



Figure 1

INFORMATION

Object number: 189.996

DIMENSIONS

-Width at the widest point:
17.3cm
-Length: 17cm

MATERIAL

-wood- wood type as yet
unknown
-Linen cloth

ORIGIN

-Unknown



Figure 2



Figure 3

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INTRODUCTION

The artefact in hand is an Egyptian headrest, depicted in figure 1 located in the top left hand corner. dated to around the period of the middle kingdom. Headrests were common during this period of Egypt and were used in everyday life as well as death (Fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk, 2017). This particular piece can be found in the Merthyr Tydfil museum and is part of the collection that was originally owned and acquired by Major Harry Hartley Southey.

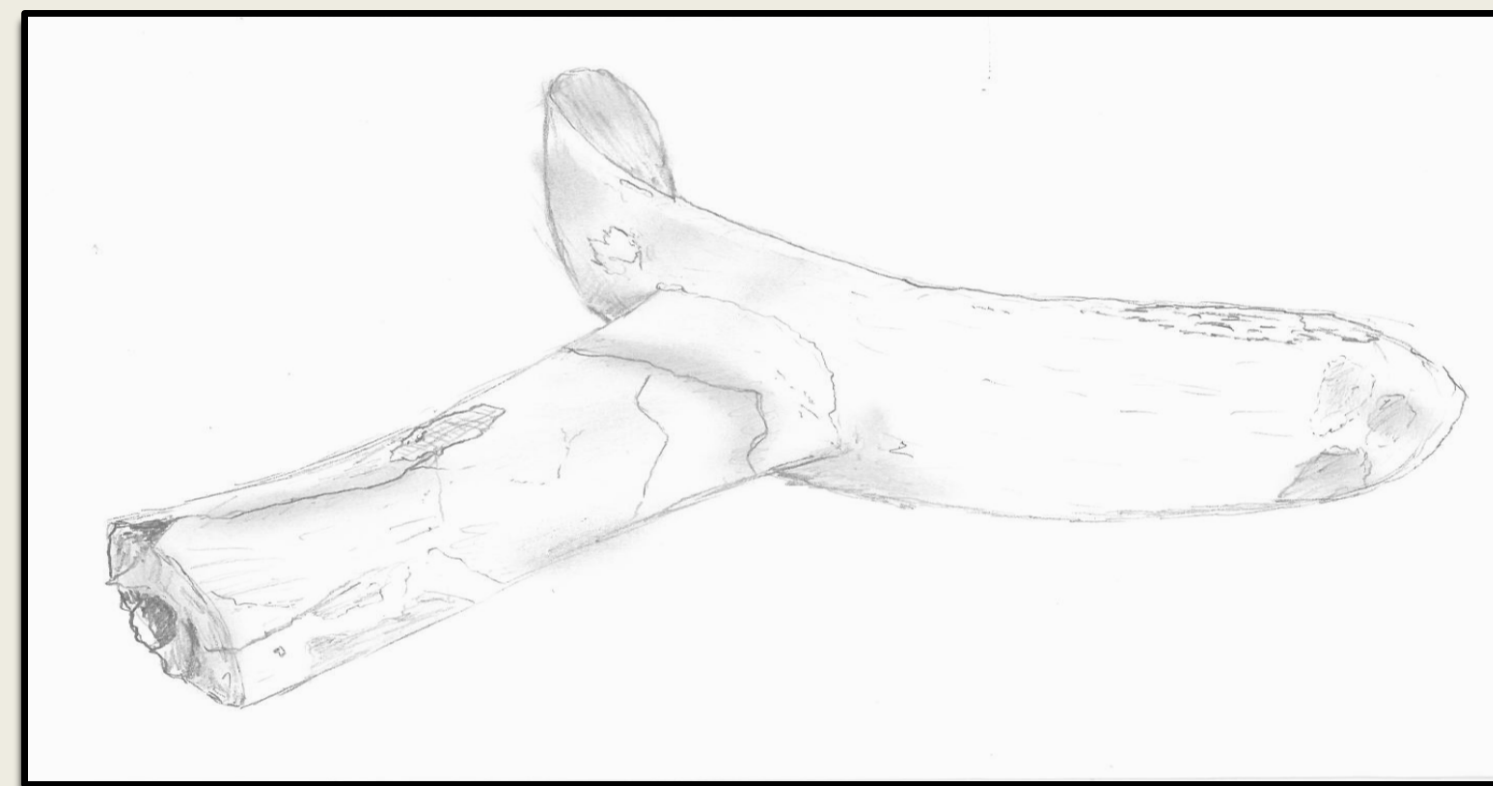


Figure 4

MATERIALS

The material used in the creation of the headrest is a yet un identified wood, it possibly could however be made from either sycamore or acacia, both of which were common during this period. Other materials used include: granite, alabaster and calcite (Fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk, 2017). During the middle kingdom wood predominated in the production of headrests contributing to the dating of the example found in the Merthyr collection.

the Merthyr headrest would have also been wrapped in linen, The artefact over all is very plain, and does not have any elaborate decoration carved into the sides unlike certain examples which can be found in other collections.



Figure 5

Egyptian Headrest

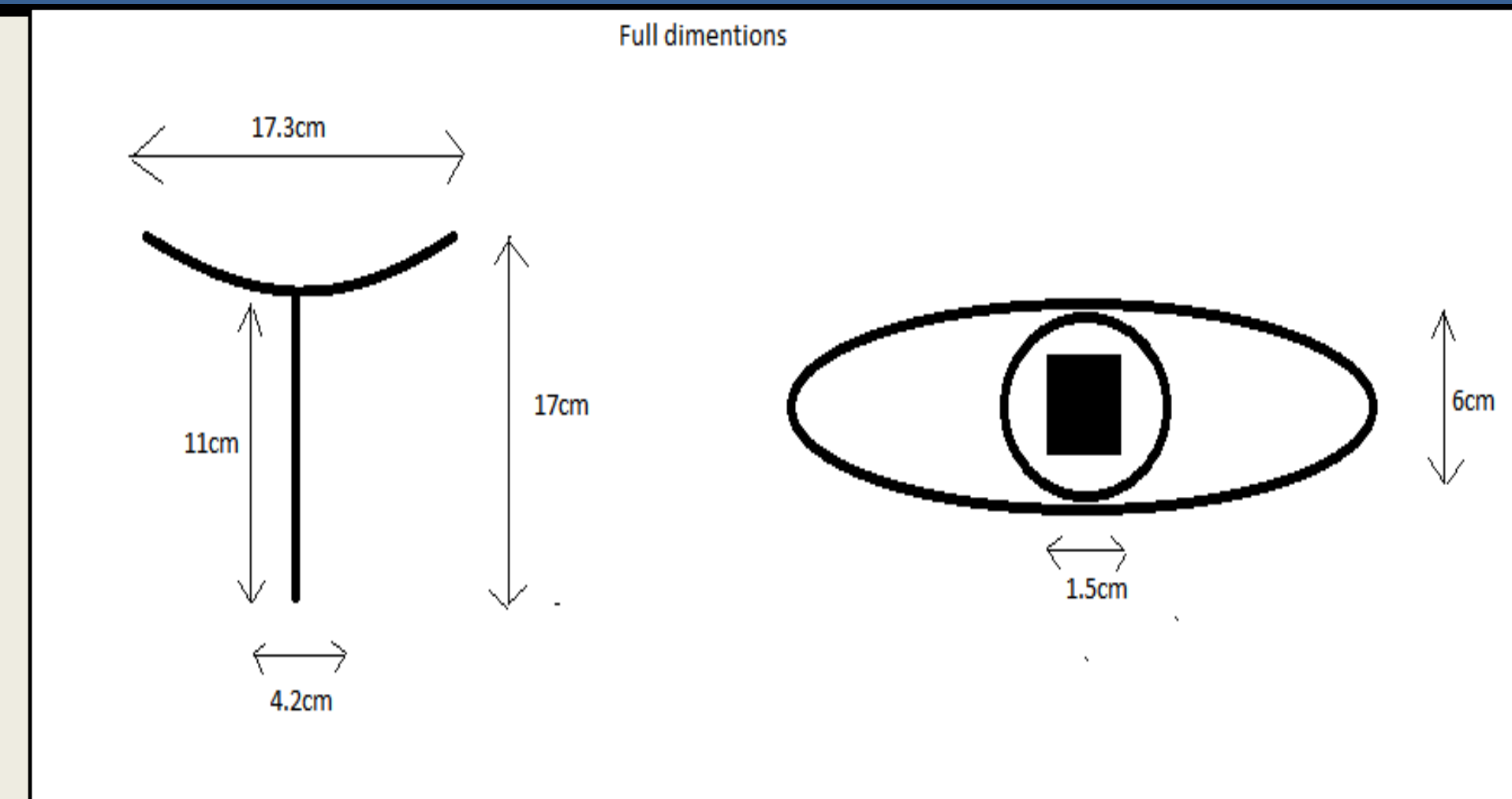


Figure 6

DISCUSSION

Most of the headrests made in ancient Egypt would have probably been custom made to fit the head size of the person who commissioned it meaning the size can differ with each example found, this particular headrest (without the base) stands 17cm tall from the lowest to the highest point, with a width of 17.3 cm at the widest part of the head rest, other measurements and dimensions are seen above in the diagrams labelled figure 6 . it may be possible to determine With this data whether or not its intended user was male or female correlating to the size of heads and shoulders.

There are numerous ways that headrests would have been created, many wooden examples are in three pieces as seen in figure 5, this example however seems to be one piece, with a separate base. Head rests like these normally were created with a base stand for the shaft to slot into, which is shown in figure 7 below along with a photo of the joint in figure 8 In which the joint (now snapped off) is clearly characterised by the unnatural carved square shaped remnants located at the very base of the headrests shaft.

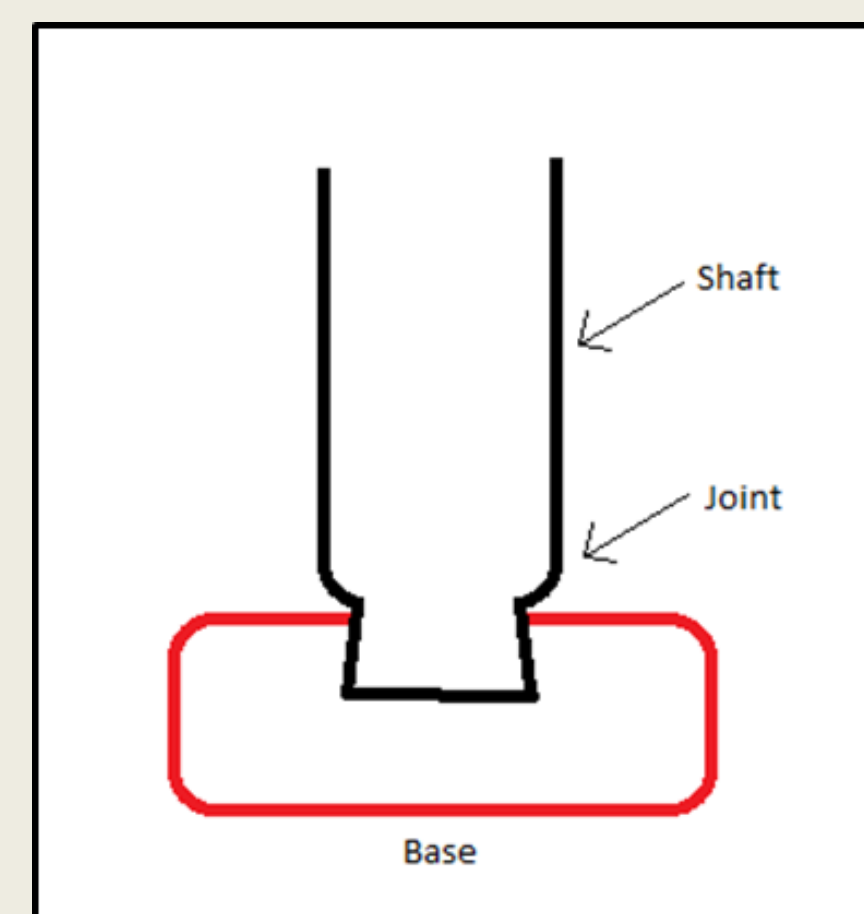


Figure 7

Figure 8

For a piece that is visibly damaged quite a lot (for high lighted cracks see figure 4), it amazingly still showcases the remnants of the original Egyptian linen that would have been wrapped around the wood, this can be seen in figure 2 outlined in red. The tightly woven fibres that have been weaved can be seen in the image taken whilst looking at the artefact through a microscope pictured in figure 9 This tightly woven linen was the sign of a well-made expensive piece, however it seems that the wood the artefact is made from could more than likely be of poor quality.

Head rests have been a popular choice for the past nearly 5000 years instead of a pillow for many past cultures including some modern day peoples see figure 10 for example the Karo peoples who live in Ethiopia.



Figure 9



Figure 10

REFERENCES

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- Figure 10 - Pavitt, N. (2017). [image] Available at: <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/photo/turkana-man-takes-a-nap-using-his-wooden-high-res-stock-photography/125223982> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2017].