





# THE CATALOGUE







I.

# PRIVATE GROUP STATUES

Students of Restoration and Students of Archaeology from Minia, Hildesheim, and Goettingen, and their Project Tutors: The Catalogue, in: Brandl, Helmut, Hussein M. A. Ibrahim, Sven Kielau, and Regine Schulz (eds) (2025): Ancient Egypt in the Museums of Mallawi and Hildesheim. Heidelberg: Propylaeum, pp. 74-231. <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.1362.c19053>





# OF THE OLD KINGDOM



# IMAGING OF THE PROVINCIAL ELITE

## Pair Statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty

### INVENTORY N°

Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 656

### MATERIAL

Limestone with remains of paint (black, white, red and yellow)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 97.0 cm; Width: 68.5 cm; Depth: 76.0 cm;

Height of base: 30.0 cm; Height of the face of the man: 9.5 cm;

Height of the face of the woman: 8.0 cm

### PROVENANCE

From Meir, necropolis, rock tomb of Pepy-ankh the Middle and lah-huty (A 2); discovered by the Sayed Khashaba Bey expedition with Ahmad Kamal as supervisor on 14 March 1913

### DATE

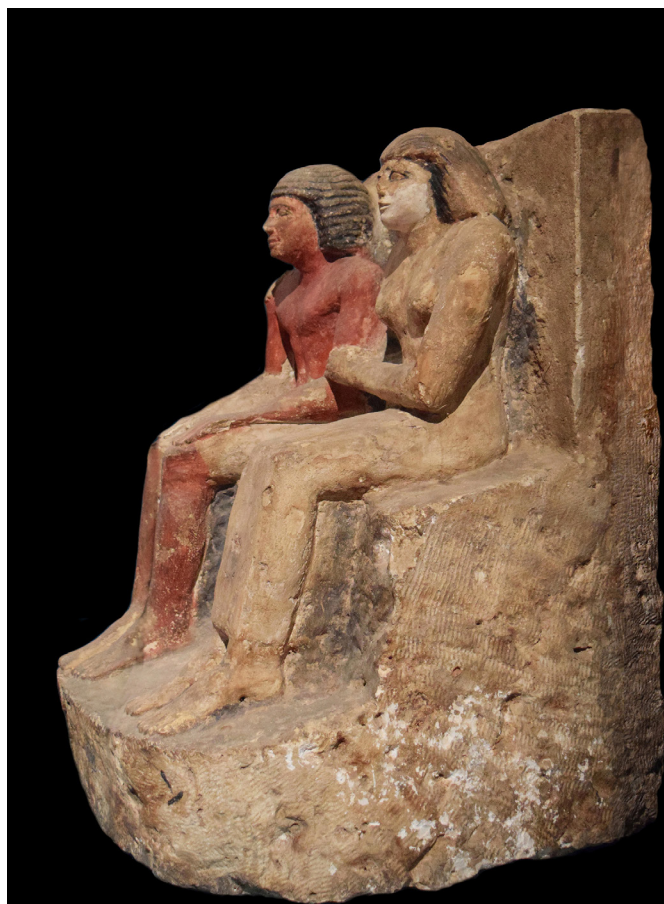
Old Kingdom, late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, presumably reign of Nefer-ka-Re Pepy II (ruled ca. 2216-2153 BCE)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kamal 1915, pp. 245, 258; Blackman 1924, p. 24 with n. 7, pl. IV; Hayes (unpublished), p. 76, photos 39/39; Messiha and Elhitta 1979, p. 23, pl. XXVI; Abou-Ghazi 1983; Brunner-Traut 1988, p. 560; Ziegler 1997 pp. 96-99; Ziegler, in: Exh. cat. New York 1999, p. 70; Brandl 2008, p. 61, Fig. 11; Kanawati 2011, p. 66, pl. 72c-e; Faidallah 2012, p. 74, Fig. 20; Mohamed Abdel Rahman 2019, pp. 75, 76 (no. 8), pl. III.









## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Entrances of the rock tombs of Meir, A-Group, seen from the south.

The Mallawi Museum exhibits numerous significant sculptures from the pharaonic period. The most ancient among these is the painted pair statue depicted here (pp. 78-79 and Fig. 4-5). It represents a private (i.e., non-royal) couple of the late Old Kingdom. The sculpture is well under life-size, quite massive and devoid of ancient inscriptions which would identify the couple. Nevertheless we know who the depicted persons are. The statue was discovered in 1913 by an Egyptian team headed by Dr. Ahmed Kamal in the richly in-

scribed rock tomb "A 2" at Meir.<sup>1</sup> The necropolis of Meir is situated on the western shore of the Nile between Mallawi and Asyut (Fig. 1).

The find of the pair statue was briefly mentioned in the first publication of the tomb but it didn't receive much scholarly attention for quite some time.<sup>2</sup> Only in 1983 – seventy years after its discovery – a scientific article was dedicated to this sculpture and published by the archaeologist, Dr. Dia Abou Ghazi.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to his efforts we now know that the statue in the Mallawi Museum, inv. 656, is identical with the sculpture found by Ahmed Kamal in the tomb of a certain Pepy-ankh-her-ib, i.e., Pepi-ankh the Middle. (The attribute "the Middle" distinguishes him from his relatives who similarly bore the name Pepy-ankh.) The woman at his side must therefore be his "Beloved wife, the royal acquaintance and musician of Hathor, lady of Cusae, lah-huty, whose 'perfect' name is Hetit".<sup>4</sup>

The couple belonged to the provincial elite as Pepi-ankh was the *nomarch* of Cusae, i.e., he served as the head of the administration of the 14<sup>th</sup> Upper Egyptian nome (or district). They lived during the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty when two kings ruled whose name was Pepy.<sup>5</sup> Similar to King Pepy II who famously attained extreme old age Pepy-ankh's autobiography which was found engraved on the walls of his tomb, claims that the nomarch Pepy-ankh also lived to his 100<sup>th</sup> year. This was



regarded as ideal during this period but it may not necessarily reflect the truth. As the mummy of Pepy-ankh was not discovered there is now no possibility to find out the truth.

The pair statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Iah-huty – also named Hetit – was discovered in the rearmost room of the rock tomb which had once served as *serdab*, i.e., the secluded place for the statue cult of the tomb owners.

The sculpture shows the couple formally seated side by side on a high-backed bench; both persons are depicted on equal scale and exhibit full idealized faces and straight forward gaze. The appearance of the symmetrical figure of the husband is reminiscent of a traditional single seated statue: The male subject is shown with the hands pressed flat on the knees and the legs parallel to each other. The female subject's figure is similar excepting the position of the arms. Lady Iah-huty sits at a marked distance to her companion although her arms reach out for her husband whom she "embraces": Her right arm is meant to be placed on her husband's back. It is concealed by the backrest so that only her hand is depicted resting on Pepy-ankh's right shoulder. Iah-huty's lady's left arm is bent at waist level while her fingers touch the husband's crook of the elbow. To render this traditional gesture of affection<sup>6</sup> while simultaneously respecting the – planned! – dis-

tance between the two figures caused the sculptor(s) to disregard the classical canon of proportions.<sup>7</sup> The woman's shoulders were "broadened" and her arms were "lengthened" in an anatomical, unrealistic way. To the modern beholder the gesture may appear awkward; in antiquity, however, the statue served as the perfect place of dwelling for the tomb owners' *ka*-spirits and thus guaranteed the couple's ability to receive and to consume food and drink offerings in the afterlife.

A good deal of the statue's ancient polychromy is preserved, especially the man's traditional reddish brown skin.<sup>8</sup> The wife typically displayed a lighter skin color, yellowish ochre, which has however faded. The couple's garments – the man's short plain kilt and the woman's long close-fitting dress with straps – were painted white but this color, too, has largely disappeared. Black was used for the shoulder-length wigs: the man's coiffure displaying horizontal rows of geometrically rendered curls and the lady's striated wig which is parted in the middle. Some details of the face including the outlines of the eyes as well as the man's nipples are also painted in black.

Moreover, the front of the backrest, the bench and the base which is rounded at the front were all painted black. In the darkness of the *serdab* this must have caused a stunning effect on an-



**Fig. 2** (left): Pair statue of Kheri-remen and Rudj-kai. Limestone. Height: 42 cm. From Giza, Western Cemetery. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 16.



**Fig. 3** (right): Group statue of li-em-hetep and Ankh-Hathor. Limestone. Height: 63 cm. From Giza, Western Cemetery. Hildesheim Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1.

cient visitors as a torch would have highlighted the two vividly painted figures alone while their background remained dark. Still, this sculpture is a standard representation; many similar pair statues from the Old Kingdom have survived which are now kept in antiquities' museums of Egypt and worldwide. They all belonged to *tombs* of officials (and not to temples or houses). Most sculptures of this kind were excavated in the Memphite region, in the cemeteries adjacent to

the pyramids of Saqqara, Giza and Abusir, but not so the Mallawi pair statue (inv. no. 565). This is a relatively rare example of an *Upper Egyptian* tomb statue from the Old Kingdom. The style of this artwork, however, appears to be based on models which were created in the Memphite region.<sup>9</sup> During the Old Kingdom it was only by exception that statues of officials were set up in temples.<sup>10</sup> This became a regular religious practice only later in Egyptian history. Old Kingdom private group statues (i.e., sculptures whose subject are officials – occasionally together with their spouses and their children – but neither royals nor gods) often depict a couple seated side by side as if prepared to enjoy a meal in the afterlife. However, there are variants of this scheme. Alternatively the man could be shown seated while his female companion – usually depicted proportionally smaller – would be standing at his side. An example for such a grouping is the statue of li-em-hetep and his wife Ankh-Hathor in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (PM 1)<sup>11</sup> which was recovered from a ruined mastaba tomb of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty at Giza (Fig. 2). Other contemporary group statues depict the husband and wife standing or striding and may also include the couple's children. An example for this type is the group statue of Kheri-remen and Rudj-kai (Hildesheim, PM 16)<sup>12</sup> which, too, was excavated at Giza (Fig. 3).



In the rock tomb of Pepy-ankh all of his impressive offices are duly listed. His most important titles are *"Overseer of Upper Egypt in the central nomes, (...) keeper of secrets of all commands of the king, favourite of the king in all respects (...), member of the pat, count [i.e., nomarch], chamberlain (...), vizier, overseer of royal document scribes, royal seal-bearer (...), overseer of the dual granary (...), document scribe in the presence of the king"*, as well as *"expedition leader"* and *"draftsman"*.

Some of these offices and especially the title *"vizier"* made Pepy-ankh one of the top officials of the reign. However, during the Old Kingdom administrative and priestly functions were usually performed by the same individuals. A priesthood exclusively devoted to the service of the gods, as would be typical for the Egyptian Third Inter-

mediate and Late Periods (21<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty), had not developed as yet. This is why the vizier Pepy-ankh the Middle also officiated as a priest (*"prophet"*) of the gods Isis and Hathor, of Horus and Seth, of Nut, and of the Great Ennead and also as *"Overseer of priests of Hathor, lady of Cusae, chief lector priest and sem priest"*.<sup>13</sup>

It may be added that the use of the name Pepy was not restricted to the kings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and male officials. It could similarly be borne by women. This is documented by another private group sculpture of the Old Kingdom which was excavated at Giza and which is preserved in Hildesheim's Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (PM 17). For this statue, see [cat. I.2](#).

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## FURTHER READING

For the rock tomb of Pepy-ankh the Middle and his wife Jah-huty, see Kamal 1915; Blackman 1924; Kanawati 2011.

For the art of the Old Kingdom focusing on private statuary (preserved outside Hildesheim), cf., e.g., Wolf 1957, pp. 130-199; Bothmer 1982; Saleh and Sourouzian 1987, no. 27-66; Russmann 1989, pp. 10-47; Stadelmann and Sourouzian 1995; Ziegler, in: Exh. cat. New York 1999, pp. 47-71 and pp. 362-385; Bárta 2004.

## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 4-5** Pair statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty as exhibited in the Mallawi Museum until 2013. (The photo was taken in 2007.)



The photos above (**Fig. 4-5**) depict the pair statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and his wife Jah-huty (Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 565) in the condition in which it was in 2007. No artificial light was used for the photography then.

Comparing these images with the photos taken during the winter school in December 2021 (see **pp. 78-79**) a number of differences can be made out. Firstly, the white surfaces of the object now appear yellowish. Until August 2013 the galleries

of the Mallawi Museum largely depended on daylight. However, the new installation of the museum which was opened to the public in 2016) uses spotlight to highlight the objects. This artificial light gives a yellowish tone to white and cream colored surfaces and adds to the differences noticed by beholders.

Secondly, it is evident that restoration measures were carried out between the two documented conditions.<sup>13</sup> These measures were necessary after the attack on the museum on 14 August 2013.

One hundred years after its discovery and after fifty years on display in the Mallawi Museum the statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty fell victim to an outburst of atrocity which was unprecedented in an Egyptian antiquities' museum. On 14 August 2013 the Mallawi Museum was stormed by violent groups of people and plundered in the following night. The intruders left the museum almost completely looted.<sup>14</sup>

Too heavy to be dragged away the statue of Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty remained in the museum, but it was terribly damaged. Toppled from its modern wooden pedestal, it was thrown to the floor and lay there on its left side, as photographs demonstrate. An enlarged print of such a photo is currently exhibited next to the statue (**Fig. 6**). It reveals that the faces and much of the heads of the figures of Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty were



crushed and severed from the bodies. This made the most recent restoration necessary.

The current condition of the statue, is however, the result of more than one restoration. This was discussed with the Egyptian and German students during the Hildesheim autumn school. One previous restoration is documented. In his scientific article of 1983 the archaeologist, Dr. Dia' M Abou-Ghazi, observed that the statue of Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty exhibited "*many slight defects both in seat and figures. The largest is in the man's restored right arm*".<sup>15</sup>

This statement probably refers to the first restoration which was carried out on before the sculpture was acquired for the Mallawi Museum.

The sculpture's previous owner was Sayyed Khashaba Bey (later Pasha), a wealthy merchant, collector and dealer of antiquities at Assiut.<sup>16</sup> He had received permission from the Egyptian Antiquities' Service to conduct excavations at various pharaonic necropolises, particularly in Middle Egypt. This was done under the lawful condition of a division of finds which would enable the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to secure unique or outstanding objects from Khashaba Bey's finds. Khashaba Bey employed Ahmed Bey Kamal – then assistant curator of the Egyptian Museum – as the archaeologist acting as the scientific head of the mission. In the division of finds from Meir,



Khashaba Bey acquired the statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty and had it displayed in his local museum at Assiut. This was probably the place where the statue was restored for the first time. Photos of the sculpture (inv. no. 565) which were published in print between 1976 and 2019 (see Bibliography, above), as well as photos taken by visitors, document some of the changes of the statue's appearance over the years (see Fig. 5).

**Fig. 6** Dr. Ahmed Atta, archaeologist of the Minia University, lecturing in front of the pair statue Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty at the Mallawi Museum during the project's Winter School (December 2021).



**Fig. 7** Students of the Minia University mapping hints on restorations on the pair statue of Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty. Winter school at the Mallawi Museum (December 2021).

During the winter school Dr. Ahmed Atta, archaeologist at Minia University, pointed out the characteristics of the statue in front of the students in the Mallawi Museum (Fig. 6).

Readdressing the sculpture's restoration history the students were requested to carefully look

over the original and to note the visible restorations which they detected. They marked them on printed photos of the sculpture (Fig. 7) and compared them with earlier photographs. The results were later discussed.

In the months which followed the Mallawi Museum's ransacking<sup>17</sup> a great number of the antiquities which were stolen and believed to be lost have been returned to the museum by honest people.<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities had called on the local population to find and send back the missing antiquities which represent an important part of Egypt's precious cultural heritage. And they proved to be successful. It was later decided to refurbish the Mallawi Museum and to improve the security installations.<sup>19</sup>

Many objects have since been restored by a team of skilled restorers (see Fig. 11 on p. 51). This was necessary because the inexpert handling of the antiquities outside the museum had caused further damage on them. The damages of the statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty have been repaired, too, and the extent of the restoration work including aesthetic retouching has been documented. Since the museum's reopening on 22 September 2016 the statue is on display once again.

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## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Kamal 1915. The necropolis of Meir can be visited in the desert west of the modern village el-Qusiya under which the remains of the ancient town *Cusae* are to be found.
- 2 Cf. Blackman 1924, Porter and Moss 1934/1968, pp. 254–255 (a reference to the statue discussed here is omitted).
- 3 Abou-Ghazi 1983.
- 4 Abou-Ghazi 1983, p. 4; cf. Baines 2015, p. 25.
- 5 According to Kanawati 2011, p. 25, Pepy-ankh the Middle could have been a great-grandson of king Teti, the founder of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.
- 6 This pose survived in the corpus of private sculpture well into the New Kingdom. See, e.g., Seipel, in: Exh. cat. Konstanz 1983, pp. 152–153, no. 87.
- 7 Robins 1994.
- 8 Some portions of the statue's present polychromy represent the results of modern restoration.
- 9 Compare, e.g., Exh. cat. New York 1999, pp. 290–295, 362–381, 459–460; for stylistic peculiarities of Old Kingdom single statues from Upper Egypt, cf. Wildung 1999.
- 10 For an early Old Kingdom private statue which was set up in a temple see, e.g., Russmann 1989, pp. 12–13, no. 2 (kneeling statue of the priest, Hetep-dif, Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 1).
- 11 Martin-Pardey 1977, pp. 1–8; online information: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10376>
- 12 Martin-Pardey 1977, pp. 30–38; online information: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10384>
- 13 Baines 2015; for references to previous translations and discussions of the hieroglyphic texts in this tomb, see Baines 2015, p. 19 n. 1.
- 14 Kampmann 2013 (in German); El-Aref 2013a; Johansen 2013; cf. Mostafa 2015. See also: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/09/449342-unesco-mission-confirms-egypts-malawi-museum-ransacked> (accessed 19 June 2021).
- 15 Abou-Ghazi 1983, p. 3.
- 16 Hagen and Ryholt 2016, pp. 260–261; cf. Mohamed Abdel Rahman 2019.
- 17 Compare the photos of Roger Anis / AP depicting the partly looted Mallawi Museum; the toppled statue of Pepy-ankh and Jah-huty (inv. no. 565) is depicted on photo no. 14: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/130823-museum-mallawi-egypt-looting-artifacts-archaeology-science-antiquities> (accessed 19 June 2021).
- 18 El-Aref 2013d; El-Aref 2013f.
- 19 El-Aref 2013i; El-Aref 2016.

# A MUCH DEBATED FAMILY

## Group Statue of Lady Pepy and Two Ra-shepses

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 17

### MATERIAL

White Limestone with very scanty remains of paint (yellow, red and black)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 44.0 cm; Width: 27.0 cm; Depth: 16.0 cm; Height of the base: max. 4.7 cm

### PROVENANCE

From Giza, Western Cemetery, mastaba D 23, shaft no. 5; excavated by G. Steindorff in 1905; given to W. Pelizaeus by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation and donated by him to the city of Hildesheim in 1907

### DATE

Old Kingdom, late 5<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, around 2300 BCE

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Roeder and Ippel 1921, pp. 50, 54-51; Hornemann 1951-1969, vol. 5, pl. 1407; Kayser 1966, pp. 24, 48, Fig. 12; Kayser 1973, p. 46, Fig. 26; Porter and Moss 1974, p. 110; Martin-Pardey 1977, pp. 39-46; Exh. cat. Konstanz 1983, pp. 64-65, no. 40; Martin-Pardey, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1985, cat. no. 104; Schulz, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1986, pp. 60-61, AR 16; Rößler-Köhler 1990; Steindorff, Hölscher, and Grimm 1991, p. 33 n. 16; Schulz 1995, pp. 123-124; Eaton-Krauss 1995, pp. 58-59; Exh. cat. St. Petersburg 1997, p. 31 (with illustration); Satzinger 1997, pp. 96-97, no. 93; <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10385> (last update: 28 August 2003); von Falck und Schmitz 2009, pp. 78-79, no. 16; Schmitz 2011, p. 124, Fig. 4; Spiekermann, Antje, PM 17 ([giza-projekt.org](http://giza-projekt.org)); cf. [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statuengruppe\\_der\\_Pepi\\_und\\_des\\_Raschepses](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statuengruppe_der_Pepi_und_des_Raschepses) (accessed 19 June 2021); Schmitz 2024, S. 238.







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** (above): Back of the group, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 17.

**Fig. 2** (right): Facsimile of the inscription on the base of the group, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 17.

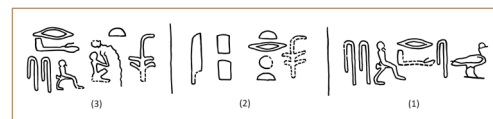
The group statue presented here (illustrations on pp. 88-89 and Fig. 1) depicts three figures together on one rectangular base. They are standing densely positioned against a rectangular backplate which reaches to about one third of the sculpture's total height. All three persons are seen setting the left foot slightly forward which is the ancient Egyptian striding position.

The back of the group and all the figures are severely affected by weathering (Fig. 1). Only the front portions of the heads of the two adults are nicely preserved. They depict similar idealized full faces which are neatly sculpted. The gaze of the two figures is not parallel which is exceptional. The central figure looks straight forward while her companion's face is slightly turned to the left, away from her (Fig. 4 on p. 92).

Unusually the group's central figure is that of a woman. The lady is clad in a long tightly fitting dress and wears a shoulder-length wig which is finely striated and parted in the middle. The woman's natural hair is meticulously indicated by horizontal relief lines at the forehead. The female figure is also the tallest person of this group which is truly exceptional. As a consequence she is to be regarded as the most important person represented in this group. The lady's figure is flanked by the figures of two males – one adult and one boy. The adult at her proper left side whom she embraces<sup>1</sup> is slightly shorter than the

central female figure while the boy at her right side is even smaller. The adult male is depicted with an elaborate roundish wig displaying meticulously sculpted echelons in rows which is reminiscent of a beehive and he wears a short plain kilt. Unfortunately the man's body is considerably affected by weathering and a part of his left arm is now missing. However it can still be recognized that his arms were energetically stretched out along the body, with the hands forming a fist. He apparently grasps a small cylindrical object which is often seen on similar Egyptian statues. This object is sometimes interpreted as a clenched amulet, perhaps of fabric, but it may be just a meaningless element helping the sculptor to shape the fist. The boy's figure at the proper right side of the female figure is seen naked and laying his left arm around the central woman's hips. His figure is also weathered but it is clear that the boy is typically shown with shaven head excepting a braid (the sidelock of youth) falling onto the shoulder from behind his right ear.

A hieroglyphic inscription engraved at the front of the base names the three individuals and their titles (Fig. 2). The inscription consists of three



separate short portions – (1), (2), and (3) – which are separated by vertical strokes. It translates as follows:

- (1) "Her son Ra-shepses";
- (2) "The royal acquaintance Pepy";
- (3) "The royal purification priest Ra-shepses".

Obviously, the name Pepy was not reserved for men alone. Women also could be named Pepy. (see [cat. 1.1](#)).

The group statue was excavated at Giza where three famous kings of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty had their funerary complexes erected including their giant pyramids. These kings were Khufu (called Cheops by ancient Greek historians), Khafra (Chephren) and Menkaure (Mykerinos). Khufu's near relatives were buried in monumental tombs called *mastaba* in modern times at the foot of the king's pyramid. The kings of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty chose to be buried elsewhere, at Saqqara and Abusir respectively, and their high-ranking officials were interred in their vicinity. For this reason middle and lower ranking officials of the later Old Kingdom turned back to Giza. There, in the shadow of the Great Pyramid, they could "insert" their own, relatively modest mastabas between the monumental mastabas of bygone times ([Fig. 3](#)). Lady Pepy's tomb, which was largely built of bricks and broken stone blocks, was no exception.<sup>2</sup>



Several interpretations regarding the meaning of lady Pepy's unusual group statue have been brought forward. Some scholars interpreted this sculpture as the image of a husband and a wife (the adult Ra-shepses and Pepy) with their son (Ra-shepses, the boy) although this is not what the sculpture's inscriptions indicate.<sup>3</sup>

It was further assumed that the ancient sculptor who had carved the inscriptions had made a mistake by erroneously placing the title "royal purification priest" below the infant's figure and

**Fig. 3** Giza, so-called Western cemetery at the foot of the Great Pyramid (seen in the background). A huge mastaba of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and, attached to it, a less carefully erected tomb structure of the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty can be seen.





**Fig. 4** The gazes of the two adult figures are oriented in differing directions. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 17.

wrongly calling Pepy's apparently adult partner whom she embraces "Her son Ra-shepses".<sup>4</sup>

Prof. Ursula Roeßler-Köhler who dedicated a scholarly article to this group statue opted for a different solution.<sup>5</sup> She considered the Hildesheim group statue (PM 17) to represent a variant of a specific sculpture type termed *pseudo-group* by Egyptologists. The scholar explained that the sculpture could depict one and the same Ra-shepses twice besides his mother and in two different

stages of his life, i.e., as a boy and also as an adult. However, Roeßler-Köhler's interpretation was not fully embraced by contemporary scholarship. Prof. Regine Schulz, of the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, remained sceptical about her explanation. Schulz stressed the fact that lady Pepy is in the focus of this group statue – and not the man, Ra-shepses.<sup>6</sup>

The specialist in ancient Egyptian art history Dr. Marianne Eaton-Krauss, added that all known pseudo-groups represent the statue owner simultaneously – and not a subsidiary figure.<sup>7</sup> As the adult Ra-shepses is explicitly labelled "*her son*, Ra-shepses", lady Pepy must be regarded as the principal statue owner and as the mother of Ra-shepses. Eaton-Krauss also noticed that the adult Ra-shepses is depicted significantly shorter than Pepy and thus he cannot have been her husband. Only his mother would understandably be depicted taller. She explained that the child named Ra-shepses could have been Pepy's second, younger, son who bore the same name as his older brother – a scenario which was not uncommon in the Old Kingdom.

To our team the arguments of Schulz and Eaton-Krauss concerning the family relations of lady Pepy and the two Ra-shepses are more convincing than previous explanations. Still the group remains exceptional.

A classic example of an Old Kingdom pseudo-group is the double statue of a certain official named Ptah-shepses which was similarly excavated at Giza (Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum in Hildesheim, PM 2144; Fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> The sculpture depicts Ptah-shepses striding together with his "double". Both figures are characterized as adults. One of them is slightly taller than the other. The meaning of this double representation is not fully understood but it may be that one figure (the taller one?) represents the deceased while the shorter one could possibly incorporate his immortal *ka*-spirit.<sup>9</sup> The differing interpretations regarding the significance of the group statue of Pepy and Ra-shepses demonstrate that the sculpture cannot be explained beyond doubt. It represents an exception to the rule.

It may be that we encounter here a mother with her two same-named sons, one of them serving as royal purification priest. Whether this title was correctly or perhaps erroneously carved in front of the child's figure instead of that of the adult Ra-shepses remains doubtful. Likewise it remains unknown why Pepy's husband is not depicted. Was he already dead at the time when the statue was commissioned? Did the surviving Pepy not want him to be united with the rest of the family in the afterlife?

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**Fig. 5** Pseudo-group statue of Ptah-shepses. Limestone with some remains of paint. Height: 39.3 cm. Old Kingdom, 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus-Museum, PM 2144.

### FURTHER READING

For the sculpture of the Old Kingdom in Hildesheim cf. Roeder and Ippel 1921, pp. 47–57; Martin-Pardey 1977 and 1978; Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1986; Schulz 1995; Eggebrecht 1996, pp. 16–38; von Falck and Schmitz 2009.

## CONSERVATION

**Fig. 6** (opposite page): Prof. Regine Schulz lecturing during the autumn school at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (October 2021).

The art technological investigation usually begins with the visual examination of the materials. The Hildesheim group statue (PM 17) now appears white which is the natural color of a specific variety of limestone. The white limestone quarried at El-Moqattam (a mountain ridge at the eastern border of modern day Cairo) which was probably used for lady Pepy's group was in high demand already in the Old Kingdom. Besides this brownish and greyish varieties of limestone were available (compare **cat. VI.1**).

Looking at the white limestone statues in the Roemer and Pelizaeus museum visitors may feel reminded of the white marble statues of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. And indeed, like these later sculptures the ancient Egyptian group statue of Pepy and Ra-shepses was once painted.<sup>10</sup> Following the ancient Egyptian tradition the skin of the woman was painted in light yellow while the skin of the two males was painted reddish brown. Their dresses were painted in white. Black was used to color the wigs and the outlines of the eyes (compare **cat. I.1**). Only the scantiest remains of this former polychromy have survived on the Hildesheim group statue, but they are not usually noticed by the museum's visitors. Only by close inspection and using a magnifying glass the color remains can be detected. This was confirmed by the members of this team during the Hildesheim Autumn School.

Egyptian limestone developed of fossils which mainly consist of practically insoluble calcium carbonate. Furthermore Egyptian limestone sculptures may contain a high amount of soluble salts which entered the porous material through contact with water which leads to condition changes.<sup>11</sup> As soon as the object starts to dry the diluted salts are recrystallizing. This process includes an increasement of the volume of the salts and therefore leads to powdering, crumbling and possibly even white efflorescence of the object's surface. Thus it was decided in the early 1960s to soak such limestone sculptures for a certain period of time in order to wash out the soluble salt. Hence, also the group statue PM 17, was soaked. It took four and a half months (from 16 February to 1 July 1963) until most of the detrimental salt was dissolved and washed out and the sculpture could finally be consolidated.

Nowadays Hildesheim's group statue PM 17 and several other sculptures which were treated in the same way appear monochromatic white. It should be kept in mind that this was neither the intention of the ancient sculptors nor that of the officials who commissioned the statue, and who imagined that a polychrome, life-like statue placed in the *serdab* of the tomb would guarantee their life in the hereafter.

Mahmoud Mahran and Helmut Brandl



## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Compare the pair statue of Pepy-ankh the Middle and Jah-huty in the Mallawi Museum ([cat. I.1](#)) which depicts the same gesture.
- 2 For additional information related to the *mastaba* of lady Pepy, cf. Spiekermann, Antje, in:  
[http://www.giza-projekt.org/Mastaba/Mastaba\\_D23.html](http://www.giza-projekt.org/Mastaba/Mastaba_D23.html)
- 3 Exh. cat. Konstanz 1983, p. 64; Martin-Pardey 1985.
- 4 Martin-Pardey 1985; Schulz 1986.
- 5 Roeßler-Köhler 1989.
- 6 Schulz 1995, p. 124.
- 7 Eaton-Krauss 1995, p. 59.
- 8 Martin-Pardey 1977, pp. 126-132;  
<https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10946>  
cf. the statue's 3D-model:  
<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/kunstmodell-projekt-doppel-statue-eines-mannes-602de49fc5cf462c9ec9dd6489e68285>
- 9 Martin-Pardey 1977, p. 41.
- 10 Cronyn 1990, pp. 103-106.
- 11 Schulte 1979.



II.

# PROVIDING FOOD





**FOR THE  
DEAD**



# SLAUGHTER SCENE

## A Funeral Model from a Period of Transition

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1694

### MATERIAL

Wood with paint (black, white, brownish red)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 23.0 cm; Width: 30.0 cm; Depth: 33.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

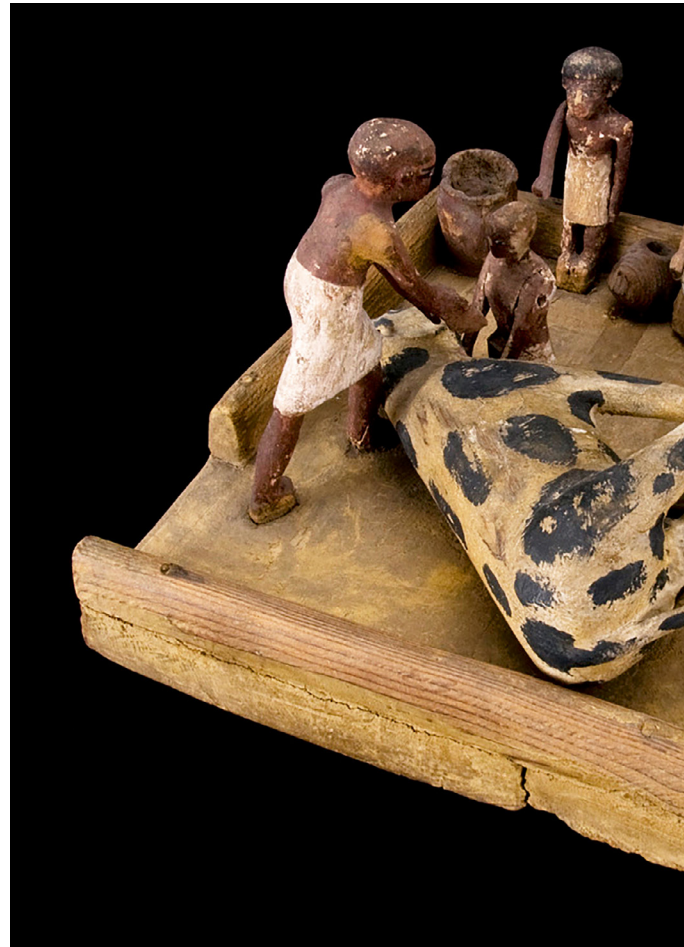
Unknown; said to be from Meir or Assiut; formerly part of the collection of Sayed Khashaba Bey; acquired by W. Pelizaeus on the antiquities market in Cairo and donated by him to the city of Hildesheim in 1907

### DATE

First Intermediate Period / early Middle Kingdom, 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty  
(21<sup>st</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Roeder and Ippel 1921, p. 74; Breasted 1948, p. 37, pl. 35; Kayser 1973, p. 55; Martin-Pardey 1991, pp. 83-86; Germer 1997, p. 67, Fig. 66; <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10856> (last update: 10 October 2003); von Falck, Lembke and Rabe 2011, pp. 86-87, no. 18b; Wilde, in: Exh. cat. Hanover and Hildesheim 2022, Mittelägypten, no. 2; 3D model: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/kunstmodell-projekt-modell-rinderschlachtung-e41e7295df1a45ada7f17296f366e2a6> (accessed 19 June 2021); Schmitz 2024, S. 266, 268, 278, 680.





## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Slaughter scene. Relief depiction in the cult chamber of the mastaba of Wekhem-ka (detail). Limestone with scanty remains of paint. From Giza, Western Cemetery (D 117). Height of the depicted portion: ca. 25 cm. Old Kingdom, late 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 2970.

### Description

The object which is represented (twice) on pages 98-99 depicts a slaughter scene; it is a coarsely carved wood sculpture which consists of a courtyard imitation in which a cow and five figures are fixed.

The rectangular wooden base is encompassed by a low boundary and has an opening at one of the corners. Much of the available surface is occupied by the cow figure lying on the floor on its left side and with tied up legs. The animal exhibits a yellow-brown fur with black "dots"; the cow's eyes and the ears are also painted in black. A butcher stands behind the animal's head and is bent over

its neck holding a knife in his right hand by which he has apparently cut the throat of the animal. A patch of dark red color on the cow's neck indicates the completion of slaughter. A boy serving as the butcher's assistant sits on the opposite side and holds a bowl under the cow's throat to collect the blood. The butcher and the boy are both bald-headed and display a dark, slightly reddish skin color. Their eyes and eyebrows are painted black and both are wearing simple short white kilts. In the right corner, next to the head of the cow, is a large wooden barrel with a stirring man next to it. His left arm is outstretched and points now to the scene that is taking place in front of him.



Right next to him is a smaller wooden bowl on the floor. Following that, two men are sitting on wooden pedestals. The one next to the bowl has a writing board on his lap and holds a writing tool indicating him as scribe. All three men have reddish-brown skin and short black hair. Two of the men are wearing white kilts, whereas the man sitting in the corner wears a white cloth tied around his shoulders. He might therefore be an overseer.

Lin Mombartz

### Archaeological Background Information

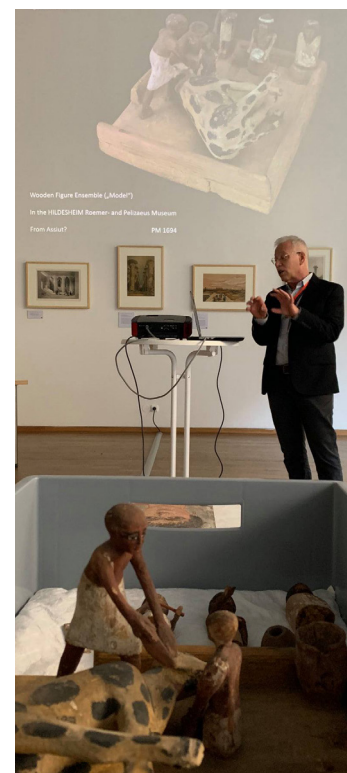
The tomb model (Hildesheim, PM 1994) represents typical grave goods from a specific era spanning the time from the late Old Kingdom to the early Middle Kingdom. This Period of transition witnessed considerable political and socio-economical changes. It saw the dissolution of the centralized state of the Old Kingdom (around 2100 BCE) and the shift of the Egyptian royal residence from Memphis (near Cairo) to the more southern town Heracleopolis (now: Ehnasya el-Medina, Beni Suef Government).

The First Intermediate Period – chronologically situated between the Old and the Middle Kingdom – was a time of conflict, political instability and civil strife. It ended around 2000 BCE when the victorious Theban ruler Mentuhotep II (11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) founded the second centralized state

in Egyptian history (Middle Kingdom). During this period it was customary to equip the burial chambers of the elite with three-dimensional wooden images (models) representing the production of food and the preparation of household goods for the dead. Typically they were placed on top of the coffin or, alternatively, in its vicinity because in antiquity models of this kind served a religious purpose. It was believed that the deceased would need and want to enjoy food and drink, not only during their lifetime but also in the afterlife.<sup>1</sup>

In order to magically secure the tomb owners' mobility models of sailing boats typically equipped with boatmen were regularly placed in the tomb chambers.<sup>2</sup> Only rarely these models – single figures as well as figure groups – were elaborately carved and painted. The majority of them were of modest size and poor craftsmanship.

According to the information provided by the Cairo art dealer, who sold the wooden tomb model (PM 1994) to Wilhelm Pelizaeus, the object comes from a tomb in the Assiut Gouvernement (Meir necropolis?). Allegedly the Hildesheim models numbered as PM 1689 (a wooden sculpture depicting nine workmen filling of a granary)<sup>3</sup> and PM 1697 (a wooden model sailing boat equipped with seven figures of sailors and, additionally, three figures of craftsmen)<sup>4</sup> were also discovered in this sepulcher.



**Fig. 2** Dr. Helmut Brandl lecturing on the history of ancient Egyptian funerary models of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Hildesheim autumn school, September 2021.



**Fig. 3** (left): Woman grinding grain. Limestone with some remains of paint. Height: 29.5 cm. From Giza, mastaba of Djasha. Old Kingdom, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 19.



**Fig. 4** (center): Two women grinding grain. Wood (destroyed by termites) and limestone. Height: 20 cm. From Giza, mastaba of Idu II. Old Kingdom, late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 2521.

**Fig. 5** (right): Three women grinding grain. Wood with paint. Height: 15.3 cm. From Deir el-Bersheh, rock tomb of Henu. 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Mallawi Museum.



The slaughtering of cattle (i.e., the preparation of beef) was a standard feature of the relief decoration of the nobles' tombs during the Old Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> According to such reliefs the slaughtering was carried out by groups of men. Their names and professional designation ("butcher") were occasionally inscribed above their depictions. This can be seen, e.g., on the reliefs from the cult chapel of the official Wehem-ka (late 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) which is exhibited at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (PM 2979; **Fig. 1**)<sup>6</sup>.

A new funerary custom emerged during the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty: Vividly painted limestone figures sculpted on bases came in use. Most of these Old Kingdom tomb or funerary models – traditionally known as "servant figures" – stood between 30

and 40 cm tall and remained uninscribed. Only a few sculptures preserve the name of the depicted person who could be a relative of the tomb owner. Hence the designation "*serving figure*"<sup>7</sup> is sometimes given preference over the traditional term "*servant figure*". The two- and three-dimensional stone sculptures (reliefs and figures) were believed to be lasting and magically effective images serving the needs of the dead in the hereafter. During the late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty the funerary customs further developed. Small-sized wooden figure groups representing domestic activities now replaced the stone sculptures. Typically these wooden figures were but crudely carved and sometimes they included elements of stone. **Fig. 3** depicts a well-modelled Old Kingdom ser-

vant /serving statue of a woman grinding grain (i.e., preparing for the baking of bread; Hildesheim, PM 19<sup>8</sup>). **Fig. 4** illustrates a proportionally smaller group of two grinding women carved in wood and placed on a base (Hildesheim, PM 2521; the wood was destroyed by termites). This figure group exhibits two model grinding stones made of limestone (late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty).<sup>9</sup> **Fig. 5** shows three female millers placed side by side on one common wooden base. This tomb model was excavated by a Dutch mission of the University of Leiden in the tomb of the official Henu at Deir el-Bersheh.<sup>10</sup> It is currently exhibited at the Mallawi Museum. Unlike the Old Kingdom figures in Hildesheim, the Mallawi tomb model from the early Middle Kingdom was carved entirely of wood and painted. Obviously the millers' traditional pose and gesture – especially the long arms grasping the grinding stone – remained similar from the Old to the Middle Kingdom (and beyond). Comparable similarities may also be noticed regarding the Old Kingdom stone figure of a beer brewer from Giza (Hildesheim, PM 18; **Fig. 6**)<sup>11</sup> and the proportionally smaller early Middle Kingdom brewer figure from Henu's tomb at Deir el-Bersheh. The latter was entirely carved from wood (**Fig. 7**).<sup>12</sup>

Helmut Brandl



**Fig. 6** (left): Man sieving beer mash (an episode in the production of ancient Egyptian beer). Limestone with remains of paint. Height: 36 cm. From Giza, mastaba of Djasha. Old Kingdom, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 18.

**Fig. 7** (right): Woman sieving beer mash. Wood with paint. Height: 15.3 cm. From Deir el-Bersheh, tomb of Henu. Early Middle Kingdom, 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Mallawi Museum.

## FURTHER READING

For stone servant / serving statues of the Old Kingdom, see, e.g., Borchardt 1897; Breasted 1948; Wolf 1957, pp. 166-169; Exh. cat. New York 1999, pp. 386-395; Exh. cat. Hildesheim 2011, pp. 182-191.

For wooden model figures of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, see, e.g., Tooley Tooley 1995; Eschenbrenner-Diemer 2013 and 2017; For the meat production in ancient Egypt, see Eggebrecht 1973 and Ikram 1995; Cf. The Museum August Kestner's and the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum's virtual exhibition focusing ancient Egyptian "models": <https://kunstmodell.de>



## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 8** Lin Mombartz (second from left), Prof. Mahmoud Massoud (third from left) and students of the Minia University investigating the wooden slaughter scene (Hildesheim, PM 1694).

### Current condition

The stability of the courtyard construction is given despite the large gap between the two boards. The three figures of the stirring man, the scribe and the overseer, one bowl and the cow are loose nowadays. With the exception of the cow, all can be easily removed from the object

(**Fig. 9**). The cow has a bit more stability as it is framed by the butcher and his assistant but it moves when the object is transported. In some places, layers of paint are lost. This can be seen on the men's heads and bodies where the red-dish-brown layer is missing in small parts and reveals the white foundation. Most of the paint on the enclosure walls are also missing, revealing the wooden support.

### Condition changes and former interventions

The examination of the object revealed an old repair. This is found e.g., at the figure of the butcher as an orange retouching could be identified at the back of the right shoulder (**Fig. 10**). Also, on the calves of the butcher a repair appeared as under UV radiation two fine cracks became visible which fluoresce in a bright white (**Fig. 11-12**). The figure was thus broken off once and has been re-attached with an adhesive. Relevant to the photographic documentation of the object, it could be observed that these interventions took place before the first photograph was taken / published in the catalogue from 1921.

### Original condition

The composition of the sculpture has slightly changed within time. In the publication of Martin-Pardey from 1991 the stirring man is still oriented to the barrel and the writing board is still hori-



zontally oriented and placed upon the knees of the scribe.<sup>13</sup> The time and reason for this change could not be researched. By visual inspection, the object presents a support fully made out of wood, which is covered with multiple layers of paint. According to an older report from the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, the object is made from two different kinds of wood. The determination was carried out macroscopically by Dr. D. Grosser from the Institute for wood at the University of Munich, Department for Anatomy and Pathology of Wood.<sup>14</sup> As claimed by the report the woods are Sycamore Fig (*Ficus sycomorus* L.) and Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani* A. Rich).



**Fig. 9** (left): Hildesheim, PM 1696. Mapping of the current condition with the three figures along the enclosure taken off.  
Legend: pink = missing wooden parts; black = traces of glue; blue = cracks in the support; neon-green = missing paint; turquoise = dirt.

**Fig. 10** (right): Hildesheim, PM 1694. Detail of the butcher focusing the orange retouching at the right shoulder.

Sycamore fig wood, a deciduous wood, comes from a native tree,<sup>15</sup> whereas the cedar wood, a coniferous wood, was imported.<sup>16</sup> Egypt did not have a large natural occurrence of trees<sup>17</sup>, which led to the circumstance that the wood often had to be imported from other areas, like the near east or west Asia.<sup>18</sup> The base is composed out of two wooden elements. It couldn't be investigated if these are pegged or glued (or both) to hold the two elements together. The boundary is mitered and joined to the base by wooden pegs. The five men appear to be carved out of one single piece of wood, except from the arms and the two pedestals. The arms are made individually and at-

**Fig. 11-12** Hildesheim, PM 1694.  
The UV radiation unveiled the modern adhesive at the butchers' calves (red arrows). For the convenience of the readers the picture was slightly lightened with Adobe Photoshop.



tached to the torsos by wooden pegs. The cow's legs are also made as single pieces and pegged to the body, just like the tail. The horns and ears as separate pieces were plugged in holes.<sup>19</sup> With its eleven single elements the cow is the most complex figure in the model. All men would most probably have been attached to the base or to their pedestals by the use of small wooden pegs and possibly glue as well. An indication for the attachment with pegs is provided by the broken peg in the corner of the object (Fig. 13). Animal glue was used in ancient Egypt for various purposes in conjunction with wood. According to Lucas it was used, among other things to "fasten wood".<sup>20</sup>

All painted areas appear to be made up of several layers. A white foundation is applied on the whole object. This could either be made from gypsum<sup>21</sup> or from chalk. Following the foundation, the different parts of the object present a maximum of three color tones used: yellow, reddish-brown, and black (Table 1). The yellow paint is used e.g., for the courtyard imitation and appears to have been applied very thinly. The cow's pattern is composed of black patches upon a yellow background. Finally, the reddish-brown and black paint have been used for all men, as males were usually depicted with reddish skin color, black eyes, and white kilts.<sup>22</sup>





**Fig. 13** (left): Hildesheim, PM 1694. The detail of the corner shows the condition without the overseer in place revealing a broken peg (red arrow).

**Fig. 14** (right): Hildesheim, PM 1694. Mapping of the dust accumulation (in turquoise) where the figures along the enclosure wall were taken off.

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| Paint:<br>yellow        |
| Paint:<br>Reddish-brown |
| Foundation:<br>white    |

(A) Base and boundary

|   |
|---|
| Paint:<br>Black (for pattern and<br>face details) |
| Paint:<br>Yellow (for fur)                        |
| Foundation:<br>white                              |

(B) Cow

|  |
|--|
| Paint:<br>White (for kilt)                     |
| Paint:<br>Black (for face details<br>and hair) |
| Paint:<br>Reddish-brown (for skin)             |
| Foundation:<br>white                           |

(C) Men

**Table 1**  
Hildesheim, PM 1694. Possible stratigraphy of the paint layers with the indication of the layers function, as could be investigated in the autumn school. (The thickness of the rows does not represent the thickness of the paint layers.)

**Fig. 15** Autumn school at the Roemer- and Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim (2021). Students and tutors discussing the RPM's antiquities which were selected for the catalogue.

To produce the paint, minerals were crushed and ground until a powder was formed. Afterwards, the powder was mixed with water and an adhesive such as animal glue or gum<sup>23</sup> and was applied to the object.

#### Conservation interventions recommendations

To prevent the risk of losing the three separate figures completely they should be reattached to the object. Also, as the cow lies loosely it should be reattached to the base, so that it does not cause or receive any more damage. In addition, it would support a better handling during transportation. Furthermore, dust has accumulated in a small area. This can be seen e.g., at one of the corners (**Fig. 14**). Therefore, a cleaning would be recommended. The smaller areas with missing parts in the paint layers do not interfere with the viewers perception of the objects. In addition, there is no need for filling and color reintegration/retouching.

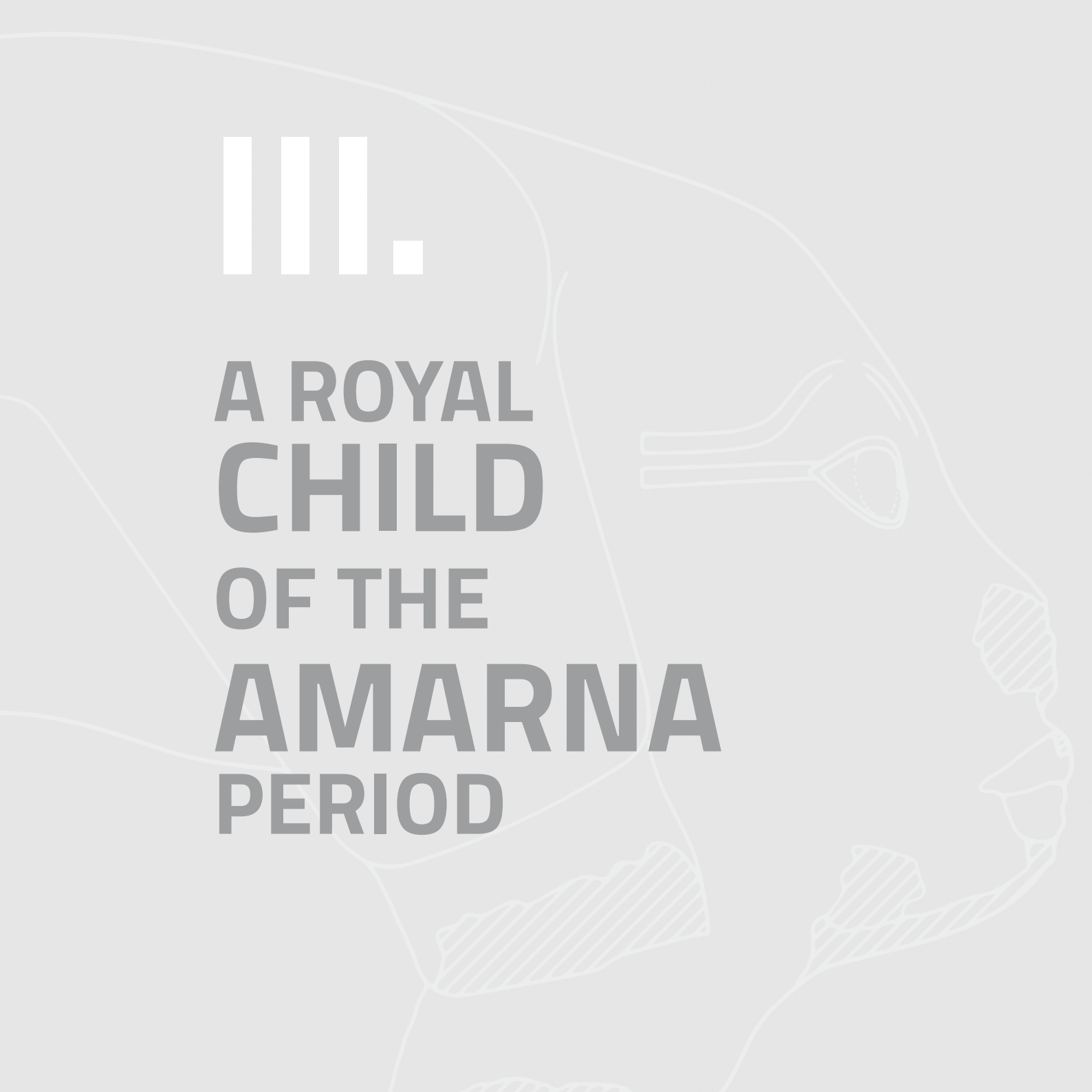
Lin Mombartz

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Tooley 1995; Eschenbrenner-Diemer 2013 and 2017.
- 2 See, e. g. Martin-Pardey 1991, pp. 60-63, 89-100.
- 3 Martin-Pardey 1991, pp. 64-68; Eggebrecht 1996, p. 40, Fig. 31.
- 4 Martin-Pardey 1991, pp. 93-101; Pieke and Bohnenkämper 2015, p. 24, Fig. 7.
- 5 Eggebrecht 1973; Ikram 1995.
- 6 Kayser 1964; Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1986, pp. 46-49 (AR 8).
- 7 For the use of the term *serving figure(s)*, see, Macy Roth 2002; cf., e. g., <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/144023>
- 8 Eggebrecht 1991, p. 30, Fig. 22.
- 9 Breasted 1948, p. 22, pl. 21a; Schmitz 1996, p. 28, pl. 5
- 10 De Meyer 2007 and 2011, p. 37, Fig. 1.
- 11 Eggebrecht 1991, p. 31, Fig. 23.
- 12 De Meyer 2007 and 2011, p. 40, Fig. 6.
- 13 Martin-Pardey 1991, p. 86.
- 14 Martin-Pardey 1991, p. 84.
- 15 Gale et al 2000, p. 367.
- 16 Lucas 1959, p. 491.
- 17 Gale et al 2000, p. 334.
- 18 Lucas 1959, p. 503.
- 19 Martin-Pardey 1991, p. 84.
- 20 Lucas 1959, p. 7-8.
- 21 Gale et al. 2000, p. 367.
- 22 Hayes 1978, p. 107.
- 23 Lucas 1959, p. 9; Newman and Serpico 2000, p. 490.





The background features a light gray, stylized profile of an ancient Egyptian head facing right. The head is composed of simple outlines. Several areas are filled with diagonal hatching: the eye, the eyebrows, the lower part of the face, and the base of the neck. In the upper left corner, there are four vertical white bars of varying heights, resembling a stylized 'III.' or a set of columns.

III.

**A ROYAL  
CHILD  
OF THE  
AMARNA  
PERIOD**



# A PRINCE OR A PRINCESS?

## A Wooden Statuette and Its Identification

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54 (the object is temporarily on display at the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums, Mannheim, Germany)

### MATERIAL

Wood with some remains of paint (yellow, red, and black)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height of the child figure: 17.4 cm; Height of the base: 3.4 cm;  
Width of the base: 6.2 cm; Depth of the base: 15.1 cm

### PROVENANCE

Believed to have been discovered at Kom Medinet Ghurab in 1904; acquired in Cairo from M. Casira and M. Nahman by Wilhelm Pelizaeus and donated by him to the city of Hildesheim in 1907

### DATE

New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep IV /Akhenaten (ruled ca. 1353-1336 BCE)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Borchardt 1911, pp. 14-15, Fig. 14 (as princess); Roeder and Ippel 1921, pp. 79-80, Fig. 25 (as "a prince?"); Fechheimer 1921, pl. 86 (as Queen Tiye); Vandier 1958, p. 435 (G, d), pl. 139.2 (as prince); Kayser 1973, p. 70 (as "a prince?"); Porter and Moss 1934/1968, p. 113 (as prince); Hermann and Schwan 1949, p. 81 (as "a youthful courtier"); Eggebrecht, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1976, no. 83 (as prince); Müller, M. 1988, IV, pp. 99-100 (as "probably a princess"); Seidel, in: Eggebrecht 1993 (as prince); Seidel, in: Eggebrecht 1996 (as princess); Petschel, in: Exh. cat. Leoben 2001, p. 65, no. 28 (as prince); <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10410> (last update: 30 August 2003; as prince); Exh. cat. Hildesheim 2006, pp. 168-169, Fig. 33 (as prince); Bayer 2014, pp. 31-33, doc. 3, pl. 2 and 3a (as princess); Pieke and Bohnenkämper 2015, p. 30, Fig. 14 (as princess); Schmitz 2024, S. 329, 635, 659.







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Earliest available photographic documentation of the statuette Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54. Photo taken in 1907 or slightly later.

**Fig. 2** (right): Hieroglyphic inscription on top of the base. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54.

The finely carved and painted wooden figure (PM 54) which is depicted on pp. 112-113 and Fig. 1 exhibits the delicate features of a high-ranking child whose sex has been a matter of some controversy in the past. On the basis of the specific garment worn and also with regard to the decoration of the base it has been assumed that this youth's status was royal.

The child is depicted in movement advancing the left leg. As characteristic for wooden sculptures (and similarly also for bronze figures) there is no dorsal pillar and the arms and legs are freely modelled. The child wears a striated wig with a plain head band; the wig resembles the so-called "Nubian" wig worn by kings and queens during the New Kingdom. A large hairpiece (consisting of four vertical braids of curly hair which are twisted at the bottom and held together by ribbons) hangs down from the wig's proper right side as far as the chest. This hairpiece is traditionally interpreted as the "sidelock of youth".

The child's slender body is clothed in a knee-length kilt pulled up in the back and exhibiting the belly with a round navel above the triangular protruding apron front. Curving ribbons extend diagonally from the belt on either side of the apron. The upper body, the arms and the lower legs are unclothed. Hence it can be noticed that the chest reveals a youthful bosom. The youth's arms are



bent and the left arm is raised higher than the right arm. The left lower arm is not preserved. Probably the figure once held an object now lost, perhaps fruit or a pet which could be concluded from similar wooden figures.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively the statuette could have carried a *sistrum* (a metal rattle used in acts of religious worship) or a miniature fan (or scepter) made of precious metal as would be appropriate for a princess (see Fig. 9 on p. 118) and for a prince<sup>2</sup>.

The remains of paint indicate that the statuette was once brightly painted. The wig still preserves traces of black paint while the skin is painted reddish brown and the kilt now appears greyish-

yellowish. Prof. Arne Eggebrecht once suggested that the figure's headbands were originally gilt.<sup>3</sup> Such an elaborate ornamentation would have been common for royal wooden statuettes of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>4</sup>

When the figure (PM 54) came to Hildesheim it was fixed on a rectangular wooden base which bears inscriptions. Such inscriptions would normally identify the person represented in the figure, but not in this case. The base shows engraved alternating *ankh*, *djed*, and *was* signs (the hieroglyphic characters for "life", "endurance" and "prosperity") running around the pedestal which is typical for representations of kings and queens. Moreover, four lines of engraved and incrustated hieroglyphic characters decorate the base's upper side (Fig. 2). This inscription translates as follows:

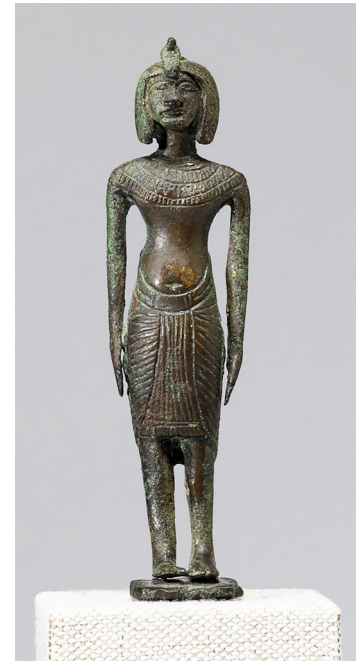
*"The Princess, great of favour, the Lady of the Two Shores, the Beloved, the Desired, the Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt great of splendor, sublime of jewellery, the Great Royal Wife Tiyi, may she live."*<sup>5</sup>

This inscription confirms that the base originally belonged to a statuette of Queen Tiyi, the chief consort of Amenhotep III and mother of Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten. Although the text calls Tiyi "Princess (great of favour)..." it can be safely excluded that the statuette (PM 54) depicts Tiyi as a child because the queen was not a borne

royal. Her parents, Iuya and Tuya, were commoners. Tiyi's original statuette is unfortunately lost and the identity of the child depicted on the queen's base remains a matter of speculation.

#### The statuette's provenance

According to investigations by Ludwig Borchardt carried out in 1905 the statuette and the base (Hildesheim, PM 54) belong to a group of typically small-scale royal representations (sculptures and fragments of such) which were discovered by a local farmer at the ancient *Kom* (hill) of Medinet Ghurab, a village near Illahun (Fayoum oasis). The findspot was a spacious but ruined brick building of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (according to the pottery sherds found within it) which Borchardt considered to represent the remains of a royal palace. This edifice may have included a place of worship for the royal family of the Amarna Period, as together with PM 54 a formerly gilt bronze statuette of a pharaoh in the Amarna style was recovered (Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, inv. no. 44.406; Fig. 3)<sup>6</sup>. The best-known discovery from Kom Medinet Ghurab is, however, a stunning statue head representing the aged Queen Tiyi. Borchardt described this isolated head as the masterpiece of ancient Egyptian wood carving and acquired the head in Cairo for the Egyptian Museum in Berlin (ÄM 21834; Fig. 4).<sup>7</sup> The Egyptian students participating in our project delighted in



**Fig. 3** Standing figure of an anonymous Pharaoh (Akhenaten?). Bronze with scanty remains of gilding. Height: 10.4 cm. Presumably from Medinet Ghurab. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, inv. no. 54.406.





**Fig. 4** (left): Statue head of Queen Tiye. Wood, gold, linnen, colored stones and glass. Height: 9.5 cm. Berlin, Egyptian Museum, ÄM 21834.

**Fig. 5** (center): Seated figures of Amenhotep III and Tiye. Ebony with remains of gilding. Height: 6.4 cm / 5.8 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus-Museum, PM 53 a+b.



looking at this head during their visit to the Berlin Egyptian Museum.

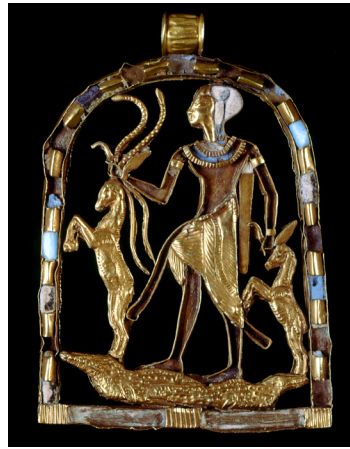
At Hildesheim, two more figures from Kom Medinet Ghurab can normally be seen and studied (if they are not travelling in a touring exhibition to be admired somewhere outside Hildesheim): Two small-scale seated figures representing an obese (i.e., aged) Amenhotep III and his consort Tiye. These outstanding wood carvings may once have served as ceremonial staff finials (Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 53 a+b; **Fig. 5**).<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm Pelizaeus had bought these two royal figures in Cairo together with the figure of a princely child (PM 54).

#### PM 54: Discussion of the sex

In the past the statuette's (PM 54) lack of identifying inscriptions and indifferent iconography have caused doubt whether a girl or a boy is represented. Prof. Günther Roeder (the Pelizaeus Museum's director from 1915-1945) suggested the depiction of a prince. His opinion was shared by Dr. Hans Kayser, Roeder's successor at the Pelizaeus Museum (from 1945-1974) and until relatively recently this opinion has found supporters (see Bibliography).

In fact the figure (PM 54) exhibits features which are thought to be typical for males: The striding position and the reddish-brown skin color.

The figure's specific kilt, however, resembles the ornate kilt of both princes and princesses from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and also from the Rameside Period and must be considered as indecisive. This is proven, e.g., by a small stela depicting the youthful Rameses II as a divine (solar) child (Musée du Louvre, N 522; **Fig. 6**).<sup>9</sup> The pharaoh is squatting and shown wearing a diadem together with the pleated kilt which is pulled up in the back and reaches down to the anklets. The pharaoh's youthfulness is further marked by the finely sculpted sidelock and a long ear pendant. A similarly ornate figure (omitting the diadem and the earring) could also be shown in connection with a male divinity: The youthful saviour god Shed. A fine open work gold pectoral in Hil-



**Fig. 6** (left): Relief tablet depicting Ramesses II as a (solar) child. Limestone. Height: 18 cm. Provenance unknown. Musée du Louvre, N 522 (Replica).

**Fig. 7** (center): Pendant depicting the god Shed. Gold with polychrome inlays. Height: 6.9 cm. Provenance unknown. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus-Museum, PM 5922.

**Fig. 8** (right): Lid of a box depicting princess Nefer-neferu-Re. Wood with polychrome inlays. Length: 10.3 cm. From the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV 62). Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 61498.

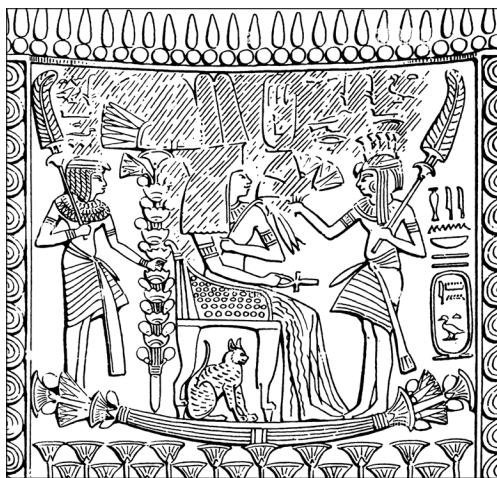
desheim which can be dated on stylistic grounds to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty depicts Shed striding on crocodiles and grasping snakes and gazelles (Hildesheim, Roemer- and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 5922; **Fig. 7**).<sup>10</sup> Here a male god wears the "princely" pleated kilt with flaring ribbons together with a collar, armlets, and the sidelock of youth.

A turning point in the scholarly perception of the statuette (PM 54) was reached in 1988 when the Egyptologist, Dr. Maya Müller, published an assessment of the figure.<sup>11</sup> She concluded that PM 54 very probably represents a *female* royal child. Müller pointed out that princes – other than

princesses – are only very rarely depicted during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, to which she dated the figure on stylistic grounds. She added that several representations of daughters of Amenhotep III and of Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten exist which depict the princesses wearing a "royal" pleated kilt together with a broad collar and a braid (or sidelock) attached to the wig.

From the Amarna Period this iconography is attested, e.g., on a box lid representing princess Nefer-neferu-Re, Akhenaten's and Nefret-iti's 5<sup>th</sup> daughter, which was found in the tomb of Tutankhamun (**Fig. 8**).<sup>12</sup> The princess here wears a flat modius on top of her shaven head

**Fig. 9** (left): Backrest of a throne depicting Queen Tiyi (seated) opposite her daughter Sat-Amun and an anonymous princess (detail). Wood, stuccoed and gilded. From tomb KV 46 (tomb of Iuya and Tuya, Western Thebes). Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 51112.



**Fig. 10** (right): Statuette Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54 (detail of Fig. 1). The modelling of the figure's breast appears atypical for a male youth and points to the representation of a girl.



which also exhibits a side braid. The ornamentation of princesses from Amenhotep III's reign is best illustrated by the gilt relief on the backrest of princess Sat-Amun's wooden throne, which was discovered in the tomb of Iuya and Tuya in the Valley of the Kings (KV 46) (Fig. 9).<sup>13</sup> The chair's original owner is shown here together with another, anonymous, princess standing and attending the enthroned Queen Tiyi. Both princesses are dressed like the Hildesheim figure (PM 54). Additionally they are seen holding a fan (or scepter) and flowers while wearing a flower crown on their "Nubian" style wigs.

#### PM 54: Date and identity

Comparing the Hildesheim statuette (PM 54) with two-dimensional representations of princesses from the reign of Amenhotep III, Müller identified the figure (PM 54) as – very probably – the image of a daughter of this king and Queen Tiyi. With regard to the figure's proportions she further concluded that PM 54 was probably carved in the early Amarna Period, which identifies the subject of the statuette (PM 54) as a sister of king Akhenaten. This explanation is plausible bearing in mind that during the Amarna Period some statues of Tiyi and Nefretiti, as well as



statues of Akhenaten's daughters, were sculpted from reddish-brown quartzite reminiscent of the reddish brown skin of the statuette, PM 54.

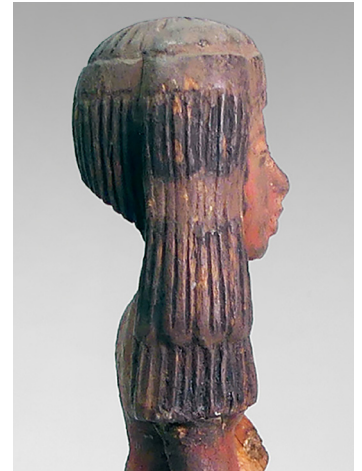
It may be added that the modelling of a youthful female bosom (Fig. 10) and the addition of a typically female hairpiece (Fig. 11) could also be regarded as decisive for the figure's (PM 54) identification as a girl. The coiffure is reminiscent of "erotic" female representations of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty: An almost identical hairdo is shown by the wooden figure of a swimming girl which may have served as a spoon or the decoration of an cosmetic vessel (Fig. 12).<sup>14</sup>

The precise dating and the identification of PM 54 remain problematic. Depictions of daughters of Amenhotep III datable to the reign of Akhenaten are not known – excepting, perhaps, princess Baket-Aten whose father was a king (either Amenhotep III or Akhenaten). The historical events accompanying the transmission from Amenho-

tep III's reign to that of Akhenaten are still not fully understood. Several experts including W. Raymond Johnson<sup>15</sup> consider a long joint reign of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, during which the senior king reigned from his traditional seat, Thebes, while Akhenaten would have chosen to simultaneously reign from Akhet-Aten.

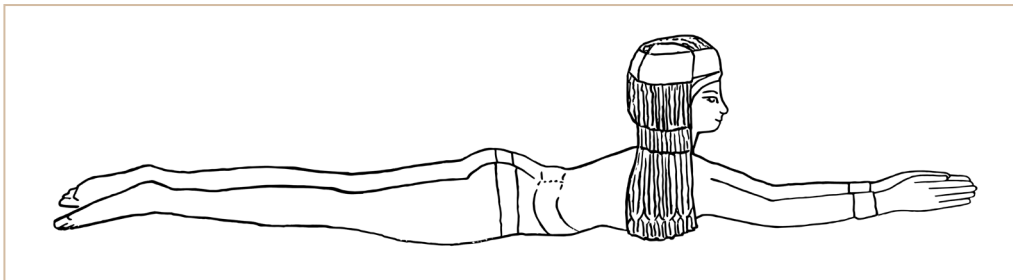
Following this idea, the reigns of the two kings may have overlapped for about 12 years. This reconstruction would certainly help the interpretation of the Hildesheim figure (PM 54) as a daughter of Amenhotep III carved in the Amarna style. The figure (PM 54) could possibly represent Akhenaten's sister Sat-Amun or his other sisters, Isis or Henut-tawi who both left inscriptions at Kom Medinet Ghurab.

During the advanced Amarna Period specific portrait types of members of the royal family were created by the king's sculptors. Among these there is one specific face type that comes



**Fig. 11** Head of the statuette Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54. The braid appears to be a female ornament.

**Fig. 12** Handle of a cosmetic spoon (?) in the shape of a swimming girl exhibiting a braid. Wood. Length: 34.5 cm. Provenance unknown. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 45118.





**Fig. 13** (above): Head of an anonymous female statuette. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54.



**Fig. 14** (right): Lid of a canopic vessel formerly inscribed for Akhenaten's lesser wife, Kiya. Calcite with colored inlays. Height: 18.2 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.8.54.

to mind when looking at the face of the Hildesheim figure (PM 54). This face is found on the lids of the four canopic jars which were discovered in the royal tomb KV 55 in Western Thebes. The tomb's history is complicated and not completely understood.<sup>16</sup> KV 55 is considered to preserve the remains of Akhenaten's secondary, Theban, burial together with remains of the tomb equipment of Queen Tiye – and of Kiya, Akhenaten's second wife. The richly gilt wooden inner coffin and the set of four canopic jars found in KV 55 were originally owned by Kiya.<sup>17</sup> Three of the jars

are preserved in the Egyptian Museum Cairo while one was given to the excavator, Mr. Theodore M. Davis, who bequeathed it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Comparing the head of the statuette, PM 54 (Fig. 13) and the proportionally larger head of the lid of the Metropolitan Museum's canopic jar (Fig. 14) a similar coiffure, a similar oval form of the face and similarly elongated eyes can be noticed. Of course, the two representations differ regarding their materials and proportions, and with regard to their function. What seems clear is that these images represent royal females in different stages of life. The wooden figure's short, broad nose and the smiling full lips are typical for children, while the canopic lids' straight, narrow noses and the subtly modelled lips duly characterize a youthful adult. Could it be that these two female portraits represent one and the same historic person in two different stages of her life, namely Kiya? In the absence of other royal faces similar to those of the canopic jars this seems possible. Alternatively one might consider to attribute the Hildesheim wooden figure to another mysterious princess of the Amarna Period: Baket-Aten who was closely associated with Queen Tiye and who – according to the scholar, Marc Gabolde<sup>18</sup> – may have been a daughter of Kiya.

Rebecca Hemmy and Helmut Brandl

## CONSERVATION

### Preparation of the Object

The statuette of a royal child (Hildesheim, PM 54) was one of two objects which were chosen to give the students the opportunity to examine CT-scan slides. The independent wood conservator Antje Zygalski was consulted as supervisor for this procedure, which was carried out by the Hildesheim St. Bernward Hospital, respectively by Dr. med. Bernhard Holland. In addition, the object was mechanically cleaned with a soft brush before handing over to the students.

Noteworthy is the prepared packaging of the statuette. The object has its own packaging, made up of high quality materials and is laying in a recess in the shape of the statuette. It is therefore properly prepared for storage and handling./ transportation (Fig. 15). The packaging was prepared by the conservator Elke Michler, M.A., of the Reiß-Engelhorn Museums in the city of Mannheim where the Hildesheim figure (PM 54) has been on loan since 2015. The object was brought from there to be investigated during the Hildesheim autumn school.

### Current Condition

Two condition reports of the object are available and date from 2001 and 2012. As the described condition in the older report is congruent with the current condition, it can be stated that no changes took place since that time. The figure's

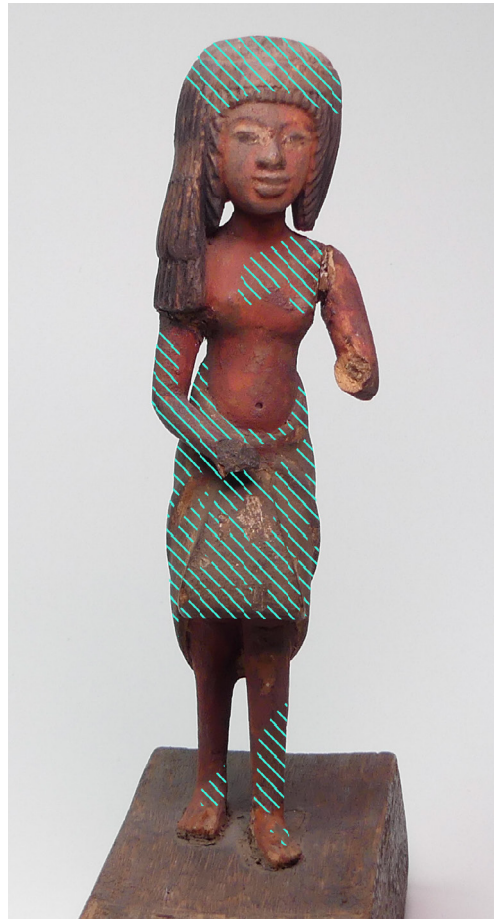


proper right hand and left forearm are missing and the joining of the proper left arm to the torso is still very fragile. Further, there is a small missing part in the wood below the proper left knee. The paint layers in general are stable. The object shows scattered losses of the polychromic layers down to the wooden support, e.g., on the front side of the kilt is an area with chipped paint. Also, in the area of the joints within the arms some

**Fig. 15** Antje Zygalski (left), independent conservation consultant, and Cassandra Wirth (right), student of conservation (HAWK Hildesheim / Holzminden / Göttingen) preparing the statuette (Hildesheim, PM 54) for computer tomography at the hospital St. Bernward, Hildesheim.



**Fig. 16** Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54. Mapping of the possible surface dirt at the figure (not mapped at the base).



loose dried residue of paint can be found. Wide areas of the surface appear in grey and grey-brownish tones which is interpreted as heavily soiled by burial debris and/or dust (Fig. 16). In addition, the figure shows stains upon the head. The later added (see following paragraphs) base of the princess is deformed due to climatic fluctuations and resulting stresses in the wood. Deep cracks on the bottom side run in the direction of the grain. The upper surface also has some flaws: in the marginal area an older crack and more recent damage can be found; and some fillings of the upper engraving have fallen out leaving empty parts behind (Fig. 2).

#### Condition changes and former interventions

As the archaeological investigation has already shown, the base originally belonged to another figure. This can be substantiated by the art-technological investigation. Already in visual light, a wooden inset behind the proper left foot could be detected. The CT-scan revealed that underneath the inset a deep recess is present, which in addition is filled with wood (Fig. 17).

Due to the location and size of the recess its function has been a mortise; and the closing of this former mortise is an indication that the base once supported a figure with legs in parallel position.

The examination under UV radiation also showed some conspicuousness which might point to condition changes (Fig. 18). Fluorescence becomes visible on the contact surface of the fracture edges and joints. These could originate from the used adhesives. (The figure has had both arms reattached with an adhesive.) Furthermore, luminous areas can be seen in the kilt, which could originate from former restorations or be part of the original paint. Because of the thick dirt / deposit layer this remains unclear. In addition, the retouching's (which were partially applied directly to wooden areas) can be seen under UV radiation; they also fluoresce.

#### Original condition of the figure

The CT-scan shows that the figure itself nowadays consists of three parts. The biggest of it being the body and the two other elements being the arms. The joints between arms and torso are realized by the use of pegs. The figure and the (original and now missing) base were separate parts, which seems to be typical for ancient Egyptian wood sculptures.<sup>19</sup> The carved princess was connected to the original base by extensions of the feet (instead of pegs). The structure of the different paint layers of the figure was examined on a macroscopic level (Table 1). The figure was first primed in white throughout. The hair was painted



**Fig. 17** Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54. This CT-scan slide crosses the statuette in the width of the proper left foot. A second recess is seen behind the recess in use. This is filled with wooden pieces.

straight on top of the primer. The flesh tone parts were painted in red and represent the next layer. Details of the face were applied with black and the kilt in beige paint directly over the red color layer.

**Fig. 18** Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54.  
The UV radiation revealed the location of possible adhesive applications (blue), restoration measures or white primer (green), and retouchings (red). For the convenience of the readers the picture was slightly lightend with Adobe Photoshop.

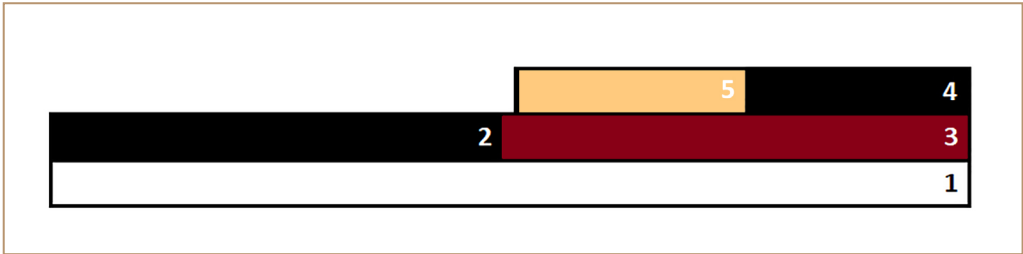


**Recommended conservation interventions**

The phenomena of the paint losing the adhesion to the wood is typical for changes in the surrounding climate (temperature and humidity).<sup>20</sup> For minimizing this process, stable climate conditions should be warranted. For storage, there is no urgent action needed for the object, assuming suitable packing. For loan or exhibiting the object, consolidation of the paint layers is recommended. This will ensure that the original surface is preserved. Furthermore, surface cleaning should be considered to reduce the risk of microbial infestation<sup>21</sup>, to better differentiate the color scheme and in general to make the object aesthetically more representative. Securing the loose arm joining is not mandatory and could be compensated with a suitably installed mounting.<sup>22</sup>

Kassandra Wirth

**Table 1** Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 54.  
Possible stratigraphy of the paint layers as could be investigated during the autumn school. (The thickness of the rows does not represent the thickness of the paint layers.  
Legend: 1 = white primer; 2 = hair; 3 = skin; 4 = eyes; 5 = kilt.)



## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 See, e.g., Fay 2004.
- 2 For an example for the figure of a prince, see, e.g., Connor 2017, p. 19, Fig. 10 (Amun-her-khepshef at the statue of Rameses II, Torino, Museo Egizio, C. 1380. As usual in stone sculpture the scepter is depicted attached to Amun-her-khepshef's shoulder and head).
- 3 See Eggebrecht, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1976, no. 83.
- 4 See Berlin, Egyptian Museum, ÄM 21836 (height: 25.5 cm), cf. Schultz 2006, p. 30.
- 5 For the translation see: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10410>, and Bayer 2014, p. 32.
- 6 Bryan, in Exh. cat. Cleveland 1992, p. 194; Bryan in: Schulz and Seidel 2009, p. 78, no. 30, n. 4; online: <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/8931/standing-amarna-king/>
- 7 Borchardt 1911; cf. Wildung, Reiter and Zorn 2010, pp. 84-87; Bayer 2014, pp. 88-95, pl. 26c-d, 27-28.
- 8 Borchardt 1911, p. 14, no. 1-2; Schulz, in: Eggebrecht 1996, p. 59, Fig. 51.
- 9 Feucht 1984, pp. 410-411; Andreu, Rutschowskaya and Ziegler 1997, p. 144, no. 65.
- 10 Schmitz 1994; cf. Brandl 2021c.
- 11 Müller, M. 1988, IV, pp. 99-100.
- 12 Feucht 1984, pp. 404-405, Fig. 1.
- 13 Davis et al. 1907, p. 42-44, Fig. 4.
- 14 Exh. cat. Denver 1987, p. 148, no. 15.
- 15 See, most recently, Johnson 2020, p. 768, n. 4.
- 16 See Bell 1990.
- 17 Krauss 1986.
- 18 Gabolde 1992.
- 19 Nearly all ancient Egyptian wooden figures exhibited in the RPM show arms which were produced separately and joined to the torso.
- 20 Gänsicke 1993, p. 100.
- 21 Hatchfield 2002, p. 31.
- 22 See, e.g., Barclay, Bergeron and Dignard 1998, p. 3.

## FURTHER READING

For the reign of Akhenaten, see, e.g., Aldred 1988; Gabolde 1998; Hornung 1999; Reeves 2005; for the art and archaeology of Amarna, see, e.g., Exh. cat. Brooklyn 1973; Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1976; Müller, M. 1988; Exh. cat. Cleveland 1992; Exh. cat. New York 1996; Exh. cat. Boston 1999; Exh. cat. Copenhagen 2005 and 2023; Exh. cat. Berlin 2012.

For more finds from Kom Medinet Ghurab, see Borchardt 1911; Fay 2004; Bayer 2014; for the Gurob (Ghurab) Harim Palace Project (2005-2014) co-directed by Ian Shaw and Frederik Hagen, see <http://www.gurob.org.uk/about.php>



# IV. TRADITION:



# **NEW KINGDOM AND HELLENISTIC PERIOD**



# A NEW KINGDOM ROYAL STATUE HEAD

## in the *Nemes* Headdress with Double Crown

### INVENTORY N°

Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570

### MATERIAL

Limestone with some remains of paint  
(yellow, blue, and red)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 54 cm

Width: 57.5 cm

Depth: 47.5 cm

Height of the face: 21.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

Said to be from El-Ashmounein (Hermopolis Magna)

### DATE

New Kingdom, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, probably reign of Rameses II  
(ca. 1279-1213 BCE); it remains uncertain whether the  
statue of a previous ruler was usurped, partly reshaped,  
and reused

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Elhitta and Messiha 1979, p. 24, pl. XXVIII; Brandl 2008,  
p. 62, Fig. 14; Sourouzian 2019, p. 821 (A21, with illustration);  
Sourouzian 2020, p. 290 (A 21, with illustration).







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** (above): Head of a seated statue of Rameses II, exhibited in the municipal garden of Zamalek. Granodiorite; height: 210 cm. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 67097. The eyes and eyebrows, indented earlobes, the strap apparently holding the false beard in place as well as two creases at the throat are indicated in relief.

**Fig. 2** (right): Statue head of an anonymous pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570.

The well over-life-sized statue head which is illustrated on pp. 128-129 and Fig. 2-3 is one of two remarkable royal portraits preserved in the Mallawi Museum (the other is cat. VI.1). Both are isolated statue heads and believed to originate in the ancient city of Hermopolis Magna (El-Ashmounein).<sup>2</sup> The sculpture (inv. no. 570) depicts the head of a pharaoh; the neck and a small portion of the shoulders are also preserved. There are no identifying inscriptions on the fragment and in the museum's catalogue of 1979<sup>3</sup> the sculpture has been attributed to the New Kingdom.

That the head depicts an ancient Egyptian king can be concluded from the specific headgear. The ruler wears the traditional, striped *nemes* headcloth which typically exhibits two striped lappets symmetrically falling on the breast. At the king's forehead, a uraeus is sculpted. Unfortunately, most of the serpent's tall hood is now broken away, leaving only the symmetrically arranged horizontal loops of the snake's body on both sides of the hood. The headcloth was apparently topped by a cylindrical element of which only the base remains. This must have been the pharaonic double crown, consisting of the Red crown of Lower Egypt and the White crown of Upper Egypt. The king's regalia also included a false beard (*khebesut*) attached to the chin. It depicted horizontal notches at the front indicating curly hair; only a small portion of this iconographic feature



has survived. Additionally, there is evidence that a curved strap keeping the false beard in place was formerly *painted* on the lower jaws; on close inspection, this can be detected on the left side of the sculpture (see image on p. 129 and Fig. 13). However, the paint has faded, leaving nothing but a "shadow" of this detail which now appears lighter than the surrounding area. The statue's breast may once have been decorated with a broad collar (*wesekh*), which would have been indicated either in painted relief or, possibly, by painted de-

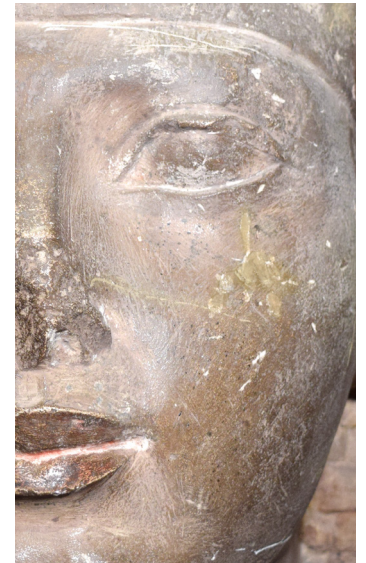
coration alone, but no traces of it are now preserved.

The pharaoh's oval, full-cheeked face appears to depict a youthful ruler. His eyes are almond-shaped and slightly hooded, marking the upper eyelid in relief. There is some damage to the brows, but it is clear that they were not outlined by the use of incisions or in relief. Instead, they were simply painted, as were the typical cosmetic lines which would be expected to extend from the outer corners of the king's eyes towards the temples of this image. The bridge of the royal nose is narrow and rounded; the tip of the nose is destroyed. The mouth depicts a pronounced smile, which is even more striking as it exhibits bright red painting. The king's ears are proportionally large and well-modelled. The earlobes are slightly indented, indicating that the king's ears were pierced and prepared to hold earrings. In the history of Egyptian royal sculpture, this detail made its initial appearance during Akhenaten's reign, i.e. in the Amarna Period (mid-14<sup>th</sup> century BCE). A feature which normally accompanied the indented earlobes – both on three- and two-dimensional representations – are two creases horizontally incised at the throat. However, this iconographic detail is missing here though it could once have been painted. If so, then it has disappeared together with most of the head's former polychromy.

For comparison a statue of Rameses II can be cited here: The seated granodiorite figure Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 67097 which is on display in the municipal garden of Zamalek (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> This statue clearly depicts incised creases at the throat and markedly indented earlobes, as well as the strap of the false beard and cosmetic extensions of the eyes worked in relief.

When complete, the Lower Egyptian crown of the Mallawi statue head (inv. no. 570) would have been painted red (remains of the red paint can still be made out) while the now missing Upper Egyptian crown was painted white. The headcloth depicted alternating blue and yellow stripes, as well as a yellow uraeus. The *khebesut* beard and its strap could have been painted either black or blue. The pharaoh's face was painted in reddish-brown, the typical color for male skin; scanty remains of reddish-brown color are still preserved all over the face. Yellow color can also be found on portions of the face; they are best recognizable on the subject's proper left cheek (Fig. 3).

The fragment belongs to a statue of an unknown type. One detail helps to limit the possibilities: On the back of the head the remains of a narrow dorsal pillar are preserved. The dorsal pillar (or back pillar) – like the raised base on which a statue of such proportions normally stood – was an essential tectonic element of most ancient Egyptian stone statuary. The shape and height of the dorsal



**Fig. 3** Statue head of an anonymous pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. Detail: Yellow patches on the left cheek.



**Fig. 4** Seated colossus of Rameses II at Luxor Temple. Granodiorite. Height (total): 927 cm.

pillars varied. In the case of the Mallawi statue head (inv. no. 570) the observation helps to exclude that the head would have belonged to a sphinx statue. That the fragment once formed part of a seated or a striding figure is probable though, as high dorsal pillars appear on these two types of Egyptian statuary depicting the ruler wearing the *nemes* and double crown.<sup>5</sup> The fragment could either belong to a single statue or perhaps to a statue group depicting the ruler together with one of several deities in a standing or striding position. That the head would have formed part of a kneeling figure is less probable. What speaks against this theoretical possibility is that the ruler's gaze is directed downwards, i.e., towards the beholders upon whom the ruler graciously looked down. This can be verified by looking at the left and right profile views (pp. 128-129). From this, it follows that originally the pharaoh's statue head was positioned considerably higher than the head of a human worshipper standing before the statue and looking up to the king's face.

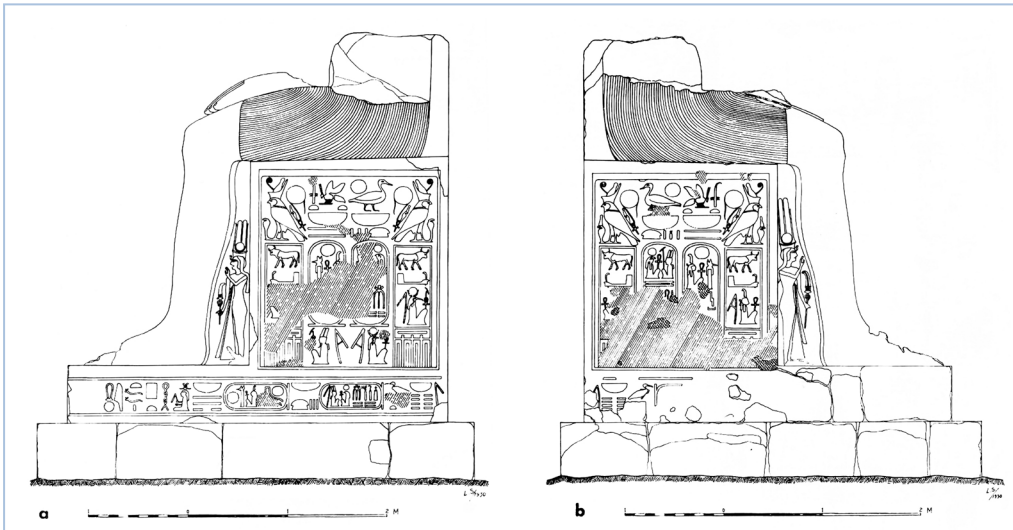
#### Identification of the depicted king

The preserved fragment (Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570) can be dated on stylistic grounds to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The reasons for this attribution are:

1. The Double Crown on top of the *nemes* (though attested in two-dimensional art since the reign of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III in the 15<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury BCE) – entered the repertoire of three-dimensional sculpture in the reign of Amenhotep III (14<sup>th</sup> century BCE). During and after the lifetime of this king, the combination of Double Crown and *nemes* was regularly depicted. Rameses II is often depicted wearing this combination (see, e.g., Fig. 4)

2. Indented earlobes occur from the time of Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten onwards. In the Rameside Period this feature was regularly added to older statues which were reused.
3. "Hooded" eyelids are a stylistic feature which was known during the late 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty this feature reappears under Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten. This represents a reliable indication that the sculptural work which we see now on the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570) was carried out after the Amarna period.
4. The portraiture of the rulers Tutankhamun, Ay and Horemheb (post Amarna period) differs from that of the Mallawi statue head, whereas the latter is likely to have been sculpted after the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.<sup>6</sup>
5. Considering the soft modelling of the facial features of this head, it may be assumed that the sculpture was commissioned not long after the Post-Amarna period. Rameses I and Sethy I (the two first rulers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) must be considered but it seems preferable to the present team that the head represents Rameses II.



**Fig. 5** Two seated colossi of an unknown king re-inscribed for Rameses II. From El-Ashmounein (Hermopolis magna), so-called Southern Temple. Limestone. Preserved height: ca. 400 cm.

It is well-known that Rameses II had building works carried out at Hermopolis Magna, e.g., a pylon erected for the temple of Thoth.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, he had several statues of himself commissioned for the local temples of Thoth and Amun-Re.<sup>8</sup> Two over-life-sized limestone seated statues of Rameses II were found in front of the Southern Temple of Hermopolis (Fig. 5).<sup>11</sup> Both their upper parts are missing. As the statue head in the Mallawi Museum (inv. no. 570) was reportedly discovered at El-Ashmounein, it is conceivable that the statue's body would have remained on

the site and may be identified one day – if it was not thoroughly destroyed. One can speculate whether one of these seated colossi which have been described as usurped (reused) sculptures could belong to the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570). Rameses II had appropriated these sculptures by having their original inscriptions recarved.<sup>12</sup> It could be that also the faces of these statues were reshaped to be more in accordance with the royal portraiture of Rameses II's own reign. If so, then the result could be what we see on the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570).





**Fig. 6** (left): Statue head of an anonymous pharaoh. Limestone. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570.



**Fig. 7** (center): Head of a seated colossus of Rameses II at Abu Simbel. Nubian Sandstone.



**Fig. 8** (right): Head of a striding statue of Rameses II. Limestone. Preserved height: 150 cm. From Hermopolis Magna. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 87299

And indeed this head bears marks of reshaping (see the chapter "Conservation").

Among the doubtlessly original sculptures from Rameses' II reign are the four seated colossi of Abu Simbel. Despite their enormous proportions the facial features of these rock statues appear quite similar to those of the Mallawi statue head (see Fig. 6-7). In both cases the youthful expression is evoked by a soft modelling which includes eyes without brows or cosmetic extensions worked in raised relief. Although minor stylistic differences may also be noted, the general simi-

larity may be regarded as an indication that the Mallawi head also depicts Rameses II.

Two white limestone striding statues inscribed for Rameses II and exhibiting the combination of *nemes* and Double Crown (destroyed) were also excavated at El-Ashmounein.<sup>9</sup> While one of these statues is preserved only as a fragmentary torso the head of the better-preserved statue (Cairo, JE 87299; Fig. 8)<sup>10</sup> can be compared with the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570). It will be seen that these two sculptures are not strikingly similar and therefore it is not considered that Cairo statue (JE

87299; Fig. 8) and the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570) once belonged to similar statues forming a pair.

There is the idea that the Mallawi head could represent a female ruler. The sculpture is currently labelled as "Head of a Queen" and "possibly Hatshepsut". Considering the history of the specific iconography (the Double Crown on top of the *nemes*) – and the head's slightly "hooded" eyes (which during the New Kingdom do not occur before the Amarna Period) an identification as an image of Hatshepsut is rather unlikely. This female pharaoh's three-dimensional portraiture never included the features mentioned above. Hatshepsut's face appears heart-shaped, her *nemes* headcloth is typically wider than that of the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570). Her eyes display curved, extended eyebrows and matching cosmetic lines usually worked in relief. Moreover, Hatshepsut's statues were never reused. They typically show signs of destruction because the female pharaoh suffered the fate of *damnatio memoriae* (extinction of the official memory) after her death. An example for a mutilated statue of Hatshepsut is illustrated here (Fig. 9).<sup>14</sup> It can be seen that the uraeus is destroyed (as usual). Like many other of Hatshepsut's statues this sphinx was smashed to pieces and buried in front of her mortuary temple, at Deir el-Bahari – hence the sculpture's poor state of preservation.



**Fig. 9** Sphinx statue head of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut. Rose granite. Height of the statue: 120.3 cm. From Deir el-Bahari. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 31.3.94.

This adds to the team's impression that the sphinx of Hatshepsut and the Mallawi head, both in the *nemes* headdress, cannot be regarded as contemporaneous works of art. The Mallawi head (inv. no. 570) probably represents Rameses II. Whether it belongs to the reused statue of a previous ruler (perhaps the king who commissioned the statues depicted as Fig. 5 or another statue at Hermopolis Magna) should be further investigated.

Helmut Brandl

## CONSERVATION

The raised questions referred to the paint layers on the statue head – respectively to the small opaque greenish-yellow patches (e.g., on the proper left cheek) and the widespread transparent yellowish-brown layer (e.g., on the proper left side of the headdress). The author as an external consultant was asked whether the original polychromy could be reconstructed and whether the yellow layers are part of this (it was expected that the statue's head would have had red skin due to depicting a male person and the headdress was expected to depict blue stripes) and in case these layers are not part of the original polychromy - what other reason can be found?

As the only resources available for an investigation were photographs, the method focused on the differences in the object's visible surface which shows different textures and different colors. Different surface colors can occur due to the degree of working (rough, sanded, polished), to the degree of aging (fresh or aged, and if aged under which conditions), and due to the application of materials (usually colorless consolidation or colorful retouching media).

But as the photographs were taken by different people and under different exhibition situations the great challenge of color reproduction arises which is influenced by the two factors 'camera' and 'light source.' The influence of the camera not

only refers to the use of different camera types but mainly to the use of different camera settings (e.g., white balance). Related to light sources numerous types of artificial light can function as this, but daylight was also used. Contrary to the constant color temperature (expressed in Kelvin) of artificial light types, daylight is also subject to permanent fluctuation depending on the season and time of day. More recently, the influence of the light source on the perceived color of objects in exhibition situations has been optimized in such a way that the so-called "color rendering index" (CRI) of the light source needs to be optimal. Related to this color reproducing influences the photographs given to the author showed severe differences between each other and the "realistic" colors were unknown. The method used for defining a realistic color was found in the circumstance that a freshly broken limestone surface is usually light grey to white (opposite to worked or aged limestone which appears mostly yellowish). This was found in the latest photographs from 2021: some of the most recent scratches from the looting in 2013 were not included in the following retouching process and therefore occur still in the fundamental limestone color (Fig. 10). Based on the post-processing of these latest photographs the older ones have been color-matched to them to make all photographs comparable.

For the description of color and especially the differentiation of colors it is noteworthy how color is defined: Color is defined by a combination of several features, whereas the three main features are color hue, saturation, and lightness. These features are also widely used in modern defined color appearance models for arts and science<sup>15</sup>, like the “Munsell color charts”<sup>16</sup> which are used in archaeology. If it comes to physical objects another feature might be included: the gloss. The color descriptions in this contribution are therefore based on the latest scratches which have been defined as light grey (without any hue of another color) and are given in the mentioned way. The results are shown as an overview in [Table 1](#) and are discussed in detail in the next paragraphs.



**Fig. 10** Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. Photograph of the proper left side taken in 2021 showing scratches from 2013 underneath the chin without retouching. Version after post-processing for finding the “realistic” colors.

| The ancient history of the object  | Condition changes while in the ground  | The modern history of the object   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- recarving (?) of the stone support</li><li>- Applying decorative layers</li><li>- Destruction /breaking off object parts</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Loss of polychromy</li><li>- Growing of lichens</li><li>- Slight scratching</li><li>(- Adherence of burial debris)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Excavation</li><li>(- Cleaning)</li><li>- Surface harmonisation (?)</li><li>- Museum looting</li><li>- Opaque Retouching</li></ul> |

**Table 1** Overview of events in the object’s history. The events placed in brackets are not thematized.





**Fig. 11** Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. On the proper left side, the “tab” of the headdress was obviously reworked as remains of the longer version are still visible.

### The ancient history of the object

#### Recarving (?) of the stone support

The ancient stone support shows some surface features which are interpreted as tool marks. Firstly, very wide indentations with parallel running edges can be observed. In addition, these do not run parallel to each other, which suggests a tool that leaves one indentation per application. The resulting color also appears lighter than the surrounding surface. The combination of these features is interpreted as chisel marks and can be found on the edge of the striped royal headdress (on the skin side). Moreover, indentations are detectable, which on the one hand are very thin and groups of them are running almost parallel to each other. But most important is the fact that they clearly follow the different forms of the sculpture. Due to these features, it is proven that these indentations are not unintentional (e.g., damage by scratching processes while in the ground) but human-made. Therefore, these grooves are interpreted as traces of sanding tools or material. Middle-size indentations of this kind are symmetrically arranged within the face: above both eyelids, along both sides of the nose, and all around the mouth. Wide and deep grooves are to be found in the headdress following the form of the stripes.

Both kinds of tool marks cause problems in placing them in the chronology of the production process: a raw surface will always be worked from rough to fine, but both kinds of rough tool traces are breaking up the already polished and therefore darker appearing skin area. This leads to the theory that the sculpture has been reworked in antiquity. Another hint of that might be found in the obviously reworked “tab” of the headdress at the proper left temple (**Fig. 11**).<sup>17</sup>

#### Applying decorative layers

Even in the photographs of the statue head scanty remains of the former decorative layers could be observed. Related to the already mentioned possibility of reworking in antiquity the first question did not focus on the precise identification of colors and the reconstruction of the former polychromy but rather on the time of application. It could be proven that the application of the decorative layers took place after the reworking of the stone support as some of the scanty remains are to be found in chisel indentations (best recognisable at the proper right side along the edge of the headdress and above the ear; see **Fig. 12**).

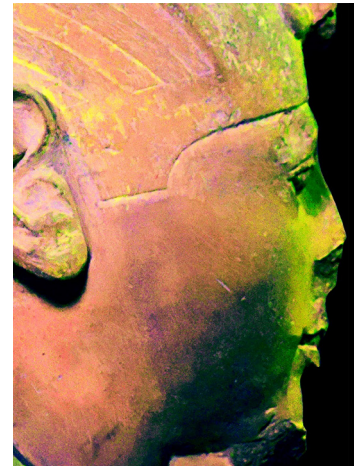
It could be observed that a white ground was partially applied above the stone support. This can still be found in wide areas on the nemes headdress but not in the area representing the skin. In some

grooves which mark the crossing between two relief details also white remains could be observed: between the headdress and face, in the grooves between the eyelid and the iris and between the upper and lower lip. The crossing between the headdress and face is most likely connected to the grounding of the headdress. With regard to the eyes, these remains can be understood as the remains of the white of the eyes. But the white-filled groove between the lips raised the question of whether the lips – unlike the remaining part of the skin, which was painted directly on the stone support – received a white ground before being painted. This question has however remained open and should be addressed in the future.

The now lost color layers could partly be reconstructed based on the scanty remains of coloring which are still preserved. The face and the neck show remains of red coloring (best visible underneath the proper right ear) and a line of intense red can be seen between the lips (Fig. 3). The headdress shows patches of (the original) yellowish ochre tone, e.g., above the ears (Fig. 12), at the crossing edge between the seam of the headdress and the skin, between the headdress and the uraeus and on the uraeus itself. Lastly, the cylindrical Red Crown represents indeed remains of the original red color. On the proper left jaw, a pattern nearly in the shape of a beard



strap can be made out (see image on p. 127). As this pattern was reshaped by a later treatment (see the paragraph on the modern history) and a beard strap is expected by ancient Egyptian iconography the right side was investigated with an imaging technique that reveals faded or visibly lost colors: DStretch. This program was developed as a tool for "Rock Art Digital Enhancement" as this kind of art is made up of natural earths and minerals and due to exposure to the environment tends to fade and becomes unseen to the naked eye. The application offers eight standardized "colorspaces" to choose from which are focusing on different colors. Fig. 13<sup>18</sup> gives



**Fig. 12** (left): Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. The statue head in 2021. Although under yellowing light conditions – by using an additional daylight imitating source the yellow ochre toned remains can be detected above the ear and at the underside of the headdress. Due to the fracture angle the bust leans slightly backwards.

**Fig. 13** (right): Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. The digital photograph has been enhanced with the application "DStretch" in the mode "YBK" revealing a pattern on the right jaw in the shape of a beard strap.

**Fig. 14** (right): Head of a colossal striding statue possibly depicting Pharaoh Tutankhamun. The sculpture preserves much of the original polychromy. Quartzite. Height of the preserved portion of the statue: 285 cm. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 59869 and JE 60134.



the result which shows a purple curved band running down the cheek, starting from the “tab” of the headdress and continuing under the chin. As this represents exactly the shape and the location where a beard strap would have been painted, this is accepted as confirmation. Based on the described remains of colors a theoretical reconstruction of the fragment’s original

polychromy was designed (**Fig. 15**). Additional details (e.g., the stripes color and eye details) were also included considering comparable stone sculptures like the quartzite colossus of Pharaoh Tutankhamun (Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 59869 and JE 60134; **Fig. 14**)<sup>19</sup> and the bust of a grey granite statue of Pharaoh Merenptah (Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 607).<sup>20</sup> To offer this thorough reconstruction here was possible through the combined efforts of Egyptology and Conservation.<sup>21</sup> Note: The remaining questions include e.g., the stripe’s occurrence and its color. The original yellow ochre tone could be found on all surfaces of the headdress – even at the “underside” (**Fig. 13**). This proves that for this layer no differentiation in material or technique between well-seen areas and poorly visible areas took place. But opposite to that on the underside is no relief indicating stripes. Related to the color of the stripes it needs to be noted that no remains of any imaginable color could be found (blue or black) – not on the upper sides and not on the underside. But no photographs of the backside of the bust are available and thus this should be addressed in the future.

#### **Destruction / Breaking off object parts**

Additionally, in the not overpainted areas (see the paragraph on the modern history) it can be noticed that the fractured surfaces of the sculpture



show a similar appearance as the skin area of the worked stone surface: a densified version of the raw material. Within the worked surface, this is mainly due to the polishing process but the densification of the fractured surfaces is most likely due

to pressure being applied over a very long period of time. As this period under pressure is assumed to be the time while being in the ground, hence, the event of destruction / breaking off object parts took place in ancient times.

**Fig. 15** Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. Reconstruction of the fragment's suggested former polychromy (Fractured areas are not included).





**Fig. 16** Statue head Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. Condition in 2007. The photograph has been enhanced with the application "DStretch" in the mode "YDT" revealing the "harmonized" areas in a brown-yellow tone (the intense yellow spots refer to remains of the original yellow paint layer; note also the intense red lips).

#### The condition changes while in the ground

The fragment has lost its polychromic layers, which can be caused by the influence of water. Also, it shows very small spots of black lichens that have been growing – for which humidity is also indispensable. The influence of water while the fragment was in the ground is therefore given. An object that has been in contact with water / high humidity for a longer period of time can be found in circumstances with either the permanent (or at least regular) presence or the temporary occurrence of water. Examples of permanent wet surroundings are soils within the vicinity of rivers, soils that are high in groundwater, and soils that are regularly watered for agricultural reasons (including river-flooded). Temporarily wet surroundings are known from rain or flash flooded soils that are usually dry, like desert regions. However, as the fragment consists of limestone (mainly calcium carbonate) and the surface is not corroded<sup>22</sup>, it can be concluded that the piece has not been in contact with water on a permanent basis.

A few scattered scratches can be identified on photographs which were already taken before the museum looting in 2013. Also, these scratches appear darker than recent ones. These are therefore interpreted to have been caused by the fragment moving in/above the ground.

#### The modern history of the object

##### Surface harmonisation (?)

Wide areas of the surface show the application of another layer, which can be identified easily on the proper left side but even clearer after the enhancement with DStretch (**Fig. 16**).

The first question focused again on the time of the application: The layer is found in worked areas as well as on fractured surfaces. In addition, where the layer has been applied in the worked areas nearly no remains of the original paint layers could be observed underneath but instead, several black lichen spots have been covered by this layer. This points to the time of application after the excavation. Related to the modern history of the object it can be stated that the photograph used for visualising the presence of this layer (**Fig. 16**) was taken in 2007. In summary, this layer was applied after the excavation and before 2007.

The next question was more complicated to answer and related to the function of this layer. Given the time of application, there seem to be two possibilities: retouching and consolidation. But the attribution to one of the possible functions caused problems due to the given characteristics as will be described in the following chapter.

At the time of application, the object showed the widespread loss of polychromy leading to an overall impression based on the color of the aged limestone: greyish with a hue of yellowing. Also, the stone surface is still nowadays fairly good which means, this surface condition was already present after the excavation. The aggregate state of the applied material was liquid (as can be expected) which can be seen in the drops that were running down during the application process. The coloristic features of the liquid include on one hand transparency as the stone surface is visible through the layer and on the other hand a (now?) slightly yellowish-brown tone which can be recognised on top of the black lichens and on top of the remains of the white ground. The visual detectability is due to the (now?) slightly darker appearance compared to the stone surface (images on pp. 128-129). Especially at the sides of the sculpture (mainly in the areas of the headdress), this is obviously intensified due to a higher layer thickness. The treatment's location does not follow any identifiable scheme: not the whole surface received this layer, just some spots. These are found in worked areas as well as in fractured surfaces and in both parts with different (former) polychromy: the skin and the headdress area. The quality of the application is rather rough. The brush strokes reveal a quite wide brush that has been used and the treatment has been very imprecise as the liq-

uid dropped on the sculpture a few times. After application the liquid ran down the surface because of the too low viscosity and the brush guidance was imprecise as it touched also areas that should obviously not be treated (e.g., the neck on the proper left side).

A special feature that needs to be thematized is the already mentioned pattern which imitates nearly a beard strap on the proper left jaw (Fig. 17). As far as could be investigated from photographs this pattern seems to occur due to two different reasons: The lower half of the pattern still represents the result of differences in the surface structure (the pattern being rougher than the finer surrounding areas)<sup>23</sup> and therefore, most probably refers to ancient working processes. However, the shape of the upper half was intensified by the application of the (now?) darker appearing liquid. The material application in this area seems to have been performed with a thin brush being guided along a defined line as the amount of material is very high around the pattern. Questionable is the shape of the untreated area, as this is just on one side of the pattern representing the expected outline of a beard strap. The reason for this uncertain shape cannot be reconstructed, nevertheless, based on the precise guiding of the brush and the partly geometric shape it is clear, that the "non-treating" of the inner area was by intention.



**Fig. 17** Statue head of an anonymous pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. The finer worked areas that could be safely identified are shown in brown, whereas the surrounding line caused by the applied liquid is presented in red. (The mapping is prepared on a black and white version of a photograph.)

Several fundamental problems occurred in identifying the function of the liquid. The first problem lies in the requirements of the different treatments: Retouching generally implies a colored medium. But retouching media are usually opaque as they have to cover color unfitting areas – but the used liquid is transparent. A medium for consolidation on the other side requires always a transparent but colorless medium as this is meant to be unseen. Unfortunately, given the possible older age of the treatment, it is possible that the liquid was darkening or yellowing due to ageing processes. Secondly, it could not be clarified what the differences were between the treated and the untreated areas at the time of application (especially regarding the beard strap) or, in other words: the need for this treatment. It is verified that after the excavation the whole surface has been in a similar state: without polychromy and therefore all over in the aged grey-yellowish stone color (= no need for a retouching) and fairly intact (= no need for a consolidation). In summary, the detected features do not match one of the mentioned functions.

The only imaginable explanation would be a quite early treatment when the modern standards for conservation work had not yet been defined and therefore, the ethical consideration to treat only

areas which need a treatment was not implemented. The function of the liquid could hence have been to “harmonize” the overall impression: After the excavation, the statue showed polished next to rough surfaces and even fractured areas; also a few lighter appearing scratches and black lichen spots. To bring all these differences closer to each other without falsifying the appearance by the use of an opaque paint, a transparent and slightly yellowish-brown medium could have been used for this purpose.<sup>24</sup> Still, this possibility cannot explain the rough application and the formed shapes and will stay a theory.

#### Looting of the museum

The museum was looted on 14 /15 August 2013 and the irregular scratches which now appear white can be connected to this unfortunate event. It can be excluded that these scratches are ancient as they don’t show an aged appearance. Furthermore, it can be excluded that the damage occurred while being buried because then, at least some of the scratches would show the yellowish-brown layer indicative of the “harmonization” treatment.

#### Retouching

Above some of the white scratches opaque paint in a greenish-yellow tone was applied, e.g., on the

left cheek (Fig. 18), on areas within the headdress and at the lower end of the proper left shoulder. The goal of the retouching was to conceal the scratches. The reason for the choice of a yellowish retouching medium (from the conservator's point of view) was to imitate the sculpture's meanwhile yellowish/brownish appearing surface. As the original polychromy was proven to be red in the skin areas, it is not possible that the goal was the imitation of the original polychromy. The color of the retouching medium is unfortunately not fitting the color of the "harmonized" sculpture any more (which must be due to ageing), and can thus be detected today.

#### Remark

This contribution has shown that numerous results on the history of an object can be obtained just by visual examination and photographic post-processing if the relevant knowledge about materials, their ageing behaviour, and causes for condition changes is available. However, since this contribution was carried out by a wood conservator and only on the basis of photographs, this contribution should only serve as an introduction to the discussion. Verification of the results should be carried out on the object (with own eyes) and preferably by a conservator specialized in stone objects.

Antje Zygałski



**Fig. 18** Statue head of a pharaoh. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 570. Condition in 2021 (after the looting in 2013 and subsequent retouching). On the proper left cheek and in the headdress area the greenish-yellow retouching on top of the new damages can be seen. (Photographed in museum lightning with additional "daylight" light source)



## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 The sculpture was selected as an example for the investigation of an object exhibited without a showcase. The investigation needed to be carried out *in situ* without touching. Therefore, no condition survey was carried out and no pre-investigation treatments were evaluated and/or undertaken.
- 2 The other royal portrait in the Mallawi Museum is the Late Period limestone head, [cat. VI.1](#).
- 3 Elhitta and Messiha 1979, p. 24.
- 4 Sourouzian 2019, pp. 297-298, no. 193.
- 5 Cf. Sourouzian 2019, p. 311 with Sourouzian 2020, p. 664, Fig. 238 (no. 200, a seated statue of Rameses II wearing the *nemes* and double crown); Sourouzian 2019, p. 564 (no. 363, a striding statue from El-Ashmounein/ Hermopolis exhibiting the same regalia).
- 6 Cf., e.g., the sandstone head, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 11.1533 which is attributed to Tutankhamun; Exh. cat. Birmingham 1988, p. 98, no. 29.
- 7 Cf. Roeder 1959, pp. 57-58 (chapter II, § 63). Cf. Sourouzian 2019, pp. 715-717; for a more recently discovered third statue reused by Rameses II, see Sourouzian 2019, pp. 718.
- 8 Sourouzian 2020, p. 290. One of these statues was later usurped and reused by Rameses II's son, Merenptah; cf. Sourouzian 2019, pp. 564-566 (no. 363).
- 9 Roeder 1959, p. 286 (chapter XI, § 5b), pl. 56b, c.
- 10 Between 2008 and 2015 this royal statue from El-Ashmounein was exhibited at the El-Arish Museum (see Brandl 2010, p. 54, Fig. 7-8). Its display at El-Arish ended when the museum was closed following a violent attack on 29 January 2015. The sculpture was next shown (in 2021 and 2022) in the special exhibition "Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs" at The Houston Museum of Natural Science.
- 11 Cf. Roeder 1959, p. 256 (chapter VIII, § 18), pl. 44.
- 12 Sourouzian 2020, p. 290.
- 13 Cf. Arnold, Dorothea 2006; Dorman 2006; Bryan 2012, pp. 365-369.
- 14 Sphinx head of Hatshepsut, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. no. 31.3.94. Cf. [www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/549029?ft=31.3.94&offset=0&20rpp=40&pos=3](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/549029?ft=31.3.94&offset=0&20rpp=40&pos=3)
- 15 Compare e.g., Stromer 2005
- 16 See <https://munsell.com/> (accessed 2023-02-18).
- 17 A well-documented example of a Middle Kingdom statue reworked for Ramses II is the colossal seated statue now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (L.2011.42): <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/590699> (see "curatorial interpretation", accessed 2023-01-23)
- 18 For more information: <https://www.dstretch.com/>  
It should be noted, that this application is made for mobile devices as rock art is naturally found outside.
- 19 Saleh and Sourouzian 1986, cat. no. 173.
- 20 Saleh and Sourouzian 1986, cat. no. 211.

- 21 For the decorative layout in ancient Egyptian stone statuary and the influence of the stone type used as support compare Sist 2016.
- 22 For comparison see the royal statue head, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. L/Sch 744 (cat. IV.2).
- 23 One possibility for different stone surface structures is the result of different surface treatments within the production process. This can, for example, be found in the monumental statue of Ramses II in the British Museum (EA 19), where the area of the beard strap was left rough while the skin area was polished.  
[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA19](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA19) (accessed 2023-01-23)
- 24 For comparison see the royal statue head, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. L/Sch 744 (cat. IV.2). The black lichen carpet was retouched with a translucent white medium, resulting in a grey appearance.

## FURTHER READING

For the sculpture of the Ramesside pharaohs (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty), including reused statues from the Middle and New Kingdom, see Sourouzian 2019 and Sourouzian 2020.

For the life and times of Rameses II, see, e.g., Exh. cat. Paris 1979; Exh. cat. Denver 1987; Exh. cat. Karlsruhe 2016.

For the polychromy of objects, see Davies 2001; Hartwig 2016; Sist 2016.

For the deterioration of stone objects, cf. Doehne and Clifford 2010; Ricca and La Russa 2020; Pearson 1987.

# A HELLENISTIC PERIOD ROYAL STATUE HEAD

## in the Pharaonic Style

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, L/Sch 774

### MATERIAL

Brownish Limestone

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 25.3 cm

Width: 23.5 cm

Depth: 23.0 cm

Height of the face: ca. 16.0 cm

### PROVENANCE

Unknown; formerly in a private collection in New York City; brought to the USA prior to 1948; acquired by the Schafhausen Foundation for the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum in 2020

### DATE

Hellenistic Period, presumably 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Statue head of a pharaoh. Limestone. Height: 25.3 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, L/Sch 774.

The statue head illustrated on pp. 148-149 and Fig. 1, 3, and 6 depicts a pharaoh in the traditional striped royal *nemes* headdress. The sculpture is made of a similar material (limestone) and shares much of the iconography of a statue head in the Mallawi Museum (inv. no. 570, cat. no. IV.1).

However the two heads differ iconographically as the Hildesheim head lacks the Double crown on top of the *nemes*. Moreover some stylistic differences can be noticed which make it evident that the two sculpture fragments do not originate from the same historic period. While for the Mallawi head (inv. no. 570) the New Kingdom can be plausibly assumed as the time of manufacture, the comparable Hildesheim statue head (inv. no. L/Sch 774) was probably crafted in the more recent Hellenistic Period (4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). This can be concluded through comparison of this isolated head with statues whose subject is identified by inscription.<sup>1</sup> Moreover the appearance of the statue head (L/Sch 774) with its stylistic peculiarities can be connected to that of similar heads and statues which possess a known archaeological background and which can be attributed to a certain historic period.

The battered statue head (L/Sch 774) represents a recent acquisition of the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum. Before it came to the museum the sculpture was privately owned and has remained unpublished. According to documents which

were acquired together with the piece, its history can be traced back to the year 1946 when it formed part of a former US American private collection of antiquities. Its origin within Egypt and also the statue from which it separated, remains unknown.

Although severe damage has affected much of the original workmanship the fragmentary head is immediately recognizable as ancient Egyptian. The pharaonic royalty of the fragment can be concluded from the subject's striped *nemes* headdress which is adorned at the forehead with the sculpted image of a rearing cobra – the *uraeus*. Unfortunately, this magically protective symbol is almost entirely destroyed leaving only traces of the serpent's body and of its relatively small hood with two narrow horizontal loops.

The loss of significant portions of the sculpted surface makes it difficult to fully assess the sculpture and to imagine its former appearance which very probably included polychromy. However, no traces of the ancient painting are now preserved.

The head displays an oval face with full cheeks. Much of the face is destroyed by weathering but it can be perceived that this was an idealized portrait depicting a divine ruler who is both ageless and devoid of human individuality. The nose apart from its narrow upper bridge is destroyed. Also most of the mouth is broken off leaving nothing

but the hint of a smile. What can still be noticed is that the brows are modelled as thin ridges placed horizontally above the eyes. These are almond-shaped and somewhat bulbous and exhibit short, thin cosmetic extensions worked in raised relief. An incised line above the eye (preserved on the right eye only) marks the upper eye lid. The artificial royal *khebesut* beard is either destroyed or was intentionally omitted on this image.

The sculpture's proper right side is better preserved than the left. On the right the large and well-modelled ear is preserved behind the hair at the temple which is rendered in a geometrical way. The ancient sculptors neatly incised the headcloth's striations and executed them in shallow relief which is visible on the head's proper right side. The striations taper towards the bottom of the head's back where they disappear behind four incised parallel concentric "circles" worked in relief. These circles indicate that the headcloth is tied up to a queue at the back as was usual. The queue itself is not preserved but it can be concluded from the position of the queue's circles that it was placed *horizontally*. This identifies the Hildesheim head as belonging to a sphinx statue. The other main types of ancient Egyptian statuary representing a pharaoh in the *nemes* headcloth (e.g., statues in standing, striding, seated or kneeling position) depict the queue placed *vertically* on



the king's back (or on the back pillar respectively). The profile view of a sphinx statue found in the Nile delta and dated to the early Ptolemaic period (as "Ptolemy II?") by the Egyptologist, Gabriele Pieke (**Fig. 2**)<sup>2</sup> opposite the profile view of the newly acquired Hildesheim head (L / Sch 774; **Fig. 3**) demonstrates the similarities. Perhaps the damaged Hildesheim head, too, once decorated the entrance of a temple in Lower Egypt where the humidity of the soil is less favourable to preservation of artifacts than the dry climate of Upper Egypt.

To propose an exact date of manufacture for this sculpture is difficult. Reasons for this are the dearth of significantly inscribed sculptures avail-



**Fig. 2** (left): Head of a sphinx statue possibly representing Ptolemy II or III. Said to be from "San Saud" (in the Sharqeya Governorate). Limestone. Height of the statue: 49 cm. Formerly at Heriat Raznah, Sharkeya National Museum, H 855.

**Fig. 3** (right): Statue head of a pharaoh. Limestone. Height: 25.3 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, L/Sch 774.



**Fig. 4** Sphinx statue of Nectanebo I. From the sphinx alley in front of Luxor Temple, eastern group. Sandstone.

able for stylistic comparison and also the Hildesheim statue head's (L/Sch 774) poor state of preservation. Speaking in general terms the peculiarities of that statue head's ageless smiling face in combination with the proportionally small uraeus speak for an origin in the Hellenistic Period in Egypt (4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). This means that the sculpture could represent either Alexander the Great as pharaoh or one of his Macedonian successors or, alternatively, a Ptolemaic ruler. With regard to the detail of the horizontal eyebrows one should however not exclude that a king from the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, the last indigenous family of ancient Egyptian rulers (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) could be represented.<sup>3</sup>

During the New Kingdom and also during the Late and Hellenistic Periods veritable avenues of sphinxes were produced by groups of Egyptian sculptors. The sculptures were designed to flank the processional routes which provided access to temples in both Upper and Lower Egypt. The most prominent northern specimen are the numerous Ptolemaic limestone sphinxes which gave way to the famous Serapeum temple<sup>4</sup>, in Saqqara.<sup>5</sup> In Upper Egypt the sandstone sphinx avenue in front of the Luxor Temple which was commissioned by Nectanebo I is the most extensive.<sup>6</sup> The numerous sphinxes of Nectanebo I slightly differ in style; some of them do recall the traits

of the Hildesheim head (L/Sch 774). One of these sphinxes is illustrated in **Fig. 3**.

How can one find out which king is represented in the Hildesheim statue head (inv. no. L/Sch 774)? Only through comparison with other statues which are either significantly inscribed or otherwise well dated. However, in the field of sculpture of the Late and Ptolemaic periods it is particularly problematic to attribute an anonymous statue or statue head to one, specific ruler because the development of the royal (and private) statuary is still a matter of considerable scholarly debate.

A now isolated limestone statue head of a Ptolemaic king which appears to be stylistically similar to the Hildesheim head (L/Sch 774) is the (proportionally bigger) limestone head, Bloomington, Indiana University Art Museum 66.225.<sup>7</sup> The specialist, Paul E. Stanwick, dated this head to the first half of the second century BC and mentions Ptolemy VI as the possibly depicted ruler.<sup>8</sup>

There is a fine art historical study of a limestone statue head which depicts a Ptolemy in the traditional *nemes* headcloth written by the pioneer of the study of Late and Ptolemaic sculpture, Bernard V. Bothmer.<sup>9</sup> The statue head then belonged to the collection of Christos G. Bastis. It is similar to the Hildesheim statue head (L/Sch 774) though certain stylistic dissimilarities with

the "Bastis Head" can also be noticed – e.g., the "Bastis head's" smaller ears, the absence of a smile and the flat modelling of the eyes. Bothmer plausibly dated the "Bastis Head" to "about 150-100 B.C.". It seems comprehensively that this sculpture which is more softly modelled than the Hildesheim head (L / Sch 774) would have been crafted some time after that effigy which is more clear cut and less sophisticated.

However, the statue which – in the view of the present team – seems to be most closely related with the Hildesheim head (L/Sch 774) is the exceptional calcite head and upper part of a statue representing a *defied* ruler (exhibiting the tripartite wig of a god below the *nemes* head-dress) which is in the British Museum (EA 941; Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup> Specialists have considered this archaizing sculpture<sup>11</sup> to come from Saqqara and to represent either the last indigenous pharaoh, Nectanebo II (ruled 360-343 BCE)<sup>12</sup> or, alternatively, the second ruler of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, Ptolemy II Philadelphos (ruled 285-246 BCE)<sup>13</sup> whose striding statue in the Vatican<sup>14</sup> is the only surviving statue of a Ptolemy in pharaonic attitude which is identified by its inscriptions – and which still possesses its head. The faces of the royal statue in London (EA 941) is similar to that of the statue head (L/Sch 774) which could mean that both sculptures depict the same king (Fig. 5). Therefore the truth could chronologically lay in



**Fig. 5** (left): Upper part of the statue of a pharaoh with divine attributes. Calcite, Height: 74.5 cm, presumably 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. London, British Museum, EA 941.

**Fig. 6** (right): Statue head Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, L/ Sch 774 (for comparison).

between the two former propositions and the London sculpture (EA 941), as well as the Hildesheim statue head (L/Sch 774) exhibiting similar facial traits could both represent Ptolemy I Soter, the founder of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, who was



**Fig. 7** Pharaoh Ptolemy I offering incense and libation before the god Osiris-the-baboon (detail). Limestone with remains of paint. Height of the block: 107 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1883.



indeed deified after his death. Later, Ptolemy II and several other rulers of the Ptolemaic Dynasty were also worshipped as divinities. Ptolemy I however remained the outstanding royal ancestor who had founded the cult of Alexander the Great and the Ptolemaic dynastic cult.

If the attribution to Ptolemy I could be substantiated in the future then the Hildesheim museum would be so fortunate to exhibit several significant portraits of Ptolemy I in both the Greek style (see [cat. VII](#), the ancient plaster cast of a relief, PM 1120, and a gold coin, L/Sch 777) – and in the pharaonic style (reliefs of Ptolemy I constituting the so-called “Thoth chapel” from Tuna el-Gebel (PM 1883; [Fig. 7](#)) – and the newly acquired head (L/Sch 774). Despite its lamentable state of preservation this work of ancient Egyptian art makes a convenient study piece in academic research and training.<sup>15</sup>

Mahmud Mahran  
and Helmut Brandl

## FURTHER READING

For the royal sculpture of the Ptolemies, see Ashton 2001 and Ashton 2003; Stanwick 2002; Exh. cat. London 2001.

For the attribution of the calcite statue London, British Museum, EA 941 see Baines and Riggs 2001.

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Myśliwiec 1988, pp. 64-120-121, pl. LXIII (sphinx of Pharaoh Amasis); Myśliwiec 1988, pp. 80, 123, pl. LXXXV (sphinx of Wahibre); Myśliwiec 1988, pp. 80, 121, pl. LXXXI-LXXXIV (Luxor sphinxes of Nectanebo I); Stanwick 2002, p. 98 (A3), p. 157, Fig. 2-3 (striding statue of Ptolemy II in the Pharaonic style). Cf. Stanwick 2002, p. 160, Fig. 10-13 (significantly inscribed statues of early Ptolemaic rulers in pharaonic attire whose head is unfortunately not preserved); Josephson 1997, pp. 1-12, pl. 1-3 (inscribed royal statues of the Late Period).
- 2 Pieke 2014 (as "Ptolemy II?").
- 3 The horizontal eyebrows are a stylistic feature which harks back to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Saite Period, 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Brows of this shape can also be found on inscribed statues of Nectanebo I. Cf. Josephson 1997, p. 8, pl. 3b.
- 4 "Serapeum" designates the compound of the temple of the Greco-Roman divinity, Serapis. Only scanty remains of this temple are now preserved; in modern times the name "Serapeum" is often used to designate the *subterranean galleries* which were the burial ground of the sacred Apis bulls during much of the Late Period.
- 5 Lembke 1998.
- 6 Myśliwiec 1988, pp. 70 (5), 80-81, pl. LXXXI-LXXXII.
- 7 Stanwick 2002, pp. 111 and 177, Fig. 74-75 [B26]. Limestone, height of the head: 55.0 cm, height of the face: 27.0 cm; provenance unknown; allegedly from Sheikh Abada.
- 8 Stanwick 2002, p. 111, adds that the head [now: Bloomington, Indiana University Art Museum 66.225] was sold in an auction in 1960 during which it was considered to be of "early Ptolemaic" date possibly representing "Ptolemy III?".
- 9 Bothmer 1987, pp. 88-92, no. 35.
- 10 London, British Museum, EA 941; online: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA941](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA941)
- 11 Baines and Riggs 2001.
- 12 Josephson 1997, p. 30, pl. 11a.
- 13 Ashton 2001, pp. 20, 84-85.
- 14 Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio, inv. no. 22681 (statue in the traditional pharaonic attitude), see Stanwick 2002, p. 98 (A3), 157, Fig. 2-3.
- 15 Cf. Brandl 2021, p. 137. Nothing indicates that this could be a modern imitation of an ancient work of art. What remains of the original workmanship and also the specifics of the visible damage testify to the antiquity of the object.

V.

OSIRIS  
IBIS:

DEAD BIRDS AS  
DIVINITIES







# FROM TUNA TO HILDESHEIM

## Figure of a Sacred Ibis

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 4749

### MATERIAL

Wood, bronze with some remains of ancient gilding (neck and tail), stucco (feet), jasper or carnelian (eyes)

### MEASUREMENTS

Excepting the modern base. Height: 41.15 cm

Width: 14.5 cm

Depth: 50.0 cm

### PROVENANCE

Provenance unknown, presumably from Tuna el-Gebel; acquired in 1975

### DATE

Late Period, 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) or Ptolemaic Period (4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Eggebrecht, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1979, no. 185; Kessler 1979, p. 60 (with illustration); Schulz, in: Eggebrecht 1996, p. 88, Fig. 88; Exh. cat. St. Petersburg, Fl. 1997, pp. 8-9 (with illustration);

<https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=11264>

(last update: 26 May 2003).





## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Fragment of the wall decoration of the so-called "Tuna chapel": The god Osiris-the-ibis receiving offerings from king Ptolemy I (partly destroyed). Limestone with remains of paint. Height: 107 cm. Ptolemaic Period. Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim, PM 1883.

Today the ibis is a rather rare sight in modern Egypt. However it was very prominent in the living environment of the ancient Egyptians. In the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim there is the almost life-sized statue of a species of ibis, the *Threskionis aethiopicus*, a bird which was considered sacred in ancient Egypt (images on [pp.](#)

[158-159](#)). The ibis was associated with the god Thoth, a deity concerned with knowledge, writing, magic and healing and also god of the moon. Ibises are also closely connected to the ancient city of Hermopolis Magna which was the main cult center for Thoth in antiquity.<sup>1</sup> The Greek name of the city, Hermopolis, derives from the interpretation of Thoth as the Egyptian version of the Greek god Hermes, the "messenger of the gods". Both deities, Thoth and Hermes, also functioned as divine guides to escort newly deceased "souls" to the netherworld. Thoth was often depicted as an ibis, or as a baboon, or alternatively, as a humanoid figure with the head of an ibis (or of a baboon) crowned by the lunar crescent and disc ([Fig. 1](#)). A Hermopolitan variant of Osiris, the god Osiris-the-ibis could be depicted in the same way.<sup>2</sup> Osiris-the-ibis was believed to be incorporated in the countless mummified ibises which were buried in the subterranean galleries (catacombs) of Tuna el-Gebel.<sup>3</sup> Without the presence of identifying inscriptions it is difficult to know whether the god of wisdom, Thoth, or alternatively, the god, Osiris-the-ibis is depicted.

The Hildesheim ibis figure (PM 4749) consists of a wooden body with folded wings and an attached bronze neck, head and tail. Originally the body would probably have been gessoed and gilded.<sup>4</sup> This can be concluded from similar sculptures

which still preserve a portion of their ancient gilding over gesso and wood.<sup>5</sup> On the Hildesheim ibis figure remains of gilding can be found only on the bronze parts. The figure's neck and tail also sport fine incisions aiming to mimic the structure of feathers. The eyes of the ibis are inlaid with red stone. Minor damages and cracks can be seen on the wooden body as well as on its bronze attachments. The torso rests on two legs, which are crafted separately out of wood, covered in stucco and painted black, with fleshed out joints. The left leg is placed forward, while the figure's weight seems to be resting on the slightly backwards placed right leg, making it appear as if the bird was striding. There are some cracks on the legs and the toes on the left foot are glued to it, while one toe and the tip of another one are completely missing on the right foot. The original base is lost and was replaced by a modern wooden base. The figure can be dated to the Late Period, i.e., the sixth to fourth century BCE which was the heyday of animal worship in ancient Egypt. However, the veneration of sacred animals including ibises continued well into the Greco-Roman period and resulted in the production of numerous similar figures which were religious gifts to the gods and dedicated in their sacred animals' burial places. In the Mallawi Museum a large number of ibis figures, small and large, are on display (Fig. 2).<sup>6</sup>



They all were discovered in the course of the early excavations at Tuna el-Gebel, headed by the archaeologist, Prof. Sami Gabra.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps, the Hildesheim ibis figure also originates there. Tuna el-Gebel still contains millions of burials of mummified ibises and a huge number of burials of baboons, another animal associated with the god

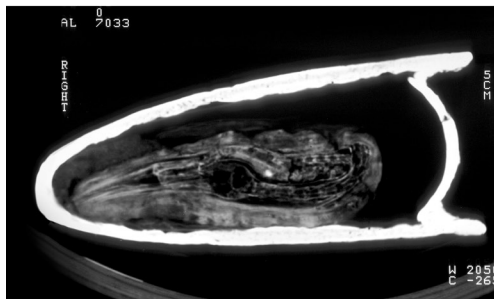
**Fig. 2** Group of ibis figures placed on receptacles for the remains of the sacred birds. From Tuna el-Gebel. Late Period to Ptolemaic Period. Mallawi Museum. Photo taken in 2012.



**Fig. 3** (top): Sealed conical vessel used as coffin for an embalmed ibis. Pottery. Length: 37.0 cm. Late Period. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 5466.

**Fig. 4** (center): X-ray image revealing the presence of an ibis mummy inside the vessel (Hildesheim, PM 5466).

**Fig. 5** (bottom): Ibis mummy wrapped in linen. Late Period. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 6263.



Thoth.<sup>8</sup> Most commonly the sacred birds were buried in simple conical pots without inscriptions and ornamentation (Fig. 3). Still nowadays, hundreds of thousands of such pots fill the side chambers of the catacombs at Tuna el-Gebel (Fig. 6). The x-ray image of one such pot kept in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (PM 5466<sup>9</sup>) clearly shows the remains of a bird (Fig. 4). The bird remains were variously treated with natron (sodium bicarbonate), incense and ointment and placed in the pots. Some of the mummified birds were wrapped in linen such as the ibis mummy in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (PM 6263; Fig. 5)<sup>10</sup>. In some cases painted wooden coffins were used to bury the animals. A well-preserved example is exhibited at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (PM 6527; Fig. 7-8)<sup>11</sup>. It depicts the god Osiris-the-ibis in two different ways. On the coffin's long sides the god appears as a crouching ibis wearing the *atef* crown which is typical for Osiris opposite a small figure of the goddess Maat, and an incensing priest. On one of the short sides the same god is seen twice as a humanoid mummy exhibiting the head of an ibis with the *atef* crown of Osiris (Fig. 5).

In 1979 Arne Eggebrecht, the former director of the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, speculated whether the museum's ibis figure (PM 4749) might be hollow and could have been used as the



**Fig. 6** Tuna el-Gebel. Subterranean gallery prepared to accommodate the burials of innumerable sacred ibises and other animals including various kinds of birds and baboons. Late Period.

receptacle of an ibis mummy.<sup>12</sup> However, since that time the object has become clear that the sculpture is not hollow. Hence it could not hold the remains of a bird. Still the possibility remains that the figure was once placed on top of a hollow wooden base and functioned as the decorative element of a squarish receptacle serving as coffin for the mummy (or parts of a mummy) of the ani-

mal it portrays. Such ibis "reliquaries" are depicted on **Fig. 2**. Another possibility may be that the figure was once the crowning part of a standard of a deity, possibly Thoth or Osiris. One example of a wooden striding ibis figure representing the crowning element of a divine standard is known from Tuna el-Gebel (**Fig. 9**); this specimen was published by Mélanie Flossmann-Schütze.<sup>13</sup>



**Fig. 7-8** (above): Decorated coffin for the embalmed body of a sacred ibis. Wood with paint. Height: 25.0 cm. Late to Ptolemaic Period. Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim, PM 6527.



**Fig. 9** (right): Crowning element of a standard depicting a sacred ibis. From Tuna el-Gebel, subterranean galleries. Wood, plaster, resin and paint. Height: 45.3 cm. Height of the ibis figure: 27.0 cm. Late Period. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 12.

The religious object represented Thoth or Osiris-the-ibis and probably served in the temple cult of either of these divinities. That it was deposited in the animal necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel may have been within the context of "burial" for the god. The standard incorporated the divinity which it depicted and was regarded as magically protective. The standard from Tuna, however, is of simpler workmanship and less carefully executed as the Hildesheim figure (PM 4749) which is a composite figure anciently combining costly materials such as gilded bronze, gilded wood and red stone. Moreover the Hildesheim ibis is proportionally bigger than the ibis of the standard which is now in the Mallawi Museum (inv. no. 12).

Although both objects focus the same image, namely that of a striding sacred ibis and could therefore be regarded as similar they may well differ with regard to their function. At present it seems preferable to interpret the Hildesheim ibis figure as a cult object and once the decoration the receptacle or "reliquary" containing an ibis mummy.

Carina Rosenlehner



## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Flossmann-Schütze 2016, p. 9.
- 2 Kessler 1989, pp. 196-219.
- 3 Kessler 1986.
- 4 Eggebrecht, in: Exh. cat. Hildesheim 1979, no. 185.
- 5 Cf. Brandl 2008, p. 59 with Fig. 3.
- 6 Cf. Messiha and Elhitta 1979, pp. 8-9 (cat. no. 4, 7, 9, and 27 with pl. 1), p. 10 (cat. no. 45-49).
- 7 For Prof. Sami Gabra's archaeological work at Tuna el-Gebel, see Gabra 1971; for a list of antiquities discovered by Gabra at Tuna el-Gebel which were on display at the Mallawi Museum in 1984, see Abou-Ghazi 1984.
- 8 Flossmann-Schütze 2016, p. 9.
- 9 <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=11399>
- 10 Unpublished; cf., however, the similar objects in Exh. cat. Hildesheim 2018, pp. 98-105, no. 15-18.
- 11 Schmitz 2013, p. 425, no. 48.
- 12 Eggebrecht 1979, cat. no. 185.
- 13 Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 12, see Flossmann-Schütze 2013.

## FURTHER READING

For the early excavations at Tuna el-Gebel carried out by Prof. Dr. Sami Gabra of the Cairo University and his team, between 1931 and 1952, see Gabra 1941 and Gabra 1971.

For current excavations at Tuna el-Gebel carried out by a Joint Mission of the Universities of Cairo and Munich, see <https://www.aegyptologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/projekte/tuna/index.html> (accessed 19 June 2022) and <https://www.aegyptologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/projekte/lebenswelt/index.html> (accessed 19 June 2022); cf. Kessler and Onasch 1998; Kessler and Nur el-Din 2002; Kessler and Nur el-Din 2005.

For the excavations at the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial Period necropolis of the humans of Hermopolis at Tuna el-Gebel and the history of archaeological activity there, see <https://www.tuna-el-gebel.com/en/> (English Version) and <https://www.tuna-el-gebel.com/ar/> (Arabic version); accessed 19 June 2022.

For the book series "Tuna el-Gebel" (TeG) see <https://www.aegyptologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/publikationen/tuna/index.html> (accessed 19 June 2022).





# VI.

## ANONYMOUS LATE PERIOD

**PHARAOHS**  
**IN THE**  
***KHEPRESH***



## A DISCREDITED RULER?

### Statue Head of a King in the *Khepresh*

#### INVENTORY N°

Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 558

#### MATERIAL

Light grey fossiliferous limestone

#### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 54 cm; Width: 57.5 cm; Depth: 47.5 cm;  
Height of the face: 21.5 cm

#### PROVENANCE

Reportedly either from El-Ashmounein (Hermopolis Magna)  
or from Tuna el-Gebel

#### DATE

Late Period, 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, presumably reign of pharaoh  
Takhos (also known as Teos) who ruled from 365 to 360 BCE)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Messiha and Elhitta 1979, p. 21; Brunner-Traut 1988, p. 560;  
Myśliwiec 1988, p. 71, no. 13; Myśliwiec 1991, pp. 263-288,  
Fig. 34-35; Josephson 1997, p. 17, pl. 6d; Brandl 2008,  
pp. 59-60, Fig. 6; Forgeau 2018, p. 338; Myśliwiec 2020,  
p. 1055.







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Relief tablet depicting a king in the *khepresh*. Limestone. Height: 11.8 cm; 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Hanover, Museum August Kestner, inv. no. 1935.200.419.

The battered limestone head (Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 558) which is depicted on [pp. 168-169](#) belongs to a well over life-sized statue of a Late Period pharaoh. The remaining portion of the statue which may once have stood in one of the temples of ancient Hermopolis Magna is not known. According to the information provided by the Mallawi Museum's inventory book the head was discovered either at El-Ashmounein or, alternatively, at Tuna el-Gebel.<sup>1</sup> It is not excluded that the missing portion of the statue will one day be discovered at one of these sites.

There are no identifying inscriptions on the head which would date it precisely. Still the time of the sculpture's manufacture can be concluded from both the particular shape and ornamentation of the helmet-like headgear, the *khepresh* (or Blue crown) and the stylistic features of the face.

Unfortunately the details of the face have suffered severe damage in the past which has resulted in uncertainty regarding the identity of the represented ruler. However, through comparison with inscribed sculptures it can be said that the head probably represents a king who lived towards the end of the Egyptian Pharaonic period proper, i.e., in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE – shortly before the Persians conquered Egypt for the second time. No traces of a back pillar have survived and so the statue type is not known. The sculpture

could have shown the ruler either striding or seated or kneeling. It can be excluded that the head belongs to a sphinx as the *khepresh* is never seen on statues of this type.

The king's face is oval and full and exhibits pronounced cheeks. Despite the destruction of much of the facial features it can still be seen that the brows were of horizontal shape, softly modelled and not framed by incisions. The eyes were almond-shaped; they still display short pointed cosmetic extensions in slightly raised relief. The king's crown depicts the *uraeus* which is however largely chipped off. The serpent's body extends from the top of the crown to the forehead and forms single horizontal loops on both sides of the hood. Originally this feature was probably painted yellow (symbolising gold). The remaining surface of the crown was either painted blue, which was the typical color of this crown in the New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period, or alternatively it may have been painted yellow (see [Fig. 2 on p. 199](#)). The king's skin was probably painted in reddish-brown color which was typical for males. It is also conceivable that the king's eyes were accentuated with black ink. In pharaonic Egypt limestone statues (and often also statues made of harder rocks such as quartzite and granite), were considered incomplete if not at least partly painted.

During the Late and Ptolemaic Periods two narrow textile streamers visible at the back of the crown belonged to this headgear. The evidence for this includes three-dimensional sculptures<sup>2</sup>, as well as coffin paintings<sup>3</sup>, temple reliefs<sup>4</sup>, and relief tablets<sup>5</sup>. One relief tablet in the Museum August Kestner, Hanover, which exhibits the bust of an anonymous ruler – stylistically datable to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE – depicts the streamers as if emerging from behind the right ear (Fig. 1). However, the iconographic detail may have been similar to the streamers of the papal Tiara, the Roman-Catholic pope's traditional crown (Fig. 2). The ancient Egyptian streamers of the Late Period were narrower and shorter (Fig. 3). During the New Kingdom, when the developed form of this headdress entered the repertoire of pharaonic crowns<sup>6</sup>, the streamers were broader and are sometimes depicted as pleated.

The Mallawi head (inv. no. 558) broke off the statue just above the place where the streamers would be expected. They were possibly indicated in relief (and painted red) on the neck of the pharaoh or, alternatively, on the lateral sides of the dorsal pillar.

The Mallawi statue head's chronological attribution which is followed here – the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE – was first proposed by Prof. Karol Myśliwiec who dedicated a scholarly article to this head.<sup>7</sup>

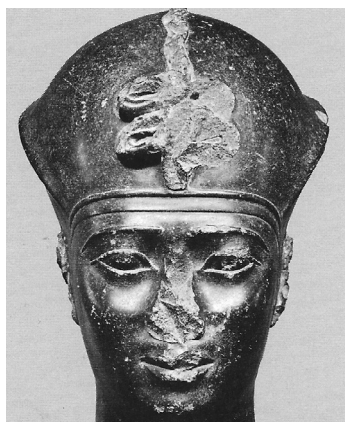


**Fig. 2** (left): Bronze kneeling figure of a Late Period pharaoh in the *Khepresh* crown. The streamers are depicted in relief on the back. Marseille, Museum of Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean, no. 824.

**Fig. 3** (right): Tiara of Pope Pius IX (1854 CE). Height: 35 cm. Gold, Silver, precious stones. Collection of the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff.

Myśliwiec attributed the head to Nectanebo I, the founder of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, mainly on stylistic grounds. He added that the particular variety of the limestone used for this sculpture – fossil-rich grey limestone – is similar to the limestone of a large Hermopolitan stela of Nectanebo I<sup>8</sup>.

Nectanebo I ruled for almost 37 years (380-343 BCE) and must have attained old age, but his depictions would not necessarily betray that. The majority of Nectanebo I's representations depict him as an ageless man with idealized facial features and youthful proportions.<sup>9</sup> However such features were considered ideal also during earlier periods, especially during the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty



**Fig. 4** (left): Statue head of Apries. 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Greywacke. Height: 40 cm. Provenance unknown. Bologna, Museo Civico, inv. no. 1801.



**Fig. 5** (center, left): Head of a striding statue of Nectanebo I. 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. From Hermopolis Magna. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 87298.



**Fig. 6** (center, right): **cat. VI.1.**

**Fig. 7** (right): Head of a figure of Nectanebo II protected by Horus as a falcon. Greywacke. Height of the falcon figure: 72 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1934, 34.2.1.



(7<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Another well-known specialist, Jack A. Josephson, opted for an earlier date of the Mallawi head (inv. no. 558), namely in the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty – similarly judging on stylistic grounds. Josephson compared the Mallawi head with an inscribed statue head of Pharaoh Apries (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) which is kept in Bologna, Italy (Museo Civico, inv. no. 1801; **Fig. 4**).<sup>10</sup> Following a description of the similarities between the Mallawi and the Bologna heads Josephson attributed the Mallawi head (inv. no. 558) to Apries.

Plausibly dating uninscribed statue heads can be difficult. If in our team Myśliwiec's opinion is given preference over that of Josephson's it is

for Myśliwiec's convincing observations concerning the head's particular material and its stylistic features. To us a date in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE appears more plausible than a date in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE considering the outline and volume of the *kheprsh* (see also **Fig. 3-4** on p. 181) and what remains of the facial features and the simple double-looping of the cobra ornament<sup>11</sup>. The latter detail is shared by the head of a colossal statue of Nectanebo I from Hermopolis (**Fig. 5**). However, would all this necessarily point to Nectanebo I as the depicted king as Myśliwiec postulated? Statue faces of Apries, Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II can be rather similar (see **Fig. 4-7**). It is well known that the ancient Egyptians wor-

shipped statues of their kings and regarded the sculptures as living beings able to hear prayers and to receive offerings. Colossi of Rameses II (19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE) were famously worshipped by officials and ordinary people at Pi-Ramesses (Qantir), the Ramesside capital in the eastern Nile delta (Sharqeya Governorate). More than 60 stelae depicting the worship of Rameses II's statues are preserved in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum; one example is illustrated here (Fig. 8)<sup>12</sup>. However, not only in the New Kingdom but also during the later periods the cultic worship of royal statues was customary. Statues of Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) were ritually worshipped by specific priests still towards the end of the Ptolemaic Period (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). However, not so the statues of Pharaoh Takhos (or Teos; in ancient Egyptian: Djed-Hor), the ephemeral king who ruled *between* Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II.

A look at the Mallawi statue head (inv. no. 558) under side light reveals that the damage done to this sculpture concentrates at the head's front, especially the uraeus and the king's eyes, nose and lips; the ears are affected to a lesser degree. Thus the damage primarily concerns a symbol of kingship and the sensory organs of the pharaoh which are now destroyed or partly destroyed. The fact that the ears are broken off is of inferior significance as the ears (and similarly the nose) are

exposed and might have been damaged by weathering. The damage seen on the face is, however, unlikely to have occurred in a natural way. Instead the ruler's uraeus and sensory organs seem to have been attacked by people determined to deprive the pharaoh of the cobra goddess's protection – and to ritually "kill" the statue.

Egyptian statues were quite often destroyed by people who lived centuries after the statues were made.<sup>13</sup> It appears to the present team that the damage seen on the Mallawi head (inv. no. 558) focusing on the cobra and the sensory organs of the face, was intentionally done using a hard instrument, perhaps a stone hammer.

Similar acts of destruction (iconoclasm) occurred throughout Egyptian history,<sup>14</sup> especially during the New Kingdom<sup>15</sup> and the Late Period. Rulers like the female pharaoh Hatshepsut and the Amarna kings (Akhenaten and his successors) and also the Kushite (Nubian) kings of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>16</sup> fell under the *damnatio memoriae*. The condemnation of their memory meant that their names were erased on monuments and that their statues were destroyed.

In order to conclude which Late Period king's face was represented on the defaced Mallawi head (inv. no. 558), one can receive some help from ancient written sources. Herodotus, the Greek historian who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, narrates that Pharaoh Apries (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) was



**Fig. 8** Private stela depicting a woman in adoration before a striding statue of Rameses II. 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Limestone with remains of paint. Height: 9.5 cm. Said to be from Tell Horbeit but probably from Qantir (Pi-Ramesses). Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 376.





**Fig. 9** Egyptian “*nub-nefer*” coin (stater). Gold. Diameter: 1.7 cm. Weight: 8.29 g; 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, probably reign of Nectanebo II. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. F 27.

deposed by Amasis, one of his generals.<sup>17</sup> Trying to regain the throne of Egypt from the usurper, Apries lost his life. According to Herodotus, the defeated monarch was left to the mercy of his former subjects who gruesomely strangled him to death. However, according to other historic sources Apries died in battle.

The sources do agree, however, that the victorious new pharaoh, Amasis, granted a traditional royal burial to Apries and so acted like a pious ancient Egyptian son would have appropriately acted for his father. At last Amasis protected the late pharaoh's dignity and simultaneously claimed his own legitimate succession. No *damnatio memoriae* of Apries appears to have occurred after that ruler's death.<sup>21</sup>

If one were to search for a pharaoh, preferably of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, whose actions made him unpopular and unworthy of cultic veneration in the view of his subjects, and whose statues were probably destroyed after his reign one should consider the lesser known ruler Takhos (or Teos), the son and successor of Nectanebo I. Takhos is known to have officiated as Nectanebo I's co-regent (or junior king) during the last two regnal years of his aged father. Following Nectanebo I's death Takhos continued to reign as sole ruler for less than three years. It may therefore be conceivable that statues of him existed. However, it is currently assumed that no statues of Takhos

have survived.<sup>21</sup> Historians recount that Pharaoh Takhos was unpopular as he levied high taxes in Egypt; he was also accused of depriving the temples of their golden ornaments which he had melted down in order to mint coins. Minting coins was unusual in pharaonic Egypt, but the king needed gold coins in order to properly pay the Greek mercenaries on whom he militarily relied.

One of the earliest Egyptian coins – probably minted under Takhos' successor, Nectanebo II<sup>22</sup> who continued the practise of minting – is exhibited at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (**Fig. 9**). On one side it depicts the hieroglyphic characters designating “good gold” (in ancient Egyptian: *nub nefer*). On the opposite side a jumping horse can be seen.

While away on a military campaign into Phoenicia Takhos was overthrown by his treasonous uncle Nihapimu who installed his own son, Nectanebo (II), as the new pharaoh in Egypt. Takhos reportedly fled to the Persians where he submitted to the Great-king, Artaxerxes III Ochus, and was granted asylum by him. At that time the Persians were considered Egypt's arch-enemies and thus Takhos clearly stood on the wrong side. Only a few years after these events the Persian army would defeat the Egyptian army headed by Nectanebo II and conquer all of Egypt for the second time. Nectanebo II – Egypt's last indigenous pharaoh – is said to have survived the catastrophe.

Legend has it that he fled Egypt after his defeat and withdrew to Nubia disappearing from the historical records. However, Nectanebo II, the falcon-king, was well remembered in Egypt. Later story-tellers regarded him as a great magician and even as the father of Alexander the Great. By contrast Takhos' temporary alliance with the Persians must have appeared despicable to the Egyptians. It is not known whether the deposed pharaoh died in Persia or was sent back in chains to the Egyptians as some authors tell. Ruling at times simultaneously with Nectanebo I, Takhos probably commissioned statuary which was similar to that of his father. One can speculate that without accompanying inscriptions it would be difficult to differentiate the statues of the two kings. Looking for a possible subject of the Mallawi head (inv. no. 558), it seems worth considering Takhos, the second king of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Thought to be nonexistent Takhos' statues may have been overlooked by being too badly destroyed to be recognized. A statue of Nectanebo I from Hermopolis which is identified by inscription (Fig. 5; Fig. 11), is largely intact (except for the nose) and also statues and statue heads which can reasonably be attributed to Nectanebo II<sup>23</sup> do not bear undisputable signs of *damnatio memoriae*.

Mahmoud Mahran and Helmut Brandl



Fig. 10 (left): Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 558. Detail: Destruction of the uraeus, eyes, nose and mouth.



Fig. 11 (above): Nectanebo I. From Hermopolis Magna. Limestone. Preserved Height: 250 cm (the lower legs and the base are missing.). Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 87298.

## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 12** Students of the Minia University discussing the statue head, Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 558, during the winter school.

No conservation measures were carried out on the statue head (Mallawi, inv. no. 558) during the winter school. The students were however, advised to closely look at the sculpture and to map the damaged areas on a printout of a photo of the head (Fig. 5). It soon became clear that some of the damages can be better explained as intentional destruction than as natural ageing or weathering. It was concluded that in this particular case “restoring” the face would be counterproductive as it would conceal an essential part of the objects history, i.e., the presumed ancient destruction of the main facial features and the uraeus as a symbol of kingship. The interpretation of the mutilation paved the way for the proposed attribution of this ancient work of art to Pharaoh Takhos (or Teos) of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, the second-last indigenous pharaoh.

Antje Zygalski

### FURTHER READING

Exh. cat. Berlin 1973, pp. 58-60;  
Mateini and Moles 1990, p. 16;  
Klemm and Klemm 1992, pp. 29-30.

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 The head surely belongs to a temple statue. It can be imagined that this statue once stood in Hermopolis. It could have been dragged to Tuna el-Gebel to be reused as building material presumably during the Ptolemaic or Roman Imperial periods. Cf. Myśliwiec 1991, p. 263.
- 2 See, e.g., the statue head of Pharaoh Apries, Bologna, Museo Civico, KS 1801; cf. Müller 1955 and Pernigotti 1980, 63, pls. LXXXIV- LXXXV.
- 3 Myśliwiec 1991, pls. I and IVb.
- 4 Myśliwiec 1991, pp. 89-91, with pls. XII, XIIIb, LXXb, LXXII, LXXVIII, LXXXVII, XCV-XCVI; cf. Myśliwiec 2020, 1047, Fig. 3.
- 5 Exh. cat Birmingham 1988, pp. 125-127, no. 45.
- 6 Cf. Davies 1982; Hardwick 2003; for the religious meaning of this headgear, see Bryan 2007.
- 7 Myśliwiec 1991. Previous comments on the head's dating include Messiha and Elhitta 1979, p. 21 (as "New Kingdom?"), and Brunner-Traut 1988, p. 560 (as Ptolemaic).
- 8 Roeder 1954.
- 9 Cf. Myśliwiec 1988, pls. LXXVI-LXXXc. A few extraordinary relief representations of Nectanebo I combine an idealized body with a highly individual (apparently "realistic") head. Such "portraits" represent the king with full facial features and a prominent, hooked nose. Cf. Myśliwiec 1988, pls. LXXXVIa-c.
- 10 Josephson 1992, 94, pl. 16b. Cf. Josephson 1997, p. 6, pl. 2b.
- 11 Myśliwiec 2020, p. 1055.
- 12 Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 376; see Roeder and Ippel 1921, p. 95, and Habachi 1954, p. 529.
- 13 Cf. Müller, M. 1981.
- 14 Cf. Exh. cat. Brooklyn 2019.
- 15 See Bryan 2012.
- 16 The images of the Kushite (Nubian) rulers of Egypt (25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) were attacked and their inscriptions were erased during the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Cf. Myśliwiec 1998, pp. 157-158.
- 17 Herodotus, Histories, II, chapter no. 169-170, quoted by Myśliwiec 1998, 160-162.
- 18 De Meulenaere 1975, p. 359.
- 19 Hoffmann and Steinhart 1998, p. 60.
- 20 Forgeau 2018, pp. 235-236.
- 21 Josephson 1997, p. 9.
- 22 Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. F 27; see Schmitz and Schulz 2014; Magen 2007, p. 99. For the late pharaonic coinage of Takhos (Teos) and Nectanebo II, cf. Forgeau 2018, pp. 218-220.
- 23 Brunner-Traut 1971.



# AN ENIGMATIC BUST

## Bronze Head of a King in the *Khepresh*

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384

### MATERIAL

Leaded tin bronze and sheet gold; remains of iron bars inside

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 39.5 cm; Width: 25.0 cm; Depth: 24.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

Said to be from El-Horbeit (ancient Pharbaitos); acquired by W. Pelizaeus on the antiquities' market in Cairo and donated by him to the city of Hildesheim in 1907

### DATE

Late Period, either 29<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, perhaps reign of Necho II (ruled 610-595 BCE)

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rathgen 1912; Maspéro 1913, p. 202 (as Rameses IV); Roeder and Ippel 1921, pp. 80-81, pl. II (as Rameses II); Kluge 1927, p. 103; Roeder 1937, pp. 38-39, § 161-166, pl. 22-26 (as "26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty?"); Roeder 1956, § 350a; Wolf 1957, pp. 633-634, Fig. 676 (as "early Ptolemaic"); Kayser 1973, p. 70, Fig. 61, pl. 6 (as "perhaps Rameses II"); Exh. cat. Wien 1992, no. 166 (as "3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE"); Seidel, in: Eggebrecht 1996, p. 90, Fig. 87-88 (as "Dynasty XIX-XXX"); <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10521> (last update: 5 September 2003); Hill, in: Exh. cat. New York 2007, pp. 140-141, 210, no. 48 (as "probably 29<sup>th</sup> Dynasty"); Schulz 2021, calend. page for March 2022; Schmitz 2024, p. 244, 264-265, 268, 676.





## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Bronze bust representing an anonymous pharaoh in the *khepresh*. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384.

The Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum's life-sized bronze head of an ancient Egyptian king in the *khepresh* crown (PM 384; images on pp. 178-179 and Fig. 1, 9-11) is a great rarity among Egyptian antiquities. Large format bronze sculptures like this one were often melted down for reuse of their material by posterior generations. Only rarely outstanding works of metal art like this have survived.

### Description

The Hildesheim sculpture is hollow cast and represents the head and neck of an anonymous pharaoh together with a small portion of the upper body – breast and back – that would typically be covered by a broad collar. The lower margin of the object is rounded at the front and back and thus indeed resembles a collar. Naturally the object can not stand safely but needs a modern base for the presentation in the museum (see Fig. 9 on p. 184 and Fig. 15 on p. 186).

Inside the head six iron bars<sup>1</sup> originally held the cast core in place which is now not preserved. Following the object's corrosion two holes now perforate the sculpture at the back, one on the upper right area of the crown and one on the left side of the neck.

The king wears a bulbous variant of the tall *khepresh* crown, the outline of which differs from the variants of that crown which are attested

from stone works of art of the New Kingdom and the Late Period. Obviously the *khepresh* was not a crown which was handed down from one generation to another like some of the crowns of medieval European rulers. Reliefs from the New Kingdom (Fig. 2)<sup>2</sup> depict the *khepresh* more elongated and with longer and broader streamers at the back, as reliefs and statues from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Fig. 3)<sup>3</sup> and – presumably – of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Fig. 4)<sup>4</sup> which usually depict a shorter version of the crown equipped with tiny narrow streamers. The size of the uraeus at the forehead similarly varies on the crown models of different periods. The Hildesheim head's crown exhibits a large three-dimensional cobra. The serpent's winding body sneaks across the crown's front and forms a horizontal loop on each side of the raised hood. The snake's scales, the stylized spine column, and the traditional design of the uraeus' hood are all worked in relief. The uraeus' head is broken off. The head PM 384 depicts the king wearing the straight royal false beard (called *khebesut* in ancient Egyptian) together with the *khepresh* crown which is a rarely seen combination. Similar to statues made of stone the false beard is shown connected with pharaoh's throat (Fig. 1).

No "double lines" modelled in raised relief normally marking the crown's rim at the front and back are present on the head. During the New



**Fig. 2** (left): Rameses II in the *khepresh*. Relief depiction on the stela of Mose said to be from Tell Horbeit (but probably from Qantir / Pi-Ramesses). Limestone. Height of detail: ca. 5 cm. New Kingdom, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 374.

**Fig. 3** (center): Statue head of Apries in the *khepresh*. Greywacke. Height: 40 cm. Late Period, 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Bologna, Museo Civico, inv. no. 1801.

**Fig. 4** (right): [cat. VI.1](#). Statue head of a pharaoh in the *khepresh* (Tachos / Teos?). Limestone. Height: 54 cm. Late Period, 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Mallawi Museum, inv. no. 588.

Kingdom and during the Late Period such markings were standard features of the *khepresh*. In the New Kingdom they designate the crown's upturned frontlet (**Fig. 2**). During the Late Period the shape of these lines is different and may represent the margins of a cap or headcloth worn under the crown (**Fig. 3-4**). Indications of streamers are lacking on the neck of the Hildesheim head (PM 384) and the surfaces of the crown, the false beard and what could be regarded as the inner part of a collar are all plain and devoid of any decoration.

It is obvious that the head's restored appearance differs from how the object may have looked like in antiquity when it was complete. This can be concluded from the remains of gold covering only

the white of the eyes. The rendering of the uraeus' scales may further indicate that also other details of the bust were once executed in some detail. But if so, these additions were either made of precious materials which were later reused, or of not durable materials which have not survived.

The king's face is of oval shape. It exhibits high cheekbones, flat cheeks, a big straight nose, a rather full mouth and a small chin. The large stylized almond-shaped eyes with short cosmetic lines dominate the upper section of the face. The irises appear darker than the surrounding bronze which seems to be the result of ancient coloring. The remains of sheet gold covering the white of the eyes are a stunning feature of the bust. The brows are marked in raised relief. Start-



**Fig. 5** The processional barge of Amun-Re decorated with an "aegis" (*wesekh*) at the prow and at the stern. Relief depiction within the so-called "triple shrine" of Sethy II in the First Court of the Karnak Temple. Sandstone. New Kingdom, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Sethy II (ruled ca. 1202–1198 BCE).



ing high above the root of the nose, the brows run horizontally above the eyes and curve downwards towards the temples where they taper slightly. Especially the king's sensory organs are well modelled. Besides the eyes this refers to the straight, long nose, the large ears and the mouth which is of individual shape. A high philtrum bridges the distance between nose and upper lip and the mouth's slightly asymmetrical form indicates a smile with restraint.

#### Chronological placement

Early scholarly comments – uttered long before the object's thorough conservation – have attributed Hildesheim's bronze head (PM 384) either to the

New Kingdom or, alternatively, as G. Roeder mentioned in 1937 to the Late Period (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty). Mr. Pelizaeus had acquired the metal object from a Cairo dealer who had also sold him numerous limestone stelae depicting the cultic worship of colossi of Rameses II presumably at Pi-Ramesse. One such stela is depicted as **Fig. 8** on p. 173. According to the information provided by the dealer the stelae and the head (PM 384) had appeared at Tell Horbeit (ancient Pharbaitos) in the eastern Nile delta. As the stelae's inscriptions testify to their production during the reign of Rameses II (19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, ruled 1279–1213 BCE), the dealer and Mr. Pelizaeus speculated that the bronze head could represent the same pharaoh.

The "identification" of the represented ruler als Rameses II was questioned in 1957 by the Hildesheim-borne Egyptologist Walter Wolf who assigned the head to the early Ptolemaic Period (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE). The true dating of the object remained, however, uncertain and the Pelizaeus Museum continued to exhibit the head as image of "Rameses II" until 1973. Nowadays a chronological placement in the New Kingdom is ruled out on the basis of iconographic and stylistic arguments – and the presence of iron bars inside the head which rather point to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.E. Currently the bust's attribution to the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) or to the early Ptolemaic Period (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) is favoured by scholars specialising in Late Period art.

However, the shape of the crown of Hildesheim's bronze head (PM 384) is outstanding and cannot be linked with that of other royal representations. Hence it has remained unknown whether the object represents a pharaoh of 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, a Persian ruler (27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty)<sup>5</sup>, a later monarch of Egyptian nationality (Dynasties 28-30), a Macedonian or, perhaps, an early Ptolemy.

New considerations come back to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) as the period during which the combination of the iconographic elements *kheprsh* and *khebesut* on one sculpture appears for the first time and during which the head could have been produced (see below).

#### How could the sculpture be reconstructed?

Since the examination by Roeder in 1937 it has been assumed that the head belongs to a composite sculpture principally made of wood or stone. What type of sculpture this could have been has remained unclear. No parallels for wooden or stone composite sculptures with bronze heads are known from Late Period Egypt – excepting some wooden figures of sacred animals, especially ibises which display bronze heads (see [cat. V](#)).<sup>6</sup> The reconstruction of a statue entirely made of bronze is difficult as no remains of brackets or any other mechanism suitable to connect the head's rounded base to the rest of the body could be detected.

Other interpretations which have been proposed include the head's identification as the emblematic decoration of the prow or stern of a ritual barge.<sup>7</sup> Barges of this kind belonged to the cult equipment of temples and were used during processions on the Nile and its delta branches.<sup>8</sup> During religious festivals the large barges transported priests carrying on their shoulders a model barge on which a statuette of a divinity was placed. Ritual barges were typically adorned with sculpted heads of the divinity whose statuette they carried. During the New Kingdom the barge of Amun-Re, e.g., depicted the head of a ram crowned by a sun disc and a

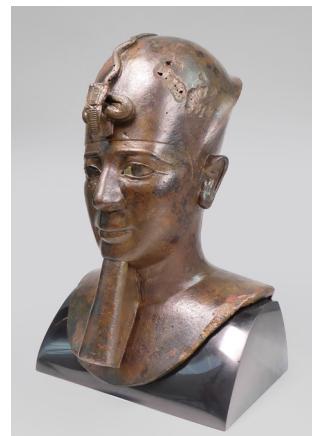


**Fig. 6** "Aegis" (*wesekh*) from a protective ritual object named *menjt*. It exhibits the combination of the three-dimensional head of a goddess above a two-dimensional and proportionally larger broad collar. Bronze. Height: 22.3 cm. Provenance unknown. Late Period. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 6008.

**Fig. 7** (left): Bust of Pharaoh Akhenaten in the *khepresh*. Limestone with paint and partial gilding. Height: 57 cm. From Tell el-Amarna. Berlin, Egyptian Museum, ÄM 21360.

**Fig. 8** (center): Tablet depicting the bust of an anonymous pharaoh in the *khepresh*. Limestone. Height: 12.6 cm. Presumably 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Philadelphia, University Museum, inv. no. 14315.

**Fig. 9** (right): Bronze bust representing an anonymous pharaoh in the *khepresh*. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384.



uraeus (**Fig. 5**). The prow and stern of Amun-Re's barge were additionally decorated with a broad floral collar and strings of gold discs. However, relief depictions show a *horizontal* base of the god's head which is fixed onto the barge. The collar represents an additional and perhaps only temporal floral ornament. Ritual barges exhibiting a royal head in the *khepresh* are not attested.

The iconographic combination of a head and a collar can also be seen on ritual objects called "aegis" (*wesekh* in ancient Egyptian) which guaranteed divine protection (**Fig. 6**).<sup>9</sup> However, the collars of the aegises and the ritual barges differ from the corresponding portion of the head (PM 384)

as this portion is a three-dimensional element. However, there were other sculptures in the pharaonic period which should be considered. During the New Kingdom painted stone busts of humans ("ancestor busts"<sup>10</sup>) served the cult of deceased family members in private houses and domestic chapels. In the Amarna Period royal stone busts were produced for the first time. Two formerly painted and partly gilt busts of Akhenaten are kept in the Berlin Egyptian Museum (**Fig. 7**)<sup>11</sup> and in the Louvre, respectively.<sup>12</sup> A bust of Nefert-iti and that of an unidentified Amarna ruler can be studied in the Berlin Egyptian Museum.<sup>13</sup> In 1987 the Egyptologist, Dr. Rolf Krauss suspected the busts of



Akhenaten and Nefertiti to represent objects of worship, presumably in the royal mortuary cult.<sup>14</sup> This explanation has found much acclaim. Busts representing a pharaoh in the *khepresh* were possibly also produced during the Late and Ptolemaic periods to which the Hildesheim head has been tentatively ascribed. Such late busts are, however, primarily known from two-dimensional relief depictions on stone tablets; for an example see Fig. 8.<sup>15</sup> Tablets like this one are traditionally termed "sculptor's models"<sup>16</sup> but may in fact represent votive objects donated to Egyptian sanctuaries. Could the Hildesheim bronze head (PM 384) belong to a cultic bust? Because of its pre-

cious materials it should be regarded as a part of a cult object. If this was a *composite* bust then its original base could have been made of stone. In this case the base could have looked similar to the modern base presently used for the bust's presentation in the museum (see Fig. 9 and Fig. 15). We also discussed whether or not the bust PM 384 could belong to a *herm* similar to the Roman monuments exhibiting a pillar-shaped stone base crowned by the hollow-cast bronze head of an individual. However, stone *herms* with bronze heads are only known from outside Egypt (e. g. from Pompeii and Herculaneum in the Campania region, Italy) and date from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE onwards (see Fig. 11-12). Hildesheim's bronze head (PM 384) is a pharaonic work of art and centuries older than the Roman *herms*. It may be noted that its facial features bear some similarities to those of representations of Late Period pharaohs including a bronze figure inscribed for Necho II (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) who reigned from 610 to 595 BCE (Fig. 10).<sup>17</sup> This figure depicts the king with a long face, a long nose, large eyes and ears, a slightly asymmetrical mouth, and a large and high uraeus with a marked spine column and one loop on either side. Hence it may be proposed to identify the Hildesheim bronze head as the portrait of a ruler of the 7<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, perhaps Necho II.

Helmut Brandl



Fig. 10 (left): PM 384 juxtaposed with the head of a kneeling figure inscribed for Pharaoh Necho II. Bronze. Height of the statuette: 13.4 cm. New York, Brooklyn Museum, inv. 71.11.

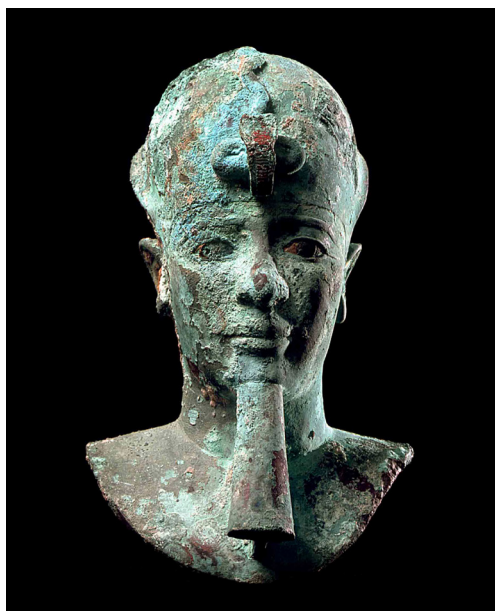
Fig. 11-12 (above): Herm of an unknown man. Life-sized bronze head on a stone (breccia) base from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (replica). From Herculaneum, Italy, so-called *Casa dell'erma di bronzo*.



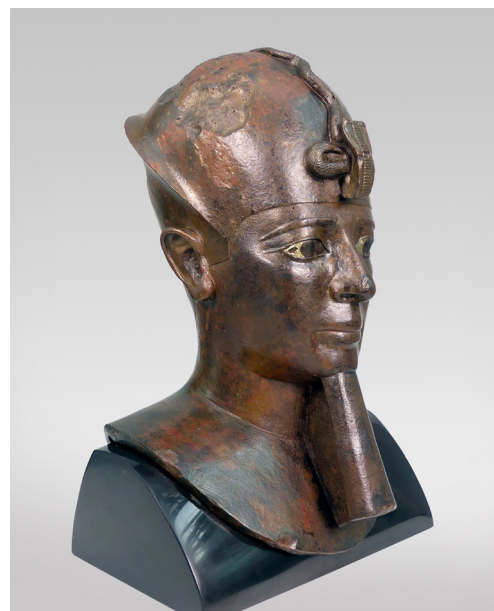
## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 13** (left): Bronze bust of a Late Period pharaoh. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384. Condition in ca. 1910.



**Fig. 14** (center): Hildesheim, PM 384. Condition in 1979.



**Fig. 15** (right): Hildesheim, PM 384. Condition in 2021.

### Condition changes and former interventions

Besides the reconstruction of the face of the Old Kingdom statue of Hem-iunu (see **Fig. 16** on p. 54) which was discovered with a smashed face and later restored at Hildesheim, the conservation of the bronze bust (PM 384) represents the most spectacular case of a modern intervention in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum. This was communicated to the students on the occasion of

a guided tour through the museum's galleries given by the museum's director Prof. Regine Schulz. The bust PM 384 was consequently chosen by the project organisers to introduce the students to the topic of evaluating former conservation interventions. The author was hence consulted for the reconstruction of the conservation history, based on the available conservation reports and photographic material and for

the evaluation of the treatments. This was implemented with the help of the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum's metal conservator.

#### Condition around 1910

When the bust entered the museum, it showed the typical alteration that can be expected from archaeological copper-alloy products (see Fig. 13-14): the surface was covered with environmental reaction (= corrosion) products. In antiquity the object was exposed to air and therefore in reaction with the oxygen and sulphur within it. The result is always a darkened surface occurring as reddish-brown patina which develops naturally and serves as a protective layer.<sup>18</sup> In small areas this patina was still visible. But in the greatest extent the green patina and greenish crusts were present which developed while the object was buried. Corrosion processes of this kind have been studied since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup> and are nowadays known as "bronze disease".<sup>20</sup> The reaction partners are the copper of the object and the chlorine of the wet soil which are forming different kinds of copper chlorides ranging in color from pale green, over vitreous green to blueish green.<sup>21</sup> If an object shows this kind of extraordinary composition of greenish crusts mixed with some red corrosion products and both have grown into the metal – the object is considered as being authentic. This is due to the fact that

this alteration can hardly be imitated in an artificial way, especially not in a short period of time.<sup>22</sup>

#### Carried out conservation measures

Since entering into the collection six conservation interventions could be reconstructed – either by conservation reports, by the photographic documentation of the object, which was usually carried out due to publication purposes or by the publications themselves. A detailed description will be given for the most important first three interventions, as the last three ones (2001, 2005 and 2008) just focus on object care related to lending the bust to other museums for special exhibitions. The current condition of the bust is shown in Fig. 15.

The first intervention applied to the bust (PM 384) took place after entering the collection in 1909 and has been a preventive measure: the object was transferred to a showcase. But the extraordinary aspect hereby is that the idea and the construction of this specialized showcase was recently implemented in conservation sciences: 10 years after the establishing of the first conservation laboratory in Germany in 1888 (Laboratory of the Royal Museums, Berlin) the director, Friedrich Rathgen, published his standard reference *Die Konservierung von Alterthumsfunden* (1898).<sup>23</sup> His idea for a new type of showcase was related

**Fig. 16** Bronze bust of a Late Period pharaoh in the newly developed climate-case (between 1909 and 1912). Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384.

to the understanding of the alteration process of "bronze disease": the ongoing corrosion is a result of the influence of water (respectively water vapor in the air). The showcase he designed was therefore "airtight" and contained a desiccant (dehydrating agent) which absorbs water out of the encased air to create a low humidity.<sup>24</sup>

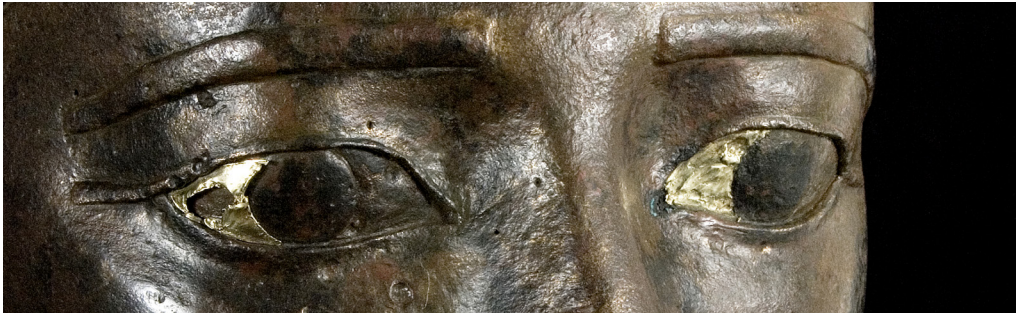
In 1909 Rathgen published the first detailed description of the construction where he stated that the first construction was completely sealed with putty and therefore a reopening of the showcase was very time-consuming. The second construction changed this disadvantage by using a groove filled with mineral oil where the glass cover was placed in; it was produced by the company for gold standard showcases at that time "Kühnscherf & Söhne".<sup>25</sup>

As the bust entered the museum in 1909 and a paper presented by Rathgen in 1912 showed a photograph of the bust in the showcase<sup>26</sup> of the second version seal (Fig. 12) – it is evident, that the bust was fortunate to be placed in that new implementation of a climate-case just after its arriving in Germany (and possibly even before the museum opened to the public in 1911).

A first remedial conservation intervention is recognizable related to the photographic documentation of the object.<sup>27</sup> In the museum's catalogue by Kayser from 1973 both irises are overgrown by corrosion products and therefore occur green-



ish.<sup>28</sup> Two photographs taken for a conservation article published in 1979 show already the left iris cleaned and therefore black again.<sup>29</sup> It can be assumed that some first tests for cleaning the object were performed within an appropriate conservation concept.



**Fig. 17** Eyes of the bronze bust of a Late Period pharaoh, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 384. Condition in 2005.

The main conservation program took place at the beginning of the 1980s for a time span of two years: The surface of the copper alloy support was cleaned thoroughly from the corrosion products (patina and crusts). Since then, the iris of the proper right eye can be seen as well.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the still existing metal foils which are imitating the eye-white have been cleaned and are now recognizable as yellowish metal (see **Fig. 17**).

#### Evaluation of the conservation measures

The author has been asked by the project organizers

- a) why the intervention in the 1980s took place so late (approx. 70 years after the bust entered the collection) and
- b) why it is on one hand highly invasive
- c) but on the other hand, is not trying to recreate the original appearance of the bust.

The answers lay in the development and the limits of the field of conservation.

- a) At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the field of scientific conservation had just begun to develop and therefore was defined by trials and errors. Standardized measures first had to be developed which include the evaluation for their applicability and possible negative long-term effects. Also, the scientific training of conservators needed to be established (which started only in 1968<sup>31</sup>), to satisfy the demands for conservation professionals of larger and smaller museums. And at last, the museums needed to implement well-equipped conservation labs.
- b) The greenish appearance of a copper alloy object has always been considered as "attractive" and hence was called "Edelpatina" (en: precious patina).<sup>32</sup> But the familiar greenish appearance





**Fig. 18** Head of a wooden striding statue of Rameses II from Deir el-Medina (Western Thebes). Height of the statue: 68.8 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, E 16277. Stratigraphy of the crown: Wood, white ground layer, blue gluing putty, blue faience beads.

of the bust was due to risky corrosion products that had overgrown the whole surface. The cleaning of the bust was hence fully justified to avoid a restarting of the corrosion processes that could have appeared just after 48 hours in an environment with higher humidity.<sup>33</sup> Although the bust might have strongly changed its appearance after cleaning – the bust is now closer to the original appearance again, as it gives a glimpse on a preliminary state of the workmanship within the production process before the decoration was completed.

- c) Decisions for or against restoration measures can be made only when conservators and archaeologists come together. Conservators are generally not specializing in specific cultures (like ancient Egypt) and their objects but rather in material classes. Therefore, the archaeologist needs to communicate the original appearance of an object to the conservator. As the original appearance of the bust, the construction as a complete product and the materials used are still in scholarly discussion in various degrees (see the chapter “archaeological investigation”) a reconstruction would have been an interpretation based on the knowledge of that time. Therefore, the best possibility was (and still is) to keep the object in a stabilised condition and open to future interventions when increased knowledge will be available.

#### Original condition – Remarks on the decoration of the crown

The Egyptology tutor Dr. Helmut Brandl communicated another question to the present author. Opposite to the possible change of the crown’s color, the well-known circular pattern stayed in use as can be seen in the Late Period relief tablet shown in Fig. 8 on p. 185 and in the Late Period kneeling figure represented in Fig. 2 on p. 171 (cat. VI.1). As the bust PM 384 depicts a plain crown omitting any carved decoration (indicating an ornamentation with small discs), several questions arose: Is another decoration method known to create a circular pattern? If so, could this decoration method nevertheless have been used on a metal object as well? The consultation of the author as wood conservator was not related to the specialisation on wooden objects but based on her specialization on wooden objects from ancient Egypt which includes decoration methods and used materials.

For creating a pattern of numerous small discs by a decoration method other than carving one example will be given here for discussion: the wooden statue of Rameses II from the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Paris, Louvre, E 16277).<sup>34</sup> The statue shows beads which are made of faience and shaped as flat round disks with a centered hole (Fig. 18). The gluing substance used for this object can

be compared to a blue paint which still shows its original color at the proper right forehead where the beads are missing and the surface of the paint has not yet turned into the altered brown-blackish color. To work as a gluing matter on one side the paint needed to be high in adhesive and on the other side needed to be applied in a thicker layer, so that the beads could be pressed inside to be surrounded by the substance (and therefore the paint should be called "gluing putty"). For the application of this method, it should be noted that the gluing putty is comparable to regular paint (pigment-adhesive-system) and although the use of colored gluing putty is widely known from small scale metal objects<sup>35</sup> it is questionable if this method was used on larger ones.

Another object shall be presented here which does not show a circular pattern, but exemplifies a decoration method upon a plain metal surface: the wooden statue head of Queen Tiye from the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Berlin, Egyptian Museum, ÄM 21834).<sup>36</sup> On the back of Queen Tiye's headgear remains of dark-blue beads can be seen which are made of glass, ring-shaped and strung upon a thread (therefore also lying on their sides, Fig. 19).<sup>37</sup> The threaded beads were pressed into a thick layer of a now dark brown appearing (resinous?) adhesive while it was still wet; where they got lost, they left a pattern of the imprints.<sup>38</sup> (In addition, under-

neath the brown adhesive a supporting material made of several fabric layers can be found.) As was already mentioned the decoration upon the statue head of Queen Tiye which imitates a blue wig doesn't lay on the wooden support. The statue head has a long history of art-technological investigations related to its high value and therefore, many details upon the stratigraphy and materials used are known nowadays.

The investigations started already in 1911 with the first detailed visual examination,<sup>40</sup> continued in 1932 and 1989 when radiographic examinations were carried out and supported by a CT-scan in the early 1990s<sup>41</sup>. It is verified that underneath the imitation of the blue wig a first decoration can be found which imitates a light headcloth – and this headcloth is made of metal foil.<sup>42</sup>

This proves that an application of other solid materials upon a metal support is possible. Presumably, the several fabric layers served for covering the outer irregular form created by the gold applications of the earrings, the uraeus, etc. for creating the typical shape of the royal blue wig. Whether the single use of a (resinous?) adhesive would be enough to glue solid elements upon metal needs to be discussed with conservators specialized on metal objects.

Antje Zygaliski



**Fig. 19** Head of a composite figure of Queen Tiye. Height of the head (excluding the crowning sun disc, cow's horns and falcon feathers): 9.8 cm. Believed to be from Kom Medinet Ghurab. New Kingdom, reign of Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten. Berlin, Egyptian Museum, ÄM 21834. Stratigraphy of the headgear's first decoration: Wood, gluing putty, gold alloy leaf<sup>39</sup>; Stratigraphy of the headgear's second decoration: several fabric layers, brownish (resinous?) adhesive, blue glass beads on thread.

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Roeder 1937, p. 39, § 166, Fig. 101.
- 2 Seidel, in: Eggebrecht 1996, p. 72, Fig. 67.
- 3 Müller, H. W. 1955; Josephson 1992, p. 94. Pl. 16b.
- 4 [Cat. VI.1](#).
- 5 The bulbous shape of the *khepresh* of PM 384 appears to be unique in Egyptian sculpture and hence a production during the “unknown” 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (with regard to royal sculpture in the round) cannot be ruled out. For the shape of Darius’ *khepresh* as depicted in relief, see Myśliwiec 2020, p. 1047, Fig. 3c, p. 1054. This variant, however, depicts a uraeus with “double loops” which seems to be more in line with earlier than with the later periods. See, however, the royal statue head, Boston, MFA, inv. no. 2000.637 (Josephson 1997, p. 28, pl. 10c) which appears to attest the use of “double loops” also during the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. It may be concluded that besides “single-looped” uraei also “double looped” variants remained in use.
- 6 For a rare exception, i.e., the bronze face (height: 5.5 cm) of a baboon figure which was composed of different materials (probably including wood), see Exh. cat. Jerusalem 1997, p. 80, no. 63 (with illustration in color on p. 96).
- 7 Cf. Karlshausen 1998 and Karlshausen 2009.
- 8 See Bernhauer, in: Bakr, Brandl, and Kalloniatis 2014, pp. 156–157, no. 31.
- 9 Cf. Schulz 2003.
- 10 Cf., e.g., Friedman 1985; for busts in Egyptian art, see Kaiser 1990.
- 11 Exh. cat. Berlin 2012, p. 334, no. 121; cf. <https://smb.museum-digital.de/object/494?navlang=en>
- 12 Musée du Louvre, E 11076; see Barbotin 2007, pp. 66–67, no. 24
- 13 For the bust of Nefert-iti, cf. <https://smb.museum-digital.de/object/646?navlang=en>; for the unidentified ruler’s bust, see Exh. cat. Berlin 2012, p. 414, no. 201; cf. <https://smb.museum-digital.de/object/656>
- 14 Krauss 1987, pp. 101–102. Cf. Exh. cat. Berlin 2012, pp. 181–186.
- 15 See, e.g., Exh. cat. Birmingham, AL 1988, p. 125–127, no. 45.
- 16 Tomoum 2005, pp. 56–59, pl. 36, 41b, 43c, d, and 44a, b. For the interpretation as votives cf. Liepsner 1982.
- 17 Hill 2004, p. 162–163, no. 25, pl. 53
- 18 Cronyn 1990, pp. 214–219; Francis 2010, pp. 15–16.
- 19 Riederer 1992.
- 20 Scott 2002, p. 122.
- 21 Scott 2002, p. 123.
- 22 Riederer 1973, p. 28.
- 23 Rathgen 1898. An English version was published in 1905 under the title “The Preservation of Antiquities”.
- 24 Rathgen 1898, pp. 125–126. The range of humidity to prevent further corrosion lies approx. below 35%. See Cronyn 1990, p. 226.
- 25 Rathgen 1909, p. 98.  
<https://ahoi-leipzig.de/artikel/kuehnscherf-vitrinen-historische-massarbeit-in-neuem-glanz-1110/>
- 26 Rathgen 1912. Publication of a paper presented on 5 February 1912.

- 27 A report upon this second intervention could not be found; this correlates with the situation that the oldest conservation reports in the museum go back just until the 1980s.
- 28 Kayser 1973, p. 70.
- 29 Schulte 1979, pp. 114–123.
- 30 After the cleaning the viewing direction seems even more to be oriented to the left side. But this is the result of an optical falsification which is due to the circumstance that in both eyes the left halves of the eye-white is missing. This has been proofed with a digital reconstruction.
- 31 VDR 2018.
- 32 Voss, A. 1888, p. 38.
- 33 Cronyn 1990, p. 227.
- 34 online: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010008673> (accessed January 2023).
- 35 Broschat 2016, endnote 29 and Broschat 2017, p. 71.
- 36 online: <https://id.smb.museum/object/606612/kopf-einer-statuetten-der-k%C3%B6nigin-teje> (accessed January 2023).
- 37 Borchardt 1911, p. 8.
- 38 Wildung 2001, p. 15.
- 39 Borchardt 1911, p. 10.
- 40 Borchardt 1911, p. 7–10.
- 41 Wildung 1994, pp. 67; Illerhaus 1995, p. 348–349.
- 42 Borchardt 1911, p. 10. The stratigraphy has been reported as being composed of a "yellowish" gluing putty where two different kinds of metal foils were applied for imitating different materials. The yellowish color of the gluing putty for the application of a metal foil most probably results from a white mineral which was mixed with a high amount of yellowish binding media, e.g., gum arabic or glue. One of the two metal foils was used for the representation of the headband and was described as "gold foil". The second metal foil imitates the headcloth and has been analysed to contain 70–75 % of gold. Although the remaining 20–25 % could not be identified precisely, it could be excluded to be silver – and hence the metal-alloy is not "electrum".

## FURTHER READING

For ancient Egyptian metal sculptures preferably of the Late Period, see Exh. cat. New York 2007.

For technical investigations, aging mechanisms and conservation of metal objects, see Rathgen 1898; Rathgen 1909; Riederer 1973; Brown et al. 1977; Riederer 1977; Exh. cat. Berlin 1987; Cronyn 1990; Scott 1994; Selwyn 2004; Turner-Walker 2008; Francis 2010.



**VII.**

**A MACEDONIAN  
GENERAL**

**AS  
KING  
OF EGYPT**





# A PORTRAIT IN PLASTER

## Relief Plaque of Ptolemy I Soter

### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1120

### MATERIAL

Plaster

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 8.3 cm, Width: 6.0 cm, Depth: 2.6 cm

### PROVENANCE

Said to be from Mit Rahina (Memphis); acquired by W. Pelizaeus on the antiquities' market in Cairo and donated by him to the city of Hildesheim in 1907

### DATE

Ptolemaic Period (4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE)

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

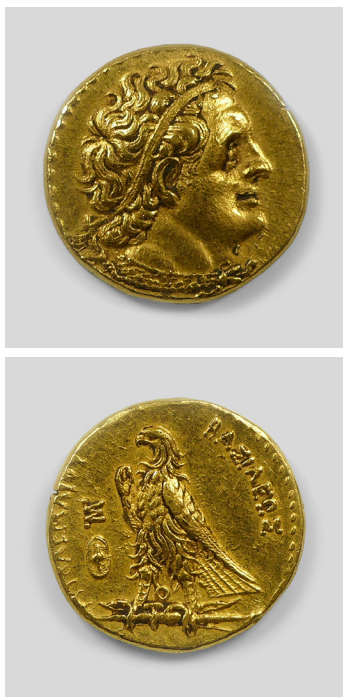
Rubensohn 1911, pp. 44-45, cat. 32, pl. 6; Roeder and Ippel 1921, p. 143, Fig. 56-57; Kayser 1971, pp. 63-71 (with unnumbered illustration); Kayser 1973, p. 119, fig. 104; Kyrieleis 1975, p. 8 with n. 19, pl. 7.3; Thompson 1973, pp. 94-95, pl. 72a; Reinsberg 1980, cat. no. 36, Fig. 49-50; Exh. cat. Brooklyn 1988, cat. no. 51; Exh. cat. München 1989, cat. no. 48; Seidel, in: Eggebrecht 1993, p. 93, Fig. 90; <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10752> (last update: 26 September 2003); Exh. cat. Leoben 2015, p. 96, 153, Fig. cat. II.8; Kielau 2021; cf. Schmitz 2024, p. 319 (no. 124)







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1.** Coin (*trichryson*) representing Ptolemy I Soter on the obverse and the eagle of Zeus on the reverse. Gold; Diameter: 2.3 cm, Weight: 17.79 g. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. L/Sch 777.

This portrait is unanimously identified as Ptolemy I, who was given the nickname *soter* (Greek: Σωτήρ, meaning "savior") in antiquity because he had protected the Greek city of Rhodes on the island of the same name from the legendary warfare of a competing *diadochoi*, Demetrios Poliorketes, the "city besieger" (in 305 BCE, the Rhodians subsequently had the Colossus of Rhodes built from the spoils of this war).

Ptolemy I, friend, military companion and heir of the late Alexander the Great, was the founder of the famous Ptolemaic Dynasty, which ruled over Egypt and lasted until the year 30 BCE. In 305/304 BCE Ptolemy was proclaimed pharaoh and *basileus* (Greek for king). It might be surprising to see king Ptolemy I represented in such a modest way, as in this and in other preserved portraits. A closer look at the plaster plaque PM 1120 from the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim can, however, help to explain why this is the case.

The plaster print shows the bust of a male person, which stands out from the flat background in a strong high relief. The lower left corner of the square plaster plate and much of the lower edge are broken off, but over all it is in a good condition. The face shows a slight bump. The nose is not complete due to an air bubble trapped when pouring. In the upper half, especially in the right corner, there is a dark, mottled discoloration,

traces of which are scattered over the whole object. The portrait is framed by a square, profiled edge that is decorated with a band of eggs and darts, the so-called Ionic *kymatium*. The head of the portrayed person is turned to the right and shows up in a three-quarter profile. The main hair is draped in thicker curls, leaving the left ear uncovered. The forehead is also shown free of curls, so that the *diadema*, a headband, which in reality was made of fabric, is highlighted. The *diadema* is knotted at the back of the head, the two longer endings fall along the neck over the left shoulder. The deep-set eyes and the bulging brow, as well as the eye-catching nose and the pointed chin underline the striking appearance of the wide face. The mouth, with a narrow upper and a full lower lip is slightly angled down. The width of the subject's neck corresponds with the width of the face and is inclined to the left. The two pronounced lateral muscle strands of the neck underlines the strength of the depicted person, who is dressed in a *chiton*, a traditional unisex garment. The fold in the center of the chest is eye-catching.

Portraits of Ptolemy I Soter in the Greek style are not always easy to identify, as they lean on the images of the Greek god Dionysus. But by iconographic comparisons with portraits on coins the depicted person on the plaque can be identified as Ptolemy I, dating the object to the early Hellenistic

period.<sup>1</sup> Coin portraits of Ptolemy I equally show a characteristic deep-set eye, with an arched eyebrow, a protruding chin and a strong neck. A *trichryson* (or "tripel stater") gold coin which was struck under Ptolemy II Philadelphos, but which depicts the ruler's father and predecessor, Ptolemy I Soter, was recently acquired by the Schafhausen Stiftung for the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (Fig. 1). Here, too, Ptolemy I is represented with a *diadema*, positioned close to the edge of the forehead, but upon the curly hair. This very image type is in its basics also used by, or for, the male successors of Ptolemy I.

In difference to representations of the founder of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, another small plaster relief fragment (Hildesheim, PM 1121, Fig. 2) is identified as Ptolemy III Euergetes ("the Benefactor"). The object was also allegedly found at Mit Rahina and it similarly depicts a Macedonian ruler of Egypt in the Hellenistic style, with significantly full facial features. The identification as Ptolemy III was possible mainly on the basis of coins which depict and name this particular ruler.<sup>2</sup>

Representations of Ptolemy I in the *pharaonic* style – both in two and in three dimensions, i.e., in relief or painting and also as a statue – however, can only be recognized if accompanying (hieroglyphic) inscriptions are preserved identifying the depicted ruler.<sup>3</sup> The appearance of two-dimensional depictions of Ptolemy I as pharaoh can

well be studied from the relief-decorated blocks constituting the so-called "Tuna chapel", which is on display at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (PM 1883)<sup>4</sup>. An example from these reliefs, which can be seen here, exhibits the *pharaoh* Ptolemy I without any physical characteristics that would be typical for him alone (Fig. 3). His is a youthful and athletic appearance with super-individual facial traits incarnating the divine nature of the solar god, Horus – and not simply representing a "human" king. As the earthly representative of Horus, the pharaoh here wears a golden variant of the *khepresh* or "Blue" crown<sup>5</sup> with additional horizontal ram's horns, framed by ostrich feathers (alluding to Maat – the Egyptian concept of both "truth" and "order"), and topped by a red (i.e., the rising) sun disc.

Ptolemy I started issuing coins in 304 BCE<sup>6</sup>. But what was the function of the plaster plaque discussed here? The object (PM 1120) was allegedly found, together with numerous other, similar small-sized plaster casts and moulds in the precinct of the modern village Mit-Rahina, within the ruins of an ancient Memphite workshop specializing in the production of high quality metal works.<sup>7</sup> It is believed that the so-called "Mit Rahine Gypsums" were shop or workshop models used as visualization for potential customers who could in this very case, order a portrait of the famous king Ptolemy I Soter in a precious metal



Fig. 2 Ptolemy I Soter as pharaoh. Limestone with paint. From Tuna el-Gebel. Height of shown portion: ca. 30 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1121.



**Fig. 3** Ancient cast of a relief portrait of Ptolemy III (?). Plaster, said to be from Mit Rahina. Height: 5.0 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 1121.

version. However, several specialists would not exclude that this plaster relief (and similar antiquities) may represent works of art in their own right.<sup>8</sup> As the object obviously represents the *cast* of another object which was presumably crafted in metal it represents a kind of simplified (and perhaps only partial) reproduction of an original object. In other words, the Hildesheim cast (PM 1120) documents the appearance of an original regarding its size and iconographic details, but not regarding its materiality which was replaced by a less durable material. The model plaque was produced by moulding a “negative” (sunken relief) in clay or in gypsum over the original “positive” (raised) relief. The mould which is lost would have served as the form for the positive, i.e., Hildesheim’s cast.

The research project *KunstModell* (“Works of Art & Models”) which was conducted at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum between 2019 and 2022 focused on the improvement of the understanding of the term “model” and its implications and elaborated a new dynamic classification of “models” which were used in ancient Egypt.<sup>9</sup> Plaster casts produced to be used for visualization were grouped as “representation models” and / or “documentation models” and the plaque discussed here, too, probably fits into these categories.

The Hildesheim museum owns numerous plaster “models” said to be from Mit Rahina which

were all acquired by Wilhelm Pelizaeus between 1907 and 1911, who forwarded them to the Hildesheim museum. Other plaster casts and moulds from the same site were acquired by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the University College London (Petrie Museum)<sup>10</sup> and also by the German Egyptologist, Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing, who later sold them to the Museum August Kestner, Hanover.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned in the beginning, the depiction of Ptolemy I (PM 1120) at first glance appears unpretentious. The only given attribute is the *diadema* – an attribute full of meaning. In ancient Greece, the fabric bandage worn around the head expressed the success and victory of its wearer in competitions.<sup>12</sup> Since Alexander the Great, the *diadema* appeared as the *insignium* of a *basileus* and has been adopted as a symbol by his immediate royal successors, the *diadochoi* and by later kings.<sup>13</sup> But at the same time the *diadema* has a divine reference. As a pharaoh, according to the ancient Egyptian tradition, Ptolemy I was given a divine status. The Greek diadema was an attribute of the Greek god Dionysus.<sup>14</sup> Thus Ptolemy I Soter not only adorned himself with a royal insignium, but presented himself as a Greek divinity.

Gesine Philipp

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Thompson 1973, pl. 73i.
- 2 Rubensohn 1911, p. 25, Fig. 3; for the coinage of Ptolemy III Euergetes, cf. Exh. cat. London 2001, p. 86.
- 3 Hence the newly acquired statue head, Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, L/Sch 774 (**cat. IV.2**) can only be attributed to a specific ruler who may be Ptolemy I Soter in pharaonic attire.
- 4 Derchain 1961.
- 5 For the meaning of this royal headgear (often erroneously thought to represent a "war helmet"), see Bryan 2007.
- 6 Cf., e.g., Thompson 1973, p. 78.
- 7 Thompson 1973, pp. 94-95 n. 5.
- 8 See, in: Exh. cat. Brooklyn 1988, cat. no. 51; cf. Exh. cat. München 1989, p. 172.
- 9 For a brief description of the project (in English), see Bayer, Brandl and Loeben 2020.  
For the innovative classification of ancient Egyptian models, see Wachlin 2021.
- 10 Rabe 2011, p. 17; Edgar 1903; cf. Edgar 1906, pp. VIII-XII.
- 11 Rabe 2011, pp. 11-12.
- 12 Lehmann 2012, p. 205.
- 13 Haake 2012, p. 304.
- 14 Meyer 2012, p. 220, since the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the headband is a fixed attribute of the Greek god Dionysus.

### FURTHER READING

For the reign of Ptolemy I, see Howe 2018 as well as Hölbl 1994, pp. 9-22.

For the iconography of Ptolemy I (in Greek art), see Kyrieleis 1975; Haake 2012; Lehmann 2012; Lichtenberger 2012.

For the so-called "Mit Rahina Gypsums", see Rubensohn 1911; Roeder and Ippel 1921, pp. 139-153; Rabe 2011, pp. 11-19; Reinsberg 1980.





# VIII.

## ANCIENT FACES



# TIMELESS LOOKS

# LIVING FOREVER

## Two Funerary Portrait Panels

### VIII.1. FUNERARY PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

#### INVENTORY N°

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3066

#### MATERIAL

Egg tempera (?) on wood panel

#### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 32.5 cm

Width: 19.5 cm

Depth: 0.7 cm

#### PROVENANCE

Unknown, acquired in 1926

#### DATE

Roman Imperial Period, around 100 CE

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kayser 1973, p. 119; Parlasca 1980, no. 530, pl. 128.4;  
Exh. cat. Hamburg 1982, no. 58; Exh. cat. Marseille 1997,  
no. 182; Exh. cat. Barcelona 1998, no. 117;  
<https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=11079>  
(last update: 19 December 2003); Schmitz 2024, pp. 573,  
590, 684.



**VIII.2 FUNERARY PORTRAIT OF A MAN**

**INVENTORY N°**

Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3067

**MATERIAL**

Encaustic on wood panel

**MEASUREMENTS**

Height: 36.2 cm

Width: 21.5 cm

Depth: 0.9 cm

**PROVENANCE**

Unknown, acquired in 1926

**DATE**

Roman Imperial Period, second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

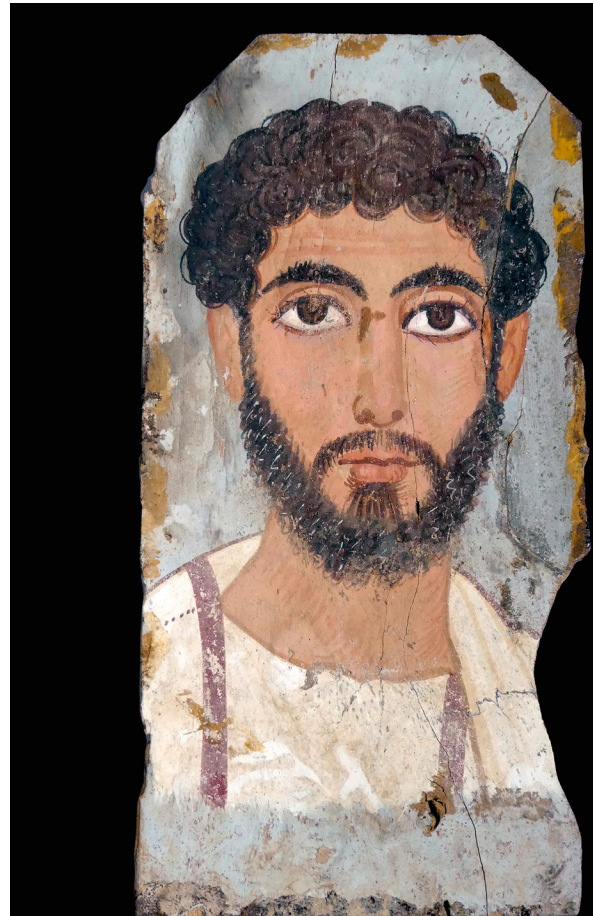
Kayser 1973, p. 119, Fig. 95; Parlasca 1980, no. 504,

pl. 122.4; Exh. cat. Marseille 1997, no. 181;

Exh. cat. Barcelona 1998, no. 116;

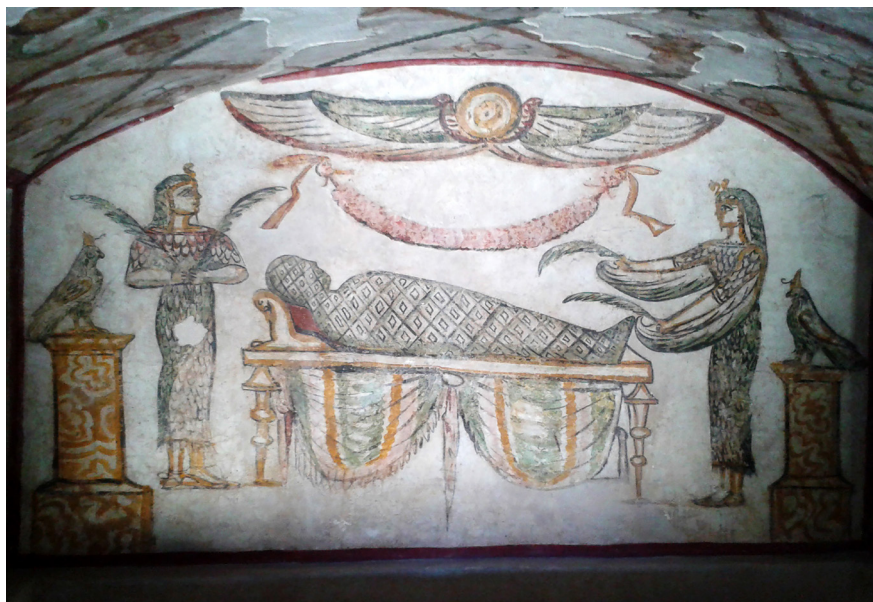
<https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=11080>

(last update: 19 December 2003); Schmitz 2024, pp. 573, 590, 684.





## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Wall painting in the “Tomb from Tigrane Pasha Street” in Alexandria. Nowadays exhibited at Kom esh-Shuqafa. Roman Imperial Period, reign of Emperor Hadrian (ruled 117–138 CE).

Few painted panels from the Greco-Roman world have survived until today. Paintings from the Greek-Roman world proper are known to posterity mostly from painted vessels and from wall paintings such as those preserved in Italy, especially at Pompeii and Herculaneum. A rare example of well-preserved Roman Period painting from Egypt can be found at Kom esh-Shuqafa, where the painted “Tomb from Tigrane Pasha Street”<sup>1</sup> in Alexandria is now exhibited (**Fig. 1**).

Painted scenes of wooden tablets are but seldomly preserved. It is therefore noteworthy that most surviving Roman panel paintings were found in Egypt in the form of portraits, which were used to decorate the head of a mummy and to give a life-like face to the mummy.

The portrait in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum Hildesheim (PM 3066, illustrated on [p. 204](#)) shows the bust of a woman against a greyish background facing the viewer head on. She wears a reddish-pink dress (called *chiton* in ancient Greek) with black stripes (so-called *clavii*) which are ornamented with pink dots on her shoulders. Her black hair is styled in ringlets seemingly tied up in a bun on the back of her head with some strands falling on her forehead and before her ears, framing her oval-shaped face. She dons a pair of golden earrings adorned with four pearls on the front, while the lower part is bent upwards in the back. A gold chain with a circular pendant graces the lady’s neck. She exhibits large brown eyes framed by thick dark eyeliner on her lower lid, while her upper lid is accentuated by lines in her skin. Her slightly curved black eyebrows are prominent and connected by a few hairs. A slight pink flush, possibly, adorns her cheeks. Her small full lips are painted red and separated by a dark line; the corners of her mouth are slightly curved upwards. The upper edges of the wooden panel are cut and there are cracks and loss of paint in

multiple places, but especially in the upper half of the background and in the lower section of the dress, where one can also see a hole almost exactly in the middle of the bust's chest. The hair and the left earring seem to have been repaired and painted over in modern times.

The lady's coiffure was popular during the reign of Emperor Trajan (ruled from 98 to 117 CE)<sup>2</sup> and hence the tablet can be dated to this period. The curly hairstyle is similar to that of another female mummy portrait, which in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford (AN 1966.1112) and which has been dated to the late first or early second century CE.<sup>3</sup> Two more examples of this hairstyle can be found on two other female mummy portraits in Berlin (Antikensammlung).<sup>4</sup> They are dated to the late first or early second century CE. Though the latter's hairstyle is far less elaborate than that of the Hildesheim portrait (PM 3066) or the other examples, the portraits share some distinct stylistic similarities that can also be observed in the "Ashmolean portrait": In contrast to some well-known "mummy portraits" the figures in our example seem rather flat and two-dimensional while thick, sharp lines accentuate wrinkles in the cloth and certain body parts, like the nose and upper eyelids.

They all have large eyes with dark eyeliner on their lower lid, and the lady of the Berlin portrait (Antikensammlung, SMB, inv. no. 31161.48; Fig. 2)

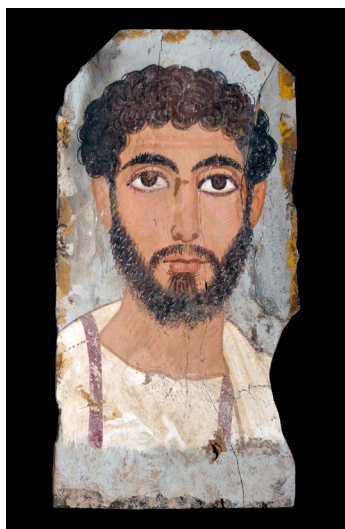
even has the same pink flush on her cheeks as the lady of the Hildesheim portrait (PM 3066). The red lips separated by a dark line which is slightly curved upwards also appears in all three portraits. Furthermore, they all share similar jewellery. Based on these observations the Hildesheim portrait (PM 3066) can also be dated between the late first and early second century CE. Whether it was also designed or found in the Fayoum area like its comparisons cannot be determined.

Despite the similarities the Hildesheim portrait shares with the examples in Berlin and Oxford, all three portraits differ slightly in dress and appearance, making them seem rather individualistic. This raises the question of whether such portraits were especially created after a specific person and if so, for what purpose.

Antique portraits are not portraits in a modern sense since an actual likeness to the human they were supposed to portray was a secondary concern. However, the specialist, David L. Thompson, has pointed out that in the first and second centuries CE attempts would be made to capture the actual and individual likeness of a subject, while by the third century CE mummy portrait production would be serialized and restricted to formulaic types.<sup>5</sup> It can thus be assumed that in the first and second century CE the resemblance to a specific person was a criterion when picking out



**Fig. 2** Funerary portrait panel (mummy portrait) of an unknown woman. Height: 40.5 cm. Roman Imperial Period, late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, inv. no. 31161.48.



**Fig. 3** Funerary portrait panel (mummy portrait) of an unknown man. Height: 36.2 cm. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3067.

a funerary portrait. Since the Hildesheim painting (PM 3066) was presumably created around 100 CE, it most probably resembled the woman for which it was intended and whose likeness now faces its modern beholder.

The archaeologist, Klaus Parlasca emphasized the individuality of the paintings and even suggested they might have been commissioned and carried out during the lifetime of a person.<sup>6</sup> This leads to the question of the portraits' use and purpose which is addressed in the following contribution.

Carina Rosenlehner

Wooden objects from ancient times are rare among archaeological findings. Due to climate conditions only a few regions worldwide allow that organic matter, such as wood or fabric, is preserved for millennia. Egypt with its desert regions provided a great number of treasures of the past. By consequence, researchers and collectors were ambitious in uncovering these treasures, such as the polychrome wooden panels on which faces from antiquity have seemingly been immortalized. These portrait panels, traditionally called "mummy portraits" from Roman Imperial Egypt (30 BCE–395 CE) represent, at the same time, a testimony of a transformation process which deeply rooted in the first millennium BCE,

and which entered a new and lasting phase when Egypt became a Roman province (30 BCE). These paintings contain a mixture of different artistic traditions.

Before addressing questions of the function and the genesis of funerary portrait panels, let us have a closer look at the second panel presented here.

The portrait depicting a man (Hildesheim, PM 3067 (illustrated on p. 205 and as Fig. 3) is in a slightly damaged condition. The lower left edge is partially cracked; the upper left edge has been cut back. At the lower edge of the board and partly at the right edge, textile remains are preserved.

The portrait depicting the bust of a man set against a blueish-grey background is aligned frontally; his chin has a slightly pointed shape due to the lush, curly full beard of brown and black hair. The mouth is surrounded by a dense full beard; it is painted very effectively due to a multi-layered use of red tones. The curls of the full, brown head hair, which does not cover the ears, are nuanced by finer, black brushstrokes. Beneath the pronounced eyebrows, emphasized by eyelashes and lower eyelids, lie wide open eyes with a brown iris. The nose is given a strong shape by the use of shades of red, and the forehead is also emphasized by its two wrinkles. The skin color of the face is kept in a light brown shade, its neck looks a little darker.

The man wears a white chiton with red *clavii*, two longitudinal stripes on the clothes (compare the previous contribution). A bulging crease on his left shoulder might indicate that he also wore a *himation* (a traditional coat) over his *chiton*. The folding of the garment is represented by wider, partly beige or ochre-colored brush strokes.

Due to its stylistic elaboration, the described piece can be dated from the middle to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE – the hairstyle is of special significance, as the following comparisons can show. An earlier dating of the Hildesheim panel (PM 3067) can be ruled out by comparing this object e.g. with another mummy portrait, in the British Museum, London (EA 63396). This portrait, dated ca. 120 to 140 CE, shows a young man whose hair is combed forward from the back of the head, in long strands, and is curled on the forehead, as it was fashionable at that earlier time. Similarities in the design of individual facial areas, such as eyes, nose and mouth, suggest that the chronological difference between the two portraits is not far apart. The eyes are large, almond-shaped and face the viewer; the curved brows are painted in black while the eyelids are accentuated by darker and lighter color layers. The mouth is painted with a broader upper lip and a narrower full lower lip.

A portrait in the Myers Museum at the Eton College (inv. no. ECM 2149) again shows a different,

later style. This portrait has been dated 180-210 CE.<sup>7</sup> It depicts a male person whose head appears to be covered by curls. Although the forehead and the ears are free from hair, as is the case with the Hildesheim specimen (PM 3067), however, not only the hairstyle, but also the more defined and finely accentuated elaboration of the portrait points to a later date of creation.

It was common in Pharaonic times to mummify and thus to preserve the bodies of the elite, which was believed to be essential for the desired continuation of life in the hereafter.

In the Ptolemaic Period the Greek custom of cremation – a horror in traditional Egyptian thinking – was introduced in Egypt. This is evidenced by the so-called *Hâdra vases*<sup>8</sup>, named after their main discovery site Hâdra in Alexandria. The Greek vases functioned as ash urns (for an example in the Mallawi Museum, see Fig. 4). From inscriptions on these vases it is known that some of the cremated individuals were envoys or leaders of the mercenary troops who received an official burial. Vases of this kind were excavated at Tuna el-Gebel also, though mummification continued and was used by the indigenous Egyptian population and also by Greeks and Romans who settled in Egypt. The practice, however, underwent cultural changes over time. In Pharaonic Egypt, the deceased were identified with the deity



**Fig. 4** Hydria (water jar) used as urn ("Hâdra vase"). Painted pottery. Height: ca. 45 cm. From Tuna el-Gebel. Hellenistic Period, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.



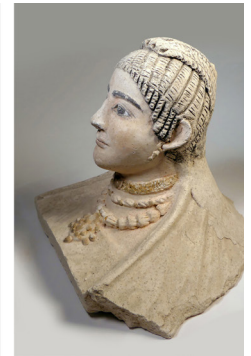
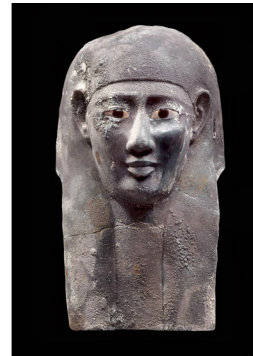
Traditional mummy head covers from ancient Egypt (from left to right):

**Fig. 5** Mummy head cover. Plaster over linnen, Old Kingdom, 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 2300 BCE). Hildesheim, PM 2386.

**Fig. 6** Extended mask. Plastered and painted linen, Middle Kingdom, 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 2000 BCE). Hildesheim, PM 6226.

**Fig. 7** Extended mask. Silver with remains of gilding. Late Period, 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (6<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Hildesheim, PM 2240.

**Fig. 8** Painted stucco head formerly modelled on top of a mummy's head. Roman Imperial Period, 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Hildesheim, PM 574.



Osiris, occasionally also with Isis or Hathor.<sup>9</sup> This tradition was continued after Egypt had come under Greek rule.

As far back as in the Old Kingdom, when the pyramids of Saqqara and Giza were erected, the Egyptians developed the custom of providing the dead with a new, idealizing face. **Fig. 5** depicts a plaster "mask" dating to the Old Kingdom (Hildesheim, PM 2386).<sup>10</sup> It was found at Giza; it covered not only the face of the mummy but the crown of the head as well.

During the Middle Kingdom extended cartonnage masks became popular which covered not only the head but also the breast and the upper back. An example for this type is the Hildesheim mask, PM 6226, which dates to the 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (ca. 2000 BCE; **Fig. 6**)<sup>11</sup>.

During the New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period gold masks were used to cover the faces and heads of mummified kings and their relations. During the Late Period gilt silver masks could be part of the funerary equipment of the nobility. An example is the extended silver mask, Hildesheim, PM 2240 (**Fig. 7**)<sup>12</sup>.

In Middle Egypt and especially at Tuna el-Gebel a new tradition emerged during the Roman Imperial Period. Instead of hollow masks, massive stucco heads could be applied to the human mummies. Such stucco heads were modelled on top of the mummy head proper. The raised heads almost created the impression that the deceased was about to "rise" from the place of burial. An example for this type is a female stucco head in

the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (PM 574) which according to that lady's specific coiffure dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (Fig. 8).<sup>13</sup> It may be that this stucco sculpture whose find place was not recored, originates from Tuna el-Gebel since similar painted stucco heads were discovered by the Egyptian archaeologist, Prof. Sami Gabra at the human necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>14</sup> Several of the better preserved mummies which are decorated in this way and also isolated stucco heads which Gabra discovered, are now on display in the Mallawi Museum (see Fig. 9).<sup>15</sup> The addition of masks and stucco heads were thought to ensure a safe life in the hereafter.<sup>16</sup>

Some scholars believe that such objects could be regarded as objects of worship.<sup>17</sup> However, the archaeologist Dr. Barbara Borg, who published extended studies of the mummy portraits, stated that the Egyptian funerary portraits of the Roman Imperial Period were less of a cult object, nor were they intended to guarantee passage to the realm of the dead. Instead they served to give the deceased an identity and may have temporarily functioned as memorial objects.<sup>18</sup> The realism of the paintings made the depicted individuals identifiable and thus their portraits could serve an ancestral cult in the Roman Imperial Period. For the contemporary beholders the portraits with their depiction of elaborate hairstyles, pre-



cious jewellery and clothing conveyed the significance of the family.<sup>19</sup>

The questions arise when and where mummy portraits were visible to mourners? Finds from the Hawara necropolis located southeast of Medinet el-Fayoum in the Fayoum oasis suggest that mummies bearing portraits such as the panels Hildesheim, PM 3066 and PM 3067, were partly buried in a surprising manner; here mummies often were found buried in piles in sand pits. The Egyptologist Flinders Petrie discovered that the mummies must have been kept above ground for an extended period of time before being finally

**Fig. 9** Painted stucco masks and a painted stucco head formerly modeled on top of a mummy head. From Tuna el-Gebel. Roman Imperial Period, 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Mallawi Museum.



**Fig. 10** (left): Portrait of a noble woman above her mummy's head. Roman Imperial Period, around 100 CE. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, inv. no. SN 1.



**Fig. 11** (right): Icon of the crowned Virgin Mary and the infant Christ (Hodegetria type), 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. Mallawi Museum (formerly in the Coptic Museum, CG 3363).

buried: the surfaces of the portraits and of the mummies themselves were mostly polluted and seemed to have been exposed to rain. Bodies were contaminated by fly dirt, some had graffiti on them, and they showed damages, such as paint splinters or bumps.<sup>20</sup> Petrie thus postulated that after the mummification process the relatives kept the deceased in their homes.<sup>21</sup>

Barbara Borg added that ancient sources report a custom of keeping the deceased in the house. Mummifying revered persons and placing them on a funerary bier to honor them has later also been practiced in Coptic culture. A legend says that St. Anthony (Antonius eremita) e.g. went into exile to wait for his death so that his body would not be subjected to this practice after his death.<sup>22</sup> Whether the mummies from Hawara were kept in homes is debated among archaeologists to this very day. However, mummies with attached portraits must have been kept in some way above ground for a significant time, allowing the living to visit the dead and to see their portraits.

The ancient Egyptian-Roman tradition of painting heads and busts of beloved men and women on wooden panels paved the way for another lasting tradition and for a different group of works of art from a later historic phase, namely, the icons. Still today these painted panels play an important role in the religious life of orthodox Christianity including the Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church. An icon depicting the crowned Virgin Mary and the infant Christ which has been attributed to an anonymous Egyptian painter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (CE) called "Master of the Clear Line" can be cited here; this icon belongs to the Coptic Museum in Cairo (CG 3363)<sup>23</sup>. It is currently on display in the Mallawi Museum (see Fig. 11).

The timeless calm, dignity incorporated by this relatively recent image of worship can similarly be recognized in the pagan painted funerary portrait (mummy portrait) of a richly adorned lady, which is preserved – together with the woman's wrapped human remains – in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (inv. no. SN 1; see Fig. 10).<sup>24</sup> The wide open eyes and the frontal gaze, as if the painted figure would stare at its beholder, are but two characteristics which funeral portraits from Roman Imperial Egypt and icons have in common. Both groups of paintings often share also the encaustic technology (applying mineral pigment on the tablets mixed with hot wax), which is well-attested from funerary portraits of the Roman Imperial Egypt and on ancient icons. The same technique is still used by modern icon painters.

Gesine Philipp



**Fig. 12** Prof. Hussein M. A. Ibrahim and Dr. Sven Kielau explaining the artistic relations between ancient Egyptian funerary portraits from the Roman Imperial Period and traditional icon painting. Winter school at Minia and Mallawi, December 2021.

## FURTHER READING

Thompson, David L. 1982; Bierbrier 1997; Exh. cat. Frankfurt 1999; Swoboda and Cartwright 2013; Balachandran 2016.



## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 13** (above): Students instructed by Prof. Julia Schultz

**Fig. 14** (right): Funerary portrait panel of an unknown man. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3067. The panel painting shows a broken part (upper arrow) and a missing part (lower arrow).

### Current condition

The condition of the panel portraits is rather good. Although there are losses of paint, especially around the corners and edges, the center of the paintings and the faces are very recognizable and nearly flawless. In the male portrait there is also a vast missing part at the proper left side in the lower half. At the same side the upper half was formerly broken off and is still turning backwards. (Fig. 14). In addition, there are some cracks all over the surface of the painting, but these do not affect the stability.



### Condition changes and former interventions

Today the back sides of both panel portraits are covered with a constructional board and therefore could not be examined. A previous treatment could be identified on the male portrait (PM 3067). The upper corner of the proper left side was reattached. Another result of the examination under UV radiation is that this previous treatment also included an intense cleaning of the broken off part: the colors, especially the background, fluoresce much brighter than the rest of the portrait (Fig. 15).



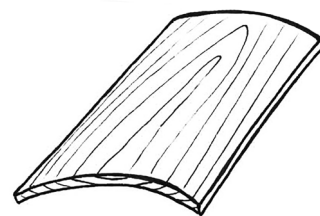
#### Original condition

The materials used in both of the portraits are wood and paint. The panels are probably made out of one thin piece of wood (Fig. 16) rather than a surface produced from several boards. Related to the wood species that are known to have

been used in ancient Egypt, it shall be mentioned that there were two geographic origins of timber: native wood and imported wood.<sup>25</sup> Examples for worked native wood species in Roman Egypt are sycamore fig (*Ficus sycomorus* L.) and tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.). The most frequently used woods from Europe are oak, linden/lime and cedar.<sup>26</sup> The female funerary portrait is probably made of softwood. Opposite to that the male portrait seems to be made of hardwood, as there are typical wood structures (like pores) visible at the sides of the panel. Hints on the production of the wooden support can be found via some visible tool marks such as saw grooves at the male portrait. The female portrait does not show any tool marks within the wooden support.

The stratigraphy of the polychromic layers is very complex and could not be investigated within the available time, but some hints on the foundation and the pinkish paint will be mentioned. The used foundation was often very light, probably white or beige, so that the following colors would appear clearer and brighter.<sup>27</sup> Within the possible pigments an example for a very frequently used one for red or pink tones is madder. Madder is made out of the roots of a plant called *Rubia tinctorum* and was available and also, rather cheap.<sup>28</sup> The examination of the panel portraits under UV radiation confirmed the use of this material: Madder fluoresces in a strong orange or orange-

**Fig. 15** (left): Funerary portrait panel of an unknown man. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3067. The UV radiation reveals an intense cleaning of the broken off and reattached part. For the convenience of the readers the picture was slightly lightened with Adobe Photoshop.



**Fig. 16** (above): Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3066 and 3067. The schematic drawing shows a possible lay-out of both wooden panels.



**Fig. 17** Funerary portrait panels of an unknown woman and an unknown man. Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum, PM 3066 and PM 3067. The UV investigations revealed areas of orange-pinkish fluorescence which is most probably due to the use of madder. For the convenience of the readers the picture was slightly lightened with Adobe Photoshop.

pinkish color under the impact of UV radiation.<sup>29</sup> Both of the portraits show the common use of madder for painting the fabrics and facial features. The lips and the tunic of the woman fluoresce very bright orange-pinkish and a slight use of madder on the cheeks and the chin can also be seen (Fig. 17, left). The facial features of the man are also slightly colored with madder. But rather prominent is the use around his eyes, which fluo-

resce very brightly (Fig. 17, right; compare also Fig. 15). Regarding the binding media, the female portrait is possibly painted with egg tempera, a commonly used technique because of its lower costs.<sup>30</sup> But the male portrait is most likely made in the encaustic technique, which means that the pigments were mixed with wax, probably beeswax.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, traces of the known use of the portraits could be found: The female portrait shows some fabric imprints at the proper left side at the upper edge, which most probably occurred within the wrapping of the mummy with bandages. Remains of textile can even be found in the male portrait along the edges.

#### Recommended conservation interventions

The paint layers and the construction in general are stable and not brittle. Moreover, the colors are bright and clear and no cleaning is necessary. The missing part of the male portrait does not interfere with the recognizability of the painting because the main part, the face, is not affected. In summary there is no need of conservation or restoration measures.

Pia Neitemeier

## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 Venit 1997.
- 2 Walker and Bierbier 1997, pp. 87-88.
- 3 Exh. cat. Frankfurt 1999, Fig. 25.
- 4 Inkarnat und Signifikanz 2017, cat. no. 3 and cat. no. 4.
- 5 Thompson, D. L. 1982, pp. 14-15.
- 6 Parlasca 1966, p. 74; Exh. cat. Frankfurt 1999, p. 28.
- 7 Parlasca 1999, pp. 170-171, cat. no. 71 (with illustration on p. 170).
- 8 Docter 1998, pp. 54-55; cf. Lembke, Abdel Malik and Derbala 2020/2021.
- 9 Doxiadis 2000, p. 39.
- 10 Martin-Pardey 1977, pp. 133-137;  
online: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10981>
- 11 Schulz, in: Eggebrecht 1996, pp. 44-45, Fig. 35;  
online: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=11074>
- 12 Conrad 1993;  
online: <https://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=10961>
- 13 Kayser 1973, p. 118.
- 14 Gabra et al. 1941 and Gabra 1971.
- 15 Messiha and Elhitta 1979, pp. 11, pl. VII-IX; Abou-Ghazi 1984.
- 16 Borg 1998, p. 64.
- 17 Doxiadis 1995, p. 39.
- 18 Borg 1998, p. 75.
- 19 Borg 1998, p. 75.
- 20 Borg 1998, p. 76.
- 21 Borg 1998, p. 76.
- 22 Borg 1998, p. 79.
- 23 Van Moorsel 1994, p. 57, no. 63.
- 24 Schulz, in: Eggebrecht 1996, p. 106, Fig. 101.
- 25 Gale et al. 2000, pp. 334.
- 26 Cartwright 2020, p. 18.
- 27 Thompson, D. L. 1982, p. 6.
- 28 Newman and Gates 2020, p. 25.
- 29 Newman and Gates 2020, p. 29.
- 30 Thompson, D. L. 1982, p. 7.
- 31 Thompson, D. L. 1982, p. 6; Lucas and Harris 1989, p. 337.



**Fig. 18** Investigating the two Hildesheim funerary portrait panels under side light.





**IX.**

**A WOODEN  
GENUFLECTING  
FIGURE:**

**ANTIQUITY  
OR FORGERY?**

# ASYMMETRICAL KNEELING FIGURE OF A MAN

## A Serving Figure of the Old Kingdom?

### INVENTORY N°

No inventory number (though apparently labelled as "E 12" previously); formerly owned by Dr. Eva Eggebrecht, Hildesheim, and now kept at the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum

### MATERIAL

Wood with paint  
(black, white and brownish red)

### MEASUREMENTS

Height: 32.0 cm  
Width at the height of the arms: 13.0 cm  
Width of the base: 9.0 cm  
Depth: 14.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

Unknown;  
allegedly from the Saqqara necropolis

### DATE

Presumably 20<sup>th</sup> century CE

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auction cat. New York Dec. 1980, lot 130.







## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION



**Fig. 1** Asymmetrical genuflecting figure of a non-royal man. Temporarily at Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (E 12).

The wooden figure which is illustrated on pp. 220-221 and as Fig. 1, 3, 4-6 and 9 came to the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum without any written information.<sup>1</sup> On the underside of the figure's base someone had written "E 12" with a pencil. This may represent a previous registration number. To quote the object this designation (E 12) was occasionally used. The object was handed over to our team for investigation by Dr. Christian Bayer. To find out whether this figure is an antiquity or not, what it represents and to which period it may eventually belong were open questions.

### Description

The figure (E 12) depicts a kneeling man dressed in a plain short kilt belted at waist level. His upper arms are raised and symmetrically held forward. Unfortunately both lower arms are apparently broken off and missing.

The figure rests on a small squarish wooden base which is narrower than the figure's shoulders. The man's right knee touches the base while the left knee is raised (genuflecting pose). The left knee may once have supported the left forearm. The arms now terminate in oval planes where the remains of pegs are visible in the center. Hence the impression is created that the missing lower arms would originally have been carved separately and attached to the upper portion using pegs. Moreover, the position of the upper arms

suggests that the subject could have once presented something at chest level in front of the body. The observation gives rise to the idea that the figure could depict an anonymous servant or offering bearer.

The skin of the figure is characterized by a reddish-brown painting, otherwise only the brows, eyes and hairstyle are painted in black. The hairline, the facial features including the eyes, nose and lips as well as the toes are all well modelled. The man's navel is indicated by a small round depression. The overall impression is that the Hildesheim genuflecting figure's body modelling appears nearly realistic; this includes the indication of the spinal groove at the back.

The figure shows numerous losses of the polychromic layers in countless small portions, mostly chipping off the paint layers; cracks in the layers are also noticeable. On the back of the figure, as well as on the head, the layer of polychromy is very thin, revealing the wood underneath. On the figure's chest a shapeless, light-colored structure catches the eye which might represent a kind of "sticker" – possibly a modern piece of paper or parchment attached to the figure by use of some adhesive material (see illustration on p. 220).

In 1980 the figure which is currently in Hildesheim (E12) made its first known appearance in a print medium, namely in an auction catalogue. In this catalogue it was described as "*Fine Egyptian*

*painted wood servant figure*". It was dated to the "Old Kingdom, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 2494-2181 B.C.". Furthermore it was stated that "This figure and that in the preceding lot were reputedly discovered at about the turn of the century in the same tomb at Saqqara as the kneeling figure sold in our sale of May 20, 1980, lot 185".<sup>2</sup>

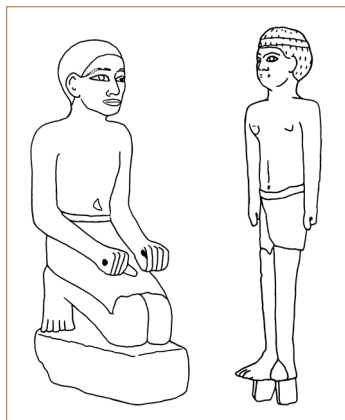
To archaeologists specializing in Egyptian art this information is unexpected, although the sculpture's simple iconography – without any elaborate ornamentation – could possibly be regarded as an argument for the interpretation of the sculpture (E 12) as an "Old Kingdom servant figure". What do we know about this particular type of sculpture? A brief overview may summarize some facts.

Servant figures (or *serving* figure as they are alternatively called<sup>3</sup> indicating that the subject may not necessarily be a "servant" but could represent a serving member of the deceased owner's family) were common during the Old Kingdom (starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) through the First Intermediate Period (9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) and the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Middle Kingdom). Servant / serving figures commonly depict domestic activities and craftsmanship and were placed in the tombs of the deceased. There they were believed to magically provide the tomb owners with food and drink in the afterlife and



also with other kinds of worldly goods as well as entertainment. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty such figures were made of limestone and mostly executed as single figures placed on a base. They were used in only small numbers per tomb and their occurrence seems to be limited to the cemeteries of the officials at Giza and Abusir. Various examples for such stone figures are kept in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum. Two of them (PM 18 and PM 19) are illustrated on pp. 102 and p. 103 where this class of objects is further discussed: One figure (PM 18) represents a man

**Fig. 2** The author (first to the left) investigating the surface of the wooden figure (E 12) together with other students and conservators of the Mallawi Museum. They are instructed by Prof. Hussein M. A. Ibrahim (far right) and Prof. Mahmoud Massoud (third from left). Autumn school in Hildesheim, 2021.



**Fig. 3** Sketch depicting the two wooden figures which are said to have been discovered in the same Saqqara tomb as the genuflecting figure (E 12). Wood with remains of paint.  
Height of the kneeling figure: 36.5 cm.  
Height of standing figure: 37.0 cm.

**Fig. 4** (right): Head of the wooden figure (E 12) facing right.

preparing beer. The other figure (PM 19) depicts a woman grinding grain.

During the late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty painted *wooden* figures became increasingly popular and soon replaced the stone servant/serving statues in the tombs. The wooden figures were typically of smaller size than the limestone specimen and often they were of rather crude workmanship. Hence the smaller, wooden figures were easier and quicker to produce and probably much cheaper.

Wooden servant/serving figures are traditionally called “(tomb) models” although this term has been revised recently and the innovative designation “action figure” – coined by Regine Schulz<sup>4</sup> – may soon replace the more generalizing designation “model” for this particular kind of funerary sculpture.

Other than the majority of the wooden tomb models or action figures (excepting the striding figures of female offering bearers) the Hildesheim figure (E 12) is proportionally rather tall – and surprisingly well modelled.

The sculpture exhibits an oval, full-cheeked face and a gaze slightly turned upwards (Fig. 4-5). The eyes are almond-shaped and wide open and exhibit long horizontal cosmetic lines extending into the area of the temples from both the brows and the outer corners of the eyes. The nose appears to be hooked and quite large while the relatively



full lips are rather narrow; they are painted in the same brownish color as the rest of the skin.

The man's rounded hairstyle – to be understood as either natural hair or, perhaps, a plain wig – appears to be short-cropped; the ears are largely concealed with the exception of the earlobes which protrude vertically from the lower margin of the coiffure.<sup>5</sup>

Rebecca Hemmy



Several Egyptologists specializing in Egyptian art have looked at the Hildesheim figure (E 12) offering different opinions regarding the object's chronological placement and possible authenticity. Some of the scholars were inclined to regard this figure as an ancient work of art. Others, however, considered the object to represent a modern imitation.

Coming to a conclusion was attempted with the combined efforts of traditional Egyptological / art historical analysis and modern investigation techniques currently used by conservators.

Here are some of the relevant points stressed by the sceptical Egyptologists:

1. It has not been possible to identify a published excavation report confirming that the Hildesheim figure (E 12) was discovered at Saqqara "at the turn of the century", much less that it was excavated in the very tomb in which the two wooden figures illustrated as Fig. 3<sup>6</sup> were allegedly discovered.
2. The only printed reference to the figure – identified by the Egyptologist Rainer Pauer, M.A. – can be found in an auction catalogue of 1980. The information provided in this catalogue may not be reliable as the two wooden figures which were reputedly found in the same tomb (Fig. 3) iconographically and stylistically seem to date from other periods than the Hildesheim figure (E 12). Hence the latter object's provenance should be regarded as uncertain.
3. Old and Middle Kingdom servant / serving figures usually depict domestic activities (the production of food and other goods for the after-life) and boating. "Priestly" figures convincingly similar to the Hildesheim figure (E 12) could not be found in published excavation reports.
4. Squatting figures with one knee up (representing the subject seated on the ground) made of stone or wood are well attested from the Old Kingdom onwards. However, no sculptures from the Old or Middle Kingdom can be cited which depict the Hildesheim figure's genuflecting pose which includes a *raised left heel*; see Fig. 6).

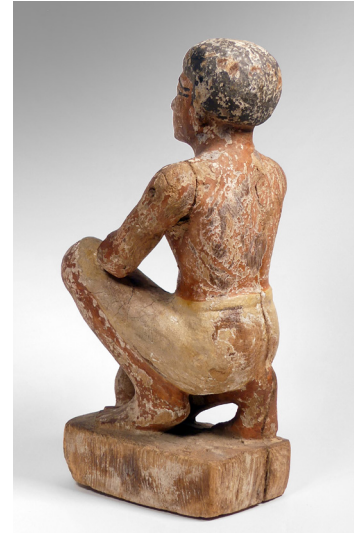


Fig. 5 (left): Head of the wooden figure (E 12). Frontal view.

Fig. 6 (top): The left heel of the wooden figure (E 12) is markedly raised. Both heels and the buttocks do not touch the base which seems to be unparalleled in ancient Egyptian art.





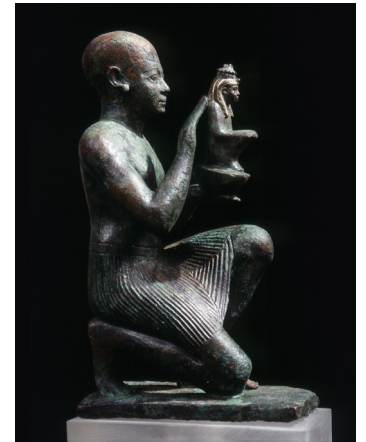
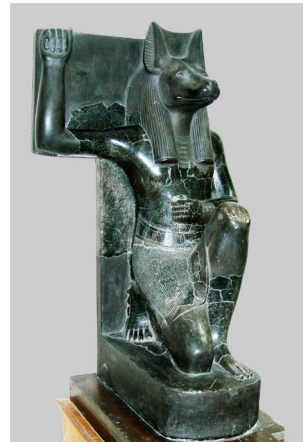
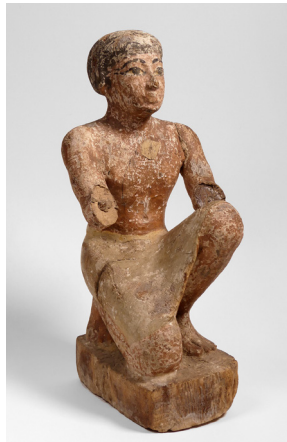
**Fig. 7 and Fig. 8** (opposite page; a detail of Fig. 7): False door in the tomb of Nakht depicting ten offering bearers. Wall painting on plaster over Nile mud. Qurnah (Western Thebes), TT 52. New Kingdom, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Thutmose IV – Amenhotep III. 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

5. Stylistically the figure's appearance is not indicative for the Old or Middle Kingdom. The shaping of the body and the face rather points to the Thutmoside Period (18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) or, perhaps, to the Third Intermediate (Libyan) Period (21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty) when features similar to those of 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty figures resurfaced.<sup>7</sup>
6. The earliest three-dimensional kneeling figures with one knee up that can be cited are from the New Kingdom. These are stone statues representing the divine falcon-headed *ba*-souls of

the ancient city Pe (Buto) and the jackal-headed *ba*-souls of ancient Nekhen (Hierakonpolis; **Fig. 10<sup>8</sup>**); these temple statues date from the reign of Amenhotep III (18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty). Such statues – and also a wooden figure of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE exhibiting the head of a pharaoh in the *nemes* headcloth (New York, MMA, inv. no. 2003.154<sup>9</sup>) – exhibit the chest-beating *henu* gesture of jubilation which clearly differs from the Hildesheim figure's (E 12) offering pose.

7. Regarding ancient Egyptian, non-divine and non-royal sculpture only one, small, figure could be identified which represents the subject in half-kneeling pose (Bologna, Museo Civico, EG 1851; **Fig. 11**)<sup>10</sup>. This bronze statuette depicts a non-royal man with shaven head (or perhaps wearing a cap) and offering a figure of the goddess Maat. Stylistically this statuette dates to either the Third Intermediate or, alternatively, to the Late Period (9<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

On the basis of these observations the present team and writer propose to identify Hildesheim's wooden figure (E 12) as a modern work in the pharaonic style representing a non-royal offering bearer of the Thutmoside Period. It must be admitted that no New Kingdom figures of this type (or photos of such a figure<sup>11</sup>) can presently be cited



which could possibly have served as a model for a modern forger. Perhaps such a figure exists but if so, it has escaped the attention of our team including the present writer. We are thus inclined to ask: Could there have been a source of inspiration for a forger other than a three-dimensional figure? Genuflecting figures of the New Kingdom proffering offerings are well-known from tomb paintings, e.g., in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tomb of Nakht at Qurnah (Western Thebes; TT 52; Fig. 7-8)<sup>12</sup>. We speculate that a talented modern artisan could have created a three-dimensional version of a genuflecting offering bearer based on one of the two-dimensional depictions of genuflec-

ting offering bearers which can be encountered in private tombs of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty including the rock tomb of the official called Nakht. To render in three dimensions the offerings which these painted figures illustrate (Fig. 7-8) would have been a difficult task for a modern forger. For this reason it is further speculated that the lower arms of the wooden figure and the offering goods were possibly never sculpted. The figure was sold without the lower arms and perhaps only pretending that this part of the sculpture is accidentally not preserved.

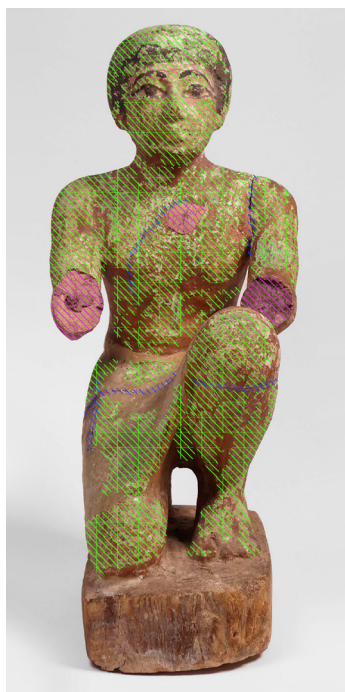
Helmut Brandl

**Fig. 9** (second from left): Genuflecting figure temporarily kept in the Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (E 12).

**Fig. 10** (second from right): Statue of a *ba*-soul of Nekhen. 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III. Granite. Height: 133 cm. Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 41210.

**Fig. 11** (right): Anonymous official (a priest?) offering a figure of Maat. Bronze and gold. Height: 11.8 cm. Third Intermediate or Late Period. Bologna, Museo Civico, EG 1851.

## CONSERVATION



**Fig. 12** Asymmetrical genuflecting figure of a non-royal man. Temporarily at Hildesheim, Roemer and Pelizaeus Museum (E 12). The mapped damages within the figure (not mapped in the base) include missing wooden elements (pink), cracks and gaps (blue) and missing paint (light green).

### Preparation of the object

The figure was scanned by computer tomography (CT) in the St. Bernward Hospital, Hildesheim, together with another wooden figure (*cat. III*) under the supervision of the independent consultant Antje Zygaliski. This technique was meant to serve the question upon authenticity.

### Current condition

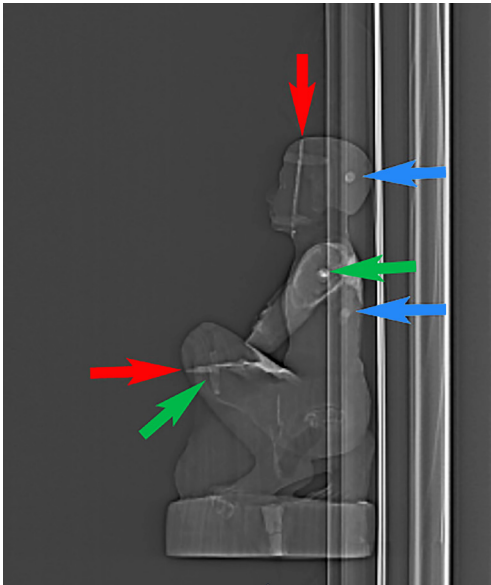
Both forearms of the figure are missing (*Fig. 12*); the upper arms are still preserved. There is a gap between the proper left upper arm and the shoulder and another one crossing the extended knee. Further, two cracks run through the head and two vertically from the base to the center of the body: one located at the proper right flank and one at the back. The polychromy is partially preserved and has a homogeneous damage pattern of wood visibility due to paint spalling and subsequent loss.

### Condition changes and former interventions

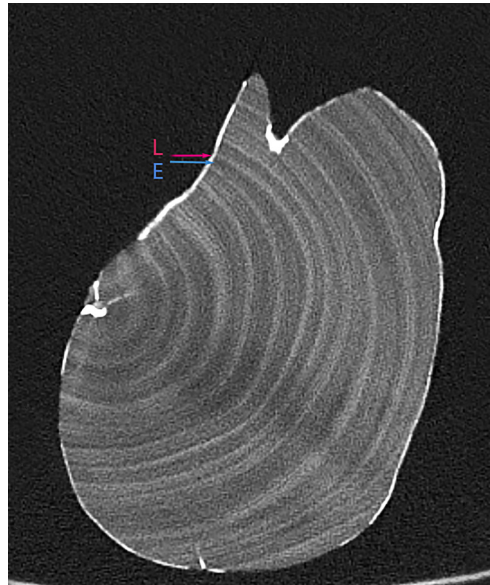
Under UV radiation a dominant white fluorescence appears on the edge of the forearms indicating an adhesive which might point to a former repair. But no subsequent retouching could be found. In addition, there is a yellowed sticker stuck to the center of the figure's chest, presumably from a former inventory or auction. This sticker fluoresces also in a whitish color.

### Original condition

Due to the CT-scan it could be determined that the lower part of the figure and the base are made from one piece of wood (*Fig. 13*), which is very unusual for ancient Egyptian sculptures; the base is usually made separately. The CT-scan also confirmed that the gap between the left upper arm and the shoulder is due to the fact that the arm was made separately and attached to the body. All together the CT-scan showed that the figure consists of five parts which are joined by pegs (*Fig. 13*). Some characteristics of the used wood could also be detected. *Fig. 14* shows a CT-scan slide of the cross-section of the sculpture and its growth rings with early- and latewood. The growth rings are relatively thick, which indicates a quick growth of the tree.<sup>13</sup> Further, it can be seen that the figure is made of low-grade timber related to the crooked growth and knotholes.<sup>14</sup> In ancient Egypt the natural timber sources were very rare which (upon other reasons) led to the import of timber and consequently also to the recycling of wooden elements from already produced objects.<sup>15</sup> Three more pegs have been found which are not in function and therefore speak for recycled wood<sup>16</sup> (*Fig. 13*). Interestingly, the areas of missing paint where the wooden support is visible appear black under UV. Considering that, the wood was probably isolated first before the paint was applied. This is rather unusual and needs further investigation.



**Fig. 13** (left): Asymmetrical genuflecting figure of a non-royal man (E 12). The given image is a montage of several CT-scan slides to visualize several features: the joints are marked by red arrows and the pegs by green. In addition, pegs without function are marked by blue arrows.



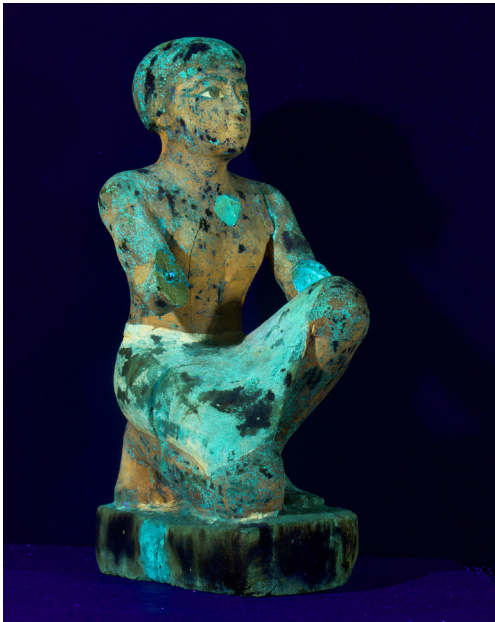
**Fig. 14** (right): Asymmetrical genuflecting figure of a non-royal man (E 12). This CT-slide shows a cross-section of the object and marks the latewood (L) and earlywood (E) areas within one growth ring.

The structure of the different paint layers was examined on a macroscopic level (Table 1). The figure was first primed in white. In the missing areas of the color-layers, the primer fluoresces brightly (Fig. 15). All areas of the flesh tone were then primed with a second coat of pink before being painted in red. Under the influence of UV radiation, it can be seen that the paint in the area of the flesh tone fluoresces in a red-orange glow. The eyes are painted with yellow and black.

The hair received a coat of grey as a second primer and was then colored with a black paint. The kilt is the only area where no second layer of primer could be detected. The kilt also shows areas of a slightly orange fluorescence which could be caused by a varnish. In visible light, these areas are slightly transparent yellow supporting the assumption of a varnish. Whether this is the original varnish or a later addition cannot be answered at this point and in general not without scientific analysis.



**Fig. 15** Genuflecting figure of a non-royal man. Temporarily at Hildesheim, RPM (E 12). The UV examination revealed e.g., the bright fluorescence of the primer and the red-orange fluorescence of the flesh tone area. For the convenience of the readers the picture was slightly lightend with Adobe Photoshop.



**Recommended conservation interventions**

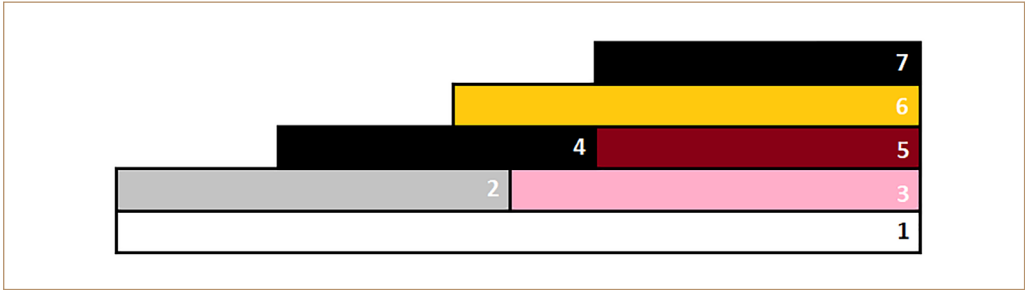
In general, no immediate conservation treatment is needed. For storage, packing appropriate to the material has to be established and cleaning of the surface is recommended. A completion of the arms should not be done without historical evidence of what they should have looked like.

**Interpretation on authenticity**

The lack of any retouching or repairs (with the exceptions of the reattachment of the arms) make this object either highly unique or not very old. More time and investigations are needed to differentiate this. Besides pigment and varnish analyses, the suggestion upon the age could be supported by dendrochronology. Unfortunately, dendrochronology databases for ancient Egyptian timber are not well established yet.

Kassandra Wirth

**Table 1** Asymmetrical genuflecting figure of a non-royal man. Temporarily at Hildesheim, RPM (E 12). Possible stratigraphy of the paint layers. (The thickness of the rows does not represent the thickness of the paint layers. Legend: 1 = prime coat; 2 = second primer under the kilt and hair; 3 = second primer under the skin; 4 = hair; 5 = skin; 6 = eyes white and kilt; 7 = eyes)



## ANNOTATIONS

- 1 The statue was bequeathed to the RPM from the private estate of the late Dr. Eva Eggebrecht in October 2021. No information concerning the object's history and previous owners accompanied this legacy.
- 2 Auction cat. Dec. 1980, lot 130. We are grateful to Rainer Pauer, M.A. who researched ancient Egyptian statues in asymmetrical *squatting* pose (Pauer 2021) and who pointed out the figure (E 12) to the present writers. Further thanks are due to Dr. Christian E. Loeben, Dr. Olivier Perdu, and Ms. Hannah Solomon, who facilitated our research.
- 3 Hill, in: Exh. cat. New York 1999, pp. 386-387; Roth 2002.
- 4 R. Schulz, "Ancient Egyptian Models: Images – Persons – Actions", keynote speech held on the occasion of the opening of the international conference *Modelling Ancient Egypt: Modelle als kulturelle Instrumente*, Luxor 9-16 November 2019 (the proceedings will be published shortly).
- 5 This detail, the visibility of the earlobes under the lower margin of the coiffure is attested on wooden private statues from the Old Kingdom, see Harvey 2001, Fig. 1b (W.7).
- 6 Auction cat. May 20, 1980, lot 185, and Auction cat. Dec. 13, 1980, lot 129. To provide an idea of the general appearance of the two wooden figures line drawings must here replace the photographic representations.
- 7 Brandl 2009.
- 8 Exh. cat. Cairo 2007, p. 42, no. A 12.
- 9 Josephson 1997, pp. 33-39, pl. 11b-d, 12.
- 10 For the statuette Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, MCA-EGI-EG 1851, online: <http://www.museibologna.it/archeologicoen/sfoglia/66289/offset/1856/id/2837>
- 11 For the importance of photos of ancient objects for the work modern forgers, see Voss, S. 2014.
- 12 Shedid and Seidel 1996.
- 13 Unger, Schniewind and Unger 2001, p. 10.
- 14 Hasenstab 2006, p. A34-A39.
- 15 Lucas and Harris 1962, p. 429.
- 16 Gale et al. 2000, p. 334.

## FURTHER READING

For wooden statuary of the Old Kingdom see: Harvey 1994; Harvey 1999; Harvey 2001.

For wooden tomb models ("action figures") of the late Old Kingdom, the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom, cf. Breasted 1948; Winlock 1955; Wolf 1957; Schmitz 1996, pp. 27-29; Eschenbrenner-Diemer 2013 and 2017.

For discussions of modern imitations of ancient Egyptian works of art, cf., e.g., Borchardt 1930; Riederer 1994; Fiechter 2005 and 2009; Teeter 2008; Krauss 2009 and 2013; Fitzenreiter 2014a and 2014b; Gaber, Grimal and Perdu 2016; Exh. cat. Herne and Hildesheim 2018; Brandl 2021a and 2021b.