

The stela of Seankhiptah in Madrid. An epigraphical analysis

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This paper presents an epigraphic study to the stela of Seankhiptah, which shows some interesting graphic peculiarities with reference to monumental texts during the Second Intermediate Period (=SIP) as well as some toponyms and historical aspects hitherto unknown. The stela dates from a particularly obscure period (late XIII Dynasty - early XIV Dynasty). The connection between a high official (Nebsumenu) with a specific king (Seankhiptah) constitutes the most significant contribution of the stela.

Sobre la estela de Seankhiptah realizamos una aproximación epigráfica que nos ha permitido reconocer interesantes peculiaridades gráficas en la escritura monumental del Segundo Periodo Intermedio, así como topónimos y aspectos históricos desconocidos de una etapa especialmente oscura (fines de la Dinastía XIII-Dinastía XIV). La vinculación de un alto funcionario (Nebsumenu), con un rey concreto (Seankhiptah) constituye la contribución más sobresaliente de esta estela.

The piece whose text is the object of this study (the stela of king Seankhiptah and of his chancellor Nebsumenu) entered the collection of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (Madrid), inventory no. 1999/ 99/4, in the year 1999. It belonged to the private collection of J. L. Várez Fisa, from whom the Spanish state bought part of its archaeological section¹.

It is a limestone stela, 72.4 cm by 52.7 cm, typologically a *top rounded* stela. The central iconographic panel, accompanied by its own explanatory text (names and titles of personages and gods) separates two epigraphic fields, the upper one (with a short mention of Behedet²), and the lower one, formed by four

lines of an interesting text from a historical and epigraphical point of view.

We have already published a short description of the piece in the catalogue of the temporary exhibition of the mentioned Várez Fisa collection (November 2003)². The shortness of space prevented us at that time from going into detail in the translation that we offered and commenting in a more detailed form some aspects and peculiarities of the text.

For this reason, we deem it interesting to dedicate an article to review in certain depth the translation of the above mentioned text and to underline the aspects that we consider most interesting³.

* I would like to express my gratitude to C. Sevilla, M-Á. Molinero and J-R. Pérez-Accino for their revisions, appropriate suggestions and all the time devoted to the final production of this paper. Any errors and inaccuracies contained in it remain, evidently, under the exclusive responsibility of the author.

1. The collection of Várez Fisa was formed of diverse materials (paintings, sculptures, archaeological materials). About the collection, see Cabrera, 2003.
2. Jaramago, 2003: 49-51.
3. Always in these cases we wonder whether it is licit to undertake separately the analysis of text and iconography. In Egyptian art, perhaps more than in any other, images and text go hand in hand, to the point where the former are real *graphical determinatives*, at a scale much greater, obviously, than the writing that accompanies them. Taking into account this reflection, that we always have present in epigraphic analysis when we are talking .../...

EPIGRAPHIC FIELDS

The stela presents three epigraphic fields in hieroglyphic writing, written in middle Egyptian; they are as follows:

·Upper field: Associated with the representation of Horus of Behedet, and situated in the upper part of the stela.

·Central field: Associated with the representations of the central area: the king, his official and two gods (Ptah and Anubis).

·Lower field: Four lines of text running from right to left; this constitutes the main reason for the stela's existence, as we will have occasion to show.

Upper field



Bhḏty, ntr ʿ3

It forms a double inscription, symmetrical in relation to the central sign, which constitutes a beautiful epigraphic device known since the Old Kingdom⁴, duplicating the complete inscription, except for the first or last sign (in our case, the last), which is shared by both inscriptions. This aesthetic device had great success and it will be present in Egyptian inscriptions until Greco-Roman times⁵.

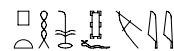
The translation is *Behedeti, great god*. It makes reference to the solar disc with extended wings placed immediately above the inscription. The text identifies the divinity, and in the central sign, around which the duplicated inscription pivots, also fixes visually a vertical axis dividing the stela ideally in two (especially the central iconographical area immediately below this double inscription).

Central epigraphic field

We have four distinct texts in this zone of the stela.

It exists an important damaged area, partially affecting the reading of the texts corresponding to Ptah and the king. However, the relatively numerous parallels make it possible to restore the damaged text, with only a slight margin of error.

Above the god Ptah we have an easily recognizable text, written from right to left (the god is looking towards the beginning of the text at the right). In spite of the mentioned loss of the first signs, the reading is unmistakable. A short, horizontal line referring to the god Ptah:



mry Pth, rsy inb.f

Beloved of the god [Pta]h, (who) is to the south of his wall⁶.

about Egyptian art, we separate in a slightly artificial way the text from the background, to concentrate principally on the inscriptions and, in a subordinate way, on questions of a philological kind, such as grammatical structures, semantics and global organization of the discussion, aspects of which, however, as we go forward, refining, give us advances in our analysis.

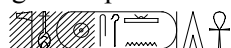
4. An Old Kingdom example would be the inscription of king Teti (VI Dynasty) collected in Gauthier (1907: 147). A datable example in the SIP is the stela of Smenkare Nebnenu, (AAVV, 2000: fig. 19).
5. An example geographically near to us, in the temple of Debod (Almagro Basch, 1971: 211 and ff.).
6. From the first moment our attention has been drawn to the calligraphy of the *h* in this stela, the sign used here to write the name of the god Ptah, but which we also find in line 3 of the lower epigraphic field, written in exactly the same way. Curiously, an "atypical" *h* (together with other elements, it has to be said) alerted Fischer, after some time, to a false Egyptian inscription (Caminos and Fischer, 1979: 49); this is not, however, our case. In fact, having compared different Egyptian inscriptions carrying "atypical" *h*, we have verified the enormous graphical variability of this sign across time and in different places in Egypt. We have documented this "heterodox calligraphy" in numerous epigraphs, which makes us think that there have been different ways to write the mentioned sign, of which the most usual is what appears in Gardiner (1979: 27), a form that, in spite of .../...



*Figure 1. The stela of Seankhiptah.
The three pictures of this article are courtesy of the
Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid*

The person "beloved" of the god is the king, who is in front of him, making an offering. The epithet accompanying the name of the god is well known; it identifies the place of the Memphite cult of Ptah⁷.

Above the king the text runs from left to right (the last two signs in vertical, giving an angular aspect to the inscription⁸):



Ntr nfr shq3.n-R^c, di ʿnh

In this case, the damage received in the stela in this zone affected the three first signs, which have been restored thanks to parallel inscriptions and to the four lines of text in the lower zone of this stela.

The restoration of *ntr nfr* preceding the royal *cartouche* has been possible considering the small physical space available and the examples of various other stelae from the same period bearing similar texts (especially the already mentioned, in note 4, stela of faience of Smerkara Nebnenu, also from the Second Intermediate Period, which shows a close iconographical and textual similarity to the stela we are studying).

The translation would be: *[The good god] Sehekaen[ra], to whom has been given eternal life⁹.*

We will comment on the royal name below.

Above the high official Nebsumenu, the figure with his back to the king, there are two vertical columns of text, to be read from right to left.



h₁tmw bity, imy-r3 h₁tmw / Nb-swmmw
The Chancellor of Lower Egypt, Overseer of the sealers, / Nebsumenu.

We have two titles and a personal name. The first title, *h₁tmw-bity*, is transcribed by some authors in a different way (*sd3wty-bity*). The same happens with its translation, were there is not unanimity; there are those who prefer to translate *royal seal keeper* instead of *Chancellor of Lower Egypt*, to which there doesn't exist a parallel title in Upper Egypt¹⁰. We maintain the traditional translation seeming to underline the importance of the rank.

being the better known and usual, was not the only one. I have here some examples of the monumental epigraphs with "atypical" drawing of the *h*:

-In the XII Dynasty, it received a "canonical" treatment in the low relief of Sesostri I in front of god Min (Petrie Museum, UC 14786); however, there is already documented a *h* similar to that of our stela in a piece in Liverpool Museum (Bienkowski and Tooley, 1995: fig. 133 lower left), dated to the Middle Kingdom.

-In the XIII Dynasty it is dated the stela of Bebi (Bresciani, 1985: fig.14), where the *h* is written in two different forms (lines 2 and 5) on the same stela.

-In some inscriptions of the New Kingdom, the *h* "closes" in the lower part (Hayes, 1959: 413).

-A similar plan of the *h* to our stela can be seen in the stela I.1.a.5641(4076) of the Pushkin Museum, in the XXII Dynasty (Hodjas and Oleg, 1989: 159).

-In the Saite Period we come back, on occasions, to this plan (stela UC 15524; Stewart, 1983: vol. III, fig. 37 in ill. 18).

7. About the well known surname of Ptah, see te Velde (1982: col. 1179), and Castel (2001: 340).
8. The epigraphic device of *bending at a right angle* the text after the *cartouche* (with the aim of permitting the last part of the inscription being shared by the adjacent text, which does not happen in our stela) has been documented in stelae of the Middle Empire at least since Sesostri I (an example in Mysliwiec, 1979: ill. XLV-B).
9. About the grammatical interpretation (and translation) of *di ʿnh*, see Allen (2000: 336-337). We offer here a conventional translation, in passive perfect.
10. This is a controversy which has been echoed by Ryholt (1997: 109, n. 361). Hannig (1997: 626b) admits the double translation. Ryholt (1997: 463) prefers *hetemu bity*, which translates as "carrier of the royal seal". He states, to this respect, that "(it was a title) used by officials who had the privilege guaranteed of maintaining and using the royal seal". Hannig respects this translation ("Kronsigelbewahrer") although he also offers a translation that preserves the place name: "Siegelbewahrer des Königs von Unterägypten", and maintains that this title was the "dritthöchster Hofrangtitel" (Hannig 1997: 626b). Ryholt (1997: 109), comments that the carriers of this title "had the right to carry and use the royal seal and thus, in a sense, to represent the King" up to the end of the XII Dynasty and during the XIII Dynasty. This would change in the XIV Dynasty, according to this author.



Figure 2

With the second title something similar happens. Depending on the way the word *seal* is transcribed. For some authors, this title would have to be transcribed *imy-ra hetemu*; for others *imy-ra sedjauti*; in whichever case, here the translation of the title would be *Overseer of the Keepers of the Seals*¹¹. It is a title inferior to the *Chancellor of Lower Egypt*, but is complementary to this in various occasions (as we shall see, both titles appear together in several characters of the SIP¹²).

Concerning the proper name Nebsumenu (lit. *Lord of Sumenu*, making reference to the god Sobek, who was the lord of the locality called Sumenu, near to Thebes), it has been well documented since the Middle Kingdom¹³. The morphology of this name, in the present stela, presents two variants, seeming to be written twice:

· above the figure, the "complete" drawing: the phonetic signs and a logogram;

· in the second line of the lower epigraphic field: only with the phonetic signs (this way of writing the name of the chancellor will be the object of a more detailed comment below, as it carries a carving error, having written the single letter *k* in place of the double letter *nb*, evidently for its visual similarity)¹⁴.

Below this two vertical columns of text appears the chancellor Nebsumenu worshipping Anubis. Above this, a short horizontal text, written from left to right (as the god looks to the left).



Inpw nb wtiw

11. Hannig (1997: 626a) offers the following translation of the title: "Oberster Siegelbewahrer", which we have adopted, and also "Hofkämmerer". Bresciani (1985: 66-67): "preposto al sigillo"; see Bosticco (1959: 71).
12. Ranke (1935-52: 186a); during the SIP, documented in various scarabs, see note 51; also on inscriptions of the SIP. See, for example, Helck (1983: 76), stela of Iah-nefer (originally from Abydos), in which this person is Chancellor of Lower Egypt and Supervisor of the Keepers of the Seals. Also in the stela of Nebkheperri Inyotef, in Cairo Museum, also in that of Abydos, behind the king appears a Chancellor of Lower Egypt, Supervisor of the Keepers of the Seals.
13. Cairo stela 52453 of the king Neberau I; See Miosi (1981: 23, line 12). Dated to the XVI Dynasty by Ryholt (1997: 389 and ff.), the Dynasty of the mentioned king is not unanimously accepted but the chronology of the SIP is.
14. Ranke (1935-52: 186a) uses the second drawing of those that appear on our stela.

Ryholt reads *Anubis, lord of the embalmers*, interpreting the strange epithet of Anubis as *nbwtiw*¹⁵. This title of Anubis would have been written -following the interpretation of Ryholt in this stela with a short combination of two signs (a radical sign and a determinative of the plural). But it appears a problematic reading (as this epithet of Anubis is not documented on any other text) and forced (the sign on the stela, we believe, does not endorse clearly this reading). However, as we have not been able to offer an alternative translation to that of Ryholt, we maintain his reading in spite of not being completely convinced, and in a very provisional form. Of course, there is no doubt that *Anubis, lord of the embalmers* was written. The only doubt comes in the interpretation of the next two signs.

The symbology that accompanies the format of this text in the Central Field allows us to observe that, for the gods, the texts are arranged in horizontal; for Nebsumenu, who is not a divine character, the text goes in vertical. For the king, who participates in the double condition (human and divine), the text referring to him adopts the double format, horizontal and vertical.

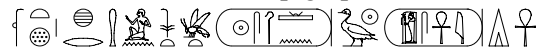
Lower field

If the stela of Seankhiptah is a document of great importance significance, it is mainly for the four lines of text that form the lower epigraphic field, which were written from right to left.

This epigraphic field seems to be delimited by two imaginary vertical lines, visual prolongations of the vertical lines that frame the iconographic field at the same time. This fact is of the most importance for the modern reader, as it allows the evaluation of the graphical extension that occupies the lost signs.

Actually, these four lines of text have suffered an important damage, not only at the endings of the last three lines but also at the beginning of some of these. Establishing the beginning and the end of each line is, in our case, of considerable importance. The first line being preserved in a good condition, we can observe that the limits of each line seem to circumscribe themselves to the limits of the upper iconographic field, as we shall comment below¹⁶.

The first line of this epigraphic field reads:



h3t-sp 1, hr hm.i n(y) nsw-bity shq3.n-R^c, s3 R^c s^cnh.i-Pth, di ^cnh

Year 1, under the/my¹⁷ majesty, (the) of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Sehekaenra, the son of Ra Seankhiptah, to whom has been given eternal life.

The first line of text places chronologically the stela in the first year of the reign of Seankhiptah, and can be interpreted by itself alone, we do not need the support of the rest of the text.

15. Ryholt (1997: 69). This epithet of Anubis is unknown in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* and in Bonnet (1971). Recently collected in Castel (2001: 61-62).

16. A careful observation of the end of the first line seems to show, just besides of the sign ^cnh, a short horizontal line, from the foot of the line of text. It is difficult to determine if it consists of the remains of a hieroglyphic sign or is part of the damage suffered by the piece in this zone. If it is a sign, this perhaps could affect also the interpretation we have given to the second line of text.

17. The interpretation given to the sign above the preposition *n(y)* will determine the concrete reading:
 · If it is the sign A1, we will be looking at a suffix pronoun of the first person singular masculine; this would allow for a reading "my majesty", a reading that we propose somewhere else (Jaramago, 2003: 50), and that would imply that the king is speaking in the first person. Anyway, it would be surprising if the suffix pronoun of the first person singular of the monarch had not been used.

· If it is the sign A40, the reading would be (Hannig, 1997: 528b) "(the) majesty". This type of construction is not unusual for royal dating in the Middle Kingdom, although the scribes often prefer a different determinative (the sign Z1).

Perhaps we are looking at a *lapsus calami* similar to what can be observed in line 2.



Figure 3

We will go on to comment on the principal elements of this line. In the first place, we could be looking at a stela drafted in the first person (see note 16), making it the monarch who speaks (literally "my majesty"¹⁸). The fact has great importance; if, as we suppose, the stela was erected by Nebsumenu, the use of the first person in the discourse gives him a stronger force. In this case, what is read on the stela would have been said by the king, not the high official. The inscription, in any case, maintains the preposition *n(y)* after this construction.

Next it can be read the abbreviated titulary of the king, consisting of his *prenomen* (Sehekaenra) and his *nomen* (Seankhiptah)¹⁹. Closing the line is the expression *di ḥnh* (see note 9).

The royal names have been formed with radical causatives, which is quite common in the XIII and XIV dynasties²⁰. The identification of the king of our stela with some of the known previous kings results fruitless, not appearing clearly cited in any of the king lists²¹, and not knowing other attributable monuments to this king with unmistakable security²². The epigraphy and the style of the piece advocates a chronology like the above indicated (SIP, more exactly the XIII or XIV dynasties). Ryholt decided that the XIII dynasty was the correct assignment²³, and von Beckerath adopted the chronology of Ryholt²⁴.

If in the chronology the discrepancy is not significant, when transliteration of the royal names comes, certain differences arise: The

18. Allen (2000: 31-32) has recently offered an interpretation more according with the Egyptian mentality ("my incarnation").
19. Quirke (1990) comments that, after the XIII Dynasty, the most frequent way of identifying the king was precisely that which we find in this stela, formed by two *cartouches*: the first (*prenomen*) with the coronation name, the second (*nomen*) would be the name given to the king at birth (Quirke, 1990: 30-31). According to this, our king would be Seankhiptah at birth; Sehekaenra would have been the name that he adopted on reaching the throne.
20. The use of causatives to construct royal names has been observed before the XIII Dynasty (Seherutai, Senefertai, Seankhtai, Sehetepibra), and in the XIII and XIV Dynasties it would form a very usual way of elaborating the names of kings (Sekhemnetjeru, Sekhemrakhutai, Sekhemkara, Semenkara, Sehetepkara, Seuadjitai, Seneferibra, Sekhaenra, ...).
21. Ryholt (1997) sees possible that the king of our stela could be identified with one of the kings appearing in one of the fragmented zones of the Royal Canon of Turin, col. 8, line 25 (Ryholt, 1997: 69); the reference to the Canon, in Gardiner (1987: ill. III, col. 7, 8, fragments 95 and 101), a hypothesis that seems acceptable to us.
22. For Ryholt, some other Egyptian monuments could be associated with this king, besides the present stela. He proposes the Cairo stela CG 20600 (Cairo Museum), in a very bad state of conservation, and a cylindrical seal (Ryholt 1997: 358).
23. Gardiner, 1979: 449.
24. Von Beckerath, 1999: 106-107.

prenomen allows, in this period, the reading we maintain here (Seheka-en-Ra), but it could also be read and interpreted as Seheka-n(i)-Ra.

With regard to the *nomen*, Ryholt reads it as Seankhptahi, considering it an hypocoristic²⁵; von Beckerath reads it as Seankhptah²⁶ (we understand that for this author the sign *i* of the *cartouche* would be, in this case, not the known single consonant sign, but another sign with a different function, a non-phonetic sign, perhaps a logogram/determinative); Ranke²⁷, lastly, takes two different readings of this proper name (Ptahseankhi y Seankhiptah²⁸). We believe that the last (used by us here) fits better what seems to be written on the *cartouche*, maintaining the *inversion respectueuse* and the reading of the signs contained in it. An hypocoristic name in a royal *cartouche* and in an inscription of this type seems to us difficult to accept, for which reason we discount the reading of Ryholt. As to the reading of von Beckerath, it also doesn't seem to us correct (in spite of the proper name Seankhptah being documented, this -we believe- doesn't make it the same as the proper name Seankhiptah; we are talking of two different personal names).

In the first line of text there are several epigraphic questions of interest:

We have already commented on the expression apparently in the first person in the date, which gives the text a stronger (executive) force, coming from the king himself.

The vertical stroke corresponding to the year of his reign is excessively long. At one time, we thought in two short lines joined into one (which would imply having an epigraph datable in the second year of the reign of Seankhi-

ptah, and not the first), but nothing corroborates this idea, except the already mentioned excessive length of the said line.

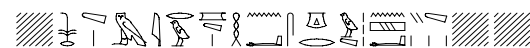
The hieroglyphic sign of "Ptah in his naos", which is C20 of Gardiner²⁹, only appears to be used inside a royal cartouche in this stela, during all the epigraphic history of Ancient Egypt. On the other hand, according to Gardiner, this sign would certainly appear in Egyptian texts after the XIX dynasty³⁰. The present stela, therefore, permits the assurance that the sign C20 has been known and used at least since the SIP.

The analysis of the three final lines of text, being the essential reason for the existence of the inscription, results more feasible carrying out previously a morphological analysis. In doing this, we observe that several words are repeated at least a couple of times (the preposition *m* up to four times); and that there only appears in the preserved text (and presumably in all the text in its hypothetical original configuration, considering the gaps at the beginning and end of several lines) one single verb: represented by the three consonant sign *hpr* (in line 2).

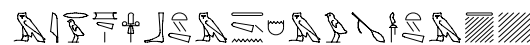
We will proceed to make an initial reading, and then we shall comment upon:



3hwt htmw-bity imy-r3 htmw <nb>-swmnw
hpr(.w?) w rsy i3bty, t3 n [...]



[...] rsy m i(t)rw hn^c.s, gr w n s^cy [...]



m i(t)rw i3bty m t3 n hmw imnty, m (t3?) [...]

25. Ryholt (1997: 238): " (...) Sankhptahi who, significantly, also employed the "Kose-endung" -i for his name".

26. Von Beckerath, 1999: 106.

27. Ranke, 1935-52: 141b.

28. In this same period the name Seankhimin is documented, which -for certain- Bresciani reads as "Minsanekhi" (Bresciani 1985: 32).

29. Gardiner, 1979: 449.

30. Gardiner (1979: 449); however, the author leaves open the possibility that there could exist evidence of its use before this moment.

Line 2: *The cultivable lands³¹ of the³² chancellor of Lower Egypt, supervisor of the keepers of the seals, *Neb**sumenu* (:) have passed to be³³ the districts of the south and the east³⁴, the lands of [...]*

Line 3: [...] *to the south, <m>³⁵ the channel³⁶, together with it³⁷ (,) also (;)³⁸ the districts of the wasteland³⁹ [...]*

Line 4: [...] *<m> the channel (,) of the/to the east⁴⁰ (,) the land of Hemu⁴¹, and to the west*

31. "Fields" in the specific sense of agricultural land (Hoch, 1997: 83).
32. There is no doubt, it is a direct genitive construction, without preposition.
33. Is it possible to determine the verbal time of *hpr* in the stela? As things are in the field of Egyptian philology, this is almost like *taking sides* with one or other *school*. In whichever case, and although our work is especially epigraphic, we are going to note down some lines in this sense.
I believe that a translation of the type "the fields of the Chancellor (...) *pass to be...*" transmits efficiently the information that the stela tries to reflect. In fact, a translation of this type is what we have used somewhere else (Jaramago, 2003: 50). If the text is written in the first person (which depends, as we have said, on the interpretation of a sign in the first line of the Lower Field), this translation clearly reflects the intention of the text.
However, it is very likely that we are looking at a *hidden* passive form, *hpr(w)*, in which, as happens in the majority of cases, the characteristic temporal ending (-w) is omitted. If this is to be accepted, the translation would demand a passive past (Hoch, 1997: 45-46). A translation of the type "...*have passed to be...*", "...*have converted themselves into...*" (reflexive passive) would result more adequate. In this case, what we would have would be a *written ratification* of a fact that has taken place. Consequently, *hpr* would have acted in our text like an auxiliary verb of a predicate of situation (Malaise and Winand, 1999: 320).
Although the philologists have here the last word, we believe that the precise verbal tense does not affect *in its essence* the general meaning of the text. The only thing it does, in any case, is to provide a certain nuance to the information that is transmitted in it (offering a precision of temporal or modal type).
34. They are the well known *nisbés* relative to the cardinal points.
35. The preposition *m* is repeated, as we have already indicated, in several occasions along the text, with a very precise syntactic meaning that we will comment below. We draw the attention of the reader to this point in order to remember its presence (not translated) in the text through the <m>.
36. Defective drawing of *i(t)rw*, which means "channel". The omission of the -t, which probably was not already pronounced in everyday speech (at least in the zone where this stela comes from) at the time of writing this text, would come to be finally the Coptic ending "*iaro*". Sánchez (2000: 108a) recognizes an example of the defective writing of *i(t)rw* in Middle Egyptian.
We disregard for this word the meaning *iteru*, an Egyptian unit of measurement of distance (the Greek *schoenos*), for two reasons: it doesn't appear accompanied by numerals; and, in the fourth line it is probable that the *nisbé* which means "eastern", written after *i(t)rw*, makes reference precisely to the substantive *i(t)rw* (meaningless if this was a unit of measurement).
Finally, on occasions *i(t)rw* was used to refer to the river Nile. As we don't have a powerful reason to give it this meaning in our translation, we maintain the generic and more restricted meaning of "channel", "current of water", although we wouldn't absolutely rule out the meaning of "Nile", or "arm of the Nile", in our text.
37. Accompanying the preposition *hn*^c is a suffix pronoun in the third person, feminine singular, functioning as a resumptive. The words *w*, *itrw* and *t3* are masculine (see Hoch, 1997, dictionary at the end of the *Grammar*, that offers the classification of the three words we refer to here); for this reason, the said pronoun could possibly refer to some feminine substantive situated perhaps in the damaged zone of the stela, at the end of the second line or at the beginning of the third.
We do not rule out, given the characteristic syntax and semantics of the text, to be looking at dialectic forms or another *lapsus* of the scribe.
38. If *gr* were functioning here as an enclitic particle, we could be looking at a change of paragraph/oration, that would indicate to us - with reserves - the pause (;). But we think that is has probably no enclitic value.
39. *s*^c is translated by as "sand" by Hannig (1997) and Faulkner (1976), from whom Sánchez (2000: 416a) produces the same translation. Given the character of this stela, we would prefer to translate it as "land of sands", or "wasteland", not apt for cultivation.
40. It also fits the reading "the Eastern Channel". Since we have perhaps situated the lands related to our text in the Delta. We remember (Hannig, 1997: 112b-113a) that existed in Egypt (in the Eastern Delta) an *Iteru Imenti* (or literally "the Western Channel"), name of the Canopic Arm of the Nile (about the different denominations and hieroglyphic words for the arms of the Nile, see Bietak 1975: 118 and ff.). Very little is known about the Western Delta during the SIP. In short, the place names collected in the stela could lead us to the Middle Delta (Eastern or Western) or to the surroundings of Memphis.
41. Literally, the "land of the Oar", or "the land of Rudder", we suppose that -hence its name- perhaps alludes to a navigable zone, although the term could also have a symbol meaning (like some of the names of the *nomoi*).

<*m*> (*the land?*)⁴² [...]

Diacritical signs key. In the translation, we have used:

< <i>m</i> >	to indicate <i>m</i> of predication
[.]	to indicate the lack of a sign
[...]	to indicate the lack of various signs
* <i>neb</i> *	to indicate carving error in writing the sign <i>nb</i>
()	to indicate possible pauses in the reading / structure of the text
/	to indicate alternative meaning

The syntactical analysis has allowed us to discover the following constructive scheme:

An initial emphasis: *The lands of the chancellor... Nebsumenu*; this position at the beginning of the speech immediately situates the reader in the thematic subject of the text. It is, for this reason, a position with a clear emphatic function: essentially what we are going to read about in this text are the lands of the chancellor.

The intransitive verb *hpr* lends itself to two types of construction in middle Egyptian, accompanied by the preposition *m*⁴³. They are:

· *hpr* (+ *m* of predication): *become*

· *hpr* + *m*: *change into*

There are numerous examples of these uses collected in the grammars of middle Egyptian⁴⁴.

In sum, the repetition of the preposition *m* allows the scribe to avoid the repetition of the verb *hpr* in each one of the predicates starting with *m*.

In spite of the difficulty contained in the existence of gaps, we believe that the text tries to reflect a fact: the change of character of the *arable lands*, from lands that were property of the chancellor Nebsumenu⁴⁵. If this fact prepared a change in the taxable consideration (or other) of the said territories, this would be, in principle, an object of reasonable speculation.

The stela establishes some territorial limits affecting this change. The text speaks of channels (at least one, maybe two), of sandy lands and even of a probably navigable zone (the *land of Hemu*). All the cardinal points are mentioned, except the north, for which we suppose that perhaps this would have to be mentioned at the end of line 2 or at the beginning of line 3. Besides, we lack a feminine singular substantive (or periphrasis/sentence in nominal function) to which would refer the resumptive of line 3 which we have translated with a neutral sense and which accompanies the preposition *hn*^c.

The text, in short, appears complex in its geographical descriptions. These descriptions weigh heavily over the narration (limited to the event of *transformation* expressed by *hpr*).

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Besides the above mentioned novel aspects, this stela offers to the modern reader some aspects (some of which we have already commented on, others being commented on in the catalogue corresponding to the exhibition of the stela in the Museo Arqueológico Nacio-

42. As we have already noted, we have interpreted in the whole text the preposition *m* as *m* of predication. Should this not had been so, the last two lines of the text would have been translated as follows:

(line 3).

[...] *southern (/to the south), in the channel, together with it moreover the districts of the sandy lands [...]*

(line 4)

in the channel, to the east in the land of Hemu and in the west in (the land...?) [...]

43. Hoch, 1997: 276.

44. Gardiner (1979: 65, 120, 240, 346 and 347), Malaise and Winand (1999: 320, example 693), especially interesting in our case.

45. There is no doubt: it is talking explicitly of lands that are property of the Chancellor. This fact remains unquestionably clear with the use of the genitive at the beginning of the second line.

nal at Madrid⁴⁶), various other features result interesting.

From an epigraphic point of view, the piece presents elements that could seem in principle anachronistic, like the use of the hieroglyphic sign "Ptah in his naos" (C20 of Gardiner), or the defective writing *i(t)rw* (for the word "channel"). However the iconography does not leave room for doubt, as it is typical of the SIP (furthermore, the evaluation of the canon of proportions to the figures produces a canon whose chronology of use ranges, for Gay Robins, from the Middle Kingdom to mid XVIII dynasty. The present stela fits perfectly within this chronological limits). We have to admit, for this reason, that the supposed epigraphic anachronisms detected are just the beginning of changes that would be imposed on Egyptian writing progressively during the New Kingdom.

What we have just signalled, as much as the errors of carving (which have been clearly remarked in our commentaries) make us think in the situation of the royal scribes in this period. As has been shown recently⁴⁷, the loss of tradition suffered in different cultural fields of the SIP affected also (and in a notable form) the writing; the use of scribes *trained* preferably in the field of hieratic writing (that is to say, coming from the world of book keeping and not from that of royal inscriptions) led to important changes in the epigraphy and also in the literature itself. Some of this is verifiable in our stela, as much in the hieroglyphic calligraphy as in the semantics and also perhaps in the syntax itself.

In general, the number of texts from the SIP can not be considered scarce but, as has been shown by some specialists⁴⁸, are difficult to in-

tegrate in a well supported chronological scheme. If we have to refer to some text from the SIP close in form to the stela of Seankhiptah, leaving obviously aside those that present conventional formulae, it is perhaps good to remember the *Endowment stela of king Sobekemsaf*⁴⁹.

We know that during the SIP various states lived together in the valley of the Nile, and taxes were introduced concerning the products that travelled along the Nile⁵⁰. Although the interchange of products between these states was never interrupted during the SIP, the transport along the Nile led to the apparition of taxes added to the merchandise (which ended up strengthening, as we know, the oasis route). These taxes on the river itself and the navigable channels made an important fund of income for the riverbank states. We believe that perhaps the text of the stela could be indirectly documenting, in some way, the importance of this fact as (perhaps) it could also be documenting the geography of a little known historical zone, maybe the central zone of the Western Delta or other possibilities are explored in the footnotes.

On the other hand, our attention has been called to the fact that Ryholt does not include Nebsumenu in his monograph dedicated to the SIP, and yet includes this stela and king Seankhiptah (whose complete name with the two *cartouches* is to be read in line 1 of the lower epigraphic field, the only place in the stela where it is intact). Perhaps the carving error in line 2 of this epigraphic field raised a doubt about the correct spelling of the name of the high official. The fact is that Ryholt, in his work, omits all reference about Nebsumenu (although it is true that he centres his investigation on the royalty, and not on the officials of the period).

46. See note 2.

47. Bourriau, 2000: 198.

48. Bourriau, 2000: 186.

49. Helck, 1983: 62; Redford, 1997: 8.

50. Bourriau, 2000: 195 and ff.

The index of names of the high officials of the SIP shows various figures with this name; some of them exhibiting as well the title of Chancellor of Lower Egypt, documented in various scarabs dated in the XIII or XIV dynasties⁵¹. The stela of Seankhiptah puts in direct relation two figures, the king Seankhiptah and the chancellor of Lower Egypt Nebsumenu. While Seankhiptah was reigning, Nebsumenu was chancellor of Lower Egypt⁵². Precisely this connection is one of the most relevant facts of the piece. The chronology of the end

of the XIII dynasty (which is proposed by Ryholt) or the XIV dynasty (which takes into account the scarabs that carry the name of the chancellor Nebsumenu) appears to us correct for the stela.

The stela, for this reason, is a piece of considerable archaeological, epigraphic and, evidently, historical interest. It is the only sure document attributable to king Seankhiptah, and its contents permit the historian to perceive some new aspects of the SIP.

51. Newberry, 1979: ill. 16, number 6; ill. 17, numbers 5 and 19. Petrie and Quibell, 1896: ill. 80, number 15.

52. Perhaps the reality was the opposite and, for the misfortune of the king it was Seankhiptah who reigned (at least for a year) while Nebsumenu was Chancellor of the Lower Egypt.

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