

*The Stela dedicated to Goddess Hathor
in Cairo Museum*

J.E n^o 59863

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This rounded-topped limestone stela is registered under the Journal d'Entree number of 59863.

It measures 25.4 cm in height and 18.5 cm in width and 9 cm in thickness. It was excavated in Madinet Habu during the excavations done by the Oriental Institute from 1926 - 1931, under the excavation number of 27.52.

The stela is divided into two sections, the top section is representing the figures of two Hathoric sistrums with the lady's face and the two ears of a cow with the two quills of feathers on the sides of a monumental naos, having two open papyrus flowers and four buds decorating the sides of the stela.

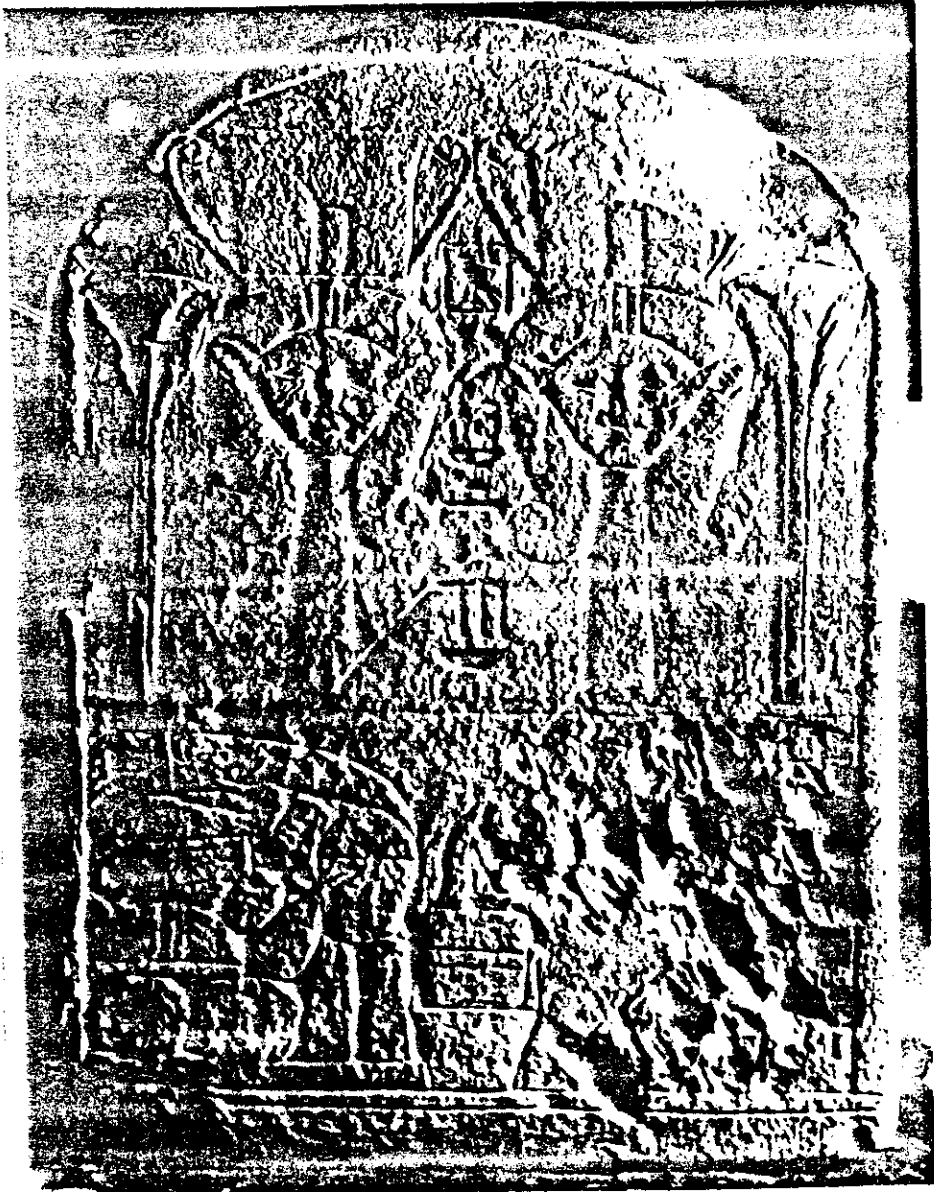
The sistrum is a musical rattle which is usually used in some rituals, especially those related with the Menat.

The origin of the rattle is obscure, though comparing the Misopotamian¹ rattle from Iraq and the prehistoric African² against the Coptic³ rattle

¹ Säve-Söderbergh, Ethnos, Stockholm 1968, 90-133.

² Hans Hickmann, Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart 12, Kassel-Basel etc. 1965, 734.

³ CG 69301. 69312.



and the Ethiopian⁴ rattle, we could conclude that the latter two rattles (the Coptic and Ethiopian) were used in producing some sort of music in some religious festivals and they are some-how connected with the Pharaonic instrument.

The definition of the names of the sistrum by the Ancient Egyptians varied until the Greco--roman period, there was *sh̄m*⁵, *sšst*⁶ and *ib*⁷ with a determinative as a person holding a sistrum and shaking it, these were used with words connected with music and musicians as *ih̄t*⁸ and *ih̄it*, *hn.w* and *hn.wt*⁹, *sh̄mt*¹⁰.

The name *sh̄m* was assigned to the 'looped sistrum', while the 'naos sistrum' had the term *sšst*¹¹, and this was strongly evidenced for Ramesside and later dates.

The sistrum is also represented in the priestly titles like *t3 sh̄mw*¹² (the holder of the sistrum), as

⁴ Leclant, *Ethiopie millénaire* (Catalogue), Paris 1974, no 178-180.

⁵ Wb IV, 251; P. Germont, *Sekhmet et la protection du monde*, AH 9, 1981, 261.

⁶ Wb III, 486; C D 248; Germont op. cit., 263; Gardiner, *Sinuhe*, 102-3.

⁷ Wb I, 61-1.

⁸ Wb I, 121-9.

⁹ Meir IV, pl. 7; Edfou I, 341, 6-7; Dendera VI, 154.

¹⁰ *sh̄mt n Nbt-H̄tpt*: Vandier, Rde 16, 1964, 84 D XV: 107 E XII.

¹¹ N. De G. Davies, JEA 6, 1920, 69-72.

¹² Wb V, 348; *t3 sšwt (n) H̄mt-ntr*: Erhart Graefe, *Untersuchungen zur Verwaltung und Geschichte der institution der Gottesgemahlin des Amun...I*, ÄA 37, 1981, 96.

well as the names of regions as *hwt shm* (Toponomie), the capital of the Bat province¹³.

The sistrum is of two kinds, the sistrum with the "naos" and the sistrum with the "loop or arch".

The 'naos' sistrum is definitely seen since the end of the Old Kingdom period, as the Alabaster sistrum dedicated by King Teta¹⁴, and also rare texts of the mastaba¹⁵.

Certainly the shape of the sistrum here is reflecting the *shm* sign, while in the Ptolemaic texts it is representing the *bhn*¹⁶.

During the Middle Kingdom period, this sistrum was associated with the 'Bat' sign and had its final form as a double head of Hathor-Bat¹⁷ surrounded by coils and on top of it is the *bhn* having different materials¹⁸.

The naos sistrum was in use until the Roman period with some sort of disappearance during the Amarna Period, though with its change of being made out of stone it was representing the Hathoric columns which were decorating the Holy of holies of the female goddesses.

¹³ Fischer, JARCE I, 1962, 7-23.

¹⁴ Davies, op. cit.

¹⁵ Junker, Giza X, pl. 46; Fischer, op. cit, fig. 5-6; Mohamed Saleh, Three Old Kingdom Tombs at Thebes, AV 14, 1977, pl. 17.

¹⁶ Daumas, Rde 22, 1970, 77-8.

¹⁷ Philippe Derchain, Hathor quadrifrons, Istanbul 1972, 11.

¹⁸ Davies, op. cit.

However, the arched sistrum did not appear except by the Egyptian borders¹⁹, while the first appearance of this arched sistrum in Egypt was during the 18th Dynasty but there are also some other examples which are near in shape to it dating to the Middle Kingdom²⁰.

During the New Kingdom period, the 'naos sistrum' which was preserved within the treasures of Dendera was considered the re-incarnation of the goddess Hathor²¹.

However, in later periods this instrument was used in festivals of various female goddesses²², as the connection between them and Hathor is very close. The sistrum was used in various musical and religious rituals represented on scenes and texts preserved so it was used by priests, musicians²³ and singers²⁴, as well as its use in the ancient ritual called the *sšꜥt wꜥꜥd* which was specialised with the Hathor cult and was her symbol²⁵.

¹⁹ Exemples de sistres et colonnes Hathoriques se trouvaient a Chypre et Byblos.

²⁰ Maspero, Musée Egyptien III, Le Caire 1915, pl. 35.

²¹ Daumas, op. cit.

²² Nebet Hetepet, Vandier, Rde 16-18, 1964-66, passim, Bastet (BM 38172), Sekhmet, Brunner, ZÄS 80, 1955, 5-10; Isis (Münster, Isis, 116-118), Nehemetaouy (Klebs, ZÄS 67, 1931, 60 n. 13).

²³ *ihꜥw wꜥb* (Meir IV pl. 7) and *ihꜥt* (Yoyotte, EPHE 5, 1979, 80).

²⁴ *šmꜥjt* (Yoyotte, CRAIBL, Feb. 1962, 45; Blackman, JEA 7, 1921, 8-30)

²⁵ Allam, Hathorkult, 125 ff.

The music of the sistrum also had a very important role in pleasing some male gods especially Amon who had some holy instruments within his private articles²⁶.

Some gods like *Ihy* and *Meret* were represented as simple singers with their sistrums, while the offering texts showed that these rituals occur with the participation of the pharaoh and his family or his divine mistresses.

Some texts give us the impression of the *sh^c sh^m* (raising the sistrum) which is the ritual of the erection of the Hathor column²⁷.

There are also some scenes in the tombs showing the deceased handling the sistrum from the hands of his family and showing it to his nostrils, which is a sign of eternal life and health similar to the scene of the bunch of Lotus flowers²⁸, this is a kind of immunity which gives eternity to the deceased and the sistrum is one of those important implements which is placed in the sarcophagus or an amulet placed in the tomb or carved on a stela.

In between the two faces of Hathor of the sistrums there is a short vertical line of text which reads:

'*ht Hr hry-tp w3st nbt pt hnwt ntrw nbw*'

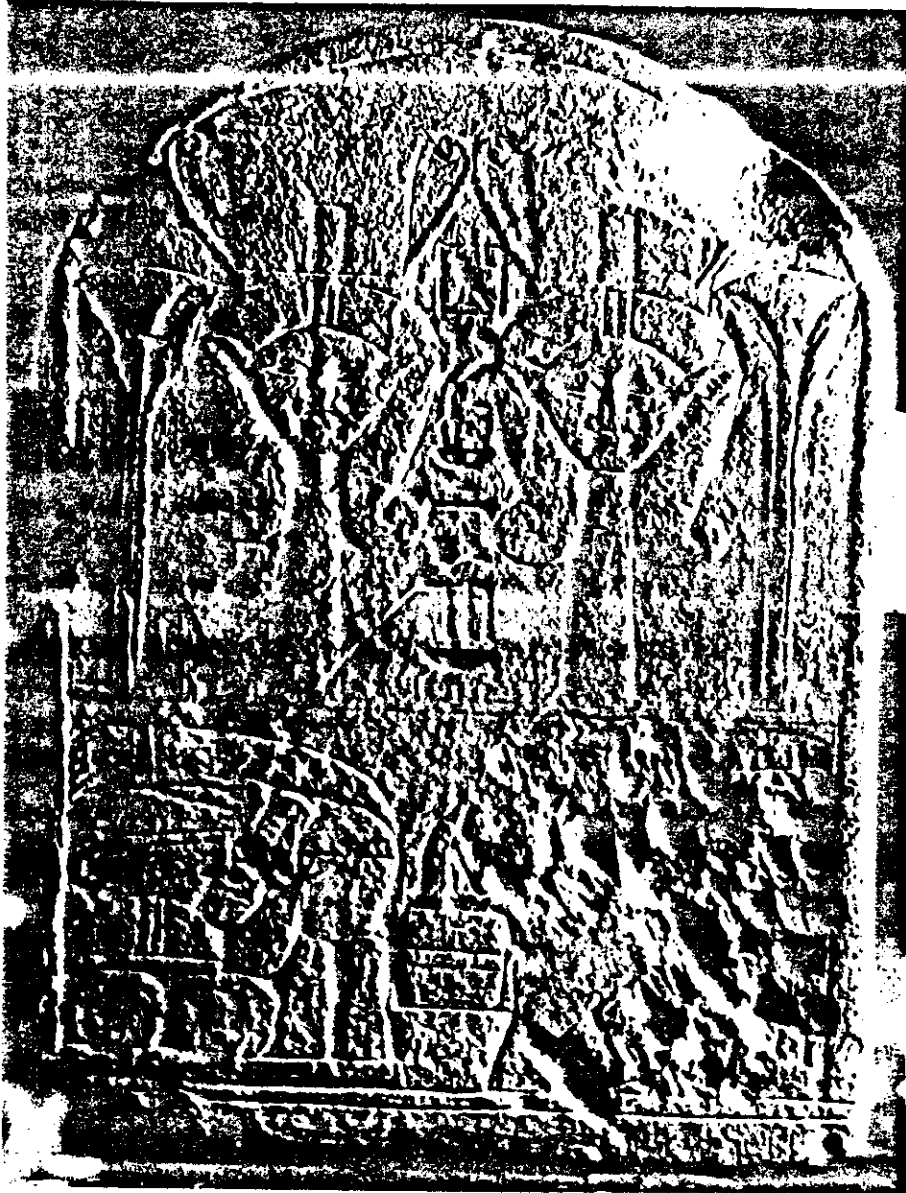
"Hathor chieftainess of Thebes, lady of heaven mistress of all gods"

Then there is a line separating the top register from the bottom one, which is showing a big table

²⁶ RÄRG. 719; Sistrum, OrAnt 15, 1976, 227-231.

²⁷ Vandier, Rde 16, 1964, 129; Yoyotte, EPHE 5, 1979-80, 194.

²⁸ Sistrum, OrAnt op. cit.



of offerings showing loafs of bread, pancakes, vegetables, onions, the head of a goose and on the side there is a pot of incense with the smoke flying out.

All these offerings are probably offered by the owner of the stela which is the destroyed section at the right hand side but through the chiselled part we could see the two hands and arms of a person raised and the remains of probably a jar is shown ?, with his head behind and he is shown in a kneeling position with probably a vertical line of hieroglyphic text behind him which would bear his name and probably his titles as well as there is a remaining single stroke at the bottom end of the chiselled text.

However, the date of this stela is obscure, but according to Davies (*An Alabaster sistrum dedicated to King Teta 69-72*) and Dr Gardiner in (*Notes on Sinuhe, pp. 101-103*), stating that the 'naos sistrum' was evidenced during the Ramesside period and later dates and both sistrums cannot well occur together, as the 'naos' replaced the 'loop', so we could suggest that this stela refers to the late Ramesside period.