

Some Remarks on the so-called “Iwf” in Religious Texts Until The End of New Kingdom

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Abstract

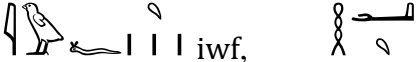
The ancient Egyptians maintained a profound belief in the continuity of existence beyond death, considering the afterlife not merely a destination but an intricate journey requiring extensive preparation. This journey was imagined as a perilous odyssey fraught with obstacles and trials, necessitating spiritual resilience and ritual support to ensure the deceased's safe passage. Central to this belief system was the reunification of the bA (soul) and the physical body, a concept fundamental to achieving immortality and integration into the divine cosmic order.


Within this framework, particular emphasis was placed on sacred objects that held protective and transformative power, among which the "Iwf" occupies a significant, though often overlooked, role. This study examines the symbolic and functional importance of the Iwf within funerary practices and religious texts of ancient Egypt, with a focus on its representation and usage up to the end of the New Kingdom. By exploring the conceptual associations of the Iwf with the physical body and its ritual significance, the article sheds light on how such objects were believed to facilitate the deceased's journey and ultimate reunion with their spiritual essence in the afterlife.

Keywords Iwf, Entity, Flesh, Body, Afterworld.

1. Introduction

The ancient Egyptian religion was founded on the preservation of the body, allowing the soul to recognize it, and the belief in an afterlife that connected the two. The majority of texts and depictions were concerned with the process of uniting the soul and body to ensure resurrection in the afterlife, thus achieving immortality. Various terms were employed to refer to the entire body or its more essential parts.

 iwf, Ha, Flesh.

 XAt, Corpse.

 Dt, Body, at, Body Part.











The terms iwf and Ha both describe aspects of flesh, exhibiting similar structural characteristics as concepts linked to creative potential. In the case of iwf, it is primarily associated with the notion of outflow, often believed to originate from the flesh. These terms,

along with other body parts, were fundamental concepts in the ancient Egyptian understanding of bodily unity and integration, though *iwf* played a relatively minor role in this context. Another notable connection between these terms is their association with fear. *Iwf* is conceived as a container for both an individual's own fear and the fear instilled in the flesh of others, whereas *Ha* is more specifically linked to the latter interpretation.

Furthermore, some terms related to the preservation and vitality of the body contrast with decay and weakness. While attributes signifying the opposite of the corpse's degradation align with expressions of strength and vitality, these qualities are generally seen in connection with rituals such as mourning and burial, reinforcing the notion of ritual action as an essential element of the posthumous process.

Both *XAt* (corpse) and *Dt* (body) share a profound connection to the *BA* (soul), with numerous references to their spatial relationships. The *BA* is depicted as capable of moving away from the body, a reflection of its independence. However, the proximity of the *BA* to the body—particularly when it watches over or stays near the corpse—illustrates a different facet of the spiritual connection. These seemingly contradictory notions suggest a cyclical movement, where the *BA* alternates between distant and close proximity to the body, highlighting the dynamic nature of this relationship.

The relationship between the *bA* and the *Dt* was generally viewed as similar, but also exhibited distinct differences. A key aspect of this relationship was the accessibility of the body to the *bA*, which emphasized the need for the *bA* to move freely. However, this dynamic avoided the occasionally negative connotations associated with the *bA* and body being in close proximity or depicted as being intimately tied to the body, was also believed to share a significant connection with the *Dt*. Furthermore, the *Dt* and the eye of Horus were frequently associated with each other, highlighting a recurrent connection in the ancient Egyptian worldview. (Nyord, R., 2009).

The ancient Egyptians believed that the human body *Ha*  is made up of five elements: the heart  *lib*, the shadow *Swt* , the noun  *rn*, the soul  *bA*, the luminous immortal part  *Ax*, and the consort  *kA*. (Allen, J., 2000);cf: (Waziry, A.,2009). However, there is a widespread belief that there are three additional components to a living being: *xAt*  is the physical body that dies and is embalmed after death *Xt*, and *sxm*  is the life force or vital energy that is given to a person to live, and *sxm* lives in heaven with *Ax* after death, and finally  *sAHw* It is the heavenly body in which man lives and travels through the universe, It exists after the deceased passes the court, and he retains all of the deceased's intellectual and spiritual abilities, thus combining all of the previous elements.(Jacques, R., 2019).

*All figures in this research are sourced from Hornung, E. (1963), with the exception of Figures 5 and 6, which were designed with the assistance of a collaborator.

The deceased seeks the union of "kA and bA" in the other world, and when they are united, he becomes "Ax" and transforms into a part of the sky with stars, taking from the astral body sAHw as his body, with which he sails among the stars that do not vanish. The sun god travels in the form of iwf for the union of kA and bA.

2. The Distinction Between "Iwf" in Religious and Secular Texts

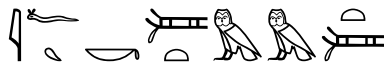
2.1 Body

The word iwf appeared in the ancient Egyptian language meaning a body; the meaning became clear in the pyramid texts:



snt.k wrt sAqt iwf.k

Your great sister collects your body (Pyr, II, 1008b)



Iwf.k tm m |m

Your body is complete as Atom (Pyr, II, 1298b)

The meaning also became clear in the coffin texts



Ast iwf.f rDw.f r tA

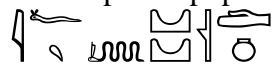
Isis (stopped) his body and secretions from the ground (CI, VI, 40j)



Iwf xftyw anx m sgr

The body of the enemy that lives in silence (CT, VII, 297a-c).

The serpent Apophis also took the nickname Iwf DwDw that means: the malignant body



(LGG, I, p.184).

2.2 Flesh

The word iwf has appeared in abundance in texts throughout the ages, meaning meat or pieces of chosen meat (WPL, p.49f).






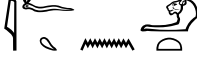

smA, wAH n.i iwf.f Hr axw.k

The calf, I put the meat on your brazier (Edfu, III, 196.14).



rdit iwf Hr xt

Putting meat on fire (Edfu, VII, 316.7).

The word at iwf  means butcher,  iry iwf means responsible for meat, iwf n pHwy  means back meat, iwf n HAt  means front meat and wr n iwf  means a lot of meat (Wb, I, p.51f).

It should be noted that it does not only represent the sacrificial meat, but also the meat of the gods: (CT, 108, e-f).



qsw.k biA iwf.k nbw pw n sw nTr

Your iron bones and golden flesh belong to a god

2.3 god

It is worth noting that Iwf was not a deity himself, but was associated with many deities to express their sacred bodies, but despite that, his name was mentioned singly in many sources, and the following are some written forms. (Pyr, I, 722a), (Hornung, E., 1963), (Dendera, X, 194, Nr 7, Tf, 94), (LGG, I, p.183f).



Although there is no evidence that Iwf was a deity in its own right, a text mentions:



XAt xpri pw Iwf Ds

Khabari's body is Iwf himself (Hornung, E, 1963).

And in the Tenth Hour of the Amduat there is a baboon Associated with the return of the Solar

Eye." designated iwf fAy irt.f  "Flesh-who-carries-his-Eye (Hornung, E., 1963).

The idea of compatibility and merging has appeared since the era of the Pyramid texts (Pyr, I, 145b), and it is worth noting that the merging of the deities does not mean that they are equal, not symmetrical, and one does not erase the other, and the following text explains the merging of god Ra with the body of Osiris (Hornung, E., 1975); cf. (Hornung, E., 1982).



Ra pw Htp m Wsir Ts-pXr

It is Ra who settles in Osiris and vice versa

The merger of Ra and Osiris resulted in two united entities, not one. The deceased may wish to be a body united with his soul, and become fully formed, which resurrects the hope of eternal life like Ra-Osiris. What also confirms this is that the deceased wants to become like Ra and Osiris in the next world (Anwar, Kh., 2005).

2.3.1 Iwf-Ra



(Hornung, E., and Andreas, B., 1979).







(Hornung, E., 1963).



Hornung, E., 1990).

appears in the first, second and eleventh hours of the book of the amduat, with a human body and a ram's head, and the head has two horizontal horns between them (in the second hour). the face of the deity was painted black as a metaphor for darkness after the death of the sun, and it climbs the night boat inside a special cabin and is surrounded by a number of deities on its sides (Hornung, E., 1963).

As for the sixth hour, he appears in the form of a recumbent deity with his hand toward his head, a scarab on his head and surrounded by a five-headed serpent called aSArw, meaning with many faces, and it is one of the forms of mHn snake. This view expresses the transformation of the dead idol into a new sun under the protection of mHn (Hornung, E., 1963).

Second Hour	First Hour
	
Fig 2	Fig 1
Eleventh Hour	Sixth Hour
	
Fig 3	Fig 4

It is mentioned that the most important goals of the sun god's night journey is the union of his soul with the corpse of Osiris in the other world, when the merger takes place, the first steps of resurrection and immortality in the other world are achieved. The sun-god is called "the great Ba" but in his nocturnal journey through the underworld obtains the special name of "Flesh" (iwf), and during his visit with the kings he joins his own corpse (xAt), which rests in the underworld. He shares his divine prerogatives with Osiris, the ruler of the underworld,

whose Ba "belongs to heaven and whose body belongs to the earth". This sharing of domains by Re and Osiris entitles the Osirianized king of the Amduat (Zabkar, L., 1968).

The god Osiris in the other world is the night form of the sun god, as well as the horizon from which he exits to the world of heaven to begin his daily journey (Anwar, Kh., 2005).

In some texts from the books of the underworld, each deceased wishes his body to become like the incorruptible body of Osiris. The word xAt is implied as Osiris (Barta, W.,1986).

The deity Ra's day journey comes to an end as he descends to another realm, and the night journey begins. During this journey, the deity Ra takes on several roles. One of these positions is depicted in the second row of the amduat book's first hour (Piankoff, A.,1954):



nTr pn wD-mdw irt-sxrw

imy-dwAt r sxt tn

Regarding this field, this deity commands to look after the affairs of those in the underworld

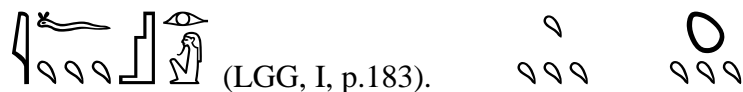
In the concluding text of the third hour of the book *amduat*, what was said by the deity Ra at the end of this hour, he mentioned that he came to the other world to unite with his corpse




ii.n.i aA r mAA XAt.i sip.i sSmw.i imy-dwAt

I came here to see my corpse and examine my pictures in the other world (Piankoff, A., and Rambova, N., 1957).

2.3.2 Iwf Wsir



appears in the upper line at the seventh hour of the amduat as a deity seated on the throne, two feathers above his head, a scepter in one hand, and the ankh sign in the other, and his body is covered by the serpent of mHn. And shields him with his body folds, but at this particular

hour he was called  anx irw.

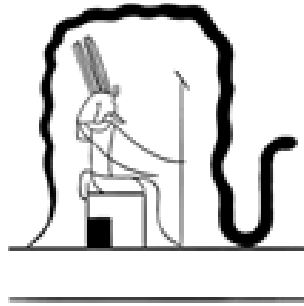
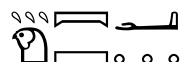


Fig 5

2.3.3 Iwf ꜥqr

 (Hornung, E., 1963).

Iwf ꜥqr Hry Sa.f

Iwf skr on his sands

appeared at fifth Hour in the amduat in the lower line, in the form of a Sphinx with a human face, where the scene shows two sphinxes with a human head, the two were called iwf, separated by an oval cave inhabited by the god Suker, who appeared in the form of a deity with a falcon face standing on a snake with four heads, three with snake faces and the last with a human face, and the deity's feet are immersed in the snake's body, as if it is emerging from it, and he holds the wings of a falcon in his hands, as if he is guarding himself.

This text discusses the role of Iwf in relation to the deity ꜥqr:



Srq.f m xrw nTr aA irt.f pw sAwt sSm

He breathes from the voice of the great god (Hornung, E., 1963).

he acts as a guard for his statues (ꜥqr)



Fig 6

2.3.4 Iwf ꜥm



He appeared in a royal form at the seventh hour from the book of the amduat, holding the Was scepter and the ankh sign, and taking the serpent named Life of Spirits as his throne, a serpent that devours and throws flames at Osiris' enemies. (Al-Sayid, M., 1991).

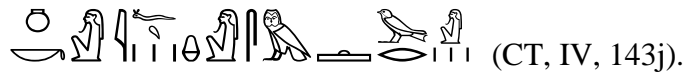


Fig 7

2.3.5 Iwf gHwty



It is one of the forms of the deity Hapy; in the incantation (319) of the coffin texts, the god Hapy talks about himself, mentioning that he is the god of the Nile that overflows and overflows, that he is the master of eternity to whom the gods come kneeling, and finally that he is the body of Thoth who challenged the great gods.



Ink iwf gHwty sm wrw

I am Iwf Thoth who defied the great gods



Iwf-rmn -irt.f One of the god Thoth's forms, appearing at the tenth hour of the amduat in front of eight deities, four with lioness heads and four with human heads, each carrying a scepter. He appeared with the face of a monkey, sitting on his tail and holding the eye of the widgat, and the function of those deities was to examine the eye of Horus and ensure its safety until it shined every day, and the role of Thoth in restoring the Eye of Horus to its original state after the god Seth seized it is well known. (Hornung, E., 1963).

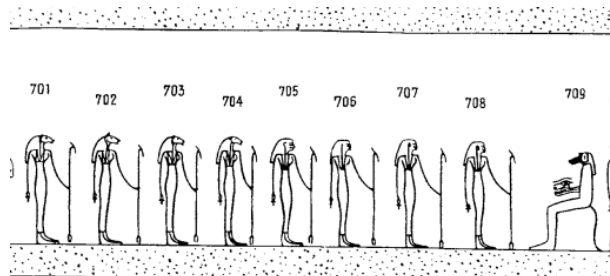
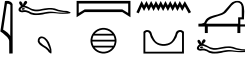


Fig 8

iwf-Hry xndw.f  iwf on his throne






He appeared as a baboon on a throne, holding a raised knife (LGG, I, p.184), in a row of six deities who were said not to transgress.

Hornung mentions that they are members of a court who cheer when the deity appears and weep when he departs (Hornung, E., 1963).



Fig 9

3. Results

- The word "Iwf"  appeared frequently in the ancient Egyptian language throughout the ages and primarily means flesh. However, it is not the only term for flesh; other words such as "Ha"  (flesh), "XAt"  (corpse), "Dt" (body) , and "at"  (body part) also exist.

- The term "Iwf" was used to describe the body of gods, as a container of efflux, and also as a container for fear.

- "Iwf" was not limited to human bodies alone; it also referred to animal bodies, such as the body of Apophis, the front and rear of an animal's body, and even the bodies of enemies.

- Numerous references in ancient Egyptian texts relate to the prototypical characteristics of flesh (Iwf) in connection with the recreation of the dead person's body. These characteristics include being clothed or "wrapped," having "strength" (rwD), "freshness" (wAD), and the ability to "breathe."

- Although it was uncertain whether "Iwf" was considered a deity in its own right, it was closely associated with gods, particularly Ra, Osiris, and several other deities.

- "Iwf" was depicted as a wandering sacred body in the afterlife, awaiting the union of the sacred spirits of the gods with it. As a result, it played a crucial role in the afterlife by connecting the soul to the body.

- "Iwf" served as a nickname for guardian deities in the afterlife and functioned as both an entity, an embodiment, an adjective, and a noun.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the term "Iwf," representing flesh in ancient Egyptian thought, occupies a central and complex role that goes beyond its mere physical existence to embody profound spiritual and cosmic concepts. Flesh was intricately linked to the flow of vital and spiritual

forces, serving as a container for both physical efflux and spiritual overflow, as seen in references to the god Shu issuing from the flesh. Moreover, flesh was not only a physical substance but also a creative force, used by the creator gods to form other beings, as exemplified by Atum, who created gods and akhs from his own flesh.

This concept of flesh extended beyond its physicality, intertwining with the process of cosmic creation and being an essential material in the formation of bodies. Flesh was seen as a bridge between life and death, a link between the material and the divine. Its connection to death and resurrection, such as in the case of Osiris, highlights its role as both a missing and a rejuvenated element, contributing to the idea of eternal life. In certain contexts, flesh was described as gold, contrasting with iron bones, symbolizing perfection and immortality.

Through these multifaceted meanings, it becomes evident that flesh (Iwf) was integral to ancient Egyptian religious thought, representing a deep understanding of the unity between body and soul, life and death, and humanity's connection with the divine. This analysis reveals not only the complexity of Egyptian metaphysical concepts but also the intricate cultural significance of bodily renewal and transformation, offering valuable insights into one of the most influential ancient civilizations.

Abbreviations

- **CT** = De Buck, A., The Egyptian Coffin Texts, 7 Vols. Chicago, 1935- 1961.
- **Dendera** = Mariette, A., Dendérah, Description générale du grand temple de cette ville, 4 Vols. Paris, 1870-1875.
- **Edfu** = Chassinat, E., Le Temple d'Edfou", 7 Vols. I-XIV, MMAF X-XI, XX-XXXI, Paris, 1897-1934.
- **LGG** = Leitz, Ch., Lexikon der Ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen, OLA, 7 Vols. Leuven-Paris-Dudley, 2003.
- **Pyr.** = Sethe, K., Die Altägyptischen Pyramidentexte", Vols. I-II, Leipzig 1908-1910.
- **Wb** = Erman, A., & Grapow, H., Wörterbuch der Ägyptischen Sprache, 7 Vols. Berlin, 1971.
- **WPL** = Wilson, P., A Ptolemaic Lexikon, a Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfu, OLA 78, Leuven, 1997.
- **ZÄS**=Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde, Leipzig-Berlin, 1863.

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بعض الملاحظات على ما يسمى بـ "إيوفف" في النصوص الدينية حتى نهاية الدولة الحديثة

الملخص

يُسلط هذا المقال الضوء على مفهوم إيوفف (iwf) كما ورد في النصوص الجنائزية المصرية القديمة، ويهدف إلى تحليل هذا العنصر لفهم دوره الرمزي والوظيفي في العقيدة الجنائزية المصرية. يعتمد البحث على دراسة نصوص الأهرام ونصوص التوابيت وغيرها من النصوص الجنائزية، لتوضيح أن "إيوفف" لم يكن مجرد عنصر غذائي أو مادي، بل كان يُمثل مفهوماً متعدد الأبعاد يرتبط بالتجديد والاستمرارية.

يكشف المقال عن الدور الحيوي الذي لعبه "إيوفف" في العقيدة المصرية القديمة، حيث اعتُبر وسيلة لضمان استمرارية الكيان الروحي والجسدي في العالم الآخر، مما يعكس فلسفة المصريين القدماء حول مفهوم الخلود. كما يُبرز المقال ارتباط "إيوفف" بالتحويلات الكبرى في الكون، مثل رحلة الإله رع عبر العالم السفلي، التي تمثل دورة متكررة للحياة والموت والبعث. يتناول المقال تفسيراً جديداً للمكانة الرمزية لهذا العنصر في النصوص الطقسية، موضحاً كيف كان "إيوفف" يُستخدم لضمان تجدد الطاقة الإلهية واستمرارية النظام الكوني. ويؤكد البحث على أن دراسة هذا المفهوم تعزز فهمنا للعقائد الجنائزية المصرية، وتكشف عن أبعادها الفلسفية والرمزية التي تميزت بها هذه الحضارة.

يقدم المقال رؤية معمقة للمفهوم في سياقه الحضاري، مما يساهم في تطوير الدراسات المتعلقة بالنصوص الدينية والجنائزية المصرية القديمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

إيوفف، جسد، لحم، العالم الآخر، الديانة المصرية القديمة.