

STUDIES IN ANCIENT EGYPT,  
THE AEGEAN, AND THE SUDAN





# STUDIES IN ANCIENT EGYPT, THE AEGEAN, AND THE SUDAN

Essays in honor of Dows Dunham  
on the occasion of his 90th birthday,  
June 1, 1980

Edited by  
William Kelly Simpson and Whitney M. Davis



Department of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

1981

# An Anubis Figure in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

LYNN HOLDEN

In 1908 the Harvard University – Museum of Fine Arts expedition at Giza found two fragments of a jackal statuette in the debris on the floor of Room (III) 2 of the Valley Temple of King Menkaure of Dynasty IV. The jackal figure, MFA 11.721, has been in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts for seventy-seven years and on display for no small part of that time (fig. 1). Even so, it is virtually unknown to scholars.<sup>1</sup> This statuette is fashioned in a hard greenish basalt and presents the animal in the pose customary for the god Anubis. The quality of workmanship is the very finest. However, pecking marks visible on the inside of the rear legs and traces of fine abrasion around the ears and knees, indicate the piece is not completely finished. The extraordinary realism and subtlety of modelling of the musculature of the rear legs and in the treatment of the eyes combine to emphasize that this statuette was, without a doubt, one of the most masterful creations of the royal atelier.

The head and neck fragment is 12.8 cm. in length and 7.9 cm. in width, with the rear section some 22.7 cm. in length and 12.8 cm. in width. Originally the dimensions of the complete figure would have been approximately 56 cm. long by 30 cm. high (fig. 2). The fragment of the head and neck has the snout and ears broken away and the rounded and worn edges of the breaks indicate that the piece was reused as a rubbing or grinding stone.

1. No. 45, Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 114, pl. 64a.

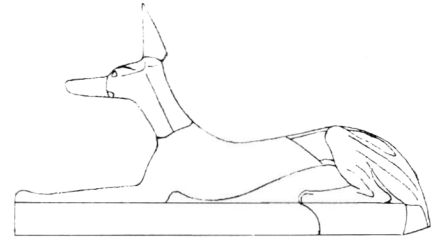


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of MFA 11.721. Drawn by L. Holden.

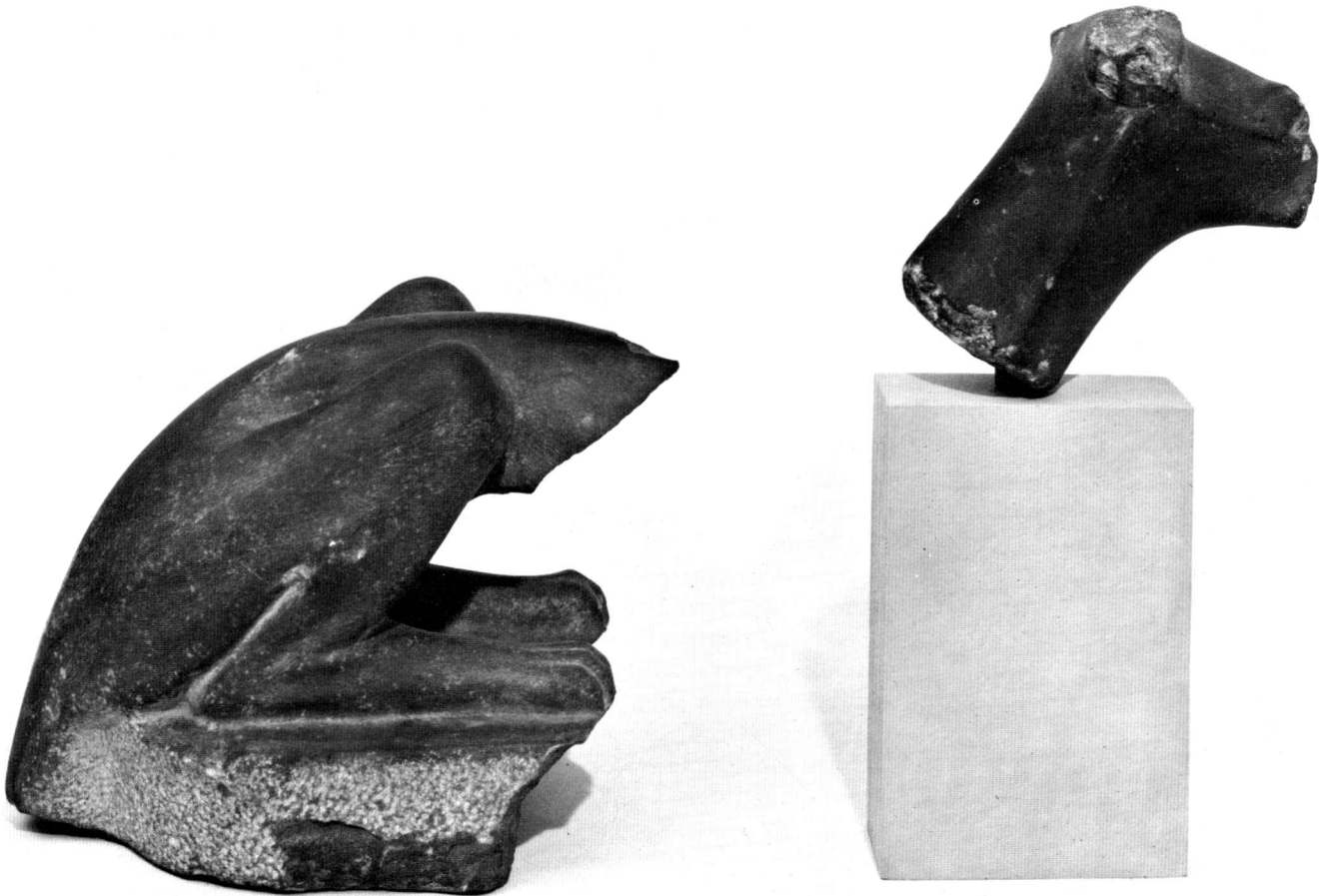


Fig. 1. Jackal figure, MFA 11.721. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Fig. 3. Jackal figure, MFA 11.721. Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

2. Vandier, *Manuel d'Archéologie Égyptienne*, I, 2, pp. 971 ff.

3. Von Bissing, *Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re* I, p. 55; Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-woser-re*, p. 65, for contrast see the Khufu ram, Schäfer, *OL* 29 (1926), pp. 723-7, pl. 2.

4. Fischer, "A Fragment of a Late Predynastic Relief from the Eastern Delta", *Artibus Asiae* 21 (1958), p. 64.

5. Obj. No. 6-19071, Elasser and Fredrickson, *Ancient Egypt*, p. 24 (catalogue), Smith, *Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, p. 12, pl. 3; Fazzini, *Images for Eternity*, pp. 12-14.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this statuette is the eyes (fig. 3), which are thoroughly human in appearance. The shape and proportions of the eyes are very similar to the eyes on the figures of the Menkaure triads. The lower part of the eyeball is undercut, angling upward to a rather prominent lid. The canine character is achieved by the upper eyebrows which curve back over the receding forehead. The snout of the jackal is completely broken away, but a trace of the right corner of the mouth shows that the lips were modelled in raised relief. The damaged right ear shows that the ears were not solid forms, but were hollowed out in a realistic manner. The general shape of the head is delineated by prominent ridges which run from the corner of the eye to the forward base of the ear and thence down the side of the neck. There is also a shallow depression down the center of the forehead to the brow. On the back of the neck and ears are very small incrustations of a reddish-brown colour, which are neither pigment nor plaster.

The hindquarters of the jackal are complete to the front of the rear paws, the abdomen being broken just above that point. The tail of the animal ends abruptly at the lower edge of the base. This part of the statuette does not appear to have received the same abuse inflicted on the head and neck, however, the area just above the tail shows signs of having been used as some type of anvil. The broken section of the abdomen displays very flat upper and lower surfaces with sloping sides creating a trapezoidal effect. The transition from the lower back to the thighs is very fluid with the musculature of the thighs represented by two slight ridges running from the base of the tail to the knee. The knees are quite broad and well rounded, more human in form than canine. The lower legs down to the heel are also well modelled, showing tension in the calf muscle and an indentation at the heel. The feet and paws are simple and cylindrical with four toes carved. The claws are not indicated. The base is four centimeters thick and twelve centimeters wide, the shape is rectangular, curving in at the back to conform to the shape of the animal. Rough pecking is visible on the sides of the base and on the bottom is a small circular drilled indentation.

The Museum of Fine Arts Anubis figure is probably the earliest three-dimensional representation of a jackal and the only sizable statue of this animal to survive from the Old Kingdom. From the Archaic Period many small animal statues survive, such as the lions in the Ashmolean, Turin and Berlin Museums, the baboon in Berlin, the hippopotamus in Athens and the lion in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to mention only the most important.<sup>2</sup> However, comparison with these pieces is surprisingly unprofitable. The only animal figures from the Old Kingdom which are comparable, in terms of style and quality of workmanship, are the basalt lion-head waterspouts from the pyramid temple of King Neuserre at Abusir, which were fashioned about fifty years after the Anubis statuette.<sup>3</sup> It is possible in these lions to see a similar treatment of the facial features, especially the eyes, brows and cheek bones. The lion heads, however, are executed in a more naturalistic manner. It is only in representations of jackals that human eyes with cosmetic stripes are regularly used.

Moving to the realm of two-dimensional representations, beginning in the Predynastic Period members of the canine family were frequently portrayed. The earliest representations were on slate palettes, the two finest examples being the so-called "dog" palettes, now in the Ashmolean and Louvre museums. Henry Fischer has shown that the shape of the body and the markings on the face, body and tail indicate that these animals are the *Lycaon Pictus*, a form of wild dog resembling the hyena.<sup>4</sup> It is possible to see in the method used to portray the toes and musculature of the legs the prototype of the style used regularly for canine and feline figures throughout the Old Kingdom.

In the Lowie Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley, California, there is a slate palette, forty centimeters long, in the shape of a jackal.<sup>5</sup> The eye in this palette is not of the usual type for a jackal, but is a simple almond shape resembling those on the so-called "dog" palettes. The snout and mouth are quite crude, but the ear is accurately portrayed. The front legs, which are very short and stubby, do have toes



indicated, if only three. An interesting feature is that the phallus is clearly shown on this figure, a fact unparalleled by any representation of a jackal, with the exception of a small group of provincial stelae from the First Intermediate Period.<sup>6</sup>

Towards the end of Dynasty IV and at the beginning of Dynasty V, at a time contemporary with the fashioning of the Boston jackal, there appeared in a number of important tombs an enlarged relief figure of a jackal used in a very special way. These reliefs are always on doorjambs and show the jackal reclining with its tail hanging down framing the inscription beneath. They are part of an inscription which begins vertically before them with the words Hotep-di-nesu. The Hotep sign is situated above or below the forepaws of the jackal. The inscription continues horizontally over the back of the animal giving the epithets of Anubis and concludes beneath with optative wishes for the dead.

The earliest inscription of this type is represented by fragments from the chapel of Kawab, Giza mastaba 7120 in the Eastern Cemetery.<sup>7</sup> The next and finest surviving example of the type is in the chapel of Khafkhufu I, G 7140.<sup>8</sup> Here the jackals have human eyes and wear vertically striped headdresses, one with a menat counterpoise. These figures display especially delicate modelling in the musculature of the legs and show the usual four toes. Another fine example is in the tomb of Meresankh III, G 7530 (fig. 4).<sup>9</sup> In this case the figures, in sunk relief, do not show as much detail and have plain headdresses, but still display human eyes. The last example at Giza is in a tomb south of the Khafre causeway, number 50 of Hassan, that of Netjerpunesu (fig. 5).<sup>10</sup> This representation on the jamb of the inner chamber appears without the headdress, but has some sort of collar at the neck. The inscription is virtually identical with that in the tomb of Khafkhufu I.

Scenes almost identical to the above can be found in another usage in tombs of this same period, namely on the lid of the sarcophagus. A very fine example is on the lid of the sarcophagus of Meresankh II in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (fig. 6).<sup>11</sup> The cosmetic eye stripe and human eyebrow are clearly visible here. While there is no headdress, a line is carved around the neck at shoulder level. The body exhibits little detail except for the four toes of the paws. Unusually the tail does not hang down but extends straight out. A second lid of this type was found by Pierre Montet at Tanis (fig. 7),<sup>12</sup> cut down in size and reused for the sarcophagus of King Amenemipet of the Twenty-first Dynasty. Montet suggests that the lid is of Fourth Dynasty date. The proportions of the jackal are identical and it has the human eye. In this example the tail descends at an angle. It is interesting that the name of the original owner, Kadjeded, is attested at Giza.<sup>13</sup> Selim Hassan found another lid in the tomb of Hotep at Sakkara,<sup>14</sup> just southeast of the entrance to the Step Pyramid complex. The lid, which he dates to the Fifth Dynasty, has on its upper surface three inscriptions, almost identical in content, each dominated by an enlarged jackal figure.<sup>15</sup> The jackal figures on the sarcophagus lids served the same function as the jackals on the tomb walls, to emphasize the patronship of the god Anubis over the mortuary cult and to represent graphically his essential role in guarding the sepulchre and ensuring an eternal existence. Later in Dynasty V slightly enlarged jackals were quite common in sarcophagus inscriptions as well as on stelae and false doors. The figures on the very fine sarcophagus of Fifi in the Cairo Museum provide a good example.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 6. Drawn by L. Holden.

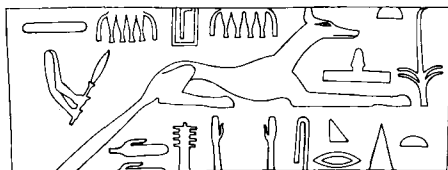


Fig. 7. Redrawn from Montet, *Tanis II*, fig. 65, by L. Holden.

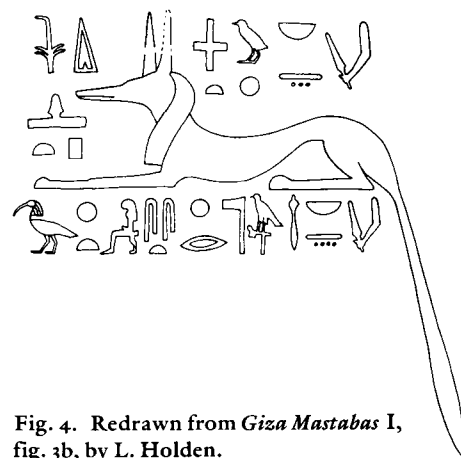


Fig. 4. Redrawn from *Giza Mastabas I*, fig. 3b, by L. Holden.

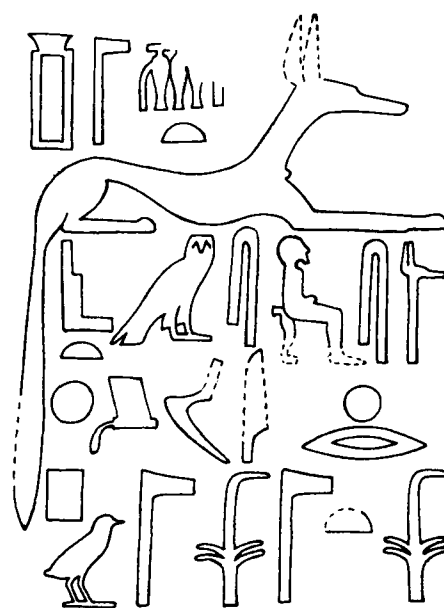


Fig. 5. Redrawn from Fischer and Caminos, *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Palaeography*, p. 35 (second ear added), by L. Holden.

6. Fischer, *Inscriptions from the Coptite Nome*, p. 9.

7. Simpson, *Giza Mastabas 3*, fig. 5.

8. Simpson, *Giza Mastabas 3*, pl. 15.

9. Dunham and Simpson, *Giza Mastabas 1*, pls. 2c and d.

10. Fischer, *ZÄS* 105 (1978), p. 43.

11. MFA 27.441; *BMFA* 25 (1927), p. 97.

12. Montet, *Tanis II*, p. 175.

13. Khafre quarry tomb no. 1, unpublished MFA photographs B 8531, 8537, and 8538, lintel with name spelled the same, photo A 7306

14. Hassan, *ASAE* 38 (1938), p. 505.

15. Fischer and Caminos, *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Palaeography*, p. 35.

16. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, 1929-30, pls. 61-65.

17. Reisner, *Mycerinus*, pl. 43. See W. Wood, *JEA* 60 (1974), pp. 82-93, for a recent discussion of the Mycerinus triads.

18. Reisner, *Mycerinus*, p. 114, pls. 61a and b.

19. Lythgoe, *BMAA* 14 (1919), no. 10, p. 3.

20. Copenhagen, No. 33, Morgensen, *Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Aegyptiske Samling*, p. 25, pl. 21; Vandier, *Manuel d'Archéologie Égyptienne* III, p. 306.

21. Cairo 38.517; Daressy, *Statues des Divinités*, CCG 28, p. 138; CCG 29, pl. 30 (H. 97 cm.). Wildung and Grimm, *Götter-Pharaonen*, no. 48.

22. Munich, No. 22; Müller, *Die Ägyptische Sammlung des Bayerischen Staates*, no. 1 (H. 1.63 m).

23. Vandier, *Manuel d'Archéologie Égyptienne* III, pl. 124.

Returning to the Boston statuette, the most useful representation for visualizing and reconstructing the figure is the Menkaure triad in Cairo which portrays the king accompanied by Hathor and the personification of the Cynopolite nome, the seventeenth province of Upper Egypt.<sup>17</sup> In this sculpture, from the same excavation and the same atelier, is depicted a reclining jackal in bold relief, almost three-dimensional, which displays features identical to the Boston Anubis figure, especially the human eyes, raised lips, ridge line on the side of the neck and the musculature of the rear legs.

The incomplete tail of the figure led Reisner to suggest that the Boston jackal may have been completed by a separate base in a different stone. If this were the case, some very good candidates for this base were discovered at the western end of the same room in which the statue was found.<sup>18</sup> Reisner thought these alabaster and limestone slabs were near their original location, but as he considered them to be merely libation stones, the documentation is not sufficient to allow confirmation of this hypothesis.

The location of the Anubis statuette in the central westernmost room of the Valley Temple is perhaps significant as this was the focal point of the mortuary cult of the deceased king. This image would have physically represented the powerful concepts expressed in the reliefs and inscriptions found in contemporary tombs.

There is another period in Egyptian history when exceptionally fine representations of the god Anubis were fashioned in hard stone. As is well known, during the reign of Amenhotep III there were produced large numbers of good quality, nearly life size, therioanthropic statues, the largest series being the 574 statues of the lion goddess Sekhmet dedicated to the temple of Mut at Karnak.<sup>19</sup> Contemporaneously there were carved statues of other deities, including Anubis. This last series is represented by a particularly fine example in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen.<sup>20</sup> This black granite statue is about life size (H. 1.60 m) and represents the god seated upon a throne which has the heraldic *Sm'* signs on the sides. The figure wears a vertically striped lappet wig and a pleated kilt with a belt which curves under the belly. In his right hand he holds an Ankh sign. A back pillar extends to just below the apex of the ears. The forepart of the pedestal is curved and the front of the block throne has two vertical columns of hieroglyphics which read: "The Good God, *Nb-M' 't-R'*, beloved of Anubis in *Ipt-rst*, may he be given life," and (left) "Son of Re, (*Imn-htp, hk' W'st*) beloved of Anubis in *Ipt-rst*, may he be given life." The Amenhotep cartouche has been erased. The intended location of the statue is clearly stated.

The head clearly displays human eyes, the upper lids being indicated by double incised lines. Although the cosmetic lines are absent and plastic eyebrows are lacking, when contrasted with the Sekhmet figures, their human character is immediately apparent. The hollowed out ears do not show pectinations and the mouth and nostrils are merely incised lines.

Another figure of Anubis, originally found at Tanis, is now in the Cairo Museum.<sup>21</sup> This standing figure is carved in a dark mottled granite and is preserved down to the knees. The god wears a striped lapped wig, broad collar and pleated kilt, which has a pleated belt with a *Tit* knot suspended from the buckle. This mode of dress as well as the size, material and proportions of the statue are virtually duplicated in a falcon-headed statue in Munich.<sup>22</sup> The right arm of the Cairo Anubis extends straight down and hold an *Ankh* sign, the left arm holds a *Was* septre directly in front of the body. A backpillar terminates just beneath the tip of the ears.

The upper portion of the face is very sensitively modelled, resembling the Copenhagen Anubis, but the eyes face more to the front and are more canine in appearance. The ears have pectinations carefully marked on the inside. Although the snout is damaged, traces of whiskers can be detected and the slightly recessed lower jaw is plainly visible. There is a bit of a jowl where the side of the face meets the headdress.

Vandier groups the Cairo statue with the seated figure in Copenhagen and others from the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty.<sup>23</sup> Even though many of the traits of

this piece would allow such a date, the treatment of the body and the form of the belt and collar suggest a date early in the Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>24</sup>

The final piece of interest is a dark mottled granite jackal head in the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, Massachusetts (fig. 8).<sup>25</sup> This very well preserved and little known sculpture is almost identical to the Cairo statue in the treatment of the eyes, mouth, cheeks, ears and headdress. These features combined with the similarity of size and material suggest the possibility that the Northampton head of Anubis is a fragment of another statue in the same series as the Cairo Anubis.

Together these statues demonstrate the continued veneration for this ancient mortuary god by the kings of the later New Kingdom and that there existed a conventionalized manner for representing him.

There are other therioanthropic Anubis sculptures, all executed in softer stones and stylistically not comparable with the figures discussed in this article. The three most important are: a standing pair statue in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,<sup>26</sup> which offers a contemporary parallel for the *Was* septre held by the Cairo Anubis, an interesting torso and head in the Brooklyn Museum<sup>27</sup> that has a support under the snout, and from the Late Period a seated figure with a mummiform statuette of Osiris on his lap now in Cairo.<sup>28</sup> Figures in bronze have been adequately described and inventoried in two articles by Dr. Ischlonsky.<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 8. Head of Anubis 1970.19-1. Courtesy Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Mass.

24. See note 21, Müller deals with dating such pieces.

25. Smith College Museum accession number 1970. 19-1 (H. 30 cm.).

26. MMA 17.2.5, Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt* II, fig. 218.

27. Brooklyn Acc. No. 11.662.

28. Cairo 38.570, Daressy, *Statues des Divinités*, CCG 29, pl. 31.

29. Ischlonsky, "A Peculiar Representation of the Jackal-God Anubis," JNES 25 (1966), pp. 17-26, and "Problems of Dating a Unique Egyptian Bronze," JNES 25 (1966), pp. 97-105.