**Statue of the high priest of Ptah, Nebipu**

material: limestone; measurements: XXX

This fragment is from a life-size statue of Nebipu, the high priest of Ptah, and shows him squatting in an asymmetrical position.[[1]](#footnote-1) The knee of the figure’s left leg is upright, while its right lower leg is flat on the ground, with the right foot just behind the left one. Much of the statue is missing, but substantial parts of the base and lower part of the body are preserved. The remains suggest that the sculpture was of high quality. Its surface is smooth, the figure’s toes are finely carved, and the hieroglyphic inscriptions appear well proportioned and cut. As the upper part of the statue is missing, only a small portion of the short kilt on its lap is visible. A carved line marking the lower end of the high priest's kilt appears on the left leg. The surface of the kilt curves in accordance with the position of the figure’s legs. What survives of the kilt on the lap shows an intricate pair of beaded kilt covers. The one on the viewer's right, which is better preserved, consists of five strings of beads, each with an alternating pattern of cylinder beads and two disk beads. These strings are gathered at the top in a clasp that has the form of a small *shendyt* kilt. The strings and clasp on the adjacent cover are less distinct (FIGURE 1). This kind of cover seems to have been part of the dress of officials, such as the high priests of Memphis, who performed ceremonial roles (Maystre 1992, 26). The closest comparable example is the triple statue of Nebipu at the Louvre, which shows him along with two other high priests of Ptah (Delange 1987, 81, Delange 2005).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Three hieroglyphic inscriptions survive in part: two on the base, one on the kilt. The best preserved line appears on the left side of the base (inscription 1). Three further lines of text are incised to the right of the upright left leg (inscription 2). Of these, the first is well preserved, the second partly preserved, and the final one, of which only a few traces remain, is nearly illegible. Remnants of a third inscription survive on the kilt (inscription 3).

The texts:

Inscription 1

INSCRIPTION 1

ímæãy ­ÿd œswt írr œss Ptœ rë nb wr ãrpw œmww Nbpw

The revered one, the one stable in favour, who is doing every day what Ptah favours, the great one of the directors of craftsmen, Nebipu.

'The great one of the directors of craftsmen' is the title for the high priest of Ptah. [[3]](#footnote-3)

Inscription 2

INSCRIPTION 2

œtp dí nswt Ptœ-Skr dí.f prt-ãrw t œnþt kæw æpdw šs mnãt n þæ n sm n œtp íb sëœ r rd…wr ãrp…

An offering that the king gives to Ptah-Sokar, may he give a voice offering consisting of bread, beer, cattle, goose, linen and garments for the ka of the sem-priest of pleasing the heart (a), official at the foot (?) [...] the great one of the directors [of craftsmen, Nebipu]

Comments:

(a) 'Sem-priest' is not often part of a longer title, but one other example of it can be found on the base of a statue of the high priest of Ptah Sehetepib-ankh, now in Brooklyn. The title on that one is 'sem-priest of the great throne of Horus' (sm n st Œrw wrt) (James 1974, 39, no. 90, pls. VI, XXXIV).

Inscription 3

INSCRIPTION 3

[...] ímæãy

... the revered one ...

The reading and reconstruction of the bee (Gardiner, Sign-list L4) is uncertain.

Few Middle Kingdom monuments of the high priests of Ptah are preserved. Of those that are, most are of outstanding quality, confirming their high social status. The Hazor statue adds an invaluable example to this small corpus. Statues of a person squatting on the ground are uncommon in the Middle Kingdom but do appear already under Senusret I in a series of sculptures for the 'treasurer' Mentuhotep (Paris, Louvre A123, A124, AF 9915: Delange 1987, 55-86, 78). There are some further examples of such dating to the late Twelfth or Thirteenth Dynasty. One late Middle Kingdom statue of a figure in a similar pose is uninscribed (Metropolitan Museum 30.8.76: Hayes 1953, fig. 151, on. p. 214; see FIGURE. 2). At 13.5 cm in height, the statue is relatively small, but still attests to this period’s type. Another small-scale example is the statue of Senebu and his family (Metropolitan Museum 56.136: Oppenheim, 2015). A final Middle Kingdom example is the bronze seated statue of 'Princess' Sobeknakht, with a child on her lap (Hill 2015, 109). This statue type also existed in the New Kingdom, as can be seen in the figure of the 'treasurer' Sobekhotep in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 1090: Borchardt 1934, 51, Blatt 162), and that of the 'scribe' Amenemhat discovered in Buhen (University of Pennsylvania Museum E10980; Silverman 1997, 134-135).

Nebipu also appears in a group statue portraying three high priests (only two of which are preserved). The inscriptions on it indicate that he was the son of Sehetepibre-ankh-nedjem, the high priest of Ptah. On stylistic grounds, the group statue may be dated to the late Middle Kingdom, perhaps to the reign of Senusret III (Delange 2015).[[4]](#footnote-4) A high priest of Ptah Nebipuenra, which may be a fuller form of the same person’s name (Wildung 1984, 14, fig. 4; Mathieu 2012, 831), also appears in a series of depictions of famous historical individuals on the New Kingdom tomb relief known as the 'Daressy-fragment'.[[5]](#footnote-5) Such an identification would again point to the great importance of this priest.

**List of high priests of Ptah, dating to the Middle Kingdom**[[6]](#footnote-6)

(those attested only on the Third Intermediate Period ancestor stone Berlin 23673 are marked with an \*).[[7]](#footnote-7)

\*Ptahemhab (Berlin 23673). Date: Mentuhotep II.

\*Sokeremhab (Berlin 23673). Date: uncertain.

Djefa-Hapi (?), Date: Senusret II (Griffith 1889, pl. 9, line 333).

Sehetepibre-ankh (statue base from Saqqara, Brooklyn Museum 16.589.87: James 1974, 39, no. 90, pls. VI, XXXIV; offering table, Brooklyn Museum 37.1498E: James 1974, 40, no. 91, pls. VI, XXXIV, second offering table, Berlin 1189: Berlin 1913, 208, compare de Meulenaere 1974). This one also appears in the New Kingdom 'Daressy-fragment' (Wildung 1984, 14, fig. 4; Mathieu 2012, 831). Date: Senusret I?

Senusret-ankh (Mastaba at Lisht: Arnold 2008, 14, pl. 25). Date: Senusret I.

\*Ankh-Khakare (Berlin 23673). Date: Amenemhat II.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Nubkaure-ankh Sarenput II (Sethe 1935, 9). Date: Amenemhat II.

\*Ankh-Nubkaure (Berlin 23673), Date: Senusret III.[[9]](#footnote-9)

\* Ukhet (?) (Berlin 23673), Date: Senusret III.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Sehetepibre-ankh-nedjem (Louvre A 47: Delange 1987, 81-83) . Date: Senusret III (or later).

Nebipu, son of Sehetepibre-ankh-nedjem (Louvre A 47).Date: Senusret III (or later).

Sehetepibre-ankh-nedjem-khered, son of Nebipu (Louvre A 47). Date: Senusret III (or later).

Seneber... (papyrus UCL 32331: Collier, Quirke 2004, 136-137). Date: Late Twelfth Dynasty (?)

Sobekhotep Haku, statue found in Memphis (Verbovsek 2004, 472-475) and gold base from scarab (Martin1971, 89, no. 1149, pl. 3 [14]). Date: Thirteenth Dynasty (?)

Senebuy (Stela Fitzwilliam E. SS.37: Martin 2005, 48-49). Date Thirteenth Dynasty.

\*Sergem (Berlin 23673).

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FIGURES

1. Drawing of a kilt by Paul Whelan.

2. Statue, Metropolitan Museum of Art 30.8.76. (image is in the Public Domain).

1. I am grateful to Daphna Ben-Tor who invited me to publish the statue. As I was not able to see the original, I worked with a set of photographic images. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Other comparable examples appear on New Kingdom statues: El-Sharkawy2008, figs. on p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The conventional reading of the title is wr ãrpw œmww. However, new readings on a papyrus from the Roman era may suggest wr ëbæ œmwt, see Broekman 2017, 119 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A later date should not be excluded. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A comparable alternation of shortened and full names on the same pattern is attested on a late 12th Dynasty stela, British Museum EA 101 (Nebipu/Nebipusenusret: see Franke 1941, 203, Dossier 297). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Compare the most recent list: El-Sharkawy 2008, 21-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Berlin slab/stela 23673 is published in Borchardt 1935, 96-112, Blatt 2a and Blatt 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The name Ankh-Khakare must refer to Khakaure (throne name of Senusret III). The dating of this official on the Berlin slab to the reign of Amenemhat II seems problematic. Compare Fischer 1976, 59-67. He wonders whether it was meant to read Ankh-Kheperkare. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Berlin stela dates him to the reign of Khakare. This must be a mistaken reference to Khakaure (throne name of Senusret III). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Berlin stela also dates him to the reign of Khakare. This must again be a mistaken reference to Khakaure. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)