NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE BROOKLYN BLACK HEAD

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As the archaeological remains of Ptolemaic Egypt become increasingly accessible through discovery and publication, there are more opportunities to comprehend the period from the standpoint of its elite. Judging from the corpus of private statuary, there is a richness to this history about which much remains to be understood. The Brooklyn Black Head (figs. 1-2) is an important example of this idea. It features over-life-size scale and distinctive features that can inform us about the identity and social position of the person represented. The Brooklyn head and other monumental statues can provide insights into the history of high-ranking officials under the Ptolemies (see list of sculptures at the end of this article; the Brooklyn head is no. 4).

Egyptian-style statuary of the Ptolemaic elite is mostly about men, their status and occupations, and their relationships with the gods. Despite prominent queens from Arsinoe I through Cleopatra VII, and their frequent depiction in statuary, there are comparatively few private female statues in the Egyptian style, continuing the practice of Late Period Egypt prior to the arrival of Alexander the Great. Ptolemaic male statues were primarily intended for temple settings. The two main types preserved are standing statues with the left foot forward, and block statues. The standing figures

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Bianchi, CE = R.S. Bianchi, eds., Cleopatra’s Egypt: Age of the Ptolemies (Brooklyn, 1988).

Bianchi, Striding Draped Male Figure = R.S. Bianchi, The Striding Draped Male Figure of Ptolemaic Egypt I-III (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1976).

Bothmer, ESLP = B.V. Bothmer et al., Egyptian Sculpture of the Late Period, 700 B.C. to A.D. 100 (Brooklyn, 1960).


Huss, Ägypten = W. Huss, Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit, 332-30 v. Öhr. (Munich, 2001).