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ANOTHER MOUTHFUL OF DUST

Egyptological Studies in Honour of Geoffrey Thorndike Martin

edited by

JACOBUS VAN DIJK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE IX

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF GEOFFREY T. MARTIN XI

David A. ASTON
In Vino Veritas. A Docketed History of the New Kingdom between Year 1 of Tuthmosis III and Year 1 of Ramesses II 1

Susanne BINDER and Boyo OCKINGA
Akhenaten and Amarna through the Eyes of Max Weidenbach (1843 and 1845) 43

Janine BOURRIAU
Observations on the New Kingdom Ceramics at Saqqara and Memphis, with particular reference to the reign of Ramesses II . . 63

Edda BRESCIANI
Une amulette de la Double Âme 77

Edward BROVARSKI
Reflections on the Battlefield and Liban Booty Palettes 81

Jacobus VAN DIJK
A Statue of Yupa and his Wife Nashaia in the New Kingdom Necropolis at Saqqara 91

Richard FAZZINI
Some Reliefs of Dynasty Thirty in the Precinct of Mut at South Karnak 107

Marc GABOLDE
Some Remarks on the Embalming Caches in the Royal Necropoleis at Thebes and Amarna 123

Waltraud GUGLIELMI
Der Kopf der Nofretete im Museum Folkwang, Essen 141

Fredrik HAGEN
On Some Movements of the Royal Court in New Kingdom Egypt . 155

Yvonne HARPUR
Decorated Old Kingdom Blocks and Fragments in Magazines, Museums and Private Collections: Loose Blocks and Fragments from Giza, Saqqara and Abusir 183

Julia Harvey
The Lady Ikuy 221

Zahi Hawass
The Egyptian Expedition to the Valley of the Kings. Excavation Season 2, 2008–2009 – Part 2: The Valley of the Monkeys . . . 233

Marsha Hill and Deborah Schorsch
Ptah's Profile 251

Salima Ikram and Aidan Dodson
A Twenty-second Dynasty Mummy-Cartonnage in the Gayer-Anderson Museum 309

W. Raymond Johnson and Zahi Hawass
The Abusir Tutankhamun Relief Blocks: Origin and Context . . 323

Rolf Krauss
The Azzi Eclipse and Hittite-Egyptian Chronology 335

Piers Litherland
The Archaeological Future of the Valley of the Kings: the True Legacy of Howard Carter 371

Lise Manniche
Amarna Deserts 381

William H. Peck
Two Archaic Cylinder Seals from Egypt: from Excavations in the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at Karnak and the Site of Mendes in the Delta 395

Stephen Quirke
Another Piece in the Faience Puzzle of Hatiay 401

Maarten J. Raven
The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb: the Central Chapel Revisited . 421

Nicholas Reeves
Englishman in New York: Cyril Aldred at the Met, 1955–56 . . 435

Alessandro Roccati
From the Western Corner of the Sky 463

Donald P. Ryan
The Very Brief Theban Excavation of H.S. Whitaker 467

Kim RYHOLT
Two Private-name Scarabs in the British Museum: a Note on a Hard-stone Forgery 477

Hans D. SCHNEIDER
Works of Art in their Own Right: Late Eighteenth Dynasty Shabtis in Chiddingstone Castle 481

René VAN WALSEM
Quantitative Means for Establishing the Qualitative 'Individuality Degree' of Hetepka's Elite Tomb at Saqqara 495

Toby A.H. WILKINSON
Power and Authority in Early Dynastic Egypt 543

THE LADY IKUY

Julia HARVEY

The most pleasant side effect of studying a group of material, in my case wooden statues, and publishing the results is that one can be asked suddenly for one's opinion of a previously unknown or unlocated statue. This happened to me not so long ago, and I am delighted to say that the owner has generously granted me permission to publish it. It gives me great pleasure to be able to dedicate this contribution to Professor Geoffrey Martin, who has played a major part in my Egyptological career, both at UCL and at Saqqara.

The statue discussed here, now in a private collection, was reportedly acquired by the previous owner in Brussels in the 1960s, but unfortunately that is as far back as the documentation goes. As far as has been possible to ascertain, it has not previously been published, nor did it leave Egypt after 1922.

The statue is of a nude female, standing on an inscribed base (Fig. 1); ht: 56.5 cm; base: 4.2 × 12.5 × 35 cm. It is carved from a single piece of wood, with only the arms, the fronts of the feet and the base being separate pieces. The chock of wood under the feet appears to be also part of the main statue, and is slotted into the base and secured from behind (see below). The entire figure is painted yellow, with black wig, sandals, eyebrows, navel and nipples, black and red jewellery, white finger- and toenails, each ending in a black dot. The pubic region is indicated by a series of nicks in the wood. The base is painted red over white plaster.

She is wearing a tripartite wig with a centre parting, painted black over a thin white plaster layer. The individual tresses are not carved, but each tress ends in a point, implying that they are plaits tied off at the end. The topmost layers both front and back terminate slightly above the layers underneath, three rows in front and four rows at the back, creating a very realistic impression (Fig. 2). The ears are completely covered. The forehead is wide and smooth, with the eyebrows prominently carved and painted black. They extend to the sides of the head and downwards, framing the eyes, although the black paint does not continue beyond where it would naturally. The eyes are inlaid and have been examined by an art conservation expert:[1]

[1] This expert cannot be named as the owner wishes to remain anonymous.

A copper alloy frame surrounds both eyes.

The proper left eye appears to have a calcite inlay (so-called Egyptian alabaster). The front side of the white inlay is flat from the front. The pupil is made of a black material; it appears to be stone (likely obsidian). The black inlay (pupil) is thin i.e. appears disc like but since the white inlay has a round dimple or opening right behind the black inlay, the presumption is that the pupil tapers into (i.e. is cone shaped) or is inserted into the white inlay. Eye inlays in general were usually cone shaped, inserted in a recess and adhered with resin from behind.
There is a plaster like material between the white inlay and the socket. This might be supporting the attachment or it is just some soil deposit.

The proper right eye appears to be made of calcite as well. However, the stone is not flat from the front and is arched outwards. Also, the black pupil is not an inlay but simply black paint. This eye is an old restoration. There is no visible indication as to how the eye is attached.

The nose and mouth are smallish and well carved. The nose turns up slightly pertly, while the corners of the mouth turn down. The upper lip is a bow, the lower lip a straight line at the bottom. The cheekbones are not prominent and the chin is also rather small. The overall impression is one of youth rather than maturity.

Across the front of her short neck is a triple line of beads with drops in between. The pattern is black line, black drops, red line, black drops, black line. The angle is strange if a choker is meant — if you continue the lines on they would not pass around her neck — but the hair hides this problem. The shoulders are straight and curve naturally downwards at the ends. The width of the shoulders is 12 cm. There is evidence of an old repair on the proper right shoulder. The chest has a crack running down it from just below the choker to the top of the left leg, running to the left of the carved navel. The breasts are positioned under the lappets of the wig, perhaps a shade too low, and have prominent nipples painted black with a circle of black dots indicating the areolae. They are small and jut out in side view — also an indication of youth (Fig. 3). The waist is slim and the hips are prominently carved.

The navel is indicated by a round hole, painted black. The pubic triangle is large and triangular, but not painted black. Instead, the pubic hair is indicated by a series of short nicks in the surface of the wood. There is also a carved line indicating the pudendal cleft (Fig. 4). The buttocks are pointed just like the breasts. On her back a crack runs from the left of her waistline down through a knothole just above her buttocks to the back of her left thigh.

The arms, attached to the shoulders with dowels, are pendant with the hands open. They do not touch the torso at any point. The elbows are carved and are at the same height as the small of the back, just above the jutting hipbones. There is a bracelet around each wrist in alternating vertical bands of red, unpainted (perhaps originally white?) and black in the pattern red/unpainted/ black/ unpainted /red etc. The hands do not have the fingers and thumbs carved

separately, but the fingernails are carved and painted white. At the end of each finger is a small black-painted dot.

The legs are together, and have not been carved free at the thigh. They were originally carved free from that point downwards, but the crack on the back of the left leg has widened that calf so that it is now touching the other calf. The knees are well carved. The ankles are also carved, but not particularly prominently. Just above each ankle is an anklet matching the bracelets in the pattern red/unpainted/black/unpainted/red etc., where the unpainted parts could originally have been white. The relatively long feet with separate front parts are flat on the base and the statue is wearing black painted sandals with a strap between the big and second toe on each foot (Fig. 5).[2] The bottom of the sandals may have originally been painted in black around the feet, but this is now difficult to discern. What can be seen is that both feet are surrounded by a series of black dots. The toes and toenails are carved but not separated, and the toenails are painted white. Again, each toe has a small dot of black paint at the tip. The fronts of the feet are a separate section, probably secured to the main chock by dowels underneath. The main chock appears to be part of the main statue and has a trapezium shape with the narrower part set downwards into the base. It appears to be secured with plaster. The statue was probably slotted or slid into the base and secured with a further piece behind. The usual side securing with a peg or dowel is not present, but this would have been less necessary with a trapezium-shaped chock than a square chock. The original securing piece that would have filled the area behind the statue in the base is now missing, revealing the unworked, plastered inside (Fig. 6).

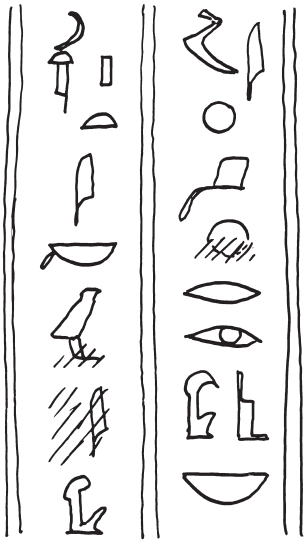
The base is rectangular (35 × 12.5 × 4.2 cm) and is plastered white and painted red on all sides except the underneath. The upper surface of the base has thicker plaster between the feet and the inscription, perhaps covering a hollow in the wood.

All of the paint applied to the statue is directly onto the wood, except for the wig and the base, which have a thin, white plaster (gesso) layer underneath.

There are two columns of text carved in hieroglyphs near the front of the base. Unusually they run from side to side vertically rather than horizontally. The inscription has traces of plaster in the column lines and the hieroglyphs themselves. There does not seem to be any trace of black paint, which may

[2] In her unpublished MA thesis (*Sandals in Ancient Egypt. An archaeological study*, University of Groningen, 1984), Anneke Poelstra notes that women in the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom who wear sandals are usually nude, except for some jewellery. She draws comparisons to later material where nude women in jewellery and sandals have an erotic connotation, designed to stimulate the sexual energy of the man and promote fertility. See also Strabo, XVII, I, 33, where Pharaoh is attracted to a woman after her sandal is dropped in his lap by an eagle.

have highlighted the hieroglyphs originally. The inscription (Fig. 7) gives the name of the deceased and mentions the god Osiris:[3]



(1) *ỉm3ḫ(.t) ḫr Wsỉr nb* (2) *ỉmnt.t ʾIkwy* , 'The one revered with Osiris, Lord of the West, Ikuy'. The name Iku, Iky, Ikwy, etc., with many variant spellings, is well known from the Middle Kingdom.[4] Unfortunately there is no title given in the inscription.

Comparative material

A search through the records of wooden statues I have researched over the years revealed a number of parallels — 14 to be precise. They fall into two groups, those revealing the ears and those with covered ears. All wear the tripartite wig, are nude and are standing with their legs together. Most of them also wear sandals. Some have inscriptions on the base, others are missing their base or they are uninscribed. The best parallels are the group of statues that come from excavations at Asyut in Middle Egypt, and date to the end of the First Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom.[5] The first three in the list best match the statue being researched here in size, style and attributes, differing only in the detail of the ears. The statue researched here has been added to the end of the table for comparative purposes. The heights given are in cm and include the base.

[3] My thanks to Jacobus van Dijk for the handcopy of the text.

[4] Ranke, *PN* I, 47: 26–48: 12.

[5] Statues from later in the Middle Kingdom show more mature characteristics — full breasts and wide hips. See, for example, J. Harvey, 'A Late Middle Kingdom Wooden Statue from Assiut in the Walters Art Gallery', in *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 49/50 (1991–1992), 1–6.

Accession no.	Provenance	Height in cm	Ears	Inscription
Cairo JE 36288	Asyut T7	59	Visible	Yes
Unknown[6]	Asyut T7	35	Visible	unknown
Boston MFA 04.1777	Asyut T6	46.5	Visible	No
Cairo JE 28992	Akhmim	53.4	Visible	No
New York MMA 26.3.338	Thebes	30	Visible	No
Cairo JE 36280	Asyut	67	Visible	Illegible
Cairo JE 38983	Asyut	42	Visible	No
Cairo JE 30210	Meir	32.5	Visible	Yes
Cairo JE 30538	Meir	30.5	Visible	Yes
Cairo JE 30211	Meir	22.5	Visible	No
London BM EA 22541	Unknown	28.8	Covered	No
Cambridge Fitzwilliam E135.1900	Unknown	41	Covered	Yes
Turin 14777	Asyut	50 (or more)	Covered	No
London BM EA 45092	Asyut	43	Covered	No
Ikuy	Unknown	56.5	Covered	Yes

Table 1. Comparative material

The statues were then analysed on an 18-unit grid following Gay Robins.[7] Thus far only the grid for the Old Kingdom has been thoroughly researched for wooden statues,[8] but it is clear that the same principle applied to statues from later periods,[9] and this is often a handy tool for spotting fakes. Not all the comparative material could be analysed as suitable photos were not available. Table 2 lists the relevant points for the statues being discussed here.

The table reveals that all of the divergence from the late OK standard is within acceptable levels — never more than 1 unit, with at least two statues in all cases showing divergence, with the exception of the buttocks where only one statue diverges. However, that statue has an impeccable pedigree. The statue being researched here thus shows no unacceptable anomalies regarding proportions.

[6] This statue was previously in the Norbert Schimmel Collection, see J. Settgast, U. Gehrig, E. Strommenger and K. Vierneisel, *Von Troja bis Amarna, The Norbert Schimmel Collection, New York* (Mainz, 1978), no. 193. In 1996 it went to auction at Sotheby's New York. Its present whereabouts are unknown.

[7] G. Robins, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art* (London, 1994), 64–86.

[8] J. Harvey, *Wooden Statues of the Old Kingdom* (EM 2; Groningen and Leiden, 2001), Appendix 5, 633–6.

[9] J. Harvey, 'Continuity and Collapse: Wooden Statues from the End of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period', in M. Barta (ed.), *The Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology. Proceedings of the Conference held in Prague, May 31–June 4, 2004* (Prague, 2008), 157–66.

Accession no.	Knees (6½ units)	Buttocks (9½ units)	Small of back/elbow (12 units)	Nipple (14 units)	Neck and shoulder (16 units)
Cairo JE 36288	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boston MFA 04.1777	¾ unit lower	Yes	½ unit lower	Yes	Yes
Cairo JE 28992	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cairo JE 36280	1 unit lower	Yes	½ unit lower	½ unit lower	Yes
Cairo JE 38983	½ unit lower	1 unit lower	Yes		Yes
Cairo JE 30210	1 unit lower	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ikuy	Yes	Yes	Yes	½ unit lower	Yes

Table 2. Grid points for female wooden statues

The treatment of the pubic region is particularly interesting. As far as I have been able to ascertain, indicating the pubic triangle with a series of nicks and clearly marking the pudendal cleft only occurs on the wooden statues from Asyut. The three closest parallels to Ikuy all have their pubic region marked in this way. It thus appears to be a sort of 'signature' for this period and area.

Although we know very little about workshops from this period, representations of workshops from the Old and Middle Kingdoms reveal that they were not independent enterprises but always formed part of the households of high officials.[10] In later times there were also workshops attached to temples and of course to the royal court, and the assumption is that this was also the case for earlier periods, particularly in relation to royal workshops. In the representations, the practitioners of several crafts are shown working alongside each other, producing items for funerary and domestic use. What we don't know is whether the artisans worked to order or had stock from which prospective customers could choose. What seems clear is that although there is dissimilarity within groups of wooden statues known to come from the same tomb or the same area, indicating more than one artisan at work, the similarities are such that single workshops seem likely. This thus also implies that if a statue bears a strong resemblance to others with a known provenance and secure dating, then the likelihood is that, unless there are other indications to the contrary, it probably came from the same workshop/area/period. Until such evidence emerges, for example analysis of the wood revealing modern age or modern tooling, a statue may thus be presumed to be an independent original and not a modern copy.

[10] R. Drenkhahn, *Die Handwerker und ihre Tätigkeit im alten Ägypten* (ÄA 31; Wiesbaden, 1976); id., 'Artisans and Artists in Pharaonic Egypt', in J.M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1995), Vol. I, 331–43.

Asyut is the capital of the 13th Upper Egyptian nome, and although it was never the capital of Egypt, it was in a strategic location. During the First Intermediate Period and up to the 11th-Dynasty reunification of Egypt, it fell into the Heracleopolitan sphere of influence. The main god worshipped there was Wepwawet. Also popular was Anubis of Raqereret, the name of the necropolis of Asyut, and there was also an Osiris cult at Asyut, known from the time of nomarch Khety I of the early 10th Dynasty. The most popular form of Osiris was Osiris Khentyamentiu, also a jackal.[11]

Unfortunately this important site has a very untidy excavation history. It is also extremely large, so policing it is virtually impossible. During the entire 19th century uncontrolled digging by locals was rife, with the high point the discovery in 1893 by a local called Faraq of the tomb of Mesehti.[12] The plundering became even more thorough after this. In 1902/3, E. Chassinat and C. Palanque conducted a season of excavations, notable perhaps most of all because they published their findings![13] They excavated 26 new tombs, 21 of which were intact. None of their tombs was inscribed but of the 61 coffins they found, 34 were inscribed. E. Schiaparelli of Italy worked in the area between 1905 and 1913, and although most of his finds ended up in the Turin Museum, virtually nothing was published.[14] In the period during and after the First World War, an Egyptian merchant called Said Bey Kashaba held an excavation permit covering the area between Dairut, north of Meir, and Deir el-Ganadla, just south of El-Badari, on both sides of the river. Asyut fell into this vast area. Kashaba hired huge numbers of *fellahîn* to do the actual excavating and a single supervisor, the Egyptian archaeologist Ahmed Bey Kamal, to control everything and publish the results. Kamal mainly remained in Meir, and those excavations are the only ones whose material was ever published.[15] Other locations, including Asyut, were certainly being excavated, but unsupervised, and a large amount of material found its way onto the art market. Kashaba seems to have viewed his concession as a way to make money, and Kamal only persuaded him with difficulty to found a museum in Asyut to display some of the finds. In the period 1914 to 1922, Henry Walters of the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore acquired a large number of wooden statues from the antiquities dealer Dikran Kelekian, who said that they came from Asyut. They most likely came from Kashaba's excavations and Kelekian would have had no reason to

[11] H. Beinlich, 'Assiut', *LÄ* I, 489–95.

[12] PM IV, 265. See also D.P. Ryan, 'David George Hogarth at Asyut, Egypt, 1906–1907. The History of a "lost" Excavation', *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 5: 2 (1994), 3–16, esp. p. 5; online at DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bha.05202.

[13] E. Chassinat & C. Palanque, *Une campagne de fouilles dans la nécropole d'Assiout* (MIFAO 24; Cairo, 1911).

[14] One article only, by G. Marro in *Annales de l'Université de Grenoble* 32: 2 (1921), 15–48.

[15] A. Kamal, *ASAE* 12 (1912), 128–42 ; 16 (1916), 65–114.

lie about the provenance as these excavations were 'legal'. After 1922 and the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, it became much less simple to export Egyptian antiquities. Statues said to be from Asyut in museums with acquisition dates later than 1922 seem to all have been acquired via private collections or dealers, for example the statues in Leiden from the von Bissing collection[16] and in Hildesheim via the dealer or collector Möger sometime before 1966.[17] After Kashaba, Asyut appears to have been left to the plunderers until 2003, when a new field project began: The Asyut Project. A joint mission of the Universities of Münster (2003 and 2004), Mainz (2004 up to present) and Sohag (2003 up to present), directed by Jochem Kahl.[18]

Unknown to most people, because also not yet properly published, D.G. Hogarth conducted a season of excavation at Asyut in 1906–7 at the instigation of E.W. Budge of the British Museum.[19] Hogarth gained a concession between W.M.F. Petrie (central area — Khawaled, 25 km south of Asyut) and E. Schiaparelli to the north. He was rather scathing about the quality of the tombs in his area as they were significantly smaller than those in the other parts of the area, and mostly already plundered in modern times or stripped by Copts using them as homes in earlier times. Nevertheless, he excavated 57 tombs, starting with that of Hapidjefa III. Despite the problems of dealers waiting for his men after work as the town of Asyut was so close, and outbidding him on many fine objects, Hogarth sent 37 crates of objects to Cairo, 19 of which remained there; the other 18 were shipped to the British Museum. The BM thus acquired about 700 objects from here, including wooden statues[20] and models. Among them are statues with inlaid eyes, and statues of some height (BM 45192 is 54 cm, for example). One head with part of a torso (with inlaid eyes) is 47 cm (BM 47568) and must originally have been nearly life-size, and another of 14.6 cm (BM 45202) may originally have been about 60 cm in height. We know much less about the fate of the 19 crates that remained in Cairo. However, in 1909 a wealthy Belgian engineer called Édouard Empain (1852-1929)[21] donated two coffins to the Musées Royaux in Brussels. The coffins were said to come from Asyut and to have been purchased from the 'salle de vente' at the Cairo Museum. It appears that the objects from Hogarth's excavations left in Cairo were being sold to collectors

[16] For example RMO F1934/12.2 and RMO F1936/10.1.

[17] Hildesheim RPM 4565.

[18] J. Kahl, *Ancient Asyut. The First Synthesis after 300 Years of Research* (Wiesbaden, 2007).

[19] Ryan, op. cit. See also the British Museum collections online at: http://www.britishmuseum.org/ .

[20] Eight of them can be traced via the electronic catalogue of the BM: BM 45086, BM 45095, BM 45192, BM 45193, BM 45200, BM 45202, BM 47551 and BM 47568. BM 45086 and BM 45193 are female. The author's unpublished file on Asyut has many more.

[21] See M. Bierbrier, *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, 3rd ed. (London, 1995), 141.

by 1909. It is thus perfectly possible that Empain or someone else acquired other objects at around the same time from this provenance, perhaps including the statue under discussion here and forming the link to Brussels in the 1960s.

A very large number of coffins are provenanced to Asyut, and the general consensus seems to be that they date to the period after the reunification of Egypt by the Theban 11th Dynasty. H. Willems in his study of inscribed coffins[22] does not date any earlier than the reign of Senwosret I. However, recent finds and studies of the First Intermediate Period are pushing some of the accepted dates back.[23] It is also possible that inscribing coffins became popular after unification and that some or all of the uninscribed ones could have an earlier date, in Dynasty 9 or 10.

To sum up, based on the physical analysis, it seems likely that this statue originally came from excavations at Asyut in Middle Egypt. It may have been discovered in the first two decades of the 20th century, either during the Hogarth excavations or the later Kashaba ones, and passed on to a dealer, and acquired for a private collection in Europe at that time and remained in private hands since. The closest parallels are two wooden statues from tomb 7 at Asyut and one from tomb 6 at Asyut.[24] Research being conducted in the area may result in more information about this site and its date range (see Kahl, *Ancient Assiut*), and an analysis of the wood may also help. A date in Dynasty 10 or early Dynasty 11 seems possible stylistically.

[22] H. Willems, *Chests of Life. A Study of the Typology and Conceptual Development of Middle Kingdom Standard Class Coffins* (MVEOL 25; Leiden, 1988).

[23] See for example the chapter on the First Intermediate Period by S. Seidlmayer in I. Shaw (ed.) *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2000), 108–36.

[24] See Chassinat & Palanque *Une champagne de fouilles*; J. Harvey, 'Some notes on the wooden statues from the Tomb of Nakht at Assiut', *GM* 116 (1990), 45–50.

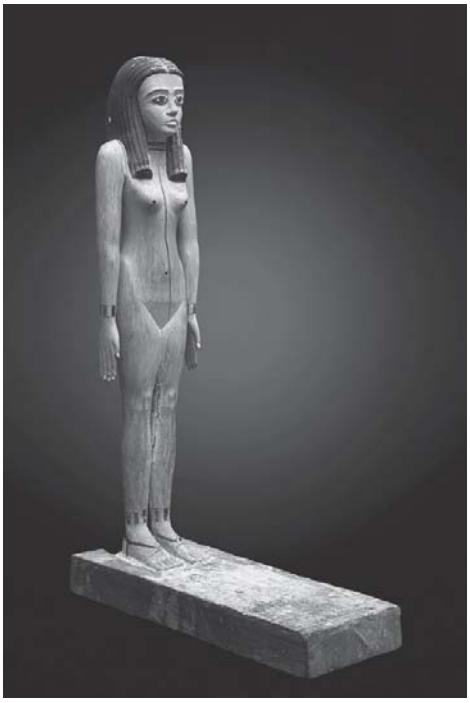


Fig. 1. The Lady Ikuy.

Fig. 2. Back view of wig and upper torso.

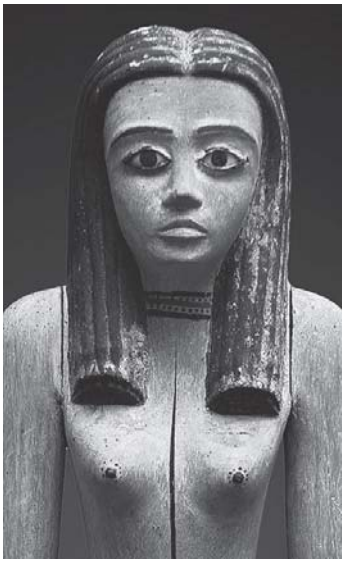


Fig. 3. Front view of wig and breasts.

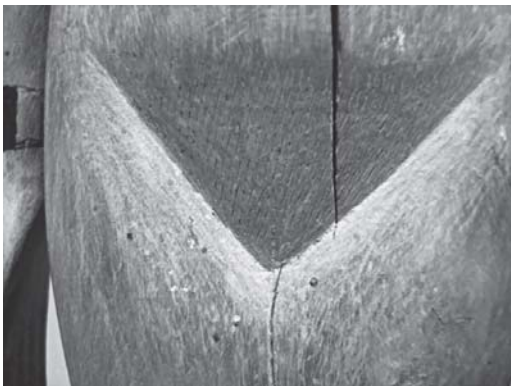


Fig. 4. Detail showing pubic triangle.

Fig. 5. Detail showing sandals and anklets.

Fig. 6. View of back of base.

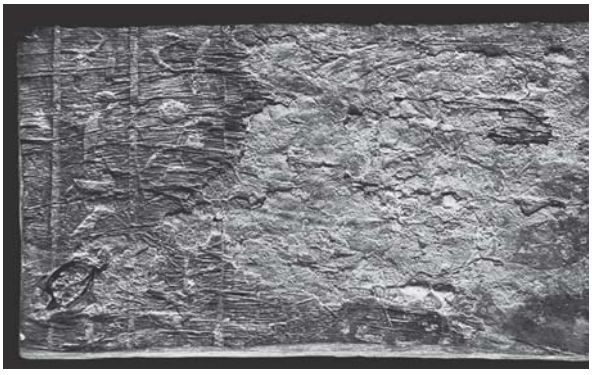


Fig. 7. Top of base with inscription.