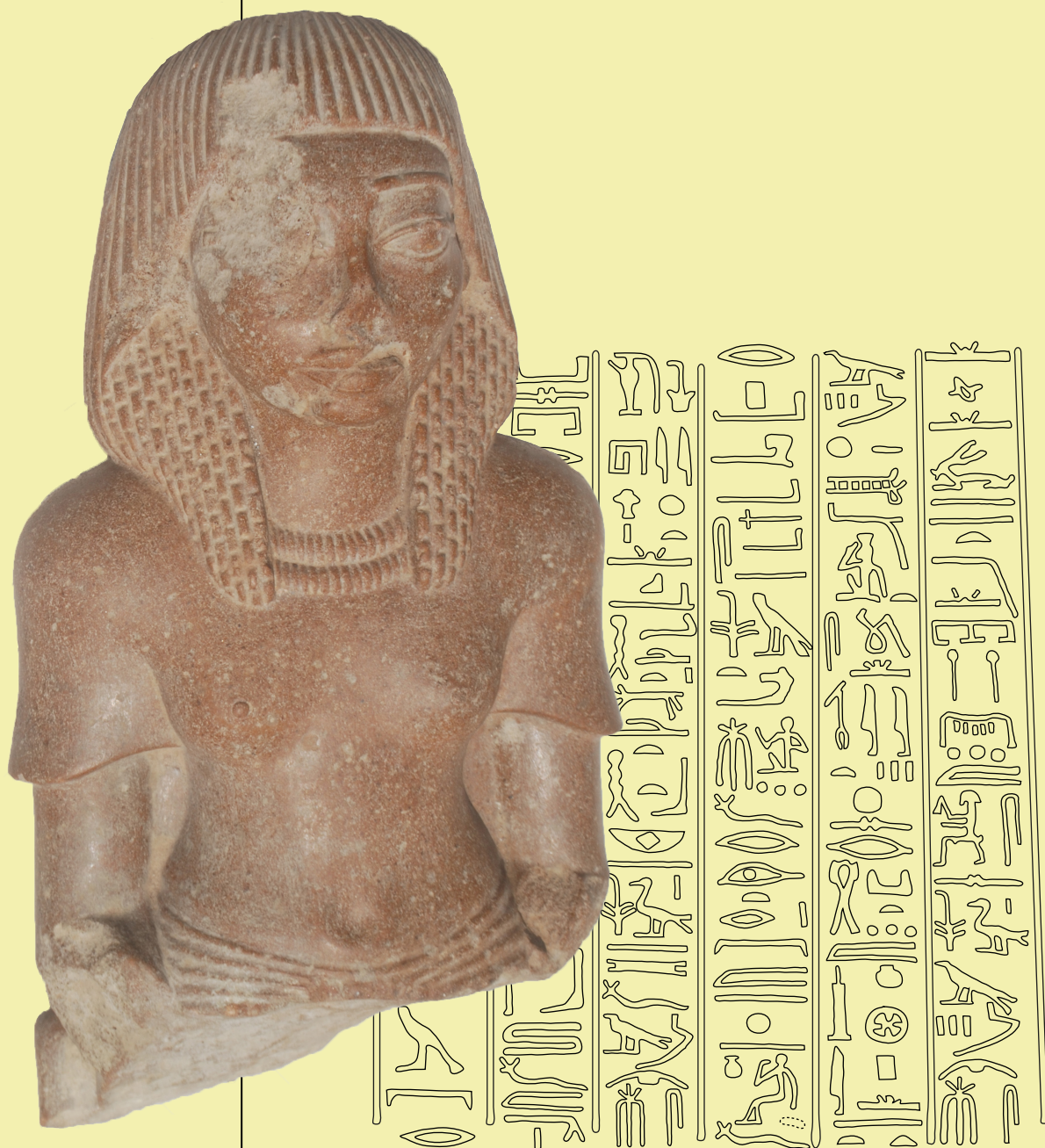




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A FUNERARY STELA OF THE WAB-PRIEST MENTUHOTEP AND HIS WIFE IN THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM (GEM 8063)

Ahmed HAMDEN *

GEM 8063 is a round-topped sandstone stela and belongs to the category of private funerary stelae (Figs. 1-2).¹ The inscriptions identify its owner as Mentuhotep, who served as a “*wab*-priest of Montu lord of Armant”. It was previously on display in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Tahrir) basement with the conservation numbers: SR 4/14198 and Temp. No. 10/3/25/11. On the 14th of January 2014, the stela was transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza. The stela is not known from sources other than the *Topographical Bibliography*, in which only essential data is presented.² Moreover, we do not know how the stela came to be in the museum which makes it hard for us to know where it was first found. Both factors complicate the study of this stela, especially regarding the identification of the *wab*-priest of Montu and the original provenance of the stela.³

The stela measures 49.9 cm in height by 29.9 cm in width, with a depth of 7 cm. It consists of two registers, surrounded by a framing line. The representations and texts are primarily in sunk relief. Some details, such as the bread slices on the offering tables or the eyeball of the *wedjat*-eye on the right part of the stela, are simply painted in black. The figures and texts engraved on the stela are still in good condition, despite the obvious crack from the mid-left upper register to the bottom right lower register. The surface is also scratched on different parts.

1 I am very grateful to Christophe Thiers (CNRS-CFEETK), Claire Somaglino (Sorbonne University), Ken Griffin (The Egypt Centre, Swansea University) and Suzanne Onstine (University of Memphis) for their valuable comments and for discussing the draft of this article.

2 PM VIII, p. 16 (803-048-229): “Round-topped stela, Osiris seated, and below, Mentuhotep *Mntw-ḥtp*, *wab* priest of Montu lord of Hermonthis, and wife (name not recorded), late Dyn. XVIII or Dyn. XIX, in Cairo Egyptian Museum, Temp. No. 10.3.25.11”.

3 For Armant during the New Kingdom, cf. EGGBRECHT 1972, cols. 436-7; WILKINSON 2000, p. 200.





Figure 1. A facsimile drawing of the stela GEM 8063 [© Mina Zaghloul].



Figure 2. Stela GEM 8063 [© Ahmed Amin].

UPPER REGISTER

On the left side of the lunette, there is a *wedjat*-eye  flanked by a *shen*-ring, water symbols, and a cup .⁴ Osiris, on the right half of the upper portion, is seated on a low-backed

throne. He is wearing the *atef*-crown, his usual shroud and wide collar while holding the crook and the flail. Above him are three columns of hieroglyphs consisting of the *hṭp-di-nsw.t* formula.

An offering table stands before him, carrying long, thin bread loaves; jars adorned with lotus flowers are figured under the table.

Texts above Osiris:



(1) *hṭp-di-nsw.t Wsir* (2) *ntr-ʿ3 hq3 dt*

(1) A boon which the King gives (to) Osiris, (2) the great god, ruler of eternity.





LOWER REGISTER

An offering of papyrus stems is borne by Mentuhotep, the *wab*-priest of Montu, Lord of Armant.⁵ He stands before two columns of hieroglyphs and is followed by his unnamed wife. The sculptor planned to inscribe two columns of hieroglyphs behind Mentuhotep's wife, as he did for the husband. However, only the top of the first column is inscribed, while the bottom and the following column are left empty.

Mentuhotep wears a short kilt with the indication of a sash down the front that would have been more detailed in paint. His belly has a slight paunch, typical of the Ramesside Period. The unnamed wife wears a cone of unguent atop her long wig and a long dress; the dress and cone are indicative of a Ramesside date.⁶ With her right hand, she carries a papyrus stem held at chest level, while in the left hand, hanging down her left side, she seems to clutch the stem of the flower in her closed fist.

Texts before Mentuhotep:




⁴ For the *wedjat*-eye, cf. MÜLLER-WINKLER 1986, pp. 824-6. For the elements    , see JÉQUIER 1914, pp. 139, 142; STEWART 1976, (UC 10700), p. 27; MOSTAFA 1993, pp. 85-8.

⁵ For further details about the offering of lotus and papyrus by individuals to deities on stelae, see DITTMAR 1986, p. 72 (c. a).

⁶ For the cone during the Ramesside Period, cf. PADGHAM 2012, p. 96 and fig. 22.

(1) *ir n w 'b n Mntw* (2-3) *nb İwnw {n} 7 Mntw-htp*

(1) Made by the *wab*-priest of Montu, (2-3) lord of Armant, Mentuhotep.⁸

It seems that the sculptor did not have enough space to inscribe the determinative of the man  (Gardiner A1) at the bottom of line 2, so it was inscribed at the bottom of the main scene in the lower register below the papyrus stems held by Mentuhotep.

Behind Mentuhotep's wife:

sn(t)=f nb(t)-pr



His sister (wife), mistress of the house.

COMMENTARY ON THE STELA

Iconography

The lunette of the stela presents unusual iconographic features. For example, on the left, the winged sun-disk above Osiris has been replaced by the *htp-di-nsw.t* formula. The elements engraved on the right side of the lunette are meant to provide the owner of the stela with various abilities: the deceased can symbolically see from the world of the dead through the *wedjat*-eye; the *shen*-sign acts as the sunlight providing the illumination of wisdom, etc.⁹

During the New Kingdom, the protective *wedjat*-eye appeared on numerous lunettes of several types.¹⁰ For instance, there is a type that appeared in the middle of the XVIIIth Dynasty which portrays a single winged solar-disk on one side, the presupposed other wing being replaced by the eye on the other half.¹¹ The Mentuhotep stela belongs to another type, with the *wedjat*-eye on one side and a funerary text replacing the single winged solar disk on the other. The deity

7 The sign  is most probably a scribal mistake.

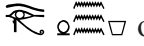
8 During the Ramesside Period, the toponym Armant is written *İwnw* instead of *İwny* (WERNER 1985, p. 199). For the names and variants of Armant, see *PN* II, pp. 51, 192, 106 and 238; EGGBRECHT 1972, col. 435. On the epithet *nb İwnw*, cf. *LGG* III, p. 577.

9 BOLSHAKOV 1997, p. 182.

10 For more on the decorative representations of the *wedjat*-eye, cf. HÖLZL 2002, pp. 36-47.

11 For the royal stela, see LACAU 1909, (CG 34170), p. 208, pl. LXII; (MMA 28.9.6), BULL 1929, pp. 78-82. For more examples of the commoners, cf. LACAU 1909, (CG 34040 and 34024), p. 75, pl. XXV, (CG 34058), p. 105, pl. XXXV, (CG 34059), p. 105, pl. XXXV, (CG 34060), p. 107, pl. XXXVI, (CG 34061), p. 108, pl. XXXVI, (CG 34062), p. 109, pl. XXXVII, (CG 34139), p. 189, pl. LVII, (CG 34140), p. 190, pl. LVIII; HALL 1925, (BM EA 906) p. 8, pl. 17, (BM EA 623) pp. 11-2, pl. 34; STEWART 1976, (UC 10700), p. 27, pl. 17, (UC 14467), p. 36, pl. 28. 1; BOLSHAKOV 1997, p. 182; SHONKWILER 2014, p. 76.

is usually shown beneath the single winged-disk or the funerary texts, while the worshiper is shown below the protective *wedjat*-eye on the other half.¹²

All the elements of the stela are typically associated with the hallmarks of the Ramesside Period. The lunette of the stela of Djeserka at Turin (Museo Egizio 50022), dated to the XIXth Dynasty and hailing from Deir el-Medina, provides a good parallel.¹³ It is decorated with the combination  on one side, while the *hṯp-di-nsw.t* formula dedicated to Osiris, in addition to the titles of the deceased, is inscribed on the other half.¹⁴ Another comparable stela in the Turin Museum, belonging to Mahu and Yupa (inv.-Nr. Cat. 1465), is dated to the reign of Ramesses II.¹⁵ It shows strong resemblances in palaeography and style with our stela – especially the long dress worn by Mentuhotep's wife.

Other iconographic criteria point to the Ramesside Period such as the elongated figure of Osiris and the shape of his crown, the hairstyles of the couple, the appearance of the unguent cone and the egg-headed shape of the skulls of Mentuhotep and his wife.¹⁶

Mentuhotep, a *wab*-Priest of Montu lord of Armant

The stela GEM 8063 allows us to add another priest, named Mentuhotep, to the list of the clergy of Montu lord of Armant in function during the Ramesside Period.¹⁷ Even though numerous monuments and objects carrying the names of *wab*-priests of Montu of Armant are known – such as those of *ḥ3wty-3* who served during the reign of Ramesses IX¹⁸ –, and despite the study of the cult and priesthood of this deity attempted by several scholars such as Kitchen, Mond, Myers and Werner, it has not been possible to ascertain a link between the Mentuhotep of our stela and an already known priest. The deceased's tomb is unknown, and there are no other identified funerary objects belonging to him.¹⁹

The owner's titles likely suggest the Theban region for the provenance of the stela, although other locations cannot be excluded based on the presence of such titles outside the Theban area. The cult of Montu and its clergy have been widely spread over many places in Upper Egypt, such as Thebes, Tod, Medamoud and Armant.²⁰

The textual inscriptions and iconographical representations within the tomb of Khonsu (TT31) are a significant source of information about the Montu clergy in the Ramesside Period.

12 BULL 1929, p. 76; STEWART 1976, (UC 10700), p. 27; ROBINS 1997, p. 144; BAINES 2007, p. 21; SHONKWILER 2014, p. 76.

13 PM I/1², p. 736; TOSI & ROCCATI 1972, pp. 55-6; DEMARÉE 1983, pp. 129-130 (A. 49), pl. XII (ca 1/3).

14 KRI V, p. 791.

15 BEYLAGÉ 2004, p. 84 and fig. 73.

16 For more parallel representations of the elongated Osiris in the Ramesside Period, cf. JAMES 1970, (BM EA 154) p. 31, pl. XXVII; (BM EA 156) pp. 32-3, pl. XXVIII; (BM EA 158) pp. 33-4, pl. XXIX; (BM EA 290) p. 63, pl. XLVIII; (BM EA 314) p. 67, pl. LI.

17 For further information on the clergy of Montu, see BISSON DE LA ROQUE 1941, pp. 1-3; BORGHOUTS 1982, cols. 200-2; WERNER 1985, pp. 12-4.

18 WERNER 1985, p. 300; BETRÒ 2001, p. 88 (95).

19 HELCK 1961, p. 161.

20 BORGHOUTS 1982, col. 200; WERNER 1985, pp. 1, 310-5; WERNER 1986, pp. 109-10; WERNER 2001, p. 435; GABOLDE 2018, p. 550.

The deceased's family is linked with the deity priesthood,²¹ and several *wab*-priests of Montu, such as *Nb-Īmn*, *Wsr-Mntw*, and *P3-Šd*, are figured in this tomb.²² The name 'Montu of Armant' appears on other monuments that are not part of his cult centre,²³ but our poor understanding of the Ramesside Period in Armant makes it difficult to place this stela in context.

The temple of Medinet Habu housed a manifestation of Montu of Armant, as well as the local aspect of the deity, Montu in Thebes.²⁴ At Deir el-Medina, the deity was honoured by the workers. His name is also inscribed in the tomb of Resh in Saqqara.²⁵ Graffiti dated to the Ramesside Period also record two families from Armant, including a *wab*-priest, who visited the sanctuaries of the temple of Thutmosis III at Deir el-Bahari for pilgrimage.²⁶ It was also popular among individuals even before the New Kingdom, and several kings of the XIth dynasty bore the name Mentuhotep. Several *wab*-priests also carried this name (for instance, on stela Genève D 51 during the Middle Kingdom).²⁷

Van Walsem pointed out a large number of Montu-theophoric names during the New Kingdom, whether at Deir el-Medina or outside²⁸ and how they increasingly flourished during the XXth Dynasty²⁹, thus shedding light on the popularity of Montu during this period.³⁰

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21 DAVIES & GARDINER 1948, pp. 11-30, pl. X-XXI.

22 DAVIES & GARDINER 1948, p. 28; HELCK 1961, p. 161 (36); WERNER 1985, pp. 300-1.

23 For the deity Montu of Armant, cf. *LGG* III, p. 321.

24 *MH* 6, pl. 375 (C 2), pl. 434 (B).

25 For Deir el-Medina, cf. VALBELLE 1985, pp. 317-8; McDOWELL 1994, p. 57. For Saqqara, see ZIVIE 1983, pp. 139-40; WERNER 1985, p. 150.

26 BARWIK 2009, pp. 45-52. Other examples of graffiti contained the name of Montu of Armant and date to different periods and locations, cf. LIPPERT 2015, pp. 242, 251.

27 *PN* II, p. 51; ILIN-TOMICH 2017, pp. 22, 109, 166, 169, 231 and pl. 15.

28 VAN WALSEM 1982, pp. 198-204; WERNER 1985, p. 197.

29 VAN WALSEM 1982, p. 205.

30 VAN WALSEM 1982, p. 205.

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