

Unpublished Stele NO (JE 99107) at the Egyptian Museum

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Abstract: This paper studies an unpublished funerary stele preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo under number JE 99107. According to the Museum catalogue, the stele is dated to the Late Period, more precisely to the 29th Dynasty. It was found in Saqqara during the excavations conducted by Mohamed Ibrahim Aly which was sponsored by the Egyptian Antiquities Service (EAS). The Stele depicts a sun-disk with double wings in the upper register and below it the owner of the stele worshipping the bull Apis(Hapi) which stands on a pedestal. In the middle there is an offering table with bread and a slain goose. Next to the table there is a stand topped with a bowl which was probably used for burning incense. The lower register has seven lines of Hieratic written horizontally.

Keywords: Saqqara - Stele – JE 99107 – Serapeum – Hapi.

لوحة غير منشورة رقم (JE 99107) بالمتحف المصري

المخلص: يدرس هذا البحث لوحة جنازية غير منشورة محفوظة بالمتحف المصري بالقاهرة برقم JE 99107 وفقاً لكتالوج المتحف، فإن اللوحة مؤرخة بالعصر المتأخر، وتحديدًا إلى الأسرة التاسعة والعشرين. تم العثور عليها في سقارة أثناء الحفريات التي أجراها محمد إبراهيم علي برعاية مصلحة الآثار المصرية (EAS). يصور اللوحة قرص الشمس بأجنحة مزدوجة في السجل العلوي وأسفله صاحب الشاهدة يعبد الثور (حابي) أبيس الذي يقف على قاعدة. في الوسط يوجد مائدة قرابين بها خبز وإوزة مذبح. يوجد بجانب الطاولة حامل يعلوه وعاء ربما كان يستخدم لحرق البخور. يحتوي السجل السفلي على سبعة أسطر من الهيروغليفية مكتوبة أفقيًا.

الكلمات الدالة: سقارة - شاهدة - JE 99107 - سيرابيوم - حابي - أبيس.

-Introduction

This paper studies a votive offering stele belonging to a priest whose name was Mmy (Plate 1). It is in the form of a funerary stele and depicts Mmy in the act of worshipping the bull Apis. Stelae were known as a means of celebrating certain occasions and events and were used in ancient Egypt for various purposes.¹ There were funerary, votive, memorial and official stelae. They were also used for marking the borders and for documenting gifts and presents; there were even magic stelae. In general, the term stele is used to describe a slab of stone standing by itself even though it was set up in later times on a pedestal or fixed on a wall. They were sometimes made of wood.²

Stelae had several shapes in antiquity. The most famous was, as in our stele, the round-topped one; this shape was the most dominant throughout all periods of ancient Egypt.³ Usually the owner of the stele appears in a drawing or a relief showing him in front of a god with the usual offering table in between. Although stelae were made to be seen from the front, the backside was often attended to and polished but not decorated with any scenes or texts.⁴ It is rarely left rough as is the case with this stele.

Round-topped stelae were also probably the most ancient since they date back to the First Dynasty.⁵ A famous example of this type of stelae is the one made by King Djet and preserved now in the Louvre museum.⁶ Several interpretations were

¹ HÖLZL, R., "Stelae", in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, Vol. III*, edited by D. Redford, Cairo, 2000, 319-324.

² BIERBRIER, Morris L., *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, Lanham, Maryland, 2008, 225.

³ HÖLZL, Stelae, 319.

⁴ BIERBRIER, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, 155.

⁵ MARTIN, K., "Stèle", *LÄ VI*, Wiesbaden, 1986, col. 1; HÖLZL, Stelae, 285.

⁶ No. E11007. See REISNER, G., *The Development of the Egyptian Tomb down to the Accession of Cheops*, Cambridge, 1936, 334-335; HÖLZL, Stelae, 285. See also VANDIER, J., *Manuel d'Archéologie Égyptiennes, I*, Paris, 1952, 724-726, Fig. 48.

suggested to explain this shape. According to Maspero, it may have been influenced by tombs of Upper Egypt which had small pyramids on top or were carved in the rock with vaulted chambers and arched doors.⁷ Another interpretation suggests that it might have imitated the chapels of small primitive gods.⁸ A third interpretation gives it a religious and cosmic connotation whereby the round top of the Stele represents sky symbolized by goddess Nut who was sometimes portrayed on top of some stelae leaning with her arms and legs on the ground while her curved body represents the top of the stele. As for the ground, it is considered according to this interpretation as Geb, god of earth. In such scenes there was a *was* scepter on each side symbolizing pillars of the sky.⁹ Being most favorable, the round-topped stele continued throughout all stages of ancient Egyptian history until the end of the Greco-Roman periods.¹⁰

As for our stele, it was a votive offering connected with the funeral rites and was meant to commemorate the deceased and to provide him with offerings in his eternal life.¹¹ Its kind was the most common among individuals who considered such funeral monuments a means to preserve their memory and to provide them with offerings after death and transfer to the other world.¹² The following paragraphs will study this unpublished monument in an attempt to determine its approximate date and to shed some light on its artistic style and religious significance. The study will also concentrate on the text accompanying the scene, the characteristics of the Hieratic script and on the various items set

⁷ MASPERO, G., *Guide to the Cairo Museum*, Cairo, 1908, 85.

⁸ BADAWY, A., "La stèle funéraire sous l'ancien empire: son origine et son fonctionnement", *ASAE* 48, 1948, 228-232.

⁹ MARTIN, Stèle, col. 1; WESTENDORF, W. "Altägyptische Darstellungen des Sonnenlaufes auf der Abcüssigen Himmelsbahn", *MÄS* 10, 1966, 22, 65; WILKINSON, R., *Reading Egyptian Art*, London, 1992, 127.

¹⁰ HÖLZL, Stelae, 320.

¹¹ BADAWY, La Stèle funéraire sous L'Ancien Empire, 215 .

¹² MÜLLER-WOLLERMANN, R., "Der mythos vom ritus Erschlagen der feinde", *GM* 105, 1988, 70–71.

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on the offering table in front of the owner of the stele.

-Discovery

According to the official registration in Cairo Museum, our stele belongs to a person named *pA Sri Ast* and goes back to the 29th Dynasty and the reign of King Nephertes. It was registered upon discovery under number RB 18377 and catalogued in the Egyptian Museum in 2008 under no. JE 36660 and an international no. 01/001/15800. The Stele was found in Saqqara during an excavation sponsored by the Egyptian Antiquities Service (EAS). No reference is included about the exact excavation place nor date. The stele, which is a votive offering to Apis, is obviously one of the Serapeum Stelae,¹³ examples of

¹³ These stelae were first published by Auguste Mariette who published 38 stelae out of the total he discovered and amounted to 1200 pieces. 800 stelae were then transported to the Louvre museum and the rest were stored in Boulaq Museum. Later on members of the ruling family of Muhammed Ali Pasha have dedicated some of these to foreign visitors which were later put in various Museum in Europe. Unfortunately, a large number was destroyed because of the Nile flood and only 30 pieces survived in a good condition and were transported to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo and the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. In 1899, Émile Chassinat published the inscriptions of 181 stelae of the group housed at the Louvre museum but without translation. The work on these stelae was resumed in 1968 when Jean Vercoutter, Michel Malinine and Georges Posener collaborated and published the result of their study in two volumes; the first, containing texts and translations of 252 stelae; the second, the plates. Moreover, 80 stelae were newly discovered in 1985-6 and 31 belonging to the Third Intermediate Period were studied in a Ph.D. thesis. As it stands, there are still many pieces awaiting publication. For more information on this topic, see: MARKOVIČ, N., “The cult of the sacred bull Apis: History of Study”, in *A History of Research into Ancient Egyptian Culture Conducted in Southeast Europe*, edited by M. Tomorad, 135-144, Oxford, 2015. As for the references to the previous studies on the Serapeum Stelae organized chronologically, see: MARIETTE, A., “Renseignements sur les soixante-quatre Apis trouvés dans les souterrains du Sérapéum”, *Bulletin Archéologique de l'Athenaeum français* I, 1855, 45-50, 53-58, 66-68, 85-90, 93-100; idem, “Le Serapeum de Memphis: découvert et décrit”, ouvrage dédié à S. A. I. Mr le prince Napoléon et publié sous les auspices de S. E. M. Achille Fould Ministre d'Etat, Paris: Gide, 1857; idem, *Le Serapeum de Memphis*, Paris, 1882; MALININE, M., POSENER, G. & VERCOUTTER, J., *Catalogue des Stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis I, Texts, II*, Paris, 1968; ALY, M. Ibrahim, *Les Petits Souterrains du Sérapéum de Memphis, Étude d'Archéologie, Religion, et Histoire – Textes inédits*, Paris, 1991; ALY, M. Ibrahim, “À propos du prince Khâemouaset et de sa mère Isetneferet”, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung* 49, 1993, 97-106; ALY, M. Ibrahim, NAGEB, Ramzy & HEBRIN, Fr.-R., “Présentation des stèles nouvellement découvertes au Sérapéum”, BSFE 106 (1986), 31-44.

which were found in underground tunnels in the Serapeum at Saqqara.¹⁴ As already observed, it was discovered during the excavations of the Egyptian Antiquities Service (EAS) conducted by Mohamed Ibrahim Aly in 1985-6.¹⁵ Regardless of calling it a stele of *pA Sri Ast* by its discoverer, as we shall see from the translation of the Hieratic accompanying the scene, it belongs rather to a priest called Mmy. Thus, although the name of *pA Sri Ast* was mentioned first in the text, he is not the owner of the stele.

-General Description

The stele is made of limestone. It measures 38 cm in height, 21.5 cm in width and 5.5 cm in thickness.¹⁶ The color of the stone of the stele is light yellow. The drawings and the writings are executed in black ink, except for the sun-disk with the double wings which is colored partly red, partly black. The stele is in a good condition although its outer edges have some small cracks and the surface of the painting has some scattered scratches and scrapes (Fig. 1).

I -The Upper Register (the Round-Summit)

Considering the scene and the text recorded on the stele, it can fairly be described as consisting mainly of two parts. As for the first part, the top of the stele, it is rounded in shape and has on it the Hieroglyphic sign of the sky to point to goddess Nut.

¹⁴ They are the underground tunnels discovered by Auguste Mariette in Memphis at Saqqara in 1850 which were the burial place reserved for the bull Apis. During the excavations, 24 huge sarcophagi made of granite and basalt were found in rooms opening on the main tunnels. There were also hundreds of funerary stelae made by individuals seeking help and protection from the god. In 1970 the archaeologist Emory discovered the tunnels of the Iseum where mothers of the bull Apis were buried. See LURKER, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*, 152-153.


¹⁵ ALY, NAGEB & HEBRIN, *Présentation des stèles nouvellement découvertes au Sérapéum*, 39, fig. 4.

¹⁶ All measurements are taken by the authors.

Under the sign of the sky is depicted a winged sun-disk (Fig. 2).¹⁷ The sign denoting the sky or the horizon, which symbolizes the goddess Nut, is consistent with similar representations in Egyptian art all along the periods of Egyptian history through the Greco-Roman periods.¹⁸ In this position, Nut was sometimes represented with her hands and feet on the ground and the rest of her body bent on the earth.¹⁹

In addition to her being goddess of the sky, Nut was also the wife of Geb and was represented in many forms among them the heavenly cow or a standing woman.²⁰ Thus in the Book of the Dead (22.133) (see Fig. 3), we find the sign of the sky connoting the goddess Nut. The scene represents the god Ra with his head in the form of a falcon sitting on Maat sign in the middle of the sun-boat which is sailing on a symbol of the sky. Nut was also connected in Egyptian religious thought with the idea of eternity which was related to the other world and darkness. Within this context, She symbolized life after death and was referred to as *nHH*. But since she was also responsible for the daily cycle of the sun, eternity was explained as *nHH* and *Dt* which refer to the day and the night, whereby birth equals day and death equals night.²¹

-The Winged Sun-Disk

In addition to many other names, the ancient Egyptians called the winged sun-disk by the name of  (*pr-wr*) or

¹⁷ Wb, 11, 214. The Serapeum stela were usually rectangular in shape but rounded on top. They also had either the winged sun-disk, the falcon, or the eye- wadjeat. Both the latter ones ended with the sign *Sn*, the winged scarab, the phoenix or the Jakal.

¹⁸ WESTENDORF, *Altägyptisch Darstellungen des Sonnenlaufes*, 22 , 65 ; WILKINSON, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 127.

¹⁹ HÖLZL, *Stelae*, 320; WELLS, R. A., "The Mythology of Nut and the Birth of Ra", *SAK* 19, 1992, 305.

²⁰ EL-SAYED, Mohsen L., *Book of the Dead of the Ancient Egyptians* (In Arabic: *Kitāb al-Mawta lil-Miṣriyyīn al-Qudama*), Cairo, 2009, 337.

²¹ BAKIR A., "A further Re-Appraisal of the Terms: *nHH* and *dt*", *JEA* 60, 1974, 252-254.

𓆎𓆏 (Bḥdty).²² All these names reflect, however, the nature of Horus as falcon God 𓆎𓆏 (ntr-ḥ), (nb-pt), 𓆎𓆏 and 𓆎𓆏𓆏 (ḥb ḥwt).²³ Although the winged sun-disk was used in the beginning as decorative element, it soon began to acquire religious significance whereby it guaranteed protection for the deceased in funeral contexts. Despite its importance as a decoration on Egyptian monuments, scholars' views about its beginning are not unanimous. It is suggested by Friedman that it appeared first on some relief panels which were found in the tunnels under the step pyramid of King Djoser and continued until the Greco-Roman periods (Fig. 4).²⁴ As for Keels, he goes back with this symbol to the First Dynasty and argues that it was depicted in an inscription found on a comb of King Djet (Fig. 5).²⁵ Although the inscription is not complete, Keels explains that the wings represent the sky and considers the presence of the falcon in the middle of the sun-boat as an alternative for the sun-disk and that the two constitute together a winged sun.²⁶

As it can be determined the first appearance of the sun-disk on the round top of stelae of individuals took place towards the end of the Twelfth Dynasty.²⁷ By then, its symbolism has gone a long way since either the First or the Third dynasties. In a study devoted to the decoration of the round topped stelae from the Middle Kingdom to the Late period, Hölzl observes that this symbol was used on individuals' stelae during the end of the

²² Wb I, 179 [22], 180 [5].

²³ ALLAM, Murād, "(Winged) Sun-Disk of the One Wing and Wadjet Eye on Top of Stelae" (In Arabic: *Qurṣ al-Shams (al-Mugannaḥ) ḍul-Ganaḥ el-waḥed wa 'ayn Wadjet 'ala Qimam al-Lawḥāt*), in *The World of the Pharaohs* (In Arabic: 'ālam al-Farā'enah), 37 (2008), 108.

²⁴ FRIEDMAN, F. D., "The Underground Relief Panels of King Djoser at the Step Pyramid Complex", *JARCE* 32, 1995, 3, fig. 2 a-b.

²⁵ ENGELBACH, R., "An Alleged Winged Sun-Disk of the First Dynasty", *ZAS* 65, 1930, 115-118.

²⁶ KEEL, O., *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of the Psalms*, USA 1997, 27.

²⁷ HÖLZL, R., *Giebelfelddekoration von Stelen des Mittleren Reiches*, Wein, 1990, 55

Middle Kingdom but it appeared then in a royal context including the name of the king and his representation.²⁸ Later on it was adopted by individuals alone whereby they appeared by themselves praying in front of divinities.²⁹ Thus, in our stele, the winged sun-disk may symbolize the light of the sun, life and resurrection in the other world, while the bull Apis is meant to provide the priest with protection.³⁰

As was the case with the date when the winged sun-disk began to appear, views of scholars varied about the two wings on both sides of the sun-disk and attributed them to different deities. According to some, they were attributed to Horus where they symbolized sky.³¹ While some others connected between the two wings and goddess Rekhmet of el-Kab region.³² On the other hand, Werbrouck considers that the disk represents Ra himself, and that the wings are those of Horus of Edfu and not the falcon's.³³ With this varied religious symbolism, the winged sun-disk usually appeared on temples' facades, in their inner rooms, on panels and on door lintels inside tombs and any locations endowed with religious significance.³⁴

-The Priest MMy

In the scene pictured under the winged sun-disk is depicted a priest in the position of adoration in front of the bull Apis who stands on a high pedestal with the sun-disk between his horns in

²⁸ HÖLZL, R., "Round-Topped Stelae from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, Remarks on the Decoration of the Lunettes", *SCIE* 1, 1992, 288.

²⁹ WILDUNG, D., "Flügelsonne", in: *LÄ II*, Wiesbaden, 1977, col. 278; WESTENDORF, *Altägyptische Darstellungen des Sonnenlaufes*, 24.

³⁰ HERMANN, A., *Die Stelen der Thebanischen Felsgräber der 18. Dynastie*, Glückstadt, 1940, 56.

³¹ SCHÄFER, H., *Ein Bruchstück altägyptischer Annalen*, Berlin, 1902, 24; FRANKFORT, H., *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago, 1948, 38; ANTHES, R., "Egyptian Theology in the Third Millennium B.C.", *JNES* XVII no. 3, 1959, 189.

³² SCHOTT, S., *Myth und Mythenbildung*, Leipzig, 1945, 75; ANTHES, R., "Das Problem des Allgottes im vorgeschichtlichen Ägypten," *MDAIK* XV, 1957, 6.

³³ WERBROUCK, M., "A Propos du Disque Ailé", *CdE* 32, 1941, 165.

³⁴ MACKENZIE, D., *Egyptian Myths and Legends*, London, 1913, 61, 63.

a frontal position (Fig. 6). Mmy is bald headed and wears the familiar priestly dress known throughout all periods of ancient Egyptian history. He raises his two hands in front of him hailing the bull Apis. In the middle, there is an offering table. Judging from his appearance, it can be confirmed that we have here a typical view of how priests looked like in ancient Egypt. They followed a strict discipline which forbade them from eating certain kinds of food and were required to remove all hair from their body especially from their heads. Thus, they had to shave every third day to be sure that their heads were clean and pure in order to be able to perform their duties and conduct rituals. This is why they are usually represented bald and without any eyebrows or lashes.


We have even an eye witness testimony of the appearance of the Egyptian priests recorded by Herodotus who visited the country in the fifth century BC. According to his description: "They are especially careful always to wear newly-washed linen. They practise circumcision for cleanliness' sake; for they would rather be clean than more becoming. Their priests shave the whole body every other day, so that no lice or anything else foul may infest them as they attend upon the gods. The priests wear a single linen garment and sandals of papyrus: they may have no other kind of clothing or footwear. Twice a day and twice every night they wash in cold water."³⁵

The reason for their strict mode of life is explained by the priests' religious role which is also clarified by the title which describes them as 'servants' of the god. In Hieroglyphics the title reads 'Hm nTr' which means 'servant of the god.' This title when combined with the title of the 'purified' (*w' b*) refers to the cult of the sun. Both titles thus refer to the persons who were

³⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2. 37. [Godley translation].

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qualified to perform the daily rituals to the god of the temple and
who were allowed to enter the holy compartment containing the
statue of the God.

-The Offering Table (*ḥ3wt*)³⁶

The scene pictured on the stele has, in addition to the priest and the statue of the bull Apis, an offering table and a stand which complement and simultaneously confirm its religious and funeral nature. The offering table  (*ḥ3wt*) was known all along Egyptian history as an important element in the religious and funeral spheres and was usually put in the tomb in front of the false door or before the image of the deceased. But it was also found in temples. The earliest representation of an offering table goes back to the First Dynasty when it was depicted in the decorations of the tombs, on the false door and sometimes in panels.³⁷

Historically speaking, the offering table represents a development from a practice which goes back to the predynastic period. Then the offerings consisted of a loaf of bread placed on a braided mat (*ḥtp*) which later became the written sign for 'offering'. In the beginning of the Old Kingdom, a table made of stone became the standard form instead of the braided mat. Usually the offering tables had the form of the sign (*ḥtp*), or carried such sign in the inscription on the top. On the other hand, the top of the sign (*ḥtp*), which was connected with the loaf of bread, used to face the person introducing the offering.

As for the libations or the liquid offerings, wine vessels were often represented in high relief on top of the table and some canals were dug on it for the libations. Whether the offering table was represented figuratively or as a sign in the text, it was meant to keep the offerings for ever. Compared to the offering tables

³⁶ Wb. III, 226 ; 13

³⁷ VANDIER, J., *Manuel d'Archéologie Égyptiennes*, I, Paris, 1952, 772-774.

introduced to mortals, those presented to deities had the sign of (*hṯp*) on all four sides and/or on a pedestal in the shape of an alter.³⁸ Supposedly, the table had all the necessary elements to attract the soul in order to come back and become unified with the person sitting before the table with his hand stretched towards the table to indicate that he became alive so as to have the food prepared to him.³⁹

-The Offerings on Mmy's Table

The offerings on the table had in the funeral context a special significance since the ancient Egyptians believed that the *ka* needs various kinds of food to continue living in the other world.⁴⁰ The point can be demonstrated by the scenes representing the deceased sitting at offering tables with various kinds of food, starting from the Old Kingdom and through the later periods.⁴¹ Of the various kinds, bread and meat had a special place and may be considered as basic foods.⁴² Thus, on Mmy's table we find bread and two slain geese.

1) **Bread:** The significance of the bread depends on the myth which connects between it and the body of the god from whom grains have grown. It symbolizes the new life which has permeated its body. Bread, therefore, became a symbol of life and an important element on the offering tables. A certain goddess, Nepit, was the goddess of the fields and was consequently responsible for the grains and, being her son, the

³⁸ LURKER, Manfred, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: an Illustrated Dictionary*, translated by Şalah El-Dīn Ramaḍān, revised by Māḥmūd Māher, Cairo, 2000, 217-218

³⁹ ANDERSON, J., "The Tomb Owner at the Offering Table", in *Egyptian Art, Principles and Themes in Wall Scenes*, edited by L. Donovan & K. Mccorquodale, Guizah, Egypt, 2000, 133-134.

⁴⁰ TRAUNECKER, C., "Une Stèle Commémorant La Construction de L'enceinte d'un Temple de Montou", *KARNAK V*, 1970-1972, 143, fn. 1.

⁴¹ SCHULMAN, A., "The Iconographic Theme: Opening of the Mouth on Stelae", *JARCE* 21, 1984, 170.

⁴² MARTIN, Stèle, col. 3.

king was frequently depicted presenting grains.⁴³ The earliest scenes in the tombs of Saqqara include scenes of grinding grains, sifting the flour, preparing the dough and heating the bricks. Thus, it is no wonder that loaves of bread acquired some importance in religious and funeral rites and some real bread loaves were found buried in tombs with the deceased.⁴⁴ In many cases there were depicted several kinds of bread on the offering table which included elongated loaves (*šꜣꜣ*) and (*ḥꜣ-wꜣ*) bread which was stuffed with raisins and honey to be eaten warm.⁴⁵ Its importance is shown in the Coffin Texts which confirm that its presence prevents the deceased from eating garbage and from making him resemble Horus' white eye.⁴⁶

2) **The Slain Geese:** The ancient Egyptians thought that slaughtering animals and birds were rites connected both with the gods, since their bodies constituted their meal, and with fertility, in addition to its other mythological connotations.⁴⁷ As for the goose in particular, it was considered as a sacred bird of the god Amun and geese were raised in a special yard near his temple at Karnak to be introduced in offerings to the god. When building the inner shrine or the holy of holies in a temple, a goose was slain and its blood was spread in the place. Its symbolism in the funeral context is further confirmed by the mummified geese found in the stores of the funeral temple of Thutmose III's.⁴⁸

Geese were also connected with the creation myth owing to the significance of their eggs since chicken were not known in Egypt before the campaigns of Thutmose III to Syria. It was thought that the first god came out of an egg and this cosmic

⁴³ CAUVILLE, Sylvie, *l'offrande aux dieux dans le temple égyptien*, traduit par Suhayr Lutf-Allāh, Cairo, 2010, 52-53.

⁴⁴ WORSHAM, Charles. E., "A Reinterpretation of the So-Called Bread Loaves in Egyptian Offering Scenes", *JARCE* 16, 1979, 7-10.

⁴⁵ CAUVILLE, *l'offrande aux dieux dans le temple égyptien*, 52-53.

⁴⁶ ALMAHDĪ, Eman A., *Bread in Ancient Egypt* (In Arabic: *al-Ḥubz fī Miṣr al-Qadīmah*), Cairo, 2009, 194-196.

⁴⁷ BUDGE, E. A. Wallis, *Egyptian Magic*, London, 1901, 194-195.

⁴⁸ CAUVILLE, *l'offrande aux dieux dans le temple égyptien*, 61-62.

existence was often connected with Amun who was sometimes pictured in the form of a goose. During the Greco-Roman periods, geese were usually connected with Harpocrates, i.e. Hor the child god.

But since the goose was considered also a symbol for the god Set, the evil god, it was the most common bird on the offering table and in sacrifices.⁴⁹ According to this myth, slaughtering geese was considered a symbolic act of conquering evil through subduing Set. In the city of Sais, the king was represented on the temple of Neith while presenting two geese in one hand and in the other a piece or two of bread. Geese and bread were also put on the altar of Ra during the feast of the sixth lunar day.⁵⁰

-The Altar


The offering table in the scene represented on the stele seemingly has a dual function. According to this view, altars, on which offerings were presented to the gods, were the offering tables which were used during the religious rituals. The priest who was responsible for the sacrifice was called (*w' b*) indicating that he had to be clean and his task was to check if the meat of the slain animal is suitable to be offered. There was also another priest whose title was 'the scribe of the altar' who was probably responsible for documenting the sacrifices to be offered.⁵¹

Like the offering tables, the shapes of the altars witnessed a long history going back to the predynastic period. A braided mat was used then as an altar. It later developed and was built of dried bricks or stones. Its shapes developed also over the centuries, except for the step altars which was common over the

⁴⁹ LURKER, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: an Illustrated Dictionary*, 62.

⁵⁰ CAUVILLE, *l'offrande aux dieux dans le temple égyptien*, 61-62.

⁵¹ ERMAN, Adolf, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1894, 312.

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ages.⁵² Also, altars had several shapes in Hieroglyphic language,
such as , where bread and meat were offered.⁵³

-The Bull God on the Pedestal

The creed of the bull Hapi, who was known to the Greeks as Apis, goes back to the Old Kingdom if not before. It shows that ancient Egyptian thinking was influenced by some kinds of animals which played an important role in daily life- of which the bull or the ram were most important owing to their productivity and fertility.⁵⁴ Among the names attributed to the holy bulls, which were found in the Delta, ‘the white bull’, ‘the great black bull’, ‘the great bull’ and ‘the consecrated bull.’ It seems also that these titles indicated different positions, since some bulls had only few priests or servants to tend to. Thus, ‘the white bull’ and Apis had only group of servants who were not priests. We also know that ‘the great black bull’ was the patron deity of the tenth district in the Delta.⁵⁵

As for the bull Apis, it was considered the most important among the holy bulls in Egypt and was originally a symbol of fertility. Later, however, Apis was endowed with more capabilities and attributes.⁵⁶ Since its main temple was in Memphis, it was connected with Ptah and became ‘the great soul of Ptah’ which appeared on earth in the form of a bull. After

⁵² SHUKRĪ, Anwar, *Architecture in Ancient Egypt* (in Arabic: *al- ĩmarah fĭ Miṣr al- Qadĭmah*), Cairo, 1970, 165-168.

⁵³ CAUVILLE, *l'offrande aux dieu dans le temple ĩgyptien*, 59.

⁵⁴ See for example, VERNUS, Jean, “APIS”, *LÄ* I, 338-348.






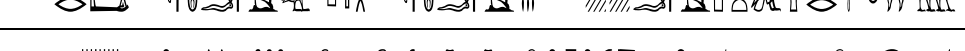
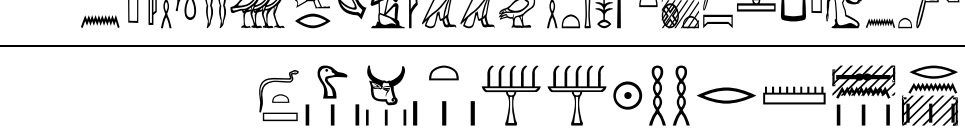
⁵⁵ ČERNY, Jaroslav, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, translated by Aĥmed Qadri, revised by Ṣalah El-Dĭn Ramađān, Cairo, 2000, 21-22.

⁵⁶ Usually Apis was represented in the form of a bull or a man with the head of a bull and was then considered a symbol of fertility, see, for example, ALY, M. Ibrahim & RÖHL, D. M., "Apis and the Serapeum", *JACF* 2, 1988, 6-26; WILKINSON, R., *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London, 2017, 170-2; DAVIES, Sue, SMITH, H.S., “Sacred Animal Temples at Saqqara”, *The Temple in Ancient Egypt*, edited by S. Quirke, 112-131, London, 1977; COVADONGA, Sevilla Cueva, “Apis. Osiris-Apis, Serapis,” *Historica* 16, 1994, 77-84; DEPUYDT, L., "Apis Burials in the Twenty-fifth Dynasty", *GM* 138 (1994), 23-25.

death, Apis changed to Osir and was therefore called Osiris Apis. During the Modern Kingdom, Apis used to carry the sun-disk between its horns and it was buried upon its death in a great ceremony in the underground tunnels at the Serapeum in Memphis, as already mentioned. In its Hellenic form, Osiris Apis was represented in the form of Serapis who later became a funeral god and appeared on many sarcophagi as a holy bull accompanying the mummy of the deceased to the tomb.⁵⁷

II -The Lower Register

The lower register (Fig. 7) has seven lines of Hieratic script which can be rendered into Hieroglyphic, transliterated and translated as follows.

| * | Hieroglyphic Transcription |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |
| 6 |  |
| 7 |  |

⁵⁷ LURKER, *Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: an Illustrated Dictionary*, 34.

| | |
|-----|--|
| ** | Transliteration |
| 1 | <i>im3hy hr hpi Wsir it-ntr sm hm pth s3 mmy idn wr b3w ndm p3-šri-3st hw-w3d h^c-r(°) it-ntr sm hm [pth]</i> |
| 2 | <i>s3 mmy idn wr b3w ndm hw-w3d h^c-r(°) i^ch- ms it-ntr sm hm pth s3 mmy idn wr b3w ndm</i> |
| 3 | <i>hw-w3d h^c-r(°) hr-ir-° it-ntr sm hm pth hry m [sšt3] r-st3w s3 mmy idn wr b3w ndm hw-w3d h^c-r(°)</i> |
| 4 | <i>w3h-ib-R^c hr-irt n pk3- n htp ity m3^c hrwsn.f [mmy] it-ntr sm hm pth s3 mmy idn wr</i> |
| 5 | <i>b3w ndm hr-w3d h^c-r(°) _ nht- m- htp it [nfr-tm] i^ch-ms it ntr nfr-tm-hp it nfr-tm-p3-di- hr</i> |
| 6 | <i>hry-sšt3 irt n pk3-n-htp hry-sšt3 r-st3w it-ntr sm hm pth s3 mmy idn wr b3w ndm hp-mn</i> |
| 7 | <i>rn[w] [s]n mn r nhh]di.sn] h3wt t k3w 3pdw dt</i> |
| *** | Translation |
| 1 | Honored by Hapi (Apis) ⁵⁸ , the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant of Ptah, Son of Mmy, the Great official from Bau Negm, <i>p3 šri 3st</i> , Khw Wad, Kha-Ra, the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant [of Ptah]. |
| 2 | Son of Mmy, the Great Official of Bau Negm, <i>Khw W^cd, Kh^c-R^c (i^ch Ms</i> [Ahmose]), the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant of Ptah, Son of Mmy, the Great official of Bau Negm |
| 3 | <i>Khw-W^cd, Kh^c-R^c, (hr ir °)</i> the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant of Ptah, Chief [of Secrets] Rostau son of Mmy, the Great Official of Bau Negm, <i>Khw-W^cd, Kh^c-R^c</i> |
| 4 | <i>W3h-Ib-R^c</i> , Born to <i>Pk3-n-htp</i> , Ity of the True Voice, His brother (Mmy's), the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant of Ptah, Son of Mmy the Great Official. |
| 5 | Of Bau negm, <i>Khw-W^cd, Kh^c-R^c(°)</i> , - Nehetem Hotep, Father [Nefertem] <i>T^c h-ms</i> (Ahmose), Father of Nefertem Hotep, Father of Nefertem Padiher |
| 6 | Chief of Secrets, Born to <i>Pk3-n-htp</i> , Chief of Secrets of Rostau the God Father, <i>Sem</i> Priest, Servant of Ptah, Son of Mmy, the Great Official of Bau Negm, Hepmen |
| 7 | May their names remain for ever, [and may they be given] offering tables [full] of bread, bulls and birds for ever. |

⁵⁸ Hapi, who was known to the Greeks as Apis, goes back to the Old Kingdom if not before

- Commentary on the text

1- Sem Priest: This designation of *sem* priest indicates that he was mostly concerned with funerary contexts since he was charged with performing certain rituals during mortuary ceremonies. He was usually dressed in a leopard skin over a white tunic which characterized him in this regard among the rest of the priests. Although his role in these rituals was important, we do not know the exact meaning of this title which may mean a noble person. On the other hand, Černý thinks that *sem* priests were not so important as other priests and that they did not usually utter any words during the ceremonies.⁵⁹

The title of this priest was known also during the Old Kingdom and appeared in the Pyramid Texts (848) where it was mentioned in the following manner.⁶⁰ However, this term was usually written without any determinative to indicate its meaning but, starting from the Middle Kingdom, it was written next to the determinative of a sitting man but only sometimes.⁶¹ The task of *sem* priests was to carry the offerings and to introduce them to the deceased. They also raised the hands of the deceased to a certain height or level and opened his mouth to help him receive the offerings and continue the functions which he was deprived of through death and mummification. Symbolically as well, the task of opening the mouth was to enable the deceased to speak again.

From the records of some priests, it seems that the function of the *sem* priest could have been performed by other priests as

⁵⁹ ČERNÝ, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 167.

⁶⁰ SA'D-ALLAH, Mohamed A., "A Study of Sem-Title in Ancient Egypt" (in Arabic: *Dirāsah li-laqab el-Kāhen Sem in Miṣr al-Qadīmah*), *Bulletin of Faculty of Arts-Sohag University* 9 (1990), 442.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 441.

well. Thus, a priest named Nefer Aker, who was the bearer of the seals of the king during the reign of Senusert III, states that he used to: “decorate the chest of the god with lapis lazuli, turquoise, electron and all other precious stones used as jewelry on his divine members. Owing to my office as an official responsible for the secrets, I dressed the god with his crowns and as a *sem* priest with clean hands, I put the ornaments on the god.”⁶² Some kings even had the *sem* title, among them were Khnumhotep I, Amene, Khumhotep II.⁶³

2- Hry-sStA Official: The function of this official was to help the visir and the judges who preside over the trials. He was also entitled ‘Chief of Secrets who pronounces the judgements of the court of the six’ and ‘Chief of Secrets who alone sits in the court of the six.’ As shown from the documents of the First and Second Dynasties, kings had some officials with these functions, as personal assistants, to help them with some duties but without playing a major role in the administration.⁶⁴ Until the Fourth Dynasty, these ‘chiefs of secrets’ were chosen from high officials. Since they helped in preparing laws and other measures pertaining to administration, their importance then increased and they began to form special assemblies to help also in other areas, such as religion.

The importance of ‘chiefs of secrets’ increased more during the reign of the Fifth Dynasty together with the increasing authority of the kings. In this period they had two kinds of functions. The first was concerned with promulgating laws, regulations and royal measures. They performed this function

⁶² LALOUETTE, Claire, *Textes sacrés et textes profanes de l'ancienne Égypte*, traduit par Maher Gouigāti, Cairo-Paris, 1996, 239.

⁶³ HASSOUN, M. A. E., “Offices and Officials of the Royal Palace until the End of the New Kingdom”, (in Arabic: *Wazhef and Muwazafou al-Qaṣr al-Malaqi ḥatta Niyhāyat al-Dawlah al-Ḥadīthah*), *PhD Thesis*, Cairo University, 1990, 332

⁶⁴ HELCK, W., *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs*, Leiden, 1958, 43.

through an assembly especially assigned for this purpose. It was presided by the visir, was called ‘the legislative council’ and its members were chosen from the ‘council of the ten.’ The second function was to give advice on the important issues pertaining to administration in the fields of financial, judiciary and defense matters.⁶⁵ The title of this office became an honorary title starting from the Sixth Dynasty and it combined two groups of officials: a) counsellors of investigation (chosen from the ‘council of the ten’) and b) counsellors of the sessions (chosen from the previous council or from the judges presiding over the scribes).

The most important function of those chiefs was to keep the secrets of the king and preserve them from envious’ eyes.⁶⁶ Since these secrets included all daily activities of the king, Helck thinks that the title was not so much a functional as an honorary one for those who were so close to the king as to know his secrets and to preserve them. In addition to the above title, some others derived from it also spread denoting certain qualifications, such as ‘the secret keeper/secretary of the royal palace, of his master, of everyday, of the kind god, of the palace, of the king in all his works.’⁶⁷

During the Middle Kingdom the secret keepers performed an important role in the royal adornment and the rituals of the ceremonies in the temples. An official in the royal court in the Twelfth Dynasty named Semty had the title of ‘secretary of the royal jewelry’ and was responsible for dressing the king, his adornment and for crowning him. Another secretary called Ihy was likewise responsible for the jewelry and at the same time for







⁶⁵ HELCK, *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs*, 43.





⁶⁶ HELCK, W., "Ein Grabwand des Mittleren Reiches in Hamburg", *MDIK 21*, 1966, 43-44.

⁶⁷ HASSOUN, *Offices and Officials of the Royal Palace until the End of the New Kingdom*, 334.

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the ‘the two jewelry lockers’.⁶⁸

3- Idn wr bAw nDm Official: Although the function of this official seems clear, considering that it refers to his administrative role over a place called (*ndm/Ngm*), neither the place itself nor its location are securely identified,⁶⁹ and it may have been close to Memphis.⁷⁰ It appeared however on several of the Serapeum Stelae, such as no. 215 in the Louvre museum which is known as the stele of *Nefer-ib-re Mery Ptah*.⁷¹

4- hw-w3d Official: The Hieroglyphic documents available to us record this title with several spellings, such as , , ,  and .⁷² Meanwhile, the determinative  points to protection of some sort, either protection of a temple, the figure of the god, Hor, or the holy compartment of the Gods.⁷³ It is also the title of the priest of Hor Samatawy in Kom Ombo.⁷⁴

5- h^c-r(ʿ)  Official: As is the case with the preceding title, the Hieroglyphic texts provide us with several spellings for the title of this official, such as ,  and .⁷⁵ It is also the title of the priest of Sakhebou to the north of Letopolis and the south of Kom Ombo.⁷⁶

6- r-sšt3w Official: This title is among the frequently

⁶⁸ FIRTH, C. M. & GUNN, B. G., *Excavations at Saqqara: Teti Pyramid Cemeteries*, vol 1, Cairo, 1926, 28.

⁶⁹ LABUDEK, J., “Late Period Stelae from Saqqara: A Socio-Cultural and Religious Investigation”, *MA Thesis*, Birmingham University, 2010, 287.

⁷⁰ Wb. II, 381 (11); Wpi. 566.

⁷¹ PM, 800.

⁷² LIMME, L., “Deux stèles inédites du Sérapeum de Memphis”, *CdE* 47, 1972, 93.

⁷³ Wpl. 710.

⁷⁴ ALY, NAGEB & HEBRIN, Présentation des stèles nouvellement découvertes au Sérapéum, 39.

⁷⁵ Wb. III, 242 (17).

⁷⁶ YOYOTTE, J., “Encore Sakhebou”, *Kêmi* XV, 1959, 75-79.

mentioned titles on the Serapeum Stelae. It refers to a priest while Rostau is a name of place which is not known. It may be close to the hill of Giza but it is also likely that it may refer to the other world according to its context in the Book of the Dead.⁷⁷ The name appeared also on quite a number of the Serapeum Stelae such as A5, 11, 12, 15, 24, 37, 41, 52, 65, 72; B 10, 11; C 7, 15, 39.⁷⁸

6- May their Names Remain For Ever: This sentence begins the final line in the stele and, together with rest of the line referring to the kinds of the offerings introduced to the deceased, they summarize the purpose of the stele as a whole. We do encounter the phrase on similar stelae which are now housed in the Louvre museum, such as A 39 and 48.⁷⁹ The interesting point, however, is that the prayer and the wishes are extended to several members of Mmy's family whose relation to him can be easily explained in the following tree (Fig. 8). It soon emerges from the study of the names of the members of the family and their titles that they all belong to a priestly family whose members worked in the temple of Sakhebou in Kom Abou billou which was consecrated for Hor Samatawy. They put up this stelae at the Serapeum of Memphis hoping that their names will be remembered and that they may receive the offerings of bread, bull meats and birds for ever after.

- Conclusion:

This paper studies an unpublished funerary votive offering (JE99107) by a priest whose name was Mmy. As the previous study of the stele has shown, its date goes back to the Late Period and particularly to the 29th Dynasty. It is also representative, in

⁷⁷ Zivie, "Ro-Setau", *LÄ V*, 304-309.

⁷⁸ For more, see in general, LABUDEK, Late Period Stelae from Saqqara, 294, 326, 328, 335, 348, 354, 410.

⁷⁹ MALININE, POSENER & VERCOUTTER, *Catalogue des Stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis*, 173-174.

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terms of its scene and the text accompanying it, of the group of Stelae known as the Serapeum Stelae, which were found in the underground tunnels at the Serapeum in Memphis. Contrary to what has been recorded in the catalogue of the Egyptian Museum, the stele does not belong to a person named *p3 šri 3st*. Rather, it belongs to a person named Mmy who comes from a priestly family whose members can be identified from the text of the stele and from which we know that *p3 šri 3st* was Mmy's son together with four others, they are: *iḥ- ms*, *ḥr-ir-3*, *nht- m- ḥtp*, *ḥp-mn* We also know that Mmy had a son who had also three sons, they are: [*nfr-tm*] *iḥ-ms* , *nfr-tm-ḥp* , *nfr-tm-p3-di-ḥr*, While Mmy's shape as bald-headed person provides as with a typical image of priests in ancient Egypt, both the scene and the final statement in the text confirm the funerary nature of the stele.

Plates



Plate 1: Stele of Mmy



Fig. 1: Stele of Mmy

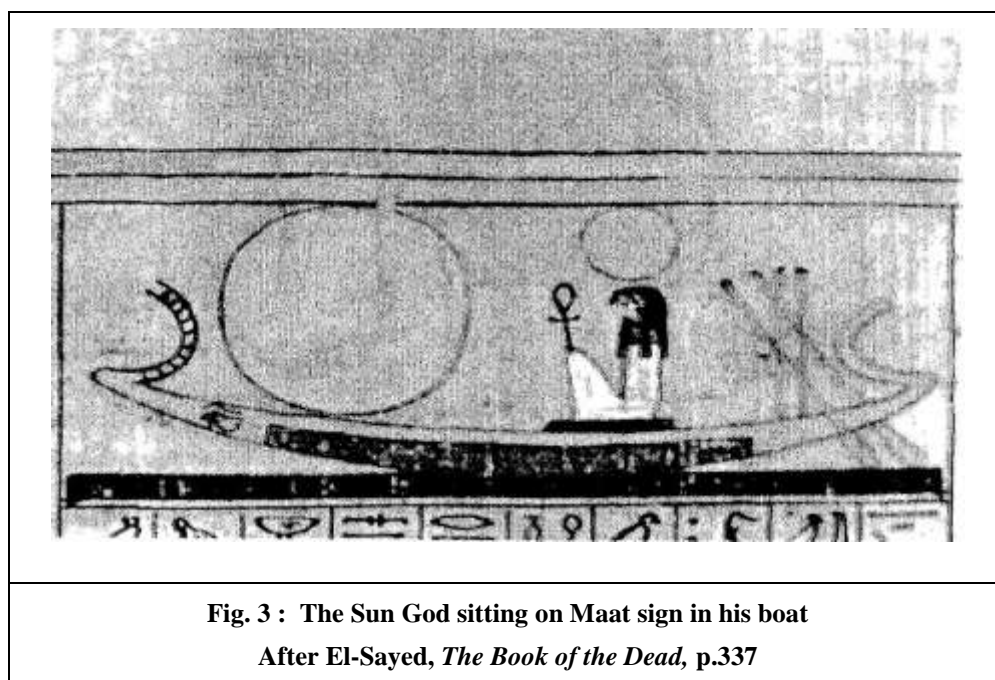
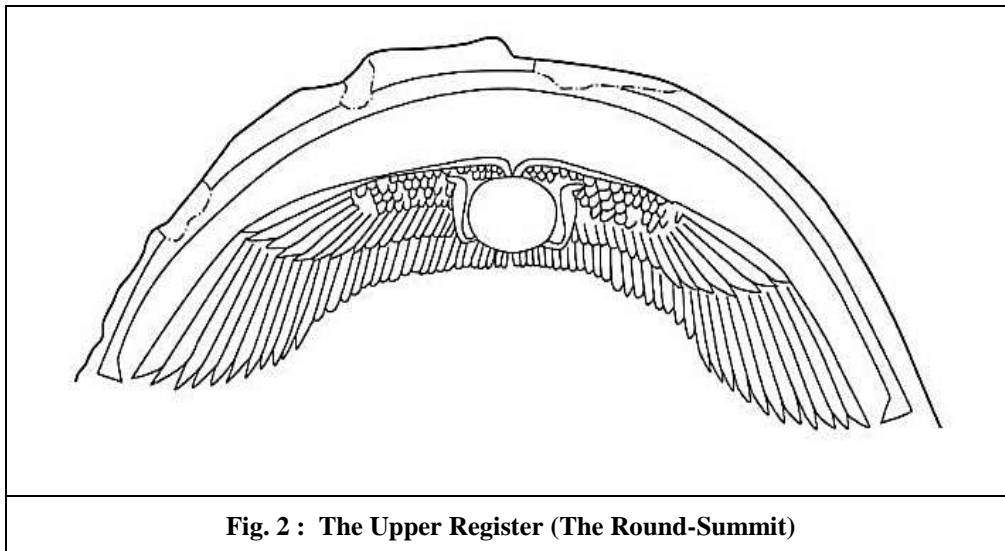




Fig. 4 : Behdety's Name on one of King Djoser's Panels
After Friedman, *The Underground Relief Panels*, fig. 17.



**Fig. 5: A Comb of King Djet, First Dynasty
After Engelbach, An Alleged Winged Sun-Disk, fig. 4.**

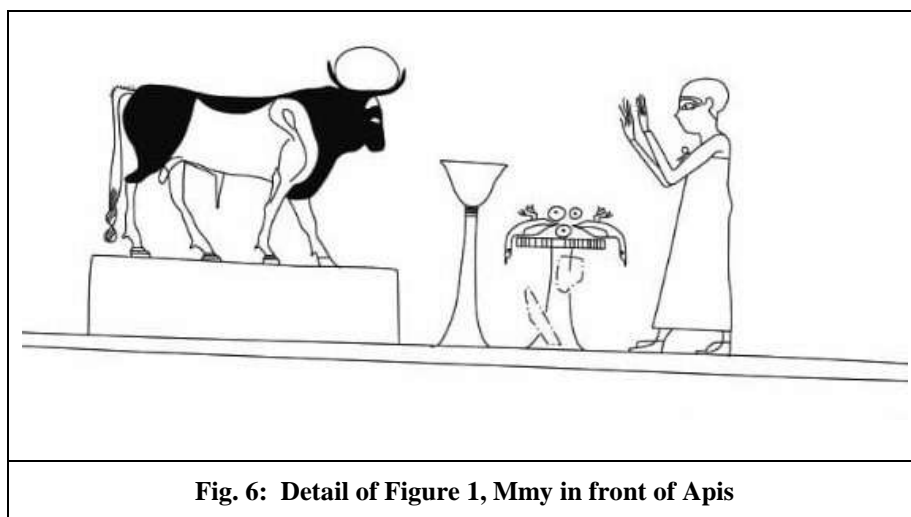


Fig. 6: Detail of Figure 1, Mmy in front of Apis

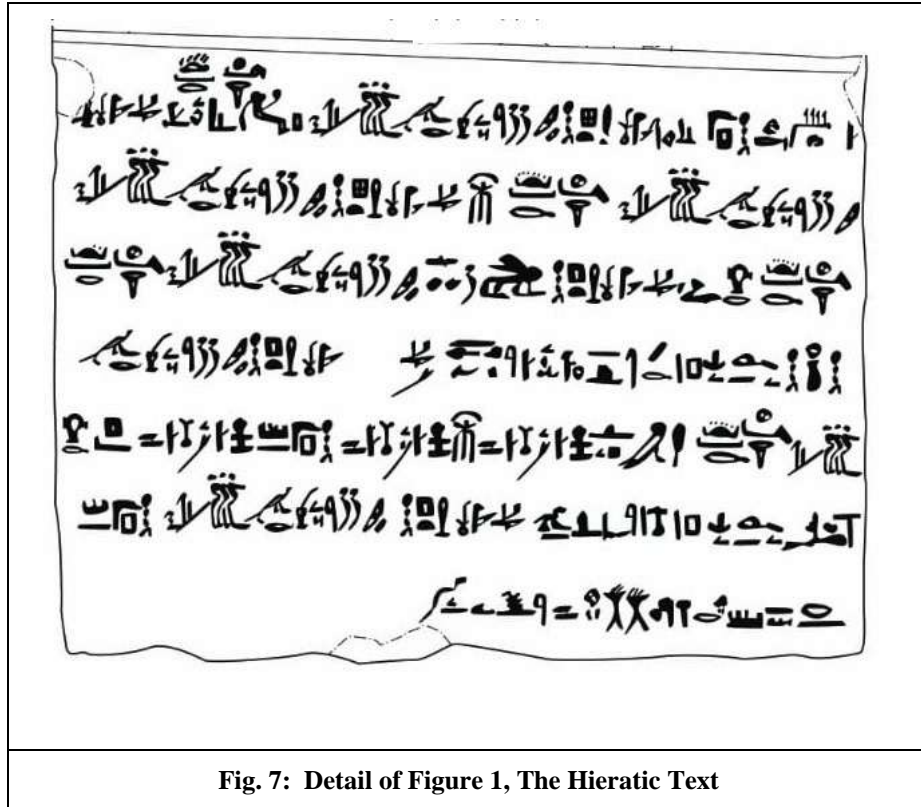


Fig. 7: Detail of Figure 1, The Hieratic Text

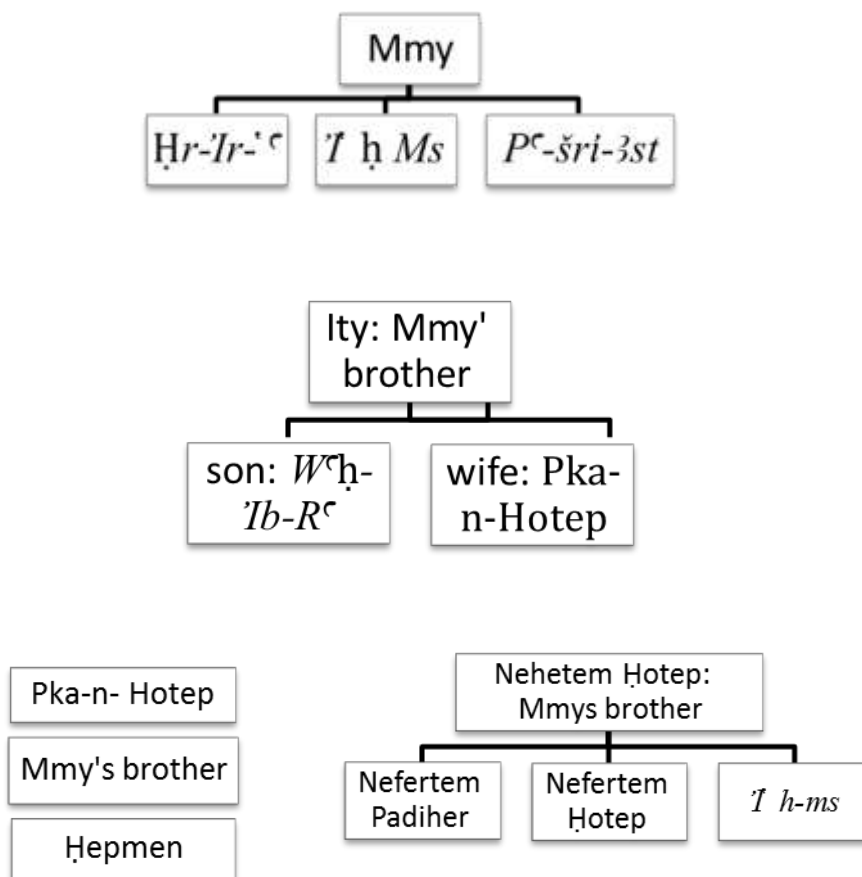


Fig. 8: Family Tree of Mmy and his brothers

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