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

material: limestone; measurements: XXX

This fragment is from a life size statue of the high priest of Ptah Nebipu squatting in an asymmetrical position.[[1]](#footnote-1) The left leg is with knee upright, while the 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 with the lower part of the body are still preserved. From the remains it seems that the sculpture was of high quality. The surface is smoothed, the toes are finely carved and the hieroglyphic inscriptions also appear well proportioned and cut. With the upper part of the statue lost, only a small portion of the short kilt on the lap is present. On the left leg there is visible a carved line, being the lower end of the high priest's kilt. The surface of the kilt curves following the positions of the legs. The surviving parts of the kilt on the lap bear a depiction of the intricate pair of beaded kilt covers. The better preserved cover, on the viewer's right, comprises 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 which takes the form of a small shendyt kilt. The strings and clasp on the adjacent cover are now less distinct (FIGURE 1). This form of cover seems to belong to the dress of officials in ceremonial roles, including the high priests of Memphis (Maystre 1992, 26). The most closely comparable example is to be found on the triple statue of Nebipu in the Louvre showing him and two other high priests of Ptah (Delange 1987, 81, Delange 2005).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Parts of three hieroglyphic inscriptions survive, two on the base, one on the kilt. The most complete line is that on the left side of the base (inscription 1). Three further text lines are incised to the right of the upright left leg (inscription 2). Of these, the first line is well preserved, the second one only partly and from the last one only a few signs are left. 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 is found on a statue base of the high priest of Ptah Sehetepib-ankh now in Brooklyn. The title there 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 high priests of Ptah are preserved. Most of them are of outstanding quality, confirming their high social status. The Hazor statue adds an invaluable example to this small corpus. The statue type of a person squatting on the ground is not common in the Middle Kingdom but does appear already under Senusret I in a series of statues for the 'treasurer' Mentuhotep (Paris, Louvre A123, A124, AF 9915: Delange 1987, 55-86, 78). There are some further examples dating to the late Twelfth or Thirteenth Dynasty. One late Middle Kingdom statue 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 statue is the relatively small, but still attests to the type for this period. Another small scale example is the statue of Senebu and his family (Metropolitan Museum 56.136: Oppenheim, 2015). A last Middle Kingdom example is the sitting statue of the 'princess' Sobeknakht, made in bronze and showing a child on her lap (Hill 2015, 109). The statue type is also attested in the New Kingdom, including the statue of the 'treasurer' Sobekhotep in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 1090: Borchardt 1934, 51, Blatt 162), and that of the 'scribe' Amenemhat found at Buhen (University of Pennsylvania Museum E10980; Silverman 1997, 134-135).

Nebipu is also known from a statue showing once three high priests (only two figures are preserved). Its inscriptions indicate that he was the son of the high priest of Ptah Sehetepibre-ankh-nedjem. On stylistic grounds, the statue group may be dated to the late Middle Kingdom, perhaps under Senusret III (Delange 2015).[[4]](#footnote-4) Furthermore, a high priest of Ptah Nebipuenra appears in a series of depictions of famous individuals of the past on the New Kingdom tomb relief known as the 'Daressy-fragment', and might possibly be a fuller form of the name of the same person (Wildung 1984, 14, fig. 4; Mathieu 2012, 831).[[5]](#footnote-5) The latter identification would again point to the great importance of this priest.

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

(those only attested 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). He appears also on 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 at 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 kilt, by Paul Whelan.

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

1. I am grateful to Daphna Ben-Tor who invited me to publish the statue. I was not able to see the original but 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 Roman times papyrus might 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 short 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, Dosssier 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 to be problematic. Compare Fischer 1976, 59-67. He wonders whether it is a mistake for Ankh-Kheperkare. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The Berlin stela dates him under Khakare. This must be a mistake for Khakaure (throne name of Senusret III). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Berlin stela dates him under Khakare too. This must be again a mistake for Khakaure. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)