

Three Stelae of Tiberius from Qift

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Abstract

The town of Qift Gbtyw, *KOITTOS* was the capital of the fifth upper Egyptian Nome.¹ Min was the principal god of Qift.² He was connected with Isis, Horus the child and Geb—particularly during the Greco – Roman period. The southern temple of Qift was built by Nectanebo II (gate), Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra VII and her son Caesarion (hypostyle hall). This temple was dedicated to Geb and Isis. The northern part of the southern temple was built by Tiberius Claudius for goddess Isis and her son Horus the child. Twenty five stelae were found in the site³, written in hieroglyphic and in Greek inscriptions. Latin has a minor presence compared to Greek and Demotic⁴. This paper aims to study three stelae dated to the reign of the emperor Tiberius. It also studies the depiction of Emperor Tiberius in these stelae instead of the priests of Isis at Qift. Nowadays two of them are in the Egyptian Museum CG. 9286, CG 9268 and the third one is in Leiden Museum F.1969 2-3.

Key words: Tiberius Claudius Qift, stelae.

Introduction

The Roman province of Egypt was established in 30 BC after Octavian (Emperor Augustus) defeated his rival Mark Antony, he ruled it until his death in 14 AD. His successors (the first five Roman Emperors), Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero ruled the Roman Empire since its establishment in the second half of the 1st century BC down to AD 68, when the last of the line, Nero, committed suicide.⁵ Egyptian temples continued to be built and decorated in traditional style during the first two centuries of Roman rule, just as they had been throughout the Ptolemaic period. The great Temenos and the southern temple of Qift were built for Geb and Isis and both retained Augustus's name (pl.1),⁶ as found all over the area with the thick wall portions. A massive pavement of two courses of rough cut blocks were found in various part, giving the names of Augustus and Tiberius (pl.2)⁷. Petrie suggested that the great pit at the southern side was probably the sacred lake or temple tank of pre - Ptolemaic period.

A- (.....nty hw) , (Augustus).

B- (.....birysa) , (..... Tybr), (Tiberus)

C- Germanicos Caesar.⁸


Egypt of Tiberius (*Autokrator = ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΣ Sebastos* سبيل) was great; the priests who controlled the architectural and decorative programs continued their innovation of the liturgy and theology of the old cult. Many temples and sanctuaries were built by Emperor Tiberius at Dendara, Esna, Kom Ombo, Philae, Elephantine, Debod, Dakka, Luxor, Karnak and temple of Berenike at Red Sea.⁹ Our three stelae were votive, set up in the temple and dedicated to the main gods of Qift. As a commemorative stelae, they were presented to the temple and sanctuaries by the emperor Tiberius himself as evidence of his personal devotion and loyalty and as well as his successful royal building activities at Qift. Votive stelae of the late and Greco - Roman period were often dominated by large images of the god to whom the stelae were dedicated. They contain very little text and were usually written with hieroglyphs but occasionally also in Demotic and Greek.¹⁰

A stela from the Egyptian Museum CG. 9286¹¹

It is a round-topped stela from Qift, made out of sandstone. It is 69 cm in height and 42 cm in breadth. The stela is of an Egyptian style during the Roman era. The inscriptions of the stela executed in raised relief and sunken Greek inscriptions.¹² The space in the top curve of the stela (the lunette) is decorated with winged sun disk - royal symbols of protection.¹³ The wings on each side of the disk were divided in three sections without any decoration, two uraeus hangs down; the right one is wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt and the left one is wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt.

The second section of the stela is flanked in its four sides with the heaven sign *pt* (from above), to the right and left by (*w3s*) scepter and below a ground line. On the left side of this second section the Emperor is represented in a very rough way as an Egyptian king. He is wearing the royal dress *Sndyt* and a triple *atef* crown and presenting with his both hands an offerings dish or small offerings table to the god (pl.3). Before the head of the Emperor we can read: "The king of Upper

and Lower Egypt Tiberius”,¹⁴ the king of Upper and Lower Egypt lord of thrones and Caesar *Nty – Hjw* which was known after Augustus.¹⁵ Just behind him a vertical column reads: “all protection and life is behind like (as) *R^c*. In the center of the scene is the infant Horus stands to the right wearing a helmet with sun disk and double plums, with long cloak falling behind him from his shoulders, holding in his right hand a flail and his left hand to his mouth. He is represented on a table in the form of *sm3 – t3wy* sign (union of the two lands), the leg of which is knotted round by a rope and flanked on each side by a scepter with papyrus head. The short one was put on the pedestal of Isis figure. Between the cartouches and the head of Horus is a column with word *smn*, which means 'to be established'.

Behind, the goddess Isis is seated on a throne and is wearing herb crown of sun disk between two Hothor horns with the throne – sign  *st*. Isis is suckling another infant Horus, who also wears the helmet with the sun disk and double plume. In front of the head of Isis is three vertical lines of hieroglyphs reading: “words spoken by Horus the child son of *mwt* (the mother), words spoken by Isis the nursing one”. The throne is on a platform and the work is fairly good. Beneath the scenes are two inscriptions; one of five lines dates back to 20 – 21 AD. with letters 15 – 17 mm high, well curved and referring to the great goddess Isis and her son Harpokratis. (To the honor of Tiberius Caesar *sebastos* of Isis and Harpokratis, the building which was built by Pamynos Arthothes son of Parsenos). The other two lines have letters 8 – 11 mm high, rough and irregular. It dates back to 148 – 149 AD. and it refers to the priest of “Isis the great one”.

Another stela from the Egyptian Museum CG. 9268

This rectangular slab from Qift which represents the emperor Tiberius was made of sandstone; its height and breadth are 51 cm and 35 cm respectively.¹⁶ On one curved face of our stela we can see the winged sun disk, its wings are undecorated and from each side of the sun disk hangs an uraeus. The one to the right is wearing the crown of Lower Egypt, whereas that to the left is wearing the crown of Upper Egypt. Below is a scene, framed in the top by the heaven sky *pt* and to the right and left by *w3s* scepter turned inwards. The figure of the Tiberius is advancing to the left, wearing the royal dress and the crown of Lower Egypt. His left hand holds a staff and a baton, he raises his right hand as if he is making an offering. Before him is an alter in the form of *Sh – ntr* Naus or a pylon (pl.4).¹⁷ In the center is the god Geb facing the right side, crowned with the double crown, the upper part of which is flanked by two plumes. In his right hand, he holds the *cnx* sign and in his left hand a *w3s* scepter. Behind him Nut is standing, wearing a long robe and crowned with a vase *nw*¹⁸. Like Geb, she holds *cnx* sign in her right hand and her left hand holds the *w3s* scepter. The work is rough in low relief.

As for the inscriptions of this stela, one can see in front of the emperor two blank cartouches, which seem to be offered to god Geb. Above part reads: “The king of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt lord of thrones”. Between these and the head of the god Geb two vertical hieroglyphs columns read: “words spoken by Geb,¹⁹ the prince of the gods, words spoken by Nut, the mother of the gods”. In front of the head of the god Nut are three similar columns. Below is an inscription of two lines in hieroglyphs reading “Horus name; the living Horus strong arm, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt lord of the two hands (Tiberius), (the king of Upper and Lower Egypt lord of the thrones Caesar *Sebastos* (Autokrator), he made the building for his father Geb, the prince of the gods, the great god who is upon the temple of Qift and the place of the great big gate, he made this may giving life, Parthious son of Paminos”. Below is an inscription of three lines in Greek, letters are 9 – 20 mm height, very rough style dates back to the third of July 81 A.D. and refers to the priests of Isis and Geb.

Stela from Leiden, Rifiksmuseum von Oudheden: f.1969/2.3

It is a rectangular broken block of stela dates back also to Tiberius.²⁰ The stela, which was found near the gate of Geb temple, is rounded at the top. The curve is occupied by an undecorated winged sun disk, while from each side of the disk hangs one Uraes, crowned with the sun disk. The scene was framed by the heaven sign *pt* and the *w3s* scepter in both side inwards. In the center is Geb crowned by the double crown with two plums, he holds the *w3s* scepter in his left hand and *cnx* sign in the right one, behind him stands the goddess Isis crowned by the sun disk flanked by the two horns of Hathor. She holds the *w3D* scepter and *cnx* sign in her left hand. Before them stands Tiberius (pl.5), wearing the royal dress and the red crown of Lower Egypt. In his left hand he holds the *xrp* scepter and baton. He raises his right hand as if he is making offering to the two blanked cartouches. In front of him there is an alter in the form of Naos. Between Tiberius and Geb are two blank columns and also between Geb and Isis. Below this scene, there is an inscription of two relief lines reading: “The king of Lower and Upper thrown Egypt, lord of the two lands (Tiberius Claudius), (The son of *R^c* lord of the thrown), (Caesar *nty xw* – Augustus – Germanicus Autokrator). He made his building to his father Geb, the prince of gods, the great divine god in the southern temple. May he give life like *R^c*!

Below are three and half lines of Demotic writing that read: “for Tiberius Claudius Kaisaros Augustus Germanicus Autokrator of Geb the king of gods, the great god, who likes to give life to Parthenios, son of Paminis born by his mother Tapachchois priest of Isis in the year 9, winter, the first month, twenty fifth of February 49 A.D.

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Conclusion

Successive Roman emperors after Augustus continued to adopt the Pharaonic traditions of getting represented on reliefs or stela in Egyptian dresses while carrying out the old rituals.²¹ Many stelae carried Tiberius name in Hieroglyphic and Greek writing²² (pl. 3, 4). The first stela from the Egyptian museum refers to two Horus: Horus the child of Isis and Horus— who is perhaps identified here with Min. The second and third stelae (pl.4,5) refer to the name of the southern temple of Qift in the Greco–Roman period (*Ht ntr smSt*)²³. It was written with different signs, while the second stela (pl.4) refers to the great gate of Tiberius at the temple of Geb at Qift.

The text of the eighteenth dynasty is associated with Horus son of Isis and Min of Qift: “Hail to thee, Min at his appearing, with his lofty plumes, son of Osiris, born of divine Isis.....mighty of *ipw*, thou of Koptos, Horus with up his arm,²⁴ Horus on the *sm3t3wy* appeared on another stela of Qift with his mother Isis.²⁵ The second stela from the Egyptian Museum (fig.4) proves that Geb and Nut (the gods of the ennead) were worshiped at Qift from the thirtieth dynasty down to the Greco – Roman period, where the temple of Isis and Geb was built²⁶.

The third stela of Leiden Museum (pl.5) depicts Isis with Nut, where Isis was identified with Nut and Geb identified with Osiris. The southern temple of Qift was built for Geb and Isis and the middle temple was built for Osiris who was associated with Geb (pl.1). All the three stelae bear evidence that one family of the priests of Isis and Harpokratis,²⁷ who was associated with Min was able to continue the Capital of both Gods.

The grandfather was Parsenos, the father was Pamynos Parthothes (fig.3), the son was Parthian son of Pamynos and the lady was Tapachois. One of the Tiberius’s stelae from Qift refers to the god *skr* as a falcon–headed mummified god with the goddess Isis.²⁸ The pair of falcons also identified as Horus the elder and Seth who were represented in the name of city emblem, they indicated to the old cult of the city and later they identified as Horus and Min.²⁹ The portraits of Emperor Tiberius are not as fine as the other works from his reign, especially in Upper Egypt as shown by his stela at the British Museum, his stela at the temple of Mut at Karnak (where he was offering a *sxt* sign to Mut–Isis and Khons–Neferhotep),³⁰ and his constructions at Kom Ombo.³¹

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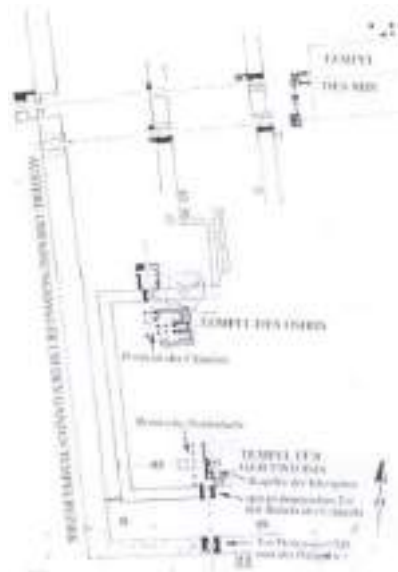
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Pl.1: The southern temple of Qift



Pl.2: Rough cut blocks with the names of Augustus and Tiberius
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Pl.3: Tiberius on stela of Egyptian Museum CG. 9286
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Pl.4: The second stela of the Egyptian Mus. CG. 9268
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Pl.5: Tiberius Claudius, Stela of Leiden, Rifksmuseum von Oudheden
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ثلاث لوحات لتبيريوس من قفط

تعتبر مدينة قفط "جبتيو" عاصمة الأقليم الخامس في مصر العليا، و منذ القدم كان الإله "مين" هو الإله الرئيسي لتلك المدينة حيث سوي بالإله حورس الطفل ابن إيزيس. لهذا كانت الإلهة إيزيس هي الإلهة الرئيسية في تلك المدينة، وقد بني المعبد الجنوبي لعبادة كلا من إيزيس وجب منذ نهاية العصر الفرعوني، وقد استمر عمله حتى العصور الرومانية. هذا وقد شيد الجزء الشمالي من المعبد الجنوبي علي يد الأمبراطور تبيريوس، حيث عثر في المنطقة علي أكثر من ٢٥ لوحة تحمل اسمه بالكتابة الهيروغليفية واليونانية وكذلك الديموطيقية، وعلي الرغم من ذلك كان تصوير الملك في تلك اللوحات بصورة خشنة وغلبيظة وأقل اهتماما مما قام به من أعمال و بناء في معابد مصر مثل أدفو، فيلة و كوم أمبو، وخاصة تلك اللوحة الجميلة التي عثر عليها في رحاب معبد الكرنك للإلهة موت - إيزيس. وتدل تلك اللوحات علي اهتمامه بالمنطقة واستمرار عبادة إيزيس بها وكذا الإشراف علي كهنوت إيزيس وحورس الطفل في قفط الي جانب الإله الكوني جب.