TWO BLOCKS FROM THE EXCAVATIONS OF CAIRO UNIVERSITY IN HELIOPOLIS KEPT AT THE MUSEUM OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHEOLOGY, CAIRO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This article publishes two blocks from Heliopolis, discovered during the Faculty of Archaeology’s excavations at the ancient Egyptian city of Ounû to the northeast of Cairo, The area is currently known as Tell el-Hisn or Arab al-Hisn. The two blocks are stored at the Museum of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University.

1. The Block of Ramesses II: A rectangular block with a finely engraved scene depicts a figure of the Nile-god Hapy in a kneeling posture, lifting on his hands a flat offering-table presenting to the cartouche of Ramesses II. On his head, there is a symbol of an unknown district. The offering table is laden with a heap of offerings consisting of bread, birds of the marshes, and papyrus plants. The block has three registers of hieroglyphic texts.

2. The Block of Ramesses V: A rectangular block depicts a scene of a destroyed figure of the king Ramesses V crowned with the blue diadem and uraeus, kneeling and doing fumigation and libation before a seated baboon, the sacred-figure of the god Thot. The latter, is represented in the form of a seated baboon wearing the necklace of Ma’at with a headdress, consisting of the lunar disk on top of a crescent moon. The scene is accompanied with three cartouches and a short hieroglyphic texts.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to publish two blocks from Heliopolis, the ancient ‘Iwnw’, capital of the thirteenth district of Lower Egypt. ¹ The blocks were found during the Faculty of Archaeology's systematic investigation of this site of the ancient Egyptian city of Ounû ² to the northeast of Cairo. It is currently known as Tell el-Hisn or Arab el-Hisn to the north of El-Matariyah district. The excavations were inaugurated in January 1976 and were carried out for six seasons up to 1981. ³ A. Saleh continued earlier Cairo University excavations by the Egypt Antiquities Organisation that had made important discoveries. ⁴ Because of the archaeological and religious importance of Heliopolis, many excavations took place at this site. However, the most important excavations were the excavations of the joint Egyptian-German Mission that made valuable discoveries⁵.

The recent excavation of Ain Shams University under the supervision of M. Eldamaty held during two seasons, remains unpublished. However, it revealed, during the first season in October 2017, a religious complex and ceremonial palace dating to the Ramesside period. At the end of the second season in April 2018, a unique ceremonial chapel of Ramesses II was discovered, used for royal celebrations. It is considered to be the first of its kind for the New Kingdom. A collection of mud-brick walls of a casemate building was also revealed, dating at its earliest stage to the Ramesside Period, and being used until the Late Period. The mission revealed many artefacts dating to this chronological range.⁶

1- The Block of Ramesses II (Pls.1-4, fig.1).

Material: Limestone
Height: 87cm
Width: 61cm
Thickness: 11cm
Place of preservation: Museum of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, no.1755-814.
State of preservation: The relief and hieroglyphs are in a fairly good state of preservation.

²The two blocks were attested by A. Saleh in his preliminary report of the Excavations in Heliopolis, see: Saleh, A, Excavations at Heliopolis, Ancient Egyptian OUNU, vol. II, Cairo, 1983, 63-64, fig 17.
Description:
A rectangular block was found among the debris of the Temple of Ramesses IV. It lost the edges of its upper parts. It is divided into four vertical registers. The third register depicts the scene, while the first, second, and fourth registers contain the hieroglyphic texts. This block is probably a balustrade. A. Saleh suggested that the block would have been dislodged from the older panels of the balustrade wall of the temple.

The scene:
A finely engraved scene depicts a figure of the Nile-god Hapy in a kneeling posture, lifting, on his hands, a flat offering-table presenting the cartouche of Ramesses II. Hapy is frequently portrayed as a plump man with women's breasts, a protruding belly, and blue or green skin adoring also the false beard of the pharaoh.
The breasts, the belly, and the colour of the skin symbolise his fertility and ability to nourish the land and the harvest through the Nile's annual floods. Moreover, the two breasts may also refer to the two caves from which the Nile stems, while the false beard reaffirms his link to the pharaoh. On his head, there is the symbol of an unknown province. The offering table upon his hands is laden with a heap of offerings that consists of bread, birds of the marshes, and papyrus plants.

The texts:
The text of this block may be compared to similar texts, such as one from the Temple of Amenhotep III at Wadi es-Sebua, and one from the Temple of Osiris dating to the reign of Sety I at Abydos. The closest texts to the present block's text are for one recorded on the eastern wall of the second pylon of the Temple of Rameses III in Medinet Habu Hence, the missing parts of the text in this block of the Temple of Ramesses IV could be traced and read:

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1. The storerooms of the house at El-Matariyah have similar blocks dating to the reign of Amenhotep III that were on display for many years in the Open Air Museum of El-Matariyah. Still there is a similar object on site in the old concession of Cairo University and another one is found on the archive photos of Turin Museum (Schiaparelli, 1903 – 1906, about balustrades blocks in the New Kingdom period. See: Shaw, J., ‘Balustrades, Stairs and Altars in the Cult of the Aten at el-Amarna’, JEA 80, 1994, 109-127.
4. A.Saleh suggested that Hapy presenting offerings to the king Ramesses IV indicates that he is the god of the temple, see: Saleh, A., Excavations at Heliopolis, II, 63.
7. Saleh, A., Excavations at Heliopolis, II, 63-64, fig 17.
10. A. Saleh read the text as: '(at) the beginning of the inundation, I bring to you all good things (upon) the hands of thy son the lord of the two lands, Weser-maet-Re, Setepen-Re given life ………and (at the beginning of) the inundation, I bring to you all good fresh vegetables'. see: Saleh, A, Excavations at Heliopolis, 63.
Fig. 1. A facsimile of the block of the King Ramesses II

Transliteration:

[1] [dd mdw in H罍py] in. (i) n.k h[t nb(t) (nfrt)
[2] [hr] ∼wy s:k nb tswy (wsr-mAat Rceptor n Rceptor) dī ʾnh.
[3] [dd mdw in] H罍py in. (i) n.k rnpwt h[t nb(t) nfrt

Translation:

[1] [Spell by Hapy]: I brought to you every beautiful thing.
[2] [On] the two arms of your son the Lord of the Two Lands (Weser-Ma'at Re, setepen-Re) given life.
[3] [Spell by] Hapy: I brought to you every beautiful vegetable.

Comment:

a- Although this stela was found among the debris of the Temple of Ramesses IV, the recorded title in the cartouche (Wsr-mAat-Ra stp-n-Ra) is the title of Ramesses II. This suggests that the block was taken from a place constructed by Ramesses II near the Temple of Ramesses IV. It may be the Temple of Ramesses II in Tell-el Hisn, Heliopolis, which was located at the same site where this stela was found. Thus, this block was designed for a structure of Ramesses II but was reused by Ramesses IV.  

b- Depicting Hapy ‘presenting offerings’ is related to two matters:

1- The relationship between Hapy and the offerings depends on his central role in the Egyptian religion as a god of water and fertility. He was responsible for supplying Egypt with water, food, and yearly inundation of the Nile and henceforth providing gods and people with offerings. One of his titles was the ‘Lord of the fish and birds of the marshes indicating that he provided these goods to Egypt and the Egyptians along with the Nile itself. Therefore, many religious texts indicate the relationship between Hapy and the offerings, such as:

* ‘Hapy is the one who supplies the gods with offerings’.
* ‘I am Hapy who brings offerings’.

The offering table of Hapy, as seen in the block, always contains all the goods he supplied Egypt with, such as birds of the marshes, fish, fruits, vegetables, and papyrus. They were a precious gift on altars and offering tables in temples as a natural symbol of life and the primeval marsh from which all life came.

He is depicted in his most common posture in temples, stelae, and statues, he was presenting offerings to gods, kings, or their cartouches. For instance,

* A relief on the southern wall of the sanctuary of the god Ra-Hor-akhty shows Hapy presenting offerings to the god.
* A relief from the reign of the king Horemheb at Karnak depicts Hapy as presenting offerings to the goddess Renenūtet.
* A relief on an altar from the reign of the king Amenemhat I at the Metropolitan Museum presents Hapy with fertility figures offering goods to the cartouche of the king.

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Because of his vital importance to all living, many praising hymns were dedicated to this deity, see: Assmann, J., ‘Nilhymnus,’ *LÄ* IV, 489-496. For the text itself, see: Spence, L., *Myths & Legends of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 2008, 171; Helck, W., *Der Text des Nilhymnus* (Kleine ägyptische Texte, 4; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972.


Pyr. 1553b, 1554.

CT V, 11G.


Baines, J., *Fecundity Figures: Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre*, Warminster, 1985, fig. 188.

* A stela from the reign of Sobek-hotep VIII (16th dynasty) depicts Hapy as presenting offerings to the king.¹
* A relief from the reign of Amenhotep III at Cleveland Museum 61205.76.51 shows Hapy with province figures as presenting offerings to the king.²

2-The figure of Hapy presenting offerings with the province symbol on his head illustrates geographical processes in Ancient Egypt³, with the personifications of provinces of Egypt offering their produce⁴ as in this scene.

Many reliefs show Hapy either presenting offerings or performing the sema-tawy ritual. In both positions, he wears different headdresses⁵. In our scene, the god Hapy was depicted as a personified province thanks to the symbol on his head, which in this instance, is undetermined.

c- The relationship between Hapy and Heliopolis, the ancient (Iwnw) may be derived from the relationship between Hapy and its main god ‘Nwn’. Hapy was associated with the creator god Nun,⁶ as he was believed to be located somewhere in the watery chaos of Nun's domain. He was thought to have flowed from the primeval waters of Nwn, before becoming an aspect of Nwn, the primeval water from which all things emerged. In some cases, the high inundation also was called mwn.⁷

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² Baines, J., Fecundity Figures, 90, fig.56.
⁵ In the case of depicting Hapy as the patron of Lower Egypt ‘hapy-mḥty’, he was depicted wearing papyrus plants headdress as a symbol of Lower Egypt. As the patron of Upper Egypt ‘hapy-rꜣṣy’, he was depicted wearing lotus plants headdress as a symbol of the south on his head. When he was depicted as the god of the entire Nile, he held both lotus and papyrus plants in his hands and two vases. For more information, see: Marwan, N. Z., Egyptian Agriculture Life in the New Kingdom, Cairo, 1989; Jéquier, G., Le Monument Funéraire de Pépi II (Le temple), Le Caire, 1938, fig. I.
Sometimes the primeval god replaced Hapy in his offerings; the formula was then “"dd mdw in nwn". Many texts established the relationship between the two gods, such as a stela from Gebel es-Silsila mentioning:

‘Nwn mry h‟py it ntr’
‘Nun, the beloved of Hapy the father of the gods’

The main recorded formula is ‘"dd mdw in" h‟py‘ 'a spell by the god Hapy'. In some similar texts, the letter ‘n’ in the particle ‘in’ in the formula was written with the sign instead of 3. This feature is common in the New Kingdom.

2. The Block of Ramesses V  (Pls.5-7, fig.2)

**Material:** Limestone  
**Height:** 45cm  
**Width:** 42 cm  
**Thickness:** 11 cm  
**Place of preservation:** Museum of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, no.118-812.  
**State of preservation:** The relief and hieroglyphs are in fairly good state of preservation.

**Description:**
A rectangular block was found in Heliopolis. It had lost all four edges but comprised a scene of a destroyed figure of the king Ramesses V, a complete figure of a baboon accompanied with three cartouches, and a short hieroglyphic texts .This block could have belonged to a lintel, as it resembles temples’ doorways lintels from the New Kingdom.4

**The scene:**
The scene shows part of the figure of the king Ramesses V crowned with the blue diadem and uraeus,5 kneeling, fumigating and performing libation from armless vessels 6 before the sacred-figure of the god Thoth7, who is represented in the form of a seated baboon with a headdress of the lunar disk on top of a crescent moon, wearing the necklace of Ma'at.

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2Wb, V, 625-626; LDLLE, II, 275.  
3See, for example, a text from the Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, MHV, pl.259A.  
5Saleh, A., Excavations at Heliopolis, II, 63, 66, fig.18.  
The texts:

In front of the king's head, there are two cartouches:

\[ nb-t3wy (Wsr\text{-}m3\text{"}t\text{-}R, shpr\text{-}n\text{-}R) , [nb]-hf\text{'e}w ( R\text{'}-ms\text{-}s(w), f', mry\text{-}Imn) \]

‘The Lord of the Two Lands (Weser- Ma'at -Re, sekheper-en-Re), The Lord of appearance, Ramesses the beloved of Amon’.

Under the king's arms, there is a short text:

\[ nb-hf\text{'}e w \]

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1 In the two cartouches containing the name of the king (R\text{'}-ms-sw) the writer used the suffix pronoun (f) instead of (sw), see: KRI, VI, 221, 14.

2 The sign before the cartouche may be an abbreviated writing of \( nb-hf\text{'}e w \).
Irt-snTr qbh

‘Doing fumigation and libation’.

In front of Thot's headdress, his name is recorded 𓊅‘dhwty’.

Behind Thot, a short text is written:

nh-h5w (Rˁ-ms-s(w)f  mry-Imn).

‘The Lord of appearance, Ramesses the beloved of Amon’.

Comments:

a- The block belongs to Ramesses V as the cartouche had the title (Wsr-mȝf-Rˁ, shpr-n-Rˁ).¹

b- Depicting the king in the company of the gods, presenting it offerings, doing the presentation of Ma'at or doing fumigation and libation, as in the current stela, is important for the balance of the Egyptian universe. According to the Ancient Egyptian religion, the Egyptian universe was surrounded by endless and unknown darkness, dangerous to all creation. Therefore, it had to be kept at bay by preserving Ma'at with the support of the gods, except for few deities who disrupted the divine order, against the representatives of ‘jsft’ darkness and chaos.³

The king, as someone extraordinary⁴, played a mediator role between his people and the gods and was responsible for their care.⁵ He was principally responsible for keeping Ma'at,⁶ the regularly depicting of the king in the accompaniment of gods, worshiping

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them refers to the success of his previous roles, which depended on the support of the gods. Both mortuary and divine temple images and texts recorded the king performing political acts and ritual duties to the gods. These official religious practices and divine behaviour were believed to govern all nature and maintain Ma’at for the benefit of all Egypt.

c- irt-sntr-kbh
Burning incense and libation was considered among the daily rites inside temples. They helped in the purification and nourishment of the god. Libation referred not only to purification, but also to the inundation. The scenes of burning incense and libation were either separated or joined, as in our stela. Combining them was popular in New Kingdom scenes, which showed the king performing this rite for the god accompanied with the short text ‘irt-sntr kbh’. For instance, on the first pylon of Luxor Temple, Ramesses III was depicted doing libation and fumigation to the god Sokar-Osiris. Another scene on the first pylon of Medinet Habu shows Ramesses III performing the same rite to the god Amon-Ra.

d- The title ‘nb-hfw’ ‘Lord of Appearance’ is an important royal title, especially from the New Kingdom onwards. This title may be a mission statement for the

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5 Wb IV, 180, 18-22
6 Wb V, 27, 15-16
8 Poo, MU-Chou., Liquids in the Temple Ritual, 5.
9 MH IV, Pl.244,k.
10 MH IV, Pl.245,A.
11 Wb II, 228, 10.
king related to his appearance to the common people during feasts and ceremonies inside some accessible places in the forecourts inside the divine temples. These courts themselves had epithets relating to their function: the king's appearance happened. For instance, the first court was known as 'št-hr', 'the place of appearance', and the second court was known as 'wšt ḥyrt' 'the court of appearance' and 'št ḥyrt 'the place of appearance'. Furthermore, in both royal and temple palaces, one of their essential architectural elements is called 'šsd-xw' 'the Windows of appearance', through which the king appeared to the common people and foreign delegations during feasts and certain ceremonies.

- Thot is depicted here, in one of his main roles in the Ancient Egyptian religion, as the moon god allowing time to be measured. He was considered as the reckoner of times and seasons because the moon cycles organised many of the Egyptian society's rituals and events, both religious and civil. Consequently, Thot was seen as a god of wisdom, magic, as well as measurement and regulation of events and time.

As a moon god, Thot was commonly depicted as a seated baboon with or without a lunar disk on top of a crescent moon resting on his head.

- The god Thot wore the necklace of the goddess Ma'at, which referred to their strong relationship, which appeared clearly in the Ancient Egyptian religion, for instance,
*Thot was considered the husband of Ma’at.\(^1\)

*During the deceased’s final judgment in the underworld in the Hall of Truth.\(^2\) Thot was the god of equilibrium who reported on the scales weighing the deceased's heart against the feather of Ma’at.\(^3\)

*Thot was regularly depicted with a symbol of Ma’at, either as a baboon wearing the necklace of the goddess Ma’at, as an ibis accompanied with Ma’at or the feather of Ma’at resting on his beak.\(^4\)

*Thot had many titles related to Ma’at, such as ‘nb-mAat’, ‘Lord of Ma’at’ ‘sS-mAat’ ‘Scribe of Ma’at’, and ‘mry-mAat’ ‘Beloved of Ma’at’.\(^5\)

The name of Thot is written in front of his figure \(\text{DHWTY}\) This confirms the identity of the moon god, as many gods played the moon god’s role, such as Khonsu and Osiris.\(^6\) Recording the name of Thot avoids any confusion, especially between Thot and the moon's god Khonsu \(^7\) who bore strong similarities with Thot \(^8\) and whose cult spread in the New Kingdom.\(^9\) Khonsu was also depicted as a baboon with a headdress of the lunar disk on top of a crescent moon.\(^10\) Furthermore Ounû was not from the central cult places of Thot.\(^11\)

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3 Budge, W., *The gods the Egyptians or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, Vol. I, 403


11 Thot was worshipped in many places, but its two central cult places were Hermopolis Magna and Saqqara. For more information, see: Maurer, K., ‘Der Tierfriedhof von Tuna el-Gebel in frühptolemäischer Zeit’, in: J. Mylonopoulos & H. Roeder (eds.), *Archäologie und Ritual. Auf der Suche nach der rituellen Handlung inden antiken Kulturen Ägyptens und Griechenlandes*, Wein, 2006, 116; Smith, A., *A visit to Ancient Egypt*, Life
Conclusions:
This article publishes two blocks from Heliopolis, dated to The New Kingdom.

The first block:
The first block is dated to the reign of the king Ramesses II. It has a finely scene depicts a figure of the Nile-god Hapy in a kneeling posture, lifting, on his hands, a flat offering-table presenting to the cartouche of Ramesses II, who had the titles: *nb tdwy (wsr-m3t RΔ stp n RΔ)*

"The lord of the two lands (Weser-Ma'at Re, setepen-Re)."

The second block:
The second block is dated to the reign of the king Ramesses V. It has a scene shows part of the figure of the king Ramesses V kneeling, performing fumigation and libation before the sacred-figure of the god Thoth1, in the form of a seated baboon. The king had the titles:

- *(nb-tΔwy (Wsr-m3t-RΔ, shpr-n-RΔ), [nb]-hρw(RΔ-ms-sw, mry-Imn)).*

"The lord of the two lands (Weser- Ma'at -Re,sekheper-en-Re), The lord of appearance , Ramesses the beloved of Amon".

- *(nb-hρw(RΔ-ms-sw, mry-Imn)).*

"The lord of appearance, Ramesses the beloved of Amon"

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THE PLATES

Pl. 1: Block of Ramesses II

Pl. 2: Texts in front of Hapy
Pl.3: The Text behind Hapy

Pl.4: Hapy Presenting Offerings.
Pl.5: Block of Ramesses V

Pl.6: Ramesses V Performing Fumigation and Libation and the texts in front him.
Pl. 7: Thot and the texts in front and behind him.