

A BLOCK OF THE DIVINE ADORATRICES RECONSIDERED

by Charles C. Van Siclen, III

In the winter of 1985, as a member of the Mut Expedition of the Brooklyn Museum, I had the opportunity of re-examining a block reused in the contra-temple on the south side of the Temple of Mut at South Karnak. This block was first published by Jean Leclant who stated that it showed two divine adoratrices consecrating offerings, and he further suggested that one of these adoratrices might actually be Nitocris, since a block with her name was found reused elsewhere in the Mut Complex.¹ An examination of the block (fig. 1), however, quickly leads one to doubt a twenty-fifth dynasty date for it, since the scene is not simply the remains of two figures -- "divine adoratrices" -- consecrating, but rather it is a part of a composition which is more complex.

To the right in the scene are parts of two registers. The upper register shows the lower half of two female figures (Leclant's divine adoratrices) facing right and holding in their right hands the white mace. Before each figure is a small pile of offerings which they are "consecrating."

 1. Jean Leclant. RECHERCHES SUR LES MONUMENTS THEBAINS DE LA XXVe DYNASTIE DITE ETHIOPIENNE, (BdE 36) Cairo, 1965, pp. 115-16 (32c), pl. 71 (A); republished by Leclant in his "Varia Aethiopica," MDAIK 37 (1981): 296 n. 57; pl. 45c with the same date. The block also appears *in situ*, incidently behind a Sakhmet statue in a photograph published by Margaret Benson and Janet Gourley, THE TEMPLE OF MUT IN ASHER (London, 1999), pl. 28.

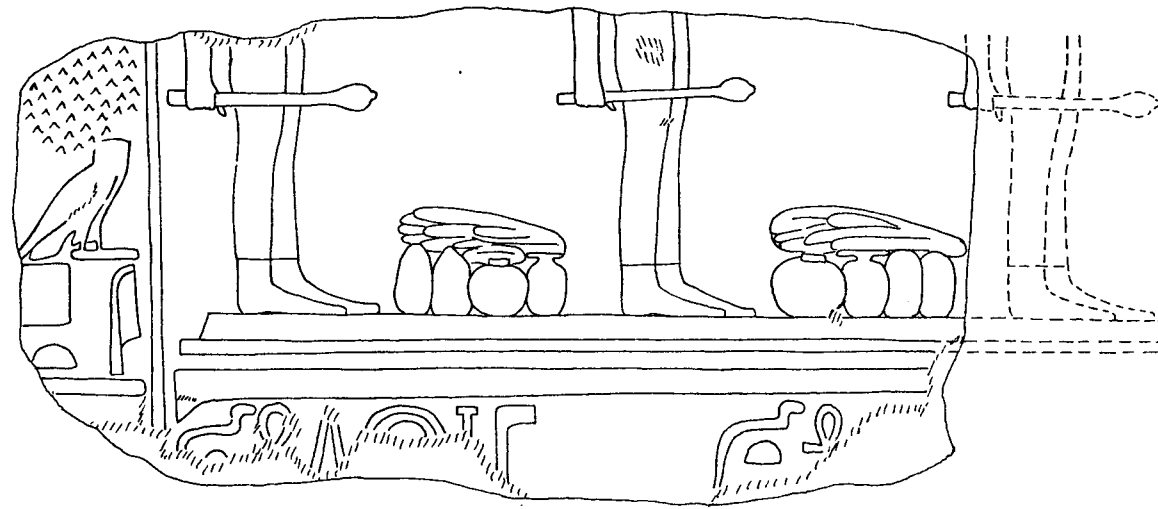


Fig. 1. A Eighteenth Dynasty Reused Block from the Mut Contra-temple,
Formerly Attributed to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.

At the right edge of the block, however, is a small trace so placed that it must be the end of the handle of yet a third mace and a part of the hand holding it, with the rest of the figure further to the right now lost. The two extant figures (and probably the third as well) and the offerings before them are on a separate base above the base line of the register, and they must be understood as an elaborate statue group of at least three figures. From its spacing, the third figure is not likely to be a part of a separate statue group. Since the block does not record a PAIR of females (that is, Leclant's two contemporary divine adoratrices) consecrating, but rather at least three figures in some such act, an alternative explanation should be sought. While not wholly alike, there is depicted in the Akhmenu of the Temple of Amun at Karnak a statue of Queen Sitioh, a wife of Tuthmosis III, in a similar attitude, holding a white mace (fig. 2).² Thus on the Mut block, what might be represented is a group statue showing several QUEENS consecrating offerings.

Only the upper portion of the lower register on the right is preserved. It contains captions for objects which once were figured on the lost block adjoining below. The hieroglyphic group to the left reads: nꜥr nfr ...r', dí 'nh dt, "the good god ...re, given life forever," with most of the royal cartouche lost. To the right is the end of a similar grouping which reads ... <dí> 'nh dt, "... <given>

2. Porter-Moss II, 2nd ed., p. 124 (loc. 435); I would like to thank William J. Murnane for calling this scene to my

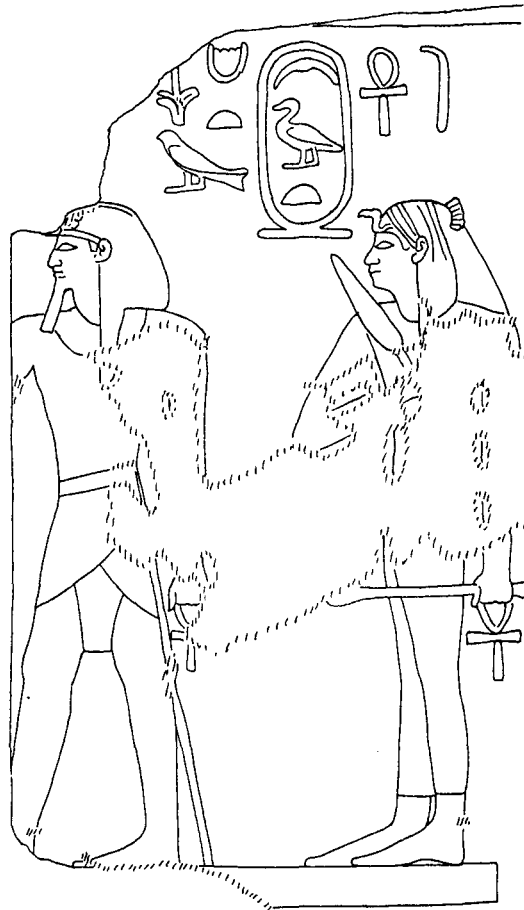


Fig. 2. The Representation of the Pair Statue showing Queen Sitioh
from the Akhmenu.

attention. A representation of a statue of Queen Meryet-
re-Hatshepsut, a later wife of Tuthmosis III and mother
of Amenhotep II, from the tomb of Sennefer (TT 96), also
shows a statue with a white mace, see N. de G. Davies,
"The Graphic Work of the Expedition at Thebes," *BMMA* 23,
no. 12, sec. 2 (December 1928):49, fig. 6.

life forever." These are without doubt labels identifying royal statues facing to the right which must have stood in this lower register as well. The overall scene of which the reused block is but a small part would have shown an assemblage of royal statuary.

On the left edge of the block is a column of text. The first group has been purposefully erased; it is not simply worn. The erasure is followed by the words m ípt, "in Opet." One suspects that here the name Amun has been erased, and the group originally was "Amun in Opet," a common phrase.³ The purposeful destruction of Amun's name would be a fact indicative of an eighteenth dynasty date for the block. Certainly the style of the block itself -- insofar as the little preserved can be identified -- is not incompatible with such a dating.

A detailed examination of the block shows that it belongs to a scene showing royal statues which seems to date to the eighteenth dynasty. This interpretation can be confirmed by other, as yet unpublished evidence in the contra-temple of the Temple of Mut in which the block is reused. The contra-temple itself was built by Nectanebo II (which of course allows a Leclant's dating for the block), and the structure was partially redecorated in the Ptole-

 3. The horizontal trace below Opet may be a register line, although it is unexpected here. The trace would also seem to fit the upper part of the mr (canal) sign. Such a reading would suggest the presence of the verb mrí, to love, and that the column contained the name of the king (?) followed by the phrase "beloved of <Amun> in Opet."

maic Period.⁴ Within the building there are a number of other reused blocks, including the one in question here. All of the other reused blocks visible within the structure would seem to date from the reign of Tuthmosis III whose name even is preserved on them in two separate cases.⁵ In addition, the scenes of which these other reused blocks are a part belong to a cycle of scenes which show a procession of royal statues. Similar such scenes, also made for Tuthmosis III, are extant in the Akhmenu.⁶ The block formerly attributed to the divine adoratrices would fit happily into such a series of scenes. Given its context and subject matter, this block once attributed to the divine adoratrices should be redated to the reign of Tuthmosis III.

 4. The contra-temple was not built by Nectanebo I, as stated by Porter-Moss II, 2nd ed., p. 258, but rather his namesake. For a brief account of the recent clearance of the contra-temple, see Richard Fazzini and William Peck, Jr., "The 1982 Season at Mut," NARCE 120 (1982): 41-2.

5. One of these blocks may also preserve the name of Queen Sitioh.

6. Rooms 37, 38, 40 and 40A in the Akhmenu; see Porter-Moss II, 2nd ed., pp. 123-4 (locs. 425-439); for a description of the scenes, see also Paul Barguet, LE TEMPLE D'AMON-RE A KARNAK, (RAPH 21) Cairo, 1962, pp. 178-182. Given their date of reuse, it does not seem likely that the reused blocks in the contra-temple at Mut come from the now missing parts of the scenes from the Akhmenu. They may indeed have a source closer to their point of reuse. The Kamutef Temple just to the north of the Mut Enclosure was built by Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III. Since the Feast of Min (with whom Kamutef is closely associated) included processions of royal statues, might it not be likely that the scenes of the reused blocks are appropriate to this temple, and might not the many small chapels visible in the temple's plan be repositories for the statues of the procession? Certainly the latest dated remains of the Kamutef Temple only date to Psamtik II. For this temple see Herbert Ricke, DAS KAMUTEF-HEILIGTUM HATSCHEPSUTS UND THUTMOSES' III IN KARNAK, (BABA 3) Cairo, 1954.