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A CACHE OF JEWELRY FROM THE
EDIFICE OF AMENHOTEP II AT KARNAK

by

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At the end of February 1989, during the course of cleaning the floor of the Edifice of Amenhotep II¹ which lies on the eastern side of the court between the Ninth and Tenth Pylons at Karnak, a small cache of jewelry was found about 2 cm below floor level in a gap between two paving slabs in the floor between the two primary doorways in the narrow vestibule which leads from the main hall of the structure into the northern suite of rooms (fig. 1).² The objects comprising the find were spread out over a distance of about 10 cm. As will be seen from the variety of objects within the find (described below), the group of objects belongs neither to a foundation deposit nor to a chance loss of a single item of adornment such as a necklace. Presumably all the objects were hidden sometime in the Greco-Roman Period--to judge from the date of the objects--by a person with legitimate access to the interior of the structure.³ Given the nature of the designs on many of the items in the group, its owner was likely a devotee of the ancient gods of Egypt.

The pieces within the cache (fig. 2) fall into four distinct groups: rings (nos. 1-4), scarabs (nos. 5-7), nails (nos. 8-9), and beads and other items to be strung (10ff). Of these, the two nails seem somewhat incongruous.

1) A gold ring (fig. 3) with an engraved bezel, weight 7.4 grams; size of bezel 25 x 10 mm; diameter of ring at right angle to bezel, 18 mm.

Apparently the ring was cast as a single piece, and the design on the bezel was incised with a sharp instrument. The decoration shows little wear and is possibly too fine to have served as a stamp. The design of the bezel is of particular interest. The upper part consists of two sets of sun-disk with double plumes (with an incised feather pattern).

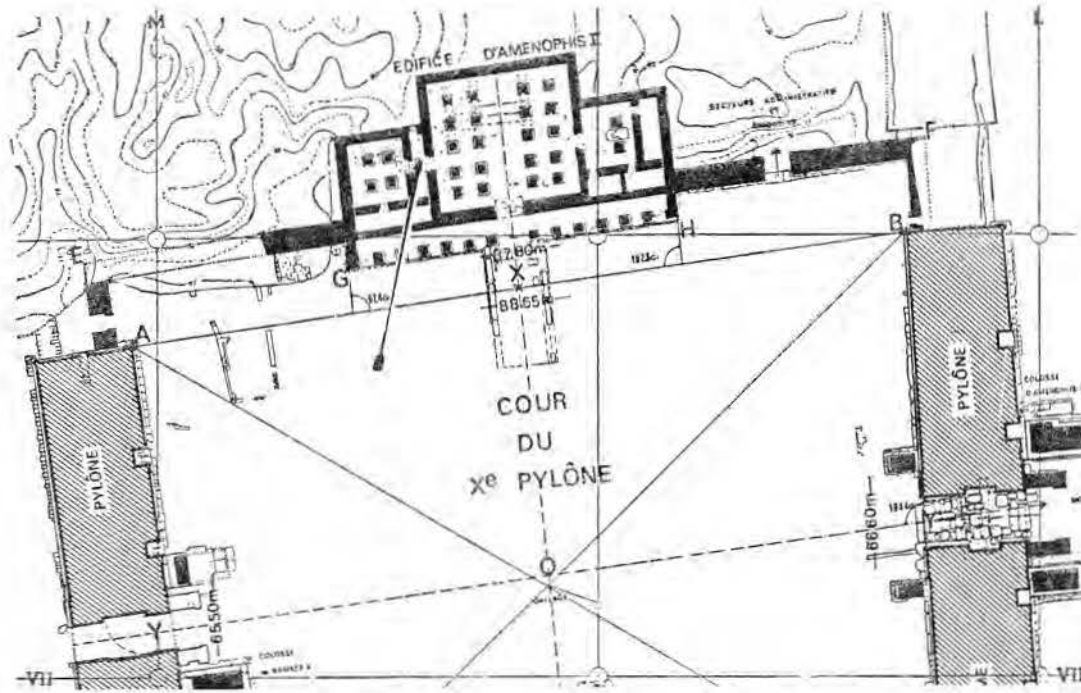


Fig. 1. Plan of the Edifice of Amenhotep II in the Court of the Tenth Pylon at Karnak. Arrow marks location of the cache.



Fig. 2. The Objects from the Cache

These surmount side by side cartouches. The one on the right contains the figure of a standing goddess who wears the double crown. She holds a *wadj*-scepter in her right hand and an ankh in her left, and she stands upon the sign for gold (*neb*). The cartouche on the left identifies the goddess as "Mut, Lady of Isheru."⁴



Fig. 3. Gold Ring (no. 1) with Name of Goddess Mut

2) A ring bezel (fig. 4), consisting of a gold setting with a glass (?) gem stone; weight of the bezel alone, 2.3 grams; maximum diameter of the bezel, 13 mm; height, 5 mm.

The gem stone found within the gold setting is oval in shape, with a flat back and a curved top. Its fabric was not scientifically analyzed, but the piece is very light in

weight, and its surface is pitted and weathered to an off white color. In places where the surface has flaked away, a dark blue or black color is visible, and it is probably made of glass.



Fig. 4. Gold Ring Bezel (no. 2) with "Gem" Stone

The manufacture of the gold setting is not without interest. The outer edge of the setting consists of a sleeve cut from a piece of gold tubing, with serrations at the top which were folded inward to fasten the gem stone. The base of the setting is made of flat sheet gold, cut to shape. A long, thin angled piece of gold attached the side and base and provided a coping around the base. At the two ends of the bezel, holes reinforced with gold wire on the exterior were pierced into the gold sleeve. These reinforced holes provided a seat to receive the band of the ring (which is lacking). On each side of the bezel, the space between the end holes was filled with small bands of applied wire decoration (manufactured previously) consisting of chevrons 1 mm in length between parallel bands. While the previous item is clearly pharaonic in date, this ring bezel is clearly classical in style.

3) Fragments of a ring (fig. 5A) in gold and copper/bronze; length of band remaining, 21 mm; restored length of bezel holder, about 15 mm.

Designed to hold a two-sided bezel such as a scarab or engraved stone, the gold bezel holder is fashioned from a thin, angled piece of gold, now broken into three pieces. At either end of this holder was a seat formed from a piece of gold wire; the one completely detached has embedded in it a fragment of the copper/bronze band. Another fragment of the band 2 x 3 mm in section also survives. It is possible that a scarab (no. 6 below) from the cache was actually mounted within this holder.



Fig. 5. A. Broken Gold Ring Bezel (no. 3) with Partial Band
B. Broken Gold Ring Bezel (no. 4)

4) Bezel holder (fig. 5B) in gold, restored length about 10-12 mm.

Bent and broken into two fragments, this thin sleeve of gold held either a scarab or a gem stone. At either end was a wire reinforcer to receive a separate band of copper/bronze (a trace of which is still visible). The side of the bezel holder is decorated with a simple line and a row of projections in *repoussé* work.



Fig. 6. A. Large Scarab (no. 5) with Cartouche of Tuthmosis III
 B. Small Scarab (no. 6) with Cartouche of Tuthmosis III
 C. Scarab (no. 7) with Pattern Decoration

5) Scarab (fig. 6A), glazed steatite with traces of gilding, 20 x 15 x 9 mm.

This scarab is well-fashioned, with the scarab shown in detail and the sides deeply undercut. The design on the back shows the cartouche of Tuthmosis III with pendant uraeae. Above the cartouche are two *maat*-feathers flanked by *nfr*-signs which frame the title "good god," *ntr nfr*, above the cartouche. Posthumous issue.

6) Scarab (fig. 6B), glazed steatite with traces of gilding, 15 x 11 x 7 mm.

The body of this scarab is less well defined, and the sides are only slightly carved. The design on the rear of the scarab shows a seated lion with a uraeus in front atop a hippopotamus. Above the back of the lion is a cartouche of Tuthmosis III. There are also indistinct traces above the head of the lion. Posthumous issue. By its size, this scarab might belong to ring no. 3 above.

7) Scarab (fig. 6C), light blue glaze going white, 10 x 6 x 6 mm.

The small scarab has only rudimentary definition and has a cross-hatched design on its back; almost a scarab-shaped bead.



Fig. 7. A. Large Nail (no. 8)
B. Small Nail (no. 9)

8) Nail (fig. 7A) of copper/bronze; 48 mm long; diameter at top, 6 mm.

A round fragment (not illustrated) of copper/bronze with curved top, 15 x 16 x 6 mm, was found in the building in May 1989; it may have served as the head of this nail.

9) Nail (fig. 7B) of copper/bronze; 15 mm long; diameter at top, 3 mm.

The remaining items are all illustrated in fig. 8.

10) Frog amulet, lapis lazuli, 8 x 6 x 6 mm.

Base is decorated with oblique parallel lines.

11) Udjat eye, carnelian, 12.3 x 10 x 4 mm.

One-sided with incised details.

12) Udjat eye, blue faience, 14 x 9 x 4 mm.

Two-sided with light detailing and some openwork.

13) Udjat eye, light blue/green stone, feldspar (?), 9 x 7 x 3 mm.

No carved details.

14) Two udjat eye beads with pendant uraeae, faience, 7 x 5 x 2 mm.

Mold-made with some openwork.

15) Scarab bead (broken), glazed steatite, 6 x 4 x 3mm.

No design on base.

16) Round bead, blue faience, diameter 10 x 8 mm.

17) Round bead (broken), blue/green glass (?), originally 8 x 8 mm.

18) Two round serrated beads, carnelian, 5 x 5 mm.

19) Six lentoid beads, carnelian, diameter 5 x 3 mm.

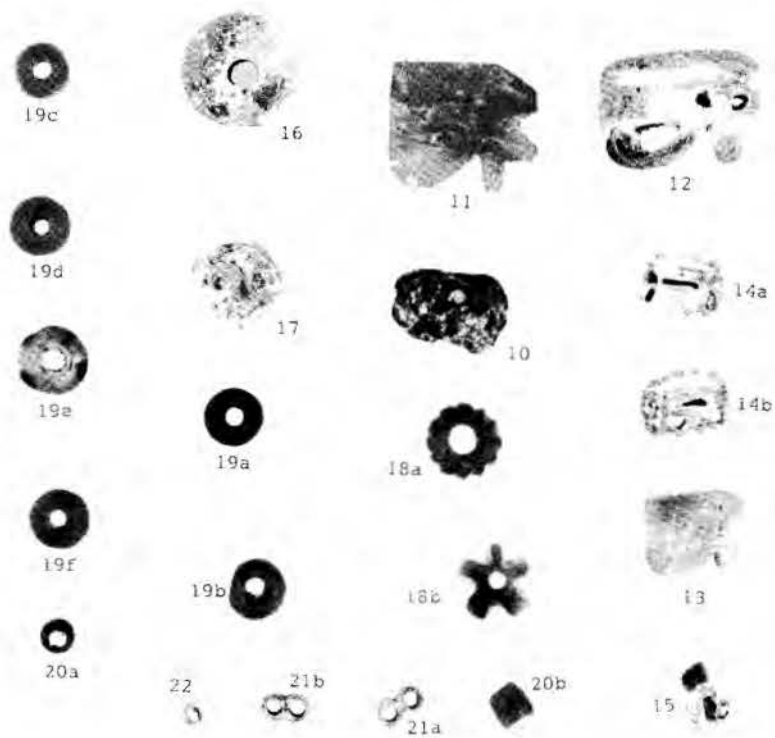


Fig. 8. Group of Stringable Items from Cache (nos. 10-22)

20) Two tubular beads, carnelian, diameter 2.5 and 3 x 3 mm.

21) Two double beads, faience, 4 x 2 x 1 mm.

22) Disk bead, faience, diameter 2 x 1 mm.

The group of items to be strung (as well as scarab no. 7) might come from a small necklace. The various materials (primarily blue/green and red in color), shapes and sizes seem to come in pairs which might be arranged in a pleasing pattern to form a necklace such as that shown in fig. 9. As reconstructed, colors would alternate as would shapes, and pieces would decrease in size towards the ends of the string. Strung together, the items form a necklace (or part of a necklace) only about 12.5 cm in length.

We will never know how this small cache of jewelry came to be in the floor of the Edifice of Amenhotep II, although a Greco-Roman date seems likely. Its existence may ultimately help to define the later uses of the building, since alterations in the structure did take place long after it was built, but before the original floor level had been abandoned.

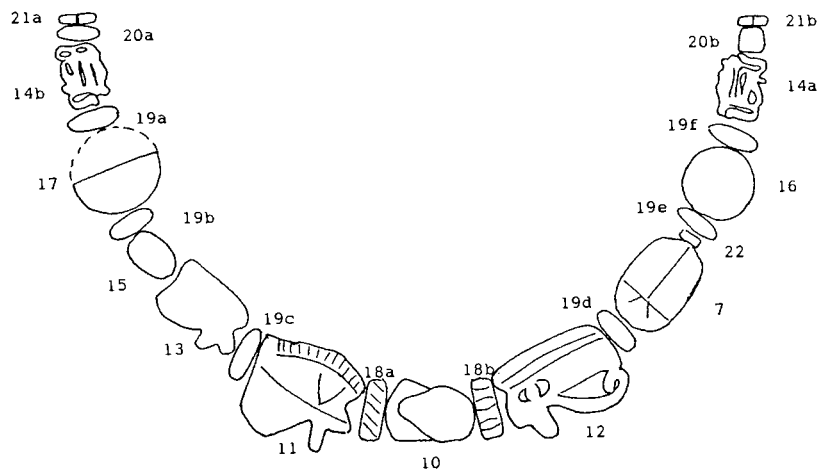


Fig. 9. Possible Arrangement of Stringable Items as Necklace

End Notes

1. This clearance was done by the Centre Franco-Egyptien during the preparation of new, detailed architectural plans of the building.
2. Fig. 2 is adapted from a plan published in **Karnak 6** (1973-77): 132, fig. 11.
3. How late the Edifice of Amenhotep II functioned is not yet clear. Two deeply sculpted, frontal graffiti suggest usage in Roman times, as do the marks on the floor for the addition of wooden door frames.
4. Following the vulture and loaf t is a second t and an egg determinative. The two horizontal lines below probably represent a crude **neb**-basket, to be understood with the following loaf t which intrudes in the writing of **išrw**, giving the reading **nbt**. The orthography is not inconsistent with a possible late date for the piece.