

# STELEPHORUS STATUE

EGYPTIAN, 18<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTY, CA. 1400-1292 BC  
GRANITE

HEIGHT: 21,5 CM.

WIDTH: 18 CM.

DEPTH: 16 CM.

*PROVENANCE:*

*IN THE GALERIE DES SAINTS PÈRES,  
6<sup>TH</sup> ARRONDISSEMENT, PARIS,  
ON NOVEMBER 1982.*

*THEN ACQUIRED BY NORMA-JEAN AND  
BERNARD V. BOTHMER (1912-1993), ON 8  
SEPTEMBER 1984.*



This superb Egyptian 'stelophorous' statue represents a man holding a stela engraved with many hieroglyphs against his torso. Stelophorous statues appeared in Thebes at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1400-1292 BC), and their main purpose was the worship of the sun god, Re. Our statue portrays a man, only the upper part of whose body has been conserved. Of his face remain small ears and a typical beaded wig that falls to his shoulders.

His chin rests on a cubic stela, while his hands are raised, palms facing outwards. The precision and the exceptional nature of our statue culminate in the details given by the sculptor: the lines of the hands are exquisitely carved, a mark on his pelvis suggests that he was wearing a loincloth. Finally, the sculptor even went as far as to represent the folds of the skin on our man's chest.



The cube shaped between his arms has hieroglyphs on several sides. The top of the front side is decorated with the representation of a solar bark in which a figure is sitting. Above him is carved a sun



at its zenith. This part depicts Re-Horakhty, the Egyptian sun god combining Horakhty, one of the aspects of Horus that was linked to the rising sun, and Re, sun god and creator of the universe. Underneath, two columns of hieroglyphs display a hymn dedicated to the god by the deceased. To the left, we can decipher “You cross the sky”, while the right-hand column can be translated as “To adore Re when he rises/when he appears”.



The top of the cube displays hieroglyphs and two scrolls containing two names. On one side, that of King Amenhotep I, second sovereign of the 18th Dynasty, under the name by which he was crowned, Amon. On the other is carved the name of Queen Ahmose Nefertari, wife of Pharaoh Ahmose I, founder of the 18th Dynasty. Finally, the back of our sculpture is decorated with two columns of hieroglyphs. The left one states “[...] at each dawn for the ka [of...]”, probably followed by the name of the beneficiary, now gone. The right column mentions the “offering given to

Amon Re-Horakhty by the king”. The deceased thus honours and adores the sun god, hoping that he will grant him eternal peace.

This statue, with its particular iconography portraying an adoring figure before the sun, corresponds to a new kind of iconography that developed during the 18th Dynasty and is the first piece of evidence of the physical and literary representation of sun worship. Although the statue has not been conserved in its entirety, comparisons with other stelophorous sculptures from the same period enable us to imagine its original shape.



At first, stelophorous depicted simple adoring figures, usually kneeling, the arms raised and palms facing the front (Ill. 1). Over the centuries, a “material stock” was added between their arms, strengthening the sculpture’s structure. This surface expanded more and more when it started to be used as a text support. This ‘material



stock' then became a real stele, separating little by little from the adoring figure, as we can see on an example from the Egyptian museum in Berlin and an other one in the collection of the Louvre museum in Paris (Ill. 2-3).



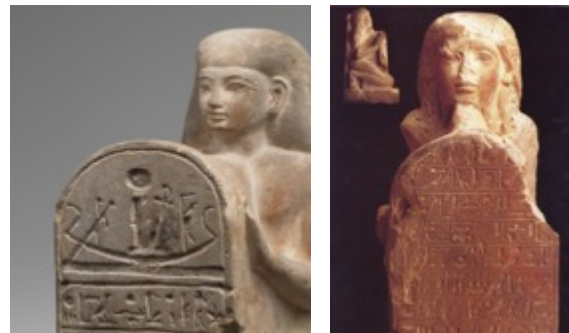
Ill. 1. Statue of Sety, Egyptian, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, limestone, H.: 33 cm. Brooklyn Museum, New York, inv. no. 37.263E.

Ill. 2. Stelophorous statue of Sa-Iset, Egyptian, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, ca. 1400 BC, limestone, H.: 30 cm. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin, inv. no. 2314.



Ill. 3. Stelophorous statue of Neferronpet, Egyptian, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, ca. 1500 BC, sandstone, H.: 39 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. A79.

The granite stelophorous statues of the same period generally comprised flat steles. From an iconographic standpoint, the hieroglyphs on our stele and the theme of worship feature in other stelophorous statues conserved in several international museums. A gorgeous example of a statue representing the solar bark is conserved at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Ill. 4). Another piece, among the collections of the Calvet museum in Avignon, has a hymn particularly similar to ours, mentioning the god Re-Horakhty in the following terms: "Adore Re-Horakhty (when) he rises over the basket maker (of Amon)" (Ill. 5).



Ill. 4. Stelophorous statue of Bay (detail), Egyptian, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, ca. 1294-1250 BC, limestone, H.: 28.1 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 66.99.94.

Ill. 5. Stelophorous statue of Houy, Egyptian, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, limestone, H.: 42.5 cm. Musée Calvet, Avignon, inv. no. A41.

The fact our sculpture is made of granite, noblest of stones, even harder to carve than limestone, shows the great skill of the sculptor. Moreover, despite the absence of the name of the beneficiary, this kind of statue was ordered by wealthy people such



as high dignitaries or the servants of the Egyptian monarchy. These two factors lead us to think that our stelophorous statue was an exceptional piece, placed in the tomb of an important figure.

Our stelophorous statue was in the collections of the Galerie des Saints Pères in the 6th arrondissement of Paris between 1982 and 1984. On 8 September 1984, it was acquired by Bertrand V. Bothmer (1912-1993), American Egyptologist and professor of Egyptology at the Institute of Arts in New York (Ill. 6).



Ill. 6. Bertrand V. Bothmer (1912-1993)

