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**A FORGOTTEN SCARAB OF HOREMHEB**

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Among the numerous and rich art collections in London, the museum of Sir John Soane occupies a very particular place, enveloping its visitors in the atmosphere of its interiors, the architecture of its buildings, and the manner in which the uncommonly diverse works of art are displayed. Sir John Soane (1753-1837)<sup>1</sup>, an outstanding architect of English Classicism, the designer of many well-known buildings in London (including the Bank of England and the Dulwich College Art Gallery) and numerous country residences, had the ambition to create a collection that would bring architecture into a harmonious whole with the other disciplines of the fine arts<sup>2</sup>. Soane's collecting activity had its origins in the last decade of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XVII, second edition (London 1922), pp. 618-619 (F. M. O'Denoghue); P. de la Ruffinière du Prey, *John Soane: The Making of an Architect* (Chicago and London 1982); and D. Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect* (London 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Soane's Museum is located at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, in a complex of three buildings specially adapted by the architect (Soane himself) for exhibition purposes. On the museum and Soane's collection, cf. the special edition of *Apollo: The International Magazine of Arts* (April 1990), with articles on pp. 228-251, and recently J. Elsner, *A Collector's Model of Desire: The House and Museum of Sir John Soane*, (in:) *The Cultures of Collecting*, ed. J. Elsner and R. Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 1994), pp. 155-176, with extensive bibliography. Cf. also the current guidebook, *A New Description of Sir John Soane's Museum*, ninth edition (London 1991).

eighteenth century, but took on particular significance after 1806, when he was appointed Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy<sup>3</sup>.

The not overly numerous set of Egyptian objects includes, among other things, a group of shabtis, several bronze figurines of divinities, a figurine of a priest from Dynasty XX, two stone grave steles from Dynasty XXII, and the most important object: the alabaster sarcophagus of Seti I (Dynasty XIX) with 18 fragments of the lid<sup>4</sup>.

There are also two Egyptian scarabs in Soane's collection, one of which - due to the name of the ruler - deserves particular attention<sup>5</sup>. This scarab, with the name of Horemheb (the last ruler in Dynasty XVIII, who reigned from 1305 to 1292 B.C.<sup>6</sup>), has been forgotten, passed over in works devoted especially to the scarabs of this ruler<sup>7</sup>. The object, 20 x 15 x 8.8 mm (Inv. no. D.S. 194) is made of blue faience and set in a gold frame (the bail of the ring has not been preserved; there are only special bushings into which its ends were turned)<sup>8</sup>. The gold wrap on the edge of the base is decorated with granulation. One's attention is drawn to the extraordinarily large orifice modeled on the axis of the scarab. No division line has been marked on the convex surface of the beetle's back (the implicit line dividing the prothorax from the elytra is only suggested by a slight indentation on the edge); a straight line divides the head and the fan-shaped clypeus. On the surface of the base is engraved the throne name and epithet of the ruler:

<sup>3</sup> Soane's collection rapidly gained renown and the deserved respect of his contemporaries, as may be shown by, for example, the description of the rooms and the collection written by John Britton, under the uncommonly eloquent title *The Union of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting* (London 1827), with numerous woodcut illustrations. Soane himself also produced a description and evaluation of his collection: *Description of the Residence of John Soane, Architect* (London 1830), with numerous lithographs by C. Haghe; this was followed by another edition, under a different title: *Description of the House and Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields: The Residence of Sir John Soane* (London 1835).

<sup>4</sup> The ancient objects from Soane's collection were the subject of a work by C. C. Vermeule, *A Catalogue of the Classical Antiquities in Sir John Soane's Museum* (London 1953; photocopy with additions and revisions published by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Department of Classical Art, Boston 1973). This is a mimeographed typescript, with no illustrations, and difficult to find. Vermeule also included in his catalogue entries on the Egyptian artifacts, prepared in 1946 by Dr. Margaret A. Murray (cf. Nos. 1-37, pp. 94-115).

<sup>5</sup> Both scarabs were placed among the objects of a glyptics (Vermeule, pp. 584-585). The second scarab also dates from the XVIII dynasty; it is made of quartz (26.6 x 20.8 x 10 mm), set in a gold frame. On the base there are engraved representations of a beetle, a sun disk, and two uraei (perhaps cryptograms of the name Amun-Ra).

<sup>6</sup> T. Schneider, *Lexikon der Pharaonen. Die altägyptischen Könige von der Frühzeit bis zur Römerherrschaft* (Zürich 1994), pp. 125-128, and J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*, Münchner Ägyptologische Studien 20 (Berlin 1984), pp. 87-88 and 232.

<sup>7</sup> This scarab was not listed by R. Hari, *Horemheb et la reine Moutnedjemet ou la fin d'une dynastie* (Geneva 1964), pl. LXIV, §7, or by B. Jaeger, *Les scarabées à noms royaux de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie. Travaux préliminaires en vue d'un corpus*, Parts VIII and IX: *Les scarabées d'Horemheb*, (in:) *Göttinger Miszellen* 84 (1985), pp. 85-97, and 86 (1985), pp. 69-78.

<sup>8</sup> I would like to thank the directors of Sir John Soane's Museum in London for making available to me the scarabs discussed in this article.

*Dsr – hprw – R<sup>c</sup>**stp.n – R<sup>c</sup>**hq3 – M3<sup>c</sup>t*

Among the seal amulets with the name of Horemheb, objects showing the epithet “Ruler of Truth” (*hq3-M3<sup>c</sup>t*) make up a rather small group, in which the scarab from Sir John Soane’s museum is yet another noteworthy example<sup>9</sup>. There is no basis, unfortunately, upon which to establish how this scarab made its way into this marvellous London collection<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> H a r i, pl. LXIV, sets them apart in Group 7, where he places five objects (nos. 42-46), whereas J a e g e r counts twelve objects of this type, out of 269 scarabs with the name of Horemheb.

<sup>10</sup> I made note only of the data regarding the origins of the group of Egyptian bronze divinities from Sir John Soane’s collection. They were added to the collection after having been purchased at auction in the years 1821 and 1825, from the collections of R. Cosway, C. Yarnold, and A. North. Cf. J. Ś l i w a, *Zabytki egipskie z kolekcji Sir Johna Soane’a w Londynie* [Egyptian Objects from Sir John Soane’s Collection in London] (FS Abramowicz, in press).