



An Unpublished Silver Toe Ring with A Fly (JE 70385)

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The ancient Egyptian mythology is ultimately a reflection of the ancient Egyptian culture, in which animals and insects were revered as embodiments of forces of life that transcended good and evil. The Egyptian glorification of insects is expressed through a wide spectrum of art, artifacts, and texts from the predynastic era to the Graeco-Roman period, revealing a variety of cultural roles, ranging from practical to conceptual. This paper aims at publishing a silver toe ring with a depiction of a fly that dates to the 3rd-6th century AD. It is currently preserved in the storerooms of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 70385). It was discovered by W. B. Emery in tomb 47 at Ballâna during his excavations in Lower Nubia between 1928 and 1931 as a rescue project before a second rising of the Aswan Low Dam. This paper also includes a comprehensive elaborate description of the silver toe ring as well as an analysis of the fly's symbolism and genesis in Ancient Egypt. In addition, it sheds the light on tomb 47 at Ballâna, the identity of its owner, and some of its precious collections. The findings of studying the silver toe ring with a fly suggest that toe rings were exceedingly prevailing during the X-Group culture. Moreover, the presence of the fly on the ring's bezel indicates that they were worn as magical amulets to protect its wearer and ward off the insect's dangers.

Flies in Ancient Egypt

The ancient Egyptians held a deep reverence for their surrounding natural world. This kind of veneration was manifested in the adoption of animals and insect imagery as symbols of the divine and kingship. During the summer season, ancient Egypt was usually plagued with the attack of the sticky and obnoxious flies that seem to be tormenting the ancient Egyptians throughout their long history (Kenawy and Abdel-Hamid, 2015). Flies were among the significant creatures depicted in ancient Egyptian writings and art. The different types of flies shown in Egyptian art are difficult to identify (Arnold, 1995); nevertheless, at least two species have been distinguished

among the remains of Tell El-Amarna as the housefly, *Musca domestica*, and the flesh-fly of the Sarcophagidae family (Panagiotakopulu, 2003).

Houseflies were a source of annoyance and disturbance in ancient Egypt (Kenawy and Abdel-Hamid, 2015). In addition, the fly whisks, which resemble but are not interchangeable with the flail (*nhh*), depicted in the hands of the pharaohs and nobles by the ancient Egyptian artists are a potent reminder of how irritating the hosts of flies were in ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians, however, seemed to have held flies in high esteem, presumably because of this insect's quick reaction, tenacious and persistent presence (Arnold, 1995).

The Etymology of the Fly

The fly symbol was depicted in hieroglyphs as early as the pre-dynastic Naqqada II phase. The ancient Egyptians used the word (*ff*) to refer to the fly in the ancient Egyptian language  (Wb I, 1926; Gardiner, 1957; Faulkner, 1962). The plural form of the word (*ff*) is (*ffw*) and it is worthy here to state that the term (عَفُوف) is still used in modern times to refer to flies in the colloquial Egyptian language (2002, تيمور).

The Symbolism of the Fly

Flies represent one of the most intriguing insects' symbols, and the ancient Egyptian appear to have employed three types of fly epitomes: flies as amulets; flies as awards and flies as seals (Kritsky and Cherry, 2000). The fly amulets were produced in Egypt since the pre-dynastic Naqqada II phase. The origin of the fly amulets is still obscure; however, Nubia has been suggested since the Nubians were renowned for wearing amulets and talismans for good luck and protection from the evil eye (Singer, 2009). Moreover, the Nubian warriors' tombs revealed a substantial number of large fly pendants made of silver, gold, bronze, and ivory that were often discovered in pairs and worn by armed males around the neck. These pendants were frequently offered as honorific rewards to those who had demonstrated military valor. The existence of these ornaments may be attributed to the fact that Nubian soldiers were reputed to be tough, tenacious fighters, comparable to the determined aggressiveness of the Nilotic fly. Later, the Egyptians adopted the fly as their own military symbol, indirectly showing respect and pledging allegiance to the skill and valor of the Nubian warriors (Firth, 1927; Török, 1997; Markowitz and Doxey, 2014).

Fly amulets varied in size, and they were represented in the distinctive V-shape, accentuating the insect's head and wings. They were made from different materials including gold, lapis lazuli, faience, carnelian, ivory and amethyst. They were often worn with a variety of beads around the neck, wrist, waist, or sometimes the head (George, 2015). It was believed that wearing a fly amulet protects its wearer against diseases, as a protective mechanism, insects bite and prevent pesky flying creatures (Garnett, 2017).

From the Old and Middle Kingdoms, flies were depicted on several ritual artifacts such as the "magic wand", which was commonly carved from hippopotamus ivory and was likely intended to fend off evil spirits and protect its owner from harm (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995; Singer, 2009). During the Middle Kingdom, flies gained more

significance and appeared as beads strung on necklaces. Moreover, small fly pendants were placed within a mummy's wrappings in connection with the Egyptian mystical belief of reuniting the spirit (*ba*) with the body and protecting the dead against the evil in the afterlife (Krtisky and Cherry, 2000). It was noticed that flies lay their eggs on the deceased before the proper compilation of the embalming, and the freshly hatched flies were spotted departing the corpse within a few days. Therefore, flies were associated with the (*ba*) or the departing spirit leaving the remains of the deceased before the burial (Haynes, 2013). Some evidence for this belief still exists even today in certain places in Egypt where the metallic green or blue flies should not be killed as it is believed they contain the spirit of a person who died recently in the area (Krtisky and Cherry, 2000).

It was not until the Second Intermediate period when large fly pendants were offered to reward significant military achievements due to the fly's resemblance to the persistence of the soldiers. In this context, the fly is portrayed as the hieroglyphic sign of the word "determinator," and is the symbol for the sound "aff" (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995). Furthermore, it has been assumed that the fly was depicted with this word as it corresponds to the determined enemy; no matter how often it is "shooed" away, it returns, and one's exasperation with a bothersome fly is regularly expressed in a sound similar to "aff". As a result of the fly's determinacy and tenacity to congregate around battlefields where blood is being shed, it has been claimed that the fly was associated with military activities and conflicts (El-Dorry, 2017).



Fig. 1: The golden fly necklace of queen Ahhotep at the Egyptian Museum. (Hassan, 2017).

Remarkably, the most spectacular example of the large fly pendant is the necklace of queen Ahhotep (fig. 1), which has three golden symmetric flies hung by a loop in its mouth and is now displayed in the Egyptian Museum (Hassan, 2017). Her sons Kamose and Ahmose presented her this golden chain in recognition of her contribution to the fight against the Hyksos. It should be mentioned that during the New Kingdom, the fly-shaped pendant was called the "Golden Fly", the "Golden Fly of Valor", or the "Order of the Golden Fly", and it was an honorable medal offered to the Egyptian courtiers for their bravery and tenacity in the battle and while attacking the enemies (Singer, 2009).



Fig. 2: A faience fly amulet, 664-332 BC, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (The Met, 2020).

Fly amulets and pendants continued to exist during the Late Period with the same previously adopted powers and purposes (fig. 2) (The Met, 2020).

During the Graeco-Roman period, fly amulets were still in use, with the notion that they had positive attributes that could be conferred onto the possessor magically. A

pink agate fly amulet (fig. 3) is one of the best examples that witness the consistent employment of fly amulets during this period (Kenawy and Abdel-Hamid, 2015).

In the Bible, the fly is described among the ten plagues that inflicted Egypt as a punishment from the God of Moses upon Egypt's idolatry and stubbornness of its pharaoh (Lockyer, 1988). The flies represented the fourth plague of Egypt as: "*Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and the ground on which they stand.*" (Exodus 8:21). Another mention of the fly in the Bible is "*In that day the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria*" (Isaiah 7:18). In this context, the fly refers to the army of Egypt in reference to the soldiers' persistence, courage, and tenacity (Singer, 2009).

It should be mentioned that the modern Arabic word of the fly (دُبَابٌ، دُبَابَةٌ) is derived from the name of Beelzebub, the patron deity of the Palestinian city of Aqir, since the fly returns every time it has been pushed away (كُلَّمَا دُبِبَ... أَب) (St-takla, 2014). Beelzebub signified the "god of flies" and was invoked to send the flies and drive them away, particularly from the sacrifices (Lockyer, 1988). The Jews mocked pagan gods and referred to Beelzebub as Baalzebub (بَعْلَزَبُوب) or Baalzeboul (بَعْلَزَبُول), comparing the god to a pile of dung and his followers as flies (St-takla, 2019; Kadmon, 2019). He was also mentioned in the Old Testament as "*Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury*" (Book of Kings II 1:18).

The Cemetery of Ballâna, Lower Nubia

The cemetery of Ballâna is located on the western bank of the Nile River, 290 km to the south of Aswan, directly opposite the cemetery of Qustul, which is located on the Nile's eastern bank (fig. 4). Both cemeteries are in Lower Nubia, on the boundary between Egypt and Sudan, between the first and second cataracts of the Nile (Salem *et al*, 2019). After the construction of the High Dam, the original location of the Ballâna cemetery has been drowned by Lake Nasser's water (Lobban, 2003).

The site was unknown until 1931 when Walter Bryan Emery began excavating the tumuli. Consequently, 122 graves were designated as Ballâna Culture or the X-Group culture (350-600 AD). These tombs date from the



Fig. 3: A fly pink agate amulet from the Graeco-Roman period. (Kenawy and Abdel-Hamid, 2015).

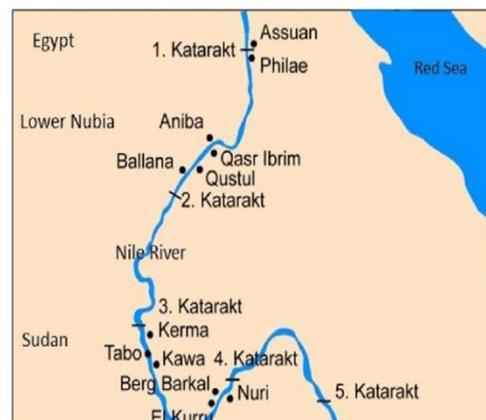


Fig. 4: The location of the cemetery of Ballâna and Qustul. (Salem *et al*, 2019).

collapse of the Meroitic culture to the arrival of Christianity at Nubia (Emery, 1938; Adams, 1967).

Meanwhile, Reisner is considered the first archaeologist to lead extensive efforts to chronicle and classify the history of Nubia. His excavations (1907-1911) were prompted by the danger posed to the site resulting from the construction of the High Dam (Bianchi, 2004). In alphabetical sequence, Reisner designated the Lower Nubian chronological phases as follows (Institut Du Monde Arabe, 1997; Emberling and Williams, 2020):

- Prehistoric and Neolithic cultures.
- Group A (3700-2800 BC), which reached its peak at the time of the Egyptian unification (Bianchi, 2004; Roy, 2011; Emberling and Williams, 2020).
- Group B (2600-2160 BC.) where Buhen has been redefined (Lobban, 2003; Emberling and Williams, 2020).
- Group C (2300-1500 BC), which replaced Group A and paralleled the Second Intermediate Period in ancient Egypt.
- The Kushite culture (900-400 BC) with Napata as the capital (Dann, 2009).
- The Meroitic civilization (400 BC-400 AD).
- The X-Group culture or post-Meroitic (400-600 AD), the transitional period from classical Meroitic Culture and Christian Nubia (fig. 5) (Dann, 2009; Lobban, 2021).

Culture	Phases	Date
Kushite	Napatan	900-400 BC
	Meroitic	400 BC-AD 400
X-Group	"Ballana culture"	AD 400-600
Christian	Transitional	AD 550-600

Fig.5: The Chronology of Lower Nubia's cultures. (Dann, 2009).

The Blemmyes, sometimes referred to as Nobadians, were an X-Group people who most likely descended from the tribe described as *Beja* by the early Arab writers (Emery, 1948), and as *Βλέμμυες* by the Greeks. They settled in the Eastern Desert and conquered Lower Nubia in the 2nd century AD. During the Roman rule, the south of Egypt suffered from their successive incursions (262-276 AD) until the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), who succeeded in signing a peace treaty with the Blemmyes (Mokhtar, 1990; 2008, الجمل; Dann, 2009).

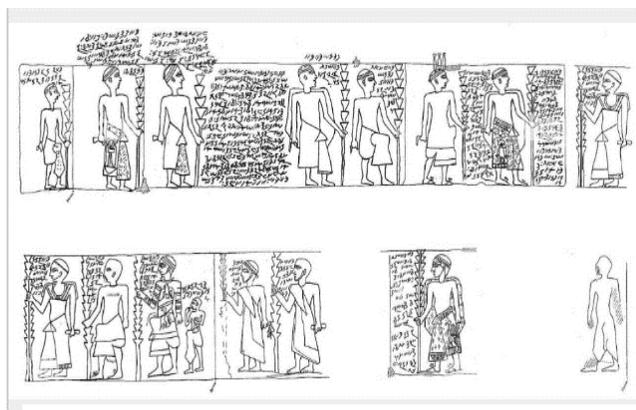


Fig. 6: Relief of the Blemmyes on the walls of the Ethiopian chamber at the temple of Philae. (Griffith, 1912).

The Blemmyes continued to attack Roman Egypt, provoking the Roman emperor Marcian (450-475 AD) to sign a peace treaty in 451 AD, allowing them to visit the sanctuary of goddess Isis in the temple of Philae (fig. 6), make offerings to her, and borrow her statue on their major feasts until the closure of the temple (535-537 AD) by the Byzantine emperor Justinian (Mokhtar, 1990; 2008، الجمل).

The X-Group people were converted to Christianity (450-580 AD), and Nubia was under the religious and political dominance of Byzantine Egypt, which was terminated by the Arab conquest in 642 AD, although Nubia remained Christian for another seven centuries (Kirwan, 1935; Adams, 1967).

Aside from the Egyptian impact, the Ballâna culture was inspired by the Meroitic iconography and ritual practices (Trigger, 1969a; Harkless, 2006; Dann, 2013). For instance, the kings of the Ballâna culture were buried in extraordinary enormous tumulus tombs, a Meroitic influence, with massive mud-brick mortuary chapels. The tumuli tombs contained furniture, model ships, pottery, jewelry, weapons, sacrificial animals as well as skeletons of sacrificed human individuals who had presumably been buried alive. Moreover, the Ballâna royal tombs are famous for their impressive silver crowns inlaid with semi-precious stones, frequently with crescents or plumes motifs resembling the *atef*-crown or Isis-form crown from ancient Egypt or likewise from Meroë (Trigger, 1969a; Dijk, 2007; 2020، البطراوى).

Tomb 47 at Ballâna, Lower Nubia

Tomb 47 is one of 122 tombs on the western bank of the Nile River belonging to the Ballâna group, which was built slightly later than those of Qustul (fig. 7). It is one of the earlier burials located at Ballâna. The tomb's construction date spans between 430 and 450 AD (Dann, 2007a; Dann, 2007b; Török, 1987). It has an indirect access and is roughly 23 m² in size (fig. 8). The tumulus above tomb 47, like the rest of the other Ballâna tombs, was covered with a layer of schist pebbles. It has a diameter of 39.30 m. and a height of 6.82 m. The tomb has a unique design with no resemblance either at Ballâna or Qustul. Even though the main part of the tomb was plundered, the burial chamber was discovered intact (Emery, 1938; Williams, 1991; Dann, 2007a).

The tomb begins with an entrance ramp descending from the south into an open

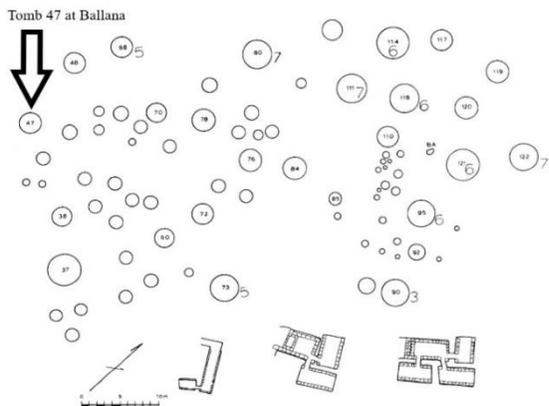


Fig. 7: Tomb no. 47 at Ballâna cemetery.

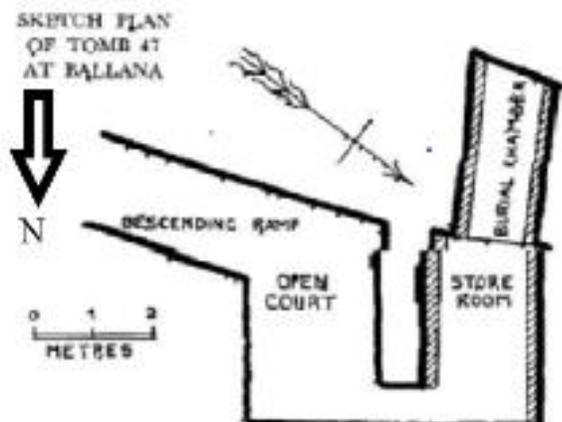


Fig. 8: The layout of tomb 47 at Ballâna. (Emery, 1938, Fig. 6; Trigger, 1969b).

court, from which a small arched doorway provided access to a vaulted brick chamber. An arched doorway on the western side of this room leads straight to the burial chamber. Following the burial, this door was plastered to deceive the robbers that there are no further chambers (Emery, 1938; Trigger, 1969b).

A horse skeleton with a collar of tiny bronze bells was discovered in the ramp, while two young sacrificial slaves whose bones were strewn by the robbers were found in the forecourt. Near the human remains, a bronze casket, decorated with impressive scenes representing God Harpocrates kneeling while wearing the double crown of Egypt upon his head, a bronze patera, a bronze flagon, and an iron sword were uncovered (Emery and Kirwan, 1938, Emery, 1938; Bacon, 1963).

Across the doorway of the main hall of the tomb, a skeleton of a woman was found together with four bronze bowls, an iron spearhead, a bronze incense burner and a few pottery vessels. Inside the concealed burial chamber, the remains of a corpse lying on its back in an extended position and adorned with extensive jewelry, in a good state of preservation, was discovered. The identification of the body was vague because of the moisture that affected it severely. However, the surrounding grave goods and the profusion of jewelry, 99 pieces of jewelry, notably the elaborate silver crown upon the head embellished with silver plumes and the disk of goddess Isis (fig. 9) (Kirwan, 1963), suggested that it was a lady, most likely a queen, nicknamed 'Jingling Millie' (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938; Trigger, 1969b; Dann, 2007a). According to Török, most of the crowns revealed in the royal tombs of Ballâna were either Egyptian or at least were manufactured by Egyptian artisans (Török, 1987; Dann, 2007a).

In addition, a mass of jewelry was found over the skeleton, indicating that the owner could not have worn it all at the same time during her life. Thus, the queen was probably buried with all of her adornments and those she could not wear were positioned in the proper place on her body. Twenty silver bracelets, for example, were spotted on the



Fig.9: The silver crown found on the head of the queen of tomb 47 at Ballâna. (Emery, 1938).



Fig. 10: The six silver toe rings with a fly found in tomb 47 at Ballâna. (Emery and Kirwan, 1938, Pl. 42).

arms, a heavy silver torque around the neck and nine sets of earrings on each side of the head. Furthermore, silver and coral anklets were located on the legs and the toes were adorned with a variety of silver toe rings, six of which are ornamented with miniature bezels in the form of the fly amulet, which is believed to ward off one of the pests of Nubia (fig. 10) (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938; Kirwan, 1963; Then-Obluska, 2018).

A comparable fly ring was found in a massive tumulus tomb at Firka on the east bank of the Nile, nearly a hundred miles to the south of Wadi Halfa. Other parallels of the fly emerged in the royal burials of Ballâna, Qustul, Firka and El-Zuma, on the eastern bank of the Nile about 20 km downstream from Jebel Barkal, including fly-shank beads, silver fly amulets (fig. 11), and large gold and ivory fly pendants (Kirwan, 1935; Then-Obluska, 2018). It should be highlighted that most of the fly amulets discovered in these tombs date from the period of the Egyptian dominance over Nubia during the New Kingdom. Additionally, the discovered golden fly pendants were recognized as being originated from the Meroitic period (Firth, 1927; Then-Obluska, 2018).



Fig. 11: Stippling silver fly amulet and fly-shank beads. (Then-Obluska, 2018, Fig.4).

Different colors of adornments were represented in the artifacts associated with the queen’s body such as red, black, bronze, green, white, blue, coral, orange, purple and yellow, but with silver appearing the most frequently. Almost 73.3% of the queen’s jewelry is composed of silver, indicating that there was an increased emphasis on the use of elaborate silver adornments in the Ballâna tombs. For the rest of the tomb’s materials, silver was also the most commonly occurring material, accounting for almost 50% of the objects unearthed in the tomb (fig. 12). Furthermore, the majority of the artifacts were decorated with various designs

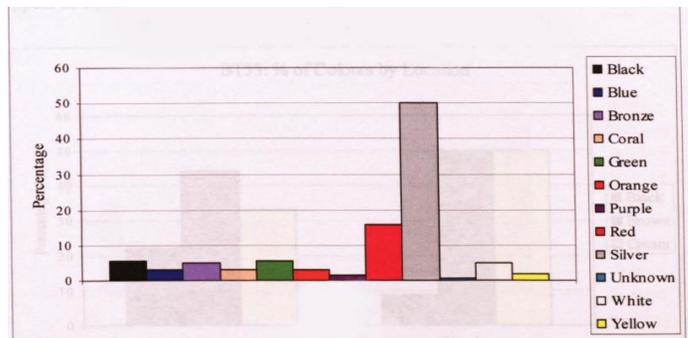


Fig. 12: Percentage of silver artefacts found in tomb 47 at Ballâna. (Dann, 2007b).

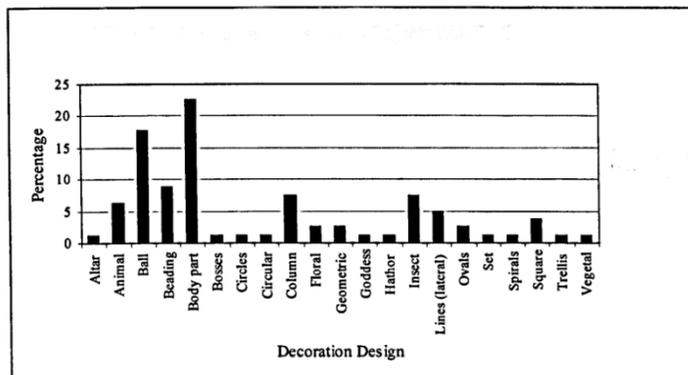


Fig. 13: Decoration design found on artefacts in tomb 47 at Ballâna.(Dann, 2007b).

and motifs i.e., Hathor, floral designs and insects including flies (fig. 13) (Dann, 2007b). It is worth noting that the artifacts revealed in tomb 47 were by far the largest collective find of jewelry unearthed at the Ballâna tombs (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938).

The Silver Toe Ring with A Fly from Tomb 47 at Ballâna

➤ **Object Type:** Toe ring (fig. 14).

➤ **Excavator:** W. B. Emery.

➤ **Provenance:** Found on the left foot of the queen in tomb no. 47 at Ballâna, Lower Nubia (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938).

➤ **Culture:** The Ballâna culture.

➤ **Date:** 3rd-6th century AD.

➤ **Material:** Silver.

➤ **Dimensions:** Length: 2 cm and diameter: 19 mm. (Emery and Kirwan, 1938).

➤ **Current Location:** The Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 70385).

➤ **Description of the Ring:** This toe ring is one of the six silver toe rings found on the left leg of the queen in the burial chamber of tomb 47 at Ballâna (fig. 15). It is a plain oxidized convex toe ring in the form of a crescent-shaped hoop with open terminals (Emery and Kirwan, 1938). The hoop is hollow cast and decorated on the bezel with a representation of a soldered fly that is solid cast and filed as it was cut from a single piece of silver together with the head and wings.

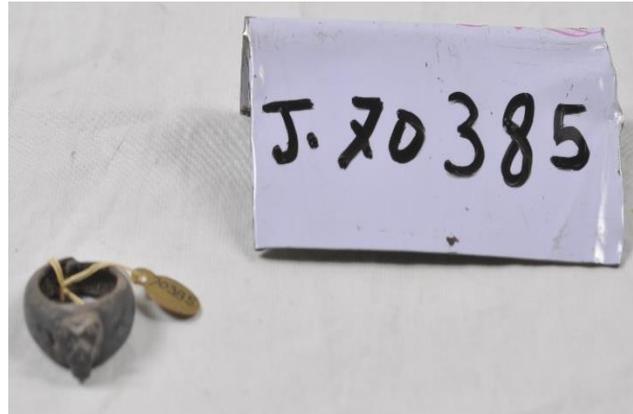


Fig. 14: The silver toe ring with a fly from tomb 47 at Ballâna. (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).



Fig. 15: A closeup for the front and back of the silver toe ring with a fly. (© Egyptian Museum, Cairo).

The silver fly figure is distinctly V-shaped, highlighting the head and the wings of the insect. The details of the eyes, head, neck, and wings are also presented. In addition, the insect's neck and wings are emphasized by incised vertical lines and oblique strokes, recreating the fly's wing ribs. Moreover, the surfaces were carved professionally maintaining the smooth rounded edges throughout the fly's figure.

It should be mentioned that fly amulets were commonly used to protect against misfortune and disease. They were also rewarded for military achievements and bravery in battles as flies were admired for their persistence and tenacity.

➤ **The Function of the Toe Rings:** Wearing toe rings was highly practiced in Ancient Nubia and this is evident through the large number of the toe rings revealed in the different tombs of Ballâna, Qustul, Firka, El-Zuma and others. They were used among the luxurious pieces of funerary jewelry to express the common belief in eternal life after death. They were also worn as a part of the body adornments and to protect its wearer from any danger, particularly if they included a specific type of amulet (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938; Kirwan, 1963; Then-Obluska, 2018).



Fig. 16: The copper alloy toe ring found on the skeleton at Tell El-Amarna. (Stevens, 2013).

Unlike Ancient Nubia, toe rings were not common in ancient Egypt, nonetheless, two skeletons for men, excavated in 2011 and dating back more than 3300 years, were unearthed to the south of Tell El-Amarna. Both skeletons were found adorned with a copper alloy toe ring (fig. 16), the first-time archaeologists have encountered this type of copper jewelry associated with ancient Egypt (Stevens, 2013). The archaeologists believed that the toe rings were likely worn while the individuals were still alive. One ring was detected on the second toe in the right foot of a man aged around 35-40, who had experienced multiple fractures during his life, but the second man was found

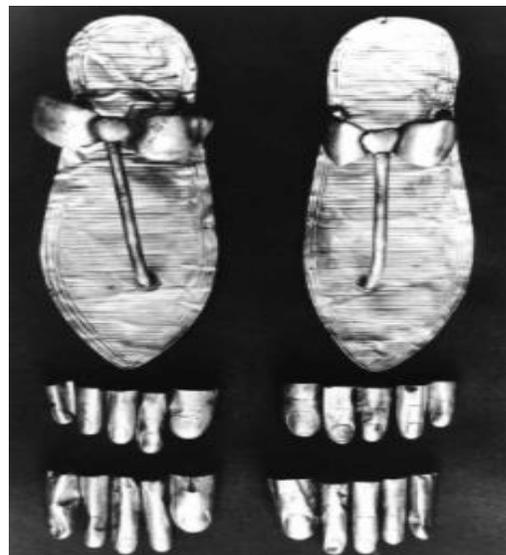


Fig. 17: Golden toe and finger caps of king Tutankamun. (Veldmeijer, 2011).

wearing a toe ring as well with no signs of physical injury. This sparked a dispute among archaeologists over the purpose of toe rings, whether they were worn as a magical or medical healing device or simply as a body adornment (The Archeological Institute of America, 2013).

As for the toe caps or the toe stalls, which differ in design and function from toe rings, they were pieces of gold jewelry meant to protect the mummies' extremities during the burial. They were also thought to keep the deceased safe from both magical and physical hazards, such as damage that could occur during the mummification process (Ikram, 2003). Additionally, they were sometimes used to substitute missing digits on the deceased. The majority of the discovered stalls date back to the New Kingdom, with those of king Tutankhamen being the most renowned (fig. 17) (Colazilli, 2012).

With reference to Ancient Nubia, the royal tombs revealed several examples of the golden finger and toes caps, which appear to be a direct adoption of the Egyptian religious beliefs and cultural traits (Riedel, 2019).

Silver in Ancient Egypt

Silver appeared in Egypt at least as early as the pre-dynastic period, however, it was relatively a scarce metal. It was used in the manufacture of ritual and funerary objects and personal ornaments such as mirrors, necklaces, and amulets (Schorsch, 2018).

Silver is known in the ancient Egyptian language as (*hd*) ḥ, the same word used to refer to the white color in hieroglyphs but written with the determinative of the precious metal ḥ,   (Gardiner, 1957; Schorsch, 2001). The term is also used to describe the color of the sun at dawn, moon, and stars. In addition, silver was referred to as the "white metal" (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995). Due to its pale color, the Egyptians associated silver with the moon, ritual purity, and the bones of the gods (paired with their golden flesh). Although Thoth was the major deity of the moon, silver was not particularly favored for his representations. Solar deities such as Horus and Hathor had also lunar aspects that were connected with silver. In addition, Nefertum, the god of healing, beauty, and perfumes, was portrayed in many silver statues more frequently than any other deity; yet the correlation between Nefertum and silver finds no analog in textual sources (Schorsch, 2001; Schorsch, 2018).

Silver appears to have had a higher value in ancient Egypt than gold, as it was included first in the list of commodities under the Old Kingdom (Gale and Stos-Gale, 1981). Silver jewelry was typically thinner than gold, as seen by the bracelets of 4th dynasty queen Hetepheres. A silver cache was excavated at the site of Tod revealed silver vessels with Cretan influence dating back to the reign of Amenemhat III of the 12th dynasty (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995). From the New Kingdom onwards, there was a plentiful supply of silver and the gold/silver ratio remained relatively steady at 2:1 till the Persian dominance in Egypt (Gale and Stos-Gale, 1981).

In contrast with gold, which was known to have been brought from the Eastern Desert and Nubia, the local sources for silver were obscure as there is no evidence that the Egyptians mined silver. It was either brought in the course of trade or tributes from

conquests in Syria, Palestine, etc. (Gale and Stos-Gale, 1981). Ancient records also indicated that silver was imported from western Asia and the Mediterranean (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995).

Conclusions and Analysis

Undoubtedly, the silver toe ring with a representation of a fly found in tomb 47 at Ballâna shows interestingly a remarkable example of jewelry adornments worn by the X-Group people, dating between 430 and 450 AD. In addition, it depicts several of the X-Group culture's adopted burial traditions, ritual practices, and manufacturing skills and the availability of resources and materials. Based on studying the silver toe ring (JE 70358), some findings are concluded as follows:

- On one side, toe rings were extremely prevalent, either in daily life or burial customs, during the X-Group culture and the extending nearby tombs as well such as the cemeteries of Qustul, Firka and El-Zuma. They were simply used as valuable pieces of body adornments and in the case of tomb 47, the fly amulet was soldered to the silver toe ring to provide it with more magical powers and features to ward off the dangers that might be caused by the insect (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938; Kirwan, 1963; Then-Obluska, 2018). On the other side, toe rings were not popular at all in ancient Egypt; nonetheless, two recent skeletons were discovered wearing copper alloy toe rings, although their exact function is still a subject of debate (Stevens, 2013).
- The X-Group people relished exquisite jewelry and paid great attention to the body adornments, as evidenced by the amount and splendor of the jewelry revealed in tomb 47 at Ballâna (Kirwan, 1963). In this context, the queen of tomb 47 was probably buried with all her adornments, and those she could not wear were arranged in the correct position on her body. Some of this jewelry had previously been worn during her lifetime, while others had not, and they were particularly made to be buried with her among the funerary jewelry (Emery and Kirwan, 1938; Emery, 1938; Kirwan, 1963, Dann, 2007b).
- Almost 50% of the unearthed artifacts in tomb 47 at Ballâna are made of silver. Furthermore, about 73.3% of the jewelry worn by the queen are silver adornments, suggesting that the numerous silver objects that were found in the royal tomb are most probably examples indicating royal regalia (Dann, 2007b; Then-Obluska, 2018). It also implies that there was an increased emphasis on the use of elaborate silver adornments in the Ballâna tombs. In addition, it demonstrates that silver was of particular importance during the X-Group culture, since Nubia was renowned for being a major source of exotic commodities such as gold, silver, and electrum (Dann, 2007a; Dann, 2007b; Klemm and Klemm, 2013; Markowitz and Doxey, 2014).
- The representation of the fly on the toe ring is considered an illustrative aspect of resemblance between the equipped grave goods of the ancient Egyptian royal tombs and the X-Group royal tombs of Ballâna. The fly epitome was introduced in hieroglyphs and the ancient Egyptian culture, since the pre-dynastic Naqqada II, in the form of amulets, seals, and jewelry (Kritsky and Cherry, 2000).

Although Nubia has been suggested for being the origin of the fly amulets in Egypt, a large amount of the small fly amulets found in these tombs were recorded from the time of the Egyptian domination over Nubia during the New Kingdom (Singer, 2009; Then-Obluska, 2018).

➤ It was not before the Second Intermediate period when large fly pendants were used as an award for valor and significant military achievements. Gold and silver fly pendants and fly beads found in the X-Group burials were identified as having originated from the Meroitic period (Firth, 1927; Singer, 2009; Then-Obluska, 2018). In this regard, the uncovered large golden fly pendants richly correspond to the Egyptian golden fly pendants, indicating a profound entanglement between the Egyptian and Nubian materials and cultural features during that time.

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خاتم إصبع قدم من الفضة على شكل ذبابة غير منشور (JE 70385)

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المخلص

تعتبر الأساطير المصرية القديمة في نهاية المطاف هي انعكاسا للثقافة المصرية القديمة والتي تتضمن تبجيل الحيوانات والحشرات باعتبارها تجسيدا لقوى الحياة التي تفوق الخير والشر. ففي هذا السياق تم التعبير عن تمجيد الحشرات المصرية من خلال مجموعة واسعة من الأعمال الفنية والتحف والنصوص من عصر ما قبل الأسرات وحتى العصر اليوناني الروماني، مما يكشف عن مجموعة متنوعة من الأدوار الثقافية، تتراوح من العملية إلى المفاهيمية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى نشر خاتم إصبع قدم من الفضة مع تجسيد للذبابة على موضع النص من الخاتم. يعود تاريخ هذا الخاتم إلى ما بين القرن الثالث والسادس الميلادي وهو محفوظ حاليًا في مخازن المتحف المصري بالقاهرة تحت رقم (JE 70385). تم اكتشاف هذا الخاتم بواسطة و. ب. إييري في مقبرة رقم 47 بالبلانة و ذلك خلال أعمال التنقيب التي قام بها في النوبة السفلى بين عامي 1928 و 1931 كمشروع إنقاذ قبل الارتفاع الثاني لسد أسوان المنخفض. يتضمن هذا البحث أيضًا وصف شامل تفصيلي للخاتم بالإضافة إلى تحليل رمزية الذبابة ونشأتها في مصر القديمة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على مقبرة رقم 47 بالبلانة، هوية صاحب المقبرة، وعرض لبعض من مقتنياتها الثمينة. تشير نتائج دراسة خاتم إصبع القدم المصنوع من الفضة على شكل ذبابة إلى أن خواتم إصبع القدم كانت سائدة بشكل كبير خلال حضارة المجموعة X. علاوة على ذلك، يشير وجود الذبابة على الخاتم إلى أنه تم ارتداؤه كتميمة سحرية لحماية مرتديه ودرء أخطار الحشرات المختلفة ولاسيما الذباب.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

تميمة الذبابة؛ خاتم إصبع؛
مقبرة 47؛ حضارة
المجموعة X؛ مقابر
البلانة.

(JAAUTH)

المجلد 22، العدد 1،

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