

**A Late Period Wooden Stela in
the Cairo Museum (TN27/1/25/16)**

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Abstract

There are a number of very interesting wooden stelae among the objects in the magnificent collection of antiquities in the Cairo Museum. It is noteworthy that they all seem to originate from Thebes and its neighborhood and that their owners are mostly persons attached to the cults of Month and Amun¹. The stela of *Tj-jrj*, the daughter of the priest of Amun *Jmn-htp*, which is published here may be dated to the Dynasty XXVI, and records the hymn of adoring Re when he rises in the eastern horizon of the sky and when he sets in the west.

The stela, which is the subject of this paper is in the Cairo Museum (TN 27/1/25/16) and was found in El-Qurna². It measures 45.5 cm in height and 0.23 cm in width. The surface is generally well preserved, except in certain damaged areas. Traces of color are still visible.

Representation and Text

The stela (fig. 1, pl. 1) is divided into three registers; the upper one, which is surmounted by a frieze of stars representing the sky, is occupied by a winged sun disk with two pendants Uraei. Below this, a line of hieroglyphs, repeated twice, reads: *Bhd.t ntr ꜣ nb pt* "The Behdty, the great god, Lord of the sky".

* I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. A. Zayed for providing me with the photo of this stela.

¹ Some of this stelae are published by A. Zayed, in: *RdE* 20, 1968, 149-170; A. Abdalla, in *VA* 4, 1988, 5-16.

² Many scholars have referred to this stela, but it has never been fully published, see: K. Piehl, *Inscr. Hiero.* III, 54, pl. LXXXV (X); J. Lieblein, *Wb*, no. 2281; *PM*¹, 802; De Meulenaere, in: *CdE* 44, 1969, 268; P. Munro, *Totenstelen*, 202; M. Bierbier, *Late New Kingdom*, 92ff; Vittmann, in: *Or* 47, 1978, 4; G. Vittmann, *Priester und Beamte*, 25ff.

At the upper part of the second register, which is completely framed by borders of colored rectangles, is a frieze of *hkr* ornaments framed by a block border. Below this are two main scenes. The scene to the right shows the deceased lady stands facing left, and wears a long, loose-fitting robe. She raises both arms in adoration towards Atum, who stands in front of her, wears the double crown, a corselet and a short kilt and tunic. The god carries the *w3s*- scepter and the *nh*-sign. Between the lady and the god is a libation stand with a jar and a very large lotus flower. Above the figures are four columns of text, which read: *dd mdw jn Jtm nb t3[.wj] Jwn.wj nb hw.t dd mdw jn Wsjr nb[.t]-pr T3-jrj s3.t Jmn-htp* "Words spoken by Atum, Lord of the Land[s], The Heliopolitan, Lord of the temple". "Words spoken by T3-jrj, Mistress of the house, daughter of Jmn-htp".

The scene to the left is similar to the above mentioned one, but the god Rahorakhty, who replaced Atum, is shown as a hawk-headed man, crowned with a large solar disk. The inscriptions referring to this scene read: *dd mdw jn R^c-Hr3h.tj ntr 3 nb pt 3 t3.wj dd mdw jn Wsjr nb[.t]-pr T3-jrj m3^c-hrw* "Words spoken by Rehorakhty, The great god, Lord of the sky, Great of the two Lands": "Words spoken by Osiris, Mistress of the house, T3-jrj, justified".

The third register is occupied by the main texts of the stela, recording two hymns of adoring Re. Each consists of nine horizontal lines of inscriptions, and are divided from each other by a vertical black line. It is worth mentioning that the two hymns are derived from chapter 15 of the BD, which was divided by Lepsius into individual hymns, called (15 a-i). Naville had added other hymn groups, which he called (15A I- IV) and (15B I- III).

T. G. Allen completed the hymn groups by adding (15A5, 15B 4-5 and 15h)³. According to his classification our hymns belong to 15A5 and 15B4 group, addressed to the rising and to the setting

³ To his sources can be added the stela of *N3.w-mnh.t-Jmn*, the daughter of *Bs-n-Mw.t*, see below.



(Fig. 1) The stela of *T3-jrj*, (Cairo Mus. TN 27/1/25/16).



- T *dw3 R^c m wbn=f m 3ht* Adoring Re when he rises in the
j3b.t.t n.t p.t eastern horizon of the sky.
- P *jn T3-jrj m3^c-hrw s3.t* by T3-jrj, justified, the daughter of
hm-ntr Jmn-R^c njsw.t- the priest of Amun, Lord of the
ntr Jmn-htp m3^c-hrw gods, Jmn-htp, justified, whose
mw.t=s h3^cws-n-Js.t mother is h3^cws-n-Js.t, justified,
m3^c-hrw dd=s she says ^(b):
- H *jnd hr=k wbn m t3-* Hail to you, who rises from his
dsr.t=f sacred domain,
sšp h^c.w m j3b.t.t n.t the daylight appears in the east of
p.t wr šfj.t m k3r št3 the heaven ^(c), the great of esteem
in the secret shrine ^(d).
- j R^c sdm=k j R^c phr=k* Oh Re, may you hear; Oh Re, may
jw šd.n=j md3.t 77 hr you circle about.
nm.t ʿpp r^c nb [for] I have read the 77 rolls
concerning the place of slaughter
of Apophis every day ^(e).
- dj .t[w] b3=f [n] hftj m* His soul is given to ^(f) the enemy
sd.t h3.t=f n 3ht h^cw=f with the fire ^(g), his corpse to the
n jr.t Hr tmw n sh3 flame, his flesh <body> ^(h) to the
.tw=f eye of Hours, so that he ceases to
jw jrr .t[w] hrjt ʿpp m exit ⁽ⁱ⁾ and is not to remembered.
š^c[.t] What is due Apophis is
<regularly> accomplished in the
[daily] conflict.

The hymn on the right-hand side (15B4) reads as follows:



T *dw3 R^c htp=f m Adoring Re when he sets in the
<jmn.t.t> West⁽¹⁾.*

P *jn T3-jrj m3^c-hrw s3.t by T3-jrj, justified, the daughter of
hm-ntr Jmn-R^c njsw.t- the priest of Amun-Re, Lord of the
ntr Jmn-htp m3^c-hrw Gods, Jmn-htp, justified, being
msj h3^cws-n-Js.t m3^c- the daughter of h3^cws-n-Js.t^(k),
hrw dd=s justified, she says:*

H *jd^h hr=k R^c-Jtm Hprj Hail to you, Re-Atum, Khepri
Hr3htj Horakhty!
b3 ntrj shd dw3.t m The divine soul, who illumines the
m3w.t n.t ntr.t=f j3ht netherworld with the rays of his*

stj [m] hrw nb n.t grh *bright divine eye,*
shb krtj *who shines [by] day, lord of night,*
nb nmt.t m hpt hh phrr *making festive the twin caverns,*
Nnw[.t] n drw *who strides according to his will*
 in a circuit of millions [of
 leagues], who courses the nether
 sky without limit.

dw3[=j] nfr.w=k rhk.wj *Praise your beauty, for I know*
sšm [=k] *[your] image.*

- (i) Our parallels are also stelae of wood and one of limestone. They seem to be of a single basic type, rounded at top, where a winged sun disk hovers. Then come balanced scenes of worship of Re or Rahaokhty at one side, of Atum at the other, and below these the paired hymns, each reading outward from the center. Some sources agree with our stela in placing Atum and a hymn to the setting sun at our right, others place these at our left¹¹.
- (ii) The arrangement of the transliteration and translation suggested that this hymn is truly poetic in both form and imagery.
- (iii) A. Abdalla¹² translated *sšp h^c m j3b.t.t n.t pt* "who receives the crown in the east of the heaven", but *sšp*¹³ or *sšsp*¹⁴ means here "daylight" and *h^c.w* means "appear" (Old Perfective), and not *h^c.w* "crown". Thus the sentence should be "the daylight appears in the east of heaven".
- (iv) Some other parallel stelae recorded variants as: *hnm R^c m k3r št3* "enter, Re, into the secret shrine" or *hnm m k3r št3* "enter, into the secret shrine"¹⁵.
- (v) Some other parallels stelae record




¹¹ See: T.G Allen, in: *JNES* 8, 1949, 349-350.

¹² A. Abdalla, in *VA* 4, 1988, 12, see: J.C. Darnell, in: *SAK* 31, 77.

¹³ *WB*. IV, 212-213.

¹⁴ Faulkner, *CD*, 248.

¹⁵ T.G Allen, in: *JNES* 8, 1949, 352 (f).

- (vi) ed (69, 70 and 73) as numbers of rolls. The daily slaughter of Apophis, the evil serpent deity of cloud and storm, is a common theme in the Egyptian literature¹⁶.
- (vii) This sign  would look much like $r^c nb$ ¹⁷.
- (viii) Also $dj .tw b3=f n sd.t$ "His soul is given to the fire" is recorded on other parallels¹⁸.
- (ix) $hk3=f$ "his magic" instead of $h^c w=f$ "his body" is also recorded on other parallels stela¹⁹.
- (x) Other parallels recorded $tm .tw$ and $tmwt$, each probably meant for $tmtj$, which would then apply to the eye of Hours instead of to Apophis and would need a different determinative and meaning²⁰.
- (xi) T.G Allen translated $'nh.t$ "the region of life" and added that "it is the west, where interments were made"²¹.
It could probably be $jmn.t.t$, since  instead of  is a mistake. For $'nh.t$ "West", see: *WB*. I, 205:16.
- (xii) Cf. *PN*, 262:19.

Conclusion

Here the purpose and date of our stela must be considered: In his discussion of the purpose of the painted wooden stelae, Dr. Zayed suggested that they were placed before the entrance of the tombs while the rites of "opening the mouth" were performed upon the mummy, and were then placed in the offering-chapel²².

In attempting to establish the date of our stela, we must point out that the owner of our stela is a member of the *Bs-n-Mwt* family,

¹⁶ T.G Allen, *Op. Cit.*, 352 (h).

¹⁷ *WB*. III, 212.

¹⁸ T.G Allen, in: *JNES* 8, 1949, 352 (k).

¹⁹ cf. T.G Allen, in: *JNES* 8, 1949, 352 (k).

²⁰ *Lco. Cit.*

²¹ T.G Allen, *Op. Cit.*, 353, 355

²² A. Zayed, in: *RdE* 20, 1968, 149-150.

who is the most complex and confusing of the many official families that are known to have flourished at the time of the Dynasty XXII²³. The lady *T3-jrj* lived probably in the Dynasty XXVI²⁴ and to her can be attributed the sarcophagus (Lieblein, *Dict. Supp.*, 360, No. 1100) and probably CG 41011²⁵.

It is interesting to notice that *N3.w-mnh-Jmn* and *Wn-nfr*, the owners of the stelae (Cairo Museum S.R. nos. 9418 and 9419) are also members of *Bs-n-Mwt* family²⁶. This could explain the similarity of the artistic style of the three stelae, which made their texts seem to be copies²⁷ and are made by the same hand.

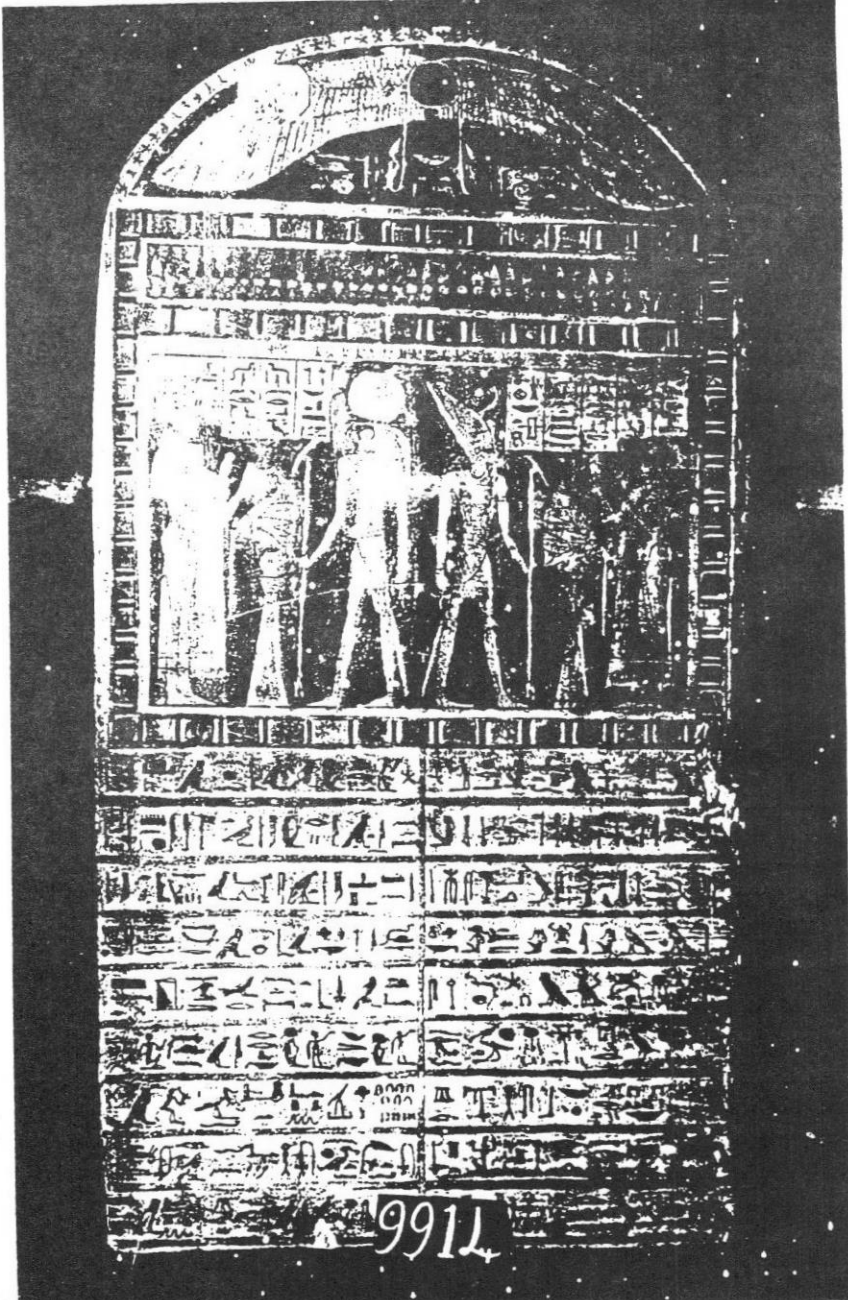
²³ For the complete genealogy of the *Bs-n-Mwt* family, see: M. Bierbrier, *The Late New Kingdom in Egypt*, 92ff, cf. A. Baillet, in: *RT* 18, 1896, 187-196; G. Wittmann, *Priester und Beamte*, 34.

²⁴ Cf. M. Bierbrier, *op. cit.* 93.

²⁵ PM I², 643; Moret, *Sarcophages*, 139-150. Contrary to H. De Meulenaere, in: *CdE* 44, 1969, 268 (No. 4735), G. Vittmann, in: *OrNs* 47, 1978, 4 (No. 202) refused the attributing of this coffin to the owner of our stela.

²⁶ Cf. A. Abdalla, in *VA* 4, 1988, 12; G. Vittmann, in: *OrNs* 47, 1978, 4 (Nos. 200-201)

²⁷ The text of our stela is distinguished from the other two by adding six more lines of inscriptions to the hymns.



(Pl. 1) The stela of *T3-jrj* , (Cairo Mus. TN 27/1/25/16).