

DRENKHAHN, ROSEMARIE

**The Elephantine Stele of Sethnacht and Its Historical Background**

[“Die Elephantine-Stele des Sethnacht und ihr historischer Hintergrund”]

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In this work, the Egyptologist Rosemarie Drenkhahn documents the problem of the succession towards the close of the 19th Dynasty, following the death of Sethos II, and the seizure of power by the new ruling house of the 20th Dynasty in the person of Sethnacht.

In the first section (“Documentary evidence on the historical background”), the personalities concerned in the events and their inter-relationships are presented from the point of view of the sources. These are:

- Siptah (the direct successor of Sethos II), a minor, of questionable legitimacy, who died young
- Tausret, the wife of Sethos II, who after his death acted at first as regent for the minor Siptah. After Siptah's death, since there was no legitimate male successor, she was able to seize the throne, but reigned for only a short time.
- Bay, the central figure in the whole affair. A civil servant, he was at first Siptah's protector, but after the death of Tausret, he attempted to seize the kingship.
- Finally Sethnacht, who was able to eliminate Bay, even to the extent of blotting out his name (Sethnacht calls him by the fictitious name of Irsu). He seized the kingship, and, although he reigned for only a short time, he was able to transfer the office to his son Ramses III, and thus secure it for his line.

The second section, “The Elephantine-Stele of Sethnacht”, is a new consideration of the stele, which was discovered during excavations by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Cairo, and which presents the change of dynasty from the point of view of the “usurper” Sethnacht. In comparison with the *editio princeps* (by Dino Bidoli, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abt. Kairo*, 28, 1973, pp. 193-200) undoubted progress has been made, not only in the constitution of the text, but also in the translation. The syntactic interpretation of the text is still in need of improvement (in one or two isolated instances, the opinion of the first editor is still preferable to that of the present one), but such possible improvements in detail would not affect the historical interpretation as a whole. The examination of the stele closes

with an analysis of the historical information provided by the text it bears; all other known sources on the subject are also utilized. A whole section is devoted to the question of the literary placing of the text.

The work can be recommended, not only for its very useful new treatment of the text, but also as a handy collection of the materials on the history and chronology of the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Dynasties in Egypt.

Professor Dr. Wolfgang Schenkel