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Epigraphic Evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period

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THE LIBYAN PERIOD IN EGYPT

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25-27 OCTOBER 2007

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CONTENTS

Contents v
Introduction vii

David A. Aston,
Takeloth II, A King of the Herakleopolitan/Theban Twenty-Third Dynasty Revisited:
The Chronology of Dynasties 22 and 23. 1

Mariam F. Ayad,
The Transition from Libyan to Nubian Rule: the Role of the God's Wife of Amun 29

Susanne Bickel,
The Inundation Inscription in Luxor Temple 51

Helmut Brandl,
Bemerkungen zur Datierung von libyerzeitlichen Statuen aufgrund stilistischer Kriterien 57

Gerard P.F. Broekman,
Takeloth III and the End of the 23rd Dynasty 91

Aidan Dodson,
The Transition between the 21st and 22nd Dynasties Revisited..... 103

Claus Jurman,
From the Libyan Dynasties to the Kushites in Memphis: Historical Problems
and Cultural Issues 113

Dan'el Kahn,
The Transition from Libyan to Nubian Rule in Egypt: Revisiting the Reign of Tefnakht..... 139

Olaf E. Kaper,
Epigraphic Evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period 149

Kenneth A. Kitchen,
The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt: An Overview of Fact & Fiction..... 161

Eva Lange,
The Sed-Festival Reliefs of Osorkon II at Bubastis: New Investigations 203

Marc Loth,
Thebanische Totenstelen der Dritten Zwischenzeit: Ikonographie und Datierung 219

Rita Lucarelli,
Popular Beliefs in Demons in the Libyan Period: The Evidence of the
Oracular Amuletic Decrees..... 231

José Lull,
Beginning and End of the High Priest of Amun Menkheperre 241

Matthias Müller,
The “el-Hibeh” Archive: Introduction & Preliminary Information 251

Brian Muhs,
Oracular Property Decrees in their Historical and Chronological Context 265

Andrzej Niwinski,
The Tomb Protection in the Theban 21st Dynasty: Unknown archaeological facts
gathered during the excavation of the Polish-Egyptian “Cliff Mission” at Deir el-Bahari
in the seasons 1999-2006..... 277

Frédéric Payraudeau,
Takeloth III: Considerations on Old and New Documents..... 291

M. Carmen Pérez Die,
The Third Intermediate Period Necropolis at Herakleopolis Magna..... 302

Robert Ritner,
Fragmentation and Re-integration in the Third Intermediate Period..... 327

Troy Leiland Sagrillo,
The Geographic Origins of the “Bubastite”Dynasty and Possible Locations
for the Royal Residence and Burial Place of Shoshenq I 341

Cynthia May Skeikholeslami,
The End of the Libyan Period and the Resurgence of the Cult of Montu 361

John H. Taylor,
Coffins as Evidence for a “North-South Divide” in the 22nd – 25th Dynasties..... 375

Anthony Leahy,
Dating Stelae of the Libyan Period from Abydos 417

Discussions 441
Richard A. Fazzini,
Addendum to the Discussions on the Chapel of Osiris Heqa-Djet..... 446

Index of Place Names 449
Index of Proper Names ..... …451

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FROM THE DAKHLEH OASIS IN THE LIBYAN PERIOD

Olaf E. Kaper[*]

In 1894, Henry Lyons visited Mut in the Dakhleh Oasis and he purchased two stelae, which subsequently entered the collections of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The larger of the two stelae was published by W. Spiegelberg in 1899, and an improved reading and interpretation of its difficult hieratic text was given by A. Gardiner in 1933.[1] It is dated to year 5 of king Shoshenq I,[2] and it bears a long text in which a land register of a king Psusennes is mentioned. Krauss has argued that this would be Psusennes II.[3] The stela mentions a governor with the name Wayheset, residing in Diospolis Parva and who was sent by the king on a mission to Dakhleh. It demonstrates that the control over the oases was taken seriously by the authorities in the Nile Valley during the early 22nd Dynasty.

Even though the larger stela remains the principal epigraphic document from the oases in the Third Intermediate Period, recent finds have added further details about its political and cultural developments, and also about the relations between the oases and the Nile Valley. In this article, we aim to discuss some of these newly found epigraphic monuments from the Dakhleh Oasis, in particular from the temples at the sites of Mut el-Kharab and Amheida.[4]

Remains of temple decoration from the Libyan Period

A small limestone fragment found at Amheida in 2004 (fig. 1) provides evidence for the existence of other highly similar stelae erected in Dakhleh during the Libyan Period. Despite its missing date, the highly similar iconography of this stela indicates that it was probably erected in the early 22nd dynasty. On the basis of a similarity in palaeography, I have argued elsewhere that a small limestone statue depicting a goddess that was found at neighbouring Deir el-Hagar should be ascribed to the same general period.[5]

The second, smaller Dakhleh Stela bought by Lyons marks the end of the Libyan Period.[6] It was erected as the result of a land donation in year 24 of Piye. It is made of sandstone and its lunette depicts the local governor Esdhuti with a feather on his head as a demonstration of his Libyan cultural identity. His tribe is named as the Shamain. The two stelae must have been found at the

---

[*] I wish to thank Colin A. Hope (Monash University) for allowing me to work on material from his excavations and for supplying information about their provenance. The material from Amheida is being excavated under the direction of R.S. Bagnall (New York University), with P. Davoli in charge of excavations. The drawings and photographs in this paper are by the author, unless indicated otherwise.

[1] A.H. Gardiner, The Dakhleh Stela, *JEA* 19 (1933), 19-30, pl. V-VII; the text is given in K. Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit Teil 2: Die 22.-24. Dynastie*, Wiesbaden 2007, 23-26 (12.28).

[2] Earlier authors have advocated the possibility that this would have been Shoshenq III, but cf. most recently Rolf Krauss, Das *wrš*-Datum aus Jahr 5 von Shoshenq [I], *Discussions in Egyptology* 62 (2005), 43-48.

[3] Krauss, op.cit.

[4] At this moment, there is not yet enough evidence from other categories of material to allow additional assessments from other angles. This applies to the lack of architectural remains, burials, small finds, and even pottery. Colin Hope informed me that thus far, only remarkably little ceramic evidence pertaining to the Libyan dynasties has come to light.

[5] O.E. Kaper, The Statue of Penbast: On the Cult of Seth in the Dakhleh Oasis, in: J. van Dijk (ed.), *Essays on Ancient Egypt in Honour of Herman te Velde*, Groningen 1997, 231-241.

[6] Janssen, *JEA* 54 (1968), 165-172; Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit II*, 363-365 (35.34).

Figure 1a Small limestone fragment of a hieratic stela from the temple at Amheida (photo B. Bazzani).

Figure 1b The corresponding section of the greater Dakhleh Stela from Mut el-Kharab (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

temple site of Mut el-Kharab, close to where Lyons bought the pieces, because the recent and ongoing excavations by C.A. Hope are yielding a series of comparable monuments and fragments from this location.[7] The recent excavations at Mut el-Kharab have established that the stone temple of the Greco-Roman period that once stood in the centre of the mudbrick enclosure has been entirely robbed, and that only the foundations of this temple and associated structures are preserved. Nevertheless, reused blocks of older periods appear regularly in the excavations, albeit invariably in disturbed contexts.[8]

Excavations at Amheida in the western end of Dakhleh have further added to the epigraphic material from the Third Intermediate Period. The most notable find from this site thus far is a stela erected by the same governor Esdhuti mentioned in the smaller Dakhleh Stela from Mut (fig. 2). This piece dates to year 13 of king Takeloth III,[9] which has nearly doubled the recorded length of the reign of this king.[10]
The town site of Amheida contains a badly robbed temple from the time of Titus and Domitian dedicated to the god Thoth. This building was demolished in antiquity and quarried for its stone so that only the lower courses of the walls remained standing. In Ottoman times, also these remaining stones were taken apart and some of them were removed from the site and reused in

[7] Cf. O.E. Kaper, Two Decorated Blocks from the Temple of Seth in Mut el-Kharab, *BACE* 12 (2001), 71-78.

[8] The Dakhleh Oasis Project started investigating Mut el-Kharab in 1979. Preliminary reports on the recent work have been published by C.A. Hope e.a. in *BACE* 12 (2001), 35-63; *BACE* 13 (2002), 85-107; *BACE* 15 (2004), 19-49; *BACE* 16 (2005), 35-83; *BACE* 17 (2006), 23-67; *The Artefact: Journal of The Archaeological Society of Victoria* 24 (2001), 29-46 and *The Artefact* 26, (2003), 51-76.

[9] O.E. Kaper and R.J. Demarée, A Donation Stela in the Name of Takeloth III from Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis, *JEOL* 39 (2005), 19-37; Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit II*, 329 (30.14).

[10] On the significance of this date cf. Kaper and Demarée, *JEOL* 39 (2005), 32, and elsewhere in the current volume the contributions by Broekman and Payraudeau.

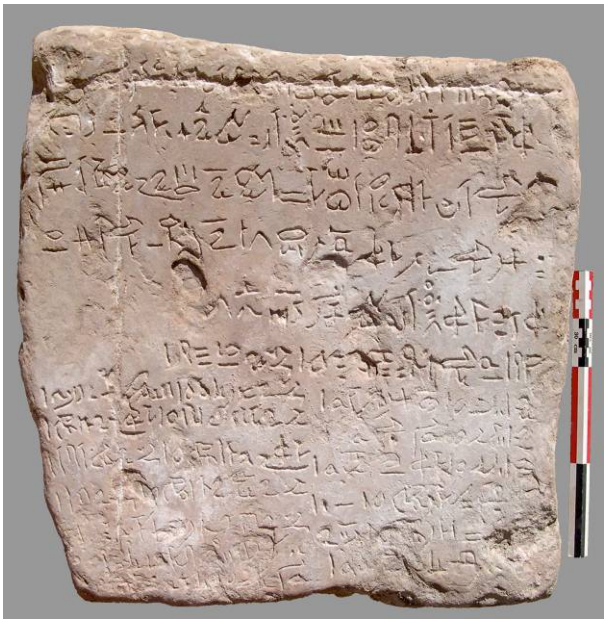


Figure 2 Stela from the reign of Takeloth III from the temple at Amheida.

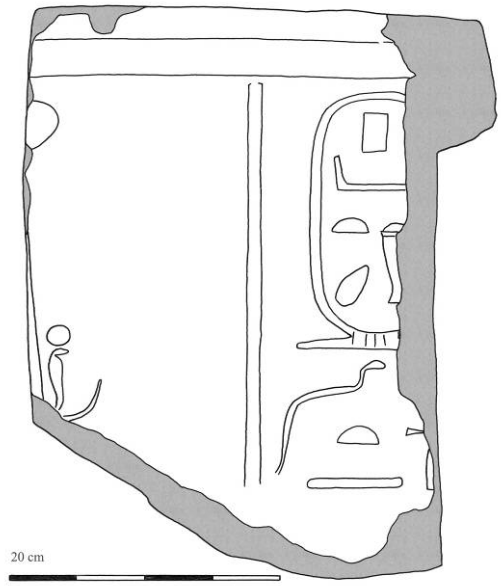
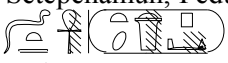


Figure 3 Relief block from the temple at Amheida with a cartouche of Pedubast I.

building works at nearby El-Qasr.[11] In the current excavations, it has been established that the hundreds of remaining building blocks of the Roman period temple were largely reused from a Saite temple dedicated to the same god, and probably also from an earlier temple. Three kings of the 26th dynasty are named on the blocks: Necho II, Psammetik II and especially Amasis. A fragmentary cartouche may also point to the name of Darius I on the temple walls, which would not be surprising as Darius I is well-known from the extensive building works in his name at Hibis in Kharga.

One of the earliest blocks found thus far dates to Pedubast I of the 23rd Dynasty (fig. 3).[12] It is a fragmentary block of sunk relief, the only piece identified thus far that stems from the temple in which the stela of Esdhuti had been erected in the reign of Takeloth III. The temple scene from which the block derives depicted the king facing right and wearing a crown composed of two ostrich feathers set upon ram's horns (crown of Tatenen), of which some traces remain on the left. The name of the king Usimare Setepenamun, Pedubast Meryamun Si-Ese/Si-Bast appears here in a strongly abbreviated form as  .[13] It may be concluded from the occurrence of this name that the kings of the 23rd dynasty ruled over Upper Egypt and the oases jointly from its first ruler onwards. The stela dated to Takeloth III confirms this territorial association for the end of the dynasty.

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[11] Cf. the preliminary conclusions on the history of the temple contained in O.E. Kaper and P. Davoli, A new temple for Thoth in the Dakhleh Oasis, *Egyptian Archaeology: the bulletin of the Egypt Exploration Society* 29 (2006), 12-14; R.S. Bagnall, P. Davoli, O.E. Kaper and H. Whitehouse, Roman Amheida: Excavating A Town in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis, *Minerva: The International Review of Ancient Art & Archaeology* 17/6 (November/December 2006), 26-29 and R.S. Bagnall, P. Davoli and O.E. Kaper, La notizia del mese: Amheida, il più grande città romana nell'oasi di Dakhla, in *Pharaon Magazine. Alla scoperta dell'antico Egitto* II.9/10 (sept/oct. 2006), 6-17.

[12] Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit II*, 209 (23.7); a photograph and earlier discussion appears in Demarée and Kaper, *JEOL* 39 (2006), 20, fig. 1.

[13] Similar to writings of the name Pedubast elsewhere, e.g. at Tanis; cf. the comments in *JEOL* 39 (2005), 20.

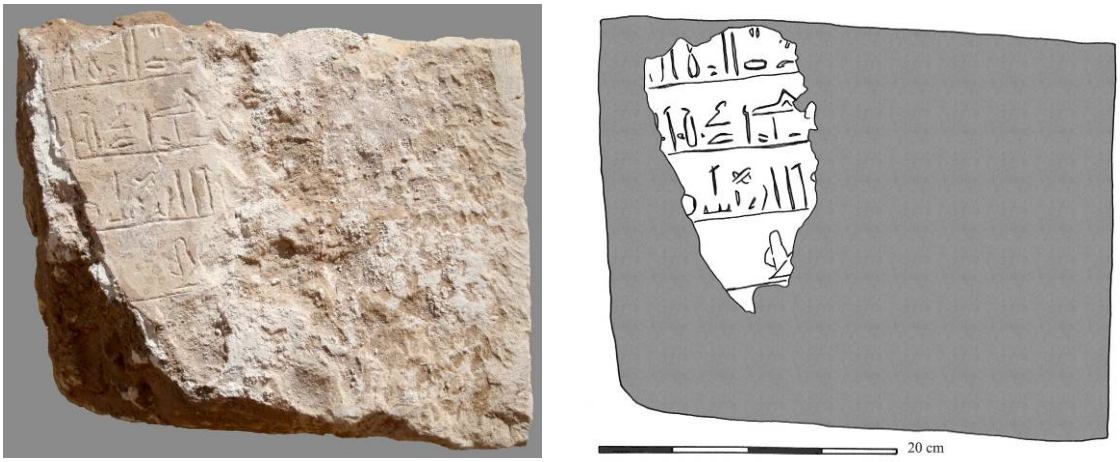

Figure 4a-b Photo of a limestone block from the temple at Amheida with traces of an earlier hieratic inscription.

In 2007, another fragment of a stela from the Third Intermediate Period was discovered at Amheida on the back of a block that had been reused in the Roman temple from the time of Domitian (Figure 4-5). This block is made of local limestone, and it carries the remains of only a few signs in hieratic script. Most of the inscription was erased when the block was cut down to size. The first and fourth lines (x+1 and x+4) are too fragmentary to yield any recognizable words.

x+2 , …] *Ḏḥwty ḥry-ib* […

x+3 , …] *Pr-wḥɜt* […

Figure 5 Detail of the remains of the hieratic inscription.

The preserved text contains the name of the god Thoth, to whom the local temple was dedicated, as we know from the donation stela from the reign of Takeloth III. The god's title is unusual, however, because *ḥry-ib* is not known with reference to the local deity. The name of Thoth with the addition *ḥry-ib* is only known from the blocks from the 26th Dynasty temple at Amheida that

were reused in the neighbouring town of El-Qasr.[14] The inscription on these blocks reads "Thoth, Lord of Life, who is in Mut(?)".[15] It seems possible, therefore, that this stela originally named a form of Thoth venerated at Mut, and thus points to a theological link between the temples of Amheida and Mut at this time.

The second remaining line contains the word "oasis" (*wḥꜣt*), or possibly a toponym *Pr-wḥꜣt*, which was not known before. The area including Amheida was known as *Sꜣ-wḥꜣt*, as mentioned in the stela from the reign of Takeloth III and also in the greater Dakhleh Stela, but the element *sꜣ* in this name was never written with the *pr*-sign as determinative.[16] The greater Dakhleh Stela also mentions a "town of *Sꜣ-wḥꜣt*" (*dmi Sꜣ-wḥꜣt*, line 3), which may well refer to the town of Amheida. I consider it possible that the *pr*-sign and stroke in the inscription are, in fact, determinatives with the word *sꜣ*, but owing to the lack of parallels, this solution must remain conjectural.

Despite the meagre legible traces, the block is evidence for a stela of quite monumental proportions. The height of the individual lines is around 4.6 cm, and the stone is currently 30 cm thick, after it had been recut with a relief on its rear side in the time of Domitian. The original stela must have been thicker, therefore, which gives a rough indication of its original proportions.[17] Since the Roman masons cut the block at a slight angle to the decoration (sides) of the original stela, it may be suggested that the stela had been broken into larger pieces before it was cut down to size.

It is not easily predictable which type of text would have been inscribed on the stela as there are different types of stelae known from the contemporary temples in Dakhleh. An autobiographical text of a priest of Seth called Khay was found at Mut el-Kharab in 1928, either from the temple or the necropolis at that site.[18] It measures 20.5 cm in thickness and is made of sandstone. The larger Dakhleh Stela was made of limestone, as was the present stela, but its dimensions are notably smaller.[19] The stela is not likely to refer to a land donation, because this type of stela, although very common in this period, seems generally to have been smaller in size.[20] The possibility that the fragment stems from a royal stela of the 23rd Dynasty should be considered seriously, therefore.

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[14] The blocks have been reused in a house from the 17th century, visible in pl. V in Ch. Décobert and D. Gril, *Linteaux à épigraphes de l'oasis de Dakhla*, Cairo 1981. Their dating is based on comparisons with other excavated epigraphic material. Previously, these blocks were ascribed to the Greco-Roman period, as in J. Osing, *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla: aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, ArVer 28, Mainz am Rhein 1982, 40; Kaper, *BIFAO* 92 (1992), 130.

[15] *Ḏḥwty nb ꜥnḫ ḥry-ib mt* [...]. The title 'Lord of Life' is known for Thoth only from a few rare attestations outside of Dakhleh (LGG III, 597a). The identification of the toponym *mt* as Mut remains uncertain until confirmation can be found in the excavations at Mut el-Kharab.

[16] The list of attestations in Kaper, *BIFAO* 92 (1992), may currently be extended with several writings of the toponym from the Saite temple at Amheida, none of which contain the *pr*-sign. Some further Ramesside occurrences of *sꜣ-wḥꜣt* have been published by P. Tallet, 'A Particularity of the Toponymy of Dakhla Oasis: *Sꜣ-wḥꜣt* and *ʾIw-mrw*', *GM* 173 (1999), 169-174.

[17] No fixed proportions have been established between the height and thickness of stelae in Egypt; however, practical considerations determined that especially the larger free-standing stelae would have been made thicker than 30 cm.

[18] JdE 52478 in O.E. Kaper and C. van Zoest, *Treasures of the Dakhleh Oasis: An exhibition on the occasion of the Fifth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, catalogue for the Egyptian Museum, Cairo 2006, 24-25, no. 3.

[19] The larger stela measures 94 x 66 cm, but with a thickness of only 11.5 cm. The height of its lines is around 3.4 cm.

[20] This aspect is at present difficult to prove. D. Meeks, in E. Lipinski (ed.), *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, vol. II, OLA 6, Louvain 1979, 605-687 does not give dimensions (p. 660); but G. Pyke in her unpublished PhD thesis: The Iconography of Kingship in Libyan Period Egypt, chapter 4, provides dimensions of many stelae from this period, even though the thickness is only rarely recorded.

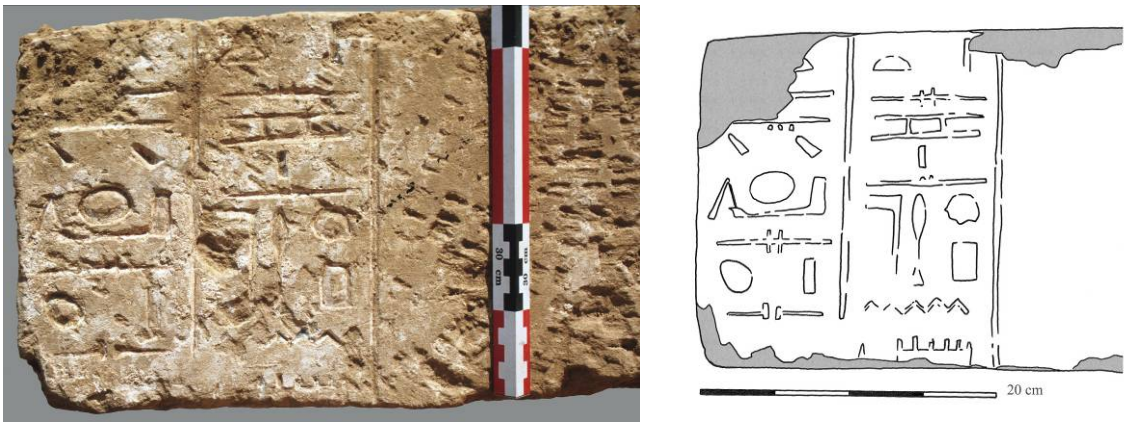


Figure 6a-b Block found at Mut el-Kharab with the mention of a HPA.

A large block from the temple at Mut was found reused at the site in later building remains (fig. 6). It carries a fragmentary inscription in two columns, mentioning a goddess protecting her son, who is probably the king or the High Priest, and in the second column the title , "High Priest of Amun". This reference to the HPA probably included the name of Karnak, as in an inscription upon a fragmentary doorjamb found by Winlock at Hibis, Kharga. There, the titles read *ḥm-nṯr tpy n* < *ỉmn …* > *ỉpt-swt ỉmy-r mšʿ wr sḥtp* < *-tɜwy* > […,[21] which Osing assigned to Pinudjem I on the basis of the title *sḥtp-tɜwy*.[22] Even though there was a cult of Amun at Mut el-Kharab itself,[23] this formal inscription in large hieroglyphs is likely to refer to a formal patron of the building works, who is most likely the king or his representative in the south, the High Priest of Amun in Karnak. Since the position of the latter was most powerful during the 21st Dynasty, and the Hibis doorjambs provide a parallel, I tentatively ascribe the text to that period.

One of the few royal portraits found at Mut el-Kharab is illustrated here in figure 7. It has the head and shoulders of a royal figure, either a king or a High Priest of Amun, who is leaning forward facing left. He is depicted with a broad collar around his neck and wearing the so-called Nubian wig. It seems possible that this portrait should be dated to the 21st Dynasty, because of the *shebyu* collar that has been added to the broad collar.[24] The double *shebyu* is rare, but it is found in reliefs depicting Pinudjem I and Menkheperre at Karnak,[25] suggesting the approximate period in which the Dakhleh block should be dated. It is also found in some cases in the reliefs of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu,[26] and in itself, a late Ramesside date can not be excluded. The Nubian wig is rare in images of kings, and without parallel in this particular posture. This may serve to indicate that the image depicts one of the High Priests of Amun of the 21st Dynasty, who

21 Osing (ed.), *Denkmäler Dachla*, pl. 9, no. 45; Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit II*, 417 (45.41) erroneously ascribes the piece to Dakhleh.

22 Ibid, 39. The title is reliably reconstructed on the basis of small traces.

23 The smaller Dakhleh Stela (Janssen, *JEA* 54 [1968], 165-172) refers to Amun and mentions several priests of this god, one of whom serves both Amun and Seth. In addition, unpublished relief blocks found at Mut el-Kharab refer to Amun.

24 On this collar, cf. P.J. Brand, The Shebyu-collar in the New Kingdom/1, *JSSEA* 33 (2006), 15-42.

25 Pinudjem I: K. Myśliwiec, *Royal portraiture of the dynasties XXI-XXX*, Mainz am Rhein 1988, pl. VIIId, Xa. Menkheperre: ibid, pl. IXc-d.

26 E.g. *Medinet Habu VI*, pls. 418-420, alternating with the single *shebyu*.

Figure 7a-b Block from Mut el-Kharab with the head of a king or a HPA.

were trying to steer a middle course between full regalia and priestly costume.[27] In this connection, it is significant that the figure has no traces of a diadem on the wig.[28] The bending posture of the figure could belong to a variety of positions and activities. Here, it may indicate an offering ritual, such as a Maat offering or a flower bouquet offering. The latter possibility is also raised by the small traces over the rear shoulder, which may perhaps form part of a floral bouquet held by a second figure behind him.

Figure 8 Block from Mut el-Kharab from a gateway referring to the Sed-Festival.

Another block I wish to discuss is also from Mut el-Kharab (Fig. 8). It preserves the feet and lower legs of a divinity facing left, seated on a block throne. The lower end of a *wꜣs*-scepter over his legs shows that the deity is male, and there are traces of the head of an identical figure in the register below him. No inscription, crown or other identifying marks are preserved. The palm ribs in the left half of the relief indicate that this block derives from a gateway in which the symbolism of the Sed-Festival was expressed. The closest parallels for this type of gate are found at Medinet Habu, on the inner face of the gateway through the pylon of the Great Temple,[29] and

[27] Herihor in Karnak is only once depicted wearing the Nubian wig; Epigraphic Survey, *Scenes of King Herihor in the Court*, Chicago 1979, xv, pl. 33

[28] E.g. in *Medinet Habu VI*, pl. 434, Ramesses III is depicted wearing the simple wig and diadem. The streamers of the diadem or fillet should have been visible in the relief from Mut.

[29] *Medinet Habu V*, pl. 251.

Figure 9 Section of the gateway of Shabako in front of the temple of Ptah at Karnak (photo by G. Legrain)

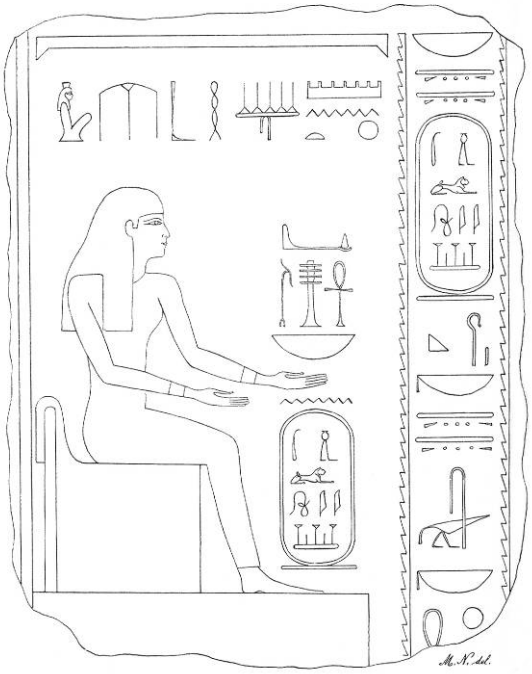
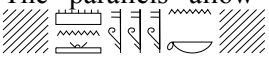


Figure 10 Relief fragment from a gateway of Darius I at Busiris (drawing Naville).[30]

in Karnak, in front of the temple of Ptah (Fig. 9),[31] in which the divinities on the jambs are shown seated, as on the present block. The Ptah gate dates to the reign of Shabako. Before the Medinet Habu gateway, the gods approaching the king were invariably shown in a marching position.[32] The parallels allow us to complete the fragmentary inscription column on the left as  "your annals are established for you" (*...s*]*mn gnwt n=k* [...),[33] referring to the ritual coronation of the king during the festival in the presence of the gods of the country. The seated gods on the Karnak gateway are identified by name as the principal gods and goddesses from different provinces of Egypt. At the bottom of the jambs, the Karnak gate depicts Thoth and

30 E. Naville, *The Mound of the Jew and the City of Onias. Belbeis, Samanood, Abusir, Tukh el Karmus 1887*, London 1890, pl. VII.

31 PM II2, 197 ('Heb-sed Porch'); J. Leclant, *Recherches sur les monuments thébains de la XXVe dynastie dite éthiopienne*, 2 vols, Cairo 1965, 38-40 §10A, pl. 12-13, 'Porche « jubilaire » B'; Photograph in M. Azim and G. Réveillac, *Karnak dans l'objectif de Georges Legrain : catalogue raisonné des archives photographiques du premier directeur des travaux de Karnak de 1895 à 1917*, Paris 2004, vol. II, 311, no. 4-11/2; P. Barguet, *Le temple d'Amon-Rê à Karnak : essai d'exégèse*, augmented with an electronic part by A. Arnaudiès, Cairo 2006, plates 14 (53952-93). This gate is not mentioned in E. Hornung and E. Staehelin, *Neue Studien zum Sedfest*, Aegyptiaca Helvetica 20, Basel 2006, 31. A general discussion on this type of gateway is found in Leclant, op.cit., 220.

32 The earliest known example dates to Senwosret III in Medamud, cf. Bisson de la Roque, *Médamoud 1929*, FIFAO 7, Cairo 1930, pl. IV; A.H. Gardiner, *JEA* 30 (1944), pl. 4; In the New Kingdom, examples are listed in Leclant, o.c., 220 note 2 from the reigns of Amenhotep I, Thutmose III, Merenptah and Ramesses III (*Medinet Habu VI*, pls. 468, 479; rooms 25-26).

33 The passive verb form, as evidenced by the preposition *n*, is without parallel in the *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* and the Berlin *Zettelarchiv* (DZA).

Seshat, who inscribe the palm ribs with a reed pen, as a depiction of the "writing of the annals" referred to in the inscription. In addition, the block from Mut el-Kharab contains the signs *nṯr*

Figure 11 Fragment from the Sed-Festival gateway at Mut el-Kharab with a cartouche.

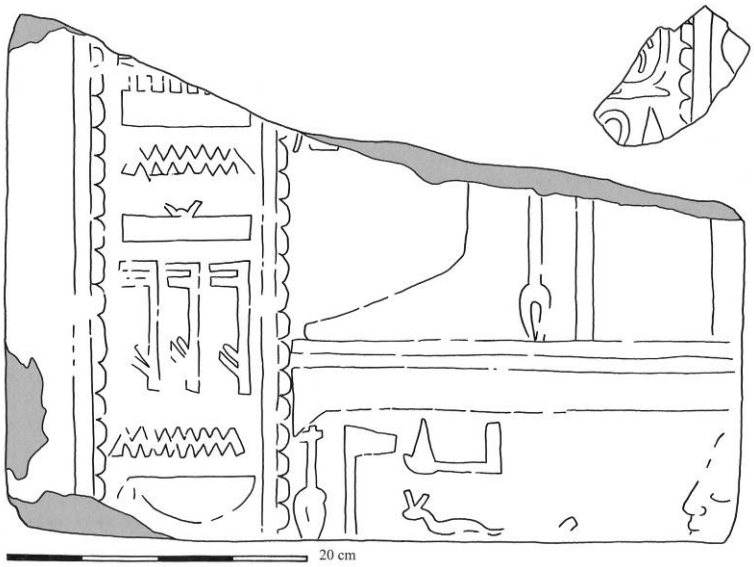


Figure 12 Drawing of the block in fig. 12 together with the loose fragment 13 (same scale).

nfr, showing that the name of the king was present underneath, and a phrase *dỉ=f*, referring to the deity and his gifts (of life, dominion, etc), which must have been listed in the column below.

There is no evidence that this type of gateway bore any relation with a Sed-Festival that was actually celebrated. On the contrary, also Darius I had one of these gates constructed, part of which was found at Busiris (fig. 10).[34] It again shows the divinities seated, which appears to be an innovation of the 20th Dynasty.

At Mut el-Kharab, the excavations have brought to light another, much smaller fragment from the same gateway (figs. 11-12). That it belongs to the same gate is clear from the quality of the relief work and by the segment of a palm rib depicted on it in the same scale as on the larger block. The palm rib faces right, which shows that the fragment comes from the left jamb of the gate. It contains a fragmentary cartouche, which is of great interest, because it preserves the lower part of a scarab beetle: . There are many kings with the element *ḫpr* in their throne name, nearly all of whom belong to the Libyan Period. In the 20th Dynasty, only Ramesses X (Khepermaatre) had a scarab in his name, and none of the kings of the 25th Dynasty or later. Even though we are not able to identify the king, his position in the Libyan Period may be considered certain.

From this period, there are only a few kings of whom references to the Sed-Festival are known. Apart from Osorkon II, whose magnificent gateway at Bubastis is described elsewhere in this volume by E. Lange, there is minor textual evidence referring to a Sed-Festival for the following rulers: Shoshenq I, Osorkon I and Shoshenq V Akheperre of the 22nd Dynasty, and Osorkon III of the 23rd Dynasty.[35] Of these kings, only the following carry the element *kheper* in their throne-names: Shoshenq I Hedjkheperre; Osorkon I Sekhemkheperre and Shoshenq V Akheperre. The

[34] Naville, *The Mound of the Jew*, pl. VII; not included in Hornung and Staehelin, *Neue Studien zum Sedfest*, 31-32.

[35] Hornung and Staehelin, *Neue Studien zum Sedfest*, 30.

latter was not recognized as king in the south of the country, so judging by other temple reliefs in Egypt that refer to a Sed-Festival, the most likely candidates for erecting the Sed-Festival gate at the temple of Seth were Shoshenq I and Osorkon I from the early 22nd Dynasty. In the case of Osorkon I only a single mention of the term Sed-Festival occurs in a relief at Karnak, but Shoshenq I referred to the courtyard he was building in front of the Karnak temple as a *wsḫt ḥb-sd*.[36] Even though these kings must be considered the most likely candidates for erecting the gateway in Dakhleh, other kings with the *kheper*-element in their names can not be excluded at this point.

The Sed-Festival is a remarkable choice of subject matter in the oasis, as it is not known that there was any involvement of this region in the celebrations, that must have taken place in Memphis or elsewhere in the north of Egypt. It is possible, perhaps, that on the occasion of the Sed-festival a cult statue of Seth was brought from his temple in Mut el-Kharab to the festival, together with the statues of other provincial deities.[37] Such a scenario would explain the emphasis placed on a royal festival in the temple decoration of this far-away oasis, and it fits well with the interest in the oases of the Libyan Desert shown by the rulers of the Libyan Period.

Conclusions

The evidence from recent excavations shows that two temple sites in the Dakhleh Oasis were especially favoured during the Libyan Period. At Mut el-Kharab, the temple of Seth was probably the most important structure in the oasis. This temple existed already in the early New Kingdom, as is proven by the occurrence of fragments of temple relief of Thutmose III and other kings from later in the 18th Dynasty and the Ramesside period, and by the ceramic evidence.[38] The find of temple bread moulds of New Kingdom date is especially significant in this respect, as these are not likely to have been brought in from elsewhere. In the Third Intermediate Period, this temple was functioning and additions to its decoration continued to be made. In this article, some fragments of temple decoration have been discussed that are most likely to date from the 21st Dynasty, such as a formal inscription referring to the High Priest of Amun at Karnak (fig. 6), and a relief of the head of possibly the same HPA who was mentioned in that inscription (fig. 7).

The larger Dakhleh Stela in Oxford was erected inside this temple in the reign of Shoshenq I, and its text demonstrates how the central administration tried to ensure that order was being maintained in the oases at this time. The limestone stela should be seen as a monument to the interest in the stability of the oases on the part of the Nile Valley authorities. From the Banishment Stela of Menkheperre we know that the oases were a region to which adversaries of the government were banished, and only for this reason, a tight control was undoubtedly necessary. During the late Ramesside period, violent incursions into the Nile Valley by Libyan groups, as documented in the records from Deir el-Medina,[39] had made it clear that this part of the Western Desert could pose a real threat to security. In this connection, it is highly interesting to take note of the remarks by Matthias Müller in the present volume, who indicates that in the days of the High Priest of Amun Menkheperre a fortress at a site of El-Ahaiwah, close to Nag' el-Deir, had become an important centre for the administration. Müller suggests that this site was

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36 In Gebel Silsila Quarry Stela 100, dating to his Year 21; R.A. Caminos, "Gebel el Silsilah no. 100," *JEA* 38 (1952): 51, plate 13; Jansen-Winkeln, *Inschriften der Spätzeit II*, 22 (12.27).

37 On this part of the festival, cf. briefly Hornung and Staehelin, *Neue Studien zum Sedfest*, 93. It is not to be excluded that there were also other contributions to the festival coming from the oases. During the Sed-Festival of Amenhotep III "women brought from the oasis" were employed to carry out a special dance at the Erection of the Djed-pillar; The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192*, OIP 102, Chicago 1980, p. 63, pl. 59.

38 The names of Thutmose III, Haremhab and one of the later Ramesside kings have been attested; C.A. Hope, Mut el-Kharab: Seth's city in Dakhleh Oasis, *Egyptian Archaeology: the bulletin of the Egypt Exploration Society* 27 (2005), 3-6.

39 B. Haring, Libyans in the Late Twentieth Dynasty, in: R.J. Demarée and A. Egberts (eds.), *Village Voices: Proceedings of the Symposium "Texts from Deir el-Medina and their Interpretation"*, Leiden 1992, 71-80.

strategically located at the juncture of the major route to the Southern Oasis, even though it was situated on the opposite bank of the Nile.[40] Of course, this association with the oases will need to be further demonstrated by the contents of the papyri he describes, but it is not unlikely that the administration of the HPA felt the need for a military presence in this region. Apart from controlling the people travelling to and from Kharga and Dakhleh, this fortress would be the best location from where to launch a military intervention in the oases should the need arise.

The close control over the oases is also demonstrated by the temple building works carried out by the kings of Dynasties 22 and 23. The fragments from a gateway referring to a Sed-Festival are likely to date to the early 22nd Dynasty, as the remains of a cartouche with the element *kheper* shows (figs. 11-12). There are, as yet, no remains at Mut el-Kharab from the later part of the Libyan Period, but the smaller Dakhleh Stela from the reign of Piye demonstrates a continuing importance of Mut for the local administration. It was erected by a local governor of Libyan cultural background, who donated land to the temple of Seth.

At Amheida, the evidence from the temple of Thoth dates especially to the later part of the Libyan Period, the 23rd Dynasty. There is a single block attesting the presence of large scale temple reliefs in the name of Pedubast I (fig. 3). Under Takeloth III, a stela was erected recording a land donation to the temple in the time of the same governor of Dakhleh, Esdhuti, who was still in office under Piye (fig. 2). Despite this emphasis on the later part of the period, a fragment of a limestone hieratic stela (fig. 1) seems to reflect activity in this temple during the early 22nd Dynasty.

The growing body of epigraphic evidence from the excavations in Dakhleh shows that the Southern Oasis was never loose from Theban control. By erecting temples in Dakhleh, the kings and High Priests of Amun contributed to the stability of these regions. This was important as it would ensure that incursions of Libyans from the Western Desert would not pose a problem again in Upper Egypt. At the same time, we may assume that the Libyan ethnic background of the rulers caused them to look with different eyes, and perhaps a genuine interest, at the regions west of the Nile Valley. Political urgency thus came to be coupled with a newly-found sense of cultural kinship, perhaps culminating in the official participation of the Dakhleh Oasis in the celebration of a royal Sed-Festival.

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[40] See P. Lacovara, S. Quirke, P.V. Podzorski, A Third Intermediate Period Fortress at El-Ahaiwah, *CRIPEL* 11 (1989), 59-68; D.A. Aston, *Egyptian Pottery of the Late New Kingdom & Third Intermediate Period (Twelfth – Seventh Centuries BC), Tentative Footsteps in a Forbidden Terrain*, SAGA 13, Heidelberg 1996, 46.

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THE LIBYAN PERIOD IN EGYPT

Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties. Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007

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This volume contains the Proceedings of a conference held in October 2007 at Leiden University on the Libyan Period in Egypt.

The study of the Third Intermediate Period, and most notably its chronology, has become stuck in controversies ever since publications by David Aston, Anthony Leahy, John Taylor and others raised doubts as to the chronology presented in Kitchen's seminal study The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1972). There had been only a single conference held on the Libyan dynasties before, organized by Leahy at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in 1986 under the title Libya and Egypt. There was clearly a need to discuss the controversial aspects of the chronology and culture of the period with all the parties involved.

The timely nature of the conference was confirmed by the enthusiastic response from those colleagues who were invited to participate. In the end, a total of 24 speakers presented in front of an audience of some 120 scholars and students hailing from fifteen different countries. It was thought that the chronological issues surrounding Dynasties 21-24, the Libyan Period, should be the principal focus of discussion, because it is here that the largest uncertainties still remain. In addition, several scholars were invited to present recent archaeological finds from their own field work. Only by considering new material may we hope to solve the remaining problems, and new insights into the Libyan Period are likely to emerge from the combined study of a wide variety of sources.

The topics of controversy lie mainly in the realm of chronology. Apart from this, several papers deal with the cultural developments of the period. An interesting joint theme that emerges from these is the appearance of archaism in the art of the second half of the Libyan period. Several papers include comments on a newly found interest in the proportions and iconography from the classical periods of the past, notably of the Middle Kingdom.

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