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A STELE IN THE MACGREGOR COLLECTION

By ALAN H. GARDINER, D.LITT.

THE attractive little stele figured in Plate XXXVII is preserved in the fine collection of the Rev. W. MacGregor at Tamworth, like the magnificent obsidian head that forms the frontispiece to this number of the *Journal*. For permission to publish both I am indebted to the kindness of their owner, and I desire also to express my gratitude to Lord Carnarvon for the admirable photographs here reproduced, both of which are due to his skill.

The fine workmanship of the stele and the excellence of its composition would alone entitle it to attention; but in addition to these things it displays several features of unusual interest, and raises questions not very easy to answer. In the first place, what is its date? In the upper register is a shrine within which statuesque figures of Amōsis I, "*the good god Nebpehterē^c, given life,*" and his spouse, "*the wife of the god, hand of the god, Aḥmōse Nefertere, living,*" are seen seated side by side. This shrine, before which stands a table of offerings, has steps leading up to it, and is probably a substantially accurate representation of some shrine, or part of a shrine, in Western Thebes, where Amōsis I and his queen enjoyed a common worship¹. The cult of the rulers of the early Eighteenth Dynasty seems to have had great popularity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties; indeed there is hardly a Theban tomb of those dates where Aḥmōse Nefertere and her son Amenophis I are not depicted as deities. Amōsis I and other members of the same family, contemporary or anterior, sometimes accompany them, but the combination of Amōsis I and Aḥmōse Nefertere alone is very unusual, if it is not unique. We are, therefore, the less obliged to date the stele to the Nineteenth or Twentieth Dynasty, to which the mention of Aḥmōse Nefertere might at first incline us to attribute it. The figure in the lower right-hand corner does not, to my eye, resemble Nineteenth Dynasty work; and this quite apart from the fact that the kilt does not display the marks of goffering usual at that period. Perhaps we may assign the stele to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty; it is hardly likely to be earlier than the reign of Amenophis III or later than that of Haremḥab.

The inscription is easy enough to translate, but by no means as easy to understand. It is a "caption," or "explanatory legend," to the accompanying scene: "*Giving praises to the victorious king, smelling the earth before the god's wife. I give praises to*

¹ I have searched in vain for any quite similar picture. The consistency with which, in the Theban tombs, Amenophis I is represented upon his lion-throne (*e.g.* LEPSIUS, *Denkmäler*, Part III, Pl. 2, *b. c.*) is sufficient evidence that real cult-figures are often, if not always, depicted in such scenes.

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your fair faces ; may ye be gracious to me every day. So speaks the scribe Irej, justified. Have ye the sun-god, Rē^c, who knows¹ what is within the body, who discerneth the state of men's hearts, who cometh at the voice of him who cries to him, and who turneth toward him who worships him ?" This rhetorical question is composed of epithets familiar enough from the hymns to Amen-rē^c, and such like ; but in what sense is it here meant ? Clearly it must somehow provide the motive of the worshipper's act of reverence ; perhaps its tone is to be construed as that of admiration and wonder that these deified rulers should possess the omniscient and beneficent powers of the highest god of all.

The material of the stele is limestone. There are traces of white paint on the top of the canopy, and red lines between the hieroglyphs. The skin of the kneeling scribe is of the usual red colour ; his collar and dress are white. The height is 28·3 cm., the breadth 20·8 cm., the thickness 3 cm. The provenance is undoubtedly Thebes, where it was purchased in 1885.

¹ The written ending *-ti* in *rh-ti* seems to be a mistake.