

OLD KINGDOM SCULPTURE

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

[Reprinted from the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY*, Vol. XLV (1941), No. 4]

OLD KINGDOM SCULPTURE

AN ARTICLE by Alexander Scharff of Munich in the last number of the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (vol. 26, pp. 41 ff.) provides a challenging interpretation of the development of Old Kingdom art in Egypt. Since this is a commendable attempt to replace former vague attributions of undated sculpture by an analysis of stylistic changes in Dynasties III–VI, it is all the more necessary to examine the evidence upon which he has based his conclusions. One great difficulty is that Scharff has not had access to much of the material from Giza which is necessary to provide a chronological background for Old Kingdom art. It is not possible to gain a complete picture of that enormous site from Junker's admirable publications, since they deal with only a portion of the field and do not touch upon the important royal cemetery east of the First Pyramid. In view of the fact that Dr. Reisner's first volume of the final publication of the Giza Necropolis and my own book on Old Kingdom sculpture have been delayed in the press by the war, it seems only fair to make available the evidence from Giza which has a bearing upon Scharff's article.

In the first place, while agreeing that the Third Dynasty was a period of experimentation, particularly in architecture, I do not believe that it is fair to say that: "the artists of the Third Dynasty made various experiments without achieving a definitive style." This is particularly unfair when the Step Pyramid and Hesy-ra reliefs are mentioned in connection with the inlaid paste reliefs of Nefermaat and the painted geese of Medum, which certainly belong to the reign of Sneferuw. Those reliefs, which can be dated definitely to the reign of Zoser, that is, those from the Step Pyramid, the wooden panels of Hesy-ra, and the Heliopolis fragments in Turin, all show a very fine low type of relief, similarly slender proportions of the human figures and certain peculiarities in the drawing of the hieroglyphs. In fact, the style is so definite that it is possible to assign to this general group a small fragment of relief in Cairo, published by Borchardt,¹ and two fragments from a temple at Gebelein (in Turin and Cairo) which may be a little earlier than the others. The reliefs of the cruciform chapels at Saqqarah and Medum, which belong to a transitional period from Dynasty III to Dynasty IV, are in bolder relief, with a greater variety of style which might have been better used to illustrate stylistic experiment. Even here, though, there is considerable uniformity. It is certainly misleading to cite the simultaneous use of reliefs, painting and the paste inlays of Nefermaat to show the tentative nature of Third Dynasty art, even had they all been contemporary. Painting and relief sculpture were used side by side in all periods of Egyptian art, and while the Nefermaat inlays were an experiment which was not used again for wall reliefs, the cutting of the wall to receive them shows little more variation from the usual scheme than do the sunk reliefs that later were used interchangeably with ordinary relief.

Certainly the architects at the time of Zoser were making experiments, translating the forms developed in lighter materials into small stone masonry. The fact that

¹ *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* xxviii, p. 43.

the Hierakonpolis temple of Kha-sekhemuwy, at the end of Dynasty II, was provided with a granite door-jamb, carved with scenes in relief² and that other fragments of granite reliefs were found both at Hierakonpolis and El Kab,³ suggests that we have still much to learn about the architecture of the archaic period. It also suggests that we should be more cautious in reconstructing the badly damaged temples of Dynasty IV along the lines of the Valley Temple of Chephren. They may not all have been constructed with the monumental simplicity of its plain granite walls and pillars. In fact, fragments recently found in the nearly destroyed temple of Cheops show that parts of it were decorated with fine low reliefs of limestone, while other fragments, re-used at Lisht, are from decorated temples of Cheops and Chephren. Certainly it can no longer be said that reliefs were not used in the temples of Dynasty IV because architects were learning how to use the intractable granite for building. They had found means to carve these hard surfaces with reliefs as early as the end of Dynasty II.

In general, while it is true that the enormous stone masonry of Dynasty IV did contribute to a monumental simplicity that contrasts both with the experimental limestone forms of Dynasty III and the lighter structures of Dynasty V which employed extensive wall reliefs and granite columns shaped into plant forms, this by no means presents the whole picture. The use of wall reliefs in the reigns of Cheops and Chephren was much more widespread than Scharff assumes. It is true that the decoration of the early mastabas at Giza was confined to a slab-stela (carved in very low, not "rather high" relief), set in the face of the mastaba, but this was a momentary digression. The cruciform chapels of Saqqarah and Medum were being decorated with reliefs in the reigns of Huni and Sneferuw, while the stone-lined niches may go back even earlier in Dynasty III. Before the end of the reign of Cheops, a number of chapels at Giza were decorated with reliefs. Of these the earliest are probably those of Hemiwn and G 2130 in the Western Cemetery, while the chapel of the Queen's Pyramid G I b, and the chapels of Khufuw-khaf, Ka-wab, Hordedef, Ra-bauw-f and Meresankh II in the Eastern Cemetery were probably finished before Cheops' death. The chapels of Ankh-haf, Merytyetes and Nofer are certainly not later than the reign of Chephren. I should like to emphasize this point, because Scharff states that the decorated inner offering-room and the serdab appear at Giza in the reign of Mycerinus. All the above chapels, except those of Nofer and the Queen's pyramid, are interior chapels, while serdabs appear in both the tombs of Hemiwn and Ankh-haf. Scharff is quite correct in noting that the change in style between Dynasties IV and V came in the reign of Mycerinus, but this is to be sought more in the expansion of both chapel-plan and the subject matter of the reliefs in the rock-cut tombs, as well as in technical changes in the carving of reliefs. In fact, we have here a transitional period, in which new elements are not so striking as the extreme conservatism with which the builders of the Giza tombs clung to old forms well into the early part of Dynasty V. This makes it very difficult to date a piece of sculpture more clearly within a range of time between Mycerinus and Sahura, unless there is other evidence beyond that of style.

The forms of sculpture in the round in Dynasties I and II were not "very crude

² *JEA.* 1934, pl. XXIV.

³ *BMAA.* November, 1935, fig. 11; *Annales* vi, p. 239.

and badly proportioned," except when the craftsman was working in stone. The ivory figures, such as the little striding king from Abydos,⁴ are beautifully carved. There is even some fragmentary evidence for large wooden statues of fine workmanship in the royal tombs of the First Dynasty. The tomb of Zer contained part of the torso of a large statuette with painted necklaces, while in that of Wedymuw was found a fragment of an elaborately worked large wig,⁵ evidently from a life-sized figure. These two fragments from Abydos were overlooked by Prof. Ranke when he sought to establish the origin of the tomb statue in Lower Egypt.⁶ Slight as is this evidence, it shows that it is dangerous to assume that large wooden statues first appeared in Dynasty V. The makers of the statues of Kha-sekhem and Zoser had nearly mastered the carving of stone, although the forms of the private statues remained heavy and clumsy until early in Dynasty IV. It is not correct to draw an inference from the absence of serdabs (which do occur, although infrequently) that there were no private statues of the reigns of Cheops and Chephren. The statue of Hemiuwn (found in a serdab) is the only completely preserved statue found at Giza of the reign of Cheops, but it is very probable that the statues of Ra-hotep and Nofret from Medum belong to this time, and the bust of Prince Ankh-haf is dated to the reign of Chephren. The chapel of Cheops' son, Prince Ka-wab, contained many fragments of hard stone statues, including three figures of the prince as a seated scribe. Another son of Cheops, Prince Khufuw-khaf, had at least two diorite statues, while a headless statue of a vizier, found in the Eastern Cemetery, is probably not far from these in date. The chapels of Ka-wab and Min-khaf had rows of open niches that must once have contained statues, and in an early tomb in the Western Cemetery (G 1205) a plastered base, with a low ramp leading to it, was evidently intended to hold a statue.

There seems to be a greater variety of statue forms in the reign of Mycerinus. I am inclined to think that this is because so many more statues of Mycerinus are preserved than those of his predecessors, rather than that the types were invented in his reign. Scharff admits that the small figure of the queen, squatting at the feet of a seated statue of Radedef, forms a sort of group, but would have the true grouping of figures begin with Mycerinus. He has overlooked a broken figure of Chephren seated with the Goddess Bast (Cairo, no. 11), that is, of course, earlier. The Radedef statue is rather an awkward example to cite, because it anticipates a statue group of Dynasty V, rather than Dynasty IV. While it is surprising to find this group so early, it is hardly a good transitional step toward the ordinary grouped figures. In stating that grouped private statues should not be assigned to Dynasty IV, Scharff may be right, if he is referring to a stylistic division of time ending with the reign of Chephren, that is, including all statues of the time of Mycerinus and after, with those of Dynasty V. This terminology is misleading when he refers to the pair statuette of Hetep-heres II and her daughter as work of Dynasty V, for we are not sure whether he realizes that it belongs to the reign of Shepseskaf, within Dynasty IV.

As for the sculpture of Dynasty V, it is certainly curious that there are very few statues of kings and that these are all small and mostly of poor quality. Scharff

⁴ *JEA*. 1931, p. 65.

⁵ Petrie, *Royal Tombs* ii, pls. XII and XL.

⁶ Ranke, "The Origin of the Egyptian Tomb Statue," *Harvard Theological Review*, Jan., 1935.

rightly excepts the splendid colossal head of Weserkaf from this general statement, but he forgets the fine statue of Sahura, accompanied by a personification of the Coptos Nome in the Metropolitan Museum,⁷ which, although small and lacking something of the quality of similar figures of Dynasty IV, is nevertheless much better than the other Fifth Dynasty royal statues in Cairo. It is not quite true, either, that "the pyramid-temples and the Sun-temple of the Fifth Dynasty were very carefully excavated and yet did not yield a single statue of a king." A beautifully worked alabaster fragment of the mouth and chin of a life-sized head was found in the Sun-temple of Weserkaf,⁸ while fragments of a seated figure of Sahura, as well as part of a sphinx, were found at Abusir in the king's pyramid temple.⁹ There was, admittedly, no sculpture found in the temple of Neferirkara, while that of Ne-user-ra and his Sun-temple at Abu-Gurob produced only the famous lion water-spouts, and a limestone statue of a bound captive.

It would be easier to understand the sculpture of Dynasty V, if Scharff had attempted to distinguish between the very fine large private statues which are found almost entirely in the early part of the Dynasty and the smaller pieces which characterize the latter part of the period. One should not speak of the statues of Ranofer and Thiy in the same breath. The latter is the only large piece of the later period, dating as it does at the very earliest to the reign of Isesy, and shows a greater simplification of the surfaces and harsher modelling than do the splendid Ranofer figures of the early part of the Dynasty. Likewise, while it is certainly true that the center of importance had shifted from Giza to Saqqarah in Dynasty V, the comparative quality of the statues from the two sites is dependent upon individual circumstances. It is something of an exaggeration to say that the better statues were made for Saqqarah and only second-rate ones for Giza. In the first half of the Dynasty, at least, a good many important people were buried at Giza, for one reason or another, and the statues of Khnum-baf (he had about fifty of various materials) compare favorably with the Saqqarah statues of early Dynasty V. The Giza example, which Scharff has cited to compare with an undoubtedly fine Saqqarah piece, is characteristic of the poorest work at Giza and could be matched for clumsiness at Saqqarah (for example, Borchardt, *Statuen*, nos. 129, 130). Scharff is right in emphasizing that bad work occurs beside good in Dynasty V and that poorness of workmanship need not necessarily mean that a statue should be assigned to a date late in Dynasty VI.

I am entirely in agreement with the dating to early Dynasty V of certain famous statues, such as the Sheikh el-Beled, the Louvre Scribe and the Ranofer statues, but I should like to emphasize again the fact that these are characteristic of the early part of the period, continuing in the great tradition of Dynasty IV. Scharff is quite right also in pointing out the increased variety of statue types of the Fifth Dynasty, although the Ka-wab figures mentioned above, as well as the statues of the sons of Radedef and that of Prince Khwnera, make it plain that the scribe's statue was already known in Dynasty IV. The servant figures also begin at the end of Dynasty IV with the cooking and slaughtering figures found in the tomb of Meresankh III.

⁷ *B.M.M.A.* June, 1920, p. 128.

⁸ Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal Königs Sahu-ré i*, fig. 197.

⁹ *L.c.*, fig. 142.

I object to the statement that the Fifth Dynasty was the culminating period of Old Kingdom art. It was a period when the arts and crafts spread to a surprising degree. Even moderately well-to-do people could afford small statues of good quality, and could have their chapels decorated with well-cut reliefs. The facility gained by the numerous craftsmen, trained in the great schools of Dynasty IV, enabled the kings of Dynasty V to decorate larger wall surfaces with reliefs than before. The same facility appears in the working of granite into columns for the temples. But this technical skill had been gained in the preceding Dynasty, and except perhaps in the working of these granite columns, there is no important advance. In fact, the reliefs and statues both show a certain falling off in quality. What the Fifth Dynasty really contributed was an expansion of subject matter in the wall scenes, a liveliness and variety. Architecture and wall decorations show a lighter, more pleasing quality, which is matched by a greater variety in statue forms. This was to increase in the Sixth Dynasty, when an even livelier action appears in the figures of the reliefs, and, as Scharff points out, a less rigid, more asymmetrical treatment in the attitudes of the statues. The Sixth Dynasty has, as far as we know, left little large sculpture, except in wood, and, except for the reliefs of the tombs of the Tety Pyramid Cemetery and in the temple of Pepy II, a great deal of work in relief which is diminishing in technical quality. I should like to remark, though, that the use of mud-brick in the mastabas of Dynasty VI is not necessarily a sign of decline, as Scharff would infer. It was used for small mastabas throughout the Old Kingdom at both Giza and Saqqarah, as well as for some very large tombs, such as that of the Sheikh el-Beled in early Dynasty V.

While most of the above objections are to matters of detail within a framework of development with which I am largely in agreement, there are two important points in Scharff's argument to which I am fundamentally opposed. These have to do with the way in which statues were placed in temples and tombs, and the denial of portraiture in Old Kingdom statues. In his first paragraph Scharff states:

"Every Egyptian statue of a man has a religious aspect; not a single one has been made to be admired by living men. Every statue was a tomb-statue, with special functions in the cult of the dead, or, if it was the statue of a king, it was set up in the semi-darkness of a temple hall. Statues of kings set up in full daylight, for instance, in front of a temple pylon, are not known to me before the Middle Kingdom. In the time of the Pyramids the statue was withdrawn from the eyes of men as far as possible, in the so-called mastabah-tombs, by setting it up in the statue-room, generally called the *serdāb*, which had no door at all and no connexion with the cult-room save through a slit in the wall, and not even that in all the tombs. Only here and there the tomb-statue stands in the cult-room itself; examples are mostly of the Sixth Dynasty, where, for instance, in the huge tomb of Mereruka, the statue forms part of the false-door. This is a form of emancipation which we shall remark elsewhere in connexion with the Sixth Dynasty."

While it is naturally true that statues had a religious aspect, and also special functions, either in the cult of the dead, or in the cult of some god, it is going beyond the point where we have certain knowledge to suggest that there was no thought of their being admired by men. That most statues were concealed from view in statue chambers is, of course, a fact, but they were placed there not to hide them from the eyes of men, but to protect them from the chance or deliberate harm that they might (and did) receive when they were exposed to view. In fact, it is not unlikely

that the origin of the closed statue chamber was due to the damage which was known to have been caused to statues standing in the open rooms of the chapel. That many statues did so stand, and that it was not a feature peculiar to Dynasty VI, can be proved.

As early as Dynasty III a statue of Zoser was placed in a serdab in the temple at the Step Pyramid, but in the same temple a statue of the king, accompanied by princesses or goddesses, stood in a small room with an open door.¹⁰ The statue of the king, which bore the name of his Vizier, Im-hotep, seems also to have stood unprotected in the entrance colonnade,¹¹ while fragments of a very large statue of the king,¹² a much earlier colossal statue than that of Weserkaf, cited by Scharff, suggest that this probably stood in an open court. The statues of the king in the form of Ptah apparently were attached in some way openly to the architecture,¹³ probably as were those of Chephren, restored by Hölscher in the court of his pyramid temple. The bust of Prince Ankh-haf (fig. 1) probably stood on a low mud platform, in an open room of his exterior chapel,¹⁴ while the platform in G 1205 and the niches in the chapels of Ka-wab and Min-khaf imply the placing of other statues of Dynasty IV openly in the chapel. The niches of Ka-wab probably suggested the cutting of figures of scribes in the niches of the rock-cut tomb of Meresankh III, toward the end of Dynasty IV, while figures of the queen and her mother were also carved on the walls of this chapel.¹⁵ Similar rock-cut statues were common throughout Dynasty V at Giza and preceded by a long time the statue of Mereruka, mentioned by Scharff.

Prof. Capart has shown¹⁶ that two groups of famous statues of early Dynasty V stood exposed in brick exterior chapels at Saqqarah. The two limestone statues of Ranofer stood against the wall of the chapel, facing the entrance, while a seated figure of the wife was set against the adjoining wall. The wooden statue of the Sheikh el-Beled stood in a similar position, in a recess of the wall, which probably also contained a statue of the wife and another wooden male statue. At Giza the granite pair statue of Nefer-ked was found in position against the back wall of a portico in the Fifth Dynasty tomb G 1152, while the seated figure of Akhet-mery-nesuwt stood in the offering niche of his chapel. A pair of seated statues was even found flanking the entrance of the chapel G 7152, while the same disposition of seated statues occurred at the entrance to the portico of the Seshem-nofer complex of Dynasty VI.¹⁷ These would form a close parallel to royal statues placed in front of temple pylons and were certainly in the open air.

Even though the temple rooms were dimly lighted, many statues were certainly plainly in view to the visitor. In addition to the Chephren, Radedef and Mycerinus examples, might be cited the statues of the sons and daughters of Radedef, found apparently in place in a columned room of their father's temple. The head of the Weserkaf colossus is so large¹⁸ that the statue probably stood in a courtyard, and the same might be suggested for the large alabaster seated figure of Mycerinus and the fragmentary figure of Zoser. A colossal statue of Queen Kha-merer-nebty I¹⁹

¹⁰ Firth and Quibell, *The Step Pyramid*, pl. 63. ¹¹ *L.c.*, pl. 58. ¹² *L.c.*, pl. 95, no. 17.

¹³ *L.c.*, pl. 66. ¹⁴ *BMFA*, xxxvii, p. 43. ¹⁵ *BMFA*, xxv, no. 151. ¹⁶ *JEA*, vi, pp. 225 ff.

¹⁷ Junker, *Vorbericht*, May, 1929, Abb. 3, Taf. VI.

¹⁸ *Annales* xxix, p. 64.

¹⁹ *Annales* x, p. 41.



FIG. 1.—BUST OF PRINCE ANKH-HAF, BOSTON
(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

was placed in an open room of her rock-cut chapel, facing a sort of court. It should be pointed out that, at least in the temples of Dynasties V and VI, statues were not only placed around the walls of temple rooms and in closed serdabs, but also in statue niches, in a special room on the axis of the temple. These niches were presumably closed by wooden doors that could be opened for the ceremonies in front of the statue. These statue niches are not unlike those of Ka-wab and Min-khaf, and they are imitated exactly in the chapel of Ptah-shepses at Abusir, where they are even approached by little ramps like those in front of the niches in the temples. Even if it could be definitely asserted that the sculptor never considered the admiration that the above-mentioned statues would call forth in the visitors who saw them, there can be no doubt that the Great Sphinx of Giza was intended to be seen and to inspire awe in the beholder.

The serdab in the Zoser temple is the earliest closed statue chamber known, but there are several early examples in the Archaic Cemetery at Saqqarah such as that in the tomb of Kha-bauw-sokar. That of Methen is probably a little later, while the cruciform chapel of Ra-hotep at Medum had been blocked up to form a serdab, after the famous seated figures of the prince and his wife were placed there. Although the serdab is infrequent at Giza in Dynasty IV, it cannot be said that before the reign of Mycerinus: "Just as we found no room for reliefs in the mastabas and temples, so we do not find statue rooms in them." The tombs of Hemiwn (reign of Cheops) and Ankh-haf (reign of Chephren) had large interior chapels decorated with reliefs and both contained serdabs. The statue chamber did not become very common at Giza even late in Dynasty IV. The serdab in the tomb of Duwanera (G 5110) was probably of the reign of Mycerinus, while the elaborate arrangement in which statue cubicles surround a panelled room in the exterior chapel of G 5080 is dated by the sealing of Shepseskaf in the burial of the owner Seshem-nofer. The serdabs in G 2150, G 2155 and G 4940 are not much later, if not contemporary with G 5080. It would seem that the more frequent use of closed statue chambers in Dynasty V was designed, as I have suggested, to provide greater protection for statues which had hitherto stood in the open rooms of the chapel. Elaborate provision for statues was made in the first half of Dynasty V at Giza—in the chapel of Seshem-nofer (G 5170) which imitated that of his father (G 5080), in the separate structures which flanked the front of Khnum-baf's tomb, and in the many large statue chambers of Selim Hassan's Ra-wer complex. But we have seen that in two tombs of this time at Saqqarah the large statues of Ka-aper (the Sheikh el-Beled) and Ranofer stood in the chapel.

Scharff recapitulates the theories concerning Egyptian portraiture, which he had expressed earlier, in an article in *Antiquity* (June, 1937, pp. 174 ff.) and in the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* (xxix, pp. 1-38). These are, roughly, that Egyptian sculpture is completely impersonal and that "the ancient Egyptians had no idea of what we call a real portrait of a person." He adds that Egyptian art was produced by workshops and that the Egyptian artist remains anonymous. That the last is largely true cannot be denied. We can never hope to identify the style of an individual artist, but can speak only of the styles of different schools or groups of craftsmen. Nevertheless, the influence of certain gifted individuals must have determined the styles

of these different schools and the fact that a good many names of craftsmen can be collected from Old Kingdom reliefs suggests that these men did not desire to remain entirely anonymous. In citing one of these, the sculptor Ni-ankh-ptah, in the chapel of Ptah-hotep, Scharff has chosen an unfortunate example. The wall on which the little figure of this man occurs is perhaps the only case where the individuality of the carving makes one wonder if we do not have here the definite influence of Ni-ankh-ptah himself.²⁰ Again, in the royal sculpture of Dynasty IV there are two pronounced trends in the representation of the human figure which led Dr. Reisner in *Mycerinus* to speak of the work of Sculptors A and B. I believe that there can be no doubt that the influence of two great master sculptors produced two schools of sculpture, although these men will probably always remain unknown. The origin of the first style may go back as early as the reign of Sneferuw, while that of the second begins perhaps in that of Radedef, earlier than Dr. Reisner believed at the time he first suggested the existence of the two schools.

Scharff states even more explicitly:

“Returning to the question of portrait-sculpture in our sense, I do not deny that this exists in Egyptian art. Its appearance, however, always coincides with a noticeable effort to break the bonds of convention, as we see in the Twelfth Dynasty, in the art of Tell el-'Amarnah, or in the late period, when Greek art was already knocking at the door of Egypt. But within the Pyramid Age, with which I am here dealing, I cannot see any piece of real portrait-sculpture. That a statement like this is not derogatory will now, I hope, be understood without further explanation.”

Scharff's *Journal* article was delivered as a lecture in London in 1938, but we have a later formulation of his ideas in the *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, which appeared in 1939. There, in remarking that there is no true portrait-sculpture in the Old Kingdom, although the Louvre Scribe and the head of the small statue in the Pepy I copper group approach this most closely, he adds a footnote which would seem to be a step toward altering his former view. He admits in this that the limestone reserve-heads from Giza might be portraits and expresses astonishment at the realism of the Boston Ankh-haf bust (fig. 1), which had recently come to his attention. Even in stating this there is some inconsistency, for he points out that the reserve-heads belong to a remarkable type which falls outside the ordinary category of Egyptian sculpture. But since he did not believe that statues were placed in the early Giza tombs, and since the royal statues are all destroyed, these heads, however unusual their form, constituted for him the only sculpture that existed from the reign of Cheops. Since he admits the portraiture in these, it would then follow that all the sculpture preserved from the reign of Cheops represented the real portraiture denied by him as existing in the Old Kingdom. This is, of course, quibbling, because we know that other sculpture did exist in the reign of Cheops. I do find it remarkable, though, that if Scharff recognizes qualities of portraiture in the reserve-heads, he did not see it in the statue of Hemiwn, a contemporary statue which bears the closest stylistic resemblance to the portrait heads and shows the sculptor working in an equally realistic manner. With the reserve-heads and the statue of Hemiwn in mind, as well as the royal sculpture of Radedef, Chephren and Mycerinus (figs. 2-3), the realism of the Ankh-haf bust, remarkable as it is, need not have been so aston-

²⁰ Wreszinski, *Atlas* iii, pls. 15-18.



FIG. 2.—HEAD OF ALABASTER STATUE OF MYCERINUS, CAIRO MUSEUM

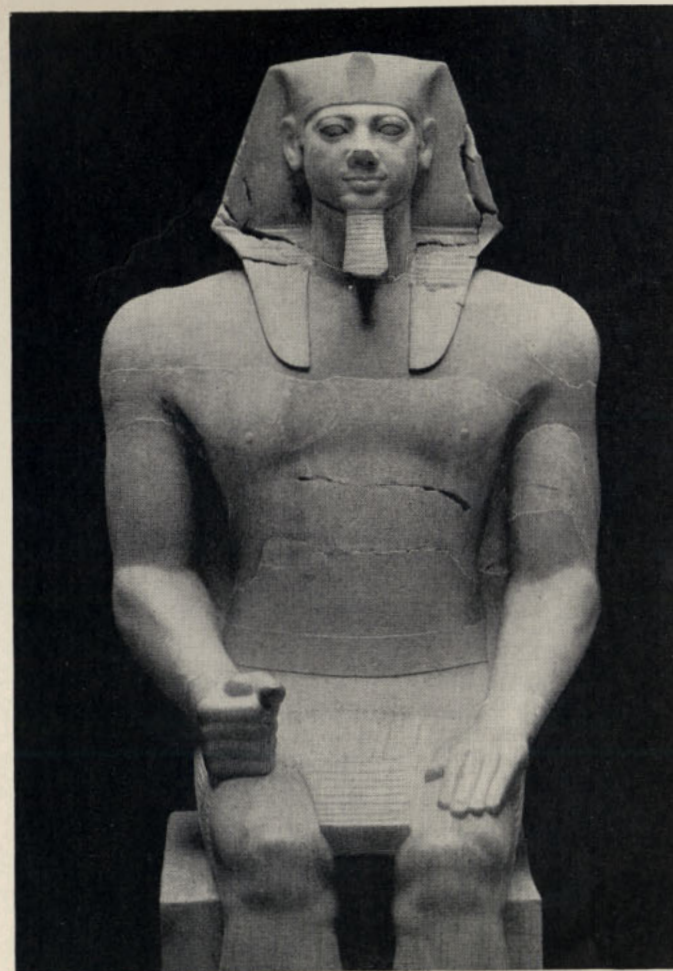


FIG. 3.—HEAD OF ALABASTER FIGURE OF MYCERINUS, BOSTON

(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

ishing. Actually, the difference between the Ankh-haf bust and the Louvre Scribe, which Scharff considers the most important masterpiece of the Old Kingdom, is not so much in the degree of realism involved, but rather in a slight falling off in technical excellence in the Louvre statue.

I should like to say at once that there is unquestionably a type to which by far the greater number of works of a given period conform. Whether one calls this a "Zeitporträt," as Scharff does, or whether one speaks of an ideal type of beauty which was admired by the people of a given time, or simply refers to the style of a period, does not matter. I quite agree that the chief difference between the seated statue of Zoser and the diorite Chephren results from the change in style from Dynasty III to Dynasty IV and not from the personality of the man portrayed. That it is difficult to distinguish the difference between heads of Tuthmosis III and Hatshepsut which conform to a conventional XVIIIth-Dynasty type is naturally to be admitted. But the realistic portraits of Sesotris III and Amenemhat III express no less the period to which they belong, and in a sense represent a type of their own, although a less conventional one, inspired by the personalities of the men themselves. The characters of these two kings express particularly well the time in which they lived. The bitterness and pessimism which appears in their faces, as well as a hard ruthlessness, are equally well expressed in the literature of the Middle Kingdom. What is more, these characteristics are not limited to these two men alone, but appear in the faces of earlier kings of the Dynasty. Moreover, the art of the court in Dynasty XII did not show a general tendency to break with the bonds of convention. In fact, it showed the opposite tendency of perfecting and co-ordinating the much more diversified forms of Dynasty XI. It is only in the wall decorations of private tombs that a certain localism remains as a heritage from the preceding Dynasty. The realistic tendencies which appear in such tombs as those at Beni Hasan, as well as in some of the royal sculpture, are conspicuously absent in most of the private statues, which are even more conventional than the smaller pieces of the Old Kingdom. I would see in the portraits of Sesotris III and Amenemhat III a naturalistic impulse which actuated really great sculptors who were working within the established framework of the style of the period. This was possible of achievement in any period of Egyptian art and is certainly not to be denied to the Old Kingdom.

Although the Tell el-Amarna period seems to me a better choice than the Middle Kingdom or the Late Period as a time when art in all its forms broke the bounds of convention, there is as much mannered convention in the new forms as there is naturalism. While the extreme treatment of some statues of Akhenaten is different from the more traditional Egyptian type, which Scharff rightly recognizes in the Louvre seated statue of the king, it is none the less stylized. The number of pieces which could be classed as credible portraits is really quite small, when those which simply represent the ideal of the bizarre taste of the time are set aside. The amazingly realistic heads of plaster are difficult to classify if we cannot be sure to what extent they are made from casts of the actual face of a person. Although this in no way detracts from our pleasure in looking at them, or the value which they have in bringing before us so vividly the people of Akhenaten's court, they are doubtful evidence in arguing the realism of the sculpture of the time. As casts they would find a paral-

lel in the plaster mask from the Tety Pyramid Temple, a mould made over an actual face, or even the Old Kingdom plaster masks which were modelled over the wrapped features of the mummy. The Tety mask would suggest that such a custom was by no means limited to the Amarna period.

The presence or absence of portraiture in a piece of sculpture has nothing to do with its quality as a work of art, as Scharff rightly points out. But its presence in some of the finest examples of Old Kingdom sculpture has always been so universally accepted, that Scharff's denial of its existence rather naturally evokes surprised protest. That the ownership of an Egyptian statue was largely established by writing the name on the base of the statue is an important fact. In small statues the name had to serve for the identification of the statue with the owner, but I can find no evidence that would make one think that the owner would not prefer to have the statue look like him, that is, within the boundaries of what he expected a statue to look like, to begin with, and providing he had obtained the services of a sculptor who was capable of achieving this. None of the reserve-heads placed in the Giza burial chambers had names inscribed upon them. In fact, there was no conventional place to inscribe a name on a head, nor was there on the bust of Prince Ankh-haf. Since two of the heads were sometimes placed in the same chamber, as in the case of Merytyetes and her husband, or the prince of G 4440 and his negroid wife (figs. 4-5), there would be a natural reason for the sculptor to differentiate the two as much as he could. This would be a perfectly simple and logical impetus toward portraiture. The heads themselves show that this was realized, as even Scharff admits. I see no reason why a similar desire should not have impelled the making of other portrait statues.

Although portraiture is usually not to be expected in the reliefs, any more than it is in small private statues, there are a few outstanding exceptions. Also certain peculiarities in the structure of the body are occasionally observed in reliefs, as they are in a few statuettes which represent dwarfs, or the hump-backed wooden figure from Saqqarah.²¹ These usually occur only in the minor figures of the wall scenes, but Seneb is shown as a dwarf both in his statuette and in the reliefs of his offering niche.²² Just as the Sheikh el-Beled is shown as a fat elderly man, the chief figure in reliefs is sometimes given a portly figure. Good examples are the figure of Khufuw-khaf, on the façade of his chapel, or the father of Meresankh III, Prince Ka-wab, but there are others. It became customary in Dynasty VI to show the owner as a young man on one of the entrance door-jambes, and as a fat man on the opposite side of the door, as in the chapel of Yeduw at Giza. It should be remembered that it was difficult for the sculptor to represent facial peculiarities with the conventions at his disposal. The placing of an eye seen in front view on a profile face hampered him considerably. It was only when the man portrayed had a prominent nose, or unusual structure of the forehead, chin or lips that an individual character could be given to the face. In a few cases where this occurred we are fortunate in being able to compare a statue of a man with his portrait in relief.

The earliest of such comparisons which can be made is between the statue of Zoser and the reliefs from the Step Pyramid precinct. The resemblance seems to me

²¹ *Annales* 1938, pl. XXXVII.

²² Junker, *Vorbericht*, April, 1927, pls. II-V.



FIG. 4.—RESERVE HEAD OF PRINCE FROM G4440, BOSTON

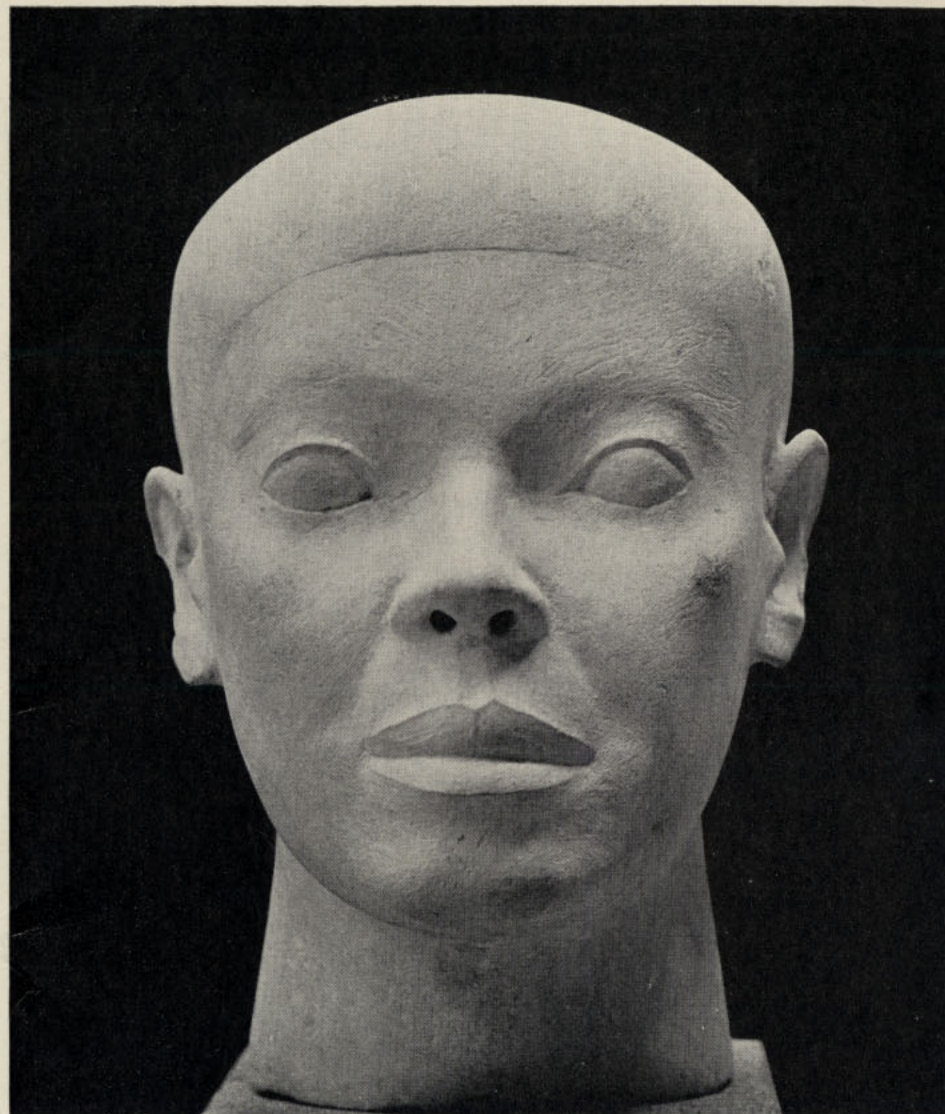


FIG. 5.—RESERVE HEAD OF WIFE OF PRINCE FROM G4440, BOSTON

(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

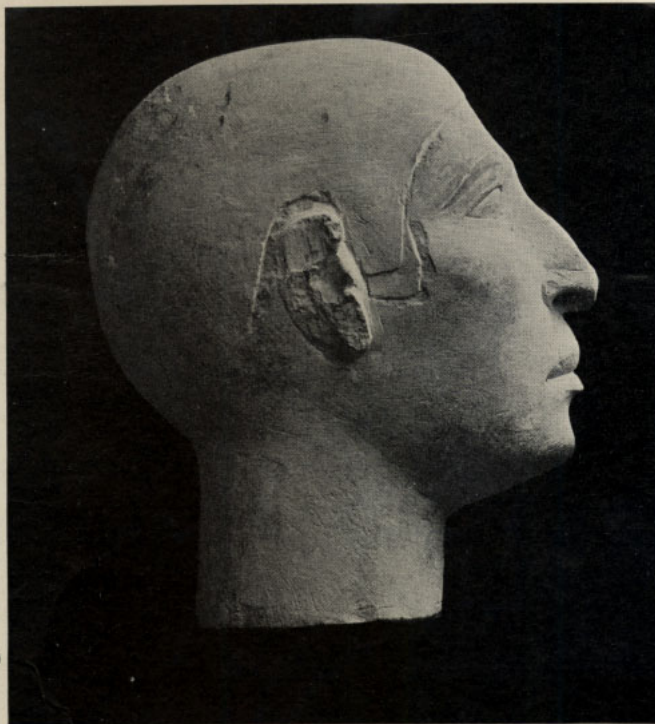


FIG. 6.—RESERVE HEAD OF NOFER, BOSTON
(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



FIG. 7.—RELIEF FROM DOOR-JAMB OF NOFER, BOSTON
(Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

to be striking, and while there is also a similarity to the face of Sa-nekht in the Wady Maghara rock carving, this could be due to the close relationship between two men of the same family.²³ I think that it is possible to say that there are here personal peculiarities which stand out against a background of the general style of the period. This style is reflected not only in the Zoser sculpture and the reliefs of Hesy-ra (who is differentiated from the others by a peculiarly narrow skull in one of his standing figures),²⁴ but also in the somewhat later sculpture of Kha-bauw-sokar, Hathor-nefer-hetep and Akhet-a'a, as well as the statues of Neset in the Louvre, the Turin princess and the standing archaic statue in Brussels. I have discussed this whole subject at greater length in a book still in the press,²⁵ where it has been possible to illustrate the material more fully. Since there has been little attempt to divide up the sculpture of the Old Kingdom into groups that belong together stylistically, this was something of a pioneer effort. Nevertheless, I believe there are grounds for such a grouping of Third-Dynasty material as I have suggested above.

There can be little question, I think, of the resemblance between the reserve-head of Nofer, fig. 6, and the relief on his chapel door-jamb, fig. 7. Attention was long ago called to this. I find the similarity between the relief fragment in Boston and the head of the Hildesheim statue of Hemiwn almost as striking.²⁶ The shape of the forehead and nose, as well as the modelling of the chin and lips, are alike in both heads. Scharff does not see this resemblance, but he need not doubt that the Boston fragment came from the chapel of Hemiwn. Steindorff's attribution was not based alone on the resemblance of the head in relief to the Hildesheim statue. The Boston relief was found with other fragments, one of which bore the prince's name, while others had titles employed by Hemiwn in the reliefs published by Junker. These pieces were found in the limestone débris not far south of the tomb, where the plunderers had dragged the fine stone from the chapel to burn for lime. Even if the name of the prince had not been found on one of these fragments, there could have been little doubt that they came from his tomb. They are carved in low relief of such exceptional quality that, besides the nearby tomb of Hemiwn, there is perhaps only one other chapel in the Western Cemetery, and only two of slightly later date in the Eastern Cemetery, from which they could have come. Nothing else compares with these reliefs in quality, except the slab-stelae, the rare royal reliefs of Dynasty IV and those of Weserkaf and Sahura in Dynasty V. Finally, I should like to mention a portrait in relief in the Brooklyn Museum from the Collection of the New York Historical Society. It was published some time ago by Mrs. Caroline Ransom Williams who first recognized its unusual realism.²⁷ Rare as are these examples, it seems to me that they add sufficient support to the evidence from the statues to make one realize that the sculptors of the Old Kingdom were often guided by a desire to make their statues resemble the people portrayed by them.

BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

WILLIAM STEVENSON SMITH

²³ See *Annales* xxviii, pp. 43 ff. and Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, pl. 48.

²⁴ Quibell, *The Tomb of Hesy*, pl. XXIX, 2.

²⁵ *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*, pp. 301-304.

²⁶ Steindorff, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 73, p. 120.

²⁷ *Bulletin of the New York Historical Society* April, 1918, pp. 14 ff.