

MITTEILUNGEN
DES
DEUTSCHEN
ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS
ABTEILUNG KAIRO

BAND 47

1991

FESTSCHRIFT
FÜR
WERNER KAISER



Werner Kaiser
Zum 65. Geburtstag 1991

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VERLAG PHILIPP VON ZABERN · MAINZ/RHEIN

XVI, 434 Seiten mit 121 Textabbildungen und 63 Tafeln mit 209 Fotos

Die Abkürzungen der ägyptologischen Literatur folgen den Regeln
des *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*

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Printed in Germany

Printed on fade resistant and archival quality paper (PH 7 neutral)

Satz und Druck des Textteiles: Hubert & Co., Göttingen

Druck der Tafeln: Zaberndruck, Mainz

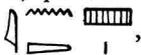
ISBN 3-8053-1205-9

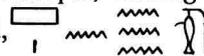
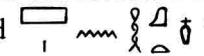
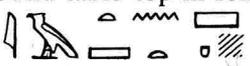
ISSN 0342-1279

An Invocatory Offering Basin of the Old Kingdom

By HENRY GEORGE FISCHER

(Tafel 7)

On an Old Kingdom offering basin in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, no. 31294¹⁾ (fig. 1, and pl. 7 a), a conventional funerary formula is followed by a curious addition and one that is—to the best of my knowledge—unparalleled elsewhere. The formula is: “(An offering)²⁾ that the king gives, and Anubis, who presides over the Divine Booth, that there may be buried in the western desert (a woman) possessed of reverence with the Great God, *Ny-kšw-Hwthr*”³⁾. The added phrase is clearly , i. e. *in idb* (or *wdb*) š, but its interpretation is less obvious. In considering the possibilities, I shall take up each of these three elements one by one, beginning with the last, the meaning of which is most immediately apparent. This procedure will entail the retracing of some ground that has been covered elsewhere, but a few pieces of additional evidence will be indicated along the way.

The meaning of š is apparent because it occurs on several other offering basins in labels referring to the basin itself. One example, bearing the much-favoured motif in the form of , has a pair of depressions labelled,  and  “tank of water”, “tank of beer”⁴⁾, and rather similar labels are to be found in two other cases⁵⁾. A more elaborate specimen has a round table-top in relief, labelled  “table” while the bottom of an adjacent basin is  “midpoint of the reservoir”⁶⁾. The inscription of yet another invokes

¹⁾ Dr. BENNETT BRONSON, who has kindly authorized the publication of the basin, informs me that it was purchased in Cairo early in the century. It is presently inaccessible, however, and thus no measurements can be provided.

²⁾ For the omission of  see LAPP, *Die Opferformel des Alten Reiches*, § 41 (11, and cf. 1). This is probably to be emended as indicated, like examples where  is omitted, although it is theoretically possible that, in the present case,  is nominal. Cf.  NN “an offering that the king gives ... a gift given to NN”. (FIRTH and GUNN, *Teti Pyramid Cemetery*, p. 160 and pl. 62), also EDEL, *Altäg. Gramm.*, § 460.

³⁾ This name is particularly well known from Giza: RANKE, *PN* I, p. 180 (24); II, p. 366 (all examples); HASSAN, *Giza X*, p. 118; ABU BAKR, *Excavations at Giza 1949–1950*, figs. 58, 62. But at least one example is known from Saqqara: MOUSSA and ALTENMÜLLER, *Tomb of Nefer and Ka-hay*, p. 38, pl. 36. Another, on a false door in Bologna (FISCHER, *Egyptian Studies* I, p. 12), is said to come from Memphis, but the provenance is not defined more closely. In yet another case (STEWART, *Egyptian Stelae* II, p. 11 and pl. 9[1]) the provenance is even more uncertain.

⁴⁾ Cairo CG 57016 (MORET and ABOU GHAZI, *Denkmäler des Alten Reiches* III). MAHA MOSTAFA, in: *Untersuchungen zu Opfertafeln im Alten Reich* (Hildesheim, 1982), p. 155 and pl. 33, cites this from QUIBELL, *Excavations at Saqqara I* (1905–1906), pl. 18 (3). One might translate “cool water”, but perhaps  simply balances the determinative  in *hnkt*.

⁵⁾ Cairo CG 57028, where the first sign of  seems to show the basin in profile. This example is cited by MOSTAFA as JE 89379 (*op. cit.*, p. 103). The second case is from FIRTH and GUNN, *Teti Pyramid Cemeteries*, p. 218 (3), discussed in ZÄS 105 (1978), p. 52.

⁶⁾ Cairo CG 1330: BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler des Alten Reichs* I, p. 14 and pl. 5. MOSTAFA illustrates this (*op. cit.*, pl. 13) from MARIETTE'S drawing in *Monuments divers*, pl. 94, where the label is copied incorrectly. So also KUENTZ, *BIFAO* 81

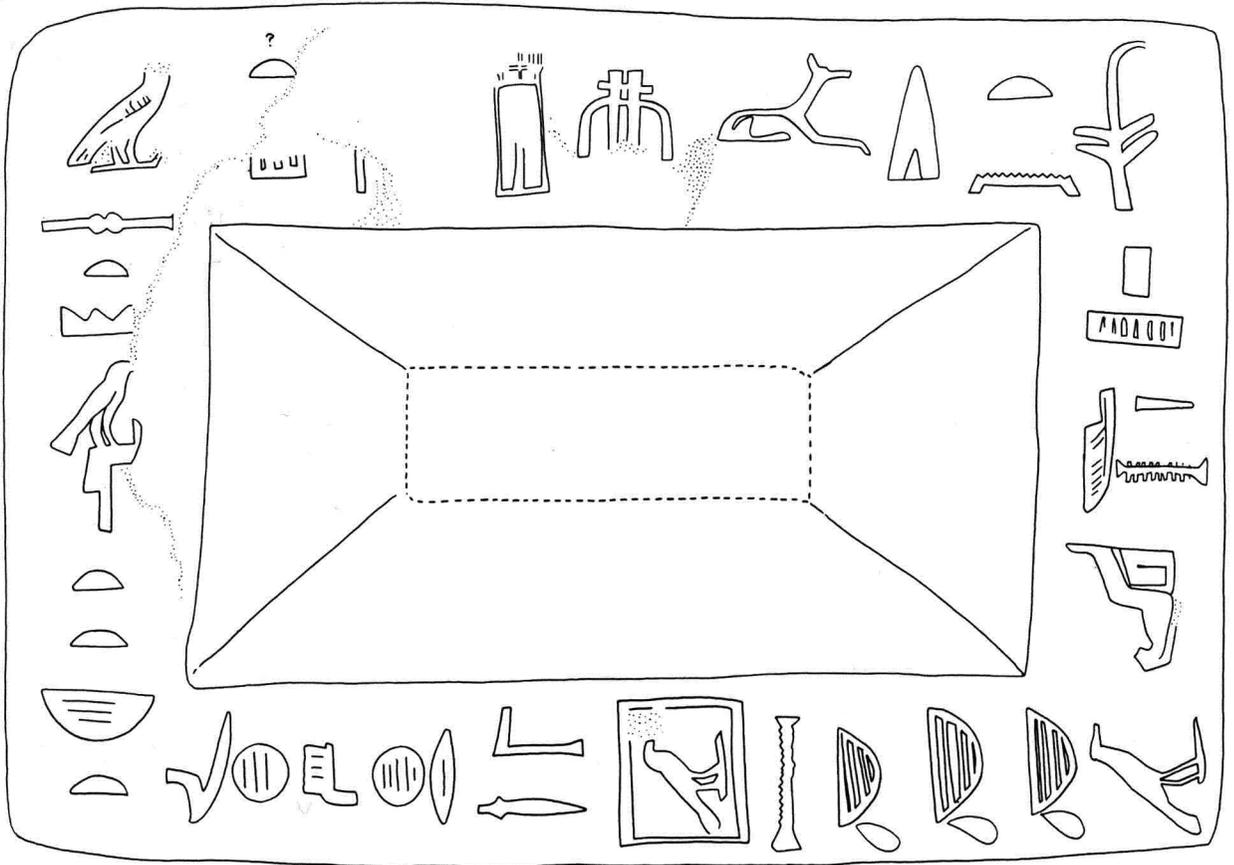


Fig. 1

offerings $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} \text{𓂏}$ “in these two basins”). Finally there is an odd example, from REISNER’s excavations at Giza, where a dummy table-top and basin, placed side by side in the tomb of a woman, are both labelled $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} \text{𓂏}$ “table of her funerary estate” (pl. 7 b-c)⁸). This must surely be a thoughtless repetition, and the basin should have been called “the basin of her funerary estate”.

The occurrences of š are not surprising since the fundamental meaning of this word is “pool” or “lake”. And two offering basins bear clear indications that they were, in fact, regarded as miniature lakes, as JUNKER has long since recognized⁹). One, in Cairo¹⁰), is decorated with four

(1981) *Supplément*, p. 247, and HUGONOT, *Le jardin dans l’Égypte ancienne* (Frankfurt a. M., 1989), fig. 160, p. 192. The sign 𓂏 is certain; the sign below it may be 𓂏 , or perhaps only a stroke; I have not been able to make out the trace of a stroke that BORCHARDT shows beside this.

⁷) MOUSSA and ALTENMÜLLER, *Tomb of Nefer and Ka-hay*, p. 45 and pl. 42 a. Also noted by MOSTAFA, *op. cit.*, p. 116. For another label referring to š see note 33 below.

⁸) From tomb G 2471. The basin, excavation no. 40-3-6, is 13×21 cm; the table, no. 40-3-5, is 24.5 cm in diameter. The woman is identified as “The King’s Acquaintance, Priestess of Hathor, Mistress of the Sycamore, *Int-ks*” and this identification is followed by *prt-hrw nt hrt-ntr* “invocation offerings of the necropolis”. I am indebted to RITA FREED and PETER DER MANUELIAN for the photographs shown here.

⁹) *ArOr* 20 (1952), pp. 185–189.

¹⁰) Cairo CG 1353; BORCHARDT, *op. cit.*, p. 24 and pl. 6. Illustrated by KUENTZ, *op. cit.*, p. 248, after MARIETTE, *Catalogue général des monuments d’Abydos*, p. 509, and more accurately by MOSTAFA, *op. cit.*, pl. 30.

boats carved in relief, one of them moored on the rim on each side of the tank. Another, in the Louvre¹¹), displays four boats on the outer sides of a triple basin, and each boat conveys the deceased owner who is rowed up and down the lakes within. These four boats correspond exactly to the four on the other basin, one of which has a prow in the form of a hedgehog¹²). The lakes are clearly identified as such by lotus blossoms and papyrus umbels incised on the sloping sides.

Since the word ξ at the end of the phrase in question, means "lake" as well as "basin", there can be little doubt that the preceding sign is *idb*, the "bank" of the lake. The reading may be *wdb*, with the same meaning¹³), but it does not seem possible that *wdb* signifies the "reversion" of offerings in this context. Apart from the phrase 𓏏 in various titles¹⁴), the sense of "reversion" is normally specified, and notably in *wdb-rd* "deflection of the foot" (by the attendant who turns to one funerary chapel after another in the re-use of offerings)¹⁵) or *wdb-ih* "reversion of provisions"¹⁶).

The remaining word does not favour *wdb* either, for it is hardly possible to translate "that (she) may be buried . . . by the reversion of the basin". And if this bizarre formulation were really intended, the word "by" would call for the preposition *m*¹⁷). The only satisfactory interpretation of *in* is "says"¹⁸), in which case the terminal phrase means "(so) says the bank of the lake", the bank being understood to refer to the rim of the basin on which the funerary inscription is inscribed. It may not seem particularly startling that the rim should utter the words inscribed on it, inasmuch as, in the three languages most familiar to the majority of Egyptologists, "an inscription says something"; "une inscription dit quelque chose"; "eine Inschrift sagt etwas". But this is not necessarily true of ancient Egyptian. Even though, in the Middle Kingdom, officials boasted that they caused inscriptions to speak (*rdi mdw drf*)¹⁹), that may mean no more than that they read them aloud, or had others do so. In the present case speech implies personification. A possible analogy might be sought in a much later offering basin, dating to the Nineteenth Dynasty, the sides of which take the form of a crenellated wall²⁰). Each of a series of external buttresses bears the image of a human ear, and the ears hearken to a series of prayers inscribed between them, e.g.: "Praise to thee at the great rampart; it is the place where supplication is heard". But the wall represents the enclosure of the temple of Ptah, and it is he who does the hearing, not the wall as such, or the basin, so that the implied personification is not very satisfactory. There is, however, conclusive evidence from the Old Kingdom itself that a lake and its banks were in fact personified.

It is appropriate to speak of a lake and its banks as a single entity because, as JUNKER has likewise pointed out in this connection²¹), the term ξ "lake" is applied to a "garden" or "plantation" of trees that surrounded it, nourished by its water. One of the most common autobiogra-

¹¹) Louvre E 25369: VANDIER, *RdE* 11 (1957), pp. 145-155 and pls. 10-11; MOSTAFA, *op. cit.*, pl. 31.

¹²) Cf. VON DROSTE ZU HÜLSHOFF, *Der Igel im alten Ägypten* (Hildesheim, 1980), pp. 24-27, 114-115 and pl. 5 (67).

¹³) FAULKNER, *Concise Dictionary*, p. 76, citing Pyr. 291, 1008, as well as later examples.

¹⁴) GARDINER, *JEA* 24 (1938), pp. 83-89.

¹⁵) CLÈRE, *JEA* 25 (1939), p. 215.

¹⁶) GARDINER, *op. cit.*, p. 86; for further examples see LAPP, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 (fig. 10), 178 (figs. 65, 66), 179 (§ 303), giving variants with *htp-ntr* and *htp-nswt* in place of *ih*).

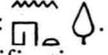
¹⁷) Cf. *m htp di nswt* "by/as an offering that the king gives", for which see LAPP, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36 (§ 54).

¹⁸) *GM* 107 (1989), p. 75, n. 19; another example in FISCHER, *Dendera*, p. 168. The closest parallel is DUELL, *Mereruka* I, pl. 27, II 211, referring to the personified Western Desert.

¹⁹) NEWBERRY, *Beni Hasan* I, pl. 7; MONTET, *Kêmi* 3 (1930), p. 53 (263); WILSON, *PSBA* 58 (1941), p. 230 (o) and pl. 3. *Wb*, *Belegst.* to vol. V, p. 477 (12-13) also include later examples, pertaining to Thoth.

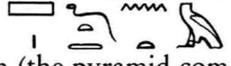
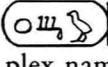
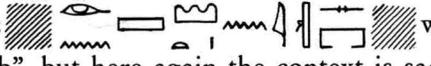
²⁰) WALL-GORDON and JACQUET, *MDAIK* 16 (1958), pp. 161-175, pls. 12-13.

²¹) *Loc. cit.*

phical statements of the late Old Kingdom, and the Heracleopolitan Period, is the boast of having excavated a pool and enclosed it with sycamore-fig trees, greatly valued because they supplied both shade and fruit²²). Once again this third meaning of *š* is explicitly illustrated by an offering basin, one of those mentioned earlier²³), which shows, at each corner of the basin's rim the word "sycamore tree": .

The personification of *š* in this sense of "garden" or "plantation" is to be found in the early Sixth Dynasty tomb chapel of *ḥnh-m'-Ḥr* at Saqqara. In one of the scenes showing attendants bringing offerings to the tomb owner, the first figure is differentiated from the others, who are collectively designated as "funerary priests" (fig. 2)²⁴). Unlike them, he wears the lappeted wig that is attributed to male divinities and he has a beard, admittedly shorter than the one worn by gods²⁵), but slightly tapered, as theirs is. In addition he has a separate caption: "The bringing of gifts by the plantation of his funerary estate"—that is to say, the funerary estate of *ḥnh-m'-Ḥr*. Inasmuch as it is the bank of the pool that constitutes the plantation, this provides a telling parallel for the personification that is implied by the phrase under discussion.

Since it is represented as a source of fowl and produce, however, the *š n dt* of *ḥnh-m'-Ḥr* can hardly have been located in the vicinity of his tomb, and the same is true of the synonymous *š n pr-dt* of *Ny-ḥnmw* and his brother, which sustains a bed of lettuce and other vegetables²⁶).

On the other hand, the autobiography of the vizier *Wšš-Pth* mentions   [Δ] "the plantation of the (?my?) funerary estate which is in (the pyramid complex named) 'The soul of Sahure appears in splendour'"²⁷). Although the context is too incomplete to establish whether the plantation belonged to the king (as seems more probable) or to his vizier, it was definitely located in the necropolis. And to judge from archaeological evidence²⁸), it probably contained a grove of trees. The association with the necropolis is perhaps to be found in the dedication of a stela that dates to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. The donor tells that he "made his father's monument in order that he might enjoy himself in his plantation of his funerary estate ()²⁹). The autobiography of *Ihy*, at Saqqara, dating to about the same period, says  which seems to mean "I made the desert plantation of my tomb", but here again the context is sadly lacking³⁰). Another piece of inscrip-

²² *Nht* "sycamore" essentially means "shelter", and is related to the verb *nh* (or *nhs*) with the same meaning (*JEA* 64 [1978], pp. 131-132); this has been misinterpreted as "create a garden" (most recently by HUGONOT, *Le jardin*, pp. 14-15).

²³ Cairo CG 1330: note 6 above.

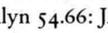
²⁴ CAPART, *Rue de tombeaux*, pl. 48, and BADAWY, *Tomb of Nyhetep at Giza and the Tomb of Ḥnchm'ahor at Saqqara*, fig. 37 (from which my fig. 2 is taken). STAEHELIN, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht*, p. 90, has already explained this as such a personification on the basis of the wig.

²⁵ Cf. the longer beard of the personification of Summer in: JAMES and APTED, *Mastaba of Khentika*, pl. 10, which STAEHELIN, *loc. cit.*, compares in this connection.

²⁶ MOUSSA and ALTENMÜLLER, *Grab des Nianchchnum and Chnumhotep*, pl. 20 and fig. 8. The location of this garden is, moreover, in the vicinity of a "pool () of fowl and papyrus belonging to the funerary estate", shown beside it.

²⁷ Cairo CG 1570A: *Urk.* I, 44 (12).

²⁸ HUGONOT gives an excellent survey of the archaeological evidence for the gardens of tombs and temples in the fifth chapter of *Le jardin dans l'Égypte ancienne*. Some further evidence is supplied by O'CONNOR, *The 'Cenotaphs' of the Middle Kingdom at Abydos*, in: *BdE* 97,2 (1985) *Mélanges Gamal eddin Mokhtar*, pp. 174-175.

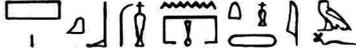
²⁹ Brooklyn 54.66: JAMES, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Inscriptions* I, no. 80, reads  as *grgt*, with SCHENKEL. See, however, my terminal notes on palaeography.

³⁰ FIRTH and GUNN, *op. cit.*, pl. 85 (7).



Fig. 2

dence that indicates this association is the mention of a *š hrt* “tomb plantation” in the Tale of Sinuhe³¹). In most cases, however, private individuals probably had to content themselves with an offering basin in place of an amenity that would have been difficult to maintain for any length of time, and for which there could have been little space in the crowded Memphite cemeteries.

Despite its unusual character, the concluding phrase of the offering basin in Chicago is completely in keeping with the extraordinarily reiterative nature of the Old Kingdom funerary cult. The terminal phrase fills the remaining area of the rim, thus linking the end of the formula with its beginning. And the continuity and circularity of the text are emphasized by the unusual orientation of the columns of inscription on three sides³²). The formula only speaks of burial, to be sure, but in the context of a basin designed to receive libations, it implies all the sustenance attendant on burial and subsequently maintained. That implication is made explicit on the rim of another basin of the same period: it is labelled  “the libation basin, with which offerings are invoked”³³).

In some other situations it is the tomb owner who eternally pronounces his own formula, either by making a gesture of address, or by the phrase “he says”, or by the use of the very same particle *in* “so says”³⁴). While the last case is subject to more than one interpretation, the one given here is considerably strengthened by the present example.

³¹) Sinuhe B 305–6.

³²) Only one identical parallel is known to me: FISHER, *Minor Cemetery at Giza*, pl. 48 (1). A few other examples show continuity, but are not otherwise comparable: BM 1176 (JAMES, *Hieroglyphic Texts I*, pl. 39[3]); JUNKER, *Giza V*, fig. 60, VII, fig. 62.

³³) ZÄS 105 (1978), p. 47 and figs. 4, pp. 51–52; 107 (1980), p. 86.

³⁴) GM 107 (1989), pp. 70–71.

Palaeographic notes

□, ☐ (N 37, N 38). Among the seven offering basins that mention *š*, the example in Chicago is the only one that shows any inner detail. The vertical lines represent the ripples of water that are frequently displayed by this sign in examples of the Old Kingdom. One might suppose that it would more appropriately take the form of ☐, and that sign does seem to be indicated by a hieratic reference to a basin in the Abusir Papyri (fig. 3)³⁵. But, contrary to GARDINER's observations in his Sign-list, ☐ is not otherwise known to have replaced □ in Old Kingdom inscriptions. In that period it normally represents *grgt* "settlement"³⁶ and *št* "aroura"³⁷, rarely also *spšt* "nome"³⁸. The replacement of □ by ☐ became common only in the Eleventh Dynasty³⁹ and later⁴⁰.



Fig. 3

◻ (N 22). The present example shows the orientation that was usual in the Old Kingdom, as opposed to the later ◻ (N 20). But it resembles the latter in form, being narrower than most examples of the Old Kingdom. This form is to be found in the Pyramid Texts, however, where the orientation also tends to conform to N 20⁴¹. Inner detail is omitted in most Old Kingdom examples, and when it occurs, it shows three basic forms: (1) a speckled pattern, representing pebbles⁴²; (2) vertical lines or ripples of water⁴³; (3) a fringe of short lines along one edge, representing the shore⁴⁴. Both of the first two forms likewise appear in the sign ◻ (N 18), *iw* "island"⁴⁵, suggesting that ◻ (as it appears in many of the older examples)⁴⁶ may be interpreted as a portion of N 18, i. e. a peninsula. A slight amount of tapering, towards the rounded end, began to occur before the end of the Second Dynasty⁴⁷, but both forms were current

³⁵ POSENER-KRIÉGER and DE CENIVAL, *Abu Sir Papyri*, pl. 7 A, f; identified as N 38 with a query on Pal. pl. VIII. Interpreted thus without reservation by POSENER-KRIÉGER, *Archives* I, p. 19.

³⁶ As in the two Old Kingdom examples which GARDINER gives for the alleged replacement of N 37.

³⁷ *Urk.* I, 2 (8, 9), 163 (14), 164 (17); JACQUET-GORDON, *Domaines*, pp. 142-143, 151; KAPLONY, *MIO* 14 (1968), p. 193 and fig. 1.

³⁸ DAVIES, *Deir el Gebrâwi* II, pls. 24, 25, 28 (h). Also note a somewhat similar sign as determinative of *hrt mw*, a watering installation for birds: EPRON et al., *Tombeau de Ti* I, pl. 27; cf. MONTET, *Scènes*, pp. 116-120.

³⁹ CLÈRE and VANDIER, *TPPI*, §§ 18 (6), 27 (ε, 1, 2), and pp. 26-27; SIMPSON, *JNES* 13 (1954), p. 265 and fig. 1; HODJASH and BERLEV, *Egyptian Reliefs and Stelae in the Pushkin Museum*, p. 69 (no. 26, line 7).

⁴⁰ Middle Kingdom: e. g. COTTEVIEILLE-GIRAUDET, *Médamoud* (1931), pl. 35; New Kingdom: e. g. BRUNNER, *Die südlichen Räume des Tempels von Luxor*, pls. 41 (6, 9), 57 (7, 8, 12), 60 (8-10, 13, 23) and passim.

⁴¹ PIANKOFF, *Pyramid of Unas*, pls. 1 (508 a), 13 (273 b), 29 (406).

⁴² SMITH, *History of Egyptian Sculpture*, p. 378 (N 22); JUNKER, *Gîza* VIII, fig. 56; BISSING, *Re-Heiligtum* III, pl. 8 (190).

⁴³ *Wp*: BUDGE, *Collection ... of Lady Meux*² (1896), pl. 7; Cairo CG 57165-6. *Dbh.n(i)*: HASSAN, *Gîza* IV, figs. 119, 124.

⁴⁴ JUNKER, *Gîza* II, figs. 15, 16, 18 (same source), III, fig. 9 a, p. 74 (~~~~~ along top and bottom edge, near rounded end); Brooklyn 37.34 E (JAMES, *op. cit.*, pl. 2 (no. 34); Berlin 1149 (*Ägyptische Inschriften* I, p. 29).

⁴⁵ Stippled: SMITH, *op. cit.*, pl. 49 a and pl. B; JUNKER, *Gîza* III, fig. 27. Rippled: JUNKER, *Gîza* I, fig. 51 (~~~~~); WILD, *Tombeau de Ti* II, pl. 106; SIMPSON, *Mastabas of Kawab, Khafkhufu I and II*, fig. 33.

⁴⁶ EMERY, *Great Tombs of the First Dynasty*, pl. 37 (18); VIGNEAU, *Encyclopédie photographique* I: *Le Louvre*, pl. 8; FAKHRY, *Monuments of Sneferu* II/2, p. 5; Cairo CG 1790 (BORCHARDT, *Denkmäler des Alten Reichs* II, pl. 112).

⁴⁷ PETRIE, *Royal Tombs* II, pl. 23 (197). This feature is even more apparent in: KAPLONY, *Inschriften* III, pl. 83 (312).

throughout most of the Old Kingdom⁴⁸). The edging of short lines occurs at the bottom of the sign in a pair of Second Dynasty examples⁴⁹, and at the top thereafter⁵⁰). One Fourth Dynasty example reverses this pattern (fig. 4)⁵¹); here vertical lines, representing ripples, fill all the interior except for the upper edge. Finally, in a mid-Sixth Dynasty tomb chapel at Akhmim, the sign is replaced, by N 18, confirming the interpretation offered here⁵²).



Fig. 4

⁴⁸) Tapered sides: e.g. SIMPSON, *Offering Chapel of Sekhem-ankh-Ptah*, pl. A; PETRIE and MURRAY, *Seven Memphite Tomb Chapels*, pl. 15; HASSAN, *Giza II*, fig. 219. Parallel sides (end of Dyn. V and later): PAGET and PIRIE, *Ptah-hetep*, pl. 31; FISHER, *Minor Cemetery at Giza*, pl. 46 (1, 2); for earlier examples, see note 46 above.

⁴⁹) LAUER and LACAU, *Pyramide à degrés V*, pl. 34 (5, no. 112; the rear end is presumably rounded, but is not intact), fig. 75 on p. 52 (even less complete); here the sign is said to be rectangular.

⁵⁰) Note 44 above.

⁵¹) Cairo CG 57165 (cf. note 43 above).

⁵²) KANAWATI, *Harawish III*, fig. 8.