A Relief of the Royal Cup-Bearer

Tja-wy

WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON

The extensive Egyptian collection of the Museum of Fine Arts encompasses a range matched by that of few others in this country, for it extends from predynastic times through the Coptic period in Egypt and the Meroitic period in the Sudan. In sculpture and relief of the New Kingdom (Dynasties 18–20), however, it is excelled by several other collections, and it is particularly in this area that we hope to make the collection more representative for our audience of scholarly and casual visitors.

A recent acquisition extends the collection in a most useful fashion, for it brings us a relief of a royal cup-bearer of late Dynasty 18 or the early Ramesside period (Dynasty 19) with an extensive series of scenes of absorbing interest. Although the tomb from which the block derives cannot be located, two statues and a relief of the same royal cup-bearer have long been known. They attest to his preoccupation with the religion of his times in a rather remarkable way. The first is an unusual herm-like statue said to have been found at Karnak in the First Hall of the Temple of Mut in June 1858 and now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. The statue is in the form of a pillar inscribed on four sides, and the top consists of the head of the official with his hands resting on his shoulders (fig. 1). The front face of the pillar has a hymn to the rising sun, the right side a hymn to the setting sun, the back an address recounting the virtues of the official to his survivors, and the left side a hymn to the god Osiris. The second statue, now headless, in the British Museum derives from Naville's excavations at Deir el Bahri. The figure holds an emblem of the goddess Hathor in his right hand, and there is a head of the same goddess placed between his knees. The relief was transferred from storage in one of the tombs at Sakkara to the Egyptian Museum many years ago, and it may have come from a site in Upper Egypt, perhaps, as Daressy suggests, Abydos. The block is inscribed on two sides. On one side there are several seated and kneeling figures, and on both sides there are the remains of religious texts, adapted, in large measure, from the pyramid texts of the Old Kingdom. The official known to us from these four objects was the royal cup-bearer, clean of hands, the chief of the wēwet-priests of the serpent goddess Weret-Hekau, and both guardian of the temple and overseer of the storehouse of the goddess Si-Renenwetet called Tja-wy.

The Boston relief is inscribed on one side with five registers of scenes and texts, the middle and lowest registers each subdivided in two registers on the left, and on the other side with fifteen lines of text (figs. 2, 3). The left portion of the first side (the
right portion of the reverse) is missing but was probably not very extensive. It evidently belonged to the same tomb as the Cairo relief. We will discuss each register individually, beginning with the topmost.

First Register. Offering bearers (fig. 2). At the top of the relief is a procession of men facing to the right. The first carries a long staff in his left hand and a paddle-like object in his right. He wears a broad collar necklace and is identified by the text “The royal cup-bearer Tja-wy, the vindicated.” Above him are the remains of other hieroglyphs. There follows a group of bearers carrying trays of offerings aloft. The outline of the four men is doubled, so that four pairs (eight men) are indicated. The outermost man of the second pair carries a flower and the last what appears to be a brace of birds. The group is evidently followed by a second group led by a single bearer, but the relief is broken away at this point. All wear sandals. Between the third and fourth pairs of the first group is the name of one of the bearers: Wau, a servant who apparently also appears by name in the bottom register. A text in the second register describes the scene of the first.

Second Register. Measuring grain for the granary of the goddess Weret-Hekau (figs. 2, 4). This is the most interesting of the five registers. In the center of the preserved section the royal cup-bearer stands with a long staff in one hand and a paddle-like circular object in the other. He is dressed in a short skirt with a full-length transparent overgarment with short sleeves. He is the only figure shown wearing sandals. He is preceded by the somewhat smaller figure of his scribe. The latter has a short pleated skirt, ending well above the knees, which is worn over a set of undergarments. The scribe writes with a reed pen in his right hand on a papyrus or tablet held in the left hand. To the rear of the figures is the representation of a building identified as “the double granary.” This building is shown in a characteristically Egyptian combination of plan and section. The forecourt is entered by a doorway shown on its side, as it were, and planted with four trees. The trees to the left of the entrance are shown vertically in upright position. The trees to the right of the entrance are shown (from our point of view) upside down, an Egyptian manner of representation which indicates that the base of the trees is nearest the viewer entering the courtyard. From the forecourt another doorway, similarly placed on its side, gives access to the inner part. This section encloses six large heaps of grain on each side. Those on the right as well as on the left are shown upright, thereby creating an inconsistency with the “upside-down” trees in the forecourt. In the center there is a shrine with a statue of the cobra goddess, apparently Weret-Hekau, seated upon a low platform and wearing on her head a sun disk and the horns of a cow goddess. Before her stands a priest, evidently our royal cup-bearer himself, holding out an incense implement in one hand and pouring a water libation from a ritual vessel with his other hand. Between him and the statue is a low altar heaped with offerings.

The tomb artists of Dynasty 18 delighted in representing buildings, a feature which reached major proportions in the Amarna period, when not only the temples are
2. Relief of the royal cup-bearer Tja-wy. Front side. Dynasty 18; limestone; h. 74 cm., w. 39 cm.,
d. 15 cm. Edward J. and Mary S. Holmes Fund. 1972.651.
shown in great detail but also the miscellaneous small structures and shelters used in everyday life. In the tomb of Mery-Re at Amarna a royal granary is shown with eight huge heaps of grain.⁹

On the left of the register is a heap of grain in the fields with a pair of figures followed by a third figure engaged in filling small barrels. The accompanying texts clarify the action. The six columns over the two main figures read, “Measuring in full. How well filled is the divine offering of the goddess! May she make the good ruler healthy and give him to us forever, says the royal cup-bearer, the chief of the priests of Weret-Hekau, Tja-wy, the vindicated.” Two and a half columns are preserved over the fieldhands, and they may refer to the scene in the register above, “Coming with

3. Relief of Tja-wy. Reverse side, with fifteen lines of text.

4. Relief of Tja-wy. Second register, with scenes (left) of measuring grain and (right) of a storehouse with a shrine of the cobra goddess.
garlands for Weret-Hekau by the royal cup-bearer, the chief of priests Tja-wy. May Meres[ger?] praise you [______ _____] standing inside it and viewing [______].” If the text is to be restored with the name of the goddess Meresger (Meret-seger), this goddess is thereby identified with Weret-Hekau. Both goddesses are represented as cobras. A single horizontal line of text immediately above the fieldhands reads, “the grain-measurers measure.”

This is a narrative scene of some interest, for it shows the continuation of an action. Outside in the fields the fieldhands measure the grain under the observation of the tomb owner and his scribe, while behind them is the granary where the grain will be stored. Scenes in the fields were popular in the painted tombs of the New Kingdom at Thebes. In this case the scene illustrates one of the activities of the tomb owner, the supervision of the harvest and the dedication of the grain to the cobra goddess. In another tomb there is a scene of a building with a series of scribes in the outer room and an inner section in the center of which is an image of the god of writing, Thoth, as a baboon. The doorways are also set sidewise, and the similarity of the two structures is noteworthy (figs. 5, 6).

In several of the tomb chapels of the New Kingdom there are scenes of winnowing and measuring the grain (fig. 7). They are sometimes accompanied by a stand or shrine with a figure of the cobra goddess of the harvest, Renenwetet (Ernutet). The first fruits of the year are offered to her in her capacity of harvest goddess. The Cairo statue and relief provide our official’s name as “Si-Renenwetet, called Tja-wy,” and the name Si-Renenwetet means “son of Renenwetet.” Our new relief is unusual in that the goddess is identified not as Renenwetet but as Weret-Hekau, “the great magician [great as to magic]”; essentially the same goddess is probably involved in both designations. Also unusual is the circumstance that Tja-wy bears several titles connecting him with what appears to be a formal cult of Weret-Hekau: “chief of the weeb-priests of Weret-Hekau” in the two reliefs and the British Museum statue, and “custodian of Weret-Hekau” and “overseer of the storehouse of Weret-Hekau” in the Cairo statue. Are we to assume that these were actual titles or did Tja-wy merely use them to emphasize his role as ritual dedicator of the first fruits to the harvest goddess, here identified as Weret-Hekau rather than Renenwetet? Is the granary represented Tja-wy’s own storehouse with a cult figure of the goddess, as in the parallel examples, or is it really a granary belonging to the cult of Weret-Hekau? These are difficult questions to answer one way or the other.

Third Register. The funerary banquet with musicians (fig. 8). On the right three members of the family are seated on a high-backed chair (or set of three chairs) placed on a low platform. The chair legs end in lion’s feet terminals set on pegs. The first two are men, Tja-wy and his father, the third a lady, Tja-wy’s mother. The men wear wavy wigs and the lady a longer wig. They all have broad-collar necklaces and have ointment cones set on their heads. These cones were made of a kind of fat. During the meal the sweet-smelling fat dissolved into a kind of grease or lotion much admired by the Egyptians. Set in front of this triad is an offering table heaped with food, and on
the other side a member of the family shown as a serving girl presents her relatives with a bowl and holds a jar and napkin. The eight columns of text relating to the seated members of the family read, "Sitting in a pavilion of pleasure to partake of a pleasant moment by the royal cup-bearer, clean of hands, Tja-wy, the vindicated, his beloved father Hat, the vindicated, and his beloved mother, Nefretiry, the vindicated." In the two statues of Tja-wy the father's name is identical, although once given in the fuller form Amun-[em]-hat, and the mother's name is given as Ry, perhaps a shortening of Nefretiry. Above the serving girl is a series of five columns reading, "To your ka. Celebrate a holiday, O calm one, praised [of Amun] in your goodly house of pleasure which Weret-Hekau has given to you. His maternal sister Meryet-Ptah, the vindicated." Seated members of a family in front of an offering table with an offering celebrant form part of the standard repertory of scenes. Tja-wy's mother places one hand on her husband's shoulder and holds his upper arm with her other hand. His father places one hand on Tja-wy's shoulder and holds a flower with his other hand.
Behind Meryet-Ptah the register is subdivided. The upper half shows a harper sitting on his heels in front of his instrument and plucking the strings. Above him the six-column text is damaged in two places and is difficult to translate with any degree of certainty. In the lower subdivision are three female musicians, the first with a standing harp, the second with an Egyptian lute, and third shown clapping her hands and perhaps singing in accompaniment. To the left of the harper and the three musicians below him is, in each case, a serving girl facing a heap of offerings. On the other side of each heap, now missing, were probably seated members of the family or additional seated figures of Tja-wy himself. The serving girl in the lower part of the register has traces of an inscription accompanying her, “the serving girl [Amun?] her-meketef.”

Note the pegs in the upper part of the two harps. Scenes of musicians were favored in many of the Theban tombs and form part of the standard repertory of subjects.

Fourth Register. Continuation of the banquet (fig. 9). On the left Tja-wy is seated on a high-backed chair with struts beneath it and the usual lion-foot terminals on pegs. He wears a pleated skirt, a long overgarment with short sleeves, a broad-collar necklace, and an ointment cone on his wig. One hand is extended to the offering tray before him and the other holds a large scepter. In scale this is the largest of the several
figures of Tja-wy in the relief. Missing on the other side of the table were evidently his parents, for the remaining columns of text above him read, “with his father and his mother, by the royal cup-bearer, clean of hands, Tja-wy, the vindicated.” The right section is similar to the scene above it in the third register. The three seated figures are identified by the text as “the royal cup-bearer, the chief of the chamber of [———], Nefer-renpet, the vindicated, his sister, the house-mistress [———]a, and the sister of his mother, Ta-weret.” Above the offering table in front of them is the list of food offerings termed “the menu,” and this list is invoked on their behalf “by the son of his brother, the scribe User-hat,” who acts as celebrant in a traditional leopard skin garment with a leopard tail hanging between his legs.

**Fifth Register.** Tja-wy views the bringing of the products of the fields (fig. 10). In the lower right-hand corner of the relief Tja-wy is shown seated beneath a canopy supported by wooden posts. This area of the relief has suffered through wear, and the details and text are badly effaced. In front of the canopy is a seated figure, perhaps with a now effaced identifying text above him, and piles of offerings of a wide variety. Of the main text only the beginning and end are reasonably clear, “Viewing all the products of the fields, making [census, by the royal cup-bearer, clean of hands, chief of the wēb-priests of Weret-Hekau, Tja-wy].” The offering bearers are disposed in two registers and ushered in by “the scribe Haty.” His arms are crossed in front of him deferentially, and he wears the same garment as the scribe in the first register, who is almost certainly the same man. Behind him is a calf. In the upper half of the subdivided register the label reads, “his dependents,” and three men are shown facing right. The first carries a pole with jars suspended in front and birds to the rear, and a calf is behind him. Following him are two men on their knees in highly subservient posture with hands touching the ground and heads almost at ground level. This position is frequent in the Amarna period among the courtiers of Akhenaten. The first is named Khawet and the second Khay. The horizontal line of text beneath them in the lower
subregister refers to them, “going, that we may offer, as we lie down upon our belly.” The two bearers beneath this text bring offerings, the second carrying a pole with birds suspended in front and sacks in the rear. Each of the subregisters has a figure identified as Tja-wy on the extreme left, seated on a stool with struts but without back, and followed by a bearer holding a sack for writing implements. The man in the upper half is Nakht-Montu and in the lower half Wau, the latter perhaps the same individual named in the first register.

Reverse of Relief. The other side of the block consists of the last fifteen lines of a text of which the first part of each line is missing (fig. 3). The preserved part may represent as much as two-thirds of the original width to judge by the continuity of the text, and this estimate accords well with the probable missing extent of the scenes on the obverse. It is not entirely clear just how the relief was placed in its original architectural setting with both sides worked. No attempt will be made here to restore the complete text, but an overview of its contents may be useful. The first four lines cite the presentation of offerings “which come forth upon the altars daily” and on the major feast days, including the great festival, the festival of the first of the year, the monthly festival, the festival of Sepy, the festival of ferrying the god across the river, the festival of receiving the river, and the festival of rejoicing. With line 5 begins Tja-
wy's address to the living:23 “O all scribes, all wēeb-priests, and all lector-priests skilled in the hieroglyphs, (6) [----- may the god] cause you to spend a goodly lifetime, enduring upon the earth, in the following of your god [-----] (7) [-----] according as you shall recite a royal offering [consisting of] a thousand loaves of bread and jugs of beer, a thousand cattle and fowl, a thousand offerings,” etc. With line 8 begins an admonition to possible malefactors: “As for any men, any overseers of work, and any necropolis workers who shall undertake any work (9) [in this tomb -----] to make a tomb for another man, he shall not be buried in the West, and he shall be in the displeasure of (10) [the gods -----], his tomb over [him?], he shall not go down to the Neshmet-barque, he shall not see the god [-----] (11) [-----] Khenty-amentiu and Wennofre shall [abandon] him. For I have acted in truth not in [falsehood -----] (12) [-----] I am a true and excellent witness, possessor of [a good] character, enduring of heart, calm of temper, free from falsehood, I am praised of [-----]. (13) [-----] I brought its [the tomb’s] stone from Ro-au [-----] that it might be (14) [-----] I was placed in my tomb which I made on the West [-----] (15) [-----] that I might inhale the incense and receive [offerings -----]."

The latter part of the text is thus a warning to anyone who should attempt to usurp the tomb for his own or another’s use, calling upon such a miscreant the wrath of the gods and denying him the hoped for participation in the celebration of the rites and mysteries (seeing the Neshmet-barque of Osiris, etc.). Possibly the missing portion at the end of line 14 provided an indication of the site of the tomb. Tja-wy boasts that he used the finest limestone from Ro-au (Turah), the quarry on the east bank of the Nile near Cairo. This may be doubted.

The date of the relief is a matter of conjecture. Three periods can be considered: the reign of Amunhotpe III, the end of Dynasty 18 after the Amarna period, and the first part of Dynasty 19. The only real argument for the first possibility is tenuous, the erasure of the name of the god Amun during the Amarna period in two places: in the phrase restored as “praised of [Amun]” in the address of Meryet-Ptah in the third register and in the name of the serving girl next to the three musicians in the same reg-
ister, “[Amun]-her-meketef.” The damage may be fortuitous rather than intentional. The name Amun is not erased in the texts of the two statues.

For a date in late Dynasty 18 there are several arguments: the general thematic correspondence with the subjects of Dynasty 18 tomb paintings and reliefs, the “Amarna” stance of the two prostrate figures, the dress of the scribe with short skirt and low undergarments, and the crossed arms of the scribe in the lowest register. These features, however, could easily be found singly or combined earlier in the dynasty or in Ramesside work of Dynasty 19. The title of royal cup-bearer, although typically Ramesside, is known in the Amarna and immediately post-Amarna periods as well.

One may also consider the well-known inscription of Mes, an account of a litigation regarding a field initially granted to a man named Neshi, an official who appears in the lower left corner of the so-called second Kamose stela. The opponent of Mes named Khay (early Dynasty 19) is the grandson of Tja-wy, a rarely encountered name, and son of an Userhet, a common name. All three names (Khay, Tja-wy, and Userhet) occur in our new relief. Although the individuals are not the same, by virtue of the different titles and parentage, possibly the same general family is involved. The generation of the Tja-wy of the Mes inscription corresponds to the end of Dynasty 18 in the reign of Horemheb or earlier.

A Ramesside date is suggested for the Cairo statue of Tja-wy by Borchardt and independently for the Cairo relief by Daressy. In effect, the quality of our new relief lacks the crispness of style and execution of the well-known reliefs of the end of Dynasty 18 in Leiden (Horemheb, Mery-mery, and Pa-aten-em-heb) and elsewhere, yet the difference could possibly be explained as the contrast between the finer Memphite school of the other reliefs and a provincial school at Abydos or another site.

Until more can be learned of the family of Tja-wy through other sources, it seems prudent to suspend judgment as to a precise date and to assign the relief to a period between the reign of Amunhotpe III and early Dynasty 19, excluding the Amarna period.

The acquisition of this relief enhances an area in our collection at present represented in the Ramesside era by a large-scale relief of the royal cup-bearer Wenefdjed-sen, purchased from the Egyptian Antiquities Department, a fine fragment of relief from Sakkara with a goddess emerging from a sycamore tree to refresh the family of the deceased, a naos of a man named Menmaatre-em-heb from the Egypt Exploration Fund at Abydos, and the upper part of a stela of Paser, a vizier of Ramses II.

It is hoped that our new relief will be enjoyed by generations of visitors who will take note of Tja-wy’s devotion to Weret-Hekau and similarly enjoy, if only visually, the singers and musicians who entertained him and his parents while “sitting in a tent of pleasure to partake of a happy moment.”


5. The object resembles the spatula-shaped club or implement carried by Méry-meri in one of the Leiden reliefs; P. A. A. Boeser, *Beschreibung der aegyptischen Sammlung des niederländischen Reichsmuseums der Altägypten in Leiden* [4], *Die Denkmäler des neuen Reiches*, pt. 1, Graber (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1911), pl. 14. In the stela of the royal cup-bearer Yepu in the same collection the object is rendered so that it seems to look like a lettuce plant; Boeser, *Beschreibung* [6], *Die Denkmäler des neuen Reiches*, pt. 3, Stelen (1913), pl. 4.

6. The object seems to form a coil and probably differs from that cited in the previous note.

7. For an example of this garment, see the same relief of Méry-meri in Leiden; Boeser, *Beschreibung* [4], pt. 1, pl. 15.


14. For this curious practice it is worth citing the comments of Davies: "A problem is presented by the dress of men and women, its white being mottled with reddish brown over
Something like this is widely met with in the latter half of the Eighteenth Dynasty in the depiction of festal garments. The explanation that it represents white robes stained by ointment which ran down from the head, or had been rubbed into the arms and the shoulders, though not attractive, must be accepted in the main. The mind of the artist dwelt, however, not on the stain, but on the revelation of the well-anointed body beneath the linens; his anxiety was, not to paint stains in the interest of realism, but to make it clear that festal ointment had been so lavishly provided by the host that all the body glistened with it. Being a proof of munificence, as well as a high pleasure, its unsightly consequences were condoned; for the smell and the sensations would be highly appreciated in that land of parched skins."


15. In one case in the Cairo statue the father's name is given in the fuller form, Amun-[em]-hat.


17. Among the frequent scenes of musicians in Theban tombs the representation in the tomb of Amunhotpe-si-Se may be cited as a fairly close parallel to our scene: Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tombs of Two Officials of Tuthmosis the Fourth (Nos. 75 and 90)*, Theban Tomb Series, Third Memoir (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1923), pls. 5, 18.

18. For the formation of the name see the masculine example, Djehuty-her-meketef, in T. G. H. James, ed., *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, Etc.*, pt. 9 (London: British Museum, 1970), no. 28, pl. 34 (Dynasty 19).

19. For the reading of the title of Nefer-renpet in Egyptian two possibilities are: J nṯ n nb [Md and 2] *J nṯ n nb [Md.


22. There are many examples of reliefs worked on both sides from late Dynasty 18 and Dynasty 19 at Sakkara. Such is the case with the fine relief in Munich published by Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing, "Über eine Grabwand aus Memphis in der Glyptothek König Ludwig's," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 1 (1924), 207–224.


24. I consider the two readings with Amun certain on the basis of the preserved traces. There is also a close parallel in a text with the name of Amun, "O praised one of Amun in your goodly house of eternity, your place of everlastingness," N. de G. Davies, *The Tombs..."
of Two Officials of Tuthmosis the Fourth (Nos. 75 and 90), pl. 23. Although the name Amun-her-meketef is not otherwise known, the formation is well attested. See Djehuty-her-meketef in Hermann Ranke, Die ägyptischen Personenamen, vol. 1 (Glückstadt: Augustin, 1935), p. 408, no. 16.

25. The title is frequent in the Ramesside period, and in many cases it is borne by officials of foreign origin. Among officials of Dynasty 18 it is borne by Pa-Aten-em-heb of the Leiden reliefs. For a discussion, see Alan H. Gardiner, Ancient Egyptian Onomastica (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), vol. 1, pp. 43-44; W. K. Simpson, "The Vessels with Engraved Designs and the Repoussé Bowl from the Tell Basta Treasure," American Journal of Archaeology 63 (1959), 35.


27. See note 2 above.


29. See notes 5 and 22 above.


31. MFA 34.50. Probably from the Teti Pyramid at Saqqara and not from Giza as previously thought. See William Stevenson Smith, Ancient Egypt, p. 144, fig. 94.


Errata Boston Museum Bulletin 70, no. 359 (1972):

Title page, legend for cover illustration: for Centennial gift, 1968 read Centennial gift of Landon T. Clay.

Page 6, legend for fig. 2: add Edward J. and Mary S. Holmes Fund; legend for fig. 3: add Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Edgar.

Page 11, legend for fig. 8: for Centennial gift, 1968 read Centennial gift of Landon T. Clay.


Page 22, third paragraph: for Ludovis read Ludovisi.

Page 43, Note 1: for Zemurray-Stone read Zemurray-Stone.