

Did Werethekau ‘Great of Magic’ have a Cult? A Disjunction between Scholarly Opinions and Sources

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Introduction

This paper investigates the contradiction between scholarly opinions and the archaeological evidence for the existence of a cult of Werethekau exemplifying the danger of building facts on assumptions. Werethekau is attested (1) as a term for a range of material objects, (2) as an epithet of other goddesses, and (3) as the name of a specific goddess (Ouda 2013, 1–7).

This paper focuses on the last aspect, the goddess Werethekau, who is shown with a lioness head crowning the king or the queen (Hari 1976, 101–102, 104, 107; Nebe 1986, 1222; Ouda, forthcoming; compare Bosse-Griffiths 1973, 100–108). Werethekau is also the cobra, the symbol of power, on the forehead of the king. The King was only empowered to proclaim his royal titulary and make his magnificent arising after the cobra Werethekau had placed herself on his forehead (Gardiner 1953, pl. 2 [15–16]; Nebe 1986, 1222; Ouda, forthcoming; Roberts 1995, 42).

Following Hoenes (1976, 182), several scholars have claimed that there was no known priesthood or cult for Werethekau without re-examining the primary evidence: “Ein Kult oder Priester der Werethekau sind aber zu keiner Zeit der ägyptischen Geschichte nachweisbar” (Hoenes 1976, 182); “Priester der Werethekau sind nicht bekannt” (Nebe 1986, 1222); “وإن لم يثبت في أى عصر من التاريخ المصرى القديم ان وجدت عباده او كهنه للاله ورت حكاو” (Farouk 1997, 345); “...für die bisher allerdings kein eigener Kult belegt ist” (Althoff 2009, 76). However, several sources indicate that Werethekau did have a cult with its own priesthood, temples, and offerings. Leitz (2002, II, 495 [L, a–b]) published evidence for the existence of priests of Werethekau, but did not include all of the sources which are discussed below, listing examples of just one pure-priest (*w^cb*), four first god-servants (*hm-ntr tpy*), and seven god-servants (*hm-ntr*) of Werethekau (including two examples from the Graeco-Roman Period, not covered here, since this paper focuses only on the Dynastic Period). On the question of whether Werethekau had a temple, el-Sayed (1975, 34) was the first to draw attention to a Nineteenth Dynasty inscription on the statue of *P3-sr* (Louvre E. 25980), alluding to a temple of Werethekau, while according to Leitz (2002, II, 494 [J, a]) the shrine of *Pr-wr* at the Roman temple of el-Qal‘a was her great palace “als Besitzer von Heiligtümern”. However, Leitz did not discuss any evidence predating the Roman Period.

In this paper, I address the available evidence for the existence of a cult of Werethekau, focusing on her statues, her priesthood (noting gender issues), and her temples. I argue that the range of sources may itself be evidence that, at certain times and places, Werethekau was considered a deity as ontologically separate as the better-attested gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt. I will first focus on the statues of Werethekau and the available evidence for the existence of a priesthood of Werethekau. Other aspects of the cult of Werethekau will be discussed afterwards.

1. *The statues of Werethekau*

Indirect evidence for the existence of a cult of Werethekau is provided by a number of statues of the goddess. In ancient Egypt statues of deities functioned as physical manifestations of the gods, and were the foci of regular ceremonies and the daily temple service (Assmann 2001, 40–41). Only three statues of Werethekau are known:

1. Statue base of Werethekau, ‘lady of the Sed-festival’, Cairo Museum N 127, presumably from the temple of Amenhotep III at Kom el-Hitan (Bryan 1997, 73, pl. 15 [b]);
2. Sekhmet-Werethekau from Kom el-Hitan, grand magazine of the SCA at Taref no. 4064 (Sourouzian 2011, 422, fig. 7 [c–d], 516, pl. 12 [g–l]);
3. CG 42002 (Fig. 9.1), from the Karnak Cachette; the inscription on the back pillar identifies the statue as a representation of the goddess Werethekau (Legrain 1906, 2, pl. 1; compare Hermann 1939, 174, pls 28 [a], 29 [a–b]; Wildung 1969, 175–176 [XXI. 120])



Figure. 9.1 *Werethekau suckling a child on her lap (CG 42002). Images courtesy of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.*

These statues allude to the existence of a cult for Werethekau despite the absence of images made of precious metals, which are commonly considered to have been the focal point of the daily temple cult (Helck 1980, 859–860). The first and second statue of Werethekau belong to a larger group of statues, representing various deities, that was made for the Sed-festival of King Amenhotep III, and invoke the protection of Werethekau during the jubilee (Bryan 1997, 57–58; for the ritual of appeasing the dangerous goddess, Sekhmet, the Eye of Re, see Yoyotte 1980, 69 ff.). On the base of the first statue, Amenhotep III is styled as the ‘beloved of Werethekau, lady of the Sed-festival’ (Bryan 1997, 73, pl. 15 [b]), while on the front of the seat of the second statue, he is ‘son of Re, lord of the Sed-festival, Amenhotep, ruler of Waset, beloved of Sekhmet-Werethekau, given life’ (Sourouzian 2011, 422, fig. 7 [c–d]). The third statue was in all likelihood a gift for the temple of Amun in Karnak (Daumas 1967, 208).

2. The priesthood of Werethekau

Direct evidence for a priesthood of Werethekau comes from priestly titles associated with the goddess. Temple walls show that the king was considered to be the most important priest, or the sole earthly representative of the deities. However, in practice other priests fulfilled the sacral duties of the king and made offerings of food and drink to the gods (Bleeker 1973, 80; Clarysse 2010, 276; Spencer 2010, 260–261). Priests serving in the great temples worked in a rotation of four shifts and performed their duties for one month or less (Clarysse 2010, 287; Spencer 2010, 258). These shifts were headed by ‘the great one of the phyle’ or ‘the great one of the month’ (Clarysse 2010, 287; Quirke 2004, 119). Four priestly titles are attested for the cult of Werethekau:

1. $w^c b$ $Wr(.t)-hk3.w$ ‘the pure-priest of Werethekau’;
2. $\text{ʿ}3 n(y)$ $w^c b.w n(y.w) Wr:t-hk3.w$ ‘the chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau’;
3. $hm-ntr$ $Wr:t-hk3.w$ ‘the god’s servant of Werethekau’;
4. $hm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr:t-hk3.w$ ‘the first god’s servant of Werethekau’.

As I will demonstrate below, some of these titles were the main titles of the bearers of these offices, indicating that her priests indeed served in a cult administration, while others were used as self-descriptive phrases. This identification is based on whether a specific title was the only title held by an individual, an inherited one, or one which precedes the individual’s name directly.

2.1 $w^c b$ $Wr(.t)-hk3.w$

The title of $w^c b$ $Wr(.t)-hk3.w$ occurs on a Twenty-Second Dynasty votive stela found in front of the second gate of the Serapeum in Saqqara (Louvre IM 3141). The stela belongs to $P3-ʿdb$, and the title of ‘pure-priest of Werethekau’ seems to have been his main title as it directly precedes his name: ‘the pure-priest of the sanctuary (*s.t-wr:t*) of Ptah-Irta-Apis-Ankh, the pure-priest of Werethekau, $P3-ʿdb$ ’ (Malinine *et al.* 1968, 59–60, pl. 20 [67]).

Pure-priests were of lower rank than the ‘god’s servants’ ($hm(w)-ntr$) and had no access to the cult statue in the sanctuary of the temple. Texts from Karnak indicate that pure-priests only had access to the processional figures of the gods, which they carried around in festive processions from the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards (Kruchten and Zimmer 1989, 252, n. 6; Spencer 2010, 257).

2.2 ʿ3 n(y) w^cb.w n(y.w) Wr.t-ḥk3.w

The title ‘chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau’, occurs on four objects from Thebes (Clère 1981, 215):

1. Boston block relief 1972.651 (Simpson 1972, 72, 76);
2. Cairo Museum limestone offering-table JE 27987 [TR 29.9.14.6] (Clère 1981, pl. 27 [2]; Daressy 1916, 59);
3. British Museum statue EA 1459 (Clère 1995, 203);
4. A rectangular brick of clay, Berlin 15704 (Clère 1981, 214 [n. 5], 215; compare UC 69964).

These four objects all belong to the same person, ‘the royal cup-bearer’ (*wb3-nsu*), ‘pure of hands’ (*w^cb ʿ.wy*), and ‘servant of the living royal-ka’ (*ḥm-ntr n(y) k3-nsu ʿnh*), *T3wy*, who lived during the late Eighteenth to early Nineteenth Dynasty (Simpson 1972, contrast to Clère 1995, 200, n. 29). The title of ‘royal cup-bearer’ seems to be *T3wy*’s main title as it precedes his name in most cases. However, the title ‘chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau’ directly precedes *T3wy*’s name on the four objects listed above, indicating that the title must have been of great importance to him.

2.3 Ḥm-ntr Wr.t-ḥk3.w

There are ten examples of the title *ḥm-ntr Wr.t-ḥk3.w*:

1. Stela Louvre C 65 (temp. Amenhotep III, unprovenanced), *P3-sr*, the elder, was *imy-r im.y(.w)-hnt ḥm-ntr Wr.t-ḥk3.w*, ‘overseer of chamberlains and god’s servant of Werethekau,’ and was also simply called *imy-hnt* ‘chamberlain’ (Drioton 1933, 25, pl. 4).
2. Pyramidion Leiden AM 6 (temp. Amenhotep III; from Saqqara): the owner, the *imy-r Pr-wr (m Mn-nfr)*, ‘high steward (in Memphis),’ named *Imn-ḥtp*, included among his many titles that of ‘god’s servant of Werethekau’ (Boeser 1913, I [1], Abb. 4; Hayes 1938, 19; Morkot 1990, 324). The inscriptions indicate that the titles ‘royal scribe’ and ‘high steward (in Memphis)’ were *Imn-ḥtp*’s main titles.
- 3A. Tomb relief Uppsala I (Nineteenth Dynasty; from Abydos): this relief mentions a man, *Wnn-nfr (?)*, who was ‘god’s servant of Horus, avenger of his father’ (*ḥm-ntr Hr-nd it=f*), ‘god’s servant of Werethekau,’ and ‘god’s servant of Wadjet and Nekhbet’ (*ḥm-ntr W3d.t[y]*), Lugn 1922, 22, pl. 16). The ‘god’s servant of Werethekau’ was not his main title, and appears to have been merely descriptive (see 3B below).
- 3B. Pair statue of *Wnn-nfr* and his father *Mry* Cairo JE 35257 (temp. Seti I–Ramesses II, from Abydos): the owner holds the same titles above (3A). The inscription places emphasis on *Wnn-nfr*’s main title ‘first god’s servant of Osiris’ which he inherited from his father (Hema 2005, I, 264, II, 262, pl. 122d; Kitchen 1980, 448 [15]).
4. On stela Bristol H 514 of the Ramesside Period, the owner, *P(3)-n-Imn*, bears only the title ‘*ḥm-ntr Wr.t-ḥk3.w*, god’s servant of Werethekau’ which is abbreviated on the same stela as ‘the god’s servant’ (Grinsell 1972, 53, fig. 30; Ouda, forthcoming). This was *P(3)-n-Imn*’s main title.
5. Votive stela Louvre IM 2785 (Twenty-fifth–Twenty-sixth Dynasty; from the Serapeum in Saqqara): the owner, ‘*it-ntr ḥm-ntr ḥ3.ty-ʿ*, a god’s father, god’s servant and governor,’ called *S3-Pth*, also held the title *ḥm-ntr Wr(.t)-ḥk3.w nb.t-ʿh*, ‘god’s servant of Werethekau, lady of the palace’ (Malinine *et al.* 1968, 132–133, pl. 47 [172]).

The title of 'god's servant of Werethekau' seems to be the main title of the owner of the stela as it comes directly before his name. This is the first time that the epithet of Werethekau, 'lady of the palace' is used within a priestly title (see 6A–B below). This indicates that this was Werethekau's primary aspect when she was worshipped or venerated in a cult in Memphis or Saqqara, where this stela was found. The name of the priest, *S3-Pth*, and his father *T3ty-Inb-ḥd* 'vizier of Memphis' also bear a reference to Ptah, the god of Memphis, and Memphis respectively. This reveals the cultic dimension of the divine presence of Werethekau (compare Assmann 2001, 8), which addresses Werethekau residing in Memphis in the form of 'lady of the palace'.

- 6A. A votive stela formerly in the Amherst collection (Twenty-fifth–Twenty-sixth Dynasty; from Abydos): the owner's father, *P3-di-3s.t*, bears, among others, the titles *ḥm-ntr whm Wsir ...ḥm-ntr Hr nd it=f ḥm-ntr 3s.t nb(.t) pr-ms ḥm-ntr Wr(.t)-ḥk3.w nb(.t)-ḥ*, 'second god's servant of Osiris...god's servant of Horus, avenger of his father, god's servant of Isis, lady of the house of birth, and god's servant of Werethekau, lady of the palace' (von Känel 1984, 86–87; Munro 1973, 292–293, pl. 39; Sotheby's 1921, 25 [239], pl. 6). The inscriptions indicate that *P3-di-3s.t*'s main title is 'second god's servant of Osiris' as it is the only title in the label above the image of his daughter adoring the Osiris triad 'daughter of *P3-di-3s.t*, the second god's servant of Osiris, *3s.t-n-(3)ḥ-bit*'.

The title in the inscription together with the depiction of the Osiris triad provides evidence that Werethekau was regarded as a separate goddess from Isis; the principal epithet of Werethekau, 'lady of the palace' (Ouda, forthcoming), is not attested for Isis (Leitz 2002, IV, 32).

- 6B. A pyramidion in Cairo (TR 15.3.25.6; found in Abydos): the same *P3-di-3s.t* recurs as 'second god's servant of Osiris...god's servant of Horus, avenger of his father, god's servant of Isis, lady of the house of birth, and god's servant of Werethekau, (lady) of the palace' (von Känel 1984, 89–90; Mariette 1880, 562 wrongly transcribes the *ḥ* in Werethekau's name as a *ḥs* vase).

The epithet of Werethekau – '(lady) of the palace' – suggests that this was her most important epithet at Abydos (see 5–6A above).

- 6C. A block statue formerly in the Michaelides collection (undoubtedly from Abydos): on this statue the same *P3-di-3s.t* holds the same titles above. This time Werethekau is named without her epithet (von Känel 1984, 89).
7. Statue Vatican 167 + Brooklyn 60.11 (Twenty-sixth Dynasty; provenance unknown): the owner *P3-dbhḥw* holds among his priestly titles that of '[god]'s servant of Werethekau' (von Bothmer 1960, 66 [56], pl. 53 [130]; el-Sayed 1975, 231). This title follows his other titles which are related to kingship and crowns, *ḥm-Hr* 'servant of Horus' and *wr-w3d.ty* 'great of the two crowns'. The '[god's] servant of Werethekau' precedes the name of *P3-dbhḥw*, but it seems that his title *hrp-ḥww.t* 'director of the estates of (Neith)' was his main title which he inherited from his father (el-Sayed 1975, 231).
8. Coffin Cairo CG 41017 from Deir el-Bahari (Twenty-sixth Dynasty): a *ḥm-ntr Mntw nb W3s.t*, 'god's servant of Monthu, lord of Thebes,' named *Hrw* gives among his other titles that of 'god's servant of Werethekau' (Moret 1913, 173). His main title is 'god's servant of Monthu'.

Two earlier examples of the title, both from the Twelfth Dynasty, pertain not to the goddess Werethekau but to royal crowns:

9. Stela BM EA 839: the owner, *Smty* the Elder, was *ḥm-ntr Wr.ty-ḥk3.w*, 'god's servant of the Two-Great-of-Magics' (Hall 1912, 6 [147], pl. 7; Simpson 1974, 20, pl. 61 [ANOC 42.1]);

compare *mss Wr:t-ḥk3.w*, ‘who created the Great-of-Magic crown’ on stela BM EA 574 (Gardiner 1953, 26; Hall 1912, 6, pl. 8; Simpson 1974, 20, pl. 61 [ANOC 42.2]).

10. Stela Cairo CG 20683: *Ti-ḥr-nfr.t*, the famous *imy-r ḥtm.t*, ‘treasurer,’ boasts the titles of *ḥm-ntr Wr:t-ḥk3.w ḥry sš3 n w3d.ty* ‘god’s servant of the Great of Magic (crown), master of secrets of Wadjet and Nekhbet,’ in clear reference to the king’s crowns (Lange and Schäfer 1908, 310; Simpson 1974, 17, pl. 2 [ANOC 1.5]; compare *db3 Wr:t-ḥk3.w*, ‘who puts on (the king) the Great of Magic Crown’ (Schäfer 1904, 37).

In the last two cases, I suggest that the holders of this office were in charge of the king’s crowns and were allowed to place them on his head (see below 2.4 [4B]). The idea of a priestly function related to the king’s crowns recurs on stela BM EA 574 of *Smty* the Younger, brother of the owner of BM EA 839. *Smty* included among his titles those of *ḥm-ntr n šm^c.s mḥw.s*, ‘god’s servant of (the crowns) She-of-Upper-Egypt and She-of-Lower-Egypt,’ and *ḥm nt m Pr-nw*, ‘god’s servant of the crown of Lower Egypt in the *Pr-nw*’ (Gardiner 1953, 26; Hall 1912, pl. 8).

2.4 *Ḥm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr:t-ḥk3.w*

The title *ḥm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr:t-ḥk3.w* suggests there was a hierarchy of Werethekau priests, analogous to the ‘first,’ ‘second,’ ‘third,’ and even ‘fourth god’s servants’ that have been attested for certain other deities, particularly at Karnak during the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Broekman 2011, 100, 102–104, 106; Clarysse 2010, 287; Spencer 2010, 257; compare Naguib 1990, 94–95, 104–105, 163). The presence of such a hierarchy normally marked a difference between the great temples with many types of god’s servants and smaller ones that would be served by a single priesthood (Clarysse 2010, 287; Quirke 2004, 129–130). However, for Werethekau there is no evidence for the existence of ‘second,’ ‘third,’ or ‘fourth god’s servants’. This may imply that Werethekau had a small temple. There are five people with the title *ḥm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr:t-ḥk3.w*, ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’.

1. In the tomb of *Imn-ḥtp* in Qurna (temp. Amenhotep III): *Imn-ḥtp* bore the titles: *imy-ḥn.t wr m Pr-wr shk^r nsw.t m Pr-nsr [ḥsy] n nb t3.wy m ḥ [ḥm-ntr tpy n(y)] Wr:(t)-ḥk3.w* ‘great chamberlain in the *Pr-wr*, who adorns the king in the *Pr-nsr*, praised of the lord of the Two Lands in the palace, [first god’s servant of] Werethekau’ (Loret 1884, 30; Helck 1958, 1938 [9–12]; the reading of the title, [first god’s servant], follows Helck’s reconstruction; see below for intact examples).

It seems that *Imn-ḥtp*’s title ‘chamberlain’ and ‘overseer of the craftsmen of Amun’ were his main titles. *Imn-ḥtp* inherited his title ‘chamberlain’ from his father, *Iwti* (Helck 1958, 1938, [14]).

2. On wooden statue base Cairo CG 806 belonging to *Hri-dd.n=f-R^c* (JE 21871, 7d), found at Saqqara and dating to the Eighteenth Dynasty: *Hri-dd.n=f-R^c* bore the titles ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau and chamberlain’ (Borchardt 1930, 103, pl. 149; Chadefaud 1982, 103). The title of ‘chamberlain’ seems to have been his main title as it precedes his name on the back of the statue.
3. On the votive stela of *Nfr-rnp.t* from Abydos, now in the Cairo museum (TR 14.6.24.17; Nineteenth Dynasty), *Nfr-rnp.t*’s brother, *Imn-w3ḥ-sw*, bore the titles *ḥm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr:t-ḥk3.w imy-r imy.w-ḥn.t* ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau, overseer of chamberlains’. He held these titles another time on the same stela, adding *n(y) nb t3.wy*, ‘of the lord of the Two Lands,’ following *imy-r imy.w-ḥn.t* (Mariette 1880, 434 [1159]).

These are the only two titles that *Imn-w3h-sw* held. The 'overseer of the chamberlains' seems to be *Imn-w3h-sw*'s main title preceding his name.

4. The best attested priest in this group is *P3-sr*, who served as vizier at the court of Seti I and Ramesses II during the Nineteenth Dynasty (Donohue 1988, 103–123; Raedler 2004, 309–354). The title occurs twelve times (once with the dual form *Wr.ty-hk3.w*) on a total of seven monuments; however, it was not *P3-sr*'s main title, which was vizier.
- 4A. On *P3-sr*'s statue in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (E.534) from the temple of Montuhotep Nebhepetre at Deir el-Bahari, *P3-sr* bore the title 'first god's servant of Werethekau' (Kitchen 1980, 18 [9]; Naville and Hall 1913, X Be).
- 4B. On block statue Cairo JE 38062 from the Karnak Cachette (Gaballa 1974, 15), *P3-sr* is given the title *hm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr.t-hk3.w* twice. The inscription on his knees calls him: *hm-ntr M3t hm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr.t-hk3.w imy-r imy.w-hn.t n(y) nb t3.wy* 'god's servant of Maat, first god's servant of Werethekau, overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands' (Gaballa 1974, 16 [A], fig. 1; Kitchen 1980, 15 [8]).

The inscription on the left side of the statue pertains to the king's crowns: *shkr Hr=f hm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr.ty-hk3.w*, 'who adorns his Horus (the king), the first god's servant of the Two-Great-of-Magic (crowns)' (Gaballa 1974, 19 [E], fig. 5; Kitchen 1980, 16 [7]; compare Traunecker 2009, 39, n. 105–106; Perdu 2012, 124 [B]). *Wr.ty-hk3.w* has the determinatives of the White and the Red crown. This indicates that it refers to the crowns worn by the king at his coronation and other appearances.

- 4C. On double statue Cairo CG 561 of *P3-sr* and his mother *Mry.t-Rc*, found at Deir el-Bahari: again one of *P3-sr*'s titles is 'first god's servant of Werethekau' (Borchardt 1925, 109–110, pl. 95).
- 4D. On statue Cairo CG 630, found in the temple of Ptah in Memphis: *P3-sr* lists among his titles those of 'first god's servant of Werethekau, overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands' (Borchardt 1925, 177–179; el-Sayed 1980, 224).
- 4E. A statue found at Tell el-Roba^c (present location unknown): *P3-sr* is again referred to as the 'first god's servant of Werethekau and overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands' (Lieblein 1891, 801 [2089]; Kitchen 1980, 34 [2]). Kitchen suggests the title **imy-r htm.tyw n(y.w) nb t3.wy*. However, no such title is attested elsewhere, and this is undoubtedly a misreading of *imy-r imy.w-hn.t n(y) nb t3.wy* (see 4B, D, F–G).
- 4F. On *P3-sr*'s statue, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek AEIN 50, of which the provenance is unknown: *P3-sr* bears the titles 'first god's servant of Werethekau and overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands' (Jørgensen 1998, 208–209 [80]; Koefoed-Peterson 1936, 12 [50], 1950, 36, pl. 72).
- 4G. In the tomb of *P3-sr*, TT 106 in Qurna (Porter and Moss 1994, 219 [106]): the title 'first god's servant of Werethekau' appears five times on pillars B, C, H and G in the broad hall (Kitchen 1975, 297 [4], 299 [10], 300 [8], 301 [11]: 1980, 9 [6]). The title 'overseer of chamberlains' recurs as well (Kitchen 1975, 297 [4], 299 [10]: 1980, 9 [6]).
5. On the back wall of the rear chapel of the temple of Maat at Karnak, the vizier *Wnn-nfr* of the reign of Ramesses XI also bears the title 'first god's servant of Werethekau' (Bouriant 1890, 173; Janssen 1967, 163; Kitchen 1983, 840–841).

2.5 Discussion

The different sources listed above prove beyond reasonable doubt that Werethekau had her own priests. Of the priests who bore titles relating to Werethekau, that title was the most important one for the *P3-ꜥdb* ‘pure-priest,’ *P(3)-n-Imn* ‘god’s servant,’ and *S3-Pth* ‘god’s servant’. The latter, *S3-Pth*, included the principal epithet of Werethekau, *nb.t-ꜥh*, in his priestly title (Ouda, forthcoming), which suggests that her priests also served in the administration. On some occasions, priests such as *T3wy* swapped their main titles with ones pertaining to Werethekau (see above 2.2, on Boston Museum 1972.651, offering-table of *T3wy* Cairo JE 27987, statue BM EA 1459 and Berlin 15704). *T3wy* bore the title ‘chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau,’ which directly preceded his name on all his monuments that mention the title instead of his main title ‘royal cup-bearer’ (see above 2.2). This could imply that the title ‘chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau’ may have been his main title on specific moments, for example while performing certain cultic activities. *T3wy* is himself depicted on Boston Museum 1972.651 while burning incense and making libation offerings for the cobra Werethekau (Simpson 1972, 72, fig. 4).

The title ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ was not the main title for any of the persons listed above (see above 2.4). However, the different sources highlight that there was a strong relationship between the titles ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ and ‘god’s servant of Werethekau’ and the titles of ‘chamberlain’ or ‘overseer of chamberlains’ which were closely related to the office of kingship and coronation ceremonies (Barbotin 1999, 20; Daoud 1994, 204; Gaballa 1974, 20–21; Kitchen 1980, 11–12; Quirke 2004, 34). The close correlation between these titles is attested for:

1. *Smty*, the Elder: ‘god’s servant of the two Great of Magic crowns’ and ‘chamberlain’ (see above 2.3 [9]; compare also the stela of *Smty*, the Younger, for ‘who created the Great-of-Magic crown (*mss Wr.t-ḥk3.w*)’ and ‘chamberlain’ (see above 2.3 [9]).
2. *P3-sr*, the Elder: ‘god’s servant of Werethekau’ and ‘overseer of chamberlains’ (see above 2.3 [1]).
3. *Imn-ḥtp*: ‘great chamberlain in the *Pr-wr*’ and ‘[first god’s servant of] Werethekau’ (see above 2.4 [1]).
4. *Hri-dd.n=f-Rꜥ*: ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ and ‘chamberlain’ (see above 2.4 [2]).
5. *Imn-w3ḥ-sw*: ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ and ‘overseer of chamberlains of the lord of the Two Lands’ (see above 2.4 [3]).
6. The vizier *P3-sr*: ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ and ‘overseer of chamberlains’ (see above 2.4 [4B, D–G]).

In addition, an inscription in the tomb of *P3-di-Imn-Ip.t* of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (TT 33) indicates that there was a relationship between the titles ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’ and *ḥry sšt3 w3d.ty*, ‘master of secrets of the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt’ (Traunecker 2009, 39, n. 105–106; compare Perdu 2012, 124, 126, n. 11). However, Traunecker’s (2009, 39, n. 106) French translation “celui qui orne la grande de Magie” for the title comprising the name of Werethekau, does not agree with the comparative ancient Egyptian examples of *P3-sr ḥm-ntr tpy n(y) Wr.t-ḥk3.w* and *wr.ty-ḥk3.w*.

In temple reliefs Werethekau is depicted placing the crown on the head of the king (for instance Abdel-Raziq 1986, 65, 67, 70–71; Badawy *et al.* 1989, 25, 43, pl. 20; Burgos and Larché 2006, 79, 84, 124, 127, 138–141; Giorgini 1998, pl. 5; Nelson 1981, pls 70, 192; compare Gardiner 1953, 25–26) (Fig. 9.2). In actuality, the chamberlain would have performed this task (Daoud 1994, 204; Gardiner 1953, 26). *Imn-ḥtp*, ‘the great chamberlain’, and *P3-sr*, ‘overseer of chamberlains’, had the responsibility of adorning the king (see above 2.4 [1, 4 B]). Many other

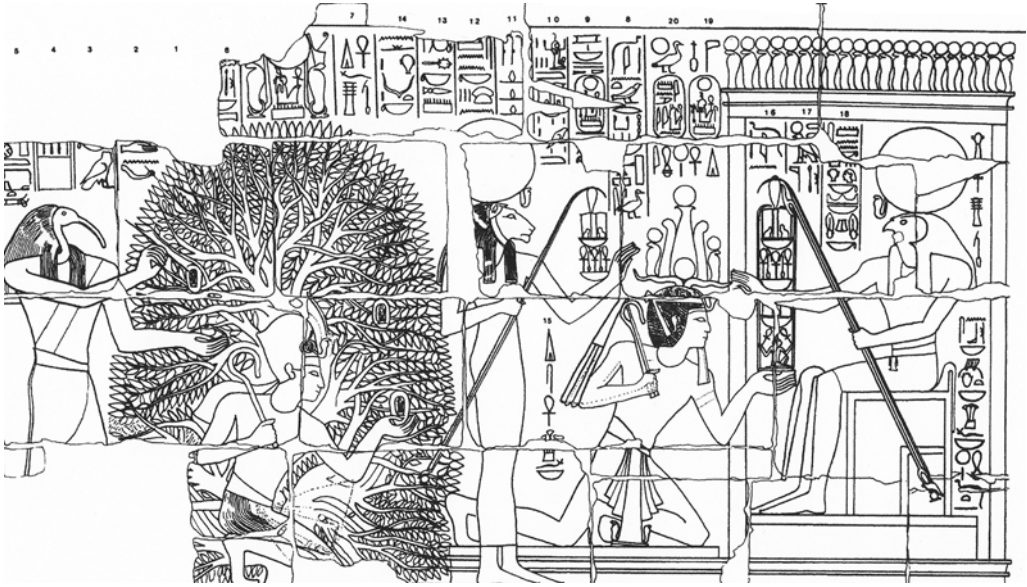


Figure. 9.2 Werethekau crowning Seti I, Great Hypostyle Hall, Karnak (after Nelson 1981, pl. 192). Image courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

examples indicate the importance of the ‘chamberlain’ with regard to the coronation and the king’s official appearances (Gardiner 1953, 26). In sum, the recurrent combination of the titles ‘god’s servant of Werethekau’, ‘first god’s servant of Werethekau’, ‘chamberlain’, and ‘overseer of chamberlains’ may stem from their involvement with coronation rituals.

Could women serve as priestesses for Werethekau?

Another major feature of the titles relating to Werethekau is their gender specificity. The evidence listed above reveals the lack of evidence for female ‘god’s servants’ of Werethekau, as opposed to the female ‘god’s servants’ of, for example, Hathor and Neith (Gosline 1996, 25–26; Robins 1993, 142–144). Quirke (1999, 229) considered the possibility that *ḥm(.t)-ntr n(y).t Ḥwt-Ḥr* ‘servant of the goddess Hathor’ in the Middle Kingdom provided music for all cults, rather than merely serving the statue of the goddess Hathor, as part of her offering cult. If this surmise is correct, this certainly would have reduced the necessity for priestesses for all of the individual cults. However, it is also possible that priests of Werethekau formed part of the state bureaucracy; whose offices were often restricted to men. Whatever the case, women had less access to priestly offices from the New Kingdom onwards (Fischer 1982, 1102; Robins 1993, 142–144, 149; Wilfong 1997, 21). Herodotus (II, 35) even stated in his second book that: “No woman holds priestly office, either in the service of goddess or god; only men are priests in both cases” (this statement contradicts what he mentioned in two other locations, see Blackman 1921, 8). Women mainly joined the temple as musicians playing sistra and participated in that capacity in the religious rituals of the temple (Fischer 1982, 1102; Quirke 1999, 228–229; Wilfong 1997, 21).

However, there are many examples over the centuries of women holding priestly titles (Fischer 1982, 1102; Gosline 1996, 26, n. 6, 34–36; Quirke 2004, 124) which leaves the question why women were excluded from the priesthood of Werethekau: is this simply the result of accidental survival in the archaeological record?

3. Did Werethekau have a temple?

Architecture can foster compelling evidence for the existence of a cult of a deity. Temples, as cult places, are the materialization of cult practices and form secure indicators of recurrent or permanent ritual action in a particular place (Renfrew 1985, 25, 1994, 51; Trump 2007, 14–15; compare Dowden 2000, 127). The sources discussed above prove that Werethekau was endowed with her own priesthood. There are six sources that indicate that Werethekau also had her own place, or even places, of worship, even though none of these have hitherto been identified archaeologically.

1. The earliest source is from the tomb of *Imn-ḥtp* in Qurna from the reign of Amenhotep III, already mentioned above (see 2.4 [1]). An inscription on the northern wall of Hall A reads: ‘he did what is favoured in the House of Werethekau (*Pr-Wr:t-ḥk3.w*), Amenhotep’ (Loret 1884, 28). As discussed above, *Imn-ḥtp* was a ‘chamberlain’ and a ‘[first god’s servant] of Werethekau,’ who had the responsibility of crowning and adorning the king in the palace. *Imn-ḥtp* is also described as the ‘one who adorned the king in the *Pr-wr* shrine and made festive the lord of the Two Lands in the *Pr-nsr*’ (Loret 1884, 27). His title ‘chamberlain’ links him to shrines, temples, the office of kingship, and the coronation.
2. *T3wy*, ‘the royal cup-bearer’, and ‘the chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau,’ (see above 2.2) held the titles *imy-r šn^c [Wr:t]-ḥk3.w* ‘overseer of the *šn^c* of [Weret]hekau’ (Borchardt 1925, 182) and *nd.ty n(y) Pr-[Wr](.t)-ḥk3.w* ‘guardian of the temple of Werethekau’ on CG 632 (Clère 1981, 215; contrast to Borchardt 1925, 181). These titles indicate the existence of physical temple departments or institutions linked to the cult of Werethekau. The *šn^c*, as a production centre, is attested for the cults of Werethekau, Amun, Osiris, and Khonsu (Eichler 2000, 104 ff.; Polz 1990, 54–60). At Karnak, the *šn^c* occupied a special position in the administration of the temple; the raw material of agricultural products, food, the daily offerings, and the offerings which were presented to the gods on special occasions, were processed in the *šn^c* for later use in the temple. The *šn^c* was also concerned with the production of cloth and linen. Therefore, it worked in close cooperation with almost all sectors of the temple (Eichler 2000, 97–98; Polz 1990, 47). In the New Kingdom, the *šn^c* was a crucial ‘redistribution centre’ in the economic system (Polz 1990, 47). These functional reconstructions are all based on the *šn^c* of the temple of Amun during the New Kingdom, and therefore need not directly apply to the *šn^c* of Werethekau. However, the title clearly indicates that Werethekau had a temple, a cult, and a *šn^c* that was linked to her temple or a bigger temple (compare Polz 1990, 44). The four objects of *T3wy* linking him to Werethekau all stem from Thebes (see 2.2). Hence the temple or *šn^c* of Werethekau was presumably located there as well.

T3wy’s second title, ‘guardian of the temple of Werethekau’, provides further evidence for the existence of a temple of Werethekau, along with his title ‘chief of the pure-priest of Werethekau’, and with his depiction on Boston block relief 1972.651 where *T3wy* is depicted burning incense and making a libation-offering in a granary housing a figure of Werethekau as a cobra (Simpson 1972, 70–72, fig. 4).

3. The diorite stelophorous statue of the vizier *P3-sr* (Louvre E 25980, temp. late Seti I–early Ramesses II, Barbotin 1999, 20–21, [Cat. 1a]; el-Sayed 1975, 28–35), who had the title of the 'first god's servant of Werethekau' (see above 2.4 [4]), also provides evidence for a temple for Werethekau. The provenance of the statue is not recorded, but previous studies suggested it came from Memphis (Barbotin 1999, 20) or Qantir (Kitchen 1980, 10 [8]; el-Sayed 1975, 34). The statue has four deities on its stela; Neith 'mistress of the Two Lands', Ptah 'lord of justice, great of strength', Sekhmet 'the beautiful one, beloved of Ptah', and Werethekau 'lady of the palace'. Neith stands on the right of the stela facing the other three deities. The left edge of the stela bears the following offering formula dedicated to Werethekau and Neith (compare the right edge where an offering formula is devoted to Ptah and Sekhmet; the plural pronoun (*sn*) is also used):

An-offering-that-the-king-gives of Werethekau and Neith, the great, lady of Sais that they may cause my name to prosper in their temple (*r3-pr=s[n]*) to the ka-spirit... (Barbotin 1999, 21; el-Sayed 1975, 32; compare Kitchen 1980, 10 [16]).

The text indicates that Werethekau and Neith had a temple (*r3-pr*), although its location is not mentioned. El-Sayed situated this temple in Kafer ed-Deir between Bubastis and Athribis based on Habachi's comments on *Mr-m3y*'s statue from the Late Period (see 6 below). El-Sayed (1975, 34) noted that this temple would have been chiefly devoted to Werethekau, relying on Habachi (see 6 below), but that it probably hosted secondary cults for Neith, Ptah, and Sekhmet as well. However, the temple is more likely to be located in Memphis because Neith, Ptah, and Sekhmet are all Memphite deities (Zivie 1982, 31–32).

4. The block statuette of *P3y-i3y*, a contemporary of Ramesses II (now in a private collection in Lyon), found in the temple of Ptah at Memphis points in a similar direction (Clère 1968, 138–148, fig. 2, pls 22–23; Schulz 1992, 411, pl. 106). A text on the right side of the statue invokes Werethekau and mentions a temple of hers that, according to the inscriptions, should be in or close to the district of Memphis (Clère 1968, 146–147; compare the left side and the back pillar invoking her as well):

O Werethekau, let me be at <your> temple (*pr*), inside it, daily. Let me be well at its doors, without being moved back and forth there, until (I) rest in (the necropolis of) Ankhtawy, the district of the favoured one, to the ka-spirit of the servant *P3y-i3y*... (Kitchen 1980, 440 [11–12]).

5. A lintel of a doorway of the Ramesside Period (Fig. 9.3), found at Amara West sealing a burial at the base of a shaft (grave 210, cemetery C; Spencer 2009, 59, pl. 29), also supports the idea of a temple or a house for Werethekau:

An-offering-that-the-king-gives of Werethekau, lady of the House [...], [beautiful] of face, sweet of love, lady of the throne in the sacred boat of million, who gives her good arm to the one who is on her water.

Unfortunately, the inscription is too damaged to discern the complete name of the temple or the house. However, if the assertion is correct that this is a re-used lintel taken from a Ramesside house in the town (Spencer 2009, 59, pl. 29), the damaged sign following the *pr*, could potentially be *pn* 'this (?)' to be read 'this house', that is, the house where the lintel was erected.



Figure. 9.3 Sandstone lintel F9010 found reused in grave 210 at Amara West, Sudan. Image courtesy of the British Museum.

The offering formula itself provides additional evidence for the existence of a cult of Werethekau as it is commonly understood as a ritual (Barta 1968, 267, 270–271; Franke 2003, 39; for the offering formulae of Werethekau, see Ouda 2013, 4–5). Further evidence for a cult of Werethekau at Amara West is provided by a stela showing Ramesses III offering wine to Amun, Bastet-Werethekau, and Horus of Buhen (Fairman 1939, pl. 15; Kitchen 1983, 382 [6]).

6. The last object to document that Werethekau had a cult place is the statue of *Mr-mꜣy* of the late Twenty-fifth Dynasty or early Twenty-sixth Dynasty (Cairo TR 22.10.48.15, Habachi 1967, 40). This statue was found at Kafr ed-Deir (Markaz Minia el-Kamh, Sharqiya Governorate, Habachi 1967, 30–33). An offering formula on the statue invokes Werethekau, *nb.t-ḥ.t ḥri(.t)-ib Spꜣ(.t)-Ḥpw.t*, ‘lady of the palace, who resides in the District of Kheput’, together with Merit-Re. As noted by Habachi (1967, 35), the District of Kheput may have included Kafr ed-Deir and the area between it and Kafr Saqr. *Mr-mꜣy* and his eldest son *Rꜥ-tꜣy=f-nḥt(t)*, who dedicated the statue, both bore the title *ḥm-ntr Ptḥ ḥry-ib Pr-Wr.t-ḥkꜣ.w*, ‘god’s servant of Ptah, who resides in the temple of Werethekau’ (Habachi 1967, 32–34, figs 1–2). Habachi (1967, 35) identifies *Pr-Wr.t-ḥkꜣ.w* with the modern village of Kafr ed-Deir.

It seems that *Pr-Wr.t-ḥkꜣ.w* was a large temple and that Ptah had a shrine or chapel inside this temple (compare with the cult of Anubis and Hathor at Deir el-Bahari temple and the cult of Anubis in Lahun in the temple of Senusert II, see Quirke 2004, 120). The observed relationship between Werethekau and Ptah may support this argument. Werethekau is depicted behind Ptah and Sekhmet on statue Louvre E. 25980 of *Pꜣ-sr* (see above 3 [3]). In the temple of Ramesses II at Wadi es-Sebua, a pair of hieroglyphic columns refers to the king as ‘beloved of Ptah’ and ‘beloved of Werethekau’ (Gauthier 1912, 27), recalling the close connection between Ptah and Werethekau. The depiction of Werethekau behind Ptah on a stela in Abu Simbel points in the same direction (Porter and Moss 1995, 98).

4. Conclusion

This paper illustrates the danger of building facts on assumptions. Hoenes (1976) postulated that there was no cult for Werethekau without investigating all of the different sources dealing with Werethekau. Later scholars such as Nebe (1986), Farouk (1997), and Althoff (2009) adopted Hoenes' opinion without re-examining the primary data. However, textual sources indicate that Werethekau did have priests, statues, temples, and offering formulae.

There is no textual evidence for the existence of temples or a priesthood for Werethekau before the New Kingdom, except for the 'god's servant of the Werethekau-crown' which is attested twice in the Middle Kingdom (compare with *P3-sr* JE 38062, 2.4 [4B]). The holders of this office were in charge of the king's crowns and were allowed to place them on his head. As such, officials with these titles were associated with the cult of the king rather than that of Werethekau.

A priesthood for the goddess Werethekau is attested from the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards (see 2.1–2.4): 1) one pure-priest; 2) one chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau; 3) eight individuals holding the title 'god's servant of Werethekau'; 4) five individuals with the title 'first god's servant of Werethekau'. It seems that the institutionalization of the priesthood of Werethekau took place during the kingship of Amenhotep III (Werethekau was first depicted in the reign of Hatshepsut/Thutmose II, Brand 2000, 68, 78, pls 44, 46; Burgos and Larché 2006, 79, 84, 124, 127, 138–141; Naville 1901, pl. 101), during whose reign the titles 'the god's servant of Werethekau', 'the first god's servant of Werethekau', and probably also 'the chief of the pure-priests of Werethekau' first appeared (see above 2.2–2.4). The priestly titles of Werethekau were not passed on from father to son, and Werethekau had no priestesses. This could support the idea that women were excluded, as priestesses, from the temple service during the New Kingdom, but this argument requires further investigation specific to each deity (see 2.5).

Some of the priestly titles relating to Werethekau directly precede the name of their title bearers (*P3-ꜥdb*, *T3wy*, see 2.1–2.2), or are even their only (and thus most important) titles (*P(3)-n-Imn*, see 2.3 [4]). Several of the priests of Werethekau were originally from Thebes (*T3wy* and *P3-sr*, see 2.2 and 2.4 [4]), Abydos (*P3-di-3s.t*, see 2.3 [6]), or Memphis (*S3-Pth*, see 2.3 [5]).

The different inscriptions, discussed above, indicate that Werethekau had her own temples in Thebes, Memphis, and Kafr ed-Deir from the Eighteenth Dynasty (Amenhotep III) to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (see 3 above). There is thus a tendency for Werethekau's cult places to be located in or near to the home towns of her priests. The connection between the priests of Werethekau and the title of 'chamberlain' may stem from their strong relationship with coronation rituals (see 2.5).

The New Kingdom was the turning point for the cult of Werethekau. The sources irrevocably prove that Werethekau had a priesthood, temples, and offering formulae, just like the better-attested gods and goddesses of the period.

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