

The Autobiography of Weni I: An Additional Source on Egypt's Nautical Activities during the Old Kingdom

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Abstract

Weni's autobiography has been the subject of numerous publications since 1864.¹ This autobiography recounts Weni's various actions and his service to three kings of the Sixth Dynasty (*ca.* 2345–2181 BCE).² Among these works are various nautical activities, whether in the Nile or in the Mediterranean Sea during the reigns of Pepi I and Merenre. Although he listed some details, Egyptologists did not analyze them at an adequate level. Perhaps because they are not specialized in the field of nautical archaeology. Therefore, this paper focuses on highlighting Weni's nautical activities and its importance as a source of knowledge at the end of the Old Kingdom. The research describes the five missions with navigational parts. It studies and analyzes in detail its various elements such as the types of ships, their names, sizes, types of wood used in building ships and their construction methods from the point of view of nautical archaeology. The importance of re-studying Weni's autobiography lies in trying to deal with this activity in an integrated manner between Egyptology and nautical archaeology. The research concluded the existence of major economic activities and great projects in the Sixth Dynasty and the end of the Old Kingdom, despite the old beliefs about the weakness of the State in that period. It also clarifies and interprets some of the ambiguities of the text by subjecting it to the science of nautical archaeology.