



Painting on Papyrus of Sennufer with a Lotus Flower

The Ancient Egyptian nobleman, *Sennufer* was "Mayor of the City of Thebes". He was also "Overseer of the Granaries and Fields, Gardens and Cattle of Amun" during the reign of the pharaoh, Amenhotep II of the 18th dynasty.

Being a favourite of the king he accumulated great wealth. This painting is a copy of the original which was found on the wall of his burial chamber. It is fitting that Sennufer is holding a lotus flower as he is famous for having a beautiful garden, known as Sennufer's Garden. However, it is more likely to be a garden which Sennufer managed, and perhaps designed, rather than a garden which Sennufer owned.

The lotus flower is a very important symbol of ancient Egypt. Many paintings in ancient Egypt had lotus flowers in them. The ancient Egyptians believed that at the beginning of the world, on the dark waters of *Nun*, from which the Egyptians believed life began, a lotus flower floated with closed petals. The petals opened and out of the flower the *Sun God Ra* rose up, creating the world. In the evening, the *Sun* went to sleep in the lotus flower, only to rise again next day.

The lotus and papyrus plants were both a symbol of fertility and life itself. During the *Old Kingdom*, fresh papyrus stalks with flower heads were used as offerings to the gods that the deceased (dead) took to the grave.

The ancient Egyptians believed that by making these offerings the gods would grant the an *afterlife*. A lot of the time, the papyrus stalks were entwined with lotus flowers. We know this from the many paintings and stone carvings left by the early Egyptians.

This particular painting of Sennufer been done on *papyrus*. Artists of Ancient Egypt used papyrus much as we do paper. The papyrus plant (pictured below) has a tall, thick multi-layered stalk. To make a writing surface, these layers are split, flattened, and placed side by side. Additional layers are placed perpendicular to and on top of the first layer. The stalks are then pressed, dried, and dressed with paste, before it is beaten flat and smooth. The papyrus is then ready to write on or paint on.

