

**DECODING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN DIADEMS:
SYMBOLISM AND ICONOGRAPHY AS A MEANS OF
INTERPRETING FEMININE IDENTITY**

by

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DECLARATION

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I, Stephanie Joan Harris, declare that *Decoding Ancient Egyptian Diadems: Symbolism and iconography as a means of interpreting feminine identity* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



SIGNATURE



DATE

THANKS

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful, encouraging and very supportive husband Garth. Thank you for venturing into the fascinating world of “old bones and stones” with me, visiting numerous museum collections, enjoying the ancient and modern Egyptian culture and culinary adventures. But most importantly, for believing in me, encouraging my quest for knowledge and being by my side every inch of the way.

SUMMARY

Ancient Egyptian distinctive headdresses made from precious or semi-precious materials date to prehistoric times, indicating a growing sense of individuality and hierarchy. Women's headdresses were indicators of rulership, divinity, social status, cultic affiliation and wealth. Visual evidence indicates that female identity was emphasised by external and outward appearance and headdresses in the form of diadems followed recognised stylistic dictates throughout the Dynastic Period. The floral and faunal motifs used in the embellishment were believed to have protective amuletic and magical powers. Although a considerable amount of investigation has been undertaken into the use of materials and techniques used in the manufacture of diadems, the incorporation of symbolism and iconography of these gendered artefacts as a means of interpreting visual messages and self-expression has largely been unexplored. The study has been limited to well-provenanced, extant Old, Middle and New Kingdom diadems housed in various museums worldwide.

KEY TERMS

Jewellery, diadem, garland, circlet, fillet, headband, headdress, medallions, rosettes, symbolism, iconography,

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Personal adornment dates to prehistoric times, with items made from a variety of precious or semi-precious materials indicating a growing sense of individuality and hierarchy within the larger social group in widely differing and dispersed civilizations. In the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures, distinctive headdresses were worn by elite men and women to depict rulership, divinity, social status, cultic affiliation and wealth. These headdresses were not simply objects of personal adornment but the motifs used in the embellishment were believed to have protective amuletic and magical powers. In various ancient cultures flowers, stylised birds or animals vied for popularity together with symbols of power. Headdresses in the forms of crowns and diadems were not only humankind's answer to the need for self-adornment but a form of decorative art which highlighted both imagination and inventiveness, largely shaped by the dictates of culture and fashion.

The relationship between ancient women and their jewellery is intriguing, serving as both symbol and identifier as female identity is defined by the emphasis on 'the visual, external and outward appearance' (Raat, 2013:9). The ancient Egyptian culture depicted the royal and elite women with eye-catching headdresses, indicative of their social position, whether as a king's wife, sister or daughter, female relative or as status in a specific religious cult. The visual arts as evidenced by sculpture in the round, carved reliefs or tomb frescoes indicate styles and fashions, how items were worn in different periods and by whom. Although much has been written about the use of materials, techniques and styles, there appears to be a paucity of insight. Under the broad sub-discipline of social studies in the ANE, the role of women, their social status, lack of identity and individuality is a fairly recent area of investigation.

The most widely recognised embellishment found on formal feminine Egyptian headdresses are those incorporating the lotus, cobra, vulture, ostrich plumes and horns depending on the specific purpose and period. These are generally indicative of a specific royal or cultic position. Although a substantial amount has been written about the use of materials, manufacturing techniques and definition of styles by recognised specialists, there appears to be limited discussion of the different motifs, the symbolism and the inherent iconography of specific headdresses particularly

those associated with these wealthy and elite women. Although a variety of surviving examples of diadems are housed in various museums worldwide as well as tomb depictions, statues and reliefs, the iconography and symbolism of some of the more unusual pieces appears to be a sparsely investigated topic.

Ancient women are generally referred to as being 'silent' in the archaeological record as there is limited textual evidence of their personal lives and the role they played as individuals within society, yet the visual arts indicate distinct and changing styles of adornment over dynastic periods. The selected topic '*Decoding Ancient Egyptian Diadems: Symbolism and iconography as an indication of feminine identity*' focuses on a specific type of jewellery item (the diadem) worn by predominantly wealthy and elite women. It was selected based on various forms of female headdress evident in different Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures dating from early Sumerian to late Egyptian eras and even extending into the Greco-Roman period. Individual examples not only feature a wide variety but also a commonality of motifs that are rich in symbolism at a time when literacy was limited to the select few.

Although generally associated with familial affiliation, status, fashion, cultic/public roles, amuletic or magical functions combined with detailed descriptions, design techniques, decorative motifs, the use of colour and mythological linkages to decode and interpret the inherent visual messages that from an aspect of increasing self-expression has 'largely been unexplored as has their role as a gendered artefact' (Cifarelli, 2010) and so too the 'link between artefacts and identity as an intrinsic property of social existence' (Graves-Brown *et al*, 1996:26).

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In-depth analysis of various components of a variety of headdresses has the potential to provide the key for unlocking the individuality of specific owners in the ancient Egyptian context. This aspect does not appear to have been addressed in any great detail in the available scholarly literature on ancient Egyptian jewellery. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the following research questions:

- **Research Question 1:** Can the identity of owners of specific headdresses provide a key to the individuality exhibited by the various examples of ceremonial, state and cultic headdresses, crowns and diadems?
- **Research Question 2:** Can the analysis of materials and design motifs on multiple levels be used to provide insight into the symbolism and iconography of specific headdresses and by extension, their owners?
- **Research Question 3:** Is there evidence that individual headdresses were used to convey strong non-verbal elements of Egyptian mythology, religious superstitions and apotropaic magic beliefs by means of symbolism and iconography?
- **Research Question 4:** Are the decorative motifs incorporated into personal items of jewellery a form of visual, tactile and auditory communication which can be used as a means of decoding and interpreting what can be construed as hidden messages?

1.2 HYPOTHESES

Fashion, and more particularly items of adornment send out 'clear social signals, indicating such diversities as financial status, aspiration, occupation and even religious persuasion' (Tyldesley, 1994:163). The diffusion, adoption and adaptation of iconography in ancient Egyptian jewellery over a long period of time dating from the pre- and early dynastic to Ptolemaic eras and by diverse women in the historical record, combines elements of gender studies, archaeology, jewellery technique/materials, religious beliefs, cultic practices and mythology. Together there is the potential element of revealing a sense of individuality. This concept is highlighted in the choice of symbolism and iconography exhibited by specific examples.

It is anticipated that the voices of traditionally 'silent women' of Egyptian antiquity can be clearly heard in the analysis of a particular type of personal adornment, namely a headdress or diadem. Ranging from familial hierarchy and formal state or cultic roles to displays of changing fashions and individual taste, it is also anticipated that these

items of jewellery could be used as a powerful form of non-verbal communication in a large illiterate society.¹

The scope of this project will be limited to extant headdresses and diadems which are housed in museum collections. Examples which have been investigated were specifically selected for the use of interesting materials, unique forms and/or unusual symbolism in their construction. Archaeological, art historical and relevant primary textual information will be accessed. The historical period under investigation will begin with evidence of pre-Dynastic and early Egyptian dynastic headdresses, before following the development of diadems through the Old, Middle, New and Late Kingdoms. The chronological scope of this investigation spans almost 3000 years of the Egyptian civilization from the pre-Dynastic to the end of the Late Period (c. 3000 to 332 BCE). It will not include the Greco-Roman period.

The intended outcome of this study is to investigate the under-examined symbolism and iconography of existing examples of ancient Egyptian women's headdresses and diadems in particular, in order to provide some insight into the individuality of the original owners and their role and status in society.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In undertaking a study of the symbolism and iconography of jewellery in what is considered one of the 'minor' and very personal forms of Egyptian art, it should be acknowledged that a very small amount has survived in the archaeological record. The majority of visual representation originates from temples, tombs and monumental structures. No study of ancient Egyptian culture can be carried out in isolation as their world view, religious belief systems, mythology and by extension representational art and symbolism was closely integrated and embedded in the fabric of their society.

Walls of temple and funerary structures provide not only inscriptions and images of political, religious and funerary ideologies but also mythological beliefs and

¹ Non-verbal communication will be discussed in Chapter 2.

propaganda messages using the accepted symbolism and iconography of the time. Gender relations have been incorporated into anthropology and there has been a marked increase in this particular topic in the past 20 years as evidenced by Fischler (1994) and Nelson (1991, 2007) taking the discipline far beyond the traditional ‘just add women and stir’ approach of the past. The functions, social and economic impact of ancient Egyptian women are increasingly being investigated by feminist scholarship using multi-disciplinary methods. Symbolism and iconography closely linked to both archaeology and anthropology is increasingly being used as an effective method for interpretation of ancient societies in a qualitative way.

Due to the symbolism and iconography that is the focus of this investigation, a quantitative or numerical method is not considered suitable. The methodology that will therefore be used in this dissertation will be that of a qualitative approach which involves the gathering and interpretation of facts under the overarching post-processual theoretical concepts of cultural approach and the Egyptian ‘world view’ (*Weltanschauung*)² concept. Qualitative research incorporates interpretation that is useful for understanding the social context of the ancient Egyptian people. A combination of broad interdisciplinary methodologies and qualitative methods that include archaeological and anthropological approaches have been used in addition to visual observation and rare mentions in texts in order to obtain a holistic view of the women who owned and wore the headdresses.

From the literature review it was ascertained that this project would focus on the multi-layered symbolism and iconography of headdresses, and specifically diadems. Due to the visual nature of the topic, suitable examples needed to be identified and analysed. Initial investigations began with identification of specific diadems currently housed in the collections of the Cairo, British and Metropolitan museums and elsewhere where considered relevant. Limitations were posed with regard to access to the museum collections, especially in Egypt due to recent unrest in the country. It became evident that a desk-top investigation would have to be undertaken, focussing

² The term ‘world view’ (*Weltanschauung*) refers to a framework of belief and ideology by members of a society informing not only how they interpret the world around them, but also how they experience and interact with it. A world view is formed by common experiences of a people from a geographical region, incorporating environmental or climatic conditions, available economic resources, socio-cultural systems and their linguistic group. It includes aspects of ethno-archaeology, art and iconography, theology, cosmogony, mythology, economics, politics, language, literature and philology amongst others.

on an-depth visual albeit photographic-based analysis of the surviving headdresses currently housed in museum collections worldwide.

A number of academic investigations have been conducted into the topic of ancient Egyptian jewellery materials, techniques and design covered by this investigation. However, to date little appears to have been done to incorporate the rich multi-layered symbolism and iconography of mythology and religious beliefs present in all the existing examples of feminine headdresses into a coherent body of work. It is thus envisaged that this dissertation will make a contribution to this under-researched aspect. In this respect, a qualitative approach has been employed in the context of the Egyptian world view³. This included jewellery materials and technology, religion, mythology and magic.

The investigation involves, firstly, the identification of specific examples of headdresses currently housed in museums and available via textual and electronic media. The topic will be systematically investigated according to the identification of headdresses, crowns and diadems. Each identified example of an existing diadem will be assigned a typology which forms the basis for individual chapters and will be discussed according to chronology and archaeological provenance/find site information. A systematic set of three primary criteria was identified and applied to each example: these include construction (including materials and dimensions), symbolism and interpretation of each example. The provenance component will provide some background about its owner. The significance of the materials used, and the identification of specific motifs incorporated will be investigated under the symbolism component. Existing ancient textual evidence relating to these diadems, crowns and ceremonial headdresses was identified and located. This will be followed by an analysis and interpretation of each of the identified examples. The discussion and interpretation of typology, motif, form, colour, amuletic and political symbolism are important factors that will be taken into consideration in each chapter. Finally, an analysis of each particular piece using the same systematic set of identified criteria for each will be performed.

³ The quantitative approach is unsuitable for a cultural type of investigation as it involves the gathering of numerical data which is processed before being interpreted.

1.4 SOURCES

Although there is minimal written information, a number of headdresses have survived in the archaeological context. Most importantly, numerous and varied statues, relief engravings and paintings can be used 'to provide an illustrated catalogue which may be used to chronicle changing styles throughout the dynasties' (Tyldesley 1994:163). The sources used in this dissertation are thus a combination of primary resources such as actual examples of diadems recovered in archaeological investigations, artistic representations and references in translation which appear in a variety of ancient texts. In addition, a wide range of scholarly books and journal articles were accessed.

1.4.1 Archaeological and Primary Resources

Many examples of diadems were obtained from archaeological excavations of tombs throughout Egypt and are now housed in museum collections worldwide. The collection details provided in speciality books about Egyptian jewellery such as those by Cyril Aldred (1971), Carol Andrews (1996) and Alix Wilkinson (1971) usually include the excavation/find spot, current location, catalogue number/reference details, period and type of jewellery, material, dimensions and its current condition plus some general contextual information. Museum web pages also contain some relevant information. In certain cases, personal information about the owner may be added such as name, status and gender if known. A desktop study had to be undertaken as it proved impossible to access and handle the existing diadems in collections due to their fragility, value and museum access and security measures. All visual examinations therefore were done using high quality photographs.

The Ptolemaic period was not included in this study as no examples have survived in the archaeological record. Rich in interesting composite headdresses as depicted on reliefs and statuary these are however worthy of closer investigation. Primary research was undertaken by means of photographic examination of selected headdresses from the designated periods. Visual examination of some examples in

the Cairo museum collection, confirm Tyldesley's theory that while some appear to have been well-worn during their owners lifetime, others were manufactured from 'tissue thin metal' and were most probably manufactured for funerary, symbolic or amuletic purposes, never to be worn (Tyldesley 1994:171). Motifs and elements identified in the examples were correlated with photographic examples of statues, reliefs and paintings where relevant.

In a largely illiterate society, it is inevitable that elements of iconography and symbolism were embedded in all aspects of Egyptian art and this rich visual heritage was closely investigated in detail. A combination of surviving examples of headdresses, materials, motifs and mythology together with artistic representations will be used to interpret the hidden messages in Egyptian women's headdresses as set out in various chapters.

1.4.2 Secondary Resources and Literature Review

Inscriptions and texts provide a useful means of not only understanding ancient Egyptian social, political, religious and economic constructs of a specific historical period or geographic location but also places artefacts and artistic representations in context. Generally, ancient written information is sparse although there are some references in the hieroglyphic Pyramid and Coffin texts and also translations in a variety of Old, New and Middle Kingdom literature by Budge (1999), Erman (2005), Fowler (1994), Lichtheim (1973, 1976) and Parkinson (1991) proved useful for translations of pyramid, coffin and other examples of texts that originated in temples, accompanying funerary art in tombs or has been identified in a variety of papyri from different periods. It is envisaged that much of the visual and available textual material in the form of tomb paintings, relief and statues in addition to any available inscriptions and dedications will provide useful in examining the identity, roles, status and lifestyles of the women under investigation, forming a kind of 'visual autobiography'.

A large number of specialist books on ancient Egyptian jewellery were consulted in order to identify a suitable variety and number of examples spanning (where

relevant) the pre-Dynastic, Old, Middle, New and Late Kingdoms. Of these Andrews (1996) is the most recent, but Aldred (1978) and Vilimkova (1969) both provided sound, detailed information on each diadem. Wilkinson (1975) provided a full catalogue of extant diadems, as well as archaeological context and other relevant background information. A wide range of literature incorporating books, journal articles and excavation reports by reputable Egyptologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians and jewellery experts indicates that in some cases information disseminated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are still as valuable now as they were at the time of publication. In historical investigations such as Egyptology, sources are varied in quality. Sometimes excavation or site reports dating from the 19th century still contain important and relevant basic information with regard to provenance of artefacts and especially details of find sites and state of repair of the jewellery, even though the discipline and its methods have progressed substantially in the intervening years. Useful reports include amongst others, those by Brunton (1920), Davis (1908), Dunham (1946), Reisner (1915, 1923) and Winlock (1933, 1934, 1947 and 1948)

Although the majority of sources consulted are the closest and most relevant to the topic, some 'fringe' sources have provided exceptionally interesting background and insight for interpretation of the headdresses. For archaeological theory Hodder (2001), Meskell (2001), Renfrew (1991, 2001 and 2005) and Trigger (2003) were consulted. The various chapters on materials and technology contained in Nicholson & Shaw (2000) were consulted on aspects such as basketry and weaving, textiles, precious metals and stones. Hepper (2009), Manniche (1989) and Wilkinson (1998) were found to be invaluable regarding the Egyptian floral kingdom while Houlihan (1986, 1996) remains the authoritative work on the mammal, reptilian and avian inhabitants along the Nile and its surrounds. Collins (2002), Gemond & Livet (2001), and Ikram (2005) were also useful.

More recent interpretations of the discipline of Egyptology focus on aspects such as gender studies, individual identity and the constructs of value in the ancient Egyptian society. Archer *et al* (1994), Graves-Brown (2010), Nelson (2006, 2007), Robins (1993), Troy (1986) and Tyldesley (1994, 2007) were invaluable resources regarding the lifeways of the women of ancient Egypt which has been necessary to establish

cultural context for how material objects defined women in their society as was Roach & Bubulz (1965). Kern (1959) was extremely valuable as a resource on the development of certain styles of diadem. Patch (2011) and Wilson (1999) provided insight into the pre-Dynastic period, its art and the emergence of royal iconography and symbolism.

No investigation into Egyptian symbolism and iconography can be undertaken without extensive consulting of Richard Wilkinson's books '*Reading Egyptian Art*' (1994), which is a hieroglyphic guide to painting, sculpture and the minor arts such as jewellery, and '*Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art*' (1999) which provides valuable insight not only into their worldview but also the subsequent interpretation and analysis of the importance of form, colour, materials, number and the incorporation of hieroglyphs. Magic, amulets, mythology, goddesses and their roles in Egyptian society were fully addressed by Andrews (1994), Armour (1986), Bleeker (1967), Brier (1999), Pinch (1994, 2004) and Wilkinson (2003). Tyldesley (2006) provided concise information on the various Dynastic queens, princesses and familial linkages as did Dodson & Hilton (2004). Schafer's '*Principles of Egyptian Art*', first published in 1919, remains invaluable for the basic principles of representation, perspective and elements. Background reading about early symbolism and religious practices, pre-Dynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt was also necessary by D'Errico (2009), Donald (2009), Renfrew & Morley (2009), Rice (2003), Tacon (2009), Wengrow (2003, 2006) and Wilkinson (2001).

1.5 CHAPTER SYNOPSES

Broad outlines of the topics that will be discussed under each chapter are structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the investigation that will focus on the identification, description and analysis of a selected number of particularly interesting and/or unique headdresses that were worn by royal or elite women from as early as 3000

BCE to the Late Period. It includes the hypothesis, research questions, methodology, sources and chapter synopses.

Chapter 2: Ideology, Iconography and Symbolism of Feminine Headdresses

This topic addresses feminine identity in ancient Egyptian art which is generally defined by the emphasis on their visual and external appearance. Headdresses in the ancient Egyptian world indicated not only a growing sense of individuality and hierarchy within the larger social context. Innovative and imaginative symbols and motifs that were believed to have amuletic power were incorporated into headdresses contributing to the non-verbal messages that were conveyed. This chapter will discuss the overall ideology, development and design of ancient Egyptian headdresses in relation to the role of elite women in ancient Egyptian society. An overview will be provided of the different types of headdresses commonly worn by both men and women. The diadems to be examined will be broadly defined in a broad typology ranging from simple headbands to complex wig coverings.

Chapter 3: Materials

Egyptian art was intricately linked with the nature of the materials out of which the artefacts were crafted and so the physical qualities of materials were more often than not magnified by mythological associations and perceived magical properties. Discussion of the precious metals and semi-precious and imitation materials favoured by ancient Egyptian jewellers will be provided in this chapter as necessary background to the investigation of examples that will be analysed. The mythological and magical beliefs surrounding the materials and colour connotations will also be included as these play an important role in their incorporation into personal adornment.

Chapter 4: Jewellery Techniques

Ancient Egyptian jewellery had a very unique and distinct style which evolved as tools and technology developed and decorative skills were diversified by specialist gold- and silversmiths and lapidaries. As this is not a technical study, a brief overview of the craftsmen, the individual jewellery techniques used and

decorative processes employed in the manufacture of the diadems to be investigated is considered essential as a background to enable visual observation and of the examples that will be analysed.

Chapter 5: Floral Motifs

Flowers and floral decorations in general were an integral part of the Egyptian civilization, being used as offerings in temples, in bouquets and garlands for festivals, as a source of fragrant oils and for adornment. This chapter provides a background of common flower species and motifs represented in the surviving examples of Old, Middle, New and Late Kingdom headdresses and diadems in particular, in order to aid identification. Mythology and cultic or religious beliefs will also be addressed in order to complete the picture.

Chapter 6: The Development of Headdress Diadems from the Pre-Dynastic to the New Kingdom

The earliest evidence of Egyptian headdresses date to the pre-historic era and were increasingly evident as a means to delineate status and wealth within a community. Early examples were not only practical but the use of colour and materials used in their manufacture provide evidence of symbolic thought development. This chapter will discuss the earliest examples of a pre-Dynastic 'proto-diadem' and the evolution of textile headbands and metal circlets discovered in the archaeological context into the formal diadem Dynastic period headdresses.

Chapter 7: Circlets, Headbands, Knots, Bows and Streamers

A close look at temple, tomb and statuary representations indicate that headbands and circlets were worn across the social hierarchy by both sexes. These appear to have ranged from woven textile and beadwork to metal embellished with a variety of motifs. This chapter aims to investigate the development of this form of headdress from the Old to New Kingdoms. The types of embellishment and favoured motifs will be examined using four well provenanced examples found in the archaeological context. Three similar surviving Old Kingdom examples bearing similar bird and floral motifs will be examined separately and discussed according to three aspects: construction,

symbolism and interpretation. A fourth surviving example of a circlet headband which fits into the typology but dates to a later period will also be investigated.

Chapter 8: Fillets, Rosettes and Medallions

Simple headbands gradually developed into more elegant items of jewellery by the incorporation of elaborate embellishment in the form of rosettes, medallions and central focal elements such as cobras and vultures. Indicative of developing and improving jewellery design and manufacturing technology, these elements were inlaid with semi-precious stone, glass or faience. This chapter investigates and analyses two well-provenanced diadems, one dating from the Old Kingdom and the other a splendid example of changing New Kingdom fashion and techniques. Each example will be examined separately and discussed according to three aspects: construction, symbolism and interpretation.

Chapter 9: Floral Garlands and Boatmen's Circlets

Floral garlands were without doubt the oldest choice headdress. This chapter will investigate and analyse three New Kingdom examples that illustrate the simple floral garland transformed into intricate, inlaid circlets fit for a princess. Each example will be examined and discussed separately according to three criteria: construction, symbolism and interpretation.

Chapter 10: Horned Headdresses

Animal imagery dominates Egyptian art giving some indication of the richness of the fauna in the early dynastic and Pharaonic eras. There is strong evidence of complex and underlying symbolism, although many interpretations are often speculative and controversial. This chapter aims to investigate the variety of antelope images used in existing headdresses. Each example will be examined and discussed separately according to three criteria: construction, symbolism and interpretation.

Chapter 11: Cap Headdresses

The cap headdress is well-attested visually in a number of reliefs and representations and appears to have been worn by the wealthy and elite during their lifetimes. Of these, the New Kingdom example is the most well-known and

provides a good example of this form of adornment and most importantly, its manufacture. This chapter aims to investigate the possible origins, mythological linkages, materials and construction of this well-provenanced and particularly spectacular cap headdress. This example has also been used as a basis to speculate on another well-attested form of royal headdress which has not been found in the archaeological record. The Egyptian vulture is a well recognisable iconographic symbol in headdresses associated with royal women and although none of these have survived in the archaeological record, artistic representational evidence for this type of headdress will also be evaluated and potential construction will be discussed. Close-fitting embellished leather caps associated with the female Nubian rulers have been included. Each example will be examined and discussed separately according to three criteria: construction, symbolism and interpretation.

Chapter 12: Wig and Hair Ornaments

An alternative form of feminine adornment by the wearing of hair ornaments became increasingly more elaborate according to status and wealth. Three examples of the more elaborate existing wig coverings and hair ornaments from the early Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom will be investigated and discussed in this chapter. Simple pendants and animal-shaped amulets were also popular embellishments for attachment to long hair and braided wig extensions for women from a variety of ages and social groups. Each example will be examined and discussed separately according to three criteria: construction, symbolism and interpretation.

Chapter 13: Conclusion

This section will summarise the symbolism and iconography presented in different examples of existing ceremonial, cultic or recreational headdresses which it is envisaged, will provide clues to the private individual versus the public identity of the women in question.

CHAPTER 2: IDEOLOGY, ICONOGRAPHY AND SYMBOLISM OF FEMININE HEADDRESSES

Abstract

Egyptian men and women are characterised in the visual arts by distinct headdresses. As the head is uppermost and imminently visible it is thereby ideal when seeking to make a strong social, political or religious statement. Adorning the head with innovative and imaginative symbols signified leaders, hierarchical status and deities. Ideology, symbolism and iconography were widely used by the Egyptians to indicate individuality and the manipulation of self-image. Self-expression cannot be ruled out. Although a substantial amount has been written about the use of materials and manufacturing techniques by recognized specialists, there has been limited discussion in published literature detailing the symbolism and the inherent iconography of specific headdresses. As there is no evidence of previous work on this particular topic, this chapter will attempt to outline the rise of the visible display of wealth, defining the purpose of the diadem and the wearer. The existing examples of diadems will also be categorised into distinct typologies for the purpose of analysis.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Numerous scholarly books⁴ and journal articles investigate the materials, techniques, design and styles of ancient Egyptian jewellery but only passing reference has been made to the inherent symbolism of the elements, motifs and attributes that make up each piece. Cifarelli observes that ‘while ancient jewellery is a feast for the eyes, it presents significant challenges to scholarly interpretation’ primarily because it does not conform with the types of enquiry that are applied to monumental architecture of works of art (2010:7). It is a portable form of wealth, transferrable within family groups, passed down for generations and transportable across long distances. Its ‘context of original intention’ being on the living body of its owner. In all categories, surviving examples of headdresses in the archaeological record are particularly rare and much of the available information about the examples, including descriptions of the intricate details and the context in which these were worn, has had to be gleaned from sculptured stone statues, carved reliefs on temple walls and brightly coloured tomb paintings.

Aldred (1978), Andrews (1996), Vilímková (1969) and Wilkinson (1975) are considered the most comprehensive reference works, yet none of these provide any

⁴ Cf. Aldred (1978) Andrews (1996), Wilkinson (1975) and Vilímková (1969).

useful insight into the symbolism or iconography of the individual pieces of headdress jewellery discussed in the text or depicted in the accompanying photographs or line illustrations. Given that during ancient times, mythology and religion so indicative of world view were embedded in material art, it is not surprising to find that looking critically at the detail of an individual item such as a diadem, is like peeling a many-layered onion, each layer rich in metaphor, allusion and meaning.

2.2 ADORNING THE HEAD WITH SYMBOLS

According to Renfrew (2001:130) it is the use and interpretation of symbols in a form of non-verbal communication that distinguishes humankind. Dress, hair, jewellery and the use of cosmetics are all a form of interpersonal communication, denoting not only status and social roles, but also personality notes Klem (1982:46-47). He adds that non-verbal communication is often intentional, controlled by social conventions and/or ritual and is often learned subconsciously according to specific cultures.⁵ Adorning the head with innovative, imaginative and, most importantly, easily recognisable symbols such as feathers, diadems and crowns occurs in most ancient cultures. It signified leaders, hierarchical status and even defines deities by the incorporation of elements, attributes and iconography as part of the design (Asher-Greve 1996:81). In the ancient Egyptian context, decorative designs or motifs, symbolism, magical meaning and hieroglyphic elements as well as iconography were employed to indicate individuality, self-expression and the manipulation of self-image. The choice of personal adornment, in particular headdresses as gender-associated artefacts, reveals a hidden sphere of religious, political and social inter-play as 'gender is often expressed via and, simultaneously, by material culture' that almost certainly can be related to individual identities in a number of Pharaonic women (Sweeney 2011:3).

The visual arts of the ancient Egyptian culture not only provide information on the types and styles of jewellery but how it was worn or used in different periods and by

⁵ Non-verbal communication can also include body movement or gesture, body posture, facial expression, eye contact and physical appearance. As such, it can be used to emphasise, complement, contradict, replace or reinforce what is being communicated verbally (Steinberg 1994/1995:45-48).

whom, thereby complementing archaeological excavations and textual sources. Although well-provenanced, headdresses from caches and burial sites often lack context in that it is difficult to ascertain the age or gender of the original wearer as these were sometimes handed down through generations. Others were looted and taken as booty by invading forces or melted down and components reworked by others. In the archaeological record extant examples of ancient Egyptian headdresses are limited to those found *in situ* in the funerary context while sculpture, carved wall reliefs and painted tomb depictions provide clues to the existence of others. The low survival rate may be due to the nature of the organic materials used in their construction or to excessive looting by tomb robbers in ancient and more recent times.

2.2.1 Innovative and imaginative symbols of distinction

Personal adornment has occurred since Egyptian pre-Dynastic times, when pretty stones, shells or bones were used to indicate a growing sense of individuality and hierarchy within the larger group. Items dating from this period were considered not simply objects of personal adornment but were also believed to have magical and shamanic power, particularly in matters central to the lifestyle of the time such as hunting, fertility and success in battle (Albersmeier 2005:7). Initially, figures of animals and vegetal motifs vied for popularity in the largely agrarian society. At a later stage signs, symbols and attributes of deities were conceived and developed as a powerful form of non-verbal communication. Many of these connotations were incorporated into ancient Egyptian headdresses magical, religious and protective significance was inherent in many decorative pieces.

As a means of beautification of the body, headdresses became an aesthetic concept for both men and women, largely shaped by the gradually changing dictates of religious cult or fashion. The body was not only adorned during a person's lifetime but also as part of their funerary beliefs. In addition to being worn by royal, noble as well as ordinary men, women and children, headdresses adorned cultic images of the wide variety of anthropomorphic deities incorporating their various attributes and

symbols (Bahrani 1995:1635). Contemporary illustrations on tomb reliefs, monumental structures or smaller items such as statuettes usually provide useful background information on how these items were worn or used.

2.2.2 Early Evidence of Headdresses

In remote desert locations, depictions of innovative and imaginative symbols of distinction are identified on wall paintings as what has been identified as ostrich feathers worn on the head. The earliest evidence of the delineation of social status and also the beginnings and development of religious beliefs, mythology and its associated iconography and symbolism, so indicative of their unique world view, would later permeate Dynastic art forms. Originally they were made from natural products such as waterweed, papyrus, flowers, horns or feathers, and, as metal- and stone-working techniques and tools developed, so jewellers 'contrived to translate into less transitory materials the colour and design of such natural forms' and their creations became increasingly innovative (Aldred 1978:12). A fine example of this development is the naturalistic transformation from the traditional handful of waterweeds known as a 'boatmen's fillet' into a delicate gold wire and semi-precious stone diadem belonging to the Princess Khnumet which was discovered at Dashur by De Morgan between 1894 and 1895.⁶

Although primarily for adornment, headdresses not only carried symbolic and iconographic messages of social and political hierarchy but were also worn for amuletic purposes. Generally, little is known about individual ancient Egyptian women but in some cases the context and items of jewellery provided not only their names but, through accompanying textual evidence, an insight into the lives of individual women, especially when found in well-provenanced burial contexts such as those at Dashur and Lahun, which were excavated at the end of the 19th or at the beginning of the 20th century.

⁶ This diadem will be described and discussed in full in Chapter 9.

The head is not only the uppermost part of the human body, making it instantly visible, but, by extension, uniquely capable of making a strong social, political or religious statement. Innovative and imaginative symbols were used to indicate status in ancient cultures. It should not be forgotten that Ancient Egypt had strong links with surrounding North African cultures. Animal deities or composite forms with totemic associations abounded in Neolithic North African societies and there are many examples captured in the archaeological record, in ancient rock art and on pottery vessels (Kusimba 1996:62).

Egyptian headdresses appear to have evolved from the simple pre-Dynastic ostrich or falcon feathers and cattle horns depicted in rock art to ornately embellished composite crowns, delicately inlaid diadems. During a particularly turbulent New Kingdom period the royal headdresses were adapted into unique tall hats that appear to emulate the plaited grass headdress worn by some modern North African tribes on special occasions. While lions or snakes were revered for their dangerous characteristics, bovine iconography was widely adopted because of their social and economic importance in the pastoralist and nomadic societies that flourished along the Nile in the Sahara and Sudan. Kusimba (1996:63) making reference to Ki-Zerbo (1981:669), notes that:

‘The Saharan representations of oxen or cows with discs between their horns, is much earlier than those of the cow-goddess Hathor. The hawk delicately carved in sandstone plaque at Hammada el Guir is much earlier than the ram of Amon’.

These can thus be considered not only forerunners of the Egyptian deities but the earliest evidence of this kind of symbolism.

The symbolism and iconography of these headdresses, often coded and unintelligible to all but the initiated, became signifiers of distinction. The ancient Egyptian culture in particular developed formulaic headdresses to distinguish and signify their leaders and deities, more often than not incorporating divine attributes and iconography as part of the design and rendering a person or deity immediately recognizable to a largely illiterate population (Asher-Greve 1996:181). Floral, faunal, avian and celestial elements predominated as an innovative form of nonverbal communication, depending on the context or cultic relationship.

2.3 TYPES OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN HEADDRESSES

Despite their widespread depiction in royal miniature portrait statuary, monumental sculpture and on a variety of temple and tomb reliefs, no ancient Egyptian crowns have ever been found during excavations. In order to investigate the headdresses favoured by royal, elite and sometimes the ordinary women of Egyptian society, it is necessary to obtain a brief background of the variety of royal crowns and other headdresses that were commonly worn and depicted in art during the Dynastic Period. These include the *Deshret* (Red) Crown of Upper Egypt, the Hedjet (White) Crown of Lower Egypt and the *Pschent* (Double) Crown which combined the two former headdresses, signifying a unified Egypt. Other royal headdresses worn on special state or religious occasions include the composite *Atef* and the ornate *Hemhem* crowns. The embellished *Khepresh* bonnet was believed to be worn in military situations. Both the striped *Nemes* and *Khat* textile headdresses were commonly depicted as worn during the Pharaonic era while the cap headdress appears to have been favoured followers of Ptah and also by the Nubian rulers. These headdresses were not generally worn by women, being primarily male royal regalia unless, as in the cases of Sobeknefru, Hatshepsut and Tausret/Tawosret for example, a woman assumed the role of Regent or Pharaoh in her own right after starting their careers as the more conventional King's Daughter or King's Wife (Tyldesley 2006:21). The relatively simple *modius* headdresses were often favoured as the base for increasingly ornate composite elements combining cultic and religious symbols. The male headdresses will, however, not be addressed in this study as the focus will be on extant examples of feminine headdress, which generally takes the form of a hoop, fillet or diadem of some kind. Apart from S10 denoting a headband or fillet, female headdresses did not have a specific sign in Gardiner's hieroglyphic sign list as listed by Wilkinson (1972:216).

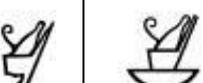
GARDINER'S LIST NUMBER	HIEROGLYPH	ITEM DESCRIPTION	MEANING
S1 & S2 (+V30)		White Crown of Upper Egypt	(S1) and (S2) were used either as a determinative or as an ideogram in <i>ḥḏt</i> 'white crown'.
S3 & S4		Red Crown of Lower Egypt	(S3) and (S4) could be used phonetically for the letter 'n', as a preposition, as a determinative or as the ideogram <i>dšrt</i> 'Red Crown'.
S5 & S6 (+V30)		Double 'Unified Egypt' Crown	The double crown was represented by signs (S5) and (S6) in <i>šmty</i> 'double crown' and could be used either as a determinative or an ideogram
S7		Blue Crown	The sign (S7) <i>Khepreš</i> was used as a determinative or an ideogram in <i>ḥprš</i> 'blue crown'
S8		Atef Crown	The sign (S8) Atef was used as a determinative or an ideogram in <i>3ff</i> 'atef crown'
S9		Double Plumes	The sign (S9) was as used a determinative or ideogram in <i>šwty</i> 'double plumes'
S10		Diadem, headband, fillet	The sign (S10) was used phonetically as <i>mdḥ</i> 'fillet'
V30		Basket	The sign (V30) was used phonetically as <i>nb</i> denoting 'all' or alternatively 'lord/lady' or 'master' ⁷ .

Figure 2.1: Gardiner's List (Wilkinson, 1972: 216) of ancient Egyptian Headdress Hieroglyphs

The Egyptians held the belief that the king was the holder of divine office derived from the gods from the beginnings of Time and was thus, as absolute monarch, an integral part of the divinely ordained world as stressed in the royal titulary as the embodiment of the god Horus and son of the sun-god Re (Leprohon 1995:274).⁸ When power was transferred to a new king it was done by means of a number of visible symbols such as the double crown (*sekhemty*) symbolising dominion over the whole land. During the New Kingdom, the elongated Blue Crown (*khepreš*) with the coiled *uraeus* on the forehead was added to the regalia signifying legitimate

⁷ The *neb* sign was used from the earliest times as a stand for the image of a god to indicate its divine nature. The vulture (G14) and cobra/uraeus (I12) were shown atop baskets to signify their identity as tutelary deities of Upper and Lower Egypt and in their role as *nebtj* 'The Two Ladies' writes Wilkinson (1994:99). It was used in a similar context under the various crowns to indicate not only divinity of the king or queen but also status and power as 'lord over all'.

⁸ Representations of the king on temple walls, for example, portray him as being in a subservient role to the gods, in attitudes of offering, adoration or prostration usually receiving the gift of Life from them, thereby clearly indicating the relationship (Leprohon 1995:274).

succession, adds Leprohon (1995:275). According to Hook (1958:78), coronations were performed at one of the 'decisive moments in the calendar', such as the beginning of one of the three seasons, but there is, however, no correlated textual and visual accounts of any coronation to provide insight into the exact order of the ceremonies that were performed.⁹ What can be deduced is that the king was purified by the gods of the cardinal points using the symbols of life and power/dominion and anointed before being invested with each individual crown. Symbolic restoration of *Sema-Tawy* (the union of the two lands) was followed by a circumambulation of the walls. Royal crowns, like the crook (*heqa*), meaning 'to rule', and flail/whip¹⁰ and various sceptres, were symbolic of the supremacy that was either conferred during the reign of the king to a co-regent or, as occurred most often, were inherited by the successor during the accession and coronation ceremonies following his predecessor's death. Additional iconography of kingship included the straight false beard¹¹ and the bull's tail suspended from the back of the kilt. It therefore appears as though the royal regalia was indeed handed down as Lichtheim (1976:40) has translated the following from the Pyramid Texts 222 which clearly indicates inheritance of the *Pschent* (double) and *Atef* crowns as well as the *nemes* headdress:

Risen as king upon the great throne,
He has joined the Great Magicians;
The double-crown clings to his head,
Re's *atef*-crown to his brow.
His face is adorned with south-crown and north-crown,
He wears the headband and the helmet;
The tall-plumed ibis-crown is on his head,
The head-cloth embraces his shoulders.
Gathered are the crowns of Atum,
Handed over to his image,
As ordained by the maker of gods,
[Amun], the most ancient, who crowned him.'

⁹ The Egyptian calendar was organised according to the state of the Nile River (flood - *Akhet/3ht*; emergence (of the land) - *peret/prt* and harvest/low water *Shomu/Šmw*. The first day of winter (*Peret/Prt*) the fifth month of the Egyptian year) was apparently deemed especially auspicious. Hook (1958:74-81) provides further detail in this regard.

¹⁰ The flail was similar to a whip and consisted of a short staff to which a number of beaded strings were attached and was used by the king in a symbolic representation of smiting enemies, indicating his dominion and power over them.

¹¹ Beards worn by the gods were longer and curved on the end.

Although found largely intact, Tutankhamen's tomb contained royal regalia such as his crook and flail but apart from some spectacular diadems featuring fabulously inlaid vulture and *uraei* elements, no iconic royal headdresses were found, notes Shaw (2012: 21, 77). Brier (1998:95) speculates that these crowns were regarded as not only having both religious and magical properties imbuing the wearer with divinity, but also as state property. As such, the royal crowns would not have been retained as a personal possession to be interred with the deceased but along with divinity ceremoniously passed on to the king's successor at the coronation ceremony. The queen consort *hemet-nesu* (king's wife) would assume her duties during the accession and coronation ceremonies by also donning the relevant regalia in order to assume her important roles in political and religious events, advises Tyldesley (2006:16). As the essential female element to the semi-divine king and mother to the nuclear royal family, from the 12th Dynasty onwards the queen wore a number of increasingly complex crowns and headdresses. In the case of absence of the king for whatever reason, she could be called upon to rule on his behalf or a son who was a minor, as regent but even as widow, she retained a position of respect and power. In some of these instances, the queen, for example Hatshepsut, assumed the full male royal regalia of crowns, crook, flail and bull's tail for formal iconographic purposes. Of the headdresses depicted in various forms of art, the *khat* and the *modius* combined with various symbolic elements to form different composite headdresses for what can be interpreted as specific cultic events were generally worn by women. These will not be investigated in this study due to lack of surviving examples. Feminine headdresses, especially the iconic vulture cap traditionally worn by Great Royal wives, have also not been found, possibly for the same reasons already outlined. Some examples of *mdh* diadem/fillet/circlets have, however, survived relatively intact or in good condition in the archaeological record to enable detailed investigation and will be used as the basis for this study.

- The *Hedjet/Hadjet* (*hdt*) was commonly known as the 'White Crown of Upper Egypt and also dates to the pre-Dynastic era. Elongated in shape with a bulbous top, it has been speculated that it was made from leather, felted wool or that it was woven like a basket from plant fibre, possibly papyrus. As with the Red Crown, as no example has been discovered even in relatively intact royal tombs (such as that of Tutankhamun), it has been suggested that this crown may also

have been inherited. The earliest evidence is on the Qustul incense burner which, although distinctively Nubian in form, incorporated the images which later became associated with Egyptian pharaohs such as a falcon deity, the *serehk* or place façade, a procession of what appears to be sacred boats and the distinctive white crown. It has been suggested that Nubian A-group rulers and the originally southern Egyptian kings were perhaps more closely connected than originally thought, using the same iconography as attested in the similarities depicted in numerous examples of rock art.¹² Roy (2011:215) does, however, note that new evidence from Cemetery U at Abydos dating to Naqada III indicates that the iconography does appear earlier. Early depictions of this headdress have also been found in Northern Nubia at Ta-Seti, dating to 3500-3200 BCE. Later King Narmer of the 1st Dynasty was clearly depicted wearing the white crown on the Narmer Palette as illustrated in Figure 2.2a (below). The deities Nekhbet and Horus are often seen in both animal and anthropomorphic form in illustrations, statues, reliefs and jewellery wearing the *hedjet*. This appears in hieroglyphics (S1 and S2) and in as *hdt*, a determinative or ideogram indicating ‘white crown’ as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (page 21).



Figure 2.2a: Hedjet (White) Crown of Lower Egypt as depicted on Narmer Palette
[Royal Ontario Museum]

¹² An alternative view is that the Nubian rulers emulated the symbols of prestige and power used by Egyptian pharaohs on this particular artefact which may have been presented as a gift or part of tribute.

- The *Deshret* royal headdress, also called the 'Red Crown of Lower Egypt', dates to the pre-Dynastic era. It was named for the red desert land associated with danger and chaos that abutted the black land of the Nile and the Nile Delta basin (*Kemet*) and possibly the god Seth but was later adopted by the 1st Dynasty kings as part of their common symbolic regalia. In shape it resembles a tall, slightly tapering, open-topped and cut-away cylinder with a protruding curlicue which resembles the proboscis of the honey bee as illustrated in Figure 2.2b (below). The bee was accorded solar significance as, according to one myth, the insects were created 'when the god Re wept and his tears fell to earth in the form of bees' writes Wilkinson (1994:115).¹³ The king was later known as *Nesw-bit* 'He of the sedge'¹⁴ and bee' so this imagery for the rulers of Lower Egypt was very appropriate (Wilkinson 1999:94). The bee played an important part in Egyptian society as honey was commonly used in food but most importantly it was a key ingredient the preparation of medicinal compounds and also in unguents¹⁵.



Figure 2.2b: *Deshret* (Red) Crown of Upper Egypt depicted on Narmer Palette
[Royal Ontario Museum]

¹³ In addition to Re, the bee was also associated with Amun, Min and Neith. Indeed, the temple of Neith at Sais, was called *per-bit* 'the house of the bee'.

¹⁴ The sedge was the heraldic plant of Upper Egypt (M23) and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 (Feminine Floral Motifs). Various aspects of beekeeping are depicted on wall panels.

¹⁵ The hieroglyph sign for bee (L2) *bit* , was also used as an ideogram for Lower Egypt. Numerous signs in a group mean 'swarms'. The head is sometimes omitted from representations owing to it being a stinging and thus dangerous insect.

According to Egyptian mythology, it is believed that *deshret* was first given to Horus to symbolize his rule over Lower Egypt by the god Geb who personified the earth and, as such, was one of the most important primeval gods. The distinctive crown was subsequently an important aspect of the transmission of kingship, as it was believed they were successors to Horus. According to the 'Contendings of Horus and Seth' (as captured in Papyrus Chester Beatty I), it was Geb who not only championed Horus but also ultimately determined the rightful heir in mythology (Wilkinson 2003:105).

Due to the lack of surviving examples in the archaeological record, it has been theorised that the Red Crown was inherited by the succeeding king from his deceased predecessor during the coronation ceremony following the precedent set in mythology. It has been suggested that this crown may have been woven from plant fibre such as papyrus. However, I propose that cattle hide or tanned leather was also a strong and very logical possibility. This theory is supported by the red colour and the strong links with cattle in early royal imagery, such as the use of the bull's tail as part of the king's regalia. Although the earliest evidence of the red crown appears on a pottery shard from Naqada the most well-known example is that of King Narmer wearing the Red Crown on both the Narmer palette and the Narmer mace head. The Red Crown appears in hieroglyphics (S3 and S4) as *dšrt*, a determinative or ideogram indicating 'red crown' as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (page 21).

Utterance 239 of the Unas Pyramid Texts (Lichtheim 1973:32) provides the following information:

'The triumph of the White Crown
White-crown goes forth,
She has swallowed the Great;
White-crown's tongue swallowed the Great,
Tongue was not seen!'

The White and Red Crowns were more than just headdresses to be donned by the king; they represented the union of the two lands, the victorious Upper and the vanquished Lower Egypt.

- The *Pschent* was a combination of the red *deshret* and white *hedjet* crowns into a double crown known as *sekhemty/shm-ty*, 'the Two Powerful Ones' representing the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt. It features the *uraeus* (Egyptian cobra), rearing and ready to strike at the king's enemies, symbolising the Lower Egyptian goddess Wadjet and also the vulture, symbolising the Upper Egyptian goddess Nekhbet. In this context, the tutelary goddesses appeared as part of kings' iconography and were referred to in titulary as *nebty*, as the 'Two Ladies' (Wilkinson 2003:214). In some instances, the vulture was replaced by a second cobra. Although generally attributed to the 1st Dynasty King Menes, pictorial evidence dates its first appearance in a rock inscription to the reign of Djet. *Pschent* crowns appear in conjunction with all the 1st Dynasty names of Lower Egyptian monarchs which appear on the Palermo Stone King List, marking the unification notes Kemp (2006:92).

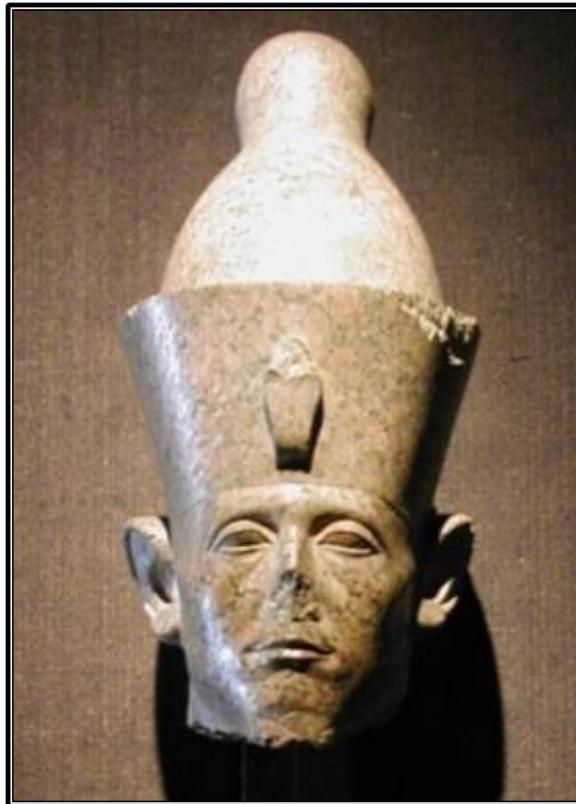


Figure 2.2c: *Pschent* (Double) crown worn by Senusret III (12th Dynasty)
[Luxor Museum]

As is the case with both the *deshret* and *hedjet*, there is also a lack of archaeological evidence for the *pschent* crown but the materials can be assumed to be the same as those used to make the other two crowns. Horus, Ra and Atum are generally depicted wearing the double crown representative of the special relationship between the ruling king and these particular deities. It appears in hieroglyphics (S5 and S6) as *shm-ty*, a determinative or ideogram indicating 'double crown' as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (page 21).

- The *Atef* crown was the bulbous *hedjet* 'white crown' of Upper Egypt flanked by a pair of ostrich feathers symbolising the concept of *ma'at*, surmounted by a *uraeus* at its centre front and sometimes combined with a pair of ram horns as illustrated in Figure 2.2d (page 29). It was generally depicted as being worn by the god Osiris, representing fertility and the cycle of birth and rebirth. Depictions of kings wearing the *Atef* crown originate from the 5th Dynasty. It appears in hieroglyphics (S8) *3tf*, a determinative or ideogram indicating 'atef crown' as illustrated in Figure 2.1 (page 21).

A number of individual elements such as the flanking plumes made from metal have been discovered giving credence to the headdress as potentially being composite.¹⁶ As illustrated in Figure 2.2e (page 29), this large solid bronze decorative plume element dated to the early New Kingdom is indicative of the superb craftsmanship of that era and would have constituted the right side of a royal *hemhem* or *atef* crown.¹⁷ The extraordinary element represents the horn of a ram with long, undulating horns, the feather of *ma'at* (justice) and the dual cobra-*uraeus* 'defender of Egypt' surmounted with a solar disk.

Traces of red and blue faience/glass can be seen on the flanking *uraeus*. This element appears to have been connected to the rest of the piece by the two large tenons protruding from the feather and by attachment rings hidden behind the

¹⁶ Judging from the tenons on these pieces that include amongst others, what would have been inlaid ureai and double plumes, these decorative elements appear to have been made for attachment to a variety of crowns/headdresses and destined for statues. There can be no doubt that similar elements for attachment to real crowns/headdresses would also have been fashioned in the same way. Further investigation into these decorative elements has the potential to bring a brand new experimental aspect to the study into this aspect.

¹⁷ Given the dimensions, it has been estimated that the plume would have formed part of an *atef* or *hemhem* crown for a monumental stone statue measuring approximately 2.2 metres in height.

horn. It is uncertain whether the statue was that of a god or a king, as both were represented as wearing similar crowns during the New Kingdom (1570-1085 BCE). This piece has been dated from the earlier part of Dynasty 18, before the Amarna period.



Figure 2.2d: Atef crown on a bronze statue of Osiris
[State Museum of Egyptian Art, Munich]



Figure 2.2e: Bronze Atef plume with additional ram's horn and uraeus elements
(New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty 1570 BCE–1380 BCE. Dimensions: 38.5 cm. Weight 1600 g)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

- The ornate *Hemhem* crown was composed of a pair of corkscrew rams horns surmounted by the triple Atef or bundles of papyrus and usually featured double *uraei* as illustrated in Figure 2.2f (page 30). Depictions of this crown begins during the Early 18th dynasty of Egypt. In the ancient Egyptian language '*hemhem*' meant 'to shout/cry out'. It has thus been speculated that that there may have been a strong connection with a horn sounded during battle. Ram horns based on the species *Ovis longipes palaeoegytiaca*, the first species to be domesticated and raised in Egypt, were associated with the creator god Khnum from pre-Dynastic times and later with Osiris who is often depicted with a pair of rams' horns at the base of the single *atef* crown. Later, the more recently introduced species *Ovis platyra aegyptica* was used. Khnum was most commonly

depicted in semi-anthropomorphic form as a ram-headed man wearing a tripartite wig surmounted by horizontal ram horns, and the White Crown flanked by twin plumes known as the *atef* crown and surmounted by a solar disc (Wilkinson 2003:194), thereby effectively combining the iconography of the powerful and popular creator deity with the sun-god Re and the symbolism of the White Crown associated with Lower Egypt and the *atef* crown connected to Osiris.



Figure 2.2f: Metal votive statuette of child-god Harpocrates wearing a *Hemhem* crown, *nemes* and *sidelock* (Late Ptolemaic Period 664-30 BCE - Dimensions: 22 cm x 110.6 x 7.2 cm) [Metropolitan Museum of Art]

Initially venerated at Elephantine at Aswan, the cult temple at Esna provides useful information as set out in wall inscriptions. The corkscrew ram horn was more often associated with the iconography of the god Amun-Re as a man with the head of a ram as opposed to the straight/undulating horns reflecting the species of sheep that were associated with the god Khnum. The introduced species was known for its procreative vigour, writes Wilkinson (2003:95). Worshipped at numerous temples throughout Egypt especially following successful New Kingdom military campaigns, representations of Khnum can be found in the avenues of rams or ram-headed lions (*crisosphinxes*) symbolising the solar-related aspect of this deity, along the processional route leading to Amun's temples at Karnak and the Southern Sanctuary at Luxor (Wilkinson 2003:95).

The great festival barque of Amun, 'lord of the two horns', was also decorated with rams' horns.¹⁸

Apart from representations on reliefs and sculpture, no *hemhem* crowns have survived in the archaeological record and one can only speculate what materials were used in its construction based on its separate elements. Given the importance of papyrus in Egyptian iconography, it has been suggested that the central elements could have originally been based on tied bundles with the surmounting sun-discs being symbolic of the sun god Re and thus incorporating solar imagery.

It should be noted that both Akhenaten and Nefertiti are represented wearing elaborate *hemhem* crowns, supported by a *modius* surrounded with multiple *uraei* atop a *khat* head covering. This is indicative that the *hemhem* could in fact have been worn by other queens but that no corroborating depictions have survived. Another example appears on the back panel of the Tutankhamun chair.

It is therefore proposed that it is possible that initially real rams horns covered with gilding formed the base, surmounted by a combination of other materials including ostrich plumes and that, at a much later stage with the introduction of semi-precious stones and improved jewellery-making skills and metal technologies, the headdress may have been made from precious metals with separate attachments in the form of plumes inlaid with the favoured lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian plus gold solar discs. Given the connections with war, the combination of rams' horns, the protection of Khnum/Amun and the *atef* makes sense for this turbulent New Kingdom period.

- The *Khepresh*, also known as the 'blue' or 'war' crown, appears to have been popularised during the New Kingdom when it was frequently depicted being worn on military campaigns and also worn during ceremonial processions. The earliest

¹⁸ The *shofar* mentioned in Hebrew Biblical, Talmudic and rabbinic sources, is described as a musical instrument made from horn in a variety of shapes and sizes depending on the animal (usually a ram). It was commonly used for announcing religious holidays but also to indicate the start of a war as mentioned in Joshua 6:4; Judges 3:27; 7:16, 20 and 1 Samuel. 8:3. The Hebrew word '*keren*' can also be interpreted to mean both 'horn' and power and ancient kings chose to adorn headdresses with horns a being symbolic of strength, ferocity in battle and subsequent supremacy.

evidence is on a 2nd Intermediate Period stele which dates to King Neferhotep III where the word was written with a determinative which represents the cap crown. In some later examples from the 18th Dynasty, as worn by Ahmose I, the first New Kingdom king, show it as being slightly taller and more angular. It was also depicted as being favoured by Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Amenhotep III notes Davies (1982:69-74). Collier (1993:145-137) indicates that it appeared for the first time in cap form during the 13th Dynasty but that later it was also represented in more complex versions, with the addition of ram horns, additional *uraeus* (surmounted by the red and white crowns), feathers and a sun disk.¹⁹ As with other important royal regalia, the distinctive protective, coiled protective *uraeus* appears on the centre front of the brow as clearly illustrated in Figure 2.2g (page 33).

Like the Red, White and Double Crowns, no Blue Crowns have survived to the present day. However, based on numerous and the clear artistic representations in sculpture and wall paintings, it has been speculated that it was made from leather or stiffened textile and covered with an intricate and precise arrangement of a hundreds of sequins or alternatively, metal discs/rings (Maisels 2001:60). A different theory is that the *khepresh*, like the *deshret* and *hedjet*, may have been woven from plant fibre and that the regular arrangement of devices may be an artistic interpretation of the hexagonal holes in the weave. As it is generally depicted in art as being blue, I propose that it is entirely possible that the stone may have been the expensive, imported and symbolically important blue lapis lazuli or glass made locally and appliquéd using some form of glue or even stitched to a moulded leather cap. This would have been much stronger and more resilient to the wear and tear of an extended military campaign and offered greater protection in a battle situation.

¹⁹ Collier (1993) seeks to address some common misconceptions about the use of the *khepresh* as a ‘war crown’, but also details its different forms and variations over time. She proposes a possible Semitic origin and possible introduction by the Hyksos. The more traditional form of the headdress is depicted on Ahmose, the founder of the 18th Dynasty who reunified Egypt. She notes that according to the *Kamutef* (translated as ‘bull of his mother’) theology, it was at this time that the king’s ties to Amun became more complex as the queen simultaneously became both the spouse and the mother of Amun (1993:144-146).



Figure 2.2g: Granodiorite (red granite) statue of Amenhotep III wearing a *Khepresh* crown
 (c. 1380 BCE; Re-carved 1279-1213 BCE - Dimensions 43.2 x 28.6 x 32 cm)²⁰
 [Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore]

The *khepresh* crown appears to have ceased to be worn in the Kushite 21st Dynasty (747–656 BCE). Collier (1993:147) advises that these rulers did however adopt all the other traditional crowns of Egypt and that it was replaced by a headdress referred to as the ‘Kushite cap’. It appears in hieroglyphics (S7) as *ḥprš*, a determinative or ideogram indicating ‘blue crown’ as indicated in Figure 2.1 (page 21).

- **Nemes Headdress:** The striped textile *nemes* headdress is one of the most commonly depicted ancient Pharaonic headdresses and dates from the reign of Djoser. As illustrated in Figure 2.2h (page 34), two flaps of cloth (lappets) hung down at the front, resting on the upper chest. These were gathered and tied together in a braid/chignon-type knot at the back. Traditionally coloured in blue

²⁰ Amenhotep III (1388-1348 BCE) was responsible for a number of large-scale architectural and sculptural programs during his long reign. Ramesses II (of succeeding 19th Dynasty) greatly admired his predecessor's accomplishments and proceeded to copy them at times simply re-carving them as done with this statue. The *khepresh*, or ‘blue crown’, appears frequently in royal sculpture of the New Kingdom. The king wore this crown on campaigns or in ceremonial processions. As with all royal headdresses, the coiled, protective *uraeus* serpent appears at the brow.

and gold, Green (2000:69) advises that the number of width of the stripes appears to have varied.



Figure 2.2h: Front and rear views of Tutankhamen's famous gold and lapis lazuli *Nemes* headdress (18th Dynasty, New Kingdom)
[Cairo Museum]

Based in the information now available for the *khat* headdress worn by New Kingdom Queen Tiye as discussed below, I propose that it is possible that what has been traditionally-viewed as the woven textile *nemes* headdress could in fact have been a carefully threaded three-dimensional network of blue and gold beads thereby forming the iconic *nemes* shape.²¹ The *uraeus* and cobra were often surmounted on the front of this headdress, symbolic of the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. An example of an almost completely decayed *nemes* headdress made from fine linen was found in the Tutankhamen burial, only the pigtail/chignon at the back had survived partially intact. The band around the temple passed behind the ears and under the linen headdress to be tied to the back of the head (Carter Archives: 256,4,p,bis).

- **Khat Headdress:** The *khat* (sometimes also called *afnet*) was a simple textile 'kerchief' or bag-like headdress and, unlike the other royal headdresses, was worn by the nobility of both sexes. It was similar to the well-known striped *nemes*

²¹ The proposed three-dimensional beaded network of the *nemes* headdress could potentially form the basis for an experimental archaeology project.

but without the side flaps and gathered at the back, as opposed to being tied together in a type of ponytail describes Wilkinson (1999:196), adding that the earliest depiction of this style can be found on an ivory label found at Abydos of the 1st Dynasty King Den wearing the *khat* and brandishing a mace. There is no evidence of it again until the reign of king Djoser.

The *khat* headdress appears to have been favoured particularly in the Amarna period but does make an appearance during the New Kingdom's Queen Tiye as illustrated by the famous wooden statuette. Johnson (1991:52) observes that despite the missing original surface, an overall, interlaced pattern which matches the 'small patch of miniscule, brilliantly blue disk-beads'²² that still adheres to the surface. Research indicates that beadwork was done using three basic bead-threading techniques²³. The Tiye headdress appears to have been covered by an intricate network of blue beads but will not however been investigated in this study.

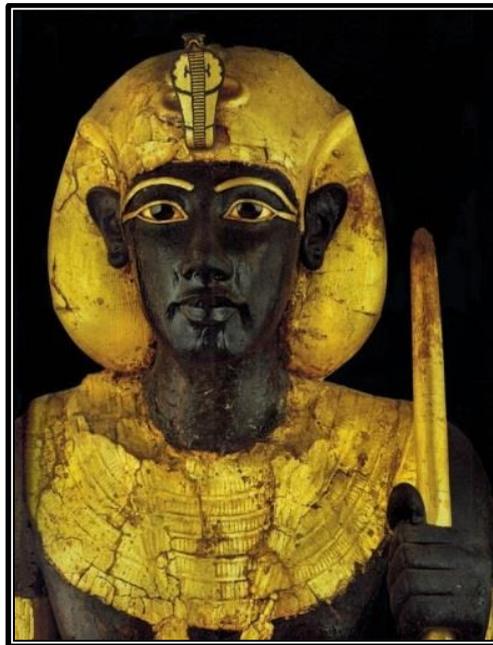


Figure 2.2i: Gold foil *khat* headdress from *ba* statue of Tutankhamun (18th Dynasty, New Kingdom) [Cairo Museum]

²² Also known as seed or ring beads, these were widely used in craft work such as the geometrically-patterned headbands illustrated in New Kingdom tomb paintings. The technique known as netted beadwork is, according to Johnson (1991:53), the strongest and most versatile method and requires no background material, lending itself to a range of uses. The beads lie in 'staggered rows, each bead overlapping slightly, the bead next to it'. The resulting work is both strong and flexible and can be worked to cover three-dimensional surfaces.

²³ Namely (a) sewn/overlaid single-stitch/overlaid spot-stitch; (b) woven beadwork or (c) netted beadwork.

Given the significance of the colour blue in the Egyptian belief system which will be discussed in Chapter 5, the probability of a real *khat* manufactured from netted lapis lazuli, turquoise, glass or faience beadwork does open up speculation whether the blue headdresses depicted as being worn by Tutankhamen and Ankhesenamen were not wigs as traditionally described, but variations of this particular three-dimensional style. Illustrated in Figure 2.2i (page 35), particularly finely made examples of the gilded *khat* headdress were depicted on the two *ba* statues recovered from the tomb of the boy king.

- Cap Crowns worn since the Old Kingdom were also clearly shown on images of the creator god Ptah. Surmounted by double *uraei*, these were generally associated with the 25th Dynasty Kushite kings (800-657 BCE). Referred to as *sdn* during this era, these skull caps made from linen or soft leather were often depicted decorated with horizontal lines, large circular elements (possibly sequins) or a variety of natural shapes. The Nubian Cap crown discovered during excavations at Kerma will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.
- A variety of headdresses using the modius as part of the structure are well attested in both sculpture and relief. According to Sebesta and Bonfante (2001:245) it was named by modern scholars based on the strong resemblance to the Roman unit used specifically to measure dry goods such as grain and symbolized fertility/fruitfulness in those wearing it.²⁴ The higher *polos* headdress appears to have been similar to the *modius* in form and it has been speculated that they both were woven from plant fibre or textile.

As depicted specifically on Egyptian sculpture and wall paintings, the *modius* appears to have been a low, flat-topped cylindrical headdress favoured by Egyptian queens. Surmounting the wigs worn by Egyptian women, it was used as a base for additional and more complex symbolic elements such as papyrus,

²⁴ According to these two authors (Sebesta & Bonfante 2001), the flat-topped *modius* headdress was later also worn by Palmyrene priests.

bovine horns, sun discs and central double or multiple *uraei* and/or vulture elements as illustrated in Figure 2.2j (below).

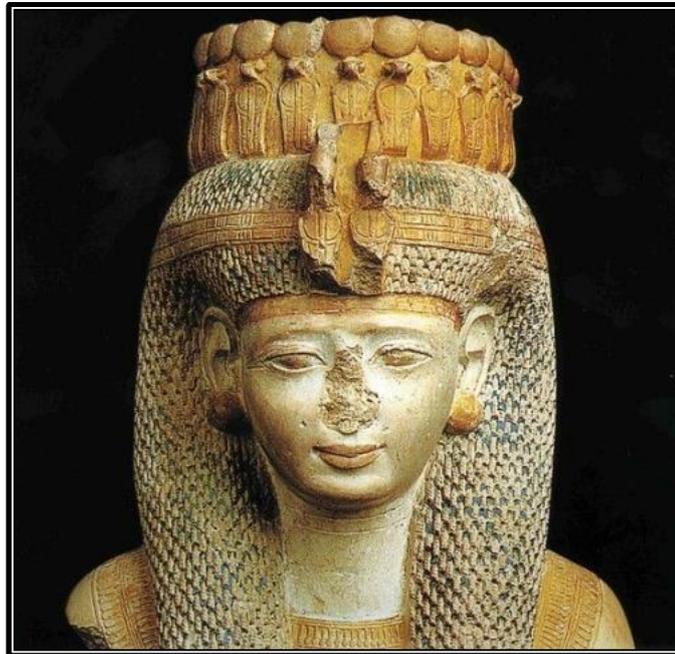


Figure 2.2j: *Modius* headdress of Meritamen, daughter and consort-wife of Ramesses II comprising an ornate wig, twin uraeus with multiple *uraei* and sun discs (Limestone, 19th Dynasty - New Kingdom) [Cairo Museum]

The *modius* was also depicted as being worn by other deities such as Hapy and Mut and later incorporated into the iconography for Greco-Roman god Serapis. In a number of scenes from the High Gate at Medinet Habu temple at Thebes, young women wearing similar costumes and regalia and interacting with the king were referred to as *nfrwt* 'beautiful ones'. Either members of the royal harem or dancers, these women were depicted wearing *modius* headdresses surmounted by neatly arranged bundles of foliage possibly papyrus, sedge or lilies observes O'Connor (2005:446-447). A distinction should however be made between the platform *modius* and the tall circlet worn by women of the court (called *khekeret nesw*) which was also worn as a support for other elements as discussed under the composite headdress.

An interesting observation is that the famous tall Blue Crown worn by Nefertiti is considered to be an elongated version of the *modius* which appears to have been secured by means red ribbons attached to a headband. This detail is clearly visible on the famous painted bust (Figure 2.2k, page 38).



Figure 2.2k: Painted stucco-coated limestone bust of Nefertiti wearing blue headdress
(Amarna period c 1345 BCE. Height: 48 centimetres)
[Neues Museum, Berlin]

Two actual gold bands (not diadems *per se*) that were recovered from the tomb of Tutankhamen (as mentioned previously in connection with the partially decayed linen *nemes* and possibly also securing the textile *khat* headdresses) have narrow slots/eyelets at their ends for threading the decorative ribbon ties or strings that could be concealed underneath. These ribbons are clearly indicated in the Amarna representations as being a distinctive red. Based on a rare depiction from Amarna, Johnson (1991:61) discusses the exciting possibility that what has always been assumed to be a flat-surfaced Blue Crown may indeed have been covered in a textured network of intersticed blue seed beads much like the Tiye headdress. The gold bands used to tie the *khat* headdress in place can be clearly seen on the carved wooden head representing Queen Tiye (Johnson 2015:63). The *modius* was generally depicted on the heads of Egyptian queens and members of the royal family but have been excluded from this study as there are

no surviving examples. There is, however, plenty of scope for further research using examples from sculpture, reliefs and tomb paintings.

- Ornate, heavily symbolic composite headdresses were generally depicted on the heads of Egyptian queens. A distinction should, however, be made between the platform *modius* and the tall circlet of sometimes differing heights worn by women of the court (called *khekeret nesw*) which was worn as a support for other elements. Composite headdresses are sometimes referred to as 'Hathoric diadems' (Green 2000:63). The additional elaborate decorative elements included multiple *uraei* arranged in an outward-facing frieze around a base, an example being that worn by Ankhesenamen which is clearly detailed on the small golden shrine of Tutankhamen. Added to the basic circlet element could be a composition surmounted by bovine horns, sun discs and plumes/ostrich feathers as illustrated in Figure 2.2I (page 40).²⁵

A gilded detail from the back of a cedar wood chair from the tomb of Yuya and Thuyu shows the profile of Princess Sitamun, daughter of Amenhotep III, wearing a headdress comprising carefully arranged upright lotus embellishments atop a *modius* and diadem crown with an unidentifiable central element shown in profile (Johnson 2015:60). Apart from providing visual evidence that composite headdresses appear to have been made in a variety of fantastic and imaginative styles during the New Kingdom, it is uncertain if these were made from actual foliage stuck into a woven basket-type *modius* or fashioned from sheet gold imitations.

The most easily recognisable example of a composite headdress is that worn by the goddess Isis, which usually comprises a vulture cap surmounted by bovine horns enclosing the sun disc as illustrated in Figure 2.2I (page 40). Sometimes, depending on the context in which it was worn, tall *shuti* feathers were added. Composite headdresses appear to have increased in popularity during the Ptolemaic Era.

²⁵ In some depictions, single elements were added to the basic circle, in other events all of those mentioned above, making for what would in all probability have been a heavy, unwieldy headpiece that required a certain amount of balance and decorum to wear graciously!

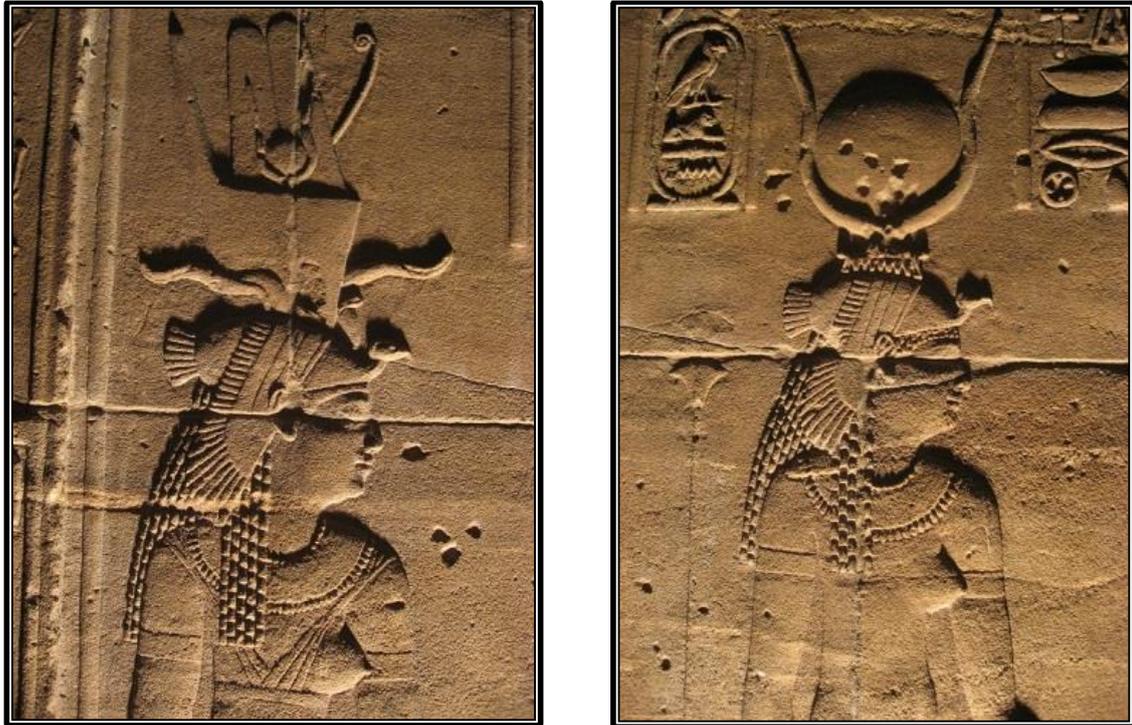


Figure 2.2I: Composite headdresses of Arsinoë II, wife to Ptolemy II Philadelphus) and Isis
 (Ptolemaic Era, 316 BCE –270/260 BCE)
 [Philae Temple, Aswan]

Nilsson (2012) addresses the symbolism and political iconography of the composite crown of Queen Arsinoë II Philadelphus extensively in the context that she ruled as a pharaoh.²⁶ It comprised a combination of the red *Deshret* crown of Lower Egypt, ram horns, a tall double feather plume, cow horns and a solar disk, all surmounting the traditional vulture cap and tripartite wig (Nilsson 2011:1). There is, however, plenty of scope for further research into the iconography and symbolism of feminine headdresses using examples of composite headdresses evident from sculpture, reliefs and tomb paintings. Composite headdresses have also been excluded from this study due to the lack of surviving examples.

- The *Shuti* was a double feather element added to a variety of headdresses and crowns. It was added to the headdress worn by the god Amun. The feathers are usually straight, indicating that this supposed to emulate falcon tail feathers as opposed to the characteristic dual ostrich plumes usually depicted on the *Atef* crown and the single plume associated with the goddess Ma'at. Given the

²⁶ She was Queen of Thrace, Macedonia and Asia Minor as a result of her marriage to King Lysimachus before becoming queen and co-ruler of Egypt together with her brother-husband Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

reference above in the Pyramid Text 222 to ‘the tall-plumed ibis-crown [is] on his head’ it is entirely possible that what has been interpreted as falcon feathers by scholars may indeed be incorrect and that the iconography was originally attributed to Djehuty/Thoth. The *shuti* hieroglyph (S9) was used as both a determinative and an ideogram *šwtj* for ‘double plumes’. The *shuti* will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

- Diadems, circlets, headbands and fillets were sported by both men and women from the Early Dynastic era. This type of headdress was clearly depicted in sculpture, reliefs and wall paintings. The term ‘fillet’ referred not to a cloth tie notes Green (2000:62) but ‘a metal band or diadem which encircled the royal (or elite) head’. In a throwback to an earlier period, the solid gold or silver diadems/fillets are sometimes depicted in sculpture or painting with what may indeed have been brightly coloured cloth ties to tighten it hanging down the back of the head. In the various examples of existing diadems, these streamers were fashioned from the same precious metal as the headband but with the addition of sometimes highly stylized and symmetrically angled ribbon/streamers alongside the head sometimes ending with a *ureaus*. An attempt has been made during the course of this study to assign different typologies to the diadem-type of headdress that appears to have been particularly favoured by wealthy and elite women, but which was also worn by men and other members of society on special occasions in the form of beaded headbands with the addition of botanical elements. In hieroglyphs, the sign (S10) was used phonetically as *mdḥ* to indicate headband or fillet.²⁷

2.4 WEALTH AND MATERIALITY

‘The relationship between objects and identity has always been important for archaeology and its cognate disciplines, in particular anthropology ...’ advises Graves-Brown, Jones & Gamble (1996:26). In other disciplines, while objects are generally interpreted in their social contexts, archaeologists seek to create the

²⁷ the sign for headband/fillet *mdḥ* is  (S10)

relationship from the objects themselves which results in far-reaching consequences for the manner in which objects and identity can be linked and understood. With this approach in mind, in ancient societies, jewellery was worn or collected for a number of reasons where coinage or monetary systems were not yet developed. Yet, it should be borne in mind that material culture should not be thought of as being made up purely of actual items/artefacts, notes Sørensen (2006:105), adding that it can be used in the construction of gender at different levels, especially when approached from the symbols or signs point of view. It can substantially enrich the exploration of how women constructed what was, at times, intricate gendered worlds around themselves, especially with regard to the production, circulation and consumption of material objects such as jewellery as an indication of wealth and status in their society (Sørensen 2006:106).²⁸ The amount, rarity and workmanship of jewellery found in the Egyptian burial context is thus a vital aspect of reconstructing women's past lives and the importance of their role in society. There is a distinct intrinsic link between the objects and identity as property as the objects would have been produced and used by specific social and cultural groups, peoples or tribes that clearly reflect evidence of societal classification, writes Trigger (1980:148). He adds that these links would not only be 'perceptible to archaeologists' but also meaningful to ethnographers and historians'. Similarly, Hodder (1982) observed that artefacts (such as jewellery), 'not merely used as tools, possessions, or simple badges of rank or belonging' could be 'actively manipulated in the negotiation of identities based on age gender and ethnicity'. Headdresses and diadems in particular, would have been an outward and very visible sign of their gendered roles and status. To date, there has been limited research into contextualizing how objects such as headdresses were used as part of the relatively active role taken by women in Egyptian society and investigating the diverse symbolism and iconography of these as part of both personal and social lives.

In this context, it is unclear from the available texts whether ancient women also regarded jewellery as an investment for their futures in case of hard times. In Dynastic Egypt, as in many other ancient Near Eastern societies where ownership of property by women was generally limited, items of jewellery often formed part of the

²⁸ The initial investigations into gender and material culture were motivated by an interest in finding evidence of women in the ancient record identifying their roles and contribution to society.

dowry or were given to a woman by her husband at the time of the marriage (Tyldesley 1994:176).

Another reason for jewellery was for purely ornamental purposes, with aesthetically pleasing pieces being particularly prized and indicative of the wearer's hierarchical status or particular role in society. Social status and hierarchy within a society were strongly and clearly communicated by the type, quality and quantity of jewellery worn by men and women (Albermeier 2005:8). Jewellery served as a highly visible means of communicating status or hierarchy. Egyptian kings and nobles wore crowns or diadems demonstrating their superior position. Egyptian pharaohs are instantly recognisable by the *nemes* headdress surmounted by the twin cobra *uraeus* and vulture *nekhbet* figures representing Upper and Lower Egypt as depicted on the gold funerary mask of Tutankhamen. The motifs, together with the quality of the materials used, were also an indicator of wealth and status, with glass and faience being used in place of the expensive lapis lazuli or turquoise stones affordable only by the elite classes who commissioned pieces. Items made from precious metals or stones served as an effective method of acquiring and accumulating wealth. Jewellery had the advantage of being portable in times of danger. As evidenced by the number of treasure hoards discovered by archaeologists, it could be safely hidden to be retrieved later.²⁹ For reasons unbeknown to us, many of these hoards were never recovered, providing a rich legacy of past times for scholars of antiquity when eventually found, often by accident.

Recent social anthropology scholarship indicates that emphasis is being placed on the importance of 'the material nature of objects and people interacting with them' (Volioti 2011:140). Theories and definitions of materiality include discussions about material objects, the consumption of products, cognitive and bodily engagement with these objects together with their symbolism and representation. Human senses and movement play an important role in how artefacts such as jewellery are used and experienced by their wearers. Although closely linked to an individual motion and self-image, material objects can also be interpreted by how they were perceived in

²⁹ The incredibly rich gold cache found by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy during the 1800s in his quest to confirm Homer's epic poetry and its mythological site is a prime example of a hidden hoard.

the wider context, in this case the persona of the elite and royal women of Egypt as both the wearers and the observers.

Due to the ancient Egyptian religious and cultural beliefs in the afterlife, burial practices provided an important motivation for making jewellery as the owner would, in theory, continue to enjoy and wear the finely crafted pieces worn during his lifetime and after death. Jewellery in the funerary context, was considered to have apotropaic and magical properties, thereby ensuring the wearer's protection in the realm of the Afterlife. Amulets or charms made from a variety of materials, according to status, were worn on a daily basis for their perceived magical or apotropaic qualities in warding off various forms of evil. The use and significance of amulets differed greatly between Near Eastern periods, cultures and regions. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether an object was purely ornamental or used for this particular amuletic purpose.

2.5 THE ICONOGRAPHY OF WOMEN

Royal and elite women were depicted through a variety of visual artistic mediums with distinctive headdresses, indicative of their social position, whether as a king's wife, sister or daughter, a wealthy governor's wife or as affirmation of their ruler-ship, divinity, social status, specific cultic affiliation and wealth. In some cases, names and some textual evidence are provided about individual women, especially when found in well-provenanced burial contexts. A number of visually spectacular headdresses although represented on various monuments have not been found in the archaeological record. Aldred (1978:44) notes that numerous queens, queen mothers, princesses and noblewomen are depicted wearing elaborate headdresses or hair ornaments on state or cultic occasions. The most spectacular and iconic of these 'missing' headdresses, is the so-called 'vulture cap'.³⁰ It is difficult to ascertain from the depictions exactly how this headdress was constructed and what materials were used. A segmented, ornate gold wig cover made up of myriad rosettes and

³⁰ The evidence for the vulture headdress and materials used in its construction will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

recovered from the tomb of one of the wives of Tuthmose III could provide valuable clues.³¹ This prospect will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

2.5.1 Defining the Wearer

Aesthetically pleasing feminine headdresses made from valuable materials were presumably prized for their ornamental appeal. Individual items are indicative of the wearer's hierarchical status or particular role in society and were usually worn by queens, princesses and elite women such as governor's wives. Commoners donned simpler, less durable versions of wreaths and chaplets fashioned from fresh flowers and beads for festivals and banquets as indicated by various New Kingdom tomb paintings as those in the Tomb of Nebamun (Aldred 1978:11), making the florist among the earliest and longest lived craftsmen or women in Egypt. Often, it appears that a single lotus was just tucked into the hair on special occasions such as feasts, while at other times a number of flowers were inserted but it is difficult to ascertain from the depictions whether these were in fact an item of jewellery realistically fashioned or an example of the florists' artistry and skill.

The floral diadem illustrated in Figure 2.3 (page 46) described by Wilkinson (1975:42), with free-standing floral motifs was painted yellow indicating gold and is depicted in the Old Kingdom 5th Dynasty temple of *Sa3hure* (c. 2485 BCE) at Abusir. It is speculated that the wearer was possibly a princess and that the diadem would have been worn as formal attire.

Egyptian jewellery is underlined by its amuletic properties and magical shapes and colours, particularly if worn on what was considered vulnerable places such as the head. Thus, headdresses could be used as an extension of these powers to enhance the sexual allure of its wearer, in much the same way as clothing and cosmetics were employed (Aldred 1978:11). Bourgeois (1996:73) conjectures that instead of wearing animal masks during ritual ceremonies as done by many women

³¹ The segmented headdress belonging to one of the foreign wives of Thutmosis III will also be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

in North African tribes, Egyptian women instead incorporated animal motifs and symbolism into their headdresses.



Figure 2.3: Relief carving of an Old Kingdom princess wearing a floral diadem

2.5.2 Individuality and Identity

The so-called 'silent women' of antiquity are evidenced by tomb depictions, statues, jewellery and textiles, revealing a theme that includes examples of fantastic headdresses, crowns and diadems. These incorporated a variety of motifs, many specific to a particular period or culture. Brumfiel (2006:40) indicates that burials provide a useful means of gender representation similar to rock art, painted pottery, temple and tomb murals and sculpture.³² Egyptian literary or tomb texts, writes Sweeney (2011:7), rarely indicate women engaged in speaking to each other, which is clearly a misrepresentation of their active role in society as a whole. Depictions on various queen's tombs are not accompanied by what could be termed conversational or biographical text, despite these women being well-known and in some cases having a considerable sphere of influence not only at court and in conjunction with

³² Human figures on rock art, ancient pottery or other representational artefacts may not be gendered (i.e. bear specific anatomical features or clothing suggesting gender) but in the Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern context in general, gender is usually quite clearly indicated.

the king. They would have been engaged in conversation or participated in specifically during religious or cultic activities, particularly when actively fulfilling the role of various goddesses important to the prosperity of the land and its people.³³ Two or three dimensional representations of women are distinctively gender³⁴ orientated in the Egyptian artistic canon, with strict conventions regarding skin colouring, body posture, gesture, hairstyle, clothing and items of personal adornment (Sweeney 2011:1).

According to the Egyptian belief in the after-world, both men and women underwent the same 'journey' before becoming an *akh*, the 'Blessed or Glorified Spirit' of the deceased. Women's burial goods were, however, generally fewer and cheaper than a man of similar wealth or status. Gender studies in Egyptology indicate that gender not only intersects with but is shaped by a range of social identities which are articulated by factors that include age, status, race, occupation, religious or political affiliations (Clark & Wilkie 2007:1). The life-cycle of an individual, together with social stratification, class identity and ethnicity, thus plays an important part in forming the framework for any evaluation of personal adornment belonging to an ancient Egyptian woman and assists in determining not only her identity but also the role she played within a specific community.

The jewellery worn by royal women was exclusively produced by workshops attached to the king's place, and with all the resources readily available, craftsmen were able to develop advanced and intricate techniques such as cloisonné. Although amuletic functions of certain motifs are readily recognised, the protective powers attributed to certain colours and types of stone are less obvious, thereby making each diadem a multi-layered expression of not only the individual owner but also perhaps the imagination of the jeweller.

³³ Investigations into women's history and gender concepts specifically in the field of Egyptology dates from the late 1970's (e.g. Barbara Lesko 1978, Lynn Meskell 1999, 2000, Gay Robins 1993 and Carolyn Graves-Brown 2008). The approach was that generalisations should not be made about women's roles across Dynasties and status in society but also should not be isolated and that gender should be studied in combination with other factors.

³⁴ While an individual's 'sex' is defined by the biological male or female, 'gender' is defined by changing associations, attitudes and practices prescribed by human social groups, according to their sexed bodies advises Sweeney (2011:1), adding that individuals engage in 'socially prescribed practices and assume socially prescribed attitudes in different degrees'.

The role of jewellery was not only decorative but primarily amuletic during life and in the Afterlife. While archaeology provides provenance and evidence of identity, status, societal roles and familial relationships of individual queens, princesses and elite women it does not enlighten us about the individual woman who wore the specific diadems. The ownership and use of personal accoutrements interpreted by means of the inherent meaning of colour, decorative design motifs, symbolism, hieroglyphic elements, magical meaning and iconography evident in these unusual ceremonial, state or cultic diadems may by extension, provide a more personal 'voice' and insight into the individuality, self-expression and the manipulation of self-image in an increasingly material ancient society.

Given the rich symbolism and iconography incorporated into various headdresses, it is proposed that these can be used as a particularly eloquent form of 'visual autobiography'. These items of personal adornment were worn on a woman's body and thus provide a vital meeting point between her and the accepted artistic and cultural representations.

Humankind develops its own ideas about concepts of individuality and the visual arts in turn create embodiments of these concepts (Hanfmann 1973:259). The scope for misinterpretation in ancient times as well as the present cannot be discounted but according to literature accessed, no attempt appears to have been made to approach the study from a psychological angle or from the comparative approach of the art historian. The interpretation of specifically floral, faunal and abstract shaped motifs exhibited in individual headdresses was explored in this study. This was done by examining the metal, stone, form and embellishment used in headdress manufacture in an attempt to unravel individual feminine identity that may be inherent to each object. For example, throughout the ancient Near East, plant or animal ornament was commonly associated with religious or fertility symbolism. In Egyptian jewellery in particular, the lotus and papyrus with all their life-giving connotations were extensively used for decorative purposes in designs of 'rhythmic repetition and symmetry' advises Dimand (1993:141-142).

Not only the overall design of a particular headdress but also the incorporated symbolism of its embellishment conveys a plethora of messages which can be

interpreted by the modern viewer. These range from potential clues about diplomatic alliances to an indication of age and personal taste. These headdresses were not simply objects of personal adornment but the colours and motifs used in the embellishment were believed to have protective amuletic and magical powers (Andrews 1996:37). In the ancient Egyptian culture, as in many others in the Ancient Near East, stylized flowers, birds or animals vied for popularity together with symbols of power. Assorted Egyptian headdresses are embellished with a variety of floral, faunal and abstract motifs incorporating significant colour and symbolism which can be interpreted by the observer. The most commonly recognized forms of embellishment found on Ancient Egyptian feminine headdresses associated with sacred cults are those incorporating the rearing cobra known as the *uraeus* signifying the Lower Egyptian goddess Wadjet and the vulture likewise signifying the Upper Egyptian goddess Nekhbet. Various forms of ostrich plumes were associated with the goddess Ma'at, while the cow horn-sun disk combination was linked to the goddess Hathor.

2.6 PURPOSE AND DEFINITION OF DIADEMS

The importance of an Egyptian woman's jewellery, and diadems in particular, is difficult for us, so far removed in years, to assess. It is obvious that it had an ornamental function and it can be assumed that it was an indication of her wealth and social status and sometimes an expression of personal taste and beliefs in perceived amuletic powers in both life and the Afterlife. From tomb depictions, it can be ascertained that the Egyptians delighted in displaying their finery during life and, according to their beliefs, it was equally important that they were buried with suitably impressive and appropriate jewellery. From those diadems recovered from funerary contexts, it can be seen that some were obviously well-loved and well-worn by their owners, often delightfully expressing individuality. Other diadems, fashioned from tissue-thin metal were specifically manufactured for symbolic purposes, to be made functional by magic and not for practical use (Tyldesley 1994:171). There is no indication that these items were anything other than a close imitation of those items that were worn on a daily basis.

2.6.1 Defining the Diadem

According to heraldry and dictionary definitions, the crown or diadem in various forms is traditionally the headdress worn by a monarch or a deity, symbolising their power, legitimacy or divinity. A consort crown is worn by the monarch's foremost female companion signifying her specific rank (Smith *et al*: 1890)³⁵. Traditionally, the tiara³⁶ defined as a coronet worn exclusively by women, is associated with a high- conical shaped crown, made of richly ornamented fabric or leather and was traditionally worn by the Hittites, the Assyrians and the Indus Valley civilisations.³⁷ As attested in various palace and temple murals, the headdress usually incorporated bull horns in pairs with the addition of short feathers. A similar shape was adopted as the papal tiara by the Roman Catholic Church and is worn by the Pope during ceremonies as a symbol of his authority. In Mesopotamia there was a complex system of symbols, visual metaphors/allegories and mental associations. Parpola (2000:31) proposes that the tall mitre-like Assyrian crowns are associated with Heaven.³⁸

Throughout ancient Babylonian and Assyrian Mesopotamia, Hittite Anatolia, Persia and Canaan the *corona muralis* or 'walled crown', represented city walls and battlements. The Phrygian mother-figure goddess, Cybele (Matar Kubileya), who was later adopted as *Magna Mater* 'Great Mother' by the Romans, is usually depicted with a similar crown on her head as protector of cities as illustrated in Figure 2.4 (page 51).³⁹ The Romans awarded a gold *corona muralis* decorated with turrets (*quasi muri pinnis decorata*) to the first man to scale the wall of a besieged city; it was apparently one of the highest orders of military decoration (Smith *et al*, 1890). Discussed in detail by Metzler (1994:77), mural crowns were characterised by

³⁵ Definitions of *Corona* and *Diadem* accessed online via Perseus.

³⁶ from the Latin *tiarus*, meaning turban

³⁷ Definition of *Tiara* accessed online via Dictionary.com.

³⁸ Indeed, the Southern African Zulu tribal matrons also wear tall, brightly coloured, plaited grass hats as being indicative of their status.

³⁹ In modern times, a sparkly semi-circular tiara (made up of a myriad faceted or cabochon-cut precious stones such as diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires or pearls set in gold or silver) is usually worn by the crowned heads of Europe and their close relatives on state and festive occasions and form part of the crown jewels of a particular country. The design and workmanship is the pinnacle of the jeweller's craft. The design motifs are usually composed from elements of heraldic, symbolic and iconographic importance to the specific country. New tiaras are also specially designed for wealthy non-royal women to wear at very formal social occasions as a statement of social status and wealth. Modern brides in the Russian and Indian cultures also wear traditional tiaras during the marriage ceremony.

regularly spaced crenelated or dentate (toothed) designs and emblematic of the tutelary and protective deities of city-states.



Figure 2.4: Obverse of a silver tetradrachm issued by the city-state of Smyrna depicting the mural crown on goddess Cybele (160-150 BCE)

Mural crowns are widely attested in stone relief panels throughout the region, often with the addition of horns, suns, crescent moons, stars or feathers depending on the context.⁴⁰ Mural crowns are also widely depicted on Greek coinage, indicative of goddesses' protection of city-states. There is no pictorial evidence that this particular oriental design or else its symbolism was ever adopted by the Egyptians.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, headdresses worn especially by kings and queens in the form of a much simpler ornamented headband are referred to as a 'diadem'. The word derives from the Greek *diádēma* (διάδημα translated as 'to bind around' or 'to fasten').⁴¹ A fillet was traditionally a very narrow band of leather or cloth worn to keep long hair neatly out of the face and probably also served as a type of sweatband when working. It originally referred to an embroidered headband, ending in a knot with two fringed strips that draped over the shoulders and worn by a chief and later the king of a city-state to denote his authority. The term was later applied to

⁴⁰ The original Ancient Near Eastern design was adopted and adapted for the rising nobility throughout Europe during the Dark and Middle Ages to become the royal and heraldic insignia we readily recognise today on civic and national coats of arms and displayed in museum collections such as the British Crown Jewels.

⁴¹ A diadem, headband or fillet (διάδημα) was worn by the Persian kings; by Alexander the Great; and by his successors (Liddell & Scott 1940).

a metal headband made from copper, silver or gold, fashioned in a circular shape, often embellished with semi-precious or precious stones and sometimes with symbolic or culture-specific motifs. Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities notes that before the diadem was adopted by the Roman emperors as a symbol of sovereignty, the diadem headdress was traditionally worn by Greek and Roman women as the '*ornamentum capitus matronarum ex auro contextum*' (Isidore, *Orig.* 19.31).⁴²

Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities (Smith *et al*, 1890) notes that the spiked *corona radiata* the 'radiant crown', originally associated with the solar divinity Helios (and possibly adorned the head of the Colossus of Rhodes) was adopted by the Roman emperors as part of the cult of Sol Invictus as illustrated in Figure 2.5, (page 52). It is referred to as 'the chaplet studded with sunbeams' by Lucian (Volume IV which refers to 'Alexander the False Prophet') while Theophrastus (*Hist.* Pl. 6.6), Athenaeus (lib. xv.) and Pliny (*Plin. Nat.* 21. 1-70, 22; 4-13) also refer to the use of a variety of crowns. From earlier Babylonian and Assyrian sun divinities, early Christianity adopted the halo for their own iconographical depictions of the divine. The *corona* in ancient texts was described as a circular ornament of metal, leaves, or flowers, worn around the head or neck, as a reward of talent, military or naval prowess, and civil status on festive occasions and as funerary decoration.⁴³

Symmetry of design was important to the Egyptians and composition was generally linear repetition and alternation of motifs, sometimes with an impressive central forehead adornment as focal point. A circlet or chaplet, known in Greek as *stephanos* (στέφανος), is translated as garland, wreath or open crown. In most cases it was just a simple string of beads or a band of precious metal worn around the head which was also used to indicate noble or elite status.⁴⁴ Later, in classical

⁴² For the purpose of this study, all classical references were sourced from Perseus Digital Library.

⁴³ The horseshoe-shaped laurel wreath made from interlocking branches and leaves of the bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), as well as the olive wreath were awarded to Greek athletic victors (known as "*kotinos*" (κότινος). During the Roman Republic and early Roman Empire, laurel wreaths crowned a successful commander during his triumphal procession and were worn as an indication of military honours. The *corona civica*, made from oak leaves was regarded as the second highest Roman military decoration. According to Pliny (*Nat. Hist* 16), the grass crown (*corona graminea*) was held in highest esteem and was initially constructed on the battlefield from various grasses, cereals or wheat but later formalized in precious metal. Recipients of this rare award include Scipio Aemilianus Africanus and Lucius Cornelius Sulla.

⁴⁴ The word *stephanos* (στέφανος) refers to garlands made from a variety of botanicals (Lewis & Short 1879).

antiquity, a myrtle wreath made from gold or silver was a popular head adornment of the wealthy as attested in many of the finely detailed Fayoum Mummy Portraits and also found in archaeological context throughout the Hellenistic world. Olive and laurel wreaths were awarded to victorious athletes and triumphant military leaders respectively and in time became synonymous with the Greek games as well as the powerful Roman Empire.



Figure 2.5: Roman Imperial repoussé silver disc of *Sol Invictus* wearing the *corona radiata* (3rd Century from Pessinus/Bala-Hissar, Asia Minor).

The majority of examples of ancient Egyptian headdresses, including circlets, fillets and diadems worn by women, are housed in the Egyptian collections of museums such as the Cairo Museum in Egypt and the Metropolitan Art Museum in America. These generally have sound archaeological provenance, having being found in well-documented mortuary contexts albeit in the early days of the discipline. The examples originated with the simple beaded or gold fillets of the pre-dynastic era and continue throughout early to late dynastic Pharaonic Egypt. Archaeological evidence for diadems from the pre-dynastic period is sparse with simple and fundamentally natural ornaments being made from sea-shell, bone, a variety of coloured stone or copper beads. The choice for semi-precious stones did not really change from pre-Dynastic through to Late Dynastic periods with a preference for dark blue lapis lazuli,

pale blue-green turquoise, purple amethyst and red carnelian gradually making an appearance (Vilímková 1969:12).

The diadems which have survived from the Old Kingdom were purely for funerary purposes. Examples dating to the 4th and 5th Dynasty tombs at el-Giza are simple metal bands with either a stylized papyrus-knot in a bow shape at the back or more elaborately decorated with ibis or *akh*-birds between papyrus heads which represented the spirit of the deceased (Wilkinson 1975:37-38). These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. Evidenced in the Coffin Texts, during the Old Kingdom period, *nefer-hat* (*nfr.h3t*) was used to denote a closed circle diadem and *seshed* (*sSd*) and *medjeh* (*mdj*), meaning ‘fillet’ referred to the open-ended type that tied at the back (Andrews 1996:102). Making their appearance before the beginning of the 1st Dynasty, both open and closed diadem types were worn by men as well as women. During the Old Kingdom the word *si3.t* apparently referred to ‘head-cloth’ (Wilkinson 1975:37). Visual evidence from statues and tomb reliefs suggests that the earliest diadems could be made from solid metal such as gold or silver, embellished with colourful bosses and inlaid designs or, as Andrews (1996:102) suggests, alternatively from strings of beads with a loop at each end for ties for fastening. During the Middle Kingdom several additional words *hnsd*, *tpsd*, *ssnn*, *nsd.w* and *w3h* were added and are found on coffin-friezes. Later words for the *uraeus* on the front were also extended to mean the diadem itself. In later times the words *m3h* and *’n.t* were also used (Andrews 1996:102; Wilkinson 1975:37).

2.6.2 Purpose of Diadems

I propose that the purposes of diadems as an expression of feminine identity and societal roles can be identified as:

- a) Depicting status that included royalty, power and wealth;
- b) Indicative of important cultic roles such ‘God’s Wife of Amun’;
- c) Having strong linkages to mythology and goddesses such as Ma’at, Hathor and Isis;
- d) Fulfilled social functions at banquets and festive events.

It is not clear from the surviving records whether independently wealthy royal women were afforded the opportunity to visit court craftsmen and commission items according to their own personal taste but judging from the some of the diadems that were examined, there is nothing to suggest that this could not have occurred. It is also entirely possible that elite women entitled to wear a form of headdress indicating their status, having a certain degree of private income and thus individual wealth, commissioned pieces for their own delight and thus their own personal tastes can be deduced.

2.7 INTERPRETATION OF DIADEMS

Although there are minimal historical documents in the Egyptian context, there is substantial visual evidence in the form of tomb paintings, statues and stone reliefs which, together with a limited amount of well-provenanced artefacts, have the potential to take interpretation into the multi-layered realm of iconography and symbolism. The choice of personal adornment reveals a hidden sphere of religious, political and social hierarchies that almost certainly can be related to previously un-noticed individual identities in Pharaonic women. In order to ascertain whether the voices of traditionally 'silent women' of antiquity could perhaps be heard in the form of this particular type of personal adornment, a selection of headdresses highlighting the most representative of the identified floral motifs will be interpreted in subsequent chapters according to recurring motifs, elements of colour, form, symbolism and iconography. The examples range from formal court headdresses worn on state or cultic occasions by royal wives and elite women, those manufactured purely for burial purposes and the whimsical informal garlands worn by young princesses at festivals or on social occasions.

For the purpose of this study, I have categorised selected extant examples into distinct typologies:

- Headbands embellished with bows, knots and streamers;
- Headbands using botanical and bird motifs;
- Fillets adorned with rosettes or medallion motifs;

- Floral garlands;
- Horned headdresses;
- Caps headdresses; and
- Wig and hair ornaments.

In order to interpret the headdresses, it should be understood that Egyptian artefacts were generally conceived within a matrix of symbolism and magic. In the Doctrine of Eternal Life in the Papyrus of Ani, the head is identified by Budge (1960:90) as carrying identity:

‘Thy Urrt Crown is upon thy head, thy headdress is upon thy shoulders, thy face is before thee; and those who sing songs of joy are upon both sides of thee ...’

The symbols that were used often represented something other than what is apparent at first glance. Together with the concept of sympathetic or implicit magic this makes for a multi-layered interpretation of any decorative item rarely equalled by other ancient cultures. Each diadem/headdress has been investigated and discussed according to the materials used in its construction, the symbolism of form and interpretation of its use and function.

2.7.1 Symbolism and Iconography

The development of a formal symbolism and iconography was, from the earliest Dynastic times, of fundamental importance for the elite members of Egyptian society as it confirmed their own privileged position (Teeter 2011: 81). For a predominantly illiterate society ‘it was mainly through symbols that the Egyptians sought to represent many of their ideas and beliefs about the nature of life and death’ and thus a primary form of their belief system (Wilkinson 1999:7). The relationship between form, symbolism and magical function pervades a wide range of objects from small, intricately crafted items of personal adornment to massive monumental structures. A core aspect is the symbolism exhibited in diadems as a means of establishing individual feminine identity in society. The jewellery worn by royal women was exclusively produced by workshops attached to the king’s place. With all the resources readily available, craftsmen were able to develop advanced and intricate

techniques such as cloisonné. Common motifs are the lotus and papyrus which, together with the cobra *uraeus* and vulture *nekhbet* figures, represented Upper and Lower Egypt. These were not only indicative of a specific royal or cultic position but also tell a story of fashion, status and increasing self-expression. It is fair to assume that women in antiquity, much like their modern counterparts, would have expressed themselves through their adorned appearance, although questions can be raised whether specific items were gifted by male family members or commissioned by female individuals who had access to a personal source of wealth.

Although amuletic functions of certain motifs are readily recognised, the protective powers attributed to certain colours and types of stone are less obvious, thereby making each diadem a multi-layered expression of the individual owner. The amuletic or magical function of these various headdresses have 'largely been unexplored as has their role as a gendered artefact' and so too the 'link between artefacts and identity as an intrinsic property of social existence' (Cifarelli 2010; Graves-Brown, Jones & Gamble 1996:26).

The symbols frequently have several interpretations at primary and secondary levels and could be used to either reveal or conceal, depending on the audience privy to the message contained therein. In the primary or direct association, the form of an object suggested concepts or ideas such as those connected with a specific deity, thereby performing an amuletic function. If in the secondary or indirect association, the form could have its own symbolic significance (Wilkinson 1999:17). The Egyptians also delighted in forms of visual punning and the forms of everyday objects could be adapted to symbolic shapes such as the floral bouquet or *ankh* and the word for 'Life'. Symbolism ranged from the basic form of an object, its size, its colour and the materials used in its construction to its composition and any mythological representations. In many cases a multitude of symbolic details were all brought together in a single item thereby enriching it as a form of powerful non-verbal communication. A given form may have a variety of different symbolism which may take on new meanings over time (Wilkinson 1999:25). 'And so the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, of every kind of thing which grows ...' notes Wilkinson (1999:82), quoting from the Memphite Theology. Egyptian art was intricately linked with the nature of the

materials out of which the objects were crafted. 'Outward appearance was no more important than inner substance ...' Wilkinson continues, and so the physical qualities of materials were more often than not magnified by mythological associations and perceived magical properties. Durable materials such as precious gold and silver and certain rare semi-precious stones thus bore the most significance.

2.7.2 Evoking the Senses

Five recognized methods of perception are experienced by humankind. These are the senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste. Without exception, all the diadems examined evoke the visual (sight) sense in the use of symbolic decorative motifs and colourful semi-precious stone. The superior manufacturing techniques would result in a tactile (touch) appreciation for the quality of work. In some instances, the olfactory sense (smell) would be very powerful as it appears from depictions that fresh lotus blooms were tucked into the circlets during festivals and banquets. The diadems would not only have resonated with their wearer on the visual and tactile levels as expected, but some would certainly also have moved, shimmering in the bright sunlight possibly even rustling like the reeds or feathers they sought to emulate thereby creating an auditory sensory experience for both the ancient wearer and observer.

Wear-and-tear is indicative of favourite pieces which, to a certain extent, define not only the owner but also her appreciation for a specific diadem. Burial evidence suggests a basis for use during life by a variety of feminine physiques, ethnic origins and social status thus entailing a cognitive and bodily interaction with many of the examples examined whilst in other cases the diadem appears to be a cheap but accurate copy of an original. A vital aspect of the funerary rites was the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony which, in effect, could have been considered as restoring all these senses to the deceased in the afterlife thereby linking the importance of these diadems to their owners.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Although scholarly investigation has quite extensively investigated the materials and jewellery-making technologies and undertaken stylistic analysis of all forms of Dynastic Egyptian jewellery, relatively little attention has been paid to the symbolism and iconography of the varied forms of feminine headdresses. Distinctive headdresses indicative of gender and status appear to have occurred in the Egyptian pictorial record since images were carved onto rock during the Neolithic period and this trend continued until the end of the Dynastic era. There is thus sufficient visual evidence on the heads of sculptures, statuettes, reliefs in temples and paintings on tomb walls that the circlets, fillets and headbands found in the archaeological context were indeed worn by ancient Egyptian women. The visual evidence corroborates favoured styles and changing fashions. Floral, faunal and avian materials and motifs tended to be popular because of their social, mythological and political importance. The choice of headdress was to a certain extent a manipulation of political, religious and/or cultic cultural self-image in a society that increasingly embraced material culture. Although very few examples of headdresses have survived to modern times, the visual arts nevertheless provide useful corroborative information about the materials, types and styles of jewellery that were introduced and adopted by women across the social strata throughout the Dynastic period.

The Dynastic Egyptians developed formulaic headdresses to signify their royalty and mythological deities, the iconography of which became interchangeable and immediately recognizable to a largely illiterate population. Although there is visual corroboration that a number of distinctive male headdresses such as the *Deshret*, *Hedjet*, *Atef* and *Hemhem* crowns, together with the iconic *Nemes* headdress, were used to indicate political and symbolic power and dominion, none of these have survived in the archaeological record and one can but speculate as to the original material used. None of the elaborate composite headdresses made up of a number of symbolic elements have survived. In contrast, a number of the simpler but no less spectacular diadem, circlet and headband diadems made from precious metals have survived intact to be found in the burial context. Those examples which have survived have generally been discovered during the well-documented excavation of burial sites. These range from a simple string of beads designed to hold a cloth veil

in place, and a simple unadorned gold hoop to an intricately inset diadem displaying impressive lapidary techniques. The diadems were rich with multi-layered symbolism, political iconography and amuletic promise during the wearer's lifetime and in the afterlife. Originally made from perishable materials, as metal and stone-cutting technology developed and improved, the colours, motifs and symbolism incorporated into early designs were translated into less transitory materials that carried strong visual and non-verbal messages not only defining the identity of the owner but also providing a tantalizing insight into her role in society.

The amuletic function and aspects of materiality of what can be considered 'gendered artefacts' have, to date, been unexplored, thus offering new opportunities for investigation. The development of a formal symbolism and iconography from earliest dynastic times to the end of the Ptolemaic era confirms the potential of using women's headdresses as a means of investigating individual feminine identity in what was an illiterate but hierarchical society. Common floral, faunal, avian and celestial motifs were indicative not only of social or cultic position but also tell a story of fashion, status and increasing self-expression in society as it developed, flourished and ultimately waned over 3000 years. Egyptian women's diadems were not only designed to fulfil ornamental functions but also had the potential to express social status, make political statements and were indicative of cultic roles. Interpretation and analysis of diadems can be performed using a holistic approach that includes symbolism and magic. As the symbolism was intricately linked to the nature of the materials used, each diadem can be interpreted at primary and secondary level which played an integral part of the multi-layered Egyptian world-view. The diadems can also be interpreted in a wider context by the wearer as well as the viewer using all of the senses.

The diadems that will be investigated were categorised into typologies that addressed their basic types and the variety of motifs that were used in the embellishment. Each diadem will be analysed according to construction and symbolism and in each case an attempt will be made to provide my own interpretation. .

CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS

Abstract

Egyptian art was intricately linked with the nature of the materials out of which the objects were crafted and so the physical qualities of materials were more often than not magnified by mythological associations and perceived magical properties. Egyptian jewellers favoured specific materials not only for their attractiveness but also for perceived magical and amuletic properties. This chapter serves as a short background to the variety materials available to the ancient Egyptian jewellers and used in the diadems under investigation. The summary of favoured metals and stones is essential for the visual analysis to be undertaken on each example to be discussed.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the development of the earliest human societies, attention has been given to the adornment of the body in life and in death, with intricately crafted objects made from a variety of shiny metals and gemstones. The recognition of the intrinsic beauty of certain materials and minerals, especially gold, has led to their constant use in widely differing and dispersed civilizations. That these were fashioned to adorn the human form is beyond doubt but at some stage these objects were adopted for amuletic purposes to serve the superstitious need for protection from a multitude of frightening phenomena far beyond human comprehension.

The scope for misinterpretation of the individual in ancient times as well as the present cannot be discounted. No attempt will be made to approach the study from a psychological angle or from the comparative technology-focused approach of the art historian. Instead, the interpretation of symbolism present in individual headdresses will be explored by means of the metal, stone, form and symbolism used in its manufacture. It is hoped that this approach will assist in unravelling individual feminine identity that may be inherent to each object (Dimand, 1993:141-142).

Jewellery was not only humankind's answer to the need for self-adornment but also the earliest form of decorative art which highlighted not only imagination and inventiveness but also the development of related technologies. Whether worn as personal and private possessions or making a cultic or political statement, eye-

catching and colourful jewellery was not only designed for use during life but, importantly according to unique Egyptian religious beliefs, also for wear in the afterlife. Jewellery found in Pre-Dynastic and First Dynasty burial sites incorporates precious metals from the Eastern Desert and locally available gemstones indicating that these were already being exploited quite extensively (Aston, Harrell & Shaw 2000:6).

Recent social anthropology scholarship indicates that emphasis is being placed on the importance of 'the material nature of objects and people interacting with them' (Volioti 2011:140). Durable materials such as precious gold and silver and certain rare, colourful semi-precious stones thus bore the most significance evoking the sense of sight in the use of symbolic decorative motifs, superior manufacturing techniques but also visual and tactile appreciation for the quality of work. Although closely linked to individual motifs and self-image, material objects can also be interpreted by how they were perceived in the wider visual, tactile and auditory context, in this case both the wearer and the ancient observer.

In order to investigate the decorative headdresses and diadems worn by the ancient Egyptian royalty, nobility and commoners, it is necessary to obtain a broad overview of the common metals and decorative gemstone materials of choice.⁴⁵ Examples of Egyptian diadems that have survived extensive tomb looting are minimal. Aldred (1978:45) notes that although most have been studied intensively in respect of ancient techniques and designs, insufficient attention has been given to the symbolism and iconography. This study concentrates on the inherent meanings, symbolism, iconography and concepts of magic that were knowingly and deliberately incorporated into each piece.

Wherever possible the Egyptian names for materials used in jewellery manufacture will be referred to, as useful information has been gleaned from texts and representations which indicate manufacturing techniques, uses or places of origin. However, it should be borne in mind that, despite the extensive knowledge of ancient Egyptian vocabulary, some of the commonly used materials have not always been

⁴⁵ As this study is not focussed on the mining, composition, refining and working techniques of precious metals, kindly refer to the chapter "Metals" by Ogden (2000:148-176) for in-depth detail.

accurately identified (Andrews 1996:39). In addition, as pointed out by Aston *et al* (2000:21), there is some confusion with regard to correct nomenclature or classification applied to stones by archaeologists as opposed to more specialised gemologists.

3.2 PRECIOUS METALS AND OTHER MATERIALS

The Egyptian jewellery craft involved not only form and size but also the incorporation of raw materials that were favoured for their physical qualities combined with mythological associations and perceived magical properties. The Memphite Theology (quoted by Wilkinson, 1999:82) advises: 'And so the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, of every kind of thing that grows ...'

From the archaeological record, it is clear that at some stage relatively scarce or visually attractive materials were specifically selected and fashioned with this purpose in mind. Once metalworking techniques were improved, the gold found in alluvial deposits throughout the ancient world would have become a much-desired element in the creation of jewellery, although silver was generally more highly prized due to its scarcity. Tait (2008:11-12) informs that simple forms of gold jewellery later incorporated semi-precious stones.

In ancient jewellery manufacture new ideas, however suddenly they might have been introduced, tended to be accepted cautiously into the existing skills base and, only after a certain interval, more widely adopted. This might have been as a result of the diffusion of techniques across cultural divides or by captive craftsmen physically relocating to a new region. Consequently, there is evidence of a gradual development rather than a series of sudden innovations as not only materials but also as techniques were copied or adopted and adapted to suit local needs and tastes.

In Egypt in particular, colour was not just for aesthetic purposes but had symbolic significance, also denoting the substance of objects. Wilkinson (1999:104) writes

that the colour of an object 'was regarded by the Egyptians as an integral part its nature or being ... in this sense, colour was virtually synonymous with 'substance'. The word *iwen*, used to signify colour, can be translated variously as not only referring to external appearance but encompassing 'character', 'nature' or 'being'. Romano (1995:1606) discusses the meaning of colour at some length. Wilkinson (1999:104) quotes a passage from the introduction to the Egyptian Book of the Dead as follows: 'He rules the plains of the Silent Land, even he the golden of body, blue of head, on whose arms is turquoise'. Black, or *khemet*, as indicated by onyx and obsidian, denoted fertility as depicted by Osiris and Min's black faces while green turquoise, feldspar and jasper symbolised the emergence of new vegetation, resurrection and the reborn Osiris. The colour connotations are one of the reasons why Egyptian jewellery can, in many instances, be interpreted as symbolic statements, complementing and expanding on the basic visual information imparted by each piece. Specific colours commonly used in headdresses will be discussed in context in greater detail below.

3.2.1 Gold

Since the earliest times, the possession of gold has been synonymous with wealth. Unchangeable and permanent, gold was the principal metal used in the manufacture of jewellery throughout the ancient world, primarily because it bestowed a certain status on its possessor and also for its unique properties and symbolism as its colour and lustre was equated with the brilliance of the sun. It was regarded as 'a divine and imperishable substance, its untarnishing nature providing a metaphor of eternal life and its brightness an image of the brilliance of the sun'. Wilkinson (1999:83) advises that as much of the ancient Egyptian culture is linked to the sun and particular deities such as Amun-Re⁴⁶, gold was perceived to contain supernatural qualities, a manifestation of their beliefs representing immortality in the afterlife and thus termed '*the flesh of the gods*'. The solar significance of the substances was

⁴⁶ Wilkinson (1999:83) writes that Re was sometimes referred to as 'the mountain of gold', while Hathor, Re's daughter, was called "The Golden One" and believed to be a personification of the precious metal. Mirrors made of gold were often decorated with either an image or symbol of Hathor, thus symbolically representing the goddess in both substance and form. Isis was also associated with this metal, often placed on the hieroglyph for gold.

extended to the practice of covering the tops of obelisks with gold foil, to not only reflect the rays of the sun but also to symbolise them. Gold leaf or inlay was added to objects to symbolically emphasise their importance. The comparative ease with which it was obtained and worked together with its durability, resistance to rust and decay plus its convertibility by means of the melting-pot if necessary, made it a popular medium with which to work. It could be hammered, cast, engraved, embossed and made into thin foil-like sheets for decorating a wide variety of objects such as wooden statues or furniture.

Although much of the gold was imported from Nubia, received as tribute or captured during warfare, ancient Egypt nevertheless had access to its own reasonably productive gold mines situated between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. Gold was found in two forms, either as nuggets and dust in alluvial sands and gravels of what were once river beds or in veins in quartz rock. The Egyptian term for gold extracted from rock was *nub-en-set* or 'gold of the mountain' while alluvial gold was referred to as *nub-en-mu* or 'gold of the river'. Sometimes the more elegant term and its representative hieroglyphic, *djam*, was also used. From ancient textual evidence Moorey (1994:218) advises that gold was classified according to its source, appearance and purity. Healy (1999:283) confirms that most Egyptian alluvial gold contains not only silver but also small amounts of copper.

Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica* III: 12-14) records a description of the rigours of gold mining in Egypt during in the 2nd century BCE.

'This working of the gold, as it is carried on at the farthest borders of Egypt, is effected through all the extensive labours here described; for Nature herself, in my opinion, makes it clear that whereas the production of gold is laborious, the guarding of it is difficult, the zest for it is very great, and that its use is half-way between pleasure and pain.'

The metal was obtained in various forms either in nuggets, requiring a minimal complex or laborious smelting process before it was partially prepared as powder or as ingots in the shape of blocks or rings (Ogden 2000:161). Gold mining regions were located in the Eastern Desert and southwards towards the Sudanese border. Egyptian records define these specific sources as 'gold of Koptos', 'gold of Wawat'

and 'gold of Kush'⁴⁷. Royal treasurers controlled its distribution to temple and court workshops and reckoned against a silver standard in use throughout the Ancient Near East.

3.2.2 Silver

Silver, rare in its native form, was more highly prized than gold and Aldred (1978:56) indicates that silver regularly preceded gold in lists of precious materials until the Middle Kingdom. Silver occurs from the pre-Dynastic period onwards but as technologically it was not yet possible to separate it from gold, Ogden (2000:17) suggests that it was probably derived from the smelting of argentite (silver sulphide) or lead ores in a process known as cupellation. Analysis of Egyptian silver objects indicates that cupellation was used well before 3000 BC.⁴⁸ Silver was also imported from Asia Minor where it was extracted by cupellation from silver-bearing lead ores such as galena before being shaped into rings, bars, nuggets and hide-shaped ingots. As evidenced by various Egyptian texts, silver was usually obtained in the form of booty or tribute from the Retenu (Syria) or by means of peaceful trade with the Minoans and later the Mycenaeans, possibly from Cypriot sources (Aldred 1978:56). During Ptolemaic era, a new word, *arqur*, appears in demotic texts, a phonetic rendition of *arguros* the Greek word for silver. Nevertheless it formed a standard by weight for barter exchange and means of payment throughout the ancient world. Aldred (1978:16) also indicates that, in some cases Old and Middle Kingdom gold contained as much 38 per cent silver.

Symbolically, silver denoted purity and omnipotence and was linked with the moon, often used for representations of the lunar disc in the religious and mythological context. It was also equated with material from which the bones of the gods were formed, their flesh being of gold (Aldred 1978:56; Wilkinson 1994:84).⁴⁹ Initially

⁴⁷ Ogden (2000:161) notes that surveys undertaken in 1989 and 1993 by Munich University and the Egyptian Geological Survey have studied about 130 ancient gold mining sites in the Eastern Desert alone. Some of these workings date from the pre-Dynastic period and provide evidence on how the recovery methods changed over time as technology improved.

⁴⁸ One of the oldest silver objects dating to the middle of the fourth millennium BC, is a box-lid from Naqada.

⁴⁹ Silver mirrors also depict images and symbols of the goddess Hathor. Small statuettes of baboons (sacred to the god Thoth) also associated with the moon were frequently completely or partially made using silver.

called *nub hedj*, 'white gold', and later *hedj*, the name indicates that it was found in association with low-grade gold that was grey-white in colour.

The number of silver objects interred in burial sites was originally far greater than what has been recovered but as a result of its propensity for corrosion, even if identified, more often than not cannot be successfully restored. Ogden (2000:171) debates whether ancient silver was intended to have a bright and shiny surface as there is some evidence of pigment on some surfaces. The methods of gold manufacture also refer to silver, whether it was hammered and raised into shape or cast, decorated with filigree or granulation. Presumably the silversmith's tool kit did not differ to any great extent from that of the goldsmith.

3.2.3 Electrum

A metal known as electrum, or *djam*, in Egyptian was both a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver and an artificially produced compound. Due to the impurity of Egyptian gold it is sometimes difficult to be certain whether the metal in question should be categorised as low-grade gold or electrum (Aldred 1978:55). While modern authorities consider electrum a gold-silver alloy ranging in colour from deep yellow to pale yellowish-white and containing between 20-25 per cent silver, Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 33:80) defined electrum as gold ore which contained at least one fifth of silver (Healy 1999:283). To add to the confusion, the Egyptians depicted it either coloured yellow like gold, or white like silver. Because it is slightly harder than gold, electrum was particularly suitable for jewellery as it was able to better withstand daily wear and tear.

3.2.4 Copper

Copper, known as *hemt*, was the first metal to be worked by the Egyptians as early as the Badarian Period. Ogden (2000:155) states that tangible evidence of copper-working includes 'crucibles, tuyeres (blowpipes of furnaces), moulds, waste and slag' as well as tools. He adds that some of the earliest flimsy, simple examples dating

from the Badarian Period, were probably made from native copper obtained from surface ores in the Eastern Desert and mines in Sinai (Ogden 2000:151). After smelting the impure metal was refined by hammering and re-melting in clay crucibles before being cast into forms for transport. Improved copper-production methods can be linked to the increase in copper alloy products during the Third and Late Periods (Ogden 2000: 152).⁵⁰ Later, during the New Kingdom, copper was not only imported as part of peaceful trade from Syria, Cyprus and Asia Minor but also obtained as booty or tribute by vassal peoples. The deliberate inclusion of arsenic during the Ramesside period resulted in greater hardness, which was necessary for tools and weapons. The addition of tin also resulted not only in improved hardness but also sharpness of weapons and tools.

Ingots of copper were hammered, bent and cut not only into weapons, farming implements and ornaments for temple and tomb. Metal-working scenes are captured in a variety of tombs⁵¹ (Ogden 2000:156), that show not only melting and pouring but also the earliest reference in hieroglyphics to the process of annealing. Both the hollow casting and lost-wax methods were used in the casting process. Caches of copper figurines indicate that 'sacred copper' was not generally repurposed suggesting that a steady supply of raw material was necessary. Items such as mirrors, counterpoises/weights (*menits*) or diadems would have been hammered from sheet metal. Complex objects were usually made in separate components, joined by rivets. Andrews (1999:56) advises that by the end of the Old Kingdom, copper was widely used as a core for gilded circlets and diadems. Ogden (2000:160) confirms that overlaying of copper with gold, silver or electrum was a technique often practiced in Egypt. Pressing and shaping the thin sheet of precious metal over the object was the simplest technique. The decorative overlay was held in place by overlapping or adhesive. An unusual example of copper jewellery includes a decorative roundel used in the embellishment of a headband dating to the First Intermediate Period (Aldred, 1978:56).

⁵⁰ Ogden (2000) further observes that near-pure copper was difficult to cast as it was prone to shrinkage and gas bubbles resulting in poor quality castings but numerous objects nevertheless indicate considerable skill.

⁵¹ Such as that of Rehmire of the 18th Dynasty at Thebes.

3.2.5 Gesso

A traditional mix of an animal glue binder commonly known as size, chalk or gypsum and white pigment, *gesso* was used to coat rigid surfaces as a primer or substrate for the painting or decorative gilding/gold leaf process. Applied in a number of very thin layers, in the Egyptian context it is most commonly found on the outside of wooden or cartonnage coffins. It has also been documented as occurring in a number of diadems that appear to have been designed solely for funerary purposes. Ogden (2000:16) notes that gilding was often applied to a thin layer of gesso and in order to facilitate adhesion the underlying metal was roughened slightly. Lucas (1962:338) mentions that fragments of cloth covered in stucco and daubed with black, red, green and white paint were found at Naqada, thereby providing the earliest evidence of gesso.

3.3 SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES AND OTHER MATERIALS

Stone was important in the Egyptian world view because of its symbolic endurance and as Wilkinson (1999:89) asserts, a 'direct link with the beginning of time and thus with the creation of the cosmos itself'. He adds that in earliest dynastic times, the conical-shaped *ben-ben* stone, possibly of meteoric origins, was not only associated with cosmic origins and the site where the primeval god became manifest but also as an interface between the visible world and the realm of the divine.

Egyptian jewellery combines colourful stones with precious metals in visually appealing forms. Brightly coloured stones were most popular, playing a significant role in the extensive exchange and trade networks long before 5000 BCE. Aldred (1978:17) refers to a papyrus that mentions a *mes'at*, or 'purveyor of precious stones', who may have been the equivalent of a prospector roaming the desert collecting its hidden treasures. Although costly and highly prized in ancient times, receiving mention in Egyptian texts as having been received as tribute or among the spoils of war, many do not fall into what is now considered the precious stone

category⁵² with the majority including carnelian, garnet, jasper, amethyst, turquoise and lapis lazuli being classified merely as semi-precious.⁵³ Beads fashioned from these semi-precious stones are among the commonest objects found in pre-Dynastic and Early Dynastic site excavations and were fashioned either as inlay, attachments or independent articles of adornment, writes Higgins (1961:35). The ancient Egyptian word for mineral *aat* ('3t) most closely matches what in modern terminology would be 'gemstones' and is generally associated with value or rarity, indicates Harrell (2012:1). Even during these early periods, it is postulated that stones were used as much for their perceived magical properties as for their decorative qualities as some varieties of coloured stones were considered to have deep symbolic value.

In the ancient Egyptian culture that placed a high value on visual beauty, it was the vivid, opaque and translucent colours of stone, faience and glass, and not the specific type of material, that was of primary concern, asserts Lucas (1962:386). It is also necessary to bear in mind that various stones were esteemed as being symbolic of rank or status, indicative of religious or mythological beliefs and also valued for their purported magical or medicinal value.⁵⁴ Harrell (2012:1) advises that ancient gemstones set into pieces of jewellery are usually identified according to attributes such as colour, lustre and cleavage or fracture type. However, when loose stones can be closely examined, standard non-destructive gemmological tests can be used to ascertain and confirm their identity.⁵⁵

Healey (1991:375) indicates that Pliny (*Nat. His.* XXXVIII: 196) made some general observations with regard to the shapes of gemstones: 'Concave and convex gems are thought to be less valuable than those with a flat surface. An elongated shape is most prized; then the lenticular, as it is called, and next a flat, round shape. Gems with sharp angles are less favoured.'

⁵² The concept that gemstones can be classified as 'precious' or 'semi-precious' is relatively recent, apparently emanating in the nineteenth century. The diamond, emerald, sapphire and ruby were unknown to the ancient Egyptians, states Lucas (1962:386).

⁵³ Pliny the Elder (*Nat. His.* XXXVII) mentions about 30 different kinds of decorative stone, but relatively few of these have been successfully identified (Lucas, 1962:386).

⁵⁴ Many of these arcane associations persist to the present but they no longer have any effect on the value of these gemstones.

⁵⁵ The non-destructive tests include: specific gravity, refractive index, spectroscopic pattern. The Mohrs hardness test involving scratching the surface and also reaction to dilute acid are both mildly damaging. Many of gemstones identified in the diadems to be investigated have been visually identified due to the fragility of the pieces (Harrell 2012:1).

Valued above all others for their rarity and beauty, Romano (1995:1606) advises that dark blue lapis lazuli, green-blue turquoise and red carnelian featured strongly in the majority of finest quality Egyptian pieces as illustrated in Figure 3.1 (below). Ranging widely across the ancient Near East from Egypt to Mesopotamia, the lapidary's favourite stones included garnet, amethyst, green feldspar, jasper, rock crystal and agate. This study will however only focus on the semi-precious lapis lazuli, carnelian and turquoise stones that were incorporated into the various extant examples of diadems.



Figure 3.1: Pectoral made of a typical combination gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian stones featuring a Solar disk (Ra), scarab (*kheperu*) and the crescent (*neb*) form Tutankhamen's first name Neb-kheperu-ra (New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty)

3.3.1 Lapis Lazuli

Lapis lazuli, called *khesbed*, was prized most highly by the Egyptians who placed it immediately after gold and silver in their lists of valuable materials. Aston *et al* (2000:39) notes that lapis lazuli covers a wide range of colours from a deep, almost violet blue and the royal blue of the gem quality to some much faded-looking green

and turquoise hues. It incorporated into a wide variety of jewellery from pre-Dynastic times. Because of its blue, gold-speckled appearance it was regarded as being symbolic of the heavens and thus having a high amuletic potency. Andrews (1996:37) equates dark blue with the colour of ‘the all-embracing, protective night sky’, noting that *khesbed* was a synonym for ‘joy’ and ‘delight’ and traditionally associated with wisdom. She further notes that it was so often imitated by glass and faience that the adjective *maa* (‘true’) was sometimes appended to its name in order to distinguish the real stone from cheaper imitations. Composed mainly of blue alumina-silicate lazurite, both Aston *et al* (2000:39) and Lucas (1962:398) describe lapis lazuli as an opaque stone of dark blue colour, often speckled patches or veins of white calcite and iron pyrites, colloquially known as ‘Fool’s Gold’.

Although it does not occur naturally in Egypt, Aston *et al* (2000:39) indicate that lapis lazuli was frequently mentioned in Old Kingdom texts suggesting an existing Western Asiatic trade link. Middle and New Kingdom texts refer to its origins from various localities in western Asia, such as Assur, Khatti, Babylon and Syria.⁵⁶ Lucas (1962:400) confirms that the original source has been tracked to limestone quarries along the Kokcha River valley of Badakhshan province in the north-eastern region of modern Afghanistan.⁵⁷ There is ample evidence that these deposits have been worked for more than 6000 years and Aston *et al* (2000:39) writes that these quarries were situated at the centre of a vast trade network where the popular blue stone was transported and traded for use by the lapidaries of the early Western Asian and North African civilisations.

The less common name for lapis lazuli is *tefrer* and is thought to have originated from the region of Tefreret, south of the Caspian Sea but this has since been identified as a trading post and not as a source (Harrell 2012:3). Lapis lazuli has been identified as the *sapphirus* mentioned by Pliny (*Nat. His.* XXXVII: 119)⁵⁸ but also became

⁵⁶ Aston *et al* (2000:39) describes a lapis lazuli necklace found at a pre-Dynastic Naqada grave site together with a Mesopotamian cylinder seal.

⁵⁷ Aston *et al* (2000:39) elaborate that the use of sulphur isotope ratios in establishing the precise origins of lapis lazuli confirms its use in numerous Egyptian artefacts. However, museums are reluctant to allow the amount of samples necessary for destructive testing purposes to be removed from these artefacts. There was a 200-year hiatus in the importation of lapis lazuli during early dynasties which may have coincided with a temporary break in trade relations with Mesopotamia.

⁵⁸ The flecks of iron pyrites were often mistaken for gold, thus ‘*aureus pulvis in sapphiros/sappirus*’ (Greek/Roman) (Bailey 1929:198).

known in later times as *cyanus* (Healey 1999:267; Lucas 1962:398). It was popular as insets in jewellery until the Third Intermediate Period as evidenced by pieces found in the Tanis burial sites before once again becoming a scarce commodity during the flux caused by invasions by the Persians and Greeks. Aston *et al* (2000:40) confirms there is no evidence for powdered lapis lazuli being used as a pigment.

3.3.2 Turquoise

Turquoise, known in Egyptian as *māfkāt* (*mfk3t*) was, like lapis lazuli (*khesbed*), also a synonym for 'joy' and 'delight'. Typically ranging in varying grades and shades from bright sky blue and blue-green to green because of traces of copper compound, turquoise is found in veins and nodules in arid regions (Ashton *et al*, 2000:62; Lucas 1962:404).⁵⁹ The Sinai Peninsula provided rich deposits of turquoise situated in seams of sandstone at Serabit el Khadim in the Sinai and Wadi Maghara, the latter known by ancient Egyptians as 'The Terraces of Turquoise' (Lucas 1962:404). At the mines at Serabit el-Khadim is a temple dedicated to Hathor as *nbt mfk3t* translated according to Aston *et al* (2000:62), as 'Lady of Turquoise'. Mined extensively at these sites from the late pre-Dynastic Period onwards, the Egyptians appear to have particularly prized the greener over the more porous bright blue variety.⁶⁰ It has not been determined whether the turquoise that was incorporated into small items of Neolithic, Badarian and pre-Dynastic jewellery originated from the Sinai or from alternative sources in nearby Libya. There is evidence that turquoise was used for inlaying jewellery dating from the 7th and 8th Dynasties and also occurs plentifully in the 12th Dynasty diadems from Lahun and Dashur that will be discussed in later chapters.

According to Egyptian beliefs, green was considered the colour of 'new vegetation, growing crops and fertility, hence new life, resurrection ... and in particular, the colour

⁵⁹ In the case of a diadem belonging to a woman from Abydos, malachite, which also occurs in the Eastern Desert and the Sinai Peninsula along with copper, is often erroneously identified as turquoise as it was also referred to as *mfk3t*⁵⁹.

⁶⁰ The colour does not remain stable but does have a tendency to deteriorate over time when exposed to sun or water.

of the papyrus plant' which in hieroglyphs wrote the word *wadj* meaning 'to flourish' or to be 'healthy' (Andrews 1996 37) and hence its importance and incorporation into their symbolism.

3.3.3 Carnelian

Carnelian occurs in a range of colours from pale orange to a dark orange or brownish red as a result of small amounts of iron oxide or haematite impurities (Aston, Harrell & Shaw 2000:26).⁶¹ Carnelian was commonly used from the pre-Dynastic Period onwards, initially in the form of beads or amulets and later in the Pharaonic Period for inlay work on furniture and jewellery. Carnelian was one of the few gemstones still used for inlay during the New Kingdom, when glass replaced many of the traditionally used stones. Andrews (1996:37) notes that the colour red was associated with blood, energy, power and life and by extension also associated with the desert god Seth, patron of chaos and storms. It was mainly used in the form of beads and as inlay.

Carnelian deposits occur in abundance in both the Eastern and Western Deserts in the form of small waterworn pebbles scattered across the desert surface between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. A substantial amount of carnelian, along with agate has been detected in the Nile gravels of the Fourth Cataract of Northern Sudan and also in Nubia near Wadi Halfa reports Harrell (2012:13). Some of the red carnelian has been chemically traced to deposits in India's Gujarat region which it is known were exploited from as early as the third millennium BCE (Aston *et al* 2000:27; Andrews 1996:41).

Because of similarities in colour, carnelian is sometimes confused in visual identification with dark red to reddish-brown garnets which occurred plentifully at Aswan, Kharga Oasis and Sinai, according to Lucas (1962:394). It appears that these were generally considered too dull and too small to be used successfully as gem

⁶¹ The Oxford English Dictionary determines "carnelian" as a perversion of 'cornelian', linking its roots with the Latin word for flesh *carn-* which makes sense given its reddish-brown colour. 'Carnelian' has been used throughout this study.

stones but nevertheless were used as beads and inlay during the Badarian Period and also to some extent during the Middle and New Kingdoms until the end of the New Kingdom. Ogden (1982:98) suggests that the garnets used in Mycenaean jewellery originated not in Europe as traditionally surmised, but were traded out of Egypt through early trade contacts. Andrews (1996:43) mentions that *hemaget*, the Egyptian word for garnet, has been identified from inscriptions describing tribute from Nubia in the Theban tomb of Rekhmire, vizier of Tuthmosis III (c. 1425 BCE).

Jasper is also classified together with this quartz-group of stones and occurs as medium-dark red (known as *khenmet*, *mekhenmet* and *heken*), medium-dark green (identified as *nemhef*, *seheret/sheret*) and yellow (ancient name unknown) in the Eastern Desert. The word *khenmet* for red jasper meaning 'to delight' while the word for carnelian, *herset*, *herset desher* or *djertet* was used to indicate 'sadness' (Harrell 2012:5).

3.3.4 Mica

Glistening, soft mica occurs in igneous and metamorphic rocks and can be split into wafer-thin translucent sheets. Light to medium brownish yellow mica deposits occurred in the Eastern Desert but there is limited evidence of its use in Dynastic jewellery. As confirmed by Aston *et al* (2000:45) and Harrell (2012:4), it was used for embellishment on garments and as cap ornaments by the Nubian Kerma culture during the Egyptian Middle Kingdom (c. 1750-1550 BCE). Andrews (1996:48) speculates that mica was possibly called *paqt*, meaning 'eggshell' or *irqebes*, which only occurs once in a list of Nubian commodities but neither of these have been confirmed.

3.4 IMITATION MATERIALS

A large percentage of the ancient Egyptian population could not afford jewellery made from expensive materials. In order to simulate the more expensive materials, imitations were produced. Substitute materials such as faience and glass played an

important role in the jeweller's craft. During the pre-Dynastic Badarian Period c. 4000 BCE, a substitute material was achieved by applying a vitreous alkaline glaze to common steatite beads resulting in a range of blue or green shades that imitated turquoise.⁶²

3.4.1 Faience

Later, the Naqada I period, craftsmen mastered the technique of glazed composition, also known as faience, which is acknowledged as being the most characteristic of ancient Egyptian manufactured materials. From the Old Kingdom onwards black, white, yellow and red and purple were added to the faience palette. Blue and green glazes that imitated turquoise and lapis lazuli were the most popular. Faience became the material of choice for the ordinary citizen, appearing in a variety of objects ranging from amulets and beads to intricate inlay work.

Composed generally of a quartz sand core covered with a layer of coloured vitreous alkaline glaze and pressed into terracotta moulds before being fired similar to pottery, faience is commonly identified with Egyptian amulets. As it could be modelled or moulded into a variety of shapes, glazed composition was extremely versatile for the manufacture of decorative inlays such as rosettes on headbands, specifically in the imitation of rare or expensive semi-precious stones. Egyptians, in describing the shiny appearance of this glazed composition, referred to it as *tjehnet* (*thnt*), meaning 'gleaming, shining or dazzling' thereby emphasising its role as an artificial gemstone (Andrews, 1990:58; Nicholson & Peltenberg 2000:178).

According to Romano (1995:1606), faience was made by 'shaping a mass of powdered quartz into any desired form, either by hand or in a mould, covering it with a brightly coloured alkaline glaze and firing the core and glaze until the two surfaces fused'. Andrews (1990:57-58) advises that various colourants could be added to the glazing mixture by three methods:

⁶² For detailed discussions on faience, see the in-depth chapter in Nicholson & Shaw (*Egyptian Materials and Technology* 2000:177-194). The definition of early faience may not be the most accurate term for the material, but it is nevertheless firmly entrenched in the study of early Egyptian artefacts. Nicholson and Peltenberg (2000:177) note that little has been done since the mid-1960s to refute this. The chemical analysis of faience has been the focus of a number of studies as recently as the late 1990s.

- a) Applied glazing is considered the earliest method known. The powdered raw materials were mixed with water to form a compound known as slurry before being applied to the core material by dipping, painting or pouring, resulting in the an uneven glaze forming on the surface during firing.

- b) By the time of the Middle Kingdom, a self-glazing process known as cementation had been developed whereby the sand core was completely enveloped in the glazing mixture in either a wet or dry state. The mixture melted during the firing process to form a neat glaze on the surface of the object.

- c) The third method entailed mixing the glazing materials with that of the core. In a process known as efflorescence, the glazing salts rose to the surface during firing before melting to coat it.

Although there are many examples in Egyptian art of potters at work, there is limited evidence for the manufacture of faience. Nicholson & Peltenberg (2000:178) refer to a scene in a 26th Dynasty tomb at Thebes, dating to the reign of Psamtek I (664-610 BCE). They interpret it as a workman grinding or mixing faience ingredients while another works on an almost complete item, possibly something that was being inlaid. Unfortunately, there is no accompanying text to verify the scene. A tomb at Lisht and a 19th Dynasty funerary papyrus both mention the uncommon title of director or overseer of faience workers.

3.4.2 Glass

Manufactured glass was referred to as *inr n wedeh*, 'stone that flows' or *a3t whdt*, 'stone which is poured/cast' (Nicholson & Henderson 2000:195). Glass was afforded high status as it was often used as a substitute because of its affordability and availability in addition to the range of symbolically important colours that could be produced. Lucas (1962:179) is uncertain of the exact date that glass was first made in ancient Egypt but notes that some glass beads and tiny amulets were found in pre-

Dynastic and Early Dynastic contexts.⁶³ Egyptian faience workers are credited with the initial production of glass which is recognised as being among the finest in the ancient world. Regular, large-scale high-quality production took place from 1500 BCE onwards although it is also believed that glass was introduced and reworked at this time (Nicholson & Henderson 2000:195). The words *mekku* and *ehlipakku* Akkadian and Hurrian respectively, pointing to a possible introduction of glass as part of tributes brought back during the time of Thutmosis III.

Full understanding of the glass-making process has been severely hindered by the lack of identifiable glass furnaces dating to Pharaonic times although four brick structures uncovered at Amarna may indeed be the only surviving examples. Others may have simply been overlooked or misidentified as pottery kilns during excavations (Nicholson & Henderson 2000:201). Ancient Egyptian glass is a complex composition of predominantly alkali-lime-magnesia-alumina-silica with the nature being closely aligned to that of ordinary quality modern glass.⁶⁴ The main difference lay in that during the glass process it was used independently and formed into rods or canes. Crucibles discovered at Thebes, Amarna, Wadi Natrun, Lisht, and much later at Alexandria are indicative of glassworks at these settlements (Lucas 1962:184). Skilled craftsmen produced glass in a variety of colours including red, blue, green, yellow and opaque white (Romano 1995:1606).

Both Lucas (1962:189-191) together with Nicholson & Henderson (2000:195-206-218) provide valuable information on the chemical composition of ancient Egyptian coloured glass artefacts.⁶⁵ Certain colours were favoured for jewellery purposes, replacing stones of the same hue and credited with the same amuletic effects. The ground colourant material would have been added to the molten glass in the crucibles before being poured into moulds. Yellow glass was found to contain compounds of antimony, lead or iron and white or opaque glass was formed by the addition of oxide tin. Copper was also used as a colourant in the production of red glass, a particularly difficult hue to create and has the tendency to discolour to green.

⁶³ For detailed discussions on faience, see the in-depth chapter 'Glass' by Nicholson & Henderson (Nicholson & Shaw, *Egyptian Materials and Technology* 2000:195-224).

⁶⁴ The glaze of glazed composition and the glass manufactured by the ancient Egyptians were essentially the same material, an alkaline calcium silicate.

Blue glass resulting from the addition of copper, iron or cobalt compounds was produced in three shades:

- a) The darkest imitated lapis lazuli, referred to in some textual sources as the lapis lazuli of Babylon;
- b) The light blues and green-blues, a shade sometimes termed 'grue' and obtained by the addition of copper, were used to imitate turquoise.
- c) Green glass was made by the addition of a copper compound while copper oxide was added to the materials that were used in the making of red glass.

By the middle of the New Kingdom when it was produced in quantity, coloured glass inlay formed by kiln casting had become an acceptable substitute for the expensive turquoise, carnelian or rare lapis lazuli and used in a wide variety of items manufactured for the royalty, including diadems (Lucas 1962:193). Sometimes termed paste, or *pâte de verre*, certain large and elaborate inlay pieces would have been made by hot moulding using clay or limestone forms. Lucas (1962:193) elaborates that smaller pieces would have been worked cold, being cut from a solid glass block or, alternatively, 'first moulded to shape before being finished by cutting, grinding, drilling and polishing' before being cemented into position, usually within cloisonné cells.

3.5 STONE-CUTTING TECHNIQUES

Due to paucity of existing information in the archaeological record, no study of a lapidary's workshop has been possible. From Egyptian Middle and New Kingdom tomb depictions, it appears that lapidaries and gold or silversmiths worked in close proximity. Andrews (1996:79) advises that blocks of stone destined for inlay were first cut off the main body of stone by sawing or grinding before being chipped into shape. Harrell (2012:15) confirms that raw stones were initially roughly shaped by a combination of chipping and grinding. He speculates that the grinding was done on a slab of silicified sandstone. Actual cutting, he adds, would have been done with drills 'equipped with a bit consisting of either a chip of chert or a copper/bronze wire that was used together with fine quartz sand'. Shaped stones were polished by rubbing

with a fine quartz sand paste applied with a piece of cloth or leather to give it a smooth, rounded top surface in what is known as a ‘cabochon’ style, usually elliptical in shape with a convex top and flat bottom. This method works exceptionally well with softer, opaque gems, while faceting is usually limited to harder stones which were not used by the Egyptians. Combined with the increasing knowledge of the properties of specific stones and mastering of abrading and polishing, the Egyptian lapidaries, known as *hery nesdhy*, were capable of exquisitely delicate work on medium to hard stones (Moorey 1994:107). Art historians and archaeologists are fortunate to have a number of depictions to corroborate evidence and although a vignette in a 6th Dynasty tomb depicts ‘lapidaries polishing carnelian’ there is no description of how this was accomplished (Harrell 2012:16).

A summary of the most popular materials and their connotation with mythology and divinities is provided in Figure 3.2 (below).

Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>nub, djam</i> (yellow = <i>khenet, kenit</i>) • Equated with “the flesh of the Gods”, eternal life, solar imagery (sun, stars) • Divinity: Re, Isis
Lapis lazuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>khesbed</i> (dark blue = <i>irtiu</i>) also <i>tefrer</i> • Synonym for ‘joy’ and ‘delight’ • Equated with heavens, life-giving cosmic/primeval waters, fertility, wisdom • Divinity: Amun-Re, Hapy (Nile God)
Turquoise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>mafkat</i> (green = <i>wadj</i>) • Equated with vegetation, health and vitality, resurrection • Divinity: Hathor “Lady of Turquoise”, Wadjet, goddess of Lower Egypt, Eye of Horus
Carnelian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>herset, herset desher</i> and <i>djertet</i> (red = <i>deshret</i>) • Equated with fire, life, the sun, blood, or abstract concepts such as sadness, anger, danger, chaos and destruction • Divinity: Eye of Re, Atum, Seth
Figure 3.2: Summary of popular materials used in diadems and their colour connotations	

3.6 CONCLUSION

Adornment of the Egyptian body in both life and death formed an important aspect of their material culture. Certain metals and semi-precious stones not only held intrinsic

beauty but were prized for their value or rarity in addition to perceived symbolic political, religious or mythological connotations. A background investigation of these was considered necessary in order to aid in the visual identification of each example and also to provide context for the choice and use of materials. Considerable scholarly work has been done on aspects such as the identification of ancient Egyptian quarries, extraction and preparation of the precious substances. While rare and expensive lapis lazuli was imported from Asia Minor, carnelian and turquoise were extracted from local quarries.

Gold was generally used in the manufacture of diadems as it was synonymous with wealth and was thus popular for diadems worn during the owner's lifetime. Silver was a much rarer, expensive and imported expensive substance that has not survived successfully due to corrosion. Copper was one of the earliest metals to be worked by the ancient Egyptians. Combined with textile, gesso and paint, copper appears to have been favoured in two surviving Old Kingdom diadems that, from all accounts, were made specifically for funerary purposes.

Stone was symbolically associated with endurance thereby providing a direct link with Creation. Combinations of brightly coloured red, blue and turquoise green stones, glass or faience were favoured mainly for their symbolic value and formed the basis of the colour palette used in the intricate cloisonné or inlaid motifs. Locally manufactured faience and glass were used to imitate the more expensive and rare natural materials and played an important role in possessing the perceived magical or amuletic qualities. 'Fake' was not an issue, as long as it served its purpose by imitating the character and the colour connotation of the original material. Colour connotations provide the basis for the interpretation of non-verbal, symbolic statements and complement the basic visual information contained headdress that would have been popular choices for wear by mainly non-elite women during banquets and festivals.

CHAPTER 4: JEWELLERY-MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUES

Abstract

The manufacture of decorative items is one of the earliest human crafts. Egyptian development of tools and metallurgy resulted in unique items and styles of jewellery as technology improved and fashions changed over the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. In particular, improved technology and impressive decorative skills resulted in diadems of rare beauty which incorporated favoured motifs. Classified collectively as 'personal arts', headdresses fashioned from a variety of precious metals and semi-precious stones, was manufactured by specialist gold- and silversmiths and inlaid by lapidaries in workshops funded by the elite of Egyptian society. In particular, the ancient Egyptian craftsmen were skilled in the decorative techniques of repoussé and chasing as well as intricate inlay and cloisonné. This chapter serves as an essential background to the ancient Egyptian jewellery-making technologies and discusses their craft.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to investigate the decorative headdresses and diadems worn by the ancient Egyptian royalty and nobility as well as the commoners, it is necessary to obtain an overview of the general jewellery techniques. Aldred (1978:45) notes that techniques used in most items of personal adornment have been studied quite intensively⁶⁶ Although Winlock and others have indicated the important contribution and necessity of stylistic analysis, this particular study does not intend addressing jewellery manufacture and techniques as there is limited opportunity to gain access to museum collections. Scientific methods of analysis such as spectroscopy or computer tomography would also not be feasible. An investigation into the inherent meanings, symbolism, iconography and concepts of magic knowingly and deliberately incorporated into each piece would however be more logical and quite feasible using a desk-top approach.

⁶⁶ Maryon (1949:93-125) provides a good overview to metal working in the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman world in general and in particular aspects such as the use of charcoal fires, annealing, riveting, welding, sintering and soldering, that have not been discussed in detail in this study.

4.2 THE JEWELLERS CRAFT

Much of the available information about the variety of headdresses and, more specifically, diadems are obtained from Egyptian temple reliefs, tomb paintings and statues. Caches of jewellery found in royal graves have put much of this visual information into context, providing examples of the combination of precious metals combined with semi-precious stones, glass or faience.⁶⁷

The Instructions of Dua-Khety, also known as the Satire of the Trades, describes the jeweller's craft as follows:

The jeweller drills in bead-making using all of the hardest hard stones. When he has completed the inlays, his arms are destroyed by his exhaustion. He sits at the food of Ra with his knees and back hunched double.'

Papyrus Sallier II, column V, lines 1-3 (Transliteration after Helck 1970a)⁶⁸

Andrews (1996:67) indicates that despite the appreciation for the finely crafted and valuable items, it appears that socially jewellery-manufacturers were not held in high esteem. The sole means of obtaining the heat necessary for the smelting of metals was the charcoal fire fanned reach the high temperature necessary by bellows or blowpipes (Maryon 1949:93) before by reheating and hammering to ensure its pliability in a process known as annealing.⁶⁹ Thereafter the hot metal was 'quenched' by plunging it into cold water before beating into shape. The work was done in hot, dirty and noisy workshops and the metalworker was vilified as follows:

'... I see the coppersmith [metalworker?] at his toil at the mouth of his furnace, his fingers like crocodile skin, his stench worse than fish eggs.'

Papyrus Sallier II, column IV, lines 6 to 8 (Transliteration after Helck 1970a)

⁶⁷ Illustrations of the various techniques and methods of embellishment will not be provided in this chapter, but instead featured in the relevant chapters where the individual diadems will be discussed in detail.

⁶⁸ Transliterations after Wolfgang Helck 1970a (*Die Lehre des Dw-Htjj*) using the copy on Papyrus Sallier II as principal source.

⁶⁹ This process changes the crystalline structure of the metal, altering shape and size leaving the metal in an 'unstrained' condition.

4.2.1 Workshop and Craftsmen

In the Egyptian economy, fine quality jewellery was manufactured in state-controlled workshops or official establishments belonging to the temples, the elite or royalty producing goods for ritual, votive or funerary purposes or as private commissions. Andrews (1996:67) notes that it is the overseers and officials whose 'names have survived and in their tombs that the manufacture was depicted'. Egyptian jewellers were referred to either as *neshdy/mesneshdy*, meaning 'jewellery-maker', or as *neby* and *hemu nub*, the goldsmith. The organisation of goldsmiths under an overseer in royal or temple workshops did not lend itself to personal signatures on individual items. As a result, very little is known about the individual craftsmen who actually fashioned the items of jewellery. A number of scenes depicting jewellers dating from Old and Middle Kingdom tombs serve to illustrate nearly every stage of the jewellery-making process but no helpful descriptions are provided (Andrews 1996:68; Wilkinson 1975:1-2). It is speculated that their craft, like many others, was possibly hereditary with its secrets being passed on through the generations.

The Saqqara tomb Mereruka⁷⁰ contains a detailed frieze depicting a workshop with, among other items of jewellery, a completed diadem. Similarly, the Middle Kingdom tomb of Bakt III at Beni Hassan depicts a man working on a diadem with elaborate knots indicating that this style was quite commonly made throughout Egypt (Andrews 1996:71).

Goldsmiths and lapidaries did not supply or control raw materials as luxury goods were imported by the state. According to Drenkhan (1995:334) they were remunerated in kind by their employers who commissioned their work and oversaw the distribution of the finished items. Although no workshops or toolkits have been identified, a New Kingdom painting from the tomb of Nebamun dating from the 15th century BCE depicts various aspects of a jeweller's workshop with metalworkers and lapidaries working side-by-side (Parkinson 2008). As illustrated in Figure 4.1 (page 85), the basic tools depicted were a wooden block, a hammer, some kind of anvil, chisels to cut and awls to pierce. Punches and burnishers together with a

⁷⁰ Vizier to King Teti during the 6th Dynasty (c. 2340 BCE). The diadem with streamers down the back, can be seen to have been embellished with lotus ornaments.

blowpipe/small bellows and crucibles, waxes for modelling moulds and dies, solders and fluxes, and fine sand for polishing are also visible (Moorey 194:226). Sheet metal was hammered, before being drilled or cut with a sharp chisel to divide it into parts or shapes. Untracht (1985:75, 78) notes that shears have been in use since the Iron Age. He adds that stone saws were developed during the Neolithic and there is also evidence of Egyptian bronze saws dating from about 3500 BCE.⁷¹ Piercing or perforating originated in prehistoric times when boring tools made from stone or bone were used to make holes in thin sheets of metal. The sharp point of the piercing tool was placed in position and struck in a series of blows (Untracht 1985:89, 91). The method of piercing by a rotary or boring motion is depicted in various murals. Metal could also be removed from its background by means of flat or rounded bronze files which were developed and widely used during the Bronze Age (Untracht 1985:100).

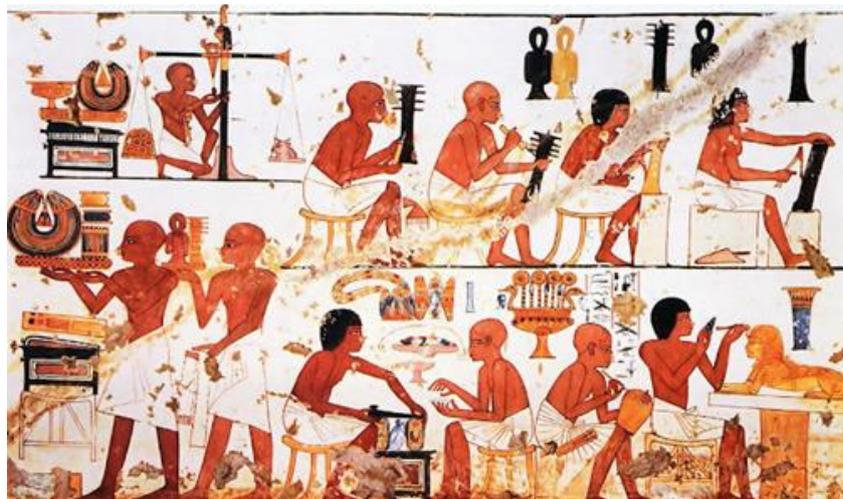


Figure 4.1: Jewellery workshop from the New Kingdom Tomb of Nebamun, Thebes
[British Museum]

A vital group that are not easily discernible in either the texts or the pictorial record were the designers of working diagrams or models. Drenkhan (1995:340) mentions that there is no record of those craftsmen who reworked, extended and modernised the repertoire of existing designs or whether they enjoyed special status and rewards. As he motifs and proportion remained essentially the same for long

⁷¹ The forerunner of the modern jeweller's saw comprising a saw blade being placed under tension in a frame, originated in ancient Rome.

periods, so there must have been something akin to templates or 'pattern books' that were used to guide the manufacturers.

4.2.2 Sheet Metal

Sheet metal forms the foundation for the majority of gold, silver and electrum jewellery items. Andrews (1996:86) indicates that these metals produced in various thicknesses in sheet form were further worked into very thin sheets 'by beating over a flat stone or wooden block by a hand-held rounded stone hammer' which was shaped like small pestles.⁷² Ogden (2000:165) advises that the hammered gold sheet was then cut and shaped to form the individual components making up a piece of jewellery. Referred to in most Old and Middle Kingdom tomb depictions, the beating process was very aptly labelled *sequr* or 'striking'.

Gold can be easily stretched, beaten or thinly drawn and the addition of a small amount of copper strengthened the alloy considerably. Andrews (1996:87) confirms that the small gold beads were formed by simply bending the ends of sheet metal over towards each other. Electrum was commonly used when soldering gold items together. Sheet metal could be shaped with the aid of moulds and stamps and decorated by means of punching, repoussé, chasing, engraving or granulation (Higgins, 1965:11).

4.2.3 Gold Foil and Gilding

By the 1st Dynasty, gold foil and gold leaf was perfected and was soon adopted as a common form of embellishment for wooden/cartonnage coffins. It was used to enhance not only wooden statues but also objects made from copper, silver or gesso. Ogden (2000:160) explains that the simplest and earliest gilding technique entailed pressing and shaping the thin foil over the object; it was then held in place

⁷² According to Moorey (1994:226) a bulbous hematite stone tool fitting this description was found during excavations at Sumerian Ur.

by overlaps, mechanical folds or some form of adhesive.⁷³ Gilding occurs particularly in the funerary context where it gave the illusion of wealth.

The process is referred in two instances, once as *redit nub* 'placing gold' and also as *redit nub er sesher* 'placing gold in order to gild' with the terms *sekha* and *sesher* appearing in other tombs together with the sign for copper. In both of these cases Andrews (1996:94) speculates that the technique may refer to the process of gilding copper with gold leaf by burnishing and heating and not merely overlaying with adhesive and gold leaf.⁷⁴ She notes that because of its poor durability, the latter technique would have been suitable for funerary jewellery only⁷⁵.

Evidence from ancient sources is provided by Pliny the Elder who discussed the manufacture of gold-leaf in *Historia Naturalis* (XXXIII:20) as follows: 'Again, nothing can be beaten into thinner leaves nor divided more finely, for an ounce of it is hammered out into seven hundred and fifty, or even more, gold-leaves measuring four fingers each way'.⁷⁶ He refers to the malleability of gold and its ability 'to be divided into so many portions; thus an ounce of gold can be beaten into upwards of 750 leaves, four inches square' (Nat. Hist. XXXIII: 296 as quoted by Healey 1991:296). He further advises that gold-leafing was '... laid on [to a marble surface] with white of egg and onto gesso or wooden objects with glue called *leucophorum* made in accordance with a certain formula'. He further notes that 'half a pound of Pontic sinopsis, ten pounds of bright sil⁷⁷, and two pounds of Greek melium, well mixed and triturated together for twelve successive days, produce *leucophoron*, a cement used for applying gold-leaf to wood.'

⁷³ The nature of adhesives has not been confirmed, but it is presumed that these were either albumen or animal glues.

⁷⁴ Overlaying produced a very distinct coloured metal termed 'red' or 'rose' gold and can be most clearly seen in the flowers attached to the 19th Dynasty diadem of Queen Tausret (c. 1200-1994 BCE).

⁷⁵ Andrews (1996:93) indicates that the process of gilding is depicted in two tombs and the production of gold leaf only in one. In the tomb of Bakt III at Beni Hassan, a craftsman removes a strip of gold leaf from a basin-shaped mould; apparently the gold foil placed in the bowl could be turned into gold leaf by rocking a hand-held stone backwards and forwards.

⁷⁶ The majority of commentators assume that the gold-leaf of Pliny's era could not compare in thinness with modern gold-leaf. Baily (1929:195), however, confirms that if one takes "four fingers" as being 7.5 cm, then the thickness of one of Pliny's 750 sheets was about 0.000034 cm. If the gold was impure and thus less dense, the thickness would be slightly more. Pliny's gold-leaf was most probably less than four times as thick as the best quality modern product. Sil refers to yellow ochre while *melium* is a type of white earth from the Isle of Melos.

⁷⁷ Sil refers to yellow ochre while *melium* is a type of white earth from the Isle of Melos.

As measured by Lucas (1962:231) and confirmed by Ogden (2000:160), gold foil ranged in thickness from 0.17 mm to 0.54 mm. Ancient Egyptian gold leaf varied from 0.01 mm to 0.13 mm in thickness. When sheet gold was used to decorate wooden objects, such as the medallions on a diadem for example, it would have been embossed or engraved before being glued directly onto the wood with some kind of adhesive. Alternatively, the gold foil would have been stuck with size (glue) onto on a thin layer of special white plaster, known as 'gesso' used to coat the surface of the object. In some instances, depending on the thickness of the foil, it was fastened into place with tiny gold rivets. For a thinner layer of gold-leaf, a similar process was followed. Lucas (1962:232) and also Ogden (2000:160, 164) advise that in some cases traces of animal glues and egg albumen have been identified.

According to Darque-Ceretti, Felder & Aucouturier (2011:549), the Louvre Museum houses a set of small gold leaf fragments found in a tomb dating to the 4th century BCE located at Elephantine Island near Aswan. The Museum also houses eight large sheets of gold leaf interleaved with thin copper sheeting. As illustrated in Figure 4.2 page 89), the leaves were assembled into what resembles a book. This is very similar to how it is presented and sold to modern day artists and art restorers. The origin of this book is uncertain, although it has also been dated to the Late Period.



**Figure 4.2: (a) Gold Fragments from Elephantine Island, 4th C BCE;
(b) "Gilder Book, Late Period [Louvre Museum]**

The composition and thickness of the gold fragments and leaf have been measured using a variety of analytical techniques such as PIXE, RBS and Scanning Electron

Microscopy (SEM) by Darque-Ceretti, Felder and Aucouturier (2011:548-550). Their investigation confirms that Elephantine fragments are a pure gold and about 1.2 μm thick. In addition, their studies indicate that the 'book' leaves are gold-silver alloy and much thicker at about 5 μm . Their analysis confirms that gold leafing with a broad range of composition including white gold and a gold-copper-silver alloy has been identified, the age and location of the gilded objects notwithstanding. They also confirm that according to their data, thicknesses of between 1 μm and 10 μm were already reached at the beginning of the second millennium BCE.

4.2.4 Wire

From the earliest periods, wire was used in simple ways for decorative effects but there is no evidence that the Egyptians had mastered the technique for drawing wire. Hammering would have produced a thin sheet of metal that could be folded in on itself to create a circular hollow metal tube or by wrapping it around a length of wire that was later withdrawn (Ogden 2000:165). Andrews (1996:96) suggests that wire could also have been formed by twisting or by winding single strands into tight spirals before being rolled into a solid rod or it could be cast in a groove cut into stone blocks. In the context of diadems, wire was used to make filigree, hair rings and chains that held pendants. The drawplate⁷⁸ was not introduced until the late Roman period (Higgins 1965:11). Gold wire is particularly prominent in the openwork circlet belonging to Senebtisi (12th Dynasty, c. 1975 BCE) that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 12.

A simple chain was composed of a series of links made by inserting a section of wire into the previous link, bending it around and soldering the ends together. More intricate chains were made using the loop-in-loop method, becoming more complex as technology and skills improved (Andrews 1996:99; Higgins 1961:16). In the context of this study, chain links were generally only used for attaching decorative hanging elements such as pendants to the front or sides of diadems.

⁷⁸ A drawplate was a perforated sheet of metal with holes through which soft, malleable strips were drawn.

4.2.5 Casting

Although the Egyptians were adept at every metal-working technique known in the ancient world, the more elaborate pieces were manufactured using the lost-wax or *cire perdu* casting method.⁷⁹ The Egyptians were practicing the *cire perdue* method from the mid-3rd millennium BC, as evidenced by Early Dynastic gold jewellery. Lost-wax casting is the process whereby a solid stone or clay model was used to produce wax positives from which silver or gold was cast. The object to be cast was first modelled in wax before being covered with clay (Andrews 1996:85). Once it had dried, the covering was pierced and the wax heated until it melted and flowed out leaving a closed mould into which liquid or molten metal could be poured. The hot metal was allowed to cool and solidify before the mould was broken and the object could be removed.



Figure 4.3: Two parts of a steatite casting mould for a Middle Syrian period diadem from Ugarit (c. 1450-1200 BCE.⁸⁰ L: 15.7 x H 4.3 x 1.5 cm)
[National Museum of Aleppo, Syria]

This method was used for making large or complex shapes that would be either difficult or uneconomical to make individually.⁸¹ Casting was, according to Ogden

⁷⁹ For detailed descriptions on the various casting methods, see Ogden in Nicholson & Shaw (2000:157-160).

⁸⁰ Ugarit, located at what is now called Ras Shamra in northern Levant (modern Syria) maintained trade and diplomatic connections with the Egyptians. The port city-state was at its height from c. 1450 BCE until 1200 BCE. Pomegranates were symbolic of fruitfulness and as a motif for the crenulations, are particularly feminine and attractive. The choice of motif together with the petiteness of the cast item, are an indication that this diadem was possibly designed for someone feminine, perhaps an Ugaritic princess.

(2000:165), often combined with hand-wrought work. As indicated in Figure 4.3 (page 90), depending on the individual's skills, intricate small items and finely detailed diadems could be fashioned using this method. This method was practical for the mass-production of small decorative motifs items such as amulets or decorative pendants for necklaces (Higgins 1965:11).

4.2.6 Joining and Soldering Methods

Soldering is the process by which separate pieces of small and delicate jewellery were joined together without using rivets or other mechanical devices (Maryon 1949:107). Andrews (1996:88) notes that this entailed the application of small amounts of copper sometimes mixed with a little glue to hold the components in place until the solder had melted. Hard solder was composed of a filler metal such as lead or tin, alloyed with silver or copper to ensure that the melting point was lower than that of the pieces to be joined. In order to join, the surfaces were coated with a flux to prevent oxidation during the heating, and chips of solder were placed between them. The work was then heated over a charcoal fire and when the correct temperature was reached, the solder melted, thereby completing the join (Higgins 1965:12).⁸² Pliny notes that gold which contained copper 'contracts and grows dull and is soldered with difficulty' (Nat. Hist. Book XXXIII: 93). He adds that copper was soldered using *cadmea* (zinc oxide).

4.3 DECORATIVE TECHNIQUES

It is generally accepted that there was a fairly continuous development of jewellery techniques in different parts of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Ancient Near East during the Iron and Bronze Ages as metallurgical techniques and technologies were improved. By the 12th Dynasty, jewellery played an important role, having acquired elaborate amuletic, social and decorative functions. Imitations and substitutes were

⁸¹ Greco-Roman texts dating from the 1st century refer to lost-wax casting and Columella mentions the processing of wax from beehives for casting in *De Re Rustica*, as does Pliny the Elder in his *Natural Histories*.

⁸² For greater detail on soldering techniques see Maryon (1949:107110).

introduced for those could not afford or were not entitled to wear the more valuable materials.

4.3.1 Repoussé and Chasing

Sometimes a design in outline was simply insufficient for the craftsman's purposes and relief was required to enhance an object. Repoussé, also known as embossing, is a technique whereby silver or gold was ornamented by hammering out the design from the reverse side to create a raised low-relief decoration in the front (Andrews 1996:92). Initially repoussé was produced free-hand using a variety of punches. For repetitive designs, a stone or metal die was incised.⁸³

Chasing is the opposite technique used on the front of the item by hammering the metal down to produce an indented design (Moorey 1994:216). Chasing and repoussé were normally done against a yielding surface such as wood, leather, beeswax, pitch or resin (Untracht 1985:119). The two techniques were generally used in conjunction to create a finished piece. There is no loss of metal in the process, the surface remains continuous and maintains the same thickness throughout.⁸⁴

4.3.2 Engraving

Engraving is the process of gouging out a decorative design on a metal surface using a sharp instrument known as a burin. Engraving would initially have been done using an obsidian stone flake such as obsidian or a copper tool before iron tools were introduced Andrews (1996:92).⁸⁵ It was primarily used for embellishing semi-precious stones advises Albermeier (2005:64). During the early Bronze Age, incised

⁸³ The Egyptian 18th Dynasty funerary mask of Tutankhamun is a fine example of this kind of decorative process. The lapis lazuli and other stones were inlaid in chased areas after the height of the form was completed. It appears that the majority of the mask was formed from a single sheet of gold using the repoussé technique and the ceremonial beard, Nekhbet vulture, and Uraeus were attached separately.

⁸⁴ Maryon (1949:120-124) goes into greater detail on the techniques of repoussé and chasing.

⁸⁵ Engraving was the final step in the process of manufacturing cylinder seals, drawing on centuries of decorating on bone, ivory and stone.

straight and curved linear patterns were achieved by using a hammer and tracer (a small round-edged bronze chisel leaving what resembles a stitch mark in the metal surface Maryon (1946:115).⁸⁶

If multiple copies of a pattern were required, the craftsman created a punch to ensure accurate replication of the design. This method would also be much quicker than working each motif separately. The design was cut into stone or wood before being attached to a punch-end (Maryon 1946:124). Punching was thus useful for creating multiples motifs to form a continuous pattern (Moorey 1994:216).

4.3.3 Filigree and Ajouré

Filigree did not exist in the accepted modern sense but in its earliest form this decorative technique was done using thin silver or gold wire strands which were twisted and soldered onto a solid background to create delicate decorative patterns, (Albermeier 2005:64). The wires were arranged singly with the most popular patterns being circles, spirals or straight lines.

A rarer and technically more difficult variety of filigree done by the Egyptians is known as *ajouré*. It is formed by openwork patterns cut out of metal background. There were no fine saws so the pattern had to be chiselled or punched out. Individual elements were not quite separated and often joined together throughout. It was a popular technique for plaques that formed part of pectorals (Andrews 1996:90; Higgins 1961:20).

4.3.4 Granulation`

Granulation was, in effect, a refinement of the filigree technique whereby minute gold globules were arranged in a decorative ornamental or figurative design s before being fused onto the solid metal surface (Albermeier 2005:64; Andrews 1996:88). Simple patterns such as chevrons, lozenges and rosettes were made by attaching

⁸⁶ The exact angle of the tracer varies with each tool and personal preference of the engraver.

the grains directly to the surface of the metal, possibly making use of a pattern first etched by engraving into which the grains were placed. Granulation could as a single linear pattern, as an outline adjacent to embossed forms, as a silhouette, massed to fully or partially cover an entire item, or as a background filling while the main features are left plain and undecorated.

Granulation is one of the most controversial aspects of ancient jewellery in that it cannot be assumed that only one method was used throughout antiquity to obtain the granules. Jewellery analysis has not yet confirmed how such uniformity of granules was obtained

- Higgins (1961:20) postulates that possibly small pieces of gold cut from wire or a sheet were laid separately in a crucible before being heated until surface tension caused minute spheres to form.
- Ogden (2000:165) proposes that sheet or wire would be twisted and rolled up as a result of surface tension when heated.
- Maryon (1949:111) cites an interesting observation that copper salt combined with glue was potentially used to hold the grains in place before being melted away, leaving a very fine solder to fasten the grains permanently; the process is known as colloidal hard soldering.
- According to Andrews (1996:88) the decoration known as beaded wire is believed to have been formed by joining gold granules together to form a type of wire.
- Alternatively, molten metal could have been dipped in cold water or gold dust could have been graded according to size but the latter is considered unlikely.

The granulation technique is accepted as being foreign and examples found in Asia indicate that the technique was possibly introduced to Egyptian craftsmen from Mesopotamia.⁸⁷ Evidence for the earliest examples of granulation occurs in the Middle Kingdom's 12th Dynasty jewellery that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. It appeared again in the middle to late new Kingdom where it was used for some

⁸⁷ Maryon (1949:110) notes that there is evidence from the First Dynasty of Ur, that the Sumerian craftsmen were acquainted with filigree decoration as well as producing granulation to form a pattern. He advises that the 12th Dynasty Egyptian jewellers produced much finer granulation work but that this reached the greatest heights with the Etrurians and Greeks from the 8th to 2nd centuries BCE.

Ramesside jewellery (Ogden 2000:165). Granulation declined as the decorative technique of choice in the Roman era before disappearing completely by about 1000 CE. Subsequent attempts to revive it failed and it was only in the mid-20th century that the technique of attaching grains too coarse for ordinary soldering methods was attempted (Higgins 1965:11).

4.3.5 Inlay and Cloisonné

At some stage, Egyptian craftsmen experimented with adding attractive, patterned blocks of colour to their work. This was achieved by wedging a thin, narrow strip of gold into an incised line. The inlay process provided colour, contrast and relief. One of the most characteristic polychrome decorative techniques was cloisonné. This entailed inlays of semi-precious stones, glass or other materials such as faience, mother-of-pearl or ivory being inset into metal open-topped cells, generally made from flattened wire fastened to the surface of the metal. The inlays were cut into shape to fit the settings; the settings were seldom made to fit particularly choice stones except in the case where the stone formed an eye-catching centre-piece, such as a scarab in a pectoral. The inlay was then cemented⁸⁸ into place in openwork cells formed by metal strips soldered onto the surface of a sheet-metal background to form a series of boxes called 'cloisons' (Andrews 1996:8; Higgins 1965:11).

Ogden (2000:166) comments that the inlaid coloured stones were often set in continuous or symmetrical patterns and used for their colour connotations rather than their gemstone value, thereby introducing subtle symbolism. The inlaid stone could either be flush with the top edge of the cell or cut in the cabochon style, rising above the cell.

Cloisonné is considered to have reached its height during the 12th Dynasty period, particularly with reference to the inlay of lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian into the diadems from Lahun and Dahsur that will be discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.

⁸⁸ The cement was made from resin mixed with powdered gypsum or limestone.

Champlevé was a similar technique whereby recesses were cut into the metal base and the hollows filled with stone, faience or glass (Maryon 1949:120). As a thicker metal base was needed this method was generally less popular.

Inlay could also be done by overlaying a copper, wood or gesso with gold, electrum or silver sheet. In its simplest form the thin sheet is pressed and shaped over an object which had been stippled or chiselled to create a rough surface. The foil was held in place by overlapping, folding, tiny rivets, adhesive or a combination of all of these (Ogden 2000:160).

4.4 CONCLUSION

In order to understand the headdresses worn by ancient Dynastic Egyptian women, it was considered necessary to obtain an overview of general jewellery techniques and popular forms of embellishment.⁸⁹ The acquisition of some of the materials and the techniques used in jewellery manufacture indicate well-established trade relations and skills transfer throughout the Ancient Near East and the Aegean. Although no tool-kits have survived there is ample visual evidence of jewellery technologies and craftsmen. Surviving items of jewellery provide context for the scenes and techniques. Tools do not appear not to have changed substantially, merely being replaced by modern materials such as steel. Workshops and the supply of raw materials were generally state-controlled. Jewellery was valued and individual items appear to have been greatly appreciated but craftsmen were not held in high esteem. Although popular decorative motifs remained basically unchanged, the repertoire was modernised, incorporating changing symbolism. In all probability there were templates or pattern books to guide the designers.

Sheet metal was beaten into thin sheets before being cut and shaped to form individual components. The development of gold leaf added a new dimension to the embellishment the minor arts and items destined to be used in the funerary context. Metal casting obtained high levels of finesse and was particularly popular for smaller

⁸⁹ The comparative technology-focused approach and stylistic analysis as used by the art historian were not used during this investigation.

or more detailed elements. Wire-making techniques, joining and soldering techniques were developed and refined. Decorative techniques included filigreed wirework, repoussé, chasing, engraving, moulding, granulation and cloisonné. Punches were used to create multiple replicates of a design. Balanced and symmetrical design was an important aspect of jewellery. It appears that originals worn regularly on state, cultic and festive occasions were replicated for funerary purposes using cheaper materials.

CHAPTER 5: FLORAL MOTIFS

Abstract

Flowers and floral decorations in general were an integral part of the Egyptian civilisation, being used as offerings in temples, in bouquets and garlands for festivals and as a source of fragrant oils. Botanical representations are found on a wide range of artefacts ranging from pottery vessels to finely crafted items of jewellery and was without doubt, the oldest adornment of choice for the female head and body. This chapter will identify and discuss the common floral species that were incorporated into a variety of Dynastic diadems. It provides a background to the floral motifs incorporated into a variety of diadems which will be discussed in following chapters.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The plant life of modern-day Egypt is not the same as it was during the Dynastic period. This is primarily due to climate change that has resulted in the desertification of what was once a savannah-like Sahara. Today, few plants flourish beyond the Nile flood plain and the network of constructed canal systems. Visitors to Egypt expecting an arid desert environment are surprised at the vast amount of botanical motifs depicted in ancient Egyptian art as illustrated in Figure 5.1 (page 99). In reality, in ancient times, the Nile valley and especially the Delta region were extremely lush with vegetation. Pharaohs and peasants alike adorned themselves, their temples and homes with botanicals and reproduced floral images on a wide range of artefacts ranging from pottery vessels to finely crafted items of jewellery.

Given the variety of shape, colour and scent of the floral kingdom, there can be no doubt that the oldest adornments of choice for the female head and body were floral garlands, having had the same attraction and innate sensuality then as now. Floral decorations were an integral part of the Egyptian civilisation and featured extensively in poetic imagery, were given to lovers, offered as tributes to deities, used in garlands for festivals and as a source of fragrant oils.

Floral and botanical images were used extensively in the funerary context in addition to being richly illustrated in scenes of the afterlife. The remains of floral offerings have been found in a number of tombs while scenes incorporating elaborate bouquets and flower gardens were painted onto the walls (Hepper 2009:8). An extract from the Spell 62 of the Coffin Texts gives an indication of the importance

accorded to botanicals in Egyptian beliefs and society as noted by Faulkner (in Wilkinson, 2009:78): 'May you pluck papyrus plants, rushes, lotuses and lotus buds'.



Figure 5.1: Lush vegetation along the banks of the Nile (wall panel from Amarna)

5.2 FLORAL MOTIFS IN EGYPTIAN JEWELLERY

Flowers were depicted in temples and homes, and incorporated into furniture and jewellery not only for their intrinsic beauty but also for symbolic reasons. Accurate representation was important because the plants were expected to live on in the Egyptian after-world, perpetuating the timeless reality of the tomb owner's previous life (Wilkinson 1998:4). There is no doubt that the transient seasonal blooms were imitated and formalised in more lasting and precious materials thereby entering Egyptian iconography as botanical motifs with a multiplicity of layered, sometimes obscure meanings and interpretations. A variety of botanical motifs are exhibited on diadems. This, together with the quality of the materials used, is a potential indicator of fashion trends over an extended period as well as of wealth, status and individual preferences.

Investigation reveals that a large number of botanical motifs were frequently used as embellishment on the less formal headbands, circlets and diadems worn by wealthy

and elite, all of which contained underlying messages in their form, use of colour and the choice of material. Exquisite examples of finely crafted circlets and diadems that feature the lotus, papyrus, lily, poppy and daisy floral motifs were made during the 3000-year Dynastic period. These are illustrated in scholarly publications on Egyptian jewellery materials and techniques, magic and symbolism, gods and goddesses. Although textual evidence relating to diadems, crowns and other ceremonial headdresses is limited, the motifs, symbolism and iconography of these botanical elements can not only be identified according to surviving examples but can also be ascertained via painted sources, monumental stone reliefs and sculpture. Visual corroboration is first attested during the Early Dynastic era on *mastaba* tomb reliefs and statues and reveals the preference for botanical images such as floral rosettes, lotus buds and papyrus umbels.

5.2.1 Chamomile Daisy

Delicately-formed white and yellow chamomile flowers (*Anthemis pseudocotula*, also known as mayweed) adorned faience tile inserts and wall plaster of the Amarna palaces and also at Tell el-Yahudiya. These common flowers grew along the Nile Valley in cultivated fields while other species preferred the sandy coastal zones. The large daisy flowers as illustrated in Figure 5.2 (page 101) have white ray-like florets and bright yellow disc-like centres (Hepper 2009:13). Chamomile flowers appear to have been interpreted as symbols of rebirth⁹⁰ and regeneration. The motif appears on sandals, chariots, chairs and boxes found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. Whether either of these species are related to the rosette motif seen in many items of feminine jewellery such as glass ear studs remains debatable but the chamomile motif was particularly popular during the 18th Dynasty (1550-1295 BCE) and the 20th Dynasty (1186- 1069 BCE).

⁹⁰ The body and abdominal cavity of Ramses II had been anointed with chamomile oil (Stevens, 2006:76-77).



Figure 5.2: Decorated painted wall plaster from North Riverside Palace at Amarna incorporating mayflowers (Weatherhead 2007:230)

5.2.2 Rose

Rosa gallica is a deciduous shrub with fragrant, deep-pink five-petalled single flowers clustered together in groups of up to four. Their exact ancestry is unknown and other species may be involved resulting in early hybridisation. *Rosa persica* was native to the deserts and steppes Assyria and Persia, while *Rosa berberifolia* was found much further east (Figure 5.3a, page 102). *Rosa persica*, a wild, distinctive five-petalled bright yellow flower with a darker coloured centre, grew alongside grain crops (Phillips & Rix 1994:19). *Rosa gallica* (Figure 5.3b, page 102) was one of the earliest cultivated species of roses.

The *Rosa gallica* was much loved and propagated by the Greek and Romans in and around the Fayoum region and worn on festive occasions during that period by members of the cult of Isis as evidenced by letters from the Oxyrynchus Papyri collection. Parsons (2007:135)⁹¹ refers to a delightful letter discussing a family wedding in the Oxyrynchus Papyri collection (No. 46.3313) from Apollonios and his wife Sarapias to Dionysia, wife of Alexandros and advises:

⁹¹ *The Oxyrynchus Papyri Vols I-LXX* (London, 1898-2006)

'...there are not yet many roses here, in fact they are scarce, and from all the estates and from all the garland weavers we only just managed to collect the thousand that we sent you by Sarapias, even by picking the ones that ought to have been picked tomorrow.'



Figure 5.3a: The yellow *Rosa persica*



Figure 5.3b: The wild pink *Rosa gallica*

Rosette' is the descriptive term generally used for an ornament or badge that appears to be pleated or gathered to resemble a rose and was used to embellish items of clothing or jewellery. The earliest evidence of rosette motifs can be dated to the Sumerian late Uruk period (3500-3000 BCE). A cemetery at Tepe Gawra contained rich burial gifts that include crescent and eight-petalled, rosette-shaped, sequin-like appliqué decorations that were originally sewn onto garments. Bahrani (1995:1635) indicates that the rosettes were made from hammered sheets of gold with lapis lazuli or turquoise centres that had been attached to the gold with bitumen.⁹² From the burial of Queen Pu-abi of the Ur Early Dynastic period (2900-2334 BCE), come examples of a number of large, gold rosettes atop upright stems, used to adorn her lavish floral headdress (Bahrani 1995:1636). An Early Dynastic period wall mural of Kubaba⁹³, the only queen on the Sumerian King list (c. 2500-2330 BCE) clearly depicts her wearing a high, cylindrical podium/polos-type

⁹² The practice of appliqué motifs to garments continued until the Neo-Assyrian period in Mesopotamia.

⁹³ Kubaba (Kug-bau) subsequently became the tutelary goddess who protected the Syrian city of Carchemish located on the Upper Euphrates in the late Hurrian-Early Hittite era. Relief carvings also show her holding a pomegranate in one hand and a circular mirror in the other. Burkert (1982) notes that as the Lydian goddess Kuvav/Kufav, her cult later spread throughout Hittite Anatolia and her name was later translated by the Ionian Greeks as Kybêbê (Kybele).

headdress featuring many-petalled rosettes.⁹⁴ These examples of rosettes may be considered indicative of early cultural diffusion by means of trade/exchange leading to the subsequent adoption of this specific and distinctive floral motif by the Egyptians.

The earliest example of a floral motif in Egyptian jewellery dating from the 1st Dynasty is a gold rosette on a bracelet. As illustrated in Figure 5.4 (below), the central motif is flanked by a symmetrical arrangement of lapis lazuli, gold amethyst and turquoise beads. Beautifully made and indicative of the already high quality of work, it was found in Abydos in a tomb dating to the time of King Djer (c. 3200 BCE). Placed on the linen-wrapped forearm of a woman along with three others, it is thought that the owner possible a member of the royal family (Vilímková 1969: 13).



Figure 5.4: Amethyst, lapis lazuli, turquoise and gold bracelet
(Length: 18c., 1st Dynasty, Tomb of King Djer, Abydos)
[Egyptian National Museum, Cairo]

5.2.3 Lotus

Diadems fashioned for princesses during the Old and Middle Kingdom display an abundance of popular floral motifs such as the papyrus denoting Lower Egypt and the lotus representing Upper Egypt. The lotus had particular significance when, according to their cosmogony, it was the first living entity to emerge from the watery chaos when the world was created and Ra emerged (Wilkinson 1998:198). It thus signified resurrection. The Hymn to the Rising Sun as detailed by Spell 15A in the Papyrus Berlin 3002, Book of Coming Forth by Day (Assman 1995:45)⁹⁵ invoked

⁹⁴ This panel is currently housed in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara, Turkey.

⁹⁵ See also references in Naville (1886)

thus: 'Hail to you, youth who is in his root, who rises in the lotus flower. Beautiful youth, who comes from the *akhet* and illuminates the Two Lands with his light.'

Floating on the ornamental pools and waterways in Upper Egypt were the water lilies, referred to in many Egyptian texts as 'lotuses. As this species of flower was an important iconographic symbol representing Upper Egypt, it was widely used in botanical designs entwined together with the papyrus representing Lower Egypt, indicating the union of the two lands. There were two indigenous species of water lily, the white and the blue. Herodotus in *Histories* (II) writes:

'When the river has become full and the plains have been flooded, there grow in the water great numbers of lilies, which the Egyptians call *lotos*; these they cut with a sickle and dry in the sun, and then they pound that which grows in the middle of the *lotos* and which is like the head of a poppy, and they make of it loaves baked with fire. The root also of this *lotos* is edible and has a rather sweet taste: it is round in shape and about the size of an apple.'



Figure 5.5(a): Blue Lotus (*Nymphaea caerulea*)

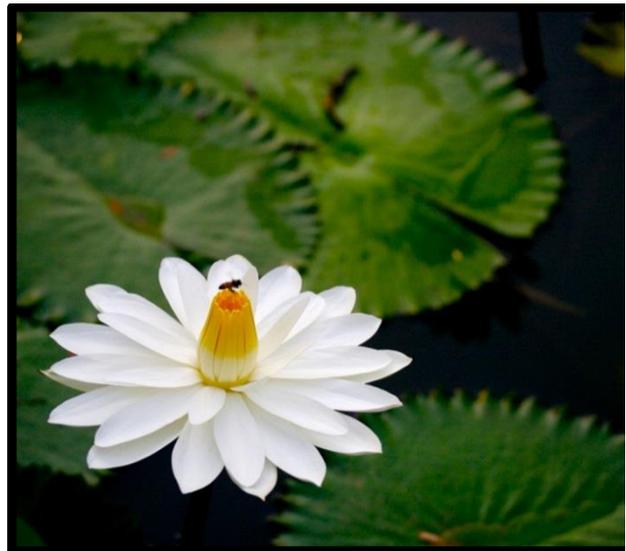


Fig 5.5(b): White Lotus (*Nymphaea lotus*)

The blue *Nymphaea caerulea* (Figure 5.5a, above) was common in the Delta region although it was also found in side-waters, pools and irrigation ditches along the Nile. It opens from the early morning until midday and has smoothly rounded leaves and has a heady perfume which was a common ingredient in oils and unguents. By comparison, the white *Nymphaea Lotus* (Figure 5.5b, above) is the larger of the two species and is easily distinguishable by its white petals and the sharply toothed edges of its floating leaves. It favours deeper water and opens in at midday and

stays open all night and is distributed southwards into tropical Africa. The pink flowered eastern sacred lotus *Nelumbo nucifera* introduced to Egypt from India during the Persian period is usually depicted in artworks from the Hellenistic period.

De Garis Davies (1923 pl. xxxiii) quotes a prayer from the tomb of the Theban nobleman Nebamun:

‘An offering of good and pure things, lotus flowers and buds and all kinds of herbs of fragrant smell (O Amun Ra) that thou mayest give health to the Ruler ... on the part of the Ensign Bearer, Nebamun.’

The lotus was included in recipes featured in the Ebers Medical papyrus as its oils and scent were considered both restorative and protective. In temple scenes, the lotus is commonly shown being held to the nose of royalty by deities. Along these lines, the Book of the Dead contains spells for ‘transforming oneself into a lotus’, thereby fulfilling the promise of resurrection (Wilkinson 1998:198). Statues of the goddess Hathor, whose sacred flower it was, were liberally doused in a concoction of its sweet-swelling essential oil extract. A popular theory is that the fragrance was considered a sexual stimulus, hence its frequent depiction in murals of people holding these to their noses. It also accounts for their frequent use in garlands worn on heads during banquets and festivals.

The ancient Egyptian term for the flower was *seshen* (M9)⁹⁶; the bud was termed *sapet*, the leaf *kha* and the root *red*. As a hieroglyphic sign, the lotus was sometimes incorporated into a design not only for its meaning as part of a word but also as symbolic or amuletic signs. As a purely decorative element writes Wilkinson (1994:121), the lotus flower was usually shown inverted but in scenes depicting its use as an offering, as part of a floral arrangement or tucked into diadems, it appears upright with the lotus bloom hanging to one side under its own weight. Both species of water lily close after pollination (Wilkinson 1994:54; Hepper 2006:16). As a symbol of the sun, creation and rebirth, it was believed that the lotus emerged from the primordial waters of Nun and in Hermopolitan mythology, played a role in the

⁹⁶ The hieroglyphic sign for the open lotus flower (M9)  could be used as either a determinative or an ideogram in *sšn/seshen*, and as determinative in lily bud (M10)  *nḥbt*. The lily flower and stem (M11)  could also be used as a determinative or as an ideogram in *wdn* ‘offer’.

emergence of Nefertum, whose name translates as ‘Beautiful Being’ and ‘Beautiful Beginning’, was also considered ‘Protector of the Two Lands’. Associated with *Nymphaea caerulea*, Nefertum was considered a patron deity of medicine and healing and is generally shown with a large lotus bloom forming his crown or as a small child ensconced by the flower.

5.2.4 River Reeds and Pond Weeds

With marshy ground in the delta and along the river banks and waterways, varieties of water plants either grew wild or were cultivated. Reed grasses, sedges and rushes used for mat and basket making, were common in shallow water and can be quite easily identified by illustrations in Old Kingdom tomb reliefs, Middle and New Kingdom tomb paintings and on remnants of the tiled palace floor at Amarna (Wendrich, 2000:255).

The Reed Mace *Typha domingensis*, also called the cat-tail and bulrush, has a very distinctive inflorescence with brown cylinders of separate male and female flowers on an erect stalk about the height of a man.⁹⁷ On the walls of Medinet Habu, Ramses II is depicted hunting amongst the Common Reed *Phragmites australis* advises Wilkinson (1998:60). The stems were used for pens and arrows. Although not often used in jewellery, there is one particular instance of it being added to a diadem, to great visual effect. This example, belonging to 18th Dynasty Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

Sedges and reeds were commonly used in hieroglyphs in a number of forms and combinations to indicate a wide variety of meanings and concepts, namely M22, M23, M24, M26, M26, M27 and M28 as shown in Figure 5.6 (page 107).

HIEROGLYPH	DESCRIPTION	GARDINER'S SIGN LIST
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⁹⁷ This species is most often associated with the biblical tale of the baby Moses who was rescued by the pharaoh's daughter.

	Papyrus stem	(M13) Used as a phonogram <i>w3d/wd</i>
	Papyrus clump with downward-facing umbels	(M15) Used a determinative of papyrus and as a phonogram <i>ht.3h</i> . Also in <i>3h-bit</i> for 'Khemmis'
	Papyrus clump with erect, upright umbels	(M16) Used as a phonogram <i>h3</i> . Used as a determinative in 'The Delta'.
	Reed frond	(M17) Used as a phonogram for <i>i</i> and <i>y</i> (when doubled)
	Rush with side shoots/leaves	(M22) Used as a phonogram <i>nhb</i> and <i>nn</i> , when doubled, also in <i>nht</i> in 'germination' and also in 'Nehkbet'.
	Sedge	(M23) Used as a phonogram <i>sw</i> and as the ideogram for <i>nswt</i> 'king'.
	Sedge – a combination of M23 + D21	(M24) Used as the ideogram <i>rsw</i> for 'south'.
	Sedge	(M25) A combination of M24 + M26
	Sedge	(M26) Used as a phonogram <i>šm</i> and as the ideogram <i>šm</i> 'w for 'Upper Egypt'
	Sedge	(M27) A combination of M26 + D36. Used as a phonogram <i>šm</i> '
	Sedge	(M28) A combination of M26 + V20 as the ideogram for the title <i>wr mdw šm</i> 'w 'Greatest of the tens of Upper Egypt'.
	Flower	(M42) Used as a phonogram <i>wn</i> (e.g. in <i>wnm</i> 'eat', <i>hwn</i> 'be young')
Figure 5.6: Summary of reed and papyrus hieroglyphs extracted from Gardiner's Sign List		

Pond weeds and water hyacinth were often depicted under boats and in canals. These have been identified as a pest in modern times as they grow to cover the whole surface of a body of water. The long-stemmed, robust *Potamogeton lucens* grows in both fresh and brackish water and occurs widely throughout the waterways of Egypt (Wilkinson, 1998:61). The broad-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton natans* (see Figure 5.7, page 108) produces dark-green, leathery leaves flowery spikes... It is these species that are most often associated with the so-called 'boatmen's circlet' which was worn to tame the hair and is illustrated in tomb reliefs on the heads of jousting boatmen.



Figure 5.7: The pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*)

5.2.5 Papyrus

Papyrus is probably the most widely recognized and most frequently illustrated of all the Egyptian water plants occurring widely in the shallow waters of the marshy delta region and along the muddy banks of the Nile (Figure 5.8, page 109). *Cyperus papyrus* is a perennial, freshwater plant which grows to a height of 3-5m (Leach & Tait, 2000:229). As an extremely versatile plant, it was used for a myriad of purposes from food and writing material to footwear and boat manufacture.⁹⁸ The stem of the plant is triangular in shape, topped by an enormous mop-like flower head. In winter these are composed of thread-like green bracts but as summer approaches, small brown flowers appear (Hepper, 2006:33; Wilkinson, 1971:54).

Individual umbels are depicted in numerous wall paintings throughout the Dynastic period. Clumps of papyrus known as *mehyt* (M15 and M16 as indicated in Figure 5.6 on page 107) were symbolic of life and *idhu*, the primeval marsh. Papyrus pillars were said to hold up the sky and, as such, were popular as a symbolic decorative motif on monumental pillars, examples of which can be seen at the temple at Philae. Papyrus plants together with lotus plants are often depicted as the other part of

⁹⁸ Today, the papyrus plant grows profusely in the Central and East African swamplands. It disappeared from the Nile Valley, possibly due to ecology changes such as the silting up of waterways, diversion of certain branches of the river over time, increased salt levels or simply over-exploitation, but it has subsequently been re-introduced (Leach & Tait 2000:228).

sema-tawy, representing unification and duality of the Two Lands. The colour and symbolism of papyrus was closely linked to Wadjet, protective goddess of Lower (northern) Egypt; who was known as ‘the green one’ (Wilkinson, 1994:108). The colour green was also associated with the goddess Hathor.



Figure 5.8: Papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) growing on the banks of the Nile in Uganda

Papyrus supposedly represented the concept of ‘around’ or ‘behind’ and the hieroglyph was frequently paired with the *sa* sign of protection as the phrase ‘All life and protection are around’. It is thus no surprise that, as an important iconographic symbol, it was used to represent Lower Egypt, often depicted as part of the duality of *sema-tawy*, the Two Lands. Goddesses and mortals are depicted giving birth in the quiet and shade of their gardens. Leafy bowers or *mammisi* called ‘Beautiful Tent’, ‘House of Protection’ and ‘the Beautiful Birth-house of the Ennead’ are depicted on temple walls as being made of columns of papyrus representing the marsh where Horus was born to Isis. Stone versions of the *mammisi* imitating the protective marsh environs can be seen at Edfu and Dendera.

5.2.6 Cornflower

The oriental cornflower *Centaurea depressa* is native to southwestern and central Asia. An annual or a biennial with stout, leafy stems growing to a height of 30-40 cm, each stem is topped by a head of blue florets bearing a striking resemblance to the thistle as illustrated in Figure 5.9 (below). Its petals were used to dye linen and there is evidence that it was an effective ingredient in healing wounds. The blue flowers were used for garlands. Faience pendants imitating its shape and colour were popular choices for the lower classes.

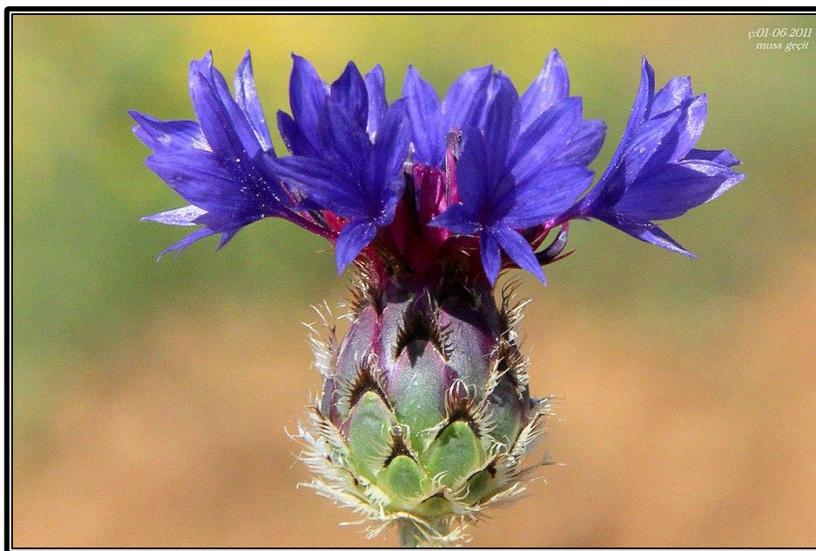


Figure 5.9: Cornflower (*Centaurea depressa*)

Judging from the frequency with which the cornflower appears in tombs, wall paintings and as faience pendants, this field flower was probably cultivated for decorative temple, funerary and festival use. Although its ancient Egyptian name is unknown, it was frequently illustrated in tomb garden depictions and appears as part of the delightful panel depicting Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun and their small still-born daughters in an inlaid frieze with mandrake fruits and leaves, red poppies and blue cornflowers (Hepper, 2009:11, 14; Wilkinson, 1998:53).

5.2.7 Lily

One of the most strongly scented flowers, the white Madonna lily (*Lilium Candidum*) grew from perennial bulbs to a height of about 1m, bearing leaves of decreasing size towards the terminal cluster of stark white and beautifully scented trumpet-shaped flowers as illustrated in Figure 5.10 (below). Described as a six-petalled white flower with stamens and a good fragrance, the species is found inhabiting hills in the eastern Mediterranean region and scenes of collection and pressing these flowers can be seen in both New Kingdom and Late Period wall art, indicating indicates that they were specially cultivated for this purpose (Hepper 2009:25; Wilkinson1971:58). Flowers provided the all-important fragrant additives and extracts used in sweet-smelling unguents and perfumes and oils for temple libations.



Figure 5.10: Madonna Lily (*Lilium candidum*) growing on Mt Carmel, Israel

Attesting to its widespread popularity in the Mediterranean region, the ancient Minoan palace at Knossos features Madonna lilies in a fresco titled 'Prince of the Lilies'. The Hebrew word *Shoshannah* is translated as 'lily' in the *Song of Songs* 2:2 (KJV): 'As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.' King

Solomon's Temple is described as being adorned with designs of Madonna lilies on the columns⁹⁹.

During the New Kingdom's 19th and 20th Dynasties, headdresses depicting lilies and poppies were introduced into the goldsmith's repertoire. Girls who were either the daughter of Amenophis III or Kharuef are depicted in the latter's tomb with delightful headdresses made using a combination of these two floral motifs. During this period, as discussed in Chapter 2, a completely new style podium headdress featuring long-stemmed papyrus makes its appearance in royal depictions on temples and tombs. These bear a strong similarity to that worn by Hapy, god of the inundation (Wilkinson 1971:152-154).

The origin of the lily motif has given rise to much speculation as there is no single plant which can convincingly be identified as its model although several have been suggested. The lily became recognised as the heraldic plant of Upper Egypt, known as the 'Lily of the South' from as early as the Old Kingdom. Conventional lily elements also contributed to the well-known ancient Greek palmette motif and the two can often not be distinguished from one another (Wilson 1986:20) particularly in the entwined *sema-tawy* motif depicting the unification of Northern and Southern Egypt.

5.2.8 Poppy

Poppies originated in the eastern Mediterranean region and their seeds were carried around the world with grains of cereals amongst which they usually grow as weeds. Poppies are depicted as early as the 4th Dynasty. As illustrated in Figure 5.11 (page 113) the dark red corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), although a common annual field flower, is not the opium-bearing variety and was frequently illustrated in garden scenes painted on tomb walls. Scarlet, four-petalled flowers have been found in a wreath dated to the 21st Dynasty. Manniche (1989:131) speculates that the pink

⁹⁹ In later periods, the lily symbolised purity in the Roman Catholic Church. The Virgin Mary and often St Joseph are specifically associated with lilies, particularly in context of the Annunciation.

opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) was introduced during the New Kingdom. It is reported as having been grown near Thebes during the late Ptolemaic Period.



Figure 5.11: Corn Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)

The seeds were used in cakes, its leaves eaten as a vegetable, the petals as ingredients in soup and an oil was extracted that could be used as a substitute for olive oil. A small stone vessel found in a tomb at Deir el-Medina, contained remnants of an unguent laced with morphine, indicating that the ancient Egyptians appear to have known how to extract morphine. Manniche (1989:131) further notes that in the Ebers Papyrus, the term *spn* appears to have been a medicinal compound similar to opium, which had a strongly soothing effect:

'A remedy for too much crying in a child: *Spn*-seeds; fly dung from the wall; is made to a paste, [mixed with water (?)]; strained and drunk for four days. The crying will cease immediately.'

A bouquet comprising papyrus flowers, poppies, lotus petals, cornflowers and mandrakes is depicted on an incised alabaster casket from Tutankhamun's tomb (Hepper 2009:16; Wilkinson 1971:53).

5.2.9 Pomegranate

The pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), a fruit-bearing deciduous shrub, originated in the south west Asian Persian region (modern-day Iran) and its cultivation soon spread throughout the ancient Mediterranean, the Caucasus and as far as India. During the Bronze Age, the pomegranate was grown not only for its fruit but, with its attractive scarlet flowers, was also popular as an ornamental tree in gardens.

Its fruit and juice were eaten fresh and also used as flavourants in cooking as well as being made into an alcoholic beverage. The long-lived shrub with its glossy, dark green leaves features bright red flowers. As illustrated in Figure 5.12 (below), the edible fruit with a dark red skin is similar to a grapefruit in size and contains a thick membrane in which the rosy seeds are embedded. The deciduous pomegranate with its dark, glossy leaves and scarlet flowers and fruit was primarily cultivated for its tart juice and edible fruits which were popular flavourants in ancient dishes. There is ample evidence that extracted pomegranate juice could also be fermented and made into wine (Lucas & Harris 1989:23; Nicholson & Shaw 1995:23).



Fig 5.12: Pomegranate *Punica granatum*

Pomegranates were by no means unusual in Egyptian jewellery design and especially during the Amarna period, were made from colourful faience and often incorporated into the broad, beaded collars and as pendants on heavy and ornate

New Kingdom earrings. The pomegranate flower was often included in real bouquets and garlands, and in this particular case in a diadem, represented possibly in faience or gold by the ancient Egyptians who viewed it as not only as a symbol of prosperity and ambition but also sexuality.

Mentioned in literature, an Egyptian love poem in Manniche (1987:83) contains the following lines:

'The pomegranate opens its mouth to say,
"My seeds are like her teeth, my fruits are like her breasts.
I am the foremost in the orchard, for I endure through every season.
The sister spends the day with the brother under my branches,
drunk with grape and pomegranate wine..."

The medicinal uses of the pomegranate were noted in the Ebers Papyrus dating from about 1400 BCE. Both the root and bark were used for medicinal purposes, particularly in combating intestinal worms, dysentery, diarrhea and other stomach-related infections (Manniche 1989:140). The rind of the fruit was used to create a yellow dye.

Remains of the carbonized outer skin of the fruit has been identified in early Bronze Age Jericho and late Bronze Age Cyprus indicating its early consumption throughout the Mediterranean and Near Eastern region. Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets mention pomegranates as early as the 3rd millennium. It has also been identified in late Bronze Age archaeological sites on Cyprus and at Tyrins. Often referred to in Biblical contexts, the image often appeared throughout the Levant as a decorative motif and at a later stage, also on coinage.¹⁰⁰

It was introduced to Egypt during the New Kingdom possibly by Thutmose III on his return from Asia and depicted in his tomb as growing in his garden. The flowering tree with its fruits is also clearly depicted in Theban tomb murals. This is corroborated by a dried pomegranate which was discovered in the tomb of Djehuty,

¹⁰⁰ The beauty and value of pomegranates and their use as a motif in ornamentation feature widely in Biblical references such as the Song of Solomon and Exodus. Pomegranates appear to have enjoyed a decorative popularity similar to that of the lotus in Egypt; the motif was embroidered onto garments and used in temple ornamentation (Smith 1991)

who served Queen Hatshepsut. In the Egyptian context, the pomegranate known as *inhmn*, *inhmn*, indicating loanword links with the Semitic *jnhmn* or *nhm*, with probable origin in south-west Asia (Manniche 1989:139).

The pomegranate with its myriad, jewel-like seeds was synonymous with fertility and features in this context in Greco-Roman mythology with Persephone, goddess of the under-world although no Egyptian references have been found to this effect. The pomegranate was a popular symbol in ancient Hebrew religious adornment with references including that of Solomon who it is said, designed his crown based on the shape of the pomegranate's calyx.¹⁰¹ It is also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as one of the Seven Fruits of fruits and grains (*Shiv'at Ha-Minim*) enumerated in Deuteronomy (8:8) as being special to Israel. In Christian religious iconography, the pomegranate motif is often used on vestments or in decorative carved motifs on stone or in metal. The Egyptians associated the pomegranate with prosperity and ambition.

5.3 CONCLUSION

As evidenced by references in murals and reliefs, lush vegetation flourished along the River Nile and Delta region during the Pharaonic era. Floral decorations were an integral part of the Egyptian civilisation and floral motifs were widely adopted in the minor arts from the Early Dynastic period. Stylistic floral representation of lotus and papyrus and lotus were popular decorative theme but also as a strong visual and non-verbal means of communication of state iconography and royal symbolism.

Given the connotation of flowers with youth, it is not surprising that transient blooms were translated into more formal interpretations and that stylised floral motifs became popular choices for incorporation into items of personal feminine adornment such as diadems. It has become evident from this investigation that botanical motifs appears to have provided a unique and rich multiplicity of layered symbolism and amuletic magic when incorporated into diadems. Representations of papyrus and lotus which

¹⁰¹ *Parashat Tzaveh* - Commentary by Peninnah Schram, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York

were closely associated with mythology featured extensively on tomb and temple wall. A variety of flowers have been found in the funerary context, looped around the necks of mummies thereby providing irrefutable evidence as to the season in which the demise occurred. The papyrus and lotus motifs contributed to the visual art of the ancient Mediterranean world, being adopted by the Greek and Minoan civilizations.

Apart from providing a food source, botanical products and their derivatives formed the basis for a wide range of ancient Egyptian medicinal remedies. Essential oils derived from a variety of floral sources were used extensively in the production of fragrant oils incorporated into perfumes, used in ritual anointing in the mummification process.

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPMENT OF HEADDRESS DIADEMS FROM THE PRE-DYNASTIC TO THE NEW KINGDOM

Abstract

Since prehistoric times, headdresses have served to delineate not only gender but also status within a community. Early examples were not only practical as an item of female apparel but also had a decorative appeal as evidenced by the durable and colourful materials used in the construction. The use of colour and material may be construed as evidence of symbolic thought development. This chapter will discuss the earliest examples discovered in the archaeological context and the development and design incorporated into this particular form of circlet headdress, also referred to throughout this study as the diadem headdress, through the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A variety of headdresses are depicted in Egyptian reliefs and on statues. The development and design of iconic headdresses and the incorporated symbolism appears to have originated in the pre-Dynastic era, with the addition of cattle or ram horns, solar discs or feather motifs depending on the context. Since pre-historic times, headdresses have served to delineate status within a community. The head, being upper-most, and thus imminently visible, was an ideal means of making a strong social, religious or political statement.

Evidence of personal adornment reveals a fascinating hidden facet of pre-Dynastic social hierarchies. Anderson Black (1988:13) suggests that ancient jewellery should be taken in context with three human insecurities, namely 'vanity, superstition and the desire for material wealth'. Prehistoric jewellery is not only be appreciated by the modern view for its intrinsic simplicity but also used to gain insight into customs and increasing amuletic practices. It is also used to ascertain technological capabilities and development.¹⁰² Prehistoric and Early Dynastic rock art in the Eastern Desert depicts the changing and increasingly hierarchical social status by representing important persons, possibly chieftains or religious leaders, wielding what appear to

¹⁰² The majority of jewellery items dating from the Prehistoric are classified as *object trouvés* (found objects) such as shells, teeth or pretty pebbles. Finds dating from 15,000 to 5,000 BC indicate technical progress and improved precision as stones are drilled, polished and graded according to size when strung.

be maces/baton-like implements and wearing a tall, distinctive feathers (Redman & Redman, 1989:21).¹⁰³ Although informal in design, it is obvious that these headdresses had an ornamental and social function. Early headdresses that have survived also provide a valuable insight into the materials that were available and the technology that was used. Although the workmanship was fairly primitive, there is nevertheless evidence of the use of colourful semi-precious stones thus indicating potential early significance in the Egyptian belief system.

6.2 THE NAQADA PROTO-DIADEM

The archaeological record reveals tantalising evidence of what can be construed as 'proto-diadems' (the author's emphasis). In the pre-Dynastic Badarian period dating to about 3500 BCE, excavations revealed a simple circlet made from stone beads. In the succeeding Naqada II civilization terracotta figurines of women are shown wearing what appears to be anklets, necklaces and even diadems represented by painted or incised dots (Wilkinson, 1971:11).

A simple string of colourful beads creatively incorporating loops into the design (as illustrated in Figure 6.1 (page 120) is the earliest example is. It was found *in situ* on the undisturbed skeleton head of its Gerzean owner at Abydos and could well have been mistaken for a necklace if taken out of context. Still holding a piece of cloth-like veil over the face and head of a woman, its context corroborates the terracotta figurines (Andrews, 1996:43). The diadem consists of three strings of extremely small roughly cut garnet, turquoise and carnelian chip-sized stones interspersed with some small gold-disc beads, made by turning up strips of metal (Vilímková 1969:10; Wilkinson 1975:11). Very few of the gold beads were soldered indicating some developing gold techniques by 3,200 BCE. The strings are threaded at intervals through a number of uniting beads resulting in some airy loops which must have

¹⁰³ Recent excavations at a site known as Abdju in the Nile Valley have provided pottery beakers decorated with what is considered the earliest image of a king, represented as a tall figure surmounted with a tall feather, holding a mace in one hand and with the other, a rope binding three captives. The subjugation motif plus the headdress and mace is often depicted in the prehistoric rock art of both the Eastern and Western deserts (Wilkinson 2010:40).

looked very eye-catching indeed over the woman's cloth veil and thereby forming the first tangible evidence of a headdress (Andrews 1996:43).



Figure 6.1: Garnet, carnelian, turquoise and malachite bead diadem from pre-Dynastic Naqada Period (c. 3200 BCE - length: 31.2cm)

Slightly concave oval pendants appear in other burial finds of this period. Vilímková (1969:10) agrees with Petrie's proposal that these may have been worn on the brow as the forerunners of diadems, held in place by a single string of beads or narrow length of fabric in the form of a headband which has since disintegrated.

6.2.1 Construction

The proto-diadem consists of a string of extremely small, chip-sized roughly-cut garnet, malachite, turquoise and carnelian stones.¹⁰⁴ Chips of garnet were incorporated into the Naqada diadem in the earliest evidence of their use as personal adornment. Then, as now, there appears to have been a direct correlation between an object's rarity, its intrinsic beauty and its perceived value. The stone chips are interspersed with some small gold-disc beads, (Vilímková, 1969:10; Wilkinson,

¹⁰⁴ Carnelian and turquoise will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4 which focusses on Egyptian materials used in jewellery making. Evidence for Pre-dynastic use in jewellery only will be discussed in this section.

1971:11). The colourful blue and red string has been divided into five fairly equally spaced sections. At four intervals, four separate strands have been threaded through uniting beads resulting in four distinctive, airy loops. Each set of loops comprises four separate strings, dispersed and gathered at central points. This is quite a difficult and intricate bead-stringing technique and indicates a fair amount of design and pre-planning that went into the threading of this item. The gold beads used in the Naqada diadem appear to have been soldered indicating some hard evidence for advanced hand-wrought techniques by 3200 BCE.¹⁰⁵

Aston, Harrel and Shaw (2000:44) note that there is limited evidence of malachite being used in Egyptian jewellery, amulets and inlays, the Naqada diadem being one of the examples. Occurring alongside turquoise and copper, malachite was found in the Eastern Desert and in the Sinai at Wadi Maghara and Serabit el-Khadim and also further north at Timna, close to modern Eilat. Originating from the same Sinai sources, the use of pale-green or pale sky-blue turquoise (*mfk3t*) was common from the pre-Dynastic to the Roman periods.¹⁰⁶

6.2.2 Symbolism

Against a palette of bleached, pale sand and the harsh sunlight, bright and vibrant colours became an important way of expressing both life and individuality. Although not every colour can be interpreted as bearing some symbolic significance, it is, nevertheless, no surprise that bright colour was incorporated into the earliest, pre-Dynastic jewellery. The word *iwen* was used to indicate the concept of colour and this was also translated variously as 'nature' and 'character' as well as 'external appearance' (Wilkinson, 1994:104).

The diadem lacks a central focal piece but instead features four sets of distinct loops placed at equal intervals. I propose that this is an early example of symbolism that

¹⁰⁵ Little is known of the ancient Egyptian prospecting for precious materials and it is impossible to determine the origin of the gold used to make the beads incorporated into this artefact. It is, however, possible that it was obtained either by trade with Nubia or from alluvial gold deposits found in the Eastern Desert.

¹⁰⁶ Green malachite has been found in pre-Dynastic graves, usually ground up in the form of an ingredient in eye-paint (*wḏw*) (Nicholson & Shaw, 2000:44). Later, during the Old Kingdom it was replaced by black galena in the form of kohl known then as *msdmt*.

can be equated with the number four in the Egyptian belief system. The number four was indicative of the concept of totality and completeness by the Egyptians and occurs most frequently in their art and rituals (Wilkinson, 1994:133). It was connected to the four Cardinal Points (north-south-east-west). Their importance in the Egyptian landscape and world view was related to the south-north flow of the all-important Nile and the sun's daily east-west movement.

- Mythology features the four pillars of the sky (visualized as the legs of a cosmic cow) and the four quarters of the heavens thus the cosmic connection with the sky, earth, heavens and underworld.
- The Egyptians identified 'four races of mankind', these being Egyptians, Nubians, Libyans and Asiatics, possibly because they lived within the four regions.
- Wilkinson (1994:134) advises that during censuring and purification rituals, 'words to be recited four times'.
- In the ritual known as the 'consecration of the *meret* chests', four chests mounted on sledges, surmounted by four feathers and containing linen of four different colours were dragged before the image of a god, four times.
- During coronations and later jubilee ceremonies, four arrows were shot and four birds released to these Cardinal Points.
- The ancient earth god, Ta-tenen, is depicted in the form of four identical rams, differentiated only by their headdresses and possibly indicative of the strong pre-Dynastic linkages to nomadic herding.
- In other ceremonies, the four Cardinal Points and their deities implied 'complete and universal protection' (Wilkinson, 1994:134).

6.2.3 Interpretation

Egyptian jewellery was very symmetrical, and often laden with subtle symbolism and iconography (Ogden, 2000:166). The proto-diadem exhibits a visually pleasing, symmetrical arrangement of dark red, blue/green and yellow. It would have been not

only practical but also attractive. The four sets of airy loops that intersperse the threaded beads must have looked very pretty indeed over the woman's cloth veil.

According to Wilkinson (1971:20), the only artistic representation of a diadem from the Early Dynastic period is a string of beads worn over a wig of a 2nd Dynasty princess. The Abydos bead diadem can thus be interpreted as the first tangible evidence of a headdress in the Egyptian record (Andrews, 1996:43). Although this particular headdress lacks a centre piece, slightly concave oval pendants appear in the archaeological record of this period. Sir Flinders Petrie proposed that these pendants may have been worn on the brow as the forerunners of diadems, held in place by a single string of beads or narrow length of fabric in the form of a headband to denote status (Vilímková, 1969:10).

6.3 THE NAG' EL-DEIR HOOP

Opposite Abydos, on the east bank of the Nile, is a large necropolis located at a site known as Nag' el-Deir. These cemeteries at this site date from the early pre-Dynastic (ca. 3800 BCE) until as recently as the Coptic era (after 400 CE). Discovered *in situ* in an Archaic burial site was an intact set of predominantly gold jewellery belonging to a woman (Andrews 1996:18-19). The burial has been dated to the 1st Dynasty (c. 3000 BCE).

Although crushed by the weight of being buried, the skull was encircled by a narrow hoop of sheet gold, thereby providing irrefutable evidence of diadems being worn during the Early Dynastic period. The junction between the two ends is invisible, indicating that it was manufactured as a complete circle by a highly skilled goldsmith. Wilkinson (1975:20) notes that would have been extremely difficult to weld the two ends together without melting the narrow strip of metal.¹⁰⁷ . There are no indications that pendants or other embellishments were attached.

¹⁰⁷ Regrettably, there are no photographs or illustrations of this diadem in any of the sources consulted.

As Andrews (1996:19) notes, the headband is 'virtually all that has survived to illustrate the best of the jewellery-maker's art during the formative years of Dynastic civilization'. The Nag' el-Deir gold hoop thus forms a prototype for the Old Kingdom circlets headbands which were embellished with knots and streamers and later with the more intricate inlaid rosette and medallions.

6.4 DEVELOPMENT OF OLD KINGDOM CIRCLET DIADEMS

A band tied around the head to confine masses of thick long hair, thereby preventing it from blowing around the face and keeping it back from the eyes is not only a utilitarian but also a practical solution. The concept of hair confinement would have been adopted by Egyptian peasants sowing grain in the scorching, hot fields or sailing on the breezy river Nile and entwined and knotted wet pondweeds would have provided cooling relief. Numerous examples are depicted in Old Kingdom tomb murals and on statues from the same era. The designs of rustic floral garlands were taken step further. Jewellers' fashioned headdresses out of precious metals embellished by popular design motifs and inlay work for the wealthy and elite of Egyptian society (Winlock, 1973:27).

6.4.1 Textile headbands

The idea of decorating these essentially primitive bands was adapted by the upper classes, as early as the 1st Dynasty. A further development of the very basic circlet concept was the more formalised headband-style headdress. It appears that this was originally a band of coloured woven textile tied around the brow, knotted at the back, with the loose ends falling to the neckline as streamers (Aldred, 1971:33). Textiles were a common feature in daily life, notes Vogelsang-Eastwood (2000:286),

as the Egyptians were adept at spinning and weaving.¹⁰⁸ Flax, goat hair, sheep's wool¹⁰⁹ and palm fibres were all used in textile production.¹¹⁰

Button-like faience rosettes and gold disc sequins were used to embellish textiles. According to Vogelsang-Eastwood (2000:280) these ranged in size from 1–5 cm and were a popular way of brightening up plain fabrics purely for aesthetic purposes or as an indication of wealth. The absence of headbands embellished with faience rosettes and gold disk sequins does not necessarily imply that these did not exist and were probably worn on a daily basis by the general populace. Given artistic corroboration, I propose that textile headbands embellished with rosettes or sequins, knotted at the back and with streamers hanging down may have been a forerunner to those made from precious metal and inlaid with coloured stones. These may have been beaded or woven to provide the textured appearance.

6.4.2 Development of formal diadems

Depictions from Old Kingdom reliefs and statues provide a confirmation of the development of headbands and circlets. These range from purely utilitarian use by peasants to more elaborate headdresses that appear to have been worn on festive occasions by the wealthy and elite. Some examples belonging to women have survived intact, providing valuable insight into favoured materials and motifs. They are also indicative of changing fashions during the Old, New and Middle Kingdoms. It appears that materials such as bands woven from textile and intricately constructed beadwork were favoured by the non-elite. It is difficult to ascertain from these reliefs

¹⁰⁸ This evidence takes the form of tools and surviving examples of textiles as well as a variety of models and pictorial representation of looms and spinning techniques. Evidence dates to settlement sites dating from the pre-Dynastic period.

¹⁰⁹ Wool and woollen textiles are known from the Predynastic period onwards but because of a statement by Herodotus about the prohibition of wool in temple and funerary contexts, there is a common misconception that it was not used by the Egyptians. The prohibition was limited to priests as he further informs the reader that young men "...wore linen tunics with a fringe hanging around the legs and called *calasiris*, and a white woollen garment on top of it" (Histories II). The remains of a 1st Dynasty man from Helwan were wrapped in woollen cloth (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2000:269).

¹¹⁰ Cotton was not used in textile production until the 1st century CE and silk was only available after the 7th century CE. Flax (*Linum bienne* Mill. and *Linum usitatissimum*), a versatile and popular textile, is not native to Egypt and was probably introduced from the Levant as early as the Badarian Period. The production of linen textile is quite a complicated process which took time to develop but various surviving examples indicate that it was being produced in the Neolithic period in the Fayum region (Vogelsang-Eastwood 2000:270).

and depictions whether the lotus blooms that appear to have been tucked into the band festive occasions on occasion might have indeed been real, fresh flowers and merely added to the headband for extra emphasis and colour. The lotus motif may have been fashioned from metal and a permanent fixture to the headband.

The jewellers translated the natural materials into formal precious metal circlets that featured brightly coloured stones and renditions of knots and streamers. Women's diadems were further enriched by the addition of floral and faunal motifs. From textual evidence it appears that these could have been given by royalty to courtiers and loyal functionaries under certain circumstances. Other examples found during tomb excavations appear to have been made specifically for funerary purposes. In some cases these headdresses were made from wood covered with painted stucco, showing minimal usage. The circlet headband was later depicted as being worn by the king with the addition of the uraeus serpent twisted around the band.

6.4.3 Embellishment

Embellishment of Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom diadems metal headbands varied. Some of the simple metal bands feature a stylised papyrus-knot in a bow shape at the back or are more elaborately decorated with ibis or *akh*-birds between papyrus heads (Wilkinson, 1971:37-38). However, it is the more elaborate and visually elegant diadems found interred with three princesses at el-Lahun and Dashur that capture the imagination. Some featured patterns of vertical lines which have been likened to a rolled papyrus mat. The 'knot' was inlaid with a carnelian disc and papyrus motifs were inlaid with semi-precious stones that appear to be the favoured lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian.¹¹¹ The headband-style circlets which have survived from the Old Kingdom appear to have been primarily manufactured for funerary purposes as they are not robustly made. A more elaborate type of diadem appears to have been worn mainly by high status women. In a scene in Sahure's temple, for example, a woman is shown wearing a circlet with the papyrus knot and

¹¹¹ In some later instances, such as illustrated by the famous bust of New Kingdom Queen Nefertiti, the distinctive blue headdress's surrounding circlet appears to have been inlaid with a variety of attractive coloured stones.

streamers but with numerous distinctive large flower motifs added around the band. It is proposed that these elements were made from gold or silver repoussé/chasing method before being attached to the headband.¹¹²

The majority of Old Kingdom diadems appear to have been limited to a simple metal band with a stylized papyrus knot or a bow at the back. Others are more elaborately decorated with *akh*-birds between papyrus umbels. Three complete examples of the latter design have been found at el-Giza, dating from the 4th and 5th Dynasties. Dunham (1946:27) describes a scene in the 6th Dynasty tomb of Mereruka depicting metal workers in the process of making personal ornaments. Amongst these is a diadem embellished with papyri and birds very similar to the Giza and Boston examples.

In the 4th Dynasty, the circlet consisted of a band of flexible gold, just long enough to fit around the head, perforated with holes on each end for linen tapes to be tied in a bow-knot. Large chased-gold projecting medallions, papyrus umbels and ibis birds were popular choices for additions to headbands. This style was also worn by the king with the addition of the uraeus serpent, symbolic of royalty added to the band. As described by Winlock (1973:27), during the 5th Dynasty the linen tapes gradually disappeared with the bow knot at the back becoming stylized as a pair of lotus flowers and the two ends of the tapes, were two metal streamers. Also during the 5th Dynasty, the knot at the nape of the neck developed into a clasp with a roundel in the centre and pairs of papyrus blooms on each side.

According to Vilímková (1969:19), as illustrated by reliefs and statues (Figure 6.2 page 128), the ribbon element and the loose ends appear to have borne a design of alternate broad and narrow rectangles. Vilímková (1969:18) indicates that high-born Egyptian men of the 6th Dynasty often wore fillets tied at the nape of the neck. This would have resulted in the bows being brought forward towards the ears, leaving the ends hanging down the back. Circlets in this style appear to have been worn by

¹¹² The diadems belonging to Senebtisi, Sit-Hathor-Iunet and Khnumet are all completely different in design and seem to exemplify the heights to which jewellery design and fine craftsmanship had risen after the hiatus of the First Intermediate period (Wilkinson, 1971:70).

nobility in the late Old and in the Middle Kingdom when fishing or fowling and by their accompanying womenfolk.

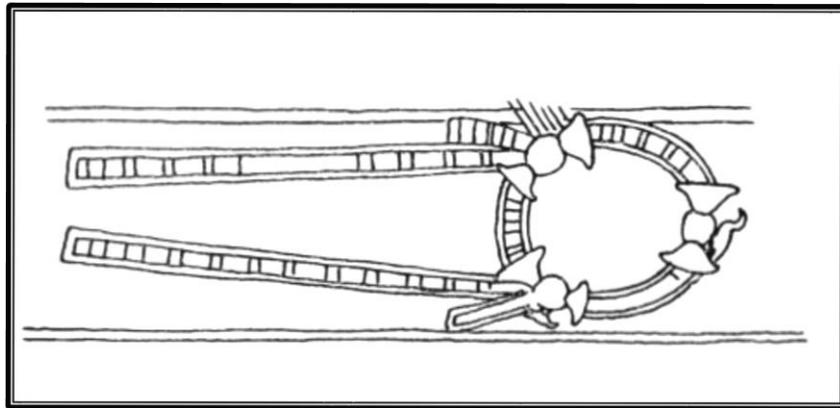


Figure 6.2: Diadem from the 5th Dynasty tomb of Mereruka (Saqqara)

While some examples were intended for state occasions and thus visually loaded with propaganda, others were obviously inspired by natural garlands of flowers and informal beaded linen bands worn by the common folk (Wilkinson 1971:198). During this period additional floral elements such as the cornflower, mandrake fruit, leaves and pomegranates were introduced. There does not appear to have been specific mythological connections so it is possible that motifs were the personal choice of the women commissioning jewellery.

6.5 MIDDLE AND NEW KINGDOM CIRCLET DIADEMS

After the Middle Kingdom and in the New Kingdom as corroborated in tomb frescoes such as those of the nobleman Nebamun, a new style adopted was adopted. These appear to be broad bands of either textile, beaded headbands or cloisonné circlets placed low around their foreheads and tied behind with tasselled cords.

A painted limestone fragment from Djehuti-hotep's mid-12th Dynasty¹¹³ tomb at Deir el-Bersha, gives a good indication of apparel and adornment worn by high ranking women of the time. Djehuty-hotep is recorded as being a powerful feudal lord of the

¹¹³ He died in the reign Amenemhet III (c. 1850 BCE).

'Hare' district of Middle Egypt. As illustrated in Figure 6.3 (below), such circlets appear to have been worn by his two daughters Sit-hedj-hotep and Sit-kheper-ka. Each daughter wears an eye-catching circlet that considering the knotted back and fluttering streamers, the headbands these could have been constructed from woven textile bands or intricately interlaced beading with the addition of festive lotus blooms. Alternatively, these could have been made of metal such as silver, embellished with multi-coloured stone cloisonné, a carnelian medallion at the centre back and long, static streamers. Given the prominent pectorals around their necks, I propose that these items of jewellery were a matching set.

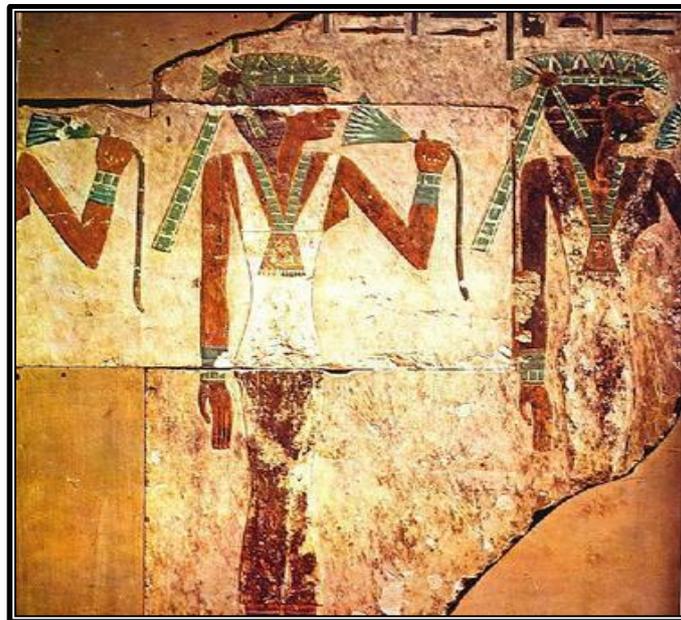


Figure 6.3: Sit-hedj-hotep and Sit-kheper-ka (c. 1850 BCE)
[Cairo Museum]

The band, the knot and the streamers of the headband were interpreted in a similar manner to the broad, delicately-threaded and interconnected colourful *usekh* or *wesekh* collars synonymous with ancient Egyptian jewellery. The depictions of these on stone reliefs and in tomb friezes indicate the incorporation of a myriad of small floral elements such as pomegranates, papyrus umbels and lotuses. All were popular amulet forms and were most probably threaded onto thin wire in order to hold the shape of the collar and for strength. A similar practice was most probably used for the headbands.

Additional visual information about headband or ribbon fillets is supplemented by illustrations of scenes in jewellers' workshops and offering scenes in tomb art (Vilímková, 1969:20). A well-known banquet scene from the New Kingdom Tomb of Nebamun (Figure 6.4, below), depicts musicians wearing what appears to be beaded headbands providing a good visual example of the intricate workmanship of this particular fashion.

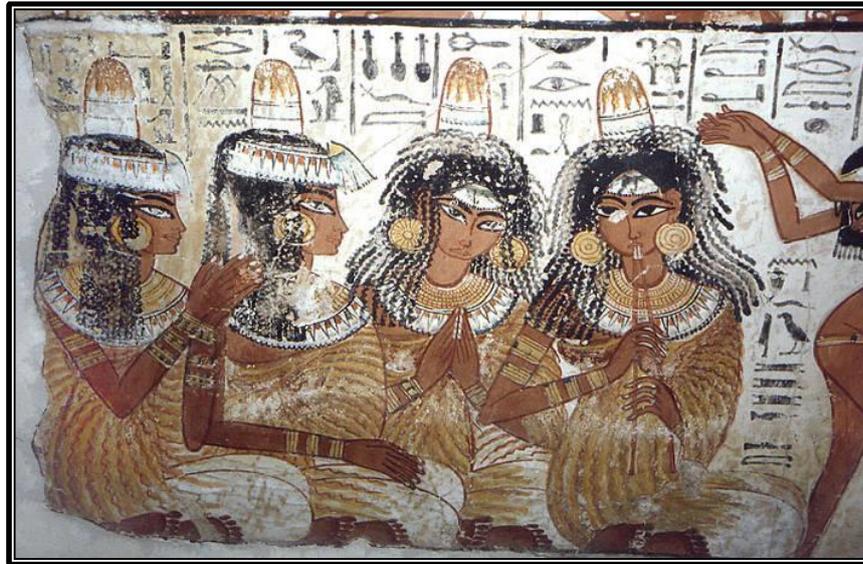


Figure 6.4: Musicians wearing beaded headbands in Tomb Chapel of Nebamun, Thebes [Painted plaster, height 61cm]

6.6 CONCLUSION

The earliest depictions indicate that a variety of distinctive headdresses were adopted to indicate status within the social hierarchy. The head being the uppermost part of the human body was an ideal means of making a strong visual social, religious or political statement particularly when surmounted by symbols that were integral to the people's belief systems. Being a predominantly pastoralist and agricultural society, it is thus not surprising that the early emblems that were incorporated into headdress were related to cattle, goats and sheep. Solar symbolism and easily recognisable botanical emblems also became an integral part of headdresses. Distinctive headdresses in form of feathered headdresses can be traced back to the pre-Dynastic period. Although primitive in concept, there is an indication that early symbolic connotation, an appreciation of rarity, and what would

later become distinctive colour combinations were also gradually adopted as a representative iconography developed.

The earliest evidence of a 'proto-diadem' was a simple string made of colourful stone bead. There can be no confusion as to its intended purpose serving to underline the early but direct correlation between an appreciation for beauty, colour and rarity and developing symbolism that featured in their world view (north and south, east and west). The technique used in stringing the beads indicates early concepts of pattern and design and a certain amount of pre-planning necessary to obtain an aesthetically pleasing balance of colour and loop elements.

The development of metal-working techniques becomes evident in the Nag' El-Deir gold hoop. The workmanship indicates some impressive early jewellery techniques and although lacking additional elements, it nevertheless serves as prototype for later diadems.

It can be speculated whether many of the depicted headbands were simply made from strips of woven or plaited textile fibres that were knotted at the back with long streamers being formed from the left-over strips. It is proposed that design of the textile headbands was translated into formal versions made from precious metals. Headbands could be further embellished with beadwork or applied motifs and fresh flowers added for special events. Given the pictorial evidence on tomb walls, the style appears to have been popular with women in general.

A number of formal Old Kingdom headbands have survived intact, providing valuable information about improved metal-working technology and insights into changing fashion and favoured motifs. Circlets with stylised knot and streamers placed centrally at the back of the diadem or with additional decorative elements incorporated into front of the design appear to have been limited to the nobility. During the Middle and New Kingdoms, new interpretations of diadems become evident.

CHAPTER 7: CIRCLET HEADBANDS, KNOTS AND STREAMERS

Abstract

Circlet headbands become evident from visual sources dating from the Old Kingdom. These appear to have ranged from textile and beadwork worn by the ordinary Egyptian, to the more formal and elaborate metal bands worn by the wealthy and elite members of society. Gold and silver diadems were originally plain bands but gradually various forms of symbolic motifs were added as embellishment. These imitated the earlier textile versions which would have been tied in a knot at the back of the head. The motifs were designed to include floral and faunal symbolism while hanging streamer also incorporated meaningful elements. This chapter investigates the design and symbolism of four surviving Old Kingdom diadems. No examples have survived in the archaeological record from the Intermediate, Middle and New Kingdoms.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom mastaba tomb walls at Memphis, Giza and Saqqara are richly illustrated with examples of circlet diadems worn in a variety of scenes. The diadems consist of bands around the head meeting at the back in the form of a either a bow or a papyrus knot. They bear a strong resemblance to the cloth headbands depicted as being worn by field workers. As illustrated by multiple examples in Old Kingdom mastabas, diadems with bows on the back were worn by both men and women during the 4th to 6th Dynasties. While men's diadems appear to have been limited to circlets, women are depicted wearing more elaborate diadems decorated with streamers and flowers. Variations of this type of diadem include circlets with a bow or papyrus knot at the back or at the front, without the streamers. A hieroglyph of a fillet complete with bows and streamers (S10) is used in the word *mdh* to indicate a headband¹¹⁴.

Andrews (1995:107) describes painted cartonnage masks belonging to males from Asyut dating to the 1st Intermediate Period.¹¹⁵ These depict the deceased wearing colourful headbands with prominent central medallions, inlaid with what appears to be semi-precious stones and tied with knots and streamers behind (as illustrated in

¹¹⁴ The sign  (S10) is used as a phonogram in *mdh* meaning 'fillet'.

¹¹⁵ Cartonnage masks consisted of layers of linen and gesso that were moulded into shape and then painted in bright colours to mimic how the deceased look and what they wore during their lifetime.

Figures 7.1a and 7.1 b below). It is uncertain if the representations were meant to represent woven or inlaid metal headband. Fifteen medallions were recovered from the Matmar graves (c. 2100 BCE). Each had a central dark coloured medallion with radiating 'petal' perforations¹¹⁶. The medallions each had a suspension loop at the back and bear a striking resemblance to a modern button with a shank for attachment. I propose that they were most probably intended for secure attachment onto a textile headband were possibly an early innovative form for interchangeable 'mix-and-match' medallions, according to personal preference. A central medallion made from copper worked in repoussé with alternating carnelian, green and black glazed composition inlays was found in the same context. There is thus ample visual and archaeological evidence to bolster headbands and circlets embellished with medallions.

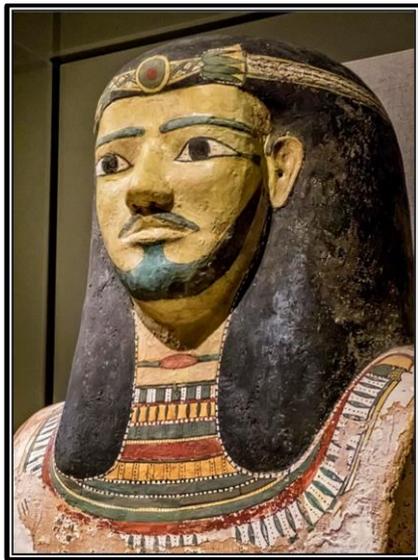


Figure 7.1a: Cartonnage mummy mask of an elite official showing headband with central medallion (Asyut, 11th Dynasty)
[Walters Art Museum, Baltimore]



Figure 7.1b: Cartonnage mummy mask of a nobleman (Asyut, 11th Dynasty)
[Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum, Hildesheim]

According to various artistic sources, the papyrus-knot diadem continued through the Middle and New Kingdom periods. A fine example surmounted by the *uraeus* indicative of royalty was found in the tomb of Tutankhamen. Nobles such as Mereruka and their wives were illustrated wearing similar diadems which often

¹¹⁶ The design bears a striking resemblance to the popular rosette/ daisy decoration that orms the focal feature of the bracelet from the Early Dynastic tomb of King Djer from Abydos.

formed the basic element in headdresses such as that worn by the New Kingdom Queen Nefertiti.

7.2 OLD KINGDOM CIRCLET DIADEMS

Although very few Old Kingdom monumental structures have survived, there is nevertheless a rich record of daily life in the capital of Memphis, including the wearing of diadems. Evidence is also to be found carved and painted on courtiers and officials tombs in the surrounding areas of Giza and Saqqara. These diadems appear to have formed part of a formal dress code but were not limited to any specific occasion. According to inscriptions, the diadems were presented to loyal male and female courtiers by kings such as Sahure and Neuserre, a practice that, according to Wilkinson (1971:41), appears to have been discontinued by the end of this period. Statues of the kings Snefru, Userkaf, Sahure and Neuserre illustrate the wearing of this type of diadem surmounted by the *atef*-crown.

Scenes of presentation of single bow diadems were found in the tombs of Nebemakhet and the dwarf Senb. As illustrated in Figure 7.2 (page 135), an Early Dynastic Period version with double bows, one on each side, is depicted on a pile of offerings in the tomb of Akh-hotep.

Three Old Kingdom diadems that have survived more or less intact are, according to Wilkinson (1971:37), 'purely funerary' in purpose. One diadem was fashioned from burnished gold while two were made from gilded copper. All three exhibit similarities in the choice of elaborate decorative medallions with the incorporation of papyrus umbels, lotus blooms and ibis birds, also known as *akh* birds. Interpretation of the symbolism and iconography incorporated into these diadems is multi-faceted and effectively combines the phenomenon of *sema-tawy*, the 'Two Lands'. Incorporated with the Egyptian concept *ma'at* the combination of symmetry, duality, unity and balance was a good example of powerful non-verbal communication (Wilkinson 1994:130).

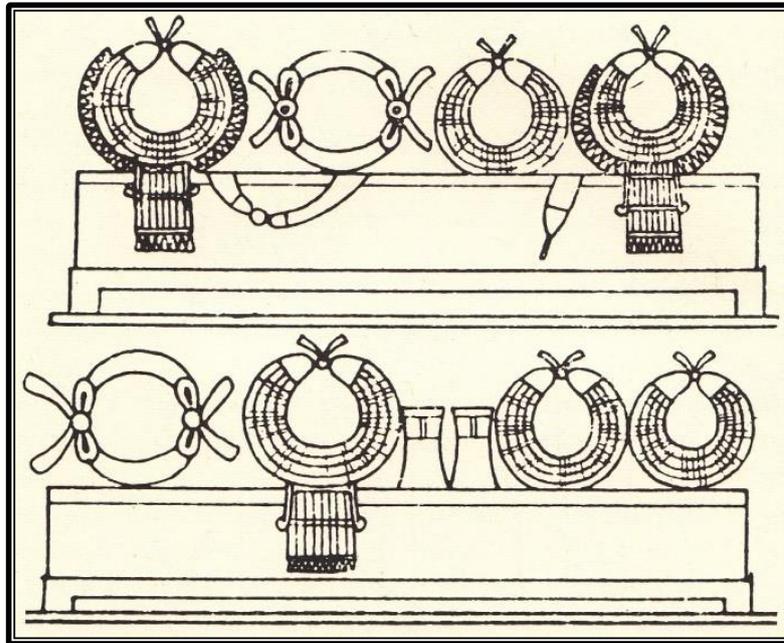


Figure 7.2: Diadems, pectorals and collars made by the craftsmen of the royal workshops (Tomb of Akh-hotep, Saqqara, 5th Dynasty)

The unity of *ma'at* is evident in the juxtaposition of north and south, the east and west banks of the Nile, night and day, darkness and sunlight, life and death. Symbolically, the concept of dualism not only represented the united Egyptian kingdom and the power of *ma'at* as wielded by the royal house but also reaffirmed the nature of creation itself. This concept went much further than abstract theological theory. The dual elements are obvious in the composition of these diadem where deities and attributes, colours, heraldic plants and animals issue strong visual messages (Wilkinson, 1994:130).

7.3 THE UNKNOWN WOMAN FROM GIZA

The earliest Old Kingdom diadem was discovered in an intact limestone sarcophagus at an excavation site situated close to the Sphinx complex¹¹⁷. The inscriptions at the site were indiscernible and it was thus assumed at the time that the un-named adult woman was closely connected to the royal court (Hassan 1932:149). The strictly formal symbolism incorporated into the headband design indicate that the woman

¹¹⁷ The undisturbed burial was discovered in 1930 during extensive excavations of the area by Selim Bey Hassan.

must have been closely connected to the royal court, perhaps a sister or daughter to the king, according to Dunham (1946:26). He notes that the design of this diadem bears close affinity with both the 'Leipzig' and 'Boston' diadems that will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.3.1 Construction

The diadem consists of a band of burnished gold, shaped wider in the centre, tapering towards an open back with slightly rounded ends. These were pierced with holes for the tapes for tying in a knot and/or bow for securing it to the head (Vilímková, 1969:17). As illustrated in Figure 7.3 (below) the sheet gold band is embellished with three gold medallions decorated using the repoussé and chasing techniques.

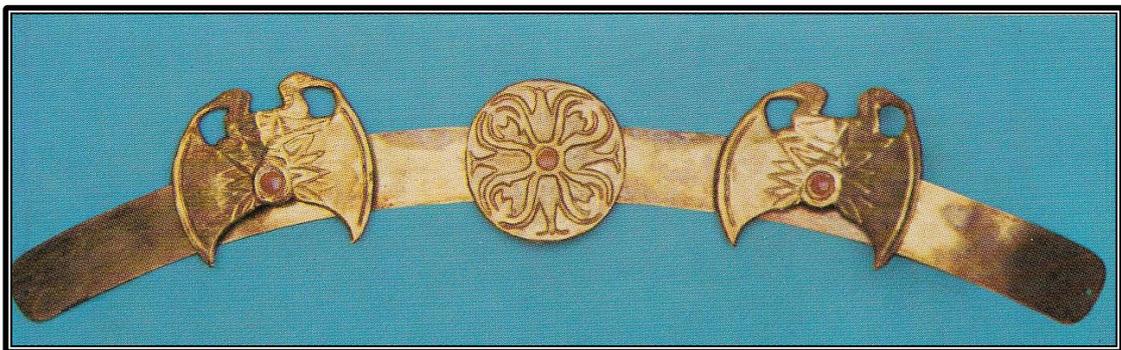


Figure 7.3: Gold diadem of the 4-5th Dynasty "Unknown Woman" from Giza
(Diameter: 23cm)

The central design element measuring 7cm across, consists of four lotus buds surrounding a central red cabochon-cut carnelian. According to Dunham (1946:27), the excavation reports indicates that the ornaments were inlaid, there is no clear evidence in the available photographs to support this. The two side medallions are slightly larger, measuring 8cm across. Double papyrus umbels are surmounted by two crossed *akh* or ibis birds facing outwards, their beaks joined to the upper edge of the papyrus (Vilímková, 1969:17).

A separate addition to this diadem a narrower, partially gilded, curved, copper band with three copper nails sticking out of it. Popular conjecture is that this was for holding the gold diadem in shape (Wilson, 1971:38). However, I propose that it was an innovative way of making the larger diadem temporarily smaller when worn by a more petite owner. A point of conjecture is that diadems of this style were mass-produced and thus not made according to individual head sizes and the inner band served the purpose of making it smaller.

7.3.2 Symbolism

During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, inlaid metal diadems display an abundance of popular floral motifs. The symbolism and iconography of the papyrus and lotus were cleverly combined to represent diverse concepts in this particular diadem. The papyrus denoting Lower Egypt was represented by the colour green, symbolic of vegetation, life and resurrection. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, the colour and symbolism of papyrus was closely linked to Wadjet, the protective goddess of Lower (northern) Egypt. The lotus, representing Upper (southern) Egypt had particular significance. When entwined with the papyrus, the two elements were representative of the concept of *Sema-Tawy*, the union of the two lands. It is entirely possible that, in combination of the symbolism and iconography of papyrus and lotus incorporated into this diadem illustrated in Figure 7.4 (below), the magic of protection, regeneration and resurrection were being invoked.

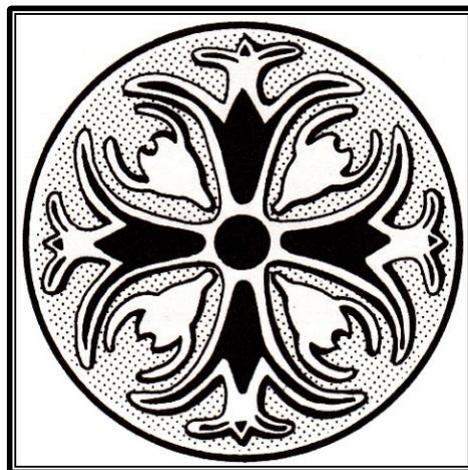


Figure 7.4: Detail of central medallion showing stylised lotus buds

Red cabochon-cut carnelians form the focal point of the three decorative medallions that feature on this diadem. Called *deshet*, red not only symbolised life and regeneration but also represented the radiant sun. It was thus used, particularly in amulets, to represent the ‘fiery, protective and potentially destructive, Eye of Ra’, (Wilkinson, 1994:107). Its use in this particular diadem can be interpreted as invoking regeneration and protective magic for its owner.

The ibis forms a central and visually important motif. The African Sacred ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*), the Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) were commonly used in hieroglyphics and Egyptian iconography. Ibises were closely associated with the god Djehuty, also known as Thoth. The deity was often depicted in human form with an ibis head surmounted by a lunar disk or crescent moon. Credited with the power of words, wisdom, magic, healing, the regulation of time and also order, Djehuty’s power was considered immense, playing an important role in the battles between good and evil, providing the magic words enabling the resurrection of Osiris (Wilson 2003:217). Amulets of the god in ibis form were ascribed magical powers that were often invoked in popular magic and religious practices. The hieroglyph representing the Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) was used in the hieroglyphic sign *ihw* and can be interpreted either as the noun ‘spirit’ or the verb ‘to be efficient, beneficial, useful or profitable’.

HIEROGLYPH	SPECIES	GARDINER’S SIGN LIST
	Glossy ibis (<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>)	(G28) phonogram gm , Also used as the verb gmi ‘to find’
	Northern Bald ibis (<i>Geronticus eremita</i>)	(G25) logogram ꜥh
	African Sacred ibis (<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>)	(G26) hb or djhwtj
	African Sacred ibis (<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>) Northern Bald ibis (<i>Geronticus eremita</i>)	(G26A) phonogram akh , logogram of Akh-spirit , Verb: <i>be, become a spirit, beneficial, useful, profitable.</i>
	Thoth	(C3) logogram Djhwtj

Figure 7.5: Summary of Ibis hieroglyphs extracted from Gardiner’s Sign List¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Gardiner’s Sign List is a list of common Egyptian hieroglyphs compiled by Sir Alan Gardiner. It is considered a standard reference in the study of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Frequently mentioned in the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, the *akh* (a shadow-bird) was believed to represent the spirit of the deceased (Wilson 1971:38). In the many New Kingdom tomb paintings, the *ba*-bird was not, however, depicted as an ibis. Wilkinson (1971:38) proposes that the ibis in these medallion may thus be interpreted as symbolising 'the shining spirit of the deceased'.

The ibis often appears in marsh and river scenes and especially in symbolic contexts where it is identified with Thoth, patron of scribes, writing and the moon (Wilkinson 1994:89). There is also abundant evidence of the artistic representation of the ibis, or *akh*, signs on ivory plaques, in differently styles and accuracy, dating from the Early Dynastic period. Janák (2010:17-19) writes that in Egyptian religious context the concept of the *akh* is often translated as 'spirit' or 'blessed dead' but may also extend to that of 'sacred mediator' and thus as *akhu*, the 'resurrected'. The deceased become not only blessed but also influential after the performance of proper burial rites and subsequent transfiguration. Wilkinson (1994:89) notes that the ibis was used to signify 'glorious' and 'the transfigured spirit'. Apparently regarded as intermediaries or an 'effective spirit (*akh*) of Re', they were believed to be capable of conveying requests and prayers to the sun-god. Steles illustrating this concept were set up in houses and offerings were placed before them to propitiate the *akh* and protect the living from danger and illness (Janák 2013:3).

Herodotus (*Histories: II*) refers to folklore that served to highlight the bird's protective role in the Egyptian belief system whereby:

'...at the beginning of spring winged serpents from Arabia fly towards Egypt, and the birds called ibises meet them at the entrance of this country and do not suffer the serpents to go by but kill them. On account of this deed it is (say the Arabians) that the ibis has come to be greatly honoured by the Egyptians, and the Egyptians also agree that it is for this reason that they honour these birds.'

The protective role is similarly highlighted by Pliny (*Natural History* Book X: 40) who recounts that 'the people of Egypt invoke their ibis to guard against the arrival of snakes'. This may be merely hearsay but nevertheless the reverence for the ibis in Egyptian society was quite evident.

7.3.3 Interpretation

The symbolism and iconography of this particular diadem can be interpreted on a variety of levels. Given the Egyptian propensity for visual punning, I propose that the ancient Egyptian term for the lily flower *seshen* and bud *sapet*, papyrus clumps known as *mehyt*, symbolic of life, together with the names *dhw*, *hbj* or *ihw* may denote the 'Spirit of the Two Lands'. The elements may also simply have been incorporated into the unknown woman's name, something along the lines of 'Seshen-Mehyt' or 'Mehyt-Sapet'. Alternatively, the Unknown Woman may have originated from the 15th Egyptian *nome* (province), or the Middle Kingdom city of Khenmu (Hermopolis in Greek) which both used Thoth as their emblem (Wilkinson 2003:217). It is proposed that the ibis in this medallion may thus be interpreted as representing 'the shining spirit of the deceased'.

7.4 THE 'LEIPZIG' DIADEM

The 'Leipzig Diadem' was discovered in the early 1900s during excavations funded by the University of Vienna, hence its appellation. It is currently housed in their museum collection of Egyptian antiquities. Diadems described by Andrews (1995:107), and depicted on 1st Intermediate period cartonnage masks together with medallions found in the archaeological context, verify and corroborate the construction and embellishment of this diadem to a certain extent.

7.4.1 Construction

The 'Leipzig Diadem' combines copper, wood and painted gesso. Although originally gilded, much of this has worn off over time. Described by Schafer and Andrae (1925:270, 629), it widens slightly in the centre, narrowing towards both ends and is open at the back. The rectangular ends have piercings for tapes or two long fabric streamers to tie it together, probably the bow form which is indicated in depictions and reliefs. Unfortunately only one of the decorative medallions has survived (Wilkinson, 1971:38). Made from wood and covered with painted gesso, as

illustrated in Figure 7.6 (below), the medallion has been designed to represent papyrus, birds and the ancient Egyptian symbol for Life.



Fig 7.6: Detail of the corroded copper medallions featured on the Leipzig diadem

Gilding in the form of sheet gold foil and gold leaf¹¹⁹ occurred particularly in the funerary context providing the illusion of wealth. The majority of the gilding has worn off this particular diadem. The gold foil on this medallion would most probably have been embossed before being glued directly onto the wood advises Lucas (1962:232). Alternatively, the gold foil could have been attached by thin layer of gesso plaster or fastened into place with small gold rivets (Lucas 1962:232).¹²⁰ On the lower inside edge of the diadem are three vertically-placed metal tubes.¹²¹ I propose these could have been used to support an upright decoration such as a feather plume or even a fresh bloom.

7.4.2 Symbolism

The central motif of the Leipzig Diadem was composed of three conjoined papyrus umbels surmounted by an *ankh* sign. The *ankh* sign itself is flanked by a pair of

¹¹⁹ As measured by Lucas (1962:231), gold foil ranged in thickness from 0.17mm to 0.54mm. Ancient Egyptian gold leaf varied from 0.01mm to 0.13mm in thickness.

¹²⁰ Known as “gesso”, the plaster was used as a primer coat and applied in very thin layers to coat the surface of the object to be embellished by decorative gilding.

¹²¹ These are 1 cm in length.

ibises perched atop two of the papyrus umbels and facing outwards (Wilkinson, 1971:39). Orientation and location is relatively unnoticed in the minor arts but it is however considered an important aspect when applied to the arrangement of individual elements within a composition. The actual position and relative placement should be appreciated in order to 'grasp this subtle yet vital dimension of Egyptian art', notes Wilkinson (1996:60). As mentioned earlier, the Egyptian world-view accorded special significance to the four Cardinal Points; the geographic north-south axis and visible east-west axis of the rising and setting sun. The topography of the Afterlife was central to their belief system. It was believed that the deceased crossed over the *sekhet iaru* 'Field of Reeds', also known as *seket hetep* 'Field of Offerings' (Wilkinson, 1996:63, 65). It is proposed that the representation of the outward-looking ibises featuring in the Leipzig diadem could be interpreted as representing the concept of 'crossing over' to the Afterlife, thereby affording protection to the wearer. The focal point of the medallion, initially painted red or inlaid with now-lost carnelian, is the stylized solar symbol associated with life, regeneration and the protection. The symbolism of the ibises and papyrus motifs are associated with Thoth Hathor and Wadjet denote Life, Creation and Lower Egypt.

The number three often featured in Egyptian art and symbolism. It is primarily evident in cosmological and religious beliefs as the triad of deities. Wilkinson (1994:133) theorises that 'it is the unity of an integrated group which is implied by the number – three functioning as a united whole representative of many.' The earliest reference to the concept of a trinity appears in the Coffin Texts (Wilkinson 1994:132) in the myth of the primordial god Atum giving birth to Shu and Tefnut 'when he was one and became three'. The three major solar deities Re, Khepri and Atum are also commonly recognised as an early trinity. Divine triads were also grouped as a father, mother and son with Osiris, Isis and Horus or Amun, Mut and Khonsu being the most recognized examples.

The *ankh* hieroglyph incorporated is synonymous with Egyptian symbolism but its origins are somewhat obscure¹²². The *ankh* was used since archaic times as a

¹²² The *ankh* continued to be a potent amulet across all periods of Egyptian iconography, surviving into the Coptic period when it was adopted as the *crux ansata* (the handled or 'eyed' cross) symbolic of this particular

symbol for 'Life' (S34)¹²³. It was often depicted being carried in the hands of deities, offered to the king or held to his nose as the 'Breath of Life', thereby indicating the transferral of divinity. It is commonly assumed to resemble a sandal strap or a knot with some kind of mythical or religious connotation but given the stylistic pre-Dynastic clay models of women, the *ankh* as an archaic symbol of feminine fertility is far more plausible. Wilkinson (1992:161) speculates that the *ankh* symbolism may have had strong sexual allusions in the form of a pubic triangle which is depicted at the top of joined 'legs' in a number of amulets. He continues that the form was also a popular design for hand-held mirrors while the word also referred to a floral bouquet often depicted in funerary context which subtly associates the deceased with the gods. The flexibility associated with the *ankh* is indicative of how hieroglyphic forms developed into a rich source of symbolism and iconography, more often than not blending symbolic representation with written script (Wilkinson, 1999:161).¹²⁴

7.4.3 Interpretation

The importance of the *akh* is closely connected with Egyptian cosmology. Created in three realms, the earth (*ta*), the sky (*pet*) and the underworld (*duat*) converge on the horizon (*akhet*). This created not only a cosmic junction but was also directly linked with the sunrise and by extension, a place of birth, renewal and resurrection where the divine beings could venture forth and the 'blessed dead' were created¹²⁵. The Book of the Dead refers to the *akhu* as *imy akhet*, 'those who dwell in the horizon'.¹²⁶ It is suggested by Janák (2013:3) that the root word *akh* may be

Christian sect. A personified *ankh* is sometimes shown in close proximity to the king holding an ostrich-feather fan.

¹²³ The *ankh*  (S34) in Gardiner's hieroglyphic list is used as the phonogram 'nh', as in 'nh' 'live' and also 'nh' 'sandal strap'.

¹²⁴ A less common rendition is that of offering tables that were also sometimes fashioned in the shape of the *ankh*, with a loaf of bread being placed on the circle of the loop. Streams of *ankh* signs are sometimes shown being poured from libation vessels over the king and queen or deceased commoners as 'a symbol of the regenerating power of water' and, in a form of visual punning, libation vessels were also sometimes produced in the *ankh* shape (Wilkinson 1992:177).

¹²⁵ Given the linkage with the deceased, the *akh* was believed to have similar qualities and powers later ascribed to angels in Greek magical papyri notes Gee (2009:9-12) while Adams (2007:17-18) indicates connections with ghosts in both Coptic and Christian literature.

¹²⁶ For in-depth discussion on the *akh* bird, its connection with the 'blessed dead' and resurrection as well as material evidence, refer to Janák (2011, 2013). For further discussion on the *akh* in relation to the creative power of magical spells, secret knowledge, power/manifestation of the deceased and cultic ritual, refer to Ritner

connected with the term *iakhu*, meaning radiance, light or glow and thus the mysterious and invisible force, connected to not only to the glowing appearance and disappearance of the sun but also the glossy, iridescent hues of the ibis.¹²⁷¹²⁸. In temple architecture, the twin peaks were reflected in the flanking pylons being situated on the east-west axis and referred to in an inscription at Edfu as Isis and Nephthys ‘... who raise up the sun god who shines on the horizon’.¹²⁹

In some cases such as in the Leipzig Diadem, the *ankh* sign is framed in a triangle which, according to Wilkinson (1999:160), signifies the hieroglyph *di*, ‘give’, and thereby producing a rebus that reads *di ankh*, ‘given life’. Given the meaning and symbolism of the ibis birds, the papyrus umbels and the *ankh*, I propose that the symbolism incorporated into the ‘Leipzig’ Diadem can be interpreted as the owner being ‘given life under Thoth’s protection’.

7.5 THE ‘BOSTON’ DIADEM

The very fragile copper ‘Boston’ Diadem was found around the skull of a 5th Dynasty woman buried close to Prince Khufuw-khaf at the Eastern Mastaba Complex on Giza Plateau.¹³⁰ Amongst the personal possessions in the badly decayed wooden coffin were bead necklaces and amulets as well as numerous fragments that when

(1993:33-34). Ritner (1993:30) notes that these ideas have survived in Coptic words, especially *jkh* referring to demon.

¹²⁷ Janák (2013:2) suggests that this is confirmed by a variety of Egyptian texts that connect the *akhu* with the eastern horizon *akhet* as the birds descended on fields, settlements and cemeteries daily in search of food, returning in the evening to the western horizon (N27).

¹²⁸ The *akhet* in Gardiner’s hieroglyphic list (N27 ) is written as the ideogram as in 3ht ‘horizon’. It shows the two peaks of the ‘mountain’ glyph, with the solar disk appearing between them as the sun appeared/ disappeared and was a common motif in amulets (Wilkinson 1994:135). In the New Kingdom, Hor-em-akhet ‘Horus in the Horizon’ was the god of both the rising and setting sun and often represented either as a falcon or a child. The pyramids of Khufu and Khafra were also identified as twin peaks and thus the horizon. In addition, the carved, curved headrest (Q4) used for a sleeper’s head was used to imitate the *akhet* in both form and symbolism.

¹²⁹ A statue of the sun god was sometimes displayed on a terrace between the two pylons and, notes Wilkinson (1994:135); the term for this was ‘*khaai*’, the same as that used for ‘horizon’.

¹³⁰ During the 1927 expedition, George Reisner excavated a number of tombs on the Giza Plateau. The items of jewellery including the diadem are all recorded under the expedition number 27-2-462 and were found in burial chamber G.7143 B at Giza. The only published mention of the diadem appears in the 1938 Bulletin of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts article.

reconstructed formed a plain gilded copper band (Reisner 1938:30-31).¹³¹ The 'Boston' Diadem needed to be carefully restored before it could be exhibited as illustrated in Figures 7.7 (below) and 7.8 (page 146).

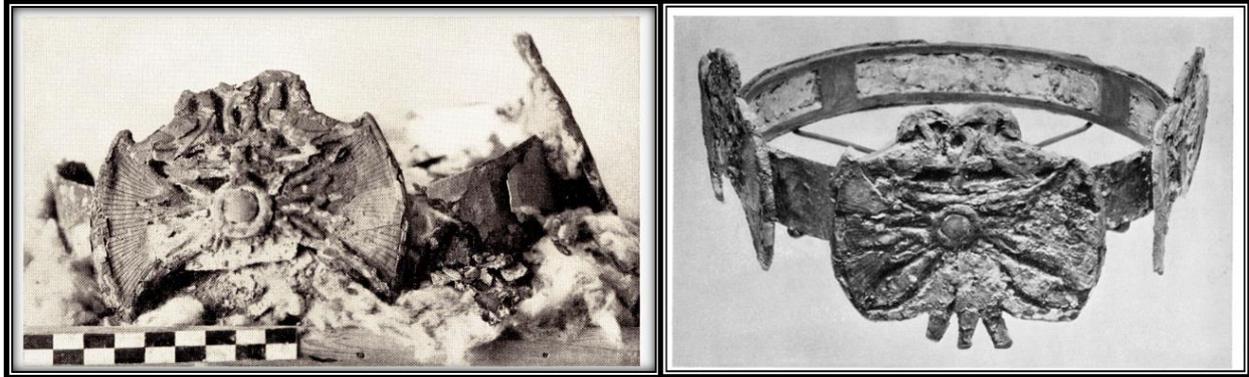


Figure 7.7: Original very fragile and badly corroded 5th Dynasty 'Boston' Diadem before and after restoration

Reisner (1938:31) noted that two painted discs with well-preserved colours originating from a similar diadem were found in a 6th Dynasty tomb situated in the Western Cemetery. Given the regularity of artistic depictions it can be assumed that diadems of this style and construction type were favoured during this time.

7.5.1 Construction

The 'Boston Diadem' is made up of a copper headband and three medallions fastened to the band by rivets. The headband is a complete circle covered with gold leaf overlay. A linen backing layer was applied to the copper. This coating acted as a binder for the gesso and gold leaf that originally covered most of the diadem's surface. From the remains, it appears that a backing layer of linen was applied to the copper during the initial construction, patches of which can still be seen in damaged portions. The textile coating acted as a binder for the gesso and gold leaf that originally covered most of the surface. Although decayed and corroded in many places, it has been ascertained with some certainty that where the gesso was not covered with gold leaf, it was painted with bright blue, green, red and black pigments resulting in quite a striking effect (Dunham 1946:26).

¹³¹ The diadem was shipped to Boston Museum, USA in 1937, hence its appellation.

The original three medallions done in raised gesso on a repoussé copper base before being gilded with gold foil paint was (Dunham, 1946:25). They feature a pair of *akh* birds facing inwards with beaks crossed atop two blue papyrus umbels with inlaid, cabochon-cut carnelian at their junction surmounted by the *ankh* sign. Below this is a stylized lotus flower with buds on each side. The side elements are similar to this, but lacking the addition of the lotus. The design is, painted and gilded with gold foil (Wilkinson, 1971:39). The papyrus is a greenish-blue shade, the calyx and tips are inlaid carnelian tips with the whole floral element edged by a gold border¹³². The stone once again serves the practical purpose of effectively masking the rivet attachment to the headband and would have been cemented in place after assembly. The outline of the feathers and legs was emphasized by black ink on the gold foil while the wings central *ankh* sign were filled in with green-painted gesso. As a focal point on the central medallion, is an additional stylized lotus flower flanked by buds. The diadem was carefully restored 'by piecing together the fragments, filling in the gaps and consolidating the mass of copper, gold leaf, plaster and paint' Dunham (1946:23).



Figure 7.8: Restored, painted and gilded 'Boston' Diadem, Giza (5th Dynasty)

¹³² A similar diadem from an undisturbed Giza burial dating to the late 4th or early 5th Dynasties was found intact on the head of an adult female. This example now housed in the Cairo Museum has strong affinities with both the Leipzig and Boston diadems but was made from solid gold and has been discussed in detail above.

7.5.2 Symbolism

Wilkinson (1996:64) notes that west and east were synonymous with judgement. Amun set the wicked to the left (east) and the just to the right (west). As the ordered and relative positioning of objects is believed to have held symbolic significance (as illustrated in the artist's impression in Figure 7.9 below) , it is proposed that, given the inward-looking representation of the birds featured on the Boston Diadem medallion indicate a neutral judgement.



Figure 7.9: Artist's impression of colours and details on the 'Boston' Diadem

The symbolism of the papyrus, lotus blooms, *ankh* and ibis birds have already been discussed in considerable, the added symbolism of colour incorporated into the decorative elements will be considered here. Although jewellers favoured raw materials that combined physical qualities with mythological associations, perceived magical properties and symbolic significance, these were generally very costly. Composite materials such as faience, glass or even paint were used in imitation.

The gold-leaf was used to gild the metal headband in the belief that the substance, associated with wealth and believed to have supernatural qualities, representing immortality in the afterlife. Dark blue traditionally associated with wisdom and the body of the creator god, Ptah. Symbolic of the sky, it is proposed that blue was used to represent the River Nile and cosmic waters. The incorporation of red would

possibly have added amuletic elements of energy, power and regeneration to the decorative medallions of the diadem.

Given the relatively cheap materials combined with the fragility of the diadem, it is difficult to believe that it was extensively worn during its owner's lifetime. A fairly flexible copper band covered with gesso, paint and gold leaf would have been damaged by constant wear and tear. Durham (1946:27) seems certain that this diadem was specifically designed for funerary purposes in imitation of the owner's real gold headdress. It is nevertheless invaluable as it contributes to the visualization of the exceptionally beautiful and costly jewellery forever lost due to looting.

7.5.3 Interpretation

In this particular motif, the ibis is depicted in a roosting position on top a papyrus umbel. Janák (2010:27) discusses the possibility of the motif as being a representation of a ritual run (the *Vogellauf* or 'bird run') thought to be similar to the running of the jubilee '*heb-sef*' which can be found among cultic scenes on temple walls.¹³³ The scenes show the king holding a northern bald ibis in one hand and three sceptres in another, running to perform a 'life-giving ceremony'. The three sceptres individually represented Life, Power, and Stability. Three birds (ibis, vulture and owl) are visible on the top of these rods invoking the deities invoked Hathor, Bastet and Isis. Apart from a deity greeting the king and bestowing his/her favour, the accompanying text does not, however, elaborate further on the activity (Dekker and Herb 1994:42-123 and Kees 1921:22-102; referred to in Janák 2010:27)

In this specific diadem, there is the added floral symbolism of lotus blooms, so it is suggested that possibly the symbolic message wishes the wearer to 'flourish in radiance and light'.

¹³³ Janák (2010:27) in the ritual running context dating to the New Kingdom, also refers to a *Ruderlauf* (paddle run) and a *Vasenlauf* (vase run). The event is captured at Dendera temple.

7.6 QUEEN MENTUHOTEP'S SILVER CIRCLET

Silver diadems are rarely identified during tomb excavations, due mainly to severe corrosion. A silver diadem surmounted by a gold *uraeus* associated with the burial of King Nubkheperre Intef¹³⁴ is documented from a site at Dra' Abu el-Naga' close to Thebes on the West Bank of the Nile. Unfortunately, recordkeeping was poor and provenance has been sketchily captured. The back features a central bow and streamers, surmounted by an eye-catching doubled lotus motif inlaid with a double turquoise-blue glass or faience flanking what appears to be a round centre. The sides of the diadem mimic the colourful geometric patterns often found in tomb cornicing designs. Currently housed in the Rijksmuseum in Leiden, it was considered unique until recently.

Bearing a striking resemblance this diadem, another example found recently in somewhat unusual circumstances has recently been identified. Reeves postulates that, as only one Second Intermediate Period queen's burial appears to have been uncovered at the Theban Royal Necropolis, there is a good possibility that the diadem belongs to Queen Mentuhotep, Great Royal Wife of the 17th Dynasty King Djehuti (1730-1643 BCE).¹³⁵ The tomb was found substantially intact during the early 19th century and although its contents were dispersed and any un-inscribed artefacts will thus unfortunately remain unidentified, Reeves (1996:47) draws the conclusion that:

'given the apparent queenly nature of the piece, and the paucity of suitable candidates for ownership, it requires no great leap of faith to conclude that ... the diadem's first owner was none other than Queen Mentuhotep herself.'

7.6.1 Construction

The Mentuhotep diadem was made primarily from silver alloyed with gold and copper which accounts for its successful survival. The circlet component was chisel-cut and

¹³⁴ The king has been dated to the 17th Dynasty, forming part of the Second Intermediate Period. Mentuhotep was the daughter of Senebhanef and the princess Sebekhotep, part of the Theban nobility.

¹³⁵ It was found, not during a recognised excavation, but appeared in a private home in England. It is speculated that it was obtained as a result of looting and an undocumented sale in the early 1900's. This practice was rife at the time.

chased with t a distinctive 'basket-weave' decoration (Reeves, 1996:48). A floral bow at the back has pendant streamers, chisel-cut from a single sheet of metal and attached to the circlet by means of three rivets. Twin *uraeus* serpents hammered from sheet silver and attached by rivets to form the centre frontal focus point, appear to have been embellished by surface tooling. The workmanship is considered fairly rudimentary.

7.6.2 Symbolism

It appears that the wealthy of ancient Egyptian society wishing to indicate their status opted to replace the traditional designs incorporated into woven linen headbands. The basket-weave decoration is reminiscent of a much simpler form of the circlet, made from water plants, grasses; palm leaves or flax.¹³⁶ Plaiting and weaving are classified as 'textile techniques' and developed alongside basketry which has generally not survived successfully in the archaeological context.¹³⁷ Nevertheless matting, ropes and knots produced designs that had a considerable stylistic influence from as early as the pre-Dynastic period. Baskets and floor mats were clearly depicted from the Early Dynastic period onwards and it comes as no surprise that these common zigzag matting textures and chequered designs were popular motifs.¹³⁸ The chevron and triangular patterns incorporated into the diadem illustrated in Figure 7.10 (page 151) clearly reflect these patterns (Wilson, 1986:14-15). The distinctive geometric design also bears a strong resemblance to the stylized

¹³⁶ Grasses were the material of choice for matting during the pre-Dynastic and Pharaonic periods. The tall grasses are referred to as *halfa*, an Arabic term. Sedges used include *Cyperus papyrus* and various reed species such as *Phragmites* and *Arundo donax*. Contrary to popular belief, rushes were less flexible than sedges and were generally used to make floor matting. The large, feathery side-leaflets of the date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) and dom palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*) was a common choice. Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) was only introduced during the Greco-Roman period.

¹³⁷ Plaiting is a technique whereby a number of strands are interlaced. These may be attached and fastened parallel to each another to form fabric of different widths, depending on the purpose. Given its common, everyday usage, it is no surprise that the plaiting and weaving motifs were incorporated into jewellery as an imitation perhaps of an earlier style of headband. Weaving is defined by Vogelsang-Eastwood (2000:274) as 'the process of interlacing two or more sets according to a pre-defined system to produce a textile'.

¹³⁸ From the Early Dynastic period onwards, mat imitations were represented on the base of walls and along the upper edge of temple pylons mimicking mat-covered frames. Old Kingdom *mastabas* also featured chequered and chevron patterns and it is widely thought that the *kheker* frieze design represented the way bundles of reeds were tied together to form the edge of matting. The distinctive chevron pattern, in particular, is indicative of the plaiting technique as discussed in detail by Wendrich, (2000:255-256).

shorter outside leaves surrounding the base of papyrus stems and can be seen as architectural details carved on column bases and capitals.¹³⁹.



Figure 7.10: Queen Mentuhotep's imitation basket-weave silver circlet (c. 17th Dynasty)
(Diameter: 19 cm, maximum height of decorative elements 15 cm)

Generally of purely practical use, knots were used to prevent textile threads, the ends of wigs, kilts and papyrus reed bundles from unravelling (Nicholson & Shaw 2000:283). Kilts and women's garments were wrapped around the body and simply tied in a knot to hold it together.¹⁴⁰ Knots were considered an important aspect of Egyptian magic. The use of knots in spells invokes the sense of magical power of writing itself, in which lines loop back on themselves and represent reversibility in the temporal world as, in the process of knotting, the left and the right, the top and the bottom turn into each other. A spell from the late 2nd millennium BCE described Isis, Nephthys and Hedjhotep spinning and weaving the linen cord of an amulet of health which the goddess Neith then ties in knots. In the Greco-Egyptian magical Papyri, knotted cords are described as 'Anubis threads', as the process of mummification also involved the wrapping, knotting and tying of bandages (Pinch, 1994:108). Knots were a powerful image featuring in magical remedies, where their function was to ease or diffuse pain, confirming that the remedy continued to work in the curative or prophylactic object. In the magical-medical sense, knots were thought to assist with

¹³⁹ This detail can be clearly seen in wall paintings from the 18th Dynasty tomb of Panhesy, the 19th Dynasty temple of Sethos at Abydos and the 18th Dynasty temple at Semna (Wilson, 1986:21)

¹⁴⁰ Rope and cord were made from reed, papyrus, date palm fibre, halfa grass and camel hair date and the earliest specimens date from the Badarian and pre-Dynastic periods notes Lucas (1962:134). A number of knot types have been clearly identified from representations: square knot (a sturdy knot clearly indicated in depictions of the symbolic tying together of the sedge and papyrus signifying the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt), the reef knot (which together with mesh knots are still used in the manufacture of fishing nets), the *senha* (Persian knot) which is still used in carpet manufacture and running knots used in nooses and lassoes.

the knitting together of wounds and the process of healing (Connor). Pliny the Elder (*Nat.His.* XXXV: 17) reports on the miraculous healing power of the Hercules Knot '*nodus Herculanus*':

‘..It is quite surprising how much more speedily wounds will heal if they are bound up and tied with a Hercules knot. Indeed, it is said that if the girdle which we wear every day is tied with a knot of this description, it will be productive of certain beneficial effects, Hercules having been the first to discover the fact.’

It has been suggested that the use of knot amulets in Egyptian magic was linked to the vertebra as suggested by the ideograph *ts* which signifies both knot and vertebra, the series of bony links that ‘tie’ the skeleton together (Gordon & Schwabe 2004:101). The reef knot was a popular element in Egyptian amuletic jewellery when translated into precious metals and gold reef-knot bangles formed part of female fertility charms. In particular the *tjet* knot, its girdle shape and red colour in particular identified with Isis, gained specific protective symbolism because of its association with the creation of human life (Pinch, 1994:116).

7.6.3 Interpretation

This diadem was manufactured for royal wear as indicated by the twin uraei on the brow. Although silver is traditionally considered to have been much rarer in Egypt than gold, this particular piece nonetheless reflects the importance of its original owner. According to Reeves (1996:47), the presence of the double serpents indicates the identity of the owner of this diadem as have the status of a queen as attested by depictions in an early 18th Dynasty tomb of Tetiky at Thebes and representations of several later queens such as Ahmose-Nofretari, Tiye (wife of Amenhotep III), Nefertiti (wife of Akhenaten) and Nefertari (wife of Ramesses II).

The 17th Dynasty kings who ruled the southern regions while the Hyksos were dominant in the northern, Delta region, appear to have allowed their consorts a more prominent role in state affairs as their changing titles indicate. Even though a queen’s status continued to derive directly from her relationship with her husband, there was line of strong, politically active women (Tydesley, 2006:80). It is no coincidence that although Mentuhotep’s main title was Great Royal Wife, another title

conferred on her was *Khenemet-nefer-hedjet*, 'she who is united with the white crown'. This is possibly indicative of a strong supportive role during this unsettled period. She was mother to three subsequent Theban kings of Egypt, Sekhemre-Se'ankhtawi Neferhotep, Se'ankhenre Mentuhotep and Sekhemre-Seusertawi Sebekhotep (Tydesley, 2006:81).

It is proposed, therefore, that this particular example fashioned from silver mimicked headbands constructed from intricate beadwork. These are evident in wall paintings of the daughters of Djehuty-hotep and also of the female musicians in the New Kingdom tomb of Nebamun, mentioned elsewhere in this study.

7.7 CONCLUSION

Examples of circlet diadems are well-represented scenes recorded in Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom mastabas and tombs. Circlet diadems worn by men appear to have been decorated with prominently-placed central medallions and some colourful inlaid designs. Those worn by women became increasingly elaborate, incorporating symmetrically-placed knotted bows-and-streamers and some added floral elements as illustrated in Figure 7.11, page 154). There is corroborating evidence from painted cartonnage masks and medallions suggest that decorative elements may have been detachable and interchangeable. One cannot help but speculate if the detachable decorative medallions were inherited via the familial line. In all probability these representations were true reflections of actual diadems of the period. Three Old Kingdom diadems have survived virtually intact and appear to have been imitated for funerary purposes. All three exhibit similar decorative medallions that incorporate stylised lotus blooms, papyrus umbels and ibis birds. Symmetry, unity and duality as well as the concept of *ma'at* were incorporated.

The earliest surviving Old Kingdom diadem belonged to an unidentified adult woman who was closely connected with the royal court, perhaps a direct female relation of the king. It corroborates the popularity of floral motifs and the increased use of symbolism and iconography to represent a variety of political and mythological concepts in addition to perceived magic and efficacy related to the Afterlife.

Attachments inside the headband indicate that floral embellishment or plumes were added on occasion. It is suggested that the combination of decorative elements may have been a visual representation of the deceased woman's name.

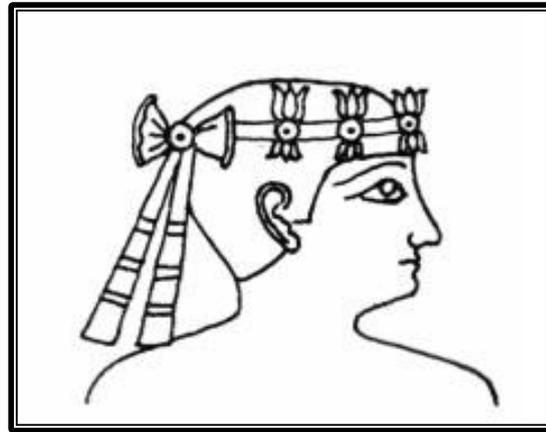


Figure 7.11: Illustration of diadem worn by Queen Meresankh III
(Giza, late 4th Dynasty)

The incomplete 'Leipzig Diadem' is an interesting item. Covered in painted gesso it appears to have been constructed purely for funerary purposes but is a particularly useful and early example of the gilding technique. It was probably very similar to a diadem worn during the owner's lifetime.

The extremely fragile 'Boston Diadem' has been construed as another example of jewellery destined for funerary purposes. It bears a striking resemblance in size and design to the two other examples but slightly different manufacturing techniques are evident incorporating textile and the addition of paint which resulted in a visually striking and unique effect. Given the use of relatively cheap materials and lack of robustness, it can thus be constructed being one of the earliest examples of what is now commonly accepted as 'costume' jewellery. The value of the diadem does however lie in its value in contributing to the visualization of what must have been magnificent and costly diadems worn by generations Egyptian women.

An interesting example of the combined use of silver and gold is illustrated by the circlet belonging to Mentuhotep, especially as silver has a poor survival record due to corrosion. It also illustrates the incorporation of the important *uraeus* element, over

and above the ubiquitous papyrus knots, bows and streamers as part of the state iconography of women. The use of silver and the presence of the double serpents serve to highlight the high status and royal linkages of the diadem's owner. The use of geometric patterns resembling basket-weave on the side of the headband is not only unusual but also aesthetically pleasing. Alternatively, the design may be imitating chevron-patterned plaited or beadwork headbands depicted as being favoured by ordinary women.

Craftsmen are depicted in the process of making diadems very similar to the Leipzig, Boston and Mentuhotep examples. There is tangible evidence that the diadems depicted did indeed exist and were greatly favoured even if the actual headdresses did not survive extensive looting in antiquity.

CHAPTER 8: FILLETS, ROSETTES & MEDALLIONS

Abstract

Simple gold, copper or silver headbands gradually developed into more elegant items of jewellery by the incorporation and attachment of elaborate embellishment. This took the form of central focal elements such as cobras and/or vultures, rosettes and medallions. These decorative motifs were inlaid with semi-precious stone, glass or faience and were an indication of growing innovation in jewellery design. Improved technology and growing manufacturing skills also become evident. This chapter departs from surviving examples by investigating a famous representation of an Old Kingdom diadem belonging to a noblewoman which demonstrates the use of popular motifs. The rosette and medallion embellishment of a particularly fine example of a Middle Kingdom royal diadem will be analysed in detail.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The original flower-bedecked chaplet worn by from the earliest times may have been the inspiration for a metal version. By the Old Kingdom, diadems had developed into headbands with piercings for tapes for secured them to the head. They were ornamented medallions knots, bows and streamers that hung down the back (Wilkinson 1975:37). Some of the solid headband-type diadems were inlaid with coloured stones. Royal versions often had the *uraeus* attached to the front. Diadems fashioned for princesses during the Old and Middle Kingdom eras often have an abundance of rosettes and floral motifs featuring colourful inlaid designs.

8.2 NOFRET'S ROSETTES

A distinctive floral-inspired headband type of diadem can be seen on the plastered limestone statue of Nofret who was buried together with her husband Prince Rahotep in a 4rd Dynasty *mastaba* tomb at Meidum.¹⁴¹ She is depicted as a very attractive and elegant woman in her prime with serene and very realistic facial features. As illustrated in Figure 8.1 (page 156), despite the rigid pose, the artist's skill in producing a statue of such high quality is, nevertheless, quite obvious. The inscriptions indicate Nofret's full name as *Nsw-r (kh)-t Nfr-t* which translates as 'The

¹⁴¹ The statues of the couple were excavated by the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette in the 1870s.

King's wise and beautiful woman'.¹⁴² Her title is given as 'King's dependent/acquaintance' which links her to the royal family suggesting a reasonably high status (Robins 1977:44; Shaw 2000:129). Nofret's parentage is not known but Prince Rahotep was a son of Pharaoh Sneferu (c. 2575-2551 BCE). Together they produced three daughters, the princesses Mereret, Nedjemib and Sethtet, and three sons, the princes Djedi, Itu and Neferkau. Rahotep's titles included 'King's Son of his Body, Elder of the Chamber, Unique of the Shepenty, Great Priest of Heliopolis, Unique One of Festival, Craftsman of the Ames Sceptre, General of the Army Expedition and Overseer of Works'.



Figure 8.1: Painted limestone statue of Nofret, wife of Ra-Hotep
[Meidum. Height - 122 cm, 4th Dynasty. Cairo Museum]

8.2.1 Construction

Nofret's statue wears a full, shoulder-length black wig surmounted by a headband-type diadem. The colours mirror the broad, beaded *usekh* collar around her neck. As the wife of a prince and important government official, Nofret was entitled to wear a headdress indicating her status. Nofret's diadem, decorated with brightly coloured, stylized floral motifs, is evidently a painted representation of an original made in silver which, like many of the surviving examples, appears to have been inlaid with symmetrically placed green and red motifs. Some of these are in the form of

¹⁴² Nefert and Neferet are alternative versions and the name was quite common throughout Egypt and during various dynasties.

rosettes, each having eight radiating lines represents flower petals. The central blue motif with a black centre also appears to be a form of rosette (Wilkinson, 1975:20).

8.2.2 Symbolism

In a land of harsh sunlight and bleached desert vistas, vibrant colours are a means of adding interest and individuality. It is thus not surprising that the colour of an object was regarded as an integral component of its nature. This was one of the underlying reasons for colour symbolism in the Egyptian palette. The colours on the statue would have reflected those of a real silver diadem affixed with cloisonné rosettes and inlaid with imported dark blue lapis lazuli, red carnelian and green turquoise worn by Nofret during her life. Silver had a symbolic association with the moon and the goddess Hathor (Wilkinson 1996:84). Silver was not found in deposits in Egypt and was imported from sources in the Aegean and Asia.

‘Rosettes and intersecting circle patterns’ notes Wilson (1994:169) ‘have a long history in Western Asia’.¹⁴³ The rosette or star motif was adopted not only as a divine symbol but also indicative of prosperity in general and was prominently displayed on bracelets worn by Assyrian royalty.¹⁴⁴ It is proposed that, given its prominence and clear divisions, the central blue rosette motif on Nofret’s diadem is most likely to be a stylised version of the blue lotus (*Nymphaea caerulea*). The lotus enjoyed particular significance in Egyptian symbolism and as mentioned in Chapter 5, it signified resurrection and regeneration. It was frequently depicted artistic representations forming part of garlands worn during banquets and festivals (Wilkinson 1998:198). Given that the diadem on the statue was based on an existing example owned by Nofret, it is probable that the blue rosette would have been filled by thin wedges of lapis lazuli, much valued by Egyptians and synonymous for ‘joy’ and ‘delight’.

¹⁴³ The motif occurred as early as the 5th millennium BCE occurred on painted pottery from Tell Halaf in Syria.

¹⁴⁴ During the 3rd millennium, was used to represent divine figures and both versions were recognised as the symbol of the Sumerian goddess Inanna. The rosettes are clearly displayed on reliefs originating from the North-West Palace at Nimrud, currently on display in the British Museum.

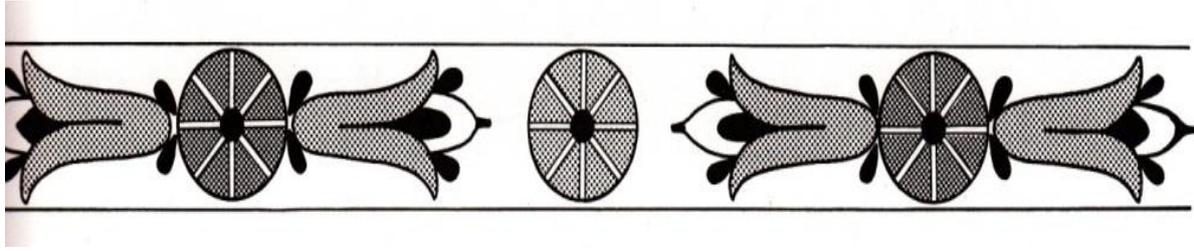


Figure 8.2: Detailed schematic of floral-inspired motifs on Nofret's diadem

The central motif is flanked by slender blue cup-shaped flowers with red centres (Vilímková, 1969:16). These are possibly representations of the bright blue cornflower (*Centaurea depressa*) that was often used for funeral garlands and frequently depicted in tombs. It is probable that the lighter blue/green shade of turquoise was used for the inlay.

As indicated in the schematic diagram (Figure 8.2 above), further around the side of the band are stylised red flowers, possibly of the Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*) variety, which were cultivated in Ancient Egypt for their perfume (Hepper, 2009:14). The design is balanced with corresponding motifs placed at regularly spaced intervals. Red carnelian symbolising energy, power and life would have been used in the real diadem on which the statue representation was based.

8.2.3 Interpretation

Princess Nofret's diadem can be interpreted to be conveying not only a rich and colourful floral assemblage indicating the verdant abundance along the banks of the Nile but also, perhaps most importantly, a complex non-verbal form of communication that encompasses the Egyptian concepts of Life, Regeneration and Joy.

8.3 SIT-HATHOR-YUNET'S MEDALLIONS

Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet (also translated as lunet), meaning 'daughter of Hathor of Dendera', was one of five known children and one of three daughters of Senusret II. The other children were Senusret III, Senusretseneb, Itakait and Nofret (Dodson &

Hilton, 2004:99). It appears that the 12th Dynasty princess survived her father by a number of years, living during the reign of her brother or half-brother Senusret III, dying during the reign of his grandson Amenemhat III and was buried in a tomb located in the Lahun pyramid complex (Winlock, 1973:3). Her jewellery collection is considered one of the most famous hoards of the Middle Kingdom. Beyond the fact that Sit-Hathor-Yunet was a King's Daughter, there is little additional evidence of her position within the royal family although it has been suggested that, at some stage, she was queen to either her brother or her nephew but this is unsubstantiated except by the location of her burial.¹⁴⁵

Given the dates, Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet must have lived at least 40 years, possibly longer, but, as her body was completely destroyed by tomb robbers, there is minimal knowledge about her personal. However, from the dimensions of a golden cowrie shell girdle, bracelets and necklaces found in the overlooked chests of jewellery, it can be assumed that she was petite and slender in stature with delicately formed wrists and throat (Winlock, 1973:5-6). Not only are these examples of the high quality, they are also objects that were evidently used during her lifetime which imbues them with a personal feeling that many other examples do not give.

8.3.1 Construction

Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet's attractive diadem is an elegant interpretation bearing a strong resemblance to Nofret's statue version. As illustrated in Figure 8.3 (page 161), the diadem consists of a burnished gold band joined at the back, embellished with a central uraeus and 15 medallions. The hood of the cobra inlaid with carnelian and lapis lazuli is fixed to the front with a T-shaped sliding joint (Brunton, 1920:26). The identical medallions vary slightly in size and are divided into gold cloisons soldered to a base-plate (Brunton 1920:26). The medallion design features four crossed flower shapes with what can be construed as a bud and two leaves in each

¹⁴⁵ In 1913 the British School of Archaeology in Egypt's Flinders Petrie and Guy Brunton found the entrance to a pit leading to an antechamber, sarcophagus-room and an offering room, all plundered in antiquity (Wilkinson 1975:53). Hidden in a recess in the antechamber was a cache of jewellery including girdles, bracelets and a diadem all showing distinct signs of wear. Individual pieces of jewellery from the cache are currently displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

quarter. The buds are inlaid with lapis lazuli and feldspar, while the petals surrounding the buds were inlaid with carnelian and a white glaze which has fallen out in many places (Wilkinson 1975:72). The medallions were attached to the diadem by individual pegs, fitted into holes in the gold band. A single papyrus umbel attached by rivets serves as the focal point of the centre back. It serves as a support for two erect sheet-gold plumes, imitating the ostrich feather plumes typically worn by royal women (Wilkinson 1975:72). According to Brunton (1920:27) the 'thickness of the gold plumes was such that they would wave slightly with every movement of the head' or in the strong breeze that blew along the Nile.



Figure 8.3: Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet's gold diadem inlaid with carnelian, lapis lazuli and green faience (Middle Kingdom, 12th Dynasty)
(Height: 44 cm, Width 19.2 cm. Medallions: 25-27mm. Gold plumes 215mm)
[Egyptian Museum, Cairo]

8.3.2 Symbolism

The diadem bears a strong resemblance to the headdress associated with Hathor, associated with female sexuality and motherhood. Epithets included the 'Beautiful One' and the 'Hand of Atum' (Wilkinson 2003:141).¹⁴⁶ The chief wife or eldest

¹⁴⁶ As protector of remote mining areas such as Serabit el-Khadim and Wadi Maghara, Hathor was specifically worshipped as 'the Mistress of Turquoise' and by extension, based on the similarity of colour, also known as the 'Mistress of Faience' (Wilkinson 2003:143).

daughter acting in her role as the earthly ‘wife of the King’ during cultic events. The stylized ostrich feather, known as *shut*, was not only symbolic of Shu, the Egyptian god of the air¹⁴⁷ but also associated with light and sunrise, as ‘He who rises up’ (Wilkinson 2003:129). Shu was usually represented in human form, wearing a plumed feather on his head and was represented by a hieroglyph (C10)¹⁴⁸. The stylized feather also appeared as a hieroglyph (H6) as a phonogram *šw* and an ideogram *šwt* and the feather was the hieroglyphic symbol for his name.¹⁴⁹. According to Troy (1986:126), the goddess Isis, when associated with royal iconography of the queen, was also depicted wearing the double feather headdress known as the *shuty* crown.¹⁵⁰ The headdress represented the feminine duality of the queen as mother and daughter.



Figure 8.4: Close-up of details of *uraeus* and medallions, showing lapis lazuli and carnelian inlay

¹⁴⁷ In the Heliopolitan Ennead of primary deities, Shu was created by Atum and was husband of Tefnut, goddess representing moisture; the pair in turn produced Geb, god of the Earth and Nut, goddess of the sky. Shu is mentioned in the Pyramid Texts in relation to the deceased king being purified ‘in the lakes of Shu’ (interpreted as being mists) and ‘climbing up to heaven on the ‘bones of Shu’ (interpreted as being clouds) (Wilkinson 2003:129).

¹⁴⁸ The different types of feathers and other deities associated with this iconography will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

¹⁴⁹ The feather was written in hieroglyphics as  (H6), a phonogram for *šw* and used as an ideogram in *šwt* ‘feather’ while the sign showing a god/goddess wearing a feather on the head  (C10, 10a) was used as both a determinative and an ideogram in *m3’i* ‘truth’.

¹⁵⁰ The double plumes  (S9) was used as a hieroglyphic determinative or ideogram when referring to *šwtj* ‘double plumes’.

Hinged to three of the medallions were pairs of sheet-gold streamers hanging down from the headdress to shoulder height. These strongly resemble the ornamental ribbons that were attached to floral garlands (Brunton 1920:27). Aldred (1978:34) proposes that 'the addition of the inlaid *uraeus* exalts the headdress from the ordinary into an item of royal adornment'.

8.3.3 Symbolism of the Uraeus

Egyptians represented their unique concepts of the creation of Life, prosperity and abundance by symbols. Wilkinson (1992:9) writes that symbolic objects and pictures served to make 'the transcendental and unseen both immediate and understandable'. Symbols formed an integral part of protection in both daily life and in the Afterlife. Appreciation of symbolism is an important factor as diadems incorporated the rich and complex symbolism and iconography to convey subtle non-verbal communication. These individual 'ideographic elements' can be 'read' like an inscription, indicates Wilkinson (1992:10)¹⁵¹. Sometimes symbols were fluid, changing over time or depending on the context and by 'reading' the diadem in this an attempt can be made at understanding the symbolic content.

Specific motifs on headdresses indicated regional and national power in addition to association with all-important protective deities. Upper (southern) Egypt was symbolised by the lotus and vulture while Lower (northern) Egypt was represented by the papyrus and cobra. Together with Nekhbet (the vulture), the cobra was symbolic of royalty, sovereignty and divine authority, and appeared in the king's *nebty* or 'Two Ladies' title. The cobra was associated in mythology with the 'fiery eye' of the sun god Re and often depicted on either side of the solar disk. In the funerary context, the cobra is often depicted in a protective role, spitting fire as it guards various gates or towing the barque of the sun god through the Underworld.

¹⁵¹ Art historians and scholars are aware of the danger of superimposing our own modern, western cultural ideas on symbolic interpretation or to draw conclusions about ancient Egyptian representational symbols. However, sometimes this is the only approach. Sometimes symbols can be fluid, changing over time or with different meanings depending on the context. By 'reading' Egyptian art (and in this case, a specific type of headdress, the diadem) in this manner, an attempt can be made at understanding the symbolic content and thereby seeing it through ancient eyes.



Figure 8.5a: Egyptian cobra (*Naja annulifera* / *Naja haje*)



Figure 8.5b: Black-necked Spitting cobra (*Naja nigricollis*)

The venomous Egyptian cobras (*Naja annulifera*/*Naja haje* and *Naja nigricollis*, illustrated in Figures 8.5a and 8.5b above) are native to the arid semi-desert and savannah regions of North and West Africa. They also occur in agricultural fields within close proximity to human habitation. If threatened, it rises into an upright posture, with the hood expanded in order to intimidate. In this posture sprays toxic venom in the direction of its aggressor and thus the inspiration for cobras depicted spitting ‘flames’ (Houlihan 1996:169)¹⁵²¹⁵³. In hieroglyphics a snake is used to indicate the letters ‘ḏ’ and ‘ḏḏ’ (I10)¹⁵⁴ while the cobra sign is the word *iaret* and *irt* (*uraeus*), meaning literally ‘She who stands up’ (Wilkinson 1992:109). The Greek word *uraeus* is used to indicate the coiled, rearing cobra with its characteristically extended and dilated hood. Houlihan (1996:177) advises that this was later translated into Greek as *uraios* which later became Latinized to the more commonly recognized *uraeus*.¹⁵⁵ The artistic rendition of the royal *uraeus* appears to have been

¹⁵² In mythology, Re lost an eye and when it returned from its wanderings it was angered to see that it had been replaced by another. As consolation, Re placed the returned eye on his forehead in the form of a *uraeus*. Henceforth, the all-powerful *uraeus* was installed to spit venom in the face of the adversaries of the future successors of the Sun God and becoming the protector of both Egypt and its king. The symbolism, explains Houlihan (1996:178), ‘may be partly attributable to the analogy between the heat of the sun contained in Re’s eye and the burning sensation of a snakebite’.

¹⁵³ It should be noted that this species is generally found in sub-Saharan Africa preferring savanna and semi-desert regions. It is, however, entirely possible that it originally lived further north in Egypt but was forced to move southwards due to changing climate in ancient times. The head has a distinctive shape due to the two large venom glands situated on either side of the head. The colour varies from pale grey/black to olive, yellowish or dark reddish brown, depending on the region.

¹⁵⁴ A snake (I10)  is used to indicate the letter ‘ḏ’ in the Egyptian alphabet (double snakes to indicate *ḏḏ*).

 (I14) and a variation,  (I15) are both determinatives for *ḥf3w* ‘snake, serpent’.

¹⁵⁵ The erect cobra (I12)  is used as the determinative in *irt* ‘uraeus’ and also as the determinative of goddesses.

modelled on the Egyptian cobra. Houlihan (1996:175) notes that the *uraeus* was extensively used as a repetitive element on long, decorative friezes on royal monuments and in multiples, and also makes an appearance in elaborate composite headdresses worn by queens.

The attitude of the Egyptians was ambiguous as snakes could be both protective and destructive because of their skin-shedding, became symbols of rebirth. There is a wealth of textual evidence of spells and charms used for protection against snakes. The cobra was associated not only with the sun and the persona of the king but also with a number of serpent deities which represented both benign and malevolent powers (Wilkinson 2003:220). Egyptian mythology features a number of deities such as Wadjet, Renenutet and Meretseger who manifested as a beneficial or protective snakes. Termed *weret hakau*, 'the Great Enchantress', the snake could be represented as a winged cobra or a human-headed goddess with the body of a cobra, sometimes wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt.

- Foremost of these deities was the cobra goddess Wadjet¹⁵⁶ (also known as Wadjet, Uto, Uatchet and Edjo), associated with the Nile Delta and the tutelary deity representing northern (lower) Egypt. The major cult centre was situated at Buto in the north western Delta where her shrine was referred to as *per-nu*, or 'House of Flame'.¹⁵⁷ Wadjet, referred to as 'the Green One' not because of skin colouring but green foliage, also bore the epithets 'great of magic' and 'Mistress of Awe/Fear' (Wilkinson 2003:227). In mythology, Wadjet was associated with Isis as nurse to the young Horus in the Delta. Wadjet was usually represented in the form of an erect cobra, hood extended and ready to strike and it is this iconic pose that is used on royal headdresses and diadems.
- The New Kingdom goddess Renenutet was protective, nurturing and beneficent deity who was associated with the household and family life. Known by the epithets 'Snake who nourishes', 'Lady of the Fertile Land', 'Lady

¹⁵⁶ The sign  (I13) was used to indicate the determinative of the goddess *w3dt* 'Wadjet' (it was a combination of I12 – the erect cobra and V30 – the basket).

¹⁵⁷ Several Old Kingdom royal sarcophagi were patterned after the distinctive shape of the *per-nu* shrine. Later in the New Kingdom, the shape was reintroduced; a particularly famous example is the innermost of the four funerary shrines of Tutankhamen.

of the Threshing Floor' and 'Lady of the Granaries'. The goddess was depicted anthropomorphically as a woman with a snake's head surmounted by a sun disk with the addition of two tall plumes (Wilkinson 2003:225).¹⁵⁸

- Meretseger, 'she who loves silence', was the local patron deity of the workers of Deir el Medina who constructed the tombs in the Theban necropolis. Meretseger was portrayed as either a coiled rearing cobra or a woman-headed cobra and was believed to inhabit al-Qurn, the pyramid-shaped peak overlooking the Valley of the Kings in western Thebes.
- The fearsome mythological serpent Apophis was equated with darkness, Chaos and the Underworld and is usually depicted as being tightly compressed or restrained prior to being destroyed. According to Wilkinson (2003:221), Apophis was captured and restrained by the god Geb and the sons of Horus before being cut into pieces, only to regenerate in an on-going cycle. In another version, the serpent swallowed the sun god, later disgorging him in affirmation of rebirth and renewal.
- In the New Kingdom, Mehen ('he who hides the hours') was extensively incorporated into vignettes contained in books detailing the Amduat (Underworld) protecting the sun god Re on his nightly journey through the underworld (Wilkinson 2003:223).
- Kebehwet was a celestial serpent mentioned in the Pyramid Texts as a daughter of Anubis who supposedly refreshed and purified the heart of the king before opening the 'windows of the sky' to enable resurrection. Her name is derived from the word *kebh*, firmament (Wilkinson 2003:223).
- The endlessness of the relationship between resurrection and renewal was symbolised by a snake, known as the *ouroboros*, which coiled around the World, biting its own tail.
- The four female deities of the Ogdoad also sported serpent heads.

¹⁵⁸ Her festival celebrations coincided with the last month of the season when crops were sown and in the first month when they began to ripen. In addition to shrines erected in fields, vineyards and close to granaries, more formal evidence of worship is found at Thebes, Abydos and Giza.

8.3.4 Interpretation

Inscriptions from depictions of women taking part in processions indicate that the wearers of similar diadems were priestesses of Hathor. All indications are that Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet also performed this important duty, hence the inclusion of the name of the goddess Hathor in her name.

The *uraeus* often appears as the central element on diadems dating from the Middle Kingdom onwards. Russman (1974:39) mentions that, although appearing singly on kings headdresses, the double *uraeus* featured more commonly on queen's diadems from the 18th Dynasty onwards. Russman (1974:39) notes that its importance arose under Amenhotep III, whose wife Tiy was usually depicted wearing the double cobras. This can be possibly be iconography of her role as Great Wife to a king as well as mother to the prospective king. At a much later stage queens sometimes wore triple *uraeui*, suggesting that in the complicated family context, the woman was simultaneously the daughter, wife and mother of a king. In this particular case, the central *uraeus* element is indicative of Sit-Hathor-Yunet status as the daughter of a king.

The pendant streamers move slightly with the wearer and, together with the upright feather component these would have glittered as they caught the light, visually creating a halo effect, distinctly reminiscent of the bright aura seen around the Egyptian sun and sending the clear message of the royal divinity and by the glinting feather component, the goddesses Isis or Hathor. It has been speculated that the diadem, with the addition of the royal *uraeus* was probably part of her regalia in the regalia cult of Hathor.¹⁵⁹

The diadem indicates that the wealthy Egyptian women of court set the fashion and style of their day, incorporating a variety of magical and mythical symbolism related to colour, social and cultic status.

¹⁵⁹ Tubular sheet-gold beads graded in size were found together with the diadem but these will be discussed separately in Chapter 12.

8.4 CONCLUSION

Bright colourful jewellery was a novel way of adding interest and individuality to attire and colour symbolism formed an integral part of Egyptian personal adornment. The choice of colour can be successfully and systematically analysed to reveal a range of mythological, religious and state symbolism and iconography. The inherent meaning appears to have resulted in a complex and multi-layered form of non-verbal communication women who either wore the diadems in real life or had them commissioned for funerary purposes.

An exceptionally life-like representation Nofret, a close member of the royal household provides a clear example of the brightly coloured, symmetrically-placed stylized floral decorative elements incorporated into an Old Kingdom style of diadem. The abstract concepts of joy, regeneration and protection appear to have been incorporated.

A particularly fine example of the jeweller's craft was found the belonging to Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet and is indicative of her high status in the royal household. The dimensions provide useful clues as to her physical stature while evidence of wear indicate that the objects were well-used during her lifetime. This particular diadem is an elegant interpretation in the same style as that shown on the Nofret statue. Embellished with identical medallions, symmetrical streamers and tall stylized plumes, it also features a central inlaid *uraeus*. The incorporation of the *shuti* plumes and the cobra elevate the more common headband into an item of royal adornment. The inclusion of the intricately inlaid *uraeus* exudes a particularly powerful political message and reiterated their important association with the tutelary and protective deities of Upper and Lower Egypt resulting in a complex and multi-layered form of non-verbal communication. Unusual additions such as pendant streamers and the upright elements would have given a certain sense of mobility to the headdress potentially creating a shimmering and impressive halo effect.

Wearing colourful diadems does not appear to have been limited to formal occasions. Wealthy women appear to have commissioned their own jewellery for their court or

cultic regalia. The construction of the examples indicates an increased refinement in workmanship. There is no doubt that with the addition of strongly symbolic elements, that the repertoire of designs was intended to convey increasingly strong messages about power and status.

CHAPTER 9: FLORAL GARLANDS AND BOATMEN'S CIRCLETS

Abstract

Garlands, also known as 'boatmen's circlets', were originally made from handfuls of river plants. Botanical motifs were rich in symbolism and garlands were later translated into more formal versions using precious metals inlaid with colourful semi-precious stones. The headdresses were not purely ornamental but also incorporated magical, amuletic and superstitious properties that encompassed a range of mythological, religious, social and political contexts. The symbolism and iconography that are evident in two distinctive and finely crafted 12th Dynasty diadems belonging to Princess Khnumet will be discussed and interpreted according to the importance of numbers, colour connotations, botanical and celestial elements. The possible connection to an annual cultic festival will be investigated. An unusual New Kingdom diadem belonging to Queen Tausret will also be discussed.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Given the variety of colour and shape, it is not surprising that headdresses fashioned from botanical materials were favoured not only for their intrinsic beauty but also for symbolic reasons. The amuletic character of Egyptian jewellery dictates that it was purposefully placed upon the vulnerable parts of the body, thereby acting as an extension of any magical power. According to Aldred (1978:11) wreaths, garlands, chaplets, fillets and circlets played an important role but protection of the head. Fresh flowers would have been an inevitable choice and the florist's handiwork must surely have been amongst the earliest and longest surviving in ancient Egypt.

9.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOATMEN'S CIRCLET

The formal type of ornamental headdress known as the 'boatman's circlet' was worn by the royal, elite, wealthy and even common men and women. Identified from Old and Middle Kingdom reliefs, wall paintings and captions, Aldred (1978:33) advises that the headdress is referred to in the Pyramid Texts as *ssd* (*she-shed*), meaning 'to adorn with a band' (Kern 1959:161,162). Old Kingdom reliefs from the tomb of Aket-hotep, Mereruka at Saqqara and the brothers Niankhnun and Khnumhotep, as well

as that of Sahura at Abusir, depict scenes of boatmen wearing a variety of river plant garlands (see Figures 9.1, page 172)¹⁶⁰.

The simplest form appears to have been a type of chaplet, woven from freely available botanical materials that proliferated on the banks of the Nile. The significant papyrus and lotus blooms could be found throughout the *nomes* (provinces) of Egypt. Placed over the brow to confine the hair, these would not only have been cooling to the head but also practical as it would have assisted in shading the eyes from the harsh sunlight. Indeed, floral bouquets are often interpreted as a visual pun for the hieroglyphic sign for Life, *ankh*, and it is the word *ankh* that is most often used to denote 'garland' (Wilkinson 1998:124).

The Nile and its canals swarmed with state craft and private boats of all sizes. River transport could be hazardous due to shallows and hidden sandbanks and also during the high flood season. An Oxyrynchus papyrus (Papyri 3:425, GLP no. 97; GDRK 3 in Parsons, 2007:90)¹⁶¹ preserved a song about the Nile boatmen:

'You sailors who run over the deep waves,
Tritons of the salt waters –
You Nile-men who run over the sweet stream,
Sailing the laughing waters –
Tell us, friends, the rival claims
Of the sea and the fruitful Nile'

Old Kingdom tomb walls ¹⁶² depict scenes of garland-bedecked boatmen engaging in various activities identified as jousting in their papyrus skiffs as illustrated in Figure 9.1 (page 172). Boats appear to have been filled with livestock, baskets and caged birds which have been construed as offerings as part of annual cultic festivals celebrated the flooding of the Nile. Alternatively, it has been speculated that the contents could have been potential rewards in a sporting contests. The garlands

¹⁶⁰ The scenes, often referred to as a form of aquatic 'jousting', are a common theme and over 30 similar representations are recorded at Old and Middle Kingdom sites.

¹⁶¹ *The Oxyrynchus Papyri Vols I-LXX* (London, 1898-2006)

- GLP no. 97 = D.L. Page *Select Papyri III: Literary Papyri, Poetry* (Loeb Series) (London and Cambridge MA 1942)
- GDRK 3 = E. Heitsch *Der griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Vol I, 2nd edn. Gottingen 1963)

¹⁶² Boating scenes are depicted in the 5th Dynasty tomb of Queen Merysankh III, daughter of Queen Hetepheres II and granddaughter of Cheops/Khufu at Giza.

may have had a primary or incidental meaning similar to the laurel wreaths awarded to the victors of Greco-Roman games, as proposed by Aldred (1978:33).



Figure 9.1: Scene of 'jousting' boatmen in papyrus skiffs in the mastaba of the brothers Niankhnun and Khnumhotep [Saqqara, 5th Dynasty c.2460-2430 BCE]
(Photo credit: Ayman Fadl)

Over time, the rudimentary botanical garland was adapted and interpreted as more permanent and decorative versions manufactured gold, silver or copper, embellished with colourful stones and incorporating popular decorative, religious or amuletic motifs.

9.3 PRINCESS KHNUMET'S FLORAL GARLAND

Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet was a daughter of the 12th Dynasty king Ammenemet II (1991-1962 BCE). The remains of Khnumet were found in close proximity to three female relatives identified as Ita, Itiu-eret and Sit-hator-meret. It is uncertain whether they died at more or less the same time, perhaps from disease, or within a short time span of one another.¹⁶³ Investigation of her mummy, and those of the other royal women found in the same burial context, indicate that they were all of slender build

¹⁶³ During his second season of excavation at Dashur in 1894-5, Jacques Jean-Marie de Morgan, Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, discovered several burials of members of the royal family within the pyramid enclosure of this king.

and petite (less than 1.52 m tall). In life they probably bore a striking resemblance to the svelte, elegant women usually depicted in New Kingdom tomb paintings commemorating Nebamun, Nakht and Senedjem as illustrated in Hawass (2008:70, 113, 183).¹⁶⁴

Princess Khnumet's jewellery was not only limited to those items placed on her mummy but also a cache of exquisite semi-precious stone collars, bracelets, anklets and pendants featuring gold granulation found nearby (Wilkinson 1975:52). The headdresses included two plain gold circlets and two elegant cloisonné diadems. Given the lack of information, there is no confirmation whether Princess Khnumet's jewellery formed part of her dowry or whether this was standard court adornment for a woman of her status. The diadems reveal much about their young owner. Taking into consideration her youth, it is plausible that Princess Khnumet was one of the younger, unmarried daughters of King Ammenemet II and thus did not reach the age when she would be expected to play an important cultic or integral role as a member of the royal household (Harris 2016:264).

9.3.1 Construction

The finer of the two diadems is a gold wire headband intertwined with additional blue, red and green stones to represent dainty flowers. This distinctive circlet is also generally considered to be one of the most delightful formalised imitations of the traditional 'boatman's circlet' style and it is proposed that it probably formed part of Princess Khnumet's court apparel for wear on a specific occasion, namely that of the annual Nile inundation festival (Harris 2016:263).

Reminiscent of a handful of twisted water-weed, the diadem is formed by strands of intertwined thin gold wire and a scattering of delicate artificial flowers inlaid with semi-precious stones. Wilkinson (1975:70) describes the feminine gold cloisonné version of the boatman's circlet illustrated in Figure 9.2 (below) as having an 'airy

¹⁶⁴ The lower part of a seated statue, found in Syria, is the only surviving representation of Princess Khnumet, providing no clue as to her looks.

lightness', giving the impression of a real 'floral garland' that would have been fashioned from field flowers.



Figure 9.2: Gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli and turquoise floral circlet of Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet (Dashur, 12th Dynasty, Middle Kingdom)
(Diameter: 18 cm)
[Cairo Museum]

The garland is caught at six points by a cross type element which is formed by four lapis lazuli papyrus umbels, joined at their base around a central carnelian boss. This type of quatrefoil can be seen on a variety of solid head-band diadems dating to the 4th Dynasty, thereby confirming its antiquity.¹⁶⁵ As described by Andrews (1996:102), each of these six papyrus quatrefoils is connected to the next by a complicated interlacing of 10 gold wires, united in pairs at frequent intervals by tiny gold tubes. From these hang tiny oval lapis lazuli beads resembling flower buds. The wires in turn pass through rings on the back of each quatrefoil and flower bud. To these wires are soldered small flowers, each with five points or petals inlaid with turquoise or turquoise glass in the cloisonné technique and radiating from a carnelian centre. Wilkinson (1975:52) confirms that it exemplifies the highest level of Middle Kingdom workmanship. It is proposed that the diadem was not simply a particularly

¹⁶⁵ This particular type of motif has been discussed in greater depth elsewhere in the study and will therefore not be repeated here.

finely made diadem but also as the only surviving example of an informal and non-state headdress what was worn during festive occasions by young princesses¹⁶⁶.

9.3.2 Symbolism

The popular floral and celestial symbols were considered to have had protective amuletic and magical power and, according to Wilkinson (1996:17), may be interpreted at primary and secondary levels, having its own significance depending on the context. Ancient women are referred to as being 'silent' as there is limited textual evidence of their personal lives and the role they played as individuals within society. Yet, the visual arts indicate distinct and changing styles of adornment over dynastic periods. The symbolism inherent in the well-provenanced and uniquely distinctive diadem belonging to Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet conveys some intriguing messages relating to her role in Middle Kingdom society. In addition to its provenance and the material used in its manufacture, floral and celestial motifs were found to form an integral part. Elements of colour, number, symbolism, mythological linkages and magical association, together with the occasion on which it might have been worn, have been considered. The combination of parameters allows for speculation about the woman who wore this unique headdress in life and ensured that it accompanied her into Eternity.

By combining what is known about Princess Khnumet's elite status, familial affiliation, and to some extent, her personal taste together with the multiple layers of symbolism and decorative motifs, colour and mythological linkages, it is possible to venture an interpretation of the visual message. This diadem has, in its own unique way, made its owner 'come alive' and speak volumes to the modern observer.

In the Egyptian belief system, numbers were believed to reflect not only divine planning but also cosmic harmony. There was an awareness of numerical 'patterns' which accounts for a great deal of the symbolism associated with numbers in

¹⁶⁶ The majority of examples of headdresses worn by women are housed in the Egyptian collections of museums such as the Cairo Museum in Egypt and the Metropolitan Art Museum in America. These generally have sound archaeological provenance, having been found in well-documented mortuary contexts, albeit in the early days of the discipline.

numerous myths and texts and also exhibited in various art forms. In this diadem the symmetrical number four is represented by the papyrus motifs. Wilkinson (1996:126-139) asserts that the number four traditionally denoted totality and completeness. Four appears more frequently in Egyptian art than any other number and in contexts ranging from groups of deities as it represented not only the four Funerary Goddesses but, most importantly, the Cardinal Points of the Egyptian landscape (Wilkinson 1996:133-134). In the Pyramid Texts, references were made to these points as the Four Legs of the Cosmic Cow and the Four Pillars of the Sky. In the cosmological context, Wilkinson (1996:134) indicates that the number relates to the Four Quarters of the Heavens - the Earth, Sky, Heavens and Underworld. Pinch (2001:182) observes that it was rare that more than four colours be included in one magic spell. To corroborate this, if gold is viewed as yellow, there are four colours in Khnumet's diadem.



Figure 9.3: Close-up detail of quatrefoil and fine floral elements in floral circlet of Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet

Botanical elements were common motif and in this interpretation of the traditional waterweed boatmen's circlet, the six delicately inlaid papyrus-shaped quatrefoils amidst the myriad fine flowers provide not only focal points but also serve the practical purpose of linking gold wires at intervals. The colour combination was commonly used and does not appear to have any particular significance.

Celestial elements were often used in Egyptian art but do not have been generally incorporated into surviving jewellery. The myriad dainty five-pointed elements of the diadem can also be interpreted as celestial motifs. Representations of two very distinctively shaped stars decorated with granulation appear on two necklaces illustrated in Figure 9.4 (below), that were also found in Princess Khnumet's cache. A number of un-common Egyptian designs and techniques, such as granulation, point to potential intriguing Minoan and Syrian links (Harris 2016:271). Similar star elements have been identified on a Cretan gaming board from Knossos which lends credence to this theory (Aldred, 19778:115).

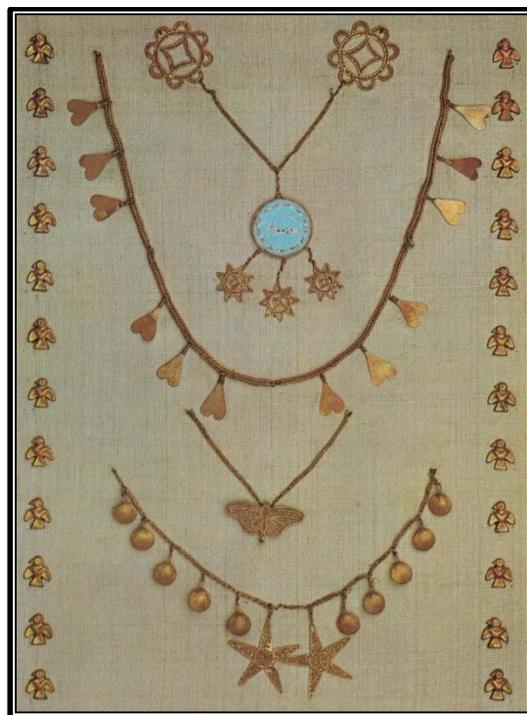


Figure 9.4: Two versions of Princess Khnumet-nefert-Hezet's granular gold stars
[Cairo Museum]

Considered constant and timeless, stars were known as *seba*, 'the imperishable ones' and played a vital role in the Egyptian calendar. Wilkinson (1996:131) indicates that as stars were equated with immortality, they were connected with the Afterlife in a number of different ways. Known as the 'Followers of Osiris' and in the complex conception of their cosmos, stars were representative of souls in the *Duat* (the Afterlife). Depictions of yellow stars were also popular additions to the deep blue ceilings of tombs, the blue colour once again forming a symbolic link with the symbolism associated with lapis lazuli. Wilkinson (1996:131) further notes that stars

were represented by the five-pointed hieroglyphic sign (N14), translated as *sb3* ‘star’ and *dw3* ‘morning’¹⁶⁷. Stars were often used to adorn the body of the personified sky goddess Nut. In addition, the red carnelian disk with a gold dot the centre of each quatrefoil bears a close resemblance to the all-important solar disk. This was used extensively in hieroglyphics as an ideogram (N5) for the letter ‘*r*,’ meaning ‘Sun’ and in reference to the solar deity ‘Re’, as well as *hrw* and ‘*sw*’, both meaning ‘day’.¹⁶⁸ . Accordingly, the red carnelian in this diadem potentially represents the ‘the sunrise, the daily rebirth of the Sun and eternal resurrection’ (Kozloff 2015:296).

A passage from the text titled ‘*The Tale of Sinuhe*’ in *Papyrus Berlin* (B268-274)¹⁶⁹, refers not only to the ‘Lady of Heaven’ and the ‘Lady of Stars’ but also directly to a delicate diadem, which certainly seems to be similar to hers:

Now they had brought with them their necklaces, their rattles and their sistra¹⁷⁰, and they presented them to His Majesty: "Your hands be upon this beauty, enduring king, these insignia of the Lady of Heaven! May the Golden One (Nub) give life to your nostrils, the Lady of the Stars enfold you. South-crown fares north, North-crown south, joined and made one in the words of your Majesty, on whose brow the uraeus is placed.'

(Parkinson 1997: 41)¹⁷¹

It comes as no surprise, then, that this particular diadem may indeed have represented a star-filled sky, thereby combining the concepts of Immortality and Eternity.

¹⁶⁷ The star (N14)  was used as a phonogram in *sb3* ‘star’ and *dw3* ‘morning’. It was also used as an ideogram *wnwt* for ‘hour’. The encircled star (N15)  was used as the ideogram *dw3t* ‘Netherworld’.

¹⁶⁸ The solar disk (N5)  was used to indicate the letter *r* meaning ‘Sun’ and the god ‘Re’ and *hrw* and *sw* ‘day’.

¹⁶⁹ This text dates to the time of Ammenemet III (1818-1773 BC) shortly after Khnumet’s death.

¹⁷⁰ Broad, heavy beaded collar necklaces were weighted down at the back by a counterpoise. This was often a distinctive cultic emblem. “The Golden One” is a reference to Hathor, goddess of Love.

¹⁷¹ The Gardiner version (*Notes on the Story of Sinuhe*, Librairie Honoré Champion, Paris, 1916 (268-279) translates necklaces as counterpoises but the two versions are very similar in translation. Allen (2015:143-145) translates necklaces in the same passage as *menits* which were multiple strands of beads held together by a decorative counterpoise and thought to be used by priestesses in temple ceremonies. Similar to the *sistrum*, the *menit* makes a shushing sound.

9.3.3 Interpretation

Given airy lightness and delicateness of the diadem, the observer gains an impression of a petite young woman who was a lesser daughter who died young and thus did not reach the age where, as a member of the royal household, she would be expected to play an integral role in state or cultic duties in the services of goddesses such as Hathor or Isis. Admired as a triumph of the Middle Kingdom jewellers, the gold wire garland is a delightful combination of fragility, colour and flower scattered in the random profusion of nature and, as Wilkinson (1975:71) muses, probably quite indicative of the young woman who wore it during her lifetime.

Visual punning was common practice and as bouquets were linked to the concept of Life it is proposed that the message conveyed by this diadem may be interpreted as *'All youth, joy, life and immortality surround her [Princess Khnumet's] head'*.

9.3.4 Symbolism of Occasion and Links to Nile Festivals

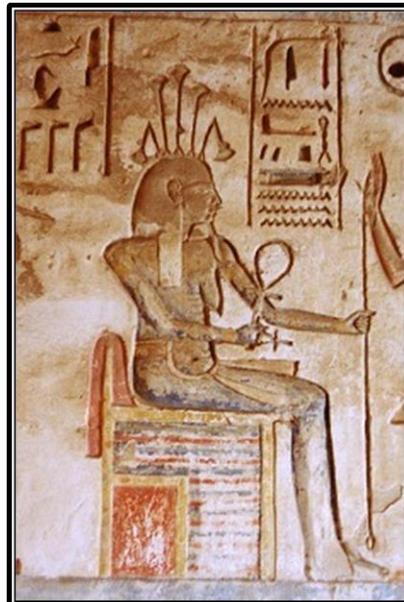
In the absence of direct textual sources the interpretation of an individual diadem such as this may be misleading or even naïvely simplistic. However, the intriguing aspect of the princess wearing this extraordinarily beautiful diadem on a festive occasion, raises an unexpected aspect of the materiality of Egyptian jewellery and links between form and function.

It is proposed that that the formal rendition of 'boatmen's circlet' style of diadem was linked with the Nile inundation and the celebration associated with the joyous event (Harris 2016:253-283). The river god Hapy, associated with the annual flooding, was depicted in green or blue representing water, as an androgynous male form thereby combining the male and female life forces (Lazlo 1982:298). As illustrated in Figure 9.5 (page 180) Hapy was usually depicted adorned with a headdress of papyrus plants or lotus flowers denoting the Lower and Upper Egyptian regions respectively. These headdresses were sometimes knotted together symbolising *sema-tawy*, the unified land and are strongly reminiscent of the boatmen's circlet (Armour 1986:180). Honorifics included 'Lord of the River Bringing Vegetation'.

As translated by Armour in the Coffin Texts (1986:181), the concept of Hapy was described as follows:

‘...I am the Nile God, the Lord of the Waters,
Who brings vegetation,
And I will not be driven off by my enemies.
I have come that I may make the Two Lands Green’

Hapy’s attributes and the connotation of a festival connected to the bringer of vegetation corresponds nicely with the concept of the traditional ‘boatmen’s circlet’ as depicted in reliefs and paintings and also with the actual floral garland-type diadems fashioned in metal wire, studded with cloisonné floral motifs and worn by women such as Princess Khnumet.¹⁷² Daughters of Ramses III are shown at Medinet Habu wearing long-stemmed papyrus headdresses. From the same period, a podium headdress sprouting long-stemmed papyrus umbels, dramatically coloured red and gold, was depicted on the head of Queen Nebttuai, a daughter of Ramses III. Queen Tausret, wife of Seti II (19th Dynasty) is depicted in her tomb also wearing a similar headdress. While some stems are upright, others are bent and the whole is distinctly reminiscent of those depicted those sported by Hapy.



**Figure 9.5: Hapy, god of the Nile inundation, with papyrus headdress
[British Museum]**

¹⁷² The linkages between Hapy, Nile festivals and boatmen’s circlets were especially intriguing and warranted closer investigation, resulting in a conference paper and a journal article (Harris 2016:253-283).

The Egyptian cosmogony not only shared a belief that there were two Niles but also the importance ascribed to its annual flooding. The river on Earth was believed to issue from the Underworld bringing water for life while another mirrored in the Heavens was believed to bring rain. Shavit (2000:81) notes that the various cosmological belief systems share ‘the perception of overwhelming importance ascribed to the Nile’ and its annual flooding that ‘coincided with the helical rising of Sirius, the brightest **star** in the Earth’s hemisphere just before dawn’. The emphasis on star (my own), is drawn specifically in connection to the earlier discussion on the incorporation and earlier interpretation of these elements in Princess Khnumet’s diadem.

Morenz (1973:150) confirms that there was indeed a Nile cult that celebrated a great festival to celebrate the onset of the flood during which offerings (*wdn*) were cast into the river. A feast known as *tp-nwy*, ‘The First of the Flood’, captured on Papyrus Harris, refers to a Nile festival in honour of the creator deities Ptah and Nun. *The Great Hymn of the Aten* from the Amarna period (Shavit 2000:80) confirms this:

‘You make Hapy (h’py) (the Nile God) in Amduat (the Netherworld),
You bring him (as floodwaters) when you will to nourish the people,
You make a heavenly Hapy (rain) descend for them.’

A number of versions of a *Hymn to the Nile*¹⁷³ have been recorded on papyri¹⁷⁴. It addresses the mysterious origins of the Nile, extolling it as the bringer of life and prosperity not only to the land and its peoples but also that the each god ‘... god receives his sacrifice’. Mention is also made the creator god Ptah, and his offspring Geb (Seb) and Nut (Nepera), underlining the belief in the celestial origins of the Nile as follows:

¹⁷³ The most complete surviving hymn to the Nile flood is a literary composition written in Middle Egyptian. All surviving copies date to the New Kingdom (+/- 1550-1069 BCE) leading some scholars to argue that it was composed during this period. Although no author is identified, the style of language and vestiges of other compositions suggest that it may, in fact, date to the Middle Kingdom (+/-2025-1700 BCE). Despite being a central event in the Egyptian year, there is no surviving temple dedicated to the Nile flood. It is speculated that there may have been a cult centre at a place named Per-Hapy (“Domain of the Nile Flood”). It is entirely possible that a festival to celebrate this occurrence could have included the singing or recitation of this hymn.

¹⁷⁴ It is acknowledged that there are a variety of different translations of this text including the version by Helck (1972) which are more modern. The versions contained in Thatcher (1907) and Foster (1975) were also consulted. However, for the purposes of this paper, the translation by Sayce (1890:48-54) was preferred for its more elegant translation and lyrical qualities.

'Adoration to the Nile!
Hail to thee, O Nile!
who manifesteth thyself over this land,
and comest to give life to Egypt!
Mysterious is thy issuing forth from the darkness,
on this day whereon it is celebrated!
Watering the orchards created by Ra
to cause all the cattle to live,
thou givest the earth to drink, inexhaustible one!
Path that descendest from the sky,
loving the bread of Seb and the first-fruits of Nepera,
thou causest the workshops of Ptah to prosper!'

A royal decree by Ramses II detailing a festival in honour of the Nile was first recorded in stone at Gebel el Silsila¹⁷⁵ where the height of the inundation was measured. It lists offerings made during the annual feast dedicated to Hapy. Verse 8 of Sayce's *Hymn to the Nile* translation (1890:53) reads as follows:

'O Inundation of the Nile,
offerings are made unto thee,
oxen are immolated to thee,
Great festivals are instituted for thee.
Birds are sacrificed to thee,
gazelles are taken for thee in the mountain,
pure flames are prepared for thee.
Sacrifice is made to every god as it is made to the Nile'

From the Silsila text translated by Breasted (1906:157) it appears that cakes, bread, wine, meat and grain were cast into the river, further corroborating evidence of the festival and sacrificial rituals. It provides the information that 'A festal song is raised for thee on the harp, with the accompaniment of the hand'. Breasted further notes that women and singers were depicted on monuments and in funerary art as clapping their hands in time to the musicians.

Despite being a central event in the Egyptian year, there is no surviving temple dedicated to the Nile Flood, although there is speculation that there may have been a cult centre at a place named Per-Hapy.¹⁷⁶ Lindsay (1968:344) notes that an Arab

¹⁷⁵ Gebel el-Silsila was located close to Thebes and seat of power during this period.

¹⁷⁶ Here, it is interesting to note, that an annual modern festival known as *Wafaa al Nil*, celebrating the rising waters that ensured a prosperous harvest, was observed until as recently as the 1970s when the river was permanently dammed at Aswan.

writer Ibn Abd-el Hakam (c. 871) recounted the custom of casting a young girl into the Nile during the month of June. As there is no corroborating evidence of this practice, this can be viewed as a folktale based on the ancient Egyptian festival rites of taking sacred objects (usually a statue of a divinity) to the river and surrounded by an audience immersing them to ensure an abundant annual inundation and favourable new year¹⁷⁷. In later syncretistic Greek and Roman literature, reference is made to the goddess Minerva being generated as a virgin in the waters of the Nile.¹⁷⁸

Herodotus apparently witnessed a mock battle at Papremis in the Delta, 'where there was a feint of preventing the statue of the god Horus from entering the Temple of Isis' in a quest for immortality through rebirth, writes Frankfort (1952:6). This particular event underlines the presumption indicated earlier, of boatmen wearing waterweed garlands engaged in what is commonly referred to 'mock battles' or 'jousting'. Hapy's attributes and the connotation of annual Nile festivals corresponds with the concept of not only the traditional floral 'boatmen's circlet' that may have been worn during festivals of this kind but also graceful, floral diadems worn by women such as Princess Khnumet when attending these occasions.

It is probable that a festival to celebrate this important annual phenomenon would have included the singing of a hymn extolling the beneficent Nile. Frankfort (1952:2) observes that on ritual festive occasions such as these 'for a short while, the human and the divine met' during a solemn, ritualistic performance that had wide public appeal and was probably much anticipated as cause for joyous celebration.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ The Egyptian king (or his representative) would not only have been the main celebrant, but along with his close family, also the defender of Ma'at, one of the beneficiaries thereby reaffirming continued fertility and abundance across the land.

¹⁷⁸ Lazlo (1982:295) notes that, according to Anobius' *Adversus Nationes* (4:16) and Cicero's *De Divinatione* (3:23:59), both were aware of a goddess who was said to have 'come from the Nile'. Lazlo argues that this observation by both chroniclers may have originated 'in the Egyptian concept of the birth of Neith in the Primeval Water'.

¹⁷⁹ It should be noted that lakes in temple gardens were often the site for ritual ceremonies. Kings were often rowed onto their lakes in an imitation of the passage of the Sun across the sky (Wilkinson 1998:128). These ranged from greeting the infant Sun god Ra or Horus the child, who, in mythology, emerged from a lotus lily and was later believed to be reborn daily to the ritual hunting as depicted at Edfu by the pharaoh of Seth in the form of a hippopotamus in a show of overcoming the forces of Chaos and restoring Ma'at. There is ample evidence of rowing the statue of the deity across to the West Bank of Thebes as occurred during the *Opet* Festival. At Karnak, the goddess Mut was rowed on her lake during an annual festival aimed at appeasing her anger whilst at Dendera, the Festival of Rowing Hathor had the same purpose of pacifying and calming the angry goddess after her mythological adventures in the desert (Wilkinson 1998:125-128). A range of these funerary and ritual ceremonies are depicted on tomb paintings and temple reliefs.

9.4 PRINCESS KHNUMET'S FLORAL FANTASY

A finely-wrought openwork inlaid circlet belonging to Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet featuring elaborate lily and daisy motifs was also among the cache of jewellery. This diadem exemplifies the high level of Egyptian Middle Kingdom workmanship.

9.4.1 Construction

The cloisonné technique was used for the inlay of flat-cut carnelian and light blue-green turquoise that dominate the colour scheme. As illustrated in Figure 9.6 (below), this petite headdress is composed of sixteen identical openwork and inlaid elements, each consisting of a stylized central daisy-shaped rosette, flanked by two bell-shaped blooms (possibly lilies)



Figure 9.6: Finely crafted openwork cloisonné reed, lily and daisy diadem of Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet
(Dashur, 12th Dynasty, Middle Kingdom)
(Dimensions: 4.2 cm in height and 20.5 cm in diameter
[Cairo Museum])

The intricate horizontal and vertical design is composed of eight decorative elements centred on daisy-like rosettes. The carnelian nucleus of the rosette is surrounded by fourteen turquoise petals inlaid in gold. The smaller elements and spaces of the design were inlaid with lapis lazuli, the more costly and rarer of the stones used (Aldred 1978:115; Vilímková 1969:22). As illustrated in the schematic diagram in Figure 9.7 (below), the contrasting composition is both harmonious and visually pleasing. These elements are flanked on each side by lyre-shapes in what can be construed as stylized lilies.¹⁸⁰ Vilímková (1969:22) considers that these lyre-shaped elements could represent either single lotus blooms or cornflower petals but taking the much earlier example belonging to Nofret into consideration, these floral motifs bear closer resemblance to stylised lilies.

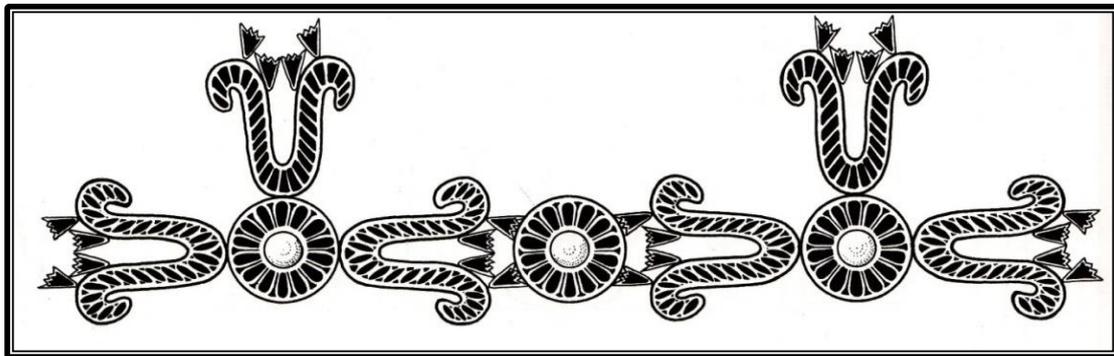


Figure 9.7: Schematic diagram of multiple daisy and lily elements (Wilson 1986:36)

The small red and blue petal shapes would thus be representative of the stamens inside the lily. Eight alternate rosettes are further visually enriched by being surmounted by larger versions of these lily-shaped elements, identical to the horizontal elements. The polychrome inlay has been set in a herringbone pattern, containing what appears to be two carnelian and two lapis lazuli buds/stamens. Wilson (1986:36) describes the popularity of linking flowering sedge-like plants to form continuous frieze-type designs. This approach may have contributed to the development of the lily-type motif used in this particular diadem. Vilímková (1969:22) describes how the gold interior surface of the diadem has been chased to emulate

¹⁸⁰ The basic floral decorative motif in this particular diadem closely echoes that of Nofret's 4th Dynasty headband. The shape bears close resemblance to that of the lily which appears to have been used in the earlier diadem's construction which is the reason the lily motif is proposed.

the inlaid outer surface and it can be clearly seen that each of the individual rosette elements have been soldered to the flanking horizontal plant motifs.

The diadem was originally fitted with two plain gold upright decorative elements forming front and rear focal points as illustrated in Figure 9.6 (page 183). Forming the front central focal point is an arch formed by a gold vulture with outspread, downward-curved wings. The pair of *shen* signs is indicative of the owner's royal status. A unique gold foil element attached to a socket at the back is representative some kind of flowering sedge or rush.

9.4.2 Symbolism

This specific diadem is particularly rich in layers of symbolism. The red and light blue that dominate the colour scheme were indicative of important concepts in the Egyptian world view. Red was considered symbolic of the colour of the Sun, Fire and Life whilst the shades of blue were associated with the Heavens, the Cosmic Waters and the Primeval Flood, symbolic of Life and Rebirth (Wilkinson 1996:107). By the same token, it also represented the concept of fertility, the river Nile and its associated crops and offerings and also, by extension, Osiris (Wilkinson 1996:116). The darker shade of blue was associated with the god Amun-Ra, the Heavens and the Cosmic Waters and was often used for artistic depictions of the deities of the Hermopolitan Ogdoad (Nun - Primeval Waters, Heh – Infinity and Kek – Darkness) and also the Memphite god Ptah.

The relationship between numbers was an important aspect and the connotation of the number eight (a doubling, and thus intensifying, of four) was particularly well-known.

- The number eight featured in Hermopolitan creation myth whereby the god Shu created the deities to support the legs of the goddess Nut in her guise as the Great Heavenly Cow (Wilkinson 1996:137).

- Heh represented the concept of Infinity ‘millions of years’ (Eternity), considered the gift of the gods. Chapter 62 of the Book of the Dead states: ‘... limitless eternity is given to me, for I am he who inherited eternity, to whom everlasting was given’ (Wilkinson 1996:138).
- The Hermopolitan goddess Hauhet/Hehet¹⁸¹, represented in the form of a frog, is often depicted seated on a *shen* ring as eternal protection. The number also appears in relation to Hermopolis, the ‘City of Eight’. The latter representation thus visually and mythologically ties in with the use of eight motifs in the main body of the diadem.

The central frontal focus point of the diadem is composed of an outstretched gold vulture with two *shenu* signs, symbolising completeness and eternity in its talons. In this guise, the vulture¹⁸² was representative of the Nekhbet, tutelary goddess and protector of Upper Egypt (Wilkinson 2003:214). According to Wilkinson (1994:193), the ‘circle evokes the concept of Eternity’ while ‘its solar aspect is symbolised by the Sun disk often depicted in the centre of the *shen* sign.’ The circular *shen* (*šnw*) ring (V9)¹⁸³ was originally made of rope, the ends of which were knotted together, forming an endless circle and its meaning, ‘to encircle’, is considered to be the origin of the sign that became the cartouche (V10). The *shen* was closely associated with the special protection of the king and the royal house and surrounded the king’s throne and birth names.

The inlaid rosette motifs closely resemble the delicately-formed white and yellow camomile (*Anthemis pseudocotula*) (Hepper 2009:13). The lily with its cluster of trumpet-shaped flowers was often depicted in the entwined *sema-tawy* motif depicting the unification of Northern and Southern Egypt (Hepper 2009:25; Wilkinson 1975:58).

¹⁸¹ feminine of Heh the god of Eternity who existed before the world began in the Hermopolitan cosmogony

¹⁸² A number of vulture species are still commonly found throughout Egypt. Symbolism and iconography of the vulture will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

¹⁸³ The circular  (V9) and oval  (V10) *shen* (*šnw*) signs are both used as the determinative in ‘cartouche’. The oval sign is also used in ‘*m*’ meaning ‘name’. The symbolism of the *shen* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12.

The central upright element resembles a species of common reed grass (*Phragmites australis*) with small florets on the main stem that grew in shallow water throughout Egypt. The hieroglyphic sign for ‘sedge’ *sw* (M23)¹⁸⁴ was used in a variety of phonograms and ideograms denoting *nswt* ‘king’ (M24), *rsw* ‘south’ and Upper Egypt (M26). Although not commonly used in jewellery, it was used here to great effect and possibly even emulating the movement of plant in its natural habitat.

9.4.3 Interpretation

Volioti (2011:140) indicates that Egyptian art was intricately linked with the importance of ‘the material nature of objects and people interacting with them’. Outward appearance was equally as important as inner substance and so the physical qualities of materials were more often than not magnified by symbolic or mythological associations and perceived magical properties. Human senses play an important role in jewellery is worn and experienced by their wearers. Although closely linked to self-image, material objects can also be interpreted by how they were perceived in the wider context, in this case both the wearer and the observer.

The orientation and symmetry of elements were strictly governed in Egyptian artistic canon. ‘Absolute orientation’ of heads, for example, was right-facing because this side was deemed more auspicious by ancient societies due mainly to the majority of people being right-handed (Klop 1998:38) but also because of the viewer’s perspective. ‘Relative orientation’ was usually governed by symmetry, often by the placement of another element in the composition. A sense of visual balance, symmetry and basic geometry¹⁸⁵ was achieved throughout Egyptian art including items of jewellery, often by simple repetition of elements on either side of a central axis.¹⁸⁶ This symmetry, proportion and adherence to harmonious balance may be interpreted as being part of the concept of *ma’at* that governed their worldview. In

¹⁸⁴ The hieroglyphic sign for sedge (M23)  could also be used in combination (M24+D21)  as an ideogram for *rsw* ‘south’ and as (M26)  as the phonogram for *šm* ‘ and as the ideogram *šm* ‘w in ‘Upper Egypt’.

¹⁸⁵ This was as a result of the Egyptian geographical environment and the balanced landscape of the all-important cardinal points that featured so strongly in their belief system.

¹⁸⁶ This sense of orientation, balance and symmetry can be particularly clearly identified in the Old Kingdom diadems featuring the focal ibis motifs, either facing inwards or outwards (as discussed in detail in Chapter 7).

this case, it is not only the balance achieved by the symmetrical number of motifs surrounding but also those placed at the centre front and back of the diadem as focal points. The vulture together reed element with guides the viewer's attention to a vertical axis. The aim of this particular piece emphasised the iconography of the unity of Northern and Southern Egypt.

The use of a sedge or reed element in the composition of the headdress is an interesting inclusion possibly alluding to the myth of the protection of the infant Horus by Isis in the dense marshland. Redford (1967:220) writes extensively about the literary motif of the exposed child in ancient Middle Eastern and Greco-Roman literature.¹⁸⁷ The use of the sedge/reed in the headdress may be indicative of the incorporation of this particular iconography not only in association with the goddess Isis protection but also of Northern Egypt as part of the royal nomenclature 'he of the sedge and bee'.

With respect to the senses, in all probability the diadem evoked the sense of sight by the use of symbolic botanical decorative motifs and colourful stones. There was probably visual and tactile appreciation for superior manufacturing techniques. Given what is known of Princess Khnumet's petite stature, these particular botanical choices would have looked particularly attractive and entirely in-keeping with the style of headdress, heavy in symbolism and evocative of femininity that appears to have been favoured by her. Evidence of wear-and-tear are indicative of a favourite piece of jewellery that is indicative of the young woman who appreciated it during her lifetime.

The symbolism that emerges from this particular diadem appears to be more formal than the garland. It encapsulates the unity and balance of north and south using the heraldic vulture and unique sedge element but also that of the lily (Wilkinson 2003:214).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ The most well-known of these is, of course, that of Biblical Old Testament Moses and Roman Romulus and Remus.

¹⁸⁸ The iconography of the vulture as Nekhbet with protective, outspread wings will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11.

Both of Princess Khnumet's diadems evoke visual, tactile and aural senses in the use of symbolic decorative motifs, beautifully inlaid stones and superior manufacturing techniques. The diadems conjure the image of a petite and lively young woman who danced joyfully at Nile festivals and at court, with the garland sparkling and shimmering in the bright sunlight, thereby creating a sensory experience for both the ancient wearer and observer.

9.5 QUEEN TAUSRET'S GARLAND OF ROSES

The Queen Tausret (Tawosret/Taosrit/Tausert) was the daughter of New Kingdom King Seti II (19th Dynasty) by a minor wife. The records are not entirely clear whether she was full sister or step-mother to brothers Siphtah and Setnakhte (Davis 2001: xvi). She held the titles 'King's Daughter', 'Kings Great Wife', 'Kings Mother', 'Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt', 'Lady of the Two Lands', 'God's Wife' and strangely enough, 'King'. The feminine titles are all in keeping with her status but it is the last that provides us with a clue to her high status within the royal circle. While it is recognised that she was the wife of her brother Siphtah and held the title 'Great Royal Wife' which indicates that at some stage she took over important court and cultic roles (Tyldesley 2006:163).

Although a rightful heir to the throne, according to the rules of royal inheritance, she was set aside in favour of her half-brother Amenmeses but following a short two-year reign, the minor Merenptah-Siphtah ascended the throne and was duly married to his elder sister Tausret¹⁸⁹ who assumed the role of ruler until his death at age 20, leaving Egypt without an obvious heir. At this stage, Tausret stepped forward unopposed into the role of a fully-fledged 'king' and 'Daughter of Ra, Lady of Ta-merit, Tausret chosen of Mut' (Tyldesley 2006:164). According to sources, she faced food shortages, civil unrest combined with rapidly escalating political crisis and threats to security from the Libyan tribes. Although she was represented as female, inscriptions at Abydos, Hermopolis, Memphis, Qantir in the Delta and as far afield as Nubia and Palestine use a mixture of male and female epithets. Tausret's reign

¹⁸⁹ Tausret assumed the throne name Sitre-Meritamun.

lasted a mere two years and it is not known whether she died of natural causes or was overthrown by Setnakhte. A female mummy with a 'prominent, narrow, high-bridged Ramesside nose' (Tyldesley 2006:166) found in KV35 and known as Unknown Woman D has been identified by some scholars as possibly belonging to Tausret, but there is no other evidence for this other than the correct 19th Dynasty period of mummification¹⁹⁰¹⁹¹

9.5.1 Construction

The distinctive floral circlet is composed of 14 gold rosettes stamped out of gold foil and mounted on a narrow strip of sheet gold. Each floral motif is made in two pieces. The rosette (3 cm in diameter) is concave composed of 10 rounded petals delineated by chased lines. Four of the petals bear the royal cartouches of Queen Tausret and her husband inscribed written on the underside. As illustrated in Figure 9.8 (below) there is a round-headed knob in the centre of each flower.



Figure 9.8: Gold circlet diadem embellished with 14 rose-shaped flowers inscribed with cartouches of Queen Tausret [Cairo Museum]

¹⁹⁰ Theodore Davis identified the Queen and her husband from objects in a cache of jewellery found in tomb KV56 in the Valley of the Kings in 1908.

¹⁹¹ Smith, GE (1912:82) *The Royal Mummies*, Cairo

A piece of wire is threaded through a ring at the back of each flower and a hole in the metal band to hold these two components together and it appears that the flowers were removable (Davis 2001:35).

9.5.2 Symbolism

Of the various materials available to the ancient Egyptians, gold was regarded as a divine and imperishable substance while its untarnishing nature was considered a metaphor of eternal life. Its solar significance was primarily because all the gods were considered to have descended from the Sun god Ra. Hathor, daughter of Ra, was often called 'The Golden One' (Wilkinson 1996:83). The *sah*, or afterlife 'body' of the Egyptian deceased, was thought to have a shining golden skin, this being the reason for the royal golden funerary masks and magically conferring eternal survival through its imperishability (Wilkinson 1996:84).

Identification of the distinctive rosette-shape floral form proves to be somewhat difficult. In some sources, the floral motif is identified as the red corn poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, a common annual field flower. If this is the case, then the representation is botanically incorrect but this does not preclude a stylized interpretation. While the rosette form bears a strong resemblance to the *Rosa gallica*, this particular species is not mentioned in any of the funerary, religious or mythological texts or feature strongly in artistic representations. This does not necessarily mean that it was not grown in the region in small quantities. Rose extract would have been a fragrant ingredient in oils and unguents but it was imported from elsewhere in the Ancient Near East. It is conceivable that the garland f may have been a gift from a foreign ruler and was subsequently engraved with the cartouches of Tausret and her husband in their honour.

9.5.3 Interpretation

Given what is known about Queen Tausret, this feminine garland would not have been worn during as a ruling queen of Egypt after assuming state and cultic duties. It

may have been a remnant as royal princess but there is a possibility that the diadem may have been given to or sentimentally placed with a deceased girl child so that she too would be suitably endowed with funerary goods for the afterlife. There does not appear to be any specific mythological, cultic or state iconography connected with the floral element.

Rosettes dating to the reign of King Talakhamani (c. 453-423 NCE) were found at Nuri in the adjacent Sudan (Wilkinson 1975:155). These differ from Tausret's only in that they are deeper and vary in size but may well have come from a similar garland to the Egyptian queen's, indicating that this motif may have been more widely popular throughout the region than originally thought. Alternatively it could have been looted and transported southwards for resale to a willing and appreciative buyer.

This is not the only evidence of this particular style of garland diadem. An *ushabti* figure of an unknown woman wears an exact replica of Tausret's chaplet interpreted in gilded gesso¹⁹². In addition, a depiction dating to the 25th Dynasty shows wearing a similar floral diadem.¹⁹³ Nearly a thousand years later, statues of Ptolemaic and Roman period men are also depicted wearing similar chaplets and festival of roses connected to the cult of Isis is also mentioned in the Oxyrynchus papyri.¹⁹⁴

9.6 CONCLUSION

Although textual evidence is sparse, there is sufficient artistic evidence to corroborate the surviving examples of botanically-themed diadems and visual punning in the interpretation of their world. The intertwined gold-wire circlet interspersed with tiny, brightly-coloured and delicately formed flowers inlaid is a visual delight in the Cairo Museum. The only one of its kind, it gives the impression of a whimsical floral garland commissioned by a petite young woman for festive occasions. As such, it is a far cry from the formal iconography of state. The incorporation of celestial

¹⁹² CG 47.692 Catalogue générale des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire

¹⁹³ ASAE 1921:191 (fig. 2) (Annales du Services des antiquités de l'Égypte, Cairo)

¹⁹⁴ ASAE 1940:1-50 (Annales du Services des antiquités de l'Égypte, Cairo)

elements brings a new dimension to the symbolism. The intriguing aspect of Princess Khnumet wearing this extraordinarily diadem during a festive occasion such as the joyous celebration of the annual inundation of the Nile, raises a new aspect of the materiality of Egyptian jewellery and links between form and function.

In contrast, the colourful openwork circlet constructed using multiple alternating frieze-type daisy/rosette and lily elements is strongly reminiscent of the Egyptian architectural frieze-type designs and the palmette and lotus designs used to decorate pottery during the later Greek geometric period. The workmanship is a superb example of the New Kingdom jewellers' advanced techniques. The focal points add an unexpected third dimension to this particular diadem. There is also the potential for additional sensory experiences.

Tausret's distinctive garland does not appear to have formed part of her formal attire as queen and controversial role as regent-king. Given the cartouches containing both her name and that of her brother husband, it is possible that the garland was worn before she assumed her state role and titles. It is possible that the diadem was presented as a gift by a foreign ambassador. Alternatively, diadem could have been placed with the burial goods of a young daughter who predeceased her. Similar garlands may also be evidence of foreign trade.

Ancient Egyptian women who had access to a personal source of wealth appear to have had the opportunity of commission jewellery according to their own personal taste, thereby expressing fashion and to some extent, their individuality.

CHAPTER 10: HORNED HEADRESSES

Abstract

Early dynastic and Pharaonic art abounds with images of a variety of fauna that inhabited the Nile environment. Antelope species were often depicted, giving some indication of their popularity as subjects for in relief, in sculpture and in the minor arts. Interpretations of the underlying symbolism are both speculative and controversial. . This chapter investigates the antelope different species commonly found in Egypt and the Ancient Near East environs and the incorporation of their imagery into two specific diadems, possibly of foreign origins.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Animal imagery in Egyptian art provides some indication of the richness of the fauna in the early dynastic and Pharaonic eras. Despite being arid the land beyond the Nile Valley teemed with wildlife. According to Arnold (1995:7), during the prehistoric period and the Old Kingdom, the eastern and western areas bordering the Nile Valley were steppe rather than barren desert, supporting patches of grass and hardy shrubs as well as some tree species which were nourished by sporadic rain and minor watercourses.¹⁹⁵ The inhabitants led a similar lifestyle to that of the Sahara hunters as the damper climate of that era provided a steady supply of game. Decorative scenes on pre-Dynastic pottery and Early Dynastic palettes confirm the importance of hunting in the desert and semi-desert grassland regions that bordered the Nile valley. These faunal images appear to have been selected as emblematic of towns and/or districts called nomes. Houlihan (2002) indicates that Nubian ibexes, scimitar-horned oryx, addax, various species of antelope and the petite gazelle were commonly used as inspiration for the minor arts. Bovine imagery was also included in the artist's repertoire

During the Old Kingdom the indigenous oryx and gazelle were kept in captivity thereby ensuring a regular meat supply in the increasingly urban settlement areas. Antelope were sacrificed as offerings to the various gods and haunches of meat were also prepared for funerary purposes. In the Egyptian world-view, the existence of

¹⁹⁵ Although still supporting some hardy vegetation and wildlife, many of the desert species were hunted to the brink of extinction in ancient times and the environment that was familiar to the ancient Egyptians, is now only found in the Sudan and further south.

abundant life in a dangerous and foreign place was symbolically important as being hunted by the king. There is strong evidence of complex and underlying symbolism, although many interpretations are speculative and controversial.

Three species of deer are found in the Near Eastern geographic region. It is no surprise that these animals were interpreted as decorative elements on sacred barques, delicately carved ivory statuettes, cosmetic spoons and jewellery.¹⁹⁶ Aldred (1978:121) notes that during the 18th Dynasty it became fashionable to embellish the diadems of princesses and lesser queens, with gazelle heads. Specific antelope and deer species can be clearly identified in two diadems, having an astounding degree of accuracy and realistic detail. Indicative of the ancient Egyptian relationship with the animal world, the two diadems have particularly interesting symbolism related to beliefs and foreign deities represented in animal form encompassing the complex relationships between humans and their beliefs in the supernatural world dating to the Neolithic period.¹⁹⁷

10.2 ANTELOPE SPECIES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Near Eastern and northern African ungulates fall into two subfamilies, the *Antilopinae* as represented by gazelles and *Hippotraginae* which include the larger addax and oryx species (Gilbert 2002:21, Strandberg 2009:8). The *Cervidae* or deer family, were limited to highland and coastal terrain in more temperate areas.

10.2.1 Gazelle

Gazelle were held with great affection as tame household pets by the elite, so much so that one was found buried in its own wooden coffin at Deir al-Bahari. Houlihan (1996:109) notes that the species appears in the file of animal offerings presented to

¹⁹⁶ A vase of the Naqada II period documents both the gazelle and the ibex in a hunting scene.

¹⁹⁷ Headdresses containing rams horns, representative of the god Amun were worn by men and will thus not be discussed here. Although widely attested on statues and in paintings, there are no surviving examples of elaborate composite headdresses, combining bovine horns and sun-disks and will also not be discussed.

the deceased on tomb-chapel walls. Archaeo-zoological evidence from Natufian sites reveals a high percentage of gazelle remains indicating that they were the principal source of meat for hunter-gatherers.¹⁹⁸ The gazelle was the most abundant ungulate in the arid parts of the Near East and Egypt featured in abundance in desert hunting scenes from as early as Pre-Dynastic times. Gilbert (2002:23) notes that their habitat was restricted to the west of the Nile.

The Dorcas gazelle (see Figure 10.1a below), the smallest of the species¹⁹⁹, is the one most commonly depicted in hunting scenes. Ridged, lyre-shaped horns are found on both the males and females (Strandberg 2009:9). The mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazelle*) as illustrated in Figure 10.1b (below) inhabited the southern Levant highlands and coastal regions. The *Dama* sub-species lived in the Sinai and southern Israel and was the most abundant of the ungulates in arid parts of the Near East and Egypt with herds sometimes numbering in the thousands during the migration season (Gilbert 2002:23). The gazelle identity is confirmed in labels attached to Egyptian art as *ghs*, and *ghst*, written phonetically (Strandberg 2009:8).



Figure 10.1a: Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*)



Figure 10.1b: Mountain Gazelle (*Gazella gazelle*)



Figure 10.1c Dama Gazelle (*Gazella dama*)

The gazelle was often used as effective imagery in New Kingdom love poetry as evidenced by Stanza 3 in Papyrus Chester Beatty (Matthieu 1996:31-32 as quoted in Strandberg 2009:29):

¹⁹⁸ Gazelle are still a major food source for the modern Bedouin tribes in these remote areas.

¹⁹⁹ The Dorcas gazelle measures 60cm in height at the shoulder, about 1m in length and can weigh up to 20kg. Although petite in stature, proportionately it has the longest legs.

'O, that you might come to the sister (lover) quickly
Like a gazelle leaping in the desert
Its legs running, though its limbs are weary
Terror enters its limbs
A hunter is after him, and dogs are with him
(Still) they do not see its dust.'

This obvious affection for the petite, graceful species is most probably the reason why gazelle were adopted in symbolic context as a decorative element on wooden chests, drinking bowls, unguent jars, cosmetic spoons and wands.²⁰⁰ Bronze *deben* weights in animal form were popular during the New Kingdom as illustrated in Figure 10.2 (below). The Egyptian craftsmen closely observed the finer details of their subjects, reproducing these in a natural and anatomically correct manner notes Arnold (1995:11).²⁰¹



Figure 10.2: A bronze *deben* weight in the form of a gazelle
(18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III c. 1390-1353 BCE. L. 7.1 cm H. 5.4cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

Unlike the *w3s* sceptres which were associated with men and gods, Strandberg (2009:130) states that the wand had a feminine association and often depicted in dancing scenes.²⁰² References to the gazelle wand are found in the Pyramid Texts (Utterance 504) in the context of the dawn (*dw3t*), translated as 'she who worships',

²⁰⁰ A particularly finely made 18th Dynasty statuette from a Theban tomb of a gazelle standing on a wooden base decorated with flowering plants was fashioned from tinted ivory is particularly eye-pleasing. A pet gazelle is depicted standing under the chair of a 26th Dynasty tomb of a high official at Thebes.

²⁰¹ *Deben* weights were primarily used to weigh gold that was used by jewellers or paid in tribute. The three marks on the gazelle's back indicate that it was supposed to weigh three *deben* (273 grams).

²⁰² Animal heads are canines such as jackals (Anubis?) were popular, situated on the top of staffs/sceptres as attested by numerous examples in Early Dynastic and Dynastic tomb paintings. A rare example is pair of gazelle-headed wands dating to the 1st dynasty Giza and Abydos (Wilkinson, 1999:189-190). Strandberg notes the juxtaposition of the gazelle and canine symbols as the "dog attacking gazelle" motif was quite a prevalent theme in desert scenes.

thereby enabling the king to ‘raise himself’ (Strandberg, 2009:131). The reference to the dawn was used in the context of the goddess Nut. Strandberg (2009:132) argues the possibility that there was a connection between the gazelle wand and rituals performed for the rising sun. The gazelle can be construed in the context of Egyptian magic as a generative force’

10.2.2 Ibex

The ibex (*Capra ibex Nubian*) which is found widely in North Africa and further north into Israel is a member of *Caprine* subfamily that includes goats and sheep. The ibex, with its compact, stocky build and light brown pelage was referred to in Egyptian as *nr3w* and *im3t* (Strandberg 2009:11). Males and females have very distinctive circular, curving and heavily ridged horns with pronounced knobs on the outer curve. According to Arnold (1995:13), ibex were considered symbolic of renewal, especially at the start of a new year, when it served as the sign for ‘year’ and thus popular as a good-luck charm.



Figure 10.3a: Nubian Ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*)



**Figure 10.3b: Mottled semi-translucent quartz ibex (Late 18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, Thebes).
L 2.6 cm, H. 2.3 cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]**

The ibex was represented artistically in aesthetically pleasing 3-dimensional items, such as milk-jug, elaborate perfume vessel and cosmetic spoons where the backswept horns formed the handles as illustrated in Figure 10.3b (above)

Strandberg (2009:13) notes that the carved wooden ibex and the gazelle are documented as prow ornaments for sacred barks from as early as the Pre-Dynastic era, suggesting a connection with the iconography between ceremonial barks and desert prey.²⁰³

10.2.3 Oryx

Two species of oryx range throughout the arid northern African regions and the Near East. The oryx is generally well-adapted to arid conditions, similar to camels have adapted physiologically and foraging habits to survive for considerable time in a desert habitat (Gilbert 2002:22). The common East African or Nubian oryx (*Oryx beisa beisa*) scimitar-horned oryx also known as the Sahara oryx (*Oryx dammah*) were hunted throughout in Egypt.²⁰⁴ The gracefully arching horns of Scimitar-horned oryx made it a popular subject of the sculptural and minor arts. The smaller but distinctive straight-horned Arabian oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) was introduced during a later period. Male and female oryx have long, narrow, ridged, slightly backward-curving horns. The oryx was known as *m3 hd*, translated as 'seeing white', in reference to their overall colouring (Strandberg 2009:12). Tomb paintings from Beni Hasan show a small herd of captive oryx feeding from mangers, watched over by their young keeper. Oryx were shown wearing decorated collars, suggesting that they were routinely kept as pets. Live animals, skins and horns appear to have been common tribute items from Nubia.



Figure 10.4a: Nubian Oryx
(*Oryx beisa beisa*)



Figure 10.4b: Arabian Oryx
(*Oryx leucoryx*)



Figure 10.4c: Scimitar-horned / Sahara Oryx (*Oryx dammah*)

²⁰³ The Henu bark (dating to the Old Kingdom) incorporated the oryx head. Other examples can be found on the New Kingdom walls of Medinet Habu.

²⁰⁴ The oryx *dammah* is the larger of the two species, measuring up to 120cm at the shoulder and is close to 2m in length. It can weigh up to 200kg. The *beisa* is slightly smaller.

The oryx was believed to be sacred to the god Sokar and symbolic of solar protection. Carved oryx heads were used in a decorative context to adorn the prow of sacred barques used in the Sokar festival (Strandberg 2009:13).

10.2.4 Addax

Although its numbers have been drastically reduced by hunting over thousands of years, the addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*) is still widely found in the most arid parts of northern Africa, including Egypt (Gilbert 2002:21). Belonging to the same family as the oryx, the stocky addax is easily recognisable by its exceptionally long, distinctive spirally twisted horns and was usually depicted in profile.²⁰⁵ Strandberg (2009:16) explains that as it was apparently quite easily tamed in captivity, these animals were generally depicted as offerings as opposed to desert prey in hunting scenes. It was identified by the label *nwdw*.

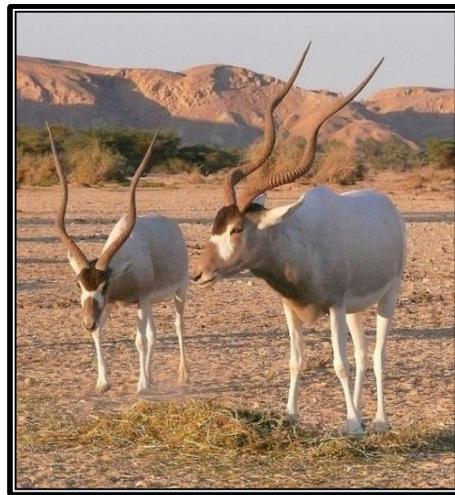


Figure10.5: Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*)

10.2.5 Deer

Three species of deer (*Cervidae*) are indigenous to the Near East, ranging across Anatolia and Mesopotamia as far south as Israel including various areas of Greece.

²⁰⁵ The addax stands at about 110cm, with a length of 160cm.

The deer are easily identifiable in Egyptian art from the characteristically shaped male antlers (Houlihan, 1987:238). The Barbary deer (*Cervus elaphus barbarus* – Figure 10.6a below) is endemic to North Africa but is currently found only in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco but may have occurred more widely in the Dynastic era. The roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*- Figure 10.5b below) are the smallest of the deer species. The Persian fallow deer (*Dama dama* – Fig 10.5c below) are of medium size prefer the drier brush habitats of Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Arnold (1995:15), speculates that sightings of this shy deer would probably have been rare even in antiquity but advises that representations of the magnificent stags were captured hunting images until as recently as the New Kingdom.



Figure 10.6a: Barbary Deer stag
(*Cervus elaphus barbarus*)



Figure 10.6b : Roe Deer stag
(*Capreolus capreolus*)



Figure 10.6c: Fallow Deer stag
(*Dama mesopotamica*)

In contrast to both male and female antelope's permanent horns, the three species of male *cervidae* are characterized by very distinct racks of rough-textured, branched antlers that are shed and regrown annually ahead of the mating season. These are primarily for display and territorial displays. Barbary deer stags antlers spike out from the main beam. Roe deer antlers are a simpler configuration, forking midway up. In comparison, the fallow deer antlers form a flat, hand-like shape with additional projecting small finger-like tines (Gilbert 2002:26) The identification of specific antelope horn and deer antler types and their representation will play an important role in determining the possible origins and iconographies of the diadems to be discussed below.

Depictions of fallow deer, referred to as *hnn*, decrease over time in Egyptian art and Strandberg (2009:16) speculates that this may reflect the limited number but also

provide evidence of extinction in North Africa during the New Kingdom due partly to overhunting but also loss of habitat.

10.3 BOVINES

While wild cattle no longer exist in Egypt, the Near East and Europe, the extinct aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) is considered the ancestor of all modern domestic cattle breeds known as *Bos taurus* (Collins 2002:15). It was the largest of the desert-dwelling animals and this is duly reflected in numerous examples of royal hunting scenes, indicating iconography of power. The Egyptians were successful cattle breeders in a society and economy where cattle played a pivotal role. Zoo-archaeological remains, wall paintings and miniature models indicate that some of the breeds were long-horned and long-legged; others had short, stocky legs with broad-spanning lyre-shaped horns (Figure 10.7 below). The zebu (*Bos taurus indicus*), a South Asiatic breed with a characteristic fatty hump on the shoulder and a large dewlap (flap) under the neck, was introduced in the 18th Dynasty. The breed was particularly well-adapted to withstand hot, dry conditions. Cattle were grazed in open country, tended by herdsman and moved around according to a seasonal schedule (Arnold 1995:51). Oxen were used for transporting heavy loads and ploughing the fields and hides were turned into a variety of leather goods.

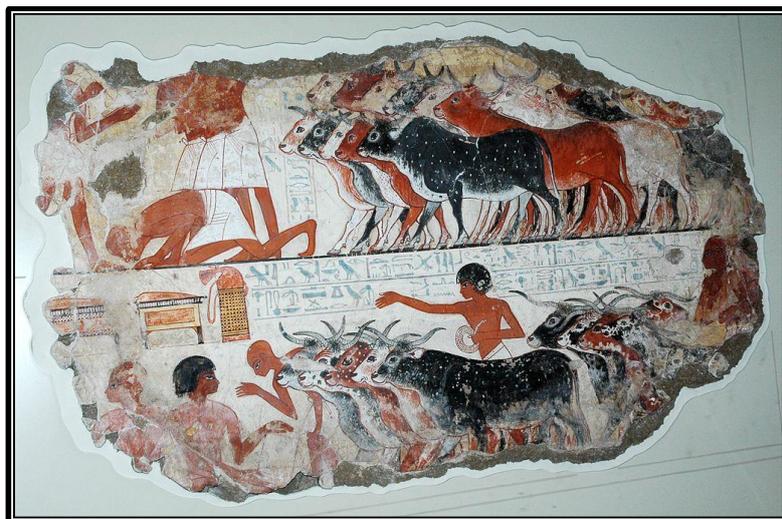


Figure 10.7: Egyptian cattle, from the New Kingdom tomb of Nebamun c. 1350 BCE
[British Museum]

Bovine headdresses, usually in composite form together with solar disks, have not survived but examples were depicted usually in the context of the queen in the role of the goddess Hathor²⁰⁶²⁰⁷. Composite headdresses which appear to have been made up of bovine horns, sun disks and crescents often surmounted on top of a vulture cap are commonly depicted worn by royal women, thereby combining the symbolism and iconographies of female divinity. Given the weight, size and ungainliness of actual bovine horns, the ornamental versions were probably imitated in metal, before being combined with the other elements. Wilkinson (1999:82) writes that as outward appearance was equally as important as inner substance and the symbolic significance of the material was of primary importance, it is possible that the elements of composite headdresses were carved from lightweight wood before being covered with thin gold foil.

10.4 DIADEM WITH TWO GAZELLES

An 18th Dynasty New Kingdom diadem which features twin gazelles as a central focus point was discovered as part of the items recovered from a multiple burial tomb at Qurna. Together with the remains of three foreign wives of Thutmose III, the tomb contained a large quantity of jewels, vases and other valuable objects (Wilkinson, 1971:95). It is notable that each of the women appears to have been provided with a full, almost identical set of jewellery.²⁰⁸ Judging from their names, Meruwa/Menwit, Maruta/Merti and Manhata/Menhet), they appear to have been either Canaanite or Syrian in origin. It is not known whether they were related, perhaps sisters, sent to join King Thutmose III's harem as diplomatic marriages. The beaten gold diadem is embellished by rosettes and two centrally positioned gazelle heads. There is

²⁰⁶ As there are no existing examples of bovine headdresses in museum collections, these are therefore outside the scope of this study but there is nevertheless sufficient visual evidence available to warrant a future investigation into their symbolism and iconography.

²⁰⁷ Hathor, whose cult and iconography originated in Pre-Dynastic times, **was** mentioned in the Pyramid and Coffin texts and in all-important healing and protective roles. As a solar goddess, she was associated with the sun-god Re as his 'Eye' and was therefore represented wearing the sundisk between bovine horns. Wilkinson (2003:140) suggests that the goddess came into being as a consort for Re as his cult grew in strength at the beginning of the Old Kingdom which resulted in a relatively obscure goddess growing to play an important role

²⁰⁸ Other diadems and headdresses found in the same context are discussed in detail elsewhere in this study.

speculation that the headdress was foreign in origin, arriving in Egypt as part of a dowry.

10.4.1 Construction

Described by Wilkinson (1975:115) as 'delicate and intriguing', circlet tapers from widest point in the centre the rounded, open ends. As illustrated in Figure 10.8 (below), the diadem features a central sagittal band. The three narrowed ends are embellished with feline heads which were worked separately before being soldered into place (Wilkinson 1975:115).²⁰⁹ All three felines hold rings in their mouths which would have been used for threading and securing tie-cords to hold edges of the diadem in place. This would have allowed for adjustment according to the dimensions of the wearer's head (Aldred 1978:120).



Figure 10.8 : 18th Dynasty Diadem with two gazelle heads – made from gold, carnelian, and turquoise glass
(New Kingdom tomb of three wives of Thutmose III c. 1479-1425 BCE
(Dimensions: 43 cm diameter; width 4cm-2.8cm)
[Metropolitan Museum]

²⁰⁹ It is unclear whether these were interpretations of lionesses or leopards.

The two central gazelle were made of hollow-cast gold which were soldered to the centre of the band at the point where the sagittal band met the horizontal band. Wilkinson (1975:115) describes the visually appealing gazelle as having 'proud, alert little faces' looking out at the observer with 'wide nostrils and wrinkles on their noses'. The large eyes and details of the eyebrows and ears have been chased into the metal. Given the petite shape of the ears plus the ribbed detail and curvature of the horns, the pair of gazelle appears to be either the more commonly-found Dorcas or even possibly the mountain gazelle variety that inhabits the southern Levant coastal and highland regions.

The junction between the circlet and the necks of the gazelle has been clumsily soldered. The flanking rosettes were inlaid with carnelian and what has been identified as turquoise-blue and green composite material. The rosettes composed of twelve round-ended petals with a central disc were placed symmetrically, graduated in size on either side the centrally placed gazelles. Another two rosettes were placed above one another on the sagittal strip. Close inspection reveals a fair amount of untidy solder overflow on the outer edge of the rosettes indicating that these were possibly added at a different stage to the initial construction (Wilkinson 1975:116).

10.4.2 Symbolism

The use of gazelle at the centre of the diadem is not coincidental. The number two pervades in the Egyptian belief system as the concept of complementary duality. In the Egyptian world-view this was epitomised by the essential differences between male and female entities, night and day, heaven and earth, the north and the south. There were pairs of gods and goddesses who represented these and other binary aspects (Wilkinson 1999:129). From the Egyptian perspective, these elements constituted the complete world. The dualistic view stretched beyond the abstract and influenced the balance of artistic compositions incorporating the use of mirror images. In their incorporation in the diadem, the two gazelle may be interpreted as being representative of the duality of Upper and Lower Egypt, the lands adjacent to the Nile and the Delta and thus the concept of *Sema-Tawy*, the unification of the Two

Lands. In essence, symbolically the paired gazelle not only represent the unification of the two lands, but also affirm the cosmic creation and nature itself.

Seven rings were soldered along the lower edge of the forehead band to hold now-missing pendants. Winlock (1933:159) describes how during the restoration process of this particular diadem, rows of ancient gold beads in the shape of the word *nefer* (beautiful) were strung on the empty fittings. Lilyquist (2003:153) notes that Winlock (who reconstructed the diadem for the Metropolitan Museum of Art) originally published the diadem with *nefer* pendants suspended from these rings.²¹⁰ The *nefer* sign translated as 'beauty' or 'goodness', was incorporated in to many personal names.²¹¹ According to Wilkinson (1999:79) it was used to denote youth, good fortune and happiness. The number seven was an important symbolic number, associated with the concepts of perfection related to totality and completeness and was thus considered to have great potency in Egyptian magic notes Wilkinson (1992:136).²¹² The diadem shows signs of a fair amount of wear indicating that the headdress was well worn by one of the foreign women. Lilyquist (2013:158), however, doubts that these rings formed part of the initial design and were probably added at a later stage by different artisans, judging from the untidy soldering and poor workmanship.

10.4.3 Interpretation

The iconography of this diadem concurs with the foreign origins of this particular woman about whom nothing has been recorded in history, save her communal burial. Although there are a number of artistic representations of similar diadems, Wilkinson (1975:116) notes this particular style of headdress appears to have been limited to those who bore the title 'Concubines of the Royal Harem'. Other women who were depicted wearing similar diadems were Sitamun (daughter and wife of Amenophis III) who was depicted wearing a headdress comprised of upright papyrus umbels with a

²¹⁰ A large number of loose elements were discovered in the burial, and various attempts were made to piece items of jewellery together with little or no visual clues provided as to what fitted where. The *nefer* pendants have subsequently been removed.

²¹¹ Nefertari, wife of Ramses II and Nefertiti, wife of Akhenaten are the most instantly recognized.

²¹² The goddess Neith was believed said to have carried out her creation in seven statements while Isis is said to be accompanied by seven scorpions.

gazelle head in the centre, receiving 'the gold of the southern lands'.as well as. Ramses II's two daughters, Meritamun and Bent'anta, were each portrayed on temple walls at el-Kab wearing podia headdresses with a gazelle head on the forehead. They are shown as carrying gazelle-headed wands, possibly linking the headdress to a cultic status. According to Wilkinson (1975:116) the gazelle headdress was also worn by daughters of Menna who lived during the reign of Thutmosis IV who were depicted wearing the tall papyrus headdresses featuring gazelles. Their titles are given as 'Praised ones of Hathor (i.e. concubines of Hathor), ornament of the king (royal concubine), beloved of their lord'. Blue, red and gold pendants are shown hanging down over the forehead which correlates with the empty rings soldered below the twin gazelles in this specific example. This particular style of diadem appears to to have been worn by young women who were not of sufficiently high status to wear the royal insignia.

As illustrated mural paintings, papyri and sketches on ostraca primarily dating to the New Kingdom, animal fables were quite common in ancient Egypt. Many of these depict animals in an allegorical and sometimes very humorous manner in recognisable work-related scenes, festivities and combat. The illustrations suggest narratives that probably formed an integral part of oral tradition and folklore but never recorded and which have subsequently been lost. In this regard Winlock (1933:159) makes reference to a satirical papyrus featuring a caricature a king depicted as a lion playing a board game with a lady of the court, represented as a plump little gazelle.

Strandberg (2009:162) references textual evidence to gazelles in the place name Gehesty (*ghsty*) '[The place of the] Two Gazelles' first found in 6th Dynasty Pyramid Texts.²¹³ She further suggests that the iconography of two gazelles is female, linked to 'the Two Ladies' (Nekhbet and Wadjet) tutelary goddesses of the north and south. Gehesty was 'cited throughout the history of Egyptian religion as a place associated

²¹³ Given the archaeological evidence, the modern town of Komir has been suggested as the possible location of Gehesty. It was a centre of worship of Nephthys during Greco-Roman period and is also the site of gazelle burials in catacombs. Alternatively, the cult place of the goddess Anuket has been suggested. The mummified gazelle (primarily females) were believed to serve as messengers of the goddess. It suggests that gazelles may have been kept in captivity solely for the purpose of offerings. Votive gazelle mummies have also been found at Kom Ombo, Dendera,

with the death and resurrection of Osiris' but also associated with the goddess Anukis (Strandberg, 2009:162, 164). Although rarely depicted as a manifestation of a deity, the gazelle was however recognized as an attribute of the goddess Anukis (Anuket) who was primarily associated with the lower cataract region and specifically Sehel and Abu islands (Valbelle 1981:94). Pinch (2004:186) advises that not only was Anukis a goddess of the hunt, she was also bore the epithet 'Nourisher of the Fields'. Anukis was usually depicted wearing a tall plumed headdress.²¹⁴ An ostrakon featuring a seated Anukis confirms her role as 'Mistress of Sehel', holding a staff and an ankh, with two recumbent gazelles. Written evidence of the link between Anukis and gazelle is located on the temple at Esna and dated to the 1st Century CE. In the inscriptions, Anukis is referred to as 'lady of the gazelle' (*hnwt ghs*), while the standard phrase 'giving life, stability and dominion' was also used in this context.

Spell 837 of the Coffin Texts reads:

'Rise up Osiris
On your side is Gehesty,
Isis has your arm, Nephthys has your hand
May you go between them,
To you are given the sky and earth.'

Given the textual and pictorial evidence, it appears that the gazelle headdress may have been closely associated with Anukis and worn by royal concubines with specific duties. The incoherent design, overall clumsiness and excess soldering mar its final effect, leading to queries related to its integrity as an original headdress of the period. Lilyquist (2013:153, 158) notes the significant discrepancies in style and craftsmanship (feline heads, overlarge rosettes and excessive solder), suggesting that the diadem was modified by someone with inferior skills. Strandberg (2009:137) concurs with the curious conflict suggesting that a plain gold diadem embellished with only the gazelles and felines modified and 'Egyptianised' by the addition of some loose rosettes, not in antiquity, but just after it was extracted from the tomb in 1916.

²¹⁴ Strandberg (2009:173) informs that compositions featuring the goddess clearly identified by her plumed headdress, giving life to the king Sesostris III by proffering the ankh to his nose can be traced back to the Middle Kingdom. At the temple of Buhen, Anukis is depicted in a similar scene with Thutmosis III.

10.5 DIADEM WITH FOUR GAZELLES AND STAG

A unique diadem featuring rosettes and multiple gazelle heads combined with a central stag and found in the eastern Delta, at el-Salhiya is considered to be of Hyksos or possibly Asian origin. It has been tentatively dated to the 2nd Intermediate Period. Unlike the previous diadem, this particular piece has a distinctly foreign appearance about and does not appear to be corroborated in the artistic record.

10.5.1 Construction

The electrum diadem features a central stag head (8.5 cm in height) with spiked horns, flanked by four gazelles interspersed with four pointed flower-like motifs (Aldred 1978:119). The two ends were perforated enable tie-strings to be threaded through (Andrews 1996:105). Although at first glance, the backward-curving horns on the hollow stag head strongly resemble one of the three species of oryx mentioned above, this is anatomically incorrect. As illustrated in Figure 10.9 (below), the horns appear to be a combination of the red and the roe deer species.



Figure 10.9: 15th Dynasty Diadem with multiple Gazelles and a Stag between stars/flowers
(Eastern Delta region, 2nd Intermediate (Hyksos) Period, c. 1648-1540 BCE)
(Length: 49.5cm length, height 1.5cm)
[Metropolitan Museum]

The interpretation of the horns indicate that the craftsman was not familiar with the species. The horns bear a striking resemblance to the Barbary deer which hints at a possible North African influence. Alternatively, it may have been a Persian fallow deer stag, interpreted from a description. Aldred (1978:119) proposes that in all probability the diadem was not an Asiatic import even though it was found close to the Hyksos city of Avaris in the Delta region. It may indeed have been made by an Egyptian craftsman during the Middle Kingdom (late 12th and 13th Dynasties), effectively combining Egyptian with Levantine and Asian Middle Bronze Age styles. Aldred (1978:24) notes that there was ample opportunity for foreign techniques and styles to be introduced by foreign jewellers as part of an ongoing cultural exchange. This is particularly true for the period ascribed to Hyksos invasions of the 18th century BCE. During this time, fresh local interpretations and foreign demands would have been combined in Egyptian regalia. During the New Kingdom, during a period of extended diplomacy with a variety of northern nations such as the Hittites, Syrians, Cretans and Canaanites, foreign brides and their retinues entered the harems. There is considerable evidence of foreign decorative motifs entering the Lower Egyptian artistic repertoire and of Egyptian motifs being adopted by other cultures further afield. Aldred (1978:24) observes that it may well be that metalwork in the entire Levant area was similar in style and technique but that little has survived the ravages of wars, plundering and burial practices in these lands. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the stag diadem could have been made as part of a dowry and brought to Egypt thereby lending credence to its unfamiliar appearance. Given the period and its find-site, it is possible that the diadem's owner, about whom nothing is known, came to Egypt in a diplomatic marriage to one of the Hyksos rulers.

10.5.2 Symbolism

The four sharply-pointed, eight-petalled floral elements do not appear to be Egyptian in origin. They bear a strong similarity to the granular stars featured in Princess Khnumet's jewellery. Although the flowers bear a strong resemblance to the Madonna lily, the number of petals is incorrect. There are no other Near Eastern flowers of similar shape and it must therefore be assumed that the craftsman's powers of observation were indeed inaccurate with both the flowers and the frontal

stag. The Hebrew word *shoshan* (*sushan*) translates as 'lily', and it suggested that there could have been verbal punning and that the diadem represents its owner's name.

Apart from Anukis (Anuket), the other deity associated with gazelle was Reshep (also known as Reshef), a West Semitic/Canaanite god associated with war. The deity was assimilated into the Egyptian religion along with other Near Eastern deities. Wilkinson (2003:126) indicates that the god was syncretised with the Mesopotamian deity Nergal, god of warfare and pestilence who was probably introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos. By the New Kingdom, although retaining his foreign character and identity, he was assimilated with Seth. Reshep was depicted anthropomorphically as with a pointed Asiatic-style beard, wearing a tall cap surmounted by a gazelle head or horns springing directly from his forehead represent the deity's desert origins (Wilkinson 1975:118, Wilkinson 2003, 127). He is usually depicted brandishing weapons mace, an axe, a sickle sword or most commonly a spear in the right hand while on the left he carried a shield, was sceptre or an *ankh*.



Figure 10.10a: Head of goddess Anukis (Anuket) associated with the cataract regions and gazelle c.1336–1250 BCE (steatite, H. 8.2 cm x W. 4.6)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

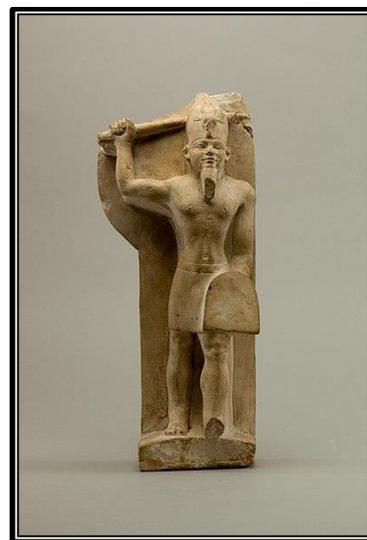


Figure 10.10b: Canaanite god Reshep clearly showing gazelle in centre of headdress c. 1184–664 BCE (limestone fragment H. 29 cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

There are four gazelle on the headband. The number four appears frequently in Egyptian art and was equated with completeness and totality.

- There were four sons of Horus and four funerary goddesses and incantations were generally repeated four times (Wilkinson, 1994:133).
- The four pillars of the sky and the four quarters of the heavens were constantly referenced in mythology, indicating their cosmic significance.
- Censing and purification rituals usually happen in the four Cardinal directions
- During the ritual known as the 'consecration of the *meret* chests', four sledge-mounted chests, containing linen of four different colours and each with four feathers attached to individual corners were dragged before the image of a god, four times (Wilkinson (1999:133)).

10.5.3 Interpretation

It is important to bear in mind that numbers reflected design, order and meaning in the Egyptian world. The abstract numbers found in nature and mythology were often used in visual punning to reflect the cosmic mysteries and divine planning (Wilkinson, 1994:126). The number one was symbolic of individuality and importance, particularly in reference to a primary creative deity. In the case of a foreign diadem, the central stag element was probably an attractive focal point or chosen to remind its owner of her homeland fauna, perhaps even a beloved pet. This distinctive diadem, with gazelle heads alternating with rosettes, is considered typical of the co-mingling of Near Eastern and Levantine of this particular period in Egyptian art.

10.6 CONCLUSION

Antelope were hunted widely throughout the pre-Dynastic and Dynastic period and were depicted in desert scenes, represented in sculpture and the minor arts. Deer were found in habitat north of Egypt in the Levant and into Asia but some specimens may have been brought as tribute and kept in captivity in royal menageries. Gazelle were held in great affection and thus a popular choice having strong feminine associations. The ibex was considered to be symbolic of renewal while the oryx was

linked to solar protection. The addax does not appear to have had any particular symbolic relevance.

There is ample artistic evidence of twin-gazelle diadems to indicate that this was in fact, not a unique headdress but one commonly worn by women. A New Kingdom diadem featuring gazelle recovered from the multiple burial of the three foreign wives of Thutmose III contains not only conflicting decorative elements but also poor quality techniques resulting in a very mixed visual message. There are a number of possibilities: (a) it may have been made up for one of the foreign wives; (b) two diadems were combined to form a new one containing Egyptianising elements; (c) that it was made in haste as part of the grave goods or (d) that the twin gazelles and rosettes were a later addition to an existing Egyptian diadem that was looted in the early 20th century. .

A headdress featuring a magnificent central stag and multiple gazelle heads has been dated to the period when the Delta area was settled by Hyksos invaders. There is no evidence in the Egyptian artistic record of headdresses of similar design. The interpretation of the stag indicates that the jeweller was most probably not familiar with the specific deer species and may have been acting on a description. Alternatively, as the flower elements also do not appear to have been inherently Egyptian, it may have been the property of a foreign bride's as part of her dowry or the introduction of designs from her homeland. There was ample opportunity for foreign techniques and design styles to be introduced into the Egyptian repertoire.

Mythological evidence links the gazelle not only to the goddess Anukis but also to a Canaanite deity, Reshep. Both diadems are visually distinctive, indicating foreign origins and be linked to Levantine, Aegean or Hyksos origins thereby introducing a new dimension to their interpretation and iconography.

CHAPTER 11: CAP HEADDRESSES

Abstract

An alternative form of feminine adornment was by means of cap-style headdresses, hair and wig ornaments. Two elaborate Middle Kingdom wig/hair coverings of linked gold elements forming cap-like head covers that invoke shimmering cascades of sunlight have survived relatively intact. Although there are no existing examples housed the iconic vulture cap headdress worn by Egyptian Dynastic queens will be discussed and some theories suggested about its possible construction and symbolism. A Nubian cap featuring vulture motifs and the incorporation of mica into headdresses will also be discussed.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

It appears from archaeological as well as pictorial evidence, that some of the more elaborately-constructed complex headdresses worn by women were constructed onto a wig to form a complete unit and thus dressed and ornamented in advance for wear during specific state or cultic occasions. A number of elite tombs contain ready-styled wigs on stands but the actual headdresses missing.

11.2 CAP HEADDRESS

Two 18th Dynasty cap-style diadems that exemplify the elaborate court dress of the time were found amongst the burial goods belonging to the three foreign wives of Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 BCE).²¹⁵ The three women have been identified as Menhet²¹⁶, Menwi and Merti and each bore the title of 'King's Wife'.²¹⁷ Wilkinson (1995:114) advises that 'the syllabic writing of their names indicates that they were foreigners, possibly daughters of Syrian kings'. The cause of their death has not been confirmed and it has been speculated that it could have been due to some kind

²¹⁵ The treasure was discovered by villagers from Qurna in 1916 after summer rains had dislodged rocks to reveal a tomb located in a gorge close to the Valley of the Kings. The tomb contained not only the remains of three princesses but also a considerably quantity of jewellery and other funerary objects such as mirrors, vases and canopic jars. Sometime later the artefacts were gradually offered up for sale in Luxor and began to appear on the international antiquities market.

²¹⁶ Merhet may have been named for Merhyt a minor goddess associated with the Nile and with water but little is known of her actual roles. The origin and meaning of the other two names is unknown.

²¹⁷ Only the mother of the heir was given the appellation of the 'King's Great Wife'.

of infectious disease or possibly even a harem plot. Both surviving examples show distinct signs of wear and repair.

Regrettably, as the tomb was not professionally excavated and no proper records kept, the actual location in the tomb together with clear descriptions of the state and construction of the two cap headdresses jewellery has been lost leading to considerable speculation during the reconstruction process as suggested by Winlock.²¹⁸ Aldred (1978:120) proposes that the pendant elements instead of being individually attached to tresses or plaits, were strung in columns which were independent of the hair or wig itself.

The cap headdress style is well attested visually.

- A relief from Saqqara (Western Cemetery: G 2155) shows the wife of Kairi wearing a light circlet with hanging rosette, leaf and cornflower pendants that form a network reaching the ears and following the line of the wig in front but shorter at the back (Wilkinson (1975:115, citing Quibell 1898).
- A gold headband embellished with what appears to be a single row of round pendant elements similar to those of the Cap Headdress can be seen in the Theban Tomb (TT29) of Amenemopet (Wilkinson 1975:115).
- Similar headdresses are also worn by the wives of Nebamun (TT17) while a headdress which reaches to the ears is depicted on the portrait of a 19th Dynasty woman (TT13).
- A number of wall-paintings depict women wearing yellow/gold or white/silver headdress with coloured floral pendants.
- The cedar wood coffin of Meritamun, queen and wife of the New Kingdom Amenhotep I (18th Dynasty) bears an example of an intricate gold and blue feather-patterned headdress reaching below the shoulders, covering the whole wig and may also have been articulated (Tyldesley 2006:91).

²¹⁸ It should be noted that the joining of the rosettes in long, continual strips to this head piece to form a wig cover is by no means the only interpretation of these items but to date this appears to be the most logical interpretation and presentation. The 'Great Headdress' is currently housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, but additional elements of the same type that were recovered separately and acquired at different times are also found in museums in Berlin, Paris and Cambridge.

- A cosmetic spoon carved in the form of a Syrian woman shows her head covered in a cloth embroidered with beads, which has been interpreted as possibly being the peasant version of what could have been a Syrian court headdress.²¹⁹

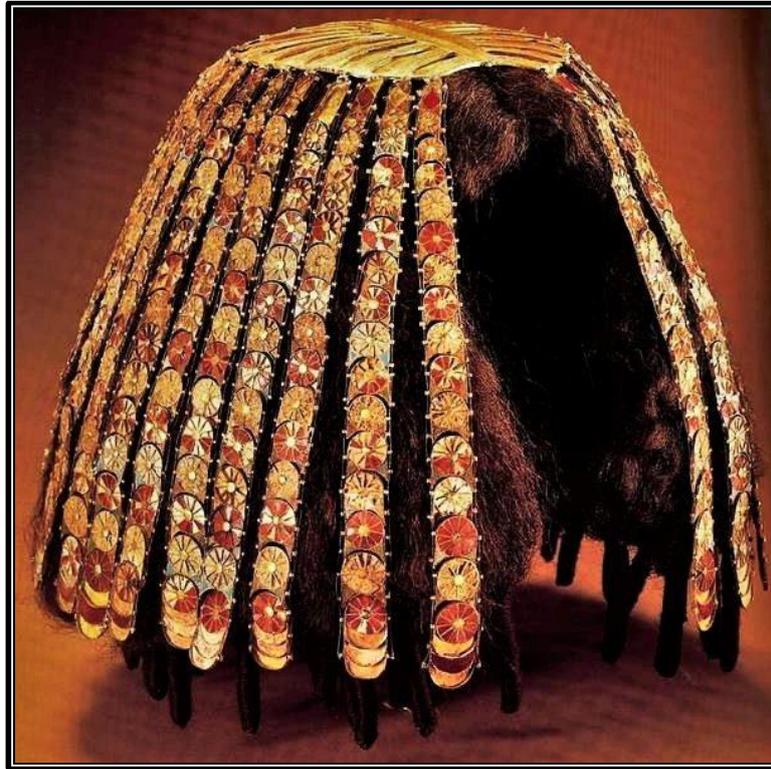


Figure 11.1: Great cap headdress of a lesser foreign wife of Thutmose III (c. 1479–1425 BCE) featuring linked, graduated rosettes made from gold, carnelian, jasper and glass (Wadi Gabbanat el-Qurud, Thebes) [Metropolitan Museum of Art]

11.2.1 Construction

The magnificent, articulated Great Cap Headdress is formed by a cascade of inter-linked and articulated rosettes. The headdress appears to have been designed as flexible hood or cap falling to below shoulder level to completely cover a wig. Aldred (1978:120) speculates that it must once have been a ‘glittering and opulent object’ when worn on state or festive occasions. The inlay has been identified as a combination of carnelian, jasper and some glass in a variety of attractive orange-red shades. It is estimated that there were originally over 850 individual rosettes.

²¹⁹ This spoon is currently housed in the British Museum.

Andrews (1995:109) describes each rosette as inlaid using the cloisonné technique onto a gold base with rings at the edge designed to interlock with adjacent elements. Suspended by rings from the oval-shaped gold head plate, additional gold beads were strung along with the interlocking rings 'gives the columns of rosettes the appearance of being separated by notched vertical ribs'. Each terminates with three crescent shapes. As the various pieces making up this headdress were purchased at different times and in no particular order, there can be no certainty about the original shape and size of the headdress, warns Wilkinson (1975:114). Similar challenges apply to reconstruction of the second headdress found in the same context which lacks a centre plate (possibly as a result of looting) and appears to be shorter.



Figure 11.2: Assemblage of graduated rosettes as part of wig cover as suggested by Winlock (L. in front 35 cm, circumference 40.2 cm, weight 1kg) [Metropolitan Museum of Art]

The uppermost head piece (measuring 14.6 cm x 14 cm) is made up of two sheet gold components and is more petite than one would expect from photographs. The lower component is concave, covered by another sheet featuring what appears to be a cut-out design that has been chased and incised with a feather 'fan' design. The large and quite distinctive central feather is surrounded by 21 symmetrically placed pairs of feathers with slightly rounded edges. The substantial open space between feathers appears to have originally been inlaid with semi-precious stones or specially moulded glass. There are a number of puncture marks on the lower layer of the head-piece indicating that the insets were forcibly pried out using a sharp object. It is surmised that the insets were probably deliberately removed during the looting

process and have thus been irretrievably lost. It therefore cannot be ascertained what material was used or what colour these may have been. It is suggested that a feather design equated with birds would correlate with the use of lapis lazuli or blue turquoise as this would have been equated with the Sky. Gold loops for pendant attachments were placed at regular intervals along edge above the forehead. This head-piece is corroborated by the statuette of a couple wherein the woman wears a leaf-shape head-piece only; there is no evidence of any hanging attachments however. (Wilkinson 1975:115).²²⁰

11.2.2 Symbolism

The head piece of the diadem has been clearly incised with a distinctive 'fan' design made up of feathers with slightly rounded edges (Figure 11.3, page 220). A large number of bird species flourished throughout Egypt and were incorporated into jewellery from the earliest times. Feathers in various forms appeared frequently in ancient Egyptian art and iconography, were mentioned in a variety of texts, and were also incorporated into hieroglyphic writing. Feathers were depicted not only as being utilitarian but also featured strongly in ritual and mythological contexts whereby they were used to ornament headdresses, personify deities and indicated divine attributes.

Ostriches were common subjects in pre-Dynastic rock art and Bailleul-Leseur (2012:26) advises that ostrich eggs and feathers were prized objects then and continued to be so throughout the pharaonic era.²²¹ Nicholson & Shaw (2000:332) mention New Kingdom tomb paintings that show foreign delegations to the Egyptian court originating from Libya, Nubia, Punt and Asia, bearing tributes of feathers and thus indicating the value and prestige attached to feathers as a trade commodity. According to Teeter (2010:3) feathers were used in Egyptian art as ethnic designators of Libyans and Nubians and at a camp-site close to Hierakonpolis, a

²²⁰ It is also interesting, notes Naville (1894-1908) that Nefrubiti, daughter of Hatshepsut and a contemporary wife of Thutmose III, is depicted as having a headband decorated with rosettes arranged in a single row on a circlet but in this case there is clear evidence of a uraeus denoting her royal heritage.

²²¹ Containers and beads made from ostrich eggs have been recovered from archaeological contexts and there is no doubt that the meat was enjoyed by hunters and at royal banquets.

deposit of ostrich feathers was accompanied by an ostracon that referred to an annual celebration related to the return of Hathor from the desert.



Figure 11.3: View of uppermost 'head piece' made of two sheets of gold, one concave the other decorated with what appears to be feathers or palm fronds (New Kingdom c. 1479–1425 BCE, .Measurements: L. 14.6 x W. 14 cm) [Metropolitan Museum of Art]

As a hieroglyphic sign, the feather represented was a single tall ostrich plume bending over at its tip from its own weight. Wilkinson (1994:103) notes that the curved upper portion is distinctive and serves to distinguish the sign linguistically and iconographically from that used to indicate the reed-leaf. The sign of the feather was used phonetically as *sw* in the writing of the name of the air god Shu, as the ideogram for *swt* (feather) and in *ma'at* (cosmic and societal order).²²² Shu was depicted wearing a tall plume on his head. The ostrich feather plume was used to denote the goddess Ma'at either surmounting her head or independently as her emblem (Wilkinson 1994:103).²²³

The hieroglyph representing the West (*imenet*) where the sun set and the deceased found the afterlife, occurred in two forms, one upon which a falcon and a feather

²²² The same sign was used to write the names of the gods Shu and Ma'at.

²²³ The feather is most commonly recognised as representing Truth on the pans of the scale when weighed against the heart of the deceased in a funerary context. It could also be depicted held in the hand of the deceased, suggesting a successful judgement, or worn/held by the deities who constituted the divine tribunal in the afterlife as symbols of their office (Wilkinson 1994:103).

were placed and the other as a simplified form depicting a single plumed feather atop a rounded pole (Wilkinson 1994:167). This hieroglyph appears in a number of personifications, namely as the head of the goddess of the West, Imentet, who received the deceased: 'the perfect West: her arms will receive you.'

- Other iconographic uses of the feather were on *nemset* vessels used in ritual offering contexts such as the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony.²²⁴
- Four feathers to denote the cardinal points were used to adorn the ceremonial *meret* chests in ritual contexts.
- Two ostrich plumes were depicted flanking the tall crown of Osiris and a single or double ostrich feather with a distinctive midrib was characteristic of the *atef* crown worn by kings as well as the crowns of Isis, Amun and numerous queens.²²⁵
- Teeter (2010:2) mentions that feathers was a distinctive feature of Behdety, a form of Horus of Edfu, who was represented by a winged disk and whose epithet was 'dappled of plumage' (*s3b-sw*t).
- Numerous private and royal New Kingdom coffins were covered with a distinctive colourful design representing a mantle of feathers (known as *rishi*) with the protective wings of the deities Nekhbet and Wadjet encircling the shoulders and chest of the deceased (Teeter 2010:3).

Feathers have generally not survived well in the archaeological record and of those that have been found during excavations, usually as components of fans or pillows, little effort was made to accurately identify the specific bird species, especially as many disintegrated completely shortly afterwards.²²⁶ The phonetic value for 'fan' was

²²⁴ The ceremony was performed over the mummy or before statues of the deceased and was associated with the goddess of Truth.

²²⁵ Although comprising multiple symbolic and iconographic messages, and well attested to in reliefs and statuary, none of these fascinating crowns have survived in the archaeological record and will not be discussed in this study.

²²⁶ Eight fans once trimmed with brown and white ostrich plumes were recovered from Tutankhamen's treasures, reflecting not only the high demand but also the prestige associate with this particular species. One particularly fine, semi-circular, gold fan depicts scenes of an ostrich hunt and inscriptions on the staff confirm that the birds were 'bagged by the king while hunting in the desert east of Heliopolis', notes Teeter (2010:4). Ostrich feather fans feature prominently in scenes of royal processions and enthronement, where they were held close to the head of the king or deity. Feather fans (*sryt*) also served to represent army military standards, and given the hot, dry climate, the prestigious title 'fan bearer on the right of the king' was accorded to courtiers. Depictions in tombs indicate that feathered plumes were also worn by the horses that drew the king's chariot, as a mark of importance.

similar to that used for 'shade' (*swt*) and advises Teeter (2010:3). This was probably not because of the large size and beauty of the feathers but because of the association of the ostrich plume with the concept of *ma'at*, incorporating Truth and Cosmic Balance.

11.2.3 Interpretation

The intricately inlaid, spectacular cap headdresses testify not only to the wealth and sophistication of Thutmosis III's court but also to the exceptional skills of the court jewellers. The jewellery was designed as a powerful statement of their status in the harem (Scott 1964:234).

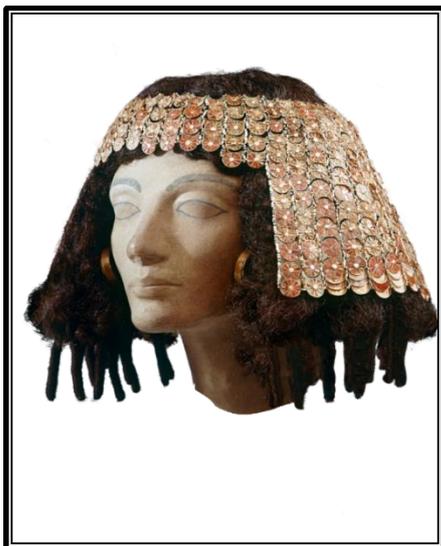


Figure 11.4a: Additional reconstruction of incomplete gold headdress from the tomb of the three princesses/foreign wives of Thutmosis III (c. 1450 BCE)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

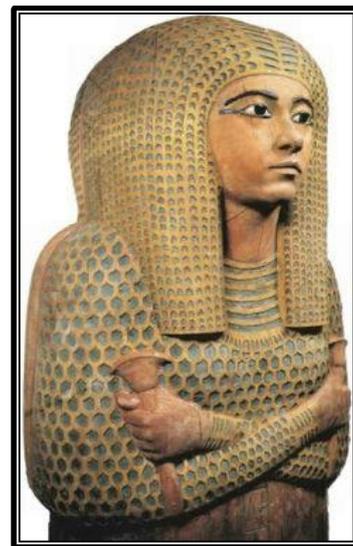


Figure 11.4b: 'Feathered' headdress on coffin cover of Queen Merytamun (18th Dynasty, New Kingdom)
[Cairo Museum]

The headpiece strongly resembles the form of a stylized wing or a feather fan and there is no doubt that the feathers bear a remarkable resemblance to the distinctive fans made from ostrich plumes. According to Wilkinson (2003:150), *Ma'at* was associated with Osiris and, as such, was also considered to be the sister of the reigning king. This relationship was thus important for the king's legitimacy, efficacy and harmony in the kingdom. The inclusion of the feather motif could thus possibly be interpreted that its owner, like her husband the king, was considered to be

beloved of the goddess Ma'at. The incorporation of red in the headdress was associated with Energy, Power, Life and the Sun. With the speculated inclusion of turquoise inlay in the head piece equated with 'delight' and combined with the feather motif with the qualities of Ma'at, it was thus perhaps an appropriate choice of symbolic colours, materials and motifs for a foreign princess who had left her familiar home and family when contracted into a diplomatic marriage under the hot sun and dangerous, unfamiliar desert landscapes of Egypt.

11.3 VULTURE HEADDRESS

Mention Egyptian queens and the fabulous golden vulture headdress worn by the infamous Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra VII, and generations of Dynastic royal women springs to the collective mind. The headdress takes the form of the feathered body and delicately detailed wings of a vulture with the body fitting closely to the wig or head like a cap while the 'tail descends over the occiput with each wing and leg falling on each side of the head behind the ear' (Aldred 1978:44). Of all the royal headgear, it is this particular one that has unfortunately not survived in the archaeological context, probably due to extensive tomb looting in ancient times. It has, however, been clearly represented on Dynastic statuary as being worn by, if not the Queen, then by a senior consort to the king. Nevertheless, associated evermore with Cleopatra, it has been copied and, more often than not, historically incorrectly reproduced/represented in various guises by artists, sculptors and theatrical costume designers (Tyldesley 2006:208).

The vulture headdress was originally associated with Nekhbet ('she of Nekheb'), the tutelary goddess of southern Egypt whose cult centre was Nekheb, the capital city of the 3rd Nome of Upper Egypt (Wilkinson 2003:213).²²⁷ From the Old Kingdom, Nekhbet was synonymous with the White Crown of Upper Egypt and thus closely associated with the king and, by extension, becoming his mythical mother.

²²⁷ Greek Hierakonpolis and the modern El-Kab, about 80 km south of Luxor.

The earliest evidence of the vulture headdress is a small sculpted alabaster head dated, on stylistic evidence, to the Old Kingdom. Although Meresankh III is usually credited with being the 'King's Daughter, King's Wife' of 4th Dynasty Khafre, Khamerernebtj I, Persenet and Hekenuhedjet have been suggested as additional wives, advises Tyldesley (2006:48), their relationships have been deduced from 'a series of cryptic references in their own and their children's tombs.' A broken statue of a head (as illustrated in Figure 11.5 below), found in close proximity to Khafre's pyramid and tentatively dated to his reign, may be the only representation of one of these three women. For the first time there is clear evidence of a royal woman wearing not only a royal headdress but what has been identified as the vulture headdress that would become so closely associated with the role and formal regalia of the Queen and 'Great Wife' in dynasties to come. There are too few Old Kingdom examples for any kind of study, but it has been speculated that the headdress may originally have been reserved for either the King's mother, or the mother of a future king (who may not have been the principal wife). It was Kahmerernebtj I and not Meresankh III, was the mother of Menkaure who succeeded Khafre, and captured on the small alabaster head wearing the vulture headdress. The headdress appears to have been used to stress the connection between the Queen and/or the Queen Mother and the divine, writes Tyldesley (2006:49), while also highlighting the gap between the queen consort (the 'Great Wife' and other lesser wives in the harem.

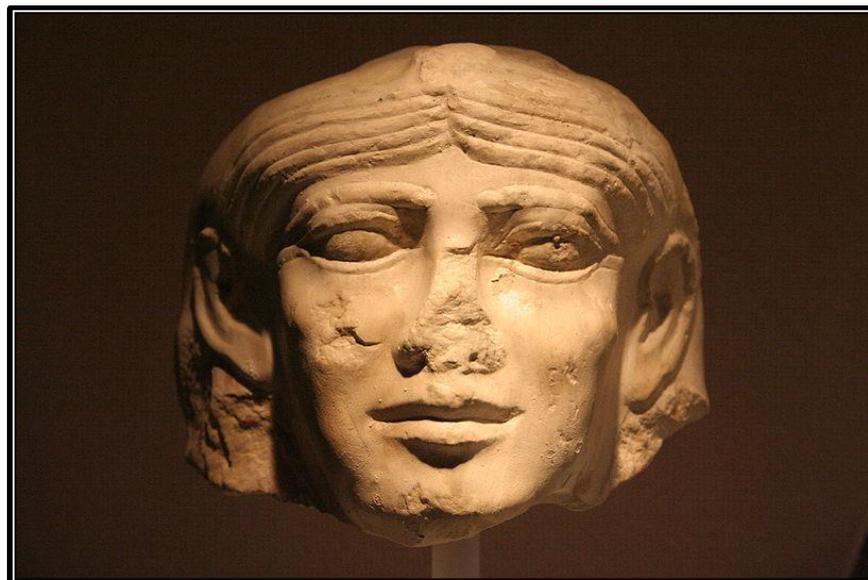


Figure 11.5: Alabaster sculpture of 4th Dynasty Queen of Khafre wearing a vulture headdress
[Ägyptisches Museum, Leipzig]

It is unclear whether this type of headdress was a new phenomenon or merely existing but unrecorded, since the time of 1st Dynasty Queen Neithhotep, generally assumed to be a daughter of the defeated northern chief, who became King Narmer's wife and thereby sealing his position and power.²²⁸ The name Neithhotep is translated as '[the goddess] Neith is satisfied' and the argument has been presented by Tyldesley (2006:27) that only a northern woman would be named for a goddess of the Delta region. It should be noted that the name Neith became associated with queenship and many of the Early Dynastic queens bore compound names incorporating it, writes Tyldesley citing Herneith and Meritneith as examples (2006:24, 27). She adds that additional fragments of female statuary wearing vulture headdresses were recovered from the pyramid complexes of both Khafre and Menkaure but unfortunately these were too damaged for identification (Tyldesley 2006:48).

11.3.1 Construction

It is difficult to ascertain from the depictions if this headdress was in fact composed of real vulture feathers sewn onto a type of cloth headdress, covered in layers of gesso with overlying gold leaf and manufactured anew for each wearer and thus not surviving the ages. An alternative theory is that it was in fact made from intricately formed plates or segments of gold foil, ornately inset with the lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian as represented in tomb paintings as for instance worn by Nefertiti and numerous other women in their role as Great Wife. The segmented and articulated ornate gold cap made up of myriad rosettes and recovered from the tomb of one of the wives of Tuthmose III, discussed in detail above, could provide valuable clues. That the headdress was made from gold-leaf over fabric or even vulture skin in a style similar to the *khat*, are points of conjecture made by Brunner-Trait (1977:515).

²²⁸ Neithhotep was never described as either a King's Great Wife or a King's Mother; these titles are not found before the 2nd Dynasty but is nevertheless described as 'Consort of the Two Ladies' (Nekhbet and Wadjet), 'Foremost of Women' (Tyldesley 2006:28). Her name, surmounted by the crossed arrows symbolising the goddess Neith, does however appear in a *serekh* (the rectangular box in which Early Dynastic kings wrote their names, and a predecessor to the cartouche).

The vulture headdress cannot be described as a crown in the truest sense but from representations on statues and reliefs it does, however, appear to be remarkably similar to the shape of the fully articulated cap headdresses. In appearance, the vulture, draped over the wearer's head, with the body and wings drooping down either side of the face. On the small wooden statuette of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari (wife to Amenhotep I and first King of the New Kingdom) there are vestiges of gilding on the headdress (see illustration 11.6 below) which may be used to infer that it was made from sheet gold, either cut into individual articulated elements attached to a head plate or hammered into a single raised shape.²²⁹



Figure 11.6: Wooden statue of Queen Ahmose Nefertari, wife of Amenhotep I (Deir el-Medina, 19th Dynasty c. 1500 BCE) [Louvre Museum]

On the wall paintings throughout the tomb of Nefertari, Great Wife to Ramses II, the vulture headdress is depicted as being painted yellow throughout, representing gold, which provides a valuable insight into the use of a single precious metal as illustrated in Figure 11.7a (page 227).

²²⁹ This elegant statuette is one of the most charming examples of small wooden statuary from the pharaonic era and according to the inscription was 'The Divine Spouse of Amun, the Great Royal Spouse, Mistress of the Dual Lands, Beloved of her father, Amun, Mother of the King, Ahmose Nefertari, vibrant, young, eternal as Ra, forever'.

However, in other wall paintings of queens, such as that of 18th Dynasty Ahmose-Nefertari (in the Theban tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky TT181) it is equally as clearly depicted as being primarily made of gold, but with distinct inlays of shades of blue, green and red (Figure 11.7b below). These can be construed as the greatly favoured lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian. If this is indeed the case, together with the large wig, it must have been exceptionally heavy to wear bearing in mind the weight of the reconstructed rosette cap headdress.

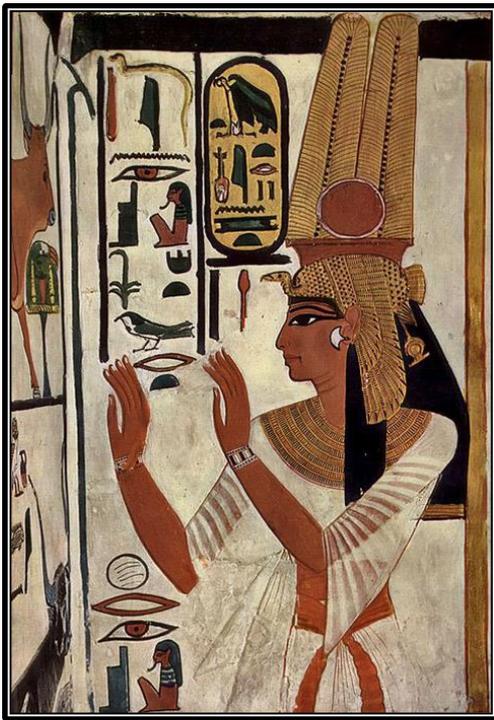


Figure 11.7a: Mural painting of Queen Nefertari wearing a gold vulture headdress (Valley of the Queens, Thebes, New Kingdom 19th Dynasty)

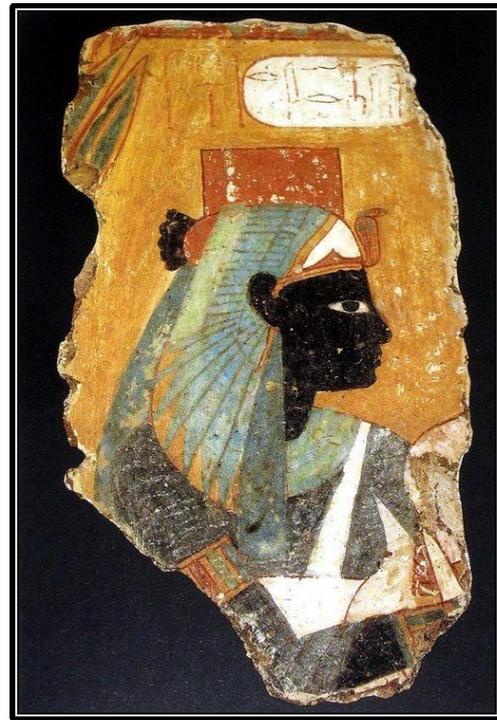


Figure 11.7b: Mural painting of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari wearing a blue vulture headdress (Theban Tomb TT 181, New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty)

A miniature rendition of the colourful, inlaid version of the vulture headdress has survived (Figure 11.8 page 228). It was probably originally destined for an inlay on wooden furniture or some form of cabinetry such as a stool or footstool. It clearly indicates the demarcation of the back plumage in what may be dark blue glass. The individual longer feathers have been laboriously inlaid with what appears to be turquoise, blue and white glass or faience, thereby providing evidence not only of the headdress but also the colour combinations.



Figure 11.8: Vulture headdress with inlay from statuette showing uppermost and inside (Ptolemaic period, 100-1 BCE – dimensions unknown)
[Cleveland Museum of Art]

11.3.2 Symbolism

Animals in various forms featured strongly even in the Egyptian minor arts such as jewellery. It is theorized that this was because animals were essentially experienced in three realms - the biological, the cultural and the conceptual (Klop 2008:19) and could thus be used to convey diverse symbolic and iconographic messages.

The Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvis*) characterised by a distinctive white head, neck and collar ruff and yellow bill, light coloured wings, dark flight feathers and short tail, first appeared in Egyptian art as early as the pre-Dynastic period, notes Houlihan (1986:40-41), apparently serving as the primary inspiration for representations (Figure 11.9a, page 229).²³⁰

The Lappet-faced, or Nubian vulture (*Torgos tracheliotus*), first appeared in Egyptian art in the 5th Dynasty and featured more regularly from the 12th Dynasty onwards,

²³⁰ The bare skin on their heads is useful for thermoregulation in hot, dry climatic conditions. The griffon vulture typically ranges from 93–122 cm in length with a broad wingspan of 2.3–2.8 m and weighs from 6.2 to 10.5–11.3 kg. It establishes nesting colonies in cliffs and can often be seen soaring in the thermals after sunrise to forage over a wide area.

writes Houlihan (1986:42). Distributed widely across Africa and occurring solitarily or in pairs, the Lappet-faced vulture is characterised by a featherless head and neck with large folds of dark pinkish skin (lappets) hanging on either side of the head and neck, a large, heavy hooked bill and large wings (Maclean 1996:106). Their preferred habitat is deserts with scattered trees in wadis, the dry savannah with minimal grass cover and open country with a scattering of thorn-bush trees.²³¹



Figure 11.9a: Eurasian Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvis*)



Figure 11.9b: Lappet-faced vulture (*Aegipius tracheliotus*)

In contrast, the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), also known as the ‘Pharaoh’s chicken’, is a petite, visually attractive bird. The plumage varies with shades of white and light beige to grey-brown depending on the age of the bird²³², with long neck feathers forming a hackle. The facial skin is an unmistakable yellow and un-feathered down to the throat. The pointed wings have black flight feathers and the tail, wedge-shaped. The bill, which may be black or a pale colour, is slender and long, and sharply hooked (Figure 11.9c, page 230).²³³

²³¹ The bald head of the lappet-faced vulture is an adaptation for cleanliness during and after feeding on carrion, usually arriving first on a site. The body feathers are generally a dark brown, with white thighs and a streaked belly. It is ranked as the largest and longest of the vultures. Unlike the Griffon vulture, lappet-faced vultures are generally solitary birds that do not nest in colonies.

²³² Immature birds are chocolate brown to blackish with black and white patches and adult plumage is usually attained after five years.

²³³ Unlike the larger and much heavier griffon and lappet-faced vulture species, the adult Egyptian vulture measures 47–65 cm (from beak point to tail feather extremity) with a wingspan of approximately 2.7 times that of the body length while its weight may vary from 1.9 to 2.4 kg (Maclean 1996:102-103).



Figure 11.9c: Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)

The vulture was strictly conventionalized when depicted in a number of formal poses in Egyptian art, namely standing; flying in profile; and guarding with outstretched wings. The Egyptian vulture was used in a number of different ways hieroglyphically, phonetically denoting the letter 'a' (G1, G2) while the Griffon vulture was used to indicate the word *mwt* 'mother' (G14).²³⁴ It is not always possible to discern which deity is represented by the vulture based on these iconographic details, but it is generally accepted, advises Wilkinson (1994:85) that a flying vulture represents the goddess Nekhbet represented writes Wilkinson (2003:214). Many depictions include the Nekhbet vulture holding the circular hieroglyphic *shen* sign representing 'Eternity' or wearing the White Crown.²³⁵ The image of the vulture was combined with that of the cobra in the *nebtj* ('two ladies') name of the Pharaoh.²³⁶ When depicted in anthropomorphic form, Nekhbet was shown as a woman wearing the vulture headdress. She was important in royal religious practices in a protective role and as such, was often incorporated into pieces of jewellery such as pectorals and pendants.²³⁷ Vultures were regarded as being good examples of motherhood, thereby emphasised the close connection between the queens, mother of the heir and the

²³⁴ The Egyptian vulture (G1 in Gardiner's list)  was used phonetically to indicate the letter 'a' 3 while the double vulture (G2)  was also used phonetically as in *m33* 'see'.

²³⁵ For a detailed investigation into the vulture clasping the *shen* sign, refer to Klop (2008).

²³⁶ The hieroglyph combining the vulture (Nekhbet) and the cobra (Wagjet)  (G16) was used phonetically to denote the *nebtj* 'Two ladies' name of the pharaoh.

²³⁷ Later, in the New Kingdom, Nekhbet was also venerated as protection during childbirth. Mut, worshipped in a human form as the consort of Amun, displacing Amaunet in the cosmogony and the Theban triad, was sometimes depicted in bird form.

uraeus-wearing king (Tyldesley 2006:49). The Egyptian word *mwt* (mother) was written using the much larger griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) hieroglyph.²³⁸

11.3.3 Interpretation

Wings of birds formed an important part of the Egyptian belief system²³⁹. Wilkinson (1994:101) explains in a very lovely visual image that, according to a very old Egyptian concept of the cosmos, the heavens 'were the great wings of a falcon (the god Horus), whose eyes were the sun and moon, and whose speckled underside was the starry sky'. Concurrent with a rise in importance of the solar cult during the 5th Dynasty, two wings flanking a sun disk (N5 in Gardiner's list) were introduced into the iconography which was attributed to the Sun god Re. The winged sun disk is most commonly associated as a protective symbol above the entrance doors of temples as well as the central axis of a temple roof where it was symbolic of the daily east-west passage of the sun overhead.²⁴⁰

Wings were attributes of the deities Isis and Nephthys, associated with the funerary cult in the protective and apotropaic contexts. Written in hieroglyphic form, the sign (H5) *ḏnh* was a determinative denoting 'wing'.²⁴¹ The goddess Ma'at, goddess of truth and personification of the combined concept of 'rightness, justice, truth and order, was often depicted embracing and protecting symbols of royalty (Tyldesley 2006:14-15). For this reason, encircling wings were positioned on royal New Kingdom coffins symbolising a protective embrace for eternity.

From the visual evidence, it appears that the important symbolism of the gold, blue and green materials which may have been used in the construction were indicative of the inherent magic in the materials played in the conceptualization and interpretation

²³⁸ The Griffon vulture  (G14) was used phonetically to denote *mt*, *mwt* 'mother'.

²³⁹ The earliest image is seen in the 1st Dynasty tomb of King Djed at Abydos, where the wings of the falcon were attached to the solar barque on which the bird was perched.

²⁴⁰ The curved upper section of the stela was symbolically associated with the arch of the heavens ( N1). Winged sun disks made an appearance in shrines and tombs and during the Saite and Late Periods atop round-topped votive stela that were erected along processional ways.

²⁴¹ 'Wing' *ḏnh* was written in hieroglyphics as 

of this particular type of female headdress. As no examples of the vulture headdress have survived, it may be possible to infer that, similar to the king's red and white crowns, this important item of royal female status and regalia may also have been conferred on the new or succeeding queen. As the new queen inherited the implied divinity and roles from her predecessor, the ornate and heavily symbolic vulture headdress made from gold or silver and intricately laid with lapis, turquoise and/or carnelian would thus not have been included in the funeral goods of the deceased queen. This may explain the complete lack of evidence of this fabulous headdress and the scholar can but speculate about its construction.

I propose that, given the protective 'dropped' stance of the vulture wings, the body and enfolding drooping wings framing the face on the vulture headdress can be interpreted as being symbolic of not only the elevated status of its wearer but together with the strong magical protection imbued by Isis, Ma'at and Mut, also of the queen of Egypt as the principle female/mother figure and consort of the divine person of the King.

11.4 NUBIAN VULTURE CAP HEADDRESS

Skullcap headdresses surmounted by double *uraei* were worn since the Old Kingdom but were generally associated with the Kushite kings of the 25th Dynasty (800-657 BCE), writes Török (1997:284). The crown (as illustrated in Figure 11.10, page 233) was referred to as *sdn* and was often depicted decorated with horizontal lines, large circular elements (possibly sequins) or a variety of natural shapes. Knowledge of Nubian clothing and jewellery is found not only in depictions on temple walls but also from elite burials attributed to the A-Group and C-group cultures, such as those excavated at Kerma by Reisner between 1906 and 1932²⁴². Close-fitting leather caps worn by both sexes and enriched with stone and faience beads were discovered in these graves together with ostrich plumes that would have been worn in the hair.

²⁴² The remnants of clothing such as loincloths, girdles, sandals, belts and caps indicate that leather obtained from the tanned hide of cattle, sheep, goats and gazelle was used.



Figure 11.10: Example of Cap headdress as illustrated in a bronze statuette of King Taharqa (25th Dynasty) [Louvre Museum]

The cap (often shown as blue in wall paintings and on statues) appears to have been worn under the white, red and double crowns as protection for the head but was also a headdress in its own right.

11.4.1 Construction

From prehistoric times, jewellery initially made using organic materials such as ostrich egg shell and bone and later from gold, faience and semi-precious stones, was worn by Nubian men and women as a form of adornment. Nubia was a source of rich raw materials for the ancient jeweller as gold but also amethyst, carnelian, mica and rock crystal were found in abundance. Gold jewellery originating in Napata and Meroe was highly developed and some of the finest earrings, finger rings, bracelets and anklets in the ancient world were produced south of Egypt.

The cap itself was most probably cut from soft leather or later, made from linen. The remnants of a partially decayed fine cambric-type linen cap, tied at the back of the head in a ribbon bow and secured to the temples by a sheet gold band, was found in place on Tutankhamun's mummy (Howard Carter Archives:256-4st). Four *uraei* made of minute red and blue glass and gold beads, and bearing a cartouche

containing the word *Aten*, were mounted on the skullcap. The style strongly resembles that worn by the deity Ptah and later adopted by the Nubian kings.

Reisner (1915:80, 1923:272-80) describes dazzling mica ornaments, cut into the shapes of birds, animals and botanical elements decorated with lines to emphasize feathers and other natural markings. It is thus possible that the horizontal lines and circular elements depicted on sculpture, temple reliefs and tomb paintings may have been appliquéd. These were worked onto the cap in elaborate designs (Hayes 1992:47). As illustrated in Figure 11.11 (below), one of the caps dating to 1650-1700 BCE, discovered during excavations of elite and female graves at Kerma, featured distinctive appliquéd mica ornaments in the shape of birds that strongly resemble vultures while other elements bear a striking resemblance to feathers. The ornaments are quite a substantial in size (birds 7 x 8 cm, feathers 1.5-1.8 cm and border bands 10.6 x 2.3 cm) with perforations to enable them to be attached to the cap.

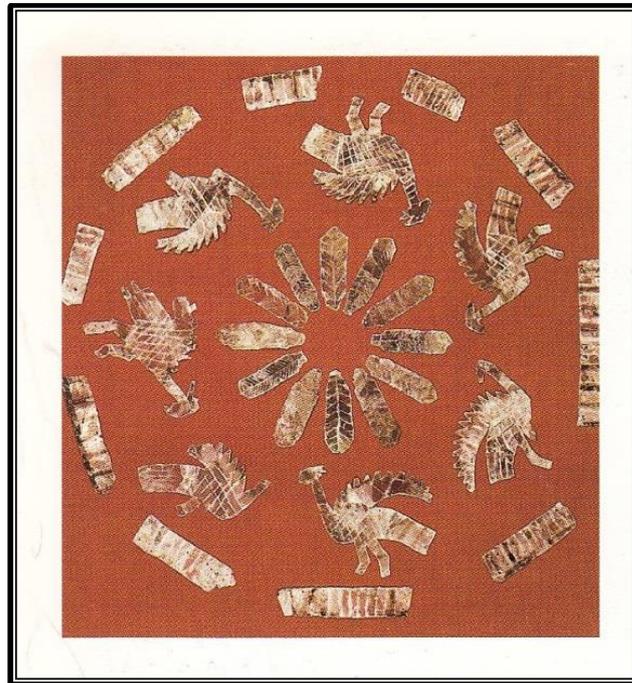


Figure 11.11: Elaborate mica ornaments resembling vultures that were appliquéd to a leather cap (Kerma c. 1650-1700 BCE)
[Boston Museum of Fine Arts]

Kozbusiewicz *et al* (2009:149) refers to pieces of mica discovered on undisturbed skeletal remains during excavations at Neolithic family group cemeteries situated at

Gebel Ramlah, in the southern region of the Western Desert. The pieces of mica are understood to have been adult grave goods. While there were some substantially-sized irregularly shaped sheets (20 cm in diameter and almost 1 cm thick), others were identified as the surprising but distinctive shape of tilapia fish with clearly demarcated eye. The find clearly substantiates the importance of mica during the pre-Dynastic period and its adoption as a form of embellishment by the Nubians and Kushites at a later date.

11.4.2 Symbolism

The style most closely resembles the caps worn by the deity Ptah, who, in the Memphite theology,²⁴³ was responsible for the creation of the Universe, the patron of craftsmen and creator of the geographically and economically important Old Kingdom city of Memphis. Ptah was attested in art in essentially the same format from as early as the 1st Dynasty (Wilkinson 2003:124). Statues were sometimes mounted on a narrow plinth which was suggestive of the primeval mound notes Wilkinson (2003:126). He is usually depicted as a distinctively straight-bearded²⁴⁴, standing, anthropomorphic figure wearing a tightly-wrapped garment and close-fitting skull cap that does not bear any ornamental elements (although sometimes two tall plumes are added).

Ptah was often depicted holding a tall sceptre that combines the three powerful symbols of ancient Egyptian power and magic, namely the *was* sceptre (Power), surmounted by the *djed* pillar (Stability) and topped by the *ankh* symbol (Life). It is believed that *was* (*w3s*) sceptre (*S40*)²⁴⁵ was originally a herdsman's staff that, over time and with changing beliefs, evolved into fetish, imbued with the spirit of a sacred animal. The sceptre consisted of a straight shaft, forked at the base and surmounted transversely by an element which has been interpreted variously as a bull's sexual

²⁴³ The 25th Dynasty, Nubian King Shabaka transcribed onto a stela, an old theological document found in the archives of the temple library of the god Ptah located at Memphis. Called the Memphite Theology, the stela is also known as the Shabaka Stone.

²⁴⁴ As opposed to the curved divine beard found on representations of other Egyptian gods such as Osiris.

²⁴⁵ The *was* sceptre (Gardiner's List S40)  was used phonetically in 'w3s-scepter' and as an ideogram in *i3tt* 'milk', 'cream'.

organs or the head of zoomorphic creature. As an attribute and emblem, the iconography was used in connotation with 'Power' and 'Dominion', explains Wilkinson (1994:181). The was sceptre was depicted since the earliest times as being carried by deities and kings.

Ptah was referred to as 'Noble *Djed*', notes Wilkinson (1994:165), who adds that the written *djed* sign appears in the hieroglyphic inscription 'All protection, life, stability, dominion and health ... are behind him'. The origins of the iconography and symbolism pertaining to the *djed* pillar (R11)²⁴⁶ are uncertain but it is theorised that the sign may represent sheaves of grain or bundles of reeds tied together.²⁴⁷ The *djed* was a popular amulet for regenerative power and stability usually associated with Osiris. Raising the *djed* pillar was ritual performed for the deceased king by the royal successor festival, writes Wilkinson (1994:165), possibly representing both rebirth and the establishment of stability for the new reign and for the cosmos itself. The *djed*, the *ankh*, was and *tjet*, the 'Isis knot (V39) were frequently grouped in repetitive decorative signs, particularly around the bases of temple columns, denoting 'all life, stability and power'.

Ptah played an indirect role during the 'opening of the mouth' ceremony performed on funerary statues and mummified deceased by the *setem* priest who used a metal chisel, suggestive of the deity's creative role.²⁴⁸ Patron deity and *wer-kherp-hemu* 'great leader of craftsmen', Ptah was particularly venerated at sites where there was an extensive arts and crafts workforce (Wilkinson 2003:124).²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ The *djed* column (Gardiner's list R11)  was used phonetically to represent *ḏd* in 'stable/stability'. Given the strong agricultural linkages of Egyptian society, I query that it is believed by many that it represents the human backbone; although body parts such as arms and legs are used hieroglyphic signs, human bones (e.g. skulls) are not used.

²⁴⁸ This may be due to a lack of importance in funerary context or alternatively, a relative lack of importance of the Memphite deities in an era dominated by the Heliopolitan theology, or even due to the geographical association but eventually Ptah fulfilled several important roles. In the Memphis triad, Ptah was believed to be the husband of Sekhmet and father of Nefertum. Ptah bore honorific titles in inscriptions such as *nefer-her* 'merciful of face' and *nefer-maat* 'lord of truth' indicating importance to his devotees.

²⁴⁹ Ptah was later associated with the Greco-Roman gods Hephaistos and Vulcan, both involved in metal-smithing.

11.4.3 Interpretation

Ptah was credited with founding '*Ineb-hedj*' ('white walls') which developed into the important city of Memphis, the administrative capital (Wilkinson 2003:124) during the period of unification of Upper and Lower Egypt around 3000 BCE. By the Middle Kingdom, Ptah was given the epithet 'Lord of Ankh-tawy' also referring to the city of Memphis. Ptah was also venerated in Nubia where there is evidence in a number of temples such as the group of statues in the inner sanctum at Abu Simbel which may account for the iconographically important skull-cap. There is thus a strong possibility that the wearing of the cap headdress was related to the mythologically important city-founding function. The dazzling mica ornaments in the shapes of birds, animals and botanical that were worked onto the surviving Kushite example cap and also seen on that worn by Shabaka (as illustrated in Figure 11.11, page 233 above) would have blinked and shone in the sunlight, possibly creating the impression of a halo of bright light around the head of the king. This would have visually added to the illusion of divinity and, given the association of the cap headdress with the god Ptah's attributes thereby enhancing the concept of 'all life, stability and power' for the wearer.

11.5 CONCLUSION

Heavy, ornate cap headdresses appear to have formed part of court regalia and although only two New Kingdom examples have been found, the style is well documented in Egyptian art. In all probability, this category of headdress was designed for formal occasions. There is evidence that the wig component was dressed in advance and could be kept in storage. Cap headdresses in a variety of designs have been well-documented in the artistic record indicating that the style was quite favoured and appear to have been worn and enjoyed during life.

A magnificent example was among the possessions of the three foreign wives of Thutmose III. The heavy shoulder-length headdresses appears to have been articulated allowing for draping over the wig and shows signs of wear and repair. The context of the headdress has been largely lost and the reconstruction is

considered fairly accurate based on representations in antiquity. The feather motif on the head-piece was considered an important aspect of this headdress in mythological and iconographical contexts representing the concepts of Truth and Cosmic Balance.

The surviving cap headdresses were used to infer the construction and embellishment of the instantly recognisable vulture crown of which there are no examples. This may be as a result of it being conferred on successive queens as an important item of state regalia or due to extensive looting of burial goods in antiquity. Vulture iconography was used extensively throughout the Dynastic period as it denoted the connection between the queen and the divine Mut and Nekhbet. The distinctive vulture cap featured extensively in the iconography of Egyptian queen-consorts from the Old Kingdom until the Ptolemaic era. Based on artistic evidence, it is proposed that the vulture headdress's construction may also have been segmented and articulated on a head-plate similar to the construction of the 'Great Headdress'. Given a miniature rendition, it is proposed that headdress may have been interpreted by jewellers in keeping with other examples of jewellery from the same period, as having been multi-coloured with intricate inlay and thus more spectacular than we can ever imagine. Without evidence from an intact queen's tomb complete with a cache of state jewellery this interpretation will remain a speculative but exciting prospect.

Snugly-fitting cap headdresses made from leather or textile a seldom used precious material, also appear to have been favoured as a head covering. Caps embellished with mica were most especially favoured by Kushite royal men and women. It is interesting to note that images of vultures, common in Egyptian feminine iconography, were used as appliquéés on this particular example.

CHAPTER 12: HAIR AND WIG ORNAMENTS

Abstract

An alternative form of feminine adornment was hair and wig ornaments worn over twisted locks, braids and elaborate hair extensions that hung over the back and shoulders. These ranged from elaborate arrangements of linked gold elements to simple amulets and clasps tied to the ends of plaits or the side-locks worn by children. Middle Kingdom diadems combined with wig and hair coverings invoking shimmering cascades of sunlight have survived relatively intact in the archaeological record. These headdresses appear to have been a fairly common ornament and would have been worn at a variety of events during their owner's lifetime. Three examples of wig ornaments will be investigated in this chapter together with two splendid examples of an amulet designed to be worn at the end of a lock of hair and intended for both decorative and amuletic purposes.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a wealth of pictorial material depicting Egyptian women and their varied hair and wig styles throughout the Dynastic period. Ornaments were a way of decorating the natural hair and wigs, depending on the wearer's personal preference. Tyldesley (1994:54) notes that ancient societies exerted a certain amount of control in the manner in which women were permitted to display their hair and conventions that had to be observed. Women wore their hair naturally long or cropped short or clean-shaven. This was done according to religious practices and to mitigate the heat. And as attested by evidence of nits on fine-toothed combs, also for hygiene reasons. Riefstahl (1956:10-17), describes hair pins or hair sticks carved from wood, ivory, bone or fashioned from precious metals were used from the Naqada period onwards to hold long hair, beaded diadems/headdresses and elaborate hairstyles in place.²⁵⁰

12.2 DRESSING THE HEAD

In Egypt's climate, some kind of protection was necessary to shield the exposed head from the blazing sun but, unlike other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the practice of wearing hats of any kind or cloth turban substitute for hats, observes

²⁵⁰ Although the tops of hair pins were ornamented with a variety of floral, faunal and other decorative and amuletic motifs, these will however not be discussed in this investigation and has the potential to form a focussed study based on examples housed in various European, American and Egyptian museums.

Winlock (1933:156), was never adopted. Wilkinson (1971:75) does, however, describe tall cylindrical headdresses resembling top-hats which were worn by servants in the Middle Kingdom. An example of this particular headdress is a carved wooden head (5.6 cm in height), dating to approximately 1800 BCE which was found during an excavation at Deir el-Bersha. Reade (2015:239-262) discusses the Assyrian and Babylonia adoption of cylindrical headgear (similar to a *polos*)²⁵¹ possibly manufactured out of felt surmounted by tall cones. Further embellishment included diadems and the addition of long ribbons attached at the back. Remnants of paint on wall panels indicate that rosettes that appear to have been applied onto these headdresses were generally painted white or yellow, indicating that in reality these embellishments were originally stamped out of silver or gold. This particular style of headdress was worn by gods/goddesses (with the addition of horns), kings, queens and courtiers. In the Late Assyrian period, courtiers were depicted donning turbans distinctively wound around the head in what is considered a mark of rank. Instead, in Egypt the draped *nemes* and tied cloth bag-looking *khat* head coverings were favoured. Elaborate wigs were worn by both men and women (Peck 2013:62). The neighbouring Nubians favoured close-fitting leather caps, embellished with a variety of appliqué-like shapes made from mica (Haynes 1991:47).

Scott (1983/1984:34) refers to an interesting openwork sard²⁵² plaque which was probably set into a gold bracelet.²⁵³ Illustrated in Figure 12.1 (page 241), it depicts Queen Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III (18th Dynasty), as a crouching winged female sphinx wearing an unusual headdress. Arms extended, Tiye embraces the king's cartouche inscribed 'Nebmaatre', his pronomen (Johnson 2015:51). Based on a limestone relief in a Nubian temple, Tiye was indeed represented as a female sphinx. She is shown wearing a tall platform crown, similar to that favoured by Queen Nefertiti, secured by a ribbon bound around the headband. The headdress has been construed a turban-type headdress bounded by a fillet of some kind, surmounted by what has been identified as either a collection of feather plumes or

²⁵¹ The tall, tapering hat adopted by the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti bears striking similarity to the *polos*, hinting at a foreign Assyrian, Babylonian or possibly even Mycenaean influence.

²⁵² the dark brownish version of carnelian

²⁵³ Johnson (2015:51) queries the veracity of the piece, citing convincing evidence of skilled forgery at time of purchase in Luxor by Howard Carter in 1912. An additional two plaques of similar size and shape but carved from top quality gem carnelian were purchased as part of the same lot are, however, considered to be genuine and the product of a royal workshop.

stylised vegetation notes Johnson (2015:53) quoting observations by Kozloff, Bryan & Lawrence (1992). What appears to be a large, heavy earring or a side-lock of hair is also visible.



Figure 12.1: A carnelian plaque representing Queen Tiye (wife of Amenhotep III) as a winged sphinx (18th Dynasty c. 1390–1352 BCE, L. 3.4 cm, W. 4.9 cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art]

The floral element bears a strong resemblance to the carefully arranged mixed lotus and papyrus blooms sported by the cataract goddess Anukis and thus having a strong linkage to Nubian iconography (Kozloff, Bryan & Lawrence 1992) in Johnson 2015:53).

- The unusual headdress has been associated with the goddess Tefnut, advises Aldred (1978:216. In the Heliopolitan theology, Tefnut was the daughter of Atum and Shu and, according to Wilkinson (2003:183), was associated with life-giving atmospheric moisture and thus rejuvenation.
- A similar but taller headdress was also depicted as being worn by Horemheb's queen, Mutnodjmet, also in the guise of a winged female sphinx on a throne base.²⁵⁴ In this particular example the floral element is, without doubt, stylised lotus flowers and buds.
- This particular headdress bears a striking resemblance to the unique tall blue headdress adopted later by Queen Nefertiti, wife of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten

²⁵⁴ The scene was originally captured as an engraving by Compollion le Jeune in 1824. The throne base is currently housed in the Egyptian Museum in Turin, Italy.

and can possibly be interpreted as being a forerunner. Arnold (1997:107) considers Nefertiti's most frequently depicted crown as emphasising 'her all-important role as female counterpart of the king in the great scenario of the daily renewal of Creation'.

- Although it was originally speculated that the mythical sphinx-like creature and the strange, foreign-looking headdress on this plaque points to close connections, possibly by the manufacturer, with Asiatic lands, as a similar headdress/hairstyle was worn by the Syrian goddess Anat, observes Arnold (1997:107), an alternative theory is that this was created as a blending of Egyptian and Asian imagery.²⁵⁵

Wigs, false braids and hair extensions made from human hair or wool were limited to the elite and worn to fill-out their own hair so that it appeared to be more abundant and luxurious. Similar types of head coverings made from cheaper materials were worn by less wealthy women. Depending on the fashion, the wig hair could be plaited into numerous little braids, slightly curled or tight, crinkly waves. These were generally bound together to form tassels or could be divided into a tripartite style, hanging over the back and shoulder (Winlock 1933:156). At times heavily perfumed, wig lengths and styles varied according to taste and changing fashions. Additional hair pieces were also worn to hide deficiencies such as thinning or greying. There is evidence of a high-status female who in the Old Kingdom was 'Overseer of the Wig Workshop' advises Graves-Brown (2010:84).

Natural hair was elaborately braided according to personal taste or the particular fashion of the day. Women originally adorned these braids with simple bone combs and hairpins but later adopted a variety of simple animal forms fashioned from ivory, bone, stone or faience²⁵⁶. In the tale of The Two Brothers, Anpu and Bata, Lichtheim (1976:204) relates that when one of the two returned home, the narrator informs that 'His young brother found the wife of his elder brother seated braiding her hair.' As translated by Lichtheim (1976:191), further evidence for hairdressing is found in Papyrus Harris:

²⁵⁵ King Amenhotep III's name on a similar bracelet plaque indicates a close connection with the *Heb Sed* jubilee festivities and the bracelets may have been made to commemorate this.

²⁵⁶ The inherent symbolism and iconography exhibited by combs and hairpins has the potential for a separate investigation.

‘My heart thought of my love of you,
When half of my hair was braided;
I came at a run to find you,
And neglected my hairdo.
Now if you let me braid my hair,
I shall be ready in a moment.’

From surviving examples as well as artistic representations, it appears that the complex wigs worn by women could be dressed and ornamented in advance. It is proposed some of the elaborate composite headdresses such as the intricate cap and vulture headdresses were constructed directly onto a wig to form a complete unit designed to be worn on specific state or cultic occasions. A number of elite tombs contain heavy, elaborately styled wigs on stands but the actual headdresses are missing.

Ornaments were a way of decorating the natural hair or the wig, depending on the wearer’s personal preference. The burials of Middle Kingdom’s Lady Seneb-tisi and Princess Sit-Hathor-lunet²⁵⁷ both contained fine examples of this practice. They differ in design and, unlike the Old Kingdom diadems that have been discovered, were designed to be worn and enjoyed during their owners’ lifetimes.

12.3 HAIR ORNAMENTS OF SENEB-TISI

Seneb-tisi’s shaft tomb and adjacent chamber contained offerings, a coffin and a canopic chest.²⁵⁸ Some jewellery were found outside the wrappings, while other items were still hidden inside (Wilkinson, 1971:52). Despite being rifled and destroyed in antiquity, the excavators discovered Seneb-tisi’s ‘charmingly, delicate gold wire circlet’ still resting on her head. As Seneb-tisi was titled ‘Mistress of the House’, it has been construed that she was probably a close family member of the Vizier Sen-wosret. Although a number of diadems have been found belonging to elite women, this particular design remains unique. As the wig had mostly perished,

²⁵⁷ The name is sometimes written as Sit-Hathor-**Yunet**, depending on the translation.

²⁵⁸ The tomb was discovered during the 1906-07 excavations at el-Lish, in the environs of the ruined pyramid of King Ammenemes I (c. 1991-1062 BCE). Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), working in the environs of the ruined pyramid of King Ammenemes I (c. 1991-1062 BCE - 12th Dynasty).

the attachment of the multiple gold rosettes that formed part of the headdress was not immediately obvious and it took some experimentation during the reconstruction process to figure out the arrangement (Winlock 1933:157; Wilkinson 1971:70). Initially thought to be sequins for attachment to a garment of some sort, it was later ascertained that these could indeed have been hair ornaments in the form of graduated daisy-like rosettes that had been attached to her wavy hair (Winlock 1933:157). The overall effect of the intertwined, continuous gold wire loops and its pendant rosettes is light and airy and a fitting adornment for a young noblewoman.

12.3.1 Construction

The circlet comprised twisted gold wires coiled in a series of continuous loops to form a loosely interlinked chain (Figure 12.2, page 245). Winlock (1933:157) describes that provision was made in the centre front of the circlet for a pendant attachment. The central pendant decoration for the forehead is unusual and has been construed as representing two rearing cobras. If this was the intended design then concept and interpretation was very simplistic. What has been interpreted as the centre pendant may merely have been a device designed to attach both ends together, holding a separate, removable pendant attachment which was never placed on the head during the entombment.

A series of loops along the side were for the attachment of small rosettes, arranged in fourteen rows of seven each. Wire was widely used in the manufacture of ancient Egyptian jewellery and Ogden (1992:46) explains that gold wire loops would have been made using either the hammering or the spiral coiling method. It has apparently not been possible to determine which method was used



Figure 12.2: Looped gold wire headdress of 12th Dynasty Princess Seneb-tisi
(Lisht, c. 1859–1770 BCE; H. 3.4 cm, circ. 56.5 cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

Aldred (1978:114) indicates that the rosettes were made by beating gold sheet into daisy-shaped moulds as illustrated in Figure 12.3a (page 246). The larger rosettes (1.5 x 1.5 cm) have sixteen radiating petal-like divisions, the smaller versions have twelve divisions. The larger rosettes have a thin gold bar soldered across the back and would have been threaded directly onto the wig. The smaller rosettes were pierced with two holes to accommodate threads for attachment. The gold-foil rosettes were initially thought to be some form of wig decoration as reconstructed in Figure 12.3b (page 246). The burial photographs indicates that they were found closely grouped together. It has subsequently been suggested that, based on the small size of the rosettes, they were originally sewn onto a piece of folded or rolled or folded cloth, rather than spaced apart on hair.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ There is pictorial evidence that rosettes were sometimes used to decorate imitation leopard skins and cloaks.

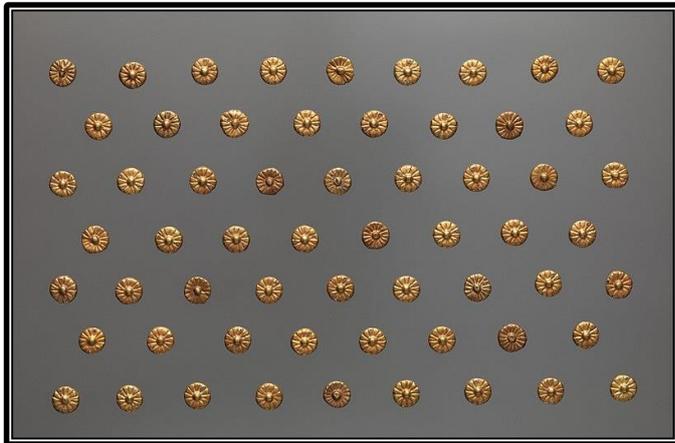


Figure 12.3a: Gold foil rosettes from the burial of Senebitsi (Measurements 1.2 cm x 1.2 cm)

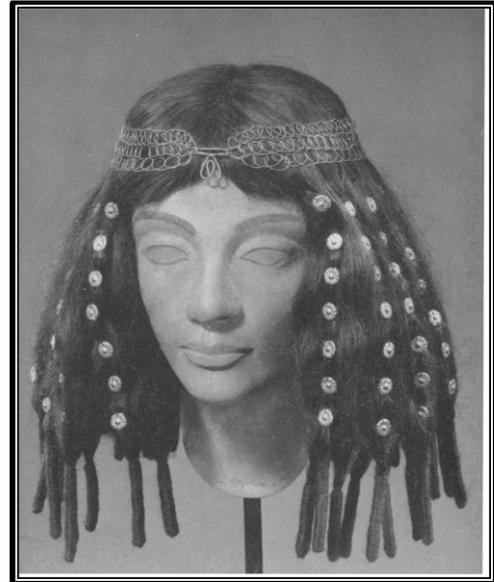


Figure 12.3b: Reconstructed version of gold looped diadem together with rosettes as envisaged by Winlock (1948)²⁶⁰

12.3.2 Symbolism

The daisy-like rosettes closely resemble chamomile flowers, a popular Dynastic jewellery motif. Gold, synonymous with wealth and valued as a divine and imperishable substance, was perceived to have supernatural qualities and symbolic of Sun and Eternal Life. Wilkinson (1999:83) elaborates that while Hathor bore the epithet the 'Golden One', Isis and her sister Nephthys were also associated with gold, often being placed above *nub*, the hieroglyph for gold; all of three of the goddesses were associated with protection (Wilkinson, 1992:171). The rosettes would have sparkled and, given the number threaded together, possibly even tinkled when their wearer moved, providing not only a pleasing visual but also an aural aspect to the hair decoration.

Wilkinson (1999:16) writes that 'the relationship of form, symbolism and magical function may be seen in almost every class of object found in Egyptian culture – from some of the smallest items of personal adornment to the architectural programs of massive temple complexes'. In the design of the wire hair ornament, the principal

²⁶⁰ The modern wig used in the display serves to illustrate ancient Egyptian wig styles and was not found *in situ* with the headdress.

component was the headdress of intertwined gold circles. Without beginning or end, the circle evoked the concept of Eternity as depicted in hieroglyphics and was represented by the *shen* sign. The origin of the word is found in the root *shenu*, meaning 'to encircle' and is also associated with the concept of protection (Wilkinson 1992:193). The sign is more familiar in its elongated form surrounding the Egyptian king's birth and throne names, known as the cartouche. Wilkinson notes that, when associated with protection, the hieroglyph was associated with Heh, the god who personified Infinity and Eternity, often forming the base of the notched palm-branch and thereby symbolising years.²⁶¹ The frog-headed goddess Heqat is sometimes depicted sitting atop a *shen* sign. The *shen* ring was associated with the avian forms of Horus, the falcon and the vulture goddesses Mut, Isis and Nekhbet who were frequently depicted in a posture of protection with outstretched wings, holding the sign in their claws. Given the divine connections and denoting Eternity and protection, the *shen* also appears on the vulture cap worn by the Great Royal Wife.

12.3.3 Interpretation

As the sign has been related to solar symbolism linked with the encircling of the Sun and thus the realm of both Re and the King (Wilkinson 1992:195), the intertwined gold loops have been interpreted as continuous *shen* rings. Interlinked, continuous, encircling circular rings-without-end would thus have been considered to have had very important magical and apotropaic functions in a headdress.

12.4 HAIR ORNAMENTS OF SIT-HATHOR-YUNET

Sit-hathor-Yunet's hair ornaments comprised ninety-eight tubes of short, beaten sheet-gold that were interspersed at regular intervals along the braided tresses of a wig. Thanks to careful excavation and documentation, it has been possible to reconstruct the placement of the additional hollow, tubular gold beads found with the inlaid gold headdress fairly accurately.

²⁶¹ *Ouroboros*, the serpent which bites its own tail, is another interpretation of this concept of Eternity

12.4.1 Construction

Aldred (1971:34) considers the effect of the two sizes of tube as giving the appearance of a 'complete gold reticulation' covering the wig. There is, however, no clear evidence that the tubes were ever attached to the diadem itself and Winlock (1933:157) suggests that these could possibly have been threaded onto individually braided plaits or locks of hair but seems certain that they may have been strung in continuous strands. He reasons that if they had been placed at intervals along the plaits they would probably have slipped down out of place mainly when the wig was worn. It was noted that the majority of the tubes were double the size of the others which baffled the reconstruction efforts.

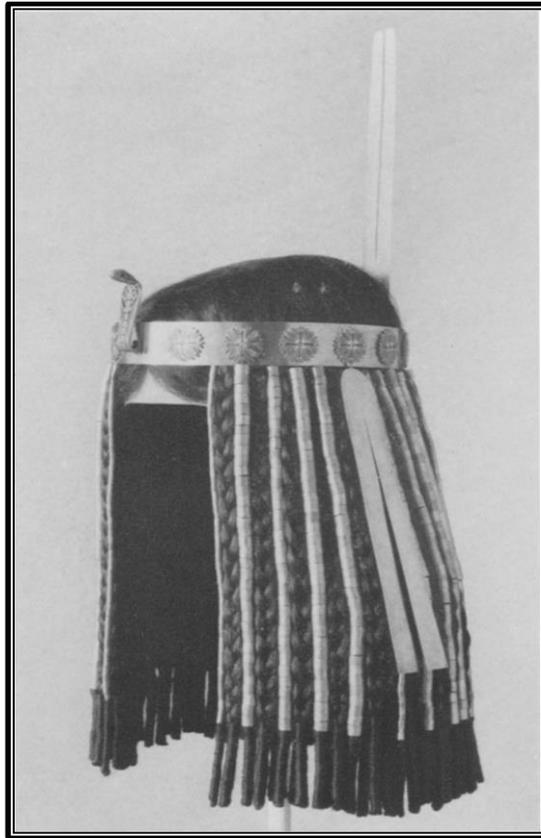


Figure 12.4: Reconstruction and arrangement of graduated gold tubes on headdress²⁶² of Sit-hathor-Yunet as proposed by Winlock

Eventually, the large tubes were arranged in twenty-four strands and the smaller tubes in seven, all the same length and held in place by a bound, tassel-like ending.

²⁶² The modern interpretation of the wig is for display purpose only and was not found with the headdress, but does indicate a different style of wig that was bound at the bottom to prevent fraying.

In this way, they could be arranged around the wig in a pattern of one thin strand between every four thick strands as illustrated in Figure 12.4 (page 248). Given Sit-Hathor-Yunet's petite stature, the strands would probably have hung just over her shoulders (Winlock 1933:158).

12.4.2 Symbolism and Interpretation

As with Seneb-tisi's rosettes, the tubular gold beads and the potentially interesting interlacing would have accentuated the visual symmetry of the braiding, providing a visually pleasing effect that would have invoked shimmering sunlight and visual association with the Sun god, Re. Combined with Sit-Hathor-Yunet's diadem, the strands of gold tubes would have resulted in a headdress of some considerable weight which had the potential of making a pleasant clicking sounds as the wearer moved, thereby evoking an aural sense not only in the wearer but also those around her.

12.5 HAIR ORNAMENTS OF QUEEN MERYET-AMUN

According to the report by Winlock (1932:9)²⁶³, at the time of her death, Meryt-Amun, wife of Amenophis II and daughter of Tuthmose III, was about fifty years old. She was short but slender in stature with wide cheeks, a high-bridged nosed and pointed chin. Her brown wavy hair without a trace of grey was supplemented by numerous false braids and additional tresses of human hair of the same colour, creating an elaborate hairstyle that covered her shoulders. The mummy was robbed of the amulets and treasures contained in the wrapping in antiquity. Impressions were left on the head of garlands that were placed around the brow, leaving the top of the head uncovered (Wilkinson, 1971:118).

²⁶³ The tomb of 18th Dynasty Queen Meryt-Amun was discovered in February 1929 during an expedition led by Harry Burton of the Metropolitan Museum.

12.5.1 Construction

Winlock (1932:14) notes that the garland pattern was confusing making it almost impossible to discern definite design elements.²⁶⁴ Placed slightly higher than the other elements was a smooth metal band (8 mm wide) that was probably decorated on the outside. Lying below but not attached to it or each other, were three strings of beads forming the basis for three different floral elements.²⁶⁵ It has been speculated that these could have been made from faience, glass or semi-precious stone. An unusual element was the row of pomegranates (7.5 x 5 mm). Although smooth on the reverse, these were probably either chased or inlaid on the front with an additional bead soldered to it for suspension purposes. Also suspended, was a row of leaf-shaped pendants or petals (55 x 10 mm). Wilkinson (1971:118) advises that garland headdresses made from natural or imitation leaves were favoured by women. There was also faint evidence of another row of pendants made up of branching wires ending with an oval bead, simulating sprays of buds. Winlock (1932:15) also notes that minute flakes of gold were detected in the assemblage, suggesting that some of the elements may have been gilded.

12.5.2 Symbolism

Headdresses similar to these described above would have been a fairly common ornament for 18th Dynasty women and would in all probability have been worn at events such as festivals and banquets. Given the degraded and damaged state of the human remains, apart from the indentations, it has been impossible to identify what kinds of leaves or petals might have been represented on the garlands but there is a good chance that these would have included the all-important lotus flower denoting not only Upper Egypt and Nefertum patron deity of medicine and healing, but also the concepts of Creation and Resurrection. Wilkinson (19971:118) indicates that imitation leaves and other botanical elements such as cornflowers, mandrakes and lotuses would have been fashioned from faience or glazed composite and not necessarily made from precious metals (see Figures 12.5a and 12.5b, page 251).

²⁶⁴ Regrettably, it has not been possible to obtain a clear and reliable illustration of this assemblage.

²⁶⁵ The average size of the beads is 1 mm thick with a diameter of 2.5 mm.



Figure 12.5a: Example of 18th Dynasty faience leaf bead with suspension loop
 (Measurements: 24 x 8 x 4 mm)
 [Liverpool Museum]



Figure 12.5b: Example of an 18th Dynasty blue and green faience cornflower (c. 1352 - 1336 BCE,
 Measurements: 22 x 11 x 4.5 mm)
 [Liverpool Museum]

12.5.3 Interpretation

Pomegranates were by no means unusual in Egyptian jewellery design and especially during the Amarna period, were made from colourful faience and often incorporated into the broad, beaded collars and as pendants on heavy and ornate New Kingdom earrings. The pomegranate flower was often included in real bouquets and garlands, and in this particular case in a diadem, represented possibly in faience or gold by the ancient Egyptians who viewed it as not only as a symbol of prosperity and ambition but also sexuality. Unlike Greco-Roman mythology which associates the pomegranate with fertility and the seasonal changes related to the disappearance of an underworld goddess (Persephone/Ceres), this particular myth does not appear in the Egyptian context. It is not surprising that craftsmen were inspired to incorporate pomegranate-shapes into jewellery (Capel & Markoe 1996:75) or that jewellers incorporated this motif into items of jewellery destined to be worn not only by the ordinary woman but also by royalty such as Queen Meryt-Amun.

12.6 HATHOR'S CURLS

There is sufficient pictorial evidence that women's wig and hair styles changed quite frequently over the Dynastic period. There is a noticeable correlation between the wealth of the Egyptian state and hair fashion. During the Old Kingdom, hair fashions were quite short and severe but these graduated to longer, shoulder lengths by the Middle Kingdom and to more elaborate curly styles during the height of the New Kingdom.



Figure 12.6a: Steatite statue of a 12th Dynasty woman wearing a “Hathor-style wig” (Middle Kingdom c. 1985 - 1850 BCE)
[Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, Swansea University]



Figure 12.6b: A fragment of a limestone statue of the goddess Hathor illustrating a wig embellished with narrow gold ribbons/bands and rosettes (presumed to be gold) (3rd century BCE)
[Louvre Museum]

During the Middle Kingdom, the ‘tripartite’ style was adopted; the hair, all the same length, hung free at the back of the head while two bunches were pulled forward to frame the face on either side as illustrated in Figure 12.6a (above). The bound sections could also be wrapped around a decorative flat disk or spool-shaped weight. According to Tyldesley (1994:157) this style was originally favoured by commoners and unmarried women with a lower social status but later the style came to be associated exclusively with goddesses (most specifically Hathor) and queens. The style gradually spread to higher-ranking women and by the 18th Dynasty, a more formal and intricate style developed that involved binding the two front sections with

wide ribbons. These ribbons were made from broad strips of woven textile or thin sheets of gold ribbon as illustrated in Figure 12.6b (page 252) together with what has been construed as metal rosettes have been clearly depicted on statues from these eras.

12.7 AMULETS AND PENDANTS

From elite to peasant, women chose to not only hold their hairstyles in place with a variety of intricate, inexpensive ornaments such as hairpins but also simple faunal forms fashioned from ivory, bone, stone or faience. Young girls are often depicted in sculpture and wall decoration wearing their natural hair long enough to plait into a single long braid or a side-lock (Figure 12.7 below). The 'Instruction of Anksheshonq' tells of the following wish, probably voiced by a young woman: 'May my mother be my hairdresser, so as to do for me what is pleasant.' (Lichtheim 1976:167). Braids were associated with not only with youth and sexuality which implied regeneration and rebirth, but also with Hathor.



Figure 12.7: 12th Dynasty black steatite cosmetic container in the shape of a girl wearing a fish pendant (c. 1981-1802 BCE - - H 7.8 cm, W 3.3 cm)
[British Museum London]

- Tyldesley indicates that dancers and acrobats wore their hair long, 'occasionally plaiting weights into the ends so that it gave a good swing when dancing' (1994:154).
- Wilkinson (1971:75) describes a 6th Dynasty harpist²⁶⁶ with her hair in a long plait with a disc or ball threaded through the end.
- Servant girls are depicted as wearing cylindrical hair-pendants.

12.7.1 Materials

Faience fish pendants, usually representing *tilapia*, were particularly popular and were worn as hair ornaments. As illustrated in Figure 12.7 (page 253) the small but beautifully detailed cosmetic container depicts a kneeling girl with a long braid down her adorned with a fish pendant. Wilkinson (1971:75) describes a number of interesting fish-shaped pendants found in Middle Kingdom tombs.²⁶⁷ Some of the fish pendants were made from plain gold, as illustrated in Figure 12.8a (below), silver and electrum while others were colourfully and intricately inlaid using glass or semi-precious stones in the cloisonné technique. As illustrated in Figure 12.8b (below) pendant could also encapsulates stones, exemplifying remarks Stünkel (2015). Both designs incorporated suspension loops attached to the mouth of the fish. Less expensive faience versions were also worn.

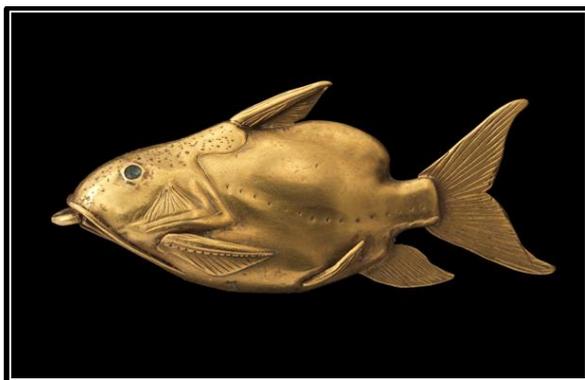


Figure 12.8a: Late 12th Dynasty gold fish pendant (c. 1878-1749 BCE)
(L 3.9 cm, H 1.6 cm)
[National Museums of Scotland]

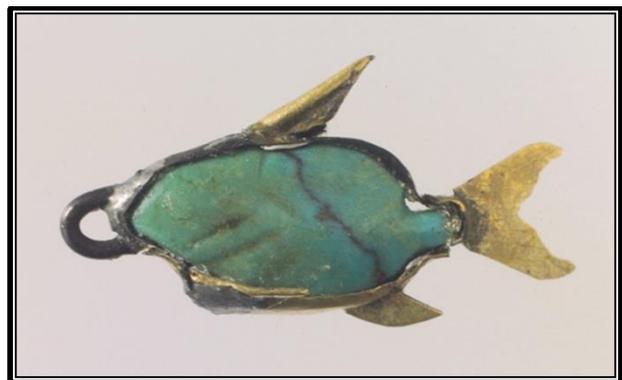


Figure 12.8b: Late 12th Dynasty turquoise and gold fish pendant (c. 1878-1749 BCE)
(L. 2.1 cm, H. 1 cm, Th. 0.4 cm)
[Metropolitan Museum of Art]

²⁶⁶ The harpist is depicted in the 6th Dynasty tomb of Pepy-‘ank-hir-ib at Meir.

²⁶⁷ A number of fish pendants have been found in child burial contexts, often with cowrie shell girdles.

12.7.2 Symbolism

Although fish a common food source for the majority of the population and are often represented in various art forms (Wilkinson 1994:111).²⁶⁸ Certain fish held special significance and the bulti fish *Tilapia nilotica*, known as *ienet* (K1 - *int*),²⁶⁹ were represented from the pre-Dynastic period in the form of palettes, lamps and pottery vessels. According to Egyptian mythology the spirit of the deceased was believed to rise from the waters of the afterlife just as the Sun arose from the primeval lake; as it incubates and hatches its eggs in its mouth the bulti fish became associated with the concept of rebirth. The sides of the fish were made, not naturalistically with horizontal scales but with vertical wavy lines representative of swimming upwards through the water, in symbolic rebirth, writes Wilkinson (1994:111). An additional symbolic significance is that tilapia were incorporated into scenes with lotuses, another symbol of the Sun and rebirth. The Egyptians associated the tilapia and in particular catfish *Synodontis batensoda* (also known the 'upside-down' catfish which swims belly up) with magical regenerative powers. The little pendant illustrated in Figure 12.8b accurately represents this species.²⁷⁰

12.7.3 Interpretation

Fish pendants, favoured as amuletic charms for protection and good luck, were suspended from strands of long hair and also attached to the end of plaits. Made from faience or symbolically materials such as turquoise, these simple but attractive hairdressing items were not only a symbolic way of indicating the age and maturity of young girls but also an effective, generally inexpensive and attractive hair ornament. Fish pendants also featured in ancient literature. A well-known tale from the Westcar Papyrus describes how a number of beautiful young women, clothed only in beaded net garments, were rowing a king across a lake at his palace. One woman's

²⁶⁸ Fish were traditionally viewed as being ritually unclean and were not permitted as offerings.

²⁶⁹ In Gardiner's sign list,  was a phonogram for *in* as used in the word *int* = 'bulti'

²⁷⁰ The lateral line of the fish, mottling on the head, the sharp ray on the dorsal fin, triangular gill cover and the comb of small spines between the eyes have been naturalistically depicted. It also includes the barbels (whiskers) that extend from the mouth.

turquoise fish pendant fell from the end of the braid into the water. Distraught, she ceased rowing thereby disrupting the outing. Although the king kindly offered her a replacement, she refused, wanting her own ornament returned. Fortunately, a magician was found to part the waters, thereby enabling the young woman to recover her property. Fish pendants were considered as being more than merely ornaments; being imbued with amuletic properties, and was probably why the young woman was so adamant about retrieving her own.

12.8 CONCLUSION

Wigs natural hairstyles and hair ornaments worn by Egyptian Dynastic women represented in art and sculpture were indicative wealth, social status, age, religion and fashion. Wigs played an important role as permanent base for the construction of intricate and elaborate composite headdresses.

A simple but visually effective form of diadem was constructed from delicately-made thin looped wire thin wire combined with a myriad gold foil rosettes. There is some speculation that these were attached either to a cloth covering or to individual locks of hair. The intertwined components have been interpreted as representing the *shen* sign denoting Eternity. The gold tubular beads found in conjunction with a formal circlet diadem appear to have been designed to be slipped over individual braids resulting on a headdress of considerable weight. The visual effect would have been sumptuous.

An unusual garland-type headdress composed of strings of floral and leaf-shaped beads probably made from colourful faience, glass or semi-precious stones is only recognizable from impressions left on the owner's mummified head. It impossible to identify which leaves and flowers were chosen but nevertheless it must have presented a colourful image. Notwithstanding the ancient Egyptian love of colour combinations and given the status of the owner, there is evidence that some of the pendants may have been gilded with foil to create an impression of additional sumptuousness. It may be that these strings were a particular favourite of the Queen which is why they were included as part of her funerary trappings. Multiple strings

such as this would probably have been a fairly common choice of adornment. The choice of floral elements have added to the overall 'fun' image of its owner.

There is ample evidence that thin sheets of gold ribbons together with large, presumably gold rosettes, were draped over formal tri-partite wigs. This style appears to have been associated with the goddess Hathor. Interesting amulets made from semi-precious stone and faience were attached to braids as attractive adornment.

What has become evident is that the importance of dressing the hair with attractive objects ranging from simple pendants to intricate gold wire circlets formed an important aspect of both the elite and the ordinary Egyptian woman's choice of hair adornment.

CHAPTER 13: CONCLUSION

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Housed in museums worldwide, existing diadems belonging to ancient Egyptian women have, to date, been analysed primarily according to the materials used and ancient jewellery techniques used in the manufacture. Those diadems that have survived not only looting in antiquity but also the slow and inevitable ravages of time form part of a relatively small but representative collection of the many fine specimens that must have existed.

Throughout the Dynastic period, ancient Egyptian women adorned their heads, their hair and their wigs. Amongst the ancient Near Eastern cultures, headdresses made strong visual statements relating to political power, hierarchical authority, social status and important religious/cultic roles. An Egyptian woman's identity appears to have been intrinsically linked to the type of headdress that was worn. Beyond its main purpose of adornment, the design of diadems provides information not only about the status and role of individual women but in some cases, also insight into their physical stature, their age and even their remarkable achievements as queens and consorts. Diadems make eloquent statements highlighting the intimate relationship that existed between women and the ever present symbolism in the surrounding natural floral and faunal environment. The diadems make striking visual statements about the innovation, technology and artistic creativity of Dynastic jewellers, striking a balance between form and function.

While queens wore elaborate and complex crowns and richly inlaid diadems, ordinary women wore beaded headbands with fresh flowers, adding to the sensory allure. Formal diadems fashioned from precious metals and semi-precious stones imitated the readily available natural options. The symbolic and iconographic messages contained in the headdresses designed for or chosen by these women reveal intensely personal aspects of their wearers. As modern women are defined by their style and choice of jewellery, there is no reason not to assume that women in

Egyptian antiquity likewise expressed taste, fashion, wealth and even individuality by what they wore.

13.2 DISCUSSION

The available literature focusses on materials and jewellery techniques used in the construction of women's headdresses but the associated symbolism has not been addressed. In the absence of textual sources, the interpretation of existing diadems may be totally incorrect, misleading or even naïvely simplistic. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that multi-layered and interlinked symbolism combined with strong magical beliefs were clearly incorporated by the ancient designers and jewellers to form objects of personal adornment which conveyed powerful visual and non-verbal messages to what, barring the scribes and priests, was a largely illiterate society.

Excavation and restoration reports, many of them dated to the early 20th Century, although written in the emerging discipline of Egyptology, remain the most useful and accurate sources. The diadems housed in international museums have not been subject to closer scientific analysis using new and advanced scientific methods that include non-destructive techniques. Accurate identification of materials and close inspection of manufacturing techniques have generally not been fully ascertained. The Leipzig diadem is an exception.

Unless assuming the role of Pharaoh in their own right or acting as regent, Egyptian queens rarely donned Red, White and Double Crowns representing Upper and Lower Egypt. The same principle applies to the *Atef*, *Hemhem* and Blue Crowns and the *Nemes* headdress. There is ample pictorial evidence of Old and New Kingdom women wearing the textile *khat* headdress. The *modius* appears to have formed the basis for the elaborate composite headdresses adopted by royal women in state and cultic roles, combining rich elements of symbolism. Heavy cap headdresses comprising a head-plate and articulated rows of decorative pendants are well-documented. The vulture headdress so full of symbolism and state iconography appears to have been worn by royal women as part of their state regalia. There is strong artistic corroboration that headbands, circlets, fillets and diadems were

favoured by women of all ages, regardless of their status throughout the Dynastic period. The early unadorned metal headbands appear to have undergone changes in quality, design and composition over a considerable period of time. The double-plumed *shuty* headdress with its additional iconography was sometimes an added element. Given the variety of design elements, intended use, symbolism and iconographic detail incorporated into the headdresses, there is evidence that a relationship could be established between distinctive diadems and the individual women who owned and wore them.

A specific attempt was made to investigate the social connection between individual owners and surviving ceremonial, state and cultic diadems. The majority of surviving headdresses were found in the burial context and generally have a sound, well-documented provenance of the identity of the women plus some information about the ruling Pharaoh. In some cases, the human remains were found intact, thus providing useful information about the woman in question. The pre-Dynastic Naqada beads, for example, indicate an early appreciation of rare stones and the beginning of cognitive skills in symmetrical design. The Nag' El-Deir gold hoop provides the first evidence of the formal diadem-style adopted by wealthy women.

By the Old Kingdom, distinctive decorative and symbolic embellishments that included stylized heraldic plant and avian motifs were added to headbands. This is most evident in the 'Unknown Woman', the 'Leipzig' and 'Boston' diadems. The symbolism and iconography incorporated into three very similar designs have been interpreted as evidence of the increasing importance of magical protection, not only during the owner's lifetime but also in the afterlife. It was during this period that imitation jewellery designed specifically for funerary goods purposes appears to have been introduced into the manufacturing repertoire. It is proposed that these were cheap gilded copies of the original diadem which may have been inherited by a female relative.

Visually pleasing floral decorative elements, rich in symbolism, were particularly favoured. Intricately inlaid central medallion elements were introduced as a focal point making strong statements of power and divine protection. Knot elements were

also incorporated into formal diadems, in what appears to be accurate imitations of the more commonly-worn textile or beadwork headbands.

Garlands fashioned from freshly-picked botanical materials were popular amongst the general population. Not only were these utilitarian but, as clearly documented in reliefs and wall paintings, also worn at festivals and banquets. The formal interpretation using precious materials provided a marvellous outlet for design and led to the development of intricate jewellery techniques. The advancement resulted in two particularly fine diadems that appear to have reflected their owner's personal tastes and sense of style. The gold wire garland, bespeckled with colourful floral elements, was the initial inspiration of the topic of this study. What has become evident is that although the owner was part of the royal household, she does not appear to have had state or cultic responsibilities. Her jewellery reflects a relatively carefree, petite young woman who probably commissioned her own jewellery according to personal taste, current fashion and, it is surmised, instructed the incorporation of floral symbolism that was important to her. Roses were not usually common in Egyptian symbolism. It is probable that the diadem featuring these floral motifs was a gift and as such, provides a useful insight into subject choice by foreign jewellers and the practice of gift exchange or tribute received.

Horned headdresses appear to have been favoured by foreign women who joined the royal harem. Given the petite and graceful gazelle, it is not surprising that the motif was favoured. In the cases of the twin-gazelle and the multiple gazelle diadems, there is also the distinct possibility of visual punning with women's names and possibly also their stature.

The reconstructed New Kingdom cap headdress exemplifies the elaborate court attire of women of the harem and must have been a spectacular sight to behold and wear, given its considerable weight. It provides a strong statement related to the status of its owner, some insight into the appreciation of objects of beauty and status in the royal harem. The fact that there were additional, almost identical headdresses in the same burial context leads to speculation that all three foreign wives may have been presented with matching headdresses on their arrival at court. Whether all royal wives in the harem owned similar headdresses is a point of conjecture and

additional evidence would have to be sought from reliefs and tomb illustrations. The construction of the cap headdress led to a theory about the possible construction of the distinctive iconographic vulture cap headdress usually associated with the state and cultic roles of generations of Dynastic queens. Vulture symbolism was also incorporated into the design of Nubian leather caps. Dressing the head and hair using items of jewellery appears to have appealed to women of all social standing. From gold loops and tubular beads to animal shaped pendants, there is little doubt that these design elements provide useful information about the individual preferences, status and roles of their owners.

The materials used were not merely intended for aesthetic purposes but also had considerable symbolic significance. Colour formed an important aspect of royal and state symbolism and iconography. Gold, red, blue and green/turquoise dominated the colour palette and each appears to have been synonymous with the divine, having cosmological or mythological significance. Although expensive stones were valued and rarity was greatly appreciated, the use of replacement or imitation materials was acceptable, especially if the diadem was destined for inclusion in funerary goods and did not need to withstand the rigours of constant wear. In some instances, imitation material was much easier to form into the small, specifically shaped pieces required for the intricate inlay of decorative motifs. Colourful imitation materials such as faience and glass were also instrumental in making fashionable headdresses available to a diverse social group of women, to be worn and enjoyed by all, then, as now, following the lead of the royal trends of the day. As such, colour was found to complement and expand on the basic visual information contained in shape and form in each of the diadems.

Considerable floral, zoological, celestial, architectural and abstract forms were found to be present in the various diadems. Given the abundance of the Nile, there was a particularly wide repertoire of floral motifs to choose from and while some were represented accurately, others became highly stylized. Choice of floral motifs which were incorporated into diadems appears to have remained largely unchanged throughout the Dynastic period. Formal diadems originally appear to have been quite plain, unembellished headbands but the opportunity for using the head for making a highly visible political or social statement soon presented itself to state jewellery

designers. Rosette and medallion motifs appear to have been popular choices and appear to have been based on influences from elsewhere in the ancient Near East. The rose species however, appears to have been introduced from foreign sources. Given the three examples diadems featuring papyrus umbels, stylised lotus buds and sacred ibises appear to have been considered 'high-fashion' for the well-dressed, wealthy Old Kingdom women. These diadems feature multiple layers of symbolism and incorporate a surprising amount of state iconography. Bows and streamers appear, from artistic representations, to have been a popular choice of embellishment for Old Kingdom diadems. These imitated the original textile headbands and woven designs that were a rich source of inspiration. State iconography related specifically to women and their cultic roles was incorporated the all-important cobra and vulture in various heraldic poses, all reflecting connotations of solar power and divine protection. Two New Kingdom interpretations of floral garlands reflect the epitome of the jeweller's craft. They are rich in multiple layers of symbolism and appear to reflect their owner's youth and petite physique thereby providing form of visual biography. Images of the elegant, svelte women depicted in Egyptian art are brought to life in a very tangible way. Celestial symbolism appears as decorative elements in diadems, albeit subtly and usually incorporating a red stone of some kind.

An unexpected outcome of the study was the linkage between a distinctive piece of jewellery and the well-documented festivities that accompanied the Nile inundation. This linkage does not appear to have been made in any of the published literature.

Another unexpected outcome was the realisation that the visually splendid heavy, elaborate cap headdress incorporated flexibility and considerable articulation by the use of a head-plate with inter-linked pendants as well as the advanced and particularly fine jewellery-making techniques used throughout its construction. The overall impression gained was that this 'plate-and-pendant' (own emphasis) technique may well have been used for the construction of the vulture headdress. This topic appears to have considerable potential for closer investigation.

The most surprising and unexpected outcomes while the diadems incorporated the expected visual and tactile forms of communication there was also potential for

evoking the other senses. A number of the decorative motifs may well have stimulated the human senses as a completely different and previously unconsidered level of communication. The material, colour and texture used would have appealed to the sense of sight and touch. By the addition of fresh blooms, the olfactory senses would have been stimulated. Decorative elements such as tubular beads and streamers added to diadems and fastened onto wig coverings would have created a shining 'halo effect' around the wearer's head and, by extension, visually enhancing the semi-divine aura of royal women. These elements would also have produced a pleasant clicking or shushing sound with body movement similar to the sound of the sistrum or the multi-stranded *menat* which was widely used by royal women and priestesses in temple and cultic practices, thus 'Hearing the Headdress' (own emphasis) stimulated the auditory sense. Movement of elements probably also played a vital role as women progressed down aisles in temples, danced or swayed to accompanying music. It is proposed that sensory stimulation can be used in interpreting the many-layered messages of ancient Egyptian Jewellery. The connection between visual and aural aspects in ancient shamanistic, cultic and religious context is a potentially interesting and unexplored research topic.

There is ample evidence that women of all social classes and ages embellished their hair and wigs, from clicking gold tubes attached to the more formal diadems to freely-swinging, colourful amulets in a variety of shapes and materials. The choice of materials, colour and symbolism appears to have been a common thread running throughout the Dynastic period. Materials and design motifs can therefore be used on multiple levels to provide insight into the symbolism and iconography of specific headdresses and by extension, their owners. Visual evidence gleaned appears to corroborate the hypothesis that individual headdresses were used to convey strong non-verbal elements of Egyptian mythology, religious superstitions and apotropaic magic beliefs by the incorporation of symbolism and state iconography. Powerful forms of non-verbal communication can be used to gain insight into the multi-layered realm of self-expression and the manipulation of self-image. Symbolism and iconography is a valuable approach to gain insight into the multi-layered realm of Egyptian women's self-expression and their manipulation of self-image in an increasingly material ancient society. Undoubtedly, for both the ancient manufacturers and wearers, a wide variety of connotations and perceptions were

attached to specific diadems. In the absence of textual corroboration, the symbolism and iconography appears to have been composed of overlapping and interlinked concepts. The interpretation of an individual piece may be misleading or even naïvely simplistic. Nevertheless, it has become clear that women wore items express wealth, status, fashion and according to their personal preferences.

13.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although more traditionally in the field of art history, the knowledge of ancient Egyptian forms and materials and their translation into modern diadems as interpreted by great early 20th century jewellery designers is a potential topic for future investigation. The reception of Pharaonic-themed diadems does not appear to have been thoroughly explored. Brief investigation indicated three unexpected and startling examples of costume jewellery diadems, which must have fuelled the perception of the fabulous jewellery once owned and worn by Pharaonic women.

Despite the flat perspective of relief and paintings, the ancient artist's consummate skill in interpreting naturalistic and intricate details and incorporating subtle nuances of shape and colour of the vulture headdress have been clearly captured in statuettes, finely crafted items of jewellery and furniture inlays. It is envisaged that recreating the vulture cap headdress cap could form the basis for a new research topic. An initial investigation was undertaken in conjunction with a collaborator from the Tshwane University of Technology's jewellery design and manufacture department. Some working diagrams with dimensions were prepared as 'proof of concept'. Due to time constraints and the limited research budget, the project did not progress beyond this point. The exercise was extremely useful in gaining a practical and extremely tactile understanding of not only the use of basic metalwork and tool manipulation but also the fine-motor skills necessary for the ancient craftsmen in their royal-sponsored workshops, highlighting just how time-consuming and costly the production of the fabulous Old, Middle and New Kingdom diadems must have been.

13.4 SUMMATION

It was disappointing that very little reaction was received from museums in response to requests for additional technical information about the diadems under their curatorship. The study required far more in-depth investigation into a wide range of cultural, social, technological and artistic related aspects than initially envisaged. This served to underline the extremely rich symbolism and iconography that was incorporated in the diadems. It is anticipated that there is potential for additional research on this visually rich topic using existing sculptural, relief and artistic examples of the vulture cap.

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<https://www.pinterest.com/taramccarron/animals-of-asia-and-india> [accessed 13/08/2016]

Figure 10.1b: Mountain Gazelle (*Gazella gazelle*)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reshef_MET_89.2.215_EGDP01177_5.jpg accessed 13/08/2016]

Figure 10.1c: Dama Gazelle (*Gazella dama*)
<http://www.saharaconservation.org/?Dama-Gazelle> [accessed 13/08/2016]

- Figure 10.2: A bronze or copper alloy Deben weight in the form of a gazelle
[accessed 11/11/2017]
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544069>
- Figure 10.3a: Nubian Ibex (*Capra ibex nubiana*)
<http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/animals/nubian-ibex> [accessed 01/11/2017]
- Figure 10.3b: Mottled semi-translucent cryptocrystalline quartz ibex
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544072> [accessed 11/11/2017]
- Figure 10.4a: Nubian / East African Oryx (*Oryx besia besia*)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_African_oryx#/media/File:Beisa_Oryx,_Samburu_NR,_Kenya.jpg [accessed 01/11/2017]
- Figure 10.4b: Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*)
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reem-Lavan001.jpg> [accessed 01/11/2017]
- Figure 10.4c: Scimitar-horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*) <http://what-when-how.com/endangered-species/oryx-scimitar-horned> [accessed 01/11/2017]
- Figure 10.5: Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*)
<https://za.pinterest.com/pin/554646510337996533/> [accessed 17/08/2016]
- Figure 10.6a: Barbary Deer stag
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_deer#/media/File:Cervus_elaphus_barbarus,_Tierpark_Berlin,_523-629.jpg [accessed 21/08/2016]
- Figure 10.6b: Roe Deer stag (photo credit - Richard Ford)
<http://carnivoraforum.com/search/?c=3&mid=3772303&month=5&year=2012>
[accessed 21/08/2016]
- Figure 10.6c: Fallow Deer stag
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/jellybeanzgallery/3819462991> [accessed 01/11/2017]
- Figure 10.7: Egyptian cattle, from the New Kingdom tomb of Nebamun c. 1350 BCE
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=User:Didia&action=edit&redlink=1> [accessed 22/10/2017]
- Figure 10.8: 18th Dynasty Diadem with two gazelle heads made from gold, carnelian, opaque turquoise glass and decayed glass (Tomb of three wives of Thutmose III, c. 1479–1425 BCE)
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/553269> [accessed 25/10/2017]
- Figure 10.9: 15th Dynasty Diadem with Multiple Gazelles and a Stag Head combined with (Eastern Delta region, 2nd Intermediate Period c. 1648–1540 BCE)

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544073> [accessed 25/10/2017]

Figure 10.10a: Head of goddess Anukis (Anuket) associated with the cataracts and gazelle c.1336–1250 BCE

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Head_of_Goddess_Anukis_MET_66.99.58_EGDP013281.jpg [accessed 26/11/2017]

Figure 10.10b: Canaanite god Reshep clearly showing gazelle protome in centre of headdress c. 1184–664 BCE

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reshef_MET_89.2.215_EGDP011775.jpg [accessed 26/11/2017]

CHAPTER 11

Figure 11.1: Great cap headdress of a lesser foreign wife of Thutmose III

<http://solarey.net/elaborate-ancient-egyptian-wig-hair-ornaments> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 11.2: View of uppermost 'head-plate' component made of two sheets of gold, one concave the other decorated with what appears to be feathers (New Kingdom

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/591131?pos=1> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 11.3: Assemblage of rosettes as part of wig cover as suggested by Winlock in 1937 and later modified

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548677?pos=6> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 11.4a: Additional reconstruction of incomplete gold headdress from the tomb of the three princesses/foreign wives of Thutmose III (c. 1450 BCE)

<https://egyptianhistorypodcast.com/2017/03/17/episode-73-the-three-princesses> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 11.4b: Feathered' headdress on coffin cover of Queen Merytamun (18th Dynasty, New Kingdom)

<https://za.pinterest.com/pin/233272455677242350> [accessed 22/12/2017]

Figure 11.5: Alabaster sculpture of 4th Dynasty queen of Khafre wearing a vulture headdress

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%C3%84gyptisches_Museum_Leipzig_034.jpg [accessed 17/11/2017]

Figure 11.6: Wooden statue of Queen Ahmes Nefertari, wife of Amenhotep I

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ahmes_nefertari2-2.jpg [accessed 17/11/2017]

Figure 11.7a: Mural paintings of Queen Nefertari wearing a gold vulture headdress

<https://www.veniceclayartists.com/relief-art-egypt> [accessed 14/11/2017]

Figure 11.7b: Mural painting of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari wearing a blue vulture headdress (Tyldesley 2006. Photo credit Jurgen Liepe)

Figure 11.8: Inlay of a vulture headdress (Ptolemaic period, 100-1 BCE)
<http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1920.1991> [accessed 14/11/2017]

Figure 11.9a: Eurasian Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvis*)
<http://www.kuwaitbirds.org/birds/eurasian-griffon-vulture> [accessed 25/11/2017]

Figure 11.9b: Lappet-faced vulture (*Aegipius tracheliotus*)
<https://www.birdlife.org/middle-east/news/saving-vultures-saudi-arabia> (Photo credit: Mohamed Shobrak) [accessed 25/11/2017]

Figure 11.9c: Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopteros*)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_vulture#/media/File:Egyptian_vulture.jpg
(Photo credit: Kousik Nandy) [accessed 25/11/2017]

Figure 11.10: Example of Cap headdress as illustrated in a bronze statuette of Kushite King Taharqa (25th Dynasty)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taharqa#/media/File:Louvre_042005_10.jpg
[accessed 21/12/2017]

Figure 11.11: Elaborate mica ornaments from a leather cap recovered from a royal tomb at Kerma (Haynes 1992:42)

CHAPTER 12

Figure 12.1: A carnelian plaque representing Queen Tiye (wife of Amenhotep III) as a winged sphinx <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544497>
[accessed 02/11/2017]

Figure 12.2: Looped gold wire headdress of 12th Dynasty Princess Senebtisi (Lisht, c. 1975 BCE) <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/54422>
[accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 12.3a: Gold foil rosettes from the burial of Senebtisi, likely decorations from headdress
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rosettes_of_Senebtisi_MET_DP354262.jpg [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 12.3b: Reconstructed headdress incorporating looped wire headdress and rosette wig ornaments (Winlock 1948)

Figure 12.4: Reconstruction and arrangement of graduated gold tubes on headdress of Sit-hathor-lunet as proposed by Winlock
<https://www.metmuseum.org/pubs/bulletins/1/pdf/3255422.pdf.bannered.pdf>
[accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 12.5a: Example of faience leaf bead

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/antiquities/ancient-egypt/item-294836.aspx> [accessed 02/11/2017]

Figure 12.5b Example of an 18th Dynasty blue and green faience cornflower

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/antiquities/ancient-egypt/item-294864.aspx> [accessed 02/11/2017]

Figure 12.6a: Steatite statue of a 12th Dynasty woman with a 'Hathor-style' wig (Middle Kingdom c. 1985 - 1985 BCE)

<http://www.egyptcentre.org.uk/index.asp?page=item&mwsquery=%7Bidentity%20number%7D=%7BW842%7D> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 12.6b: A fragment of a limestone statue of the goddess Hathor illustrating a wig featuring narrow gold bands and rosettes

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/7f/6c/1f/7f6c1f818db1f3fcb8bfede083611141--egyptian-goddess-the-goddess.jpg> [accessed 03/11/2017]

Figure 12.7: 12th Dynasty Cosmetic Container featuring a girl wearing a fish pendant (c. 1981-1802 BCE)

<https://metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2015/upside-down-catfish> [accessed 29/10/2017]

Figure 12.8a: Late 12th Dynasty gold fish pendant (c. 1878-1749 BCE)

<https://metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2015/upside-down-catfish> [accessed 29/10/2017]

Figure 12.8b: Late 12th Dynasty turquoise and gold fish Pendant (c. 1878-1749 BCE)

<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/546742> [accessed 29/10/2017]

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