

**Scarab Pendant**  
**The British Museum**

From Egypt

Reign of Senwosret II, 12th Dynasty, around 1890 BC

**Winged scarab of electrum, inlaid with carnelian, green feldspar, and lapis lazuli**



This piece of jewellery is a pendant in the form of a winged scarab. It is made of electrum (a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver) inlaid with carnelian, green feldspar and lapis lazuli. Two small tubes on the underside of the object were used to suspend it.

The central ornament forms the praenomen (first name) of King Senwosret II, Khakheperre. The name is composed of the sun disc (phonetic *re/ra*) scarab (phonetic *kheper*) and the rising sun sign beneath (phonetic *kha*). Because the beetle lays its eggs in a ball of dung and pushes it around, the Egyptians used it as an image and metaphor for the passage of the sun across the sky. The young scarab beetles hatch out of the ball of dung (equivalent to the sun), which emphasizes the concept of new life and rebirth through the sun. Either side of the Kha hieroglyph is a papyrus flower, another symbol of rebirth. A similar object was excavated in a tomb dating to the Middle Kingdom (2040-1750 BC) at Riqqa in 1912-13.

R. Parkinson, *Cracking codes: the Rosetta St* (London, The British Museum Press, 1999)

C.A.R. Andrews, *Catalogue of Egyptian antiquities* (London, The British Museum Press, 1981)

C.A.R. Andrews, *Ancient Egyptian jewellery* (London, The British Museum Press, 1996)

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