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The “Hieratic” Stele of the Sherden *Pazegef*¹: Observations and Research

Abstract:

In 1904, during the excavations of the site of Ehnasiya el-Medina, the ancient Herakleopolis Magna, the English archaeologist W. F. M. Petrie discovered a limestone stele among the ruins of the Ramesside temple of the local god Hershef, dating back to the XXI-XXII Dynasty. The document, written in abnormal hieratic, is of considerable importance if we consider that it is the first ‘biographical’ attestation of a Sherden/Shardana warrior in Ramesside Egypt. The available data on Sherden in Ancient Egypt, data that covers the XVIII-XXII dynasties, actually represents the most relevant and essential core of sources for this historical phenomenon occurring in the Mediterranean Late Bronze Age, as well as an excellent starting point for further investigations inside and outside the Nile Valley. Since 2007 the “Shardana Project”, developed by the “J. F. Champollion” Centre for the Study of Egyptology and the Coptic Civilization in Genoa, Cairo and Luxor, aims to collect all data about these “warriors” available both within and without Pharaonic Egypt during the Late Bronze Age. The Shardana stele represents an essential source about their culture inside Egypt, and the present article contains a translation of it for further investigations and analysis.


Keywords: Sherden stele; Ehnasiya el-Medina; Herakleopolis Magna; Shardana Project

¹ - PA-zD-Dz.f abbreviated in *Pazegef* (see note 4).

The stele

The stele itself was discovered by W. F. M. Petrie at the site of Ehnasiya el-Medina, the ancient Herakleopolis Magna, among the ruins of the Ramesside temple of the local god Hershef (Figs. 1-3). It is a block of limestone of 36 x 18 cm, rectangular in shape with irregular edges and with chipping in the middle and lower sections, which dates back to the XXI-XXII Dynasty (Fig. 4). The dedicator is depicted on the upper part of the monument, a Sherden named Pazegef², extending offerings to the god Hershef, accompanied by Hathor. The deceased is depicted with the typical Ramesside skirt with a wide belt at the waist, carrying the lotus flower in his right hand; the god is depicted with a short skirt, wearing the Atef crown, holding the wAs scepter in the left hand and the anx in the right one, while Hathor is dressed in a long robe and typical crown, holding the scepter Hd in the left hand and the anx in the right one.

Above the deceased's head there is a text engraved in two columns: the first column bears his name and a hieratic sentence translatable into *n pr*, while in the second column the hieroglyphic name of the god is engraved *irSf*. The translation of the inscription (PA)-zD(y)-Dz.f *n pr irSf* is "Pazegef in the temple (of) Hershef" (see below). We are probably dealing with a "foreigner", who integrated well into post-Ramesside society and conformed to Egyptian funeral customs, who was therefore allowed to place his dedication stele inside the temple³; this privilege appears to have been reserved to other prominent members of the military elite, including the royal scribe, the superintendent of the granaries and the general Sethemheb⁴, who also bears the title of

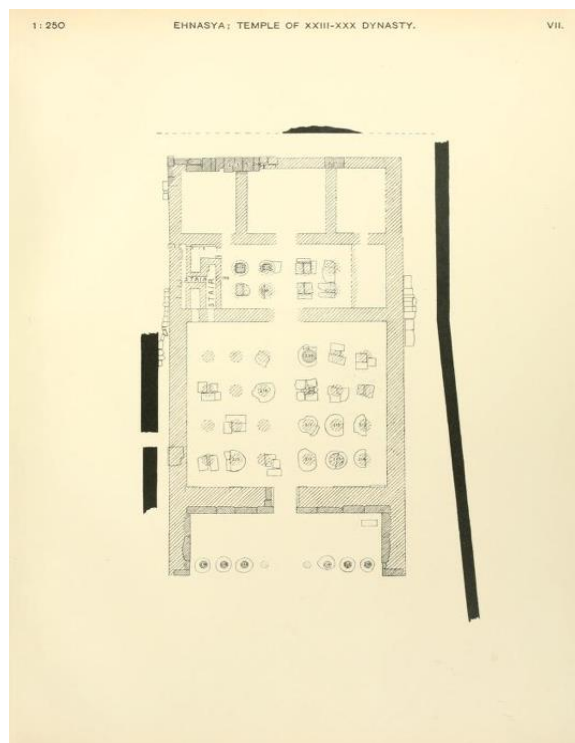
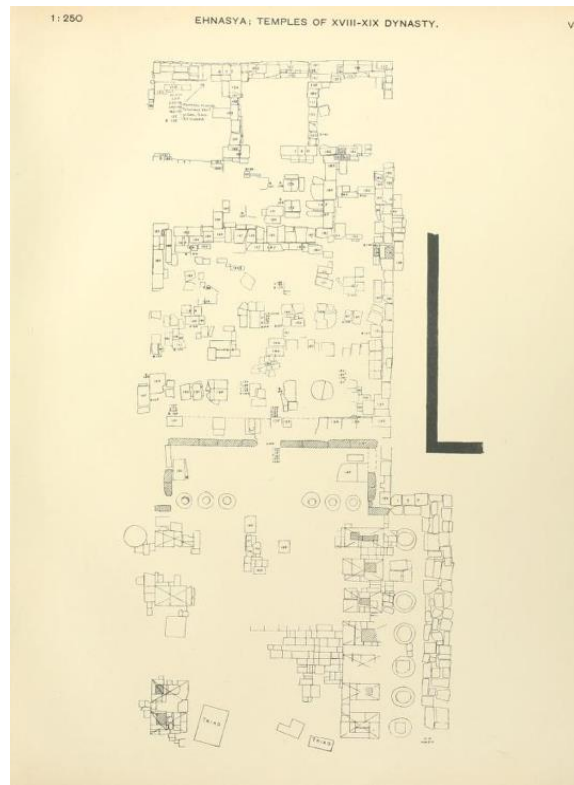
 HAt (n) pA nwtw aA SArDnnA
"Commander of the great fortresses of the Sherden" (Fig. 5).

² Petrie 1905, p. 22, Pl. XXVII.2; PM IV, 119; Cavillier, 2020, pp. 99-102.


³ On the Sherden warriors and the sources thereof, see also Loretz, 1995; O'Connor, 2000; Oren, 2000; Cavillier, 2005; 2007; 2010; Emanuel, 2013 and the recent contribution of Cavillier, 2020.

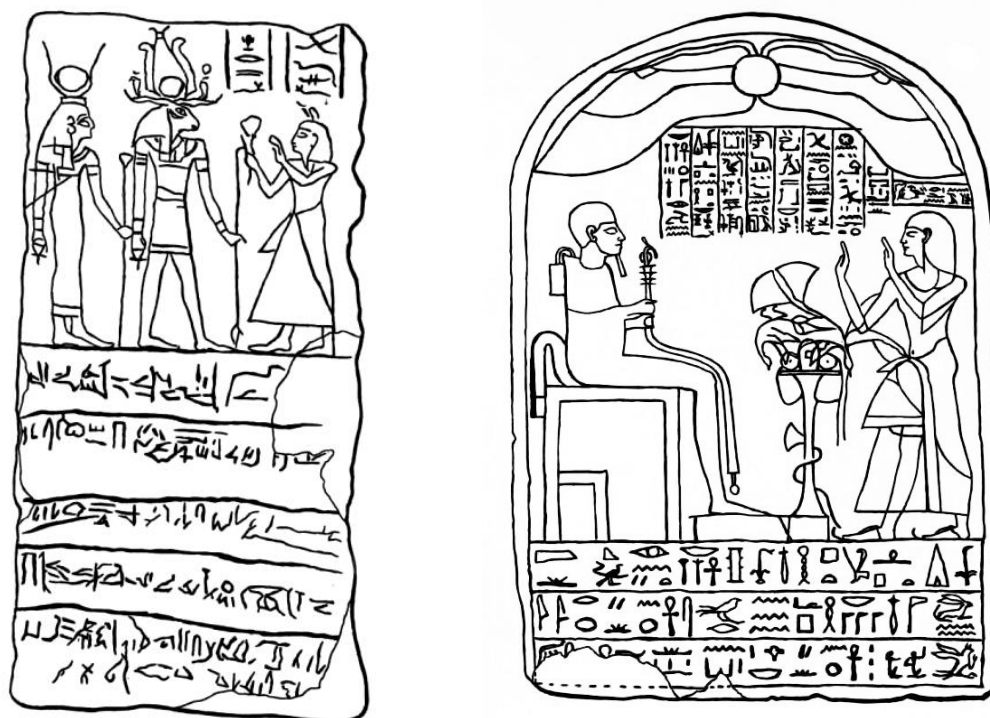
⁴ PN I, 321.31. On the stele of Sethemheb, see also PM IV, 119; KRI VII, 373; Petrie, 1905, p. 22, Pl. 27.1.

The “Hieratic” Stele of the Sherden Pazegef



Figures 1-2 Excavations plan and reconstructive relief of the temple of Hershef (Petrie, 1905, pl. VI-VII)

In the text: 



Figures 4-5 The Pazegef and Sethemheb steles (from Petrie, 1905, pl. XXVII.1-2)

This evidence offers interesting insight into the strategic distribution of the Sherden in Middle Egypt and their presence in Herakleopolis, the main military stronghold of the Ramesside period. The presence of the two stelae of Pazegef and Sethemheb in the temple of Hershef would appear to confirm this view.

Now if, from a stylistic point of view, the stele of Sherden showcases an evident derivation from Egyptian models, the correct reading of the “abnormal” hieratic inscription appears more complex, which suggests a date around the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period or the subsequent Libyan period (XXII-XXIII Dynasties)⁵. It does not help either that the stele, after its discovery by Petrie, went missing⁶;

⁵ On the abnormal hieratic, see Malinine, 1973, 1983; Depaw, 2007; Donker van Heel, 2013a, 2013b, 2014.

⁶ Investigations conducted over the course of a decade in many museums with exhibits from Ehnasiya el-Medina – as an essential part of my “Shardana” research project in Egypt and the Mediterranean – did not provide exhaustive data; neither did the study of Petrie's excavation finds, inventories and notes made at the Petrie Museum produce any useful results. My thanks to Stephen Quirke (Petrie Museum) and Frédéric Colin (Spiegelberg archive in Strasbourg

as was customary, the English archaeologist entrusted his wife Hilda, an exceptional designer, with the reproduction of the documents and excavation finds (Fig. 6).

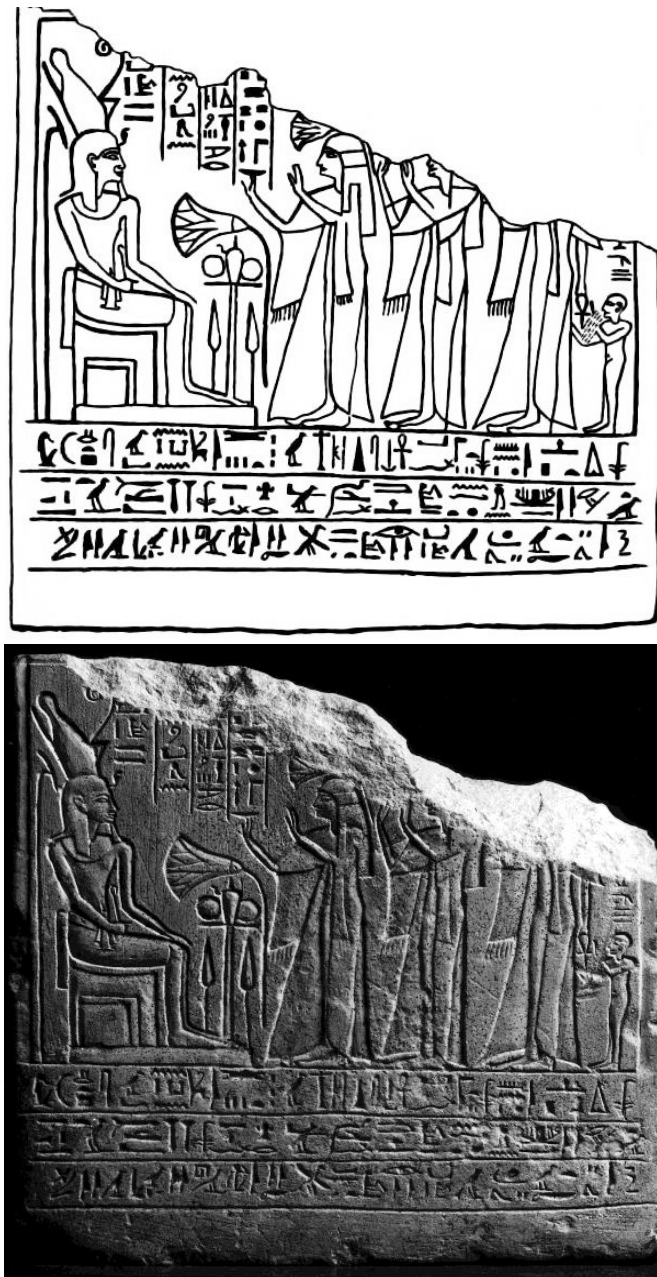


Fig. 6 Hilda Petrie at work in Abido (from Egypt Expoloration Society photo archive)

See, for example, another stele always discovered in Ehnasiya el-Medina and sketched by Hilda Petrie (Fig. 7). The find is part of the Aubert collection in Paris (Fig. 8) and, from the comparison of the two images, the absolute accuracy and perfection of the Petrie design is evident.

However, despite the precision of the stroke and the abundance of details in the drawing of Pazegef's stele made by Hilda Petrie, due to the difficulty of reading and translating the text, the find was sent to the demotist Spiegelberg for a more exhaustive analysis.

University) for their support with this research and for the useful discussions on the possible "destinations" of the Pazegef stele after its discovery *in situ*. The research is still in progress in other institutes and museums, such as the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.












Figures 7-8 The Innakht stele: the Hilda Petrie drawing and a recent photo (from the Aubert collection)

The philologist, in admitting the impossibility of providing a suitable translation of the stele with the help of donation texts of the Libyan period known to him, published a transcription and a partial comment in Petrie’s volume on the excavations of Ehnasyia el-Medina (Fig. 9):

Transcription and commentary

The text in the scene






Above the deceased and the god Hershef are two vertical columns in hieroglyph. The first visible sign is engraved in hieratic, whilst the remaining three are in hieroglyph.

1.    [PA]-zD-Dz.f (above the deceased, in hieratic writing)   | n pr
2.     Hr-S.f

Translation

“(1) [Pa]-zedj-djezef in the temple (of) (2) Hershef.

Commentary

The first element to consider is the name of the document’s beneficiary. Petrie translates the name of the soldier into pA-Ds.f, “his person, himself”; as we can see, this is a plausible hypothesis, although this name does not seem to have any logical explanation or any similarities with other known names of Sherden warriors. An alternative and more plausible reading is that the name consists of the hieratic logogram of the 2-lit. verb sD / zD, “to breach, to conquer” (Wb.IV, 373.8; HG, Tav.228 n.134; cf. HP II-III, 565) in the form of active participle, followed by the ‘expression of hypseity’ Ds.f (consisting of the noun ds “person” and the personal pronoun suffix of a third singular person), “in person, himself, his own” (Wb.V, 607.4; Gr. § 36; ME 8.14; Kor, pp. 84-85; ČG, pp. 43-44 3.3a), used here as an intensifier of the agent participle; note the use of the spelling z instead of the traditional sibilant s. The initial article pA (Wb.I, 492.1) in the form  is understood and ‘assimilated’ to the sign  zD in handwriting hieroglyphic, while in the following hieratic text the article is expressed in the typical form    of the Late Egyptian

offering of the garrison. As for those (who will confirm) this stele: (5) that it is brought and prepared (for) its worship (in) the temple (from) the foreign district, so that donations are granted (6) and seasonal offers are confirmed, (for)ever!”.




Commentary

The text, as already mentioned, is roughly engraved and only in a few passages can the signs be assimilated to the known ones published in Ali's volume on hieratic palaeography and in Möller's volumes II-III. Other comparisons with the known Libyan and hieratic age books were also useful for the analysis of the registration, donation, and offer formulas of the III Intermediate Period.





Line no. 1. The ethnic name ‘Sherden’ is made up of the signs HG Tav. 121 n.725; Tav. 57 n.2301; Tav. 127 n.83; Tav. 225 n.1726; Tav. 57 n.232; Tav. 148 n.14; Tav. 52 n.1380; Tav. 148 n.672; Tav. 1 n.19; Tav. 165 n.78 (cf. HP II, XLI, 274, 192 C, 560, 91, 331, 73, 214, 331, 632, 457, 33B); the name of the deceased is partial and consists only of the article pA HG, Tav.108 n.459 (cf. HP II, 267, 469, 117), followed by the sign aHA HG, Tav.51 n.603 (cf. HP II, 112).




Line no. 2: 


The waw sign (Wb. I, 280.3-5) is made by HG, Tav.55 n.1322 in union with HG, Tav.227 n.680 (see HP II, 105 with HP II, 200B; also XXXV), and follows the initial sign of the cartouche in HG, Tav.198 n.2386 (cf. HP II-III, 532); the sign i is made with HG, Tav.130 n.2873 (cf. HP II, 282); the sign mn is made with HG, Tav.218 n.2867-3056 (cf. HP II, LXII) and the sign zA HG, Tav.104 n.780; the final part of the cartouche is made only with a vertical line. The genitive n is made with HG, Tav.148 n.14 (cf. HP II, 331), under which, strongly stylized, the article pA is made with HG, Tav.109, 647 (cf. HP II, 192C with the sign A with HP II, 192C positioned higher); for the two signs pA and A less




probable is the sign  xnrt, “fortress”, “prison”, HG, Tav.49 n.1806 (see Wb.III, 296.14-20) or the sign  Hwt, “castle, administrative center” HG, Tav. 153 n.1689 (cf. Wb.III, 1.4). The group of signs  nextw, “fortress”, already proposed by Spiegelberg, is herein confirmed (cf. HG, Tav.273 n.1261); the determinants pr follow with HG, Tav.151 n.26 (cf.



HP II, 340) and xAst with HG, Tav. 143 n.897 (cf. HP II, 322) and the genitive n with HG, Tav.148 n.14 (cf. HP II, 331). The name of the fortress of Wsr-MAat-Ra is made with the signs HG, Tavv. 137 n.831, 73 n.225, 114 n.650 (see HP II, 303, 148 and 236), and follows the final part of the cartouche with HG, Tav.198 n.2386 (cf. HP II-III, 532) and the determinative nTr with HG, Tav.93 n.692 (cf. HP II, 188).

Line no. 3:     . The logograms of the verb rdi, “give, do that” (Wb. II, 464.1-2) and of the noun Htp, “offer” (Wb. III, 189.4) are made, with abnormal spelling, with HG, Tavv. 53 n.2304, 168

n.2077 (see HP II, 108, 552); the use of the verb  Hnk, “to offer, to donate” (Wb. III, 117), is also plausible. The following first-person singular direct object complement tw.i is made with HG, Tavv. 209 n.41, 227 n.1280 (cf. HP II, 575, 518) and with HG, Tav.11 n.1599 (cf. HP II, 33B). The sign pr is made with HG, Tav.151, 11 (cf. HP II, 340), less clear is the set  assimilated with  (cf. HG, Tav.228 n.2707; HP II, 200B), to

be understood as a synthesis of the noun  prt-xrw, “funeral offer”. The subsequent sign nTr is made with HG, Tav.93 n.692 (cf. HP II, 188) with the attribute aA, “large”, referring to the god and expressed with HG, Tav.155 n.1007 (cf. HP II, 363B); the toponym nn-nswt, “Herakleopolis” (Wb. II, 272.4) is made with the signs HG, Tavv. 273 n.2576, 148 n.14, 21 n.780, 226 n.760, 158 n.98 (cf. HP II, LXXI, 30, 559, 339). The construction that follows, iw Dd, has abnormal spelling (cf. HG, Tavv. 130 n.1157, 121 n.2097; HP II, 33B, LXI).


Line no. 4:    .

The rdi sign (Wb. II, 464.3) with handwriting  is made with HG, Tavv. 52 n.1381, 209 n.276 (cf. HP II, III), followed by the HD sign, made with HG, Tav.184 n. 509 (cf. HP II, 447); the nbw sign is made with HG, Tav.178 n.1314 (cf. HP II, 419), while the determinative  is made with HG, Tavv.49 n.1283, 222 n.2547 (cf. HP II, 572, 616); the sign dbn is implied, while the number 30 is made with HG, Tav.239 n.48 (cf. HP II, 625). Here the number 10 is also plausible, but less likely (cf. HG, Table 236 n.1001; HP II, 523). The sign Hm, “Majesty” that follows the noun (Wb. III, 87.12) is made with HG, Tav.195 n.839 (cf. HP II, 483); the

epithet nb of “Lord” (Wb. II, 234) is made with HG, Tav.202 n.1338 (cfr. HP II, 510) and the nTr sign is made with HG, Tav.93 692 (cf. HP II, 188); both are associated with the epithet ‘majesty’.

Note the approximate spelling of article pA (cf. HG, Tav.108 n.16; HP II, 222) and the sign for Hm-KA, “donation” (Wb. III, 90.12) with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tav. 518 n.2087b; HP II, 108); the indirect genitive n that follows is made with HG, Tav.148 14 (cf. HP II, 331) and the sign iwayt, “garrison” (Wb.I, 51.11-12) is made with HP II, 143. The ir n(A) pA wD declaration, “as for those (who will confirm) the stele” can here be considered an earlier and briefer version of the typical formula for Libyan-age donations⁹.





The conditional particle ir is made with HG, Tavv.130 n.980, 50 n.1111 (cf. HP II, 282, 91) and the pronoun n (A), “those” that follows is made with HG, n Tav.224 n.2006 (cf. HP II, 331, 562); the article pA has stylized handwriting and is made with HG, Tav.107 n.1311b (cf. HP II, 222), while the noun wD, “stele, decree” (Wb.I, 398.15) has a logogram and determinative sign with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tavv. 157 n.79, 199 n.800; HP II, 474, 357)¹⁰.

Line no. 5:  .


The construction iw ini “to carry, to take” (Wb.I, 90.2) has abnormal spelling (cf. HG, Tavv.130 n.1157, 208 n.2095; HP II, 282, 496), followed by the sign grg, “to establish, to found” (Wb.V, 186.3), always with abnormal handwriting and the ending of the passive form, w, expressed by HG, Tav.228 n.2707 (cf. HP II, 200B); the transitive verb diw, “to adore, to pray” (Wb.V, 428.11) is expressed by HG, Tav.211 n.594 (cf. HP II, 569), the determinative is expressed by HG, Tav.31 n.2315 (cf. HP II, 569), while the personal pronoun of the third person singular f with the function of a direct object is made with HG, Tav.119 65 (cf. HP II, 263). The noun pr (n) nTr, “temple” (Wb.I, 513.10) and the diacritical nTr are made with HG, Tav.151 11, 93 135, 221 n.8 (cf. HP II, 340, 188B, 614).

⁹ The stele lacks the protective clause and the punitive sentence in use in the Libyan age; for more on protection formulas and punishment of stele of the XXII-XXIII dynasties, see Sottas, 1913, pp. 132-156; Janssen, 1968, 171; Kitchen, 1969-1970, p. 60, note 6; on the texts of the donation steles of the Libyan age, see Ritner, 2009.


¹⁰ See similar spellings in some steles of the XXII Dynasty for the wD logogram in line 6 of the Brooklyn Stele 67.119 (Kitchen, 1969-1970, pp. 64-66) and for the determinative in line 6 of the IFAO Stele n.3886 (Berlandini, 1978, pp. 151-152, note 6c).

The noun tA, “territory” (Wb.V, 212) is made with HG, Tavv.141 481, 143 n.153 (cf. HG, 276 481; HP II, 218) and is in apposition with the infinite skA, “cultivating, plowing” (Wb.IV, 316.4) whose logogram  is made with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tav.190 n.2688; HP II, 465); equally plausible is the noun mryt, “coast, shore” (Wb.I, 109.11). The diacritical sign and the determinative  are made with HG, Tavv.142 n.1085, 221 n. 41 (cf. HP II, 558 and 323). It is followed by the nisba of xft, “stranger, enemy” (Wb.III, 276.17) which referred to the preceding noun and whose logogram  and ending  tyw have abnormal hieroglyphic handwriting (cf. HP II-III, 49-50), while the plural is made with HG, Tav.224 79 (cf. HP II, 658). The construction that derives from it, tA-skA xftyw “the foreign district (colony)” probably indicates the area of the Sherden garrison (Middle Egypt?) or the region of their temporary cantonment. Then there is the preposition m, made with HG, Tav.95 135 (cfr. HP II, 196) and the participle of the verb rdi, “to give, to concede, to allow that” with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tav.53 n.3864; HP III, 108). Less probable, after the preposition m, is the epithet imAxw with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tav.86 n.681b; HP III, 172) that refers to the deceased.


Line no. 6:   

The object of the verb rdi in line 5 is the noun Dbw-rd, “donations, receipts (to the temple)” (Wb.V, 553.4), whose logogram is made with HG, Tav. 61 n.2688 (cf. HP II, 465) followed by the plural made with HG, Table 224 n.1394 (cf. HP II, 562); less probable is the logogram  of the epithet wab, “pure” (Wb. I, 90.1) with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tavv.130 n.3945, 208 n.2095; HP II, 282, 496).

The text follows with the subjunctive of the verb causative smn, “to confirm, to establish” (Wb.IV, 131-132) made both with the sign s with normal HG handwriting, Tav.179 n.1266 (cf. HP II, 232) and with the

signs and mn determinative  with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tavv. 217 515, 194 n.79); less probable is the epithet mAat(y), “truthful” with the diacritical signs made with HG, Tavv.114 n.650, 221 n.1260 (cf. HP II, 236 and 558) and the name Wsr, “Osiris” with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tavv.162 157, 32 n.2525b; cf. HP II, 383 and 45).

The object of the verb *smn* is the logogram *HTp*, “supply, offering” (Wb. III, 189.4), made with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tav.168 n.1263; cf. HP II, 552), followed by the nisba of the noun *tr*, “season”

(Wb.V, 313.12) and the logogram  of the adjective *mty* “regular, exact” (Wb.II, 169.III) both in reference to the offers and expressed by HG, Tavv. 209 n.2144, 50 n.16, 59 n.2864 (cf. HP II, 575, 91, 96). The text ends with two composite adverbs, *r-nHH* and *r-Dt*, “forever, eternally” (Wb.II, 299.a; V, 507.a) with the preposition *r* implied and made with abnormal handwriting (cf. HG, Tavv. 97 n.276, 121 n.462, 209 n.522; HP II, 229, 250, 575); less probable for *nHH* is the sign *mi*, “as” (cf. HG, Tav.206 n.1396).

Conclusions

An important element that emerges from the analysis of this stele is the primarily type of incision, rather stiff and predominantly linear, devoid of the traditional “flexibility” hieratic of the time was known for. The roughness of the execution can be primarily attributed to the difficulty of engraving on sandstone block, and secondly to the fact that these documents were produced “in series”. In fact, this *modus operandi* is also found on other offerings or donation stelae of the Third Intermediate Period, whose texts – written in normal and abnormal hieratic – do not respect the traditional stylistic standards of the funerary monuments of previous eras.

As regards the content, of greatest scholarly interest is the legend found in the two columns of the upper scene, laid in hieroglyph and partly in hieratic, which specifies the name of the Sherden Pazegef “in the Hershef temple”. The initial invocation, present in the first line of the text, is followed by the name of the deceased and, in the second line, by the honorary title of him as “warrior / valiant” of king Siamun of the fortress of *User-Maat-Ra*. The offering formula that follows provides a statement of the intended recipient (the god Hershef) the bid amount (30 deben of silver) and the bidder (the garrison) through the decrees of the sovereign. The text concludes with the typical formula “as for this stele”, followed by the reason for its erection in the temple for the beneficiary.

These same conclusions also emerge from a philological and comparative analysis of the stele, in parallel consideration with other contemporary sources; however, it should be noted that the sketch published by Petrie is a *unicum* and that, in the absence of the original find and other contemporary documents relating to the Sherden, the

translation proposed here is merely provisional, with only the primary purpose being only that of triggering further insights. If the translation of the text is reliable, the dating of the stele could be provided by the name of the sovereign present there, Siamun (978-959 BC), the only one among the pharaohs of the XXI Dynasty to have resumed warfare in Canaan in order to reaffirm Egyptian influence over those territories, once Pharaonic domains¹¹.

That the Sherden were an important part of the Egyptian military organization at the beginning of the XXI Dynasty is known from the documents of the *Renaissance Age*, in which these “war specialists” appear as messengers and “guards” of General Payankh during his Nubian campaign against Panehesi¹². It is not known what the country's military organization was during the reign of Siamun or whether the Sherden were still part of it as royal “guards”.

However, as already highlighted, the name of the deceased and his honorary title of “warrior” and soldier of the garrison of Herakleopolis (fortress of *User-Maat-Ra*) during the reign of Siamun, in fact, places the stele's beneficiary and the Sherden people to which they belonged firmly in the society of the XXI Dynasty¹³. Therefore, the Pazegef Stele constitutes an important testimony to the events of these war specialists active at the end of the Ramesside Age; further investigations about the stele may well open new research perspectives on this interesting issue.

¹¹ Egyptian rule in Canaan is attested until the reign of Ramesses VI: (Brandl, 2004, p. 61; Morris, 2005, pp. 703-740; Martin, 2011, pp. 246-249; Ben-Dor Evian, 2017, pp. 268-269; for more on Siamun and the Egyptian conquests in Canaan, perhaps against the Philistines, see Kitchen, 1986, pp. 278 §234, 280-281 §235; Ritner, 2009, pp. 162-163, n. 39); on Philistines, Israel Siamun and Sheshonq I's campaigns in Canaan see Lipinski, 2006, pp. 49-110; Jansen-Winkel, 2006b, pp. 231-233, with bibliography.

¹² LES n.50, 9, 28; Wentz 1990, pp. 188-195; Cavillier 2020, pp. 92-95.

¹³ The honorific title of the deceased and the donation to the temple of Hershef by the Sherden garrison of the fortress of User-Maat-Ra suggest that Pazegef was the leader or prominent element of the group of warriors. This is a most important fact, especially if one considers that during the entire existence of these warfare specialists in Egypt, beginning in the second year of Ramesses II's reign, no title, honorific or otherwise, which had a known command function was ever granted either to the Sherden, or to any of their members. There is no doubt that Pazegef was a prominent figure among the Sherden headquartered in Herakleopolis, although it is not known whether his stele was drawn up after the Siamon campaign in Canaan, or whether the donation was merely mentioned therein to constitute a celebratory act in homage to a specialist in warfare.

Abbreviations

- ČG = Černý J. & Groll S. I., 1984, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, Rome.
Gr = Gardiner A.H., 1999. *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford.
HG = Mohamed Ali S., 2002, *Hieratische Ritzinschriften aus Theben: Paläographie der Graffiti und Steinbruchinschriften*. GO. Reihe 4. Ägypten 34, Wiesbaden.
HP = Möller G., 1965, *Hieratische Paläographie*, I-II Vol., Berlino.
LÄ - *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden 1975-1987).
LES - Gardiner A. H., 1931, *Late Egyptian Stories*, Bruxelles.
Kr = Korosovtsev M., 1973, *Grammaire du néo-égyptien*, Moscow.
KRI = Kitchen, K. A., 1968-1999, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Bibliographical*, Oxford.
ME = Allen J. P., 2010, *Middle Egyptian*, 2nd ed., Cambridge.
PM = Porter B., Moss R., 1939-1988, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts*, Oxford-Warminster.
Wb = Erman A., Grapow H., 1926-1931, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 5 vol., Leipzig.

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