Aimee Hinds, "Entry on: Barbie® The Great Eras® Collection (Series): Barbie® Doll as Egyptian Queen™ by Mattel, Inc. ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1129. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Mattel, Inc.

Barbie® The Great Eras® Collection (Series): Barbie® Doll as Egyptian Queen™

United States of America (1994)

TAGS: Cleopatra VII Egypt





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Barbie® The Great Eras® Collection (Series): Barbie® Doll as Egyptian Queen™
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1994
First Edition Details	Mattel, *Barbie® Doll as Egyptian Queen*, 1994.
Official Website	barbie.mattel.com (accessed: September 22, 2020).
Genre	Collectables*, Dolls*
Target Audience	Young adults (on the box Mattel suggest that this doll is for adult collectors, which they define as those aged 14 and up)
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Creators

Mattel, Inc. (Company)

Logo retrieved from Wikipedia, public domain (accessed: January 11, 2022).

Mattel Barbie

Originally launched in 1959, Barbie was founded by businesswoman, inventor, and co-owner of Mattel, Ruth Handler as an opportunity for girls to play with dolls that allowed them a wider range of imaginative roles, in line with the range of toys available to boys at the time. From the early 1960s, Barbie has had over 200 careers to date.

Source:

barbie.mattel.com (accessed: January 27, 2020).

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Additional information

Summary

This collector's edition doll depicts Barbie as an ancient Egyptian Queen (distinct from the similar dolls which depict Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra (2000), the 2010 Barbie as Cleopatra doll and the 2001 Princess of the Nile doll). The doll is part of the *Dolls of the World, Great Eras* collection, which also includes a "Grecian Goddess" doll. The doll wears a blue and gold dress with a blue cloak. Her black hair comes over her shoulders and is largely covered by a gold head-piece. She wears a wide collar and golden arm cuffs.

The text on the box gives us some historical context for the Egyptian Queen, placing her within 18th Dynasty ancient Egypt with the specific date of 1567 to 1320 BC, noting that it is the same period as Tutankhamun. The rest of the description tells us about her costume, jewellery and cosmetics, ending with a declaration of the doll's educational potential:

"Egyptian Queen Barbie offers a glimpse of the splendor and grandeur that was Ancient Egypt. She reminds us of the legacy and lessons of the past, and invites us to learn more about her Kingdom of the Nile."

The text is illustrated with a disparate set of images including a sphinx, a slate with powdered cosmetics, some bracelets, an eye of Horus symbol, the bust of Nefertiti, and some gemstone rings.

Analysis

Like the similar 2001 Princess of the Nile doll (also surveyed in this database), this doll is provided with historical context through the information on the box. The factual aspect of the text is in contrast to the text on the boxes of other dolls on the series. Although historical dolls in the Great Eras series from more recent periods tend to lean towards fantasy (for example, the Gibson Girl and Victorian Lady), the Egyptian Queen doll's information is still preoccupied with fashion and cosmetics (Milnor 2005: 229). The historicity of the doll is supported by the specific facts presented, including the date range the doll is supposed to fit in to. Like the Princess of the Nile doll, no specific identity is suggested although possible contenders are certainly narrowed down. Like the doll's later counterpart, the most likely inspiration is Nefertiti, who is directly referenced in the imagery on the box. Although the date range is more fixed here than for the

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Princess of the Nile doll, it is Barbie's costume in this case which provides ambiguity, especially as her striking head-dress marks her as distinct from Nefertiti's most well-known image, instead allowing her to be any Egyptian queen through her vulture headdress, a crown associated with queenship through the goddess Mut (Goebs, 2012).

The non-specificity of her identity within Egyptian history may reflect a desire to avoid approaching the complex, often both polygamous and incestuous nature of New Kingdom royal marriage practice, information which is certainly difficult to relay to children and young adults. This information is not difficult to find and it is very possible that it would come up during research for the doll. Like the later doll, the Egyptian Queen doll provides a physical vessel to hold the history – non-specific and through the lens of Barbie – provided on the box (Milnor 2005: 223). Where this doll deviates from the Princess of the Nile doll is in the limits imposed by the specificity of its historical contextualising: the scope for role play through Barbie's own role is narrow. This is not necessarily negative from the point of view of the producer, as the consumer is forced to role-play a very specific version of Barbie's historical world (even if playing with the doll, collector's dolls are typically stuck in pose and costume meaning that unlike other Barbies, there is a limited capacity for extensive role-play). Like the Grecian Goddess doll from the same series, there seems to be an attempt with this doll to historicise through a deliberate ambiguity of identity, allowing the consumer to substitute any (or none) specific Egyptian queen. Instead of depicting a real woman (as in the Cleopatra doll), the doll attempts to depict all Egyptian (royal) women through an amalgam of several aspects of non-specific women, including aspects of mythical women. For example, the eye of Horus depicted on the box links loosely to Isis, who connects the doll back into Greco-Roman mythology, and Mut, who is often depicted in the vulture headdress and wearing blue).

While the doll's fashion styling mark it as distinct from any real figures from the specified time-period, it is clearly inspired by images of Egypt such as Elizabeth Taylor's depiction of Cleopatra in the eponymous film of 1963, through the costume and in particular the headdress. As with the Princess of the Nile, the date range for the Egyptian Queen doll rules out Cleopatra as her intended identity. This indicates an engagement with history, although it has apparently been supplemented by pop-culture, possibly to encourage a recognition and engagement with the doll as "Egyptian". (This likely was not a possibility with the Princess of the Nile doll as an Elizabeth Taylor as

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	Cleopatra doll was released around the same time). The relative insignificance of historicity is evident in the false equivalence of the value of various objects pictured around the box text; as Milnor (2005: 220) indicates, both historical and fashion objects become interchangeable through their relative position and size. Despite the engagement with images of Cleopatra, there are elements of the doll's design which display the significance of genuine historical fact, for example her vulture headdress; while the 2010 Cleopatra doll uses a version of the more recognisably Egyptian style of crown know as a *nemes*, this doll's less recognisable headdress is one of a set of crowns worn specifically by queens (in contrast to the *nemes*, which is a pharaonic headdress worn regardless of gender [Goebs, 2012]).
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Cleopatra VII Egypt
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Femininity Gender Girls Historical figures History Identity Society
Further Reading	Barbie, *About Barbie*, available at barbie.mattel.com (accessed: January 27, 2020). Barbie, *Egyptian Queen Barbie doll*, available at barbie.mattel.com (accessed: August 12, 2020). Goebs, Katya, "Crowns, Egyptian", in R. S. Bagnall, K. Brodersen, C.B. Champion, A. Erskine and S.R. Huebner, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History,* 2012, avaiable at onlinelibrary.wiley.com (accessed: August 12, 2020). Milnor, Kristina, "Barbie® as Grecian Goddess™ and Egyptian Queen™: Ancient Women's History by Mattel®", *Helios* 32.2 (2005): 215–233.

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