

**Relief of a Pharaoh Worshipping Thoth**

24.2 x 77.5 cm (9 $^{1}/_{2}$ x 30 $^{1}/_{2}$ inches)

Limestone

380-30 BC, 30th Dynasty, Late Period-Ptolemaic Period

A rectangular block of limestone carved with a detailed scene in sunken relief. The ibis-headed deity Thoth is depicted facing to the left, wearing the atef crown and headdress with corkscrew horns. The god holds the was-sceptre, representing power and dominion, in front of himself. Two hands with slightly upturned fingertips are visible on the left of the relief, facing the god. These represent a pharaoh offering the emblem of the goddess Ma'at to Thoth. Above the hands are the lower portions of two cartouches, which would have held hieroglyphic inscriptions identifying the pharaoh. Parts of the original polychrome paint survive, particularly in the red colour of the king's hands and the blue-green paint on the hieroglyphic figure of Ma'at. The detailed carving on Thoth's wig and headdress, as well as the expressive rendering of the hands, and the incorporation of the horns into the atef-crown, suggest a date in the 30th Dynasty or early Ptolemaic period.

Scenes depicting the pharaoh offering Ma'at to various gods and goddesses are represented in many Egyptian temples, gaining particular prominence by the Ptolemaic period. Ma'at was both herself a goddess and the personification of truth, balance, law, and justice. Presenting Ma'at to other deities illustrated the reciprocal relationship between the pharaoh and the gods. Thoth, god of wisdom and writing, was also the masculine counterpart of Ma'at, and often called 'Lord of Ma'at'.

**Literature:**

Robert Wright, 'Galleries: Painter of the Norditerranean', The Tatler & Bystander, 7 March 1962, p. 553.

David Aaron, IX, 2026, no. 23, pp. 89-92.