

The New Kingdom Funerary Stela CG 34081 – Cairo Museum

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Abstract

The article publishes scenes and hieroglyphs of the stela CG 34081- JE 21817, SR 3/10332, Cairo Museum, dating to the New Kingdom (pl.1, fig.1)

The face of the stela was divided into three registers: a small Lunette directly connected to the upper register that shows Queen Ahmose Nefertari sitting in front of the two deities Osiris and Hathor; in the second register three persons are worshipping the god Anubis, in the lower register three men and two women are sitting on the ground in a funerary banquet scene with an offering table before them.

Keywords: Funerary stelae - Stela CG 34081 – Cairo Museum stelae - New Kingdom stelae.

1. General description

Discovery: Northern Upper Egypt: Abydos.

Date: New Kingdom.

Owner: (?)

Material: Limestone.

Dimensions: **H:** 59cm, **W:** 36cm, **D:** 13 cm.

Condition: Fairly good, with smashed parts, slight cracks and traces of colors.

2. Description

A painted arch-topped funerary stela, follows the classic style that was dominant throughout Egyptian history, it was divided into a Lunette and three registers. A horizontal thin line separates the three registers of the stela, and surrounds its edges. All figures and hieroglyphs are executed in shallow sunk relief. The back of the stela (the verso) was polished with no scenes or texts.

2.1. The Lunette

Narrow Lunette directly connected to the first register without the usual horizontal dividing line, it contained only one sacred element: the winged disc, which seems to shade the whole scene with its wings.

Comment

The narrow Lunette directly connected to the first register as stelae: CG 34096, 34503, 34517, JE 43544, TN 14/10/69/1.

According to an ancient cosmic conception the heavens where the wings of the great falcon god, Horus, whose eyes where the sun and moon, this conception was mostly depicted for the first time on the ivory comb of King Djet in the 1st Dyn., where the two wings were fixed to the boat on which the god rides. From the 5th Dyn. onwards a sun disc was added between the two wings, thus it was attributed to the sun god.(Wilkinson, 2011)

The symbol embodies one of the images of the sun god after his departure from the eastern horizon *pri m 3ht* to ascend to the sky, flying and spreading the light as *R^c Hr 3hty*. It appeared since the 3rd Dyn. onwards in different kind of religious and royal scenes, and at the entrances to temples and chapels.

The sun disk with the added wings of Horus were associated with kingship and important symbols such as the *ḥnh* and *šn* signs. The winged sun disk on the top of stelae symbolizes divine support and protection for their owners and resurrection and warding off evil forces. (Wildung, 1977)

In terms of protection, the wings were also associated with a number of gods, similarly, the encircling wings on royal coffins refer to the embrace of a protective goddess. (Wilkinson, 2011)



As an important religious and decorative element the winged sun disk first appeared on the round tops of royal stelae since the 1st Dyn., then on the stela of one of the ministers during the reign of King Senusert I, people used it since the end of the 12th Dyn. to the Greco-Roman era either alone or with other symbols, (Hölzl, 1990) the same as: CG 34503, 34517, JE 43544, 43565, TN 14/10/69/1, with *wḏ3t* eye and *šn* sign: CG 34004, 34018, 34024.






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The sun disk is reddish-colored with remains of the same color on the lower part of the wings, that appear separate from the middle. The wings feature no inner feather details.

2.2. The first register

It is directly connected to the Lunette without the usual horizontal dividing line; start from the left:

The Queen Ahmose Nefertari is shown facing towards the viewer's right sitting on her chair  wearing long tight-fitting garment, long wig surmounted by the vulture cap, the double feathers crown, and a uraeos; holding, with her left hand, the *nh3h3* flail, with her right hand she holds the *nh* sign . The Queen is facing the two gods on the right side of the stela.

Sitting on the right facing the viewer's left is the god Osiris shown from the profile, appeared in a mummified form, wearing a beard, the *3tf* crown  and a wide collar which its hind part hangs over the back, he sits on his chair  holding, with one hand, the *w3s*, the *hk3* scepters and the *nh3h3* flail , , , with the other hand he holds the *nh* sign.

Hathor is sitting on her chair behind Osiris wearing a long tight-fitting garment, long wig surmounted by the sun disc between her horns with a uraeus, holding the *w3s* scepter with her right hand which she puts on her chest and the *nh* with her left hand.

Between the two gods and the Queen engraved an offering table full of offerings with one censer and a bowl below.

At the top of the register and behind the Queen are vertical columns of hieroglyphic texts in two opposite directions with vertical lines separating them:

Comment

The reason for the appearance of a number of kings and queens on stelae is the desire of the deceased that they might play a mediating role between him and the gods. (Radwan, 1991) Accordingly, it was only natural for the Queen Ahmose Nefertari to appear on some funeral and votive stelae.

The Queen and her son King Amenhotep I, gained a great position in the workers' community in Deir al-Medina, as they were considered the patrons of this community, the King was considered one of the local deities in that region and soon he was elevated to the ranks of the main gods, along with his mother, the deified Queen. (Černy, 1927; Sadek, 1987)

Ahmose Nefertari held the title *Hmt ntr n (Im)n* – The god's wife of *(Im)n*, a title that some women of the royal house held in the 18th Dyn. onwards, usually it was held by queens and sometimes by princesses, daughters of the king, the title was associated with a priestly role related to the worship of Amun - Ra in Thebes. (Robins, 2001)

Holding the *ʿnh* sign – symbolizing life that was a concept associated with deities to give to the kings, the Queen is shown here on a par with Osiris and Hathor, she also appeared on other stelae with Amun-Ra (TN 26/2/25/5); Hathor, Mut and Rahorakhty (TN 30/1/15/13)

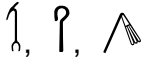
She wears the vulture cap that was the oldest and most common headdress of queens, they began to wear it since the 5th Dyn. onwards. The wearer of the cap should be associated with Nekhbet and Mut, in this way, it confirms the Queen's role as a mother. (Gobes, 2001)

The cap was surmounted by the double feathers crown *Šwty* (ostrich or falcon feathers) appeared as a royal crown since the reign of Senefru, a pair of feathers were used also to adorn some gods as Amun and Min. Religiously the *Šwty* appears in conjunction with the *3tf* crown. Representing the two horizons and the two solar eyes, Queens worn the double feathers crown since the 13th Dyn. onwards, from the 18th Dyn. it became one of their most important headdress, while goddesses worn the crown at the end of the 18th Dyn., the platform crown, which form a base for the feathers, appeared in the early 18th Dyn. (Gobes, 2001)

Unusually and in contrast to the colors of the women's bodies on the stela, and in the ancient Egyptian art in general, the artist painted the parts of the Queen's body black, whereas, her garment, crown, chair and part of the *nh3h3* bore the remnants of the red color.

As a popular funerary god and a ruler of the cemetery and the underworld Osiris frequently appeared on the funerary stelae from the reign of Amenemhat II onwards, (Khodzhash,1982), he appeared alone or with other gods like Isis, Anubis, Horus, Nephtes, Rahorakhty, Maat; and Hathor.

On some stelae Osiris was depicted from the profile sitting wearing the *3tf* crown, the same as on: CG 34503, 34505, JE 19772, 32025, TN 3/7/24/17, 10/6/24/11, 12/6/24/17, 14/6/24/17, 14/10/69/1), the crown consists of the white crown with two feathers on the sides. Equaling the double crown, it was associated in the beginning with Anedjti then with Osiris and Herishef, it can also be worn by Horus and Amun Ra. The oldest appearance of the crown in the scenes is due to the rule of Senefru, where Horus appeared wearing it on the umbrella of Queen Hetepfers (the Egyptian Museum - Cairo), it was mentioned for the first time in the coffin texts in the Middle Kingdom. (Smith, 1958; Eissa, 1989)

Sometimes the god holds with both hands, the *w3s*, the *hk3* scepters and the *nh3h3* flail  as on stelae: JE 2013, 20395, 8784, CG 34506, TN 10/6/24/11, 15/12/24/2. In fewer scenes the *nh3h3* flail was replaced by the *dd* pillar as: JE 48845. In a unique scene the artist depicted Osiris on the stela holding the *w3s*, the *hk3* scepters and the *nh3h3* flail with his left hand while holding the *nh* sign with his right hand.

As a goddess of the dead and the West, it was only logical that Hathor was depicted on funerary stelae as JE 72021; with Osiris as: CG 34506; and with Osiris and other deities like Rahorakhty, Ptah, Anubis, Horus and Rnenutt as on stelae: JE 27958, 43569, 45557, 72018, TN 14/6/24/17, 14/10/69/1, CG 34505.

Hathor held the title: "*nbt smt Imntt* - lady of the western necropolis", which equals "*hnwt smt Imntt* – mistress of the western necropolis" on the stela JE 72018, taking into account that the goddess of the West was originally an aspect of Hathor. According to her important funeral role in protecting the deceased, resurrection and eternity, and of being the lady of the cemetery who was associated with the goddess of the cemetery *Mrt-sgr*, and also with the goddess *Imntt* in the Theban cemetery

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she held the title *Hnwt Imntt* – mistress of the west and *nbt pt* as on JE 72021. (Bleeker,1973; Vischak, 2001; Wilkinson, 2011)

Hathor holds the *w3s* scepter that was more associated with gods than with goddesses,(Wilkinson, 1994) the artist strangely portrayed it to appear completely behind her back in an oblique position without actually holding it with her clenched hand on her chest due to the lack of space. For the same reason, the *ꜥnh* sign that she held in her left hand appeared incomplete, as if it was broken.

Although the name has been partially erased, the titles confirm that the god in the *hꜥtp di nsw* formula was *Imn Rꜥ* who appeared on a large number of stelae as the king of gods and an official deity of the state (CG 34010, 34025, 34026, 34145, 34183; TN 5/12/35/1, 30/1/15/13; JE 27820, 41399, 41401, 41403, 41405, 41406, 43656, 87829). He was also one of the most popular deities in Deir al-Medina. He appeared on the stelae since the Middle Kingdom onwards most commonly in human form, standing or sitting, usually crowned with the feather crown; as a ram *rhny nfr*, his sacred animal, or as a goose *smn nfr*. On the stela the god appeared with his name only taking the titles: *nb pt* - lord of the sky, as a national god, as on stelae: JE 41402, 45557, 43564; TN 26/2/25/5; *ḥk3 W3st* - ruler of *W3st* (Thebes) a title appeared since the New Kingdom onwards, associated with his worship center in Thebes as on stelae: TN 26/2/25/5; JE 43564, and *nꜥtr ꜥ3 ḥk3 dt*, the great god, lord of eternity. (Petrie, 1909; Leitz, 2002; Khodzhash,1982)

Because Amun Ra played an important role in the religious life of the Egyptians, especially in the era of the New Kingdom, and was a popular god and a patron of the people of Thebes, the deceased wished to receive his care and support in the other world.

As for the expression " *n k3 n Wsir* - To the *k3* of Osiris" in the *hꜥtp di nsw* formula, it is likely that the owner of the stela records the granting of part of the sacrifices and offerings of the temple of Amun Ra to the temple of Osiris, as it was customary to deduct part of the endowments and offerings of the main temples to give to other temples when needed. Accordingly, *k3* means "offerings"; and the owner of the stela may have been working in one of the two temples.


It is clear that the artist engraved the left part of the stela first without taking into account the rest of the scene, so only the front of the seat of Osiris appeared, while

its back disappeared behind the legs of Hathor, also the body of the god appeared adjacent to the legs of the goddess.

Between the Queen and the two gods is a simple wide offering table, piled high with offerings surmounted by a big lotus flower which was a common offering since the Old Kingdom onwards, the same as (CG 34035 – 34037 – 34040 – 34056 – 34085), in the New kingdom lotus flowers, bouquets and buds were very much associated with offerings and offering tables as a symbol of resurrection and re-birth.

Under the table in front of the Queen's feet the artist depicted a wide serrated bowl with a raised base contains the sign of the Eighth Upper Egyptian Nome "Abydos", which took the shape of a simple mound like object surmounts a tall pole. This sign may represent the primeval hill that emerged from the waters of the primordial ocean, as the name of the Nome was *T3-Wr* "Eldest Land".

With the flourishing of the Osirian religion, the symbol became more complex as the mound like object was surmounted by two feathers and tied with a ribbon having a side knot on the right (headband) (18th Dyn.) and other attributes

associated with the cult of Osiris  (as it was depicted in the temple of Seti I at Abydos). Perhaps all of these elements link the symbol with the head of Osiris. The *T3-Wr* sign appeared in funeral contexts: on coffins, sarcophagi, as a funeral amulet, with other symbols associated with the concept of rebirth, and Chapter 138 of the book of the dead. (Gardiner, 1957; Wilkinson, 2011)

The bowl on the stela replaces the lower tall pole, the two feathers could not be drawn owing to the lack of space. By making comparisons with a large number of stelae, this symbol appeared on few of them as on: CG 34182, 34517, Bologna No. 1915 (Lowle, 1980), but it was never depicted with a bowl instead of the vertical lower pole. The censer on the other side appears as if it was placed in the air above the feet of Osiris.

2.3. The second register

A horizontal line, separates the first and the second register. The god Anubis with a jackal's head is sitting on his chair on the left side facing the viewer's right wearing a short kilt, a long heavy wig and a wide collar; holding the *w3s* scepter with his left hand and the *ʿnh* sign with his right hand. Above the god are vertical columns of hieroglyphs with vertical lines separating them:

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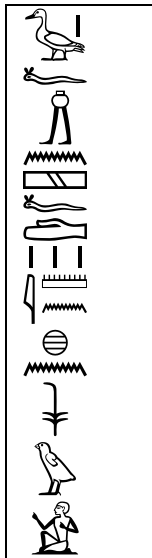
wdn ht (n) Inpw hnt(y) Imntt

Offer things (to) Anubis the foremost of the West

On the right side stands a man shaved head wearing a short kilt and a long loose kilt extends to the mid-calf, raising his hands in a worshipping pose.

After the man stands a women wearing a long tight-fitting garment that covers her feet and a long wig tied with a wide strip of fabric, surmounted by an aromatic cone with a lotus flower on the forehead, she offers three geese with her right hand and a burning censer with her left hand.

Finally at the far right stands a man shaved head wearing a short kilt, presents with both hands a long lotus bouquet, behind him was engraved a vertical column of hieroglyphs:



S3.f in .n šfdw Imn - Hnsw – His son who brought the papyrus rolls Imn- Hnsw

All the hieroglyphic inscriptions (6 vertical columns) above the worshipers' heads and the offering table were deliberately smashed, only one letter remains (*f*) above the woman's head.

Between Anubis and the worshipers is an offering table bears divers offerings with two similar censers below.

Comment

God Anubis gained great popularity in the New Kingdom era, which was evident through his widespread images in the scenes of private tombs, stelae and funeral papyri.(Wilkinson, 2011)

He was depicted as a canid-headed man in the New Kingdom onwards. As the chief god of the dead before the rise of Osiris and a god of the necropolis he appeared on many funeral stelae as: CG 34004, 34133, 34024, 34060, 34008, 34035, JE 32025, 48845 (verso), he was usually colored black, a color symbolic of the afterlife and fertility, although he was colored red on the stela; only the jackal-head bears traces of black color. He was the god of the cemetery, protector of the dead and companion to the deceased in the Osirian court. The cult of Anubis was incorporated into the Osirian religion since the Middle kingdom onwards.(Doxey, 2001)

The same as stela SQ.DAH.WU.168 (Saqqara stores), the god bears the title *hnty Imntt* "foremost of the West" that Osiris had in the New Kingdom era, which equals *hnty imnt(yw)* –"first of the westerners".(Leitz, 2002)

Anubis appeared in the second register, while Osiris and Hathor were depicted in the first one, as on the stela CG 34503, thus Anubis replaced Horus as the third member of the Osirian triad that he joined in the era of the New Kingdom. The deceased hoped that Anubis, the patron of embalmers, would supervise his embalming and burial rituals, as he did with his father, Osiris (Pyr. 509). (Khodzhash,1982)


The artist mistakenly engraved the front part of the chair on which Anubis sits in the form of a slandered seat leg.

Despite the absence of the name and titles of the owner of the stela, it is certain, according to the usual, that the man who stands after the offering table worshipping Anubis is the owner of the stela, most likely his wife and eldest son follow him. He wears a short kilt covered by a loose long piece of cloth tied to the waist with a belt and extends to the mid-calf, it is transparent showing the legs.

The figure depicted with outstretched and upraised arms represents the worshipping pose adopted by the Egyptians was used as a determinative in the word *dw3* "adore",

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it was widely found in religious scenes in front of the gods. Figures adopting this pose always appear in the same form as the hieroglyphic sign, whereby a person raises his arms upwards with one preceded the other. (Wilkinson, 2011)

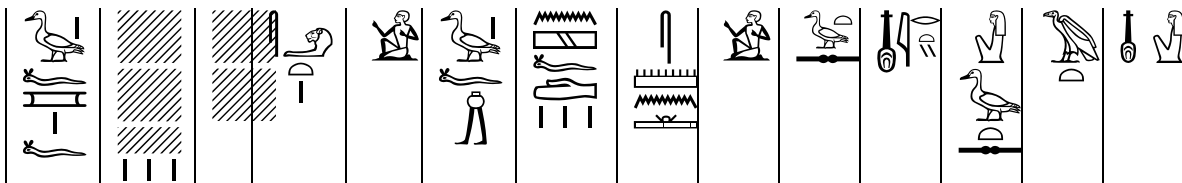
The woman presents an incense burner  *hꜥw* a type that appeared in the 6th Dyn. and then was popularized in scenes on stelae and sarcophagi in the Middle Kingdom, it is a container widening from the top more than the bottom with (or without) a flame emits from it. (Radwan, 1983) (as on JE 34542; TN 3/7/24/17)






She also presents three geese that were favorite offerings commonly offered either for deities or for the deceased, they appeared on the stelae slaughtered on the offering tables (as on CG 27958, 32025, 34505, 34542), or presented by the sons and relatives of the deceased (usually one goose or three, as on JE 27958, CG 34023, 34029, 34096, 34542). The bird played an important role in eliminating evils and warding off evil spirits. (Eggebrech, 1977)






2.4. The third register

Three men and two women are squatting facing the viewer's left in front of an offering table. All of them place the left leg on the ground and raise the right knee. The men shaved head, wearing short kilts; each of them holds a lotus flower with the right hand and raises it closer to his face, while he extends his left hand on his raised knee.

Above them 6 vertical columns of hieroglyphs were engraved:



S3.f mri.f    (w)   *Sh3t s3.f in.n šfdw Smn s3t.s Nfirtiry s3t.s Mwt nfr(t)*

His son his beloved    (w)   *Sh3t*, his son who brought the papyrus rolls *Smn*, her daughter *Nfirtiry*, her daughter *Mwt nfr(t)*.


The two women wear long tight-fitting garments and long wigs tied with wide strips of fabric, surmounted by aromatic cones with a lotus flower on the forehead. The first of them holds a small lotus bouquet in her right hand which she puts on her

chest, while the second holds two lotus flowers one in each hand, a part of her left leg is broken with no restoration.

Once again of the three vertical columns of hieroglyphs above the offering table two were deliberately smashed only one remains.

Comment

In a funerary banquet scene three brothers and two sisters are sitting on the ground in front of an offering table bears different offerings. Banquet scenes were frequently depicted in tomb decorations since the late Old Kingdom, where the scenes showed the gathering of family members, while the scenes of banquets in the New Kingdom, notably in the 18th Dyn., showed family and friends enjoying the feasts. Men and women are shown sitting together, especially if they were relatives.(Ikram, 2001)

The sitting position of the men and the women is the same as the hieroglyph represents the word  S "man" with slight variations in the positioning of the arms, the sign appeared in many Egyptian works of art where seated figures are represented; for example in the banquet scenes as in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Thebes, 18th Dyn.) where the guests appeared seated in exactly the same position as is on the stela. (Wilkinson, 2011)

Wilkinson believes that it is difficult to understand this position when sitting with a leg bent down the body and a knee raised, he suggested that it is one of the methods used by the artist to fully show the back leg in the scenes(Wilkinson, 2011); while this sitting position is usual among men, it is very comfortable for the body parts, and therefore it is still common in the modern era.

The oldest scenes of smelling the fragrance of the lotus flowers, showed Queen Meres Ankh III raising a lotus flower to her nose, as the flower was associated first with women only, scenes of men smelling lotus appeared for the first time in the reign of King Pepy II as an alternative to the jar of unguent, then it was associated with men and women together in the reign of Amenemhat II. (Pflüger, 1947; Dunham, 1974; Selim, 2001)

Chapter 81 of the book of the dead contains spells for transformation into a lotus flower and thus join the resurrection circle. The flower was depicted in almost every offering scene and in most banquet scenes in the New Kingdom. Inhaling the scent of the lotus flower stimulates the respiratory cycle and thus helps in resurrection

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and revival (Harer, 2001), men and women take the same position as on stelae: CG 34517, JE 27820, 34542, 45557, TN 5/7/24/10.

Three men with two registered names only, thus, the name of the first man was written in one of the two vertical columns that were smashed above the offering table.

The offering table was depicted without its base owing to the lack of space.

3. General comments

- The stela bears signs of hostility and deliberate damage to its owner by erasing his name.

- No indication of the profession of the owner is registered.

- Unusually, the Queen's body was painted black which may be an indication that the stela was inscribed after the Queen's death.

- For some reason, the name of Amun was deliberately erased from the titles of the Queen and from the *hṯp di nsw* formula, while keeping the names of other deities on the stela: Ra, Osiris, Hathor, Anubis and the deified Queen, this explains a special hostility to Amun, which is likely to have happened during the reign of Akhenaten by one of the followers of the Atenian religion.

- The men's eyes were intentionally erased. This act is considered a distortion to the stela to harm its owner and his sons in the other world.

- *in.n šfdw* - who brought the papyrus rolls, an unofficial title: one of the sons of the deceased, usually the eldest one, can play the role of *hry hbt* - the lecture priest, so he must read the prayers from the papyrus rolls because he does not memorize them like the priest, but on the stela two of the sons of the deceased were described as such; either they were papyrus makers, worked in the library of a temple or government department, or it was an indication that they are literate can read and write.

- Gods and goddesses on the stela: Amun Ra (by name only), Osiris, Hathor, Anubis and the deified Queen Ahmose Nefertari.

- Individuals on the stela: The owner, his wife, four sons: *Imn- Hnsw*, , *Sh3t*, *Smn*, and two daughters: *Nfrirty* and *Mwt nfr(t)* .

- Linguistically, sons were attributed to the father and daughters to the mother.
- Hieroglyphic inscriptions bear traces of blue color, men's bodies are colored black, while women's bodies are painted yellow.

Acknowledgment

All thanks to Professor Dr. Ahmed Eissa for his accurate scientific views that illuminated some of the dark parts of the stela.



Pl. 1: Stela CG 34081

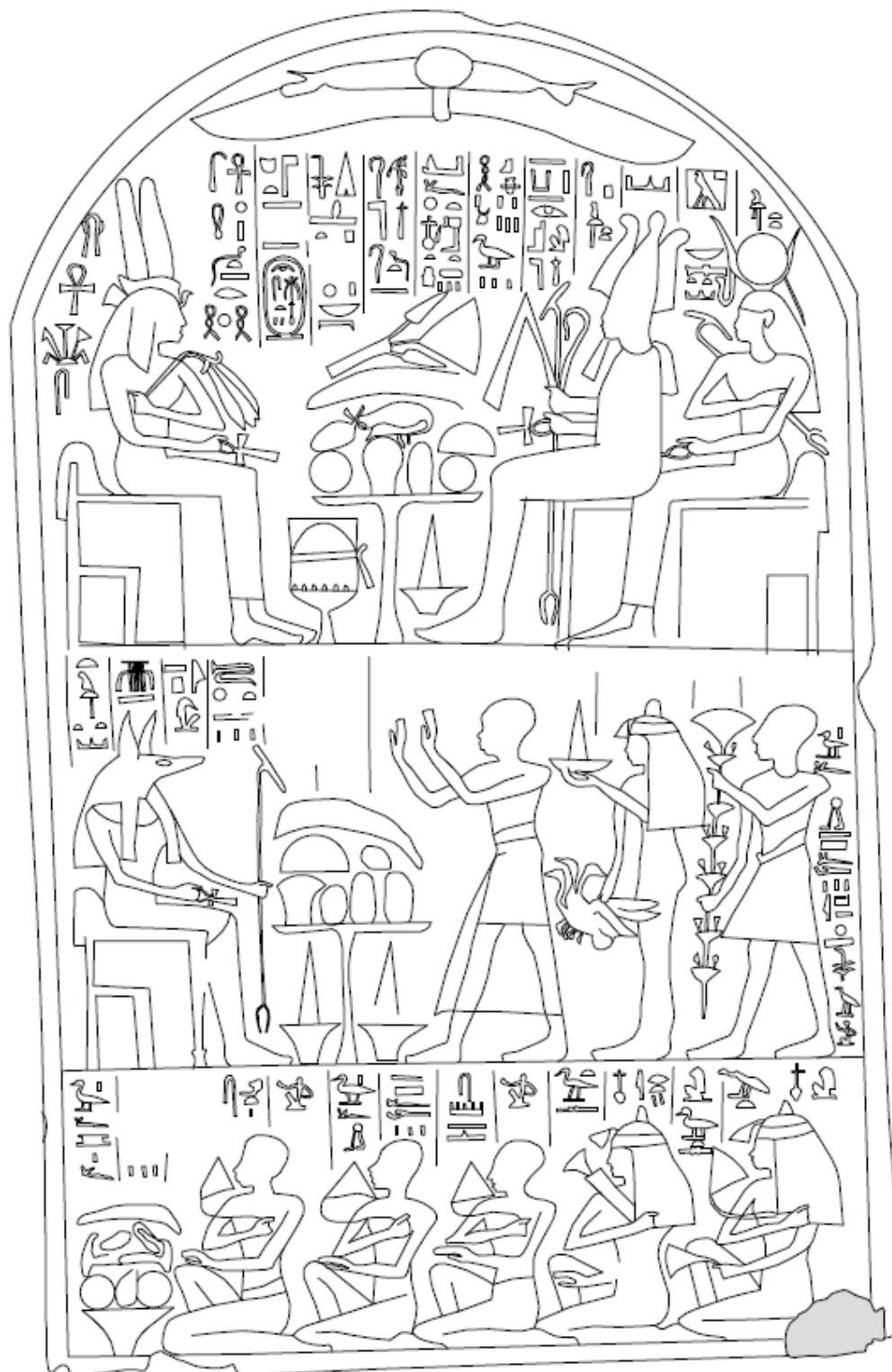


Fig. 1: Stela CG 34081

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