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Pharaoh's Portraiture: Between Nature and Propaganda

My interest in images of pharaohs began with a relief, and to be more specific with a stone tablet where an Egyptian artist made a stylus sketch of the head of a pharaoh wearing a short wig (**fig. 1**). This item is now in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw.[1] It was acquired in Luxor by Professor Kazimierz Michałowski, who in 1937–39 directed Polish-French excavations in the Upper Egyptian city of Edfu.[2] Since the relief belongs to a group of the so-called sculptors' models,[3] it found itself among objects of a similar function originating from Edfu, where in the workshop of an anonymous sculptor they served as prototypes of motifs (hieroglyphs and human figures) adorning the walls of a monumental temple devoted to the god Horus, built during the Ptolemaic Period.[4] Sculptors' models from this period were the subject of my master's thesis,[5] written under the supervision of Professor Michałowski.

From the very beginning of research it was clear the sketch of the pharaoh's head differed iconographically and stylistically from the collection of relics from Edfu, which are homogeneous in this respect. Among the hitherto published ancient Egyptian reliefs and paintings, I found no analogy that would make it possible to date this model. During the several months of my first visit to Egypt (1969), taking part in the Polish excavations in Alexandria, I constantly kept returning to the nagging question of the dating of the anepigraphic exercise left by an Egyptian sculptor from the pharaoh era.

A turning point came with my first trip to the south of Egypt (at the turn of 1970), and particularly to Thebes, today known as Luxor. A novice archaeologist, the few days spent in this land of temples and tombs made my head swirl. Questions kept coming that I could not

[1] The National Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. 141274. See Karol Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvel Empire* (Warsaw, 1976), p. 125 (13, ostraca a), n. 2, table CXXVI, fig. 278. Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Mediterranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences, (18)19.

[2] Karol Myśliwiec, "Egipskie modele rzeźbiarskie Okresu Ptolemejskiego," *Meander*, vol. 23, no. 7–8 (1968), pp. 319–26; id., "O niektórych modelach rzeźbiarskich z Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie," *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*, vol. 14 (1970), pp. 63–77.

[3] Nadja Samir Tomoum, *The Sculptors' Models of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. A Study of the Type and Function of a Group of Ancient Egyptian Artefacts* (Cairo, 2005); Karol Myśliwiec, "Towards a Definition of the 'Sculptor's Model' in Egyptian Art," Études et Travaux, no.6 (1972), pp. 71–75.

[4] Karol Myśliwiec, "Une esquisse du décorateur du temple d'Horus à Edfou," Études et Travaux, no. 3 (1969), pp. 63–79.

[5] Published in the form of several articles, see n. 2 and n. 4.

find answers to in my master's dissertation. Who was shown in the anonymous image from the National Museum in Warsaw?

One day I went to the Valley of the Queens, located in the West Bank of Luxor, not far from the largest of the preserved New Kingdom pharaoh mortuary temples, erected for the posthumous cult of Ramesses III.[6] I entered the tomb of Prince Amon-Her-Khepeshef, one of this ruler's several sons buried in the Valley. None of these tombs had yet been published in a scholarly paper.[7] I looked at the painted reliefs and was suddenly speechless. Standing before me was the man from the sculptor's model kept at the National Museum in Warsaw. The same head proportions, an identical shape of the wig and the artificial beard, and above all the modelling of the face with the eye placed very low, almost at half-height of the nose, and the eyeball with a straight upper contour, contrasting with the roundness of the same stroke in images of great rulers from the earlier phase of the New Kingdom. I quickly looked at the tomb's other walls to compare the renderings of the same figure – they were stylistically identical, as if the same template were applied everywhere.

I then went over to the tombs of Ramesses III's other sons,[8] where I found an identical manner in the representation of the face and only minimal differences in the execution of the contour, reflecting the style of several different sculptors and painters from the same workshop. It was undoubtedly a school represented by artists who during that period lived in the village scattered in the ravine and on the slopes of the mountain between the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, today known by its Arab name of Deir el-Medina.[9] A young scholar wondering what should be the subject of my doctoral dissertation, I suddenly felt my head buzzing. After only a few days of explorations, two surprising truths hit me. I hurried from one relic to another in Thebes, verifying the hypothesis that the portraits of each ruler, however schematic, do possess individual features characterizing not only the period, but also the different phases of his reign, the workshops concentrated at the major religious and artistic centres, and even the style of the different artists. Each day brought further confirmation of this assumption. Even more surprising was the constatation that of the many relics containing representations of pharaohs, mainly temples and tombs, most had never been published. And how many reliefs are scattered in museums and collections around the world! I started to dream about collecting, documenting and working out criteria for dating New Kingdom reliefs based on royal portraiture.

Conflicting feelings overwhelmed me: on the one hand, I was terrified by the amount of material to research, to raise funds for the documentation and secure permits for the publication of; on the other, I was fascinated by the idea of doing something that had never been done in Egyptology before. I felt tormented. I couldn't sleep. I decided I would write a book about royal portraiture in New Kingdom reliefs, in a foreign language of course, so that

[6] See Harold Hayden Nelson et al., *Medinet Habu* (Chicago, 1930–1964). Oriental Institute Publications 8, 9, 23, 51, 83, 84, 93.

[7] See Fathy Hassanein, Monique Nelson, *La tombe du prince Amon-(Her)-Khepchef* (Cairo, 1976); Christian Leblanc, *Ta Set Neferou. Une nécropole de Thèbes-Ouest et son histoire, 1. Géographie – toponymie historique de l'exploration scientifique du site* (Cairo, 1989), tables CXXXIII–CXLIV; Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., fig. 279.

[8] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., p. 125 (Vallée des Reines, a–e), figs. 276–77, 279–82.

[9] Jaroslav Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period* (2nd edition) (Cairo, 2001). Bibliothèque d'étude, 50; Guillemette Andreu, ed., *Les artistes de Pharaon. Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois*, exh. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris; Musées royaux d'art et d'historie, Brussels; Fondation Bricherasio, Turin, 2002–3 (Paris–Turnhout, 2002).

it found international reception. I chose French, which I was fluent in and inclined to also by my Francophilia, which was "undernourished" after I interrupted my Romance studies to go to Egypt. From that moment on, I took notes in French on everything that occurred to me in connection with the subject.

I needed to record, even if only cursorily, thousands of reliefs and paintings preserved sometimes very fragmentarily in Egypt itself, but also gain access to materials kept at various international museums, from America to Australia. I started writing hundreds of letters in various languages, asking for photographic materials and documentation of the relics, for the right to use and possibly publish them. All that in the so-called free time, free from the excavations and the administrative work at our station. I learned to use literally every minute between my duties and, above all, the wonderful invention that is the night. Since in Egypt only nocturnal temperatures allow one to concentrate, creative work was like a balm after a hot day. When young candidates for scholars ask me today how to work, I always reply that the secret of success is to use the twenty-minute breaks between monotonous and boring, yet necessary tasks.

Comparing sculptors' and painters' sketches with their final works, I had the feeling of "grasping their hand" at the most creative moment, when they could still afford to hesitate, to change the idea, to make corrections, and even to mock and laugh at the highest authority. There is often an incredible sense of *Schadenfreude* when one catches an ancient master out in an error or ordinary laziness, evident particularly in the execution of the details. It is said that even Homer dozed off sometimes. That, however, is a luxury that a scholar cannot afford; he always feels that his work is from being perfect or that the sources collected are yet incomplete.

Before the outline of a book is born, one needs to spend thousands of hours on tedious work in absolute solitude, such as in a back office at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, browsing through the pages of the several dozen volumes of the *Entry Journal* (relic register) where for years every item excavated in Egypt was recorded. Most of these artefacts are still kept in boxes in the museum's basement; only some, the most spectacular ones, are displayed in the gallery, which is nonetheless mind-blowing. A number beginning with JE (for *Journal d'Entrée*) and a tiny photo pasted into this "holy book," which is available for scholars only, are often the only pieces of information allowing a researcher to "discover" an unpublished relief with the image of a pharaoh. One feels like screaming with joy, but in the tiny JE office silence must be observed. Next to you sit colleagues, sometimes renowned scholars, who with childish humbleness expect to find unpublished sources for their research in this *embarras de richesse*. For many months, day after day, I sat next to Georges Posener (1906–88), one of the greatest French Egyptologists. This philologist and historian of Russian descent confided to me that browsing through the JE pages was the greatest pleasure in his mature scholarly life. It was something he devoted all his free time to while in Cairo, even if he didn't happen to be working on any particular subject. One can hardly imagine any original Egyptological research today without passing through this purgatory of sources where at every step one is tempted to venture into a new line of inquiry.

Whenever, in turn, I had more than one free day, I would be in the field in the hope of discovering new materials, now in the ruins of temples or tombs, now in the usually hard-to-access storerooms of past excavations. But the greatest reservoir of royal portraiture were the Theban relics, whether the mortuary temples of the kings and nobles in the west bank of the Nile or the numerous New Kingdom temples in the east bank, i.e., in Luxor and Karnak. Luxor, as also the whole area, situated some 700 kilometres south of Cairo, is commonly

called today, was where I went most often to, using every available opportunity. There was no part of a temple or tomb from the reign of the Amenhoteps, Thutmoses, and Ramesseses that I would leave unexplored. Not for a single moment did I part with a notebook and a photo camera. On the occasion of those trips, I visited many of the archaeological missions working in Egypt at the time, thereby broadening the circle of my acquaintances who, needless to say, enthusiastically encouraged my efforts, assisting me in all possible ways.

The use of the term "royal portrait" with respect to pharaonic images has been contested by some scholars. Their criticism is based on the definition of the term and the specificity of Egyptian art. To what extent did the images of rulers reflect their actual looks? Speaking against those Egyptologists who argue that there was no physiognomic portraiture in Egypt at all, but only artistic styles corresponding with the spirit of the time, are periods of radical naturalism in sculpture and relief.[10] During the Middle Kingdom, these are the "sad portraits" of Sesostris III or Amenemhat III, which coincide chronologically with a pessimistic trend in Egyptian literature.[11] For the second time in its history, the pharaoh state was experiencing a period of internal disarray, which around 1794 BC led to the collapse of central authority during the so-called Second Intermediate Period. This opened the gates of Egypt to an external enemy, today referred to generally as the Hyksos, who settled in the Nile Delta.[12]

The Hyksos were only expelled from Egypt two hundred years later (c. 1567 BC) by the last ruler of the Seventeenth Dynasty, the legendary Kamose.[13] The next dynasty was founded by Ahmose I, and following his brief reign, the country's reunification under Egyptian rule was achieved by his son, Amenhotep I (**figs. 2–3**). He earned such a glorious place in the Egyptians' historical memory that throughout the New Kingdom era and even later, during the Third Intermediate Period, he was worshipped as a god and placed in the pantheon of the major deities, particularly in the tombs of nobles in Thebes.[14] This circumstance presents a researcher of the Egyptian royal portrait with an additional difficulty. For according to what criteria should we date an image representing Amenhotep I, but sculpted or painted two hundred years after his death? Should we expect archaism, i.e., a reminiscence of facial features familiar from reliefs made during his reign, or anachronism, where a long-dead pharaoh is given the facial features of a living one? In the finest reliefs, both tendencies are present: while the modelling of the face back to original images of Amenhotep I, made in his lifetime, the relief as a whole conforms to a later style.[15]

That such dilemmas bothered sculptors well into the times of the Ramesseses, i.e., during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, is clearly indicated by a sculptor's model discovered by French archaeologists in northern Karnak in the early 1970s[16] (fig. 3), which was precisely

[10] Karol Myśliwiec, "Three Periods of Realism in Ancient Egyptian Royal Portraiture and Contemporaneous Literary Tradition," in Tatsuro Yamamoto, ed., *Proceedings of the XXXI International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Tokyo-Kyoto, 31st August – 7th September 1983*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 631–32.

[11] Dietrich Wildung, *L'âge d'or de l'Égypte – Le Moyen Empire* (Fribourg, 1984), pp. 196–209.

[12] Manfred Bietak, *Pharaonen und fremde Dynastien im Dunkel* (Vienna, 1994); id., "The Egyptian Community in Avaris during the Hyksos Period," *Ägypten und Levante. Internationale Zeitschrift für ägyptische Archäologie und deren Nachbargebiete*, no. 26 (2016), pp. 263–74.

[13] Karol Myśliwiec, *Święte znaki Egiptu* (Warsaw, 1990), pp. 114–18 (2nd edition) (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 112–16.

[14] Id., *Royal Portraiture of the Dynasties XXI–XXX* (Mainz, 1988), pp. 1–5, tables I–VI.

[15] Ibid., pp. 3–4; Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., p. 30 and 35–39, figs. 20, 24, 26–33.

[16] Id., *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., pp. 37–38, fig. 24.

the time when I began to study royal portraiture. While the large-format lime panel bears the relief image of a ruler described several times as Amenhotep, the proportions of the head and the modelling of the wig leave no doubt that the representation was made during the reign of one of the Ramesseses, probably no later than that of Ramesses III.

Original images of Amenhotep I are another, equally difficult challenge for a researcher. A vast majority of reliefs from the temples he built in Thebes, and particularly in the Precinct of Amon-Re in Karnak (after all, the name Amenhotep means nothing but "Amon is satisfied"), remain unpublished. These blocks, which in most cases were reused later as building material to fill gaps in pylons (huge gates) and walls, were discovered in the course of various archaeological, architectonic, and conservation projects carried out at different periods on the site of the thus-far discovered largest temple complex that is Karnak. Previously built chapels were either expanded by subsequent rulers or rebuilt according to new religious and political trends and the aesthetic preferences of the pharaoh and his theologians, which of course meant that many beautiful structures inconsistent with those trends were demolished. Often, quite like today, the only thing that mattered was the opinion of the ruler and his acolytes, usually priests.

As for nearly two thousand years the temple at Karnak was filled with more and more stone stelae and statues representing gods, kings, and dignitaries, always placed there deliberately as a kind of exchange between the god and people; from time to time a clearance was necessary. All objects were gathered and stashed away in a large cavity that was later covered with the flooring of the temple's new sections. Thus were created caches, known today by the French name of *cachette*, of many masterpieces of Egyptian art. The largest of those was discovered by archaeologists in Karnak at the place where the succession of pylons turns south at a right angle.[17] A similar procedure was practiced at different times, but especially during the Third Intermediate Period, even on the west bank of the Nile, in the Theban Necropolis, with the difference that there a shelter was sought mainly for the mummies of kings, priests, and other dignitaries.[18] Besides coffins and sarcophagi, archaeologists also find in them remains of burial accessories. These are often masterpieces of goldwork, statues made of various materials, and likely huge amounts of luxury ceramics.

Among the temples dismantled in Karnak for building material were also the Amenhotep I buildings decorated with fine reliefs, which often show the pharaoh performing various ritual acts. Most of these blocks were placed in storerooms closed for many years, squeezed into the less visible corners of the vast ruin.

The relief images of Amenhotep I (fig. 2) proved beyond any doubt that their authors took as their model the finest portraits of the rulers of the Eleventh and early Twelfth Dynasties, i.e., older by over two hundred years.[19] The times of the mature Middle Kingdom are considered the classical period of Egyptian culture, or even its golden era. It is precisely this model that was adopted by early Eighteenth Dynasty sculptors responsible for royal relief.

[17] Paul Barguet, *Le temple d'Amon-Rê à Karnak. Essai d'exégèse* (Cairo, 1962), pp. 272–80, table XXXIX C. Publications de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Recherches d'archéologie, de philologie et d'histoire, 21.

[18] Andrzej Niwiński, "The Bab el-Gusus Tomb and the Royal Cache in Deir el-Bahari," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 70 (1984), pp. 73–80; see also id., *21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes. Chronological and Typological Studies* (Mainz am Rhein, 1988).

[19] Dietrich Wildung, *Sesostris und Anenemhet. Ägypten im Mittleren Reich* (Munich, 1984), pp. 38–39, fig. 31, p. 41, figs. 34–35, p. 43–44, fig. 36, p. 51, fig. 45, p. 53, fig. 47, p. 54, fig. 48, p. 55, fig. 49, p. 58, fig. 52, p. 63, fig. 57, p. 65, fig. 58, p. 68, fig. 60, p. 76–78, figs. 68–69, p. 134, fig. 116.

In some cases, the similarity is so striking that – without the accompanying inscription – one could take many a face for the countenance of one of the Mentuhoteps, such as from the temple situated at Deir el-Bahari right next to the temples of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Interestingly, the authors of the image of Amenhotep I were not inspired at all by the beautiful reliefs of the "pessimistic" trend, showing the concerned faces of the last pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty, Sesostris and Amenemhat. Instead, the great king, a victor and restorer, had to be shown with a face radiating joyous optimism and self-confidence.

The evolution of iconography and style in the century preceding the "heresy" of Akhenaten, as well as after its collapse, offers clues about the vectors of political development, and even about specific historical events. This can be traced in particular when multiple images of a single ruler have been preserved in different parts of the country, as in the case of great pharaohs such as Thutmose III,[20] Amenhotep III[21] (**figs. 4–10**), or Ramesses II[22] (**figs. 11–13**). Characteristic features of their portraits can also be found in images of deities, and even in representations of royal courtiers (fig. 7), which clearly demonstrates that a portrait type developed in the sculpture workshop of a given centre for a specific ruler became a pattern that was imitated in all anthropomorphic imagery.[23]

An artistic style thus emerged that, while having little in common with portraiture as the term is understood today, is nonetheless very useful in dating reliefs or statues, especially those missing inscriptions with the name of the ruler. This style would sometimes change radically as new political trends set in. Sudden breakthroughs in the realm of political power and theology could even give rise to a new canon of proportions, which is particularly evident at the turn of the Twenty Sixth Dynasty. The stocky "African" pharaohs (**fig. 14**) were then briefly replaced by rulers from the north-Egyptian Sais, who were represented in art as slender figures.[24]

Such changes occurred of course in the first place at sculpture workshops most closely connected with the royal court or the temples of the major religious centres, taking more time to arrive at the provincial hubs. It is significant, therefore, that in most cases the first images of a new ruler still bear many characteristics of the previous pharaoh's iconography, and it is only with time that artists adapted to a new style, developed in the successor's milieu. Evidence of such anachronism can be found, above all, in the relief decoration of temples whose construction began during the reign of a now deceased king. In the case of Ramesses II, this is most clearly evident in the mortuary temple of his father, which is situated in Western Thebes near the Hatshepsut temple.[25] The oldest images of Ramesses to be found there are still distinguished by the delicate modelling of the face characteristic for representations of his father, Seti I (**fig. 15**), which in later reliefs gives way to a more schematic rendering

[20] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., pp. 50–52, figs. 71, 74–97.

[21] Ibid., pp. 67–68, figs. 129–56.

[22] Ibid., pp. 105–08, figs. 224–62.

[23] Ibid., figs. 2, 34–36, 38, 49–50, 63–64, 87–88, 106, 108, 110, 123, 134, 139, 146, 152, 154, 158, 162–63, 187–92, 194–99, 203, 216, 241–43, 262, 310.

[24] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture...*, op. cit., tables LVI–LVII a–b, LX–LXII, LXV.

[25] See Jürgen Osing, *Der Tempel Sethos' I. in Gurna. Die Reliefs und Inschriften*, vol. 1 (Mainz, 1977). Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, 20.

of detail, typical for the mass-scale artistic production from the period of the reign of the great warrior and greatest megalomaniac on the Egyptian throne.[26]

During the reign of the "heretic" Akhenaten (c. 1351–34 BC), Egyptian art evolved beyond all patterns sanctioned by centuries of tradition. The ruler and his family members were represented with peculiar bodily deformations that today could be classified as caricature[27] (**fig. 16**). Why this "revolution" happened remains a mystery, but the course of political events in the century preceding the reign of a man whose only god was the Sun points to a gradual development of tendencies that culminated in art in the love of nature. It also found its expression in the literature of the period, and above all in the *Hymn to the Aten*, which was probably written by Akhenaten himself.[28] This beautiful work of poetry echoed far and wide throughout the ancient Middle East. Even several hundred years later it found an imitator in the author of one of the psalms.[29]

The reign of the "monotheist heretic" Akhenaten (**figs.** 16, **17–20**) is considered a breakthrough period for many areas of Egyptian civilization, including linguistic development. Art historians, historical linguists, anthropologists, and researchers of Egyptian civilization wonder how such a fundamental and rapid transformation could take place and why centuries of tradition were suddenly disowned. Analyzing the structure of the changes, historical linguists noted that they consisted in the spoken language rising to the rank of the literary language. But what was the social, political, or religious background of that "revolution" is something that we still do not know.

Studying the diachronic development of royal portraiture during the early phase of the New Kingdom, i.e., under the reign of the Eighteenth Dynasty, we arrive at a surprising conclusion: there was no revolution at all, but rather a gradual evolution starting from the takeover of royal power by a beautiful and strong-willed woman, Hatshepsut[30] (**figs. 21–22**). Anti-feminists would say that a progressive "feminization" of Egyptian culture followed. Even those representations in relief or full sculpture that show Hatshepsut as a monarch without female attributes are distinguished by a softness of modelling unprecedented in the earlier period.[31]

Echoes of this physiognomy are found in the portraiture of her two successors, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II (**fig. 23**), and images of Thutmose IV (**fig. 24**), while remaining in this vein, introduce a mannerist foregrounding of certain facial features, such as an almond eye cutting obliquely across the surface of the forehead or thick sensuous lips.[32] It can be said that delicate, almost girlish features became the stylistic mode preferred by some sculptors in relief images of rulers not only for the remainder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but even at the beginning of the Ramesside period[33] (fig. 15). This physiognomic feature is particularly

[26] Examples of hasty relief modelling in room XXVI, see ibid., tables 42–44.

[27] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal*..., op. cit., figs. 160–63, 176–78, 182.

[28] Id., Święte znaki..., op. cit., pp. 128–30 (pp. 123–24).

[29] Ibid., pp. 130–32 (pp. 125–26).

[30] See Zbigniew E. Szafrański, ed., *Królowa Hatszepsut i jej świątynia 3500 lat później / Queen Hatshepsut and her temple 3500 years later* (Warsaw, 2001); see also Jadwiga Lipińska, Aleksandra Majewska, eds, *Tajemnicza królowa Hatszepsut. Sztuka Egiptu XV wieku p.n.e.*, exh. cat., The National Museum in Warsaw, 1997–98 (Warsaw, 1997).

[31] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal*..., op. cit., figs. 47–48, 51–57, 59–60, 67, 70.

[32] Ibid., pp. 80, 89, 99–104, 111, 113–19, 122, 124–28.

[33] Ibid., pp. 205–06, 217–22.

striking in images of Amenhotep II, of whom we know from hieroglyphic texts (such as the famous stele placed by the Old-Kingdom Great Sphinx of Giza) that he was a sportsman-king, fond, for example, of shooting arrows at a target from a speeding chariot.[34] One of the finest reliefs shows him in precisely such a situation, yet with facial features deceptively similar to those found in portraits of Hatshepsut (fig. 15). Feminine elements in portrayals of male rulers shocked no one in ancient Egypt. The pharaoh, considered a divine demiurge, could combine the characteristics of both sexes. In images of Amenhotep II, a short wig appears, consisting of several layers of curls,[35] which during the reign of Akhenaten will become a favourite headdress.[36]

The nearly forty-year-long reign of Amenhotep III, Akhenaten's father, concludes this evolution with sophistication noticeable in all fields of art.[37] Successive phases can be clearly distinguished leading up to a mannerist vision of the monarch of feminine bodily proportions, unnaturally slender limbs, an egg-shaped head, and expressive modelling of facial features (fig. 16). Images made in the final years of Amenhotep III's reign differ in no respect from the early portraits of Akhenaten.[38] Many scholars believe that the aged king shared power with his son and that this co-regency lasted for several years at least. There are many indications to believe that the infirm old man spent the autumn of his life in Akhetaten, a new capital built in the desert by his son.

After his death, a religious schism took place on behalf of the basically monotheistic worship of a sun-disk deity, the Aten. This, of course, had to antagonize the Theban priesthood of the powerful god Amon, until then the dominant demiurge in the local theology. Amenhotep IV, later renamed as Akhenaten (fig. 16), did, however, manage to build in Thebes a magnificent temple devoted to the solar Aten. It stood within a vast temple complex where previously the Amon reigned supreme, i.e., in eastern Thebes, today's Karnak. That temple became the representation of a new political theology which found an even fuller expression in the structures erected by the "heretic pharaoh" in Akhetaten (today Tell el-Amarna), a new capital city he established near the Middle Egyptian town of Hermopolis, far from Thebes.

The solar temple in Karnak was doubtless perceived as a provocation against Amon and his powerful priesthood. It was, of course, demolished as soon as Akhenaten's monotheistic whims subsided and everything went back to the old order. The stone blocks from it, finely decorated with reliefs and paintings, were later reused, this time to fill gaps in the walls of buildings erected in Karnak by the successive pharaohs.[39] Akhenaten's architecture in Akhetaten was treated no differently. Archaeologists have found its fragments for example in the monumental structures built later in Hermopolis, an important religious centre that during

[34] Myśliwiec, *Święte znaki*..., op. cit., pp. 120–24 (pp. 117–20).

[35] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal*..., op. cit., figs. 101–4.

[36] Ibid., figs. 162–65, 170.

[37] Karol Myśliwiec, "Ciało jako droga do wieczności w starożytnym Egipcie," in Rafał Matuszewski, ed., *Somatotes. Cielesność w ujęciu historycznym* (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 23–24.

[38] Id., *Le portrait royal*..., op. cit., figs. 153–61.

[39] Jean Lauffray, "Les « talatat » du IX[e] pylône de Karnak et le Teny-Menou (assemblage et première reconstruction d'une paroi du temple d'Aton dans le Musée de Louqsor)," in *Cahiers de Karnak, VI (1973–1977)* (Cairo, 1980), pp. 67–90, tables XIV–XIX; see also Robert Vergnieux, *Recherches sur les monuments thébains d'Amenhotep IV à l'aide d'outils informatiques. Méthodes et résultats* (Geneva, 1999).

the schism became part of Akhenaten's mini-state. Entire walls of the Aten temple have been reconstructed with the fragments of reliefs discovered in Karnak. The most impressive scene, comprising hundreds of small blocks of standardized size, known as the *talatat*, is on display at the monographic Luxor Museum,[40] where art masterpieces excavated in Thebes by various archaeological missions, including Polish ones,[41] have been gathered. There would have been no place for them at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

A completely new iconographic mode emerges in Akhenaten-period relief, showing the ruler and members of his family, or at least his royal consort, the beautiful Nefertiti, venerating the solar disk that emits life-giving rays which sometimes terminate with a human hand holding the *ankh* (sign of life).[42] Here, the solar disk, i.e., the god Aten, is a hypostasis of Amenhotep III, Akhenaten's father. Strikingly, the characteristic features of the latter's physiognomy (fig. 16) appear in all members of his family as well. Consequently, anthropologists have been wondering whether this may be a degeneration that affected the whole family. What seems more likely, however, is a religious and artistic motivation, the culminating point of an evolution dating back at least to the reign of the female pharaoh, Hatshepsut.[43]

While the development of art shows clearly that the evolution leading up to the "Amarna revolution" (as Egyptologists sometimes call Akhenaten's reforms) began precisely when Hatshepsut sat on the throne, the political and social factors behind that unprecedented upheaval remain a mystery. Studies of one of the most important Egyptian deities, Atum, whose iconography so much resembles the images of monarchs that a researcher of royal portraiture could not ignore the representations of this divine lookalike of pharaohs, have, however, brought us closer to the truth.[44] First of all, Atum, the Heliopolitan god of the Sun, demiurge of the local pantheon in the ancient Iunu (or On), was usually depicted as a man wearing a double royal crown known as the *pschent*[45] (**figs.** 13, **25**), and his most frequent epithet, even more popular than "Lord of Heliopolis," was "Lord of the Two Lands."[46] This, therefore, as with the monarch, was a reference to his reign over the whole of Egypt. Only one detail distinguished the deity from a pharaoh: the beard. In depictions of Atum, as with most Egyptian gods, it was a kind of plaited braid, narrowing downward, with the end bent forward.[47] The pharaoh's false beard, in turn, widened gradually towards the horizontal bottom edge. Only one god had the same kind of beard as the king – the Memphite demiurge

[40] *Das Museum für Altägyptische Kunst in Luxor, Katalog*, Maṯḥaf al'ṯār al-Miṣrīya, ed. (Mainz, 1981), pp. 104–10.

[41] Ibid., tables III–IV, pp. 42–43, no. 64 and 70; pp. 52–53, fig. 44; p. 57, fig. 46.

[42] Myśliwiec, "Ciało jako droga...," op. cit., p. 41, fig. 22.

[43] Karol Myśliwiec, "Amon, Atum and Aton. The Evolution of Heliopolitan Influences in Thebes," in *Colloques internationaux du CNRS, n° 595 – L'Égyptologie en 1979. Axes prioritaires de recherches*, part 2 (Paris, 1982), pp. 285–89.

[44] Id., "Iconographic, Literary and Political Aspects of Ancient Egyptian God's Identification with the Monarch," in *Monarchies and Socio-Religious Traditions in the Ancient Near East. Papers Read at the 31st International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa* (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 44–50. Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan.

[45] Id., *Studien zum Gott Atum*, vol. 2: *Name–Epitheta–Ikonographie* (Hildesheimer, 1979), pp. 213–17. Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge, 8.

[46] Christian Leitz, ed., *Lexikon der* ägyptischen *Götter and Götterbezeichnungen*, vol. 7 (S–D) (Leuven–Paris–Dudley, 2002), pp. 412, 418.

[47] Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott...*, op. cit., pp. 211–12.

Ptah, who, however, differed from the monarch in all other aspects.[48] As far as this detail is concerned, the analogy between the depictions of the god and the pharaoh may have been due to the fact that the kings were crowned in Memphis, the major centre of the cult of Ptah.

Already in the Pyramid Texts – the oldest work of ancient Egyptian religious literature – the different parts of the pharaoh's body are identified with the analogical elements of Atum's physiognomy.[49] In later times, the local theology of various religious centres developed zoomorphic embodiments of the Heliopolitan demiurge as well. In the eastern Delta, he was worshipped, for example, as a snake,[50] and reliquaries in the shape of small metal coffins containing mummified eels, snakes, or lizards, with inscriptions describing those animals as embodiments of Atum, have been found at various centres, especially in the Delta.[51] Most of those date from the first millennium BC. During the same time, his vision as a monkey shooting a bow, an expression of the heat of the noon hours, emerged in the Memphite region.[52] Syncretic representations were also produced, combining, for example, the body of an eel with the neck-flap of a cobra and a human head in a double royal crown[53] (fig. 25). Most frequent, however, are depictions of Atum as a man whose only attire is a short loincloth, typical for kings, with a double crown on his head (fig. 13).

Strangely, whereas in Egyptian relief, particularly in temple wall decorations, Atum is encountered frequently, and that in different contexts characterizing his religious significance, statues of this deity are rare. Compared with the multitude of three-dimensional representations of Amon, Ptah, Thot, or Osiris, one can get the impression there are nearly none at all, or at least far too few for a deity of this status.[54] Was it not so that every statue of king wearing a double crown, with an inscription identifying him as "Lord of the Two Lands," was considered an incarnation of Atum?[55] If that was the case, then in special situations exceptions were made that are sometimes surprising in their originality. Let us take a closer look at one of those because it reflects the theological quandaries of a sculptor who was forced to choose between the Theban Amon and the Heliopolitan Atum.

Although the reign of the Heliopolitan demiurge over the entire country was expressed both in religious literature and art, his presence in Thebes was a delicate matter. He was tolerated as a representative of Heliopolis, the "Sun City" located where the like-named district of Cairo stretches today, as well as – in a broader sense – as a representative of Lower Egypt, i.e., the northern part of the country. Few, however, dared to call Atum "Lord of Thebes"[56] because

[48] Miroslav Verner, "Der Gott Ptah und die memphitische Theologie," *Sokar. Geschichte & Archäologie Altägyptens*, vol. 29 (2nd half-year) (2014), pp. 21–29.

[49] Myśliwiec, "Iconographic, Literary and Political Aspects...," op. cit., p. 44.

[50] Id., "Aal oder Schlange? – Atum oder Meresger?" *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*, vol. 37 (1981), pp. 377–82.

[51] Id., *Studien zum Gott Atum*, vol. 1:*Die heiligen Tiere des Atum* (Hildesheim, 1978), pp. 95–138. Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge, 5.

[52] Emma Brunner-Traut, "Atum als Bogenschütze," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*, vol. 14 (1956), pp. 20–28.

[53] Karol Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder. Ägypten im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Mainz,1998), fig. 44; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt. First Millennium B. C. E.* (New York–London, 2000), p. 100, fig. 33.

[54] Id., *Studien zum Gott Atum*..., op. cit., pp. 210–11.

[55] Id., "Iconographic, Literary and Political Aspects...," op. cit.

[56] *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter*..., op. cit., p. 417; Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott Atum*..., op. cit., pp. 121–23.

Thebes was where Amon reigned supreme, especially as the father in a local triad of deities. We have reason to believe that the Theban priests had to solve many a theological-political puzzle before they decided to depict Atum in the context of the Theban gods. Sometimes, doubtless for the sake of political correctness, they had to rectify a mistake that was not necessarily evident during the carving of an inscription or a figural scene.

One example of such retouching is a sunken-relief inscription carved on the plinth of one of the two sphinxes guarding the entrance to Seti I's mortuary temple in Western Thebes.[57] The original inscription – describing the king as "beloved by the god Atum who is Lord of the Two Lands and Heliopolis" – contained an elaborate hieroglyphic spelling of the name Atum and the epithet "Lord of the Two Lands and Heliopolis." This version was found unacceptable by one of the high priests or even by Remesses II, who completed the decoration of the building devoted to his father. It was decided to append Atum the epithet "who is in Thebes," and place it right after the god's name. Ignoring the aesthetics of the no less than monumental inscription, the latter part of the name was hammered out and a new epithet was inserted, barely recognizable in the mess of hieroglyphic signs. The elaborate spelling of the word "Atum" was replaced with a shorter one, comprising only two phonetic signs, the loaf of bread (*t*) and the sledge (*tm*), without even hammering out the signs of the original version. The two spellings overlap, which is why in the version that has survived to our times there are two sledges, while a bird, part of the original inscription, grows out of the squatting god's torso.

This means that the Heliopolitan demiurge Atum's presence in Thebes complicated things for the makers of political theology in different periods, even several decades after the demise of Akhenaten's "religious revolution" that emerged, after all, on the basis of solar cults. The "Lower Egyptian lobby" probably always had "its people" in the Upper Egyptian realm of Amon. Everything confirms the hypothesis that they took advantage of the opportunity when the female pharaoh, supported by her lover the architect, who was also the author of her mortuary temple, became conflicted with the all-powerful Theban priesthood. From that moment on, until the long reign of Amenhotep III, Atum gradually emerges in Thebes as the equal partner of the local demiurge. In religious reliefs as well as in hieroglyphic texts, Amon and Atum increasingly often appear as parallel figures, as if they were partners rather than rivals.[58]

These struggles between theological conscience and political interest on the eve of Akhenaten's "religious revolution" are best illustrated by a statue that is among the masterpieces of Egyptian art (figs. 8–10). Found in 1989 during conservation works under the floor of one of the courts of the Luxor Temple, it was made towards the end of the reign of Amenhotep III as a cult image of monarch and god in one, and placed in the colonnade of the same temple.[59] Over a thousand years later, during the reign of the Ptolemies, who conducted "cleanups" at many sacred buildings around the country, it was placed in a cache under the temple's floor, where it remained until our times.[60] Made of red quartzite, its colour is reminiscent of the sun. It is monolithic, carved in one huge block of stone. Its form and contents are unique in

[57] Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott Atum*..., op. cit., pp. 238–39, tab. I.

[58] See Myśliwiec, "Amon, Atum and Aton...," op. cit.

[59] Mohammed El-Saghir, "Das Statuenversteck im Luxortempel," *Antike Welt* (Sondernummer) (1991), pp. 21–27.

[60] Ibid., pp. 2–3, fig. 2, p. 14, fig. 27.

every respect. First of all, it is a statue of a statue, for on its wide plinth there is a sledge and on it stands a statue of the monarch wearing the *pschent*, the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The facial features of Amenhotep III, particularly the almond-shaped eyes, placed obliquely between the cheeks and the forehead, indicate a work from the closing phase of this pharaoh's reign.

Why was the statue of the king represented on a sledge? If we remember the hieroglyphic notation of the name of the god Atum, we will realize that the sign representing precisely this object was the graphic-phonetic root of the word "Atum."[61] During the successive phases of Egyptian civilization, the name of the Heliopolitan demiurge was written in different ways, but almost always featured the sledge hieroglyph. A basic means of land transportation in the pharaoh state,[62] the sledge was used to move various loads, including huge stone blocks in the construction of pyramids and temples, although the scenes decorating the walls of dignitaries' tombs usually show statues and other ritual objects being hauled on it. The sledge hieroglyph had the phonetic value *tem*; conveying precisely this sound, it was what linguists call a phoneme. In some cases, the god's name was written with a single hieroglyph – the sledge one.[63]

There is no doubt, therefore, that the presence of a sledge in the unique Luxor Temple statue is nothing but a cryptographic notation of the name of the supreme god of the Heliopolitan pantheon, one that was identified with the pharaoh more than any other Egyptian deity. The statue of Amenhotep III standing on a sledge should then be understood as an ideogram of a sun-god monarch, and in terms of the structure of the Egyptian language it can be seen as both a phonetic complement of the value *t* and as a determinative that clarifies the meaning of the word without itself being pronounced. How much more could be found out about the origin of this extraordinary work if the stone could speak! Based on the iconography alone, it can only be said that an outstanding sculptor used the image of a king to convey the name of a god who was rapidly rising to prominence in Thebes at the time, but that his popularity was certainly not to the liking of the local priesthood.[64]

The ambiguity of the message is confirmed by inscriptions decorating various parts of the statue, particularly the long text carved on the outer surface of the slab that serves as its background[65] (fig. 9). To those who cannot read between the lines, the text may appear merely as a panegyric apotheosis of the Theban Amon. After all, his name is mentioned there multiple times next to those of Amenhotep III. But when we look at the structure and phraseology of the work, we will notice that it paraphrases, in various ways, and in a highly poetic manner, Atum's most popular epithet, "Lord of the Two Lands." It took considerable diplomacy on the author's part, while extolling Amon, to speak actually about Atum, an arrival from the distant Heliopolis. Did the ancient Egyptians understand the allusion? There is no doubt that the matter must have been obvious for the priests, especially those from the circle where the idea of the sculpture was first conceived. While they could not yet express that openly, the priests of Amon knew that the future belonged to the Heliopolitan demiurge.

[61] *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter*..., op. cit.,p. 411; Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott Atum*..., op. cit., pp. 5–71.

[62] Myśliwiec, *Studien zum Gott Atum*..., op. cit., pp. 72–77.

[63] Ibid., pp. 5–7.

[64] See Myśliwiec, "Amon, Atum and Aton...," op. cit.

[65] El-Saghir, "Das Statuenversteck...," op. cit., p. 22, figs. 47–48; p. 25; Karol Myśliwiec, "Reading a Statue of a Statue: A Testimony of Three-Dimensional Cryptography," *Imago Aegypti*, vol. 1 (2005), p. 82.

During the reign of Akhenaten, Amon's name was hammered out from many hieroglyphic inscriptions, including the texts decorating the Luxor Temple statue[66] (figs. 9–10). Curiously, however, although Aten the sun-disk was the god commonly worshipped during the religious schism, Atum was tolerated too. The most striking illustration of the latter's extraordinary role has survived in the Hatshepsut temple in Deir el-Bahari, where a long – divided into several sections – procession of Egyptian gods was carved on the wall in one of the portals. While the scene fell victim to the zeal of the Aten iconoclasts during the reign of the "heretic king," one figure was left untouched – that of the god Atum.[67] This fact indirectly confirms the Heliopolitan roots of the solar monotheism and, in combination with the sources mentioned above, lets us conclude that the spectacular rise of the sun-god cult in Thebes was bound up closely with the growing importance of the Heliopolitan clergy, in which Hatshepsut most likely found her ally in her conflict with the Theban priesthood.

Akhenaten's reign was short, but artistically the period echoed for centuries. This is evident in Memphis, which not for a moment lost its status of the administrative capital, as well as in Thebes, which returned to the orthodox cult of Amon and until the end of the New Kingdom era remained the burial place of monarchs (in the Valley of the Kings) and of their families (in the Valley of the Queens). After the collapse of Akhetaten, the ephemeral capital of Akhenaten's state, the artistic style that had gradually evolved in Thebes during the late reign of Amenhotep III, flourished in its purest form at least until the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty in the north, in Memphis, which is best illustrated by the tombs of high officials discovered in recent decades at the royal necropolis in Saqqara.[68] Examples include reliefs decorating the tomb of Tutankhamun's wet-nurse, and especially the large tomb of general Horemheb, built at a time when the military man did not yet dream of becoming pharaoh. With its dynamism, the naturalistic, sophisticated modelling of the figures in these reliefs surpasses even the finest works of the Akhetaten sculptors.

The second tomb for Horemheb, already as pharaoh, is situated in the Theban Valley of the Kings.[69] Although the return to religious orthodoxy in Amon's kingdom was also marked by a revival of the classic hieratical style in the decoration of royal tombs, the images of the owner of this grave still bear clear reminiscences of shapes typical for Akhenaten. Tutankhamun (who was probably Akhenaten's son) was depicted in a similar fashion, both in his famous Theban tomb[70] and in the reliefs decorating the Luxor Temple.[71] The latter was soon claimed by Horemheb, who had the names of his predecessor hammered out from the royal cartouches and his own carved instead. However, no traces of retouching are visible in the peculiar, still highly mannerist facial features, which means that Horemheb and his

[66] El-Saghir, "Das Statuenversteck...," op. cit., p. 22, fig. 48; p. 23, fig. 49; pp. 26–27, figs. 54–59.

[67] Myśliwiec, "Amon, Atum and Aton...," op. cit., pp. 287–89, figs. 72–73.

[68] Alain Zivie, "Aper-El et ses voisins. Considérations sur les tombes rupestres de la XVIII^{e} Dynastie à Saqqarah," in Alain Zivie, ed., *Memphis et ses nécropoles au Nouvel Empire. Nouvelles données, nouvelles questions. Actes du colloque international CNRS, Paris 9 au 11 octobre 1986* (Paris, 1988), pp. 103–12; id., *Découverte à Saqqarah. Le vizir oublié* (Paris, 1990).

[69] Erik Hornung, *Tal der Könige. Die Ruhestätte der Pharaonen* (5th edition) (Zurich–Munich, 1990), pp. 99–102.

[70] Zahi Hawass, *Discovering Tutankhamun from Howard Carter to DNA* (Cairo–New York, 2013), pp. 82, 96, 97, 100; Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., figs. 183–84.

[71] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., fig. 186; id., "The Uraeus as a Dating Criterion," in Janice Kamrin et al., eds, *Guardian of Ancient Egypt. Essays in Honor of Zahi Hawass* (Prague, 2020), p. 1049, fig. 4a.

iconographers were not worried by the echoes of the "revolutionary" style that are clearly discernible in them.

The return to religious and artistic orthodoxy after the fall of Akhenaten creates multiple issues for a researcher of royal portraiture. Among the results of this "renaissance" is the fact that the "classical," at least in their premise, images of the three ephemeral rulers of the "post-revolutionary" period (Tutankhamun, Ay, Horemheb),who concluded the Eighteenth Dynasty, seem, through their being rooted in Amarna-period art, deceptively similar to the depictions of kings, particularly Amenhotep III, from the times of the ripening of the "revolution," when the evolution was in the reverse direction: classical forms were gradually giving way to expressive naturalism. This is true both for relief and for full sculpture.[72] If the pharaoh's name has not been preserved on them, it is easy to misdate.

In Tell el-Amarna (the present Arabic name of Akhetaten), archaeologists uncovered a sculptor's workshop, complete with a number of models, sketches, and unfinished works, among which was also the famous head of queen Nefertiti, Akhenaten's wife, today in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin.[73] Studies of royal heads on stone panels illustrate the different phases of this artist's creative process (figs. 17–20).[74]

The prototypes developed by the Amarna school continued to inspire some sculptors during the Ramesside period, particularly in eastern Delta centres under the reign of Ramesses II (figs. 11–13). Similarly, a fascination with poetry, and especially with the *Hymn to the Aten*, did not go into the past with the New Kingdom, as attested by the structure and phraseology of one of the psalms of David.[75]

Studies of New Kingdom-era royal portraiture took me eventually much further than I could have expected during my rambles through the Theban temples and tombs when the fascination first started. Initially, my ambition was merely to develop the iconographic and stylistic criteria for dating relief depictions of the monarch's face. Soon, however, it became evident that these criteria could be used as well to date the portrayals of gods and the court elite, for royal portraiture became a universal source of inspiration, particularly in terms of style. My doctoral dissertation, *Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvel Empire* [Royal portraiture in New Kingdom low-relief], written in French and defended in 1973 at the University of Warsaw, was published three years later and immediately won international acclaim. The schools, phases, archaisms, imitations, and other correlations discerned in it are widely used today in interpreting newly discovered relics as well as in studying long-known reliefs that were previously only perfunctorily analyzed. This research inspired young scholars from various countries to continue the work.

I, in turn, was approached by many colleagues who encouraged me to write a similar study about a period far darker, less explored, and still holding many secrets, i.e., the so-called Late Period, the eight centuries separating the New Kingdom from the reign of the Ptolemies after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great.

[72] W. Raymond Johnson, "Images of Amenhotep III in Thebes: Styles and Intentions," in Lawrence Michael Berman, ed., *The Art of Amenhotep III: Art Historical Analysis, Papers Presented at the International Symposium Held at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 20–21 November 1987* (Cleveland–Bloomington, 1990).

[73] Kazimierz Michałowski, *L'art de l'ancienne Égypte* (Paris, 1968), fig. 103; id., *Storia della scultura nel mondo. Egitto* (Verona, 1978), p. 53.

[74] Myśliwiec, *Le portrait royal...*, op. cit., figs. 170–81.

[75] See n. 28 and n. 29.

I hesitated for a long time because I had already selected a topic for my postdoctoral dissertation – a study of the Heliopolitan god Atum. It would have meant having to conduct research in two different directions at once. That would have been difficult, especially as we are talking about an era of a very complicated history and so far little studied due to the fragmentary nature of the sources and the eclecticism of its culture, which was heavily influenced by other civilizations – Asian, European, and African.

With time, however, it became clear that the two topics – royal portraiture of the Late Period and the god Atum as the principal figure of Heliopolitan solar cults – were in fact complementary. While collecting materials for my postdoctoral thesis, I kept encountering the cult of the pharaoh as a sun god and its iconography, and while documenting royal portraiture, I was surprised at every step by its solar aspects. In many cases, the effects of that work proved as unexpected as those of the research described above.

After the decline of the New Kingdom, Amenhotep I continued to be worshipped in Thebes. Rather than on the walls of tombs and temples, however, he was now represented on the wooden coffins of high officials.[76] The deified pharaoh from several centuries past, to whom Egypt's revival after the Hyksos period was attributed, appears most frequently as the central motif of a fabulously colourful painting on the bottom of those coffins. Did this reflect a longing for the reunification of Lower and Upper Egypt or rather the coffin owner's wish to become like a "living god" that the legendary pharaoh once was? Probably both. In the maze of various religious symbols that compose this decoration and are a classic example of *horror vacui*, the figure of Amenhotep dominates both with its size and its rich iconography. His mummy-shaped body is wrapped in a garment that imitates the plumage of a falcon, thereby identifying the pharaoh with two gods that express resurrection, Osiris and his son Horus. Confirming this association are the various crowns adorning the monarch-god's head. These are usually various plumed crowns, borrowed from the iconography of Osiris, but sporadically there also appears the *khepresh*, i.e., a blue crown, characterizing the king as a victor. The royal aspect is also emphasized with the shape of the beard, which is typical for a pharaoh rather than bending forward as in depictions of the god. But inspiration with the art of the Eighteenth Dynasty from before the "revolution" of Akhenaten is also discernible in the few preserved temple reliefs from the so-called Third Intermediate Period.[77] Among the finest examples of this are probably the reliefs of Shoshenq I from the so-called Bubastite Portal (**fig. 26**), those of Takelot III and Osorkon III from the small temple of Osiris Lord of Eternity in Karnak[78] (**figs. 27–28**), as well as the scenes carved on the walls of the temple in the Middle Egyptian town of El-Hiba, today in the Egyptian Museum of the University of Heidelberg.[79] Not only the style, but also the execution of the sculptures, with a preference for fine flat relief, transport us to the times of the Thutmoses and Amenhoteps. The preserved portraits of the monarchs resemble the images of Amenhotep II or Thutmose IV so closely that if the cartouches with the names of the kings had not been preserved, a researcher could not be blamed for misdating them by a good half a millennium.

[76] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., p. 1, tables I–VI.

[77] Ibid., pp. 19–20, 104.

[78] Ibid., p. 15 (2a), 17–18, tables XIV d, XVI, XXIII–XXVII.

[79] Ibid., p. 15 (A1), tables XIV a – XV a–b.

Surprisingly, we also discover late reminiscences of Akhenaten's art. The characteristic *sfumato* in the modelling of the eye, devoid of any linear contours and treating the surface of the face as an undulating sequence of gently cross-fading surfaces (**fig. 29**), appears in the oldest reliefs at the abovementioned temple of Osiris Lord of Eternity[80] as well as in the top registers of the pylon in front of temple of the god Khonsu in Karnak.[81] What seems noteworthy is the fact that both of these sites lay out of the way and were inconspicuous; the small but original and later expanded sanctuary of Osiris from the period of the reign of rulers of Libyan origin (Twenty Second and Twenty Third Dynasties) is situated in the north-eastern corner of the extensive temple temenos, far behind the monumental Amon temple. Today we would say that it is a place "where the devil says goodnight." Meeting a tourist there, we are no less surprised than when seeing the proverbial footprints in the sand that, as the prophecy goes, man will kiss upon discovering them in the future, after some total cataclysm. It was probably the same in ancient times. The priests' attention was doubtless focused on the enfilade of rooms along the axis of the temple, and few visited the far corner except when necessary.

The artists decorating that temple were, therefore, able to afford various surprising experiments, and even risky decisions, to which doubtless belonged the ostentatious imitation of the relief-style dating from the period of Akhenaten's reign, known as the Amarna style. In fact, sources of inspiration can be discovered not only in the modelling of the facial features of monarchs named Takelot or Osorkon,[82] but in the iconography of their headgear as well. As in depictions of the great rulers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the falcon with spread wings became a highly popular decorative motif.[83] It can be seen standing on the head of Takelot III as well as spreading its wings on the wig of the "God's Wife of Amon," Shepenupet I, shown while being breastfed by one of the goddesses, probably Mut.[84] In the case of the ephemeral, though highly ambitious, princes of the Twenty Third Dynasty, this was an important iconographic practice aimed at legitimizing their rule through an identification with Horus. No other god's name had such strong basilophoric power (the power of a royal name) as that of Osiris's son.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the sculptor preparing to execute a portrait of Takelot III at the temple of Osiris Lord of Eternity first made a sketch thereof in the nearby portal of Thutmose III[85] (figs. 27–28). Each of the numerous pillars standing there in rows is decorated with large-format images of the latter. The Twenty Third Dynasty artist chose, six hundred years later, the pillar farthest from the temple axis and closest to the Osiris sanctuary where he was to carve his own vision of Takelot in order to perform a kind of sacrilege: he hammered out the upper section of the original relief, smoothed out the soft sandstone and pitilessly replaced Thutmose's head with a portrait of Takelot of the same modelling and identical dimensions as that visible on the wall by the entrance to the oldest room in the sanctuary of

[80] Ibid., pp. 26–28, tables XXIII–XXVII.

[81] Ibid., tables VIII c–d, IX a–b, X a.

[82] Ibid., tables XX–XXV.

[83] Karol Myśliwiec, "Quelques remarques sur les couronnes à plumes de Thoutmosis III," in Paule Posener-Kriéger, ed., *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar* (Cairo, 1985), pp. 149–60. Bibliothèque d'étude, 97/2. On representations of Thutmose III, see critique in Monika Dolińska, "The Bird at the Back of the Atef Crown," in Panagiotes Kousoulis, Nikolaos Lazaridis, eds, *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, 22–29 May 2008*, vol. 1, p. 1017, n. 1; p. 1020, n. 19.

[84] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture...*, op. cit., table XXVII a.

[85] Ibid., p. 18, D(a), table XXIV c.

the Lord of Eternity. Killing two birds with one stone. He probably hoped that no one would notice one alteration in the maze of pillars showing boringly identical depictions of the great ancestor. Until recently, no Egyptologist was aware of it either.

The decorator of the front part of the Temple of Khonsu in Karnak also seems to have hoped that the prospective viewers would not be attentive enough, especially as far as the reliefs in the upper registers of the high pylons are concerned.[86] He was commissioned to depict Pinedjem I,[87] the first of the high priests of Amon, rulers of Thebes at the end of the second and beginning of the first millennia BC, i.e., at the time when the Twenty First Dynasty, with its capital in Tanis, reigned in Lower Egypt.[88] It was hard reaching those previously unpublished reliefs without a very long, multi-section ladder that only the Franco-Egyptian archaeological mission in Karnak had at its disposal. Courtesy of the head of that mission, the architect Jean Lauffray, as well as the eminent Egyptologist Claude Traunecker, we used that sky-high ladder, which, placed against the wall of the pylon at a very sharp angle, required extraordinary skill from the photographer too. Wearing a safety harness like a fire-fighter, he had to be careful all the time not to lean back even a millimetre too far. Let us not forget either that he carried professional photographic equipment with him. Holding my breath, with a pounding heart, I watched from below as Zbigniew Doliński, the only person in Thebes capable of such a feat, climbed up the ladder. The official photographer of the Polish mission in Deir el-Bahari, he had previously worked in the film industry as a stuntman. His excellent photographs[89] left no doubt whatsoever that the portraitist of Pinedjem was fascinated with the Amarna style, but could only express that feeling in the uppermost registers of the temple pylon if he wanted to stay safe. Not only the modelling of the face, characterized by a sort of *sfumato* that avoids all sharpness of contour, but also the slightly egg-shaped skull resemble depictions of the "heretic king" older by four hundred years.

The fascination with the sophisticated art of the Eighteenth Dynasty ends at the close of the Third Intermediate Period, i.e., in the middle of the first millennium BC, when Egypt is reunited by a foreign dynasty that comes to occupy the throne after the country's conquest by a culture from the south, the Kushites.[90] The land of Kush was conquered by Pharaonic Egypt over the centuries, but after the decline of the New Kingdom formed its own state, the early history of which remains highly obscure. The name "Kushite" comes from the Egyptian toponym of the region, Kush. The upper strata of society had adopted Egyptian culture there, including hieroglyphic script. The lower strata, the so-called common people, continued to use the local language, which to this day remains a linguistic puzzle, even though in the last centuries BC it began to be written down using an alphabet based on a highly simplified version of the hieroglyphs.[91] The kingdom of Kush had its capital in a centre located at the foot of a sacred mountain where a temple devoted to the Egyptian god Amon was built.

[86] Bertha Porter, Rosalind Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, vol. 2: *Theban Temples* (Oxford, 1972), p. 228.

[87] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., tables VIII c–d, IX a–b, X a.

[88] Id., *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., pp. 31–33; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 27–67.

[89] See n. 87.

[90] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., pp. 94–146; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 68–109.

[91] Id., *Święte znaki Egiptu*..., pp. 224–30.

The town is situated in what is now Sudan and its Arabic name is Gebel Barkal.[92] The tombs of the Kushite rulers had the shape of small pyramids, whereas their culture included many African elements.

Facial features typical for the indigenous inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa and a stocky, muscular build characterize portrayals of Kushites in Egyptian art, whether of pharaohs from Kush[93] (fig. 14) or of commoners, often previously depicted as a subjugated people, with their hands tied at the back.[94] This last vision of Egypt's southern neighbours was widespread for centuries, especially in propaganda scenes, reproduced in the most prominent places, particularly in reliefs decorating the front wall of high pylons so that they could be viewed not only by the priests, but also by the simple folk gathered around the temple. They depict the Egyptian monarch holding captives tied-up, kneeling representatives of all or some of the enemy peoples: Asians, Kushites, and Libyans.

Accustomed to such an image, Egyptians must have been surprised by the Kushite invasion around 747 BC.[95] The Kushite king Piye (or Piankhi) invaded Egypt from the south and conquered one by one all the major centres of power in the weakened state, fragmented into a series of small principalities. In the north, without encountering any serious resistance, he reached Athribis in the Nile Delta. His successive victories are chronicled in a long hieroglyphic text carved on the famous stele found at Gebel Barkal and today kept at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.[96] The text is, of course, of a propaganda nature and, judging by its characterization of Egyptians, was commissioned by the Kushite king. Egyptians are presented in it as a godless and lazy people who forgot about their gods and neglected their stables of beautiful horses so that the animals nearly starved to death. The Egyptian magnates deserved their cruel fate and the Kushite invaders would assume the role of restorers, paying due homage to the gods, rebuilding their old sanctuaries and erecting new ones.

Did this political upheaval have serious iconographic implications for royal portraiture? How to represent the Kushite rulers of Egypt? More as Kushites or rather as Egyptians? It was decided to reconcile the opposites, which further complicated things. A pharaoh with African facial features and an athletic build wore the Egyptian crown. However, not all types of headgear were suitable here from the viewpoint of political correctness. By no means could he be adorned with the *khepresh*, i.e., the so-called blue crown, which until then was an iconographic symbol of victory over foreign peoples, appearing usually in a war context, e.g., in a pharaoh shown on a speeding chariot in battle scenes. This crown disappears from royal iconography for nearly one hundred years, the entire period of the "African" dynasty's reign.[97] Soon, however, a replacement was found: a tight-fitting cap, similar to today's swimming

[92] Id., *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., pp. 119–41, figs. 36–38; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 97–104, figs. 28–29.

[93] Id., *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., pp. 30–45, tables XXVIII–XLIX.

[94] Id., *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., fig. 35.

[95] Ibid., pp. 95–108; Myśliwiec, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 69–85.

[96] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., pp. 98–107; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 73–84.

[97] Edna R. Russmann, *The Representation of the King in the XXVth Dynasty* (Brussels–Brooklyn, 1974), pp. 27–33. Monographies Reine Élisabeth, 3; Karol Myśliwiec, "Ramesside traditions in the arts of the Third Intermediate Period," in Edward Bleiberg, Rita Freed, eds, *Fragments of a shattered visage. The Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ramesses the Great, Memphis, Tennessee, 1991* (Memphis, 1993), p. 110.

cap and in the Egyptian context particularly reminiscent of the headgear of the Memphic demiurge, the god Ptah.[98]

While some Egyptologists interpret this attribute of the Kushites as short-cropped, thick hair, characteristic for the inhabitants of Central Africa, these rulers' ideological connection with Ptah and Memphis as his cult centre is undeniable. The Kushites crowned themselves as kings of Egypt precisely in Memphis and were doubtless interested in becoming similar to the supreme deity of the local pantheon. It was also in Memphis that one of the most important theological texts, signed by a pharaoh of Kushite origin, Shabaka, was found[99] (fig. 14). Carved on a large slab of stone, it contains the most complete presentation of Heliopolitan theology. As befits a politician, Shabaka first has to boast his achievements; since the papyrus on which the text was originally written down was at the risk of being eaten away by worms (which was the Egyptians' fault of course!), the king had it carved in stone. What a pity that in later times the stele was trimmed so that it could serve as a millstone.

The Kushites' predilection for Memphite theology is also reflected in their names. Their Egyptian onomastics frequently features names borrowed from the kings of the last (Sixth) dynasty of the Old Kingdom, which resided nowhere else but in Memphis.[100] The memory of these pharaohs obviously had to be alive and played an important political role fifteen centuries after their death. How much of it was genuine respect for the great ancestors and how much just political cunning to reinforce the Kushites' position on the Egyptian throne is not clear. The answer would perhaps become obvious if we looked by way of analogy at the ethos of today's politicians. The Kushites were no strangers either to the traditions of the New Kingdom, but it was the rigorous orthodoxy of the two Ramesside dynasties (Nineteenth and Twentieth) that they drew on rather than the artistic sophistication of the earlier period of the Thutmoses and Amenhoteps (Eighteenth Dynasty).[101] This is attested, for example, by the *ushebti* found in the tomb of Taharqa, which in their material, form, size, and carved texts resemble similar artefacts from the Ramesside period.[102]

After the fall of the Twenty Fifth Dynasty, the authors of royal portraiture eschewed everything that could be reminiscent of Kushite rule. Here and there, Theban reliefs depicting Kushite monarchs were destroyed on orders of zealous nationalists, especially at the beginning of the Saite dynasty. One particularly fervent iconoclast was Psamtik II who, for example, had the depictions of Taharqa, adorning the monumental colonnade that the latter had built in the frontage of the Amon temple in Karnak, hammered out.[103]

What must have irritated Egyptians the most in the depictions of the Kushite pharaohs were the double uraei on the forehead. Unlike the earlier, native rulers of Egypt, whose head was adorned by one cobra only, the Kushites sported two. The symbolism of this decoration

[98] Myśliwiec, "Ramesside traditions...," op. cit., pp. 111–13.

[99] Olivier Perdu, "Les rois kouchites et Memphis," *Egypte, Afrique et Orient*, no. 81 (2016), pp. 28–29.

[100] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., p. 112; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt...*, op. cit., p. 90. On the special role of Memphis in the political theology of the Kushite dynasty, see Perdu, "Les rois kouchites...," op. cit.

[101] Myśliwiec, "Ramesside traditions...," op. cit., pp. 108–16.

[102] Id., "Das Königsporträt des Taharka in Napata," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*, vol. 39 (1984), pp. 151–58.

[103] This colonnade is a remnant of a monumental "kiosk." See Barguet, op. cit., pp. 50–51; Jean Lauffray, "La colonnade-propylée occidentale de Karnak dite « Kiosque de Taharqa » et ses abords," *Kêmi. Revue de philologie et d'archéologie égyptiennes et coptes*, no. 20 (1970), pp. 111–64; Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., fig. 46.

was purely propagandistic; since the two snakes often wore the royal crown – one the white crown of Upper Egypt, the other the red crown of Lower Egypt – the point was to stress that the Kushite was "Lord of the Two Lands." This was so irritating for Egyptian nationalists that they strove to remove at least one of the uraei, namely that symbolizing the reign of a "black" pharaoh over northern Egypt. One example of such "retouching" is a large-format portrait of king Shabataka on the façade of the temple of Osiris Lord of Eternity at Karnak.[104] But since the Upper Egyptian crown was left here on the head of the second cobra, it may be suspected that it symbolized not so much the southern part of Egypt as the Kushite homeland further south, which the pharaohs of the Twenty Fifth Dynasty held an undisputed title to.

The most revolutionary change, however, originated by artists under the reign of the next dynasty, called the Saite after its capital city of Sais, was the introduction of a more slender human figure, something that is most evident in relief sculpture.[105] In the proportion grid, the human silhouette became longer by several cells. This can be considered an artistic manifesto, a kind of antithesis of the muscular and stocky depictions of the Kushite pharaohs from the recent past. The new proportion grid was in common use not only to produce original works, but also to copy the finest reliefs from the Old, Middle, and New Kingdom periods. This practice resulted in a striking similarity, not only iconographic, but also stylistic, between many works of the Twenty Sixth Dynasty and their prototypes from centuries prior. This poses another challenge for a researcher of Egyptian art, and the most famous mistake made in this respect was the dating of a deposit of reliefs of extraordinary artistic quality, discovered near the ruins of the royal palace in Memphis, for the Middle Kingdom era, whereas a later, more detailed analysis of their style demonstrated that they were made for one of the last monarchs of the Saite dynasty, i.e., at least fifteen centuries later.[106]

Full-sculpture portraits of the Saite rulers are distinguished by "academic" technical perfection, flawless, elegant proportions, and harmony in the modelling of facial features.[107] What they very often lack, however, is individuality, missing a dash of the naturalism that is so fascinating in depictions of the Kushites. A unique style is born that will continue until the end of the dynastic period, i.e., for over three hundred years. The ruler's face has a cheerful expression, emphasized by slightly raised corners of the mouth, protruding cheekbones standing out against almond-shaped eyes, the contour of the eyeball slightly drawn out with a tapering stroke, and the eyebrows modelled as a bulge with clearly marked edges.[108] Similar features can be found in statues of gods, and even of the high officials who could afford to commission a portrait in a royal workshop.[109]

As dominant as the "academic" style was, a current emerged in Twenty Sixth Dynasty relief that was its precise opposite, characterized by a penchant for nearly caricatural

[104] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., p. 31, D (1), table XXXIV.

[105] Ibid., tables LVI b, LX–LXII, LXV.

[106] Ibid., p. 48, D (4), tables LVIII–LIX a.

[107] Ibid., tables LXIII a–b, LXIV a–c; see also Jack A. Josephson, *Egyptian Royal Sculpture of the Late Period, 400–246 B.C.* (Mainz, 1997), pp. 1–32. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. Abteilung Kairo (Sonderschrift), 30. It needs to be stressed, though, that the dating of many of the sculptures discussed by Josephson is at least controversial, see Myśliwiec, "The Uraeus...," op. cit., pp. 1051–55.

[108] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., pp. 104–5, tables XLIX a–d, LXII a–b, LXIII a–b.

[109] Ibid., tables XLIX a–d, LV d, LVI a, LVII a–d.

naturalism, evident in conveying or even emphasizing the least favourable physiognomic features, such as an almost vertical contour of the occiput, an undulating double chin, nasolabial folds, eye details devoid of distinct boundaries, or exaggerated, bulging lips.[110] Some of these traits were already evident in depictions of Psammetchicus I, the first of the Saite rulers, found on the lintel in the tomb of Montuemhat, a high official that stood at the helm of the Theban elite at the close of the Twenty Fifth and beginning of the Twenty Sixth Dynasties.[111] They are even more conspicuous in the same pharaoh's portrait carved on an inter-column stele from northern Egypt, found at Rosetta, originating at Sais, and today on display at the British Museum in London.[112] The same manner can be found in a similar intercolumnium in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.[113]

The Saite period was brought to an end by the Persians who – through their satraps – reigned in Egypt first for over a hundred years (Twenty Seventh Dynasty), and then for ten (Thirty First Dynasty).[114] Contrary to what Herodotus, a Greek historian from the mid-fifth century BC, hostile towards the Persians, wrote about them, Egypt under Persian rule again experienceed a period of prosperity, especially under Darius the Great. Although very few depictions of Persian rulers as pharaohs have survived from the times of the Twenty Seventh Dynasty, those that have are very telling. First of all, they attest that the Persians – like the Kushites before them – felt immense respect for Egyptian tradition and sought to win favour with the local population through various propaganda "gimmicks," not only textual, but also iconographic. In Egypt, it was very important for them to be perceived as one-hundred-percent pharaohs, while in Persia it was to demonstrate a symbiosis of Egyptian and Asiatic elements.[115]

The characteristic facial features of the "pharaoh" Darius I, as if following the vein of the naturalistic royal portraits of the previous dynasty, stand out with their large eyeball and double chin.[116] We see them, for example, on the walls of the wooden naos found in the underground gallery of sacred animals in Hermopolis[117] (**fig. 30**). During the Ptolemaic period, it was reused as a baboon coffin (the baboon being a sacred animal of the god Thot), but in Darius's times in this miniature shrine there doubtless stood a cult statuette, or perhaps even a small statuary group with a three-dimensional representation of the key motifs conveyed through polychrome painting on the wooden surface of the naos.[118] The Persian king appears here as the pharaoh par excellence, retaining all rigours of contemporary political theology.

[110] Ibid., pp. 51–52.

[111] Ibid., p. 46, A3 (e), table LI.

[112] Ibid., p. 46, A (1), tables LIII a, LIV.

[113] Ibid., p. 47, C (4), tables LIII b, LV a–c; see propositions of slightly earlier dating of this relief (Psamtik I or Necho II); Marianne Eaton-Krauss, "A falsely attributed monument," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 78 (1992), pp. 285–87; Anthony Leahy, "A mysterious fragment and a monumental hinge. Necho II and Psammetichus II once again," in Isabelle Régen, Frédéric Servajean, eds, *Verba manent. Recueil d'études dédiées à Dimitri Meeks par ses collègues et amis* (Montpellier, 2009), pp. 238–39, n. 38–48. Cahiers Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne, 2.

[114] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., pp. 180–208; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt...*, op. cit., pp. 135–62.

[115] Id., *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., pp. 182–206; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt...*, op. cit., pp. 137–62.

[116] Id., *Royal Portraiture...*, op. cit., tables LXVIII–LXIX.

[117] Ibid., table LXX b; Karol Myśliwiec, "Un naos de Darius roi d'Egypte," *Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan*, vol. 5 (1991), pp. 221–46.

[118] Myśliwiec, "Un naos...," op. cit., pp. 234–36, tables IX–X.

It is a pity that the head of a large stone statue found by the French archaeological mission at Susa, one of the two capitals of the Persian empire, has not been preserved[119] (**figs. 31–32**). It is probably the only surviving full-sculpture depiction of Darius I and, in terms of content, iconography, and style, the most eclectic work of ancient art from the first millennium BC. Is it an example of Egyptian art or Persian art? It is impossible to answer this question with any certainty. Opinions among researchers are divided. The stone in which this original testimony of political theology was carved comes from the Zagros Mountains; ergo, the material was local. Whereas the monarch's iconography (his attire and attributes) conforms entirely to the Persian style, the other elements are either Egyptian or styled as Egyptian. Although short texts in three Asiatic languages have been carved on the vertical folds of the cloak, most inscriptions are hieroglyphic, linguistically flawless and excellent in their calligraphy, reminiscent of the finest standards of the Saite period.[120] The general concept of the statue is also based on Egyptian tradition: the monarch stands on a rectangular plinth, with one leg forward, his back connected with the dorsal pillar that defines the axis of the sculpture.

The decoration of the pedestal of this statue is a very careful transformation of reliefs that for centuries decorated the stone plinths situated along the axis of rooms dedicated to the barque in Egyptian temples. During the major ceremonies, a barque with a cult statue of a deity, carried by the priests on their shoulders, would rest on such plinths. As in the case of those, the base of the Darius I statue too has a symbolic scene of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt carved on its front wall. The parallel side walls, however, which in Egypt always showed several identical or almost identical figures of the pharaoh as founder of the temple, his hands raised in the gesture of supporting the sky, which the sacred vessel would rest on, depict instead a long procession of peoples and lands conquered by the Persians.[121] Each of the figures represents a different ethnic unit, but these are not slaves with their hands tied at the back, as foreigners were usually portrayed in Egyptian relief, but free members of the upper social strata. Of course, there is an Egyptian among them too, this time a priest (fig. 32).

Given the Heliopolitan undertone of the hieroglyphic texts carved on the statue, some Egyptologists believe that the latter was meant for the temple of the god Atum at Heliopolis, the Egyptian centre of solar cults.[122] Why would stone be brought over from the Zagros mountains when much finer material was sourced for millennia from inland quarries? Why would the sculpture be taken later to the royal palace in Persia? Although written sources confirm that Persian monarchs appropriated Egyptian sculptures and took them home, in this case it seems more plausible that what was imported were Egyptian sculptors rather than their works.

The Thirtieth Dynasty concludes the reign of the native pharaohs. A monumental structure in Sebennytos, its heartland in the middle of the Nile Delta, was the most magnificent

[119] Id., *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., pp. 191–99; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt...*, op. cit., pp. 146–55.

[120] Jean Yoyotte, "Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques, Darius et l'Egypte," *Journal Asiatique*, no.260 (1972), pp. 253–66; id., "The Egyptian Statue of Darius," in Jean Perrot, ed., *The Palace of Darius at Susa. The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (London–New York, 2010), pp. 240–46.

[121] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder...*, op. cit., pp. 194–95; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt...*, op. cit., pp. 146–51, figs. 41, 44–45.

[122] See n. 120.

temple complex built during that period.[123] To this day scattered granite blocks have been preserved among the fields there, decorated either by the two Nectanebos or, later, by the Ptolemies.[124] However, most of the reliefs from the first group, i.e., the older ones, have ended up, via various routes, at major museums in America and Western Europe. Attempts to reconstruct the temple *in situ* have encountered massive difficulties due to the Delta's swampy ground as well as the remoteness of the site, which is located far away from larger settlement areas and especially from landmarks regularly visited by tourists.

Yet, the reliefs from that temple hold immense significance for studies of Egyptian art from the late dynastic and early Graeco-Roman period (as the times of the reign of the Ptolemies and then of Roman emperors are called).[125] The sculpture workshops of that important political and religious centre developed a unique style that left a fundamental mark on the sculpture, including relief sculpture, of all Egypt and was imitated even at the beginnings of the Ptolemaic period, at least until the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.[126] This style is familiar to us not only from reliefs decorating stone blocks in temple walls, but also from numerous sculptors' models with sketches and exercises by artists searching for the best way to express their ideas and aesthetic preferences.[127]

As far as royal portraiture is concerned, this is essentially another phase of the trend that emerged at the beginning of the Saite (Twenty Sixth) dynasty in opposition to the "African" imagery of the Kushites. The faces became fuller, the smile even more pronounced by raised corners of the mouth, the almond eye is drawn out with an even longer, usually very thin, sometimes barely noticeable stroke, parallel to a similar terminus of the eyebrow.[128] We may venture to say that this is a final, expressive version of the Saite standard. Despite these differences, we nonetheless often find it difficult to attribute individual works to the Saite (earlier), Sebennyte (later), or Ptolemaic (final) phase because a tendency for archaization and conservatism was even stronger during this period than in the first half of the first millennium BC.

This type of royal portrait continued – almost unchanged – until the beginnings of the Ptolemaic period. Depictions of Alexander the Great in Theban temples are particularly representative in this regard[129] (**fig. 33**). Of course, Alexander never reached Thebes and never saw these testimonies of his personal cult, but did it matter at all from the viewpoint of political theology? Those who commissioned those iconographic panegyrics did so for their own sake rather than for the sake of an ephemeral monarch who searched for the end of the world in the badlands of Asia. For them, the great Macedonian was and remained a legend. He only materialized when his mummy was secretly brought to Memphis and provisionally buried in Saqqara, somewhere between the oldest pyramid and the sacred bull galleries, probably

[123] Christine Favard-Meeks, *Le temple de Behbeit el-Hagara. Essai de reconstruction et d'interprétation* (Hamburg, 1991). Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur, 6; Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., pp. 71 (B, 1–2), 81–82, 86–87, tables LXXXIX–XCII, CII–CIV.

[124] Myśliwiec, *Herr Beider Länder*..., op. cit., pp. 229–31, figs. 86–88; id., *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*..., op. cit., pp. 172–75, table VIIIa, fig. 50.

[125] Id., *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., tables LXXXIX–XCII.

[126] Ibid., tables CII–CIV.

[127] Tomoum, *The Sculptors' Models*..., op. cit., tables 11c, 13c, 14c, 15a–b, 29a, c, 30a, 34a, 38a, 40b, 42b; Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., tables CII–CIV.

[128] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture*..., op. cit., tables LXXXIX–XCIV, XCVIII.

[129] Ibid., p. 84 (A), tables XCIII–XCVII (b).

in a reused tomb from the Old Kingdom period.[130] Perhaps even in the grave of Imhotep, if anyone still remembered at the time where the maker of the first pyramid was buried.

Naturally, Alexander was depicted in Theban temples as a pharaoh.[131] He wore the various traditional crowns of Egyptian monarchs, with a preference for the helmet of victory (the *khepresh* crown) and the so-called double crown, which can be considered tantamount to the epithet "Lord of the Two Lands" (the *pschent* crown). In Luxor, a new chapel was built for him, right in the middle of the central room of the oldest part of a temple built a thousand years earlier by Amenhotep III.[132] The passage between the relief-decorated wall from centuries prior and the outer face of the new chapel is so narrow that the artist sculpting the representations of Alexander needed only to turn around to find himself face to face with portraits of Amenhotep. That stylistic inspiration was drawn thus is attested by a striking similarity of facial features in some images situated vis-à-vis, but chronologically separated by many centuries (fig. 33). We often see the Macedonian as a young man with head proportions characteristic for the prelude of the "Amarna revolution," naturalistic modelling of anatomical details, and a cheerful expression.[133] While this echo of the Amarna style was unlikely to have been deliberate, it still proves that Egyptian art never completely freed itself from the reminiscences of its most original episode.

Translated by Marcin Wawrzyńczak

[130] Karol Myśliwiec, "Hole or Whole? A Cemetery of the Ptolemaic Period in Saqqara (Egypt)," in Tomasz Derda, Jennifer Hilder, Jan Kwapisz, eds, *Fragments, Holes and Wholes. Reconstructing the Ancient World in Theory and Practice* (Warsaw, 2017), pp. 365–77. The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements, 30.

[131] Mahmud Abd el-Raziq, *Die Darstellungen und die Texte des Sanktuars Alexanders des Grossen im Tempel von Luxor* (Mainz, 1984). Archäologische Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, 16.

[132] Hellmut Brunner, *Die südlichen Räume des Tempels von Luxor* (Mainz, 1977), table 1. Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, 18.

[133] Myśliwiec, *Royal Portraiture...*, op. cit., table XCIV, figs. b–c; table XCV, figs. a–d; table XCVI, fig. a–f.