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# Continuity or collapse

## Wooden statues from the end of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period

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### I. Introduction

When visiting museums all over the world in the late 1980s for my research into wooden statues of the Old Kingdom,<sup>1</sup> I was also permitted by the museum curators to record information about the wooden statues they held from the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom. The original intention was to publish everything together, but the sheer volume of material defeated that object very swiftly. There turned out to be nearly 240 statues<sup>2</sup> from the Old Kingdom alone, and there are a further 500 at least from the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom. The task of analysing this vast corpus of First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom material has just begun, in collaboration with Wolfram Grajetzki. This paper presents the preliminary results of research into some wooden statues from the end of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period. It must be stressed, however, that the choice of statues is to some extent random, and subsequent research may affect any or all of the tentative conclusions presented here.<sup>3</sup> Although the pool of material is relatively large, any new find or reallocation of an individual statue to this period, or reassignment of a statue to an earlier or later period, will always have the potential to upset the 'system'. The final aim is clarification and understanding, not a hard and fast set of rules that will apply in every situation.

During the reign of Pepy II, definite changes in the pattern of distribution of wooden statues begin to emerge. Burials begin to contain more statues than previously, although now generally of a less refined quality, and certainly smaller in scale. New provenances also begin to appear – places where previously only an occasional statue was found now became major sources. One good example is the cemetery of Naga ed-Deir, where wooden statues only appear late in the reign of Pepy II but which from then on was a major source not only of wooden statues but also of wooden statue groups.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of recent reassessments of the history of the First Intermediate Period,<sup>5</sup> from a period of chaos affecting the entire country to a more nuanced picture where only the traditional centralized system was in disarray, and where the grassroots were actually thriving, it is interesting to examine whether this holds true for individual categories of material. The first impressions from the wooden statues are that this is indeed the case. Although the more impressive examples of statues with regard to size and quality are now extremely rare – there is much less evidence for the custom of the king granting royal gifts of burial equipment and tombs to members of the court elite in this period of weak central control – in the provinces, noble families and others in a position to do so seem to have been ordering many smaller and often refined examples for their burials.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Harvey, *Wooden Statues of the Old Kingdom. A Typological Study* [Egyptological Memoirs 2] (Leiden, 2001). Henceforth Harvey, *WSOK*.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, when statues are referred to in this paper they are always wooden statues.

<sup>3</sup> For this reason I have decided not to include a list of the statues examined for this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey, *WSOK*, 79ff. Cat. Nos. A 106–A 125, A 127–A 128, B 66 and C 8.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. in particular, S. Seidlmayer, 'The First Intermediate Period', in I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2000), 118–147.

<sup>6</sup> For example the group from tomb N43 at Naga ed-Deir, Harvey, *WSOK*, Cat. Nos. A108–A124.

The group of statues that have been analysed for this conference consists of statues from the end of the Old Kingdom that are published in my Old Kingdom catalogue, both male and female, and statues attributed to the First Intermediate Period by their excavators or by the museums where they currently reside. The group undoubtedly contains statues that will eventually be dated either earlier or later, into the Old Kingdom or Middle Kingdom. As the specific research into the history of each individual statue with an eye to dating has only just commenced, this paper will concentrate on art-historical aspects and general information. There are undoubtedly also glaring omissions – the most glaring being the group of wooden statues of Ipy excavated by Peter Munro in the early 1980s, which very likely date to the First Intermediate Period.<sup>7</sup>

This preliminary ‘corpus’ consists of 34 male statues, 7 of which are in the Old Kingdom catalogue, 23 female statues, 12 of which are in the Old Kingdom catalogue, and 32 female offering bearers, none of which are in the Old Kingdom catalogue. I have treated the statues of female offering bearers in groups as individuals for my purposes here, except for provenance.

The provenances of the statues are as follows:

|              |    |          |   |
|--------------|----|----------|---|
| Assiut       | 14 | Abusir   | 2 |
| Meir         | 13 | Antinoë  | 2 |
| Saqqara      | 11 | Dahshur  | 2 |
| Sedment      | 7  | Luxor    | 1 |
| Naga ed-Deir | 6  | Giza     | 1 |
| Akhmim       | 4  | Gebelein | 1 |
| Beni Hassan  | 3  | Abydos   | 1 |
| el-Bersheh   | 3  | Denderah | 1 |
|              |    | Unknown  | 1 |

No statue in the Old Kingdom corpus seems to have been found at Assiut, el-Bersheh, Antinoë, Luxor, Denderah or Beni Hassan and only 2 can be attributed to Meir. Saqqara, Sedment and Naga ed-Deir continued as centres of statue production into the First Intermediate Period and later, with Naga ed-Deir only coming into the picture late in the reign of Pepy II. This pattern, of course, relies heavily on the accident of preservation.

The typological study of Old Kingdom statues revealed that 3 of the 6 criteria originally investigated were useable from the point of view of dating – hairstyles, dress and how statues hold their arms, and then in combination with each other. These are therefore the criteria that have been used to analyse the new group, starting with the 34 male statues, then the 23 females, and ending with the 32 female offering bearers.

## II. Male statues (*table 1*)

An analysis of the hairstyles of the males reveals that most of them are the same as those on Old Kingdom males (see *table 1a*). Only two new hairstyles appear, each on 3 statues. The first is the bagwig revealing the ears, a variation of the bagwig covering the ears which first appears in the reign of Pepy II.<sup>8</sup> The second hairstyle is a shaven head with black dots probably indicating stubble.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> P. Munro, ‘Der Unas-Friedhof Nord-West 6. Vorbericht über die Arbeiten der Gruppe Berlin/Hannover in Saqqara (Teil 2)’, *GM* 75 (1984): 73–91.

<sup>8</sup> Harvey, *WSOK*, 16, fig. 1b.

<sup>9</sup> This hairstyle may date to the Middle Kingdom. Further research will establish whether the statues with this type of hairstyle have any other features or criteria that point to later than the First Intermediate Period. For the time being, and within the preliminary framework of this survey, the style has been included here.

The dress on male statues is also rather conservative – there are four new varieties, worn by a total of only 9 statues. The only clearly new type is the *shendyt*, originally known from royal contexts. There are two variants worn by 6 statues.

Finally, there are the arms. Statues missing one or both arms have not been included, which left 28 statues in this part of the analysis. Only 2 of them had new ways of holding their arms, both variants of the pendant arms familiar from the Old Kingdom.

The preliminary conclusion concerning male statues is thus that very little seems to have changed. There is one new dress style, the *shendyt*, and a new hairstyle – punk stubble.

**Table 1** The ‘corpus’ of male statues numbers 34, 7 of which appear in the Old Kingdom catalogue.<sup>10</sup> The new types are shown in bold

**Male wigs** (table 1a) Most of the wigs on FIP males are the same as those on OK males. Only two previously unknown types appear, both of them variants of previous styles

| Wig type     | Description   | Date        | No. of statues |
|--------------|---|-------------|----------------|
| W1           | Echelon-curl covering ears  | Sneferu     | 2*             |
| W1a          | Echelon-curl revealing ears   | Teti        | 2*             |
| W1b          | Echelon-curl revealing earlobes                                       | Pepy I      | 4              |
| W3           | Natural hair/skullcap   | Izezi       | 4              |
| W5           | Echelon-curl, one layer to forehead, then several rows, covering ears | Merenra     | 1*             |
| W6a          | Echelon-curl, vertical rows, revealing earlobes                       | Pepy II     | 3*             |
| W6b          | Echelon-curl, vertical rows, covering ears                            | Pepy II     | 1              |
| W7           | Bagwig, covering ears   | Pepy II     | 6              |
| W7a          | Bagwig, revealing earlobes  | End Pepy II | 2              |
| <b>WNew1</b> | <b>Bagwig, revealing ears</b>   |             | <b>3</b>       |
| W8           | Echelon-curl, vertical rows, straight fringe, revealing earlobes      | Pepy II     | 2**            |
| W9           | Echelon-curl, vertical rows, straight fringe, covering ears           | ?           | 1*             |
| <b>WNew2</b> | <b>Shaven head indicated by black dots</b>                            |             | <b>3</b>       |

**Male dress** (table 1b) Nine of the statues have new forms of dress. The rest comply with the Old Kingdom corpus

| Dress type | Description                                 | Date    | No. of statues |
|------------|---|---------|----------------|
| D2a        | Half-goffered kilt, crossflap, tab, no knot | Unas    | 1*             |
| D2f        | Kilt, no goffers, tab or knot               | Pepy II | 3*             |

<sup>10</sup> Statues from the Old Kingdom corpus are marked (\*). Each asterisk indicates an OK statue. The dates given are the earliest appearance of a feature. This applies to all the tables.

| Dress type | Description   | Date                       | No. of statues |
|------------|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| DNew1      | <b>Kilt, belt, mid-calf length</b>                  |                            | 1              |
| D3         | Projecting-panel kilt, knee-length                  | Nyuserra–Pepy I<br>Pepy II | 1*             |
| D3a        | Projecting-panel kilt, mid-calf length              | Teti                       | 7              |
| DNew2      | <b>Close-fitting projecting panel kilt, no knot</b> |                            | 2              |
| D4b        | Nude, uncircumcised                                 | Pepy II                    | 2              |
| D5         | Plain skirt with plain belt                         | Unas                       | 2*             |
| D6         | Plain skirt   | Teti                       | 9***           |
| DNew3      | <b>Shendyt, plain</b>                               |                            | 5              |
| DNew3a     | <b>Shendyt with pointed flap</b>                    |                            | 1              |

**Male arms** (table 1c) Three statues are missing their arms, another four are missing one arm, which left 28 in the analysis. Only two new ways of holding the arms appear

| Arm type | Description   | Date    | No. of statues |
|----------|---|---------|----------------|
| A1       | Pendant clasping <i>Steinkern</i>   | Unas    | 3*             |
| A3       | R. pendant, pierced fist, l. forward at elbow, pierced fist                     | OK      | 7              |
| A4a      | R. hand clasped on lap, fingers down, l. hand flat on knee                      | Unas    | 1              |
| A6       | Pendant, hands fisted and pierced   | Unas    | 3              |
| A7b      | R. hand on front flap of kilt, l. hand natural fist                             | Pepy II | 1              |
| A8       | Pendant, l. hand open, r. hand holding tube of cloth                            | Merenra | 1              |
| A9       | Pendant with two natural fists  | Unas    | 5              |
| A15      | Pendant with open hands   | End OK  | 4*             |
| A16      | Pendant, r. hand on front edge of p.p. kilt, l. hand holding tube at side       | End OK  | 1*             |
| ANew1    | <b>L. arm pendant, hand open, r. hand held forward from elbow, hand pierced</b> |         | 1              |
| ANew 2   | <b>Pendant, fisted, r. natural, l. pierced</b>                                  |         | 1              |

### III. Female statues and female offering bearers (*table 2*)

The female statues are slightly more adventurous. There are 5 new hairstyles among the 21 female statues with wigs, worn by 6 statues. One is a variant of the tripartite wig, but the other 4 styles appear for the first time, for example smooth hair behind the shoulders or a skullcap with real plaits. Two of them are hairstyles

known from other contexts, for example dancing girls – although these statues are clearly not dancing, they may well be dancers (*fig. 1*).<sup>11</sup>

No statues have a dress type different from the Old Kingdom, although there is a much higher percentage of nude statues – 16 of the 23 analysed. One statue, however, is wearing a type of sheath dress with a V-shaped bodice which is only otherwise known on a single statue from the Fourth Dynasty, the female from the tomb of the Sheikh el-Beled. Of the 16 statues with arms, only one does not have its arms pendant with open hands, and there is reason to doubt the authenticity of these arms.

Things begin to get interesting with the female offering bearers. As already mentioned above, the statues in groups have been treated as individuals – the groups are usually 2 or 3 statues on a base, sometimes varying in size. Groups with four or more statues have not yet been dealt with and appear to be slightly later in date. Taking a look at the hairstyles, only 7 out of 24 statues have a style known from the Old Kingdom. Six new hairstyles appear, probably related to the function of the female offering bearers as working girls. One style, the short bob covering the ears and with a plait down the back, is worn by 7 statues. Another version of this short bob, but without the plait, is worn by a further 4 statues. The other styles have one or two statues each. Six female offering bearers wear headscarves, presumably to keep their hair out of the way and to protect it from dust (*fig. 2*).

The female offering bearers also account for all of the new dress variants, 11 in total. Of the 32 statues analysed, 3 were nude and the rest all had a new type of garment, the most popular being a sheath dress with one strap over the left shoulder, covering the left breast, worn by 8 statues, but double straps covering or revealing the breasts are also popular.

Not surprisingly, the arm positions are all new as well – there are 2 main variants, used by 25 of the 27 statues with arms. The right arm is pendant with a pierced fist, probably to hold something like a duck or a flower, the left is bent up to support the burden on the head with an open hand. The variant is that the hands are not carved. The remaining two female offering bearers have both arms raised and appear in the same group.<sup>12</sup>



**Fig. 1** Statue of a female, Cairo JE 37756, Naga ed-Deir, Tomb 297



**Fig. 2** Female offering bearer, Cairo JE 88579, Saqqara D 6, Ishtji Tjetji

<sup>11</sup> Cairo JE 30809 (= CG 248); Cairo JE 37756: illustrated in Macramallah, *Mastaba d'Idout*, 13, figs. 6, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Cairo JE 30798 (= CG 250).

**Table 2** The corpus of female statues numbers 23, 12 of which appear in the Old Kingdom catalogue. There are also 32 female offering bearers (FOB), counting each offering bearer in a pair or triplet as an individual. The new types are shown in bold

**Female wigs, including female offering bearers** (table 2a) There are eleven new types of wigs. Whereas female statues remained fairly static in the Old Kingdom, there now seems to be a relative explosion of variety. Six female offering bearers wear headscarves

| Wig type       | Description  | Date   | No. of statues | No. of FOBs |
|----------------|--|--------|----------------|-------------|
| Wf2a           | Smooth tripartite, revealing ears                                    | End OK | 3***           | 4           |
| <b>WfNew1</b>  | <b>Smooth tripartite, centre parting</b>                             |        | <b>2</b>       |             |
| <b>WfNew2</b>  | <b>Smooth tripartite, covering ears, front bunches painted</b>       |        |                | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>WfNew3</b>  | <b>Smooth tripartite, covering ears, centre parting</b>              |        |                | <b>2</b>    |
| Wf2b           | Striated tripartite, revealing ears                                  | End OK | 1*             |             |
| <b>WfNew4</b>  | <b>Crude tripartite/bob</b>  |        |                | <b>2</b>    |
| Wf3a           | Bagwig revealing ears  | End OK | 1*             |             |
| Wf3b           | Bagwig covering ears   | End OK | 1*             |             |
| <b>WfNew5</b>  | <b>Short, smooth bob, covering ears</b>                              |        |                | <b>4</b>    |
| <b>WfNew6</b>  | <b>Short bob, covering ears, plait down back</b>                     |        |                | <b>7</b>    |
| Wf4            | Echelon-curl, revealing ears   | End OK | 3**            |             |
| Wf4a           | Echelon-curl revealing earlobes                                      | End OK | 1*             |             |
| Wf4b           | Echelon-curl covering ears   | End OK | 3*             |             |
| Wf5            | Skullcap   | End OK |                | 3           |
| <b>WfNew7</b>  | <b>Skullcap with 2 plaits joined into 1 long plait, wooden chock</b> |        | <b>1</b>       |             |
| <b>WfNew8</b>  | <b>Skullcap with 1 long plait ending in large circular disc</b>      |        | <b>1</b>       |             |
| Wf6            | Tripartite echelon-curl, short behind, revealing ears                | End OK | 1*             |             |
| Wf7            | Vertical echelon-curl, covering ears                                 | End OK | 1*             |             |
| <b>WfNew9</b>  | <b>Full-bottomed wig, one small bunch behind</b>                     |        | <b>1</b>       |             |
| <b>WfNew10</b> | <b>Smooth long hair behind shoulders and ears</b>                    |        | <b>1</b>       |             |
| <b>WfNew11</b> | <b>Smooth long hair behind shoulders covering ears</b>               |        |                | <b>1</b>    |

**Female dress, including female offering bearers** (table 2b) The 11 new types of dress are confined to the female offering bearers. The percentage of nude statues has increased significantly. Type Df1<sup>13</sup> is only otherwise known from one statue from the fourth Dynasty in the OK corpus

| Dress type | Description                   | Date   | No. of statues | No. of FOBs |
|------------|-------------------------------|--------|----------------|-------------|
| Df1        | Sheath dress, V-shaped bodice | Dyn IV | 1              |             |

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, *WSOK*, 29.

| Dress type | Description   | Date                  | No. of statues | No. of FOBs |
|------------|---|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Df2        | Sheath dress, no visible bodice                                       | Nyuserra              | 6*             |             |
| Df3        | Nude  | Merenra and end of OK | 16*(x11)       | 3           |
| DfNew1     | Sheath dress, no bodice, one strap diag. over l. shoulder             |                       |                | 3           |
| DfNew2     | Sheath dress, 2 straps covering breasts, V-shaped bodice              |                       |                | 2           |
| DfNew3     | Sheath dress with U-shaped bodice                                     |                       |                | 3           |
| DfNew4     | Sheath dress, 1 strap over left shoulder, covering breast             |                       |                | 8           |
| DfNew5     | Sheath dress, no sleeves  |                       |                | 2           |
| DfNew6     | Sheath dress, V-bodice in front, U-bodice behind                      |                       |                | 1           |
| DfNew7     | Sheath waist to ankle, 2 thin straps between breasts                  |                       |                | 3           |
| DfNew8     | Sheath dress below breasts to mid-calf, 2 wide straps between breasts |                       |                | 1           |
| DfNew9     | Sheath dress, 1 strap over r. shoulder, covering breast               |                       |                | 3           |
| DfNew10    | Hemline implies sheath  |                       |                | 2           |
| DfNew11    | Black line on waist and legs implies dress                            |                       |                | 1           |

**Female arms** (table 2c) Arms on female statues seem to be consistently pendant with open hands. Nine statues missing one or both arms are not included. No female offering bearers were included in the Old Kingdom catalogue, so not surprisingly, their arm positions are all new

| Arm type | Description   | Date     | No. of statues     | No. of FOBs |
|----------|---|----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Af3      | Pendant, open hands   | Nyuserra | 15*(x6)            |             |
| AfNew1   | Pendant, l. hand open, r. hand pierced fist                 |          | 1 (arms original?) |             |
| AfNew2   | R. pendant, fist pierced, left bent up to burden, hand open |          |                    | 17          |
| AfNew3   | R. pendant, left raised, too crude for hands                |          |                    | 8           |
| AfNew4   | Both arms raised to burden                                  |          |                    | 2           |

#### IV. Conclusions

Although this is not the place to go into the inscriptions in detail, it will be interesting to mention what there is so far. Two female statues have inscriptions: the statue of Shepset from Naga ed-Deir has *jm3hw hr ntr 3* plus title and name.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Harvey, WSOK, Cat. No. A125.



The statue of Tipet from Meir,<sup>15</sup> has the offering formula plus *n k3 n*, which is not known from the Old Kingdom corpus. The female offering bearers with inscriptions probably date to the Middle Kingdom – the one in the Meyers Museum at Eton College<sup>16</sup> is inscribed with the titles and name of Hepi Kem.<sup>17</sup> A pair of offering bearers in Copenhagen have two lines of illegible ink traces on their base.<sup>18</sup> They come from the tomb of Gemni at Saqqara.

Eighteen male statues have inscriptions, only one of which appears in the Old Kingdom catalogue, but then with 2 bases – Gegi from Naga ed-Deir.<sup>19</sup> Of the other 17 statues, only 6 have inscriptions similar to those in the Old Kingdom catalogue, with various forms of *jm3hw hr* a god or *jm3h* plus name and titles, and 2 are illegible (fig. 3). The remaining inscriptions all expand the text significantly with the *pri-hrw n k3 n* offering formula or the *hnp-di-nzw* formula, also with *n k3 n*.

**Table 3** Comparison of guidelines (in bold), from *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egypt* by Gay Robins, with actual wooden statues

|                        | <b>OK males</b> | OK males | <b>FIP males</b> | FIP males <sup>20</sup> | <b>OK females (incl. statues)</b> | FIP females                  | FIP female offering bearers         |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Hairline               | <b>18</b>       | 18       | <b>18</b>        | 18 (30)                 | <b>18</b>                         | 18 (17)                      | 18 (25) <sup>21</sup>               |
| Neck/shoulders         | <b>16</b>       | 16       | <b>16–17</b>     | 15½–16 (30)             | <b>16</b>                         | 16 (9)<br>[15½ (4)]          | 16 (16)<br>[16½ (2); 15½ (6)]       |
| Shoulder width (m)     | <b>5–6</b>      | 4–5      | <b>5–6</b>       | 5–5½ (18 of 26)         | –                                 | –                            | –                                   |
| Nipples (f)            | –               | –        | –                | –                       | <b>14</b>                         | 14 (8)<br>[13½ (5)]          | 14 (18)<br>[14½ (1); 13½ (4)]       |
| Elbow                  | <b>12</b>       | 12       | <b>12</b>        | 12 (19 of 29)           | <b>12</b>                         | 12 (7)<br>[12½ (3); 11½ (4)] | 12 (11 of 19)<br>[11½ (4)]          |
| Small of back          | <b>12</b>       | 12       | <b>12</b>        | 12 (26 of 30)           | <b>12</b>                         | 12 (7)<br>[12½ (3); 11½ (4)] | 12 (10)<br>[12½ (5); 11½ (2)]       |
| Lower line of buttocks | <b>9</b>        | 9        | <b>9</b>         | 9 (26 of 30)            | <b>9½</b>                         | 9½ (9)<br>[10 (2); 9 (5)]    | 9½ (12)<br>[10 (8); 9 (2)]          |
| Knee                   | <b>6</b>        | 6        | <b>6</b>         | 6 (24 of 30)            | <b>6½</b>                         | 6½ (7)<br>[6 (5)]            | 5½ (11 of 23)<br>[6 (3); 5 (4)]     |
| Basket/burden (FOB)    | –               | –        | –                | –                       | –                                 | –                            | 3½ (9 of 22)<br>[4 (5); 3 (3)]      |
| Raised arm elbow (FOB) | –               | –        | –                | –                       | –                                 | –                            | 18 (14 of 20)<br>[18½ (2); 17½ (2)] |

Perhaps the most significant results of this preliminary examination of post-Old Kingdom statues have been revealed by the analysis of the proportions of the statues (table 3). A similar analysis of the Old Kingdom statues<sup>22</sup> revealed that the

<sup>15</sup> Cairo JE 30211 (= CG 442).

<sup>16</sup> Myers Museum 1: S. Spurr, N. Reeves, S. Quirke, *Egyptian Art at Eton College*, (London, New York, 1999), 13.

<sup>17</sup> Cairo JE 30209 (= CG 440).

<sup>18</sup> Copenhagen ÆIN 1628: M. Jørgensen, *Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Catalogue Egypt I* (Copenhagen, 1996), 126–127.

<sup>19</sup> Cairo JE 30211 (= CG 442).

<sup>20</sup> The actual number of statues is shown between brackets. If one or both arms are missing, shoulder width or elbow position is difficult or impossible to measure.

<sup>21</sup> The statues in groups have each been measured separately

<sup>22</sup> Harvey, *WSOK*, 633–636.



Fig. 3 Striding male,  
Cairo JE 39149,  
Saqqara shaft 289,  
Ipiemdjebauf



Fig. 4 Striding female,  
Cairo JE 30314 (CG 797),  
Meir

second style discussed by Ann Russmann<sup>23</sup> was more a question of a slimming of the limbs than an actual shifting of the gridlines – thus more a question of a visual impression than an actual change in the grid. The most usual points of reference in the Old Kingdom are the hairline, the junction of the neck and shoulders, the elbow, the small of the back, the lower line of the buttocks, and the knee. The males were also expected to have a standard shoulder width, and females had a nipple guideline. For the sake of convenience, Gay Robins transferred these reference points to an 18-unit grid,<sup>24</sup> and her reference points are shown in bold in table 3. Each statue was measured from the feet to the hairline and the result was then divided by 18. This gave the unit height for the statue in question. It was then a simple matter of checking where the canon points fell. As is clear from the table, Old Kingdom males match these points in all except one instance – shoulder width. Wooden statues are consistently 1 unit less broad in the shoulders than 2-dimensional males.<sup>25</sup> Old Kingdom females have an identical grid to males, with the exception that their knees and buttocks are consistently half a unit higher, giving them a long-legged appearance. All Old Kingdom statues that were measured fitted this grid with a surprising consistency.

The same holds true for the statues analysed for this preliminary study of post-Old Kingdom material. The male statues from this period conform just as closely

to the Old Kingdom ideal as Old Kingdom males, the sole exception is that their necks are slightly higher, and their heads therefore slightly smaller. This means that although visually many of the statues look totally different stylistically, they actually conform almost slavishly to the canon.

First Intermediate Period females also match the Old Kingdom canon in the majority of cases, and those that do not are usually within half a unit of the ideal (*fig. 4*). The number in brackets after hairline 18 in table 3 gives the total number of statues, the numbers in square brackets are the alternative unit heights. It will be clear that although an occasional statue varies by 1 or more units from the ideal, this is by no means the norm.

The column for female offering bearers tells the same story until nearly at the bottom – the knees of female offering bearers turn out to be consistently 1 full unit lower than the norm (*fig. 2*). The rest of the grid points match to the same degree as females – that is, virtually always – but the lowering of the knee produces a visual effect that is unmistakable once you are aware of it – the optical illusion is that the waistline is much higher than usual, but in actual fact it is the upper legs

<sup>23</sup> E. R. Russman, 'A Second Style in Egyptian Art of the Old Kingdom', *MDAIK* 51 (1995): 269–279.

<sup>24</sup> G. Robins, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art* (London, 1994), 64ff.

<sup>25</sup> It would be interesting to see how stone statues measure up in this respect. This falls outside the scope of this paper, however.

that are exceptionally long. The consistency of this measurement surely cannot be a coincidence. What is also interesting to note is that both crudely made and more carefully made statues all conform to the grid as best they can – quality seems to make no difference, or very little difference; everyone knew and adhered to the canon, it appears, at least in wood.

To conclude, the production of wooden statues seems to continue unabated into the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom. New centres of production appear, but the craftsmen seem to have adhered to the approved canon of proportions. Only a few aspects change over time – probably due to changing fashions in dress and hairstyles. The only ‘radical’ change to the canon appears to be the height of the knees of female offering bearers, which is a full unit lower than the canon.