

# ‘There was Light’: King Amunhotep III and his Dazzling Age



## **Large print guide**

## **'There was Light'** **Amunhotep III and his Dazzling Age**

*"I looked this way, and I looked that way, and there was no light.  
Then I looked towards the king, my lord, and there was light."*

These words were written by a man named Tagi, mayor of Gintikirmil, a settlement in Syria/Palestine, in a letter to the Egyptian king. It is one of the famous Amarna letters; an archive of international correspondence and diplomacy between the Egyptian court and its neighbours and vassals. The letters date from a period of at most 30 years from late in the reign of Amunhotep III, through the reigns of Akhenaten and Smenkhkare, ending at the latest in the first year of the reign of Tutankhamun.

Tutankhamun ruled Egypt for only nine years and died at the age of 18. He was largely forgotten by history until the discovery of his relatively undisturbed tomb by the British archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922. In the hundred years since this discovery Tutankhamun has become a household name the world over.

These kings ruled at a time when Egyptian power extended over vast expanses of land from Amurru (Syria) to Nubia. They possessed enormous wealth in the form of land, people and goods including luxuries from across the known world.

This exhibition focuses on Tutankhamun's family, particularly his father and grandfather, together with the courtiers who surrounded them, exploring the world around the boy king.

## Ancient Egypt's Golden Age?

Amunhotep III ruled over an empire that was well organised and managed by experienced administrators based at court, in the provinces and in the 'hill countries'.

A professional army provided and maintained security at the borders and for the trade routes. The temples promoted Amun-Ra as the state god, who embodied hidden and visible divinity.

Amunhotep was imagined as the centre of the universe and his vision was realised in stone monuments, many of which still survive in part. The structures were designed to showcase the wealth of Egypt under his rule and to ensure his eternal survival as the 'Dazzling Sun Disk'.

Such dreams required the resources of a rich state. Gold mines in the eastern desert provided the means to become immortal, stone quarries provided all the materials for eternal buildings and statues. The fertile lands along the river Nile were abundant in grain fields, animal pastures, orchards and vineyards. Even the sands of the desert were transformed to produce faience and glass for the manufacture of amulets, luxury vessels and elaborate objects.

Able men and women supported the king and his projects and benefited in turn from the wealth of the age.

## Amunhotep III

Amunhotep III Nebmaatre became king as a child or teenager around ca.1388 BCE having been educated in the arts of war and chariotry, in administration and in the hieroglyphic writing of the temples and their rituals.

Although he is often shown wearing the 'blue crown', a military helmet made of leather with copper rings, only one military campaign from his reign is recorded.

Amunhotep III had many temples built or renewed throughout Egypt and in Nubia as far as the Third Nile Cataract. At the centre of his universe was Thebes (modern Luxor) where a completely new temple was dedicated to the king's spiritual renewal and parts of Karnak Temple were remodelled.

A settlement with palaces and storage areas was built to house the royal family and their staff.

Greatest of all, a huge festival and mortuary temple for the bodily rejuvenation of the king was built at Kom el Hetan and filled with statues of every Egyptian god, constellations of the sky and hundreds of images of the king and the healer goddess Sakhmet. Three special *Sed*-festivals were celebrated here, where the king was renewed as a god and his energy filled the colossal statues representing him in the complex.

Resources, loyal support and belief in the divinity of the king enabled such a display of wealth and power.



Sun court of Amunhotep III at Luxor Temple taken in the 1930s

Photograph by May C Salisbury, from the Abbas Hilmi II Collection, Durham University Archives and Special Collections. Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Mohamed Ali Foundation.



### **Statuette of Amunhotep III**

**Glazed steatite**

**Egypt, from Thebes (Kom el-Hetan)**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1350 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG3998



Plaster cast of the head section which  
is now in Cairo added to the Oriental  
Museum piece.

The inscriptions on the back pillar of this statue of Amunhotep 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 details of the statue evoke the 'dazzling' sun king with his golden neck collar and armlets, panther head sporran and gleaming white linen kilt. In this figure this is all enveloped in the light formed by the brilliant blue glaze.

The figure has an unusual history. While the torso was acquired in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> 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 collections in Cairo (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.



### **Fragment of shabti of Amunhotep III**

Travertine

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE

Purchased with the assistance from V&A

Purchase Fund

DUROM.1983.13

Shabtis are funerary figures. Their purpose was to spare the owner from manual work in the afterlife. Many shabti are inscribed with chapter 6 of the *Book of the Dead*. One version of this reads: ‘O shabti, if [name of deceased] be summoned to do any work which has to be done in the realm of the dead—to make arable fields, to irrigate the land or to convey sand from east to west; “Here I am”, you shall say, “I shall do it”.’

Shabtis were made from a wide range of materials, ranging from wood to faience and stone. They also vary greatly in size and quality of workmanship.

This shabti of Amunhotep III must have been of very high quality. The distinctive shape of the eye, likened to a cat’s eye, is typical of shabti figures made later in the King’s reign. The meaning of the shape is not clear, it has been suggested that it might reference narrowing the eyes to look at the sun, reflecting the King’s interest in the power of the sun god.



## Head of a Queen

Limestone

Date unknown

Purchase

DUROM.1987.1

This bust of a queen is the subject of ongoing research.

It was originally identified as representing Queen Tiye, wife of Amunhotep III. However, other scholars have suggested that this might be a late Ptolemaic queen, perhaps even the famous Cleopatra VII (reigned 51-30 BCE). A recent researcher has suggested that the head may date from the 20th dynasty (1186-1069 BCE).

The queen wears a heavy wig and elaborate headdress, the top section of which has been lost. One of the main methods used to date uninscribed statues is to study the style of hair and any headdress. The damage to the headdress on this piece is one of the reasons the identity of this queen has been so difficult for scholars to agree upon.

Is the grouping above the queen's brow three rearing cobras or a vulture flanked by two cobras? Three cobras, known as *uraei*, would support the idea this is Tiye or Cleopatra. If it is a vulture at the centre, then it is likely to be another queen.

One suggestion is that piece was made by an apprentice as a practice piece which might account for the difficulties in matching it to any other inscribed statue.



## The Royal Family

Amunhotep III had many wives including at least two daughters of the kings of Mitanni, a powerful kingdom in southeast Anatolia, (modern day Turkey). These princesses brought an international dimension to the Egyptian court but the most important of Amunhotep's wives was Tiye.

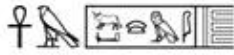
Tiye was from Djeruka (modern Akhmim) in the middle of Egypt. Her family were landowners, charioteers and horse trainers. There is no doubt that she was important due to her frequent appearance in royal statues. She had at least one temple built in her name at Sedeinga in Nubia and administered the women's quarters in the palaces.

Tiye's family rose to prominence following her marriage. Her father Yuya and mother Tjuiu were accorded lavish burials at Thebes. Tiye's brother Anen was second priest of Amun, and the High Priest of Amun named Ay was probably another for Tiye's brothers. He would go on to become king after Tutankhamun's death.

The King and Great Wife Tiye had at least 6 children. The eldest son, Thutmose, was destined to rule. However, in mid-life, the heir apparent died and the second son, named Amunhotep like his father began his training to be king. He would go on in later life to change his name to Akhenaten. He was the father of Tutankhamun.

## Royal names

The full name and titles of each king of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty consisted of five parts. These emphasise the role of the king as a god and as ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt. So the king we call Amunhotep III today was:



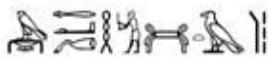
*hr snb k3 nbt hsi m m3et*

Living Horus, Strong Bull, appearing with Maat



*nb.ty smn hpw sgrh t3wy*

Two Ladies: he who establishes laws, he who pacifies the Two Lands



*hr nbw 3 hps hwi sttyw*

Horus of Gold: he who strikes the Setetyu (people)



*nsw bity nb t3wy, nb m3et r*

King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands: Neb-Maat-Ra



*s3 r imn-htp, hk3 w3st, di snb*

Son of Ra: Amunhotep, Ruler of Waset, given life

The king's birth name, the only one he was given when he was born, is preceded by the title 'son of Ra', a reference to the sun god Ra. The other four names were given to the king when he became ruler.

Two of the names, the 'son of Ra' birth name and the 'Ruler of the two lands/He of the Sedge and Bee' name are contained in cartouches. These oval shapes protect the name.

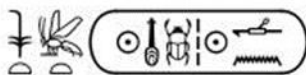
Many of the objects in this exhibition are decorated with cartouches of kings and some also bear the name of Queen Tiye. Can you find them?



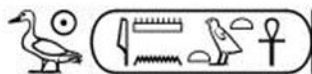
Amunhotep III



Queen Tiye



Akhenaten



Tutankhamun





### **Votive stela**

**Limestone**

**Egypt, Thebes**

**New Kingdom, 20th dynasty, 1190-1075 CE**

**EG600**

This stela dates to the 20th dynasty, around 200 years after the reign of Amunhotep III but the king's name appears as part of the inscription on the side. This demonstrates the continuing power of the king in the Theban area where his mortuary temple may still have been functioning.

The stela was dedicated by a man named Huy who is shown in the upper scene on the front of the stela making a libation over an offering table and offering a brazier to Khons-em-waset Neferhotep who is shown seated on the right hand side. The god is depicted holding an ankh symbol and a was-sceptre.

The inscription tells us that Huy was a scribe of Amun and held a position in the House of Gold of Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis.

The lower scene depicts three female and two male relatives standing facing right bringing offerings. The men are shaven headed and wear short kilts and the women wear long wigs and long sheath dresses.

The surface is very worn leaving the details and inscriptions hard to read.



## **Scarab of Tuthmosis III**

**Steatite**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Thutmose III, 1479 - 1425 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG3512

The series of commemorative scarabs from the reign of Amunhotep III are well known. This fragment dates to the reign of his great grandfather, Tuthmose III.

It has an unusual text referring to the rising sun and ongoing research suggests that it may refer to a royal event as some of the better known later scarabs do.



### **Axe handle fitting with name of Amunhotep III**

**Faience**

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

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep 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 Amunhotep 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 royal burial complex at Thebes. He was buried in what is now called the western arm of the Valley of the Kings. The tomb is unique with two subsidiary burial chambers for his wives Tiye and Sitamun.

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. The surviving decoration is of very fine quality,

## The power of royal names

The written word played an important role in ancient Egyptian magic and religion. Personal names were similarly important and held great power. Objects inscribed with the name of the ruler, or his queen, were thought to bring good fortune and might be given as gifts to loyal subjects.



### **Vessel inscribed with royal names**

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG471

This small vessel was probably designed to hold kohl, the cosmetic used by the Egyptians as eye makeup and protection. The vessel is decorated with the names of Amunhotep III and his wife Queen Tiye. These are shown in cartouches, and oval shape with a line at the base used to enclose and protect the royal names.



### **Fragment of vessel bearing the names of Amunhotep and Tiye**

Travertine

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG3785

This small fragment once formed part of a high quality travertine vessel. It is decorated with cartouches which hold the names of Amunhotep III and Queen Tiye.





### **Amulet of Tiye**

Steatite

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6370

The decoration on the base of this cowroid reads '*nsw hmt tiy*', the king's wife Tiye. A cowroid is a cowrie shell shaped amulet or seal. Cowrie shells were associated with female genitalia and so with women's fertility. They are often seen as part of girdles.



### **Amulet of Tiye**

Stone

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6371

The decoration on the base of this cowroid reads '*nsw hmt tiy*', the king's wife Tiye. The top is in the form a wedjat eye, a symbol of healing and protection.



### **Ring bezel**

**Carnelian**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,**

**reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG470

This carnelian amulet was probably originally a ring bezel. One side bears one of the names of Amunhotep III, allowing the wearer to access the protective power of the ruling King's name. The other side is carved with a wedjat eye, combining the beneficial properties of the eye with those of the king's name.

The wedjet eye is perhaps the most common of all Egyptian amulets. The name wedjat means 'the sound one', referring to the lunar left eye of Horus that was plucked out by his rival Seth during their conflict over the throne. The regenerative and protective powers of the amulet meant that it was placed among the wrappings of mummies in great numbers. They were most commonly made from blue or green faience, as these colours symbolized regeneration.



### **Seal of Amunhotep III**

**Green glazed steatite**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,**

**reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE**



Northumberland Collection

EG6360

The rectangular seal has hieroglyphs impressed into both sides. One side shows the cartouche of Amunhotep III 'Nb-ma'at-ra' followed by the title 'Son of Ra' On the other side is the same cartouche accompanied by a sphinx and a winged ureaus. This invokes the protective power of the king together with the cobra and sphinx.



### Seal of Amunhotep III

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6368

This faience seal shows a sphinx trampling an enemy. Next to the sphinx is the name *Nb-ma'at-ra*, one of the names of Amunhotep III.

On the other side, the King's name appears together with the title 'Son of Amun-re' and a depiction of a god Ptah.



### Cowroid seal

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6369

A 'cowroid' is an amulet or seal in the form of a cowrie shell. The base of this example is impressed with the name '*Nb-ma'at-re*' of Amunhotep III.

## The Elite of the Sun Kings

The elite who supported Amunhotep III, Akhenaten and Tutankhamun were themselves a dazzling group of intellectuals, engineers, military men, administrators and courtiers. Their positions enabled them to have access to the best craftworkers, sculptors and royal workshops. We can connect objects in the Oriental Museum's collections to some of these individuals.

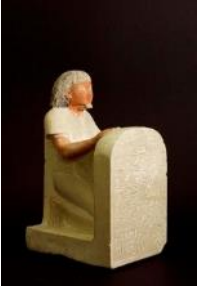
Meryptah, High Priest of Amun during the reign of Amunhotep III, is depicted in the statue kneeling behind a stela. The stela is inscribed with a hymn to the sun. He may also have been the owner of the famous servant girl statuette. His tomb has not yet been found.

Perpa(wty), the owner of the two wooden boxes featured here, may have had some connection with the kingdom of Mitanni or commissioned a painter from the Near East. This is suggested by the inclusion of design features such as gazelles standing on their hind legs eating the tree leaves.

There are two boxes of Perpa in Durham and one in Bologna, but the location of his tomb is not known. The painting style can be linked, however, to other important 18th Dynasty tombs.

Merymose was the high ranking King's Son of Kush. He was charged with the administration of Nubia, source of the gold required to support the king and his court. Userhat was in charge of the king's private quarters and was no doubt a close confidante of the king and his wives. The exhibition features funerary cones belonging to both men. Funerary cones are representations of the setting sun disk that would have been set into the front of the tomb above the doorway.

While we know the names of these men and how they served the king, we know nothing of the vast majority of Amunhotep's subjects. The elite members of court were surrounded by scribes, engineers, builders, farmers, cleaners, cooks, craftsmen and many others whose names and lives are not recorded.



### **Stela-bearing statue of Meryptah**

Limestone

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep 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 Amunhotep 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 reaches its height in the following reign of Akhenaten.



### **Boxes of Perpa(wty)**

Painted sycamore wood

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
about 1370 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG4572 and EG4573



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

On one long side of the larger box Perpa is shown with his wife, Ady, receiving gifts from his son Newenef and three daughters, Tjat, Ta-khat and Tata. On the other side Perpa is depicted seated alone, receiving gifts from another son, Patjuy and two daughters, Tjat (already known from the first side) and Qeden. The figures and offering tale are shown in silhouette, symbolising their shadow-selves.

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 reflecting the international influences in Egypt at this time.

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.

Perpa 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 linen bedding or items of clothing. Linen is closely connected with mummification and renewal after death. The contents were presumably removed when the boxes were taken from the tomb.

## Art in the 18th Dynasty

The political stability and economic prosperity of the 18th dynasty provided the ideal conditions for a flowering of the arts.

The period began with war which led to Ahmose, the founder of the dynasty, reuniting Egypt under a single Egyptian ruler. In the reigns that followed his successors expanded Egyptian influence far beyond its traditional borders. As a result, the depiction of the king as a mighty warrior is a consistent theme in art of the period.

Trade was as vital as conquest for the prosperity of the period. The capital, Memphis, was an important centre for international commerce attracting merchants from around the Mediterranean bringing luxury goods. Soon Minoan, Mycenaean and Levantine influences started to emerge in work by Egyptian artists and crafts people.

The art found in the tombs of the elite from this time is of the highest quality and has a distinctive style which is freer and more individual in subject matter and character than in earlier periods. The wall paintings depict a world of luxury filled with opulent parties, singers, dancers and acrobats. The wealthy wear long flowing robes and magnificent jewellery. Subtle changes in the depiction of the human body result in a more naturalistic and sensuous approach which is also reflected in sculpture.

The surviving contents of royal and non-royal tombs hint at the range of beautifully designed and decorated objects in use within elite homes. International trade and technological advances meant that everyday objects could be made using exotic imports such as ebony or modern materials like glass in a range of original ways.

This is a time of experimentation in the arts which paves the way for the artistic innovation of Akhenaten's reign



## **Shabti of Bahmery**

**Wood**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, about 1450 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG517

The size, modelling and decoration of this shabti are of the highest quality, as is the style of the hieroglyphs. The deceased Prince Bahmery for whom it was prepared was a son of one of the early kings of the 18th Dynasty. He is shown mummified, like the god Osiris, His face was originally adorned with a beard, now missing, fixed in a hole in the chin. The hands are not visible, which is typical for the earlier types of shabti figure.

Its 10-line hieroglyphic text contains a version of the shabti spell, Book of the Dead Chapter 6. It reads: 'The illuminated one, the king's son Bahmery, he speaks: O you shabtis, if the King's son Bahmery is counted and called upon to do all the works which are wont to be done there (in the Netherworld), yes, an irritating obstacle is put in his way there-with – like a man at his duties at any time, namely to plough the fields, to irrigate the riparian lands and to transport sand by boat from east to west and vice versa, yes indeed, "Here I am, I shall do it", you shall say yonder.'





**Bag shaped jar**

**Basalt**

**Egypt**

**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. This expensive stone jar was probably placed in the tomb of someone of high rank for use in the afterlife.

When it was found this jar contained a viscous, fatty liquid. The contents were removed at the British Museum for analysis in the 1940s but the results are not recorded.



**Funerary cone of Userhat**

**Fired Clay**

**Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE**

Transfer from Dundee Museum

DUROM.1951.41

Funerary cones are made of clay and were found almost exclusively in the Theban necropolis being placed over the entrance of the chapel of a tomb. Some examples date from as early as the 11th Dynasty but are generally plain. It wasn't until the New Kingdom, that they were reduced in size and inscribed with the title and name of the tomb owner, often with a short prayer. This example is inscribed for 'The honoured one before Osiris, overseer of the King's private quarters, Userhat, justified, fathered by the dignitary Neh, justified, born of Senu, Mistress of the house, whom he loves, Mai, justified.'



### **Funerary cone of Merymose**

**Fired Clay**

**Egypt, Deir el Medina**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE**

Transfer from Dundee Museum

DUROM.1951.46

This funerary cone is stamped for the King's Son of Kush, Merymose. He held the office of King's Son of Kush meaning that he administered the vital region of Nubia to the south of Egypt. This region was an important source of gold for the Egyptian court.



### **Heart scarab**

**Stone**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE**



Wellcome Collection

EG1859

The 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. They would be denied their 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 scarab is an unusual form with a human head. It may have been intended to emphasise the connection to the human owner.



### **Bowl with fish decoration**

**Faience**

**New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, 1550-1295 BCE**

Wellcome Collection

EG907

This bowl is decorated with images of the Tilapia fish (*tilapia nilotica*) which lives in the River Nile and was eaten by the Ancient Egyptians.

When Tilapia lay their eggs they then appear to swallow them. In fact, they hold the eggs in their mouths until they hatch. At this point the young fish swim from the parent's mouth. This led to the Tilapia becoming a symbol of rebirth. The lotus flower which also decorates this bowl is also associated with rebirth. The square design at the centre is often thought to symbolise a pool or other body of water.

Bowls with this decoration appear to have had a ritual purpose and are particularly associated with the goddess Hathor. Since they are often found in tombs, it has also been suggested that they were used as part of funerary rituals.



### **Box with lid**

**Faience**

**New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, 1550-1295 BCE**

Wellcome Collection

EG913

This box is shaped like a cartouche. A cartouche is an oval with a horizontal line at one end, indicating that the text enclosed within is a royal name. It provides protection to the name. Similarly the shape must have been intended to protect the contents of this lidded box.

The lid has two holes in the top and would have swivelled open from the hole in the top of the cartouche shape.

## Art in the 18th dynasty



### **Mirror with Bes handle**

Bronze and ebony

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4348

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 handle of this mirror is carved from ebony. It 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.

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.



### **Vessel for ointment**

Alabaster/travertine

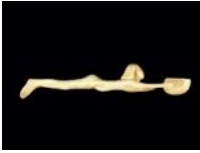
Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> 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.



### **Spoon in the form of a girl**

Ivory

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1015

Cosmetic spoons would have been used for holding or mixing perfumes and minerals for make-up. They were often very simple in design but this item is very intricately crafted in ivory and was clearly a high status object.

The spoon is in the shape of a swimming girl on her stomach with legs stretched out behind and the arms in front. Her head is upright and she is looking forward. She holds the remains of a carved bowl in her hands, which would have been used to hold make-up. As well as enhancing appearance, cosmetics had religious and symbolic significance. The pose of the swimming girl may mimic that of the sky goddess Nut.



### **Cosmetic palette**

Ivory

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1540-1292 BCE

Northumberland Collection

This ivory object would have been use for preparing cosmetics. The handle includes a depiction of an ibex.

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. The ibex is also connected with fertility.

The use of imported elephant ivory reached a peak in the late 18th dynasty. Its use is well documented in the Amarna letters.



**Cosmetic pot**

Stone

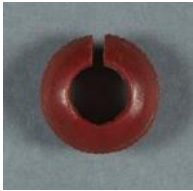
Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1540-1292 BCE

Northumberland Collection

EG4404

Kohl (eye paint) was used by both men and women in Ancient Egypt. It was used both as a cosmetic and to keep the eyes healthy. Eye paint helped to reduce the glare of the sun, to repel flies that caused eye disease and perhaps to catch dust. The wealthy of the 18th dynasty could afford beautifully crafted pots like this to hold this everyday essential.



**Hair ring**

Jasper

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE

Wellcome Collection

EG1156

Rings like this were woven through hair, probably as part of a wig for someone wealthy. Many rings would be used so that when the person moved they would clink against each other to create a pleasing sound.



### **Lidded basket**

Grass and other plant fibres  
New Kingdom,  
18th Dynasty or later,  
after about 1450 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG4968

Basketry is an extremely ancient manufacturing tradition in Egypt, and this specimen, woven with a timeless design in a variety of plant fibres, is extraordinarily well preserved and still contains a few scraps of ancient linen.

It represents, perhaps, an ancient version of the modern sewing basket.



### **Coloured rosette**

Faience  
Egypt  
New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III,  
about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG3786

Egyptian faience is a ceramic made with a silica rather than a clay base. A wide range of colours can be achieved by adding a range of metallic colourants.

Inlays like this were used widely to enhance plain objects and to stretch rare and valuable resources.



### **Signet ring**

Silver

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Amunhotep III, about 1360 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG6052

This silver ring is inscribed with the names '*Nb'ma'at're Stp-en-re*'.  
names of Amunhotep III.

Silver is much rarer than gold in the mountains and deserts around Egypt. By the New Kingdom it was being imported from western Asia and the Mediterranean greatly increasing supplies and its use.

The bones of the gods were thought to be made of silver, while their flesh was made of gold.



### **Inscribed plaque**

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,  
reign of Thutmose III, about 1450 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG5084

This is part of a set of faience plaques.

The main set is in Naples, with additional pieces in the Petrie Museum, London and the Louvre.

They are inscribed with the offering liturgy and afterlife wishes of the 'Writer of the House of Life Hatiay'. The House of Life was an institution linked to the royal court charged with creating and preserving written knowledge.





**Jar (*krateriskoi*)**  
**Glass**  
**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,**  
**about 1481-1425 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG890

Glass begins to appear in Egypt from around 1500 BCE as a high status product. The earliest glass was probably imported into Egypt from the Near East. Glass workers may have been brought to Egypt by Tuthmose III following his campaigns in Mitanni.

The presence of glass in elite 18th dynasty burials such as that of Yuya and Tuya, Queen Tiye's parents, attests to value it was given. The form of this glass vessel reflects those being made at workshops in places such as Tyre and Sidon at this time reflecting the international influence on Egyptian art of the 18th dynasty.



**Head of a man**  
**Glass and steatite**  
**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, about 1370 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG4347

Glass was occasionally employed to produce small-scale sculptures from the mid 18th Dynasty on, the technique employed being essentially that of a semi-precious stone worker – i.e. grinding and polishing.

Appropriately enough the face of this composite piece was originally catalogued as red jasper: close examination of the surface, however, reveals distinctive air bubbles and confirms its identification as glass, now partly discoloured.

The face's almond shaped eyes, delicate mouth and small chin are characteristic of representations of Amunhotep III.

The wig is fractionally too large for the head, with differently shaped hair-lines on each piece. This suggests that the two were not originally carved to be together. However, it is thought that they were combined in antiquity rather than when rediscovered in the 19th century.



### **Heart amulet**

**Glass and Stone**

**Egypt,**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1550-1295 BCE**

EG5852

From the New Kingdom onwards a heart amulet is found on virtually every Egyptian mummy. The heart was thought to be the most essential of the organs, considered to be the source of thought and emotion.

The rarity and quality of the materials used here clearly express the importance of the heart. Glass was still relatively new material in New Kingdom Egypt but the mastery of the head suggests that the Egyptian craftworkers had already understood the technology expertly.



### **Servant girl carrying a jar**

Boxwood, ivory and gold

Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

Egyptian art acquired its distinctive form at about the same time that Egypt was first united as a single state, in the centuries before 3000 BCE. While there were some changes over time, this very distinctive style remained remarkably consistent for the next 3000 years. This statue is one of only a handful of pieces that have survived which show such a deliberate move outside the accepted artistic canon.

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, as everyday objects, as religious or funerary items or as part of the trappings of state. Just as today, such objects were often closely linked to the display of rank and wealth.

This link to function led to the distinctive style of presentation of the human body. In statues, this meant a very upright, formal presentation. Figures look straight ahead and sit or stand in standard poses that convey information about their status. The servant girl does not follow these conventions.

All of the pieces that reflect this break from conventional style date to the later part of the 18th dynasty and the reigns of Amunhotep III and his son Akhenaten.

Akhenaten's attempts to transform the religious, political and artistic conventions of Egypt failed. With the rejection of his reign, these experiments in new styles of art also seem to have vanished.

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.



**Statuette of a servant girl**

**Wood**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amunhotep III  
about 1350 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG3568

This statuette captures the sensuous and naturalistic artistic style which developed during Amunhotep's reign. The elongated torso and limbs are combined with a curving belly and hips. 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.

This piece dates from the same period as Durham's far more well known servant girl statue. This exhibition offers a rare opportunity to see the two figures side by side.

# Major Settlements and Natural Resources



## Akhenaten

Amunhotep III and Queen Tiye had at least 6 children. When the eldest, Tutmose, died the second son, also named Amunhotep, became the heir.

This son was interested in the solar cult of Ra-Horus of the Horizon, and there seems to have been a link between Amunhotep the father's interest in the rejuvenating powers of the sun and his son Amunhotep's ideas.

Eventually, the young Amunhotep abandoned the cult of Amun-Ra in favour of the Aten, the sun disk itself. He changed his name from Amunhotep meaning 'Amun is Content' to Akhen-Aten 'Brilliant spirit of the Aten'.

He built a new city Akhetaten 'Horizon of the Aten' (the modern site of Amarna), dedicating his life to the god Aten, along with his wife Nefertiti and their daughters and sons. Tutankhamun was one of these children.

## Importance of Nubia during Akhenaten's reign

Akhenaten's retreat to his capital city at Akhetaten after five years of rule, has suggested to modern scholars that he was not too concerned with the world outside, leading to neglect of foreign policy and an end to military campaigns or security checks.

However, the Amarna letters hint at full control of the military and scenes from Amarna show a continued security presence.

Akhenaten's army commander, Horemheb, remained in control during the reign of Tutankhamun, eventually becoming king himself when the family line died out.

The support of the army and the chariotry enabled the king to undertake campaigns to retain control of areas where security was threatened. Trade routes had to be kept clear of raiders, quarries—especially for gold—had to be protected and lines of communication kept open.

In Wadi Allaqi, in the Wawat region to the south of Egypt, there were active gold mines through the reigns of Amunhotep III, Akhenaten and Tutankhamun. The protective fortress at Buhen, on the second cataract of the Nile, acted as the settlement and temple serving these mines.

The temples of Horus and Hathor at Buhen were used to display symbols of the king's ownership of the region and its resources.

Akhenaten added to the works already placed there by his predecessors. Fragments of this stela are displayed here for the first time.

Other evidence for activity in Nubia during Akhenaten's reign includes temple building and repurposing, including the removal of the name of Amun.



## Akhenaten's Stela

This stela of Akhenaten comes from Buhen in Nubia. It is a complicated document, as fragmentary as its discovery. The Durham fragments are being displayed here for the first time ever, after restoration and mounting generously funded by the Friends of the Oriental Museum.

The first two fragments were rediscovered in 1909 by the Eckley B Coxe expedition to Buhen. These fragments are now housed in the Pennsylvania Museum in the USA.

In 1964 the Egypt Exploration Society Mission at Buhen found another large fragment of the left-hand side of the stela and six smaller fragments of the upper left side. They had been reused in antiquity when the stela was destroyed to provide material for the foundations of a new temple. These fragments were sent to the Oriental Museum because Durham University had supported the excavation.

Together, all of the fragments provide evidence for a military campaign in Nubia during Akhenaten's rule which resulted in the conquest of the Ikayta people. The text contains part of the date, two cartouches of the king, a mention of the Aten, details of the numbers of people and animals captured and reference to the king as a lion raging with his fiery war cry.

This is important because it contradicts the idea that Akhenaten did not make military campaigns and that his reign was mostly peaceful.

The stela was probably topped by a scene showing the king striking down his enemies. The date can be reconstructed as Year 10 or 12, with the campaign taking place in the first month of Akhet, the flood season, day 20. It is thought that the Ikayta may have been targeted because they lived in the gold mining regions and threatened the mines or caravan routes.

A fragment of an almost identical stela was found nearby at Amada in 1902. It is dated to 16th day of Akhet, four days earlier than our stela. A complete text has been recreated using the fragments from both the Buhen and Amada fragments along with similar texts from earlier kings that the Buhen stela copied.

This copying of earlier inscriptions raises the possibility that despite a precise date being given, this campaign may have been symbolic rather than real, recalling the activities of earlier rulers.

## The Durham Fragments




The Durham fragments are from the top of the inscription, as they have the date line and the first line of the text with part of the king's titles. In all, parts of 6 lines are preserved but none is complete.

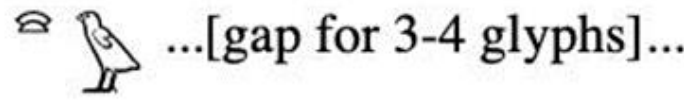

The way that the stela has been broken at the top suggests that it may have been rounded, but it is not clear what may have been in the lunette – a scene or whether it was blank and contained only a symbol.


DUROM.1964.213.1-6 and DUROM.1964.188 (large fragment)

DUROM.1964.213


Line 1: .....[about 4 glyphs] 


Line 2: 

Line 3:  ...[gap for 3-4 glyphs]... 


Line 4: ..... 

Fragment 2

line 1:  could be a B1 sign here too

line 2: 







DUROM.1964.188 (Large fragment)

Line 3: ... .. 









Line 4:    




















Line 5:      


Line 6:        

Line 7:        

Line 8:        

Line 9:        

Line 10:                    [Pennsylvania fragment 2 starts here] ...

Line 11: ... .. 

## The Pennsylvania Fragments



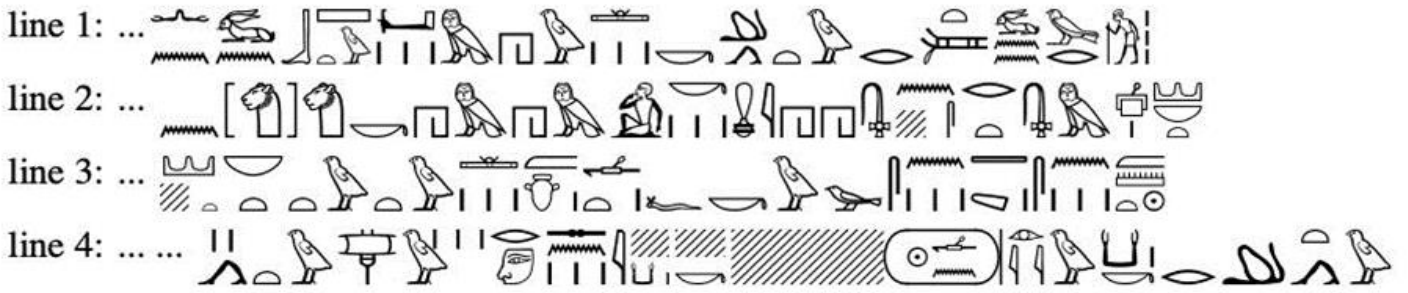
5 cm



5 cm

Buhen, Pennsylvania fragments 16022A and B

Fragment 1





Fragment 2








## Reconstruction of the hieroglyphic text


Line 1: 


Line 2: 


Line 3: 

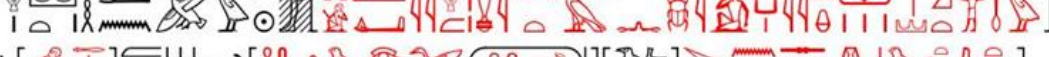
Line 4: 


Line 5: 


Line 6: 


Line 7: 


Line 8: 


Line 9: 

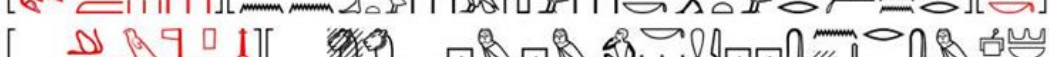
Line 10: 


Line 11: 


line 12: [...] 


line 13: 

line 14: 


line 15: 


line 16: 

line 17: 

line 18: 

### Fragment 2

line 1: ...  [possibly female sign] see line 12?

line 2: ...  see line 13?

Key: black text = Durham fragments

[ ] black brackets, black text = Penn fragments

red text = restored from Amada Akhenaten stela

[black brackets], red text = restored based on multiple comparative texts by W. Helck

After W. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, Atalanta, 1995: No.55, p.101-2.

Reconstructed



## Translation of reconstructed text

Durham text highlighted in **Bold**.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania text highted in **red**.

[Regnal year 1]2, **third (?) month of Inundation, day 20 (of) the Living Ruler**, [Strong of Forearm, beloved of Aten in the land], **the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, who lives on Maat, Lord of [the Two Lands, Waen]re**, [the Son of Re who lives on Maat, Lord of Crowns, Akhenaten, long in his lifetime, given life for ever and ever], **having appeared** upon [the throne of] his father, **the Aten** [like Ra in the sky and the land every day. Now his Person l.p.h., was in Akhet-Aten when one came to tell his Person that] **the enemies of the foreign country Ikayta** [were plotting rebellion against The Black Land and had (even) invaded the land of] **the Nilotic Nubians (Nehsy), taking all foodstuffs away from them** [as they roamed the desert in order to *escape from him (?)*].

**Thereupon his Person charged the King's Son** [of Kush and overseer of the southern countries to assemble an army **in order to defeat the] enemies of the foreign country of Ikayta**, [males as well as females. These enemies were found on the eastern side of] **the river, to the north of the cisterns of the mining region**. [They fetched the Forearm of the Living Ruler in one day and in one morning a great slaughter was made] **upon the highland, and the fugitive was killed** [like those who did not exist. The Ikayta, while the loud cry of victory] was in their heart(s), **the [fierce] lion** [ the Living Ruler, he] **slaughtered** [them, at the command of his father Aten] **by means of valour and strength!**"

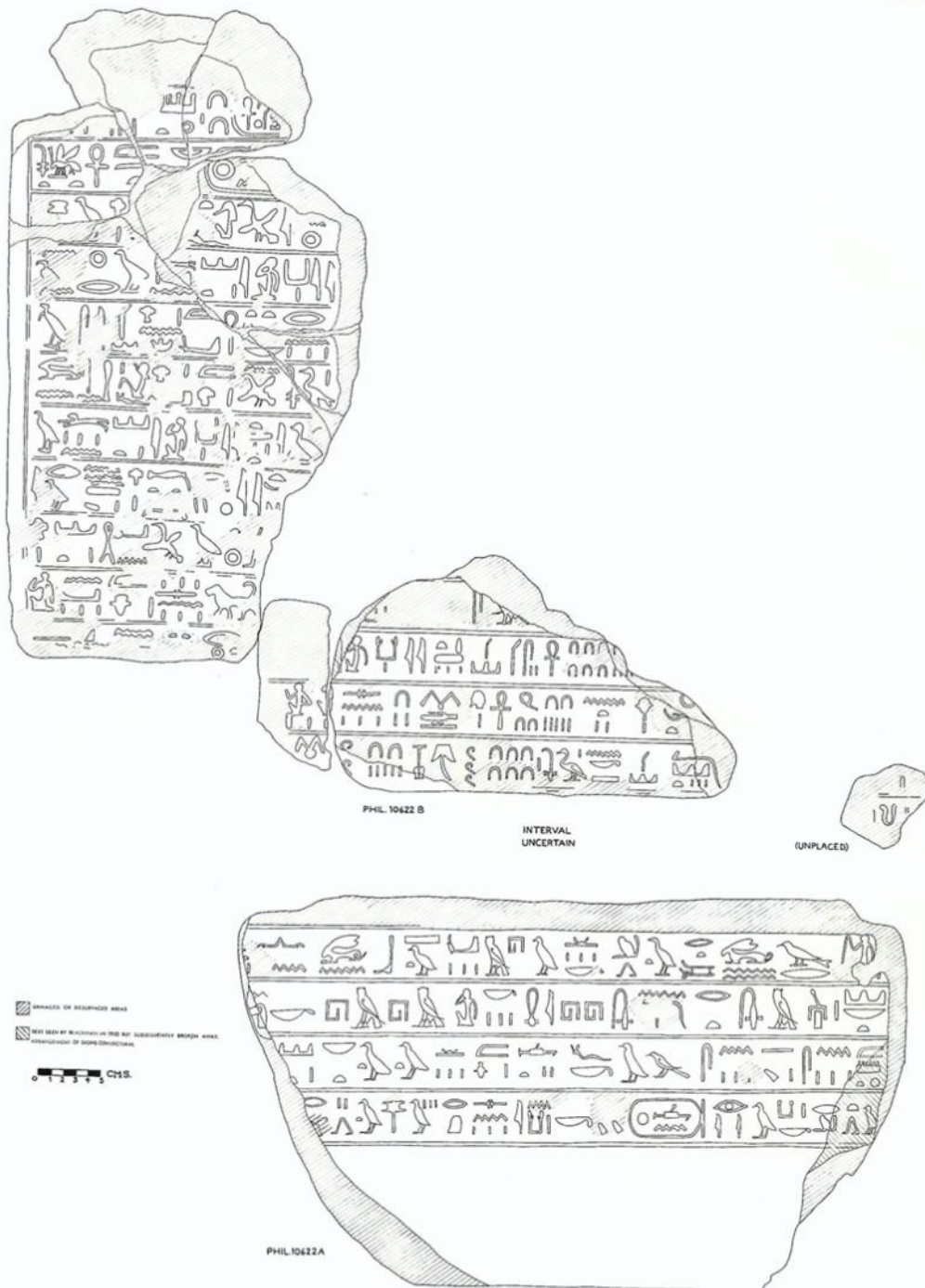
List [of the plunder which his Person carried off from the country] **Living Ikayta: 84**; [Magiu ...]; Living Nilotic Nubians: [82? + x]; **their children: 12; Total of living "head(s)": 145; those who were impaled: [...; Slain: ...]; Hands: [...]; Total: 225; Total sum: 361** [sic].

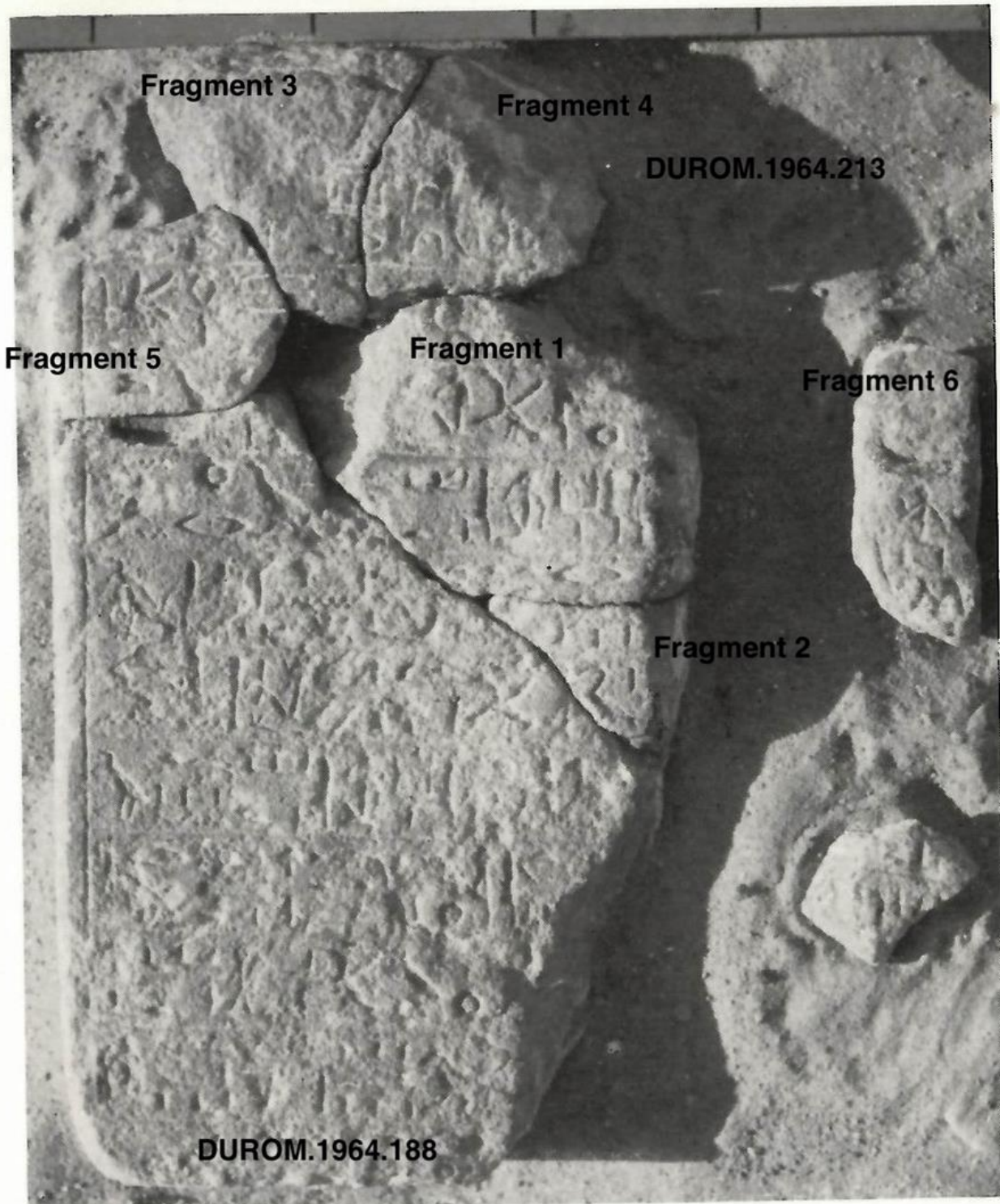
The King's son of Kush, the overseer of the [southern] countries [Thutmose, said "... fear of you is in their hearts]. **There are no rebels in your time, for they have achieved non-existence!** [Their] chiefs [fall at your might], **your battle cries are like a fiery flame (following) after every foreign country** [(and) every land is in peace when you have come,] **every foreign land is united with one wish, (namely) that they might despoil their land(s) daily** [and they may give to yourself their children] **in order that breath may be sent to their nose(s) by your Ka.** (O) [Lord of the Two Lands Waenre, may your Ka act in order to reach *[all your enemies]*."

## Original Publication

H. S. Smith, with W.B. Emery, *The Fortress of Buhen: the inscriptions*, London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976: No.1595, p.124-129; pl. XXIX, top; LXXV, 1,2 with Pennsylvania fragments pl. XXIX bottom and LXXV, 3,4. The plates are reproduced here by kind permission of the Egypt Exploration Society.

PLATE XXIX

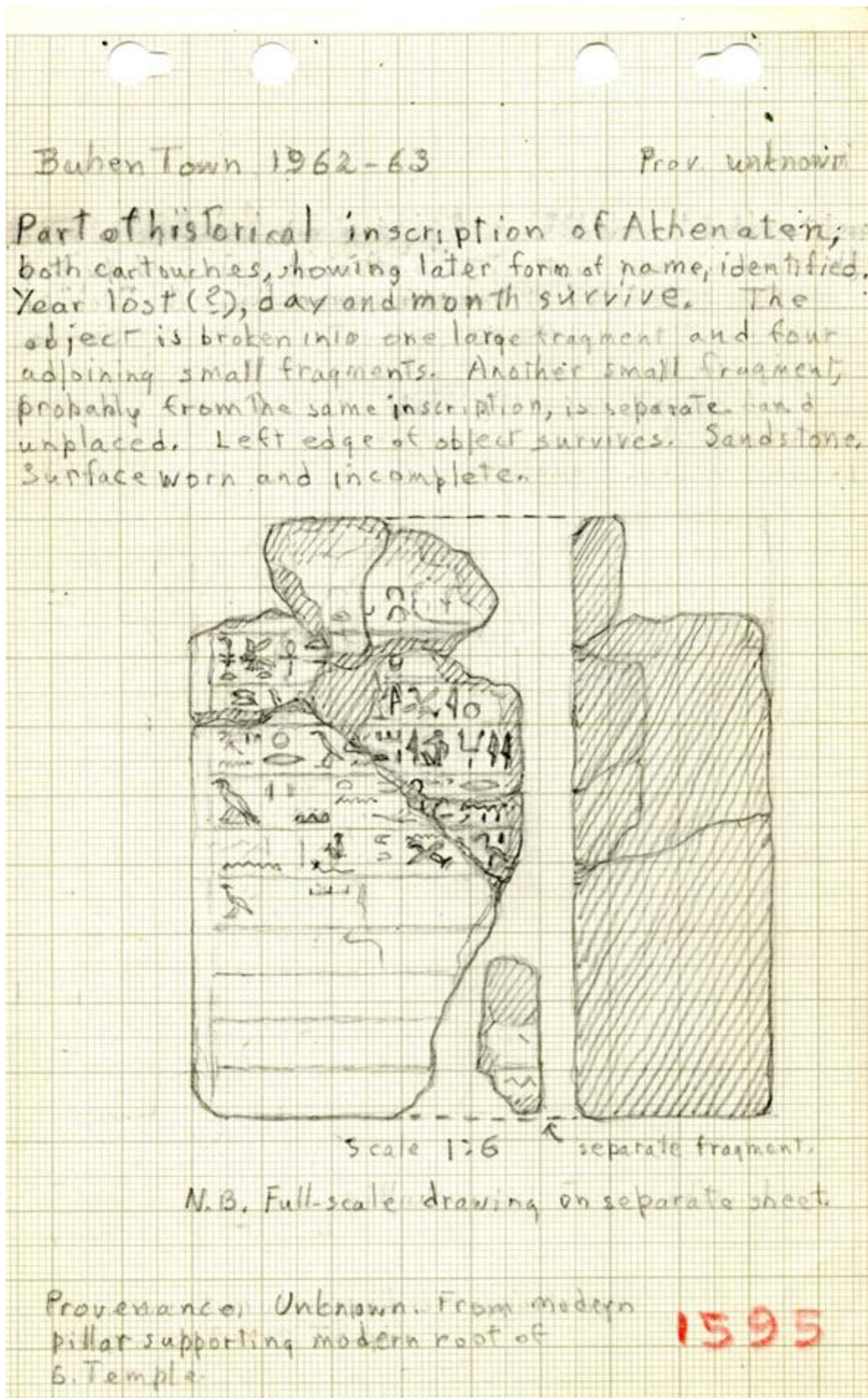




1. 1595, complete



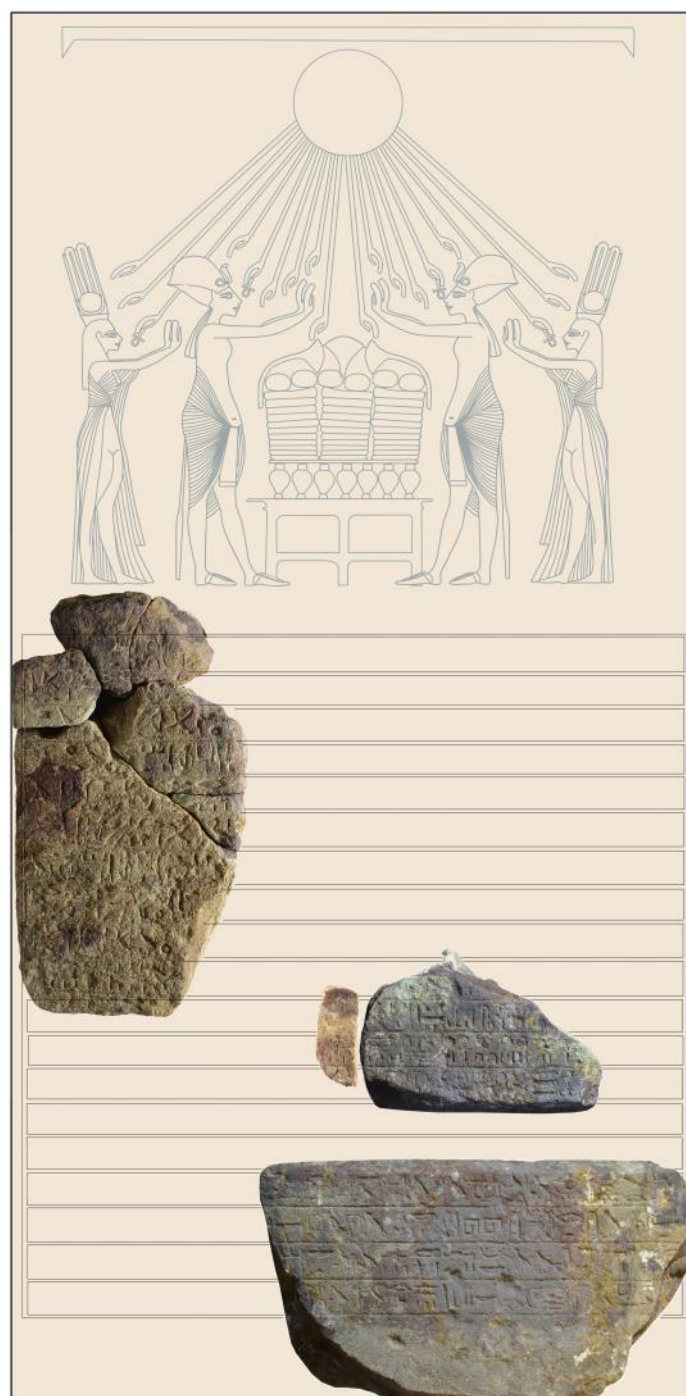
Original Buhen Record card  
now in the Egypt Exploration Society archive



## Potential reconstruction

The Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology have suggested this possible reconstruction for the stela. The lunette at the top is based on typical scenes from stelae found at Amarna and show the royal family adoring the Aten. However, it may be more likely that the stela was surmounted by an image of Akhenaten smiting the enemies of Egypt, as seen in similar stelae erected by other kings.

The reconstruction does give a good indication of how the fragments might have fitted together.



## Tutankhamun and the end of a dynasty

Tutankhamun ruled Egypt for only about 9 years and died aged 18 (c. 1341-1323 BCE).

Originally named Tutankhaten, with the support of the military hierarchy and the revived priesthood of Amun, the young king's name was changed to Tutankhamun. The court left his father's capital at Akhetaten (Amarna) and moved back to Memphis. Construction began on new buildings at the temple of Amun at Thebes, among others. The dramatic changes led by Akhenaten during his reign were deliberately erased or buried.

After Tutankhamun's death, the family line of kings going back almost two hundred years, was ended. The elderly High Priest of Amun, Ay, came to the throne to be followed by military leader Horemheb. Horemheb had no children and so chose his vizier, a man named Paramessu, as his heir. Paramessu had a son and grand son. Ramesses I as we now know him was therefore able to found a new dynasty of kings, succeeded by his son Seti I and grandson, the famous Ramesses II, ushering in a new period in Egyptian history.





*Temple of Tutankhamun at Kawa between third and fourth cataracts of the Nile, photograph taken between 1923-1946*

*From the Cyril R Williams Collection, Durham University Archives and Special Collections*



## Tutankhamun's tomb and its contents

Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered almost intact in the Valley of the Kings in 1922. His fabulous funerary goods reflect his golden life but also include heirlooms of his father and grandfather's family.

The technological achievements of the objects in the tomb and the amount of precious materials such as gold, textiles, resins, semi-precious stones, glass and iron provide a good indication of the resources available to the 18th Dynasty kings.

The chariots, weapons and personal possessions, perhaps show the kind of life that was planned for the young man and his wife Ankhesenamun, a daughter of Akhenaten and at least a half-sister to Tutankhamun.

The young king did not have much time to have new monuments or statues built and there are only a few objects in Durham University's collection that come from his reign. Two faience ring bezels have the name (prenomen) of the king written in hieroglyphs: *Neb-kheperu-ra* 'Lord of the Forms of Ra'. They were probably made and distributed as protective amulets at important festivals during the king's reign. In contrast to the high-status objects and personal possessions from the king's tomb the rings represent the closest that ordinary Egyptian people – and we – can come to the 'Living Image of Amun' Tutankhamun.



*Approach to the tomb of Tutankhamun taken between 1926-1932,  
From the W Nicholls Collection, Durham University Archives and Special Collections*



### **Amarna period relief**

**Sandstone**

**Egypt, Thebes (Qurna)**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE**

Bullock Bequest

DUROM.1998.10

This relief shows the two workmen apparently engaged in pulling on a rope or some similar task and is probably part of a relief from a tomb or temple wall. They have the characteristic features and attitude of Amarna Period carving. Their pose is an attempt at showing perspective, normally missing from conventional ancient Egyptian art.

Akhenaten embarked on several major building schemes at Thebes and in his new capital city of Akhetaten, which were all subsequently destroyed. Many small fragments such as this have, however, been recovered from the ruins of these buildings, or were used later as infill in the great pylons, or gateways, of the temple of Amun at Karnak.



### **Relief fragment with name of Nefertiti**

**Red granite**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG3971

This section of red granite is incised with a cartouche surrounding the names of the wife of Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti—'*Nfr-nfrw-itn Nfr.t-i-ti*' which translates as 'Beautiful are the beauties of Aten, the Beautiful one has come'.

The block may have originally come from one of the structures built at the capital, Akhetaten, which seem to have been used as platforms where the royal family could be seen by the people of the city. The red granite would have sparkled and glowed in the sunshine adding to the drama of the royal appearance.



### **Shabti**

**Ebony**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten  
about 1340 BCE**

Northumberland Collection

EG410

This shabti wears a tripartite wig. He holds a hoe and pick axe in his hands. Bracelets are visible on his wrists. The shabti is inscribed with 12 lines of text from Chapter 6 of the Book of the Dead. The inscription tells us that it was dedicated for 'Neterankhbaankhf, born of Heptartas'. The style of the carving suggests that the piece dates to the reign of Akhenaten.



### **Ring with name of Akhenaten**

**Bronze**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE**

Wellcome Collection

EG2547

Akhenaten's name means 'glory of the Aten (sun disc)'. By this time the metal signet had almost completely replaced the finger ring with swivelling bezel for sealing purposes, because of its greater ability to withstand pressure.

Metal signet rings bearing a king's name are known to have been entrusted to high officials so they could seal documents or containers of precious commodities on the king's behalf. The type of metal used for the ring may indicate the rank of the person to whom it was given.



### **Vessel fragment**

**Faience**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1349-1336 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG2923

The title 'Son of Re' can be seen above this cartouche which encloses Akhenaten's name. At this time, this title preceded the king's birth name. Having been named Amunhotep at birth and used this name early in his reign, the king changed his name to Akhenaten in year 5 of his reign. This vessel can therefore be dated to the second part of the reign.



### **Cowroid Scarab**

**Steatite**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG6375

A cowroid is a seal or amulet shaped like a cowrie shell. The inscription on the base of this one is for a 'hmt nswt' or King's Wife. The name has been read as that of Nefertiti.

Cowrie shell amulets are strongly associated with women's sexual health and pregnancy. They are commonly seen on girdles and belts for women. The queen's name would have added to the effectiveness of this amulet.



**Wedjat eye shaped amulet**

Steatite

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG6374



**Cartouche shaped amulet**

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Akhenaten,  
1352-1336 BCE

Wellcome Collection  
EG472

Both of these amulets are inscribed with the throne name *Nfr-hpr-r-w'-n-r'*. This means 'Beautiful are the forms of Re, the unique one of Re'. This is the only part of Akhenaten's titulary which he did not change in the fifth year of his reign.

## Evidence for the existence of Tutankhamun

Before the discovery of his tomb, many people doubted the existence of Tutankhamun. The objects in this case are representative of the type of material which was available to researchers in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



### **Statuette fragment**

**Faience**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 1479–1323 BCE**

DUROM.1996.10

This fragment of a statuette depicts a seated royal figure. The lower torso and thighs are all that remain.

The back of the throne has two cartouches carved into it. These are badly damaged and difficult to read. One cartouche can be read as:

Menkeperre (Tuthmose III),  
Menkeperrure (Tuthmose IV), or  
Nebkeperrure (Tutankhamun).







**Ring bezel with throne name of Tutankhamun**

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun,  
about 1336-1327 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG3063



**Ring with throne name of  
Tutankhamun**

Faience

Egypt

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun,  
about 1336-1327 BCE

Northumberland Collection  
EG3084

This moulded bright blue faience ring bezel is impressed with the prenomen or 'throne name' of Tutankhamun, Nebkheperure. The ring section has been lost.

The green faience finger ring also impressed with the prenomen Nebkeperure, together with the title 'Ruler of Heliopolis'.

Rings like these may have been issued as part of the coronation of the new king at Amarna.





### **Wedjat eye amulet**

**Carnelian**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, possibly reign of Tutankhamun,  
about 1336-1327 BCE**



Northumberland Collection  
EG6377

This carnelian wedjat eye has a cartouche carved on the back. The hieroglyphs are not easy to read. Some researchers have read it as Nebkheperure, Tutankhamun's throne name but it can also be read differently.



### **Seal of Ay**

**Faience**

**Egypt**

**New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, possibly reign of Ay,  
1323-1319 BCE**

Northumberland Collection  
EG6376

This seal is in the shape of a duck with its head folded back onto its body. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was read as Kheperkheperue, the throne name (prenomen) of Ay, successor to Tutankhamun. Today it is very difficult to read with certainty.

This piece, and many of the others displayed here, was collected by Algernon Percy, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Northumberland. Percy had a strong interest in royal chronology and dating. He seems to have deliberately set out to collect pieces which included the names of as many of the kings of Egypt as he could. He may well have collected this small piece because of the reading of the name of Ay.



**Scarab**  
Steatite  
Egypt  
New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun,  
about 1336-1327 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6378



**Scarab**  
Steatite  
Egypt  
New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun,  
about 1336-1327 BCE



Northumberland Collection  
EG6379

Both of these seals have the inscription '*ankh-s-n-imn*'. This can be read as 'She lives through/in Amun', a good luck wish. It is also the name of Tutankhamun's wife.

These scarabs have been dated to the reign of Tutankhamun but it is impossible to be certain if they refer to the queen or not.

## Acknowledgements

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Research into the scarab of Thutmose III (EG3512) was undertaken by Henry Lester as part of his BA and MA in Archaeology at Durham University.

*JSesh* was used to create the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic texts used in the exhibition.