



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

Aging Signs on Some Male Statues of the Old and Middle kingdoms

علامات تقدم السن علي بعض تماثيل الرجال في
الدولتين القديمة والوسطى

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المخلص:

يُعتبر الفن المصرى القديم من أهم مصادر المعرفة عن الحضارة المصرية، فقد أمدتنا المناظر المصورة على جدران المقابر والمعابد وكذلك العدد الكبير من الآثار المنقولة بالمعلومات الوفيرة عن هذه الحضارة. ويتميز هذا الفن بأسلوبه وطرازه الفريد وكذلك بالعدد الكبير من التماثيل التى نحتت على مدار التاريخ.

فقد صنعت التماثيل المصرية للأبدية، ووضع عدد كبير منها فى المعابد والمقابر، سواء تماثيل ملوك أو آلهة أو صفوة الموظفين. ولم تكن مجرد أعمال فنية لأن الغرض منها فى الأساس لتسكنها الروح وتتحد معها مرة أخرى فى العالم الآخر، لذلك يجب أن تكون سهلة التعرف عليها. كان ينظر للنحات أنه خالق، أو الذى يمنح الحياة، حيث أنه يصنع التمثال ويعده للحياة الأبدية فى العالم الآخر. لذا لم تكن التماثيل التى تحمل علامات تقدم السن شائعة فى الفن المصرى القديم، فقد كان هدف كل إنسان خلق صورة مثالية له، أملا أن يصل للأبدية بملامح جميلة، وجسم شاب ومتناسق. كما صور الرجال فى مراحل عمرية مختلفة، سواء فى مقتبل العمر أو منتصفه أو كبيراً فى السن، أما بالنسبة للنساء فكان تصويرهم فى سن متقدم نادرا.

يهدف البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على علامات تقدم السن التي ظهرت على بعض تماثيل الرجال في الدولة القديمة والوسطى.
الكلمات الدالة:

النحت، علامات تقدم السن، رجال، دولة قديمة ووسطى.

Abstract

Ancient Egyptian art is one of the most important sources of understanding the Egyptian civilization, the tombs and temples wall scenes and the large number of objects provided a rich source of information. This art is distinguished by its unique style and conventions, and characterized by the large number of statuary produced all along the history.

Egyptian sculpture was created for eternity. A large number of statues were placed in temples and tombs, either for the kings, for the gods or for the elite officials. They were not just works of art, but were meant to provide a physical body and had to be recognizable and appropriate to the being that was meant to manifest in it. Sculptors were looked at as creators, or the ones that give life, as they make a statue and prepare it to live again in the afterlife.

Sculptures with aging signs were not common in the ancient Egyptian art. Creating an ideal image of the person was the aim of every human, hoping to reach eternity with beautiful facial features, youthful body and harmonious proportions. Men can be depicted at different stages of their lives, either young, middle-age or old, whereas older women statues are rare. This paper aims at highlighting

the aging signs that appeared on some male statues of the Old and Middle Kingdoms.

Keywords

Sculpture, aging signs, male, Old and Middle Kingdoms

Introduction

Ancient Egyptian art was used to express the religious and cultural beliefs; the main concern was to create an eternal life after death. However, the official houses were richly decorated as the private tombs, and the royal palaces were shining as the divine temples¹.

Sculpture is one of the most significant forms of the Egyptian art. Ancient Egyptian sculptors created statues for deities, kings, officials and members of their families². They were made to replace the deceased and to enable the housing of the spirit. Accordingly, they had to be recognizable. This was guaranteed, on the one hand, by the "perfected likeness" between the statue and its owner, and on the other hand, by inscribing the name of the person to be easily identified³. As the statue was considered the eternal house of the soul, the deceased appeared usually in the prime of his life, with the ideal young and fit body, with a face clear from lines and

¹ M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian, *The Egyptian Museum Cairo. Official Catalogue* (Mainz, 1978), 18.

² P. A. Kozloff, Sculpture: an Overview, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. VI. III (Cairo, 2003), 218; M. Hartwig, *Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Boston & Oxford, 2015), 191.

³ Kozloff, 2003, 219.

wrinkles⁴. Thus, "idealization" is one of the most important aspects of the ancient Egyptian sculpture⁵.

To remain young and beautiful was the desire of the ancient Egyptians, especially women⁶. Being depicted with full youth, energy and beauty was one of the conventions of the Egyptian art, hoping to reach the afterlife with that perfect image. Hence, depicting people with aging features was not common. Aging male representations were more frequent than women⁷. Women aging signs differ from those of men; old women were mainly depicted with sagging breasts and white hair, while old men had generally facial wrinkles and fat folds on the stomach⁸.

Old Kingdom statuary is known for its idealistic modeling⁹. Although royal statues from that period are rare¹⁰, the seated statue of king Khafre in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 14, represents the ideal iconography of Old Kingdom monarchs¹¹. It is considered to be one of the masterpieces of the Egyptian sculpture due to the

⁴ M. Hartwig, *Sculpture, A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Wiley, 2015), 192.

⁵ J. Baines, *What is Art? A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Boston & Oxford, 2015), 10.

⁶ C. Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2010), 69; Baines, 2015, 10.

⁷ D. Sweeney, *Forever Young? The Representation of Older and Ageing Women in Ancient Egyptian Art*, *JARCE XLI* (Cairo, 2004), 67; Graves-Brown, 2010, 69.

⁸ Graves-Brown, 2010, 70.

⁹ Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, 21.

¹⁰ C. Aldred, *Some Royal Portraits of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt*, *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (New York, 1970), 27.

¹¹ Hartwig, 2015, 197.

excellent polish and modeling, and to the powerful young body with prominent arms and torso muscles¹². Royal statuary of the Middle Kingdom is one of the glorious sculptures of the Egyptian art; it is distinguished by the realistic style of royal portraits¹³. There were three main artistic schools of the 12th Dynasty: the idealistic school represented in the statues of kings Amenemhat I and Senusert I where the face and the body are shown with immortal youth. Then, the classical school that lies between the idealistic and the realistic one, the portraits are individualized but still with no wrinkles, as in the statues of Senusert II and Amenemhat II¹⁴. A new royal sculptural style was introduced during the reigns of Senusert III and Amenemhat III; this was the realistic school, where the statues show deep realism with the facial wrinkles and tiredness¹⁵.

This research aims at shedding light on the aging signs that appeared on some male statues of the Old and Middle Kingdoms. It starts with an introduction about the ancient Egyptian sculpture, followed by displaying objects from the Old Kingdom, then the Middle Kingdom, to detect and examine the various signs of aging on these statues and their interpretations.

Archaeological Evidence from the Old Kingdom:

¹² Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 31, A. El-Shahawy, *The Egyptian Museum in Cairo. A Walk through the Alleys of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, 2005), no. 25.

¹³ Aldred, 1970, 27; Hartwig, 2015, 200.

¹⁴ J. Vandier, *Manuel d'Archéologie Egyptienne*. Tome III (Paris, 1958), 261-268.

¹⁵ Hartwig, 2015, p. 200

The earliest known artistic depiction of an old figure is the ideogram , representing a "bent man leaning on a stick"¹⁶, it was used in the ancient Egyptian language to indicate old age or to grow old. There are some words that were used to express the old age or getting old,    or  *i3w* meaning old or *i3wi* old man and     *i3yt*, old woman. Old age, to be aged, to attain old age or to be old is *i3wy* or *i3wt*¹⁷. It is also used as a determinative in the word    *smsw*, meaning elder or eldest¹⁸. Other words are also used as   *tnti* meaning to be old¹⁹

¹⁶ A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford, 1957), 444

¹⁷ Gardiner, 1957, 444; R. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford, 1964), 8, Erman, A. and Grapow, H. *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache*. Band I (Berlin, 1971), 28-29.

¹⁸ Gardiner, 1957, 550; Faulkner, 1964, 229; Wb IV, 1971, 142-143

¹⁹ Gardiner, 1957, 444; Faulkner, 1964, 299; Wb V, 1971, 311.

Statue of king Djoser²⁰ : (fig. 1)²¹

- The 3rd Dynasty, the funerary complex of the king at Saqqara, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, JE 49158.

Description: The king is represented seated on his throne, wearing the *nms* headdress and enveloped in the jubilee garment. He is shown with a fine moustache and an aging face, clearly noticeable with the downturned mouth.



fig. 1

²⁰ A. Cyril, *Old Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1949), 28; B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*. III², 2 (Oxford, 1978), 414; Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no, 16; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 16.

²¹ <https://www.egyptianmuseumcairo.com/egyptian-museum-cairo/artefacts/statue-of-djoser/>

Statuette of King Khufu²² (fig. 2)²³:

- The 4th Dynasty, Abydos, the Egyptian museum, Cairo JE 36143.

The king is seated on his throne, wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt and the pleated *šndyt* kilt, and holding the flail *nḥḥ* in the right hand. The king's face reveals almost realistic features and an advanced age.



fig. 2

Statue of Hemiunu²⁴ (fig. 3)²⁵:

- The 4th Dynasty, western cemetery of Giza, D 68, Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim, n. 1962.

Hemiunu, was a vizier, seal-bearer of king of Lower Egypt and probably



fig. 3

²² F. Petrie, *Abydos* II (London, 1903), 30, pl. 13-14; PM V, 1962, 46; Saleh and Souroujian, 1987, no. 28; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 24.

²³ <https://www.egyptianmuseumcairo.com/egyptian-museum-cairo/artefacts/statuette-of-khufu/>

²⁴ H. Junker, *Giza I: Die Mastabas der IV. Dynastie auf dem Westfriedhof* (Wien und Leipzig, 1929), 153-157, pl. 18-23; PM III ², 1, 1974, 123; A. Eggebrecht, *Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim: Die ägyptische Sammlung* (Hildesheim- Mainz, 1993), pl. 11 ; Hartwig, 2015, 192, fig. 11.2.

²⁵ <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/detail.aspx?id=10921>

responsible for the work of the pyramid of Khufu. He is shown seated, he is wearing a knee-long kilt knotted around his waist. He appears older with the double chin, the sagging breasts and the fat folds on his stomach

Bust of $\epsilon nh-h3.f$ ²⁶ (fig.4)²⁷

- The 4th Dynasty, reign of king Khafre, Giza G 7510, Harvard University, Museum of Fine Arts Expedition, MFA 27.442.



fig. 4

$\epsilon nh-h3.f$ was probably the son of king Snefru. He was a

²⁶ PM III²,1, 1974, 196; Ch. Ziegler, *Non-Royal Statuary, Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1999), 61, fig. 32.

R. Freed and L. Berma and D. Doxey, *Arts of Ancient Egypt* (Boston, 2003), 78.

²⁷<https://collections.mfa.org/objects/45982/bust-of-prince-ankhhaf?ctx=6d929159-3315-4f79-bf5d-4b56edd25bfa&idx=0>

vizier and overseer of works during the reign of king Khafre. This bust depicts him as a mature man, with a receded hairline, a tired stern face, slightly drooping eyelids, puffy eye bags and vertical lines around the nose and the mouth.

Statue of *k3-ḥpr* known as sheikh el-balad²⁸ (fig. 5)²⁹

- The 5th Dynasty, Sakkara, mastaba C 8, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 34, *k3-ḥpr*, a chief lector priest, is depicted standing, holding a stick in his left hand. He is wearing a knee-long kilt knotted around his plump stomach. The hair is cut short, as if he is bald. The



fig. 5

²⁸ L. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten*. Teil 1 (Berlin, 1911), 32-33, pl. 9; Cyril, 1949, 34; PM III, 2, 1978, 459; Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 40; El-Shahawy, 2005, no.50.

²⁹ <https://www.egyptianmuseumcairo.com/egyptian-museum-cairo/artefacts/statue-of-ka-aper/>

full round face, the double chin and the plump stomach show him as a middle-aged man. The corpulent body might reflect his wealth and social status.

Statue of a seated scribe³⁰ (fig. 6)³¹:

- The 5th Dynasty, Saqqara, mastaba X, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 36.

The scribe is seated on the ground with legs crossed. He is holding with his left hand an unrolled papyrus on his lap, while the right hand is positioned to hold a pen. The overall physiognomy is idealistic. The young, excellently modeled body contrasts with the wrinkles



fig. 6

³⁰ Borchardt, 1911, 34-35, pl. 9; PM III, 2, 499-500; B. Bothmer, On Realism in Egyptian Funerary Sculpture, *Expedition Magazine. Pennsylvania Museum* (Pennsylvania, 1982), 36, fig. 23; Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 43; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 52.

³¹ <https://www.egyptianmuseumcairo.com/egyptian-museum-cairo/artefacts/scribe-statue-cg-36/>

besides the nose and around the mouth.

Statue of a seated scribe³²:(fig.7)³³:

- The 5th Dynasty, Saqqara, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The scribe is shown seated on the ground cross-legged, holding a papyrus roll with both hands. Same as fig 7, the physical strength and young body do not match the wrinkles beside the nose and around the mouth.

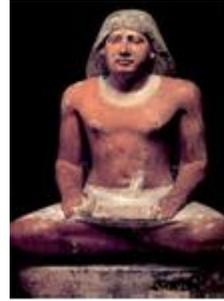


fig. 7

Statue of a seated scribe³⁴ (fig. 8)³⁵:

- The 5th Dynasty, north Saqqara, at the north of the Serapeum, the Louvre Museum, E 3023.

The scribe is seated on the ground with legs crossed, he is holding a papyrus roll with his left hand while the right



fig. 8

³² F. Tiradritti, *Egyptian Treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo* (Vercelli, 1998). 56, El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 51.

³³ El-Shahawy, 2015, no, 51

³⁴ G. Maspero. *Le Scribe Accroupi V^e Dynastie*. Musée du Louvre, *Essai Sur L'Art Egyptien* (Paris, 1912). 53-56; Cyril, 1949, 34. pl. 40.; PM III, 2, 1974, 458; Bothmer, 1982, 35, fig. 22.

³⁵ <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010006582>

hand is about to write. He is shown with clear aging signs on his face, a sagging breast and fat folds on his stomach.

Head of an old man³⁶ (fig. 9)³⁷:

- The Old Kingdom, 5th Dynasty, unknown provenance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA 47.105. 1

The head is an example of the realistic portraiture of the Old Kingdom. It was a part of a standing statue with back pillar. He is shown with a short black wig. He is realistically depicted with aging signs: heavy vertical wrinkles around the mouth and between the eyebrows and a flesh roll above the nose.



fig. 9

³⁶ W. Hayes. *The Scepter of Egypt: A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part I* (New York, 1953), 110. fig. 62; *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids* (New York, 1999). 289, no. 81.

³⁷ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/543871>

Statue of *titi*³⁸ (fig. 10)³⁹:

- The Old Kingdom, late 6th Dynasty, Saqqara, near the pyramid of Teti, tomb 6001, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA 26.2.9



fig. 10

titi was overseer of scribes of the sealed documents. This is one of two statues representing *titi*, as a young man MMA 26.2.8, and this one as a mature official. He is here standing wearing a long projecting long kilt on which he is resting his right hand. The facial features are very distinctive and typical of the period, with the bulging eyes, heavy eyelids and wrinkled cheeks.

³⁸ Hayes, 1953, 112; PM III, 1, 1974, 566-567; E. Russmann, 1995. A Second Style in Egyptian Art of the Old Kingdom. *MDAIK* 51 (Mainz, 1995), 269-270, pl. 53 (a-b); Ziegler, 2015, 70.

³⁹ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/543916>

Statue of a kneeling prisoner⁴⁰ (fig. 11)⁴¹:

- The Old Kingdom, late 6th Dynasty, Saqqara south, probably from the pyramid complex of king Pepi II, the Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 47.2.



fig. 11

This is an example of the prisoner statues that started to appear from mid-5th Dynasty and became very common during the reigns of Pepi I and Pepi II. This prisoner is kneeling and leaning forward. His arms are pulled back. He has a long face with a short forehead, protruding eyeballs and deep nasolabial folds reflecting his advanced age.

Commentary

Among the few examples of the Old Kingdom royal statuary, there exist only two examples where the kings appear with signs of aging; the statue of king Djoser (fig. 1) and the statuette of king Khufu (fig. 2). The overall

⁴⁰ Hayes, 1953, 114 -115, fig. 67; PM III, 1, 1974, 424; Bothmer, 1982, fig. 9-10; T. Prakash, Ancient Egyptian Prisoner Statues: Fragments of the Late Old Kingdom (Columbus, Georgia, 2022), 171-172, cat. C.7.3

⁴¹ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/543869>

countenance of Djoser is that of an aged or middle-aged man, emphasized by the moustache and the downturned mouth flanked by two vertical lines. Despite the aging signs on the face, the body is strong and youthful.

Many non-royal male portraits of the Old Kingdom are characterized by obesity, as an attestation of the prosperity and the well-being of the person, and sometimes authority. This obesity adds an aging appearance on the statue especially when accompanied by a plump stomach, as on the statue of *k3-pr* (fig. 5), or by a sagging breast and fat rolls on the torso, as on the statues of Hemiuu (fig. 3), and the statue of the scribe in the Louvre museum (fig. 8).

Ancient Egyptian scribes represented the elite of the society. Their statues were common in the sculpture; they were usually depicted sitting on the ground with crossed-legs. Many examples were found with different aging signs, as on the two examples in the Egyptian museum, (fig. 6) and (fig. 7). The scribe on both statues is shown with wrinkles around the nose and the mouth, which contrasts with his young powerful body. The sculptor might have added these wrinkles to indicate that he is an expert, yet young, scribe and that he has both, the maturity and the youthful physical power combined together. Although the face of the scribe in the Louvre museum (fig. 8) has no wrinkles, he looks older especially with the fat folds on his torso. These fat folds might indicate that he is old or might refer to his wealth and prosperity.

The hair is a major element that affects the appearance of a person. From the non-royal examples of the Old Kingdom, there exist two examples where the hair made the person look older, the statue of *k3-pr* (fig. 5), where the hair is cut very short but looks as he is bald, which

adds an older appearance. The other example is the bust of *ḥḥ ḥ3.f* (fig. 4), where the hairline is receded as a sign of aging especially with the puffy eye bags and the wrinkles around the nose.

The rendering of the eyes is noteworthy on some example of the Old Kingdom, as the eye is one of the essential features that reflect a person's age. Heavy eyelids with prominent eye bags are common aging signs in old people; this was realistically executed on the statues of *ḥḥ ḥ3.f* (fig. 4), the head of an old man (fig. 9), the statue of *ḥḥ* (fig. 10) and the statue of the kneeling prisoner (fig. 11).

Late Old Kingdom statues were different than these of the 4th and 5th Dynasties, they were smaller in size but with larger proportions. The features are exaggerated with long narrow bodies and overlarge heads⁴². This type of statues was found in large numbers, as the one of *ḥḥ* (fig. 10). He is depicted as a mature man with the prominent folds that begin from the nose till the sides of the mouth⁴³.

Another type of statues also appeared during the late Old Kingdom; it is the prisoner statues, found in the pyramid complexes of the kings⁴⁴. The prisoner statue (fig. 11) is one of many examples of this type, where in most of the statues the prisoner is shown with a deep lined face reflecting his advanced age⁴⁵.

Archaeological Evidence from the Middle Kingdom:

⁴² Russman, 1995, 269-270.

⁴³ Russman, 1995, 270.

⁴⁴ Prakash, 2022, 2.

⁴⁵ Bothmer, 1982, fig. 7-18.

As mentioned above, Old and early Middle kingdoms royal portraits depicted the kings in their prime with youthful countenance, muscular bodies and young faces⁴⁶. The realistic school began from the reigns of kings Senusert III and Amenemhat III⁴⁷. Senusert III was the first king to be represented with a young body and realistic features revealing age and exhaustion⁴⁸. His statues are recognizable with their distinctive style, particularly the ones that depict him in an advanced age.

His aging tired facial features are characterized by the rounded slanting eyes, protruding eyeballs, heavy bulging eyelids, eye bags, sharp cheekbones, nasolabial folds descending from the inner corners of the eyes, downturned curving mouth with shallow lines at the corners, and thin upper lip⁴⁹. These distinguished aging signs are seen on the following objects:

**Upper part of a fragmentary statue⁵⁰
(Fig. 12)⁵¹:**

- From Luxor temple, the head is in Luxor Museum, J.34 and the torso in the antiquities storeroom.



fig. 12

⁴⁶ A. Oppenheim, *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle Kingdom* (New York, 2015), 70.

⁴⁷ Hartwig, 2015, 200.

⁴⁸ R. Fazzini, *Images for Eternity: Egyptian Art from Berkeley and Brooklyn* (Brooklyn, 1975), 41; Oppenheim, 2015, 79.

⁴⁹ Oppenheim, 2015, 79.

⁵⁰ Oppenheim, 2015, 5, fig. 6.

⁵¹ Oppenheim, 2015, 5, fig 6

The king is shown in the osirian posture, wearing the double crown and holding the *ḥnḥ* signs in the hands crossed on his chest. Some aging signs are visible on the face: the tired slanting eyes with the slight eye pouches and the wrinkles starting from the inner sides of the eyes till the mouth.

Head of a statue⁵² (fig. 13)⁵³:

- Probably from Karnak, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, 62-11.

The king is wearing a striated *nms* headdress with a frontal *uraeus*.



fig. 13

The face of a statue⁵⁴ (fig. 14)⁵⁵:

- Unknown provenance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnarvon Collection, 26.7.1394. This is the only



fig. 14

⁵² Oppenheim, 2015, 79, cat. 22.

⁵³ <https://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/27508/head-of-senuseret-iii>

⁵⁴ C. Aldred, Some Royal Portraits of the Middle Kingdom in Ancient Egypt, *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (New York, 1970), 44, fig. 27; Oppenheim, 2015, 79, cat. 23.

⁵⁵ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544184?ft=head+of+sesostris+iii&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=2>

remaining part from
the statue.

Head of a statue⁵⁶(fig. 15)⁵⁷:

- Unknown provenance, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, Portugal. Inv. 138

The king is wearing the *nms* headdress with a coiled *uraeus*.



fig. 15

Bust of a statue⁵⁸ (fig. 16)⁵⁹:

- FROMMedamud, the Louvre Museum, E 12961.

The king is wearing the *nms* headdress with a frontal *uraeus* and a pendant hanging on his chest.



fig. 16

⁵⁶ J. R. Harris, *Egyptian Art* (London, 1966), 33, fig. 14, pl. 17; L. Araújo, *Egyptian Art. Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (Lisbon, 2006), 66-68, cat. 4.

⁵⁷ <https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/colecao-com-historias/senusret-iii/>

⁵⁸ D. Laboury, Senwosret III and the Issue of Portraiture in Ancient Egyptian Art, *Cahiers De Recherches de L'Institut de Papyrologie et D'Égyptologie de Lille* 31, (Lille, 2016-2017), 73, fig. 1.

⁵⁹ <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010010139>

Different statues in a praying posture⁶⁰ (fig. 17)⁶¹:

- Deir El- Bahari, the mortuary temple of Mentuhotep Nebhepetre, , from left to right: the Egyptian Museum Cairo, RT 18.4.22.4, the British Museum BM EA 686, 685, 684.



fig. 17

The king is shown standing in a praying attitude; he is wearing the *nms* headdress with a frontal *uraeus*, and the triangular pleated kilt on which he is resting his arms.

Sphinx⁶² (fig. 18)⁶³:

- Probably from Karnak, the Metropolitan Museum of Art MMA 17.9.2

The sphinx depicts the king with a human head and face and a body of a lion. He is wearing the *nms*



fig. 18

⁶⁰ Laboury, 2016-2017, 78, fig. 2.

⁶¹ Laboury, 2016-2017, 78, fig. 2.

⁶² Aldred, 1970, 43, fig. 25-26; Oppenheim, 2015, 82, cat. 24.

⁶³ https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544186?ft=senwo_sret&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=2

headdress with a frontal
uraeus. The ceremonial
beard is attached to the
chin.

Head of a nobleman⁶⁴ (fig. 19)⁶⁵:

- 12th Dynasty, reign of
Senusert III, unknown
provenance, Boston
Museum of Fine Arts,
2003.244



fig. 19

This head belongs to one of the noblemen or to an important courtier of the king, due to the fact that it is modeled parallel to the king's representations⁶⁶. The nobleman is wearing a plain wig exposing his ears. He is depicted with an aging face, with the furrowed brow, the fleshy eye bags and the nasal labial folds. On the other hand, the realistic royal sculpture continued during the reign of king Amenemhat III, but not on all of

⁶⁴ J. Josephson and R. Freed, The Portrait of a 12th Dynasty Nobleman, *Servant of Mut: Studies in Honor of Richard A. Fazzini*, edited by Sue D'Auria (Boston, 2007), 141-148; C. Barnebee, Senusert III: A Pharaoh, A Collector, a Legacy in the Sand, *ARTH* 716, (2020), 6, fig. 6.

⁶⁵ <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/402795/head-of-an-official-the-josephson-head?ctx=381e2e98-b49d-4c51-a629-7ea9f04f2487&idx=47>

⁶⁶ Josephson and Rita, 2007, 142; Barnebee, 2020, 6.

his statues, and with slight modifications⁶⁷. The king's remarkable features are recognizable by the broad face, the large ears and high cheekbones, probably inherited from his father Senusert III⁶⁸, the "wrinkled cheeks and bitter mouth"⁶⁹, and the slightly bulging eyes⁷⁰.

The following objects are statues or parts of statues of Amenemhat III with his distinctive facial features and clear signs of age:

A Head of statue⁷¹ (fig. 20)⁷²:

- Unknown provenance,
Carlsberg Glyptotek,
Copenhagen AEIN 924.

The king is wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt, partially broken. The face is tired with the eye bags, two vertical lines are seen beside the nose and around the mouth.



fig. 20

⁶⁷ Aldred, 1970, 45.

⁶⁸ Aldred, 1970, 48.

⁶⁹ Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 103.

⁷⁰ Aldred, 1970, 48.

⁷¹ Oppenheim, 2015, cat. 27.

⁷² Oppenheim, 2015, cat. 27

A Head of a statue⁷³ (fig. 21)⁷⁴:

- Unknown provenance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA 24.7.1

The king is shown wearing the double crown, with a frontal *uraeus*. The sagging muscles of the face, and the folds around the nose and the mouth, reveal his old age.



fig. 21

Bust of a statue⁷⁵ (fig. 22)⁷⁶:

- Unknown provenance, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MMA 45.2.6



fig. 22

The king is wearing the *nms* headdress with the *uraeus*. The aging signs are visible on the brow with two vertical furrows and the nasolabial folds.

⁷³ Hayes, 1953, 199; Aldred, 1970, 48, fig. 34.

⁷⁴ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545549?ft=24.7.1&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=1>

⁷⁵ Hayes, 1953, 199; Aldred, 1970, 47, fig. 32-33.

⁷⁶

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545937?ft=45.2.6&offset=0&rpp=40&pos=1>

Bust in priestly costume⁷⁷ (Fig. 23)⁷⁸:

- Fayum, Mit Fares, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 395.

The king is wearing an enormous wig with heavy plaits falling on the shoulders, and a frontal *uraeus*.



fig. 23

Double statue as offering bearers⁷⁹ (fig. 24)⁸⁰:

- Tanis, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 392

The king is represented twice, wearing an unusual wig consisting of heavy long hair locks and a broad beard. He is leaning on two altars or offering tables representing the Nile flora and fauna. The vigorous countenance of the statues is a typical portrait of the king.



fig. 24

⁷⁷ Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 103; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 71; Oppenheim, 2015, 68, fig. 53.

⁷⁸ Oppenheim, 2015, 68, fig. 23.

⁷⁹ Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 104; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 73; R. Edna, *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum* (London, New York, 2001); 41

⁸⁰ Oppenheim, 2015, 297.

Sphinx⁸¹: (fig. 25)⁸²:

- Tanis, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CG 394.

The king is featured with a human face (with vigorous countenance) and a lion's mane, ears and body.



fig. 25

Commentary

Vast development and reform projects were launched during the reigns of kings Senusert III and Amenemhat III. They also pursued an aggressive policy of conquest and military expansion. This led to a strong monumental program that was reflected on the statuary production, leaving large numbers of royal statues of both kings. Most of these statues are characterized by the realistic style that expresses the burden of the enormous responsibilities and achievements they undertook. This is clearly visible on many of their statues, featured with the stern exhausted face, the tired eyes and the downturned mouth. This led eventually that the kings appeared as mature kings in an advanced stage of their lives. Among the different statues of kings Senusert III and Amenemhat III, the aging signs

⁸¹ Saleh and Sourouzian, 1987, no. 102; El-Shahawy, 2005, no. 72.

⁸² <https://egypt-museum.com/sphinx-of-amenemhat-iii/>

appear only on their faces; their bodies are excellently executed with idealism, revealing youth and power. Accordingly, these aging signs might be interpreted not only as real aging, but as well a result of the heavy responsibilities they had on their shoulders.

Some of the courtiers of Senusert III followed the same realistic style, as on the head of a nobleman (fig. 19), where his features are parallel to these of the king.

From the various examples of the Old Kingdom statuary, the signs of aging vary from: corpulent bodies, sometimes with rolls of fat on the torso and a sagging breast and chest muscles, eye wrinkles, puffy eye pouches, nasolabial folds and a receding hair. From the Middle Kingdom, the signs of aging on the royal statues and some of the non-royal ones are mainly the lined face with deep wrinkles either on the forehead or between the eyes or around the nose and the mouth, the heavy eyelids and eyes bags with stern downturned mouths. There exists no example where the king is depicted with neither a protruding belly nor folds of fat.

Wrinkled face of the Old Kingdom statuary (royal and non-royal) reflects either the person's advanced age or his wisdom and experience, whereas in the Middle Kingdom it reveals either the person's age or the tiredness and the burden of the responsibilities.

Conclusion

Statues were made for eternity, to be placed in temples and tombs. They were created to replace the deceased in the afterlife. Hence, he appeared in an idealistic aspect, reflecting the desire to exist in the afterlife with natural

beauty, youthful body and harmonious proportions. Accordingly, being depicted with signs of age was not common in the Ancient Egyptian art.

Old Kingdom royal statues with aging signs are rare, whereas these of the Middle Kingdom are common, especially on the statues of Kings Senusert III and Amenemhat III, where they introduced a new artistic style of royal portraiture manifested on their statues featured with a realistic aspect.

Old Kingdom private statuary with signs of aging was common; many elite and high officials were depicted obese, sometimes with a prominent belly and fat folds on the torso. This is not the case with the private statuary of the Middle Kingdom, where only few examples were seen with lined faces and tired eyes.

The common signs of aging on the Old Kingdom private statuary are: a wrinkled face and a corpulent body with sagging breasts and rolls of fat. In few cases, a double chin, a receding hair and tired eyes with heavy eyelids or bulging eye bags.

The aging signs on the statuary of the Middle Kingdom are distinctive; an exhausted face, tired eyes, heavy protruding eyelids, pouching eye bags, nasolabial folds descending from the inner corners of the eyes, and sometimes two deep lines on the forehead and wrinkled cheeks.

In some cases, having wrinkles on the face or having a corpulent body with rolls of fat on the torso does not necessarily mean being old. The wrinkles might refer to the person's wisdom, experience and professionalism. The flesh folds usually refer to the person's authority and well-being.

The aging signs on the statues of kings Senusert III and Amenemhat III might be the reflection of their advanced age, and might be also interpreted as exhaustion from the responsibilities and the great achievements they undertook.

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