

## A unique Stela from the Fayoum in the Egyptian Museum CG no: 22197

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[This article deals with a unique round-topped stela of black granite that was found in the Fayoum area. It is actually exhibited in room 34 in the Egyptian Museum (J.E. no: 22262). It dates back to the Roman period. The figures and inscriptions are in sunken relief. The stela is fairly well preserved, except for the upper part of the figure on the left side, and the lower left corner which are broken. This stela has two characteristics, first: on its top a unique representation of the head of the deceased having Greco-Roman features. Second; there is a difference in the distribution of the scenes on the surface of the stela where the hieroglyphic text is between two scenes. It seems that the stela is unfinished especially in the lower part representing the deceased offering to Osiris and Isis; if it had been completed we would have expected to find the name and titles of every figure represented on the stela. As for the text, some of the writings are not deeply carved, so too hard to read and some signs are without determinatives and confused with others signs.]

**Keywords: Fayoum Stela, Roman Period, Osiris, Isis.**

This round-topped stela of black granite measuring 99 cm in height and 53 cm in width<sup>1</sup> was found in the Fayoum area. It is actually exhibited in room 34 in the Egyptian Museum (J.E no: 22262). It dates back to the Roman period. The figures and inscriptions are in sunken relief. The stela is fairly well preserved, except for the upper part of the figure on the left side, and the lower left corner which are broken. There are no traces of colors in the figures or in the hieroglyphs.

On the rounded top the winged solar disk is represented with two hanging uraei, one of them wearing the white crown while the other wears the red crown. Each of them holds the wind sign  and the *w3s* scepter  offering them to the ba bird with human head , standing upon the sign of  with a *anx*-sign in front of it.

Under the winged sun disk a row of figures are represented divided in two at the middle by two back to back figures of the god Sokar. On the right the deceased is led by the god Horus towards the gods Ptah, Nefertum, Sekhmet and Sokar, while the goddess Imentet with the usual symbol  above the head, stands behind the deceased with behind her the jackal-headed god Anubis. The left scene is similar to that on the

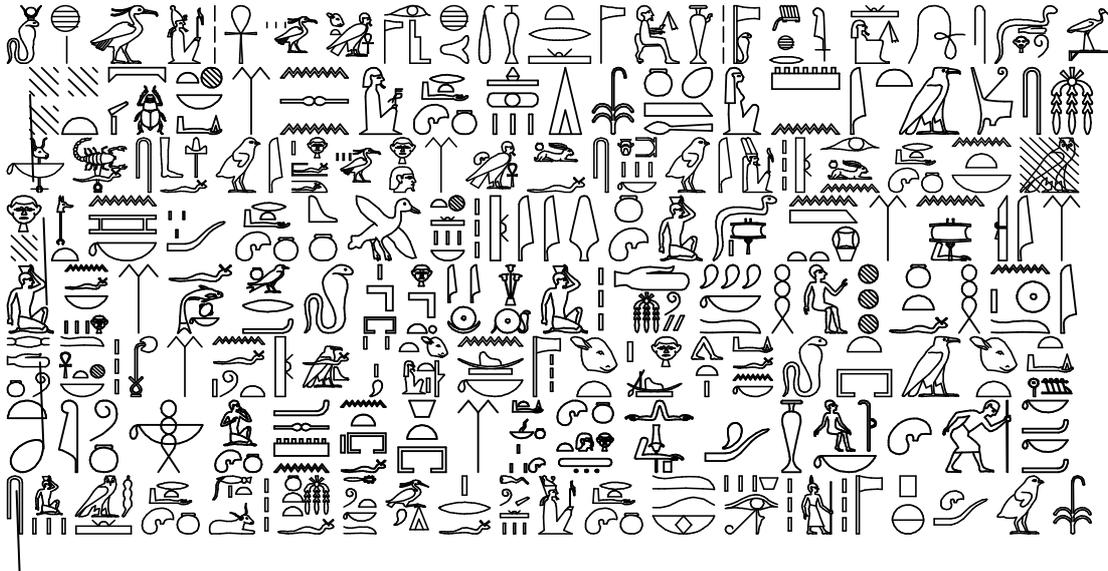
1. A. Kamal, *Stèles ptolémaïques et romaines* I, 193-194, II, pl. LXIX.

right. But here the gods towards whom the deceased is led are Amon, Horus, Tatenen and the falcon-headed god Sokar. A damaged figure of a goddess stands behind the deceased.

Beneath this scene, there are four horizontal hieroglyphic lines running from right to left. Beneath the hieroglyphic lines another winged sun disk covers a large scene. This scene represents the deceased burning incense and making purification in front of Osiris and Isis. The god Osiris is seated on his throne in his usual mummified form with his arms joined on his chest. He is wearing the Atf-crown without horns. Behind Osiris stands the goddess Isis raising her right hand in a protective gesture.

It seems that the stela is unfinished especially in the lower part representing the deceased offering to Osiris and Isis; if it had been completed we would have expected to find the name and titles of every figure represented on the stela<sup>2</sup>.

1. *The hieroglyphic text*



1-*Dhwtj-dd-hr-sw3 m3(-hrw) im3h hr ntrw ntrwt hsi špsy ntri hs.ti hr Wsir b3 ʿnh hnt 3hw ʿnhw Wsir? 3h nbt imntt? ms n T3-imnt -pn m3(-hrw) htp-di-nsu rdit n.k s3w-n.sn m ht nbt di pt t3 .....*

2-*m ht nbt rdit n.k Ir-wnwt r ph3-ib.k swnf b3.k ʿnh m hry-tp 3hw hr pr ʿk r 3b.f srk htyt.k m is-ni3w m nmt dʿ fi3 n.k im3yw ht nbt p3k rdit n.k ʿbw n mr.k wsr.ti hr ....*

3-*in hrw m hnw.f nhn hʿw.k m dwy msw.f h3yty hr nh pr.k wrh.f h3t.k m nf nb hrw.f dit šsp hnt ʿt.k di.f n.k nmt hr wi3 hnt ntrw n wi3.k hnt kdw.f fk3.n.f tw m h3w m ht nbt ʿnh ʿdt*

2. There are other stelae which have the same form, for example the stela no: 22120 of  from Akhmim and the stela no: 22136 of  from the same province. See: A. Kamal, *Stèles ptolémaïques et romaines* I, 103-105, 117-119. See also, P. Munro, *Die Spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, *ÄF* 25 (1973), Tafel 21, Abb. 77 from Thebes, Tafel 43, Abb. 156, 44, Abb. 158, 45, Abb. 159 from Abydos, Tafel 59, Abb. 202 from Memphis.

4-khkh.k rnp.k hs ʿb.f n hrp n.k hr-tp t3 di.t(w) n.k sntr m ʿt nt pr.f ḥsmn.n.k ḥkn [m] m3ʿt  
sw ʿb.k p3wtyw wrw nbw B3kt m mnt-ḥb rdit n.k Itm ḥpš rf bʿḥ.f ht.k m ms-ntt.f Mḥt[-wrt]  
rdit n.k ndm f3w.s

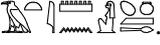
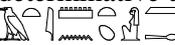
1- Thot-Djed-Her-Swa<sup>(a)</sup> true of voice<sup>(b)</sup>, the honored one before the gods and goddesses, the praised, noble and divine one, being praised before Osiris, the living ba in front of the living spirits. Osiris will be splendid mistress of the west<sup>(c)</sup>, the one who was born of Ta-imenet<sup>(d)</sup>, true of voice, an offering which s3w-n.sn<sup>(e)</sup> deities give to you 2- from everything which the heavens and the earth give ..... with everything<sup>(f)</sup> which the maker of beings<sup>(g)</sup> will give you that your heart rejoice, that your living ba be glad on account of the glorious ones to go forth and to enter as it desires, your throat will cause to breathe with the air<sup>(h)</sup> and with offerings?<sup>(i)</sup> ..... Im-Ayw<sup>(j)</sup> will carry up to you everything and the flat thin cake<sup>(k)</sup> (=biscuit) offerings will give to you as you love strongly ..... 3- by the day together with her mistress<sup>(l)</sup>, your members will be young in his shrine .....?<sup>(m)</sup> the two lights will protect your residence, he will smear your body with .....?<sup>(n)</sup> his faces will give the light in front of your residence<sup>(o)</sup>, he will cause that you go upon the bark before the gods of your bark in front of their images<sup>(p)</sup>, and he rewarded you with thousands of every living and complete thing, 4- when you become old you will become young “o” praised one he will offer to you without control<sup>(q)</sup> upon the earth<sup>(r)</sup>, the incense will burn to you in the chamber of your residence, and you eat and rejoice<sup>(s)</sup> with<sup>(t)</sup> truth, he ..... the great primeval<sup>(u)</sup> lords<sup>(v)</sup> of Egypt in the eyes festival, Atum? give to you might and he will supply your body with its needs<sup>(w)</sup>, Mehet-[weret] will give to you gladness and her offerings.

## 2. Comment

(a)- The name of the owner of the stela was copied by Ahmad Kamal as <sup>3</sup>. H. Ranke also read the name as *Dḥwty*<sup>4</sup> following it by a question mark. But I suggest that the name is a compound one determined by an uncommon form of a seated man , so, it is probable that the name is read  *Dḥwty-dd-hr-sw*<sup>3</sup>.

(b)- The sign  which is a confused writing of the sign  is to be read *m3ʿ* and represents the first element of the term *m3ʿ-hrw* which usually follows the deceased name except that the scribe did not write the following sign .

(c)- The sign  or the sign  is read *nbt imntt*<sup>5</sup> “mistress of the west”, so it maybe refers to the goddess Hathor as a mistress of the necropolis.

(d)- A. Kamal copied the name of the owner’s mother as , while the correct writing is . The scribe seems to have written the two signs  instead of the signs , which are usually written before the determinative and not following it; so it is possible that the correct writing of the name should have been  *T3-imnt m3ʿ-hrw*<sup>6</sup>. Specially because the name starts with the feminine definite article ; a similar writing is also found on another stela<sup>7</sup>.

3. A. Kamal, *Stèles ptolémaïques et romaines* I, 193.

4. H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen personennamen* I, 407.

5. F. Daumas et Autres, *Valeurs phonétiques* II, 375.

6. H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen personennamen* I, 358.

7. See A. Kamal, *Stèles ptolémaïques et romaines* I, n<sup>os</sup>: 22054, 22173.

- (e)-  *s3w-n.sn* it is a name given to a group of gods who protect the main temple god<sup>8</sup>; the term seems to be an abbreviation of the phrase *s3w.n.sn sw* “they who have protected him”<sup>9</sup>.
- (f)- This group is probably , a wrong writing of the group  which reads *ht nbt*.
- (g)-  *Ir-wnwt* “the maker or the creator of the beings” is an epithet known since the New Kingdom and given to the god as creator. Amun, Ptah, Khnum, Khnum-Re, Sobek, Sobek-Re and Horus-Re<sup>10</sup>, as well as the god Osiris were given this title in the Roman Mammisi at Dendara<sup>11</sup>, as well as the great god Nun  “the creator of the beings, Nun the great who gave birth (to) her majesty”<sup>12</sup>. The same expression eventually refers to the offerings <sup>13</sup>.
- (h)-  *is-n3iw* is a compound term which appeared in the Late Period and the Greco-Roman Period referring to “breath, air”<sup>14</sup>.
- (i)-  is unclear.
- (j)-  *imy* the sign  is read *imy* “therein”, *im3/i3m* “kind/gentle”<sup>15</sup>
- (k)- This word is read *p3k*<sup>16</sup> which means “a flat thin cake or biscuit” and it is presented as an offering<sup>17</sup>; it may also be the word  *p3t* meaning “cake or loaf”<sup>18</sup>, but the scribe mistakenly wrote the sign  instead of the sign .
- (l)- An uncommon writing for the word *hnwt*.
- (m)-  This group is unclear, it may refer to the word *tmw* “cover”<sup>19</sup> which corresponds to the clothes covering the body, or it may be read *tmsw* , meaning “shrine, cabin”<sup>20</sup>. The last meaning is more appropriate to the text.
- (n)-  possibly the name of a material for smearing the body, but I could not find it in ancient Egyptian dictionaries.
- (o)-  word to be read *t*.
- (p)-  This group of signs is to be read *hnt kdw.f*.
- (q)- Kamal copied the signs  instead of .
- (r)- Kamal copied this part ; it might better be read as  *hr-tp B*.
- (s)-  This group is a miswriting of the group .
- (t)- We can add, here, the preposition *m*.
- (u)- Kamal copied the group  as .

8. F. Daumas, *Les Mammimis des temples égyptiens*, Paris, 1958, 432 n. 3.

9. J.C. Goyon, *Les dieux gardiens et la Genèse des temples, (d'après les textes égyptiens de l'époque gréco-romaine) les soixante dieux d'Edfou et les soixante-dix-sept dieux de Pharbaethos*, BdÉ 93(1-2), Le Caire, 1985. 401-431, for the form of writing the name see p. 489-496.

10. LGG I,450.

11. F. Daumas, *Les Mammimis de Dendara*, Le Caire, 1959, 126,10.

12. A. Klasens, “A magical statue base (socle behague) in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden”, *OMRO 33* (1952), 44.

13. F. Daumas, *Les Mammimis de Dendara*, 196,16.

14. P. Wilson, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon*, 111.

15. R. Faulkner, *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 20.

16. W. Barta, *Die altägyptische Opferliste*, MÄS 3 (1963), 124, 145.

17. R. Faulkner, *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 88. Barta, *Die altägyptische Opferliste*, 150.

18. R. Faulkner, *A concise dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 87.

19. L. Lesko, *A dictionary of late Egyptian*, vol. II, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 228.

20. R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen Großes Handwörterbuch, Ägyptisch-Deutsch*, Mainz, 2006, 1027.

(v)- The scribe wrongly wrote the word  $\text{𓂏}^{\text{III}}$  as  $\text{𓂏}^{\text{III}}$ .

(w)- Kamal copied the word  $\text{𓂏}^{\text{III}}$  as  $\text{𓂏}^{\text{III}}$ .

### 3. The characteristics and the shape of the stela

This stela has two characteristics, first: on top of it a unique representation of the head of the deceased having Greco-Roman features. Second, there is difference in the distribution of the scenes on the surface of the stela where the hieroglyphic text is between two scenes.

Maspero commented on this stela saying: “one would think that the Egyptian sculptor had been influenced by the remembrance of the Greek hermae and that he had tried to adapt their conception to his national traditions instead of placing the head upon a rectangular oblong base, he has fixed it upon the usual round-topped stela, it is not likely that this original departure found many imitators”<sup>21</sup>.

As we mentioned above, the stela has a fairly unusual style: the head of the deceased is showing a Greco-Roman style in the curls of the hair and the garland surrounding it; and also in the features of the face is depicted as if coming out from the top of the round-top of the stela.

### 4. The symbolism of the stela

1-This stela might represent the primeval mound  $\text{𓂏}^{\text{III}}$  from which the deceased is coming out resurrected like the creator god at the beginning of creation. A similar representation is met with on the Osiris stela in the Cairo Museum, where Osiris comes out as a tree from the primeval mound.

2- The stela might represent the womb from which the head comes out as a symbol of rebirth in the afterlife, so as to be in the company of the winged solar disk in his daily journey.

According to the features of the head of the owner of this stela  $\text{Dhwtj-dd-hr-sw}^3$ , I suggest that he was a Roman-Egyptian who lived in the Fayoum during the Roman period. His father, whose name is not mentioned on the stela, was married to an Egyptian woman called Ta-Imentet.

As for the text, some signs are unclear, without determinatives and confused with others signs. Some of the writings are not deeply carved, so they are too hard to read.

21. G. Maspero, *Guide to the Cairo Museum*, English edition, Cairo 1903, 194-195, n.731.

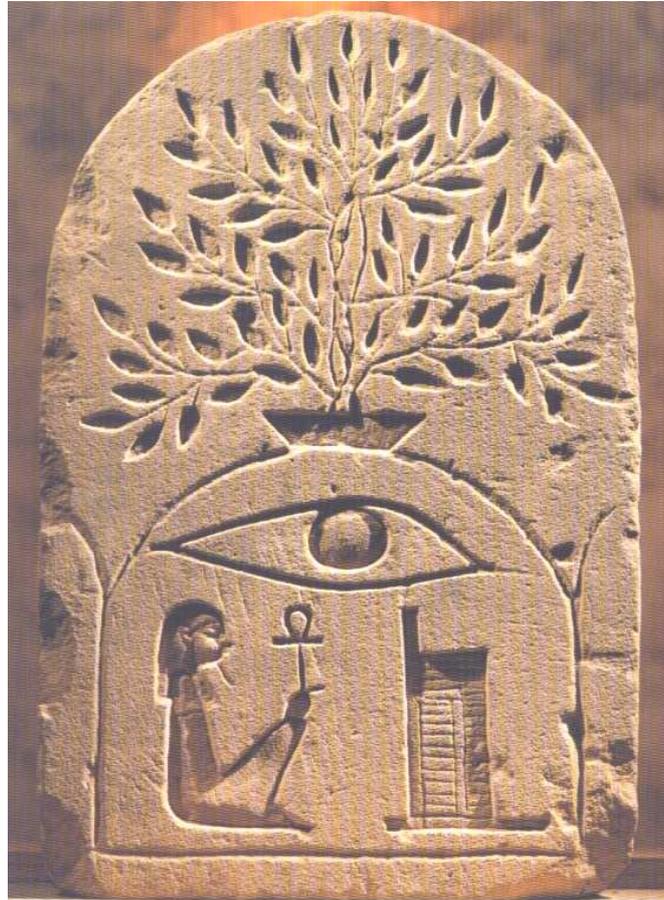


Fig. I: The Osiris stela (Cairo Museum)  
From: **Z. Hawass, Hidden Treasures of the Egyptian Museum.**  
One Hundred Masterpieces from the Centennial Exhibition, Cairo-New York 2002, p.71.



Fig. 2: suggestion of the form of the lower part of the stela if it was completed



Fig. 3: The stela of *Dhwti-dd-hr-sw3*

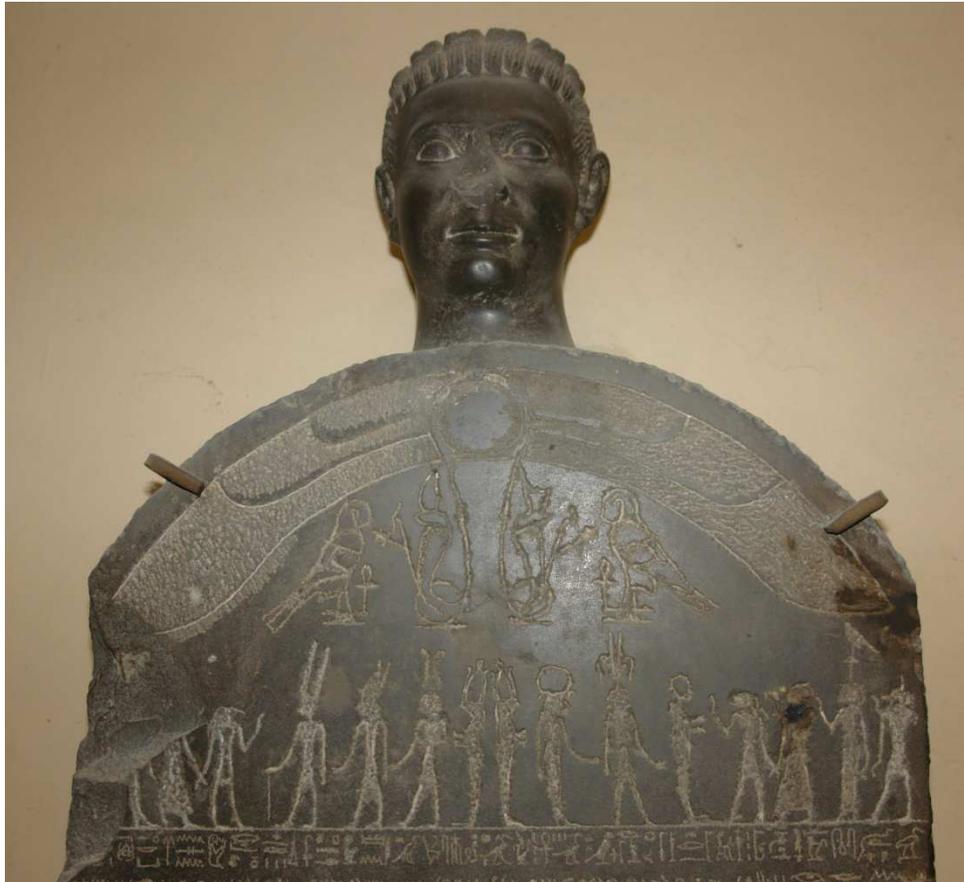


Fig.4: The top of the stela