

We are IntechOpen, the world's leading publisher of Open Access books Built by scientists, for scientists

6,400

Open access books available

174,000

International authors and editors

190M

Downloads

Our authors are among the

154

Countries delivered to

TOP 1%

most cited scientists

12.2%

Contributors from top 500 universities



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index
in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?
Contact book.department@intechopen.com

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.
For more information visit www.intechopen.com



Chapter

Egyptian Amulets in the Western Mediterranean: The Case of Cadiz

Carmen Muñoz Pérez

Abstract

Among all the artefacts exported from Egypt in Antiquity, amulets have played an important role. These small objects were imbued with magic properties, based on their iconography and hieroglyphic inscriptions, the combination of materials and their colour. Because of their apotropaic properties, amulets were used in daily life and in funerary rituals in Egypt. Furthermore, Egyptian amulets have been attested in other funerary contexts in the Mediterranean area. In the western part, the city of Cadiz was one of the most important Phoenician cities. A great number of Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets, which are still unpublished, have been found in the local necropolis. Thus, to precisely say if the same funerary amulets were used in Egypt and in the Phoenicians cities is still a work in progress. Nevertheless, their great number suggests that Egyptian amulets were closely part of the Western identity.

Keywords: Egyptian amulets, interconnections, Phoenicians, Cádiz, iconography

1. Introduction

Amulets were widespread in ancient Egyptian culture. In daily life, these objects were carried by their owners because of their apotropaic properties: to prevent bad luck or against evil forces as well as in medicine and during passing times, like childbirth. Moreover, amulets played an important role in funerary rituals, like mummification.

In this manner, these small objects were placed close to the deceased's body, between the mummy's bandages. Their typology and their emplacement were precisely chosen, according to the relationship between the amulet and the deceased [1, 2]. However, comparative studies between mummies from different sites and periods (in particular, through CT-scan analysis) have shown that not all Egyptian amulets were suitable for funerary rituals. Those selected were precisely chosen for their iconography and, for symbolic reasons, even for their material and their colour. Despite the interest of these objects for the understanding of Egyptian culture, few studies have been focused on the particularity of funerary amulets.

Even if mummification practices have only been attested in Egypt during Antiquity, amulets and apotropaic objects of Egyptian manufacture or inspiration are also attested in the Mediterranean, in particular in a funerary context. Beyond mere aesthetic value, they arose as a response to changes in the mentality and in general in the society of ancient Egypt, more particularly when the country came into

contact with other cultures. Indeed, amulets are not exclusive to Egyptian civilization, but they were commonly used by several ancient cultures: Persians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, etc. Their presence in the tombs of these cultures proves their degree of assimilation.

The diversity of their cultural and chronological contexts shows that Egyptian amulets therefore had universal values, shared by several ancient societies. In this article, we would like to analyse the diversity of amulets in ancient Egyptian culture and their multiple uses, mostly in the funerary field. Furthermore, a comparison between Egyptian amulets and those attested in the Mediterranean necropolis allows us to precise their reuse and reinterpretation. In particular, the Phoenician culture is relevant: by creating new colonies all along the Mediterranean, they have spread their men, rites, religious ideas and objects. The case of Cádiz, the Phoenician city at the end of the Western Mediterranean, is significant because of the great number of Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets found in its necropolis. Through this particular example, we would like to consider the role of these "oriental" objects and their presence in the Western cultures.

2. Amulets in Egypt

In Egypt, amulets were essentially defined by their apotropaic role. So they were supposed to provide their owner magical protection. Indeed, three of the four words used in Egyptian to define them refer to protection: *s3*, *mkt* and *nḥt*. These words confirm the amulets' intention to grant a certain magical security to their owner. There is a fourth word, *wḏ3*: even if it names one of the most common amulets, the *wedjat*-eye or the eye of Horus, the Egyptian word rather refers to the idea of well-being in general [2]. The words used in the Egyptian language show that amulets were created to protect their owner, which explains why they were supposed to be worn. However, not all the Egyptian amulets had a perforation or suspension system. This suggests that their role and use could be multiple.

Considering that the funerary contexts are the best preserved, we have chosen in this study to focus on funerary amulets. In this manner, some textual and iconographic sources provide further information about them. The main papyri concerning funerary amulets is the *Book of the Dead*: a few chapters describe the addition of a precise amulet during the ritual of mummification. Thus, the vignettes that illustrate the text allow to unequivocally establish the typology of the amulet. Furthermore, amulets' emplacement on the body of the deceased and their material are sometimes specified [2]. In this way, chapters 155–160 are dedicated to the "activation" of certain amulets and to their emplacement on the body of the deceased. These chapters name the main funerary amulets in the Egyptian culture: the *djed*-pillar (in Ref. to Osiris), the *tit*-knot (the so-called "knot of Isis"), the golden vulture, the *usekh*-necklace and the *wadj*-column (the papyrus sceptre). In addition to these chapters, other papyri also provide some indications concerning funerary amulets, in particular on their manufacture materials. This is the case of the MacGregor papyrus (private collection) and the papyrus of Month-Em-Hat (University of Bonn L 1647), indicating the choice of some golden amulets in a funerary ritual. Likewise, the so-called "papyrus of Men" (British Museum EA 10098) shows a schematic plan of the position of some amulets in a Ptolemaic mummy [2]. Finally, the texts inscribed on the walls of the Ptolemaic temple of Hathor at Dendera describe that the amulets needed to accomplish the ritual of the mummification of Sokar.

In spite of these sources, only a few researchers had been interested in Egyptian amulets. We have to point out the work of Sir Flinders Petrie (1914) about the collection of University College London, as a founding study [3]. He was one of the first Egyptologists to consider amulets in a specific way, proving their interest for the study of Egyptian magic and rituals. In his study, Petrie distinguished five main amulets' values: physical, in the sense that amulets allowed their wearer to protect themselves against dangers; medical, in order to combat physical illness; as an *alter ego*, considering the idea that the organs are connected to each other in a mystical way; as a double, when an object which represents an evil force can prevent it; and finally, the so-called "doctrine of similars" by which objects that come together must be connected [3].

The diversity of the use of Egyptian amulets as well as their typology is significant. Because of these reasons, they seemed ordinary objects [4], which explains why amulets have usually received little interest by researchers. Therefore, the definition of what can be considered as an amulet is a complex question.

The definition of Petrie is too simple: he considered as an amulet any small object (under 5 cm long), worn by a person without an aesthetic purpose [3]. However, this approach is remarkable because, today, the distinction between an amulet and jewellery is not clear. Indeed, amulets are often confused with jewels with an apotropaic function [5]. Like amulets, jewels also played various roles: during the life of its owner, the jewel could be worn as a distinctive sign of his function or social rank, as protective amulet or simply as a decorative object. Thus, the jewellery perfectly demonstrates the difficulty of distinguishing objects of personal adornment from amulets since both amulets and jewellery that incorporate amulets were magical items worn by the ancient Egyptians. In addition, frequently used during their lifetime, the jewels end up spreading in the funerary field, deposited in the tombs [2].

Considering this idea, a more complete definition of what we can consider an amulet was given by D. Dunham in a brief article (1930) on certain Late Period amulets of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston: "The term amulet, as applied to ancient Egypt, means an object which is intended to protect the wearer from evil either specific or general, to ensure him the favor of a particular deity, or to supply certain benefits to him" [6]. Indeed, the relationship between the amulet and its owner is one of the main features that distinguishes these objects. This criterion is still the one mainly used by researchers, in particular concerning amulets found outside the Egyptian territory.

3. Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets in the Western Mediterranean

Amulets, in particular, are one of the best testimonies of the relationship between Egyptians and other Mediterranean cultures. Thus, the comparison between the use of these objects in Egypt and outside their original territory can allow us to have a different approach to certain religious and ritual ideas. Their study also makes possible a better understanding of the commercial and intellectual exchanges in the Mediterranean area during Antiquity.

The great diversity of Egyptian amulets makes their study more complex. Thus, the difference between funerary and daily amulets is not yet established, considering that they have several uses in both contexts. Concerning the funerary domain, amulets have been part of the burials in all periods of Egyptian history, as offerings but especially as protectors of the deceased. On the one hand, most of the amulets are attested in all periods of Egyptian history. Some of them, like the *wedjat* or the

djed-pillar, have been attested from the predynastic period (c. 6000–3000 BC) until the Roman times (from 30 BC), so we can consider them as “permanent amulets.” On the other hand, the number and the typology of funerary amulets increased from the Late Period (664–332 BC), when some amulets seem to have been created especially for the burial [1, 6]: this is the case for the two fingers and the headrest amulet, both used exclusively in mummification.

The “profusion” of amulets during this period is also a phenomenon outside the Egyptian territory. Amulets, in particular, represent a large part of the material exported by the Phoenicians. These objects were first exported to the regions close to Egypt, the Levantine area and Greece. In the Levant, a significant number of Egyptian amulets in faience representing deities are attested alongside other amulets of local production [7]. This confirms the importance that these objects had in other ancient cultures, being included in their funerary practices, and the Egyptian influence concerning religious and magical ideas. Furthermore, the presence of Egyptian amulets is well attested in Greek tombs, especially in children’s burials: most of them are figures of scarabs and Egyptian divinities in faience or steatite [5].

Through the Greek and especially the Phoenician trades, these “oriental” objects have progressively arrived to the farthest regions, in the Central and the Western Mediterranean.

Thus, the study of Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets in Carthage is particularly interesting. As J. Vercoutter has pointed out, these objects are usually the only ones deposited in Carthaginian tombs: “*Quiconque ouvre un rapport de fouilles de Carthage, ne peut manquer d’être frappé par la fréquence des termes: amulette “égyptienne”, décor “nilotique”, objet “égyptisant”*” [8]. Beyond the interest of maritime trade routes, the presence of Egyptian amulets in Carthage shows the importance of the Egyptian amulet as a protective element of the deceased in other ancient cultures. The great number of scarabs and scaraboids is significant, as well as the diversity in their typology, but other amulets, especially divinities (Isis et Horus, Osiris, Shu, Bes, etc.) and apotropaic symbols (*wedjat*, *uraeus*, *Ptah-pathecus*. Etc.) are also attested.

Egyptian-type objects, including amulets, appeared even in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. The presence of Phoenicians at the end of the Western Mediterranean is well attested since the 8th century BC, through some important settlements and objects. This phenomenon was mainly due to economic reasons: to find metallic sources, like silver and bronze. Therefore, some researchers concluded that the main reason for the trade relationship between Egyptians and Phoenicians was provisioning of raw materials. This would explain the large appearance of bronze statuary in Egypt during the Libyan Period (945–715 BC) and the expansion of the Phoenician colonisation in the Western with metal products during the 9th and 8th centuries BC.

It has to be noted that Egyptian amulets have been mostly attested in necropolis [4]. During the first years of the Phoenician colonisation (8th century BC), the volume of amulets in the Mediterranean necropolis was not significant, in general, one or two amulets by tomb [9]. Thus, their number increased progressively, in particular from the 6th century BC onwards. According to M.J. López Grande, around 64 Egyptian-type objects were found in the Phoenician colonies in the areas of Catalonia and the Western Languedoc. This is not a great quantity, considering the many hundreds of tombs in the area. Besides, only 35 of these objects were found in a funerary context [10]. However, a more significant number of Egyptian-type objects were found in the east and the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

The role of Ibiza in the development of the trade relationships between Phoenician, Greek and Etruscan civilizations must be underlined [10]. Indeed, the

port of this island was one of the main trade routes in the central Mediterranean, under the influence of Carthage. The so-called “Island of Bes” presents a large number of Egyptian objects, most of them with the image of this Egyptian divinity. We also found a large number of Egyptian-type amulets, especially in the necropolis of Puig des Molins. This necropolis, which was in continuous use from the 7th century BC until the 1st century, is exceptionally well documented. Most of the Egyptian amulets kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid probably belong to this necropolis [4]. They are diverse in their typology, their material and their manufacturing technique as well as in their iconography. The representations of Isis, Hathor and of course Bes are significant in number [4].

In this manner, one must distinguish between the two main influences in the Mediterranean: the “Circle of Carthage” and the “Circle of the Strait”. This concept was created in 1960 by M. Tarradell to distinguish materials from the central Mediterranean (Carthage, Sardinia, Sicily and Ibiza) and from the West (the area close to the Strait of Gibraltar). However, this classification was made according to a political idea, rather than an iconographic analysis of the objects. This theory is also based on the fact that the relations between Tiro, the Phoenician metropolis in Lebanon, and the city of Cádiz, at the end of the Western Mediterranean, were strongly maintained [11]. Indeed, the worship of the divinities composing the pantheon of Tiro, like Astarte, was very popular in Cádiz.

The city of Cadiz has been conditioned by its insular nature, close to the Strait of Gibraltar and the entrance to the Atlantic Ocean. The city (*Gadir*) was founded by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BC and is one of the oldest cities in Western Europe. For this reason, the chronological and spatial scope of the necropolis of Cádiz is relevant [9]. On the one hand, the considerable number of Egyptian amulets found in this necropolis shows the strong position of this city in the Phoenician network. On the other hand, the great number of Egyptian-influenced objects and Egyptianizing amulets could suggest the existence of a particular workshop in Cádiz.

Concerning this idea, note one of the main problems regarding the study of these objects in the Mediterranean: the distinction between Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets. In the Phoenician cities of the Iberian Peninsula, the importation of Egyptian amulets led to a phenomenon of imitation: a local production of amulets, which largely took on the shape or decoration of Egyptian ones. This is particularly clear in the case of scarabs and scaraboides. J. Padró has tried to establish the limits of this problem: while Egyptian objects were created in the Egyptian territory, Egyptianizing objects are those that are not Egyptian but that show some characteristic or influence that connects them with Egypt [12]. Considering the ambiguity and the difficulties to distinguish amulets in these categories according to their iconography, we have to turn up to their material, more precisely, to the metallographic or geological analysis of the objects [13].

The production of Egyptian-inspired amulets, in particular scarabs, is remarkable in various sites in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, these objects are not mere imitations, but they allow us to see and to evaluate the impact of the Egyptian culture among the indigenous populations [14]. Regarding this idea, we must consider the heterogeneity of the Iberian Phoenician necropolises, both in their system and grave goods, as a sign of the diversity of the deceased’s social origins [11]. In the Phoenician societies, the quantity and the quality of the objects placed in the tomb indicated the status of its owner. In this manner, A.M. Jiménez Flores thinks that the quality of the Egyptian-type amulets found in the Iberian Peninsula is poor, given that most of them are made in faience or steatite, presenting just a few incised details [9]. Nevertheless,

these amulets would be recognised, especially for their magic properties, rather than their economic value.

Thus, the quality of each amulet depends on two factors: the social status of the burial's owner as well as the necropolis in which the deceased has been buried. It must be noted that, despite the wealth of the archaeological objects found in its necropolis, most of the Egyptian-type amulets of Cádiz are still unpublished. However, the particularity of this city deserves to have a closer look.

4. The amulets of Cádiz: A dismissed corpus

The necropolis of Cádiz is well known since the 19th century, more precisely, from the discovery of the two anthropoid sarcophagi representing a man (c. 450 BC, discovered in 1887) and a woman (c. 480 BC, discovered a century after the previous one, in 1980). Studies made on the marble lets us suppose that both sarcophagi were made in the same workshop. They perfectly show the influence of customs and especially Egyptian iconography in the Near Eastern areas during the late 2nd millennium and the 1st millennium BC. Since the discovery of these two anthropoid sarcophagi, the city became a reference for the study of the Phoenician-Punic culture [11].

The necropolis of Cádiz is important because of the diversity of its graves (incineration in an urn or in a cist, cremation, burial, etc.) as well as because of the objects, amulets and gold jewellery found in these burials, some of them dating from the 8th century BC [11]. The study of Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects in the Iberian Peninsula was mostly developed in the late 20th century. Nevertheless, the lack of information about Cádiz is remarkable. On the one hand, it was due to the lack of archaeological material, given that there were not architectural or urban remains of the ancient city. The best context was the funerary, having examples dating from the 7th–6th century BC, which confirmed the location of the first Phoenician city as well as its antiquity. On the other hand, access to the Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects found during the local excavations was not possible.

It is interesting to mention an ancient study published in 1892 by the *savant* Louis de Laigue, which, among other heterogeneous research studies, dedicated a particular study to our corpus: *Amulettes de style égyptien trouvées dans la nécropole phénicienne de Cadix* [15]. He pointed out the importance of the necropolis of Cádiz and the similarities between the objects found there and in Carthage. In this brief study, he described two gold rings and three amulet cases with the head of an animal (a hawk, a lion and a ram) on the top (**Figure 1**). The Egyptian influence in the iconography of these objects was clear. He finished his report with a hope note: “*Les découvertes vont continuer et contribueront à jeter un jour inespéré sur la civilisation sémitico-gaditane, si incomplètement connue jusqu’ici*” [15].

From the 20th century, we have to point out the work of Pelayo Quintero Atauri, who led most of the archaeological excavations in Cádiz. It was under his guard that most of the Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets were found. Nevertheless, it is not until 1978 that this material has been considered, in the publication of I. Gamer-Wallert [16]. Her founding work about the *aegyptiaca* in the Iberian Peninsula includes a brief summary about the objects found in Cádiz. However, as J. Padró has also noticed, she has just considered the objects that were exhibited in the local Archaeological Museum in Cádiz and the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid [14]. In other words, she focused just on their iconography rather than their archaeological context.



Figure 1.

Amulet cases. Museo provincial de Cádiz - Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte - junta de Andalucía.

Afterwards, J. Padró published the first volume of his doctoral thesis, some years after the work of Gamer-Wallert. The third volume, published in 1985, is dedicated to the south area: *Egyptian-Type Documents from the Mediterranean Littoral of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman Conquest, Volume 3 Study of the Material. Andalusia* [17]. In this research, he made a complete catalogue about all the Egyptian-type objects found in the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman conquest. However, he also dismissed the objects of Cádiz, given the difficulties to have access to them.

The most recent study is the doctoral thesis of M.A. García Martínez (2001), under the supervision of J. Padró: *Documentos prerromanos de tipo egipcio de la vertiente atlántica hispano-mauritana* [18]. This work aims to be a continuation of the previous one. She also made a catalogue of Egyptian-type objects found in the Atlantic coast according to their typology. She paid attention not just to their iconography and aesthetic criteria but also to their role as vectors of religious and cultural ideas. Nevertheless, she has not included the Egyptian-type objects from Cádiz.

Finally, we would also like to underline the recent study made by F. Barreiro Espinal, which gives precise information about the amulets kept at the Museum of Cádiz. Most of her conclusions were discussed during a conference and published in the proceedings: *Los amuletos egipzizantes de Gadir. Propuesta tipológica* [19]. Moreover, this work would need to be updated.

The Egyptian influence in the objects of Cádiz is relevant as suggest the large number of Egyptian-type statues found in this area. Most of these figures represent Phoenician divinities, in particular Melqart, whose iconography is also typically Egyptian: he is represented as Osiris, with the *shendyt*-cloth and the *atef*-crown. Melqart has played an important funerary role, assimilated to Osiris, as a divinity that died and reborn. It is the same for the “priest of *Gadir*”, kept in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, who has been interpreted as the god Ptah with his face covered by a golden mask. However, he could also be one of the protective divinities of trade, taking into account the important role that Cádiz played in its development. In any case, metallographic analyses show that it is an imported object, probably from Egypt.

The importance of the necropolis of Cádiz for the study of the Phoenician culture in the Western Mediterranean is currently undeniable. Thus, recent archaeological

excavations continue to nourish this idea. Indeed, other Egyptian-type amulets have been found in the ancient necropolis area of the city. However, most of the objects are noted in the archaeological reports, which are not published, but kept in the administration archives. This partial information makes it more difficult to create a corpus of all the Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets of Cádiz. In other words, further research has to be developed.

5. Notes about some Egyptian amulets in Cádiz

Most of the Egyptian-type amulets found in Cádiz are well attested from an archaeological point of view. They were found in a funerary context, being part of burials from the Phoenician to the Roman period. F. Barreiro Espinal distinguished in her study around 164 amulets with an Egyptian and Egyptianizing iconography [19]. She classified them according to their typology: anthropomorphic divinities with human head (Bes, Nephthys, Isis, Harpocrates, *pataikos*, etc.), anthropomorphic divinities with animal head (falcon, ram, hippopotamus, ibis, etc.), parts of the body (*wedjat*, two fingers, leg, hand, etc.), animals (scarab, cat, *wraeus*, lion, etc.), plants (papyrus and lotus), symbols of power (white and red crown, pyramid and solar bark), creation of the world (religious compositions) and objects (like the New Year vases in faience or the amulets case).

As she has pointed out, the most common amulet in Cadiz is the *scarab* (28), followed by the *wraeus* (22) and the *wedjat* (13) [19]. As we have explained, this corpus must be updated, given that recent excavations have shown more sets of amulets. However, by paying close attention to the iconography and materials of these amulets, we can find some differences with those used in Egypt. In other words, the degree of acculturation and assimilation of these "oriental" amulets is not the same in the Western Mediterranean.

Created in all materials, the scarab is one of the most widespread amulets. This assimilation can be explained by the variety of its symbolism. Likewise, its wide distribution, both chronological and geographical, must be considered: in Egypt, this amulet was made from the First Intermediate Period (2181–2055 BC) and up to the Roman period in Egypt, its form being imitated in the Near East and in the rest of the Mediterranean area [2].

In Egypt, the hieroglyphic sign of the scarab represented the phonetic value *hpr*, which is translated as "to be created", "to come into existence" or "to become". The amulet takes the form of the sacred dung beetle (*Scarabeus sacer*). According to the legend of Heliopolis, the sun had three forms according to the time of day and sunrise (Khepri) is represented by a man with the head of a scarab. It was therefore the symbol of rebirth because it represents the sun, which rises each day in the morning [2]. This divinity is also represented as a black beetle on the walls of tombs accompanying the deceased in his passage from the darkness of night to the light of day. It is therefore a symbol of regeneration and rebirth, which explains the use of this amulet in the burials.

Scarabs and scaraboids are very similar objects; by paying close attention to their iconography, one can find out that they are two different types of amulet. Scarabs are interpreted as small beetle-shaped amulets with iconographic decoration and inscriptions on their reverse. On the contrary, scaraboids do not present anatomical details of the insect on the reverse but other iconographic symbols [20]. Most of the scarabs in Cádiz appeared as pendants or being part of rings [19].

Most of the scarabs found in the Mediterranean were created in Egypt. The workshop of Naucratis (the so-called "scarab factory", according to the great number

of moulds in clay and the scarabs and scaraboids in faience) was one of the most important sites, especially during the 6th century BC [21]. From this period onwards, the manufacture of Greek and Punic workshops became more important, according to the growing number of Egyptianizing scarabs and scaraboids [20].

Outside Egypt, scarabs (and scaraboids) are the most frequently attested amulets in Greek tombs. Some Greek sites have revealed the strong relationship between the scarab amulet and children, given their presence in their tombs [21]. Indeed, some researchers think that scarabs were used as a social distinction so that they were mostly used in the burials of women and children [20].

Concerning the iconography, scarabs found in Cádiz belong mostly to two categories. On the one hand, simple scarabs [19], that is, pendants with the form of the insect. They could correspond to the so-called “mummy scarabs”: often anepigraphic and very small in size (between 1 and 4 cm), with detailed anatomy. This variant, developed from the 26th dynasty, is characterised by its reverse and the naturalistic representation of the legs folded over the very convex belly. Created from the Late Period, in coloured stones and faience, these “naturalistic” scarabs had an apotropaic function; they were placed on the chest or between the bandages of the mummies. They are often pierced horizontally so that they can be sewn to the mummy wraps [2]. On the other hand, scaraboids present a more complex iconography on their reverse. These symbols were not typical from the Phoenician society, rather the Greek and the Egyptian influences. Let us mention a scaraboid with the representation of the winged horse Pegasus and another scaraboid with the head of the Egyptian god Bes. Concerning the last one, the image of Bes is commonly known for its apotropaic powers. Amulets representing this god were widespread in Egypt from the 26th dynasty [2]. They were commonly worn in daily life, in particular by women and children. Their use in tombs is also well attested in Egypt but also outside the Egyptian territory: they are one of the most common amulets in the tombs in Greece, Carthage and Spain [2, 5].

The second most spread amulet in the necropolis of Cádiz is the *uraeus*. In Egypt, we must distinguish the amulet of the *uraeus*, representing the cobra, and the amulet representing the head of the snake (*mnkbyt*): this amulet, always made in red stones (carnelian or jasper), had the intention to prevent snakes and worms to devour the deceased's body in the afterlife [2]. Thus, according to this interpretation, this amulet is not attested outside Egypt. Moreover, the *uraeus* was a cobra in attack position, that is, with its head raised to expel venom. This is why the pharaoh wears it on his forehead, as a symbol of his royalty and his divinity. Represented on the walls of tombs and funerary ornaments, the *uraeus* protected Osiris and the deceased. Moreover, the amulet should be considered as a representation of the goddess cobra of the Delta, Ouadjyt, eye of the sun and protector of the pharaoh. However, the goddesses taking the form of a serpent are numerous [2]. The profusion of their amulets indicates that the protection of the cobra reached not only the pharaoh but also the wearer of this amulet. In the case of the deceased, the effectiveness of the amulet extended into the afterlife.

Despite the strong relationship between the cobra and the Egyptian pharaoh, the use of this amulet in the Phoenician culture shows that it has lost a part of its original significance. In other words, the cobra was related not just to the pharaoh's power but also to the idea of protection (**Figures 2–4**). It is interesting to note the absence of this type of amulet in the necropolis of Carthage. However, in addition to Cádiz, amulets representing a cobra are also attested in the necropolis of Ibiza. Their discovery in a funerary context proves that the amulet was considered for its apotropaic powers and prevention to the deceased in the afterlife.



Figure 2.
Uraeus amulets. Museo provincial de Cádiz - Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte - junta de Andalucía.



Figure 3.
Uraeus amulets. Museo provincial de Cádiz - Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte - junta de Andalucía.



Figure 4.
Uraeus amulets. Museo provincial de Cádiz - Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte - junta de Andalucía.

Finally, the *wedjat-eye* is considered not only one of the most widespread amulets but also one of the most powerful. It had great importance in daily life in Ancient Egypt as well as in the rituals for their deceased.

The name of the amulet derives from the word *wedja*, which can be translated as “to be in good health” or “intact”. The amulet was considered as the source of happiness and health. It can also be translated as “to be complete”: placed among the bandages of the mummies, this amulet therefore guaranteed the physical integrity of the deceased after death, the ultimate goal of mummification.

Traditionally, this amulet has been identified with the eye of the god Horus, the markings located below the eye derive from the feathers of the falcon. According to mythology, Seth had torn it off during a fight; he had been cared for and cured thanks to the god Thoth and thus transformed into a protective symbol, guarantor of physical integrity. Part of this myth tells that Horus offered the healthy eye to his father Osiris in order to bring him back to life. When Osiris became the master of the afterlife, the *wedjat* was identified with his son Horus [2] (**Figure 5**). The iconography of this amulet is complex, often combined with other symbols. Note that certain female deities considered dangerous (such as Sekhmet, Neith, Isis and Tefnut) were connected with the eye of Horus and are often represented on the back of the *wedjat*-eyes.

The *wedjat* amulet was also seen as a symbol of inviolability. This is the case in the pectoral of Tutankhamun, where the *wedjat* is surrounded by an *uraeus* and a vulture; that is to say, the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet, representing the Two Lands of Egypt, protect the *wedjat*-eye, which in turn can protect both animals and the pharaoh. It is rather in this perspective that several mummies have a *wedjat* engraved on the plate, which covered the incision made during the embalming. It should be noted



Figure 5. *Wedjat and falcon amulets. Museo provincial de Cádiz - Consejería de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte - junta de Andalucía.*

that the left flank of the body was associated with Seth. The amulet prevented the entry of malignant forces through this part while promoting complete healing of the wound. It therefore represents the restored integrity.

It is interesting to point out that both the *uraeus* and the *wedjat* are also the most attested amulets in the necropolis of Ibiza as well as in Carthage [4, 8]. Despite their undeniable Egyptian origin, these amulets seem to have been adopted and reinterpreted by the Phoenician culture, readjusting them to their own funerary ideas. On the one hand, their funerary context suggests that, like in Egypt, they were also used to protect the deceased in the afterlife. On the other hand, similarities between their emplacement in relation to the deceased's body can also be found by paying attention to their archaeological context. This idea can also be applied to their iconography and their material.

Indeed, Egyptian-type amulets found in Cádiz were made in the same materials as Egyptian amulets: faience, gold, argent, bronze, semi-precious stones and vitreous paste. The most common, faience, can also provide us considerable information. Egyptian faience seems to be the preferential material for the creation of amulets. Two advantages can explain this choice: its malleability, being a paste (a mixture of sand and metallic fondants), perfectly adapted to the moulding technique and its symbolism. Indeed, in Egyptian culture, faience was related to the sun and rebirth ideas because of its shiny aspect. For this reason, it has been selected for the creation of some funerary objects: the *oushabtis* figures and the net placed on mummies during the Late Period in Egypt. Depending on its components, Egyptian faience can present different colours: the most common is blue, but green, yellow, black and white varieties are also attested. Faience amulets were used by both poor and nobles, even in royal contexts: consequently, all levels of society have included faience objects in their burials, given its apotropaic powers.

It seems that the typologies and the materials of the Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets in Cádiz do not differ from those found in other Mediterranean sites. The same parallels can be found through the Phoenician area of influence: Palestine/Israel, Sardinia, Carthage, Sicily, Malta, North Africa, Ibiza and the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, there is not a precise typology of funerary amulets. The distinction between daily and funerary amulets is often very problematic because it is assumed that they were used during the lifetime of their owner. Concerning the case of Cádiz, one must distinguish the difference between personal objects and amulets: while the first seems to be created, in particular, for the burial, amulets seem to have been used during daily life [9, 19].

This suggests another problem for the study of these objects: to evaluate their degree of assimilation and understanding by the Western Phoenician society. One can think that the local culture did not totally understand the real meaning of amulets and Egyptian divinities. However, they were used as magical and apotropaic objects. The person who sold the amulet was informed about its capacities, in order

to introduce it into the Mediterranean market. Considering that the future owner will carry it during his life, or even take it to his burial, he had to know its effects and powers. Placing an object in a tomb was not left to chance but had a precise intention. Despite the diversity of objects in burials, amulets, like personal objects that belonged to the deceased or figures of divinities, served intentionally for funerary purposes.

6. Conclusions

Amulets have been in use since the earliest periods of ancient Egyptian history. This shows their intention to address deep-seated concerns in the society. We must take into consideration the role of *ma'at*, the universal harmony which governed the life of the ancient Egyptians. Particularly in the funerary field, *ma'at* is the power that balances the scale during the weighing of the heart (chapter 125 of the *Book of the Dead*). Thus, the ancient Egyptians used amulets in order to guarantee a certain control of this natural balance: they were used to fight the evil forces during the living, as much as in the afterlife. Considering that the afterlife was an extension of life on earth, they therefore adorned their deceased with amulets, just as they did during their lifetime [6]. Amulets were obviously multifunctional objects because the same type of amulet may have been used in different situations. The use depends on several characteristics, such as the shape of the amulet, its material and colour, as well as its inscriptions. However, their original function can only be understood in a complete way from the analysis of their context of use. In this manner, several Egyptologists have tried to establish a classification of amulets according to their daily or funerary use since they were supposed to guarantee magical defence to their owner against evil forces, both on earth and in the underworld.

This distinction between daily and funerary amulets is often very problematic because it is assumed that they were always used during the lifetime of their owner. However, some funerary amulets, as well as certain funerary jewellery, were created exclusively for tombs [2]. This is the case for the *ib* amulet in the shape of the heart, which is only attested in funerary contexts. However, this amulet is not attested in the Mediterranean tombs.

The exclusively funerary use of the amulet can be highlighted by its material study, as some seem too delicate to have been worn during the lifetime of their owner. However, although Petrie defined the amulet as “any object worn” [3], the presence of a suspension or perforation system would not be necessary when the amulet was placed on the deceased’s body. Concerning the corpus of Cádiz, we would like to insist on the difference between apotropaic jewellery and amulets. On the one hand, “the necropolis of Cádiz has plenty of rings and earrings, which could not have been used in life” [11]. On the other hand, Egyptian-type amulets in Cádiz seem to have been worn during the life of their owners [19].

Some objects were directly imported from Egypt because of their particular materiality but mostly because of their symbolic values. Through the Phoenician network, these objects arrived to all the areas in the Mediterranean. In the extreme Western, they were reused and imitated, creating the so-called “orientalizing” art. However, to precise if their use was the same in the East and the West is a complex task. To answer this question, we must pay attention to the context in which these objects were found. The case of Cádiz is relevant because of the important role of this city during the Phoenician colonisation and the establishment of this culture in the Western Mediterranean.

This article resumes the first conclusions of our ongoing research about the Egyptian influence in the necropolis of Cádiz through amulets. The study of the iconography of these objects as well as their material would allow us to contribute to one of the most difficult questions about these objects: the distinction between Egyptian and Egyptianizing amulets. Moreover, our main purpose is to have a better understanding of the amulets of Cádiz and their use in ancient societies, that is, to determine the adaptation and reinterpretation of Egyptian ideas in the Mediterranean.

The necropolis of Cádiz has been continuously used from the Phoenician until Roman times. We have pointed out that Egyptian amulets have been found in these Phoenician burials, but it is also interesting to note that these same amulets are also attested in the Roman necropolis. Whether they were imported from Egypt following the Roman trade connections or were reused from the Phoenician times is still a problem to solve. Considering the practical aspects of the Roman culture, it is not unlikely that these amulets were already part of the local society. This idea confirms that Egyptian amulets have been part not only of the Western rituals and funerary practices but also of the foundation of the Western identity.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Cádiz (UCA) and the Campus de Excelencia Internacional del Mar (CEIMAR) for contributing to the publication of this article, as well as the Museum of Cádiz for allowing me to publish the amulets.


IntechOpen

Author details

Carmen Muñoz Pérez
University of Cádiz, Cádiz, Spain

*Address all correspondence to: carmen.mun.per@gmail.com

IntechOpen

© 2023 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This chapter is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. 

References

- [1] Ikram S, Dodson A. *The Mummy in Ancient Egypt: Equipping the Dead for Eternity*. London: Thames & Hudson; 1998. pp. 137-165
- [2] Andrews C. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. London: Trustees of the British Museum; 1994
- [3] Petrie WMF. *Amulets*. London: Constable & co. ltd.; 1914
- [4] Fernández JH, Padró i Parcerisa J. *Amuletos de tipo egipcio del Museo Arqueológico de Ibiza*. Ibiza: Museo Arqueológico de Ibiza; 1986
- [5] Barcat D. *Les amulettes de type égyptien en contexte funéraire en Grèce et en Égypte: étude comparative*. *Archimede*. 2019;6:222-228
- [6] Dunham D. *Amulets of the late period: Note on some recent accessions to the Egyptian department*. *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*. 1930;28:117-123
- [7] Leclant J. *Dictionnaire de l'Antiquité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France; 2011
- [8] Vercoutter J. *Les objets égyptiens ou égyptisants du mobilier funéraire carthaginois*. Paris: Bibliothèque archéologique et historique XL; 1945
- [9] Jiménez Flores AM. *Aegyptiaca: datos sobre la espiritualidad en la necrópolis de Gadir*. In: Marín Ceballos MC, editor. *Cultos y ritos de la Gadir fenicia*. Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, Servicio de publicaciones; 2012. pp. 349-368
- [10] López Grande MJ. *Acerca de los materiales egipcios y de tipo egipcio hallados en el Noroeste peninsular y en la región occidental del Languedoc*. *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología*. 1991;3:194-204
- [11] Ferrer AE. *La necrópolis fenicio-púnica de Gadir. Reflexiones a partir de un discurso identitario no esencialista*. In: Niveau de Villedary AM, Gómez V, editors. *Las necrópolis de Cádiz. Apuntes de Arqueología gaditana en homenaje a J.F. Sibón Olano*. Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, Servicio de publicaciones; 2010. pp. 69-92
- [12] Padró i Parcerisa J. *New Egyptian-Type Documents from the Mediterranean Littoral of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman Conquest*. Montpellier: Orientalia Monspeliensia VIII; 1995
- [13] Hölbl G. *Ägyptisches Kulturgut im phönikischen und punischen Sardinien*. Leiden: Brill; 1986
- [14] Padró i Parcerisa J. *De nuevo sobre los hallazgos egipcios y egiptizantes de la Península Ibérica*. *Cuadernos de prehistoria y arqueología castellanenses*. 1982. 1983;9:149-192
- [15] Laigue L. *Amulettes de style égyptien trouvées dans la nécropole phénicienne de Cadix*. *Revue archéologique*. 1892;20:291-296
- [16] Gamer-Wallert I. *Ägyptische und ägyptisierende Funde von der Iberischen Halbinsel*. In: *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients (TAVO) 21*. Wiesbaden: Reichert; 1978
- [17] Padró i Parcerisa J. *Egyptian-type documents from the Mediterranean Littoral of the Iberian Peninsula before the Roman conquest, volume 3 study of the material*. In: *Andalusia. Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain 65*. Leyde: Brill; 1985

[18] García Martínez MA. Documentos prerromanos de tipo egipcio de la vertiente atlántica hispano-mauritana. Montpellier: Orientalia Monspeliensia XIII; 2001

[19] Barreiro Espinal F. Los amuletos egipcizantes de Gadir propuesta tipológica. *Folia Phoenicia: an International Journal*. 2018;2:162-167

[20] Luques Loma A. Escarabeos y escaraboides, egipcios, egipcizantes y pseudoegipcios en la Península Ibérica. *Egiptología 2.0*. 2017;6:113-124

[21] Webb V. The significance of faience in the religious practices at Naukratis and beyond. *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan (BMSAES)*. 2019;25:1-28