Providence Pictures Inc.

2000 **"Women Pharaohs."** for Discovery Channel.

No better place in the ancient world for women than Egypt.

Own property, divorce their husbands, and even became rulers.

Zahi Hawass: wrote a book on women’s roles in ancient Egypt. Ma’at -Gave the law that gave justice between women and men.

Nut – divine consort of sun god Amun .

God’s Wives – considered a cult

Royal women reenact the creation story with the earthly manifestation of Amun. Any royal woman could achieve the title “God’s Wife of Amun”.

Meryt-Neith: the first woman to achieve the status of Pharaoh.

Thebes was the biggest, richest and most sacred city in the ancient world. Amun was thought to dwell in that city in the temple of Karnack.

Hieroglyphic on free-standing chapels of the God’s Wives show how they conducted their sacred ceremonies. The God’s Wives had tremendous spiritual power, but also political power.

Hatchupsut: God’s Wife inherited the title from her grandmother. Hatchupsut married to the new pharaoh. When her husband dies, Hatchupsut is named co-regent [co-ruler]. As God’s Wife, she had a greater power than as merely pharaoh. She created some of the largest obelisks in Egypt. They were a way to tell the story of the person who erected the obelisk. She even wore the pharaohnic beard and dressed like a man. She built her funerary temple in the valley of kings. Jezer-jezeru [ spender of splendors]. After her death, all of her images and name are chiseled away. There is one monument with her name and story intact. The Red Temple was disassembled before it could be destroyed. Her stepson actually added to the story. After her death the title of God’s Wife was removed as a way for women to gain political power. . .for a while.

Nefertiti: her husband, Aken-Aten, was considered a heretic. She reinstated the God’s Wife cult. The stones from the city and buildings they built were taken down and used as building filler by later pharaohs. There are hundreds of blocks intact. The scenes carved on these stones show that Nefertiti had as least as much power as Aken-Aten. She elevates herself to the level of goddess. After death, she vanished completely.

Nefertari: the most desirable women in the ancient world. As a teenager, she marries the Ramses II who will eventually be Ramses the Great. Resurrects the position of God’s Wife once again. Nefertari wants to be a God’s Wife, but in order to do that, she had to stand out from the other 20 wives. She used make-up, scented oils, and her sensuality to please Ramses. The linen shift she wore was almost see-through. Very, very sexy woman. After 30 years of marriage, Ramses builds her a huge temple to show his love for her. Ramses depicts Nefertari as equal to his at Abu-Simbel. At 46, she dies. To mourn her passing, he built a lavish tomb in the valley of queens. It is consider Egypt’s cysteine chapel. With it, she achieves immortality.

Nubian women: Nubian [current Sudan] kings once again resurrect the office of God’s Wife. Their daughters took religious and political power. They ushered in a 500-year period of renaissance and art, peace and prosperity for Egypt. One of the most celebrated is:

Amen-iris: one of the most famous. She wore the double-feathered crown. She presents offerings directly to Amun. The iconography suggests the status of the God’s Wives was equal to the Gods. These women may have been celibate. They adopted daughters to whom they passed on their positions. Thebes returns to its place as a metropolitan city. Weak rulers in the north allowed Assyrians to overthrow the city.

To read about the last woman pharaoh, Cleopatra, go to:

http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/quest/lost-queen/female-pharaohs/female-pharaohs.html

All of the above mentioned women are there in much greater detail. There are a few new names added to the list as well. Nefertari isn't listed. I'm not sure why.