



Maitland, Margaret (2022)

The King and I: Commemorating the privilege of royal statue dedication in
Ramesside Deir El-Medina In:

Deir El-Medina: Through the kaleidoscope. Proceedings of the International
Workshop Turin 8th-10th October 2018 pp. 158-180

Deposited on: 27th July 2022

THE KING AND I: COMMEMORATING THE PRIVILEGE OF ROYAL STATUE DEDICATION IN RAMESSIDE DEIR EL-MEDINA¹

Margaret Maitland

(*National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh*)

ABSTRACT

It is generally understood that in ancient Egyptian statuary, “a private person is never sculpted together with the king”. However, an unusual small limestone statue in the collections of National Museums Scotland contradicts this understanding, depicting a man kneeling to offer a statue of a king (NMS A.1956.139). Clearly Ramesside in style, it has sometimes been assumed to represent a royal tutor and his charge. Recent archival research in the notes of Scottish archaeologist Alexander Henry Rhind has revealed the provenance of this statue as having been excavated in Deir el-Medina in the 1850s. This paper will discuss possible identifications for the king and the official and examine the statue in relation to similar examples excavated in the Hathor chapel at Deir el-Medina by Bruyère (Deir el-Medina nos. 91, 250 and other fragments). In context, these statues offer insights into the relationship between the Ramesside kings, their viziers, and the high officials at Deir el-Medina, as well as the mutually beneficial performative role of commissioning and dedicating monuments.

¹ Warm thanks to the organizers of the Deir el-Medina workshop at the Museo Egizio. Thanks to my National Museums Scotland colleagues, in particular curator Dan Potter for helpful comments on a draft of this article, curatorial interns Edward Scrivens, Gemma Park, and Evgenia Michailidou, and photographers Neil McLean and Amy Fokinther. Thanks to John Baines, Cédric Gobeil, Niv Allon, Guillemette Andreu, Paolo Del Vesco, and Marie Vandenbeusch for useful conversations on various topics relating to this paper.

1. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE KING SHAPED BY DECORUM AND THE ROYAL CULT DONATION STATUE TYPE

It has generally been understood that in ancient Egypt, “a private person is never sculpted together with the king”.² Representations of individuals, like all cultural production, were restrained and shaped by a system of decorum — an unwritten set of rules and practices that governed and constrained what could be represented.³ As discussed by Baines, decorum represented the “proper order of the world”, reflecting a social hierarchy governed by the king and the gods, essentially a “sacralized hierarchy”.⁴ Originally the restriction concerning the depiction of kings with non-royals also applied to two-dimensional representations: the king was only first depicted in private tombs during the early Twelfth Dynasty, in the tombs of the royal treasurer Khety (TT311: MMA 26.3.354–8)⁵ and of Senet, mother of the vizier Intefiqer (TT60),⁶ but such representations did not become widespread until the New Kingdom.⁷ Although it eventually became acceptable to depict oneself in the company of the king in two-dimensional stelae and tomb decoration, presumably decorum continued to dictate that it was not appropriate to be shown on equal standing with the king in three-dimensional form.

Nevertheless, several statues from Deir el-Medina contradict this “rule”, though they have not previously been recognized as a group. This statue type pushed the boundaries of what may have been considered appropriate by representing an official offering a statue of the ruling king as a god, rather than depicting the king in person. They commemorate the donation of royal cult statues and were likely a privilege restricted to the highest elite. Indeed, most of these statues belonged to viziers, the highest office in Egyptian administration. All of them were apparently connected to Deir el-Medina, the settlement of the craftsmen who built the royal tombs.

² Freed, in Silverman (ed.), *Searching for Ancient Egypt*, 1997, p. 121.

³ Baines, *Fecundity Figures*, 1985, pp. 277–305; Baines, *JARCE* 27 (1990), pp. 20–23; Baines, *Visual and Written Culture*, 2007, pp. 15–20, 28.

⁴ Quotations from Baines, *Visual and Written Culture*, 2007, p. 16, and Baines, *JARCE* 27 (1990), p. 21.

⁵ Grajetzki, *Court Officials*, 2009, pp. 47, 50; *The Met Collection*, [metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/590886](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/590886) (12 July 2021).

⁶ Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, 1920, pl. 16.

⁷ Radwan, *Die Darstellungen des regierenden Königs*, 1969.

2. RAMESSES II AND THE CULT OF THE LIVING KING AT DEIR EL-MEDINA

The temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor in Deir el-Medina was rebuilt in the early years of the reign of Ramesses II (c.1279–1213 BC), with a chapel to the state god Amun-Ra in the south-east and a *Khenu*-chapel added at the front.⁸ The *Khenu* (*hnu*), literally “residence”, whose structure has been compared to that of the Ramesseum as well as to palace architecture, is believed to have housed the cult of a statue of the deified Ramesses II.⁹ The worship of the ruling king was widely promoted during the reign of Ramesses II with the introduction of numerous statue cults serving as one of his policies of self-promotion.¹⁰

The vizier Paser and the senior scribe Ramose (i) are considered to have been responsible for founding, on behalf of Ramesses II, the statue cult and building the aforementioned chapels where a large number of statues and stelae dedicated by them were excavated by Bernard Bruyère.¹¹ A stelophorus statue of Ramose (i), excavated in the *Khenu*, records an endowment of offerings that he set up for a statue in the Hathor temple under orders from Ramesses II in year 9 (Cairo JdE 72023).¹² A dedicatory panel excavated in the *Khenu*-chapel shows Ramesses II with the vizier Paser and another official, presumably Ramose (i), whose figure is accompanied by the text: “I have made the *Khenu* within the [house] of this statue of my Lord which rests within it” (Deir el-Medina no. 70).¹³ Bruyère also excavated in the same place a possible foundation deposit stone inscribed with the cartouches of Ramesses II and the names and titles of Paser and

⁸ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, I, 1948, pp. 20–21, 71–89, 121–25, pl. 2; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, pp. 77–79; PM I²/2, p. 700; Sadek, *Popular Religion*, 1987, pp. 66, 83; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, pp. 53–54, 59.

⁹ For discussion of the term, examples of various *Khenu* structures, etc., see Valbelle, in Haring *et al.* (eds.), *The Workman’s Progress*, 2014; see also Davies, *Life Within the Five Walls*, 2018, pp. 146, 165–67.

¹⁰ Habachi, *Features of the Deification of Ramesses II*, 1969; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, p. 61.

¹¹ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, p. 57; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006; Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, pp. 135–36; Davies, *Life Within the Five Walls*, 2018, pp. 260–63; for a list of references for these monuments, see Davies, *Who’s Who*, 1999, p. 80, no. 38.

¹² Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 115, pp. 42, 56–57, pls. 12, 35; PM I²/2, p. 697; KRI II, pp. 361–63; Davies, *Who’s Who*, 1999, p. 80.

¹³ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 70, p. 63–66, pl. 30; PM I²/2, p. 697; KRI III, p. 705; Davies, *Who’s Who*, 1999, p. 80; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, p. 54; Valbelle, in Haring *et al.* (eds.), *The Workman’s Progress*, 2014, pp. 243–45, figs. 3–4.

Ramose.¹⁴ Access was not restricted to these high officials alone though, as monuments dedicated by other villagers were also found there. The royal cult continued beyond the reign of Ramesses II, through the Ramesside period, though as Bruyère stated, damage to the chapels due to the later construction of the Greco-Roman temple on top meant that it is uncertain whether Merneptah and his successors built their own chapels or reused their predecessors'.¹⁵ From P. Turin Cat. 1879+1879 vso, which records the planned establishment of a cult statue of Ramesses VI (c.1143–1136 BC) in the “*pr* of Ramesses II”, it seems plausible that the *Khenu* continued to be used for royal statue cults for many decades.¹⁶

The divine elevation of the living king, as well as the cult of the deified Amenhotep I as patron of Deir el-Medina, and indeed the worship of other posthumous rulers, was a form of ritual practice that acknowledged the ruler's central importance to the community.¹⁷ Cult statues provided a kind of proximity to and a visual and physical manifestation of a mostly absent king, who was the purpose of the community's existence and the source of their wealth. Loyalty in the settlement was not always assured though, as evidenced by records of the workers striking.¹⁸ Considering the essential role the craftsmen played in constructing the royal tombs, as well as how central the burial of kings was to the Egyptian political system, it was important to maintain the stability of the social structure that governed Deir el-Medina by cultivating devotion to the king. While the king's authority was supreme, in reality it was the “senior scribe of the tomb” who was appointed by the vizier to act as head of the settlement. The royal statue cult may have provided a way for the villagers to feel a connection with their king, while its administration by the vizier and senior scribe of the tomb would have reinforced their authority to act on the king's behalf. Undoubtedly, the dedication of the statue of the king would have involved a public display of ritual performance. It seems fitting that this process was memorialized in a new form of statuary at Deir el-Medina, where the creation and dedication of monuments was the settlement's *raison d'être*.

¹⁴ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 41, p. 85, fig. 113, pl. 23.

¹⁵ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), I, 1948, pp. 25, 91; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, pp. 108–09. See also Sourouzian, *Les Monuments du roi Merneptah*, 1989, p. 186, n. 806; El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008), p. 157.

¹⁶ Hovestreydt, *LingAeg* 5 (1997); Valbelle, in Haring et al. (eds.), *The Workman's Progress*, 2014, p. 247.

¹⁷ E.g. Černý, *BIFAO* 27 (1927).

¹⁸ E.g. Davies, *Life Within the Five Walls*, 2018, pp. 318–25.

3. THE STATUES

3.1. The royal cult donation statue type at Deir el-Medina

The excavated examples of this new statue type, which commemorated the dedication of an image of the deified living king, are presented and discussed in this section. Two statues and three or four statue fragments were excavated in the area around the Ramesside period Hathor temple by Bruyère for the IFAO between 1935–40. These are all over a metre tall and depict viziers either kneeling or standing with arms outstretched to present statues of either Merneptah or Ramesses III. Two further examples apparently also derive from Deir el-Medina, probably from the same chapel area. A statue fragment from the Metropolitan Museum is inscribed with the name of Ramesses II, but apart from the hands, the figure of the donor does not survive. The quality of carving and its similar scale to the other examples suggests that it was also dedicated by a vizier. The aforementioned statues all depict the king within a shrine or in front of an altar, though one final example differs. This smaller-sized statue, now in National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, is the most complete example of the statue type. As such it is given a fuller treatment below, especially since no discussion of it has yet been published. It lacks an inscription, but the donor does not wear the robe of a vizier, so it is likely a high official who is shown with arms outstretched holding the royal statue directly. Stylistically it can be dated to the reign of Ramesses II. These last two examples suggest that the statue type may have been introduced alongside the founding of the statue cult of Ramesses II at Deir el-Medina.

3.2. Statue of Vizier Panehesy offering a statue of Merneptah and a royal wife (Deir el-Medina no. 250)

One of these statues is a limestone standing figure of the vizier Panehesy [Fig. 1], who is shown offering a seated pair statue of King Merneptah (c. 1213–1203 BCE) and a royal wife, whose name is not recorded.¹⁹ The statue measures 167 cm in height, 107 cm in length, and 17 cm in width at the base. It is delicately and sensitively carved with a high level of detail. There are many traces of white plas-

¹⁹ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 250, pp. 107–09, pl. 41; Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, pl. 169,6; El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008), pp. 161–78, pls. 21–24.



Fig. 1 Statue of Vizier Panehesy offering a statue of Merneptah and a royal wife (Deir el-Medina no. 250). H. 167 cm, L. 107 cm, W. 17 cm (From Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, pl. 41).

ter covering the statue and a significant quantity of polychrome paint survives on the throne. Panehesy wears an elaborately curled wig and the long full robe traditionally worn by the vizier during the New Kingdom. The robe is worn high on the chest, tucked just under the arms and secured by a strap around the neck, terminating just above the ankles. Panehesy holds his arms out at a 45-degree angle to proffer the pair statue. All three figures stand on a plinth whose edge is carved with an inscription in sunk relief, as is the back pillar in two columns.

The royal pair are dressed as divine figures in archaizing garments. The king wears a *nemes*-headdress and a *shendyt*-kilt, while the queen wears a long elaborate Ramesside wig and a sheath dress. The heads of the king and queen are missing. The king and queen are seated on a throne whose sides are decorated with royal titulary carved in sunk relief and colourfully painted with a surrounding border of bands of colour. The epithets on the throne describe the king as beloved of Amun-Ra on the left side and Hathor on the right, and inscriptions on the back pillar are offering formulae addressed to the two deities, similarly divided between the two columns.²⁰ The statue was discovered in four frag-

²⁰ See El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008) for the text, transcription, and translation.

ments; when it was re-published in 2008, the upper portion of Panehesy was not found, apart from the vizier's head.²¹ Bruyère believed there may have been a *Khenu*-chapel dedicated to Merneptah between those of Ramesses II and Seti I.²² The statue was excavated in a small chapel against the north wall of the temple of Amun of Ramesses II.²³

3.3. Statue of Vizier Hori offering a statue of Ramesses III in a ram-headed shrine (Deir el-Medina no. 91)

A limestone statue of Vizier Hori depicts him kneeling to offer a ram-headed shrine containing a figure of Ramesses III (c. 1184–1153 BCE) [Fig. 2].²⁴ The vizier, who wears the long robe associated with the position, kneels holding the shrine before him. The head of the vizier is lost, along with some of the figure of the king (which is barely visible in Bruyère's photographs, apart from the feet), and part of the pedestal. The entire statue measures 100 cm high, 70 cm long, and 37 cm wide at the base. The carving is relatively rough and lacking in detail, with the hands and feet rendered somewhat awkwardly.

Both sides of the shrine are inscribed with the cartouches of Ramesses III, as well as the Theban gods Amun-Ra, described as “king of the gods, ruler of the West” on the right-side and “Khonsu, born of Mut”, on the left-side. The ram's head with striated wig represents Amun-Ra; his ram form was particularly associated with Deir el-Medina and the Amun chapel attached to the Hathor temple there, similar to its association with Hathor's cow form.²⁵ The titles of the vizier are roughly incised in an inscription that encircles the pedestal and also on the back pillar in a single column of text.²⁶

²¹ According to El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008), p. 151 n. 2, the fragments were previously kept in a magazine in TT33, inv. No. 693 on the register Gournah no. 1/29, until they were transferred to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in 2007.

²² Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, I, 1948, pp. 25, 91; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, pp. 108–09. See also Sourouzian, *Les Monuments du roi Merneptah*, 1989, p. 186, n. 806; El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008), p. 157.

²³ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, pp. 125–26, fig. 68.

²⁴ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 91, pp. 40, 54, pl. 29.

²⁵ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, I, 1948, p. 17; Davies, *Life within the Five Walls*, 2018, p. 28.

²⁶ For this text, see Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, pp. 40, 54.



Fig. 2 Statue of Vizier Hori offering a statue of Ramesses III in a ram-headed shrine (Deir el-Medina no. 91). H. 100 cm, L. 70 cm, W. 37 cm (From Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, pl. 29).

3.4. Statue fragments of viziers offering statues of Merneptah and Ramesses III (Deir el-Medina nos. 150, 251, 252, 253)

Bruyère also describes three or four damaged limestone statue fragments that belong to the same type of royal cult donation statue. Deir el-Medina statue fragment no. 253 represents a vizier, probably Panehesy, holding a ram-headed shrine or altar with a standing figure of Merneptah before it, measuring 75 cm in height.²⁷ Statue fragment no. 251 depicts a kneeling figure of the vizier Hori, apparently holding a ram-headed shrine or altar with an attached standing figure of the king.²⁸ These were both excavated in the north sector, north-east of the Ptolemaic enclosure.²⁹ A similar statue fragment, no. 150, of a standing king may also have been attached to the front of an altar with a ram's head being offered by an official, or it may have stood before a statue of the Hathor cow.³⁰ The fragment is 35 cm in height, though the figure of the king probably originally stood 60 cm at full height. Statue fragment no. 252 preserves the upper half of Vizier Panehesy shown kneel-

²⁷ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 253, p. 111, fig. 186.

²⁸ Bruyère does not give its dimensions; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 251, pp. 109–10, fig. 186.

²⁹ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, p. 106.

³⁰ Bruyère does not specify its findspot; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 150, pp. 59–60, fig. 145.

ing to offer what was probably originally a Hathor statue, as the back pillar is inscribed with an offering formula addressed to the goddess.³¹ However, the statue's form is extremely similar to the other examples discussed above, which suggests the possibility that it could originally have been fronted by a statue of the king. The fragment measures 80 cm in height and was also found in the north sector.

3.5. Fragment of a statue of an official offering a statue of Ramesses II, probably the vizier Paser (MMA 90.6.1)

Another statue fragment of an official presenting a statue of the king represents Ramesses II [Figs. 3-4]. Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it was donated from the collection of James Douglas, who probably acquired it between 1851–1865, when he is known to have been travelling and collecting in Egypt.³² The statue originally represented an official kneeling to dedicate a shrine surmounted by a ram's head of Amun fronted by a standing image of the king. The only surviving fragments of the donor are his outstretched hands visible on either side of the shrine. The statue fragment measures 58 cm in height, 24 cm in width, and 29 cm in depth. Its scale is similar to the others discussed above; the original statue would have probably stood around 125 cm in total.

The king wears a *nemes*-headdress, broad collar, and *shendyt*-kilt with an elaborate belt adorned with ribbons and uraei. The king strides forward with his hands placed flat on his kilt. Significant traces of green and yellow pigment survive on the *nemes*-headdress, as well as blue and yellow on the broad collar and kilt. The king's skin was painted reddish-brown, which survives on the face and shoulders, with the eyes outlined in black. The ram's wig is green, traces of blue survive on the altar or shrine, with the titulary on either side mostly carved in raised relief with a line of sunk relief below and painted in polychrome, which mostly survives on the left-hand side. The shrine's sides are decorated with the names of Ramesses II who is described as beloved of Amun-Ra, *ꜥb imntt* – “who favours the West” [Fig. 4], an epithet that also appears on Deir el-Medina statue no. 250 of Panehesy and seems to have been largely restricted to Deir el-Medina,³³

³¹ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, pp. 109–11, fig. 187.

³² *The Met Collection*, metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/549228 (12 July 2021); Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, p. 677, pl. 157,5; Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, II, 1959, p. 352.

³³ Interpretation of the epithet is discussed in detail in El-Bialy, *Memnonia* 19 (2008), p. 153; see also Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), III, 1952, pp. 40–52.



Fig. 3 Fragment of a statue of an official offering a statue of Ramesses II (MMA 90.6.1). H. 58 cm, W. 24 cm, D. 29 cm (Photo by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).



Fig. 4 Side view of a fragment of a statue of an official offering a statue of Ramesses II (MMA 90.6.1). H. 58 cm, W. 24 cm, D. 29 cm (Photo by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

suggesting this statue probably has the same provenance as the others. Since the statue dates to the reign of Ramesses II, its dedication may have directly related to the founding of the *Khenu*-chapel. The relatively high quality of the carving and painting, as well as its scale, suggests that the statue must have been commissioned by a very high-ranking official, most likely the Vizier Paser himself.

3.6. Statue of an official wearing a floral wreath offering a statue of a king wearing the blue crown, possibly Ramose (i) and Ramesses II (NMS A.1956.139)

This statue in the collections of National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh is another rare example of an official depicted offering a statue of a king [Figs. 5-7].³⁴

³⁴ For a 3D digital model of the statue, see <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/white-limestone-statue-of-a-man-b8360233009a4000a4cc453ad4e4638d> (12 July 2021).



Fig. 5 Statue of an official wearing a floral wreath offering a statue of a king wearing the blue crown (NMS A.1956.139). H. 36.2 cm, W. 14.6 cm, D. 24.9 cm (Photo by National Museums Scotland).



Fig. 6 Side view of a statue of an official wearing a floral wreath offering a statue of a king wearing the blue crown (NMS A.1956.139). H. 36.2 cm, W. 14.6 cm, D. 24.9 cm (Photo by National Museums Scotland).

Although images of the statue have been published several times,³⁵ it has never been published in detail. It is damaged, probably in ancient times, having been fractured in several places, and partially restored in modern times. No inscription survives, although this may have originally been located on the front half of the base, which is entirely lost. The man kneels with his arms held forward to proffer a seated statue of a king shown wearing the blue crown. He is an official rather than a vizier, as he does not wear a vizier's robe. Two vertical bands decorated with horizontal stripes, of the type that typically forms the base of a kheker frieze and other architectural elements, are carved into the flat surface between the man's arm and his lap, suggesting that the king is seated on a throne. If considered in isolation, the statue's arrangement might initially suggest a tu-

³⁵ Murray, *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities*, 1900, p. 25, no. 432, fig. on p. 26; Aldred, *Dynastic Egypt*, 1955, pl. 16; Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, p. 668, pl. 156.4; PM VIII, 801-635-630. See brief discussion in Sourouzian, *La statuaire royale*, p. 830 with suggested dating of Merenptah to Siptah.

tor-and-ward relationship, similar to that of Senenmut and Princess Neferure.³⁶ However, the depiction of a reigning king in this context would be highly unusual and the official's kneeling pose is the position typically used in naophorous statues to indicate the presentation of a divine votive statue. The statue measures 36.2 cm in height, 14.6 cm in width, and 24.9 cm in depth.

The official wears an elaborate double-style wig with a two-tiered floral wreath on top. The face is lost. He wears a long, pleated kilt reaching down to his ankles. While the wig and kilt are relatively detailed in terms of carving, the upper part of the costume is represented more simply with just four lines incised around the upper arms probably indicating a pleated shirt. Both the official and the king wear cylindrical bracelets. The official's hands are relatively small, and the feet are simplified, with no differentiation of toes. He holds the statue of the king on his lap with his chin resting on the top of the crown. The king wears a smooth-surfaced blue crown with a coiled uraeus. He holds a *heqa*-sceptre and flail in his left hand, while his right hand is placed flat on his lap. Two long ribbons from his belt extend over his long pleated linen robe featuring a triangular projection. Unlike on the official, the pleats on the sleeves are rendered three-dimensionally. The right-hand side of the king's face and crown have been restored in modern times. The closeness of the royal statue to the official seems unusually intimate, but this is not unique. Although most donation statues are naophorous in form, with a shrine separating the figure of the individual from the god, there are a number of examples where the owner is shown directly touching the divine statue.³⁷ A comparable statue of the senior scribe Ramose (i) shows a similar level of closeness between the official and the divine images that he offers, depicting the statues of Osiris, Nephthys, and the four Sons of Horus sitting directly on his lap (Louvre E 16378).³⁸

The whole statue is supported by a base plinth and a stela-shaped back pillar, a somewhat rare feature that is attested elsewhere.³⁹ This stela is uninscribed

³⁶ Roehrig, in Roehrig *et al.* (eds.), *Hatshepsut*, 2005.

³⁷ E.g. NMS A.1902.306.10: Staring, *JEA* 102 (2016), pp. 159–63, fig. 3; PM V, p. 47; AEIN 1492: Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, p. 667, pl. 156,6; PM VIII/3, 801-636-110; BM EA 2292: PM VIII/3, p. 536, 801-624-500.

³⁸ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 114, p. 55, pl. 34; Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, p. 467, pl. 157,3; *Louvre Collections*, collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010008667.

³⁹ E.g. BM EA 480: Radwan, in Hawass *et al.* (eds.), *Perspectives on Ancient Egypt*, 2010; PM II/2, p. 279; AEIN 661: Jørgensen, *Egypt*, II, 1998, no. 20, pp. 80–81.



Fig. 7 Stela-back pillar of a statue of an official wearing a floral wreath offering a statue of a king (NMS A.1956.139). H. 36.2 cm, W. 14.6 cm, D. 24.9 cm (Photo by National Museums Scotland).

apart from a rather roughly sketched sgraffito of the god Amun or Amun-Ra. He is shown standing, facing left, wearing a tall plumed crown with two ostrich feathers and a kilt, holding a staff or *was*-sceptre in his right hand before him and an *ankh* in his left hand [Fig. 7]. The informal nature of this image suggests that it was added at a later date, rather than being part of the statue's original decoration.

The statue is part of a group of Egyptian objects that was transferred to National Museums Scotland from the former National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, of which the majority were excavated or collected by Alexander Henry Rhind (1833–1863), a pioneering Scottish excavator and the first experienced archaeologist to work in Egypt in the 1850s.⁴⁰ Rhind was unusual in his system-

⁴⁰ Rhind, *Thebes, Its Tombs and Their Tenants*, 1862; Stuart, *Memoir of the Late Alexander Henry Rhind*, 1864; Irving and Maitland, in Cooke and Daubney (eds.), *Every Traveller Needs a Compass*, 2015; Gilmour, *PSAS* 145 (2015).

atic approach and for typically recording the provenance of his finds; however, most of this information became separated from the objects over the years. Fortunately, Rhind's papers hold a clue to the statue's provenance: a list of objects that includes an item described as "Statuette in Limestone. ~~King~~ Probably king symbolically nursed by Isis. Found in course of excavations near Der el Medinet".⁴¹ No other object in the original museum catalogue⁴² or currently in our collection fits this description. The tentativeness of the note suggests that Rhind was slightly puzzled concerning how to interpret the statue. If this note does indeed relate to the statue, then we can presume a Deir el-Medina provenance.

The floral wreath worn on the official's head is a particularly distinctive element. It is a common feature on statues of women, but very unusual on statues of men – these rare occurrences appear to be entirely early Ramesside in date, and at least 4 examples date specifically to the reign of Ramesses II.⁴³ They all come from the Theban area, apart from one whose provenance is only given as Upper Egypt (CG 874). One of these examples comes from Deir el-Medina: a wooden standard-bearer statue of Ramose (iii) (Turin C. 3046), who is attested during the reign of Ramesses II [Fig. 8].⁴⁴ Thus an early Ramesside dating of the Edinburgh statue, specifically during the reign of Ramesses II, is suggested.

Since the statue probably derives from Deir el-Medina, the possibility must of course be considered that it might represent the deified Amenhotep I, who was so closely linked with the settlement and frequently represented there. The blue crown is sometimes worn by the deified Amenhotep I – exclusively during the reign of Ramesses II.⁴⁵ However, the blue crown is also frequently attested on representations of Ramesses II himself in the Deir el-Medina chapels and elsewhere. Exell suggests that Ramesses II may have sought to associate himself

⁴¹ National Museums Scotland Library Special Collections, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Archives Internal Mss. UC60/17.

⁴² Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, *Catalogue of Antiquities*, 1863.

⁴³ Cairo CG 874 (JdE 28004) from Upper Egypt, on display in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, is attributed to Dynasty 19 by Borchardt, *Statuen*, III, 1930, p. 132, pl. 155; PM VIII/3, 801-653-225 as late Eighteenth/early Nineteenth Dynasty; see also Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, p. 658. Statues of men wearing floral wreaths from the reign of Ramesses II are found in TT178: Hofmann *et al.*, *Das Grab Des Neferrenpet gen Kenro*, 1995; TT296: Feucht, *Das Grab des Nefersecheru*, 1985; TT32, Cairo CG 549: Borchardt, *Statuen* II, 1925, pp. 94–96, pl. 91.

⁴⁴ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el-Médineh* (1927), 1928, p. 39; Connor, *Le statue del Museo Egizio*, 2016, pp. 58–59, 71–73.

⁴⁵ Černý, *BFAO* 27 (1927), pp. 166–69; Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, pp. 45, 67.



Fig. 8 Statue of Ramose (iii) as a standard-bearer wearing a floral wreath (Turin C. 3046) (Photo by Nicola Dell'Aquila and Federico Taverni/ Museo Egizio).

with Amenhotep I through use of the blue crown.⁴⁶ Notable examples include the limestone relief that decorated the doorway between rooms 2 and 3 in the *Khenu*-chapel, which depicts Ramesses II in ceremonial attire wearing the blue crown and offering a cow statue to Hathor, accompanied by Paser and presumably Ramose (i).⁴⁷ A large fallen fragment of painted wall decoration from room 3 of the *Khenu* also shows Ramesses II wearing the blue crown.⁴⁸ The Amun chapel of Ramesses II was similarly decorated and Bruyère's reconstruction shows the king wearing a blue crown.⁴⁹ On stela no. 121, excavated in the *Khenu*, Ramesses

⁴⁶ Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, p. 65; Exell, in Dann and Exell (eds.), *Egypt: Ancient Histories*, 2013, pp. 119, 124.

⁴⁷ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 70, pp. 38, 63–64, pl. 31; Valbelle, in Haring et al. (eds.), *The Workman's Progress*, 2014, p. 243, fig. 3.

⁴⁸ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, no. 82b, p. 39; Valbelle, in Haring et al. (eds.), *The Workman's Progress*, 2014, p. 239.

⁴⁹ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, I, 1948, pl. 11.

II is shown wearing the blue crown while offering to statues of Amun of Karnak, Amenhotep I, and Ahmose-Nefertari.⁵⁰ The nine Deir el-Medina stelae that show Ramesses II as a recipient of worship show him sometimes wearing the blue crown, sometimes the *nemes*-headdress.⁵¹

The wooden statue of a king wearing a blue crown (Louvre E 16277)⁵² excavated by Bruyère in the *Khenu*, room 9, pit 1414 along with various statues and stelae of the senior scribe Ramose (i) (e.g. Louvre E 16346),⁵³ has been variously attributed to both Amenhotep I and Ramesses II, though Ramesses II seems most likely considering the context in which it was found. Bruyère described the wooden statue as having been found practically “*in situ*” and he was absolutely convinced that it was the cult statue of Ramesses II that formed the focal point of worship in the *Khenu*.⁵⁴ In other relevant examples from elsewhere, there is a stela that depicts statues of Ramesses II in shrines wearing the blue crown, possibly from Saqqara (Brooklyn 54.67),⁵⁵ and the famous statue of Ramesses II in Turin wears the blue crown (C.1380).⁵⁶ The blue crown was frequently associated with Ramesses II and since other comparable royal cult donation statues depict officials presenting statues of *living* kings, it seems more likely to represent Ramesses II.

The youthful appearance of the king represented in the statue is probably partly due to its scale, but it might also suggest the young ruler Ramesses II who was sometimes depicted as a child at Deir el-Medina and elsewhere.⁵⁷ Representations of the Hathor cow and Ramesses II at Deir el-Medina were associated with the myth of the young king as the child Horus sheltered in the marshes, and

⁵⁰ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 121, pp. 70–71, fig. 151.

⁵¹ Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, p. 117.

⁵² Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), I, 1948, pp. 87–88; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, no. 112, p. 53, pl. 32; PM I²/2, p. 698; Andreu, *Les artistes de Pharaon*, 2002, p. 255 [202]; Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, pp. 45, 73, 78, pl. 4b; Valbelle, in Haring *et al.* (eds.), *The Workman’s Progress*, 2014, pp. 240, 246, fig. 5.

⁵³ A film now held in the IFAO archives clearly shows these statues being removed in 1939. It was shown by Guillemette Andreu at the Museo Egizio’s 2018 Deir el-Medina workshop.

⁵⁴ Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh* (1935–40), II, 1952, p. 65.

⁵⁵ *Brooklyn Museum Collection*, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3601>.

⁵⁶ See for example Connor, *Le statue del Museo Egizio*, 2016, pp. 28, 105, 108–09.

⁵⁷ For example stela Louvre N 522: Andreu *et al.*, *L’Égypte ancienne au Louvre*, 1997, pp. 144, 254, n. 65; statue of falcon-god protecting child-Ramesses, Cairo JdE 64735: Saleh and Souroujian, *The Egyptian Museum*, 1987, no. 203, 26; at the Museo Egizio Deir el-Medina workshop in 2018, Cédric Gobeil presented a representation of Ramesses II as a child on a relief recently discovered on a doorframe in Deir el-Medina.

with the eternal life of the king.⁵⁸ Reliefs from the *Khenu*-chapel depict and describe Ramose dedicating a statue of Ramesses II with the Hathor cow.⁵⁹ However, the NMS statue's iconography differs from those depictions, in which the figure wears either a *nemes*-headdress or side-lock of youth while holding their hand to their mouth in the gesture associated with children, so it seems less likely that this was intended.

Unlike the other royal cult dedication statues excavated by Bruyère that wear the robes of a vizier, this statue clearly does not represent a vizier, but presumably a high-ranking official. At 36.2 cm in height, the statue is much smaller in size than the aforementioned examples made for viziers, but it is still comparable to other Deir el-Medina statues, both in terms of size and simplified style of carving. For example, the comparable statue of the senior scribe of the tomb Ramose (i) offering the statue of a group of funerary deities (Louvre E 16378; see n. 37), which is almost exactly the same size, measuring 37 cm in height. If the statue of the official offering a figure of the king in a blue crown dates to the reign of Ramesses II, the most likely candidate is that era's most prolific dedicator of monuments, Ramose (i), founder of the statue cult of Ramesses II.

4. PRIVILEGE, DECORUM, AND DISPLAYS OF PATRONAGE IN THE CULT OF THE LIVING KING

From these examples, it is clear that there was a phenomenon particular to the community of Deir el-Medina during the Ramesside period of mostly viziers, and occasionally other high officials, not only offering cult statues of the incumbent ruler, but also commemorating this dedication with another statue depicting the actual presentation of the royal cult statue. Since the vizier Paser and the senior scribe Ramose (i) were responsible for first setting up this cult for the king,⁶⁰ it seems plausible that this innovative new statuary tradition would have begun

⁵⁸ Blumenthal, *Kuhgottin und Gottkonig*, 2001, pp. 44–48; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, pp. 54–56.

⁵⁹ Deir el-Medina nos. 87–88: Louvre E.16276 a/b; Cairo JdE 72017; PM I²/2, pp. 696–97; Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1935–40)*, II, 1952, pp. 39, 66–68, pl. 36; Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, pp. 53–54.

⁶⁰ KRI II, p. 705; Jauhiainen, in Preys (ed.), *7. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung*, 2009, p. 153.

with them. A letter preserved on P. Turin Cat. 1879+1879 vso from a senior scribe of the tomb, possibly Amennakht (v), to Ramesses VI confirms that the privilege of offering cult statues of the king extended beyond the vizier to include the senior scribe too.⁶¹

Although scholars have discussed the evidence that the *Khenu*-chapel was strongly associated with the goddess Hathor,⁶² this group of statues all reference Amun in some way, through ram's heads, inscriptions addressed to Amun, and the sgraffito. From these, it is clear that the royal statue cult in the area of the Hathor temple must have also had strong links to Amun-Ra, which is reasonable considering the cult area also included a chapel dedicated to Amun-Ra.

The privilege of this statue type was apparently restricted to viziers and the high officials of Deir el-Medina since it denoted a high level of intimacy with the king as well as a position of authority in his cult. In elite texts, the theme of proximity to the king is prominent, suggesting it was one of the most important status markers.⁶³ As well as the “social capital” offered by displaying such connections, the exclusiveness of this unique and innovative statue type would have probably given it status-enhancing “cultural capital”. The endowment of the statue cult would likely have been profitable as well, with the donor benefiting from a share of the offerings.⁶⁴

Although this form of statue pushed the boundaries of decorum, part of what likely made it acceptable was that it was still subject to restrictions. The deification of the living king and the instigation of a royal statue cult presented an opportunity to modify the existing theophorous/naophorous statue type to inventively circumvent decorum rather than break with it completely. It was an image of the king that was represented, rather than the king himself, and the intimacy on display was restricted to the king's inner circle. Those in lesser social positions found other, similar ways of displaying royal favour and devotion to the king in statuary, as is indicated by a small steatite statue of Meryptah, a “king's scribe of the offering table of all the gods”, who is shown kneeling to present a cartouche of Ramesses II, “Usermaatse Setepenra” (BM EA 2291).⁶⁵ The

⁶¹ Jauhainen, in Preys (ed.), 7. *Ägyptologische Tempeltagung*, 2009, pp. 155–56; Hovestreydt, *LingAeg* 5 (1997).

⁶² E.g. Exell, in Dann (ed.), *Current Research in Egyptology*, 2006, pp. 54–57, 60–62.

⁶³ E.g. Doxey, *Egyptian Non-Royal Epithets*, 1998, p. 81, see also pp. 87–90, 109–28.

⁶⁴ Hovestreydt, *LingAeg* 5 (1997), pp. 117–21.

⁶⁵ Parkinson, *Cracking Codes*, 1999, p. 83; KRI III, p. 497; Vandenbeusch *et al.*, *Pharaoh*, 2016, p. 74.

statue's form suggests a similar wish to honour the king and show devotion, but the inscription on the back pillar is more overt in describing the relationship as mutually beneficial, that of patron and devotee. It describes Meryptah as "one greatly praised of the Lord of the Two Lands, whom his Person loves because of his character".

The *context* of this new rule-breaking form of displaying royal intimacy must have also been crucial to its permissibility. Deir el-Medina was an important community, but the chapels there were a local stage, whose audience was confined to a specific group within society, as contrasting with a national stage like Karnak. Adherence to decorum was typically stronger in state cult centres.⁶⁶ Similar displays of royal devotion and piety in statuary took place elsewhere, but in a much less explicit form. Instead, the king could be included and honoured through the conspicuous display of royal titulary alongside the divine statue. For example, a naophorous statue found in the Karnak cachette depicts the Vizier Paser kneeling to offer a ram's head statue on an altar, the front of which is entirely decorated with the titulary of Ramesses II (CG 42156).⁶⁷ The titles of Ramesses II prominently fill the negative space between the figure of the great overseer of the cattle Ptahemwia and a statue of Osiris that he offers (NMS A.1902.306.10),⁶⁸ and similarly between the figure of Hori, a prophet of Harendotes, and a statue of Horus (AEIN 1492).⁶⁹

In the context of this community, the royal cult donation statues displayed the donor's relationship with the king as patron. Patronage was central to Egyptian society and administration, especially amongst the elite and sub-elite, who reinforced their advantageous social connections through public display and commemoration on monuments.⁷⁰ This seems to have been a particularly prominent aspect of life at Deir el-Medina, as a small, closely interconnected, and well-off community. The phenomenon of representing important Deir el-Medina relationships in monuments is evident in many forms, including numerous stelae and tomb scenes that depict Ramesses II and/or Paser and Ramose (i),

⁶⁶ Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, p. 135.

⁶⁷ Legrain, *Statues et Statuettes de Rois*, II, 1909, pp. 23–24, pl. 19; Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, pp. 465, 485, 533, pl. 155,3.

⁶⁸ Staring, *JEA* 102 (2016), pp. 159–63, fig. 3.

⁶⁹ Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie*, III, 1958, pl. 156,6; Jørgensen, *Egypt*, II, 1998, pp. 216–17.

⁷⁰ E.g. Moreno García, in Moreno García (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, 2013, p. 1041–56.

with workmen kneeling in adoration in the register below.⁷¹ The display of these networks of patronage, extending from the king through the vizier and his subordinate to select workmen, enhanced the authority and status of all those involved. The vizier and senior scribe acted as proxies for the king and conduits for his authority. The statues commemorating royal cult statue donation would have served as visible reminders of these relationships, reinforcing the existing power structure in the settlement.

5. CONCLUSION

The royal cult donation statue type introduced during the reign of Ramesses II does not appear to have continued beyond the Ramesside period or reached beyond the limits of Deir el-Medina, which declined after that period along with the king's power.⁷² The representation of an official presenting a statue of the king pushed the conventions of statuary, but only within a restricted context as a privilege extended to high officials acting on the king's behalf. More overtly true-to-life than two-dimensional reliefs, these statues captured in three dimensions the actual performance of commissioning and dedicating monuments, extending that reality, and allowing it to be displayed perpetually – a practice that was mutually beneficial to both the high officials and the king whom they were honouring. Extending the privilege of this exclusive statue type to royal representatives in Deir el-Medina presumably served to reinforce the status of these men as pillars within their community, while also reaffirming the king's role in this relationship and their loyalty to him.

⁷¹ Davies, *Who's Who*, 1999, p. 81; Exell, *Soldiers, Sailors and Sandalmakers*, 2009, pp. 69–74; Moreno García, in Moreno García (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, 2013, p. 1047.

⁷² See for example Davies, *Life within the Five Walls*, 2018, pp. 268–69.

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