

THINGS OF THREADS AND PATCHES

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Emily's article on an ancient Egyptian mirror with modern decoration gave me the first inkling that objects in museums may not be all that their curators hope they are, that artefacts can have varied and mutable histories, and that forgery and the history of collecting are legitimate and necessary topics for research.¹ The slightly dubious objects I discuss below are offered with fondness and respect to Emily, who is undeniably the genuine article.

KENAMUN AND HIS PLINTHS

Emily published OIM 25648 (fig. 1) as the most impressive of the Oriental Institute's four figures of Kenamun, Overseer of the Cattle of Amun during the reign of Amenhotep II.² Kenamun is unusual among New Kingdom officials for having deposited caches of 'extra-sepulchral' mummiform figures at Umm el-Qaab at Abydos and Zawiet Abu Mesallam between Giza and Abu Ghurob.³ The Zawiet Abu Mesallam group was formally discovered and cleared in 1919 following reports of looting; an earlier group of figures at the site had apparently been discovered 'about 4 years ago' by troops digging a firing trench.⁴ A number of Kenamuns are therefore known from the art market rather than a secure findspot. OIM 25648 can be attributed to the Zawiet Abu Mesallam group on formal features: i.e. its size and style.

OIM 25648 was given to the Oriental Institute in 1985 by Chicago collector Eugene Chesrow,⁵ who had acquired it at auction in March 1984.⁶ The auction

1 Teeter 1990.

2 Teeter 2003, 57. The other figures are OIM 18210 (excavated at Abydos), OIM 10515 (purchased by J. H. Breasted), and OIM 10479 (given by J. E. Quibell from the Egyptian Museum Cairo, of which Quibell was a curator at the time). I am grateful to Jean Evans for information on the object from the Oriental Institute's files.

3 See Pumpenmeier 1998 in general, with a round-up of Kenamun objects p. 95–96, citing OIM 25648 under its alternative accession number 1985.1

4 Boulos 1919; Daressy 1919.

5 Oriental Institute 1985, 8–9.

6 Sotheby's 1–2 March 1984, lot 167.

catalogue identified the figure as one of Kenamun, and provided a provenance including two sales: that of the estate of the art dealer Joseph Brummer in 1949 (fig 2);⁷ and that of the estate of Mrs Christian R. Holmes in 1942 (fig 3).⁸ Mrs Holmes was a scion of the Fleischmann yeast fortune and widow of a Cincinnati doctor, and had formed a significant collection of Chinese art, dispersed after her death. The Egyptian objects were lots 239–62 of the sale, and were said to come ‘from the Gayer-Anderson collection’.⁹ The Brummer description goes further, recording the provenance as ‘R. G. Gayer-Anderson Loan Collection, 1917, no. W42’.

The photograph in the 1984 auction catalogue shows it on a small plinth, described in notes made on its arrival at the Oriental Institute as ‘modern metal base, gun metal grey’.¹⁰ This is presumably the same plinth on which it still stands. It is not, however, the plinth on which it was sold in 1949 and 1942. The lot photos for the 1942 and 1949 sales show it on a rectangular wooden base, described in 1949 as ‘on wood base carved with a lengthy inscription’ and in 1942 as ‘On wood stand also with incised hieroglyphics underfoot’.

Close examination of the base in the 1949 lot photograph, with the eye of faith, seems to show horizontal lines of signs, but they cannot be read.

What is this inscribed base, now missing? Could it have been the original fixture for the figure? Figure 1 shows that OIM 25648 has an integral tenon to fix it to a base, as do other Kenamun figures of almost identical dimensions

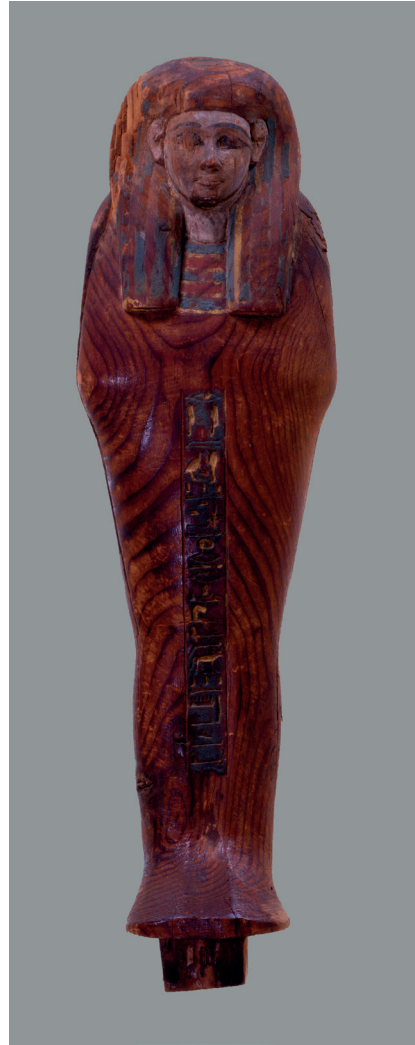


FIG. 1: OIM 25648, figure of Kenamun. (Image courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.)

7 Parke Bernet 11–14 May 1949, lot 43.

8 Parke Bernet 15–18 April 1942, lot 260. A fact sheet on Mrs Holmes, concentrating on her collections of Chinese art, is available at the Freer Gallery Washington DC, and online at <https://asia.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Holmes-Mrs.-Christian.pdf>.

9 On R. G. Gayer-Anderson, Egyptian army officer, collector, dealer, pederast, and benefactor, see Bierbrier 2019, 178; Foxcroft 2016; Warner 2016.

10 Information courtesy Jean Evans.

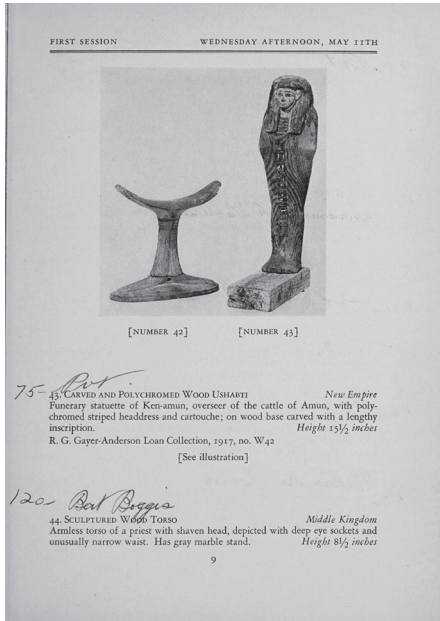


FIG. 2: Figure of Kenamun as sold in 1949. (Public domain image from Parke Bernet 1949.)

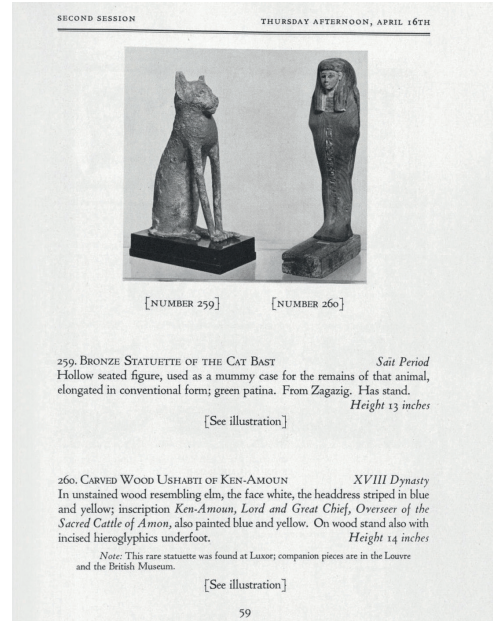


FIG. 3: Figure of Kenamun as sold in 1942. (Public domain image from Parke Bernet 1942.)

believed to come from Zawiet Abu Mesallam,¹¹ indicating that many of them were presumably fixed to something.¹² Others, without tenons, were found inside wooden or faience coffins.¹³ Did OIM 25648's original base survive with it for 3,400 years only to disappear after 1949? New light can be shed on the mystery inscription on the base thanks to the recent digitization of the Brummer Gallery archives, stored in the library of the Cloisters at the Metropolitan Museum, New York.¹⁴ Joseph Brummer kept meticulous card indexes of his objects, organized by stock number, and Kenamun is N6131 (figs 4–5). The card, like most Brummer stock cards, has a photograph of the object, a description, and an indication of the object's fate (here, sold at the '2nd Auction' of the Brummer estate); on the reverse are details of its vendor

11 E.g. OIM 10515, 36.8 cm high, has a tenon 2.4 cm high (estimate from photograph with scale), leaving a visible height of 34.4 cm. British Museum EA 56929 and 56930, 37.2 and 36.9 cm high respectively, both have tenons; that of EA 56929, visible in the BM online database photograph, appears to be between 2 and 3 cm high (thus visible height between 34 and 35 cm). Walters Art Gallery 22.194 appears from online photographs to have an ancient tenon joining it to its modern plinth. Its given height, presumably without the tenon, is 34.4 cm. OIM 25648's given height is 34.4 cm, presumably on its modern metal plinth, but coronavirus shutdowns prevented its being measured again to clear up this minor point. These measurements imply a series of figures the same visible height, all attached with tenons to a base or bases.

12 Wild 1957, 209, asks 'Qu'est-il advenu également des fragments du naos, monté sur traîneau, en bois peint et rouge, qui contenait peut-être les figurines funéraires de Qen-amon, fragments signalés sans numéro au Registre Provisoire, à la date du 17 décembre 1919'. This may have contained a base with mortises for the tenons to hold the figures.

13 e. g. Pumpenmeier 1998, 5, 27, 33, 39, 49–55, 95, from Abydos.

14 Accessible at <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/watson-digital-collections/cloisters-archives-collections/the-brummer-gallery-records>. On Joseph Brummer and his brothers Ernest and Imre, see Bierbrier 2019, 72.

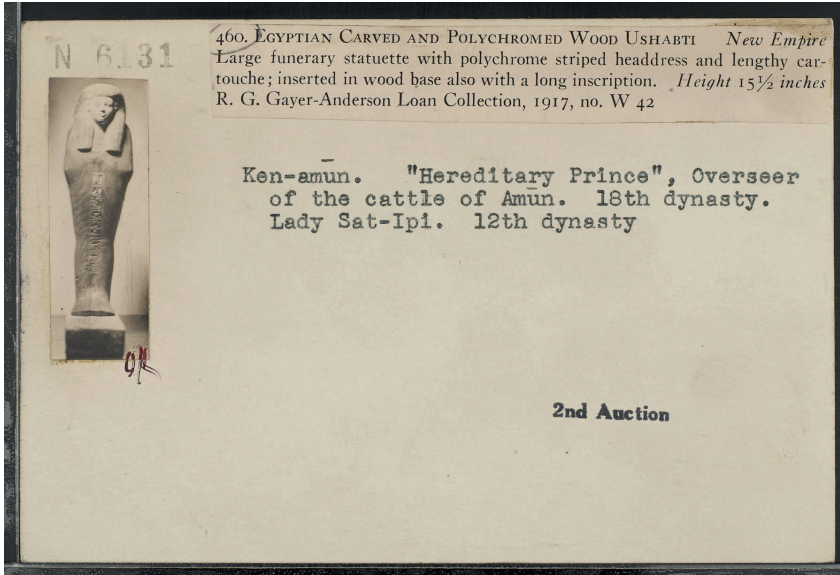


FIG. 4: Brummer Gallery stock card N6131, recto. (Public domain image from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

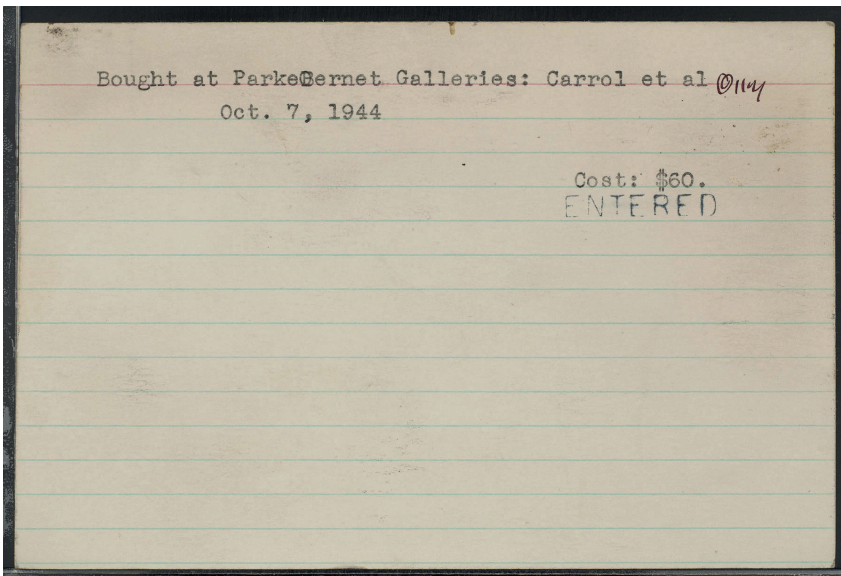


FIG. 5: Brummer Gallery stock card N6131, verso. (Public domain image from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

and the price paid. N6131 is described as lot 460 of a Parke Bernet sale of October 7, 1944, where it cost \$60. The lot description has been cut from the catalogue and pasted onto the slip. This is the earliest appearance of the information, missing from the 1942 Holmes sale, that Kenamun was ‘R. G. Gayer-Anderson Loan Collection, 1917, no. W 42’. Gayer-Anderson deposited a collection of objects at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in 1917, which

remained there until 1925 when he began to disperse it.¹⁵ Labels printed with ‘R. G. Gayer-Anderson Loan Collection, 1917’ still survive on other objects (fig. 6), and I presume the classification W 42 (W = ‘wood?’) would have been added by hand, as ‘X-75’ (in this case X = the Roman number 10) is here. The Gayer-Anderson label may be the pale rectangle visible in the 1942 auction photograph (fig. 3) on the base of the figure near the foot; it is not visible in the Brummer catalogue card (although the angle of the photograph does not help), and has definitely vanished in the 1949 auction photograph (fig. 2).

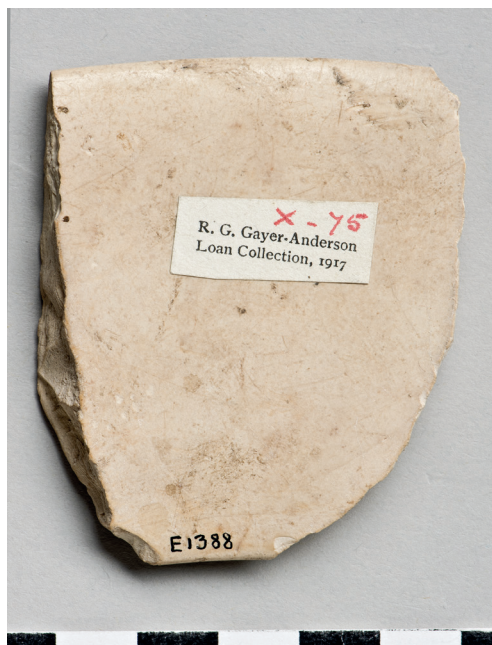


FIG. 6: Printed Gayer-Anderson label on the reverse of Medelhavsmuseet MM 11388, a fragment of a carved Middle Kingdom hippopotamus tusk ‘magic wand’. (Image by Ove Kaneberg, National Museums of World Culture, via Creative Commons (CC-BY).)

The Brummer card does not just contain the cutting from the 1944 auction catalogue entry. It also has three lines of typescript:

*Ken-amūn. “Hereditary Prince”, Overseer of the cattle of Amūn. 18th dynasty.
Lady Sat-Ipi. 12th dynasty*

The writing Ken-amūn is not found in the auction descriptions, and the overbar on the u in Amūn is typical of earlier 20th century Egyptological style. The typed information records a professional assessment of the object made for Brummer after he acquired the object in 1944, most likely by Walter Federn.¹⁶ If the identification of Kenamun is obvious, that of ‘Lady Sat-

¹⁵ Ikram 2009, 177–85, esp. nn. 5–6.

¹⁶ Federn is explicitly recorded as providing translations and assessments of other objects for Brummer, e.g. Brummer N3811, a shell inscribed with the cartouche of Senwosret I. Federn and Brummer had cultural links – both were Jewish, born in the Austro-Hungarian empire (Federn in Vienna, Brummer in Zombor in what was then Hungary), and by 1944 exiled in New York. On Federn see Bierbrier 2019, 160.

Ipi. 12th Dynasty’ can only refer to the inscription on the now missing base. Although Brummer must have now known that the base and the figure did not belong, he kept them together.

What was Kenamun’s figure doing on Satipi’s base? Pastiche of ancient but unrelated elements joined together to create a more satisfactory whole are not uncommon among objects acquired on the art market.¹⁷ To the owner of both a statue base lacking a statue and an unstable figure with a tenon, it must have been an obvious marriage of convenience. Although currently impossible to prove, it is possible that Gayer-Anderson himself was responsible for the join. He restored many objects he owned, and collected broken bronze figures to complete other fragments.¹⁸ Gayer-Anderson claimed the credit for spotting the quality of what would become the British Museum’s Gayer-Anderson Cat ‘covered with a heavy coating of reddish and greenish deposits’¹⁹ and to have ‘carefully flaked off little by little the layers of outer grey-green and inner brick-red patines and gradually an exquisite figure of a cat emerged as if from under a veil that was being slowly stripped off her’. In reality, as recent scientific examination has shown, the cat had been restored from fragments with solder, plaster, and bitumen, repatinated with green paint, had its chased details (re-)engraved, and was given new precious metal accoutrements.²⁰ Gayer-Anderson had form.

Gayer Anderson was likely aware that figure and base did not belong. In 1925 he began the process of dispersing the collection he had lent to the Ashmolean, writing to Albert Lythgoe, then Curator of Egyptology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to ask if Lythgoe [*sic*] would be willing to ‘place’ his Egyptian collections, which he made ‘between 1907 & 1914 taking it home just before the war’ with an American museum or collector, as ‘I am told that owing to post-war economy in England, and French financial conditions, the best if not the only market for such a collection now is in America’. Gayer-Anderson provided a 34-page typescript inventory of his collection, which he valued at £6,600 (then about \$29,000), although he only sought £6,500 for it; Kenamun and its base can be recognized among the section of wooden objects:

Funerary figure brown wood, face and hair painted white, yellow and blue, single line of hieroglyphs incised, 15”

17 One early example is BM EA 61111, a wooden figure of a jackal-headed deity, likely to come from a New Kingdom royal tomb, mounted for sale on a fragment of a Late Period coffin: Taylor 1990. See also Picchi and Chilo’s article in this volume for Belzoni restorations and the use of ancient fragments as bases.

18 Foxcroft 2016, 117.

19 Passages from Gayer-Anderson’s unpublished memoir *Fateful Attractions* cited in Ambers et al. 2008, 1, 7.

20 Ambers et al. 2008. The article leaves implicit the obvious conclusion that the Gayer-Anderson cat is, effectively, a modern creation.

*White wooden stand for same, incised 6 rows hieroglyph, (?) not belonging to above.*²¹

Gayer-Anderson's list gives us the additional information that the base has six rows of text, although does not translate them, and further implies that stand and figure were linked (even if the association was not certain), but does not say why they were associated – were they acquired together, or did Gayer-Anderson make the join? Gayer-Anderson's attempt to dispose of his collections via Lythgoe was unsuccessful, and Kenamun's whereabouts between 1925 and 1942 remain unknown.

Who was Satipi? The base, removed from the figure at some point between 1949 and 1984, is no longer extant, so other details beyond her name and title (parentage, paleography of the text, mention of local deities etc.) are lost.²² The name is not uncommon in the Middle Kingdom (*PNI*, 285.20–22, 'mehrfach'). However, the Gayer-Anderson Satipi is not the only Satipi to emerge in the West in the nineteen-teens.

In the first half of 1915, Bostonian artist Joseph Lindon Smith deposited two wooden figures of a man and a woman (fig. 7) on loan at the Museum of

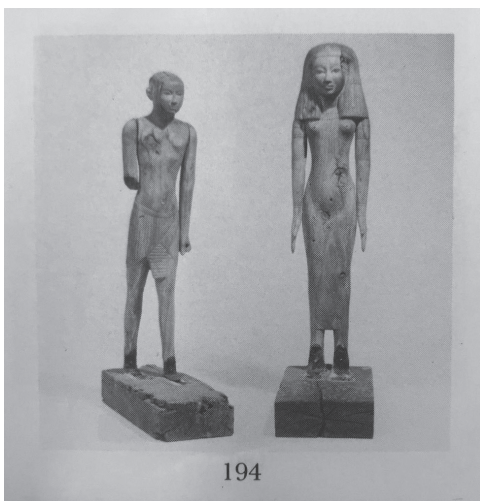


FIG. 7: Two wooden figures with bases inscribed for Senwosreti and Satipi from the collection of Joseph Lindon Smith, as sold in 1986. (Image courtesy Sotheby's.)

Fine Arts, Boston, where they were put on display in the 'New Empire Room'.²³ Smith, who regularly visited Egypt as a member of George Andrew Reisner's team at Giza, and who had visited Egypt in the autumn of 1914, generally had an excellent 'eye' for an object. He gave and sold the MFA some fine pieces of sculpture, but these figures are – with the eye of hindsight – obviously not 'New Empire'. They are middle-ranking fakes. The woman, in particular, is particularly bland and unspecific, and the use of poor quality, knotty wood for both figures, without any visible gesso

21 Letter and list now in the archives of the Department of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum. I am indebted to Salima Ikram for sharing her copies of this with me at a late stage of writing. With a certain amount of creative license Kenamun could also be the 42nd object in the unnumbered list of wooden pieces.

22 I am grateful to the staff of the Topographical Bibliography for checking their files to look for the base and for looking for other Satipis.

23 Boston Museum of Fine Arts 1915, 48. On Smith see Bierbrier 2019, 436, and for his 1914 visit to Egypt see Smith 1956, 127.

remaining, is worrying.²⁴ The inscribed wooden bases, whose authenticity has never been questioned, name the couple: the Inspector of Retainers (*shd smsw*) Senwosreti, born of Henut; and the Lady of the House Satipi, born of Henut, beloved of Hathor of Atfih (fig. 8). Like the Gayer-Anderson base, the Lindon Smith Satipi's base has six rows of text. There is no proof that the two Lindon Smith bases were found together, but the general paleography of the two inscriptions seems, to me, consistent, and the fact that the two figures have a mother with the same name is also compelling. Another figure of an Inspector



FIG. 8: Detail of wooden base of Satipi. (© Christie's Images, 2019)

of Retainers Senwosreti born of Henut is known to me, a small ivory figure in Turin acquired before 1888. Name and title are identically written in both cases, with a single *i* in Senwosreti's name and the *hd* sign in *shd smsw* written with Gardiner T4 rather than Gardiner T3.²⁵ It is too tempting not to link the Turin Senwosreti to the man named on the Lindon Smith base.

Pending the re-emergence of the Gayer-Anderson Satipi base one cannot prove or disprove a link between the two Satipis, but given that both left Egypt within two years of each other it is impossible not to engage in some wild speculation. To wit: the burial of Satipi and Senwosreti (and/or possibly their mother Henut?) was uncovered (near Atfih?) around 1914 – just as the earlier looting of Kenamuns at Zawiet Abu Mesallam was said to have taken place

24 A full treatment of these figures is beyond the scope of this article. Briefly: the loan to the MFA was terminated in 1919, and the figures remained with Lindon Smith and his descendants until they were sold at Sotheby's New York, Antiquities, 24 November 1986, lot 194. There, they were catalogued as 'Two wood figures in Ancient Egyptian style, probably circa A.D. 1900 ... the ancient wood bases, one 12th Dynasty, carved on the top with inscriptions.' They were purchased by William Kelly Simpson, who believed the figures to be ancient, and lent again to the MFA until 2001. They were sold from Simpson's estate at Christie's London, Antiquities, 3 July 2019, lots 17 and 18. Before the 2019 sale, Carbon 14 testing of the figures gave dates in the mid first century BC for the wood, and the lots were accordingly, subtly, catalogued as 'an Egyptian wood female figure on a separate base for the Lady of the House Satipy' and 'an Egyptian wood figure of an official on a separate wood base for Senwosrety'. The date of the wood need not be disputed, but the style of the figures is so egregious as to make their antiquity dubious. Wakeling, writing of the forging scene in Egypt in 1912, discusses forgeries 'made from pieces of old mummy cases so as to give them the appearance of age' (42, see also 37–38, 114).

25 Cat 3045, acquired before 1882; PM VIII 801-437-660. Simon Connor (pers. comm.) suggests a Twelfth Dynasty dating for the ivory figure, around Senwosret II. The paleography of all three inscriptions fits with a Twelfth Dynasty dating.

around then. The burial had contained at least two figures of Satipi and one of Senwosreti. Perhaps the tomb had been rifled a generation or so before when the beautiful ivory figure of Senwosreti was removed, and only the bases and other less valuable objects were left by 1914. The figures may have succumbed to termites (Senwosreti's base has signs of damage), may already have been removed with the ivory Senwosreti, or may have survived but been deliberately separated from their bases to be sold independently and may be found among the many baseless wooden figures in museums and collections worldwide. One of Satipi's bases encountered a recently discovered figure of Kenamun at a dealer's or chez Gayer-Anderson, while the other Satipi and Senwosreti were kitted out with dubious figures that drew legitimacy from their undoubtedly ancient bases. Kenamun's base satisfied Gayer-Anderson, Mrs Holmes, and Joseph Brummer, but was removed between 1949 and 1985. The other bases are still with their figures: a reminder that one should take nothing for granted when one is presented with an object for study.

A VERY COMPOSITE FIGURE

The second object for consideration (fig. 9) can be dealt with more quickly. At present in a private collection in London, it was acquired approximately ten years ago with a group of small miscellaneous Egyptian and ethnographic objects from an art market 'runner' from older collections in the south coast of the UK. Measuring 4.5 cm high, 1.5 cm wide, and 2.6 cm deep, the figure is made of blue-green faience. A lion-headed figure wearing a sun disc sits, naked, on the ground offering an oval plaque inscribed *rꜥ wp rnp(t) nfr(t)* – it is Re who opens a beautiful year.



FIG. 9: Composite faience object. Private collection, London. (Drawing by Andrew Boyce.)

The combination of figure, costume, pose and inscription is unprecedented on first glance. A second look reveals why: the figure is a pastiche made of three unrelated parts glued together. The dark and crusty appearance of the glue hints at the antiquity of its creation.

The lion's head with a sun disc comes from a figure of a leonine deity, most likely Sekhmet, an extremely common amulet type.²⁶ The plaque is the bezel of a ring made to celebrate the New Year, again not an unusual object.²⁷ The naked headless body comes from a so-called 'Naucratic' figurine of a naked man with a giant erect penis, now missing. Faience 'Naucratic' figures are relatively unusual; they are more common in limestone, where parallels for the figure's gesture – not grasping the ring bezel, but holding an oval object between both hands – can be found.²⁸

It is now impossible to know who created this pastiche and why. Was it made by a vendor anxious to wring every drop of profit from his mediocre stock? Was it sold as wholly ancient or as a pastiche? Did a bored collector confect it out of miscellaneous odds and ends²⁹ as a practical joke? Whoever made it, and for whatever reason, it took imagination and talent to turn three unprepossessing fragments into an engaging object. Precisely because it was made for modern consumption, it manages to satisfy modern desires for pharaonic Egypt – animal headed humans! Scanty clothing! Hieroglyphics! [*sic*] – far more exactly than genuine, untampered objects ever could. ¶

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26 Examples abound in collections worldwide; in the Oriental Institute, E12238 is close to the example here.

27 E.g. Petrie Museum UC58328 and UC58342.

28 E.g. Fitzwilliam Museum E85.1914 and E99.1914, limestone figures from Naucratis, holding what their cataloguers identify as a tambour or a drum.

29 The owner of this piece calls fragments like this 'craplets'.

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