

# Staging Restricted Knowledge

The sculptor Irtysen's self-presentation  
(ca. 2000 BC)

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## Abstract

Irtysen's hieroglyphically inscribed mortuary self-presentation (stela Louvre C 14, ll. 6-15; ca. 2000 BC) has often been read as a prime source for ancient Egyptian material production and craftsmanship, yet strongly resists such exploitation. Although it occupies the functional slot of an autobiography on the stela on which it is inscribed, Irtysen's self-presentation is not an autobiography in generic terms and alludes to the genre only at crucial junctures; a composition lacking parallels in the preserved record, it has Irtysen speak a uniquely original voice. The carefully composed, laid out and metricalized text presents Irtysen's *hmw*-ship ("art/expertise") in the terms of ritual and transformative knowledge, an art, therefore, that is truly creative in bringing things about, not mimetic. This knowledge consists in the proportions in (raised and sunk?) relief sculpture and in the repertoire of divine and royal representations, with matters of material production ("making") being limited to the indestructible materiality of what is "inside" such sculpted relief. The inscription focuses on representations of kingship, a focus that on a primary level may well reflect its date, broadly coeval with the restoration of royal art under Mentuhotep II. On a less context-bound level, Irtysen's ritual knowledge is transformative precisely because it (re-)creates royal and divine ritual representations that are performative in nature. Knowledge is displayed as such without specifics being given any elaboration, because this is restricted in-group knowledge (as discussed already by Fischer-Elfert 2002); it is accordingly transmitted only to the speaker's son under the "god's" authorization, frustrating an historian's expectations further. The text is at times enigmatic or under-specified, in all likelihood intentionally

so, and replete with double entendres on both the linguistic and the graphic levels, the latter being the locus of a rich elaboration with graphic puns of various sorts. In its deliberate opacity and its hinting at what more lies beyond the primary meaning of the words, the composition entices. It also, not only displays, but stages, reflexively, the restricted nature of Irtyzen's knowledge.

*Keywords:* Irtyzen, Louvre C 14, sculptor, self-presentation, restricted knowledge, ritual knowledge, hieroglyphs, relief sculpture, performativity, icons of kingship, king smiting his enemies, royal rituals, repertoire, proportions, enigmatic writing, graphic play, double entendre, pun, Middle Kingdom, Mentuhotep II, autobiography.

In elite textual productions,<sup>1</sup> ancient Egyptian artists and craftsmen are typically manifest in other people's voices and spaces, not in their own (for a discussion of ancient Egyptian artists' "words" in relation to diverse types of inscribed materials, the associated socially embedded situations of communication, and the resulting hermeneutic opportunities, see Quirke, this volume). Thus in the Middle Egyptian literary *Teaching of Kheti* (a.k.a. *Satire of Trades*, 2000-1450 BC; Jäger 2004),<sup>2</sup> artists and craftsmen are, among a great many other types of professionals, subjected to a strongly ideological treatment in the scribal sub-elite's voice, which defines itself notably in viewing trades other than their own in distancing, often derogatory and arguably ironic terms (Widmaier 2013, with a detailed comparison with pictorial representations of the same trades in New Kingdom funerary chapels; Laboury 2016, 373-377). In the highest elite's funerary chapels, pictorial representations of artists and craftsmen are partly labelled with designations of occupations, titles and/or names (Jurman, this volume), and at times associated with segments of direct speech (so-called "*Reden und Rufe*": Quirke, this volume, section V; Gulgielmi 1973; Junker 1943; Erman 1919; Scheel 1985-1986 for metal-workers). These "*Reden und Rufen*" purport to evoke the craftsmen's *sermo quotidianus* only by virtue of a fictionalizing convention in a genre that is itself strongly intertextual and codified (Vernus 2009-2010; 2015). The images and inscriptions combined are expressive of an ideological representation of dependents' activities and relative social position in spaces designed for the funerary self-presentation of the highest elites, while also contributing to the performative quality of funerary chapels as ritual spaces. Still on other people's monuments, artists specifically may speak their own voices in artists' signatures. These turn out to be surprisingly numerous, speaking to the status of artists and to the commissioners' interest in being associated with them (Laboury 2016; 2013, 34; Quirke, this volume, section IV). A few are developed to include elements of self-presentation by the artists themselves (*e.g.*, Meryre's signatures in the late 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty tomb of Setau at el-Kab, ca. 1100 BC: Laboury 2016). Artists could also leave their names inscribed as marks in places they had travelled or had been sent to (*e.g.*, the draughtsman Neb, ca. 1350 BC: Rondot 2013; on rock inscriptions by artists, further Quirke, this volume, section IV).

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1 I thank Stephen Quirke and Dimitri Meeks for commenting on, and suggesting additional references for the present paper.

2 For "Kheti" as the authorial identity of the teaching, Verhoeven 2010; for the dating, which is debated, provisionally, Stauder 2013, 468-476.



On their own monuments, artists speak their own voices in mortuary autobiographies, yet generally not in specific reference to their being artists per se. Egyptian autobiographies are a tightly codified genre, allowing for deviations and evolving over time. Inscribed in hieroglyphs on stone and set in ritual spaces (funerary chapels, later on temples), they have strong mortuary determinants and present an individual's worth in relation to points of culturally centripetal reference such as the king and/or, later on, the gods; they do not carry any of the detailed descriptive, introspective and/or self-finding narrative dimensions of the Western similarly named genre. Prior to the emergence of the autobiographical genre proper, the inscription of the leatherworker Weta (probably 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty, ca. 2600-2500 BC; see Appendix, A) thus includes epithets that are oriented entirely on expressing that Weta worked for the king's pleasure. Specific reference to Weta being a leather-worker is concentrated in the titles of which the epithets are an elaboration. At a time when the autobiographical genre had long coalesced and evolved further, the "overseer of sculptors" In[...]nakht (Mentuhotep II, ca. 2000 BC; see Appendix, B), a contemporary of Irtysen, focuses entirely on his acting for, and loyalty to, the king. References to In[...]nakht being an "overseer of sculptors" follow the narrative part of the inscription in the final string of titles: they stand outside the continuous text itself, which conforms fully to the format of the mid-11<sup>th</sup> dynasty Theban autobiography; a similar autobiography could have been inscribed for any other type of higher official. In the "overseer of sculptors" Shen-Setji's autobiography (Senwosret I, ca. 1950 BC; see Appendix, C), the short narrative part of the inscription is in reference to the speaker's activity as an organizer of works for the king, successively in Lisht then on mission in Abydos, expressed in a terse, two-sentence, format. The inscription conforms fully to the common format of contemporary autobiographies of officials in mission for the king. In the New Kingdom, the 'overseer of draughtsmen' Dedia (CGC 42122; ca. 1300 BC; Frood 2007, 133-136; cf. Laboury 2016, 385, and n. 33) similarly presents his activity as a mission for the king. Reflecting a broader evolution of the autobiographical genre in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, the "master sculptor" Ser-Djehuty (Klotz 2015; 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) emphasizes his relation to the gods through titles, hymns and prayers, making only marginal reference to his activity as a sculptor working for the gods.<sup>3</sup> Unlike artists' signatures, artists' autobiographies are in general not determined primarily, or not at all, by the fact that the speakers are artists specifically.

All the more remarkable are then the relatively fewer autobiographies of artists that include elements to do with the specific nature of their trade. In the New Kingdom, the "chief sculptor (lit. chief chisel-bearer) of the Lord of the Two Lands" Hatiay (early 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty, ca. 1300 BC; see Appendix, D) proudly emphasizes his initiation to restricted knowledge in relation to the fabrication of statues. Playing upon clichés of (early post-)Amarnian autobiographies, Hatiay presents this as a distinction that has accrued to him as a result of the king's recognition of his exceptional worth in spite of humble origins. In the "chief goldsmith" Amenemone's inscriptions (late 18<sup>th</sup> dy-

3 Front text, 14-15 (said to Amun) *km.n=i ḥsb wdt.n=k n=i iw=i ḥr mh pr=k m k3t-ʿwy=i* "I completed the time you decreed for me filling your estate through my handiwork"; Left side, 8 (said to Khentimentiu) (*ink ...*) *ḳsty pw smʿr ḥʿw=k srnp ḥm=k m k3t-ʿwy=f* "(I am ...), that is, a sculptor who renders your body perfect and rejuvenates your Majesty through his handiwork".



nasty, ca. 1325 BC, Frood 2007, 129-133), access to restricted knowledge is featured as well if in a more allusive way, complementing references to Amenemone's work for the king. In both cases, no detail of artistic activity is given textual elaboration. For Amenemone, it has been suggested that references to his role as a chief goldsmith may rather be found on a non-textual level, in the highly elaborate pictorial renderings of ornamentation and jewelry in his funerary chapel (Ockinga 2004, 20).

Against the background just outlined, Irtyzen's funerary self-presentation (stela Louvre C 14, ll. 6-15) is unique for its being focused fully on matters to do with the speaker being an artist specifically. The stela<sup>4</sup> (photograph: fig. 1-2, below; other photographs: Bryan 2017, pl. 1; Delange 2015, 152; partials: Andreu-Lanoë (ed.) 2013, 50-51 [close-up]; Barbotin 2005, 57; Barta 1970, pl. I) derives from Abydos,<sup>5</sup> the main centre of Osirian cult in Upper Egypt, and dates to the later part of the reign of Mentuhotep II (ca. 2000 BC),<sup>6</sup> thus broadly to the era of the reunification of Egypt ushering into the Middle Kingdom. Irtyzen bears the titles of "director of craftsmen, scribe and sculptor" (*imī-r3 ḥmwwt sš ksti*,<sup>7</sup> l. 6). The individual's name, *irty=sn* (lit., "Their-eyes") could read alternatively as "Who-makes-their-forms" (*ir-ir(w)=sn*: Barta 1970, 18-20); assuming that the former, traditional, reading is correct, a pun could be intended with the latter, given its appropriateness for an artist. No other monuments of Irtyzen are known.<sup>8</sup>

In its apparent focus on technical detail to do with craftsmanship, Irtyzen's inscription is unparalleled in the preserved Egyptian record. Its textual format, a self-presentation yet one that lacks the typical framing elements and formulations of the contemporaneous autobiography (see below, "Irtyzen's self-presentation"), is similarly unique. In addition, the text is infamously replete with philological difficulties. Irtyzen's self-presentation has accordingly attracted a considerable amount of scholarly interest and merited a great many in part widely diverging translations (the most detailed study remains Barta 1970; among subsequent studies, e.g., Bryan 2017; Mathieu 2016; Landgráfová 2011, 80-82; Barbotin 2005, 56-57; Fischer-Elfert 2002; Aufrère 2000, 26; Barta 1970; Badawi 1961; Baud 1938; for discussions of individual passages, see references below). Yet, the text has resisted a commonly agreed upon interpretation in terms of the referents, the realia of artistic practice, for which it is generally read.

The extreme difficulty of the text may derive in part from its reflecting an "idiolectal extract" of a technical lexicon that is bound to remain opaque as long as no further comparable textual material becomes available (Fischer-Elfert 2002, 29). All the more so if this extract relates to restricted knowledge that Irtyzen displays as such

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4 Material description: limestone; height 117.5 cm., breadth 56 cm.; some typical First Intermediate Period epigraphic features in the inscription (Barta 1970, 13).

5 The stela was found during Thédénat-Duvent the Younger's collecting activity in Abydos in 1820 and acquired by the Louvre museum from the Erard collections in 1838 (Delange 2015, 152; on the Thédénat-Duvent collection, further Guichard 2007). The stela is mentioned by Champollion already in 1826 (Barta 1970, 11).

6 The stela bears the third version of the titulary of Mentuhotep II (Postel 2004, 150).

7 Or *gnwti*, as an alternative transcription for the last term.

8 The proposal that the contemporary "overseer of sculptors" In[...]nakht (Cairo TR 3/6/25/1; see Appendix, B) could be the same individual as Irtyzen (Barta 1970, 128-130) is based solely on the observation that both are sculptors; it cannot be confirmed by independent evidence and has accordingly been met with cautious scepticism.



(*ibid.*, the same author's main argument, on which the discussion below elaborates), the difficulty of the text could be intended, and thereby loaded with signification in itself. The inscription would then frustrate modern expectations aimed at extracting referential information on craftsmanship not primarily on philological grounds, but on hermeneutic ones: Irtyzen would defeat a reading as a directly referential and informative "source" because it is not amenable to be made into one. Rather, it will be argued, the difficulty and complexity of the inscription are integral to what, in more oblique and thereby all the more effective ways, it expresses and stages.

### The main textual self-presentation: transcription, translation and philological notes

The following provides a transcription and translation of Irtyzen with basic philological notes. Depending on issues discussed, the text will be referred to subsequently in the present article in three different ways: through lines on the stela (in the transcription and translation, superscript (6)-(15)), through metric lines (in the right margin, (i)-(xiv)) and through the sections that can be identified based on structuring features in the text (the added headings, I-VI). The transcription incorporates metric analysis, broadly, though not fully, adhering to Fechtian rules revised by Allen (for a previous, substantially different, metric analysis, Barta 1970, 136-144). The aim of the metric analysis is practical and twofold: to demonstrate that the text is metrically formed (whatever the individual details) rather than mere free-flowing discourse, and to make appear how certain structural relations in the composition are also emphasized at the level of its metric structure.

#### Section I: Irtyzen's *hmw*-ship defined as ritual and transformative knowledge

<i>iw(=i)-rh.<sup>(7)</sup>kw sšt3 n-mdw-ntr</i>	<i>sšmt-<sup>c</sup>w nw-hbyt</i>	(i)
<i>hk3-nb <sup>c</sup>pr.n(=i)-sw</i>	<i>nn-sw3t im hr=i</i>	(ii)
<sup>(8)</sup> <i>ink-grt-hmww ikr m-hmt=f</i>	<i>pr hr-tp m-rht.n=f</i>	(iii)

- I kno<sup>(7)</sup>w the hidden knowledge of hieroglyphs,  
the conduct of festive rituals; (i)
- All generative force, I have equipped myself with it,  
without anything there escaping me. (ii)
- <sup>(8)</sup>Thus<sup>a</sup>, I am an expert-artist efficient in his art,  
one who has come out on top through what he knows. (iii)

a) Against traditional additive renderings as "moreover", *grt* here has argumentative force (Oréal 2011, 460) signalling that the contents expressed in metric lines (i)-(ii) form the basis for asserting (iii) (see further below, "Irtyzen's *hmw*-ship").



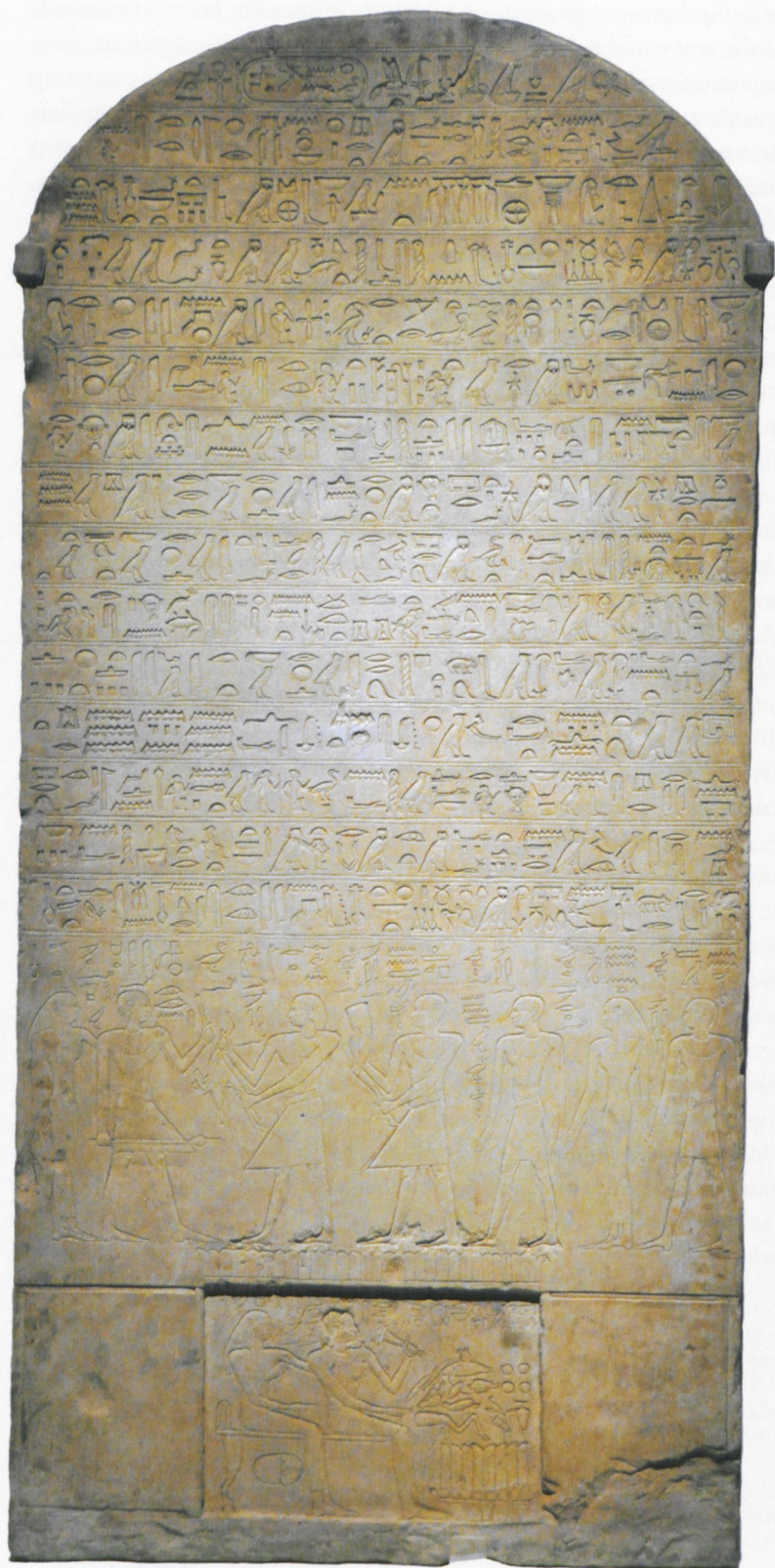


Figure 1: Stela  
Louvre C 14  
(Irtysen), courtesy  
Dimitri Laboury.



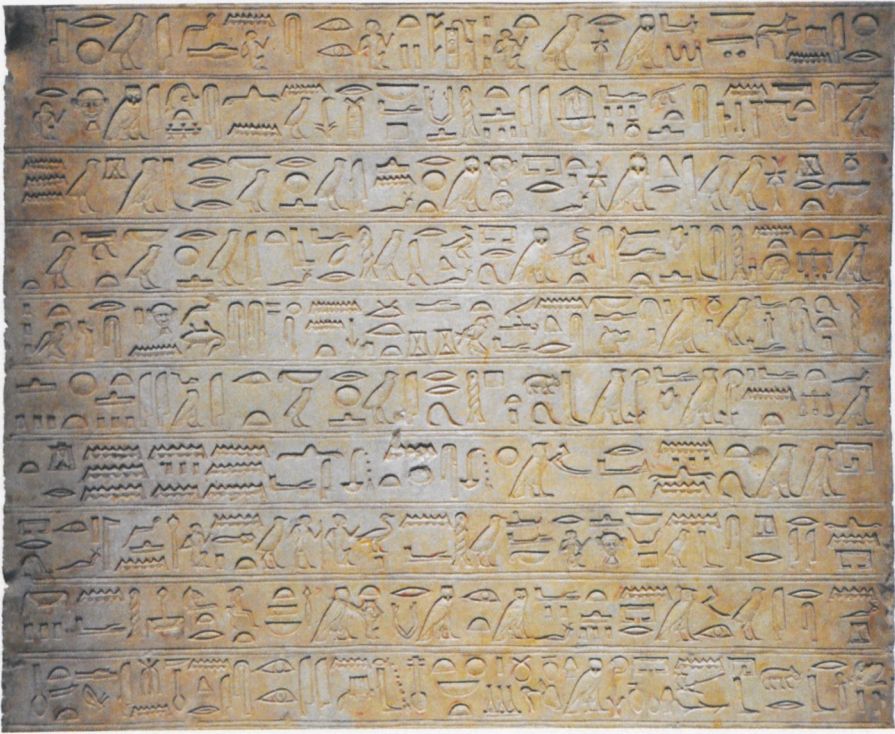


Figure 2: Stela Louvre C 14 (Irtysen), ll. 6-15, courtesy Dimitri Laboury.

**Section II:** Proportions in (raised and sunk?) relief sculpture

<i>iw(=i)-rh.kw r3w-b3gw</i>	<sup>(9)</sup> <i>f3t nt-tp-hsb</i>	(iv)
<i>šdt s<sup>c</sup>kt m-pr-<sup>c</sup>k=f</i>	<i>r-iw h<sup>c</sup> r-st=f</i>	(v)


I know the parts<sup>(formulae - b)</sup> of the ... (?)<sup>c</sup>, (iv)  
<sup>(9)</sup>the weighing<sup>d</sup> of the norm of exact reckoning,  
 the taking out<sup>(recitation - e)</sup> and letting get in as it goes out or in (v)  
 so that a limb will<sup>f</sup> come to its right place.



b) *R3w b3gw* is a crucial phrase, as the following depends on it, yet remains opaque. For *r3w*, “parts” would seem to be the primary reading (perhaps also with the contextual implication “parts”, hence “stages” of work, as suggested on an admittedly speculative mode by D. Meeks, p.c.). The similarly written “formulae” is possibly present as well, if so as an overtone or double entendre (see below, “Double entendres, hieroglyphic elaboration”).

c) The much discussed phrase *b3gw* remains opaque. Proposals that have been made fall in four broad groups. (α) Based on a verb *b3g* “coagulate, be(come) thick (of fluids)” attested in medical texts (von Deines and Westendorf 1962, 241-243; *Wb. I* 432.12), Baud (1938, 26) proposed “ciment, pâte, mortier”; by a similar derivation, Barbotin (2005, 56) had “solidification (du métal en fusion ?)”. These



readings of the text for matters of material production remain speculative and are, moreover, problematic in the context of section II which reads coherently if understood in reference to proportions (Badawi 1961, 273, n. h; Barta 1970, 94-100; Mathieu 2016, 13, n. f). (β) Based on the water determinative, it has been proposed

that *b3gw* in Irtyzen (  ) could be derived from a root documented in *bg3w* “shipwrecked man” (in the Middle Kingdom, e.g., *Eloquent Peasant* B1 169). Cautiously positing a not otherwise attested meaning \**√bg3* “sink”, Schenkel (1965, n. e) thus suggests that *r3w b3gw* in Irtyzen could be for “(sunk) relief”; it remains uncertain, however, whether a semantic relation similar to the one between “sink” and “(sunk) relief” in modern Western languages would have obtained in Egyptian; moreover, the following seems to be about both sunk and raised relief. Following Edel (1955-1964, 189), Barta (1970, 99) relates *bg3w* “shipwrecked man” to the singularly attested *g3i* “to capsize(?)” (Pyr. §662b<sup>TP</sup>, PT 377; cf. Allen 1984, 574) and proposes “Teile der Umwandelbarkeiten” (“parts of convertibility”) for *r3w b3gw* in Irtyzen, in reference to the canon of proportions; the suggested etymological and semantic connection remains speculative, however. Also based on *bg3w* “shipwrecked man”, D. Meeks (p.c.) suggests, on an admittedly speculative mode, a metaphorical implication “shipwreck”, hence “failure”: thus, *r3w b3gw* as “stages (of work: cf. n. b above) and failures”. (γ) Mathieu (2016, 11, 13, n. f) proposes to read with a root *b3gi* “be weary, languid, slack”, so that *b3gw*, lit. “ce qui est inerte”, would be in reference to a “représentation”; this reading would fit the context in which proportions seem to be at stake, but faces the problem that the

root *b3gi* regularly has another determinative, not , but . (δ) Bryan (2017, 5-6, n. e) proposes to read as an allusion to an epithet of Osiris, *imi-b3gw*, lit. “the one in the shipwreck” which would accord with the water determinative in Irtyzen; this faces the opposite problem, namely that section II otherwise seems to be about proportions. Making matters more complex yet, Irtyzen may be playing with the determinatives intentionally while simultaneously alluding to esoteric knowledge, so that Mathieu’s reading may be correct in spite of the unexpected determinative, while Bryan’s may be present as well, not as a primary meaning to be sure, but as a possible overtone of the text (see below, “Double entendres”). Should Mathieu’s reading be followed, the phrase could also be understood, quite literally, as “the inert ones”, to be brought alive (*sʿnh*) by the artist (see below, “Irtyzen’s *hmw*-ship”).

- d) With *f3i* “raise, carry”, here “weigh”, in the sense of “evaluate” (compare *Eloquent Peasant* B1 266, B1 355; cf. Parkinson 2012, 217, 287).
- e) With “taking out” as the primary reading, and “recitation” possibly an overtone or double entendre (see below, “Double entendres”).
- f) With *iw* a prospective *sḏm=f*. Alternatively, “according to how it comes to its (right) place”, with *iw* a *mrr=f*.



**Section III:** Repertoire of (divine and royal) representations

<i>iw(=i)-rh.kw šmt-twt<sup>(10)</sup></i>	<i>iwt/nmtt-rpwt</i>	<i>ḥꜥw nw-3-10</i>	(vi)
<i>ks n-skr wꜥt(i)</i>	<i>dgg-irt n-snt-snt=s</i>	<i>ssnd-ḥr n-rstw</i>	(vii)
<sup>(11)</sup> <i>f3t-ꜥ nt-h3ꜥ-h3b</i>	<i>nmtt-phrr</i>		(viii)



I know the going of a male figure<sup>g</sup> (10),  
the coming/stride<sup>h</sup> of a female figure,  
and the stance of many<sup>i</sup> birds,

the bent<sup>(/striking power - j)</sup> of the one who strikes a single (captive),  
how the eye looks at its two sisters<sup>k</sup>,  
and the making fearful of the face of the bound enemies,

<sup>(11)</sup>the lifting of arm of the one who harpoons the hippopotamus,  
and the stride of the one who runs.

g) *šmt twt* is the “going of a male figure” (or statue), paired with *iwt/nmtt rpwt* “the coming/stride of a female figure” (or statue) (for similar pairings of *twt* and *rpwt*, Mathieu 2016, 13, n. i). In a demotic papyrus of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and possibly already before, the phrase *šmt twt* also refers to the register representation in a temple (Vittmann 2002/2003, 120-121; Bryan 2017, 6, n. h), prototypically a procession of divine figures.

h) If interpreted in reference to (free-standing) sculptures, the passage could read “the going of male statues and the coming (*iwt*) of female ones”, possibly in reference to “die Art und Weise ihrer bildhauerischen Umsetzung” (Fischer-Elfert 2002, 29). If interpreted in relation to relief sculpture, as the preceding lines (iv)-(v) suggest, a reading “... the stride (*nmtt*) of female ones” is more likely, in reference to the slightly open position of the feet of a female figure seen from the side (Mathieu 2016, 13, n. i). On the regular gender distinction between male and female figures in the same procession (“walking” and “standing”, or perhaps “striding” and “(less perceptibly) walking”, see further Wiebach-Koepke 2003, 145-147.

i) The phrase has been read as “the stance of eleven birds” (3 11, ) and interpreted as pointing, reflexively, to eleven bird-hieroglyphs present on stela Louvre C 14 (Baud 1938, 28; also Mathieu 2016, 13, n. j). This is problematic in view of the epigraphic detail of stela Louvre C 14 (Schenkel 1965, 247, n. k; Meeks forthcoming). Rather than as 11,  would be the number 10, marked as such by the logographic stroke. In line with other similar occurrences, the expression is idiomatic for “many” (Meeks forthcoming).

j) On *ks*, see, further, Fischer 1964, 115, n. i. An overtone “striking power” is possibly being evoked through the unexpected graphic determinative (see below, “Double entendres”).

k) *snt sp 2 s* is a ludic writing for *snt snt=s*, itself for *snt 2=s* “its two sisters” (Bryan 2017, 7, n. l). The reference is to the frightened gaze of the captive being smitten



(or one several captives being smitten, distinguished through its frightened face directed at the king). This signification is enhanced by a complex chain of graphic play (see below, “Double entendres”). Mathieu’s (2016, 14, n. 1) *snty*=s “son semblable”, in reference to two anthropomorphic figures facing one another like the king and the gods in temple reliefs, does not fit the context of metric line (vii), the first and third part of which are both about the king and his enemies; moreover, *snty* “likeness” would require a different spelling of its radical part and a different determinative. *snty* “likeness” is therefore certainly not the primary reading of the text; there remains the possibility, however, that the word is hinted at, as an overtone, through a graphic pun (see below, “Double entendres”).

**Section IV:** Indestructible materiality of what is “inside” sculpted relief

<i>iw(=i)-rh.kw irt-imy</i>	<i>ht</i> <sup>(12)</sup> <i>h3zt-n(i)</i>	(ix)
<i>nn-rdt m3h=sn ht</i>	<i>n-i<sup>c</sup>.n(i) n-mw-grt</i>	(x)

I know the making of what is inside them<sup>l</sup>, (ix)  
that is<sup>m</sup>, the materials <sup>(12)</sup>that go down into them<sup>n</sup>,  
without letting fire burn them, (x)  
and without them possibly washing away<sup>o</sup> through water either.

l) With a view on Nefermaat’s statement regarding his paste-filled figures and inscriptions (see below, “The domains of Irtysen’s knowledge”), *imy* is interpreted as the *nisba* of the preposition *m*, thus “the ones that are inside (*scil.* the reliefs)” (Edel 1959, 24: “die vorgeschchnittene Vertiefungen im Stein, in die die Pasten hineingestrichen wurden”; Schenkel 1965, 248, n. d: “die im (Relief) befindlichen (Farben)”). Spiegelberg’s (1929, 94-95) reading “Farbenpaste” was based on the same comparison with Nefermaat and a proposed derivation of *imy* from the rarely attested *im* “clay, mud, gesso(?)”. Barta’s (1970, 120-125) “exterior”, based on *im3* “schöne Gestalt”, is speculative; based on the same root *im3* “be kind, gentle, pleasing”, Oréal’s (2011, 443) “enjolivures” would fit the context; both, however, face the problem that the spelling (both of the root and the determinative) points to *im* “which is in”, not to *im3* “be pleasing”. Note also the word *imy* “Pulver (? Abfall?) von Alabaster, offizinell verwendet” (*Wb.* I 76.2, quoting P. Ebers 69.19; see also Harris 1961, 97-98), which, however, seems less fitting in context.

m) With Edel (1959, 23-24), *imy* and *ht h3zt n(i)* are probably related to one another as through specifying (*badal*) apposition. The more common reading as a coordination (“... and of the materials ...”) is not excluded but would seem somewhat redundant.

n) On *h3zt n(i)*, Edel (1959, 23-24).

9 E.g., Ameniseneb, Louvre C 12, 8-10 ... *sšw-kd hr mh m drwi m tit m imw m sm3wi irt.n nsw-bity hpr-k3-r<sup>c</sup> m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw* “... painters filled it (*scil.* the temple) with pigment and figures of gesso(?), renewing what the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkare, justified, had made” (Kubisch 2008, 139-142; Baines 2009).



o) On *n i<sup>c</sup>.n(i)*, Edell (1959, 23-24).

**Sections V-VI:** Transmission of restricted knowledge to son

<sup>(13)</sup>*nn-pry hr=s n-bw-nb* *wpw-hr=i w<sup>c</sup>.kw* (xi)

*w<sup>d</sup>.n ntr ir=f* *hn<sup>c</sup>-s<sup>z</sup>=i smsw n-h<sup>t</sup>=i*  
*pr-<sup>(14)</sup>n=f hr=s* (xii)

<sup>(13)</sup>There is none revealing<sup>p</sup> it to anyone (xi)  
except me alone

with my firstborn bodily son,  
for the god has ordered that he act (xii)  
(as) one to whom <sup>(14)</sup>it has been revealed<sup>q</sup>.

*iw-m<sup>z</sup>.n=i prt-<sup>c</sup>wy=f* *m-irt imi-r<sup>z</sup>-k<sup>z</sup>t* (xiii)

*h<sup>z</sup>t-r-h<sup>d</sup> hn<sup>c</sup>-nbw* *m-<sup>c</sup>z<sup>t</sup>-nb špst*  
<sup>(15)</sup>*phwy-r-<sup>z</sup>b r-hbn* (xiv)

I have seen his activity (xiii)  
in acting as director of works

in every precious material  
ranging from silver and gold, (xiv)  
<sup>(15)</sup>to ivory and ebony.

p) *pri hr* is “to divulge, reveal (a secret, hidden knowledge)”, lit. “come forth with” (*Urk.* IV 1031.14; 1410.10: cited below, “Restricted knowledge”). The construction is with an active participle, lit. “There is none coming forth with ...”, in reference to the revelation of knowledge. The interpretation in reference to being knowledgeable (“Kundiger”: Schenkel 1965, 248; Barta 1970, 126) does not fit the lexical meaning of *pri hr*.

q) *pr n=f hr=s* is an extended construction of the passive participle (that is, with the antecedent of the participle corresponding to an oblique case in the relative construction), lit. “one to whom there was coming forth with it”. Active readings (“... daß er darin kundig sein sollte”: Schenkel 1965, 249; sim. Barta 1970, 126) do not fit the lexical meaning of *pri hr* (above, n. p). Mathieu’s (2016, 11) “... et à moi de le lui divulguer” (*pr(=i)*) is unlikely for graphic reasons (the suffix pronoun of the 1st person singular is otherwise written out in forms of the suffix conjugation in Irtysen) and for stylistic ones (it would go against the intended echo between both instances of *pri hr*, both of which are impersonal in formulation).



## Irtyesen's self-presentation on stela Louvre C 14

Stela Louvre C 14, on which Irtyesen's self-presentation is inscribed, consists in the following elements:

- <sup>(1)</sup>“Long live ... (titulary of Mentuhotep II)”
- <sup>(2)</sup>“His true servant of his affection, who does all he (*scil.* the king) praises in the course of every day, the *imakh* by the Great God, Irtyesen.”
- <sup>(3-6)</sup>“An offering that the king gives ... consisting in an invocatory offering ... for the *imakh* ..., the director of craftsmen, scribe and sculptor Irtyesen, who says:“
- <sup>(6-15)</sup>*the self-presentation proper* (see above)
- <sup>(15)</sup>“An invocatory offering ... for the *imakh* Irtyesen-iqer, justified, born of Idet, justified.”
- *in the lower section under the text, pictorial representations of Irtyesen and his wife standing before their children bringing offering; Irtyesen and his wife seated before an offering table.*

The material of the stela (limestone), the fact that it is inscribed in hieroglyphs (a restricted symbolic resource) and the length of the inscription, as well as the placement of the stela in a mortuary space in Abydos, converge in presenting Irtyesen as a member of the elite (on other Egyptian artists' access to written or monumentalized death, Laboury 2016, 384). The self-presentation proper (ll. 6-15) is embedded in mortuary texts (ll. 3-6; 15) and therefore an integral component of a mortuary monument in which the textual and pictorial representations combined have performative power: to make the name and voice of the speaker live, and to bring offerings about. In its layout, the stela is also expressive of a hierarchically ordered twofold relationality: to the king on the topmost, hierarchically superior, part of the stela (ll. 1-2; implicitly also in Irtyesen's titles as implying work for the king, immediately before the self-presentation proper: l. 6); and to Irtyesen's family on the, lowermost, hierarchically inferior, part of the stela (pictorial representations in the lower part; also the transmission of knowledge to the son expressed in the closing, lowermost part of the self-presentation, ll. 13-15).

Combined, these elements are typical of (early) Middle Kingdom (Abydene) stelae as bearers of autobiographical inscriptions, and Irtyesen's self-presentation in ll. 6-15 may therefore be viewed as occupying the functional slot of an autobiography on such monuments. Yet, Irtyesen's self-presentation is not an autobiography in the sense of the contemporary, early Middle Kingdom incarnations of the genre (anthology: Lichtheim 1988; autobiographies on stelae: Landgráfová 2011). It does not include developed sequences of self-laudatory epithets to do with courtly etiquette and relation to other officials, calm and composure, moral qualities and social solidarity, etc. Nor does it overtly feature the official's action in relation to the king's order, mission or praise.

While not an autobiography, Irtyesen's self-presentation clearly alludes to two of the main elements of the genre. The first is self-laudatory formulations and statements of exceptionality. At a textual juncture that structurally heads, and thereby has scope over, the whole composition (section I, metric line (iii)), Irtyesen defines himself: “Thus, I am an expert-artist efficient in his art, one who has come out on top through what he knows” (*ink grt hmww ikr m hmt=f pr hr tp m rht.n=f*). The phrasing echoes formulations of the type *ink ... ikr ...* “I am ... excellent ...”, as well as such of the



type ... *ikr m hmt=f* "... efficient in his art/expertise". The former is overly common in autobiographies, and the latter finds parallels in autobiographies and other types of texts, notably in relation to scribal art (compare, e.g., "I am a very excellent scribe, one truly efficient in his art", *ink sš ikr wrt mnḥ m3ꜥ n ḥmw=f*; Antef, Louvre C 167, C.1; Senwosret I, ca. 1950 BC).<sup>10</sup> In the second part of the inscription, the phrase "... except me alone ..." (... *wpw-ḥr=i wꜥ.kw* ..., (xi)), in reference to the transmission of restricted knowledge, echoes statements of exceptionality that are otherwise typical of autobiographies.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, these two passages in which the autobiography is hinted at ((iii), (xi)) are located at strategic junctures in the overall composition (sections I and V, framing the whole composition: see below, "Irtysen's *ḥmw*-ship" and "Restricted knowledge"). The second main element of the autobiography is the expression of the official's relation to the king (e.g., Stauder-Porchet 2017 [for earlier times: the Old Kingdom]; Guksch 1994 [for later times: the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty]). This is here given on top of the stela (ll. 1-2), and therefore outside the self-presentation (ll. 6-5). Following immediately the royal titulary (l. 1), l. 2 provides a direct and synthetic statement of how the official's daily actions merit royal praise in standard autobiographical terms. In addition, the king is present, if obliquely, in the self-presentation itself, insofar as Irtysen's knowledge of royal representations implies working for the king and taking part in contemporary developments in the royal sphere (see below, "The domains of Irtysen's knowledge", "Irtysen's voice").

The relation of Irtysen's self-presentation to the genre of the autobiography is therefore oblique. The self-presentation in ll. 6-15 occupies the functional slot of an autobiography on the stela; moreover, it hints at central elements of the genre; yet it does not adopt the generic format of the autobiography. Instead, it develops a highly original discourse, centring around *ḥmw*-ship ("art/expertise") and the restricted knowledge that, for Irtysen, is associated with this.

### **Irtysen's *ḥmw*-ship ("art/expertise") as ritual and transformative knowledge (section I)**

The composition is structured in two parts, the first marked by the fourfold anaphora *iw(=i) rh.kw* ... "I know ..." (sections I-IV), the second centring around the transmission of such knowledge to Irtysen's son (sections V-VI). This second part begins with a new line on the stela (l. 13), probably a deliberate effect of layout. Various structural elements relate sections I and V, the initial sections of both parts, with one another, so that these frame the composition as a whole (see below, "Restricted knowledge").

10 Further, *ḥmw m dbꜥw=f* "one expert with his fingers" (Mentuhotep, Cairo 20539, vso 6; autobiography, Senwosret I, ca. 1950 BC). Compare also the phrase *ikr m dbꜥw=f* "excellent with his fingers", in *Shipwrecked Sailor* 188 (of Ameny, the copyist; literary composition, ca. 1900 BC), *Neferti* 2c (of Neferti being picked by the king, ca. 1800-1450 BC), in Meryre's artist signature (Kruchten, Delvaux 2010, 211; Laboury 2016, ca. 1100 BC), as well as, in a slightly different form, in Hezi's autobiographical inscription (ca. 2350 BC) stressing the official's worth (col. 2: Stauder-Porchet 2015, 193).

11 With *wꜥ* "be alone", e.g., in a specific context, Weni (autobiography, Abydos, ca. 2250 BC; col. 3 (*Urk.* I.99.5); col. 11 (*Urk.* I, 101.2); more generally, see the formulations of the type *n zp ... mrtt* ... "Never ... the like ..." (for the Old Kingdom, Stauder-Porchet 2017).



Section I (l. 6-8; metric lines (i)-(iii)) defines Irtyesen's *hmw*-ship. As the particle *grt*, here with argumentative force, signals (see above, textual note a), the first two sentences (i-ii) provide the foundation for Irtyesen's statement in (iii): "Thus (*grt*, i.e., given, or based on, the above), I am an artist/expert efficient in his art/expertise" (*ink grt hmww ikr m hmt=f*...). This statement, which begins with a new line on the stela (l. 8), probably another deliberate effect of layout, forms the core of section I. As such, it also functions as a heading to the whole composition, over which it has scope.

In general, a *hmww* "artist, expert" is distinct from a mere *irw* "maker", or material producer (Laboury 2016, 374-377; 2013, 30-31). "Art/expertise" (*hmwt*) can also refer to medicine, ritual or magic, demonstrating that *hmwt* is about an art or expertise that is efficient in making things happen or even in bringing things about, and not a matter of mimesis (*ibid.*, 375, n. 7).<sup>12</sup> Irtyesen defines his *hmw*-ship in terms of "knowledge" (*rh*), as is underscored by the general anaphoric articulation of sections I-IV (*iw(=i) rh.kw*...). Internally to section I, "knowledge" is also emphasized chiasmatically, with *rh* appearing at the beginning of the first metric line (i) and at the end of the last (iii), thereby framing section I. The phrase *hk3 nb* "all generative force" (also, depending on contexts, "magic")<sup>13</sup> is emphasized as well, syntactically an extraposed topic that is thus set at the beginning a new metric line (ii). The phrase *hk3 nb* is prominent on the stela also physically, sitting just underneath Irtyesen's title *ksti* "sculptor" (Baud 1938, 24), while *rht.n=f* "what he knows" sits just underneath *hk3 nb*. Thus:

Layout on stela (vertically)		Metric structure	
... <i>ksti</i> ...	(l. 6)	<i>iw(=i) rh.kw</i> ...	(i)
... <i>hk3 nb</i> ...	(l. 7)	<i>hk3 nb</i> ...	(ii)
... <i>rht.n=f</i> ...	(l. 8)	... <i>rht.n=f</i>	(iii)

The knowledge that Irtyesen invokes consists more specifically in "the hidden knowledge of hieroglyphs", in "the conduct of festive rituals" and in "all generative force". While painters or artists with varying, including high, degrees of literacy were not uncommon in ancient Egypt (Laboury 2016, 381-386), the first expression here means substantially more, referring both to the restricted and possibly arcane knowledge associated with hieroglyphs (see further below "Double entendres, hieroglyphic elaboration") and to their performative power of bringing things about. Opening the list of what Irtyesen knows, "the hidden knowledge of hieroglyphs" (*sšt3 n mdw-ntr*) has scope over all subsequent elements that define Irtyesen's *hmw*-ship (similarly, Darnell in press).

As the immediately following mention of *hbyt* "festive rituals" implies, Irtyesen's knowledge includes ritual dimensions. In general, artists can be among the funerary celebrants from the Old Kingdom onward and can themselves be ritualists (Chauvet 2015; Vernus 1986; Laboury 2016, 384-385), and the creation of a statue is described

12 Further domains of application include rhetoric (in Middle Egyptian literary texts: *Teaching of Ptahhotep* 56, cited below; *Merikare* E 32) and intellectual ability (notably of the king, in the phrase *hmw-ib* "of expert intellect": Stauder 2013, 191).

13 For the rendering of *hk3* as "generative force", compare also the possible etymology *h-k3*, with *k3* both an agentive component of personhood and "sustenance" (D. Meeks, p.c.). On *hk3* further, e.g., Borghouts 1987; Rittner 1993,



in highly ritualized terms in the Ritual for Opening the Mouth (Fischer-Elfert 1998). In Irtyesen's self-presentation, this ritual dimension is emphasized further on the lexical level, by the combination of the expressions *rh* "knowledge", *sšt* "hidden knowledge", *hkz* "generative force, magic", *pr* "equipped", and *ikr* "efficient" in Section I. A similar clustering of expressions is found in ritual formulae in Old Kingdom tombs in typical association with an appeal to the living, with texts for ensuring the protection and ritual integrity of the tomb, and/or with the so-called "ideal biography" (Stauder-Porchet 2017, 201-202, 204-207; Kloth 2002, 116-119; Edel 1944, 19-26, §21-22); after the Old Kingdom, the lexical clustering recurs notably in the Coffin Texts (Coulon 2004, 122-123). *E.g.*, "I am an efficient and equipped *akh* and I know every efficient magic" (*ink zḥ ikr pr iw(=i) rh.k(i) hkz nb ikr*, Mehu, architrave, 9: Hawass 2002); "I am an *akh* more equipped than [any *akh* ...] (...) I am an efficient lector-priest, who kn[ows every rite, a ma]gician more than anyone: never has any efficient magic been hidden to me" (*ink zḥ pr r [zḥ nb ...] (...) ink hri-hb ikr r[h] ht nb h]kzy r rmt nbw n zp št z hkz nb r(=i) ikr*, Merneferbef F7A, 1-5: Willems 2008; Myśliwiec 2004). Irtyesen thus invokes *hkz*, "generative force, magic", and the associated ritual dimensions as a model for the efficiency of *hmw*-art (Coulon 2004, 124-125): this is presented as a transformative process, an art that is truly creative in the strong sense of bringing things about.

Elsewhere, this conception of art as a transformative, rather than mimetic, process<sup>14</sup> underlies, *e.g.*, the representation of Mereruka painting the seasons at the entrance of his tomb (Laboury 2016, 391-392) or the metallurgist Anky's reference to himself as the "interpreter of Horus' eye" (*is'w n irt hr*), who "transform(s) raw material into the trappings of ritual" (Darnell in press). In Irtyesen's self-presentation, it resonates with the performative power of "hieroglyphs", of which Irtyesen invoked the "hidden knowledge" at the beginning of section I; it could also be hinted at in the expression *bzgw* (beginning of section II, (iv)), which among various possibly simultaneously relevant readings, may mean here, it has been proposed, "inert ones", then to be understood quite literally as to be "brought alive" by the artist (*s'nh*; for the latter expression, *e.g.*, Barta 1970, 86-90). In the closing section of the composition (VI), the emphasis on luxury materials deriving from beyond the confines of the Nile Valley seems significant as well, as these are the very materials on which the transformative knowledge of the artist can otherwise be applied (Darnell in press, conclusion).

## The domains of Irtyesen's knowledge (sections II-IV)

In sections II-IV, Irtyesen provides a structured list of the domains of his knowledge. Frustrating an historian's expectations, the speaker hardly informs about processes of material production and instead outlines what to him matters in defining his ritual

14 This conception is not contradicted by a literary text that in reference to eloquence reads: "The limits of art (*drw hmt*) cannot be attained, there is no artist fully equipped with its *akh*-power (*nn hmw pr zḥw=f*). Perfect speech is more hidden than green-stone, yet can be found with maidservants (*hmwt*) at the mill" (*Teaching of Ptahhotep* 55-59; ca. 1900 BC). The context is here, not a mortuary self-presentation, but a literary teaching emphasizing humility (*cf.* also the word-play between *hmw* "artist" and *hmwt* "maid-servants"). Moreover, only full *akh*-power is denied, because this is reserved to the gods and to the deceased *akh*-spirits (Borghouts 1987, 40; Mathieu 2016, 11, n. d), not, however, the transformative power of art as associated with *hkz* "generative force" in Irtyesen.



and transformative *hmw*-ship. In the interpretation of the text offered here, Irtyzen's knowledge may be summarized as follows:

- Proportions in (raised and sunk?) relief sculpture (II);
- Repertoire of (divine and royal) representations (III);
- Indestructible materiality of what is "inside" sculpted relief (IV).

Sections II and III take the form of a list of items that Irtyzen knows; they do not feature the term *irt* "making". In the line of interpretation pursued here (previously, e.g., Badawi 1961, 273, n. h; Barta 1970, 94-100; Mathieu 2016, 13, n. f), section II (metric lines (iv)-(v)) concerns proportions in (raised and sunk?) relief sculpture: "I know the parts of the ...(?), the weighing of the norm of exact reckoning, the taking out and letting get in as it goes out or in so that a limb will come to its right place." In particular, "the taking out and letting get in as it goes out or in" would be in reference to projection and receding in relief, and perhaps to raised and sunk relief sculpture (Badawi 1961, 273, 275).

Section III (metric lines (vi)-(viii)) consists in a repertoire of specifically divine and royal representations: "I know the going of a male figure/register representation the stride of a female statue and the stance of many birds; the bent of the one who strikes a single (captive), how the eye looks to its two sister eyes and the making fearful of the face of the bound enemies; the lifting of arm of the one who harpoons the hippopotamus, and the stride of the one who runs." The first metric line (vi) here refers to register representation, specifically to the positions of divine and royal figures. The second (vii) refers to the foundational icon of the king striking the enemy and dispelling the evil this embodies, a cultural matrix of sorts (e.g., Swan Hall 1986; Schoske 1994; Luiselli 2011). The third (viii) refers to the royal ritual of the hippopotamus hunt (Säve-Söderbergh 1953; also Bryan 2017, 8, and Parkinson 2012, 197-198, noting that the large-scale pictorial representation of the active hippopotamus hunt is restricted to the king prior to the New Kingdom). Irtyzen focuses specifically on royal art, representations, that is, that have a strong performative force, bringing what they represent about.

Section IV is the only to mention material aspects of production and, significantly, the only to have the expression *irt* "making": "I know the making of what is inside them, that is, the materials that go down into them, without letting fire burn them, and without them possibly washing away through water either." While references to specifically material aspects of production remain uncommon in Egyptian autobiographies or self-presentations more broadly<sup>15</sup>, Irtyzen's statement immediately brings to mind Nefermaat's in Atet's chapel in Meidum (ca. 2650 BC) "He is the one who

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15 In his autobiographical inscription, Ineni (ca. 1450 BC), among other titles a "director of works", says: "I created 'fields of clay' to overlay their tombs of the necropolis: this is a work that has not been made since the predecessors" (*Urk.* IV 57.9-11; Dziobek 1992). Unlike in Irtyzen, the statement is about the bearer of representations, not the representations themselves, and is made by an organizer of other peoples' work, not a *hmw* himself. Ineni's statement fits into a series of claims of innovations that are more broadly characteristic of the early Eighteenth Dynasty horizon (Popko 2006; Vernus 1995, *passim*). In Ameniseneb (Louvre C 12), 8-10 (see above, n. 9), technical detail is given in the context of restoration work carried out for the king in the temple of Abydos.



made his godly (signs) in writing that cannot be rubbed off, Nefermaat” (*swt ir ntrw=f m zš n zin=f nfr-mꜣt*; panel OIM 9002; Harpur 2001, 84, n. 7 with references, and pl. 27; Stauder-Porchet 2010). Not part of a continuous text, Nefermaat’s statement is in direct relation to the monumental standing figure of Nefermaat himself, thus to a pictorial representation, which it frames vertically. Provided the above traditional reading is correct (for an alternative reading, Osing 1994, 282-283), the statement is self-reflexive with respect to the paste-filled reliefs and thus its own materiality, stating the indestructible nature of representations and signs that are explicitly presented as *ntrw* “godly (signs)” and thereby as having a performative quality. In Irtyesen similarly, the reference to materiality is made, not for the sake of the craftsmanship it implies, but in specific relation to the indestructible nature of (royal and divine) representations that have a performative quality (see above).

In the preserved earlier inscriptional record, Irtyesen is unique in addressing proportions (section II) and repertoire (section III). The date of the text, the later part of the reign of Mentuhotep II, may be contextually significant (Barta 1970, 65-77). In the wake of the re-unification of the country, the period sees the restoration of a royal art sponsored by the king and expressive of kingship (*e.g.*, Lorand 2016; Bussmann 2010, 177-187; Postel 2003) after the preceding generations during which representations such as listed in section III had been by and large discontinued. In referring to the repertoire of such representations and to their proportions, Irtyesen indexes his participation in the most innovative contemporary developments, as well as its close relation to the royal sphere.

Beyond, proportions (section II) are central in the fabrication of a statue in the Ritual for Opening the Mouth (Fischer-Elfert 1998, 23), a quintessentially transformative process. Furthermore, sections II (proportions) and III (repertoire) combined can be read in reference to what has been variously termed “canonical tradition” (Whitney Davis), “Kanon” (Jan Assmann) or “formal culture” (Barry Kemp). On a different plane, hieroglyphic writing itself, which may be viewed as another defining element of formal culture and of which Irtyesen had initially claimed to know the “hidden knowledge” (i), is distinguished by two similarly correlated dimensions: its ordination in space (“investissement de l’espace”: Vernus 1990) and its “sacralizing” function, with performative force (Vernus 1989)<sup>16</sup>. The representations that Irtyesen mentions as his repertoire (section III) are described in terms of positions, actions of arms, and gazes (Bryan 2017, 9-10), thus more broadly of actions. Irtyesen’s focus on royal art (the positions of divine and royal figures in the register; the foundational icon of the king smiting his enemies; royal rituals of hippopotamus hunting) and the description of these representation in terms of actions accord with the ritual dimensions of Irtyesen’s *hmnw*-ship emphasized in section I: Irtyesen’s art is transformative because it (re-)creates (royal and divine) representations that are performative.

16 Defined as: “... consiste à insérer une réalité quelconque parmi les éléments constitutifs de l’ordre du monde tel qu’il a été institué par le démiurge et que la société s’efforce de maintenir” (Vernus 1989, 24).



## Restricted knowledge, displayed and staged as such

Irtysen's self-presentation centres around knowledge but does not communicate the contents or specifics of this knowledge. Irtysen frustrates an historian's expectations: he states that he knows, but frames his knowledge in a "nearly onomastic" format, for example a list of "nominally framed postures" in section III (Bryan 2017, 10). The first occurrence of the anaphoric *iw(=i) rh.kw* ... "I know ..." is immediately followed by the word *sštš* "hidden knowledge", contextually in reference to hieroglyphs (i), but also with scope over the whole composition. The type of ritual knowledge by which Irtysen defines his *hmw*-ship in section I is typically associated with the expression *štš* "hidden" in mortuary texts (see above, "Irtysen's *hmw*-ship").

The anaphoric *iw(=i) rh.kw* ... "I know ..." has been compared with similar statements in the Coffin Texts consisting in a question the deceased is asked regarding his/her knowledge, followed by an answer that he/she knows; only rarely do a second question and associated answer regarding the specifics or contents of such knowledge follow: as in Irtysen, knowledge is stated as such, without further elaboration of what more precisely it consists of (Fischer-Elfert 2002). It has been proposed that this format could be modelled on similar exchanges in the situational context of a final examination dialogue leading to the admission of a new member into a professional guild, whereby only the first part (the statement about knowledge as such) would be open to being reproduced (*ibid.*, 34-35). Going further, the fabrication of a statue in the Ritual for Opening the Mouth has been analysed as featuring two linguistic norms corresponding to different degrees of restrictedness of the associated knowledge: first the *sm*-priest in dialogue with the *imi-hnt*-priest, then the *imi-hnt* priest "translating", as it were, such restricted knowledge into a less restricted linguistic register to instruct the *ksti* "sculptor" (Fischer-Elfert 1998, 48ff.; 2002, 33). Following Egyptian and broader cross-cultural patterns in this respect (Baines 1990, 7, 9; Fischer-Elfert 2002, 35), Irtysen displays knowledge as such while withholding specifics; through this very act of withholding, he points effectively to the particular quality of the knowledge he has access to, namely its restricted nature itself.

The second part of Irtysen's self-presentation concerns the transmission of the speaker's knowledge to his son (sections V-VI). In ancient Egypt as in many societies, a craftsman would often have been trained in a family setting, notably by his father (Laboury 2013, 32). Beyond, the transmission of offices from father to son, where the latter is to perform the funerary rituals for the former, represents a cultural ideal in ancient Egypt commonly expressed for example in the appeal to the living.<sup>17</sup> A "sculptor" when working for the king may be compared to an office-holder broadly understood so that this cultural ideal may have served as a hypotext to Irtysen's text. Against this background, Irtysen's text is remarkable on two accounts: first, knowledge, rather than an office strictly

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17 Compare the common formula "May you transmit your offices to your children" (*swd=tn iw(=i) rh.kw n hr(=i) rh.kw*). On the father-son "relational paradigm" in relation to the funerary cult, e.g., Donnat Beauquier 2014, 89-90, with references; in the so-called "ideal autobiography", Stauder-Porchet 2017, 198-208. On the transmission of office from father to son expressed in other types of inscribed texts, Favry 2016.



speaking, is here transmitted; second, this transmission is given a textual account, not in an appeal to the living, but exceptionally within the self-presentation itself.<sup>18</sup>

The transmission of knowledge that merits textual elaboration in Irtyzen concerns restricted knowledge specifically, to wit the expression *pri hr* “divulge, reveal (lit. come forth with)” (xi, xii). The expression recurs twice in the early New Kingdom in significant contexts: said by a vizier, “I did not divulge the words of the King’s House” (*n pr=i hr mdwt pr-nsw*; *Urk.* IV 1031.14, Useramun’s Uriage Stela, 7); and said by a High Priest of Amun “I did not divulge the initiation of the hidden knowledge that I knew” (*n pr=i hr bs št[š] rht.n(=i)*; *Urk.* IV 1410.10, Amenemhat: Gardiner 1910, 96-97). That restricted knowledge is not to be transmitted freely is also thematized in Coffin Texts spell 156 (Fischer-Elfert 2002, 34; Morenz 1996, 80).

The textual structure and layout of the inscription converge in underscoring the importance of this transmission, to which no less than the last four of fourteen metric lines are devoted. Section V begins with a new line on the stela (l. 13), echoing Irtyzen’s self-definition (“Thus (*grt*), I am an artist efficient in his art ...”) which also begins with a new line on the stela (l. 8). This initial self-definition of Irtyzen’s is reminiscent of autobiographical formulations (see above, “Irtyzen’s *hmmw*-ship”), just like the mention of exceptionality in l. 13 is (see above, “Irtyzen’s self-presentation”): autobiography-like material thus appears concentrated in these two structural junctures in section I and V. At the level of metricalization, finally, *pri hr* “divulge” frames section V chiasmically, just like *rht* “know” does in section I:

<p>section I</p> <p><i>iw(=i) rht.kw ...</i> (i)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>... rht.n=f</i>(iii)</p>	<p>section V</p> <p><i>nm pry hr=s ...</i> (xi)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>... pr n=f hr=s</i> (xii)</p>
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Irtyzen makes explicit that he transmits his knowledge to his son alone (xi), who is worthy of receiving it (xiii-xiv), and that the transmission is sanctioned by the “god” (*ntr*) (xii)<sup>19</sup>. The son’s worthiness that is observed by Irtyzen (*iw mš.n=i ...* “I have seen ...”, echoing the anaphoric “I know ...”, *iw(=i) rht.kw ...* in sections I-IV) consists in the son’s “activity” (*prt-ꜥwy*), punning with “divulge” (*pri hr*).

Like Irtyzen, the “chief chisel-bearer of the Lord of the Two Lands” Hatiay (ca. 1300 BC) takes great pride in his access to restricted knowledge, which he does not reveal (see Appendix, D); all other things are different, however. In the context of an inscription that is an autobiography generically, Hatiay emphasizes the exceptional nature of his initiation as a strong testimony to the king’s out-of-the-ordinary favour in spite of the speaker’s humble origins, a classic trope of the genre and an (early post-)Amarnian topos specifically; he does not insist on this restricted knowledge any

18 While not an autobiography (see above, “Irtyzen’s self-presentation”), Irtyzen’s inscription alludes to the genre. Another “autobiography” that includes a mention of the transmission of offices to the children is *Sinube* (B 238-241). Like Irtyzen, *Sinube* is significantly not an autobiography proper, but a literary work and a fictionalized palimpsest of the genre.

19 In a literary text similarly, Prahhotep transmits his teaching (which, however, is not restricted knowledge) to his son at the king’s behest and thereby under the king’s guarantee (*Teaching of Prahhotep* 36ff.: Mathieu 2016, 15, n. s).



further. Irtyesen's self-presentation, by contrast, is all about restricted knowledge itself, which is displayed as such.

Through its onomastic format, the text points to a series of referents, yet does not inform about these referents which therefore remain mere naming labels of sorts. While the lexicon may in part reflect a not otherwise documented technical register, it also seems to be in part intentionally underspecified as in deceptively simple lexical selections such as “the taking out and letting get in as it goes out or in” (*šdt sꜥkt m pr-ꜥk=f*, (v)). Various elements are clearly understood (e.g., “the bent of the one who strikes a single (captive)” (vii), in reference to the icon of the king smiting the enemy and dispelling disorder), although not all would have been similarly clear to various ancient audiences depending on their degree of exposure to icons of kingship (e.g., “the lifting of arm of the one who harpoons the hippopotamus, and the stride of the one who runs”, in reference to royal rituals, the performance of which may itself have been restricted, either in actuality or at the level of the effective visibility of representations in royal art). Other elements remain outright enigmatic (see further below, “Double entendres”), hinting at additional, not immediately apparent, layers of meaning.

The difficulty of Irtyesen's self-presentation would have struck ancient readers no less than present-day Egyptologists. The text is not about conveying information, but, quite to the contrary, about staging a withholding of such information: through multiple strategies, it consistently points to what more it does not say. The difficulty and partial opaqueness of the text are then features integral to the its expressive intent. They function, reflexively, as indexicals of the restrictedness of the knowledge staged in and by the text itself.

### **Double entendres, hieroglyphic elaboration**







On both the linguistic and the graphic levels, Irtyesen's self-presentation includes additional layers of meaning beyond what the words say in a directly referential mode. The inscription features instances of possible double entendre in a remarkable density. Irtyesen's own name (*irty=sn* “Their-eyes(?)”), to begin with, permits an alternative reading as “Who-makes-their-forms” (*ir-ir(w)=sn*), which would certainly be fitting for a sculptor.



More than one linguistic expression is enigmatic and some could carry ritual and mythological allusions. Thus, *b3gw* (iv; see also above, textual note c) may refer to the representations (the “inert ones”(?)) that Irtyesen sculpts in relief (thus Mathieu 2016, 13, n. f), yet may also include an allusion to Osiris (*imi-b3gw* “the one in the shipwreck”, *Wb.* I 413.13, thus Bryan 2017, 5-6, n. e, 9). An Osirian allusion would be fitting in a mortuary monument and is possibly supported by the Osirian determinative of *twt* in *šmt twt* “the going of a male statue”/“register representation” (vi) (Bryan 2017, 6, n. h, noting the determinative's extraposed position at the beginning of l. 10 on the stela). The “lifting of arm of the one who harpoons the hippopotamus” (viii) refers to a royal ritual whose representation Irtyesen masters, and simultaneously evokes Horus slaying Seth (Bryan 2017, 7, n. n). “The stance (*ꜥhꜥw*) of many birds” (vi) may recall the onomastic display of birds in Beni Hassan (as in the tomb of Baket, no. 15: Newberry 1893, pl. IV; cf. Bryan 2017, 7, k, and 8) and thereby evoke Irtyesen's art, yet could also be punning on the *ꜥhꜥw* birds, “the grey herons, who were likened in




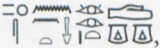


the Pyramid Texts to the deceased as rain clouds, no doubt due to their color” (Bryan 2017, 6, n. j, 8). In the present author’s interpretation, these possible ritual and mythological allusions are not the primary meaning of the text (differently, Bryan 2017), which concerns Irtyesen’s knowledge of proportions in relief sculpture (section II) and of the repertoire of representations of kingship (section III). However, the clustering of such instances of possible double entendre suggests that at least some of these are, rather than an Egyptologist’s musing with the text, effectively woven into the text as an additional layer of meaning, reserved to the very few.

The graphic level is complex as well and multivalent beyond its function of solely representing language. Speaking to the deliberate graphic elaboration of the stela, determinatives other than the expected ones are found in various places (*h3c* (viii), *ks* (vii), possibly *b3gw* (iv)), or an expected determinative is lacking (*šdt*, (v)). The phenomenon is dense and therefore significant.

Specifically, in *f3t-c nt h3c h3b* “the lifting of arm of the one who harpoons the hippopotamus” (viii), *h3c* is not determined with any of the regular signs of striking ( or ) , but exceptionally with . While the image of a striking arm is lexically evoked in the immediately preceding expression *f3t-c* ... “the lifting of arm ...”, this exceptional use of  could carry additional significations on various non-exclusive levels. In the context of an artist’s self-presentation, the sign  may evoke the word *h3pw* “figures, sculptured reliefs” in which it is occasionally used.<sup>20</sup> Intratextually, it makes *h3c* resonate with *h3b* “(norm of) exact reckoning” (iv), in which the same sign is used in regular fashion. The identification of this graphic echo as intentional is supported by the observation that both phrases begin with *f3t*, and that both instances of *f3t* open new lines on the stela (ll. 9 and 11, respectively). Perhaps more significantly yet, the selection of the sign  could evoke the word *h3t* “corpse” in which it is regularly used, thus expressing that the king’s (or Horus’) enemies are already dead by the very representation of the king lifting his arm to strike or shoot. In its performative quality, hieroglyphic writing would here point to the performative quality of the representation itself:

- “the weighing (*f3t*, beginning of l. 9) of the norm of exact reckoning ()” (iv);
- “the lifting (*f3t*, beginning of l. 11) of arm of the one who harpoons (- evoking *h3t* “corpse”) the hippopotamus” (viii).

In (vii), *ks* “bent” is exceptionally written , not with its regular determinative (). The determinative used in Irtyesen is otherwise found in *3t* “striking power (of the king)”, evoking overtones that enhance the context: “the bent ( – evoking *3t*, “striking power”) of the one who strikes a single captive”. In the following clause, “how the eye looks at its two sisters” (vii), the graphic realization is ludic: , with *snt* (*sp-2*)=*s* (“sister, twice, its”); that is, *snt snt=s* (“sister, sister, its”); hence, by homophony, *snt 2=s* “its two sisters”. In addition, the sign *sp* (o) in *sp-2* may be viewed

20 Djehuti, Northhampton Stela, B.5, B.10 (*Urk.* IV 422.11, 425.2; early Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1450 BC). (The motivation for the use of the sign in *h3pw* “sculptured reliefs” is phonetic, via *h3p3* “navel”, cf. Gardiner 1957<sup>3</sup>, 539).



at as a “pupil” (*dfđ*), itself metonymically standing for the eye (Bryan 2017, 7, n. 1). Read as a metagraphic indicator, the same *sp-2* may hint at an alternative punning reading of *snt* (*sp-2*), lit. “*snt*, twice”; hence “*snt*, dual”; hence, read aloud, “*snty*”; and thus, by homophony *snty* “likeness, representation”. On the phonetic level, the phrase *snt snt=s* is also in alliterative resonance with the following *ssnd* “make fearful (the face of the enemy)”. Spanning through metric line (vii), a visual chain thus expresses how the king’s gaze as a manifestation of his “striking power” (𓄏) meets and terrifies the gaze of the ritually bound enemies he smites:

- “the bent (𓄏 – evoking *st* “striking power”) of the one who strikes a single captive (𓄏)
- how the eye (𓄏) looks (𓄏) at its two sisters (*snt snt=s*, o ludic, metonymically for the eye -possibly also punning on *snty* “likeness”),
- and the making fearful (*ssnd*) of the face (𓄏) of the bound enemies (𓄏)”

As noted above, *b3gw* (iv) may or may not refer to the representations (the “inert ones”(?)) that Irtyzen sculpts, in which case another determinative, 𓄏, would have been expected. The spelling on the stela, with the water determinative (𓄏), may or may not have been purposefully selected to allude to the expression *imi-b3gw* “the one in the shipwreck”, i.e. Osiris, an epithet that itself possibly puns on the god’s “inertness” (Bryan 2017, 5-6, n. e, 9). In the next metric line, (v), *šdt* is paired with *sḳt* just like the immediately following *pr* is paired with *ḳ=f*: the primary meaning of the text must therefore be in reference to sunk and raised relief sculpture (“the taking out and letting get in as it goes out or in”), and not to “recitation” (also *šdt*, proposed by Bryan 2017, 4). This being established, the spelling of *šdt* (𓄏) is noteworthy in lacking any determinative, a graphic under-determination that may have served the purpose of making a double entendre possible: beyond the primary meaning “taking out”, also, indeed, an allusion to ritual “recitation”. In (iv), the context makes it likely that *r3w* is in primary reference to the “parts” or “components” of a sculpted relief representation, yet an homophonous word is *r3w* “formulae”. The spelling of the plural with triplication (𓄏) is neutral as to which reading is intended but attracts attention to the word, however to be read. *R3w* and *šdt* sit at the beginning of two successive metric lines (safe for the anaphoric “I know ...” for the former). In the double entendre described here, they would also be allied semantically (“formulae”, “recitation”) to resonate with one another:

“I know the *parts*<sup>(/formulae)</sup> (𓄏 (triplication attracting attention) ) (iv)  
*of the inert one*<sup>(?)(/Osiris?)</sup> (𓄏). ...  
the *taking out*<sup>(/recitation)</sup> (𓄏 (lacking any determinative) ) (v)  
and letting get in as it goes out or in, ...”

On a higher level, both *r3w* and *šdt* (section II) resonate further with the ritual knowledge alluded to in section I. More generally, the complexity of the graphic



realization of Irtyesen's self-presentation echoes his initial statement on knowing "the hidden knowledge of hieroglyphs", including, as becomes clear now, their potential for pointing to multiple layers of meanings beyond those directly expressed in the linguistic sequence.

The hieroglyphic dimension of Irtyesen's self-presentation thus creates an additional level of texture beyond the linguistic texture. Graphic double entendres make the text thicker, both more polyphonic and opaque. In suggesting that more lies behind what the words say, they point to how much more the text does not say: the graphic realization of Irtyesen's self-presentation is integral to its necessarily oblique representation of restricted knowledge.

### **Conclusion: Irtyesen's voice**

Most immediately, stela Louvre C 14 is a mortuary monument geared at Irtyesen's rejuvenation and simultaneously a memorial inscription in and through which the speaker presents himself, as part of the elite that has access to written monumentalized death and, in Irtyesen's case, as an individual. Irtyesen's partaking of the higher elite of his time is indexed on various levels, including metricalized language and composition of the sort that develops with the ascent of the Theban 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty (for which see, *e.g.*, Lichtheim 1988, 40). While the mortuary dimension concerns the stela as an integrated whole, it is also strongly present in the self-presentation proper (ll. 6-15): possibly in Osirian allusions (? - sections II-III); certainly in formulations of the speaker's knowledge that resonate with similar formulations of ritual knowledge as in, *e.g.*, the Coffin Texts (sections I-IV); and arguably in double entendres such as in the associated terms *r3w* and *šdt* "parts" and "taking out", alternatively read "formulae" and "recitation" (section II).

On the stela, Irtyesen's self-presentation occupies the functional slot of an autobiography, and, moreover, hints at major semantic elements of the genre at central junctures in the composition. Yet, unlike, *e.g.*, Hatiay's, Irtyesen's self-presentation is not an autobiography in generic terms. Instead, Irtyesen chooses to speak in a highly original voice to display what his *hmw*-ship, "art/expertise", consists of, as a ritual and transformative knowledge. The most fundamental structural and semantic articulations of the composition (sections I and V) presents this knowledge as "hidden", to be divulged only to Irtyesen's son under "the god's" authorization. In Irtyesen's definition, it includes the proportions in (raised and sunk?) relief sculpture, the repertoire of (divine and royal) representations, and elements of a materiality that makes these indestructible. Performative representations of kingship are strongly emphasized.

Restricted knowledge is exclusive in-group knowledge; its display accordingly implies a marked element of social and professional indexicality, and thus of distinction. Similarly indexical of distinction is Irtyesen's emphasis on representations of kingship, inasmuch as this points to a close proximity with the royal sphere; so does the probable contextual occasion of Irtyesen's presently unique composition, arguably to be related to the restorative efforts regarding royal art during the later part of Mentuhotep II's reign. As noted, Irtyesen's departing from the generic expectations associated with the autobiographical genre results in a highly original voice. The layered complexity of the text is enhanced by an oftentimes virtuosic display of literary and especially hieroglyphic



proWess. These combined dimensions, all of which further occasions of distinction for the speaker, are directly expressive of Irtyesen's projected inscriptional identity.

While a self-presentation implies a pronounced addressive dimension in general, this is in Irtyesen's case reinforced through the originality and virtuosity of the speaker's inscribed voice. In addition, this is a voice that would have sounded partly opaque to most ancient readers even among the most literate. Much as practices of enigmatic (so-called "cryptographic") writing in private inscriptions<sup>21</sup> among other things serve to display scribal prowess, attract attention and cause the passer-by to pause and read (Espinel in press; Darnell in press), Irtyesen's difficult-to-understand hieroglyphic voice would have had a strong enticing effect on ancient readers.

In a public setting such as a mortuary monument, restricted knowledge can be mentioned as something one has access to and displays for the distinction it implies (Hatiay, Irtyesen). In addition, restricted knowledge can be represented in onomastic form and explicitly thematized in terms of its conditions of transmission (in the record uniquely in Irtyesen). By its very definition, it cannot be explained further other than by pointing to all things not said: its representation, if any such is given, must remain oblique. In his textual self-presentation, Irtyesen speaks as someone who masters the ritual and transformative knowledge that makes possible the creation of performative images of kingship. His discourse, enhanced by its highly elaborate hieroglyphic realization on the stela, is in part opaque, underdetermined and suggestive of double entendres, more generally of a deeper layering of additional yet ultimately elusive meanings. It entices and makes one pause. It not only displays, but also, reflexively and obliquely, indexes and stages restricted knowledge as such.

## Appendix: Selected other craftsmen and artists' self-presentations

### A. The leather-worker Weta (ca. 2600-2500 BC (?))

(*Sarcophagus Cairo CG 1787, from South Giza, cf. PM III2, 311; Text: Borchardt 1964, 205-206, Bl. 110; Urk. I 22; Study: Junker 1957, with a discussion of leather-working and Weta's titles, on which see also Moreno García, this volume; Stauder-Porchet 2017, 90-92; Dating: Menkaure-Neferirkare-Kakai/Niuserre, ca. 2600-2500 BC, cf. Baud 1996, 24-25, with discussion of contrary views; also Strudwick 2005, 425, for a late Old Kingdom dating*)

Inscribed on the leatherworker Weta's sarcophagus, the inscription, probably from a time prior to the rise of the Old Kingdom autobiography proper (for which see Stauder-Porchet 2017), is a non-continuous text. It adopts the format of epithets inserted between titles and the name (compare, e.g., the musician Iti's inscription who is similarly said to cause the king's heart to rejoice: *Urk. I 45.13-17*; Stauder-Porchet 2017, 91,

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21 On enigmatic spellings in late First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom private inscriptions contemporary with Irtyesen, Darnell 2004, 1, n. 3-4; in press, n. 3-4; on visual-poetic compositions in the same periods, Morenz 2008, 90ff, 214-216. The phenomenon would become more widespread in the New Kingdom (Espinel in press; Darnell in press).



n. 51), a format that is here developed in a small tripartite form with *Steigerung* (*Ibid.*, 90-92) to express a distinguished relationship of Weta with the king for whom he works. (i), lid; (ii), left side; (iii), right side:

(i)  $w^{\epsilon}b$  nsw rh-nsw nb im $\dot{z}h$  hr nb=f hnt(i)-š hri-sšt $\dot{z}$  ntr(i)-mn-k $\dot{z}w$ -r $\epsilon$   
gs wt $\dot{z}$

(i) *The king's wab-priest, the royal acquaintance, possessor of imakh in the sight of his lord, the khenti-she and keeper of hidden knowledge of Divine-is-Menkaure, the tanner Weta.*

(ii) imi-r $\dot{z}$  gs nsw hri- $\epsilon$  hri-sšt $\dot{z}$   
ir ht r st-ib nt nb=f m k $\dot{z}t$  gs wt $\dot{z}$

imi-r $\dot{z}$  gs tbw nsw

ir ht m tbw-nsw r st-ib nt nb=f wt $\dot{z}$

(ii) *The overseer of tanning and assistant of the king's documents, the keeper of hidden knowledge,*

*who acts according to his lord's pleasure in the work of tanning, Weta.*

*The overseer of tanning and the king's sandal-maker*

*who acts on the king's sandals according to his lord's pleasure, Weta.*

(iii) imi-r $\dot{z}$  rtiw

ir{t} m $\dot{d}z$ t nt r $\epsilon$  nt hri-hb r st-ib nt nb=f mr w $\dot{d}t$

ir{t} ht r st <-ib> n(t) nsw hpr{t} <=f> ? hms m d $\dot{z}dw$  wt $\dot{z}$

(iii) *The overseer of the scroll manufacturers,*

*who makes the lector-priest's written scroll of according to his lord's pleasure like has been ordered,*

*who acts according to the king's pleasure when he happens to be seated in the djadou-courtyard, Weta.*

## B. The overseer of sculptors In[...] -nakht (Mentuhotep II, ca. 2000 BC)

(Stela Cairo TR 3/6/25/1, from el-Tarif (Thebes West); Text: Clère and Vandier 1948, 44 (no. 30); Translations: Schenkel 1965, 239; Landgráfová 2011, 59; Landgráfová and Dils, TLA; Barta's (1970, 128-130) proposal that In[...] -nakht may be the same individual as the contemporary Irtysen is based solely on both being "sculptors")

In an inscription that dates to the same reign as Irtysen, the continuous text does not make reference to In[...] -nakht's trade as a sculptor specifically and fully conforms to the generic format of the autobiography of a mid-11<sup>th</sup> dynasty Theban official working for and loyal to his king. The professional identity of the speaker is displayed through the title string at the end of the inscription, in a prominent position after the continuous text:

(1) hr ... nb-hpt-r $\epsilon$  (2) n $\dot{h}$ - $\dot{d}t$

b $\dot{z}k$ =f m $\dot{z}$  $\epsilon$  n st-ib=f irr h $\dot{s}st$ =f nbt m (3) hrt-hrw nt r $\epsilon$  nb [...] in[...] n $\dot{h}t$   $\dot{d}d$



*iw ir.n=i [...] m pr-hty wn<sup>(4)</sup>n pr-nsw ʿt=f nb ht st-hr=i hr srwd pr-nsw r-dr=f {hr srwd pr-nsw r-dr=f} hr s<sup>(5)</sup>htp ntrw m hwwt-ntr nt šm<sup>c</sup>  
imi-r3 kstiw n [...] <sup>(6)</sup>... hmww? imi-r3 {t}ms <t>(t)w? imi-r3 [...] imi-r3 [... <sup>(7)</sup>...]*

<sup>(1)</sup> *The Horus ... Nebheptere, <sup>(2)</sup> may he live forever!*

*His true servant of his affection, who does all he praises in <sup>(3)</sup> the course of every day, In[...] -nakht, says:*

*I spent [...] (period of time) [...] in the domain of Kheti, <sup>(4)</sup> the royal house, its every chamber, being under my authority, fortifying the royal house entirely and pa<sup>(5)</sup> cifying the gods in the Upper Egyptian temples.*

*The overseer of sculptors of [...] <sup>(6)</sup> ... artists<sup>2</sup>, the overseer of quarry-workers<sup>2</sup>, the overseer of [...] the overseer of [...] <sup>(7)</sup> ...]*

### C. The overseer of sculptors Shen-Setji (Senwosret I, ca. 1950 BC)

*(Stela Los Angeles County Museum of Art 50.33.31, in all likelihood from Abydos; Text: Faulkner 1952; Lichtheim 1988, 90-92; Translations: Obsomer 1995, 542-546; Landgráfová 2011, 124-126; Oppenheim 2015, 153-154; <http://collections.lacma.org/node/230235>)*

The bulk of the inscription consists in funerary texts and texts dealing with temple of Osiris at Abydos and Shen-Setji's mortuary monument. In the terse narrative part (ll. 16-17), Shen-Setji speaks of his working for the king, first in the royal residence Itjtawi (Lisht), then the Osirian cult center Abydos (on the mobility of sculptors in the Middle Kingdom, Quirke 2009, 117-119; Connor, this volume; on artists in mission for the king more broadly, Laboury 2016, 377-379). The inscription and autobiographical part conform to the format of contemporary Abydene stelae:

*iw ir.n(=i) imi-r3 gnwti m imn-m-h3t-it-t3wi d-<sup>c</sup>nh dt  
ii.n(=i) grt <r> r3-pr pn r k3 <t> <sup>(17)</sup>hr hm n nsw-bit hpr-k3-r<sup>c</sup> mry hnt-imntiw  
nb 3bdw d-<sup>c</sup>nh mi r<sup>c</sup> dt r nhh*

*I have acted as overseer of sculptors in Amenemhat-Itjtawi, given life forever.*

*I have, moreover, come to this temple for work <sup>(17)</sup> under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkare, beloved of Khentamentiu lord of Abydos, given life like Re forever and eternally.*

### D. The chief chisel-bearer (hri t3y md3t) Hatiay (a.k.a. Userhat; ca. 1300 BC)

*(Leiden V.1; Text: Boeser 1913, 1-2, pl. 1; KRI VII 26-29; Translations: Kruchten 1992; Froot 2007, 123-129, also 117-123 for lintels and door-jamb = KRI I 357.5-362.10; Studies: Kruchten 1992; Willems 1998)*

Preceded by a hymn to Osiris and Thot, the autobiography focuses on the distinction that accrued to Hatiay by the king. Playing with a general trope of the genre and a recurrent (early post-)Amarnian topos, Hatiay's being raised above the courtiers is presented as remarkable in view of the speaker's humble origins. The distinction con-



sists notably in Hatiay's "initiation" (*bs*) to the House of Gold (Kruchten 1992) to create statues for the gods (possibly in the context of the post-Amarnian restoration: Willems 1998). This initiation to restricted knowledge is also alluded to on the lintel in the epithet "who had access to House of Gold" ( $\epsilon k n hwt-nbw$ , Leiden K.9, 12 = KRI I 360.1). Inserted into the autobiography, a lengthy list of gods associated with possibly complex theological contents (Willems 1998) is another occasion for Hatiay to display knowledge, arguably similarly restricted in nature. Unlike Irtyesen's, Hatiay's inscription is a genuine autobiography, conforming to the format of the genre of his time, and focusing on the speaker's distinguished relation to the king. The inscription mentions restricted knowledge but, unlike Irtyesen's, is not wholly about it, nor does it stage it in any reflexive manner:

... (address)

*ink pw hwrw n hzy=f ktt n dmi=f*

<sup>(6)</sup>*rh.n wi nb t3wi ip.kw wr(t) hr ib=f m3=i nsw m km3=f n r $\epsilon$  m dsr  $\epsilon$ h=f*

*s $\epsilon$ z.n=f (w)i r smrw sbn=i <sup>(7)</sup>wrw  $\epsilon$ h hr.n nb=i hr tsw=i mkh3=f wrw r=i ...*

*dhn.n=f wi r hrp k3t ist wi <sup>(9)</sup>m nmh gm.n=f wi ip.kw hr ib=f bs.kw r hwt-nbw r ms(t) ssmw  $\epsilon$ hmw <sup>(10)</sup>nw ntrw nbw n(n) imnw im=sn r=i*

... (address)

*The fact is that I was a poor one of his family, a little one of his town.*

<sup>(6)</sup>*The Lord of the Two Lands recognized me with the effect that I counted greatly on his heart so that I used to see the king in his form of Re in the secluded part of his palace.*

*He made me greater than the courtiers so that I mingled <sup>(7)</sup>with the great ones of the palace; my lord was content with my utterances so that he neglected the ones greater than me ...*

*He appointed me to conduct works even as I <sup>(9)</sup>was only a private citizen, because he had found me counting on his heart; I was initiated to the House of Gold to fashion (lit. give birth to) seshemu and the akhemu statues <sup>(10)</sup>of all the gods, none among them remaining hidden to me.*

*ink pw hri-s3t3 m33 r $\epsilon$  m hprw=f tmw m mswt ... (list of gods)*

*The fact is that I am one introduced to the hidden knowledge, one who sees Re in his manifestations and Atum in his births ... (list of gods)*

*ink pw dd htp=s<sup>(17)</sup>n m hmw=sn n nhh ... (continues)*

*The fact is that I the one who makes them re<sup>(17)</sup>st in their sanctuaries of eternity ... (continues)*



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