

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE BLUE AMUN

by Charles C. Van Siclen III

In a previous issue of this journal, Monika Dolínska made some observations regarding the advent of the blue Amun in temple relief.¹ In the fall of 1990, I had the opportunity to examine a series of mid-Eighteenth Dynasty reliefs with both original and restored figures of Amun reused in the Edifice of Amenhotep II at Karnak, as well as reliefs contemporary with the rebuilding of that edifice,² and in general their coloration conforms to the patterns recognized by Dolínska.

The following list identifies the figures of Amun which survive in the structure with traces of color. Only two of the figure are original, pre-Amarna Amuns (both red), most of the images are restored Amuns, and the remainder are original Amuns dating to the reign of Seti I. (In the following list, location numbers are those which appear in the article mentioned in note 2.)

pillar 29	south	red (original)
pillar 30	east	black
pillar 35	east	black
pillar 35	west	blue
pillar 36	north	red ? (over red original)
pillar 38	east	red
pillar 40	east	blue
pillar 41	south	red (original)
pillar 41	west	? (over red original)
pillar 42	east	blue
pillar 42	south	blue
pillar 42	west	blue
pillar 43	south	blue
pillar 44	south	blue
pillar 45	south	red
pillar 50	south	yellow
pillar 50	east	red
pillar 66	north	blue/black
pillar 66	south	blue/black (temp. Seti I)
pillar 66	east	blue/black
pillar 67	north	red
pillar 67	west	red
pillar 67	south	blue
pillar 67	east	red

1. "Red and Blue Figures of Amun," VA 6 (1990): 3-7

2. For an account of the work, see my "Preliminary Report on Epigraphic Work Done in the Edifice of Amenhotep II, Seasons of 1988-89 and 1989-90," VA 6 (1990): 75-90.

pillar 68 north red
 pillar 68 east black
 pillar 68 south red
 pillar 68 west blue/black
 reused block in scene 17: blue
 reused block in exterior wall behind scene 33: blue
 scene 45 blue (temp. Seti I)
 scene 47 blue (temp. Seti I)
 graffito 56 blue
 loose fragment of Amun: blue

While the figures of Amun undamaged or identifiable from the Eighteenth Dynasty are always red, those 28 which were restored vary in color. Nine were red, twelve were blue, 3 were blue/black, three were black,³ and one was yellow.⁴ The three figures dating to the reign of Seti I are all blue or blue/black. It should be noted that the restoration of the figures of Amun dates to the end of the first building stage of the Edifice of Amenhotep II (Tutankhamun to early Horemheb).⁵

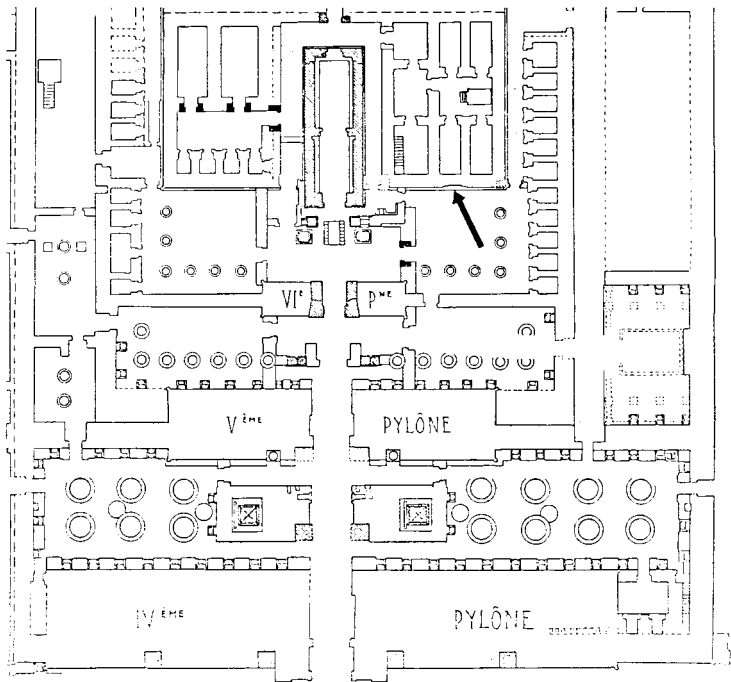


Fig. 1. Map showing location (at arrow) of the false door of Tutmosis III within the Temple of Amun.

The image of the blue Amun occurs much earlier than the post-Amarna period at Karnak. Located on the exterior west wall of the suite of rooms built by Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III to the south of what is now the Philip Arrhidaios bark chapel (fig. 1) is a false door inscribed in the name of Tuthmosis III (figs. 2-3).⁶ As it survives, it consists of the lower portion of inscribed frames with two inset model doors (complete to their lower pivots) adorned with decorated panels. The door is seemingly part of the sandstone construction of the wall in which it is set. The texts on the two frames are mirror images of one another (fig. 4),⁷ and they provide the "building text" for the false door. The conflated text reads: "... the making for him of a stela⁸ called 'Menkheperre renews monuments' in the House of Amun,⁹ of electrum and real¹⁰ lapis lazuli which he made for him because he loved ...¹¹ that he might make for him life forever." The peculiar flat, undetailed interiors of the sunken hieroglyphs of the text, coupled with the information within the text itself indicate that the inscription was inlaid--ostensibly with lapis lazuli or at least blue glass or faience.

The mirror-image scenes (fig. 5) on the "leaves" of the false door show similarly inlaid scenes of the king offering before Amun. The texts of the right-hand scene are the better preserved. Over the king it reads: "The good god,

3. It is not yet clear whether blue, blue/black, and black actually form a single color due to weathering.

4. The yellow Amun is not part of a monochrome scene since the figure of the king has traces of red paint.

5. Cf. Van Siclen, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

6. Porter-Moss II², 95 (176). Fig. 3 is adapted in part from O. Koenigsberger, *Die Konstruktion des ägyptischen Tuer* (Glueckstadt, 1936), p. 24, fig. 22.

7. *Urk.* IV, 852; P. Barguet, *Le Temple d'Amon-re à Karnak* (Cair, 1962), pp. 127-8; C.F. Nims, "Places about Thebes," *JNES* 14 (1955): 116, 123 (fig. 2.18).

8. Following Nims's reading, *ibid.*

9. "In the House of Amun" is not part of the name of the stela, but rather it is the place where it was erected. The word Amun is a post-Amarna repair.

10. The word *m3f* is superimposed over the word *hsbd*.

11. Restore "him/his father more than any other god" or the like, following Barguet and Sethe.



Fig. 2. General view of the false door of Tutthmosis III.

the lord of the Two Lands, lord of action, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkheperre, the son of Re, Tuthmosis nfr ḥpr,¹² given life, stability and dominion like Re." The ritual act of the king is labeled "presenting cool water

13. This epithet replaces ḥk3 m3't in the cartouche.

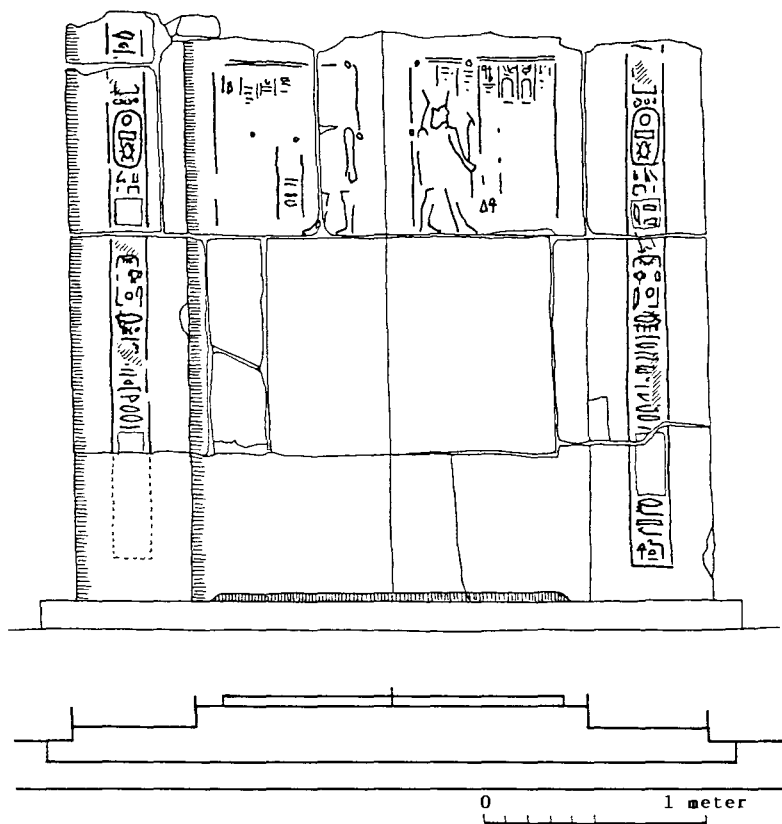


Fig. 3. Elevation and plan of the false door of Tuthmosis III.

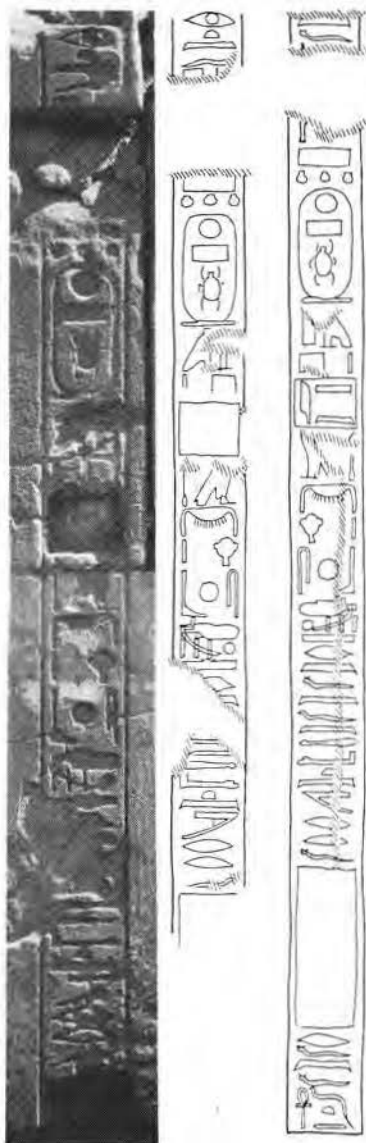


Fig. 4. The texts
on the jambs.

that he might make 'given life.'" The figure of the god is identified as "Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands; he gives all life and dominion like Re."¹³ All the hieroglyphs and the pet-sign above the scenes were also inlaid.

The actual image of the god (partially damaged in the Amarna period) was partly inlaid (fig. 6): the visible flesh of the god (as well as his back support, ankh and scepter) was filled in, presumably with lapis lazuli. Thus here was a literal blue Amun. By contrast, the only inlay on the figure of the king was his broad collar. In fact, the entire figure of the king and the clothing of the god are now lacking: only a rough surface remains. Presumably shallow raised relief in either plaster or sandstone has disappeared along with its plating of electrum.¹⁴ At some

13. Altered from "Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, lord of heaven."

14. For use of plaster in relief, see *The Epigraphic Survey, Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak, III, The Bubastite Portal* (Chicago, 1954), p. viii. For a contemporary partly gilded stela, see Cairo JE 31179 in *Treasures of the Pharaohs*, edited by S. Curto and A. Roccati (Milan, 1984), no. 35.



Fig. 5. Detail view of the scenes on the false door.

point while the false doors were still in use, two sets of four holes marked off rectangles enclosing the name, head and plumes of Amun. These holes would have served to secure either additional plating or some form of screening material.

It would seem that the probable blue images of Amun on the false door of Tuthmosis III from Karnak are the earliest attested examples of the blue Amun. Clearly these images predate the post-Amarna forms by about a century and a half. A careful examination of other surviving pre-Amarna figures of Amun may turn up other, even earlier examples.



Fig. 6. Pattern of inlays on the figure of Amun.