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THE *TKNW* AND THE *HNS*-EMBLEM : ARE THEY TWO RELATED OBJECTS ?






Rasha METAWI *

Despite the scholarly attempts to decipher the enigmatic *tknw* ⁽¹⁾, which appears as a regular feature in reliefs of funerary processions and burial rites in private Theban tombs, this object remains obscure. Discussions raised about its nature and exact function gave rise to many theories and speculations. On the other hand, important issues such as the origin of the object, the significance of its name, and whether it had a royal equivalent were either ignored or insufficiently discussed. Undoubtedly, the repetitive appearance of the object in funerary scenes suggests that it must have had an important role in funeral rites. The fact that it only appears in private tombs brings up the question of the existence of a royal equivalent. Also the fact that the object is attested in tombs since the Middle Kingdom raises the possibility of a forerunner. A re-examination of this funerary object from a different perspective focussing on the abovementioned issues seems, therefore, appropriate. Yet, it would be useful to begin with a brief review of the previous discussions.

The appearance of the *tknw* has been attested in at least thirty four private Theban tombs dating between the Twelfth Dynasty and the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, as follows :⁽²⁾

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I am very indebted to Professor J.-C. Goyon for his valuable suggestion regarding the transliteration of many of the corrupt text associated with the *tknw* figure.

(1) The name «*tknw*» is also attested with the variant writings of : , , ,  and .

(2) PM, *TB*, I/1, 2nd ed., Oxford 1960, pp. 24, 27, 31, 35, 41, 67, 73, 79, 83, 91, 103, 108, 121, 154, 162, 165, 189, 201, 212, 218, 236, 240, 242, 280, 325, 343, 353, 366, 455, 458.

- Two tombs dating from the Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty : Antefoker (60), and Sehetepibre (Ramesseum).
- Twenty-six tombs dating from the New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty : Tombs n° 12, 15, 17, 20, 24, 39, 42, 53, 55, 78, 81, 82, 92, 96B, 100, 104, 120, 122, 125, 127, 172, 224, 260 and 276. In addition to the tombs of Renni (EK7), and Paheri.
- Five tombs dating from the New Kingdom, Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties : Tombs n° 41, 49, 284, A26, C4 (?).
- One tomb dating from the Late Period (Twenty-Sixth Dynasty) : Ibi (36).

The iconography of the *tknw* object as attested in these tombs could be discerned as follows :

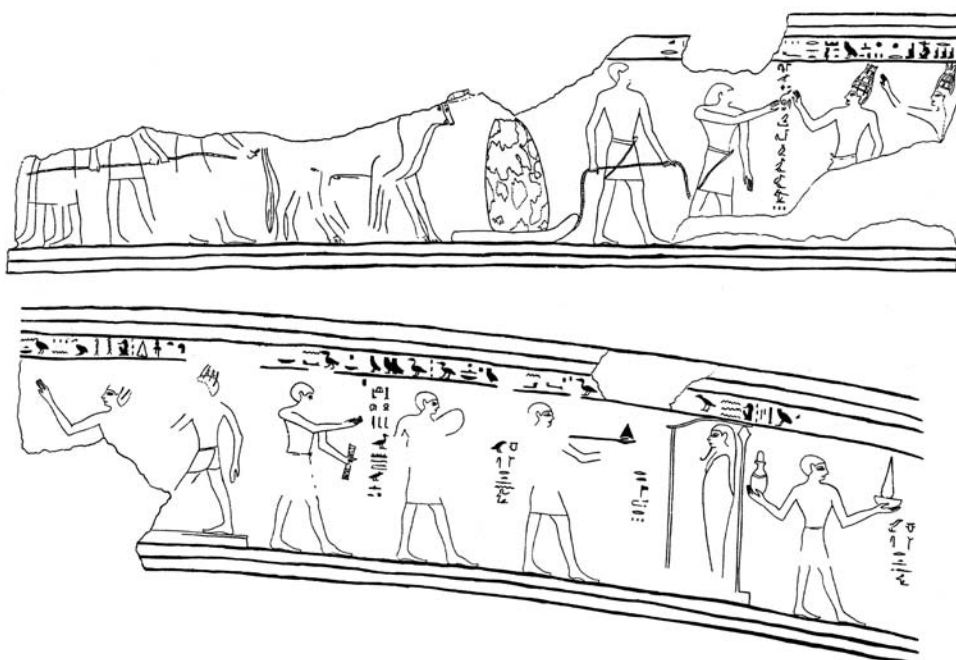


Fig. 1 – The *tknw*. Sehetepibre Tomb, Twelfth Dynasty.
[Drawing from J. E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum*, London 1898, pl. IX].

1. A shapeless spotted sack dragged on a sledge as in the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of Sehetepibre (cf. fig. 1)⁽³⁾.
2. A shrouded pear-shaped object dragged on a sledge. This form is attested in a number of tombs dating from the Eighteenth Dynasty including : Paheri⁽⁴⁾ ; Amenemhet (53)⁽⁵⁾ and Amenemhet (82)⁽⁶⁾ . It also appears in the tomb of Neferhotep (49)⁽⁷⁾ from the Nineteenth Dynasty ; and in the tomb of Ibi (36)⁽⁸⁾ from the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.
3. A fully shrouded human figure crouching on his hands and knees on a sledge (facing downwards), as in the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Ramose (55)⁽⁹⁾.
4. A shrouded man, head exposed, squatting upright on a sledge. This form appears in the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of Antefoker (60)⁽¹⁰⁾. It is also attested in many tombs belonging to the Eighteenth Dynasty such as : Hery⁽¹¹⁾, Tetaky⁽¹²⁾, Renni⁽¹³⁾, Puyemrē⁽¹⁴⁾ and

⁽³⁾ J. E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum, Egyptian Research Account (1896)*, London 1898, pl. IX.

⁽⁴⁾ J.-J. Tylor, F.-L. Griffith, *The Tomb of Paheri at El Kab, EEF* 11, London 1895, pl. 5.

⁽⁵⁾ For the scene showing the dragging of the «*tknw*» as part of the funeral procession reliefs in the tomb of Amenemhet (TT.53) : see J. Gwyn Griffiths, «The *Tekenu*, the Nubians, and the Butic Burial», *Kush* 6, 1958, pl. XXXII, facing p. 112 (after MMA photo negative n° T 3243).

⁽⁶⁾ N. de G. Davies, and A.H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Amenemhet (N°82), EEF*, London 1915, pl. XII, 50-1.

⁽⁷⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Nefer-Hotep at Thebes, I, PMMA* 9, New York 1932, p. 42 and pl. XX.

⁽⁸⁾ V. Scheil, «*Tombeaux thébains, Le tombeau d'Aba*», *MMAF* 5/2, Cairo 1894, pl. IX, pp. 648-650.

⁽⁹⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of the Vizier Ramose, EES*, London 1941, pl. XXV.

⁽¹⁰⁾ N. de G. Davies, and A. H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Antefoker, Vizier of Sesostris I and of his Wife Senet*, London 1920, pp. 20-22 and pl. XXII.

⁽¹¹⁾ G. Menéndez, «La procesión fúnebraria de la tumba de Hery (TT.12) en Dra Abu el-Naga», in *BAEDE* 15, 2005, pp. 29-65.

⁽¹²⁾ N. de G. Davies, «The Tomb of Tetaky at Thebes», in *JEA* 11, 1925, pp. 16-18, pl. V ; G. Legrain in Lord Carnarvon and H. Carter, *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes : A Record of Work done 1907-1911*, London 1912, p. 17 and pls. VII-IX.

⁽¹³⁾ J. J. Tylor, *Wall Drawings and Monuments of El Kab, IV : The Tomb of Renni, EES* 4, London 1900, pl. III.

⁽¹⁴⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Puyemrê at Thebes, II, PMMA*, 1922, pl. 46.

probably also Nebamun (17)⁽¹⁵⁾ where the damaged figure of the *tknw* suggests an uprightly seated form. Moreover, the depiction of the *tknw* in the tomb of Nebamun (24)⁽¹⁶⁾ is said to look like a crouching statue dragged at the head of the procession.

5. A shrouded oval figure with human head and hands emerging from its skin-like shroud. The figure is lying facing downwards on a low bed or a stool that has animal legs bent towards the interior. This form is encountered in three tombs dating from the Eighteenth

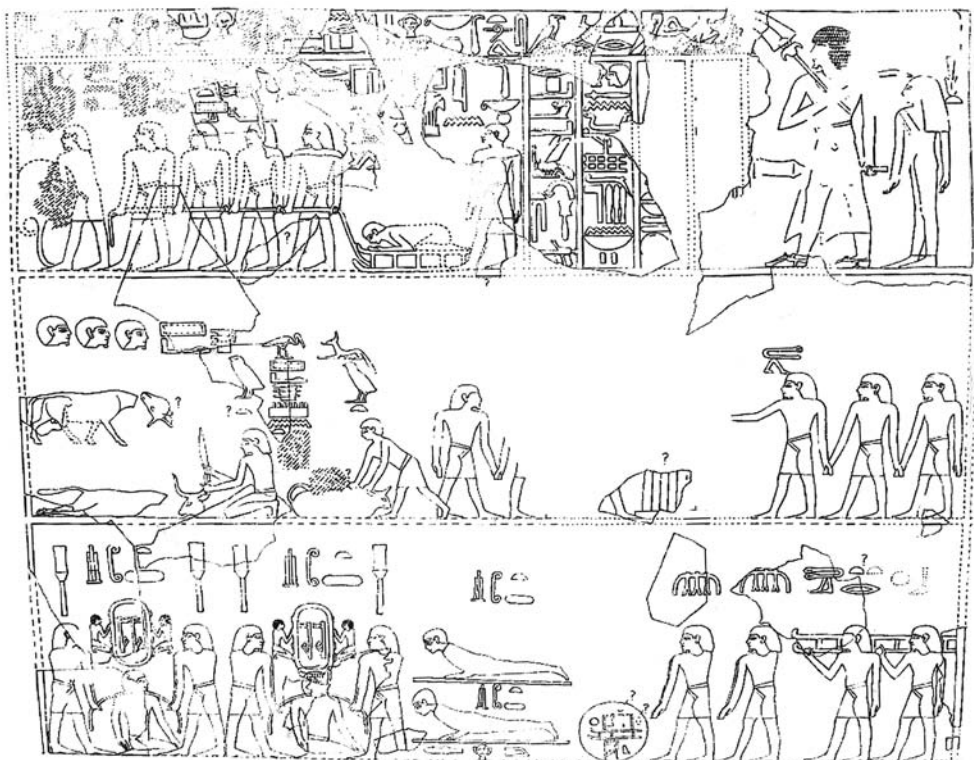


Fig. 2 – The *tknw*. Mentuherkhopeshef Tomb (20), Eighteenth Dynasty.
[Drawing from N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, London 1913, pl. VIII].

⁽¹⁵⁾ M. Werbrouck, *Les pleureuses dans l'Égypte ancienne*, Bruxelles 1938, pl. III.

⁽¹⁶⁾ U. Bouriant, «Tombeau de Neb-Amun», *RecTrav* 9, 1898, p. 97.

Dynasty : Rekhmirē (100)⁽¹⁷⁾, Sennefer (96)⁽¹⁸⁾ and Duaerneheh (125)⁽¹⁹⁾.

6. An uncovered figure of a man with short-haired crouching voluntarily on hands and knees, on a sledge (depicted in an archaic mode as if seen from above and from the side concurrently). This form has been attested only in the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Mentuherkhopeshf (20)⁽²⁰⁾ (cf. fig. 2).

The texts accompanying the *tknw* in its various tomb depictions could be generally grouped into a number of statements⁽²¹⁾ :

1. *st3 tknw = Antefoker (60)*⁽²²⁾.
“Dragging the *tknw*”.
2. *iw.f m htp r m33 st3 tknw hr [...]* = Mentuherkhopeshf (20)⁽²³⁾.
“He comes in peace to see the dragging of the *tknw* [...]”.
3. *st3 tknw r hr(t)-ntr = Tetaky (15)*⁽²⁴⁾.
“Dragging the *tknw* to the necropolis”. Also in the tomb of Renni (EK7)⁽²⁵⁾ where the text reads *st3 tknw r hr(t)-ntr pn*.

⁽¹⁷⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-rê at Thebes*, 2 vol., New York 1943, (re-edition in one volume : New York 1973), pl. V.

⁽¹⁸⁾ C. Campbell, *Two Theban Princes Kha-em-uast & Amen-khepeshf sons of Ramses III ; Menna, a Land-Steward ; and their Tombs*, London 1910, pl. facing p. 102 [Middle].

⁽¹⁹⁾ J. Settgast, «Untersuchungen zu altägyptischen Bestattungsdarstellungen», *ADAIK* 3, Glückstadt 1963, pp. 92, 119, and pl. 10.

⁽²⁰⁾ N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, *EEF*, London 1913, pp. 9-19, pl. II and VIII.

⁽²¹⁾ Cf. F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 118.

⁽²²⁾ N. de G. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *Antefoker*, pl. XXII.

⁽²³⁾ N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pl. VIII.

⁽²⁴⁾ G. Legrain, in Lord Carnarvon and Carter (eds), *Five years' Explorations at Thebes*, p. 17.

⁽²⁵⁾ E. Lefebure, «Le sacrifice humain d'après les rites de Busiris et d'Abydos», *Sphinx* 3, fasc. 3, 1900, p. 160.

4. [...] *r imntt sp 2 [...]* = Paheri⁽²⁶⁾ (cf. fig. 3).

“[...] towards the west, towards the west”.

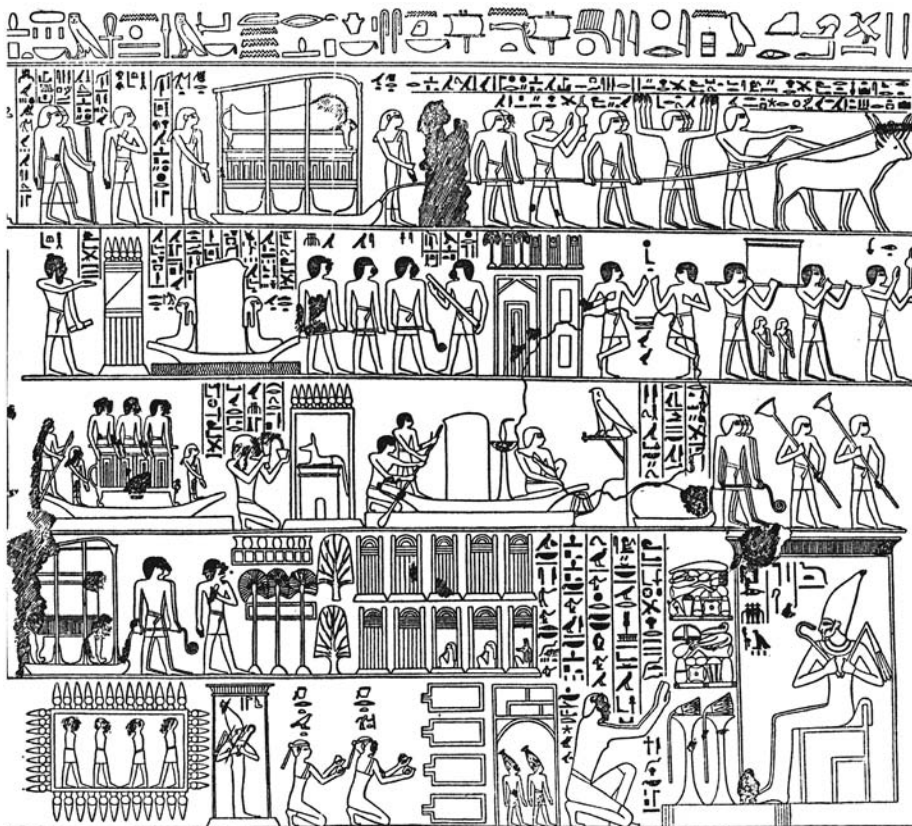


Fig. 3 – The *tknw*. Paheri Tomb, New Kingdom.

[Drawing from J.-J. Tylor and F. L. Griffith, *The Tomb of Paheri*, London 1895, pl. 5].

5. [...] *r smyt imntt m ḥtp sp 2 ḥr wsir r st nt nbw nw nhḥ* = Sehetepibre⁽²⁷⁾ (cf. fig. 1).

“[...] to the western (desert) necropolis, in peace, in peace, to Osiris, to the places of the lords of eternity” (text above the *Muu* dancers who arrive to welcome the procession).

⁽²⁶⁾ J.-J. Tylor- F.-L. Griffith, *The Tomb of Paheri*, pl. 5.

⁽²⁷⁾ J.E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum*, pl. IX.

6. *st3 tknw in rmt ist Dp*⁽²⁸⁾ *s3 srkt prt n(=m) niwt ʕk pr sp 4 in stm*⁽²⁹⁾ *mḥty.w š.w k(ʕ)ḥty(.w)*⁽³⁰⁾ = Amenemhet (82)⁽³¹⁾.

“Dragging the *tknw* by the people of the crew (gang of workmen) of Bouto-Dep and the Serqet-magician : coming out of the city (= necropolis), come in and go out (come and go) four times by the Sem-priest and the northerners of the coastal-lakes”.

An abridged version of the text of tomb 82 appears in the tomb of Ahmose (224)⁽³²⁾, where the text reads :

st3 tknw in rmt ist dp s3 srkt.

“Dragging the *tknw* by the people of the crew (gang of workmen) of Bouto-Dep and the Serket magician”.

In the text of the tomb of Puyemrē (39) the *tknw* is also said to be dragged by “people of Dep”⁽³³⁾, while according to the text of Ramose (55) those who drag the *tknw* are “people of Neter(i)” (Behbeit El-Haggara) *st3 tknw in rmt ntr(i)*⁽³⁴⁾.

7. *st3 tknw r hr(t)-ntr iw m ḥtp rmt P rmt dp rmt ḥt (wr) k3(w) =* Nebamun (24)⁽³⁵⁾.

“Dragging the *tknw* to the Necropolis, coming in peace (by) the people of Pe, the people of Dep, the people of Hout-(wer)-kaw”.

⁽²⁸⁾ The sign 𓄏 = *ist* : see *Wb* I, 127, 19 ; D. Meeks, *AL*, I, p. 44 (770442). It doesn't therefore designate a place (Qed or Qedem) as has been suggested earlier by Gardiner (Davies and Gardiner, *Amenemhēt*, p. 51). The word that follows immediately is *Dp*.

⁽²⁹⁾ The damaged sign is most probably 𓄏 = *s*. A suggested restoration for the word would be 𓄏 *sdm* < *stm*.

⁽³⁰⁾ 𓄏 is probably an illusive form of writing 𓄏 . It bears the well attested term used to designate the Northern Lakes (*Wb* V, 20,13) ; D. Meeks, *AL* I, p. 385 (77.4374), III, p. 299 (79.3109). The designation «the northerners of the coastal-lakes (Borollos and Menzaleh)» applies to the *Muu* coming from a territory dependent of Bouto.

⁽³¹⁾ N. de G. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *Amenemhēt*, p. 51.

⁽³²⁾ N. de G. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *Amenemhēt*, p. 51.

⁽³³⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, 118.

⁽³⁴⁾ N. de G. Davies, *Ramose*, p. 23.

⁽³⁵⁾ U. Bouriant, in *RecTrav* 9, p. 97.

8. *st3 tknw r hr(t)-ntr hr i⁽³⁶⁾ m rwti nt ʿnh int⁽³⁷⁾* = Nebamun (17)⁽³⁸⁾.

“Dragging the *tknw* to the necropolis⁽³⁹⁾, Horus talking with the double lion of the Valley of Life”. A similar text to that of Nebamun (17) occurs in the tomb of Amenemhet (53)⁽⁴⁰⁾.



9. *rdit iy n niwt msk3 m tknw sdr hr.f m š hpr* = Rekhmire (100)⁽⁴¹⁾.

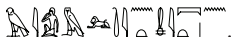
“Causing to come to the City (of Eternity) a hide as a *tknw* which lies under it as a pouch (lit. receptacle)⁽⁴²⁾ of transformation”. Also *rdit iy n niwt msk3 m tknw sdr rdit sgr m š hpr* “Causing to come to the city a hide as a sleeping *tknw*, causing silence in the receptacle of transformation” = Duaerneheh (125)⁽⁴³⁾.

10. “He who stoops comes” = Tetaky (15)⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Apparently, the above statements, barring statement (9), do not reveal much regarding the nature of the *tknw* and its role. Statements (1-7) seem to lay emphasis on certain issues : firstly, the *tknw* is dragged to the necropolis. Secondly, it comes to the necropolis in peace. Thirdly, the people who help in dragging the *tknw* sledge to the necropolis are generally related to places in the North. These places are : Pe, Dep (Buto), Behbeit El-Haggara

⁽³⁶⁾ Archaic form of *dd*.

⁽³⁷⁾ The proposed reading ʿnh int is influenced by the assumption that  is a variant of .

⁽³⁸⁾ See T. Säve Söderbergh, *Four eighteenth dynasty tombs, Private Tombs at Thebes I*, Oxford 1957, p. 31, pl. XXIV-XXV. Cf. F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 118, quoting W. M. Müller, in *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft* 15, 1914, pp. 2, 114 who reads the latter part of the text as .

⁽³⁹⁾ The actors are the people of Dep as declared by the caption before their heads.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 118, quoting N. de G. Davies, *Notebook*, p. 7 who translates the texts as : «coming of the *tknw* to the necropolis, sitting  lion-shaped like a man from the city».

⁽⁴¹⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-rê*, pl. V.

⁽⁴²⁾ *š* = a basin to receive a liquid, a receptacle or container (*Wb.* IV, 398). See also *AL.*, I, p. 360 (770456) ; III, p. 367 (78.4013) where it occurs in the meaning of a hollowed out design (cavity) held on a support. In this context, *š* is used in the sense of a pouch with a solid or liquid content.

⁽⁴³⁾ J. Settgast, *ADAIK* 3, pp. 92, 119, and pl. 10.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ G. Legrain, in Lord Carnarvon and Carter (eds), *Five years' Explorations at Thebes*, p. 17.

and Hout-(wer)-kaw⁽⁴⁵⁾. An official identified as *s3-srkt* (Serqet-magician) is also mentioned as participating in pulling the *tknw* sledge. Statement (8) corresponds to the arrival of the *tknw* before the *Muu* at the entrance of the City of Eternity. The text, which is recited by the men facing the dancers (*rmṯ dp* = the people of Dep)⁽⁴⁶⁾, reads : *Hr i m rwti nt ḥnh int* “Horus speaking with the double lion of the Valley of Life”. It implies that at the point where the *Muu* depart from the zone of the necropolis to receive the procession the Sem-priest = Horus should then pronounce a formula addressing the double lion *Rwti*, the guardian of the Underworld (analogous to *3kr*) in order to allow for the progress of the funerary procession to the hereafter. Statement (9) is exceptionally important. It defines the nature of the envelope as *msk3* (= hide), under which a human-headed figure sleeps in a shrivelled form, namely (*msk3 m tknw*), recalling the state of the original archaic grave (a crouching body, facing east, covered with a hide). This aims to perpetuate the foetal stage of the deceased prior to his transformation (*hpr*) into a new existence as Osiris-Ra.

The meaning of the word *tknw* is also uncertain. At first, Maspero⁽⁴⁸⁾ attempted to relate the word *tknw* to the ancient Egyptian verb *tk* = to cut. Conversely, Lefebure⁽⁴⁹⁾ suggested that the word *tknw* has a non Egyptian origin, pointing at the names “Tekennu”, “Tektana of a certain oasis”, tribe mentioned in the text of the Israel stela and in the duplicate text at Karnak respectively. Then, Griffiths⁽⁵⁰⁾ suggested that the word may mean “He who approaches”. His suggestion was probably based on the supposition that the word is derived from the verb *tkn*⁽⁵¹⁾ which means to attach, approach or reach. Since the statement “coming in peace” is frequently attested in the texts that accompanies the *tknw*, the name could be translated as “He who approaches”. Alternatively, both Erman and Grapow⁽⁵²⁾ adopted the meaning

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Hout-(wer)-kaw = Unknown locality or temple. H. Gauthier, *DG*, p. 60, whereas according to *Wb.* III, 6 (8), Hout-wer-kaw was «probably a town in the Delta».

⁽⁴⁶⁾ T. Säve Söderbergh, *Four eighteenth dynasty tombs*, pl. XXIV and XXV.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ For the variant writings of the word *tknw* see above p. 2, fn.1.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ G. Maspero, *Tombeau de Montouhikhopshouf*, *MMAF* II, Cairo 1891, p. 456ff.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ E. Lefébure, *Sphinx* 3, fasc. 3, pp. 129-164.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 120.

⁽⁵¹⁾ R.O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford 1962, p. 302 ; *Wb.* V, 333-34.

⁽⁵²⁾ *Wb.* V, 335(14-15).

“symbolic human sacrifice” for the word *tknw* and argued that the origin of the word is *tiknw* which excludes any relation with *tkn* = to approach. Eventually, Reeder⁽⁵³⁾ declared that the word conveys no meaning.

The lack of documentary evidence led to a scholarly dispute regarding the interpretation of the *tknw* object and the role assigned to it during funeral rites. Among the suggested theories are the following :

1. The first theory was put forward by Maspero, according to whom the *tknw* was a remnant of human sacrifice with Sethian significance. His idea of the human sacrifice came merely from the association of the *tknw* with the sacrifice of Nubians in scenes from the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Mentuherkhepeshef (20)⁽⁵⁴⁾. This view of human sacrifice was adopted by other scholars such as : Lefébure⁽⁵⁵⁾, and Moret⁽⁵⁶⁾ who developed Maspero’s ideas claiming that the sacrifice symbolizes the new life that is wished for the deceased.
2. The second theory was presented by Davies⁽⁵⁷⁾, who saw in the *tknw* figure a ceremonial revival of the ancient custom of burial in a crouching position. The role of the *tknw*, according to him, was undertaken by a representative of the deceased, usually the *Sem*-priest.
3. The third theory is that of Thomas⁽⁵⁸⁾, who discussed the role played by the skin in Egypt as a vehicle of magic power, which one could absorb through contact with it and deduced that the *tknw* was evidently a man with a bull’s hide around him. Thomas explained that the *tknw* was to come out of the skin as he lays on the couch. He further added that : “He (the *tknw*) possibly played the role of Anubis who seems to have performed a similar rite for the dead

⁽⁵³⁾ G. Reeder, «A Rite of Passage. The Enigmatic *Tekenu* in Ancient Funerary Ritual» in *KMT* 5/3, 1994, p. 53.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ G. Maspero, *Tombeau de Montouhikhopshouf*, pp. 435-68, esp. 452ff ; N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, pp. 9-19. pl. II, VIII, and IX.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ E. Lefébure, *Sphinx* 3, fasc. 3, pp.129-164.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ A. Moret, *Mystères égyptiens*, Paris 1911.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ N. de G. Davies, *Five Theban Tombs*, p. 10.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ E. Thomas, «The Magic Skin», in *AncEg* 8, 1923, pp. 52-53.

Osiris. By contact with a sacrificial bull-hide, the *tknw* is the bull : the Bitau bull, and when he emerges he is born, like an embryo issuing from the womb, as the bull”.

4. The fourth theory was suggested by Kees⁽⁵⁹⁾, according to whom the *tknw* was “a sort of scapegoat” intended to attract the malign (evil) powers that control over a person in death, so that the transfigured body would remain free of them. Thus, according to Kees, the *tknw* was an embodiment of the harmful substances (*dwt nbt* = “every evil thing”) which was removed during the embalming process.
5. The fifth theory is that of Griffiths⁽⁶⁰⁾ who raised the possibility of the identification of the *tknw* with the *Sem*-priest assuming the role of Horus the beloved son, who recognizes his father Osiris in the deceased. In support of his view, Griffiths argued that “The similarity between the sleeping *Sem*-priest and the crouching *tknw* can hardly be merely accidental. Their posture and their covering of hide compel one to connect them”. He further added that : “it is at the beginning of the ceremonies that the *Sem*-priest sleeps, immediately after the arrival of the cortège, which suggests, according to him, that the *tknw* is simply transferred from sledge to couch”⁽⁶¹⁾. Griffiths also concluded that : “the *tknw* ceremony belonged to the ancient Butic Burial and took place originally when the voyagers had returned to Buto”⁽⁶²⁾. Reeder⁽⁶³⁾ also agreed to the identification of the *tknw* with the *Sem*-priest explaining that : “The *Sem* is a shaman undergoing a trance like dream state in the guise of the *tknw*. As the *tknw* he is transported to the tomb wrapped in a shroud to help facilitate his «death» so that he can be transported to the other world. Thus having visited the spirit world, the *Sem* was imbued with powers which enabled him to perform the succeeding «Opening of the Mouth» ceremony for the deceased”.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ H. Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter*, (2nd ed), Berlin 1956, p. 251.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, pp. 106- 120.

⁽⁶¹⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 116.

⁽⁶²⁾ F.-L. Griffiths, *Kush* 6, p. 120.

⁽⁶³⁾ G. Reeder, *KMT* 5/3, 1994, pp. 53-59.

6. The sixth theory was presented by Hornung⁽⁶⁴⁾ who suggested the interpretation of the *tknw* object as a sack-like container for the spare body parts, which were left over during the mummification process⁽⁶⁵⁾, but were still essential for the full resurrection of the deceased. This sack-like object was occasionally given a mask of the deceased where a face would be on the *tknw* figure, while sometimes it does not look like a man at all.

Having reviewed these variant suggestions, what seems certain is that the *tknw* was employed during the funeral rites of high-ranking officials, particularly the procession to the tomb, for the welfare of the deceased. According to Assmann⁽⁶⁶⁾, such funeral processions, though in no way royal, took the form of a festival drama the theme of which was the funeral of a Lower Egyptian King in Late Prehistory. In support of this, Assmann underlined that the active participants who helped to drag the sledges during funeral processions of high-ranking officials were usually identified as the people of Pe, the people of Dep (= Buto), and the people of Hout-(wer)-kaw, a fact already confirmed by the text accompanying the *tknw* figure⁽⁶⁷⁾. Assmann further added that the all-encompassing term *rhyt nbt* “all the subjects” may as well apply to these participants, thus implying that it was a public event for all the land to see and to take part in, at least as far as Lower Egypt was concerned. However, since it is very unlikely that the Thebans who accompanied the actual funeral processions of their high officials would really play the role of inhabitants of the Delta, Assmann suggested that the event must have assumed such character of a Lower Egyptian festival drama only in tomb depictions, which intentionally transposed what actually happened into an archaic setting⁽⁶⁸⁾.

An examination of the variant depictions of royal processions since Late Prehistory onwards led to a striking observation. One of the divine


⁽⁶⁴⁾ E. Hornung, *Idea Into Image*, (trans. E. Bredeck), New York 1992, pp. 106-120.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ J.-C. Goyon, «Momification et reconstitution du corps divin : Anubis et les canopes» dans *Funerary Symbols and Religion. Essays dedicated to Prof. M.S.H.G. Heerma van Voss*, Kampen 1988, pp. 34-44.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, Ithaca and London, 2001, p. 308. See also J.-C. Goyon, *Rituels funéraires de l'ancienne Égypte*, LAPO 4, Paris 1972.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ See above, pp. 185-187.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, p. 309.

standards⁽⁶⁹⁾ that often precede kings in processions bears on top of it an enigmatic swollen object , the shape of which resembles, in many cases the pear-shaped fully shrouded *tknw*. At this point I would like to highlight a particularly interesting scene of a dragged *tknw* figure from Theban tomb A4 (now destroyed)⁽⁷⁰⁾, which was copied by Hay (MSS 29824, 18, verso) who worked in this tomb from 30 May to 10 June 1826⁽⁷¹⁾. The shape of the *tknw* figure in this scene, as copied by Hay, strongly supports its identification with the object described above.

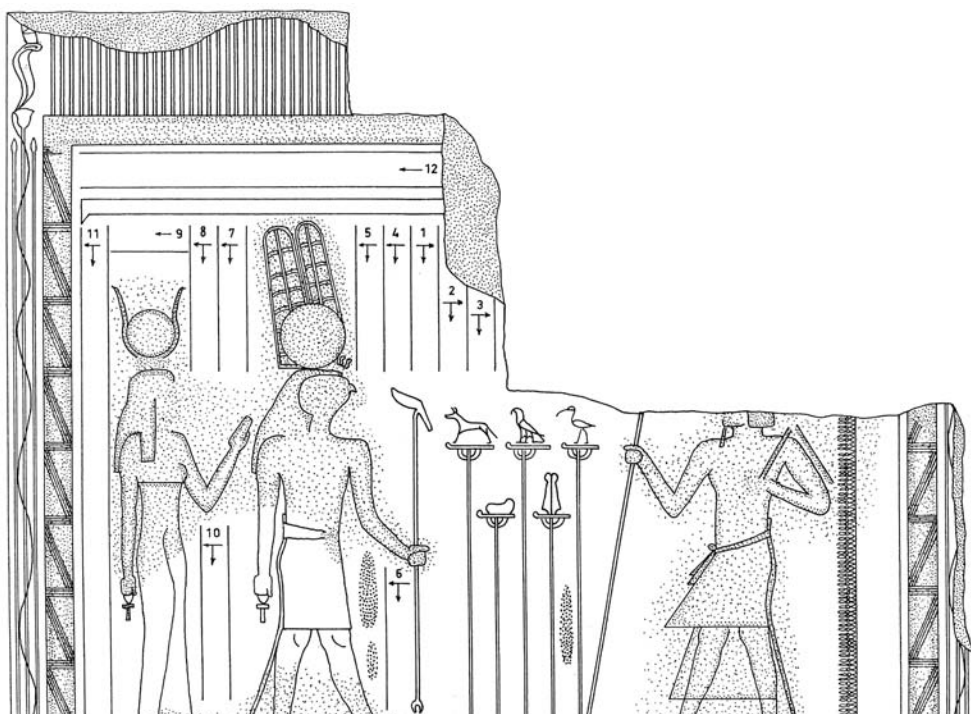



Fig. 4 – King before Montu and Raettaui. [Drawing from E. Drioton, *Tôd. Les inscriptions du temple ptolémaïque et Romain I : La salle hypostyle, textes N^{os} 1-172, IFAO, Le Caire 1980, n^o 8].*

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Divine standards are formed of a vertical support staff, the top of which was modelled in the form of a horizontally oriented *ntr* sign. These standards were topped by representations of sacred animals and other divine emblems. G. Graham in D. B. Redford, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, II, Cairo 2001, p. 166.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Not recorded by PM, *TB*, I-1, pp. 447-448.

⁽⁷¹⁾ L. Manniche, *Lost Tombs. A Study of certain Eighteenth Dynasty Monuments in the Theban Necropolis*, London and New York 1988, p. 75.

The standard bearing the object in question is attested on both palette and mace-head of Narmer⁽⁷²⁾. It also appears on one of the three decorated relief panels found under Djoser's Step Pyramid, and on two of the three panels found under his Southern Mastaba⁽⁷³⁾. It was carried by a priest in a scene from Abu Gurab showing a foot washing of Neuserre on his way to the dressing chamber or palace of the *Sed*-Festival⁽⁷⁴⁾. The standard also figures frequently in different temple reliefs depicting royal ceremonies and processions including the appearance of the king from the palace (cf. fig. 4), the king's jubilee, coronation, and enthronement.

Moreover, among the objects found in the Tomb of Haremhab at Thebes are two blocks of sycamore wood (0,23 m and 0,21 m in length and 0,10 m in height). The wooden blocks are rounded on all sides  and have pegs underneath for fixing to stands⁽⁷⁵⁾. Evidently, these are wooden replicas of the object in question, which indicates that this object did not only precede kings during processions, but probably also accompanied royal bodies in funerals before being transferred to their tombs. Could it be then that this enigmatic object and the shrouded *tknw* were related to each other? The similarity of their shapes can hardly be accidental. Their appearance in processions and funerals, and the fact that they were both transferred to tombs, argues to a possible connection between them. Recalling, with these facts, some of the previously discussed issues, particularly : (1) Assmann's suggestion that, in tomb depictions, funeral processions of high officials must have assumed such character of a royal festival drama that transposed what actually happened into an archaic setting ; (2) the texts testifying for the *tknw* as an object associated with the North and with Horus ; (3) the occurrence of the *tknw* figure in tomb relief showing funerary processions only since the Middle Kingdom, although it is very unlikely that the object itself was originated only then – it seems quite reasonable to suggest that the *tknw* object developed from or was at least related to the enigmatic object carried on one of the divine standards that preceded kings in processions since late prehistory. The question that arises next is the identity and the significance of the object under discussion in addition to any further indication for its association with the *tknw*.

⁽⁷²⁾ F. D. Friedman, «The Underground Relief Panels of King Djoser at the Step Pyramid Complex», in *JARCE* 32, 1995, fig. 4.

⁽⁷³⁾ F. D. Friedman, *JARCE* 32, figs 12, 23, and 24.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ N. M. Abd el-Halim, «The Problem of the Royal Placenta in Ancient Egypt», *JFA(C)* 3/1, 1978, fig. 5.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Th. M. Davis, in collaboration with G. Maspero, *The Tombs of Harmhabi and Touatânkhamanou*, London 1912, p. 105. New ed. published in Duckworth 2001.

The object held on the standard has been variously identified by Egyptologists. According to one opinion it represented a throne cushion⁽⁷⁶⁾. This is mainly based on equating the object discussed with the determinative used for the hieroglyph of the toilet deity *Dw3w*, which consists of a sack or a type of pillow on a standard. Friedman⁽⁷⁷⁾ denounced the equation of the two signs, though he favoured the view that the object represents a throne cushion. He found justification in a relief from the fifth Dynasty sun temple of Niuserre, in which the bearer of the divine standard supporting this object was identified as *hm st* “priest of the throne”⁽⁷⁸⁾.

The equation of the object with the sign for *Dw3w* was also rejected by Blackman⁽⁷⁹⁾, who stressed that the two signs must not be confused with each other⁽⁸⁰⁾. Alternatively, Blackman agreed to the notion that the object in question represents the King’s Placenta⁽⁸¹⁾; a theory supported by many other scholars⁽⁸²⁾. However, before discussing this theory it should be noted that the object was also interpreted as the fetish of the earliest royal capital of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)⁽⁸³⁾.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, *ÄgForsch* 18, 1954, pp. 37 and 27 n. 99; cf S. Schoske, *Schönheit-Abglanz der Göttheit*, Munich 1990, p. 14, who followed *LÄ* I, col. 1151 a in interpreting the symbol as *dw3-wr* «der grosse Morgendliche».

⁽⁷⁷⁾ F. D. Friedman, *JARCE* 32, pp. 4-5.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ A variant translation of the title *hm st* as «priest of Isis» was suggested by H. Frankfort, and used to support the object’s identification with the royal placenta since Isis was the mother of Horus, himself identified with the king. Cf. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago and London 1948 = Phoenix re-edition 1978, p. 71.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ A. M. Blackman, «Some Remarks on an Emblem upon the Head of an Ancient Egyptian Birth-goddess», *JEA* 3, 1916, p. 199, n. 1.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ See B. Grdseloff, «Le dieu *Dw3w*, patron des oculistes», in *ASAE* 41, 1942, p. 208, who was also of the opinion that one should not confuse the two signs.

⁽⁸¹⁾ A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, pp. 199-206. Cf. also A. M. Blackman, «The Pharaoh’s Placenta and the Moon-god Khons», *JEA* 3, 1916, pp. 235-249.

⁽⁸²⁾ In addition to the above noted articles of Blackman see also G. van Der Leeuw, «The Moon-God Khons and The King’s Placenta», *JEA* 5, 1918, p. 64; H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 71; N. M. Abd el-Halim, *JFA(C)* 3, (1), pp. 83-90. See also P. Barguet, «Un groupe d’enseignes en rapport avec les noms du roi», *RdE* 8, 1951, pp. 9-19 who accepted the object’s identification with the royal placenta and added that in certain cases it corresponded to the *nbtj* name of the King.

⁽⁸³⁾ G. Posener, «Brèves communications», *RdE* 17, 1965, pp. 193-95.

The theory describing the object as representing the royal placenta was first introduced in the early twentieth century by Seligman and Murray⁽⁸⁴⁾. Their opinion seems to have been influenced by the shape of the object, particularly in its early representations, as well as by the beliefs and the practices of the Baganda, who, at least in their Hamitic conducts, were related to the ancient Egyptians. Moreover, it is noteworthy that up till now, in the villages of Upper Egypt, the placenta is often treated as a dead child, where as the *fellahin* call it *el walad el tani* or *the other (or) second child*⁽⁸⁵⁾. The fact that the same belief remained concurrent among modern Egyptians, argues for the presence of an ancient parallel that equally accredited the placenta with a spirit.

According to the Baganda every man's placenta is his stillborn twin ; being born dead, it becomes a ghost immediately after it leaves the womb. The ghost of the placenta, or better said the spirit of the stillborn twin must have a tangible object to which it could attach itself so that it can function effectively. As explained by Blackman⁽⁸⁶⁾, such tangible object could not be sought in the fleshy placenta, which even if dried, would soon crumble into dust. Alternatively, the ghost of the placenta would attach itself to the stump of the umbilical cord when it drops of the real child. The ghost of the placenta, though external to a man's physical being, constitutes an essential part of his personality. Thus the taking away of this ghost (now attached to the stump of the umbilical cord as a substitute for the placenta) during a man's lifetime means death to him, and its absence after death means an incomplete existence.

In view of such belief, the stump of the umbilical cord of a newly born prince was dried and kept in a specially decorated container throughout his life. When the king dies his spirit attaches itself to his jawbone, which was, therefore, separated from the corpse, prepared and decorated, then taken to be preserved together with the stump of the king's umbilical cord in a temple built especially for their reception. Such practices of the Baganda were meant to supply the dual character of the royal dead person – (the spirit of the dead ruler and the spirit of his stillborn twin (*i.e.* his placenta) – with a tangible support in order to function effectively. For only when the dual character of

⁽⁸⁴⁾ C. G. Seligman and M. A. Murray, «Note upon an early Egyptian Standard», *Man* 11, 1911, pp.165-171 (Nr. 97).

⁽⁸⁵⁾ H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 72 n. 55, quoting W. S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, first published in 1927 and republished by the American University in Cairo Press 2000, pp. 63, 67.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, p. 199.

the late king is represented in his temple, he may continue to give oracles and advice his successors⁽⁸⁷⁾.

In their article, Seligman and Murray showed that the beliefs and practices of the Baganda, with regard to their king's placenta, were surprisingly paralleled among the ancient Egyptians⁽⁸⁸⁾. In favour of this, Blackman referred to an object held by one of the goddesses assisting at the birth of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir El-Bahari⁽⁸⁹⁾. He argued that the shape of this object was similar to that of the container of the umbilical cord of the Baganda king, which may suggest that the umbilical cord of the ancient Egyptian king (presumably also serving as a substitute for his placenta) was likewise preserved and revered with great importance. Blackman verified that a clear documentary evidence is also provided by the legend of Horus, according to which Horus fought Seth in order to bring back the stolen umbilical cord of Osiris⁽⁹⁰⁾. Obviously, this wouldn't have happened unless the umbilical cord was thought to be important for the resurrection and survival of Osiris.

Being quite positive about the identification of the object with the royal placenta, Blackman confirmed that regardless of the apparent inconsistency in its writings (𓆎𓆏, 𓆎𓆏, 𓆎𓆏, 𓆎𓆏, 𓆎𓆏, and 𓆎𓆏), the name of the object which one would expect to mean "placenta of the king", is "the *h* of the King" (lit. *h-n-s(w)t*, *h-nsw*, *hns*). This, quoting Blackman, means that "in 𓆎𓆏 = *h* we possesses the Ancient Egyptian word for placenta"⁽⁹¹⁾.

Notably, that the standard appears on the earliest royal monuments, and remained associated with the pharaoh until the end of the Egyptian history. It is always shown in the closest proximity to the king, together with the standard bearing the figure of the jackal (Wepwawet)⁽⁹²⁾. Wepwawet,

⁽⁸⁷⁾ H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 70.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ C. G. Seligman and M. A. Murray, *Man* 11, 1911, pp. 165-171, Nr. 97.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, p.199.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, pp. 203-205 quoting E. Naville, *Textes relatifs au mythe d'Horus recueillis dans le temple d'Edfou*, Genève 1870, pl. 24, 1, p. 196ff.

⁽⁹¹⁾ A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, pp. 199-206 ; A. M. Blackman, *JEA* 3, pp. 235-249.

⁽⁹²⁾ This was a deity known as Sed until the 3rd Dynasty when he gained the epithet Wepwawet or «The Opener of the Ways». See E. Brovarski, «Sed», in *LÄ* V, col. 779.

or “The Opener of the Ways”, was a deity particularly connected with the king’s triumph in battle and with victory over death (as he opened ways to the eternity of the necropolis)⁽⁹³⁾. Wepwawet probably also stood for Horus, who, whether a deity or a pharaoh, personified the firstborn son, that is to say “The Opener of the Body”. The fact that, in processions, the Wepwawet standard and the standard representing the placenta of the king (*i.e.* his stillborn twin) are often seen together in close association with the royal figure is therefore understandable. Their involvement in royal funerary rites and processions is predictable, as the equivalents of the jawbone and the umbilical cord of the Baganda King. It is also archaeologically supported by their joint appearance on relief panels found under the Step Pyramid and the Southern Mastaba of Djoser at Saqqara⁽⁹⁴⁾. Likewise, the discovery of two rounded wooden blocks in the tomb of Haremhab at Thebes having a shape that is quite similar to the object held on the standard of the “placenta of the King”.

To conclude, the above discussion has shown that :

- 1- There are good grounds for believing that the *tknw* object, attested for the first time in reliefs of funeral processions in private Middle Kingdom tombs, developed from or was at least related to the so called *h-n-s(w)* or *hns* object, which was held on a standard often seen in processions in the closest proximity to the king, as a representation of his placenta (*i.e.* his stillborn twin). This assumption will help answering many questions regarding the nature and role of the *tknw*.
- 2- In light of this assumption, the *tknw* is a sack-like container for the placenta of the deceased (*i.e.* his stillborn twin) that had to be buried with him in order to facilitate his resurrection. Its absence, on the other hand, may result in an incomplete existence, if not absolute non-existence. That the placenta was also treated as a stillborn twin by ancient Egyptian individuals is quite reasonable, considering the fact that the same belief still exists in modern Egypt among the villagers in Upper Egypt⁽⁹⁵⁾. This would explain the facts that :

⁽⁹³⁾ S. B. Johnson, *The Cobra Goddess of Ancient Egypt : Predynastic, Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Periods*, London 1990, p. 53.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p. 71.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ See above p.194.

(a) The sledge-drawn *tknw* is regularly shown leading the procession to the necropolis in front of the ox-drawn coffin and the canopic chest.

b) The dragged *tknw* is often accompanied by the same statements that accompany the dead body “in peace”, and “to the West”.

(c) The deceased comes, out of care, to watch the dragging of his *tknw* as in the tomb of Mentuherkhopeshef.

3- Identifying the *tknw* with the placenta of the deceased (his stillborn twin) also explains its association with Horus, who fought Seth in order to recover the stolen umbilical cord (assumed to be a substitute for the placenta) of Osiris. This may as well explain the appearance of the *tknw* in the tomb of Mentuherkhopeshef in close proximity to scenes depicting the slaughtering of Sethian creatures.

4- This identification also explains the variant iconography of the *tknw*, as a pear-shaped sack (similar to the object held on the standard) ; a rounded spotted sack (similar to the placenta, which has an inner surface covered with vessels coming from the umbilical cord and branching in all directions, and an outer surface showing 12-20 lobes called cotyledons) ; and as a shrouded man (the stillborn twin).

Abstract

Several attempts have been made by scholars to explain the enigmatic shrouded funerary object identified as the *tknw*, which appears as a regular feature in reliefs of funerary processions and burial rites in private Theban tombs. Discussions raised about this object were generally concerned with the decipherment of its nature and function. However, the lack of documentary evidence resulted in apparent disagreement among scholars and gave rise to many theories and speculations. On the other hand, important issues such as the origin of the object, the significance of its name, and whether it had a royal equivalent were either ignored or insufficiently discussed. The fact that it only appears in private tombs brings up the question of the existence of a royal equivalent. Also its attestation since the Middle Kingdom raises the possibility of a forerunner. A re-examination of this funerary object from a different perspective focussing on the abovementioned points seems, therefore, appropriate.

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