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“Marriage Scarab” of Amunhotep III and Queen Tiye

Arnold Lehman: Let’s look at the beetle-shaped object at the center of this case. It has hieroglyphs underneath.

Edward Bleiberg: This is a scarab, one of the most common objects from ancient Egypt. On one side it represents a dung beetle—a kind of beetle that the Egyptians associated with the sun god Re, because when the actual beetles rolled up a little ball of dung and pushed it, the ancient Egyptians visualized the sun traveling across the sky. And because the sun is associated with the king, the scarab beetle was also associated with the king.

This is what Egyptologists call a marriage scarab. You’ll see that it has ten lines of hieroglyphic text on it. And the first four lines are just the king’s name. It says that he’s the king of Upper and Lower Egypt. And that also he is the son of the sun god. This is called a marriage scarab because in the fifth line the king’s wife is named. And then it goes on to say the names of her mother and father. And this is part of the reason that Egyptologists thought that these were wedding announcements. It tells you the king’s name. It tells you the new queen’s name, and then it tells you the name of her parents.