PRESERVING ETERNITY

MODERN GOALS, ANCIENT INTENTIONS

Egyptian Funerary Artifacts in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

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To Eugene M. and Emily Grant

This catalogue is dedicated to the Grants in grateful appreciation for their commitment to preserving the collections of the Kelsey Museum. Their leadership gift made it possible for the Museum to construct an environmentally controlled storage area, the Sensitive Artifact Facility and Environment (SAFE), which now houses all the collections that are most vulnerable to climatic change.

We are also grateful to Linda A. and Todd Herrick, whose generosity made it possible for the Kelsey Museum to conserve and exhibit its 6th century BC coffin of an Egyptian priest, Djheutymose.

Cover illustration: false-door panel of Kar, also known as Pepi-Nefert (IV.1)

This catalogue was prepared in conjunction with the exhibition “Preserving Eternity: Modern Goals, Ancient Intentions,” held at the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology from April 7 to August 25, 1995.

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The theme of the exhibition, “Preserving Eternity: Ancient Goals, Modern Intentions,” sprang from the desire to celebrate the Kelsey’s newly constructed storage room, the SAFE (Sensitive Artifact Facility and Environment), whose primary purpose is to give a new lease on life to the Museum’s collections. The great majority of these come from Egypt. The theme of modern attempts at preservation neatly dovetails with that of the ancient Egyptian concern with preservation in order to ensure eternal life. In exploring this dual theme, the exhibition highlights the Kelsey Museum’s important holdings of Egyptian artifacts of the Dynastic (or Pharaonic) Period, many of which are little known and seldom, if ever, exhibited.

In the scholarly arena, the Dynastic Egyptian collections of the Kelsey Museum have long been overshadowed by the Museum’s much larger and better-known collections from Egypt of the Graeco-Roman Period. The latter derive primarily from three sites—Karanis, Terenouthis, and Soknopaiou Nesos (Dimay)—excavated in the 1920s and 1930s by archaeologists from the University of Michigan. Notwithstanding two beautiful and popular exhibitions that were prepared in the 1980s by Curator of Collections and Exhibitions, Margaret Cool Root—“The Samuel A. Goudsmit Collection of Egyptian Antiquities: A Scientist Views the Past” of 1982 and “Egyptian Mummies: From Ancient Cult to Modern Science” of 1988—the Kelsey’s Dynastic Egyptian antiquities have not yet taken their proper place alongside those from Graeco-Roman Egypt. Lacking an Egyptologist on our regular curatorial staff, these collections have, perforce, only intermittently been the focus of scholarly attention. Paradoxically, the Dynastic collections are the most popular with the museum-going public. Before the recent renovation, key pieces were displayed on a regular basis, if in very small numbers, in our permanent galleries. Our goal is to develop a new long-term installation of Dynastic Egyptian material toward which “Preserving Eternity” is a significant first step.

During the current academic year we are very fortunate to have two young Egyptologists at the Kelsey as visiting curators, Janet Richards and Terry Wilfong. Since September they have scoured the Dynastic ranges in our new SAFE room and acquainted themselves with virtually every Egyptian piece of Dynastic date. Janet Richards has used these objects extensively in two courses she has taught, and they will be important focal points for Terry Wilfong’s teaching this spring and summer. Research by graduate students and undergraduates that resulted from one of Dr. Richards’ courses figures prominently in this catalogue.

This catalogue is dedicated to Eugene and Emily Grant of Mamaroneck, New York, who upon learning of the rapidly deteriorating collections of the Kelsey Museum caused by uncontrolled climatic conditions and severe overcrowding in old storage cabinets were motivated to help. It is thanks in very large part to their financial and moral support that the SAFE was constructed and our most endangered collections are now protected to the limit that modern technology allows. With this catalogue we also gratefully acknowledge the many other donors who came forward in the Museum’s time of critical need.

As the result of a fortuitous discovery, several years ago the
Kelsey reclaimed possession of an important painted mummiform coffin, which has been undergoing thorough conservation treatment thanks to the generosity of Linda and Todd Herrick of Tecumseh, Michigan. This coffin encapsulates the dual theme of preservation, ancient and modern, as no other single object in the show can.

It is with great pleasure and considerable pride that we present this exhibition in honor of those who made possible the renewal of the Kelsey Museum. Those who contributed to the Renovation Fund are listed below:

Ann Taylor-Van Rosevelt
An Anonymous Foundation
The Associates of the Kelsey Museum
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Helen Adams-Murray
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Ford Motor Company
National Endowment for the Humanities
Shell Oil Company
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University of Michigan Office of the Vice President for Research

Elaine K. Gazda, Director
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To mount a special exhibition and prepare an exhibition catalogue requires the help and cooperation of many people. As recently arrived visiting curators to the Kelsey Museum, we have found the staff here to be particularly welcoming and appreciate very much everyone's generous assistance. We would like to thank for their efforts on behalf of the exhibition, in alphabetical order: Helen Baker, Administrative Associate; Geoffrey Brown, Curator of Conservation; Dana Buck, Technician and Designer; Nathan Garcia, Photographer; Margaret Lourie, Editor; Robin Meador-Woodruff, Registrar and Associate Curator of Slides and Photographs; Thelma K. Thomas, Associate Curator of Collections. For their tireless efforts in publicizing the exhibition, we thank Rebecca Loomis, Todd Gehring, Mark Lawall, and Ric Smith; for administrative support, we thank Michelle Biggs and Jackie Monk. Though officially on leave, Laurie Talalay has provided endless moral support. Traianos Gagos, Associate Archivist in Papyrology at the University of Michigan Graduate Library, has greatly facilitated our use of the Michigan Papyrology Collection. Finally, Elaine K. Gazda, Director of the Kelsey Museum, has been a great source of help and encouragement on both catalogue and exhibition from the beginning.

The present catalogue has likewise been the result of a collaborative effort, and we would like to acknowledge the hard work of our contributors (in alphabetical order): Geoffrey I. Brown, Bryan E. Burns, Traianos Gagos, Elaine K. Gazda, Melanie D. Grunow, Alan J. Hogg, Jr., Harry Jho, Paul Legutko, and Jennifer Trimble. We would also like to acknowledge the equally hard work of Nathan Garcia and Robin Meador-Woodruff, both of whom worked above and beyond the call of duty in getting photographs ready for this catalogue. Finally, we are very much indebted to Margaret Lourie, who has patiently and skillfully designed and formatted this catalogue.

Individually, Janet Richards would like to acknowledge the help and inspiration of John Baines, Peter Lacovara, and Wendy Watson; Terry Wilfong would like to acknowledge the bibliographical assistance and archival hospitality of Charles E. Jones, head of the Oriental Institute Research Archives, University of Chicago.

This exhibition and catalogue are supported in part by gifts to the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and the Arts Enrichment Fund from alumni and friends of the College of the University of Michigan.

Janet E. Richards
Terry G. Wilfong
Visiting Assistant Curators
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology


EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY

Predynastic Period
Badarian 4800-4200 BC
Naqada I 4200-3700 BC
Naqada II 3700-3250 BC
Naqada III 3250-3100 BC

Early Dynastic Period
1st Dynasty 3100-2900 BC
2nd Dynasty 2900-2750 BC

Old Kingdom
3rd Dynasty 2750-2680 BC
4th Dynasty 2680-2544 BC
5th Dynasty 2544-2407 BC
6th Dynasty 2407-2260 BC

First Intermediate Period
7th-10th Dynasties 2260-2035 BC
11th Dynasty (1st half) 2134-2040 BC

Middle Kingdom
11th Dynasty (2nd half) 2040-1991 BC
12th Dynasty 1991-1783 BC
13th Dynasty 1783-1650 BC

Second Intermediate Period
14th-17th Dynasties 1720-1570 BC

New Kingdom
18th Dynasty 1570-1293 BC
19th Dynasty 1293-1185 BC
20th Dynasty 1185-1070 BC

Third Intermediate Period
21st Dynasty 1070-946 BC
22nd Dynasty 946-712 BC
23rd Dynasty 828-665 BC
24th Dynasty 718-685 BC
25th Dynasty 767-656 BC

Saite Period
26th Dynasty 685-525 BC

Late Period
27th Dynasty 525-404 BC
28th Dynasty 404-399 BC
29th Dynasty 399-380 BC
30th Dynasty 380-343 BC

Persian Period 343-332 BC

Ptolemaic Period 332-30 BC

Roman Period 30 BC-AD 285

EGYPT

- Ancient site names
- MODERN CITY NAMES

REGIONS AND BODIES OF WATER

SOKNAPAIOUY
Nesos (Dimai)

FAYUM

SINAI

CAIRO

SAQQARA

Terenouthis (Kom Abou Billou)

Lahun

Tell el-Amarna

Luxor (Thebes)

Edfu

Coptos

Western

Aswan

• Andent site names.
• Modern city names.
• Regions and bodies of water.
INTRODUCTION: Preserving Eternity

In this exhibition, we are interested in exploring the intense concern for eternal preservation shared by the ancient Egyptians and museums in the modern world. This concern entails the commitment of considerable resources, both human and financial, on the part of each. However, the philosophies driving these preservation efforts are profoundly different. The ancient Egyptians sought to preserve their bodies, names, and possessions with the specific intent of ensuring an eternal life, for which these things were needed. Modern museums, on the other hand, seek to preserve knowledge and the world's cultural heritage for future generations by preventing or mitigating the natural processes of decay. The goal is therefore the same; but the purpose of the things which are preserved is not.

The ancient Egyptians believed in a life after death that was similar in many ways to life in the here and now but of far longer duration. Death was simply the point of entry to renewed life; the deceased would live forever in his or her tomb, as part of an hierarchically organized society, which replicated that of the living world and was believed to be in accordance with the order established by the gods at the beginning of time. This blessed state was accomplished by the correct execution of specific procedures designed to prepare, protect, provision, and empower the deceased in preparation for the day of "joining the earth."

This procedure included the sometimes elaborate preservation of the body in which the ka, or life force, of the individual would reside after death, and the identity, through preservation of the name and image of the deceased. It also involved the building, decoration, and furnishing of a tomb or grave, which the ancient Egyptians termed a pt dz, "House of Eternity," and the provisioning of the tomb with real or magical offerings of food—for the dead, just as the living, required nourishment to exist. Ideally, the individual's body would be laid to rest to the accompaniment of an elaborate and symbolically charged funeral. And finally, the deceased must undertake a long and perilous journey through the Underworld to the Hall of Two Truths, where his/her heart would be weighed against ma'at, the personification of truth and order, and judged either worthy to become an akh, or beneficent and equipped spirit, or to die a second and utterly final death. The Egyptians firmly believed in covering all bases; so among the furnishings of a tomb would be magical aids for the successful accomplishment of this journey.

Egyptians conceived of their tombs as possessing a distinct division between public and private space. The "private" part, usually underground, was the burial chamber itself, in which the deceased resided. The "public" portion of the tomb was the offering chapel or area, where relatives and priests would visit to bring food offerings or pronounce ritual formulae to nourish the deceased and cause his/her name to live. The point of connection between these two aspects of the grave was a "false door" or stela bearing the image of the deceased, from which he/she was believed to emerge to receive offerings. Wealthy individuals constructed large and elaborate surface structures of durable materials such as stone, associated with the burial itself through a deep shaft descending to the burial chamber. A middle-class person might erect a smaller
surface chapel of mud brick, in which would be set a stone stela recording his/her name, in association with a simpler burial chamber, often just a pit dug into the desert sand. Even the poorest individuals seem to have shared this notion of a private/public distinction, leaving pottery at or near the surface of otherwise unmarked burials.

The deliberate preservation of Egyptian paraphernalia of the afterlife was aided by two factors. First, cemeteries were almost always located in the desert, considered to be the land of the dead. Any visitor to Egypt is familiar with the stark contrast between the vivid green of the alluvial plain and the sterile monochrome of the desert, leading one scholar to remark that “in no country of earth is life more attractive, more desirable; yet in no other country is death so nakedly revealed” (Gardiner 1935, 6). In this land of the dead, the lack of moisture in the desert, coupled with the naturally desiccating effect of the sand, furthered the goal of complete preservation. In addition, since the afterlife was so much longer than life in the here and now, tombs and their contents were made, when possible, of more durable materials than those used for the homes and possessions of the living. The use of stone in building, for example, tended to be restricted in ancient Egypt to the construction of temples and tombs, edifices requiring eternal materials, while houses in villages and towns were constructed of mud brick.

As a result, the vast majority of archaeological remains from Egypt are funerary in nature, contributing to the notion of the Egyptians as a culture obsessed with death. Certainly, the resources expended on proper burial were considerable; but in the Egyptian world view the reward—eternal life—was well worth the expense. It must also be noted that preparations for death, in a culture that viewed cemeteries as an effective extension of the living landscape, provided a prominent forum for the display of wealth, contributing to the status and prestige of living families.

Ironically, the modern urge to conserve objects in museums dovetails neatly with the ancient Egyptian imperative. The 1991 Code of Ethics adopted by the American Association of Museums stresses the role of museums as stewards and guardians of the cultural heritage of the world, holding their collections intact and in trust for posterity. Their mission is therefore altruistic and oriented to community service, through the transmission of knowledge. An ancient Egyptian would say that museum conservation and display of their objects also serves the individual Egyptian purpose—inadvertently, a museum visitor would cause the name of Kar (IV.1) to live simply by saying it, or in reading a translation of a traditional offering formula would provide Kar’s spirit with the nourishment it needs to survive in the next world.
Conservation, in a museum context, is the practice of identifying and retarding (or arresting, if possible) the effects of natural processes of deterioration. These processes are part of the way materials are naturally recycled in the environment: artificially purified metals return to a mineralized state; wood and textiles decompose into organic compounds; stone and ceramic (essentially synthetic metamorphic stone) erode and break down into small particles which, over geologic time periods, might be reconstituted as a solid material again.

Those of us who appreciate cultural artifacts and art must also be involved with protecting these objects from decomposition. Our efforts are often complicated by the fact that conditions in our buildings may accelerate the deterioration processes. Ultimately, perhaps, we may be fighting a losing battle in that we seek to counter apparently inexorable natural processes. We do have defenses, however. Conservators have learned and continue to discover much about deterioration processes, and we are able, in most cases, to extend the artifacts’ normal span of existence indefinitely for enjoyment by many future generations.

To help preserve its collections, the Kelsey Museum established an active conservation program in the early 1970s, a time when museums throughout the world had come to recognize the importance of conservation but few had yet established facilities. Until fairly recently, the emphasis of the Kelsey Museum conservation program was the treatment of individual artifacts in order to mitigate existing deterioration problems. Our conservation philosophy has now shifted, however, to emphasize preventative conservation on a collections-wide basis—the implementation of measures that will prevent (or significantly reduce) deterioration in large groups of artifacts made from similar materials.

Our goal for conservation of the objects in our collections is built on the concepts of preservation, stabilization, and protection of the object’s integrity. This means that we seek to preserve the objects in our care for the greatest possible length of time, in the most original state that we can achieve. Through both preventative and direct remedial methods, the objects are stabilized to arrest deteriorative processes and/or to compensate for structural weaknesses that may be the result of past deterioration.

In order to avoid altering the object’s true nature, cosmetic compensation (often called restoration) is only rarely and sparingly used, and then only when the visual impact of a particular object is severely reduced because of damage or missing portions. Our users, the visitors and researchers who come to the Kelsey Museum (and other such research collections), expect to see genuine antiquities made by the craftspeople of ancient cultures—our purpose is not fulfilled by modern-day restorers’ ideas of what the objects might have looked like at some time in the past.

Each archaeological artifact embodies a complete record of its history—from the time it was made and used to its loss or destruction; from its time in the ground through its experiences since the time of excavation. Although we would like to think that museum environments produce no changes, exposure to air, light, fluctuations of temperature and humidity, and handling stresses can cause
more deterioration in a few years than has occurred during the preceding thousands of years of burial in the ground.

From 1991 to 1995, this writer had the privilege of directing a project designed to reduce or eliminate the damaging effects of post-excavation conditions that had been taking their toll on the collections for three-quarters of a century. Construction was completed on the Sensitive Artifact Facility and Environment, an insulated, vapor-sealed and secured storage facility equipped with a sophisticated climate control system. Located on the Museum's newly built third floor, this facility (the "SAFE") was designed to provide optimal storage conditions through tightly regulated humidity and temperature levels. The SAFE is furnished with state-of-the-art nonreactive storage cabinets funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' National Heritage Preservation Program.

Another major part of the project, implemented during the move of the collections into the SAFE, was to pad and support the artifacts to further ensure their protection against vibration and handling. Old acidic packing materials and labels were also replaced with inert and durable acid-free materials. During this process, the collections were carefully reorganized and inventoried to improve their usefulness. Urgent preservation problems were noted and recorded to assist with planning future remedial conservation projects.

This project, now complete after four years of planning, construction, and collections relocation, will prevent or dramatically reduce deterioration in the objects accommodated in the SAFE, estimated at approximately 85 percent of our holdings. Although we still plan to treat past problems, we anticipate that virtually no new damage will occur in the future.

We are now planning a number of conservation projects to further improve the state of the collections. The ceramics that remain stored in the basement require treatment to remove destructive salts that are mobilized by the fluctuating humidity conditions. The extensive textile collection will benefit from careful cleaning and blocking. Many of the glass artifacts collected by Francis Kelsey that were found broken or suffered breakage during shipping can be effectively repaired with high-tech adhesives to reestablish their form and structure. Architectural components present a more complete and comprehensible picture of the past when they are cleaned of accretions, repaired, and reassembled. Through the diligent efforts of staff, volunteers, interns, and generous supporters, the collections at the Kelsey Museum will continue to receive knowledgeable care through conscientious conservation.
I. Guardians of the Afterlife

The ongoing preservation of the remains of ancient Egypt in the modern world can be attributed both to the conservation efforts of museums and also to the generally good condition in which Egyptian materials were found before they reached museum collections. This condition is due, in part, both to the careful efforts of the Egyptians themselves and to the unique climatic conditions of Egypt. The ancient Egyptians would have also added a third factor: the protective influences of divine and magical forces. This contribution to preservation was sought through prayers, ceremonies, and related activities, as well as through the use of protective images of gods and goddesses. By their good influence, these divinities helped to preserve the dead and their belongings. This section of "Preserving Eternity" includes a number of such images that were placed in the tomb for protection and preservation; it also includes a number of images that do not specifically come from a funerary context but depict other protective entities. In the context of the current exhibition, these statues serve as the symbolic guardians of the objects in the exhibition. Placed at the entrance to the exhibition and at points throughout, these divine images are intended to help replicate the protective and preservative influences that the ancient Egyptians themselves considered so important. Within the context of a modern museum display, it is often easy to lose sight of the original intentions behind the artifacts on exhibit. The presence of these guardians reflects a concern of the curators of this exhibition: to make the objects accessible to a modern audience while at the same time attempting to respect the wishes, intentions, and religious beliefs of the ancient culture that created the objects on display. We hope that an ancient Egyptian visiting "Preserving Eternity" would feel reassured by the presence of these protective deities.

Three of the most striking images in this section call for special comment. The image of the god Osiris in a wooden coffin with a falcon head (1.1) belongs to a very specific class of artifacts known as "grain-mummies," unique symbols of death and resurrection. The grain-mummy began with barley placed in mud and allowed to sprout; the germinated grain and mud were then wrapped in cloth in imitation of a mummy. The resulting grain-mummy was given a wax mask with a green face and white crown: the attributes of Osiris, Egyptian god of the dead. According to Egyptian mythology, the god Osiris was once a mortal man, a king who was murdered and torn apart by his jealous brother Seth. Osiris' wife Isis collected the parts of her dismembered husband, reassembled him, and had him wrapped in bandages. Through magical means, she restored life to him, and thus Osiris became the god and ultimate judge of the dead. The contents of the grain-mummy—the germinated barley—symbolize the rebirth and resurrection of Osiris, as well as his transition from god to man, from the present world to the world beyond. Osirian imagery is found in two other statues in this section that call for special mention, both for their funerary significance and

1. For these objects and the discussion that follows, see Raven 1982. Note that, although many publications refer to these objects as "corn-mummies," in such cases the term "corn" is used in the general British sense "grain" rather than the specific American word for maize, which was not known to the ancient Egyptians.
for their recently revealed connections with another object in the Kelsey Museum’s collections. These are the two painted wooden statues of the deity known as Ptah-Sokar-Osiris (1.2-3). This composite god combined the attributes of Osiris with those of Sokar, another god connected with death, and Ptah, a god associated with creation. The image of this combined god was used for special protective reasons: Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statues often preserved funerary papyri or tiny grain-mummies in their bases or in their cores. If any such objects were concealed in the Kelsey Museum Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures, they were removed or lost long before the statues reached the museum. Until recently, however, the Kelsey Museum Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figures concealed something else: an unsuspected connection with another object in the Kelsey Museum. This will be discussed below in the section “The House of Eternity.”

In terms of the problems of preservation, the objects that make up this group of Guardians of the Afterlife give a sampling of the different kinds of materials that pose challenges to the modern museum conservator. Indeed, the Osiris grain-mummy itself is the most complex combination of materials in the entire exhibition and an illustration of the issues such materials raise. The internal core of the piece is made of mud and germinated grain, wrapped in cloth, sealed with pitch, covered with more cloth and a wax mask, and then placed into a painted wooden coffin. The wax mask is of particular interest; wax was used for a variety of purposes in ancient Egypt but, when sculpted as in this figure, it almost always had magical significance (Lucas and Harris 1962, 2-3, 336-37; Raven 1983). The other “guardians,” made of painted and gilded wood or bronze, show the varying ways in which these materials have reached modern museums.

1.1. Corn-mummy in coffin
Painted wood, germinated grain, clay, pitch, cloth, wax
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period-Saite Period
(c. 1070-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88902
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
coffin 51 cm h., 17.5 cm w., figure 44.5 cm h., 12.5 cm w.
Unpublished

1.2. Ptah-Sokar-Osiris figure of Djheutymose
Painted wood
Nag el-Hassaia (?), Egypt
Saite Period (685-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88768
Cairo Department of Antiquities, purchase, 1935
57.5 cm h., 11.5 cm w.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 74 (no. 64)

1.3. Ptah-Sokar-Osiris
Painted and gilded wood
Nag el-Hassaia (?), Egypt
Saite Period (685-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88769
Cairo Department of Antiquities, purchase, 1935
60.0 cm h., 11.0 cm w.
Unpublished

2. The complex iconography and symbolism of these statues, as well as the criteria for dating them, are discussed in Raven 1978-79. For further discussion of the date and provenance of the Kelsey Museum figures, see IX “The House of Eternity” below.
This spell illustrates a mythology that places Isis, Horus, and Osiris in a cosmic triangle of aid, protection, resurrection, and power with which the deceased, by invoking any of these gods, associates himself. It must be remembered that, to the Egyptian, the roles that these deities played and the qualities they represented were more important than the specific narratives associated with them. The power represented in Horus, the protection and nurture represented by Isis, and the resurrection and restoration of Osiris are all qualities that the deceased hoped to acquire. The representations displayed here are all the means by which the deceased hoped to gain these benefits and achieve bliss in the afterlife.

The statues here differ from other objects in this exhibition in the following way: many of the artifacts here are tools, spells, and other aids that the deceased hoped to use directly to survive death and exist happily in the afterlife. But, like many of the amulets, these images are meant to invoke the protection and help of the deities represented. The statuettes can be seen as homopoeic—that is, as Carol Andrews states with reference to amulets, the deceased “would hope to assimilate the person of the deity represented and thus gain access to their particular powers or characteristics” (Andrews 1994, 15). The representation of the deity could be equivalent to the presence of the divinity for the Egyptian, just as, in its ultimate form, the deity could manifest itself in the cult statue in an Egyptian temple. The deceased would thus directly assimilate the qualities of the deities represented by surrounding himself with their images.

What were these qualities? The representations of Osiris here are perhaps the most obvious attempts at emulation. Osiris is the Listless One, forever helpless, and, ultimately, deceased. The representations of Osiris here (I.4, I.5, and I.6) all show him as basically a mummy. But at the same time, he is a mummy resurrected and possessing the symbols of power and rule: the atef crown, the uraeus, and the crook and flail. These images represent Osiris as both a mummy and risen to be restored to power. The deceased could identify with the mummy and hope that, like Osiris, he too will be resurrected.

Osiris cannot, however, be resurrected and restored without help. It is his wife and sister, Isis, who sought out, pieced together, and, with the help of Anubis, resurrected Osiris. Isis is thus the protectress, the nurturer. In addition, she provided Osiris with an avenger; her son by Osiris—Horus—was likewise nurtured and protected in his infancy from the evil Seth and his confederates. It is this scene which is represented in I.7 and I.8. In these popular representations, the nurturing and protective aspect of Isis is emphasized.

Guardians of the Dead

Horus comes at your call, Osiris,
You will be placed upon his arms,
You will be safe in your power.
Horus is in the underworld . . .
Osiris, live!
May the Listless One rise upon his side.
I am Isis!

I.4. Double Osiris
Bronze
Fayum, Egypt
Kelsey Museum 3146
Askren Purchase, 1925
Ptolemaic-Early Roman periods
(332 BC-200 AD)
5.1 cm h., 2.3 cm w.
Published: Haeckel and Spelman 1977, 51 (no. 33)

I.5. Osiris
Bronze
Fayum, Egypt
Kelsey Museum 21614
Askren Purchase, 1925
Ptolemaic-Early Roman periods
(332 BC-200 AD)
8.3 cm h.
Unpublished

She is nurturing Horus and at the same time anticipating the resurrection and revenge of Osiris. The appeal of these statuettes for the deceased is clear: he hopes to assimilate to his person something of the life, protection, and nurture that Isis is here giving to her son, and at the same time he hopes to gain some of the life and power represented by the young Horus.

In these nurturing scenes, the symbols of nurture, resurrection, and power are all present. Isis' pose is one of protection with her left hand and nurture with her right. She wears on her head the assimilated horns of Hathor, the nurturing cow-goddess, as well as the life-giving sun-disk of Re. Since it is ultimately the power of Horus that will save and restore Osiris, the idea of power being nurtured is evident in the representation of Horus with uraeus and crown but with a prince's lock of hair. His youth is symbolized by his nudity. As with the images of Osiris, these images perfectly represent, embody, and express the protection and nurture that the deceased hoped to assimilate to himself.

It is simply by associating these pieces with the burial that the deceased can assimilate their powers. We have no contexts for these pieces. Some of them (1.4) are probably meant, like amulets, to be worn. Others (1.5, 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8) seem to have been displayed on a stand or attached to a larger object such as a chest. These deities are represented in many contexts and in many media. The powers of Isis, Osiris, and Horus are invoked through representation on tomb-paintings, on papyri, and in statuary as large as monumental sculpture and as small as amulets. But perhaps it is in small statuettes like these, in funerary contexts, that the special purpose of these guardians of the dead is most heartfelt.
II. Preserving Life

The ancient Egyptians believed that life in the House of Eternity was in many ways similar to that in the land of the living. In addition to food, therefore (see IV “Nourishing the Dead”), they provisioned their graves with objects to meet the needs and demands of a comfortable and pleasurable life. In the tombs of the wealthy, a decorative system of relief or painting in the funerary chapel would represent many of the scenes and items desired, which were magically activated in the afterlife. These scenes might represent the varied activities of a country estate; the deceased at leisure with his/her family; displays of cosmetic items; furniture; depictions of boats for river travel, including the important pilgrimage to Abydos.

Objects of “daily life” were also placed in the grave, though it is often difficult to establish whether they were actually used in life or produced specifically as funerary artifacts. Frequently occurring are the accouterments of the toilette: palettes to grind minerals for the making of kohl, the ancient Egyptian eyeliner worn by men and women alike; jars to store kohl powder; and bulbous-ended sticks for the application of this cosmetic. Combs and hairpins are attested in graves from the Predynastic Period onwards, and mirrors of copper or bronze were also deposited in grave assemblages later in the Dynastic era. Mirrors served both a practical and symbolic purpose, as they were believed to be a symbol of life, perhaps because they reproduce the image of the deceased (Lilyquist 1982, 186). Other kinds of daily life items that might occur in grave assemblages are pieces of furniture, including chairs, stools, head rests, and fragments of decorative inlay (II.1).

Beginning in the Middle Kingdom, the ancient Egyptians also equipped their graves with funerary figurines called ushabtis, which were intended to perform labor on behalf of the deceased in the afterlife. Many are inscribed with chapter 6 of the Book of the Dead, which specifies that when the deceased is called upon to do work, this figure will report for duty. In fact, the term ushabti is derived from the ancient Egyptian verb “to answer,” highlighting its particular responsibility. By the 18th Dynasty, it was customary to place several—and often hundreds—of these figurines in the grave to ensure a life of leisure for the deceased. Ushabti boxes of the Third Intermediate Period stored sometimes hundreds of tiny ushabti figurines (e.g., II.19).

Several of the objects in this section of the exhibition illustrate problems of preservation or conservation. The figure of a bound ox (II.11) was probably originally part of a butchering scene, now lost. Two objects reflect the impact of modern and ancient economic markets. The calcite ushabti (II.20) once was decorated with strips of precious metal, torn away by either ancient or modern opportunists; the mirror (II.12) may incorporate a modern handle, added to the ancient artifact to enhance its retail value. Finally, the two head rests from Sedment illustrate the differential preservation of wood objects due to the factors of quality and context.
II.1. Lotus flower furniture inlay
Wood
Sedment, Egypt, Tomb 419
18th Dynasty (1570-1293 BC)
Kelsey Museum 1886
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921
8.15 cm h., 5.0 cm w.
Published: Petrie and Brunton 1924, 25, pl. 61

II.2. Head rest
Wood
Sedment, Egypt, Tomb 1586
11th Dynasty (2134-1991 BC)
Kelsey Museum 1906
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921
neck piece: 3.5 cm h., 11 cm w.,
5.0 cm l.; column: 7.5 cm h., 4.0 cm w., 4.0 cm l.; base: 4.0 cm h.,
16.5 cm w., 6.0 cm l.
Unpublished

II.3. Head rest
Wood
Sedment, Egypt, Tomb 2123
First Intermediate Period
(2260-2040 BC)
Kelsey Museum 1908
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921
neck piece: 4 cm h., 12 cm w.; column
8 cm h., 6 cm w.; base 4.25 cm h.,
23.5 cm w.
Unpublished

II.4. Cosmetic palette
Gray slate
Egypt
Predynastic Period
(Waqada II; 3700-3250 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88823
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
12 cm h., 11.5 cm w.
Unpublished

II.5. Palette
Granite?
Egypt
Old Kingdom (2750-2260 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.220
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
2.5 cm h., 8.25 cm w., 12.25 cm l.
Unpublished

II.6. Cosmetic jar with two-piece lid
Basalt
Egypt
New Kingdom (1570-1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88789a-b
Cairo Department of Antiquities purchase, 1935
5.0 cm h., 4.8 cm w.
Unpublished

II.7. Cosmetic jar with lid
Calcite (Egyptian alabaster)
Egypt
Middle Kingdom (2040-1650 BC)
Kelsey Museum 62.2.25
Gift of Mrs. John G. Winter, 1962
3 cm h.
Unpublished

II.8. Cosmetic jar
Serpentine
Egypt
Middle Kingdom (2040-1650 BC)
Kelsey Museum 62.2.5
Gift of Mrs. John G. Winter, 1962
3 cm h.
Unpublished

II.9. Kohl stick
Wood
Sedment, Egypt, Tomb 419
18th Dynasty (1570-1293 BC)
Kelsey Museum 1887
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921
15.6 cm l.
Published: Petrie and Brunton 1924, 25, pl. 61

II.10. Comb
Wood
Sedment, Egypt, Tomb 419
18th Dynasty (1570-1293 BC)
Kelsey Museum 1890
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921
5 cm h., 4.0 cm w., 6.5 cm l.
Published: Petrie and Brunton 1924, 25, pl. 60
II.11. Figure of bound ox
Painted wood
Egypt
Early Middle Kingdom (2040-1783 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88759
Cairo Department of Antiquities purchase, 1935
12.5 cm h., 7.0 cm w., 20.0 cm l.
Unpublished

II.12. Mirror
Bronze, wood
Egypt
Middle Kingdom (2040-1650 BC); handle possibly modern
Kelsey Museum 71.2.137
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
23.6 cm h., 12.2 cm w.
Unpublished

II.13. Boat model and associated figures
Wood, paint
Egypt
Early Middle Kingdom (2040-1783 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88804
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
Boat 56 cm max. l.; 18 cm max. h.; seated figures 10 cm h., standing figure 14 cm h.
Unpublished

II.14. Ushabti
Faience
Egypt
Saite Period (26th Dynasty; 685-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.162
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
11 cm h., 3.0 cm w.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 75 (no. 66)

II.15. Ushabti
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.24
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
7.4 cm h., 2.0 cm w.
Unpublished

II.16. Ushabti
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.25
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
6.4 cm h., 1.9 cm w.
Unpublished

II.17. Ushabti
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.26
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
6.1 cm h., 1.7 cm w.
Unpublished

II.18. Ushabti
Faience
Egypt
21st Dynasty (1070-946 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.12
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
11 cm h.
Published: Root 1982, 22 (no. 8)

II.19. Ushabti
Painted pottery
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period (1070-656 BC)
Kelsey Museum 83.1.3
Gift of Dr. S. A. Goudsmit, 1983
6.0 cm h.
Unpublished

II.20. Ushabti
Plastered and painted calcite
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period (1070-656 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88707
Askren Purchase, 1934-35
17.5 cm h., 5.5 cm w., 3.75 cm depth
Unpublished

II.21. Ushabti
Painted wood
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period (1070-656 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88715
Askren Purchase, 1934-35
20.0 cm h., 5.0 cm w., 3.0 cm depth
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 74-75 (no. 65)

II.22. Ushabti
Blue faience
Egypt
Kelsey Museum 88721
Askren purchase, 1934-35
15 cm h.
Unpublished
A Fertility Statue

“With the shape of you I people night, and thoughts of hot desire grow live within me” (Foster 1974, 17). In this New Kingdom love song, a woman’s desire for her lover is given the power to produce life and populate her world. A similar conception of life is embodied in a statuette at the Kelsey Museum; its study highlights aspects of Egyptian belief in the nature and role of fertility in life and death.

The figure (1.23) comes from the Bay View Collection of Egyptian antiquities. A certain Dr. Camden McCormack Cobenn is said to have given the piece to the Bay View Association in the late 1890s; no further provenance is known. A block of limestone represents a naked woman lying on the padded top of a three-layer bed; the bed stands on low supports and measures 18 cm long by 3 cm high by 5.5 cm wide. At one end, the woman’s head is supported by a columnar head rest; on the footboard at the other end, there is a painted or stamped checkerboard design of black squares. Traces of black and red paint are visible in the creases of the bed’s layers; black paint survives on the woman’s wig and eyes. In front of the footboard and behind the naked woman’s feet are the feet and robe hem of a second, smaller figure. Most of this secondary figure is broken off; there is a break across the opposite corner of the footboard as well. Otherwise, the statue is whole, although worn at the back of the head and the middle of the face.

The forms of the statue emphasize sexuality and childbearing. The woman wears only a wig — textual sources give women’s heavy wigs an erotic dimension (Robins 1993, 185). This wig is short and bulbous, sharply marked off around the face and ears, and painted black over the triangular gouges that indicate the hair. The woman wears no clothing or jewelry — she is nonetheless “clothed” in a carefully specified nudity. The sculptor has carved the full, low breasts and curving belly, solid thighs, and thick waist of a mature woman; this is a proven bearer of children. Comparisons with similar statues suggest that the secondary figure behind her feet is a second female and may be holding a child; this would reinforce the message of successful childbearing. Equally suggestive is the footboard of a similar statuette from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, painted with symbols and figures that have been interpreted as images of protection for women in childbirth. The Kelsey statuette depicts female fecundity.

The meaning of the Kelsey figurine would have been activated by its context. Unfortunately, the date and intended function of this statuette are difficult to reconstruct. Egyptian figures of naked women on beds are dated from the New Kingdom through the Late Period, although most belong to the New Kingdom (Pinch 1983, 406; Breasted 1948, 96). The New Kingdom figurines are exclusively slim, long-haired, and supine; any secondary figures are nude and lie down at lower left. In the Kelsey figurine, however, we see a plump, short-haired woman lying on her side and a clothed secondary figure sitting up or standing at lower left. In these aspects, the statuette most resembles the figures of reclining women found at

1. Brunton and Engelbach 1927, Tomb 408, pl. 25, 20; Pinch 1983. For a clothed secondary figure, see Pinch 1983, 409, n. 29.
Naukratis and dated to the 6th-4th centuries BC; this seems the most likely date for the Kelsey figurine.\(^3\)

Closest to the Kelsey figurine in body and hair, but not in pose, is a limestone sculpture in the round at the Brooklyn Museum, dated to the Ptolemaic Period and depicting intercourse between a male with a giant phallus and a woman with the plump figure and short hair of the Kelsey figure (Bianchi 1988, no. 130). These three sets of images, New Kingdom, Late Period, and Ptolemaic, show a development of representations of fertility over time, and yet, at least between the New Kingdom and Late Period figures like the Kelsey statuette, there are striking formal similarities. While we have little information about the use of Late Period figurines, New Kingdom figurines are fairly well known. Can we posit continuity of function as well?

New Kingdom fertility figurines were for a long time interpreted only in terms of their presence in male tombs. They have been called "concubines for the dead"; another interpretation sees them as images meant to restore the virility of the deceased after death and thereby help to ensure the continued propagation of his family in life (Dестroches-Noblecourt 1953). However, a broader interpretation of these fertility figurines is needed, for they have been found in a wide variety of contexts, domestic and votive as well as funerary. In funerary practice, such figurines were put into the tombs of women and children, as well as men (Pinch 1983, 410-11). The figures therefore must represent procreation in terms of its importance to all people, a concern that is not likely to have changed much from the New Kingdom into the Late Period. This principle of life and continuity was considered essential to the afterlife as well as to this life; accordingly, we find it inscribed in modeled bodies of fecund women placed in tombs. The New Kingdom love song quoted above evokes female sexual desire as a power that can produce life even in solitude and night—no less could figurines like the Kelsey statuette "people night" and turn death into life.

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3. Petrie 1886, 40-41, pl. XIX. Unfortunately, no context for these figurines is given. Petrie found figures of reclining women "a very common class" at Naukratis; their shared characteristics were a naked female lying down, often with a head rest, and a small standing figure often found at the feet. His three illustrations depict women lying on their sides; fig. 14 shares the dumpy outline and short wig of the Kelsey figurine. A close comparison at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is unprovenanced: Hayes 1990, II:202-3.
III. Preserving the Identity

One important step on the road to ensuring existence in an afterlife was the preservation of the individual's identity. Not only must the name of the deceased be preserved (see VIII “Preservation of the Name”), but also his or her image must survive. One vital preservation of the image of the deceased was the body or mummy itself, with its protective amulets and inscribed coffin (see VI “Preserving the Body”), in which the ka or life force of the deceased was believed to reside and to which the ba (“soul”) returned every night after traveling the earth.

The numerous statues, stelae, reliefs, and paintings depicting the deceased that survive from ancient Egyptian graves were set in place to further this goal of preservation. They also provided a second line of defense should the body be destroyed by accident or misfortune: the ka was able to take up residence in the painted or carved image of the deceased and continued to receive offerings in that guise, as depicted in the standard scene of the tomb owner seated before a table laden with foodstuffs and other commodities (e.g., III.8). The ba would also be able to recognize the image of the deceased and return there at night. Significantly, the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, which restored the mummy to all its faculties, could also be performed on its alternates, statues of the deceased.

Votive images of the deceased were also dedicated at the gateways or in the courtyards of deities’ temples from the Middle Kingdom onwards, enabling the deceased simultaneously to preserve yet one more image and to share in offerings made to the god every day. The representations in this portion of the exhibition include statues, stelae, and fragments of relief decorations from both contexts (tomb and temple) in a variety of materials. Many are in fragmentary condition, reflecting the differential preservation of the various materials or the circumstances of their removal from their original context. The antiquities market and the craze for things Egyptian, in force since the 18th century, are jointly responsible for the isolated, unprovenanced condition of such pieces as two fragments of Old Kingdom relief (III.6, III.9), which might well have been removed or sold separately from larger walls or pieces to satisfy the demands of customers who did not concern themselves with context.
III.3. Stela: Isis with priest
Basilic diorite
Egypt
19th Dynasty (1293-1185 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88806
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
31.1 cm h., 20.7 cm w., 11.3 cm depth
Published: Haecki and Spelman 1977, 22 (no. 1)

III.4. Statue of three seated figures
Basil
Egypt
12th Dynasty (1991-1783 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88818
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
22 cm h., 18 cm w., 26.5 cm l.
Unpublished

III.5. Upper portion of statuette
of man
Basil
Egypt
Late-Ptolemaic periods (525-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.171
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
10 cm h.
Unpublished

III.6. Relief carving of hieroglyphs
Limestone
Egypt
Old Kingdom (2750-2260 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.186
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
17.25 cm h., 26 cm l.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 70 (no. 58)

III.7. Stela fragment
Limestone
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.189
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
25.5 cm h., 12.0 cm w.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 71 (no. 60)

III.8. Stela of a woman
Limestone
Egypt
12th Dynasty (1991-1783 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.190
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
26 cm h., 21.75 cm w., 5.0 cm thick
Published: McCleery 1987, 7 (fig. 18)

III.9. Tomb relief of scribes
Limestone
Egypt
6th Dynasty (2407-2260 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.2
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
23 cm h., 38 cm w.
Published: Root 1982, 14 (no. 1)

III.10. Stela fragment
Green glazed limestone
Egypt
New Kingdom (1580-1293 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.4
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
13 cm h., 23 cm w.
Published: Root 1982, 15 (no. 2);
Allen and Dix 1991, 71 (no. 59)
A Middle Kingdom Statue

Kelsey Museum 88808 (III.11) is a Middle Kingdom block statue from Abydos. The statue was purchased in 1952 from Tano, a dealer in Cairo. It is carved out of basaltic diorite and was made for a man named Ren-seneb, son of Hetepet. Ren-seneb sits with his legs crossed and his feet tucked under him. His arms rest on his thighs, and he is wearing a long cloak, which covers his waist and feet. The cloak bears the statue’s inscription, which begins on his lap and goes over to the front of his crossed legs. He wears a smooth and unadorned wig, which is held back by his large ears. The face of the statue is quite worn, especially around the nose and mouth. The overall impression is one of grave seriousness. His eyes and eyelids are clearly marked and somewhat heavy. The bridge of his nose is preserved, although the nose itself is damaged. His lips are thick and droop down at the edges. The center of his lips, which comes out furthest from the face, has been worn down like his nose.

Ren-seneb’s statue exemplifies the kind of statuary that was used to make votive offerings during the Middle Kingdom. Block statues enabled the owner to ensure his spiritual presence at places where he himself was absent. They also served a memorial function. They “attracted the attention of passers-by, who would recite the formula and perpetuate the offerings for the owner of the statue” (Bourriau 1988, 56). These votive statues thus served a function similar to offering stelae or false doors but were often placed far away from the actual burial place of the owner.

Egyptians chose the block statue to make votive offerings primarily for its low cost, modesty, and functionality. The block statue performed all the duties of a votive statue, without requiring as much stone or labor as full-sized statues. It was respectful while at the same time capable of attracting the attention of passersby. It also had an area where the offering inscription could be easily placed and read.

Ren-seneb’s statue shows us that a great amount of information is contained in these relatively small statues. His face, form, and inscription enable us to infer when he lived and where he made his offering. His choice of statuary and his use of granite give us a hint of just how much wealth he may have had and to what level of society he may have belonged.

This statue has been dated to the 12th Dynasty, probably as a result of its facial resemblance to the kings Senwosret III and Amenemhat III. His grave expression and heavy eyelids, the slight downward curve of the eyes, and the pursed and slightly drooping lips are facial characteristics that are similar to the statuary of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III (Bothmer 1959, 18). If it is indeed modeled after these kings, a more precise dating of 1878-1797 BC is possible.

The statue is inscribed with the conventional formula requesting offerings. It is written in five vertical lines, from right to left:

An offering that the king gives, and Osiris, the Foremost of the Westerners, the great god, the lord of Abydos, and Wepwawet, so that invocation offerings (bread, beer, oxen, food, cloth, alabaster jars), all good and pure things, incense and oil come forth for the spirit of the god’s father, Ren-seneb, whose mother was Hetepet, the mistress of the house.
By the First Intermediate Period, private individuals like Ren-seneb began to depict themselves asking for offerings in the afterlife and made use of royal funerary texts. These offerings were for the spirit of the deceased and were meant to sustain it in the afterlife. The offerings were spiritual and worked through magic, so simply reading the inscription would grant the Ren-seneb's spirit those offerings in the afterlife. In addition to the offering formula, the inscription tells us the name of the statue's owner, Ren-seneb, and also his title, "god's father," which probably referred to a priestly title.

The inscription tells us that Ren-seneb was addressing "Osiris, the lord of Abydos." The statue's provenance has been listed as Abydos. Since the statue was bought in Cairo, it is possible that its provenance was determined on the basis of this inscription. Abydos was the chief popular religious center in Egypt during the Middle Kingdom (Baines and Malek 1980, 114). This was due to its connections to Osiris and the reenactment ritual of the "mysteries of Osiris," which attracted many pilgrims. The reference to Wepwawet, a deity particular to Abydos, also suggests an Abydos provenance. Many votive offerings were set up to Osiris at Abydos, and this could very well have been one such offering.

This statue can also tell us about Ren-seneb's general social background. It is made of granite, a durable and respectable material for sculpture. Granite was used to ensure that this statue would survive forever while at the same time reflecting a certain amount of wealth in its owner. Also, Ren-seneb wears a long kilt, which is generally associated with the office of bureaucrat. His priestly title along with his choice of dress and medium suggest that he comes from a financially comfortable level of society.
A deceased individual’s ka, or life force, resided in the tomb after death and required nourishment in perpetuity in order to survive. The ancient Egyptians met this requirement through offerings of magical and virtual food and drink in the offering chapel or public part of the grave. Wealthier individuals would decorate large chapels with extensive menus of food; they would also endow funerary estates, with the proceeds intended to support a priest dedicated to visiting the chapel on a regular basis. This priest, or members of the deceased’s family, would make offerings of food and attend to the cult of the deceased so that he/she might continue to exist in the afterlife.

The focal point of offerings in the tombs of wealthy individuals of most periods was the false door set into the eastern wall of the chapel, which the Egyptians believed to be the point of connection between the deceased residing in the burial chamber below and the offerings made to him/her. The 6th Dynasty false-door panel of Kar, also known as Pepi-Nefer (IV.1), is from his tomb at Saqqara, which was equipped with several false doors. The Kelsey Museum panel formed the left jamb of one of these doors and depicts the deceased standing with staff in hand to receive offerings to his ka. The inscriptions on the complete false door would have included Kar’s titles along with standard offering formulae, which could magically provide nourishment to the deceased should visits to the tomb cease. The fragmentary inscription on our panel reads:

(right vertical line): . . . the lector priest who is in the heart of his lord, the true senior warden of Nekhen, the revered Kar
(left vertical line): . . . to the House of Eternity of the revered Kar, whose nickname is Pepi-Nefer.

The graves of less wealthy individuals were also accompanied by real or symbolic offering chapels, though the former were far less elaborate than structures such as that of Kar. Smaller brick-built chapels might be furnished with crude stelae depicting the name and image of the deceased, seated before a funerary feast (Richards 1992, 201); in the First Intermediate and Middle Kingdom periods, small pottery offering trays with modeled representations of chapels, food, and libation channels might be placed on the surface of simple graves, in lieu of a real structure (D’Auria et al. 1988, 107).

The single largest category of artifacts from ancient Egypt is that of containers, reflecting the enormous numbers of food or liquid related vessels left in offering chapels or buried with the deceased, in fulfillment of the need for nourishment. The containers on display in the exhibition provide examples of the different kinds of materials used by the Egyptians for these vessels, including the highly prized calcite, popular for its attractive, translucent appearance (e.g., IV.2), the hard stones diorite (IV.10) and granite (IV.14), and pottery (e.g., IV.11).

The Egyptians knew, however, that over time even the most carefully thought out arrangements break down: graves can be robbed, family members die out, priests cease to come to the chapel. The magical images would continue to nourish the ka of the deceased, but some tomb owners also took the precaution of
inscribing an “Appeal to the Living” on their funerary monuments, so that passersby in the cemetery might be entreated to utter the correct offering formula:

... all people of Abydos, who shall pass by this monument in going downstream or in going upstream, as you love your king, as you praise your city gods, as your children shall remain in your place, as you love life and ignore death, you shall say: a thousand of bread and beer, oxen and fowl, ointment and clothing, incense, unguent and all kinds of herbs, all kinds of offerings on which a god lives, for the ka of the revered prince . . . Sehetep-ib-re, the justified, son of Dedet-Nekhbet, the justified. (from the stela of Sehetep-ib-re, quoted in Licht-heim 1973, I:128-29)
A Grave Group from Gurob

The most essential way to study burial evidence is by the units in which the material was deposited. Not all items can be linked back to their original grave and accompanying items. But when pieces can be recontextualized, one is able to speak not only about ancient Egypt in general but about an individual and a community of a specific place and time. Several of the Kelsey pieces are united by such an origin, as they form part of a burial assemblage dating to the Early Dynastic Period, c. 3100-2600 BC. These items were excavated from the burial of a mature woman, Tomb 103 at the site Gurob, located on the south edge of the Fayum.¹

Gurob is best known as the site of an 18th Dynasty temple and city built under Tuthmosis III, but the burials made here range over a period of 2,000 years. Hundreds of graves were uncovered in British excavations in 1920 led by Guy Brunton and Reginald Engelbach. Tomb 103 is one of 16 graves that were labeled as Cemetery O and are dated to Dynasties 0-1, making this the earliest activity at the site. The material from the 1920 excavation was distributed among various museums of Europe and North America. And so the items from one of these burials were donated to the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology in 1924 by Sir Flinders Petrie.

The burial of Tomb 103 was made in a rectangular pit with various items laid around the body (see drawing). The items that were placed in this grave include a calcite bowl (IV.15), 13 fragments of malachite (IV.16), a set of faience beads (IV.17), and fragments of an ivory pin (IV.18). In addition to the objects on display were two other ivory pins, a wooden spoon, and eight ceramic vessels.

These materials were excavated and distributed at a time when attitudes regarding their study and preservation were different from those of today. Consequently, the skeletal remains were not preserved, and none of the pottery was included in the Petrie donation. Unfortunately, the fragments of the wooden spoon (once Kelsey Museum 1905) had disintegrated into dust by the time they reached Ann Arbor.

The pots were simple, undecorated types that are representative of the Early Dynastic Period. There were several different forms of bowls and jars. No contents survived in these pots, but it is most likely that they contained grain or basic food items. The use of the pots for food storage might explain the presence of spoons: an ivory one in Tomb 117 and the wooden spoon originally in Tomb 103. The inclusion of ceramic vessels in burials is a standard in Egyptian custom since the beginning of the 4th millennium. Caution, however, must be exercised in attempting to understand the meaning behind rituals of this early period. We know from texts of the later periods that food items were represented or included in burials in order to provide nourishment for the dead in the afterlife. But it may be inappropriate to apply this belief to burials before the Old Kingdom proper.

The calcite bowl from Tomb 103 is a fine example of the stone vessels that were carved in the Early Dynastic Period, a time of sophisticated and prolific production. Calcite is one of the most

¹ Data about the tomb group come from Brunton and Englebach 1927. Figures are adapted from Brunton and Englebach 1927, pl. 3.
frequently used materials due to its softness, luminescence, and local availability. The Kelsey bowl is typical in its bands of yellow and white and is a fine example of how the natural veining is accentuated by shape and polishing. When excavated, this bowl held pieces of malachite, a copper ore that is often found in raw lumps such as these. This material was commonly ground into powder to be used as eye charcoal. The copper ore is common in graves from all periods, as are stone and ceramic vessels that contained charcoal and slate palettes on which the ore was ground. Tomb 103 also contained personal accessories that are found in many burials, in this case hairpins and a faience necklace. Pins and other pieces made of ivory were carved from the bone of both elephant and hippopotamus and were used since the Neolithic Period. It is unclear if the hairpins were worn by the deceased of Tomb 103 or merely placed in the tomb, but the faience beads must have been strung around her neck.

The other Early Dynastic burials at Gurob contained similar material. All included pottery of the same basic types, and many had stone vessels, charcoal or malachite, and pins of ivory or wood. Also, two graves contained slate palettes, and a few others had minor pieces of jewelry as well. Tomb 103 can be considered among the wealthiest of the Cemetery O burials, considering its contents and size. But in comparison to other burial assemblages of this period, the Gurob cemetery is fairly consistent in the amount of wealth and energy invested in each burial. It is difficult yet potentially productive to relate this funerary evidence to the society of once living people. In this case, Cemetery O appears to be that of a community with little variation in wealth and status of individuals, at least as reflected by burial practices.

The pottery assemblage dates this burial to the Early Dynastic Period, a time that is marked by the use of hieroglyphic writing, greater foreign contact, increased wealth among the elite, and the beginnings of canonical Egyptian art. Yet the items in Tomb 103 and the similar burials of Cemetery O do not display these advances that are seen in other burials. In fact, many of the artifacts are types known in Predynastic Egypt as well. Yet these burials can by no means be considered poor, in that they do contain items of value and use and are deposited in deep pits. They can be seen as representative of a small group that shows modest prosperity and continuity with earlier ways of life. Thus it is one component of a range of variable levels of class, wealth, and organization of Egyptian society at this time. By linking this material back to its original context it is possible to reconstruct the array of burial practices and communities within the societal structure of Early Dynastic Egypt.
**Gurob Tomb group: IV.15, IV.16, IV.17, IV.18.**

**IV.15. Bowl**
Calcite  
Gurob, Egypt, Tomb 103  
Early Dynastic (3100-2750 BC)  
Kelsey Museum 1899  
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921  
6 cm h.  
Published: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 6, pls. 3-4

**IV.16. Fragments of raw malachite**  
Gurob, Egypt, Tomb 103  
Early Dynastic (3100-2750 BC)  
Kelsey Museum 1901  
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921  
Published: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 6, pl. 3-4

**IV.17. Bead necklace**  
Faience  
Gurob, Egypt, Tomb 103  
Early Dynastic (3100-2750 BC)  
Kelsey Museum 1904  
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921  
29 cm L (entire string)  
Published: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 6, pls. 3-4

**IV.18. Hair pin**  
Bone  
Gurob, Egypt, Tomb 103  
Early Dynastic (3100-2750 BC)  
Kelsey Museum 1900  
Gift of W. Flinders Petrie, 1921  
11 cm L.  
Published: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 6, pls. 3-4
V. Journey and Judgment

Before the dead person could enjoy the benefits of the objects preserved in the tomb, his or her soul would have to go on a long journey that terminated in a judgment. Only if the deceased were judged “true of voice” (in Egyptian terms) could the soul then return to the tomb, reunite with the body, and begin the process of life after death. The journey and judgment after death was not something that the Egyptians wanted to face unprepared; this resulted in the development of a complex system of texts and images designed to show and instruct the dead person what to expect along the way.

These funerary texts and images accompanied the dead person on a variety of objects and surfaces. The walls of the tomb, the panels of the coffin (V.1-2, for example, and IX.1), statues (I.2-3), jewelry (V.4), and even the cloth bandages in which the mummy was wrapped could be inscribed with useful information for the afterlife (as in V.8). In most cases, the combination of object and text had special significance. For example, heart scarabs such as V.4 were inscribed with a special spell for the protection of the dead person’s heart during judgment; such scarabs were often put inside the body of the deceased near the heart itself.

The medium most commonly associated with Egyptian funerary texts was papyrus—paper made from the pithy stalks of the papyrus plant. Although a wide range of texts were written on papyrus (literary, scientific, legal, administrative, epistolary, liturgical), by far the majority of papyri that have survived from Pharaonic times were inscribed with some sort of funerary text designed for use by a dead person in the afterlife. The Kelsey Museum papyrus fragments come from two categories of funerary text: compilations known to modern scholars as the Book of the Dead and the Book of Amduat. The Egyptian Book of the Dead was a collection of spells and hymns designed to assist the dead person in the difficult journey through the afterlife. One of the Kelsey pieces illustrates a test the deceased had to pass: the “Negative Confessions,” whereby the dead person had to make a series of negative claims successfully (“I have not done . . .”) before a succession of gods (V.11). The other two fragments from the Book of the Dead in the display show scenes following a successful journey: in one (V.6), the dead man receives food and drink from a sycamore tree, while in the other (V.7) the dead man rows a boat in what was once an idyllic scene of life after death in the “Fields of Repose.” The other composition represented in the display, the Book of Amduat (literally: Book of what is in the Underworld), is a much shorter and more specific composition, covering the journey of the sun god through the Underworld during the 12 hours of the night. The Kelsey fragment (V.5) is from the description of the 12th hour: the papyrus shows the sun god’s boat and the various beings that surround it, while describing in the text what the gods are called and what happens at this point in the sun god’s voyage. Such texts and images were thought to help the deceased prepare for what they would encounter after death.

The very documents designed to guide and safeguard the dead person through the trials and pitfalls of the afterlife are themselves subject to the perils of time and human intervention. In addition to the conservation problems that plagued Egyptian papyri even in
ancient times—damage from damp, insects, and rough handling—surviving documents have often been subject to further indignities at the hands of modern antiquities dealers and collectors. The Kelsey Museum has three papyrus "rolls," two of which are included in the current exhibition (V.9-10), that are, in fact, of modern construction but incorporate ancient materials. These made-up papyrus rolls are common artifacts of the practice of 19th-century antiquities dealers, who rolled up fragments of genuine papyrus and wrapped them in strips of ancient cloth to form scrolls. This is evident by, among other things, the fact that the texts and images on the papyrus are turned to the outside of the roll; actual ancient papyrus scrolls generally turn the text and images inside the roll to further protect them. This disposition of text and image can be observed in another item in the Kelsey Museum collection (V.11), an ancient papyrus scroll in something like its original state. At some point prior to the acquisition of the papyrus by the Kelsey Museum, an attempt was made to unroll it. This was not carried out with the proper techniques, however, with the result that the unrolled parts of the papyrus fell into fragments. Based on parallels, it has been possible to reorder these fragmentary portions of the papyrus; meanwhile, the remainder of the roll awaits a properly carried-out unrolling to reveal the texts and images it now conceals.

1. For an excellent summary of the conservation problems posed by papyri and the modern treatments used on the papyri of the British Museum, see Donnithorne 1986.
2. Donnithorne 1986, 19 (pl. 3.c) shows a similar example of a modern roll made from ancient materials in the British Museum and the papyrus fragments conserved from this roll (pl. 3.d).
V.8. Inscribed mummy cloth
Ink on linen
Egypt
Late-Ptolemaic periods (525–30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.277a
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
Unpublished

V.9-10. Papyrus rolls (modern construction with ancient materials)
Ink on papyrus, ancient cloth, clay
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period
(1070–656 BC)
Kelsey Museum 87.12.1-2
Gift of Lovell Wood Royston in memory of Olive Yale Anderson Wood (1907–87)
23.5 cm h. and 17 cm h.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 82 (no. 75)

V.11. Papyrus: Book of the Dead (partial roll and reconstructed scene)
Ink and paint on papyrus
Egypt
Third Intermediate-Saite periods
(1070–525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 87.12.4
Gift of Lovell Wood Royston in memory of Olive Yale Anderson Wood (1907–87)
roll c. 15 cm h.
Unpublished
Preserving the Written Word

The University of Michigan owns the largest papyrus collection in the Western hemisphere and ranks among the largest worldwide. It contains over 7,000 inventory numbers and has more than 10,000 individual fragments (many of the inventory numbers include multiple fragments). In date, the papyri of the Michigan collection cover almost two millennia of history, ranging from c. 1200 BC to 1000 AD, with the majority from the 3rd century BC to the 7th century AD. The earliest text in the collection is an illustrated fragment from the so-called Book of the Dead, and the latest papyri come from the early centuries of the Arab Period. Most of the papyri are in Greek, but a large group of them are in several other languages spoken and written by the various cultural and ethnic groups that once lived in Egypt: Hieratic, Demotic and Coptic Egyptian, Greek, Arabic, Latin, and a handful in Aramaic.

In addition to the papyri, the Michigan collections also contain other writing surfaces that were in use in the ancient world, such as ostraca (potsherds), lead, wax and wooden tablets, parchment, and, rarely, paper.

The first papyri of the collection were acquired in 1920, with continuous subsequent purchases until 1940; two smaller purchases were made in the 1980s. In the early years the papyri were acquired through a "cartel" that was comprised of the British Museum, several American universities (Columbia, Princeton, Yale, etc.), and a number of European universities (Geneva, Oslo). In an unprecedented expedition the University of Michigan pioneered a unique excavation for eleven consecutive seasons (1924-35) in the ancient Egyptian town of Karanis, 40 miles southwest of modern Cairo. More than 100,000 archaeological objects were excavated, while the complete and partial documents on papyrus that were retrieved filled more than 2,500 folders, and there were over 6,000 ostraca. Most of the papyri and all the ostraca from Karanis were returned to the Egyptian government in 1954 as part of the original agreement. Approximately 1,000 individual papyrus fragments, along with Polaroid pictures and negatives of many of the returned papyri and ostraca, remain in the Papyrology rooms at the University of Michigan. The archaeological artifacts in combination with the rich evidence of the papyri provide an unparalleled opportunity to study daily life, literally house to house, in ancient Karanis. Such a research opportunity is unique and cannot be carried out for any other site in ancient Egypt.

All types of documents, literature, and subliterature are represented in the collection. These include poetry, prose, scientific treatises (mathematics, geometry, astronomy), textbooks, lectures, private notes and accounts, medical recipes and prescriptions, magical spells, letters, invitations, decrees of kings and emperors, petitions to emperors, kings, or subordinate officials, contracts and agreements of every conceivable nature, purchase orders, checks, receipts, tax lists and declarations, court proceedings and other legal business.

All these papyri provide a unique insight into the ancient world, the social structure of ancient life in general and in many details. The contribution of the Michigan papyrus collection has been very important in the understanding of the history of Egypt.
under Greek and Roman rule, the structure of the society from the
Ptolemaic to the Byzantine Period, the administration, the personal
religious beliefs of individuals, the official religions and their dog-
matic strife, the history of ancient scholarship, the schools, higher
education, and changes in literary taste over the periods.

In sum, the Michigan papyrus collection, with its widely
diverse documents, is an irreplaceable source of knowledge not only
for students of ancient Egypt but also for those who are engaged in
the study of the Bible, ancient languages, ancient literature, science,
Greek and Roman law, ancient history, archaeology, and other
related disciplines. In that respect, the papyrology collection at the
University of Michigan occupies a central position in the develop-
ment of interdisciplinary approaches to the ancient world.

The size of the Michigan papyrus collection and the limited
conservation staff available in the past precluded the systematic
conservation treatment of all the items in the collection. Individual
treatment of papyri was performed regularly both by researchers
and/or conservation staff on an ad hoc basis to accommodate specific
needs for research or exhibition. Until 1990 the papyri were kept in
the original tin boxes and acidic folders (mostly newspaper leaves
from the late teens and the early twenties of this century). Thanks
to an initiative of, and funding provided by, the Preservation Unit
of the Graduate Library, staff from the Conservation Unit undertook a
four-year rehousing project that is now nearly complete. Most of
the papyri—an estimated 6,000—are now housed in acid-free
folders and grouped into drop-spine boxes that were specially
designed for papyrology. Several hundred of the papyri are housed
sandwiched between glass (approximately 1,200).

The Michigan papyrus collection is also the first in the world
to enjoy residence in a purpose-built environmental chamber,
which was completed in early 1994. The environmental room is
designed to control temperature at 65°F (± 2) and relative humidity
at 45 percent (± 2). Air circulated into the chamber is filtered for
both particulate and chemical pollutants. There are barriers that
prevent water penetration and fire. Alarm systems provide warning
of breakdown of environmental controls, smoke detection, and
security against unauthorized entry. Temperature and humidity are
continuously monitored independently. The temperature and
humidity configurations imitate very closely the climatic conditions
of the dry sand in Egypt where the papyri and other writing surfaces
survived for several centuries buried in the ruins of ancient towns.
VI. PRESERVING THE BODY

Think of the day of burial, the passing into reveredness. A night is made for you with ointments and wrappings from the hand of Tait. A funeral procession is made for you on the day of burial; the mummy case is of gold, its head of lapis lazuli. . . . Not shall Asiatics inter you. You shall not be wrapped in the skin of a ram to serve as your coffin. Too long a roaming of the earth! Think of your corpse, come back! (from "The Story of Sinuhe," trans. Lichtheim 1973, 2:229-30)

The preservation of the body was one of the most important steps towards ensuring an afterlife. The body must be held together as an integral whole, as in the archetypal preservation of Osiris, the god of the Underworld (Morenz 1973, 200); it also provided a home for the two main spiritual aspects of the deceased, the *ka* and the *ba*. The *ka* (or life force) lived in the body; the *ba* ("embodiment of psychic and physical forces"; D'Auria et al. 1988, 29) was free to travel outside the cemetery during the day but always returned to the body at night. Thus the body of the deceased should be as intact as possible so that life could continue in the grave, and as much like the living person as possible so that the *ba* could recognize him/her and return to the correct body. This ancient Egyptian concern with following the correct procedures in preserving the body is eloquently expressed in the Middle Kingdom story of Sinuhe, an official who fled Egypt during a time of political turmoil and is here entreated to return to his land of birth so that he can receive a proper burial.

During the Predynastic Period, burials were made directly in pits in the sand, and bodies were therefore naturally dessicated. By the Old Kingdom, however, Egyptian burial customs became increasingly elaborate, including the use of coffins and the construction of tombs or lined graves, and this natural preservation of the body no longer took place. It is in this period that we see the first attempts at mummification: a deliberate intervention in the process of decay through a combination of technical actions by embalmers and the utterance of magical spells by ritual specialists, both of which the ancient Egyptians considered crucial to the successful preservation of the body. The entire process was under the magical protection and supervision of Anubis, the deity believed by the Egyptians to have mummified Osiris.

The process of mummification developed over time into an extremely complicated and costly procedure. At its most elaborate, it is believed to have taken place during a period of seventy days, incorporating the following steps. First the body was purified by washing it in Nile water. Representations of this act depict the water flowing over the individual in the form of a chain of *ankh* ("life") signs, indicating the regeneration of life made possible for the individual. Next, the embalmers removed the internal organs through an incision in the left flank, wrapped them in linen, and placed them in canopic jars, to be buried with the deceased. During certain periods, the lids of these jars represent the deities known as the Four Sons of Horus, who each protected specific organs: falcon-headed Kebehsenuf watched over the intestines; human-headed Imsety, the liver and gall bladder; jackal-headed Duamutef, the stomach; and ape-headed Hapy, the lungs. Curiously, the brain was
not retained after its removal. The heart, however, was considered the seat of intelligence and was left in the body: the Egyptians believed that the deceased would need it on his/her journey to the Hall of Judgment (see V “Journey and Judgment”)

The eviscerated body was packed in a dry bed of natron (a salt that occurs naturally in Egypt, which acted as an effective dessicant). Following this dehydration process, the body was once again washed and purified, packed with linen or other stuffing to restore it to its original shape, anointed with oils and unguents, covered with resin, and finally wrapped in linen. Each digit and limb was wrapped individually with strips of linen, and then the body enshrouded as a whole, with powerful and protective amulets incorporated into the wrappings. The mummy might be adorned with colorful cartonnage trappings depicting mythological scenes or foot cases covering the feet of the mummy as added protection. Finally, a gilded mask representing the idealized visage of the deceased would be placed over the head of the mummy to assist the ba in recognizing its proper body. The body would then be placed in a decorated coffin or nest of coffins, which added yet another layer of physical and ritual protection to the body of the deceased and could indeed provide a “House of Eternity” for the body should the tomb itself be destroyed.

Every stage of the mummification process offered the opportunity for different levels of quality and expense. For example, the canopic jars in this exhibition display the range of materials available to the exacting tomb owner: beautifully striated calcite (VI.5), finely worked limestone (VI.6), and the less labor-intensive pottery. Of special interest is a pottery canopic jar that has been plastered and painted to resemble the more expensive calcite (VI.8). Coffins and mummy masks could be enhanced by the incorporation of inlaid eyes, composed of bronze, calcite, and other stones (VI.10–14). Often these eyes, being of durable materials, survive independently of their larger, more perishable contexts.

The eight enigmatic wooden figures, representing the deceased with his arms raised in adoration, two crouching jackals, and the funerary deities Osiris, Duamutef, and Hapy (VI.15–22), are curved in a manner suggestive of openwork decoration for a piece of funeral furniture, possibly a bed.

Since the Ptolemaic–Roman Period, the effective beginning of international tourism in Egypt, mummies have become the quintessential Egyptian “object.” During the 19th century it was especially fashionable to winter on the Nile, and the wealthy Americans and Europeans who made the trip often indulged in a kind of amateur “archaeology.” These enthusiasts were generally not interested in scientific excavation techniques or precise provenance. Rather, they sought mummies of their own, and failing the means or desire to
transport the entire mummy, frequently removed more portable pieces such as fingers, hands, or fragments of linen wrappings to take home as souvenirs. In this century, a significant number of these disembodied trophies have found their way into museums, as the descendants of their collectors clean out attics and houses. One such piece of social history was donated to the Kelsey Museum in 1988 in the form of a folded fragment of linen mummy bandage with an explanatory note (VI.23). The text of the note reads:

**Thebes 18th March 1890.
Mummy Cloth from a mummied lady**

The mummy case in whole was at our cost & instruction procured from an ancient tomb near Deir el-Bahari & taken to the house of the American Consul at Luxor, & there broken open: The mummy removed & unwrapped by us, & the inscriptions indicated an age of about 2800 to 3000 years BC.

I took this from the body (E) also one of the arms & hand.

---

**VI.4. Mummy mask**
Gilded and painted plaster on cloth

*Egypt*

Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BC)

Kelsey Museum 88777

Cairo Department of Antiquities purchase, 1935

39.0 cm h., 19.8 cm w., 23.0 cm depth

Published: Root 1979, 26 (no. 9)

**VI.5. Canopic jar with human head**
Calcite

*Egypt*

New Kingdom (1570-1070 BC)

Kelsey Museum 73.1.4

Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971

jar 29.6 cm h., 20.8 cm max. w.

Published: Root 1979, 17-19 (no. 4)

**VI.6. Canopic jar with falcon head: Kebebesetf**
Limestone

*Egypt*

Late Period (525-343 BC)

Kelsey Museum 71.2.196

Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971

jar 22.6 cm h., 15.0 cm w., 10.5 cm interior diameter; lid 9.4 cm h., 12.5 cm base diameter

Published: Root 1979, 14-15 (no. 2)

**VI.7. Canopic jar with human-headed lid**
Painted pottery

*Egypt*

New Kingdom (1570-1070 BC)

Kelsey Museum 71.2.197

Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971

jar 18.8 cm h., 15.5 cm w.;

lid 7.9 cm h., 11.6 cm w.

Published: Root 1979, 20-21 (no. 5)
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<th>ID</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Museum/Location</th>
<th>Additional Details</th>
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<td>VI.8</td>
<td>Canopic jar with human-headed lid</td>
<td>Painted pottery</td>
<td>New Kingdom, possibly 18th Dynasty (1570-1293 BC)</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 4970</td>
<td>Aslactn Purchase, 1925, 19.9 cm h., 17.6 cm w., 10.7 cm interior diameter, lid 7.9 cm h., 11.0 cm w. Published: Root 1979, 16-17 (no. 3)</td>
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<td>VI.9</td>
<td>Canopic jar and lid</td>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>Old Kingdom (2750-2260 BC)</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 88773a-b Cairo Department of Antiquities purchase, 1935</td>
<td>Jar 23.5 cm h., 15.5 cm w.; lid 3.0 cm h., 13.0 cm w. Unpublished</td>
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<td>VI.10</td>
<td>Eye inlay</td>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 71.2.24</td>
<td>Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971 3.6 cm w., 7.8 cm l. Unpublished</td>
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<td>VI.11</td>
<td>Eye inlay</td>
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<td>Kelsey Museum 71.2.21</td>
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<td>Eye inlay</td>
<td>Bronze, stone</td>
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<td>Eye inlay</td>
<td>Calcite, black stone</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971 1.75 cm w., 5.25 cm l. Unpublished</td>
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<td>VI.14</td>
<td>Eye inlay</td>
<td>Bronze</td>
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<td>VI.15</td>
<td>Hapy figure</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Fayum, Egypt</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 23410</td>
<td>Askren Purchase, 1925 24.3 cm h., 5.3 cm max. w. Unpublished</td>
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<td>VI.16</td>
<td>Jackal figure</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Fayum, Egypt</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 23411</td>
<td>Late-Ptolemaic periods (525-30 BC) Askren Purchase, 1925 7.0 cm h., 15.0 cm w. Unpublished</td>
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<td>VI.17</td>
<td>Mummy linen and descriptive note</td>
<td>Linen, paper</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Kelsey Museum 88.1.1a-b</td>
<td>Gift of J. D. Candler 1988 Unpublished</td>
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VII. DRESSING THE DEAD

Since the Predynastic Period, the Egyptians included in their burials jewelry with which to dress the dead, manufactured in a variety of materials and often incorporating powerful symbols. These symbols or amulets magically protected and imparted to the deceased certain powers, through mythic reference or association with a god. By the Middle Kingdom, there emerged a constellation of amulets believed crucial to the protection and revitalization of the deceased, a symbolic assemblage shared throughout all levels of society. The meaning and form of many of these amulets are documented in ancient Egyptian texts, including the Coffin Texts and the Book of the Dead. Several spells in the latter describe amuletic forms, specify the material of which they are to be made, and provide magical words to be pronounced as these amulets are placed on the mummy, thereby "activating" their special powers (Andrews 1994, 6).

Some of the most powerful and ubiquitous amulet forms are the wedjat, the djed pillar, the scarab, and the ankh. The ankh is the hieroglyph meaning “life” and in amuletic form promises eternal renewal. The wedjat (e.g., VII.10) represented the eye torn from the god Horus during his mythical battle with Seth, his uncle and the murderer of his father Osiris. The eye was restored to Horus by the god Thoth and came to be associated with wholeness and revitalization. A wedjat amulet was often placed over the embalmer’s incision to render the body symbolically whole once again. Similarly, the djed pillar (e.g., VII.11), in the form of the hieroglyph meaning “stability” or “permanence,” ultimately was identified with the backbone of the god Osiris; by association, it rendered stable the backbone of the mummy as well. Finally, the scarab (e.g., VII.3) represents a particular form of the beetle, which was associated with the sun god and was the hieroglyph meaning “to come into being,” or “manifestation.” The scarab form was particularly attractive for amuletic purposes, since its flat underside could be inscribed with spells and other symbols reinforcing its regenerative power (Ibid., 51). The production of protective amulets enjoyed an insatiable market, and all of the above were mass produced in faience, by means of molds that could be used over and over (e.g., VII.13).

Representations of plants could also be symbolic of regeneration and rebirth, occurring in forms ranging from the painstakingly detailed to the highly schematic. The beaded collar terminals (VII.4)
VII.1. Four ring bezels
Faience
Fayum, Egypt
18th Dynasty (1570-1293 BC)
Kelsey Museum 3252a–d
Askren Purchase, 1925
a, c–d 1.75 cm h.; b 1.5 cm h.
Unpublished

VII.2. Quadruple eye of Horus amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525–343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 3252a–d
A. E. R. Boak donation, 1960–61
4.1 cm h., 4.7 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.3. Scarab
Glazed steatite
Egypt
New Kingdom (1570–1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88531
Askren Purchase, 1934–35
0.5 cm h., 1.1 cm w., 1.4 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.4. Beaded collar terminals
Greenish faience
Egypt
New Kingdom (1570–1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88573–4
Askren Purchase, 1934–35
5.0 cm h., 4.5 cm w. (both pieces)
Unpublished

VII.5. Cartonnage mummy sandal
Cloth, plaster, paint
Egypt
Late Period (525–343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88578
Askren Purchase, 1935
8.5 cm w., 22.5 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.6. Pair of cartonnage mummy sandals
Cloth, plaster, paint, gilding
Egypt
Ptolemaic Period (332–30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88727–8
Askren Purchase, 1934–35
7.5 cm w., 25.3 cm l. (each)
Unpublished

VII.7. Necklace
Blue faience and carnelian
Saqqara, Egypt
Old Kingdom (2750–2260 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88730
Cairo Department of Antiquities purchase, 1935
Unpublished

on display probably represent a stylized version of the lotus plant, forming the end points of a faience broad collar, associated with funerary ritual and the vindication of Osiris (D’Auria et al. 1988, 135). Also of note are the different components of a standard set of Ptolemaic Period mummy trappings, originally sewn into the outermost shroud of the mummy. This set typically incorporated items of daily dress—such as sandals (VII.5, VII.6)—along with those of more specifically symbolic and funerary significance—such as the miniature broad collars of gold, which include representations of the falcon god Horus. One of the sandals still bears the impression of the foot to which it was molded. These pieces also provide an illustration of the need for care in the conservation of the gilded and painted cartonnage of which they are made. Cartonnage, formed of layers of plaster, linen, and paint or gilding and often brittle in preservation, is highly subject to deterioration, especially if not handled with extreme care.

It should be noted that amulets were worn by the living as well as the dead, since the ancient Egyptians believed that chaotic forces constantly threatened the order and harmony of their universe. The deities Bes (VII.12) and Taweret (VII.21; see following essay) were fierce protectors of pregnancy and childbirth. The wearing of other powerful symbols associating the Egyptians with specific deities and with the magical forces of protection and revitalization protected them from the misfortunes of the daily round.
VII.8. Pectoral
Gilded plaster on cloth
Egypt
Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88730
Cairo Department of Antiquities
purchase, 1935
12.25 cm max. w., 21 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.9. Pectoral
Gilded plaster on cloth
Egypt
Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88761
Cairo Department of Antiquities
purchase, 1935
13.5 cm w., 20.5 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.10. Wedjat eye amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late-Ptolemaic periods (525-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.30
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
Unpublished

VII.11. Djed pillar amulet
Stone
Egypt
Late-Ptolemaic periods (525-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.30
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
Unpublished

VII.12. Bes amulet
Faience
Egypt
Saite Period (685-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.70
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
5.7 cm h., 2.6 cm w.
Published: Haeckel and Spelman 1977, 65 (no. 50)

VII.13. Amulet mold: wedjat eye
Clay
Egypt
Third Intermediate Period?
(1070-656 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.116
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
5 cm l., 3.5 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.14. Fragment of necklace counterpoise
Faience
Egypt
New Kingdom (1570-1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.116
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
4.5 cm h., 3.75 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.15. Necklace with Duamutef amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.116
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
pendant 7 cm h., 1.4 cm w.
beads 1.5 cm h., 0.2 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.16. Necklace with Hapy amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.42
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
pendant 5.8 cm h., 1.2 cm w.
beads 1.2 cm h., 0.2 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.17. Necklace with Kebebeset amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.43
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
pendant 6 cm h., 1.1 cm w.
beads 1.5 cm h., 0.2 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.18. Necklace with Duamutef amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 80.4.44
Dr. R. W. Gillman donation, 1952
pendant 6 cm h., 1.1 cm w.
beads 1.5 cm h., 0.2 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.19. Ring inscribed with the name of Akhenaten
Green faience
Egypt
18th Dynasty, Reign of Akhenaten
Kelsey Museum 80.4.44
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
ring bezel 0.22 cm h.
Published: Root 1982, 43 (no. 35); Root 1984, 28 (no. 4)

VII.20. Crown of Lower Egypt amulet
Faience
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.109
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
3.0 cm h.
Published: Root 1982, 42 (no. 29)
A Taweret Amulet and a Scaraboid

A Taweret Amulet. Taweret was a minor deity particularly popular among all strata of Egyptian society as a protector of pregnant women and young children. A composite deity in the form of a hippopotamus with a crocodile’s tail and human breasts, Taweret embodies aspects of strength, protection, and fertility. This amulet (VII.21) is the largest and most detailed of the Taweret amulets in the Kelsey collection. It is made of faience with a light aqua glaze. This amulet is lightly soiled, and there are yellow splotches on it that are probably glue from an early museum display. The head is carefully modeled: her mouth is open and her teeth show, the hippopotamus ears press against the wig, and she seems to be wearing a multi-stringed necklace. She has the flat, pendulous breasts typical of Taweret and Nile river gods. The nipples seem almost separated from the breasts. Her arms extend forward along her body and terminate in lion paws at the widest part of her belly, emphasizing Taweret’s fertility functions. At the back of her neck, neatly placed at the interface between her wig and her dorsal appendage, is a loop of faience so that this amulet could be used as a pendant. Her dorsal appendage is decorated with a series of v-shaped lines and shows signs of tapering towards the now-missing base. Other than the missing legs and base, this amulet is in excellent condition.

A Scaraboid. The back of this tiny and elaborately carved scaraboid (VII.22) is of an unusual type. Carved in the form of a crouching human (of indeterminate sex), it presents a view of humans unusual in Egyptian art: the back. Its head is turned to the right, and its open eye looks directly upwards. The artist has very cleverly tried to evoke the form of a scarab beetle in depicting this crouching human, especially in the arrangement of the limbs.

Carved on the base of the Kelsey scaraboid is the protective goddess Taweret. A fearsome composite of hippopotamus, crocodile, and river god, Taweret was popular among the general population of ancient Egypt, who believed that she could provide protection from the dangers of pregnancy, childbirth, and early childhood. This illustration of Taweret shows her devouring a snake and holding a knife, while a ša, the hieroglyph of protection, floats near her feet. Other 18th Dynasty scarabs have bases similar to that of the Kelsey scaraboid. These symbols of Taweret’s fierce character and protective abilities are common.

There are two known parallels to this scaraboid; both are identified as being from the 18th Dynasty, yet neither seems to have been studied in detail. Newberry illustrated one in his book on Ancient Egyptian scarabs (Newberry 1905, 85-86, no. 84). Unfortunately, he only provides a drawing of its back, and he gives no detailed description and no information about its origins—not even in what collection he saw it! The second similar scaraboid was

1. For general references and information about Taweret, see Gundlach 1986; Weingarten 1991.
2. Newberry 1907, 359 (#37431), pl. 18; Musée de Guéret 1992, 83 (#70); Petrie 1925, 24; Hayes 1990, II:183; Reisner 1958, pl. 11, CM #12847.
3. See, for example, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 1982, 74 (#46).
published in the Gurob excavation report (Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 13 and pl. 25). This scaraboid is dated to the Tuthmoside Period (18th Dynasty) on the basis of the other materials found in the grave with it.

Is this crouching figure male or female? The artist seems to have very carefully rendered breasts on this figure. Additionally, Taweret was a deity especially involved with female concerns about reproduction. The scarab beetle itself was considered a symbol of fertility, and themes concerning fertility were often depicted on the base of scarab amulets (Andrews 1994, 53). Because of the strong fertility connotations, identifying the crouching figure as a female is desirable.

However, the clothing worn by the crouching human seems to conform more closely to the conventions of 18th Dynasty male clothing than to female clothing. In addition, the two comparable scaraboids must be taken into account. The scaraboid from Gurob, which is illustrated in a side view, does not seem to have breasts. Both comparable crouching humans seem to be wearing belts, a feature that would indicate that they are wearing kilts and therefore are male. The scarab illustrated by Newberry also seems to be wearing a broad collar or necklace similar to the one on the Kelsey scaraboid.

The Kelsey scaraboid is an unusual artifact. While the sex of the crouching human remains ambiguous, this piece undoubtedly had significance both as a protective amulet and as a fertility charm. Are the three scaraboids the creation of a single 18th Dynasty artist? Or are these scaraboids merely the few obvious examples of an understudied type? More detailed illustrations of the other scaraboids are necessary to make the comparisons that might help solve the puzzle. Further investigation of this type of amulet would hopefully lead to identification of other similar scaraboids and perhaps answers to these questions.
Amulets from Tomb 4, Kom Abou Billou, Egypt

This group, excavated from Tomb 4 in the cemetery of Kom Abou Billou (ancient Terenousis) by a University of Michigan expedition, illustrates the variety of amulets that would have been included in many Egyptian burials. All of these amulets represent items that are mentioned in the Book of the Dead. Some are small representations of deities, others are symbols of deities, and yet others are miniature representations of everyday objects. Although this tomb was looted before the University of Michigan excavators arrived, 21 amulets were excavated. The wealth of this burial is demonstrated by the high quality of these amulets and the expensive materials used. The golden amulets are hollow and probably originally had some backing or filling material to make them sturdier. Of the 21 amulets found, 18 are shown and listed here; the remaining amulets from the find are a green stone papyrus column (KM 24211 [4E-1]), an eye of Horus (KM 24208 [4E-6]), and a collar (KM 24226 [4E-8]).

VII.23. Vulture amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24199
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-4)
0.9 cm L
Unpublished

VII.24. Snake amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24195
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-3)
1.2 cm L
Unpublished

VII.25. Collar amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24225
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-9)
1.7 cm L
Unpublished

VII.26. Snake head amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24194
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-2)
1.5 cm L
Unpublished

VII.27. Cow amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24200
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-5)
1.3 cm L
Unpublished

VII.28. Papyrus column amulet
Gold
Terenousis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24213
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-9)
1.7 cm L
Unpublished

(Left to right) top row: VII.23-27; second row: VII.28-33; third row: VII.34-36; fourth row: VII.37-40.
VII.29. Eye of Horus amulet
Carnelian
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24126
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-8)
0.8 cm h., 1.7 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.30. Eye of Horus amulet
Red jasper(?)
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24127
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-7)
0.8 cm h., 1.2 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.31. Eye of Horus amulet
Turquoise
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24110
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935
0.8 cm h.
Unpublished

VII.32. Eye of Horus amulet
Black hematite
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24134
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-3)
0.9 cm h., 1.4 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.33. Dyed amulet
Gold
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24207
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-7)
1.7 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.34. Writing tablet amulet
Unglazed faience
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24240
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-10)
0.4 cm h., 0.9 cm w., 1.3 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.35. Head and neck of a snake
Carnelian
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24193
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-5)
2.4 cm h., 0.5 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.36. Writing tablet amulet
Unglazed faience
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24241
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-11)
0.4 cm h., 1.0 cm w., 1.4 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.37. Amulet of Sekhmet
Lapis lazuli
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24096
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-4)
2 cm h., 0.8 cm w.
Unpublished

VII.38. Head rest amulet
Serpentine
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24239
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-2)
1.3 cm h., 1 cm w., 2.0 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.39. Architect's square amulet
Brown hematite
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24235
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4D-9)
1.3 cm w., 1.5 cm l.
Unpublished

VII.40. Heart amulet
Gold
Terenouthis, Egypt
Roman (3rd-4th centuries AD)
Kelsey Museum 24230
University of Michigan Excavation, 1935 (4E-10)
1.9 cm l.
Unpublished
VIII. PRESERVING THE NAME

In addition to the physical objects that the Egyptians tried to preserve for the afterlife, a less tangible possession also needed to be protected as well: the name. Egyptians expended great effort to preserve, commemorate, and perpetuate their own names; if a person's name was not preserved after death, there would be serious consequences. The dead person would be forgotten, and the soul of the deceased would have problems finding its body and the objects so carefully preserved with it. Thus Egyptians tended to put their names on every conceivable surface, especially in a funerary context. In addition to the incidental use of the name on monuments, funerary equipment, objects of daily life, certain kinds of objects specifically commemorate and preserve the names of deceased Egyptians.

Most frequently commemorated are royal names; kings, queens, and their families had the economic resources and the authority to feature their names prominently on monumental structures and objects. Smaller-scale public commemorations of royal names took place frequently too on scarabs, seals, and other jewelry items; elsewhere in the exhibition, the preservation and commemoration of royal names can be seen on rings and ring bezels. But the preservation of the royal name was not limited to objects on public display; even objects completely hidden from view were inscribed with the king's name. Thus wooden builder's cramps, incorporated into structures to make them stronger and more stable, would be inscribed with the name of the king responsible for the construction. The Kelsey Museum has one such object, a wooden builder's cramp inscribed for the king Seti I (VII.1); this object was used in the building of a corner of a structure, to keep the two sides together. Such a hidden commemoration of the king's name would also provide symbolic protection to the building. The Kelsey Museum Seti I builder's cramp is paralleled by examples in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which are said to come from the temple of Seti I at Abydos.

Nonroyal individuals also had special means with which to commemorate their names. Private citizens could have their names inscribed on seals and scarabs, but far more common was the commemoration of the name on objects intended for the public part of the tomb, such as stones inscribed with the name incorporated into walls outside the tomb or funerary cones. Funerary cones are baked clay cones shaped to imitate conical loaves of bread; on the base of the cone is stamped the name and titles of the deceased person, sometimes with information about the family of the deceased and short religious formulae. Most of the known funerary cones come from the cemeteries of western Thebes; earliest widespread usage of the cones occurs in the 18th Dynasty and continues down into the Late Period. These cones were imbedded in the walls of the mud-brick structures built above underground tombs, so that the stamped ends were visible along the surface of the wall (D'Auria et al. 1988, 148). These ends were sometimes colored with pigment. The cones were mass produced, and in many cases several examples of the same cone (made from the same original) have survived. This

is true of each of the three funerary cones from the Kelsey Museum's collections included in this exhibition. The first cone (VIII.2) was made for a man named Denrega and bears a simple inscription: "Honored by Osiris: the Overseer of priests, the blessed Denrega." The tomb of Denrega is not known for certain, but it was probably in western Thebes; certainly, the name Denrega is known from the Theban area in the 18th Dynasty (c. 1570-1293 BC). Other examples of nearly identical cones from Denrega's tomb exist in other collections.

The second funerary cone commemorates an individual about whom much is known: Montuemhat, the Fourth Priest of the god Amon at Thebes (VIII.3). Montuemhat was not only a priest but also the mayor of Thebes and eventually the governor of the southern half of Egypt, a man of great political power under the Nubian rulers of Egypt whose career is known from 667-648 BC. Montuemhat's tomb in western Thebes was one of the most extensive and impressive of its time; the Kelsey Museum funerary cone (and many others) come from the superstructure of this tomb. The inscription on this cone reads "The late, blessed Fourth Priest of Amon, Montuemhat, his bodily son being the Priest of Amon, the Royal Acquaintance Pasherenmut, born to the lady of the house, Wedjarenes." This relatively simple inscription hints at the political intrigue of Montuemhat's era. The cone is likely to have been made and installed after Montuemhat's death by his son Pasherenmut, who was born to Montuemhat's Nubian princess wife Wedjarenes; Montuemhat's main heir and successor, however, was another son (Nesptah), born to another wife (Neskhons).

The inscription on the remaining funerary cone (VIII.4) is more complicated; although highly legible, the hieroglyphs on this cone are irregularly positioned and strangely drawn. Other examples of this particular cone are attested, as well as similarly inscribed cones for other individuals. The reading of the name of the deceased as "Amenhotep," though, is tentative and provides a good example of the problems posed by even relatively straightforward and well-attested artifact types. It would not be fair, however, to conclude that this funerary cone has failed in its purpose of preserving the name simply because it is unclear to a modern reader; a contemporary Egyptian audience may have found the interpretation of the inscription completely obvious.

The use of funerary cones was predicated on the existence of tombs with superstructures into which they could be incorporated. Thus their use was restricted to the elites who could afford such tombs; as tombs in general became less elaborate, the use of funerary cones gradually came to an end altogether. The specific preservation of the name, however, continued in a different class of objects that came into common use in the Late Period: mummy labels. The mummy label was a tag of stone or wood that was tied directly to the mummified body of the deceased. Earlier tags seem to be

2. See Davies 1957, no. 45.
3. The standard work on Montuemhat is still Leclant 1961; for more recent bibliography, see Bierbrier 1982.
4. Davies 1957, no. 472 is an exact parallel to the Kelsey Museum cone; other cones of Montuemhat are Davies 1957, nos. 418, 419, 420, 473.
5. Exact parallel is Davies 1957, no. 374; similar types of inscriptions are Davies 1957, nos. 353-57.
predominantly inscribed in Demotic, often including short funerary prayers and sometimes illustrations of funerary gods or objects; some were inscribed in Greek or both Demotic and Greek. The limestone mummy label in the exhibition (VIII.5) is a good example; on one side it gives the name of the dead person, while the other side bears a drawing of Osiris. The label is pierced twice; the cord used to tie the label to the mummy would run through these holes.

These labels served to preserve the name of the dead person and to identify the mummy; often this is done for purposes of transporting the mummy from the embalmers to its grave. Later mummy labels tended to be made of wood, inscribed in Greek, and were less likely to have pictures of funerary images. Such labels sometimes listed only the name of the deceased but often also gave parents' names, place of origin, age at death, date of death, and directions for the disposition of the body. The use of mummy labels of this sort ended in the 4th century AD, roughly contemporary with the decline of mummification itself.

VIII.1. Builder's cramp with cartouche of Seti I
Wood
Abydos (?), Egypt
19th Dynasty, Reign of Seti I (c. 1291-1271 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.175
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
4.75 cm h., 8.5 cm w., 33.5 cm l.
Published: Allen and Dix 1991, 76 (no. 69)

VIII.2. Funerary cone of Desequa
Clay
Western Thebes (?), Egypt
New Kingdom (c. 1570-1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.10
Goudsmit Bequest, 1981
6.5 cm diameter
Published: Root 1982, 21 (no. 3); Root 1984, 41 (no. 10b)

VIII.3. Funerary cone of Montuemhat, Fourth Prophet of Amon
Clay
Western Thebes, Egypt
25th Dynasty, death of Montuemhat (c. 648 BC)
Kelsey Museum 81.4.19
Loan of Samuel A. Goudsmit, 1981
8 cm diameter
Published: Root 1982, 20 (nos. 1-2); Root 1984, 41 (no. 10c)

VIII.4. Funerary cone of Amenhotep (?)
Pottery
Western Thebes (?), Egypt
New Kingdom (c. 1570-1070 BC)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.244
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
19.75 cm h., 8.5 cm w.
Unpublished

VIII.5. Mummy label with drawing of Osiris
Limestone, ink
Fayum, Egypt
Kelsey Museum 4972
Askren Purchase, 1925
Ptolemaic-Early Roman periods (332 BC-200 AD)
7.0 cm h., 4.8 cm w.
Unpublished

6. For a general discussion, see Quaeghebeur 1978.
7. But see no. 1 in Wilford forthcoming; a 3rd-4th century AD mummy label in Greek with a drawing of two jackals.
IX. THE HOUSE OF ETERNITY

Perhaps the single most important object to accompany the dead person in burial was the container in which the body was placed. For much of ancient Egyptian history, the bodies of the dead were buried in coffins; the style and elaborateness of such coffins depended on the fashion at the time of burial and on the wealth of the individual it contained. Typically, Egyptian coffins bore texts giving, at a minimum, the names, titles, and parentage of the dead person; religious texts and representations were common on coffins, as was some sort of image of the deceased, often highly idealized and symbolic in nature. The images and texts on the coffins were in general protective—designed as the last and final defense of the mummified body against the perils of the afterlife.

The Kelsey Museum owns a remarkable example of an ancient Egyptian coffin: the coffin of Djheutymose. This coffin was acquired by Mr. Albert M. Todd and presented to the Kelsey Museum sometime in the 1930s; until 1990, though, the coffin was on display at the Kalamazoo Public Museum. Since its return to the Kelsey Museum, the coffin of Djheutymose has been undergoing a thorough program of conservation (described below). Stylistic and textual criteria date this piece to the Saite Period (685-525 BC), an era of great artistic revival. The texts on this coffin give the name of Djheutymose and information about his family: his father was named Nespakhered, and his mother was Taro. Both Djheutymose and Nespakhered were priests of the falcon god Horus and the “Golden Goddess” Hathor, while Taro is identified as a “Lady of the House.” The family probably lived near Edfu in southern Egypt, home of the cult of Horus, and the coffin probably comes from the nearby cemetery at Nag el-Hassaia. Djheutymose’s priestly titles and the fine quality of the coffin show the family to have been fairly prosperous. The coffin is carefully carved and the painting is beautifully executed, with great attention paid to detail. The lid of the coffin is made from a single piece of wood, which, given the lack of suitable sources in Egypt, must have been imported. In every respect, the coffin of Djheutymose is a luxury product.

The coffin itself is carved to represent the mummy of Djheutymose. He is shown wearing a striped headdress and broad collar necklace. His face is green, in imitation of the god of the dead Osiris, who is often shown with a green face as a symbol of regeneration and rebirth. Djheutymose also wears a false beard, another characteristic of Osiris. The coffin is covered with representations of protective deities. From head to foot, Djheutymose is protected by three winged goddesses: Nephthys on top of his head, Nut on his chest, and Isis, wife of Osiris, on top of his feet. More unusual in terms of Egyptian traditions is the snake that encircles the entire lid of the coffin, its tail and head meeting above Djheutymose’s feet. In addition to protection, the circled snake also symbolizes the eternity that Djheutymose expects to enjoy. Djheutymose himself appears in one scene on the front of the coffin, where he is being embalmed.

1. The coffin of Djheutymose is unpublished but has been the object of close study by Jonathan Elias; much of the information on the date and possible provenance of the coffin that follows comes from Elias 1993.

2. This observation courtesy of Geoffrey I. Brown, Kelsey Museum Curator of Conservation.
by the jackal-headed god Anubis. His soul, in the form of a human-headed bird, hovers above. Beneath the embalming bed sit four canopic jars containing and protecting Djheutymose’s entrails, removed during the mummification process. Below this scene is a procession of gods and goddesses. The coffin’s interior also bears protective texts and images, including large depictions of the sky goddess Nut and the funerary goddess Imenett; these two goddesses are positioned in such a way that when the coffin was closed, they embraced the mummy. The spells on Djheutymose’s coffin also serve to protect the dead man in the afterlife. One of these texts is the opening spell from the Book of the Dead (BD 1), which stresses the identification of the deceased with Osiris. Another spell was designed to make the soul attach itself to the corpse in the afterlife (BD 89). In Egyptian religion, the soul could wander away from the body, but it was necessary for it to return for afterlife to continue; hence the need for such magical insurance.

Once Djheutymose’s coffin was equipped with these multiple levels of protection, it was ready to receive the body of the dead man. However, the condition of this coffin shows that things did not go entirely according to plan at the funeral: Djheutymose’s embalmed and wrapped body turned out to be a little too large to fit into the coffin. This was quickly remedied by carving out space at the shoulders and feet of the coffin interior so that Djheutymose could fit into his final resting place and proceed to his afterlife.

IX.1. Mummiform coffin of Djheutymose
Painted wood, gesso
Nag el-Hassia (?), Egypt
Seite Period (685-525 BC)
Kelsey Museum 89.3.1
Gift of Albert M. Todd, around 1930
Unpublished
A Previously Unsuspected Connection

Research for “Preserving Eternity” brought to light an interesting connection involving the coffin of Djheutymose and two other objects in the Kelsey Museum’s collection: the two Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statues discussed earlier (1.2-3). Routine checking of the inscriptions on one of the statues (1.2) revealed the same name as the owner of the coffin—Djheutymose. Djheutymose was not an uncommon name in ancient Egypt, and this coincidence alone would be no reason for suspecting any relationship between the two pieces, which entered the collections of the Kelsey Museum from different sources. However, a closer examination of the statue revealed an even more suggestive coincidence: the name of the deceased’s father was Nespakhered, just as on the Djheutymose coffin. Moreover, the Nespakhered and Djheutymose from the statue were both described as “priest of Horus and priest of the Golden Lady”—exactly the same as those of the owner of the coffin and his father. Examination of the other Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statue (1.3) revealed yet another coincidence: the name of the man who owned the statue was obscured, but the names of his parents were clear: priest of Horus and priest of the Golden Lady Nespakhered and the Lady of the House Taro, precisely the same as the owner of the Djheutymose coffin. The owner of this second statue could be a brother of the owner of the first statue as well as the owner of the coffin. The question then became serious: Could these three pieces really be related?

The similarity of the two statues and the parallel between the titles and the father’s name and titles make it almost certain that the owners of these statues were brothers. Since the two statues come from the same purchase, it is likely that they were found at the same time, possibly in the same tomb. The titles of these two men limit the possible point of origin of the statues to the district in southern Egypt centered on the town of Edfu, and, as with the Djheutymose coffin, it seems likely that the statues come from graves at Nag el-Hassaia.1 Like the Djheutymose coffin, the two Ptah-Sokar-Osiris images date on iconographic grounds to the 26th Dynasty (685-525 BC).2 They lack a definite provenance; they were purchased, together with several other objects, from the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in Cairo in 1935. The Djheutymose coffin was acquired by Mr. Albert M. Todd from an unknown source around the same time. It is possible that Todd acquired the coffin from the same source; although records are lacking, it is also possible that these objects were all excavated together. But it is the textual evidence that makes the case for a connection most convincing. Both names—Djheutymose and Nespakhered—were not particularly uncommon in Egypt and even taken together would not make the identification certain. But the general circumstances of the acquisition of these pieces make the connection likely, and the pairing of Nespakhered and Taro and the exact parallel of titles on all three objects render it conclusive. Thus after more than 2,500 years together and over 50 years apart, pieces from the burial of Djheutymose have been reunited in the Kelsey Museum.

1. Elias 1993, 552.
2. Based on parallels in Raven 1978-79; 1.2 corresponds to Raven’s type III, while 1.3 corresponds to Raven’s IV.A.
Conserving the Coffin of Djheutymose

When the coffin of Djheutymose was moved to the conservation lab to prepare it for exhibition, it quickly became clear that a great deal of conservation would be needed. While the wooden structure of the coffin was in good condition, its painted surface presented a number of pressing problems.

The core of the coffin is made of wood, which still has most of its original strength. This wood is covered by a layer of plaster, and that plaster has been painted to form the surface we see today. However, this outer layer of intact plaster and paint is deceiving, since the wood has shrunk over the centuries. This shrinkage has left the plaster and paint layer forming, in places, a fragile shell with many cavities between the wood and plaster. This shell is extremely susceptible to further flaking and chipping whenever the coffin is handled or moved.

In addition to the natural damage of aging, an earlier attempt at restoration introduced plaster fills and cosmetic in-painting to the coffin's surface. These materials were used to fill gaps where the original paint had been lost and to cover raw wood or original plaster so that lost images could be reconstructed and repainted in association with the original depictions.

Therefore, to prepare the coffin for display our initial step was to eliminate, if possible, any paint or plaster that was not original. The vast majority of these in-fills were successfully removed, uncovering the grain of the wood as well as some small areas of painted plaster. Once all of the modern material was cleared from the coffin, the most complex step began. The voids between the painted plaster shell and the wood underneath needed to be filled. We accomplished this with a solution of glass microbubbles in a reversible consolidant, lightly tinted to hide its bright white color. This stabilizer was injected into the cavities between the wood and plaster, forming an adhesive fill that would support the plaster, while not affecting the coloring or consistency of the paints. This step was the most crucial for the stabilization of the coffin—it will prevent further cracking and chipping of much of the surface, as well as return to it a strength it had lost when the wood shrunk underneath it. As a final touch, areas of the surface that had already suffered cracking or chipping were consolidated.

Once the coffin was effectively stabilized, we needed to find a way to display it safely, yet effectively, in the exhibit galleries. This was a challenge, since every surface of the coffin is painted except for the edge where the lid and the bottom meet. We had to balance the benefit of strong structural support with the desire to keep visible as many of the painted surfaces as possible.
IX.1. In Conservation.

IX.1. Before conservation.

IX.1. After removal of modern restorations.
IX.1. Before conservation.

IX.1. During conservation.

IX.1. After removal of modern plaster fills and cosmetic in-painting.
X. ETERNITY PRESERVED

Having examined the coffin of an ancient Egyptian, it remains to explore what the coffin originally protected: a mummy. Unfortunately, the mummy of Djheutymose was separated from his coffin before it reached the Kelsey Museum, and its current whereabouts are unknown. The ancient Egyptians would have considered this a bad fate but not necessarily a calamitous one; provided that the mummy were safe, intact, and still identifiable as belonging to Djheutymose, the separation of mummy and coffin would not have impeded Djheutymose's soul from recognizing his body. Granted, Djheutymose's afterlife would not have been as comfortable as originally planned without his coffin and the other objects buried with him, but his soul would have been saved from the fate of being without a body to which it could return. Hopefully, Djheutymose's mummy rests unsuspected in some museum, awaiting reunion with his coffin and Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statue.

Although the Kelsey Museum does not have the mummy of Djheutymose, it does have a number of other mummies, most of them mummified animals. It might come as a surprise to find animals embalmed like humans, but, in fact, probably many more animals than humans were mummified. Hundreds of thousands of animal mummies have been excavated in the complex of animal burials at Saqqara alone, and many more were buried at the sites of other animal cults. Animals so treated included apes, bulls, rams, cats, dogs, ibises, falcons, crocodiles, and snakes. Contrary to popular belief, the Egyptians did not worship the animals themselves but considered them to be manifestations of gods or goddesses. Thus the goddess Bastet—frequently represented with a human body and a cat's head (X.2-3)—was considered to manifest herself in the form of a cat (X.4-5), and the mummification of cats (X.1) was connected with her cult. In some cases, the animals mummified were the single revered representation of a god; the embalming and burials of such mummies were accompanied by elaborate rituals. The vast majority of animal mummies, however, were created to satisfy the needs of what might almost be called a religious tourist industry. In these cases, for a fee, an animal that symbolized a particular god or goddess would be killed, mummified, and then buried in a part of the shrine as a sort of a votive offering on behalf of the donor. The enormous number of surviving animal mummies from this sort of burial show how popular these cults were. Indeed, demand for animal mummies seems to have been higher than supply at times; there are several examples, including a baboon "mummy" in the Kelsey Museum (X.7), where random bones have been wrapped as if they were whole animals.

Apart from the animal cults, however, the ultimate aim of mummification in Egypt was the preservation of human remains. The Kelsey Museum owns two human mummies, both children; one is badly damaged and unsuitable for display, while the other is the simply wrapped and undecorated mummy in the current exhibition. The Kelsey Museum mummy remains wrapped, much as it was when originally buried. In the past, it was very common for collectors and museums to unwrap the mummies in their keeping, both to further knowledge of the health and condition of the Egyptians at death and to satisfy curiosity about the preservation and
the appearance of the ancient Egyptians. The unwrapping of mum-
mies, however, exposes the bodies to increased threats to their
continued preservation. Moreover, there has been considerable
debate as to the ethical and moral implications of the treatment of
ancient human remains; this has become a special subject of dispute
in connection with the display of unwrapped mummies. Increas-
ingly, museums are using nondestructive and nonintrusive means of
investigating the Egyptian mummies in their care. The X-raying of
mummies has become relatively commonplace in the past century,
while more complex medical technologies have been used to obtain
even more detailed information about mummies without disturbing
their wrappings. As scholars become increasingly aware of and
sensitive to the complex issues surrounding the study of human
remains, the use of nonintrusive investigative techniques is likely to
become the normal means for the study of mummies.

X.1. Mummy of a cat
Cat body, cloth, paint, pitch
Egypt
Roman Period (30 BC-285 AD)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.183
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
37.2 cm l.
Unpublished

X.2. Figure of Bastet
Bronze
Egypt
Late-Ptolemaic periods (525-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 86.9.1
Gift of Alfred A. Hahn, Jr.
and Myrtle R. Hahn
14.7 cm h., 4.4 cm w.
Unpublished

X.3. Bastet
Bronze
Fayum, Egypt
Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BC)
Kelsey Museum 21641
Asken Purchase, 1925
10.5 cm h., 3.0 cm w.
Published: Haeeck and Spelman 1977,
64 (no. 47)

X.4. Cat figure
Wood
Egypt
Late Period (525-343 BC)
Kelsey Museum 88800
Cairo Department of Antiquities
purchase, 1935
12.5 cm h., 3.25 cm w., 6.0 cm depth
Unpublished

X.5. Coffin for cat in two pieces
Wood
Saqqara, Egypt
Ptolemaic-Roman periods
(332 BC-285 AD)
Kelsey Museum 88775
Cairo Department of Antiquities
purchase, 1935
36 cm h., 9.4 cm w.
Unpublished

X.6. Mummy of a hawk
Hawk body, cloth, pitch
Egypt
Ptolemaic-Roman periods
(332 BC-285 AD)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.182
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
6.0 cm w., 26 cm l.
Unpublished

X.7. Mock baboon mummy
Linen, arm bones
Egypt
Ptolemaic-Roman periods
(332 BC-285 AD)
Kelsey Museum 88922
Tano, Cairo, Purchase, 1952
14 cm max. w., 36.5 cm l.
Unpublished

X.8. Mummy of child
Human body, cloth
Egypt
Ptolemaic-Roman periods
(332 BC-285 AD)
Kelsey Museum 71.2.179
Bay View Collection Purchase, 1971
91.5 cm l.
Unpublished
CONCLUSION: “THE HOUSE OF DEATH IS FOR LIFE”

Because the overwhelming majority of Egyptian artifacts come from a funerary context, the Egyptians have often been characterized as a culture obsessed with death. The elaborate preparations expended on tombs and the preservation of their contents have led people to conclude that the Egyptians devoted all their efforts toward death. If the ancient Egyptians as a whole were obsessed with anything, however, it was life: all their preparations for death were intended as a means of preserving and perpetuating their lives beyond death. A quotation from a collection of sayings attributed to the Old Kingdom prince Hardjedef sums up the Egyptian attitude: “The House of Death is for life” (quoted from Lichtheim 1973, 58). All the effort the Egyptians put toward “preserving eternity” was really directed at the eternal preservation of their own way of life. We hope that our own efforts at preserving the objects generated by this pursuit of afterlife will both ensure that this material will be available to future generations as a source of knowledge of Egyptian culture and also carry on the efforts begun by the Egyptians themselves.
REFERENCES


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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MATERIALS AND THEIR PROPERTIES

The primary resource for ancient Egyptian raw materials is A. Lucas and J. R. Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, 4th ed., 1962, from which the following information is drawn.

**Basalt** is a black, compact, heavy rock, which is an aggregate of various minerals. It occurs widely in Egypt and was used in the Old Kingdom mostly as a building material.

**Bronze** is an alloy of copper and tin, neither of which occurs naturally in Egypt. Initially the alloy was probably imported, though by the 18th Dynasty bronze was produced in Egypt. Worked by means of hammering or casting, it was used in Egypt as early as the Middle Kingdom for weapons, vessels, and statuettes; from the New Kingdom on it is well known. It was widely used in the Ptolemaic-Roman Period for the casting of statuettes.

**Calcite** (Egyptian alabaster) is a compact crystalline form of calcium carbonate, yellow or white in color, which is translucent in thin sections and often banded. It occurs in Egypt in various places in the eastern desert. Easily worked and attractive, it was used extensively throughout the Dynastic era for building, statuary, and vessels, often in such a way as to maximize the natural striations in the stone.

**Carnelian** is a form of red chalcedony. It occurs in abundance as pebbles on the surface in the eastern desert of Egypt and was popular from the Predynastic era onward for jewelry and later inlay.

**Clay** is a plastic material derived from the disintegration and decomposition of certain rocks, the chief constituent being hydrated aluminium silicate, with smaller proportions of natural impurities. The two principal kinds of clay used in ancient Egypt are Nile silt clay, containing a large proportion of organic matter and iron compounds, and calcareous clay or marl, which occurs in specific localities in the desert.

**Diorite** is a crystalline, granular rock consisting of feldspar and hornblende. It occurs extensively in Egypt in the eastern and western deserts; the ancient Egyptians used it as early as the Neolithic Period for axes and palettes and later for statues and vessels.

**Faience** is a composite material made from glazed quartz frit, the use of which is documented in Egypt from the Predynastic Period. Worked by hand or cast in pottery molds, it was used extensively throughout the Dynastic Period and beyond for a wide variety of purposes, including the manufacture of jewelry, inlay, vessels, and ushabits. Faience occurs in a wide range of quality; the color of the glaze is usually blue, green, or blue-green.

**Gesso** is a term used in Egyptology either in reference to whitewash plaster, which is a mixture of whitening and glue, or gypsum plaster. Gesso was used as a wash applied to stone or wood to provide a thin ground for painting.

**Gold** was found widely in ancient Egypt and in lower Nubia, which was frequently under Egyptian control in the Dynastic era. Occurring either in alluvial sands or gravels, or as veins in quartz rock, it was mined and used from the Predynastic Period onwards. Shaped by hammering and casting, it was used extensively for jewelry, statuary, and vessels; it was beaten into thin sheets for covering furniture and other objects and into even thinner leaf for gilding. The ancient Egyptians prized gold above all other materials; the skin of the gods was believed to be of gold. Not surprisingly, it was a primary target for grave robbers, and often only fragments remain in cemetery contexts.

**Granite** is a crystalline, igneous rock composed of many different minerals, including quartz, feldspar, and mica. Red and gray granite occur widely in Egypt, most notably at Aswan. The ancient Egyptians used granite in the Predynastic Period for bowls and vases and later as a building material and for sarcophagi, statues, stele, and other objects.
Ink in ancient Egypt was used in the form of small cakes of solid material, probably a mixture of pigment, gum, and water. A pen would then be dipped in water and rubbed on the ink for writing. The most frequently used colors were black and red, the latter for headings or rubrics. Black ink was usually made with carbon, red with red ochre. Other colors occurring in illustrated papyri include white (calcium carbonate), yellow (yellow ochre or oxide of lead), and blue (artificial frit, see above).

Jasper is a semiprecious stone, an opaque silica that occurs in red, green, black, and yellow. The ancient Egyptians made most frequent use of red jasper for beads and amulets, and sometimes for inlay or scarabs. Red jasper occurs as bands in rocks in the eastern desert and was especially popular in the New Kingdom.

Lapis lazuli is an opaque semiprecious stone, dark blue in color, consisting of silicates of aluminum, sodium, and sodium sulphide. It often has patches of white and sometimes small flecks of pyrite. Lapis was probably imported from Afghanistan and was highly valued by the ancient Egyptians. It was used from the Predynastic Period onwards for jewelry, inlay, seals, and even vessels.

Limestone was one of the most frequently used materials for building and statuary in ancient Egypt, from as early as the 1st Dynasty. This fact is hardly surprising given its wide occurrence in Egypt; the hills bordering the Nile Valley from Cairo to Esna (c. 500 mi.) are limestone formations. It consists mostly of calcium carbonate with small proportions of other materials such as silica, clay, and oxide of iron; the quality and hardness of limestone is highly variable.

Linen was produced in ancient Egypt from the fibers of the flax plant from the Neolithic Period onward. The quality and texture of ancient Egyptian linen ranges from an extremely fine gauze to a coarse canvas-like texture. It was chiefly used for clothing—the living and the dead alike.

Malachite is a green mineral, consisting chemically of hydrated carbonate of copper. It occurs in Sinai and in the eastern desert of Egypt and was used in Egypt from the Badarian Period onwards. Only rarely was it used as a gem stone, however, its most common occurrence in Egyptian graves being in the form of powder for use as eye paint or in lumps of the raw material intended for that purpose.

Paint in ancient Egypt was a mixture of finely ground minerals and an adhesive, during Dynastic times probably size, gum, albumin, or beeswax. Black pigments incorporated some form of carbon, while the principal blue pigment used in ancient Egypt was an artificial frit of calcium copper silicate, as was the green pigment. Powdered malachite was also used for green. The principal grounds to which the ancient Egyptians applied paint were canvas, papyrus, pottery, plaster, stone, and wood. Sometimes a colorless varnish was applied over paint, as in mural paintings, coffins, and wooden boxes; over time the varnish can take on a brown, yellow, or red color.

Papyrus, a variety of sedge plant that once grew abundantly in the marshy areas of Egypt, had many uses in ancient Egypt, including food, fuel, floral decoration, basketry, and building, to mention only a few. Its main use, however, was for producing sheets of the material on which ancient Egyptians wrote, which is also termed papyrus. This papyrus was produced by slicing the pith of the plant into thick slices, which were laid side by side on an absorbent cloth, then overlaid with more strips at right angles to the original layer. The whole was then covered with another absorbent cloth, beaten with a rounded stone, and left in a press for several hours. This technique welded the slices together, producing a sheet of thin paper. Papyrus was used for religious texts and for the day-to-day business of the country, but it was relatively expensive; scribes tended to take notes or drafts on less expensive materials such as potsherds or limestone fragments (ostraca).

Plaster in ancient Egypt was composed of either clay or gypsum and
was used for a variety of purposes, including repair, the provision of a
smooth painting surface, backing for inlay, and the molding of masks or
mummified bodies. Clay plaster was used with or without straw and on
walls was generally applied as a preliminary coat, which was then covered
with gypsum plaster. The ancient Egyptians used gypsum plaster from the
Predynastic Period onwards and produced it by burning, powdering, and
then slaking masses of gypsum crystals. These crystals, which also contain
varying proportions of calcium carbonate and quartz sand, occur just
beneath the limestone desert surface in various localities in Egypt. During the
Ptolemaic and Roman periods, lime plaster was also introduced.

Pottery is a ware made from either Nile silt or desert marl clay,
molder while wet and then fired. The ancient Egyptians used it principally
for making vessels but also for modeling a variety of other objects, including
figures of human beings or animals, coffins, canopic jars, and ushabti figures.
The Egyptians made pottery from the Neolithic Period onwards, initially
shaping it by hand, then by the use of a wheel. Red Nile silt clay is brown or
red in color, while desert marl clay yields a pale red or pinkish color, buff, or
greenish gray depending on the temperature at which it is fired.

Serpentine is a dark green or black noncrystalline rock, with a
mottled appearance. It occurs in the eastern Egyptian desert and is easily
worked, being a relatively soft stone. The ancient Egyptians used it from
Predynastic times onwards for a variety of objects, including heart scarabs,
which religious belief dictated should be of dark green stone.

Slate and schist (greywacke) are compact, hard, crystalline rocks
that are very similar in appearance to each other, occurring in various
shades of gray or gray-green. Without microscopic examination, they are
difficult to tell apart. Both occur in the eastern Egyptian desert and were
used for varied objects such as cosmetic palettes, bowls, vases, and statues
throughout the Dynastic Period.

Steatite is a form of talc that is very easily worked and was therefore
a popular material for ancient Egyptian jewelry and small objects from the
Badarian Period onwards. A large percentage of scarab seals are of glazed or
unglazed steatite. Steatite occurs in southern Egypt and remains a popular
material in modern times for pipes and bowls.

Stone, general. A very wide variety of stones occur within Egypt's
borders, used by the ancient Egyptians for almost all categories of artifacts
(vessels, cosmetic objects, statuary, and jewelry, to name only a few), and
from the Early Dynastic Period onwards as building materials. The earliest
artifacts known from Egypt were of stone (mostly flint), and sophisticated
techniques for stone working, including the production of highly finished
vessels, date back to the Predynastic Period. It is often difficult, however,
to identify a stone precisely without chemical analysis.

Wax was used in ancient Egypt as an adhesive, as a medium for
paint, and for a variety of other purposes, including hairdressing, mummifi-
cation, the coating of painted surfaces, and shipbuilding. It was also used
for the production of magical figures, such as the Four Sons of Horus. The
wax used in ancient Egypt was beeswax.

Wood was and is a scarce resource in Egypt, there being relatively
few large trees occurring naturally (the principal building material was mud
brick). Consequently, sizable, high quality timber was imported from the
Predynastic Period onwards, including cedar from Lebanon and Syria for
the production of sarcophagi, coffins, shrines, and other burial items; and
ebony from further south in Africa, used for statuettes, inlay, furniture,
musical instruments, and staves. Woods native to Egypt, such as acacia,
sycamore, tamarisk, and date or dām palm, were also used by carpenters and
joiners. Local wood, however, yielded smaller, lighter planks than the
higher quality imported wood, necessitating a strategy of patchwork—the
joining together of several pieces by means of dowels and pegs—for larger
objects such as coffins. In the archaeological record, local wood preserves
less well than imported wood, given these qualities.