

## Some Notes on the Wooden Statues from the Tomb of Nakht at Assiut

by Julia Harvey

In the course of preparing a comprehensive corpus of private wooden statuary of the Old and Middle Kingdoms for my thesis<sup>1</sup>, I have noted a number of references in the literature to discrepancies and inaccuracies in the report by Chassinat and Palanque on their excavations at Assiut in 1903.<sup>2</sup> Pending the appearance of my work, it may be helpful to make available some corrections to this report revealed by my re-examination of the material.

As Chassinat explains in his introduction, the excavations were conducted by Charles Palanque and his notes form the basis for Chassinat's publication which appeared in 1911, after the death of Palanque and the distribution of the statues to various museums. This may account for some of the inaccuracies in the publication. Chassinat describes, in varying detail, a total of twenty statues found in the tomb of Nakht, nineteen of wood and one of alabaster, and these are listed here, with a few notes, in the order in which they appear in the publication.

The following eight statues were found in the entrance hall.

**p. 30:** Female offering bearer, illustrated in fig. 2 and Pl. IV. The height of this figure is given as 65 cm. This statue is Louvre E 12029, Ht. 57.7 cm; base 27.7 x 11.3 cm. Bibliography: Porter & Moss, *Topographical Bibliography IV*, p. 265; J. H. Breasted, *Egyptian Servant Statues* (Washington, 1948) p. 64 [14] (reversing the heights of 13 and 14), Pl. 59a; Catalogue *Un siècle de fouilles*

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<sup>2</sup> É. Chassinat & Ch. Palanque, *Une campagne de fouilles dans la nécropole d'Assiout*, MIFAO 24 (Le Caire, 1911); the chapter dealing with the tomb of Nakht is Chapter II, pp. 29-154.

*Françaises en Égypte 1880-1980* (Le Caire, 1981), p. 114, No. 109, with colour photograph on p. 105; J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* III (Paris, 1948), pp. 147-148, Pl. L, 1.

**p. 31:** Statue of Nakht, illustrated in Pl. V. The height is given as 165 cm; base as 88 x 33 x 16 cm. This statue is Cairo JE 36283. I was unable to verify the measurements as the case in which the statue is exhibited could not be opened<sup>3</sup>.



**p. 32:** Female offering bearer described as similar to the one above (*i.e.*, to Louvre E 12029). In the absence of any further criteria it is impossible to say for certain which statue this could be. By a process of elimination of the other candidates, by only considering statues with one-strap dresses, and those with white headbands on their wigs, I tentatively suggest Cairo Temp. No. 8/4/23/7 (Ht. 38.5 cm; base 25.0 x 6.5 x 3.3 cm) as this bearer.

**p. 32:** Statue of Nakht. Height given as 175 cm. Illustrated on Pls. VI & VII. This statue is Louvre E 11937; Ht. 178.5 cm; base 110.0 x 49.5 cm. This statue has most recently been published in Elisabeth Delange, *Catalogue des statues égyptiennes du Moyen Empire (Musée du Louvre)* (Paris, 1987), pp. 151-153, with bibliography.

**p. 33:** Statue of Henu, wife of Nakht. Nude female statue, height given as 66 cm, illustrated on Pl. VIII. This statue is Cairo JE 36288, Special Register 207. Ht. 59.0 cm; base 30.9 x 12.8 x 5.8 cm. The inscription on the base, not published by Chassinat, reads: 

Bibliography: Porter & Moss IV, p. 266; H. Fehheimer, *Kleinplastik der Ägypter* (Berlin, 1921), Pl. 38.

**p. 33:** Three offering bearers are discussed in somewhat confusing terminology. Two are fortunately illustrated but the third is only described as the largest found in the tomb. The height of this large bearer is given as 77 cm and I would suggest that this is Cairo JE 36289; Special Register 340; at present on display in the Cairo Airport Museum. Unfortunately I was unable to

<sup>3</sup> In the inscription on the base of the statue read  instead of  (Chassinat).

check the measurements of this statue. Bibliography: Breasted, *Eg. Serv. St.* p. 63 [7], where the height is given as 77 cm. The bearer illustrated on Pl. IX is Cairo JE 36290; Special Register 341; Ht. 57.5 cm (Chassinat gives 60 cm); the bearer on Pl. X is Cairo JE 36291; Special Register 342; Ht. 52.5 cm (Chassinat gives 60 cm). See Catalogue *Nofret - Die Schöne: Die Frau im Alten Ägypten* (Cairo/Mainz, 1984), pp. 96-97, Nos. 41 and 42.

The majority of the statues in the tomb of Nakht were found in Pit 1, and it is the *en masse* photograph of these statues (Pl. XI, 1) that has led to the most confusion. The excavation of the pit is discussed on pages 34-114, and a useful sketch of the position of the objects in the pit is given on page 47. Numbers 1-10 are those of the statues concerning us here.

1. Statue of Nakht. Ht. given as 50 cm. Illustration Pl. XI, 1. Inlaid eyes. This statue is Cairo JE 36292; Special Register 208; Ht. 48.0 cm; base 27.0 x 11.2 x 4.5 cm. The exact illustration reference is Pl. XI, 1 (left).
2. Statue of Nakht. Ht. given as 41 cm. Illustration Pl. XI, 1. Painted eyes. This statue is Louvre E 12002; Ht. 44.8 cm; base 26.3 x 10.4 cm. The illustration references are Pl. XI, 1 (2nd from left) and Pl. XII, 3. This statue has been published in Delange, *Statues*, where a comprehensive bibliography is given.
3. Statue of Nakht. Ht. given as 40 cm. Illustration Pl. XII, 3. Inlaid eyes. This statue is Boston MFA 04.1776; Ht. 41.0 cm; base 24.4 x 10.0 x 3.5 cm. It is illustrated on Pl. XI, 1 (3rd from left).
4. Statue of Nakht. Ht. given as 29 cm. Illustration Pl. XI, 2. Painted eyes. This statue is Boston MFA 04.1775. Both the height and the illustration reference as given by Chassinat are correct. Bibliography: *BMFA* III No. 2 (April, 1905), p. 14; Porter & Moss IV, p. 266.
5. Statue of Nakht in *shendjyt*. Ht. given as 28 cm. Illustration Pl. XII, 1. This statue is Cairo JE 36281; Special Register 205; Ht. 28.0 cm; base 16.5 x 6.6 x 3.0 cm. The illustration reference is correct, but add Pl. XI, 1 (2nd from right).

There is now more paint missing from the right hand side of the front of the *shendjyt* than in Chassinat's photograph.

6. Statue of Nakht in *shendjyt*. Ht. given as 30 cm. Illustration Pl. XII, 2. This statue is Louvre E 12028; Ht. 29.5 cm; base 16.8 x 8.2 cm. The illustration reference is correct, but add Pl. XI, 1 (3rd from right). It has recently been published in Delange, *Statues*, where a complete bibliography is available.

7. Alabaster statue of Nakht. Brussels E. 5596. This does not fall within the scope of my research, but the illustration reference should be Pl. XI, 3 and not Pl. XII, 3. See most recently E. Teeter, *GM* 114 (1990), pp. 101-106.

8. Ebony statue of Nakht. Ht. 13 cm. Illustration Pl. XI, 1. This statue is Cairo JE 36282; Special Register 206. The height is indeed 13.0 cm and the base is 7.8 x 3.9 x 1.9 cm. The exact illustration reference is Pl. XI, 1 (right).

9. Statue of Nakht of the same type as Nos. 1-4. Ht. given as 29 cm. Besides the tiny sketch on p. 47, this statue is not illustrated and has thus been the subject of much speculation. There are, at present, two candidates: Louvre E 12633 (Ht. 26.4 cm; base 14.4 x 7.4 cm) and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 3-1922 (Ht. 40.8 cm; base 22.2 x 9.5 x 4.8 cm). The latter has been suggested to be the 'missing' statue from this tomb on the basis of stylistic similarities with the other statues from the tomb<sup>4</sup>, but these criteria also apply to Louvre E 12633. Three more points, in my opinion, bring the weight of evidence more firmly down onto the side of Louvre E 12633. Firstly, as we can see from the list of corrections above, Chassinat's measurements, although often inaccurate, are all within 4 cm of the actual heights of the statues. He gives the height of statue 9 as 29 cm: Louvre E 12633 is 26.4 cm in height, thus 2.6 cm smaller than Chassinat's figure. Fitzwilliam 3-1922 is 40.8 cm in height, thus 11.8 cm larger than Chassinat's figure. Secondly, Chassinat always mentions it if a statue has inlaid eyes. No mention of the eyes is made at all for statue 9, but I suspect that if it had had inlaid eyes this would have been

<sup>4</sup> Janine Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals: Egyptian art in the Middle Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 34-35, No. 25.

recorded. Louvre E 12633 has painted eyes; Fitzwilliam 3-1922 has inlaid eyes. Finally, when one compares photographs of the statues from this tomb, the neck is seen to be rather short. This is the case also with Louvre E 12633, whereas Fitzwilliam 3-1922 has a noticeably longer and thinner neck. The apparently long neck of Louvre E 12002 can be accounted for by the fact that the head is turned markedly upwards, thus raising the chin significantly and making the neck appear longer. Until further proof is forthcoming, however, any attribution to the tomb must be tentative.

10. Female offering bearer of a type previously described.<sup>5</sup> Ht. given as 55 cm. Not illustrated. This statue is probably Louvre E 11992 which is on record as having come from this tomb. She is a relatively crude bearer and her right hand is missing entirely. She wears a long skirt with no straps over her shoulders. Ht. 56.3 cm; base L. 28.0 cm. Bibliography: Breasted, *Eg. Serv. St.* p. 64 [10], Pl. 57 [right hand figure]; Boreux, *Guide-Catalogue Sommaire I* (1932), p. 177, Pl. XXII; *Un siècle de fouilles*, p. 115, No. 110.

No statues were found in Pits 2 and 3. In Pit 4 two wooden statues were found - one of a nude female, illustrated on Pl. XXVII,3, and one female offering bearer, which is not illustrated. I have not yet been able to locate the nude female. For the offering bearer there are two main candidates, Louvre E 11991 and Louvre E 12001, both attributed to Tomb 20, Ankhef. The information about the statues from Tomb 20 is nearly as vague as for the one from Pit 4. Nevertheless, one significant detail in the description of these statues makes it impossible for both Louvre statues to come from this tomb. For one we are told that she is 45 cm in height and wears a white dress;<sup>6</sup> the other is also said to wear a white dress, but here it is added that this dress is supported by a strap going over one shoulder,<sup>7</sup> obviously in contrast

<sup>5</sup> "Porteuse d'offrandes en bois peint, du type déjà décrit, vêtue d'une tunique blanche", *o.c.*, 49; presumably the comparison is to the three offering bearers on p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Chassinat & Palanque, *o.c.*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 189.

to the first. Chassinat's description implies that the first dress has a different method of support, perhaps two straps or none at all. Both Louvre statues wear dresses supported by shoulder straps. Also, the height of the first statue is given as 45 cm, and the fact that no height at all is given for the second implies that it was close to that of the first. Louvre E 12001 measures 49.7 cm, which is within the range of Chassinat's figures, inaccurate as they generally are. On the other hand, Louvre E 11991 is 63.2 cm and thus clearly a much larger figure. The offering bearer from Pit 4 is said to be very similar to that from Tomb 6,<sup>8</sup> which is Boston MFA 04.1774. The latter is 66.0 cm in height, wears a sheath dress with a strap going between her breasts and over her left shoulder, a black wig with one long bunch down her back, and a plain white fillet around the crown of the wig. On her head she carries a tall, black and yellow painted basket with sloping sides. Louvre E 11991 is 63.2 cm in height, wears a similar dress to Boston MFA 04.1774, a similar wig, and carries a similar basket. The only difference between the two is that the fillet of Louvre E 11991 has one end hanging down the back bunch of the wig. Therefore, I suggest that Louvre E 11991 comes from Pit 4, and that only Louvre E 12001 comes from Tomb 20.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See for this statue Chassinat & Palanque, *o.c.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Louvre E 11992, surmised above to be statue No. 10 from Pit 1, measures 56.3 cm and is therefore unlikely to be the other offering bearer from Tomb 20.