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*A Fragmentary Statue of Ramesses II
with a Scarab on the Head*

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo contains a fragmentary eroded royal bust, dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty (**Fig. 1a-c**).¹ The statue was found in the Temple of Ptah in Memphis.² The sculpture has never been discussed before from an iconographic and stylistic point of view. The present article is dedicated to analyzing some of the unusual features that can be observed on this interesting fragment.

The king is shown wearing the *nemes* headdress with the *uraeus* decorating the forehead. On the middle top part of his head there is a three-dimensional, forward-facing scarab.³ The pharaoh's face is almost round, the cheeks chubby. The eyebrows are shaped in raised relief, forming two symmetrical arches on the protruding brow. The king's wide almond-shaped eyes are placed horizontally, the inner canthi carved deeply, so that the eyeballs appear to be gazing downward. Although the nose is damaged, the remains show that it could have been broad. The mouth is small with fleshy lips and it is well articulated with two little hollows at the corners. The small rounded chin is marked by side furrows; remains of the royal beard are still visible on the king's neck and chest. The ears are pierced. The surface of the statue is much eroded, so that not much can be said of the way in which the torso was worked. Weathering has also obscured the details of the scarab, making it difficult to determine any differences between it and similar examples of beetles.

Although there are no inscriptions to date the bust, G. Daressy proposed to identify it with Ramesses II based on the iconographic features.⁴ G. Maspero attributed it to Merenptah,⁵ J. De Morgan suggested the Nineteenth Dynasty, noting also that the scarab was dedicated to Ptah.⁶

The iconography of the face shows an association with other similar effigies of Ramesses II.⁷ The face of Ramesses II is more triangular in shape than on most colossal statues, where they are round sometimes, particularly in the case of statues wearing the *ibes* wig; they are never long and square.⁸ The eyes are almost almond-shaped, with softer inner canthi dipping downwards slightly; the upper eyelids are inclined as if the king was looking downward, a practice in vogue since Amenhotep III and the Amarna Period.⁹

¹ The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to Professor Karol Myśliwiec and Professor Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal for discussion and suggestions.

² CG 38104, JE 27856, SR 4/ 13649, GEM 18219; Red granite, H. 84cm, W. 60 cm; M. MINAS-NERPEL, *Der Gott Chepri*, *OLA* 154, Leuven-Dudley, Mass. 2006 [= Gott Chepri], pp. 401–402, Figs 162–163.

³ MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 401–402, Figs 162–163.

⁴ M.G. DARESSY, *Statues de divinités*, [Texte imprimé], Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire. Nos 38001–39384, Cairo 1905–1906, p. 35.

⁵ G. MASPERO, *Guide du visiteur au Musée du Caire*, Cairo 1915, p. 188, No. 731; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 401–402.

⁶ J. DE MORGAN, *Notice des principaux monuments exposés au Musée de Gizeh*, Cairo 1894, p. 51, No. 156; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 401–402.

⁷ For more information concerning the published statues of Ramesses II, cf. J. MALEK, *Egypt 4000 Years of Art*, London 2003 [= Egypt], p. 225; J. BAINES, J. MALEK, *Wielkie Kultury Świata*, Warsaw 1995, p. 39.

⁸ Cairo Museum (CG 616 and J E44668), British Museum (EA 67, AES 1066 and 118544), Memphis, Open Museum (red granite triad); H. SOUROUZIAN, *Raccords ramessides*, *MDAIK* 54, 1998, pp. 279–292, Pls 40–47.

⁹ H. SOUROUZIAN, *Standing royal colossi of the Middle Kingdom reused by Ramesses II*, *MDAIK* 44, 1988, pp. 229–254, Pls 62–75; H.R. HALL, *A Ramesside royal statue from Palestine*, *JEA* 14, 1928, p. 280, Pl. 29, Fig. 1; PM VII, p. 382; A.M. MOUSSA, *A statue group of Ptah, Sekhmet and Ramses II from Memphis*, *SAK* 9,



1a-c. Ramesses II – Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Phot. by Sameh Abdel Mohsen).



2. Ramesses II – Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Phot. by Sameh Abdel Mohsen).



3. Ramesses IV – Tell Basta (Phot. by the author).



4. Tutankhamen / Ramesses II, Toledo Museum of Art (Phot. Toledo Museum of Art, USA).

The mouth in statues of Ramesses II is usually curved, the corners often drawn upwards in a faint smile. Where the lower lips are accentuated, the drilled corners of the mouth and the chin are marked by side furrows. The ears of Ramesses statues are small and pierced.¹⁰

These facial features support on the whole the attribution of the statue to Ramesses II, but there is some other iconographic evidence, like the execution of the eyeballs, which stands against this attribution. The eyeballs appear to have been reshaped sharply back to impart the impression of the king gazing downwards.¹¹ It might signify usurpation of the statue by a successor of Ramesses II. The *uraeus*, nose and wings of the *nemes* are too damaged and eroded to be of assistance in determining the identification of this image.¹²

The motif of the scarab, either large or small, carved in high relief on the head of the pharaoh, is found on a small number of royal statues.¹³ All of these statues are attributed to kings of the Ramesside Period, with only one exception, a statue from the late phase of the Eighteenth Dynasty (Figs 2–4).¹⁴

The religious symbolism of a scarab sculpted on the top of a royal head was new in royal statuary of the New Kingdom, especially in the Ramesside Period. It signified the wish to be reborn after death, a renewal. The power of Khepri was transferred to the pharaoh as a guarantee of a prosperous and renewed Egypt. The king was identified with the sun god and as such, he was regenerated overnight, just like the daily rising of the morning sun.¹⁵ It is noticeable that the kings of the New Kingdom, especially of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, preferred this concept and used it in their statues, thus endowing the kings with the role of the Creator God and therefore also with that of the god Khepri.¹⁶

1981, pp. 285–288, Pls 6–8; J. VANDIER, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne III, Les grandes époques, La statuaire* Paris 1958 [= Manuel III], pp. 391–433, Pls 126–135.

¹⁰ C. VANDERSLEYEN, *Écrits sur l'art égyptien, textes choisis*, Bruxelles 2012, pp. 216–217; SOUROUZIAN, *MDAIK* 44, 1988, pp. 229–254, Pls 62–75; VANDIER, *Manuel III*, pp. 391–433.

¹¹ Dark grey granite head of Ramesses II in the Ramesseum Temple, see: E.R. RUSSMANN, *Egyptian Sculpture, Cairo and Luxor*, Austin 1989, p. 151, Pl. 70; C. LEBLANC, *Diodore, le tombeau d'Osymandyas et la statuaire du Ramesseum*, [in:] *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar* 2, Caire 1989, p. 151, Pl. 70.

¹² For the importance of these facial features in iconography and style, cf. K. MYŚLIWIEC, *Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvel Empire, Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences* 19, Warsaw 1976, pp. 105–116, Pl. CLI, Figs 224–261.

¹³ Glasgow, Kelvin grove No. 9.br.1912 – Eighteenth Dynasty; Cairo CG 42145 – Ramesses II; Toledo (Ohio) 1906.227 – Ramesses II / Tut-ankh-Amon; Cairo JE 27635 – Ramesses IV; Marseille 209 – Ramesses IV; Cairo JE 69771 – Ramesses III; Tell Basta, black granite statue – Ramesses IV; Matariya Museum Heliopolis – Seti II.

¹⁴ MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 397, Figs 155–156; B. MOJSOV, *The Monuments of Ramesses III*, [in:] E.H. Cline, D. O'Connor (Eds), *Ramesses III, The Life and Times of Egypt's Last Hero*, Ann Arbor, Mich. 2012 [= *Monuments*], p. 293.

¹⁵ M. SALEH, H. SOUROUZIAN, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo Official Catalogue*, Mainz a/Rhein 1987, No. 266; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 411–417; N. STRUDWICK, *The British Museum Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*, London 2006, pp. 97, 110; MALEK, *Egypt*, p. 294.

¹⁶ MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 426.

Another explanation may be deduced from a text found on a healing fragmentary “protecting” statue of Ramesses III from Almaza (archaeological site near Heliopolis).¹⁷ The base of this statue was inscribed with ten magical formulae; the seventh formula was particularly intended to offer protection against snake and scorpion bites, as well as other dangers of the journey through the Eastern Desert. It seems that this protecting magical text is related directly to the provenance of this statue; it was found in a small chapel on the caravan route toward Canaan.¹⁸

The inscriptions on a group statue of Ramesses II in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, also with a scarab on the head of the king (**Fig. 2**), contain mainly the royal names and epithets of Ramesses II with Atum, Re-Harakhte, Khepri and Geb, without any clarification of the role or the religious symbolism of the scarab.¹⁹

The statue under discussion may be attributed to Ramesses II, based on its facial features, which are similar to other statues of this king.

CONCLUSION

The red granite fragmentary bust (Egyptian Museum in Cairo – CG 38104, JE 27856; from the Temple of Ptah in Memphis), is believed to be part of a statue of Ramesses II, but owing to the fact that the fragment is unepigraphic and much eroded, this identification will have to remain hypothetical. An examination of iconographical and stylistic features led the author to believe either that the statue represented Ramesses II or that it had been usurped by one of his successors.

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¹⁷ Cairo Museum (JE 69771, red quartzite, 155 cm) see: É. DRIOTON, Une statue prophylactique de Ramsès III, *ASAE* 39, 1939, pp. 57–89; MOJSOV, Monuments, p. 294; MINAS-NERPEL, Gott Chepri, p.401, fig.161; B. Hornemann, Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary, Vol. V, Copenhagen 1966, pl.1213.

¹⁸ DRIOTON, *ASAE* 39, 1939, pp. 57–89; MOJSOV, Monuments, p. 294; MINAS-NERPEL, Gott Chepri, p. 401, fig.161; B. HORNEMANN, Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary IV, Copenhagen 1966 [= Types IV], Pl. 1213.

¹⁹ Cairo Museum (CG 42145, JE 41750, limestone, H. 130cm), see: G. LEGRAIN, Catalogue Général des Antiquités Egyptiennes du Musée du Caire. Statues et statuettes, de rois et de particuliers II, Cairo 1909, pp. 9–11, Pl. 7; HORNEMANN, Types IV, Pl. 1114; K.A. KITCHEN, Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical II, Oxford 1969–1979, p. 558, No. 225; VANDIER, Manuel III, p. 626, Pl. CXXXV.5.