THE STELA OF HEPU FROM THE LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM (GEM 23753/ JE 41638)

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to publish and study a round-topped limestone stela belonging to Hpw. In good condition, it is kept at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM 23753). This paper tackles the offering formula terminology, the artistic style, and the spelling and palaeographic features. This stela is dated to the 13th Dynasty. The stela was made by a local artist as indicated by the rough outlines in areas of the stela.

KEYWORDS
Stela – Thirteenth Dynasty – hpw – El-Lisht

INTRODUCTION
A stela kept at the Grand Egyptian Museum (inventory number GEM 23753),1 was excavated at el-Lisht by the expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1907-1908). This stela has not been fully published hitherto.2 It was found in the south chamber of pit 412, in Lisht North (Pyramid Temple of Amenemhat I). The same pit contained another stela of Hpw, which is now in the Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami (877509),3 and a superb royal head, possibly representing Amenemhat IV (New York, MMA 08.200.2).4

1I am grateful to the authorities of the Grand Egyptian Museum for the permission to publish this stela and for providing good photographs. The stela previously held the inventory number of the Cairo Museum (JE 41638).
3Stefanović, D., GM 244, (2015), 118-119, pl. IX.
eroded at the bottom, and there is a crack running from the right side to the left of the stela. The back of the stela was left rough, suggesting that it was meant to be placed in a niche. The front surface was carefully cut and smoothed. The stela is executed in the silhouette style: the inscriptions and the images are cut in raised relief without further inner details. This style was popular in the Middle Kingdom, especially during the 13th Dynasty, though it was already known at the beginning of the 12th Dynasty.

The stela is divided into two registers: the upper register is framed by incised borders lines. It contains the main scene of the stela. It shows the seated owner facing right; there is no offering table in front of him. He sits on a chair with a high backrest and lion legs on short drums. His features and some details of the body are somewhat obscured. He wears a calf-length kilt reaching the ankles. The remains of a kilt-knot appear on the waist. His left arm holds a long staff that rests on the ground. His clenched right hand rests on his right thigh. In front of him, two vertical lines of a hieroglyphic inscription are engraved and divided by two vertical incised lines. The lower register shows the main inscription of three horizontal lines of text with borderlines.

2. INSCRIPTION
2.1 The upper register

The inscription reads from left to right. It contains an offering formula:

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(1) htp di nsw Wsir, nTr ḫ3, nb ḫdw (2) n k3 n s3-nsw, hpw m3r- ḫrw
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(1) An offering-that-the-king-gives of (a) Osiris (b), the great god (c), lord of Abydos. (d)
(2) for the ka of (e) the king's son (f) Hepu. (g) justified.

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2.2 The lower register

Three horizontal lines of inscription run from right to left with borderlines and read:

(1) [ḥtp] di nsw WsIr, ntr r[^3], ḫk3 ḏt, di.j (2) prt-hrw t ḫmk t lhw [3bdw] ḫt nbt nfrt (3) wḥfb[n] n [ḵ3 n] [ss] r n [nsw] š hprw ṣmś-hrw

(1) An [offering]-that-the-king-gives of Osiris, the great god, ruler of eternity that he may give (2) an invocation-offering consisting of bread and beer, oxen and [fowl], all good (3) and pure things, for the [ka] of [the secretary] of documents of [the king], Hepu, justified.

3. COMMENTARY

(a) The ḥtp-sign between nsw and di is very commonly found on the monuments of the Middle Kingdom and was attested until the 13th Dynasty.

(b) The sign [Q2] has unusual writing. The use of the sign [Q2] in the name of Osiris is one of the features which were first at used at the very end of the 12th Dynasty and in the 13th Dynasty. Ilin-Tomich has noted that the use of this sign [Q2] instead of [Q1] in the name of Osiris was first attested under Amenemhat IV and its use continued during the 13th Dynasty. Bennett also mentioned that the spelling of the god Osiris’s name was changed

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during the Middle Kingdom. During the 11th Dynasty, and often in the early 12th Dynasty, the name of Osiris is written with the determinative ⲧ [A41]. Later, the determinative is usually dropped. Instead of ⲧ ⲧ [A43] often appears during the 11th Dynasty and early 12th Dynasty.1

(c) On the stela the sign ⲧ [O29] has unusual writing. The epithet ⲧ ntr-⃝⃝ was used as a title for Osiris from the reign of Senwosret I.3

(d) The word ⲧbdw was written with the sign ⲧ [R15].4 Otherwise, the writing of ⲧbdw with the palm and a hand-sign Ⲩ [D46] only occurs from the New Kingdom.5 According to Ilintomich, the only known exception is on stela Cairo JE 91243 from the reign of Amenemhat III. No written examples for ⲧbdw with the palm-sign are attested before the New Kingdom.6 Osiris with his epithets (ntr-⃝⃝ nb ⲧbdw) is mostly seen during the 12th and 13th Dynasties.7 His epithets are of interest chiefly because they changed in each period; during the 11th Dynasty, they are usually nb ⲧdlw, ūnty imntyw, and nb ⲧbdw. In the reign of Senwosret I, the epithet ntr-⃝⃝ is added. Under Senwosret III all the god’s epithets are usually dropped, except ūnty-imntyw.8

(e) The sign of ⲧA with ring-shaped hands ⲧ⃝⃝⃝⃝ is a common feature from the 13th Dynasty and later.9 The text prefaces the name of the stela owner with n k3 n “for the ka of”. The use of n k3 n NN at the end of the invocatory formula was already attested at the end of the 12th Dynasty, rather than the formulation n im3lw NN or n k3 n im3lw NN,10 which stopped

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1 Bennett, C.J., ‘Growth of the ḫtp di nsw Formula in the Middle Kingdom’, JEA 27, (1941), 80.
3 Bennett, C.J., JEA 27, (1941), 78.
10 The phrase n k3 n im3lw NN “for ka of the favoured NN” was common during the 12th Dynasty, but disappeared after that. Ilintomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 31.
occurring after the reign of Amenemhat II. Furthermore, all the inscriptions dated to the 13th Dynasty use the form \( n k 3 n \) NN to introduce the recipient.

(f) The stela identifies Hepu as a \( s1-nsw \). This title was held by non-royal individuals in the 13th Dynasty and the Second Intermediate Period, when many principalities existed side by side. Each claimed royal prerogatives and titles for their ruling families. For example, the owner of the stela Cairo CG 20537 held the title "royal son", while being the son of a "count and overseer of the priests". Nevertheless, Hepu’s second stela LAM 877509 also features his mother Abeteni. She has the title \( hmt-nswt \) and is depicted wearing a crown with two tall plumes, suggesting that their family had claimed some level of local rulership.

(g) \( hpw \): Ranke mentioned that this name was attested on the monuments of the Old, Middle and New Kingdom, mainly as a masculine name, but also occasionally as a feminine name. This name was incised on a Middle Kingdom funerary stela e.g., stela Athens 4054a; Cairo CG 20123; CG 20409; CG 20675. Remarkably, there is a space after the name of \( hpw \). I suggest that it was left for the determinative of the sitting man \( \text{A1} \), a common feature used to refer to personal names, which is written in the third line of the lower register.

(h) The epithet \( hk3-dt \) "ruler of eternity" as an epithet of Osiris is attested no earlier than the 13th Dynasty. For examples, see: Stela Berlin 7311; Cairo CG 20039; CG 20050; CG 20614.

(i) The attestation of \( di.f \) after the formula \( htp \, di \, nsw \) and before \( prt-hrw \) indicates the 12th Dynasty or later. According to Bennett, the term \( prt-hrw \) "an invocation" is in offering formulas of the 11th Dynasty, whereas in the 12th Dynasty, the formula \( di.f \, prt-hrw \) "that he may give an invocation" is preferred. Obsomer also emphasises the importance of \( di.f \, prt-\)

\[1\] Bennett, C.J., *JEA* 27, (1941), 79 (6); Pflüger, K., ‘The Private Funerary Stelae of the Middle Kingdom and their importance for the study of Ancient Egyptian History,’ *JAOS* 67, (1947), 133.


\[5\] Stefanović, D., *GM* 244, (2015), 119,126, pl. IX.

\[6\] Ranke, *PN* I, 238.14.

\[7\] Ilin-Tomich, A., *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, pl. 16 (left).


\[9\] For the epithet, see *LAGG* V, 531-532.


\[13\] Bennett, C.J., *JEA* 27, (1941), 77-78.
hrw as a dating criterion, arguing that it was not attested in offering formulas before the 12th Dynasty.\(^1\)

(j) An unusual writing of the \(\text{hnkt}-\text{sign} \, \text{heiroglyph}\). Ilin-Tomich pointed out that the spelling of the word \(\text{Hnkt} \) "beer" in the offering formula with the sign having two crossing lines, can be classified as \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [W20] \) or \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [W59] \), first occur in the Thirteenth Dynasty.

And become widespread in the Second Intermediate Period.\(^2\)

(k) The writing of \( \text{heiroglyph} \, \text{heiroglyph} \) "oxen and fowl" occurs occasionally in the late 12th Dynasty and becomes common during the 13th Dynasty and the Second Intermediate Period.\(^3\)

(l) The word \( \text{heiroglyph} \) "things" is written with the determinative \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [Y1] \). This writing occurs occasionally in the 13th Dynasty and becomes common in the Second Intermediate Period.\(^4\)

(m) Most of the first half of the third line is destroyed, whereas only a few traces remain of some hieroglyphic signs \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [N35] \) and the two top ends of the sign \( \text{heiroglyph} \). These traces could be completed as follows: \( \text{heiroglyph} \). After this part, the owner's name and titles would typically follow, as in the second line of the upper register. The title of \( hpw \) is gone except the word \( \text{heiroglyph} \). I would suggest that this destroyed space should be filled with the title \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [N35] \) \( \text{heiroglyph} \) \( \text{heiroglyph} \) \( nswt \) “the secretary of documents of the king”,\(^5\) compared to a similar text which was found on the second stela of \( hpw \, \text{LAM 877509} \).\(^6\) Quirke mentioned that this title is known in the early Middle Kingdom. In contrast in the late Middle Kingdom, most sources are more specific, differentiating between the person present at court with the king and those with responsibility for "assembly" and "lands".\(^7\) In Hepeu’s second stela, his full title is given as \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [N35] \) \( \text{heiroglyph} \) \( nswt \) \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [N35] \) “the secretary of the documents of the king of the assembly”.

(n) Notice that the determinative sign \( \text{heiroglyph} \, [A1] \) was written in cursive hieroglyphs.\(^8\) The use of determinatives with cursive hieroglyphs after the individuals’ names was common in the late 12th and 13th Dynasties. For examples, see: (JE 52453); (JE 20458); (JE 91244); (JE 91249); (BM EA 220); (BM EA 226). According to Ilin-Tomich, in the Middle Kingdom,

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\(^2\)Cf. Ilin-Tomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 20, (Table 11).

\(^3\)Ilin-Tomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 20-21, (Table 12).

\(^4\)Ilin-Tomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 22-23, (Table 14).


\(^6\)Stefanović, D., GM 244, (2015), 119,126, pl. IX.

\(^7\)For further information and references about this title: Quirke, S., Titles and bureaux, 42-44.

\(^8\)The palaeography of cursive hieroglyphic script is common from the 12th Dynasty and later. Caminos, R. & Fischer, H.G., Ancient Egyptian epigraphy and paleography, New York, (1976), 42-43.


\(^12\)Budge, W., Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum, III, pl.3; IV, pl. 43.
the determinatives for the seated men or women are not used after names. Only a limited number of examples are derived from the 12th and 13th Dynasties. On the other hand, during the Second Intermediate Period, this usage became increasingly common.1

4. CONCLUSION

The stela does not contain a royal name or dateline. However, the approximate date of this stela, based on its artistic style, the palaeographic features and orthographic criteria mentioned above, is the 13th Dynasty. The 13th Dynasty artistic style may be further corroborated by the relatively poor quality of the depictions and hieroglyphs executed in the so-called silhouette style. This technique was prevalent in the late Middle Kingdom, especially in the 13th Dynasty. Furthermore, the silhouette style was characteristic of craftsmen from the Memphite and Fayum regions.2 Linguistic evidence points to the 13th Dynasty, such as the use of the sign [Q2] in the divine name of Osiris and his title “ruler of eternity”. Both indicate a date, not before the 13th Dynasty.3 On the other hand, according to Vernus, the stela’s date must not be later than the 13th Dynasty due to the order of the offering formula.4 The writing of the word ḫt "thing" was written with the abstract determinative [Y1] in the offering formula in the 13th Dynasty and became common in the Second Intermediate Period. All these criteria point to a 13th Dynasty date or later.

2Grajetzki, W., Two Treasurers of the Late Middle Kingdom, 62; Ilin-Tomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 76-78.
3Ilin-Tomich, A., From Workshop to Sanctuary, 8, 27.
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The Stela of Hepu from the Late Middle Kingdom (GEM 23753/JE 41638)

**Pl. I** Stela of Hepu, Grand Egyptian Museum, Cairo (GEM 23753/JE 41638) (Photograph by the author).
Fig. 1. Line drawing of Hepu stela (by Ali Elfiky).