

## 28-29. Two Stelae of the Chief Priest Rudjahau

From Abydos  
Cairo 20514 and BM 159  
Late 11th Dynasty

The Cairo stela of Rudjahau came from Mariette's excavations at Abydos, and the find spot was described by him as "Nécropole du nord, zone du nord-est, contre le mur d'enceinte". To the same Rudjahau belongs the British Museum stela 159, which is said to have come from Abydos and to have been in the Salt collection. The two stelae had evidently stood together in an Abydene tomb – a real tomb, not a cenotaph, since Rudjahau informs posterity that he had been a top-ranking priest at Abydos, and a wealthy citizen there.

The location of the tomb – in that part of the "north cemetery" which abutted on the western enclosure wall of the Osiris temple complex – is significant. Being a chief priest of the temple, and building his tomb at a time when the area was not yet crowded, Rudjahau could choose a spot in close proximity to the sanctuary.

### 28. Cairo 20514

Lange-Schäfer, *Grabsteine* II, pp. 104f. and IV, pl. xxxv.2. Mariette, *Cat. d'Abyd.*, no. 742. Schenkel, *MHT*, no. 496, pp. 291f.

A small rectangular limestone stela, 60 x 53 cm., divided in three registers. The top register has the text in four lines. The wider middle one depicts Rudjahau and his wife Nefrut seated on the left, facing an offering table. On the right sits a second woman, "the honored Nebet-it", and behind her stand two children, "his beloved son Rudjahau", and "his daughter Idi". In the bottom register two cows are milked by the herdsmen Djadjay and Idi.

(1) An offering-that-the-king-gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, Khentamenthes. lord of Abydos, in all his places : a voice-offering of 1000 [bread and beer] (2) [1000 beef and] fowl, 1000 alabaster and clothing, 1000 of everything good : the pure loaves of Khentamenthes; the funerary meal in the house of Osiris; the cake [ration], (3) jugs of beer, milk, pure white loaves; what has been presented on the great altar, what has gone up before the great god – after his *ka* has been satisfied therewith – for the honored Chief (4) Priest and Chamberlain (*mr ḥm-nṯr imi-ḥnt*) a great one in the sacred land, a great priest in Thinite Abydos, a leader of the *ḥnmmt*-people on the day of joining the Two Lands<sup>1</sup>, Rudjahau (*Rwd-ḥ3w*) justified.

### Notes

1) Is this a festival celebrating the reunification of Egypt by Mentuhotep II, the same that was mentioned on the stela of Meru? (p. 63 with n. 2).

## 29. BM 159

PM V, 95. HT I, 46-47; Faulkner, JEA 37 (1951) 47-52 & pl. vii. Schenkel, MHT, no. 497, pp. 292-295.

A tall round-topped limestone stela, 155 x 95 cm. The lunette is filled by an offering array and an attendant. Below it are three registers. In the upper one Rudjahau and his wife Idi<sup>1</sup> are seated on the left, receiving offerings from sons and servants. In the second register is a dairy-farming scene similar to that of the Cairo stela, and some of the same names reappear, including that of the cow Seh-nefer (*Sh-nfr*). The third register contains the inscription in twelve lines.

(1) An offering-that-the-king-gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, Khentamenthes, lord of Abydos, in all his places : a voice-offering of 1000 bread and beer, 1000 beef and fowl, 1000 alabasters and clothing, 1000 of everything (2) good : the pure loaves of Wepwawet; the funerary meal of Osiris; cakes, pure white loaves, jugs of milk, jars of beer; the food presentation (3) of the lord of Abydos, what has gone up before the great god – after his *ka* has been satisfied therewith – for the honored Chief Priest Rudjahau, justified, who says :

I am a knower of things, (4) one guided by Thoth,  
close-mouthed <on> temple secrets,  
who honors nobles above plebs,  
a Thoth in judging ['matters'].<sup>2</sup>  
I am the like of Ptah, the second of Khnum,  
a great rebel slayer when the *sem*-priest proceeds,<sup>3</sup>  
front-ranked in the western lightland,<sup>4</sup>  
the like of (6) the Sole-among-them.<sup>5</sup>  
I am Anubis, the keeper of starched linen,  
on the day of wrapping the poles,<sup>6</sup>  
swift-handed to hold back (7) the foes  
from the ground of offerings.<sup>7</sup>  
Of discerning heart<sup>8</sup> a priest of Neith  
on the day of the 'attackers'.<sup>9</sup>  
A mute one at the judges' decision  
(8) on the day the byssus is cut.  
One praised by the Foremost-in-Hesret

when leading the 'poling',<sup>10</sup>  
 the guide on the Horus (9) ways of the Netherworld  
 on the day of setting up bouquets.  
 One who gladdens his god with what he desires,  
 adorns him with what his heart has conceived,  
 contents the august nobles (10) with what went up before his lord,  
 the honored Rudjahau, justified, who says :

I am a magnate who bends the arm,  
 who knows his rank among the nobles.  
 (11) I am a magnate in his town,  
 a rich man in his house,  
 a great pillar of his kin.<sup>11</sup>  
 I am one who loves good, hates evil,  
 with whom none stayed angry (12) overnight.  
 No falsehood came from my mouth,  
 no evil was done by my hands.  
 I am one who made his repute (*qd*)  
 whom people loved throughout each day.

#### Notes

1) On the Cairo stela the name of the wife is Nefrut. Rudjahau thus had two wives – successively or simultaneously – and a third woman, Nebet-it, is depicted on the Cairo stela. In JEA 60 (1974) 100-105, Simpson examined the question of polygamy on the basis of such Middle Kingdom stelae. — 2) An illegible word. — 3) The first of several references to ritual actions performed during the celebration of the Osiris mysteries in which Rudjahau took a leading part. — 4) Faulkner (note *f*) thought the "western horizon" here meant a religious establishment, perhaps the Tomb of Osiris, and Schenkel, too, suggested "ein Gebäude, o.a." My findings are summed up on p. 92, n. 8. — 5) "The Sole among them" can hardly be anyone other than Osiris. — 6) An unidentified ritual. — 7) Since the "ground of offerings" (*w'rt htpt*) is a term for the sacred necropolis (see p. 88) I think that the "foes" in the ritual performance were not "apprehended" (*hnr*) in it, as Faulkner rendered, nor "imprisoned" in it (Schenkel) but rather "held back" from it. — 8) The meaning of *fnh-ib* is uncertain. Its other known occurrences (see Janssen, Autobiografie, I.x.1-4) suggest the mental quality of "discernment" or "insight". — 9) The *idhw* (from *dh*, Wb. IV, 484, "niederwerfen") seem to be the forces on the side of justice, who overthrow the Sethian rebels. — 10) *M m3' sm't*; Wb. IV, 130.12 knows only *sm'*, "ein Schiffsgerät". The "Foremost in Hesret" could be Thoth or Osiris (cf. Gardiner, AEO I, 51f.) either of whom might "praise" this priest of Osiris for what seems to be the steering of the god's bark, the action also mentioned on the stela of Ikhnofret, line 19 (No. 42, p. 99). — 11) On *3bwt* see now Franke, Verwandtschaft, 277ff.