

**A NEW READING OF AN OLD KINGDOM ADMINISTRATIVE TITLE ()
RELATED TO QUARRY EXPEDITIONS**

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Abstract

*This study focuses on a carved block from an Old Kingdom false door currently kept in a private art gallery. It had previously been a part of the antiquities collected by the gallerist Joseph Altunian. The relief mentions the titles of an official named Seshemnefer. However, its specific provenance is uncertain, but it is most likely from the Memphite region and may be roughly dated to the 5th/6th dynasties. Among Shesemnefer's titles is the unattested office *šḥd ḥr(y.w) šzp*, 'inspector of the ones in charge of the šzp'. This title is matched with comparable references to it and the office of *ḥry šzp*, 'the one in charge of the šzp', in some unusual Old Kingdom graffiti in the Wadi Hammamat. Besides, different interpretative proposals for the meaning of šzp in quarrying contexts are presented and discussed.*

Como las letras de Egipto
son las que celoso escucho,
que hablan poco y dicen mucho.

(Like the letters of Egypt
are the words I jealously listen to,
they say little and mean much)

Tirso de Molina, 1635, *La Peña de Francia*, act 1, scene 2.

Some years have passed since I had the good fortune to attend Marilina's classes on the top floor of the former Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche del Mondo Antico in Via Luigi Galvani 1, in Pisa. Among the fond memories I have of those years are the ones of her accessibility, kindness, and affection and her demanding and erudite lessons, always on unusual topics that were little known to those beginning the study of ancient Egypt. I still treasure the documentation of her seminar on the so-called stela of the daughter of Khufu, which, for me, was a kind of academic 'fall from the horse'. Likewise, her interest in plants and aromata, as well as in the travels and travellers of ancient Egypt, always made it into her classes and served,

even without my knowing it, as coordinates to set my course for Punt and other distant lands.

These pages examine an Old Kingdom relief (Figs 1-2) that sheds some light on the reading – but not the understanding – of an obscure administrative office and, perhaps, on the interpretation of an elusive hieroglyph. Though a few aspects of this paper deviate from the core subjects that Marilina has addressed, I hope it will be to her liking.

THE 'ALTOUNIAN BLOCK'¹

Only by chance was this relief discovered on the website of the Austrian art gallery *Christoph Bacher Archäologie/Ancient Art* (ref. 1330) in late 2022.² It is a limestone fragment from an Old

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¹ For convenience, the relief will be referred to hereafter by the name of its first owner. I am very grateful to Christoph Bacher, its current owner, for providing all the information and pictures and for permission to publish the object. My thanks also go to Annie Gasse for information on the inscriptions of Wadi Hammamat, to Ana García Martín for the drawing of the object and to the editors for inviting me to participate in this volume.

² <https://www.cb-gallery.com/en/produkt/kalkstein-fragment-einer-scheintuere/> <accessed 13.12.2022>.

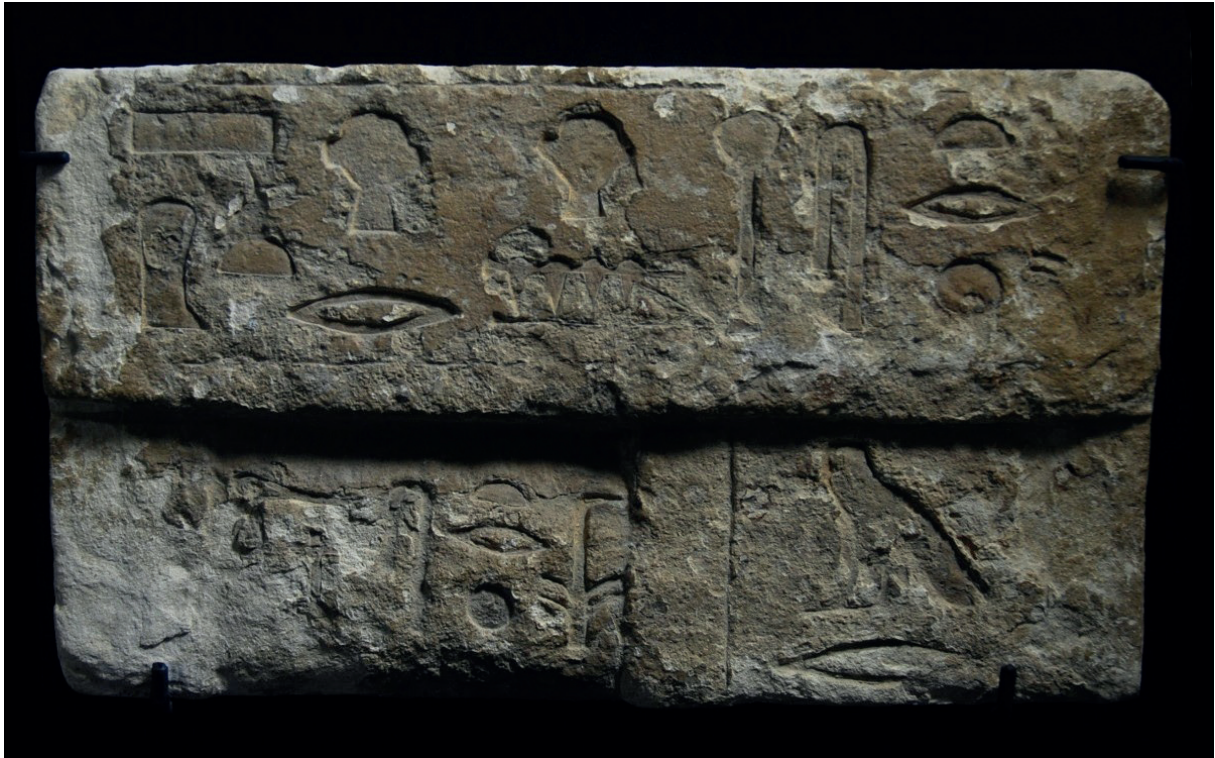


Fig. 1 - Picture of the Altounian block (taken from <https://www.cb-gallery.com/en/produkt/kalkstein-fragment-einer-scheintuere/>, with permission of Christoph Bacher).

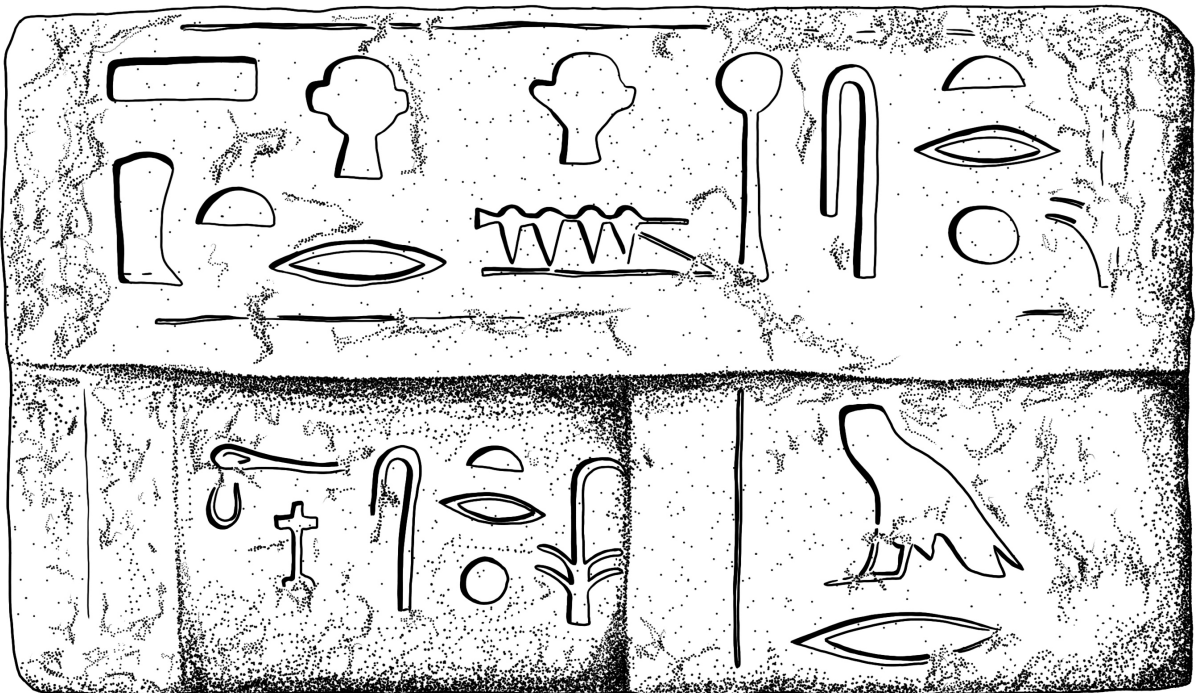


Fig. 2 - Drawing of the Altounian block (drawing by Ana García Martín).

Kingdom false door, supposedly from Saqqara.³ It formed part of the antiquities acquired by Joseph Altounian (1889-1954). After his death, it was auctioned at least twice in Paris: at the Tajan Gallery (13th November 2001) and at the Artcurial Gallery (17th-18th September 2019).⁴

Joseph Altounian (or Altunian) was born into an Armenian family from Constantinople who emigrated to Egypt in the early 20th century.⁵ He was a renowned art collector and antiquities dealer, known for being a key supplier of pharaonic antiquities to Auguste Rodin until 1914. Moreover, he purchased certain objects from the auctions of the Amherst and Macgregor Egyptian collections in 1921 and 1922, respectively.⁶ Regarding this topic, the Metropolitan Museum obtained a significant group of Amarna artefacts in 1957 from his daughter, Jacqueline Rousset (1925-2019), *née* Altounian-Lorbet (1925-2019), which originally came from the Amherst collection. The relief under study may have the same provenance. Specifically, it may be the false door auctioned among the Amherst antiquities laconically described as “a *Ka*-door in limestone”.⁷

The block left Egypt prior to 1937 when Joseph Altounian moved to Mâcon, France. It appears that he regarded the relief as a permanent part of his private collection, which included works of art from various regions and ages. In this sense, it is marked on the reverse with a reddish brand “AN-NEXE N° 445”, possibly referring to a storage register of his collections.⁸

The following description of the relief is not based on direct examination but on information from auction catalogues, supplemented by data and detailed pictures kindly provided by the current owner. This limestone block is 17.8 cm high x 30 cm wide x 3.9/4.0 cm deep. Despite its thin

thickness, the rough surface of its back side shows no traces of having been sawn. The inscribed surface is poorly preserved. The hieroglyphs are carved in sunk relief and lack inner details. A few small patches observed in the pictures may indicate they could have been painted, but this is not certain.

The block (Figs 1-2) includes a significant portion of the lower lintel, the internal jambs, the drum and the central niche of a false door. Some inscriptions are carved on the lintel, the drum, and the right jamb.⁹ Given the use of sunk relief, it may have been placed outside a tomb chapel or, at least, was conceived as an external element.¹⁰ This fact, combined with the absence of inner details in the hieroglyphs and the preserved administrative titles, suggests that the block was part of a modest mortuary monument for a middle or lower-ranking official called Seshemnefer.¹¹ The use of sunk relief could favour a general date range of the 5th-6th dynasty.¹² No other evidence allows for a more precise dating.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Transcription:

Lintel ()

Translation:


Lintel: The custodian/administrator of the royal property, the inspector of the ones in charge of *šzp*, the one in charge of the secrets [...] (?) [Seshemnefer]


Drum: The administrator of the royal property, Seshemne[fer]

Richt jamb: The overseer [(of) ...]

Notes:

^{a)} The title *iry-ht nswt* is visible, notwithstanding the worn surface. It appears again on the drum, possibly being one of the highest or most valued titles held by Seshemnefer. Indeed, this office, also read as *rh nswt*, ‘one who is known to the king’, often figures at the head of the titulary of middle/lower-ranking male and female officials.¹³ It is not clear whether this is a rank or an actual title. In any case, it seems to have been a distinctive feature of palace officials and provincial agents of the state.¹⁴

^{b)} The last sign of the title, which is heavily eroded, is , Gardiner’s hieroglyph O43, a phonogram representing the phonetic sequences *šzp* and, less often, *sšp*. The title is not listed in any catalogue of Old Kingdom titles. On the other hand, although no further interpretations can be drawn from this observation, it is noteworthy that the ‘inspectors’ (*shd*) are often in charge of *hry*-officials,¹⁵ whereas the ‘overseers’ (*imy-r*, see n. ^{e)}) are not.










^{c)} Given the probability that the lintel had a symmetrical arrangement, the remaining space hardly leaves room for more than one and a half squares in which the name of the tomb owner, Seshemnefer, would be expected. Moreover, it is possible that there was still space left for the final 3-phonogram of the title *hry-sšt3* () . In general, these officials were in charge of classified

information and/or were qualified or specialised in a particular activity.¹⁶

^{d)} The name of Seshemnefer is visible, although the last part is badly damaged. This mostly male anthroponym is common throughout the Old Kingdom.¹⁷ So far, no connection has been established between the person mentioned in the relief under study and any of his numerous namesakes.

^{e)} There are no traces left for the restoration of the inscription following the administrative rank *imy-r* ‘overseer’.

THE TITLE 

So far, the Altounian relief is the only sure evidence for the title  *shd hr(y.w) šzp*. However, graffiti in the Wadi Hammamat probably mention the same title and the subordinate office  *hry šzp*.¹⁸ These examples include a netted pattern after the sign  that, in light of the title on the Altounian relief, is probably the hieratic rendition of  (Fig. 3). In these attestations, the sign has no phonetic complements or additional classifiers that could clarify its reading. For this reason, it has previously been read in different ways. Couyat and Montet transcribed the sign as  (sign N24), but did not offer a precise translation. Later, Goyon, following an earlier study by Schäfer,¹⁹ considered it to be  (sign O38) and interpreted the whole title as  *shd hry tm(3)* ‘inspector of the officials of the cadaster (?)’.²⁰ This idea was subsequently accepted by other authors.²¹ In 1991, Fischer reconsidered the evidence and concluded that it was the ideogram  (sign N31) for *w3t* ‘road/way’ and read the title as  *shd hry(.w) w3(.w)t* ‘inspector of the master(s) of the way(s)’.²² However, he acknowledged that *hry šzp* might well be the correct reading.²³ The Altounian block confirms

¹³ JONES 2000, 327-8 [1206]; BAUD 1999, 107-18; FISCHER 2000, 30.

¹⁴ MARTINET 2019, 336-7; DE CENIVAL 1975, 68.

¹⁵ JONES 2000, 946-7 [3488-92]. Only in two instances is the *imy-r* position related to *hry*-officials, but indirectly (JONES 2000, 212 [790] (*imy-r zš(.w) pr hr(y.w) wdb*); 213 [791] (*imy-r sš(.w) pr hr(y.w) wdb m pr.wy hr(y.w) wdb rhyt*)).

¹⁶ JONES 2000, 609 [2233]; RYDSTRÖM 1994; BALANDA 2009.

¹⁷ SCHEELE-SCHWEITZER 2014, 663-5 [3229] (*sšm-nfr*); 481-2 [1984] (*nfr-sšm*).

¹⁸ COUYAT, MONTET 1912, 74-5 [107], 93 [160], 100 [195]; GOYON 1957, 68 [39], 70-1 [44]. They correspond (apart from [160]) to EICHLER 1993, 74-5 [133], 79 [149], 64 [102], and 65 [106], respectively.

¹⁹ GOYON 1957, 68-9 [39]; SCHÄFER 1902. A later Wadi Hammamat inscription includes the title *hry tm(3)* (GOYON 1957, 69 [41]; HELCK 1959, 19 [41]; FISCHER 1991, 62, n. 6).

²⁰ JONES 2000, 646-7 [2369] (*hry (n) tm(?)*). Jones (2000, 947) writes *tm* with the *w3t* logogram.

²¹ EICHLER 1993, 74-5 [133], 79 [149], 64 [102], 65 [106]; JONES 2000, 646-7 [2369], 947 [3492].

²² FISCHER 1991; JONES 2000, 946 [3488] (*shd hry(.w) w3(.w)t*), 600 [2199] (*hry w3.wt*).

²³ FISCHER 1991, 62, n. 9; 64; FISCHER 2002, 29 [2199].

Wadi Hammamat	𓆎 (O43)	𓆏 (N24)	𓆐 (N31)	𓆑 (O31)	𓆒 (U15)	𓆓 (O38)
CM 107						
CM 160a						
CM 160b						
CM 195						
G 39						
G44						

Fig. 3 - Hieratic renditions of 𓆎 in the Wadi Hammamat inscriptions (taken from FISCHER 1991, 59) and Old Kingdom hieratic examples of signs O43, N24, N31, O31, U15, and O38 (taken from GOEDICKE 1988, 30a, 25a-b, 26a, 29a, 39a, 30a; POSENER-KRIÉGER 2004, 34; POSENER-KRIÉGER, VERNER, VYMAZALOVÁ 2006, 446-7; TALLET 2021, 217, pl. 13 [D27]; TALLET 2020, 71; DOBREV, VERNER, VYMAZALOVÁ 2011, 34). Signs not at the same scale.





	Place	Document	𓆎	𓆏	𓆐	𓆑	𓆒	𓆓	Period
<i>Ssm-nfr</i>	Saq.?	Altounian block						?	OK
<i>Hrw</i>	WH	CM 107							6th dyn -Pepy I
<i>K3(=i)-nfr.w</i>	WH	CM 160a							OK
<i>Pth-?</i>	WH	CM 160b							OK
<i>Hnp/Hng-n-sw</i>	WH	CM 195							OK
<i>H3w-nfr</i>	WH	G 39							OK
<i>Ny-ꜥnh-ptḥ</i>	WH	G 44							OK

Tab. 1 - List of *hr(y) šzp*-officials and related titles during the Old Kingdom (OK) according to the evidence from Saqqara (?) (Saq.) and Wadi Hammamat (WH).



Fischer’s suspicions. Despite other possible identifications of the reticulated signs of Wadi Hammamat, such as 𓆑 (sign O31), 𓆏 (sign N24), or less plausibly 𓆐 (sign N31), 𓆒 (sign U15), or 𓆓 (sign O38), by far the most probable candidate is 𓆎 (sign O43) (Fig. 3).





Given that these graffiti were created using various carving techniques such as engraving, scratching, and even pecking, and lacking defining features for accurate paleographic dating, most of them can only be broadly categorised as Old Kingdom inscriptions. Only the inscription



CM 107 is well-dated (Tab. 1). Moreover, none of them provide any information about the role of these officials or the meaning of *šzp*, a term that is hardly present in other administrative titles. Generally, these graffiti are very short. Only the inscription CM 107 refers to one of these officials in a longer list of members of an expedition. Therefore, the possible interpretation of *šzp* can only be implicitly inferred from the few titles attained by their holders, the limited context in which they are attested, and, above all, the possible meaning(s) of *šzp*.



Four of the seven officials related to the *hr(y.w) šzp* were also craftsmen (Tab. 1). Two of them had the title  *hmwty* ‘craftsman’, and the other two were  *imy-r hmwt(y.w)* ‘overseer of craftsmen’.²⁴ In this respect, it is plausible that the fragmentary title  on the Altounian block could be restored . The involvement of *hmwty*, craftsmen, in quarry work, as seems to have been the case with the *šzp*-related officials, strongly suggests a close link between both groups of workers.²⁵ Although less relevant, it is also interesting to note that two of the three *šhd hr(y.w) šzp*, including Seshemnefer, were also *iry-ht nswt*. This title may have meant access to various state resources.

Going deeper into the matter, these circumstances and other data presented below lead to different interpretations of *šzp* and the administrative offices that mention it. These ideas are listed in order of plausibility (according to the author):

First, the *hry.w šzp* could be in charge of a specific administrative branch related to resources for expeditionary and/or stoneworking activities. This possibility is suggested by the position of a *šhd hr(y.w) šzp* called  *H3w* ‘Hau’ in the inscription CM 107 in the Wadi Hammamat, which lists several officials of a quarry expedition sent in the year after the 18th cattle count of Pepy I. They seem to be grouped according to their duties. The upper lines show the date and the titles of the expedition’s leaders. Below them is a register of the officials involved in the quarrying activities: six  *imy-ht hmwt(y.w)*, ‘under-supervisor(s) of crafts-

men’, and two  *iry-ht nswt imy-r kd(.w)* ‘administrator(s) of the royal property and overseer(s) of builder(s)/mason(s)’.²⁶ Finally, another register at the bottom lists several administrative and juridical officials. They are grouped as three  *z3b šhd šz(.w)* ‘inspector(s) of scribe(s) of the state’, two  *smsw h(3y)t* ‘elder(s) of the court’, and three  *iry-md3t* ‘keeper(s) of documents’.²⁷ Apparently, Hau would belong to this group of officials since he is mentioned after them at the end of this last register.²⁸

In this administrative or juridical context, the meaning of *hry šzp* might derive from the trilateral verb *šzp*, ‘to receive’, ‘to take possession of’,²⁹ here interpreted as an active perfective participle (‘the one who receives’ or ‘the one who takes possession’).³⁰ In this line of reasoning, the coetaneous expression  *šzp nḥ* /  *šzp r nḥ* for ‘statue’ has been interpreted literally as ‘receiver for living/in order to live’.³¹

Consequently, the *hry.w šzp* could be officials in charge of receiving or taking some kind of supplies, tools or people, as also seems to be the case with some analogous titles in later times, such as  *iry šzpt* ‘keeper of (the department of) received goods (?)’ during the Middle Kingdom,³² or  *hry šzp.tw n htpt-ntr n Wsir*, ‘the one in charge of what has been received for the god’s offerings to/of Osiris’, in the mid-18th dynasty.³³



Some Old Kingdom papyri from the archives of the mortuary temples of Neferirkare and Reneferef at Abusir associate the verb *šzp* (generally

²⁴ JONES 2000, 595 [2179] (*hmwt(y)*), 179-80 [680] (*imy-r hmwt(y.w)*).

²⁵ EICHLER 1993, 185-7.

²⁶ JONES 2000, 293-4 [1071] (*imy-ht hmwt(y.w)*), 327-8 [1206] (*iry-ht nswt*), 258-9 [935] (*imy-r kd(.w)*).

²⁷ JONES 2000, 814 [2978] (*z3b šhd zš(.w)*), 902-3 [3313] (*smsw h(3y)t*), 317-8 [1167] (*iry-md3t*). The coetaneous inscription G 21 presents a similar order, but only among its highest officials (GOYON 1957, 55, pl. 8 [21]).


²⁸ Wadi Hammamat inscription CM 195 mentions  *hry šzp Hnp/Hng-n-sw* ‘the one in charge of the *šzp*, Henepnesu/Henegnesu’. This graffti is related because of its proximity and similar patina, technique and palaeography to the unpublished rock inscription  *sm(h)r pr Rf/sm(h)r Šrf* ‘companion of the house Ref/the companion Sheref’ (JONES 2000, 891-2 [3263] (*sm(h)r*); 896 [3287] (*sm(h)r pr*); PN I 222, 8 (*r-f*, a New Kingdom name); Neither *Šrf*, nor *Hnp/Hng-n-sw* are attested as personal names.





²⁹ TLA lemma no. 157160; HANNIG 2003, 1316-9 [33451-522].



³⁰ EDEL 1955, 303-5 §§ 627-8; ALLEN 2000, 324-5.



³¹ FISCHER 1963, 24-8; EATON-KRAUSS 1984, 85-8 [§103].



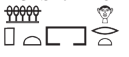
³² Quirke (2004, 70) translates “keeper of the outgoing goods (?)” cf. FRANKE, MARÉE 2013, 100-1 [BM EA 239, n. 3, 13, 21].

³³ Stela Florence inv. no. 2585; BOSTICCO 1965, 17-9 [7]; PM VIII 70 [803-048-956] (‘Head of the reception of provisions for the god’s offerings’). The title appears in *Wb* IV 534, 8. The same title in *Wb* IV 534, 7 from the Ramesside stela London BM EA 167 actually refers to  *hry rhty*, ‘chief of laundrymen’ (JAMES 1970, 29, n. 6, 30, n. 1, pl. 25 [167]).

written as  instead of , see Fig. 3 for an example) with the receipt of irregular incomes consisting of different goods, taxes or dues.³⁴ These include cloths, tools for the libation, papyrus, wheat ‘received as food’, gifts, travel fares or ‘good things’ for the morning offerings.³⁵ Similarly, the terms  *šzpt* and  *šzpt nswt*, which appear in a few administrative titles, perhaps refer to the reception of clothes for the king³⁶ and not to a homonymous type of linen, as has generally been interpreted.³⁷ Actually, apart from the aforementioned titles, the *šzpt*-linen only appears during the Old Kingdom in an early unusual offering list and an epigraph from a 6th dynasty provincial tomb scene³⁸ and is virtually absent from the accounts, except for two doubtful examples.³⁹

Alternatively, since Hau’s colleagues in CM 107 seem to be involved in legal and archival activities, the *hry.w šzp*-agents could be receivers of royal commands and reports. In this sense, *šzp* is related to this task in a fragmentary papyrus of the 4th dynasty that mentions  *šzp wh3 (?) m hwt=f-[w(i)] [...]* ‘the reception of an official order (?) from [...] (of) Khu[fu]’, and in a late 6th dynasty royal decree which mentions a person  *šzp.t=f srw zš.t=f wd.w* ‘who receives an order of recruitment, and writes commands’.⁴⁰

In conclusion, it is conceivable that the ‘receptions’ managed by the *hry.w šzp*, whether of materials or commands, were related to quarrying and/or stonework, because almost all of these officials were linked to these activities, and some of these agents had other titles associated with craftsmen. As ‘officials in charge of the reception’, whatever lies behind this translation, they may have played a similar role, albeit limited to the quarrying expeditions, to other *hry*-officials in charge of goods obtained through different administrative procedures, as is the case of  *hry škr* ‘the one in charge of the *škr*-offering’ and, above all,  *hry wdb*, ‘the one in charge of the reversion of offerings’.⁴¹

A second set of interpretations of the *šzp*-related titles derives from the literal interpretation of the hieroglyph  as a logogram. Unfortunately, there is no agreed and unambiguous interpretation of what it represents. The sign has a large number of variants.⁴² It has generally been considered a fence or, more precisely, a “fence outside primitive shrine  O 19” (Fig. 4.1d).⁴³ Despite the lack of clear evidence of a **šzp*-word for referring to a fence, the word may exist and could be extrapolated to other kinds of ‘barriers’. According to Wallet-Lebrun, a puzzling  *šzpt hrt* ‘upper (?) *šzpt*-chamber’ in the mortuary complex of King Merenre could be the granite blocking plug and frame in the upper part of the

³⁴ POSENER-KRIÉGER 1976, 223-4. According to New Kingdom administrative papyri, *šzp* would refer to the act of checking and verifying the delivery of goods at the very moment of their reception, see MEGALLY 1977, 247-9.

³⁵ POSENER-KRIÉGER 1976, 358 (clothes), 19, 21 (tool for the libation, *šzp kbhw*), 17, 529 (papyrus, *šzp sš*), 223, 336-8 (wheat received as food, *zwt šzpt m šbw*), 332-3, 223, 368, 633, n. 3 (gifts, *šzp 3wt*); 461 [t], n. 3 (travel fare, *šzp hmt*); POSENER-KRIÉGER, VERNER, VYMAZALOVÁ 2006, 148-9, 283, pls 62/62a [b4] (reception of the morning offering (consisting) in good things, *šzp.n=f ht-dw3t m ht nfrt*).

³⁶ JONES 2000, 220 [820] = 257-8 [931] (*imy-r šzpt nt nswt*), 775 [2817] (*htm(w) šzpt nswt*), 965 [3559] (*shd zš(w) šzpt nswt*). Another title mentions clothes received from a temple (JONES 2000, 650 [2379] (*hry-tp d3t šzpt m hwt-ntr*)).

³⁷ SCHEELE 2005, 42-3.

³⁸ See, respectively, BROVARIKI 1996, 119, fg. 1, 125 [x + 2]; FISCHER 1976, 11, fg. 4. Later, two *Coffin Texts* spells also refer to *šzpt* as a kind of cloth: CT VII 333a (sp. 1069); 517e (sp. 1179).



³⁹ POSENER-KRIÉGER, VERNER, VYMAZALOVÁ 2006, 52-3, 228, pls 14/14a [e²], 196-7, 312, pls 86/86a [I].


⁴⁰ See, respectively, TALLET 2021, 61-2, n. b-c, 217, pl. 13 [D 27]; GOEDICKE 1967, 88 [VIII], 106 [42] (Coptos B); on *srw*, ‘order for the recruitment of people/transfer order’, see GOEDICKE 1967, 99-100 [22] (Coptos B); TLA lemma no. 139270; HANNIG 2003, 1172 {28968} (*Verlegungsbefehl*).


⁴¹ FISCHER 1991, 61 [12]; JONES 2000, 646 [2367] (*hry škr*); FISCHER 1991, 61 [5]; JONES 2000, 603-6 [2212-2218] (*hry wdb*); see also FISCHER 1991, 62 [5’]; JONES 2000, 947 [3489] (*shd (n) hry(w) wdb*).


⁴² FISCHER 1963, 26, fg. 1.

⁴³ GARDINER 1957, 497 [O42/O43]; BADAWY 1948, 54-5; FISCHER 1963, 25-6; BETRÒ 1996, 214; FISCHER 1999, 37 [O42/O43]; BORGHOUTS 2010, 108 [O42]; TSL_1_4814 at <http://thotsignlist.org> <accessed 17.09.2023>; PHRP O42 at <https://www.phrp.be> <accessed 17.09.2023>; MATHIEU 2021, 147-8. There are dummy stone fences in the chapels of the *heb-sed* court of the Step Pyramid (FIRTH 1925, 155-6, fgs 1-2, pl. IV [3]; LAUER 1936, 133, pls. 55, 59, 65 [3]; MATHIEU 2021, 148, fgs 8 [a-b]).

pyramid's gallery.⁴⁴ Returning to the original idea of 'fence', some examples of  seem to depict wooden stockades, sometimes consisting of wooden stanchions with a cord or a strip of wood passing through the holes at the top of the posts (Fig. 4.1a-c). In other examples, however, and in its later variant  (sign O42),⁴⁵ these stakes seem to be cords because of the loops at their ends (Fig. 4.2a-c). Actually, according to Griffith, the hieroglyph depicts "a number of threads, regularly spaced, each looped at one end, and at the other attached to a horizontal bar of wood; a thread passes through the loops parallel to the bar, and from near one end of the latter there projects a short curved handle (?)"⁴⁶ Given these circumstances

and the fact that there is a word  *šzp* that means 'cordage' from the Middle Kingdom,⁴⁷ it seems plausible that the word *šzp* mentioned in the titles under consideration, which are primarily related to quarrying activities in the Wadi Hammamat, could refer to a group of devices related to stone-cutting and/or transport activities. Since the extracted blocks were most likely dropped from their place of origin to the bottom of the aforementioned wadi,⁴⁸ the logogram might refer to some devices made of ropes and wood for 'receiving' large quarried stones on sledges by which they would be transported. Although almost all the Old Kingdom objects made of greywacke from Wadi Hammamat were easy-to-handle statues, bowls and jars, a few were considerably bigger blocks that required more care and attention, such as sphinxes,⁴⁹ pyramidions and royal sarcophagi.⁵⁰

What would these hypothetical *šzp*-devices look like? Maybe, they had different forms depending, for instance, on the shape, size, or weight of the stones. Sometimes, they could be made by wooden stanchions with a transversal rope or beam that would serve as a parapet, as shown in some transport boats in the Unas causeway (Fig. 4.1e).⁵¹ On other occasions, they could be cord-based fastening systems or cargo nets (Fig. 4.2a-c),⁵² similar to the 'sticks-and-ropes' system for hanging mat works depicted on certain false doors (Fig. 4.2d-e), or the truss girdle made of ropes that strengthens the seafaring ships (Fig. 4.2f).⁵³ Alternatively, they might be combined wood and cord frames set on transport sledges.⁵⁴ In this regard, some Old Kingdom hieroglyphs of the *hnw*-bark of Sokar (Fig. 4.3d-f) already depict its peculiar base that resembles the later variant  (Fig. 4.3a-c). Later elaborated reliefs reveal that it was made using wooden stakes and ropes (Fig. 4.3f).⁵⁵ They recall similar attaching devices for carrying great stone blocks (Fig. 4.4a-c). Finally, they could be various systems of beams, ropes and 'bearing stones' (a type of pre-pulley) to effectively move the sledges with heavy blocks, such as the system placed in the ramp of Quarry P at Hatnub or the devices employed on the Giza plateau.⁵⁶

As a result, it is possible that the *hry(y.w)* *šzp* oversaw the creation and operation of these systems involving ropes and wooden structures. In rather different contexts, there were some *hry*-officials also in charge of materials or goods, as is the case of  *hry ht.w*, 'the one in charge of

⁴⁴ Urk. I 107, 5-6; WALLET-LEBRUN 1989, 56-8. This hapax is attested in Weni's biographical text.

⁴⁵ The oldest example of this variant I know so far is on stela BM EA 574 (reign of Amenemhat II) (https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA574 <accessed 11.10.2023>).

⁴⁶ GRIFFITH 1898, 45-6 [fg. 53].

⁴⁷ JONES 1988, 188 [165]; WILLEMS 1996, 431, n. s; TLA lemma no. 157290; HANNIG 2006, 2488 {33561-62} (**Seilbindungen und Verschnürungen*).

⁴⁸ GOEDICKE 1964, 48-50; LEPROHON 1989.

⁴⁹ FAY 1996, 63 [12] (is 'schist' = greywacke?); D[ELVAUX] 2006, 51, 219 [cat. 64].

⁵⁰ NOVÁKOVÁ 2018, 338. WISSA 1994; KLEMM, KLEMM 2010, 7-10; WISSA 2011. Some sarcophagi of queens are also made in this material (CALLENDER 2011, 238, 262). Weni's biographical text mentions the pyramidion and sarcophagus of King Merenre coming from this area (WISSA 2011, 223); another greywacke pyramidion from the pyramid of a queen is also known (CALLENDER 2011, 290). On the damage to the sarcophagus of Teti possibly caused by extraction activities, see LABROUSSE, ALBOUNY 1996, 65.

⁵¹ GOYON 1969, 24-5.

⁵² FISCHER 1963, 26, fg. 1 [IA B6 = PT §812^p]; PIERRE-CROISIAU 2001, pl. I [P/F/W inf A 25] (fg. 4.2a).

⁵³ LANDSTRÖM 1970, 64-5, fg. 191 [1].

⁵⁴ LEHNER, LACOVARA 1985; DELVAUX 2018, 48-9, fg. 4.

⁵⁵ This base is reproduced in three dimensions in a Saite gold pendant (Cairo CG 53310); see MASPERO 1902, 3-4, pl. III [1].

⁵⁶ See GOURDON 2019 and LEHNER 2021, respectively.

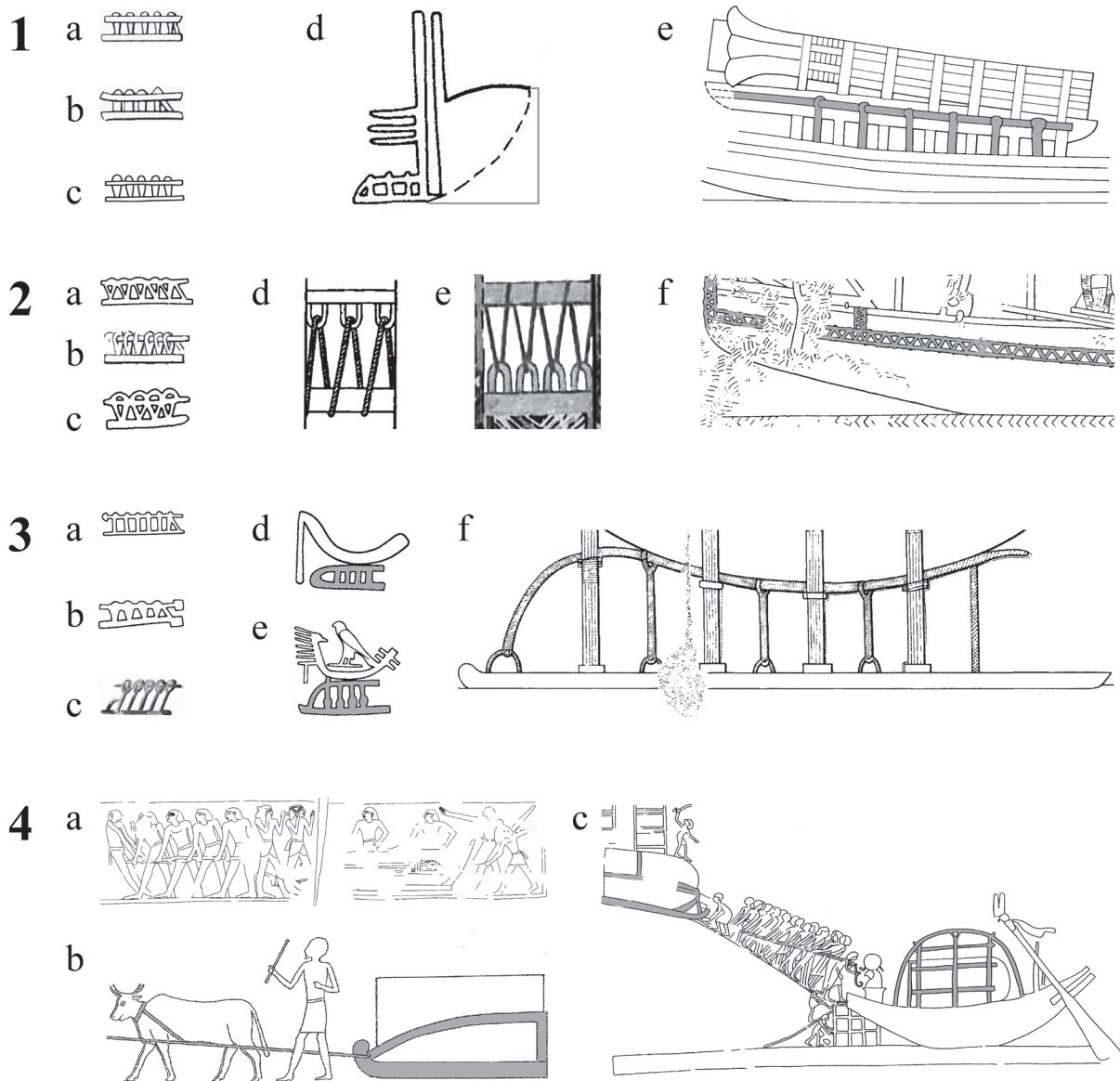








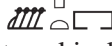





Fig. 4 - Possible interpretations of the sign O42. 1a-e) The sign O42 as fence: a-c) examples from hieroglyphs (VON BISSING, KEES 1923, pl. 16 [39] [41]; BARTA 2015, 138, fg. 3); d) an example of a *pr-wr* chapel (sign O19) preceded by a fence (PIERRE-CROISIAU 2001, pl. 9, col. 34); e) parapet in a transport boat from the Unas causeway (ARNOLD 1991, 277, fg. 6.37). 2a-f) The sign O42 as a fastening system made of cords and wooden sticks: a-c) examples from hieroglyphs (PIERRE-CROISIAU 2001, pl. 1, col. 26A; ÉPRON, DAUMAS 1939, pl. 37; PIERRE-CROISIAU 2019, pl. 11, col. 2); d-f) mat hanging systems depicted in false doors, and truss girdles of cords on boats (taken from BORCHARDT 1937, 38; BORCHARDT 1907, pl. 24; BORCHARDT 1913, pl. 13). 3a-f) Sign O43 as complex fastening devices for transporting loads: a-b) examples from hieroglyphs (PIERRE-CROISIAU 2001, pls. 3, col. 16; 2b, col. 91); c) a later development of the sign (sign O42) (GRIFFITH 1898, pl. 5 [53]); d-e) transporting or supporting devices under the *hnw*-boat (PIERRE-CROISIAU 2001, pls. 1, col. 31; 2b, col. 68); f) a later detailed depiction of such device in the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY 1940, pl. 221). 4a-c) Different devices for transporting stone blocks made of cords and wooden beams of the late Old Kingdom (a) and New Kingdom (b-c) (MOSTAFA 2014, 82, fg. 13; DARESSY 1911, 263; MARTINEZ 2009, 163, fg. 5). Figures not at the same scale.





wood’, or  *hry hkr(.w)/hkrt nsw* ‘the one in charge of the (royal) luxuria’.⁵⁷

Finally, there is a much more contrived interpretation of  in the title . The hieroglyph also served as the logogram for ‘hand’s width’ (*šzp*),⁵⁸ a unit of length divided into four fingers (*db*). Consequently, it could be a sportive writing for *ifd* ‘four’ or, in some contexts, ‘rectangle/rectangular block’, or ‘rectangular area’.⁵⁹ Thus, the *hr(y.w) šzp* could be officials responsible for the stone blocks extracted from the quarries or, alternatively, in charge of an area that could be related to the living or working spaces of labourers. Regarding this ‘spatial’ option, there are, again, some *hry*-officials in charge of spaces or, more precisely, buildings, as the early title  *hry (w)d3* ‘the one in charge of the magazine’, or  *hry pr* ‘the one in charge of the house’.⁶⁰

As an aside, but still in the context of quarrying, there are other less feasible interpretations of  in the title , which illustrate the (too) wide variety of alternative readings that the sign may inspire either as a pictogram/logogram or phonogram. The sign could represent a ladder,⁶¹ or, considering the sign as a fence again, it could be a kind of barrier or palisade made with wooden stakes and rope nets, as in the case of some

detailed depictions of hunting grounds named  *ht*.⁶² On the other hand, considering the phonetic value of the sign,  could be related to  *šzpt* ‘*šzpt*-tent’, a kind of temporary hut or kiosk attested from the Middle Kingdom or later.⁶³ Another possibility is that the office could refer to  *šzpw/zšpw/sšpw* ‘sphinx’, only attested, again, from the Middle Kingdom.⁶⁴


However, this word could derive from  *sšp*, ‘bright’, ‘light’,⁶⁵ rather than *šzp*, ‘to receive’, because this origin would be far more in accordance with the solar connotations of these hybrid beings in ancient Egypt.⁶⁶ Actually, a passage in the *Pyramid Texts* (PT 515 §1178a-b^{PMN}) mentions two obelisks along with the dual hapax  *sšp-wy* that might be interpreted as ‘two sphinxes’.⁶⁷

All these interpretations of the title  probably run parallel to the presence of the hieratic version of  on several Old Kingdom building blocks from private tombs (Ptahshepses and Wer-kare at Abusir, and Akhethetep at Saqqara) and a royal mortuary complex (Pepy I at Saqqara South) (Fig. 5). These signs have been identified with the hieroglyph , but they are actually much closer to  (Fig. 3).⁶⁸ These building marks were painted on the blocks before they were set in their

⁵⁷ FISCHER 1991, 61 [9]; JONES 2000, 608 [2229] (*hry ht.w*); FISCHER 1991, 61 [10]; JONES 2000, 608 [2230-1] (*hry hkr/hkr nswt*); see also JONES 2000, 947 [3490] (*šhd hry(.w) ht*).

⁵⁸ TLA lemma no. 157200; HANNIG 2003, 1319 {33538}.

⁵⁹ TLA lemma no. 24560; 850571; HANNIG 2003, 70 {1617}; 489-90 {1611} {11809} (4); TLA lemma no. 24570; HANNIG 2006, 171 {1625} (rectangle); TLA lemma no. 24600; HANNIG 2006, 171 {1625} (rectangular area). For examples of sportive writing, see GOEDICKE 1965; see also, to a lesser degree,  *m^cb3*, ‘harpoon’ (TLA lemma no. 68700; HANNIG 2003,


516 {12531}), that was homonymous to  *m^cb3* ‘30’ (TLA lemma no. 68690; HANNIG 2003, 516 {12525}).

⁶⁰ JONES 2000, 601-3 [2202-9] (*hry (w)d3*); FISCHER 1991, 61 [6]; JONES 2000, 606-7 [2220-5] (*hry pr*); see also FISCHER 1991, 62 [6’]; JONES 2000, 294 [1075] (*imy-ht hry(.w) pr*).

⁶¹ BOREUX 1924, 514, n. 3. On Old Kingdom ladders, see BLOK 1928; LIPTAY 2017, 284.

⁶² On these palisades, see e.g. HERB, FÖRSTER 2009, 27-8, fg. 10; DAVIES 1920, pls 6-7; NEWBERRY 1895, pl. 7. On *ht*, see TLA lemma-no. 39870; HANNIG 2003, 283 {5655}.

⁶³ TLA lemma no. 157250; HANNIG 2006, 2487 {33541}.

⁶⁴ TLA lemma no. 157210; HANNIG 2006, 2487 {33549} (two attestations occur in the Wadi Hammamat). For other Middle Kingdom examples, see POSTEL, RÉGEN 2005, 237, 268-70 [nn.], 288-9, fgs 5-6, col. x + 18; ALTENMÜLLER 2015, 168 [AnnP x + 4], pl. 5. During the Old Kingdom, the only known term with this meaning is  *m3(i)* ‘lion/sphinx?’, see TLA lemma no. 66380; HANNIG 2003, 500 {12074}.

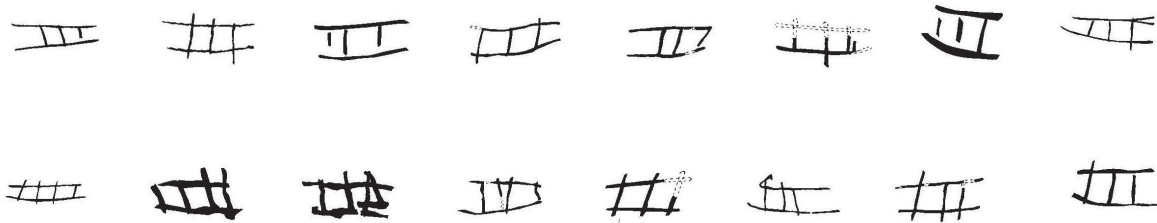
⁶⁵ TLA lemma no. 144850; 144860; HANNIG 2003, 1235 {30498} {20502}.

⁶⁶ OCKINGA 1984, 339.

⁶⁷ TLA lemma no. 157210; HANNIG 2003, 1319 {33549}; FAULKNER 1969, 190. On the contrary, Allen (2015, 163) translates it as “the two dazzling ones” and Mathieu (2018, 463) as “deux lumières”.

⁶⁸ DOBREV, VERNER, VYMAZALOVÁ 2011, 52 [U15]; VYMAZALOVÁ 2014, 261-75 (Werkare); VERNER 1992, 163-4, 166 (Ptahshepses); CIAVATTI 2022 (Akhethotep).

Mortuary temple of Pepy I, South Saqqara



Mastaba of Werkare, Abusir



Mastaba of Ptahshepses, Abusir



Mastaba of Akhethetep, Saqqara



Fig. 5 - *šzp*-like building marks from the Memphite necropolis (not at the same scale)
(taken from DOBREV *et al.* 2011, 52 [U15]; CIAVATTI 2022, 356 [docs. 2-3; 5].

final position. Therefore, they are probably related to extraction, shaping and/or transport operations. They are also related to other hieroglyphic-like signs and non-textual marks. According to Andrassy and Ciavatti, they might refer to subdivisions of a phyle of workers.⁶⁹ Alternatively, Verner has proposed that they could be topographical indications of the precise provenance of the blocks in the quarries.⁷⁰ Be that as it may, it is evident that this hieroglyph was part of a ‘non-writing system’ employed to identify a particular group or workers, a place of origin, or a destination, among other possibilities.⁷¹ Therefore, in this case, 𓆎 probably has no direct relation with the title outlined in these pages.

CONCLUSIONS

The Altounian relief, with its mention of a *šhd hry(w)*, is an important document for reading an enigmatic sign attested in several administrative

titles in the Wadi Hammamat. This identification, however, raises new questions about the precise meaning of these offices and, above all, of the term *šzp* and its logogram. The word can refer, among other possibilities, to a specific administrative practice that took place on the occasion of quarrying expeditions, or it could be connected to the creation of one or more types of fixing or transporting devices of great loads or to the control or management of an area or settlement.

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⁶⁹ ANDRÁSSY 2009; CIAVATTI 2022, 348, 353.








⁷⁰ VERNER 1992, 163-4, 166, 168-9.

⁷¹ VAN DER MOEZEL 2015; For a list of signs of this kind, see ANDRÁSSY 2009.

- TLA = Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae <<https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de>>, Web app version 2.0.2.1, 8/8/2023, ed. by T.S. Richter, D.A. Werning, H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, P. Dils.
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