Fig. 1.  *The Planet Mercury*  
German Woodcut, 1531  
Otis Norcross Fund, Helen and Alice Colburn Fund
MEMBRA DISPERSA

King Amenhotep II Making an Offering

DURING the season of 1898–1899, W. M. Flinders Petrie, the great British excavator, worked with a small staff at Hu, once the capital of the VIIth nome of Upper Egypt, halfway between Abydos and Dendera.¹ The Latin authors called the place Diospolis Parva to distinguish it from Diospolis Magna, which is Thebes, and nearby cemeteries show that the site must have been of importance from Predynastic to Roman times. Among the finds which came to this Museum from Hu as gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund, was a small royal head of

Hu, we found a small white marble head of a young king; and though we thoroughly searched the whole top dust in which it lay, and all the graves within ten yards of it, not a chip more was to be found of the statue. From the work, and the quality of the stone, it seems to be early Ptolemaic; but if a Ptolemy, it cannot be earlier than Ptolemy V., 204-181, b.c., by the portraiture. 12

But when the head came to the Museum in October, 1899, it was accompanied by a description which stated “... probably Ptolemy III or perhaps rather later,” and as such it has been exhibited in our galleries ever since, for lack of a better attribution. To be sure, several scholars had, over the years, doubted its Ptolemaic origin, among them the late Jean Capart who was inclined to date it to Dynasty XVIII. More recently the head was compared with material collected in this Department for the Corpus of Late Egyptian Sculpture, and this preliminary examination indicated that it could not belong to Late Dynastic, not to mention Ptolemaic, times.

It was therefore temporarily taken off exhibition for further study.

As Petrie had rightfully stated the head shows a king of youthful appearance (Figs. 1-4). 3 He wears the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, provided, right above the forehead, with head and hood of a royal cobra, the uraeus, while the rest of the serpent’s body is not shown. The material is indeed a marble-like crystalline limestone, cream-colored through corrosion on the surface, but nearly white in the break. 4 It is well suited for carving in great detail as can be seen especially in the head of the cobra. The king’s double crown rests low on the forehead. His eyes are rather wide; the rim of the upper lid is outlined and, at the outer corners, extended into a long cosmetic line in low relief with widened terminal. The eyebrows too are greatly drawn out and rendered as plastic bands in low relief. The eyeball appears at first glance rather flat; but in the side view it becomes apparent that the lower part is cut back. The right tearduct has been worked out in greater detail than the left one. The cheek bones are prominent and stand close together and contribute to the individualistic expression of the face which is characterized by the long, straight, pointed nose, the slightly protruding mouth with raised corners and the small well-rounded chin. A great deal of fine craftsmanship was

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applied to the carving of the face, noticeably in the almost invisible incised lines tracing the alar furrows of the nose and the margins of the lips. Nostrils and philtrum are superficially indicated, which holds true also for details of the ears, but in the latter the sculptor’s skill and daring are once more demonstrated by the degree to which the helix has been separated from the royal crown.

Petrie called it the head of a young king, and every feature of the face indeed conveys the impression of delicate youth. We shall see later whether this head can be taken to be the actual portrait of a royal personage. The head was probably separated from its body on purpose. The break at neck level is “clean” and the slight damage to the edge of the lower Egyptian crown above the left eye and the right ear, as well as to the upper helix of the latter, may have been caused when the head was severed. The face is perfectly preserved, and there are only tiny chips missing from the upper edges of the back pillar; a fall — backwards or forwards — would have
left much heavier traces. On the left side a small piece of the inner surface of the shoulder is preserved which shows that the neck itself could not have been very long.

In studying the head, attention was focused on the back pillar which, at least to this writer, seemed rather unusual. Retaining its standard shape to just above ear level where it meets the double crown (Fig. 1) it then loses in depth and ends, as low relief, in a point which, especially when seen from the back, lies just below the rounded top element of the Lower Egyptian crown (Fig. 4). Here evidently was a distinctive feature of — as it then appeared — exceptional form, and by good fortune an article came out at the same time where Mr. Jean Leclant drew attention to this unusual shape of the back pillar on a statue found by Mr. Henri Chevrier at Karnak. This statue inscribed for King Amenhotep II (1450–1423 B.C.), of which Mr. Jean Leclant drew attention to this unusual shape of the back pillar on a statue found by Mr. Henri Chevrier at Karnak. This statue inscribed for King Amenhotep II (1450–1423 B.C.), of which Mr.

1 Orientalia (Rome), N.S. 20 (1951), p. 464: "... la partie supérieure d'une splendide statue de granit rose, d'Amenophis II assis, coiffé du pschent et appuyé à un pilier dorsal terminé en pointe."
Chevrier kindly furnished a photograph, represents the king wearing the same double crown decorated with the uraeus as the then unnamed, beardless ruler of the Boston head. The only difference is that the Karnak king is adorned with a ceremonial beard but in spite of it a great resemblance between the features of the two heads is undeniable.

Thus it seemed likely that our head represented King Amenhotep II, especially since style and workmanship conformed well with what is known from other royal representations in the round of Dynasty XVIII. Yet, there was no definite proof, and a study of other pieces of sculpture, inscribed for Amenhotep II, seemed necessary in order to come to a conclusion. It so happens that a nearby collection, that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, has a kneeling royal statuette, lightly inscribed on the belt buckle with the prenomen of Amenhotep II, Aa-keperu-ra (Figs. 5 and 6). The statuette, made of ordinary white limestone, has a height of about one foot, and its head is almost of the same size as the Boston sculpture.

The double crown, the uraeus, and, above all, the pointed back pillar offer exact parallels. Furthermore eyes, eyebrows and cosmectic lines are identical in both heads. That the New York statuette nevertheless appears to have a different expression lies mainly in the fact that it lacks the last touch of the sculptor's hand: the mouth has only been roughly carved, the beard is without incised hair lines, the name on the belt buckle has merely been outlined but not yet cut in detail, and the area between neck and back pillar (cf. Figs. 1 and 12) had not been deepened.

Here, then, was another Amenhotep II with the peculiar back pillar, and the similarity of the New York and Boston heads seemed sufficiently strong to assume, as a working theory, that our head represented King Amenhotep II, perhaps in the same attitude as the statuette in the Metropolitan Museum. Yet, there was no proof, and stylistic analysis alone would (considering the present state of Egyptian art history) never result in evidence conclusive even to those unfamiliar with the complex field of Dynasty XVIII royal sculpture.

Turning to the writings of the ubiquitous antiquarian, Professor Wiedemann, it was learned that Amenhotep II had left quite a number of kneeling statues but the most striking reference was that to a headless example in the Louvre. Neither material nor size were mentioned, and it was not until the summer of 1952 that the occasion arose to in-

8 Just before this article went to press Mr. Chevrier wrote that
the back pillar bears a sketch of the name of King Tuthmosis III,
father and predecessor of Amenhotep II. This seems
to indicate that the statue was originally designed to represent the former, but was finished under the latter's rule. To what extent the features may have been adapted for Amenhotep II cannot be decided until the statue has been fully published. See also H. Chevrier, in Annales du Service des Antiquites de l'Egypte, 51 (1951), p. 555, pl. III, fig. 1.

9 M.M.A. Acc. No. 13.182.6; probably from Thebes. Total height 29.3 cm.; height of base 2.5 cm.; width of base 9.6 to 9.9 cm.; depth of base 17 cm.; width of back pillar at base 3.1 cm.; width of back pillar at neck 2 cm.; Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 11 (1916), pp. 211 and 212, fig. 1. G. Hoyningen-Huene and G. Steindorff, Egypt, second ed. (New York, 1945), p. 99 (illus.). Nora E. Scott and Ch. Shoen, Egyptian Statuettes (New York, 1946), fig. 19. Mr. William C. Hayes and Miss Nora E. Scott, of the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, kindly granted permission to illustrate the statuette here and furnished the measurements as well as bibliographical references.

8 A. Wiedemann, Ägyptische Geschichte (Gotha, 1884), p. 375.
9 Loc. cit.: "... ein kopffloses Exemplar im Louvre..." but none of the bibliographical references (see below, note 10) are given by Wiedemann.
Fig. 11. The Louvre Statuette with a Plaster Cast of the Boston Head

spect the original in Paris. The material turned out to be exactly the same as that of the Boston head, the attitude that of the New York statuette and the inscription at the front of the base contained both names of the king while a somewhat sketchy later addition on the belt buckle bears the prenomen of Tuthmosis IV (1423–1410 B.C.), son and successor of Amenhotep II. This statuette (Figs. 7–10) seemed to be the missing torso. A tracing of the break at the neck was taken and, later, compared with the break of the Boston head. The outlines of both matched within a fraction of an inch, a plaster cast of the head was made and shipped to Paris and finally word was received from the Louvre that the head undoubtedly belonged to the torso of King Amenhotep II although it did not fit it perfectly since the break on the torso

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had been pared down. In the summer of 1953 the plaster cast of the Boston head was photographed on the Paris torso (Figs. 11-13).

As has been mentioned before, the break of the Boston head is clean and has never been tampered with. The neck of the Louvre torso, however, had been smoothed off at some time in the past and a shallow groove was worked out which extends into the back pillar (Fig. 10). No doubt it was done to receive another head in lieu of the one which was lost, but it is difficult to state when this repair had taken place. As we have seen, the Boston head preserves on its left side a small part of the left shoulder (Fig. 1). This projects awkwardly when the head is fitted to its torso (Figs. 11-13), but the reason is obvious.

11 Grateful acknowledgments are due to Mr. Jacques Vandier, Conservateur-en-chef du Département des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Louvre, and to his able Assistant, Miss Paule Krieger, for their help and for the many courtesies with which they facilitated the study and photography of the torso. Mr. Vandier also kindly permitted its publication in this Bulletin.

12 "Right" and "left," as applied to sculpture, always refer to the right and left sides of the sculpture itself, not to those of the observer's viewpoint.
Whatever caused head and torso to be separated, heavily damaged the upper portion of the left shoulder, and when the repair was undertaken this portion of the shoulder had to be pared down considerably in order to obliterate the injury to the surface. The work has been expertly done, but as a result the left shoulder of the statuette is much lower than the right one (Figs. 7, 11, and 13).

The damage to the left shoulder, the remaining piece on the left side of the neck of the Boston head, and the fact that most people are right-handed permit but one conclusion: that the head was severed by a strong blow against the base of the neck at the left side. In tipping over, the slight injuries mentioned before may have occurred on the right side of the head. There are more convenient means by which a statuette can be smashed and the evidence seems to indicate that it was intended to cut off the head but not to destroy it. Again we are faced with an enigma which evades solution. Why was the head severed? Who made the adjustment at the neck of the Louvre statuette? Has the addition of the name of Tuthmosis IV on the belt a bearing on these problems? There are no answers to these questions at present. The Boston head was excavated by Petrie in the “top dust” of the Roman cemetery at Hu in 1898–99, while the torso came to the Louvre in 1857 from the collection of the Armenian businessman and collector Giovanni Anastasi. It is not known where he obtained the statuette nor when and from whom he acquired it, and thus the separation of head and body will probably remain the riddle it is now.

To photograph the Boston head on its torso in the original position, allowance had to be made for the small section of about three millimeters now missing. Yet this does not seriously mar the composition of the statuette as a whole: the representation of a kneeling king offering two round jars, probably full of wine, to an unknown god. This scene is well attested in the round since the Old Kingdom, but while it is there full of tense, almost nervous feeling which implies movement, the Louvre statuette is static, in perfect repose and almost casual in appearance. The calm which emanates from it is heightened by the pleasing expression on the face. Tradition had frozen the form; no deviation from the accepted attitude was conceivable, and only the craftsman’s skill raises the sculpture above the standard of the conventional.

This sculptural skill, already observed in the head, has been lavishly applied to the carving of hands and legs and skirt. The belt shows the neat rhomboid pattern known from royal representations since Dynasty I. The cartouche in the center was not envisaged originally; the name of Amenhotep II is
found at the front of the base, apparently an innovation introduced by this king since similar sculptures of his predecessors, as well as one of his own, bear the royal cartouche on top of the base, in front of the knees. The modeling of the torso, however, requires special attention as it is so obviously not the hardened body of the great sportsman Amenhotep II is known to have been, but that of a very young boy, supple and tender, with rounded breasts and a navel which is deeply set in soft flesh. This well coincides with the youthful expression of the face, but it has to be remembered that Amenhotep II is here represented with full royal regalia and that he no longer was a boy when he became co-regent of his father in 1450 B.C. By endowing the king deliberately with an immature body, the sculptor probably wanted to stress his juvenility, but why he did so in this case is not known.

As a final problem remains the question whether we have in the Boston head a portrait of the king, a true likeness of his features, and the answer is not easily found. The face obviously has some individual traits, especially in the pouting mouth, but little work has been done on the iconography of Amenhotep II and one is still more or less obliged to study each inscribed piece individually before reaching any conclusions. Egyptian sculpture tended, at all times, to formalize and to idealize — trends which place heavy obstacles in the way of portrait studies. By observing every detail some characteristics of the physiognomy can be defined, but unless they sum up to a perfectly individual countenance, they cannot be taken as component parts of a true portrait. Let us see how this applies to Amenhotep II.

Taking the Boston head as a starting point, available examples of the likeness of King Amenhotep II can be divided into two groups. The first more or less faithfully repeats the characteristic features of the head under discussion, notably the shape of the eyes and nose, the small protruding mouth, the youthfully bright aspect of the face. They are: The new statue from Karnak.

None of the other statues and statuettes (cited below in notes 22 ff.) show this treatment of the body.

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13 Hatchepstut: New York no. 29.3.1 (Nora E. Scott and Ch. Sheeler, Egyptian Statues [New York, 1943], eleventh page); New York no. 50.3.1 (H. E. Winlock, Excavations at Deir el Bahri [New York, 1942], fig. 52, right).

14 Tuthmosis III: Cairo no. 42995 (G. Legrain, Statues et statuettes des rois et particuliers, vol. 1 [Cairo, 1924], p. 45, pl. XXXIII); Munich no. 60 (Eul Wolters, Führer durch die Glyptothek [Munich, 1930], p. 12, Kunsthalle Basel, Schätze altägyptischer Kunst [Basel, 1953], pp. 48-49, no. 115); New York no. 25.2.34 (Nora E. Scott and Ch. Sheeler, Egyptian Statues [New York, 1944], fig. 17).


17 None of the other statues and statuettes (cited below in notes 22 ff.) show this treatment of the body.

18 See above, notes 5-6.
Karnak, between Pylons V and VI [2]. Karnak, Room XVII of the Sanctuary complex [2] (Fig. 15); Collection Albert Gallatin no. 19, 40 Boston, MFA no. 29.11324 (Fig. 16); Louvre no. E. 138892; as well as several statues from the king's tomb, now in Cairo.

The variety is bewildering, but gradually the main traits mentioned above become visible although they are far from resulting in a definite picture as far as the second group is concerned. The first group, however, and primarily the Boston head, conveys the impression of a youth with a characteristic face, and his features are sufficiently strongly indicated to let us recognize the individual. Thus one would not hesitate to call the likeness of the first group a portrait; and that it lacks the expression of personality, which alone distinguishes a true portrait from the average likeness, may be attributed to the tender age of the live model. Without its torso in the Louvre the head would forever have remained in the class of antiquities assigned to a definite king with no more than archaeological and stylistic conclusiveness — sufficient proof to the art historian, but not always conclusive enough to those who prefer to have written proof as well.

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Uninscribed. G. Legrain, loc. cit., p. 46, pl. XLVII.


Unpublished. Porter and Moss, op. cit., pl. LXXV.

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