

## Nḥsy: THE DUBIOUS KING

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### RESUMEN:

El autor intenta aclarar la posición del rey Nehesy en el canon real en base a las fuentes disponibles, la genealogía real y las condiciones de su acceso al trono, situándolo en la dinastía XIV como segundo rey, tras su padre Shesy.

This paper aims to deal with the controversial issue of King Nehesy, whose position in the royal canon is still in debate amongst scholars (fig. 1). Hence, the present writer would clarify the matter —as possible as he could— according to the available sources, the King's genealogy and the conditions of his accession.

The viewpoint concerning Nehesy's Royal family tends to locate him in the Fourteenth Dynasty, since his Royal seals are similar to those of the Fourteenth family rather than the Thirteenth<sup>1</sup>.

However, the genealogy of the family refers to foreign origins, as we are going to deal *infra*. Nehesy was the youngest son of King Sheshi and the Queen Tati. He had a stepbrother called Ipqu, who died very early during the long reign of his father who ruled for about 40 years<sup>2</sup>. It is also probable that Nehesy and his brother were preceded by another two brothers, who also died very early<sup>2</sup>. Thus Nehesy became the legitimate heir of the throne, as shown by his title «s3 Nsw smsw Nḥsy»<sup>3</sup>. (Fig. 2 y 3).

This position is already testified by various allusions, which were mainly royal prerogatives. Such as «the beloved of Seth, lord of Avaris», on a part of obelisk

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<sup>1</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *The Political Situation in Egypt During The Second Intermediate Period (1800- 1550 B.C.)*, Copenhagen (1997), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> VON BECKERATH, J.: *ÄF* 23 (1964), p. 263.

from Tanis<sup>4</sup> (fig. 4). And «the beloved of DN; given life ..», as well as «(He who) the rulers came forth upon (their) bellies before him»<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, Von Beckerath tends to consider Nehsy as the second king of the Fourteenth Dynasty in one hand, while he leaves the first one unknown on the other hand. He also mentions that Nehsy was entitled after accessing the throne by «3<sup>c</sup> - sh- R<sup>c</sup>»<sup>6</sup>; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Nehsy<sup>7</sup>.

As for the origin of King Nehsy, it is worth mentioning that it throws light on one of the early semitic groups, which infiltrated to eastern delta. These groups tried to overwhelm Egypt during the chaotic transition from the Twelfth to the Thirteenth Dynasties<sup>8</sup>. They tried to establish ruling families in a very limited sphere of influence as well as relations with the most powerful group; *i.e.* the Hyksos. One of these rulers was Nehsy's father Sheshi (Ma<sup>c</sup>-ib-Re<sup>c</sup>), as shown from the royal scarab-seals of the Fourteenth Dynasty<sup>9</sup>. These latter are also attributed to his son Ipqu who died during his father's life, as mentioned *supra*, and to Nehsy who was very old when he accessed the throne. He ruled most likely for less than a year<sup>10</sup>, whereas he paid his interest to the north-eastern borders of the country; especially Tell-Haboua (10 km N.E. the city of Al-Quantara)<sup>11</sup> (fig. 5).

As for his mother the Queen Tati, her name was known as the only Queen in the family from 11 seals and two scarabs<sup>12</sup> (fig. 6). Although she never bears the title of «king's mother, her name was written in a royal cartouche. This would refer to her as a wife of Sheshi and a mother of his legitimate heir Nehsy. The only possible suggestion for that is the death of Tati before Nehsy's accession. Moreover; the name of her son Nehsy (the Nubian) reflects the Nubian origin of Tati. And it also attests the viewpoint that Ipqu the other son of her husband Sheshi was not her son, especially that his name is semitic<sup>13</sup>.

In the respect of the origins also, we would say that the marriage of the Semitic Sheshi and the Nubian Tati reflects part of the political situation during the second intermediate period. It represents the extension of relations between the Canaanite rulers and the Kushite ones, which mainly based on trade interrelations since the Thirteenth Dynasty<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> PETRIE, W. F.: *Tanis I*, pls. 198, 208, 217.

<sup>5</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> VON BECKERATH, J.: *Handbuch der Ägyptischen Königsnamen*, Münster (1984), 2/2; QUIRKE, S., *Who were the Pharaohs; A History of Their Names with a List of Cartouches*, (1990), p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> VON BECKERATH, J.: *ÄF* 23 (1964), p. 262.

<sup>8</sup> HELCK, W.: *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens Zu Vorderasien Im 3. Und 2. Jahrtausend V. Chr.*, Wiesbaden (1962), p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *The Political Situation in Egypt During The Second Intermediate Period.*, p. 96; cf. Beitaq, M., *SAK* 11, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *op. cit.*, p. 252; GARDINER, A.: *The Royal Canon of Turin*, Oxford (1959), pl. III.

<sup>11</sup> See; ABDEL- MAQSUD, M.: Un monument du Roi AA-S<sup>c</sup> Nhsy à Tell- Haboua (Sinai Nord), *ASAE* 69 (1983), PP. 1-5; Ryholt, K. S.B., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> HAYES, W.: *The Scepter of Egypt II*, fig. I.

<sup>13</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *The Political Situation in Egypt During The Second Intermediate Period.*, p. 253.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-4.

As stated in both Turin and Karnak Papyri; a long period of *circa*. 150 yrs of the Thirteenth Dynasty, where fifty or sixty rulers accessed the throne. This overlapped to some extent with the short period of twenty years for the reigns of Nehsy and his father ( *ca.* 1740- 1720 B.C.), during the reigns of Neferhotep I and Sobekhotep IV of the Thirteenth Dynasty<sup>15</sup>. According to Pap. Turin some of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Dynasties' Kings are recorded in columns 8-9, where the lacuna would have included the founder of the Fourteenth Dynasty. This is most likely Shesi who was succeeded by Nehsy as the second King of the Dynasty<sup>16</sup>.

Added to that; the rise and expansion of the Fourteenth Dynasty had coincided with the decline of the contemporary kings of the Thirteenth one. A decline which was reflected in the delimitation of its influence in Nubia and its relations in Syria, besides the spread of epidemic diseases<sup>17</sup>. While the sphere of influence of the Fourteenth Dynasty had grown up around its capital Xoïs ( in the vicinity of modern Kafr Al- Sheikh in Delta.). Many monuments were found in Tell-Dab<sup>ca</sup>, Tell-Farsha, Tell-Maskhouta and further distant in eastern Delta were under the control of the Fourteenth Dynasty Kings. They were 76 kings ruled for 184 yrs (*ca.* 1786-1603 B.C.), as mentioned by Manetho and Pap. Turin<sup>18</sup>.

However, the King Sheshi of the Fourteenth Dynasty was contemporary to the first generation of the Hyksos, to the extent that he was considered —according to Hayes— as one of their loyal rulers<sup>19</sup>. This was a traditional trend of the local rulers policy in Eastern Delta since the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty. Whereas the Asiatic elements infiltrated throughout Egypt as workers or captives, then they tried to form a power, which aided the Hyksos in overwhelming most of Egypt later<sup>20</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Nehsy already followed his father's policy towards either Nubia or the new invaders in Delta (*e.g.* the Hyksos). Since the relations with Upper and Lower Nubia represent a strategic policy for the Egyptian rulers in both defense and economic scales. This latter in particular depended on the caravan trade that based in Kerma as its center behind the Third Cataract<sup>21</sup>. Meanwhile, Nehsy's policy toward the Hyksos was likely similar to that of his father in general<sup>22</sup>. But the lack of specific documents maintains its nature and details open to question amongst scholars.

<sup>15</sup> VON BECKERATH, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 55-8; VERCOUTTER, J.: *Egypt in the Middle Kingdom; Later Eleventh Dynasty and Twelfth Dynasty*: in: BOTTERO, J. (and others, eds.), *The Near East: The Early Civilization*, London (1967), pp. 387-8.

<sup>16</sup> RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *op. cit.*, p. 95, fig. 11.

<sup>17</sup> DANIEL, C.: *Nubia under the Pharaohs*, London (1976), 71-6; VERCOUTTER, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 389-90; Ryholt, K. S. B., *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> It is hard to determine the extension of the fourteenth dynasty territory due to the lack and ambiguity of its documents and monuments, see: VERCOUTTER, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 391; RYHOLT, K. S. B.: *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> HAYES, W.: *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> REDFORD, D.B.: *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, Cairo (1995), pp. 113-4; James, T. G. H., *An Introduction to Ancient Egypt*, New York , p. 55; HELCK, W.: *op. cit.*, p. 95; AL- SAYED, R. A.: *History of Ancient Egypt II* (in Arabic), Cairo (1993), p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> Save-Söderbergh, The Hyksos rule in Egypt, *JEA* 37, pp. 61-2; ARKELL, A.: *A History of the Sudan*, London (1955), pp. 46-9.

<sup>22</sup> REDFORD, D. B.: *op. cit.*, pp. 114.

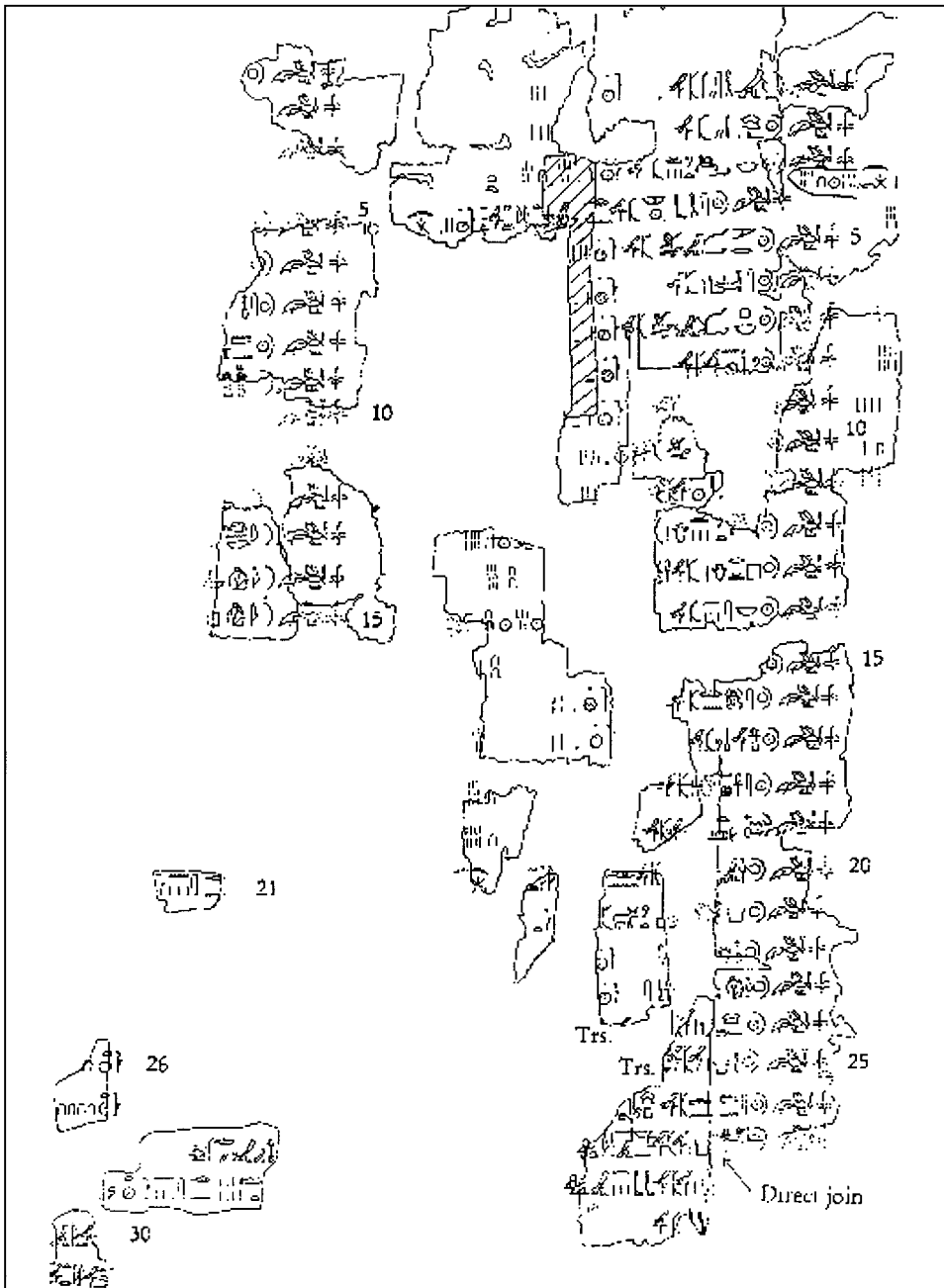


Fig. 1. Turin King-List Col. 9-10. Adapted from: K.S.B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period*, 1997, p. 95.



Fig. 2-3. Eldest King's Son Nḥsy «š3 nsw smsw nḥsy» and King's Son/son of Re Nḥsy «š3 R<sup>c</sup>. Nḥsy» respectively. Adapted from: K.S.B. Ryholt, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

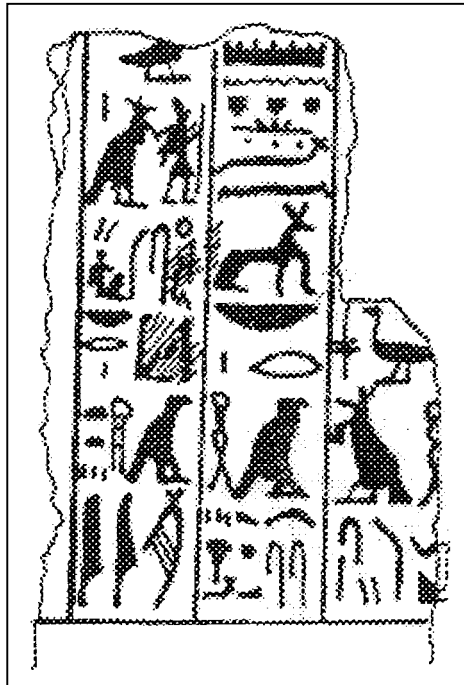


Fig. 4. Parts of Obelisk of Nḥsy and there is a dedication to God Seth on it. (Adapted from: Petrie: *Tanis, I, PIS, 198,208, 217.*)

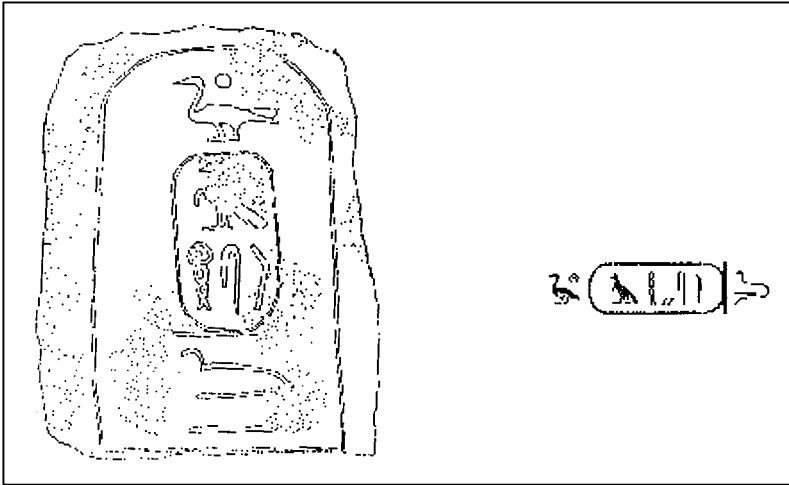


Fig. 5. King Nhsy bears the title s3 R<sup>c</sup> Nhsy and it was found in «Tel-Haboua (North Sinai).  
(Adapted from: M. ABD EL-Maqsound), ASAE, T. 69, p. 3.

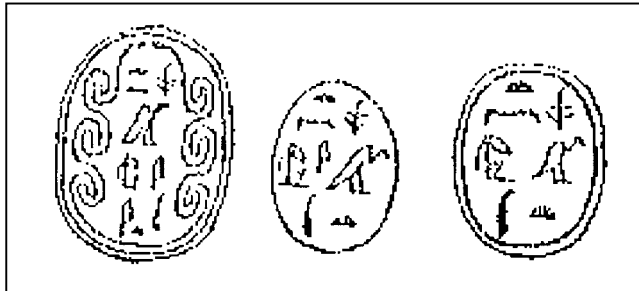


Fig. 6. Three Scarab-Seals of the mwt-ni swt <sup>c</sup> Itti, «King's-Mother ITTi», are in the Blanchard Collection, Cairo. One has a scroll pattern; the other two are plain. Adapted from: P.E. New Berry, «The King's-Mother Itti», JEA, XVIII, 1923, p. 142.