

Original article

AN UNPUBLISHED STELA OF THE KING TAHARQA GEM NO. 2348

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Article info.

Article history:

Received: 17-10-2023

Accepted: 3-8-2024

Doi: 10.21608/ejars.2025.434909

Keywords:

Taharqa

Amun-Ra

Mut

Milk offering

Ogdoad

Ancestors

EJARS – Vol. 15 (1) – June 2025: 113-117

Abstract:

This article deals with the Stela of "an unpublished stela of the king Taharqa", now preserved in the Grand Egyptian Museum under the number GEM 2348, and was registered under the number JE 36410 and SR 14087, when it was previously kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. This article presents a complete publication of this Stela of Taharqa, by describing the scenes listed on it in the upper part, translating the hieroglyphic text accompanying the scene and below the scene in the second part, in addition to clarifying the importance of the stela presented by kings to the gods, the importance of the milk offering in ancient Egypt, and the role of King Taharqa in renovating some buildings in the Medinet Habu Temple in particular.

1. Introduction

Many of the votive stelae were dedicated to the gods, presented to the temples and sanctuaries by the kings, to express their personal devotion, offerings and rituals to the gods. These stelae were constructed as substitutes through which their donors could participate in feasts and benefit from divine offerings. Sometimes stelae in temples were created to bear witness to successful military campaigns, royal building activities and other official events in Egypt, but they could also contain royal decrees issued by the kings to priests and the people in general. The scenes and texts recorded on the painting in the upper part of stela refer to the offering of milk to the god Amun Ra and the goddess Mut by King Taharqa, and the winged sun disc adorns the upper part of the stela. The hieroglyphic texts recorded on the lower part of the stela indicate King Taharqa's interest in renovating some buildings for deities in the temple of Medinet Habu in Luxor.

2. General Description

- **Date:** Late Period, 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty from the reign of King Taharqa [1].
- **Material:** Limestone
- **Location of find:** Medinat Habu temple (the mound of Djéme)
- **Dimensions:** length about 60 cm, width about 36 cm
- **Status:** The stela appears in good condition, except for some smashed parts, which seems unintentional, in the upper part

of the stela, in addition to some minor cracking. The king's face with the vertical text in front of him and the royal cartouche containing it were lost, as well as the feathery crown of the god Amun-Ra and the two cobras hanging from the winged sun disk. This rectangular stela with a curved top, is adorned at the top by the sign of the sky "pt", and below it is the winged sun disk, from which two cobras hang, representing "Nekhbet" and "Wadjet", and on both sides of the stela are two sceptre's fig. (1).



Figure (1) a. Stela of the King Taharqa GEM No. 2348, b. drawing by Nagdy, M.

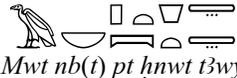
### 3. The Lunette

The upper part of the stela was executed with a relief engraving, depicting King Taharqa standing. He holds in his hands two vessels containing milk. The king's head was smashed, and it separates the king from the god "Amun-Ra" is a vertical line of hieroglyphics. In front of the king appears the god "Amun-Ra" sitting on the throne chair, and at the bottom of the throne chair there is the sign of  $\text{—} m^3t$ , which indicates justice and cosmic order, and he holds with his right hand the sign of life  $\dagger \text{nh}$  and with his left hand he grips the sceptre of  $\uparrow w3s$  and wears the feather crown consisting of two feathers. The goddess "Mut" stands behind the god "Amun-Ra", in her right hand, she holds the sign of life  $\dagger \text{nh}$ , and in her left hand, the  $\uparrow w3s$  sceptre, above her head is the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. In front of the crown, there is a vertical line of hieroglyphs that records the name of the goddess "Mut" and her titles [2,3]. The text recorded between the king and the god:



"The milk offering to his father, Amun-Ra"

The text recorded in front of Mut:

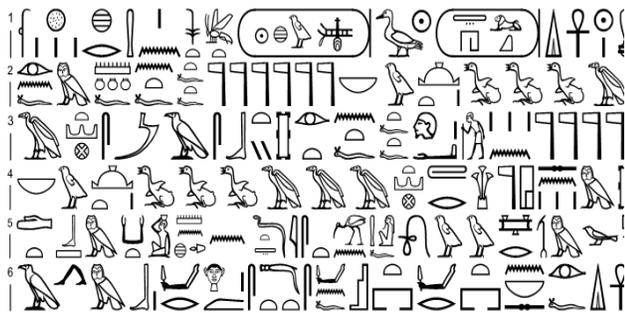


"Mut, Lady of the Heaven, Lady of the Two Lands"

### 4. The Lower Part of the Stela

Below the top scene is a text inscribed in hieroglyphic, consisting of six horizontal lines.

#### 4.1. The text recorded on the stela [4]



#### 4.2. Transliteration

<sup>1</sup> |  $h3t-sp$  3  $hr hm$  n  $nsw-$  bity "Hwi- nfr tm- R<sup>c</sup>" [1] s3- R<sup>c</sup>

"Thr- k3" di  $\text{nh}$  mi R<sup>c</sup> dt [5]

<sup>2</sup> |  $ir.n$  f m  $mnw.f$  n  $itw.f$  ntrw ntrw(t) nbw i3t D3mwt (= T3w Mwwt)

<sup>3</sup> |  $sm3$  sbty irt n  $itw.f$  tpyw-<sup>c</sup> n ntrw ntrw(t)

<sup>4</sup> | nbw i3t D3mwt (= T3w Mwwt) phr h3 hwt- ntr .sn m sbty n

<sup>5</sup> | dbt m k3t mnht(t) n(t) dt ist gm. n hm. f w3w r d<sup>c</sup>m pr h

<sup>6</sup> | 3m bw dsr hr gs. s mh3t sudsy. n.f st dsrt n nb.s ir.f di  $\text{nh}$  dt

#### 4.3. Translation

1- The third year of the reign of his Majesty, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, "Khu-Nefertam-Ra", son of Ra "Taharqa", the giver of life, like Ra, forever.

- 2- He built his monuments for his fathers, the gods and goddesses, the lords of "the mound of Djême".
- 3- He renewed the perimeter wall of his ancestral gods and goddesses.
- 4- The lords of "the mound of Djême" to surround behind their temple with a wall.
- 5- Of bricks, as a good deed forever, when his majesty found it fallen into ruin, that he might come out.
- 6- He enters into the holy place on his north side; he has dedicated the holy place to his master, whom he does to give life forever" [6].

### 5. Results

Interesting results were extracted, and they are as follows:

- a) A votive stela was found in Thebes from the reign of Taharqa. It is currently located at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), after having been transferred from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.
- b) The stelae in temples were created by kings, to bear witness to successful military campaigns, royal building activities.
- c) Taharqa was the most famous king of the Twenty-fifth dynasty. He bore the five royal names, and his throne name was Kho- Nefertum Ra.
- d) King Taharqa offers milk to the god Amun Ra, as well as to the goddess Mut. The winged sun disk appears at the top of the arched stela for the purpose of protection.
- e) The text emphasizes the importance of the construction work and renovations carried out by Taharqa in the temple of Medinet Habu in Luxor in honor of the deities for whom this temple was built.
- f) The term  $\text{nt}rw$  ntrw(t) was used to in the context gods and goddesses, referring to the Ogdoad of Hermopolis, who was associated with the Habu region.
- g) There is a suggestion that the offering recorded on Taharqa's stela represented an offering of wine, but this is incorrect according to the original text recorded on the stela.

### 6. Discussion

#### 6.1. Stelae

Many of the votive stelae were dedicated to the gods and goddesses, presented to temples and sanctuaries by the kings, queens and persons, to express their personal devotion, offerings and rituals to the gods. The stelae were also used as memorial monuments, with a large group of such stelae originating from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties at Abydos. At the end of the Old Kingdom, Abydos developed into an important centre for the worship of the god Osiris. It later became a popular place of pilgrimage, where festivals and processions regularly took place. Most of the stelae were erected along the procession routes, and some were also placed in sanctuaries with statues and offering tables. These stelae were erected as substitutes through which their donors could participate in feasts and benefit from divine offerings. Sometimes stelae in temples were created by royalty or nobles, to bear witness to successful military campaigns, royal building activities, marriages in the palace and other official



“Ruler of the earth, great ruler of Egypt, mistress of the ancestors, and queen of gods”.

One of the texts in the Edfu temple stresses the importance of the ancestors' deities in creating gods and beings, as it mentions the text on the offering of the lotus flower

 hnk nhb to the god "Ra" and Ogdoad Hermopolis the following [35]:



tpyw- ʿ km3 p3wtyw ir(w) wnnwt nb(wt) m t3 pn

"The ancestral gods created the eternal gods, and they created all the creatures on this earth".

### 6.8. Ashmolean stela

There is another copy of this stela preserved in the Ashmolean Museum (AM 1941. 1132) in Oxford, it was donated to the museum by Alan Gardiner, who published it, and it was also found in Medinet Habu Temple in west Thebes. It is similar to the stela under study, except for the last part recorded on the Ashmolean stela in a more detailed way, as follows [3,4,36,38]:



ir .f di ʿnh dd w3s mi Rʿ dt

"He does to give life, constancy and power, like Ra, forever".

### 6.9. "Amun- Ra"

It is noted that the name of the god  'Imn- Rʿ "Amun-Ra" is written opposite the direction of the text of the title of the milk offering, so that it corresponds to the direction of the god. This also applies to the text recorded in front of the goddess "Mut" so that it corresponds to the direction of the goddess.

## 7. Conclusion

The stela of King Taharqa is considered one of the most important sources that confirm his interest in constructing monuments to Egyptian deities. Taharqa wanted to confirm the legitimacy of his rule of Egypt, where he appeared as the son of the god Amun Ra, so he offers milk to his father, the god Amun Ra and the goddess Mut in the upper part of the stela. Therefore, King Taharqa may replace the god Khonsu. The upper part also contains many decorative and protective elements at the same time, as it contains the winged sun disk and the sign of the sky pt, the symbol of the goddess Nut, as well as the scepter of WAs, which indicates rule and authority. Milk was one of the elements included as an offering in the feast lists, for example the list of the feasts of Amun-Ra in Heliopolis, which recorded the number of milk vessels presented to the temple. Milk was associated with the king in symbolism to legitimize it during the Sed Festival and the Opet Festival, and sacred milk was presented to the divine wife of Amun. The term "the mound of Djême" refers to the area which was located near Medinet Habu Temple, the headquarters of Ogdoad Hermopolis. There is another copy of this stela preserved in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and it is similar to the stela under study, except for the last part recorded on the Ashmolean stela.

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