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Mam. P. P. Altier,
hommage de l'auteur.

THREE HIPPOPOTAMUS-FIGURES OF THE
MIDDLE KINGDOM

BY

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Hippopotamus in blue faïence (Brit. Mus. No. 36346).

Scale: c. $\frac{1}{3}$.

THREE HIPPOPOTAMUS-FIGURES OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

By H. R. HALL

With Plates xxii and xxiii.

The three hippopotamus-figures shown in Plates xxii and xxiii are among the finest treasures of the British Museum in faïence. They are of the Middle Kingdom, and presumably of the Eleventh—Twelfth Dynasty (if No. 36346 be not even older), but nothing is known of their provenance except that both are said to have come from Thebes, no doubt from Dirâc abu'l Nagâ. No. 35004 was bought from the late Rev. Greville Chester in 1882, No. 36346 was acquired in 1902, No. 22880 in 1891. None has till now been published.

The first (No. 35004) shows the hippopotamus at rest, or at any rate peacefully inclined, the second (No. 36346) shows him alert and roaring. Both are admirable representations of the animal, showing his heavy jowl and the characteristic pig's eyes and little ears with remarkable fidelity.

No. 35004 differs from the other in being ornamented on the surface (in a manner common on these Twelfth Dynasty figures) with representations of the water-lilies amid which he may be imagined to be standing. Over the forehead and back of the head is a flower; on the back are the stalks and bilobed fronds of the plant, on the sides and buttocks are again the petalled flowers. On the face, however, the markings are intended merely to accentuate the features: thus on the broad muzzle beneath the eyes are spots representing the bristly hairs that grow there. The legs of this figure are unluckily broken off. It is of a fine blue, somewhat discoloured and greenish in parts; the drawing of course in brownish-black.

No. 36346 is made of a harder faïence, in a lighter colour, which has faded all over to a uniform pale blue. There is no drawing of water-plants or features on it: even the eyes are not indicated in another colour. But the inside of the mouth is red.

The animal is shown just rising from the ground as if suddenly surprised, and roaring, with its head lifted and turned towards the spectator. The rear limbs are still lying at rest, and the body half-raised on the fore-legs; the off fore-leg is broken. The mouth, wide open, is, as has been said, all red within: a cavern in which are in the upper jaw four, in the lower five, holes for the insertion of peg-like teeth of another material, that have disappeared. It is an unusual piece, and is one of the finest Egyptian representations of a hippopotamus that exists. I think, too, that it is possibly, judging by the faïence and its general appearance, the oldest figure of the kind known. Mr. H. G. Evers tells me that he would date it to about the time of Amenemmes II, but personally I should have been inclined to date it to the Eleventh Dynasty, if not before.

This characteristic attitude of the hippopotamus was evidently often represented. We find it also in the figure formerly in the Hilton Price Collection, illustrated by HENRY WALLIS, *Egyptian Ceramic Art (Macgregor Collection)*, Fig. 7, p. 4, which is however adorned with lilies like No. 35004 and has ornamental spot and zigzag bands upon

it. This was republished in the *Burlington Fine Arts Club Exhibition Catalogue*, 1922 (Pl. xxxvii, p. 56), with another larger and finer example also then in the Macgregor Collection, with ornamentation in deep manganese violet of lily flowers and leaves, rosettes, and even a dragon-fly. No. 35004 may well be compared with H. WALLIS, *op. cit.*, Pl. 1, also formerly in the Macgregor Collection, but somewhat damaged. The hippopotamus at Cairo figured by H. WALLIS, *op. cit.*, Fig. 5, has its head turned to its right, as also has the third British Museum hippopotamus, No. 22880 (Pl. xxiii, *a*), which is a good deal smaller than the others described. It also has lilies painted in manganese brown-black glaze on its back, but they are rather faded, while its blue ground-colour is brilliant. The damaged Macgregor example is of a magnificent deep blue; that of another Cairo specimen (H. WALLIS, *op. cit.*, Fig. 6=*Egyptian Ceramic Art*, II (1900), Pl. 1) is also of a fine, but much paler blue. Its head is not very well modelled.

Berlin possesses a fine green specimen (No. 10724) on which are represented flowers, buds, a butterfly, and even a flying bird. Berlin No. 13890 has the jaws and throat open; Nos. 13891 and 13892 are both "young" (*Ausführ. Verzeichnis*, 1899, 106). And Dr. Scharff kindly informs me that there are two more examples at Berlin, Nos. 15258 and 20601, the first blue green, the second "weisslich" (presumably faded pale blue), both without plants painted on them and "ziemlich mässig in der Durchbildung." The second came from the Martyn Kennard Collection. There are also very fine examples in the Louvre. But in spite of their comparative deficiency in colour (and the leglessness of No. 35004), the two larger British Museum specimens are probably the finest of all their kind as representations of the animal. The measurements of the three are: No. 35004: L. $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (19 cm.); H. $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (8.8 cm.). No. 36346: L. $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins. (16.5 cm.); H. 6 ins. (15.2 cm.). No. 22880: L. $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. (4.4 cm.); H. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.85 cm.).



a.



b.

a. Hippopotamus in blue faïence (Brit. Mus. No. 22880).

Scale: c. 1.

b. Hippopotamus in blue faïence (Brit. Mus. No. 35004).

Scale: c. 1.