

## THE INUNDATION STELA OF SEBEKḤOTPE VIII

BY

JOHN BAINES

University of Durham

The stela of Sebekḥotpe VIII published by Abdul-Qader Muhammad,<sup>1</sup> mentioned previously by Labib Habachi<sup>2</sup> and von Beckerath,<sup>3</sup> and subsequently by Björkman,<sup>4</sup> provides some interesting data both in terms of the events it describes and in the iconography of the relief on its recto, while even the thickness offers a small enigma worth discussing. Since several of these points have not been brought out by Abdul-Qader, a new treatment may not be out of place, although in default of a re-examination of the original it must remain provisional; this applies especially to the drawings in figs. 1–3, which have been made on enlargements of the published photographs.<sup>5</sup>

No precise physical description of the stela can be given, as the necessary data are lacking in the previous publication. Some facts are none the less available. It is a thin, roughly square slab of limestone, with its decoration in sunk relief. Its approximate dimensions are: preserved height c. 35 cm., width c. 50 cm., thickness c. 17 cm. An uncertain amount is lost at the bottom, probably more than one complete line of text. The bottom line

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<sup>1</sup> *ASAE*, LIX (1966), pp. 146–8, pls. 3–4. Cf. Porter & Moss, *Top. Bibl.*, II<sup>2</sup>, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *ZDMG*, CXI (1961), p. 438; cf. postscript, below p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der Zweiten Zwischenzeit*, p. 260, no. xiii K. In *Abriss der Geschichte des alten Ägypten*, p. 65, von Beckerath gives this king the number VII. I have retained VIII.

<sup>4</sup> *Kings at Karnak*, p. 132, Mon. E.

<sup>5</sup> It is quite possible that more signs could be read off the stone itself.

is severely rubbed, as is the top thickness. This suggests that the piece was subjected to wear after removal from its original site and after breakage, but before its burial in the third pylon; the reasons for such wear are hard to imagine. The stela must have been set up originally as a free-standing monument. Since on most stelae inscribed on one face the relief is placed above the text, it should here in strict logic be read before the text, and I have therefore designated the relief side the recto. The text, however, records the circumstances which led to the creation of the relief, so it is best to treat it first.

The text (fig. 1) is probably missing at least one entire line at the bottom, and only the beginning of the last preserved line can be read with certainty, the rest being severely rubbed. Since it is not possible to reconstruct the precise original form of the monument or the continuation of the text, no good estimate can be given of how much is missing. Were the cutting and spacing not so poor one would guess with some confidence that the text did not continue below the level of the figures on the other side; if this were so it would be difficult to accommodate more than two, or possibly three, more lines. The text reads:

(Life to <sup>a</sup>) The son of Rē' Sebekhotpe, beloved of the great inundation <sup>b</sup>, given/giver of life for ever. Year 4, fourth month of *šmw*, the epagomenal days, <sup>c</sup> under the auspices of the person of this god, living for ever. His person went to the hall <sup>d</sup> of this temple (*r'-pr*) <in order to> <sup>e</sup> see the great inundation <sup>f</sup>. His person came <to> <sup>e</sup> the hall <sup>d</sup> of this temple which was full of water. 'Then his person' <sup>g</sup> waded there ' <sup>h</sup>. . . .

<sup>a</sup> The  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$  at the beginning of the cartouche is perhaps not to be read, though none the less to be understood as having a meaning, cf. Winter, *Untersuchungen zu den ägyptischen Tempelreliefs der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, p. 36.

<sup>b</sup> The sign after *h'pj* could be  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$  or  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$ . Von Beckerath reads  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$ , and this is confirmed by the relief on the recto. *h'pj wr* in *l.3* is irrelevant, cf. *f* below.

<sup>c</sup> *djw hrjw rnpt*. The writing is not the most normal, and could just possibly be read *djw hrjw rnpt sw 1*, in which case the first epagomenal day would be specified. However, the writing of the epagomenal days varies considerably, and this is less likely than that the day is not specified. For datings to the epagomenal days cf. Winter, *WZKM*, LVI (1960), pp. 262–6; Schott, *Altägyptische Festdaten*, pp. 886–7, 992–3. If the day was to be specified, this was normally done either by adding its number at the end (Griffith, *Inscriptions of Siût and Dêr Rîfeh*, pl. 7, l. 297), or by naming the birth of the relevant god. The position of these days between 4 *šmw* 30 and 1 *ḥt* 1 is assured, and they were counted with the old year, probably from the time of their introduction, cf. Winter, *loc. cit.* For a reconstruction of the course of events see below, pp. 44–5.

<sup>d</sup> *wsḥt*. This cannot be located precisely within Karnak, but would presumably be in the Middle Kingdom area (east of the sixth pylon and west of *ḥ-mnw*), not the sanctuary itself but an outer court or hall. Another possible location is south-east of the third pylon (cf. Björkman, *Kings at Karnak*, pp. 58–9), but this is less likely.

<sup>e</sup>  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$  presumably omitted. The omission of two or, perhaps, three prepositions (cf. n. *g*) is striking.

<sup>f</sup> *h'pj wr*. Note the absence of divine determinative and use of *wr* and not *'j*. These differences suggest that the physical inundation and not its personification is meant—as indeed would suit the context.

<sup>g</sup> The traces of  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$  are not quite certain and require the insertion of  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$ . However,  $\overline{\text{𓂏}}$  definitely does not suit what can be seen on the photograph.

<sup>h</sup> The signs *SHN* and subsequent traces admit of a variety of restorations. It seems wisest not to attempt to fill the gap.

The general import of the text is clear, but various of its implications warrant more extended discussion.

First of all, the date. The dating to the epagomenal days provides a chronological fix, if an imprecise one, and allows us to estimate the time of year at which the events took place. Taking the year 1650 as an arbitrary figure, the epagomenal days of the sliding calendar beginning in 2773 then fell before about 12 Oct. Julian, which, according to Parker's correction table,<sup>6</sup> makes 24–28 Sept. Gregorian.

How does this date relate to the physical pattern of the inundation? Assuming (perhaps rather boldly—and this must be borne in mind throughout the following discussion) that the phases of the inundation changed little between c. 1650 B.C. and the construction of the first Aswan dam, the inundation should by the end of September be well past its peak at Aswan, although in an exceptional year the land may remain flooded until considerably later. One or two days should be added to this date to obtain the picture at Luxor;<sup>7</sup> it would certainly be exceptional for the maximum extent of the flooding there to be as late as the end of September, and, for reasons given below, it should be assumed that what is recorded on the stela is in fact the maximum extent. If the dates are recalculated for the year 1700, one obtains 6/7–10/11 October, which would be still more unusual, so that the indications are in favour of the later date of c. 1650 for Sebekhotpe VIII, that is, right at the end of the thirteenth dynasty, although the evidence cannot in itself be conclusive.<sup>8</sup> They also reveal what one would expect, unless the account were to be explained away as fiction, that the inundation was definitely out of the ordinary, not only because it flooded what was in terms of its later extension a central part of the Karnak temple, but because, if the epagomenal days were the high point, it came unusually late—or, if they were not, it was even more exceptional in scale—and, of course, because it was considered worth recording.

Like the high Nile of Taharqa,<sup>9</sup> the event was thought to be a

<sup>6</sup> *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> cf. W. Willcocks, *The Nile in 1904*, p. 142, table 26; p. 16. The description of the Nile flood in Bonneau, *La crue du Nil*, pp. 20–5, is excessively regularised.

<sup>8</sup> Von Beckerath abstains from locating him precisely.

<sup>9</sup> Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, I, pp. 22–32; Leclant & Yoyotte, *BIFAO*, LI (1952), pp. 22–9.

good omen—otherwise it probably would not have been recorded. Yet if it flooded the Karnak temple it must have caused considerable destruction there and elsewhere (we do not have enough evidence to know how commonly this may have happened). The text itself perhaps contains the key to why it was thought a good omen. The epagomenal days were a liminal period before the onset of the new year,<sup>10</sup> and were thus an unusually appropriate time for the inundation, since the inundation re-enacted the world before creation,<sup>11</sup> and each new year was to some extent a new creation (the Egyptian ritual calendar includes in a year the complete span of mythological events, as does the Christian one).

The temple represented the first created land, and as such was higher than the surrounding land, and incidentally less liable to flooding.<sup>12</sup> When it was flooded, or, more specifically, when the higher area behind the hypostyle hall or its earlier equivalent was flooded, it therefore returned to its state immediately before creation. If the sanctuary only was above water level, it would recreate precisely the state of affairs at creation, with a small mound emerging from the primeval waters. A complete flooding of the whole temple would bring a return of chaos. Whichever may have happened, the happy coincidence of date and flood allowed an unusually full re-enactment of creation.

The king's role in this may also have satisfied his amour-propre, for by wading in the flood in the temple he was coming as near as he could to imitating the actions of the creator god, who, in various versions, rose up from the flood. The specific associations with creation probably reinforced emphatically a normal ritual

<sup>10</sup> cf. for example Schott, *CRAIBL*, 1970, pp. 547–56. The birth of the gods on these days is clearly of relevance to this character, since it was something that was a precondition of the Egyptian's normal world. The last epagomenal day is called the 'eve' (*grh*) of the new year, a definitely ambivalent description. Cf. also Bakir, *The Cairo Calendar*, verso, XVI.

<sup>11</sup> cf. the identification of *h'pj* with Nun, and the depiction of Nun as a fecundity figure ('Nile god'): Caminos and James, *Gebel es-Silsilah*, I, pl. 42; Moursi, *Die Hohenpriester des Sonnengottes* (MÄS 26), pl. 13.1; cf. also the interesting parallelism between *Urk.* IV, 1649.6 and 1651.13.

<sup>12</sup> First pointed out by de Rochemonteix, *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 15/7/1887; cf. also Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 152 with p. 380, n. 21; Barguet, *Le temple d'Amon-Ré à Karnak*, pp. 31–2, 336–9.

pattern (see below, p. 45),<sup>13</sup> so that the king's action had a meaning on several levels. The connection between *h'pj* and the primeval waters, Nun, is made in the texts that record the water-fetching rite performed at this time of year. An allusion both to the conventional rite and to the king's role-assumption may be found in the relief on the recto of the stela. These two meanings do not, however, exhaust the implications of the text, since it is likely that the king would have done something to stop the flood from encroaching further, if only for practical purposes. If he did, this would be interpreted as setting order in place of disorder—a standard part of his 'historical' role, and one that has similar overtones to the action of a creator god—however positive might be his attitude to the inundation as such. The Osorkon III and Amasis texts (below, n. 38) do in fact document such a reaction to an excessive flood. If Sebekhotpe acted in this way he would have had his mythological cake and eaten it.

The interpretation of the wading just given has further implications. The chaotic aspect of the inundation could obviously be terrifying to people who were not sure that it would cease, and the king's action of wading in it and assuming the creator's role would for them be both an act of courage and a reassurance (the more educated would no doubt be less worried). But if the king were to do his wading and the water still continued to rise, the efficacy of the action and its symbolic relevance would disappear. So it seems logical to assume that the king would make sure that the waters had reached their maximum level before wading. He could no doubt have received advance warning of the state of the flood from Aswan. A likely detailed chronology would therefore be that the flooding began in late 4 *šmw* and reached its high point during the epagomenal days. The king then waded in the waters, and perhaps took steps to halt the flood. The waters would have begun to recede at the beginning of 1 *šht*, at which time, no doubt, the stela would have been commissioned and executed: it is conceivable that year 5, 1 *šht* 1, was named in the lost continuation of the text. Any reconstruction of the events which did not allow for their being stage-managed to a certain extent would

<sup>13</sup> Traunecker, *BIFAO*, LXXII (1972), pp. 195–236. This is on the assumption that the rites described go back as far as the thirteenth dynasty.

include the possibility of the king's being discredited by his own actions—Egyptian kings were scarcely Canutes. This does not mean, however, that the participants in the scene would have a cynical attitude to it, only that they would not have asked the impossible of events. They would have wished event and myth to be mutually reinforcing, and the myth to sanction an otherwise disorienting phenomenon.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the mythical associations of the king's wading there was a sound ritual basis for the action, as is made clear in a recent article by Traunecker (above, n. 13). The ritual filling of jars from the Nile took place during the epagomenal days. Since in an ideal year they fell at the beginning of the inundation, the coincidence of a high flood, the rite, and the king's presence, would be a happy one, making literal the role of the chief actor and the otherwise symbolic connection between the water in the jars and the inundation.<sup>15</sup> The water would also be 'young' (*mw rnpj*).<sup>16</sup> The lost continuation of our text may indeed have named the rite, or have made some other allusion to the king presenting the water to, or consecrating it for, the god. At the same time there is another parallel between the structure of Taharqa published by Traunecker and the Sebekhotpe stela. Taharqa's structure serves both as access to the water and protection from it, and Sebekhotpe's ritual exploitation of the flood was probably concomitant with measures to remove its waters. In Taharqa's time the epagomenal days came around the beginning of February, so that his ramp was very necessary to make the connection between 'inundation' and god.

The relief (fig. 2) is crudely cut, but displays no lack of finesse in its iconography, details of which will be discussed in the commentary on the individual parts of the scene. Only one aspect of the form of the inscriptions calls for comment: the divine names


<sup>14</sup> M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, pp. 58–9, refers to parallel attitudes among !Kung bushmen and Dinka.

<sup>15</sup> The rite would of course take place during the inundation for centuries at a time, as long as the epagomenal days fell at the right season. But they would come near its peak for a smaller number of years, and the threefold coincidence would be much rarer.

<sup>16</sup> *BIFAO*, LXXII (1972), pp. 233–4.

are arranged in such a way that they must be read with the royal names, so that the right-hand text is 'the "good god", lord of the two lands, lord of cult action, *šḥn-r' swsr-tjwj*, beloved of *ḥ'pj' 'j*, giver of life, duration and power like *Rē'* for ever'.<sup>17</sup> This same text conceals other points of interest. Although it runs continuously, the distribution of the signs suggests that *ḥ'pj* gives life (he is unlikely to be given it) rather than the king. This raises further issues: the giving of life 'like *Rē'*' should perhaps not be understood to mean that *ḥ'pj* gives like *Rē'*, but that the life the king receives is like that of *Rē'*; this is confirmed by parallels, for example at Abydos, where gods other than *Rē'* give the king life 'like *Rē'*'<sup>18</sup>, and there is no obvious reason why their mode of giving should not be their own, whereas the life the king receives should be *Rē'*-like as his office of king is *Rē'*-like. In 'giving life' prominently, *ḥ'pj* is stepping outside the normal role of a fecundity figure ('Nile god'), which is to bring offerings. When fecundity figures do 'give life' it is almost never 'like *Rē'*': the dispensing of anything like *Rē'* is normally a prerogative of more important divinities.<sup>19</sup> The neutral phrasing of the whole and the absence of speeches may reflect in part a lack of traditional models for the scenes, particularly the one with *ḥ'pj*. In addition, *ḥ'pj' 'j* is highly abnormal in relief captions as the name of the god, and is probably carried over from the *ḥ'pj' 'j* of the text. This may define the god as this particular inundation.

The scenes should be read from right to left, as is confirmed by the use of the king's prenomen on the right-hand side, and his nomen on the left. The right scene is very squashed (both are somewhat cramped) evidently because the figure of *ḥ'pj* fills more space than that of Amūn, and the artist had not allowed for this: measurement shows that the surface divides in half vertically down a line between the backs of the two figures of the king.

<sup>17</sup> There is a trace of a sign after , and space for perhaps one more, but I have no reading to offer.

<sup>18</sup> e.g., Calverley, *The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos*, IV, pls. 46 (lower left scene), 47 (lower right), 48 (lower left). The deity in all these scenes is Nekhbet. These examples could easily be multiplied.

<sup>19</sup> In BM 1346 (fig. 4; see next note) *ḥ'pj* gives life like *Rē'*; this piece is another example of his assuming an unusual role.

The figure of *ḥ'pj* is altogether exceptional. It is the second earliest example known of his filling in relief a place normally occupied by a major divinity, the older one being BM 1346 (fig. 4), from the first part of the thirteenth dynasty, where *ḥ'pj* is in a position often occupied by Osiris and Wepwawet.<sup>20</sup> In both cases the benefit is passing from *ḥ'pj* to the king, and not vice versa. Elsewhere, in *ḥ'pj*'s rare appearances in cult scenes, he is either not prominent or not in fecundity figure form, and offered to, not bestowing offerings. Given the rarity of such pictures, it is not surprising to observe that the iconography has been modelled on the standard type of fecundity figure, most notably in that the offerings are held at waist height and not raised high to be presented, as they are in later periods when the king offers them to a god.<sup>21</sup> The similarity between *ḥ'pj* here and other fecundity figures would be complete in all respects, except that of style, if a necklace were restored on our figure.<sup>22</sup> This should in fact be done, as the line at the bottom of its neck would otherwise be meaningless or a mistake; the rest of the necklace must have been added in paint. The loss of this detail leads one to ponder whether others are not missing.<sup>23</sup>

The meaning of the scene is clear. The inundation—this particular one that has flooded the temple—is bringing its benefits to the king, the benefits being the abundance associated with fecundity figures, although the text, in conformity with normal captions in such contexts, names no more than the unspecific


<sup>20</sup> British Museum, *A Guide to the Egyptian Collections*, (1909) pl. 28 (photo); *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae*, IV, pl. 22 (inaccurate drawing). For an example of Osiris and Wepwawet in the same function see BM 233: *Guide*, p. 220.

<sup>21</sup> This action, which is performed with food offerings, and not libation jars, is called *faj jht* 'raising offerings'. The king sometimes kneels for it, as is shown in the determinative of *faj*. Cf., for example, *Medinet Habu*, VII, pls. 541, 569.

<sup>22</sup> Necklaces are worn by all fecundity figures from the reign of Pepy II on.

<sup>23</sup> One peculiarity in the figure of *ḥ'pj* should be noted; I have no explanation for it. This is the almost rectangular shape on the wig just below the ear lobe. It could be a detail of fitting or patterning on the wig, although it projects in front of it. A further slight possibility is that it is an ear decoration: but it is not visibly attached to the ear. Alternatively, the craftsman may have made a mistake in executing his pattern.

'*nḥ ddt wꜣs*. These gifts, general or specific, are then translated into offerings to the god of the temple, Amon-Rē' (a second, not necessarily conflicting interpretation is given below). But the figure of the king receiving largesse from *ḥ'pj* is in semi-divine form. His passivity is in itself characteristic of scenes where kings are divinised by receiving benefits from gods, and are not acting on their behalf; in such cases, and when facing from the temple to the people, the king commonly holds an '*nḥ*-sign, which he otherwise rarely does. Here he is also wearing the cap and feathers of Amūn—as repeated in a different form on the god himself on the other side of the relief—and holding the *mks*-sceptre and mace, as frequently in divinised contexts.<sup>24</sup> Curiously, he wears no beard on either side of the relief,<sup>25</sup> while the uraeus, among other attributes, prevents complete identity between him and Amūn. The cap and feathers are of extreme rarity on the king, and since two of the three parallels known to me<sup>26</sup> are

<sup>24</sup> Examples of the king holding *mks* and mace are legion. The most obvious is the hieroglyph  (Gardiner no. A 23) for *jtjj* 'sovereign' (i.e., fatherly one; for the divine character of the king when called *jtjj* cf., e.g., the writings collected *Wb. I*, 143). They date from the Old Kingdom (e.g., Petrie, *Koptos*, pl. 5.7) to the Graeco-Roman period (frequent). The king holds them and/or an '*nḥ*-sign at doorways, where he pronounces an injunction that those who pass through be pure (e.g., *Medinet Habu*, VII, pls. 490, 496, 508 B, 509 B).

<sup>25</sup> The two scratches noted in fig. 2 below the chin of the left-hand figure may be accidental. Alternatively there may have been beards added to the figures in paint—although it is hard to see why these would be in paint and the gods' beards in relief.

<sup>26</sup> Naville, *Deir el Bahari*, V, pl. 105 (figure of the king in front of a statue of the Ḥathor cow); Calverley, *Temple . . . Abydos*, III, pl. 35 (an extremely complex composite crown); Lefébure, *Les hypogées royales de Thèbes*, p. 120, commentary to tomb 11 = Porter & Moss, *Top. Bibl.*, I<sup>2</sup>, pt. 2, p. 524, (40), (41) (figure of the king in the ritual of the opening of the mouth: not properly published). Marginal examples are the problematic Ramesses II/Amūn in the sun disk recently republished by Kákosy, *ZĀS*, C (1973), p. 39, fig. 1 = Bruyère, *Deir el Médineh 1935–1940*, fasc. II (FIFAO XX), p. 99, pl. 42, and the figure of a Nubian king wearing the Nubian cap (?) and feathers, Griffith, *LAAA*, IX (1922), pl. 27. Other examples doubtless exist. Possible parallels are the cap with feathers, horns, and disk worn by Amarna sovereigns (Harris, *Acta Or.* XXXV [1973], pp. 5–13, n. 32) and the flat cap with additional elements (not primarily feathers) common in the Graeco-Roman period (e.g., Chassinat, *Edfou*, XI, pls. 264–5, 277, 304–5, 310–11; Chassinat & Daumas, *Dendara*, VI, pls. 464, 474, 490, 523, 539 *ter*, 544, 576). However, if

probably pictures of statues, these features may in this case derive from a statue. It seems clear that the king is to some extent identifying with Amūn, or taking over attributes from him,<sup>27</sup> so that the overall composition of the relief has two different 'readings', one, the conventional one with antithetical grouping, in which the gods and king balance,  $\rightarrow \leftarrow$  or  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ , and the other in which they alternate,  $\rightarrow \rightarrow$  and  $\leftarrow \leftarrow$ . Thus there can be extracted from the relief the unusual abstract statement *ḥ'pj*:king::king:Amūn.<sup>28</sup> This is confirmed by the position of the *dj* '*nḥ*' in the two scenes: in both cases it is on the right-hand side, above *ḥ'pj* on the right and above the king on the left.

The statement has two further justifications, one general and one particular. It reflects the normal lowly status of fecundity figures among divinities. Unlike other gods, they move in temples in the same direction as the king, and can share activities with non-divine (and non-existent) beings such as the subsidiary of-

the base of the former is the same as Nefertiti's cap, it will have been blue, whereas the Amūn cap is generally yellow (e.g., at Abydos; this difference could be explained away). The Graeco-Roman cap cannot be discussed here; two points must suffice. The detailed example *Dendara*, VI, pl. 539 *ter* is covered with minute feathers like the feathers of Amūn's cap. The cap's form is mostly close to that in the Abydos example just cited, but as the horizontal band which provided the analogy is not a necessary part of the Amūn cap and feathers (it is commoner with the rounded form, and in the Graeco-Roman period) this is not conclusive. To discover its colour it would be necessary to examine the monuments themselves. The contexts of the Graeco-Roman examples vary considerably, and would need detailed study. Whether the headdresses worn by Amenhotpe III (Gayet, *Le temple de Louxor*, pl. IX, no. XV, fig. 58; pl. LXVIII, no. LXXIV, fig. 212) are related to the Graeco-Roman form, or relevant at all in this context, must remain doubtful in view of the well-known unreliability of the publication.

<sup>27</sup> cf. Wildung, XXIX Congrès International des Orientalistes, *Résumés des communications sections 1–5*, p. 24, for another example, the ram's horn of Amūn. Only a limited number of attributes is borrowed by kings from gods, and the reverse is restricted to certain well-defined contexts. In this particular case the insignia of Amūn will have been the obvious ones to choose from the local iconographic repertoire in order to show divinisation. Elsewhere a different set might have been chosen.

<sup>28</sup> A good parallel to this is the pair of scenes at Edfu, also exceptional in a number of ways, *Edfou*, I, pp. 475.6–18, 494.7–17, pl. XXXVa, which produces the equation *ḥ'pj*: living king (Ptolemy IV):: living king (Ptolemy IV): dead king (Ptolemy III, i.e. god; see epithet *nḥr mnḥ nb wꜣst-nḥr*).

4 *Acta Orientalia*, XXXVI

fering bearers in Old Kingdom mortuary temples. In a context where the king is the centre of attention they can act for him, in a local and terrestrial, not divine, way.<sup>29</sup> The king alone is shown offering in reliefs—scenes where gods are performing actions for other gods are very much the exception, and ones where fecundity figures perform the service unknown—so that if the benefits given by a fecundity figure are to reach a god they must pass through the king. The well-known statues of the king with food-offerings<sup>30</sup> are representations of this process, later visible in figures of the king heading rows of offering bearers in Graeco-Roman temples. In our stela the same is shown in a more abstract and appropriate form (jars), and the designer of the scene (see below) has at the same time solved the problem of combining the relatively lower status of the fecundity figure<sup>31</sup> with that of the king and the god by separating the scenes into two, the right-hand one involving *h'pj* and the king (a temporary god), the left-hand one being an entirely normal scene of king offering to god.

Additionally, the relief may incorporate a comment on the king's actions recounted in the text. It is conceivable that the king's assumption of the creator god's role when he waded in the flood, postulated above, would be reflected in his identification with the local creator god—Amūn.<sup>32</sup> The role-assumption would be a (no doubt limited) divinisation of him by *h'pj*, and would be turned to good account in honouring Amūn. Informed Egyptian observers who had access to the stela could read this too off the

<sup>29</sup> e.g., *Medinet Habu*, VI, pls. 452–3, horizontal bands of text. The short vertical texts contradict these to some extent.

<sup>30</sup> e.g., Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten*, II, no. 550, pl. 92.

<sup>31</sup> Note that in BM 1346 (fig. 4; above, n. 20) *h'pj* is seated below the king, who is shown in the form of his Horus name. Cf. also de Wit, *Le temple d'Opet*, II, pl. 15, where the figure of the king at the head of a procession stands, and the fecundity figures behind him kneel. Marginal examples are Gayet, *Le temple de Louxor*, pl. II, no. II, figs. 5–6; pl. XVI bis, no. XVII, figs. 62–3. The unnamed fecundity figure holding up the offerings, which is wearing an uncanonical uraeus (if the publication is correct), may simply be the king.

<sup>32</sup> Since Amūn is later identified with Nun (cf. Sethe, *Amun und die acht Urgötter*, pp. 67–9, § 139–40, 55, § 106) it is possible to imagine that his relevance here is a double one, for Nun can 'raise himself up at his season' (*ibid.*), and Amūn can indirectly be identified with the inundation. Links between Amūn and *h'pj* are well known, cf. Ranke, *PN*, I, 27.12, 30.6–7. Association with Nun or *h'pj* is not, however, strictly necessary here.

iconography of the relief; the god to whom it was dedicated was no doubt equally competent.

A further aspect of the composition of the relief emphasises its exceptional character and provides another index of the divinisation of the king in this context. Most paired scenes on stelae show the king on the outside approaching the god in the middle. This is an application, in a different setting, of a rule which governs temple relief. Exceptions are where the king is deified (normally dead), depicted in intercourse with human beings and not gods, or shown in the form of his Horus name or cartouche (e.g., BM 233: above, n. 20). On our stela the king is in the middle on both sides. The logic of this is clear in the right-hand scene: a humbler being (fecundity figure) is approaching the divinised king. The left-hand scene, on the other hand, can reasonably be explained only as having been composed to suit its companion; this is in itself likely, as the scene that is read first (the right-hand one) will mostly be composed first. The left-hand scene violates obvious principles in that the offering is made away from the centre, and in that it seemingly places Amūn below the king in status. This latter cannot be meant, for the king would not be offering to Amūn if it were true. So we can only assume that the dictates of symmetry and the desire to give a coherent reading to the whole (above, p. 49)—if this reading is accepted—determined the choice of this unusual layout, once the pattern had been set for the other half. It expresses well the interdependence of the king and the divine and natural world.

The left-hand scene needs relatively little comment. The king may be wearing the white crown because the whole context is an Upper Egyptian one. Alternatively, the white crown may be used as one of the most elementary pieces of royal headgear. The offering of liquid may relate to the nature of the event celebrated (libation jars  $\overline{\text{Q}}$  such as those on *h'pj*'s offering table are not normally offered in this way), or the nature of the offering may be chance. It should be noted, however, that jars with a short spout  $\overline{\text{V}}$  can be used to offer water, as is shown by scene titles calling the action *jrt qbhw*, 'presenting cooling water';<sup>33</sup> *qbhw* is

<sup>33</sup> e.g., Calverley, *Temple . . . Abydos*, III, pl. 17; *Medinet Habu*, VII, *passim*. When the king uses a  $\overline{\text{Q}}$  jar he is always pouring from it; cf. *Medinet Habu*, VII, 4\*

the normal gift of fecundity figures carrying  $\bar{\text{Q}}$  jars. The jars on the relief look more like milk jars than any other type, but the use of an imprecise type may be due to the inexperience of the artist.

Amūn's figure here may be specifically appropriate to the events celebrated. His cap is of the round, close-fitting type which is commoner at early periods than the flat-topped type worn by the king on this stela. Early examples<sup>34</sup> yield no consistent picture for the differentiation of the two shapes.<sup>35</sup> Later ones, on the other hand, suggest that Amūn tends to wear the round cap when his role of creator is being emphasised.<sup>36</sup> Given the re-enactment of

pls. 512, 515-6, 531 etc. The jar is normally held at a lower angle than the accompanying censer. Exceptions are, of course, cases where he is carrying two  $\bar{\text{Q}}$  jars when running at the *sed*-festival. It is clear that  $\bar{\text{Q}}$  and  $\bar{\text{Q}}$  jars are to some extent symbolically equivalent. For more extensive material on jars, see Traunecker, *BIFAO*, LXXII (1972), pp. 195-236, *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> The arrangement of the feathers on this form is in theory different from that on the flat type. With the flat type we know from numerous examples that the feathers were inserted into the top and faced the viewer (possibly earliest case on the hawk's head from Hierakonpolis, Cairo CG 52701: conveniently, Lange & Hirmer, *Ägypten|Egypt*<sup>4</sup>, pl. X). Carefully detailed examples of the round type (e.g., Vandersleyen, *Les guerres d'Amosis*, pl. 1—evidently based stylistically on early Middle Kingdom models) show that the feathers were tucked into the band tied round the cap (if it is a cap and not a shaven head), one on each side of the head, above the ears. This would mean that their broad sides faced the wearer's shoulders, and the viewer would see a profile. The mode of drawing could none the less be a graphic convention without further significance. Discriminations can also be observed in the shape and plumage of the feathers, but these are not visible on the present stela.

<sup>35</sup> This is true of Lacau & Chevrier, *Une chapelle de Sésostris I<sup>er</sup> à Karnak*, planches, although some guiding principle may ultimately be identified. For further Middle Kingdom examples of both shapes, see e.g. Petrie, *Koptos*, pls. 5.10, 6.3, 6.6, 9.1, 9.2, 11.3 (all probably Min.)

<sup>36</sup> cf. some blocks from the 'chapelle rouge' of Hatshepsut: Legrain & Naville, *L'aile nord du pylône d'Aménophis III à Karnak*, pls. 10B (called *pawtj tawj*), 11A-B, 13A-B: these blocks are nos. 297 int., 216 ext., 292 int., 302. int., and 308 int. of Gitton, Négroni & Yoyotte, *Kēmi*, XIX (1969), pp. 295-318. See also Calverley, *Temple . . . Abydos*, II, pl. 3-4, 8 (two examples), 10, 12; *Médinet Habu*, V, pls. 319, 326; VII, pls. 496, 512; The Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak*, I, pl. 13A (Amon-Rē'-Atum; II, pl. 107J has Amon-Rē'-Atum with a normal divine wig and sun disk on his head). Many of these examples show Amūn

creation postulated in the commentary on the text, such an association would clearly be highly appropriate in the relief.

The top thickness of the stela bears an inscription in two lines (fig. 3), of which the only signs that can be read with certainty from the photographs are in the second line, and form the royal prenomen. Above this is another cartouche which cannot be read; the traces, however, are consistent with Sebekhotpe.<sup>37</sup> If Sebekhotpe is in fact written there, the order of the two is completely uncanonical, as prenomen always precedes nomen. The cutting is summary, and seems unlikely to date to the time of manufacture of the stela, especially since it would have to be lying on its side for the signs to be upright. It is logical to assume that these lines were cut with the stela in this position. If so, this could have been done at two possible times, before or after the cutting of the main relief and text. If it were done before, the text would have been a practice attempt to write the king's cartouches, and, unless subsequently covered in plaster, would have impaired the final appearance of the stela. It would seem far more likely that it dates to the period after the dismantling of the monument—whatever its form may originally have been—and before its burial in the foundations of the third pylon. If so, the cartouches will be a copy of the king's name from the relief side, which will have been lying uppermost, and could have been done out of simple curiosity or as some sort of record. As a record, signs in this position would be visible if the stone were stacked in a pile of dismantled masonry. The purpose of such information is, however, hard to imagine, and a recording agency—temple scribe or whoever—would probably have written in the less exacting medium of ink, and would scarcely have reversed the order of prenomen and nomen. So the most plausible explanation of the signs is that they are a casual copy, made for no specific purpose.

Thus this unprepossessing object, as far as I know only the second record from ancient Egypt so far identified as celebrating

in forms more or less closely related to Min. It is possible that this is the basic distinction in the Middle Kingdom too. The distinction continues to be observed in the Graeco-Roman period; cf. Chassinat, *Edfou*, I-II, pl. 32a.

<sup>37</sup> See the photograph in the original publication (above, n. 1). The traces could not easily be reproduced in a drawing.



an exceptional inundation,<sup>38</sup> can be shown to have a number of other unusual features. Its position in history, as the sole important surviving product of one of Egypt's least significant kings, also gives cause for consideration of two factors in its creation. First, it shows that the implications and latent possibilities of the king's role<sup>39</sup> were apparent to, and could be exploited by, the most minor king; and this would appear to mean—if our king judged his public right—that the kingship as an institution was not discredited by the rapid successions of the thirteenth dynasty. Second, the physical appearance of the stela makes it clear that craftsmen of a high calibre were not available at the time, but the composition of text and relief show that the reverse was true of designers. It must be assumed that the two were different people; the subtlety of the implications of text and relief would be clear only to the highly educated and could be created only by them. The most obvious candidate for author is a priest, presumably a ritual or temple specialist. Reduced economic circumstances did not impair his acumen.

<sup>38</sup> Osorkon III and Amasis evidently treated the floods in their reigns as disasters (texts in Vandier, *La famine dans l'Égypte ancienne*, pp. 123, 125–6). Both were probably caused by breaches in dykes (cf., for Osorkon III, Traunecker, *BIFAO*, LXXII (1972), pp. 198, 199 n. 2). The Amasis text is apparently cast in the form of a *Königsnovelle*, that is, a narration of how a threat to the world order is countered by royal action; formally a distinctive type of text, and unlike the one under discussion here. The positive approaches of Sebekhotpe VIII and Taharqa clearly set the events described apart from those reported by the other kings. These latter should probably be compared rather with the storm in the reign of Ahmose (Vandersleyen, *RdÉ*, XIX, (1967), pp. 123–59; XX (1968), pp. 127–34). Traunecker points out the basis in reality of the reports of Osorkon III and Taharqa. It is likely that all three late period kings went back to older models for their reporting of floods.

<sup>39</sup> Which is not, of course, the same thing as inherent divinity (cf. Hornung, *Der Eine und die Vielen*, pp. 130–33). As I have tried to show above, the monument as a whole suggests a mixture of detachment from, and involvement in, the role.

#### Postscript

Since this article went to press the publication of Lahib Habachi, 'A high inundation in the temple of Amenre at Karnak in the 13th Dynasty' has been announced for *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur*, I (1974). As this had not appeared at the time of reading proofs, consideration of it must be postponed to a later date.

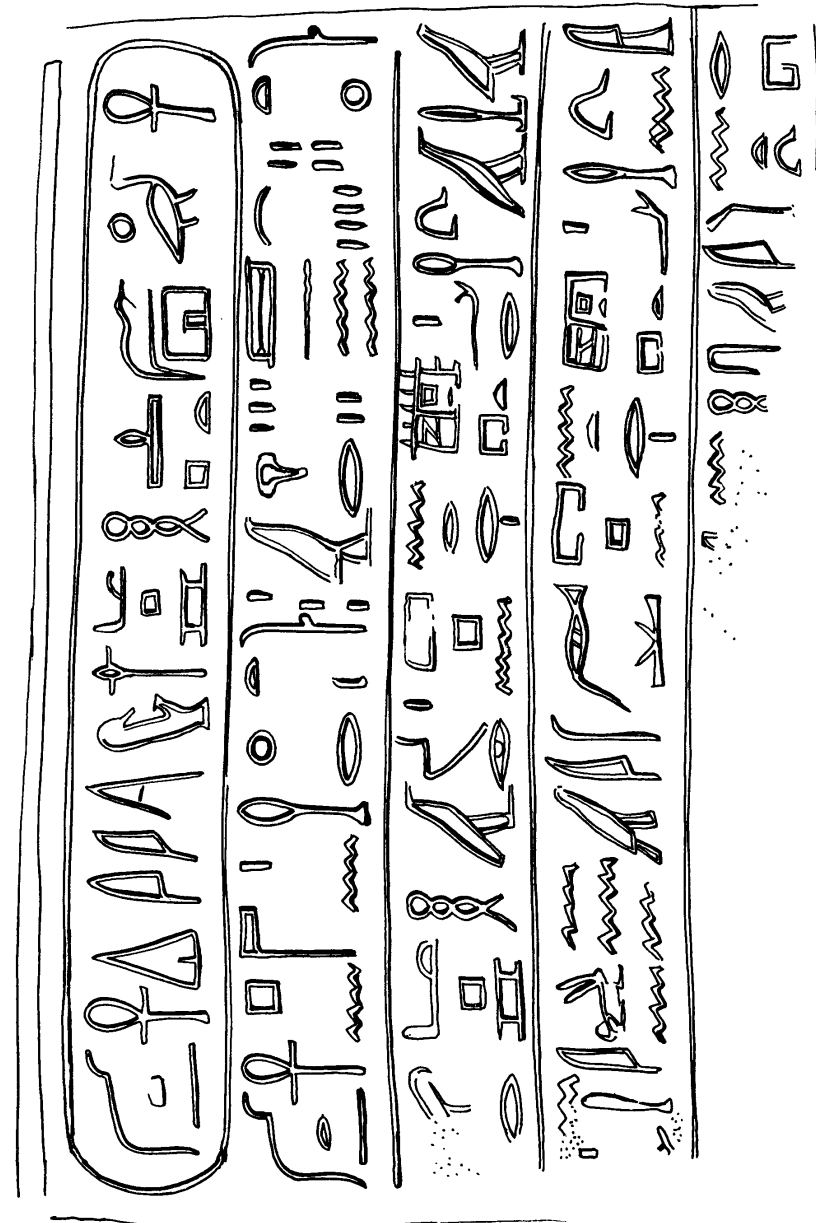


Figure 1. Stela of Sebekhotpe VIII: text.



Figure 2. Stela of Sebekhotpe VIII: relief.

JOHN BAINES

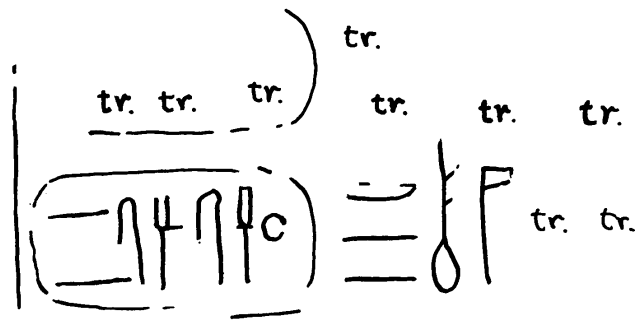


Figure 3. Stela of Sebekhotpe VIII: worn inscription on thickness.

THE INUNDATION STELA OF SEBEKHOTPE VIII