

EGYPT AND BEYOND



ESSAYS PRESENTED TO  
LEONARD H. LESKO





Leonard H. Lesko, in his office at Brown University

# Egypt and Beyond

Essays Presented to Leonard H. Lesko  
upon his Retirement from the  
Wilbour Chair of Egyptology  
at Brown University  
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# An Act of Piety from the Western Cemetery at Giza

Tohfa Handoussa

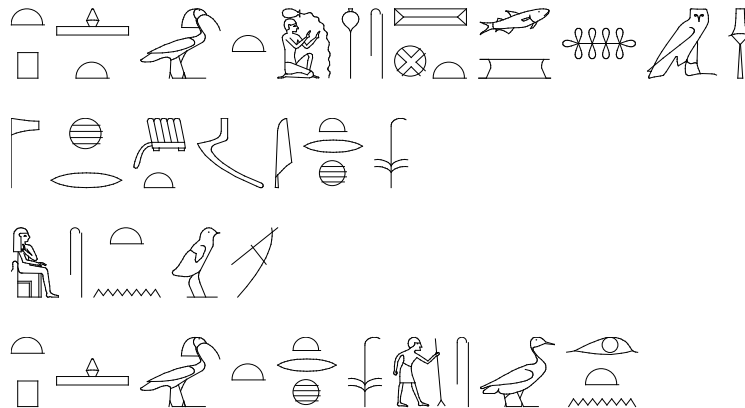
THIS PAPER DEALS WITH AN OFFERING SLAB found during the Abu Bakr Excavations at Giza, stored in the magazine of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, with excavation number 433.<sup>1</sup> Finely cut from white limestone, it was very well preserved when found.<sup>2</sup>

The offering slab is rectangular in shape, measuring 50 x 31 x 9.5 cm. A raised border 2.5 cm wide frames the slab on all four sides, while a vertical column 2 cm wide divides the slab into two nearly equal parts. Inside the frame they measure: right side 21.8 x 11.8 cm, left side 21.1 x 11.7 cm. In turn, each of these parts is divided horizontally into an upper and lower section. The two upper sections contain a hieroglyphic inscription in sunk relief, while the two lower sections each contain two libation basins (making a total of four), sunk in the limestone slab and narrowing from top to bottom. The basins measure, from right to left:

- Basin (a) 14 x 20 cm.
- Basin (b) 13.5 x 11 cm.
- Basin (c) 13.5 x 9 cm.
- Basin (d) 13 x 11 cm.

## THE INSCRIPTIONS

The arrangement of the signs is not always correct; this should be modified so that the right section of the text would read as follows:



The left section:



- 1 In the magazine register it is described as an 'offering table' of white limestone, very beautifully carved. In the upper half is a hieroglyphic funerary inscription mentioning several names. In the lower half are four offering basins. No excavation diary was found, and the register does not mention the exact position where it was discovered: 'It was found during the excavations of the Western Cemetery of Guizeh in 1955, in the west side of the cemetery.'
- 2 Since it was stored in the magazine in 1955, it has suffered a little damage. The two upper corners, right and left, are slightly abraded. The lower left corner is broken, and there are several fissures running through the basins.

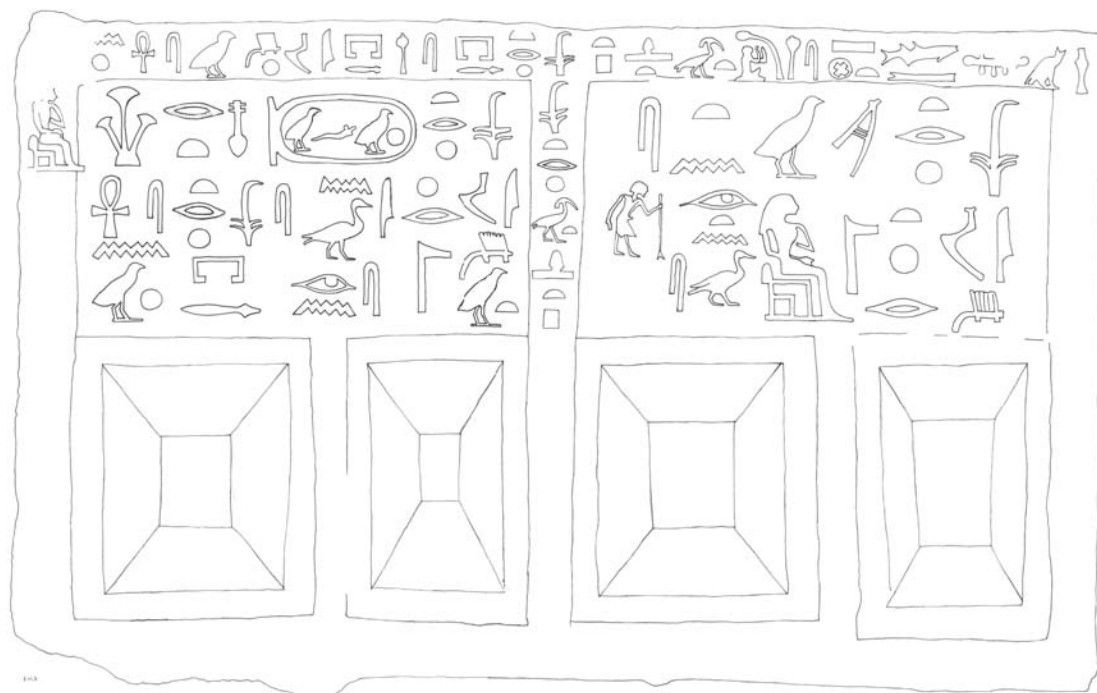


Fig. 1. Old Kingdom offering slab. Cairo University, Faculty of Archaeology, excavation number 433.



Epigraphic Notes:

- 1) The  $\uparrow$  *hwp* sign has been written outside the horizontal upper border of the frame, i.e. in the right vertical border of the frame. Was it added? Also, part of the  $\uparrow$  *m* sign is outside the horizontal upper boarder of the frame. The  $\triangle$  under the  $\uparrow$  *htp* is superfluous.
- 2) The text of the upper right section has been written in vertical columns and horizontal lines. Maybe this was the reason that the determinative  $\uparrow$  for the name of the lady *mrwt.n.s* was not in its natural place after the proper name, as the space was not sufficient.
- 3) The sign for *smsw* is separated from *ss.s*, which it describes.
- 4) The vertical column that divides the slab into two was used to write the name and title of the donor.
- 5) The  $\uparrow$  *nswt* sign, which should have been written in the horizontal upper left border of the frame, was switched to the middle of the slab, at the top of the vertical column.
- 6) The  $\uparrow$  *w* of the proper name in the left upper corner has weathered away.



- 7) The text of the upper left section has also been written in vertical columns and horizontal lines.
- 8) The sign  $\left| \begin{array}{c} \text{ } \\ \text{ } \\ \text{ } \end{array} \right|$  s of *ss.s* is written below the word to which it refers.
- 9) The sign  $\left| \begin{array}{c} \text{ } \\ \text{ } \\ \text{ } \end{array} \right|$  s which is written after *in ss* belongs to the relative *ir.n.s*.
- 10) The determinative of the proper name of *nfri-h3-hwfw* is written on the vertical left border of the frame.
- 11) It is to be noticed that the determinative following the feminine proper names (in n. 2 and n. 10) is bigger in size than the other signs, and it is usually used for people of rank or for nobles, see Gardiner, A., *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd edition, (London, 1973), sign-list A50. A sign in D. Dunham and W. K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III*, Giza Mastabas, Volume I, (Boston, 1974), pl. IIa, b (on the architrave over the entrance) is exactly the same as the determinative on the slab. It is understandable as a determinative for the *st nsw nt ht.f hmt nsw mrsy-nh*. Was the determinative enlarged on purpose, for emphasis? Cf. H. Fischer and R. Caminos, *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Palaeography* (New York, 1976), pp. 35–36; could they take the place of a representation? For name-determinatives of nobility in the feminine derived from masculine in the Old Kingdom, see H. Fischer, “Redundant Determinatives in the Old Kingdom,” in *MMJ8* (1973), pp. 81–88 and Dunham and Simpson, Mersyankh, pl. VIa; fig. 6, *isw* changed into feminine and fig. 14, the determinative of noble (masculine) used for feminine. I would like to thank Nathalie Beaux for bringing to my attention the determinative of *isw* in the feminine.

## INSCRIPTIONS:

## 1—Right half of the slab:

- a) Frame: horizontal line of sunk relief written from right to left:

*hrp imyw-3 ʕd-mr grgt shd wʕbw ʕhty-htpw*

The director of those who are in the phyle,<sup>3</sup> the boundry of the settlement,<sup>4</sup> the inspector of priests<sup>5</sup> Akhet-hotep.<sup>6</sup>

- b) Right upper section of the slab: sunk relief from right to left:

*rh-t-nsw imsh-t hr ntr mrwt.n.s irt.n 3 smsw*

3 For the reading of *hrp imyw-3* cf. H.G. Fischer, *Egyptian Studies I: Varia*, (New York, 1976), p. 14; also Junker, *Giza VI*, p. 20; for the role of *hrp imyw-3* see: Z. Hawass, *The Funerary Establishments of Khufu, Khafra, and Menkaure during the Old Kingdom* (Ann Arbor, Mich, 1990), p. 604; for more bibliography see D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom* (Oxford, 2000), vol. II, p. 697 (2546); for a parallel of *hrp imyw-3 ʕd-mr grgt (mht)* see the tomb of *k3i-tp* in Fischer, *Varia I*, fig. 9.

4 For the reading of  $\frac{\text{𓆎}}{\text{𓆏}}$  *grgt* see *Wb. V*, 188; for a bibliography see Jones, *Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, vol. I, p. 352 (1342); *ʕd-mr grgt* not mentioning the name of the settlement or to whom it belongs (as in the case of our offering slab) cf. H. Jacquet-Gordon, *Les noms des domaines funéraires sous l'ancien Empire Egyptien*, *BdE 34* (1962): 58; also tomb of *Nfri* (4<sup>th</sup> dynasty), A. Abu-Bakr, *Excavations at Giza, 1949–1950*, (Cairo, 1953), fig. 38 and p. 52 and 57 n. 4; for dating, N. Cherpion, *Mastabas et Hypogées d'Ancien Empire, le problème de la datation*, *Connaissance de l'Égypte Ancienne* (Brussels, 1989), pp. 97–98. Also, W. Helck, “Bermerkungen zu den Pyramidenstädten im alten Reich,” *MDAIK 15* (1957), pp. 92–93. For both titles borne together see: P. Posener-Kriéger, *Les archives du temple funéraire de Néferirkarê-Kakāi (Les papyrus d'Abousir): traduction et commentaire* (Cairo, 1976), II, pp. 574–75 in which she concludes that this may indicate that the bearers of both titles were of a certain importance; see also Z. Hawass, *Funerary Establishments*, pp. 339 and 619–20.

5 *Shd wʕbw*, inspector of priests, cf. Jones, *Index II*, p. 918 (3376).

6 *ʕhty-htpw* Ranke, *PNI*, p. 257,26.

The king's acquaintance,<sup>7</sup> revered with the god, Merutenes,<sup>8</sup> which her eldest son made<sup>9</sup> (for her).

c) Vertical column (dividing the slab)

*rh nsw 3hty-htpw*

The king's acquaintance Akhet-hotep.

2—Left half of slab:

1. Frame: horizontal line of sunk relief, from right to left:

*rh nsw pr-ꜥ3 shꜥ pr-ꜥ3 imshw sꜥnhw*

The king's acquaintance of the palace, the inspector of the palace,<sup>10</sup> the revered Sankhu.<sup>11</sup>

2. Left upper section of the slab, sunk relief, from right to left:

*rhꜥt nsw imshwt hr ntr Nfrt-hꜥ-hwfw*

The king's acquaintance, revered with the god,<sup>12</sup> Nefert-ha-Khufu.<sup>13</sup>


*in sꜥs*

It is her son

*ir n.s rh nsw pr-ꜥ3 sꜥnhw*


Who did this for her,<sup>14</sup> the king's acquaintance of the palace Sankhu.<sup>15</sup>

COMMENTARY:

In the Old Kingdom, almost every tomb was provided with an offering slab placed immediately in front of the false door stele. Offering slabs differed in design: they could take the shape of a  *htp* hieroglyph or they could be round, but more frequently they were rectangular. The *htp* sign could be carved in relief upon the surface of the slab together with the offerings, depicted in detail. Usually the offering formula and the name and titles of the owner or owners were inscribed around the slab on empty surfaces. Sometimes shallow basins collected the poured liquid that could be drained through channels leading to a spout.<sup>16</sup> Slabs with basins are frequent: they vary from one large basin filling the whole slab to a slab with as many as six basins.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes each basin is labeled with its contents. A slab with four basins contained in

7 *rhꜥt-nswt*, cf. *Wb.* II, 447,4. This feminine "title is rarely attested in the Memphite cemeteries or in the provinces after the Old Kingdom, although a few examples may be cited." Cf. H. Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* III, *Varia Nova*, (New York, 1996), p. 26. *rhꜥt-nswt* "royal/king's acquaintance, one known to the king, one who is concerned with the things of the king, custodian of the king's property;" cf. Jones, *Index* I, pp. 327–28 (1206) and *rh-nswt pr-ꜥ3* cf. H. Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* I: *Varia* (New York, 1976), p. 8 and n.15.

8 *mrw.t(j?)-n.s.*, ("The one whom she loves") Ranke, *PN* II, p. 291,24. For a parallel, Junker, *Giza* V, fig. 38 (tomb of *Mni*)

9 *irt.n sꜥs smsw* for the reading of  *smsw* cf. Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* I, pp. 88–89 and *Egyptian Studies* III, p. 47.

10 *shꜥ pr-ꜥ3* "inspector of the palace," cf. M.A. Murray, *Index of Names and Titles of the Old Kingdom* (London, 1908), pls. XLI, XLII

11 *sꜥnh(w).n-pth?* Ranke, *PN* II, p. 28; *sꜥnh(w).n-f* Ranke, *PN* II, p. 29. I thank D. Mourad Allam for bringing to my attention *sꜥnhw(i)* "the one who causes me to survive."

12 *imsh(w)t hr ntr* see D. Jones, *Index* I, p. 30 (142).

13 Ranke, *PN* I, p. 197; same name from Giza, 4th dynasty in tomb of *Ni-htp-hmmw*, See A. Abu-Bakr, *Excavations at Giza, 1949–1950* (Cairo, 1953), p. 22 and pl. XIII B. For the dating, Cherpion, *Mastabas*, pp. 98–99. Compare with the name *nfrt-hꜥ-nsw* in Abu-Bakr, *Giza*, p. 51 fig. 37 (tomb of *Nfri*); 4th dynasty Cherpion, *Mastabas*, p. 97.

14 For parallels of this grammatical construction and formulae of filial piety during the 4th, 5th, and 6th Dynasties see: R. El Sayed, "Formules de piété filiale," in *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, vol. I (Cairo, 1985), pp. 271–75. Notice that in our case *nw*, "this," is omitted.

15 See n. 11 above.

16 For offering tables or slabs see M. Mostafa, *Untersuchungen zu Opfertafeln im alten Reich*, Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge 17 (Hildesheim, 1982), pp. 81–123.

17 Cf. Mostafa, *Untersuchungen*, Tafel XXIII, figs. 1–2; Tafel XXIV, figs. 1–2; Tafel XXIX, fig. 1.

each water, wine, *dsrt* beer, and milk.<sup>18</sup> Another with four basins was divided into two different kinds, each on either side of the slab. Each pair was labeled for beer and water.<sup>19</sup>

The offering slab with which we are concerned is of a type omitting the offering formula. Its four basins are not labeled.

The inscriptions on the right and left of the slab, and above the basins, show it was offered by two different sons, each to his own mother respectively. The formulae ending the inscriptions, as we understand them, are tokens of filial piety. Both formulae are well known in the Old Kingdom, especially from the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty and after.<sup>20</sup>

The first son is Akhet-hotep. Could he be the owner of the tomb excavated by Abu Bakr in the Western Cemetery a few meters away from the place where the slab was found?<sup>21</sup> The tomb owner held nearly the same titles as the owner of the slab: both were *rh-nswt*; *hrp-imyw-r3*, and *shd w'bw*. The most interesting thing is that the tomb owner mentions his title *hrp imyw-r3* only once and only on the recess, representing the false door opening<sup>22</sup> as if it was added later after the tomb was ready. We also noticed on the slab that *hrp* and part of *imyw* seem to have been added later.

As for dating the slab, I believe it is from the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty for the following reasons:

1. The mention of *grgt* written alone without the name of the settlement.
2. The name *Nfrt-h3-hwfw* which is attested in Giza in tombs of the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty, and Akhet-Khufu, which is also, in Giza, a 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty name.
3. The use of the determinative for 'noble,' usually used for a man, here used for a woman.<sup>23</sup>

18 Cairo Museum JE 89370 and Mostafa, *Untersuchungen*, p. 103, Tafel XX.

19 Cairo Museum JE 51953 and Junker, *Giza V*, pl. XIIb, c. Cf. Mostafa, *Untersuchungen*, Tafel XXIX, fig. 1.

20 R. El Sayed, "Formules de Piété de filiales," in *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, BdE 97, v.1 (Cairo, 1985), p. 288.

21 Abu-Bakr, *Giza*.

22 Ibid., fig. 6.

23 Cf. H. Fischer, "Redundant Determinatives in the Old Kingdom," in *Ancient Egypt in the Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vols. 1-11 (1968-76) (New York, 1977), p. 73ff.