

Object 1725.004

Frogs!



approx. 1.8cm long, 1.2cm wide and 1.1cm tall

The geography of Ancient Egypt meant that frogs were a common sight to the people who lived there. The flooded banks of the river Nile was the perfect place for frogs to lay their eggs and tadpoles to grow. There was so many wild frogs that their word for 100,000 'Hefen' was the hieroglyphic symbol of a tadpole. (1)

This is why it is not surprising that although this amulet is small, it is detailed.

Scaraboid?

At first glance, this item looks very much like a scaraboid. It is made out of faience with a distinctive blue sheen and its base is vaguely oval shaped. However, there is no evidence of any hieroglyphs on the base (unlike the picture on the right) and the clear cut hole at the front makes it clear that this object is more likely to be an amulet.

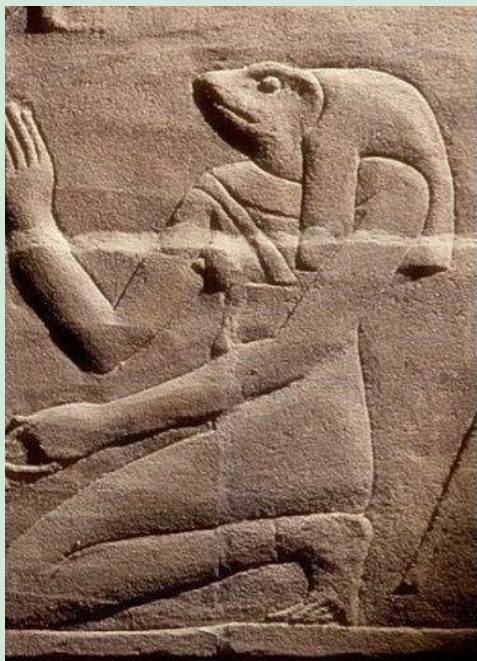


Amulets

Amulets were worn by the living and the dead, not just for aesthetic values, though most were beautiful works of art, but mostly because they were thought to have magical properties, mostly connected to protection. (2)

People most likely to wear frog amulets like this in life were pregnant women and mothers of newborns as the deity of fertility and midwifery (Heket) was often depicted in the form of a frog, or as a female with the head of a frog. (3)

Frog amulets date all the way back to the Predynastic period and the connection between frogs and rebirth continues all the way through not only ancient Egypt but also into the 1st century AD with early Christian iconography using frogs to symbolise Jesus' resurrection. (4)



Afterlife Connection?

The connection between the Ancient Egyptian afterlife and frogs lies in its life cycle. A frog is born in an egg, hatches into a tadpole which later develops into a frog. This changing of forms bears a striking similarity to their belief that death is not the end, merely a transition into a new eternal body. (5)

There is also connections between this and the way that after the waters had retreated from the Nile marshlands, thousands of young frogs would appear, musically announcing their presence. For the Ancient Egyptians, this was a symbol of their own emergence after death into a better place, symbolised by the fertile mud. (6)



References: (1) Yahia, M (date unavailable) *The Disappearing Frog Of Egypt* [retrieved from <https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=5705>] (2) Andrews, C (1994) *Amulets Of Ancient Egypt*. British Museum Press, London. (3) Hill, J (2010) *Heket* [retrieved from <https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=5705>] (4) Kremler, J (2012) *Frogs in Ancient Egypt* [retrieved from <https://egyptmanchester.wordpress.com/2012/11/25/frogs-in-ancient-egypt/>] (5) Assmann, J (2005) *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*. Cornell University Press. New York. (6) Arnold, D (1995) *An Egyptian Bestiary*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.