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*A Fragmentary Statue of Ramesses II  
with a Scarab on the Head*

The Egyptian Museum in Cairo houses a fragmentary eroded royal bust, dated to the Nineteenth Dynasty (**Fig. 1**).<sup>1</sup> The statue was found in the Temple of Ptah in Memphis.<sup>2</sup> The sculpture has never been discussed before from an iconographic and stylistic point of view. The aim of the present article is to analyze some unusual features that can be observed on this interesting fragment.

The king is shown wearing the *nemes*-headdress with the *uraeus* decorating the forehead. On the middle top part of his head there is a three-dimensional, forward-facing scarab.<sup>3</sup> The pharaoh's face is almost round, the cheeks chubby. The eyebrows are shaped in raised relief, forming two symmetrical arches on the protruding brow. The king's wide almond-shaped eyes are placed horizontally, the inner canthi carved deeply, so that the eyeballs appear to be gazing downward. Although the nose is damaged, the remains show that it could have been broad. The mouth is small with fleshy lips and it is well articulated with two little hollows at the corners. The small rounded chin is marked by side furrows; remains of the royal beard are still visible on the king's neck and chest. The ears are pierced. The surface of the statue is much eroded, so that not much can be said of the way in which the torso was worked. Weathering has also obscured the details of the scarab, making it difficult to determine any differences between it and similar examples of beetles.

Although there are no inscriptions to date the bust, G. Daressy proposed to identify it with Ramesses II based on the iconographic features.<sup>4</sup> G. Maspero attributed it to Merenptah,<sup>5</sup> J. de Morgan suggested the Nineteenth Dynasty, noting also that the scarab was dedicated to Ptah.<sup>6</sup>

The iconography of the face shows an association with other similar effigies of Ramesses II.<sup>7</sup> The face of Ramesses II is more triangular in shape than on most colossal statues, where they are round sometimes, particularly in the case of statues wearing the *ibes* wig; they are never long and square.<sup>8</sup> The eyes are almost almond-shaped, with softer inner canthi dipping downwards slightly; the upper eyelids are inclined as if the king was looking downward, a practice in vogue since Amenhotep III and the Amarna Period.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to Professors Karol Myśliwiec and Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal for discussion and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> CG 38104, JE 27856, SR 4/13649, GEM 18219; red granite, H. 84cm, W. 60cm; M. MINAS-NERPÉL, *Der Gott Chepri*, *OLA* 154, Leuven-Dudley, Mass. 2006 [= Gott Chepri], pp. 401–402, Figs 162–163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> G. DARESSY, *Statues de divinités*, CGC, Nos 38001–39384, Le Caire 1905–1906, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> G. MASPERO, *Guide du visiteur au Musée du Caire*, Le Caire 1915, p. 188, No. 731; MINAS-NERPÉL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 401–402.

<sup>6</sup> J. DE MORGAN, *Notice des principaux monuments exposés au Musée de Gizeh*, Le Caire 1894, p. 51, No. 156; MINAS-NERPÉL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 401–402.

<sup>7</sup> For more information concerning the published statues of Ramesses II, cf. J. MÁLEK, *Egypt 4000 Years of Art*, London 2003 [= *Egypt*], p. 225; J. BAINES, J. MÁLEK, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, London 1992 (Polish edition: *Egipt – Wielkie Kultury Świata*, Warszawa 1995, p. 39).

<sup>8</sup> Cairo Museum (CG 616 and JE44668), British Museum (EA 67, AES 1066 and 118544), Memphis, Open Museum (red granite triad); H. SOUROUZIAN, *Raccords Ramessides*, *MDAIK* 54, 1998, pp. 279–292, Pls 40–47.

<sup>9</sup> H. SOUROUZIAN, *Standing royal colossi of the Middle Kingdom reused by Ramesses II*, *MDAIK* 44, 1988, pp. 229–254, Pls 62–75; H.R. HALL, *A Ramesside royal statue from Palestine*, *JEA* 14, 1928, p. 280, Pl. 29, Fig. 1; PM VII, p. 382; A.M. MOUSSA, *A statue group of Ptah, Sekhmet and Ramses II from Memphis*, *SAK* 9,



1. Ramesses II – Egyptian Museum in Cairo CG 38104, JE 27856 (Phot. Sameh Abdel Mohsen).



2. Ramesses II – Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Phot. Sameh Abdel Mohsen).



3. Ramesses IV – Tell Basta (Phot. M. Kassem).



4. Tutankhamun/Ramesses II, Toledo Museum of Art (Phot. Toledo Museum of Art, USA).

The mouth in statues of Rameses II is usually curved, the corners often drawn upwards in a faint smile. Where the lower lips are accentuated, the drilled corners of the mouth and the chin are marked by side furrows. The ears of Rameses statues are small and pierced.<sup>10</sup>

These facial features support on the whole the attribution of the statue to Rameses II, but there is some other iconographic evidence, like the execution of the eyeballs, which stands against this attribution. The eyeballs appear to have been reshaped sharply back to impart the impression of the king gazing downwards.<sup>11</sup> It might signify usurpation of the statue by a successor of Rameses II. The *uraeus*, nose and wings of the *nemes* are too damaged and eroded to be of assistance in determining the identification of this image.<sup>12</sup>

The motif of the scarab, either large or small, carved in high relief on the head of the pharaoh, is found on a small number of royal statues.<sup>13</sup> All of these statues are attributed to kings of the Ramesside Period, with only one exception, a statue from the late phase of the Eighteenth Dynasty (**Figs 2–4**).<sup>14</sup>

The religious symbolism of a scarab sculpted on the top of a royal head was new in royal statuary of the New Kingdom, especially in the Ramesside Period. It signified the wish to be reborn after death, a renewal. The power of Khepri was transferred to the pharaoh as a guarantee of a prosperous and renewed Egypt. The king was identified with the sun god and as such, he was regenerated overnight, just like the daily rising of the morning sun.<sup>15</sup> It is noticeable that the kings of the New Kingdom, especially of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, preferred this concept endowing the kings with the role of the Creator God, and therefore also with that of the god Khepri,<sup>16</sup> and used it in their iconography.

Another explanation may be deduced from a text found on a fragmentary healing – ‘protecting’ statue of Rameses III from Almaza (archaeological site near Heliopolis).<sup>17</sup>

1981, pp. 285–288, Pls 6–8; J. VANDIER, *Manuel d’archéologie égyptienne III. Les grandes époques. La statuaire* Paris 1958 [= Manuel III], pp. 391–433, Pls 126–135.

<sup>10</sup> C. VANDERSLEYEN, *Écrits sur l’art égyptien, textes choisis*, Bruxelles 2012, pp. 216–217; SOUROUZIAN, *MDAIK* 44, 1988, pp. 229–254, Pls 62–75; VANDIER, *Manuel III*, pp. 391–433.

<sup>11</sup> Dark grey granite head of Rameses II in the Ramesseum Temple, see: E.R. RUSSMANN, *Egyptian Sculpture*, Cairo and Luxor, Austin 1989, p. 151, Pl. 70; C. LEBLANC, *Diodore, le tombeau d’Osymandyas et la statuaire du Ramesseum*, [in:] *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar 2*, Le Caire 1989, p. 151, Pl. 70.

<sup>12</sup> For the importance of these facial features in iconography and style, cf. K. MYŚLIWIEC, *Le portrait royal dans le bas-relief du Nouvel Empire*, *TCAM* 19, Warsaw 1976, pp. 105–116, Pl. CLI, Figs 224–261.

<sup>13</sup> Glasgow, Kelvin grove no. 9.br.1912 – Eighteenth Dynasty; Cairo CG 42145 – Rameses II; Toledo (Ohio) 1906.227 – Rameses II/Tutankhamun; Cairo JE 27635 – Rameses IV; Marseille 209 – Rameses IV; Cairo JE 69771 – Rameses III; Tell Basta, black granite statue – Rameses IV; Matariya Museum Heliopolis – Seti II.

<sup>14</sup> MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 397, Figs 155–156; B. MOJSOV, *The Monuments of Rameses III*, [in:] E.H. Cline, D. O’Connor (Eds), *Rameses III, The Life and Times of Egypt’s Last Hero*, Ann Arbor, Mich. 2012 [= *Monuments*], p. 293.

<sup>15</sup> M. SALEH, H. SOUROUZIAN, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo Official Catalogue*, Mainz a/Rhein 1987, no. 266; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, pp. 411–417; N. STRUDWICK, *The British Museum Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*, London 2006, pp. 97, 110; MALEK, *Egypt*, p. 294.

<sup>16</sup> MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 426.

<sup>17</sup> Cairo Museum (JE 69771, red quartzite, 155cm), see: É. DRIOTON, *Une statue prophylactique de Ramsès III*, *ASAE* 39, 1939, pp. 57–89; MOJSOV, *Monuments*, p. 294; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 401, Fig. 161; B. HORNEMANN, *Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary V*, Copenhagen 1966 [= *Types*], Pl. 1213.

The base of this statue was inscribed with ten magical formulae; the seventh formula was particularly intended to offer protection against snake and scorpion bites, as well as other dangers of the journey through the Eastern Desert. It seems that this protecting magical text is related directly to the provenance of this statue; it was found in a small chapel on the caravan route toward Canaan.<sup>18</sup>

The inscriptions on a group statue of Ramesses II in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, also with a scarab on the head of the king (**Fig. 2**), contain mainly the names and epithets of Ramesses II associated with Atum, Re-Horakhty, Khepri and Geb, without any clarification of the role or the religious symbolism of the scarab.<sup>19</sup>

The statue under discussion may be attributed to Ramesses II, based on its facial features, which are similar to other statues of this king.

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<sup>18</sup> DRIOTON, *ASAE* 39, 1939, pp. 57–89; MOJSOV, *Monuments*, p. 294; MINAS-NERPEL, *Gott Chepri*, p. 401, Fig. 161; B. HORNEMANN, *Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary IV*, Copenhagen 1966 [= *Types IV*], Pl. 1213.

<sup>19</sup> Cairo Museum (CG 42145, JE 41750, limestone, H. 130cm), see: G. LEGRAIN, *Statues et statuettes de rois et de particuliers II*, Le Caire 1909, pp. 9–11, Pl. 7; HORNEMANN, *Types IV*, Pl. 1114; K.A. KITCHEN, *Ramesseid Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical II*, Oxford 1969–1979, p. 558, no. 225; VANDIER, *Manuel III*, p. 626, Pl. CXXXV/5.