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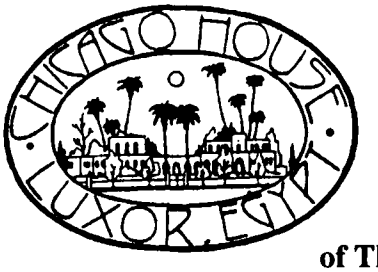

CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN

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THE YEAR OF THE GODDESS

By W. Raymond Johnson, Assistant Director

I've learned to expect the unexpected in our line of work in Egypt, but every now and then something so totally unexpected and wonderful happens I am taken completely by surprise. Such has been the case this year with the Luxor Temple Fragment Project, which lately has been obliged to expand to include three-dimensional royal sculpture in addition to wall relief. The surprises include beautiful and mysterious late 18th Dynasty queens, the great Mother-Goddess Mut, colossal sculpture re-united with long-missing heads, and some painstaking detective work. Here's the story.

For years my personal research has been focused on the stylistic development of sculpture and relief produced during the late Eighteenth Dynasty (1400-1325 BC). Although my work has concentrated on the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, I have also made a study of the artistic styles of Tutankhamun, Ay, and Horemheb, stimulated in great part by the Epigraphic Survey's work in the Luxor Temple Colonnade Hall, a structure that was worked on by all three kings. After their respective deaths, and for reasons that are still obscure, Tutankhamun and Ay were stricken from the kings' lists, and their royal sculpture was appropriated by their successor Horemheb, who erased their names and reinscribed their statuary and reliefs with his own cartouches. Further complicating matters, most of Horemheb's sculpture was in turn reinscribed for Ramesses II, including the statuary he appropriated from Tutankhamun and Ay, leaving us with little or no textual means of determining which sculpture belonged to which king. Luckily, a few pieces of Tutankhamun sculpture have survived with the original inscriptions naming him intact, overlooked by Horemheb's and Ramesses II's workmen. There are also a few statues that preserve identifiable traces of the name of Ay, indicating that the pieces are original to him. Now enter the art historian, who can use these named images as a starting point to associate, on stylistic grounds, other like pieces whose inscriptions are either changed or missing.

But the art historian must always be wary, especially studying a period such as this. The ancient Egyptian definition of 'portraiture' was quite different from ours today, and in fact could be quite a fluid thing, varying from dynasty to dynasty, reign to reign, and sometimes even from decade to decade within a single king's reign! Throughout most periods the term should be qualified as *idealized* portraiture. Since statuary and relief work functioned as an eternal abode for the *ka*, or spirit, of a person, supplementing the real physical body, it was important that individual facial features and sometimes physical characteristics be captured, but in an idealized fashion, without the blemishes or impairments that one did not necessarily wish to carry into the next world. Depending upon the period and fashion of the time, Egyptian portraiture could be more, or less, true to life.

The Colonnade Hall at Luxor Temple still houses three indurated limestone sculpture groups from the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty: a colossal seated (headless) king and two colossal dyads of the god Amun seated beside his wife Mut, one dyad considerably larger than the other. All three statues stand just inside the northern entrance of the Hall and are presently inscribed for Ramesses II, who erased the original names and replaced them with his own. The face of Mut on the large dyad is lost, but the break preserves two dowel holes from a time in antiquity when the face first fell off the statue and had to be restored. The entire head and torso of Mut on the small dyad is also missing. The statuary is generally assumed to belong to the time of Tutankhamun, whose youthful features seem to be reflected in the surviving faces of both Amun figures, but I have come to question this identification.

Tutankhamun ruled during a period when Egyptian portraiture was very true to life, a carryover

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from the mercurial artistic program of Akhenaten, whose reign finished with an artistic style that captured, in an extraordinarily truthful way, his aging family. The statuary of Tutankhamun continued this program, reflecting the king's youth at the beginning of his reign, while later pieces reflect his growing maturity and approaching manhood. In his sculptures he is consistently depicted with narrow shoulders, fleshy, close-set pectorals, and full, high hips, strikingly different from the Colonnade Hall statues with their idealized, broad-shouldered, almost too perfect bodies. Significantly, some of the named statues of Ay do exhibit this sort of idealized body, particularly several colossal statues of him excavated by the Oriental Institute in the ruins of Ay's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu. Ay was an old man when he assumed the throne of Egypt, and seems to have preferred an artistic convention that depicted him in a traditional Egyptian manner, idealized and youthful. With that in mind, plus the fact that the interior decoration of the Colonnade Hall was unfinished at the time of Tutankhamun's death and the statues were probably set up inside the hall after the completion of that decoration, it is very likely that the Colonnade Hall statuary dates to Ay's reign (or less likely, Horemheb's), and not Tutankhamun's. Questions of attribution such as this often can be answered by carefully comparing a whole range of related sculptural material, which is what I have found myself doing the last few years. It is perhaps significant that very few of these colossal dyads and group sculptures in indurated limestone survive, even in a fragmentary state; it appears that only a small number were actually commissioned, fitting with Ay's short four-year reign. Also interesting is the fact that the goddesses display the physical characteristics of two different women, one thin and long-faced with a somewhat dour expression, the other more voluptuous and smiling. Some believe that Ay ruled first with Ankhesenamun, the widow of Tutankhamun and daughter of Akhenaten. After her disappearance from the scene fairly early in his reign, Ay's wife Tiye took her place by his side; at this time in Egyptian history it is logical that the change of queens be reflected in the royal sculpture program.

One of the most important of these sculpture groups has been inaccessible until now. This past summer our colleague Dr. Hourig Sourouzian, with the permission of the Director of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Dr. Mohammed Saleh, graciously allowed me to consult her photographic archive of unpublished statue fragments from a similar sculpture group excavated at Karnak at the turn of the century, presently in the basement storage area of the museum. We owe Hourig and Mohammed Saleh a tremendous debt of gratitude, for the archive turned out to provide vital pieces of this increasingly interesting puzzle. The fragmentary dyad is practically identical in style and colossal scale to the larger of the two dyads in the Colonnade Hall, and from the photographs it is clear that the two groups are not only contemporary, they may have been made as a pair, separated later by Ramesses II. The preserved Amun faces are identical, and both goddesses are wearing the same beautiful form-fitting dress of wrap-around vulture wings.

The gigantic head of the Mut figure has been one of the centerpieces of the Cairo Museum Eighteenth Dynasty Hall since the museum was built;

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imagine my surprise then, when I observed another large Mut head among the photographs of the fragmentary dyad bodies. One first notices a square hole in the center of the face where the nose was repaired in antiquity with a plug that has fallen away, but the gentle, benign beauty of the goddess with her elegant, heavy-lidded eyes and smiling mouth, simply shines through. At first I supposed that this head must belong to the Karnak dyad, and the Mut head on display must be from a second unknown Karnak group. But when I looked closely at the details on the vulture's crown framing the goddesses' face, and the break lines, and then compared the broken face to photos of our large Colonnade Hall dyad with its broken face, I realized that the break lines, broken ears, and wing patterns of the crown matched, and the face seemed to be the right scale. I hardly dared hope; could this be the missing face of our colossal Mut? My heart literally skipped a beat when I finally noticed the crucial detail: a dowel hole from an ancient repair pierced the upper right side of the goddess's head. Photos of our Colonnade Hall dyad clearly showed an identical dowel hole at exactly the same spot, and a second one on the other side. It couldn't be coincidental; this had to be our goddess Mut's missing face!

After I shared my discovery with Peter, henotified Dr. Saleh at the Cairo Museum and requested permission for us to look at the piece with Hourig in September on our way to Luxor. This we did, and I was pleased to have my suspicions reinforced when we examined the colossal face in the flesh; we even found the second dowel hole! The join was 98% certain now. But there was even more to come: a second, smaller goddess's head and torso, badly battered, from the basement storage area and Hourig's photo archive was also brought up for us to examine. I recognized immediately that it had to join a statue group in Khonsu Temple, Karnak (which the Epigraphic Survey has the concession to record). The museum kindly promised to make casts of the breaks of both pieces for us to test the joins conclusively, and when I was in Cairo in early November for some documentation work at Memphis, I picked up the large cast of the face break, and hand-carried it *very* carefully (on my lap) during the flight back to Luxor.

Preparations for the Thanksgiving weekend Friends of Chicago House tour delayed the test, but finally, on November 30, the whole house assembled in the Colonnade Hall with the Director of Antiquities for Upper Egypt, Dr. Mohammed Saghir, and cohorts in attendance, to test the join. We set up a small stepladder to the right of the dyad, and I hauled the cast up to the missing face of the giant goddess. Because of the awkward angle at which I was standing, not directly in front of the statue, I had to maneuver the cast into its proper position by feel, while everyone held their collective breath. I felt the broken left dowel hole on the cast with my finger and guided it to the dowel hole on the statue; it made a satisfying 'thunk,' the sound and feel of which can only mean one thing: a perfect fit! 'It's good!' I said, and everyone applauded! I held it in place for a minute while pictures could be taken, then descended, flushed with satisfaction. Peter then ascended with the cast and held it in place so I could see it from the ground. There were more pictures, handshakes, congratulations all around, and wonderful good will; when we notified Mohammed Saleh at the Cairo Museum, he was equally enthusiastic. I am doubly happy, since one of my dreams in life was to find her face; I expected at best to find a small piece somewhere if I was *really* lucky. And...

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we can now include her face in our publication of the Colonnade Hall statues, which I am writing up for Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple, Volume 2: *The Façade, Portals, Upper Registers, Columns, and Marginalia of the Colonnade Hall.*

Early in December I took my photos of the smaller Mut goddess to Karnak and compared them to the statue group of Amun, Khonsu and Mut in Khonsu temple, and the join looks excellent; again, I am 98% convinced. All that remains to do is to test the cast of the break which the Cairo Museum is preparing now. And, strangely enough, there is potential for even *more* happiness; there is an entry in the Cairo Museum *Catalogue Genéral* referring to another goddess head and partial torso in museum storage that might very possibly belong to our second missing Mut, from the other dyad in the hall; the description is perfect, and it also has a broken nose repaired with a stone square plug. Well, we shall see; this has been a year full of surprises and revelations, perhaps there will be more. Ultimately, we cannot lose; wherever this third Mut belongs, there will much to be learned about her, as well as all the others. Wish us luck!

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