

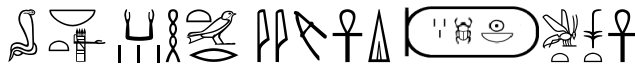
The Golden Pendant of Tutankhamun (JE61952)

A new interpretation for the epithet of Werethekau *




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THE PENDANT OF Tutankhamun was found with its necklace below the fragments of a corselet inside the small golden shrine in his tomb (KV 62, Carter No. 108c). The pendant and corselet were found wrapped in thin strips of linen.¹ It is made of sheet of gold over a core and measures 14cm H, 7.3cm W, and 0.6cm T.² This pendant takes the shape of a deity, Werethekau, suckling Tutankhamun, a motif connected with coronation.³ The king stands in front of Werethekau, whose body is in the shape of an upright cobra, but with human arms, breast, and a female head [fig. 1]. Her left arm embraces the king, while her right arm holds and presents her breast to him. Werethekau wears her bracelets, armlets, broad collar, earrings, and tripartite wig with vulture headdress, surmounted by a modius and a plumed crown with two cow horns and a sun-disc. Both, king and goddess are on one rectangular base.⁴ The inscription on this base identifies the king:



May live the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neb-khepru-Re, given life, beloved of Werethekau, lady of the palace.

The epithet of Werethekau on this frontal base [fig. 2] is a controversial passage. It was previously read “beloved of Werethekau, lady of heaven”.⁵ This epithet is not clearly written, and has been interpreted in different ways: ,⁶ ,⁷ and .⁸ The author has to date

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¹ K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, “The Great Enchantress in the Little Golden Shrine of Tutankhamun”, *JEA* 59, 1973, p. 102; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *The Small Golden Shrine from the tomb of Tutankhamun*, Oxford, 1985, pls. 3, 6.








² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ J. LECLANT, “The Suckling of the Pharaoh as a Part of the Coronation Rites in Ancient Egypt” = “Le rôle de l’allaitement dans le cérémonial pharaonique du couronnement”, in *Proceedings of the IXth International Congress for the History of Religion*, 1958, p. 135-147.

⁴ K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, *op. cit.*, p. 101-102, pl. 35; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 7, pl. 23; A. WIESE, A. BRODBECK, *Tutankhamun: the Golden Beyond; Tomb Treasures from the Valley of the Kings*, Basel, 2004, p. 264-265, fig. 3; A.M.M. OUDA, *Werethekau ‘Great of Magic’ in the Religious Landscape of Ancient Egypt* (unpublished doctoral thesis, UCL, London, 2014), p. 161-162, 262, fig. 3.29 and 5.1.





⁵ K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, *op. cit.*, p. 102; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 7, n. 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7, n. 47, pl. 23

found no parallel for “lady of heaven” written in the form  in nineteenth examples of the dynastic period.⁹ Further, the writing of the  in this form does not too have parallels on the golden shrine where this pendant was found.¹⁰ Rather than an egg, the angled stroke in front of the cobra recalls the horizontal  in *nswt bity* at the right end.¹¹ The sandy tract ¹² is considered as a determinative for Werethekau’s name in Hari’s interpretation; from the distinct lower curve, this sign must surely be read ¹³ *nb(t)*, “lady” [fig. 2]. Goebs linked between writing the name of Werethekau by this determinative  and the connotations of food, which is not applicable to this example because it is the sign of the basket .¹⁴

Hari then extends the interpretation to *Wrt-ḥk3w* on this pendant of Tutankhamun, as an example for Ouret-Hekaout / *Wrt-ḥk3wt*, “la Grande-en-grains”,¹⁵ reading the epithet of Werethekau as a determinative for Ouret-Hekaout / *Wrt-ḥk3wt*. This new goddess, according to him, was merged by the Egyptians with *Wrt-ḥk3w*, and is assimilated or identified frequently with the nourishing Renenutet and connected with Nepri, the god of corn and grain.¹⁶ Bosse-Griffiths presents a convincing argument against his point of view:¹⁷

“Hari derives the name of his so-called ‘Ouret-Hekaout’¹⁸ from the word for ‘measure de grains’¹⁹ which he reads *ḥk3t* or *ḥk3wt* but which in fact should be read *ḥk3t*. There is no suggestion that *k* and *ḳ* are here at any time interchangeable”.

This controversial sign () can be read *ḥt*, “palace” [fig. 2],²⁰ but the narrow space did not help the writer to write it in the form  or ; the  determinative is excluded, but there are examples for this epithet without this determinative.²¹ There are set of attestations which support this reading. The golden shrine of Tutankhamun, where the pendant was found, gives a more secure reference of Werethekau “lady of the palace”. Tutankhamun is described on a

⁷ H. BEINLICH, M. SALEH, *Corpus der hieroglyphischen Inschriften aus dem Grab des Tutankhamun*, Oxford, 1989, p. 45-46.

⁸ R. HARI, “La grande-en-magie et la stèle du temple de Ptah à Karnak”, *JEA* 62, 1976, p. 100, n. 4.

⁹ A.M.M. OUDA, *op. cit.*, p. 280-282.

¹⁰ M. EATON-KRAUSS *op. cit.*, pls. 8, 10-12, 16, 18.

¹¹ For the writing of the palace, *ḥt*, with *t*, see for example: A. MARIETTE, *Catalogue général des monuments d'Abydos découverts pendant les fouilles de cette ville*, Paris, 1880, 450 [1196]; Chr. BARBOTIN, *Les monuments d'éternité de Ramsès II*, Paris, 1999, 20; A.M.M. OUDA, “Warethekau and the Votive Stela of *P3-n-Imn* (Bristol Museum H 514)”, *BMSAES* 22, 2015, fig. 4, 10.

¹² A. GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, London, 1957, sign-list N 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, sign-list V 30; cf. the writing of the sign of *nb* inside the cartouche on the frontal base of the pendant itself.

¹⁴ K. GOEBS, *Crowns in Egyptian Funerary Literature: Royalty, Rebirth, and Destruction*, Oxford, 2008, p. 300.

¹⁵ R. HARI, *op. cit.*, p. 100, n. 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100-101; Hari has the same point of view for a stela at Leiden Museum AP 61 (P.A.A BOESER, *Beschreibung der Ägyptischen Sammlung des niederländischen Reichsmuseum der Altertümer in Leiden: die Denkmäler des Neuen Reiches, zweite Abteilung, Pyramiden, Kanopenkästen, Opfertische, Statuen*, V and dritte Abteilung, *Stelen*, VI, Haag, 1913, Tf. 24 [44]; KRI I, 232 [7]); contra to this interpretation: J. BROEKHUIS, *De Godin Renenwetet, Bibliotheca classica Vangorcumiana* 19, Assen, 1971, 39; J. BAINES, *Fecundity figures, Egyptian personification and the iconology of a genre*, Warminster, 1985, p. 172.

¹⁷ K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, “Further Remarks on *Wrt-ḥk3w*”, *JEA* 62, 1976, p. 181.

¹⁸ *Wrt-ḥk3wt*, ‘la Grande-en-grains’.

¹⁹ *Wb* III, 174, 15.

²⁰ See the full writing of the hieroglyphic text above.

²¹ P. MUNRO, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, *ÄF* 25, 1973, Tf. 39; a painted limestone stela at the Louvre Museum N 54-42-IM 2785: M. MALININE, G. POSENER, J. VERCOUTTER, *Catalogue des stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis I*, Paris, 1968, 132, pl. 47 [172].

side of this shrine with “beloved of Werethekau, lady of the palace”.²² Here, the reading of the palace word is clearer. This evidence supports my reading for this epithet on the pendant. The inclusion of this single epithet of Werethekau on the golden shrine and the pendant indicates that this was the principal epithet used to identify her.²³ This shrine with the pendant shows a strong relationship between the king and Werethekau. She is mentioned ten times on the shrine, and once on the pendant.²⁴ These are the first royal sources on which she had this epithet. The presence of Werethekau on the pendant and in the shrine inscriptions reflects the strength of her relation with the royal palace and coronation ceremony.²⁵

Further examples of “beloved of Werethekau, Lady of the Palace” epithet

Ramesses II is styled “beloved of *Wrty-ḥkꜣw*, lady of the palace” on an ivory pen-case (?) of the vizier *Pꜣ-sr* from Abydos at Liverpool Museum 24.9.00.92.²⁶ The name of *Wrty-ḥkꜣw* is written with the determinative of the White and the Red crowns, but the name is followed by her epithet *nbt-ḥ*, “lady of the palace” which used to refer to Werethekau as goddess.

On a bronze statue base found under a wall at Megiddo, Palestine Archaeological Museum 36.1993,²⁷ Ramesses VI is described on the top of the front end as “son of Amun, beloved of Werethekau, lady of the palace”.²⁸

On the base of the non-royal wooden statuette of *Mi* of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Brooklyn Museum 47.120.3,²⁹ *Mi* is: “beloved of Werethekau, mistress of the palace (*ḥnwt-ḥ*)”.³⁰ This is further evidence, which may support my interpretation for the reading of the epithet of Werethekau on the pendant of Tutankhamun.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate that the epithet of the king “beloved of Werethekau, lady of heaven” should instead be read as “beloved of Werethekau, lady of the palace”. This epithet was previously misread by various authors,³¹ often due to the epithet being unclearly written by the ancient author. The golden shrine of Tutankhamun, where the pendant described in this article was found, gives a more secure reference of Werethekau “lady of the palace”. Tutankhamun is described on a side of this shrine with “beloved of Werethekau, lady of the palace”. To conclude, by discussing and comparing different examples, the sources present the epithet of Werethekau as a single epithet. The author considers this single epithet “lady of the palace” as a criterion for the identification of the principal epithet of a deity in

²² H. BEINLICH, M. SALEH, *op. cit.*, p. 42; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *op. cit.*, p. 14, pl. 26 [B 1].

²³ A.M.M. OUDA, *Werethekau ‘Great of Magic’ in the Religious Landscape of Ancient Egypt*, p. 258-267, 299.

²⁴ K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, *JEA* 59, 1973, p. 101.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100-108.

²⁶ KRI III, 14 [5]; D. RANDALL-MACIVER, A.C. MACE, *El Amrah and Abydos 1899-1901*, London, 1902, p. 77, pl. 40 [12].

²⁷ J.H. BREASTED, “Bronze Base of a Statue of Ramses VI Discovered at Megiddo”, in G. Loud (ed.), *Megiddo II, Seasons of 1935-39, OIP* 62, 1948, p. 135, fig. 375.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135, fig. 375 [top]; KRI VI, 278 [7].

²⁹ T.G.H. JAMES, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Inscriptions in the Brooklyn Museum from Dynasty I to the End of Dynasty XVIII*, Brooklyn, 1974, pls. 11, 73.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. 73.

³¹ E.g. K. BOSSE-GRIFFITHS, *JEA* 59, 1973, p. 102; M. EATON-KRAUSS, *The Small Golden Shrine from the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, Oxford, 1985, p. 7, n. 47.

ancient Egypt.³² The “lady of the palace” on these always follows the phrase of “beloved of Werethekau”, so this may support the new interpretation for the epithet of Werethekau on the pendant of Tutankhamun.



Fig. 1. Werethekau suckles Tutankhamun, JE61952 (Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum Cairo).



Fig. 2. Werethekau “lady of the palace” (?) on Tutankhamun pendant JE 61952 (Courtesy of the Egyptian Museum Cairo).

³² A.M.M. OUDA, *Werethekau ‘Great of Magic’ in the Religious Landscape of Ancient Egypt*, p. 299.