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GENDER AND KUSHITE STATE IDEOLOGY: THE FAILED MASCULINITY OF NIMLOT, RULER OF HERMOPOLIS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Arguably, Nubian studies and gender studies are not often combined.¹ There are works that at least implicitly highlight *femininity* in Kush (modern-day Sudan) by focusing on the roles of royal women in Kush,² but (staying with the royal sphere) works that centre on the Kushite king or other royal males directly in relation to *masculinity* in Kush are arguably lacking.³

This paper seeks to address this perceived deficiency, in making a strategic case study, looking at how Nimlot⁴, ruler of Hermopolis⁵ (modern-day

el-Ashmunein in the middle part of Egypt), is represented on the victory stela of the Kushite king Piankhi⁶ (747-716), both on his own and in relation to Piankhi. My hypothesis is that Piankhi – the male protagonist and hero of the story – represents *ideal* masculinity, while Nimlot – a male antagonist and villain of the same story – represents *failed* masculinity.⁷ My analysis will rest both on the textual and visual evidence, and centre on the *ideological* (instead of the usual historical) aspects.⁸ This paper is accordingly designed to contribute to the topic of Kushite state ideology.⁹

THE STELA

The victory stela of Piankhi (Fig. 1) is around 180 cm high, rounded at the top, and made of grey granite. It was discovered in the ruins of the temple of Amun of Napata (the capital of Kush) at the holy mountain Gebel Barkal in 1862 CE, and is today exhibited in the Cairo Museum (JE 48862). Its main text consists

- 1 By contrast, gender analyses are relatively frequent in the neighbouring discipline of Assyriology, especially concerning Assyria. For masculinity studies based on sources from Mesopotamia in general and Assyria specifically, see e.g. Winter 1996 and Bahrani 2001 on the visual sources, and Guinan 1997 and Chapman 2004 on the textual sources. In order to enrich the analysis of this paper, I will include references to this research.
- 2 See e.g. Kormysheva 1999 (on royal mothers) and Lohwasser 2001a-b (on queenship and royal women in general). The identified strong position of queens in Meroe (Kush's successor) was noted already by Graeco-Roman writers (Lohwasser 2001b: 61). Also the royal women of the Kushite, or Napatan, phase of Sudanese history have been identified as powerful. Some scholars even speak of a matrilinearity, in terms of royal women holding key positions in the succession to the throne (see Priese 1981: 49-53 and Lohwasser 2001b: 64-66). The king's mother e.g. had a crucial role at the coronation (Lohwasser 2001b: 68-69). However, also fratrilinear and patrilinear successions in Kush have been suggested (Macadam 1949: 124 and Török 1995a: 107-14 resp.).
- 3 For example, the works by J. Pope (2014) and F. Breyer (2003) at best only implicitly relate to Kushite royal masculinity in their studies of the kings and reigns of Taharqa (690-664) and Tanutamon (664-653) resp. The work by U. Matic (2019) discusses masculinity but only partly and from an Egyptian perspective.
- 4 Written *n-m3-r-t*. The rendering of this name varies. Here, I follow Wilkinson 2016 in using Nimlot.
- 5 The Hermopolis-linked king Nimlot D in scholarly literature (Kitchen 1973: 136-37, 513). Hermopolis was the main city of the Hare-province, i.e. the 15th province or nome of Upper Egypt (Lichtheim 1980: 81, n. 24).

- 6 The rendering of this name varies. Here, I follow Wilkinson 2016 in using Piankhi.
- 7 For these terms, see e.g. Bahrani 2001: 39 (ideal) and Chapman 2004: 20 (failed).
- 8 See e.g. Yoyotte 1961, Priese 1970, Kitchen 1973, Spalinger 1979, Kessler 1981, Depuydt 1993, Goedicke 1998, and Kahn 2001 for works on the historical(-chronological) aspects of the stela. An exception is the work by A. El Hawary (2010: 210-347) which includes an analysis of the stela in which Kushite *culture* is the focal point. The ideological (or even propagandistic) nature of the stela is evident e.g. in its mixing of the genres royal decree (*wꜥ*) and *Königsnovelle* (Grimal 1981a: 297-98).
- 9 That said, the "Kushite" character of this monument has been discussed frequently. As noted e.g. by N.-C. Grimal (1981a) and R.H. Pierce (1994: 112), the text abundantly exploits earlier (Egyptian) sources, the perspective of the stela text seems almost Theban, judging by the knowledge and stress on Thebes (Priese 1970: 30-32), and the language of the text indicates a mastering of Middle Egyptian (Pierce 1994: 113). The visual arts in the lunette tell of Egyptian influence (cf. Robins 1997: 210-13), and Egyptian hieroglyphs were employed.

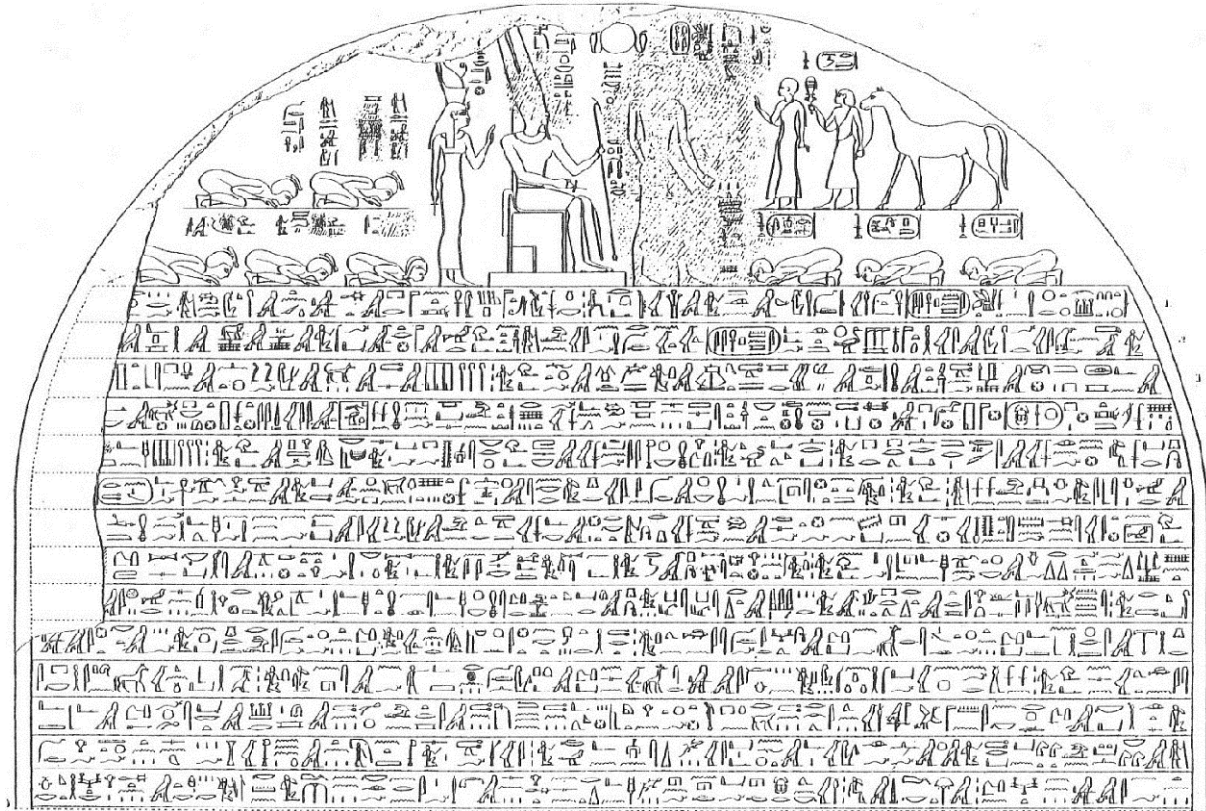


Fig. 1: Adapted from Mariette 1872: pl. 1. See also Grimal 1981a: pl. 1.

of 159 lines which runs on all four sides of the monument in question. On the front side of the stela, a lunette contains images and captions. As is evident from the above drawing of its upper front side, the stela is partly damaged.

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE STELA

The below image (Fig. 2) is a drawing of the lunette. In the centre of the scene, the god Amun is enthroned, with his consort the goddess Mut standing behind him. Piankhi can be discerned in front of Amun. The wife of Nimlot, Nestjenet, followed by Nimlot himself (who holds a sistrum in his one hand and pulls a horse with his other hand) face Piankhi. Below, Osorkon IV (of Bubastis), Iuput II (of Leontopolis), and Peftjauwybast (of Herakleopolis) kiss the ground in front of Piankhi. Another five Egyptian-Libyan rulers prostrate behind Mut's back, namely prince Padiese (of Athribis), and the "chiefs of the Ma" Patjenfi (of Per-Sopdu), Pemaï (of Busiris), Akanosh (of Sebennytos), and Djedamuniuefankh (of Mendes).¹⁰

10 The lunette thus gives a pictorial summary of the events narrated in the stela text (Török 1994: 114). As observed by J. Yoyotte (1961: 162, n. 1), the lunette scene conflates two different events narrated in the stela text, namely the

While Piankhi, in his embodying ideal masculinity, represents strength (physical as well as abstract),¹¹ Nimlot, in his embodying failed masculinity, signifies *weakness*. The above image illustrates this dichotomy of strength/weakness. Proceeding from the representation of Nimlot, this ruler of Hermopolis is depicted much smaller than Piankhi, and he is also portrayed as an inferior (in relation to Piankhi) through his supplication role and through his giving gifts and tribute (spoken of in the text). There can be no doubt as to who the "dominant male" of the scene is.¹² As for proportions, it is also noticeable that the horse that Nimlot pulls is fairly realistically portrayed in terms of scale and the proportions of Nimlot. In conclusion, and in other words, the "social perspective" is not flattering for Nimlot in the lunette scene.¹³

surrender of Nimlot and the submission of a number of northern rulers.

11 Judging by the texts, the king's partly preserved figure, and the iconographical context. For a concise mapping of the good qualities claimed by Piankhi on the stela, see El Hawary 2010: 302-03.

12 For the term dominant male, see e.g. Winter 1996: 15 (focusing on Naram-Sin of Akkad).

13 The term social perspective (used e.g. in Reade 1979: 331-32) alludes to the varying scale of depicted humans, signifying social status (with humans depicted bigger than others having higher social status).

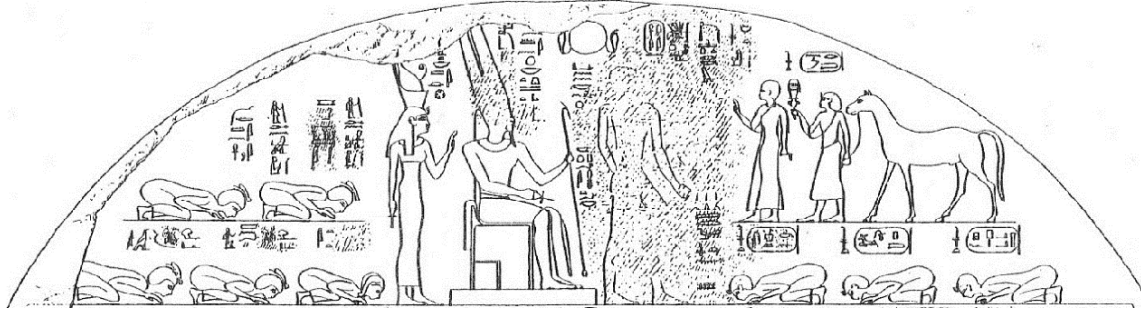


Fig. 2: Adapted from Mariette 1872: pl. 1. See also Grimal 1981a: pls. 1, 5.

It is also possible to identify *direct* emasculation of Nimlot in the scene in the lunette.¹⁴ To begin with, Nimlot is holding a sistrum, i.e. an instrument that is intimately linked to the female sphere, associated with the goddess Hathor, and used by various kinds of priestesses.¹⁵ Nimlot also stands *behind* his wife Nestjenet. Normally, Egyptian and Kushite kings are merely accompanied by royal women, and there are rarely any doubt as to who the main agent is.¹⁶ Another sign of Nimlot's humiliation-laden emasculation is the fact that his wife seems to speak for him in relation to the triumphant Piankhi.¹⁷ Nimlot's wife here appears to be the head of the family.¹⁸ Last

but not least, Nestjenet is represented as somewhat bigger than her spouse Nimlot. With the ample evidence of Ramesside sculpture where colossal kings are flanked by miniature royal wives and daughters in mind,¹⁹ this is an extraordinary detail.

There are details in the above image that seem to soften the failed status of Nimlot's masculinity. Firstly, he is still portrayed with his uraeus on his forehead. However, so are most of the other (prostrating) Egyptian rulers, and the stela text narrates that signs of Nimlot's authority (including his uraeus) were taken away as booty by the forces of Piankhi.²⁰ Secondly, Nimlot is seen *standing*, instead of kneeling. All the other Egyptian rulers are depicted prostrating. However, the role of Nimlot as delivering tribute may have necessitated this dignified position. His standing position should probably not be seen as a recognition.²¹

14 Emasculation and feminization are often attested in the sources from ancient Assyria. Polarities here serve to divide the male sex into legitimate and illegitimate members (Chapman 2004: 6-7). Concretely, there are e.g. the "curses of feminization" sometimes found at the end of government texts and omen texts. A person who acts against the king is here cursed into a woman (Guinan 1997, Chapman 2004: 48-58). J. Assante (2007: 384) even sees a conflict between a "masculinized dominant class" against a "feminized other" with regard to Assyria. Feminization of the enemy comes across also in images from New Kingdom Egypt (Matić 2019: 146-47).

15 Including by princesses and royal wives. The Egyptian king can be seen using a sistrum instrument only in the context of his making offerings to Hathor (Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 271-72). The use of the sistrum in the cult was intimately tied to royal women also in Kush (Lohwasser 2001b: 67). According to the interpretation of L. Török (1994: 114), Nimlot seeks to pacify (the divine) Piankhi through his rattling the sistrum. The sistrum rattling was part of a reconciliation process inspired by the mythological sphere according to which an angry divine entity coming from the south (the eye of the sun) had to be pacified (Fitzenreiter 2011: 264).

16 Robins 1993: 190-91 (concluding also from textual sources). Following the interpretation of L. Török (1994: 114), Nestjenet's raised right arm expresses a gesture of adoration in relation to Piankhi. According to R.H. Pierce (1994: 63, n. 6), Nimlot's relative position (and size) in relation to his wife simply tells of "humiliation".

17 R.H. Pierce (1994: 63, n. 5) sees the female figure both as illustrating Nestjenet and as symbolizing the entreating wives of all the other defeated rulers (based on his seeing a plural form of the word "wife").

18 For the (comparatively mild but still) patriarchal nature

of ancient Egyptian society, see Robins 1993: 190-91, and for a patrilinear succession principle (at least) in Kush, see Török 1995a: 107-14 (note however L. Troy (1986) on male/female as (inter)related polarities in Egypt, and A. Lohwasser (2001b: 71-74) on the dynamic and complementary role of royal women in Kush, according to which "rulership would not function" "without the female aspect" and queenship "was a component of rulership"). As noted by S. Melville (2004: 56) with regard to Assyria, "an Assyrian royal woman who plays her part correctly can reinforce a man's virility and masculinity, even to the point of legitimizing a king's rule". She could, however, also "usurp" the male gender role. Thus, royal women were "always at once a threat and an asset for the king".

19 See e.g. Robins 1997: figs. 211, 213.

20 As for clothing, because of the damaged portion of the lunette it is impossible to say if Piankhi wore a more elaborate dress than Nimlot's plain one. All agents (including the deities) in the lunette seem to be barefoot. The clothing aspect is, however, difficult to assess. A parallel to Mesopotamia can be drawn here. Nudity does not have to imply death, defeat, and humiliation. It can also express a ruler's masculine strength, virility, and heroism (Winter 1996: 22, Bahrani 2001: 57) as well as a ruler's piety (Bahrani 2001: 59-60).

21 Contra D. Kessler (1981: 238-42, 244-45) who regards Nimlot as the leader of the defeated enemies, claiming that the crushing of Hermopolis, i.e. Nimlot's dominion, was Piankhi's true objective of his campaign.



Fig. 3: Lines 11-14 (adapted from Mariette 1872: pl. 1).

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE STELA

The above image (Fig. 3) is an excerpt of the main inscription.²² The narrative part begins by focusing on a report reaching Piankhi that Tefnakht, the Sais-based ruler of the western delta, had started an attempt to take control also of the eastern delta and of middle Egypt.²³ To this end, he had formed an alliance with Nimlot, the king of Hermopolis, and had besieged Herakleopolis, the city of Pef-tjauawybast. After hearing of this, Piankhi sends an army northwards, to aid his ally and to halt the forces of Tefnakht. Dissatisfied with his army's slow progress, Piankhi later decides to go northwards himself, paying homage to the deities of Thebes on his way. Nimlot is captured and pacified, and his ally Pef-tjauawybast is rescued. Piankhi proceeds further north, with town after town surrendering. Memphis (controlled by Tefnakht) resists but is eventually conquered. Piankhi then pays homage to the deities of Memphis and Heliopolis, and numerous delta rulers come to his court to surrender. Finally, Tefnakht himself surrenders, albeit not in person. Piankhi returns to Kush in triumph, laden with riches. The narrative passages in which Nimlot plays a role are conveyed below.

'Nimlot, the mayor of Herwer²⁴, has demolished the fortifications of Nefrusi²⁵, thus surrendering his own town for fear of him who would seize it for himself to besiege a further town. Look, he (Nimlot) has gone to fall at his (Tefnakht's) feet, having repudiated loyalty to His Majesty.²⁶ He (Nimlot) (now) stands alongside him like one of [his own men in] Waseb-

province²⁷. He (Tefnakht) gives him (Nimlot) rewards to his heart's content, from everything he (Tefnakht) has plundered.²⁸

King Nimlot fled upstream, to the south, when he was told, 'Hermopolis faces an onslaught from His Majesty's army; its people and its livestock are (about to be) captured.' And he went to Wenu²⁹ while His Majesty's army was on the river and on the banks of the Hare-province. When they heard this, they encircled the Hare-province on all four sides. No one was allowed in or out.³⁰

After a few days, Wenu began to exude a foul odour, for lack of air to breathe. Then Wenu prostrated itself, making supplication before the monarch³¹. Messengers went to and fro carrying everything fine to behold – gold, every (kind of) precious stone, chests of clothing, the crown from his (Nimlot's) head, the serpent that proclaimed his majesty – without ceasing for many days, as supplication to the crown³². Then his wife was sent – the king's wife and king's daughter, Nestjenet – to make supplication to the king's wives, king's concubines, king's daughters and king's sisters. She prostrated herself in the women's quarters before the royal women: 'Come to me, king's wives, king's daughters and king's sisters, that you may appease

22 For lines 15-159, see Mariette 1872: pls. 2-6. For the whole inscription, see also *Urk.* III, pp. 1-56, and Grimal 1981a: pls. 1-4.

23 According to K. Kitchen (1973) and N.-C. Grimal (1981a: 216-19), the events narrated in the stela text took place between 728-727 BCE. The stela can then be dated to Piankhi's 21st regnal year, arguably 727 BCE.

24 Herwer was an important town in the Hare-province (Lichtheim 1980: 81, n. 25).

25 Nefrusi was a town situated in the Hare-province (Lichtheim 1980: 81, n. 26).

26 The expression "His Majesty" (*hm.f*) of course refers to Piankhi. For the word *hm*, see *Wb.* III, pp. 91-92.

27 That is, the Oxyrhynchus-province (the 19th Upper Egyptian nome) (Lichtheim 1980: 69, Pierce 1994: 69).

28 FHN I, text 9, lines 6-8. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 66-67.

29 Wenu and Khmun together formed Hermopolis magna (Lichtheim 1980: 82, n. 42). According to R.H. Pierce (1994: 76, n. 32), Wenu was just another name for Hermopolis magna.

30 FHN I, text 9, lines 22-23. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 69.

31 That is, Piankhi. The term used is *bity*. This term refers to the ruler as king of Lower Egypt (*Wb.* I, p. 435).

32 That is, an indirect reference to Piankhi, as hinted at also in R.H. Pierce's (1994: 81) translation "beseeching his (Pi(ankh)y's) diadem" and M. Lichtheim's (1980: 72) "to implore his crown". The latter part of this phrase is transcribed *wrr(t).f*. The noun in question (*wrrt*) can refer to the Upper Egyptian crown (*Wb.* I, p. 333).



Horus³³, master of the palace, great of power, exalted in justification! ...^{34 35}

He (Nimlot) presented himself in the presence of His Majesty, saying, '... Horus, lord of the palace! It is your power that has done this! I am (but) one of the king's servants, who pays taxes to the Treasury ...³⁶ their taxes. I have done more for you than they.' Then he presented silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, copper and all (kinds of) precious stones; and the Treasury was filled with his tribute. He brought a horse in his right hand and in his left a sistrum of gold and lapis lazuli.³⁷

His Majesty proceeded to the house of King Nimlot. He went through all the rooms of the palace, his treasury and his storehouses. He (Nimlot) presented to him the king's wives and king's daughters and they paid honour to His Majesty as women do. But His Majesty did not pay them any attention. (Instead) His Majesty went off to the horses' stables and the foals' quarters where he saw that [the horses] were hungry. ...³⁸ Then his (Nimlot's) property was assigned to the Treasury, his granary to the endowment of Amun in Karnak.^{39,40}

At dawn the following day, there came the two rulers of the south and the two rulers of Lower Egypt – the serpent-wearers – to kiss the ground before the might of His Majesty. Now the petty-kings and mayors of Lower Egypt who came to behold His Majesty's glory, their legs were like the legs of women. They could not enter the palace, because they were uncircumcised and ate fish, which is an abomination to the palace. But King Nimlot entered the palace, because he was pure and did not eat fish. So three stood there and only one entered the palace.⁴¹

While Piankhi, representing ideal masculinity, is portrayed as loyal and honest in the stela text, Nimlot, signifying failed masculinity, is pictured as treacherous and corrupt. For example, when Nimlot switches side to being allied with Tefnakht instead, he is treacherous.⁴² The text states that, "Look, he (Nimlot) has gone to fall at his (Tefnakht's) feet, having repudiated loyalty to His Majesty (*mk sw šm r wn m ir(y)-rd(wy).f wi{3}n.n.fmw n hm.f*)."⁴³ Nimlot's corrupt character is referred to in the words that, "He (Tefnakht) gives him (Nimlot) rewards to his heart's content, from everything he (Tefnakht) has plundered (*di.fn.ffk(3)w r dd(yt) ib.fm ht nb gm(w).n.f*)."⁴⁴ Nimlot also appears as false, opportunistic, and ingratiating in saying to Piankhi (after submitting) that, "I have done more (with regard to the providing of resources) for you than they (the other Egyptian vassals) (*ir.n(i) n.k m-h3w r.sn*)."⁴⁵ His recent defection to Tefnakht is here suddenly forgotten. Piankhi, by contrast, is loyal to his ally in Herakleopolis, Pefjtjauawybast, sending troops to break up the siege of the latter's town.⁴⁶ Piankhi is also not corrupt, in his repeated granting of booty and tribute to the temple of Amun in Karnak, instead of taking them for his own pleasure (like Nimlot did).⁴⁷ His honesty is also expressed in his urging his troops in Egypt to fight in daylight and refrain from using ambushes.⁴⁸

33 That is, Piankhi, associated with the falcon-headed god Horus.

34 According to T. Wilkinson (2016: 71), the lacuna "would have recorded the intercession of the royal women, Piankhi's acceptance of the surrender of Hermopolis and Nimlot's appearance before Piankhi". This reconstruction almost word by word follows the one made in Lichtheim 1980: 82, n. 47.

35 FHN I, text 9, lines 32-34. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 71.

36 Just a few signs are missing here (the end of line 56).

37 FHN I, text 9, lines 55-58. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 71-72.

38 A section in which Piankhi blames Nimlot for maltreating the horses follows (FHN I, text 9, lines 64-69).

39 That is, the god Amun from Karnak, his main temple in Thebes.

40 FHN I, text 9, lines 61-70. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 72.

41 FHN I, text 9, lines 147- 53. Translation from Wilkinson 2016: 81-82.

42 According to R.H. Pierce (1994: 85, n. 39), there is an "embittered tone throughout the text" in relation to Nimlot's defection from the status as a vassal of the Kushite king. Following D. Kahn (1998), there is a deeper, religious meaning to Nimlot's defection, with Nimlot having offended Piankhi and his patron god Amun.

43 FHN I, text 9, line 7. A literal translation of the final clause is, "he has rejected the water of his majesty" (Lichtheim 1980: 69). Before telling of Nimlot's change of loyalty, the text says that, "The mayors and rulers of estates are like dogs at his (Tefnakht's) heels!" (FHN I, text 9, line 3: *h3t(yw)-^s hk3w-hwwt m tzmw m iry-rdwy.f*). In this paper, I follow the transcriptions made by R.H. Pierce in FHN I (1994), with the exception of my using dots instead of equal signs before suffixes.

44 FHN I, text 9, line 8. Tellingly enough, the word *fk3* can convey the connotation of corrupt financial transactions, i.e. of "bribes" (*Wb.* I, p. 579).

45 FHN I, text 9, line 57.

46 It is e.g. stated that, "His Majesty sent an army to Egypt", not the least due to Tefnakht's and Nimlot's attacking Herakleopolis (FHN I, text 9, line 9: *h^s.n hm.f (hr) zb(t) mš^s r Kmt*).

47 See e.g. FHN I, text 9, lines 70, 81. The granaries (*šnwwt*) of Lahun, e.g., are assigned to "the endowment" (*htp-ntr*) of Amun in Karnak (FHN I, text 9, line 81). He also gives booty and offerings to Thoth (of Hermopolis), Ptah (of Memphis), Re (of Heliopolis), and other deities (FHN I, text 9, lines 59, 98, 102).

48 FHN I, text 9, lines 9-12. Piankhi here instructs his army to "fight when he (the enemy, with his anti-Kushite forces)



Cowardice (in a military context) is another personal quality that can be linked to failed masculinity in the stela.⁴⁹ While Piankhi is brave, heading into every battle that comes in his way,⁵⁰ Nimlot is fearing his adversaries. He is e.g. “surrendering his own town for fear (*whn.n.f niwt.f ds.f m snd*)” of Tefnakht.⁵¹ While Piankhi destroys the city walls of others,⁵² Nimlot destroys his own city walls at the advance of Tefnakht's troops, in his having “demolished the fortifications of Nefrusi (*iw shnn.n.f sbtt n Nfrws*)”.⁵³ Nimlot then decides to flee at the approach and victories of Piankhi, as told of in the narration that, “King Nimlot fled upstream, to the south (*[--- <w>] r nsw Nm3rt m hnt r rsy*).”⁵⁴ Piankhi, by contrast, steadily advances, like the yearly inundation.⁵⁵ While Nimlot travels upstream, Piankhi

travels downstream. Their opposite directions may signify ideological polarization. Bravery versus cowardice is one of the ideological dichotomies expressed on the stela.⁵⁶

Weakness has already been identified as a sign of failed masculinity. While Nimlot (among others) proceeds “to kiss the ground before the might of His Majesty (*r sn t3 n b3w hm.f*)”,⁵⁷ Piankhi stands in the receiving end, with a dignified and majestic stance.⁵⁸ Before that, the text says that, “he (Nimlot) has gone to fall at his (Tefnakht's) feet (*mk sw sm r wn m ir(y)-rd(wy).f*).”⁵⁹ Nimlot is reduced to being just “like one of [his (Tefnakht's) own men] (*h^c.f hn^c*)” *mi w^c m [---]*”.⁶⁰ In relation to Piankhi, Nimlot says that, “I am (but) one of the king's servants (*ink w^c m hmw-nsw*)”, thus diminishing his own importance.⁶¹ When Piankhi turns to the stables to check Nimlot's horses and realizes that these are faring badly, Nimlot is being sharply rebuked by Piankhi for his alleged lack of care for the horses, with Piankhi exclaiming that, “it is more painful to me that my horses should be hungry than every evil deed you (Nimlot) have done in your recklessness! I will teach you to respect your fellows! (*ksn.w(y) nn hr ib.i shk^r smsmw.i r bt3 nb ir(w).n.k m kf3 ib.k mtr n.i tw snd(yt) n.k gs(y)w.k*)”. While Piankhi is the strong one, admonishing, Nimlot is the weak one, being admonished.⁶²

says” (*h3.tn hft dd(t).f*) in Egypt.

- 49 Making a cross-cultural comparison, war and military performance were closely linked to notions of masculinity in ancient Assyria. The battleground was here the main venue of masculinity. The victor was an ideal male without rivals, while those who forfeited or failed the masculinity contest experienced failed masculinity or feminization. Royal masculinity was in other words primarily tied to strength, heroism, and bravery. Male rivals were discredited in their fearing, fleeing, and surrendering (Chapman 2004: 20-24, 33-41).
- 50 FHN I, text 9, lines 24-25. Piankhi here declares that, “I will go north myself! I will tear down (the enemy's) works; I shall make him abandon fighting for ever!” (*iw.i r hd(yt) ds.i whn.i ir(w).n.f di.i ht(y).f h3 r ht nh^h*). Also, his army addresses Piankhi, exclaiming, “it is your bravery that gives us strength” and “no army succeeds with a weak commander” (FHN I, text 9, line 15: *in kn.k di n.n hps; n km.n ms^c t(z).f m hmt(y)*). Obviously, the mentioned weak commander would be an opponent or degenerate successor to Piankhi. By contrast, in Egyptian sources it is the Nubian soldiers who flee in panic, avoiding battle face-to-face (Matić 2019: 141-42).
- 51 FHN I, text 9, line 7. Nimlot is here associated with the lowly emotion of fearing (*snd*) in relation to responding to earthly enemies. For the meanings of this word, see *Wb.* IV (pp. 182-84).
- 52 FHN I, text 9, line 28. A fortress-city in middle Egypt here suffers the following fate, “A siege-tower was erected against it and its walls were demolished” (*h^c.n ir:t(w) iwn n ms r.s shnn s3w.s*).
- 53 FHN I, text 9, line 7. According to D. Kessler (1981), Nimlot's destroying of his walls was a strategic act aimed at preventing Nefrusi of becoming a base for Piankhi's attacks against the main citadel Herwer. Alternatively, it is merely an act of surrender.
- 54 FHN I, text 9, line 22. The verb in question can be reconstructed as *w^r*, denoting the act of fleeing (*Wb.* I, p. 286). A generous interpretation of this fleeing act is that Nimlot went from the Herakleopolis-area to Wenu (part of Hermopolis magna) to protect his own citizens. Still, he first fled from a battlefield and then hid behind his city walls, in order to escape from the troops of Piankhi.
- 55 FHN I, text 9, lines 24-25. Piankhi, starting at New Year (coinciding with the yearly inundation), travels down-

stream, while bringing order and destroying chaos (Török 1994: 115). The Kushite king here states that he will go northwards “after the New Year rites have been performed” (*ir hr s3 ir irw nw Wp-rnpt*).

- 56 A. El Hawary (2010: 306) also identifies the dichotomies king – vassal, pure – impure, south – north, bright – dark, travelling in chariot – riding on horseback, advancing – barricading.
- 57 FHN I, text 9, lines 148-49. Apparently (judging by the context), Nimlot lacks the “might” (*b3w*) that Piankhi is endowed with. For this word, see *Wb.* I (pp. 413-14). Nimlot earlier “prostrated himself in the presence of His Majesty” (FHN I, text 9, line 55: *h^c.n rd(y).n.f sw hr ht.f m-b3h hm.f*), lying on his stomach (*ht*).
- 58 This remark highlights that dominance can also be expressed through posture and way of holding objects (e.g. bows), as in Assyrian visual arts (Chapman 2004: 47, 58).
- 59 FHN I, text 9, line 7.
- 60 FHN I, text 9, line 7. After the lacuna, Oxyrhynchos is mentioned (in isolation).
- 61 FHN I, text 9, line 56. Nimlot's reference to himself as a “servant” (*hmw*) clearly expresses his subordinate status in relation to the Kushite king. Following the interpretation of D. Kahn (1998), Nimlot here repents his sins, appeases Piankhi, receives Piankhi's forgiveness, with the result that the cosmic balance is restored.
- 62 FHN I, text 9, lines 65-67. In his neglect, Nimlot is guilty of an “evil deed” (*bt3*) and lacks the “respect” (*snd(yt)*) that befits an inferior. In Piankhi's strongly caring for the horses, he follows a tradition evidenced already in the



Another aspect of Nimlot's weakness is his giving up of property.⁶³ Among the precious items given up, Nimlot loses "the crown from his head, the serpent that proclaimed his majesty (*h^c wn(w) hr tp.f i^r(r) dd(yt) šfy.t.f*), i.e. symbolically charged items.⁶⁴ Standing in front of Piankhi, Nimlot "presented silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, copper and all (kinds of) precious stones; and the Treasury was filled with his tribute. He brought a horse in his right hand and in his left a sistrum of gold and lapis lazuli (*h^c<.n> m3^c.n.f hq nbw hsbq mfk3t hsmn 3t nb(t) š3(t) h^c.n mh pr-hq m inw pn in.n.f ssmt m wnmv<.f> sšš(t) m izby<.f> sšš(t) nt nbw hsbq*)."⁶⁵ Piankhi takes over Nimlot's palace, as revealed in the text saying that, "He (Piankhi) went through all the rooms of the palace, his (Nimlot's) treasury and his storehouses (*šm.n.f 3t nb(t) nt pr-nsu prwy-hq.f wd3w.f*)."⁶⁶ It is concluded that, "Then his (Nimlot's) property was assigned to the Treasury, his granary to the endowment of Amun in Karnak (*h^c.n sip(y.n) ht.f r pr-hq šnwt.f r htp-ntr nt Imn m Ipt-swt*)."⁶⁷ Thus, Nimlot's property was now at Piankhi's disposal.⁶⁷

inscriptions of Egyptian New Kingdom-rulers (Török 1994: 116; contra M. Fitzenreiter (2011) who sees Piankhi's care for horses (together with the stress on the ritual purity of the Kushite palace) as the otherness of Kushite state ideology in relation to its Egyptian counterpart). Horses were cherished by Kushite rulers because of "traditionalism" (the king having an "aristocratic love" for his horse and a duty to protect the royal stables) and "naturalism" (horses being valuable in warfare) (Török 1995b: 201). According to A. El Hawary (2010: 289), Nimlot's horse(s) symbolized bravery and chivalry. Nimlot here gives up these qualities.

- 63 Making yet another cross-cultural comparison, the victor's destroying or seizing of property from the hands of the enemy in (Assyrian) royal inscriptions has been seen as yet another act of emasculation. The person giving up his property by force experiences powerlessness and humiliation in the process (Chapman 2004: 38).
- 64 FHN I, text 9, line 33. For the significance of the serpent, or uraeus, of the king, see e.g. Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 67, 302-03. The term for Nimlot's "majesty" is (simply) *šfy.t* (*Wb.* IV, pp. 457-59) and not *hm*, indicating Nimlot's inferior status already prior to the conflict.
- 65 FHN I, text 9, lines 57-58. Not the least the lapis lazuli (*hsbq*), imported from Asia (Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 157-58), attests to the scale of Nimlot's giving up of property. The term *inw* has a clear connotation of "tribute", property transferred from an inferior to a superior (Hallmann 2006: 239-59, 324-26).
- 66 FHN I, text 9, line 62. In Piankhi's going through all rooms (*3t nb(t)*) of Nimlot's palace, he symbolically seizes the palace in its entirety.
- 67 FHN I, text 9, lines 69-70. The verb *sip* clearly denotes the transfer of property from one person or institution to another (*Wb.* IV, p. 35). Once again, the Theban perspective (here by serving Amun of Thebes) of Piankhi comes across.

Another indication of Nimlot's weakness (and Piankhi's strength) is Nimlot's losing duties in relation to his people and his deities, with Piankhi taking over these duties.⁶⁸ After having experienced the weakness of Nimlot, the pacified troops of the Hare-province exclaim that (now), "you (Piankhi) protect Hare-province! (*hw(y).k Wn*)".⁶⁹ Also, in Piankhi's offering to the local gods of Hermopolis (Thoth and the Ogdoad), the Kushite king takes over Nimlot's cultic duties, with the text saying that, "Then His Majesty appeared from his (Nimlot's) palace and went forth to the House of Thoth, lord of Hermopolis. He slaughtered oxen, short-horned cattle and geese for his father Thoth, lord of Hermopolis, and the ogdoad in the House of the Ogdoad (*h^c.n sh^c(.n) <hm.>f m h^c.f (hr) wd3 r Pr-Dhwty-nb-Hmnw sm3.n.f iw3w wndww 3pdw n it.f Dhwty nb Hmnw Hmnyw m Pr-Hmnyw*)."⁷⁰

Turning to attestations of direct emasculation,⁷¹ Nimlot seems to give up his role as the head of the family. The text says that, "Then his wife was sent – the king's wife and king's daughter, Nestjenet – to make supplication to the king's wives, king's concubines, king's daughters and king's sisters (*h^c.n rdy{t} iw hmt.f hmt-nsu 33t-nsu Ns-3nt r snmh n hmwt-nsu ipwt-nsu 33wt-nsu snwt-nsu*)."⁷² By contrast, Piankhi's women are invisible and barely mentioned.⁷³ As

68 Continuing with cross-cultural comparisons, the victor's act of taking over the military, political, and religious duties of the defeated enemy ruler can naturally be regarded as emasculating the latter. The Assyrian king (in this case) here takes over the shepherding of his defeated rival's people and deities (Chapman 2004: 37).

69 FHN I, text 9, line 61. The idea of protection is given by the word *hw*, which also has the notion of controlling (people), as indicated by the flail-determinative with which it is written (*Wb.* III, pp. 244-45).

70 FHN I, text 9, lines 58-60. The Ogdoad was a local collection of eight supernatural beings credited with the creation of the world (Quirke 1992: 25, Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 210).

71 For feminization of the enemy in texts from New Kingdom Egypt, see Matić 2019: 146-47.

72 FHN I, text 9, lines 33-34. The main verb is in the passive, but considering who was in charge of the Hare-province at this time, Nimlot must have been the sender. R.H. Pierce (1994: 81) gives, "Then was caused that...", and M. Lichtheim (1980: 72) writes, "Then they sent his wife...". A parallel in the tale of Sinuhe comes to mind, with the consort of the reigning Egyptian king acting on behalf of Sinuhe (Parkinson 1997: 40-41, lines B 264-79). Still, the intervening woman (the queen) in the tale of Sinuhe belongs to a different strata of society (in relation to Sinuhe) and is (of course) not the said man's wife.

73 FHN I, text 9, lines 2, 158. It is true, though, that Piankhi's mother (and father) are mentioned (but far from centred on) in hymnic sections of the stela text (FHN I, text 9, lines 2, 84, 158). People on the Nile banks exclaim, "Joyful is the



already noted, Nimlot brought “a sistrum of gold and lapis lazuli (*sšš(t) nt nbw ḥsbḏ*)” to Piankhi, with the sistrum belonging to the female sphere.⁷⁴ In the context of Piankhi’s inspecting Nimlot’s palace (now Piankhi’s property), “He (Nimlot) presented to him the king’s wives and king’s daughters (*rd{t}.n.fstḏ{n}.tw n.f ḥmwt-nsw szwt-nsw*).” In other words, also Nimlot’s women are being taken over by Piankhi.⁷⁵ The stela text also says that, “the petty-kings (arguably including Nimlot)⁷⁶ and mayors of Lower Egypt who came to behold His Majesty’s glory, their legs were like the legs of women (*is gr nn (n) nsww ḥztyw-^s nw T3-mḥw ii r m33 nfrw ḥm.f rdwy.sn m rdwy ḥmwt*)”, i.e. these rulers were nervous to face their superior.⁷⁷ By contrast, Piankhi had the legs of a soldier, in his not hesitating to attack his (and the deities’) enemies.⁷⁸ Lastly, Nimlot and the other

Egyptian rulers are hinted at by the people on the Nile banks who cheer on the returning Piankhi, in their exclaiming that, “You turned bulls into women! (*ir.k k3w m ḥmwt*)”.⁷⁹ Piankhi is defined as a true bull in a parallel clause.⁸⁰

There are details in the above portrayal that seem to soften the failed status of Nimlot’s masculinity. Firstly, Nimlot is referred to as “king” (*nsw*) and not as “chief” (*wr*) or the like.⁸¹ It is far from certain, though, that the word “king” should be seen as a recognition. It is, more likely (to judge by the context), a neutral term, signifying the leader of a polity.⁸² Secondly, the following passage seemingly conveys a recognition. It is here said that, “They (Peftjauawybast, Osorkon IV, and Iuput II of the lunette scene) could not enter the palace (of Athribis), because they were uncircumcised and ate fish, which is an abomination to the palace. But King Nimlot entered the palace, because he was pure and did not eat fish (*n ^k.n.sn r pr-nsw ḏr ntt wnn.sn m ^mw ḥn^s wnm-rmw bwt pw nt pr-nsw is nsw Nm3rt ^k.fr pr-nsw ḏr ntt wnn.fm w^bn wnm.frmw*).”⁸³ However, this passage is difficult to interpret as a real recognition of a good character of Nimlot, not the least in the light of the textual context in which Nimlot appears as treacherous and corrupt.⁸⁴ Thirdly, Nimlot is

mother who bore you” (FHN I, text 9, line 158: *ndm ib n mwt ms ti*). The royal women of Piankhi are called upon by Nestjenet in her supplication (*snmh*) for clemency (FHN I, text 9, line 34). In the women’s quarters (*pr ḥmwt-nsw*), Nestjenet prostrates, hoping that Piankhi’s women may appease (*shp*) him. Kushite royal women are otherwise frequently depicted and mentioned in Kushite royal texts and images (cf. Lohwasser 2001a; see e.g. the two royal women in the lunette of Tanutamon’s dream stela (see Grimal 1981b: pl. 1) and the text on the election stela of Aspelta (c. 600-580) (see FHN I, text 37) in which the role of royal women are stressed.

74 FHN I, text 9, line 58.

75 FHN I, text 9, lines 62-63. R.H. Pierce (1994: 84) translates, “He caused that the king’s wives and king’s daughters be dragged to him”, obviously focusing on the meaning of the verb *sz* (*Wb*. IV, pp. 351-53). The subsequent comment that, “But His Majesty did not pay them any attention” suggests that the image of a king inspecting his “harem” is at hand (FHN I, text 9, lines 63-64). An erotic aspect of this encounter is suggested also by A. El Hawary (2010: 243, n. 934). This naturally threatens the constructed masculine roles of (im)pregnate, protect, and provide referred to by I. Winter (1996) in her discussion on the image of Naram-Sin of Akkad on his victory stela. Similarly, the Assyrian king, in his portrayal as shepherd, “is metaphorically tied to the role of a husband as protector and provider for his wife” (Chapman 2004: 29-33). When the Assyrian king captures the women and children of his enemies, it “validates his own masculinity, but also essentially cuckold his enemy, whose manhood and reputation are thereby dealt a terrible blow” (Melville 2004: 56).

76 The phrase *nn (n) nsww* should refer to the four rulers singled out in the lunette. The following sentence, beginning with, “They could not enter the palace...”, seemingly contradicts all four having womens’ legs.

77 FHN I, text 9, lines 149-50.

78 At Memphis, Piankhi declares that, “I will seize it like a cloudburst” (FHN I, text 9, line 93: *iw.i r ḏt(t) s(t) mi gp n mw*). Piankhi “rages like a panther” throughout the text (FHN I, text 9, lines 23, 31, 92: *ḥ^rr ... mi 3by*). For the rage connotation of *ḥ^rr*, see *Wb*. III (p. 244). The word *3by* can also mean “leopard” (*Wb*. I, p. 7).

79 FHN I, text 9, lines 157-58. As for the bull imagery, Peftjauawybast enthusiastically describes Piankhi as, “the bull who attacks bulls” (FHN I, text 9, line 72: *k3 ḥd k3w*). For the importance of bull imagery in Egyptian religion and royal titulary, see e.g. Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 57.

80 FHN I, text 9, line 159. Piankhi’s mother is here “the cow that bore the bull” (*idt ms k3*).

81 See e.g. FHN I, text 9, line 22: *nsw Nm3rt*. Tefnakht is, on the other hand, referred to as a “chief (of Sais)” (FHN I, text 9, line 87: *wr (pf n Szw)*). Also, the delta rulers are lumped together as “all the feather-wearing chiefs” (FHN I, text 9, line 107: *wrw nb t3 mht*). True enough, Nimlot is also referred to as “mayor” (of Herwer) (FHN I, text 9, line 7: *ḥzt(y)-^s (n Ḥt-wr{t})*), here expressing a non-royal status.

82 As noted by A. El Hawary (2010: 374), *nsw* alludes to a secondary rulership, with the titles “king of the two lands”, “the great house”, and “His Majesty” reserved for Piankhi, the main ruler.

83 FHN I, text 9, lines 150-52. Nimlot is here positively described, in his being pure (*w^b*), i.e. circumcised, and not a fish-eater (*wnm-rmw*), thus gaining entrance to the palace, respecting its taboo (*bwt*).

84 Nimlot is treacherous in the sense that he betrays Piankhi and corrupt in the sense that he allows himself to be bribed by Tefnakht (FHN I, text 9, lines 7-8). This interpretation is in contrast to the one of D. Kahn (1998) who suggests a line of development in which Nimlot evolves from *the bad* to *the good* in Piankhi’s eyes. According to A. El Hawary (2010: 316-18), Nimlot is differently treated because he belonged to an older ruler generation than the other rulers and to the same ruler generation as Piankhi, he had been a vassal to Piankhi before, he had a Theban



counted among “the two rulers of the south and the two rulers of Lower Egypt – the serpent-wearers (*nn n hkꜣw sn nw Rsy hkꜣw sn nw Mht m iꜣrwt*)” at the end of the stela text. Still, this mention is made in a context of these rulers’ having surrendered completely to Piankhi.⁸⁵

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has centred on the victory stela of Piankhi and on how Nimlot, the ruler of Hermopolis and an enemy of Piankhi, is portrayed (in terms of gender) in the images and texts of the stela. Following the use of basic textual and art analysis and in its focusing on gender and ideology, it adds to previous research on the victory stela and Kushite state ideology.

The analysis showed that there are several motifs and themes that *indirectly* tell of the failed masculinity of Nimlot (and of the ideal masculinity of Piankhi). In contrast to Piankhi, Nimlot is depicted and/or described as weak in various ways, as cowardly, corrupt, and treacherous.

The analysis also showed that there are several motifs and themes that *directly* speak of the failed masculinity of Nimlot (and of the ideal masculinity of Piankhi). In the lunette, Nimlot stands behind his wife Nestjenet, as well as being smaller than her. He also holds the female-gendered sistrum instrument in one of his hands. Nimlot’s sistrum is also brought up in the stela text. Also in the text, Nimlot sends his wife to speak for him in relation to the triumphant Piankhi, he offers his own women to Piankhi after surrendering, he is arguably described as having the legs of a woman, and he is alluded to as having transformed from a bull to a woman.

In other words, Nimlot is portrayed by Piankhi as a person failing in his masculinity, both in the former’s displaying personal qualities that stand in contrast to the ones Piankhi (the ideal male) possess, and in Nimlot’s acquisition of female attributes and positions and in his being likened to a woman. Thus, the failed masculinity of Nimlot is exposed.

connection, and his city was a vital city in Egypt. In other words, only *external* factors explain the possibly positive differentiation of Nimlot in Piankhi’s eyes.

85 FHN I, text 9, line 148. On the stela, these four rulers (Nimlot, Peftjauawybast, Osorkon IV, and Iuput II) symbolically represent the conquered parts of Egypt, in this way signifying the completeness of Piankhi’s victory (Török 1994: 117). Nimlot (along with the others) is now referred to as “ruler” (*hkꜣ*), thus adding to his other titles “king” (*nsw*) and “mayor” (*hꜣty-ꜣ*).

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- FHN I = see Eide et al. 1994.
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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im Fokus dieses Artikels steht die Siegesstele des kuschitischen Königs Piankhi und konzentriert sich darauf, wie Nimlot, Herrscher der ägyptischen Stadt Hermopolis, dargestellt und geschlechtsspezifisch beschrieben wird. Die Analyse zeigt, dass Piankhi den idealen Mann verkörpert (stark, ehrlich, tapfer und wohlwollend), während Nimlot den gescheiterten Mann verkörpert (schwach, falsch, feige und korrupt). Die gescheiterte Männlichkeit von Nimlot drückt sich teilweise durch Feminisierung aus, wobei Nimlot mit einer Frau verglichen wird.