

THE METTERNICH STELA

By NORA E. SCOTT

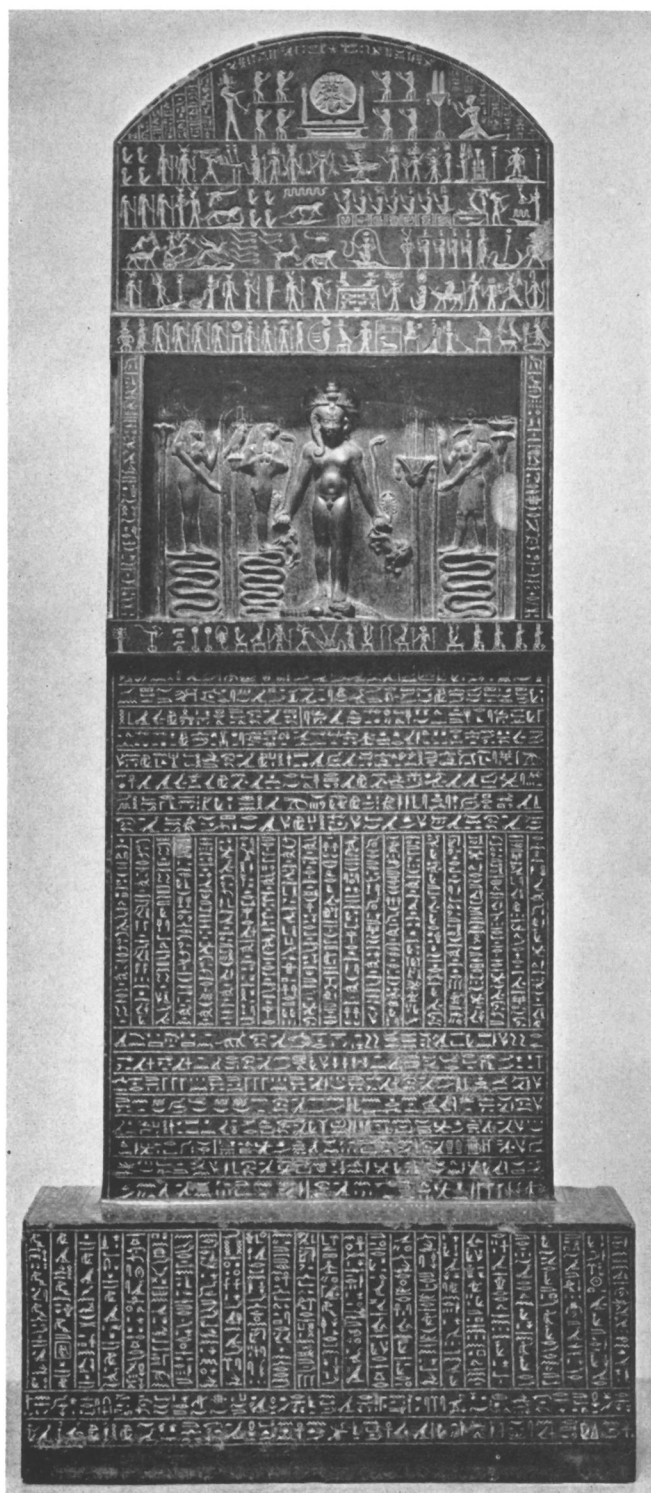
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The Metropolitan Museum has recently had the good fortune to acquire one of the outstanding Egyptian antiquities, the "Metternich Stela." Famous among scholars for over a century, this stela is little known to the general public, as it has been almost inaccessible since its discovery and the only reproductions generally available have been line drawings published in 1877 (see note on p. 217).

Its origin is told on the stela itself. One day in the reign of Nectanebo II, the last of the Pharaohs, a priest called Nesu-Atūm ("Belonging-to-[the-god-]Atūm") visited the burial place of the Mnēvis bulls, the bulls sacred to Atūm, at Heliopolis. Nesu-Atūm was a man of antiquarian tastes—a fashionable foible at the time—and apparently had the means to indulge them. He noticed certain "writings" among the

inscriptions in the necropolis which appealed to him particularly, and he gave orders to have them copied for a monument he wished to set up in honor of Mnēvis and the Pharaoh. This monument, our stela, was forthwith carved out of a fine block of dark green stone. The draughtsman who was to be entrusted with laying out the inscriptions was carefully chosen, and he and Nesu-Atūm must have had long consultations, deciding which among the texts and which illustrations must have a place on the stela and which had to be sacrificed to the limitations of space. When all was settled the best available lapidary was called in and the actual engraving began. The little pictures,

ABOVE: *The upper front of the Metternich Stela, showing registers I—V of the vignettes*



The Metternich Stela: above, the front; on the opposite page, the back. Made for the priest Nesu-Atūm about 350 B.C., in the reign of Nectanebo II. Height 33 inches. Fletcher Fund, 1950

carved in the hard stone in the most delicate sunk relief, and the hieroglyphs of the text were each engraved with the care usually reserved for small gems. Nesu-Atūm looked forward with pride to the day when his stela would at last be set up in the necropolis, with the prayer that, in return, Mnēvis would protect him and grant him a fine burial after a happy old age.

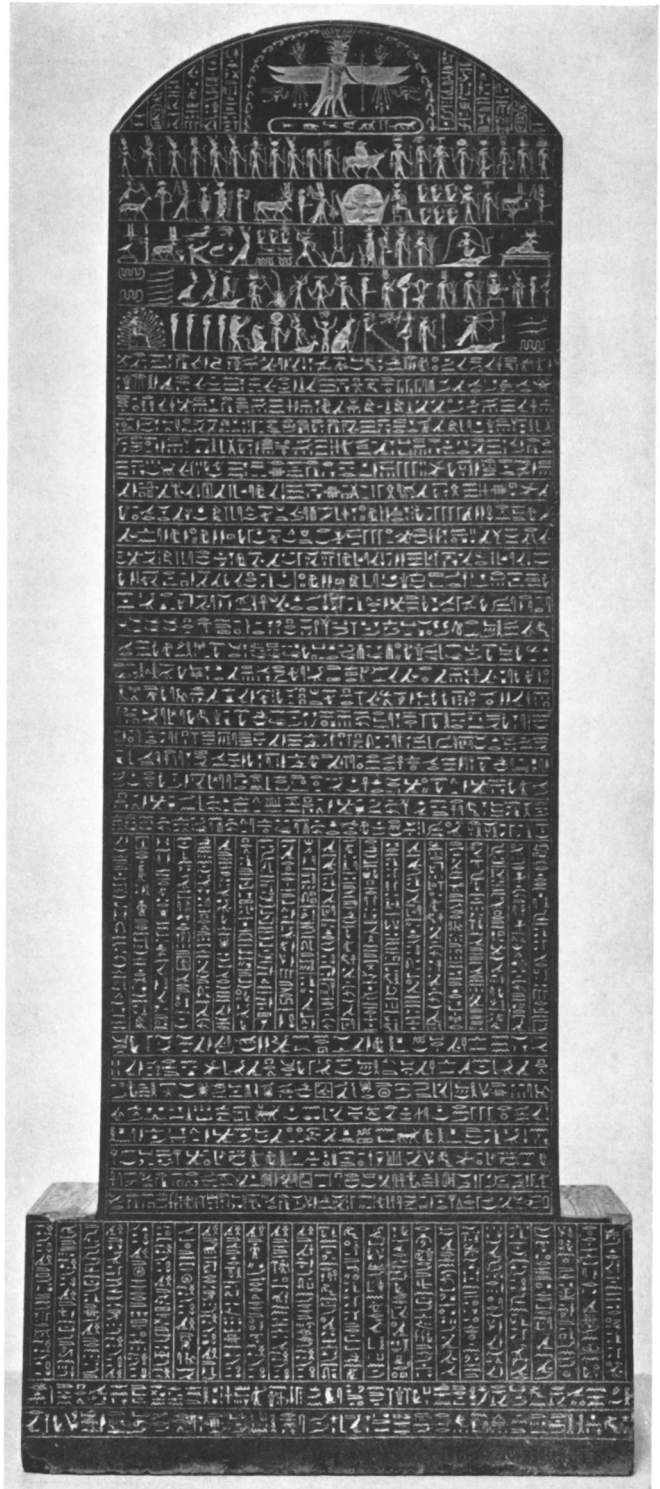
Whether or not this day ever came we cannot be certain. In a year or two the Persians were to overrun Egypt, only to be conquered in turn by Alexander the Great. In time the worship of the bulls ceased and their cemetery disappeared, but someone who admired Nesu-Atūm's stela, either there or perhaps still standing in the workshop, had taken it off to Alexandria, where it too disappeared—for over two thousand years. Then, at the beginning of last century, while a well was being dug for a Franciscan monastery, it once more came to light. In 1828 it was presented by the Khedive Mohammed Ali to the Austrian statesman by whose name it is known and was taken to Schloss Metternich at Königswarth in Bohemia, where it remained until recently.

This stela is one of the countless talismans by which the Egyptians hoped to guard against attacks by destructive animals, particularly reptiles. It belongs to the group known as "cippi of Horus" or "stelae of Horus on the crocodiles," monuments covered with texts of a magic character and pictures of combats between the gods and various malign creatures. As is usual, the front is dominated by a sculpture in high relief showing the Child Horus—"Horus the Savior"—triumphant over the powers of evil.

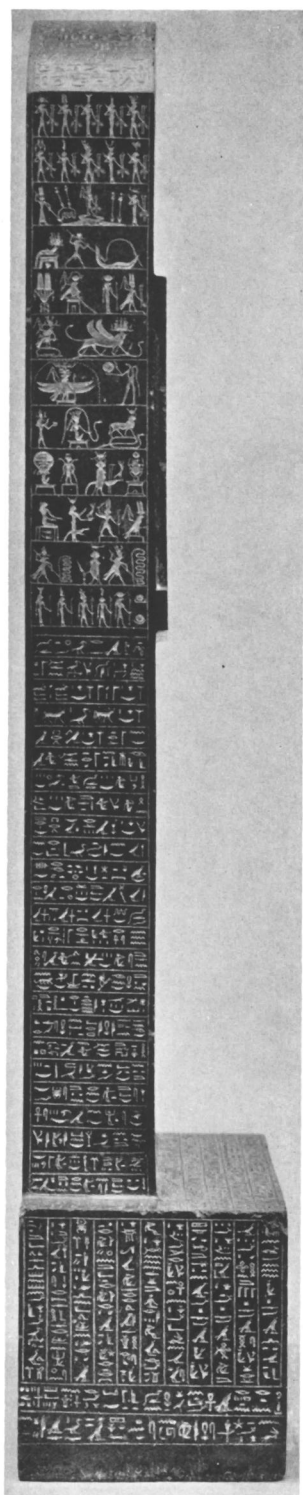
The Metternich Stela is the largest, finest, and most complete of the cippi both in texts and in illustrations, as well as being in an almost miraculous state of preservation.

Most of the cippi are of modest size and were apparently kept in the home. But two larger monuments, evidently meant to be set up in a public place, give us a clue to how they were probably all used. These are still standing in bases which have channels and basins hollowed out in their upper surfaces. Water poured over such a cippus would become imbued with its magic power, and would finally collect in the basins. This water, drunk by one suffering from an attack by a noxious beast, would cure the sufferer as Horus himself, stung by a scorpion, had been cured. It is unlikely, however, that a person who had already been attacked could have made his way to the temple; so, if the water was used *in situ*, it must have been as a prophylactic. It could also have been taken home by the faithful against a possible emergency, or given as medicine by doctors when they were called to attend a case.

There was evidently a recognized body of texts and illustrations from which the designers of these stelae could select to please their individual customers. No two cippi are exactly alike, but the favorite passages appear over and over again, in whole or in part, and the same is true of the pictures, or "vignettes." That the texts originated, or at least were codified, at different periods is obvious from the language in which they are told and the hieroglyphs with which they are written. But the idea on which they are all based goes back to the earliest times; it is first expressed



This stela, the finest example known of the "stelae of Horus on the crocodiles," is covered with pictures of gods, many of them fighting noxious beasts, and with spells against these beasts.



The left side of the stela;
opposite page, right side

in writing in the pyramid texts of the V and VI Dynasties and is to the effect that the person who is threatened can avoid his fate by pretending to be a god who has overcome the same calamity. "Tety is Horus, the little child with his finger in his mouth. Tety is the little child, he can trample on you." Two thousand years later Nesu-Atūm wrote, "It is Horus who has been stung, the innocent child, youngest of the gods." It is to be noted that in the earlier passage it was Tety, the king, who was privileged to identify himself with the gods. Now any Egyptian felt that he could command divine help when he needed it.

Although the word *magic* is usually employed to describe these stelae, it must be remembered that the ancients made no such distinction as we do between magic (*commanding* divine help) and religion (praying for such help). Many of the texts which we are considering are spells to *force* the gods to aid the person for whose benefit they were recited. When a second person made the recitation he might be a priest (we should say magician priest), one whose part was purely spiritual. But if the victim had already been attacked, the spells were more likely to have been recited—while the patient drank or was sprinkled with "holy water"—by a (magician) doctor, who probably regarded them simply as the correct professional "patter" with which to accompany the sound medical procedure they often imply.

The first register of the Metternich Stela is a sort of introduction to the rest of the monument. The disk of the sun, containing a winged figure of one of the forms of Rē, the supreme god of northern Egypt and the "Great Magician," is supported on the signs for water, earth, and air; Rē has four heads which are turned towards the north, south, east, and west. This symbol is worshiped by eight baboons and by Thōt, the messenger of Rē and god of wisdom and writing (at the left), and the reigning pharaoh, Nectanebo II (at the right). The short inscriptions praise Rē, state that "Thōt comes, equipped with magic, to exorcise poison," and give the king's prayer that Rē may keep him safe from the heat of the sun. (The king's name appears again on the upper surface of the base, in the small spaces at the sides of the stela proper.) Below, on the left and right of the main relief—the Child Horus triumphant—are two further short recitations. That on the left is uttered by the goddess Isis, "Fear not, fear not, my son Horus, I am around thee as thy protection, I keep every evil far from thee and from everyone who suffers likewise." On the right Thōt again speaks, "I have come from heaven at the command of Rē to protect thee on thy bed every day, and everyone who suffers likewise."

The longer texts begin below, under the last row of divinities. The first three are incantations against attacks by *serpents* (horizontal lines 1-8), *scorpions* (vertical lines 9-29 and horizontal 30-37), and, on the back of the stela, *crocodiles* (horizontal 38-48). Beginning with the middle of line 48, the rest of the stela and its base are entirely devoted to an account of the adventures of Isis and the

infant Horus in the Delta and their application to ordinary mortals—this being the most complete account known of the events described. As the texts had all been copied and recopied, often by draughtsmen who did not understand them, mistakes were apt to be perpetuated. The texts of the Metternich Stela are probably the least corrupt of all the known versions, but they, too, contain passages of great difficulty. The problems cannot be discussed here. The excerpts quoted below are only intended to give those to whom it is new some idea of the contents of this remarkable document, and short omissions will not be indicated.

The first three lines show that prevention was always considered better than cure. They consist in a spell for frightening away the serpent—identified with Apophis, the particular enemy of Rē^c (“this intestine of Rē^c, this winder in the body, without arms, without legs, without a body”)—by telling him that Rē^c will cut him to pieces. If the patient is stung, nevertheless, and a doctor has to be called his procedure is laid down. He must claim to be Horus himself and must repeat further spells, but at the same time he is to cut the wound, sucking and spitting out the poison: “Flow out, poison, approach, come forth on earth. It is Horus who exorcises you, he cuts you to pieces, he spits you out so that you cannot mount up on high but fall to earth. You are weak, you have no strength, you are miserable and cannot fight, you are blind and cannot see, your head is turned upside down and you cannot raise your face. You wander without being able to find your way, you grieve and cannot rejoice, you wander and cannot open your eyes—in accordance with the speech of Horus, potent of magic. This exultant poison which made the hearts of the multitude to grieve, Horus destroyed with his magic power. Those who grieved now rejoice. Arise, you who were tormented, Horus has returned you to life, he who is newly born has come forth himself and has overthrown his enemies who sting. Everyone who can see praises the son of Osiris. Turn, snake, take away your poison which is in any limb of the sufferer. Behold, the magic of Horus is too strong for you. Flow out, enemy! Back, poison!”

The next text is labeled, “Spell for exorcising [poison from] a cat.” The cat is usually identified with Bastet, but other goddesses, including Isis, sometimes assumed this form. Presumably this is the very spell which once saved one of these divine ladies from death, this time from the sting of a scorpion. And presumably the potential sufferer for whose sake it was to be recited was some four-footed member of the household—or of the temple precincts—who was thus identified with a goddess: “O Rē^c, come to your daughter, whom the scorpion has stung on a lonely road. Her cries reach heaven; harken on your way. The poison which has entered into her limbs flows through her flesh. She has used her mouth against it [*i.e.*, probably, “has sucked the wound”] but lo! the poison is in her limbs. Come then with your might, with your frightfulness, with your magnificence. Behold, it hides from you.” Rē^c replies that she



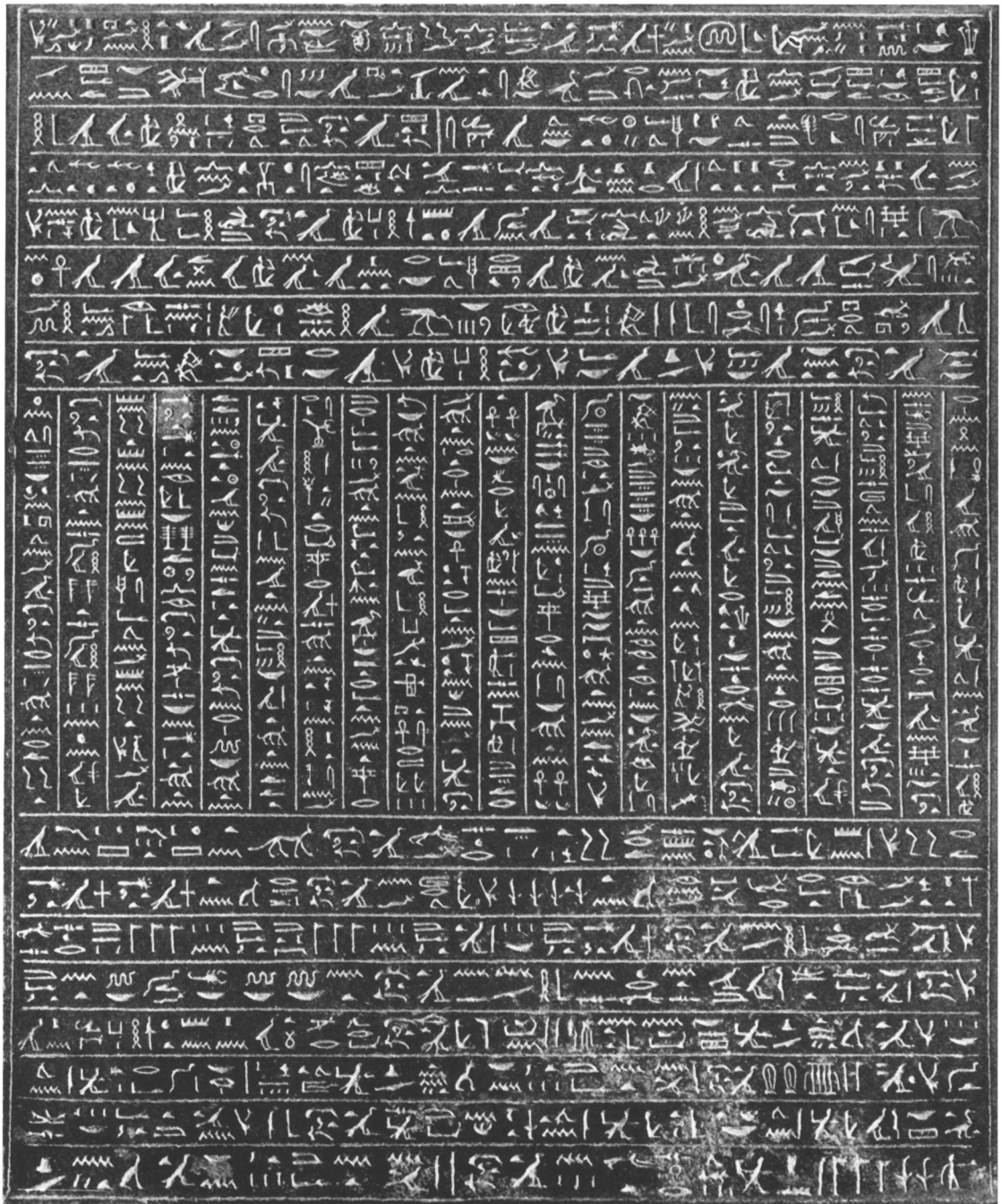
The stela is carved from a single block of stone.



Front, registers VI-VIII. Register VII: Horus the Child trampling on crocodiles and holding two serpents, two scorpions, an oryx, and a lion—all regarded as malign animals. On the left and right of Horus are Rē Horakhty, on a serpent, and two divine symbols. Over his head is the face which usually represents Bēs, the guardian of newborn infants; the two gods may perhaps also illustrate the prayer to the “Old Man Who Renews His Youth”—the setting sun who reappears in the morning as a youthful god. The two eyes above are the eyes of Horus, the sun and the moon. Isis and Thōt stand on either side, and on the standards at the extreme left and right are the vulture goddess of the south and the serpent goddess of the north.

is not to fear, as he is protecting her and will overthrow the poison. An incantation follows in which each limb of the cat is placed under the protection of a different god: “O cat, your head is the head of Rē, Lord of Both Lands, who strikes rebellious people, whose fear is throughout all lands and all the living, forever; O cat, your eyes are the eyes of the Lord of the Glorious Eye, by whose eyes the Two Lands are lighted and who brightens the face on the dark road; O cat, your nose is the nose of Thōt, twice great, Lord of Hermopolis, Governor of

the Two Lands for Rē, who gives breath to the nose of every man; O cat, your ears are the ears of the Lord of All, who hears the voice of all men who call upon justice in the entire land.” In a similar way mention is made of the cat’s mouth, neck, breast, heart, “hands,” belly, legs, ankles, “feet,” forelegs, soles, and entrails. A tourniquet is then applied, supposed to have been spun by Nephthys and woven by Isis, and inscribed with a further spell, “O evil poison which is in every limb of this sick cat, come forth on earth.” A second very short spell for a



Front, lines 1-37: an incantation against attacks by serpents (1-8), and a spell for exorcising the venom (regarded as a demon) from a cat which has been stung by a scorpion

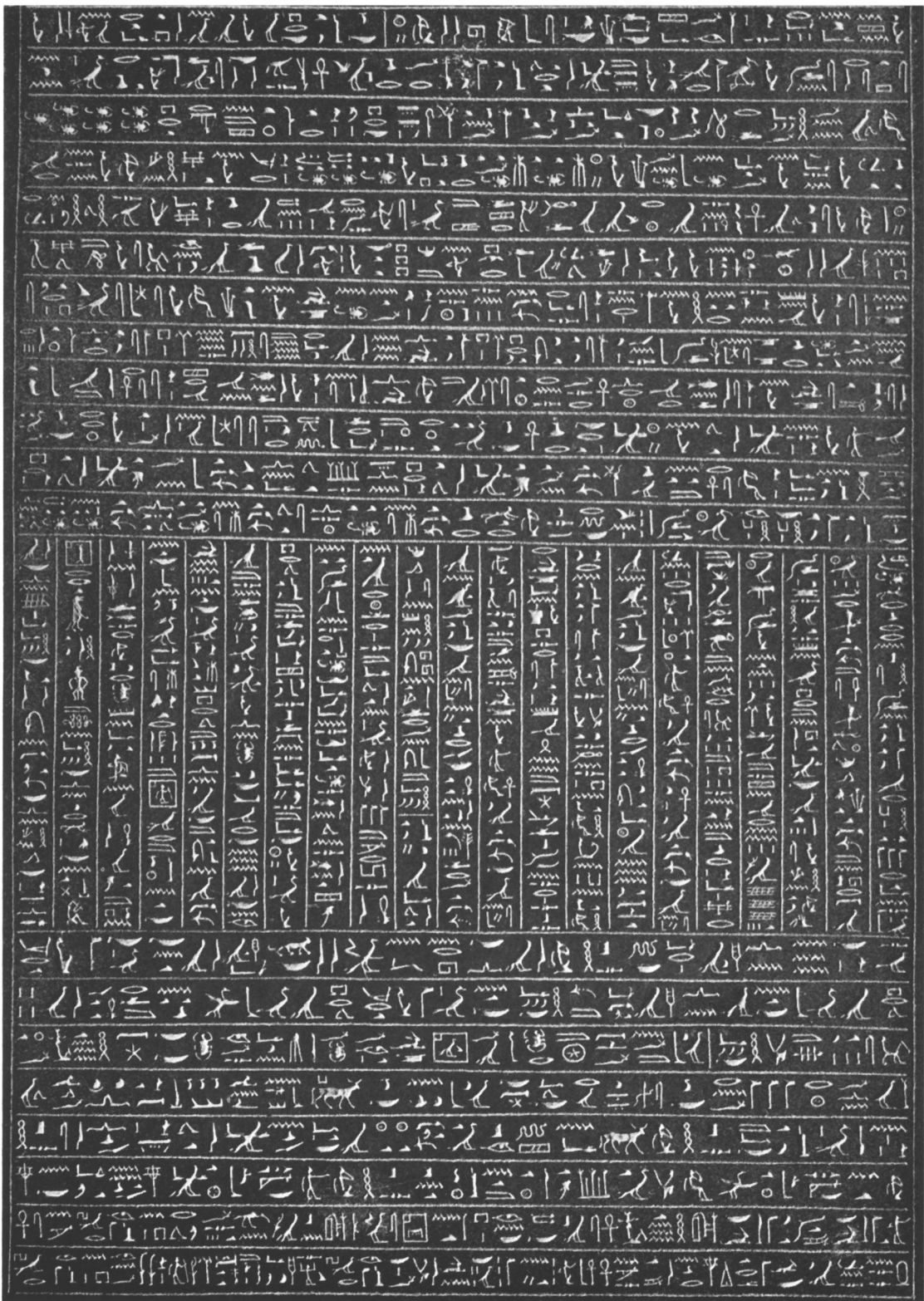
sick cat, addressed to Bastet, the cat-headed goddess, follows on the first two lines of the base.

The magician next begs the god to send Thôt to drive away the crocodile, saying that

the person who is in peril in the water is none other than Osiris himself. "Do not raise your faces, dwellers in the waters, when Osiris passes you. Close your mouths, stop up your throats.



ABOVE: Back of the stela. Registers IX-XIV: top, a pantheistic god surrounded by flames. Lines 38-48: the prayer to the "Old Man Who Renews His Youth," that he might destroy crocodiles
 OPPOSITE PAGE: Back of the stela, lines 48-88: Isis and the Woman of the Delta; Isis discovers that Horus has been stung and assures him that he will recover; hymn to Min; dedication





Left side, registers xv-xxvi: the griffin of register xx is probably the "lion of the western mountains" of the hymn to Mīn, not to be confused with "the Destroyer" of register iv.

Back, enemy, do not lift your face against him who is on the waters, because it is Osiris. O water dwellers, your mouths are closed by Rē^c, your throats are stopped up by Sakhmet, your tongues are cut out by Thōt, your eyes are blinded by Heka. May these four great gods who guard Osiris protect everyone who is on the waters and all cattle which are on the waters today." All the gods and goddesses utter a great cry, hoping to frighten away the crocodile. "Rē^c, furious, has raged over it, he has ordered you to be cut to pieces. Back, enemy! Ho! Ho!"

We now come to the adventures of Isis and Horus during their exile in the Delta. The opening passage, "The Story of Isis and the Woman of the Delta," suggests a folk tale, with its charming touches of everyday life mingled with the supernatural. The goddess describes how, having escaped from the captivity in which Sēth had been holding her since the death of her husband Osiris, she was instructed by Thōt to hide her son Horus until he was old enough to assume his father's position.

Isis started out in the evening, accompanied by seven scorpions who had been sent to protect and guide her—Tefen, Befen, Mesten, Mestetef, Petet, Thetet, and Ma^tet. The fact that she knew their names, which in themselves suggest an incantation, gave her power over them, and she ordered them most sternly to look at nothing but the road until they had reached their first halt, a city at the edge of the marshlands. After a time she began to see houses, at one of which a woman was standing; but the woman shut the door because she was frightened of the goddess's companions. This angered the scorpions, and they "took counsel about it, they put their poison all together on the spine of the scorpion Tefen. But the native [servant] opened the door for me, and I entered the house of ill omen. And Tefen slipped under the door and stung the son of the mistress." Immediately the house became filled with flames, a sign that the gods themselves were disturbed, and "heaven sent down rain upon the house of the mistress, although it was not the season for it, and although she had not opened the door for me. And her heart was very troubled, for she did not know if he would live. She filled her town with lamentation, and no one answered her cry. And my own heart was troubled for the little one because of it, how to make the innocent one live. And I called to her, saying, 'Come to me, come to me, behold, life is in my mouth. I am a daughter famous in her town for driving away reptiles with her spells, which my father taught me to know, for I am his own beloved daughter.'" (Isis and Osiris were the children of Gēb, the earth.) Isis then proceeded to massage the throat of the child, saying as she did so, "Poison of Tefen, come forth, flow on the ground, do not penetrate, do not enter in. Poison of Befen, come forth on the ground. I am Isis the goddess, Mistress of Magic, who makes

magic, glorious of speech. Every reptile who stings listens to me. . . . Isis, great of magic before the gods, has spoken, to whom Gēb has given his magic to repulse poison. Be powerless, be repulsed, retreat, flee back, poison!" She then repeats her orders to the scorpions not to raise their eyes from the road until they have reached the shelter of Chemmis, an island in the Delta and the legendary home of Horus in his infancy.

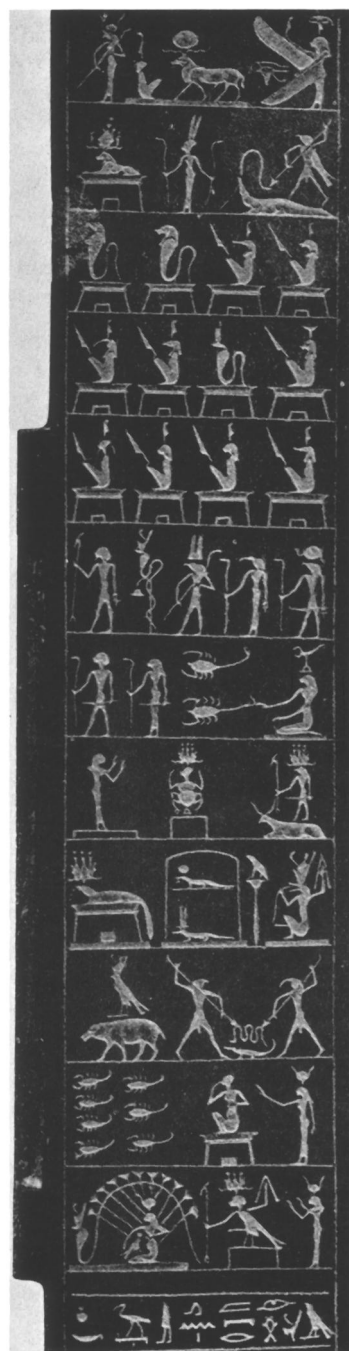
At this point an instruction to the magician interrupts the story: "Call out, 'May the child live and the poison die! As Rē^c lives, the poison dies! As Horus will be cured for his mother Isis, those who suffer will be cured likewise!'"

Then: "The fire went out, the sky was peaceful at the word of the goddess Isis. The mistress went and brought presents, she also filled the house of the maid according to the maid's desire, because she had opened the door of her house to me against the will of the mistress, who wasn't feeling well that evening. She kissed her mouth, although her son had been stung, and she brought presents to make up for not having opened the door for me." Then again, "Call out, 'May the child live and the poison die! As Horus will be cured for his mother Isis, those who suffer will be cured likewise!' It is a [poultice of] bread of spelt which drives away the poison so that it yields; it is natron and the stinging extract of garlic, which drive away the burning from the limbs."

The gods now call to Isis that her own son has been stung, and Isis rushes to his aid, assuring him that nothing evil will happen to him. She ends, "You are Horus, no poison has power over your limbs, you are the son of the magnificent god who came forth from Gēb, and the sufferer likewise," thus exorcising the poison by using the god's own name.

At this point the magician identifies himself with the god Mīn and interpolates a hymn in his honor: "He shines in heaven and sets in the underworld, he lives in the High Palace. He opens his eye, there is light; he sleeps, there is darkness. The flood is according to his command, and the gods know not his name. I am he who lightens the Two Lands, making darkness flee, who shines every day. I am the bull of the eastern mountains, the lion of the western mountains, who crosses heaven every day without being hindered. I have come at the call of the son of Isis. Behold, the bull bites the blind serpent, the poison goes from every limb of the sufferer. Come out on earth, it is not a [mortal] sufferer who has been stung, it is [Horus] who has been stung! O Mīn, Lord of Koptos, as you give breath to the sufferer, so may breath be given to you!"

The last two lines of the back were reserved for the dedication, and it is here that we find Nesu-Atūm's name, title, and ancestry—"the Priest and Leader of a Phyle, son of the Priest and Leader of a Phyle, the Scribe of the Inundation, 'Ankh-



Right side, registers xxvii-xxxviii. The two lowest registers show Isis, Horus, and the seven scorpions; Isis and Horus, protected by a serpent goddess, in the "nest of papyrus."

RIGHT: the left top of the stela, lines 89-100: Horus is stung by a scorpion while his mother is absent, and appeals to Rē^c to help him.

BELOW: the left side, lines 101-125: Thōt comes to the assistance of Horus and chants a hymn in his honor "to seal the mouth of all reptiles in heaven or earth or in the water, to save the people, to pacify the gods, to glorify Rē^c." This text is inscribed more frequently than any other on the "stelae of Horus on the crocodiles."



Psametik, son of the lady Ta-ent-Hat-nūb"—the description of his finding of the "writing," and the pious hope that Mnēvis might "lengthen his time in joy" in return for the stela. For the first time the engraver has found himself a little short of space and has had to crowd the signs.

The story of Horus is now resumed on the top and sides of the stela. "Horus was stung in the fields of Heliopolis, north of Hotep, when his mother Isis was making libation to her brother, Osiris." He cries out, and Thōt replies with a much loved hymn, which begins "Praising Horus to glorify him, to be said on water or on land. Recitation by Thōt, the savior of this god: 'Praise to the god, the son of the god! Praise to the Heir, the son of the Heir! Praise to the Bull, the son of the Bull, born of the Divine Cow! Praise to Horus, who has come forth from Osiris and was born of the goddess Isis! I have recited from your magic, I have spoken from your glorious words, I have conjured with your words which your heart has created . . . to seal the mouth of all reptiles which are in heaven or earth or in the water, to save the people, to pacify the gods, to glorify Rē^c with your prayers. Come to me quickly, quickly, today, as you did when you rowed the divine boat, repulse from me every lion of the desert, all crocodiles on the water, all mouths which sting, in their holes. Make them for me like a stone of the desert, like a potsherd in the street. Extract for me the rushing poison which is in every limb of the sufferer. . . . Behold, your name is pronounced today, 'I am Horus the Savior!' "

Thōt continues, assuring the enemies that the person in danger is a god and finally announcing that he is Horus himself. He then recites part of the ancient funerary ritual in which the body of the dead man is reconstructed limb by limb until it is complete: "You have your head, Horus; it stands fast under the *wereret*-crown! You have your eye, Horus, you are the son of Gēb, Lord of the Two Eyes," and so forth, down to the soles of his feet. "You rule the south and the north, the west and the east, you look about you like Rē^c. Repeat four times. The sufferer likewise."

Isis now takes up her story again (the whole of the base of the stela). She tells how Horus was born in a secret "nest of papyrus,"



LEFT: the right top of the stela, lines 126-137: an incantation to persuade reptiles and other desert animals that the individual in peril is a god, and finally that he is Horus himself. BELOW: the right side, lines 138-162: incantation in the form of the ancient funerary ritual by which the body of the deceased is made whole limb by limb, ending, "Repeat four times. The sufferer likewise." The person who recites identifies himself with Thôt in these four texts.

how she rejoiced, how she spent her time looking after his needs, and how one day she found him unconscious. She called out, and the peasants living near by came running, but no one knew what to do. One woman, indeed, "full of experience," realized what had happened, but she was apparently powerless to help. Isis, then, was forced to make her own diagnosis. She did this by identifying the odor of the wound, which she proceeded to open. Next, she attempted to revive the child by

shaking him, "jumping around with him like a fish on the fire, crying, 'Horus has been stung, O Rē^c, thy son has been stung, Horus the heir of your heir has been stung! The child has been stung, the beautiful, golden child, the orphan without a father! Horus, the son of Osiris, has been stung, born of the one who weeps! Horus has been stung, without sin, youngest son of the gods! Horus has been stung!'"

At last Thôt answered her appeal and came at the command of Rē^c with the supreme threat—"It will be dark, and the light will be driven away until Horus is cured for his mother Isis, and every sufferer likewise." He chants a long list of divinities who are protecting the child, ending with, "The protection of Horus is the lamentation of his mother and the cries of his brothers, and the protection of the sufferer likewise." Then addressing the child directly, "Awake, Horus, your protection is strong, may you rejoice the heart of your mother Isis! . . . I am Thôt, the eldest, the son of Rē^c, whom Atûm and the Nine Gods sent to cure Horus for his mother Isis and to cure the sufferer likewise. The poison dies, its fire is driven away because it has stung the son of the Powerful One."

Thôt then turns to the inhabitants of the Delta, saying, "'Go to your houses, Horus lives for his mother, and the sufferer likewise.' Then the goddess Isis says, 'Regard the Delta-dwellers, the nurses of Pe and Dep! They have contributed much, much, to heal the child for his mother and to heal the sufferer likewise! But let them not recognize my condition in Chemmis—a refugee who fled from her town.' Then spake Thôt to these gods; he addressed the dwellers in the Delta, 'O nurses of Pe, . . . Horus belongs to you, entrusted with





ON THESE TWO PAGES: The base, lines 167-249. Apart from the first two lines, we continue the story of the Child Horus—how he was stung by a scorpion, how his mother appealed to Rē, and how Thōt was sent to her aid. Horus recovers and Isis and Thōt thank the dwellers in the Delta for their help. Lines 167, 168: the second spell for a sick cat, addressed to Bastet

Above, the upper surface, lines 167-171. Below, the front, vertical lines 172-196 and horizontal lines 244, 247.

ON OPPOSITE PAGE: Above, left, the left side, lines 197-207, 245a, 248a. Right, the right side, lines 233-243, 246b, 249b. Below, the back, lines 208-232, 245b, 246a, 248b, 249a. For the order in which the horizontal lines are read see note, page 217.



life. I cause that the sailors [in the sun's barque] row again, for Horus lives for his mother Isis, and the sufferer lives for his mother likewise. The poison is without power, and the craftsman will be praised for his service. Re-joice, Rē^c Hor-akhty, your son Horus is endowed with life!"

The last passage leaves no room for doubt that the Delta-dwellers (a) considered the Child Horus as their peculiar property and (b) that they expected him to help them when required in return for services which they had rendered him and his mother. The stela, in fact, is exclusively concerned with the Delta. Not only does it relate a Delta myth, but the divinities mentioned in the text and shown in the vignettes are almost all particularly associated with the north and worshiped, like Mnēvis, at Heliopolis.

It is probably impossible to identify with certainty all the divinities in the vignettes, as divine symbols had become confused by this late period, the greater gods having often assimilated the characteristics of the lesser. A certain number of the cippi have a label beside each figure, but sometimes these labels contradict each other, and in any case they apply to only a small proportion of the divinities shown on the Metternich Stela. As is to be expected, Isis, Horus, and Thōt appear most frequently, and the action most often represented is a combat between a god or gods and a reptile. Not all the gods mentioned in the text appear in the vignettes, however, nor are those depicted always mentioned in the text. It is of some help in picking out the separate scenes to note that each minor figure faces the most important divinity in its own group, who in turn faces the center of the register. Otherwise, on the front of the stela, the individual figures face the center; those on the back all face right, like the hieroglyphs. The figures and texts on the sides face the front of the stela.

The lunette in front, register I, has already been described. The vignettes of register II are more characteristic of the decorations as a whole and may be described in detail. They consist of a group of deities watching Chnūm and Ta-weret killing a crocodile, a second

group surrounding a pantheistic god who tramples on two crocodiles, and Ptah Sokar Osiris, also trampling on crocodiles. The first group includes Nephthys and her sister Isis, the latter in her form as goddess of the town of Re^c-nofret in the Delta; notice her animal legs. The ram-headed Chnūm is a god who was particularly associated with the killing of monsters and is depicted a number of times on this stela. Ta-weret, the hippopotamus goddess, was a special patroness of women and children, as was Hat-Hor, the first goddess of the second group. Beside the latter stands Serket, the divine scorpion who had passed into the service of Rē^c. Thōt stands opposite Serket, and behind him is a god who may have the head of a lion, then Heka, the personification of magic, the mummiform Khepry, and Mīn, with the green plants associated with his worship growing from a shrine. Most of these divinities are holding captive serpents.

In addition, the following subjects may be noted: At the left of register IV the falcon on the back of an oryx, which appears three times on this stela, represents Horus as lord of Hebenu, a district of the Delta. Next comes the most elaborate vignette of all—Horus the Savior shooting noxious beasts from a chariot drawn by the griffin of death, "the Destroyer." Two quivers full of arrows are fastened to the chariot. Horus the Child, seated on a crocodile, seems to be encouraging the archer.

At the extreme left of register VI Bēs and Ta-weret, the guardians of infants, watch over the Child Horus of the main sculpture, immediately below. Near the right is a cat seated on a shrine. The cat is labeled on another monument, "Mūt, Mistress of Ashru," the wife of Amūn of Thebes and the great goddess of the south. If this is the cat of lines 9 following, she (Mūt) must have been regarded here as a form of Isis.

On the bottom register of the back (xiv) we find Isis and Horus in the "nest of papyrus" at Chemmis. This scene is repeated on the right side, register xxxviii, where Horus is represented as a falcon instead of a human infant. Above, register xxxvi, we see Horus the Child in a shrine, adored by his mother Isis and pro-

tected by the seven scorpions of our story.

All in all, almost a hundred divinities are represented, as well as the noxious beasts, the followers of Sêth. The venom of reptiles itself was, as we have seen, personified and addressed as a demon. We have also seen how *practical* methods of driving out this demon were advocated—cutting the wound so that the poison would flow out with the blood, sucking the wound and spitting out the poison, applying a tourniquet, a bread poultice, garlic and natron, massage, and shaking to keep the victim awake.

The recitation of the spells may also be regarded as practical: both on the part of the patient (presumably an inhabitant of the Delta), who is reminding the god of a kindness in the past for which he deserves recompense, and on the part of the physician, who doubtless hopes that the incantations—accompanied by an application of magic water—will have a “good psychological effect.” How much real philosophical content there is in these and similar texts is doubtful. Some scholars have been inclined to overemphasize the spiritual meaning of “Horus the Savior, the Orphan without Sin.” The Egyptians almost certainly regarded him as one who rescued them from material, not moral, dangers.

Nor can we know how much faith a cultivated man like Nesu-Atūm placed in these texts and pictures which he had chosen with so much care. He may have believed in them implicitly—or he may simply have felt it the “correct thing” to erect a fashionable and expensive stela in honor of his patron. But, whatever his motives, we can be grateful for the taste in selection and skill of execution which have made this the finest monument of its kind in the world today.

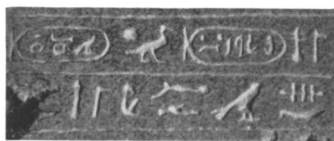
The complete texts of the stela were first published by W. Golenischeff, Die Metternichstela, a landmark in the history of Egyptology. The

line drawings mentioned above are in this publication. They are remarkably accurate, but give no idea of the quality of the original. The texts have been translated more recently by A. Moret in Revue de l'histoire des religions, 36 (1915) and François Lexa in La magie dans l'Égypte antique (1925); the vocabulary was studied afresh for the Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache (1926). Recent discussions of monuments of the same class are by George Steindorff in the Catalogue of the Egyptian Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery (1946) and Keith Seele in the Journal of Near Eastern Studies, vi, January 1947. The thanks of the author are due particularly to Professor Steindorff, who has, with the greatest generosity, made his own unpublished translation available to her; from this she has drawn freely for the above article.

The numeration of the registers of vignettes and lines of text is that of Golenischeff. In 1929, however, Étienne Drioton published the texts on a base from a statue in the Béhague Collection in Paris (Revue de l'Égypte ancienne, II). These texts correspond to Metternich Stela lines 190 to the end, and as well as giving a number of variant writings, settle the order of the last lines, hitherto uncertain. According to the Béhague fragment this should be (following line 243): 246b, 244, 245a, 245b, 246a, 248b, 249a, 249b, 247, 248a; i.e., Golenischeff read the horizontal lines from the front around, upper and lower. The Béhague fragment shows they read from the upper right side around to the back, following with the lower back and around.

The material of the Metternich Stela—a very hard, fine grained, dark gray-green stone—has been identified as graywacke by Dr. Frank F. Grout of the University of Minnesota, through the kindness of Dr. Frederick H. Pough of the American Museum of Natural History.

The stela is in the XIV Egyptian Room.



Cartouches of King Nectanebo, top of base, left and right