

# A TORSO OF A STRATEGOS IN KOM-USHIM STOREROOM, EL-FAYOUM

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the torso of a male figure housed in Kom-Oushim storeroom, El-Fayoum (Inv.no.307). This torso is carved in sandstone with a height of about 1.16 m. The head and feet are missing. The back-pillar is badly-damaged as well. The torso represents a man standing in a full-frontal pose, wearing two tight garments; a tight short-sleeved tunic with a round-shaped neck, and an Egyptian fringed mantel grasped by the left hand. The right arm is stretching along the body. The left leg is advanced, while the right leg is straight and pulled back. The main challenge in studying this torso is the lack of information about its archaeological context, the missing head, and the bad condition of the back pillar. The pattern of the dress helps the stylistic analysis, to understand the dedication and context of this torso. This torso represents a governor (*strategos*), and dates to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

## KEYWORDS

Sobek; Ptolemaic statuary; Erinaious; Dimeh ; Madinet Madi.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines a torso of a male figure, currently housed in the Kom-Oushim storeroom, El-Fayoum (Inv.no.307). Unfortunately, it was confiscated, and nothing is known about its provenance.

## المخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية، جذع تمثال لرجل محفوظ الآن بالمخزن المتحفي بكوم- أوشيم بالفيوم برقم (307). للأسف هذا الجذع وجد بحوزة أحد الأشخاص ولا يُعلم الجهة التي أتت منها ، وهو ما شكل تحدياً في تحديد شخصية صاحب التمثال، وظيفته، والعصر الذي ينتمي إليه. الجذع من الحجر الرملي، ارتفاعه 1,16 م، الرأس، والأرجل مفقودة، الدعامة الخلفية التي تدعم الجذع في حالة سيئة من الحفظ. يقف الجذع في الوضع الأمامي، القدم اليسرى متقدمة ومنثنية، بينما اليمنى تمتد للخلف، يرتدي خيتون ضيق بأكمام قصيرة ورقبة دائرية الشكل ، ويعلوه عباءة مُحكمة تمتد من أسفل اليد اليسرى وتنسدل علي الكتف الأيسر وتغطي اليد اليسرى. اليد اليمنى تلتصق بالجسد، بينما اليسرى تنتهي لئمسك بالرداء أعلي الفخذ. الأمثلة المقارنة التي تم تناولها في هذه الدراسة أثبتت، بما لا يدع مجالاً للشك، أن الجذع يخص تمثال لأحد كبار الموظفين (حاكم) من الفيوم، كما أمكن من خلال دراسة طراز الملابس والأمثلة المقارنة تأريخ التمثال بالفترة المتأخرة من العصر البطلمي أو المبكرة من العصر الروماني، ويمكن تحديد الفترة الزمنية بنهاية القرن الأول ق.م. أو بداية القرن الأول الميلادي.

## الكلمات الدالة

سوبك، العصر البطلمي، إيريناوس ، ديمه السباع، مدينة ماضي.

This male figure is standing in a full-frontal pose, with a left advanced leg, a characteristic feature of Egyptian statuary. This feature continued well into the Ptolemaic period.<sup>1</sup> His right arm is stretching along the body, while the left arm is bent at the elbow at an oblique angle, resting over the abdomen and holding the edge of a fringed mantle (**fig.1,a**). The man is dressed in two tight garments; a tight round-shaped-neck tunic, with short sleeves, banded with a deep line carved from the neck to the edge of the sleeve on the forearm (**fig.1,b**). The second garment is a fringed mantle, crossed beneath the right armpit, covering the left shoulder and muffling the left arm, with a diagonal-grooved roll on the chest (**fig.1,c**).<sup>2</sup> The folds of the fringed mantle are realistically sculpted and reflect the body pose. It is diagonally rendered on the left arm and the chest, vertically on the advanced left leg, and circular on the right leg. The body treatment shows a well-built structure, round shoulders, round arms, and a lightly-protruding chest.

## THE SUBJECT AND ITS OWNER

The main challenge in studying this torso is the lack of information about its archaeological context, the missing head, and the bad condition of the back pillar (**fig.1,d**).

This statuary type dressed in the fringed mantle represents high officials, mostly *strategoï*. These officials were acting as governors of the district (*nomoi*). They were responsible for all the temples located in their district.<sup>3</sup> All the inscribed examples show military, administrative, and priestly titles.<sup>4</sup>

## ARTISTIC STUDY

In studying this statuary type, the dressing style is the main criteria to attribute pieces with unknown provenance to specific sites thanks to similar statues from Fayoum.

The most significant example is a headless basalt statue, kept in the Cairo Museum Basement (N4257). It is thought to be an unknown *strategos* from Fayoum. The man is dressed in a fringed mantle, characterised by a grooved-diagonal roll on the chest, and a round-shaped-neck tunic with short sleeves. The shoulder is banded with three deeply grooved lines carved from the neck to the edge of the sleeve on the forearm. The most important feature is the circular folds on the right leg, which establish a stylistic parallel

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<sup>1</sup>The Ptolemaic period is one of the most important and diverse periods in the history of Egypt as it combined two cultures: the Egyptian and the Greco-Macedonian ones. For further readings: Ashton, S. A., *Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture from Egypt; the interaction between Greek and Egyptian traditions*, Oxford University Press, (2001); Noshay, I., *The Art in Ptolemaic Egypt, A study of Greek and Egyptian influences in Ptolemaic Architecture and Sculpture*, Oxford University Press, (1937), 83-142; Vandrope, K., 'The Ptolemaic Period,' in: Lloyed, A.B., *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, vol. I, Wiley- Blackwell, (2010), 172-173; Ashton, S. A., 'Ptolemaic and Romano-Egypt Sculpture,' in: Lloyed, A.B., *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, vol. II, Wiley-Blackwell, (2010), 971-973.

<sup>2</sup>I follow Sobhi Ashour's interpretation of this dress as two pieces, not three like Bothmer and Bianchi. For details: Ashour' S., *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, (A study in Plastic Arts), Università degli studi di Palermo, (2007), 327-354.

<sup>3</sup>Stavrianopoulou' E., *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period: Narrations, Practices, and Images*, Brill, (2013), 108-109; Kaiser, W., 'Zur Datierung Realistischer Rundbildnisse Ptolimäische-Römische Zeit,' *MDAIK* 55, (1999), 237.

<sup>4</sup>Plato son of Plato was acting as a governor of many Theban nomes and had many priestly titles, which were recorded on his statue. Coulon, L., 'Quand Amon parle à Platon (La Statue Caire JE 38033),' *RdÉ* 52(1), (2001), 101-103, pl. XV-XXI ; Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, Cats.8,16,26,36,62,85.

between the two pieces. This statue is dated to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The statue of Cairo Museum N4257 shows close stylistic features to the studied torso.<sup>1</sup>

The statue (CG 27495), currently kept in The Egyptian Museum of Cairo, is the keystone among the parallel examples. The statue is carved in the same pose and wears a tight tunic with a round-shaped neck and short sleeves. The fringed mantle runs from the bottom of the right arm, falls to the left shoulder, and covers the left arm. The back pillar is inscribed with a hieroglyphic inscription mentioning the crocodile god Sobek. The statue dates to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>2</sup>

The statue of Erinaious the *strategos*, preserved in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria (Inv.no.3192), was found in the temple of Soknopaiounesos at Dimeh. It depicts a man in the same pose with an advanced left leg. The two arms were sculpted in the same manner. He is dressed in the same way; a short-sleeved tunic with a round-shaped neck, and the fringed mantle which passes beneath the right arm and over the left shoulder, held by the left hand over the thigh. The most important feature is the absence of fringes on the Dimeh statue, similarly to the Kom Oushim torso. The Erinaious statue dates to the Augustan period.<sup>3</sup>

The statue of an unknown *strategos* from Dimeh kept in Berlin (Inv.no.11633) shows the combination of the Egyptian and Greek traditions. The most important feature is the diagonal edge of the sleeve on both statues' left forearms, in addition to the style of execution of the mantle edge on the left wrist. The Dimeh statue dates to 50-20 BC.<sup>4</sup>

The headless statue of a man kept in the Museo Archeologico of Milan (Inv.no E. 0.9.40006). The left leg is fractured just below the knee, while the right is preserved up to the middle of the calf. He is dressed in a short-sleeved tunic and a fringed mantle in the same manner as the others (**fig.2**). The folds were carved in three lines on the right side of the body and descend from the waist making three smaller folds. They finally turn around the arm and hang to cover the lower left part of the body. One interesting stylistic confront is the double edge of the mantle on the body axis, which may relate the studied Fayoumic torso with the workshop of Medinet Madi, the ancient Narmouthis in the Fayoum. The statue dates to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>5</sup>

## DATING

The examples mentioned support the identification of this torso as one of a *strategos* dating to the late Ptolemaic period to early Roman period. Statues of the time continued the

<sup>1</sup>Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, Cat. no.99, 144.

<sup>2</sup>Riggs, C., *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt*, Oxford University Press, (2005), 90-91-fig.37; Edgar M.C.C., *Catalogue Générale des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, N.27425-27630, Greek Sculpture, Otto Zeller Verlag, Osnabrück, (1974) 27, pl.XV.

<sup>3</sup>Botti, G., *Catalogue des Monuments exposés au Musée Gréco-Romain D'Alexandrie*, Imprimerie Générale A. Mourés, (1901) 470, No.24; Lembke V.K., 'Dimeh.Römische Repräsentations kunst im Fayyum,' *JDAI 113*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, (1999), Abb17-19 ; Ashour, S., *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, (A study in Plastic Arts), Cat.no.98, 143.

<sup>4</sup>Lembke, V.K., 'Private Representation in Roman Times: The Statues from Dimeh/ Fayyum', *L'Egitto in Italia Dall'Antichità Al Medioevo, Atti del III Congresso Internazionale Italo-Egiziano*, A cura di: N.Bonacasa, M.C.Naro, E.C.Portale, A.Tullio, Pompei 13-19 November 1995, Roma, CNR, (1998), 294, fig.3 ; Lembke' K.& Vittmann. G., 'Die Ptolemäische und Römische Skulptuur im Ägyptischen Museum Berlin,' *Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen*, Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berlin, (2003), 17, Abb13-16.

<sup>5</sup>Bresciani, E., La Iside di Medinet Madi, in: Arslan E.A. (a cura di) "Iside. Il mito, il mistero, la magia" (catalogo della mostra), Milano, (1997), 76, scheda II.51

Egyptian tradition of the back pillar and the modelling of Greek costumes. Furthermore, the pose with the right arm stretching alongside the body and the left arm holding the fringed mantle over the abdomen was a feature of late Ptolemaic statues.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the torso under investigation might date to the late Ptolemaic to early Roman period thanks to the comparisons to the Erinaious statue and the Fayoumic statue in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

According to Sobhi Ashour<sup>2</sup>, the dress worn by our torso is close to **the Dimeh types B & C**, especially with the tunic distinguished by the round-shaped neck and banded shoulder sleeves, which were features of type B. Furthermore, the absence of the axial fringes from type C is another evidence supporting this. The two Dimeh types are chronologically interlaced, suggesting a similar timeframe and workshop. As a consequence, the torso is dated between 30 BC to the early Roman period.<sup>3</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The newly examined Fayoumic torso lacks authenticated information about its archaeological context. However, its provenance is easily identified thanks to the many Fayoumic examples mentioned as a temple.<sup>4</sup> The stylistic similarities with these Fayoumic statues with a fringed mantle type suggest a relation between the temples and the workshops within the different Fayoum towns.

Medinet Madi had a workshop, whose production may have reached Dimeh and other Fayoumic sites.<sup>5</sup> Dimeh could also have had a workshop. The unfinished statue from Medinet Madi (Kom Oushim Magazine 48-1995) was carved in sandstone. It shows extreme

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for more details about the examples of fringed mantles during the late Ptolemaic period, see: Maspero, G., *Guide du visiteur au Musée du Caire (4e éd.)*, Imprimerie de l'IFAO, Cairo, (1915), 225-225, fig.79; Graindor, P., *Bustes et Statues-Portraits d'Égypte Romaine*, P.Barbey, Cairo, 1936, 138, pl. LXV ; Grimm, G., Johannes, V.D., *Kunst der Ptolemäer-und Römerzeit im Ägyptischen Museum Kairo*, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, (1975), 19, Taf 22-25; Tiradritti, F., *Egyptian Treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo*, 1st edition, published by Harry N.Abrams, (1999), 389; Russmann, E.R., *Egyptian Sculpture*, 203, Fig.92; Drerup, H; *Ägyptische Bildnisköpfe Griechischer und Römischer Zeit*, Aschendorffsche Verlagbuchhandlung, Munster in Westfalen, (1950), 19, Taf.13; Cafici, G., *Looking at the Egyptian Elite: Sculptures Production of the Ptolemaic Period, Egitto e vicino Oriente*, vol.73, Pisa University Press, (2014), 115, fig.1; Bianchi, R.S. and others, *Cleopatra's Egypt: Age of the Ptolemies*, Brooklyn Museum, (1988), 126-127, Cat.32; Bothmer, V.B., *Egyptian Sculpture of Late Period 700 B.C-to A.D.100*, the Brooklyn Museum, (1961), 178, pls.128-129, figs.340-341, 343 ; Bothmer B.V., 'Hellenistic Elements in Egyptian Sculpture of the Ptolemaic Period,' in: *Alexandria and Alexandrianism*, The J.Paul Getty Museum, California, (1996), 216, fig.2; Savvopoulos, K. and Bianchi, R.S., *The Omar Tousson Collection in the Graeco-Roman Museum*, AMC, B.A., (2013), 16, fig.10.; Stanwick, P.E., *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs*, University of Texas Press, Austin, (2002), 127 fig.188. ; Edgar, M.C.C., *Catalogue Générale des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire, N.33301-33506, Sculptors Studies and Unfinished Works*, Osnabrück, (1977), 2-3, PL.II no.33306; Stricker, B.H., *Graeco-Egyptische Private Sculptuur*, in: *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen, Vit Het Rusksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden*, Nieuwe Reeks XXXVII, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden, (1956), pl.IV,6.

<sup>2</sup>For more readings and studies investigating the nature of the fringed dress, a characteristic of the striding male statues from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt: Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 327-354.; Bianchi, R.S., The Striding Draped Male Figure of Ptolemaic Egypt, in: *Das Ptolemäische Ägypten, Akten Des Internationalen Symposions 27-29 September 1976 in Berlin*, Mainz Am Rhein, (1978), 97-100.

<sup>3</sup>Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 918-919.

<sup>4</sup>Many Fayoumic examples when provenance is recorded strictly come from temples: the dromos of Dimeh, Medinet Madi, Tebtynis. Examples from non-Fayoumic sites also come from temples. Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 64, Cat. 20, 159, Cat. 113, Cat. 176, Cat. 130.

<sup>5</sup>Ashour, S, 'A Roman Portrait-Head from Medinet Madi,' *BIFAO* 116, 2016, 16

resemblance with Dimeh type B. This statue might have been carved by a sculptor from Medinet Madi influenced by the Dimeh workshop or by a sculptor from Dimeh working in Madinet Madi. Further studies are necessary to identify these craftsmen and their origin.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ashour, *Representation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt During Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 155, cat.110

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PLATES



Fig.1.a: The torso: a male figure (sandstone; height:1.16 m, Kom-Oushim storeroom, El-Fayoum, (Inv.no. 307). The front view. Photograph by the author.





Fig.1.b The torso, side view, the shoulder with a banded line carved from the neck to the edge of the sleeve on the forearm. Photograph by the author



Fig.1.c: The fringed mantel with a diagonal-grooved roll on the chest. Photograph by the author



Fig.1.d: The back pillar. Photograph by the author



Fig.2: Headless statue of a man (limestone, height: 135 cm, Milano, inv.no.0.9.40006).  
Bresciani E., *La Iside di Medinet Madi*, 76, pl.11.51.