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Kneeling Statue of Senenmut

Edward Bleiberg: This is a statue of Senenmut, who served the pharaoh Hatshepsut—sort of like a prime minister for the king. And what's interesting about Hatshepsut is she's the only woman we really know about who was pharaoh.

It's one of twenty-five statues of him that's known to us. This one's really terrific because it shows so well the connection between Egyptian writing and Egyptian sculpture. If you're standing directly in front of the sculpture, you'll see that Senenmut is holding in his hands an emblem, which is made up of a sun disk, a snake, and two hands pointing upward. If you walk around to the side, you can see that Senenmut's arms are at a ninety-degree angle, holding the object. The arms are the hieroglyphic sign for "giving" or "offering."

The symbol that Senenmut is holding actually spells out Hatshepsut's name in hieroglyphs. And her name is actually a sentence that means something like: *Truth is the soul of the sun god Re*. Now that's written out this way: the sun god Re's name is spelled with the sun disk, which is at the top. The snake is a writing of *truth*. And the two arms reaching upward stand for the Egyptian word that means *soul*.