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Back Pillar with Cartouche of Rameses II

Egypt

1279-1213 B.C., 19th Dynasty, New Kingdom

Schist

H: 34.4cm

Schist fragment incised in deep relief with a cartouche bearing the pre-nomen, or regnal name of Ramesses II, commonly known as 'Ramesses the Great'. This relief comes from the back pillar of a large figural statue of the King. Ramses the Great reigned from 1279 to 1213 B.C., allowing us to safely date this pillar to within this time frame.

It is thought that back pillars were utilised as a way of reinforcement, allowing stone statues to have the tall and slim profile of a standing human. Sometimes these pillars were left blank, either because the statue itself was to be placed in a niche or against a wall. However, they were also used as space for hieroglyphic text, often to identify the figure.

Ramesses the Great, the third pharaoh of the powerful 19th Dynasty of the New Kingdom, has been hailed as one of the greatest pharaohs of all time. Responsible for building more great monuments than any other pharaoh, including at Karnak and Abu Simbel. His long reign is hailed as having brought Egypt into a golden age, and his funerary temple, the Ramesseum at the necropolis at Thebes, contained a massive library of some 10,000 papyrus scrolls. Upon his death, he was buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Kings, his body was later moved to a royal cache where it was discovered in 1881. It is

now on display in the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization

Literature:

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