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Spring 1995





An Egyptian Bestiary

Dorothea Arnold

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Acknowledgments

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Chapter-opening images

Page 7, "The Egyptian Desert": A deceased official adores deities in the western desert. Detail from a watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Userhat (T 51) at Thebes, early Dynasty 19, ca. 1294–1279 B.C. Norman de Garis Davies, date unknown. Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.31).

Page 24, "Wetlands and Waterways": Marshland fauna. Watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Menna at Thebes, Dynasty 18, ca. 1400–1350 B.C. Nina de Garis Davies, 1924. Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.48).

Page 38, "The Alluvial Land": Activities in the alluvial land. Detail from a watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Nakht, Dynasty 18, ca. 1400 B.C. Norman de Garis Davies, date unknown. Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.5.19b).

Page 61, "A Brief History of Animal Representations in Egyptian Art": Geese. Watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Itet, Dynasty 2, ca. 2600 B.C. Charles K. Wilkinson, 1920–21. Rogers Fund, 1931 (31.6.8).

Director's Note

The sobriquet "Metropolitan Zoo" might be applied very appropriately to the galleries of our department of Egyptian art. Thousands of birds, animals, and reptiles—feathered, furred, and scaled—from antelope to zebu, from $\frac{3}{16}$ inches to almost four feet, in media from alabaster to obsidian represent thousands of years of Egyptian animal art. Throughout the Museum's collections, man's relationship with creatures is seldom so sensitively portrayed.

Herbert E. Winlock, the brilliant Egyptologist and director of the Metropolitan from 1932 to 1939, wrote in a December 1923 *Bulletin* that Egyptian artists seemed to enjoy drawing animals, taking "far more interest in trying to draw such subjects than in

making the slavish copies they were hired to produce," and "in their off times . . . amused themselves sketching snatches of life on flakes of the paper-white limestone which littered the ground." Winlock cited our horse (no. 70) "drawn rubbing his muzzle against his outstretched foreleg" as (in Winlock's understanding) "surely a pure experiment, for probably no scene in the tomb contained any such figure." And a hippopotamus (no. 35), a quintessential Egyptian beast and relative of our "mascot," William (back cover), caught his eye: "One of the most charming bits that have ever come out of Egypt is on a flake of whitest limestone about the bigness of the palm of a man's hand. Some temple sculptor has been asked how he would draw a hippopotamus and,

picking up this flake, he has portrayed a sedate beast of a purplish brown hue with pink eyes and belly and an enormous jowl indicated with a few swift strokes of black." We share his delight.

The leader of this *Bulletin* "safari" is Dorothea Arnold, curator in charge of the Egyptian Art Department, whose fascination for the subject is clearly evident in her inspired text. To ensure zoological accuracy, she called upon James G. Doherty, general curator of mammals at the Wildlife Conservation Society. We hope that their efforts will enhance your enjoyment of all the Egyptian creatures "at large" in our galleries.

Philippe de Montebello
Director

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Introduction

Animal representations are a delight to every friend of Egyptian art. Through keen observation and an unerring grasp of each animal's essential features, Egyptian artists achieved images that even today can be instantly recognized and appreciated. Animals, moreover, are everywhere in Egyptian art. They appear in hieroglyphic script and architectural decoration, in sculpture, relief, painting, and the minor arts. And wherever artists included animals, they also portrayed the easy, natural bond between animals and Egyptians. It was clearly a partnership of mutual dependence, and neither man nor animal could have existed in quite the same way without each other.

Equally apparent to viewers of Egyptian art is the abundance of animal life during pharaonic times. Today, roughly one-third of all species depicted in this *Bulletin* have vanished from Egypt under pressure from climatic changes or ever-increasing human activities. These factors did not originate solely in the modern industrialized age, but began even before the establishment of a unified Egyptian state around 3200 B.C. and have affected the Egyptian fauna ever since. Egyptian art bears witness to the gradual disappearance during ancient times of elephants, giraffes, baboons, aardvarks, and sheep with horizontal spiraling horns. But ancient representations also document the continued presence of lions, cheetahs, leopards, hippos, and sacred ibises—all extinct, or nearly so, in Egypt today—throughout pharaonic history.

As elsewhere around the world, humans in the Nile valley not only caused many animals to disappear but also imported foreign species and changed indigenous ones through breeding and domestication. Notable newcomers to Egypt, again as shown in its art, are *Ovis platyura*, sheep with forward-bending horns and thick fleece, which arrived at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2040 B.C.); horses, at the beginning of the New Kingdom (ca. 1550 B.C.); chickens, during the New Kingdom and Persian times (525–404 B.C.); and camels, in the time of the Ptolemies (304–30 B.C.).

Most domesticated animals known to have lived in Egypt during pharaonic times were probably introduced into the country as such. For instance, one possible site where domestic cattle are thought to have been developed from their wild ancestors is in the Saharan region of Africa when it was brushland and steppe (ca. 10,000–6000 B.C.). Domesticated cattle could have come into Egypt from some such source. Sheep and goats may have been first domesticated in the Near East and then imported to Egypt, whereas the Egyptians probably had a hand in breeding their own dogs, pigs, donkeys, and cats.

During the Old Kingdom (ca. 2650–2150 B.C.), artists' representations record efforts to domesticate steppe animals such as antelope, gazelles, barbary sheep, and hyenas. These attempts failed, however, and were later given up altogether. Most fowl, with the exception of geese, remained wild throughout pharaonic history. Ducks, herons, and cranes were caught in the

marshes and then fattened in captivity, but they did not breed under those conditions, so their physical appearance did not change, as is usual with domesticated animals. Some creatures of the wilderness—lions, cheetahs, leopards, monkeys, baboons, and ichneumons (or mongooses), for example—were tamed and kept as pets or in menageries, but they, too, remained essentially wild. It seems that, especially during the Old Kingdom, the boundary between wild and domesticated animals was not as rigid as it is today. Steppe and marshland, after all, existed as intact environments, home to whatever animals the people of the region wanted to use.

The basis of the ancient Egyptians' close relationship to animals was religious. From the earliest times, Egyptians experienced the divine in living creatures. Not that animals in general were venerated as gods among the Egyptian people, who, after all, hunted for food and sport and farmed and bred cattle with a totally self-centered practicality. Ample source material, however, testifies to the Nile dwellers' profound awe of the many creatures who shared their land and existence: to fly like a bird, smell as keenly as a dog, run as swiftly as a cheetah, or jump as powerfully as a lion were clearly beyond human capabilities. Animals also act by instinct, as if in possession of extraordinary wisdom, and they communicate not by speech but by body movement and eye contact. Superhuman powers and ways of behaving that were mysterious to the people of ancient times suggested animals shared part of their

existence with the gods, and through them contact could be made with the divine.

One way to express reverence of the divine in animals was through the use of animal images in art and religion. A New Kingdom hymn exclaims:

Hail to you, Aten of daytime,
Creator of all, who makes them live!
Great falcon, brightly plumed.
Beetle who raised himself.

In this text the character of the solar deity is described first through association with a brightly colored falcon who triumphantly soars into the sky, then by identification with a scarab beetle who crawls on the fertile earth pushing its mysterious dung ball, which is the shape of the sun disk. In each case the image calls on common human observation of and experience with a particular animal and thereby evokes the properties of a deity.

It is important to realize that to Egyptians, these images were more

than purely poetic metaphors, and the same is true for the pictorial representations of the god Horus as a falcon or the rising sun as a beetle. Images, according to Egyptian belief, were entities with lives of their own, and the picture of a falcon, beetle, or other animal not only described the god but could stand in for the deity as a visible and tangible manifestation of the invisible and intangible. This understanding of images is closely related to magic. Animals, indeed, played a great role in Egyptian thaumaturgy, and many amulets and magical objects used animal imagery.

The perceived substantiality of divine animal images notwithstanding, no Egyptian thought that the sun god actually looked like a falcon or beetle, and every worshiper knew that no single image conveyed the totality of a deity. This is why in texts such as the one quoted above the images shift from one animal to another, and in pictorial art a deity can appear in a

single context in the form of various animals or as the same animal in different poses.

The knowledge that no one image can fully represent the essence of a deity also contributed to that most puzzling creation of Egyptian art, the god with a human body and an animal head (nos. 14, 28). Again, Egyptians unquestionably did not think that any of their deities were actually formed that way. The images are conceptual and should be "read" part by part, like hieroglyphic script. The human body informs the viewer that no ordinary animal is depicted, and the animal head signals the superhuman properties of the deity. It is solely due to the Egyptian artists' imaginative abilities that such theoretically conceived pictograms became convincing creatures of a third kind.

Egyptian representations differentiate clearly between the combined human-and-animal image of a god and depictions of persons wearing



Fig. 1. A scribe notes the spoils of the hunt. Drawing after a painting in the tomb of Rekhmire at Thebes, Dynasty 18, ca. 1425 B.C. From Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re at Thebes*, Publications of The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition, vol. 11 (New York, 1943), pl. 44

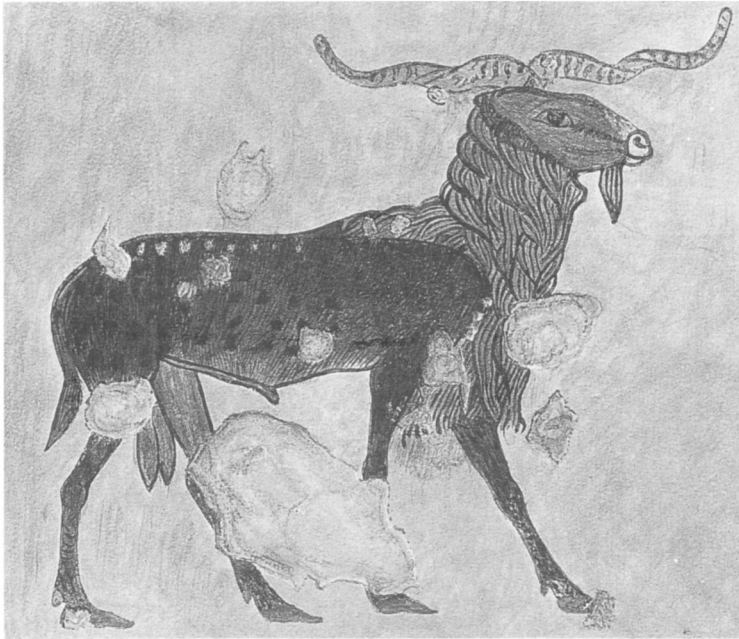


Fig. 2. Hieroglyphic sign depicting a ram and designating the syllable *khnum* in the name of the tomb owner. Watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan, Dynasty 12, ca. 1897–1878 B.C. Norman or Nina de Garis Davies, 1931. Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.8.9)



Fig. 3. Hyena at bay. Watercolor facsimile after a painting in the tomb of Amenemope at Thebes, Dynasty 18, ca. 1400–1390 B.C. Charles K. Wilkinson, 1920–21. Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.4.123)

animal masks, such as the jackal masks that were worn by priests during funeral and temple rites and the lion masks that magicians wore on their heads. The practice of wearing masks—known from many cultures all over the world—is based on the understanding that by slipping into an animal image, a person can step out of humanness to become another being that wields divine power.

If the images of animals evoked the presence of deities and spirits, it is not astonishing that individual living animals could serve as repositories for gods, in much the same way that, according to Egyptian belief, statues offered a god places of materialization. The individual animal chosen for such a role—for instance, the Apis bull (no. 66)—was often singled out from others of the species by being

marked bodily in a certain manner, and after its death another individual bearing the same markings would be installed. The species as a whole was not included in such worship.

A different matter was the belief that entire species, such as cats, ibises, and crocodiles, were sacred to certain deities, who might have an affinity with the particular animal that was also expressed in images of the deity. Such beliefs became especially strong in the Late Period (664–332 B.C.) and Ptolemaic and Roman times (304 B.C.–A.D. 395) and resulted in the custom of embalming thousands of animals from certain species and burying them in vast underground cemeteries (no. 45). One may be tempted to see in such proliferation a sign of decline in the spontaneous awe that characterized man's attitude toward animals

in earlier periods. However, the basic concept underlying the Late Period sacred animal rites was deeply rooted in Egyptian religious thinking, which considered animals to be the “external souls” or potencies (*baw*) of a god.

The animals of Egypt were not merely useful companions; many were dangerous, life threatening, and destructive. The Egyptians nevertheless did not categorize the animal world as either good or evil. On the contrary, Egyptians had what seems at first to be an ambivalent attitude toward most animals. Hippos, crocodiles, turtles, and other species appear to have represented beneficial qualities at some times and evil aspects at others (nos. 33–37). This phenomenon was so widespread that the word “ambivalence” seems inadequate. Modern logic finds a contradiction in

a duality that for the ancient people was an inherent quality of existence. Animals, for the Egyptians, were neither solely beneficial nor exclusively evil, but embodied forces of life beyond good and evil.

Central to all understanding of life in ancient Egypt is the concept of cyclic renewal. Animals demonstrated their role in the ever-recurring rebirth of nature and the universe through their ability to procreate and multiply. It was this fact that made representations of animal life appropriate decorations for tombs. Many such depictions incorporated dangerous predators, such as wildcats or crocodiles, their evil intentions directed especially against the young. Renewal, according to Egyptian thought, was the outcome of a never-ending struggle between creative and destructive forces. In this struggle the forces of

turmoil and destruction were as necessary and real as the triumphant forces of life and order. Therefore, it must have seemed deeply meaningful to the Egyptians that potentially destructive and life-threatening animals, such as hippos and crocodiles, lived in the marshland's muddy waters. Muddy water was considered the quintessential environment of creation, since it was from the sodden fields after the annual flooding by the river Nile that fresh life-sustaining vegetation grew. The hippo, therefore, its heavy figure decorated with marshland plants, symbolically combines the dangers of destruction and the renewal of life in one potent image (see back cover).

The ancient Egyptians' attitude of awe toward an animal world that incorporated a multitude of deities and forces of life was neither contradicted

nor diminished by the equally strong conviction that animals shared with humans protection by a supreme deity, whose most important representative was the solar god Re. In this religious context man derived confidence and consolation from the contemplation of the god's wise provision for all creatures, and animals appeared as the siblings of humans.

In Egyptian art this aspect of animal life proved to be one of the most important incentives in rendering animals with precision and care. In literature many texts, especially of the New Kingdom, express the same thoughts. The following hymn is addressed to the sun god:

You are the one who has created all
that exists,
Who creates the herbs from which the
cattle live,
And the tree of life for mankind,
Who brought forth the river which
lets the fishes live,
And the birds who fill the sky.
Who gives air to the one in the egg;
Who keeps alive the young of the
snake,
Who creates what the mosquito lives
off,
As well as worms and fleas;
Who cares for the mice in their dens
And keeps alive the beetles in all kinds
of wood.



Fig. 4. Late Period animal amulets and figurines in Egyptian art gallery 22

The Egyptian Desert



In the most famous literary work of ancient Egypt, *Sinuhe*, a nobleman, fearing the wrath of a new pharaoh, flees Egypt and crosses the eastern desert into Asia. Years later, as an old man, he returns and describes his perilous journeys: “An attack of thirst overtook me,” he writes about adventures during his desert crossing. “I was parched, my throat burned. I said, ‘This is the taste of death.’” To the ancient Egyptians the vast arid lands flanking their fertile valley could indeed carry the threat of death. If they ventured beyond the valley margins, they might suffer as did *Sinuhe*, fall victim to predators, or encounter strange and foreign people. It must have seemed fitting that the desert was a “land of death,” where the Egyptians buried their dead.

However, the desert was also the bountiful realm that provided stone for Egypt’s magnificent buildings and statuary, gold and semiprecious gems for jewelry, metals and minerals for luxury goods and weapons, and clay

for pots. Most importantly, in ancient times the Egyptian desert was teeming with wildlife.

During the prehistoric period and the Old Kingdom, the areas bordering the Nile valley on the east and west were steppe rather than barren wasteland, supporting patches of grass, shrubs, and even occasional trees. Minor watercourses and sporadic rains nourished the plants, and the vegetation in turn sustained a rich variety of animals. For humans living in the Nile valley, wild steppe game constituted an important source of food in these early times and served as offerings to the gods through all periods of Egyptian history. Hunting steppe animals in the wide open lands gave kings and nobles ample opportunities to prove their valor and feel themselves to be masters of the universe. In Egyptian religion the existence of abundant animal life in the “land of death” became a potent symbol of life after death. Innumerable representations of desert and steppe animals in

tombs and royal funerary monuments, as well as the use of such animals as amuletic objects, are evidence of this.

During the whole pharaonic period, wild herd animals such as antelope and ibex and predators such as lions and leopards roamed the steppe while it turned gradually into desert. Many other creatures—from tiny jerboas, whose long hind legs enabled them to perform acrobatic leaps, to hedgehogs and wildcats—made their homes in the hilly steppe region. There were still elephants and giraffes in this area in fourth millennium Egypt, but they gradually diminished as cultivation, raising livestock, and clearing woodland, along with climatic changes, caused steppe vegetation to recede. Today, although the Egyptian desert still supports some vegetation and wildlife, man has brought many Egyptian desert species to the brink of extinction, and the desert and steppe environments that the ancient Egyptians knew can be found only in present-day Sudan or farther south.

1. Comb

Predynastic, ca. 3200 B.C. Ivory; h. 2¼ in. (5.7 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.8.224)

The animals minutely carved in relief on this small comb (its teeth now missing) have been identified with more or less certainty. On one side (from the top) are a row of elephants standing on giant cobras, then one of a stork, which has a snake under its beak (indicating either its food or the wetland environment it inhabits), leading a giraffe, three more storks, and a heron or crane. The next three rows include a dog attacking the hindmost of three large felines, a line of antelope (possibly one gazelle and three oryx), and a line of what might be dogs or pigs, ending in a star or flower. On the comb's other side the top two rows are repeated, but below them are canids (jackals?) in a row, followed by cattle or wild bulls, and again a line of dogs or pigs. The animals alternate directions from row to row. This creates an impression of continuity and perpetuity, while the fact that the entire space is filled with animals speaks of an overwhelming abundance of animal life.

The elephants are more schematically presented than the other animals, and their position atop the serpents seems to be symbolic. The mythology of many African peoples associates elephants and serpents with the creation



of the universe. The uppermost row of each relief may thus represent a creative deity to whom the rest of the animals owe their existence. No human being is depicted on the comb, but the presence of the attacking dog—shown as domesticated by its upward-curling tail—hints at the existence of man, the hunter. Comparison with pharaonic representations, such as the drawing in number 12, may even suggest that this dog belongs to a ruling chieftain or king.

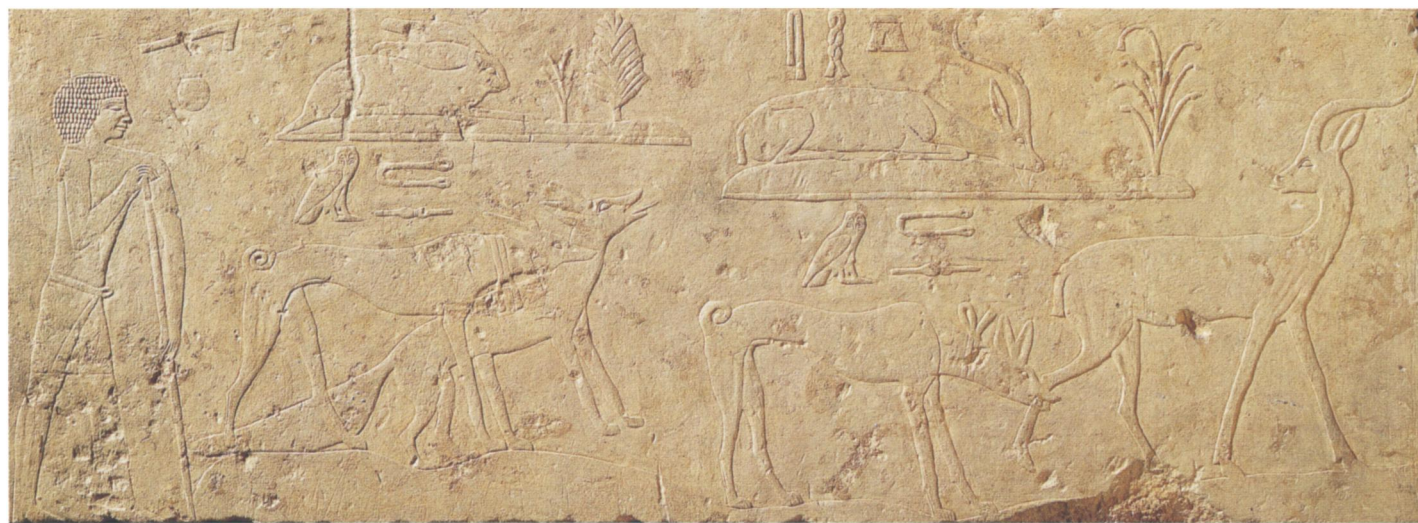
While ivory in pharaonic times was very often of hippo tooth, this comb is made of elephant ivory, an indication that elephants may still have been roaming the desert-steppes at the end of the fourth millennium B.C. By the beginning of dynastic history, elephants and giraffes were gone from Egypt, and today lions no longer live there.

2. The Hunt in the Steppe

Saqqara, Dynasty 5, probably ca. 2350 B.C. Limestone; h. 23¼ in. (60.3 cm). Rogers Fund, 1908 (08.201.1g)

The bow and arrow was the most important hunting weapon in ancient Egypt, but during the Old and early Middle Kingdoms grazing animals were often hunted with lassos after the herd had been driven into a stockade. It was important to catch the animals alive so that they could be fattened in captivity before they were slaughtered. One detail (top) shows an ibex, *Capra ibex nubiana*, being roped in the hilly landscape of the steppe. The pen is not represented in this relief, as it is in many other hunting scenes. Dogs accompany the huntsmen; in the other detail (bottom) one hound catches a Dorcas gazelle, *Gazella dorcas*, by the leg, while another attacks a hyena. A hare and a gazelle crouch behind trees and bushes to escape the hunters. Hieroglyphic inscriptions give the animals' names and describe the lasso hunt.

In addition to the well-known complete tomb of Perneb, the Museum owns the funerary chapel of Prince Ra-m-kaj. The details here are taken from a relief on its south wall. The prince and heir to the throne must have died prematurely, because a tomb originally carved for a judge named Neferiretnes was adapted for his interment.







3. Gazelle

Dynasty 18, ca. 1400 B.C. Tinted ivory, wood, and blue-pigment inlay; h. 4½ in. (11.5 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1292)

A love poem of the New Kingdom likens the passion of the lover to the intensity of a gazelle as it flees the hunter:

O that you came to your sister [lover]
swiftly,
Like a bounding gazelle in the wild;
Its feet reel, its limbs are weary,
Terror has entered its body.
A hunter pursues it with his hounds.

This elegant ivory gazelle seems poised for just such a flight, its slender legs set daintily on the uneven ground of the steppe. It stands among desert plants that are incised into the wooden base and filled with blue pigment. The plump little body is smooth and lustrous, the head held alertly on a swanlike neck, and the circular eyes tinted a velvety brown.

Purple coloring on the forehead and muzzle, as well as asymmetrically applied purple-brown lines on the back and tail, may indicate differences in the shading of the fur. The hooves are dark brown. The animal's ears are broken off, and the horns, originally made of another material, are missing.

The gazelle statuette was most probably part of a rich burial equipment. In this context the animal served as a symbol for the powers of renewal that Egyptians attributed to all desert and steppe animals. The Museum also possesses the mummy of a real gazelle that was buried with the coffin of a Theban lady of Dynasty 26 (664–525 B.C.).

4. Weight of Three *Deben* in the Shape of a Gazelle

Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1390–1353 B.C. Bronze; h. 2⅞ in. (5.4 cm). Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1968 (68.139.1)

The artist who shaped this bronze gazelle was a master of carefully observed details. The neck stretches from its humped base in a natural, anatomically correct manner. The muscles of the hindquarters are tensed, reflecting the weight resting on the leg joints. Heavy, drooping lids half cover the eyes, and the animal's nostrils are flared as if scenting the air. The artist has captured the qualities of the hard knobby horns and the soft furry ears.

Three incisions on the back of the animal indicate that the figure was supposed to weigh three *deben* (273 grams), which is slightly more than its actual weight of 261.8 grams, a difference caused by corrosion. Bronze weights in animal form were common during the New Kingdom. They were mainly used to weigh gold that served as payment and tribute or was used by jewelers or other craftsmen in their work.



5. Antelope Head

Dynasty 27, 525–404 B.C. Graywacke, inlaid Egyptian alabaster and agate eyes; h. $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. (9 cm). Purchase, Rogers and Fletcher Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1992 (1992.55)

The sculptor has shaped this head of an antelope so skillfully that a distinct impression of its delicate, thin bone structure is conveyed. The skin is stretched over tense sinews and lean flesh. The soft, sensitive muzzle seems well adapted to sample desert herbs and grass. The eyes, almond shaped with luminous alabaster inlays for the eyeballs, are especially striking. The remaining agate inlay of the right pupil—bluish purple with a gray outer circle—lends a hypnotic quality to the antelope's gaze. Originally horns of ivory or gilded wood were attached to the head by tenons.

Only recently have gazelles, antelope, and ibex become scarce to the point of extinction in Egypt. Even at the time this head was made, however, it was probably rare for the ordinary nonhunting Egyptian of the alluvial land to encounter one of these elegant creatures. The sculptor certainly reflected in his work an expression of awe at the quasi-miraculous appearance of the animal.

The head—a masterpiece of Late Period animal sculpture—was most likely not part of an entire figure but rather crowned the prow of a ceremonial boat dedicated to the god Sokar, who was in charge of the desert and the pyramid cemeteries near Egypt's capital, Memphis.



6. Ibex

Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1300 B.C. Faience (figures of a crocodile and a fish engraved on underside); h. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (1.2 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.50)



7. Ibex

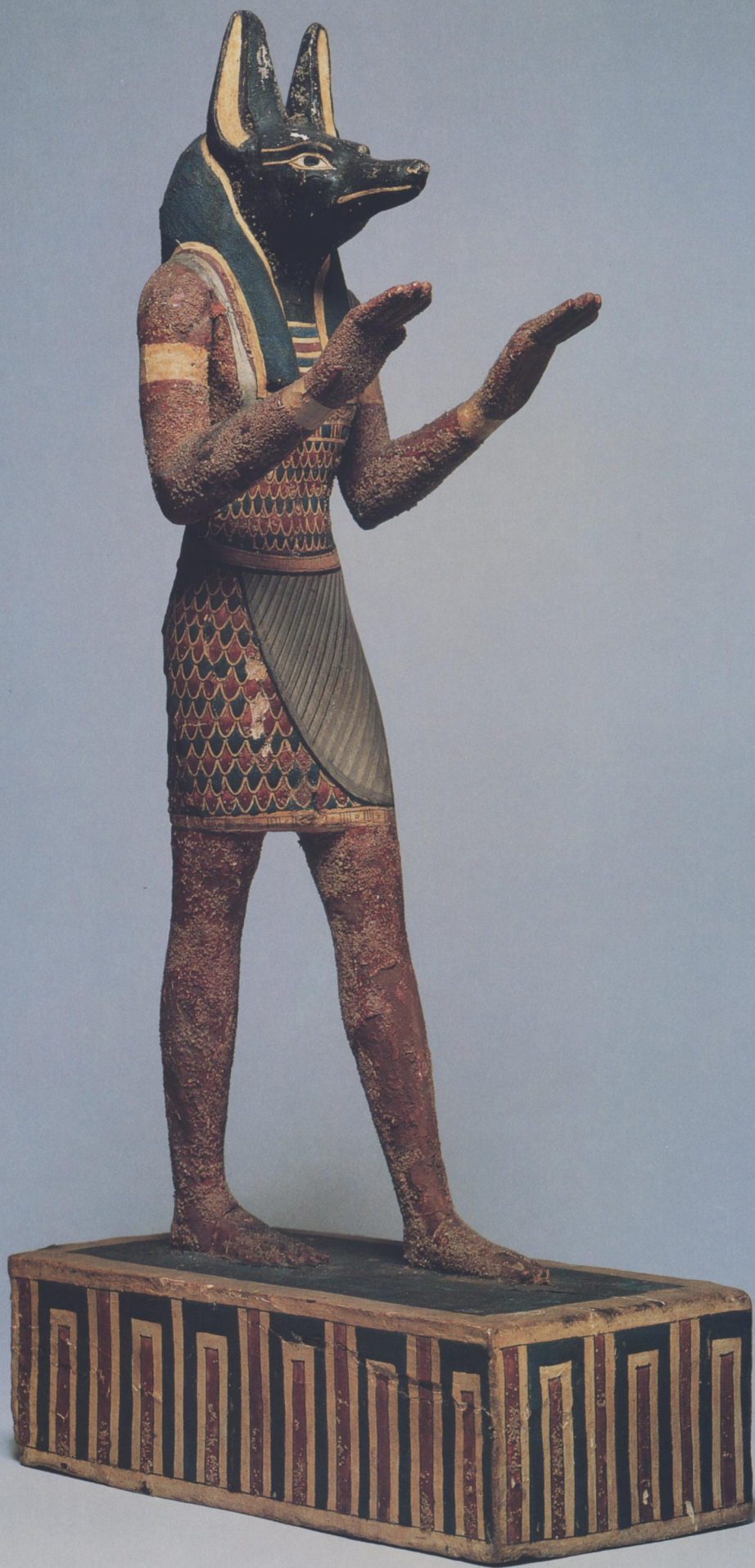
Late Dynasty 18, probably reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1390–1353 B.C. Mottled semitranslucent cryptocrystalline quartz closely resembling jasper (horn damaged; two holes drilled on underside, one each, front and back); h. 1 in. (2.5 cm). Purchase, Vaughn Foundation Gift, 1980 (1980.2)

The ancient Egyptians considered the ibex to be a good-luck charm and symbol of renewal. Ibex figures often decorated New Year's gifts, and in "Happy New Year" inscriptions an

ibex frequently served as the hieroglyphic emblem for the word "year."

These two representations of recumbent ibex are markedly different from each other in posture and expression. The faience animal on its little base might be crouching behind a bush during a hunt. Eyes wide open and head only slightly raised from the forelegs, the animal seems to be listening and sniffing for the dreaded hunter and his dogs. In contrast, the quartz ibex lifts its head proudly on an upright neck. In a posture recalling the bronze gazelle (no. 4), both forelegs are bent backward and the body rests gracefully on the left haunch. Despite the small size of the figure, the artist has conveyed the uneven weight distribution with remarkable accuracy. The animal's body is curved, and the left hind leg has disappeared under the haunch. This pose was used for the large ram sculptures that King Amenhotep III dedicated to the god Amun-Re at his temple of Soleb, Upper Nubia. The strong influence such large sculptures exerted on the minor arts is reflected in the small figures of this ibex and the bronze gazelle.

The two ibex figures served as adornment. The faience one is pierced horizontally to fit into a ring. The quartz ibex may have decorated an elaborate perfume vessel, in which case it would have been attached by pegs or tubes protruding from the underside and by pieces of wire securing it front and back.



8. Statuette of the God Anubis as Embalmer

Prolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Wood with gesso and paint; h. 16½ in. (42 cm). Gift of Mrs. Myron C. Taylor, 1938 (38.5)

This wooden figure represents the god Anubis with a canid head on a human body, wearing the feather costume of Egyptian deities. In this pose—hands raised, palms downward—the god performed purification and transfiguration rites over a mummy. During the actual mummification process, a priest wearing a canid mask played the role of Anubis.



9. Stag Protome from a Diadem

Hyksos Period, Dynasty 15–16, ca. 1640–1550 B.C. Gold; h. of protome 3⅞ in. (8.8 cm). Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1968 (68.136.1)

The Persian fallow deer, *Dama mesopotamica*, came to Egypt by way of the Suez isthmus in the Pleistocene

era. The species was rare even during pharaonic times and lived not in the steppe proper but in the brush at the border of the agricultural lands. It is likely that few Egyptians actually saw this shy animal, although from the Old through the New Kingdom representations of the magnificent stags appear in images of the hunt in the desert.

The artist who hammered this center protome from sheet gold for the crown of a Hyksos lady of high rank created such a detailed image that he must either have seen the actual creature or based his work upon another artist's close observation. The head shows all the essential characteristics of the species: the majestic dimensions, triangular furrowed brow, puffy cheeks, rectangular nose, and large funnel-shaped ears. Even minor details are well represented, from the knobby circles around the base of the antlers—indicated by twisted gold wire and repeated around the ears—to the pores in the flesh of the nose. These naturalistic features, as well as the technique of manufacturing three-dimensional objects by joining two hammered halves, is so essentially Egyptian that the piece must undoubtedly be attributed to an Egyptian artist.

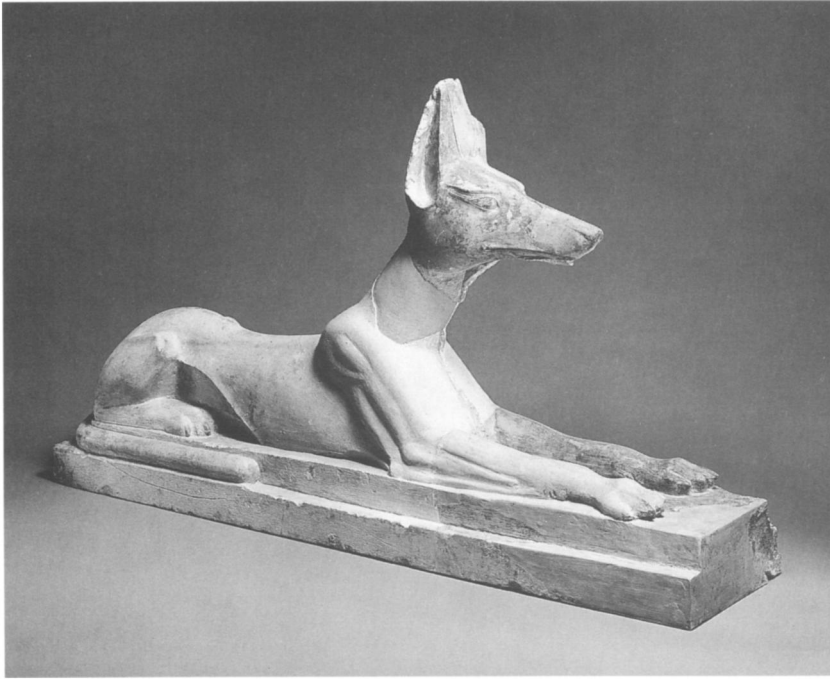
The diadem is also adorned with heads of gazelles and lotus blossoms. Beginning in the Old Kingdom, headbands with papyrus and lotus ornaments were frequently worn by Egyptian women. The combination of marsh flowers and horned desert-animal heads has a foreign character, however, that may best be attributed to the taste of a Hyksos client with strong ties to the Canaanite Middle Bronze Age culture.



10. Head of a Canid, Possibly a Jackal

Late Period, 664–332 B.C. Gypsum plaster; l. 2½ in. (6.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1974 (1974.264)

The classification of wild canids—for instance the Egyptian jackal, *Canis lupaster*, and the wild dog—living at the margins of the Egyptian desert causes problems even for zoologists. It is not surprising, therefore, that the ancient Egyptians did not distinguish particular canid species in their representations of gods, such as the necropolis god Anubis (see no. 8); Duamutef, one of the four sons of Horus; or Wepwawet, the god of Asyut, a town in Middle Egypt. This sensitively modeled plaster head could have served to depict any of these deities. The use of plaster and the rough, unmodeled area around the ears indicate that the head was cast in a mold. Recent research has shown that Egyptian artists used a variety of finely graded plaster materials for trial pieces and finished works of art. This small head is in a class with Old Kingdom “reserve” heads and the famous New Kingdom plaster portraits from an artist's studio at Amarna. In the latter workshop, mold casting was also practiced.



11. Anubis Recumbent

Saqqara, Dynasty 26–27, 664–404 B.C. Limestone, originally painted black (neck, nose, left ear, right leg, and part of base restored); l. 25¼ in. (64 cm). Adelaide Milton de Groot Fund, in memory of the de Groot and Hawley families, 1969 (69.105)

Egyptian artists often depicted Anubis entirely in animal form and in a pose indicating watchful guardianship. To this day, in cemeteries in the Egyptian desert, wild dogs guarding their territories stretch out in the same alert pose as this powerful limestone sculpture. The near-lifesize figure was excavated by British archaeologist Walter B. Emery in a temple deposit at Saqqara, the vast necropolis near ancient Egypt's capital, Memphis. Temple objects were gathered and hidden during the various foreign raids on Memphis. It is not known from which temple the Anubis statue came. A Late Period sanctuary of Anubis, called the Anubieion, was surrounded by one of the numerous cemeteries at Saqqara that were specifically dedicated to the burial of sacred animals.

12. Pharaoh Spears a Lion

Thebes, Valley of the Kings, late Dynasty 20–Third Intermediate Period, ca. 1100–700 B.C. Painted limestone; h. (of stone) 5½ in. (14 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1453)

The ancient Egyptians lived in awe of the great felines, and lions especially were regarded as the embodiment of

power. A lioness deity, for example, was addressed in a Middle Kingdom text as “the Great, whose eyes are keen and whose claws are sharp, the lioness who sees and catches by night.” The hunting of lions was a royal prerogative, as shown in this masterly and detailed sketch by an Egyptian draftsman, who added praise to pharaoh in flowery script on the back of the piece. Flakes of the dense Theban limestone were the traditional “notepaper” of scribes and artists in the New Kingdom. The hands are often those of master draftsmen (see also nos. 35 and 63). Scholars have stressed that this lion does not stand on the same level as pharaoh and his well-trained dog. As the lion embodies the forces of chaos, it belongs to a world beyond the ordered realm of the Egyptian king.

Lions were part of the Egyptian fauna until about two centuries ago, and in the pharaonic periods they must have been fairly common. They were certainly well known to herds-men and hunters as the most dangerous animal of the steppe. Recently the





skeletal remains of adult as well as young lions were discovered near the tomb of the First Dynasty king Hor Aha (ca. 2960–2926 B.C.) at Abydos, Middle Egypt—clear evidence that from the beginning Egyptians kept captive lions at the royal court. The remains of a New Kingdom zoo were found in the Delta palace of King Ramesses II (ca. 1279–1213 B.C.) at Qantir. Lions, elephants, and horned desert beasts had been kept in this menagerie.

The artist's sketch of a royal lion hunt was reportedly found near the entrance to the tomb of Tutankhamun, where it was discarded by an artist, probably working in one of the late New Kingdom tombs nearby.

13. Recumbent Lion

Said to be from Gebelein, Early Dynastic, ca. 3000–2700 B.C. Quartz; h. 4¾ in. (12 cm). Purchase, Fletcher Fund and Guide Foundation Inc. Gift, 1966 (66.99.2)

The abstract form, lack of a base, and the way the tail curls up across the back of this glowing figure of a lion dates it to Early Dynastic times. It is a somewhat enigmatic masterpiece, and scholars have proposed various interpretations. The animal has been identified as a maneless male lion, a lioness, and a cub. This last is most likely. None of the hardstone sculptures of powerful adult lions that were made around the same date matches the short head, over-large nose, soft

mouth, and general furriness of ears, paws, and body. These features, decidedly those of a young lion, must be read as intentionally reproduced characteristics of the animal represented.

It is difficult to explain the meaning of a lion-cub sculpture in the context of Egyptian religion and art, especially in this early period. In ancient Egypt lions usually represented the king. There was a famous temple of the goddess Hathor at Gebelein, where the quartz lion was reportedly found. Beginning in early times, Hathor was not only the goddess of love but also a celestial mother deity who appeared as a cow suckling the king and as a wild lioness. Is the quartz lion her son, the king?



14. Amulet in the Form of a Seated Goddess with Lion Head

Third Intermediate Period, ca. 1070–712 B.C. Faience; h. 2½ in. (6.5 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.868)

In Egyptian religion lion gods were less prominent than lioness deities. The females embodied the essence of supernatural power and were much revered. However, it was the general concept of the lioness deity that was important, not the many names under which she appeared. This often makes it difficult to distinguish iconographically between the various lioness deities in Egyptian art.

The enthroned goddess of this intricate amulet closely resembles

New Kingdom statues of Sakhmet, goddess of war and pestilence. On the beautiful, slender body of a woman sits the menacing head of a lioness encircled by the mane of the male, which had become a symbol of power used regardless of gender. In her right hand the goddess holds a sistrum, a musical instrument like a rattle. The sistrum was used in performances that were believed to transform the dangerous Sakhmet into Bastet, the cat goddess, her benign counterpart.

If Egyptians in the New Kingdom would call this goddess Sakhmet, those living in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods often understood seated figures of the lioness deity to be Wadjet, the goddess of Lower Egypt,

who also appeared in the shape of a cobra (see nos. 48 and 49). Believed to be endowed with magic powers, this Wadjet in her amuletic role is supported by a demon named Nehebkaw. He appears in the lattice-work on the side of the goddess's throne as a serpent with human arms and legs. Before him another lioness deity is seen, this one standing.

Since all lioness deities were closely related to the sun god, Re, this amulet's head was once crowned by a sun disk, possibly of gilded bronze or gold. It was attached by means of a peg inserted into a hole drilled between the animal's ears.



15. Large Feline as Handle of a Cosmetic Spoon

Malqata, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1390–1353 B.C. Egyptian alabaster; l. 5½ in. (13 cm). Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.215.715)

The ancient Egyptians understood the leopard, *Panthera pardus*, and the cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, respectively, as the Upper and Lower Egyptian versions of the same animal. It is therefore understandable that not all representations distinguished clearly between the two large felines. In this handle of a cosmetic spoon the long neck of the animal probably indicates that the cheetah's leap is being celebrated. The spoon, clearly a luxury item, was found in the palace of King Amenhotep III, one of the great hunters among Egypt's pharaohs.

Both leopards and cheetahs were common in Egypt, as they were in the rest of Africa during ancient times. Today they are largely extinct in Egypt, the last leopards having been seen at the beginning of the twentieth century, whereas rare cheetahs are still living near the Libyan border.

16. Double Leopard-Head Amulet from a Girdle

Lahun, pyramid of Senwosret II, Dynasty 12, ca. 1900–1840 B.C. Gold and amethyst; l. 1¼ in. (4.5 cm). Purchase, Rogers Fund and Henry Walters Gift, 1916 (16.1.6)

Leopard heads and skins—and, less often, those of cheetahs—served as priestly garments and were believed to guarantee rejuvenation and fertility.

In the Middle Kingdom this belief led to the custom of including images of leopard heads in girdles worn by women. The large heads of this piece were made in two halves hammered from sheet gold and soldered together. The interior spaces were filled with pebbles so that a rhythmic sound was created when the owner—a princess named Sithathoryunet—walked or danced. The girdle was found with the rest of the princess's rich jewelry in an undisturbed niche of her plundered tomb at Lahun. The thread that held the elements together had disintegrated, but each piece was painstakingly recovered from the sediment by one of the expedition's archaeologists, Guy Brunton. After the Museum acquired most of the jewelry in 1916, the girdle was restrung from Brunton's sketches.







17. Wildcat

Early Dynasty 12, ca. 1990–1900 B.C.
Egyptian alabaster; h. 5½ in. (14 cm).
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1990
(1990.59.1)

Domesticated cats did not appear in Egyptian art before the Middle Kingdom, and then only in rare instances, but the African wildcat, *Felis silvestris libyca*, was already represented by artists during the Old Kingdom, or at least from about 2250 B.C. onward. The habitat of this solitary predator with yellow fur and striped markings was the steppe and brush at the margins of the desert, from which it may have made forays into the wetlands in search of prey, such as mice, birds, and fish. In the marshes lived another wildcat species, the swamp cat, *F. chaus*, which had a heavier body, solid-colored fur, and a short tail.

The Egyptians were greatly impressed by the wildcat's prowess, especially its ferocity in fighting poisonous snakes. This special talent made it an appropriate helper of the sun god, Re, in his struggle against the Apophis snake, the embodiment of all evil. Sometimes the sun god himself could even appear in the shape of the "great tomcat." The cat's role as helper of

the deceased is expressed in a papyrus of the Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1070–712 B.C.): "Oh cat of lapis lazuli, great of forms . . . mistress of the embalming house, grant the beautiful West [Land of the Dead]: in peace [a benediction]."

This exquisite alabaster wildcat vividly captures the fierce and agile nature of an alert predator. The artist has combined the broad musculature and short tail of the swamp cat with the striped fur of *F. silvestris*. The cat sits lightly on its haunches, forelegs in a forward position, ready to spring. There is nothing domestic in the small head with its erect ears, wide-open eyes, and well-defined muzzle. This is a dangerous beast, well able to assist the sun god against the evil Apophis. To serve as a container for cosmetic or medicinal ointment, the alabaster form was hollowed out until, in places, it became eggshell thin. A stone stopper (now missing) originally fit into the opening between the cat's ears. A container of such exquisite ferocity would surely have lent potency to its contents, a perfumed oil.

18. Jerboas

Middle Kingdom, late Dynasty 12 or Dynasty 13, ca. 1850–1650 B.C. Faience; h. 1⅞ in. (3.1 cm); 1⅞ in. (4.2 cm).
Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926
(26.7.900, .901)

The Egyptian jerboa (from the Arabic *jarbu* meaning "flesh of lions"), *Jaculus jaculus*, is well equipped for jumping and, given its small size, can leap a surprising distance of six or seven feet. Faience jerboas such as these have been found in a number of Middle Kingdom tombs. A group of three, of which two are depicted here, was allegedly found at Heliopolis, in the southeastern Delta, together with a faience figure of a wildcat and the magic rod (no. 38). If this is correct, the tomb owner had especially strong beliefs in the potency of animals.

The jerboa is usually represented sitting upright on its hind legs, its paws raised to its muzzle, which is how many rodents sit when eating. It is also possible that the ancient Egyptians interpreted the gesture as praying to the solar deity. Used as funerary votives, the jerboas may have served to strengthen the deceased's hope that he or she would reach a new day in companionship with the sun god.



19. Genet

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Faience; l. $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (2.2 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.8.859)

The genet, *Genetta genetta*, is a small carnivore related to the civet, *Viverra civetta*, but with less well-developed scent glands. Egyptians used artistic license to show the small spotted genet, like the wildcat and ichneumon (or mongoose), stalking birds and other prey in papyrus thickets. The genet's proper habitat, however, was the tall grass and shrubs of the steppe and at the desert margins, which it would leave to hunt in the marshes, as did the wildcat and the ichneumon. The genet was sometimes tamed and kept as a mouser. Today genets are extinct in Egypt, but they

were frequently depicted in the Old and early Middle Kingdoms. This tiny figure attests to their presence in the first millennium B.C.

20. Seal Amulets in the Shape of Hedgehogs

Left to right: New Kingdom, ca. 1550–1070 B.C. Glazed steatite (scroll design on base); l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.8 cm). Dynasty 26, 664–525 B.C. Faience (animal with long legs [gazelle?] on base); l. $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (1.4 cm). Late Period, probably Dynasty 26, 664–525 B.C. Egyptian blue (inscribed on base “the beloved of Bastet Si-mer-diw”); l. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2.1 cm). Gifts of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.871, .884, .882)

Two kinds of hedgehogs were known to the ancient Egyptians: the desert hedgehog, *Paraechinus aethiopicus*, represented on the left and right in

the illustration, and *Hemiechinus auritus*, which had larger ears and is shown in the center. The first of these species is nearly extinct in Egypt today but must have been common in pharaonic times. During the Old Kingdom short-eared *Paraechinus* hedgehogs lived on the steppe and at the desert edge in burrows from which they emerged at dawn or dusk to search for meals of insects, small mice, and carrion. Even today the large-eared *Hemiechinus* dwells in the alluvial land of the Nile Delta.

In Egyptian art desert hedgehogs are part of representations of the hunt in the desert. They are depicted either in cage baskets among the booty or in the steppe environment in front of the entrances to their dens. The latter could be a reference to the hedgehogs' habit of sleeping underground





when food is scarce. Their reappearance after long absences may be the basis for the Egyptians' belief that hedgehogs heralded the renewal of life, an explanation for their use in amulets. Hedgehog amulets were also thought to protect against poisonous snakebites. Amulets showing the long-eared *Hemiechinus* are less frequent than those in the shape of the desert hedgehog.

21. Hare Amulet

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Faience; l. 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (3.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1944 (44.4.25)

Among the small animals of the Egyptian desert is the desert hare, *Lepus capensis*. In ancient times it was not considered worthy prey for princely hunters, and in representations it appears only occasionally

among the spoils of the hunt. In many hunting scenes, however, it can be found in the background as part of the landscape. The tomb relief of Ra-m-kaj (see no. 2), for example, includes a desert hare in much the same position as the one that forms this amulet. It crouches low to the ground, ears flattened, intent on eluding the hunter's notice. The desert hare's sand-colored fur (here transformed to an amuletic blue) serves it well as camouflage. If detected, however, the hare uses its great speed to help it to escape.

The hare's amuletic role is not known for certain. Ancient Greek and Roman authors believed that hares could sleep with their eyes open and reproduce without copulation. If these were also Egyptian beliefs, the

hare might have represented extreme vigilance or the primeval deity's self-creating power.

22. Hare as a Hieroglyph

Deir el-Bahri, temple of Mentuhotep II, Dynasty 11, late reign of Mentuhotep II, ca. 2040–2010 B.C. Painted limestone; l. of hieroglyph 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (5 cm). Gift of Egypt Exploration Fund, 1907 (07.230.2)

This detail of a relief from King Mentuhotep II's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri is a good example of the care with which Egyptian artists rendered hieroglyphic signs in monumental inscriptions. In the pictographic writing system of ancient Egypt, the hare represents the combination of consonants *wn* and was thus used in the important word meaning "to be."



Wetlands and Waterways



At the beginning of pharaonic history considerable portions of the Nile Delta, modern Egypt's most densely populated area, consisted of swamps and marshes. Other wetlands occurred as occasional pockets farther south along the Nile and in the geological formation known as the Fayum depression. In ancient times the lake at Fayum drained into the Nile and must have been considerably larger and less salty than it is today. Typical marsh vegetation grew in these waterlogged areas. The famous Egyptian papyrus grew higher than a man's head, providing an ideal environment for a multitude of birds (both indigenous and migratory) and aquatic mammals. There was also an abundance of fish and other aquatic life in the Nile itself and in the irrigation canals, as well as in the salt waters of both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

An Old Kingdom tomb inscription describes the hunt in the marsh as a "delight of the heart." Paddling on light reed boats through the papyrus thickets, fishing and fowling, was for the Egyptians a most desirable way to experience the richness and beauty of divine creation. Here men could prove

their strength in encounters with dangerous animals such as crocodiles or hippos; they could spear fish or catch ducks and geese by deftly hurling their throw sticks. Women could gather flowers and papyrus for adornment or help handle the captured birds.

In religion, art, and literature, the marshlands, even more than the desert and steppe, came to be endowed with the character of a paradise. Lovers likened their amorous pursuits to those of bird catchers in papyrus thickets, a theme expressed in a New Kingdom love song:

The wild goose soars and swoops,
It alights on the net;
Many birds swarm about,
I have work to do.
I am held fast by my love,
Alone, my heart meets your heart,
From your beauty I'll not part!

In temple rituals gods and the king were seen in the role of marshland hunters defeating the forces of evil embodied in the hippo, as expressed in lines of ritual text such as these concerning the god Horus:

A happy day! I have cast my harpoon
lustily!

A happy day! My hands have the mastery of his [the hippo's] head!

I have cast at the cows of the
hippopotami in water of eight
cubits . . .

I have hurled with my right hand,
I swung with my left,
As a bold fen-man does.

As a child, Horus, the sky god of kingship, was believed to have been raised in the marshes, where his mother, Isis, hid him against the evil Seth, who had killed Horus's father, Osiris. Such rituals and myths explain why images of the hunt in the marshes were favorite themes of tomb reliefs and paintings throughout pharaonic history. In essence such scenes served as symbols for the power of nature to renew itself constantly, a cycle in which each Egyptian wished to participate. Present-day viewers of marsh scenes in ancient Egyptian art should realize that they do not see naturalistic landscape depictions but idealized images. However, through their keen sense for realistic detail, Egyptian artists managed to capture much of the country's beautiful flora and fauna in the mythical landscapes.

23. Otter

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Bronze;
h. 17 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (44 cm). Gift of Lily S. Place,
1923 (23.6.2)

Old Kingdom artists depicted the otter catching fish in the papyrus thicket. During the Late Period and Ptolemaic times otters in bronze statuettes such as this one were represented standing, forepaws raised, atop small bronze boxes. As in the case of baboons, the raised paws of the otter is a pose of adoration before the sun god when he rises in the morning. The great hymn to Aten beautifully expresses this daily occasion for prayer and rejoicing:

Earth brightens when you dawn in
light land
When you shine as Aten of daytime;
As you dispel the dark,
As you cast your rays,
The Two Lands are in festivity.
Awake they stand on their feet,
You have roused them;
Bodies cleansed, clothed,
Their arms adore your appearance.

In myth otters were attached to the goddess of Lower Egypt, Wadjet, whose cult was centered in Buto, in the northern Delta. The animal may have been common on the shores of nearby Lake Burullus.





24. Stucco Pavement Fragment

Malqata, Dynasty 18, reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1390–1353 B.C. Stucco with blue, green, yellow, and brown pigments (uppermost edge, including top of duck's head, restored); 20½ x 16¾ in. (52 x 42.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.2.2)

On the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes (Luxor), King Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye resided in a vast palace in the desert, near the present-day village called Malqata. The floor of a large “audience hall” in this palace was covered with stucco, and on it Egyptian artists painted a large pool with fish, plants, and swimming birds. At the borders surrounding the pool were painted brightly colored

marshland scenes, rich with plant and bird life. Our fragment was part of this border from room E. The marshland hunter was omitted in this painting; it was enough that the king himself was able to stride across the pavement as master of the marshland paradise.

In this fragment of the Malqata floor painting, a duck is seen among the branches of an unidentified marsh plant beside arching stems of papyrus. Many types of waterfowl breed in Europe, Asia, and northern Africa and winter in Egypt. This one is sketched in profile, its head, body, and legs outlined in black and red. Black lines of varying thicknesses define the feathering on its neck and flanks; the

curving lines give the bird a fullness that is further enhanced by the peculiar patchy distribution of blue and ochre paint. Through this combination of draftsmanship and painting, the artist has captured the essence of the duck: its head pulled gracefully back from the full crop, its heavy body is caught in motion, walking on widely spaced legs with the duck's typically awkward gait.

On closer study it becomes apparent that the heavy bird could never rest on the flimsy leaves and branches of the marsh plant that surrounds it. Both the shrub and neighboring papyrus, created entirely with bold strokes of the paintbrush, seem to serve only as background for the bird.

25. Fragment from a Temple Relief

Deir el-Bahri, Dynasty 11, late reign of Mentuhotep II, ca. 2040–2010 B.C. Painted limestone; 15 x 13 in. (38 x 33 cm). Gift of Egypt Exploration Fund, 1906 (06.1231.1)

The birds on this fragment are caught in a clapnet set by the fowling of King Mentuhotep II. The mesh of the net appears in yellow-white paint against the birds' bodies. Some of the entrapped waterfowl sit quietly, perhaps not yet realizing their plight, while others fly up, attempting to escape. The left uppermost bird could be a European coot. The other birds could

be curlews and gulls or shovelers. Many such waterfowl are common winter guests in Egypt, although they breed in Europe, Asia, and other parts of northern Africa. In nature shovelers have greenish necks and are otherwise white, black, and blue-gray. Coots are black, and curlews are mostly brownish. Gulls can be a number of colors, from white to brown to gray, depending on the species. The brown and yellow paint in the Mentuhotep relief was most probably added during a restoration of the temple in Dynasty 19. The original paint may well have been closer to the birds' real

colors. The background was originally blue water.

The fragment came from one of the many reliefs that once decorated the columned porticoes and halls of Mentuhotep II's mortuary temple. This king reunited Egypt after the period of disunity called the First Intermediate Period. His temple's innovative terrace architecture influenced Egyptian architecture for centuries to come, while the vast wall reliefs reflected the in-depth studies of Old Kingdom reliefs made by the king's artists.





26. Cosmetic Containers in the Shape of Mallards

Dynasty 18, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Tinted ivory; h. $3\frac{3}{16}$ in. (9 cm); $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. (9.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1940 (40.2.2, .3)

These delicate ivory boxes are in the shape of mallards, *Anas platyrhynchos*, that have been prepared as offerings, with the feathers plucked from their wings and bodies. Only the birds' elegant heads and gracefully curving necks retain the black feathering and white neck ring typical of this species. The artist has carefully carved webbed feet on the underside of each container. Some of the waterfowl caught in nets were kept in enclosures and fattened, although no duck species was totally domesticated in ancient Egypt.

27. Perfume Vessel in the Shape of Two Trussed Ducks

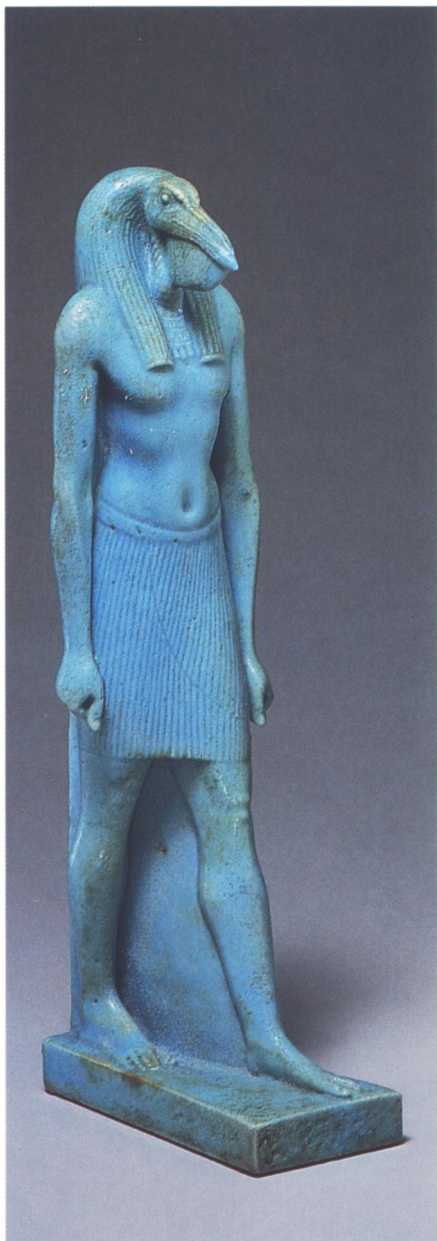
Middle Kingdom, probably late Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1800–1650 B.C. Anhydrite; h. $6\frac{3}{4}$ in. (17 cm). Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1927 (27.9.1)

Skilled craftsmen, probably working somewhere in Middle Egypt, used anhydrite to sculpt vessels for cosmetic ingredients. Of those that survive, the Museum's trussed-duck vessel is undoubtedly the most beautiful. The two ducks are prepared to be offered to a deity in a way similar to the ivory mallards (no. 26), but here the artist has used the two bodies most ingeniously to form a single lenticular flask, translating the joints of the bird's legs into four little knuckles for the vessel to stand on. The necks

of the birds, too slender to support their heavy heads, are arched over to form handles. With a rare touch of sentiment, the artist has made the birds' necks seem to give way to the neck of the vessel between them in what can only be called a gesture of sacrificial submission.

Anhydrite is a rare, semitranslucent stone, light mauve or faintly blue, and is characterized by the way it takes a high polish. In the early Middle Kingdom Egyptian quarrymen discovered a source of anhydrite in the mountains of the eastern Egyptian desert, which was probably the source for the stone used here.





28. Statuette of Thoth

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Faience;
h. 5½ in. (14 cm). Purchase, Edward S.
Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.860)

This turquoise-colored faience statuette is a beautiful example of the skill with which Egyptian artists combined animal heads and human bodies to create totally convincing creatures, in this case the ibis-headed god, Thoth.

29. Hieroglyphic Sign Showing an Ibis

El-Ashmunein (Hermopolis Magna),
Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Polychrome
faience; h. 6½ in. (15.5 cm). Purchase,
Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.992)

This exquisite relief inlay shows a sacred ibis, *Threskiornis aethiopica*, walking atop the crossbar of a standard that identifies it as a deity. Its beak is supported by a feather, signifying supreme order (*maat*). The ibis was associated with Thoth, the god of wisdom, whose primary sanctuary was located in Hermopolis Magna, Middle Egypt, where the inlay was found. It was one of several that belonged to elaborate wooden shrines erected to

house statues of deities. This example was part of a large inscription. It represents a hieroglyphic sign that could be used at the end of the word *hb* (Egyptian for “ibis”) or to write the name *Djehuty* (“Thoth”).

The sacred ibis, which has not been seen in Egypt since about 1876, was larger than related species now living in central and southern Africa. Huge flocks once came to Egypt from Ethiopia to breed in the wetlands during the annual Nile flood. The sacred ibis has a white body and a black head and neck. The inlay uses green to represent the white areas because green is the color of vegetation and fertility.





30. Heron

Western Thebes, tomb 65 (burial of Nany), Dynasty 21, reign of Psusennes I, 1040–992 B.C. Drawing on papyrus; h. of papyrus (overall) 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (37 cm). Rogers Fund, 1930 (30.3.32)

In Egypt herons are year-round residents in the Nile Delta and along the Red Sea coast and annual winter guests in the whole country. The birds migrate from Europe, Asia, and other parts of Africa. Judging by the frequency with which these magnificent birds, with their ornamental crests, are depicted, Egyptians must have loved them. It is not surprising, therefore, to find one among the creatures depicted on a funerary papyrus such as this, found by the Museum's excavators in Thebes in the spring of 1929. The ancient Egyptians believed that their king ascended to heaven in the form of the crested bird, and artists also often depicted the legendary phoenix as a heron. In everyday life these avian experts in fishing were used by fowlers as decoys to lure other birds into the nets.

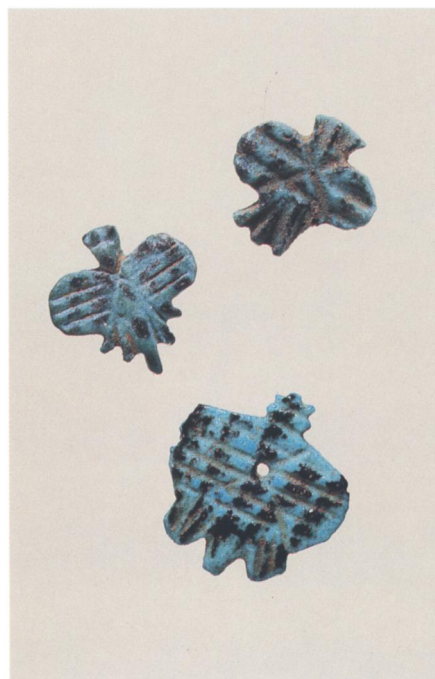
The papyrus belonged to the king's daughter Nany, the chantress of Amun, at her death an elderly woman of considerable girth. Her father was proba-

bly the titular king of Upper Egypt, Painedjem I, who, as high priest of Amun, had been responsible for the reburial of several royal mummies. On Nany's papyrus, which was found rolled up at the side of her mummy, the heron appears flanked by her name and with a group of solar deities.

31. Butterflies

Lisht, northern cemetery, Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1970–1640 B.C. Faience. Left: l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.5 cm). Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1922 (22.1.1394). Upper right: l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.8 cm). Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.3.513). Bottom: l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (2.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.3.512)

Butterflies are among the most charming of the small winged creatures depicted in Egyptian marsh scenes. These amulets typify the Egyptian artists' approach to butterfly representations. The artists almost invariably chose to show them from above, the colorful wings spread open. Butterflies were frequently used to decorate jewelry in ancient Egypt. Among the most beautiful examples are the detailed inlays in the Cairo



Museum in the armlets of Queen Hetepheres, mother of King Khufu (ca. 2551–2528 B.C.). The amuletic meaning of these insects is not known.



32. Dragonflies and Damselflies

Lisht, northern cemetery, Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1970–1640 B.C. Faience. Upper left (pierced transversely under wings): l. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm). Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1922 (22.1.285). Right (pierced transversely under wings): l. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.9 cm). Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.3.519). Bottom (pierced vertically): l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.8 cm). Rogers Fund, 1915 (15.3.514)

Although representations of four-winged insects in marsh scenes and amulets have been identified as both dragonflies and grasshoppers in flight, the first interpretation is more convincing. Dragonflies and damselflies feed on the much-dreaded mosquito and its larvae, a service the ancient Egyptians must have appreciated. This may account in part for their appeal as amulets. The finest amulets clearly define the insect's four wings, as do two of these.



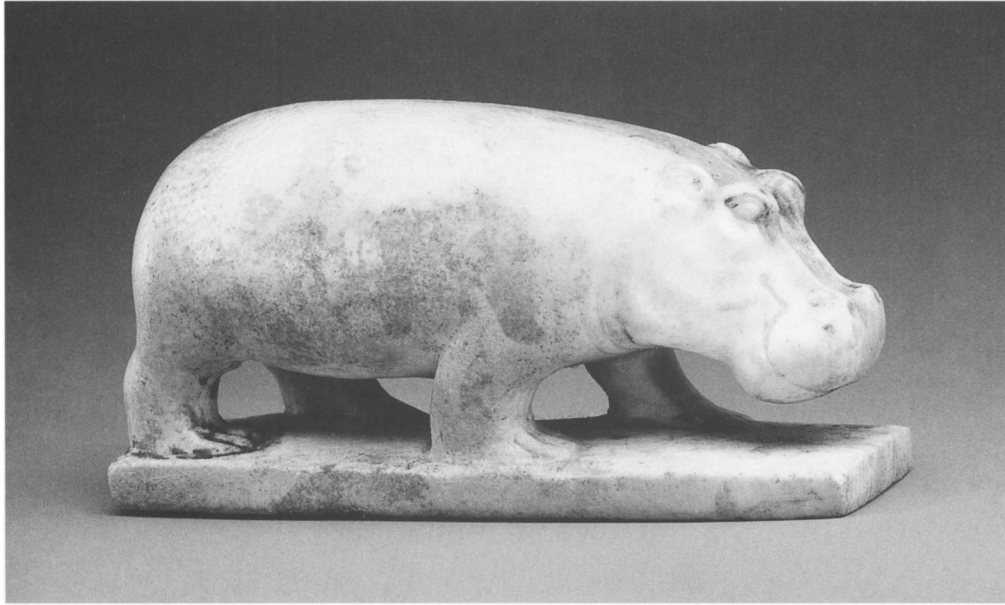
33. Crocodile

Late 1st century B.C.—early 1st century A.D.
Granite (tail missing); l. 42½ in. (108 cm).
Purchase, The Bernard and Audrey Aronson
Charitable Trust Gift, in memory of her
beloved husband, Bernard Aronson, 1992
(1992.13)

This granite crocodile, *Crocodylus niloticus*, sculpted in a relatively late period of Egyptian art, is a fine blend of naturalism and expressive stylization. Crocodiles once swam and fed in the river and basked on its banks in

great numbers, but today, like the hippo, they have disappeared from Egypt north of Aswan, while in the new Lake Nasser they seem to be thriving again. Although the ancient Egyptians somewhat whimsically called the crocodile “wrinkle face,” without doubt these reptiles were the most dangerous creatures of their country and a constant threat to the people and their livestock. Traveling by boat, crossing the waterways with herds, or bathing in the river put the lives of men, women, and animals

at risk. Being such a strong adversary, the crocodile not surprisingly played a prominent role in Egyptian magic. An early Middle Kingdom story tells of a magician who formed a small crocodile of wax and threw it into the water. The wax figure was transformed into a lifesize reptile, which devoured the lover of the magician’s adulterous wife. The deity related to the crocodile was the god Sobek, who was venerated primarily in the Fayum region.



34. Hippo

Middle Kingdom, ca. 1900–1650 B.C.
Aragonite; l. of base, $3\frac{3}{16}$ in. (8 cm).
Rogers Fund, 1920 (20.2.25)

35. Hippo

Deir el-Bahri, area of causeways, Dynasty 18, ca. 1473–1425 B.C. Painting on limestone; stone $4\frac{1}{16} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ in. (12 x 10.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.3.6)

The hippopotamus, *Hippopotamus amphibius*, must have been very common in Egypt during the earlier peri-

ods, but man's hunting pursuits and ever-increasing encroachment on the hippo's wetland environment gradually reduced the number of these magnificent beasts. The last wild hippos were seen in Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The ancient Egyptians were well aware of the phenomenal strength of the hippopotamus, which artists captured by emphasizing the huge unsegmented body, as in this figure from the Middle Kingdom. Bold strokes of thickly applied brown and black paint

and a dangerous red on the belly and eye achieve a similar effect in the artist's sketch from Dynasty 18. The awe inspired by an animal that could devastate a farmer's fields overnight was tempered by the Egyptians' belief in the animal's revitalizing power. As a creature from the fertile mud, the hippo embodied divine powers guaranteeing rebirth. One might recognize this benevolent aspect of the beast in the friendly faces of many hippo figures.



36. Turtle

Dynasty 12, ca. 1991–1783 B.C. Rock crystal inlaid with amethyst, turquoise, red jasper, and lapis lazuli; l. $1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (4.7 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1359)

To the ancient Egyptians, the African water turtle, *Trionyx triunguis*, like many other animals, may have seemed to possess a dual character. Being an animal of the shadowy deep, the turtle embodied cosmic danger and thus was ritually annihilated, but its power could also be made to work to the advantage of people by warding off evil. This power made turtles potent amulets, three of which are shown here (at right and opposite). The large, wide-eyed alabaster turtle (opposite) served as a cover for a cosmetic dish, protecting the contents in a similar amuletic function.

37. Frogs and Toads

Back row from left to right: Frog on a lotus pad: Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1300 B.C. Bronze (possibly a weight); h. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm). Rogers Fund, 1970 (1970.197). Toad(?): Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Lapis lazuli (horizontal suspension tube and vertical pierce from below, to accommodate peg[?]); h. 1 in. (2.5 cm). Gift of Darius Ogden Mills, 1904 (04.2.378).



Frog: Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Chlorite (pierced horizontally); h. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.1928).

Toad(?): Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Faience (pierced horizontally); h. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.8 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.1921)

Front row, left to right: Frog: Dynasty 19, ca. 1295–1186 B.C. Red porphyry (pierced horizontally); l. $\frac{13}{16}$ in. (2 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1143).

Tree frog(?): New Kingdom, ca. 1550–1079/69 B.C. Faience (small loop in front); l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.5 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1028). Frog: Dynasty 19–20, ca. 1295–1079/69 B.C. Serpentine (pierced horizontally; lotus and bird on base); l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.5 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore

M. Davis, 1915 (30.8.861). Frog: New Kingdom, ca. 1550–1079/69 B.C. Faience (pierced); l. $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (1.1 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.1918)

In the marshes, as well as in the alluvial land when the annual flood waters had receded, thousands of frogs appeared, their deep-throated chorus filling the night air, as they continue to do today on the banks of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians associated these musical amphibians of the fertile mud with creation, birth, and regeneration. Amulets in the image of frogs and toads, such as these, were popular. “I am the resurrection” can be found written on the underside of such frog figures even from early Christian times.

In the small amuletic figures it is not always easy to distinguish between the Egyptian frog, *Rana mascareniensis*, and the toad, *Bufo regularis* or *B. viridis*, which has a shorter face and knobby skin on its back. The tree frog, *Hyla savignyi*, possibly represented in one of the amulets in the front row, is rare in Egypt.





38. Toads, Frogs, and other Animals on a Magic Rod

Late Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1850–1650 B.C.
Glazed steatite; l. 11 in. (28 cm). Purchase,
Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926
(26.7.1275)

This complex object consists of a tripartite stafflike base and seven individual figures of animals. The segments of the base are hollow; originally they were probably joined by pegs. The beautifully crafted little animals are attached by means of pins that fit holes on the undersides of the animals and in the base. Previous publications have shown this rod, the best-preserved example of its kind, with the animals facing toward the center. A recent examination, however, revealed that the outlines of each animal, clearly preserved on the base, face outward.

This remarkable piece epitomizes Egyptian beliefs about the universe and the symbolic role of certain animals. Outward-facing lions symbolize the two mounds of the Egyptian horizon between which the sun rises in its daily renewed act of creation. According to Egyptian beliefs the sun has enemies and helpers in the struggle against the nightly chaos. The turtle often appears as an enemy but here may represent the re-creative powers of the deep, while felines, crocodiles, and frog or toad deities are known helpers of the sun. Baboons tending lamps and beneficial eye emblems (*wedjat*) protect the corners of the world. The face of a leopard (not visible here) is carved at each end of the rod.

The rectangular base takes the form of a reed mat with cross bindings. Such mats were commonly used

in ancient Egypt as blankets on which offerings were presented or as rugs on which kings knelt in prayer. The mat here defines a consecrated zone in which the cosmic event of the solar triumph over evil is being magically enacted. The object formed part of a burial as a guarantee of rebirth. It may have been found at Heliopolis, the center of Egypt's solar worship.

39. Turtles

From left to right: New Kingdom, ca. 1550–1300 B.C. Carnelian; l. $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (2.2 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.2397). Second Intermediate Period, ca. 1650–1550 B.C. Quartz and hematite; l. $1\frac{1}{6}$ in. (2 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.2398). Dynasty 20, ca. 1100–1000 B.C. Alabaster; l. $2\frac{1}{6}$ in. (6.8 cm). Purchase, Nina Walker Wainwright and Beatrice Appel Gifts, 1980 (1980.310)





40. Fish in a Canal

El-Qantir, Dynasty 19, reign of Ramesses II, ca. 1279–1213 B.C. Detail of polychrome faience tile; h. 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (20 cm). Purchase, Rogers Fund, Edward S. Harkness Gift, and by exchange, 1922, 1929, 1935 (35.I.104)

While the Egyptians caused the populations of some water creatures to diminish by hunting and encroaching on their environments, other species flourished in man-made canals and irrigation ditches. In the scene depicted on this tile, what could be an elephant-snout fish (*Mormyridae* family) swims between the lotuses in a canal bordered by other water plants. Fish of this family live near the bottom of muddy, slow-moving waterways and would have been right at home in an ancient canal. In typical Egyptian manner, the representation combines a plan of the canal between its two banks and profile views of the plants and fish.

This tile is one of a group of decorative architectural elements thought to have adorned Ramesses II's private apartments in his eastern Delta residence, Piramesse.

41. Mollusk Shells

Left: Cowrie. Lisht, northern cemetery, near tomb enclosure 758, Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1990–1650 B.C. Gold; l. $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (1.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.180.1200). Right: Bivalve shell. Lisht North, tomb 754, late Dynasty 12, ca. 1850–1800 B.C. Gold; l. 1 in. (2.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.227.18)



Since prehistoric times, actual mollusk shells were used by Egyptians as objects of adornment and were fashioned into cosmetic containers and painters' palettes. Shell forms were also reproduced in gold and silver. This type of jewelry was especially prevalent during the Middle Kingdom, when the two shells shown here were made. The smaller one is a cowrie shell, while the larger is an unidentified bivalve. Cowries are thought to have been fertility symbols and were often part of women's girdles (but see no. 16, where leopard heads are used instead of cowries), whereas bivalves were worn by both sexes, either as a single pendant on a chain or thread or strung with other shells to form a necklace.



42. Dish in the Shape of a *Bolti* (Fish)

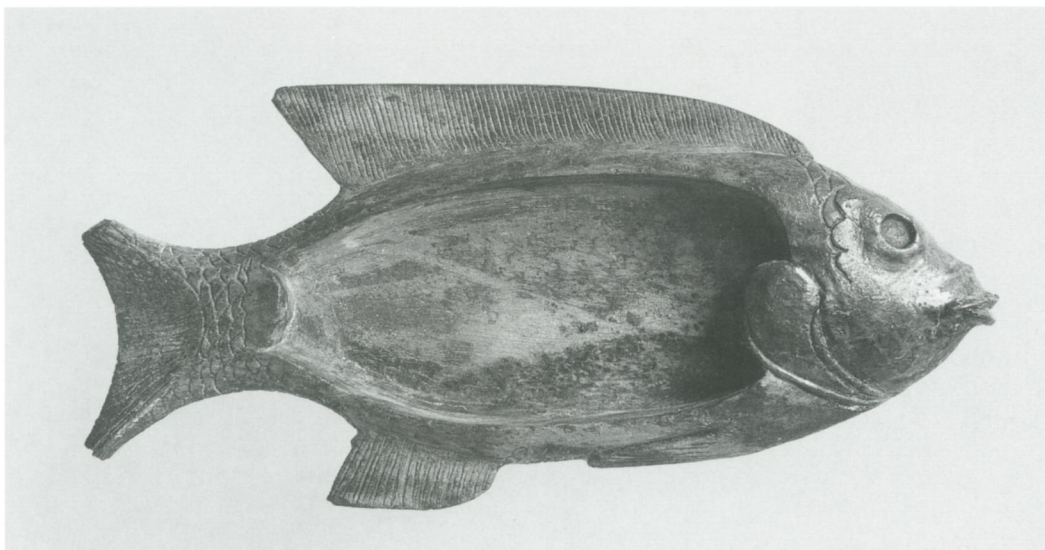
Dynasty 18, reign of Tuthmosis III, ca. 1479–1425 B.C. Glazed steatite; l. 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (18.1 cm). Gift of James Douglas, 1890 (90.6.24)

Fish of the genus *Tilapia* (*bolti* in Egypt today) is the most common fish of Egypt, easily recognized by its long dorsal fin. Its manner of reproduction,

hatching its eggs in its mouth, was interpreted by the ancient Egyptians as a kind of spontaneous generation. In Egyptian art, the *Tilapia* thus symbolized the renewal of life. The fish was also thought to be a companion of the sun god.

This fish-shaped dish has the kind of shallow depression on its reverse (below) that was generally used for the preparation and presentation of cos-

metic substances. The piece is too large, however, to have been used as an ordinary cosmetic palette and was probably made for temple use—for example, to anoint a cult statue—or for a royal burial. The cartouche of Tuthmosis III below the lateral fin suggests that the dish was a gift to or from this pharaoh.



The Alluvial Land



In ancient times, as now, the Egyptians relied on the Nile for most of life's necessities. The river provided a continuous supply of water in a land of little rain. It also deposited nutrient-rich sediments along its length each year for thousands of years. It was here, on the alluvial land, that the Egyptians planted crops; raised livestock; and built their houses, villages, and cities.

Until the erection of the Aswan dams, culminating with the famous High Dam built in the 1960s, the nature of the alluvial landscape was primarily determined by the annual inundation. The floods originated in the Ethiopian highlands and southern Sudan with the summer monsoons; in July the river in Egypt started to rise quickly, and the flood waters covered most of the alluvial land from mid-August to late September. By October and November, when the waters had receded, crops could be sown for harvesting from January to April. Basin irrigation, a system of canals and dams enclosing fields, increased the availability and productivity of water for farming.

In the agricultural society of pharaonic Egypt a low flood meant famine, and too much water brought the danger of overflowing, with the fields too wet to work during the planting season. A "perfect" flood was greeted with great joy. "The meadows [are] laughing when the river banks are flooded," says a text in one of the Old Kingdom pyramid chambers, and a popular hymn to the Nile god (Hapy) praises him as the one

Who floods the fields that Re has
made
To nourish all who thirst . . .
Lawful, timely, he comes forth
Filling Egypt, South and North,
As one drinks, all eyes are on him,
Who makes his bounty overflow.

In pharaonic times, however, agricultural activities were considerably less extensive than they are today. Large tracts of the alluvial land were left unplowed, used only for seasonal grazing. In the southern region of Middle Egypt during the early Middle Kingdom, there was sufficient woodland to provide timber for shipbuilding. The high ground at the desert

margins and here and there in the Delta supported evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs that were watered sporadically by rains and the river. These "islands" of high ground were ideal for human settlements.

Because of the amount of human activity, much of the animal life on the alluvial land was domesticated, but wild creatures, especially small mammals, amphibians, birds, and insects, found room to coexist happily with humans and their domesticated animals. The wild animals of the alluvial land made their nests and dens in the areas above the high-water line and foraged for food in the floodplain, marshes, and occasionally the desert. Because of these movements, the environments of some animals described here as belonging to the alluvial land overlapped with those of the marsh or steppe-desert. This is especially true for birds and insects. The Egyptians themselves, whether tending their herds or working their fields, followed the rise and fall of the river, moving their animals to high areas during the flood and spreading out over the low ground during the rest of the year.



43. Shrew

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Bronze; l. 3 1/8 in. (8 cm). Gift of Darius Ogden Mills, 1904 (04.2.465)

“The voracious” was the ancient Egyptians’ name for the shrew, an epithet that aptly describes the feeding habits of this tiny animal. In ancient Egyptian popular mythology the shrew was closely associated with the ichneumon. The shrew represented the blind aspect of a solar deity whose complement, endowed with keen eyesight, was understood to be the ichneumon. Egypt has two species

of shrew, *Crocidura flavescens deltae* and *C. nana*, but it is difficult to determine which is represented in this small bronze figure.

44. Ichneumon

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Bronze (inscribed on base: “Wadjet giving life to Pedineith, son of Isemkhebi”); l. 4 1/16 in. (12 cm). Gift of Darius Ogden Mills, 1904 (04.2.654)

Like the African wildcat and the genet, the Egyptian mongoose, *Herpestes ichneumon*, also called pharaoh’s rat,

is often depicted in the papyrus thicket pursuing birds. The animal’s true habitats, however, are shrubby terrain, rocky hills, and the open areas at the edges of Egypt’s cultivated land. Ichneumon kill snakes and mice and are sometimes tamed and kept for this purpose. This bronze ichneumon strides between two small seated cats, suggesting a religious connection to deities residing in the “cat city,” Bubastis. The goddess of Bubastis, Bastet, was sometimes identified with Wadjet, goddess of Lower Egypt, to whom the inscription on the base of the ichneumon figure is addressed.





45. Cat

Saqqara, Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C.
Bronze (hollow, cast in two parts); h. 11 in.
(28 cm). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1956
(56.16.1)

The earliest Egyptian cats were wild predators that roamed the steppes and marshes (no. 17). In the refined urban culture of the New Kingdom cats became increasingly attached to humans, who probably first appreciated their mouse-hunting skills but soon came to enjoy these creatures as pleasant companions around the house. Egyptian house cats were considerably larger than modern domesticated cats, which zoologists believe originated in the ancient Near East.

Of these three cat figures, the two from the Late Period convey the cat's companionable, attractive personality. The large dignified Ptolemaic figure—a masterpiece of bronze casting—once served as a container for a cat mummy. Burials of mummified cats were part of rituals performed in honor of the goddess Bastet. All three animals are characterized as sacred by the jewelry incised or carved around their necks. The large bronze cat and the small faience one wear elaborate collars with pendants in the shape of a beneficial eye emblem, *wedjat*, while the small bronze cat's *wedjat* pendant hangs from a simple chain. The large cat's right ear is pierced to hold a gold ring, now lost.



46. Cat

Late Period, Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C.
Bronze (solid cast); l. 1 1/16 in. (4.7 cm). Gift
of J. Lionberger Davis, 1966 (66.123.2)



47. Cat

Late Period, Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C.
Faience; h. 1/16 in. (2.3 cm). Bequest of Mary
Anna Palmer Draper, 1915 (15.43.26)



48. Cobra Heads

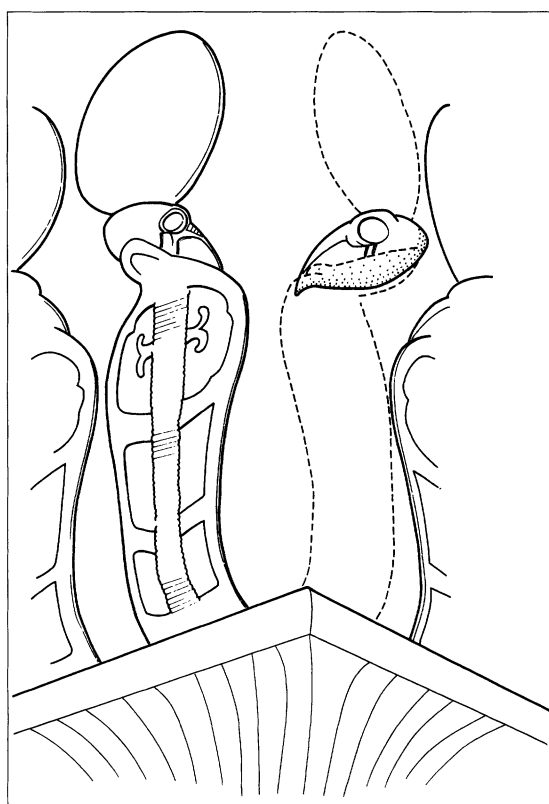
Left: Late Dynasty 18, ca. 1400–1300 B.C. Faience; l. $4\frac{1}{4}$ in. (10.8 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.2584). Right: Thebes, Valley of the Kings, tomb of Amenhotep III, Dynasty 18, ca. 1353 B.C. Faience; l. $2\frac{1}{6}$ in. (5.3 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1122)

In the tomb of Tutankhamun a gilded wooden shrine shielded the canopic chest containing the king's organs. The

shrine stood under a protective canopy, also of gilded wood, guarded by four figures of goddesses. Both canopy and shrine were surmounted by cavetto cornices decorated with continuous friezes of cobra figures. The cobras were of gilded wood inlaid with richly colored glass and faience. Solid dark blue snake heads were fastened to the tongue-shaped upper ends of the cobra bodies (see drawing below). The monument struck Howard Carter,

excavator of Tutankhamun's tomb, as "so lovely that it made one gasp with wonder and admiration."

These two cobra heads of shiny blue faience were originally part of similar tomb furniture. The smaller of the two heads was found in the tomb of Tutankhamun's ancestor Amenhotep III. It indicates that Amenhotep's burial once boasted an equally stunning monument.



Detail from a cobra frieze crowning the canopic shrine of King Tutankhamun (ca. 1327 B.C.). Drawing by Barry Girsh

49. Cobra on Pharaoh's Forehead

Deir el-Bahri, temple of Mentuhotep II, Dynasty II, late reign of Mentuhotep II, ca. 2040–2010 B.C. Painted limestone; stone h. 9½ in. (24 cm). Gift of Egypt Exploration Fund, 1906 (06.1231.37)

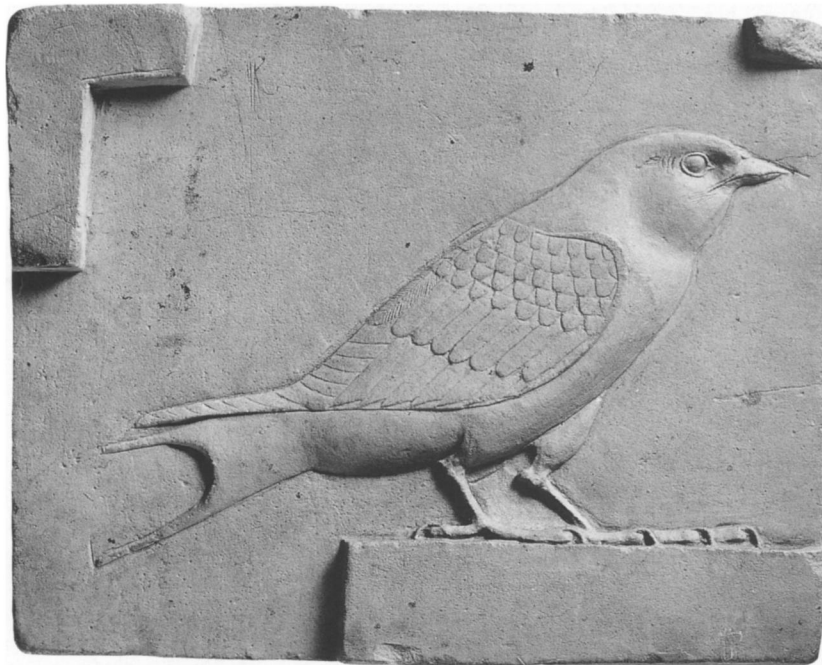
Cobras, the best known of Egypt's many snakes, are also among the most impressive. Their raised throat posture and the way some of the species spit venom are thoroughly intimidating. The ancient Egyptians were so fascinated by these behaviors that they adopted the cobra as a mythical snake. The uraeus, as it was called in Greek, sat on the foreheads of pharaohs and guarded the roofs of holy shrines with awe-inspiring aggressiveness.

This fragment from the mortuary temple of King Mentuhotep II shows the uraeus above the pharaoh's forehead twisting its body around the diadem as if it were living. Although only one Egyptian cobra species, *Naja nigricollis*, rather than the more common *N. haje*, actually spits, both this behavior and the threat posture were ascribed to the mythical uraeus.

A Middle Kingdom tale conveys the terror Egyptians felt when confronted by dangerous snakes. According to the story, a sailor was stranded on a deserted island. After eating his fill of fish and vegetables, which were plentiful there, he made an offering of thanks to the gods for his survival. Just then, as he narrates, he heard a "thundering noise and thought, 'It is the sea.' Trees splintered, the ground trembled. Uncovering my face, I found it was a snake that was coming. He was of thirty cubits [about 50 feet]; his beard was over two cubits [3½ feet] long. His body was overlaid with gold; his eyebrows were of real lapis lazuli. He was bent up in front. . . . I was on my belly before him." The story ends happily, however, with the snake helping the sailor to get home.







50. Falcon

Probably from Heliopolis, Dynasty 30, reign of Nectanebo II, 360–343 B.C. Graywacke (inscribed on the base with the king's names); h. 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (72 cm). Rogers Fund, 1934 (34.2.1)

The ancient Egyptians believed their king was an incarnation of the sky god, Horus, who appeared as a falcon. One of the most potent images expressing this belief is this falcon statue of King Nectanebo II, with its intense facial expression and vicious claws. In their representations of Horus Egyptian artists depicted a generalized falcon, rather than any one particular species, even though Egypt is home to several. The Lanner falcon, *Falco biarmicus*, and the peregrine, *F. peregrinus*, for example, still nest and breed in the limestone cliffs at the desert margin and in the ruins and pyramids. The birds can be seen rising on updrafts of hot desert air and performing amazing aerobatics.

The sculpture follows the Late Period tradition of animal images in hardstone (see no. 5) with remarkably naturalistic details in head and feet,

while the body and wings are simplified renderings of the bird's natural features. The image of a bird and royal figure together can be read as a rebus for Nakhthorheb, the Egyptian form of one of the king's names: *Nakht* from the scimitar the king holds; *hor*, the bird; and *heb* (the feast), the sign in the king's right hand.

51. Swallow

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Limestone; h. 3 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (9.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.228.9)

The linear oasis along the Nile that is Egypt has always had a rich variety of small birds, including swallows. Migratory swallows from northern climes pass through Egypt during the spring and fall, whereas other species are year-round residents. The swallow's migratory habits were carefully observed by the ancient Egyptians and interpreted as a sign of regeneration. In an ancient love poem the swallow, who heralds the morning, is encountered by a young woman returning from a tryst with her lover:

The voice of the swallow is speaking.

It says:

Day breaks, what is your path?

[The girl answers:] Don't, little bird!

Are you scolding me?

I found my lover on his bed,

And my heart was sweet to excess.

In Egyptian art the individual members of the swallow family were not differentiated. This limestone relief presents a truly lovable image of the bird, standing on well-articulated legs with an expression that is both comical and dignified. The piece belongs to a group of reliefs and sculptures that have often been identified as sculptors' models because many of them include grid lines and other traces of the artist's technique. The raised angle plate in the upper left corner, for example, might be an item of this kind.

In recent times, however, most scholars prefer to interpret these objects as ex-votos, or votive objects, and in this case, the image of the swallow might have been dedicated to the sun god or the goddess Isis. The bird is closely connected with both deities.



52. Vulture and Cobra

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Limestone relief; h. 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (17.5 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1911 (II.155.12)

Like the falcon, the vulture, Egypt's largest bird, lives high in the limestone cliffs and soars over the desert and alluvial land in search of food. Ancient artists depicted both the griffin vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, and, less often, the lappet-faced vulture, *Aegypius tracheliotus*, as incarnations of Mut, goddess and consort of Amun, and Nekhbet, goddess of the royal crown of Upper Egypt. The vulture's head and wings served as inspiration for the headdress of Egyptian queens, and images of the majestic bird adorned the ceilings of temples and palaces.

In this relief Nekhbet as a griffin vulture is the heraldic figure of Upper Egypt, leading the cobra, which represents Lower Egypt. The vulture and the serpent both appear to stand on

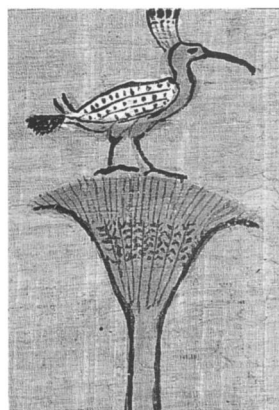
wicker baskets, but this should not be taken literally. The baskets are hieroglyphic signs for "lord" or "lady," and the whole configuration identifies the two creatures as *nebtj*, the "two ladies." The ladies in question are the titular goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt, whose names are part of every pharaoh's name. This is another example of Ptolemaic relief plaques that served either as sculptors' models or as votives (see no. 51). This plaque is also carved

on the reverse, where the image of a falcon appears.

53. Hoopoe

Dynasty 19, ca. 1295–1186 B.C. Drawing on papyrus; h. of papyrus 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (36 cm). Gift of Edward S. Harkness, 1935 (35.9.19)

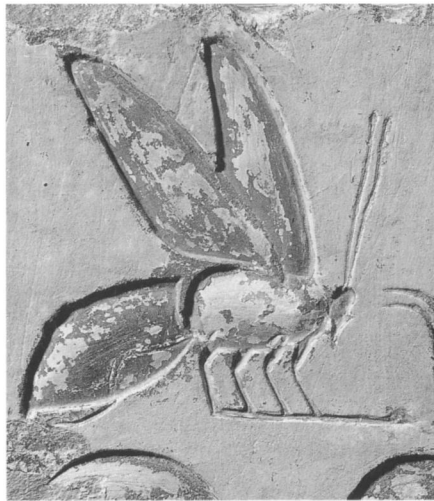
The Egyptian hoopoe, *Upupa epops*, with its colorful feathering and beautiful head crest, is still common in Egypt. In the Old Kingdom hoopoes were caught to be pets for children. In the papyrus drawing the bird sits atop a stylized papyrus(?) plant and is identified in the accompanying text as "he whose magic is hidden." This is an apt description if Nineteenth Dynasty Egypt followed the practice reported from much later times, when parts of the bird's body—the heart, head, and blood—played a role in magic practices (third to eighth century A.D.).



54. Bee

Lisht South, pyramid temple of Senwosret I, Dynasty 12, reign of Senwosret I, ca. 1971–1926 B.C. Detail from a painted limestone relief; h. of bee $6\frac{1}{4}$ in. (16 cm). Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.180.64)

This beautiful carved image of a bee functioned as a hieroglyphic ideogram for “the king of Lower Egypt.” Originally, it was part of a monumental inscription adorning the pyramid temple of King Senwosret I. The Egyptian honey bee, *Apis mellifica fasciata*, was domesticated in Early Dynastic times, if not before. Bees were usually kept in terracotta pipes that served as beehives, which were stacked in rows one above the other. After driving out the bees with smoke, much as beekeepers do today, the farmers removed the honeycombs and extracted the honey, which, along with date mash, was the main sweetener in ancient times. Beeswax was also an important sub-



stance, widely used in adhesives, metal casting, and other processes.

55. Barn Owl

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Limestone relief; h. $4\frac{1}{16}$ in. (10.4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.228.11)

The barn owl, *Tyto alba*, whose head is depicted with unforgettable clarity

in this relief plaque, is a resident of Egypt. It nests in trees, buildings, and ruins and hunts by night. The bird’s most characteristic feature, its impressive facial disk, invariably prompted Egyptian artists to choose a frontal view when representing it. The relief belongs to the same group of objects as the swallow relief and the vulture and cobra piece (nos. 51 and 52). As is the case for the rest of the group, its interpretation is still under discussion. Is it a votive object or a sculptor’s model? As an ex-voto, the image of an owl might appropriately have been dedicated to a solar deity. Owls, called “keen-sighted hunters,” were also believed to be birds of mourning and death. As a model, this relief demonstrates the most intricate part of the letter *m* (a complete owl), and in fact owls are rarely depicted in Egyptian art except as this hieroglyphic sign.



56. Fly

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Faience(?); l. $\frac{7}{16}$ in. (1.2 cm). Bequest of Mary Anna Palmer Draper, 1915 (15.43.47)

57. Flies

Left: Dynasty 13–17, ca. 1783–1550 B.C. Ivory; l. $2\frac{7}{16}$ in. (6.3 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1285). Right: Early Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1525 B.C. Glazed steatite (inscribed on underside for Queen Ahhotep); l. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (1.3 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.168)

58. Mosquito Deity

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Green-and-white banded jasper; l. $1\frac{3}{16}$ in. (3 cm). Gift of Cyril Aldred, 1955 (55.172)

The fly whisks that Egyptian artists depicted in the hands of pharaohs and nobles are potent reminders of how irksome the hosts of flies were in ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians, however, seemed to have held flies in high esteem, presumably because of this insect's powers of fast reaction and indomitable, insistent presence. Beginning in Dynasty 18 (ca. 1550–1295 B.C.), fly pendants, often made of gold, were given by the king as military awards for valor, and the amulets shown may well be reminders of the official gold “medals.” The glazed steatite fly is inscribed on the underside with the name of Queen Ahhotep, mother of kings Kamose and Ahmose,



who finally defeated the Hyksos.

Earlier fly amulets may also have served to ward off these annoying insects.

The actual flies represented in these amulets are difficult, if not impossible, to identify by species. Among the insects shown here, the steatite and faience pieces are unmistakably flies, and the somewhat larger ivory piece seems to be a stylized fly, probably a replica of the golden award pieces. The green-and-white jasper insect looks more like a mosquito than a fly. Whatever its identity, this jasper amulet has a falcon head and wears the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. In this guise the insect has become a deity with royal attributes.

Evidence of mosquito nets being used strongly suggests that mosquitoes were as much a nuisance in the ancient world as they can be today. The Greek writer Herodotus, who traveled in Egypt in about 445–440 B.C., reported that people used fishing nets against mosquitoes, while in Upper Egypt they slept on high towers (perhaps meaning the roofs of multistory houses). An actual frame to support a fine linen netting over a bed, made long before the time of Herodotus, was found with the burial equipment of Queen Hetepheres, mother of Khufu (ca. 2551–2528 B.C.).



59. Scarabs

Left: Late Dynasty 12–early Dynasty 13, ca. 1800–1750 B.C. Glazed steatite (scroll motif on underside); l. $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (2.2 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.713). Right: Dynasty 19, ca. 1295–1186 B.C. Glazed steatite (enigmatic inscription on underside); l. $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (1.7 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.352)

The importance of the scarab, *Scarabaeus sacer*, in ancient Egyptian religion was based on careful observation and interpretation of its behavior. The scarab beetle rolls animal dung to form balls that are often many times its size. The scarab both feeds from these balls and lays eggs in them. For the Egyptians the image of the dung ball moved by the scarab's strong hind legs became a metaphor for the rising sun, and the beetle was adopted as one of the most potent symbols of resurrection.

Starting in the early Middle Kingdom and continuing throughout the rest of pharaonic history, images were engraved into the undersides of scarab

amulets, which could thus be used as seals. To be readily and quite literally at hand, scarabs such as these were perforated horizontally and fitted as bezels into rings of gold or other precious metals.

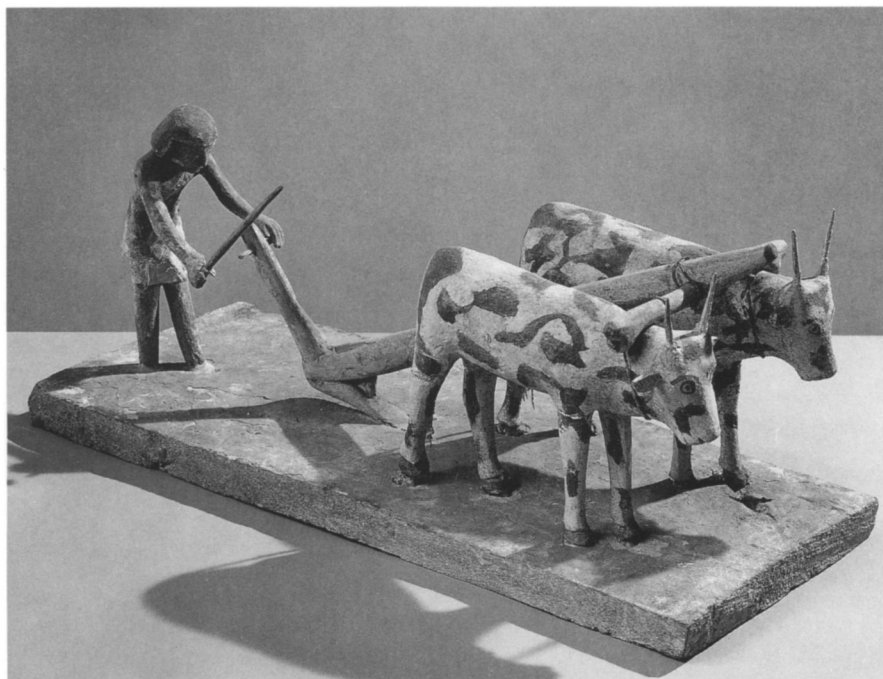
60. Beetle

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Bronze; h. $2\frac{3}{8}$ in. (6 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.855)



This rather sinister horned creature seems to represent the rhinoceros beetle, *Oryctes nasicornis*, which is native to the Mediterranean region. The small bronze sarcophagus that it guards once held a beetle mummy, though not necessarily of the same species. In embalming beetles, as in all animal mummification, the Egyptians of the Late Period and Ptolemaic and Roman times gave tangible form to their belief that all animals, large and small, were incarnations of the divine. Religious texts from Egypt and parallels from other African cultures, moreover, indicate that insects could be understood as incorporating an “external soul,” meaning those inner forces of humans and deities that are capable of leaving the body. In an Old Kingdom text, for example, the king was said to ascend to heaven in the form of a grasshopper.





61. Stable with Fattened Longhorns

Western Thebes, tomb of Meketra, early Dynasty 12, ca. 1990–1980 B.C. Gessoed and painted wood; l. 28½ in. (72.5 cm). Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1920 (20.3.9)

The ancient Egyptians were very successful cattle breeders. In their society and economy cattle played an important role, and numerous varieties were raised. Some were long horned and long legged; they grazed in the open country in herds comprising many hundreds of animals and, under the care of attentive herdsmen, were moved from place to place according to a seasonal schedule. Others had long horns and short legs; often castrated, they were raised and fattened in stables. There were also varieties with short horns, no horns, or artificially deformed horns, as well as zebu, an Asiatic ox imported from the Levant during Dynasty 18 (ca. 1550–1295 B.C.).

In this miniature representation of a stable, two compartments are connected by a door. In the back room, which in real life probably had a roof, three cattle and a calf (or hornless

cow) are feeding from a long trough, while in the other compartment, most likely an open courtyard, two cattle are fed from a heap of fodder. A guard, armed with a spear, sits by the entrance to the courtyard. The black, brown, and spotted cattle are very sturdily built and clearly fattened.

The stable was one of twenty-two miniatures found with two large statues of women in a small chamber cut into the rock in the tomb of the chancellor Meketra at Thebes (Luxor). They had been untouched since the day of their burial. “The beam of light shot into a little world of four thousand years ago,” wrote Museum curator Herbert E. Winlock, who discovered this cache in one of archaeology’s most memorable moments.

62. Farmer Plowing

Early Dynasty 12, ca. 1990–1900 B.C. Painted wood; l. 19½ in. (49.5 cm). Gift of Valdemar Hammer Jr., in memory of his father, 1936 (36.5)

The peasant trudges behind the traditional hook-shaped plow of Egypt,

which is pulled by two very friendly looking oxen. The farmer’s feet have sunk into the muddy earth, which is probably still waterlogged from the annual inundation, but the animals seem to be on dryer ground. To own cattle was a sign of high standing for a peasant in ancient Egypt; plow oxen usually had to be rented from a large state or temple institution. Even if the oxen were not actually owned by the plowman, however, an exceptionally strong bond could exist between man and animals. A tale of the New Kingdom tells of a young man who worked on his older brother’s farm and lived so closely with the cattle that he could understand their language. When the older brother set out to kill the younger, because the elder’s wife—as the wife of Potiphar—had accused the younger brother of trying to seduce her, the cattle warned him in time for him to escape.



63. Fighting Bulls

Dynasty 19–20, ca. 1295–1070 B.C. Painting on limestone; stone $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{5}{16}$ in. (18.5 x 11.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1924 (24.2.27)

By allowing bulls to fight, Egyptian herdsmen could determine which was the stronger and consequently more suitable for breeding. Bulls fighting, therefore, was a frequent occurrence among the herds. For Egyptian artists the fights were interesting subjects. In this trial sketch, the draftsman captured a moment of high drama. One of the powerful beasts has thrown the other onto its front legs to attack its abdomen with pointed horns. Both

bulls are highly agitated; their tails are tensely curved, they are defecating, and the visible eye of the attacking bull is turned upward.

Wild bulls still roamed the margins of the Delta in the New Kingdom, and King Ramesses III (ca. 1184–1153 B.C.) felled some enormous individuals in a reed thicket, according to a depiction on the pylon of his mortuary temple at Medinet Habu, Thebes.

64. Resting Cattle

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Gold; l. (each) $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (1.25 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.8.405, .406)

These small short-horned bovines seem to be resting, chewing their cud. The hollow figures were made by hammering sheets of gold to form the animals' bodies, adding the horns and feet, and fusing the whole onto small oval bases with notched edges. As two of seven celestial cows who provided nourishment for the deceased in the beyond, the little animals may have been part of a rich person's burial equipment, adorning a piece of jewelry or an elaborate vessel.



65. Bull's Leg

Abydos, Dynasty 1–2, ca. 2960–2649 B.C.
Ivory; h. 6½ in. (16.5 cm); Rogers Fund,
1906 (06.1162.1)

In Early Dynastic Egypt low beds and stools, like other furniture of high quality, included ivory parts such as bulls' legs. Using an animal's leg for the leg of a piece of furniture had religious significance relating to the great strength and generative power of the animal. The bull was also a symbol for the Egyptian king, especially in the Early Dynastic period, and royal furniture may well have been the first to be fitted out with such legs.

In making sets of legs, Egyptian artists always distinguished hind and forelegs, often also the right and left, and positioned them on the piece of furniture accordingly. As seen here, the legs had tenons on top that fit into the horizontal frame of the bed or stool. Leather thongs were threaded through the two holes below the tenon to secure the leg to the frame. All furniture legs in bull's-leg shape terminated in beaded cylinders that kept the tender hooves off the dirty floor.

This left front leg from a bed or stool is the work of a master joiner who was also an accomplished sculptor. The animal's musculature and



skin are delicately differentiated from the smooth hoof, and the taut veins are expressive enough to evoke through this body part the image of the entire strong, highly tensed animal. The leg may well have been part of a king's bed or chair because it was found at Abydos in one of the tombs of the first kings of Egypt.

66. Apis Bull

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Ivory (base modern); h. 2⅞ in. (6.1 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.62)

One of the most important animal deities of ancient Egypt was the sacred Apis bull, whose worship is attested from Dynasty 1. Near the Ptah temple at Memphis, Egypt's old capital, a living representative of the Apis bull was stabled. He was paraded out at festive occasions to participate in ceremonies of fertility and regeneration. The bull that played this important role was selected for displaying color patterns, such as a white triangle on the forehead and black patches resembling winged birds on the body. In the ivory figure the white triangle is indicated by a sunken area on the head, while engravings of a vulture with wings spread and a winged scarab flank an elaborate blanket on the back. When Apis bulls died, they were embalmed and buried with all honors. Beginning with the reign of King Amenhotep III in Dynasty 18, the place of Apis burials was a huge and growing underground system of chambers called the Serapeum in the Memphite necropolis, Saqqara. The mothers of Apis bulls had their own cult and burial place.





67. Donkey

Deir el-Bahri, area of causeways, Dynasty 18, ca. 1473–1425 B.C. Drawing on limestone; drawing $2\frac{1}{16} \times 2\frac{1}{8}$ in. (6.3 x 6.7 cm). Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.3.8)

Since at least the fourth millennium B.C., ever-patient donkeys have carried heavy loads and helped farmers by treading seeds into the ground and threshing grain. The artist who created this small character study over a proportional grid on a limestone chip has captured the expression of a typically obstinate donkey. Around the donkey's neck is a red striped band. An animal with black striped fur (a cat or leopard?) was drawn below the donkey's head to the right, but the main portion of this creature is now broken off. It appears that the sketch comes from a larger image illustrating a fable involving an ass and a feline. One such story from the second century A.D. tells of a lion who wants to find out the nature of man. Among other animals, the lion encounters a horse and donkey that are tethered to a chariot. The lion asks, "Who did this to you?" They answer, "Our lord, man, has done it. . . . There is nothing more cunning

than man." Wild donkeys were still living in the Egyptian desert during the first part of the nineteenth century.

68. Head of a Camel

Thebes, Lower Asasif cemetery area, Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. or later. Terracotta with white slip; h. $1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.3.343)

The ancient Egyptians knew about the existence of the dromedary (or one-humped) camel, *Camelus dromedarius*, at least since Early Dynastic times. In various Egyptian sites rare

instances of camel bones have been recorded, although some are doubtful as to date and identification, and there are a few figurines and figure vessels of camels preserved from pharaonic times. By and large, however, the camel remained an oddity in Egyptian eyes. It was only with the invasion of the Assyrian army in the seventh century B.C. that people in the Nile valley met the camel as a domesticated beast of burden. It took another four centuries to introduce the domesticated camel to Egypt, where it was destined to become one of the country's most familiar sights. Only recently have automobiles and farm machines begun to supersede the animal.

This small terracotta head is unpretentious but skillfully modeled. It is the living image of a camel, head held disdainfully upright, the protruding eyes gazing into the far distance, while the soft muzzle seems to be caught in a chewing motion. It might be a portrait of one of the camels of today, which can be seen lifting their heads over farmhouse walls near the exact spot where this little terracotta piece was found by the Museum's excavators in 1915–16.



69. Horse

Dynasty 19, possibly reign of Ramesses II, ca. 1279–1213 B.C. Ivory; w. 1 7/8 in. (3.5 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1290)

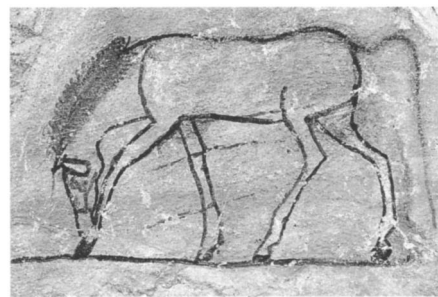
70. Horse

Thebes, tomb of Nespekashuty, Dynasty 26, 664–610 B.C. Drawing on limestone; drawing 4 x 3 in. (10.2 x 7.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1923 (23.3.33)

71. Horse

Thebes, Dynasty 18, ca. 1400 B.C. Tinted ivory, glass(?) inlay in left eye; l. 5 7/8 in. (15 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1293)

The horse is a relative latecomer to the Egyptian menagerie. The earliest skeleton found in the Nile valley may date to the seventeenth century B.C. In ancient literature and relief art, horses first appeared in connection with the expulsion of the Asiatic rulers, the Hyksos, which occurred from the late Seventeenth to the early Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1550 B.C.). After the defeat of the Hyksos the horse-drawn chariot became the predominant fighting machine of Egypt's military, the official conveyance of her kings,



and an efficient vehicle for hunting. Horseback riding, however, remained a rarity until Ptolemaic times.

These three representations capture the traits the ancient Egyptians most valued in a horse: speed, elegance, and good manners. The small ivory

horse formed the top of a comb, its teeth now mostly missing. This horse is somewhat nervously feeding from a trough. In the drawing, a few masterly brush lines capture an elegant, well-groomed horse wearing a bridle, rubbing its left foreleg playfully with its graceful muzzle. The motif is known from a late Dynasty 18 relief from Amarna. It is possible that this sketch is a copy of a New Kingdom representation that interested this particular artist at a time when many Old and New Kingdom works of art were copied for reuse in Dynasty 26 tombs.

The larger ivory horse, which once adorned a whip handle, is shown in what scholars call the flying gallop. Its shiny coat is beautifully rendered with a light brown tint; the mane, tail, muzzle, and lower legs, as well as a stripe on the back, are in dark brown. The left eye still retains its glassy inlay, which beautifully captures its shining eagerness. The animal's head presses against its curved neck, a pose often used in depictions of horses in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.





72. Sow Amulet

Dynasty 26–29, 664–380 B.C. Faience; h. 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. (3 cm). Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.194.2243)



73. Young Pig

Western Thebes, found near the tomb of the vizier Yuy, Late Dynasty 13(?), ca. 1700–1650 B.C. or later. Wood with reddish brown and black paint (left leg missing); l. 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. (4 cm). Rogers Fund, 1926 (26.3.352)

Pigs were domesticated in Egypt from a wild species, *Sus scrofa*, before the fifth millennium B.C. During pharaonic times, pork was one of the staple foods, and pigs were kept in herds on every large farm, often grazing in the open steppe. Pigs were not highly regarded, however, and those who tended them were reviled as dirty, although an Old Kingdom tomb relief shows a herdsman lovingly feeding a small pig from his own mouth. The taboo on pig meat evolved slowly, and associations with the evil Seth notwithstanding, pigs also had a favorable role to play in Egyptian myths. The

sky goddess Nut was described as a sow whose children were the stars. The fact that sows are known to eat their piglets was understood as a parallel to the rise and disappearance of stars. Amulets like the one illustrated here were representations of the great mother goddess and guaranteed fertility.

The little wooden figure of a young pig is simply but carefully made. Its round head, snub nose, and the black stripes along its back are the unmistakable characteristics of the suckling pig, object of the herdsman's care. The figure was found at the mouth of the plundered tomb shaft of Yuy, a great man and vizier, who lived at the end of the Middle Kingdom. It is difficult to explain the pig's presence among burial equipment at a time when wooden models of peasants, stables, granaries, and the like were no longer in fashion. Yuy's tomb was situated where Queen Hatshepsut later erected the causeway to her temple of Deir el-Bahri. It is possible, therefore, that the little pig figure did not belong to Yuy at all but was a poor man's gift to Hathor of Deir el-Bahri, whose shrine beside Hatshepsut's temple was much visited throughout the New Kingdom.

74. Ram

Medinet el-Fayum, Roman Imperial Period, probably 2nd century A.D. Faience; h. 4 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (12 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.1019)

This magnificent ram, with its brilliant blue-and-green glaze, was made late in the history of Egyptian art. It is said to have been found in the capital of the Fayum oasis, Crocodilopolis (Medinet el-Fayum), together with two beautiful faience masks in Roman style. All three objects were most probably votives to a sanctuary.

The ram can be identified as *Ovis platyura aegyptiaca*, based on the forward-bending horns and thick fleece. The species was first introduced into Egypt from western Asia around 2000 B.C. During the Old Kingdom and earlier, another sheep species, *O. longipes palaеоaegyptiaca*, was living in the Nile valley. This species had long, horizontally spiraling horns (see fig. 2) and lent its powerful shape to a number of Egyptian gods, the creator god, Khnum, being perhaps the most important of them. Probably because *O. platyura* had longer fleece, it quickly superseded *O. longipes* after the beginning of the Middle Kingdom.

The *platyura* ram became one of the most sacred animals in Egypt through its association with the god Amun, who, as Amun-Re, was the country's supreme deity during the New Kingdom and afterward. This faience ram is bending its head over what at first glance seems to be a manger, but on closer inspection is actually a lotus blossom. Vessels in flower form were frequently used to present offerings to gods. Amun receiving an offering is thus the true subject of this faience masterpiece.





75. Pharaoh's Hunting Dog

Late Dynasty 18, 1400–1350 B.C. Ivory, tinted red inside mouth and black around eyes and on undersides of paws (tail missing); l. 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (18.6 cm). Rogers Fund, 1940 (40.2.1)

This leaping dog is a masterpiece of Egyptian animal sculpture. It is shown in a sort of *grand jeté*, its full body weight thrown forward, every muscle straining. Because the lower jaw can be opened and closed by means of the lever under the belly, the piece has been called a mechanical toy. There are, however, serious religious implications to the image of a leaping dog. The artist's sketch (no. 12), for example, shows a dog in an almost identical pose beside the pharaoh as he fights a lion, which, in this context, embodies evil forces. Associations of a leaping dog with the pharaoh's mythical role as the foe of chaos and evil suggest that the ivory piece was part of royal burial equipment and functioned as a magical object. If this is the case, judging from its strikingly naturalistic style, it most likely belonged to the burial of Amenhotep III.

The exceptional piece shows unmistakable signs of an alteration that took place in antiquity, probably shortly after the work was finished.

Based on the nonalignment of the lines of the dog's incised collar, an additional drill hole under the throat, and the presence of two sets of cavities inside the upper jaw to accommodate the protruding lower front teeth, it appears that the jaw lever was originally fixed lower down on the chest. The artist or his client did not like the original shape of the mouth and repositioned it, after which he had to drill a new hole in the neck and a new cavity in the upper jaw. The drill holes probably served as channels for a string that controlled the angle of the moveable jaw when it was in its open position.

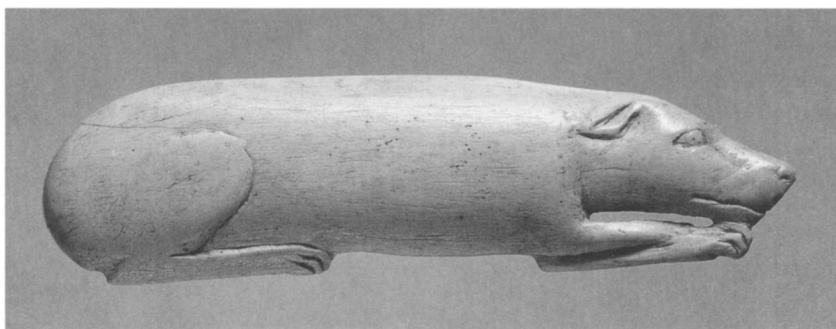
76. Crouching Dog

Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1295 B.C. Ivory; l. 3 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (9.7 cm). Gift of Helen Miller Gould, 1910 (10.130.2520)

Egyptians were closely attached to their dogs, which served as hunting

and watchdogs, status symbols, and companions. About seventy dog names are known from texts and inscriptions. They bear striking resemblance to the names given modern pets—from Ebony, Blacky, and Trusty to Son-of-the-Moon, North-wind, Good-for-Nothing, and, more simply, The Fifth or The Sixth. The earliest breed (see no. 2) had upright ears and a curled tail. A later breed had lop ears and a straight tail. There were other kinds, including a type of dachshund.

This small, crouching dog is a fine example of the Egyptian artist's ability to convey an animal through a few features. Its heavy head rests lightly on paws folded over each other: the picture of a faithful dog awaiting its master. Many dog burials have been found in Egypt, some with stele bearing the animal's name or with a sarcophagus, and at least one Eighteenth Dynasty leather dog collar has survived.



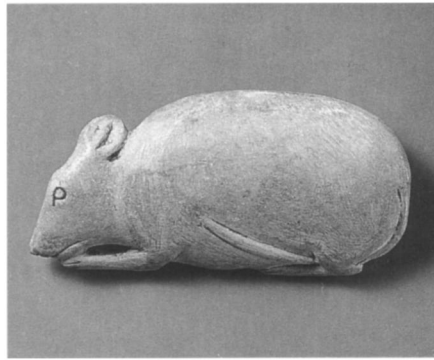
77. Mouse

Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1295 B.C. Ivory;
l. 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (6.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1944
(44.4.55)

78. Rat or Spiny Mouse

Western Thebes, Dynasty 18, ca. 1473–
1458 B.C. Drawing on limestone; stone 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x
3 $\frac{15}{16}$ in. (17 x 10 cm). Anonymous Gift, 1931
(31.4.2)

It is not clear which mouse or rat species the artists had in mind when they created these two representations. The rat of pharaonic Egypt was the grass rat, *Arvicanthis niloticus niloticus*. The house rat arrived from Asia after the pharaonic period. Two species of mice dating to pharaonic times have been identified from animal bones: the Egyptian spiny mouse, *Acomys cahirinus*, and the house mouse, *Mus musculus*. The spiny mouse is a scrubby-looking creature known to have lived on the rocky island of Elephantine in great numbers, while the house mouse, which has a smooth coat, preferred the Delta margins. The small exquisite ivory piece, which is hollowed on one side to serve as a cosmetic dish, may repre-



sent a house mouse, whereas the masterly drawing on limestone could be a spiny mouse or a grass rat. The drawing is on the reverse of a sketch showing two profiles of Senenmut, the renowned steward of Queen Hatshepsut, making this an early example of the art of political caricature.

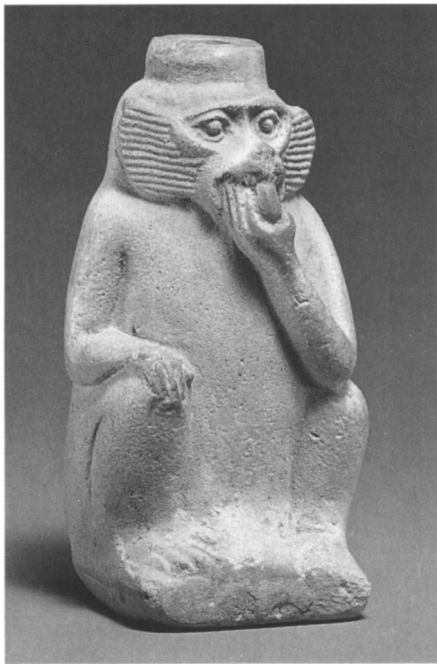
79. (Opposite top) Vessel in the Shape of a Monkey

Dynasty 18, ca. 1550–1295 B.C. Faience;
h. 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (6.5 cm). Rogers Fund, 1974
(1974.97)

At least one species of monkey, *Cercopithecus aethiops*, survived in the wild in ancient Egypt until the Middle Kingdom, but monkeys have also always been imported from Ethiopia and Somalia and kept as entertaining companions, especially by the ladies of the house. In wall paintings and elsewhere monkeys are depicted in the lady's boudoir, playing as she put on her makeup. They are also shown busily “helping” to harvest dates and figs. The naughty monkey seen here may well have stolen the fruit he is eating during such a harvest.

Not surprisingly, many cosmetic vessels were adorned with monkey figures. Not only did these amusing creatures cavort around the dressing room, but they also came from the same exotic countries to the south that produced many cosmetic ingredients. Interestingly, monkeys were also employed as police “dogs” in ancient Egypt. Old Kingdom reliefs show vivid scenes of thieves being caught by the clever animals.





79

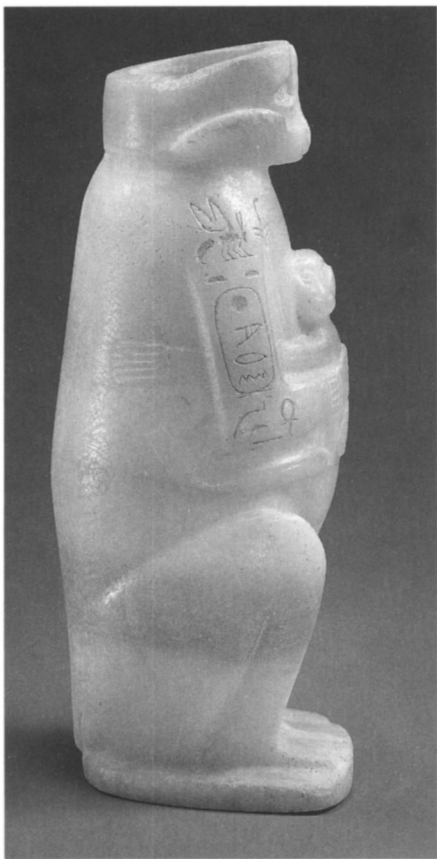
81. Vessel in the Shape of a Mother Monkey with Her Young

Dynasty 6, reign of Pepi I, ca. 2289–2255 B.C. Egyptian alabaster (inscribed “Ny-Khaswt-Meryre [female] tenant landholder” [of the pyramid endowment of Pepi I] and “first occurrence of the jubilee”); h. 5½ in. (13.7 cm). Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Fletcher Fund, and Lila Acheson Wallace, Russell and Judy Carson, William Kelly Simpson, and Vaughn Foundation Gifts, in honor of Henry George Fischer, 1992 (1992.338)

The two monkey vases below are inspired by keen observation of animal behavior, in this case the close relationship between mothers and their young among primates. Both vessels were made during the Sixth Dynasty, most

likely as gifts for dignitaries and foreign rulers at the king’s thirty-year festival (*Heb Sed*). The monkeys are identified as pets by their bracelets and armlets.

The vessels are almost identical in subject and composition but remarkably different otherwise. The piece below left is highly stylized, its overall shape is cylindrical, and all details are reduced to nearly flat relief. The other piece (no. 81) is more organically conceived, egg shaped overall, with the details sculpted in the round. It captures an almost human intimacy in the pose of the mother and baby. In ancient Egyptian art, it is rare to be able to distinguish individual artists’ hands as clearly as in these two objects.



80

80. Vessel in the Shape of a Mother Monkey with Her Young

Dynasty 6, reign of Merenre, ca. 2255–2246 B.C. Egyptian alabaster (inscribed with the name Merenre); h. 7¼ in. (18.5 cm). Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 (30.8.134)



81

82. Baboon-Shaped Game Pieces

Ptolemaic Period, 304–30 B.C. Ivory. Left: h. 1⅜ in. (3.5 cm). Ludlow Bull Fund, 1968 (68.3). Right: h. 1⅝ in. (3.3 cm). Purchase, Fletcher Fund and The Guide Foundation Inc. Gift, 1966 (66.99.75)

These two little baboons represent an imported species, *Papio anubis*, that lacks the magnificent mane of *P. hamadryas*. The figures are masterful animal depictions, combining precise anatomical rendering with expressive, almost satirical characterization. Since the back of the figure on the right is shaped like a knuckle bone, the traditional form of dice in the ancient world, it is likely that both animals were pieces from a game. Stylistically they are so close to one another that they must belong to the same set, although they came to the Museum at different times.

By the Ptolemaic era, many Egyptians were living in cities, some of which were quite large and cosmopolitan, as was Alexandria, that ancient equivalent of New York. The minor arts of the time often reflect an urban lifestyle and a somewhat sentimental and condescending attitude toward nature. The two baboons, near caricatures of two little beggars, are good examples of this outlook. The artist who sculpted the figures had a discerning eye that was surely influenced by the Hellenistic tradition, which is reflected in the intricate postures of the thin animal bodies.



83. Baboon

Memphis(?), Dynasty 26, 664–525 B.C. Faience; h. 3⅞ in. (8.8 cm). Purchase, Edward S. Harkness Gift, 1926 (26.7.874)

Egypt's resident species of baboon, *Papio hamadryas*, vanished from the wild during the Middle Kingdom, about the same time that the monkey also disappeared. Thereafter baboons continued to be imported from the south. They were consistently depicted as less playful and more serious than the whimsical monkey. As far back as Early Dynastic times the ancient Egyptians venerated the baboon as the "great white one," which has been called a royal ancestor animal. Based on observations of the actual behavior of baboons, the Egyptians believed that these primates worshiped the sun god at sunrise with upraised arms or hands on their knees, postures that have been explained by primatologists as the animal's need to warm its body in the morning. The hands-on-knees posture found its most impressive artistic realization in large baboon sculptures created during the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1353 B.C.).

The baboon's intelligence and enigmatic gaze linked it to Thoth, the god of wisdom, responsible for measuring, writing, and generally all things intellectual. This faience statuette is a representation of the deity. Many artists studied and revived older artistic traditions during Dynasty 26. It is entirely possible, therefore, that the Amenhotep III baboon sculptures were the ultimate source of this small but impressively statuesque masterpiece.

A Brief History of Animal Representation in Egyptian Art



Late Predynastic Period,
ca. 3200–2960 B.C.



Dynasties I and 2,
ca. 2960–2649 B.C.

The art of Egyptian animal representation developed in six main phases. During the late Predynastic Period and the first two dynasties, animal representations were widely used to express theoretical concepts such as kingship or the powers of the universe. At this time, the Egyptians formulated their hieroglyphic script, a good part of which is composed of animal images.

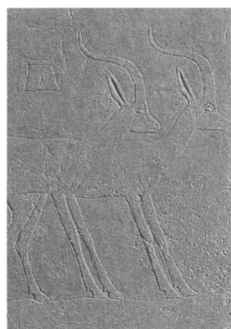
Nos. 1, 13, 39

Dynasty 3,
ca. 2649–2575 B.C.

Animals were rendered more abstractly than they would be later and can usually be identified by genus but not by species. Many important images of deities in animal shapes began to receive definitive form, a process completed by Dynasty 3. The iconography of types thus created would continue to be used in much later periods.

Nos. 49, 50, 52, 54

Dynasty 4,
ca. 2575–2465 B.C.



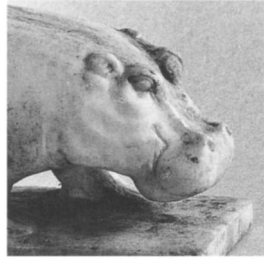
The second phase of animal representation began in Dynasty 4 and reached an unsurpassed peak in Dynasty 5. Egyptian artists revealed their outstanding abilities to observe nature closely and depict it precisely. Today's zoologists can identify almost every species of fish, fowl, or horned steppe animal seen in paintings and reliefs from the period. The incentive for this naturalism came from the belief

No. 2

Dynasties 5 and 6,
ca. 2465–2150 B.C.

that the sun god, as supreme creator, cared for every living thing, each in its particular form and size. In art, the solar creed found its most potent expression in the Fifth Dynasty sun temples at Abusir, just south of present-day Cairo. Preserved only in fragments, reliefs from these temples revealed in minute detail the living world under the solar deity's tutelage. Each animal was shown in activities appropriate to the three seasons of the Egyptian year. The influence of these sun-temple reliefs is apparent in all animal representations of the Old Kingdom and in many later works of art.

First Intermediate
Period, ca. 2140–
2040 B.C.



As the Old Kingdom waned, the importance of Memphis (modern Mit Rahina, south of Cairo) and its royal residence gave way to the provinces, and a markedly pessimistic philosophy developed. Early in the third phase of animal representation, which coincides with the Middle Kingdom and early New

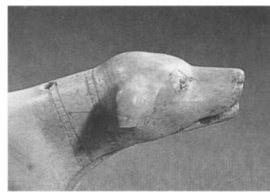
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Middle Kingdom,
ca. 2040–1640 B.C., to
early New Kingdom,
ca. 1550–1400 B.C.

Kingdom, provincialism inspired a nascent folk art, and the prevailing pessimism gave rise to a multitude of magical practices for which many new types of objects were created. Often folk art and iconography with magical significance mingled in Middle Kingdom animal figures, while high-quality luxury articles sublimated these characteristics into fine works of art. Royal temple and tomb reliefs, however, were largely influenced by Old Kingdom prototypes. As the third phase lapped over into the early part of the New Kingdom, many charming animal images, often more intimate and elegant than those of the Middle Kingdom, were created.

No. 34
Nos. 16, 17, 27
Nos. 25, 49
Nos. 3, 9, 20, 35, 37, 39,
42, 57, 71, 76, 77, 78, 79

Amenhotep III,
ca. 1390–1353 B.C.



A revival of solar worship ushered in the fourth phase of the art of animal representation. The new intensity in the worship of the sun god started during the reign of Amenhotep III and reached a peak while his son

Nos. 4, 6, 15, 24, 26, 48,
75

Akhenaten,
ca. 1353–1336 B.C.

Akhenaten was king. Artistically this phase includes many parallels to the accomplishments of Old Kingdom artists. Anatomical details, closely observed and precisely rendered, were again primary concerns. There was renewed interest in the concept of time, expressed not only in representations of seasonal life but in the artists' attempts to capture a passing moment by showing the effects of gentle winds blowing over plants or by freezing animals in motion. Stylistic tendencies such as these lent themselves most readily to painting, and even before the third phase had ended, there were examples of this kind. Many fine drawings made in the early Eighteenth Dynasty anticipate the achievements of artists during Akhenaten's reign.

No. 75
No. 24

Nos. 35, 67, 78

Small sculptures in the round were another specialty of the late third and fourth phases, echoing an urban, luxury-oriented lifestyle that resulted in a more sentimental relationship between humans and animals. Many of the small-scale animal figures were influenced by large hard-stone animal sculptures created for royal monuments such as the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes or, in Nubia, the temple at Soleb. Literary works, such as a text on a large scarab describing royal hunting feats or the famous hymns to the god Aten, underlined the importance of animals in the state ideology of the time. The immense hunting booty generated by the famed court hunts of the New Kingdom, incidentally, may have given artists the chance to study animal bodies directly.

Nos. 3, 4, 75

Dynasties 19 and 20,
ca. 1295–1070 B.C.

Third Intermediate
Period, ca. 1070–712
B.C.

Late Period, 7th to 4th
century B.C.

Just as echoes of Fifth Dynasty art reverberated in succeeding dynasties, the animal representations of the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten greatly influenced the art of later times. This influence is reflected in the many fine animal images of Dynasties 19 and 20 and the Third Intermediate Period. The striking liveliness of certain amulets from that period reveals the renewed vitality of that tradition as well.

Nos. 12, 40, 53, 63, 69
No. 37



Sometime during the Late Period, artists began to discover the anatomical structure of animal bodies. They had always observed and captured essential characteristics of each species, especially during the Old and New Kingdoms, but now, in the fifth phase, they sought to understand how bones,

muscles, sinews, and skin made an animal function. The results could be impressive.

Nos. 5, 10, 11, 50

The best animal representations of this fifth phase are sculptures in the round, created in dark green or black hardstone. Innumerable small animal amulets and figurines of high quality made during this period also show artists reevaluating and reinterpreting earlier achievements in miniature art, with a new emphasis on organic detail. The beautiful light turquoise color of this period's faience enhanced the effect of these sometimes tiny masterpieces.

Nos. 5, 50

Nos. 19, 20, 37, 46, 56,
58, 64, 83

Ptolemaic and Roman
periods 304 B.C.–4th
century A.D.



The sixth phase of animal representation covered the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. In the light blue, impeccably finished faience of the period, amuletic images assumed a cool aloofness that reflected the intellectualism typical of this phase of Egyptian culture. Bronze was widely

Nos. 28, 29, 33, 74, 82

Nos. 21, 28

used for animal figures. Many of these bronzes were also containers for body relics of real animals. Such objects remind us of the period's almost frenzied search for tangible manifestations of the divine. Beginning with the preceding Late Period phase, actual animals, rather than images, had been included in ever-increasing numbers in the worship of deities.

Nos. 23, 43, 44, 45, 60

A special achievement of Ptolemaic art was the creation of many striking relief images of animals in limestone. Whether votives or sculptors' models, these reliefs clearly strive to represent animals in an exemplary and direct manner. Capturing thousands of years of artistic tradition in definitive pictograms, they evince the same substance and attention to detail that had inspired animal imagery in Egypt since the Old Kingdom.

Nos. 51, 52, 55

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