

TWO STATUE GROUPS OF THE V DYNASTY

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In accordance with its policy of rounding out its collection of the art of the Old Kingdom, the Museum has recently purchased two statues at present on exhibition in the vestibule in front of the tomb of Per-nēb, with which they are roughly contemporary. These statues were made to be placed in the statue chambers, or *sirdābs*, of tombs like that of Per-nēb, and their owners, like Per-nēb himself, were officials in the service of the pharaoh. The statues are similar in size, both are of painted limestone, and both date from the second half of the V Dynasty. One portrays a certain Demedj and his wife, and the other Ny-ku-Rē^c and his wife and daughter.

Of the two men, Demedj had the more interesting titles and probably occupied the more important position at court. He was the first Supervisor of the Necropolis of whom we know—although the title was not uncommon in the later periods of Egyptian history—and he held the related office of Supervisor of Royal Works. His third title may perhaps be rendered Supervisor of Transportation. He was the Steward of the King's Storehouses, another very rare title, and Controller of Cattle.

The statue, however, was not carved for Demedj himself but by order of his son, who gave his own name precedence. Down the right of the block on which Demedj is seated we read, "It was his son, the Judge and Administrator, the Great One of the Southern Tens, the One Who Knows the Secret [*i.e.*, Privy Councilor], the Supervisor of Fowl Yards. Thiy, who made it for"—then, at the left, the name and titles of Demedj himself.

It may appear irrelevant to begin a discussion of the statue by listing the offices held by these two men, but as a matter of fact the most direct way to identify such a family—when an antiquity comes to us with no history—is by

the offices the members held. The names of Demedj and in particular of Thiy were common during the Old Kingdom, as was that of the wife of Demedj, Henwetsen, who stands at the right. The style of the figures indicates that they were made during the second half of the V Dynasty. Therefore we must consider the men called Demedj or Thiy already known to us who lived during the V Dynasty and who had similar titles.

It so happens that the eldest son of the Thiy whose magnificent tomb is well known to all visitors to Saḳḳāreh was called Demedj. As the eldest son was regularly named for his grandfather we may infer that Thiy's own father was also a Demedj, although neither of his parents is mentioned in his tomb. This Thiy's offices were so multifarious that it is hard to sort out which actually had practical duties attached to them and which were sinecures. He himself always emphasized those which brought him into personal contact with the pharaoh, and his own favorite was the simple one of "Sole Companion [of the pharaoh]." However, high up on the list come three possessed by Thiy, the son of our Demedj: "Supervisor of Fowl Yards," "Judge and Administrator," and "The One Who Knows the Secret" (made explicit by the addition of "in the House of the Morning," or the like). Only "Great One of the Southern Tens" (an ancient office connected with the administration of Upper Egypt) does not appear.

As to the titles of our Demedj which his son might have been expected to inherit in due course, Thiy's position of Supervisor of specified pyramids and sun temples of V Dynasty pharaohs—which to us would seem his most important offices—might perhaps be taken to include the first three. The Saḳḳāreh Thiy was not a Steward of the Royal Storehouses; and



The Supervisor of the Necropolis, Demedj, and his wife, Henwetsen. Egyptian, V Dynasty, 2500-2420 B.C. Painted limestone. Height 32½ inches. Rogers Fund, 1951

he was a Supervisor, rather than a Controller, of Cattle.

The son of this Thiy, Demedj, was like both Thiys a Supervisor of Fowl Yards—his only office when his father's tomb was made. Moreover, the wife of Thiy of Saḳḳāreh had the same epithets as Henwetsen, the wife of our Demedj. Each lady claimed to be the Relative of the King, Priestess of Neit, and Revered by the Great God, in that order. These are all usual enough titles in themselves for ladies of the nobility, but taken in conjunction with the names and positions common to our Demedj and his son Thiy, and to Thiy of Saḳḳāreh and his son Demedj, we may perhaps be permitted to wonder if the two men called Thiy were not identical.

The tomb of Thiy of Saḳḳāreh was a family burying place, and fragments of two statues of a Supervisor of Fowl Yards, Demedj, in the Cairo Museum probably came from one of its statue chambers and represent Thiy's son, who cannot have occupied the same position at court as Thiy himself had done—at least at the time when the tomb was made. The same was evidently true of Thiy's father, as his son did not trouble to honor him either by mentioning him in the inscriptions in his tomb or, if we believe that the two Thiys were one and the same, by allowing his name to come first on his own statue.

It is tempting to try to seek a family likeness between our statue of Demedj and the famous, life-sized portrait of Thiy in the Cairo Museum. That there is such a likeness is undeniable, but a similarity of treatment is to be expected in two statues of the same date and from the same vicinity. Thiy's features are somewhat sharper and his figure more slender. Both men have the prominent eyes, nose with well-defined bridge, mouth with wide corners, and full chin which were admired at the period. Demedj's statue appeals by reason of the impression of solidity and forcefulness it conveys. It is made more attractive by the inclusion of the graceful little Henwetsen, who stands dutifully a little behind her husband.

The wigs, the details of the eyes, and the base were once black, and the flesh of Demedj

red. There are now no traces of any other color, but the flesh of Henwetsen must have been a soft yellow, and presumably the linen costumes were once painted white over the cream-colored limestone.

Embellished with these pigments to imitate life as closely as possible, the statue was completed about 2500 B.C. and shut away in its *sirdāb*, where the souls of Demedj and his wife could visit it throughout eternity. It is perhaps happy in having had no history. This was not the fate in store for our second portrait.

According to the story current among the dealers in antiquities of Cairo, the tomb of Ny-ku-Rē^c was discovered by C. M. Firth during his excavations at Saḳḳāreh on behalf of the Egyptian government. Unpublished objects from this tomb and others were stored in a magazine, the contents of which were sold in the early nineteen-thirties, after the death of Firth. There seems little reason to doubt this story, which was reported by several sources. If it is true, the tomb was perhaps one referred to in Firth's preliminary report of the season 1925-1926: "A considerable area was cleared south of the southern Temenos wall in order to provide a place to deposit the rubbish taken from the Step Pyramid enclosure. Several Mastabas of the fifth and sixth dynasties were found here. In one tomb, that of Mitry, was found an untouched *serdab* containing eleven wooden statues of the early fifth dynasty." (By coincidence five of the statues of Mitry are now in our collection, having been purchased from the Egyptian government in 1926.) As Firth was excavating the "colonnade" at the time, the "considerable area" was apparently situated conveniently near the eastern corner of the enclosure wall.

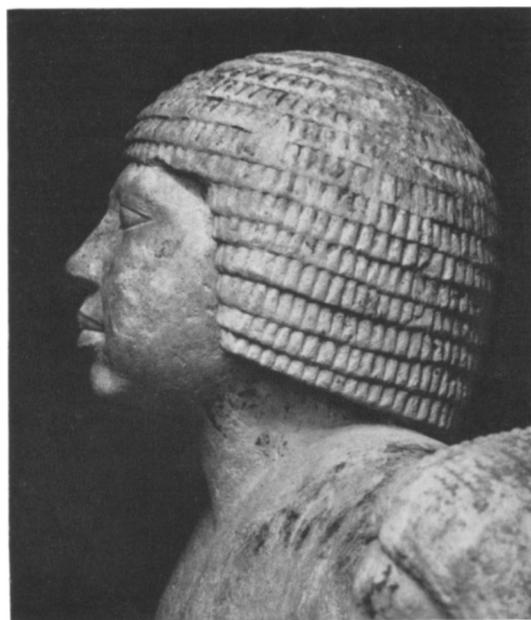
A number of objects from the tomb of Ny-ku-Rē^c eventually appeared on the market. This is the second statue of him which the Museum has acquired, a red granite figure representing him as a scribe having been added to our collection in 1948. The Brooklyn Museum has recently purchased a striking limestone group of Ny-ku-Rē^c with his wife and son, while at least one other granite figure is in the hands of a dealer. Other objects are

said to be “in Germany,” while a number of inscribed blocks from the false door of the tomb are also known. Our own statues were once in the collection of Moïse Levi de Benzion, who acquired them shortly before the war, taking the limestone group to Paris. In 1940 it was seized by the German army of occupation, and in 1942 or 1943 Benzion died in unhappy circumstances. Shortly after the war his collection was returned to Madame de Benzion, by whom it was sold in 1947.

We have already said that both our groups are to be placed after the middle of the V Dynasty, when, for the first time, figures of this size, of a good quality, became available to the Egyptian of moderate means. As pointed out by William Stevenson Smith, this was undoubtedly due to the fact that the great army of sculptors necessary for the works of the pharaohs of the IV Dynasty was now released from royal service and glad to undertake commissions for private persons. Family groups were no longer made during the VI Dynasty, so it follows that the figures must date from about 2500-2420 B.C.

Fortunately, in the case of the Ny-ku-Rē^c group we have corroborative evidence of this. Among the titles enumerated in Ny-ku-Rē^c's tomb and still preserved among the inscribed blocks mentioned above are those of “Priest of Rē^c in the Temple ‘Happy-Is-the-Heart-of-Rē^c [the sun temple of Ny-woser-Rē^c],” and “Priest of Ny-woser-Rē^c” himself. This king, the sixth of the V Dynasty, began his reign at about 2515 B.C. and ruled for something over thirty years. Many of the nobles of the later Old Kingdom were connected with his sun temple; the Thiy of the Saḳḳāreh tomb was its Supervisor. Ny-ku-Rē^c's title of Priest of Rē^c there takes us back to about 2500 B.C. as the earliest date for this tomb, and although the statues may well have been made before the reliefs were carved, it could only have been by a few years at most.

Ny-ku-Rē^c's titles as a whole are even more resounding than those of Demedj, though whether or not they imply a position of greater responsibility is open to doubt. Over the false door of the tomb is carved: “The Great One



Head of Demedj, detail of the statue group illustrated on page 117

of the Southern Tens.” From this door we learn that he was also the Supervisor of various royal fowl yards and stables, Supervisor of the “houses of the royal children,” of “all hinterland waters,” of “all huntsmen,” and of “all beekeepers.” As well as having priestly duties in connection with Ny-woser-Rē^c and his temple, he was a priest of the deceased King Saḳu-Rē^c.

Ny-ku-Rē^c's chief offices, however, had to do with the royal granary, but unfortunately we cannot be sure of his exact position in its administration. The inscription already quoted begins with an ambiguity. He was either “The Scribe *and* Supervisor of the Granary” or “The Secretary *of the* Supervisor”—rather a difference of rank. He was certainly “Supervisor of the Scribes of the Granary” and “Foreman of the Granary”—the distinction between a supervisor (*imy-r*) and foreman (*hry-tp*) apparently being that the former was the nominal head and the latter the man on the spot. Ny-ku-Rē^c's son, however, is definitely stated in this inscription to have been a “Supervisor of the Granary.”

The statues confirm our feeling that the



The Inspector of the Scribes of the Granary, Ny-ku-Rē, with his wife and son. Egyptian, V Dynasty. Painted limestone. Height 225/8 inches. This triad is in the Brooklyn Museum.

granary titles are the ones which count. This is not surprising in an agricultural country where enormous storehouses were necessary for the taxes paid in kind to the central government. The two granite figures call Ny-ku-Rē the "Foreman of the Granary" and nothing more. His only title on the Brooklyn group is "Inspector of the Scribes of the Granary," and here his son numbers among the latter. Our new statue is not of much help in determining his exact position as there is a break at the beginning of the inscription, which now reads, ". . . the Scribe(s?) of the Granary." This, however, was most probably preceded by "Inspector of," to judge by the available space and by the fact that our statue and that of Brooklyn seem to have been made at the same period of Ny-ku-Rē's life, so that his position in the administration of the granary would be the same in both cases.

We have already said that Ny-ku-Rē's sta-

tues may antedate the reliefs from his tomb, and this seems probable to the present writer. The Egyptian liked to have the tomb itself prepared during his lifetime, ready for his decease, and often years of labor must have gone into its making. The figures which were to be sealed up in the *sirdāb* must normally have been finished before the walls of that room were completed—although in an emergency they could doubtless have been lowered from above, just before the ceiling blocks were placed in position. Moreover, we do know that these likenesses—so necessary as a home for the soul—were on occasion prepared as a safeguard long in advance. To mention only one case (illustrated in our own collection), the nurse Sit-nofru took the sensible precaution of having a proper Egyptian portrait of herself made before she left home for faraway Asia Minor, whence, as she apparently feared, she was never to return. It seems likely that at a comparatively early stage of Ny-ku-Rē's career he found himself possessed of sufficient funds to order two handsome statues of himself and his family, much as he would take out insurance were he living today. One was to show him with his wife, Kuy-ny-Nub, and his small son, whose name was 'Ankhy-ma'-Rē. The other, now ours, was to show him with his wife and little girl, Kuy-ny-Nebty. Ny-ku-Rē was an "Inspector of Scribes" when the statues were carved. Later he became "Foreman of the Granary"—presumably with an increase in salary—and to celebrate the event he ordered further figures, this time of himself alone and in a more costly stone, granite. Finally, when the moment came to order the inscriptions for his tomb, he was able to do so as a "Great One of the Southern Tens." This seems a more likely course of events than that Ny-ku-Rē, when he had attained to some eminence, would have commemorated a stage in his career which he had left behind.

The two statue groups are of more delicate workmanship and altogether more arresting than the figures in the more pretentious granite. Ours is remarkably well preserved, although little of the original paint remains. Like the statue of Demedj, it was once painted



*Ny-ku-Rē with his wife and daughter. Egyptian, V Dynasty.
Painted limestone. Height 22½ inches. Rogers Fund, 1952*

red, yellow, white, and black, as was the group in the Brooklyn Museum. In both groups the red or yellow, as the case might be, covered the entire faces, and only in the case of the little boy are there any signs of the eyes having been enhanced with black.

Ny-ku-Rē^c's features are of the same type as those of Demedj, although the eyes are closer together, but the ridges of the eyebrows, the rims around the eyes, and the edges of the lips are all more accentuated and harder. The tiny features of the wife and daughter are also sharply defined.

Kuy-ny-Nubsquats at her husband's feet, a position which in itself marks the group as having come from Saḳḳā-reh. She is shown with a round, placid face, just as the Brooklyn triad shows her, so that we must wonder if this is not an attempt at real portraiture. In both groups she is portrayed with a style of coiffure all her own, the heavy wig parted in the middle and drawn back to show bangs of her own hair arranged in horizontal waves which end in tiny curls. Her feet are drawn up to one side, one arm rests on her lap, and the other embraces her husband's leg. The little girl, Kuy-ny-Nepty, also embraces her father. In neither case is the hand of the encircling arm shown, as it almost invariably is in Egyptian group statues, even when the arm must be abnormally elongated to do so. Kuy-ny-Nepty's hair is cut in straight bangs in front. Behind it is in a heavy pigtail which is turned up over the block on which her father is seated.



Kuy-ny-Nub, wife of Ny-ku-Rē^c, detail of the statue group shown on page 121

The Brooklyn triad is unusual in that all three heads are on much the same level, although, as Ny-ku-Rē^c is seated, he is in reality much larger in scale than his wife and son. Our group is of a more orthodox design, yet the two small figures give an impression of genuine affection. Taken together these two groups show us an Egyptian family of the Old Kingdom, happy to be portrayed together for all eternity.

For a complete account of the art of the V Dynasty, see William Stevenson Smith, Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom. The triad of Ny-ku-Rē^c in the Brooklyn Museum has been published by John D. Cooney in the Bulletin

of the Brooklyn Museum, vol. XIII, no. 3 (Spring, 1952). For the granite figure of Ny-ku-Rē^c in this Museum see the Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1948, p. 61. C. M. Firth's brief account of his discovery of the tomb of Mitry, and perhaps of Ny-ku-Rē^c, is to be found in the Annales of the Services des Antiquités of Cairo, vol. XXVI (1926), p. 101. The accession number of Sit-nofru's statue is 18.2.2.

The names of the family of Ny-ku-Rē^c are all in the form of short sentences. Ny-ku-Rē^c is to be translated "The Possessor of Souls is Rē^c." The name of his wife, Ny-ku-Nub, is "My Soul Belongs to the Golden One (Ḥat-Ḥor)." The daughter's name means "My Soul Belongs to the King," and the little boy's, "My Life is in the Hand of Rē^c."