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The Votive Stela of the “Overseer of the Singers of the King” Nfr-rnpt
(Egyptian Museum Cairo TR 14.6.24.17)

Ahmed M. Mekawy Ouda

This paper republishes the votive stela of Nfr-rnpt at the Egyptian Museum Cairo (inv. Nr. TR 14.6.24.17). It was published previously in 1936 by P. Labib, but this study did not give a hieroglyphic transcription of the stela. The translation of the inscriptions also needs to be revised. Additionally, P. Labib overlooked the work of A. Mariette which indicates that this stela came from Abydos, so the provenance needs no longer be based on assumption. Furthermore, the previous publication did not offer a commentary on the stela—on the titles of the owner, or the costume of the figures shown which help to identify the chronology. Thus, the present paper will investigate the history of the publication of the stela which has never been completely discussed. Secondly, the complete transcription for the stela, as well as a transliteration, a translation and a commentary on the inscriptions and titles of the owner will be given. The approach focuses on a newly facsimile of the stela, in order to point out the elements that previous studies did not remark.

*Faculty of Archaeology, Department of Egyptology, Cairo University. I would like to thank Jan Picton for her help and the correction of my English. Special thanks go to my colleagues Mostafa Nagdy, Noura Mahmoud, and Hoda Kamal for their help with the drawing of TR 14.6.24.17. I am also very grateful to Ms. Marwa Abd el-Razik and Mr. Sameh Abdel Mohsen of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo for their help with the excellent photographs of this stela.

2. A. Mariette, Catalogue général des monuments d’Abydos découverts pendant les fouilles de cette ville, Paris, 1880, p. 434 [1159].
HISTORY OF THE PUBLICATION

A. Mariette\(^3\) was the first scholar to publish the stela in 1880, giving only a brief description of the object.\(^4\) He delivered a partial transcription of the sections which focus on the titles of the owner, his family’s affiliation and the last three lines of the second register, containing a threat-formula.\(^3\) A. Mariette recorded the discovery of this stela with seven other stelae in the northern part of the southern cemetery at Abydos.\(^6\) These eight stelae do not bring any royal name. The datation was based on the common features, distinctive of the 19th Dynasty.\(^7\)

K. Piehl\(^8\) also published this stela in 1895.\(^9\) He translated the eleven lines of hieroglyphs of the lower register, providing two plates of vertical lines for the entire transcription, running from left to right.\(^10\) However, he did not translate the inscriptions accompanying the deities and the people in the upper register.\(^11\) Furthermore, no comment on the inscriptions of the stela were done. He reported that the stela was at the Museum of Boulaq.\(^12\)

A slip in the dictionary of Berlin (no. 545), copies the titles of Nfr-rnpt and his brother, Ḥmn-wȝḥ-sw, and their family affiliation on this stela. Later, P. Labib\(^13\) published this stela, showing an image for the first time and giving a translation.\(^14\) I listed this stela as a source for the goddess Werethekau, in the catalogue of my unpublished PhD.\(^15\) However, I did not comment the inscriptions as it was a secondary object study, on which Ḥmn-wȝḥ-sw, brother’s owner, bore the title of “first god’s servant of Werethekau”.\(^16\) I also listed the stela in two other recent publications.\(^17\)

DESCRIPTION

The stela is currently kept in the Egyptian Museum Cairo, with the temporary number TR 14.6.24.17. It is a round-top limestone stela, well preserved apart from some erosion on the top curve, and retains some colour. Its height is 98 cm and width 66 cm. It has two registers.

First Register

The upper register shows two scenes. The right scene depicts the owner of the stela adoring Osiris and Isis. Nfr-rnpt wears an ankle length wrap-around kilt with a long tunic over the


\(^{4}\) A. Mariette, loc. cit.

\(^{5}\) Ibid., p. 434.

\(^{6}\) Ibid., pp. 433–437 [1958–1965].

\(^{7}\) Ibid., p. 415.

\(^{8}\) M.L. Bierbrier, op. cit., p. 432.


\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 57.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., pp. 36, 57.

\(^{13}\) M.L. Bierbrier, op. cit., p. 305.

\(^{14}\) P.C.L. Labib, loc. cit.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 325.

top, a collar, and sandals on his feet. He does not wear a wig and his head is shaved. Osiris and Isis stands before him. Osiris is depicted in mummiform, standing on a pedestal, wearing a broad collar, and counterpoise, an Atef-crown with cobra, and a divine beard. He holds a ws-sceptre in his hands. Isis is shown standing behind, or perhaps next to Osiris, with her right hand raised in blessing. She wears the tripartite wig, crowned with the sun-disc, flanked by two horns, and a long tight ankle-length dress.

The inscription before the deceased reads:

[1] dỉt ỉȝw n  
[3] n nb-tȝwy Nfr-rnpt mȝʿ-ḥrw

[1] Giving adoration to  
[2] Osiris by the overseer of singers  
[3] of the lord of the Two Lands, Nfr-rnpt, Justified

a. This title occurs twice in the second register of the stela in the form of ỉmy-rȝ ḥsyw n nb-tȝwy (ll. 1 and 4, see below), and twice more in the form of ỉmy-rȝ ḥsyw n pr-ȝ (ll. 7, 8 and 9, see below). It seems that this was his main title, preceding his name in the four examples. He bore another title on the stela, ỉmy-rȝ ḥsyw n nṯrw nbw (l. 1, below). These two titles linked Nfr-rnpt to the king, the royal palace and the temple.19

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The inscription above the deities reads:

1. Wsỉr hnty
2. Ḫmnt nb Ḫbw
3. Šst wrt nbt pt

1. Osiris foremost of
2. the West, lord of Abydos
3. Isis, the great, lady of heaven

The other scene, on the left of the upper register, represents Ḫmn-wȝḥ-sw, the brother of Nfr-rnpt, adoring Horus and Wepwawet. The god Horus is represented with a falcon head wearing a tripartite wig and the double Crown. He wears a short tight kilt with bull’s tail hanging from the waist. He is bare-chested except for a broad collar. He holds a ṭȝs-sceptre in his right hand, while his left hand grasps an ‘nh-sign. The god Wepwawet is depicted with the head of jackal standing behind, or perhaps next to Horus, with both hands at his sides. He wears a short tight kilt with a tail falling behind, and a tripartite wig. Ḫmn-wȝḥ-sw stands before the gods with hands raised in adoration pose. He wears complex layered clothing. He has a fine tunic worn as an under-garment, a long wrap-around kilt over this and a sash kilt tied around the hips so it is positioned high at the back and low in the front. He also wears sandals and a broad collar. His head is bald and neck is thin.

The inscription above Ḫmn-wȝḥ-sw reads:

1. rdỉt ỉȝw n Ḥr Wp-wȝwt
2. Ḣn ḫmn tpy n Wṛt-hkḏw
3-4. Ḫmy-rꜣ Ḫmyw-hnt Ḫmn-wȝḥ-sw

1. Giving adoration to Horus and Wepwawet
2. by the first god’s servant of Werethekau
3-4. overseer of chamberlains Ḫmn-wȝḥ-sw
a. Five people bore the title of the “first god’s servant of Werethekau”,21 The earliest attestation dates to the 18th Dynasty, while the latest dates to the reign of Ramesses XI.22 Other priests of the goddess Werethekau: the “pure-priest of Werethekau”, “chief of the pure priests of Werethekau”, and “god’s servant of Werethekau”, were attested from the New Kingdom onwards as well.23

b. The chamberlain took charge of dressing the king, adorning him with the jewellery,24 and placing the crown on the head of the king.25 He was very close to the king and his family inside the royal palace.26 During the New Kingdom, the imy-hnt; “chamberlain”, was associated with the wrḥw, “the anointer”, adorning and dressing the king in the ceremonies of the coronation and the Sed-festival.27 The vizier Pȝ-sr, contemporary of Seti I/Ramesses II, held the title of “overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands” and the title of “the first god’s servant of Werethekau”.28 It is the first clear example of combining the two titles.29 This could help for dating our stela. However, there is an earlier example for Ṭmn-hıp, contemporary of Amenhotep III, who held the titles “great chamberlain” and “[first god’s servant] of Werethekau” in his tomb at Qurna.30 It was reconstructed by Helck.31 Hṛ-dd.n.f bore the title of “chamberlain” on his wooden statue Cairo JE 21871 [7d], which was found in Saqqara, and the title of “first god’s servant of Werethekau”, dated to the 18th Dynasty.32
The inscription above the deities reads:

1. Ḥr ỉnd-[2] Ḥr ḫt.f ỉs- Justi
2. Wp-Wȝwt
3. nb-Ȝbdw nṯr- ỉ nb ỉs- dsrt

[4] lord of Abydos, the great god, lord of the Sacred land

Second Register

The second register of the stela has a text of eleven lines of hieroglyphs. The inscription falls into three sections: the first one is an adoration of Osiris (ll. 1–4). The second section is an offering formula (ll. 5–9) which is dedicated to the Osiris triad, Wepwawet, and Anubis. The last section of the stela is a threat formula (ll. 9–11). The inscription reads as follow:
Adoring Osiris, foremost of the West, lord of Abydos, by the Overseer of the singers of all of the gods, Overseer of the singers of the lord of the Two Lands, Nfr-rnpt, justified, son of the dignitary Ḥȝt, born of Tȝ-wsrt of Thebes. He says: “I came before you, great god, Osiris, foremost of the west, Wenennefer, lord of the Sacred Land, rejoicing for seeing your beauty.

My arms are in adoration, worshipping your majesty. You are the one who traverses eternity. May you give the glorification, the might, the justification, the gentle (i.e. sweet) breeze of the north,

the breeze which comes forth and back in the cemetery, in all forms which I love to the Ka-spirit of the Overseer of the singers of the lord of the Two Lands, Nfr-rnpt, justified.”

He says:

“An offering-that-the-king-gives of Osiris, Foremost of the West, Wenennefer, lord of Abydos, Isis, the great, mother of the god, Horus, Avenger of his father, son of Isis, sweet of love, Wepwawet, lord of Abydos and ennead who is in the sacred land, Anubis, who is up on his mountain, in front of the divine booth, may they give all that comes forth on their altars of bread, beer, oxen, fowl

cool water, wine, milk, and all good and pure things, which a god lives on them,” for the Ka-spirit of the uniquely excellent, the good character, friendly one, quiet one, justified, the overseer of the singers

of the Pharaoh, l.p.h., Nfr-rnpt, justified, son of the dignitary, Ḥȝt, born of lady of the house, Tȝ-wsrt, (to) his father, (and) his brother, first god’s-servant of Werethekau,

Overseer of the chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands, Imn-wḥḥ-sw, justified, the Overseer of the singers of the pharaoh, l.p.h., Nfr-rnpt, justified. He says: “O great ones, gods-servants,
[10] pure-priests, lector-priests, all people who will come after me in millions of years. As for him who shall remove my name to place his name, god will reimburse him, destroying his statue upon earth, ‘if he called my name on this stela, god will make to him likewise.”

COMMENT ON THE PREVIOUS TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION

(A. MARIETTE, K. PIEHL, P. LABIB)

a. Piehl adds the sign of niwt (O49), though the original inscription does not show it. 33
b. Piehl used (N16) instead of (N17).34
c. Piehl missed the n (N35) in the transcription ms(w).n.35
d. Piehl used the sign (H6), though the correct one is (Aa11).36
e. Piehl used the sign (N33A), instead of (Z2).37
f. Piehl has an additional sign (Z1) in it, though the original inscription does not have.38
g. The determinative of sn in Piehl’s transcription is (N33A), though the right one is (Z2).39
h. Piehl applied the determinative of the three strokes (Z2) twice for t and hnqt, though the text used (Z2) once for both of the words.40
i. Piehl used the determinative of (Z2) in the word of irp, though it is (Z3).41
j. Piehl used (N16) for the word of tȝwy, but it is (N17).42
k. The three strokes (Z3) in sn were omitted in Piehl’s copy.43
l. Mariette in the last line of the inscription used (D4) instead of (D21).44
m. Mariette overlooked the sign (Y1) in mitt.45
n. Labib overlooked the translation of tȝw, “breeze” in l. 4, translating the sentence tȝw prt hȝt m ẖrt-nṯr m ḫprw nb, “a coming and going in the Underworld in every form”.46
o. Piehl translated the word of bnrt into “palm”,47 instead of the expression bnrt mrwt, “sweet of love”.48
p. This epithet is attested for both women and goddesses.49 Mut held this epithet on the northern wall of the sanctuary in the Speos at Gebel el-Silsila from the reign of Horemheb,50 the walls of the temple of Karnak,51 and the eastern wall of the shrine of Khonsu in the forecourt of the temple of Luxor.52 Mehit bore this epithet on the northern wall of the sanctuary of Horemheb at Gebel el-Silsila.53 Isis held this epithet in a series of epithets on the aforementioned sanctuary at Gebel el-Silsila on the eastern wall54 and also on a

33 K. PIEHL, op. cit., pl. 91 [col. 2 from left].
34 Ibid., pl. 91 [col. 3 from left].
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., pl. 91 [col. 5 from left].
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., pl. 91 [col. 6 from left].
39 Ibid., pl. 91 [col. 7 from left]; cf. the word friy-w-bb in his transcription as well (ibid., pl. 92, col. 2).
40 Ibid., pl. 91 [col. 8 from left].
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., pl. 92 [col. 1 from left].
43 Ibid.
44 A. MARIETTE, op. cit., p. 434.
46 PCl. LABIB, op. cit., p. 195; K. PIEHL, op. cit., p. 57.
47 K. PIEHL, op. cit., p. 57.
48 Wb I, 463, 4-5.
49 LGG II, p. 805; Wb I, 463, 4-5.
51 KRI I, 20 [8]; KRI VI, 88 [10].
52 KRI II, 616 [15].
54 Ibid., pp. 325–326 [6], Abb. 16.
stela BM EA 156 of the Ramesside Period. Maat held the epithets *bnt mwr m ‘ḥt s K*, “sweet of love in the palace of her father, Re” in the tomb of the aforementioned vizier Pȝ-sr (TT 106, Qurna). Many other goddesses bore this epithet in the Greco-Roman Period.

q. This should be translated into “the ennead”, instead of “the company of the gods” or “le cycle divin”.

r. P. Labib translated the epithet of Anubis into *imy wht*, “who is in the Oasis (?)”. However, the applicable transliteration and translation is *imy wt*, “who is in the place of embalming” or “who is in the mummy wrappings”.

s. P. Labib translated the word of *grw*, “silent”. However, a suitable translation could be “quiet” or “self-controlled”.

t. A. Mariette reported that the ancient Egyptian scribe did not write the name of Nfr-rnpt’s father, Ḥt, after it. Piehl thought that it, “father” is an honorary qualification for Nfr-rnpt’s brother, Ỉmn-wȝḥ-sw, in this instance. P. Labib translated the whole passage “his father and his brother were (?) the chief prophets of Werethekau”. However, there is another interpretation that the giving of the gods of bread, beer, oxen etc., is dedicated to the Ka-spirit of Nfr-rnpt, his father, and his brother. His father’s name is not written, as it has been recalled in the family affiliation of Nfr-rnpt at the same line.

u. P. Labib translated *ỉmy-r ỉmyw-ḥnt* as “Overseer of the provisions of the lord of the Two Lands”, though the correct translation is “Overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands”.

v. The threat-formulae invoked a threat against violators of the tomb, burial chamber, the image, and the corpse of the deceased. In the Ramesside Period, there is an increase in using threat-formulae. The king started invoking threats of divine punishment, imitating the individuals who started it earlier in time. The inscriptions of the 19th Dynasty contain an invocation against the removal of a stela or an inscription from its place e.g. the monumental ostraco Boston MFA II.1498 “as for the vizier who shall remove this stela from its place: he shall not be satisfied with *mȝʿt*; nor shall he follow Amun in all his festivals”. Another inscription of the high priest of Amun, Ḥry-Hr, contemporary of Ramesses XI, on his statue in the Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 42190, indicates that if anyone removes his image from its place (*rwỉ pȝ twt ḥr st.f*) after many years, the Theban triad will punish him; his name shall not exist in the land of Egypt and he will die of hunger and thirst. The closest threat-formula to our votive stela, the subject of this paper, is the inscription of the High Priest of Amun, Ỉmn-Ḥtp, contemporary of Ramesses IX. A block was found at Karnak that...
has a threat, directed against usurpation of his text or erasing it. The inscription reads: \textit{fr p\kappa\eta\dot{\eta} i\varphi f\varphi u i [r\eta], i r dlt nr hbb Imn 'h f br-t tp w tm, “as for the One who will remove my [name] to place his name, Amun will lessen his entire life-time on earth”}. Another group of Ramesside graffiti occurs on the local shrines of Amun and Hathor at Deir el-Bahari. These are directed against erasing the name and text of their owners. One of these reads “as for the one who shall erase my name in order to place his name: Ptah shall be an opponent for him, while Sekhmet shall pursue his wives, and Taweret his children”.

**DISCUSSION**

The name of \textit{Nfr-rnpt} is attested once, according to Ranke, in the Old Kingdom and many times later in the New Kingdom and the Late Period. However, the way of writing his name, which occurs on our stela, has not been attested before the New Kingdom. There are many tombs on the West Bank of Thebes for men named \textit{Nfr-rnpt}. However, none of them had the same occupation as \textit{Nfr-rnpt} or the identical family affiliation. The name of \textit{Imn-wȝḥ-sw} is attested in the New Kingdom. This stela should be attributed to \textit{Nfr-rnpt}, not to \textit{Imn-wȝḥ-sw}, although both of them are depicted on the upper register of the stela. The name of \textit{Nfr-rnpt} is followed by the name of his parents twice which did not happen for his brother. \textit{Nfr-rnpt} is depicted on the right side of the stela, which is more important than the left side, adoring Osiris and Isis.

The depiction of the Osiris triad in its upper register is further evidence pointing to the provenance of this stela as Abydos. The second register opens with adoration of the god Osiris, the main god of Abydos. The offering formula in the second register addresses the Osiris triad as well. The main epithet of Wepwawet on this stela is “lord of Abydos”. He is represented twice on this stela with this epithet. He was worshipped in Abydos; he replaced Anubis, the god of the necropolis, according to a 12th Dynasty stela, and became a local god.
fighter against the enemies of Osiris, “Horus the protector” and “the son of Osiris” in Abydos. Wepawawet also was “the opener of ways”, who led the processions in the Osiris mysteries in Abydos. The name of Anubis was included in the offering formula in the second register, together with the Osiris triad and Wepawawet. Anubis was worshipped at Abydos. This stela is devoted to the Osiris triad, Wepwawet, and Anubis. The family of the owner of the stela may come from Thebes, however the stela was found in Abydos. His mother was called Tȝ-wsrt of Thebes. The last section of the inscription in the second register addresses the identity of the object, i.e. the stela. Mariette attributed this stela to the Ramesside Period. There is ample evidence which supports that this stela could be dated to this period. The title of the “overseer of chamberlains” and the “first priest of Werethekau” were both attested clearly together first on the objects of Pȝ-sr, contemporary of Seti I and Ramesses II. So the stela could be dated to the reign of Seti I or Ramesses II. The type of the costume of the owner cannot be precisely compared with any of the twenty types included in Hofmann’s study of the art of the Ramesside private tombs. However, Hoffman’s garment type (no. 14), which dates to early in the Ramesside Period could be linked to our stela.

The main titles and occupation of Nfr-rnpt was “Overseer of the singers of the lord of the Two Lands”, “Overseer of the singers of the pharaoh, l.p.h.”, and “Overseer of the singers of all the gods”. This indicates that he had a high position in Egyptian society, providing music necessary for the king and associated him with the temple, and the members of elite.
Fig. 1. The stela of Nfr-rnpt (Egyptian Museum Cairo TR 14.6.24.17). Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, photograph by Sameh Abdel Mohsen.
Fig. 2. The stela of Nfr-rnpt (Egyptian Museum Cairo TR 14.6.24.17). Facsimile by Ahmed M. Mekawy Ouda.