

THE FALCON GOD MONTU WITH KING THUTMOSE III (CGC 1237)

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Abstract:

This study is a new publication of a rectangular base of the statue of a distinctive group consisting of a falcon and King Thutmose III, kept in the Egyptian museum in Cairo - CGC 1237. The author will try using the pedestal to reconstruct a complete picture of the original with a discussion of the dating, and the original site of the statue. These issues will be discussed based on the available inscriptions and archaeological data. Although nothing remains of the statue except for the base bearing the traces of the falcon and the king walking in front of it, this object is a unique model of the falcon Montu. Regarding the function of the statue, the falcon Montu's role towards the king appears through religious books, especially the pyramid texts, which will be reviewed during the study. We will discuss his relationship with the king, as well as the reason for making this statue.

1. Introduction

There are many group-statues representing the king with a huge falcon. Usually, these falcons represent the god Horus and other gods on a small scale. The object studied here is unique because it represents the king with the falcon god Montu. It is conserved in the Egyptian museum in Cairo - CGC 1237. The remains of the falcon and the name of the god Montu inscribed on it caught the researcher's attention, so, the researcher decided to publish it, although it is badly damaged. All what remains of the object is the rectangular base of a group statue featuring a falcon and king Thutmose III preserved in R.13 in the Egyptian museum, Cairo - CGC 1237. It has another inventory numbers SR 4/12064 (Special Register) and TR 10/12/14/4 (Temporary Register). The red granite object dates to the reign of king Thutmose III of the eighteenth dynasty.

The pedestal measures 159 cm in length, 25 cm in height, and 43 cm in width. The height of the remaining part measures 33 cm. However, the Special Register (SR) of the museum mentions other dimensions: 165 cm length, 45 cm width, and 27 cm height. CGC 1237 notes that the pedestal is 160 cm in length. The object was found near the temple of Esna in 1887 [1].

2. Description

The remaining surface area of the rectangular base of the CGC 1237 group statue shows the remains of the claws of a standing falcon, beside which are the king's toes in the traditional striding pose, fig. (1). At the front of the pedestal base, the hieroglyphic text carved in sunken relief under the sign for heaven $\overline{\text{pt}}$, mentions the royal titles

and names of king Thutmose III along with the wishing expression.



▪ **Transliteration**

ntr nfr Mn-hpr-R^c
s3 r^c Dhwtj-ms hk3-m3^ct
di nḥ mi R^c dt
mry Mntw nb iwn

▪ **Translation**

Perfect god^{3.1}, *Menkheperre*
Son of Re, Thutmose, ruler of truth^{3.2}.
May he live as Re forever^{3.3}.
Beloved of Montu, lord of Armant^{3.4}.

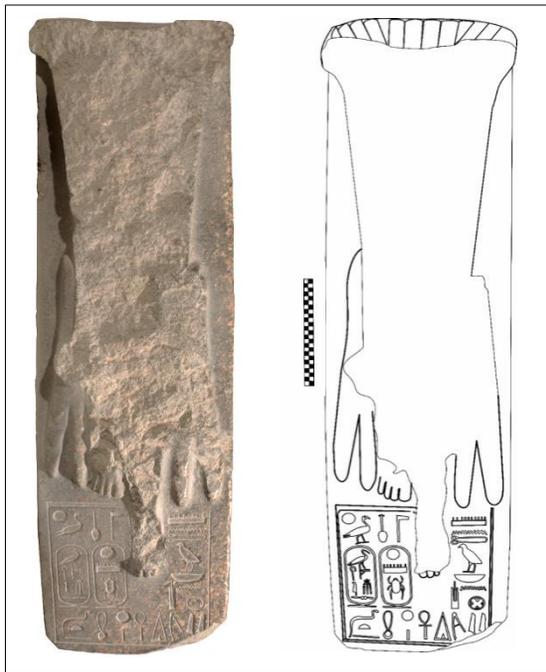


Figure (1) Shows the pedestal of the group statue, Egyptian Museum, Cairo, CGC 1237

3. Commentary

3.1. Occasionally, the royal title  *ntr nfr* replaced  *nswt-bity*. The epithet *ntr nfr* was used to convey the same meaning “perfect god” [2] or “kind god” for both gods and kings [3,4]. Regarding the ruler’s

relationship with deities, *ntr nfr* was a god who first appeared in the old kingdom [4] during the reign of king Niuserre in his inscription in Wadi Magharah, fig. (2-a) [5-7], as well as king Merenre in his inscriptions in Hatnub [7-9]. The god *ntr nfr*, was depicted on numerous antiquities, ranging in dates from the third intermediate period to the late period. Also, *ntr nfr* is an epithet associated with many deities including Amun, Osiris, Horus, etc [4]. Concerning its relationship with royalty, the epithet *ntr nfr* was used more as a royal title rather than an epithet signifying divinity. It appeared as a royal title from the reign of king Khafre in the fourth dynasty, fig. (2-b) [10]. It is evident that the royal title *ntr nfr* places pharaohs in the realm of gods in comparison to the royal title *nswt-bity* which refers only to the temporal power of monarchs.

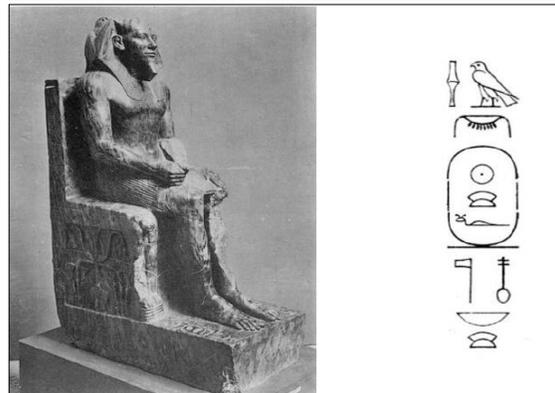
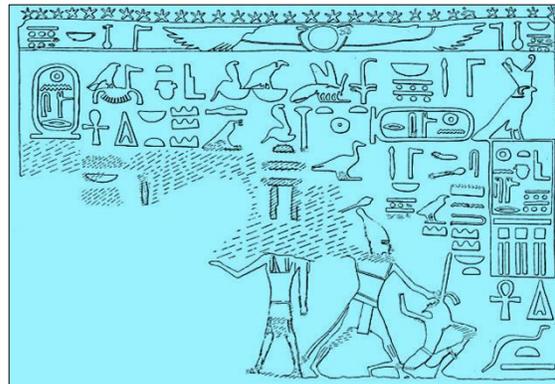


Figure (2) Shows **a.** the inscription of the king Niuserre at Wadi Magharah. (After: Gardiner et al., 1952), **b.** the statue of Khafre, Cairo, CGC 14, with transcribed inscription. (After: Friedman, 2018).

3.2. The royal title $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$, son of Re, *Dhwtj-ms hk3-m3t* commonly was used after the twenty-first year of the reign of king Thutmose III [11]. This epithet is inscribed on his obelisk now in London [12], the Armant Stela [13], in addition to other constructions at Karnak and Nubia [6]. The Armant Stela [13] mentions the twenty second year and twenty-ninth year of king Thutmose III, fig. (3), while the Amada temple stela [6] registers the forty-third year of his rule.

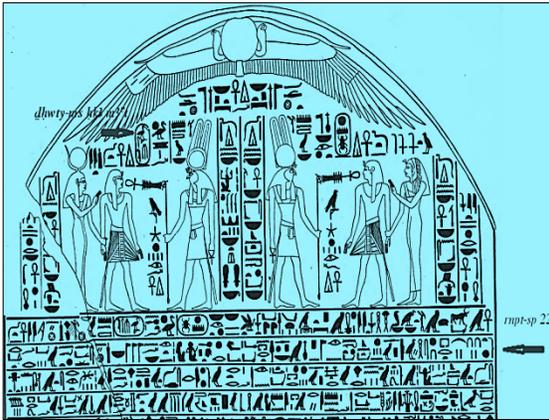


Figure (3) Shows the upper part of Armant stela. (After: Mond, et al., 1940)

3.3. A wishing formula - *di snh mi r dt* - commonly follows the names of pharaohs.

3.4. The title is commonly read as *nb iwny* [3] according to extant writings $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$, $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$ [4]; Sometimes, it is read as *nb iwnw* according to the script $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$ [4]. Also, the word *iwny* without the phonetic complement *n* 𓄏 [3], is also written as $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏} \text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$ *iwnw smc* [3] “the south city”. But a new written form for the reference to city 𓄏 - to be read *iwn* without *y* - was added in the CGC 1237 object. The title *nb iwn(y)* relates to the god Montu from the old kingdom until the end of ancient Egyptian history [4]. Montu was a falcon-headed Theban deity who was revered as the god of war, before Amun predominantly assumed that role later. *Iwn(y)* refers to the city of Hermothis (Armant) [3] which was the center of Montu’s cult.

4. Results

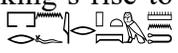
Although, the base of the group-statue shows the remains of a falcon and the king’s toes, but it is a unique example of the king under the supremacy of the falcon god Montu. The inscription dealt with the king’s names and titles and wishing expression, but it has important connotations related to the function, the importance, and the dating of the statue. The place where to find the object has a connotation related to the original site. The sign of heaven 𓄏 *pt* inscribed upon the written text refers to the ascension of the king to the heaven, as well as the connection with heaven, which is confirmed by the pyramid texts. This object was erected due to the special relation between the god Montu and king Thutmose III. Although, the inscription mentions *iwn* “the city of Armant” the cult’s center of the god Montu, except its original site is the city of Esna where the king Thutmose III constructed his temple there. The written form of the birth name of king Thutmose III enables us to suggest that this object dates back after the twenty-first year of his rule.

5. Discussion

5.1. Importance

The object CGC 1237 is a unique model of the god Montu in the form of a complete falcon and is even the oldest statue of the god Montu. In general, it is considered the oldest example of a king under the protection of a huge standing falcon, and especially, maybe a unique example of the monarch under the protection of Montu. There are, however, many complete examples in the same style of CGC 1237 from subsequent periods. For instance, Egyptian museum JE 36455 & JE 64735 of Ramesses II, British Museum EA1006 of Ramesses II [14-16], and Metropolitan Museum of Arts, MMA 34.2.1 of Nectanebo II [17].

5.2. The function

The sign *pt* and the falcon refer to the connection with heaven. PT spell 503 §1081 in the pyramid of Pepi I describes the king's rise to heaven with the god Montu, that says:  [18] *k3 Mntw k3.f hn˙f* “When Montu is high, he (the dead king) will be high with him” [19]. Montu was believed to be a celestial falcon with a stellar association whom the king follows in his ascent [20,21]. Also, The spell 555 §1378b in the pyramid of Pepi I describes the king's rise to the sky like Montu, that says:  [19] *pr. n.f ir pt m Mnt* [19, 21,22] “he has gone up to the sky, as Montu”. It is worth mentioning that the determinative  added to the name of Montu in the pyramids of Pepi II, and Neith [18], refers to Montu as a falcon. This statue is a representation of the king's ascension to heaven with the falcon Montu, which was clearly indicated in the previous spells of the pyramid texts.

5.3. The relationship between king Thutmose III and the god Montu

The pedestal shows king Thutmose III under the protection of the god Montu according to the remaining traces and the text  *Mntw nb iwn*. As a ruler, king Thutmose III had a militaristic personality; he therefore accorded great importance to the god of war, Montu, and dedicated a grand temple to the deity in Armant [13,23]. In the stela at Armant [13], which summarizes his military campaigns, king Thutmose elaborate the support he received from Montu in his victories. CGC 1237 expresses this special relationship between the pharaoh and Montu, which was the main reason to sculpt the statue.

5.4. Original site

There is no mention of a geographical provenance of the object, except for the word  *iwn* “the city of Armant” (Hermonthis) as part of the title “Montu, the lord of the city of Armant”. However, the pedestal was found near the temple of Esna (Latopolis) [1] dated to the Ptolemaic period [24], but

Jean-François Champollion, the French linguist and decipherer of the hieroglyphic script, mentions that the construction of the temple of Esna began during the reign of king Thutmose III [25]. It is interesting to note that Esna was called  *iwnyt* [3], and the wife of the god Montu was also called  *iwnyt* [3]. Consequently, the statue probably was a part of the temple of king Thutmose III in Esna.

5.5. Dating

Though the pedestal mentions the name of king Thutmose III, the birth name *Dhwtyms-hk3-m3˙t* confirms that the statue was sculpted after the twenty-first regnal year of the king.

5.6. Artistic Features

Montu appeared in many scenes as a falcon-headed god [6]. As for the statues, the god Montu has appeared on a very limited scale. The excavations of the temple of Montu in Armant brought to light a limestone statue of Nebamun, dated to the late 18th - 19th dynasty. Sitting on a chair, he is holding a naos housing the falcon-headed god Montu, seated upon a throne, fig. (4-a). And near to the statue of Nebamun, a headless granodiorite statue shows the ‘High Priest of Montu from Armant’ Ramose, fig. (4-b), from the same period. Ramose is presented kneeling and holding an altar upon which two falcon heads are sculpted in the round. Each falcon-head was possibly topped by a sun-disk and two feathers, but these are missing. These two manifestations of the local god Montu are quite unexpected and seem to have no parallels in that aspect, although some Late Period bronze statuettes of deities with two falcon heads are known [27]. There are many amulets of the god Montu in the late period, some of which express a god with a falcon head, fig. (4-c), and some of which express a god in the form of a complete falcon, fig. (4-d). In Greco-Roman period, there are some statues that express Montu with a bull's head surmounted by a sun disk and two feathers from the Greco-Roman era, fig. (4-e). So, though the traces of the falcon

and king Thutmose III remain only on the base of object CGC 1237, it is possible to imagine that the Montu falcon was surmounted by a sun disk and two feathers, as indicated by the previous examples' figs. (4-a:e), while the remains of the king's toes show that he was in the traditional walking position.



Figure (4) Shows **a**, the statue of Nebamun held naos. (After: Christophe, 2014), **b**, the statue of Ramose. (After: Christophe, 2014), **c**, bronze figure of Montu wearing the double plumes and sun-disc. British museum, EA60339 (After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA60339, 3/25/2023), **d**, amulet in Egyptian blue, in the shape of a falcon. British museum, UC6485. (After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/X_882, 3/25/2023), **e**, statue of Montu with bull's head statue, 332-30 BC, Ptolemaic, from Medamoud, Louvre museum E12922. (After: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/recherche?q=E12922>, 3/25/2023)

6. Conclusion

This object is the unique and the earliest statue of the god Montu. And thus, it considers the oldest statue of a huge falcon protecting the king. The object dates to the post twenty-first year of king Thutmose III. All indications prove that it possibly originates from the temple of Thutmose III in Esna. This object is a symbol of the king's ascension to heaven with the falcon Montu, which was clearly indicated in the spells of the Pyramid texts. It also displays the protection of king Thutmose III by a falcon which represents the god Montu.

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