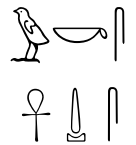
A watercolor illustration of an ancient Egyptian tomb interior. The scene is framed by two large, decorated columns on either side, covered in hieroglyphs. In the center, a mummy lies on a bed or platform, partially covered by a white cloth with a dark pattern. A window in the background shows a glimpse of a landscape with a green field and a blue sky. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by browns, tans, and muted greens.

Studies in Honor of
William Kelly Simpson

VOLUME 2

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson

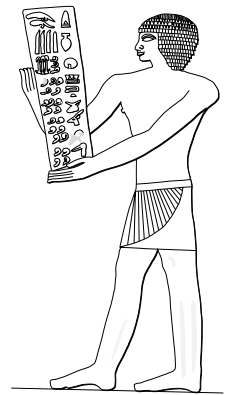




William Kelly Simpson

*Studies in Honor of
William Kelly Simpson*

VOLUME 2



*Edited by
Peter Der Manuelian
and Rita E. Freed*

DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN,
NUBIAN, AND NEAR EASTERN ART

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON
1996

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Frontispiece: William Kelly Simpson at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1985

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An Old Kingdom Sculpture in the San Antonio Museum of Art



GERRY D. SCOTT, III

WHEN CONSIDERING A SUITABLE SUBJECT TO PRESENT IN HONOR of my teacher, William Kelly Simpson, I decided to select a topic that would reflect an area of scholarship in Egyptology that has interested him, and to which he has contributed greatly during the course of his career. Professor Simpson has written extensively on the art and archaeology of Old Kingdom Egypt, has conducted painstaking field research on the Old Kingdom mastaba tombs at Giza, and has curated one of the finest collections of Old Kingdom sculpture in the world. It is my hope, then, that the presentation of an Old Kingdom sculpture in the collection of the San Antonio Museum of Art will be an appropriate offering from a student who retains most pleasant memories of his professor's seminar at Yale University on Giza mastabas.

San Antonio's Old Kingdom gneiss ("Chephren diorite") bust of a woman came to the museum in 1991 as part of the second great donation of ancient art given by San Antonio art collector and philanthropist Gilbert M. Denman, Jr (figs. 1–6).¹ It bears the museum accession number 91.80.126, and measures 25.4 cm in height, 18.4 cm in width, and 12.7 cm in depth. The face, which lamentably has lost most of the nose and suffered some surface abrasion, measures 7.4 cm from the chin to the brow.

Mr. Denman acquired the sculpture in 1969 from the well-known New York antiquities dealer Michel E. Abemayor. At the time, the work was known to John D. Cooney, William Stevenson Smith, and Dows Dunham, each of whom expressed a brief opinion on its high quality and Old Kingdom date, Cooney further stating that he believed the sculpture belonged to the Fifth Dynasty.² While the present notice is the bust's first full publication, it was mentioned and illustrated by Carlos A.

¹ The two antiquities gifts, given in 1986 and 1991, respectively, hold the museum accession numbers 86.134.1–201 and 91.80.1–193. The objects given in 1986 are predominantly classical antiquities, those in 1991 mainly Egyptian.

² Letter from Dows Dunham to Gilbert Denman of 16 January 1969, and letter from John Cooney to Gilbert Denman of 8 January 1969, both in the museum's files.



Fig. 1. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, San Antonio Museum of Art 91.80.126.



Fig. 2. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, rear view.

Picón in an article on the Denman collection when the sculpture was still in Mr. Denman's possession.³

At the time the work was purchased, it was, "said to have been found near Sakkara."⁴ While this general provenance suggests that the San Antonio bust was originally placed in a tomb at Saqqara, the statement is so general that it probably would be unwise to rule Giza out as another possibility.

The bust derives from a statue that once showed the owner seated upon a block support with the hands resting on the thighs, as the left arm, which is bent at the elbow, demonstrates. There is no indication of a back support, nor is there any evidence to suggest the presence of another figure. Thus, the statue is one of the relatively small number of single sculptures of women dating to the Old Kingdom.⁵

³ Carlos A. Picón, "Ancient Art from the Denman Collection," *M3* (San Antonio Museum Association Quarterly, Winter 1987), p. 16, ill. p. 13.

⁴ Correspondence from Michel Abemayor to Gilbert Denman of 20 January 1969, in the museum's files.

Upon her head, the anonymous woman wears a full short wig of a common Old Kingdom type.⁶ It is parted in the center. In front, the wig falls approximately to the jaw line and it gradually tapers to a length that brushes the top of the owner's back above the shoulder blades. Carefully carved and regularly spaced striation lines denote the strands of the wig. The costume is probably completed by the usual close-fitting sheath, although there is no indication of the garment's neckline.

The modeling of the body is simple, yet it is elegant in its simplicity. The breasts and the spinal recess are indicated, and there is some shaping of the back, abdomen, and arms to give the impression of the interplay between the musculature and the fleshy portions of the body.

Much more attention has been given to the carving of the face, which is full and rounded.⁷ The jaw is firm and the lips are set in a fairly straight line. While the eyebrows are not shown, the brow ridges are indicated, and the well-modeled eyes reflect the orbits and the bony structure of the skull beneath the flesh. The ellipses of the eyes themselves are well defined. The upper eyelids are shown, and the cheeks are worked, as are the fleshy pockets just below the eyes. The fleshiness of the face, the treatment of the naso-labial area, and the firm set of the mouth and jaw combine to lend the facial features the look of a more advanced age than the usual robustly youthful visage of the era.⁸

Although the corpus of Old Kingdom single statues of seated women is not large, it may be traced back to the Third Dynasty. Two well-known examples are in Italy, a seated statue of Princess Redief in Turin and an anonymous seated woman in Naples.⁹ Both show the owner seated with the arms held in the earlier manner: right arm placed palm down upon the thigh, left arm bent at the elbow and passing across the torso. Each of these sculptures is carved in hard stone.

⁵ For the statue type, see J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne* III (Paris, 1958), pp. 66–67.

⁶ It often leaves a small portion of the woman's hair visible at the forehead, as in Nofret's statue (CG 4), but this is not the case for the San Antonio bust.

⁷ The contrast between the simplicity of the carving of the body and the sophisticated treatment of the facial features recalls William Stevenson Smith's observation on the cross-legged sculpture of Prince Khu-en-re in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: "The whole figure shows a conventional, simple treatment of surfaces, the attention being concentrated upon the face" (*HESPOK*, p. 41).

⁸ Signs of age in the facial features during the period are relatively rare, the Ankh-haf bust of the Fourth Dynasty (Boston 27.442) and the Senedjem-ib-mehy wood statue of the Sixth Dynasty (Boston 13.3466) being two especially notable examples.

⁹ Both are illustrated in *HESPOK*, pl. 3 a,b, respectively. The Turin princess has recently been discussed and illustrated in Wilfred Seipel, *Gott, Mensch, Pharao* (Vienna, 1992), cat. no. 9, pp. 86–87.



Fig. 3. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, right profile.

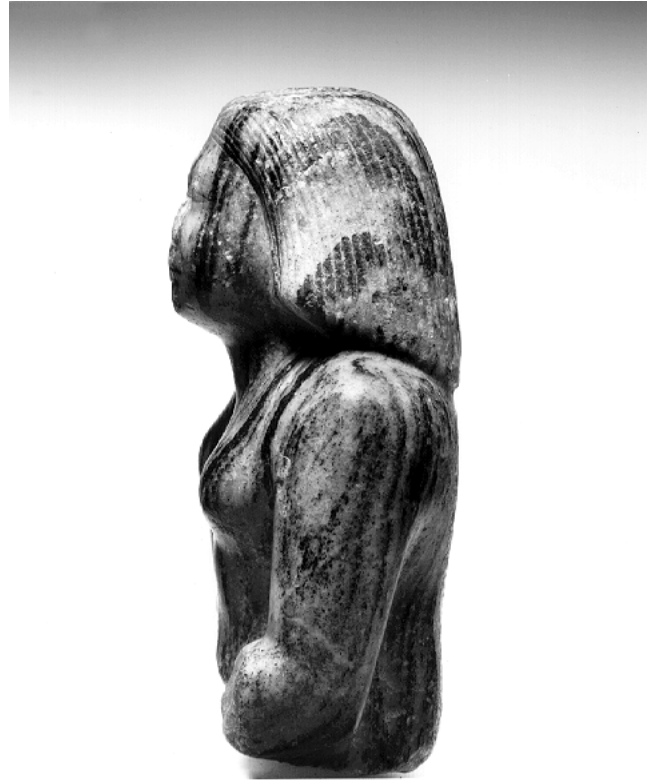


Fig. 4. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, left profile.

Seemingly similar is the first major statue of this type assigned to the Fourth Dynasty, the famous statue of Nofret from Maidum.¹⁰ The pose for Nofret's statue is essentially the same, except that the arm positions are reversed. Other differences include the addition of her long cloak and the statue's material, limestone. In addition, the placement of this statue, in close proximity to that of her husband Rehotep, has long led it to be conceptually considered as part of a dyad rather than as a totally separate entity.¹¹

Other important Old Kingdom examples are to be found in Paris (such as Louvre A 109) and Cairo (such as CG 53).¹² In each case, the pose shows both hands placed flat, palm down, on the thighs. Each work also shows the full short wig, and is carved in limestone. Linked with

¹⁰ Cairo, CG 4, recently discussed and illustrated in Mohamed Saleh and Hourig Sourouzian, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo* (Mainz, 1987), cat. no. 27.

¹¹ Cyril Aldred commented on this: *Old Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1968), no. 10, p. 28.

¹² Both are conveniently illustrated in Vandier, *op. cit.*, pls. XV, 5 and XXI, 4, respectively.



Fig. 5. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, right 3/4 view.

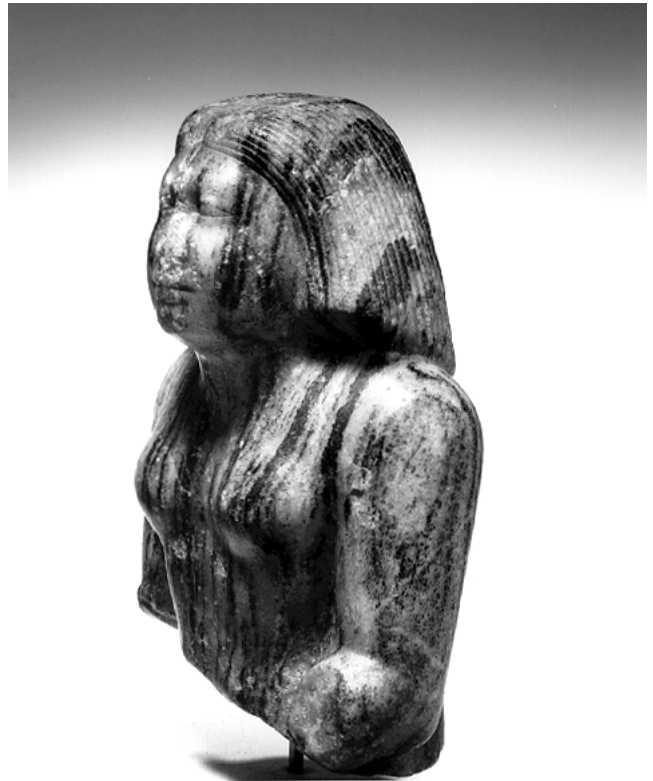


Fig. 6. Old Kingdom bust of a woman, left 3/4 view.

these statues, although not strictly a single statue since it includes the diminutive figure of a standing son, is the sculpture of Khent in Vienna (Inv.-Nr. ÄS 7507).¹³ Clearly, however, Khent is the primary figure, and shows the pose with both hands placed palm down on the thighs, the sheath dress, and the full short wig. Her sculpture is usually assigned to the Fifth Dynasty.

In *HESPOK*, William Stevenson Smith discusses an interesting group of statues belonging to Chephren's queen Kha-merer-nebty I and various members of her family. These were discovered at Giza by Count Galarza.¹⁴ Included in this group was a colossal seated statue of the queen and three smaller single statues of seated women, all carved in limestone.¹⁵ The colossal statue reportedly shows the queen wearing a

¹³ The statue has recently been illustrated and discussed, see Wilfred Seipel, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 28, pp. 126–27.

¹⁴ *HESPOK*, p. 41 and G. Daressy, "La tombe de la mère du Chephren," *ASAE* 10 (1910), pp. 41–49.

¹⁵ *HESPOK*, p. 41.

lappet wig, as is typical for statues of queens during the Old Kingdom.¹⁶ The practice is not, however, necessarily universal at this time, as may be seen in the Boston pair statue of Queen Hetep-heres II and her daughter, Queen Mersyankh III.¹⁷ In this sculpture, the elder queen wears the same sort of full short wig as is found on the San Antonio bust. It is again found on a tantalizing fragment of a female statue, probably also Hetep-heres II, that shows its owner wearing a pleated cloak. The fragment was found near the entrance to Mersyankh III's rock-cut tomb.¹⁸

Even with the addition of single standing female statues of Old Kingdom date,¹⁹ the number of works that may be drawn upon for comparison with the San Antonio bust remains relatively small, and the majority of these sculptures are in a less intractable material than the gneiss of the San Antonio lady, most surviving examples being carved in limestone. Indeed, the fact that the San Antonio bust is carved of gneiss seems of singular significance, given the small number of Old Kingdom statues carved in this material and their subjects. Included are such works as the late Third or early Fourth Dynasty striding deity in Brooklyn (58.192), the Fourth Dynasty seated statue of Chephren in Cairo (CG 14), and the Metropolitan Museum's pair statue of Sahure in New York (18.2.4).²⁰ All are important Old Kingdom sculptures in this stone, each the work of highly competent sculptors.

While it may be impossible to state the identity of the owner of the San Antonio bust, it is possible to offer a few observations regarding her relative station and date. The fact that the sculpture represented a single seated woman and is carved in a dense and uncommon luxury material such as gneiss combine to suggest that the owner was a woman of some

¹⁶ Ibid. In the pair statue of Mycerinus and Kha-merer-nebty II (Boston 11.1738), the queen wears a lappet wig as does Meryre-ankhnes in her pair statue with her son Pepy II (Brooklyn 39.119). The Brooklyn statue has recently been published in Seipel, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 16, pp. 102–103 and Richard A. Fazzini, *Ancient Egyptian Art in the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, 1989), cat. no. 15.

¹⁷ Boston 30.1456. The Queen of Djed-ef-re may also wear this wig in the fragmentary pair statue now in Paris (Louvre E. 12627), illustrated in Vandier, *op. cit.*, pl. II, 1.

¹⁸ Boston 30.1461. For the fragment, see Dows Dunham and William Kelly Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III* (Boston, 1974), p. 23, pl. XIX a–c (with additional reference) and HESPOK, pp. 42, 43, fig. 14c.

¹⁹ See Vandier, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–64.

²⁰ The Brooklyn statue of a deity has recently been published in Seipel, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 7, pp. 82–83 and in Richard A. Fazzini, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 7. The Cairo Chephren, often published, appears in Mohamed Saleh and Hourig Sourouzian, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 31. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Sahure pair statue also was included in Seipel, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 15, pp. 100–101. The same publication discusses and illustrates a private male single striding statue in this stone (Berlin Inv.-Nr. 1122), attributed there to the mid-Fifth Dynasty, see Seipel, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 17, pp. 104–105.

importance who had access to the products of the royal ateliers. The full face bears comparison with a number of visages from the late Fourth Dynasty, including Queen Kha-merer-nebty II, Prince Khu-en-re, and particularly those of Queen Hetep-heres II and Queen Mersyankh III.²¹ Such rounded features and firmly set lips appear also to continue into the early Fifth Dynasty, the Cairo greywacke and red granite heads of King User-kaf and the New York gneiss pair statue of King Sahure with the personification of the Coptos nome coming to mind.²² In concluding, it seems likely that the San Antonio bust may represent a significant female member of the royal family and that it was probably carved during the late Fourth or early Fifth Dynasty.



²¹ Boston 11.1738, Boston 13.3140, and Boston 30.1456. All are conveniently illustrated in *HESPOK* (pls. 13 a, 16 c, and 17 b, respectively) and in Vandier, *op. cit.* (pls. V 3, XIII 2, and VI 2, respectively).

²² Cairo JE 90220 and 52501, Metropolitan Museum of Art 18.2.4. Each has been frequently illustrated and discussed. For Cairo JE 90220, see Saleh and Sourouzian, *op. cit.*, cat. no. 35; for JE 52501, see Vandier, *op. cit.*, pl. VII, 6; for MMA 18.2.4. see note 20 above.

SCHOLARS FROM AROUND THE WORLD HAVE GATHERED HERE to contribute sixty-eight articles in honor of their friend and colleague, William Kelly Simpson, one of the most distinguished Egyptologists of his generation. The topics include archaeological expedition reports, art-historical essays, philological treatises, and historical analyses. The focus is on Egypt during 3,000 years of ancient pharaonic history, but Nubian and Aegean studies are also well represented. The volume contains 232 photographs, numerous line drawings, and a comprehensive bibliography of W. K. Simpson's Egyptological writings through 1996.

