

Unpublished Funerary Stela from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG34131)¹

Rehab Elsharnouby

Associate Professor-Tourist Guiding Department-Faculty of Tourism and Hotels-Mansoura University. Tel: 00201007144672

Email: relsharnouby@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper is a publication of a funerary stela² preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo under number CG 34131 (Plate 2, Figure 1). According to the Museum Catalogue, the stela goes back to the New Kingdom and was found in Abydos by A. Mariette excavation for the EAS (Egyptian Antiquities Service). It is divided into upper and lower registers. The upper one represents the owner of the stela and his son sitting, in front of an offering table, on the same chair under which a child is depicted sitting on his knees. The wife of the owner of the stela is standing on the other side of the offering table. The lower register depicts the same scene but without the child and the sitting position of the owner and his son is reversed: in the upper register, the owner is sitting in front of his son, whereas in the lower register, the son sits in front of the father.

Keywords

Abydos, Stela, CG 34131, *S3-3st*, Mariette.

Discovery

This funerary stela belongs to the priest *S3-3st*, goes back to the New Kingdom, and is now exhibited in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo under number CG 34131, SR4/11653 and Gem 5901. It was found in Abydos in the Northern Upper Egypt by Mariette for the EAS (Egyptian Antiquities Service).

¹ I would like to express my appreciation to the General Director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo for his permission to publish this stela.

² The word “*Stela*” means a stand-up artifact without resting on any other object. Later forms rested on a vertical wall. Those Stelae were often made of stone or wood. They usually etched on the front, whereas their back was often left unpolished.

M.A. Shoukry, “The So-Called Stelae of Abydos”, *MDAIK* 16, 1958, 292; L. Bierbrier, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, United Kingdom, 2008, 225; K. Martin, “Stèle”, *LÄ* VI, 1986, col. 1; R. Hözl, “Stelae”, *OEA* III, 2001, 319-324.

The register of the Egyptian Museum recorded neither the exact excavation place nor the excavation date.

Material and Dimensions

It was crafted from limestone. It measures 35.5 cm height, 25 cm width and 6.5 cm thickness³.

Techniques

The edge of the upper round top of the stela is incised with a line of shallow sunk-relief.

In the upper register, the hieroglyphs are engraved in vertical lines in sunken relief. The figures of the father (front) and the son (rear), the chair, on which the two men are sitting, the child, the woman, the *hs* vase, are painted and surrounded with shallow sunk-relief except the following are in sunk-relief:

- The father's wig, head, lower part of his right hand (from the elbow to the end of the palm) resting on his knees and his left arm.
- The son's head, lower part of his right hand (from the elbow to the end of the palm) and his left hand.
- The wide part between the back of the chair and the back leg.
- The lower part of the child left hand (from the elbow to the end of his palm) put on his knees and the lotus blossom held in his right hand.
- The woman right hand.
- The offering table in the middle; the line of water flowing from the *hs* vase.

The horizontal line separating the two registers is incised in shallow sunk-relief.

The lower register is almost similar to the upper one except the following:

- The *hs* vase held by the lady, as well as her hand holding the *hs* vase, are in sunk-relief.

³ All measurements are taken by the researcher.

- The offering table as well as the offerings are painted and surrounded with shallow sunk-relief, while the two vases under the offering table surrounded by the lotus stems are in sunken relief.
- The kilt of the first male figure is in sunken relief.

Colors

The whole background of the stela is painted in light yellow. In the two registers, the flesh of the two men is in dark red, whereas that of the woman in light red (pink). The hair of the men and the woman are in black. Their clothes and collars are in white. The hieroglyphs, the offering table, the *hs* vase, and the lotus flowers are in blue. In the upper register, the black hair of the woman is coated with a light thin layer of white plaster. The colors as a whole are not in perfect condition. The lower register retains the colors better than the upper one (Plate 2).

Conservation

The stela is preserved in a good condition. Its surface is generally smooth except for some deterioration issues on few small areas:

- Some scratches at the edges of the background.
- In the upper register, the end of the kilt of the son of *S3-3st*, the owner of the stela, the middle part of the woman dress, the background behind her hair, the stem of the lotus held by her and the lower part of the *hs* vase are damaged.
- As for the lower register, the kilt of the son of the owner of the stela *S3-3st* from the knee area, the end of the kilt of *S3-3st* the owner of the stela and the background in front of the woman dress are damaged.

Description

This stela is a rectangular painted round-topped funerary stela. Its shape is a characteristic of the New Kingdom stelae. It is crafted of limestone and belongs to a priest called *S3-3st*. He was the priest of God Wsir and responsible for the stores of Wsir (Figure 1).



Figure 1

The stela is divided into two registers almost symmetrical: two men sitting in front of an offering table, and a woman pouring libation on the offering.

The Upper Register

On the left of the upper register, facing right, there is a representation of the priest *S3-3st*, the owner of the stela, seated on a lion-legged chair with a high backrest. He wears a short wig covering the ears, a broad painted collar and a narrow fitting kilt held by a belt and with a bare foot. He is holding a lotus blossom with his right hand while his left arm is stretched forward with its hand with palm



Figure 2

downward, almost touching his lap. On the same chair, facing right too, there is a figure of his son on the same scale, sitting behind him, bald headed, wearing a wide painted collar and a long narrow fitting kilt held by a belt, and his extended two hands affectionately clap the shoulder of his father with bare feet (Figure 2).

Under the chair, a naked child is drawn seated on his knees using a much smaller scale. He brings a lotus flower to his nose while resting his left arm on his knees. His natural hair appears in the middle all along the head while shaven from the two sides (Figure 2).

Above the priest head, there are two vertical columns of hieroglyphs mentioning his name and titles carved in sunk-relief from right to left as follows:



iry t n Wsir S3-3st

“Keeper of the storeroom of Wsir, Son of 3st”

In the middle of the scene, in front of the two-seated male figures, there is a well-loaded offering table bearing offerings in three rows. The bottom one represents two aromatic vases and a *t3-wr* bread. The middle row depicts a *t3-wr* bread and a fish, while the top one shows a bunch of green onions (Figure 3).

On the right in front of the two men, drawn on the same scale, a woman is standing facing left. She is wearing a long straight wig surrounded by a headband with a small aromatic oil suppression, and a long tight straight ankle-length dress with two straps. With her right hand, she is pouring libations from a *hs* vase over the

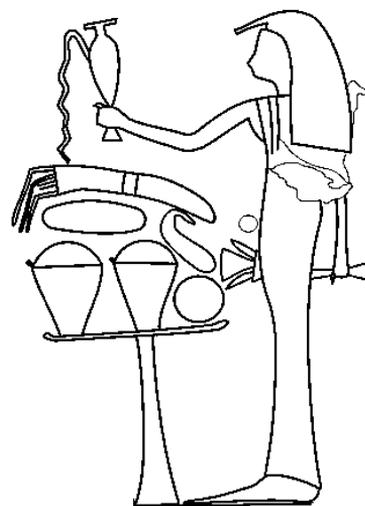
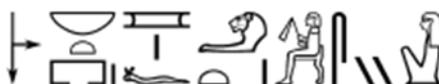


Figure 3

offerings⁴ while her left hand stretched by her side is holding a lotus stem. She is drawn bare-footed (Figure 3).

Her name is written in two vertical columns, in front of her face:



nbt pr mr(yt).f h3t špsty

“Lord of the house (home) his beloved, *h3t špsty*”

The Lower Register (Figure 4)

The lower register is similar to the upper one except for few differences:

- The son is the one who is sitting in the front of the chair, bringing a lotus flower to his nose, while his father is sitting behind him while resting his palms on his son shoulders.
- The small child sitting under the chair does not exist.
- The food on the offering table is arranged in two rows:

The bottom one represents two aromatic oil vases, *šnš* bread, fish and a *t3-hd* bread, while the top one shows a bunch of green onions. Beneath the table, there are two aromatic oil jars wrapped up with lotus blossoms.

⁴ The ritual of pouring water or cleansing is an important ritual in the Ancient Egyptian belief, and highlights the importance of water as a symbol of life. It was expressed by the sign of life *nḥ*, which represents the strength of the body. The roots of this ritual date back to the end of the Fourth Dynasty, when the influence of solar doctrine and rituals started to appear in all temples all over the country. This ritual was a cultural heritage associated with the idol of the sun god *R^c*, which emerged from the first corner of Nun.

حنان محمد ربيع، طقسة سكب الماء في مصر والعراق القديم، دراسة تحليلية مقارنة، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ٢٠٠٧، ١٥٢، ومابعدھا.



Figure 4

In front of the son's face, one horizontal line of hieroglyphs mentions his name and title:



ms.f s3.f K3-nht

“His son who born of him *K3-nht*”

Comments

The Sitting

The stela is divided into two registers. The upper one represents the world of the living where the priest *S3-3st* is depicted alive. Behind him, his son is represented a baldhead⁵ which indicates that his father is preparing him to be a priest to replace him (his father) in his position. As for the lower register, it represents the other world, where the priest is depicted after his death and preceded by his son (in front of him) after being ordained as his successor as a priest.

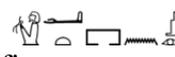
⁵ Priests had to remove all their hair from their bodies every two days, so that no lice or dirty insects could prevent them from their prayers and worship. This is the main reason that all images and statues of priests show them completely bald. This process was obligatory to the extent that, in the late dynasties, they were fined for any neglect in cleaning of their bodies from hair.

سيرج سونيرون، كهان مصر القديمة، تعريب: زينب الكردي، القاهرة، ١٩٧٥، ٤٢.

The act of portraying the son sitting in front of his father means that the father has already died, and his son succeeded him as a priest; meanwhile his father's sitting behind him is an evidence of his transition to the other world⁶.

The Owner of the Stela and his Son

-The owner of the stela  S3-3st was the priest of God Wsir and responsible for the stores of Wsir. The name S3-3st appeared for the first time during the New Kingdom⁷. The name was also mentioned on a stela now preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo under number C206762, and on a stela in Leiden Museum in Holland under number V71. The name appeared a second time, during the New Kingdom, by being mentioned on multiple stelae. One is currently preserved in Berlin Museum in Germany under number 7276. Another stela is shown in Turin Museum in Italy under number 31. A third stela is preserved in Stockholm Museum under number 77, and a fourth one in Louvre Museum under number 693⁸.

-As for the title  iry-^ct, its first appearance goes back to the Middle Kingdom⁹. The first appearance of the conjunction of iry with Wsir was in the title  iry pr n Wsir (Keeper of the Temple of Wsir). This title first appeared in piece number CG 20326 in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, which goes back to the Middle Kingdom¹⁰.

⁶ The succession of the priesthood was an established tradition in Ancient Egypt, but practically it was not an absolute rule. Since the time of the Old Kingdom, priests were asked to name their successors. They thought that their profession was a procession like anything they own. Nevertheless, sometimes in the New Kingdom, a person would apply and request a priestly job just by claiming that he is the son of a priest. From the late period, many stelae were discovered showing series of genealogies, where some priests listed their predecessors for seventeen generations for specific idol. Consequently, it became possible to talk about families of priests coming after each other.

سيرج سونيرون، كهان مصر القديمة، ٤٩.

⁷ H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen*, Bd. 2, Glückstadt, 1935, 383, 280, N. 8.

⁸ H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen*, Bd. 1, Glückstadt, 1935, 280, N. 8.

⁹ W.A. Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom with a Glossary of Words and Phrases Used*, American University of Beirut, 1982, 57, N. 452.

¹⁰ W.A. Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative*, 63, N. 514.

- In Ancient Egypt, children were one of the most precious things a man could have. The child was considered as an extension of his father on earth: people always remember the latter when they see or name the former. This idea occupies a great part of the social believes of modern Egyptian proverbs such as (اللي خلف ما ماتش) “The one who has a child did not die” and some popular songs also promote this belief¹¹.
- S3-3st and his son are represented according to the traditions of the Ancient Egyptian art through different periods. The faces are depicted sideways while the rest of the body was represented from the front. As for the hair, it is natural and short; that was a favorite feature since the Thirteenth Dynasty¹².
- Concerning the clothes, the owner of the stela and his son are wearing a long kilt under the knees that appeared since the end of the Twelfth Dynasty; before that, kilts were short¹³. The kilt was the traditional dress for men during this period, due to its effective role in the religious believes. This is because it represents Atum grip and through it, the deceased returns to life¹⁴.
- S3-3st and his son are wearing the  Wsh collar. Its name means the broad or the wide¹⁵ as its shape takes the breadth or wideness of the chest. This necklace appeared starting from the Third Dynasty in the temple of Zoser in Heliopolis, and it was called Nwbt . This necklace was given to people who serve the king. The first appearance of the Wsh with its name was in Mererouka tomb as it represents the two arms of God Atum. When the ennead was created, Atum was embracing them to give them life and protection. In the same way, the owner of the stela and his son were represented wearing the Wsh to refer to his purity and to show the embracement of Atum to

¹¹ A.A. Ashmawy, “An Unpublished Stele from Tell Basta”, *BIFAO 109*, 2009, 21; G. Maspero, “Chansons populaires recueillies dans la Haute-Egypte de 1900 à 1914 pendant les inspections du Service des Antiquités”, *ASAE 14*, 1914, 167-168.

¹² عائشة محمود محمد محمود عبد العال، لوحات أفراد الدولة الوسطى مجموعة المتحف المصرى بالقاهرة، ماجستير، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ١٩٩٥، ٥٠، ١٨٥، ٢١٣.

¹³ عائشة عبد العال، لوحات أفراد الدولة الوسطى، ١٩٩٥، ١١٩.

¹⁴ W. Westendorf , “Beiträge Aus und Zu den MedizinischenTexten”, *ZÄS 92*, 1967, 143; J. Leclant , “Gotteshand”, *LÄ II*, 1977, cols. 415, 813.

¹⁵ *Wb IV* , 365, 16 .

him for the full protection from everything that may harm him in the other world¹⁶.

His Wife

The authors of The General Catalog of Abydos Monuments (A Mariette, Catalogue Général des Monuments d'Abydos) forgot the word *mr.f* (who is his love). Consequently, the authors wrote  in the catalogue, whereas it was written on the Stelae as ¹⁷.

Aromatic Paints Cones

The aromatic paint appeared in the stela worn by the wife in the upper and the lower registers. It is composed of a leaf of a lotus flower. What confirms that this stela dates back to the New Kingdom is that the aromatic cones appeared only since the Eighteenth Dynasty as it emerged since the reign of King Amenhotep III, where it is seen topping the heads of the people on a regular basis crossed by the Lotus flower on the front. Sometimes, the aromatic cone is replaced by a huge lotus flower as is in the stela subject of the study¹⁸.

Lotus Flower

As for the two jars portrayed under the offering table, they contain aromatic oil. The proof for that is that they are wrapped up with lotus flowers and as it is known that the lotus flower is always used as perfume. The warping style around the body of the jars is very common in the

¹⁶ A. Wiedemann, "Bronze Circles and Purification Vessels in Egyptian Temples", *PSBA* 23, 1901, 265; A. Hermann, "Die Stelen der Thebanischen Felsgräber der 18 Dynastie", *ÄF* 11, 1940, 56; E. Staehelin, "Untersuchungen Zur Ägyptischen Tracht im Alten Reich", *MÄS* 8, 1966, 113 ff.

¹⁷ A. Mariette, *Catalogue Général des Monuments d'Abydos Découverts Pendant les Fouilles de cette Ville*, Paris, 1880, 409, No. 1114.

¹⁸ أحمد يونس محمد مرسي، لوحات الأفراد في عصر الرعامسة، دراسة فنية أثرية لمجموعة المتحف المصري بالقاهرة، رسالة دكتوراة جامعة حلوان، ٢٠١٥، ص ٤٧٦.

N. Cherpion, "Le cone d'onguent", gage de survie", *BIFAO* 94, 1994, 79-85.

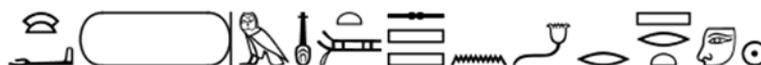
representations of the aromatic jars, such as the two scenes that were depicted in the temple of King Ramses II in Abydos (Plate 1).



Plate 1¹⁹

-The lotus flower²⁰ is depicted several times in the stela: in the hand of the owner of the stela, the son, the child, the wife, and the two aromatic jars beneath the offering table, due to the important role played by the lotus flower in the Ancient Egyptian Civilization as its importance in the resurrection of the deceased as well as its importance role in renewing the vitality of Gods and creating their power.

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:



h^c N m nfrtm sššn ršwt R^c

“(the deceased) appears like Nefertum as a lotus flower on the nose of R^c”

The lotus was associated with the myths of creating the universe. The lotus blossoms sprout from the eternal water and the sun god emerges from it when it blooms at the beginning of the day as a child to light the

¹⁹ The Picture depicted in the temple of King Ramses II in Abydos is taken by the researcher.

²⁰ E. Brunner-Traut, “Lotos”, *LÄ III*, 1980, col. 11091; *Wb V*, 293, 9-12; W. Harer, Jr. Benson, “Lotus”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, B.D. Redford. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001, 304 ff.; R. Germer, “Flora”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, B.D. Redford. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001, 535–541; N. Harrington, *From the Cradle to the Grave: Anthropoid Busts and Ancestor Cults at Deir el-Medina, Current Research in Egyptology*, 200 ed., Kathryn Piquette and Serena Love, Oxford, 2005, 71–85.

darkness of the universe. In the coffins texts²¹, the text was reproduced as follows:



sšn-wr hꜥ m nwy mhy-Mh wr nbt ir sšpw-rwy kkw nbt ir sšpw-rwy kkw

“The great lotus flower shone from the eternal water as a child, and was illuminated when he emerged as he dissipated the darkness of the universe”

The Chair

The first appearance of the lion legged chair in the stela goes back to the Proto-Dynastic Period²². Its first appearance in Tombs scenes goes back to the First and the Second Dynasties, and it has continued throughout the Pharaonic Period²³.

The Bread

There are three different types of bread depicted on the two offering tables represented on the stela . Two of them are called  *t3-wr* that means “the big bread”; it is always filled with raisins and honey, and is always served hot with a delicious smell and taste. As for the third type, it is called  *šns* that is always served to Gods. Dozens of scenes depicting this type of bread are in the temple of Dendara²⁴.

Why the bread is represented on the stela?

In general, the bread has a great importance for gods. The God Nini is responsible for the grain, one of the principal derivatives of bread manufacturing. God Nini is the bread maker god and the creator of crops, which is one of the most important contents of the offering tables²⁵. The presence of bread on the offering tables indicate its importance to the

²¹ H. Kees, “Ein Alter Gotterhymnus als Begleittext Zur Opfertafel”, ZÄS 57, 1922, S. 116 ff.

²² أحمد سعيد ناصف عبد الرحمن، لوحة حسو ببي *hsw bbi* رقم (CG 20626) المتحف المصري، مجلة الاتحاد العام للآثار بين العرب ١٨، ٢٠١٧، ١٢.

²³ H. Fischer, *A Chair of the Early New Kingdom, Egyptian Studies III*, New York, 1996, 146.

²⁴ S. Cauville, *Offerings to the Gods in Egyptian Temples*, Belgium , 2012, 52 ff.

²⁵ S. Cauville, *Offerings to the Gods*, 52 ff.

deceased who is afraid that the absence of bread from his offering table or in his tomb would force him to eat his filth which is an ominous fate for the deceased²⁶.

Green Onions

The onion was known as  *ḥdw*. The onions were served, basically, on the offering tables to God Sokar Osiris. This was related to the dawn, where the earth was covered with the white color as the onion *ḥdw* with its white color appears and brings life back to Sokar, who emerges from the stationary state, and turns into a hawk that rises to the sky²⁷.

The *ḥs* Vase

The *ḥs* vase existed since the Pre-Dynastic Period where models made of pottery and stones were found in the tombs traced back to this period²⁸. The first appearance of the *ḥs* vase as a hieroglyphic sign was in the pyramid text²⁹ as well as among the offering tools in the Old Kingdom. This vase had a great importance in the funeral rites and purification in the daily worship. Schott states that it represents the sacred vessel of God Amun with its known form³⁰. In addition, God Wsir describes it in one of Turin Stelae as *Nswt-ḥsyt*³¹. Its main role was pouring water on the offerings.

²⁶ خالد محمد الطلي، أهم موائد قرابين منطقة الصوة بمتحف هرية رزنة، مجلة الاتحاد العام للآثار بين العرب ٤٠، ٢٠٠٢، ٣.

²⁷ S. Cauville, *Offerings to the Gods*, 86.

²⁸ A. Radwan, "The *ḥs* Vessel and its Ritual Function", *IFAO II*, 1985, 211-213; C. Du Mensil, *Les Noms et Signes Égyptiens Designant, Des Vases ou Objects Similaires*, Paris, 1935, 118.

²⁹ *Wb III*, S. 154.

³⁰ E. Schott, "Die Beilige Vase des Amon", *ZÄS* 98, 1972, 38, 50.

³¹ C. Du Mensil, *Les Noms et Signes*, 118.



Plate 2

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ملخص البحث

هذا البحث عبارة عن نشر جديد لأحد اللوحات الجنائزية المحفوظة بالمتحف المصري تحت رقم CG 34131 (لوحة ٢، شكل ١). بالرجوع لسجلات المتحف، نجد أن اللوحة ترجع لعصر الدولة الحديثة وتم العثور عليها في أبيدوس أثناء بعثة عالم الآثار مارييت. تنقسم اللوحة إلى صفيين علوي وسفلي: الصف العلوي يظهر صاحب اللوحة وابنه جالسين علي نفس الكرسي أمام مائدة قرايين، تحت الكرسي يجلس طفل علي ركبتيه. زوجة صاحب اللوحة تقف على الجانب الأخر من مائدة القرايين. الصف السفلي نجد عليه نفس المنظر لكن بدون الطفل الجالس تحت الكرسي، كما حدث تبادل بين الأب والابن في مكان الجلوس علي الكرسي: ففي الصف العلوي يجلس الأب أمام الابن لكن بالصف السفلي يجلس الابن أمام الأب.