



Unknown (Egyptian)
Amulet of Sebek
date unknown
faience
1 7/8 x 3/8 x 1/2 in. (4.8 x 1 x 1.2 cm)
Gift of Horace Mayer
59.21.13.A

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amulet of Sebek

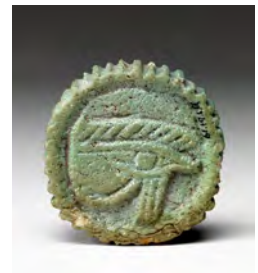
Amulets were personal adornments worn by the living and placed on mummy wrappings to provide protection and aid on the journey from death to the afterlife. The color, shape, and other qualities of the materials were believed to endow the amulet and its wearer with special powers and protections. Amulets of crocodiles were worn to ward off evil. Crocodiles were a great fear for those who traveled on or lived near the Nile River. Those who were eaten by crocodiles were said to forfeit an Afterlife. Crocodiles posed danger even after death; the *Book of the Dead* devotes chapters to repelling a crocodile that aims to steal the magical power of the deceased. The crocodile also symbolized rebirth; it was said to sink into the waters of the primordial ocean and then re-emerge like the sun.

The god Sebek, which means crocodile, was associated with the pharaoh and represented his power. Sebek was often depicted as a crocodile-headed man wearing a sun disk. This amulet is made of faience, a sandy mixture of crushed quartz, natron, and pigment that was heated to fuse it together.

RELATED IMAGES



Sacred eye amulet
date unknown
faience; 9/16 x 11/16 in., 1/8 in.
(1.5 x 1.8 cm, 0.3 cm). Gift of
Horace Mayer (60.39.2.E)



Amulet
date unknown
faience; 1 3/8 x 1/4 in.
(3.5 x 0.6 cm). Gift of Horace Mayer
(61.19.1.G)

Sources

Andrews, Carol. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. 1994 (British Museum Press). University of Texas Press, 1998.

"Faience Openwork Collar." British Museum Catalogue Entry for Object Number EA 59334
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/ff/faience_openwork_collar.aspx

Wilkinson, Richard H. *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. Thames & Hudson, 2003.



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DISCUSS

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This amulet takes the form of a crocodile, an animal found along the Nile River and associated with the god Sebek. What other plants and animals inhabited the Nile River and its surroundings?

Find out more about the Nile River ecosystem:

World Wildlife Fund

http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0904_full.html

Royal Ontario Museum

<http://www.rom.on.ca/programs/activities/egypt/learn/plants.php>

The crocodile was both feared and revered in ancient Egypt. It was said to sink into the waters of the primordial ocean and then re-emerge as the sun re-emerges each day, and so it symbolized rebirth. Click on the EXPLORE tab to learn more about the significance of crocodiles to ancient Egyptians.

Why do you think the natural environment (plants, animals, the sun, the river) played such an important role in Egyptian religious beliefs?



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CREATE

Amulet of Sebek

Write your own story about two characters who take a trip on the Nile River. You can research the plants and animals that can be found in and along the Nile River (see the DISCUSS tab) and incorporate what you learn about the Nile habitat in your story. Make it a picture book and share it with a friend!

Make sure to include a crocodile in your story. Roll your cursor over the photograph of the *Amulet of Sebek* to magnify the image. What details do you see? Draw a sketch to capture Sebek's face, body shape, and texture.