

A Sandstone Relief of Tutankhamun in the Liverpool Museum from the Luxor Temple Colonnade Hall

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It was my good fortune to join the Epigraphic Survey based at Chicago House in Luxor during the spring of 1978 when Bill Murnane was working as senior epigrapher there. I started as apprentice epigraphic artist, graduated to full-time in 1979, and began what was to become my life-long career with the Survey. I owe a tremendous debt to Bill and former director Lanny Bell for initiating me into the rigors and discipline of epigraphic documentation and life “in the field.” Bill was particularly patient with this enthusiastic greenhorn, and I will always remember his encouragement, his humor, his dignity, and his delight in talking with everyone about the work (his and theirs). His encyclopedic memory was astonishing; I long even now for just a fraction of it. His enthusiasm infected us all, and does to this day. Bill taught me that expedition life did not have to be deprived of culture; I learned more about opera in Luxor listening with him to his incredible library of cassette tapes than anywhere else in the world. No one could write the way Bill wrote, or analyze other people’s work more cogently, or in a more gentlemanly fashion. Just before his death he was producing some of the most thoughtful and insightful writing of his career, particularly concerning the Amarna period, which makes his untimely passing doubly tragic. There is not a day that goes by in Luxor that I do not think of him, and wonder what he might have to say about this or that.

At the time I started work in Luxor, the Epigraphic Survey was documenting the great Colonnade Hall of Amenhotep III and Tutankhamun at Luxor Temple.¹ This astonishing edifice— 80 feet tall, almost 200 feet long, and supported by 14 open papyrus columns— in its day may have been the largest free-standing stone structure in the ancient world. But by the first century AD seismic activity had caused the great stone roof blocks to fall, and systematic quarrying of the side walls throughout the medieval period has left us only the 14 papyrus columns and architraves standing to their original height (still one of the most impressive sights in the modern world). Part of the first register of decoration— the famous Opet water procession reliefs— survives today, out of the four registers of decoration that originally reached all the way up to the roof line (although I was to discover later that fragments of all four registers do survive). One of my first tasks for the Survey, suggested by Bill (for which I will be forever grateful), was to trace the several dozen inscribed, fragmentary sandstone wall fragments that the Epigraphic Survey had identified as having been quarried from the

¹ Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple Volume 1: The Festival Procession of Opet in the Colonnade Hall*, OIP 112 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1994); Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple Volume 2: The Façade, Portals, Upper Register Scenes, Columns, Marginalia, and Statuary in the Colonnade Hall*, OIP 116 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1998).

Colonnade Hall in later antiquity. These beautiful wall fragments, identifiable by the distinctive low raised relief carving style of Tutankhamun, had been culled by the Survey from the blockyard storage areas around the temple where tens of thousands of inscribed fragments found in medieval foundations around the temple precinct had been stored. Little did anyone know at that time that I would end up specializing in the analysis and reassembly of this fragmentary material, a project that is ongoing to this day, 30 years later! At current count, 50,000 inscribed fragments from all periods of Luxor Temple (over 1500 from the Colonnade Hall alone) and even parts of Karnak are being documented and analyzed by the Epigraphic Survey. The blockyards recently have become the focus of our growing conservation and restoration programs designed to protect the material and make it accessible to the public.²

I cannot pass through the Colonnade Hall without thinking of Bill, with whom the Chicago House team and I worked for many seasons documenting the beautifully inscribed wall surfaces. While it is clear that Amenhotep III began the construction of the Hall at the end of his reign to commemorate his deification while alive, he sadly did not reign long enough to complete it. This was largely accomplished only at the end of Tutankhamun's reign; the evidence of unfinished reliefs at the southern end of the Hall, later carved by Sety I, indicates that Tutankhamun died before he could finish inscribing the walls. This suggests that the young king was obliged to finish the Hall's construction first, at a time when the Egyptian work force was spread rather thin during the restoration of Amun's cult throughout Egypt. Except for one doorjamb scene on the exterior facade of the Colonnade Hall that was started by Amenhotep III in paint, the entire facade appears to have been carved solely by Ay after Tutankhamun's death. Both Tutankhamun's and Ay's reliefs were ultimately usurped by Horemheb who erased and reinscribed their cartouches with his own name, often not very carefully. The plaster and paint which concealed traces of the earlier kings' names is now gone, and the palimpsest of the sets of names is quite clear, especially in raking light.³

Analysis of the standing wall remains and the fragmentary material from the missing wall sections indicates that all four registers of Tutankhamun's decoration in the Hall documented rites associated with the annual Opet festival, the processions which were part of that festival, and the coronation of the king (or reenactment of same) at the culmination of the rites. There are a number of iconographic and stylistic anomalies in the decoration that suggest Tutankhamun utilized a pre-existing program for the relief decoration of the Hall which had been drawn up during Amenhotep III's reign. The presence of the bark of the king for the first

² These programs have been funded by an ARCE/EAP grant, BP Egypt, USAID Egypt, and the World Monuments Fund (Robert Wilson Challenge grants), and numerous contributions from private individuals. For reports on the Epigraphic Survey's conservation activities at Luxor Temple since 1995, see *The Oriental Institute Annual Report*, from 1995-1996 to the present. The results of the first seven seasons' conservation activities will be published in a forthcoming ARCE/EAP publication series volume. An epigraphic volume dedicated to facsimile drawings and photographs of Colonnade Hall upper register fragments and joined groups will be published in the *RILT* series.

³ For a review of the sequence of carving in the Colonnade Hall, see the prefaces for each of the two volumes cited above, *RILT* 1 and 2.

time among the barks of the Theban triad, and figures of Amenhotep III which Tutankhamun includes behind the cabin sanctuaries of the divine barges and in all of the processions might not be simply hommages to the king who started the Hall, but might actually reflect Amenhotep III's original program which commemorated the deified Amenhotep III taking his place among the Theban pantheon.⁴ A scene which may shed some light on this question can be found in Amenhotep III's solar court at Luxor Temple. Here Amenhotep III is shown presenting an enormous offering pile to Amun's bark set up in the center of the court. Standing behind the bark is another figure of Amenhotep III accompanied by his *ka*, which implies that Amenhotep III and Amun are one and the same, with both benefiting from the offerings.⁵ In the Colonnade Hall, the placement of figures of Amenhotep III at the rear of each divine barge behind the cabin sanctuaries; behind the barks of Amun in the bark processions; and behind the Amun-Re-Kamutef procession in the second register west wall all indicate identification of Amenhotep III with Amun, and would have been an appropriate part of his program for the Hall. Since Amenhotep III was deceased at the time Tutankhamun executed the reliefs, there was no need to change the program.⁶

Amenhotep III's great water procession scene (also Opet-related) on the eastern face of his 3rd pylon at Karnak shows the king offering incense and a bouquet to the cabin (within which was enshrined the bark of Amun), but a figure of Amenhotep is also depicted on the stern of the barge helping to steer with a long-handled oar.⁷ In Tutankhamun's divine riverine barge scenes in the Colonnade Hall, the placement of a figure of Amenhotep III on the stern of each barge made it awkward to squeeze in the traditional figure of the king holding the steering oar. Instead, the two Tutankhamun figures were depicted back-to-back on the prow, the figure on the left holding a steering oar, and the figure on the right offering incense and flowers to the cabin. In the preserved wall reliefs and fragmentary material from the Colonnade Hall this arrangement of elements on the riverine barges of the divine triad of Thebes is consistent: back-to-back Tutankhamun figures (whose cartouches have been usurped by Horemheb) on the prow, and a figure of Amenhotep III at the stern. All preserved royal figures on the barges wear *khepresh* crowns.⁸

⁴ For a more detailed examination of this question, see this author's, "Honorific Figures of Amenhotep III in the Luxor Temple Colonnade Hall," in *For His Ka: Essays in Memory of Klaus Baer*, SAOC 55, ed. D. P. Silverman (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1994), pp. 133-144.

⁵ For a preliminary drawing of this scene, the upper section of which has been partly restored from fragmentary material, see this author's, "Images of Amenhotep III in Thebes: Styles and Intentions," *The Art of Amenhotep III: Art Historical Analysis*, ed. L. M. Berman (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art and Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 30, drawing 2. Restoration of this fragmentary group to the original wall will be finished by the Epigraphic Survey in 2009

⁶ See note 4 for details of these scenes.

⁷ *PM II*², p. 61 (183). The sunk relief bark of Amun visible today in the Amun Barge's main cabin was carved in the later Ramesside period, possibly by Sety II who also added a renewal inscription below the scene. In the time of Amenhotep III, divine riverine barge cabins were depicted closed within a shrine. The divine riverine barge representations in the Colonnade Hall represent the first time in Egyptian art that the cabins of such barges are depicted open and their contents—the bark of the god or goddess within—visible.

⁸ *RILT I*, pls. 17 (west wall), and 68 (east wall).

A sandstone relief in the Liverpool Museum, Inv. #1967.35 shows this same detail, back-to-back small-scale figures in shallow raised relief, of Tutankhamun wearing the *khepresh* crown (figure 1).⁹ The Tutankhamun figure on the left is intact from head to shoulder with text above and in front, and the king's upraised hand grasping the steering oar pole is preserved at the break. A streamer attached to the base of the king's crown falls over his shoulder and is partly hidden by the streamer of the right-hand king. Tutankhamun's prenomen cartouche *Nebkheperure*, is carved slightly above the leftmost king's face and has been rather crudely recarved into Horemheb's prenomen, *Djeserkheperure Setepenre*, with traces of the original prenomen visible.¹⁰ To the left of the cartouche read: "the Good God," and over the king's head read "given life like [R]e." The whole group, including cartouche, reads "The Good God, Nebkheperure, given life like [R]e." There are traces of an inscription above the cartouche and epithets, too broken to read, from a separate text above the two kings. To the left of the leftmost king and cartouche is a larger-scaled, vertical column of text in reverse orientation, facing the king, "... born of Mut." The rightmost Tutankhamun figure is mostly broken away except for the back of his *khepresh*-crowned head, streamer, and upper left section of his shoulder. Between the heads of the two kings read "protection, life." Part of a quail chick over the rightmost king's head is part of an epithet that follows his (broken away) cartouche.

Having spent a good deal of time drawing the Tutankhamun barges in the Colonnade Hall, and reconstructing almost an entire divine barge from fragments (that of the god Khonsu from the eastern wall), I believe that Liverpool Museum 1967.35 is actually a piece of the Colonnade Hall. In fact, the style, scale, surface treatment, paleography, and textual reference to Mut makes it certain that 1967.35 comes from the divine barge of Mut scene on the Colonnade Hall western wall. This section of the water procession, which featured the divine barges of the Theban triad being towed by towboats and the barges of the king (Amun) and queen (Mut), still preserves the better parts of the barge of the queen, in full sail, towing the barge of Mut (figure 2).¹¹ Mut's barge is well preserved at the prow and stern, but the central section is very decayed, and only vestiges of the cabin remain. Today all that remain of the two back-to-back figures of Tutankhamun at the prow are the feet. Photos from 1912 published in *RILT* 1 show more of the legs and lower bodies preserved. Earlier photos taken by Georges Daressy in the 1890s seem to show both kings intact.¹² Liverpool fragment 1967.35 must have

⁹ The relief is a shallow piece of sandstone 38 cm in width and approximately 20 cm in height, acquired by the Liverpool Museum in 1967 from J. Moger in Holland. I would like to thank Gary Brown, Assistant Curator of Antiquities, National Museums Liverpool for permission to publish 1967.35, and for the photograph of the relief published here, courtesy of National Museums Liverpool (Liverpool Museum). I would also like to thank Margaret Warhurst, Head of Humanities, National Museums Liverpool for information about the acquisition of the piece. See also P. Bienkowski and A. M. J. Tooley *Gifts of the Nile*, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1995), p. 27, fig. 28. This relief can also be viewed online at: http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/humanworld/egyptian/sandstone_relief.aspx.

¹⁰ The sun disk is original and was utilized for both names.

¹¹ *RILT* 1, pl. 17, far right for the wall context; pls. 27 (photo) and 28 (drawing) for details. The published photo dates to 1912 and still shows the feet of the right-hand king figure, but the upper part is already gone.

¹² "La Procession d'Ammon dans la temple de Louxor," *MMAF* 8 (Paris: Leroux, 1892).

fallen off the badly fractured Colonnade Hall wall and had been recovered sometime after the 1890s but before 1912. Comparison of the breaks of the wall and graining on 1967.35 supports the match.

It is always sweet to run into old friends in unexpected places, and this is how I feel about Liverpool 1967.35; an old friend, long lost, and now found again. It is with deep gratitude, and a sense of great loss that I dedicate this study to a dear friend we have lost, but whose name will always live. Thank you, Bill.¹³

Figures



Fig. 1: Liverpool Museum 1967.35. Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool (Liverpool Museum).

¹³ A reconstruction of the wall scene with restored fragment Liverpool 1967.35 will appear in *Epigraphic Survey, RILT 3, Upper Register and Miscellaneous Wall Fragments from the Colonnade Hall*, forthcoming.



Fig. 2: The barge of Mut (detail of prow) being towed by the barge of the queen, Luxor Temple Colonnade Hall western wall. photo by Ray Johnson.