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## A TENTATIVE IDENTIFICATION OF THREE OLD KINGDOM SCULPTURES

By JOHN D. COONEY

ABOUT seven years ago there appeared on the European market three life-size Egyptian sculptures of the Old Kingdom, each minus its head and feet and bearing no inscription. The dealer who first acquired the sculptures stated that they were from Gīzah; no other information was available. One statue was of a woman and was purchased by the Worcester Art Museum. The other two, of men, were soon acquired by the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Kansas City, and by the Brooklyn Museum. Each has been published,<sup>1</sup> but as these sculptures appear to me to be related to each other, the re-publication in pl. I seems warranted, particularly as there is a chance that they can now be identified.<sup>2</sup>

In my publication of the Brooklyn sculpture I suggested that it formed the right end of a triad, as the right side is completely finished, the left clearly having been attached to another sculpture. The Worcester statue was equally clearly to be placed at the left end of a group, but as there was no trace of the woman's right hand on the Brooklyn sculpture, a detail which the position of her right arm demands, the existence of a central figure seemed certain and was assumed. Shortly afterwards, when the Kansas sculpture appeared, its similarity of workmanship immediately called for comparison with the Brooklyn piece. While the type is conventional for the period, the details and workmanship seem to me so similar in each piece that I believe they must come from the same group. A close examination of the right side of the Kansas piece shows, directly above the kilt, the outline of a woman's hand against the man's body, which I believe to be the right hand of the Worcester piece. The Kansas statue has clearly been cut free on each side from companion pieces, which I identify as the Worcester and Brooklyn sculptures. The hand of a child on the right leg of the Kansas statue makes it certain that we have here fragments of a family group of three adults and at least one, probably two, children, a well-known composition typified by the group of Penmerew<sup>3</sup> in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The missing fragments of the two children are probably to be identified in two limestone sculptures of a boy and girl which I saw in the possession of a Paris dealer in 1938. In material, scale, and detail they fit perfectly on each side of the Kansas statue. The Brooklyn Museum has photographs of these sculp-

<sup>1</sup> P. B. Cott, *An Egyptian Sculpture of the Fourth Dynasty*, in *Worcester Art Museum Annual*, I (1935-6), 17 f., with pl. 16. Limestone, h. 1.37 m. *William Rockhill Nelson Collection*, Kansas City, Mo., [1940], 13, fig. 3. Limestone, h. 1.75 m. (69 in.). John D. Cooney, *An Old Kingdom Torso*, in *Brooklyn Museum Quarterly*, xxiv (1937), 189 ff. Limestone, h. 1.55 m.

<sup>2</sup> In reducing Cooney's photographs for reproduction, the attempt has been made to reduce the three figures to their relative proportions, at least approximately.—ED.

<sup>3</sup> *The Harvard University Museum of Fine Arts Egyptian Expedition*, in *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, xi (April, 1913), 20.

tures, but as it is not possible to communicate with the owner at the present time, publication does not seem advisable.

The Worcester, Brooklyn, and Paris fragments, all of which I have examined, are identical in the texture and colour of the stone, a good limestone of rather unusual yellow-brown tone. I have not seen the Kansas sculpture, but examination of the photographs suggests that the stone is the same as in the other pieces, and the presence of the hands of the boy and woman on the body leaves no doubt in my mind of its position as the central figure in our group. Each of the pieces has the same type of incrustation, suggesting burial in identical conditions. These sculptures passed through the hands of several dealers before they were acquired by museums, but the dealer who first handled them in Europe states they were all of the same group, and I see no reason to doubt his statement. The head of each sculpture was broken off anciently, but the breaks at the feet may be of recent origin. Each of the three large figures has been sawn into three sections, presumably to facilitate shipment, and later assembled.

The Worcester statue is easily the finest of the group, being, in my opinion, one of the great masterpieces of private sculpture of the Old Kingdom and as such deserving to be better known to readers of the *Journal*. The body is completely clothed in a fine, tight-fitting linen garment, through which the sculptor has in masterly manner suggested the lithe sensuousness of the woman's body. The left leg of the figure is advanced in the usual masculine pose, a most unusual position for a woman.

This detail is so exceptional that in reading the publication of the excavations of the tomb of Raṯwēr at Gīzah my attention was caught by an illustration<sup>1</sup> of the limestone base of a five-figure family group in which the left-end figure of a woman also stood with her left leg advanced. No trace of the sculptures was found with the base. A careful comparison of the illustration of this base with the pieces here published made me suspect a possible connexion between them. Measurements of the base are not given, but it is referred to as 'life-size', and the scale of serdab 18, in which the base was found, would just permit the use of a group of life size. Family-group sculptures of a large scale are rare, and when the unusual position of the Worcester figure's left foot is indicated in the base of one of them, it is very tempting to claim an identification. Since the breaks on the base seem to coincide with those on the statues, I can see no obstacle to such an identification. Additional weight is given the identification by comparing the Brooklyn and Kansas pieces with the statue from the naos of the tomb of Raṯwēr,<sup>2</sup> which is strikingly similar to the Brooklyn piece. Comparison of all these sculptures suggests to me a strong possibility that they are from the same studio. Definitive proof must await conclusion of the War, when a cast of the base can be tried in place.

If my identification is correct, these sculptures would date from the early Fifth Dynasty, probably the reign of Neferirkarē. Previous attributions were practically the same, ranging from the end of the Fourth Dynasty to the first half of the Fifth, the logical terminals for large private sculptures. Copies and translations of the text on the base are given by Selim Hassan.<sup>3</sup> I differ from the reading in one detail only, the name

<sup>1</sup> Selim Hassan, *Excavations at Giza, 1929-1930* (Oxford, 1932), 27, 29, with pl. xxx, No. 1. Op. cit., pl. xix.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., p. 29 and p. 3.

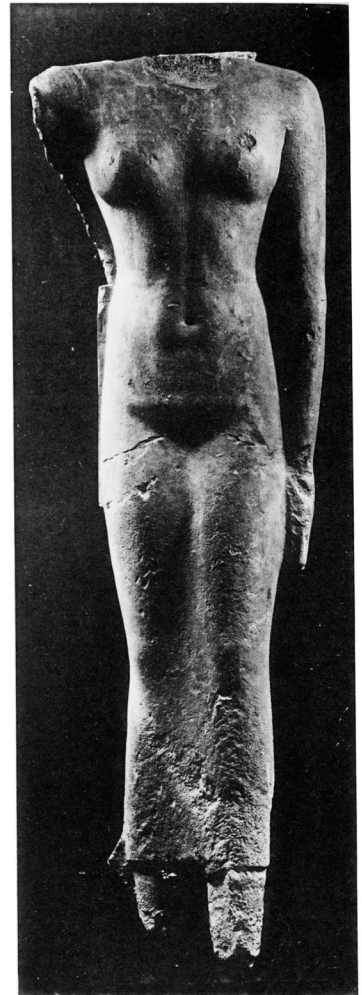
of the right-end figure, presumably to be identified with the Brooklyn statue. The name is  $\text{ḥ}t$ , which the author reads *It-s*, but questions. It is to be read *ity·s* or *ity·sn*.<sup>1</sup> Professor Ranke, with whom I discussed this name, suggested the latter reading to me as the more probable, remarking that it belonged to that group of Old Kingdom names of which *nb·sn* is a typical example.

Long before the recent excavations the tomb of Raḥwēr had been entered, for sculptures from there have been in the Cairo collection for many years.<sup>2</sup> It is very possible that illicit diggers entered the tomb sometime before the most recent excavation to remove the sculptures which later appeared on the European market.

In comparing the illustrations of these three sculptures it must be remembered that the photographs were made separately, with different cameras and lighting, and to different scales. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Charles Sawyer of the Worcester Art Museum and Mr. Paul Gardner of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art for their kindness in supplying me with the photographs here reproduced and giving me permission to publish these fine examples of Egyptian art.

<sup>1</sup> H. Ranke, *Personennamen*, p. 49, No. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Selim Hassan, *op. cit.*, p. [vii].



THREE STATUES FROM A FIFTH DYNASTY FAMILY GROUP