

Unknown / Epitaph of Kheredankh Daughter of Shepmin

Source: Hildesheim PM 6352 [TM 89804], 2nd/1st century BCE. K. Jansen-Winkeln and M. Panov, trans. The middle section of the translation is taken from M. Panov, “Women in the Inscriptions of the Late Period”, no 7.3; the start and end is adapted from the commentary by K. Jansen-Winkeln, “Die Hildesheimer Stele der Chereduanch”. There is also a ‘provisional’ English translation by R.K. Ritner, which he provided for a Christie’s catalogue.

This 2nd/1st century BCE inscription describes the carefree life of a young woman ‘who loved to drink’, without any suggestion of criticising her.

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The grown-up girl, of patient (?) character and familiar ways, eloquent *but* restrained, capable and intelligent, popular *and* (?) in the mouth of everyone, of careful tongue and with friendly words, Osiris Kheredankh, justified, daughter of the ‘judge’, the prophet of Amun, the primeval of the two lands, the prophet of Min, the lord of Achmim, the Osiris Shepmin, justified, born of the Lady of the House Senimouthis, who is well, says this:

O all writers, all scholars, ḥn-z3w, who are allowed to enter the libraries, residents of the house of life who read the scriptures, team of the Ibis who are searching the books of life (?), servants of Thot, practitioners of the rituals, all dignitaries, lords, patricians and subjects, [5] all wab-priests, stolistai, prophets and fathers of my nome, ḥzk-priests of the nome of Abydos, administrators of *Osiris* Khenti-amenti and expert *readers* of lower rank, all those living on earth, who come from Upper and Lower Egypt and will pass through this desert, who will enter the necropolis of the nome of Abydos and will pass Ḥ3pt-nb.s, all you who will see this stele next to my grave: come *near* so that you can read this writing that is on it, in which I say what happened to me, without listening to someone else saying *it*.

I was a beautiful lady in my city, and I was so beautiful of face that *people* rejoiced at seeing me! *I was* trusted by each person who saw me, both male and female. It is me who pronounced good *speeches* and said desirable *words*. Evil never left my lips and never [10] occupied my body. I was a nurse who reared little babies, *and* nourished *them* all with my sustenance.

I was happily conceived and *came* in a pleasant birth; I was raised in joy. My father praised my grace more than that of any child of his, when he gave me to his eldest son. His *son’s* heart was filled with love for me. He did not let me separate from him in the ‘beer house’, day or night. He forgot everything bad in his heart at the sight of me, every day.

I was sitting and relaxing every day with my associates, we drank and banqueted, our hearts were delighted with the northern wind blowing on us. I made festivals and *arranged* appearing both of the gods and goddesses of my region. I was mistress of beverages, who loved a merry day, pleasures proceeded in front of her every day, [15] anointed with myrrh, adorned with lotus. *Flower* garlands always hung round our necks, various plants were brought for us. We smelled herbs perfuming sweet, their scent was like *the aroma of those carried from* Punt. Singers made music for us, beautiful girls, with *their* heads down, sang, danced and played, making us happy every day, without cease.

It was I who gave goods to the poor. I gave bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. Citizens prayed for my health in return for benefactions I performed for them. I was a grown-up lady with a short lifespan. The crocodile seized me and I died when I was young (?).

O *all* who you are living on earth, people [20] who will come to die *also*: Give me water as a libation—I was one who loved to drink. Your Lord, the King of the Gods {*Osiris*} Wennefer, justified, the ruler of the nome of Abydos, will live for you according to how you speak of a royal sacrifice and *how* your arms bend with incense, libations and a sacrifice of a thousand-fold of all things for a young girl’s ka; *because* I was one who *only* spent a few years conforming to my heart. *My* years on earth: 20 years, 9 months and 13 days.