

JOURNAL
of the
American Research Center In Egypt



VOLUME XXXVIII

2001

Published by
THE AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT


CONTENTS

HENRY GEORGE FISCHER	A Unique Composite Hieroglyph.	1
WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON	Studies in the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty III: Year 25 of the Era of the Oryx Nome and the Famine Years in Early Dynasty 12.	7
WILLIAM KELLY SIMPSON	Studies in the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty IV: The Early Twelfth Dynasty False-Door/Stela of Khety-ankh/Heni from Matariya/Ain Shams (Heliopolis)	9
NICHOLAS J. CONARD and MARK LEHNER	The 1988/1989 Excavation of Petrie's "Workmen's Barracks" at Giza.	21
ANGELIKA LOHWASSER	Queenship in Kush: Status, Role and Ideology of Royal Women	61
JOHN A. SEEGER	A Preliminary Report on the 1999 Field Season at Marsa Nakari.	77
DONALD B. SPANEL	Two Groups of "Coptic" Sculpture and Relief in the Brooklyn Museum of Art	89
YOKA KAUP, JOHN H. TAYLOR, URSULA BAUMER, JOHANN KOLLER, and ULRICH WESER	The Survival of Enzymes in Embalmed Bones from Pharaonic Egypt	115
NIGEL STRUDWICK	A Fragment of a Scene of Foreigners from the Theban Necropolis.	133
* * *		
BOOK REVIEWS		141
Svenja A. Gülden and Irmtraut Munro with the collaboration of Christina Regner and Oliver Süttsch, <i>Bibliographie zum Altägyptische Totenbuch</i> (T. G. Wilfong)		141
Sigrid Hodel-Hoernes, <i>Life and Death in Ancient Egypt. Scenes from Private Tombs In New Kingdom Thebes</i> (Nigel Strudwick).		142
Erik Hornung, <i>Akhenaten and the Religion of Light</i> (Gary A. Rendsburg)		144





Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, eds., <i>Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations</i> (Gary A. Rendsburg)	145
Thelma K. Thomas, <i>Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture. Images for This World and the Next</i> (Robert Steven Bianchi)	147
William D. E. Coulson et al., <i>Ancient Naukratis II. The Survey at Naukratis and Environs. Part I: The Survey of Naukratis</i> (Marjorie Susan Venit)	148
Derek A. Welsby, ed., <i>Recent Research in Kushite History and Archeology: Proceedings of the 8th International Conference for Meroitic Studies</i> (Stanley M. Burstein)	149
Nelly Hanna, <i>Making Big Money in 1600: The Life and Times of Ismaʿil Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant</i> (Amalia Levanoni)	150
Jane Hathaway, <i>The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaghlis</i> (Amalia Levanoni)	152
* * *	
BOOKS RECEIVED	155

A Unique Composite Hieroglyph

HENRY GEORGE FISCHER

I have long been intrigued by the playful ingenuity the ancient Egyptian scribes displayed, throughout their long history, in devising hieroglyphic composites. As a rule such inventions combine an ideogram and a phonetic sign, as in Old Kingdom , in which a man embodies the word for “carry” by carrying the first sign of the verb *ḥꜣi*.¹ In the Archaic Period hieroglyphs might also be combined in the writing of names consisting of a pair of elements: e.g., *Ḏsr-kꜣ(.i)* (fig. 1a),² and much later, from the New Kingdom onward, two or more signs were grouped in the hands and on the head of a human figure.³ This type of composite, although not yet attested for Old Kingdom names, was applied in that period to at least two occupational designations: *ḥm/ḥmt* “servant” and *ḥtst*, “weaver” (fig. 1b, c).⁴ In the case under discussion, which does in fact concern the naming of a person, a human figure is again involved, but here the elements of the composition are wholly ideographic, and the ideogram is accompanied by a pair of phonetic signs (fig. 2). Thus this composite is evidently unique in both form and function, and one that has thus far resisted explanation.⁵


The group of signs in question appears on the lintel and drum of a woman, now in the Field



Museum at Chicago (fig. 3),⁶ which have proven to come from Giza tomb 3033. The provenance may be seen from another lintel and drum (in one piece), which surmounted the southernmost niche of that mastaba, and which are now in the University Museum, Philadelphia (fig. 4).⁷ Every detail of the offering formula is similar in both cases, including the rather unusual omission of *ḥtp di nswt* before the invocation of Anubis,⁸ and more particularly the form of , with four or five pellets beneath it instead of three, all of them oddly adhering to the strip of land above them.⁹ Also the exceptional configuration of the signs in , in which  is more usually mounted upon .¹⁰ The same individuals are represented in an offering scene, now in the Cairo Museum, that has been assembled from a great many fragments;¹¹ but these fragments

⁶ Field Museum, Chicago, 31301, 31296. The length of the lintel is 57 cm. By permission of the Field Museum's Department of Anthropology and, for the photograph, the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

⁷ University Museum E 13533, length 55 cm.: Clarence Fisher, *Minor Cemetery at Giza*, pp. 115, 147–48, pls. 18, 51 (2); the adjacent niche contained another lintel and drum of smaller scale, E 13534–5, length 29 cm. I am indebted to Peter Manuelian for the reproduction of Fisher's plate 51.

⁸ See Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* I, p. 24, n. 1, to which may be added Simpson *Mastabas of Kawab, Khafkhufu I, II*, figs. 24–25 (but not 31–32); Dunham and Simpson, *Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh*, fig. 6 (but not figs. 3, 7, 10); Leclant, *Orientalia* 22 (1953), 94, pl. 17(2); Ahmed Moussa, *MDIAK* 28 (1972), 289. Most of the evidence is early (i.e., Dyn. IV).

⁹ Four pellets are attested in at least two other cases, but the pellets are separated from : Hassan, *Giza* I, fig. 144; IV, fig. 108. The pellets are frequently omitted in inscriptions of Dyns. IV–V.

¹⁰ For variants of this combination of signs see *MMJ* 12 (1977), p. 9, fig. 3 and n. 38, esp. g (from James, *Hieroglyphic Texts* I², pl. 3), a Dyn. IV example with  above , as also another of the same period: CG 1790 (Grébaut, *Le Musée Egyptien* I, pl. 21).

¹¹ Cairo J.E. 60544; see Málek, *PM* III², p. 97.

¹ *MMJ* 12 (1977), 9, n. 42 and fig. 4a.

² *Ibid.* 6–7, n. 14 and fig. 1c.

³ *MMJ* 5 (1972), 21. This practice is prefigured, in Dyn. III, by a representation of *Hzy-R^c*, holding objects that allude to his name, *ibid.*, 18; *GM* 49 (1981), 28–31.

⁴ (b) *MDIAK* 16 (1958), 131, 136; *MMJ* 12 (1977), p. 9, fig. 4c. (c) *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson* I, 273–74.

⁵ Ranke, *PN* I, 427 (4), reads *ht* with a query. Peter Kaplony, *Inschriften der Aegyptischen Frühzeit* I, p. 605, referring to his fig. 879, reads *Hnmt*. In the new edition of my *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom and the Heracleopolitan Period*², p. 74 and n. 205, I prefer to read *Hnwt*. While this last suggestion is equally incorrect, it has finally led me to the solution proposed here.

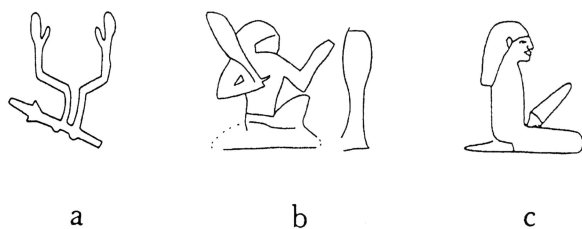


Fig. 1. (a) composite name; (b-c) occupational composites.

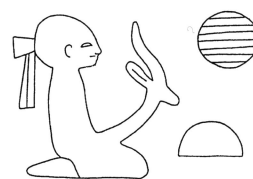


Fig. 2. Ideographic composite.



Fig. 3. Lintel and drum in Field Museum, Chicago.



Fig. 4. Lintel and drum of S3b.f, University Museum, Philadelphia.

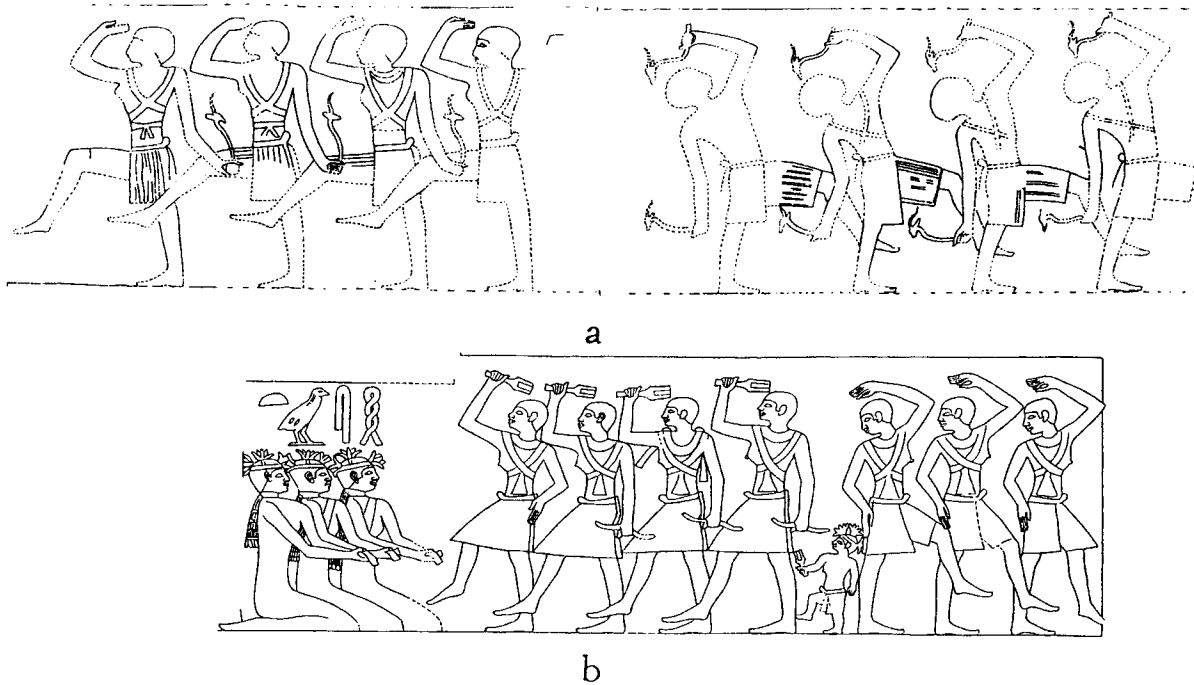


Fig. 5.(a) Dancers at Deshasha. After Petrie. (b) Dancers at Giza. After Junker.

are more clearly and completely to be seen in a field photograph from Reisner's excavations. They include pieces of a larger architrave, about 80 cm. long, as well as a small portion of yet another architrave, both of which again name the woman.¹² Although her name is damaged in all three cases where it appears on the fragments, it is clear that the writing is always identical to that of the more intact lintel and drum.

The dominant feature of the ideogram that terminates the name is a gazelle-headed clapper (or, more probably, a pair of clappers) like those brandished by dancers in a scene at Deshasha (fig. 5).¹³ Although this scene provides the only other Old Kingdom evidence for it, the gazelle-headed form must have been favored throughout pharaonic history, for an actual pair of such

clappers, made of ivory, were found in a First Dynasty burial at Gaza (fig. 6),¹⁴ and they reappear in the hands of dancers and singers on blocks from the Twenty-second Dynasty temple at Bubastis (fig. 7).¹⁵ In a second Old Kingdom tomb chapel, at Giza, a row of female dancers shake the sistrum, another percussion instrument that served to emphasize the rhythm of the dance, and they hold clappers as well (fig. 5b).¹⁶

The unmistakable presence of a clapper indicates that the name might be read *Hnwt* "percussionist." A determinative representing a percussionist occasionally appears in writings of that name, although the clappers are simplified

¹² The Cairo Museum's *Journal d'Entrée* has led me to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where Peter Der Manuelian kindly tracked down the field Photograph (A 7080). I have subsequently learned that it will eventually be published by Edward Brovarski.

¹³ Petrie, *Deshasheh*, pl. 12.

¹⁴ Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, pl. 5 (6-7); cf. the ram-headed clapper in his *Tombs of the Courtiers*, pl. 8 (21). There are also some less distinctive animal-headed clappers of the same period: Klasens, *OMRO* 39 (1958), 47ff., figs. 18, 21, and pls. 23 (3), 26 (1); Zaki Saad, *ASAE* 41 (1941), 407, and pl. 38 (from Helwan); Cairo J.E. 53110, 53111 (from Tura).

¹⁵ Naville, *Festival Hall of Osorkon II*, pls. 14 (dancers) and 25 (singers).

¹⁶ Junker, *Giza X*, figs. 44, 46. The sistrum also appears in Davies, *Sheikh Said*, pl. 4.

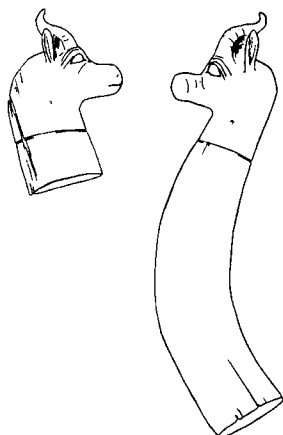


Fig. 6. Ivory clappers. After Petrie.

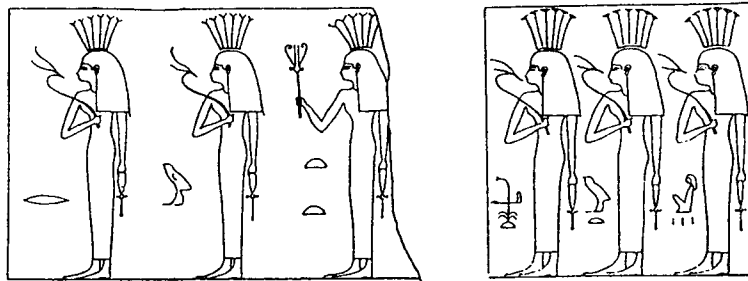
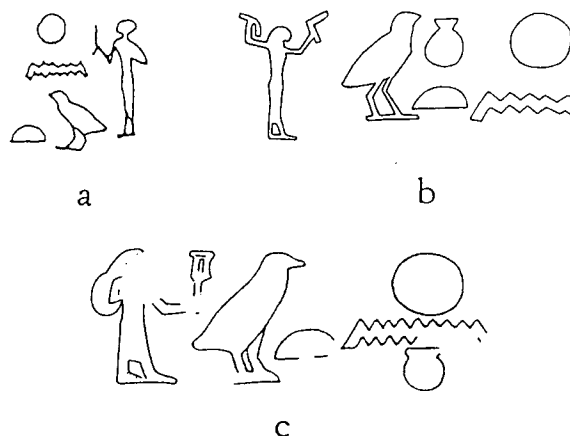


Fig. 7. Dancers and singers at Bubastis. After Naville.

as indeterminate shapes (fig. 8,a–b),¹⁷ and are sometimes replaced by a sistrum. The same is true of examples of *hnw/ḥnwt* as a title (fig. 8c).¹⁸ In all such cases, however, the figure is standing rather than seated, and none of the numerous representations of singers and dancers show the woman's hair tied back, with the ends of the binding falling behind the neck.

The last feature (in fig. 2 partly restored from the unpublished fragments) is peculiar to the seated figure that almost invariably appears in the name *Ḥnmt* (fig. 9).¹⁹ It represents a female

Fig. 8. *Ḥnwt* in names and title; (c) after Blackman.

¹⁷ (a) Bologna B 1901, from Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* I, p. 5, fig. 4; (b) MFA 27.1117, from a photograph again supplied by Peter Manuelian; Leprohon, *CAA Boston*, 2.145, is probably right in regarding this as a name, which is repeated without the determinative above the figure seated below it, but the two occurrences may possibly be a title + name, as in the case of Cairo CG 28017, a coffin of somewhat later date: Ranke's entry for this, *PN* II, 310 (16), is to be corrected. See Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 11, for other examples of the name and title with the determinative showing clappers and sistrums, as well, sometimes, as a bag for such implements, as in fig. 8a above.

¹⁸ From Blackman, *Meir* IV, pl. 7.

¹⁹ Drawn from a photograph in the exhibition catalogue of Madeleine Page-Gasser and A. B. Wiese, *Ägypten, Augenblick der Ewigkeit: unbekannte Schätze aus Schweizer Privatbesitz* (Mainz, 1997), p. 55 (28). For other examples of the name see Fischer, *Egyptian Women of the Old Kingdom*², p. 70, n. 170. In one case (*ibid.*, fig. 24) the determinative of *in*^c "mid-wife" also shows the hair bound at the back, but without pendant streamers.

baker holding a pair of crossed sticks that were used to remove bread moulds from the fire.²⁰ Incongruous as it may seem, the replacement of the crossed sticks by a pair of clappers is nonetheless felicitous, for the verb *m3ḥ* "clap" shows \times as an alternative to \rightarrow ,²¹ a pair of hands clap-

²⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 29–30, where further evidence is given for the connection with *ḥnmt*-bread, supplementing Junker's remarks in *Giza* XII, pp. 118–22. Possibly the name is to be interpreted as *Ḥnm(ty)t* "She who belongs to *ḥnmt*-bread (for offerings)."

²¹ For the first determinative see Hickmann, *BIE* 36 (1953–54), 587, fig. 2. For the second see Duell, *Mereruka*,

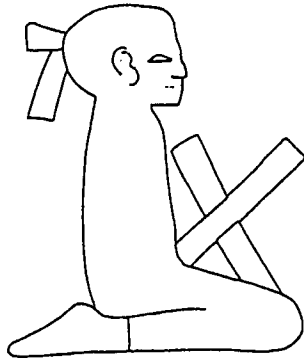



Fig. 9. Ideograph in name *Hnmt*.

ping.²² In the sole example of *m3ht* as a title, the sign  is replaced by a much more detailed determinative showing a crossed pair of curved clappers (fig. 10).²³

Thus the composite hieroglyph shown in fig. 2 combines elements that are appropriate to both *Hnmt* and *Hnwt*. And this combination explains the oddly abbreviated phonetic component, which admits either reading, and is otherwise difficult to account for. It cannot be regarded as a haphazard variant, since it occurs consistently and repeatedly in the writing of the woman's name, five times in all, and is unknown elsewhere.²⁴ Thus one is forced to conclude that the woman in fact had both names, and that the

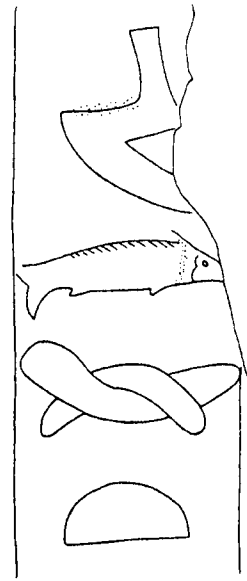


Fig. 10. Title *m3ht*.


intention was to express both simultaneously. It is not uncommon to find two names assigned to the same person in the Old Kingdom,²⁵ and two other women named *Hnwt* are in fact known to have another name as well—*Nfr-M3t* in one case,²⁶ *Inti* in the other.²⁷

In view of the many playful devices employed by the scribes of the Old Kingdom,²⁸ the possibilities offered by the present conjunction of names evidently presented an opportunity for scribal ingenuity that was irresistible. And one not likely to be encountered again, for ideographic determinatives are not particularly common in the writing of personal names, and it is difficult to imagine another case where two such names both begin and end with the same consonants, and where the ideograms lend themselves

pl. 113–14, and Simpson, *Mastabas of Qar and Idu*, fig. 38. The scenes of daily life in tomb chapels also show men beating crossed sticks while driving a herd of donkeys treading grain: Anne Macy Roth, *Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, pl. 183; Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000*, fig. 9 (where the scene is unfinished, perhaps because there was too little room for the donkeys). In another case only two of the men strike sticks: Simpson, *Offering Chapel of Kayemnofret*, fig. F. And in Simpson, *Mastabas of Qar and Idu*, fig. 24, two embalmers similarly strike a pair of sticks to mark the pace of a funeral procession.

²² Fischer, *Egyptian Studies* III, pp. 183–85.

²³ From Fischer, *Dendera*, p. 24, fig. 5.

²⁴ Ranke, *PN I*, 427 (16), has *Hti*, but this is undoubtedly an incomplete occurrence of *Nhti*, for the adjacent area is damaged: see Simpson, *Mastabas of Qar and Idu*, fig. 27, perhaps the same person as the *Nhti* in fig. 19 (D). The *Ht* ascribed to Louvre C235 (*PN I*, 274[14]) is likewise invalid; see Ziegler, *Stèles... de l'Ancien Empire*, no. 24. And the *Ht-R* of Hassan, *Giza IX*, p. 55, is also unlikely; from his pl. 22 A, this seems to be , i.e., *Hwt-R*, arranged exactly as in Martin, *Tomb of Hetepka*, pl. 33 (86).

²⁵ Ranke, *PN II*, p. 7.

²⁶ Reisner's G 1302, seen in the archives of the Museum of Fine Arts.

²⁷ Fisher, *Minor Cemetery*, pl. 55.

²⁸ In addition to composite hieroglyphs, these include playful allusions to names (ZÄS 105 [1978], 42–44) and enigmatic inscriptions: (1) Cairo CG 1696: Weill, *Le Champ des roseaux*, pp. 1ff., and Drioton, *Mélanges Maspero I*, 697–704; (2) Giza Tomb 2191: ZÄS 105, (1978), 56–57. The revision of the latter that is proposed by Ludwig Morenz, *JEA* 84 (1998), 195–96, is untenable, but this must be discussed elsewhere.

to being combined as a graphic pun that is readily recognizable.

One further point should be made about the mastaba of *S3b,f* and *Hnwt/Hnmt*, namely that it can hardly be as late as the Sixth Dynasty, as has previously been stated.²⁹ Inscriptions in true relief—and in relief of such quality—would be unexpected on the lintel and drum of any offering niche of so late a date, and the fragmentary offering scene confirms this impression. Here the detail of the man's wig suggests the Fifth Dynasty,³⁰ while his long robe looks even earlier,³¹ and so too the multiple bracelets

of the woman.³² It is unlikely that these two features reappeared very much later than the Fourth Dynasty, and at least one other mastaba in Fischer's concession also seems to be as early as the Fifth.³³

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²⁹ Ibid., p. 70. Cf. also the comment on the offering formula in note 8 above.

³³ Fisher's G3008, which Reisner, *Giza Necropolis I*, p. 312, in fact includes among mastabas of that Dynasty. Cherpion, op. cit., p. 235, implausibly dates this to the reign of Sneferu. Here, as elsewhere, she puts far too much weight on the mention of a royal name; so too, for example, in the case of *Mni* (pp. 231, 233, 235), whose tomb at Dendera does not date to the reign of Merenre, but is actually later than the Old Kingdom; see Fischer, *Dendera*, pp. 83–91, 170.

²⁹ Málek, loc. cit.

³⁰ *JNES* 18 (1959), 238–39; Cherpion, *Mastabas et hypogées d'Ancien Empire*, pp. 55–56.

³¹ Ibid., p. 62.