
THE OFFERING-TABLE OF *rdi.n* PTAH

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ABSTRACT

*Although offering-tables have been widely examined and studied in various research papers in terms of shapes, sizes and inscriptions. However, some important figures' offering-tables have not been studied. This one-of-a-kind research will focus on *rdi.n* Ptah's offering-table which has not been surveyed or published before.*

*In this paper, the *rdi.n* Ptah or *rdi.n* Ptah offering-table will be closely examined and perused. The offering-table is owned by "*rdi.n* Ptah" was the commander of troops of the necropolis-stonemasons during the XIX Dynasty in the New Kingdom. The only available information regarding the *rdi.n* Ptah's offering-table is a short description by Ahmad Kamal in his book (*Catalogue Générale des Antiquités Egyptiennes du Musée Du Caire, Tables D'Offrandes*), and by August Mariette in his book (*Notice Des Principaux Monuments Exposés A Boulaq*) in which the two authors solely described the dimensions, general conditions and the name of the owner. No additional information was provided regarding the object.*

*Within this study, the definition and purpose of offering-tables is explained and analyzed. Then, the offering table of *rdi.n* Ptah is scrutinized from various perspectives including the place of discovery and registration and the materials, shape and dimensions of the offering table. Most importantly, the inscriptions and reliefs of the offering-table are studied in detail. The engravings and reliefs of the offering table are illustrated through visuals, as well as described, elucidated and translated. In this analysis, unique attributes are found in the elements of *rdi.n* Ptah's offering-table and various findings are surmised.*

KEYWORDS: Offering-Table, Funerary, Kheker, irrigation-system, stonemason, bread.

INTRODUCTION

Offerings to the dead has become known from prehistoric times as illustrated in ancient Egyptian graves. This ancient Egyptian tradition has

continued throughout several millennia as manifested from the quantity and variety of burial equipment. As early as the I Dynasty, the deceased was depicted before an offering-table beside which, there was an inscription known as the “offering-list”. Offering-lists enumerated all that was offered in the offering-table and provided a series of rites. In addition, to the offering list a funerary meal¹ was presented to the dead at the time of interment and was supposed to be presented daily and certainly during all feast-days. (Hassan , 1948, p. 157) (Mauss, 1923-1924, pp. 30-186).

Offering-tables are found in tombs as funerary essential elements, as well as in temples. Karnak Temple still has some of these tables which are huge blocks of alabaster or granite weighing nearly eight thousand kilograms. (Mariette, 1864, p. 14). Most of the mortuary tables are found in the vicinity of false doors or in the statues that represent elite figures in their tombs. (Lundius, 2020, p. 78)

In addition to kings presenting their offerings to the gods in the temples, the idea of the king being the giver of the offerings was also illustrated in the tombs. The tables were made of numerous materials and in diverse shapes and sizes. The size, shape, and material of the offering-table indicated the social status of its owner. (Lundius, Offering Tables as Ritual Landscapes. An Anthropological Perspective of Ancient Egyptian Materia Magicae, 2020, p. 78)


The offering-table can be dedicated to only one person as in the case of the table of “*rdi.n Ptah*”, or it could be dedicated to two people (usually within the same family), or even in some cases, an offering-table could be dedicated to several family members. (Mariette, 1880, p. 105 n.560). Moreover, in other cases, one person could own more than one offering table. (Budge , 1909, p. 7)

Offering-tables constituted a link between the extant life and the spiritual sphere. The purpose of the offering-table is to provide nourishment to the deceased, by receiving offerings brought to the tomb by their relatives, or in their names by the mortuary priest. (Lundius, 2020, p. 78) They most often have carvings on their upper surface with inscriptions of the

1 In 1962 W.B. Emery published a study of a tomb (Saqqara 3477) from the II Dynasty with a well-preserved funerary meal beside the burial of woman. It consisted of a triangular loaf of bread, ground barley, cooked fish (cleaned and dressed with the head removed) pigeon stew, a cooked quail (cleaned and dressed with the head tucked under one wing), two cooked kidneys, ribs and legs of beef, ribs of beef, stewed fruit probably fig, fresh nabk berries, small circular cakes, small jars containing some form of cheese, and finally grape wine in a large jar. These findings offer an idea of a typical festival meal of the upper class in Early Dynastic Egypt. Everything was served on pottery, not on stone vessels (Grajetzki, 2000).

deceased's donations so they could be provided with kindness and benevolence. (Mariette, 1864, p. 14)

The shapes and styles of the offering-tables vary. Some are rectangular with four legs or with small columns at the angles, whereas others could be round or lightly oval. Some of the offering-tables may have the shape of

the hieroglyphic character (*htp* ) with or without a protruding spout or spillway of the libation waters. (Kamal, 1906, pp. no 23091, 23040, 23009,23073). According to Lundius' research "Offering-Tables as Ritual Landscape" offering-tables are classified into four different types based on their shapes, carvings and inscriptions (Lundius, 2020, pp. 86-88)

Carvings on offering-tables intend to honor life-giving forces. In our case, it is the canal or irrigation systems that transmit water to fields and pools from the inundating Nile water, thus yield goods and produce, hence sustain life. (Lundius, 2020, p. 78)



In many cases the offering-table was also inscribed with the so-called offering-formula or offering-list. (Global Egyptian Museum, n.d.). The offering-formula used in the tombs states: "an offering which the owner gives". this was true, owing to a peculiarity of the Egyptian offering system called "reversion of offerings" that the offerings were presented from the donor out to the gods and then returned back by the gods to the owner or to the deceased. (Mauss, 1923-1924, pp. 30-186)

Despite the popularity of offering-tables in the Old Kingdom, they became extremely rare during the New Kingdom. (Mariette, 1864, p. 28) Since the owner *rdi.n* Ptah lived during the XIX Dynasty, it could be inferred that the object studied is considered one of the few offering-tables that were created during the New Kingdom. Furthermore, under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, the offering-tables completely disappeared. (Mariette, 1864, p. 30).

THE OFFERING-TABLE DESCRIPTION :(Figure 4, **Figure 5**, Figure 6)

3.1 THE OWNER

This offering-table was owned by *rdi.n* Ptah or *rdi.n* Ptah (Ranke, 1935, p.

141.3)  *rdi.n Pth* son of lady Pesdet  *psdt* (Ranke, 1935, p. 137.11)², from the XIX Dynasty. (Kamal, 1909, p. 147)

rdi.n Ptah, the commander of troops of the necropolis-stonemasons, and the son of lady Pesdet. (Mariette, 1880, p. 525 no1367)

² With reference to this offering-table of *rdi.n* Ptah.

COMMENT

Women occupied an esteemed status in the family. The rights and properties which women had since birth, were not detracted away even after marriage by their husbands. Women's status, titles and properties were passed on intact to their children. Within the family, the rights of the mother were predominant to the extent that it would override those of the father's. In certain times, family tables were often named after the mother and the father was completely disregarded. During the Middle Kingdom, the name of the mother of the deceased was cited more frequent than that of the father (Mariette, 1864, pp. 26-284) Moreover, the name of the person's mother was recognized over the monuments and tombs of the Old and New Kingdoms in lieu of the father's with few exceptions. Therefore, it is normal to find the owner of our object is attributed to his mother rather than to his father.

A stonemason's foreman was a member of the civil service. during the New Kingdom, as well as other periods. Their role was predominantly quarrying operations and were generally undertaken by order of the king. Therefore, both the stonemason's foreman and his subordinates were state employees. On occasion, however, some stoneworkers were free to contract work for private individuals. (Fischer, 1959, p. 146)

The stonemason's foreman would lead a crew of about a hundred stonemasons, plasterers, draftsmen, and sculptors. This mix of sacred and secular professions was common in ancient Egypt. (Zimmerman, 1997, p. 700)

3.4 PLACE OF DISCOVERY AND REGISTRATION

It was found in Thebes, "Assasife" is situated east of Ilwat al Shaykh Abd al Qurnah, close to El-Khokha, on the west bank of Luxor (Figure 1), in the North Necropolis, North Zone. (Mariette, 1880, p. 525 no 1367) It has been transferred and registered in the Egyptian Museum under the J.E³ no. 40582. It is also registered under the monuments of Boulaq museum no. 1876 and no. 969. The object is now placed on the museum's storage under number (13650-C23210) (Figure2) (Kamal, 1909, p. 146) (Mariette, 1864).

³ J.E = Journal D'entrée.

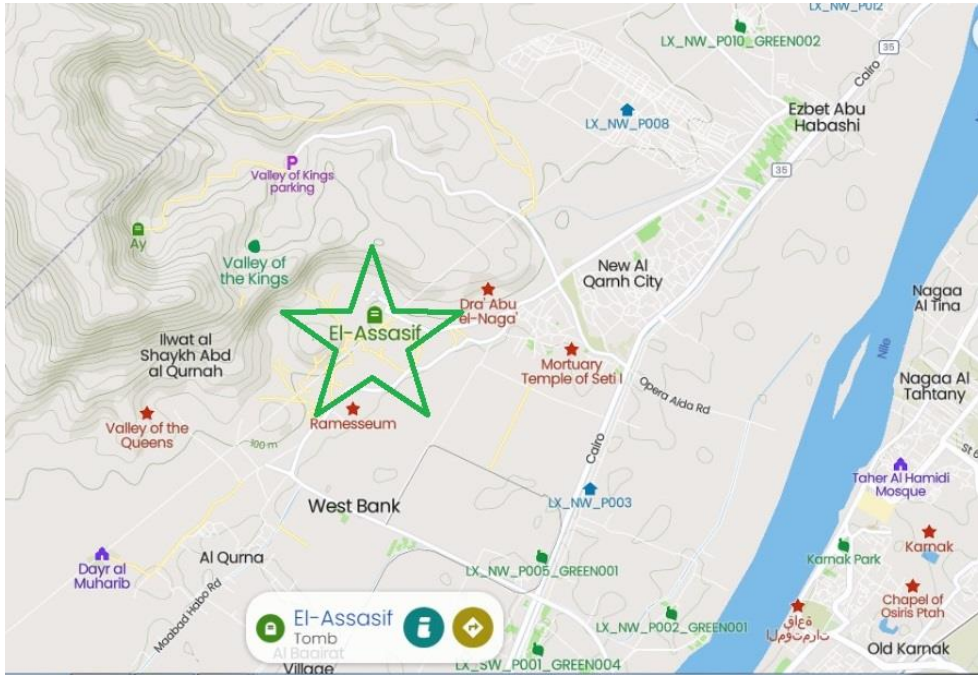


Figure 1: Assasif' location on the west bank Luxor, Theban Necropolis. (Mapcarta, n.d.)

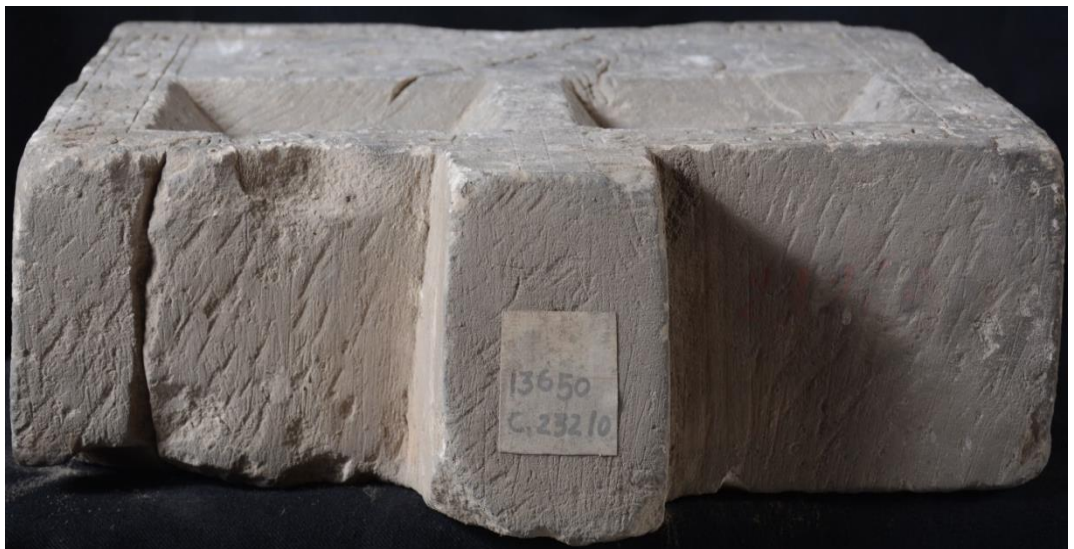



Figure2 : registration no on the table (By the author and the copyright for the courtesy of Egyptian Museum)

3.5 MATERIALS, FORM AND MEASUREMENTS

It is made of a poor-quality limestone. It has the figure that the engravers have rendered in the Hieroglyphs by the sign ⁴ with a protruding spout for the libation waters. The sign means that the table is affiliated to Type “B” in Lundius’ offering-tables’ categories⁵.

As preserved, measurements slightly vary from some researchers to others. According to Porter & Moss (1962, p. 60) and Ahmad Kamal (1909, p. 146) the offering-table measures 0.34 cm in length, and 0.39 cm in width including the glue, and is made of limestone.⁶ (Kamal, 1909, p. 146). However, Mariette’s measurements were marginally different with 0.40 cm and 0.33cm in length and width respectively (1880, p. 525).

3.6 STATE AND CONDITION

The offerings of the object are inscribed in relief, and in hieroglyphics hollow.

The table was broken slantwise, and the pieces were glued together (Kamal, 1909, p. 147). The inscriptions are slightly decayed in several areas (Figure 3, Figure 4).

COMMENT

Most of the offering-tables on which we find both hieroglyphs and figures follow the same technique of inscribing the objects offered in relief, and making the hieroglyphics hollow. In our object’s case, the artist here followed the common practice. The size, shape, material and placement of offering-table indicated the intentions and social status of their owners. (Lundius, 2020, p. 83) While the material of the object was modest as well as the workmanship. This can lead us to either of the two following explanations; the first option is that the owner was not wealthy enough,

⁴ It is a trilateral sign, meaning an “offering “ or “to be satiated”, which represents a loaf of bread placed upon a reed-mat (Hassan , 1948, p. 2). It originates from the pre-dynastic offering ritual of placing loaves of bread and other victuals on a reed mat before the deceased inside the grave pits. (Bolshakov, 2001) (The British Museum, n.d.)

⁵ Lundius categorizes the offering-tables to four types; “Type A” usually circle or oval with a T-shaped canal separating the table into two sections; “Type B” a lime-stone offering table, with a raised or sunken central platform containing offerings encircled by a canal; “Type C” a pottery offering trays representing a courtyard with offerings, including a shrine/throne positioned at the top of the tray, mirroring chapels or shrines that became common during the Middle Kingdom; “Type D” are “soul houses” which contain a courtyard before them, depicting offering items and canals. (Lundius, 2020, pp. 87-88)

⁶ Late Period, Abydos, North Cemeteries (from Osiris Temple Enclosure to Shunet el-Zebib, Middle Kingdom and Late Period)

thus could not afford to use more refined materials. The second option is that *rdi.n* Ptah elected to emphasize on intangible aspect of the offering-table than to invest in the materialistic facet of it. In other words, he did not care about the quality much as the content and the mythical function of the table, especially that he chose the type “B” shape, or the “hotep sign”. This sign may have been incorporated just to represent the table as a tool for offering life-giving liquids to the deceased, as suggested by Lundius (2020, p. 84)

THE DESCRIPTION

4.1 THE RECTANGULAR BASINS AND THE DRAINAGE SYSTEM

On the central part of the superior façade of our object, there are two rectangular basins with two holes, one in each basin, which were probably used to allow water to be poured as libations over the offerings, also they were used to collect water, which was then absorbed back into the earth to reach the dead, collected in basins, or recycled and reused (Lundius, *Offering Tables as Ritual Landscapes. An Anthropological Perspective of Ancient Egyptian Materia Magicae*, 2020, pp. 83-84). (Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6: no 8-9). Yet, after checking the inferior side of the table there were no holes at all, which means that the two holes were not intended for usage but were to carry a magical power in the after-life rituals (Figure 3). The rectangular basins, of *rdi.n* Ptah’s table particularly, are charged with a whole drainage system which is comprised of a) two holes; one in each basin (Figure 6 no9). b) Two unaccomplished canals -not engraved- in the center between the two basins. (Figure 6, no10). This is an idiosyncratic feature that can only be attributed to this object.

COMMENT

Offering-tables with two symmetric deep basins were widespread in the Old and Middle Kingdom tombs. This kind of offering-tables was prevalent during the XII Dynasty and is found in Abydos (Kamal, 1909, p. 6 no 23006). In addition, the inscriptions on offering-tables during the Middle Kingdom explicate the meaning behind their shapes, like the offering-table of *3bw* from the XIII Dynasty (Kamal, 1909, p. 29 no 23036). Oftentimes, two deep grooves stem out to the basins and amalgamate before the spout. Sometimes the basins are replaced by the representations of two libation vessels that may have water emerging, the spurts crossing as the grooves do. These two providers of water symbolize

the two sources of the Nile, which is tremendously important in the Egyptian mythological picture of the world⁷.

Interestingly, after checking all the offering-tables in the two volumes of “Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Tables d'offrandes” the object is found to be the only one which has the two holes in its basins. Furthermore, *rdi.n* Ptah's offering-table is unique as it has two unaccomplished canals.

There could be many explanations for the two shallow curved canals in the center separating the table into two sections and the two shallow holes in the basins. First, the table may have been left unfinished, due to a sudden death of the owner. Second, it could be a false drainage system, not engraved deep enough to be used, however, it may have been carved just for its mystical power and religious myth. In that case, this table would have been created for the mere reason to display the entire canal systems and basins and to typify the life-giving forces such as the structures transmitted to fields and pools. Third, as previously mentioned, the owner may have not been an affluent figure, provided the materials used in the offering-table. Thus, he might have not had the resources to create a useable or an accurate drainage system.

Several offering-tables are manufactured in a manner that would allow water to cover their entire surface, filling the whole table to a maximal degree. There are various applicable elucidations regarding the presence of water systems in our examined object. 1) It may be assumed that the varying depths and engravings the offering-table indicate that water was “activated” through its movement across the table, making it possible for the “ka” to permeate the water flow across the table, as well as prolonging the ritual in accordance with ritual actions and pronunciations of spells and utterances. 2) It can be considered a tool for offering life-giving liquids to the deceased. 3) It can be referenced to the flow of Osiris, which within the Nile water brings revival to the land. 4) It could simply be a resemblance of the natural annual cycle of the Nile flood inundating the figures of food, canals and other forms of life, and then being absorbed back into the earth, or collected in a vessel.

Furthermore, the basins engraved on offering-tables may be considered a representation of the inactive and dormant qualities of water. This deduction could be specifically applied on the object's table as it has a false aqua system, connecting it to the cosmogony of Hermopolitan Ogdoad. The water, in this case, represents the creator “Nun”, the primeval waters, who brings-forth life from the darkness by stirring and speaking

⁷Originalities in the New Kingdom include cartouche-shaped basins appearing as a result of the proliferation of ritual libation vessels and pictorial compositions with two vessels flanking the Haw.t table. (Bolshakov, 2001, pp. 574-575)

the creative utterance. Otherwise, the canals or mazes interlink to irrigation fields may be considered a representation of the active qualities of Seth in the Heliopolitan cosmology⁸. (Lundius, 2020, pp. 80-90) (Clark, 2003, p. 8).



Figure 3: The inferior side of the table showing no sign of any holes (By the author and the copyright for the courtesy of Egyptian Museum)

⁸ During the New Kingdom and later periods, staircases within central basins began to emerge on offering tables. maybe as a reference to sacred lakes within temple complexes used by priests to purify themselves before their contact with the divine during the required rituals. These features may be present to purify the water and accordingly the offerings, while at the same time they were activating the water. (Lundius, Offering Tables as Ritual Landscapes. An Anthropological Perspective of Ancient Egyptian Materia Magicae, 2020, p. 84)



Figure 4: *rdi.n* Ptah offering-table (By the author and the copyright for the courtesy of Egyptian Museum)

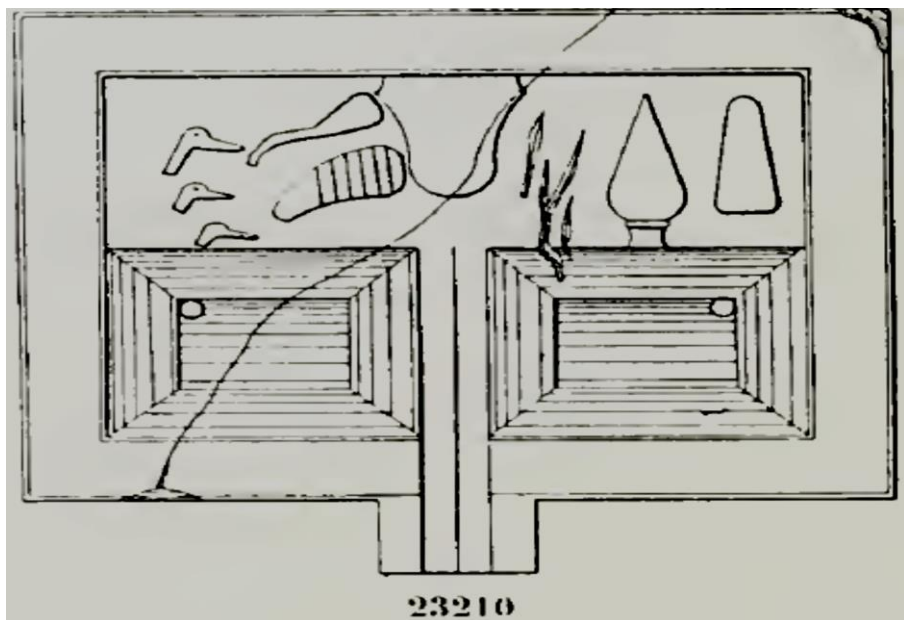


Figure 5: *rdi.n* Ptah offering-table from CGC (Kamal, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire:

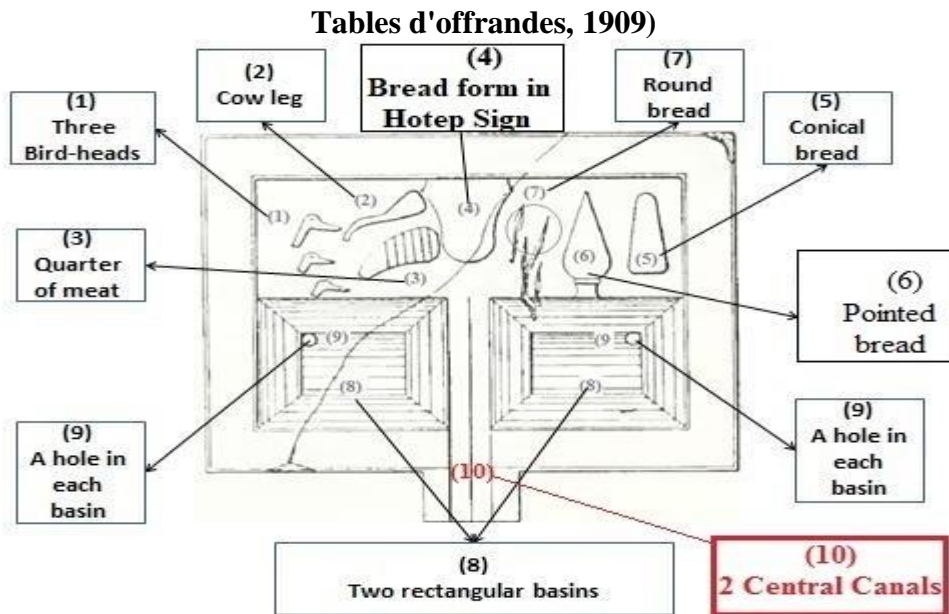


Figure 6: The description of the offers on the table (by Ahmad Kamal, modified and the numbers and labels added by the author)

4.2 THE FIGURES

In general, the iconography, form and material, of the offering-tables are functional and support the “*hk3*” 𓆎 process⁹. (Dieleman, 2019, p. 87) If drained with water, provisions represented by their imagery were believed

⁹ HkA 𓆎 the creative impulse which activated the vital power in everything, and its inseparable divine personification 𓆎 who was depicted in a male human form, sometimes with the signs that write his name on his head (Pinch, Magic In Ancient Egypt, 1994, p. 10) (Ritner, 2008, p. 15) (Lundius, 2020, p. 81). Both the concept heka and the deity Heka are attested from the Old Kingdom till the Coptic period, he represents the force of religion, magic and medicine intertwined. (Zinn, 2012, p. 4227) The Egyptian word usually translated as 'magic' is heka. This was one of the forces used by the creator deity to make the world. (Pinch, Magic In Ancient Egypt, 1994, p. 9), HkA is one of the four great gods who are in charge of protection (S3W) of Osiris (HEERMA VAN Voss, et al., 1978, p. 86). The god Heka is the eldest magician in the Amdwat despite Seth being mentioned in the sphinx Stella as the eldest magician. He is also connected with the notion of creative order “MAAT” (Te Velde, 1970, p. 177) Heka’s earliest name for the formulae found upon amulets is hekau, and it was essential for the deceased to be provided with these hekau a or “words of power”. But the custom of writing heka u , or words of power, u r heka instrument used in performing the ceremony of opening the mouth. (BUDGE, A, D, & LIT, 1901, pp. 27,60) Heka had no cult following, nor ritual worship, and no temples either until the Late Period of Ancient Egypt. (Mark, 2017)

to transmit their nutritional essence through the liquid. Likewise, symbols of natural fecundity, i.e. lotuses, reeds, phallic forms and wombs, that were demonstrated by imagery, could have their fertility transferred when water was flushed over them. In accordance with Hermopolitan cosmogony, the vegetation and watery features depictions would also refer to primordial waters of Nun and to the creative flux of the cosmos. The tables may, thus, not only be considered means to connect the ritual performer with the deceased, but may also be intended to nurture, support, guide and transition the inhabitant of the tomb into the other world. Hence, it connects the deceased to sacred landscapes and/or cosmos as well as providing agency and purpose to them (Lundius, 2020, pp. 90-91). All the above-mentioned is represented and applied in the upper surface of our object, especially the water system which is somehow unique due to its shallowness.

4.2.1 LEFT UPPER SIDE SCENE (Figure 7)

On the upper left side of the table is an illustration of the different sorts of food which might had been tangibly offered, as shown there are: three bird-heads, a cow thigh, and a quarter of meat (Figure 6: no 1, 2 and 3. Figure 7).




Figure 7: The figures on the left upper side of the table (By the author and the copyright for the courtesy of Egyptian Museum)

4.3 THE UPPER CENTER SCENE

In the upper center of the table there is the HOTE^P sign as seen above. (Figure 6 no 4)


4.4 THE UPPER RIGHT SCENE (Figure 9)

From the upper right side, there is a conical loaf of bread (bread is the offering *par excellence*). The importance given to bread speaks of a long traditional usage, which must have extended back to far beyond the I Dynasty. (Hassan, 1948, p. 2). Representation of bread, vegetables, fruits, libation vessels and parts of slaughtered animals may be considered remnants of the original function of the tables when provisions were placed directly on reed mats or plates to ensure the survival of the deceased's ka. Later on, real offerings were eventually replaced by reliefs, indicating beliefs in contagious magic. (Lundius, 2020, pp. 90-91)

Then there is a depiction of the *hkr* sign ¹⁰, as described by Ahmad Kamal (Kamal, 1909, p. 141). On the left of the *hkr* sign there is a round loaf of bread which is remarkably damaged as shown in (Figure 10).

COMMENT

As in most of the offering-tables, *rdi.n* Ptah's object consists of a stone slab with reliefs depicting food and beverages, and inscriptions with symbols and hieroglyphic texts. However, it is unusual to find a *hkr* sign as an offering among other depictions. Therefore, in order to decide whether it is a *hkr*, as described by Ahmad Kamal, several steps must be taken. Firstly, we need to determine if *hkr* was included in the revision of the offering list. Secondly, the offering-tables' catalogue in the Egyptian Museum, and all available research papers about the offering-tables must be scrutinized. This step is essential to detect if this sign had been ever depicted in any other offering-table, if it is just another similar sign that could be mistaken with the *hkr*, or even neither. Thirdly, the *hkr*'s origin,

¹⁰Kheker sign: *hkr*  (Lesko & Lesko, 2002, p. 389), (Faulkner, A concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 2017, p. 252) (Gardiner, Dictionary, p. 299), The upper decorative motive common in ancient Egyptian architecture from at least as early as the III Dynasty (2686 to 2613 BC). It became very popular in the Theban tombs of the New Empire. *Xkr* derives from early wall hangings. It is found as rows of knots in the fringe of a carpet or as bundles of reeds in decorative carved or painted friezes or cornices of the buildings (Kipfer, 2000, p. 277). (Kipfer, 2007, p. 164) (Borchardt, 1913, pp. 72-73 pl.67-68) (Shaw & Nicholson, 1995, p. 150) (Abd-elsttar, 2020, p. 71) (Jéquier, 1925-1927, pp. 148-150) (Arnold, Gardiner, Strudwick, & Strudwick, 2003, pp. 122-123) (Borchardt, 1913, pp. 42-43 pl.37-38)

usage, and symbolism has to be studied to deduce whether this is the right placement of the *hkr* sign or if it is another sign.

After a thorough review of the catalog of the offering-tables in the Egyptian Museum, it was found that there is no other table engraved with the *hkr* sign as an offering figure, nor was it found in the offering list either (Hassan , 1948).

The word *hkr* only means “to cover” or “to ornament” therefore, Ahmed Kamal characterizes the engraving as a decorative element and not to its very own being or meaning. The *hkr* frieze is always found at the top of tombs’ walls, as a frieze or molding. (Petrie, 1920, p. 101). The *hkr* seems to represent a series of reed or plant stems tied together at the top and knotted closely above the base. Also, it could be placed at the fringe or the tassel of a carpet or mat, with the roundel above the base being a knot (Mackay, 1920, p. 111).

Naglaa Shehab described the use of the *hkr* frieze as a vital and attractive component in architecture, “architectonised” furniture, and as a decorative function, without interpreting those antiquities as religious or funerary objects (Shehab, 2017, pp. 144-147). On the other hand, Jequier’ believes that the *hkr* is a derivation of the headdress of Osiris and the “Mouaou”¹¹, stylized and used for decorative purposes, yet retains its meaning as an emblem of the rebirth by immersion in the waters of the Noun. Just like the dances performed at the door of the tomb at the time of the funeral, and Osirian symbol ensures that the deceased is in the protection of the great god of the dead (Jéquier, 1925-1927, p. 152).

All things considered, it seems that the conjecture proposed by Ahmad Kamal, about this figure, is fallacious for the listed reasons:

- 1- This figure does not have any knots above its base, while the *Xkr* should be knotted (Figure 9).
- 2- The *hkr* is not a kind of offerings and has never been found on any offering-lists, nor offering-tables.

That being said, the question remains, what does this sign represent? Based on its shape, it could be one of the following: a) A vase. b) A sycamore tree. c) A loaf of bread.

By analysis, it cannot be a vase unless it was viewed upside down or reversed, thus this option is eliminated. Moreover, it cannot be a sycamore tree because when the tree was depicted, the deceased was always portrayed inside it (Kamal, 1909, pp. no: 23166-23172).


Bread was one of the essential foods for the Ancient Egyptian traditional diet. Their meals were based on bread and beer most of the time. The bread loaves found in tombs reveal that wheat was the primary ingredient,

¹¹ Mouaou, they are in general three or four dancers doing the funerary rituals. (Jéquier, 1925-1927)

especially in the bread provided for the deceased as offerings (ElSharnouby, 2019, p. 38).

Beginning from the First Dynasty, the offering-table's function was limited and exclusively used for carrying bread loaves. However, starting from the Fifth Dynasty onwards, offering-tables became holders of all kinds of food and offerings (ElSharnouby, 2019, p.34). Offering-tables were simple in their structure; they consisted of a vertical stand topped by a horizontal stand, where two to three loaves were placed. However, during the Old Kingdom, bread loaves were positioned vertically, increased in size (became bigger) and in quantity. This vertical bread depiction continued till the Middle Kingdom in which offering-tables provided various shapes of bread loaves such as vertical, circular, and conical forms. Lastly, the New Kingdom became even richer and more diverse in the bread selection (Nageh, 2008, p. 352), Some were designed in shapes like fish and human figures; others formed simpler shapes, such as disks and fans (Samuel, Bread, 2001, p. 198).

Ancient Egyptian Conical bread, like the one found in our object, was found in different areas. It was detected in a published selection of loaves from tombs of the eastern cemetery at Deir El-Medina. Moreover, conical-shaped bread was also found in the British Museum (Samuel, 1994, pp. 216-218).

Therefore, with confidence, it can be propounded that it is a pointed-shaped loaf of bread. After exhaustive juxtaposition of the offering-objects with all offering-lists found in catalogues in the Egyptian Museum, an indistinguishable sign was found on several other offering-tables and was inscribed as loaf of bread “*a conical loaf ending in a point*” ¹². (Kamal, 1909, pp. 11,12,1353,54,63.88 no 23013, 23017,23031,23060, 23078, 23104) (Kamal, 1906, pp. pls. 17,22,) (Figure 8), In addition, ancient Egyptian art is known to classify categories by similarities (Maspero, 1897, p. 2). This sign is placed right in the middle of two other kinds of bread loaves: a conical one on the right and a round one on the left. Thus, the pointed-shape relief symbolizes another form of bread and does not resemble the *hkr*.

¹² “*un pain conique terminé en pointe*”  (Kamal, 1909, p. 11)



Figure 8: table no 23031 with the same sign on the extreme left side (Kamal, 1906, p. pl.XIV)



Figure 9: the Upper right side of rednptah's table, and the sign circled. (By the author and the copyright for the courtesy of Egyptian Museum)

The top border, above the food representations, consists of two engraved adjacent semi-symmetric lines of hieroglyphs that run clockwise and address Osiris the lord of Abydos.¹³ The right-side border runs anticlockwise and addresses Ptah Sokar-Osiris¹⁴. The left-side border of

¹³The “htp di nsw” formula: two different translations of the opening phrase of the formula have been customary: 1) Using parallel clauses to introduce the king and god(s) for Old Kingdom texts. 2) Using a dative construction to introduce the god(s) for texts of Middle Kingdom date and later. The Old Kingdom formula ran: 'An offering that the king gives, (and) an offering that Anubis (gives)...', using a parallel construction to introduce the king and the god(s) as donors of the offerings. By the Middle Kingdom, the formula had been reinterpreted, with the god(s) introduced by a preposition, usually n but also hr,² usually unwritten: 'An offering that the king gives (to) Anubis/Osiris, that he [i.e. the god] may (in turn) give invocation-offerings to ...'. Thus, the offerings were given by the king to the god, who passed these on to the recipient (Leprohon, 1990, p. 163)

¹⁴Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, the god of resurrection, is a syncretism of three gods (Wilkinson, 2003, p. 34) this divine group has been interpreted as a symbol of the whole cycle of regeneration; with Ptah for creation, Sokar for death, and Osiris for resurrection (Sales, 2012, p. 123) (Pinch, *Egyptian mythology a guide to the gods goddesses and traditions of ancient Egypt*, 2002, p. 182). Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statues also known as papyrus sheath statuettes, are funerary objects well-attested from the Third Intermediate Period onwards. They have been found all over Egypt and most of the museums hold examples (Mahran, 2013, p. 21), The idea and role of these objects are strictly connected with public and private funeral rituals of Egypt (First, 2009, p. 119). Ptah-Sokar-Osiris is presented as a mummiform human being, the hands being sometimes shown, sometimes not, generally bears the atef crown on his head or the tripartite wig plus a feather crown. (Raven, 1978-

the table has an inscription of the offerings-prayer that adheres to the classic Egyptian style, which Egyptologists refer to as the “offering formula”.

The “offering formula” consists regularly of four parts:

- 1- The king's formula: *hṯp di nswt* (Turriziani, 2014, p. 66)
- 2- The closely associated god’s formula: one or more names of the divine beings.
- 3- The requests, usually introduced with: *di .f*, beginning from the XII Dynasty.
- 4- The name of the recipient who requested favors, introduced with: *n k3 n*, which means “for the spirit of”, ensued by the deceased’s title and name. (Franke, 2003, p. 39)

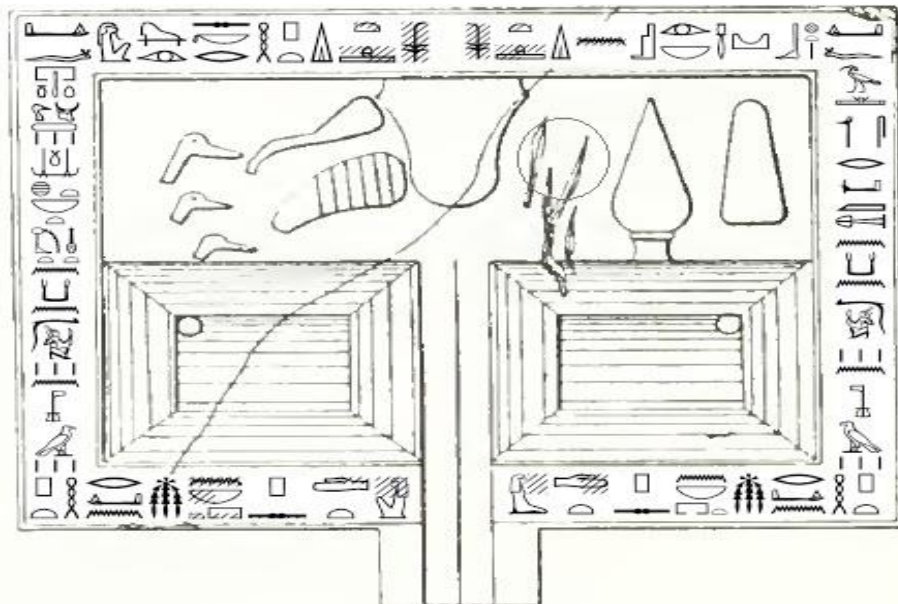


Figure 10: Hieroglyph Inscription on the table (by Ahmad Kamal, modified and the hieroglyphs inscriptions added by the author)

1979, pp. 251-252) (NUZZOLO, 2017, pp. 471-473) Ptah-Sokar-Osiris was sometimes shown presiding over the judgment of the dead in the Hall of the Two Truths. He remained important in funerary religion till the Roman period. (Pinch, *Egyptian mythology a guide to the gods goddesses and traditions of ancient Egypt*, 2002, p. 182) (Ibrahim, 2018, p. 268) (Hart, 2005, p. 6) (Nuzzolo, 2013, p. 193) (N u z z o l o, 2014, pp. 18,36)

5.1 THE RIGHT SIDE

5.1.1 THE UPPER HORIZONTAL INSCRIPTION

It is demolished in the two side-ends, fortunately the damage is in the beginning of the “offering formula” so it could be easily extrapolated.

(a) Hieroglyph:



(b) Transliteration:

htp di nsw¹⁵ n wsir nb 3bdw di.f

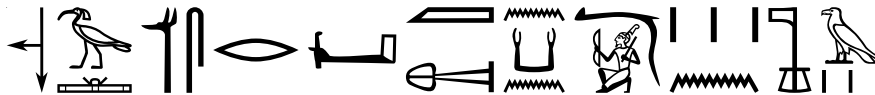
(c) Translation:

Offerings given by Osiris, lord

of Abydos,¹⁶ he gives

5.1.2 THE VERTICAL RIGHT INSCRIPTION

(a) Hieroglyph:



(b) Transliteration:

3h¹⁷ wsr¹⁸ m3^c-hrw¹⁹ n.k3.n²⁰ imy-r²¹-mš^{c22} n hrtyw-ntrw²³

¹⁵ The beginning of the inscription was severely damaged, but it is certainly the “offering formula”. (Franke, 2003, p. 39)

¹⁶ Osiris, the mummiform god “par excellence”. The deceased expresses their wish to imitate Osiris’ resurrection from death. (Raven, 1978-1979, p. 255)

¹⁷ Be a spirit, become a spirit, glorious, splendid, beneficial, useful, profitable, fame (Gardiner, Dictionary , p. 7).Glorious one (Lesko & Lesko, 2002, p. 7). Fame (Faulkner, A concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 2017, p. 5) (Faulkner, 1988, p. 4)

¹⁸ Wealthy, strength power (Gardiner, Dictionary , p. 93)

¹⁹ The justified, (The Offering Formula Phonetics, n.d.). Deceased, justified (Gardiner, Dictionary , p. 142). The justification, vindication, triumph, be triumphant (Faulkner, 2017, p. 127). True of voice, justified, triumphant, acquitted, deceased (Lesko & Lesko, 2002, p. 175)

²⁰ For the soul of, one of the offering formula, (The Offering Formula Phonetics, n.d.)

²¹ Overseer, usually. foll. by specification of office, ex: imy-r-mSa = general, “foreman” of gang (Faulkner, A concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 2017, p. 23)

²² General, generalissimo, (Lesko & Lesko, 2002, p. 28)

²³ *hrt-ntr*= stone mason (Faulkner, A concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, 2017, p. 251), necropolis, cemetery, realm of the dead(with different determinative) (Lesko & Lesko, 2002, p. 385), all precedent (Gardiner, Dictionary , p. 298), *hr* = (Gardiner, 2007, p. 515) to be distinguished from *nst w11*, and *nSt w12* (Gardiner, 2007, p. 529)

(c) Translation:

A voice offering²⁶, cows, geese, breads, alabaster, linen, everything good, pure to the soul of the foreman of the stonemasons.

5.2.3 THE LOWER LEFT HORIZONTAL INSCRIPTIONS

(a) Hieroglyph:



(b) Transliteration:

rdi.n pth ms nbt-pr psdt

(c) Translation:

rdi.n Ptah son of the lady of the house Pesdet

5.2.4 THE ENTIRE TRANSLATION OF THE LEFT SIDE

Offerings given by Ptah Sokar Osiris, he gives a voice offering, cows, geese, breads, alabaster, linen, and everything good and pure, to the soul of the foreman of the stonemasons “*rdi.n* Ptah” son of the lady of the house “Pesdet”.

COMMENT

This offering-table’s inscription on the two sides of the border could be described as almost identical parallel hieroglyphs lines with very slight incongruities. One of the main differences, between the left and right sides, is the dedicated gods mentioned on each side. The right-side text the offering is dedicated to Osiris the Lord of Abydos, while the left offering is dedicated to Ptah Sokar Osiris.

Moreover, Ancient Egyptians believed in both tangible and intangible cosmic elements which are demonstrated by the Heliopolitan and Hermopolitan cosmogonies (Lundius, 2020, p. 83 f.n). Another difference between the two sides would be the kinds of requests. The offering-formula on the right side included intangible requests, like glory, power and triumph. The opposite was requested on the left side as the deceased appealed for the tangible and material requests like cows, geese, breads, alabaster, linen, and everything good and pure.


²⁶ (The Offering Formula Phonetics, n.d.)

'j [htp di nsw Wsir hnty\] imnt.t, ntr ir, nb ibdw, dif pr.t-hrw ki(.w) Šd Š ipd(.w), irp, irt.t, snp-{\.n it-ntr hm "Imn

so that he may give invocation offering(s) (consisting of) oxen, fowls, wine, milk, incense, unguent, clothing, and everything which comes on their altars... |... |...for the ka of the divine father and prophet of Amen¹⁶ in the temple ofKarnak¹⁷, Nesmin, son of the like titled* Ankhpakhered. (Rindi, 2012, pp. 73-74)

The offering-formula of the object complied with the traditional structure and configuration of the orthodox offering-formulas. It began with the “*htp-di-nsw*”, and then it mentioned the divinity, followed by the tangible or intangible requests, and it finally stated the name and the title of the deceased.

Generally, ancient Egyptians quantify tangible requests in large numbers

of  “*h3*” meaning a thousand (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, n.d.). However, bizarrely, the offering-formula of this object did not limit the tangible requests to a certain quantity, but instead concluded the demand by asking for **all** the good and pure things which is endless in quantity.

CONCLUSION

This is a typical traditional Type “B” moderate offering-table, which overall adheres to the era’s common characteristics of offering-tables. However, it has some unique elements that distinguishes it among other. The table was modest in materials and form. Like many of its era, it has an asymmetric offering objects depicted in reliefs, and two symmetric offering traditional formula hieroglyphs inscribed in hollow. *rdi.n* Ptah’s offering-table is singled out by its full water system which has uncompleted canals and unpenetrated holes that could be either left on purpose, or because for a sudden death which did not allow to the artisan to finish his work. Moreover, this offering-table is distinct from others with these two holes in its basins, and with its uncompleted canal systems.

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