



Egyptian rock-inscriptions at Tombos and the Dal Cataract: the epigraphic survey, season 2017

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The expedition was in the field for 17 days from 30th November to 16th December, 2017,¹ the focus of our work this season being the recording of inscriptions at the sites of Tombos and Debba (Dal Cataract, east bank).

Tombos

At Tombos, building on our earlier work at the site,² we began a final collation of the five great rock-stelae of King Thutmose I situated along the river on the east bank,³ all carved into huge boulders of granite gneiss.⁴ As is well known, they were first published in full by Lepsius (Figure 1),⁵ an admirable record for its time (the texts subsequently transcribed in *Urk.* iv, 82-88; cf. Sethe 1914, 42-45, nos 32-33), which understandably, however, has turned out to contain a number of errors (see below). A preliminary account of our results to date, dealing provisionally with three of the royal stelae (from south to north, Figure 1, a, c and d; nos 1-3 below), is given here, with minimal comment and bibliography. Also included are a private stela belonging probably to an official of the colonial administration (no. 4) and a group of rock-drawings, very likely related to the presence of an Egyptian workforce at the site (no. 5). A further season will be required to complete the project.

1. Stela 'a' (*LD* iii, pl. 5, a; *Urk.* iv, 82-86; Plate 1; Figures 1,a, and 2; inscribed on a now-sloping boulder, surely upright originally)⁶

The southernmost of the royal stelae, dated to the King's regnal Year 2, it consists of 18 horizontal lines of hieroglyphic

text, well executed in sunk relief, oriented left to right, enclosed in a rectangular frame. The frame is surmounted by the motif in raised relief of the winged sun disc with two central pendant uraei, and the toponym *Behdet* written in large hieroglyphs in sunk relief on either side. Beneath the final line of inscription is a seated figure of the king in sunk relief.⁷ Though worked to a relatively smooth finish overall, the surface contains numerous flaws, undulates markedly in parts, and falls away towards the bottom right, where the framing line is necessarily abbreviated, as are the lengths of the last three lines of text. Our current copy of the stela is given in Figure 2. A fuller treatment is under preparation. I list here a selection of the more obvious corrections:

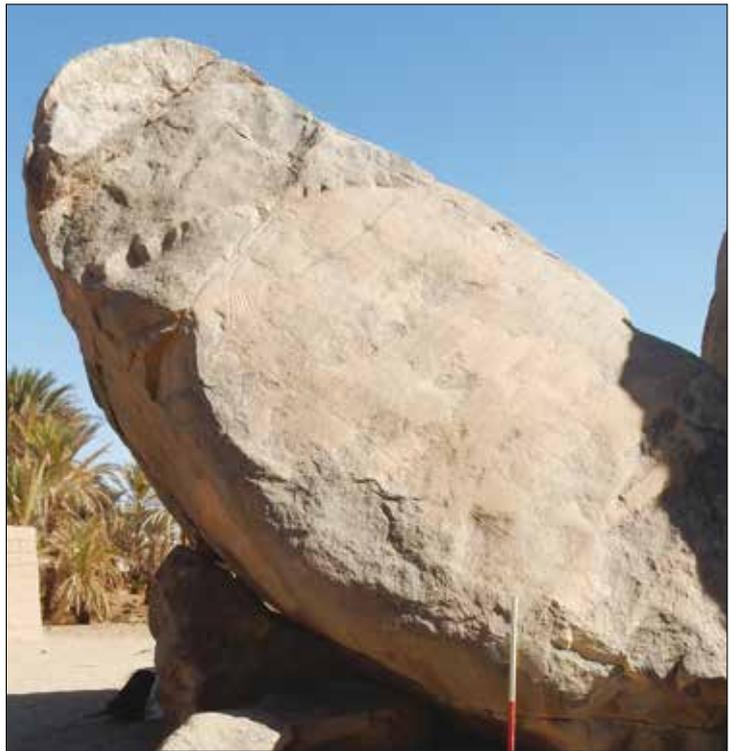


Plate 1. Tombos, stela 'a' (Year 2 of Thutmose I).

a) line 2, end (*Urk.* iv, 82, 17; Figure 3): the second determinative of *wṣ*, 'raise', is the usual 'forearm with hand holding stick' (D40), as in line 13, not the incongruous 'Kasten'.⁸

b) line 5, middle (*Urk.* iv, 83, 13; Figure 4): the unusual sign following the verb *ḥnsk.n.f*, 'he has bound (?)',⁹ is misrepresented in the earlier record. In reality, it looks very much like the 'head in profile' (*tp*-sign, D1) with a distinctively long neck;¹⁰ the sign following is not a *p* but a *g* (carved without internal detail), the first sign of the group *gnw*. The meaning

¹ For permission to continue the project and for help and co-operation, we are grateful, as ever, to our senior colleagues in NCAM, Drs Abdelrahman Ali and El-Hassan Ahmed. The team consisted of Vivian Davies (director, epigrapher), Dr Ikhlas Abdellatif (epigrapher, representing NCAM), Drs Julien Cooper and Xavier Droux (epigraphers), and Osman Dafalla (driver/cook). Over previous seasons at Tombos, Dr Derek Welsby and Liam McNamara have also contributed to the work of recording. The drawings published here have been inked in by Will Schenck. Much valuable technical assistance in the preparation of the report has been provided by Dr Renée Friedman.

² See Davies 2008a and b; 2009a and b; 2012.

³ PM vii, 174-5; Edwards and Salih 1992, 18, 91/7, b, e-h; for their location, see Osman and Edwards 2011, 292, fig. 8.16.1, TMB003.

⁴ See Harrell 1999, 244, Table 2, n. 5.

⁵ *LD* iii, pl. 5; cf. Osman and Edwards 2011, 68, 70, fig. 3. 16.

⁶ Cf. Klug 2002, 71-78, 504-506, no. 4 (citing extensive previous literature), 552, pl. 7; Beylage 2002, i, 209-219, ii, 679-683; Budka 2002, 60-61; 2005, 108-109; Osman and Edwards 2011, 293-294, fig. 8.16.5, TMB003b; Davies 2017a, 87-88, figs 24-25.

⁷ The stela has a maximum height of about 2.5m and width of 2.16m.

⁸ *Urk.* iv, 82, 17, note b; cf. Klug 2002, 72, n. 567.

⁹ *Wb.* 3, 116, 3; Klug 2002, 72, n. 571; Hannig 2006, 581.

¹⁰ Possibly a variant of the sign F10, here perhaps reading *ḥb*, 'neck' or 'throat', as suggested by Cruz-Urbe 1986, 20: '... the throats (*ḥbw*) of the powerful ones (*gnw*) ...'; cf. Spalinger 1995, 274; Beylage 2002, 214-5, n. 649 and n. 655; Klug 2002, 72, with n. 571.

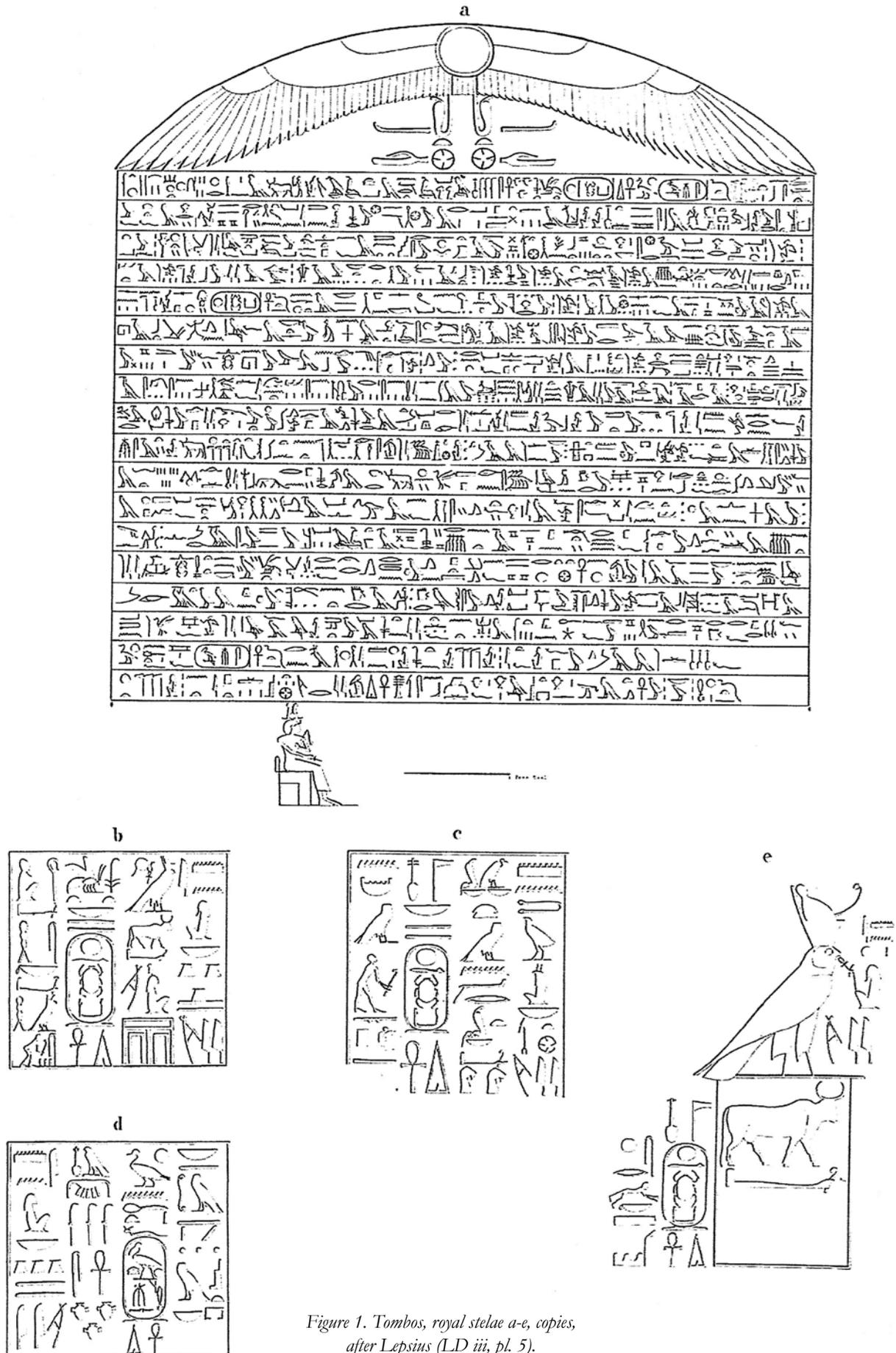


Figure 1. Tombos, royal stelae a-e, copies, after Lepsius (LD iii, pl. 5).

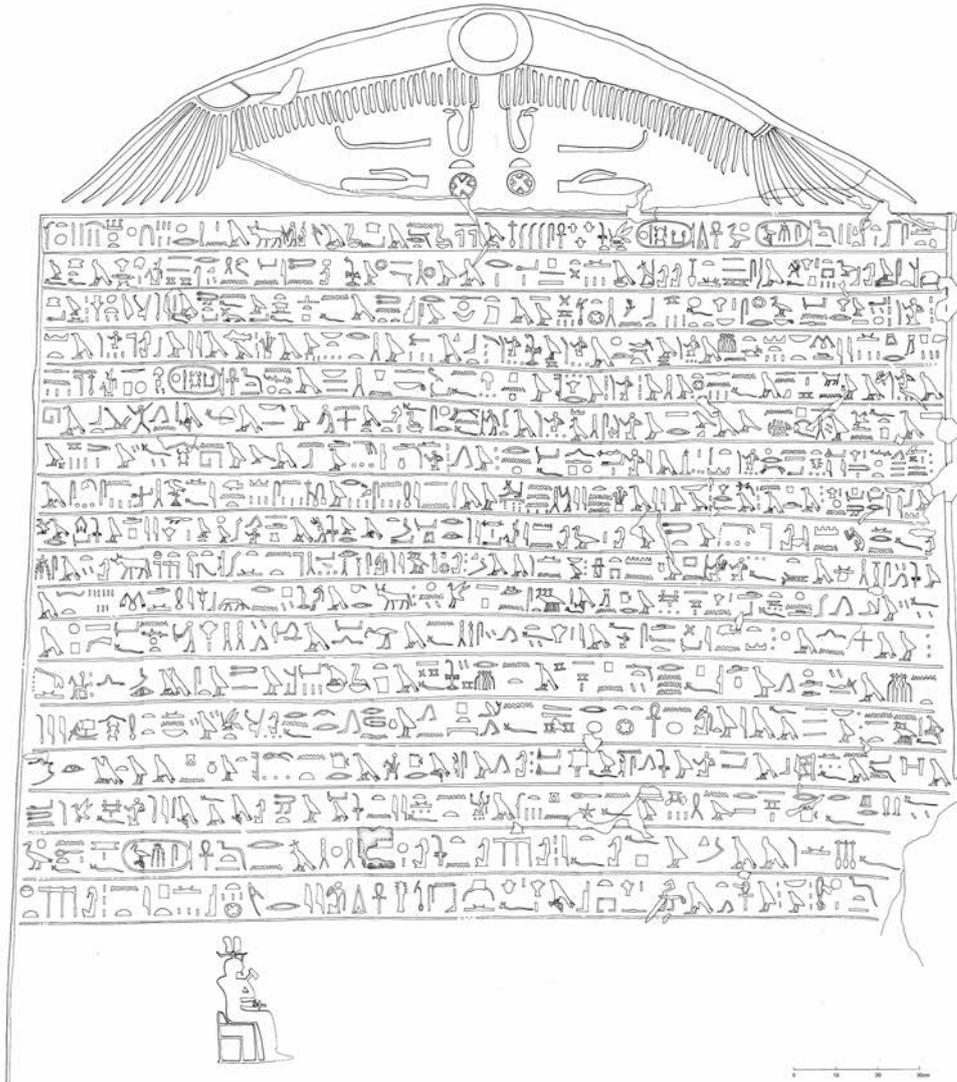


Figure 2. Tombos, stela 'a' (Year 2 of Thutmose I), recent copy.



Figure 3. Stela 'a', line 2, detail.

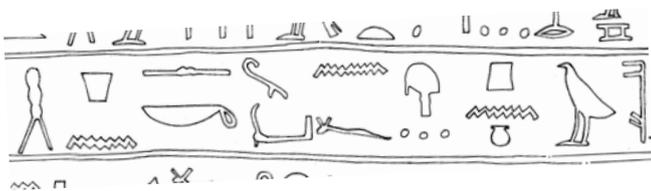


Figure 4. Stela 'a', line 5, detail.

of the passage remains to be fully clarified.

c) line 7, end (*Urk.* iv, 84, 7; Figure 5): add the sign *t3*, 'land' (N17), previously omitted, to the top of the final group, with the preceding group of three horizontal signs then perhaps to be read as 'islands' (*iww*): 'laid low throughout their islands



Figure 5. Stela 'a', line 7, detail.

and their land'.¹¹

d) line 8, middle (*Urk.* iv, 84, 9; Figure 6): the 'scribe's outfit'-sign (Y4) here reads *trw/trw*, 'blood',¹² with the determinative (previously misconstrued) representing the mouth (D21) emitting a liquid (a variant of D26). The phrase runs:

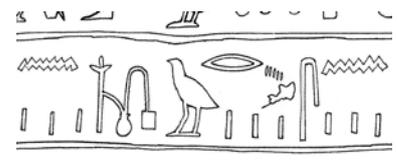


Figure 6. Stela 'a', line 8, detail.

¹¹ The riverscape of Upper Nubia is renowned for its large settled islands (eg. Sai, Argo, Mograt).

¹² *Wb.* 5, 386, 13; Harris 1961, 154-155; Hannig 2006, 1031.

trw.sn mi snmw hwywt, 'their blood (gushing) like storms of pouring rain' or similar.

e) line 17, middle, left (*Urk.* iv, 86, 12; Figure 7): note

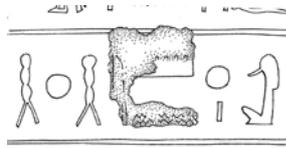


Figure 7. Stela 'a', line 17, detail.

that the name Amun has been deliberately damaged (and not restored).¹³ The name occurs again in the upper part of the stela (line 9), where, not so easily reached, it was left untouched.¹⁴

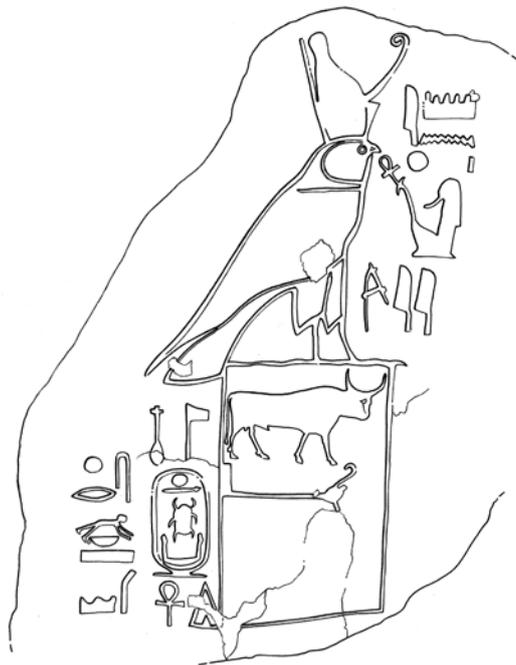


Figure 8. Stela 'e', recent copy.

2. Stela 'e' (*LD* iii, pl. 5, e; *Urk.* iv, 87, 6-8; Plate 2; Figures 1, e, and 8)¹⁵

A very fine work of sculptural art, in sunk relief, the inscription is arranged into four columns, with no frame, the composition and size of the elements well suited to the shape and size of the selected boulder. The stela features in the centre

¹³ As also on the adjacent stela of the viceroy Merymose (Davies 2012, 30, with n. 11).

¹⁴ The name Amun occurs on three of the four other royal stelae, namely 'b', 'd', and 'e', in each case in an elevated location and again left untouched (see Figure 8 and Plates 2-4).

¹⁵ Cf. Budka 2002, 60-61, fig. 2; 2005, 109, 111, fig. 1; Osman and Edwards 2011, 68, 83, pl. 49, 294, fig. 8.16.8, TMB003e.

a gigantic writing of the king's Horus-name,¹⁶ to the left two columns containing the king's prenomen with epithet, and to the right (facing right) a dedication to the god Amenre: '(1) Horus, Strong Bull [beloved of Maat], (2) perfect god, Aa-kheper-ka-re, given life, (3) who has overthrown Kush, (4) beloved of Amenre'. Interestingly, the hieroglyph of the seated deity in the fourth column has a dual function, acting both as a determinative of the name of the god and as a representation of the god himself offering life and dominion to the king, a concise solution to the lack of space available for a full figure of the deity.¹⁷ Another peculiarity is the form of the *nht*-hieroglyph (D40) in the *serekb* of the Horus-name, the

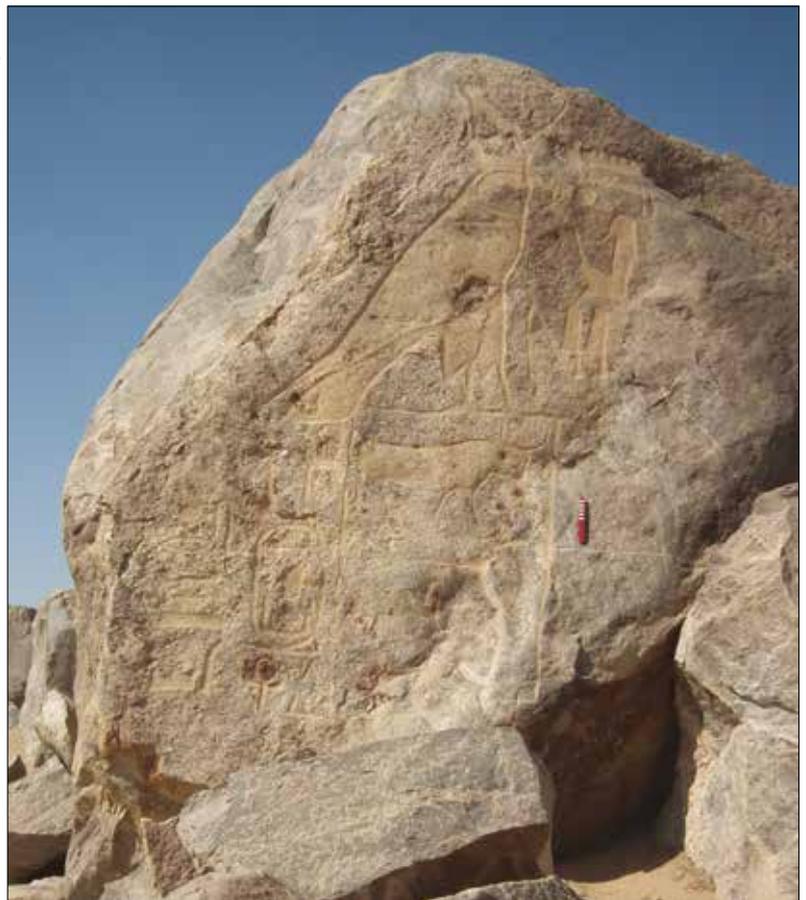


Plate 2. Tombos, stela 'e'.

rear end of which (the 'elbow' of the forearm) deliberately incorporates the frame of the *serekb* at this point.

As it stands, the final two elements of the Horus-name, 'Beloved-of-Maat', are lacking. The stone surface in this lower area is deeply uneven, which might well have discouraged an attempt at relief carving. It is possible that the decoration was completed in painted plaster, long fallen away.

¹⁶ Though often referred to as 'small' or 'minor', the stela has a maximum height of 3.2m making it the tallest of the five royal stelae.

¹⁷ Cf. the contemporary royal stela on the Hagr El-Merwa, Davies 2017a, 71, fig. 6, showing a large seated figure of the god, Amenre, offering life and dominion to the king's Horus-name. On the significance of the latter in such contexts, see Vernus 2011, 191; cf. Davies 2017a, 69, n. 7; Doyen and Gabolde 2017, 154.



Figure 9. Stela 'd', line 3, detail.

3. Stela 'd' (*LD* iii, pl. 5, d; *Urk.* iv, 88, 2-4; Plates 3 and 4, Figures 1, d, and 9)¹⁸ Located close to stela 'b' in the northern group, stela 'd' has the usual rectangular frame, the inscription within, done in sunk relief, arranged into four columns, three facing left, the fourth facing right.¹⁹ Note that the third line, writing the king's epithet, was miscopied as *nb ʔ Styw m ʔw(?) m st nbt*, 'Lord of Ta-Sety (Nubia) in lands (?)²⁰ in every place'. The line actually reads (Figure 9): *dr Styw m st nbt*, 'who subdues the Nubians in every place'. The text is otherwise routine: '(1) Horus of gold Beautiful-of-years, who-causes-hearts-to-live, (2) Son of Re of his body, Djehutymose-who-appears-like-Re, given life, (3) who subdues the Nubians in every place, (4) beloved of Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands'.



Plate 3. Tombos, stelae 'd' (right) and 'b' (left).



Plate 4. Tombos, stela 'd'.

tion names the owner as 'Mayuu,²² engendered by (son of) Horerhat and his wife Tju'. The title of the owner (who appears to be otherwise unattested) is not included but, given the inscription's location and quality, he might well have been

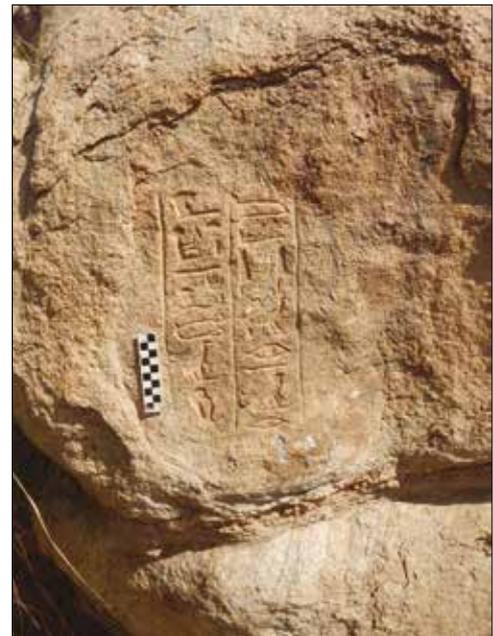


Plate 5. Tombos, inscription of Mayuu.

4. Situated on a relatively small granitic rock facing the Nile, close to the river-bank, not far from the northern group of royal stelae, an inscription in two columns of hieroglyphs, carved in sunk relief, finely done on a prepared surface (Plate 5).²¹ Dating probably to the early 18th Dynasty, the inscrip-

one of the senior officials associated with the creation of the royal stelae.

5. Located just to the south of no. 4 is a group of large granitic boulders, the main one of very considerable size (Plate 6), bearing native drawings (human figures and animals) and pharaonic matter (figures and inscriptions), most quite roughly pecked and now much weathered. The Egyptian decoration includes standing human figures and numerous representations of the god Ptah, a deity especially revered by

¹⁸ Cf. Budka 2002, 61, fig. 4; 2005, 110-111, fig. 1; Osman and Edwards 2011, 68, 83, pl. 50, right, 294-5, TMB003g, figs 8. 16. 9, and 8.16.11.

¹⁹ The stela has a maximum height of 1.62m and width of 1.54m. Its base line is situated 2.55m above the current ground level.

²⁰ *Urk.* iv, 88, note a.

²¹ Previously noted in Davies 2008a, 31, n. 47; 2008b, 48, n. 47; Osman and Edwards 2011, 68.

²² Not listed in this form in *PN*; cf. *PN* i, 146.



Plate 6. Tombos, view of boulders with drawings and inscriptions.

craftsmen (Plate 7). There are two recognizable inscriptions, one writing simply 'scribe' (Plate 7, top right), the other barely legible, just possibly 'scribe, Hor... (?)' (Plate 8, centre). Also present is a lightly pecked scene showing a horse being led by the much smaller figure of a groom (Plate 9). This interesting site appears to have been in origin a 'significant place' for the native community, appropriated during the 18th Dynasty by the colonial workforce for its own ritual and commemorative purposes.²³



Plate 8. Tombos, rock-inscription.



Plate 7. Tombos, rock-drawings: figures and inscription



Plate 9. Tombos, rock-drawing: figure of horse with groom.

²³ Cf. Edwards 2006, 58; Davies 2017a, 94, n. 81; Thum 2016, 75-76; Brown 2017, 170-171.



Plate 10. Debba, cliff face, view of rock-inscriptions.

Debba (Dal Cataract, east bank, region of Sarkamatto)

Here we briefly continued our recording of the inscriptions carved on the cliff faces in or near the *wadi* at Debba (a popular staging post for travellers, rich in prosopographical data), some of the material already included in older surveys and now in need of revision:

1. A large group of inscriptions, extending for about 3m along the bottom of the main cliff-face (Plate 10), previously hidden from view by a modern structure, many of them now damaged or eroded and very difficult to read. Though numerous, they represent probably only a fraction of the corpus that once existed here.

Among them, as indicated in the last report,²⁴ are two inscriptions of the ‘King’s son (viceroy) Setau’, dating to the reign of Ramesses II. One of these (Plate 11) is written



Plate 11. Debba, rock-inscriptions, detail.

over an earlier inscription, the end of an offering-formula, the whole now incomplete, having suffered both natural and man-made damage: ‘(1) [A gift which the king gives and A] menre, lord of the throne of the two lands (2) [... for the *ka* of Scribe Sen-Djehuty, justified, of the southern town (Thebes)’. This official, dating probably to the early-mid 18th dynasty, is known from a fine rock-inscription on Sehel Island, which reads ‘Scribe of the town, Sen-Djehuty, justified’,²⁵ and from other inscriptions in Aswan and Nubia,²⁶ including now very probably also our no. 2 below.

2. On a tall boulder, near to the east bank of the river, a large number of motifs and inscriptions (Plate 12) of varying date.²⁷ The longest inscription, at the bottom left, is an offering-formula in three horizontal lines, incised and pecked, reading right to left (Figure 10): ‘(1) A gift which the king gives, Amenre, lord of the throne of the two lands, (2) Djehuty, lord of Hermopolis, and Osiris, lord of the sacred land, (that they may give) (3) a peret-kheru offering consisting of bread, beer, beef, fowl, and all good th[in]gs, for the *ka* of Scribe Sen-Djehuty’.²⁸

These two records of Sen-Djehuty’s presence at the Dal

²⁵ Gasse and Rondot 2007, 189 and 510, SHE 311.

²⁶ Hintze and Reineke 1989, i, 37, no. 62, 39, no. 68, 40, no. 73, ii, pls 32 and 34; Mahfouz 2005, 71-72; Gasse and Rondot 2007, 189; Müller 2013, 253, no. 30.

²⁷ Cf. Vila 1975, 26-7, figs 14-16; Hintze and Reineke 1989, i, 181, ii, pl. 260, upper; Davies 2014, 41, pl. 24.

²⁸ Read tentatively as ‘Djehuty-nefer (?)’ by Hintze and Reineke 1989, i, 181, no. 602; cf. Vila 1975, 27, fig. 15, 28, no. 2; Müller 2013, 278, no. 79, 452, 42.36. The last sign in the name as written is definitely the *sn*-hieroglyph (T22).

²⁴ Davies 2017b, 66, pl. 12.



Plate 12. Debba, boulder with drawings and inscriptions.



Figure 10. Debba, inscription of Sen-Djehuty, copy.

Cataract (representing perhaps separate journeys) are by far his southernmost attestations. Like other personnel identified in the inscriptions (see now also our no. 3), he was no doubt travelling on his round of official business;²⁹ both he and his sons (Djehutyhotep and Smakhasut)³⁰ are known to have been involved in the colonial administration, with regard especially to the gold-mining industry.

3. On a curved boulder, overlooking the river just to the south of no. 2, a much weathered round-topped stela (Plate 13; Figure 11),³¹ probably Ramesside, with an incised scene (originally drafted in red)³² showing a man standing with arms raised worshipping the god Horus in the form of a falcon

²⁹ On 'the use of rock inscriptions to delineate a professional jurisdiction', see Brown 2017, 184-187.

³⁰ See the bibliography cited in n. 26; for Smakhasut, add Hintze and Reineke 1989, i, 174, no. 569, ii, pl. 243; Müller 2013, 25, no. 12.

³¹ Cf. Vila 1975, 27, fig. 17, 28, no. 5; Hintze and Reineke 1989, i, 181, no. 600, ii, pl. 260; Osman and Edwards 2011, 85-6.

³² Traces of the red outlines survive in places, most visibly on the figure of the man.



Plate 13. Debba, stela of Hatia.



Figure 11. Debba, stela of Hatia, copy.

standing on a rectangular pedestal or ledge.³³ In the register below is a semi-hieratic inscription, arranged horizontally, reading right to left, identifying the man as 'Scribe of the treasury Hatia'. This official is quite possibly to be identified with the 'Scribe of the treasury of the lord of the two lands, Hatia, son of Hornakht' known from the gold-mining region of the Wadi Allaqi.³⁴

³³ For contemporary rock-stelae (in the Wadi Allaqi) with such Horus figures, see, for example, Piotrovsky 1983, 59, 166-167, nos 151, 153; (cf. also 45, 140, no. 7, and 62, 176, no. 169); and Espinel 2012, 99-101, fig. 7.6.

³⁴ Piotrovsky 1983, 64, 79, no. 181; also, with title 'scribe' only, Piotrovsky 1983, 64, 79, no. 186; and also perhaps Kitchen 1980, 122, no. 73; 2000, 83, no. 73; B. Davies 2013, 110, no. 73; Müller 2013, 277, no. 60,



Further recording of the corpus of rock-inscriptions in this difficult but rewarding context is planned for the coming seasons. In due course, we hope also to be able to carry out a survey of the wider area.

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Abbreviations

- LD: Lepsius, C. R. 1849-1856. *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, 12 volumes. Berlin.
- PM vii: *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings VII: Nubia, the Deserts, and Outside Egypt*. Oxford, 1952. B. Porter and R. L. B. Moss assisted by E. W. Burney (eds).
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- Wb: *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 7 volumes. Leipzig, 1925-1950, A. Erman and H. Grapow (eds).

and 429, 32.39 (Abu Simbel, rock-scene no. 6, dated to Ramesses II), 'adoration ... made by Scribe Hatia, son of Hornakht'. The Debba and Wadi Allaqi examples are very similar palaeographically.