

2.41 Naophorous statue of Amenemwia

Granodiorite.

Dynasty 19, c. 1307 – 1196 BC.

H. 29.1 cm, W. 13.1 cm, D. 16.5 cm.

Naophorous statues of private individuals begin to appear in the middle of the 18th Dynasty, during the reign of Hatshepsut. Most examples come from temples, but quite a few also derive from tombs, especially from the Memphite necropolis, where many tombs took the form of free-standing, temple-like buildings rather than the rock-cut tombs which predominate in the Theban area. This type of statue shows the owner kneeling¹ and holding in front of him a small open naos containing the cult image of a deity. The figure of the owner, the naos and the back pillar are not treated as separate entities, but form a unity: the lower part of the naos in particular appears to emerge from the figure of the man holding it.

Inscriptions on Late Period naophorous statues as well as ritual texts on temple walls elucidate the symbolism of this type of statue.² The owner is shown participating in the daily temple ritual, the main purpose of which was to maintain the perpetual cycle of death and rebirth of the god and thus to preserve cosmic order. Early in the morning the priest opens the god's shrine and awakes, i.e. resurrects the god and protects him against the powers of chaos which threaten to prevent his rebirth. This is often expressed in terms of "embracing" the god. The owner of a naophorous statue is likewise depicted revivifying the god in the naos by embracing and protecting him. By doing so he not only participates in the eternal renewal of the god's life, but he in his turn receives the god's protection and is reborn and resurrected himself together with his god. This symbolism makes the naophorous statue particularly suitable for both temple and tomb.

Perhaps because of its modest size, the present example has survived in a virtually complete state. It only has a few minor points of damage on the owner's right hand, the base, and a few areas on the back pillar. The statuette is made of a deep brown granodiorite with yellowish inclusions; there are several hardened traces of pigment.

The statue as a whole appears rather squat. The head is placed directly on the shoulders with no visible neck. The feet are large and seem to have only four toes. The man is wearing the pleated linen costume worn by well-to-do Egyptians. On his head is the valanced wig covering most of the ears which is typical of the Rameside period; the various layers are only schematically indicated. A less common detail, at least in this period, is the short artificial beard on the man's chin.

The naos holds a statue of the god Amun of Thebes. The figure of the god has been carved without much attention to detail. The god's arms are held alongside the body. He is wearing the usual short divine kilt and on his head is his distinctive crown with two tall feathers, here without a sun disc.

The frame around the opening of the shrine is uninscribed, but on top of the roof is a brief inscription giving the name and title of the owner: "The scribe Amenemwia". The back pillar has two columns of text, the first of which is partly damaged and difficult to read. It appears to be a virtual duplicate of the second column, however, which reads: "An offering which the king gives to Amun-Re, ruler of Thebes, in order that he (i.e. the god) may give life, prosperity and health to the Ka of the overseer of the granary of Amun, Amenemwia".³ Unfortunately nothing more is known of this man and the name Amenemwia is a very common one. There is a slight possibility that he is to be identified with a "scribe assigned to the great enclosure wall of the temple of Amun, Amenemwia" who lived at the end of the 19th Dynasty.⁴ This Amenemwia was the son of the overseer of the granary Kharu, and it is possible that he later inherited this office from his father.

Since Amenemwia was employed by the temple of Amun in Karnak and this god is depicted in the naos he holds, it is very probable that this naophorous statue once stood in one of the courts of this great temple.

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¹ During the New Kingdom standing naophorous statues are very rare, but in the Late Period they become a regular type.

² J. van Dijk, "A Ramesside Naophorous Statue from the Teti Pyramid Cemetery", *OMRO* 64 (1983), 49–60.

³ In the first column the name of the deity is lost and the word "scribe" is added before the title "overseer of the granary".

⁴ K.A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions* IV (Oxford 1982), 378–379, No. 44.





