

The early display of Egyptian sculpture in the British Museum

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Ricerche d'archivio sulla provenienza di alcune sculture presenti nelle collezioni del British Museum fin dalla prima metà del XIX secolo hanno rivelato quante notizie si possano acquisire sulla loro storia dal momento del loro arrivo nel museo. Questo contributo è dedicato alla fase più antica della storia di tre pezzi le cui origini erano particolarmente oscure.

The research presented in this paper began with an attempt to solve a puzzle. Since 1992, I have been working on the Theban Tomb of Senneferi.¹ Senneferi possessed many monuments outside his tomb, without a doubt the most spectacular of which is his block statue in the British Museum, BM EA 48.² This statue is one of the best-preserved and, dare one say, « perfect » statues in the museum's Egyptian collection, and it is my intention to include an up-to-date account of it in the publication of TT99.³

The acquisition date of the statue of Senneferi

The acquisition date of this statue in the museum's records has always been a cause for concern to me. That date is 1829, repeated in all publications prior to 2004. The piece is always considered as coming from the collection of Henry Salt, and, as is well known, objects acquired in Egypt by Salt came into the museum's possession in two groups, the first as a result of the rather acrimonious purchase of his first collection in 1823, and later from the Sotheby's sale of his third collection in 1835.⁴ 1829 does not fit either of these

1. See < <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/tt99> >, where more detail about the work will be found. A printed report is available as N. STRUDWICK, *The Theban Tomb of Senneferi [TT.99]. An overview of work undertaken from 1992 to 1999*, in « Memnonia » II (2000), pp. 241-66.
2. Selected references: PM II², p. 454; I.E.S. EDWARDS (ed.), *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, &c., in the British Museum*, VIII, London 1939, pp. 4-5, pl. v; R. SCHULZ, *Die Entwicklung und Bedeutung des kuboiden Statuentypus. Eine Untersuchung zu den sogenannten « Würfelhockern »*, I-II, « HAB » 33-34, Hildesheim 1992, pp. 365-66, Taf. 94; E.R. RUSSMANN, *Eternal Egypt. Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum*, London - New York 2001, pp. 122-24; N. STRUDWICK, *Masterpieces of Ancient Egypt*, London 2006, pp. 134-35.
3. For assistance with material in this article I wish to thank above all else Patricia Usick, who facilitated my use of the BM's archive and permitted me to use a quote uncovered in the course of her research, and also to Daniela Picchi and John H. Taylor for important and interesting information, and to Helen Strudwick for reading a draft and for many helpful comments.
4. There are many sources for Salt, the most comprehensive of which is D. MANLEY - P. RÉE, *Henry Salt. Artist, traveller, diplomat, Egyptologist*, London 2001; chapter XV deals mostly with Salt's first collection, and pages 273-74 mention the third collection. The contents of the collection are given in the Sotheby catalogue of the sale.