

## COSTUME JEWELRY IN EGYPT IN THE XVIII DYNASTY

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The Egyptian lady of leisure in 1400 B.C. would not have regarded the basic black dress relieved only by plain gold jewelry, which is fashionable today, as an elegant costume. Her clothing was made of fine white linen, and she adorned herself with colored jewelry. In painted scenes on the walls of Theban tombs of the period Egyptians are represented in the costumes in which they judged themselves most becomingly attired, and both women and men wear broad collars, necklaces, armbands, bracelets, and anklets (see the lower illustration on the opposite page). From surviving examples of these ornaments we know that while some were made of semiprecious stones, such as carnelian, lapis lazuli, green feldspar, and amethyst, many more were of faience beadwork in colors imitating those stones.

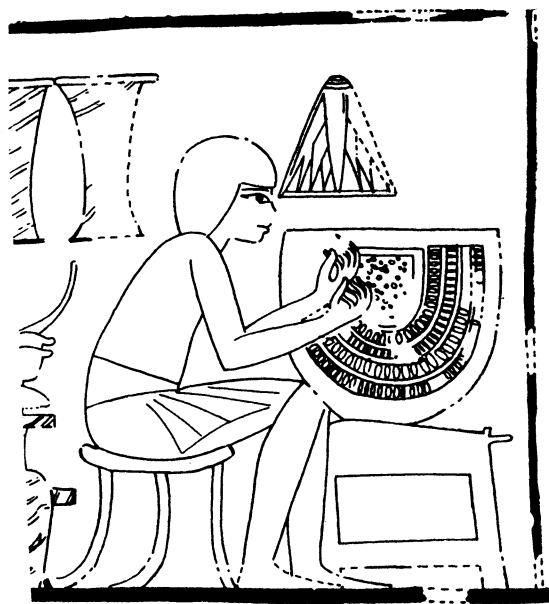
The craftsmen who were responsible for making the faience jewelry must have encountered many problems. From the initial mixing of the quartz paste which formed the core of all Egyptian faience to the firing of the glaze

and the stringing of the various elements together, the patience of the artisans was probably tried very frequently. Of the scenes in Egyptian tombs representing craftsmen at work there is only one which can be definitely identified as faience-making; but the story is perhaps better told by the actual remains from glaze factories which were found by the Museum's Expedition in its excavations at Lisht and Thebes. On the former site were found pats of the core paste, now dry and hard of course but showing clearly the finger marks of the men who had shaped them; and from the palace of Amun-hotpĕ III at Thebes came hundreds of bright-colored faience pendants, amulets, and other ornaments and the little red pottery molds in which the paste had been pressed to form them. When shaped, the paste

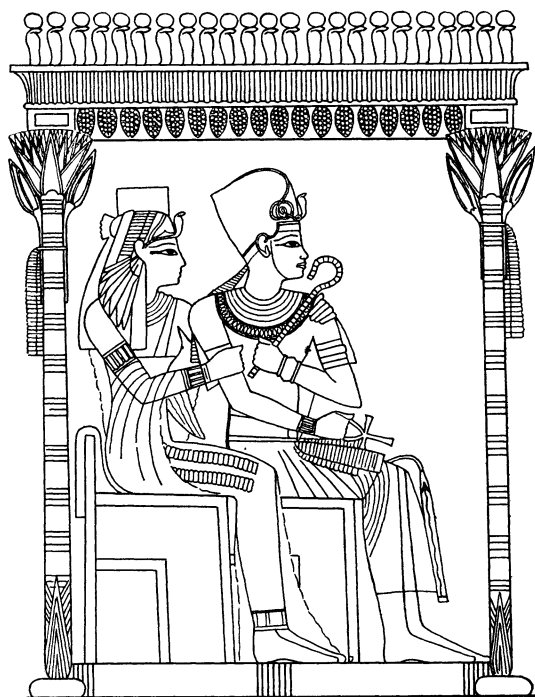
ABOVE: *A craftsman stringing a broad collar of stone beads which his companion is drilling. A scene in the tomb of Rekh-mi-Rē at Thebes. From a colored facsimile by Nina M. Davies*

was removed from the molds, dipped in glaze of the desired color, and fired. Several molds have the paste still in them, mute evidence that it was not always easy to get the object out whole; the molds were of course immediately discarded. The pottery crucibles in which the ingredients of the glaze, a true glass, were melted were of a size which would permit the smaller objects to be dipped.

Broad collars, composed of rows of beads and pendants, required innumerable individual units: separate beads molded over straws which would burn out when the glaze was fired, leaving the necessary stringing hole, and pendants with minute ring beads attached to each end before glazing for joining the concentric rows together. Just as nowadays when such ancient beads have to be restrung great care is necessary to avoid breaking off the tiny ring beads, so in ancient times the utmost delicacy in the handling of the fragile faience elements was



*A craftsman in the royal workshop laying out a collar for stringing. A scene in the tomb of Neb-Amun and Ipuky. N. de Garis Davies, "The Tomb of Two Sculptors at Thebes," pl. xi*

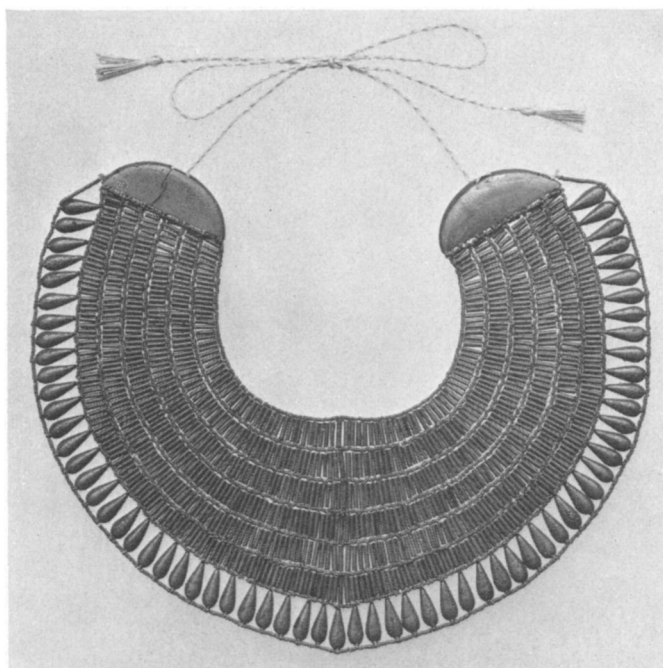


*A scene in the tomb of Neb-Amun and Ipuky at Thebes (about 1400 B.C.), showing typical costumes with jewelry. From a line drawing by Lindsley F. Hall*

required of the men stringing the collars (see the illustration above).

In the tomb of Rekh-mi-Rē' at Thebes we can see a man stringing up a broad collar, in this case one made of stone beads which his companion is busy drilling with his bow drill (see the illustration on the opposite page). It is interesting to note that there is no indication of a needle of any sort, and it is assumed that the linen thread employed was waxed. Beeswax, the only wax used in ancient Egypt, would stiffen the thread sufficiently to allow it to pass easily through most of the beads, but the task of stringing a broad collar in that way must have been long and laborious. To restring one with the fine, flexible bead-stringing needles of steel we have today is in itself not easy.

The arrangement of the elements making up the broad collars differed in the various periods. A collar recently acquired by the Museum and restrung there is an example, dating to the late Eighteenth Dynasty, which is almost an exact replica of an earlier type (see the illus-



*Broad collar of violet-blue faience. Late XVIII Dynasty*

tration above). The design, with several rows of cylindrical beads strung side by side and with a bottom row of petal pendants, was fashionable in the Old Kingdom and survived in the Middle Kingdom in funerary jewelry. The recurrence of this simple form which had gone out of fashion by the time of the New Kingdom is probably to be explained by the color of its material, a violet-blue faience, which was an invention of the Eighteenth Dynasty, perhaps imitating lapis lazuli. A great splash of this new color must have been most effective with a white costume, and jewelry made of such faience, including collars and bracelets (see the illustrations at the right), pendants and dress ornaments, became the vogue of the day.

The court of the late Eighteenth Dynasty kings was a splendid affair. Artists and artisans were kept busy supplying its needs and satisfying its desires for new things. The art of glazing, perhaps the most decorative of the arts because of the shiny nature of the material, reached its height at this time, and many new colors, including this violet-blue, were introduced.



*Bracelets of violet-blue faience made in the royal workshop of Amun-hotpĕ III. Late XVIII Dynasty*