

Marginalia IV¹
*Henry George Fischer**

1. An Anonymous Autobiography

My initial marginalia concern three inscriptions from which I have previously quoted a few phrases in publications of my own, and which, for one reason or another, seem to merit further attention. That is particularly true of the first of them, a shattered autobiography from Clarence Fisher's excavations at Dendera ninety years ago, for the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Though both ends of the inscription were missing, a substantial portion of all five of its lines may be seen in the field photograph that was made soon after its discovery (Fig. 1). This reliably indicates the approximate position of all the fragments except for two, which are completely detached and must be moved even farther rightward, as indicated by the restorations shown in the schematic reconstruction in Fig. 2.

All of the pieces were salvaged, though the condition of some of them is less good than when they were initially photographed.² They collectively bear the accession number 29-66-618, and their excavation number is D 842.



Fig. 1

* H.G. Fischer was finalizing this article at his untimely death in January 2006. I have attempted to prepare it for publication as faithfully as possible, based on his manuscript and our correspondence. —Peter Der Manuelian, ed.

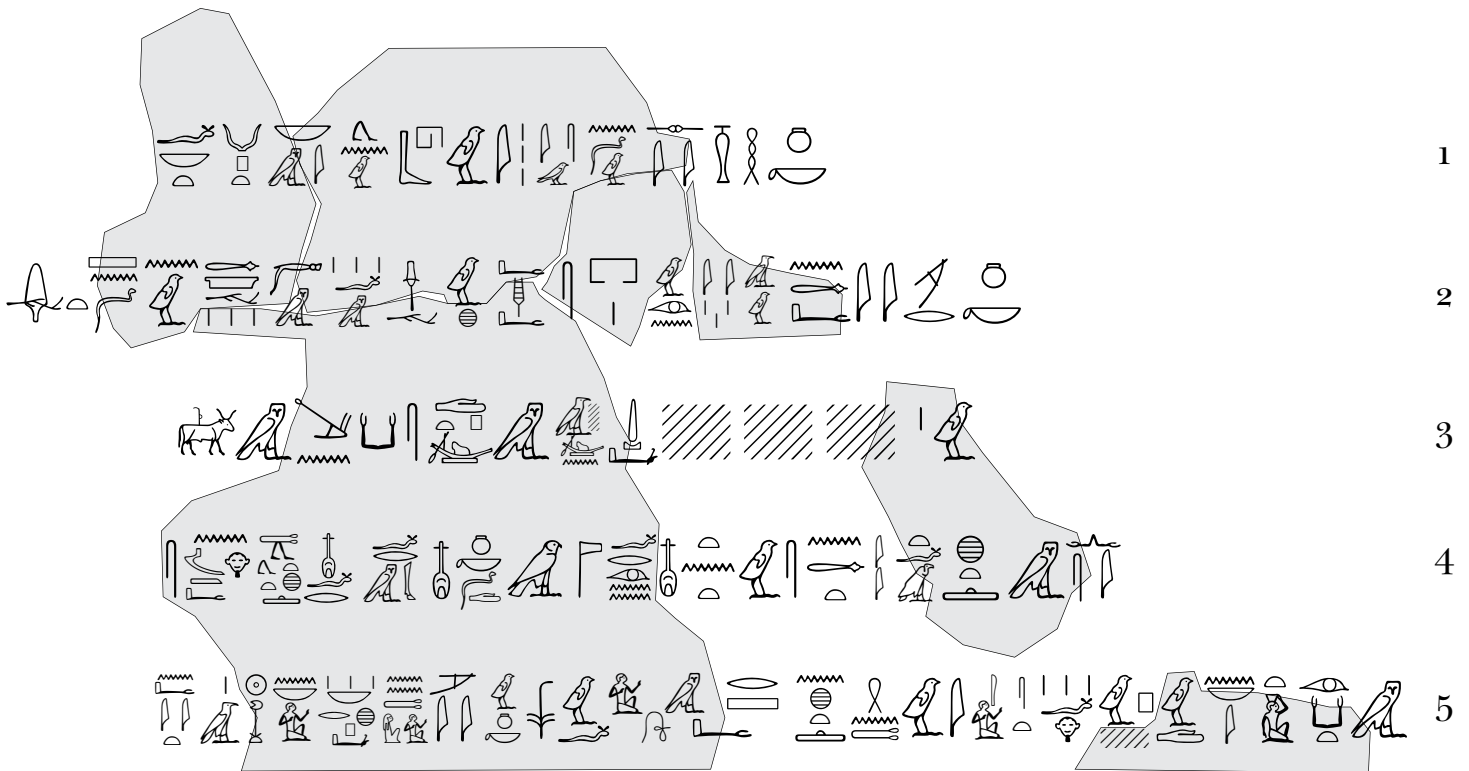


Fig. 2









Translation:

1. ... [I was praised by] the commoners.^a My lord^b sent me on his every mission^c ...
2. ... [I was loved by] the great. I [made my(?)]^d house, its columns erected, and (it) being completed with doors of acacia^e ...
3. ... I transported with my boat, ploughed with [my span]^f ...
4. ... (all this was) not, indeed, by means of the property of my father and mother,^g [but by virtue(?)] of the good that my god did for me.^h I was one who speaks good and repeats good, who acquires property justlyⁱ ...
5. ... in [executing] work [for] my lord, [his] butler[s(?)] provisioning me (?).^j I punished(?)^k the [for]eigner^l when he [ro]bbed him. I was loved by all the people^m whom my lord commanded on the day of str[ife]ⁿ ...


Comments:

a. Another Dendera stela has: “I was loved by the great, praised by the small” (D 4043, Univ. Mus. 29–66–661). In the present case the *z* of *hzy* may be traced at the right edge; thus a small correction is to be made in my *Dendera*, p. 162 (c). Elsewhere the formula in

question begins with “I said that which is loved,” etc. (Petrie, *Denderah*, pls. 2A, 8, 9, 10A). But nowhere else are the two elements of such statements separated as they are here.




b. Note the reappearance of  for , as also at the beginning of lines 2 and 5. Line 5 otherwise, in four cases, reverts to normal usage, so that “my lord” is  near the beginning of the line, and  towards the end. The substitution of  sometimes occurs in the determinative of names at Dendera and elsewhere, but only at Dendera is it known from biographical statements, and nowhere does it occur so frequently as in this particular biography. In two other Dendera inscriptions it appears in the epithet  “one whom his father praised and his mother loved” (Cairo CG 1641 and Petrie, *o.c.*, pl. 11c, center, near top). It occurs again in  “the house of my father” (D 3128, Abdalla, *JEA* 79 [1993], 250, line 1), where “father” is written as in the other two cases; this was perhaps prompted by the use of  as the determinative of the name that precedes it. The date of all three examples is Dyn. XI.

c. This phrase occurs several times at Dendera, and once at Naqada; see Fischer, *Coptite Nome*, pp. 64–5.

d. The position of  suggests that a suffix *f* might be restored below it, but there is, in fact, little room for this sign, and the lack of a more immediately antecedent reference to “my lord” would not be very satisfactory. It is much more likely that the deceased is speaking of his own house.

e. The reference to columns and doors is paralleled in Petrie, *o.c.*, pl. 10 (Fischer, *Dendera*, p. 158), and Abdalla, *l.c.*). In both cases the house has been rebuilt after being inherited from the father of the deceased. A fragmentary inscription from Abydos (Cairo CG 20503) similarly speaks of raising doors and columns, but the context is lost.


f. Elsewhere in the Dendera inscriptions transport and ploughing are offered to others who need them: Petrie, *o.c.*, pls. 10A, 11 A–C, 13; also Abdalla, *l.c.*

g. *N is m it.i, mwt.i* also occurs on a stela from Thebes (Clère–Vandier, *Textes*, no. 12), as already noted in *Dendera*, n. 643; it is preceded by “I gave grain to the hungry.” In the present case the determinatives of “father” and “mother” were probably again , since there seems too little space for  and  to be placed one above the other.

h. This combination of statements, one expressing independence, the other dependence on the local god, is also attested by another stela from Dendera (Fischer, *o.c.*, p. 208–9, comment f) and by two stelae from the Thinite Nome: Dunham, *Naga ed Deir*, no. 28, and Smith, *Egyptian Art*, pl. 57; cf. also *JNES* 19 (1960), 264, n. 7.

i. For this combination of epithets see Polotsky, *Zu den Inschriften der II. Dyn.*, par. 65. The following *s* may belong to another epithet such as *s3q-ib* “self-collected,” or *skm-ib* “wise.”

j. The word *wdpw* can hardly be doubted, in view of the accompanying determinative. It is less certain that there were a number of them, and still less certain that they “were provisioning me,” but this restoration may be near the mark, for they are evidently associated with the activity that has just been mentioned.



k. The trace identified as *r* is less likely the end of *n*, which would admit a restoration such as  “I repelled.”

l. Cf.  in the biography of *Mrrî*, Fischer, *Dendera*, pp. 138–9, where the meaning “foreigners” seems indicated by the context.

m. A scribal error—*nmt* for *rmt*.

n. *Hrw n h3yt* is known from Hatnub inscriptions 16 and 20, as may be seen from Schenkel’s list of this and kindred examples, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien*, p. 92. As these examples show, the genitival *n* is sometimes omitted, sometimes not.

The unusual separation of the epithets “praised by the commoners” and “loved by the great” would seem to indicate that relatively little has been lost at either end of the inscription, since the parallelism of these two phrases would be less effective if very many more words intervened. This means that the inscription probably lacked an offering formula, as does the autobiographical architrave D 3128, mentioned above, in comments b and e.³ As in that case, the inscription doubtless began with the name of the deceased, and perhaps a title, followed by *dd* “who says.” Even so the length was more than 65 cm, taking into account the proposed restorations. The height is 27 cm.

The style of the hieroglyphs is also similar, though not identical, to those of D 3128. Both of these architraves alternate large signs, which fill nearly the entire height of the line, with columns of as many as five smaller signs. Both also show the amalgamation of  and  in *sʿhʿ* “to erect.” D 3128 has other novel composite hieroglyphs of this kind,⁴ and so too, probably, did D 842, as shown in my restorations at the left edge of lines 2 and 3. Furthermore the reference to “the day of strife”⁵ may be related to a mention of “enmity with the Thinite Nome” in D 3128. In any case this architrave is similarly to be dated to the formative years of the Eleventh Dynasty.

Notes

1. See *GM* 122 (1991), 21–30; 128 (1992), 69–80; 185 (2001), 45–65.
2. As reported recently by Dr. David Silverman.
3. Also attested by a much more modest biographical architrave, containing only two lines of inscription: Petrie, *o.c.*, pl. 11B, right side, 4th from top. Quite exceptionally, a stela also lacks the offering formula in at least one case: D 3497.
4. For this development see *MMJ* 12 (1977), 11–12, figs. 6–8.
5. This reference should be added to those I have assembled in *Dendera*, p. 132, n. 580.

2. The Provenance of a Lost Stela

Many years ago, in my *Dendera*, n. 643, I noted that part of the “stèle maintenant détruite” presented by Daressy in *ASAE* 15 (1915), 207f., had come to light in a photograph purchased at the Cairo Museum. The photograph (Fig. 1), which shows the deceased and his wife, seemed to indicate that the stela was fashioned at Dendera. Daressy makes no mention of any provenance in his article, but I subsequently learned that Mariette had provided this information, and that he said it came from Edfu.¹ Nothing is known about the circumstances of its discovery—whether it was definitely known to have been excavated at Edfu, or whether someone in possession of it claimed that it was found there. I strongly suspect the latter, but it may be well to review this question, and the publication of the photograph will in any case be of interest.





Fig. 1



Fig. 2

My earlier judgment was based on a stylistic resemblance to a number of stelae from Dendera, and these display several of the same motifs, namely the three items that accompany the woman: a squat jar, a tubular jar and a mirror in its case.² Also the small figure presenting a cup to the man, and (as described by Daressy) another small figure at the lower right corner, representing a woman grinding grain. The cupbearer appears frequently on stelae of the Heracleopolitan Period and somewhat later, and not only at Dendera, but farther northward, at Naga ed-Deir, and southward, at Gebelein.³ The woman grinding grain was much more commonly shown at Dendera than anywhere else, however; I have counted 17 examples,⁴ and know of only two from other places—one from Naqada,⁵ where it is accompanied by baking, and the second, dating to the mid-Eleventh Dynasty, from Qurna, i.e. Thebes.⁶ The only comparable stela from Edfu that is known to me shows none of the aforementioned features except the mirror in its case.⁷

In addition to this iconographic evidence, an even more telling detail is to be found among the offerings that appear in the lower right portion of the stela. Below a thigh of beef (☉) and a bunch of onions are the head and very long neck of a goose with gaping beak and extruded tongue. This unusual detail seems only to be known from the Dendera stelae, and particularly those most similar to the one under consideration.⁸

Although the photograph of the left end of the stela includes only a few hieroglyphs, this source provides a palaeographic detail that is still more conclusive. At Dendera the sign representing bread assumes a form that seems to be completely unknown elsewhere, namely ,⁹ and is apparently to be explained by assimilation to . That explanation is confirmed by Fig. 2,¹⁰ where, in the name *Htp-Hthx*, the relation between the two signs is particularly evident. At other places the bottom of the loaf was sometimes slightly everted, but it was never spread into a rectangular base or mat.

The content of the inscription likewise supplies further indications of the provenance, calling for a translation of the entire text. This must be prefaced, however, by a caution concerning Daressy's copy, which shows some irregularities that are probably not to be attributed to the scribe, but reflect the disarray into which this portion of the stela had fallen—"tombée en miettes."



Fig. 2

Translation:

(1) An offering that the king gives, and Anubis, Who is Upon His Hill, Who is in the Place of Embalming, Lord of the Sacred Land, that offerings be invoked for^a (2) the Sole Companion, the Steward^b *Bbi*,^c who says: I acquired a boat^d of 30 cubits; I acquired houses (by) seal,^e and there was nothing remembered^f against me. I acquired three male servants (3) and seven maidservants beyond^g what was given me by my father. I acquired 28 donkeys; (4) I provided myself with goats; (5) I bought 1004(?)^h arouras of land, (this) being what I bought beyondⁱ the property of my father.^j

Caption of woman: His beloved wife, *Š3bt3*.^k

Comments:

a. Not *n k3 n*; there are clear traces of *ꜥ ꜥ*, as, for example, in D 3443 and Petrie, *Dendera*, pls. 11B (bottom right), 37F.

b. The title is best translated thus in the absence of further specification, though it is sometimes applied to other functions.

- c. The first of the pair of 𓆎 -signs belongs to the name.
- d. The initial *d* has been lost.
- e. This application of sealing is discussed in *Kush* 9 (1961), 49f. In the reference to Cairo CG 20805 the land measurement cannot be correct, but I cannot explain it; in any case the last sign is \square not \square .
- f. Lit. “no memory.”
- g. The sign is certainly 𓆎 ; *h3w* is used similarly in CG 20805, also from Dendera, as well as BM 1250, from Naga ed-Deir, for which see *Studies in Ancient Egypt. the Aegean and the Sudan* (Dunham Festschrift), pp. 5ff, and figs. 5–6.
- h. Assuming that the first sign is 𓆎 .
- i. Again *h3w*.
- j. The photograph shows a clear trace of the sign 𓆎 .
- k. Ranke, *PN I*, 324 (24) cites this example as well as *š3bt* (22), which elsewhere shows the determinatives 𓆎 (PN II, 318 [6]).

These lines contain three additional indications of the provenance, all of them extremely convincing. The first is the name of the deceased, *Bbi* which is attested far more frequently from Dendera than anywhere else; I have noted more than 50 occurrences. The second is the extent to which, in boasting of his wealth, the deceased specifies the amount or number of what was acquired. This feature is particularly characteristic of Dendera.¹¹ While similar listings of acquisitions are known from other places, they rarely add this kind of detail. Of the two exceptions that come to mind, one from Gebelein lists “10 herds of goats, 2 herds of cattle, one herd of donkeys,”¹² while the other, from Thebes, more precisely specifies “20 head of men.”¹³ Finally the last word, *it.f* has the determinative 𓆎 , following a usage that is known only from Dendera, as described in the preceding section.¹⁴

Now that the provenance of the stela has been established beyond any possible doubt, it is surprising to find that it contains a palaeographic anomaly that is not known at all from Dendera, but is also unknown from any other source. The photograph clearly reveals that, in line 2, the determinatives of *sh3w* “memory” and *b3k* “servant” show the seated figure with his head turned full face. In both cases the ears project on either side (Fig. 4), as they usually do in 𓆎 . In the determinative of *sh3w*, moreover, which would normally be 𓆎 , the



pendant arm is bent, as in , while the other is folded across the chest.¹⁵ The following drawings show about as much as can be made out with any degree of certainty.



Fig. 4

Notes

1. A. Moret, *CRAIBL* 1915, 368, n. 3.
2. E.g. Petrie, *Denderah* pl. 11 (top right). Cf. also Fig. 2 below.
3. Cf. Clère, *RdE* 7 (1950), 24, and fig. 2.
4. E.g. Petrie, *o.c.*, pls. 11 (bottom left), 12 (right, near bottom).
5. *Coptite Nome*, no. 25.
6. Cairo CG 20007. A peculiar stela shown in Petrie, *Riqqeh and Memphis VI*, pls. 5–6, shows three grinding women on the right margin, but the provenance is farther north, and the date is probably somewhat earlier than the examples at Dendera.
7. M. Alliot, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Tell Edfou (1933)*, pl. 14 (3). The date of this is again no earlier than Dyn. XI, to judge from the determinatives of *pri-hrw*, the writing of *imsh* as  and the terminal epithet *mꜣꜥ-hrw*.
8. Including Petrie, *o.c.*, pl. 11 (top right), D 6599 (Univ. Mus. 29-66-696), and at least two other stelae, as well as Cairo CC 1642, which is of different style.
9. Fischer, *Dendera*, pp. 81 (13), 85. This is also attested by Birmingham 213'72 (*Supplement au BIFAO 81* [1981]), 239–242, fig. 2, pl. 30, fig. 2) and it confirms the suggested provenance, although the detail in question is not very clear in my figure.
10. A tracing, made long ago, of a photograph from the Cairo Museum, which did not provide any identification.
11. Petrie, *o.c.*, pls. 10, 11, 11B, 12; also D 1542 (Cairo CG 20805), and D 3128 (Cairo J. 46048).

12. Cairo CG 20001. In two other cases the round number 100 is used in unspecifically mentioning a single herd; BM 1783 (Naga ed-Deir: *BM Quarterly* 12 [1938], pl. 45), BM 1671 (Gebelein: Polotsky, *JEA* 16 [1930], 194ff., pl. 29); cf. *WZKM* 57 (1961), 64-5. In titles of the same period the number is 1000 (Dilwyn Jones, *Index of Titles*, no. 692).

13. Petrie, *Qurneh*, pl. 10.

14. This usage inevitably calls to mind Pascal's characterization of Man as a reed, albeit "un roseau pensant."

15. The position of the arms is also to be seen in two Middle Kingdom hieroglyphs representing a standing man, but in each case the context and meaning are different: in one case the man holds a cloak together with both hands (Sethe, *Äg. Lesestücke*, p. 82 [5]) while in the other he is pointing to himself, as a cryptic writing of *ink* "I" (*CTVII*, 520i, 521b).

3. The Work of an Eccentric Scribe

The stela shown in Figure 1 was mentioned in *WZKM* (1961), 70–71, in connection with a phrase in the third line. It was seen by William C. Hayes in 1959, at which time it was in the hands of an antiquities dealer, who said that the provenance was Akhmim. Although it superficially resembles many of the stelae from Dendera, that alternative is ruled out by several details of both the reliefs and the inscription, nor does any other possibility seem likely.



Fig. 1

Among the peculiarities of the relief are the exaggerated demarcation of the woman's breast and the man's nipple and umbilicus. Also the strange disjunction of the man's torso and legs that is produced by a posterior that abruptly curves much too far inward. This also appears, less markedly, in the figure of his wife, and she oddly raises one foot above the other for want of space. Another unusual feature is the presence, at the right end of the offerings, of a scepter like the one the man is holding.

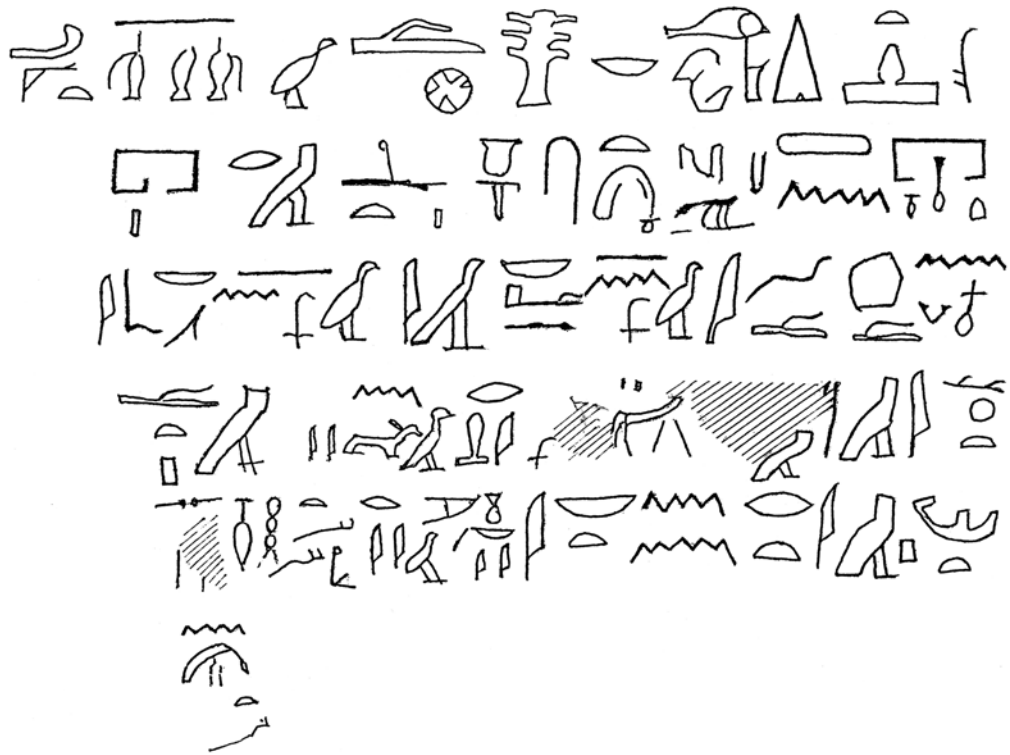































































Fig. 2

Translation:

- (1) An offering that the king gives, and Osiris, Lord of Busiris, Who Presides over the Westerners,
- (2) that offerings go forth to the Treasurer of the King of Lower Egypt, the Sole Companion, the Steward,^a
- (3) *Šdi-Nfr-k3*,^b who says: I followed a great lord and I followed a small lord,^c and nothing
- (4) came (amiss) from me.^d I [ploughed] with my^e span^f and transported the boatless man^g in my boat^h
- (5) by means of what myⁱ mistress did^j for me. I was one who is loved^k by his father and praised
- (6) by his mother.^l






The column of signs behind the wife is, except for the initial signs, barely legible:
 "His wife, his beloved, the Noblewoman of the King *Wh3t-Mnw*."^m

Comments:

- a. The application of this title is probably to be found in line 5.
- b. Like some contemporary examples of , this name shows a bag; cf.                 , *Šdit-it. s* (D 1542, Cairo CG 20805); and a similar variant in Dunham, *Naga ed-Der Stelae*, no. 3. *Nfr-k3* presumably refers to *Nfr-k3-Rc*, the prenomen of Pepy II and some of his ephemeral successors.
- c. This is the phrase discussed previously. The extremely attenuated form of  is most peculiar, as is the replacement of  by . Neither of these resembles its hieratic counterpart, unlike  for  which does indeed do so.
- d. Evidently the equivalent of                , which occurs, in the same context, in Cairo CG 20001. But here  is replaced by , while  (apparently for ) replaces . For negative *b(w)* see Clère, *MDAIK* 14 (1956), 29ff. The writing of  makes one wonder if the scribe altogether understood what he was doing.
- e. The use of  for the first person singular suffix pronoun is known from the Pyramid Texts (Edel, *Altäg. Gramm.*, § 160), and it led to the substitution of  for  as a determinative. But unlike this secondary usage, its occurrence as a pronoun is unexpected in a non-religious text.
- f. The sign , followed by *r*, evidently represents  in *htr*; probably showing assimilation to the signs for *šmsw* in the preceding line. The two strokes above the ox confirm that the span is indeed a pair; in some other cases the strokes are placed farther to the rear: Petrie, *Denderah*, pl. 11C (top left): D 3128, line 6 (*JEA* 79 [1993], 250).
- g. The addition of   is inexplicable.
- h. After transposing  and , this reversal is mistakenly repeated after the determinative in the next line.
- i. Since *nb* is not followed by a determinative in line 3, the sign , which represents “my” in line 4, evidently has that meaning again.
- j. Since the hieroglyph  is clearly represented in the first line, its replacement by  is most peculiar.
- k. The extraneous    is difficult to explain.

l. The sign for *mwt* “mother” looks more like a goose than a vulture.

m. The verb *wh3* appears in other names, though none are theophoric. The meaning seems to be “One whom Min seeks.” This reference to the god of Achmim supports the alleged provenance of the stela.

Thus there are a dozen anomalies within scarcely more than three lines. For this reason alone the stela is of some interest, but it is also interesting in other ways—above all because of the replacement of  by , which may well be the earliest example that has yet been attested. The use of the sign  to express the pronoun “my” is also notable, to be distinguished from its employment, at Dendera, as a determinative replacing  and . And finally there is *Šdi-Nfr-k3*'s reference to “his mistress,” which is surprising in view of his prior statement that he followed lords great and small. Possibly this designates a divinity, the mention of whom would parallel the reference to “the god” on the architrave discussed above in Part 1. But more probably it refers to a woman whom the deceased served as steward.