

# **A Fragment of A Block of Ramses II**

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The fragmentary relief<sup>(2)</sup> which is the subject of this article formed part of the Zaki Mahareb collection; at present it is kept in a magazine at Luxor. Its provenance is not known but it is said to come from the western Thebes.

The sunken relief is cut in the limestone block which measures : height 50 cms, width 64 cms. The surface of the block is relatively well preserved with only the upper corners of the relief being lost completely. The relief is rather carelessly executed: no traces of colour can be recognized.

The relief fragment can be divided into two parts. The left part, occupying not more than one-fourth of the whole surface, consists of a cartouche with the name of Ramses II Miamun. The cartouche is written vertically. It rests on a hieroglyphic sign symbolizing gold. The top of the cartouche is adorned by a sun disc surrounded by ostrich feathers.<sup>(3)</sup>

On the left traces of another cartouche can be recognized. This cartouche was similar in shape to the preceding one. The name is lost but it can be said with certainty that the cartouche contained the so called throne name of Ramses II – Wesermaatre or Wesermaatre Setepenre.<sup>(4)</sup> Together with the s3 R' title (written in the previous cartouche) the throne name is the only one from the five royal names which was enclosed by a cartouche.

To the right of the cartouches there is a scene representing a king before the goddess Hathor. The scene is bordered by a line carved in

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(2) I am much indebted to Dr. Mohammed El-Soghaier, Director General of Antiquities, Luxor, for permission to publish this fragment Fig. 1, p.1.

(3) For the same type of a cartouche bearing the name of Ramses II see S. Hassan, Excavations at Giza VIII, Cairo 1953, p. 4, Fig. 14.

(4) For the forms of the throne name of Ramses II see J. von Beckerath, Handbuch der Ägyptischen Königsnamen, MAS 20, München-Berlin 1984, p. 89-90, 238.

sunk relief on three sides; only on the left side is the border formed by the above-mentioned cartouche. The goddess who is identified as Hathor by a short inscription sits on a simple cubic throne. She wears a traditional close fitting long garment. No traces of any jewelery are visible. She wears a long tripartite wig and a crown adorned with cow horns and a sun disc. There is no uraeus attached to the crown. In her hands the goddess holds the  $\text{nh}_v$  sign and the  $w3s'$  scepter. Before the goddess there are two offering tables of usual type bearing incense vessels and lotus flowers.

Behind the offering tables the king stands barefooted, facing Hathor, with his far leg advanced. His head is adorned with the blue crown<sup>(5)</sup> and a uraeus. Although sometimes called the "war crown", the blue crown is by no means reserved for representations of a king as a warrior. On the contrary, the scenes showing a king wearing the blue crown when bringing offerings are relatively common.<sup>(6)</sup> He wears a knee-length kilt with a trapezoidal apron panel, a belt and an undecorated pendant hanging from it. This type of a garment is often worn by kings in New Kingdom representations. At the back of the kilt there is an animal tail attached. This tail formed a part of a royal dress from the early period of the Egyptian history on; it remained reserved for gods and kings only.

The king holds flowers in both hands and raises his arms presenting the flowers to the goddess.

Above the king's head there is a sun disc with cobras and 'mh signs.

Although the king is not identified by an inscription (see below) it can be held for certain that the cartouches in the left part of the relief refer to the king depicted in the scene of offering. Thus, the king can be identified as Ramses II.

The scene is accompanied by a brief hieroglyphic inscription written in vertical columns. The inscription, carved in sunken relief, is unfortunately only partly preserved :

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(5) For the blue crown see Georg Steindorf, Die blue Königskrone, In ZAS 53, 59-74.

(6) See for example scenes of Sety I offering to Atum or Ramses II adoring the Theban triad in Karnak temple. In H.H. Nelson, The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, Vol. I, Part I, Chicago 1981, Pls. 36, 175.

... nb t3wy.  
Hwt-Hr wrt. nbt  
pt. hnwt t3wy

... Lord of the Two Lands.  
Hathor the Great, Lady  
of Heaven, Mistress of the Two Lands.

Hathor is characterized only by general epithets reserved for goddesses. The inscription does not refer to any special place associated with Hathor's cult which would allow a closer identification of the provenance of the piece under discussion. The absence of the king's name is somewhat puzzling. Above the king's raised arms where the royal name should be, the relief is destroyed completely. In theory, the name could be written there. In fact, the very right vertical line separating the columns of the hieroglyphic text ends in a small curve. It is possible that this dividing line was at the same time a part of a royal cartouche. Traces of another curved line can perhaps be recognized more on the right. If this was a part of a cartouche the name written inside had to be very short because of the available space. Actually, some forms of the name of Ramses II are short enough to be written into such a limited space.<sup>(7)</sup>

The two parts of the relief form two independent compositional units – that is to say, the cartouches on the left do not belong to the offering scene. The asymmetrical arrangement of the preserved part of the relief suggests that originally similar scenes were carved on both sides of the cartouches. A parallel for such an arrangement can be found for example in the decoration of the temple in Medinet Habu.<sup>(8)</sup>

The question of the original placement of the block is difficult to answer. The fact that Ramses II is mentioned on it does not help us – monuments with the name of this king are spread over the whole of Egypt. A parallel for the scene of Ramses II bringing offering to Hathor can be found for example on the Bankes stela No. 9<sup>(9)</sup> which depicts votive offerings to Hathor.<sup>(10)</sup> But this parallel is of little use for our

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(7) See J. Von Beckerath, *op.cit.*, p. 238-239.

(8) Medinet Habu – The Epigraphic Survey, Vol. II., Chicago 1932, Pl. 109.

(9) J. Cerny, *Egyptian Stelae in the Bankes Collection*, Oxford 1958.

(10) G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, Oxford 1993, p. 95.

purpose because the present relief fragment does not come from any stela. On a stela the scene with a king should be placed rather in the upper register; that means another relief should be envisaged below our scene with Ramses II. But in this case, the lower border of the relief fragment is at the same time the lower edge of the block. Further, it seems that no other scene was depicted above the uppermost bordering line. The shape of the present block suggests that it formed originally a part of a wall decoration rather than a part of a stela. The composition of the relief raises the possibility that we have here a fragment of a door lintel.<sup>(11)</sup> But the question of the original location of the block remains unanswered, providing it does come from Western Thebes, we should perhaps search somewhere in the Theban private tombs.<sup>(12)</sup> But I do not know any parallel for such a relief in any private tomb. In consequence of a lack of any suitable parallel, the original location of the present relief fragment remains a puzzle for us.

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(11) See note 8. The quoted example comes from a door lintel.

(12) Royal tombs can be excluded because of the poor artistic quality of the piece.



Fig. n 0.1



Pl. no. 1