

## The Term of Nefer in Ancient Egyptian Conception

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### Abstract

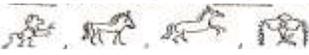
The Ancient Egyptian record their actions and doings on Temples and tombs' walls. Thus these writings commemorate their civilization. All writing had different expression and terms. Between these terms was the term of nefer. As, a result the idea and importance of this paper arise. This current study aims to shed light on the term of nefer in Ancient Egyptian conception and takes just examples to illustrate the meaning of the term only; show the different ways of its writing; indicate the different meaning of the term; refer to the term in personal and places names; point out the term in Egyptian gods descriptions; and finally show the term in personal names and titles. Throughout this study, the term nefer had different meaning according to the determinative. Furthermore, it used as a god and mentioned in personal names and titles.

**Keywords:** Nefer, Egyptian Conception, God, Ennead.

### Introduction

Ancient Egyptian writings are the way that made civilization survives until now. These writings contained many scripts (Hieroglyphic, Hieratic, Demotic, and Coptic). Moreover, the Ancient Egyptian language had a lot of terms and expressions.

The term nefer  was a trilateral sign (Gardiner, 1994). This sign of nefer (F35) means in nature the heart and windpipe (Gardiner, 1994; Allen, 2010). Firstly, the sign was written with details , then the details were disappeared in the late period and the sign was  (Erman and Grapow, 1971).

Furthermore, the following ideogram signs had the same phonogram of *nfr*  Erman and Grapow, 1971),  (Brugsch, 1868) and  (Valures, 1988).

### The different methods of writing the term nefer

The term nefer was written by different ways as follows:  (Ranke, 1935),  (Lutz, 1927),  (Erman and Grapow, 1971), ,  (Brich, 1967) and rarely written  (Gardiner, 1965).

### The different meaning of the term nefer

The following table had the different meaning of the term nefer in ancient Egyptian Language.

Table 1: The different meaning of the term nefer

No.	Word	Transliteration	Translation	References
1		<i>nfr</i>	Good, Kind, perfect, happy, faire, well	Meeks, 1998; Dickson, 2006
2		<i>nfr</i>	goodness	Sehte, 1909
3		<i>nfr</i>	Crown of Upper Egypt	Sehte, 1909
4		<i>nfr</i>	door	Brugsch, 1868
5		<i>nfr</i>	Phallus, penis	Dickson, 2006; Brugsch, 1868

6		<i>nfr</i>	Grave or tomb	Lesko, 2002,
7		<i>nfr</i>	not	Gardiner, 1994
8		<i>nfr pw</i>	There isn't, not	Bates, 2004
9		<i>nfr (w)</i>	Zero, nil	Dickson, 2006; Bates, 2004
10		<i>nfr</i>	Pure gold	Lesko, 2002,
11		<i>nfr</i>	plant	Brugsch, 1868
12		<i>nfr</i>	Warmth, heat, fire	Brich, 1967; Meeks, 1998
13		<i>nfr</i>	youth	De Buck and Gardiner, 1950; Meeks, 1998
14		<i>nfr</i>	Handsome	Faulkner, 1988
15		<i>nfr</i>	grain	Erman and Grapow, 1971
16		<i>nfr</i>	The foal	Erman and Grapow, 1971
17		<i>nfri</i>	Couch, bench	Erman and Grapow, 1971
18		<i>nfr ti</i>	bless	Brich, 1967
19		<i>nfryt</i>	End or bottom	Erman and Grapow, 1971
20		<i>nfr.y.t</i>	Tiller rope	Faulkner, 1988
21		<i>nfrt</i>	Cattle	Sehte, 1909
22		<i>Nfrwt</i>	Faire and young women	Meeks, 1998
23		<i>nfrw</i>	Beauty, goodness or end (period of time).	Sethe, 1909, Dickson, 2006
24		<i>nfrw</i>	Recruits	Schulman, 1954; Jones, 2000
25		<i>nfrw</i>	End part of the building	Erman and Grapow, 1971
26		<i>nfrw</i>	Deficiency	Brich, 1967
27		<i>nfrw</i>	In Min god titles, refer to phallus	Wilson, 1997

28		<i>mh nfr</i>	render full account	Cauville, 1997
29		<i>bw nfr</i>	good	Faulkner, 1988
30		<i>šp nfr</i>	good event	Erman and Grapow, 1971
31		<i>hrw nfr</i>	Good day	Erman and Grapow, 1971
32		<i>nfr.n.i</i>	It went well with me	Gardiner, 1994; Meeks, 1998
33		<i>r-nfr</i>	In good part	Loprieno, 1995

### The term nefer as a god

The god Nefer appeared in ancient Egyptian texts by two ways: the first, with the determinative of gods as follows: in Pyramid Texts (Spell 683)



*i nd hr.k šps I nd hr.k nfr* O, sheps (god), protect my face, O, nefer; protect my face (Samuel, 1952; Faulkner, 1978; Timofey, 2012).

In addition, God Nefer appeared in two Spells of Coffin Texts: Spell 474:



*wh<sup>c</sup>w ipw nw inyt<sup>t</sup> i nfr* these fishermen of inyt net, O, nefer,

and Spell 683<sup>†</sup> is written (De Buck and Gardiner, 1956)

During the New Kingdom the name of the God Nefer was written with one of his titles in the tomb of *sn-nfr* (TT 96): and *nfr nb m33*, Nefer the lord of visibility (eyesight) (Eggebrecht, 1986; Lüscher, 1998; Calmettes, 2007).

In an unpublished papyrus at Cairo Museum<sup>‡</sup> CG 58007 (**Fig. 1**) which dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Nefer is listed between the members of the Small Ennead as follows:



(The member of the enneads<sup>§</sup>) .....



*i psdt ʿ3t psdt nds m<sup>c</sup> rwd rn m pr-nw n w3st m pr nw sp3t iw nhh* ..... *mi rwd rn nfr*. O, the great Ennead, O, the small Ennead, Your name was strong in the chapel (Pr-nw) at Thebes in the chapel of *spat* forever..... like the strength of the name of Nefer.

In addition, the god nefer was mentioned in a ritual of plague (Smith Surgical Papyrus)



*ʿk ʿ3w n.f nfri bs3 r.i wd3 h3t s3* The ass god (form of god Ra) entre to him, Nefery, Protect to me the fresh forepart of son (Smith, 1930; Leitz, 2002).

\* Leitz mistakenly read as fdw.

† The outer coffin of DHwt nwt from El-Bersha, Now (Boston 20.1822-27).

‡ Unpublished papyrus at Cairo Museum, CG 58007, many thanks to Dr. M. Nassar at Faculty of Archeology, Fayoum University, that he showed me this papyrus.

§ All the members of the small Ennead preceded Nefer except one the god Min, for more details about the small Ennead look: Sethe, 1905; Barta, 1973).

The second way, He inscribed without the determinative of god but the meaning showed an indication of god as follows: In the Old Kingdom, he was mentioned in the Pyramid Texts Spell (820b): , *nfr dd n mwt.f iwꜥ dd.n it* nefer (the perfect one) of whom his mother has spoken "Heir", as his father said" (Samuel, 1952; Faulkner, 1978; Timofey, 2012).

Furthermore, his name appeared during the Graeco-Roman period on the Sarcophagus of *t3hw\** daughter of *iꜥh-ms* at Cairo Museum (CG 29305)  *nfr iꜥh sm3yt.f nysw m3ꜥtyw šm r hꜥtyw.f* Nefery, who strike his *smayt†* (Fig. 2). With the help of righteous (*m3ꜥtyw‡*), (he) go to his enemies (Maspero and Gauthier, 1908-14; Leitz, 2002).

It was worth mentioned that the iconographic of Nefer as a god was shown on the Sarcophagus of *t3hw* daughter of *iꜥh-ms* at Cairo Museum (CG 29305) (Fig. 3). He was depicted as a human figure holding *w3s* and *ꜥnh* scepters (Fig. 4) (Maspero and Gauthier, 1908-14; Goyon, 1985).

### The term nefer in gods' description

The term nefer was listed in descriptions of various gods as follows:

#### A. Buchis:

In a stela of Ptolemaic VI (line 7) (Fig. 5) the term nefer appeared in the description of god Buchis.

 *ntr pn nfr bwꜥs nfr imn* This good god, Buchis, the hidden god (Mond and Myers, 1934).

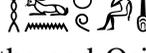
#### B. Min:

In the description of God Min (or gods attributes with Min as Amun, Kamutef), the term nefer was appeared. The god Min was described as  *ꜥꜥ m nfrw.f* "one who boasts of his beauty" (Wilson, 1997).

#### C. Osiris Wn-nefer:

The name means "he who is everlastingly good condition" (Wilkinson, 2003). Nefer in Osiris titles refer to god's physical well-being, youthfulness and renewed his vigor (Smith, 1987) or refer to Osirian resurrection (Donohue, 1978). The text as follows:

 *ink st snt n wnn nfr* I am Isis, the sister of (*wnn nfr*)<sup>§</sup> the beneficence of Osiris (Goyon, 1999).

In addition, the god Osiris was described as  *ntr nfr* the kind god or the Perfect god (Tillier, 2011),  *ity nfr* the good Sovereign and  *hwn nfr* the good youthful man (Cauville, 1997). It can be noted that the name of the god Osiris Wn-nefer was written at Dendara Temple as  (Valures, 1988).

\* Leitz mistakenly mentioned it as Dd Hr son of iaH ms

† They were the allies of god Seth.

‡ mAatyw were minor gods associated with the sun god Ra, and they were the men of Maa't (Wilson, 1997, Chassiant, 1933).

§ This is one of the names of Osiris in the Graeco-Roman period, he was written inside a cartouche . For details look: (Chassiant, 1965; Favard, and Meeks, 2012; Traunecker, 2012).

D. Osiris Sokar:

In the temple of Deir Chelouit, the inscription of the naos described the god Osiris Sokar in line 4 as (Fig. 6):

*hy n.k p3 nfr sp-sn* .....  
*šm .k ḥnw.t r t3 ḥnt ir.k st.k* The happenies is to you twice, ..... you lead you their lives to your tomb and made your place (cemetery) (Zivie, 1986).

E. Sia:

The Ptolemaic addition at El-Kab Temple revealed the king on the walls of the court in front of Nekhbet and Sia (Fig. 7) while the text described the god Sia with the good image

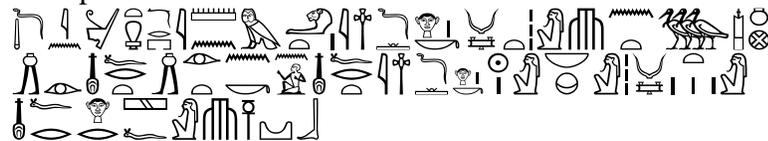
*di n.k mi rḥ dd mdw in si3 nfr twt rḥ mry rhyt* I gave to you ... as analogy with Re, Words spoken by Sia, the good image of Ra who Rekhyt birds love (Derchain, 1971).

F. Sopdu:

The temple of Hibis at El-Kharga oasis, Contained an incorporated text of a scene (Fig. 8), on West Wall of the hypostyle hall. The scene shows the king in front of Sopdu and the collateral text refers to Sopdu as the good one.

*dd mdw in spd-nfr s3 Hr-i3btt* words said by Sopdu, the good, the son of eastern Horus (Davies, 1953).

G. Wpwawt:



*dd mdw in ḥtm imy-r pr imn m ḥt i nd ḥr.k wp w3wt ḥnt nt b3w iwn in ir nfr in irt n.k n.i nfr I nd ḥr.k Rḥ nb psdw wp w3wt nfr ḥr šf ḥnt 3bdw*

Words were spoken by the royal seal bearer, the director of the house, Amenemhat "salute to Wepwawt who is in front of the spirits of Heliopolis, O, you bring and make good, bring which you made good. Salut to Ra, the lord of the Ennead, Wepwawt the good, Hershaef who is in front of Abydos" (Hassan, 1928).

Finally, there were a lot of gods who's their names contain the term nefer\* such as the god Nefertem the third member of Memphis triad which means "Atum is good" or "who he has newly appeared is perfect" (Winger, 2000) and ḥḥ nfr or ḥḥ only sacred snake†, guardian snake (Wilson, 1997).

**The term nefer in places' names**

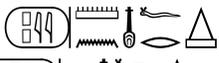
The term nefer was incorporated between Ancient Egyptian names of places such as pyramids, temples and settlement or villages. The name of the capital of the Old Kingdom was Memphis

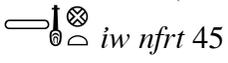
(*mn nfr* which means the white enclosur (Gauthier, 1925). Moreover, there were some village or settlement had the term nefer in their names such as *bw nfr* the good place (Menuf nowadays, Menoufia Governorate) (Gauthier, 1927), *iw nfrt* north west

\* For details about these gods look: Leitz, 2002, PP. 207- 235.

† This snake protected Osiris in the afterlife.

of Thebes (Gauthier 1925), and  *nfrw sy* village in the 15<sup>th</sup> Nome of Upper Egypt, north of Elkom El-Ahmar (Gauthier, 1927).

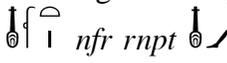
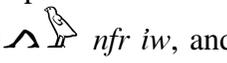
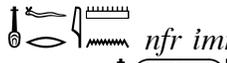
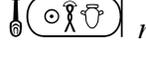
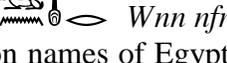
Some pyramids of the Old Kingdom had the term *nefer* between their names for instance the pyramid of King Ounas  *nfr swt wnis* beautiful are the places of Wnis (Gauthier, 1927), the pyramid of the king Pepy I  *mn nfr ppy* Pepy is fixes and beautiful, and the pyramid of king Meryenra  *h<sup>c</sup>i nfr mri n r<sup>c</sup>* the beauty of Meryenra is rising (Gauthier, 1927).

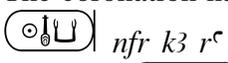
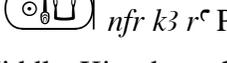
Edfu Temple is called in the temple description  *iw nfrt n id* the beautiful island of the child (Wilson, 1997). Furthermore the name of Osiris Temple at Dendera is known as  *iw nfrt* 45 (Brugsch, 1879).

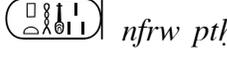
### The term *nefer* in personal names

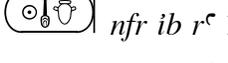
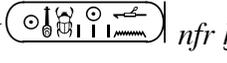
The term *nefer* appeared in personal names of officials as well as kings. There were a lot of names of officials whose their names *nfr* only  (Ranke, 1935). It can be observed that this name was named throughout the Ancient Egyptian History (Ranke, 1935, 1952).

Some official had the term *nefer* between their names such as: in the Old Kingdom  *nfr sšm* (Lepsius, 1849),  *nfr k3 s3hw r<sup>c</sup>*,  *nfr hr snfrw* (Ranke, 1935),  *nfr tm* (Mariette, 1885),  *Nfr iw hthr* (Ranke, 1952).

The Middle Kingdom coupled with the New Kingdom personal name had the term *nefer* for instance:  *nfr rnpt*,  *nfr iw*, and  *nfr sš* (Ranke, 1935),  *nfr imm*,  *nfr mwt*. In The late period had the same of the previous times such as:  *nfr w3h ib r<sup>c</sup>* and  *Wnn nfr\** (Ranke, 1935).

The coronation names of Egyptian Kings (Gauthier, 1907 and 1912) contained the term such as:  *nfr k3 r<sup>c</sup>* 6<sup>th</sup> king of the second Dynasty,  *nfr k3 skr* 7<sup>th</sup> king of the second Dynasty,  *snfrw* fourth Dynasty,  *nfr ir k3 r<sup>c</sup>* fifth Dynasty,  *nfr f r<sup>c</sup>* fifth Dynasty,  *nfr k3 r<sup>c</sup>* Pepi II.

In the Middle Kingdom the Queen Neferwptah of 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty  *nfrw pth* (Gauthier, 1907).

In the Second Intermediate Period king  *h<sup>c</sup> nfr r<sup>c</sup>* King Sobekhotep IV 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and  *nfr ib r<sup>c</sup>* 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, had the term in their names (Gauthier 1912). The New Kingdom had one name of the king Amenhotep IV  *nfr hprw rw w<sup>c</sup> n r<sup>c</sup>* (Gauthier 1912).

\* *wnn-nfr* (w), the imperfective participle of *wnn*, "to be", + *nfr* in the old perfective, was employed in the Fifth Dynasty as a personal name. It was known as a divine epithet from the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (Donohue, 1978).

The late Period had two kings whose nefer was incorporated between their names, the first was the king Shbaka (25 Dynasty)  *nfr k<sup>c</sup> r<sup>c</sup>* and the king Pasmatek II (26 Dynasty)  *nfr ib r<sup>c</sup>* (Gauthier 1912). It can be noted that there is one birth name of the king Neferhotep  *nfr htp* 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty who had nefer in his name (Gauthier 1912).

In addition, the term was listed in female names such as:  *nfr htp.s* daughter of King Jedefra (Gauthier, 1907),  *i<sup>c</sup>h ms nfr itry* Ahmose nefertari, the wife of King Ahmose (Gauthier, 1912),  *nfrt imm* (Kamal, 1907),  *nfr nfrw itn ity* Queen Nefertiti Wife of King Amenhotep IV (Gauthier, 1912),  *nfrt iry mryt n mwt* Queen Nefertari Wife of King Ramses II (Dodson, 2004; Grajetzki, 2005),  *nfrt t3y* (Ranke, 1935), and  *nfrt ist* (Ranke, 1952).

### The term nefer in personal titles

The royal titles together with personal titles had the term nefer. The title  *ntr nfr\** is more known as a royal title than as a divine epithet; nevertheless, many deities are called *ntr nfr*. The most frequent and ancient god was Osiris.

It was one of the most famous titles of king all over the Ancient Egyptian History especially in the Ramessid era. There were a lot of king who was taken this title such as Khaefra 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Mentouhotep II 11<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Gauthier, 1907), Sobek Hotep III 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Gauthier 1912), Ahmose 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Gauthier, 1912), and Ramses II 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Kamal, 1952).

The officials had the term nefer in their titles for example:  *iry ht nfr h3t* concerned with the affairs of the crown (Jones, 2000),  *imy-r ht nbt nfrt* overseer of every good thing (Fischer, 1997),  *nfr h3t* Keeper of the headdress,  *iry nfr h3t* keeper of the diadem  *nfrw* recruit (Ward, 1982).

Finally the term nefer listed between the funerary titles such as  *pr-nfr<sup>†</sup>* funerary workshop (Donohue, 1978; Ward, 1982).

### Discussion and results

The term of nefer was used to deliver the concepts of goodness and beauty and comeliness. Furthermore, the meaning was varied according to the determinative. The term was used as Adjective such as *sp nfr* (good event), noun such as *bw nfr* (beauty), Adverb for instance *r-nfr* (in good part), and verb such as *nfr.n.i* It went well with me.

The term nefer as a god was written in texts with Horus determinative  and god sitting  on one hand. On the other hand, he was inscribed without determinative of god but the meaning refer to the god.

\* The word *nfr* is appeared in the epithets of gods. In the First Intermediate Period, the presence of nTr + nfr alone was virtually obligated to Osiris or Anubis (Dunham, 1937; Petrie and Murray, 1952; Fischer, 1968).

† It was connected with the purification of the body (Grdseloff, 1941). It was appeared and performed in tombs from at least the Fourth Dynasty onwards (Hassan, 1943; Junker, 1944). In contrast, the phrase *pr-nfr* in inscriptions appears not to have been introduced before the end of the Old Kingdom (Seth, 1903; Ricke, 1950; Settgast, 1963).

Furthermore, the god Nefer was considered the god of the necropolis in Pyramid Texts, spell (820b). He had a candid title listed in the tomb of *šn-nfr* (TT96) *nfr nb m33* the lord of seeing. The god nefer was mentioned in some gods description such as Wepwawet (the god who stand equal with Anubis in two side of Osiris (chapter 138 book of the dead) (Quirk, 2013), the underworld gods Osiris wen-nefer and Osiris Sokar, Buchis (thresh in the afterworld (Wilkinson, 2012), Sia (stands in the right of god Ra and held the god's sacred papyrus scroll (Wilkinson, 2012), Sopdu (equated with the teeth of the dead king (Wilkinson, 2012), and Horus Behdety. Therefore, it can be observed that the god Nefer was one of the gods of the afterworld.

The term nefer was coupled with pyramids' names of the Old Kingdom, Temples, and Ancient places specially Memphis.

The term nefer was prevalent in Egyptian Kings' coronation names. It was listed in the Old kingdom, Middle Kingdom, Second intermediate Period, New Kingdom and Late Period. In addition, it was mentioned in some Queen such as Nefertiti the wife of Amenhotep IV.

The term nefer was common in male names as well as female one. The term nefer was put beside the name of king such as *nfr hr snfrw*, name of god or goddess such as *nfr imn* and *Nfr iw htfr*, and name of job such as *nfr sš*.

The personal titles contain the term nefer such as *nfr h3t*. Moreover, it was listed in the most famous kings' titles in Ancient Egyptian Civilization *ntr nfr*.

Finally, the term nefer in personal names or titles, Griffith (1966) pointed out that nefer in personal names refers to ethical or moral aspects and the beneficence of Osiris. It may have been a derived sense parallel to the moral implications of *m3t* (Fecht, 1958).

## Conclusion

The current study presented the term nefer in ancient Egyptian conception. The term nefer was very popular throughout the ages with the Ancient Egyptians. It had various meaning according to the determinative. The meaning was coupled with appearance, quality, characters, conditions, fixed expressions. In addition, the term was used as verb, noun, additive, and adverb.

The term was used as a god who had one title (the lord of seeing). The study suggested that god was the god of the necropolis, so he was one of the gods of the afterworld.

Nefer was also incorporated into the description of Ancient Egyptian gods as Buchis, Osiris, Osiris Sokar, Sia, Sopdu and Wpawwt. In addition, He was connected with the small Ennead.

The titles of kings and officials were held the term nefer. *ntr nfr* was the most famous title of kings as well as gods. Official held many titles in which the term nefer was involved such as *nfrw* recruits (young men of the army), and *iry nfr h3t* keeper of the diadem

This term appeared within many personal names of kings, Queen, and Officials, including those of the famous king as Snefrw and Amenhotep IV, queens as Nefertiti and Nefertari. It can be observed that the term nefer is used during the Old Kingdom in kings' names and places more than any times in Ancient Egyptian History.

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### Figures

Fig. 1: Unpublished papyrus of the Small Ennead (Cairo Museum C.G. 58007).

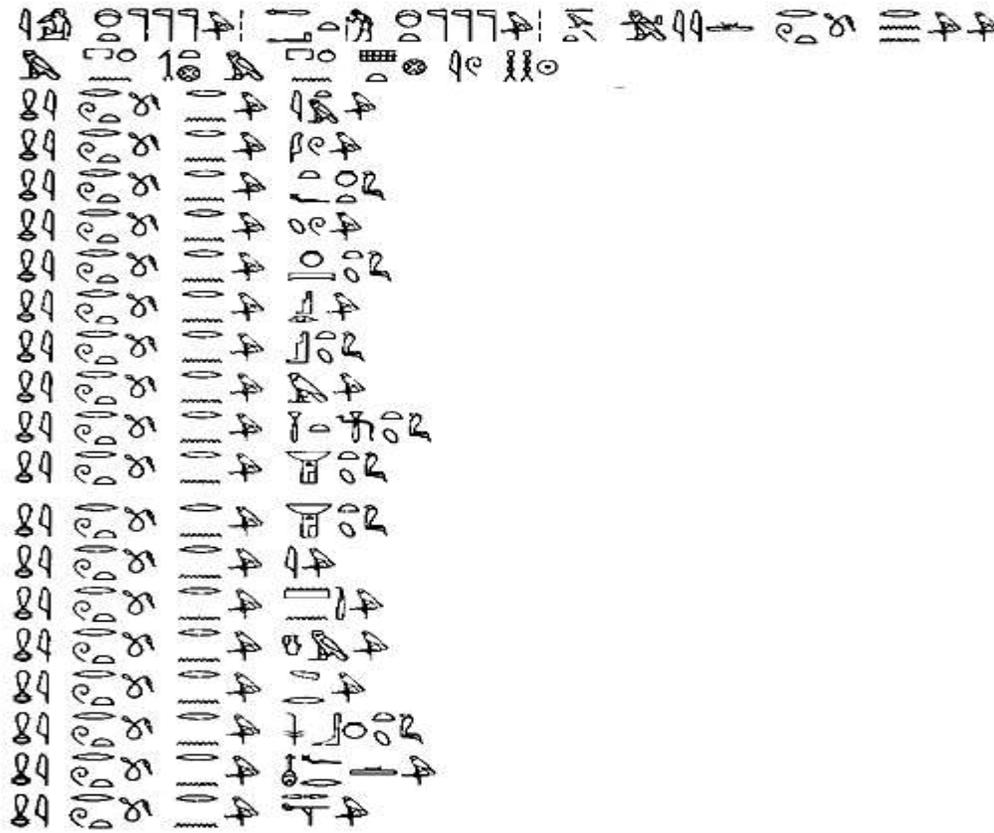


Fig. 2: *sm3yt* as depicted on the wall of Edfu Temple (Goyon,

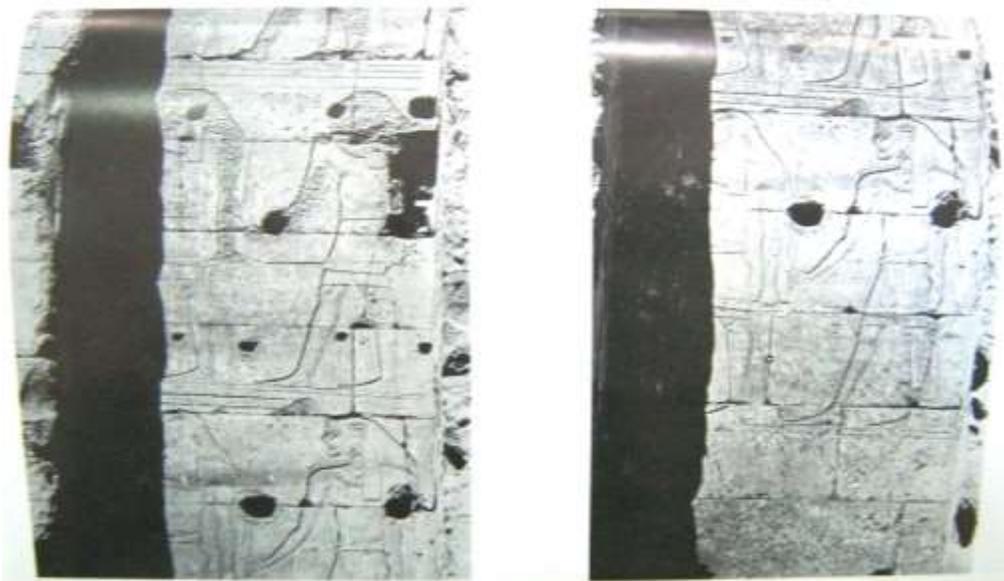


Fig. 3: The Iconography of God Nefer which depicted on the Sarcophagus of *t3hw* daughter of *iꜥh-ms* at Cairo Museum (CG 29305) (after the courtesy of the Egyptian Museum).



Fig. 4: The iconography of God Nefer the Sarcophagus of *t3hw* daughter of *iꜥh-ms* at Cairo Museum (CG 29305) (after the courtesy of the Egyptian Museum).



Fig. 5: A Stela of Ptolemaic VI, and the text which written on it (Mond and Myers, 1924 Pl XI D)



Fig. 6: The Inscription of the Naos of of Deir Chelouit Temple (Zivie, 1986. PL. 13).

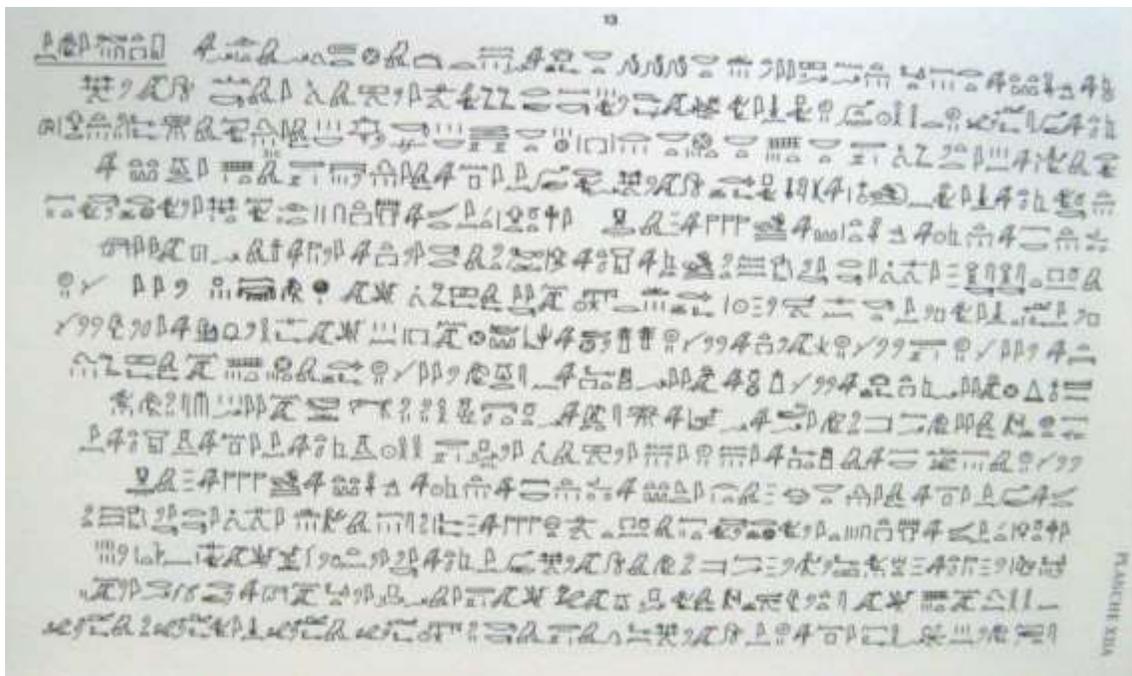


Fig. 7: Scene on the Walls of the Court (Ptolemaic addition), the king is shown in front of Nekhbet and Sia (Derchain, 1971, PL. 11).

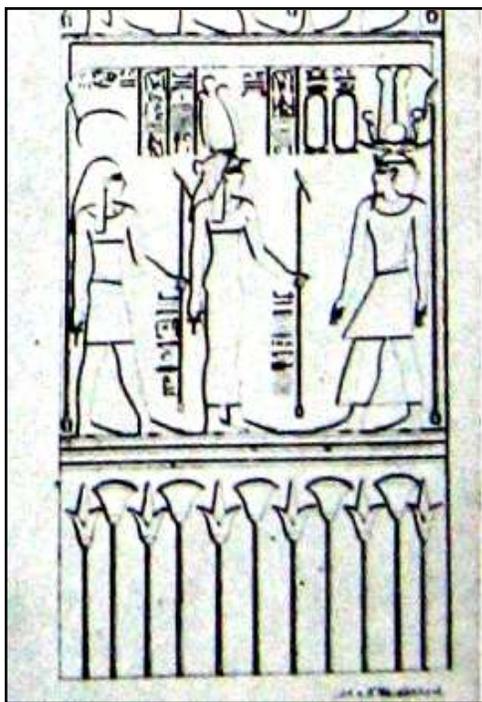


Fig. 8: West Wall of the Hypostyle Hall, Temple of Hibis at El-Kharga Oasis, (Davies , 1953, PL. 8).

