

## RE-BIRTH OF AN EGYPTIAN STATUE: UNFOLDING A NETWORK THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

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The story began with the restoration of a plaster cast of Nemptihotep (original in Berlin, ÄM 15700) in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and its presentation (fig. 1) with casts of two other Middle Kingdom statues. The three objects link together the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, and the collection of Vladimir Golenishev. This small display (fig. 2), *The Repeated Birth of an Egyptian Statue*, presented in winter 2016 at Ivan Tsvetaev Educational Art Museum (department of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Russian State University for the Humanities), was dedicated to the iconography of Middle Kingdom sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Displaying casts is one way that an Egyptological network can be formed to connect different items through space and time.



Fig. 1: Museum poster of the exhibition 'The Repeated Birth of an Egyptian Statue'.

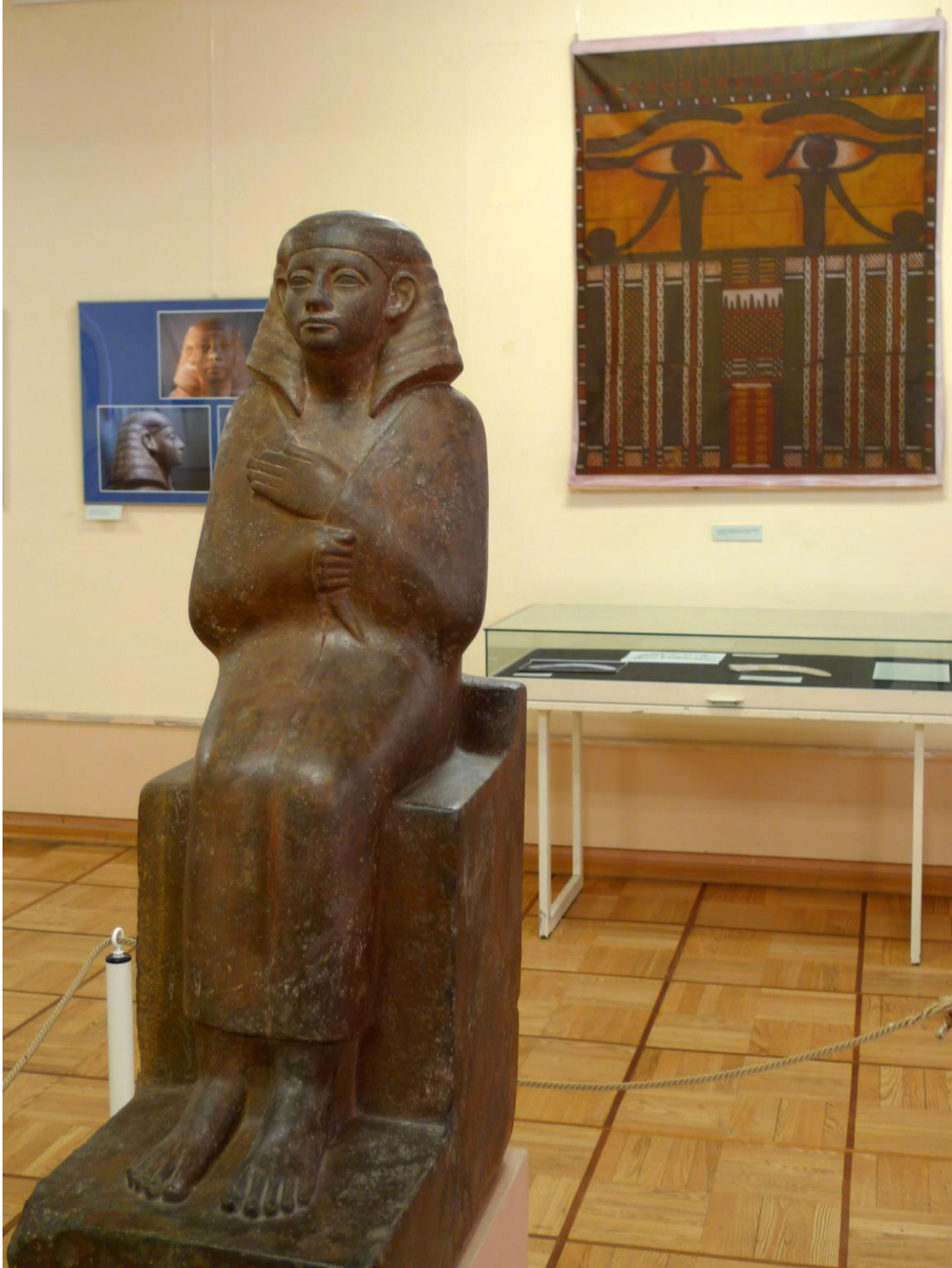


Fig. 2: The plaster cast of Nemtihotep (ГМИИ Сл.1.1.98) on display.

For the exhibition title, we selected the Egyptian term *whm-msw*, first used at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom when the ancient Egyptian state made an attempt at recreating a strong unified country. During its long history, Egypt experienced several revivals following fragmentation and disorder, and this ideology of *whm-msw* covered all spheres of life—politics, economics, religion, and, of course, art.

The term 'birth' (*msw*) also described the process of creating statues in ancient Egypt. For an image to be integrated into religious practice, the ritual of 'opening of mouth and eyes' was performed on the statue. Damage to the statue was perceived as its death, which could bring serious harm to its owner. Therefore, damage to an Egyptian statue results not just in the loss of a museum's object, but also the interruption of one of those invisible threads that bind us to the ancient era.

The cast of the Berlin statue is a masterpiece of our cast collection (ГМИИ Сл.І.1.98). It is a fine copy from the Berlin museum *atelier* and bears its mark, proving it was ordered in the beginning of the twentieth century. The cast broke into pieces in 2008, when the statue fell on its proper right side. The most extensive losses were on the protruding parts of the sculpture: part of the right shoulder, the bottom corner of the front and rear, the right side of the seat, and the right nostril. After 2008 the cast remained in storage until museum conservator Anna Shekurova developed a conservation treatment plan (fig. 3).

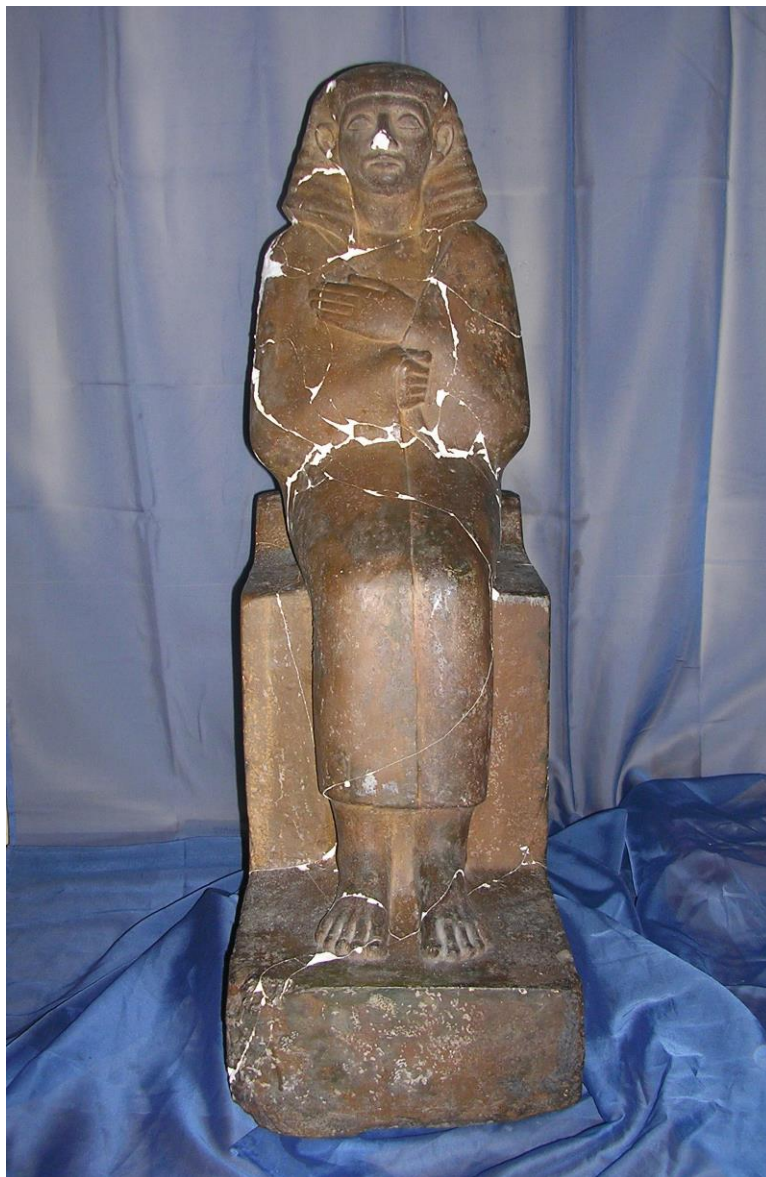


Fig. 3: The cast of Nemtihotep during treatment.

The most important stage of the conservation project was the gluing of fragments; the process consisted of the following:

- 1) Selection of fragments;
- 2) Preparation of adhesive composition;
- 3) Impregnation of bonding surfaces;
- 4) Adhesive application;
- 5) Assembling and fixing the fragments at the time of the glue has hardened.

There were some difficulties in gluing fragments because there were missing pieces and some fragments had only small joining surfaces. After pieces were glued together, small areas of loss needed to be filled by the conservator to make the statue look complete. A combination of a 10% solution of BMP-5, glue in acetone, isopropyl alcohol (IPA) and mineral spirits (DC) in a ratio of 1:1:1, with talc for workability, was employed as a filler for the areas of loss and for the restoration of chips and cracks. All losses were filled with talc mass and after gluing all filled areas were abraded with a dental drill and sandpaper № 4-0 to smooth and give a better texture to the surface. Finally, all areas were pigmented. A partial cleaning of the surface layer of the cast was undertaken, including the surface of previous restorations.

As a result, the cast regained its former condition and integrity (fig. 4). After seven years in the storeroom, this remarkable sculpture returned to the display in the Art of Ancient Egypt hall of the Educational Art Museum. The restoration of the cast of the statue Nemtihatp became a true 're-birth', or 'repeated birth', that begins a new era for this museum object. This led to the updating of the label with the new reading of the owner's name, from 'Hertihatp' to 'Nemtihatp', as published in the Metropolitan Museum<sup>2</sup> of Art's catalogue of its 2015-16 Middle Kingdom art exhibition. The goals of the new Moscow exhibition were to demonstrate the work of the conservator, to draw attention to this wonderful item belonging to the collection of the Pushkin Museum, and to place it in the artistic context of the Middle Kingdom—expanding's the statue's connections and network.

Along with the statue of Nemtihatp, the display contained photographs and other documentation, showing the process of the conservation and reconstruction of the cast. It also included two additional casts from the Golenischev collection exhibited for the first time, which also marked the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. As interesting examples of sculpture of the Middle Kingdom, these monuments illustrate common types of Egyptian statues which were made by sculptors who were contemporaries of Nemtihatp. The display also includes a very rare cast of a Middle Kingdom 'magic wand' from the collection of the Pushkin Museum. The original wand, from which the cast has been made, is carved from a hippopotamus tusk and is part of the Golenischev collection.

We decided to put this cast on display to illustrate magical practices of the Middle Kingdom connected with the dangers of night and the Netherworld, together with a copy of a false-door of a Middle Kingdom coffin printed on textile. The other items—the two statue-casts—were actually purchased as casts by Golenischev to enrich his collection and for his scientific studies.

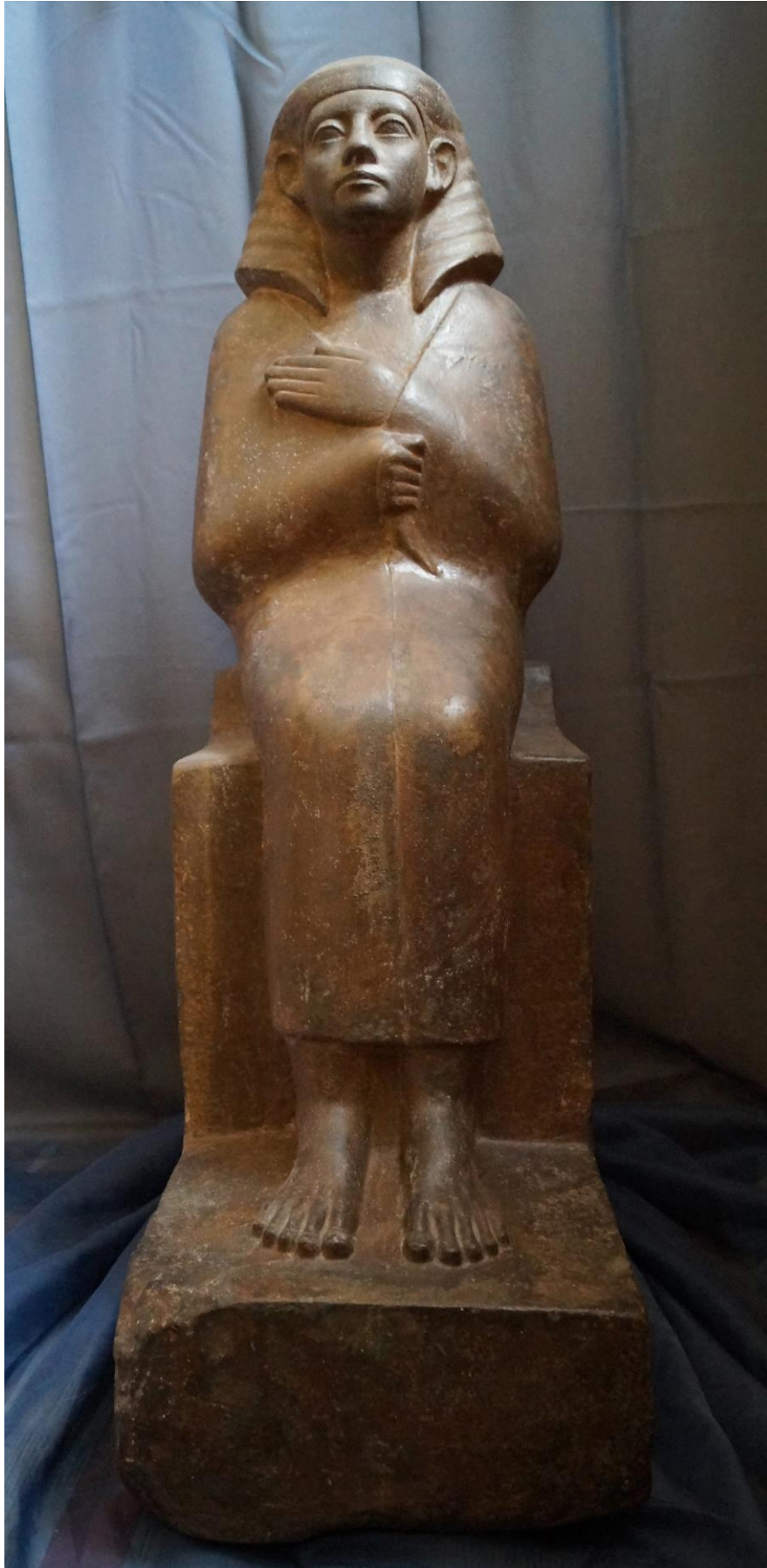


Fig. 4: The cast of Nementihotep after treatment.

Golenischev appears to have collected items that could support his scientific hypotheses, although certain were unusual and sometimes even questionable monuments. We should also note that these are the casts of statues that, for whatever reason, Golenischev could not buy as originals. It is unlikely at this time that price would have stopped a collector — these are small monuments made of limestone, and would not have been very expensive for a person as wealthy as Golenischev. These were objects from which it was possible to make a mold. He had not seen their originals in some antiquities shop, but undoubtedly in museum collections. This is certainly the case with the cast of the seated statue of Senwosret-senebef (ГМИИ Сл.І.1.10), which he bought in Cairo, and replicates a piece in the Egyptian Museum (CG 481).



Fig. 5: Block-statue of the priest Amenemhat (ГМИИ Сл.І.1.11) . (Original in Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (ME 3702).)

Another statue, the priest Amenemhat (ГМИИ Сл.І.1.11) is depicted squatting, with his knees at his chest, with his arms on top of his knees (fig. 5). This block-statue is an example of a type that appeared during the Middle Kingdom and remained popular until the end of the Late Period. The block surface of the statue is covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions featuring the name of the owner and his priestly title, 'Head of the Phyle'.<sup>3</sup> The offering formula mentions the name of the pharaoh Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II, which,

together with the name of the deceased, the shape of signs, and lexicon of the inscriptions on the statue suggest a Middle Kingdom or later date (fig. 6).

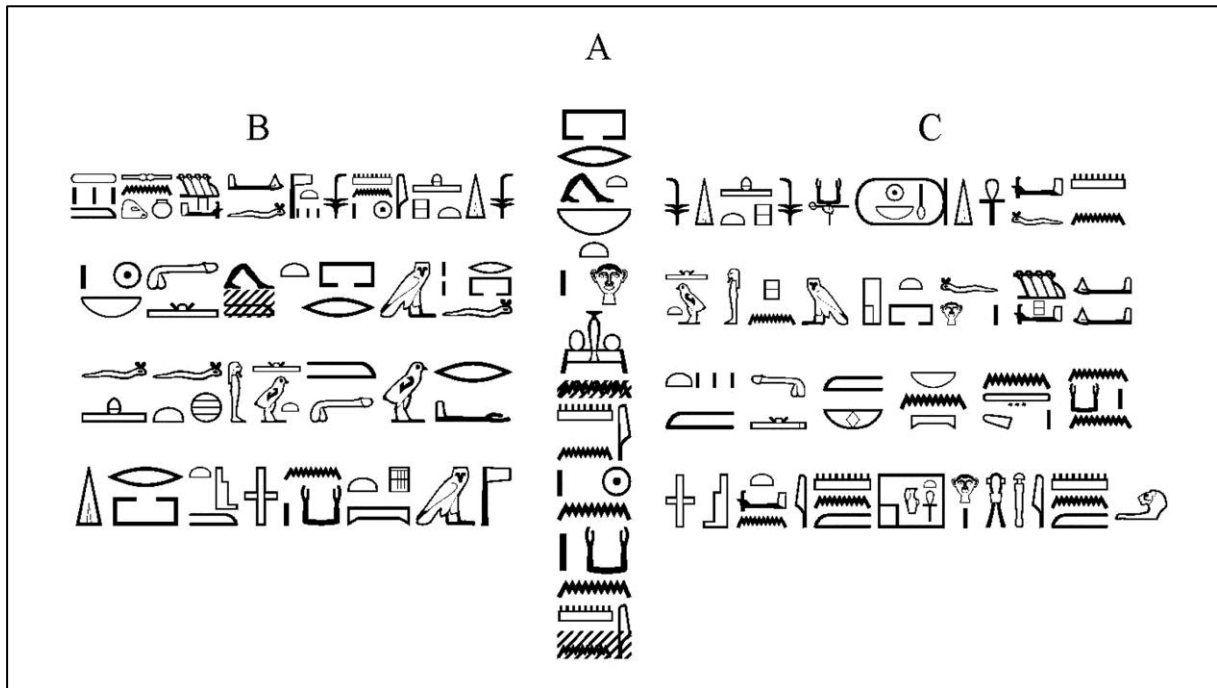


Fig. 6: Hieroglyphic inscription on the block-statue of the priest Amenemhat.

Compared to the elegant silhouette of the body, the large head with the lush wig is too large for such a small sculpture (21 x 11.5 x 15 cm). Furthermore, the facial features are quite atypical of the Middle Kingdom and are more characteristic of later times: a long face, hypertrophied, close-set eyes, with convex eyeballs, a small mouth and chubby cheeks. The wig also differs from the styles fashionable during the Middle Kingdom. The last signs of the owner's name are cut away in the vertical column of the pedestal, which is also too low. These characteristics indicate that the statue was damaged and cut away at the bottom to give it a finished shape. Considering this re-carving, we cannot exclude that the head is also not original to the body especially since it does not match in proportion or stylistic features. Until recently, this cast had an unknown provenance; at last, we found its original in Florence Museo Archeologico Nazionale (ME 3702), thought to be either from the Eighteenth Dynasty or Ptolemaic period<sup>4</sup>. The original monument is almost of the same dimensions because the statue is placed on the altar with a small staircase (34,8 x 17x 34 cm), but it is polychrome: its hieroglyphs, face and wig are covered with pigment. The appearance of the white cast differs greatly from the painted original.

Why did Golenischev—a brilliant connoisseur of Egyptian art—choose such a strange 'artefact'? Apparently, the answer to this question is the inscription, which includes the name Amenemhat. Golenischev was deeply interested in stylistic features of statues of Amenemhat III and the nobles of his reign. While Keeper of Egyptian antiquities at the Hermitage, Golenischev studied a statue Amenemhat III in the Hermitage and he purchased another wonderful example for his collection.

In addition, in his collection of originals, Golenischev had several block-statues: perhaps this is why this monument was of particular interest to him. The catalogue of Egyptian sculpture of the Pushkin Museum features a small (6.7 x 5.1 x 4.7) block-statue of a

man (ГМИИ I.1a. 5123), listed under number 68. By itself, the statue is unremarkable, but the inscription on the front makes it interesting. The inscription, made by a modern forger, contains two cartouches of Amenemhat III added in the effort to lead people to believe that the monument dated to the Middle Kingdom. These names would, of course, have increased the market value of the object. Nevertheless, some strange features were pointed out early on<sup>5</sup>, before Oleg Berlev re-attributed it to the Nineteenth dynasty. Berlev noted that Golenischev apparently acquired this small statue in 1890 in Paris when the collection of Raymond Sabatier was sold at auction<sup>6</sup>. It is unlikely that the whole object is a fake, because it is well done, with the correct proportions and careful attention to detail, which is unusual for fakes dating to the 1850s and '60s, when the collection was formed by Sabatier. The inaccurate inscription stands out as a later addition.

Apart from the attribution of the portrait of Amenemhat III (ГМИИ I.1.a 4757<sup>7</sup>) from his collection, Golenischev examined a large amount of material, primarily monuments that formed the 'background' to this work. Museum collections were an endless source of such information,<sup>8</sup> but his own collection was also a rich source for his study. Among these parallels should be mentioned the plaster copy (fig. 7) of a head of a statue of Amenemhat III (ГМИИ Сл.1.1.12) made from an original now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (E.2.1946)<sup>9</sup>. It is possible that Golenischev obtained this cast from Alan Gardiner.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, we know that Golenischev himself often shared different monuments from his own collection with his colleagues: Gardiner certainly worked with items from his collection, with which he was well acquainted; later he even used a photo of the statue of Amenemhat III (ГМИИ I.1a 4757) as the frontispiece of his book *Egypt of the Pharaohs*.<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 7: The cast of the head of Amenemhat III (ГМИИ Сл.1.1.12). From the collection of Lord Grenfell. (Original, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (E.2.1946).)



However, Golenischev's interest as a scientist and collector was focused not only on parallels among the king's statues, but also on the statues of possible contemporaries which could be found in abundance among the nobles with a name similar to their king. Along with the cast of Florence block-statue another cast of the statue of a noble with the name of Amenemhat can be found in the Pushkin Museum (Cl.I.1.97). It is marked as made in London in the *atelier* of Brucciani. The original is in the British Museum (EA 462). This monument comes from the collection of Giovanni Anastasi, which also contained three different stelae of different Amenemhats (BM EA 571, 587, 567) acquired by the British Museum in 1839. It seems Anastasi was not only a successful businessman, but also another discoverer of Amenemhats.

In general, the collection of Egyptian plaster casts of the Pushkin Museum contains a significant number of sculptures depicting the pharaoh Amenemhat III. In addition to casts in Moscow (Cl. I.1.299) and the Hermitage (Cl. I.1.15) representing this pharaoh, there are those of a sphinx from Tanis (Cl. I.1.100) and a large head from Bubastis (Cl. I.1.120), whose originals are in the Cairo Museum. From these various casts, we can draw a more accurate picture not only of Golenischev's range of interest as collector, but also of his academic preferences regarding study methods based on the stylistic analysis of different statues.

Starting with the restoration of the cast that came from Berlin, an exhibition featuring other monuments related to the Middle Kingdom came into being. Each item offered us stories that connected objects from different museums and collectors.

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<sup>1</sup> It was opened at the same time as the exhibition 'Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom' at Metropolitan museum, where the original statue of Nemtihatop was displayed.

<sup>2</sup> A. Oppenheim, Do. Arnold, Di. Arnold and K. Yamamoto., *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015). 128-130.

<sup>3</sup> The inscription on the statue (see ill.): A. 'A. Going forth on any altar of Amun-Ra for the Ka of Amen[emhat]' B. 'Offering, which the king gives to Amun-Ra — the king of the gods — to give it to get offerings in his temple, as a going ahead every day and give it to the statue during the appeasement of God in heaven for the Ka of the servant of a temple [...] (Amenemhat).'

C. 'Offering, which gives the Ka of the king [Mentuhotep] Nebhapetra, endowed with life, so he ordered to erect this statue in his temple for him to get offerings into each feast of heaven and earth for the Ka of servant of Amun in the temple Hout-ankh-hnemet, the head of the clergy Amenemhat.'

<sup>4</sup> Les Portes du Ciel. Visions du Monde dans l'Égypte Ancienne. Sous la direction de Marc Étienne. Paris, 2009. P. 352, № 314.

<sup>5</sup> O.D. Berlev, S.I. Hodjash, *Sculpture of Ancient Egypt in the collection of Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts*. (Moscow, 2004), 208-209 (number 68).

<sup>6</sup> R.G.B. Sabatier (1870-1879) was a French diplomat and collector who traveled to the East and visit Egypt and Nubia in the 1840-41 years. In 1852, he held the post of Consul General in Egypt. He also conducted excavations in Egypt, gathered a large collection of antiquities, for which a special gallery at his home in Paris was equipped. His collection was sold at auction in Paris in 1890, more than six hundred lots were put up for sale. Many items were purchased by K. Jacobsen and became a part of the collection of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek in Copenhagen, but certain objects obtained for other collections (e.g, BM EA 665) and a papyrus (Papyrus Jumilliac), which was not included at auction, was purchased later from his grandson. P.R. Carstens, *The Encyclopedia of Egypt During the Reign of the Mehmet Ali Dynasty: 1798-1952. The People, Places and Events and its Sphere of Influence*. (Victoria (Canada), 2014), 577.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.arts-museum.ru/data/fonds/ancient\\_east/1\\_1\\_a/0001\\_1000/5603\\_statue\\_amenemhet3/index.php?lang=en](http://www.arts-museum.ru/data/fonds/ancient_east/1_1_a/0001_1000/5603_statue_amenemhet3/index.php?lang=en)

<sup>8</sup> As evidenced by its reference to the Sphynx from Tanis of the Cairo museum.

<sup>9</sup> <http://webapps.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/explorer/index.php?qu=ObjectNumber:E.2.1946&oid=61606>

<sup>10</sup> Golenischev obtained this cast before 1911, the year when the collection entered the Moscow museum. However Golenischev could not have gotten the cast of this statue directly from Cambridge. The Fitzwilliam Museum only received the original statue in 1946 as a bequest of collector Oscar Rafael (1874-1941), who had bought it at a Sotheby's auction in 1917 from Lord Grenfell (Francis Wallace Grenfell, 1st Baron Grenfell, 1841 - 1925) - Field Marshal, Sirdar of the Egyptian army, and amateur Egyptologist. He conducted excavations in the private tombs at Aswan where he discovered this head; he was friends with W. Budge, corresponded with A. Edwards. Charles de Sousy Ricketts, 'Head in serpentine of Amenemmes III in the possession of Oscar Raphael, Esq.' *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 4, part IV (1917), 211-212. Thus, when Golenischev received a copy of the monument, its original was in the private collection of Lord Grenfell. Now portions of this is located at the Museum of Natural History in Bournemouth in Dorset, England. <http://www.bnss.org.uk/about/museum/>

<sup>11</sup> A. H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1961).