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# Deben (unit)

The deben was an ancient Egyptian weight unit.

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# **Old and Middle Kingdom**

Stone weights from the <u>Old Kingdom</u> have been found, weighing about 13.6 g (0.48 oz; 0.44 ozt). Similar weights from the <u>Middle Kingdom</u> were discovered at <u>Lisht</u>. From the Middle Kingdom date also *deben* weight units used for metals, referred to as <u>copper</u> deben and <u>gold</u> deben, the former being about twice as heavy (23.7 g (0.84 oz; 0.76 ozt)) as the latter.

# New Kingdom

From the <u>New Kingdom</u> one *deben* was equal to about 91 g (3.2 oz; 2.9 ozt). It was divided into ten *kidet* (alt. *kit*, *kite* or *qedet*),<sup>[2]</sup> or into what is referred to by <u>Egyptologists</u> as

Old Kingdom market scene: Two of the customers are seen carrying little boxes on their shoulders, suspected to have contained pieces of metal used as payment

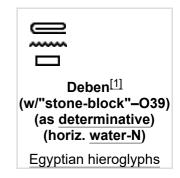
'pieces', one twelfth of a *deben* weighing 7.6 g (0.27 oz; 0.24 ozt).<sup>[3]</sup> It was frequently used to denote value of goods, by comparing their worth to a weight of metal, generally silver or copper.

### Protocurrency

It has been speculated that pieces of metal weighing a deben were kept in boxes, <sup>[4]</sup> taken to markets, <sup>[5]</sup> and were used as a means of exchange. <sup>[6]</sup> Archaeologists have been unable to find any such standardized pieces of precious metal. On the other hand, it is documented that *debens* served to compare values. In the <u>19th Dynasty</u>, a slave girl priced four deben and one kite of silver was paid for with various goods: 6 bronze vessels, 10 *deben* of copper, 15 linen garments, a shroud, a blanket, and a pot of honey. <sup>[7]</sup>

# Legacy

Debens appeared in the computer game *Pharaoh* as its currency (in the form of gold).





## See also

- Ancient Egyptian units of measurement
- Egyptian units of measurement

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