

# Zeichen aus dem Sand

Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte  
zu Ehren von Günter Dreyer

Herausgegeben von  
Eva-Maria Engel, Vera Müller  
und Ulrich Hartung



MENES

Studien zur Kultur und Sprache  
der ägyptischen Frühzeit und des Alten Reiches

Harrassowitz Verlag

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Band 5

Herausgegeben von  
Eva-Maria Engel  
und Jochem Kahl

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# A STATUE OF MENKAURE FOUND IN LUXOR

Zahi Hawass

(Tafeln 2-3)

*Günter Dreyer has contributed significantly to the field of Egyptology. He has spent many years re-excavating the royal tombs of the Early Dynastic period at Abydos. More recently, in cooperation with Ali Radwan, he has begun studying the royal tombs of Dynasty 2 at Saqqara. I became acquainted with Dr. Dreyer for the first time while I was the Director of Giza and Saqqara, when I traveled to Germany many years ago. I was Günter Dreyer's guest in Berlin, and was able to see this wonderful city through his eyes. He is a fine man as well as an important scholar, and we have remained good friends over the years. Originally, I wanted to publish my work on the tombs of Dynasty 1 at Saqqara for this Festschrift, but then realized that additional work still needed to be done. For this reason, I decided instead to contribute an article on a statue of Menkaure recently confiscated in Luxor. This statue appears to have been carved originally to be set up in the key Predynastic site of Nekhen, and so is an appropriate gift for a specialist in the earliest periods of Egypt's pharaonic history. It is to Günter Dreyer that I dedicate this article.*

## INTRODUCTION

The statue of Menkaure was found on February 19, 2004 in Luxor, in the possession of antiquities dealer Abu Mohammed Ali in Luxor. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain any further information from the dealer about its original provenance. The statue was then taken from the antiquities dealer to the storage facility of the Department of Antiquities in Luxor on March 17, 2004. It was registered as object no. 87 in the Karnak Egyptian Antiquities Register on January 24, 2006. The statue is now located in the storage facility for court cases in Karnak (case no. 4785 for 2004, Luxor). There are a few Egyptologists who believe this statue to be a forgery. I, on the other hand, believe that it is authentic; I present it here so that others can study it and come to their own conclusions.

## I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The statue represents Menkaure, the builder of the third pyramid at Giza (Pls. 2-3). He is shown sitting on a seat without a back, his feet resting on a rectangular base. The statue was broken in two just below the belt of the kilt, but has now been restored. It is made of diorite gneiss (“Khafre’s diorite”), which has an unusual dark bluish hue with white veins. The stone for the statue was probably taken from the site in Toshka known traditionally as Khafre’s quarry<sup>1</sup>.

Menkaure is shown wearing the *nemes* headdress and a trapezoidal royal beard. A uraeus has been carved flat against the front of his *nemes* headdress. The king wears the royal *shendyt* kilt. His right hand holds a folded cloth<sup>2</sup>, while his left hand is extended flat on his lap. On either side of the seat, beside the king’s legs, are inscriptions giving his name and titles, which continue down onto the base beside the feet of the king (see Fig. 1, Pl. 1a).

Measurements:	Height of statue with base and seat: 66cm
	Height of seat: 28cm
	Width of seat: 19.5cm
	Depth of seat: 25cm
	Base below the feet: 24.5 x 17.5cm

## II. DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

Menkaure is shown wearing the *nemes* headdress, which is undecorated on the upper part and has horizontal striations on the lappets (Pls. 2-3). Well-modeled sideburns are indicated below the band of the *nemes*. On top of the headdress is a cobra with an open hood, carved primarily flat against the head, with only the face in high relief. The body of the snake has been indicated in a series of undulating loops across the top of the head. In the back, the queue of the *nemes* is decorated with nine horizontal striations.

The narrow forehead below the *nemes* protrudes slightly. The eyes are widely spaced, and are relatively straight at the bottom and arched above. The inner canthi are indicated by short horizontal lines. The upper eyelids appear swollen. The eyeballs appear to bulge slightly, and the lower eyelids are shown as raised with a slight depression below. The artist has emphasized the bottom edge of the eyebrow rather than the upper edge, conveying a natural look. In general, the right side is more fully modeled than the left side, suggesting that the statue was never completely finished. The greater

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1 For a discussion of Khafre’s quarry, see HARRELL, *Diorite and Related Rocks*, 395-396.

2 For a discussion on this type of folded cloth and others, see FISCHER, in: *AEMMJ* I-II, 1968-1976, 148ff.

modeling of the right side is apparent in the carving of the right eye, especially its lower eyelid.

The face is a rounded square. The cheeks of the statue are accentuated, but the cheekbones are soft, giving the statue the appearance of youth. The bridge of the nose is thin, and the wide nostrils of the statue have folds on either side, clearly delineating the cheek area. The artist has modeled the nose in a realistic manner; this is still evident although the base of the nose has been damaged. The lips are shown as full, and are closed in a slight smile.

The ears are large, and have almost no lobes. There is a slight difference in the modeling of the left ear as compared with the right one. The outer ridge of the right ear is rounded and somewhat wide, with the interior shown naturally. The left ear has a curving outer line.

The chin is square, giving the king a strong visage that communicates regal dignity. The lines of both the jaw and the chin are beautifully modeled. The chin is slightly raised in the middle where the beard is attached. The beard is trapezoidal in shape with the bottom wider than the top. It is also connected to the neck but is broken on its left side. Although beards were generally decorated with horizontal striations during this era, the surface of the beard here is not carved, again perhaps an indication that the statue was not finished.

Menkaure's body is strong, elegant, and well-modeled (see Pls. 2-3). Its lines are beautifully carved with a smooth transition between the neck, shoulders, and chest. His neck is simple yet powerful. The shoulders are also shown as strong and wide. The chest is carved in a natural manner, and the stomach muscles are indicated. Taken as a whole, the torso is carved in an idealistic manner that conveys the power of the king, who has the right of divine rule.

Menkaure's arms, especially his forearms, are muscular; a break passes through them at waist level. The right hand is placed vertically on Menkaure's right leg and holds a folded cloth, while the left lies flat on his left thigh. The hands are well defined, with long, thin fingers. The right hand is more completely modeled than the left.

The belt of the *shendyt* kilt is raised and rather wide. The now-restored break is located just below the belt. It is believed that this break occurred during antiquity. The antiquities dealer who had this statue in his house tried to restore the break. However, the statue was broken again when the police entered his house to remove it.

The kilt is decorated with vertical lines that follow the contours of the body on the front and sides. The central panel of the kilt, visible between the king's knees, is carved with horizontal lines.

The legs, particularly the knees, are well-modeled, typical of Menkaure's statues. They are also naturalistically carved, in keeping with the powerful treatment of his divine body. The feet are also beautifully modeled.

The back of the statue also exhibits strong modeling, similar to the front (Pl. 2b). The deltoid muscles are indicated, and there is a groove between the dorsal muscles.

Detailed Measurements:    Height of head from the top of the cobra to below the chin: 10cm  
    Width of right eye: 2.7cm  
    Width of left eye: 2.5cm  
    Width of nose: 2cm  
    Width of face at level of ears: 7.5cm  
    Width of face at level of cheeks from the two sides: 6.5cm  
    Maximum width of *nemes* below the ears: 16cm  
    Length of beard: 3.5cm  
    Width of beard at the top: 2cm  
    Length of right and left ears: 3.5cm  
    Width of right shoulder: 6.5cm  
    Width of left shoulder: 6.5cm  
    Width of chest at the breast: 15.3cm  
    Thickness of left arm's muscle: 5.8cm

   Length of two arms:  
    Right: 17.5cm; Left: 17.4cm

   Length of leg from the top of the knee to the foot:  
    Right leg: 24cm; Left leg: 24.2cm

   Length of feet:  
    Right foot: 12cm; Left foot: 12cm

### III. INSCRIPTIONS

Menkaure sits on a square seat without a back<sup>3</sup> (see Pls. 2-3a). Inscriptions are carved vertically on the front of the seat beside his legs, and extend onto the statue base beside his feet (Fig. 1; Pls. 2-3). These read:

Left: *Hr k3-ht nswt bjtj Mn-k3w-r dj ʿnh dt*,

“Horus, body of the bull, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkaure, given life forever”

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3 Compare with the statuette of Khufu, see HAWASS, *The Khufu Statuette: Is it an Old Kingdom Sculpture?*

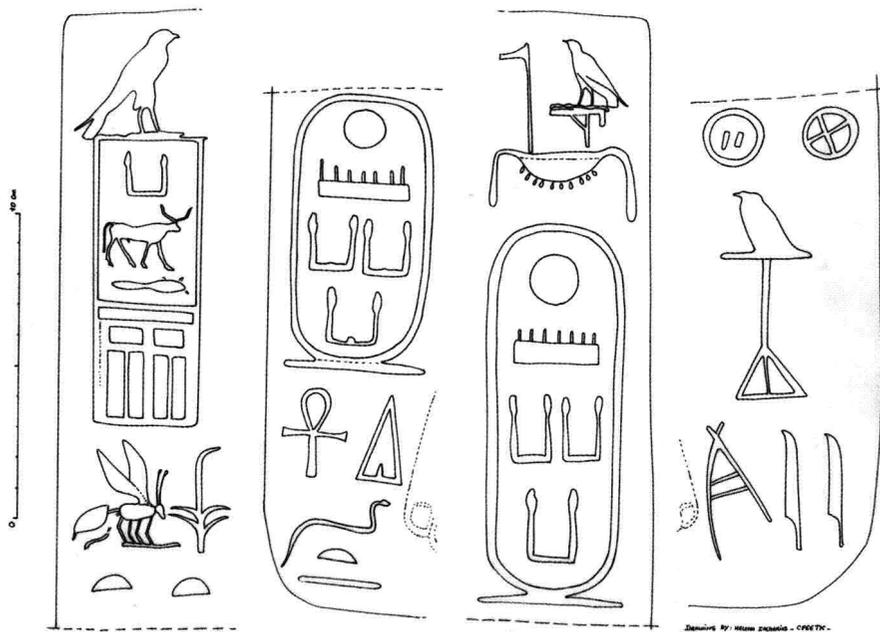
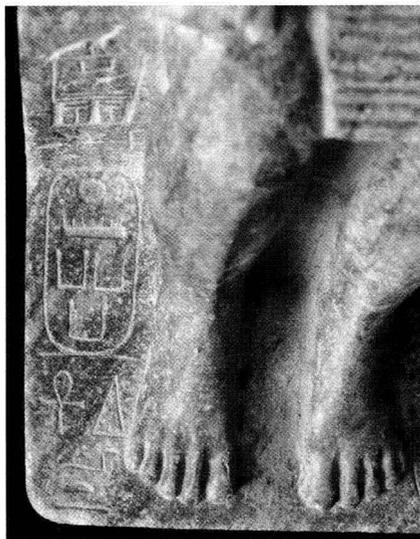


Fig. 1: Statue of Menkaure, inscriptions.

Right: *nṯr nbw-nṯrj Mn-kꜣw-rꜥ mrj-(n) Ḥr nḥn*,  
 “The golden Horus, Menkaure, beloved of Horus of Nekhen”<sup>4</sup>

Most of the hieroglyphic signs are inscribed carefully, such as the sign of the bull in the Horus name, although there is little interior detail.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In my opinion, this statue clearly displays the features of Menkaure<sup>5</sup>, and compares well to other sculptures of this king that are datable through their archaeological contexts. The face is almost square, and the cheekbones are high, although not as pronounced as on other examples of the king’s statuary (cf. for example, MFA 11.1738). This best matches a head thought to be of a youthful Menkaure (MFA 09.203)<sup>6</sup>. The flat uraeus with only the head in high relief also compares well to this piece. The bridge of Menkaure’s nose here, as in other examples of his sculpture, is generally thin, with a wide base (broken on our statue). The eyes are wide-set; their slight bulge, more apparent here on the right, resembles that seen on other known statues, for example the colossal seated statue of calcite in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 09.204)<sup>7</sup> or the dyad of Menkaure and his queen in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 11.1738)<sup>8</sup>.

Overall, Menkaure is shown here with a kind face, perhaps reflecting his desire to be seen as a benevolent ruler. This matches well with other statues from his reign, such as the dyad of the king with his queen (MFA 11.1738)<sup>9</sup> and the triads of the king with Hathor and nome deities<sup>10</sup>. The slight smile also compares well to the youthful calcite head from Boston (MFA 09.203). The statue’s face and the features, especially on the right side, resemble the treatment of the dyad of Menkaure and his queen in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 11.1738)<sup>11</sup>. The similarity in the modeling of Menkaure’s

4 This is the only known attestation of this title, see VON BECKERATH, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*, 53-54 (6), 170-180.

5 For a discussion of the facial features of Menkaure, see REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 127-128.

6 See ROHRIG, *Head of King Menkaure as a Young Man*, 274-276 (70).

7 For the colossal, alabaster seated statue (MFA 09.204), see REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 108 (A1), pls. 12-16a; SMITH, *Ancient Egypt as represented in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 43, 49, fig. 24.

8 For the dyad of Menkaure and his queen (MFA 11.1738), see REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 110 (17), pls. 54-60; ZIEGLER, *King Menkaure and a Queen*, 268-271 (67).

9 See footnote 7.

10 For the triads of the king with Hathor and nome deities, see REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 35, 37, 42, 49, 109-110 (9-15), pls. 36-46, 64h; LABBÉ-TOUTÉE/ZIEGLER, *Triad of King Menkaure*, 272-273 (68).

11 See REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 110 (17), pls. 55-60; ZIEGLER, *King Menkaure and A Queen*, 268-271 (67) for the dyad of Menkaure and his queen.

legs with other Old Kingdom statues in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston is also apparent<sup>12</sup>.

The statue under discussion here also bears the stamp of the mid-4th Dynasty Memphite school, interpreted by Reisner as portraying the divine king as serious and lofty, but with a personal, humanized aspect. This style is distinct from the earlier artistic school that created the statuary of Djedefre and Khafre. Their statues portray the king as purely divine, and as someone who ruled without mercy<sup>13</sup>.

Some might suggest that the statue was not made in the royal workshop at Memphis, but rather was made in a workshop in Thebes. However, all the artistic evidence supports the idea that the statue was carved in the royal workshop at Memphis. In fact, I believe that the artist who made this statue may be the same one that carved the colossal calcite statue in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA 09.204). This statue of Menkaure is a remarkable masterpiece of Old Kingdom sculpture.

Based on the mention of Horus of Nekhen in the inscription on the statue, I believe that the statue was modeled in Memphis and then transported to the south where it was placed in an Old Kingdom temple at Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)<sup>14</sup>. The remains of a five-chambered structure at Nekhen suggest that there was an Old Kingdom temple at the site<sup>15</sup>. The discovery by Quibell and Green of copper statues of Pepi I and possibly his son, Merenre (JE 33034 and 33035) in 1897, along with a golden falcon (JE 14717), considered to be "temple furniture,"<sup>16</sup> also presumes an Old Kingdom structure in the area<sup>17</sup>.

The discovery of the "Main Deposit," containing important artifacts from the earliest dynasties, attests to the importance of Nekhen as a cult center from very early in Egyptian history. This site was closely associated with the god Horus and kingship. Thus Menkaure may have wanted to express his connection to this cult center by placing his statue in the temple.

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12 See REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 129; SMITH, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*, 36, pl. 13b; ZIEGLER, *King Menkaure and A Queen*, 270 (67); LABBÉ-TOUTÉE/ZIEGLER, *Triad of King Menkaure*, 272-273 (68) for statues of Menkaure with legs showing bold articulation.

13 See ZIEGLER, *Head of King Djedefre*, 248-250 (54) for the statuary of Djedefre. For Khafre, see REISNER, *Mycerinus*, 128-129.

14 For the temple at Nekhen, see QUIBELL, *Hierakonpolis I*; QUIBELL/GREEN, *Hierakonpolis II*; ADAMS, *Ancient Hierakonpolis*; ADAMS, *Ancient Nekhen: Garstang in the City of Hierakonpolis*.

15 For Nekhen (Hierakonpolis), see QUIBELL, *Hierakonpolis I*; QUIBELL/GREEN, *Hierakonpolis II*; ADAMS, *Ancient Hierakonpolis*; ADAMS, *Ancient Nekhen: Garstang in the City of Hierakonpolis*.

16 QUIBELL/GREEN, *Hierakonpolis II*, 27-28, 33, pls. XLVII, L-LVI, LXXII; FRIEDMAN, *Hierakonpolis*, 98-100.

17 O'CONNOR, *The Status of Early Egyptian Temples: an Alternate Theory*, 92, 93, fig. 5A.

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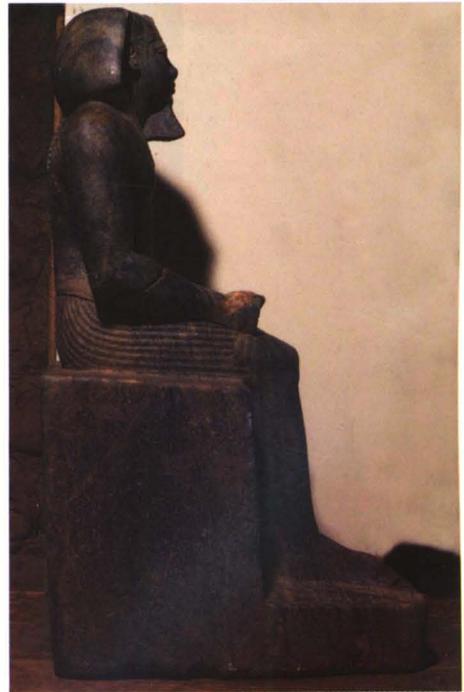
a)



b)



c)



d)

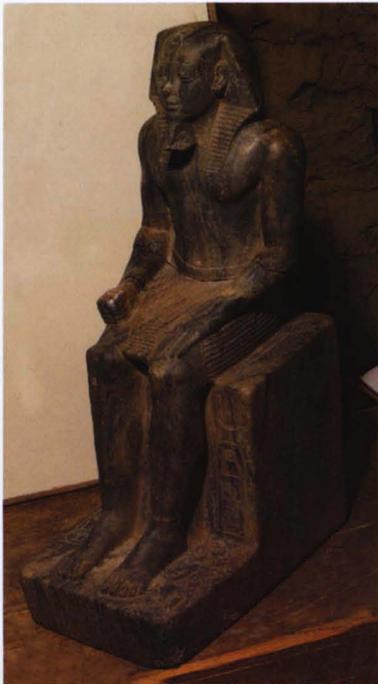
Taf. 2: Statue of Menkaure.



a)



b)



c)



d)

Taf. 3: Statue of Menkaure.