

*Original article*

AN 18<sup>TH</sup> DYNASTY WOODEN BOARD IN THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM OF  
CAIRO JE 95750- CG 25366

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**Abstract**

*This board records an 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty administrative text from Meir. It provides quite interesting information such as titles, personal names, different types of cattle, toponyms, in addition to the attestation of the term *wsh*-boat. The text also lists the number of cattle of each individual with a total number of 71 cattle. The paper will try to shed light on the handwriting of this text as an important source for the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty hieratic inscriptions. At the same time it will try to figure out the purpose of the text.*

**Keywords:** Meir, southern City, *Wnḏw*-cows, *id.t*-cows, *wsh*-boat.

**1. Introduction**

The object under the study, pl. (1) is a small board made of sycamore wood measuring about 46 cm in width, and 29 cm in height. Most probably it was used as a box lid because of the existence of two wooden strips for consolidation and joining the two wooden pieces of the board, in addition to the handle of the lid on the outer side. The text is inscribed on the inner part of the lid in 22 lines of hieratic in black ink. The text is well arranged, and occupies most of the available space. The provenance of this board is uncertain, although according to the

catalogue it came from Meir? As far as I know this board has never been published except for a black and white photograph used by G. Daressy in a volume of the *Catalogue Général* with a very brief description, without transcription or translation of the text [1]. This kind of text provides us with much valuable information concerning the administrative life in Ancient Egypt. At the same time, it presents new sources inscribed in administrative hieratic whereas only few sources in this script are known from this early time of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.



### 3. Transliteration

[1] <i>šsp m p3 wšh m-dr.t</i>	[2] <i>Hwy s3 T3 rh.t</i>	<i>wnd.w 7 id.t</i>	10
[2] <i>hrp n hw.t-ntr m-dr.t Sn-nfr (s3) Hwy</i>		<i>wnd.w 2 whm</i>	3
[3] <i>šsp m-dr.t Imn-nfr m Niw.t rsy.t</i>			
[4] <i>šsp Mh (s3) n Nfr-rnp.t idnw hwy (s3) n nhm</i>		<i>wnd.w</i>	5
[5] <i>Mrr-rmt.f idnw p3 h3.ty-<sup>c</sup> n Nfrw.sy</i>		<i>idem</i>	6
[6] <i>sdm Rwsy n sš š<sup>c</sup>.t H3.t</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[7] <i>p3 h3.ty-<sup>c</sup> .....Nfr</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[8] <i>H3.t p3.....n .....3h.</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[9] <i>.....n H3.t</i>		<i>idem</i>	2
[10] <i>S3 p3 ir p3 hsy</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[11] <i>P3 Sn p3 snny</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[12] <i>Hwy P3 p3 n T3 rh.t</i>		<i>idem</i>	9
[13] <i>hrp ir n šms hwy n t3 rh.t</i>		<i>idem</i>	6
[14] <i>whm hwy</i>		<i>idem</i>	4
[15] <i>whm hwy n t3 rh.t</i>		<i>idem</i>	2
[16] <i>whm</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[17] <i>rdit ..... n šms Imn-Nfr r p3 pr n Imn-ḳn</i>			
[18] <i>T3 Tsy?</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[19] <i>R<sup>c</sup>-htp</i>		<i>wnd.w</i>	
[20] <i>Tty</i>		<i>idem</i>	1
[21] <i>ḥnh m p3 .....</i>		<i>idem</i>	3
[22] <i>T3-rt</i>		<i>idem</i>	1

### 4. Translation

[1] <i>Received (as deliveries) from the barge by the hand of Houy son of Tarekht; Wndw-cows 7, id.t-cows 10.</i>	
[2] <i>Controller of the temple by the hand of Sennofer (son of) Houy Wndw-cows 2 again 3</i>	
[3] <i>Received by the hand of Amon-nofer from the Southern city (Thebes).</i>	
[4] <i>Received of Mehoy (son of) Nfr-rnp.t the deputy.Houy (son of) Nhmw Wndw-cows 5</i>	
[5] <i>Mererremtef [3] the deputy of the Mayor of Nfrw.sy.</i>	<i>idem 6</i>
[6] <i>the servant Rousy of the letter-scribe Hat</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[7] <i>the mayor .....Nfr</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[8] <i>Hat, the .... Akh</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[9] <i>.....to Hat</i>	<i>idem 2</i>
[10] <i>Sapaer (son of) Bahehy</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[11] <i>Pasen, the chariot officer</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[12] <i>Houy, the one who belongs to Tarekht ?</i>	<i>idem 9</i>
[13] <i>Controller made by the retainer Houy (son of) Tarekht</i>	<i>idem 6</i>
[14] <i>again Houy.</i>	<i>idem 4</i>
[15] <i>again Houy (son of) Tarekht</i>	<i>idem 2</i>
[16] <i>again</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[17] <i>Given by the retainer Amonnofer to the house of Qenamou?</i>	
[18] <i>Tatesy?</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[19] <i>Rahotep</i>	<i>cattle 3</i>
[20] <i>Tety</i>	<i>idem 1</i>
[21] <i>Ankh.....m pa....</i>	<i>idem 3</i>
[22] <i>Taret.</i>	<i>idem 1</i>

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Palaeographical remarks

The handwriting of this board is well organized, consistent and reflects the professional skills of the scribe. It seems that the text is inscribed with a thin brush-pen in contrast to the vast majority of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty hieratic texts that are usually inscribed in thick and bold form [4-8]. The right margin is not regular straight throughout the whole text, as following. **L.1:**  the closest form to this writing is that of Pap. Westcar  where a diagonal stroke on the right of this sign was used [8]. **L.2:**  an early writing form found in many different texts such as papyrus Westcar  [8]. **L.2:**  this form is very similar to the hand of Pap. Rhind and Pap. Westcar where the three strokes are not attached to the base line of the sign. ,  [8]. **L.2:** ,  the two reeds are usually written in this very short

### 5.2. Commentary

This text is quite interesting as it contains many names of individuals, titles and locations connected with cattle. Some of names are mentioned with their mothers' names, especially with the name of *hwy*. Most of these names were popular and familiar in the texts of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. The text also lists the number of cattle of each individual with a total number of 71 cattle. The most interesting point is the mention of *wsh*-barge that was loaded with two types of cattle. The purpose of the text is uncertain, although it could simply be considered as an account of a consignment of cattle received by or delivered to certain persons <sup>(b)</sup>. Otherwise, when we compare this text with the ship's logs that were published by Janssen, we can notice many similarities such as expressions, titles...etc. [10]. From this point of view, one could be

and abbreviated form without any details in most of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty hieratic texts , [9] , [6] , [6]  [7]

**L.3:**  An interesting writing form for this fence. The four columns i.e. four strokes, are not attached to the lower horizontal line. The existence of the short stroke on the left side, that links the two parts of the sign, is an abnormal writing of this form. **L.4-5:**  these signs most probably stand for *idnw* although written in an unusual form <sup>(a)</sup>.

**L.7:** , , the signs after  are very faint and difficult to follow. **L.8:** a few signs in the middle of this line are still legible. **L.9:** the reading of the beginning of this line escapes me. **L.17:** the reading of the end of this line *Qenamou* is uncertain. **L.21:** the second part of this line is illegible.

inclined to consider this text as a ship's log or at least a part of it. However, as Demarée stated, the ship's log is a kind of journal and the dates should be regularly mentioned in the text and this cannot be observed here <sup>(c)</sup>. Actually I am inclined to accept the idea that this text could have served as a draft or a temporary register, later to be copied on a permanent record as a papyrus [11]. In such records on papyrus the dates will then have been added and the mistakes will have been avoided as well.[7][12] It is clear according to the paleography of the text in addition to the context that this board can safely be date to the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. **L.1:** Maybe the text here refers to some kind of "deliveries" because a similar expression is mentioned in the ship's log of papyrus Turin 2008+2016 [10].



šsp m in.w p3 imw n p3 wdpw m-dr.t sš p3 n m ipt šms Irw š3 r<sup>c</sup>.

Received as deliveries of the ship of the cup-bearer by the hand of the scribe Paanemope and the retainer Erushare[10].



Basically this designation, pl. (2) refers to a cargo vessel that most probably derived its name from the verb "wsh" i.e. to be broad, wide [13-15]. Approximately it measured, according the text in the tomb of Wni, 60 cubits in length and 30 cubits in width and usually was made of Acacia (sycamore wood) [16, 17]. In some instances, its cargo weighed about 42 tones as mentioned in different Ramesside documents. [17, 18]. The captain of such a barge was frequently mentioned in Ramesside documents as hry- wsh [13, 15, 19]. Another title

related to this type of boat is imy-wsh that was translated by Janssen as "shipmate"[10]. Actually this vessel was known in Ancient Egypt from the Old Kingdom onwards, and it was used in transporting the huge stones and monuments that were extracted from different quarries in Egypt [17]. This wsh-vessel was also utilized in transporting different kinds of cattle and most probably this usage started in the New Kingdom [17]. In the same period it was used for bringing the cereals from the fields, as mentioned in the tomb of Paheri at El-Kab [17, 20].

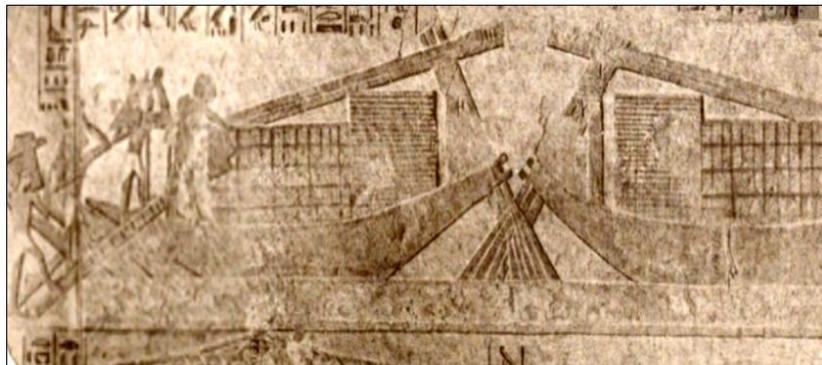
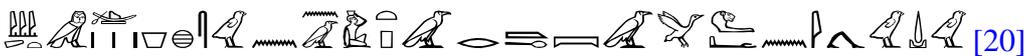


Plate (2) Shows the wsh-vessel in the tomb of Paheri [20].



wd.w in h3.t-<sup>c</sup> P3 hry m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw r 3tp n3 n wsh.w m [t]3 sh.t

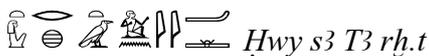
Proceeding by the mayor Paheri for loading the wsh-vessels from the fields.

Another text in the same tomb recorded



3tp wsh.w m it bd.t

Loading wsh-vessels with emmer and barley.



This individual is frequently mentioned in the text as a son of the lady [3], perhaps in order to distinguish him from the other individuals that bear the name of Huy in the text. He is mentioned in line 13 as "retainer". It is clear that this

man was a busy person as he is mentioned in the text many times with different numbers of cattle. In line 12 the individual Huy is mentioned as "the one who belongs to Tarekhet", thus it seems that Tarekhet is the name of his mother.

 *wndw*

This word refers to a special kind of hornless cattle and artificially dehorned animals. [10, 13-14]. Originally this word was written with the

 *id.t*

This word is mentioned as a second type of cattle after *wnd.w*-cows, and most probably refers to the known *id.t*-cow. However, its current writing is very interesting and quite uncommon in comparison with the known texts. The ordinary writing for this word used three basic signs, F45 , N41 , and sometimes V37  [22]. It seems that this term refers to the female cows, [22] and could be more specific to indicate a "pregnant female" <sup>(d)</sup> [15]. Sometimes the texts mention various kinds of this cow as  "cows of Cyprus" [22]. L.3  *Niw.t* *rsy.t*, southern city means "Thebes", like Northern city means "Heliopolis" *Niw.t mhy.t*. Usually the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty texts preferred to mention the name of this city in its complete form , , [23]  [23]  [24]. The Ramesside texts prefer to abbreviate it into only *Niw.t*.  [10, 25]. The mention of this city is an indirect indication that this wooden board came from another place rather than Thebes. L.4:  *idn.w*, it is clear that this title is written in the current text in abbreviated form, without any kind of determinatives. In the Turin Taxation Papyrus the title frequently occurs in this form , and is translated by Gardiner as "deputy-superintendent" [18]. L.5  *Nfr.w.sy*, this city is located not far from the town of El- Ashmunein, and about 437 KM north of Thebes [7]. It seems that Nefrousy played an important role in ancient times, as it mentioned in many different sources. The name of this city is recorded on the walls of tombs of

flower (M42) as , and this was later replaced with the sign  (Z11) [21].

Beni Hassan from the Middle Kingdom [26-27]. Then it mentioned on the tablet of Carnarvon I, most probably it was taking part in the conflict between the Egyptians and the Hyksos [28]. Sometimes Nefrusy contributed with workmen to participate in the construction works in Thebes. The text of a hieratic ostrakon from the tomb of Senmut, Deir el-Bahri, counts 23 men from Nefrusy and this was the largest contribution in this ostrakon that most probably participated in construction works in this important site [4]. The necropolis journal ostrakon that was found at Al-Qurnah counted the involvement of one man from Nefrousy in the constructions in the necropolis alongside with other workers from *Pr-shrw*, Ermant, and Qau el-Kebir <sup>(f)</sup> [7]. L.6:  *sdm*, most probably this refers to a servant of a lower rank and of intermediate function [10]. Many servants were mentioned with their names in the ship's log papyrus, sometimes preceded by *m-dr.t* [10]. L.13:  *šms*, generally many different translations are given for this title [15]. It is difficult to decide which one of these would appropriately convey the meaning of the title in the present text. As there are no certain indications or proofs one could suggest the following two possibilities: This title and the other titles in the text are similar to those mentioned in the ships' log of Leiden papyrus I 350 verso, in addition to the similarities in context, as well [10]. In several cases in the Leiden papyrus a *šms* is mentioned as the one who has delivered letters to the *sem*-priest of Memphis [10]. In this context, Janssen

preferred to translate the title as "retainer" who sometimes could serve as "messenger", [10] and in the Late Ramesside letters a *šms* is mentioned many times as "messenger or dispatch-

carrier". [25, 29, 30] The other possible translation might be "attendant", an official of a temple who could serve as overseer of cattle [31].

## 6. Conclusion

*At the end of this study it is clear that the content of this board suggests that it could be a ship's log or at least part of it, especially when it is compared with other published sources. At the same time, the paper proposed that this text could serve as a draft or a temporary register. The text illustrates the role of the wsx-boat in carrying various types of cattle. The palaeographical remarks show the similarities with other 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty hieratic texts.*

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## Endnotes

- (a) This reading is suggested by Dr. Demarée.
- (b) Thanks to Dr. Demarée for this suggestion.
- (c) R.J. Demarée, personal discussion.
- (d) This suggestion could be proven by the expression  *id.t ms k3* that

was translated by Gardiner as "*the cow that bare the bull*", [23].

- (e) On a statue of Thutmosis II in Karnak, Urk IV, p. 606.
- (f) It is worth mentioning that the spelling of *Nfrw.sy* in this ostrakon is the same as in our present board.

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