

The scaraboid frog amulet (ccm 1725.004) How is it related to Egyptian funerary beliefs?

Figure 1: side view of the amulet



Why use a scarab form?

The meaning of the scarab always held significance to the Egyptians (Wilkinson, 2008:7). Scarab beetles were thought to have had connections with rebirth, as they would use animal waste such as dung and hatch eggs from it (Wilkinson, 2008:9). This mirrors the Egyptian creation myth, where the world emerged from nothing.

Therefore, this pre-existing image with its inherent meaning was adapted as an amulet by the ancient Egyptians, so that this amulet, which took the form of a carved frog, implies a similar meaning.

Truly ribbiting

The reason for this choice of animal is due to the frog's association with the goddess Heket, who was the goddess of fertility. Women in ancient Egypt would not only wear amulets depicting frog like the one in figure 3 and figure 2 (Andrews, 1991:63) but within the time the frog is found on the mummy in different locations, such as the throat, chest, upper arm and the groin. It may have held different meaning to the owner depending on where it was positioned. However, as it was used as an amulet in life this makes it different as it held dual purpose in this life and the next. It was intended to be worn most likely to ensure that new-borns were looked after which coincides with staffs depicting frogs being present during child birth (Magda, 2011:28) Much like the scarab, the frog, who laid its eggs in the Nile mud, was seemingly self created (Aman, 2011:157)

Out of the water and onto the amulet

The use of amulets stretches back as far back as the old kingdom (2686-2181 BC) and they were used continuously throughout Pharaonic Egypt. In Egypt's New Kingdom, the mass production of scarabs and scarab based designs expanded (Wilkinson, 2008:17). Large quantities of scarabs and scaraboids were created out of faience (Wilkinson, 2008:24). What this tells us is that the implementation and mass creation of these objects indicates how popular they would have been in Egyptian society, as they were not a product that was made solely for the elite but one that permeated throughout society. Although this particular amulet is not a true scarab it holds some semblance to the original design.

Figure 2: Back view of the amulet



The use of faience to give it the distinctive blue colouring was meant to mimic lapis lazuli, which is a precious stone that was not native to Egypt (Nicholson:2012). It is difficult to date the use of Egyptian faience as it was imported throughout Pharaonic Egypt but became widely produced and used in the New Kingdom.

Divine connections

The significance of the frog in Ancient Egypt arises from a number of different connotations, as well as the god with which it is associated. The God Ptah is depicted with a frog head in Egyptian mythology (Aman, 2011:157). This god was thought have spoken the world into creation (Aman, 2011) and the connection between the tongue of this god and the frog meant that this aspect of the frog's biology was afforded a divine connection.

In addition, the association with fertility and rebirth in the afterlife was a fundamental concept to the Egyptian people, as it included idealised concepts of their passage through the underworld. This followed the opening of the mouth ceremony where the *ka* (like a person's soul and honour) and the *ba* (a person's personality and identity) would be reunited to create the ankh, a person's divinity (Harrington, 2013:3). The association and connection to rebirth was mainly linked to the goddess *Heket*, who had the head of a frog and who assisted in the rebirth of the dead (Aman, 2011:161). She also accompanied the deceased king on his ascent to the sky. The goddess' associations included fertility in addition to birth and rebirth and many priests of Heket were trained to become midwives. This divine connection is also included in the colour of the faience, as the blue colour for which it was noted is thought to have been connected to sky (Nicholson, 2012). Therefore, the role that this amulet would have played in Egyptian funerary beliefs was significant as the Egyptians believed that the *ba* of a person would ascend to join the sun god in his nightly journey (Assman, 2001:90)

Hopping onwards

The importance of the frog did not only have great meaning to this life but also the next. Upon death in Ancient Egypt, the creation of the *Ankh* allowed for the rebirth of the deceased. Therefore the carved frog amulet had an important role in rebirth, an importance that was further supplemented by the connection to the sky from the choice of faience blue colouring from which it was crafted. While the use of the frog for symbolism in ancient Egypt could be credited to different gods, the most common of these was the goddess Heket.

Figure 3: Frog amulet from Liverpool museum collection (M1157OC)



Figure 4: Khnum and Heket at Mammisi



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- Appendix**
- Figure 1: Andrews, B. (2019) Photograph showing a side view of object 1275.004
- Figure 2: Andrews, B. (2019) photograph showing the back of object 1275.004
- Figure 3: Liverpool Museum Frog amulet 18th dyn available at :<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/collections/antiquities/ancient-egypt/item-296084.aspx> accessed 04/04/19
- Figure 4: Unger, R. (2000) Khnum and Heket relief from Mammisi. Available at:<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heket#/media/File:DendaraMamisiKhnum-10.jpg> . Date accessed:03/04/19