

Sesostris I, while the vizierate of Mentuhotep probably belongs to the latter part of the reign. The reference to limestone could be an allusion to the change from brickwork to stonework. Helck (Osirisritual, 84f.) has stressed that what Sesostris I built was an Osiris-Khentamenthes temple, and not a royal *ka*-house within the old Khentamenthes temple, as previous kings up to Seankhkare Mentuhotep III had done. The very ambiguity of Mery's account – in contrast with the unambiguous statements of Shen-setji, Mentuhotep, and Amenysomb – supports the view that the temple was built in stages by Sesostris I, and embodied the changes which transformed the earlier Khentamenthes temple characterized by royal *ka*-houses into the Osiris-Khentamenthes temple proper – the outstanding sanctuary of the god "to whom all must come".

38. Stela of the Master Sculptor Shen-Setji

From Abydos
Los Angeles County Museum
Reign of Sesostris I

Faulkner, JEA 38 (1952) 3-5 & pl. I.

Coming from the early plundering of Abydos, the stela was purchased (in Rome?) in 1823 by Lord Kinnaird and reached California by way of a Sotheby sale of 1935. The finely carved round-topped stela measures 87.5 x 36.5 cm. The inscription begins in the lunette with a no longer legible regnal date and fills the upper half of the surface in seventeen lines. The lower half is divided into four narrow registers. In the first one, Shen-setji and his wife Ptahemsas are seated on the left and his parents on the right. Each couple receives offerings from a standing male relative. The three lower registers are filled with numerous family members lined up in rows.

(1) Year...¹ [under the majesty of Horus *Ankh-mesut*] (2) [Two Ladies] *Ankh-mesut*, King of Upper and Lower Egypt *Kheperkare*, beloved of Osiris, ruler of eternity.²

(3) An offering-that-the-king-gives (to) Osiris Khentamenthes, lord of Abydos, (to) Wepwawet, lord of the sacred land,³ (and to) Anubis (4) on his mountain, that he may give a voice-offering of 1000 bread and beer, 1000 beef and fowl, 1000 alabasters and clothing, and 1000 of all pure things, to the *ka* of the honored Master-Sculptor (*mr-grwty*) Shen-setji⁴ (5) justified :

His seat was advanced in this temple,⁵

houses (and) towns of eternity (*prw niwwt nt nḥḥ*),

(6) excellent ground of gods (*w'rt mnḥt ntrw*),

superior in appointments to any other seat (*ḥntt mḥrw r st nbt*),
wherewith this god is content;

great seat (7) of the thrones of Geb,

hiding place of the mysteries in Abydos,
(8) toward which Re shines his face,
when he sets in life in the west,⁶
his heart gladdened thereby.

Consecration Text

I have come in peace to (9) this monument (*m'ḥ't tn*)⁷
which I made in the western lightland of Thinite Abydos,⁸
at the place of eternity everlasting,
at the terrace of the august god (*r rd n nṯr šps*),⁹
(10) the honored master-sculptor Shen-setji; he says :

Appeal to the living and Offering Formula

O you who are alive on earth,
who love life, (11) who hate death (*ḥpt*) :
As you follow Wepwawet in all his strides,
your hearts content with life on earth,
(12) you shall give me a voice-offering
at the Monthly feast, the Half-monthly feast, the New Year's feast, the
First and the Great Procession¹⁰, the Thoth feast when the god comes, (13)
the *Wag*-feast, the Flame feast, the Sokar feast, the Beginning-of-the-season,
the *s3d*-feast, the Procession of Min, the *Haker* feast, the Vigil (14) of Peqer,
the Numbering feast, the Five Days' feast, all the good feasts of the house of
Osiris – the honored Shen-setji.

You shall (15) also say : 1000 bread and beer, 1000 beef and fowl,
1000 alabasters and clothing, 1000 of all pure things that have gone before
the great god, for the honored master-sculptor Shen-setji, born of (16) Iyet.

The Account

I have been sculptor in Itj-tawy of Amenemhet, given eternal life. Then
I came to this temple to work (17) under the majesty of the King of Upper
and Lower Egypt *Kheperkare*, beloved of Khentamenthes, lord of Abydos,
given life like Re for all eternity.

Notes

1) The date is lost, but text and relief style suggest a date within the first half of the reign :
having been a sculptor working for the now deceased king Amenemhet I, Shen-setji was
commissioned by Sesostris I to work on the Osiris temple at Abydos. Thus he may have
worked under Mery, or some years later when construction of the temple continued. — 2)
Note the epithet "beloved of Osiris", replacing the usual "son of Re", and repeated as
"beloved of Khentamenthes" in Shensetji's closing statement. — 3) The growing
importance of Wepwawet (see p. 74, n. 5) is here marked by his being given the epithet
usually associated with Anubis. — 4) That the name is Shen-setji, (*šn-sṯi*), not Shen, was
noted by Berlev in his review of Simpson's Terrace in BiOr 33 (1976), 326 n. 1. — 5) This

probably means that Shen-setji was given a permanent appointment as a member of the Osiris temple personnel, and what follows is a panegyric on the temple. All the epithets after *r-pr pn* appear to stand in direct apposition, though it is arguable (as Faulkner did) that the term *prw niwwt nt nhh* envisages both the temple and the cemeteries. All the other epithets, however, fit the temple better than the cemeteries, and note that the terms *w'rt mnht ngrw* and *hntt mhrw r st nbt* were also used by Mery for his construction (see pp. 86 and 88). Adding it all up, one obtains the impression that *w'rt mnht ngrw* and *w'rt '3t hmhmt* have a somewhat wider connotation than *w'rt rdit htpt* with its variants, in that they evoke the holiness of Abydos in its totality of temples and cemeteries. On the BM stela 193 (HT II, 33) the owner prays for a welcome by the gods *hr w'rt '3t snq nbt hmhmt iwt n.s ntt iwt htp.n ngr '3 hr.s*, "on the ground great of awe, mistress of renown, to which comes what is and is not, after the great god has gone to rest on it". (The passage was first explained by Spiegel, WZKM 54, 1957, 197f.; see also our No. 48 with p. 113, n. 4). — 6) I am assuming that *di.f m 'nh* is synonymous with *htp.f m 'nh*, but I have no proof. — 7) The opening of the consecration text — *ii.n(i) m htp r m'h't tn* — shows the, to us, baffling ambiguity of the word *m'h't*. Intef-iqer (No. 30) had said *iw.n.i grt r is pn*. Thus both used the old opening statement of "coming to one's tomb", in which *is* is the relatively unambiguous term for a real tomb, whereas *m'h't* means what? Kemp in his article "Abydos" (LÄ I, 28ff.) tried to resolve the ambiguity by the following definition: "*m'h't* must designate simply a building containing a stela, and not specifically a cenotaph for someone buried elsewhere". This definition, however, fails to take into account that the "tomb of Osiris" was also called *m'h't* (No. 42, line 20) — surely not "a building with a stela". Shen-setji's text creates the impression that he remained at Abydos after completing his mission and hence built a real tomb. But by and large, *m'h't* seems to mean an abode for the transfigured dead i.e. a "cenotaph" in the broad sense of the term. Consult also Simpson's excellent article "Kenotaph" in LÄ III, 387-391. — 8) We have observed that in conjunction with "afterlife wishes" the term "western lightland" (*3ht imntt* refers to the celestial regions in which Osiris dwells (pp. 48, 60, 61). In this consecration text, however, the "western lightland of Thinite Abydos" is of course the cemetery region, and so also on the stela of Nakhty (No. 26, p. 67). Now when Rudjahau had spoken of being "front-ranked in the western lightland" (p. 71) Faulkner and Schenkel took it to mean that he held office in a religious establishment (Faulkner: "perhaps the tomb of Osiris", Schenkel: "ein Gebäude, o. ä."). This seems to me unlikely, and I propose to combine the clear statement of Shen-setji with the earlier "afterlife wishes" and conclude that in Osirian afterlife wishes, and in other texts of Abydene stela, the term "western lightland" meant the celestial western regions and the cemeteries of Abydos (Using different terms, Spiegel, Götter, 154f., came to the same conclusion). This compatible double meaning is an exact parallel to the double meaning of *bi3*, which embraced the sky and the western desert (see p. 58). — 9) Like others before and after him, Shen-setji built his *m'h't* "at" the terrace/stairway of the august god" (see p. 68, n. 3, and p. 73). The full discussion of the "terrace/stairway" is held over to the end of this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that Faulkner's rendering of Shen-setji's *rd n ngr šps* as "the tomb-shaft of the august god", cannot be maintained. — 10) The abbreviated writing of *pri tpt '3t* for what were two distinct festivals also occurs in Louvre C 3 (see p. 87).