



Fragment of Inscribed Wall Relief

Collection: Cyfarthfa Castle, Merthyr Tydfil,
Cyfarthfa Park, Brecon Rd, Merthyr
Tydfil, CF47 8RE.

Catalogue Number: CCM186.996

Object type: Egyptian Artefact

Material: Limestone

Period: Approx. 18th /19th Dynasty (1550 – 1189 BC)

Provenance: Asyūt / Asiut / Assiout, Upper Egypt / ???

Dimensions: H 92mm x W 119mm x D 36mm

Object analysis by: Hawys Jones

Description

The Fragment is a roughly rectangular shaped piece of limestone, with uneven edges where it has suffered damage/been removed from its original position. It has hieroglyphic text (four decipherable signs) on its front face, and some masonry marks on the back in the form of long scratches or gouges. The hieroglyphs are damaged and worn but are well proportioned and are elaborately carved.

Commentary

Little is known of this fragment's provenance, as it was part of a private collection donated to the people of Merthyr and housed in the museum by a local named Major Harry Hartley Waite Southey. Maj Southey is known to have travelled extensively throughout Egypt, Turkey and the Mediterranean during his life, and did not provide any notes with the artefacts he donated giving any indication of the location he purchased or found each item (Nicholson 1998).

Wall Reliefs in general can be found in use on most monumental Architecture in Ancient Egypt. This ranges from buildings relating to funerary needs, such as temples, tombs and chapels, to functional buildings such as administrative hubs and palaces (Oakes & Gahlin 2005).



Plate 1: Front face of fragment with outlined hieroglyphs

The assumption must be made that this artefact was found in Egypt. On analysis of the type of Hieroglyphs used, we can make comparative analysis with several known texts/wall reliefs, giving us a relative idea about which period this item might belong to.

The hieroglyphs carved into our fragment (see Plate 1) are those of the consonant sounds; **w/n** (wen – image of the hare – brown/yellow outline) and **n** (n – image of water/wavy line – aqua blue outline). We can also see a small section of the hieroglyph **p/t** (pet – outlined in blue) along the upper aspect of the fragment. This Hieroglyph is often used in this way to bracket text, whilst

simultaneously symbolising the sky. We can also see a column on the right-hand side of the fragment, outlined in black. This is commonly used in hieroglyphic texts to inform the reader of the direction in which to read the text. When a column is used the text is read downwards. We also know to read from right to left (see red arrow's pointing out reading directions on Plate 1) due to the direction that the Hares head is pointing in (Budge 1975, Manley 2013).

The Hare itself was very important as a plentiful food staple in Egyptian culture and an existing respect for the Hare still exists in the Middle and Near East today. Symbolically it was linked with the Goddess Wenet/Unut/**W.n.t** ("The swift one"), see Plate 2. Hares are often used in text, to denote fast movement, speed or general stealth and the use of **w/n** and **n** together is thought to be an ideogram for the idea of existence or 'to be' (Ryneveld 2016, Wilkinson 2003, Budge 1975).

The use of the **w/n** and **n** together is used intermittently throughout the period of hieroglyphic fluency in Ancient Egypt, but there are few examples of the **w/n n n** being used together and most examples can be dated to the 19th dynasty and to items and wall reliefs relating to the funerary sphere. It is used frequently in the book of dead as part of the sentence 'of things which shall be' (*unenet*—**Wn.n.t**) and as part of the name 'Un-nefer' - **Wn.n**. The same hieroglyphs are also found on the Stelae of Panhehsi as part of the sentence 'of things which shall be' (*unenet/wn.n.t*). We also find them on the wall relief of Amenhotep (Plate 3) – a chief physician during the 19th Dynasty (Budge 1975, Berman 1999). It can be deduced that this grouping of hieroglyphs then, at least during the 19th Dynasty, are used in sentences describing a quality of existence or the being 'of things'.



Plate 2: Goddess Wenet and Hare used in symbolism

As can be seen in Plate 3, many wall reliefs have been damaged, presumably by the attempt to chisel or crow bar off entire sections to import, sell or display. Given that Maj Southey did much of his travelling at the turn of the century, when 'Egyptomania' was still prevalent, it can be assumed that this fragment is part of a larger assemblage, damaged by the attempt to remove it. There is a small likelihood that the damage occurred far earlier than this, during some of the other periods of conflict that have occurred in Egypt between the end of the Egyptian Dynasties

and the modern Egyptian society of the present today, however this is unlikely given the evidence on the back of the fragment.



As mentioned in the description, there are two clear scratch marks on the back of the fragment, that exposed the white of unoxidized limestone.

Limestone, can take some time to oxidise, up to several hundred years, depending very much on the climate and condition it is kept in. Given our understanding of limestone today (Ashurst 1988), it can be argued that unless this item received this damage during its time at Cyfarthfa Castle, the damage was received at the very latest, just before its acquisition by Maj Southey. The damage can not have happened so long ago that it has had time to

weather and oxidise as we so no evidence of either around the area of the scratches. It is with reasonable certainty that we can deduce that this item was deliberately and forcefully removed from its originally position in the last 100-300 years.

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***photo credit for front and back of artefact with measuring/colour charts and Plate 1; Georgie Whittock.**