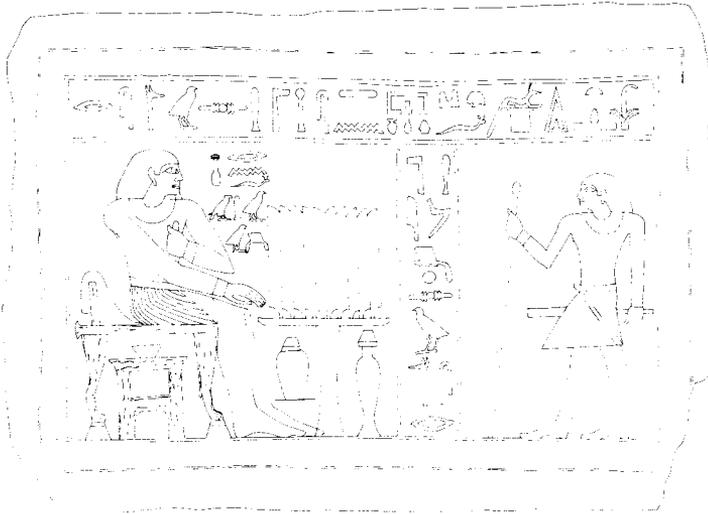




The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER No. 19

June 1986



A stela from Akhmim, similar to those made by Seni,
now in Edinburgh Museum

SENI'S PARENTS AT THE LOUVRE MUSEUM

During the period 1888-89 the monuments of El-Hawawish and the surrounding areas were laid waste by tomb robbers. Immediately after this the areas were haphazardly excavated and Akhmim became one of the most flourishing antiquities markets in Egypt.

With the intention of publishing a complete corpus of material from the province of Akhmim; a circular letter was sent to museums world wide enquiring about any monuments from the site, which might be in their possession. The response was overwhelming; numerous stelae, architraves, statues, statuettes, coffins etc. were brought to our attention and are now being studied alongside the tombs discovered on the mountain of El-Hawawish, the cemetery of Akhmim. The purpose is to establish a history of the province during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and some of the monuments have proved extremely valuable, providing missing links in the family relationships of the owners of some tombs on the mountain.

Among other things purchased by the Louvre Museum in 1889 were two stelae. The inscriptions indicate that these stelae were made by the artist Seni for his father "Nebi" and his mother "Hetepet".

Members will recall that Seni was responsible for the beautifully decorated tombs of Tjeti-Iker and Kheni (now numbered H24 and H26) at El-Hawawish. The discovery of Seni's biography in these tombs was exciting and very important as inscriptions belonging to artists of ancient Egypt are extremely rare. The Foundation uses the figure of Seni and his biography as its logo on the letterheads and the Newsletter.

The stelae of Seni's parents were placed in the stores of the Louvre Museum since they belonged to unknown people. Our publication of Seni's work has no doubt heightened his importance as a celebrity artist. The two stelae of Seni's parents represent the only work of this artist, presently known outside the mountain of El-Hawawish. With this unexpected value given to the two stelae, there can be little doubt that they will be placed on exhibition at the Louvre in the near future.

Tomb stelae are similar to our gravestones and were usually placed above the shaft leading to the burial chamber. They showed a figure of the owner and detailed his/her titles. Many of the stelae will be published in Vol. VI of "The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish".

"A Soiree of Antiquities & Music"

will be held at the Lane Galleries, 46 Oxford St., Paddington
on THURSDAY 19 JUNE, 1986 from 6.30 p.m. - 8.30 p.m.

Mr. Peter Lane has opened his gallery for the benefit of the Foundation. Members and their friends may partake of soup and sherry, examine the antiquities and listen to music (see enclosed Invitation)

A PUBLIC LECTURE

"Memphis & Balat: Recent Settlement Archaeology in Egypt"

will be given by Dr. Lisa Giddy, in PRICE THEATRE, Macquarie University, on WEDNESDAY 2 July, 1986, at 8 p.m.

Dr. Lisa Giddy studied at the University of Sydney and University College, London. From 1977-1982 she was Pensionnaire at the French Institute of Archaeology in Cairo, where she excavated at Balat in the Egyptian Oasis. She also worked with Egypt Exploration Society (London) at both Saqqara and Memphis. Dr. Giddy has contributed a number of articles to learned journals.

Tickets \$3; Members and Students \$2,
from Miss Joan Beck, School of History, Macquarie University, North Ryde 2113 (88 9091).

SENMUT, ADMINISTRATOR AND ARCHITECT

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ted Ling



The XVIIIth Dynasty reign of Hatshepsut (1473-1458 B.C.) was unusual in that it saw the coronation of a female pharaoh. During her reign a number of high officials rose to prominence and the most illustrious of these was Senenmut. He is known primarily as the architect of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari, a three level edifice which even today inspires the imagination with its grandeur and the manner by which it complements the surrounding hills. Yet Senenmut was involved in much more than this.

Senenmut's early background is mostly unknown. He was born of undistinguished parents. His father, Ramose, was a soldier, who at the completion of his military service retired to work the fields. His mother, Hetnefert, had only the title "mistress of the house" to honour her name. There were seven children in the family; five boys, (Senenmut, Amenemhet, Pairi, Minhotep, and Senmen), and two girls, (Nefeter and Ah-hotep). Apart from Senenmut, only Senmen was to achieve any prominence, being involved in the education of the princess Neferure.

Given Senenmut's strong predilection for Armant, a town located within the Theban district, it appears that the family may

have originated from that area. Although to our knowledge he never married, Senenmut took it upon himself to attend to the burial arrangements for his parents and they were interred near the first of his own tombs at Sheikh Abd el Kurna.

Precisely when, and in what capacity, Senenmut entered the civil administration is not known. From the reliefs of his tomb at Kurna it appears likely that Senenmut was himself a soldier, possibly during the wars of Amenophis I. He then retired and joined the administration of Tuthmosis II, and was employed in the royal treasury. It would have been at this time that he would have come to the attention of Hatshepsut, who was then married to Tuthmosis II.

Despite his humble beginning Senenmut was to rise rapidly during Hatshepsut's reign. In time he would accumulate respect and prominence. Although he never held the position of vizier (that honour belonged to Hapuseneb), from his lengthy titulary it would appear his status rivalled that of the vizier - supposedly the highest position within the civil administration. Not the least of his titles was his appointment as guardian to the infant princess Neferure, herself heiress to the throne. This is surely a mark of great honour and shows the high esteem in which Senenmut was held.

Senenmut left a valuable legacy in the form of historical inscriptions found generally on his statues, in which he proudly proclaims his status, and lists many of his titles. At least 23 statues (and additional fragments) are presently known, and in seven of these he is depicted holding the princess Neferure. Such a large number of statues for a non-royal person is indeed testament to Senenmut's prominence within Hatshepsut's administration.

On a statue from the Karnak temple of Mut (now held in the British Museum) there is reference to Senenmut's many titles and epithets of honour, and there is also a note as to the location of his many building works. His numerous titles included:

Steward of Amun,
Master of the palace,
Overseer of the cattle of Amun,
Overseer of the storehouse of Amun,
Overseer of the gardens of Amun,
Overseer of all works in the house of silver,
Chief of the peasant serfs.

Lest we be in any doubt as to his prominence he tells us "I was the greatest of the great in the whole land", and boasts that he was "a real favourite of the king" (i.e. Hatshepsut). Even taking into account the typical bombastic nature of such Egyptian phraseology it is still a very powerful statement by Senenmut, and certainly reflects his stature.

By far the most significant event of which we are informed in Hatshepsut's time was the organisation of an expedition to Punt which took place in the ninth year of her reign. Precisely where Punt was located has been the subject of much debate, with the generally favoured area being the coast of Somalia.

As overseer of Amun's storehouse Senenmut would have been prominent in this expedition which was highly successful and returned to Egypt laden with treasures, including myrrh trees, ebony, ivory, cinnamon wood, apes, monkeys, dogs, and of course natives. "Never was brought the like of this for any king who has been since the beginning", we are modestly told by Senenmut.

Scenes of the Punt expedition are shown on Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, on the southern half of the middle terrace. They illustrate vessels departing Egypt and returning, the reception in Punt (with the chief and his wife, the latter depicted quite grotesquely), and the presentation of tribute to Hatshepsut at the end of the expedition.

During her reign Hatshepsut commanded that two pairs of obelisks be erected within the Karnak temple complex. These obelisks were cut from the granite quarries at Aswan. Senenmut was placed in charge of quarrying at least two of these obelisks, as he recounts in an inscription engraved on the rocks at Aswan. The scene depicts him facing Hatshepsut and the inscription records "the coming of the hereditary prince, count ... Senenmut, in order to conduct the work of the two great obelisks of a 'Myrian of Years' (a religious feast). It took place according to "all that which was commanded to be done."

In order to appreciate the magnitude of such an undertaking we have only to examine the scene depicted on the lower colonnade of the west wall at Deir el-Bahari. This scene depicts the transportation of two obelisks; and a text records that the quarrying and transportation from Aswan to Thebes was completed in seven months. Given that a solid granite obelisk could be over 30 metres in height, and weigh up to 1000 tonnes, it was certainly a major engineering feat which Senenmut undertook on behalf of his monarch.

Senenmut's career reached its peak with the design and construction of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari. The primary purpose of such a temple was to perpetuate the worship of (and presentation of offerings for), the dead king. The body was not buried within the temple, but elsewhere.

Hatshepsut's temple was modelled on that of Mentuhotep located nearby; however, it was built on a much grander scale. Its basic design consists of three terraces, the lower two supported by columns. Two ramps in the centre of the complex connect the

terraces. The entire construction blends with the surrounding hillside, and this is no doubt due to the skills of the architect.

Throughout the temple Senenmut arranged for the placement of numerous small statues of himself (depicted as praying to Amun), located behind the folding doors of chapels and in small niches. These generally would not have been observed by visitors. It is a sign of Senenmut's prominence within the royal court that he was given approval to place his own statues inside a monarch's temple, although it has been argued that Senenmut went far beyond his authority with the number and placement of these statues.

Such was Senenmut's status that he was presumably given permission by Hatshepsut to construct two tombs for himself. One was at Sheikh Abd el Kurna (the site of many other tombs of nobles). The tomb is badly damaged and only a few reliefs now survive. Senenmut's second tomb was at Deir el-Bahari in front of Hatshepsut's temple; in fact, the main entrance corridor, which extends 100 metres, actually reaches underneath the first court of this temple. For his tomb to be located within the precincts of a royal temple demonstrates more than in any other instance the prominence of Senenmut.

Although Senenmut seemingly had climbed to the peak of his power and influence this was in fact deceptive. His first setback occurred in the tenth year of Hatshepsut's reign when the princess Neferure died, and several of his titles were thus eliminated. Some time, however, after year 16 Senenmut fell dramatically from power. Precisely when or why this occurred is not known. The evidence comes from many of his statues and the reliefs within his tombs where his name and face have been deliberately chiselled out.

It has been conjectured that he overreached himself by his impudence in placing his many statues within Hatshepsut's temple complex, without the full knowledge of the king. An alternative suggestion is that Senenmut observed the rising power of the future Tuthmosis III and realised that Hatshepsut's time as a monarch was coming to an end. He therefore attempted to ingratiate himself with the prince and perhaps when Hatshepsut learned of this, she punished him accordingly.

These suggestions are of course pure conjecture and we may never fully learn what were the reasons which brought the career of this brilliant architect and administrator to an end.

Translations of several of the inscriptions of Senenmut are given in James H. Breasted's "Ancient Records of Egypt". A brief description of his career is provided in T.G.H. James' "Pharaoh's People" and Sir Alan Gardiner's "Egypt of the Pharaohs". A highly entertaining, albeit fictional, account of Senenmut's rise to prominence and his relationship with Hatshepsut will be found in the novel by Pauline Gedge "Child of the Morning".

ANCIENT HISTORY REUNION DINNER

GUEST OF HONOURAssoc. Professor B.F. Harris
(who retires in July)

7.45 p.m. FRIDAY 11 July, 1986

Function Rooms 1 to 3, Level 4, Macquarie University Union

Preceded by A PUBLIC LECTURE ... "The koinonia of marriage in
classical Athens", by Dr. Elizabeth Craik
at 6.15 p.m. in PRICE THEATRE

Cost: \$20 per head (reservation form enclosed).
Reservations required by FRIDAY 4 July,
to Mrs. P. Geidans, School of History,
Macquarie University, North Ryde.
88.9762

Please make cheques out to "ANCIENT HISTORY REUNION DINNER"

A PUBLIC LECTURE"Buried Cities of the Egyptian Sahara"

will be given by Dr Colin Hope, on TUESDAY 23 September, 1986
in W5A T2, Macquarie University, at 8 p.m.

Coffee and biscuits will be served after the lecture.

Tickets \$3; Members & Students \$2.

Tickets & Enquiries: Miss Joan Beck (88 9091)

COURSE IN PROGRESS

On FRIDAY 30 May, an "Advanced Hieroglyphs" course was
commenced with 16 students participating. This course is available to
all students who have completed any Introductory Course in
Hieroglyphs. Enquiries Miss Joan Beck.

COURSES COMPLETED

For the fourth year, "An Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs" was
held with an enrolment of 21, most of whom completed the course.

"An Introduction to Ancient Egypt" was held on 12-13 April, and was
attended by 45 persons.

The week-end course "Life and Death in Ancient Egypt" was held for
the second year on 17-18 May. Teachers and students from Sydney
and country schools were given the opportunity of hearing lectures
relating to the H.S.C. syllabus and entering into discussion regarding
the lectures.



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