

GOLDEN TREASURES OF THE PHARAOHS

2,500 Years of the Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Egypt

Gold. For the Egyptians, it was proof that eternity was real. Gold was the imperishable flesh of the gods, and gold was the king's eternal likeness—his mummy mask—reaffirming his divinity in the afterlife.

An eternal life deemed to be dependant on gold meant that they needed a lot of it. During the reign of Thutmose III, for instance, Lower Nubia delivered some 250 kilograms of gold to the Temple of Karnak each year!

The Grimaldi Forum in Monaco showcases a new themed exhibition annually. They are always very popular, but this year's production is extra special: *Golden Treasures of the Pharaohs: 2,500 Years of the Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Egypt*. Over 150 exceptional pieces have been loaned from Cairo's Egyptian Museum. When they return, they'll go straight to the new Grand Egyptian Museum near Giza.

The exhibition (and this article) features pieces that have never before left Egypt, like the bracelet of King Djer (1st Dynasty, ca. 3000 B.C.) on page 17, and the stunning silver coffin of Psussennes I (21st Dynasty, ca. 1039–991 B.C.) on page 13.

These two examples alone demonstrate *Golden Treasures'* vast chronological sweep—extending from Egypt's earliest dynasties through to the Third Intermediate Period—a period covering over 2,000 years.

The next few pages put the spotlight on some of the highlights of *Golden Treasures of the Pharaohs*, and you can find more information on page 20.



Featured in the exhibition is this highly-decorated and gilded coffin belonged to Isisemkheb D, a priestess of the Temple of Mut at Karnak.

Isisemkheb was probably a lesser wife of the High Priest Pinudjem II. It was Pinudjem II who established the family cache tomb, now known as DB 320, in which Isisemkheb's coffin was found.

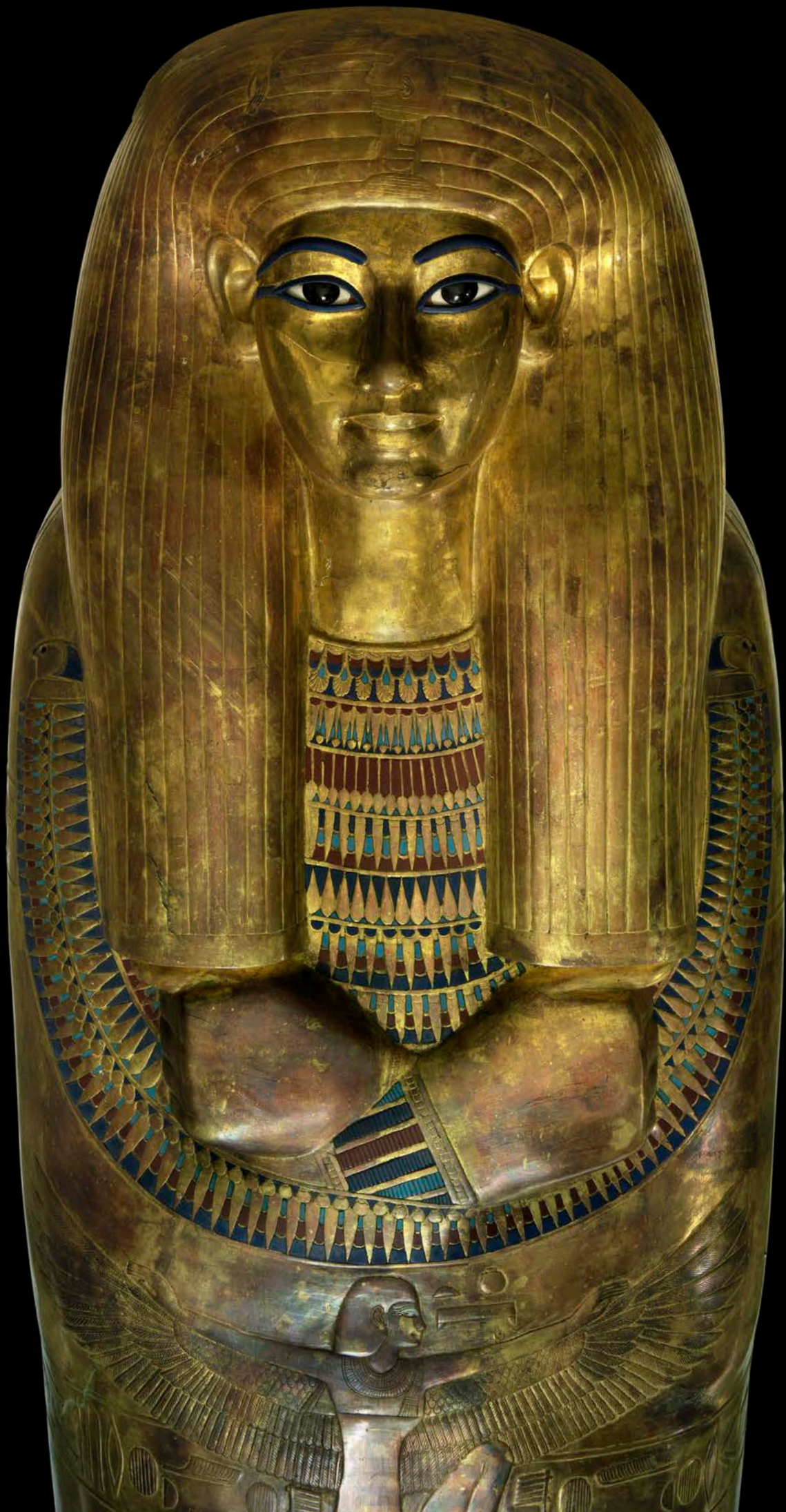
The priestess' coffin features generous gilding, a luxurious wig and a flourish of deities separated by winged goddesses.

Christiane Ziegler, honorary director of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the Musée du Louvre, and curator of *Golden Treasures*, reminds us that "gold held pride of place in tombs because it was wreathed in remarkable magical powers. In Egyptian thinking, gold, an inalterable metal, dazzling as the sun, was considered the 'flesh of the gods'. It was for this reason that it was used to make funerary masks and royal sarcophagi, conferring immortality on their owners. Rich individuals [like Isisemkheb] had to make do with wood covered in gold leaf or yellow paint highlights."

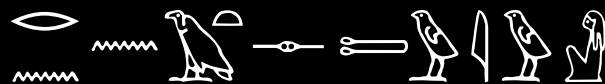
Despite the lavish appearance of Isisemkheb's coffin, times were tough and Theban elites shifted towards group burials that were more easily guarded. Commissioning colourful paintings for the tomb chapel was a costly exercise (and caught the attention of Thebans with nefarious intent), so tombs were usually left undecorated. The Egyptians adapted to this by creating more richly-decorated coffins to fill the role of the tomb.

Isisemkheb's outer coffin was found intact, but the gilded faces and hands from the inner coffin and mummy-cover were missing. These pieces were especially vulnerable in a group burial situation because they could be quickly torn off by less sentimental family members when depositing a new burial. As long as the outer coffin was left untouched, there was no way for anyone to know that the valuable gilding from the inner parts of the ensemble had been attacked.

EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO.
ACC. NO. CG 61031 / JE 26198(a).
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INNER COFFIN OF TIYE, MOTHER OF QUEEN TITE
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. CG 51006 (JE 95232). © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL





“The name of her mother is Tjuiu”


From the “Marriage Scarab” of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390 B.C.)

During the first 11 years of his reign, the 18th Dynasty’s Amenhotep III issued a unique series of notices, written on the base of large scarabs. These declared his divine authority over the length and breadth of the empire, and outlined the key achievements of his reign so far. Over 200 have been found as far north as Syria, and beyond Nubia’s Second Cataract in the south.

In addition to announcing the arrival of a princess from Mitanni (to join the royal household), the digging of an artificial lake and a wild bull hunt, the king declares the name of his chief wife, Tiye, and, for the only time in Egyptian history, the names of the queen’s parents, Yuya and Tjuiu. It rather seems like “name-dropping”—stressing an allegiance between Amenhotep’s family and Queen Tiye’s.

DNA tests released in 2010 (see NILE #14, June–July 2018) suggest that Yuya was related to Amenhotep III—possibly a brother of the Queen Mother Mutemwiya, and therefore the king’s uncle.

Tiye’s father and mother, Yuya and Tjuiu lived in the Upper Egyptian town of Akhmim and were heavily involved in the cult of the centre’s patron deity: the fertility god Min. Among many of the titles Yuya enjoyed was “Overseer of the Sacred Oxen of Min” , while Tjuiu was a “Priestess of Min” . It is quite possible, suggests Dr. Joann Fletcher, that “part of a minor royal line descended from Queen Ahmose-Nefertari [wife of the 18th Dynasty founder, Ahmose], of which the name Tiy is possibly a shortened form” (*The Story of Egypt*, 2015). This may help explain why they were privileged to be buried in a

tomb (although undecorated) in the Valley of the Kings (KV 46). It also didn’t hurt that Tjuiu was a “Royal Ornament” (lady-in-waiting) to Mutemwiya .

Yuya and Tjuiu’s tomb was discovered in February 1905 by British Egyptologist James Quibell working for the American millionaire Theodore Davis. They immediately summoned the Director of the Antiquities Service, Gaston Maspero before they probed further.

Also on the excavation team was English archaeologist Arthur Weigall. In a letter to his fiancé, Hortense, Weigall described the incredible moment when they entered the tomb’s burial chamber:

“Maspero, Davis, & I stood there gaping & almost trembling for a time—& I think we all felt that we were face to face with something which seemed to upset all human ideas of time & distance. Then we dashed for the inscribed objects, & read out the names of Prince Auai & his wife Thuai—the famous mother & father of Queen Thy. They had been known so well & discussed so often that they seemed old friends....”


Below and on the facing page is Tjuiu’s inner coffin, gilded on the outside and silvered on the interior. Curiously, while the hands on female coffins are usually pressed flat against the body, those on Tjuiu’s coffin are clenched in the manner of a man. Could Tjuiu’s coffin have been originally made for someone else?



INNER COFFIN OF TJUIU, MOTHER OF QUEEN TIYE
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. CG 51006 (JE 95232). © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL



GOLD MASK OF PSUSENNES I
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 85913. © EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

No one really noticed a small excavation in the city of Tanis (ancient *Djanet* ) , once the capital of ancient Egypt, on the Nile Delta. It was March 1940 and a French archaeologist had struck gold—literally. Working for the French Archaeological Institute, Pierre Montet unearthed a group of tombs beneath the city's Mut Temple precinct; kingly burials stocked with fabulous riches.

These were the tombs of many of the 21st and 22nd Dynasty kings who ruled for around 350 years during Egypt's Third Intermediate Period, following the death of the last Ramesside king, Ramesses XI, in around 1069 B.C.

One tomb belonged to the 21st Dynasty's second ruler, Psusennes I, who was sent into the afterlife within the unique silver coffin below, and wearing the stunning golden mask, opposite.

Egypt at this time was divided. The kings who regarded themselves as the true successors of the great Ramesses II (Psusennes I being one of them) ruled from the Delta, while a dynasty of Theban High Priests of Amun dominated Upper Egypt.

Relations between the two groups, however, may not have been quite as chilly as is often made out. Psusennes I (ca. 1039–991 B.C.) was the son of the High Priest Pinudjem I of Thebes, and later gave his daughter in marriage to his brother, the Theban High Priest Menkheperre. This entangled arrangement maintained an ongoing family connection between the two power bases.

Now, 3,900 years later, on the 1st of March 1940, Psusennes' silver coffin was opened to reveal the mummy

of the king—or what was left of it. Unfortunately, the Delta dampness meant that his body hadn't survived the centuries well. The lavish burial goods that remained, however, painted a new picture of this little-known king. Rather than a struggling ruler, nominally governing his dwindling kingdom, Psusennes appears as a powerful pharaoh with command over great resources. He furnished his burial with all the lavish equipment he would need to greet the gods as a proud ruler.

It may not have mattered that at least some of his funerary equipment was second-hand. The king's silver coffin was placed in a black granite anthropoid coffin (with the original owner's name replaced by Psusennes'), and finally, a red granite sarcophagus which was already an antique. It bore the name of Ramesses II's son, Merenptah, who used it for his rebirth some 170 years earlier.

The black granite coffin was opened in the presence of Egypt's King Farouk to reveal another stunning coffin—one made of silver, and decorated with chasing and gold embellishment. Visitors to the *Golden Treasures* exhibition are in for a treat; this is the first time that Psusennes' silver coffin has ever left Egypt.

Hidden behind a fake wall, Psusennes I's tomb was found intact—the only undisturbed royal burial ever discovered. Twenty years earlier the riches of Tutankhamun had created a worldwide sensation. Psusennes I barely made a ripple. The world was preoccupied. The day that Montet laid eyes on Psusennes' golden mask, Hitler ordered his war machine to invade Norway and Denmark.



SILVER COFFIN OF PSUSENNES I
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 85912. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL



Falcon-headed mummy cases are exceptionally rare. Only six have ever been found—and two of them belonged to one pharaoh: the 22nd Dynasty's Sheshonq II (ca. 890 B.C.).

Although his short reign (estimated at just one or two years) has left few ripples on Egypt's history, a king was still a king, and Sheshonq was duly afforded a costly royal burial, complete with a falcon-headed, solid silver outer coffin, and this falcon-headed gilded inner coffin (left) made of cartonnage (linen stiffened with plaster).

Where Sheshonq II was originally buried and what happened after they sealed his tomb is a mystery. The king was discovered in Tanis by Pierre Montet in March 1939. His funeral ensemble was occupying an antechamber in the tomb of King Psusennes I, who had predeceased Sheshonq by around a hundred years. Sheshonq II was clearly a later addition.

When examined, Sheshonq's leg bones were covered with tiny grass rootlets that Guy Brunton, who helped clear the burial, claimed didn't occur within Psusennes' tomb. It seems that Sheshonq II's original tomb was compromised and the king needed rescuing. The location of the king's first tomb is still unknown.

Also unknown is the reason for the falcon heads on the king's mummy cases. A coffin was designed to transform the deceased into a self-regenerating Osiris. Indeed, inscriptions on Sheshonq's coffins refer to him as the Osiris king—so why are they designed with falcon heads that resemble Horus instead? It may be that these coffins recall a composite funerary deity—Sokar-Osiris—who can be shown as a mummiform, falcon-headed figure.

This gilded cartonnage inner coffin of Sheshonq II has never before left Egypt.



EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 72196. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL
INNER COFFIN OF SHESHONQ II



SILVER DISH OF GENERAL WENDJEBAUENDJEDET. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE87742. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL

Although the burial of General Wen-djebau-en-djedet was found within the royal tomb complex of Psusennes I (21st Dynasty, ca. 1039–991 B.C.) in Tanis, its location seems to have benefited from royal favour rather than regal pedigree. Wendjebauendjedet could boast of a long list of prestigious military and priestly titles (see below) but none of them were royal.

The silver and gold dish (above), around 18 cm across, was discovered with the general's burial. The hieroglyphic dedication circling the dish reads (bullet-pointed for clarity):

- “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt, *Aakheperre-Setepenamun* (‘Great is the manifestation of Re, the chosen one of Amun’)
- “Son of Re, *Pasebakhaenniut-Meriamun* (Greek: Psusennes I, lit. ‘The star who appears in the city [of Thebes], beloved of Amun’)
- “That which is given as a royal gift to the Overseer of the Estate of Khonsu in Thebes Neferhotep

- “The Overseer of the Armies
- “The Chief of the Archers of Pharaoh
- “The Overseer of the Priests of all the Gods
- “Wendjebauendjedet, True of Voice
- “Of the Estate of Osiris
- “Lord of Djedet (Greek: Mendes, modern Tell el-Ruba in the eastern Delta)”.

Surrounding the central, 12-petalled rosette is a lively aquatic scene with four young women, wearing belts and necklaces, swimming in a pool teeming with fish, ducks and lotus flowers. The two most agile of the swimmers have caught ducks. Such a scene represents the Egyptian marshes which were synonymous with fertility and creation.

Each year, after the waters of the annual flood receded, millions of ducks and waterfowl arrived to enjoy the bounty in the mudflats. This saw ducks becoming associated with this great time of abundance, and, by extension, fertility, creation and the sexual vigour that allows for it all.



Nearly 4,000 years ago, the 12th-Dynasty pharaoh, Senwosret II, built Egypt's most southerly royal pyramid tomb at Lahun, on the eastern edge of the fertile Faiyum region. His ingenuity in hiding the entrance, however, had the great Flinders Petrie beginning to question whether anyone was buried there at all.

Instead of placing the entrance on the northern side—like most of the pyramids that had come before—the opening to Senwosret's tomb was through a shaft hidden in the pavement on the southern side.

In 1889, Flinders Petrie spent months trying to find the entrance. When he eventually made his way in, he found that ancient grave robbers had—as usual—beaten him to it. Of the once-rich tomb furnishings, only a red-granite sarcophagus and an alabaster offering table remained.

But then, in 1920, Petrie returned to make a thorough clearance of the debris in the rooms and passages. Within just half an hour of starting, this wonderful treasure was uncovered—a royal uraeus, likely to have been part of the king's headdress or crown. English Egyptologist Guy Brunton, who was part of the 1920 season, wrote this account:

"There had been some doubt, for various reasons, whether Senusert II was actually buried in the Lahun pyramid or not.... But there can now be no question on the matter. In 1920 it was decided to make a thorough clearance, or rather turning-over, of the debris in the pyramid rooms and passages. A start was made with the rock-cut offering chamber leading out of the sepulchre on the south. There, only some 6 ins. of dust and rubbish covered the floor, and within half-an-hour the uraeus from the king's crown was brought to light.... It is of solid gold, inlaid with the usual stones. The head is cut in lazuli, with the eyes of garnet set in gold.... The tail, which is plain gold, rises up at the back, twisting and turning in the most lifelike way.

At the back two loops are sunk into the hollow of the tail: these are for attaching it to the crown....

This uraeus is apparently the only piece of regalia actually worn by an Egyptian king, which had so far been found."

—Lahun II. Sir Flinders Petrie, Guy Brunton, M.A. Murray, London, 1923.

Senwosret II's uraeus offers us a tantalising glimpse at what must have been a sumptuous burial.

EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 46694. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL

The oldest piece in the exhibition is this exquisite bracelet from the Abydos tomb of King Djer, dated to Egypt's 1st Dynasty, around 3,000 B.C. Strung together are twenty-seven gold and turquoise plaques representing the *serekh*, or palace façade, topped by a falcon god. In time, the *serekh* would be used as a royal crest with the king's name placed inside a rectangular extension atop the *serekh*.

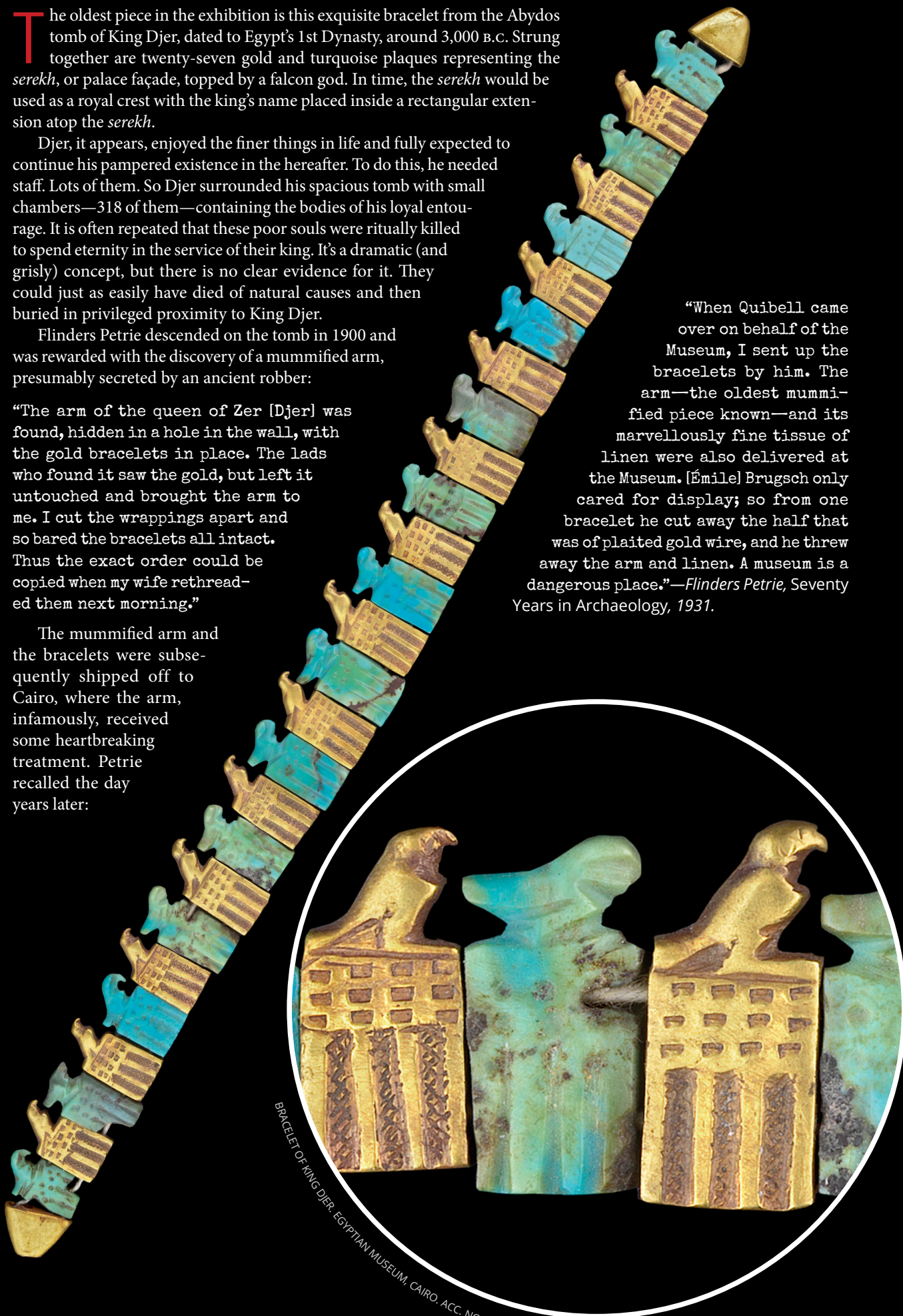
Djer, it appears, enjoyed the finer things in life and fully expected to continue his pampered existence in the hereafter. To do this, he needed staff. Lots of them. So Djer surrounded his spacious tomb with small chambers—318 of them—containing the bodies of his loyal entourage. It is often repeated that these poor souls were ritually killed to spend eternity in the service of their king. It's a dramatic (and grisly) concept, but there is no clear evidence for it. They could just as easily have died of natural causes and then buried in privileged proximity to King Djer.

Flinders Petrie descended on the tomb in 1900 and was rewarded with the discovery of a mummified arm, presumably secreted by an ancient robber:

"The arm of the queen of Zer [Djer] was found, hidden in a hole in the wall, with the gold bracelets in place. The lads who found it saw the gold, but left it untouched and brought the arm to me. I cut the wrappings apart and so bared the bracelets all intact. Thus the exact order could be copied when my wife rethreaded them next morning."

The mummified arm and the bracelets were subsequently shipped off to Cairo, where the arm, infamously, received some heartbreaking treatment. Petrie recalled the day years later:

"When Quibell came over on behalf of the Museum, I sent up the bracelets by him. The arm—the oldest mummified piece known—and its marvellously fine tissue of linen were also delivered at the Museum. [Émile] Brugsch only cared for display; so from one bracelet he cut away the half that was of plaited gold wire, and he threw away the arm and linen. A museum is a dangerous place."—*Flinders Petrie, Seventy Years in Archaeology, 1931.*



BRACELET OF KING DJER. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 35054(c). © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL

In 1914, Flinders Petrie and his assistant, Guy Brunton, were in Lahun, excavating subsidiary tombs in the shadow of the Pyramid of Senwosret II. The tombs had been thoroughly worked-over by thieves, so it was with equal surprise and delight that they greeted the news that one of their workmen had made a spectacular find. Hidden in a recess that had been plastered over and missed by previous trespassers was one of the finest collections of jewellery ever found in Egypt. It became known as the “Treasure of Lahun”.

This was the jewellery collection of Princess Sit-Hathor-Iunet, (probably) a daughter of Senwosret II. Five decayed boxes contained hundreds of golden tubes (wig ornaments), rings, bracelets and anklets, a golden diadem (below) and toiletries for use in the next life.

Once they had started to clear the tomb, the excavators hardly left. By day they carefully separated each fragile piece from the hardened mud in which it has become embedded, and by night they slept in the tomb to protect the finds:

“For a week, Brunton lived all day and every night in the tomb, gently extracting all the objects from the hard mud, without bending or scratching a single piece. Everything as it came up I washed in plain water with a camel-hair brush, so as not to alter the natural surface, then photographed it.”—

Flinders Petrie, *Seventy Years in Archaeology*, 1931.

One of the most elegant pieces to emerge from the mud was this golden diadem, decorated simply with fifteen rosettes around the band, and a royal uraeus at the front. Six bands of gold “ribbons” hang down, while two golden plumes rise up at the back. The diadem was made to be worn over the princess’ wig, which was accessorised by hundreds of small golden tubes that threaded along the long, dark hair. The effect would have been dazzling.

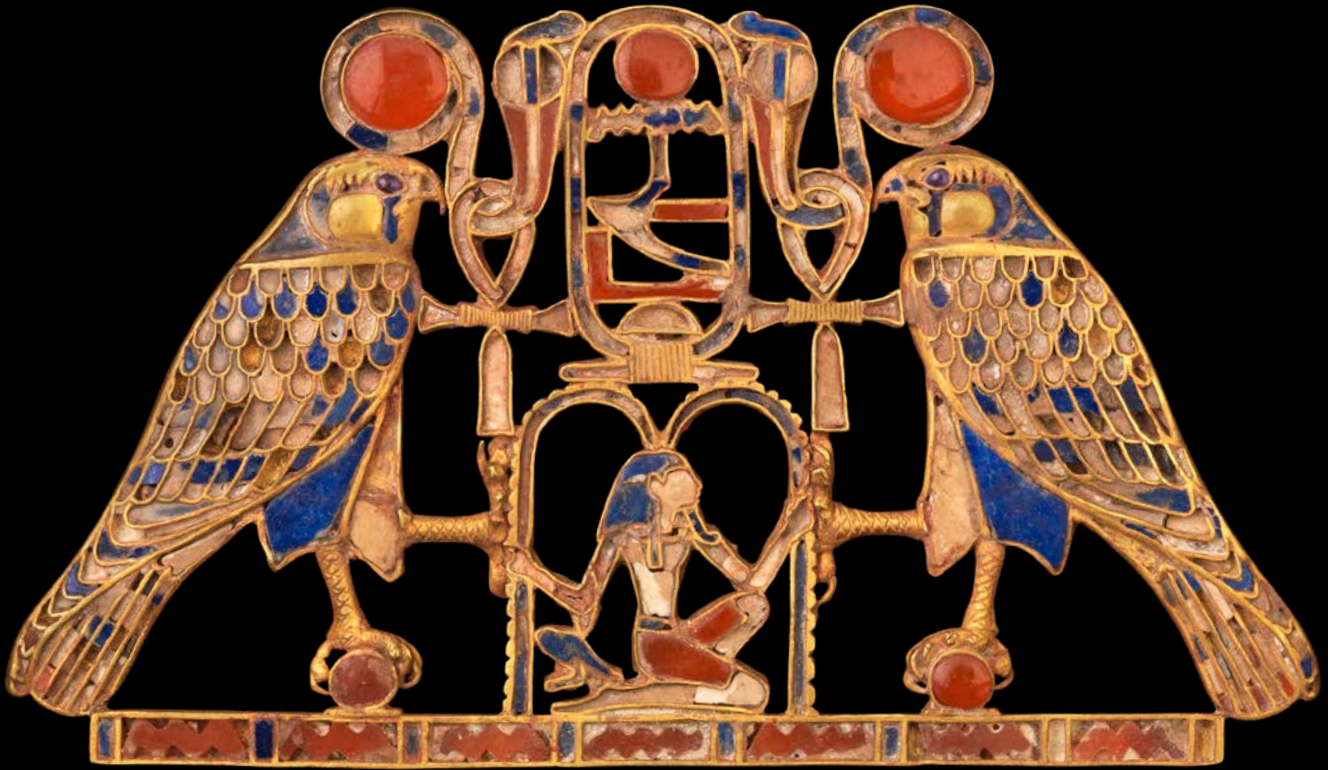
Fortunately for Petrie, Gaston Maspero, the head of the Antiquities Service, decided that the find was similar to jewellery found by Jacques de Morgan in 1894–95 (see [NILE #14](#), June-July 2018), and so conceded most of it to Petrie. This diadem, a pectoral (opposite), a mirror and an inlaid scarab were the only pieces retained by Maspero.

The rest of the jewellery was taken to London while Petrie sought a buyer, which he found in 1916 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

By now World War One was in full swing, with mines and German U-boats wreaking havoc upon merchant shipping, so the Met decided to keep the treasure in London. Princess Sit-Hathor-Iunet’s golden jewellery headed back underground, spending the rest of the war in a safe deposit vault. It finally arrived in New York in 1919. For the curators of the Met, that must have felt like a long three years.



DIADEM OF PRINCESS SITHATHORIUNET.
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 44919. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL



PECTORAL OF PRINCESS SITHATHORIUNET.
EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. CG 52712 / JE 44922. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL

This exquisite pectoral, discovered by Petrie in the tomb of Sit-Hathor-Iunet at Lahun, packs a lot of detail into a small piece: it is less than five centimetres high.

While the princess' jewellery was made to "wow", its primary function was magical. This pectoral contains the Throne Name of the 12th-Dynasty King Amenemhat III: *Nimaatre* (𓂏𓏏𓏏𓏏) ("Belonging to the maat of Re").

Amenemhat III was Senusret II's grandson, and so possibly Sit-Hathor-Iunet's nephew. The presence of his pectoral among the princess' "personal effects" suggests that she was buried during Amenemhat III's reign, which means she lived during the terms of three Middle Kingdom pharaohs. Princess Sit-Hathor-Iunet may have been one of the older and wiser members of Amenemhat's court.

Turning to the pectoral, notice the zig-zag lines along the base. These represent the primordial waters out of which the primaeval hill emerged on the first day of creation. Above that line are two falcons, representing the sun god Re, clasping the shen sign, which provides encircling, eternal protection for the king.

Supporting the royal cartouche is the kneeling god of eternity, Heh, clutching two palm ribs that symbolise "millions of years". Encircling the sun-discs above the falcons' heads are cobras, representing Nekhbet and Wadjet, the traditional protector goddesses of the king. Dangling from the cobras are two *ankhs*, delivering "life" to the king.

In a nutshell, it was the king who benefited from the magic inherent in the pectoral symbols. Sit-Hathor-Iunet provided ritual support for his eternal self-renewal. No one ever said things were very fair in Middle Kingdom Egypt.

As mentioned on the opposite page, this pectoral was one of just four pieces from Petrie's find that were retained by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The rest of the collection

sat out World War One in London, secured in a bank vault—but not before appearing in a small exhibition at University College.

Petrie's spectacular find made news around the world. The following newspaper clipping came from the Adelaide Advertiser (South Australia), Saturday 1st August, 1914:

JEWELS WORN IN 3400 B.C.

PRICELESS GEMS ON VIEW IN LONDON

Treasure-tombs of ancient Egypt continue to give up their priceless store of wonders which five thousand years ago decked the arms and the necks of queens and princesses of fabulous dynasties.... The most engaging is the Treasure of Lahun, which has been triumphantly looted from the mysterious Pyramid by Professor Flinders Petrie and his energetic little band of workers in the Fayum Province.... The result is that the most valuable group of jewellery that has ever reached Europe is now to be seen (guarded by a huge, but kindly-disposed policeman)....

These treasures were found buried (to quote the professor's own words), "in an almost incredible position".... in a recess about three feet wide and five feet deep, close to the sarcophagus, there stood two ivory caskets of jewels and vases and a large gold crown, all untouched and absolutely perfect....

BRACELET OF HETEPHERES I. EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO. ACC. NO. JE 53266. © LABORATORIOROSSO SRL



“One of the most interesting finds in the tomb was the queen’s jewel box. This lay beside the sarcophagus [and] as the clearing of the tomb progressed... there came to light a series of silver bracelets, inlaid with butterflies in semi-precious stones, lapis lazuli, beryl, and carnelian. There had originally been twenty of these, ten for each arm, graded in size to fit from wrist to upper forearms.”

—Egyptologist Dows Dunham describing the Giza tomb of Hetepheres, 1958.

Hetepheres I was a queen of the 4th-Dynasty pharaoh, Sneferu, and (probably) the mother of Khufu, builder of the giant pyramid in whose shadow her small tomb was dug from the bedrock.

The queen’s alabaster sarcophagus was already empty when her Giza tomb was discovered by George Reisner’s Harvard expedition in 1925. Reisner had suspected as much. Although the small tomb *appeared* intact, small chips from the joint between the sarcophagus and its lid had been found inside some boxes in the tomb. It suggested that someone had—long ago—prised off the lid. The silver bracelets mentioned above, however, were untouched.

Contemporary tomb reliefs tell us that it was the fashion of the day for both men and women to wear multiple brace-

lets on their arms. But the inclusion of the silver butterfly bracelets wasn’t simply about enjoying the afterlife in style. Like most Egyptian art, these butterflies carried a potent magical purpose. In this instance, it was to help guarantee the queen’s eternal life and rebirth.

Oversized butterflies feature prominently in many tomb scenes—particularly in portrayals of the Egyptian marshes which teemed with life. Such abundance was synonymous with fertility and creation, and so butterflies can be linked with both life and rebirth.

While Hetepheres’ mummy is missing, we can hope that her amulaic bracelets, packed with regenerative powers, are still doing their job.

L’OR DES PHARAONS (The Gold of the Pharaohs)

2,500 YEARS OF THE GOLDSMITH’S ART
IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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