

## Stela of Taimhotep



From Saqqara or Memphis, Egypt  
Late Ptolemaic Period, 43-42 BC

### **An appeal to the god Imhotep**

This stela is perhaps one of the finest examples of private relief sculpture of the Ptolemaic period (305-20 BC). At the top of the stela Taimhotep is shown adoring a row of ancient Egyptian gods: Sokar-Osiris, Apis, Isis, Nephthys, Horus, Anubis and the symbol of the West.

It is inscribed with an unusual and interesting text. It relates that Taimhotep was born in year 9 of Ptolemy XII (73 BC) and in the ruler's year 23, while still 13 years old, she was married to Pasherentah, the high priest of Memphis. She gave birth to three daughters but no son, and they appealed to the god Imhotep for a male child. Their wish was granted, and the child, also named Imhotep, was born in year 6 of Cleopatra VII (46 BC). When he was four (42 BC), his mother died, and was buried by her husband. In the last part of this text, the deceased Taimhotep urges her husband to effectively 'eat, drink and be merry'. Some scholars have detected the influence of literary texts, though the concept is a conventional one.

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