

Gold Earring of Tawosret The British Museum

From Tomb no. 56, Valley of the Kings, Thebes, Egypt
19th Dynasty (around 1200-1186 BC)



This earring is one of a pair found in the tomb of a royal child in the Valley of the Kings. It bears the name of Tawosret, the principal queen of Sety II and regent during the reign of his successor Saptah. As Saptah had no obvious successor, Tawosret then took the throne. Her death marked the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty. This earring may have originally come from her tomb in the Valley of Kings, subsequently taken over by her successor Sethnakht.

Tawosret's name is placed within a cartouche and surmounted by ostrich feathers. The cartouche is curiously positioned so that the hieroglyphs would be upside down when the earrings were worn.

The technique used for the inset cartouche is *cloisonné*, a process that used as early as the Fourth Dynasty (about 2613-2494 BC) but was most popular in the Middle Kingdom (2040-1750 BC) when semi-precious stones, glass and faience were used.

It is not certain how this type of earring was worn. The ear lobe could be stretched so that it passed between the ends of the earring, which clipped onto the lobe when it was released. Alternatively, the end of the earring could be passed through the pierced lobe, although the hole would have to be quite large. Evidence from tomb paintings, jewellery and burials have shown that pierced ears were fashionable for both men and women during the New Kingdom (1550-1070 BC).

E.R. Russmann, *Eternal Egypt: masterworks of* (University of California Press, 2001)

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

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