FROM RIVER WEEDS TO REGAL FABULOUS: ICONOGRAPHY AND SYMBOLISM OF A 12TH DYNASTY EGYPTIAN DIADEM[1]

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Egyptian women's headdresses in the form of circlets, fillets and diadems are intriguing in their complexity. In response to the increased need to indicate social status in a poorly literate dynastic society, these items of personal adornment became a powerful form of non-verbal communication. Garlands, originally made from handfuls of river plants, gradually developed into innovative and imaginatively powerful visual symbols when fashioned from metal and a variety of semi-precious stones. Botanical motifs symbolic of the Nile River and the duality of a unified *Sema Tawy* (Two Lands) were incorporated into magical and superstitious symbolism that encompassed social, political, religious, mythological and amuletic contexts. The headdresses that were worn were not purely ornamental but, it was believed, also provided apotropaic protection for the head. Flower motifs, material and colour played an important role in their belief system. The iconography and symbolism incorporated into a delicately crafted gold wire diadem excavated from Princess Khnumet's 12th Dynasty (Middle Kingdom) tomb at Dashur (and currently housed in the Cairo Museum) will be systematically interpreted at primary and secondary levels in order to provide some insight into its owner. Given the relationship between form and function, a novel connection has been proposed between the iconography and symbolism, and the diadem's use during an annual Nile inundation cultic festival.

INTRODUCTION

Egyptian dynastic period feminine identity is generally defined in artistic representation by the emphasis on visual and external appearance. Women's headdresses were not purely ornamental, as the Egyptians adorned the head with innovative and imaginative symbols to delineate status leadership and signify cultic

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affiliations, thereby rendering these elite recognisable to a largely illiterate population. As attested in pre-dynastic rock art and pottery vessels, distinctive headdresses have served to delineate status within ancient Egyptian society from the earliest recorded times. The head, being the uppermost part of the human body, makes it instantly visible and thus capable of making a strong social, political or religious statement. The Egyptians adorned the head with innovative and imaginative symbols to distinguish leaders and signify cultic affiliations, incorporating divine attributes as part of the design. Although a substantial amount has been written about the use of materials, jewellery manufacturing techniques and definition of styles by recognised specialists, to date there has been limited investigation into the symbolism and the inherent iconography displayed by specific headdresses worn by a range of Egyptian dynastic women.

I propose that a particularly finely crafted Middle Kingdom diadem belonging to the 12th Dynasty princess, Khnumet-nefert-hezet (hereafter referred to simply as Khnumet), can be systematically interpreted to reveal multiple layers of symbolism. The use of provenance, decorative motifs, materials, colour, mythological linkages, and possibly also the occasion for which it was designed to be worn, will be discussed in order to reveal aspects of non-verbal communication. Princess Khnumet's familial affiliation, age, status, cultic or public roles, and to some extent possibly even her personal taste, will be investigated, as well as occasions on which the diadem might have been worn. The diadem has the potential, in its own unique way, to make its owner "come alive" thereby speaking volumes to the observer.

In order to interpret headdresses, it should be recognised that items of Egyptian jewellery were conceived within a matrix of symbolism and magic. Ritner (1993:23) considers magic to be both productive and destructive, as it "animates and permeates the cosmos, resident in the world, in the bodies of gods and men, and in the plants and stones of the earth". In the Papyrus of Ani, the head is associated with identity: "Thy Urtt Crown is upon thy head, thy headdress is upon thy shoulders, thy face is before thee; and those who sing songs of joy are upon both sides of thee" (Budge 1960:90).[2]

[2] Although Budge is an older translation, its elegant formal language was preferred over the

ADORNING THE HEAD WITH SYMBOLS

In the ancient world, headdresses worn especially by kings and queens in the form of a simple ornamented headband are referred to not as a crown but as a diadem.[3] The word derives from the Greek διάδημα *diádēma* translated as "to bind around" or "to fasten".[4] The forerunner of the diadem was originally a narrow band of leather or cloth, worn to keep long hair neatly out of the face and probably also served as a type of sweatband when working. The term was later applied to a metal headband made from copper, silver or gold, fashioned in a circular shape. These were often embellished with semi-precious or precious stones, sometimes incorporated into symbolic or cult-specific motifs. An impressive central forehead adornment could also form a focal point, projecting an image of nobility or importance of the wearer. In most cases, early headdresses were just a simple string of beads or a narrow band of precious metal worn around the head to indicate noble or elite status.[5] A circlet or chaplet, known in Greek as στέφανος *stephanos*, is translated as garland, wreath or open crown.

The amuletic character of Egyptian jewellery dictated that it was purposefully placed upon the vulnerable parts of the body, thereby acting as an extension of magical protective power. Aldred (1971:11) confirms that wreaths, garlands, chaplets, fillets and circlets played an important role not only as adornment but also in protecting the head. The florist's handiwork must surely have been amongst the earliest and longest-surviving crafts in ancient Egypt, as fresh flowers would have been an obvious pre-dynastic choice before developments in metallurgy and semi-precious stone cutting and inlay techniques. Ornamental headdresses worn by the

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more modern versions.

3 According to heraldry definitions, the crown or *corona* in various forms is traditionally the headdress worn by a monarch or a deity, symbolising their power, legitimacy or divinity whilst a consort crown is worn by the monarch's foremost female companion signifying her specific rank.

4 διάδημα , band or fillet: worn by the Persian king, X.Cyr.8.3.13, *Plu.2.488d*; by Alexander and his succors, Arr.An.7.22.2; and by kings generally, *Plu.2.753d*, D.S.20.54 (Liddell & Scott 1940).

5 στέφανος stephanos is used in reference to open crowns in "Alexandri," Plin. 15, 30, 39, § 132: "Aphrodites," *App. Herb*. 105 (Lewis & Short 1879).

wealthy, elite, royal and even the common folk are identified as the "boatman's circlet" from captions aligned to coffin pictures dating to the Middle Kingdom (Aldred 1971:33). In its simplest form, this appears to have been a form of chaplet, woven from plucked water-weeds that proliferated on the banks of the Nile. It was placed over the brow to keep the hair from blowing about in the prevailing strong north wind. The materials for the boatmen's circlet were freely available to all and during festivals were widely used as the iconographic and significant lotus blooms could be found throughout the nomes of Egypt. Indeed, floral bouquets are often interpreted as a visual pun for the hieroglyphic sign for life, *ankh*, and it is the word *ankh* that is most often used to denote "garland" notes Wilkinson (1994:124).

Over time, this rudimentary botanical garland prototype was adapted, translated into more permanent and decorative versions, manufactured from durable precious metals such as silver, copper or gold and embellished with colourful stones and decorative religious or amuletic motifs. Princess Khnumet, who was buried at Dashur, possessed a finely wrought, intertwined gold wire headband liberally sprinkled with blue, red, and green stones to represent dainty flowers. This circlet is generally considered one of the most delightful and almost whimsical imitations of the "boatman's circlet" style.

The relationship between the ancient Egyptian wealthy, elite and nobility and their headdresses, ranging from simple headbands to elaborate composite state or cultic crowns, is multi-faceted and open to interpretation on primary and secondary levels. This is largely because Egyptian minor arts such as jewellery were linked to both function and content. Items were thus not only intended to be enjoyed but also conveyed a message. Motifs were not haphazardly selected. Form, material and colour were relevant as was the religious or mythological connotation. Symbolism may, however, contain different meanings depending on the context and also change over a period of time. Without context or textual evidence meanings, which would have been perfectly obvious to the Egyptians, may elude the modern interpreter or be misconstrued. Wilkinson (1992:8) in discussing symbolism notes, "Egyptian artworks can often appear deceptively simple, and much can remain hidden from view without

knowledge of the symbolic repertoire which was used by the ancient artists and craftsmen. Many Egyptian works of art were designed, in fact, to be 'read' symbolically and to provide an underlying message which was an essential part of their composition." Wilkinson (1994:7) further suggests a number of aspects which can be incorporated into interpretation of symbolism but not all of these (actions or gestures for example) are completely relevant to the minor arts such as jewellery. Those aspects that are most relevant are material, colour, shape/form, number and hieroglyph. The primary level of interpretation used in this investigation focused on the types of metal and semi-precious stone together with manufacturing techniques and other forms of embellishment used by the state-employed goldsmiths and lapidaries. There is however also some evidence that private commissions were also undertaken for wealthy individuals who were not necessarily part of the court structure.

Symbolism ranged from the basic form of an object, its size, its colour and the materials used in its construction to its composition and any mythological representations. In many cases a multitude of symbolic details were all brought together in a single item thereby enriching it as a form of powerful non-verbal communication. A given form may have a variety of different symbolisms which may take on new meanings over time (Wilkinson 1994:25). Symbolism and mythology will be considered as the secondary level of analysis.

The secondary level of interpretation encompassed colour, shape/form, number and hieroglyph as well as mythological and religious connotations. These elements were incorporated into a specific item of jewellery thereby rendering it an interpretation of the Egyptian world view. The variety of circlets, fillets and diadems fashioned from precious metals and semi-precious materials indicate imagination and inventiveness, largely shaped by the dictates of culture and fashion over dynastic periods. Sir Flinders Petrie proposed that the single string of beads or narrow length of fabric in the form of a headband worn low on the brow were the forerunners of diadems (Vilímková 1969:10). A narrow hoop of sheet gold, resting on a broken Early Dynastic skull from Nag' el-Deir provides evidence of diadems being worn during the

Early Dynastic period. Although bent out-of-shape, the junction between the two ends is invisible indicating a highly skilled goldsmith. There are no indications that pendants or other embellishments were attached to the band.[6] The only artistic representation of a diadem from the Early Dynastic period is a string of beads worn over a wig belonging to Second Dynasty princess (Wilkinson 1971:20). The diadems which have survived from the Old Kingdom were purely for funerary purposes. Examples dating to the Fourth and Fifth Dynasty tombs at el-Giza are simple metal bands with a stylised papyrus-knot in a bow shape at the back. More elaborately decorated bands featured ibis or *akh*-birds between papyrus heads which, Wilkinson (1971:37-38) proposes, represented the spirit of the deceased.

The headdresses were not only responses to the need for delineating individual status in an increasingly hierarchical society but also an important aspect of self-adornment. This powerful form of non-verbal communication was combined with the increasing social, political or religious roles indicating a growing sense of individuality. Feminine state iconography was characterised by elaborate composite headdresses featuring impressive centrepieces. These often combined the uraeus, the vulture head, ostrich plumes, bovine horns and solar disks, all of which contained underlying messages in their form, use of colour and the choice of material. In contrast, it appears that botanical motifs were frequently used as embellishment on what can be construed as less formal diadems.

The main reason for feminine headdresses was not only purely ornamental. Aesthetically pleasing pieces or valuable materials appear to have been particularly prized by queens, princesses and elite women as indicative of their role in a specific cult or as affirmation of their social status and wealth. Commoners donned simpler, less durable versions fashioned from beads and fresh flowers for festivals and banquets, as indicated by various New Kingdom tomb paintings. The amuletic or magical function of these various headdresses have "largely been unexplored as has their role as a gendered artefact" and so too the "link between artefacts and identity as

[6] A museum catalogue reference for this particular piece has proved elusive in all the authoritative resources consulted.

an intrinsic property of social existence" (Graves-Brown, Jones & Gamble 1996:26). While archaeology provides names and some textual evidence of identity, societal roles and familial relationships of elite women, it does not inform about the individual who wore the specific diadem. There is a paucity of textual evidence about their lives and the roles they may have played in society, thereby rendering them "silent" in the historical record. It should be understood that Egyptian artefacts were generally conceived within a matrix of symbolism and magic. The interpretation of these diadems can, by extension, provide a more personal "voice" and insight into the multi-layered realm of self-expression and the manipulation of self-image in an increasingly material ancient society.

Headdresses conveyed a plethora of messages. Because of the precious materials used in their manufacture, they were indicative of royalty, power and wealth, thereby clearly depicting social status. In addition to being indicative of important cultic roles and worn by priestesses of Hathor or queenly roles such as "God's Wife of Amun", headdresses also bore important linkages to mythology as many of the motifs were connected with attributes associated with the goddesses Ma'at, Hathor, Isis and Nekhbet. Many of the elements used in the embellishment because of shape, colour or material had perceived amuletic, magical or apotropaic powers. Andrews (1990:6) advises that the words *mkt* (*meket*), *nht* (*nehet*) and *s3* (*sa*) translated as "amulet" derive primarily from the verbs meaning "to protect" or "to guard" while *wḏ3* (*wedja*) sounds the same as the word used to indicate "well-being". Although amuletic functions of certain motifs are readily recognised, the protective powers attributed to certain colours and types of stone are less obvious, thereby making each diadem a multi-layered expression of the individual owner. "It was mainly through symbols that the Egyptians sought to represent many of their ideas and beliefs about the nature of life and death and thus a primary form of their belief system," (Wilkinson 1994:7).

From diadems recovered from funerary contexts, it can be seen that some were obviously well-worn by their owners. As indicated by Tyldesley (1994:171), these often express delightful individuality and possibly even a glimpse of personal taste. Tomb paintings convey images of a variety of headdresses ranging from simple

garlands to formalized diadems that were worn at social functions such as banquets and festive events. The wearers have been identified variously as dancers and noblewomen. In accordance with their social status, the materials depicted appear to range from the simple lotus flower tucked into cloth strips and colourful intricately-beaded headbands and, ultimately, to the more formal and ornate bands fashioned from what appears to be a precious metal circlet inlaid with coloured stones. Indeed, there is no reason not to assume that women in Egyptian antiquity expressed themselves by what they wore. Questions can, however, be raised whether specific items were given as gifts by male relatives or commissioned by independently wealthy women who had access to a personal source of wealth and afforded the opportunity to visit court craftsmen, to commission items for their own delight and according to their own individual taste.

It is unclear from the available texts whether women regarded their jewellery as an investment for their future in case of hard times. As indicated by Tyldesley (1994:176), in dynastic Egypt as in many other ancient Near Eastern societies, where ownership of property by women was generally limited, items of jewellery often formed part of the dowry or were given by a husband at the time of the marriage. The jewellery worn by royal women was produced exclusively by workshops attached to the king's palace. With all the resources readily available, craftsmen were able to develop advanced techniques such as the intricate form of inlay known as cloisonné.[7]

Ancient women, in general, are referred to as being "silent" in the archaeological record as there is limited textual evidence of their personal lives and the role they played as individuals within society. Yet, the visual arts indicate distinct and changing styles of adornment over dynastic periods. In order to ascertain whether the voice of one of these "silent women" of Egyptian antiquity could be perhaps be heard, the symbolism inherent in a unique diadem whose provenance is well established was investigated. It belonged to Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet. This particular headdress

[7] Cloisonné is one of the most characteristic ancient Egyptian decorative techniques dating to as early as the Sixth Dynasty. Cell-like boxes or "cloisons" were formed by soldering metal strips at right angles to the surface of a sheet metal base. Semi-precious stones, glass or faience were cemented into the cell to form intricate designs and even scenes (Andrews 1990:88, 90).

conveys intriguing messages relating to her role in 12th Dynasty (Middle Kingdom) society. In addition to its provenance and the material used in its manufacture, floral and celestial motifs form an integral part of its interpretation. Elements of colour, form, number, symbolism, mythological linkages and magical association, together with the occasion on which it might have been worn were considered. The combination of parameters allows for speculation about the woman who owned and wore this unique headdress in life and ensured that it accompanied her into eternity. By systematically interrogating the multiple layers of symbolism incorporated into the embellishment of this particular piece, it has been possible not only to ascertain prevailing fashion but, more importantly, catch a fleeting glimpse of Princess Khnumet herself. Her elite status, familial affiliation, cultic or public roles and to some extent her personal taste have been combined with detailed descriptions, design techniques, decorative motifs, the use of colour and mythological linkages in order to interpret the visual message. This particular diadem has, in its own unique way, made its owner "come alive" and speaks volumes to the modern observer.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE "THE BOATMEN'S CIRCLET"

Given the variety of shape, colour and scent of Egyptian flowers, it is not surprising that headdresses made from botanical materials were favoured from pre-dynastic times, not only for their intrinsic beauty but also for symbolic reasons. Since the earliest times, the formal type of headdress now categorised as the "boatman's circlet" was worn by the royal and elite as well as wealthy men and women. Identified from reliefs and captions (Aldred 1971:33), the headdress is referred to in the Pyramid Texts as *ssd* (*she-shed*) "to adorn with a band" (Kerrn 1959:161, 162). Old Kingdom reliefs from the tombs of Sahura at Abusir, Aket-hotep and Mereruka at Saqqara depict scenes of boatmen wearing a variety of river weed garlands (see Fig. 1). In its simplest form, the headdress appears to have been a form of utilitarian garland, woven from the water-weeds that proliferate on the Nile, placed over the brow of field workers and boatmen to keep the hair from blowing about in the prevailing north

wind. Not only would it have been cooling but also practical as it would have shaded the eyes from the harsh sunlight.

Old Kingdom reliefs such as those in the Fifth Dynasty tomb of Queen Merysankh III, daughter of Queen Hetepheres II, granddaughter of Khufu at Giza, depict scenes of boatmen wearing flower-bedecked fillets whilst engaging in various activities such as jousting in their papyrus skiffs.[8] Breasted (1917:174–175) notes that these water craft were constructed from bundles of reeds (*shn,* derived from the verb "to embrace" and thus literally "an armful"), which were lashed together at intervals to form a wide and stable boat (*wsht*) that was narrowed at the end. The water contests dubbed "the Fisherman's Game" by Donnelly (2004:12) may have had a sporting significance, with the circlets having a primary or incidental meaning, similar to the laurel wreaths awarded to the victors of Greco-Roman games (Aldred 1971:33). Circlets were later worn by Egyptian kings and queens with the addition of the iconographic uraeus and/or vulture embellishment. A number of these cobra and vulture elements, made from precious metals, have been found in isolation during tomb excavations, possibly because the botanical matter of the garland has long since disintegrated.

Figure 1: Scene of "jousting" river boatmen. 5th Dynasty Mastaba of the brothers Niankhknum and Khnumhotep, Saqqara c. 2460–2430 B.C.E.
(Photo credit: Ayman Fadl . http://www.aldokkan.com/photos/saqqara_tombs/36_saqqara_tombs.jpg)

[8] Boats depicted in these scenes are often filled with baskets, lotus flowers, caged birds and livestock. These may be construed either as offerings as part of a cultic festival or as rewards in a competition designed to make the river men fall overboard. The event may have been related to an annual festival such as the flooding of the Nile. The aquatic jousts are a common theme and there are over 30 similar Old and Middle Kingdom depictions at sites ranging from Abusir and Beni Hassan to Saqqara.

Over time, with developments in metallurgy and stone-shaping techniques, the rudimentary garland prototype was adapted as it was translated into more durable, permanent and decorative versions. These were made from precious metals and embellished with colourful botanical motifs as the transient seasonal blooms were imitated and formalised with a multiplicity of layered, sometimes obscure meanings.

PRINCESS KHNUMET-NEFERT-HEZET'S WHIMSICAL WATERWEED GARLAND

Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet was a daughter of the 12th Dynasty king Ammenemet II (1991–1962 B.C.E.). During the 1894–1895 excavations by Jacques de Morgan[9] within the pyramid enclosure at Dashur, tombs of several family members were revealed. The remains of Khnumet were discovered together with three female relatives identified as Ita, Itiu-eret and Sit-hator-meret. It is uncertain whether they died at more or less the same time perhaps from disease, or within a short time span. The only surviving representation of Princess Khnumet is the lower part of a seated statue, found in Syria, so there is limited information available to reconstruct her life. As it was found in a separate jewel case in a niche of the burial chamber, the diadem being investigated most probably formed part of Princess Khnumet's court apparel. Investigation of her mummy, and those of the other royal women found in the same context, indicate that they were all petite (less than 1.52 m tall) and of slender build. Probably in real life they bore a striking resemblance to the svelte, elegant women usually depicted in New Kingdom tomb such as those belonging to Nakt, Nebamun and Senedjem as illustrated in Hawass (2008:70, 113, 183).

Given the lack of formal cultic items in the burial site, information gleaned from anatomical measurements and the dimensions of the diadem (a circumference of 18 cm), combined with the airy lightness and delicateness of the interpretation of a classic headdress, a strong impression is gained of a young woman who was most probably not weighed down by the responsibilities of formal royal or cultic duties. Given the

[9] Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service.

paucity of available information in her case, there is no confirmation in the funerary context whether Princess Khnumet's jewellery formed part of her dowry or whether this was standard court adornment for a princess, commissioned from the palace workshops for specific occasions according to personal taste. If the latter is the case, it thus reveals much about its young owner. Taking into consideration her youth, it is plausible that Princess Khnumet was one of the younger, unmarried daughters of King Ammenemet II and thus did not reach the age when she would be expected to play an important cultic or integral role as a member of the royal household.

Princess Khnumet's diadem,[10] embellished with inlaid carnelian, lapis lazuli and turquoise to represent dainty lotus and papyrus umbel motifs is a formalised yet feminine interpretation of the traditional "boatman's circlet". Wilkinson (1971:52) states that it exemplifies the highest level of Middle Kingdom workmanship. It is interpreted here not simply as an object of personal adornment but also as the only surviving example of an informal and non-state headdress that was possibly worn during festive occasions by young princesses. The popular floral and celestial symbols were considered to have had protective amuletic and magical power[11] and according to Wilkinson (1994:17) may be interpreted at primary and secondary levels each having its own symbolic significance depending on the context.

Resembling a garland of intertwined wild flowers, the diadem is formed by ten gold wires caught at six points by a quatrefoil element formed by four lapis lazuli papyrus umbels, joined at their base around a central carnelian boss (see Fig. 2). This

[10] The majority of examples of ancient Egyptian headdresses including circlets, fillets and diadems worn by women are housed in the Egyptian collections of museums such as the Cairo Museum in Egypt and the Metropolitan Art Museum in America. These generally have sound archaeological provenance, having being found in well-documented mortuary contexts albeit in the early days of the discipline. The examples originated with the simple beaded or gold fillets of the pre-dynastic era and continue throughout early to late dynastic Pharaonic Egypt.

[11] The most commonly recognised forms of embellishment found on ancient Egyptian feminine headdresses associated with sacred cults are those incorporating the rearing cobra known as the uraeus signifying the Lower Egyptian goddess Wadjet and the vulture signifying the Upper Egyptian goddess Nekhbet. Various forms of ostrich plumes were associated with the goddess Ma'at, while the cow horn-sun disk combination was linked to the goddess Hathor.

particular motif can be seen on a variety of Old Kingdom head-band diadems dating to the Fourth Dynasty thereby indicating its antiquity. As described by Andrews (1990:102), each of these six quatrefoils is connected to the next by a complicated interweaving of gold wires, united in pairs at frequent intervals by gold tube beads from which hang tiny oval lapis lazuli beads resembling flower buds. The wires in turn pass through rings on the back of each flower. To these are soldered small flowers or stars (depending on one's interpretation), each with five turquoise points inlaid in the cloisonné technique, radiating from a carnelian centre.

Figure 2: Gold, carnelian, lapis lazuli and turquoise floral circlet of Princess Khnumet-nefert-hezet (12th Dynasty, Middle Kingdom), Dashur. Diameter 18cm. Cairo Museum Cat. No. 52860)
[Aldred, C (1971) – Plate 8. Photo credit Albert Souchair]

Connotations of colour and material

In the harsh sunlight and pale desert, vibrant colours assumed a particular importance as a means of adding individuality. Colour was regarded as being integral to and almost synonymous with substance in the Egyptian belief system. Translated as *iwen*, the concept of colour not only referred to external appearance, but also encompassed the "character" of the material as indicated by Wilkinson (1994:104) in this extract from the Memphite Theology: "And so the gods entered into their bodies of every kind of wood, of every kind of stone, of every kind of clay, of every kind of thing

which grows" (Wilkinson 1994:82).

Egyptian jewellers favoured raw materials that combined inherent physical qualities with mythological associations, perceived magical properties and symbolic significance. Ritner (1993:23) notes, however, that although magical power was believed to permeate a material, visible object, magic was itself not considered tangible. Stone was important in the Egyptian worldview not only because of its decorative qualities but for its symbolic value, timeless endurance, perceived mythological connotations and medical or magical properties.

Known as *nub* or *hedj*, gold was synonymous with wealth and valued as "a divine and imperishable substance, its untarnishing nature providing a metaphor of eternal life and its brightness an image of the brilliance of the sun" (Wilkinson 1994:83). Gold was perceived to have supernatural qualities, representing immortality in the afterlife and although it was commonly accepted that it was impossible to know the colour of the gods as their substance and being were considered "beyond human scrutiny and comprehension", it was accepted that gold was nevertheless "the flesh of the gods" and particular deities such as Amun-Re. Colinart (2001:1) notes that the colour yellow was generally used in representations for the female skin. Wilkinson (1994:113) writes that Re was sometimes referred to as "the mountain of gold", while Hathor, Re's daughter, was called "The Golden One" and believed to be a personification of the precious metal. Mirrors made of gold were often decorated with either an image or symbol of Hathor, thus symbolically representing the goddess in both substance and form. Isis was also associated with this metal, often placed on the hieroglyph for gold.

Lapis lazuli called *khesbed* was a synonym for "joy" and "delight". Dark blue was equated with the cosmic waters and the river Nile. It was generally regarded as being symbolic of the heavens, the day-time blue sky as well as the colour of "the all-embracing, protective night sky". The hair and beards of the gods were said to be of lapis lazuli. Sometimes the body of the creator god Ptah was also represented in blue. Andrews (1990:37) advises that, traditionally associated with wisdom throughout the ancient Near East, lapis was also considered to have high amuletic potency. Wilkinson

(1994:88) notes that the Book of the Dead specifies "whereby the heart is given to a person in the underworld" that these amulets should be made from lapis lazuli.

Turquoise was called *mafkat*, also a synonym for "joy" and "delight" and linked to Hathor, who was known as "Lady of Turquoise". Symbolically, light blue was treated as being functionally the same as green, sometimes referred to as grue. Used for its green hue, turquoise denoted fresh, new vegetation, fertility and growing crops as well as the concept of life. More specifically, in the magic-religious context the papyrus plant was equated with resurrection. In hieroglyphs, the word for green (*wadj*) meant "to flourish"' or to be "healthy" (Andrews 1990:7). The Pyramid Texts read "O you who stride out … strewing green stone, malachite, turquoise of the stars, if you are green, then the king will be green even as the living rush is green". Chapter 77 of the Book of the Dead indicates that the deceased should become as the great falcon "whose wings are of green stone" (Wilkinson 1994:108). Wadjet, the protective and tutelary goddess of Lower Egypt usually depicted as a cobra, was also known as "the green one".

Red carnelian, known to the Egyptians as *herset*, meaning "sadness",[12] was associated with blood, energy, power and life and by extension also associated with the desert god Seth, patron of chaos, the evil snake Apophis, destruction and storms. The colour red, or *desher*, symbolised regeneration, dangerous forces and the hostile desert regions. Indeed, red ink was used to write the hieroglyph "evil", names of monsters and unlucky days of the year. Pinch notes that in the Papyrus Ebers, the goddess Isis appeals to be protected from "red things", an association with aggression and the enemies of Egypt (Pinch 2001:182, 184).

Botanical elements

A great variety of water plants grew along the waterways of the Nile. Lakes and associated plants were a central feature of a temple garden and, together with the Nile River, were often the site for certain ritual ceremonies. One of these took the form of

[12] The Oxford English Dictionary determines "carnelian" as a perversion of "cornelian", linking its roots with the Latin word for flesh, *carn-* which makes sense given its reddish-brown colour.

greeting the infant sun god Ra also known as Horus "the child", who, in mythology, emerged from a lotus lily and was later believed to be reborn daily. A range of these funerary and ritual ceremonies are depicted on tomb paintings and temple reliefs, such as the ritual hunting of Seth in the form of a hippopotamus by the pharaoh, in a show of overcoming the forces of chaos and restoring Ma'at, as depicted at Edfu.[13] As illustrated on Early Dynastic statues and reliefs, garlands made from the blue and white water lily varieties found Nile waters were among the oldest adornments at festivals and banquets (Wilkinson 1994:54; Hepper 2009:16). Princess Khnumet's diadem features both lotus and papyrus motifs which contained underlying messages in their form and use of colour. Sacred to the goddess Hathor, considered both restorative and protective and referred to in many Egyptian texts as *seshen*, the water lily also known interchangeably as the lotus, had particular significance in Egyptian symbolism. Because the flower closes at night and sinks underwater, emerging to open again at dawn, the lotus was a popular signifier of the sun, creation, rebirth and resurrection (Wilkinson 1994:198). The lotus was believed to be the first living entity to emerge from the primordial waters of Nun when the world was created and Ra emerged. The Book of the Dead contains spells for "transforming oneself into a lotus", thereby fulfilling the promise of resurrection (Allen 1960:156). Papyrus Ryerson provides the following version in Spell 81:

> Spell for assuming the form of a lotus. To be said by Osiris N.: 'I am the pure lotus which came forth from the Sunshine and is at the nose of Re and at the nose of Hathor. I accomplish(ed) the mission(s); I [seek] it (for) Horus. I am the pure lotus which came forth from the fields of Re.'

Papyrus Millbank contains a slightly different version:

> Assuming the form of a lotus: 'I am the pure lotus which came forth from

[13] Kings were often rowed on their lakes in an imitation of the passage of the sun across the sky (Wilkinson 1998:128). There is ample evidence of rowing the statue of the deity across to the West Bank of Thebes as occurred during the Opet Festival. At Karnak, the goddess Mut was rowed on her sacred lake during an annual festival whilst at Dendera, the Festival of Rowing Hathor had the purpose of pacifying the angry goddess after her mythological adventures in the desert (Wilkinson 1998:125-128).

> the Sunshine and passes over [the nose] of Hathor, because I am the pure lotus which came forth from the field.'

An extract from the Spell 62 of the Coffin Texts gives an indication of the importance accorded to botanicals in Egyptian beliefs and society: "May you pluck papyrus plants, rushes, lotuses and lotus buds" (Wilkinson 2009:78, citing R. O. Faulkner). Princess Khnumet's diadem features what have been identified as many open lotus flowers as well as buds thereby symbolically representing not only creation, rebirth and resurrection but also joy and delight.

In a prayer inscribed in his tomb, the Theban nobleman Nebamun requests:

> An offering of good and pure things, lotus flowers
> and buds and all kinds of herbs of fragrant smell
> (O Amun Ra) that thou mayest give health to the Ruler
> … on the part of the Ensign Bearer, Nebamun (De Garis Davies 1923:31 pl. xxxiii).

Species of the long-stemmed, robust water hyacinth were often depicted under boats and in canals. These, together with the broad-leaved pondweed, are most often associated with the "boatmen's circlet" illustrated in Old and Middle Kingdom tombs. Known as *mehyt*, papyrus is probably the most widely recognised and most frequently illustrated of all the Egyptian water plants. Used in the word *Ta-Mehu*, papyrus was used to denote Lower Egypt. Given its symbolic importance in daily life, papyrus pillars were said to hold up the sky and represented the concept of "around". The hieroglyph was frequently paired with the *sa* sign of protection, as in the phrase "All life and protection are around". As an important iconographic symbol, papyrus plants were often depicted entwined with lotus plants, representing the unification and duality of *Sema-Tawy*, the Two Lands. Equated with concepts such as "flourish", "joy" and "youth", papyrus was considered symbolic of life and *idhu*, the primeval marsh (Wilkinson 1994:123). Symbolically it was used to represent the goddesses Hathor, Bastet and Neith. Hathor as goddess of heaven was often depicted as a cow with a papyrus umbel between her horns as a symbol of the sun.

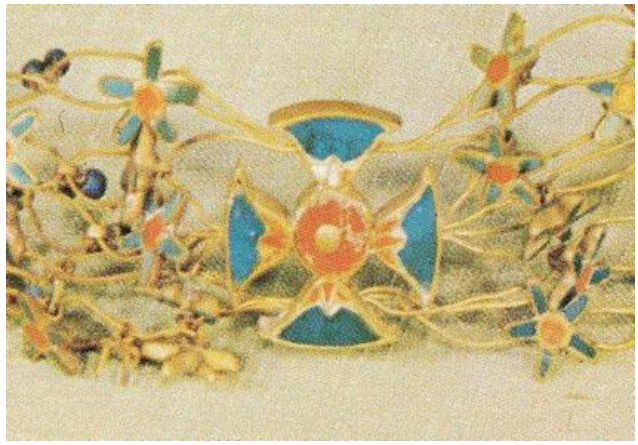

Figure 3: Detail of quatrefoil and floral elements in the floral circlet of Princess Khnumet
[Aldred 1971, Plate 14. Photo Albert Souchair]

What is particularly distinctive about the design of this specific diadem, apart from the obvious link with the traditional boatmen's circlet, are the six delicately inlaid papyrus-shaped quatrefoils as focal points (see Fig. 3). These can be interpreted as representing the concepts of life, joy, protection and, perhaps most pertinently, in the case of Princess Khnumet, youth. It should also be borne in mind that the Egyptians delighted in forms of visual punning and floral bouquets containing papyrus and lotus blooms can be interpreted as a visual pun for the hieroglyphic sign for life, *ankh* and as a coincidence, it is also the word *ankh* that is most often used to denote "garland" (Wilkinson 1998:124). The diadem in its entirety thus denotes the ancient Egyptian concept of life.

Celestial elements

Interpreted on an alternative level, although the myriad dainty turquoise and carnelian five-pointed elements of the diadem are usually interpreted as being floral, these can also be viewed as celestial motifs. Considered timeless and constant, stars were known as *seba* or "the imperishable ones" and played a vital role in the Egyptian calendar. Equated with immortality, stars were connected with the afterlife in a number of different ways, indicates Wilkinson (1994:131). In the complex conception of their cosmos, stars known as the "Followers of Osiris" were also found representing souls

in the *Duat* (the afterlife). He further notes that stars were represented by the hieroglyphic sign which was often used to adorn the body of the personified sky goddess Nut. Depictions of yellow stars were also popular additions to the deep blue ceilings of tombs, the blue colour once again forming a symbolic link with the symbolism associated with lapis lazuli. Representations of two very distinctively shaped stars decorated with granulation appear on other items of jewellery, such as the two necklaces illustrated in Fig. 4 (below), that were also found in Princess Khnumet's cache. A number of un-Egyptian designs and techniques such as granulation, point to intriguing Minoan and Syrian links. A similar star element has been found on a Cretan gaming board from Knossos (Aldred 1971:115).

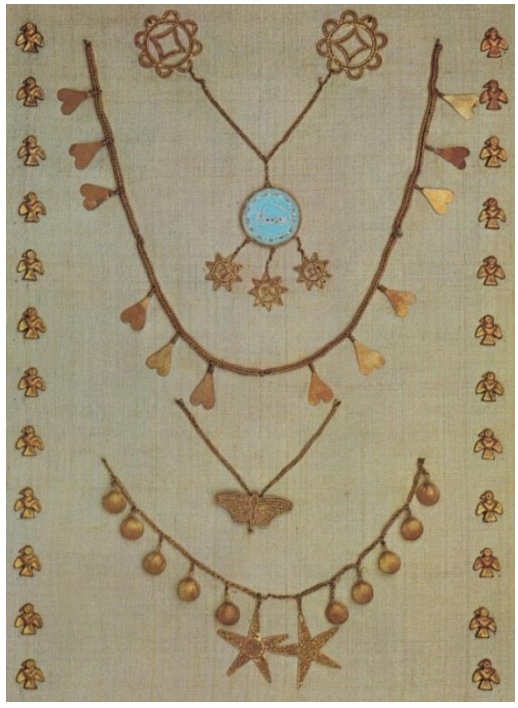

Figure 4: Two versions of Khnumet's stars (Cairo Museum, Cat. No. 52859)
[Aldred 1971, Plate 15. Photo Albert Souchair]

Forming a hub in the centre of each quatrefoil, the red carnelian disk with a gold dot in its centre bears a close resemblance to the all-important solar disk which was one of the most frequently used symbols, revered in various theologies as being

representative of the solar deities Ra and Amun-Ra. It was often used to depict "eternity". In this case, the flower motif can be linked to the Hermopolitan myth in which the sun rose out of a lotus each morning; sunset in the papyrus fields was a common euphemism for death. Accordingly, in the interrogation of the diadem, the red carnelian disk represents the "the sunrise, the daily rebirth of the sun and eternal resurrection" (Kozloff 2015:296).

A passage from the text titled "The tale of Sinuhe" in Papyrus Berlin (B268-274), which dates to the time of Ammenemet III (1818-1773 B.C.E.), shortly after Khnumet's death, makes reference to the "Lady of Heaven" and the "Lady of Stars". It refers directly to a delicate diadem, certainly a similar piece to hers:

> Now they had brought with them their necklaces, their rattles and their sistra, and they presented them to His Majesty: 'Your hands be upon this beauty, enduring king, these insignia of the Lady of Heaven! May the Golden One (Nub) give life to your nostrils, the Lady of the Stars enfold you. South-crown fares north, North-crown south, joined and made one in the words of your Majesty, on whose brow the uraeus is placed' (Parkinson 1997:41).[14]

It comes as no surprise then, that carnelian was used to represent the sun in this diadem. Because of its gold flecks, lapis lazuli was used as an additional representation of the star-filled sky thereby combining the concepts of immortality and eternity.

[14] The Gardiner version (1916:268–279) translates necklaces as counterpoises but the two versions are very similar in translation. Allen (2015:143–145) translates necklaces as menits which were multiple strands of beads held together by a decorative counterpoise that hung between the shoulders, thought to be used by priestesses in temple ceremonies. The menit made a rustling, shushing sound as it was twirled backwards and forwards. The sistrum is a metal musical instrument with disks that move backwards on wires to create a rattling sound. Menit, sistra and gold were specifically associated with the goddess Hathor, who bore the epithet Lady of the Sky (*nbt-pt).* Allen translates the reference to stars not quite as elegantly as Sayce as "May the Gold give life to your nose and the star's lady unite with you".

The importance of numbers

In the Egyptian belief system, numbers reflected divine planning and cosmic harmony. They were aware of numerical "patterns" and it is this approach that accounts for a great deal of symbolism associated with numbers in numerous myths and texts and exhibited in their art forms. Wilkinson (1994:126-139) asserts that numerical symbolism can, however, change depending on context or circumstance but the number four traditionally denoted totality and completeness. According to Pinch (2001:182) it was rare that more than four colours be included in one magic spell; in the case of Khnumet's diadem, there are four if one views the gold as yellow. Represented in this diadem by the papyrus motifs, the symmetrical number four appears more frequently in Egyptian art and ritual than any other. Four represented the cardinal points of the Egyptian landscape naturally orientated according to the Nile's north-south axis and the sun's east-west movement. References were made to these points in the Pyramid Texts as the four pillars of the sky or the four legs of the cosmic cow and in cosmological context, as the four quarters of the heavens, these being the earth, sky, heavens and netherworld.

Symbolism of occasion: links to Nile festivals

Turning now to an investigation of occasion and potential links to festivals, the Nile River was a central feature of Egyptian life and often the site for ritual ceremonies and festivals

It is my contention that this particular style of diadem can be linked to the festivity and celebration associated with Hapy[15] (see Fig. 5), revered as god of the annual Nile inundation but not the actual river as such and therefore, by extension, the expected fertility and celebration associated with the event. Some of his honorifics included "*Lord of the Fishes and Birds of the Marshes*" and "*Lord of the River Bringing Vegetation*". Depicted in androgynous male form, with pendulous feminine breasts, large belly and skin which was usually coloured blue or green thereby representing water, Hapy combined both the male and female life forces (Kákosy 1982:290).

[15] Depending on the translation, the alternative spelling of Hapi is used in many texts.

Contrary to Egyptian mythology, he was not associated with a wife or sister (Lazlo 1982:298). Hapy was usually adorned with a headdress strongly reminiscent of the boatmen's circlet. This was constructed of either papyrus plants or lotus flowers, denoting the Lower and Upper Egyptian regions respectively but sometimes knotted together symbolising the unified land (Armour 1986:180). Princess Khnumet's diadem can be interpreted as symbolic of the unified Egypt as well as the fertility of the land as it combines both of these motifs.

In the Coffin Texts, the concept of Hapy is more fully developed:

> I am the Nile God, the Lord of the Waters,
> Who brings vegetation,
> And I will not be driven off by my enemies.
> I have come that I may make the Two Lands Green (Armour 1986:181)

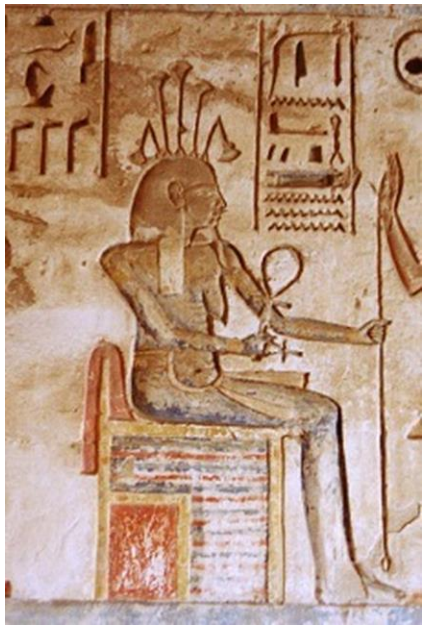

Figure 5: Hapy, god of the Nile inundation, crowned with papyrus (British Museum)
http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/glossary.aspx?id=166

Daughters of Ramses III are shown carved into rooms of the high gate of Medinet Habu wearing long-stemmed papyrus headdresses which are joined halfway up by

what appears to be some kind of binding. From the same period, a podium headdress sprouting long-stemmed papyrus umbels, dramatically coloured red and gold, was depicted as being worn by Queen Nebttuai, a daughter of Ramses III. Queen Tausret, wife of Sety II (19th Dynasty) is depicted in her tomb wearing a similar headdress. While some stems are upright, others are bent and the whole is distinctly reminiscent of those depicted as being worn by the Nile god Hapy.

The Egyptian cosmogony not only shared a belief that there were two Niles but also the importance ascribed to its annual flooding. The river on earth was believed to issue from the underworld bringing water for life while another mirrored in the heavens was believed to bring rain. Shavit (2000:81) notes that the various cosmological belief systems all share "the perception of overwhelming importance ascribed to the Nile" and its annual flooding that "coincided with the helical rising of Sirius, the brightest **star** in the earth's hemisphere just before dawn". The emphasis on star (the author's own), is drawn specifically in connection to the earlier discussion on the incorporation and earlier interpretation of these elements in Princess Khnumet's diadem. Morenz (1973:150) confirms that there was a Nile cult that celebrated a great festival to celebrate the onset of the flood during which offerings (*wdn*) were cast into the river. A feast known as *tp-nwy*, "The First of the Flood", captured on Papyrus Harris, refers to a Nile festival in honour of the creator deities Ptah and Nun. The Great Hymn of the Aten from the Amarna period (Shavit 2000:80) confirms this:

> You make Hapy (h'py) (the Nile God) in Amduat (the netherworld),
> You bring him (as floodwaters) when you will to nourish the people,
> You make a heavenly Hapy (rain) descend for them.

A number of versions of a "Hymn to the Nile"[16] have been recorded on papyri.[17] The

[16] The most complete surviving hymn to the Nile flood is a literary composition written in Middle Egyptian. All surviving copies date to the New Kingdom (+/- 1550–1069 B.C.) leading some scholars to argue that it was composed during this period. Although no author is identified, the style of language and vestiges of other compositions suggest that it may in fact date to the Middle Kingdom (+/-2025–1700 B.C.). It is entirely possible that a festival to celebrate this occurrence could have included the singing or recitation of this hymn.

[17] It is acknowledged that there are a variety of different translations of this text including the version by Helck (1972) which are more modern. The version contained in Thatcher (1907)

first verse addresses the mysterious origins of the Nile, extolling it as the bringer of life and prosperity not only to the land and its peoples but also the gods as indicated in verses 4 ("*sees that each god receives his sacrifices*") and 10 ("*all the gods adore thee*"). Allusion is made to "*the orchards of Ra*", noted by Sayce (1890:48) as mentioned in Chapter 81 of the Book of the Dead. Mention is also made of the creator god Ptah, and his offspring Seb/Geb and Nepera/Nut, underlining the belief in the celestial origins of the Nile.

> **Adoration to the Nile!**
> Hail to thee, O Nile!
> who manifesteth thyself over this land,
> and comest to give life to Egypt!
> Mysterious is thy issuing forth from the darkness,
> on this day whereon it is celebrated!
> Watering the orchards created by Ra
> to cause all the cattle to live,
> thou givest the earth to drink, inexhaustible one!
> Path that descendest from the sky,
> loving the bread of Seb and the first-fruits of Nepera,
> thou causest the workshops of Ptah to prosper!

A royal decree by Ramses II detailing a festival in honour of the Nile was first recorded in stone at Gebel el Silsila (close to Thebes and seat of power during this period) where the height of the inundation was measured. It lists offerings made during the annual feast dedicated to Hapy. In Verse 8 of Sayce's translation (1890:53) of "Hymn to the Nile" reads as follows:

> O Inundation of the Nile,
> offerings are made unto thee,
> oxen are immolated to thee,

and Foster (1975) were also consulted. However, for the purposes of this paper, the translation by Sayce (1890:48–54) was preferred for its more elegant translation and lyrical qualities.

Great festivals are instituted for thee.
Birds are sacrificed to thee,
gazelles are taken for thee in the mountain,
pure flames are prepared for thee.
Sacrifice is made to every god as it is made to the Nile.

From the Silsila text translated by Breasted (1906:157) it appears that cakes, bread, wine, meat and grain were cast into the river further corroborating evidence of the festival and sacrificial rituals. Verse 11 provides the information that "A festal song is raised for thee on the harp, with the accompaniment of the hand". He further notes that women and singers are depicted on monuments and in funerary art as clapping their hands in time to the musicians.

Despite being a central event in the Egyptian year, there is no surviving temple dedicated to the Nile Flood, although there is speculation that there may have been a cult centre at a place named Per-Hapy. Here, it is interesting to note that an annual modern festival known as *Wafaa al Nil*, celebrating the rising waters that ensured a prosperous harvest, was observed until as recently as the 1970s when the river was permanently dammed at Aswan. Lindsay (1968:344) notes that an Arab writer, Ibn Abd-el Hakam (circa 871) recounted the custom of casting a young girl into the Nile during the month of June. As there is no corroborating evidence of this practice, this can be viewed as perhaps being a folktale based on the ancient Egyptian festival rites of taking sacred objects, usually a statue of a divinity, in this case goddesses such as Isis, Hathor or Neith, to the river and surrounded by an audience of onlookers immersing them to ensure an abundant annual inundation and favourable new year.[18] In later syncretistic Greek and Roman literature, reference is made to the goddess Minerva being generated as a virgin in the waters of the Nile. Lazlo (1982:295) notes that according to Anobius' *Adversus Nationes* (4:16) and Cicero's *De Divinatione* (3:23:59) both were aware of a goddess who was said to have "come from the Nile". Lazlo argues that this observation by both chroniclers may have originated "in the

[18] The Egyptian king (or his representative) would not only have been the main celebrant, but along with his close family, also as the defender of Ma'at, one of the beneficiaries thereby reaffirming continued fertility and abundance across the land.

Egyptian concept of the birth of Neith in the Primeval Water".

It is entirely possible that a festival to celebrate this occurrence could have included the singing or recitation of a hymn extolling the beneficent Nile. Frankfort (1952:2) further observes that on ritual festive occasions such as these in the ancient Near East, "for a short while, the human and the divine met" during a solemn, ritualistic performance that had wide public appeal and was probably much anticipated as cause for joyous celebration. Herodotus apparently witnessed a mock battle with papyrus stalks at Papremis in the Delta, "where there was a feint of preventing the statue of the god Horus from entering the temple of Isis" in a mythological formula for immortality through rebirth, writes Frankfort (1952:6). This particular event underlines the presumption indicated earlier, of boatmen wearing waterweed fillets engaged in what is commonly referred to as "jousting". Hapy's attributes and the connotation of annual Nile festivals corresponds with the concept of not only the traditional floral "boatmen's circlet" that may possibly have been worn during festivals but by extension also graceful, regal diadems worn by women such as Princess Khnumet when attending these occasions.

Evoking the senses

Volioti (2011:140) indicates that Egyptian art was intricately linked with the nature of the materials out of which the objects were crafted with emphasis being placed on the importance of "the material nature of objects and people interacting with them". In essence, outward appearance was equally as important as inner substance and so the physical qualities of materials were more often than not magnified by symbolic or mythological associations and perceived magical properties, together with cognitive and bodily engagement with these objects. Human senses play an important role in how artefacts such as jewellery are used and experienced by their wearers. Although closely linked to self-image, material objects can also be interpreted by how they were perceived in the wider context, in this case both the wearer and the observer.

With respect to the senses, there is a probability that the diadem examined evoked the sense of sight by the use of symbolic decorative motifs, colourful semi-precious

stones and superior manufacturing techniques. There was probably also visual and tactile appreciation for the quality of work in this exquisite piece. In some instances, the sense of smell would be very powerful and evocative as additional fresh lotus blooms could also be tucked into metal circlets such as this, during festivals and banquets. Evidence of wear-and-tear are indicative of a favourite piece which defines not only the owner but also the appreciation for this specific and conspicuous article of adornment but also to a certain extent, is quite indicative of the young woman who wore it during her lifetime.

Princess Khnumet's diadem evokes both visual and tactile senses in the use of symbolic decorative motifs, beautifully inlaid stones and superior manufacturing techniques. Admired as one of the triumphs of the Middle Kingdom jewellers, the gold wire garland sprinkled with colourful flowers is a delightful combination of fragility, with whimsical flowers scattered in the random profusion of nature. The diadem conjures the image of a petite and lively young woman who danced joyfully at Nile festivals, with the garland sparkling and shimmering in the bright sunlight, thereby creating a sensory experience for both the ancient wearer and observer.

CONCLUSION

Housed in museums worldwide, existing diadems have to date been analysed primarily according to the materials used and ancient jeweller's techniques. The diadems that have survived the ravages of time and looting form part of a relatively small and hardly representative collection of the many that must surely have existed. As modern women are defined by their adornment, there is no reason not to assume that women in Egyptian antiquity likewise expressed taste, fashion, wealth and even individuality by what they wore.

Although textual evidence is sparse, there is sufficient artistic evidence in the form of reliefs, paintings and statuary available to corroborate the examples that have survived. The results of this investigation indicate the value of using colour, botanical and celestial iconography and symbolism as an approach to interpreting a specific

category of ancient Egyptian jewellery, namely diadems. Undoubtedly, a variety of connotations and perceptions were attached to specific diadems, depending on the jewellers who made each item and the original context by the commissioner of the work. The symbolism and iconography of diadems appear to have been composed of several overlapping but also interlinked concepts, so any interpretation of an individual piece may be misleading or even naïvely simplistic in the absence of textual sources. Nevertheless, the potential has been identified for an extended in-depth investigation into the zoological, celestial, architectural and abstract forms of headdress that were worn. Although very few diadems illustrating these forms have survived in the archaeological record, there is ample representation in artistic material in the form of wall paintings, reliefs and statuary by the ancient Egyptian people who relied heavily on powerful non-verbal forms of communication and visual punning in the interpretation of their world. The intriguing aspect of Princess Khnumet possibly wearing this extraordinarily beautiful and finely crafted diadem, heavily laden with magical meaning and symbolism on a festive occasion to celebrate the annual inundation, raises a new aspect of the materiality of Egyptian jewellery and links between form and function.

In summation, ancient Egyptian women who had access to a personal source of wealth and were afforded the opportunity to commission items for their own delight and according to their own personal taste, can be defined by their headdresses that express wealth, status, fashion and, to some extent, even individuality. Although the interpretation of an individual diadem such as this may be misleading or even naïvely simplistic in the absence of direct textual sources, the symbolism of Princess Khnumet's fabulous but whimsical diadem appears to have been composed of the interlinked concepts of symbolism and magical beliefs. The investigation indicates not only powerful forms of non-verbal communication but also the value of using symbolism as an approach to gain insight into the multi-layered realm of self-expression and the manipulation of self-image in an increasingly material ancient society.

Given the common practice of visual punning of bouquets as being linked to the concept of "life" combined with the magical and apotropaic symbolism of lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian, papyrus, lotus and what can be construed as celestial motifs, I have taken the liberty to interpret the message conveyed by this diadem as being — "All youth, joy, life and immortality surround her [Princess Khnumet's head]".

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