

Article

Names and Titles on Three Stela Fragments in the Collection of the Museo Egizio, Turin

Danijela Stefanović

Abstract

This short contribution discusses three Late Middle Kingdom stela fragments in the collection of the Museo Egizio, Turin – Suppl. 12348, Suppl. 12355, and Suppl. 12397 – focusing particularly on workshops, names, titles, and the identities of the individuals mentioned on these objects.

الملخص

تناقش هذه المداخلة القصيرة ثلاث قطع من لوحات ضمن مجموعة المتحف المصري في تورينو والتي تعود إلى أواخر المملكة الوسطى، تحمل الأرقام: Suppl. 12348 و Suppl. 12355 و Suppl. 12397، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على ورشات العمل والأسماء والألقاب وهويات الأفراد المذكورين على تلك القطع.

Introduction

Starting with Detlef Franke’s work on *Personendaten*, many significant contributions to the prosopography of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period (c. 2040–1550 BC) have been published over the last few decades.¹ The online database *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom* (PNM), created by Alexander Ilin-Tomich, builds upon the previous efforts of various scholars, including Franke, and incorporates the author’s own contributions.² It now stands as the most extensive collection of names, dossiers, and titles of individuals from the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. However, prosopographical research is an ongoing endeavour. This short contribution discusses three stela fragments from the Museo Egizio in Turin, revealing new attestations of names, individuals, and titles. These objects originate from the Italian mission’s excavations at Gebelein in 1910, specifically in the area of the Temple of Hathor, directed by Enrico Schiaparelli.³

The Stela Fragments

The large limestone fragment (17.7 x 19.2 x 15.5 cm) of a stela with the inventory number Suppl. 12348 (Fig. 1) contains images of three standing figures (two men and one woman) oriented towards the right.⁴ The text identifies the male figures as a “[w^c?]b-priest of Hathor” ([w^c?]b n ḥwt-ḥr) jw-n.f⁵ and a “commander of a crew of a ruler” (ḏt n tt ḥk) jw.f.⁶ Part of the woman’s name (or title?) perhaps reads ḥwt-ḥr-m-ḥb.⁷ Visual representations preserved on the fragment (i.e., two male figures and one female figure standing in rows with arms down, and names inscribed in front of them in columns without dividing lines) closely resemble the partly preserved stela Leeds LEEDM.D.1960.0081, and can be assigned to Theban Workshop 16.⁸ Based on the preserved titles and a comparison with other products of the workshop, the fragment is datable to the late Dynasty 13.

Among the eight limestone fragments of a stela, jointly inventoried as Suppl. 12355 (Fig. 2), the only



Fig. 1: Stela fragment Museo Egizio, Turin, Suppl. 12348. Photo: Museo Egizio, Turin.



Fig. 2: Stela fragments Museo Egizio, Turin, Suppl. 12355. Photo: Museo Egizio, Turin.



Fig. 3: Stela fragment Museo Egizio, Turin, Suppl. 12397. Photo: Museo Egizio, Turin.

clearly readable line of text – except for the *m* on the fragment in the upper left corner (which may have once been part of a name?) – is “his sister, the female servant of [the ruler]” (*snt.f b3kt n(t) [h3] ////*). The fragments are grouped in two sections. Six of them, including the one with the above-mentioned inscription (measuring 6 x 6.2 cm), are in the upper area; traces of male and female figures are also preserved on it. On one of the fragments in the lower section is a partly preserved image of a divine figure with a sceptre and a vessel, or small offering table (?). It should be noted that the two lower fragments might have belonged to another stela, as the partly preserved hieroglyphs look New Kingdom in style and, furthermore, a similar iconographic arrangement is attested on the early Dynasty 18 stela Turin Suppl. 12377, which also originates from the area of the Temple of Hathor in Gebelein.⁹

The limestone fragment Suppl. 12397 (Fig. 3), measuring 18 x 32 x 11.5 cm, preserves part of two regis-

ters separated by an incised line. In the upper register, on the right, are two standing left-facing female figures identified as “royal [ornament]” (*[h3rt]-nsw*) *nbw-htp.tj*, “true of voice” (*m3^ct-hrw*), and “royal ornament” (*h3rt-nsw*) *wsr-nbw-///*,¹¹ “true of [voice]” (*m3^ct-[hrw]*). The standing male figure on the left, facing right, is the “*sb*, mouth of Nekhen” (*sb r3-nhn*) *bw-rh.tw.f*,¹² “true of voice” (*m3^c-hrw*). The column of text behind *bw-rh.tw.f* identifies a “[commander] of a crew of a ruler” (*[3tw] n tt h3*) *[jw?].f-^cnh*,¹³ “true of voice” (*m3^c-hrw*). The arrangement of images and captions in the lower register may have once been the same – four standing human figures, two on the right, two on the left, with vertical captions identifying them. The partly preserved inscriptions in this register mention a “commander of a crew of a [ruler]?” (*[3tw n tt [h3]?*) *////*, “commander of *////*” (*[3tw n ////*), and an *^cnh////* (which could be the beginning of either a title or a name). Based on the standing human images arranged in two (?) pairs facing each other, identified by a single line of vertical text in front of their figures, the

fragment can be attributed to the Second Intermediate Period Theban Workshop 4 (cf. Fig. 4).¹⁴ Turin Suppl. 12397 can be attributed to the SIP Theban Workshop 4 together with stela London BM EA255; Cairo JE 42824; *Small Sculpture from Ancient Egypt: Egyptian Sculpture XII*, Charles Ede auction house catalogue, London 1985, no. 3; and Philadelphia 54-33-1.

Comments on the Titles

The partly preserved title of a “w^cb-priest of Hathor”, held by *jw-n.f* (Suppl. 12348), is uniquely attested.¹⁵ Due to the location of the fragment’s discovery, the object may represent an individual associated with the Temple of Hathor at Gebelein.

The title *ꜥtw n ꜥt ḥꜥ* is well known from the Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period and has been analysed in depth by Oleg D. Berlev.¹⁶ A holder of the title “commander of the crew of the ruler” could have been in charge of a combat or workforce group of people.¹⁷ More than a hundred holders of the title *ꜥtw n ꜥt ḥꜥ*, some of whom with multiple

attestations, are known by now.¹⁸ The two officers recorded on fragment Suppl. 12348 and the one (?) on Suppl. 12397, although their names are missing, should be added to the list of title holders.

The women attested on the fragments are marked as *bꜥkt nt ḥꜥ* (“female servant of the ruler”) and *ḥkrt-nsw* (“royal ornament”). Both compounds are well-attested throughout the Late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. “Female servant of the ruler”, based on entries in the *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom* database, occurs 43 times (in most cases on stela) and refers to 41 individuals.¹⁹ The personal name on fragment Suppl. 12355 is not preserved, making any identification with already known individuals impossible.

The identifier “female servant of the ruler” is frequently referenced as a “title” in the literature, although it primarily indicates rank rather than a specific position.²⁰ It has also been observed that the male relatives of *bꜥkt nt ḥꜥ* typically held titles such as *wr mꜥdw šmꜥw*, *smsw ḥꜥjꜥt*, or *šb rꜥ-nḥn*.²¹ Based on the studied data, Alexander Ilin-Tomich suggested that “the title *bꜥkt nt ḥꜥ* was normally borne by older women” as its holders are usually documented as mothers, mothers-in-law, and wives, but rarely as daughters.²² He also studied the compound *bꜥkt nt ḥꜥ* in terms of geographical distribution, indicating that, along with some other female designations, it was specific to Upper Egypt, as well as that these women were connected with the officials of the southern administration and that their status was more prominent than that of the majority of the *nbwt pr*, as is evident from the titles held by their male relatives.²³

Who were the men mainly associated with the “female servants of the ruler”? Based on the preserved corpus of attestations, holders of the title *wr mꜥdw šmꜥw* (“chief of tens of Upper Egypt”)²⁴ seem to be most closely associated with them, often through kinship links and across several generations.

For example, on the late Dynasty 13 stela Florence 7603²⁵ a *bꜥkt nt ḥꜥ nfrw-ptḥ* is commemorated as the wife of the “lector-priest” (*ḥrj-ḥb*) *snb.wj*. Among their six children – four sons and two daughters – only one has a title, i.e., their son *nnj-rs*, who was a *wr mꜥdw šmꜥw*. Although there is no obvious link between the title of the father and his son (coming



Fig. 4: Stela London, British Museum, EA255. Photo: ©The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

from different administrative branches), to be *wr mḏw šmꜥw* and to have a *b3kt nt ḥꜥ3* for a mother seems not to have been unusual. It was common for women bearing this title to have sons who were “chiefs of tens of Upper Egypt”, and sometimes more than one son holding this title.²⁶

b3kwt nt ḥꜥ3 are also attested as daughters. The stela Cairo JdE 42824²⁷ features the family of the “bowman” (*jꜣꜣ pḏt*) *jwꜣꜣ-rs*. His daughter was a *b3kt nt ḥꜥ3*, and two of his sons were “chiefs of tens of Upper Egypt.”

Rarely, a *b3kt nt ḥꜥ3* could be linked to a high-ranking official. Stela Cairo CG 20086²⁸ commemorates the “hereditary noble, governor, and deputy treasurer” (*jꜣꜣ-pꜥt ḥ3tj-ꜥ nd jḏnw n mr ḥtmt*) *jꜥ-jꜣb*. His wife, perhaps unexpectedly for the spouse of a high-ranking officer, was a “female servant of the ruler.”

A similar pattern is also noted with the titles *smsw ḥ3jt* (“elder of the portal”)²⁹ and *s3b r3-nḥn* (“*s3b*, mouth of Nekhen”).³⁰ Holders of the titles *wr mḏw šmꜥw*, *smsw ḥ3jt*, or *s3b r3-nḥn* most probably belonged to a body of court officials, without any specific function (but with certain duties or tasks their holders had to fulfil), who could be commissioned when needed for a specific task. The exact differences between them remain unclear. The title *wr mḏw šmꜥw* appears in the “Duties of the Vizier”,³¹ indicating that their holders were, at least on some occasions (such as royal commissions), under the authority of the vizier’s office.

Administrative matters and outdoor commissions were also entrusted to *s3bw r3-nḥn* and *smsww ḥ3jt*. Both titles are common for officials of the inner palace. They may have been related to commissions of the vizier for building projects or resource gathering. Based on the available corpus of attestations, these titles seem to be more closely related to Upper Egypt (in terms of provenance, workshop, and origin).³² However, it is important to note that the roles of *smsw ḥ3jt*, *s3b r3-nḥn* and *wr mḏw šmꜥw* cannot be differentiated, nor can the differences between them be clearly outlined.

For scholars in the field of prosopography, including the author, it is common to focus on a quantitative approach and statistical data. However, within interpretative sociology, the use of statistics on selected material (such as varying levels of preservation,

types of sources, etc.) is frequently regarded as questionable, as the data may lack representativeness. In this form of prosopography

*the analyst aims to reconstruct the pattern in cases where some kind of pattern is known (...). The analyst operates by tracking down incidental references to his subject matter occurring in sources focused on other things. He then pieces his snippets of information together until the resultant patchwork allows the pattern to stand out. It’s rather like putting the pieces of an incomplete jigsaw.*³³

Indeed, our jigsaw puzzle is far from complete, and we may even be fitting pieces together incorrectly. In fact, “female servants of the ruler” are primarily, though not exclusively, attested on objects either produced or originating from Upper Egypt. On the other hand, how can we determine the percentage of the 42 preserved attestations of “female servants of the ruler” in relation to the total number that once existed? While this question may appear highly hypothetical, alternative approaches for addressing it are possible.

According to data from the *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom* database, there are 391 attestations of the title “chief of tens of Upper Egypt” (representing approximately 300 individuals),³⁴ 131 attestations of the title “*s3b*, mouth of Nekhen” (corresponding to around hundred individuals),³⁵ and 159 records of “elders of the portal.”³⁶ Again, the given numbers cannot be considered as definitive.³⁷

Based on the available data pertaining to individuals holding the titles *wr mḏw šmꜥw*, *s3b r3-nḥn*, and *smsw ḥ3jt*, the status marker *nbt pr*³⁸ appears to have been predominant among their female relatives (mothers, wives, daughters, sisters). Thus, it appears that within a social hierarchy, it was not of significant relevance to the holders of the above-mentioned titles whether their wives or sisters held positions such as “female servant of the ruler”, “mistress of the house”, or were identified by any other female designation, including “royal ornament.”

Due to a lack of data on their family backgrounds and the absence of solid patterns in sources documenting the male relatives of “female servants of the ruler”, it remains uncertain whether their status was

attained through marriage or paternal lineage. Additionally, there are no preserved records indicating the specific tasks they may have undertaken, whether within the court or in any other administrative branch. “Female servants of the ruler” have not been associated with specific activities or duties, nor have they been included in ration lists. Unfortunately, the precise origin, meaning, and significance of the title within the social system of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period remain unknown. The social circle(s) to which the *ḥkrt-nsw* (“royal ornament” / “lady-in-waiting”) belonged are complex. During the early Middle Kingdom, this rank title seems to have designated women linked to the royal court. However, by Dynasty 13, it appears to have lost this specific connotation, though it remained common for the wives of court members and high-ranking officials, linking them to the king’s entourage.³⁹ Women marked as *ḥkrt-nsw* are attested both on the stelae of medium and high-ranking officials, including holders of the rank title *sw-nsw* (“king’s son”)⁴⁰ during the Late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. A large number of the late Middle Kingdom “royal ornaments” were related to men with the titles *ḥt w n ḥt ḥkḥ*, *wr mdw šmꜥw*, *swb*, and

swb rꜥ-nḥn. Whether these women might have held influence over their male family members’ careers or vice versa, is hard to say. However, it seems to be common for women of multiple generations of the same family to hold this title, as in case of stela Cairo JdE 37507,⁴¹ where the mother and three daughters were “royal ornaments.” It has also not been uncommon for granddaughters, daughters-in-law, and mothers-in-law to be designated as “royal ornaments.”⁴²

The holders of the title *ḥkrt-nsw* attested on the Turin fragments cannot be identified with already known individuals. However, these new attestations further contribute to the assembled corpus of data. Although disused fragments preserve limited data from the objects they once were part of, the names and titles they reveal are valuable additions to the prosopographic corpus of the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. New additions to the lists of various title holders are always possible. In most cases, these will not reveal much – just another attestation of a name, title, or, at best, new dossiers. However, they serve as a reminder that our knowledge of the total number of individuals with titles remains incomplete.

Note

¹ Franke, *Personendaten*, 1984; see also Grajetzki and Stefanović, *Dossiers of Ancient Egyptians*, 2012; Stefanović, *Dossiers of Ancient Egyptian Women*, 2016; Ilin-Tomich, *BiOr* 71 (2014); Ilin-Tomich, in Miniaci and Grajetzki (eds.), *The World of Middle Kingdom Egypt III*, 2022.

² *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/info>.

³ The term Gebelein refers to a group of archaeological sites located 28 km southwest of Luxor on the west bank of the Nile in the Qena Governorate of Egypt. It encompasses two towns (Sumenu and Per-Hathor), cemeteries, cult places, etc. For an overview, see Ejsmond, *Gebelein: An Overview*, 2016, and Fiore Marochetti, in Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2013. For the Italian excavations at Gebelein, see Schiaparelli, *ASAE* 21 (1921) and Moiso, *Storia del Museo Egizio*, 2016, pp. 58–60; 64–65; 94–95. The author is grateful to Museum Egizio’s staff for providing images of the objects and archaeological information about them.

⁴ There are other unpublished fragments of Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period stelae at the Museo Egizio that are of particular interest, such as

Prov. 5006, mentioning the name *rn.f-rs*, Suppl. 12345bis mentioning a *ḥmt-nswt nbw-ḥꜥ.s*, Suppl. 12351 testifying to a *ḥtj-pdt wꜥj*, Suppl. 12369 with a *nbt pr ḥ-ntt*, and Suppl. 12414 commemorating a *mtj n sꜥ (?) sꜥ-ḥwt-ḥr* and a *snb.f-ḥnḥ*.

⁵ Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 13/20.

⁶ Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 15/25.

⁷ Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 235/13.

⁸ Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 2017, front cover, pp. 107–08, pl. 13.

⁹ Donadoni Roveri, *Museo Egizio di Torino*, 1988, pp. 91–92, fig. 120.

¹⁰ Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 192/2.

¹¹ See Ranke, *PN II*, 1952, p. 275/11.

¹² Not attested in either Ranke, *PN* or *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*. Compare with *n-rḥ.tw.f* (Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 168/19).

¹³ Ranke, *PN I*, 1935, p. 14/5.

¹⁴ *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 25, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/2/workshop/41>. See also Franke and Marée, *Egyptian Stelae*, 2013, p. 142.

¹⁵ Compare with titles *wꜥb n ḥwt-ḥr nbt jwnt* and *wꜥb ḥ n ḥwt-ḥr*. *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 21, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/172> and <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de>.

- de/title/1749. The reading of the title on scarab seal Berkeley 6-12786 (see <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/579>) is amended (see Ilin-Tomich, *Egyptian Name Scarabs*, 2023, p. 60). Cf. Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, nos. 652 and 673.
- ¹⁶ Берлев, *Палестинский сборник* 17 (1967); Berlev, *RdE* 23 (1971).
- ¹⁷ Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, no. 13; Quirke, *Titles and Bureaux*, 2004, p. 99; Stefanović, *Regular Military Titles*, 2006, pp. 72–94; De Gaetano, in Apostola and Kekes (eds.), *Current Research in Egyptology 2021*, 2022.
- ¹⁸ See *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/179>.
- ¹⁹ *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/331>.
- ²⁰ See Ward, *Essays on Feminine Titles*, 1986, pp. 6–7; Stefanović, *Non-Royal Regular Feminine Titles*, 2009, pp. 57–63; Ilin-Tomich, *BACE* 26 (2018).
- ²¹ Stefanović, *Non-Royal Regular Feminine Titles*, 2009, pp. 57–58; Ilin-Tomich, *BACE* 26 (2018), pp. 20–22.
- ²² Ilin-Tomich, *BACE* 26 (2018), pp. 21–22.
- ²³ Loc. cit.
- ²⁴ Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, no. 721; Quirke, *Titles and Bureaux*, 2004, p. 84; Quirke, in Silverman et al. (eds.), *Archaism and Innovation*, 2009; Ilin-Tomich, *ZÄS* 142 (2015); Ilin-Tomich, in Arkhipov et al. (eds.), *Pratiques administratives et comptables*, 2021.
- ²⁵ Bosticco, *Museo Archeologico di Firenze*, 1959, no. 43.
- ²⁶ Stefanović, *Non-Royal Regular Feminine Titles*, 2009, pp. 58–63.
- ²⁷ Eldamaty, in El-Aguizy and Sherif Ali (eds.), *Echoes of Eternity*, 2010, pp. 91–96.
- ²⁸ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reiches*, Vol. 1, 1902, pp. 101–03.
- ²⁹ Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, no. 1309; Quirke, *Titles and Bureaux*, 2004, p. 33; Quirke, in Silverman et al. (eds.), *Archaism and Innovation*, 2009; Ilin-Tomich, *ZÄS* 142 (2015); Ilin-Tomich, in Arkhipov et al. (eds.), *Pratiques administratives et comptables*, 2021.
- ³⁰ Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, nos. 523 and 584; Quirke, *Titles and Bureaux*, 2004, pp. 89–90; Franke, *SAK* 11 (1984); Quirke, in Silverman et al. (eds.), *Archaism and Innovation*, 2009; Ilin-Tomich, *ZÄS* 142 (2015); Ilin-Tomich, in Arkhipov et al. (eds.), *Pratiques administratives et comptables*, 2021.
- ³¹ Van den Boorn, *Duties of the Vizier*, 1988, pp. 33–34.
- ³² Ilin-Tomich, *ZÄS* 142 (2015).
- ³³ Carney, *Phoenix* 27/2 (1973), p. 160.
- ³⁴ *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/178>.
- ³⁵ *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/10>.
- ³⁶ *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 5 (accessed August 24, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/192>.
- ³⁷ For example, on the late Dynasty 13 stela sold by Galartis SA auction house in 2016, six individuals are named: *ḥnh n njwt sš-jmn, // ddw-sbk, nbt pr ttj*, her mother *kjyt*, and *jrjy-pdt jty*. See <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/stele-egyptienne-deuxieme-periode-intermediaire-103-c-8de4c6ca6d?objectID=111536712&algIndex=undefined&queryID=bc2cc8bcd9fa2ae57c84fe6490d99d86> (accessed April 10, 2024).
- ³⁸ Ward, *Essays on Feminine Titles*, 1986, p. 8; Stefanović and Satzinger, in Miniaci and Grajetzki (eds.), *The World of Middle Kingdom Egypt I*, 2015.
- ³⁹ Ward, *Essays on Feminine Titles*, 1986, pp. 24–38; Franke, *JEA* 76 (1990), p. 229; Stefanović, *SAK* 38 (2009); Stefanović, *Non-Royal Regular Feminine Titles*, 2009, pp. 85–109; Stefanović, in Kousoulis and Lazaridis (eds.), *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists*, 2015, and Ilin-Tomich, *BACE* 26 (2018). For a general overview of the chronological framework of the title (from the late Old Kingdom to the end of Dynasty 18) and its cultic associations, see Fekri, in Daoud et al. (eds.), *Studies in Honor of Ali Radwan*, 2005; Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 1986, pp. 86–88, and Tooley, *SAK* 49 (2020).
- ⁴⁰ Ward, *Index MK*, 1982, no. 1245. See especially Miniaci, in Pernigotti and Zecchi (eds.), *Il tempio e il suo personale nell'Egitto antico*, 2010. For the list of title holders see *Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom*, Version 4 (accessed March 14, 2024): <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/title/165>.
- ⁴¹ Enany, *CahKarn* 13 (2010). See also Stefanović, *Dossiers of Ancient Egyptian Women*, 2016, no. 180.
- ⁴² See, for example, the stela Cairo CG 20322 (Lange and Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine* 1, 1902, pp. 334–35).

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