

## The Loyalist Instruction from the Sehetepibre Stela

*The composition which Georges Posener has designated The Loyalist Instruction is known, mainly through his efforts, from two papyri, a tablet, and over twenty ostraca with fragments of the text. These are Ramesside copies except for the tablet (early Dynasty 18); the Louvre papyrus (second half of Dynasty 18), and the stela of Sehetepibre (Dynasty 12). Posener has hazarded the guess that the sage Ptahemdjehuty, known from the list of authors in Papyrus Chester Beatty IV, was the author.*

*The text comprises two sections, the first admonishing the author's children to respect and obey the king, and the second outlining the nature of the people. An abridged version of the first part is represented in the stela of Sehetepibre, a high official of Sesostris III and Amenemhet III of Dynasty 12. This is the oldest copy of a part of the text, and it is translated here, following Kuentz and Posener, since it was the only consecutive text available. The edition of the instruction with the parallel texts and new material (see below) by Posener could not be utilized.*

*For the composition, consult Posener, Littérature et politique, pp. 117-24, and L'Enseignement Loyaliste, Sugesse Egyptienne du Moyen Empire (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1976); C. Kuentz, "Deux versions d'un panégyrique royal," Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 97-110; Erman, The Ancient Egyptians, pp. xxviii, 84-85.*

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II,8 The beginning of the teaching which he made for his children:

I have something important to say; I shall have you hear it, and I shall let you know it: the design for eternity, a  
11,10 way / of life as it should be and of passing a lifetime at peace.

Adore the king, Nymatre,<sup>1</sup> living forever, in your innermost parts. Place His Majesty in friendly fashion in your thoughts.

He is Perception, which is in (all) hearts, and his eyes pierce through every being.

He is Re, by whose rays one sees, for he is one who illumines the Two Lands more than the sun disk.

He is one who makes (the land) green, even more than a high inundation: he has filled the Two Lands with victory and life.

Nostrils are cool when he starts to rage, but when he sets in peace, one can breathe the air (again).

He gives nourishment to those in his circle, and he feeds  
11,15 the one who sticks to / his path.

The king is Ka.<sup>2</sup>

His utterance is Abundance.

The one whom he brought up is one who will be somebody.

He is Khnum<sup>3</sup> for all limbs,

The Begetter of the begotten.

He is Bastet,<sup>4</sup> who protects the Two Lands.

The one who praises him will be protected by his arm.

He is Sakhmet<sup>5</sup> against those who disobey his orders,

1. The praenomen of Amenemhet III (1842-1797 B.C.), in whose reign the stela was erected. The original composition probably lacked the name of the king.

2. Erman, "Vital Force."

3. The creator god who fashioned mankind on a potter's wheel.

4. The goddess represented with a cat's head.

5. The fierce goddess of pestilence, with a lioness's head.

and the one with whom he disagrees will be laden with sorrows.

Fight on behalf of his name;<sup>6</sup> be obeisant to his life. Be free and clear of any instance of negligence.

The one whom the king loves shall be a well-provided spirit; there is no tomb for anyone who rebels against His Majesty, and his corpse shall be cast to the waters.

11,20 Do this, and your body will flourish, / and you will find it (excellent) for eternity.

6. Posener points out that this phrase, at the end of the first part of the instruction, corresponds with the phrase, "fight on behalf of the people," in the second part.