

## Baboons as gifts, between Kyiv and Oxford

*Elizabeth Frood, Paul Docherty, and John Baines*

A reddish-hued black granite statue of a baboon has been a premier ancient Egyptian object in Kyiv since before 1900, when it was first published by one of the fathers of Egyptology in Cyrillic, Boris A. Turaev (Fig. 2). This statue, of which we became aware through a display of books from Ukraine in our library in spring 2022, was excellently studied by Olena Romanova in 2019.<sup>1</sup> The baboon sits in a conventional pose with his hands on his knees. The piece may be one of a pair with a statue in the Museo Gregoriano Egizio in the Vatican in Rome. Romanova considers them a royal temple gift from the 26th dynasty or a little later, probably once installed in an outer area of a temple. The Kyiv and Vatican statues are a little over 50 centimetres high and thus near to life size.

Here we offer in response and in homage a treatment of a much smaller-scale statue of a priest presenting a baboon, from the reign of Ramesses II, that was acquired by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1961 and is rather little known to



2. Reddish-black granite statue of a baboon. Height 52.4 cm. Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine, Inv. no. 352 ATK. Photo Myhaylo Andreev. © Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Б. А. Тураев [B. A. Turaev], *Записки Восточного отделения Императорского Русского археологического общества* [*Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniya Imperatorskogo Russkogo arkhеologicheskogo obshchestva*] 12, 1899, 179–217, 217 (not accessible to us); O. Romanova, *Orientalia* 88, 2019, 191–209, with full references.

scholarship, outside an insightful short study by Jaromir Malek, on which we attempt to build.<sup>2</sup> Our examination of the piece, which is difficult to study in detail because of the nature of the stone and the less than sharp carving, has been decisively advanced by the digital 3D model that Paul Docherty has constructed, and from which we illustrate samples.<sup>3</sup> We describe the statue, treat the inscriptions, and then discuss some issues that arise from its unusual character. We have benefited greatly from the corpus of New Kingdom statues of men with baboon elements in three and two dimensions assembled by Stephanie von Sachsen-Coburg in her 1999 Magisterarbeit (cited below without reference).<sup>4</sup> In giving parallels we use her numbers; see Table 1 below (p. 000).

## The Oxford statue: Model and description

The statue (figs. 1, 3–4) is made of a dense, veined limestone. Its owner was a priest of Thoth (*ḥm-ntr n ḏḥwtj*) whose name has disappeared together with the lower legs, feet, and plinth. The statue is 31 centimetres high and has lost perhaps a quarter of its bodily height; it would have been about one quarter lifesize.<sup>5</sup>

The digital 3D model allows fine details of its carving and traces of inscription at the breaks to be examined at high resolution and magni-

<sup>2</sup> J. Malek, *The Ashmolean* 16, 1989, 5–7; see also D. P. Silverman, in E. J. Brovarski, et al. (eds.), *Egypt's golden age: the art of living in the New Kingdom 1558–1085 B.C.*, 1982, 282, no. 387.

<sup>3</sup> For a URL for the model, please contact one of the authors.

<sup>4</sup> S. v. Sachsen-Coburg “Die Affenkappe als ikonographisches Element in der altägyptischen Rundplastik”, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München 1999. We are most grateful to the author for permission to cite her work. The dissertation was very kindly made available to us by Alexander Schütze.

<sup>5</sup> The statue is otherwise well preserved. Damage is limited to small chips, for example on the head of the baboon, the man's nose and chin, his sleeve, and perhaps his beaded sash. Patches of red, particularly on the baboon's figure, but also near the right hand of the owner and on his kilt, could either be paint traces or the result of depositional processes.



1. Ashmolean statue of a priest with a baboon  
(© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).

fication. The model was created using photogrammetry, which involved placing the statue on a turntable and photographing the surface using a Canon 5D Mark 2 digital SLR with a 100mm Macro lens. To ensure that specular highlights and reflections from the surface were kept to a minimum, the photography was carried out using a cross-polarisation technique whereby polarising filters are fitted to the lights and to the camera lens. A series of overlapping images was taken at 10-degree increments, traversing in linear bands from

the base to the top to ensure that the whole surface was captured. Photogrammetric processing was with Agisoft MetaShape Pro, producing a digital 3D model of the statue to scale. The model assisted study of the statue particularly by replacing the surface colour with a uniform tone that can be further modified through Surface Shaders. These include algorithms which work to enhance curvature, occlusion, displacement, and cavity. Each of these was used to further clarify the inscribed areas. It was also possible to extract the sash over the statue's left shoulder, where the inscriptions follow the curvature of the surface features, and flatten them out to make reading easier (Fig. 4).

The man stands with his left leg forward and his right arm to his side. His left hand supports the feet of the baboon, which sits around his



Fig. 3. Layout of the 3D model of the Oxford statue, with occlusion surface shaders. By Paul Docherty.

shoulders, rather as a human parent may carry a small child.<sup>6</sup> The baboon encircles the man's head and steadies itself with its hands held flat above the man's forehead. The faces of the man and the baboon align very closely. The baboon's mantle encompasses the area that might be occu-

<sup>6</sup> As noted by Malek 1989, 5.

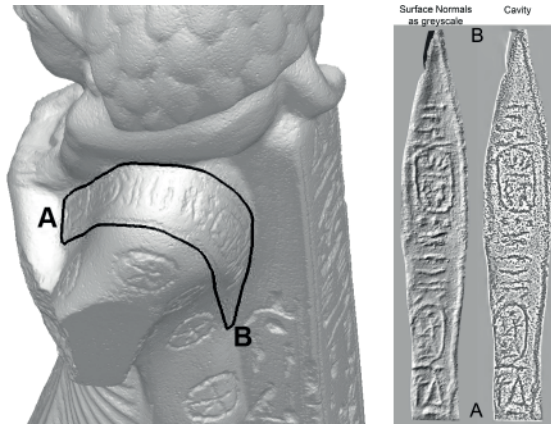


Fig. 4. Layout of the sash of the Oxford statue. By Paul Docherty.

ped by the man's wig, so that one cannot say whether he was wearing one or was imagined as bald-headed. A degree of fusion of baboon and man is apparent also in the linking of the baboon's feet with the man's large, almost boat-like hand, with its smooth cupped surface on which the baboon rests its hand-like feet. The view of this conjunction from the man's right appears "normal", but when viewed from above toward the statue's left, the man's hand is forward from his chest, with which it is linked by negative space. The fingers of this hand are fully and carefully carved on the underside even though they are scarcely visible.

The rather anthropomorphic eyes of the baboon, as well as its muzzle, are carefully modelled, with an artfully curved arc for the very broad mouth. The ruff on either side of the muzzle, a characteristic feature of hamadryas baboons, is modelled with horizontal wavy lines.<sup>7</sup> The mantle comes down to the top of the thighs, leaving the forearms, buttocks, and legs bare. Symmetrically patterned shapes on the mantle make a conventionalised rendering of the thick, brindled fur; in addition, five

<sup>7</sup> Romanova (2019, 206–207) observes that this decorative treatment of the mane, as well as that of the mantle, is characteristic of New Kingdom and earlier representations of baboons. The lack of such decoration on the Kyiv baboon is among the dating criteria she identifies.

long bands come down from the back of the head. This patterning resembles the braiding of human wigs without mimicking it. That the mane leaves the man's relatively large ears exposed makes for a further analogy between mane and wig. The slight flattening of the baboon's buttocks, most clearly visible from the side, indicates the thickened areas of skin (ischial callosities) characteristic especially of baboons. The tail wraps over the top of the back pillar, compressing the *sw* sign in the inscription, and then aligns against its right side. The legs, with their subtly modelled knees, grip either side of the man's head.

The man's face is modelled in a form typical of the reign of Ramesses II, with broad, flat cheeks and a mouth that is only slightly wider than the nose. He wears a fine, long tunic with wide, pleated sleeves on the upper arms; the shaped neckline is visible at his throat. He has a long pleated kilt, the waistband dipping below his navel, which is modelled through the fine fabric. The pleats are drawn up toward a protruding apron overlaid with a decorative beaded sash. A pleated undergarment finishes just above the lost ankles, sloping to end lower at the back. Both the kilt and the tunic have wide hem bands at the bottom. A panther skin, with the spots rendered as stars within circles, is draped across his left shoulder. The panther skin might have covered much of the left sleeve, but the elbow and part of the forearm are broken away. Moreover, the left surface of this arm is worked into a geometric plane, perhaps because of a flaw in the stone, or to allow the statue to fit into a tight space, possibly a shrine. This feature appears to be original, not a later adaptation.<sup>8</sup> The panther's head rests just above the man's navel, with a schematically rendered front paw to its right; the left paw would be tucked under the man's left arm and thus invisible. The skin's rear legs and paws extend around the body on either side, up to the apron, and its tail falls on the right to the bottom of the back pillar.

<sup>8</sup> Compare M. Eaton-Krauss / K. Jansen-Winkeln, *MDAIK* 57, 2001, 1–13, 13, who suggest that the rubbing across the shoulders on this Third Intermediate Period block statue could have been caused by wedging it between two other statues.

Over the man's left shoulder, on top of the panther skin, is a sash bearing tiny and faintly inscribed titles and cartouches of Ramesses II (see below); the prenomen is visible on the front of the statue, while the nomen is on the back. In his right hand the man holds a small, squarish, stick-like object, probably a longer version of the filler in many fistful hands,<sup>9</sup> as well as a folded cloth. These two elements are perhaps combined unusually because the man's left hand cannot hold anything while supporting the baboon's feet.

The back pillar, which begins high up behind the man's neck, must have extended to the statue's base. It bears a single column of inscription, consisting of an offering formula to Thoth. This text continues in two further columns on the pillar's left side. At least two groups of hieroglyphs are lost from the bottom of each column, and it is likely that the final column on the left, as well as other inscriptions on the lost base, would have given the owner's name, as well as perhaps additional titles.

## The inscriptions

The statue's back pillar, together with its left side, bears most of the surviving inscriptions. The sash with titles and cartouches of Ramesses II is at a much smaller scale and is more part of the man's clothing than something that was intended to be read. Its arrangement on the statue, which we discuss briefly, is striking. Here we offer a normalized transcription of the inscriptions on the back pillar, as well as a rendering from the 3D model in which the hieroglyphs emerge clearly (Fig. 3). Just a few signs, some of them at the break at the bottom of the columns, are difficult to read.

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<sup>9</sup> See H. G. Fischer, *MMJ* 10, 1975, 143–55.

## Back pillar, rear and left surface

(1) *h̄tp-dj-njsw dhwty nb h̄mnw*  
*dj.f ḥꜥw nfr hr šms k3w.f*  
*r3 mh m df3w n dd.f*

[at least two groups lost]

(2) *jm3hy m3(?) m h̄tp*  
*n k3 n hsy ʿ3 n ntr.f-njwty*  
*nb nmtt m st [dsrt]*

[at least two groups lost]

(3) *stp tsw*  
*hm-ntr n dhwty sh-[...]-ntr*  
 [at least two groups lost]

(1) An offering which the king gives to Thoth,  
 lord of Hermopolis,  
 that he may grant (the owner) a perfect life-  
 time pursuing his (Thoth's) sustenance,<sup>a</sup>  
 the (owner's) mouth being full of the provi-  
 sions of his giving,  
 [... ...]<sup>b</sup>

(2) truly (?)<sup>c</sup> revered in peace;  
 for the *ka* of one greatly favoured of his local  
 god,  
 controller of movement in the [sacred] place<sup>d</sup>  
 [... ...]

(3) one judicious of phrase,  
 priest of Thoth, scribe of god's (?) [...]<sup>e</sup>  
 [N, true of voice]



- a) As Malek observes,<sup>10</sup> the plural orthography of *ka* with the loaf determinative makes a play on the conventional formulation of this wish requesting that the individual be in the following of the god's *ka*.<sup>11</sup> This pun is then extended by the following verse describing the mouthful of offerings. A parallel pairing of these verses, but with a conventional orthography for *k3*, is an offering formula addressed to Amun-Re on the left side of the back pillar of a statue of a palace doorkeeper Piay, dated by Ahmed M. Mekawy Ouda to the 19th dynasty and thus from the same period as our piece.<sup>12</sup> Another statue, likely also belonging to Piay, uses a comparable formula to a different effect, requesting that Werethekau “grant that my body be enduring in the following of her *k3w*, (my) mouth whole and (my) movement(s) in their proper place, until (I) attain a state of veneration” (*dj.s rwd h<sup>c</sup>w.j m \$ms k3w.s r3(.j) wd3 nmtt(.j) r st.s r pht(.j) jm3h*).<sup>13</sup> Here the plural orthography of *ka*, without the loaf, evokes the goddess's name and perhaps the orthography of *h<sup>c</sup>w* “body”. Significant analysis of *ka* as substance, its implications for social relations in earlier sources, and connections with sustenance: Olabarria 2018.
- b) There are clear traces of a horizontal line immediately below the *f*, but we have no restoration to offer. Modelling the overall amount of loss is difficult. The back pillar would have continued to the statue's base, probably with the inscription running to its top, or less likely ending just above. Since the ankles and feet are missing, two or three

<sup>10</sup> Malek 1989, 7.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. W. Barta, *Aufbau und Bedeutung der altägyptischen Opferformel*, 1968, 153, no. 151g; 155, no. 176b. Sachsen-Coburg 1999, 79 n. 156, suggests it could also be a play with formulae that request *hr \$sp k3w*, as also preferred by J. Auenmüller, “Ein Beitrag zur regionalen Prosopografie des Neuen Reiches (III): Auswärtige und lokale Eliten im Tempelbezirk von Hermopolis”, 2018, 1–27, 3.

<sup>12</sup> A. M. Mekawy Ouda, *SAK* 44, 2015, 283–95, 294–95; the museum website gives the reign of Tutankhamun on the basis of style: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010006262>.

<sup>13</sup> The most detailed treatment of this text is J. J. Clère, *JEA* 54, 1968, 135–48; see also V. Rondot, *RdE* 62, 2011, 141–50. Mekawy Ouda argues convincingly that both statues belonged to the same man.

- groups are probably lost. The text on the left side of the back pillar continues that on the back, but it is not easy to suggest a linking phrase for the missing area.
- c) The sign here seems to be miscarved and is difficult to identify. We tentatively suggest emending to  $m^3c$ , on the basis of an epithet in the broadly contemporaneous tomb of Amennakht at Deir el-Medina (TT218; Rickal 2005, II, 48): “I am one truly revered ( $jnk\ jm^3hy\ m^3c$ )” (KRI VII, 208, 16). Reading  $nfr$ , “perfectly revered” or perhaps even  $hrw$  (𓂏 P8) “revered of voice” could be suggested, but we have found no parallel for either.
- d) The nonroyal epithet  $nb\ nmtt$ , “controller of movement”, is well attested from the New Kingdom (e.g. Rickal 2005, II, 540–41). We follow Johannes Auenmüller’s (2018, 3) suggestion of “sacred place” here. The hook-like trace immediately preceding the certain  $t$  is closer in shape to a cobra head than to Malek’s restoration of the sparrow for  $wrt$ , “great place”.
- e) The reading of this sequence is problematic; the traces below  $sh$ -[...]  $ntr$  are illegible to us. Malek (1989, 5) renders “scribe of the god’s revenues”, perhaps thinking of an 18th dynasty “scribe of the god’s offerings (of Thoth, Lord of Hermopolis)” (Zivie 1975, 339). As written, they may read  $hm-ntr\ n\ dhwtj\ sh\ ntr$  [...], for which we tentatively suggest a partial translation above, with a lost continuation. Auenmüller (2018, 3) reads  $hm-ntr\ n\ dhwtj\ sh$ -[ $mdw$ -]  $ntr$ . We are more cautious, in view of the rarity of this epithet for Thoth (LGG VI, 601–2), but if correct, it would fit with the artful use of language in the inscription.

## Titulary on sash over shoulder

The sash inscription is right-facing on the front and left-facing on the back, an arrangement that suits its position on the statue but would not occur on a real sash.

*nb t3wy wsr-m3<sup>c</sup>t-r<sup>c</sup> dj 5nh*

*nb h<sup>c</sup>w r<sup>c</sup>-[ms-sw] mry-jmn*

Lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre, given life

Lord of appearances/crowns,<sup>a</sup> Ra[messes]-meriamun, forever



a) What are rendered in the copy as dots beneath *h<sup>c</sup>w* should be understood as a way of carving strokes at a micro-scale.

The distribution of *dj 5nh* and *dt* between the front and back of the sash to form ‘given life forever’ is typical of ornamentally organized titularies and might, for example, have been adapted from a model for inscription on a small object. A good parallel from the reign of Ramesses II is on a block statue of a Piay in the British Museum (EA46).<sup>14</sup>

The titulary on the sash is difficult to read but conventional in character. The most unusual feature is perhaps the prenomen, which lacks the normal element *stp.n-r<sup>c</sup>*. That form, which is typical of the first years of reign of Ramesses II, should probably not be used as a dating criterion for the statue: the additional group could have been omitted as not fitting at the miniature scale. As noted above, the inscription probably indicates that priestly attire of this type would have an inscribed sash, rather than being there to be read. Nonetheless, the organization, with no text upside down and the two halves complementing each other to form a complete titulary, is one example among many of the subtlety of design of this statue, as well as probably of the need to treat the living

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA46](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA46).

king's name properly. Moreover, the inscription's content complements that of the back pillar, with cartouches appearing only on the sash. This distribution is relevant to a statue but not to a living context. Instead, the statue creates a rich and idealized form for a perpetual commemoration of both donor and baboon.

## Discussion

Sachsen-Coburg has assembled a corpus of ten Ramessid statues and one Late Period fragment (no. 2) that fuse three- or two-dimensional figures of baboons around the head of their owners. Of these, nine have the baboon seated on the owner's shoulders. The statues vary considerably in type, treatment, material, and size, as illustrated in Table 1. Thus, while the baboon motif is not common, it was used diversely for statues of nonroyal individuals and one royal son, from a small scale up to roughly lifesize (nos. 1, 3, 7). We focus our comments on issues arising from studying the Oxford statue.

S-C	Current location	Date (dyn.)	Main title and name	Pose/statue type	Material	Dimensions (cm)	Provenance
1	Berlin, Neues Museum 2284 <sup>15</sup>	19-20	Unfinished	Kneeling, theophorous	Limestone	H. 111	-
2	Hanover, Kestner Museum 1935.200.517 <sup>16</sup>	26?	-	-	Siltstone (?)	H. (max): 12.8	-
3	Cairo, Egyptian Museum CG 42162 <sup>17</sup>	20	<i>hm-ntr tpy n jmn r<sup>c</sup>-mss-nbt</i>	Scribe	Black granite	H. 80; L. 43; D. 39	Karnak Cachette
4	Paris, Louvre E12057 <sup>18</sup>	19-20	unfinished?	Block	Limestone	H. 38; L. 24.3; D. 24.6	Tuna el-Gebel
5	Paris, Louvre E25413 <sup>19</sup>	19	<i>s<sup>3</sup> njsw r<sup>c</sup>-ms-sw-s<sup>3</sup>-ptlh</i>	Block	Quartzite	H. 33.4; L. 19.6; D. 24.7	el-Ashmunein?
6	Paris, Louvre E25398 <sup>20</sup>	19	<i>jmy-r<sup>3</sup> ms<sup>c</sup> jwp<sup>3</sup></i>	Scribe	Basalt	H. (max): 28.1; L. 15.9; 12.9	el-Ashmunein?
7	Paris, Louvre A 67 <sup>21</sup>	19	<i>hm-ntr-tpy n wsjr jwjw</i>	Kneeling, naophorous	Red granite	H. 111; L. 37; D. 47.7	Abydos
8	New York, MMA 29.2.16 <sup>22</sup>	19-20	unfinished?	Scribe	Black granite	H. 22;	Qurna, Thebes?
9	Oxford, Ashmolean Museum AN1961.536	19	<i>hm-ntr dhwty</i>	Standing	Limestone	H. (max.): 31	el-Ashmunein?
10	Turin, Museo Egizio 3019 <sup>23</sup>	19-20	<i>sdm-c<sup>s</sup></i>	Block	Limestone	H. 48; L. 17; D. 25.5	Deir el-Medina/el-Ashmunein?
11	- <sup>24</sup>	19	(not known)	Standing	Wood	H. (max): 35.8	-

Table 1. Statues of men with baboons around their head/shoulder area. After Sachsen-Coburg 1999.

<sup>15</sup> PM 8, 2, 585, 801–636–020; S. Morenz, *Gott und Mensch im alten Ägypten*, 2nd ed. 1984, pl. 49 (not included in the 1964 first edition).

<sup>16</sup> Unpublished. We are most grateful to Christian Loeben for information.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/bases/cachette/ck9>

<sup>18</sup> <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010017605>; with n. 25 below.

<sup>19</sup> <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010010605>

<sup>20</sup> <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004035>

<sup>21</sup> <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010008068>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544748>; N. Allon, *JARCE* 49, 2013, 93–112.

<sup>23</sup> PM 8, 2, 619, 801-643-590; R. Schulz, *Die Entwicklung und Bedeutung des kuboiden Statuentypus: eine Untersuchung zu den sogenannten "Würfelhockern"*, 1992, I, 521, no. 320; II, pl. 135c.

<sup>24</sup> Christie's sales catalogues, December 9, 1992, 76, no. 161; July 7, 1993, 53, no. 135 (with smaller reproduction of the same photograph as 1992). The statue had been among a number of Egyptian objects collected by the Australian artist Sidney Nolan. The catalogues do not mention any inscription.

The composition of the Oxford statue integrates man and baboon to a remarkable degree. While Romanova notes an anthropomorphising tendency for some later baboon statues, including the one in Kyiv, the Oxford statue realises these possibilities more strongly than any other in the group. The closest parallel is the wooden statue sold at auction more than once in the 1990s and now presumably in a private collection (no.

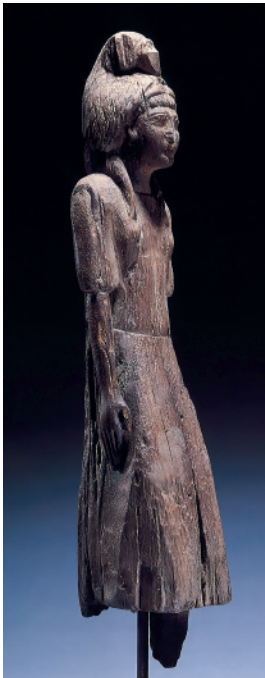


Fig. 5. Wooden standing statue with a baboon (no. 11 in Table 1: after Christie's sale catalogue, December 9, 1992, 76).

11; Fig. 5). At 35.8 cm, it is larger than the Ashmolean piece, with probably more lost from the garment and lower legs than is the case with the latter. The "slight traces of gilding on the face and neck" mentioned in the catalogues point to a very high-status object. The baboon sits on the man's shoulders, but its front paws are on the wig, so the integration is slightly less full than on our statue. The man's arms are held to his side, and the effect of mutual support is not as strong. It is possible that the statue is among the very small number of surviving wooden temple statues, and the gilding could support this. However, its survival is suggestive of a tomb context, for which the role of Thoth in the afterlife could be meaningful. Only two statues in the corpus have an archaeological provenance, and only one certainly from a temple – Ramesesnakht from the Karnak Cachette (no. 3) – but a temple setting is likely for most, including the Oxford statue.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The four statues in our table with "el-Ashmunein?" follow Auenmüller's suggestions, which he bases on internal evidence: 2018, 3–5 (the Oxford statue is his doc. 4), with 6–7 n. 42 for the Turin statue (no. 10). Since it is likely that the anonymous Louvre statue from Tuna el-Gebel (no. 4) came from a tomb (with J. Auenmüller, "Ein Beitrag zur regionalen Prosopographie des Neuen Reiches (I): die provinzielle Elite von

The three-dimensional presentation of the baboon may have a different but related range of meanings from the examples in two-dimensional relief on wigs (nos. 2, 7). Images on statue wigs from before the first millennium BCE are rare.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the life-size kneeling statue of Yuyu (no. 7), which has a figure of a seated baboon carved on either side of the wig, is an outlier in this corpus. It can be compared with two 19th dynasty block statues, also possibly from Abydos, which have striding figures of deities on either side of the wigs; one of them an ibis-headed Thoth.<sup>27</sup> This treatment complements trends of the Ramessid period in which the statue owner's body – mostly its clothed areas – is a site for images of deities and scenes of adoration.<sup>28</sup> The large hieroglyphs on the sides and back of Yuyu's body, almost on the scale of temple hieroglyphs and occurring also on the Turin statue (no. 10; Fig. 6), may be a similar development. The salient features of Yuyu's statue and of the life-size Berlin piece (no. 1) are the donor's presentations of figures of Osiris.<sup>29</sup> In these examples, the presented figure counterbalances those of the donor and the baboon, accentuating their merged identity. The Louvre block

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Tuna el-Gebel und Hermopolis", 2020, 47), the owner's name and titles would have been provided by the context.

<sup>26</sup> H. Brandl, *Untersuchungen zur steinernen Privatplastik der dritten Zwischenzeit: Typologie, Ikonographie, Stilistik*, 2008, I, 399, 434–35 (including Yuyu).

<sup>27</sup> The statue including Thoth was formerly in the Liverpool City Museum 13511 (destroyed in World War II): R. Schulz, *Die Entwicklung und Bedeutung des kuboiden Statuentypus: eine Untersuchung zu den sogenannten "Würfelhockern"*, 1992 I, 362 no. 208; II, pl. 93b. The other is Bologna 1810: S. Pernigotti, *La statuaria egiziana nel Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna*, 1980, 47–48, pls. 58–61; Schulz 1992, I, 85–86, no. 023; II pl. 8a. A 22nd dynasty statue head has a comparable treatment, but with five captioned deities: Brandl 2008, 71–72 no. O-5.1.2, II, pls. 28–29; also M. Minas, "Käfer krönen Köpfe: zum Skarabäus in der Plastik des Neuen Reiches", 2002, II, 810–23. A related elaboration of the wig is the paired *meret*-figures on the lappets of a statue of Amenmose, royal scribe under Ramesses II, from the western delta: L. Habachi, "The royal scribe Amenmose, son of Penzerti and Mutemonet: his monuments in Egypt and abroad", 1976, 83–103, 91–92, fig. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Study by Elizabeth Froid in preparation.

<sup>29</sup> One interpretation of the two-dimensional scenes of an uncaptioned figure, presumably the owner and/or a son, standing in adoration of Osiris, on the front and sides of the block statue from Tuna el-Gebel (no. 4), is that they could achieve a similar range of meanings more cheaply and compactly.



Fig. 6. Block statue with a baboon (Table 1, no. 10, height 48 cm: courtesy of the Museo Egizio, Turin).

statue of a son of Ramesses II and possible future king (no. 5) integrates even more diverse divine forms, with standing raised relief figures of the deities Shepses and Nehmetawy on the front of the knees and two-dimensional seated figures of his father and grandfather before offering tables, one on each side of the body.

Whereas those statues sacralize the presentation of the owner and relate to a temple setting, the merged three-dimensional baboon does something rather different. A fragmentary small statue of a man with a jackal over his head, as if protectively guarding him, may offer the closest match with our statues,<sup>30</sup> but humans cannot identify with jackals as much as with baboons. As Sachsen-Coburg remarks (pp. 7, 97), baboons are aggressive and could hardly be ordinary pets – unlike other simian species for which there is ample evidence<sup>31</sup> – so that a subjective and emotional attachment might be limited. Nonetheless, in the ancient and modern world seemingly unsuitable species, including some big cats, are sometimes kept as pets, and one should not rule out the possibility of commensal relationships, of a kind that people have with a still wider range of other non-human animals. Baboons were presumably kept in temple complexes – although New Kingdom evidence is lacking – whereas Old Kingdom tomb scenes include often playful depictions

<sup>30</sup> <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010008839>

<sup>31</sup> See notably J. Vandier d'Abbadie, *RdE* 16, 17, 18, 1964–66, 146–77, 77–88, 43–201.

of human–baboon interactions.<sup>32</sup> In some sense, a baboon might perhaps be a man’s “familiar”, whether or not he would carry it over his shoulders. Perhaps the Old Kingdom playfulness has partial parallels in the Ramessid statues. A figured ostrakon from the Valley of the Kings, discussed by Ludwig Morenz, is a much later and delightful example that seems at first to be connected to the statues.<sup>33</sup> A man standing with a pen in his forward hand appears to be drafting human figures, of which three in different stages of elaboration and execution are shown in front of him (Fig. 7). His backward arm is raised to support a monkey, possibly a baboon, that is seated on his backward shoulder with both legs together. The monkey seems to be playing a double flute. This is not a role associated with Thoth, so it is unlikely that the drawing relates directly to the statues discussed here although it may comment humorously on them.



7. Limestone ostrakon from the Valley of the Kings, with figures drafted in red and black. Cairo CG 25138. After Daressy 1901, pl. xxvii.

<sup>32</sup> Malek 1989, 6; J. Maître, *Égypte, Afrique & Orient* 89, 2018, 43–52, with references; see also, for the tomb of Nefer: Y. Harpur, et al., *The chapel of Nefer & Kahay: scene details*, 2015, 76–77 detail nos. 100–101; 130, detail no. 169; Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep: Y. Harpur / P. Scremin, *The chapel of Niankhkhnum & Khnumhotep: scene details*, 2010, 155, detail nos. 164–65.

<sup>33</sup> L. D. Morenz, *Kultur- und mediengeschichtliche Essays zu einer Archäologie der Schrift: von den frühneolithischen Zeichensystemen bis zu den frühen Schriftsystemen in Ägypten und dem Vorderen Orient* (2013), 35–42, with 38 fig. 5. We are very grateful to the author for bringing his discussion and this example to our attention. Original publication: G. Daressy, *Ostraca* (1901), 28, pl. xxvii, no. CG 25138.

In a different perspective, the baboon signifies something important about the statue owner's role, which could be scribal, priestly, or both. He displays himself as relating to Thoth, but it is difficult to assess what this means for the baboon's identity. If the baboon were a manifestation of Thoth, it would be surprising for someone to be shown so physically close to a deity, relatively soon after scenes of non-royal individuals offering directly to deities became more frequent in the post-Amarna period. Moreover, the baboon faces in the same direction as the owner, which would not fit with conventions of separation of the human and the divine. Thus, for all its seeming liveliness and clinging to the owner, the baboon may have more the character of an emblem than of a living being directly connected with Thoth.

Our statues probably build upon the development in the 18th dynasty of naophorous, theophorous, and sistrophorous forms.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the ibis-headed figure of Thoth could not easily be connected intimately to a human being, the baboon form offered more potential. A donor could be depicted presenting a baboon statue on a plinth, as in three examples of the reign of Amenhotep III discussed by Cédric Larcher.<sup>35</sup> Two of these wear a crown or preserve a fixing for one, and so depict Thoth as a lunar deity. A related presentation of a baboon on a stand is attested in small statue groups of the same period that show a scribe or scribes at work under the guardianship of a baboon that signifies Thoth.<sup>36</sup> Auenmüller convincingly argues that many of these statues with baboons came from the temple of Thoth at el-Ashmunein, suggesting that local factors influ-

<sup>34</sup> E. Bernhauer, *Innovationen in der Privatplastik: die 18. Dynastie und ihre Entwicklung*, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> C. Larcher, *ZÄS* 143, 2016, 60–76, with references.

<sup>36</sup> E. Delange, *Le scribe Nebmeroutef*, 1996; Allon 2013; for baboon figures depicted in a scribal office in a Ramessid Theban tomb, see L. Borchardt, *ZÄS* 44, 1907, 59–61.

enced the iconography.<sup>37</sup> There are also Ramessid and later naophorous statues with baboons.<sup>38</sup>

A distinctive feature of the Oxford statue is the way the man holds the baboon's feet. This gesture could have a double meaning: he both holds and presents the baboon, but similarity with the gesture on New Kingdom "bald" statues suggests that his cupped hand could imply entreaty – even begging<sup>39</sup> – to receive merited benefits if he is giving the animal to his deity. But such a reading is uncertain. It is not known whether people donated baboons to Thoth in the New Kingdom, but that possibility is suggested by the significant number of statues of this type. It is as if the earlier groups, discussed by Larcher, which most probably show the presentation of a baboon statue, have been transformed into fusions of donor and baboon.

We conclude with one further interpretive question. Both temple and tomb statues were intended to signify their owners' identity in perpetuity and to benefit them. Would a baboon, as an avatar of Thoth that could be depicted in symbiosis with the owner, have special significance in this connection? The god's associations with righteousness and judgment after death could have a powerful meaning for the hereafter, perhaps even constraining a favourable reception there. Protection is a crucial aspect of this meaning, as has often been observed for these statues,<sup>40</sup> but for the Oxford statue it operates in two directions: the man supports the baboon as much as it can be understood as protecting him. A sharing of purposes between donor and the figure that is offered has often been suggested for the deities in naophorous and theophorous statues, but no known text from before the 26th dynasty expresses such an idea.<sup>41</sup> In all

<sup>37</sup> Auenmüller 2018, 6, who notes that Ramessesnakht's (no. 3) family originated in el-Ashmunein, so that he could have brought these ideas to Theban workshops.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. a statue of Kha from Abydos: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/c1010007886>. See also Auenmüller 2018, 5, nos. 14, 18.

<sup>39</sup> J. J. Clère, *Les chauves d'Hathor*, 1995; with especially D. Franke, *OMRO* 68, 1988, 59–76.

<sup>40</sup> For example: Malek 1989; Sachsen-Coberg 1999; Allon 2013; Auenmüller 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Bernhauer 2010, 61, 66.

the playful subtlety of the Oxford statue, this mutual care is arguably the most extraordinary element.

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