



# The Stela of Sihathor, House Official of the Vizier Ankhu (Leiden AP 48): An Object from the Depot of Leiden's National Museum of Antiquities

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**Abstract:** The National Museum of Antiquities acquired stela Leiden AP 48 in 1829, but it remained primarily in the depot ever since. The inscriptions on the stela identify its dedicator, Sihathor, and the deity Min-Horus-nakht. The museum classified the stela as originating from Abydos and dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Middle Kingdom), but a detailed study concerning its provenance and dating remained forthcoming until recently. Ilin-Tomich's new assessment of the stela unravels some uncertainties, but lacks an in-depth study of its text, images, and archaeological context. This paper aims to explore the text and palaeography of stela Leiden AP 48 in relation to its depictions in order to contribute to a better understanding of its context and dating as recently proposed. Several iconographic and palaeographic elements, and a reference to the Vizier Ankhu indicate that the stela dates to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Late Middle Kingdom/Early Second Intermediate Period) and was produced in Thebes, whilst the archaeological context connects it to the cult of Osiris in Abydos.

**Keywords:** Stela; 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty; Late Middle Kingdom; Sihathor; Min-Horus-nakht; Osiris; Ankhu; Abydos; Thebes

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## Introduction

In January 1829, the National Museum of Antiquities (Rijksmuseum van Oudheden) in Leiden purchased a large collection of antiquities from Giovanni d'Anastasi, the Swedish-Norwegian consul-general in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Among these objects was a limestone stela featuring an inscription with an offering formula and an image of the stela donor, Sihathor, facing an offering table and the deity Min-Horus-nakht. Henceforth, the stela was categorised as Leiden AP 48 and remained in the museum's collection. The museum classified the object as originating from Abydos and dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 1980 – 1760 BC).<sup>2</sup> Although the stela was published in Boeser's catalogue of the museum

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<sup>1</sup> Halbertsma, "Le Solitaire des Ruines," 91–93, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, "Sihathor; Rechthoek Staand; Kroonlijst; Min." The letter A of the inventory number refers to the original owner of the stela, Anastasi, while the letter P refers to the material of the stela, *pierre* (stone); Raven, "Numbering Systems," 7–8.

collection in 1909, the provenance, archaeological context, and dating of the stela remained obscure.<sup>3</sup>

However, recently, Alexander Ilin-Tomich published several studies, supported by an online database, devoted to the production of private Late Middle Kingdom monuments, in which stela Leiden AP 48 is also mentioned.<sup>4</sup> His publications cover a large corpus of stelae and mainly focus on dating criteria, the origins of the monuments, and the geography of their production. His studies unravel some of the beforementioned uncertainties about stela Leiden AP 48, as they provide an approximate dating (13<sup>th</sup> dynasty) and a production location (Thebes).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Ilin-Tomich's publications provide no in-depth analysis of the text, images, and overall appearance of the stela or details concerning its archaeological context.

The purpose of the current paper is, therefore, to discuss the text and palaeography of stela Leiden AP 48 in relation to its images and iconography. This is done to contribute to an enhanced understanding of Ilin-Tomich's proposed production location and dating, as well as the archaeological context of the stela. This paper will start off with a description of the stela's overall appearance before diving into an analysis of the text and images, and their respective palaeography and iconography. The paper will then continue to explore some elements introduced by the text and images, such as the individuals Ankhu and Sihathor, who, together with palaeographic and iconographic elements, enhance our current knowledge of the dating and production of the stela, as well as the context of the stela's setting up. A detailed study of these elements helps us to contextualise an ancient Egyptian artifact, such as stela Leiden AP 48.

## Physical Appearance (figures 1–8)

Stela Leiden AP 48 is made of limestone and its measurements are 54 cm high, 29 cm wide, and 9 cm thick (figures 1–6). The artifact weighs circa 40 kg.<sup>6</sup> The stela is rectangular and the sides are substantially raised and rounded, similar to a torus moulding. The uppermost part of the stela consists of a *cavetto* cornice: a concave moulding incised with a vertical feather pattern.<sup>7</sup> Both the torus moulding and the *cavetto* cornice appear on false doors in tombs of the Old Kingdom and derive from early reed-and-mud structures. These life-size architectural constructions were set up to provide an imaginary passage for the deceased. False doors were originally integrated into the surrounding wall of the tomb, but during the Middle and New Kingdom they were primarily situated in smaller cult niches and paralleled by stelae.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that stela Leiden AP 48 was initially set up in such a cult niche or incorporated in a tomb wall, as the damage on the outer edges of the stela suggests that it has been cut out of its original context.<sup>9</sup>

The surface of the central part of the stela is not smooth and shows evident traces of vertically and horizontally engraved lines throughout the hieroglyphic inscription as well as the depiction below (figures 7–8). However, these lines are interrupted by the text and images, which are cut in sunk relief and feature inner details.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates that the surface was uneven when

<sup>3</sup> Boeser, *De Monumenten van den Tijd*, 42, pl. XXXII.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*; Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," and Ilin-Tomich. "Persons and Names."

<sup>5</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," 69–84.

<sup>6</sup> Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, "Sihathor; Rechthoek Staand; Kroonlijst; Min."

<sup>7</sup> Hölzl, "Stelae," 320–21.

<sup>8</sup> Wiebach-Koepke, "False Door," 498–500.

<sup>9</sup> Apart from this, there are several metal pins protruding from the sides (fig. 3). These are probably not original, but perhaps part of a modern mounting.

<sup>10</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," 75.

the inscription and depictions were carved. The engraved lines were thus already present during the production of the stela and are not due to later damage.

The stela preserves traces of yellow and red-brownish decoration on a few hieroglyphs and details of the depiction.<sup>11</sup> Tiny black spots cover the central part of the stela and are probably related to weathering. Additionally, discolouration can be observed in the uppermost offerings on the offering table. This part has presumably discoloured in modern times, as the discolouration seems not to be present in the plate in Boeser's catalogue from 1909.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the discolouration appeared relatively recently, while the artifact was in the National Museum of Antiquities. However, since Boeser's plate was not released in colour, it cannot be ruled out that this discolouration originates in antiquity.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 1.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: front view, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).*



**Figure 2.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: front view with grazing light, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).*

<sup>11</sup> Traces of yellow decoration can be observed at the end of the first line of the inscription and at the beginning of the third line as well as on the left oval bread. A red-brownish colour is apparent on Sihathor's head and arms, and Min-Horus-nakht's crown (fig. 1).

<sup>12</sup> Boeser, *De Monumenten van den Tijd*, 42, pl. XXXII.

<sup>13</sup> Additionally, I asked Dr. Daniel Soliman, curator of the Egypt and Nubia collection of the National Museum of Antiquities, whether the discolouration is a result of a restoration procedure, but there is no record of such activities. The discolouration may thus be part of a modern intervention in the museum, but not of restoration.



**Figure 3.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: left side view with metal pins*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).



**Figure 4.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: view from below*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).



**Figure 5.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: right side view*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).



**Figure 6.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: top view*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).

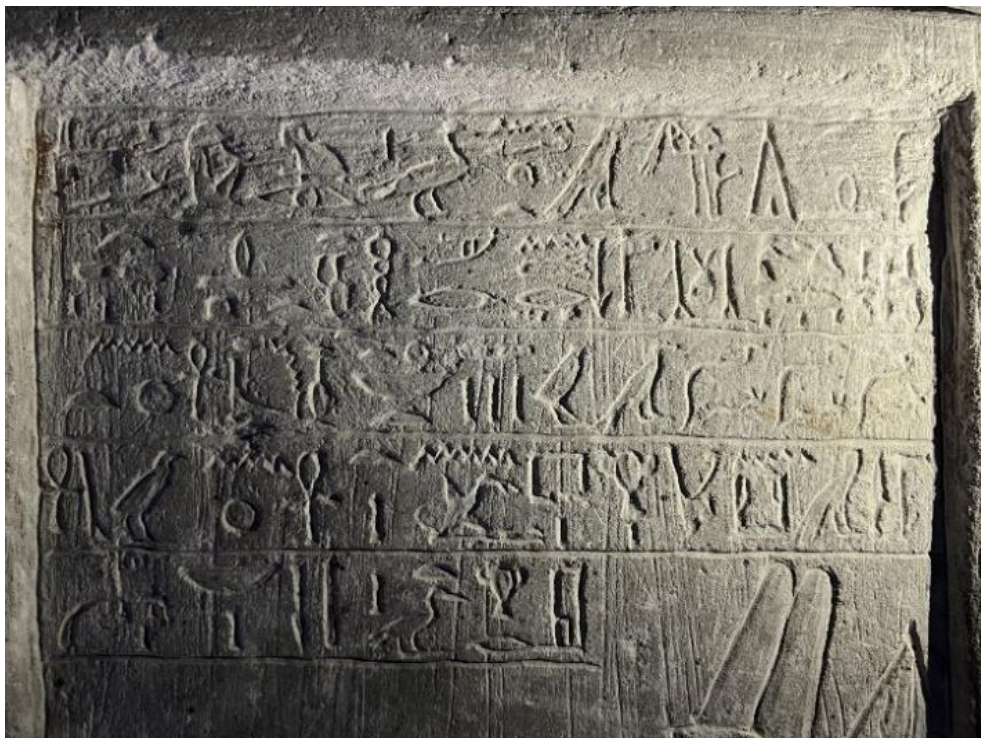


**Figure 7.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: surface detail from the side, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).*




**Figure 8.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: surface detail from the front, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).*

### **Text: Transcription and Transliteration (fig. 9)**





**Figure 9.** *Stela Leiden AP 48: close-up inscription, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 54 x 29 x 9 cm., Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (photo: Andrés Martín García de la Cruz).*

(1)   
*htp-di-nswt mnw-hr-nht s3 wsjr di=f*


(2)   
*prt-hrw t hntqt k3 3pd šs mnht sntr mrht htpwt*



(3)   
*df3w ht nbt nfrt wbt ʿnht*



(4)   
*ntr jm n k3 n hrj-pr n t3tj ʿnhw whm ʿnh*

(5)   
*s3{t}-hwt-hr m3ʿ-hrw nb jm3h*

## Commentary: Transcription and Transliteration

- (1) The sign R4  appears on the stela in a rather simplified form with a tall and narrow loaf, which was dominant during the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>14</sup>



The sign Q2  is used for the spelling of the name Osiris instead of the typical sign Q1 . Some isolated attestations of this feature date to the late 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, but the spelling was widely used from the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty onwards.<sup>15</sup>




- (2) The bulls head F1  in the group *k3 3pd* is depicted without its horns. Additionally, this group is written with both the food determinative X4  and plural strokes. This spelling is primarily attested in the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 9.


<sup>15</sup> Only two attestations from the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty are known; toilet box MMA 26.7.1438 and offering table Cairo JE 90190; Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 8.



<sup>16</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 20.



The group šs *mnht* written as a ligature of signs S27  and V6 , which became popular during the Middle Kingdom. Moreover, sign V6 shows an inner detail on the stela. Such attestations are relatively rare.<sup>17</sup>

The word *mrht* is spelled with the determinative W9  instead of W22  or W1 .<sup>18</sup> This particular spelling is not attested in the TLA or Hannig's dictionaries and may be a specific workshop trait.<sup>19</sup>

(3) The word *dfzʷ* is spelled very elaborately. The word is usually spelled with just one cobra and horned viper or with multiple, but in the latter case the vulture, food determinative, and plural strokes are absent.<sup>20</sup>

(4) The sign S3  was not used with the phonetic value *n* before the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty of which only one example is known. However, it was widely applied from the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty onwards.<sup>21</sup>

(5) On other known monuments of the same man, Sihathor's name is spelled as  .<sup>22</sup>

Spelling this name with   instead of the enclosed falcon was not uncommon and this spelling is attested in Ranke's *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*.<sup>23</sup> The *t* which is written above the goose on this stela might be a mistake by the scribe, since his name is *s3-ḥwt-ḥr* in parallels and we are dealing with a male figure.<sup>24</sup>

## Text: Translation

- (1) An offering which the king gives to Min-Horus-nakht, son of Osiris. May he give
- (2) an invocation offering of bread and beer, cattle and fowl, alabaster and linen, incense and oil, offerings and
- (3) sustenance, and everything good and pure of which
- (4) the god lives for the *ka* of the House Official of the Vizier Ankhu, who lives again,
- (5) Sihathor, True of Voice, Lord of Veneration.

<sup>17</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 4–5, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 104.

<sup>19</sup> Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, lemma no. 13366, and TLA, "Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae," lemma no. 72840. See also "Dating and Production".

<sup>20</sup> Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch II*, lemma no. 13366; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, lemma no. 39990, and TLA, "Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae", lemma no. 183850. It is also not an Old Kingdom spelling: Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch I*, lemma no. 13366.

<sup>21</sup> The only example from the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty is stela Firenze 2506; Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Persons and Names," Person PD 537.

<sup>23</sup> Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, 283.20.

<sup>24</sup> The *t* above the goose is not attested in Ranke's attestation of the name *s3-ḥwt-ḥr*; Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, 283.20. However, he does refer to the name *s3-ḥwt* as a possible abbreviation of the name *s3-ḥwt-ḥr*; Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, 283.18. In this lemma a *t* above a goose is in fact indicated as a mistake, since it's a male's name. Additionally, a *t* above the goose is present in the female counterpart of this name *s3t-ḥwt-ḥr*; Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, 291.14. It is clear from the depiction as well as from the Hermitage stelae that Sihathor was a male and, therefore, the *t* above the goose should be regarded as a mistake by the scribe; Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 94–104.

## Commentary: Translation

- (1) *ḥtp-dī-nswt* is a relative *sdm=f* construction in which *nswt* has been moved up front because of honorific transposition and is, therefore, translated as “an offering which the king gives.”

The name Min-Horus-nakht indicates the assimilation of Min in the Horus-myth as “Min-Horus, the victorious”.<sup>25</sup>

The form *dī=f* is a subjunctive use of the *sdm=f* and is thus translated with the modal verb “may”.

- (2–3) A long list of offerings is presented in complementary pairs.

- (3–4) *ḥnht ntr jm* is a relative *sdm=f* construction in which *jm* relates back to the offering list and is, therefore, translated as “of which the god lives”.

- (4) *ḥrj-pr* is a common title for the domestic staff member that was in charge of the household. Different possible translations are “Majordomo”, “Master of the House”, or “Domestic Servant”.<sup>26</sup>

The name *ḥnw* was a common name for males and actually refers to a well-known Vizier from the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>27</sup>

The epithet *whm ḥn* literally means “who repeats life”, but has been interpreted as “one who lives again”<sup>28</sup> and is a common epithet for the deceased.<sup>29</sup> It is very common during the New Kingdom, but already attested from the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty onwards.<sup>30</sup> It indicates that Ankhu was deceased at the time of the production of this stela.

- (5) Honorific transposition applies to the name *sꜣ-ḥwt-ḥr*, which was a common name for males as well and can be translated as “son of Hathor”.<sup>31</sup> The epithet *mꜣ-ḥrw* indicates that he was deceased.<sup>32</sup>

## Images and Iconography

The text identifies the deity Min-Horus-nakht and the stela dedicator, Sihathor, who are also depicted beneath the inscription (figures 1–2). This bottom half of the stela shows a typical offering scene in which Sihathor raises his bent arms in adoration before Min-Horus-nakht, while presenting offerings. Sihathor has his hair cropped short. Both elite men and male household servants are depicted with shaven heads or short haircuts in representations in tombs and on stelae. However, the former usually cover their heads with wigs. Shaven or short

<sup>25</sup> Ollette-Pelletier, “Le Dieu Min au Moyen Empire,” 22. See also “Images and Iconography”.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, lemma no. 10681; Ilin-Tomich, “Persons and Names,” *ḥr.j-pr*, and TLA, “Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae,” lemma no. 400392. “Domestic Servant” is the less appropriate, since the status of this title within the household appears to be higher.

<sup>27</sup> See “Persons and Professions” and “Dating and Production” for more information about Ankhu.

<sup>28</sup> TLA, “Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae,” lemma no. 400175.

<sup>29</sup> Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, lemma no. 8122.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. “attestations” TLA, “Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae,” lemma no. 400175.

<sup>31</sup> Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, 283.20.

<sup>32</sup> Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, lemma no. 12109.



hairstyles are related to purity and hygiene.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, Sihathor is wearing a narrow collar and a long kilt with a belt.<sup>34</sup>

On the offering table in front of him are multiple oval and round breads as well as a horizontally placed bundle of four onions depicted.<sup>35</sup> The upper offerings represent lettuce plants, which were only offered directly to the god Min. It has been suggested that lettuce was offered to Min as an aphrodisiac. Nevertheless, it seems more plausible that lettuce was connected to the fertility and regeneration of agriculture, possibly as a metaphor for the continued survival of mankind.<sup>36</sup>

Min-Horus-nakht is depicted with an erect phallus, wrapped as a mummy, and wearing a double feathered crown with a long ribbon or stick appended from the crown at the back. His left arm is raised and supports a flail.<sup>37</sup> His right arm is not depicted. The precise significance of these attributes and this gesture are uncertain. The flail may be a symbol of reproduction, but could also be an agricultural element suiting Min's lettuce connection.<sup>38</sup> Many Near Eastern figures with emphasised genitalia and a raised arm are related to protection and power. Apart from the fact that Min's ithyphallic form is associated with fertility and male potency, his pose may thus be apotropaic in nature.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the object on the stela behind Min-Horus-nakht depicts Min's sanctuary, which parallels the tents used by desert-dwellers, as Min was also associated with the desert.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, these sexual and geographical connotations are not the focus of this depiction of Min-Horus-nakht. During the reign of Sesostri I in the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Min became incorporated into the domain of Osiris in Abydos. This ultimately resulted in the assimilation of Min into the Horus-myth as Min-Horus-nakht, the son of Osiris, as indicated in the inscription of stela Leiden AP 48.<sup>41</sup> His ithyphallic form represents his power in defeating Seth for his father, which corresponds to the apotropaic interpretation of his pose and attributes.

## Persons and Professions

The text mentions Sihathor as the House Official of the Vizier Ankhu, who was in office during the reign of Khendjer in the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Ankhu and his family are well-known to us, since at least 12 objects have been identified with his name and to a lesser extent his relatives.<sup>42</sup> These sources, comprising some accounting papyri, royal decrees, and biographical texts on monuments, present considerable evidence to connect Ankhu's family, household, and subordinates to the city of Thebes.<sup>43</sup> Here, Ankhu inherited the Vizier's office from his father and as a result benefitted from the highest position at the royal court.<sup>44</sup> He was in charge of both the royal and provincial administration.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Robins, "Hair and the Construction of Identity," 61.

<sup>34</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 104.

<sup>35</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," 75.

<sup>36</sup> Norris, "The Lettuce Connection," 259, 273–75.

<sup>37</sup> The deity's iconography on this stela is consistent with Min-Horus-nakht's general appearance. Cf. Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter*, 293.

<sup>38</sup> Norris, "The Lettuce Connection," 71.

<sup>39</sup> Norris, "The Lettuce Connection," 71–72.

<sup>40</sup> Romanosky, "Min," 414.

<sup>41</sup> Ollette-Pelletier, "Le Dieu Min au Moyen Empire," 20–24.

<sup>42</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Persons and Names," Person PD 173+178.

<sup>43</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "The Vizier Ankhu," 153–57.

<sup>44</sup> Siesse, *La XIIIe Dynastie*, 174. There are arguments in favour of Ankhu being part of a dual vizierate, but this remains uncertain; Ilin-Tomich, "The Vizier Ankhu," 145–69.

<sup>45</sup> Grajetzki, *Court Officials*, 15–16.

Besides his vizierate, Ankhu is mentioned with different titles on several stelae. The title *tꜣtj* is often combined with the title *jmj-r njwt*, “Overseer of the Town,” and *jmj-r ḥwt-wrt 6*, “Overseer of the Six Law Courts.”<sup>46</sup> Both titles were introduced as complementary titles for the Vizier in the Old Kingdom. They represented the responsibility of the Vizier over several administrative units which also dealt with municipal and legal affairs. In the Middle and New Kingdom, these titles had an honorary status.<sup>47</sup>

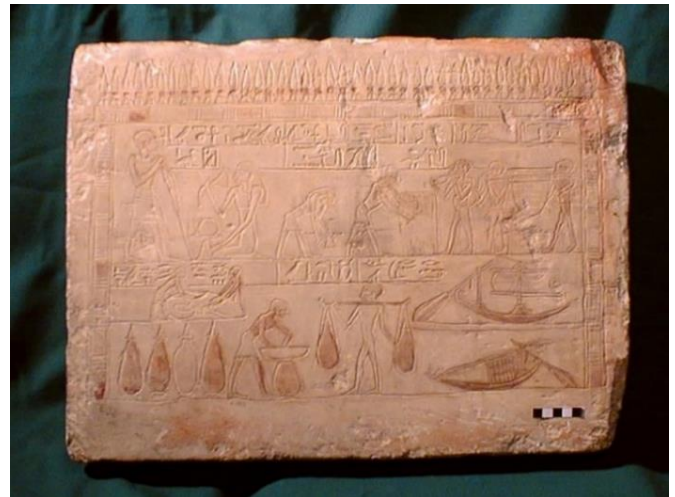
Ankhu had one daughter and two sons. His sons succeeded their father and became viziers as well. His daughter married a high official of the administration department in Abydos. This marriage united two highly influential families on an administrative level.<sup>48</sup>

His vizierate, attested relatives, and his many monuments and documents show Ankhu’s importance and high rank in society. Several of these monuments also inform us about the staff members in his entourage. In addition to stela Leiden AP 48, several other stelae, such as the Hermitage stelae, confirm the fact that Sihathor belonged to his staff.

Stela Hermitage 1063, 1064 and 1075 form a tiny stela chapel which was erected for Sihathor (figures 10–13). Stela Hermitage 1063 and 1075 depict Sihathor seated on a lion-legged chair, wearing a short wig, plain collar, and short kilt. They contain an offering formula to Osiris and Anubis.<sup>49</sup> Stela Hermitage 1063 mentions Sihathor’s *ḥnmsw*, “colleagues”, as well as some genealogical information: his wife and two sons are pointed out.<sup>50</sup> However, no other monuments of them are known.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, the stela does not tell us anything about his own parents or siblings, but does mention his wife’s mother and sister.<sup>52</sup> Stela Hermitage 1064 depicts large harvesting, butchering, and brewing scenes, as well as a boat journey with Sihathor overseeing the events.<sup>53</sup>



**Figure 10.** *Stela Hermitage 1063*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 43,5 x 57,5 x 8 cm., State Hermitage Museum (photo: <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=12808>).



**Figure 11.** *Stela Hermitage 1064*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 43,5 x 57 x 8 cm., State Hermitage Museum (photo: <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=12809>).

<sup>46</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Persons and Names," Person PD 173+178.

<sup>47</sup> Grajetzki, *Court Officials*, 19–20.

<sup>48</sup> Siesse, *La XIIIe Dynastie*, 175.

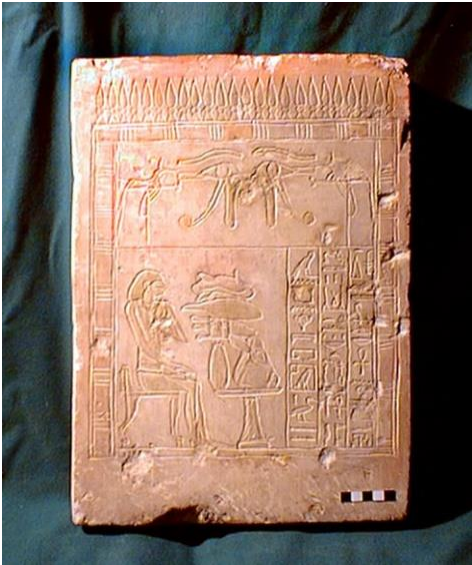
<sup>49</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 94, 102.

<sup>50</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 96, 98.

<sup>51</sup> Ilin-Tomich, "Persons and Names," Person PD 537.

<sup>52</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 96, 98.

<sup>53</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 100.



**Figure 12.** *Stela Hermitage 1075*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, 44 x 31 x 6,5 cm., State Hermitage Museum (photo: <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=12816>).



**Figure 13.** *Stela Hermitage 1063, 1064 and 1075: stela chapel*, 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, limestone, State Hermitage Museum (photo: <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/record.aspx?id=12816>).

On these stelae, Sihathor is not only mentioned as the House Official, but also as the *htmw*, “Sealbearer”, of the Vizier.<sup>54</sup> His titles may relate to his function as the head of the domestic servants of Ankhu’s estate and to the sealing of official documents. It is however not known how much authority this included precisely.<sup>55</sup>

Besides this stela chapel, two other stelae have been brought forward as possibly identifying Sihathor. Stela Louvre C 17 corresponds to the information given by the Hermitage stelae. Sihathor is mentioned as the House Official and Sealbearer of the Vizier Ankhu on this stela of Senweseret, the Herald of the Vizier.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, stela CG 20018 mentions Sihathor as a House Official, but also as a *wdpw*, “Cupbearer”.<sup>57</sup> There is no consensus on this newly introduced title with regard to the Sihathor of stela Leiden AP 48. Since the name and title on stela CG 20018 might be too common, some scholars are hesitant to allow a definitive identification,<sup>58</sup> whilst others accepted this Sihathor to be the same as the previously discussed person.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 96, 101.

<sup>55</sup> Grajetzki, *Court Officials*, 68, 70, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Siesse, *La XIIIe Dynastie*, 176.

<sup>57</sup> Ilin-Tomich, “Persons and Names,” Person PD 537.

<sup>58</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 97.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Franke, *Personendaten*, 325, no. 537; Ilin-Tomich, “Persons and Names,” Person PD 537, and Ilin-Tomich, “The Vizier Ankhu,” 155.

## Dating and Production

The National Museum of Antiquities' object card states that the stela dates to circa 1980 – 1760 BC corresponding to the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty of the Middle Kingdom.<sup>60</sup> However, the previously discussed palaeographic elements, the iconography of Min-Horus-nakht, and the identification of the Vizier Ankhu indicate that the stela dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

Palaeographic elements that are connected to the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty have been pointed out in the commentaries and include the form of the *hṯp*-sign R4, the spelling of the name of Osiris, the grouping of *kꜣ ꜣꜣd* with food determinative and plural strokes, and the use of the crown-sign S3 with the phonetic value *n*.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the epithet *whm ꜥnh* dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty at the earliest.<sup>62</sup>

One could argue for a slightly later dating of the stela, since several of these palaeographic features also appear throughout the entire Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1759 – 1539 BC).<sup>63</sup> An anomalous form of the *hṯp*-sign R4, for example, could also be an indicator of a Second Intermediate Period date. So does the use of sign Q2 instead of Q1 in the spelling of Osiris' name, the use of the crown-sign with the phonetic value *n*, and the epithet *whm ꜥnh*.<sup>64</sup> However, the god Min-Horus-nakht is primarily attested in offering formulae of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty and appears simultaneously with Min's ithyphallic representation on stelae from Abydos in this dynasty.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to this, it is known that Ankhu was Vizier under Khendjer, who reigned from approximately 1732 – 1728 BC in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>66</sup> Ankhu was still in office during the reign of Khendjer's successors, as indicated by papyrus Boulaq 18, that was written after the reign of Khendjer but before that of Sobekhotep III (ca. 1725 – 1722 BC), and refers to him.<sup>67</sup> Given that Ankhu's death is indicated on stela Leiden AP 48 by the phrase *whm ꜥnh*, the stela cannot be dated before the reign of Sobekhotep III. Taking the palaeographic elements as well as the cult of Min-Horus-nakht into account, the stela probably dates to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, sometime after 1725 BC, following the reign of Khendjer.

Ankhu does, moreover, not only shed light on the dating, but also on a possible production location of stela Leiden AP 48, as Ankhu and his subordinates resided in Thebes. Ilin-Tomich identifies several stelae workshops in Thebes. Based on palaeographic and stylistic traits, as well as the dating of stela Leiden AP 48, the stela can be connected to "workshop 2" along with the Hermitage stelae and Louvre C 17.<sup>68</sup>

Some remarkable features that connect stela Leiden AP 48 to Theban workshop 2 are: elongated torsos of standing figures, an offering table with one round and two oval breads, a simplified depiction of a bunch of four onions, and the spelling of the group *kꜣ ꜣꜣd* and *sntr mrht*. Moreover, non-detailed ears, narrow collars, marked belts, the use of the god-

<sup>60</sup> Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, "Sihathor; Rechthoek Staand; Kroonlijst; Min."

<sup>61</sup> See "Commentary: Transcription and Translation".

<sup>62</sup> See "Commentary: Translation".

<sup>63</sup> There is no consensus among scholars as to whether the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty should be regarded as a part of the (Late) Middle Kingdom or of the Second Intermediate Period; Marée, "Foreword," XI–XII.

<sup>64</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 492.

<sup>67</sup> Franke, "The Late Middle Kingdom," 271, and Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 492. However, in an earlier work, Franke dates Sihathor to the reign of Sobekhotep II (before Khendjer) or the reign of Khendjer himself; Franke, *Personendaten*, 325, no. 537.

<sup>68</sup> Ilin-Tomich identifies multiple workshops that produced the Abydene stelae of the Late Middle Kingdom. He numbered each of them and attributed them to a specific region and time period, based on artistic and textual evidence as well as the origin of the stelae owners. Workshop 2 corresponds to Thebes and the Vizier Ankhu in the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty; Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," 69–70, 78–79.

determinative in the name of Osiris, and the use of a flat-topped jar in the group *pṛt-ḥrw* are also traits, both present in stela Leiden AP 48, and belonging to workshop 2. The object is, therefore, most probably produced in Thebes.<sup>69</sup>

## Abydene Context

Although Thebes has been identified as the production place of stela Leiden AP 48, the National Museum of Antiquities states that the stela was found in Abydos.<sup>70</sup> This suggests that the stela, once finished, was transported from Thebes to a tomb or memorial monument in Abydos. The context of the stela's setting up appertains to the prevalent cult of Osiris in Abydos.

Abydos, and specifically the site of Um el-Qaab, was identified as the burial place of Osiris. From the Middle Kingdom onwards, the tomb of the Early Dynastic king Djer was thought to be the tomb of Osiris himself. Every year, a processional ceremony was organised to carry Osiris from the Temple of Osiris in the north to his tomb in Um el-Qaab on his bark.<sup>71</sup> The prominence of this cult during the Late Middle Kingdom and 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty specifically is evident from a so-called Osiris "bed" in the tomb of Djer. The bed is approximately dated to the reign of Khendjer and represents the mummified figure of Osiris on a bier.<sup>72</sup> The prominence of the cult is also illustrated by Min's syncretism with Horus and his identification as the son of Osiris. The attestation of Min-Horus-nakht in offering formulae coincides with the depiction of his ithyphallic form on Abydene stelae almost exclusively under the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>73</sup> The offering formula on Leiden AP 48 thus fits in this series.

Apart from this, stela Leiden AP 48 fits the context of the processional route to Um el-Qaab. From the Middle Kingdom onwards, this route was flanked by large cemeteries consisting of tombs and memorial monuments, such as offering chapels. These memorial monuments were extremely densely structured and were not associated with actual burials, but rather with the desire to be associated with Osiris once deceased.<sup>74</sup> It is possible that stela Leiden AP 48 and the Hermitage stelae formed such a memorial monument along the processional route, since they both belong to the same owner and share the Abydene location. The stelae could thus derive from the same architectural structure and form a small chapel for Sihathor and his relatives.<sup>75</sup> It could also be possible that only the Hermitage stelae were part of a memorial monument, whilst the isolated stela belonged to Sihathor's tomb.<sup>76</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

This paper aimed to provide a detailed study of the text and palaeography of stela Leiden AP 48 in relation to its images and iconography in order to add to a deeper comprehension of the production and temporal context, as provided by Ilin-Tomich, as well as the archaeological context of the stela. The text on the stela consists of an offering formula to the deity Min-Horus-nakht, who is also depicted in the presence of the stela's dedicator, Sihathor, beneath the hieroglyphic inscription.

<sup>69</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 104, and Ilin-Tomich, "Middle Kingdom Stelae Workshops," 69–70, 75–76, 78.

<sup>70</sup> Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, "Sihathor; Rechthoek Staand; Kroonlijst; Min."

<sup>71</sup> O'Connor, "The "Cenotaphs"," 167.

<sup>72</sup> Leahy, "The Osiris "Bed" Reconsidered," 424–34.

<sup>73</sup> Ilin-Tomich, *From Workshop to Sanctuary*, 28.

<sup>74</sup> O'Connor, "The "Cenotaphs"," 170–71, and Simpson, *The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Simpson, *The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos*, 14, 21 ANOC 57.

<sup>76</sup> Bolshakov and Quirke, *Stelae in the Hermitage*, 97.

The text identifies Sihathor as the House Official of the Vizier Ankhu, who was in office during the reign of Khendjer in the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Both Sihathor and Ankhu are known from other sources, which provide evidence for a connection to the city of Thebes. Additionally, palaeographic and stylistic traits in Leiden AP 48 relate to a Theban workshop as the place of production. The palaeography of the text, the textual and iconographic reference to Min-Horus-nakht, and the reference to the deceased Vizier Ankhu indicate that the stela should be dated to the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty, sometime after 1725 BC, following the reign of Khendjer.

The textual reference to Sihathor as the House Official of the Vizier Ankhu also allows for the identification of the Hermitage stela, which share the Abydene location with stela Leiden AP 48, as belonging to the same person. This identification, the reference to Min-Horus-nakht, and the connection to the reign of Khendjer contribute to a better understanding of the archaeological context of the stela in Abydos.

The identification of Min as the son of Osiris, and the presumed appearance of a “bed” in the tomb of Osiris under Khendjer give prominence to the cult of Osiris in Abydos in the Late Middle Kingdom and 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty specifically. Stela Leiden AP 48 can be seen in this light and probably originates from the context of the many memorial monuments that were erected alongside Osiris’ processional route in Abydos. A detailed study of the different textual parts as well as the palaeography of the text, does, in this way, help us to contextualise the different layers of the stela, both in terms of production, dating, and location, as in purpose of the stela.

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