

**MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS,
BOSTON. CATALOGUE OF
CASTS: PART I, THE EGYPTIAN
CASTS; PART II, CHALDAEAN
AND ASSYRIAN SCULPTURE**

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CHARLES G. LORING & EDWARD ROBINSON

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CATALOGUE OF CASTS PART I
THE EGYPTIAN CASTS
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CATALOGUE OF CASTS PART II
CHALDÆAN AND ASSYRIAN
SCULPTURE
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PART I.
EGYPTIAN SCULPTURE

EGYPTIAN AND ASSYRIAN ROOM.

THE EGYPTIAN CASTS.

THE art of sculpture in Egypt had its foundation in portraiture.

To live after death in the other world, a man's spirit, his *ka*, his "double," had need of an abiding-place, and for that end his body was embalmed. But embalming evidently did not wholly satisfy the requirements. The body was disfigured and could easily be destroyed; a figure of stone or of wood would be a more durable dwelling, and the larger the number of these figures the greater the chance of the survival of one. Hence in the tombs of the early Egyptian dynasties we find stowed away in recesses in the masonry and carefully walled up for protection numbers of statues in wood and stone, bearing every evidence of being portraits from the life of the men they commemorated, at least in the head and face, — the body generally idealized so far only as to represent it in the prime of life. Few of these figures have found their way to European museums, however, as their discovery is of comparatively recent date; but in the Museum at Gizeh the traveller sees the Egypt of the past rehabilitated: he studies the dress, the forms, the features, and the very expression of the men of thirty centuries before the Christian era, reproduced with no attempt at elegance or flattery, — a blunt, realistic statement of fact.

These figures are colored, so that their reproduction by casts is forbidden. The photographs A and B are taken from one of the most celebrated, — a wooden figure, the *Sheikh-el-beled*, so called. Realism of portraiture could

hardly be carried further. An overseer by occupation, Ra-em-ka stands before us, the embodiment of good-natured contentment. The photograph cannot reproduce the wonderful vividness of the eye, however, which is of white quartz set in bronze, with transparent crystal for the iris, under which a bit of silver is inserted to reflect the light. The feet are a restoration.

Photograph C shows the heads of the statues of Ra-hotep and Princess Nefer-t, his wife, of the time of the IIIrd dynasty, 4000-3700 B. C., — perhaps the earliest known work of sculpture of the human figure.

Photograph D represents the Squatting Scribe of the Louvre.

It may have been to give an epitome of life, or to insure a like perpetuity of existence to his servants and herdsmen and dependents of all kinds, that the walls of the outer chamber of the tomb were covered with reliefs, picturing to the minutest detail the daily life of the Egyptian. (Casts 5 to 16.) This outer chamber, to which the family resorted on stated occasions to bring their offerings of funeral meats, was connected by narrow apertures, a few inches square, with the recesses in which the statues were immured, so that the *ka* could smell the viands and the perfumes offered, or go to the actual presence of his living friends.

Later, other forms of commemorating the dead came into vogue, and comparatively few statues of private citizens are found; but through the long range of dynasties the reigning monarchs are commemorated by statues, often of colossal size, the heads generally intended to be portraits, but with emotionless, impassive faces, — the figures of set, conventional type. The variety of attitude and gesture shown in the reliefs was not attempted in the round, and the vivid portraiture of these early figures was never attained at a subsequent period.

The gods rarely appear until the Middle Empire, and then on the reliefs only. With the exception of the lioness-headed goddess, they are very seldom found of large size in the round. Small bronzes, however, of later date, are numerous.

1. **Statue of King Chephren.** *Khafri*, third king of the IVth dynasty, builder of the second pyramid; 3660 B. C., according to Brugsch-Bey, about 4700 B. C., according to Dr. Wiedemann.

Of diorite. In the Museum at Gizeh. This museum has hitherto been known as that at Boulaq. Found, head down, at the bottom of a well, in one of the chambers of the Temple of the Sphinx. The king's cartouche is cut upon the base.

The statues of the private citizen were thoroughly realistic; here, in the earliest figure of a king that has survived, the artist has aimed at and has succeeded in giving a measure of idealism, a certain majesty of mien befitting the royal dignity. The king holds his head erect, with the air of one born to command; there is no lack of firmness and decision. The legs and arms are not detached from the bulk of the stone; the attitude is stiff and conventional. From this timidity the sculptor in the round never freed himself. This was partly a matter of tradition, perhaps, but due chiefly to the intractable nature of the material used. For the statues of their kings, the Egyptians did not hesitate to attack the most obstinate of stones, — granite, basalt, breccia, — and in this case diorite; yet with his imperfect tools the artist has modelled the muscles of the arm with vigor, has represented with care the details of the articulation of the knees. They were careful at all times to express the anatomy of the figure, even under the dress. Over his head the hawk, emblem of *Ka*, spreads his wings, symbol of divine protection. The arms of the throne end in lion heads; the legs and feet are those of a lion. On the sides, the lotus and papyrus, emblems of Upper and Lower Egypt, are intertwined around the character of Union.

- 2-4. **Three Panels from the Tomb of Hesi.** IIIId to Vth dynasty; 4000 to 3500 B. C.¹

Of sycamore wood. Museum at Gizeh.

The aquiline nose, the prominent cheek-bones, the thin, compressed lips, stern countenance and well-knit, active

¹ The chronology followed is that of Henry Brugsch-Bey.

form of Hosi, unlike the smooth-faced, well fed and easy type of the Old Empire, led Mariette among others to ascribe these reliefs to an earlier date than the statue preceding. It has been argued that they indicate a Semitic origin for the Egyptian race. The hieroglyphics, of unusual form and of peculiar combinations, also indicate an early date. M. Maspero, however, places them in the Vth dynasty. The figures are in profile, — rarely in early art does an artist hazard a front view. They exhibit the first instance of that peculiar idiosyncrasy of early art that continues through its long history in Egypt: while the face is given in profile, the eye is in full front; the chest and shoulders are in front view while the legs and feet are in profile, — the artist choosing that position of each member that most impresses itself upon the memory. The execution of the figures and the hieroglyphics (note especially the animal heads) is admirable. For firmness of hand and subtlety of modelling, these are masterpieces of wood-carving.

5-16. Reliefs from the Tomb of Ti. Vth dynasty;
about 3500 B. C.

Of limestone. From the walls of a tomb at Sakkarah.

No better example could be given of the Egyptian artist's love for animal life, and his interest in depicting it, or of his accuracy of observation, than these scenes of the herding of cattle, antelopes, asses, storks and geese; of the driving home of the cattle during the inundation, the herdsman bearing the calf on his shoulders; of loading asses and hoeing the fields. Note especially No. 10, the milking the cows with the calves tied out to tufts of halfa grass. The walls of the tomb are covered with scenes of boat-building, harvesting, hunting, etc. Among them is cut a procession of women (Nos. 15 and 16), each bearing fruits, cakes and gifts, the products of the estates or farms of Ti.

Note the very low reliefs, — on some of the slabs not one eighth of an inch, — and the extreme delicacy of the work. They were executed when art was most natural,

least conventional. Similar reliefs are found in many tombs of Sakkarah and its neighborhood (from which the squeezes on the wall above were taken), down to about the middle of the VIth dynasty; then succeeds a period of which we know little, either of the art or history of the nation, until under the XIth and XIIth dynasties comes a revival.

17. Seated figure of Betmes; a functionary of one of the early dynasties.

Of syenite. In the British Museum.

A rude specimen for the period, yet of marked and pleasing individuality.

18. Funeral Stele of Entef. XIIth dynasty; about 2430 B. C.

Of limestone. Museum at Gizeh.

Entef is seated by his wife. His eldest son leads the procession of children and relatives, bringing funeral offerings, meats, birds, bread, flowers, perfumes, etc. Lower down the servants bring animals for sacrifice. The attitudes, seated or standing, are the same as in the Old Empire, but proportions are changing; the legs are longer, hips narrower, body more slender and flexible. The stele is dated, at the top, in the 30th year of Amenoph I, *Amenemha*, and the 10th of Usertesen, an associate upon the throne of his father.

Funeral steles are found at all periods of Egyptian art. Their essential service was to record the name of the deceased, and a prayer to some god that he would supply provisions and all things needed for the support of the *ka* or "double" of the dead. It will be noted, however, that we have as yet no representation of the gods. Later, they are invariably present.

In the XIIth dynasty, the same domestic scenes are upon the walls of the tombs, but painting has taken the place of the low relief of the Old Empire.