AN UNPUBLISHED STELA IN THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM
( CAIRO JE 49637 )

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ABSTRACT
This article studies the stela of Mertanahy at the Egyptian Museum Cairo (JE 49637). The provenance of this stela is unknown. The database of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo did not provide any data about this stela. It belongs to Mertanahy, who was Sole companion and Overseer of cloth. It probably dates to the late Old Kingdom to Early First Intermediate Period, based on its style, epigraphical and orthographical study. It is worth noting that the text recorded on this stela is very common. It contains the offering formula associated with the god Anubis accompanied by the owner’s title and name, followed by the name of his son Iti, wife Qedi, and daughter Ankhenes.

KEYWORDS
JE 49637, Mertanahy, prosopography, Overseer of cloth, genealogy, late Old Kingdom, Early First Intermediate Period.

Introduction:
The stela of Mertanahy is currently preserved in the Egyptian Museum Cairo under inventory no. JE 49637. The stela is kept in the store of the Museum (R 27, N 4) among Middle Kingdom objects. Unfortunately, the museum database does not provide any information except for the dimensions and material.
DESCRIPTION

The stela is round-topped, made of limestone, and measures H. 102cm W. 53cm Th. 11cm. It is divided into two registers that comprise the scenes and texts carved in raised relief. It is in a good state of preservation, except for the pitted surface (Plate 1, Fig. 1).

FIRST REGISTER

A. Main Inscription

The main inscription consists of the offering formula in two horizontal lines of hieroglyphs which read from right to left:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[1] } & \text{htp dj nsw}^{(a)} \text{ Inpw}^{(b)} \text{ tpj dwsf}^{(c)} \text{ imy wt}^{(d)} \text{ nb t3-qsfr}^{(e)} \text{ krs} \\
\text{[2] } & \text{twef nfr m hrt-ntr}^{(f)} \text{ im3hw hr ntr-tur}^{(g)} \text{ prt-hrw t hnkt p3t nfr}^{(b)}.
\end{align*}
\]

[1] An offering that the king gives to Anubis, who is upon his mountain, who is in the place of embalming, lord of sacred land, may he be buried
[2] well in the necropolis, the revered before the great god, an invocation offering of bread, beer, and cake to him.

a. The arrangement of the $\overrightarrow{\text{htp dj nsw}}$ formula on the stela was commonly used from the Sixth Dynasty.¹

b. Inpw: Anubis was one of the most important gods invoked in the offering formula after Osiris between the Fourth Dynasty and the Eleventh Dynasty.² From the Twelfth Dynasty, Osiris became very common, while Anubis lost favour in the offering formula.³

c. tpj dwsf: ‘who is upon his mountain’⁴ is one of the most popular epithets of the god Anubis. It was first attested in the offering formulas of the Fifth Dynasty.⁵ The arrangement

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² Barta, W., Opferformel, 8, 15, 25, 38, 45.
³ Bennett, C.J.C., “Growth of the Htp-Di-Nsw Formula in the Middle Kingdom”, in: JEA 27, (1941), 80, Criteria no. 9.
⁴ LGG VII, 393.
of the epithet tpj-dw.f in this form occurred rarely during the Fifth Dynasty but became commonly used in the Sixth Dynasty.2

d. The writing of the epithet of Anubis, imy-wt, with a town determinative Ω appears from the end of the Sixth Dynasty.5

e. nb tβ dsr: ‘lord of sacred land’ is one of Anubis’s epithets, first attested in the offering formula from the Fourth Dynasty.4

f. krs.tw.f nfr m hrt-ntr: ‘may he be buried well in the necropolis’. This epithet krs.tw.f nfr was first attested from the Fourth Dynasty but was rarely used.5 While m hrt-ntr occurs during the Fifth Dynasty and continues to be use till the Herakleopolitan period.7

g. imiḥw ḫr ntr ḫτ: ‘the revered before the great god’,8 the first occurrence of this epithet is dated to the Old Kingdom,9 and it was common during the First Intermediate Period.10

4 Barta, W., Opferformel, 8 (c).
5 Barta, W., Opferformel, 9, Bitte 4 (a).
6 Barta, W., Opferformel, 16, Bitte 4 (a).
9 See: BMHT I, pls. 22, no. 63, 24, no. 53, 27, no. 81, 30- 31, no. 80, 40, no. 1480, 41, no. 86-89.
While the term ntr occurs in the offering formula from the Fourth Dynasty, it is thought to refer to Osiris or Re. Given the non-royal nature of the stela, the great god is probably Osiris.

h. The horizontal arrangement of prt hrw n.f was first attested during the Sixth Dynasty.

The invocation offering formulas are followed by preposition n + suffix pronoun 3rd person singular masculine or feminine instead of writing the name of the owner of the stela. This writing appeared in the reigns of Kings Teti and Pepi I.

**B. Scene**

The stela is divided into two registers: the first one comprises a scene representing the stela owner with his family. The four individuals are all standing facing right with their names and titles.

Mr-t³-nšlḥ wears a close-short hair revealing the ear, a broad collar, and knee-length kilt with a belt. He holds a long staff in his left hand while he grasps a šhm-scepter in his right. His left wrist has a bracelet. His son Ḫḏl with the same appearance as his father follows. Behind him stands his wife Ḫtj. Her hair is also surprisingly short and cropped. She wears a broad collar and a tight-fitting dress. She holds in her left hand a lotus flower in the direction of her nose, while her right hand hangs by her side with a lotus flower. Her

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The sign appears in this form $\bar{b}$, see: Wilson, J.A., “A Group of Sixth Dynasty Inscriptions”, in: *JNES 13*, (1954), pl. XVIII (A), figs. 3, 5 (VIII); Hassan, S., *Mastabas of Princess Hemet-Ra and Others*, Cairo, (1957), pls. XVII, XVIII, LIV, LVI (B); James, T.G.H., “The Mastaba of Khenitka called Ikhekhi”; in: *ASEM 30*, (1953), pls. XIII, XVIII.

6 The staff is common in the Old Kingdom tombs and stelae. For similar example in tombs; see: Harpur, Y., *Decoration in Egyptian tombs of the Old Kingdom: Studies in orientation and Scene content*, in *Studies in Egyptology*, London, (1987), 128-129. For similar examples of the stelae and false door; see: Leprohon, R.J., *Stelae I*, 17 (MFA 98.1031), 20 (MFA 98.1034), 23 (MFA 98.1036), 56 (MFA 04.1851), 111 (MFA 25.629); *BMHT I*, pls. III, no. 1169, VI, no. 157A, X, no. 1324, XI, no. 1282, XIV, 130, XXXIII, no. 1319A, XXXIV, no. 128, XXXVI, no. 1263, 1818, XXXVII, no. 1264, 1262, XXXVIII, no. 212.
7 The words šhm, šḥt and hṛp, all designate the same staff; see: Gardiner, A.H., *Eg.Gr.*, Oxford, (1957), Sign list (S 42), 509; For the šhm-sceptre, see: Barta, W., “Sekhem”, in *ÄA V*, Wiesbaden, (1984), col. 772-776.
8 The lotus flower at the nose of the deceased is to symbolize her resurrection or rebirth; see: Radwan, A., *The Tutu basin of Renpetnefer, in Egypt and Beyond. Essays Presented to L.H. Lesko upon his Retirement from the Wilbour Chair of Egyptology at Brown University June 2005*, (2008), 279-280.
daughter ‘nh.n-s, depicted behind her, wears an identical dress. She grasps lotus flowers in both of her hands.\(^1\)

**Inscriptions**

Three horizontal lines of hieroglyphs, including the titles and name of the owner of the stela before him, are:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[1]} & \text{ smr \(\text{wt}\)\(\text{y}\),} \\
\text{[2]} & \text{ Mr-\(t\)-\(s\)Sr} \\
\text{[3]} & \text{ hj (?).}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^1\) Sole companion and overseer of cloth (?).

\(^2\) Mertana


\(^4\) Wb. I, 278 (11); Wb. IV, 138 (11); Ward, W.A., Index of the Egyptian Administrative and Religious titles of the Middle Kingdom, Beirut, (1982), 151, no. 1299; Leprohon, R.J., “Administrative Titles in Nubia in the Middle Kingdom”, in: JAOS 133, (1993), 425, no. 10; Gardiner, A.H., AEO I, 20*.

\(^5\) This title was first attested in the Third Dynasty, and was common from the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty. It was held by viziers and high officials. At the end of the Old Kingdom, it became an honorary title, and commonly used in Upper Egyptian districts. It seems that the holders of this title carried similar tasks than the royal envoys.


\(^9\) Helck, W., Untersuchungen zu den Beamten titeln des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches, in ÄF 18, Glückstadt, (1954), 24-25.

\(^10\) Fischer, H.G., "Two Old Kingdom Inscriptions Restored", in: JEA 65, (1979), 44.
carrying over his shoulder an object shaped 𓊏. The title could be translated ‘overseer of cloth’, or ‘overseer of linen’. Bearers of this title were responsible for the royal dressing room.

The caption above the head of the son reads:

[1] 

[1] Kdj
[1] Qedi

In front of Ity’s face there is a short line of hieroglyphs with her name and titles:

[1] ḥkrt nswt wꜣt₂t, Itj

k. ḥkrt nswt wꜣt₂t: it is one of the honorary titles of priestesses and ladies of high ranking officials, often married to priests or royal court officials. The title ḥkrt nswt wꜣt₂t was first attested from the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty, although it rarely appeared, in the offering formulas from the Late Old Kingdom while it was used commonly in the Herakleopolitan Period. The title could be translated into ‘lady in waiting of the first

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1 Steindorff, G., Das Grab des Ti, in Veröffentlichungen der Ernst von Sieglin Expedition in Ägypten 2, Leipzig, (1913), Taf. 115.
3 Urk I, 146 (13) (= Davies, N. de G., The Rock Tombs of Deir El Gebrāwī I, London, (1902), 16); Junker, H., Giza II, 165 (1-2), fig. 18; El-Khouli, A., The Old Kingdom Tombs of el-Hammamiya. With many Contributions, in The Australian Center for Egyptology Reports 2, Sydney, (1990), 29, no. 16, pl. 57; Gardiner, A.H., “Two hieroglyphic signs and the egyptian words for “Alabaster” and “Linen” etc.”, in: BIFAO 30, (1931), 174, fig. 4; Fischer, H.G., Varia Nova, 216-217, fig. 26 (a); Ward, W.A., Index, 46, no. 360.
5 The personal name Qdi appeared from the beginning of the Old Kingdom and continued to be used down to the New Kingdom, see: PN II, 320, no. 27; Scheele-Schweitzer, K., Die Personennamen des Alten Reiches: Altägyptische Onomastik unter Lexikographischen und sozio-kulturellen Aspekten, in Philippika 28, Wiesbaden, (2014), 691, no. 3410.
6 The personal name Iti appeared from the beginning of the Old Kingdom and continued to be used down to the Middle Kingdom, see: PN I, 50, 5; Scheele-Schweitzer, K., Personennamen, 272, no. 548.
8 Junker, H., Giza II, figs. 7-10; Reisner, G.A., Giza I, Cambridge, (1942), fig. 258.
rank,’, ‘sole lady in waiting of the king’,\(^1\) or ‘sole ornamented of the king’.\(^2\) According to Hassan, the title could be translated into ‘sole concubine of the king’.\(^3\)

The caption above the head of his daughter reads:

\[ 1 \]
\[ 2 \]

[1] \(^7\)nh-ns.

[1] Ankhenes.\(^4\)

SECOND REGISTER

The second register presents a scene with three standing figures\(^1\) of \(Mr-t\)-\(3\)-\(n\)\(3\)hj, facing right. They are identical, each wearing a broad collar and a knee-length kilt. They hold a long staff in their left hand, while grasping a \(slm\)-scepter in the right. They wear short wigs, lacking inner details, and uncovering the ears. The third male wears a beard, while the first and second are without. The figures show brown pigment on their face, torso, arms, and legs, while the broad collar shows yellow pigment. Their names are written in two lines in front of their face:

\[ 1 \]
\[ 2 \]

[1] \(Mr-t\)-\(3\)-\(n\)\(3\)-
[2] \(hj(?)\).

[1] Mertana
[2] \(hy(?)\).

1. The owner of the stela is depicted three times on the second register. This uncommon feature could be explained:

1. The three figures represent the different life stages of the stela owner, or it may represent the owner and two statues of him.
2. The number three indicates plurality in ancient Egypt.\(^1\) It could also refer to the immortality of the owner of the stela.

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\(^1\) Jones, D., \(Index\), Vol. I, 795-796 [No. 2900]; Nord, D., “\(\frac{\text{\(\text{\(\text{\(\ implicitly \)}}\)}}{\text{\(\text{\(\text{\(\text{\)}}\)}}\)}\), \(hkrt-nswt\) = “king’s concubine?”, \(Serapis\) 2, 1470, 12.

\(^2\) Troy, L., Patterns of Queenship in ancient Egyptian myth and history, in \(Boreas\) 14, Uppsala, (1986), 186 (81/18).

\(^3\) Hassan, S., \(Giza\) II, Cairo, 1936, 204 [No. 2].

\(^4\) The personal name \(^7\)nh.s-\(nj\) was used from the beginning of the Old Kingdom and continued to be used into the Middle Kingdom, see: \(PN\) I, 67, no. 22; This name could be read \(^7\)nh.n-s, see: Scheele-Schweitzer, K., \(Personennamen\), 300, no. 723.
Depicting the stela's owner twice\(^2\) was a common feature at Naga-ed-Dér and other sites in the Late Old Kingdom and the Early First Intermediate Period.\(^3\) However, an individual appearing three times on a stela is rarely depicted. It could represent the different ages of the owner as shown beard and wig of the third figure in the second register.

**PALAEOGRAPHICAL REMARKS**

1. The sign \(\text{(R4)}\) in the word \(\text{htp}\) was commonly used during the Sixth Dynasty.\(^4\)

2. The occurrence of Anubis name \(\text{qrs} (\text{G43})\) in the phonetic writing without the sign \(\text{(G17)}\) and determinative god from the end of the Sixth Dynasty.\(^5\)

3. The head \(\text{Htp} (\text{D1})\) in the word \(\text{tpj}\) had the beard, as seen during the Sixth Dynasty.\(^6\)

4. The sign \(\text{T19}\) of the \(\text{krs}\) has one projection at the bottom, as commonly used during the Old Kingdom.\(^7\)

5. The title \(\text{Htp}\) written without a god determinative \(\text{(A40)}\) was first attested during the reign of King Pepi II.\(^8\)

6. The following signs, \(\text{(G43)}\), \(\text{(G17)}\) and \(\text{(G1)}\) are written without extending the line of the legs. This starts appearing from the Sixth Dynasty\(^9\) until the Eleventh Dynasty.\(^10\)

**GENEALOGY**

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9. For examples, see: Simpson, W.K., Mastabas of Qur and Idu, figs. 20-21, 23.
The stela provides the genealogy of its owner and his family. Although the name Mertanahy of the stela owner is uncommon, his family members bore common names in use during the Late Old Kingdom and Early First Intermediate Period.

The genealogical table of the family of Mr-tA-nAhj contains:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mr-tA-nAhj} & \quad \text{(Father)} = \quad \text{Itj} \quad \text{(wife)} \\
\text{Kdj} & \quad \text{(daughter)} \\
\text{Rh-nxs} & \quad \text{(son)}
\end{align*}
\]

DATE

The offering formula, style and the personal names date the stela to the Late Old Kingdom or Early First Intermediate Period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. L. Azzam, for drawing my attention to this stela. I am also very grateful to Ms. Eman E. Ali for the facsimile of the stela.
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- ————, “Two Old Kingdom Inscriptions Restored”, in: *JEa* 65, (1979), 42-44.
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Pl. 1 Stela in the Egyptian Museum Cairo (JE 49637)
Fig. 1 Stela in the Egyptian Museum Cairo (JE 49637); © Facsimile by Eman E. Ali