

CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI
PER LA CONSERVAZIONE ED IL RESTAURO
DEI BENI CULTURALI



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION AND THE
RESTORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ETUDES POUR LA CONSERVATION ET LA RESTAURATION DES BIENS CULTURELS
CRÉÉ PAR L'UNESCO

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TÉLÉGR.: INTERCONCERTO, ROME

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

I have handled one or two specimens from the Mansoor Collection of limestone figurines from Tell El Amarna that were stated to be typical of the collection, looked at the surfaces with a magnifier but have made no laboratory examination : I have been shown a number of scientific reports, summaries of these in a review by Professor C.O. Hutton, Stanford University, California as well as photographs taken in day light, U.V. and I.R. illumination and after studying these I have read Dr. Stöss in Analytical Chemistry, March 1960.

My first impression of the great interest attaching to these specimens remains. That the collection has been considered to be "too good to be true" by some is understandable for the specimens submitted to me showed "wear" (degradation) but very little actual deterioration after 3.000 years; they were all very clean; there was little damage of such a nature, as to impair their value as art or historic objects, finely chiselled noses chins etc. having survived where thick necks had been broken; and a curious freshness of line attracted attention, made by the

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sculptor's point, which remained rather whitish in the textured and coloured limestone. In regard to the laboratory reports submitted it may be sufficient to state that I find the published account of Dr. Stöss entirely convincing and to my mind it is not essential to carry any laboratory enquiry as to genuineness further, the case having been amply proved.

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Interest lies rather in trying/understand and explain the discrepancies in the reports. Granted that the conclusions in certain instances are incompatible I find on studying the observations upon which deductions have been made that these are not necessarily incompatible. Thus, I have a strong impression that the objects seen by me had never been exposed to weathering in the normal sense, i.e. exposed in the open. I regard the degraded surfaces of stone as having arisen from natural burial in sharp sand. A grinding phenomenon then operates through the years as is well-known and can even result, in extreme cases, in the loss of shape of compact bone and sometimes in its entire disappearance ! The fine tool lines referred to above as "being whitish" were possibly caked over by a protective layer through the ages and the general clean appearance of all specimens suggests the wash-tub, probably with brushing that could easily result in ambiguity in the interpretation of U.V. fluorescences.

In my considered opinion it would be as serious a mistake to underestimate the importance of scientific investigation as to consider that a lack of unanimity in the conclusions

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warrants a decision against the genuineness of then Egyptian antiquities^{for} as I have analysed the evidence before me, the inescapable conclusion is that there is over-riding agreement as to their genuineness.

It is because of this conviction that I am taking the exceptional step of making this gratuitous statement in the hope that after 20 years of doubt it may be a factor in restoring confidence.



Harold J. Plenderleith
Director

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