

Thacker Gallery

Egyptian Art

Large Print Guide

Deir el Bahri Relief



Temple relief

Limestone

**Egypt, Thebes, Deir el Bahari,
mortuary temple of Hatshepsut**

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,

reign of Hatshepsut/Thutmose III, 1473-1458 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG500

This section of a much larger relief comes from the famous mortuary temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari. Egyptologists currently working at the temple believe this to be the largest section of the temple's famous carved and painted decoration to have left Egypt.

It was originally situated in the upper court, on the east wall, to the south of the granite doorway. It comes from a scene which depicts the movement of a colossal statue of the Queen by boat along the river.

This part of the scene depicts soldiers running in formation along the river bank beside the boats. The water of the river is depicted as zig-zag lines still bearing traces of blue paint at the top of the section. The soldiers carry a range of weapons such as scimitars, spears and axes, as well as shields and standards.

All of the soldiers wear short, curly wigs and short kilts. Based on the style of their features, it has been suggested that they are Nubian.

In the top right hand corner of the section is a cartouche containing one of the royal names of Thutmose III (Mn-hpr-re). The **vertical cartouche names Queen Hatshepsut (Ma'at-ka-re)**. The text describes Thutmose as established on the throne of Horus and celebrating 'festivals of millions of years'.

Stela of the Steward Dedu



Stela of the Steward Dedu

Limestone

Egypt, Abydos

Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty,

13th year of Senwosret I,

about 1943 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG503

This impressive limestone stela was created for a Steward named Dedu. It can be very precisely dated thanks to the date carved at the very top - the 13th year of the reign of Senwosret I (probably around 1943 BCE).

The stela is organised into two sections: an inscription carved in sunk relief, above an offering scene carved in raised relief.

Dedu is depicted in the bottom left corner. He is shown at a much larger scale than the other figures to indicate his importance. This status is further reinforced by his possessions. Above his head appears a broad box on which rest a mirror in its case and two vessels for expensive cosmetic oil and perfume. Below his chair sits a pet dog.

Dedu's wife is shown seated in front of her husband and is depicted at half his size. She is enjoying the fragrance of a lotus blossom, a symbol of rejuvenation. At the right, a smaller man arranges a pile of food on an offering table, while holding a censer in the shape of an arm holding a cup.

In the two upper registers Dedu's family members, shown on the same small scale, bring more offerings of meat and a perfume vase. Dedu's brother, Reniqeri, is also commemorated in the top right corner. Together with his wife, he receives offerings from two women, perhaps his daughters.

The stela is thought to have been set up at Dedu's tomb in Abydos. The inscription invokes Osiris, Wepwawet, Heqat, Khnum and other deities worshipped at Abydos and asks their blessings for Dedu. The text also mentions the sacred barque of Osiris and the various festivals celebrated in the city. Dedu asks any passerby, whether heading north or south, be they scribes or temple priests, to **mention his 'good name' in the direction of the temple of Osiris and pray to the divine images on his behalf during the festival processions.**

Originally the whole stela would have been brightly painted. In the 19th century the names of the children of Dedu could still be read. This has faded and now only the green of the vegetables and flower stems in the offering scene survive.

Dedu's father, Djebaes, is also known from a stela now in Berlin. He held the same title as his son, suggesting that this moderately high-ranking position was hereditary at that time.

Life after death



Stela of Mes

Limestone

Egypt, Thebes (Deir el-Medina)

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty,

about 1220 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG590

This *stela* commemorates a man named Mes. He was an ‘*Overseer of Goldworkers in the Place of Truth*’, the famous worker’s village at Deir el-Medina, whose inhabitants cut and stocked the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. At the top, Mes is shown standing before the gods Osiris and Isis at an offering table piled with fruit, flowers and bread. In the middle register Mes is shown making offerings to his father Iay, who was also an Overseer of Goldworkers, together with his mother, Mutemwia.

Many other members of the family are shown kneeling behind them. The lowest portion of the stela shows Mes with his wife, also called Mutemwia, receiving offerings from their son, while more relatives stand in the remaining space. One of the queens of Ramesses II was called Mutemwia, which may account for the fashion for the name.



Part of false door of Nu and
Imarer

Limestone

Old Kingdom,

5th Dynasty or later,

after about 2450 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4010

The priest Nu and his wife Imarer are seen here sitting at an offering table laden with loaves of bread. Above and below the table are representations of the luxuries they wished to enjoy in the afterlife.

This finely carved relief is believed to be part of the ‘false door’ from their tomb. The false door was a means by which the spirit of the dead person could leave and re-enter a tomb. **It stood in the tomb’s chapel** and was the focus for offerings given by the living. In depicting this scene the couple could be sure of receiving what they needed magically if for any reason their descendants failed to leave real offerings.

The inscription on the left gives the names and titles of Nu. His wife’s name and title are given in the inscription on the right. The dark patches over both heads are thought to indicate alterations to the relief which would originally have been brightly painted.

Another section of this false door can be seen in the Wolfson gallery next door.



Headrest of Hekay

Alabaster/Travertine

Old Kingdom, 6th Dynasty,
about 2300 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4394

The form of the Ancient Egyptian headrest remained basically the same for thousands of years. It would have been a common item in every prosperous home and so many examples survive from tombs, ready for use in the next life. Headrests intended for daily use were normally made of wood. This headrest was probably created specially for the use of the owner in the afterlife. The inscription names the owner as Hekay, who is described as *'count, royal treasurer, sole companion and overseer of the town'*. A further line on the base names the noble, Rekh, born of ly, who presumably had the headrest made for Hekay's burial.



Headrest amulet

Green jasper

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4458

A headrest amulet could be placed by the head to magically raise up the head of the deceased in rebirth. It would also prevent the head of the deceased from being cut off.



Inlaid scarabs

Glazed steatite and glass

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland
Collection

EG5101 and EG5102



Scarab of Ramesses II

Steatite and gold

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty,
reign of Ramesses II, about 1250
BCE

Northumberland
Collection EG475



Scarab

Feldspar

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland
Collection EG4470

Perhaps the most common Egyptian amulets are those that take the form of the scarab beetle.

The scarab beetle rolls a large ball of dung to an underground hiding place. The ancient Egyptians likened this activity to the passage of the sun across the heavens from east to west. It also lays its eggs in a ball of dung which then feeds the young when they hatch. This was seen as a perfect metaphor for the rebirth to which the ancient Egyptians aspired.

In life, as well as in death, the scarab amulet therefore represented a powerful talisman. It was either worn with beads on a string around the neck or set as the bezel of a ring for the finger.



Heart scarab

Black steatite

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty, 1295
-1186 BCE

Rawnsley Collection

DUROM.1953.105

Many Ancient Egyptians believed that after death their deeds in this life would be judged. Their heart would be weighed against *ma'at*, the personification of truth, and if they were found wanting they would be devoured by the monster Ammit and cease to exist, never reaching the afterlife. The heart scarab was designed to prevent this terrible fate. It was placed within the mummy wrappings, preferably inscribed with a spell to 'prevent the heart of the deceased creating opposition to him in the realm of the dead'. In this way the owner hoped that his heart would not betray any wrongdoings and he would pass safely into the afterlife.

This human headed heart scarab is inscribed for a priest of Montu, Nebes-ankh. The image on the front is the *bennu*-bird, which played a role in the creation of the world in Egyptian mythology and was therefore linked to the sun, creation and rebirth.



Seven frog amulets

Faience inlaid with gold

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Wellcome Collection EG5382

Sacred to the birth goddess Heket, frogs were symbols of fertility, creation and regeneration because of their emergence from the mud once the waters of the annual Nile flood had receded.



Heart amulets

Glass

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Wellcome Collection EG5245

and Wellcome Collection EG5850

Ancient Egyptians regarded the heart as the seat of intelligence, feelings and memory. As such, it was viewed as essential for the afterlife and was the one major organ left in place in the body during mummification. Heart amulets are virtually unknown before the New Kingdom but once established become one of the most **important of all funerary amulets, placed on the mummy's chest to protect the heart.** These two heart amulets are both made from polished glass. Glassmaking was a relatively new technology in Egypt when these amulets were made and production was under royal control. As such these were high prestige items.



Stela amulet

Feldspar

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland

Collection EG4462

Not all of the signs on this miniature stela are legible. It begins with the words *'A spell said by you: I am the amulet of green feldspar'*. Green feldspar is symbolic of new life and this amulet is thought to have had a protective function.



Shabti of Mes

Wood

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

Second Intermediate Period,
17th Dynasty, about 1600 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG 535

Around 2000 BCE the custom of placing mummiform statuettes of the deceased in the tomb first made its appearance. These figurines - today referred to as *shabti* - were not only images of the dead person himself but were intended to labour on his behalf should he or she be called upon to work in the Afterlife. The origin of the name is the word *shebed*, 'stick', and the reason for this can be seen in this early example. This shabti is inscribed with an offering formula addressed to the god Osiris on behalf of Mes by his father who had ordered the figure to be made and placed in his son's tomb.



Miniature shabti

Alabaster

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1350 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG519

This miniature figure is notable for the delicately modelled features of the face and wig. Shabti of this size and quality are rare, and may have functioned as amulets.



Shabti of Amenmose

Wood

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty or later,
after about 1300 BCE

Northumberland
Collection EG572

This shabti carries the two hoes it would need to labour in the fields should its master, a man called Amenmose, be summoned to do work in the realm of Osiris. A version of the shabti spell from the *Book of the Dead* is inscribed on the legs. In this spell the shabti answers when its master is called, 'Here I am, I shall do it.'



Shabti fragment

Serpentine

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty,
about 1300 BCE

Northumberland
Collection EG575

Most early shabti show the owner mummified, associating themselves with Osiris, the ruler of the Underworld. Around 1300 BCE a new type of shabti came into use which shows the owner dressed in the costume of daily life instead. This broken example is of very high quality. It shows the owner wearing an ornate collar, a linen garment with pleated sleeves and a bracelet typical of the fashions of the time.



Shabti of Huy

Wood

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty,

After 1295 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG518

The owner of this shabti was a man named Huy. The inscription tells us that he was **'Great Mayor'** and **'Overseer of the Works in the House of the Mistress of the Sycamore'**, revealing that he was both a high official and had a role within the temple of the goddess Hathor in Memphis.

Thanks to his high position in society he could afford to equip his burial with objects of the very highest quality, including this shabti. **His status is also reflected in the 'gold of honour' which the shabti wears.** These strings of gold beads were the gift of the Pharaoh to officials of high distinction. Rather than the usual shabti spell the inscription is a formula which would allow Huy to join the sun in its daily course through the sky.

It reads: 'He speaks: may your face be opened so that you see the sun disk and that you adore Re the sun in life. May you be summoned in Rostau and circle the mound of Tjamut, traverse the valley of Upper Rostau and open the secret cavern. May you take your place upon your seat which is in Ta-djeser, like the great crew members who are with Re'.



Shabti with demotic text

Faience

Late Period, 26th Dynasty,
about 500 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG524

Unusually the spell on this shabti is not written in hieroglyphs but demotic, the language and script of everyday life. By the 26th Dynasty, when this piece was made, a tomb owner might have many hundreds of identical shabti rather than just one, perhaps up to 365, one for each day of the year.



Ba bird

Wood, plaster, paint

Late Period, 716-332 BCE

Wellcome Collection EG2283

A human-headed bird was the form used to represent a person's *ba*. The concept of the *ba* is difficult to translate into English, but it roughly equates to personality or mental powers.

A stork is the image used to write the word *ba* in hieroglyphs. This may be why the *ba* came to be represented as a bird. After death the *ba* could leave the physical body but it needed to return. Spell 89 of the *Book of the Dead* recommended the placing of a golden *ba*-bird on the chest of the mummy in order to help this reunion.



Sokar hawk

Wood, plaster, paint

Third Intermediate Period,
1069-716 BCE

Northumberland collection EG1415

Sokar was the god of the necropolis at Memphis. Over time he became linked with Osiris, King of the Underworld, and Ptah, chief god of Memphis. In later periods this was expressed in the triple god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris. Many tombs were equipped with wooden statuettes of this mummiform god often standing on a miniature sarcophagus with one of these Sokar hawks at his feet. These miniature sarcophagi could be used to house a copy of the *Book of the Dead*.

Statues

Figure of a standing man

Stone

Egypt

Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty or later, after about 1850 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3996



The name of the owner of this sculpture has been lost. Large numbers of small-scale figures survive from this period.

Instead of being individually commissioned most seem to have been bought off-the-peg and inscribed afterwards. The statuette would have been dedicated in a temple or tomb-chapel with the aim of focusing the attention of passers-by on the deceased and perhaps speaking his name.

Statuette of Senwosret son of Ip

Basalt

Egypt, perhaps from el-Lisht

Middle Kingdom, early 12th Dynasty, about 1910 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG609



The owner of this statue is named as Senwosret son of Ip, mayor of the town of Kha-Senwosret, the pyramid estate of Senwosret I near el-Lisht.

His pose, swathed in a calf-length cloak, recalls a mummified body. The statuette may have been set up in a temple or a tomb chapel. It was intended to remain magically active after his death, acting as a channel for the offerings and prayers which would guarantee his eternal survival.

The inscriptions on the sides tell us that as well as being mayor, he was also a priest, or overseer of priests, for several gods: Hathor, Anubis, Wadjet, Min and Khnum. This highlights the part-time nature of many Egyptian priesthoods at during this period.



Block statue of Seneb

Limestone

Egypt

Middle Kingdom, 13th Dynasty, to
1773 to after 1650 BCE or

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1500 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4008

This statue of an official named Seneb was ordered by his brother. The text invokes the favour of the gods Osiris and Sopdu of Nekhen **with the intention of making Seneb's name live forever.**

This kind of statue is first attested in the 12th Dynasty, representing the body in an economical form with knees drawn up and arms crossed, covered by a cloak. It is thought to show the deceased at **the crucial moment when he is awakened from death's sleep by the sun's rays.**

Experts have disagreed about the dating of this statue. Earlier assessments dated it to around 1500 BCE but more recent appraisals place it before 1650 BCE.



Stela-bearing statue of

Herihernebwast

Limestone

Egypt, probably from Thebes

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,

about 1400 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4005

This statue probably comes from the tomb-chapel of Herihernebwast, a scribe of the royal granaries at Thebes. Since tombs at Thebes were sited on the west bank of the Nile, the statue would have faced east towards the life-giving sun, **'adoring Re at his rising' as the hymn on the stela desires.**

The statue shows Herihernebwast with his hands raised in adoration. This is a difficult pose to create in stone without having to have props under the arms. The Egyptians solved this problem by adding a stela on which to place the hands, a device that also provides a surface for an inscription. The form is still rendered slightly awkwardly here, the other stela-bearing statue in this case, dating to around 40 years later, shows how craftsmen had worked to perfect the form.



Stela-bearing statue of Meryptah

Limestone

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of
Amenhotep III, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4006

This statue was created to stand outside the tomb of Meryptah, high priest of the sun god Amun during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. Meryptah kneels, praising the rising sun, with his hands resting on a stela inscribed with a solar hymn.

The statue is an example of the finest quality art of this reign. It also highlights the increasing emphasis on the worship of the sun in this period, which reached its height in the reign of the following king, Akhenaten.



Door-jamb

Limestone

Old Kingdom, 6th Dynasty, about 2200 BCE

Northumberland Collection DURUM.U10782

This carving once formed part of the doorway in the tomb of a courtier of one of the two 6th Dynasty kings named Pepi (the name of the king appears twice in the inscription). The carefully modelled low relief is typical of the high quality work of the elite tombs of the Old Kingdom.



Stela of Ishemrai

Limestone

Egypt

Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty, about 1750 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG512

This stela was made for a man named Ishemrai, who is depicted as the large figure. His son, Senu, is the much smaller figure shown making offerings to his father.

Ishemrai describes himself as an arranger of works of art. Experts have suggested he was some kind of designer and perhaps designed this stela himself. He shows himself with a hairstyle and clothes of the Old Kingdom, though the stela dates from much later.

A mulets, Jewellery and Cosmetics



Mirror with Bes handle
Bronze and ebony
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG4348



Mirror with Mut handle
Bronze and ebony
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about
1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG4349

The typical Egyptian mirror consists of a flattened disc of metal, shaped with a tang to fit into a separately made handle of similar or contrasting material.

The handles of both these mirrors are carved from ebony. The larger handle is carved in the shape of the stem and flower of a lily, on top of which rests the head of the protector-god Bes. The smaller handle takes the form of a papyrus column decorated with representations of the goddess Mut and papyrus stems.

As it captured the images of the living face, the mirror was imbued with the essence of its owner and so became closely associated with ideas of revivication in the afterlife. The highly personal status this gave to mirrors is reflected in the fact that they are often found **wrapped within the bindings of the mummy close to the owner's body.**



Palm kohl tube

Alabaster/travertine

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4365

From Pre-dynastic times, the Ancient Egyptians applied make-up around their eyes. Kohl was used both to protect the eyes from the harsh rays of the sun and to try to prevent eye disease.

As very personal objects, used every day by their owner, kohl containers were often included in burials. This kohl tube is a miniaturized version of a large-scale architectural form, the palm column. Kohl tubes in this shape were popular in the mid to late 18th Dynasty, though they are more commonly found in wood, coloured faience or glass.



Multiple kohl tube of Ptahmose
Obsidian
Egypt, Probably from Saqqara
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1375 BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG4362

This vessel has been made from a block of precious, naturally occurring glass called obsidian. Kohl pots with two or more tubes may have been used to hold eye ointments as well as make-up.

The owner of this vessel was a high ranking and well-known official named Ptahmose. His titles include those of Prince, Count, Sem-Priest and **'One who pleases the heart of Ptah, greatest of the master-craftsmen'**.

This final title belonged to the High-Priest of Ptah in Memphis, of **Egypt's most important gods and patron god of artists and craftsmen.**



Bes kohl tube

Steatite

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,

about 1450 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4363

Several pieces are missing from this kohl tube. The holes down the front of the tube originally held metal hoops for an applicator. **The dwarf god Bes's pierced ears may have been adorned with metal or glass earrings, while a lid would have originally slotted into the hole beneath his mouth.** Bes is not only decorative but provides this kohl tube with extra stability.




Nefer-shaped box

Wood

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,

about 1450 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG6786

This box is carved in the shape of an animal's heart and windpipe, a common hieroglyphic sign  (pronounced *nefer*) and usually translated as 'beautiful'. The box carries an inscription for a man called Amenmose. Becoming *nefer* was not just a matter of looking beautiful, it carried qualities of youth, vitality, and physical and moral perfection. This box may have contained something to assist Amenmose in achieving this goal.



Cosmetic palette in the form of a turtle

Siltstone

Predynastic Period, Naqada II, before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection EG5283

From the earliest periods of settled life in Egypt eye paint played an important role in the ritual of bodily adornment for both men and women. This cosmetic (which in Pre-dynastic times was produced from malachite, a ground copper ore) was employed both as a protection and as a beautifying aid. Clearly of magical as well as **practical significance, palettes are among Egypt's earliest decorated objects.**

This palette follows the shape of a turtle. Bird, serpent and geometric motifs were also common. Given their importance, a palette, together with a pebble grinder for preparing the cosmetic, often accompanied their owners to the grave. Green patches of malachite are still visible on the surface.



Cosmetic dish in the form of a shell
Alabaster/travertine
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1370 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG1041

Shells were used throughout Egyptian history as containers for cosmetics, incense and paint. Shell-shaped dishes imitating natural forms in stone, ivory and glass became fashionable during the 18th Dynasty as part of a wider flourishing of the arts. This particular dish copies the form of a freshwater mussel, *Mutela nilotica*. It is said to have been found in a tomb at Thebes, along with a small cosmetic spoon. No trace of any original contents remain.



Handle of a cosmetic spoon
Steatite
New Kingdom,
18th Dynasty or later,
after about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4366

The shape of this handle indicates that it originally formed part of a large spoon, most likely for cosmetic use in either a domestic or ritual context. The woman depicted on the spoon is standing in a marsh, an area associated with rejuvenation.



Hand-shaped spoon with kohl-stick handle

Haematite

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4368

The hand-shaped spoon at one end of this applicator would have been used for measuring out the eye make-up in powder form to be mixed with water. The opposite rounded end would have been used to apply the prepared cosmetic round the eye.



Ibex cosmetic spoon

Schist

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4369

The ibex with its curved horns and the oryx with its straight horns are commonly encountered as decorative elements in combs, spoons and other cosmetic items. On one level this is with an intention to compare the delicate movements of the animal with the grace of the lady to whom the items belonged. The animals, however, are generally shown bound, alluding, on another level, to the potential danger of such desert creatures as manifestations of chaos upon which order has been successfully imposed.



Mirror-shaped cosmetic spoon

Alabaster/travertine

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4352

The basic shape of a typical Egyptian mirror has been borrowed here to produce a spoon or scoop for cosmetic use. Scenes from Egyptian tombs show people applying their make-up with the use of such mirrors. Like the other objects in this case, such small personal items were often included in burials for use in the Afterlife.



Cosmetic spoon with Bes handle

Wood

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about
1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4579

The oval bowl of this spoon takes the form of a cartouche which draws attention to and safeguards the contents - just as in royal contexts a cartouche guards the king's names. The handle takes the form of the dwarf god Bes, a protective deity. Many cosmetic objects have this dual purpose of being both functional and also magical.



Bag shaped jar

Steatite

New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, 1550-1069 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG3565

Perfumed oils were highly valued by the Ancient Egyptians in both domestic and ritual contexts. When it was found this jar contained a viscous, fatty liquid. The contents were removed for analysis in the 1940s but the results are not recorded. It may have been a perfumed oil, placed in the burial for the use of the owner in the afterlife.



Vessel for ointment

Alabaster/travertine

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about 1370 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4418

In the New Kingdom a combination of military conquest and foreign trade greatly increased the flow of exotic new goods into Egypt. These included oils and ointments prized as cosmetics and for embalming. The shape of this jar was inspired by vessels from Cyprus and Syria reflecting this cosmopolitan new world. Alabaster, as well as being visually pleasing, is non-porous, which prevented the loss of liquid and kept the contents cooler than a pottery jar.



Aryballos

Glass

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
after about 1400 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5104

This vessel, known as an *aryballos*, was produced by moulding a clay and dung core into shape and covering it with molten glass. **Trails of different coloured glass were then applied and ‘combed’ to create a zig-zag effect.** While the glass was still hot and soft it was rolled on a flat stone to smooth the surface and then the handle and rim were applied. After cooling the core was removed. The vessel would have been used to hold a valuable liquid, such as perfume, which could then be dispensed drop by drop.



Alabastron with animal decoration

Faience

Eastern Mediterranean, probably
from Rhodes

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or later,
after about 600 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG4364

This cylindrical faience vessel is an *alabastron* – a container for oils and cosmetics common throughout the Ancient Near East during the First Millennium BCE. The decoration uses the lotus flower, a symbol of rebirth, to frame scenes of order and disorder. Lions, cattle and antelope of the desert are tamed by human agency represented by the collared hunting dog. Despite being very Egyptian in theme and material, this vessel is thought to come from the Greek island of Rhodes. It reflects the fashion for Egyptian style throughout the Eastern Mediterranean in the First Millennium BCE.



Amulet of Horus

Gold

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG5978

Amulets first appear in Egypt as early as 4000 BCE. By the end of Pharaonic times around 300 different types are known, from deities to animals, parts of the human body and even everyday household implements. All of these different types has a common aim: to provide protection of one sort or another to the wearer.

The falcon god Horus, one of the best known ancient Egyptian deities, is represented in this tiny, meticulously engraved gold amulet. Horus was a sky god, the embodiment of divine kingship and the protector of Pharaoh.



Wedjat-eye plaque

Green jasper

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG4476

This delicately carved amulet was probably originally mounted in a finger ring. One side is carved with a wedjat eye - a powerful symbol of healing, protection, strength and perfection. The other side carries an inscription in cryptic hieroglyphs. In the Late Period there was a strong interest in the magical power of the written word. The hidden spell would have enhanced the power of the protection provided by the wedjat eye.



Wedjat-eye

Carnelian

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG470

Like the green jasper piece above, this carnelian wedjat eye amulet was also probably originally a ring bezel. In this case the reverse side bears one of the names of Pharaoh Amenhotep III, allowing the wearer to access the protective power of the ruling **King's name**.



Ring

Gold

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1400 BCE or later

Northumberland Collection EG6055

Rings were worn throughout Egyptian history to provide magical protection, to serve as proof of identity and be used as seals, or to demonstrate the wearer's allegiance to a particular official, ruler, or deity. The inscription on this ring reads '*the good favour of Amun-Re*' - chief deity of Egypt during the New Kingdom. The inscription on this ring reads '*the good favour of Amun-Re*' - chief deity of Egypt during the New Kingdom.



Ring

Gold

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1400 BCE or later

Northumberland Collection EG6056

This ring has lotus flowers on the shank. The bezel shows a female deity seated in a papyrus boat. She is identified as '*Mut, the beautiful mistress*'. Mut was the consort of Amun-Re, closely associated with queenship during the New Kingdom.



Ring

Gold and jasper

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1500 BCE or later

Northumberland Collection EG6051

This ring has a swivel mount set with a green jasper scarab. The **scarab's base is inscribed with a name, 'Amenhotep'**, which may have been that of the owner or one of the 18th Dynasty kings he served. The scarab was associated with the god Khepri, the solar and creator deity linked to ideas of resurrection and rejuvenation.



Ring

Gold

Probably Ptolemaic Period, about
300 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG6072

The rearing cobra with sun disc on this ring represents the uraeus **serpent, the 'Eye of Re', daughter of the sun god, who sat on the brow of the king to spit fire on his enemies.** The owner of this ring may not have been a king since uraei do appear on non-royal funerary equipment from the Late Period onwards, but he certainly aspired to a royal level of protection.



Amulet of the god Heh

Gold

Old Kingdom, 6th Dynasty, about
2200 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5072

The god Heh was one of the *Ogdoad* - the eight forces of chaos from whom life sprang according to one of Egypt's creation myths. Heh's name means 'a million' and by extension 'eternity'. The curved rods he holds are notched sticks representing years. He represents a wish for the deceased to enjoy eternal life after death.



Penannular earrings

Glass

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about
1350 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1133 and EG1134

Earrings are known in Egypt from the 12th Dynasty onwards but were only worn with any frequency from the late Second Intermediate Period onwards, leading to the suggestion that they were popularized by the Hyksos rulers of that time. They were worn by men, women and children.

However, mature men are rarely depicted wearing earrings and kings are never shown wearing them, although the evidence of royal mummies shows that they did wear them. The earrings shown here are not a pair, they were manufactured in different ways. One was formed by trailing a white glass rod around a thicker black rod, the other by fusing alternate coloured segments of glass.



Drop-shaped beads

Glass

Egypt New Kingdom,

18th Dynasty, about 1360
BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819,
1820, 1821, 1822

At the time these glass beads were made, glassmaking technology had only recently been introduced to Egypt and was a royal monopoly. Their colour was probably chosen to imitate the much-prized stones lapis lazuli and turquoise.

Mummy and coffin of an elderly woman



Mummy in linen wrappings
with wooden coffin and
cartonnage decoration

Egypt, probably from Akhmim
Ptolemaic Period, about
250 BCE

Darlington Borough Council
DUROM.1999.32

The exact origin of this mummy and painted wooden coffin are unknown. However, the style of decoration strongly suggests they are from the area of Akhmim in Upper Egypt.

The mummy first comes to light in the UK in 1888 when she was donated to Penrith Public Library by a Miss Wilson. The records in Penrith state that the mummy had previously been in the Boulaq **Museum, the forerunner of today's Cairo Museum.**

In 1884 the French archaeologist Gaston Maspero, then Director of the Boulaq Museum, discovered an intact Ptolemaic cemetery in Akhmim containing more than 6000 mummies. It seems likely that this mummy may have come from his excavation of that cemetery.

In the 1930 the mummy and coffin were transferred to Darlington Library and Museum. In 1960 when the Oriental Museum first opened to the public, it had an important Egyptian collection but no mummy. In contrast to many of his contemporaries the fourth Duke of Northumberland had not collected human remains. A loan was therefore arranged from Darlington which was later converted into a formal transfer. Considerable research has now been carried out on the mummy and this is ongoing.

The preservation of a person's name, and the repeating of that name, was very important to the Ancient Egyptians. Unfortunately knowledge of this woman's name has been lost as the inscription at the foot of the coffin has been badly damaged.

The woman would have hoped that her family would remember her, bring her offerings of food and drink to sustain her in the afterlife **or say a prayer as a 'voice offering' to ensure her well being. While we cannot say this woman's name, we do ask all of our visitors to treat her with respect.**

Funerary Equipment



Figure of Duamutef
Cartonnage and wood
probably Ptolemaic Period,
about 300 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG5259



Figure of Imsety
Cartonnage and wood
Probably Ptolemaic Period,
about 300 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG5260

These two figures originally formed part of a set depicting the four sons of Horus - Duamutef, Qebhsenuf, Imsety and Hapy. They were the divine guardians of the internal organs removed from the body during mummification.

As well as being used to identify the four canopic jars, their images were sometimes also placed around the coffin in order to ensure the full effectiveness of their magical protection. Hapy and Qebhsenuf stood on the west side and Imsety and Duamutef were placed on the east side at the head and foot of the coffin respectively.



Canopic jars of
Psamtikpadineith
Alabaster
Late Period, 26th Dynasty,
about 600 BCE



Northumberland Collection
EG1216, EG1217,
EG1218, EG1219

One of the keys to the success of mummification in Ancient Egypt was the removal, for separate treatment, of certain internal organs. These organs were placed in vessels known as canopic jars.

The four jars shown here were prepared to contain the viscera of a general by the name of Psamtikpadineith. Each of the containers is surmounted by a lid taking the form of a divine guardian, one of the four sons of Horus.

Human-headed Imsety: protects the liver

Falcon-headed Qebhsenuf: the intestines

Ape-headed Hapy: protects the lungs

Dog-headed Duamutef: the stomach



Wooden canopic container

Wood, paint, plaster

Ptolemaic Period, 332-30 BCE

Purchased with the aid of the Friends of the Oriental Museum and the Purchase Grant Fund

EG5279

While stone was the preferred material for canopic jars, pottery, faience and even occasionally wood were also used.

This particular type of wooden canopic jar dates from around the same time period as the female mummy housed in this gallery. She may well have had canopic containers like this.

Rather than being the traditional jar shape with an identifying head for the lid, this container is shaped like a temple shrine complete with cavetto cornice and doors painted onto one end.

The other sides are covered with paintings of protective deities and other protective symbols.

Wood



Boxes of Perpauty
Painted sycamore wood
New Kingdom, 18th
Dynasty, about 1370
BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG4572 and EG4573



Upon the death of their ancient owner, Perpauty, these two storage boxes were removed from his house to furnish his 'eternal dwelling' or tomb.

On one long side of the larger box Perpauty is shown with his wife, Ady, receiving gifts from his son Newenef and three daughters, Tjat, Ta-khat and Tata.

On the other side Perpauty is depicted seated alone, receiving gifts from another son, Patjuy and two daughters, Tjat (already known from the first side) and Qeden.

On each gable end is a stylised tree with a pair of antelope reaching up to graze on the foliage - a motif more familiar from Near Eastern art. The box is fitted with an intricate locking device, with a latch that dropped into place after the lid was positioned so that once closed it could not be opened without using force.

On the second box only one side opens. The frame is fitted with two knobs around which a cord could be tied and sealed to secure the contents. The decoration of this second box is simpler - a geometric pattern in black and white.

Perpauty is not known from any inscriptions but his tomb was obviously emptied early in the 19th century as various other items belonging to him are now in the British Museum and Leiden. There is also a third box, now in Bologna. All three boxes are now empty but may once have contained bedding or items of clothing which were presumably removed when the boxes were taken from the tomb.



Statuette of a servant girl

Wood

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1350 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3568

This statuette dates from the same period as Durham's far more well known servant girl statue. Like her famous counterpart, this statue is also the work of a master craftsman. The curls of her wig are carved in great detail and the facial features and deep navel are typical of the period. Only the things she once held in her hands have been lost.

This was a time of great prosperity in Egypt resulting in the production of a range of new luxury items such as this. There was also a much stronger emphasis on the erotic. Love poems praised **women's beauty, while nude female servants and musicians are** more frequently depicted in tomb paintings and other arts.



Model of a miller

Wood

Middle Kingdom,
2055-1650 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG3569

First Dynasty royal burials from Ancient Egypt have been found with graves around them containing the bodies of retainers, buried with their ruler at the time of his death. This practice quickly died out but, from the late fourth dynasty onwards, it was replaced by the provision of model servants.

In the Sixth Dynasty wood became the main material used for making these models and continued to be the primary material for tomb model production thereafter.

The best known models are those from the Middle Kingdom. As well as servants and boats, there were also whole model scenes of baking, brewing and other activities. All ensured that the tomb owner had all that they needed in the afterlife.

This tomb model shows someone grinding grain to make bread. Millers were usually women. They are usually shown with short hair, or with their hair covered to keep it out of the flour. After grinding, the flour was sifted and then formed into a variety of different shaped loaves for baking.

Temple Equipment and Offerings



Stela of Nesyweret

Limestone

Third Intermediate Period,
22nd Dynasty or later, about
900 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG497

Pouring offerings of water, wine or milk was central to both temple practices and burial rituals. Liquids were poured over altars with small basins and drainage channels in order to purify and bring new life.

This stela once stood near the tomb of a woman called Nesyweret. It shows Nesyweret making a liquid offering in adoration of Re-Harakhte - a manifestation of the sun god Re - shown as a falcon-headed mummy. The inscription contains the **prayer, 'Re-Harakhte, Lord of the Sky - may he give invocation offerings, consisting of bread and beer and all good and pure things, for the *ka* (spirit) of the Osiris, the Lady of the House, Nesyweret.'**



Bowl of a blue lotus chalice

Travertine/alabaster

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, about
1350 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4415

Stemmed, chalice-like vessels with bowls in the shape of the lotus flower first appear in Egypt in the 18th Dynasty. They are made in a variety of materials, including metal, stone, faience and glass.

Two types can be distinguished. One is modelled on the narrower blue lotus (*Nymphaea caerulea*), the other on the broader white lotus (*Nymphaea lotus*). The blue lotus type seem to have been mainly used for cultic or votive purposes, rather than for drinking. They were dedicated in temples and used as offerings to the dead.



Figure of Imhotep

Bronze

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after about 600 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG143

Imhotep was Vizier to King Djoser of the Third Dynasty, and was responsible for planning the Step Pyramid at Saqqara. His reputation for wisdom grew after his death, and he was one of the few non-royal Egyptians to be deified, as a son of the creator-god Ptah.

By the Ptolemaic period Imhotep had become identified with the Greek healer god Asklepios and shrines were erected for his worship at Saqqara and Thebes. This small bronze figure was made **as an offering given in hope of, or in thanks for, the god's** intervention. Imhotep is shown as a seated scribe. His close fitting cap recalls representations of his divine father Ptah, the papyrus scroll on his lap indicates his wisdom. The inscription on the base begins 'May Imhotep give life to...' but the name is lost.



Figure of Nefertem

Glazed steatite and bronze
Third Intermediate Period,
21st Dynasty, 1045-992 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG1933

This statue originally had a green glaze, traces of which can still be seen. It depicts the god Nefertem, identified by the lotus flower in bronze on his head. He was the son of Ptah and Sakhmet, and personified the primordial lotus flower from which the world came into being.

The two cartouches on the front of this statue are of particular interest as they contain the names Menkheperre and Usermaatresetep(en)amun, a rare reference to the High Priest of Amun Menkheperre.

During the New Kingdom the enormous power of the priesthood of Amun in Thebes had increased to the point that by the time of Rameses XI, the priesthood owned two-thirds of all temple land in Egypt, 90% of ships, 80% of factories and much else.

With such a strong grip on the state economy it was a short step for High Priest Herihor to claim the title of Pharaoh, ruling in the south while Rameses XI clung to power in the north. During the 21st Dynasty this arrangement continued. The Pharaoh ruled in the north from Tanis and the High Priests of Amun ruled in the south, continuing to adopt Pharaonic titles.

Relations between the two ruling families were cemented by marriage. Menkheperre was the son of High Priest Pinedjem I by Duathathor-Henuttawy, the daughter of Rameses XI. His older half-brother became Pharaoh Psusennes I.



Door bolt

Bronze

Probably Late Period,
26th Dynasty or later,
after about 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG 3561

This heavy bolt was probably originally attached to the doors of a large temple shrine containing a cult image. When the gods of **Egypt retired for the night the doors of their 'houses' were locked and sealed against intruders, both mortal and divine.**



Situla

Bronze

Late Period, probably

30th Dynasty, about 350 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG1523

A *situla* is a type of vessel used for storing and offering of milk as part of temple or burial rituals. This situla is dedicated to Mehyt, the lioness-headed goddess of the town of Thinis (also known as This). The exact location of this settlement is still uncertain but it is thought to have been close to Abydos.



Incense burner stand

Bronze

Ptolemaic Period,
about 250 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG1522

This is the lower part of an incense burner. A broad tray would have originally sat on top to hold the incense while it was burning.

Incense stands like this have been found in large numbers in the galleries used for the burial of mummified falcons at North Saqqara.

They were dedicated by pious donors to the gods Thoth, Osiris and **Horus**. **The inscription on this stand reads, 'May Osiris-Apis give life to Padjerkhons, son of Padiamunnebnesttawy, son of Hor'**.



Statue of Osiris

Basalt

Late Period, 26th Dynasty

664-525 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3985

Connected with death, resurrection and the afterlife, Osiris was one of the most important deities in ancient Egypt. This finely carved statue depicts the god in his characteristic form as a mummy and is of a quality that suggests it originated in a royal workshop for display within a formal setting despite the lack of any inscription.

The god's hands project through the mummy wrappings to hold the royal insignia of crook and flail. In this way Osiris is both the dead king and King of the Dead. The distinctive carving of the cobra on the *atef*-crown suggests the piece was carved during the 26th Dynasty.

The bolt would have slid through a metal sleeve into a square metal loop or staple located on the opposite door leaf. The end of the bolt takes the powerful form of a lion, whose ferocity added a protective **dimension to the object's physical strength**. It is also a play on words as the Egyptian word for bolt (ruty) is written with the twin lion (ru) hieroglyph.



Votive ichneumon

Bronze

Late Period, 26th Dynasty,
about 600 B.C.

Wellcome Collection

EG1423

The ichneumon, or mongoose, is found in the marshes of the Nile Delta where it feeds on vermin. It was sacred to the goddess Wadjet of Buto and both mummified ichneumon and small statues like this were donated by the pious.

It is obvious that this piece was made from direct observation of the animals in the wild standing on guard. On the back is a loop so the piece could be hung in the temple in the hope of divine **intervention on the dedicator's behalf**.



Votive cat

Bronze

Late Period, 26th Dynasty, about
600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5231

The goddess Bastet is portrayed here as a cat. During the Late Period her cult was very active. The form of the cat highlighted her role as a protector-mother goddess whose help could be sought in keeping children from harm. She could also be portrayed as a lion, highlighting her more aggressive qualities as a protector.

Large numbers of bronzes like this were donated to temples and shrines of the goddess by those seeking her help or offering thanks for assistance received. The holes in the ears and nose of this statue would once have held gold rings.



Cat mummy container

Bronze

Late Period, 26th Dynasty,
about 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5082

This bronze image of the goddess Bastet was designed as a container for a mummified cat dedicated as an offering at a temple or shrine of the goddess. The cat mummy would be placed into the statuette through an opening in the base. The decoration is very fine, with details like hairs on the ears and the collar round the neck finely incised into the bronze. Bastet was regarded as the daughter of the sun god and this is referenced by **the winged scarab round the cat's throat.**



Pantheistic amulet

Faience

Late Period, 26th Dynasty or
later, after 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5255

This amulet combines imagery of the gods Horus and Bes. The face is that of Bes, protector of women in childbirth and young children, while the arms holding snakes recall the child Horus. The figure also has wings and a tail.

It stands upon an oval formed by a snake biting its own tail within which we can see animals associated with evil - a lion, snakes, a hippo, scorpions and a dog. By depicting them in this way, these evil influences could be subject to divine control by the combined gods.



Bes Image

Faience

Late Period, 26th Dynasty,
about 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG5254

Images of the domestic protector-god Bes have been found in their thousands, not only in Egypt but throughout the Roman Empire. He owed this popularity to his perceived ability to ward off evil and catastrophe during childbirth and childhood.



Label

Bronze

Late Period or after,
26th Dynasty or later,
after about 600 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3144

This bronze label shows a man standing, worshipping a seated god with an offering table between them. Two holes have been punched through the metal, presumably to allow the label to be attached to the votive image or item of temple furniture the dedicator intended to present.



Osiris, Isis and Horus triad

Bronze

26th Dynasty, about 600 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG5214

In this family grouping Osiris, Isis and their son Horus are combined. Loops on the back enabled the owner to carry the object as an amulet or, more likely, hang it as an offering within a temple or shrine. From the Third Intermediate Period onwards, items like this were mass produced in bronze using moulds to satisfy demand.



Fecundity figure

Bronze

Egypt

Third Intermediate Period,
23rd Dynasty, about 750 BCE

Northumberland Collection EG5233

This bronze fragment depicts Hapy, the semi-divine personification of the Nile flood which annually nourished the soil of Egypt.

Surmounting his wig is a clump of papyrus, emblematic of Lower Egypt. Originally the plaque would have been accompanied by a second figure symbolizing Upper Egypt. It is likely that the pair once ornamented a box or piece of temple furniture.

The inscription within the cartouche names '*the son of Re, Ini*' - a ruler of the Third Intermediate Period attested from only a handful of monuments recovered from the Theban area.



Wooden label

Wood

Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty, reign
of Senwosret I, about 1935 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG458

The writing on the front of this label reads *'The Good God, Kheperkare, beloved of Amun-Re'*, one of the names of Senwosret I. The inscription on the back says simply *'Goose'*, suggesting the label was attached to a pot containing a goose as some form of offering.

Statue of the Vizier Paser



Statue of the Vizier Paser

Granodiorite

Egypt

New Kingdom, 19th Dynasty, reign
of Ramesses II, about 1275 BCE

Northumberland
Collection

EG4003

Paser was a high-ranking official who served under Pharaoh Seti I and his successor Ramesses II. Many references to Paser have been found at sites throughout Egypt. He held many titles, but his principal office was that of Vizier of Upper Egypt - one of the two most influential posts in the Egyptian hierarchy. He was also mayor, presumably of the southern capital Thebes, and it is assumed that he succeeded his father Nebnetjeru as a High Priest of Amun.

This statue shows Paser kneeling and holding in both hands a statuette of the creator god Ptah. This suggests that this statue may **originally have stood within Ptah's temple at Memphis.**

The oval shaped cartouche on the right shoulder specifies the reign it was created – that of Ramesses II - while the hieroglyphs on the chest identify the subject: *'the vizier Paser'*.

The inscription on Paser's lap contains a prayer addressed to *'Ptah who is south of his wall, lord of Ankhtawy (Memphis), may you give that my body is strong, that I may see your beauty ..., for the prince and count, chief justice of Nekhen, true prophet, overseer of the town, the vizier Paser'*.

Symbols of Kingship



Jars with the names of Pepi II

Alabaster/travertine

Old Kingdom, 6th Dynasty, about
2200 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4395 and EG4396



The inscriptions on these jars contain a selection of the five royal names of Pepi II of the 6th Dynasty.

The upper jar was made for the celebration of the king's first *sed* festival. This ritual appears to date back to the very early stages of Egyptian history. It was supposed to be held in the 30th year of the king's reign, though in practice some kings may have celebrated it earlier. The festival was a ritual of renewal and regeneration, intended to reaffirm the king's right to rule. As Pepi II is believed to have ruled for 94 years, this would have been the first of several *sed*-festivals.



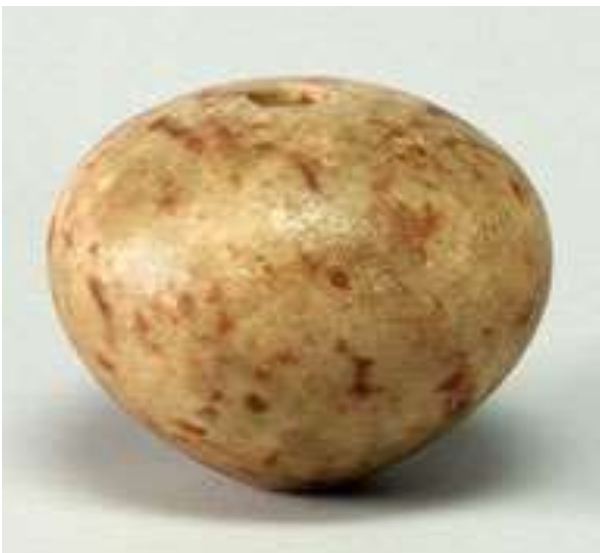
Disc-shaped mace head
Porphyritic diorite
Predynastic Period,
Naqada I-IIb,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection
EG5326



Pear-shaped mace head
Gneiss
Predynastic Period,
Naqada IIb or later,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection
EG5323



Pear-shaped mace head
White breccia
Predynastic Period,
Naqada IIb or later,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection
EG5324

It is evident that the unification of Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt in the Predynastic Period before 3000 BCE was not a peaceful process.

The stone mace head, once mounted on a wooden staff, is a weapon-type most commonly encountered at Pre-dynastic sites. Early maceheads were disc-shaped, with a sharp cutting edge and were usually made from diorite. Later, the shape changed to a less fragile ovoid or pear shape and a wider range of stones were used.

In time the mace came to symbolise the power of the warrior victorious in battle. For the next three and a half thousand years - long after the introduction of bronze and iron had made the weapon obsolete - Pharaohs appear in commemorative and ritual scenes delivering the fatal blow to their defeated enemies with a mace such as these.



Stone weight of Pepi I

Feldspar

Old Kingdom, 6th Dynasty,
reign of Pepi I, about 2300 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG457

Controlling standards of measurement has been a royal responsibility in all cultures throughout history. This weight, carved in a high-status material, was presumably intended for weighing precious metals. The inscription dates it to the reign of Pepi I of the 6th Dynasty. A reference to the cobra goddess Wadjet, mistress of the Delta city of Dep (Buto), suggests that the weight may have formed part of the temple equipment there.



Bag-shaped jar

Alabaster/travertine

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
reign of Thutmose II,
about 1485 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4402

The rich treasuries of Egypt's court and temples contained not just precious metals and stones but also oils and perfumes which played a vital role in the rituals designed to please the gods. Proof of the value that the Egyptians placed on these oils and ointments can be seen in the fact that they were highly sought after by tomb robbers in antiquity - sometimes in preference to jewellery or furniture.

Traces of the oily contents of this vessel can still be seen both around the stopper and smeared on its body. The inscription records the name and queenly titles of Hatshepsut as principal wife of Thutmose II. The vessel may have been withdrawn from the royal stores to be presented as a gift for the burial of one of **Hatshepsut's favoured officials.**



Butt-plate from an axe of Amenhotep III

Faience

Egypt, probably from Thebes (Valley of the Kings, tomb of Amenhotep III, WV22)

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, about 1360 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG469

This faience butt-plate would have been fixed to the end of the wooden shaft of a ceremonial battle-axe. It shows one of the names of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. In the ideology of kingship in Ancient Egypt, one of the central roles of the king was to impose order and prevent chaos in all spheres of life. As such Egyptian kings are often depicted as warriors, smiting their enemies.

It is likely that this piece once belonged to the tomb equipment of Amenhotep. His tomb must once have been one of the richest in the Valley of the Kings. The interior, until recently filled with rubble, has been picked over by locals and tourists for centuries, bringing fragmentary elements like this to the market piece by piece.



Dagger with name of Thuthmose III

Copper alloy, wood

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of
Thutmose III, 1479-1425 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG5081

The domination of Egypt by the Hyksos during the Second Intermediate Period, served as a reminder to the Egyptians of the danger posed by their neighbours in Syria/Palestine. To safeguard their borders, the Egyptians undertook large-scale military expansion during the New Kingdom.

To achieve this the traditional weaponry of the Egyptian army needed to be radically modernized to keep pace with the innovation of their neighbours. The chariot, composite bow and new styles of body armour were adopted. A new form of dagger, with a narrow blade and tang, all cast in one, also appears and gradually develops into a short sword.

This example is decorated with the cartouche of Pharaoh Thuthmose III, who conducted 17 military campaigns during his reign, extending Egypt's borders to the largest extent in its history.

Images of the Ruler



Statuette of Amenhotep I and
Ahmose-Nofretiri

Steatite

Egypt, from Thebes

New Kingdom, probably 19th Dynasty,
about 1250 BCE

Northumberland Collection
and anonymous donor

EG493 .1 and 2

Amenhotep I is thought to have still been young when he came to the throne and so his mother Ahmose-Nofretiri appears to have acted as his regent. They are

believed to have founded the workmen's village now known as Deir el-Medina, which provided the skilled workforce responsible for building and decorating the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. As a result, a cult dedicated to the royal mother and son grew up in the area and this statue probably came from a shrine located there. The style of the statue dates the piece to 250-300 years after their deaths, demonstrating the longevity of their cult in the area. In line with Egyptian artistic convention, while Amenhotep is depicted as a fully grown man, his mother is still shown in her youthful prime as well, rather than as an older woman.

The head of the Pharaoh has only recently been reunited with the rest of the statue, having become separated sometime early in the 19th century CE. The main part of the statue was purchased by the 4th Duke of Northumberland (then still Lord Prudhoe) perhaps as early as the 1830s. The head did not come to light until more than a century later. The two pieces clearly match despite the apparent difference in colour caused by cleaning of the head. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the two pieces have now been reunited.



Statuette of Amenhotep III

Glazed steatite

Egypt, from Thebes (Kom el-Hetan)

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, about 1350 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3998

The inscriptions on the back pillar of this statue of Amenhotep III record that the figure was not dedicated to the king himself but **to his 'living image'** - a cult statue of the king at his mortuary temple at Kom el-Hetan, western Thebes.

The figure has an unusual history. While the torso was acquired in the mid-19th century, the head would not surface for another 50 years when it was excavated from a deposit of sculpture in the temple of Amun at Karnak; it is now in the Cairo Museum (JE 39596). It seems that the head had been separated from the body already in antiquity, but was still thought powerful enough to be brought to Karnak and venerated.



Shabti of Ramesses III

Bronze

Egypt, from Thebes

(Valley of the Kings,

tomb of Ramesses III, KV 11)

New Kingdom, 20th Dynasty,

about 1153 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG525

Shabti made of bronze are very rare. This example is one of several prepared for the burial of King Ramesses III of the 20th Dynasty and represents the king in the form of the god Osiris.

The inscription is short and to the point: 'The Osiris, King Usermaatre-meryamun, justified, every day'.



Shabti of Ramesses VI

Alabaster

Egypt, from Thebes

(Valley of the Kings,
tomb of Ramesses VI, KV 9)

New Kingdom, 20th Dynasty,
about 1140 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG523

The quality of the shabti of the later Ramessid kings is very poor despite the status of their owners. This example from the burial of Ramesses VI contrasts sharply with the bronze shabti of Ramesses III also on display in this case. The facial features and arms have been applied to the alabaster in coloured wax. The inscription reads: **'The illuminated one, the Lord of the Two Lands, Nebmaatre-meryamun.'**



Sphinx of Thutmose IV

Diorite

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
about 1400 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG 3997

The Egyptian sphinx has the body of a lion and the head of a king, and was symbolic both of royal power in general and of the reigning king as the earthly representative of the cosmic creator god. The cartouche on the breast tells us that this sphinx is an image of Pharaoh Thutmose IV. From the inscriptions on the base, however, it is clear that the sculpture subsequently passed into private ownership: the sides of the plinth record an offering formula for the *'royal scribe and scribe of recruits, Ronero'*, who lived about a hundred years after the sphinx was first made.

It is interesting to note that this particular sculpture served as the model for the pair of bronze sphinxes which now flank the London obelisk known as **'Cleopatra's Needle'**. The same image was also copied to serve as an ornament on the bonnets of Armstrong Siddeley cars during the early 20th century.



Coin of Ptolemy I

Silver

Egypt, struck at Alexandria

Ptolemaic Period

Reign of Ptolemy I Soter, 323-283
BCE

EG490

Although a few coins were produced in Egypt before Alexander the **Great's** conquest, it was not until the period of **Greek rule** that coins began to be struck in large numbers. During the Ptolemaic **Dynasty** it became common practice to place images of **Egypt's** rulers on the coins. This was the first time that realistic rather than idealised representations of the faces of **Egypt's** kings and queens had been created.



Coin of Ptolemy II

Bronze

Egypt, struck at Alexandria

Ptolemaic Period

reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus,
285-246 BCE

Transferred from Darlington Museum

DUROM.2014.350.4

The reverse – or **‘tails’** – sides of the coins of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt were normally decorated with an image of the eagle of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods and patron of the dynasty. Most coins also bore the name of the king in Greek: **ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ**, or **‘Ptolemy the King’**.



Coin of Ptolemy VI

Bronze

Egypt, struck at Alexandria

Ptolemaic Period

reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor,
180-145 BCE

Transferred from Darlington
Museum

DUROM.2014.350.9

Not every coin bore an image of the king or queen. Many Egyptian copper coins were decorated with a portrait of Zeus Ammon. This deity, whose image combines the classical Greek portrait of the bearded Zeus with the horns of the Egyptian Ammon (Amun), was worshipped at his sanctuary at the oasis of Siwa. Alexander the Great visited the sanctuary in 331 BCE, and is said to have been **proclaimed the son of Zeus Ammon by the sanctuary’s oracle.**



Coin of Cleopatra VII

Bronze

Egypt, struck at Alexandria

Ptolemaic Period,

reign of Cleopatra VII, 51-30 BCE

DUROM.1985.13

This coin includes a portrait of Cleopatra VII (51-30 BCE), the final Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt and famous lover of both Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony. Like her predecessors Cleopatra was portrayed in either Egyptian or Greek style, according to the context. On her coins she was shown in Greek style.



Coin of Mark Anthony

Silver

Struck in Western Asia Minor

Ptolemaic Period, issue of Mark Antony,
about 39 BCE

Department of Archaeology, Durham University

DURMA.2004.4.357

This silver coin was struck under the authority of the Roman general Mark Antony, the lover and military ally of Cleopatra VII. Antony is portrayed on this coin surrounded by a wreath of Dionysiac ivy, symbolising his claim to the title of 'the New Dionysos'.

Obelisk of Amenhotep II



Obelisk of Amenhotep II

Red granite

New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
reign of Amenhotep II,
about 1420 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG 6789

This obelisk was originally erected by Pharaoh Amenhotep II on the island of Elephantine at Aswan in the far south of Egypt. The Pharaoh is shown at the top, kneeling in adoration of the ram-headed sun god Khnum-Re, whilst the inscription gives the titles of the king.

The obelisk was presented to Lord Prudhoe, later the 4th Duke of Northumberland, by Muhammad Ali Pasha when Prudhoe visited **Egypt in 1838**. For many years it stood in hall of the Duke's London residence, Syon House. It is thought that the gold was repainted during this time. Its pair remains in Egypt.

The inscription within the scene at the top reads: **'He gives life and strength to Amenhotep, giver of life, like the sun.'**

The inscription on the pillar section reads from top to bottom:
'Horus, Mighty bull, great of valour, He of the Sedge and the Bee
(ie King of Upper and Lower Egypt), Akheperure, Son of Re,
Amenhotep, divine Ruler of Thebes. He made it as his
monument for his father Khnum-Re. He made for him two
obelisks for the altar of Re. He did this that he might be given life
forever.'

Stela of Khnumhotep



Stela of Khnumhotep

Basalt

Egypt, Wadi Gasus

Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty,

Year 1 of

Senwosret II, 1877 BCE

Northumberland

Collection

EG 577

The conservation and mounting of the stela of Khnumhotep was funded by the Friends of the Oriental Museum.

This stela is divided into two registers. The royal and divine realm is at the top, with the human world of court officialdom below. In the upper portion King Senwosret II is shown holding a mace and staff receiving blessings from Sopdu, the god of the Eastern **Desert. The lower portion features Khnumhotep, the pharaoh's Chamberlain.**

Sopdu was responsible for the safe return of armies sent on dangerous mining and trade missions. This stela comes from one such dangerous place, the desert of the Red Sea coastal region, including Wadi Gasus, where this stela was found.

Since the Old Kingdom, the Egyptians had traded with the land known as Punt. Experts still debate the exact location of this land, the area of eastern Sudan and northern Eritrea seems most likely. Early expeditions had travelled down the Nile to this region but by the Middle Kingdom the Red Sea route was preferred as it allowed the Egyptians to bypass hostile Nubian territories. The primary port was Mersa Gawasis and in the nearby valleys, Wadi Gasus and Wadi Gawasis, archaeologists have uncovered extensive evidence of Egyptian occupation including campsites, storage caves, ancient ship timbers, ropes and cargo boxes.

These expeditions were major undertakings. Prefabricated ship parts had to be transported overland through the desert and then assembled on the Red Sea coast, before being sailed hundreds of miles south. After negotiation of trade with the leaders of Punt, the cargo had to be sailed back, unloaded and transported overland back to the Nile valley. The provisioning of the thousands of people involved with food, water and shelter must have been a formidable task requiring skilled bureaucrats.

This stela records a royal construction project in the region overseen by Khnumhotep. Khnumhotep had been born into a family of powerful provincial governors near Beni Hasan. He was educated at the royal court and entrusted with foreign affairs from an early point in his long career, which lasted into the reign of Amenemhet III. In recognition of his service he was eventually appointed to the office of highest office of Vizier and was buried in a large tomb at Darshur. The fragmentary inscriptions from that tomb reveal that as well as working in the Red Sea region he also went on a trade mission to Ullazza, near Byblos in Lebanon.

The Origins of Ancient Egypt



Axe head

Flint/chert

Neolithic Period, 5500-4500 BCE

Gift of Mrs J Munafò

DUROM.2014.1.71

The earliest evidence of Paleolithic cultures in Egypt may date back as far as 700,000 years. Most the evidence for these very early communities comes from stone tools. By the Neolithic Period new, more advanced types of tool were being developed such as axe heads like this one which would be mounted into a wooden haft.



Blade

Flint/chert

Neolithic Period, 5500-4500 BCE

Gift of Mrs J Munafò

DUROM.2014.1.2

The base of this blade shows signs of being worked so that a wooden handle could be attached to it. This suggests it may have been used as a spear head.



Image of a bearded man

Alabaster

Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before about 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG5281

The bald head, inlaid eyes and pointed beard of this figure link it to a group of objects of similar style frequently found in graves of the Predynastic Period. They were produced in a range of materials including bone, ivory and stone. Related objects occur in the form of birds, animals, or simple tusks.

Common to many is a deep groove at one end or occasionally in the middle, as in this example, which sometimes preserves the remains of a leather thong. It has been suggested that such figures were used as tags to identify the owner or the contents of a bag.

An alternate suggestion is that they may have been used in magic. This second theory has been backed up by recent excavations at Hierakonpolis where a bag containing a very similar figure was found together with a collection of objects that seem to make sense as medical or magical in purpose.



Bull head amulets
Serpentine and steatite
Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before 3200 BCE



Wellcome Collection
EG2763 and EG2771

These stylised bull heads with their deep-cut eyes (originally inlaid with shell) and powerful curved horns were intended to confer on the wearer the fearsome might of the bull. In the Predynastic Period herds of wild cattle still roamed the river margins and the bull became part of the developing imagery of Egyptian kingship.

In dynastic times the title ‘Strong Bull’ would become part of the standard titulary of the Pharaoh, while several of the gods were associated with the bull, most notably Ptah and Montu.



Jar

Pottery

Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1529



Cup

Pottery

Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1550

The pottery of the Predynastic Period is some of the finest ever made in Egypt. The earliest Egyptian ceramics were made using Nile silt clay from deposits along the river. They were formed by **hand, without the use of a potter's wheel.** The distinctive red and black finish of these two pieces is characteristic of the late Predynastic Period. Their production required considerable technical skill in firing and burnishing. As well as being used to hold food and drink for the living, from very early times pottery was included in burials to ensure the dead had provisions for the Afterlife.



Jar

Pottery

Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1528

Decoration was an important feature of Predynastic pottery. The technique of painting pottery before firing was perfected at this time and pots were decorated with patterns, as well as images of animals, boats and humans.



Footed vessel

Steatite

Predynastic Period, Naqada II,
before 3200 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG5288



Composite bowl

Limestone

Early Dynastic Period,
1st Dynasty or later,
after about 3000 BCE

Wellcome Collection EG3

Very early in their history the Egyptians demonstrate an extraordinary mastery in the production of vessels in stone. From as early as the Fourth Millennium BCE stones like basalt, breccia, diorite, dolorite, limestone and serpentine were being used to create an abundance of finely made vessels. A wide range of types is found among burials of the Egyptian privileged classes of this time. Some of these vessels were clearly produced solely for funerary use; others may originally have had a domestic or ritual function. Stoneworking continued to develop in the Early Dynastic Period and became a defining characteristic of Egyptian culture while pottery production remained utilitarian.



Vase with lug handles

Serpentine

Early Dynastic Period, 3000-
2686 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG3995

The shape of this vessel indicates it is from the Early Dynastic Period, 3100-2686 BCE. However, the inscription was added much later during the 26th Dynasty (664-525 BCE) when the vessel was reused for an offering to the goddess Hathor by a man named Djehutyemakhet, who lists his titles as Prince, Count and Overseer of Troops.

The Servant Girl



Servant girl carrying a jar
Boxwood, ivory and gold
Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty,
reign of Amenhotep III, about
1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection
EG4007

This statuette is probably the best known of all the Egyptian objects in the Oriental Museum's collection. It is famous both for the quality of the craftsmanship and for the natural pose of the girl's body. The jar the girl carries at her left side is so large she has to thrust her hip under it to help support the weight. This creates a pose which breaks away from the usual style of most Ancient Egyptian art.

The girl wears only a Bes-figure amulet on a string around her neck and a gilded girdle around her hips. Her left ear is pierced with a tiny earring hole and there are socket holes on both sides of the head to hold a wig, which has been lost. The jar on the girl's hip is actually a cosmetic container.

The statuette is believed to have been part of the burial equipment of Meryptah, high priest of Amun under Amenhotep III. A statue of Meryptah himself can be seen on display in the Statues case in this gallery.

Ancient Egyptian artistic conventions

On the whole the Ancient Egyptians did not produce “art for art’s sake”. What we now call works of art were usually created to perform a function, be it as every-day objects, religious or funerary items. Just as today, such objects were often closely linked to matters of prestige and the visible display of rank and wealth.

Egyptian art acquired a distinctive form around the beginning of the Dynastic Period (around 3000 BCE). While changes in this form reflect developments in Egyptian society over time, it remained remarkably homogenous for the next 3000 years.

In contrast with Western traditions, Egyptian art is not based on the principles of perspective and the adoption of a single, unified viewpoint for the whole picture. Instead figures are more like diagrams, designed to convey all of the important information about an object or a person by representing all of the most characteristic parts. This is most obvious in paintings of people, where for example, the head is usually shown in profile but with a full view of the eye and eyebrow. These characteristics extend from painting and relief into sculpture.

Almost all statues show figures looking straight ahead, their limbs held in a formal posture which echoes 2-D representations. A grid system was adopted so that all human figures conformed to the same basic dimensions.

Another vital element is scale. Within a figure parts are shown in their natural proportions but the difference in scale between figures within a composition is an important indicator of rank. The larger a figure is, the more important they are.

The final important feature is that things are often shown not as they are, but as they should be; they are idealised. The owner of a tomb is likely to be depicted as young and healthy regardless of his actual age or physical appearance.