

THE Statuette Group of God Amun and Amenirdis I Cairo Museum (CG 42199)

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Abstract

This article is to study the Karnak statuette group CG exhibited in the Egyptian museum in Cairo. The statuette group is an innovation in the ancient Egyptian art, since it reflects an immense amount of passion and love between Amenirdis I, the God's wife of the 25th Dynasty and her spouse God Amun. This type of emotions was only represented in the Amarna art. The statuette group is inscribed by inscriptions giving names and titles of Amun and Amenirdis I that were mistranslated. The titles contributed in understanding the significance behind the statuette group.

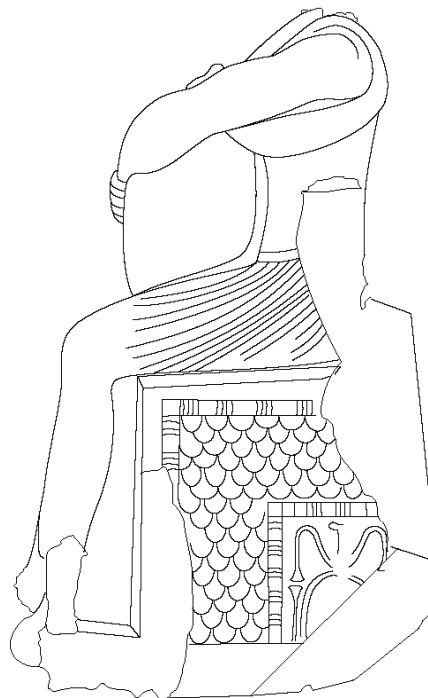
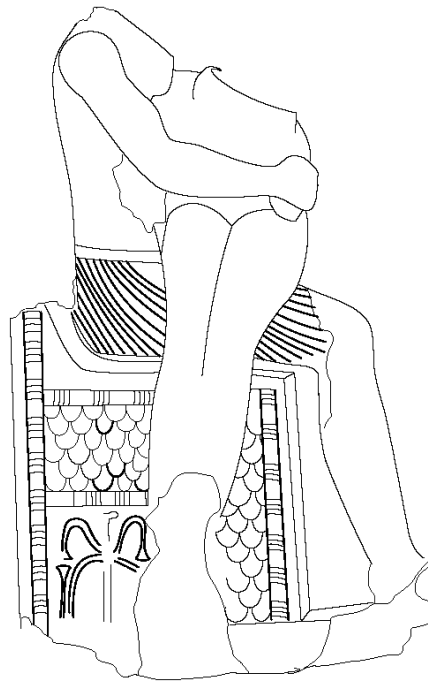
The Egyptian museum in Cairo houses a small statuette group measuring 13 cm. in height. It was bought after it has been found to the north of Karnak during the excavations of Moussa Said¹. It bears the no. (CG 42199)². Moreover, it is made out of blue faience and it is partially preserved.



Fig 1. Frontal view of the statuette group, Cairo Museum CG 42199. Photograph courtesy of the Cairo Museum and hand copy by Eman Badawy.

¹ G. LEGRAIN, *Rec. Trav.*31, (Paris, 1909), 139-142.

² G. LEGRAIN, *C.G. nos. 42192-42250, Statues et Statuettes De Rois et De Particuliers*, Tome Troisième, (Caire, 1914), 8-9.



Figs. 2&3 sides view of the statuette group Cairo Museum CG 42199. Photograph courtesy of the Cairo Museum and hand copy by Eman Badawy

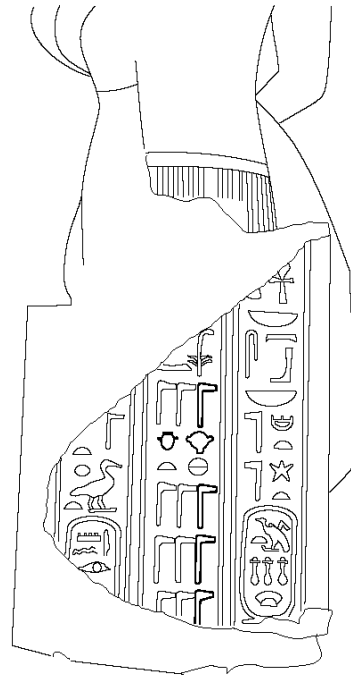


Fig 4. Back view of the statuette group, Cairo Museum CG 42199. Photograph courtesy of the Cairo Museum and hand copy by Eman Badawy.

I. Description

This faience statuette group, that is the subject of the article, represents the Divine Adoratrice, Amenirdis I seated in the lap of god Amun. They are shown in an intimate posture, in very tight embrace³.

God Amun is seated on a low back cubic throne; decorated from either side by geometrical motifs as well as by a representation of the *sm3 t3wy*; emphasizing his title as the “Lord of the Two Lands” The throne is inscribed from its front by two lines of hieroglyphic text, while from the back it is inscribed by three. Unfortunately, the text is missing in some parts as the throne is missing some of its front, side and back parts. God Amun, who is missing his head and neck, is represented wearing a collar and a pleated kilt with a central tab. The kilt is attached to his waist by a plain belt and is totally exposing his both knees. Moreover, he is missing the lower part of his legs and both feet, which were most probably resting on a foot stool missing nowadays. He is embracing, with both hands, a representation of his Divine Adoratrice Amenirdis I, who is seated sideways in his lap. His hands are clenched together just above Amenirdis’s haunch.

She is represented smaller in size when compared to god Amun. She is unfortunately missing her head, neck and the upper part of her torso. She is clad in a very tight sheath dress that clings very closely to her body, giving the impression that she is nude. This impression is further enforced by the absence of her ankles. The dress is revealing her body curves and

³ B. LESKO, ‘Women’s Monumental Mark on Ancient Egypt,’ *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 54, No.1 (1991), 14.

emphasizing her curving thighs and legs. As for the lower parts of her legs and her feet they are all missing. However, she was probably resting her feet on a higher stool that she used to climb up and sit in the lap of the god. Amenirdis I turned the upper part of her body to face the god, she appears very close as their bodies almost touch. She is tightly embracing him by passing her right hand under his armpit and onto his back to rest it on the back of his left shoulder. Only little has remained of her left forearm, which is slightly elevated on his right shoulder indicating that it was once resting on the god's neck or even towards his head to share a kiss⁴.

II. Inscriptions

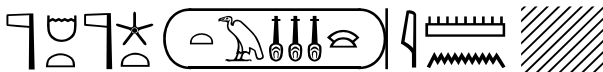
A) Front side of the cubic throne: ⁵

i) Text engraved on its right side:



hmt ntr s3t ntr (Imn-ir-di-s(t)) mry Imn
God's wife, God's daughter, Amenirdis, beloved of Amun.

ii) Text engraved on its left side:



hmt ntr dw3t ntr (h^ci - nfrw- mwt) [mry] Imn
God's wife, Divine Adorer, Khaneferumut, beloved of Amun.

B) Back side of the cubic throne:

i) Right Column:



Nb n^h [dd] nb snb hmt ntr d3t ntr (h^ci- nfrw- mwt)
All life and stability, all health to the God's wife, the Adorer, Khaneferumut.

ii) Middle Column



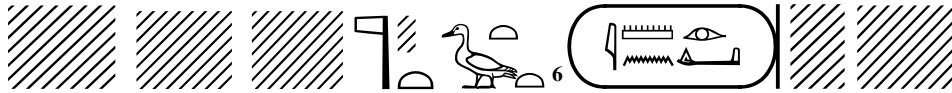
[Imn R^c] nswt ntrw hr ib psdt ntrw

⁴ LEGRAIN, *Rec. Trav.31* (1909), 139-140; LEGRAIN, *C.G. nos. 42192-42250*, 8.

⁵ K. J., WINKLEN, *Inschriften Der Spätzeit Teil III: Die 25 Dynastie* (Wiesbaden, 2009), 259-260.

[Amun Ra] king of the gods, who is in the middle of the Ennead of Gods.



iii) Left Column







[hmt] ntr s3t? (Imn-ir-di-s(t))

God's wife, daughter? Amenirdis.

III. Commentary

The statue CG 42199 in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo belongs to King's daughter *s3t nsw* Amenirdis I,⁷ the 'divine adoratrice of Amun,' ⁸ from the 25th Dynasty⁹. She was the daughter of the Kushite King Kashta and Queen Pebatjma¹⁰ and the sister of Piankhi¹¹ (747–716 B.C.)¹² (fig.5). Her name  (Imn-ir-di-s(t)) means 'Amun is the one who made her'¹³.

⁶This part of the text was mistakenly written by Le Grain as  *s3t R^c* translating it as daughter of Ra, however the sign above the *s3* is definitely a \ominus t probably a mistake made by the artist. LEGRAIN, *Rec. Trav.*31 (1909), 139.

The author believes that the artist mistakenly forgot the sign  *ntr*, thus the title should have been  *s3t ntr*, 'the divine daughter,' which is already used in the text carved on the front right side of the throne and since all the titles have been repeated in the text covering the back of the throne except for this title, therefore it makes sense that it was supposed to be  *s3t ntr*.

⁷ J. LECLANT, 'Amenirdas I,' in *LÄ I*, 196-199.

⁸This became an important political position during the Third Intermediate and the Late Periods. The title gave its owner a considerable amount of power. It was similar to the title of the "Great God's wife of Amun," of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The God's Wife of Amun was one of the most powerful women in Egypt, controlling large estates and economic resources belonging to the Temple of Amun at Thebes and playing a key cultic role at Thebes. After the New Kingdom, the office grew in power, until one God's Wife became High Priest of Amun, a position traditionally only to be occupied by men. They all shared certain features as they all placed their names inside cartouches, they acquired a prenomen just like the King upon their accession to office and they even wore a double uraeus and adopted feminine versions of the kingly titles. See, M. GITTON, J. LECLANT, 'Gottesgemahlin,' in *LÄ II*, 792-812; M. AYAD, *God's Wife, God's Servant, The God's wife of Amun (c. 740-525 B.C.)* (New York, 2009), 1.

⁹ A. DODSON, 'Twenty-Fifth Dynasty,' in D. B. Redford (ed.) *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, Vol.3* (Oxford, 2001), 392-394.





¹⁰ R. PIRELLI, *The Queens of Ancient Egypt* (Cairo, 2007), 235; M. BUNSON, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York, 2002), 32.

¹¹ E. HORNUNG, *History of Ancient Egypt, An Introduction* (New York, 1999), 133.

¹² AYAD, *God's Wife*, 12.

¹³ R.J. LEPROHON, *Writings from the Ancient World, the Great Name, Ancient Egyptian Royal Titulary* (Atlanta, 2013), 18.

When Piankhi (Piye) became King, he compelled¹⁴ the divine Adoratrice Shepenwepet I¹⁵(754-714 B.C.)¹⁶, the daughter of Osorkon III (777-749 B.C.)¹⁷, the last native ruler, to adopt Amenirdis I, his sister, as her successor¹⁸. Once installed¹⁹ as the Divine Consort of Amun (740-700 B.C.)²⁰, Amenirdis I, chose a premen or a throne name for herself upon her accession to

office, which was  (*h^ci- nfrw- mwt*)²¹ which means ‘She who Appears in the Perfection of Mut’ Amenirdis needed to emphasize her intimate relationship with Amun, so she associated herself to his divine consort Mut, stimulating their divine union. Moreover, she wanted to distant herself from her Libyan predecessor²². Amenirdis I, held several priestly titles;  *hmt ntr*, the God’s Wife,  *dw3t ntr*, the Divine Adoratrice or Adorer and  *drt ntr*, the God’s Hand²³. She is the only woman in this office known to have combined all three titles. The first two titles are commonly used throughout the New Kingdom onwards as for the third, which emphasizes its bearer’s sexual role in relation to the god, was less commonly used. It was first acquired by Ahmose- Nefertari, whose titles²⁴ were adopted by Amenirdis I, so as to be directly connected with her²⁵.

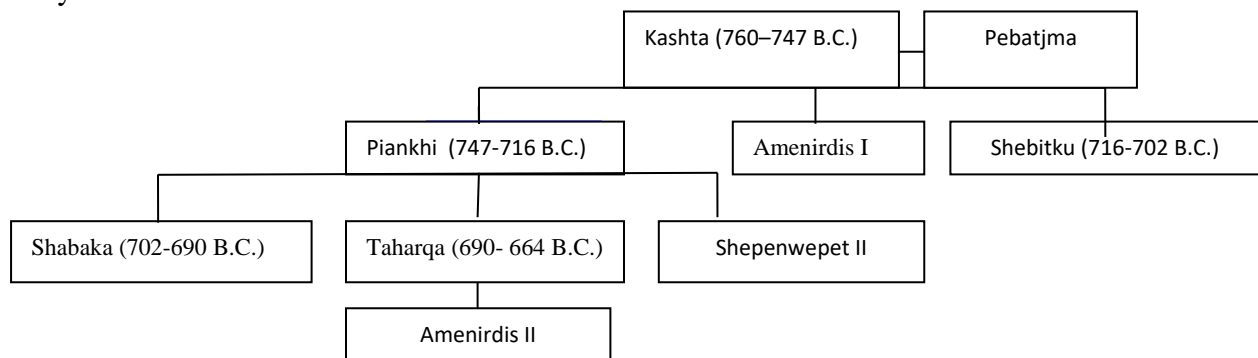


Fig. 5. family tree of Amenirdis I

Amenirdis I, who ruled jointly with Shepenupet I for 13 years²⁶, practiced royal rights in an expanded ritual role; she wore queenly crowns, enclosed her names inside cartouches²⁷ and was even closely associated with the sed-festival²⁸.

¹⁴ It has been argued that the person who arranged for the adoption of Amenirdis I by Shepenwepet I was Kashata, her father rather than Piye (Piankhi) her brother, see A. LOHWASSER, ‘Queenship in Kush: Status, Role and Ideology of Royal Women,’ *JARCE* 38 (2001), 68.

¹⁵ A. BLACKMAN, ‘On the Position of Women in the Ancient Egyptian Hierarchy,’ *JEA* 7, no.1/2, (1921), 18.

¹⁶ AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 22.

¹⁷ AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 15.

¹⁸ M. RICE, *Who’s Who in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1999), 17.

¹⁹ Unfortunately it is not certain when the installation itself took place, however a group of blocks from the temple of Mut at Karnak which probably refer to the installation of Amenirdis mention the year 5 of Piankhi. See, A. DODSON, *After Glow of Empire, Egypt from the Fall of the New Kingdom to the Saite Renaissance* (Cairo, 2012), 144. Moreover, Ayad suggested that she must have been installed between 747-735 B.C., See AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 22.

²⁰ AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 12.

²¹ LECLANT, in *LÄ I*, 197

²² AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 31.

²³ A. DODSON, ‘The Problem of Amenirdis II and the Heirs to the Office of the God’s Wife of Amun during the Twenty Six Dynasty,’ *JEA* 88 (2002), 184.

²⁴ This title is “The one who speaks and everything is done for her because of the greatness of his love for her.”

²⁵ AYAD, *God’s Wife*, 19.

²⁶ LESKO, *The Biblical Archaeologist* 54(1991), 14.

She used her position to political advantage, by establishing the power of the Nubians over the Karnak, as she inherited the territory ruled by Osorkon III²⁹. Moreover, contact with Amun, the state god, was sustained through her³⁰. Thus, the divine adoratrice established a great support for the authority of the King and made the Kushite rule in Thebes legitimate through symbolizing the ritual marriage of women in the ruling dynasty with Amun³¹. She served during the reigns of Piye³², Shebitku (716-702 B.C.)³³ and Shabaka (702-690 B.C.)³⁴. She adopted Shepenwepet II³⁵ to be her successor³⁶. She died during the reign of Taharqa³⁷ (690-664 B.C.) and was buried alongside Shepenwepet I in a tomb- chapel at Madinet Habu³⁸ (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Tomb-chapel of Amenirdis at Madinet Habu, After E., Pischikova, J. Budka & K. Griffin (eds.) *Thebes in the First Millennium B.C.* (Cambridge, 2014), 50.

²⁷ HORNUNG, *History of Ancient Egypt*, 133; BUNSON, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 153.

²⁸ AYAD, *God's Wife*, 118.

²⁹ GRIMAL, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (London, 2005), 335.

³⁰ LOHWASSER, *JARCE* 38 (2001), 69.

³¹ J. TAYLOR, 'The Third Intermediate Period (1069-664 B.C.)' in I., SHAW (ed.) *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (New York, 2003), 348.

³² J. TYLDESLEY, *The Complete Queens of Egypt, From Early Dynastic Times To The Death Of Cleopatra* (Cairo, 2006), 184.

³³ Despite the fact that for long King Shebitku was considered to be the successor of King Shabaka, yet recent studies and archaeological evidences strongly favors that king Shebitku reigned before King Shabaka. See G.P.F., BROEKMAN, 'Genealogical considerations regarding the kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty in Egypt,' *GM* 251, (2017), 13.

³⁴ AYAD, *God's Wife*, 12.

³⁵ Shepenwepet II was the daughter of Piankhi and sister of Taharqa, see J. POPE, *The double Kingdom under Taharqa, Studies in the History of Kush and Egypt, 690-664 B.C.* (Boston, 2014), 207.

³⁶ This is evident from an offering table for Shepenwepet II that contains also the cartouche of Amenirdis I, see H. HAYS 'A New Offering Table for Shepenwepet,' *JARCE* 40, (2003), fig.1, 90.

³⁷ DODSON, *JEA* 88 (2002), 182.

³⁸ It is located at the southeastern corner of the great outer wall of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III, at Madinet Habu, among a series of four chapels. It is a well preserved sandstone chapel with inscriptions giving titles held by Amenirdis I. See, M. AYAD, 'Re-Figuring The Past: The Architecture of the Funerary Chapel of Amenirdis I at Madinet Habu, a Re-Assessment,' in Z. HAWASS, P. MANUELIAN and R. HUSSIEN (eds.) *Perspectives on Ancient Egypt, Studies in Honor of Edward Brovarski, Supplement Aux Annales Du Service Des Antiquites De L'Egypte*, Cahier no. 40 (Cairo, 2010), 53-64.

She left many monuments other than her tomb-chapel; including some beautifully sculptured statues for herself. Among those is the statuette group Cairo CG 42199, which is the subject of this article. Despite its small size, yet it shows a considerable amount of details in both the anatomy of their bodies and costumes; Amun's body proportions and athletic physic are ideal and his pleated kilt is very well carved. As for Amenirdis I, her graceful body and its soft lines indicate femininity. Furthermore, their body movements make the statuette group not only appear alive, but also a perfect translation to the huge amount of passion and affection between god Amun and Amenirdis³⁹.

The statuette group is considered a masterpiece of art being a unique example for its era in particular and in the ancient Egyptian art in general. Despite the fact that there are many ceremonial embracing scenes between the kings/ queens and the gods depicted on the walls of the ancient Egyptian temples, yet they are rather formal and they don't show this intense amount of love and affection represented in the statuette⁴⁰. Moreover, the only similar example to it is the unfinished group JE 44866, which dates back to the Amarna period where king Akhenaton is shown seated on a high back throne and on his lap is a representation of a female figure⁴¹ also seated sideways in his lap and they are depicted while embracing and kissing on the lips⁴² (fig. 7). It should be added that the depiction of such representation is not attested in the ancient Egyptian history of art before the Amarna period⁴³.



Fig.7. Statuette JE 44866 showing Akhenaton kissing a female figure in his lap, Photograph courtesy of the Cairo Museum.

³⁹ LESKO, *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 54 (1991), 14.

⁴⁰ LEGRAIN, *Rec. Trav.*31 (1909), 140.

⁴¹ The statuette group is unfinished and un inscribed which makes the female figure unidentified, however hypothesis believe that she might be Kiya his secondary wife of one of his daughters. See M. EATON-KRAUSS, 'Miscellanea Amarnensia,' *Chronique d' Égypte* 56 (1981), 257-258.

⁴² M. D. WILDUNG, 'Nouveaux aspects de la femme en Egypt pharaonique. Résultats scientifiques d'une exposition,' *Bulletin De La Société Française D' Égyptologie No 102* (Mars 1985), 20.

⁴³ A. DAVID, 'A Throne for Two: Image of the Divine Couple During Akhenaten's Reign,' *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections vol. 14* (June 2017), 2.

From the religious point of view, this statuette group is emphasizing the intimate relationship between Amenirdis and Amun as his divine wife. This is evident not only from the title inscribed on the statuette $\overline{\text{Amun}} \text{ hmt ntr}$, but also from their tight intimate embrace and lap-sitting, which is in fact an indication of theogamy and the marital bond between the couple⁴⁴ emphasizing her role as his consort and assimilating herself to goddess Mut, which was earlier reflected by her throne name. This is further proved by depictions of Amenirdis I embracing the god Amun on the Eastern door jamb of the chapel of Osiris-Wennofer-in-the-Midst-of-the-Persea-Tree at the Karnak temple⁴⁵ which reflects their divine marriage⁴⁶. (Fig. 8a)

Moreover, the statuette is emphasizing another role which is the father-daughter relationship between them which is highlighted by the title $\overline{\text{Amun}} \text{ s3t ntr}$, the divine daughter⁴⁷. In this role Amenirdis is being embraced by her father god Amun, so as to legitimize herself into office and consolidate her position. Similar representations depict her successor Shepenwepet II on the lintel of the chapel of Osiris, Lord of life and on the Western door jamb of the chapel of Osiris-Wennofer-who-is-in-the-Midst-of-the-Persea-Tree while embracing Amun for this same purpose (fig.8b).⁴⁸



Fig 8 a. Amenirdis embraced by Amun,, chapel of Osiris-Wennofer-who-is-in-the -Midst-of-the-Persea-Tree, eastern jamb. After M. AYAD, *God's Wife, God's Servant, The God's wife of Amun (c. 740-525 B.C.)* (New York, 2009), 110.



Fig 8 b Shepenwepet II embraced by Amun, chapel of Osiris-Wennofer-who-is-in-the -Midst-of-the-Persea-Tree, western jamb. After M., AYAD, *God's Wife, God's Servant, The God's wife of Amun (c. 740-525 B.C.)*(New York, 2009), 110.

⁴⁴ DAVID, *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections 14* (2017), 2.

⁴⁵ It is located within the northern part of the Amun-Re complex at Karnak and it dates back to the Third Intermediate Period. See, E. PISCHIKOVA, J. BUDKA and K. GRIFFIN (eds.), *Thebes in the First Millennium B.C.* (Cambridge, 2014), 607.

⁴⁶ AYAD, *God's Wife*, 137.

⁴⁷ DAVID, *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections 14* (2017), 2.

⁴⁸ AYAD, *God's Wife*, 137.

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قسم الإرشاد السياحي - كلية السياحة والفنادق - جامعة حلوان

المخلص

معلومات المقالة

هو تمثال لابنة الملك امون-اير-ديس I، "الزوجة الإلهية لأمون" من الأسرة الخامسة والعشرين. كانت ابنة الملك النوبي كاشتا والملكة ببياتما وشقيقة الملك ببعنخي امون-اير-ديس I والتي حكمت بالاشتراك مع شبنوبت I لمدة 13 عاما كانت تمارس كثير من الحقوق الملكية من خلال دورها الديني كزوجة الإله. كانت تلبس التيجان الملكية، وتضع أسماءها داخل الخراطيش وكانت ايضا مرتبطة ارتباطاً وثيقاً باحتفال Sed. استغلت مكانتها الدينية لتأسيس قوة النوبيين وفرض سيطرتهم على الكرنك، حيث ورثت المنطقة التي يحكمها أوسركون الثالث. وعلاوة على ذلك، كان الاتصال مع أمون، إله الدولة من خلالها، وهكذا كانت الزوجة الإلهية دعماً كبيراً لسلطة الملك حيث جعلت حكم الكوشية في طيبة حكماً شرعياً من خلال زواجها للإله أمون.

تركت العديد من المعالم الأثرية إلي جانب مقصورتها الجنائزية في مدينة هابو، بما في ذلك بعض تماثيلها المنحوتة بشكل جميل، ومن بينها هذه التمثال CG 42199 وهو موضوع المقال ويعتبر من روائع الفن ومثالاً فريداً لعصره على وجه الخصوص وفي الفن المصري القديم بشكل عام. هذه المقالة عبارة عن منشور كامل للتمثال الذي لم يُنشر بالكامل منذ عام 1909. حيث يعتبر المقال دراسة دقيقة للتمثال كقطعة فنية ونشر وترجمة لنقوشه وأخيراً أهميته و المغزي الديني من وضعيته. حيث ان تمثيله بهذا الشكل يؤكد على العلاقة الحميمة بين أمون وزوجته الإلهية. علاوة على ذلك ، فهو يؤكد على دور آخر وهو العلاقة بين الأب والابنة حيث يتم تبني امون-اير-ديس I من قبل إله أمون ، وذلك بالتبعية يضيف الشرعية على منصبها الديني.

الكلمات المفتاحية

أمون – اير- ديس I، زوجة الإله ؛ الأسرة الخامسة والعشرون؛ مجموعة تمثال صغير

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