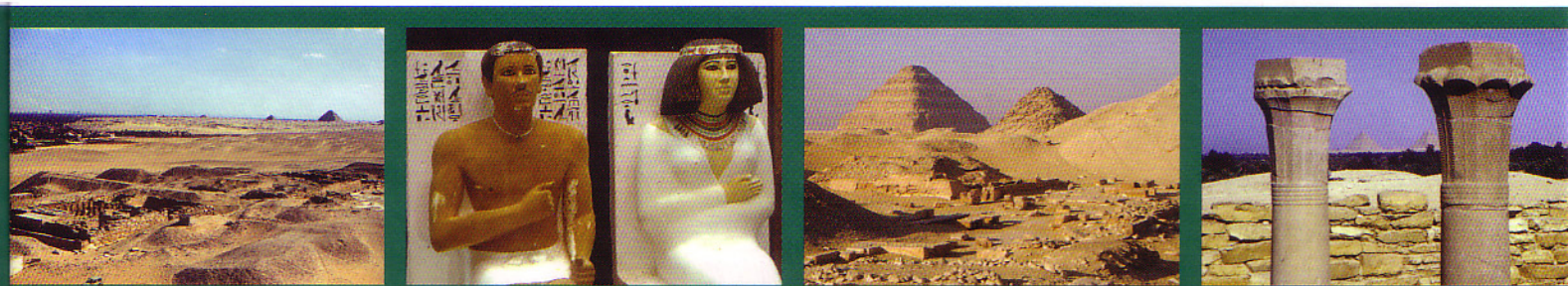


# THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

## Proceedings of the Conference



Prague, May 31 – June 4, 2004

Miroslav Bárta  
editor

# **THE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE HELD IN PRAGUE,  
MAY 31 – JUNE 4, 2004

**Miroslav Bárta**  
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## Foreword

It is with pleasure that after more than two years the publication of the lectures held during the conference on the Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology in Prague in the year 2004 (May 3 – June 4) has been made possible.

The conference held in Prague continued the tradition of previous meetings by being dedicated to the same subject: art and its dating in the Old Kingdom of Egypt: the period that forms the first apogee of the developing Egyptian state. The tradition of these irregular meetings was established in 1991 by Hourig Sourouezian and Rainer Stadelmann, at that time the Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, who organised the first conference.<sup>1</sup> The second meeting also took place in Cairo, at this time the place of the venue was the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology and the conference, held on November 10–13, 1994, was organised by its director Nicolas Grimal.<sup>2</sup> The penultimate meeting took place in Paris, France, on April 3–4, 1998, and was organised by Christiane Ziegler, Chief Conservator of Egyptian Antiquities in the Louvre.<sup>3</sup>

The present volume continues a well-established and successful tradition of post-conference publications. As such, it makes available most of the contributions that were presented during the conference in Prague. It was mainly the scientific profile of the Czech Institute of Egyptology that led us to substantially widen the scope of the conference in 2004. The total of thirty-three contributions presented in this volume cover various aspects connected to Old Kingdom culture, not only its art, but also its archaeology and architecture, selected administrative problems, iconography, texts and the latest, often first time published results of ongoing excavations. From the list of contributions it becomes evident that natural sciences and their application in the widest sense receive general acceptance and support from among Egyptologists. It is one of the few aspects that can in the future significantly enhance our understanding of specific issues connected to the Old Kingdom art and archaeology.

Eng. Marta Štrachová carefully edited the manuscript and was essential in producing this volume. The advice and guidance of Eng. Jolana Malátková also proved indispensable. The Czech Academy of Sciences is to be thanked for the production of the book. Last but not least, it was Prof. Dr. Jean Leclant, Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Paris, and the chair of the European branch of the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini, and Prof. Dr. David Silverman, University of Pennsylvania, chair of the North American branch of the the Fondation Michela Schiff Giorgini and the respective committees that approved this publication and agreed to support it financially.

Miroslav Bárta

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was held in the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo, on October 29–30, and the proceedings published in 1995 in the volume *Kunst des Alten Reiches. Symposium des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo am 29. und 30. Oktober 1991*, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo, Sonderschrift 28, Mainz am Rhein.

<sup>2</sup> N. Grimal, ed., *Lex critères de datation stylistiques à l'Ancien Empire*, Bibliothèque d'Étude 120 (Cairo, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Ch. Ziegler, N. Palayret, eds., *L'Art de l'Ancien Empire égyptien. Actes du colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 3 et 4 avril 1998* (Paris, 1999).

# Bibliography

Abbreviations for journals, series and monographs used throughout the volume follow the system of *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (cf. *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, Band VII. Nachträge, Korrekturen und Indices*, founded by W. Helck and E. Otto, edited by W. Helck and W. Westendorf, Wiesbaden 1992, XIV–XXXVIII).

The following additional abbreviations are also used:

ACER – *The Australian Centre for Egyptology: Reports*, Sydney;  
AOS – *American Oriental Society*, Michigan;  
BSAK – *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur, Beihefte*, Hamburg;  
CA – *Current Anthropology*, Chicago, Illinois;  
Hannig, *Handwörterbuch* – R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.)*, Mainz 1995;  
Harpur, DETOK – Y. Harpur, *Decoration in Egyptian Tombs of the Old Kingdom. Studies in Orientation and Scene Content*, London and New York 1988;  
Harvey, WSOK – J. Harvey, *Wooden Statues of the Old Kingdom. A Typological Study*, *Egyptological Memoirs* 2, Leiden 2001;  
KAW – *Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt*, Mainz am Rhein;  
LingAeg – *Lingea Aegyptia, Journal of Egyptian language Studies*, Göttingen;  
OrMonsp – *Orientalia Monspeliensia*, Montpellier;  
PAM – *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, Warsaw;  
SAGA – *Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens*, Heidelberg;  
WES – *Warsaw Egyptological Studies*, Warsaw.



# The title *ḥtmtj ntr* – god’s sealer – in the Old Kingdom

Kamil O. Kuraszkiewicz

In 2002, Polish-Egyptian excavations at Saqqara brought to light a funerary chapel (no. 14) that had been cut into the west side of the western section of the Dry Moat.<sup>1</sup> The tomb chapel was found to be dedicated to an official named Ikhi (*Jḥj*) who also bore the name *rn nfr Mery (Mrj)*.<sup>2</sup>

Chapel 14 was hewn in extremely friable local rock, but its eastern wall was constructed of fine white limestone (*fig. 1*). The area in front of the chapel, where the entrance niche at least should be expected, has not been excavated as yet. The inside walls of the chapel are void of any decoration. The chapel itself is divided into two

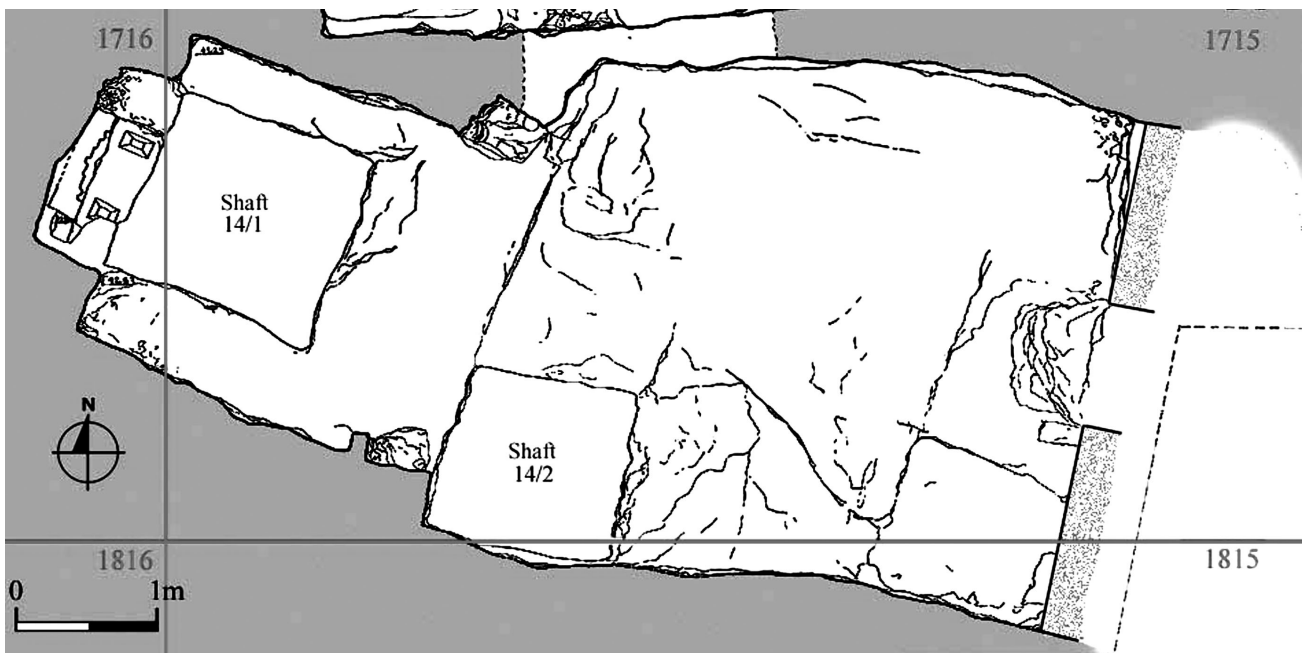


Fig. 1 Plan of the Chapel 14

approximately square parts, each with a burial shaft. The smaller, western part has a false door and an offering table made of fine limestone, contained in a niche in the west wall. Owing to the friability of the rock, the exploration of the shafts has not been concluded; even so, digging in the upper part of the western shaft (no. 14/1) has yielded already several limestone architectural fragments, some of them belonging to the two jambs that probably had framed the false door once. The inscriptions on the jambs mention not only the names and titles of the tomb owner, but also those of his son who inherited both names from his father. The following titles are attested for Ikhi I: *jmj-r3 ḥnw*,<sup>3</sup> *jmj-r3 zh3(w) ḥprw*,<sup>4</sup> *mtj nj ḥpr wj3*,<sup>5</sup> *ḥntj-š Mn-nfr-Mrj-R*,<sup>6</sup> *ḥntj-š Dd-*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Myśliwiec, 'West Saqqara in 2002', *PAM* XIV (2003): 121–125; *idem*, 'Neue Entdeckungen in Sakkara', in *Maat. Archäologie Ägyptens* 1 (2004): 9; K. O. Kuraszkiewicz, 'Saqqara 2002: Inscriptions', *PAM* XIV (2003): 137–140.

<sup>2</sup> Ranke, *PN* I, 45, no. 10 (*Jḥj*) and 160, no. 1 (*Mrj*).

<sup>3</sup> D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, *BAR International Series* 866, I (Oxford 2000), 197, No. 738.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 210–211, No. 783.

<sup>5</sup> Regulator of the crew of the ship – the title is not attested elsewhere, cf. Kuraszkiewicz, *PAM* XIV (2003): note 28.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *Index* II, 693, No. 2535.

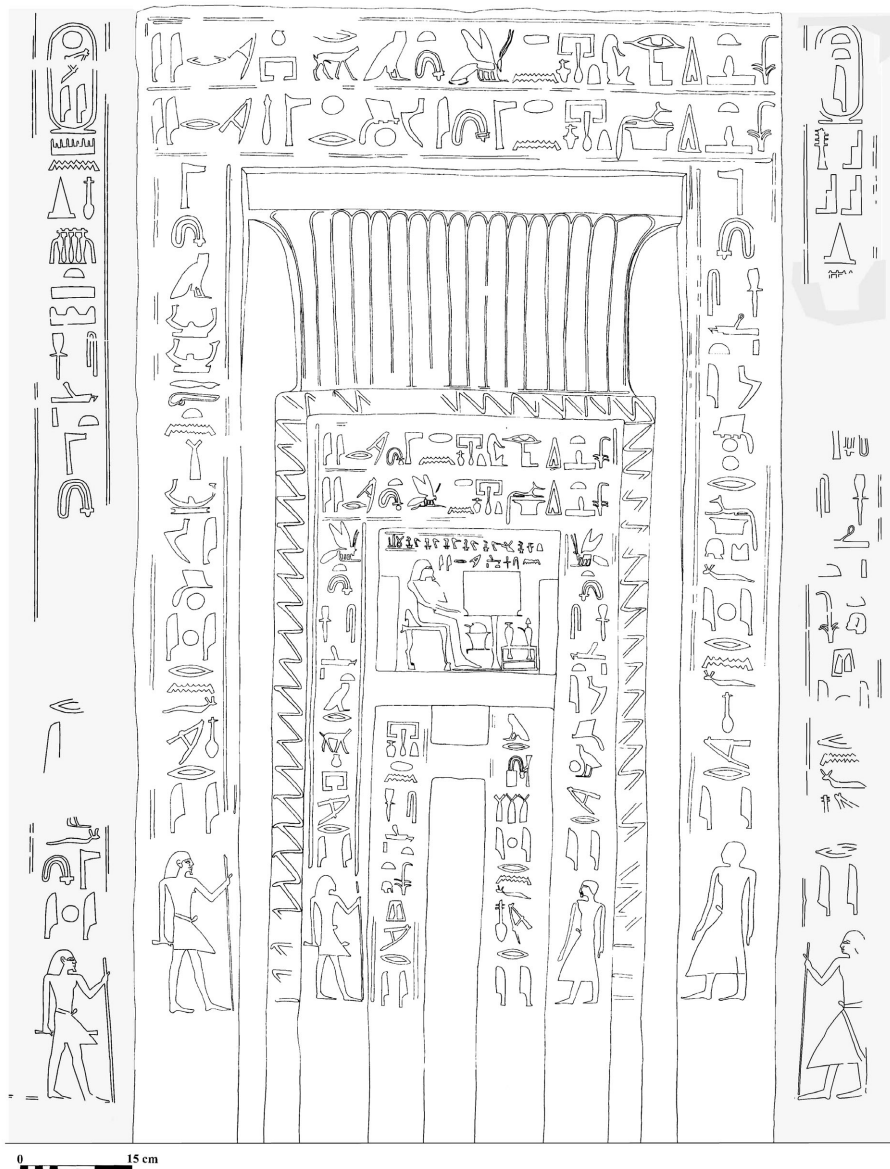


Fig. 2 False door in the Chapel 14 with probable position of jambs (shaded areas) found in the Shaft 14/1

*swt-Ttj*,<sup>7</sup> *ḥtmtj bjtj*,<sup>8</sup> *ḥtmtj ntr*,<sup>9</sup> *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3wj ʿ3(wj)*,<sup>10</sup> *ḥrj-tp nswt*<sup>11</sup> and *smr wʿtj*.<sup>12</sup> For Ikhi/Mery II, the only title given in Chapel 14 is *ḥtmtj ntr*.

Not many individuals of the name Ikhi can be found in other sources. Of these, the only one to hold the title of god's sealer was a man mentioned in four graffiti in Wadi Hammamat (nos. 30, 61, 103, 107).<sup>13</sup> Two of these inscriptions also contain the name and title of Ikhi's son, *jmj jrtj ʿprw wj3 Jḥj* (Hammamat 30 and 103). Hammamat 30 records his name as *Jḥj šrj*. All the texts were written to commemorate expeditions – or more likely one expedition – which took place in the year after the 18th census of Pepy I.

The names of both men and the title of Ikhi I indicate that the two Ikhis attested in Wadi Hammamat are almost certainly to be identified with the owner of Chapel

<sup>7</sup> Jones, *Index II*, 694, No. 2537.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 763, No. 2775.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 767, No. 2791.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 769, No. 2796.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 788, No. 2874. On another interpretation (as *tpj ḥr(t) nswt* – property administrator of the king), see H. Goedicke, 'Titles for Titles', in S. Allam, ed., *Grund und Boden in Altägypten (rechtliche und sozio-ökonomische Verhältnisse)* (Tübingen, 1994), 227–234.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, *Index II*, 892, No. 3268.

<sup>13</sup> J. C. Goyon, *Nouvelles inscriptions rupestres du Wadi Hammâmât* (Paris, 1957), 64, pl. XXXII (Hammamat 30); Couyat-Montet, *Inscr. du Ouâdi Hammâmât*, 58 (Hammamat 61); 72, pl. XXV (Hammamat 103); 74, pl. XXVII (Hammamat 107).

14 and his son. The only difference is in the titles of the younger Ikhi II. However, it should be expected that the inscriptions in the chapel correspond to a later stage in the career of Ikhi II, when he could have been appointed to a new post.

Ikhi's perhaps most intriguing title is that of *ḥmtj ntr*, or god's sealer. This title has already been the subject of numerous studies.<sup>14</sup> It was established that there were two different spheres of activity for which the title *ḥmtj ntr* was in use. The priestly use of this title, which seems to be a derivative of its civil function,<sup>15</sup> was studied exhaustively by Sauneron.<sup>16</sup> It is outside the scope of this paper which will concentrate only on the civil aspects.

There are numerous, mainly textual sources from the Old Kingdom<sup>17</sup> providing information on god's sealers. These can be divided into two distinct categories, the first being primary sources encompassing data mainly from the tombs of the office holders. It is to be expected that the tomb inscriptions contain a complete set of available information concerning offices held by the tomb owners.

On the other hand, there is also a large corpus of secondary sources, that is, inscriptions found in regions that were the destination of expeditions. Most of these texts contain little apart from the names and occasionally a few selected titles of the officials. The rather long list of offices held by Ikhi I, as found in his tomb, when compared with the graffiti in Wadi Hammamat quoting only one of his titles (god's sealer), serves as a good example of this difference in the nature of the sources. Thus, secondary sources in most cases fail to provide data pertaining to other spheres of activity of the officials in question.

Strangely enough, the title of god's sealer in itself does not express in any way the functions of its holder, contrary to what is true of most other administrative and military titles. It sounds rather like a priestly title, but the contexts in which it occurs attest to the civil functions of its holders, and moreover, only a few of them actually held priestly offices.<sup>18</sup> It has been suggested<sup>19</sup> that the noun *ntr* refers to a reigning king and this seems true in the light of the present study.<sup>20</sup> *Ḥmtj ntr* is commonly considered a nautical title and is usually interpreted as a boat captain, admiral or expedition leader.

There are three main reasons for associating this title with the navy:

1. It was sometimes supplemented with the phrases *wj3* (or *m wj3*), *wj3wj* or *wj3wj 3wj*;<sup>21</sup>
2. Many holders of this title also held evidently nautical titles;
3. There are at least two texts known that attest to the participation of god's sealers in marine journeys to Byblos, Punt and the southern lands.

<sup>14</sup> Ch. Boreaux, *Études de Nautique Égyptienne. L'Art de la Navigation en Égypte jusqu'à la Fin de l'Ancien Empire. Premier Fascicule (Second Fascicule)*, MIFAO 50 (1924–1925), 136–137; A. Fakhry, 'Stela of the Boat-Captain Inika', *ASAE* 38 (1938): 35–46; S. Sauneron, 'Le « Chancelier du Dieu » dans sa double rôle d'Embaumeur et Prêtre d'Abydos', *BIFAO* 51 (1952): 137–171; W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *ÄA* 18 (1954), 98–99; Fischer, *Coptite Nome*, 126–129; L. Bell, J. H. Johnson, D. Whitcomb, 'The Eastern Desert of Egypt: Routes and Inscriptions', *JNES* 43 (1984): 31; M. Valloggia, 'La stèle d'un chef d'expédition de la Première Période Intermédiaire', *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 263; P. M. Chevereau, 'Contribution à la prosographie des cadres militaires de l'Ancien Empire et de la Première Période Intermédiaire. B – Titres nautiques', *RdE* 40 (1989): 3–11; E. Eichler, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *GOF* 26 (1993), 234–254; Jones, *Index II*, 767–772.

<sup>15</sup> Eichler, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen*, 235.

<sup>16</sup> Sauneron, *BIFAO* 51 (1952).

<sup>17</sup> The list of the title holders is based on Chevereau, *RdE* 40 (1989): 3–11, with some additions. For the purpose of this study, whenever it was possible, the dating of tombs proposed by N. Cherpion (*Mastabas et hypogées d'Ancien Empire. Le problème de datation* [Brussels, 1989]) has been adopted.

<sup>18</sup> See table 3, below.

<sup>19</sup> Eichler, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen*, 236.

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it would be tempting to associate this word with the *3 ntr* and to suppose a relationship between functions of god's sealers and commodities brought therefrom. However, such a supposition cannot be proved.

<sup>21</sup> The single one attestation of the phrase *m wj3 3* (*3n-stj*, CG 1730, see table 1, no. 54) seems doubtful – cf. Valloggia, *BIFAO* 85 (1985): 263.

### Table 1 God's sealers in the Old Kingdom

Following abbreviations are used in the column 'Variants': x – m wj<sup>3</sup>; xx – m wj<sup>3</sup>wj<sup>3</sup>; oo – m wj<sup>3</sup>wj<sup>3</sup>  $\zeta$  wj<sup>3</sup>; & – the title attested with and without variant.

No.	Chevreau's No.	Name	Loc	Dating	Variants	<i>jrj p't</i>	<i>h3ty-'</i>	<i>smr w'ctj</i>	vizier	<i>jmfj-r3 k3t nbt</i>	<i>l'mnj b3tj</i>	<i>l'mj-š</i>	<i>l'mj-tp nswt</i>	<i>z3 nswt</i>	<i>jmfj-r3 smn3w</i>	<i>jmfj-r3 l'mw</i>	<i>jmfj-r3 wpwt</i>	<i>jmfj-r3/šhđ l'mw-ntr</i>	<i>l'm-ntr</i>	<i>l'mj-h3bt l'mj-tp</i>	<i>l'mj-h3bt</i>	<i>jmfj-r3 z'h3w</i>	<i>zh3</i>	<i>l'mj-š3t3</i>	<i>jmfj-r3 mš</i>	Other military	Nautical
1	302	<i>k3.j-w'bw</i>	Giza	Khufu																							x
2	281	<i>hr-mrw</i>	?	4 Dyn.																							
3	258	<i>jr.s-lhw</i>	Giza	4 or 5 Dyn.	oo																			x			x
4	271	<i>mrj-jb</i>	Giza	4 or 5 Dyn.						x				x					x						x		x
5	315	...	Abusir	Sahure	x																						
6	249	<i>jjj</i>	Saqqara	Izezi	xx					x														x			
7	265	<i>wr-đd-b3</i>	?	Izezi																							
8	303	<i>k3-m-tmt</i>	Saqqara	Izezi	&oo			x		x				x											x		
9	261	<i>jzzj-ᶚnh</i>	Saqqara	Izezi to Unas	&oo			x		x				x											x		
10	291	<i>smr.j-k3.j</i>	(Abusir)	5 Dyn.																							
11	295	<i>snbw</i>	Giza	5 Dyn.																							
12	304	<i>k3.j-qr</i>	Dahshur	5 Dyn.		x	x		x				x				x										
13	298	<i>sšmw</i>	Saqqara	5 or 6 Dyn.						x															x	x	
14	301	<i>k3j</i>	Giza	5 or 6 Dyn.	x									x		x											
15	259	<i>jhw</i>	W. Hammamat	Pepy I																							
16	260	<i>jlhj: mrjj</i>	Saqqara	Pepy I	&oo			x			x	x	x			x											
17	272	<i>mrjj ttj</i>	Saqqara	Pepy I	oo	x	x	x	x		x	x		x				x		x		x					
18	306	<i>mtj</i>	Saqqara	Pepy I to Merenra				x									x		x						x	x	
19		<i>jlhj šrj: mrjj</i>	Saqqara	Merenra to Pepy II																							x
20	284	<i>hwj</i>	Aswan	Merenra to Pepy II	&oo		x	x							x												
21	254	<i>mrj-It.f</i>	Bir Menih	Pepy II																							
22	256	<i>jrj</i>	W. Hammamat	Pepy II							x																
23	267	<i>ppjj-ᶚnh</i>	Meir	Pepy II			x	x	x		x		x			x		x		x							x
24	268	<i>ppjj-ᶚnh-lrj-jb</i>	Meir	Pepy II		x	x	x	x		x		x				x		x		x	x	x	x			



Table 1 (continue)

No.	Chevreau's No.	Name	Loc	Dating	Variants	<i>jrj p't</i>	<i>h3tj-c</i>	<i>smr w'c'ij</i>	vizier	<i>jmj-r3 k3t nbt</i>	<i>hmj b'ij</i>	<i>hmj-š</i>	<i>hrj-tp nswt</i>	<i>z3 nswt</i>	<i>jmj-r3 smnjw</i>	<i>jmj-r3 hmjw</i>	<i>jmj-r3 wpwt</i>	<i>jmj-r3/šhd hmjw-ntr</i>	<i>hm-ntr</i>	<i>hrj-h3bt hrj-tp</i>	<i>hrj-h3bt</i>	<i>jmj-r3 z3w</i>	<i>zh3</i>	<i>hrj šst3</i>	<i>jmj-r3 mš</i>	Other military	Nautical
58	312	...	Aswan	6 Dyn.																							
59	316	...	Gozaira	6 Dyn.	oo																					x	
60	282	<i>hr-nht</i>	Edfu	6 Dyn. to FIP																							x
61	307	<i>ttj</i>	W. Hammamat	6 Dyn. to FIP																							
62	248	<i>ij-m-hpp</i>	?	?																							x
63	252	<i>jn...</i>	Bir Menih	?																							
64	269	<i>fik-3</i>	W. Hammamat	?																							x
65	270	<i>mij</i>	Tomas	?																							
66	276	<i>nfr-nswt wr</i>	W. Hammamat	?																							
67	277	<i>nfr-nswt km</i>	W. Hammamat	?																							
68	285	<i>hwj</i>	Al-Kab	?																							
69	310	<i>...nw</i>	W. Hammamat	?																							
70	311	...	W. Awad	?																							
71	313	...	Bir Menih	?																							
72	314	...	W. Gudami	?																							x

NB: Bibliographical references are to be found in: Chevreau, *RdE* 40 (1989): 4–11.

\* Eichler, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen*, 86 (No. 173).

\*\* *Ibid.*, 243 (No. 4).

However, accepting these arguments raises serious difficulties. A statistical analysis (table 2) proves that the title *ḥtmtj ntr* was seldom supplemented with any additional phrase. Only in 15 out of 72 cases (and 13 out of 45 in the primary sources), the god's sealers were qualified as *m wj3* or *wj3wj*, most of them during the Sixth Dynasty. This indicates that the association of the function of *ḥtmtj ntr* with boats, although possible, was by no means the rule in the Old Kingdom.

**Table 2** Variants of the title *ḥtmtj ntr*

	Dyn. 4		Dyn. 4–5		Dyn. 5		Dyn. 5–6		Dyn. 6		Dyn. 6–FIP		Unknown		Total	
	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri
<i>wj3wj 3wj</i>			1		2	2			7	7					10	9
<i>wj3</i>					1		1	1	1	1					3	2
<i>wj3wj</i>					1	1			1	1					2	2

NB: The table shows the chronological distribution of the title's three attested variants in particular periods, in all sources and in the primary ones

The qualification *m wj3wj* or *wj3wj 3wj* seems to exclude the possibility of interpreting the title *ḥtmtj ntr* as boat captain. If the title *ḥtmtj ntr* is accepted as an equivalent of captain and if we interpret the sign of a ship at face value, then the title would designate the commander of sometimes one and sometimes two ships! Even if *ḥtmtj ntr* referred to a high-ranking officer in the navy who could have under his command one or more ships, it is difficult to explain why there were never more than two ships.

It would be more plausible to suppose that the sign of a ship stands for a group of ships or for a fleet and thus the god's sealers would have had under their command one or two naval units. Thus, the title would designate an officer of higher rank rather than a ship's captain. While not to be excluded, this would lead one to expect that *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3wj* had under his command two *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3* (and possibly also that he himself was subordinate to a hypothetical god's sealer in a larger number of ships, which is not attested). However, the overall number of god's sealers *m wj3wj* (*3wj*) is remarkably higher than that of god's sealers *m wj3* and this alone does not allow the idea to be accepted.

On the other hand, it could be assumed that the qualification *m wj3* or *m wj3wj* expressed in fact a limitation of the prerogatives of a god's sealer and thus the *ḥtmtj ntr* was an official of higher rank than the *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3wj*. However, the significantly larger number of 'ordinary' god's sealers seems to exclude such a possibility.

The phrase *m wj3wj* may have also stemmed from the well known duality of Egyptian institutions; it refers to 'both fleets', which could mean the entire Egyptian navy. Consequently, the meaning of the titles *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3wj 3wj*, *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3* and *ḥtmtj ntr m wj3wj* could have been the same: a god's sealer somehow related (in contrast to the more frequently attested 'ordinary' *ḥtmtj ntr*, as shown above) to the navy as a whole. Although it cannot be excluded that this was the case, our knowledge of the Egyptian navy<sup>22</sup> is still insufficient to allow us to determine whether it was divided into two *wj3*-units, in similarity to *prwj ḥd*, *šnwtj* etc.

It seems also not without significance that the title most often held by the god's sealers was that of *jmj-r3 mšꜥ*, usually translated as 'general'. It should be noted that not every god's sealer was a general, and not every general was a god's sealer. Moreover, in the Old Kingdom the overall number of generals was slightly lower than that of god's sealers, although the former appeared in the historical record significantly earlier than the latter. It means that, statistically, generals were appointed much less frequently than god's sealers. If accepted that a god's sealer was a high commander of the navy, it could be expected that the number of

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Boreaux, *Études de nautique égyptienne*; D. Jones, *A Glossary of Ancient Egyptian Nautical Titles and Terms* (London, 1988).

generals should be equal (if not even higher) to that of admirals. Moreover, unless both titles or at least one of them was purely honorific, it is difficult to imagine how to reconcile the position of high commander in the army with a similar one in the navy.

It should be added, too, that relatively few of the known god's sealers (11 out of a total of 72, and 10 out of 45 in the primary sources) held nautical titles. This, together with the conclusions presented above, suggests that the title of *hmtj ntr* was not necessarily or not exclusively a nautical one.

The textual sources leave no doubt regarding the participation of at least some of the god's sealers in journeys and expeditions. That they took part in expeditions does not mean that they were their leaders. The secondary sources provide us with important information concerning the expeditions. The standardised formula *wpt nswt jrjt n* – 'royal mission performed by...' – seems to inform us who was in charge of a given expedition. And only three expeditions are known to have been commanded by a *hmtj ntr*,<sup>23</sup> while in other cases (under the command of, e.g., *jmj-r3 mšc* or *jmj-r3 k3t nbt*) the god's sealers (sometimes more than one in the same group) were merely participants. In addition, the fact that only two of the god's sealers held the title of overseer of royal missions (*jmj-r3 wpwt nswt*) indicates that the relation between the function of *hmtj ntr* and that of expedition leader was rather casual.

A separate issue is the fact that the names found in expedition records (that is, secondary sources) generally do not correspond to those known from primary sources. The only certain exception is Ikhi from Saqqara and his son. Possibly also one Seni buried at Meir,<sup>24</sup> who is to be identified with a person bearing the same name attested at Wadi Hammamat,<sup>25</sup> and finally, Khui of Aswan<sup>26</sup> who could be the same person as the one known from a graffito at el-Kab.<sup>27</sup> It means that over 40 god's sealers seemingly left no traces of their travels and that we are not aware of any other records of over 20 officials attested to in an expedition context. Thus, we are led to suppose that leading or even just participating in expeditions was not necessarily among the god's sealer's official duties.

There are at least four texts known that describe various activities of officials bearing the title *hmtj ntr*: The autobiography of Weni records that the king sent to Tura a god's sealer with a *tzt nt ʿprw wj3* under his command, his mission being to bring a sarcophagus for Weni.<sup>28</sup> In his letter to Harkhuf, the king Pepy II recalls the god's sealer Werdjedba who brought a dwarf from Punt for the King Izezi.<sup>29</sup> An inscription in the Aswan tomb of Khui mentions the participation of *hrp zh* Khnumhotep in the journey of the god's sealer Tjetjy to Byblos and to the southern lands and in the travels of the god's sealer Khui to Punt.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the autobiography of Debeheni records the participation of two god's sealers in the construction of his tomb.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the relevant section of the text is only fragmentarily preserved and the precise nature of their task remains unknown.

This data, as well as expedition reports, indicate that the god's sealer was an official responsible for supplying rare and valuable materials, and that initially the title designated simply a dignitary in a royal mission.<sup>32</sup> This seems much more plausible, although it follows that the correspondence between primary and secondary sources should be much closer than expected.

<sup>23</sup> Sinai 17 (*Inscr. Sinai* II, 64); Hatnub 3 (*Hatnub*, 20); Hammamat 35 (Cuyat–Montet, *Inscr. du Ouâdi Hammâmât*, 46). However, in the latter case the *hmtj ntr* was also *jmj-r3 mšc*.

<sup>24</sup> See table 1, no. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Table 1, no. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Table 1, no. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Table 1, no. 68.

<sup>28</sup> *Urk.* I, 99.

<sup>29</sup> *Urk.* I, 128.

<sup>30</sup> *Urk.* I, 140–141.

<sup>31</sup> *Urk.* I, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Eichler, *Untersuchungen zum Expeditionswesen*, 236: 'eine relativ unspezifische Bezeichnung für Beamte in königlicher Mission'.



The title *ḥtmtj ntr* is attested from the Fourth Dynasty onwards. As demonstrated in tables 3 and 4, there was a significant increase in the occurrence of the title in the latter part of the Old Kingdom. Simultaneously, its importance diminished, as suggested by the other titles of its holders. During the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties it was evidently a very exclusive office, held by members of the royal family and combined with high court and administrative functions. Moreover, in the said period, god's sealers were appointed only in the residence. On the other hand, the Sixth Dynasty witnessed a multiplication of god's sealers and their appearance, in significant numbers, also in the provinces.

**Table 3** Other titles held by god's sealers

	Dyn. 4		Dyn. 4–5		Dyn. 5		Dyn. 5–6		Dyn. 6		Dyn. 6–FIP		Unknown		Total	
	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri	All	Pri
<i>jmj-r3 mš</i>			2	2	5	3	1	1	11	6	2	1	2	1	23	13
<i>smr w<sup>c</sup>tj</i>					2	2			18	16	1				21	18
<i>ḥtmtj bj<sup>c</sup>tj</i>									10	7	1				11	7
Nautical	1	1	2	2			1	1	4	4	1	1	2	1	11	10
<i>ḥ3tj-<sup>c</sup></i>					1	1			8	8					9	9
<i>jmj-r3 smntjw</i>									6	2	2	1	1		9	3
<i>z3 nswt</i>			1	1	4	3	1	1	2	1					8	6
<i>ḥrj-ḥ3bt ḥrj-tp</i>									3	3					3	3
<i>ḥrj-ḥ3bt</i>			1	1	1				5	5					8	6
<i>ḥrj sšt3</i>					2	2	1	1	4	3			1		7	6
<i>jmj-r3/shd ḥmw-ntr</i>									4	4					4	4
<i>ḥm-ntr</i>			1	1	1				1	1					3	2
<i>jmj-r3 k3t nbt</i>			1	1	4	3	1	1							6	5
<i>jmj-r3 zh3w</i>									4	4			1		5	4
<i>jrj-p<sup>c</sup>t</i>					1	1			4	4					5	5
<i>t3jtj z3b t3tj</i>					1	1			3	3					4	4
<i>jmj-r3 ḥnw</i>							1	1	3	3					4	4
Other military							1	1	3	2					4	3
<i>ḥntj-š</i>									3	3					3	3
<i>ḥrj-tp nswt</i>									3	3					3	3
<i>zh3</i>									3	3					3	3
<i>jmj-r3 wpwt</i>					1	1			1	1					2	2
Total	2	2	2	2	8	5	2	2	45	32	2	1	11	1	72	45

NB: Only the titles that are attested at least two times in connection with the function of the god's sealer are taken into account here. The number of attestation in a given period is shown in columns, giving in each case the number for all sources (left) and for the primary sources alone (right). The last column contains the total number of god's sealers who held given titles in the Old Kingdom. The lowermost row contains the number of attested god's sealers in particular periods, and in the right bottom corner there is the total number of sources, respectively, all and primary, in the Old Kingdom.

Therefore, it appears that god's sealers served at first as personal representatives of the king – royal commissioners of sorts. Because the title occurred frequently in combination with military and nautical titles, it can be assumed that god's sealers were appointed to tasks that demanded a military escort or organized manpower, such as expeditions, quarrying and building activities etc. An argument in favour of this theory is that during the Fifth Dynasty (and never again afterwards), god's sealers were also charged with overseeing all the works. In that period, a distinct convergence between the primary and the secondary records can be seen. Moreover, god's sealers held the title *ḥrj sšt3* (and its variants) sufficiently

often to exemplify the special royal confidence that these distinguished officials appear to have enjoyed.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 4** Chronological distribution of the title ‘god’s sealer’ in the residence (R) and the province (P)

	Dyn. 4		Dyn. 4–5		Dyn. 5		Dyn. 5–6		Dyn. 6		Dyn. 6–FIP	
	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P	R	P
<i>jmj-r3 mš</i> <sup>c</sup>			2		1		1		2	4		1
<i>smr w<sup>c</sup>tj</i>					2				3	13		
<i>hmtj bjtj</i>									2	5		
Nautical	1						1		3	1		1
<i>h3tj-<sup>c</sup></i>					1				1	7		
<i>jmj-r3 smntjw</i>										2		1
<i>z3 nswt</i>			1		3		1		1			
<i>hrj-h3bt hrj-tp</i>									1	2		
<i>hrj-h3bt</i>			1						1	3		
<i>hrj sšt3</i>					1		1		1	1		
<i>jmj-r3/shd hmw-ntr</i>									1	3		
<i>hm-ntr</i>			1						1			
<i>jmj-r3 k3t nbt</i>			1		3		1					
<i>jmj-r3 zh3w</i>									2	1		
<i>jrj-p<sup>c</sup>t</i>					1				1	3		
<i>t<sup>c</sup>jtj z3b t3tj</i>					1				1	2		
<i>jmj-r3 hnw</i>							1		1	2		
Other military							1			2		
<i>hntj-š</i>									2			
<i>hrj-tp nswt</i>									1	2		
<i>zh3</i>										2		
<i>jmj-r3 wpwt</i>					1				1			
Total	1		2		5		2		7	25		1

Thus, it seems that the title of god’s sealer was an administrative one and that it was bestowed upon army and navy officials, although not necessarily only upon them. Initially, the function of god’s sealer was to deputise for the king, possibly in some administrative tasks, during operations held far from the residence.

<sup>33</sup> Rydström, ‘*Hry sšt3*, “In Charge of Secrets”: The 3000 year evolution of a title’, *DE* 28 (1994): 53–94.

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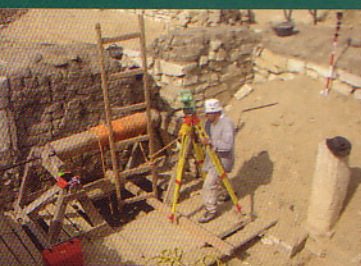
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