A Basinophorous Statue for Meryptah and Ruiu in Glencairn Museum

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Abstract

Statues comprised of an individual kneeling at the edge of an offering basin make their appearance as early as the Middle Kingdom. This is a relatively rare type of statuary with only several dozen examples known. These basinophorous statues promised their owners eternal refreshment. A previously unpublished example is presented here. A chantress of Amun named Ruiu and her husband Meryptah, who held a series of high-status offices during the reign of Amenhotep III, are the dedicants of this basin. This article suggests that the Meryptah mentioned on this basin may be the same as the Meryptah attested on other monuments from Amenhotep III’s reign.

المتخص

تظهر التماثيل المكونة من فرد راكع على حافة حوض قرابين من فترة الدولة الوسطى مصر القديمة. إن هذا نوع نادر نسبيًا من التماثيل، مع وجود عشرات الأمثلت المعروفة فقط. وقد ضمنت هذه التماثيل لأصحابها القرابين الأبدية. يتم تقديم تمثال غير معروف سابقاً هنا من هذا النوع من التماثيل. إن هذا التمثال يمثل منشدة للإله آمون تُدعى رويو وزوجها مريبتاح. اللذان كانا يشغلان سلسلة من المناصب الرفيعة المستوى في عهد أمنحب الثالث. يقترح هذا المقال أن مريبتاح المذكور في هذا التمثال قد يكون هو نفسه مريبتاح الذي يمثل على أثار أخرى من عهد أمنحب الثالث.

History of the Glencairn Basin

Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania has a small, but chronologically and typologically representative collection of ancient Egyptian objects. Glencairn, a medieval Romanesque castle-style ninety-room mansion was the private home of Raymond Pitcairn and his wife, Mildred Glenn Pitcairn. Raymond Pitcairn was the eldest son of John Pitcairn, Jr., a wealthy industrialist who worked in both the oil and natural gas industries and was a founder of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. John Pitcairn amassed one of the largest fortunes in the United States by the time of his death in 1916, and his son Raymond followed in his father’s footsteps. Raymond was a lawyer and a businessman by profession, but he was also an amateur architect and was responsible for the design of Glencairn. The building was intended to be the family’s private residence as well as a repository for their art collection. The Pitcairn family—Raymond, his wife Mildred, and their children—moved into Glencairn in 1939. The building served as their private home until Mildred died in 1979; Raymond had predeceased her in 1966.

In 1980, Glencairn and its contents, including the art collection, were given to the Academy of the New Church, the alma mater of both Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn. The collections of the Academy’s museum moved to Glencairn and merged with the Pitcairn collections to create what is today known as Glencairn Mu-
seum, an institution with a focus on religious art and history (fig. 1). The museum’s collections include materials from ancient Egypt, the Near East, and the Classical World, as well as Asian Art, tapestries, and a world-renowned collection of medieval stained glass and statuary. Glencairn’s Egyptian collection is displayed chronologically and thematically on the fourth floor of the museum in a dedicated gallery space. However, one Egyptian object—an impressive granodiorite offering basin (E1178)—is housed on the museum’s first floor in a room designed with an arched niche decorated with a beautiful cut-glass mosaic of a large white peacock (figs. 2, 3). Raymond Pitcairn designed this space specifically for the purpose of displaying the offering basin.

Both Raymond Pitcairn and his brother Theodore Pitcairn had an interest in ancient art, and they frequented dealers, principally in New York City, making many significant art purchases in the 1920s. This basin was purchased by Raymond Pitcairn on behalf of his brother Theodore from the dealers George and Lucien Demotte in 1923. The archives at Glencairn Museum preserve correspondence about the acquisition of the piece. Raymond wrote in a letter to Theodore: “It is a very good and rare piece in my estimation. I felt this on seeing it again at home.”

Fig. 1. View of Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, PA. Photo courtesy of Glencairn Museum.

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1 Built between 1928–1939, Glencairn takes its name from a combination of Raymond and Mildred’s surnames. For a discussion of Glencairn Museum and its collections see E. Bruce Glenn et al., Glencairn: the Story of a Home (Bryn Athyn, 1990); Ed Gyllenhaal, “From parlour to castle: the Egyptian collection at Glencairn Museum,” in Zahi Hawass and Jennifer Houser Wegner (eds.), Millions of Jubilees: Studies in Honor of David P. Silverman, vol. 1 (Cairo, 2010), 175–203, and Ed Gyllenhaal and Kirsten Hansen Gyllenhaal, The Bryn Athyn Historic District (Charleston, 2011). I am grateful to the following individuals for their assistance during the research of the Glencairn basin: Bret Bostock (Assistant Director, Glencairn Museum), Kevin Cahail (Penn Museum), Ed Gyllenhaal (Curator, Glencairn Museum), Kirsten Gyllenhaal (Museum Researcher, Glencairn Museum), Brian Henderson (Director, Glencairn Museum), Drew Nehlig (Historic Buildings Project Manager, Glencairn Museum), and Joe Wegner (Penn Museum). A preliminary study of this object was presented at the ARCE 68th Annual Meeting in Kansas City, MO in 2017. See also https://glencairnmuseum.org/newsletter/2017/7/19/egyptian-libation-bowl-at-glencairn-museum

2 This room is referred to as the Bird Room due to the preponderance of avian motifs on the walls and ceiling.

3 Throughout the years the family lived in the home this niche was a favorite place to photograph important guests who came to visit and to take family photos. The basin itself was a favorite object of the Pitcairns, and the Pitcairn children used to raise baby turtles in it.
several times at Demotte’s and this view was confirmed by a very good letter from the director of the Egyptian Department at the Metropolitan shown to me by Demotte. Raymond further assured his brother that if he wasn’t happy with the purchase: “I like it sufficiently well to be ready at any time to take it off your hands if you do not care to have it.” Ultimately, Raymond Pitcairn’s wife, Mildred Pitcairn, was so fond of the dark stone basin with the small kneeling figure that her brother-in-law gave the basin to her as a gift, and in 1939, it was permanently installed in Glencairn, the family’s home.

Basinophorous Statues

Raymond Pitcairn was quite correct in his estimation of the piece as a significant work of art. Examples of Egyptian statuary consisting of a human figure kneeling while supporting or presenting an object such as a stela, shrine, sistrum, or divine image are well known from the Middle Kingdom through the Late Period. Statues of figures with an accompanying circular or rectangular basin, however, are considerably less common. Characteristically, one individual is present, but a few examples are known with multiple figures—either a pair of figures, or in one case, a group of three individuals. Variations in the posture of the figures occur. Most of the figures

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4 Letter dated 2/2/1923 (Glencairn curatorial records).
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6 In the years following the basin’s acquisition, Raymond Pitcairn reached out to several scholars for their opinions on the basin and translations of the texts, but none of these preliminary examinations were ever published. The archives at Glencairn contain copies of these early translations including those of R. W. Brown (1927), Battiscombe Gunn (n.d.), and John D. Cooney (1948).
8 There are six examples of basinophorous statuary which include two figures: the Late Period example inscribed with an offering formula to Taweret and Hathor (British Museum EA1258); the basin of Heka-maat-re-nakht and his wife Ujai (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Ägyptisch-Orientalische Sammlung 50); the statue of Osiris with two kneeling figures and basin (Marseille, Château Borély 211); the seated statue of Osiris with two kneeling figures and basin (Cairo CG 38411); the basin of Hyhy and his wife Nena (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts Exp. No. 26-1-495). See Kirsten Konrad, “Ein weiterer Basinophor: Zur Deutung der Sitzstatue eines Schreibers namens Eje (Ijj),” *SAK* 42 (2013), 183, n. 20.
9 BM EA465 is a fragmentary libation basin with three figures. See Morris L. Bierbrier, *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae, etc., in the British Museum, Part 10* (London, 1982), 38 and pl. 87.
appear in a kneeling position, but some examples show the individual in a cross-legged seated position. The position of the figure’s arms and hands also varies. Most have their hands resting atop the rim of the basin, but some individuals hug, hold, or offer the water receptacle held in their arms.\(^{10}\) Often, an inscription in the form of a \textit{htp-di-nswt} offering prayer decorates the rim or exterior faces of the basin. The Glencarrian libation basin is among the best preserved of this category of artifacts and it is certainly one of the finest surviving examples of this genre of sculpture.\(^{11}\)

Although previously known to scholars of Egyptian sculpture, detailed discussion of objects of this type began in 1985 when Dietrich Wildung published a “Kniefigur am Opferbecken” statue belonging to a man by the name of Ptahankh.\(^{12}\) Dating to the reign of Amenhotep III, Wildung identified this statue as a rare type, and he documented thirteen parallels ranging in date from the New Kingdom to the Late Period.\(^{13}\) Wildung proposed that the appearance of this new form of statuary in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty was an expression of a changed relationship between an individual and the divine that would further develop into the “personal piety” seen in the Ramesside Period.\(^{14}\) As these statues incorporate both a representation of an individual (or individuals) as well as a basin for liquids, Wildung suggested that by drinking from the basin, the figure—shown in the midst of this action—would, therefore (eternally) share in offerings to the gods, and be able to commune with the divine.\(^{15}\)

In 2004, Kirsten Konrad expanded on the analysis of one of the statues previously identified by Wildung: a uniquely designed rectangular basin decorated with architectural motifs and a figure of a scribe by the name of Amenemhet.\(^{16}\) This object was discovered in the sanctuary of the small temple of Ramses II in the southwest corner of the enclosure of the Great Temple of Ptah at Memphis.\(^{17}\) In her study of the piece, Konrad proposed the use of the term “basinophorous” statue\(^ {18}\) to describe statuary of this type and concurred with Wildung’s previous interpretation that these basinophorous statues were an overt expression of an individual’s personal piety in an era when religious practices increasingly expanded modes of divine interaction. In the case of Amenemhet’s statue, a close association with the Memphite creator god Ptah is emphasized. She posits that the sculpture represented Amenemhet’s private cosmos and would provide for his enduring maintenance.\(^ {19}\)

In a second article focusing on basinophorous statues, Konrad argued in favor of further expanding the original corpus to include a total of thirty-five examples,\(^ {20}\) contending that the origins of this statue type can be identified as early as the Middle Kingdom.\(^ {21}\) She did, however, observe that the New Kingdom was the main period of production of basinophorous statues, while the sculptural type persisted into later eras and several additional examples date to the Late Period.\(^ {22}\) A distinct subset of the corpus of basinophorous statues consists of those with a large round basin and associated figure(s). This group consists of ten examples, six dating to the

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\(^{10}\) Note for example the arm position of the figure on the basin of Ptahankh (Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig in Basel, inventory number BSAe 1031) and that of the anonymous figure in Cairo (JE 45636). See Dietrich Wildung, “Die Kniefigur am Opferbecken: Überlegungen zur Funktion altägyptischer Plastik,” \textit{Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst. Dritte Folge} 36 (1985), 14–15 and figs. 1–4.

\(^{11}\) The Glencarrian basin is also quite unusual as it is the only known basinophorous statue with a single female figure represented.


\(^{13}\) Wildung, “Die Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 24–33.

\(^{14}\) Wildung, “Die Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 36.

\(^{15}\) Wildung, “Die Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 33.


\(^{17}\) For the history of the publication of this statue, see Konrad, “Der Ptah des Amenemhet,” 255–56, nn. 2–5.

\(^{18}\) This term is a counterpart to previously accepted descriptive terms for statuary such as “naophorous,” “stelaphorous” and “sistophorous” wherein individuals are depicted holding or presenting such attributes, see Konrad, “Der Ptah des Amenemhet,” 257–58.

\(^{19}\) Konrad, “Der Ptah des Amenemhet,” 273–74.

\(^{20}\) Konrad, “Ein weiterer Basinophor,” 181–92. It should be noted that after the publication of this article, another New Kingdom example was excavated at the Mut complex in Luxor by the Brooklyn Museum in 2010. See https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/community/blogosphere/2010/01/22/were-up-and-running/ and https://dl1sf6ha3ugu3d4.cloudfront.net/features/docs/Preliminary_Report_2010.pdf.

\(^{21}\) Konrad cites two documents dating to this time, the statue of Seshem from Elephantine (Aswan Museum, Magazine) and the miniature example in the Metropolitan Museum Art (15.3.391.2). See Konrad, “Ein weiterer Basinophor,” 192.

\(^{22}\) Five basinophorous statues are known from the Late Period. All of them are designed with (a) kneeling figure(s) and a large circular basin. See British Museum EA1258; British Museum EA 1292; Statue of Pefjawsawaset (Copenhagen Thorvaldsen Museum H357); statue of Wahibre (Christie’s, New York, Antiquities, 08.06.2001, 81, Lot 114); statue fragment of Horwedja (Bonhams, London, Antiquities,
New Kingdom and four to the Late Period. As we shall discuss in detail below, the Glencairn basin, dating to the reign of Amenhotep III, is amongst the earliest of the group.23

The ritual and religious function of the basinophorous statues clearly lies in the sphere of libations. Liquid offerings were an essential part of Egyptian cult practices, both in tomb and temple settings.24 Konrad observed that the round basins resemble the form of Gardiner N41 symbolizing a spring filled with water, while the rectangular examples have the form of Gardiner W10 and at the same time are also reminiscent of the lake or canal hieroglyph (Gardiner N36 and N37). This connection with various water features also recalls the Nile floodwaters. As such, the associated figure(s) can be envisioned as drinking the life-giving waters of the Nile and participating in the annual regeneration of the whole country.25 Wildung drew a parallel between basinophorous statues where the individual kneels in a respectful pose before an empty basin hoping and expecting that the gods will provide the life-giving water, and the Ramesside tomb scenes which depict deceased individuals alongside their ba, drinking from pools often before a water-bearing tree goddess.26

A similarity can also be seen between these statues and contemporary texts that express a desire to receive water in the afterlife. In the Amarna tomb of Pentu, we see the wish: “May you grant that I rest in my place of continuity that I be enclosed in the cavern of eternity; that I may go forth and enter into my tomb without my Ba’s being restrained from what it wishes; that I might stride to the place of my heart’s determining, in the groves which I made on earth; that I might drink water at the edge of my pool every day without cease.”27 Similar wishes can be found on Eighteenth Dynasty stelae, for example: “May they (i.e., the gods) grant (to me) to be an Akh in heaven, powerful on earth, justified in the god’s domain, to enter my tomb and to come out of it, to refresh myself in its shadow and to drink water from my pool every day”28 and “… when thy name is invoked at the table of offering every time the rite is performed, may thy Ba cry aloud so that it may be heard. (Thus) it shall not be kept back from the great place, and thou wilt partake of the offerings brought forward and drink water at the edge of the pool.”29 An additional explanation for the function of these basinophorous statues can be seen on an inscription on one of the Late Period examples which states that “the deceased may be refreshed by...”

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23 These basins for liquid offerings have been found in Old Kingdom tombs and offering tables with receptacles for liquid are known from tombs dating to the Middle Kingdom (1980–1630 BCE) through the Greco-Roman Period (332 BCE and later). Water is also ubiquitous in temple cult rituals, used for purification and as a liquid offering, see Joris F. Borghouts, “Libation,” in *Liberating the Living* (Glencar, 2005), 105–96.

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26 From Louvre C55, the stela of Nakhtmin. See Alfred Hermann, *Die Steine Der Thebanischen Felsgräber Der 18. Dynastie* (Glückstadt, 1940), 52*.


means of it,” i.e., the contents of the bowl. Based on these textual sources, basinophorous statues might be viewed as three-dimensional, sculptural versions of the scene described in the texts. The statues emphasize the eternal presence of the individuals poised to receive the liquid refreshment that the basins contain.

Concerning the original location of these objects, unfortunately, many of the basinophorous statues have no provenience (as is also the case for the Glencairn basin). While Wildung has argued that many of the unprovenanced examples likely have a Memphite origin, excavated examples have come from a wide geographical range including not only Memphis, but also Abusir, Hermopolis, Deir el Bahri, and Luxor Temple. As for the specific architectural setting (i.e., a tomb versus temple context) where these objects were originally installed, a relief now in the collection of the Petrie Museum, University College London, perhaps of Memphite origin, may provide some insight (fig. 4). The scene depicts a man and a woman kneeling at the edge of a water container into which liquid is flowing from an offering table adjacent to the basin. It is interesting to note that the position of the man and woman’s heads and hands on the rim of the basin is exactly the same as what we see on most of the basinophorous statues, and the profile of the basin takes the shape of Gardiner W10. The appearance of colossal statuary and columns surrounding the pair and the basin suggest that the locale depicted is a temple. We will return to this issue of the possible context of the Glencairn basinophorous statue after examining the date and ownership of the object.

31 Wildung, “Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 33.
33 The basin of Huy, Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 19900. PM 3, 334; Ludwig Borchardt, Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahure I (Leipzig, 1910), 120–21, fig. 164; Bodil Hornemann, Types of Ancient Egyptian Statuary III (Copenhagen, 1957), pl. 636; Wildung, “Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 29 and fig. 21.
34 The basin of Nehemawai, see Günther Roeder, Hermopolis 1929–1939 (Hildesheim 1959), pl. 73a, and Wildung, “Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 28 and fig. 18.
36 A fragment of a basinophorous statue from the Brooklyn Museum’s Mut Temple excavations (24ME.3). See note 20 above.
38 For a review of the debate of temple versus tomb setting, see Eric P Uphill, “A New Kingdom Relief from Memphis,” JEA 48 (1962), 162–63. See also Wildung, “Die Kniefigur am Opferbecken,” 33–34, fig. 26. He observes that the standing pose of the figures and the position of the hands of the statues in a prayerful gesture is more typical of what one would expect to find in a temple forecourt rather than in a
The Glencairn basin is carved from a single block of granodiorite and measures 65 centimeters in diameter. The object is in an excellent state of preservation with little damage to its sculptural components and only minor losses to the inscriptions that decorate the rim of the bowl. The bowl itself has a rounded bottom, carinated sides, and a recurved upper body. The area on which the figure sits projects from the exterior wall of the basin in a trapezoidal form (figs. 5, 6). Atop this projection, a beautifully carved small female figure perches with her chin and hands resting on the basin’s edge. Her head is finely detailed, but her body is less distinct. It has a gumdrop-like shape. Her lower extremities are merely suggested under her garment and her feet are not visible. A decorative feature on the figure’s proper right arm represents the pleating on the sleeve of her gown. Her hands rest atop a carved depiction of an offering table decorated with offerings of meats, loaves, and vessels. The table takes the shape of a *hetep* sign, the “loaf” of which projects slightly into the bowl.

She wears a large and elaborate long wig with two significant features: a distinctive type of braid and a noticeable depiction of her hairline (fig. 7). Her heavy wig is embellished with a triple braid that runs down the center.
of the back of her head. In her study of Egyptian hairstyles, Joann Fletcher has noted that this plaited element first appears during the reign of Tuthmosis IV and is often found on depictions in statuary and paintings of women who hold the title Priestess of Hathor. Another striking element of the figure’s wig is the appearance of her natural hairline at the top of her forehead peeking out slightly from beneath her full wig. This feature frequently occurs in women’s hairstyles of the Old Kingdom but became less popular during the Middle through New Kingdoms. This type of coiffure seems to have been revived, perhaps as a conscious archaising style during the reign of Amenhotep III, when several images of his wife, Queen Tiye, depict her natural hairline visible under a large and elaborate wig. This hairstyle can also be seen on the figure of Menana from the pair statue depicting her together with her husband Khaemwaset, similarly dated to the reign of Amenhotep III.

While the figure’s chin is set directly on the rim of the basin, her gaze is directed slightly downwards into the vessel, as if she is meant to be looking at the liquid within the bowl. Facing her on the opposite side of the basin is a protome featuring the head of the goddess Hathor carved in high relief (fig. 8). Hathor wears her typically heavy wig banded by a series of ribbons. Atop her head is a crown that takes the form of the bḥm, a pylon-like structure framed by two tall tendrils—a feature often seen decorating sistrum sound boxes. The Hathor decoration on the interior wall of the basin is balanced on the vessel’s exterior with a similar image of this goddess with comparable attributes. Here the form of Hathor depicted may be the syncretic version of this goddess, Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet, as the adjacent texts and her naos-shaped crown suggests.

Fig. 7. Views of the female figure’s distinctive hairstyle featuring a triple braid (left, center) and her natural hairline under her wig (right). Photo © Jennifer Houser Wegner.
Atop the Hathor heads, in a slightly raised rectangular area on the rim, is a short two-column inscription that has suffered some damage, particularly in the area of the cartouche (fig. 9). The inscription reads: \textit{nswt bity} [////////] \textit{di} \textit{mry} \textit{Hw.t-Hr-Nbt-Hpt} “The king of Upper and Lower Egypt [////////] given life, the beloved of Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet.” The damage to the king’s name and its encircling cartouche is severe. Reflective Transformation Imaging photography (RTI) was carried out in an attempt to read more of the signs, but it seems the inscription is truly lost.44 The only sign within the cartouche which seems visible is a circular sign reading \textit{Ra} (Re). Unfortunately, as prenomina as a rule include the \textit{Ra} (Re) element, the appearance of this sign doesn’t help to determine with any certainty which king is named. The name Neb-Maat-Re, would certainly fit the available space.

When one combines Ruia’s distinctive hairstyle, the figure’s almond-shaped eyes and plastic eyebrows, and the likely reading of the name of Amenhotep III on the basin’s inscriptions, there is no doubt that this libation basin was created during that king’s reign. Further support for this date comes from the identification of the individuals named in the dedication inscription as we now discuss.

The Dedication Inscription

The flat rim of the basin is inscribed with two symmetrically placed texts that begin at the rectangular raised panel containing the royal name and read towards the female figure.

These inscriptions contain offering formulae that mention the goddess Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet, and name the dedicants of the basin, a man named Meryptah45 and his wife, Ruia.46 The inscriptions read as follows: connected with the naos sistrum, a version of which we see atop each of the “Hathor” heads on this bowl, See Wilfried Gutkeunst, “Nebet-hetepet,” \textit{LA} 5, col. 362. With regard to a connection between Amenhotep III and Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet, Vandier notes two scarabs with this king’s name reading “Nebmaatre, beloved of Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet,” see Vandier, “Tousas et [Hathor] Nebet-Hetepet,” \textit{RdE} 16, 80 and W. M. Flinders Petrie, \textit{Scarabs and Cylinders with Names: Illustrated by the Egyptian Collection in University College, London} (London, 1917), pl. 33, nos. 39–40. For the association between Queen Tiye and Hathor-Nebet-Hetepet, see Anna Stevens, “The Amarna Royal Women as Images of Fertility: Perspectives on a Royal Cult,” \textit{Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions} 4.1 (2004), 117, n. 29.

44 The RTI was carried out by Joe Wegner and Kevin Cahail in March of 2017.

45 For the name Meryptah, see Ranke, \textit{PN I}, 221.5 and Ranke, \textit{PN II}, 373. The name Ruia comes into use in the New Kingdom. Its origin may be Nubian as there are several Nubian chiefs with this name early in the New Kingdom. See \textit{PM} 8, 79 and \textit{PM} 8, 128; W. Vivian Davies, “Egypt and Nubia: Conflict with the Kingdom of Kush,” in Catharine H. Roehrig (ed.), \textit{Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh} (New York, 2005),
The Identity of Meryptah and Ruiu

The titles held by Meryptah indicate his high status during the reign of Amenhotep III. Meryptah was a Royal Scribe ($s$ nswt), a Scribe of Recruits/elite Forces ($s$ nfr.w), an Overseer of the Royal Apartment ($mry-r$ lp.t-nswt) and a Steward ($mry-r$ pr). While the title of Royal Scribe ($s$ nswt) is quite common, Meryptah’s other titles are considerably less frequent and have the potential to offer insights and some of the unique aspects of his career and possibly his familial associations. The title Scribe of Recruits/elite Forces ($s$ nfr.w) is attested for very few individuals in the Eighteenth Dynasty, the period in which this title first appears. It has been suggested

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54. As a female name, in addition to the citations listed in Ranke, PV, there is a woman named Ruiu who was buried in the tomb of her father, Neferkhawet. This family tomb was excavated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1935. Burials for ten individuals were identified including those of Neferkhawet and his wife Rennufer, their son Amenemhat, their daughter Ruiu, and her husband Bak. As for a date for these individuals, it appears that the tomb's above-ground offering chapel was razed to make way for a building project carried out by Thutmose III, sometime before the end of his reign in 1425 BCE. For this tomb and its associated materials, see PM 1, 621; PM 1, 782; Manfred Carrass, “A Granite Group of the Eighteenth Dynasty,” JEA 41 (1955), 72–74, pl. XIX, and Betsy Bryan, “An Early Eighteenth Dynasty Group Statue,” BES 10 (1989) 27–28. The mother of Khueruf, the steward of Queen Tiye, was named Ruiu. She held the titles of Royal Ornament, Chantress of Isis, the God’s Mother, and Chantress of Amun. See PM 1, 298. A stela that was in the Hilton Price Collection records the names of Simut and his wife, Ruiu. See F. G. Hilton Price, A Catalogue of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Possession of F.G. Hilton Price 1 (London, 1897), 211, no. 2007; PM 1, 612. The whereabouts of this stela is currently unknown. Another attestation of a woman named Ruiu can be found on a black granite statue of a seated man in a private collection in Philadelphia. The statue is described as having a “strange style and curious often garbled hieroglyphs inscribed: … n k n $k-mn$ … In nswt $jw$ nb $rsw nb t mly$.” Glencairn Museum archival records, no photograph was available. None of these women seem to have any connection to the Ruiu on the Glencairn basin.

47. This area of the basin is very eroded. The traces of visible signs support the reading nswt. For similar phrasing, see Winfried Berta, Aufbau und Bedeutung der ägyptischen Opferformel (Glückstadt, 1968), 167 (Bite 122).

48. Abdul Rahman Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles of the New Kingdom (Ismailia, 2006), 537–44 [1816]. The title of $s$ nswt may be distinct from $s$ nswt m7 (True Royal Scribe) that is held by fewer individuals during the New Kingdom. For $s$ nswt m7, see Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles, 547–49 [1823]. See also Jeanette Anne Taylor, An Index of Male Non-Royal Egyptian Titles, Epithets & Phrases of the 18th Dynasty (London, 2001), 212–13.

49. Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles, 533–34 [1804]. See also Taylor, Index of Male Non-Royal Egyptian Titles, 212.


51. Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles, 26–27 [99]. See also Taylor, Index of Male Non-Royal Egyptian Titles, 19.


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Left side: $hip$ di nswt Hswt-Hr nb.t $hip$ n ($si$) nb.t pt hmw.t ngr.w dl.s $nfr$ $w$ nb $k$ nb $s$ nb $h$ ngr nfr
$s$ nswt $s$ nfr.w Mry-Pt sn.t $hip$ pr $sn$.yt n lmm Rwrv.

An offering which the king gives and which Hathor-Nebet-hetepet, Lady of Heaven, Mistress of the Gods, gives that she may give life, prosperity, and health to the ka of the one praised of the great god, the Royal Scribe, the Scribe of Recruits/elite Forces Meryptah (and) his wife, his beloved, the Lady of the House, the Chantress of Amun, Ruiu.

Right side: $hip$ di nswt Hswt-Hr nb.t $hip$ nb.t pt hmw.t n gr.w dl.s $hsw$ m-b3h nswt $n$ k $s$ s nswt imy-r $lp.t$ nswt imy-r pr Mry-Pt sn.t.f nb.t pr $sn$.yt n lmm Rwrv.

An offering which the king gives and which Hathor-Nebet-hetepet, Lady of Heaven, Mistress of the Gods gives that she may give praise before the king for the ka of the royal scribe, the Overseer of the Royal Harem, the Steward, Meryptah (and) his wife, the Lady of the House, the Chantress of Amun, Ruiu.
that the title originated at this time as a result of the intensification of Egyptian military operations during this period of expansion of the empire.\textsuperscript{53} However, the exact nature of the \textit{nfr.w} has been debated. The term has been translated variously as “recruits” or “elite forces”—two groups of military men with obviously opposing levels of experience. The category of recruits should refer to young men freshly enlisted into the military, while the term “elite forces” would suggest well-trained and experienced soldiers.\textsuperscript{54} It is possible that by the time of the reign of Amenhotep III, the \textit{nfr.w} would have been harnessed to undertake operations of a non-military nature, such as building projects or other activities that would support the kingdom’s internal infrastructure.\textsuperscript{55} One of the well-known holders of this title is the official, Amenhotep son of Hapu. A description of the type of work encompassed by the scribal of recruits can be found in a text on one of his monuments which states:

... he put all the people subject to me, and the listing of their number under my control, as superior king's-scribe over recruits. I levied the (military) classes of my lord, my pen reckoned the numbers of millions; I put them in [classes (?)] in the place of their [elders (?)]; the staff of old age as his beloved son. I taxed the houses with the numbers belonging thereto, I divided the troops (of workmen) and their houses, I filled out the subjects with the best of the captivity, which his majesty had captured on the battlefield. I appointed all their troops, I levied ------. I placed troops at the heads of the way(s) to turn back the foreigners in their places.\textsuperscript{56}

As Meryptah held the title \textit{sS nfr.w} like Amenhotep son of Hapu, we may perhaps see evidence for comparable paths of ascension through the ranks of royal administration. His role as \textit{sS nfr.w} may have occurred as part of a long career which saw him rise to a position of considerable status within the royal and religious administration during the reign of Amenhotep III, a career path reflected in his other titles.

As noted above, on the Glencairn basin Meryptah also held the title Overseer of the Royal Apartment (\textit{imy-r.

Fine army of eighteenth dynasty, a comparatively uncommon position attested during the Eighteenth Dynasty for only a handful of officials including the mayor of Thebes, Sennefer (TT 96); Userhat (TT 47); the Royal Tutor, Hekareshu (TT 226); Mery-re II, at el-Amarna (Tomb 2); Huya, at el-Amarna (Tomb 1); and Ptahmose (British Museum EA 160).\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{itemize}
\item Meryptah, nineteen known individuals held this title from the reign of Tutmosis III through the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty. These individuals are as follows: (1) Abkauser, temp. Tutmosis III; (2) Intef, temp. Tutmosis III; (3) Minhotep, temp. Amenhotep II; (4) Horemheb, temp. Tutmosis IV; (5) Amenhotep (called Huy) temp. Amenhotep III; (6) Amenhotep son of Hapu temp. Amenhotep III; (7) Men, temp. Amenhotep III; (8) Sa-aset, temp. Amenhotep III; (9) Sennu, temp. Amenhotep III; (10) Tjamen, temp. Amenhotep III; (11) Tjena, temp. Amenhotep III; (12) Huy, son of Aper-el, temp. Akhenaten; (13) May, temp. Akhenaten; (14) Horemheb (future king), temp. Akhenaten; (15) Ramose, temp. Akhenaten; (16) Is, Eighteenth Dynasty (Louvre Statue C76); (17) Raya, Eighteenth Dynasty; (18) Ti, late Dynasty 18; (19) Ranero, Eighteenth Dynasty. (The sides of the base of a sphinx of Tutmosis IV were reworked to replace the original royal inscription with that of the scribe of recruits, Ranero, see Betsy M. Bryan, \textit{The Reign of Tuthmosis IV} [Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1980], 362–65.)
\end{itemize}


\textsuperscript{54} The career path for advancement seems to have been that scribes of the army were sometimes promoted to Chief of Military Scribes, then to the rank Scribe of Recruits, and ultimately to General. All of the generals immediately before and during the Amarna Period bore the title of Scribe of Recruits before being promoted to General. These Generals would have been the direct subordinate of the Crown Prince. These Crown Princes would have been taught by royal tutors who more often than not bore military titles. See Kady, “The Social status and Education of Military Scribes, 155–62. There is no indication that Meryptah ever attained the rank of General.

\textsuperscript{55} See Helek, \textit{Der Einfluss der Militärtführer}, 20 and Schulman, \textit{Military Rank, Title and Organization}, 20–21 for opposing views on the proper translation of the term \textit{nfr.w}.


\textsuperscript{57} See also Alexandre Varille, \textit{Inscriptions concernant l’architecte Amenhotep, fils de Hapou, Bât d’ Égypte. Bât d’ Égypte} (Leiden, 2011).
This title indicates that Meryptah would have been one of the rare officials granted close access to the royal household as a high-ranking member of the palace staff. Meryptah’s final title, Steward (imy-r pr), although common in other periods is relatively rare during the late Eighteenth Dynasty. As we examine in detail below, it is possible the writing of this title on the Glencairn basin may be a shortened version of a title identifying Meryptah as the steward of a specific royal foundation.

Meryptah’s wife, Ruiu, is identified in the dedicatory inscription with only two titles: Lady of the House (nb.t pr) and Chantress of Amun (šmḥ yṯ n ỉmn). Ruiu is a previously unrecognized Chantress of Amun. Her identification during the reign of Amenhotep III adds to the comparatively small number of chantresses dating to this king’s reign. Suzanne Onstine has noted that during this period, women who hold the title of Chantress derive predominantly from the upper echelon of society. Unfortunately, there appear to exist no other inscriptive or monumental remains that commemorate this lady Ruiu and her familial background remains unknown. However, her position as Meryptah’s wife confirmed on this basin provides a useful source of evidence on the particular identity of Meryptah himself as we consider below.

The high-status titles of Meryptah, suggest that Meryptah and his wife were certainly well-connected individuals. Their social status is reflected in the extremely high quality of craftsmanship of the basinophorous statue. Indeed, in view of the sculptural quality of the object, the inclusion of the name of the king (with little doubt Nebmaatre-Amenhotep III) and sculptural details such as the hairstyle of Ruiu echoing that of Queen Tiye, we may wonder whether this object derives from a royal workshop. It may well have been a piece commissioned by the owners themselves, but access to its manufacture likely reflects the position held by Meryptah and his relationship to the royal establishment. Who was this particular Meryptah? We turn now to examine the identity of the Meryptah commemorated alongside his wife Ruiu on the Glencairn basin.

### The Identity of Meryptah on the Glencairn Basin

There are several attestations of officials with the name Meryptah during the reign of Amenhotep III and many of these individuals held high-ranking administrative positions (fig. 10). Can we say with any certainty that all or some of these texts refer to the same person? It is certainly possible that we may be witnessing two, or more, different officials with the same name. However, there is also the intriguing possibility that the multiple appearances of the name Meryptah during the reign of Amenhotep III allude to the same individual. In the following overview we will explore the set of evidence that may shed light on Meryptah.

On the Glencairn basinophorous statue, we have seen that the titles listed for Meryptah are as follows: Royal Scribe (šš nsw), Scribe of Recruits (šš ncfw), Overseer of the Royal Apartment (imy-r ipt nsw), and Steward (imy-r pr) of an unnamed establishment. An object that shows the closest correlation in titles with the Glencairn basin is a ceremonial schist cubit rod dated to the late Eighteenth Dynasty for an official named Meryptah now in a private collection. On this rod, the owner, Meryptah, is identified as a Royal Scribe (šš nswf), a True Royal Scribe (šš nswt m3?), and a Steward (imy-r pr) of an unspecified establishment. Given the two shared titles on this rod and the Glencairn basin, and the absence of any other official named Meryptah who shared these two titles, these two objects may reference the same Meryptah.

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58 See Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles, 26–27 [89] and Taylor, Index of Male Non-Royal Titles, 19.
60 See Onstine, Role of the Chantress, 7, 93, and 96 for the elite status of the husband of a šmḥ yṯ.
61 See Al-Ayedi, Index of Egyptian Administrative, Religious and Military Titles, 26–27 [89] and Taylor, Index of Male Non-Royal Titles, 19.
62 See Onstine, The Role of the Chantress (šmḥ yṯ) in Ancient Egypt (Oxford, 2005), 139–40 for the function of the šmḥ yṯ.
63 See also the inscribed green schist cubit rod found together with a wooden example in the late Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Aper-el at Saqqara in Alain Zivie, Découvertes à Saqqarah: Le Vizir Oublié (Paris, 1990), 136, and Zahi A. Hawass, Hidden Treasures of the Egyptian Museum (Cairo, 2002), 46.
The third attestation of a man named Meryptah who lived during the reign of Amenhotep III appears on the well-known family stela of Meryptah and Pahmose. This monument commemorates members of an important Memphite family including a vizier by the name of Thutmose, his wife Tawy, and their two sons. One son is Pahmose, a High Priest of Ptah at Memphis and the other is a man named Meryptah who is a Prophet (Hm-nTr) and a Steward of the Mansion of Nebmaatre (Imy-r pr n t Nbt Nb-m3 aft-r). A fifth individual also appears, another High Priest of Ptah—also named Pahmose—who is the son of a Prophet named Menkheper. Two details on this monument are of note. In the horizontal inscription above the cavetto cornice, Meryptah’s full title of Steward of the Mansion of Nebmaatre is abbreviated to simply Steward (Imy-r pr), a title we have encountered on both the Glencairn basinophorous statue and the cubit rod of Meryptah. Secondly, not only do

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the two named High Priests of Ptah wear the special jackal collar normally worn exclusively by holders of that office, but so too does Meryptah, although he is not assigned this sacerdotal title in the texts on this monument.63

Hieratic labels on sealings from Malkata dating to Years 30 through 37 of the reign of Amenhotep III likewise mention an individual named Meryptah who bore the titles Prophet (ḥm-nṯr) and Steward of the Mansion of Pharaoh (imy r n tš hwty pr 3).64 In his publication of these dockets, William Hayes has suggested that this person is the same as the Meryptah mentioned on the London-Leiden stela and that the tš hwty pr 3 seen on the dockets is the same institution as the tš hwty Nb-mšrf-r referred to on the stela.65 Nevertheless, a question remains as to which temple of Amenhotep III is being referenced here. Hayes believed that the Steward Meryptah mentioned on the Malkata labels held office and probably resided in northern Egypt.66

Hayes stated that the word hwty in the New Kingdom was used in reference to mortuary temples but recognized that the term also can be used in a broader frame of reference to denote the “domain” or “foundation” that supported such temples. He went on to say that labels 3 and 58 (q) tell us that the domain in question was that of the temple [of Amenhotep III] at Memphis. The labels in question read: “Year 26 wine of /// hwty /// l.p.h. in Memphis” (label 3) and “Year 37 wine of the hwty /// in Memphis of the vineyard master (ḥry k3[mw]) ///” (label 58). Another docket (label 6) makes mention of “Year 1 wine of the vineyard master (ḥry k3[mw]) of the hwty of Nebmaatre.” This leaves us with the fact that there is a hwty associated with Amenhotep III (although the king is not explicitly named in label 3 or 58) at Memphis and there is a hwty of Nebmaatre (without a specific geographical location given).67 This raises the question: must the hwty in Memphis be the same establishment as the hwty of Nebmaatre? There is after all a temple at Memphis which is known as “Amenhotep III-united-with-Ptah”68 and there is, of course, his funerary temple at Kom el Heitan. Perhaps both of these foundations are represented in the Malkata dockets and the hwty of Nebmaatre mentioned in the Malkata dockets is the king’s mortuary temple in Thebes rather than a Memphite establishment. This temple may be the same as the tš hwty pr 3 mentioned on the London-Leiden stela.

Another attestation of a Meryptah associated with the reign of Amenhotep III occurs on a funerary cone from the Theban necropolis.69 This cone is inscribed for the sem-priest in the Temple of Ptah (šm m pr Pḥḥ), the Great Director of Craftsmen in the Southern Heliopolis (wr ḥrḥ hmr w m lw-nw Ṣm w); i.e., the High Priest of Ptah at Thebes, and the Prophet in the Temple of Nebmaatre (ḥm-nṯr m hwty Nb-mšrf-r), Meryptah. The mention of the hwty Nb-mšrf-r suggests that this individual may be the same Meryptah referenced in the Malkata sealings. Furthermore, the appearance of the title wr ḥrḥ hmr w m lw-nw Ṣm w on this cone may help to explain why the Meryptah depicted on the Memphite family stela wears the accoutrements of a High Priest of Ptah despite not being listed with that title on that monument. It appears viable that Meryptah of the Memphite stela


64 William C. Hayes, “Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III,” JNES 10.2 (1951), 82–112. Hayes records (fig. 19) that Meryptah appears on twenty-four examples of docket types representing eight different label types (34, 38, 59, 103, 109, 158, 188 and 241). However, the transcriptions for docket type 103 and 158 do not support that, as his name does not appear those transcriptions. See also M. A. Leahy, Excavations at Malkata and the Birket Habu 1971–74: The Inscriptions (Warminster, 1978), 7, and Federico Rocchi, “The First Prophet of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten,” in A. K. Eyma and C. J. Bennett (eds.), A Delta-man in Yebu (Boca Raton, 2003), 46.

65 Hayes, “Inscriptions from the Palace,” JNES 10.2, 98–99. The current author believes Meryptah may have resided in Thebes, while members of this family were prominent Memphite officials.


and Meryptah named on this cone are the same individual; the cone could reflect the fact that Meryptah served as the southern counterpart to the office of Memphite High Priest of Ptah, an office in fact held contemporaneously by his brother Ptahmose.

A man named Meryptah also appears in the tomb of Ramose (TT 55) and may be related to the family of the vizier. Various individuals and family members of Ramose are depicted in his tomb and one of these men is labeled as a \( sm\ m\ t\ [hwt\ Nb-mt^r-R]\ ) and a Steward \( (imy-r\ pr)\ ) of an unspecified establishment. This combination of titles is similar to those just discussed for the Meryptah of the funerary cone and Malkata dockets. In an article on the first prophet of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, Federico Rocchi makes special note of an official named Meryptah and suggests the Memphite family stela, the Malkata sealings, the funerary cone, and the figure in the tomb of Ramose all commemorate the same individual. If that is the case, it then offers the possibility that the Glencairn basin and Sotheby’s cubit rod also belong to the same Meryptah. Another intriguing suggestion that Rocchi makes is that this Meryptah may be the same man as the one mentioned on the statue of Nebnefer now in Brussels. This statue dates to Year 20 of Amenhotep III and in the inscription, a man named Meryptah is referred to as the High Priest of Amun \( (hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn)\ ). There are only two First Prophets of Amun attested during the reign of Amenhotep III, a man named Meryptah and a Ptahmose. Rocchi further proposed that a connection between the High Priest of Amun and the king’s mortuary temple may be seen in that, he argues, until a king dies, the First Prophet of Amun may have been the principal official responsible for the operations of a king’s completed mortuary temple.

If we accept that the Meryptah on the Nebnefer statue is the same as the other Meryptah(s), we are then able to connect another series of monuments belonging to the \( hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn\ ) Meryptah. These objects include a stelaphorous statue of this individual inscribed with a sun hymn, now in Durham, upon which he holds the titles Great Chief in the Palace \( (hry\-tp\ 3\ m\ pr\-nswt)\ ), Overscer of Priests of All the Gods \( (imy-r\ hmw-ng-r\ nbw)\ ), Royal Seal Bearer \( (hnty-bity)\ ), and High Priest of Amun \( (hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn)\ ). This statue was found in a pit at Gurna behind “Yanni’s house” which was built above TT 52. Also found were several other associated objects including stamped bricks for the \( hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn\ ) Meryptah. Work on the nearby Theban tomb of Paenkhemenu (TT 68) has revealed that this tomb was initially made for the \( hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn\ ) Meryptah, but that

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71 See Norman de Garis Davies, The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose (London, 1941), pl. ix; Urk. IV, 1878 who restores the name as Meryptah. Rocchi suggests that it would be preferable to restore the text as \( sm\-priest\ ) in the temple of [Ptah] as seen on the funerary cone, see Rocchi, “First Prophet of Amenhotep IV,” 45.
72 Rocchi, “First Prophet of Amenhotep IV,” 45-47.
73 Statue of Nebnefer (Brussels El103) See Rocchi, “First Prophet of Amenhotep IV,” 46, and also see for example, Louis Speleers, Recueil des inscriptions égyptiennes des Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire à Bruxelles (Bruxelles, 1923), 60, n° 250; Urk. IV, 1885; Baudouin van de Walle, “La publication des textes des Musées: Bruxelles (Musées royaux d’Art et d’Histoire),” in Serge Sauneron, Textes et languages de l’Égypte pharaonique. Hommage à Jean-François Champollion, BdÉ 64.3 (Cairo, 1974), 174; B. G. Davies, Historical Records of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty, fasc. 6 (Warminster, 1995), 45-45 and Arielle Kozloff, Amenhotep III: Egypt’s Radiant Pharaoh (Cambridge, 2012), 110-11.
74 Rocchi (“First Prophet of Amenhotep IV,” 46) notes “The first four monuments clearly refer to the same person, Meryptah, \( sm\-priest\ ) in the temple of Ptah and prophet in the temple of Nebmaatra, who lived during the reign of Amenhotep III. Whether the fifth monument mentions the same Meryptah is not fully certain, seeing the difference in titles, but it seems likely.”
75 Aldred states that the holders of the four main priestly offices of Amun are known from an inscription dated to Amenhotep III’s regnal year 20. The men are: Meryptah, Anen, Amenemhat, and Si-Mut. This Meryptah seems to have succeeded Ptahmose as High Priest of Amun \( (hm-ng\ tpy\ n\ Imn)\ ) in year 20 (or a little earlier) and appears to have served in that role until the death of Amenhotep III as there are no other High Priests known from his reign. See Cyril Aldred, “Two Theban Notables during the Later Reign of Amenophis III,” JNES 18.2 (1959), 113-20.
76 Rocchi, “First Prophet of Amenhotep IV,” 37.
77 Durham EG1006 (http://discovery.durham.ac.uk/permalink/f/1sh0j7/44DUR_ADLIB_DS8915); Aldred, “Two Theban Notables,” 113.
79 See PM 11, 670-71. Several of these bricks are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (11.155.4, 14.1.424, 14.1.423) and in Berlin (1575-7, 1583). See also Karl-Joachim Seyfried, Das Grab des Paenkhemenu (TT 68) und die Anlage TT 227 (Mainz, 1991), 117 for a discussion of stamped bricks from the tomb of Meryptah.
Meryptah is a block statue now in the Oriental Institute that has been dated to the reign of Amenhotep III. Here Meryptah is given the titles royal seal bearer (hnty-bity) and high priest of Amun (hm-ntr tpy n Imn)—two of the titles also seen on the stelaphorous statue in Durham.

A final mention of a man named Meryptah dating to the reign of Amenhotep III can be found on a hieratic stela now in the British Museum. This stela was inscribed during the Twenty-first Dynasty but records a royal decree dating to year 31 of the reign of Amenhotep III. The witnesses for this decree included the vizier Amenhotep and a man named Meryptah who has the unusual title of Overseer of the House of Gold (imy-r pr nbw). William Murnane noted that the combination of name and title was curious as there are no actual attestations of this person during the reign of Amenhotep III. He proposed that the steward of Amenhotep’s funerary temple may have also been responsible for carrying out this fiscal role. Earlier, Varille had stated that this imy-r pr nbw Meryptah was the same person as the hm-ntr tpy n Imn Meryptah who would have also carried out duties related to the treasury.

Might it not be the case that the Meryptah who was the Steward of Amenhotep’s funerary temple and the Meryptah who was the High Priest of Amun were the same person? This would leave us with one man named Meryptah who held a series of important positions during his long career, which lasted from at least year 20 through year 37 of Amenhotep III, and who possessed the following titles: (honorific): hnty-pft; (administrative): imy-r lpt nsw, imy-r pr n ti hwt pr-cs/imy-r pr n ti hwt Nb-mn²-R², imy-r pr, imy-r pr nbw, hnty-bity; (priestly): hm-ntr, hm-ntr m hwt Nb-m²-R², hm-ntr tpy n Imn, imy-r hmw-ntr nbw, sm m pr Pth, sm m ti [hwt Nb-m²-R²], wr ḫr hmwt m ḫwnt ŚmTw; (scribal): sš nswt, sš nswt m², sš nfrw. Following this line of reasoning, rather than a group of different men named Meryptah with a variety of complementary and overlapping titles, it appears possible that we have a set of inscribed evidence reflecting the evolving career of one of the important officials of Amenhotep III’s reign. Like the better-known Amenhotep son of Hapu, Meryptah may have been a man entrusted over a long timeframe with a series of significant religious and administrative functions.

If this is the case, the Meryptah commemorated alongside his wife Ruiu on the Glencairn basin was a part of an important Memphite family. While his family members served in the north as vizier and high priest of Ptah, little remains of this original phase of the tomb. This tomb (TT 68) is located not far from the area where the tomb goods for Meryptah were found. Another significant monument for a hm-ntr tpy n Imn named Meryptah is a block statue now in the Oriental Institute that has been dated to the reign of Amenhotep III. Here Meryptah is given the titles royal seal bearer (hnty-bity) and high priest of Amun (hm-ntr tpy n Imn)—two of the titles also seen on the stelaphorous statue in Durham.

For the discussion of the rising importance of Memphite families during the reign of Amenhotep III, see Murnane, “The Organization of Government under Amenhotep III,” 220. For a discussion of Government under Amenhotep III, see Murnane, “The Organization of Government under Amenhotep III,” 210. He states, “not only was Meriptah in charge of the king’s mansion of millions of years on the west of Thebes, but he was also Sm in the house of Pah and chief of the master craftsmen in Southern Heliopolis—in other words, the high priest of the Theban cult of Pah and a perfect foil for his relatives who exercised the superior office in Memphis.” Also note, J. Shirley, “Crisis and restructuring of the state: from the Second Intermediate Period to the advent of the Ramessid [sic],” in Juan Carlos Moreno García (ed.), Ancient Egyptian Administration (Leiden, 2013), 593–94. This family may have had blood ties to the king. If Meryptah’s mother Tawy is the same as the Tawy who was a (half-)sibling of the king, this possibility would make Meryptah the (half-) nephew of Amenhotep III—an intriguing suggestion, but currently one that is impossible to prove. See Kozlof, Amenhotep III, 25 and 93. Kozlof, Amenhotep III, 380 further observes that the family of Meryptah and Pahmose had contred over the major priesthoods at this time as Pahmose served as High Priest of Pah at Memphis and Meryptah became Steward of Amenhotep’s mortuary temple after being High Priest of Pah at Thebes. Here again she notes that the “may also have been the same Meryptah who was High Priest of Amun at Karnak in Year 20.”
Meryptah was based in the south at Thebes and performed his duties for Amenhotep III from that southern base. He was granted a tomb in Thebes (while being commemorated in the north on a family monument at Saqqara) and was ultimately buried at Gurna during the last few years of the reign of Amenhotep III.

Questions of Commemoration and Context

In the final section of our analysis of the basinophorous statue of Ruiu and Meryptah we turn to consider the possible dedicatory context and provenance of the object. Although no final answers can be provided on these issues there are several observations that we can make. One of the striking sculptural aspects of the basin is that while the texts commemorate both Meryptah and Ruiu, it is only the figure of Ruiu who appears sculpted, sitting at the rim of the basin. Given the status of Meryptah as a high-ranking royal official, we may question: why is it that Meryptah was not depicted on this basin alongside his wife? Several examples of basinophorous statues that we have mentioned above include multiple figures and dual depiction of husband and wife together appears to have been a desirable feature of these ritual objects. As Ruiu is depicted here alone, this suggests the basin might not have been a singular object, but rather belonged to a set, possibly a pair, one that depicted Meryptah and one depicting Ruiu but with dedicatory texts commemorating the two together. These objects may have been dedicated in the same context, possibly a temple setting relevant to the careers of both husband and wife. If we accept the Theban associations of Meryptah's career discussed above, combined with the status of Ruiu as Chantress of Amun, this suggests that the Glencairn basin (and a possible companion object depicting Meryptah) once stood in a Theban context, conceivably the Temple of Amun at Karnak, or some other Theban shrine, possibly in the area where Meryptah and Ruiu were ultimately buried. Meryptah's evident role in royal administration of Amenhotep III, and his title of imy-r pr [Steward], possibly a shortened form for imy-r pr n t f Nbt-mšt-Rˁ, as we have discussed above, also raises the possibility that basinophorous statues of Meryptah and Ruiu were set up in one of the royal monuments of Amenemhat III on the West Bank. One wonders if Meryptah had a major role in administering the royal mortuary temple, might these basins have once been dedicated within the Kom el-Heitan itself or some neighboring structure?

While the possibility of two complementary basinophorous statues established in a single context appears attractive, however, we cannot exclude the scenario of a separate dedication of a basin commemorating Ruiu in one location and one depicting Meryptah in some other location. The couple's independent roles and Ruiu's status as Chantress of Amun might equally well have determined the location in which the Glencairn basin once stood.

Finally, in considering the provenance of the piece, although a Theban origin appears more probable, we cannot conclusively exclude the possibility it once stood at some other location in Egypt. Given the evidence summarized above indicating that Meryptah derived from a Memphite family and he may be the figure commemorated alongside his brother Ptahmose on the Leiden-London family stela, we also have the possibility that Meryptah and his wife were commemorated in a Memphite temple. Here again the presence of the temple Amenhotep III-united-with-Ptah in Memphis discussed above might offer another viable setting for this basin. Clearly, no final answer can be provided on the basis of the Glencairn basin alone. However, the object serves to further highlight the fascinating issues of identity surrounding the figure of Meryptah during the reign of Amenhotep III. It is remarkable that amongst all the surviving evidence mentioning one (or more) high officials named Meryptah no mention occurs of Meryptah's wife. The Glencairn basin is the only surviving monument to commemorate Meryptah's wife Ruiu. This remarkably fine example of a basinophorous statue of Amenhotep III's reign provides a glimpse into a man and wife who were members of the upper echelons of royal society at that stage in the late Eighteenth Dynasty. Now, properly attributed, the Glencairn basin of Ruiu and Meryptah forms a major addition to the sculptural traditions of the reign of Amenhotep III.

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88 It may also be of note that his wife Ruiu served as a Chantress of Amun whose major cult center was based at Thebes.

89 Concerning the materials recovered from the pit “behind Yanni’s house,” Aldred (“Two Theban Notables,” 113) states that their condition—without any evidence of deliberate destruction—suggests that “Meryptah had died and been buried in the odor of sanctity, presumably just before the end of the reign of Amenophis III.”