The Stela of Khu-Sobek
(Manchester Museum)

This limestone stela of the Manchester Museum (measured 16.5 cm wide and 28 cm high) was found in Abydos in 1901 by J. Garstang. It is of poor quality but important since it records an early of war of Egypt with its northern enemies.

A royal offering of Osiris, lord of Abydos, (giving) an invocation offering of bread and beer, foreleg (of an ox) and fowl, linen and clothing, incense and oil, every good and pure thing

for the ka of the member of the elite, high official, who has said good things, repeated /proclaimed what was desired during the course of every day, great district official of the town, Khu-Sobek whose good name is Djaa,

The principal references for these notes are T. Eric Peet, The Stela of Sebek-khu, Manchester Museum Handbooks 75 (1914), and J. Baines, The Stela of Khusobek: Private and Royal Military Narrative and Values, in Form und Mass, Beiträge zur Literatur, Sprache und Kunst des alten Ägypten, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, pp. 43-61.


Alternatively, ṣs “alabaster, calcite.”
nfrt is an adjective used as a noun and mrrt is imperfective passive participle; see Allen (23.12)
Lit. “what belongs to the day.”
Alternative, but less likely, Sobek-khu may be a subject + stative construction ṣbk xw(.w) “Sobek is protected.”
See Wörterbuch V, 520. As noted by Peet this name also appears in the Cairo Stela 20586, and in British Museum, Hieroglyphic texts from Stelae, II, 6.
begotten of Ita (mother) of the district of Tefnut, possessor of honor.

z3t.f mrt.f gbw12 ir.n [...],13 sn.f ddw ir.n mrt-iti.s,14
imi-r c-hnwty hrw15 ir.n h3sty,16 mnr[t nt ib.f rn.f c-rh17 ir.t.n(ddi)18
iwbw irt.n mrt-iti(i).s nhbt-wnnt irt.n iwbw

His daughter, his beloved, Gebu, begotten of ... His ‘brother,’ Dedu, begotten of Meret-it'i-es.

Overseer of the chamber, Kheru, begotten of Khaseti. The nurse of his heart, Renef-ankh, begotten of [Dedi]. Iubu, begotten of Meret-it'i-es. Nebet-Iunet, begotten of Iubu.

w3b19 hm.f m h d r shrt mntw-statt, spr hm.f r sp't skmm20 rn.s

His majesty proceeded downstream to overthrow the Bedouins of Asia.21 His majesty arrived at the district named Sekmem.

---

10 As noted by Peet, a rock inscription at Semna with precise date, the 9th regnal year of Ni-Maat-Re (throne name of Amenemhat III), also mentions Khu-Sobek as:

Here after the name itA the feminine mAat xrw “justified” proves that Ita is the name of a woman, therefore she is the mother of Khu-Sobek.

11 Peet notes that ‘the words beneath the chair are a puzzle.’ On the other hand, pr tfnw “The House of Tefnut” (Wörterbuch V, 299) was a district (wfrtw) of iwnt Iunet, present-day Dendera. The connection with Iunet is also shown in the name of Iubu’s daughter (sixth seated figure), nbi-wnnt “mistress of Iunet.”

12 Not z3bw Sabu,” see Ranke, PN I, 350.

13 Probably not Meret-it'i-es (see next) as the name has been intentionally erased (noted by Peet), and Meter-it'i-es was the mother of two children, at least one from Khu-Sobek.

14 Not Mert-itfes as mrt-iti.s means “beloved of her father.”

15 Conjectural.

16 Typical graphic transposition with the phonetic complement; see also line 6. Baines reads this as zmit.

17 Lit. “his name is life.”

18 Newberry’s reading.

19 Narrative infinitive, see the Bull Hunt Scarab (line 6): n't hm.f m h'd.

20 Usually identified with the biblical Shechem. In the spelling, the phonetic complement is in graphic transposition, see a variant writing (without transposition) in the next line.

21 As noted by Breasted, this campaign belongs to the latter part of Khu-Sobek’s career. The anachronism here is due to Khu-Sobek attaching importance to this event. Based on context, grammar, and style, Baines actually places the horizontal lines 6-10 to the very end of the stela.
(It was just when) his majesty was making a good beginning to return to the royal residence (lit. of lph), the Sekmem and the wretched Retjenu fell (descended?),

(while) I was serving (at) the rear of the army. Then the (foot) soldiers of the army engaged to fight with the Asiatics.

Then, I struck the Asiatic, and I had his weapons to be taken by two soldiers of the army without (me) stopping (lit. missing from) fighting,

I was brave, I did not turn my back on (lit. to) the Asiatic.

As Senwosret lives for me, I spoke in truth!

---

22 Narrative infinitive.
23 Because of the introductory word ʿḥ ṣn and the long topicalized subject (and the clauses that follow) one would expect here a circumstantial sdm.n.f/perfect instead of the rare indicative/perfective sdm.f (Gardiner (§480)).
24 For the possible different interpretations, see the discussion in Baines, loc. cit.
25 Typical unmarked adverb clause with pseudoverbal predicate. Note that ʿiri can mean “serve” a god or a superior.
26 For similar meaning, see Les. 83, 11.
27 Negated infinitive. Baines cites a similar line from the biography of Amenemhab:
28 The definite article is suggested by the context; it most probably refers to the chief, see Sethe, loc. cit., p. 134.
29 As Baines notes: “This means that he did not yield the temptation to plunder…”
30 Subject + stative construction, lit. “my sight is blessed,” an Egyptian idiom for “being brave;” see Wörterbuch, II, 59.
31 See GNS 34-5; negated indicative/perfective sdm.f
32 The goddess Wosret is in honorific transposition.
33 Typical emphatic construction using the nonattributive relative form of dd and with the prepositional phrase m m3t emphasized; lit. “It is in truth that I spoke! See Allen (25.11.4). Note that the Semna stela has dd.i while the nearly identical Uronarti stela has dd.n.i.
Then he gave me a throw-stick/staff of electrum, to my hand, a sheath and a dagger wrought (lit. worked) with electrum together with handle.

(i)r(i)-pa(t), HAt(i)-a, mn Tbt, hr nmtt, mDd-wAt nt smnx sw, rdi.n nb t3wi f 3w.f,  shnt mrwt.f st.f, wɔrt ɔn nwt, d33

Member of the elite, high official, steadfast (lit. firm of sandal), easy of bearing, loyal (lit. one who adheres to the path) to (lit. of) the one who makes him advance, one to whom the lord of the Two Lands gave his splendor, one whose position his love promoted, the great district official of the town, Djaa.

dd.f  ir.n.i n.i miHat tw s3h.ti, smnh n1 st.s r rwq à ntr ɔn, nb ɔn nh, hnt (i) ɔbdw hr wɔrt nb(t) htp 43
hr nbt ɔnh

34 Peet, following Newberry and Golenischeff, renders this as  "staff."
35 According to Wörterbuch II, 170, this word is related to the obsolete tp “dagger” using the formative m.
36 The 18th Dynasty pharaohs rewarded bravery by giving the weapons of the vanquished. Based on this Breasted conjectured the word in the lacuna to be h/ww.f “his weapons.” As noted by Peet this does not fit into the outline and the missing word believed for a type of material complementing electrum. Baines gives the partial reading hfr and conjectures this as “handle,” related to the verb and noun hfr, “grasp.” The two signs at the end are probably birds.
39 Compare this with the passage in the stela of Mentuhotep (UC14333) in this web site: rdi.n nb.f mrwt.f “one to whom his lord gave his love,” where the coreferent n.f is also suppressed.
40 Stative used as expression of state.
41 This passage is an example of an emphatic construction; see H. Polotsky, Egyptian Tenses, The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings, Vol. II, 5 (1965). The theme (the given information) is the first clause “I have made for myself…” and the missing word stands for a type of material complementing electrum. Baines gives the partial reading hfr and conjectures this as “handle,” related to the verb and noun hfr, “grasp.” The two signs at the end are probably birds.
He says: I have made for myself this tomb, beautified, once its position had been efficiently established at the staircase of the Great God/the tomb of Osiris, Lord of Life, Foremost of Abydos in the district “Mistress of Offerings” and in the district “Mistress of Life,”

\[sn <n> (i) 44 snTr pr m hnt, h[tm.n.]tw(i) 45 idt ntr, w³rtw ²³, d³³\]

(so that) I may smell the incense that came forth, (and) I may be provided with the divine censing, the great district official, Djaa.

\[dd.f mny[i] 46 rnp 27 hr hm.f (n)swt-bit(i) NBW-K³W-R²⁷ m³³ hrw,\]

\[h³⁴⁸ hm.f (n)swt-bit(i) H³-K³W-R²⁴⁹ m³³ hrw m shmti hr st hrw nt ⁵nhw,\]

\[rd³⁵⁰ hm.f ir.i ⁵¹ k³³ m ³³h³ m ht r gs hm.f m zi(i) ⁶³² n hnw\]

He says: I was born in year 27 during the incarnation of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt. Nebkaura, justified. So, when his majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Khakaura, justified, wearing (lit. in) the double crown mounted on the Horus throne of the living, his majesty made me adopt the profession as a weapon trainer (lit. fighter of stick) beside his majesty along with six men of the Residence.

---

42 According to Peet’s this refers to the terraced hillside surrounding the burial site at Abydos. Gardiner, however, interprets rwp as the staircase leading to the tomb (replacing the earlier shaft construction), and renders the phrase rwp ntr ²³ as the “tomb of Osiris.”

43 Usually written with the plural strokes as .

44 Sethe, loc. cit. p. 133.

45 Peet restores this as htm.tw.i. Incense burning and smelling the incense, however, seem to be connected, and in an circumstantial clause of causality, the circumstantial sdm.n.f/perfect verb form is used. Alternatively, the scribe may omit the suffix n as it is present in the main clause.

46 It is unlikely that the verb msi has here transitive meaning “give birth, bear” as it has pronominal subject; see Allen (21.9). As Peet noted (JEA, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Jul., 1914), p. 210), the only other possibility is that msi has intransitive meaning “to be born” and as such it has the peculiar ending y.

47 Throne name of Amenemhat II.

48 A perfect relative form as it is the predicate of an emphasized adverb clause; see Allen (25.11.2).

49 Throne name of Senwosret III.

50 Narrative infinitive.

51 rd³ + prospective/subjunctive sdm.f construction.

52 Not seven as in line 22. One stroke is for the seated man.

53 We follow here Sethe’s rendering. Baines interprets the two crowns as synonym for nswt-bit(i).
I have become effective at his side, and his majesty caused that I be appointed to be a “Follower of the Ruler.” Sixty men have been given to me.

His majesty proceeded upstream to overthrow the desert Nubians (lit. tribesmen of the bow). Then I smote a Nubian [at Kenekf] in the presence of the/my townsmen.

Then I proceeded downstream in attendance (lit. following) with six men of the Residence. Then he appointed me to “Inspector of the Followers.” One hundred men have been given to me as a reward.

\[54\] spd is an adjective-verb “sharp, skilful, effective.”

\[55\] Narrative infinitive.

\[56\] Prospective/subjunctive sdm.f.

\[57\] Passive.

\[58\] Peet’s conjectural rendering. Baines notes that this geographical name is not attested but it is probably around the Second Cataract region.

\[59\] Subject-stative construction.

\[60\] Wilson’s rendering. Baines translates this passage as: “And then I went north, performing service, in a 6-ship of the Resudence.” His “6-ship” is known from the Old Kingdom title “overseer of F6-ships;” and the so-called analogous “8-ships” are well attested, e.g. [Urk. IV, 1237, 1].