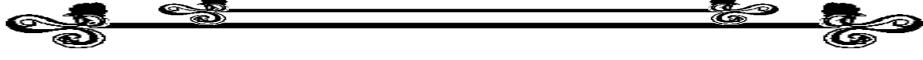


Unpublished Ear stela in the Egyptian  
Museum  
(72299)



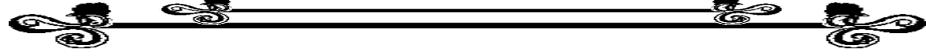
DR Samah Mohammed Elsawi  
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Unpublished Ear stela in the Egyptian Museum  
(72299)





## I- General description

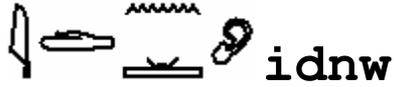
An unpublished study of a stela which has got the depiction of the ear. The stela is currently housed in the Egyptian museum in Cairo.

This kind of stela did not appear before the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty, and it was known as “the votive or magic . It has one depiction or more for the ear (‘)stela” engraved on it.

It was used by the praying individuals who were trying to have their hopes, wishes and needs to be . That kind of (‘)heard and answered by the gods stela was considered a way to supplicate to the god . It was believed that it (‘)rather than being an amulet was the fastest way to make the god listen to the prayers and wishes of those individuals and to make them come true.

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- ( 1) Redford D,B., The oxford Encyclopedia of ancient Egypt, Vol 3, Cairo 2001, p. 319 ff.
  - ( 2) Spiegelberg, W., Recueil de Travauax, vol 26, 1904, p. 65.
  - ( 3) Andrews, C., Amulets of ancient Egypt, British Museum, London 1994, p. 69.

Therefore, the ear stela<sup>e</sup> was classified as a kind of public offerings used by the commoners. But in the beginning it was used by specific groups of people in the society , for instance deaf and dumb people.



Those people were engraving the ears of the god on the stela<sup>e</sup> to whisper to them with their needs and secrets. So the gods would listen carefully to them. That practice showed one of the roles of the cult of the god which was known as : “he who listens”



<sup>(1)</sup>That role masked the other main roles of the god, and enforced him to listen to the prayers of the <sup>(2)</sup>individuals and forgive them

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( 1) Schafer, B., Religion in ancient Egypt, London 1991, p. 181-82.

( 2) Gunn. B., The religion of the poor in ancient Egypt, JEA 3, 1916, pp. 81. 94; Zaba, Z., Les Maximes de ptah-Hotep, Prague 1956; pp. 15-17; Lichtheim, M., Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol 1, London1973, p. 62; Erman, A., The Literature, of Ancient Egyptian, New york 1996. p. 55.



. They had one ear or more <sup>(1)</sup>semicircular in shape  
(<sup>2</sup>)depicted on them

In the old kingdom, the one ear was known as :

(<sup>3</sup>) msDr

(<sup>4</sup>)And it was also known as idnw

(<sup>5</sup>)The two ears were known as : anxwy

In the middle kingdom the two ears were known as:

(<sup>6</sup>) HHwy

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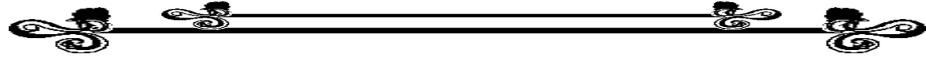
( 1) LAIV, 565; Lokas, A., The Materials and industries of ancient Egyptian, translator by Eskander, z., & Ghonim, M., Cairo 1945, p. 589.

( 2) Sadek, A, I., Popular Religion in Egypt during the New kingdom, Hildesheim 1978. pls 9-12.

( 3) Lefebvre, G., Tableau Des parties Du Corps Humain Mentionness par les Egyptiens, Le Caire 1952, p. 21; WbII, 154

( 4) WbI, 154.

( 5) WBI, 204.



In the Greek Roman period, the right ear was known

as :  **msDr wnmy**

And the left ear was known as :

(<sup>1</sup>)  **msDr iAby**

It is noticed that both terms **anxwy** / **msDr** are symbolizing –in general- the word ear. But the term “**anxwy**” is more popular in the medical papyri.

In despite of both terms (**anxwy** and **msDr**) were followed by the determinative of the animal ear, it seldom happened that the term “ms Dr” was followed by the human ear determinative .

(<sup>2</sup>) There is also the rarely seen term **msDr**

Which is referring to the curved external part of the ear and it appeared in the medical papyri.

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( 1) WbIII 154 (GR).

( 2) Lefebvre, G., 1952, 21.

( 3) Naville, E. The XI th Dynasty temple at Deir-El. Bahari part III, London., 1913, pl 24, 16.



However , there were various lingual significances for the determinative ear , such as :

(<sup>1</sup>)  **xnty n msDr**

(<sup>2</sup>)1-In the old kingdom :  **sDm**

This term means “to hear”. In this word the ancient Egyptian used the cow ear determinative to refer to the strong hearing sense.

2-In the middle kingdom, the term “*sDmy*”

meant the judge who is considered the (<sup>3</sup>)  one authorized to listen to the opponents.

3-From the new kingdom on, to the late period, the

(<sup>4</sup>)term  **sDm aS**

Means the listener to the calls or “the one who commits the demand , being considered the one who carries out or obey orders of his master.

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( 1) WbIII, 368.

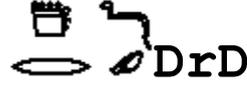
( 2) Gardiner, A.H., Egyptian Grammer, London 1973, p. 463; WbIV, 384 .

( 3) Wb IV, 388.

( 4) Wb IV, 389.



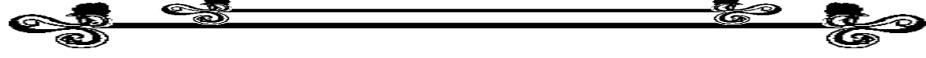
this word was referring to the (1)8-  deafness decease and it was used in the late period .

this term appeared in one of the (1)9-  medical papyri which is dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

- 
- ( 1) Deadness is one of the diseases mentioned in the Ibreese Medical papyri. It is caused by the damage which could happen in one of the blood vessels which exist in the jaw. That vessel is connecting in between the eyes and the ears. There are four veins reaching the ears, two of them are going above the right shoulder, and the other two are going above the left shoulder. Those veins were believed to grant the breath of life to the right ear , and to give death to the left one see: WbIII, 466;

Ghalioungui, p., the Ebres papyrus, Cairo 1987, p. 194; Grapow, H., Die Medizinischen Texte in Hieroglyphischer umschreibung Autographiert, Berlin 1958, Eb 854f; Grapow H., Grundriss der Medizin den Alten Agypter, GMAI, Berlin 1954, p. 31; Fulkner, O., A Consice Dictionary of Middle kingdom, oxford 1976, p. 239f; Badar, W.S., The Medicine and Doctors in pharaonic Egypt, unpublished M.A, The faculty of arts Alex univ. 2003, p.2.

- ( 2) WbV, 603.



## II- Description of the stelae :

Place of the discovery : Memphis.

Current location : the storage of the Egyptian museum in Cairo.

Information about the excavation or the date of publishing is unavailable.

The records of the object in the museum in the number 72299

The material of the object is white limestone.

Dimensions of the object: height of the stelae is approximately 74cm.

The stela has got a depiction of an ear engraved on white limestone where the remains of red color above the ear recess could be seen.

It is one of the stelaes which are known as “vows stelae”. This kind of stelae first appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty in Memphis, which was considered one of the sacred spots in ancient Egypt, just like Thebes and Sakkara.

The bearer of the vows was heading to those sacred spots to dedicate the vows to the local deity. And

that's why this kind of stela was related to the god Ptah of Memphis who was considered a "creating god". And thus, this organ (the ear) of the human body was related to the god Ptah since the beginning of the creation, and it had a very important role in, in addition to his role<sup>(1)</sup> the "Memphite doctrine therapy of deafs".

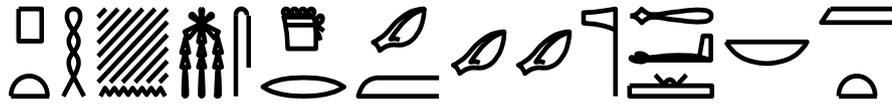
This ear is merely a substitution for the ear of the god who is listening to the prayers of the humans, it is answering and responding to the pleading of the bearer of the vows.

This believe is assured by the praise of "Ptah Taten", which is mentioned in one of the stelaes of Memphis, saying :

- 
- ( 1 ) Breasted, J.H., The philosophy of a Memphite priest, ZAS 39, 1904, pp. 39-54.
- ( 2 ) Gardiner, H., Hymens to Amon from leiden papyrus, ZAS 42, 1905, p. 28-9.
- ( 3 ) Petrie, f., Religious life in ancient Egypt, London 1924, p. 195; Sadek, A, I., Popular Religion in Egypt duriang the New kingdom, Hildesheim 1978, pp. 245, 268, pls. 1-28; Schafer, B., 1991, fig. 65







ptH n msDr sDmw nTr aA nb  
mAat

"Ptah, the listening ear, the great god, lord of  
.(<sup>1</sup>)justice"

It is noticed here that both epithets of the god are  
identical in the meaning : **sDm - nHi/msDr -  
sDm**

There are other religious texts showing the purpose  
of the senses of hearing and sight which were  
granted by the god to his creatures. It is saying :

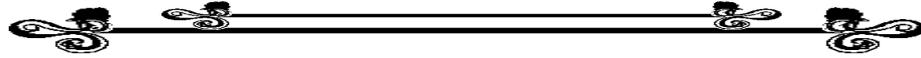


*Ddi.tw n.k irrwy.ky r mAA  
anxwy.k(y) r sDm Ddwt*

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Heidelberg, AHG, 1998, p. 158-160;.

( 1 ) Holmberg, M.S., The God ptah, lund 1946, p. 75, 86.



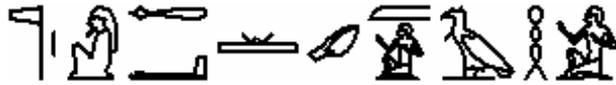
“I have given you eyes to see, and ears to hear  
speech .

Some other religious texts described the god that:

. **Wr** <sup>(1)</sup>“he has got the big eyes and the great ears”  
**wAD. Ty aSA anxwy**”

In the last phrase the god is called :“the one with the  
opened ears”, referring to the god listening

. He is also the one listening to the wishes <sup>(2)</sup>carefully  
(as mentioned in some other texts).



**nTr aA sDm nHi**

That phrase means: the greatest god who is listening  
.<sup>(3)</sup>to the wishes

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( 1 ) OTTo, Gott und Mensch nach der agyptischen  
tempelins tempelinschriften der Griechische  
romischen zeit, eine untersu chung zun phrasealgie  
der tempelinschriften, Heidelberg 1964, p. 30.

( 2 ) Lynn, H., The peopl's Religion in Egypt's Golden age,  
The art of living in the New kingdom, Boston,  
Museum of fine arts, 1982, pp. 296-307.

( 3 ) The Verb "nhi" is appear since the middle kingdom

He is listening the prayers and calls : "   
**sDm aS**

He is listening to the prayers and wishes of that who is invoking to him.



(<sup>1</sup>) **sDm n.f nHi n aS . i n.f**

It is noticed here that the description “sdm cs” is so close to the meaning of the expression “**sDm n xrw**”. And this description is seen in some of the religious texts concerning the offerings statements which are saying :

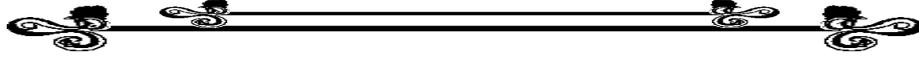


**Htp-di-nsw ptH sDm nHi**

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that it connected to the worshipers, directed from the Rulers to the Gods wick to life and Heath, Block, M.H., P., Remarques sur Quelques steles Dites "Aoreilles", KeMI 1, paris 1928, pl. 123 ff.

- ( 1) ERman A., Romische oblelischen, wissensch 1917, vol IV, p.41; Ranke, H., Die Agyptischen personennamen, Band 1,Gluckstadt 1935, p. 323, no. 20.



"the gift that the king is giving to the god Ptah to  
".<sup>(1)</sup>hear the vocation

The sense of hearing was not restricted just to the  
god Ptah, but it was also given to his spirit "K3" (as  
it was mentioned in some other texts).



*i n kA n ptH nb aA pHty*

*sDm (w)*

“Oh Ptah’s spirit "K3", lord of justice, you with the  
.<sup>(1)</sup>might hearing”

As mentioned earlier, the ear was associated with  
, Thot, <sup>(4)</sup>, Amun Ra<sup>(r)</sup> other gods such as : Hathour  
Osiris, Set, Seshat and Serapis...As each one of  
them was depicted with groups of ears. For instance,  
on one of the stelaes discovered in Abydos, the

- 
- ( 1) Mostafa, D., Lieux Saints populaire Dans L'Encienne,  
Discussions in Egyptology vol 29 Cairo 1994, p.  
95f; Holmberg, M.S., 1946, & 82
  - ( 2) Budge, W., The Book of the dead , New york 1969 ch  
xlii, p. 597, 607; Holmberg, M.S., 1964, 84.
  - ( 3) Naville, E. 1913, pl. 24, p. 16.
  - ( 4) Morgen, E., Untersuchungen Zu den ohrenstelen aus  
Der El Madine, 2004, pp. 87. 98.

goddess Hathour was represented being surrounded by six ears.

In the papyri of “Ani”, the following text was mentioned in one of the chapters of the book of the dead :



**1t-1r iw msDr m wpwAwt**

"Hathour, The two ears as wepwawet"

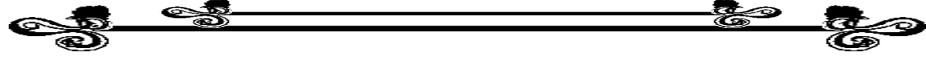
The god Amun was depicted carrying two big ears and he was preceded by the water lily flower. And the text was saying :



**Imn Ra kA mwt.f nswt  
nTr (w)**

“Amun Ra the ox of his mother, the king of the gods”.

The chant of the god “Amun Ra Hor Akhty” is saying : He is listening carefully, he has got a pair of



ears and he has hundreds of thousands of hearing  
(<sup>1</sup>)senses

In the ancient Egyptian cult, the ear amulet was important in different aspects. For instance, it was blessing the warriors during the fights. This could be comprehended from a scene depicted on a part of the fence surrounding the temple of Ptah in Memphis, as each watching tower of its fortifications had an ear depicted on it.

Moreover, there is a vertical text in between two towers of those fortifications, which mentions some prayers addressed to the god Ptah to make him listen  
(<sup>2</sup>)to the warrior who is praying and pleading

The ear played a symbolic religious role in resurrection because there is not any sense of hearing without the ear. This concept is comprehended from the mummy of a young man who lost his ear. So, the embalmer had to have a

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( 1 ) Assman, J., 1998, 85, 158, 148, 169, 129, 160;

Brunner, T., seh gott und horgott in: fragen an die altagyptische literature, GSE. OTTO, Wiesbaden 1977, pl. 12; Gardiner, A. H., 1905, 28-29

( 2 ) Sadek, 1987, 265.

substitution for that ear made out of cotton to enable the mummified young man to hear the embalmer spells.

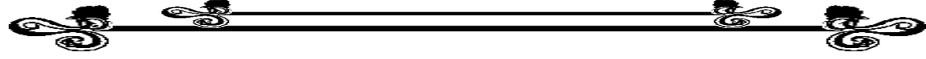
In the ritual of “the opening of the mouth” which was performed on the king’s mummy –the king is incarnation of the god Osiris- , there were some spells recited to prove the importance of the ear. Some of those spells are saying : “I open your mouth to speak up, your eyes to see Ra and your ears to hear the spells of your reverence”.

Another text is showing the desire of the deceased king to be substituted with two ears to be able to hear and to fill them with justice and truth. And to be provided with two other eyes to see.

Such text is emphasizing on the big role of hearing in the ancient Egyptian believe. And so, this role played by the ears is associated directly with the “listening god”. The text is saying :



irty anxwy n bity mH anxwy m  
mAat



That text means: “two eyes and two ears for the king  
(1) of lower Egypt to fill the ears with justice”

The ear was one of the amulets taking the shape of some organs of the human body. Two amulets dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty were found with a hole on (1) one of its sides to be hanged from

It is said that some of the traditions which were practiced by the ancient Egyptian peasants during the harvest season were offering fruits to the ears which were depicted on the top of the prayers table, (1) and waiting to be blessed by the gods

The result of the research is showing that the “ear stelaes” is one of the votive stelaes which are showing some of the organs of the human body.

That kind of stelaes was used by a patient who asked the gods to recover him/her from a decease affected that organ.

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( 1) Otto, E., 1964, 30.

( 2) Petrie, F., Amulets, London 1914, pl. 10, pl 1 5a.b.c.

( 3) Petrie, F., 1924, 195 .

The ear stela was placed in the temples of ancient Memphis, because the ear was representing the symbolic willingness of the mind to receive what the ears could hear.

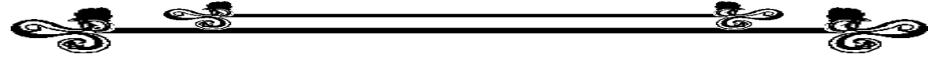
The ear stela was also considered a memorial which was activated for those who were getting closer and wanted their prayers to be heard. It is a way to insist in praying and asking to gain the attention of the god. The ear was responding to the prayers and whispers of those who pray.

Probably it was engraved by nobles or commoners – not by the royals- trying to approach the gods.

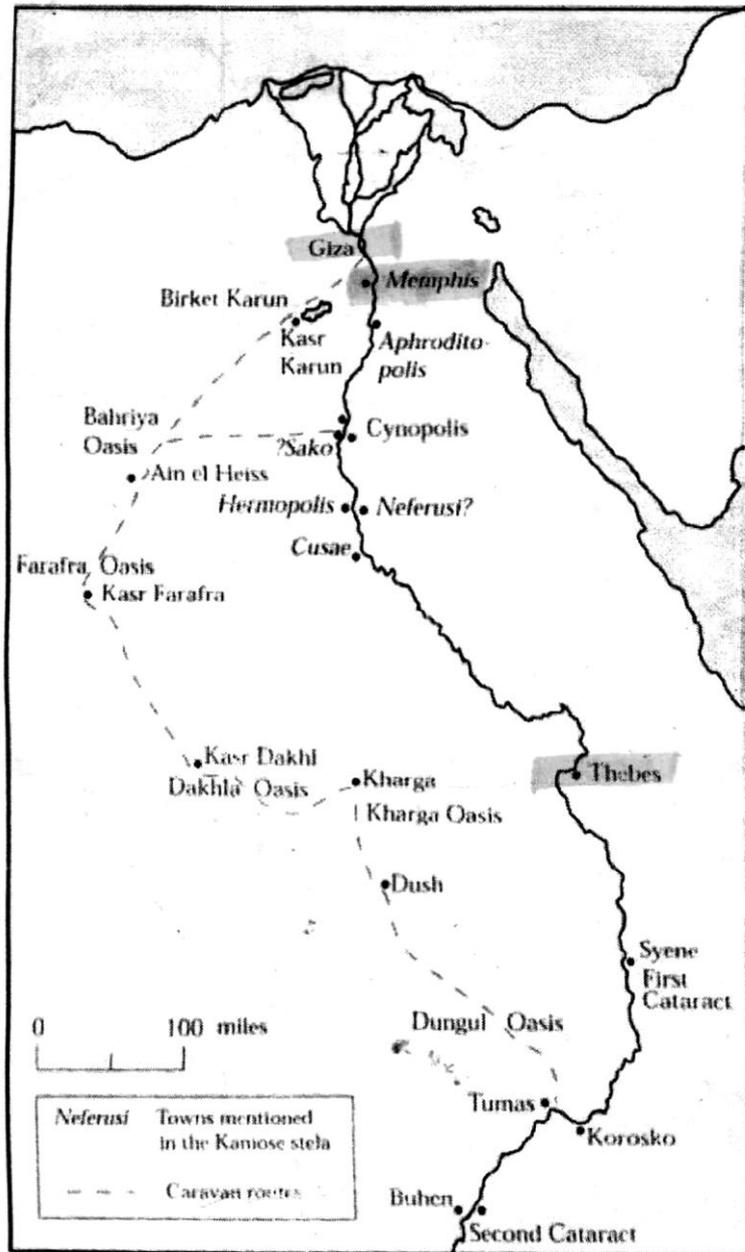
It was the right ear to activate the rite of listening, or to worship.

Since the ancient Egyptian preferred the right side when practicing anything, that's why the left ear was always eliminated from the stela.

Comparing the ear stela with other kinds of stelaes, most probably it is dating back to the new kingdom.



A map showing the temples dedicated to the ear stelae.



position of temples of ear stelaes.

1-Giza and Sakkara.

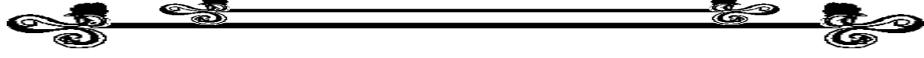
2-Memphis.

3-Thebes.

### **Abbreviation list**

WB: Worterbuch der Agyptischen sperache, 6 vols,  
(Leipzig Berlin).

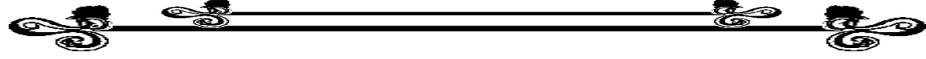
ZAS: Zeitschrift fur Agyptische sprache und Alter  
tumshunde Leipzig (Berlin)



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27. OTTO, Gott und Mensch nach der agyptischen tempelinschriften der Griechische romischen zeit, eine untersu chung zun phrasealgie der tempelinschriften, Heidelberg 1964
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