The early display of Egyptian sculpture in the British Museum

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The research presented in this paper began with an attempt to solve a puzzle. Since 1992, I have been working on the Theban Tomb of Senneferi. Senneferi possessed many monuments outside his tomb, without a doubt the most spectacular of which is his block statue in the British Museum, BM EA 48. This statue is one of the best-preserved and, dare one say, « perfect » statues in the museum’s Egyptian collection, and it is my intention to include an up-to-date account of it in the publication of TT99.

The acquisition date of the statue of Senneferi

The acquisition date of this statue in the museum’s records has always been a cause for concern to me. That date is 1829, repeated in all publications prior to 2004. The piece is always considered as coming from the collection of Henry Salt, and, as is well known, objects acquired in Egypt by Salt came into the museum’s possession in two groups, the first as a result of the rather acrimonious purchase of his first collection in 1823, and later from the Sotheby’s sale of his third collection in 1835. 1829 does not fit either of these...