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The Discovery of a Pair-Statue near the Pyramid of Menkaure at Giza

By ZAHI HAWASS

(Plates 40-42)

The recent excavations beside the Pyramid of Menkaure at Giza have revealed striking evidence for quarrying in the Ramesside period. This article discusses the possibility that the new discoveries here point to May, Overseer of Works under Ramesses II, who is known from various inscriptions to have been active at Giza.

In June 1996, the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Inspectorate of the Antiquities of Giza decided to re-investigate the area around the third pyramid of Giza (GIII), that of King Menkaure¹). This project was part of a much bigger campaign to improve the display and presentation of the Giza Plateau for visitors and one of the main aims of this campaign was to clear the areas which were filled with fallen blocks and sand.

This pyramid, like its companions to the north, has suffered from stone of robbing in the Middle Ages; its upper limestone casing has all disappeared, and many of the lower casing blocks of red granite lie strewn on the ground around. A huge gash cut into the north face was an unsuccessful attempt to find the entrance, which lies lower down. The site was first described by GREAVES who visited it in 1638. The entrance was discovered in 1817, but it was not until General VYSE examined the area in 1837 that any recorded excavation was carried out here²). VYSE dug into the upper (funerary) temple and the area between the pyramid and the temple. A few years later, LEPSIUS' team surveyed the temple and published a plan³).

The first major excavations, however, started in 1906, when REISNER began his systematic exploration of the area⁴). His work revealed the temples of the subsidiary pyramids, the complete upper temple of GIII and the causeway, valley temple and surrounding pyramid town. More recently, SALEH discovered an industrial stone-working area to the south of the pyramid causeway⁵).

Despite all this activity, the areas south and west of GIII were blocked by debris, including many fallen casing blocks of granite which lay banked up against the pyramid and its three subsidiary pyramids (GIII a-c). In addition to the main purpose of making the area more accessible, there was the likelihood of further discoveries as much of this debris was undisturbed. Boat pits have been found on the south and east sides of Khufu's pyramid (GI)⁶) and on the east side of Khafra's pyr-

¹) The excavation was carried out under the direction of the author of this paper, assisted by ALA SHAHAT, SANA FOUAD, SAHR NASR, ESMAT ABD EL-GANI, and NOHA ABD EL-HAFIZ. I would also like to thank my friends Dr. RAINER STADELMANN and MICHAEL and ANGELA JONES for profitable discussions, and R. J. KACHINSKY for his help in surveying and planning.

²) H. VYSE, *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh I*, London 1840, 150.

³) R. LEPSIUS, *Denkmäler I*, 29.

⁴) G. A. REISNER, *Mycerinus. The Temples of the Third Pyramid at Giza*, Cambridge/Mass. 1931, 8-9.

⁵) A. SALEH, *Excavations Around Mycerinos Pyramid Complex*, MDAIK 30, 1974, 131-54.

⁶) Z. HAWASS, *The Funerary Establishment of Khufu, Khafra and Menkaura during the Old Kingdom*, Ph. D. dissertation, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor 1987, 53-85.

amid (G II)⁷). As no boat pits have yet come to light at G III, it was hoped that these might lie buried beneath the tumble. There was also the possibility of finding builders' ramps and other evidence of original Old Kingdom constructional activities. In order to fulfil these aims, the fallen stones are being plotted in situ before being removed to a nearby location and a photogrammetric map of the pyramid surface is planned to document the blocks still in place.

Recent Excavations

Excavations were started in June on the south side of G III, where bedrock was soon reached, unfortunately with no trace of boat pits. The excavations continued on the east side of the easternmost subsidiary pyramid, G IIIa. Here, the western and northern walls of the G IIIa upper temple were defined. Built of mud brick, and already exposed by REISNER's excavations, they only survive a few courses high. Here also, the foundations of the subsidiary pyramid were revealed. As the bedrock slopes away to the south, a limestone foundation two layers thick had been laid, made of large blocks fitting neatly together and joined with mortar. These supported the lowest course of granite casing. Potsherds found in the sand date to the Old and New Kingdoms.

Discovery of an unfinished Pair-Statue

During the course of the excavations on the north side (fig. 1) of the north-east corner of G IIIa (pl. 40 a), a large pair-statue of red granite was uncovered, lying slightly tilted on one side next to

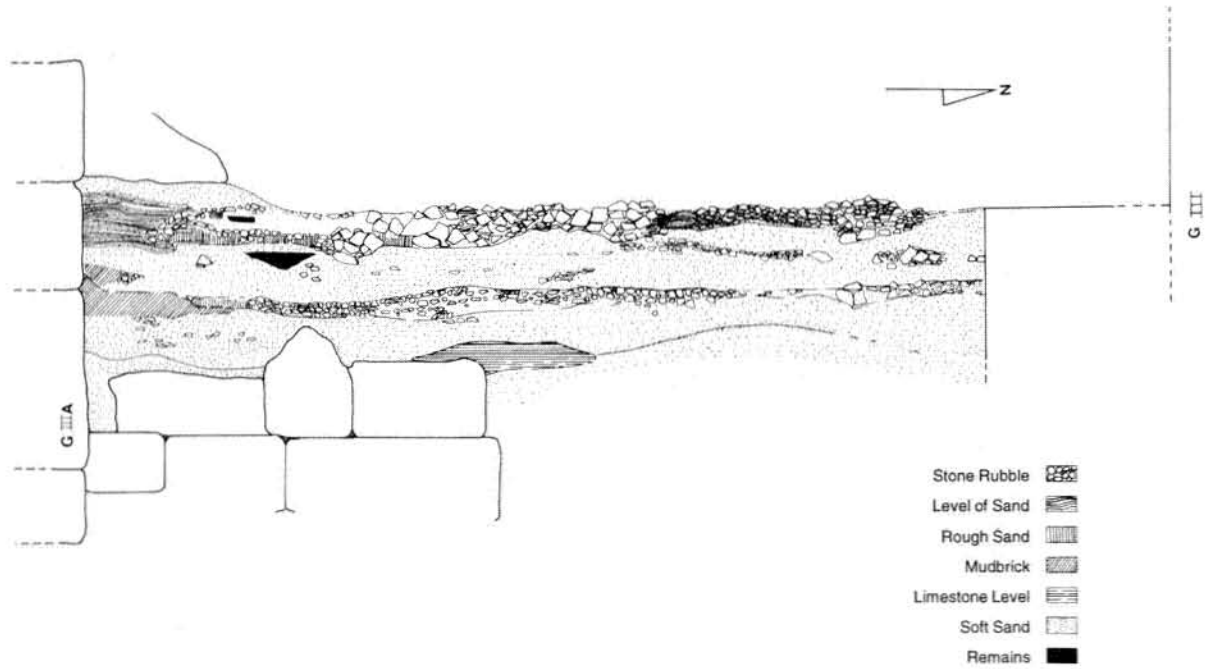


Fig. 1: Section above the pyramid pavement on the north side of G III a (Scale 1:50 cm)
Drawing: Noha. A. Lila 1996

⁷) *Ibid.*, 172-81.

the pyramid foundations (pl. 40 b, fig. 2). Across the centre, a large diagonal crack had split the block in two. The block lay face up. On its upper surface, two standing figures had been roughed-out, the heads towards the west. The piece was clearly unfinished and had been abandoned, probably when it broke in antiquity. It measures 3.39 m in height, 1.55 m across and is 0.55 m thick and weighs an estimated three and a half tons.

Only the rough outlines of the two figures are visible without much detail (pl. 41). They are both standing male figures. The one on the left wears a short kilt; he has a 'nemes' headdress with a sun disk on his head, a uraeus on his forehead and a straight royal beard. Both arms are beside his body; in his right hand he holds a piece of linen (the *mks*), and with his left hand, he touches the hand of the second figure. The statue on the right is a similar male figure also carrying a sun disk on his head above a long wig and a uraeus. His beard, however, is longer. Although broken at the end, it can only be reconstructed as a divine beard which thickens into a curl at the end. The base of the statue is similarly rough and bears no inscriptions.

In view of the unfinished condition of the statue, it is impossible to analyse features which, had the block not been broken and abandoned, were clearly intended to be refined and polished, and thus considerably changed. Even so, there are indications that the two statues had been worked by different hands. The facial features of the two figures are very indistinct but it seems that the royal figure on the left has rather fleshy features in contrast to the softer contours of the divine figure (pl. 42 a). For example, the cheeks of the god are flatter and his eyes are more prominent than those of the king, and his mouth is less full. The god's sun disk is noticeably larger than that of the king.

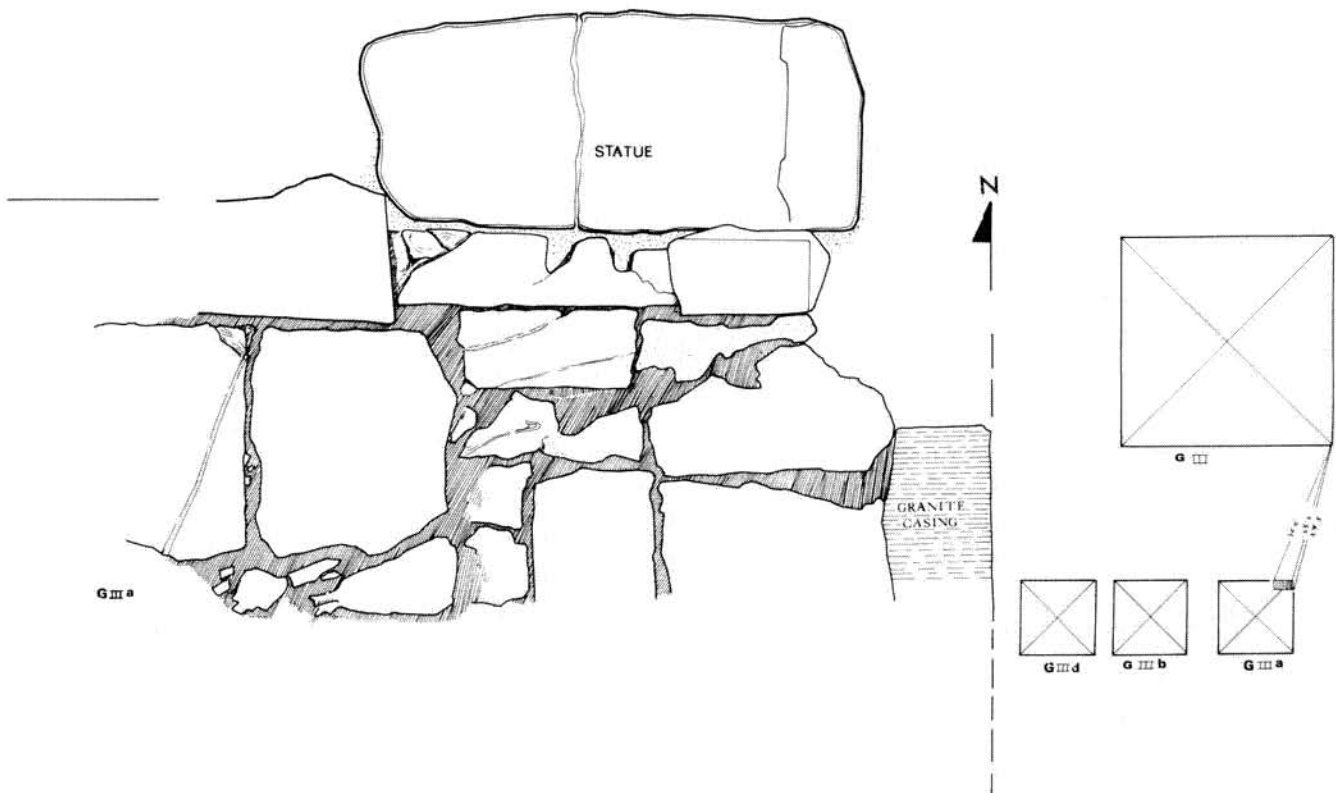


Fig. 2: Location of the statue (Scale 1:50 cm)
Drawing: Noha, A. Lila 1996

Although uninscribed, the style and proportions of this pair-statue indicate that the king is Ramesses II accompanied by a solar deity.

The statue had been sculpted from a block extracted from the lowest courses of G IIIa, possibly from the north side where there is a gap of similar dimensions in the casing. Small granite fragments, the debitage of the sculpture, were found around it. Elsewhere in the corridor between G III and its subsidiary pyramid, the tumbled granite blocks from the casing show signs of being reworked in situ into offering tables, paving slabs and column drums. One such block bears on one side a rough hieroglyph for *t* and on the other, a *htp* sign in relief. Stone pounders and hammers were found nearby and the traces of some black powder which may have been produced by the stone-working.

No inscriptional evidence has yet been found in this area to date this activity. New Kingdom and later pottery found in the upper temple indicates that it was visited at that time, but does not provide evidence of cult activity⁸). There is also evidence that some of the granite blocks and pillars were removed during the reign of Ramesses II⁹), and some of the potsherds may be of that date.

Identification of the Pair-Statue

The huge size of this statue group, the red granite from which it was carved and the stocky proportions of the figures all agree with a Ramesside date¹⁰) and it is safe to assume that the royal figure represents Ramesses II. There are several examples of group or pair-statues of Ramesses II accompanied by deities: A statue from Ehnasiya (Herakleopolis) shows the Memphite triad, with Ptah and Sekhmet on either side of Ramesses II who wears the blue crown¹¹). The left hand of the king touches the hand of Sekhmet in a similar gesture to that of the Giza pair-statue. The cartouche and inscription are written on the lower part of the statue.

A pair-statue from Buto¹²) shows a seated Ramesses II with Sekhmet. Both the goddess and the king have sun disks on their heads, but the king's hands rest on his knees and do not touch those of the goddess. A similar example of Ramesses II seated beside Sekhmet comes from Tanis¹³).

Another triad statue from Memphis¹⁴) depicts Ramesses II with Ptah and Sekhmet. Again, the king has a sun disk on his head. The space between the statues is inscribed. Finally, a badly-damaged triad from Benha (Athribis)¹⁵) depicts Ramesses II between two human-headed solar deities, each with a sun disk and uraeus, probably Re-Atum and Re-Horakhty. The king also has a sun disk on his head.

On the Giza pair-statue, the divinity accompanying the king, although clearly a solar deity wearing the sun disk, is more difficult to identify because the details that normally distinguish the different forms of a the sun god Re are absent (pl. 42 b). Of the disk-bearing gods, Khepri usually has the face of a scarab beetle and Amun-Re is shown with two plumes behind the disk. Re-Horakhty and Horus are usually depicted with falcon faces, as is occasionally Horemakhet, the New Kingdom god identified with the Great Sphinx. The most likely candidate is therefore Re, the god of Heliopolis, in his human-headed form as Re-Atum.

The use of the Giza Pyramids as a convenient stone quarry during the New Kingdom is well

⁸) REISNER, *op. cit.*, 22, plan I, room 37.

⁹) *Ibid.*, 33; U. HÖLSCHER, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Chephren*, Leipzig 1912, 67.

¹⁰) R. FREED, *Ramesses the Great: the Pharaoh and his Time*, Charlotte 1988, 24-49.

¹¹) *Ibid.*, 57.

¹²) F. MEKKAWI, *Recent Excavations at Tell el-Fara'in, Discussions in Egyptology*, special no. 1, 1989, 204, fig. 11.

¹³) P. MONTET, *Les nouvelles fouilles de Tanis*, Paris 1933, 113-4, pls. 55-59.

¹⁴) A. MOUSSA, *A statue of Ptah, Sekhmet and Ramesses II from Memphis*, *SAK* 9, 1981, 285-88, pls. VI-VIII.

¹⁵) This triad was moved from Benha to Giza and is now located in front of the Giza Pyramids storeroom.

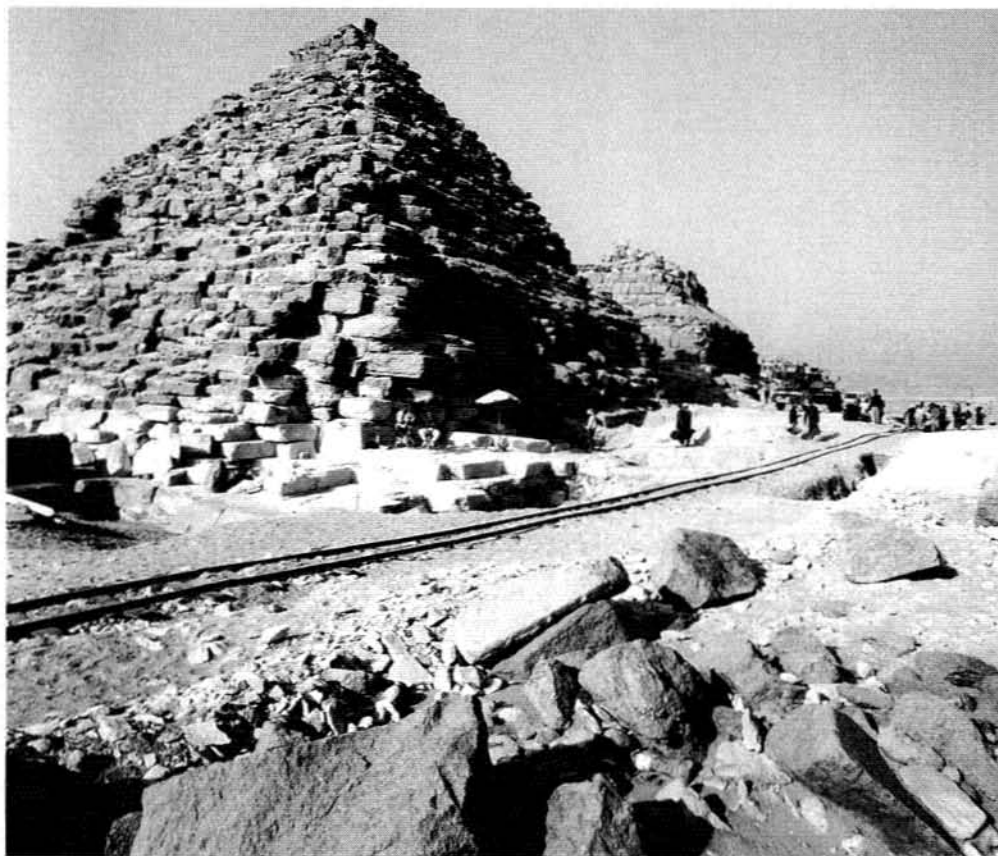
documented. The "Dream Stele" of Tuthmosis IV is carved on a reused lintel from Khafra's upper temple, and the masonry used to repair the Sphinx at this time may well have come from the nearby causeway. Granite casing blocks, probably from Giza, were used by Ramesses II's builders in the West Hall of the Temple of Ptah at Memphis.

Elsewhere, May, the overseer of works in the reign of Ramesses II, left several steles in the vicinity of Giza, and was brazen enough to leave his name twice on the rock face at the north-west corner of Khafra's pyramid enclosure¹⁶). The shorter inscription gives his name and the title: "Overseer of Work in the Temple of Ra". The longer one, written on May's behalf by his assistant, Pamenyon, states that he was the "Overseer of Works in the building 'Brilliant is Ramesses Meryamon' in the great house of the prince". This building seems to have been an addition of Ramesses II to the main sanctuary of the sun god of Heliopolis¹⁷) and it has been assumed that May was involved in removing granite from Khafra's pyramid for reuse in this building project.

Thus it may well have been May's men who were responsible for the reworking of stones at Menkaure's pyramid, including our granite pair-statue. As was usual with large sculptures or architectural pieces, the shapes were roughed-out in the quarry in order to minimise the weight before transportation; the final details and polishing would not be done until they arrived at their final destination. The inscriptions on the Giza plateau make no mention of actual quarrying but the archaeological evidence of blocks being cut up for reuse is incontrovertible. May's association with the Temple of the sun-god at Heliopolis is recorded on various stelae as well as on the two rock-cut inscriptions, and as no large temple of the sun-god has been found in the immediate vicinity of Giza, it is extremely likely that these blocks were destined for Heliopolis. This destination also agrees with the identification of this pair-statue as a representation of Ramesses II and the god Re-Atum, one of the chief forms of the sun-god whose centre of worship was at Heliopolis.

¹⁶) S. SAUNERON, *Le chef de travaux May*, *BIFAO* 53, 1953, 57-58; C. M. ZIVIE, *Giza au deuxième millénaire*, *BdE* 70, Le Caire 1976, 212.

¹⁷) G. A. GABALLA, *Some Nineteenth Dynasty Monuments in the Cairo Museum*, *BIFAO* 71, 1972, 118-137, especially p. 132, note (b).



a) The excavation at the north-east corner on the north side of G IIIa



b) The pair-statue in situ with pyramid of King Menkaure behind



The pair-statue of Ramses II



a) The pair-statue; detail



b) The pair-statue; detail