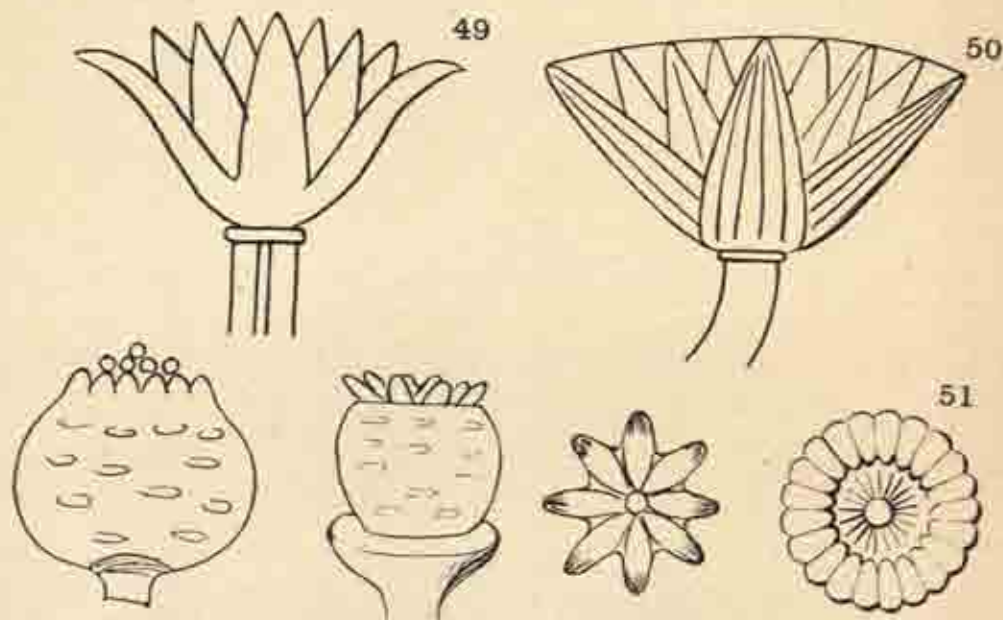


48. GRANITE PILLARS WITH PAPYRUS AND LOTUS  
Tehutmes III. Karnak.

A good illustration of the closed bud and open flower designs are given by Prisse—clearly the lotus (Figs. 43, 44, 45). One mark of distinction between that and the papyrus column is that, in the latter, root leaves are usually depicted at the foot of the papyrus design, never on that of the lotus—showing how carefully Nature was followed at that early period. In some of the lotus columns, as at Philae, no two are quite alike. I need not multiply instances of this kind; they must be quite familiar to everyone, for some fine examples are to be seen in our British Museum; though to be fully appreciated they must be seen *in situ*, with the soft Egyptian moonlight or sunrise playing upon them and casting over them a glamour which is unique.

I have endeavoured, in taking the lotus of Egypt as my text, to confine my remarks to that more especially as the source of beautiful design, from which lovely flower forms were instilled into the minds of the Egyptians giving them their ideas of beauty thousands of years ago: the beginning from which most artistic forms have since been developed. The Egyptians long ago discovered that you cannot with impunity encroach upon the simple law of natural beauty, as exemplified in the curves of plant life, any more than you can infringe other natural laws without a corresponding injury. In fact, the more nearly we can approach the harmony which prevails in the complete work of Nature, the more perfect will the copy appear, and so much the more likely is it to become a "joy for ever."

W. D. SPANTON.



49. LOTUS CAPITAL. TOMB OF YMERY. VII. DYNASTY. (L. D. II, 52.)

50. LOTUS CAPITAL. JEWELLERY OF SENUSERT II.

51. LOTUS SEED VESSEL; OVARY, SIDE AND TOP VIEW.

The last is from a bracelet of the tomb of Zer; it has twenty-one divisions, suggesting the sixteen divisions of *N. rotunda* of India. No Egyptian lotus has more than eight divisions.