MEDALLION PORTRAIT OF SAINT NICHOLAS

Byzantine Cloisonné Enamel
An Egyptian Portrait Head of the XII Dynasty

In January, 1928, Dr. Denman W. Ross presented to the Museum the Egyptian head illustrated on page 63 (Figs. 5 to 8). The fragment is of brown quartzite, 14.3 cm. in height, and once formed part of a statuette. The greater part of the face and the fore part of the headdress approximately to its highest point are preserved. The hair is concealed by a linen head-cloth. This is not the royal khaft with its sharply defined folds and angles. There is no uraeus, and the edging band across the forehead, usual with the royal headdress, is absent. The cloth ends in a clearly defined single line low down on the forehead. The brow, partly covered by the headress, is broad and nearly vertical, and the bridge of the nose projects the same plane downward between the eyes. The eyebrows are long and slightly arched, and are not indicated in relief as is so frequently the case. The rendering of the eyes is striking: of moderate size, with naturalistically modelled lids, tear ducts clearly indicated, and no kohl stripe, they are remarkable for the way in which they bulge from their rather deep sockets. Anatomically this physical peculiarity is admirably reproduced, and the swelling of the eyeball behind the lids is very evident. The nose is largely broken away, but was broad and fleshy at the base, with prominent nostrils. The mouth is straight and thin-lipped and the chin firm but slightly receding.

Mouth and chin are bruised, but their forms are pronounced characteristics which appear also in the Boston head. Here the eyes have again the marked characteristics of the Petrie head. Here the eyes have again the marked characteristics seen in the Cairo head. The protuberance of the eyes, as also the depth of cutting below the orbital ridges, is more marked in the Petrie head, and the base of the nose appears to be somewhat broader, while the mouth droops slightly at the corners. In other respects the two are very like. A third portrait of Sesostris III is one of a group found by Naville and Hall at Deir el Bahari, in 1904-1905, now in the Cairo Museum, and figured in Deir el Bahari, XI Dynasty, Pt. I, Pl. XIX G. The face is that of a much older man than either the Cairo portrait or the Petrie head. Here the eyes have again the marked characteristics seen in the Boston head, and the mouth has a more pronounced droop than that of the Abydos portrait. Finally, I would cite the magnificent quartzite fragment in the Carnarvon Collection, recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in New York, through whose courtesy I am able to give the illustration (Fig. 2). The resemblance to our head is so striking that it is sufficient to let the illustrations speak for themselves. I would only observe that the Carnarvon head represents Sesostris III as an elderly man with the

1 Reg. No. 28.1.

1 It should be noted that the question of the attribution of the sculptures referred to in this article is still under debate. Such a well-known authority as Professor Jean Carpart of Brussels, for example, inclines to the view that the Karnak Sesostris, Petrie’s Abydos head, the Deir el Bahari group, and the Carnarvon fragment are really Old Kingdom sculptures sculpted by Sesostris III. On the other hand, the Hawara Amenemhat III he would attribute to the Eighteenth dynasty, for the reason that the two creases represented on the neck are a characteristic of work of that period and are not known earlier. He considers this figure to be a cult statue made in the Eighteenth dynasty for the mortuary temple of Amenemhat, the service of which was still being kept up.
Brown Quartzite Head

Ross Collection

Dynasty XII
resultant deepening of lines and loosening of the flesh, while the Boston head shows a person of mature but not advanced years. In these four portraits, as also in the example under consideration, the structure of the skull and the general forms of its flesh covering seem to me to be the same, excepting only the somewhat receding chin of the Boston head, and even this feature appears, from the photographs available to me, to be found in the Deir el Bahari statue and in the Carnarvon fragment.

Turning to representations of Amenemhat III, the best known is the seated limestone statue in almost perfect preservation, which was found in his pyramid temple at Hawara, and is now in the Cairo Museum (Fig. 3). The face of this statue is one of the great examples of sensitive modelling in Egyptian portraiture, and again we find the same structural peculiarities, but less harshly and prominently displayed. This is the work of a different school from that of the figures we have been examining. They come from Thebes and Abydos in the south; this statue was found on the outskirts of the Fayum in northern Egypt, and seems to be the product of an older and more sophisticated art, descended from the great Memphite traditions of the Old Kingdom. Again we see the same protuberant eyeball, the same vertical forehead, and the same prominent nose, and chin is somewhat damaged. It will be once noted that the form of the cheek bones and the general modelling of the lower face are closely similar to what we see in the head under discussion.

As a result of the comparisons I have here indicated, I would put forward the opinion that the portrait head given to the Museum by Dr. Ross should be grouped with the sculptures generally attributed to Sesostris III and Amenemhat III of the Twelfth Dynasty, more especially with the figures of the former king. In the Pyramid Age portraits of kings sometimes occur without the uraeus, but I recall only one instance in the Middle Kingdom of a statue with neither royal headdress nor uraeus, that of the fourth statue of King Hor, which is in a class apart. It is only this absence of all insignia of royalty which causes hesitation in attributing our head to Sesostris, but at least we can say that it represents, if not the king himself, a person closely related to him—a prince of the blood royal.

D. D.

Prophets and Apostles in the Creed Tapestry

The Flemish tapestry given to the Museum in 1908 by Mrs. John H. Wright, in memory of her son, Eben Wright, and her father, Lyman Nichols, has, through the intervening years, been studied and enjoyed by many, not only on account of its beauty of color and the fine dignity of its design, but also because it is a splendid example of religious iconography of the culminating period of the middle ages, the last years of the fifteenth century.

Although crowded with richly clad figures, the design, through its qualities of serene order and balance, avoids all sense of confusion, and, when the underlying thought of the designer is understood, reveals a fine logic in the apparently arbitrary arrangement of its scenes.

The main field of the tapestry, enclosed by a narrow border of fruit and leaves set in a frame suggestive of architectural stone carving, is divided into four panels by jewelled columns. In each of these panels a scene from the Bible is represented.

Gathered in the background of the first scene are angels with many-colored wings, which shade from pink and yellow through green and blue. They are witnesses of the creation of Eve. On the left stands God the Father in rich robes with crown and sceptre. On the right Adam lies sleeping on the ground, while from his side rises the pale and shadowy figure of Eve. In the foreground, facing each other, are seated the figures of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Apostle Peter, identified by their names on scrolls. The blue scroll held by Jeremiah also bears the inscription, "Patrem invocabimus qui terran[m] fecit et condidit c[o]elos" (cf. Jeremiah 32: 17), "We call upon the Father who made the earth and founded the heavens." On a pink scroll which curls over the knee of St. Peter are these words of the creed, "Credo in deum Patrem omnipotentem creatorem c[oe]li et terrae," "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

In the center of the second scene Christ stands in the waters of the Jordan. On the left is John the Baptist, whose rich brocaded robe has slipped down so that the traditional "raiment of camel's hair" is revealed beneath it (Matthew 3: 4). On the right an angel holds Christ's mantle. This, as well as all the other costumes which appear in the tapestry, is made of richly patterned fabric skillfully woven with silk and wool to give the effect of gold brocaded on color, and of the shimmering of light and shadow on its long smooth folds. That real gold was not used in the weaving is to-day a matter for congratulation. The gold would have tarnished and darkened, and the original relation of color values been lost. As it is, the tapestry seems lighted from within by a pale harmonizing gleam of gold. In the upper part of the panel God the Father rises from a band of pink and blue clouds, in an aureole of light. Along the rays

*Reg. No. 20, 1213.