



Metropolitan Museum of Art

A relief that the Met turned over to Egyptian authorities.

A Goddess Goes Home

A limestone relief depicting the head of an Egyptian goddess and dating to the 13th century B.C. was returned to the Egyptian government yesterday by the Metropolitan Museum of Art after it was identified as a fragment that disappeared several decades ago from a pharaoh's chapel outside Cairo.

Dorothea Arnold, curator of the Egyptian collection at the Met, returned the fragment to Mahmoud Allam, the Egyptian consul general in New York. The piece, which is 21½ by 19¾ inches, had been on loan to the Met since 1996. After the relief was identified, the museum bought it from its owner, who was not identified, to return it to Egypt.

The relief was spotted a year ago by Dr. Jacobus van Dijk, a visiting Dutch Egyptologist, who recognized it as a piece from the chapel of Seti I, at the ancient pharaonic capital of Memphis. Upon returning home, he confirmed his hunch by checking a French publication where the same goddess's head was featured in a photograph of the Seti I chapel, taken around 1948, the year the site was discovered by archaeologists.

"Once in possession of this information, the right course for the Met was restitution of the work to Egypt," Philippe de Montebello, director of the Met, said in a statement.

The relief fragment had been owned for many years by Dorothy Rodgers, the wife of the composer Richard Rodgers. It was sold at a Sotheby's auction in 1981 to a relative of the person who then lent it to the museum.