

AN EPIGRAPHIC REANALYSIS OF TWO STELAE FROM FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD DENDERA IN THE CAIRO MUSEUM*

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Summary: An Epigraphic Reanalysis of Two Stelae from First Intermediate Period Dendera in the Cairo Museum

As the Old Kingdom weakened and the Memphite court lost power, there was a shift in the way in which wealth was redistributed throughout Egypt. This shift gave more power to nomarchs, who were able to usurp more and more formerly royal prerogatives for themselves through titulary and phraseology. The site of Dendera, in Middle Egypt, was an important regional center during Egypt's First Intermediate Period. The history of the First Intermediate Period shows that, in the absence of a cohesive and unified state, regional centers vied for power. Alliances were based on geography, access to resources, and (on occasion) aggressive action. There are no overt references, either at Dendera or contemporaneously from another site, to aggression involving Dendera. However, Dendera was certainly affected by the power struggles which governed in the absence of a unified leadership. Two First Intermediate Period autobiographical fragments from Dendera, currently in Cairo, help shed light on the political situation through epigraphic/paleographic clues and through explicit content. This paper offers a rereading of these inscriptions, JE 32139 and JE46048.

Keywords: Dendera – First Intermediate Period – epigraphy – funerary stelae

Resumen: Un nuevo análisis epigráfico de dos estelas de Dendera del Primer Período Intermedio en el Museo de El Cairo

En la medida en que el Reino Antiguo se debilitó y la corte menfita perdió poder, hubo un cambio en el modo en el que la riqueza se redistribuyó a través de Egipto.

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Este cambio dio más poder a los nomarcas, quienes pudieron usurpar más y más prerrogativas regias para ellos mismos, a través del uso de la titulación y fraseología propias de los reyes. El sitio de Dendera, en el Egipto medio, fue un importante centro regional durante el Primer Periodo Intermedio egipcio. La historia del Primer Periodo Intermedio muestra que, en ausencia de un Estado cohesionado y unificado, los centros regionales rivalizaban por el poder. Las alianzas estaban basadas en la geografía, el acceso a los recursos y (en ocasiones) en acciones agresivas. No existen referencias manifiestas de agresión relacionadas con Dendera, ni en la misma Dendera ni en otro sitio contemporáneo. Sin embargo, Dendera fue por cierto afectada por las luchas de poder que se produjeron en ausencia de un liderazgo único. Dos fragmentos de inscripciones autobiográficas pertenecientes al Primer Período Intermedio, provenientes de Dendera -que actualmente se encuentran en El Cairo- ayudan a echar luz sobre la situación política por medio de pistas paleográficas y epigráficas y a través de su contenido explícito. Este trabajo ofrece una relectura de estas inscripciones, denominadas JE 32139 y JE 46048.

Palabras clave: Dendera – Primer Período Intermedio – epigrafía – estelas funerarias

This paper is a look at two inscriptions, Journal d'Entrée (JE) 32139 and JE 46048, currently in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo which were found at Dendera and can be paleographically and archaeologically dated to the later half of Egypt's First Intermediate Period. These inscriptions are interesting for their epigraphy, their inscriptional content, and their significance to the historical context from which they came. Dendera's place in the warfare that divided Egypt during the First Intermediate Period is not clear, but an examination of some relevant texts provides evidence that Dendera played a larger role than typically suspected.

The site of Dendera, in Upper Egypt, is one of the better preserved sites with First Intermediate Period remains, and it has also given us one of the most extensive collections of inscribed material dating from the period. The First Intermediate Period cemetery at Dendera lies unprotected in the area behind the Late Period temple to Hathor. The cemetery as excavated¹ spans

¹ Excavations were conducted at Dendera initially in 1898 by Sir Flinders Petrie, excavating on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF). Petrie was joined late in his season by Charles Roshier of the American Exploration Society (AES). Although Petrie published his reports promptly in two monographs (Petrie 1900a and Petrie 1900b), Roshier's records were never published. Dendera remained untouched until the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, sponsored by the Coxe Fund and lead by Clarence Fisher, resumed excavations

a wide area: from immediately behind the temple to the base of the gebel north to south (about one-third of a mile), and about two-thirds of a mile east to west. All of the architecture and the vast majority of finds from this area date from the period beginning at the end of the Old Kingdom and continuing through the entirety of the First Intermediate Period.²

The causes of the collapse of the Old Kingdom are well beyond the scope of this paper, but the collapse had been developing slowly in the provinces before the Old Kingdom officially ended. Once elite burials began to appear at Dendera as of the end of the Fifth Dynasty, evidence to attest to the impact of the royal capital on daily life in the provinces is minimal and life likely continued unchanged for the citizens of Dendera.³ The Seventh and Eighth Dynasties represent this dissolving Old Kingdom monarchy, when Dendera was still under Memphite control. The Ninth and Tenth Dynasties are named for the Heracleopolitan rulers who established a monarchy of their own in the northern half of the country, but this monarchy ultimately failed. Rebellions, primarily in the southern half of the country and nearly always centering around Thebes, led to the eventual reunification of the country under Theban rule in the Eleventh Dynasty. The Theban rulers defeated the Heracleopolitans, united the country under a single monarchy, and founded the Middle Kingdom.

in 1915. Three seasons of work were conducted by the University Museum, and the full results of their excavations were never published. Two dissertations from the University of Pennsylvania (Fischer 1955, later published as Fischer 1968, and Slater 1974) have been written, treating the inscriptional and the archaeological finds separately.

²This article deals exclusively with the funerary remains excavated from the First Intermediate Period cemetery at Dendera. Although this cemetery was necessarily associated with a town, which is presumed to be in close proximity, the exact location and extent of the contemporaneous town is not known. The town site was assumed by Barry Kemp to have been located immediately to the east of the temple, within the temple enclosure (Kemp 1985). Recent ceramic surveys undertaken by the French team have expanded the First Intermediate Period greatly, with late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period remains being spread throughout the surface of their surveyed area (See Marchand and Laisney 2000 and Marchand 2004).

³Denderite officials did hold positions of prominence in the Old Kingdom government, but prior to the end of the Fifth Dynasty, these individuals were largely buried near the royal capital (for instance *Mtn*, published in Urk. I 2.6 or *Ntr-ḥpr*, buried at Dahshur). The evidence for burials at Dendera dating prior to the end of the Fifth Dynasty is limited and is discussed in Fischer 1968: 14 ff.

What was Dendera's place during the conflicts of the later half of the First Intermediate Period? Dendera remained loyal to the Memphite Seventh and Eighth Dynasties, but its situation vis-à-vis the Heracleopolitans is unclear, and it may never have fallen under Heracleopolitan rule. The common argument suggests that Dendera was one of the first regions to accept the Theban rule at the onset of Theban aggression.⁴

This – that Dendera fell to Thebes almost immediately – was Henry Fischer's conclusion after studying the titulary at Dendera. Fischer traced the development of the titulary in the cemetery at Dendera as a means of understanding the chronology of the cemetery, and he provided a paleography that has proved essential for dating the material from Dendera. While Fischer's study is exemplary, he focused specifically and tightly on the major individuals who held elevated positions. There were more of these heavily-titled individuals during the earlier part of the Intermediate Period. In particular during the Eleventh Dynasty, lacking the centralized Memphite government, there are a surplus of private individuals with non-extraordinary titulary who create funerary stelae. Despite a lack of titles, these inscriptions can be extraordinary for the content and for what this content reveals in terms of daily life at Dendera during this crucial time. Both of the inscriptions which I am looking at today date from the later part of the Intermediate Period. A critical reading of these inscriptions for information beyond the top-down history provided by their titulary can reveal important information about Dendera's history.

With few exceptions and few clear archaeological or contextual clues, dating at Dendera is done through the changing paleography established by Fischer.⁵ In the first publication of the Dendera material, Sir Flinders Petrie's dating of the art and inscriptions was largely visual. He based his assessment on the material's deviation from the art of the expected earlier Old Kingdom Memphite corpus, and he then dismissed many of the Denderite inscriptions using loaded labels like "rude" or "laboured."⁶ The iconography and inscriptions of this period have

⁴ As argued throughout Fischer 1968. For instance, see n. 580 or p. 177.

⁵ The paleographic changes at Dendera were tracked throughout Fischer's work. See, for instance, Fischer 1968: figures 15 and 24-26.

⁶ Petrie's chronological designations included descriptions such as "Severe," "Good, early," "Corrupt VIth Dynasty," "Crowded inscriptions," "Widespread, coarse inscriptions," "Rude

since been shown to be provincial rather than simple.⁷ Far from being crude, the material shows a clear paleographic evolution across the First Intermediate Period.

The characteristic mark of the later part of the Intermediate Period, as first recognized by Henry Fischer,⁸ is that the citizens on the whole lack significant titles. Another indication is that the inscriptions, which include stelae, architraves, and lintels,⁹ can also show a slight degradation in quality that could be related to their significant increase in production.

In studying the two stelae discussed here, I was able to do direct tracings of the pieces onto vellum. I was allowed to photograph each piece; however, their placement in the storeroom and their immovability made proper lighting impossible and only detailed study photographs were taken. Also, I was allowed limited access to each stela, which made it necessary to do collations of the stelae from photographs or from my notes. There are few to no traces of paint remaining on the stelae from Dendera, and the stones which I was studying in Cairo were in excellent condition, which made direct tracing the most adequate method of epigraphic recording.

The first inscription that I will be considering is Cairo Journal d'Entrée (JE) number 32139, which is the more widely known of the two inscriptions. It is from the mastaba of *Sn-nḏsw*, an individual with a significant number

and simple," "Laboured work. Simple inscriptions. Puffy faces," and concluded with, "Double lines. Finer work." See Petrie 1900a: 13.

⁷There is some discussion that the provincial style of the First Intermediate Period could have developed out of a so-called "Second Style," a Memphite style that developed in conjunction but separate from the royal school. Not enough work has been done on the Second Style at this point to speak about it with any confidence, and Russmann's work focused on three-dimensional representations. For more information, see Russmann 1995. Russmann's article, which was the first to propose this theory, has been readily adopted by scholars of the First Intermediate Period. For its manifestations, see for example Spanel 1996; Wildung 1999; or Robins 1990 (this work appeared prior to the publication of Russmann's article, but it deals solely with provincial art). Recent work by Stephen Seidlmayer on the archaeology of the First Intermediate Period is continually yielding more information about the archaeology and dating of the period. For instance, Seidlmayer 1990; Seidlmayer 2001; and Seidlmayer 2003.

⁸Fischer 1968: especially p. 177.

⁹Interestingly, tomb wall decoration seems to have been extremely infrequent at Dendera and the stelae are by-and-large limestone. This is fortunate for posterity in that many of the walls have been badly denuded, but a great number of limestone inscriptions are preserved.

of texts whom Fischer dated non-specifically to the “Dynasty IX and Later” period.¹⁰

The second of the two inscriptions, a natural complement to the first, is Cairo Journal d’Entrée number 46048. It has no Catalogue General (CG) number. It carries the University of Pennsylvania field number of D3128. This piece was found in the findspot of 13:483, which places it in a portion of the cemetery prevalent with Eleventh Dynasty texts. Other pieces found in the same tomb confirm the identity of the tomb owner as Hornakht. A brief communication by Aly Abdalla in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* published a line drawing of the stele with translation.¹¹ Although Abdalla’s 1993 article was the first proper publication of the inscription, Faulkner cites the inscription in his *Concise Dictionary*, published as early as 1962.¹²

With bands of hieroglyphs and no accompanying iconography, both of the inscriptions appear stylistically to have functioned as part of architraves, although lacking a clear architectural context, it is difficult to say with certainty.¹³ Architraves at Dendera were fairly uncommon and seem to have been limited exclusively to mastaba tombs¹⁴ rather than the (more common type of) tombs with a limited or non-existent superstructure. Mastabas at Dendera were few in number and were an indicator of wealth and elite status.¹⁵

The inscribed architraves were placed over the doorway of the mastaba in the facade which led into the offering chamber. They might have measured as much as 20 feet in length and could be comprised of several shorter

¹⁰ Petrie published the text on plate X of his work on Dendera, Schenkel translated it (Schenkel 1965: 142-143), and other scholars have touched on the stele periodically as appropriate.

¹¹ Abdalla 1993.

¹² Faulkner 1999: 196, under the reference for *hrwyt* (meaning war).

¹³ Because of how badly the walls at Dendera were denuded, none of the architectural pieces were found *in situ*. In many instances, such as that of the two pieces examined here, the pieces were found near to the place from where it is assumed that they came. The excavation cards, housed in the University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, provide detailed descriptions of the findspots of the pieces.

¹⁴ Slater 1974: 324, says that they were “no doubt restricted to mastabas as is shown by the distribution pattern.”

¹⁵ Slater 1974: 128: “As its [a mastaba’s] size suggests, it was restricted to the more important and wealthy officials.”

sections.¹⁶ They do not seem to have had any actual function architecturally, but inscriptionally they provided the tomb owner with a slightly larger forum in which to record his deeds beyond the space provided by a typical funerary stele. At Dendera, funerary stele were most commonly fit into smaller offering niches and therefore had room only for a short inscription reserved for simple titles or *hṭp dj nsw* offering formulae occasionally complemented by biographical data.

JE 32139

The first inscription, JE 32139 (Fig. 1), shows three lines of hieroglyphic text, done in sunk relief, reading right to left. The right side of the stele is broken off (to an unknown length) and the left side is fully preserved. The first two registers of hieroglyphs show standard inscribed forms with fine interior detailing given to the hieroglyphs, but the last line is of a crowded style known from several other examples at Dendera.

The inscription reads as follows:

(1) [break]... my father Mrrj gave to me his house, and I found it consisting of rooms of bricks, it being (2) [break]... it in standing wood, in every wood, 10 being its height in cubits, with doors of (3) [break]... on cutting down; gardeners were making vegetables; overseers of the garden were planting sycamores. The nḏs man was protected because of his bow; every man was protected because of his works.¹⁷ I did this from then on, truthfully. This is not as is said in the "offices of the necropolis"...

The very last signs of the text are clear: *Sn-nḏsw* is mentioning his father *Mrrj*. The few signs before that are puzzling.¹⁸ This expression is not easy, but I would like to propose some new suggestions. The phrase Fischer originally suggested, is read *hr ʒgt*, with the foot-sign representing the hoof rather than

¹⁶ Slater 1974: 323-324.

¹⁷ In both instances, the verb is translated as a stative in the passive, introduced by *jw*, with *n* introducing the object.

¹⁸ Fischer 1968: 156 (i).

the letter *b*. However, most parallels of this expression typically use the ʕ biliteral sign, which this example does not.¹⁹

An alternative would be to understand the preceding statement as “*This is not as is said in the ‘offices of the necropolis,’ but immediately*”. The initial bird of the next word would not be an alef-bird, but instead *bʕ* (with the break in the text passing crucially through the neck). However, this word relates to being exhausted²⁰ and seems contextually inappropriate as relating to *Sn-ndsw*’s father *Mrrj*. A third possibility is that this word is related to either the verb to mourn²¹ or to a noun meaning overabundance.

Whatever the precise translation, that which *Sn-ndsw* is stressing remains the same: his action was truthful, immediate, and was taken on earth, in life. His actions, along with the actions of his father, resulted in the continued reliance of the Denderites in his ability to provide for them and to ensure that their daily lives continued unaffected.

On paleographic grounds, Henry Fischer dated this piece to the Ninth or Tenth Dynasties.²² Some of the features which caused him to come to this conclusion are immediately evident: for instance, the long tails on the letter *h* or the rounded back of the head on the *alef*-bird, whose indicating feature is typically his squared head. By his own paleography, both of these features indicate a non-specific date in the First Intermediate Period, with the long tail of the *h* suggesting the later part of the period. On contextual grounds, *Sn-ndsw* is the son of *Mrrj*, giving another clue towards dating.

Although there is much room for stylistic and creative variation, typically Egyptian hieroglyphs are read right to left. This is consistently true in the Denderite inscriptions.²³ The writings in several contemporaneous inscriptions,

¹⁹ This expression is uncommon, and none of the parallels are from Dendera.

²⁰ See Hannig 2003: 412-413 or Wb. I, 431.

²¹ Wb. I, 22 (13, 14).

²² For the purpose of this study, I am ignoring the fact that Dendera never fell to the Heracleopolitans and that, therefore, the notion of the “Ninth or Tenth Dynasty” is irrelevant at Dendera. Although most scholars would agree that there was significant chronological overlap between at least the Tenth (Heracleopolitan) and Eleventh (Theban) Dynasties, Henry Fischer’s historical designations, which seem to imply that the Seventh through Twelfth Dynasties happened sequentially, are used to avoid further confusion.

²³ An obvious exception to this statement are two stelae in the University Museum, 29-66-627 and E17809, which are written retrograde. Regarding 29-66-627, see Fischer 1986: 115. Penn E17809 is an unpublished fragment.

like that of the last line of this text of *Sn-ndsw*, appear cramped and almost jumbled. There is a decline in the quality, even within the same inscription, as the hieroglyphs grow smaller and more crowded. Although this style of writing can occur when a scribe is pressed for space at the end of a text, the scribes responsible for these inscriptions at Dendera seem to choose this style of writing intentionally and there are no indications that it is accidental. All of the 20 inscriptions that show this style of writing at Dendera date from the later part of the Intermediate Period.²⁴ The first appearance of this style of writing comes from *Mrrj*, the father of *Sn-ndsw*.²⁵ Several of the inscriptions come from the tomb of *Sn-ndsw*. The content of these inscriptions is standard biographical and does not differ from other inscriptions.

JE 46048

The second inscription, JE46048 (Fig. 2), is six registers of hieroglyphic text. It reads from right to left, and the right side is fully preserved. The left side of the text is broken off, although the length is likely fully preserved with only a few signs missing from the bottom registers. The break is jagged and more of the top two lines are lost than of the bottom four. There is very mild surface damage.

Regarding the man standing to the right of the stele, Abdalla surmised that it was most likely a later graffito although he conceded, citing Fischer, that the motif of a private person holding an *ankh* is otherwise attested.²⁶ Unfortunately, Abdalla was evidently unaware that after Fischer published an article citing the many reasons why the stele on which Abdalla based his comparison was unusual, he renounced the comparative stele as a forgery.²⁷

²⁴ These inscriptions are as follows: from Fisher's excavations, UM 29-66-589, 29-66-611, 29-66-608, 29-66-618, and the unpublished D628 (likely from the tomb of *Sn-ndsw-j*); from Petrie's excavations, Penn E17879; Penn E17325 (Petrie Pl. X, b2l); Manchester 2933 (Petrie Pl. VIIA, bl2); Cairo CG 1666 (Petrie Pl. VIII, bl2); Manchester 3307 (Petrie Pl. IX, br); Bolton 56.98 (Petrie Pl. IX, top); Chicago 5015 (Petrie Pl. X, t2r); Ashmolean 3927 (Petrie Pl. XI, bl); Edinburgh 1898.382.3 (Petrie Pl. XI, tr); Manchester 2891 (Petrie Pl. XIB, tr); Chicago 4625 (Petrie Pl. XIB, tl); and Chicago 5014 (Petrie Pl. XIB, t3l).

²⁵ See CG1666.

²⁶ Abdalla 1993: 249 and n. 5. The other attestation is in JE 88876.

²⁷ The stele in question is JE 88876. See Fischer 1973 and Fischer 1981a. In the 1973 article, Fischer gives a scant five examples of private figures holding the *ankh*-sign from the later First Intermediate Period, and stresses that this is uncommonly used for private individuals.

Having viewed JE 46048, I am not convinced that it is even an *ankh* which the figure is holding. The man standing to the right does seem to be a later graffito. He appears to be an unusual variation on a common Eleventh Dynasty motif, wherein a small cupbearer holds a hemispherical cup to the mouth or nose of the deceased person. This motif is echoed by another motif, that of a person holding a lotus flower to his own nose. Given no direct parallel for the motif seen in this stele, and given the popularity of the Hathor cult and subsequently the popularity of the site of Dendera throughout later Egyptian history, it seems highly possible that this graffito is a later addition.

Other pieces from the Dendera cemetery can also show graffiti of a similar style. JE 46050, for instance, has two *s3*-birds drawn in to the right of the deceased as he stands next to his wife. Were one of his sons pictured, the birds (both of which are the hieroglyph for “son”) would be written as a label, typically giving their names. These two tombs both date from the Eleventh Dynasty and were found in the same general vicinity of the cemetery, making it likely that they would have been exposed for a Middle Kingdom visitor to see and embellish. In both instances, the graffiti is present in the field photo (indicating that it was not a recent addition).

Returning to the inscription, the architrave reads as follows:

(1) The sole companion Hornakht says: I built the house of my father after I found it consisting of rooms (of bricks)... [break] (2) every door of 5 cubits. I raised up 50 columns therein. I built this tomb in the second year of building this house with my own crew of 30 nḏs men. The herdsman²⁸ was beside... [break] (3) the herdsman were beside the swine,²⁹ and the washerman was washing. I gave grain to Dendera, all of it in its entirety, for 56 years, 400 measures each year, from the excess, during the hostility with the Thinite nome. I made boats... [break] (4) every mḥ3w boat with 46 oars. I made 12 large boats and 8 small boats. I gave bread to one who came hungry, and I gave sandals to one who came barefoot, water to one who came parched.³⁰ I gave

²⁸ This word, which I have translated as “herdsman,” is never fully written out, although it appears twice in this text. This translation follows Fischer 1968: n. 686 who follows Clère’s unpublished manuscript. Abdalla 1993: 250 also follows Fischer.

²⁹ Although the meaning is clear and the sign for the pig couldn’t be more clear, the reading of *ṣ3jw* follows Fischer 1968 (using Clère’s notes) and Abdalla 1993.

³⁰ This word poses a great difficulty. Barring an extreme scribal error, the word is not a variant of *jbj*, to be thirsty. This reading is based on Abdalla’s suggestion, which is to consider it

grain to one who asked for grain, and I gave [clothes]... [break] (5) to one who asked for clothes, and I gave copper to one who asked for copper. I gave yarn and I gave linen flax. I never took it from them. Moreover, I gave female children to husbands. People were born because of it:³¹ with 24 heads, from 14 men to 12 women. Moreover, [I did this].(6) Moreover, I built houses for girls from my houses, myself. I gave a span of ox to one who asked for a span of ox, and I gave donkeys to one who asked for donkeys, and I gave a boat to one who asked for a boat. Moreover, I [did this.]

Looking at the example that carries from the end of line 4 through the beginning of line 5, it is clear that there are only a few signs missing off of the last few rows of text. The final line of the text ends abruptly, and may have continued onto another piece that has not been found or simply is to be read emphatically.

Something of note about this text is its reliance on hieratic signs. Abdalla gave examples of the hieraticized ʕ³² and mʕ³³ biliteral signs, but missed the first instance of the ʕ in line 3 (as did Fischer). The hieratic evidence does not necessarily suggest that there was a papyrus original, but it could have indicated an adaptation from a more crude original. Other unfinished pieces at Dendera³⁴ show that the original drawings or hieroglyphs were carved onto the stone, without grid lines, and embellished in the final steps, facilitating similar inadvertent copy errors.

Much of the content of this text is fairly standard. For instance, many First Intermediate Period stelae from Dendera detail the number and size of

a reading of the word *tʕ* (Abdalla 1993: 252 (j)). However, this still leaves the walking legs unaccounted for.

³¹ I have translated this verb form as a passive *sdm.f* with *rmtw* as the subject. There are obvious problems with this translation. Even the reading of the *ms* sign is uncertain. However, this translation more adequately considers the clear *t* than Abdalla's does.

³² Abdalla 1993: 252 (q).

³³ Abdalla 1993: 251 (g).

³⁴ These pieces include at least 29-66-586, 29-66-650, 29-66-664, 29-66-667, 29-66-676, 29-66-690, 29-66-695, 29-66-796, 29-66-807, E17743, E17748A, and E17748B. It seems from these examples that the hieroglyphs were carved first, since the majority of the unfinished examples show complete inscriptions but unfinished illustrations.

boats which the deceased claims to have built.³⁵ Also common in stelae of this period is the idea that he satisfied those townspeople who approached him with needs: giving clothing or food to those without, for instance. His inscription is somewhat unique in the length to which he goes in providing for these people, giving copper or donkeys, or even female children.

Both of these inscriptions, that of Hornkaht as well as that of *Sn-ndsw*, come from the tombs of elite individuals. Both of them stress their prosperity. Hornakht does so explicitly, by boasting of needs that he supplied to whomever asked. *Sn-ndsw* mentions his gardeners – certainly not standard for a middle or lower class home – and his sycamore trees – also a luxury item.

Both texts also insist that normal affairs were being conducted as expected, and both imply that the status quo was maintained through their actions and their own efforts.

Hornakht says that there was no interruption in the activities of the herdsman or the washerman. This is a direct counter to the opening lines of the (allegedly First Intermediate Period) text of the Admonitions of Ipuwer, whose initial lines suggest the disarray into which the nation has fallen, including the quote that “*the washerman does not think of carrying his load.*”³⁶

The last line of *Sn-ndsw*'s text is perhaps the most interesting. It begins with a similar boast that chores were being conducted as expected. By including this information in his funerary texts, he is attempting to take credit for the stable situation at Dendera with the result that the *nds*-man is able to protect himself, and every man is protected because of his own works. The offices of the necropolis to which *Sn-ndsw* refers is cited by Fischer, who credits Clère,³⁷ as an uncommon title given to someone after death that they do not hold in life. By using this title, *Sn-ndsw* is reiterating that the stable situation at Dendera is the result of actions which he actually did while alive and is not hyperbole.³⁸

Despite their best protestations to the contrary, the status quo was shifting. In stressing that life was continuing uninterruptedly, both texts are

³⁵ For the *mḥ3w* boat in particular, Jones defines it as simply “a kind of boat.” Jones 1988: 139.

³⁶ Lichtheim 1973: 150.

³⁷ See Fischer 1968: 156 (h) and 145.

³⁸ As Fischer pointed out, this statement is paralleled by one written by his father *Mrrj*. See Fischer 1968: 142-143.

actually suggesting the possibility of a disrupted daily life. Hornakht refers to the disruption outright, mentioning the “war with Thebes.”

Many caveats apply when examining the Egyptian (or any) textual material in search of an underlying, historical truth. The texts from Dendera are a mixture of formulaic and novel statements. I would argue that, particularly regarding their attitudes toward warfare, the texts from First Intermediate Period Dendera show a clear development: the earlier texts bear no references to warfare and limited references to soldiery, and the later texts can include persons of military career or who list military-esque endeavors amongst their accomplishments. The absence of these later inclusions in earlier texts, along with their novelty, support that the biographical inscriptions (albeit often formulaic) are a depiction of what was occurring at Dendera at the point when they were written.

References to possible strife first appear in the texts of *Sn-ndsw*’s father, *Mrrj*. A text from his tomb, which slightly predates these examples, makes mention of the Nehesy-people of the desert,³⁹ a Nubian people who often acted as mercenaries for the Egyptians.⁴⁰ Although a mention of them is not necessarily explicitly warfare related,⁴¹ this is one of the many nearly contemporaneous suggestions that Dendera was engaging in battle.⁴² Another

³⁹ Fischer 1968: 138. The text itself appears in Petrie 1900b: Pl. VIIIC.

⁴⁰ For more information, see Fischer 1961: 77. Fischer surmises that, at least at Gebelein, where the *Nhsy* set up several funerary stelae for themselves in a dress distinct from their native Egyptian neighbors, they “enjoyed considerable prestige among the Upper Egyptians at Gebelein on account of their prowess as hunters and warriors, and accordingly would have taken some pride in showing themselves as they actually looked.”

⁴¹ Fischer 1961: 78. Although he states this unequivocally, in fn. 86 he goes on to clarify slightly that the evidence is limited.

⁴² The text of *Mrrj* is a badly broken cornice piece (of which much has survived and can be reconstructed), and thereby its interpretation must be used sparingly. In at least one instance from stela Berlin 24302, from Gebelein (quoted in Fischer 1961, fig. 1), the author of the text uses the *Nhsy* people as a parallel for the Egyptians, indicating that the author was pre-eminent amongst *all* peoples, both Egyptians and foreigners. (However, the passage in question is of an unmistakably war-like context, reading, “...I was an excellent commoner who acted with his strong arm, one who was the foremost of his recruits... I surpassed this town in its entirety in swiftness – (both) its Nubians and its Upper Egyptians.” quoted in Fischer 1961: 48. Fischer points out on p. 52 that the last sentence of this inscription likely has a military context: “Swiftness is linked with military prowess in other inscriptions of the time.”) Problematic to this interpretation is Fischer’s assumption that *šmꜥy* is being used as a noun, describing Upper Egyptians, an otherwise unparalleled (but believable) use of the term which he defends on p. 52-53.

clue from the texts of *Mrrj* is his statement that he “*spoke up when the nobles were silent on the day of arousing fear.*”⁴³ Another fragment from *Mrrj*’s inscriptions also mentions building a fortress, and (according to Fischer) “*a small fragment that seems to belong to the same inscription shows the [Nḥsy determinative] sign at the end of a segment.*”⁴⁴

That both of these inscriptions include references to the *nds* man is no coincidence. As an adjective, *nds* means small, but it can also designate a type of person. Translations have varied from the literal “small man” to suggestions of *nds* as an indicator of “economic independence”⁴⁵ or a “private citizen[] without titles.”⁴⁶ The *nds* man primarily appears in autobiographical texts and primarily in two circumstances: either as a self-identification, or a designation of a group of people with whom the speaker does not relate.⁴⁷

In both of these inscriptions, the author refers to the *nds* man as either one who has done his tomb building (in the case of Hornakht), or as one who has protected himself (in *Sn-nds*’s text) – both falling into the category of *nds* men which does not include the speaker. *Sn-nds* even contrasts “the *nds* man” with “every man.” Intriguingly, the name of *Sn-nds* means “Brother of *nds* men.”⁴⁸ Of the known individuals at Dendera, *Sn-nds*’s name is the earliest onomastic reference to the *nds* man. *Nds* appears in names at Dendera only four times: one example is *Sn-nds*, another is his son *Sn-nds*. The next two are women, also dating from this period, both named *Bbj-nds*.

The *nds* man also appears at Dendera in an unparalleled Eleventh Dynasty example, on a sarcophagus of *Bb*. One entry into a list reads, “*making less the officials and advancing the ndsw.*”⁴⁹

⁴³ quoted in Brovarski 1989: 714.

⁴⁴ Fischer 1968: 140.

⁴⁵ Loprieno 1996.

⁴⁶ Literally “Bürger = amtlose Privatleute,” by Assmann as quoted in Franke 1998: 33.

⁴⁷ All of the varying translations and a summary of the ideas behind the *nds* man can be found in Franke 1998. Another lengthy interpretation of the *nds* man can be found in Moreno García 1997 on p. 32ff. Additionally, a recent mention of the *nds* man in a context quite similar to these can be found in Silverman 2006.

⁴⁸ One suggestion, that *Sn-nds*’s name could possibly mean “younger brother,” is unlikely. Number agreement would be expected between the singular “brother” and the plural adjective “younger.”

⁴⁹ Columns 37-38 of his sarcophagus inscription, reproduced in Petrie 1900a: Pl. XXXVII. Fischer takes this list to be “*a list of things or incidents that concern the goddess*”; Fischer 1968: 183.

The *nds*-man can also have a military significance. Contemporaneously at Naga ed-Der, one man refers to himself as “a *nds*-man skilled in battle.”⁵⁰ Another common epithet refers to “an excellent *nds* man who acted with his arm.”⁵¹ The Hatnub graffiti include references to the recruiting of soldiers, specifically men who are *nds*-men.⁵²

At Dendera, a final intriguing mention of the *nds* man distinctly relates him to warfare and fighting. One stele’s Eleventh Dynasty author specifically clarifies that the *nds* men are being involved in warfare, saying that the stela owner⁵³ prepared the vanguard of the troops, supplying it with all the strong *nds* men. Not only did *Sbk-nht* prepare the troops, but he fought amongst them.

The only other allusions to warfare at Dendera are similarly from this period. Two of *Sn-ndsw*’s eight sons both hold the title “overseer of the house of soldiers.” These are the only two examples of this title.⁵⁴ A third son of *Sn-ndsw* is similarly “overseer of the house and the gate of the soldiers.” This third son, named *Sbk-nht*, may be the same individual who prepared the vanguard of the troops. Another Eleventh Dynasty individual, *Nwj*, held the title of “overseer of soldiers.”⁵⁵

Hornakht’s mentions of caring for young girls, both finding them husbands and providing them with houses, also could be interpreted as a sign of warfare.⁵⁶ The men who would ordinarily be responsible for these young women are unable to care for them.

⁵⁰ Brovarski 1989: 622-623.

⁵¹ Fischer 1981b: 61. Moreno García 1997: 36 n. 105 discusses this epithet at length. His conclusion is that it does not imply actual, physical strength, but instead personal autonomy. Moreno García also traces the epithet’s usage through the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period and analyzes the common metaphorical usage of the arm as a rhetorical device in ancient Egypt.

⁵² Doxey 1998: 196.

⁵³ As translated by Silverman 2006.

⁵⁴ Fischer 1968: 164.

⁵⁵ Military titles in general are not uncommon during the First Intermediate Period, and at times seem from their positioning in lists of titulary to suggest that these functions were common to provincial dignitaries of the time. For instance, to give one example of several similar, *W3hj* of El-Hagarsa has two titles: *h3ty-ꜥ* and *jmy-r mꜥꜥ*. See Kanawati 1995 Vol. III, p. 11 (with discussion following).

⁵⁶ It is necessary to point out that the motif of the strong caring for the weak is a commonly used literary device in ancient Egypt, especially in autobiographical texts (which tend towards

The directly relevant section of Hornakht's inscription, however, is the part in which he states that he gave grain to Dendera during the war with the Thinite nome. One thing to note is that the preposition which he uses is *hn*^c, or "together with," and that this cannot be translated as "at war with the Thinite nome," meaning "at war against the Thinite nome," as we would use in English. The war was not *against* the Thinite nome but, presumably, fought together with or alongside. However, it is likely that this was a part of the wars against Thebes, which were increasing in intensity over the course of the later Intermediate Period.

Another clue to Dendera's involvement in this warfare comes from the tomb of Ankhtifi. Ankhtifi, a southern nomarch of the First Intermediate Period, recorded a lengthy biographical inscription in his tomb detailing the military exploits which he took against the Theban and Coptite nomes. It is interesting, however (and relevant), that Ankhtifi gave support to Dendera⁵⁷ –but not to Thebes or Coptos. The implication, again, is that Dendera was *not* allied with the Theban nome. This supports the suggestion, in contradiction to that which was put forth by Henry Fischer, that Dendera did not fall to Thebes nearly immediately, and that Dendera was independent for longer than previously thought.

The breakdown of the state is suggested in that Hornakht gives grain to Dendera, all of it, in its entirety. The pronoun "it" is feminine and must refer to Dendera and not to the masculine grain. Perhaps this is suggesting that tax structures had been broken down, allowing Hornakht to distribute his grain directly to Dendera without a middle man. Not having to pay taxes could also account for additional prosperity.⁵⁸ Hornakht was not alone in his wealth; throughout the provinces, more and more Egyptians were experiencing a general wealth during this time period.⁵⁹

self-aggrandizing hyperbole). With that caveat, this mention from Hornakht's text is included. His text is intriguing and is definitely a reflection on the political situation of the time; no single piece of evidence is completely revealing, but the sum-total of all of the evidence does seem to have implications in agreement with the central theme of my argument.

⁵⁷ Vandier 1950: 39.

⁵⁸ This is entirely supposition on the part of the author. There is no evidence in the text that reflects clearly on the levying of taxes except for this passage, wherein I have chosen to interpret an absence of evidence as a possible indication of an absence of taxes.

⁵⁹ For more evidence on the increase in wealth, see for example Moreno García 1997: 70-72. Moreno García sees the battle against famine (epitomized in specific descriptions of grain donations, such as that of Hornakht) as a new – and important – motif to come out of the First Intermediate Period, one which was also inextricably linked with the rise of the *nds* man.

An interesting note regarding the amount of grain which Hornakht specified that he gave to Dendera each year: using comparative data, 400 measures a year would be the rations sufficient to provide for approximately 6-7 soldiers each for an entire year.⁶⁰

In the later half of the First Intermediate Period, beginning in the generation of *Mrrj* and carrying through the Eleventh Dynasty, there are several explicit mentions of warfare. The increase is gradual and subtle but undeniable, and the idea that Dendera was at peace for the entirety of the First Intermediate Period is impossible. I would also question the standard logic that Dendera was subservient to the Thebans from an early date. By being at war *with* the Thinite nome, they were likely to have been fighting *against* the Theban nome.

This article is a limited look at only two of the more historically significant of the hundreds of stelae and fragments dating from Dendera's Eleventh Dynasty. There remains significant work to be done on this material. These stelae need to be translated, treated epigraphic- and paleographically, and contextualized. This paper represents a start, but a full treatment of the Eleventh Dynasty material from Dendera is necessary to continue to help to piece Denderite history into the greater First Intermediate Period history.

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⁶⁰ These calculations are based on a translation that Simpson made of a compensation list in Papyrus Reisner I. In this text (Simpson 1973), the work force (written with the *ms*^c soldier hieroglyph) is rationed 2/3 heqat of northern barley (as seems to be the type specified here) and 1 heqat of wheat every 10 days. Kemp then extrapolated this data (Kemp 1986) with the modern estimates of the size of the heqat, to come up with a weight of 2.25kg for 2/3 heqat of northern barley and 3.75kg per heqat of wheat. With a heqat of barley at approximately 3.38kg, and 400 heqat given each year, the yearly rations per soldier were approximately 219kg, meaning that 400 heqats could feasibly have provided for 6-7 soldiers. (Note: this calculation is a rough approximation only, as the type of barley was not clearly specified, thus I have averaged an amount between barley and wheat.)

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