

### 3.23 Unfinished naophorous statue

Reddish brown quartzite.

Late Period, late Dynasty 26 or Dynasty 27,  
c. 550–400 BC.

H. 24.7 cm. Base: H. 3.7 cm, W. 7.5 cm, D. 14.6 cm.

This small statue belongs to a type which originated in the New Kingdom but became particularly popular in the Late Period. The owner, who can be shown either kneeling or standing, is holding an open shrine of a deity between his outstretched arms. In the New Kingdom this type of statue can be found in temples and tombs alike, but in the Late Period it is mainly associated with temples, the deity depicted in the naos being the god or goddess in whose temple the statue was erected.<sup>1</sup>

The present example is unfinished. It is made of quartzite, a very hard stone, difficult to work. The kneeling figure of the owner itself has been fully carved and the details of the head have been rendered quite carefully, but the surface of the stone is rather uneven and has not yet received the final polish which is so characteristic of high quality Egyptian statues. Details such as the hemline of the costume also lack finesse. The most obvious signs of the unfinished state of the piece, however, are the absence of any inscriptions on the base and the back pillar, and the fact that there is no deity within the naos. This is somewhat surprising since one would expect that the sculptor would at least have indicated the open front of the shrine and the rough outlines of a divine figure. The explanation may be that he did not intend to carve an open naos with a deity, but rather a solid block decorated in relief on the front with the façade of the temple of the goddess Neith, as is the case on a statue in Florence and some other examples, all dating to the same period as our piece.<sup>2</sup> This kind of decoration would have been added at a later stage in the production, along with the inscriptions. If this assumption is correct, the statue may once have stood in the temple of Neith in Sais. The naos itself is supported on a pillar resting on the base of the statue, a feature regularly found in Late Period naophorous statues.

The owner is dressed in a long garment which is wrapped around the chest, high under the arms, and reaches down nearly as far as the ankles. This appears to be a simplified representation of what used to be called the “Persian wrap”, a fashion which was in fact introduced in the later years of the 26th Dynasty, well before the Persian conquerors who ruled Egypt as the 27th

Dynasty arrived on the scene.<sup>3</sup> The man is wearing a plain bagwig revealing the ears, which have been carefully modelled, although they are perhaps slightly too small and placed a little too high. The facial features have also been rendered with great care: the face itself is round, with full cheeks and a double chin. The eyebrows show a gentle curve and are quite close to the eyes, which are large and almond-shaped, with a double sculpted line marking the eyelids. The nose is rather small and the philtrum is indicated below; the mouth displays a faint smile. The hands and feet are perhaps a bit clumsy, but the finger and toenails have been rendered with care.

The costume worn by the owner and his facial features date the statue to the later years of the Saite Period or the Persian Period. Good comparisons include the statue of Psamtik-sa-Neith in Philadelphia<sup>4</sup> from the last decades of the 26th Dynasty and an anonymous head and torso in Vienna<sup>5</sup> from Dynasty 27.

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<sup>1</sup> For the symbolism of naophorous statues see our no. 2.41.

<sup>2</sup> Florence, Museo archeologico, No. 1784; R. el-Sayed, *Documents relatifs à Saïs et ses divinités* (Cairo 1975), 129–135, Pl. XIX. Cf. B.V. Bothmer, *Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period, 700 BC to AD 100* (Brooklyn 1960), 90 (comment on No. 72).

<sup>3</sup> S.B. Shubert, “Realistic Currents in Portrait Sculpture of the Saite and Persian Periods in Egypt”, *JSSEA* 19 (1989), 27–47, Pls. 9–20.

<sup>4</sup> E.R. Russmann, in D.P. Silverman (ed.), *Searching for Ancient Egypt* (Dallas 1997), 146–147, No. 45.

<sup>5</sup> W. Seipel, *Gott, Mensch, Pharao: Viertausend Jahre Menschenbild in der Skulptur des Alten Ägypten* (Vienna 1992), 402–403, No. 162.





