

**A Middle Kingdom Private Stela
Cairo Museum, JE 21999- CG 20323**

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Abstract

The subject of this paper deals with an inscribed private stela of Rn-iqr from the Middle Kingdom which has been found in the northern side of Abydos and is now stored in the magazine of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (JE 21999- CG20323)¹. It is a painted limestone stela. Comparative studies with other stelae showed that the stela should fall at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty. The aim of the paper is to describe the stela and to deal with it artistically and philologically.

I. Description

The stela of Rn-iqr, from the northern side in Abydos (JE 21999, CGC 20323) ², is now stored in the magazine of the Egyptian Museum Cairo. It is in a quite good condition; it is formed in a rectangular shape made out of painted limestone, 34, 5 cm in height and 26, 5 cm in width, with torus moulding. There are blue and red traces on the top of the stela, while a yellow base is to be seen under the black flower decoration of the torus. Regarding the text, the wigs of the man and the woman are in black and the red line is clear around them; the man's flesh is red-ochre but the woman's is yellow, the man's kilt and the woman's dress are white; some damage to the writing is to be seen on the fourth hieroglyphic line and on the lower left part which was restored. The stela is divided into two parts; the upper part (a) contains the main inscription

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¹H.O. Lange/ H.Schaefer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mitteren Reiches (Catalogue general du Musee du Caire)* IV, Berlin, 1902,p. 336; pl.VI, PM 5;1, p. 268, Simpson, William K. *The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos, the offering chapels of dynasties 12 and 13 new Haven, study on Middle Kingdom stela from Abydos, their purpose and location*, 1974, p.1.

² I would like to thank Dr. WAFAA EL-SEDDIK, Ex- Director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo; Mrs. SALWA ABDEL RAHMAN, Chief of the Middle Kingdom Department, for the kind permission of photographing the stela; I am grateful to Ms. YOUSREYA HAMED for her wonderful facsimile and to Mr. AHMED AMIN for photograhing the stela.

which consists of six horizontal lines of hieroglyphs oriented right to left, and each line is separated from the next by a thick black line between two red lines, while the lower part (b, c) includes - on the left side (a) Rn-iqr is sitting barefoot on a low-backed chair wearing an elaborate shoulder-length wig and a long kilt; he is wearing a white collar around his neck. The chair's legs are carved in the shape of the front and hind legs of a lion painted in yellow with a white back. He is facing the right side, pointing his left arm to his chest and stretching his right arm towards the food in front him, where an offering table with a notched base is found,(b). Furthermore, there are three hieroglyphic red signs beneath the table; while scattered offerings are found above it including a lotus blossom, a round loaf, and a form like a hart. On the right side of the lower part, his daughter Snbt is standing barefoot facing him with her right hand holding a lotusblossom up to her nose. Her hair has a normal black women's style; she is wearing a tight dress, adorned with a collar, bracelets and a classical long wig. A text is found in front of the man's figure telling us about his name and title, oriented right to left, and another one in front of his daughter telling us about her name, oriented left to right.



Ahmed Amin

Stela Cairo, CG 20323



Fac-simile

Texts

I. The main text consists of six horizontal lines of hieroglyphs.

a.



1. Htp dj njswt wsjr ^(a) nb Ddw nTr aA nb AbDw dj.f ^(b)
2. prt-xrwt hnqt xA kA Apdw Ss mnxt xt nb anxt ^(c) nTr im ra-nb
3. n kA n ^(d) jmAxjj Smsw n HqA ^(e) anx wDA snb ^(f)
4. MnT.w- aA ^(g) sA imnjj ^(h) sA Rn- iqr ⁽ⁱ⁾
5. mAa- xrw nb imAx imAx Hmt mrt.f sA.t.Tni ^(j) imAxt
6. mwt.f nbt ^(k) imAxt mnat ^(l) xnms ^(m).f in-it.f ⁽ⁿ⁾

1. An offering which the king has given and Osiris, Lord of Djedu, Great God, Lord of Abydos, that he may (Osiris) give
2. An invocation offering, thousands of bread, beer, ox, fowl, alabaster, linen, and everything on which the God lives every day
3. For the spirit of the Venerator's, Retainer of the ruler, life, prosperity, health,

4. MnT.w- Aa, son of Imny, son of Rniqr
5. True of voice lord of the venerated, the venerated, his beloved wife Satthnyt the venerated one,
6. His mother Snbt, the venerated one Mnat, and his friend In-it.f.

(a) The writing of the Htp dj nswt from the old Kingdom till the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty had the same written sequence, that did change in the New Kingdom³. In the offering formula Htp- dj – nswt⁴ of the middle Kingdom the name of Osiris written without determinative, and the occurrence of nTr aA as an epithet of Osiris not before the early Twelfth Dynasty.⁵

(b) The use of di. f before prt-xrw would indicate a date in the XIIth Dynasty.⁶

(c) anxt nTr im, appears first under Sesostri I⁷, ra-nb, every day⁸,

(d) n kA n, this phrase is to be seen on the stela starting from the reign of Senwosert I⁹. imAxjj¹⁰, the venerated or blessed one.

(e) Smsw n HqA, retainer of the ruler, the Smsw were follower and that was considered as a high position.¹¹

(f) anx wDA snb, (with) life, prosperity, health¹².

(g) mnT.w- aA, Ranke, *PN I*, p. 153, no. 25.

³ D. Franke, *The middle Kingdom offering Formula- a challenge*, *JEA* 89, 2003, p.54.

⁴ Ibid. p. 46, Ibid.p.48, D. Franke did translate the *Htp dj nswt wsjrj...di.f prt-xrw*, as an offering which the King has given and Osiris... may he (Osiris) give an invocation offering.

⁵ C.J.C.Bennett, *Growth of the Htp-di-nsw formula in the Middle Kingdom*, *JEA* 27, 1941, p.79.

⁶ Ibid., p.77-8, and D. Franke see, that adding may he/she/they give, is the only structural; difference between Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom in the offering formula, D. Franke, *The middle Kingdom offering Formula- a challenge*, *JEA* 89, p.46.

⁷ C.J.C.Bennett, *Growth of the Htp-di-nsw formula in the Middle Kingdom*, *JEA* 27, 1941, p.80.

⁸ R. Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006, p.1455-1458 mentioning the stela with, Cairo CG 20001-20780.

⁹ D. Franke, *The middle Kingdom offering Formula- a challenge*, *JEA* 89, p.54.

¹⁰ The venerator as a deceased, R. Hannig, p.25, and *imAxt* female, R. Hannig, p. 263.

¹¹ W. Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*. Beirut, 1982, p.176, no.1526, R.Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006, p. 2463, with CG 20001-20780, PM 5;1, p.268.

¹² R Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006, p.534.

- (h) imnjj , Ranke, *PN I*, p.31, no.12.
- (i) Rn- iqr, Ranke, *PN I*, p. 222, no.23.
- (j) sAt- Tnj, Ranke, *PN I*,p.294, no.22 .
- (k) snbt, Ranke, *PN I*, p.297, no.8.
- (l) mnat ¹³, Ranke, *PN I*, p.151, no.7.
- (m) Xnms, Ranke, *PN I*, p.270, no.11¹⁴.
- (n) in-it.f, Ranke *PN I*, p.34, no.1,

b.



imax Smsw¹⁵ Rn- iqr

The venerated one the follower Rn iqr.

¹³female nurse, W. ward, 1982, p.95, no.799, and W.Ward., *Essays on feminine titles*,1986, p.85,no706, R.Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006 p.1074, CG 20001, 20780 (as) in names, the determinative is a seated woman in: H.O. Lange/ H.Schaefer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mitteren Reiches*, CG,I, p.336, so maybe it was reined.

¹⁴ H. Ranke, *Die altaegyptischen Personennamen*, 1935, p. 270, the friend, written with an (m) in: R.Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006, p.1897, 1898, with other stelae CG 20001, 20780.

¹⁵ Follower, it's a sort of a high position, R., Hannig, *Aegyptisches Woerterbuch II Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit*, 2006, p. 2459, Gardiner, p.575,

Comments

The painted stela of Rniqr gives us information about his name and titles, also some names of his family members, friends and work colleagues, such as; his grandson Montho-aA, his son Imny - whose names are not very clear because of the erased text- as well as his wife Satthniet, his mother Snbt whose names are mentioned on the main text of the stela, and his daughter Snbt who was named after his mother. So probably the stela was made for the grandfather, Rniqr, who was the follower and brewer of the ruler. In addition, there are three names that do not belong to the family; a woman called Mnct who is not a family member, his friend Inintf, and the female brewer Ddwt-mwt whose title shows that she is Rniqr's work colleague. At that time, it is common to find names of people who are not family members; such as work colleagues, written on the stelae.¹⁸

Comparative studies with other stelae showed that the stela should have fallen in the 12th Dynasty¹⁹. The stela of Nkhty and Khnt-cthy-hotep, London, BM 241 from the 12th Dynasty, found at Abydos, shows some similarities with the CG 20323 in the writing of the name Osiris without any determinatives, the writing of di. f before prt-xrw as well as in the use of *n ka n imAxw* to designate the name of the deceased. The offering table with the notched base also suggests a date from the early 12th Dynasty, between the reigns of Sesostris I and Amenemhat II.²⁰ Although the stela is a painted

¹⁸ Ronald J. Leprohon, *The Personnel of the Middle Kingdom Funerary Stelae*, *JARCE* 15, p.33.

¹⁹ Freed, Rita, *Stela Workshops of Early Dynasty 12*, in Peter Der Manuelian (ed.), *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson*. Boston, 1996, p.297-336 : "A stela is considered dated if it contains a cartouche in or near its lunette or upper border, or if the context of the cartouche otherwise implies that the stela's owner lived during the reign of the king mentioned. A stela is labeled "datable" (as opposed to "dated") if it belongs to the same owner as a dated stela or if its owner is known through other sources, such as statuary or papyri, to be associated with a given king."

²⁰ Ronald Leprohon, "*Corpus Antiquitatum Aegyptiacarum*. Fasc. 2. *Boston Museum of Fine Arts. STELAE 1, The Early Dynastic Period to the Late Middle Kingdom*, (Philipp von Zabern. Mainz, 1985)

one, it is dated to the reign of Amenmhat II. During the former's reign, all those stelae were executed in sunken relief, which is both easier and faster to carve than the raised one. The political context justifies the unelaborated style and the smooth transition into a more intricate work towards the end of Sesostris I's reign. The offering formula also suggests that the stela would have belonged to the 12th Dynasty.

According to C.J.C. Bennett's researches on the growth of the formula, *nb ddw* appears during the reigns of Sesostris I and Amenemhat II (81% of the objects studied), as opposed to later times, when the percentage falls under 35. The formula *ntr aA* shows prominence in the reign of Sesostris I and Amenemhat II (81%), declining afterwards. The offering list formula during the 11th Dynasty shows bread, beer, fowl, oxen, alabaster, linen - with incense and oil to be added throughout the 12th Dynasty steadily (from 25% in the reign of Sesostris I to 84% during Sesostris III's rule). The CG 20323 stela does not contain incense and oil that could move its date at the time of Amenemhat II. The phrase *ankhet ntr im* also shows a high percentage at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty, with 40% of the stelae studied by Bennett, declining to 25% during the reign of Senusret III.²¹

The stela from Cairo Museum falls under the category *Workshop number 10 – Attenuated Figures* designated by R.E.Freed in her study *Stela workshops of early Dynasty 12 as the largest and the latest workshop*.²² It shares the position with stelae Cairo CG 20526, London BM 241, London BM 971. In the stela CG 20323; the common characteristics include less variation in the positions of figures and the greater spacing among them. Moreover, there is a little attention to the individual details; the compositions are spare including few offerings. The less detailed and more mechanical

²¹ C.J.C. Bennett, *Growth of the Htp-di-nsw formula in the Middle Kingdom*, *JEA* 27, 1945, p.77-82.

²² Freed, E. Rita, *Stela Workshops of Early Dynasty 12*, in: Peter Der Manuelian (ed.), *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson*. Boston, 1996, p. 297-336.

style were commonly found in the reign of Amenemhat II; the high, plastic modeling, intricate detailing and complex compositions which characterize the flourishing workshops under Sesostris I reflect this style, probably as a result of the increasing demand. The offering table have extra rings on the top and bottom. It is not clear whether the CG 20323 stela from Cairo has a ring surrounding the lower part of the leg because of its deteriorated condition, but the upper ring can be clearly seen. The word dbHt –Htp, is inscribed to the left of the table. Another attribute (which is nevertheless common on other Middle Kingdom stelae) is an offering in the shape of a heart lying on the table in a compact group with the other offerings. A non-canonical figure and a lack attention to the details are found – as can be seen in the wig worn by the deceased; although close fitting and similar in shape to wigs from other stelae in the same group, it lacks the individual rendering of the curls.