MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 114 (2015), p. 447-454

Noha Shalaby

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An Offering Table of a Prophet of Onuris from Abydos Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7)

NOHA SHALABY*

This article studies an unpublished inscribed offering table displayed at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (fig. 1-3).[1] Carrying at present time the number TR 23/1/15/7, the origin of the offering table remained unknown for many decades due to the disappearance of its JE number. The latter is now confirmed to be the Abydene offering table JE 41438 discovered by John Garstang more than one century ago. The offering table belongs to Djedbastetioufankh who was a third prophet of Onuris, presumably in the temple of this god at Thinis. It most probably dates to the late 25th-early 26th Dynasty based mainly on some epigraphical and orthographical details. Although its text is quite common, containing the offering formula adressed to Osiris (left) and to Wepwawet (right) followed by the title and the name of the owner and that of his father Hor, it preserves one of few occurrences of the name Djedbastetioufankh from Abydos.[2]

Origin

The Egyptian Museum Special Register (Nr. 11106) lacks the information as regards the provenance and date of discovery of TR 23/1/15/7, however, other details (i.e. dimensions, description, material, and owner's name and title) are identical with those of the offering table

* I am greatly indebted to Prof. Anthony Leahy for his valuable remarks and precious in formation.

1 The offering table is kept in the ground floor of the Museum (R 18, N 1) among New Kingdom objects.

2 For the Abydene examples of the name Djedbastetioufankh (including the offering table JE 41438 [as father of Hor]), see A. Leahy, "Text and Image in Funerary Identity at Abydos in the Early Seventh Century BC", in G. Burkard, F. Junge, A. Verbovsek (ed.), *ImagAeg* 3, 2011, p. 70.

BIFAO 114 (2015), p. 447-454 Noha Shalaby
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JE 41438, which could not have been located in the museum.[3] Fortunately, the archives of the Garstang Museum of Archaeology, University of Liverpool, keep photographs of the offering table JE 41438 confirming its identification with TR 23/1/15/7. The photographs (fig. 2, 4)[4] were taken at the time of its discovery during Garstang's excavations at Abydos in 1909, which covered a wide area in the North Cemetery as well as an eastern extension to the Middle Cemetery; however, the specific location of the discovery remains uncertain.[5]

Description

It is a sandstone rectangular offering table taking the standard shape of the *ḥtp*-sign, sculpted as one with a shaft to be sunk in the ground (fig. 5). It measures 59 cm in width, 61 cm in depth (including the small square protuberance measuring 11 cm), and 46 cm in height.

The large sign  is carved on the offering table as a reed mat with a bread loaf. On each side over the *ḥtp*-sign are two large *ḥs*-vases, from which water flows to the outside through the spout. The food offerings are arranged in three levels. The bottom shows six centered and decorated round loaves of bread. The middle displays a calf head, an animal's heart, a pomegranate, meat chops, and a cucumber. The top level shows an animal's leg.

The offering table is almost intact. However, it was in a better state of preservation upon discovery (fig. 2) with only a surface damage of the bottom right-hand corner, which should have included a round loaf of bread, part of the libation vase, part of the reed mat and end of the right proscyneme, as well as some slight scratches, which did not affect the clarity of the inscriptions. The present state (fig. 1) shows the surface being much eroded with both the top right-hand corner and the bottom left-hand corner lacking part of the inscriptions.

Texts

There are two proscynemes running along the borders of the offering table except for the base.[6]

3 The possibility that TR 23/1/15/7 and JE 41438 could refer to the same offering table was already noted, cf. http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/3cairo.pdf, p. 868 (V. 67A).

4 I express my gratitude to Dr. Steven Snape, Director of the Garstang Museum of Archaeology, for sending and authorizing the publication of the two photographs (respectively A. 400 and A. 398).

5 I was informed by Dr. Steven Snape that "900.A'09" is written in pencil on the back of the photographs of JE 41438, which could indicate the exact provenance of the offering table, yet the entry for this unlocated tomb in Garstang's excavations notebook for 1909 mentions another offering table.

6 The signs now disappeared or in a bad state of preservation, drawn after the archival photo A. 400 (fig. 2), are rendered in dotted lines in the facsimile (fig. 3).

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Right



Ḥtp[a]*-dỉ-nswt (n) Wp-wɜwt*[b] *nb tɜ-ḏsr nṯr-ʿɜ nb{t} ɔbḏw, dỉ=f pr(t)-ḫrw t ḥnḳt kɜw ɜpdw*[c] *ỉrp ỉrtt (n) Wsỉr ḥm-nṯr 3-nw Ỉn-ḥrt*[d]*, Ḏd-Bɜstt-ỉw.f-ʿnḫ*[e] *sɜ [Ḥr, mɜʿ-ḫrw].*

A boon which the king gives (to) Wepwawet, lord of the sacred land, the great god, lord of Abydos, may he give invocation offerings (consisting of) bread, beer, oxen, fowl, wine, milk (to) the Osiris, the third prophet of Onuris, Djedbastetioufankh, son of [Hor, justified].

a. The unusual omission of the medial  is attested in the 26th Dynasty inscriptions, see P. Der Manuelian, *Living in the Past. Studies in Archaism of the Egyptian Twenty-Sixth Dynasty*, New York, 1994, p. 390.

b. Wepwawet had a sacred area was specifically established for his cult since the 13th Dynasty in the North Cemetery at Abydos for his role in the local traditional rites connected with Osiris, see A. Leahy, "A Protective Measure at Abydos in the Thirteenth Dynasty", *JEA* 75, 1989, p. 54; M.-A. Pouls Wegner, "Wepwawet in Context: Reconsideration of the Jackal Deity and Its Role in the Spatial Organization of the North Abydos Landscape", *JARCE* 43, 2007, p. 147.

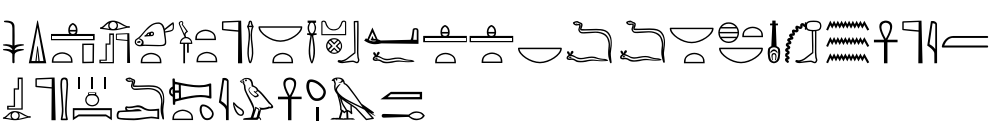
c. The arrangement  (or without the 3 final strokes) was rather common in the 25th-26th Dynasties, for Abydene examples, see H. De Meulenaere, "Trois vizirs", *CdE* 33, no. 66, 1958, p. 197-198, fig. 15 (stela BM 1333); P. Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, *ÄF* 25, 1973, p. 269, pl. 31, fig. 113 (stela JE 6303); R.J. Leprohon, *Stelae* II. *The New Kingdom to the Coptic Period*, *CAA*, 1991, p. 3,32 (MFA 72.4278); A. Leahy, "Kushites at Abydos: The Royal Family and Beyond", in E. Pischikova, J. Budka, K. Griffin (ed.), *Thebes in the First Millenium BC*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 82, fig. 3-6 (Columbia X.3). The group  currently missing is clearly shown in the archival photo (fig. 2).

d. Priests of Onuris in the Abydos-Thinis region during the 25th-26th Dynasties are known through a few stelae: i.e. TR 18/2/25/2 (*ḥm-nṯr 3-nw Ỉn-ḥrt* [the same title as that of Djedbastetioufankh] held by Nespernoub, owner's maternal grandfather), see A. Mariette, *Catalogue général des monuments d'Abydos*, Paris, 1880, p. 480-481, no. 1276; P. Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 282-283; Liverpool M. 13916 (*ḥm-nṯr 2-nw Ỉn-ḥrt*), see A. Leahy, "Dating Stelae of the Libyan Period from Abydos", in G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée, O.E. Kaper (ed.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties. Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, Leiden, 2009, p. 430, fig. 9; BM 1333 (*ḥm-nṯr Ỉn-ḥrt*), see H. De Meulenaere, *CdE* 33, no. 66, 1958, p. 197-198, fig. 15; (*ỉt-nṯr Ỉn-ḥrt*), see A. Mariette, *op. cit.*, p. 471, no. 1243.

e. The private name *Ḏd-Bɜstt-ỉw.f-ʿnḫ* appeared in the 22nd Dynasty and continued down to the Ptolemaic era, cf. *PN* I, p. 410, nº 8.

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Left



Ḥtp-dỉ-nswt (n) Wsỉr[f] *ḫnty-Ỉmntt*[g] *nṯr-ʿ3 nb{t} ʒbḏw dỉ.f ḥtpw nb(w) ḏf3w nb{t}*[h] *ḫt nb(t) nfr(t) wʿb(t) ʿnḫ nṯr ỉm Wsỉr ḥm-nṯr 3-nw (Ỉn)-ḫrt*[i] *Ḏd-B3stt-ỉw.f-ʿnḫ s3 Ḥr, mɜʿ-ḫrw.*

A boon which the king gives (to) Osiris, foremost of the west, the great god, lord of Abydos, that he may give all offerings and all provisions, and every good and pure thing of which the god lives, the Osiris, the third prophet of (On)uris, Djedbastetioufankh, son of Hor, justified.

f. The orthography  was introduced in the private inscriptions during the 25th Dynasty (*c.* 740-730 BC) and continued to be used down to the Ptolemaic era, see A. Leahy, "The Name of Osiris Written ", *SAK* 7, 1979, p. 141-153; D.A. Aston, J.H. Taylor, "The Family of Takeloth III and the 'Theban' Twenty-Third Dynasty", in A. Leahy (ed.), *Libya and Egypt c. 1300-750 BC*, London, 1990, p. 149 (as 720 BC).

g. For parallels of the short orthography of *ḫnty-Ỉmntt* (without the determinative ), cf. R.J. Leprohon, *op. cit.*, p. 3, 186 (MFA 1980.166; 25th-26th Dynasty); K. Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit* III*: Die 25. Dynastie*, Wiesbaden, 2009, p. 499-500 (CG 23103; 25th Dynasty). For an Abydene parallel, see P. Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 298-299, pl. 42, fig. 153 (Cairo TR 28/10/24/5; 26th Dynasty).

h. The sequence *ḥtpw nbw ḏf3w nbw* only started to be included in the offering formula from the 25th Dynasty, see e.g. P. Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 187-188, pl. 1-2, fig. 4, 7. At Abydos, it was attested as the first gift in the late 25th-early 26th Dynasty, see P. Munro, *op. cit.*, p. 262, pl. 27, fig. 97 (Bologna 1939), p. 276, pl. 34, fig. 123 (Cairo TR 29/10/24/1); K. Jansen-Winkeln, *op. cit.*, p. 397 (Chicago OIM 5740-50).

i. The name of the god *Ỉn-ḫrt* is peculiarly written without . It was either forgotten (because of its closeness to the ?), or the *nw*-jar was employed to serve both signs (*nw* and *ỉn*).

The owner of the offering table Djedbastetioufankh, son of Hor, lived in the Abydos-Thinis region, which is strongly emphasized by several indices: 1. The two gods invocated in the offering formula (Osiris and Wepwawet) are the deities of the necropolis of Abydos. 2. The latter site is referred to in the divine epithet *nb{t} ʒbḏw*. 3. Djedbastetioufankh worked as the third prophet of Onuris, the local god of Thinis, presumably at his temple there.[7] After death, he was most probably buried in Abydos.[8]

7 A temple was built for the cult of Onuris in Thinis by the late Old Kingdom and continued to function until the Ptolemaic era, see E. Brovarski, *LÄ* VI, 1986, col. 476-481, *s. v.* "Thinis".

8 Abydos was a burial place for the priests of Onuris, E. Brovarski, *LÄ* VI, col. 480. It was also an important area for the interment of the members of the royal family and high officials during the Libyan and Kushite Periods, see J. Budka, "The Use of Pottery in Funerary Contexts during the Libyan and Late Period: A View from Thebes and Abydos", in L. Bareš, F. Coppens, K. Smoláriková (ed.), *Egypt in Transition. Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millennium BCE. Proceedings of an International Conference Prague, Sept. 1-4, 2009*, Prague, 2010, p. 49.

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A definite dating for this monument cannot be easily specified since the owner's family is not known apart from the father's name. Also, the sole title included within the inscriptions does not provide sufficient data to positively link the offering table with any other monument. The orthography , however, provides a starting point for the dating since it began to be employed in private inscriptions during the 25th Dynasty (cf. n. [f]).

The carving of the reliefs on the offering table is not definite for the dating since it has no exact parallel. The disposition of the food offerings in three rows in the lower half of the surface does not fall under the classic type of the 25th Dynasty,[9] it rather has a close resemblance to an Abydene example dating to the 26th Dynasty.[10]

The textual details (n. [c], [g], [h]) provide a more specific time span since they are attested on Abydene monuments in the late 25th-early 26th Dynasty/ latter half of the 7th c. BC. Accordingly, the offering table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7) is most probably so dated; and thus Djedbastetioufankh can be added to the short list of the priests of Onuris (n. [d]) who lived during that period in the Abydos-Thinis region.

9 P. Barguet, Z. Goneim, J. Leclant, "Les tables d'offrandes de la grande cour de la tombe de Montouemhât", *ASAE* 51, 1951, p. 501-502.

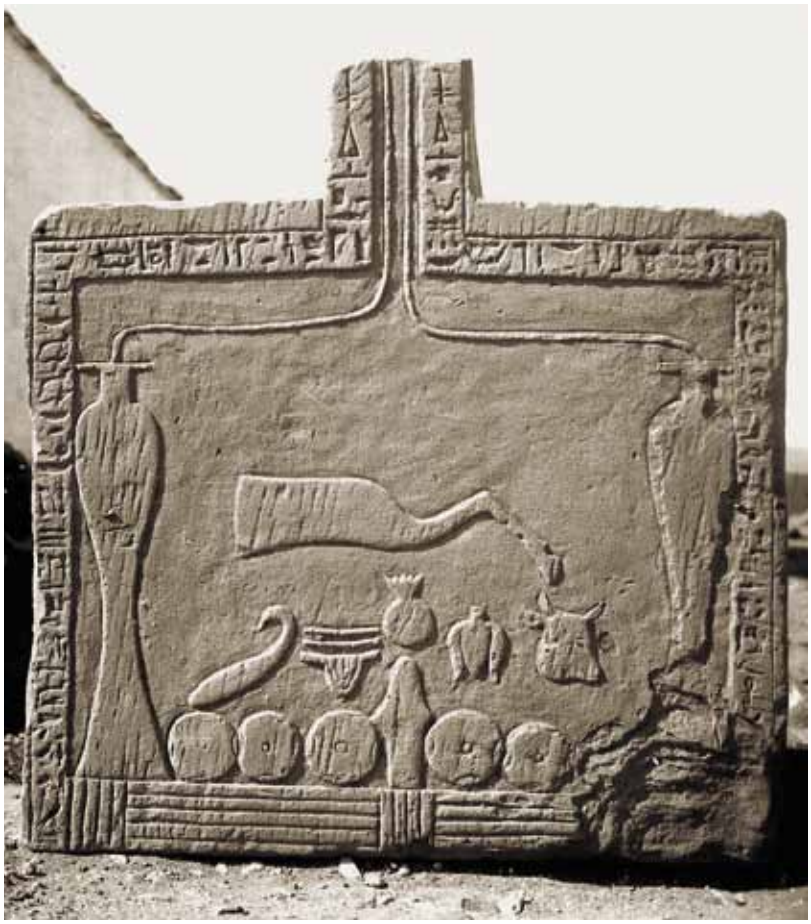
10 A. Kamal, *Tables d'offrandes* II, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du musée du Caire, Nr. 23001-23246*, Le Caire, 1906, pl. XXIV (CG 23107).

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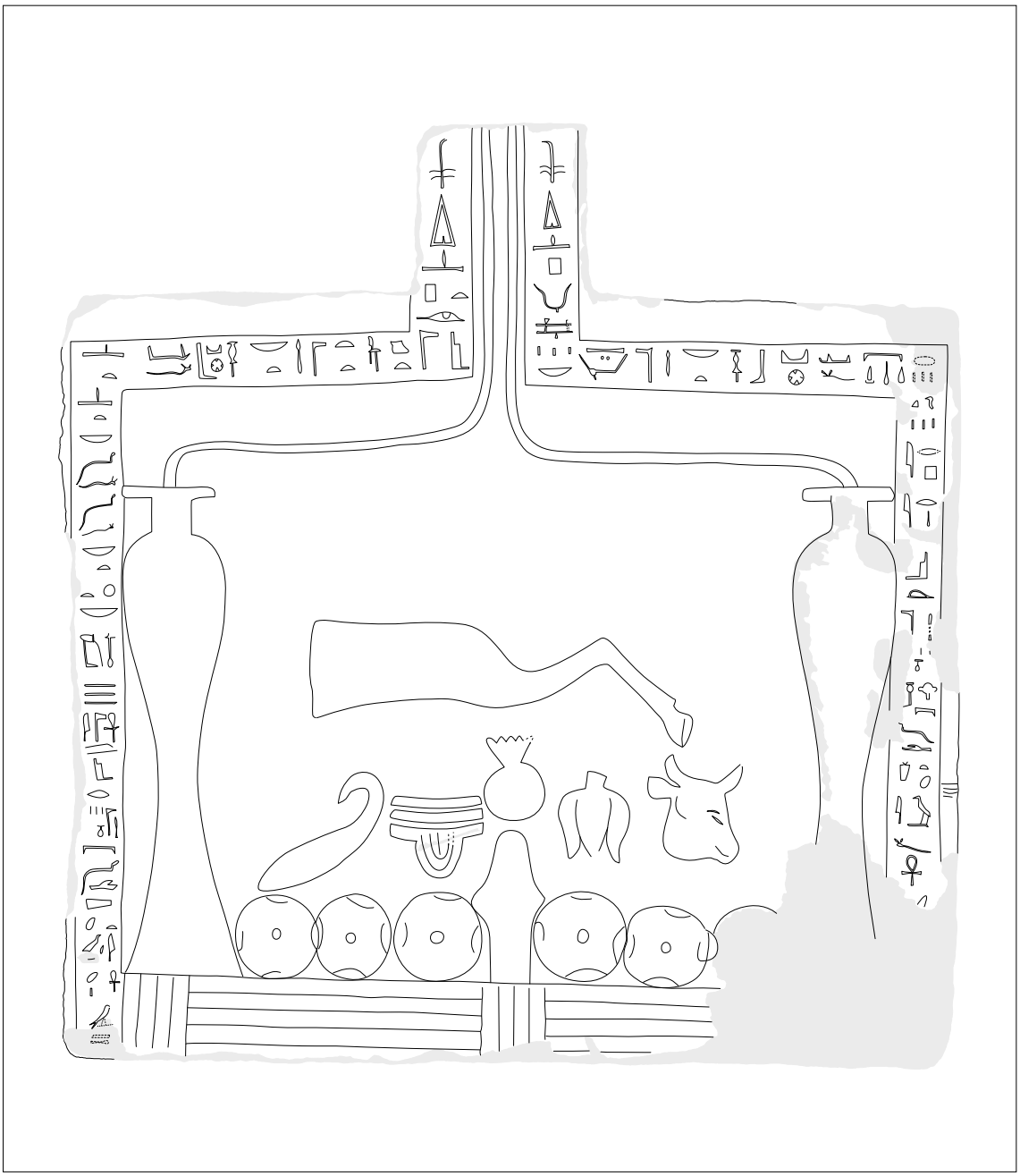
Fig. 1. Offering Table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7).



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Fig. 2. Offering Table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7).

BIFAO 114 (2015), p. 447-454 Noha Shatahy
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Fig. 3. Offering Table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7).

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Fig. 4. Offering Table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7) upon discovery.



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Fig. 5. Offering Table JE 41438 (TR 23/1/15/7).

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