

The Egg and its symbolism in the Graeco- Roman period

By

Wahid Omran

The egg has its special religious symbolism during the Graeco- Roman period. It connected with creation; the egg in the ritual Egyptian methodology was a symbol of rebirth and renewal of life in the afterlife and new creation for the deceased. It is connected with Horus, the sun god and the ithyphallic god Amon as a symbol of creation.

The egg also connected with royalty and sovereign, Geb was credited in antiquity with laying the egg from which hatched the sun, the celestial equivalent of the living Pharaoh.

The egg also was used in the Egyptian conception as an protecting amulet, especially for ships and sailors. The egg was one of the main offerings for the deceased in Egypt and Greece, it was also depicted as sacred objects upon the altars in the tombs and mummy-coffins, that three rounded eggs are illustrated on an altar. Eggs have always been symbols of rebirth or regeneration.

The appearance of the egg in Egypt and the Hellenistic world was mainly attribute of the Isiac cult, the goddess who born Horus as a sun-god in the form of an egg, so the deceased hope to rebirth again in his tomb in the form of Horus as an egg. The egg also illustrated on the niches of the private houses of the followers of Isis near the Iseum of Pompeii.

During the Christian period, the egg still has its main symbolic meaning as a sign of resurrection, the griffin's egg, a common ornament in mediaeval churches, were hung up in the churches with other curiosities.

The egg appeared in the tombs of Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period as Tigrain, Kom el-Schukafa, Si-Amon and Akhmim as a burial symbol of the resurrection of the deceased in his afterlife.

Key words: Creation, Royalty, Amulet, Isis, Sailing