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A TUTANKHAMUN STELA AT KARNAK

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Among the scattered blocks in the "Musée" area of the Karnak temple is roughly half of a round-topped sandstone stela which first attracted my attention in 1978. At that time, only one side was visible and it contained a scene of Amun-Re and Mut receiving *maât* from the king (now lost). The reverse was hidden from view and the side decoration was partially concealed. While Horemheb's names filled what remained of the cartouches, there were clear signs of usurpation. As my main goal that season was copying the remains of a temple of Tutankhamun and Ay,¹ it was not until a recent visit in the Theban area that an effort was made to examine all portions of the stela². The stela has been shifted somewhat since 1978, but to my knowledge it has never been published.

Description and Measurements

The monument is roughly half of a round-topped sandstone stela. It is 2.165 m. in height and its maximum preserved width is 71 cm. near the base. The original width may be estimated at approximately 130-135 cm. The thickness is 44.5 cm. Each surface of the stela received some decoration, for its front, back and end (or side) all bear some relief. Assuming the largest scene to have been on the main surface of the monument, we have accordingly designated the sides as **A** (front), **B** (reverse) and **C** (end).

Side A (Plate I, 1)

The upper portion of this side of the stela contains raised relief figures of Amun-Re and Mut facing left and receiving *maât* from the king. The only surviving elements of the king are his hand

1. On the remains of the Tutankhamun-Ay shrine at Karnak, cf. my "Report on the 1978 Season at Karnak" which is scheduled to appear in the American Research Center in Egypt's *Newsletter* (Autumn 1984 edition).

2. A brief study tour during part of the summer of 1984 was made possible by the patronage of Steven Contoursi of Newport Beach, California. The University of Minnesota Foundation administered the funds. Special thanks are due the Egyptian Antiquities Organization for permission to carry out various mini-projects during my sojourn. At Karnak, Abd el-Hamid Ma'arouf (Chief Inspector for Karnak and representative of the Franco-Egyptian Mission there) was most helpful with regard to the monument under discussion in this article. The photos and drawings are my own work, but the fine prints are the product of Edward Hahn of Des Plaines, Illinois. My thanks to all.

(holding the *Maât* goddess symbol in the customary basket) and the front part of his foot. Above the scene is a winged sundisc from which hangs a cobra wearing the white crown³.

Amun-Re wears the tall double-plumed headdress and holds a staff in his right hand and an *ankh* in his left hand. The legend identifying him is "Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, Foremost of Ipet-sut (Karnak)". Accompanying the god is his consort, Mut, who wears the double crown and holds a staff in her left hand and a device consisting of festival symbols in her right hand. The festival symbols appear to have been erased. The text identifying Mut is very poorly preserved (cf. rough sketch at the right): "Mut, Lady of Ish[eru], who dwells in [...] the divine (?) [...]" Unfortunately the text is not very legible, for it appears to have had more interesting elements than the usual epithets found with Mut. It should be noted that the title "Lady of" lacks the feminine ending. The winged sundisc is simply identified as "Behdety, the Great God".



As the scene is parted virtually through its centre, we cannot be certain of the exact composition of the missing segment. To balance the pair of deities on the right, the king may have been accompanied by the queen or by another deity. For an alternate suggestion, we might consider the possibility that the king stood alone and that the remaining space was utilized for various elements of the royal titulary.

Beneath the scene at the top of the stela is a single row of decoration which contains two centrally placed cartouches (both now incompletely preserved) flanked by adoring *rhwt* birds. There are three such birds on the surviving half of the stela and we may safely assume that three more adorned the missing left side. Of those *rhwt* birds surviving on the monument, the one in the centre has the hieroglyph \star (*dw3*, "adoring") before it, while the bird on the far right lacks the upraised arms of its companions. The incomplete (that is, partially fallen away) cartouches now contain the names of *Dsr-[hprw]-r' [Stp-n-r'] ... Mry 'Imn, Hrf[- m-hb]* (Horemheb)⁴ though the originals surely belonged to Tutankhamun (cf. below). Beneath this decoration is sufficient room (now blank) for only a few lines of text. Traces of baskets supporting the *rhwt* birds are barely visible, suggesting that they and perhaps the space below were subjected to some erasure or else were never fully completed. The very bottom 50 cm. of the stela are likewise blank, though it is possible that this area was never slated for any decoration.

Side B (Plates I, 2 and II, 1)

This side of the stela is very poorly preserved. Only the upper left-hand corner retains any traces of decoration. In this instance there is an image of a goddess who carries a staff and a device similar to that borne by Mut on side A. The figure and its accoutrements are cut very deeply, though the headdress of the goddess is in raised relief. The headdress appears to be the double crown, and we may infer from that that Mut is the goddess here represented. There are a few scant traces of a deeply incised text slightly in front and above the goddess, but the only sign recognizable is the loaf (\cup). At the very top of the stela are the tips of wings, no doubt a repetition of the winged disc as on side A.

3. Unfortunately only the right half of the winged disc is extant. The cobra on the left side probably wore the red crown.

4. The prenomen on the left has the original sundisc, but the *dsr* sign is a later addition. The nomen on the right appears to contain the original \overline{q} , but the \overline{m} is somewhat recessed and the result of the alteration. After the usurpation, both names faced right, with the resulting awkward situation of having the nomen precede the prenomen. With the original Tutankhamun cartouches, the prenomen (with its symmetrical signs) could be read from either direction and may have been intended as facing left to receive the adoration from the *rhwt* birds on the missing side of the stela. The nomen faced right to receive the praise of the birds on the right side. In the recutting under Horemheb, both cartouches end up facing to the right.

The cutting of the image of Mut (Pl. II, 1, detail) is very deep and contrasts sharply with the raised relief figures on side A. There are at least four perforations⁵ in a fairly straight vertical line at the breast, thighs, knees and shins of the goddess which suggest that some inlay was intended. This explanation accounts for both the deep cuttings and the perforations.

The remainder of the surface of side B is in very poor condition and partially crumbling away. Presumably the upper register would have contained some variation of the presentation scene as on side A. The centre third of side B is blank. Either this area had been totally erased and perhaps prepared for some revision, or else it may never have been completed. The bottom third is pitted and rotting away and provides little help in this regard.⁶ It is very likely that this side of the monument never received much in the way of textual decoration.

Side C (Plates I, 2 and II, 3)

Side C is actually the "end" of the stela. It contains a rather elaborate decoration in sunken relief. The main element in the motif is a cartouche surmounted by a disc and feathers. The cartouche rests upon a small figure who holds *ankh* signs in each hand while grasping "year" symbols. The latter are elongated and extend upwards on both sides of the cartouche and are supported below by symbols for "100.000" and the *mnš* sign (Ω). With symbols for festivals piled up (in a style similar to that of the device carried by Mut on sides A and B), the basic idea is to express a wish for many years of life and kingship, plus an abundance of festivals⁷. The whole ensemble is virtually encased by stylized floral patterns at the sides and below. All in all, it makes for a rather striking and attractive combination of elements.

The cartouche is now that of *Djeserkheprure Setepenre* (Horemheb), though there are definite traces of the beetle, one of the plural strokes and the basket of *Nebkheprure* (Tutankhamun, cf. Pl. II, 3). While all the elements of Tutankhamun's name were not totally obliterated, the workman who inserted Horemheb's name did so with some concern for the style and beauty of the original design. Presumably the other "end" of the stela would have contained a similar pattern, but with the nomen of the king.

COMMENTARY

As regards the royal names, the stela was decorated for Tutankhamun and later usurped by Horemheb. This fits the general pattern of many of the Tutankhamun monuments from Karnak: they were usually usurped or else partially defaced and demolished by Horemheb. As suggested elsewhere, it is my belief that in its final phase, Horemheb's policy was to rid the Theban area of all surface evidence of Tutankhamun⁸.

During the Atenist era, many temples must have suffered from deliberate damage and neglect. Tutankhamun claimed to have found the temples in a ruinous condition and to have restored them to

5. There may have been a fifth perforation, located roughly midway between the breasts and thighs. Either it was filled in more solidly than the others or else was never bored. It would appear that a complete figure of the goddess (minus the crown) would have been inserted and held fast by prongs inserted into the holes. This image would have been of wood or metal and appropriately painted or gilded.

6. There are some evenly spaced perforations near the base. As there are no similar holes in the upper portions of the monument, save those in the image of the goddess, it seems unlikely that the whole lower section of the stela would have been covered over with some type of removeable decoration.

7. These basic elements are fairly common, cf. for example a scene in which Seti I is receiving life, kingship and festivals from the gods in Nelson (ed. by Murnane), *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak I (OIP 106, Chicago 1981)*, Pl. 150. The arrangement, of course, is not identical to that of the Tutankhamun stela.

8. O. J. Schaden, *The God's Father Ay* (University Microfilms, 1977), 153 ff. and more recently in the ARCE Newsletter article cited in Note 1 above.

their former beauty⁹. This claim seems especially true insofar as Karnak is concerned, for in recent years our knowledge of Tutankhamun's works at Karnak has increased considerably,¹⁰ and the publication of this stela adds yet another monument to what has become a substantial list.

In its present condition there is a scarcity of inscripational material on this stela. There is room for a few lines on side A and for an indeterminate amount on side B. The impression one gets, however, is that this particular piece was intended primarily for visual effect rather than to record some specific deed or event. Scenes of the kings offering *maât* to the gods are common place, but it is tempting to see its presence here as a special affirmation of the return to orthodoxy which transpired during the reign of Tutankhamun. But in view of the general lack of supporting inscripational evidence, it is probably best not to put any undue emphasis on the presentation of *maât* in this case.

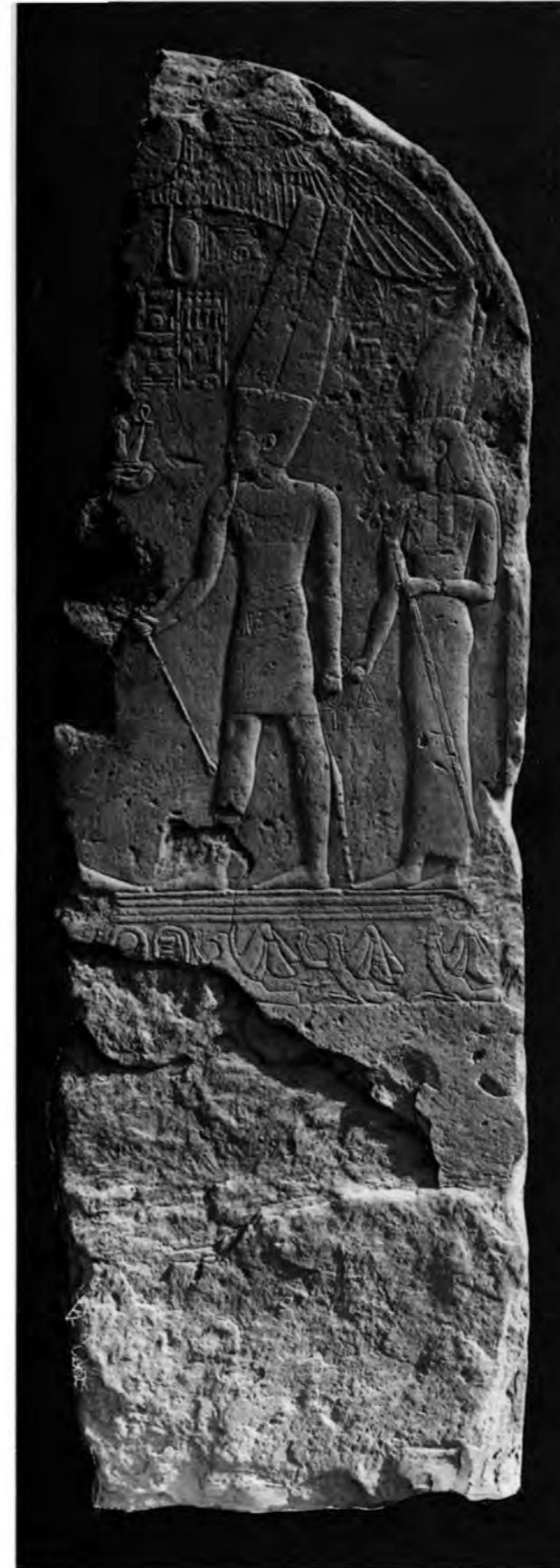
How long this monument remained *in situ* cannot be determined, nor can its original position be fixed. At most, we can speculate that the white crown of Upper Egypt on side A's winged disc may indicate that side A was placed so as to face the Nile (West). We can safely assume that the stela would have been placed in a relatively open area where it could be viewed from all sides, though it is possible that the monument was never fully completed as originally conceived.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur présente ici un élément de stèle d'une facture spéciale comportant un sommet arrondi et datée du règne du Toutânkhamon. Usurpée plus tard par Horemheb, elle porte les restes d'une scène d'offrande à Amon et Mout et témoigne de l'œuvre de restauration qui suivit, à Karnak, la fin de la période amarnienne.

9. *Urk.* IV, 2026 ff. (the Tutankhamun restoration stela).

10. Tutankhamun's significant works at Karnak to date include a monumental gateway (Sa'ad, *Karnak V*, (1975), 93 ff.), a pillared hall and either a second gateway or heavy wall (O.J. Schaden, *ARCE Newsletter* article previously cited), possibly a small limestone shrine (D. Redford, *JARCE 10 X*, (1973), 93), work on the dromos south of Karnak (J. Berlandini, *Karnak VI* (1980), 247 ff.), the granite colossi of Amun and Amonet (O.J. Schaden, *GM 38* (1980), 69 à 73), some work on the east face of the east wall of the Cour de la Cachette (Sa'ad, *Karnak V*, Pl. XXXVI), the restoration stela cited previously and assorted statuary. The Franco-Egyptian Mission's work on the ninth pylon has recently turned up evidence of a columned structure.



Pl. I, 1. Side A.
(Cl. O.J. Schaden).



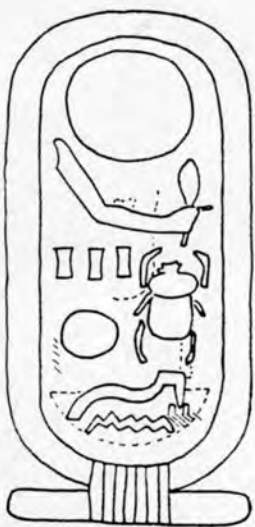
Pl. I, 2. Side B.
(Cl. O.J. Schaden).



1



2



3

Pl. II. 1 - Side B (detail);

2 - Side C;

3 - Side C (detail). (Cl. et dessin O.J. Schaden).