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THE NAME OF THE SCRIBE OF THE LOUVRE

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## THE NAME OF THE SCRIBE OF THE LOUVRE

By JEAN CAPART<sup>1</sup>.

THE squatting Scribe of the Louvre Museum (Pl. XXXI, Fig. 1) certainly divides the honours of general admiration with the "Shêkh el-Beled" of the Cairo collection. Wherever Egyptian art is discussed, the mention of these two masterpieces is absolutely inevitable. Nearly everybody knows that we owe them both to the excavations of the illustrious Frenchman, Mariette-Pasha, whose centenary is being celebrated this year. I have endeavoured, in a previous article<sup>2</sup>, to clear away certain obscurities prevalent with regard to the Shêkh, and may be permitted to deal this time with the Scribe of the Louvre.

Of this statue, also, the statement holds good: it has been reproduced everywhere, it has nowhere been properly published; and the bibliography of the Scribe—I mean, of course, the bibliography of scientific studies—is of the most meagre.

In a notice, probably the most detailed one that has appeared, drawn up by Maspero in Rayet's work<sup>3</sup>, we read that "it was found in the tomb of Skhemka, in 1851, by Mariette, during the trial diggings that preceded the discovery of the Serapeum." This statement is repeated in Maspero's great history<sup>4</sup>, where the author adds, "it comes from the tomb of Sekhem-ka and represents this person." It may be seen at once that the problem to be solved is a double one: (a) where was the Scribe of the Louvre found? (b) whom does it represent?

Let us endeavour to get back to the original sources which inform us as to the excavations of the Serapeum. On the 2nd October, 1850, Auguste Mariette landed in Egypt, commissioned to obtain Coptic manuscripts. A credit of 6000 francs had been placed at his disposal. We know how, delayed in Cairo by red tape and tempted by his adventurous genius, Mariette decided to lay bare the secret of Sakkâreh's sands<sup>5</sup>. In the detailed account of the excavations published after his death by Maspero<sup>6</sup>, we find, under the dates 1st November, 1850 to 1st January, 1851, the description of the uncovering of the famous Avenue of Sphinxes of the Serapeum. "From the commencement of the excavations," he wrote, "I had perceived that the Avenue of Sphinxes was bordered on both sides by tombs belonging to private persons. In some cases these tombs have no communication with the Avenue; and these are, generally speaking, very ancient, since for the most part they go back to the Old Kingdom; in other cases they have a façade turned towards the Avenue, with which they are connected by a communicating door. These are the most modern...." "Two of the tombs adjacent to the Avenue particularly arrested my attention. The first is situated north, and belongs to the Old Kingdom. It has been devastated from top to bottom, and it was only with great difficulty that I reconstructed its original plan. Five painted statues were found in the rubbish, into which they had been thrown pell-mell; the

<sup>1</sup> This article has been translated by Mr Battiscombe Gunn.—ED.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal*, vi, 225 foll.

<sup>3</sup> RAYET, *Monuments de l'Art antique*, i, Pl. 2, reproduced with some unimportant modifications in MASPERO, *Essais sur l'Art égyptien*, 53-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire ancienne*, i, 409, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> See MASPERO, *Notice biographique de Mariette*, in *Bibliothèque égyptologique*, vol. xviii, pp. xxviii foll.

<sup>6</sup> MARIETTE, *Le Sérapeum de Memphis*, 7 foll.



I



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4

PORTRAIT-STATUES OF THE OLD KINGDOM

1. The Scribe of the Louvre 2. Statue of Kai (Louvre A. 106) 3, 4. Statues in the Cairo Museum

pieces of these, which fitted together, were carefully gathered up and put aside. Two niches, hidden in a wall which had not been completely overthrown, were opened. We found in them two admirable statues in their original positions. They are of limestone. The bare flesh is painted red, the hair black, the short kilt (*shenti*) white. The eyes are set in envelopes of bronze which take the place of the eyelids. In the middle of the eyes, formed of pieces of opaque blue quartz, are fixed small disks of rock-crystal, which give to the pupils thus represented an extraordinary living power. I had the shaft cleared; at the bottom we found only a coarse sarcophagus of greyish limestone, already robbed" (p. 11). And Mariette adds in a footnote: "The seven statues thus discovered are now in the Louvre. One of the two statues with inlaid eyes is the famous squatting scribe, the exhibition of which caused such a lively emotion in the world of artists and archaeologists. Towards the latter period of the Serapeum excavations I again put some workmen on to the rubbish where these monuments had been recovered. The disorder is so great that I cannot state positively that this débris does not belong to several tombs. Anyhow, nothing new was discovered."

Mariette's statements seem fairly precise: on the one hand there were in the midst of the rubbish, thrown pell-mell and broken up, five painted statues, and on the other hand there were in two niches hidden in a wall which had not been completely overthrown, and *in their original positions*, two limestone statues, one of which is the famous Scribe. It is further seen from the footnote, that the confusion of the ruins was such that Mariette is unable to affirm that all these statues belonged to one and the same tomb.

In the biographical notice of Mariette cited above, Maspero, describing the slow progress of the excavations which were to lead to the entrance of the Serapeum, writes: "At the least he unearthed to right and left tombs of the Memphite Kingdom which enriched him with interesting monuments. One of them contained seven statues of painted limestone, which are now in the Louvre. Six have no great merit, but the seventh is no other than the famous squatting scribe<sup>1</sup>." I fear that we already have here, in this new manner of setting forth the facts, a regrettable confusion which has certainly contributed to obscure the problem. For Maspero speaks of seven limestone statues which he separates into two groups: one of six, not very remarkable, and the other constituted solely by the famous Scribe.

The first task incumbent on me is clearly to inquire which are the statues that have just been spoken of. With this object, let us examine the old catalogues of the Louvre. I have not at hand the first edition (1849) of E. de Rougé's *Notice*<sup>2</sup>. In the second, dated 1852, the description of the statues (classified under the letter A) stops on page 43 with No. 101. In the eighth edition, published without date and apparently a mere reimpression of preceding editions, a supplement, commencing at p. 47, first of all repeats No. A. 101, which figured already in the 1852 edition. No. A. 102, which follows, is described as being a "limestone group, painted all over, of Sekhem-ka accompanied by his wife and son. This fine group, of the end of the Fifth Dynasty, comes from Mariette's excavations at Sakkâreh."

A. 103 is also of Sekhem-ka; de Rougé says: "this figure and the three following numbers come from the same tomb as the preceding one." A. 104 and A. 105 do actually also represent Sekhem-ka. A. 102 and A. 103 are of limestone, while A. 104 and A. 105 are of pink granite and of diorite respectively.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. xxi-xxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Notice des Monuments exposés dans la galerie d'antiquités égyptiennes.....au Musée du Louvre.*

As to statue A. 106 (Pl. XXXI, Fig. 2), which has just been stated to come from the same tomb, the author declares this time that another person than Sekhem-ka is in question. It is "a man seated on a high-backed chair; his flesh is painted red with the greatest care. The eyes are inlaid in white quartz and rock-crystal, in bronze eyelids. The inscription accounts for the luxuriousness of this work; the figure represents a royal relative named Hamset, son of Kaa!"

Is it possible to hesitate a single moment in recognizing in this last statue the piece found by Mariette "*in its original position*" in one of the two niches discovered intact? In the other niche was the Scribe.

We thus appear to have on the one hand four statues of Sekhem-ka, and on the other the statue of Hamset and the Scribe. It remains to ascertain what the seventh was. This will be A. 107 of the *Notice des Monuments*, which represents Pahu-er-nefer. The notice allotted to it by E. de Rougé ends with the remark "(M. Mariette's excavations)." Had we only this short indication, which also terminates the descriptions of other statues, we might hesitate to complete our series of five and two statues by the addition of A. 107. But fortunately de Rougé, in another of his catalogues of the Louvre<sup>2</sup>, briefly describes statues A. 102, 103, 104 and 106, all coming from the same tomb, and ends with the notice of A. 107, that of "Pahou-er-nowre," regarding which he says "it comes from the same tomb as the preceding ones."

Let us now resume the results obtained. The five statues found thrown into the ruins are Nos. A. 102, 103, 104 and 105, those of Sekhem-ka, together with No. A. 107, that of Pahu-er-nefer. Statue A. 106, that of Hamset so-called, was found at the same time as the Scribe in the two niches of the undestroyed wall. Up to the present this series of statues, of so great interest, has not yet been reproduced completely. Maspero published the group A. 102 in Rayet's work<sup>3</sup>. Statue A. 103 is reproduced as a half-tone plate in a new edition of the *Description sommaire des salles du Musée Égyptien* made by Pierret in 1895<sup>4</sup>. I doubt whether anyone has published statue A. 104, the inscriptions of which declare that it was dedicated by Sekhem-ka's son, named Ma-nefer<sup>5</sup>. Statue A. 105 has remained unpublished. A. 107, that of Pehu-er-nefer, has been published by Maspero, in Rayet's work again<sup>6</sup>. At the beginning of the description which he gives of it Maspero says: "Mariette found it by chance, in searching for the Serapeum. It had been withdrawn in ancient times from the shaft (?) which contained it, and thrown into the rubbish mounds of the great alley of sphinxes which leads to the Tomb of Apis." This is a useful confirmation of E. de Rougé's remark. As to statue A. 106, it remained unpublished until I had the good fortune to be able to reproduce it in Pls. VI and VII of my *Recueil de Monuments égyptiens*. Others besides myself have since become aware that this statue did not deserve the disdain with which it had been treated previously. Breasted<sup>7</sup> recognizes in it one of the best examples of the sculptor's art in the Old Kingdom.

Let us now examine the question of the name of the Scribe.

<sup>1</sup> p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Notice sommaire des monuments égyptiens exposés dans les galeries du Musée du Louvre*, 1876, 42-3.

<sup>3</sup> RAYET, *op. cit.*, I, Pl. IV. See MASPERO, *Essais sur l'Art égyptien*, 45-51. <sup>4</sup> Plate facing p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. in my *Recueil de Monuments égyptiens*, 1902, Pl. IX, a group of this Ma-nefer and his wife belonging to the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

<sup>6</sup> Pl. IV, Pehournowri. Notice reprinted in the *Essais sur l'Art égyptien*, 75-82.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Egypt*, 1905, 103 and Fig. 50.

If we unite the seven statues into a compact group, as has been sometimes done, there is no reason to call the Scribe Sekhem-ka rather than Pehu-er-nefer or Hamset; since these three different names are found on statues discovered at the same time as the Scribe. If, on the other hand, following Mariette's definite statements, it is necessary to set aside the five statues which were thrown into the rubbish and which give the name of the Sekhem-ka four times and that of Pehu-er-nefer once, there remains over, for the question of the Scribe's name, only the statue of Hamset. It may be recalled that Mariette states that the two statues found in the niches had inlaid eyes; only the statue of Hamset answers to this description.

Must we then ascribe the name of Hamset to the Scribe of the Louvre? Let us examine the inscription of this statue A. 106, engraved on the right-hand side of the seat:—

Sethe<sup>1</sup> has taught us how the statements of Egyptian filiation are to be read, and thanks to him we now know that the statue belongs to an exalted personage named Kai, son of a noble lady whose name E. de Rougé read Hamset. The title  was a fairly high one; in the preamble of the Story of Sinuhe it follows immediately after that of  in the Ramesseum text<sup>2</sup>. Gardiner translates it "Territorial Governor"; Maspero, who studied it closely, renders it "administrator, trustee of a nome, a town, a palace".<sup>3</sup> The name of Kai's mother must be read, not Hamset but, as Lacau<sup>4</sup> has shown, Mesehet. Statue A. 106 thus represents the high functionary Kai, son of the Royal Relative Mesehet. According to the interpretation which has generally been adopted hitherto by most writers, the famous Scribe must be his servant. As Maspero has written: "he still awaits, after six thousand years, the moment when the master will be pleased to resume the interrupted dictation".<sup>5</sup> Bénédite<sup>6</sup> calls him an obscure and nameless person, and without diminishing the merit of the work (quite the contrary) he styles it a "small portrait of a clerical employee."

Let us return once more to Mariette's own account of the discovery. "Two niches, hidden in a wall which had not been completely overthrown, were opened. We found in them two admirable statues, in their original positions." Can it be believed that the master was placed in front of one of the niches and the servant in front of the other? This would be in contradiction with what is known of the position occupied by the statues in tombs having two stelae, as is almost regular in the Old Kingdom mastabas. On the faces of the two stelae representations of the master's statues are always found. I have shown in a former essay that it was the rule to place in the tomb two statues representing the master, and that differences in costume and wig can be noted between one statue and another. There are also differences in the postures. Why should one refuse to admit in



<sup>1</sup> Der Name "Merui-tensi" und die Entwicklung der Filiationsangabe, in *Zeitschr. für äg. Spr.*, 49, 97–9

<sup>2</sup> GARDINER, *Notes on the Story of Sinuhe*, 8–9, 152.

<sup>3</sup> MASPERO, *Études égyptiennes*, II, 152–6. The demonstration given by Maspero in this memoir, pp. 142 foll., and strengthened by Spiegelberg in *Studien und Materialien zum Rechtswesen*, 61–2, ought, it would seem, to have removed the opinion that the sign  merely indicated a grade in the hierarchy of functionaries and did not designate a judge. not

<sup>4</sup> *Métathèse apparente en Égyptien* in *Rec. de Trav.*, 25, 156–9.

<sup>5</sup> *Essais sur l'Art égyptien*, 54.

<sup>6</sup> *A propos d'un Buste égyptien*, in *Monuments et Mémoires de la fondation Piot*, XIII, 9.

the present case that statue A. 106 and the Scribe both represent one and the same personage, and that statue A. 106 affords us, through its inscription, the name of the Scribe?

But, it will be said, is it possible to believe that among the statuary forms adopted as common variants, the pair of types was employed which occurs here—a man seated on the ground with crossed legs, in the act of writing, and a man seated on a cubical seat? I ask permission to refer the reader to an example given us by M. de Morgan's excavations in the burial-ground of Sakkâreh. Maspero has described the new Scribe of the Cairo Museum<sup>1</sup>, and has related the circumstances of the discovery as follows:

"The excavations carried out by M. de Morgan in the northern part of the burial-ground of Sakkâreh have recently brought to light a mastaba of beautiful white stone near the tomb of Sabu, a little east of Mariette's old house. Neither an architectural façade nor any chapels accessible to the living have been found, only a narrow corridor which penetrates the masonry from north to south with a deviation of 5° eastwards. The walls had been prepared and smoothed to receive the usual decoration, but when the mason had finished his work the sculptor, doubtless, had no time to commence his; nowhere are to be seen any of those sketches with point or brush which are usually met with in unfinished tombs of all periods. Two large stelae, or, if one will, two door-shaped niches, had been fashioned in the right-hand wall, and in front of each of these stood a statue in the very spot where the Egyptian workmen had set it up on the day of the funeral. The first represents a man seated on a solid stool, with the kilt round his loins and on his head a wig with rows of little tresses ranged in tiers. The bust and legs are naked; the forearms and hands rest on his knees, the right hand being closed with projecting thumb, the left being flat, with the finger-tips extending beyond the hem of the kilt. The new scribe was squatting before the second stela..... Neither of the two statues bears a single word of inscription, which would inform us of the name and titles of our man. The latter could not have been a nobody; a tomb of large size always necessitated considerable wealth, or a high position in the administrative hierarchy supplementing a moderate fortune. It also happened that Pharaoh, desiring to recompense someone in his *entourage* for services rendered, granted him a statue, a stela, even a whole tomb which the royal architects built at the expense of the Treasury. It is thus certain that our nameless Scribe was of good rank in his lifetime....."

There is, it seems to me, a complete parallelism between the two discoveries; and I believe that the argumentation will appear sufficiently cogent for the reader to admit that in both cases we have to deal with the representation, under two different aspects, of persons of high rank. The Cairo statues found by de Morgan (Pl. XXXI, Figs 3 and 4), are unfortunately nameless; as to those at the Louvre, found by Mariette, it happens that one of them gives us a title, a name and a filiation. We can henceforward call the Scribe of the Louvre "The Administrator Kai, son of the Royal Relative, Mesehet." Let us hope that this will explode the legend of the "little employee ready to resume his master's dictation"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Nouveau Scribe du Musée de Gizeh*, in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 35<sup>e</sup> année, 3<sup>e</sup> période, IX, 265-70, and in the *Monuments et Mémoires Piot*, I, 1-6. Reprinted with slight modifications in *Essais sur l'Art égyptien*, 59-68. See also BORCHARDT, *Statuen und Statuetten* (Cairo Catalogue), pp. 33-5; the numbers 35 and 36, with the small photograph, show the exact place occupied by the two statues.

<sup>2</sup> May I be allowed to express the hope of seeing the direction of the Egyptian section of the Louvre decide on the complete publication of the *dossier* regarding the discovery of the Scribe. The archives of the Louvre perhaps contain documents destined to confirm or disprove the opinions expressed in this article.