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An Unpublished Stela of Amenhotep I and Ahmose Nefertari in the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM 18709)

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AHMED HAMDEN

ABSTRACT

This paper examines an unpublished fragmentary stela of Amenhotep I and Ahmose Nefertari who receive blessings from Hathor in the form of an *ankh*-sign extended to them. The original provenience of the stela is Thebes based on Hathor's epithets, and it is assigned generally to the New Kingdom in the museum database. The piece was transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum in 2016 from the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The main goal of the paper is to compare the epigraphical and artistic features of the stela with parallel exemplars of Amenhotep I and his mother to determine a more accurate date for the piece.

Keywords: Amenhotep I, Ahmose Nefertari, Hathor, life-giving, Thebes.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente une stèle fragmentaire inédite où Amenhotep I^{er} et Ahmès Néfertary sont représentés recevant les faveurs d'Hathor par le biais du signe-*ânkh* qui leur est tendu. La stèle provient de Thèbes, d'après les épithètes d'Hathor qu'elle révèle, et la base de données du musée l'attribue au Nouvel Empire. La pièce a été transférée du Musée égyptien du Caire au Grand Egyptian Museum en 2016. L'article propose de comparer les caractéristiques épigraphiques et artistiques de la stèle avec d'autres monuments du même type où Amenhotep I^{er} et sa mère sont figurés, afin d'affiner sa datation.

Mots-clés : Amenhotep I^{er}, Ahmès Néfertary, Hathor, don de la vie, Thèbes.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

The stela presented in this article is a fragmentary piece featuring Amenhotep I and queen Ahmose Nefertari in conjunction with Hathor. Amenhotep I and his mother commonly appear together in innumerable themes, contexts, and periods.[2] The depictions of the royal couple started during their lifetime in the Eighteenth Dynasty and continued thereafter in the form of cultic deified figures.[3] Despite the numerous stelae published for the king and his mother, the stele that is the subject of the present study has not been published yet. Until 2016 it had been located at the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo bearing the inventory number TR 26/4/22/6 and SR 3/10230.[4] In 2016, the stela was conveyed to the Grand Egyptian Museum with the number GEM 18709. The stela is designed as round-topped although the lower part is missing, and utilizes raised relief for the images, while the hieroglyphs are incised. The stela is made out of limestone, and the remaining portion measures 20.5cm, 23cm in width and 6cm in thickness. The original findspot of the stela is still unknown.

DESCRIPTION

The surviving part of the stela is the upper lunette (Figs. 1–2). The lunette is topped by centered outstretched wings that probably flanked a now eroded sun-disk. *Uraei* appear on both sides of the central axis of the wings. On the right side of the winged-disk, there are traces of what is probably a curved *pt*-sign of the heaven at the top. The main focus is on a single scene depicting the royal couple facing left in an attitude of adoration towards a figure of Hathor, which has now vanished, on the opposite side. The only remains of what should be Hathor is the top of one horn; her presence is certain based on the text. Due to the poor condition of the reliefs, it is difficult to assume the original position of the three figures, but it is likely that the king is standing based on his hand and arm positions, which would mean that the queen would also be standing. Hathor was almost certainly standing based on parallels.[5] The hieroglyphic texts are inscribed vertically above the three figures and separated by incised vertical line borders. There are no traces of color among the reliefs and inscriptions.

The king is wearing the angular type of the *khepresh* crown, decorated with a coiled snake body which extends to the head of a *uraeus*. According to Davies' categorizations of the

1 I am much indebted to the staff of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Grand Egyptian Museum for their generosity in allowing me to photograph and publish the object. The author would like to thank Dimitri Laboury, Julie Masquelier-Loorius, Suzanne Onstine and JJ Shirley for their helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.

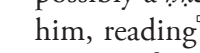
2 Myśliwiec 1985, p. 2; Robins 1993, p. 44; el-Shazly 2015, p. 231.

3 Schmitz 1978, p. 148.

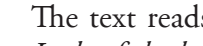
4 PM VIII/4, p. 3 (803-044-132): "Upper part of stela, Amenophis I and mother Ahmosi Nefertere *J'ḥ-ms Nfrt-Jrj* before Hathor 'in Thebes', probably temp. Amenophis I (or later?) in Cairo, Egyptian Museum, TR 26/4/22/6".

5 For parallels for the standing position: Turin Stela N. 50090 (el-Shazly 2015, p. 119; Moore 1994, p. 171); Stela JE 35003 in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Galán, Menéndez 2018, p. 23).

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blue crowns, this type is perhaps belonging to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.[6] This fits well with what can be discerned of the facial features, which seem to have the almond-shaped eyes of the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty. The king seems to be holding something on his chest, possibly a *ḥḳꜣ*-scepter.[7] The caption naming the king is inscribed in one vertical line above him, reading  *nṯr-nfr Ḏsr-kꜣ-Rᶜ dỉ ᶜnḫ*, *The good god, Djeserkare (Amenhotep I), given life*.[8]

Ahmose Nefertari is portrayed behind her son. The queen wears her usual vulture-headdress with a modius and two plumes on the top, which extends to the top of the winged sun-disk.[9] The facial features of the queen are not as delicate as other depictions of her but she shares the almond-shaped eyes of her son, pointing again to the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.[10] The narrow space between the king and his mother could be interpreted as if she is either embracing or resting her right hand on Amenhotep I, while the other hand is entirely missing.[11] There are two vertical lines of inscription in front of the queen's crown, reading  *mwt-nsw(t) Ỉᶜḥ-ms-nfr.t-ỉry ᶜnḫ tỉ ḏt*, *Great royal mother, Ahmose Nefertari, may she live forever*.[12]

On the right half, only a small part of Hathor's figure is preserved, in the form of a few traces of a horn projected from her crown, which is still visible. This leads to consider an anthropomorphic aspect for the goddess. The *ᶜnḫ*-sign is the only preserved part of a composite staff held by the goddess, which originally consisted of a *wꜣs*-scepter with *šn* -symbol and *ḏd*-pillar.[13] The *ᶜnḫ*-sign is directed towards the king's nostrils. The thematic life-giving representations are commonly associated with Hathor in various settings, and there is a close similarity between the *ᶜnḫ*-sign and the sistrum, one of the symbols of Hathor.[14] The *Coffin Texts* illustrate Hathor's role in lengthening the king's life in the realm of dead in the western necropolis.[15] On the right end of the stela, the texts associated with Hathor are arranged in the form of a column and would have been above her now-damaged figure. The text reads  *Ḥwt-Ḥr ḥryt-tp Wꜣst nb(t)-pt*, *Hathor who presides over Thebes, Lady of the heaven*.

6 Davies 1982, p. 74 and fig. 11; Quinn 1991, p. 171. W. Vivian Davies presented comparable examples of the crown worn by Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III (Davies 1982, p. 74 and n. 37). For further interpretations on the blue crown worn by Amenhotep I, see: Collier 1996, p. 118; el-Shazly 2015, p. 223.

7 For parallel examples, see: Hollender 2009, p. 23 and fig. 6, p. 26 and fig. 7, p. 48 and fig. 20, p. 50 and fig. 21.

8 The early and mid-Eighteenth Dynasty witnessed the extent of the basilophoric prenomen *Djeserkare* borne by members of the non-royal community: Moore 1996, p. 140.

9 For the significance of the vulture-headdress: Robins 1993, pp. 23–24.

10 For the almond-shaped eyes in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty, and in particular Amenhotep III, see: Myśliwiec 1990, p. 18; Romano 1990, p. 50; Strauss-Seeber 1990, pp. 11–12; Bryan 2010, pp. 68–69; Van Dijk 2010, p. 330.

11 The left damaged hand is holding one of various scepters and emblems held be the divinized queen damaged. For a complete list, see: Gitton 1975, p. 73.

12 For the association of the epithet *ᶜnḫ tỉ* with Ahmose Nefertari, see: Troy 1986, p. 162. For the queen's epithets, see: Gitton 1975, pp. 69–71; Sadek 1987, pp. 141–142; Robins 1993, p. 44; el-Shazly 2015, p. 175; Galán, Menéndez 2018, p. 187.

13 A similar scene from the reign of Amenhotep III shows what the missing staff may have looked like, see Abdel-Raziq 1986, p. 83; Johnson 1990, p. 32 and fig. 3.

14 Wilkinson 1992, pp. 212–213.

15 Bleeker 1973, pp. 42, 44, 47.

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Fig. 1. Stela GEM 18709.


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Fig. 2. Facsimile drawing of the stela GEM 18709.

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COMMENTARY ON THE STELA

The type of the winged sun-disk found on the stela is more common on the stelae of the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty. A good example is stela CG 34034 from Karnak, which presumably dates to Thutmosis III, in which the deceased Amenhotep I wears the same style of the *khepresh* crown found on GEM 18709.[16] This style of winged sun-disk does not seem to be frequent in the Ramesside Period. This also supports the dating of GEM 18709 to the pre-Ramesside cult.

The blue crown could be a convenient dating method, as it aligns the piece with the Thuthmosid period.[17] It may also help to determine provenance. In such cases, Teresa Moore pointed out that most of Amenhotep I's imagery on the temple reliefs with the *khepresh* crown in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty occurred at the temple of Amun in Karnak. On the other hand, the king was associated with the *Anedjti* crown on the west bank and in the mortuary temples.[18] If so, it is possible that GEM 18709 originally came from the Karnak Complex. Afterwards, Thutmosis III dedicated a cultic chapel to venerate Amenhotep I near the Sixth Pylon at Karnak.[19]

The posthumous cult of Amenhotep I peeked in the Egyptian pantheon during the Thuthmosid period. The GEM 18709 stela could be rightly fitting with this period, as the depictions and statues of Amenhotep I and his mother are reminiscent of those in the Thuthmosid structures.[20] The kings of the Thuthmosid period paid great attention to the cult of Amenhotep I. On the north edge of Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahari, there are structural remains of a Hathor shrine in the mud-brick temple of Amenhotep I, which may have been reused during the period between the reigns of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III.[21] It would be normal to see Hathor associated with Amenhotep I and on monuments from the Eighteenth Dynasty.

In the Theban private tombs, the posthumous cult of Amenhotep I has started by the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty and continued into the Third Intermediate Period.[22] The influence of Amenhotep I's cult during the reign of Amenhotep III is exemplified in the tombs of Nakht (TT161) and Nebamun and Ipuky (TT181).[23] The scene of Amenhotep I and his mother in TT181 is an ideal exemple of the couple during the reign of Amenhotep III.[24] The two royals' artistic poses, facial features, positions and costumes are quite similar to those of the couple depicted on the stela. We can therefore hypothesize that stela GEM 18709 dates from the same period. It remains difficult to confidently assign the stela to a particular king from this period. However, the artistic style of the two figures in GEM 18709 is closely aligned with the art of Amenhotep III.[25]

16 Lacau 1909, pl. XXIII; Moore 1994, p. 24; Hollender 2009, p. 20; el-Shazly 2015, p. 486. Another example at Karnak for Amenhotep I wearing the blue crown is stela CG 34029: Lacau 1909, pl. XXII; el-Shazly 2015, p. 486.

17 For further discussion on Amenhotep I with the blue crown, see: Exel 2006, vol. I, pp. 86–87; el-Shazly 2015, p. 5.

18 Moore 1994, pp. 46–47, 54; el-Shazly 2015, pp. 226–227.

19 Laskowski 2006, p. 190; el-Shazly 2015, p. 231.

20 For more examples of the members of the Thuthmosid family with the deified Amenhotep I, see: Moore 1994, p. 56.

21 Sadek 1987, p. 50; Hayes 1990, p. 45; Pinch 1993, pp. 6–7; Roehrig 2014, pp. 151, 153.

22 For the Cult of Amenhotep I in the Eighteenth Dynasty, see: Habachi 1969, p. 48; Sadek 1987, p. 131; Hayes 1990, pp. 46, 51; Moore 1994, p. 1; Moore 1996, pp. 139, 142–144; Manniche 2004, p. 169; el-Shazly 2015, pp. 11, 230.

23 Manniche 1986, pp. 67, 69, figs. 8 and 13; Moore 1996, p. 143 and n. 56; Exell 2006, vol. I, p. 87.

24 Davies 1925, pl. IX; Moore 1994, pp. 41–42. The joint cult of Amenhotep I and his mother reached its highest level of popularity during the reign of Amenhotep III: Moore 1994, p. 55.

25 For instance, the raised reliefs of Amenhotep III at Luxor Temple: Johnson 1990, pp. 28, 33, 42, pl. 10 and fig. 2; Myśliwiec 1990, pl. 3 (a-c). Another example is the tomb of Kheruef (TT192): Myśliwiec 1985, pl. II.2. See also fn. 8 above for the almond-shaped eye.

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The presence of Amenhotep I's cartouche does not necessarily mean that the stela dates from his reign, since the king and his mother were later venerated together in their posthumous cult.[26] In particular, the king's textual captions *nṯr-nfr* and *dỉ ꜥnḫ* do not offer persuasive proof to help dating the stela. These captions frequently appeared in different periods of the New Kingdom. A parallel example of these epithets and the king's crown can be seen on the Twentieth Dynasty stela JE 43694 in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.[27]

The quality of the hieroglyphs in the textual composition of the stela is inconsistent, with their varying. The inscriptions including the hieroglyphs *nṯr* and *dỉ ꜥnḫ* above the king's head are imprecise and inaccurate: it is noticeable that the signs are not positioned along the same line of the cartouches (beneath the king's cartouche, the hieroglyphs *dỉ ꜥnḫ* are noticeably shifted to the left side to avoid interfering with the king's *uraeus*, the hieroglyph *ꜥnḫ* being inscribed close to it). The depiction of the winged sun-disk on the top of the stela clearly prevented the sculptor from carving the queen's inscriptions freely within the designated space for the texts. The irregular inscriptions of the queen's captions are clear in the hieroglyph *mwt*, which seems to have been squeezed and curved due to the wings above it, resulting with irregular proportions compared to its typical form.

In most cases, Hathor's title *ḥryt-tp Wꜣst* was rarely used in the presence of the deified Amenhotep I at different periods.[28] By all means, it affirms that Thebes is the original provenience of this stela. However, the title does not indicate a specific location in Thebes, as it is attested from both eastern and western monuments. Likewise, its dating remains uncertain, due to its occurrence with several different kings.[29] The epithet *nb(t)-pt* is added to the whole title on GEM 18709. It is rarely inscribed. There are various examples of the goddess's titles that differ in context and function from GEM 18709. These include the Philadelphia stela of Amenmose, E 11818 from the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.[30] Another good example from the reign of Ramesses II is the Khawy stela from Deir el-Bahari, which is on display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (JE 72021, SR 4/13906).[31]

The raised reliefs on GEM 18709 are an exceedingly common feature of artistic motifs used during the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.[32] In contrast, sunken reliefs were more frequently inscribed on Ramesside monuments. The artistic elements presented in the piece suggest that it should be attributed to the royal couple's posthumous cult rather than their reign. This makes it more likely that the stela's relative dating falls during the Eighteenth Dynasty.[33]

26 For detailed information and interpretations on the cult of the patron deities, see: Sadek 1987, pp. 132–134; el-Shazly 2015, pp. 1–10. For the cult outside Thebes, see: Gitton 1975, pp. 76, 90; Moore 1994, pp. 16, 32; el-Shazly 2015, p. 230.

27 Moore 1994, p. 3; Galán, Menéndez 2018, pp. 59–60.

28 For additional examples of the epithet, see Gitton 1975, p. 87; Pinch 1993, p. 8; *LGG* V, p. 447.

29 The epithet appeared frequently on Theban monuments. In the complex of Karnak, from the reign of Thtumosis III, Amenhotep II? and Sety I (Barguet 1962, pp. 70, 106, 144, 199); at Deir el-Bahari, from the reign of Hathsepsut and Thtumosis III (Naville 1901, pls. XCII, C, CII, CVI; Fischer 1977, p. 109).

30 Naville 1907, vol. I, pp. 69–70 and pl. 25f; Pinch 1993, p. 84; Exell 2006, vol. II, p. 464.

31 Galán, Menéndez 2018, p. 78.

32 Stewart 1976, p. x.

33 Johnson 1990, p. 28; Moore 1994, p. 18.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The stela is fairly small in size and not so well preserved, but its epigraphical characteristics provide us with various persuasive evidential clues, which match closely with the artistic style of the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty. It should be noted that the artistic characteristics of GEM 18709 differ significantly from those of the Ramesside stelae. While an exact dating of the stela remains unclear, we may still conclude that the artistic hallmarks of the stela correspond to one of the Thuthmosid kings, and not to the Ramesside Period. The stela's provenance from Thebes seems to be certain, although it cannot be determined with any accuracy beyond that.

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