A FRAGMENT OF A BLOCK OF SHEPENUPET II

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This fragment is a rectangular sandstone block measuring 67.5 cm in height and 42 cm in width with incised border-line. Its provenance is unfortunately unknown. The block is presently kept in Luxor magazine and was in the private collection of Albert Tadros and comes probably from Medinet Habu’ or Karnak.

The inscribed surface is relatively well preserved, except for the left-hand corner of the lower part, but any colour that might have been there is lost. The technique is sunk relief with incised hieroglyphs. The upper part of the block (about one third of its height) is broken and has been, seemingly recently, repaired.

The right part of a scene shows a walking figure of the Nile god presenting two bezi-vases, accompanied by two lotus flowers, on an offering table which is in the form of the 3tp-sign (?). He also holds a w3g-sceptre, situated in the centre. Two 3nh-signs and a papyrus blossom hang down.

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'For a similar although not identical scene, see J. Leclant, Recherches sur les monuments thébains de la XXVème dynastie dite Éthiopienne. IFAO, Bibliothèque d'étude, T.XXXVI. Le Caire 1965, Pl. LXXIV/B.

'In the Old Kingdom, more secular offering bearers carry a wide variety of material gifts, while in royal mortuary temples personifications of royal estates and fecundity
In one column on the left, in front of the fecundity figure an inscription is preserved:

\[ \text{dq mdw: int}^{1}\text{... df3w}^{1}\text{ nb lmy.} \]

\[ \text{Sp-n-wp(t).}^{1} \]

"Speech: Bringing of all the respective nourishments."
Shepenupet.

And finally, the lower register of the block consists of a frieze with alternating \( w3s \) and \( \text{nb} \)-signs standing on \( \text{nb} \)-signs, monogram "All dominion and life".

God's Wife of Amun, the Kushite princess Shepenupet II, daughter of Piye (prenomen, Mistress of Beauty, is Mut the Eye of Re'), functioned during the reigns of Shebitku, Taharqa and Tantamani.\(^7\) We know of her from a number of remains of monuments figures bring symbolic ones. In the New Kingdom and later the relationship between the types and the formulae is more complex; see the summary in: J. Baines, Fecundity Figures. Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre. Aris & Phillips Publishers, Warminster, Wilshire 1985, 131-134.

\[^{1}\text{B. Gunn, 26, Pl. LXIV/1, in: R. Engelbach, Harageh. London 1923.}\]

\[^{5}\text{According to J. Leclant and J. Yoyotte, Nouveaux documents relatifs à l'an VI de Taharqa, Kámi 10, 1949, 28-42, df3 means the function of fecundity figure; R. Hannig, Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2 800-950 v. Ch.) Mainz 1995, 1006.}\]


\[^{7}\text{Full genealogy of the 25th dynasty in: K.A. Kitchen, op. cit., 478; N. Grimal, Histoire de l'Egypt ancienne. Fayard, 1988, 404, Fig. 158; A. Erman, Zu den Leigrain'schen}\]
mostly from Medinet Habu in Western Thebes. Across the Nile at Karnak she together with her brother Taharqa, added to the long and rich series of the Osiris-chapels.

Now, we can make, from the point of view of its iconographic form, only very a brief analysis of the scene on the block of Shepenupet II which represents a Nile god as an "offering bearer".

J. Baines, in his most recent study of the subject of Egyptian religious personifications, uses the term "fecundity figures" for Nile gods. They are very well attested from the 5th dynasty until late antiquity and are found mostly on temple reliefs, tombs, and stelae. Curiously, more attention was in general given to the symbolic gifts which the fecundity figures carry, than to their form. They have usually a human face with a long false beard and wear a divine wig which appears in different forms at different periods. J. Baines divided them according to the wigs into 6 main types. Our figure is similar, but not strictly identical with type 1, where the wig

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10 A number of bearers have general personification form. The sub-category of fecundity figures has a distinctive form, and in respect to the function many, of the generalizations made about these figures could probably be extended to offering bearers in temples as a whole; the sm3-t3w1 function falls outside the strict category of offering bearers; for further details see J. Baines, op. cit., 7-18, passim.


12 J. Baines, ibid., Fig. 50, with excellent discussion on pages 85-93.
falls down the back of the figure (the wig of our fecundity figure is not so impressive) and instead of two arms only one is shown. This type is very rare in the iconography of later periods, and has connotations of archaism. The figure wears only a simple necklace, his heavy stomach spills over his belt in three folds. The usually pendulous breasts are hardly visible.

In general, the material available for the study of fecundity figures is very fragmentary. Despite the wide variety of contexts in which they occur, our knowledge of their functions, for example, are very limited. The most frequent seems to be the bringing of offerings, which is also our case.

In spite of the brevity of the accompanying formula and relative simplicity of the fecundity figure with the offering table, we can date the block to the 25th dynasty and place it probably to Medinet Habu, where it presumably formed part of the original temple decoration for one of the chapels of the divine adoratrices.

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14 J. Baines, op. cit., 95; the necklaces or any particular form of it, has no specific meaning for fecundity figures.

15 Other functions: sm3-t3w3, libation, presentation of offerings, and protection; for further information see J. Baines, op. cit., 209-329.
