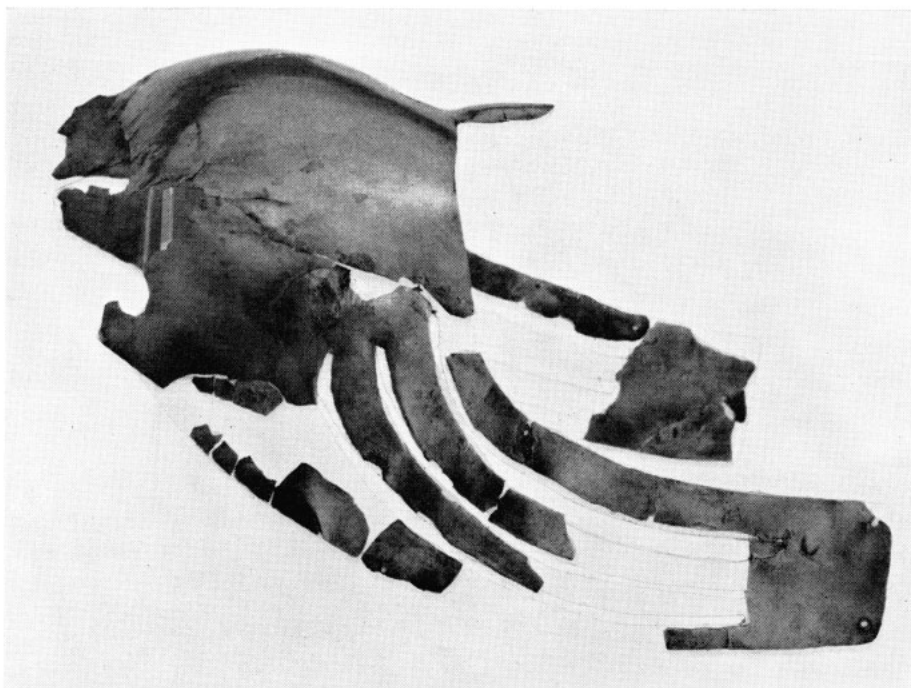


# BULLETIN

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





a

b



a. Silver Headdress from the body of a woman at Kerma in the Sudan, ca. 1800 B.C., L.  $7\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
*Harvard-Boston Expedition 20.2025*

b. Reconstruction of a Cap with mica appliques from Kerma, ca. 1800 B.C., H.  $5\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
*Harvard-Boston Expedition 20.1768*

GEORGE ANDREW REISNER'S excavation of the Middle Kingdom Egyptian trading post in the Sudan south of the Third Nile Cataract was one of the considerable achievements of modern archaeology in the years just preceding the first World War. This work also provided our Museum with an extraordinary collection of objects which have long been recognized as being of the greatest significance for the history of ancient art. Reisner produced a remarkably detailed publication of his discoveries in two large volumes, but such a great quantity of material was recovered through his painstaking methods of excavation that there is still much to be learned about things which have not yet been found at any other site in Egypt or the Sudan.

There is still the possibility of reconstituting objects which at first appeared in hopelessly fragile condition. In other cases broken parts can be fitted together, once we can gain an understanding of the nature of the original object. We have long been working on several of the most promising of these fascinating things. Such an effort seems particularly pertinent at present when so much attention is being concentrated on the Nubian stretch of the Nile Valley south of Aswan where the vestiges of ancient culture are threatened with oblivion by the projected flooding of the region when the new dam is completed. We are now exhibiting and shall publish part of the fine architectural embellishment of the facade of a mud-brick chapel which was cased in blue-glazed faience tiles, including the large striding figure of a lion.

Here are reproduced two examples of the lighter side of life at Kerma, being part of the adornment of two Nubian women who belonged to the local population with which the Egyptian traders and craftsmen were so closely concerned. One is a light silver crown which rested on the back of the head with the open-work wings extending forward over the temples above the ears. The brittle metal was badly corroded and broken but has been almost miraculously cleaned and strengthened in Mr. Young's laboratory. The crown is not quite complete. However, by mounting it on a light plastic frame cut in the shape of the original, the unusual form of the headdress becomes clear. It would appear to be a simple imitation of the vulture headdress worn by Egyptian goddesses and queens, but worn farther back on the head in a different fashion. It need hardly be said that if it were not for the detailed records made in 1913 of the position in which the crown was discovered it would have been impossible to present in so clear a fashion an object which is at the present time unique.

The second headdress is admittedly a reconstruction of a more problematical nature. It was originally a leather cap, one of a considerable number found at Kerma on which were mounted ornaments cut out of mica in a series of interesting designs in which there is a mixture of Egyptian and African motifs. The leather had in all cases decayed except for some slight traces. Miss Suzanne Chapman has found that the design of this most complete of the groups of mica ornaments could best be realized by mounting the pieces on a cloth-covered cylinder with a flat top. We sometimes see ladies wearing such a tall cap, rather like the modern fez, in the paintings and reliefs of Theban tomb chapels.

The double-headed vultures are a local Nubian feature of the design which are not found in Egyptian representations. On the other hand the cut-out elements which separate the petal-shaped forms of the rosette on the top of the cap resemble the open-work strips of the wings on the silver crown.

W. S. S.