

CENTRE FRANCO-ÉGYPTIEN
D'ÉTUDE DES TEMPLES DE
KARNAK
LOUQSOR (ÉGYPTE)
USR 3172 du Cnrs



المركز المصري الفرنسي
لدراسة معابد الكرنك
الاقصر (مصر)

Extrait des *Cahiers de Karnak* 5, 1975.

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THE FIRST COMPLETE STATUE OF ABA

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During the summer of 1971 in Karnak, in the course of preparing a foundation of the grandstand for Son-et-Lumière east of the southeastern corner of the Sacred Lake, a Saite head of gray schist was found. It had been severely damaged, broken in two and chipped (pl. XXXVII, A). It now lacks a large wedge broken from the forehead and wig and a sizable fragment from the right cheek. The piece was handed over to the Centre Franco-Egyptien for repair and was eventually placed in the magazine called *Karakol* ⁽¹⁾. The head was subsequently examined and carefully described, measured, and photographed for inclusion in *The Corpus of Late Egyptian Sculpture*, the records of which are kept in the Brooklyn Museum ⁽²⁾. There the information was catalogued and, following normal procedure, the writer checked the files for torsos without heads belonging to the period corresponding to that of the newly discovered Karnak head, in the hope of finding a body to which it might fit. Due to previous disappointments, we have adopted a rather fatalistic attitude toward possible joins, but this time a torso was discovered that fitted the head in too many details to be dismissed as mere coincidence.

This torso is now in the Cairo Museum ⁽³⁾. It was found by Legrain in the Cachette of the court north of Pylon VII in February 1904, and published by Christophe in 1955 ⁽⁴⁾. In October 1963, it had been carefully measured and recorded for *The Corpus of Late Egyptian Sculpture* ⁽⁵⁾. These records revealed that the torso was that of a kneeling

(1) Karnak *Karakol* No. 329. Height of head 10.8 cm. Height of face 7.0 cm.

(2) This recording was done in January 1972 by B.V. Bothmer to whom I am grateful for allowing me to use the Corpus.

(3) Cairo Museum No. JE 36698. As of June 1973, the reunited pair has been in the Cairo Museum.

(4) *Journal de Fouilles* No. 62. L.-A. Christophe, in *ASAE* 53 (1955), pp. 49-62, pl. I. Also mentioned by H. De Meulenaere in *BIFAO* 63 (1965), p. 20.

(5) Work on the CLES was made possible over the years by Fulbright and American Research Center in Egypt grants, the latter funded by The Smithsonian Institution.

Osiriphoros (pl. XXXVIII, A-D) named Aba, the first known High Steward of the Divine Consort Nitocris ⁽¹⁾, who is familiar to us not only from this but from other monuments, but who had until now remained without any visual identity for all his statues hitherto found have been headless ⁽²⁾.

The shape of the lower break on the head is quite distinctive and that was the first clue to follow in the attempt to locate the torso. Once a candidate with a possibly matching break was chosen, the photographs of the backs of the two pieces were studied. In this case both objects had a back pillar inscribed with one column of text and on the torso the  was incomplete. Though the end of the  could be found on our new fragment, that the two pieces might fit together depended on the measurements of the break and of the intracolumnar width, and these were identical within a few millimeters.

The head of Aba, in every detail, is an example of the delicate and refined sculptural representations made in Dynasty XXVI during the reign of Psamtik I (664-610 B.C.). Here Aba wears a plain striated wig which falls behind his shoulders; there it is offset and cut straight along the bottom. It leaves the slightly flaring and plain ears entirely exposed and comes down low on the forehead. Where it disappears behind the ears no tabs of natural hair are indicated ⁽³⁾. Below the ears the wig bulges a little.

The cheeks of Aba are slightly rounded, hence the underlying bone structure of the face is not sharp except at the eye sockets. The eyebrows in low relief are gently curved, follow the bone structure and have rounded ends near the very narrow root of the nose. At their outer tips they suddenly are brought to a point as they drop below the underlying bone structure to terminate within the eye socket at the same level as the pointed cosmetic lines. The gently slanting eyes are very delicately formed, with a modeled eyeball surrounded by a firmly drawn double-lined upper lid and terminating in long inner canthi. The nose is mostly missing, and only traces of the philtrum are left. The mouth is slightly turned up at the corners, and the drooping lips lack the thin double lines along

⁽¹⁾ Cairo Museum No. JE 36327 is the Nitocris Adoption stela which was published by R.A. Caminos, in *JEA* 50 (1964), pp. 71-100. Nitocris became a Divine Consort in the Year 9 of Psamtik I. See also : E. Graefe, in *CdE* 46 (1971), pp. 237-239.

⁽²⁾ To the list of monuments mentioned by L.-A. Christophe should be added E. Graefe's discovery : the fragment reproduced in J. Quibell, *The Ramesseum* (London, 1898), pl. XXVII, 3, probably belongs to the bottom of the basalt sarcophagus of Aba, now in Turin (no. Cat. 2202).

⁽³⁾ For discussion of tabs see B.V. Bothmer in *BMA* 10 (1968-69), p. 79, n. 3, and in *Kêmi* 20 (1970), p. 40, n. 15.



A. - *Aba*, Karnak *Karakol* No. 329 and Cairo JE 36698.



B. - *Nes-peka-shuty*, Cairo JE 36665 Photo CLES.



A



B



C



D

their edges sometimes used to mark the lips' separation from the face. The chin is damaged; the Adam's apple seems to have not been indicated.

The back pillar is squared off as it meets the wig and, the text upon this pillar, as well as the other texts on the torso, was published by Christophe ⁽¹⁾. But the finding of the head now enables us to add to the back pillar's inscription the *ntr niwty n* formula ⁽²⁾. The lower part of the back pillar, major portions of the base, the knees of ABA and most of the Osiris figure are missing. The fill-in behind the figure of Osiris is inscribed only on the right side and there does not seem to have been any inscription on the top or sides of the base. Modern reconstructions on the back and left sides support the statue.

It is satisfying that the head which can be presented as the best stylistic comparison for that of ABA is that of Nes-peka-shuty, who was certainly a vizier by the Year 14 of Psamtik I (pl. XXXVII, B) ⁽³⁾. The details on these statues are rendered very similarly, though the representation of Nes-peka-shuty is slightly more refined. It is probable that both sculptures were made in the same workshop ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ *Op. cit.*

⁽²⁾ The Brooklyn Museum, *ESLP* (1960), p. 53.

⁽³⁾ Cairo Museum No. JE 36665. H. De Meulenaere, in *CdE* 33 (1958), p. 200, n. 6; idem, in *CdE* 38 (1963), pp. 74-77 doc. e.; idem, in *BIFAO* 63 (1965), p. 22. R. Parker, *A Saite Oracle Papyrus from Thebes* (1962), p. 6.

⁽⁴⁾ I would like to express my deep gratitude to Mrs. E. Riefstahl for her expert editorial help.