

Linguistic, Oriental
and Ethiopian Studies
in Memory of Paolo Marrassini

Edited by
Alessandro Bausi, Alessandro Gori
and Gianfrancesco Lusini

Linguistic, Oriental and Ethiopian Studies in Memory of Paolo Marrassini

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Paolo Marrassini
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2014

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Editorial Note

We conceived the present volume in the course of 2012 as a *Festschrift* offered to Paolo Marrassini by colleagues, friends, and pupils. After the dedicatee passed away on 10 January 2013, trusting in the confidence of the numerous ones who had already accepted to contribute, we decided to keep on working on the volume in the only possible form of the *Gedenkschrift*.¹

A substantial number of authors from various academic environments and different countries accepted our proposal to contribute to the memorial volume: to all of them we are very grateful for their engagement, patience, and understanding. We are convinced that the variety of spectrum and approach of the contributions faithfully reflects the vastity of scholarly interests and human relationships cultivated and entertained by Paolo Marrassini.

We are particularly grateful to Riccardo Contini for having accepted to write his “Ricordo”. We are also very grateful to the family of Paolo Marrassini, namely Maria Antonia Gronchi, Elena and Alberto Marrassini, for having provided the picture printed on page ii.

1 We have shared the editorial tasks and the overall responsibility of the preparation of the volume. For technical and organizational reasons, the contributions by Alessio Agostini, Amsalu Tefera, Robert Beylot, Marco Bonechi, Antonella Brita, Maria Bulakh, Franco Cardini, Amalia Catagnoli, Alessandro Catastini, Riccardo Contini, Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Massimiliano Franci, Getatchew Haile, Felice Israel, Michael A. Knibb, Paolo La Spisa, Alberto Nocentini, Denis Nosnitsin & Maria Bulakh, Pierluigi Piovaneli, Gloria Rosati, Andrzej Zaborksi have been edited by Alessandro Bausi. The contributions by Lidia Bettini, Pietro Clemente, Giovanni Dore, Pelio Fronzaroli, Vincenzo Saladino, Marie-Claude Simone-Senelle and Tesfay Tewolde have been edited by Alessandro Gori. The contributions by Sergio Baldi, Franca Pecchioli, Maria Vittoria Tonietti and Alessandro Triulzi have been edited by Gianfrancesco Lusini.

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Hamburg, Copenhagen, Naples,
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The Editors

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3 TraCES: Advanced Grant no. 338756, hosted at the Asien-Afrika-Institut, Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian Studies of the University of Hamburg.

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RICCARDO CONTINI

Un ricordo

L'affettuosa insistenza dei curatori di questo volume, condiscipoli di poco più giovani – e di sede fiorentina anziché pisana – della scuola semitistica di Paolo Marrassini, ha voluto investire il più anziano di noi della responsabilità di aprire questa raccolta con un ricordo personale del nostro maestro. Non ho voluto sottrarmi a questo compito, benché sia ben consapevole del rischio di errori di prospettiva che mi deriva dall'aver negli ultimi trent'anni, per le ragioni che spiego nel seguito, potuto conversare con Marrassini solo di rado. In nessun modo, dunque, queste righe potranno sostituire, o anche soltanto utilmente integrare, il profilo complessivo della personalità e dell'opera del nostro maestro tempestivamente disegnato da Alessandro Bausi:¹ esse intendono soltanto rievocare l'impressione del primo incontro di uno studente ventenne col professor Marrassini e del rapporto di discepolato, divenuto per sua generosità presto anche di amicizia, sviluppato con lui nei 6 anni successivi, finché entrambi lasciammo Pisa per altre, tra loro diverse destinazioni. L'indulgenza dei lettori vorrà perdonare se questa interrogazione della memoria comporterà qualche eccesso autobiografico.

Benché pisana ne fosse l'occasione accademica immediata – rappresentata dalla mia intenzione di continuare gli studi di linguistica semitica comparata iniziati nell'autunno del 1975 sotto la guida di Pelio Fronzaroli – a Firenze e tra fiorentini si è inaugurata la nostra conoscenza, il professor Fronzaroli avendo avuto l'amabilità di presentarmi con qualche settimana di anticipo il suo primo, valentissimo allievo, che gli sarebbe succeduto nell'incarico pisano dal novembre del 1976. Si trattava per me anche di scegliere il tema di ri-

1 A. Bausi, "In memoriam Paolo Marrassini (1942-2013)", *Aethiopica* 16 (2013), pp. 200–212 (con esauriente bibliografia), qui riprodotto con aggiornamenti alle pp. xxvii–xxx.

cerca per il colloquio del terzo anno alla Scuola Normale, che avrebbe dovuto poi proseguire nella tesi di laurea. Accertate con poche ma precise domande le mie competenze e inclinazioni, Marrassini mi diede appuntamento per qualche giorno dopo, quando si presentò con una terna di argomenti di diversa declinazione metodologica, ma tutti estremamente attraenti, tra i quali scelsi la frase nominale nelle lingue siro-palestinesi, un tema che mi avrebbe accompagnato per diversi anni. Tutto questo accadeva senza che del mio nuovo mentore avessi sentito anche solo un'ora di lezione, pur avendo letto con ammirazione il suo libro sul lessico dell'edilizia militare nel semitico appunto siro-palestinese: ma avevo già sufficiente esperienza di insegnanti di alto livello frequentati nelle aule pisane per rendermi conto della sua qualità. Marrassini era un insegnante straordinario, che per di più aveva affinato il suo talento pedagogico alla severa palestra delle scuole serali di varie località della Toscana: nel ricordare le occasioni in cui aveva dispensato cultura umanistica ai lavoratori del Mugello, insisteva sulla necessità di fornire un'informazione non solo sufficiente, ma definitiva, a uditori che non avrebbero avuto né tempo né modo di approfondirla ("S'immagini spiegare il neoclassicismo a chi non sa cosa sia un classico!"). Come mi accorsi presto, aveva fatto tesoro di quell'esperienza: era chiarissimo nell'esposizione, venata di uno humour che poteva diventare sardonico nella conversazione privata ma mai *ex cathedra*, e completamente padrone della materia, che sapeva presentare nelle sue articolazioni problematiche su uno sfondo vastissimo di orizzonti culturali e di prospettive di metodo. Uomo di ampie e ben scelte letture e dei più vari interessi, era certamente tra i migliori prodotti della famosa Facoltà di Lettere dell'Università di Firenze che vantava negli anni '60 una schiera mai più rivista in Italia di maestri di livello europeo, che Marrassini avrebbe poi rievocato da par suo in occasione dell'ottantesimo anniversario della sua fondazione (2004). Sapeva suscitare negli allievi curiosità ed entusiasmo per i temi più diversi, dalle implicazioni antropologiche della lessicologia proto-semitica alle premesse ideologiche della comparazione tra le tradizioni bibliche e i miti mesopotamici o egiziani antichi (decenni prima della *Black Athena* di Martin Bernal), fino alle complessità dello scacchiere politico del Vicino Oriente tardoantico nei suoi riflessi per la storia dello Yemen e dell'Etiopia. Di molti di questi temi si parlava anche fuori dell'auletta dove dispensava i suoi corsi a un auditorio mai più folto di 4-5 allievi, quando mi capitava di accompagnarlo alla stazione a prendere il treno che l'avrebbe riportato a Firenze, dove io tornavo in famiglia solo un fine settimana ogni due, approfittando del sabato mattina per farmi guidare da lui tra le risorse semitistiche – allora, ancor più di oggi, imparagonabili alle pisane – della biblioteca dell'Istituto di Linguistica e Lingue Orientali a Piazza Brunelleschi, in gran parte organizzate da lui:

chi frequenta oggi quegli scaffali gremiti probabilmente ignora quanto essi riflettano l'intelligente cultura e la dedizione al compito del loro primo ordinatore.

Studio poliedrico e con forte propensione per la ricerca storica in tutte le sue articolazioni, Marrassini aveva particolare sensibilità e favore per tematiche di confine tra la storia culturale e la linguistica, quali l'antropo- e la toponomastica (ambito degli studi semitici di cui era espertissimo, anche se non ne ha scritto molto), la paleontologia linguistica (coltivata alla scuola di Giacomo Devoto e di Pelio Fronzaroli, ma senza negarsi alle geniali innovazioni di Émile Benveniste), e l'etnolinguistica, da poco introdotta in Italia (ricordo le occasioni in cui si discorreva – e lui aggiungeva suoi propri materiali alla già vasta esemplificazione – del benemerito manuale del suo amico Giorgio Raimondo Cardona, apparso l'anno stesso in cui ci conoscemmo). Molto più tiepido era invece il suo trasporto per la linguistica formale, per esempio per la sintassi generativa (ma molti anni dopo, nelle vesti del Preside di Lettere, avrebbe pronunciato la *laudatio* di Noam Chomsky, insignito di laurea *ad honorem* a Firenze), e in fondo anche per la tipologia linguistica, che per contro entusiasmava me, da poco iniziato all'opera di Humboldt, Sapir e Greenberg dal mio sapientissimo ed eclettico maestro alla Scuola Normale, l'altro fiorentino Giovanni Nencioni. Curiosamente, non ricordo di aver molto discusso con lui, nelle nostre conversazioni extra-curricolari, degli ambiti di ricerca in cui Marrassini ha prestato – tanto nell'applicazione *in re* quanto nell'approfondimento metodologico – un contributo innovativo e quasi da pioniere nell'ambito degli studi etiopici, e più in generale semitici: la critica testuale e la ricerca agiografica. E sì che nei tardi anni 1970, oltre a studi di minore ampiezza, veniva preparando la sua capitale edizione critica del *Gädlä Yoḥannäs Məśraqawi* (1981), vera pietra miliare di entrambe queste discipline. Forse, sapendomi figlio di un teorico dell'ecdotica, per di più assertore in ambito romanzo del metodo neolachmanniano che praticava lui stesso nell'edizione di testi agiografici e storiografici in gə'əz, presumeva – in verità erroneamente – che ne sapessi molto di più dei rudimenti che allora s'insegnavano a Pisa ai giovani classicisti, per cui riteneva superfluo erudirmene a sua volta. Fatto sta che è soprattutto di linguistica comparata, del corredo di lingue semitiche *extra moenia* (vale a dire: al di fuori dell'ebraico e dell'aramaico in cui mi venivo specializzando dopo la laurea) che mi esortava a procurarmi, e dell'importanza del controllo della bibliografia specialistica, tralasciata nella sua successione storica, che m'istruiva nelle nostre passeggiate per Pisa o nel centro di Firenze. Della documentazione bibliografica Marrassini era un modello, quale non ho mai incontrato nel seguito, e stigmatizzava in colleghi anche eminenti – aveva grande capacità di ammirazione, ma altrettanta di disi-

stima verso chi si sottraeva allo standard che riteneva obbligatorio per uno studioso, – quel che un altro dei miei maestri, Gideon Goldenberg, avrebbe poi definito *the rupture of the bibliographical chain*, che il maestro fiorentino attribuiva a indolenza o all’omaggio acritico alla voga effimera di prospettive euristiche più recenti.

Da poco rientrato dai due anni trascorsi a Manchester a perfezionarsi in etiopistica con Stefan Strelcyn, fu estremamente incoraggiante verso le mie proprie esperienze internazionali, prima e dopo la laurea: più che il mio breve periodo californiano nello stesso anno accademico 1976-77 in cui cominciammo a frequentarci (e fu lui a spingermi a seguire a UCLA in particolare i corsi di Gideon Goldenberg, come Claudio Saporetti per quelli di Giorgio Buccellati, segnalandomi i suoi scritti che sapeva sarebbero stati per me più attraenti), a suscitare l’interesse partecipe di Marrassini fu l’anno accademico che passai a Parigi, attirato all’École Pratique des Hautes Études – IV^e Section dal suo, e presto anche mio, amico assiriologo Jean Bottéro. Tra le infinite scelte che Parigi offriva allora a un apprendista cultore di studi semitici, mi orientò soprattutto verso il gruppo degli antichi allievi di Marcel Cohen (come il suo maestro Strelcyn), una scuola cui l’avvicinava naturalmente una forte consentaneità politica non meno che l’altissima stima professionale: così continuai, nella frequentazione soprattutto di David Cohen e Maxime Rodinson, a coltivare ambiti d’interesse verso cui mi avevano avviato i corsi pisani di Marrassini, quali rispettivamente la parentela linguistica e il lessico comparato (camito-) semitici, e la combinazione di filologia *gəʕəz* e storia dello Yemen tardoantico (in particolare la problematica interpretazione del complesso documentario multilingue della vicenda dei “martiri di Nagrān”, cui Marrassini aveva dedicato un corso entusiasmante, di impronta seminariale, arricchito dall’attiva partecipazione del bizantinista Gianfranco Fiaccadori, mio compagno di studi in Normale).

La frequentazione del mio maestro fiorentino rimase intensa anche dopo che, rientrato da Parigi, continuai a perfezionare la mia formazione in epigrafia semitica e filologia aramaica alla scuola di Giovanni Garbini, nel frattempo approdato alla Scuola Normale, della cui cattedra divenni poco dopo ricercatore. Tra i miei molti debiti verso la generosità di Paolo, di cui ogni suo allievo può allineare numerose prove, il massimo di cui serbo gratitudine riguarda la mia prima pubblicazione impegnativa: ricevuta l’offerta di dedicare a una monografia semitistica il primo supplemento del periodico pisano *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*, di cui mi aveva aperto le porte già nel 1979, Marrassini mi esortò – con energia insieme amica e irresistibile – ad approfittare io di quell’opportunità, rielaborando la mia tesi di laurea, compito che riuscii ad assolvere appena prima di partire per il servizio militare nella primavera del

1982. In quegli anni la nutrita serie di studi ed edizioni di testi gəʕəz che facevano corona alla precitata monografia del 1981, molto favorevolmente accolta dagli specialisti, avevano imposto il nome di Marrassini tra i maggiori etiopisti contemporanei, un rango che i decenni successivi non hanno fatto che confermare, senza tuttavia che venissero abbandonate la linguistica semitica comparata e le discipline trasversali, quali l'antropologia e la storia delle religioni, la quale anzi doveva aprire – mediata dalla collaborazione agli *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento* di Sacchi – un'ulteriore vena tematica alla versatile curiosità e all'eccezionale capacità di lavoro del nostro maestro, rappresentata dalla letteratura apocrifa e pseudepigrifa, naturalmente non soltanto in etiopico.

Nel 1983 le nostre sedi accademiche si separarono: Marrassini si trasferì a insegnare etiopico classico a Firenze, mentre io seguì Garbini a Roma, città di cui da sempre avvertivo il fascino. Da allora le nostre occasioni d'incontro si ridussero molto, particolarmente dopo che i miei genitori ebbero lasciato Firenze, così facendo mancare uno dei miei motivi principali di frequentazione della città natale. Chiamati nei decenni successivi a proseguire le nostre carriere in sedi diverse (o, se furono le stesse, questo accadde in periodi tra loro distanti), e soprattutto occupandoci di ambiti piuttosto differenti degli studi semitici, allentammo un po' il nostro rapporto.

Gli ultimi anni, tuttavia, mi hanno fortunatamente offerto qualche occasione di conversare di nuovo con Paolo Marrassini, soprattutto negli intervalli di congressi scientifici e in occasioni accademiche diverse. Nonostante l'accennata distanza relativa dei nostri settori di maggiore competenza, anche lo scambio delle rispettive pubblicazioni aveva ripreso una certa regolarità. Un'iniziativa editoriale di comune interesse ci aveva particolarmente riavvicinato: chiamato dall'editore Marco Scarpato a succedere al suo fondatore Paolo Sacchi al timone della collana "Testi del Vicino Oriente Antico" della Paideia Editrice di Brescia, avevo voluto rilanciare l'ancora inattiva sezione etiopistica invitando il mio antico maestro, che la dirigeva, a contribuirvi uno o più volumi a sua cura. Ostacolato dalla grave malattia che negli ultimi anni doveva rendergli particolarmente faticoso il lavoro scientifico, pur non avendo affatto appannato la sua lucidità né intaccato il suo entusiasmo e la progettazione di ricerche future, Paolo mi consegnò quasi *in limine vitae* il primo dei due libri progettati, la raccolta delle *Iscrizioni aksumite* tradotte, annotate e provviste di un'ampia introduzione storica. Si tratta di un contributo di importanza capitale tanto per gli studi etiopici quanto per la storia della tarda antichità, che al momento non trova riscontro in alcuna lingua: rivisto e finalizzato con affettuosa acribia da Alessandro Bausi, succeduto a Marrassini come responsabile della sezione, e arricchito di un capitolo archeologico a cura del

comune amico Rodolfo Fattovich, questo libro sta ora per vedere la luce. Con un saluto a questo autentico *Lebenswerk*, compendio dell'acume critico e della meticolosa documentazione profusi dal suo autore in quasi quarant'anni di attenzione alla storia più antica dell'Etiopia, si chiude il cerchio aperto da un suo memorabile corso all'università di Pisa nel 1978-79 (presto rifuso in una nutrita serie di articoli negli anni successivi), e con esso questa mia testimonianza.

GIANFRANCESCO LUSINI

Paolo Marrassini, maestro e innovatore

Ho conosciuto Paolo Marrassini nel 1981, nel momento cruciale del passaggio dal liceo all'università, quando – succede spesso – i giovani vanno in cerca di figure di riferimento, capaci di dare una forma più compiuta alle nozioni disordinatamente acquisite a scuola, ma anche di alimentare con linfa nuova la curiosità intellettuale degli allievi. In una tale disposizione d'animo l'incontro con Marrassini è stato per me il più fortunato degli eventi possibili. Quanti hanno avuto il privilegio di studiare con lui sanno quale alta considerazione egli avesse del mestiere di insegnante e delle responsabilità che esso comporta, e conseguentemente quanta energia e tempo egli riversasse nelle sue lezioni accademiche. In molti hanno beneficiato del suo vasto sapere, accumulato con passione e trasmesso con rara semplicità.

Fin dal primo anno, a lezione da Marrassini s'imparava a prendere le distanze dai testi, a guardarli con occhio critico, e per questo il vero punto di partenza dei suoi corsi era necessariamente la filologia, *the science of establishing primary sources*. La critica testuale, che per la prima volta è stata applicata alla letteratura etiopica in maniera coerente e sistematica proprio grazie a Marrassini, aveva per lui finalità immediate, in primo luogo l'esatta intelligenza del testo (che si trattasse di un apocrifo, di un racconto agiografico o di una cronaca reale) e la ricostruzione della sua storia tradizionale. Per questo egli considerava indispensabile comunicare l'idea che l'ecdotica è una scienza universale e che l'edizione di ogni testo letterario tramandato da una pluralità di manoscritti deve procedere rispettando le regole precise di un metodo consolidato e affinato da secoli di esercizio da parte dei filologi classici e romanzi. Affascinava anche noi giovani il fatto che Marrassini, il nostro maestro, fosse impegnato in uno sforzo di adeguamento e aggiornamento della disciplina e che non avesse timore di scontrarsi con i rappresentanti della vecchia etiopistica di derivazione coloniale, intrisa di parole d'ordine razziste e reazionarie, abbarbicata a metodi pre- e anti-scientifici di edizione dei testi

letterari. Tutti noi ricordiamo bene quanto l'aver difeso strenuamente la dignità del suo lavoro sia costato a Marrassini attacchi violenti – e a tratti feroci – in più occasioni, fino all'ultimo, fino ai giorni in cui, pur costretto ormai all'immobilità, continuava a tener fede all'impegno assunto come direttore della *Rassegna*.

Montato questo primo, solido gradino, Marrassini ci insegnava a dirigere lo sguardo più in alto, verso la finalità più autentica da lui assegnata al proprio lavoro di studioso, ovvero la comprensione della storia culturale etiopica, un obiettivo ancora più ambizioso – se possibile – della stessa ricostruzione di archetipi, stemmi e tradizioni. Anche in questo egli è stato un innovatore. Il ricorso ai testi in lingua gə'əz per la ricostruzione della catena dei fatti dell'Etiopia antica e medievale è una condizione necessaria, ma non sufficiente, per capire la storia culturale etiopica. A questa consapevolezza Marrassini era arrivato fin dal suo primo, fondamentale studio da etiopista, dedicato a un inedito testo agiografico. Completato l'esame filologico rivolto alla ricostruzione dell'archetipo e dei rapporti fra i manoscritti, egli si ripropose per primo di valutare quel testo «come documento “storico” esso stesso – s'intende della storia culturale, e non della semplice storia fattuale – e non come veicolo d'informazione per qualcos'altro» (P. Marrassini, *Gadla Yohannes Mesraqawi, Vita di Yohannes l'Orientale. Edizione critica con introduzione e traduzione annotata*, Firenze 1981, p. xxxiv). Al centro di questo secondo fronte della battaglia ingaggiata da Marrassini per il progresso della sua disciplina c'era, da un lato, la sensibilità per le nuove tendenze della storiografia d'Olttralpe, che imponeva all'attenzione dei conoscitori dell'Europa d'età medievale e moderna il superamento di ogni concezione puramente “evenemenziale” della storia, ma anche la piena consapevolezza che «un dato è tanto più realmente *storico* quanto più è fortemente o anche interamente e chiaramente *ideologico*», un «documento per la mentalità e la concezione del mondo di chi ha potuto scrivere, in quel tempo e in quel luogo, cose che a noi sembrano pura fantasia, ma che a lui sembravano pura storia» (P. Marrassini, “Un testo agiografico: la Cronaca reale”, in F. Pecchioli Daddi – M.C. Guidotti (a c. di), *Narrare gli eventi. Atti del convegno degli egittologi e degli orientalisti italiani in margine alla mostra “La battaglia di Qadesh”*, Roma 2005, pp. 225–232: p. 225).

Queste le poche parole, frutto dell'esperienza diretta, che premeva pronunciare nel momento in cui il volume in memoria del maestro è prossimo alla pubblicazione. Non c'è persona che abbia avuto rapporti di lavoro con Paolo Marrassini che non ne ricordi con ammirazione il rigore del filologo inserito in una visione straordinariamente ampia, sistematica e comparativa, dei fatti storici. Non è un caso se, per i suoi molti allievi oggi chiamati a vari ruoli

accademici e istituzionali in tre continenti, l'aver studiato con Marrassini è stato in molte occasioni un biglietto da visita che ha spianato strade e spalancato porte. Per essere stati condotti da lui lungo il "doppio binario" formativo della critica del testo e della storia della cultura, essi hanno potuto maturare una visione completa del loro oggetto di studio. Ora che dialogare con l'uomo non sarà mai più possibile, quanti hanno appreso da lui il mestiere di studioso possono capire bene, rileggendo i suoi scritti e mettendo ordine nelle proprie idee, il grande debito di riconoscenza che hanno contratto per sempre nei suoi confronti.

ALESSANDRO GORI

A few words for Paolo Marrassini*

Paolo Marrassini was a straightforward person in every respect and surely did not like rhetoric and pretentious speeches (actually, he hated them). His open character was among the main reasons why I started attending his classes: his frankness and unpretentiousness made him for me an irresistibly attractive professor who did not bury his humanity under the bulk of his knowledge, as it often happens with other representatives of the academia.

For sure, I do not want to irritate Paolo Marrassini on this occasion putting together a long and intricate series of well resounding words. I just would like to briefly give voice to a few memories and feelings which come to my mind while remembering him. I believe that this is the simplest and sincerest way to honour him as a pupil.

To me Paolo Marrassini was first and foremost a teacher. He took me by his hand when I was just a clumsy young man, furiously passionate with Oriental languages and cultures. He had the patience to guide me through the intricacies of the Semitic comparative linguistics and revealed me the richness of the Ethiopian languages, literatures and cultures which he deeply knew and sincerely respected. Thanks to his painstaking teaching, I became acquainted with the multifaceted manifestations of the Ethiopian civilization. He fostered my interest for the Islamic Ethiopian literature and manuscript tradition and encouraged me to do research in this field at a time (some 25 years ago) when it was almost completely neglected.¹

* A slightly modified version of this short text was read at the ceremony in memory of Paolo Marrassini held at Addis Ababa University on 22 April 2013.

1 It was in this way that I came to know another pivotal figure in my human and scholarly experience: the late Professor Hussein Ahmed, whom I also remember here in loving memory.

Paolo Marrassini always aimed at providing his students with a rigorous method of research based on the analysis of first-hand sources confidently approached thanks to a perfect command of the languages in which they were produced. The critical assessment of the data collected was then the second phase of a successful research. Marrassini was almost haunted by the urgent necessity to never stop questioning and scrutinizing all the different aspects of a problem, of a text, of a cultural or historical issue. He was pushed by an unquenched thirst of something more, a permanent desire to “unveil the hidden” which characterized him even beyond his scientific work. He abhorred sloppy generalizations and was always very cautious in drawing general conclusions from specific data. At the same time he kept teaching that a good researcher has to get perfectly acquainted with the general background of any issue he is dealing with, has to know in detail all the relevant bibliography and has to be aware of all the general implications his study has for the scholarly community. Erudition for Marrassini was never an infructuous retrieval of old and dusty articles but was a practical method to build up a sound basis for any advanced research work.

He strived with all his intellectual forces to transmit this rigorous intellectual attitude to me (as he did to all of his students) and to make me develop a critical spirit. If the mind could be formatted as a computer hard disk, I would say that my young mind was formatted by Paolo Marrassini.

Paolo Marrassini was always there for me: he never failed to give me his advice and his observations on my works, articles, research projects were always insightful. It was natural for him to keep following his pupils’ activities with his usual severe but supportive attitude. This is something which is not often found among academics: he really considered his students as a constituent part of his life and did not stop taking care of them even after they completed their institutional curriculum.

Beside the principles and practices of the job of a researcher, I think that there is something more (and perhaps more important) that Paolo Marrassini taught me. I learnt from him that behind (or better to say: inside) every line of a text, every apparently insignificant historical event and each tiny cultural item there is someone who is the ultimate, real object of study: the human being. Humanity is always at stake. If a scholar does not want to lose his conscience, he has to recognize that the fascinating and mysterious manifestations of the humankind appear in every research he does, no matter what the field of his activity is.

To know and respect all the human beings as they actually are, with their different languages and cultures: this is an all encompassing lesson which I hope I have properly learnt from Paolo Marrassini. Now that in my turn I

have become a teacher, I will do my best to pass this humanistic message over to the next generations. This is one of the best ways to keep alive the memory and legacy of Marrassini. For me personally it is also the reason why I can proudly and confidently say to everyone: “I am a pupil of Paolo Marrassini”.

ALESSANDRO BAUSI

In memoriam Paolo Marrassini (1942–2013)*

Prof. Paolo Marrassini passed away on 10 January 2013. He was almost 71 years old. In the last years of his life, he suffered from a progressive disease that hardly diminished his energy and undefatigable determination. He retired from active service at the university in 2009, but gave courses till 2011. He leaves his wife Maria Antonia, a daughter, and a son.

The son of Dante, a cartographer employed at the Istituto Geografico Militare, Florence, from whom he might have inherited a singular taste for meticulousness and details, his mother Clara Bosi was an appreciated primary school teacher. After attending the gymnasium and classical high school, Marrassini entered the University of Florence in 1961, first enrolling at the Faculty of Law, then moving to the Faculty of Arts in 1962, where he studied linguistics and Semitic philology. The most brilliant pupil of the eminent Semitist Pelio Fronzaroli (in turn a pupil of Giacomo Devoto for historical linguistics and Sabatino Moscati for Semitic studies, and the promoter himself of an excellent Italian school of Semitic Studies of its own, that through Moscati and Giorgio Levi della Vida went back, in the end, to Ignazio Guidi), Marrassini got his M.A. degree in 1967, with a thesis on the lexicon of military architecture in first millennium B.C. Semitic, that was later developed into his first monograph (1971).

After teaching in school some years, Marrassini was research assistant in Semitic Philology at the University of Florence in 1971–1982. After his initial and never forgotten interest in Assyriology (among his long-time acquaintances was Jean Bottéro), linguistic paleontology, and Near East archaeology (he also took part in the archaeological excavations conducted by the palethnologist Salvatore Maria Puglisi in Malatya, Turkey), Marrassini turned

* Obituary appeared in *Aethiopica* 16 (2013), pp. 200–203.

to Ethiopian Studies only in his full thirties, already as a mature scholar. He first attended the seminars at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, held in 1974–1978 by Stefan Strelcyn under the auspices of Enrico Cerulli. The latter also supported his two-year stay in 1975–1976 in Manchester, where Strelcyn lectured at the time, as well as Marrassini's first impressive publication in Ethiopian Studies, i.e. the critical edition with introduction and annotated translation of the *Gädlä Yohannäs Mäsraqawi* (1981). In this work he introduced two profound innovations, i.e. the application of a modern philological method to Ethiopic text editions (“neo-lachmannian” approach, also noted by theoreticians of textual criticism, such as Gianfranco Contini), which Marrassini maintained and explicitly defended all through his career, and the appreciation of the hagiographical literature in its proper sense. Marrassini extended this latter approach to historical texts, at the example of the so-called “chronicle” of ‘Amdä Šəyon, and other case studies.

Appointed professor for Hebrew (1977–1978) and Semitic Philology (1978–1982) at the University of Pisa, Marrassini became Associate Professor in 1983 for Ethiopic language and literature at the University of Florence, also teaching Semitic Philology for one year (1983–1984). In 1990, under the auspices of Lanfranco Ricci, he became Full Professor for Ge‘ez language and literature at the Istituto Universitario Orientale of Naples succeeding Luigi Fusella. He remained at the Orientale in 1990–1993, chairing the academic programme for Oriental languages and civilizations (1991–1993), also teaching Coptic (1990–1991) and Semitic linguistics (1991–1993).

In 1994 Marrassini was called to the Chair of Ancient Ethiopic language and literature at the University of Florence. He still taught Geez language and literature at Naples in 1994–1995, where he also remained for the rest of his life an active member of the Ph.D. programme in African Studies, promoted and coordinated for many years by his colleague and dear friend Alessandro Triulzi. In Florence, Marrassini was President of the academic programme for Humanities (1996–1998), and eventually Dean of the Faculty of Arts for two terms (1998–2004). After Fronzaroli's becoming emeritus in 2003, he assumed the Chair of Semitic Philology, in which he remained until his retirement in 2009.

Marrassini did a lot to promote studies in Ethiopic philology in Ethiopia, where he taught one semester within the framework of Italian university cooperation in 1999. He considered this task one of the most urgent duties for a scholar in Ethiopian Studies, and was consequently among the initiators and tireless supporters of the graduate programmes in Philology at Addis Ababa University. He was Adjunct Professor at that University since the launch of the M.A. and Ph.D. programmes respectively in 2004 and 2007 and until after

his retirement, teaching several courses and tutoring dozens of students. In 2008 he was also Guest Professor for Ethiopian Studies at the University of Hamburg.

Marrassini was a member of several scientific associations. Their range testifies to the wide spectrum of his interests. They include the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (Rome), of which he was a member of the Scientific Council for several years, the Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo, the Association pour l'Étude de la Littérature Apocryphe Chrétienne, the Associazione per lo Studio della Santità, dei Culti e dell'Agiografia, and the Società Italiana di Glottologia. He was also among the founders and director of the Center for Theoretical and Historical Linguistics: Italian, European and Oriental Languages, at the University of Florence.

Since 2003 Marrassini was the Italian representative in the International Organizing Committee of the International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies. Unfortunately he could not succeed, due to scarcity of funds and lacking institutional support, as well as to his incoercible uneasiness in accepting compromises and entering into negotiations, in organizing the planned 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, to be held in Italy; the conference instead took place in Trondheim, Norway, in 2007. Marrassini was also the editor-in-chief since 2010, succeeding Ricci, of the revived *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, of which he edited the issues new ser. 3 and 4 (the latter in print). He was also member of several editorial boards, including the journals *Africa* (Rome) and *Aethiopica* (1998–2000), as well as co-editor of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*.

Matched by few others of his generation, Marrassini had a scholarly career and achievements that fully ranged from ancient Semitic and Assyriology to Ethiopian Studies, from comparative and historical linguistics to philology as text criticism and hagiography, from manuscript cataloguing to religious studies, from Old and New Testament Apocrypha to the history of Oriental Studies. He substantially contributed to Semitic lexicography and linguistics, being able to approach subjects of general interest, with a special attention to South Semitic classification; to the critical edition of Ethiopic hagiographic and historical texts, where he definitely introduced new methods of editing and of looking at the sources; to the field of Apocrypha, in Ethiopic as well as in other languages; to manuscript studies, with his catalogues of Ethiopic manuscripts, among which that of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence; to several crucial questions in Christian Ethiopian history and culture, such as the so-called Syriac and Jewish influences, and others.

Initiated to Ethiopian Studies in the strict sense, in the end, by Strelcyn, *auspice* Cerulli, yet against an extremely solid background in Semitic Studies,

and Humanities in the wider sense – he always considered the intellectual legacy of several great linguists and philologists teaching at the University of Florence in the '60s and '70s, and the environment they created, that he commemorated in some of his last contributions, a fundamental component of his academic education – Marrassini was only in a very partial sense a representative of a national school of Ethiopian Studies, and rather the founder of an approach of its own.

Marrassini was a passionate, engaged, curious, and sensitive man, a meticulous scientific investigator with vast perspectives and a broad cultural horizon, an incomparable, devoted and generous teacher, and a profound methodological innovator in all the fields he dealt with. He was friend of such scholars as Jean Bottéro, Maxime Rodinson, David Cohen, Gherardo Gnoli, Franco Cardini, Tadesse Tamrat, and many others. Not a few of his pupils have undertaken an academic career, among them Riccardo Contini, Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Gianfrancesco Lusini, Pierluigi Piovaneli, Delio Vania Proverbio, Alessandro Gori, Alessio Agostini, and the author of this obituary.

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* Updated and slightly revised reprint of the bibliography compiled by Alessandro Bausi and appeared in *Aethiopica* 16 (2013), pp. 203–212, as an appendix to the obituary “In memoriam Paolo Marrassini (1942–2013)”, *ibid.*, pp. 200–203, here reprinted on pp. xxvii–xxx.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

GLORIA ROSATI

The Stela of the ‘Master-Sculptor’ Shen-Setji: A Review

The stela I am interested in belongs to a group of documents which are fundamental ones to reconstruct the history of the national sanctuary of Osiris at Abydos during the Middle Kingdom. I had to study it when I was gathering documents for my dissertation at the University of Florence, while at the same time I was preparing my last examinations on different subjects, such as Semitic Philology with the Assistant Paolo Marrassini. I wish to dedicate in memory of him my little contribution, looking back at a fruitful and untroubled period.

Stela Los Angeles County Museum of Art 50.33.31 (fig. 1; formerly A.5141.50–876; limestone, h. cm 88,9 x 38,1¹) is reported to come from Abydos² though its history is quite complex: seen for the first time in Rome, after a series of acquisitions it was presented to the Los Angeles Museum by Mr. W.R. Hearst in 1935. Its provenance is assured however by textual data.

It was published for the first time by R.O. Faulkner in 1952³ and is usually considered in the principal studies concerning autobiographies, history and religion of the Middle Kingdom.⁴ It seems that everything has been told about this stela and its topics;⁵ nevertheless, in my opinion, for its importance

1 As reported in the file of the Museum website (<http://collections.lacma.org/node/230235>): the stone is still kept mounted in a concrete rectangular block, so it is not possible to measure the thickness.

2 C(apt) 1931: 135.

3 Faulkner 1952: 3–5 with Pl. I.

4 The main additions to its first edition are actually Lichtheim 1988: 90–92; Obsomer 1995: 542–546. Lately, some passages translated in Favry 2009: 188, 191, 194. Strangely, it is not considered in Spiegel 1973.

5 As a matter of fact, it seems that anyone who has commented upon this monument so far has never seen it personally, probably from the very first publication (Faulkner 1952: 3 and

it can be presented still and reviewed for several purposes and firstly in a teaching program. So I think it's not useless to review the situation and to resume here its main points.

General description

Upright rectangular slab with rounded top, quite slender (its height more than twice its width). Quite good conservation, though the bottom right corner is lost, and the bottom edge chipped; a few parts chipped and scraped off in the right edge and in the lunette. Decoration on the whole surface, without borders or incised outlines: on the lunette and nearly a half of the rectangular field, main hieroglyphic inscription of 15 lines,⁶ right to left, plus date and elongated cartouche at the top of the lunette. Below, three registers: (1) two sitting couples and offering bearers; (2) and (3) row of twelve relatives in each one. Under the third register, a line of personal names, which have bigger determinatives, perhaps replacing figures.

Translation

Lunette, top:

Year [...] under [the Person of:]

[(Long) live (?) Horus] Ankh-mesut^a, King of Upper and Lower Egypt
Kheperkara, beloved by Osiris, may he live^b forever.

Main text:

An offering which [the King] has given, and Osiris Khentimentyu, Lord of Abydos, and Wepwawet Lord of the Sacred Land, and Anubis [Who is above] his Mountain: may he give^c an invocation-offering of a thousand of bread and beer, a thousand of oxen and fowl, a thousand of alabaster vases

n. 4), and myself, alas, as well. So we do not know yet details that could be interesting: e.g. traces of colors on the figures and in the inscriptions, which however are not visible in the image to be found in the Museum website (see n. 1): the surface of the stone looks rather dark.

6 Inscribed lines are separated by incised parallel lines, which however are not visible, and very probably absent, under lines 3–5 of the main text. A long text filling both lunette and a large part of the field is not unusual on MK stelae, at least early in the period. A similar very tall and narrow stela, though rectangular, and so without lunette, but with elongated cartouche including even the date, is BM 572: Simpson 1974: pl. 12.

and clothing, and a thousand of all pure things to the *ka* of the honoured⁷ one, the Director of Sculptors Shen-setji^d, justified.

He was promoted to this temple complex^e, the estates and towns of eternity, the splendid district of the gods, whose arrangement is superior to any place^f and with which this god is content; the shrine of the thrones of Geb, keeping secret the mysteries in Abydos; the sanctuary^g of Anubis, toward which Ra lights up his face^h. He makes gift of life in the Westⁱ, and his heart is glad thereby.

I have come in peace to this chapel^j which I have made in the western horizon of Abydos in the Ta-Wer province, in the place of eternity and continuity, the Terrace^k of the August God. The honoured one, the Director of Sculptors Shen-setji, he says: O you living upon earth^l, who love life and hate death, when you'll follow^m Wepwawet in all his movements, and your heart enjoys life upon earth, you shall give me an invocation-offering at the feastⁿ of the month and of half-month, the feast of the Opening of the Year, the First (Procession) and the Great Procession, the feast of Thot, when the God comes (?), the *wag*-feast, the *rekeh*-feast, (the feast of) Sokar, the New Year feast, the *sadj*(-feast), the Min processions, the *haker*-feasts, the feast of spending the night (or: the vigil) in *Peger*, the feast of Numbering (*tnwt*), the feasts of the Five-Days-Above-the-Year, (all) the beautiful feasts of the temple of Osiris, (namely, to) the honoured one Shen-setji. You shall then say: a thousand of bread and beer, a thousand of oxen and fowl, a thousand of alabaster vases and clothing, a thousand of all pure things^o coming forth in the presence of the Great God, for the honoured one, the Director of Sculptors Shen-setji, born by Iyt.⁸

I was a sculptor in Amenemhet-itj(u)-taui^p, given life forever; I have come then <to> this temple complex to work under the Person of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkara^q, beloved by Khentimentyu Lord of Abydos, given life like Ra forever and ever.

Commentary

^a Faulkner 1952: 4 suggests that this Ankh-mesut should be the Nebty-name of Senwosret I, because in his opinion the preceding room is too much

7 This is of course a conventional translation: cfr. one of the 'classic' contribution to the subject and one of the more recent ones, Sainte Fare Garnot 1941 and Jansen - Winkeln 1996.

8 Ranke, PN I 11,11

for the Horus-name only. In my opinion, as in Obsomer's,⁹ the line would result in very crowded signs. I prefer therefore to integrate the Horus-name only, the more so as the royal titulary could even be preceded by *ḥnḥ*, as in the stela CGC 20515, year 10 of Senwosret I,¹⁰ which shows a similar formulation at the top of the lunette: *rnpt-sp10 ḥr ḥm n //* [long heaven-sign over the elongated cartouche] *ḥnḥ nswt-bity Ḥpr-k3-R^c mry Ḥnty-īmntyw ḥnḥ dt*, "Year 10 under the Person of :/ (Long) live the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Kheperkara, beloved of Khentimentyu, may he live forever"; or stela Leiden V 2,¹¹ with the same arrangement and identical long heaven-sign over the cartouche, just like the previous one: *rnpt-sp 9 // ḥnḥ Ḥr ḥnḥ-mswt ntr nfr Ḥpr-k3-R^c mry Wsir nb 3bdw di' ḥnḥ*, "Year 9. (Long) live Horus Ankh-mesut, the Perfect God Kheperkara, beloved of Osiris Lord of Abydos, given life". This peculiar palaeographic feature, the elongated cartouche, whether with or without the heaven-sign on top, is not uncommon, especially in the first half of the Twelfth dynasty. Using the list of dated stelae in Simpson 1974: 26–29, the following ones show this feature: Leiden V 2 and Louvre C 2, both Senwosret I, 9; CGC 20026 and CGC 20515, both Senwosret I, 10; Alnwick 1932, Senwosret I, 13; Louvre C 166, Senwosret I, 17; CGC 20542, Senwosret I, 24; BM 572, Senwosret I, 39; Leiden V 4, Amenemhet II, 2; BM 828, Amenemhet II, 3; Louvre C 4, Amenemhet II, 8; Louvre C 243, Amenemhet II, 14; Berlin Inv. 1190, Amenemhet II, 23. An even more unusual one, containing only well-wishing words for the king, Amenemhet I, is incised on the back of a statue from Khatana.¹² In the second part of the dynasty this kind of cartouche design seems vanishing, at least on Abydene stelae.¹³

^b The *ḥnḥ*-sign is partially visible, so the reading is certain, instead of *ḥq3-dt*, though suitable, as in Faulkner's translation. See also the preceding note. It is still a problem to understand why some private monuments bear a

9 Obsomer 1995: 543

10 Simpson 1974: pl. 46

11 Boeser 1909: pl. VI.

12 Statue Cairo JE 60520: Gauthier 1935; Sourouzian 2005: pl. II b.

13 This is a general remark, of course: the long cartouche does exist much time before (e.g. in the famous relief of Snofru from Wadi Maghara: Gardiner-Peet-Černý 1952, Pl. II), and during the Twelfth dynasty in fact it is kept on stelae recording missions to quarries: e.g. Gardiner-Peet-Černý 1952, nos. 27, 28 (Amenemhet III, 41 and 42); Engelbach 1933: 71, 73 and Pl. IV; and on statues as well (Lorand 2011: 65; Sinai no. 79, Senwosret II). I have come across two much later stelae which show perhaps an archaizing revival of this pattern during the Nineteenth Dynasty: Pierret 1874: 66, stela Louvre Entrée 3629, Merenptah; Pierret 1878: 134, stela Louvre C 218, Ramesses II.

date; in this case however we could relate this official detail to the short record at the end of the main text, Shen-setji's transfer from the Residence to Abydos.¹⁴

^c The main text begins with the offering formula¹⁵ where three gods are named, Osiris Khentimentyu, Wepwawet and Anubis, whilst a singular subjunctive *di.f*, not a plural *di.sn*, is used to introduce the following requests. The case is not an exceptional one, because such mistakes (?) are very common, and Franke¹⁶ rightly pointed out their relatively wide rate. With regard to this last point, I observed this peculiarity in many offering formulas including a deified king: after *htp-di-nswt* and the names of the gods, the singular *di.f* is often used, instead of the plural one should expect, considering the number of the gods previously named.¹⁷ As these 'mistakes' occur very often, and more often than usual under such conditions, I think that they deserve consideration. Moussa and Altenmüller already observed this oddity and did not think of sheer coincidence, at least with regard to two instances of the Middle Kingdom involving the deified Wenis.¹⁸ They thought that the god in the formulas they were examining (Ptah and Ptah-Sokar respectively) and the deified king could have been considered as one divine being. Franke suggested that the last male god could be meant, and pointed out that a specific formula of request (*di.f mw*, "may he give water"¹⁹) is not known in a plural version and so may have affected the scribes' 'orthodoxy' every time. As for me, I cannot suggest at present any possible explanation,²⁰ but it is evident that at least in many cases, as the Swiss stela I mentioned before, such a solution does not work.

14 See however Lichtheim 1988: 74, 84, 92, who does not support a connection between missions and dates.

15 The scientific debate on this topic is 'restless': lately Satzinger 1997; resumé and a "challenge" by Franke 2003 (whom I am following here), who argued that there was no Middle Kingdom re-interpretation of the offering formula, as no clear example of a dative construction with *n* before the God(s) name(s) can support it. For later Middle Kingdom see also Postel 2009 and Ilin – Tomich 2011.

16 Franke 2003:49–52.

17 Among many instances, I wish to point out e.g. a Thirteenth dynasty stela in a private Swiss collection (Schlögl ed. 1978: 47–48 nr. 155), with the sequence *htp-di-nswt* + Amon-Ra + deified king Mentuhotep II + "all the gods of the West" + *di.f*!

18 Moussa - Altenmüller 1975, 95, a; Moussa 1971.

19 Barta 1968: Bitte 25; Franke 2003: 52.

20 Could the first 'god', not the last male one, be meant, that is the King himself?

^d Reading corrected by Berlev 1976: 326 n.1, in fact cfr. Ranke, PN I 328,29–30; 329,1 (female, *Šnt-stj*). Ranke, PN II 319,2, lists the examples of this stela, which he files as *Šn* (as Faulkner does), but in PN II 390 advises that PN I 328, 29–30 could be the same names as those recorded for our stela. He suggests also a possible translation: “dessen Geruch krank ist”, or “der/die an Geruch leidet” (II 24), anyhow nowadays we would consider it as an unpleasant personal name to be borne as long as one lives, even if referring to the peculiar milk smell of a newborn child. Cfr. Wb IV 503,7, and 503, 8–9 (Gr), “Schlechtes”.

^e Translation suggested by Baines 2009: 7 ss. As for the phrase itself, it is not easy to choose between two possible translations: 1- He was appointed to (lit. his place was advanced in) this temple (Faulkner); His seat was advanced in this temple (Lichtheim²¹); On fit prévaloir sa position dans ce temple (Obsomer²²). 2- Que sa position soit rendue éminente dans ce temple (Vernus²³).

In favour of the last one (*šhnt.t(w) st.f* as subjunctive) it may be observed that it follows directly after the offering formula, and in the third person, as a further request. Barta²⁴ lists as Bitte 47 requests with keyword *st*, but for the Twelfth dynasty only two examples are filed: *šhnt Wsir st.f r wrw imyw T3-dsr*, “may Osiris advance his place among the Great Ones of the Sacred Land” in stela BM 150 [567]; and *šhnt Wsir st.i r wrw imyw T3-dsr*, where the only difference is *st.i* instead of *st.f*, in stela Leiden V 4 (both stelae dating from the reign of Amenemhet II). These are in fact two examples of one ‘unit’ of the so-called “Abydos formula”, and precisely the fifteenth unit in the complete or full version,²⁵ which is known from a group of stelae dating from the first part of the dynasty: they show a standardized order in the sequence of units, which tends in general to be maintained also when portions of the text are cited.

Nevertheless, the phrase is a very common one of the “traditional autobiography”,²⁶ and apart a *šhnt st.f m T3-dsr r rwd n ntr ʿ3*, “one whose place was advanced in the Sacred Land to the Terrace of the Great God”,²⁷ it is

21 Lichtheim 1988:90.

22 Obsomer 1995: 543.

23 Vernus 1973: 231.

24 Barta 1968:63 (for the Twelfth dynasty).

25 Lichtheim 1988: 87, 88 n. 8; Spiegel 1973: 118, 120 ss., 125 (these examples).

26 Janssen 1946: 105–106.

27 Janssen 1946: 106 nr. 10

usually related to the career and relative self-praise of the stela or tomb owner. A close parallel to the phrases in the text of Shen-setji is to be found – as Vernus already remarked²⁸ – in the stela of Mery, Louvre C 3, but there they are Mery’s direct speech²⁹ after the section introduced by *b3k.f m3...dd*,³⁰ which follows directly after the date and the royal titulary; the *htp-di’-nswt* formula begins after his speech. Notwithstanding the differences, I prefer to consider what is referred to in this paragraph as a fact, just as in Mery’s text, not as a hope, and in my opinion this formulary, in this position, cannot be related to one of the units of the Abydos formula.

^f The two texts – Louvre C 3 and the Los Angeles stela - use some identical expressions to describe the place of work of an administrator and a sculptor: *hntt mhrw r st nbt w^crt mnht ntrw* – Mery; *w^crt mnht ntrw hntt mhrw r st nbt* – Shen-setji, not to mention the other similarities. In my opinion this *w^crt* does not refer to a particular Abydene “district”, whose list was collected by Vernus,³¹ but is an apposition for *r3-pr pn prw niwwt nt nhh* (Shen-setji), and, respectively, *st nt nhh* (Mery), in order to compose a sort of eulogy of the sacred space. The two documents are therefore probably very near in time.

^g The peculiar writing, which Faulkner understood as “the duplicate of the house of Anubis”, was correctly explained by Vernus,³² who considered the *pr*-sign a determinative.

^h Faulkner’s translation: “Re^c sheds the light of his countenance towards it”. Obsomer 1995: 543, 545, reads *shd.t*, but I disagree with his reading. It seems to me very clear the writing *psd.t*, there can be no doubt about the presence of the *p*-sign and it cannot be related of course to the previous *Inpw* as a complement. So I read: *psd.t R^c hr.f r.s*, which I consider a relative form,

28 Loc.cit.

29 Translation by Vernus 1973: 217–218: «Je suis un serviteur obeisant, grand de caractère, doux d’amour. Si grand était mon obeissance que mon maître m’envoya en mission afin de diriger pour lui la construction d’une place d’éternité, plus grand de renom que *R3-s3w*, supérieure en dispositions à toute autre place, district parfait des dieux. Ses murs, il déchiraient le ciel, le lac qui avait été creusé, il égalait le fleuve, les portes, qui transperçaient le firmament, étaient en pierre blanche de Toura; Osiris-*Hnty-immtyw* se réjouissait des monuments de mon maître. Moi-même, j’étais dans la joie, mon coeur étant dilaté à cause de ce dont j’avais dirigé la construction».

30 Cfr. Lichtheim 1988: 48.

31 Vernus 1973: 224–225; Simpson 1974: 13; Lichtheim 1988: 88.

32 Vernus 1973: 231 n.6.

and with a transitive use of *psd*, though unknown before the Ptolemaic period.³³

ⁱ Lichtheim 1988: 91 and 92 n. 6 assumes that *di.f m^cnh* is synonymous of *htp.f m^cnh*, and so she translates “when he sets in life in the west”. I am assuming that *di.f = hnk.f*,³⁴ see also Vernus 1973: 231.

^j The writing with the *mr/mi*- signs for *m*- already commented upon by Hamrawi 2002: 211; previously Berlev 1962: § 2. Discussion on this term, in comparison with *is*, “tomb”: Simpson 1974: 10ss.; O’Connor 1985: 166; Lichtheim 1988: 92. Lately, a very deep analysis has been presented by Régen 2006 (completed by Régen 2007), who points out (Régen 2006: 263–267) that the term *m^ch^ct* seems to denote generally, or at least often, a superstructure, and seems complementary to *is*, and «mérite le sens de «cénotaphe» ou de «mémorial» qu’on lui attribue généralement mais il serait réducteur de lui assigner uniquement ce sens»: at least during the New Kingdom «(m)^ch^ct désigne couramment l’ensemble architectural de la tombe privée».

^k The Terrace of the Great God is now generally located north of the main Abydos temple, near the Ramesses II temple called ‘The Portal’: lately O’Connor 2009: ch. 6.³⁵

^l On this formula, Berlev 1962 with previous references. This dated stela contributes to establishing dating criteria: e.g. that the formula is preceded by *ddf*, and a short text is inserted between it and the figures below, together with the position of “who love life and hate death”, and the use of *hpt*, “decease, passing away” as an euphemism for “death” (cfr. below, n. 36) are considered peculiarities of the first period of the Middle Kingdom. Moreover, instead of *dd.tn* “may you say”, to introduce the request, here *iw.tn r dd* (and before *iw.tn r rdit n(i)*) is maintained. On the contrary a few palaeographic marks which are more usual in a later period are attested here: e. g. the writing of the plural determinative with *tpyw* (-*t*), and the writing of *t*, typical for the whole Middle Kingdom and until the New Kingdom as well, is the first in time to be noted.

^m Hamrawi 2002: 212 records twice this group of signs with *šms*, to show both an «Umstellung von Lautzeichen» and an «Umstellung von De-

33 Wb I 558,2, Gr. Vernus 1973:231 n. 7 shows the same opinion.

34 Wb III 117,14; I “assume” this possible reading because the arm-sign actually looks like D 37, instead of D 39.

35 Previous literature: Simpson 1974: 6–13; O’Connor 1985; a recent research on landscape, ritual landscape and rituals at Abydos: Effland–Effland 2010.

terminativ». In my opinion, however, the legs-sign does not belong here, but is more probably the determinative of the preceding *hpt*.³⁶

ⁿ Here begins the list of feasts, which is considered one of the main points of interest of this stela,³⁷ clearly closely parallel at least with another Abydene example, the stela Munich GL WAF 35 (probably Amenemhet II, 13)³⁸ belonging to Wepwawet-aa, who is the owner of another stela, too: Leiden V 4, the famous one with an apparently double date, Senwosret I, 44, and Amenemhet II, 2.³⁹ Shen-setji’s list is the following: *3bd, smdt, wp-rnpt, prt tpyt, (prt) 3t, Dhwtyt-îw ntr, w3g, rkh, <hb>Skr, tp(y?)-rnpt, s3d, prwt Mnw, h3krw, sdrt Pqr, tnwt*, the Epagomenal days and “the beautiful feasts of the temple of Osiris”. So “feasts of Heaven” (Regular Monthly Offerings⁴⁰) are mixed with the so-called “Seasonal” or “Annual feasts” (*hbw tp trw*) and with Abydos feasts, showing that by the Middle Kingdom the fixed sequences of the Old Kingdom had been abandoned. Here, the feast of Thot (I *Akhet* 19) precedes the *wag*-feast (I *Akhet* 18), whilst more often the contrary is observed in the Twelfth dynasty; *wp-rnpt* and *tp(y?)-rnpt* are not side by side; the *sadj*-feast is placed before the Min feast, unlike the Old Kingdom. The combination *prt tpyt 3t* (Osirian festivals) is found on some contemporary stelae. A few peculiarities must be pointed out: *prt Mnw* and *h3kr* are in the plural form; between the feast of Thot and the *wag*-feast, there is the phrase *îw ntr*, “(when) the god comes”, now usually linked to the feast of Thot, though without any parallel text to be used to understand correctly such a note; on the contrary Barguet⁴¹ used this mark to try to explain the meaning of the name *wag*, following Clère’s interpretation: “le dieu (= le Nil) vient: que l’on se réjouisse!”. As for the name of the *haker*-feast, he considered that it meant “Viens à moi!” and that could be probably the beginning of a hymn or of a litany⁴². “The night of the *haker*-feast”, more often than “the day” or “the night and day of the *haker*-feast”, is a typical Abydene celebration, as is

36 Wb III 258–259; Berlev 1962: § 2.

37 Spalinger 1996: 45.

38 Simpson 1974: pl. 30; Spiegel 1973: frontispiece; Obsomer 1995:563–567; Spalinger 1996: 44.

39 Boeser 1909: pl. IV; Simpson 1974: pl. 30; Obsomer 1995: 535–539 and 137–143.

40 So Kitchen, cfr. Spalinger 1996: 1.

41 Barguet 1941: 72.

42 The argument that *h3kr* could originate in *h3.k r.i* “come down to me” or “may you descend to me”, is still maintained, cfr. Iskander 2011: 140.

the feast of “spending the night” or “the vigil in *Peqer* (here written *Pqi*)”.⁴³ A very rare mention is the *inwt*- feast, known only from this stela and from Munich GL WAF 35.⁴⁴

^o Berlev 1962: § 4 remarks that the request of “every pure thing/ all pure things” (also in line 2, above) is typical of the Eleventh dynasty and the reign of Senwosret I, whilst later the most frequent phrase is “all good and pure things”, and before the Twelfth dynasty but also at the end of it “all good things” is used.

^p Simpson 1963: 53 and Table I, C. Our stela is one of the best witnesses for the complete name of the Residence of the Middle Kingdom, translated by Simpson as: “Amenemhet takes possession of the Two Lands”. The name, whether in its long form or in the shortened one, *'It(w)-tβwy*, or even only *'Itw*, is rarely cited in contemporary documents, because it was frequently replaced by the term *hnw*, “Residence”.

^q Shen-setji’s statement, that he moved from the Residence “<to> this temple complex”, that is of course to Abydos, definitely explained where Mery, the owner of stela Louvre C 3, had to direct the building of the splendid monument committed by Senwosret I: Vernus (see note e, above) pointed out the close parallelism and even identity of the expressions in the two texts. Shen-setji does refer to a general “work”, whereas Mery mentions a “place of eternity” (*st nt nhh*), which usually is a funerary monument, whether independent or, in this case, more probably – as I think - within the Osiris temple proper. It was however most probably the object of the restoration works ordered by Khendjer during the Thirteenth dynasty.⁴⁵

I register

All figures incised in a low *relief en creux*. The main couple, left, sitting on a low-back seat: he wears his hair long to the shoulders and a very short

43 On the religious celebrations called the Mysteries of Osiris, Lavier 1989.

44 The translation “Numbering” or “Counting” is a possible one: I wish to remind that during the *haker*-feast and the jubilation for Osiris’ “vindication” and resurrection, some texts, as e.g. Book of the Dead ch. 18 (Iskander 2011: 140), speak of the numbering of the dead and counting of the blessed ones, so that they may be distinguished as victorious in the final judgment. Cfr. Lavier 1989: 291.

45 Vernus 1973: 232, stela Louvre C 12; more recently Baines 2009. On the building projects by Senwosret I at Abydos and the provenance of the staff of workers, lately Lorand 2011: 21 ff., part. 28-29, 284-288.

beard, a large collar and perhaps a bracelet on the right wrist, a short skirt with belt; he holds a folded cloth in the left hand near his breast. She wears the classic long hair with one flat band, large collar and long close-fitting dress; she embraces his shoulders with both hands; a mirror with case is under her, beneath the seat.⁴⁶ The table in front of them, T-shaped, has a high hip of offerings, among which a beef-leg and other meat pieces, bread, onions or leeks, a melon, a lettuce.

Captions (on two parallel columns and a closing horizontal line):

→ The honoured one, the sculptor⁴⁷ Shen-setji born by Iyt.

→ His wife, Ptah-em-sa-es.⁴⁸

They are presented a beef-leg by: ←His brother Ptahi,⁴⁹ who shows the same long hair, large collar, short skirt with belt.

The other couple, right, is drawn as specular to the first one with one difference only: the man's left hand, holding a folded cloth, is lowered in front of his waist. Nothing is beneath their seat, and the table is a bit smaller and has a rather hollow top, and a lower hip of offerings: among them a smaller beef-leg, bread, a round fruit (?), a lettuce (or two ? or a prepared goose?).

Captions:

← (vertical) The honoured one, his father, Esni,⁵⁰ justified.

← (horizontal) His (= Esni's) wife, Iyt, justified.

The offering bearer, opposite to the previous one, is (written horizontally, completed underneath): →His (= Esni's) son, Esni the Younger.⁵¹

46 This stela contributes to the definition of the "ideal standard of life" which Pflüger (1947:129–130) investigated on Egyptian stelae of the Middle Kingdom: he used ten 'marks', and among them "water basin, mirror, toilet box, oil jug", all together, are Nr. 1: he remarked however that these elements had a different 'life', though in general much present in the early Middle Kingdom and much more rare afterwards. I wish to point out a sort of 'revival' of these features in the Late Middle Kingdom, which deserves consideration: Rosati 1980: 22–23 n. 51.

47 The vertical sign looks like a *sn*-sign (T 22), and is surely miswritten for the harpoon-head for *gmwtj* (T 19–20); see also Faulkner 1952:5, n.1. In the main text he is however Director of sculptors.

48 Ranke, PN I 140, 4.

49 Ranke, PN I 142, 3.

50 Cfr. Ranke, PN I 278, 25. Faulkner misread "Yotsen", mixing "his father" with the personal name.

51 Faulkner misunderstood both the caption's layout and the sparrow sign, which he considered to be a swallow: the caption runs horizontally on one line (two squares) plus one half-line under the first square. On *hrd* meaning "the child = the young(er) = junior" cfr. Rosati 1980: 68–69.

II register: All figures represented as incised silhouettes. A row of 12 persons facing right, all captions →.

(1 short horizontal line + 2 columns): The honoured one, the sculptor [Shen]-setji, who causes their name(s) to live.⁵²

His son, Senwosret.⁵³

The honoured one, Henu.⁵⁴

His wife, Sat-Esni.⁵⁵

His brother, Shen-setji.

His wife, Senet-ites.⁵⁶

His son, Kau-Ptah.⁵⁷

His wife, Rerut.⁵⁸

The honoured one, Khety.⁵⁹

His wife Rerut.

His brother, Ptah-nakht.⁶⁰

His brother, Kau-Ptah.

III register: 12 people facing right like above.

His sister (sic, for: brother), Nemty-(em)-sa-ef.⁶¹

His wife, Iy.⁶²

52 Brief note on this formula in Ashmawy Ali 2009: 20–21. On the ‘actors’ of this ritual, Schmitz 1981; Rosati 2008: 170–171. Who is, however, this Shen-setji? Perhaps the same owner of the stela, who is already named in the main text as *imy-r gnwtyw*, and is represented in the previous register, but with the simple title of *gnwty*, in his caption? Can the same man be addressee and offerer? Or is Shen-setji here offerer with regard to his parents, just above him?

53 Ranke, PN I 279, 1.

54 Ranke, PN I 242, 2

55 Ranke PN I 293, 5–6; II, 384.

56 Ranke, PN I 311, 13.

57 Ranke, PN I 341, 11.

58 Ranke PN I 225, 9

59 Ranke, PN I 277, 26

60 Ranke PN I 140, 15

61 Ranke PN I 69, 23, filed as *°ntj(?)m-s3.f*. For the correct reading see Berlev 1969; another possible example supporting the reading *nnty* in the stela BM 213 [565] (Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc., II, 10).

Her son, It.⁶³
 Her daughter, Hut.⁶⁴
 Her son, Ptah-nakht.
 Her son, Nemty- (em)-sa-ef.
 Her son, Ptah-nakht.
 His brother, Khety.
 His brother, Khety.
 His brother Nemty-(em)-sa-ef.
 His brother Shen-setji.
 His brother, Inp(u)-nakh<ⓧ>.⁶⁵
 Extra bottom line:
 [...Nemty-(-em)?]- sa-ef.
 His brother, Ptah-nakht.
 His sister, Ip[⁶⁶
 His brother, Shen-setji.

It is not easy to follow the links among so many people, some of whom are surely relatives, but may also be colleagues. As for the owner, his family-tree is rather short: son of Esni and Iyt, he had two brothers, Esni junior and Ptahi, and a wife, Ptah-em-sa-es. Should he be the same Shen-setji at the head of the second register, he had a son, Senwosret. The personal name Shen-setji, apart from the examples on this stela (at least four different individuals), is not a very frequent one: another stela in the Cairo Museum, CGC 20063, coming from Abydos as well, records three different Shen-setji (one is the son of a woman Hathor), and moreover a selection of personal names which may be compared with the other family or ‘group’. Two women are named Iyt, two men bear the name Senwosret, a man is Esni senior (or perhaps junior, as in our example?⁶⁷), and a woman Sat-Esni is “his wife” probably of a Senwosret, but a Henu is named just before him. So it is not impossible that we have a connection between these two Abydene stelae, the first for a ‘master-

62 Ranke, PN I 8, 8 = 55, 7.

63 Ranke, PN I 50, 13, filed as *itf*.

64 Ranke, PN I 234, 25.

65 Ranke, PN I 37, 16.

66 Cfr. Ranke PN I 21, 26 ss.

67 Lange – Schäfer 1902: 79 transcribe the bird-sign as a swallow (= *wr*), but it seems to me very similar to the sparrow, which in the Los Angeles stela is determinative of *hrd*, see note 51.

sculptor', of good quality, whether made by himself or by someone else, and another described as a "gute Arbeit", where a customer or even a probable author (in this case, exceptionally) is mentioned, though no title at all is present: (bottom line, center) *in Nfr-hr ir sw*, "It was Nefer-her who made it (= this stela)". For now, this should remain a hypothesis.



STELA OF THE MASTER-SCULPTOR SHEN

Fig. 1. – Reproduced from the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 38, 1952, Pl. I.
Image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society, London.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Ranke, PN = H. Ranke, *Die altägyptischen Personennamen*, 3 vols., Glückstadt - Hamburg - New York: J.J. Augustin 1935, 1952, 1977.
- Wb = A. Erman und H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*, 6 vols., Berlin: Akademie-Verlag u. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs 1957²

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