Middle Kingdom Stela of Hotep in the Grand Egyptian Museum GEM

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Abstract
This paper aims to study an unpublished Middle Kingdom Funerary stela of Hotep preserved under the number (JE 18512, CG 20014, SR 3/ 9711) in the Grand Egyptian Museum GEM. It was discovered in Abydos in 1862. The stela is made out of limestone. It carries a representation of Hotep together with his mother standing in front of an offering table. It also carries four lines of hieroglyphic inscriptions of the offering formula. The stela measures about 88 cm. high and 51.5 cm. wide.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the names and titles of Hotep and his mother. It will represent the translation of the texts and analyze their epigraphical features. It could be suggested that this stela dates back to the Late Twelfth Dynasty or the Early Thirteenth Dynasty. This could be concluded through its artistic style, its orthographic and paleographic features of it.

Keywords
Abydos, GEM, Hotep, Khenty-khety-hotep, Offering formula, Offering table, Stela, Thirteenth Dynasty, Twelfth Dynasty.
Introduction

Stelae\(^1\) is an ancient Egyptian upright monument\(^2\) that was varied in shape and material. They were usually decorated with reliefs and inscriptions on the recto side while its verso was usually left free from any decorations\(^3\).

There were several ancient Egyptian terms that were used to refer to stelae, for instance: \(\text{\`b} \), \(\text{jst} \), \(\text{\`h} \), \(\text{sp} \), \(\text{wD} \).

Stela of Hotep (Pl. I and Fig.1)

Ancient Egyptian stelae originated at Abydos during the 1\(^{st}\) dynasty as burial markers. The stela of Hotep was excavated at Abydos by August Mariette for the Egyptian Antiquities Service in 1862. Being the main place of the Osirian cult, Abydos was a prominent ancient Egyptian sacred city\(^10\).

**Date:** Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty.

**Place of discovery:** Abydos, North Cemetery.

**Current place:** Grand Egyptian Museum.

**Number:** (JE 18512, CG 20014, SR 3/9711).

**Material:** Painted limestone.

**Conservation status:** In good condition.

**Dimensions:** 88 cm. in height; 51.5 cm. in width\(^11\).

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\(^5\) Wh. I, 126, 17.

\(^6\) Wh., I, 221, 18.

\(^7\) Wh., VI, 200, 15.

\(^8\) Wh., VI, 451, 7; Faulkner, R.O., A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egypt, p. 264.

\(^9\) Wh., I, 398, 15-20.


Description of the stela

The limestone stela of Hotep takes the form of a rectangular slab. The upper part of it is decorated with a cavetto cornice that carries palm fronds in fine lines colored red, green, and blue. The Cavetto cornice was an architectural element usually found above temple doors and around the upper edges of shrines. The stela is decorated in this way, imitating a false door\textsuperscript{12}. It has been suggested that this type of stelae appeared since the reign of King Amenemhat I of the Twelfth Dynasty\textsuperscript{13}.

Description of the Scenes

The stela carries a representation of Hotep followed by his mother. They are shown standing in front of an offering table. Hotep is depicted in profile, wearing a striped beard and a shoulder-length wig, while his ear is exposed. He is shown wearing a wide \textit{wškh} \begin{figure} \includegraphics[width=0.1\textwidth]{wshkh.png} \end{figure} collar that was usually seen around the neck of Kings, elites, deities, and mummies. It was intended for protection\textsuperscript{14}. He also wears bracelets and a long kilt\textsuperscript{15} which is tied by a projecting knot with tassels. He is colored reddish brown, holding a long staff in his left hand while his right hand is occupied by a \textit{kherep}-scepter which is shown in raised relief. This scepter was a sign of nobility and reflects the post and the high rank of the deceased\textsuperscript{16}. His representation in this attitude has been common since the Old Kingdom onwards\textsuperscript{17}.

Finally, Hotep is represented wearing multicolored bracelets and anklets. This fashion was common among men during the early Middle Kingdom. It became uncommon during the reign of Senusert I and then vanished during the reign of Senusert III and Amenemhat III\textsuperscript{18}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{12} Haeny, G., “Scheintür”, \textit{LÄ} V, col. 564, Abb 2.
\bibitem{13} Pflüger, K., “The Private Stelae of the Middle Kingdom and their Importance for the Study of Ancient Egyptian History”, \textit{JAOS} 67/2, p.128.
\bibitem{15} The shape and length of ancient Egyptian kilts varied according to the period of the Egyptian history and the class of the depicted individual. Hallmann, A., “Clothing (non-Royal), Pharaonic Egypt”, \textit{The Encyclopedia of Ancient History} (1- 9). Bagnall, R.S., Brodersen, K., Champion, C.B., Erskine, A., & Huebner, S.R., p. 2.
\bibitem{16} Scepters were essential objects held by the deceased to reflect the posts and high rank. This scepter was referred to by the term \textit{ḥḥ} in the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts and objects friezes of the Middle Kingdom. By the New Kingdom, it was referred to by the word \textit{ḥrḥ} and \textit{sḥm}. Mahran, H., “What are you Holding? Scenes from the New Kingdom Private Tombs at Saqqara”, in \textit{Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies} 6, 2020, p. 9; Baligh, R., “Three Middle Kingdom Stelae”, \textit{JARCE} 44, 2008, pp. 170-172, fig. 1.
\bibitem{17} Harpur, Y., \textit{Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom}, London, 1987, p. 128; Pflüger, K., “The Private Funerary Stelae of the Middle Kingdom and Their Importance for the Study of Ancient Egyptian History”, \textit{JAOS} 67/2, 1947, p.130.
\bibitem{18} Pflüger, K., “The private funerary stelae of the Middle Kingdom and them of the importance for the study of Ancient Egyptian History”, \textit{JAOS} 67/2, London 1947, p. 130.
\end{thebibliography}
A vertical line of hieroglyphic script is shown above Hotep. It reads from right to left as follows:

jmḥ(.w) jmj-ḥ pr Htp

‘To the revered one, Steward of the house Hotep’.

Behind Hotep, his mother is shown standing while embracing him with both hands. She is represented in profile, wearing a hair wig while her ear is exposed. She wears a wide collar, bracelets, anklets, and a long, tight-fitting dress. The color of her skin is pale cream.

A vertical line of hieroglyphic inscriptions is shown above Hotep’s mother. It reads from right to left as follows:

mwt.f ḫnty-hṭy-ḥtp

‘His mother Khenty-khety-hotep’.

The Offerings

The stela of Hotep carries a representation of two offering tables. The lower one is called “wdḥ” surmounted by two “ḥs” vessels and another offering table called “ḥḥwḥ”. The latter is heaped up by “ḥṣḥ” bread, oxen head, circular bread “ḥps”, pieces of meat, green onions, and oxen leg “ḥḥps”.

Offering tables were essential for the deceased, they were intended to support him with all the important elements that he will need in the afterlife. There are several terms that designate the offering table in the ancient Egyptian language. Offering tables took several shapes. As for “wdḥ” it is a four-legged offering table usually made of wood, copper, and bronze. It became “wdḥw” by the Middle Kingdom. They served as models found in burial chambers. Worthy of note that no traces of them remain in the chapels because they were manufactured of perishable materials. Later on, the term “wdḥw” became a determinative for words referring to ancient Egyptian offering tables.

20 Wb., I, 393, 14-18.
The “ḥ3wt” 𓊭𓊭𓊭𓊭𓊭𓊭 represents a one-legged offering table usually made of alabaster or limestone. They were used in daily life and thus they were not meant for the funerary cult of the deceased until the Fourth Dynasty. Then, they started to be placed in front of the false doors.

According to the pyramid texts, the “ḥ3wt” is the offering table belonging to the deceased. In the early beginning, they were used for carrying loaves of bread. By the Fifth Dynasty, they were surmounted by different kinds of offerings. Moreover, the term “ḥ3wt” was written followed by the determinative in the shape of an altar surmounted by bread.

The representation of the two “ḥs” jars is a common motif. They probably contained water necessary for purification. Accordingly, they were placed under the offering tables probably for purifying offerings.

The bull’s leg “ḥps” was one of the elements frequently depicted on offering tables. It represents the leg of Seth in a bull form that Horus had cut off. Accordingly, it symbolizes defeating evil in the afterlife. According to ancient Egyptians, it was responsible for transferring power and strength to the deceased by means of magic. The “ḥps” was also associated with the opening of the mouth ritual.

The bread: The offering table shown on the stela carries a representation of two kinds of bread. There is a round loaf of bread known as psn. It was common in ancient Egyptian offering lists since the Late Old Kingdom. Moreover, there is a representation of two conical loaves of bread.

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24 Wh., III, 226, 18-19.
27 Wh., III, 268, 310, 269, 1-19.
31 Wh., I, 549, 18-21.
known as $s\text{rt}$ $\text{rt}$ $\text{rt}$. This kind of bread has been attested in the offering lists since the Third Dynasty\textsuperscript{34}. It was probably a sort of local sweet bread\textsuperscript{35}.

**Oxen head** $\text{","d3b}\text{y}\text{y}$\textsuperscript{36}: One of the common offerings that frequently appeared on offering tables and $b\text{f}$-mansions\textsuperscript{37}.

**The green onions:** It was known as “$hdw$” in the ancient Egyptian language. It was written in various forms as follows: $\text{38}$, $\text{39}$. It was used in daily food; it also had medical and magical uses in ancient Egypt and it was connected to resurrection\textsuperscript{40}.

**Texts**

The inscriptions and the depiction of Hotep and his mother are surrounded on top and sides by torus molding. The latter bears traces of black zigzag lines. Above them, the inscriptions are shown in four horizontal lines of Hieroglyphic running from right to left as follows:

\begin{align*}
[1] & htp dj nsw.t (n) Ws\text{jr} nb 3\text{dw} ntr 3t3 htr3-jb 3b\text{dw} pr. (t)-hrw t h\text{nkt k3}(w) 3pd(w) \\
[2] & ss mnh.t h3 m ntr htp(t) nhfr(t) w$\text{3b}$(t) nh.t ntr jm n jm3$\text{3h}$(w) jm3-r pr htp \\
[3] & m3$\text{3h}$ hrw ms.n hnty-hty-htp nb.t jm3$\text{3h}$(w).t qd.t $\text{3nhw}$ \\
[4] & tp t3 ss nb n t3-mrj qd $\text{3nw}$ htp dj nsw.t (n) jm3-r3 pr htp
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{33}Wb., IV, 418, 2.  \\
\textsuperscript{34}Hassan, S., Excavations at Giza (1933-1934), V, Cairo, 1944, p. 99.  \\
\textsuperscript{35}Hassan, S., Excavations at Giza (1934-1935), The Mastabas of the Sixth Season and their Description, VI/III, 1950, pp. 378-380.  \\
\textsuperscript{36}Wb., V, 530, 5  \\
\textsuperscript{37}Ikram, S., Choice Cuts: Meat Production in Ancient Egypt, OLA 69, Leuven, 1995, p. 118.  \\
\textsuperscript{38}Wb., III, 212, 5.  \\
\textsuperscript{39}Dickson, P., Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, in Gardiner Classification Order, California, 2006, p. 228.  \\
\textsuperscript{40}Cauville, S., Offerings to the Gods in Egyptian Temples, Belgium, 2012, p. 86
Translation

(1) An offering which the king gives (and/to) Osiris, Lord of Busiris, the great god, who is dwelling in Abydos, an invocation-offering consisting of bread, beer, oxen, and fowl.

(2) Alabaster and linen, thousands of pure good divine offerings on which a god lives, to the revered one, Steward of the house Hotep.

(3) Justified, born of Khenty-khety-hotep, Lady of honored (ones), (I) say oh you living.

(4) Upon earth, oh you all scribes on the Land of the Hoe, mention every offering given by the king to the steward of the house Hotep.

Commentary and Dating

$hthj\, dj\, nsw$: It is the offering formula that appeared for the first time during the Old Kingdom and continued until the Graeco-Roman era. The arrangement of the $Hth\, dj\, nsw$ on this stela is the typical form that was followed during the Twelfth Dynasty and the Thirteenth Dynasty, since the end of King Amenemhat III’s reign\(^{41}\).

$Wsjr$: The offering formula is dedicated to the god Osiris whose name appeared for the first time in the offering formula by the Fifth Dynasty, the Old Kingdom\(^{42}\).

It was common that the name of $Wsjr$ was written $\begin{matrix} \text{A41} \end{matrix}$ without a determinative $\begin{matrix} \text{A41} \end{matrix}$ on several stelae of the late Twelfth Dynasty and the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty at the city of Abydos\(^{43}\).

$nb\, Ddw$: This epithet together with $nb\, Bby\, Dw$ refers to the main two cult centers for Osiris (Busiris and Abydos). Both epithets date back to the Old Kingdom. They occurred on the tomb walls of Queen Meresankh III in Giza\(^{44}\). The city of Abusir, the capital of the 9\(^{th}\) Nome of Lower Egypt, is situated at the West Bank of the Nile. It was called $pr\, Wsjr$ in the ancient Egyptian language, Busiris in Greek and

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it was the cult center of Osiris in Lower Egypt\(^{45}\). \(\text{\textit{d\textit{d}w}}\) was written in several forms as follows: \(\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\), \(\text{\textsuperscript{107}}\), \(\text{\textsuperscript{105}}\), \(\text{\textsuperscript{109}}\), \(\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\) \(^{46}\).

**ntr \(\text{\textit{f}}\):** An epithet that was frequently used to refer to deities such as Ra and Osiris\(^ {47}\). It was also used to refer to dead Kings as well\(^ {48}\). Since the Twelfth dynasty, reign of Senusert I, onwards, it was usually used to refer to god Osiris\(^ {49}\). The writing of the \(\text{\textit{f}}\) sign in a horizontal form is attested since the Early Middle Kingdom, reign of Montuhotep II\(^ {50}\).

**hrj-\(\text{jb}\) \(\text{\textit{bd\textit{w}}}\):** An epithet of the god Osiris that was written followed by the determinative of the city (O49) in the formulas of the Old and Middle Kingdoms\(^ {51}\). When hrj-jb is added to a name of a city formulating an epithet of a god, it refers to the god as a recipient of a local guest cult\(^ {52}\).

**\(\text{k3(\text{\textit{w}}}\) \text{\textit{spd}}}\):** These two signs are written in the form that is widely followed during the Late Middle Kingdom. This method became commonly used during the Thirteenth Dynasty and the Second Intermediate Period\(^ {53}\).

**\(\text{\textit{s} \text{\textit{mnh}}}\) \text{\textit{t}}):** These two terms formed the main part of the Middle Kingdom offering formula. They were inscribed on the stela as instead of \(\text{\textit{mnh}}}\) \text{\textit{t}}. They were not recorded in this form in stelae before the reign of Senusret III\(^ {54}\).

**\(\text{\textit{nh}}}\) \text{\textit{t}} \text{\textit{ntr}} \text{\textit{jm}}):** This formula is attested since the reign of King Senusret I, Middle Kingdom\(^ {55}\). It was written together without the suffixes \(\text{s}\) or \(\text{sn}\) after \(\text{\textit{jm}}\) after the Second Intermediate Period\(^ {56}\).


\(^{47}\) Hannig, R., Gro\textit{fes Handwörterbuch Agyptisch},1398.

\(^{48}\) Allen, J., Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Ed., Cambridge 2010, p. 365.


\(^{54}\) Ilin-Tomich, A., From workshop to sanctuary: the production of Late Middle Kingdom stelae, Middle Kingdom Studies 6, Londres: Golden House Publications, 2017, p. 22.


**jmj r-pr:** It means “the Steward/overseer of the house/estate”. It is an important title that dates back to the Archaic Period. It was one of the titles connected to the royal palace. It was usually carried by the governors of Upper Egypt during the Middle Kingdom. It was written in various forms as follows.

**jmḥḥ.(w):** This title appeared in the Fourth Dynasty, the abbreviated form of jmḥḥ was common during the First Intermediate Period onwards.

**ḥtp:** This name occurred during the Old Kingdom and continued until the Late period, and this name was written in several forms as follows.

**mḥḥ-ḥrw:** This epithet means “Justified” and usually follows the name of the deceased who were judged to be righteous among the dead.

**ms.n:** The formula ms.n was commonly followed by the name of the mother from the early Middle Kingdom until the late reign of King Senusret I. This formula started to manifest again from the Thirteenth Dynasty.

**ḥnty-ḥty-ḥtp:** The name of the mother of Hotep appeared by the end of the Middle Kingdom. According to Ranke, this name was commonly used during the Thirteenth dynasty. It was written in various forms as follows.

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58 Ward, W.A., Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom, American University of Beirut, 1982, p. 27.


t3-mrj: One of the names of the land of Egypt that occurred in the Middle Kingdom and is used wider in the New Kingdom. It means “land of the hoe”⁶⁸.

Conclusions

This is a funerary stela that commemorates the name of Hotep who was one of the noblemen who lived probably during the Twelfth Dynasty. It also commemorates the name of his mother hnty-hty-htp. It was found within the tomb of its owner in the city of Abydos.

The stela does not bear a royal name or dateline. However, the paleographical and iconographical study dates the stela to the late twelfth dynasty or early Thirteenth dynasty according to the following points:

- The orthographic form of the god Wsjr without the determinative ꜜ.
- The orthography of kꜯ.w ḭbd.w that was commonly followed during the Thirteenth Dynasty and Second Intermediate Period.
- The orthographic form of ṣs ṣmh that was not recorded before the Late Twelfth Dynasty and was common during the Thirteenth Dynasty.
- The formula ⲟnh.t ntr jm was written without the suffixes s or sn after jm.
- The name of hnty-hty-htp was commonly used during the Thirteenth dynasty.

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Pl. I The stela of Hotep (Photograph: Sameh Abd el-Rahman)
Fig. 1. A Facsimile of the stela of Hotep (by: Mina Zaghloul)
لوحة دولة وسطي للمدعو "حتب" بالمحافظ المصري الكبير

الملخص
تهدف تلك المقالة إلى دراسة لوحة جنائزية غير منشورة من عصر الدولة الوسطى للمدعو "حتب" من "أبيدوس". اللوحة محفوظة تحت الرقم (SR 3/9711، CG 20014، JE 18512، CG 20014) في المتحف المصري الكبير. تم اكتشافها في أبيدوس عام 1862 م. اللوحة مصنوعة من الحجر الجيري. تحدث منظر لـ "حتب" مع والدته يقين أمام مائدة القرابين، كما يوجد أربعة أسطر من الكتابات الهيروغليفية لصيغة تقدير القرابين. يبلغ طول اللوحة 88 سم وارتفاعها 51.5 سم. بالإضافة إلى مناقشة معاني الأسماء والألفاب الموجود باللوحة ونسخ النصوص وترجمتها، والتعليق على الأسلوب الفني وسمات التجهية وأشكال العلامات. ومن خلال ذلك يرجح تاريخ اللوحة بنهاية الأسرة الثانية عشرة أو بداية الأسرة الثالثة عشرة.

الكلمات الدالة
أبيدوس، خنثي، مجمع القرابين، لوحة، الأسرة الثانية عشرة، الأسرة الثالثة عشرة.