A Late Middle Kingdom Stela of *Sbk-ḥtp**

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Abstract:

This article publishes a stela that belongs to *Sbk-ḥtp* during the Late Middle Kingdom. The stela was found in the northern necropolis in Abydos, and it was used to be preserved in Cairo Museum with the numbers SR 3/ 9388 = CCG 20155; and is now in Grand Egyptian Museum with the number GEM 14233. It is on display in the Grand Egyptian Museum. The aim of this article is to identify the titles (if any) and the family tree of the owner of the stela after determining its date.

CCG 20155

[Fig. 1/ Pl. 1]

Stela CCG 20155 (Fig. 1) is a limestone rounded top stela with a lunette containing symbols of protection symbols and the offering formula. The stela is carved in sunk relief and there are traces of green color on the text and scenes. It is framed by two vertical sunken borders, and it is divided into two registers. Lange and Schäfer noted that its provenance is the northern necropolis at Abydos (Lange and Schäfer 1902, 182–183). The stela measures 43.5 cm high and 28.5 cm wide, and can be dated by the offering formula, and its palaeography, epigraphy, and iconography to the Late Middle Kingdom (maybe 13th Dynasty). The owner of the stela is *Sbk-ḥtp*.
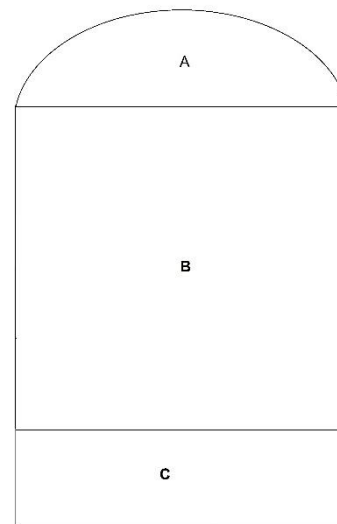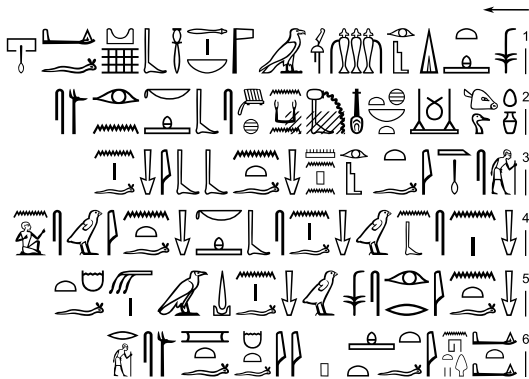

Figure 1.

Drawing: The Author

The Lunette (A):

The lunette is flanked by two Wadjet eyes, surmounted by two jackals reclining upon standers / racks in the shape of a mat and a sign as ⚚ (Hölzl 1990, 79–82; 285).

The first Register (B):

The hieroglyphic text, consists of 6 rows, read from left to right. The text includes the titles of the deceased, as follows:

(*1*) *ḥtp-di-nsw Wsir ḫnty jmntyw nṯr-ꜥꜣ nb ꜣbḏw di.f pr(t)-ḫrw* (*2*) *t ḥnḳt iḥw ꜣpdw šs mnḫt ḫt nbt nfr wꜥb n kꜣ n imꜣḫ* **Sbk-ḥtp** *ir n* **wsr (ꜣ)-s** *mꜣꜥ-ḫrw it.f Wsir mn pn snt.f* **Bbi** *sn.f* (*4*) **sn(.i) Snbw** *sn.f* **Sbk-ḥtp** *snt.f* **ꜤIw.s n.i** (*5*) *snt.f* **ꜤIr.s sw** *sn.f Ḏꜣ ḥmt.f* (*6*) *Ddt-nhty it.f Ḥtpy ḥmt.f mrt.f Wsr*

(1) A Royal offering[a] of Osiris[b], the foremost of the Westerners[c], the great god[d], Lord of Abydos[e], he may give an invocation[f] offering (2) of bread, beer, oxen, fowl, , alabaster, linen[g], and every good and pure thing to the *kꜣ* of the blessed[h] *Sbk-ḥtp*[i] conceived of *Wsr*-(ꜣ)*s*[j] justified, the father Osiris, this deceased[k], his sister *Bby*[l], his brother (4) *Šni-snbw*[m], his brother *Sbk-ḥtp*[n], his sister *iw.s n.i*[o] (5) his sister *ir.s sw*[p], his brother *ḏꜣ*[q], his wife (6) *Ddt-nhty*[r], his father *ḥtpy*[s], his wife, his beloved, *Wsr*[t].

Commentary on the first register:

(a) It is clear here that the *ḥtp-di-(n)swt* formula in this text was used most probably at the end of the 12th Dynasty. According to Franke (Franke 2003, 54–55) there are two ways of writing the offering formula: *nswt + ḥtp + di* (Type I), and *nswt + di + ḥtp* (Type II). In this stela this formula appears more like Type I, which lasted until the end of the 13th dynasty.

(b) Normally during the 11th and early 12th dynasties the determinative was occurred, usually dropped later (Bennett 1941, 78), thus it is remarkable here that the determinative in Osiris's name is dropped here.

(c) This title is often included in the *ḥtp-di-nswt* formula amongst other titles of Osiris, referring to him as the funerary god of protection. The first example is occurred in the tombs of the 1st dynasty kings Den and Qaa without clarifying if it is a proper name or an epithet. Although, the first example in which it was given to Osiris in the Old Kingdom was in PT Spell 2021 (Faulkner 1969, 291). There is no clear evidence for an independent deity carrying this name before the 5th dynasty. (Smith 2017, 65). Usually, the determinative A40, it started to disappear in the Late Middle Kingdom, under the reign of Sesostris III (Bennett 1941, 78).

(d) The title *nṯr-ʿȝ* was associated with Osiris rarely (Saied 2002, 1058, N°. 25.) since the time of the Old Kingdom (Baines 1983, 13–28; Leitz 2002, IV 395; Derchain-Urtel 1997, 52), and was still used in rarely examples during the Middle kingdom until the 12th dynasty (Bennett 1941, 79), it was also added in the combination of Osiris titles under the reign of Sesostris I (Bennett 1941, 80).

(e) The combination of Osiris titles: was occurred during; although, the title *nb ḏdw* that is not a part of the current combination, didn't occur during the 12th dynasty after the reign of Ammenemes III (Bennett 1941, 79).

(f) Beginning in the 12th Dynasty, *di.f prt-ḫrw* "that he may give an invocation" is preferred, in place of *prt-ḫrw,* "an invocation," which was used in the 11th Dynasty (Bennett 1941, 77; Clère 1935, 778ff.).

(g) Normally, in the offering formula, the combination of the bread, beer, and the *prt-ḫrw* ⬚ was used, although here, the *prt-ḫrw* was written separated from the bread and beer signs as ⬚. Also, there is a combination that appeared here as ⬚, this combination's first attestation was under the reign of Senusert III (Ilin-Tomich 2017, 4-5).

(h) The designation *n kȝ n imȝḫ* + The name of the deceased was used during the reign of Amenemhat II, until the reign of Senusert III, in which the owner was no longer venerated (Bright 2008, p. 9).

(i) Ranke, I, 305 no. 6; this name is common since the Old Kingdom until the Graeco-Roman period.

(j) Ranke, I, 86 no. 20; Ranke didn't mention the determinative 𓀀, he also noted that this name is refereeing to a female person from this stela, although, it has to be a male person, because it follows *iry n* that could be only used referring to the father not the mother.

(k) The designation *pn mn* gives the meaning of "This NN" (WB II, 64 no. 15); there is a Divine name that could be read as *it.f Wsir*, however, Leitz mentioned that this name appeared only during the Graeco-Roman period (Leitz, I, p. 577). This designation could be used referring to the deceased "*Sbk-ḥtp*" or his father "*Wsr-s*" who is also *mꜣꜥ-ḫrw*!

(l) Ranke, 95 no. 16.

(m) My brother is healthy (Ranke I, 309, no. 19).

(n) It is normal to find relatives having the same name.

(o) She heard me (Ranke, I, 15 no. 4).

(p) Ranke, I, 40 no. 17 – Ranke noted that it is refereeing to a female person from this stela.

(q) Ranke, I, 404 no. 9 – He noted that it is refereeing to a male person from this stela.

(r) Ranke, I, 403 no. 15 – He noted that it is refereeing to a female person from this stela – The one who the god *nhty* brought.

(s) This part is confusing, that it is read as *it.f ḥtpy*, the suffix-pronoun *.f* should refer to a masculine person, and the name right before it refers to a female person, thus it should be referring to another person. Thus, there are only few options: 1) he is the father of *ḏꜣ*, as the nearest person's name to this pronoun, although he is the brother *Sbk-ḥtp* or his father *Wsr-s*; 2) this pronoun *.f* refers to *Sbk-ḥtp*'s father *Wsr-s*. The most rational option is the second one. The name *ḥtpy* was mentioned by Ranke (Ranke I, 260 no. 7).

(t) The name *Wsr* appeared referring to both male and female persons, although Ranke didn't mention the determinative 𓀀 (Ranke I, 85 no. 6).

The Second register:

In the lower register there are three figures without mentioning their names;

The owner of the stela is depicted on the left facing right and sitting beside a woman (most probably his wife). He wears a short bag wig that leaves his ears uncovered (Freed 1976, 59), as well as a kilt with belt and knot/ it is not clear if he wears a kilt or not!. He is sitting on an armless wide chair (settee) with a low backrest covered by a thick cushion, with leonine feet set on the usual truncated supports (coasters) (Killen 1994, 29; Donovan and McCorquodale 2000, 133f.); not only is the entire leg of the lion reproduced, but the front legs of the chair are formed like the forelegs of the lion and the back legs like the lion's hind legs. The deceased is holding a Lotus blossom to his nose / face with his left hand and stretching the other hand toward different kinds of offerings without being loaded on an offering table. These are represented at a disproportionately large scale on the other side of the scene.

The woman is depicted wearing a long wig that leaves her ears uncovered, and a close-fitting dress, her left-palm is rested on his shoulder as a symbol of intimacy of family relations between husband and wife in Ancient Egypt, although her right hand is stretched towards the same offerings.

The other figure that is depicted sitting on the floor with his left knee kneed to the left, facing them. His right hand is closed.

General comments:

*   The background of the stela is not painted at all, the current color is the stone's, although, the symbols in the lunette, and the text and depicted scenes in the two registers are all painted with green color.

The green color has it is own importance in ancient Egypt that it symbolizes the living nature and the prosperity, it was also related to the goddess mother (Getty 1992, 6-13), thus it symbolize the resurrection, and it could be used on the stela to ensure the deceased resurrection in the afterlife.

*   The symbolism of the wide chair may have related to the marriage bed of procreation, the sexual symbolism of the wide chair/ couch is normally emphasized by the presence of a few objects, such as: mirror, unguent jars, sandals, and cats beneath the chair (Hartwig 2004, 90)

*   The lotus flower in the Ancient Egyptian Civilization as its importance in the resurrection of the deceased (Hartwig 2004, 89) as well as its importance role in renewing the vitality of Gods and creating their power.

Depicting a woman smelling the Lotus flower was familiar during the Middle Kingdom specially during the reign of Senosert I onwards (Abdelaal 1995, 78). Pflüger noted that men are represented smelling the Lotus from the time of Amenemmes II onwards (Pflüger 1947, 130 N°. 5), although, Abdelaal (Abdelaal 1995, 78) mentioned that depicting men holding a Lotus flower appeared more often at the end of the 12th dynasty and during the 13th dynasty.

The lotus flower has its very important role in the methodology in renewing the vitality of the Gods, and in the resurrection of the deceased, the smell of the lotus flower was mentioned several times through the religious texts as a happiness flower as follows:

CT VI 102d = Spell 515 (De Buck 1956, 102d)

𓊐𓅓𓀠𓏤𓂧𓅓��𓏥

ḳȝw ḥr sȝp.wt

"I am on high on the lotus flowers"

As for the inhalation of the lotus flower, it is known that there is a ritual known as the smell of the lotus flower is depicted on the stela, it is also mentioned in the pyramids texts spell no. 266, where the spell is said through the deceased tongue.

*   The offerings:

        The offering scene was selected as it was an essential part of the funerary ritual for Egyptians and was most likely to appear in all tombs throughout the Old Kingdom, the motif of sitting the deceased in front of an offering table is one of the oldest scenes in Egyptian art normally, this scene is composed of a depiction of the deceased and his wife, sometimes with their children, seated before an offering table receiving the offerings from a family member, friends, and anonymous participants (Hartwig 2004, 86) to secure the deceased's eternal sustenance and rebirth (Hölzl 2002, 133-135). The

offerings here include a leg joint (*ḫpš*), a calf's head, various loaves of bread, cakes, and green onion.

It should be noted that the offerings on this stela are not depicted on an offering table as usual, only the bread are stacked on a small mat, however the rest of the offerings are depicted in the space beneath that mat.

Conclusion:

There are a few points that are remarkable, they could be concluded in the followings:

1) The owner of the stela is *Sbk-ḥtp*. He didn't hold any title, which is not usual in Middle Kingdom non-royal funerary stelae. Furthermore, usually the owner of a stela is shown seated on the left, facing right, in front of an offering table (or just a text). However, in the studied stela, his wife is represented seated beside him on a settee, they don't not face any tables, but rather only the offerings without any tables.

2) There is a textless area on the stela, usually around the owner and his family members, one can find their names and titles, although in this stela it was completely empty.

3) In the offering formula, only Osiris's name and titles are listed, the titles that appeared in the text are; the foremost of the Westerners, the great god, and Lord of Abydos.

4) The information on the stela allows us to compile *Sbk-ḥtp*'s family tree for three generations as follows: (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Family tree of Sbk-ḥtp for three generations

The first generation: *Ḥtpy*   = The grand-father of *Sbk-ḥtp*

Wsr   = The grand-mother of *Sbk-ḥtp*

The second generation: *Wsr-s*   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s father

                           Sn.i snbw   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s uncle

                           Sbk-ḥtp   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s uncle

                           Ḏꜣ   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s uncle

                           Ḏdt-mhty   = *Ḏꜣ*'s wife

                           Bbi   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s aunt

                           Ꞽw.s n.i   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s aunt

                           Ꞽr.s sw   = *Sbk-ḥtp*'s aunt

The third generation: *Sbk-ḥtp*   = The owner of the stela

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Plate 1: Stela Cairo CG 20155 (Courtesy of Cairo Museum; © Ahmed Amin)