



Unknown (Egyptian)
Hair ornament
date unknown
stone
9/16 x 9/16 x 3/8 in. (1.5 x 1.4 x 1 cm)
Gift of Mr. Horace Mayer
62.32.17.L

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hair ornament

This object could be an earring. Earrings such as these have been found on mummies and are extremely common in New Kingdom (ca. 1550 BCE–1069 B.C.E) burials. Earrings were made of silver, lead, ivory, bone, and glass, with more expensive materials like electrum being used by men and women of the upper classes. A similar object in the collection of the Liverpool Museum is identified as a hair ring or wig ornament. Wealthy Egyptians had their hair fashioned at a barber or hairdresser's, while middle-class people did their own hair and peasants shaved it off for convenience.

Personal hygiene was very important to ancient Egyptians. They used soda—a mixture of sodium carbonate, baking soda, and salts—to cleanse their bodies and afterward would rub on perfumed ointment. Women would also use perfume in their hair.

Sources

Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt. Anne K. Capel and Glenn E. Markoe (Editors). New York: Hudson Hills Press (in Association with Cincinnati Art Museum), 1996.

Global Egyptian Museum
<http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/detail.aspx?id=2978>

Lionel Casson, *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt*. Revised edition. Baltimore: Johns



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DISCUSS

Hair ornament

This ring was probably an earring or a hair ornament. View the ring closely (roll your cursor over the image to magnify).

- Do you think this ring was ever worn? Why or why not?
- What type of stone do you think it is made from?
- What color is it?
- Does it have veins (lines of different colored minerals) running through it?
- Do you think the maker polished the stone? How can you tell?
- Why do you think the maker selected this stone?

Artifacts like this provide information about daily life in ancient Egypt. Use the web sites below to learn more about everyday life in ancient Egypt. Then create your own game of Jeopardy with a friend or your whole class! Write your own trivia questions about life in the ancient world, and then challenge one another to a game of Egyptian trivia.

Archaeology Daily News

<http://www.archaeologydaily.com/news/200910102375/Mummies-tomb-art-and-everyday-items-on-exhibit-in-World-of-the-Pharaohs.html>

Minnesota State University: Daily Life in Ancient Egypt

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/dailylife/dailylife.html>

British Museum: Egypt Daily Life

<http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/life/index.html>

British Museum: Egypt Daily Life Teacher Resource

http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Visit_Egypt_Daily_Life_KS2.pdf



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CREATE

Hair ornament

Egyptians had many styles of hair and headwear that reflected a person's age, gender, and social status. What size is the hair ornament shown in the photograph (dimensions are noted under the photograph)? Can you think of a 21st century hairstyle that would incorporate an ornament like this one?

Draw a self-portrait and give yourself an ancient Egyptian hairstyle or headdress! What type of person in ancient Egypt would have worn your hairstyle?

To learn more about the subject, visit these websites:

Minnesota State University:

Ancient Egyptian Hairstyles

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/dailylife/hairstyles.html>

Mathilda's Anthropology Blog:

Ancient Egyptian Hair and Wigs

<http://mathildasanthropologyblog.wordpress.com/2008/08/23/ancient-egyptian-hair-and-wigs/>