

TWO PAINTED WOODEN STELAE FROM THE CAIRO MUSEUM (JE 18651 & JE 4886)

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ABSTRACT:

This article is a publication of two wooden funerary stelae from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, bearing the inventory numbers JE 18651 and JE 4886 (SR nos. A 9906 and A 9403). The stelae have never been fully published. The owners are a certain Hor-nakht, son of Ankh-Hor, and overseer of the God's Wife Aqr, named Dd-BAstet-jnk-sy, son of the vizier Jry. Both stelae are coming from Thebes and they are dating from the Late Period (Dynasties. 25/26). The inscriptions contain some interesting features in the spellings of the epithets and offering formulae.

The two stelae are part of a large number of very interesting Late Period wooden funerary stelae in the magnificent collection of antiquities in the Cairo Museum.¹ It is noteworthy that the owners of these stelae are mostly persons attached to the cults of the gods *Month* and/or *Amun*. The stelae vary in size from a few centimetres to nearly one meter. They also vary in the quality of workmanship; some being carefully inscribed and artistically decorated, while others are quite poor. With some exceptions, the larger stelae are the best in this respect. One may wonder why wood should have been used as a material for these stelae, and the first idea that comes to mind is reason of economy. But a close study of the material in hand seems to dispute that reason. For one thing, the better-class wooden stelae cannot have been cheap. They have evidently been decorated by first-class artists, and some of them are even embellished with gold. Moreover, many of them belonged to persons of high social standing. Perhaps the portability of wood against the heaviness of stone determined the use of the former material. In addition, these offer an interesting view on aspects of the religion of this Period, particularly on the identification of the forms of *Horakhty* with *Sokar-Osiris*.² It also is noteworthy that all stelae seem to originate from Thebes and its neighbourhood, namely from the Ramesseum, Deir el-Bahari, Sheikh Abd El-Qurnah, and Medinet Habu. Both stelae were discovered in Sheikh Abdel Qurnah, the first in 1862, and the second in 1859³.

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1. Stela JE 18651 = SR. A 9906.

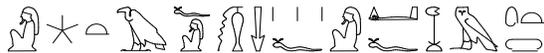
This stela belongs to Hor-nakht, son of *Ankh-Hor*. No title is named⁴. It measures 37 cm in height and 22.5 cm in width. According to Munro, the stela seems to date to the 25th Dynasty⁵.

1.1 Representation.

The rounded-topped painted stela is divided into three registers. The upper register in form of a lunette is outlined by a sign of heaven, below which is a winged disk with two *ḥh*-symbols. The second register, which is framed at the top and two sides by a border of coloured rectangles, is representing the deceased adoring five deities. The owner of the stela stands on the right side from the observers view. He has a short hair style, and wears a collar and a voluminous calves-long pleated kilt. He stands facing left, his left hand raised in adoration to the gods in front of him, the other stretched showing down. This combination means in two dimensional images: welcome and adoration. Above his figure are two short columns with his name *Hor-nakht*. The first God in front of him is (*Rē*)*Horakhty*. He stands facing right, and is represented as a *hḥwk*-headed mummy. He wears the *3tef*-crown of *Osiris*, and holds the *w3s*- sceptre. His name *Horakhty* is inscribed above him. Behind (*Rē*-)*Horakhty*, stand the four Sons of *Horus* wear the multi-row collars, all with mummified bodies and with their names above them. They are the human-headed *Imsety* with a long beard, the *baboon*-headed *Hapy*, the *jackal*-headed *Duamutef*, and the *hawk*-headed *Qebhsenuef*. *Hapy* and *Qebhsenuef* have stylized *lotus*-buds on their heads. In front and above of the heads of all figures single columns are drawn with a yellow background colour. In case of the representation of the deceased and the last of the Sons of *Horus* the hieroglyphs for the names became too long for this single column. Therefore, the second half of the name is written beside the column where no background colour was prepared.

1.2 Text.

The lowest register of the stela is occupied by six horizontal lines of hieroglyphic text, altering in white and yellow background colour. The text reads from right to left:



- (f) This name is very common in the Late Period.¹⁶
- (g) *nbt-pr* means married woman, current from the Middle Kingdom to Ptolemaic Period.¹⁷
- (h) This name seems to have been confined to the Late Period.¹⁸

2. Stela JE 4886 = A 9403.

The stela belongs to *dd-B^cstet-jnk-sy*, overseer of the God's Wife *3kr*, son of the vizier *Jry*. Its measurements are: high 38 cm, large 23.5 cm. It dates back to the beginning of the 26th Dynasty.¹⁹

2.1 Representation.

This round-topped stela is perfectly preserved. The rounded upper part is occupied by a winged sun-disk with two *Uraei* pending to the right and left from the disk. Below this motif, is a line of hieroglyphs, repeat twice: *Bḥdt nṯr ʿ3 s3b šwt nb pt* "Behedety, Great God, Dappled of plumage, Lord of heaven". The central part of the stela is framed at the top and two sides by a border of coloured rectangles. It depicts the standing figure of a woman?, with perfume cone upon her head, dressed in a long, diaphanous, loose-fitting robe, and raising both arms in adoration towards a standing figure of *Rē-Horakhty*. Between them is a libation stand with a lotus flower (blossom). The god *Rē-Horakhty* stands facing right, and is represented once again as a *h^cwk*-headed mummy, wearing the *Atef*-crown of *Osiris*, and holding the *w3s*-scepter. Behind *Rē-Horakhty*, and in keeping with his Osirian character, stand the four sons of *Horus*, the human-headed *Imsety* with a perfume cone on his head, the *baboon*-headed *Hapy*, the *jackal*-headed *Duamutef*, and the *hawk*-headed *Qebekhsenuf* with a stylized lotus bud on his head. Above each figure is a space to write their names, which have never been recorded.

2.2 Text.

The remainder of the surface of the stela is occupied by five horizontal lines of text, altering in white and yellow background colour. The text reads from right to left:



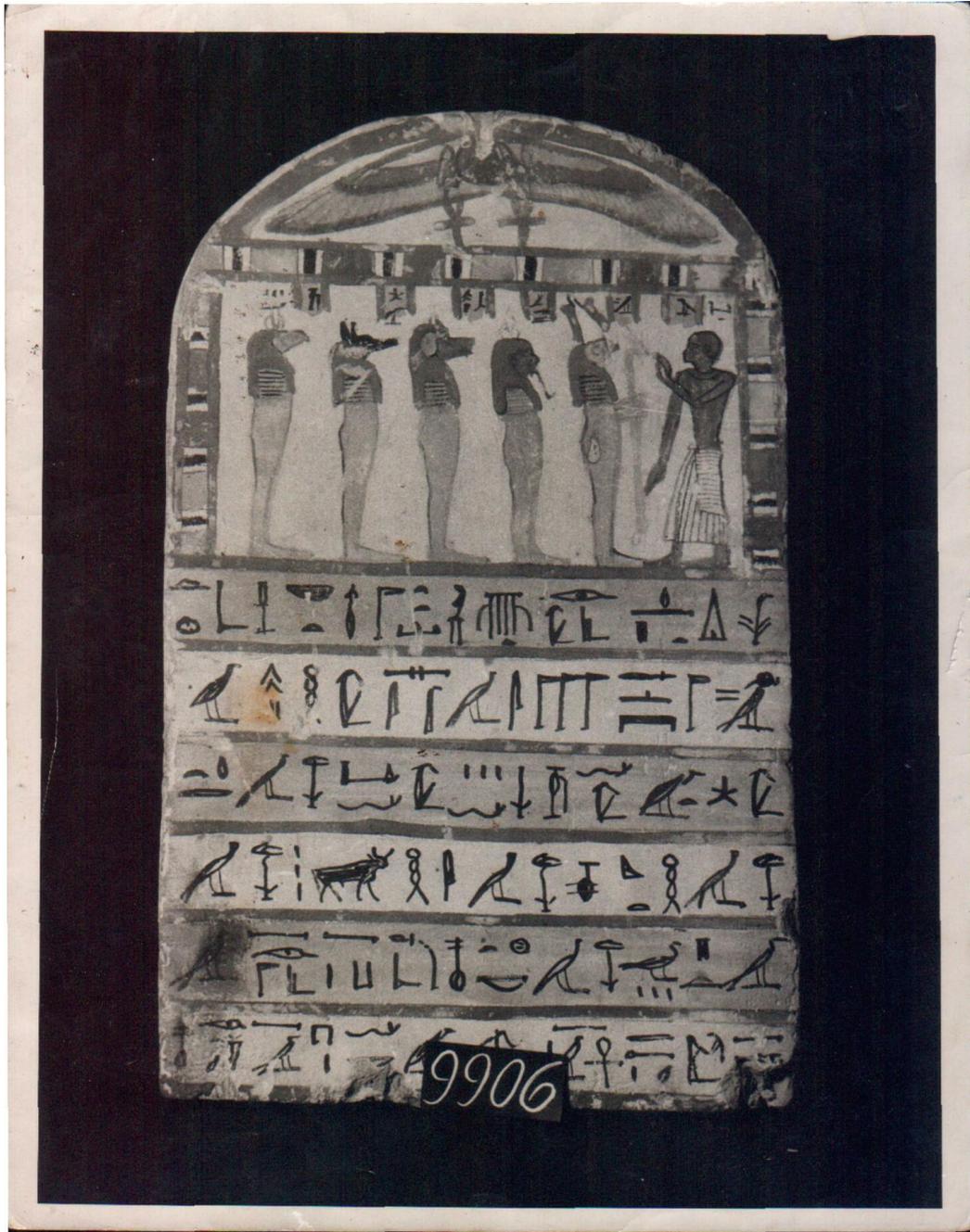
(Overseer) of the God's Wife Barrenness *dd-B^cstet-jnk-sj*, son of the Overseer of the City, (Priest of *Amun*, Overseer of the City), the Vizier *Jry*, his mother, the Lady of the House.....

3. CONCLUSION:

In the Old and Middle Kingdoms, funerary stelae were inscribed with a depiction of the deceased before an offering table and a list of offerings. In the New Kingdom greater importance began to be placed on association of the deceased with the divinities as a mean of survival in the afterlife, and thus the stelae began to depict the deceased adoring a deity. By the Third Intermediate Period the funerary cult had so diminished in importance that funerary chapels became very rare, except as part of a few large and archaizing tombs, the funerary stelae placed in the underground burial chambers may have been substituted for the funerary cults. This coincidentally allowed the stelae to be made of fragile material plastered and painted instead of stone. At the same time the painted wooden became very popular in Thebes from the 22nd Dynasty. Stelae are very similar, differing only in minor details.³³ Our two stelae are part of large number of Late Period funerary stelae which depict four, three or even two sons of Horus. From the late Third Intermediate Period onward, the presence of the four sons of Horus in mortuary context expanded. In addition, to their presence on coffins and canopic containers, faience amulets of the four were attached to shrouds or incorporated into the bead nets that came into use as body cover.³⁴ Dating from their earliest appearances in the Pyramid texts, the four sons of Hours are found exclusively in mortuary contexts, and seem not to have had any cult as such; they are thus generally referred to as "*genii*". From the Middle Kingdom onward, however, they are ubiquitous within the tomb, invoked upon almost all coffins and canopic containers. In the earlier Pyramid Texts they were among the deities before whom the deceased was stated to possess "reverence" *Jm3h*.³⁵

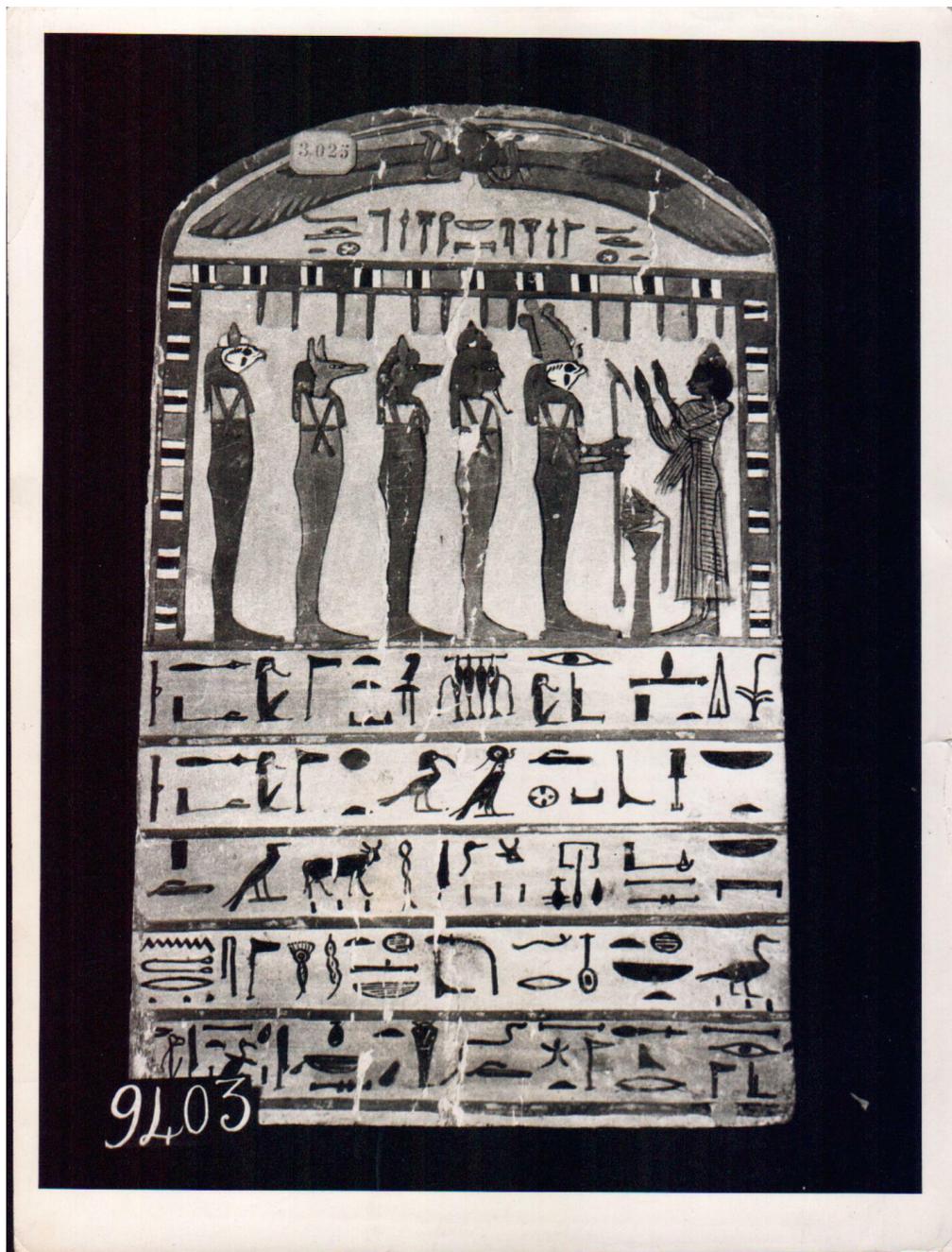
THE PLATES:

Pl. 1



Stela of *Hor-nakht*, JE 18651(SR. A 9906)

Pl. II



Stela of Dd-Bastet-jnk-sj, JE 18651 (SR. A 9906)

NOTES:

¹ A few publications geared specifically to the study of Late Period funerary stelae, see: S. Bosticco, *Museo Archeologico di Firenze. Le stele Egiziane di Epoca Tarda*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Rome 1972; P. Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, ÄF 25, Glückstadt 1973; H. Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae Reliefs and Paintings from the Petrie Collection III: The Late Period*, Warminster 1983. Large number of Late Period funerary stelae have been published in detail, see: A. Zayed, *Painted Wooden Stelae in the Cairo Museum*, *RdE* 20, 1968, 149-170; A. David, *Tomb Groups from the End of the New Kingdom to the Beginning of the Saite Period*. Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, Birmingham 1987; A. Abdalla, *Wooden Stela from the Late Period on the Cairo Museum*, *VA* 4, 1988, 5-16; H. El-Leathy, *Painted Wooden Stelae from Thebes, from the 21st to the 26th Dynasties*, *OLA* 150.1, 2007, 585-594. Four doctoral dissertations have dealt with Late Period wooden funerary stelae, see: J. Taylor, *The Development of the Theban Coffins During the Third Intermediate Period: A Typological Study*. Vol. I-II. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, Birmingham 1985; D. Aston, *Tomb Groups from the End of the New Kingdom to the Beginning of the Saite Period*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham, Birmingham 1987; S. Onstine, *The Role of the Chantress (Smyt) in Ancient Egypt*. Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, Toronto 2001; L. Swart, *A Stylistic Comparison of Selected Visual Representation on Egyptian Funerary Papyri of the 21st Dynasty and Wooden Funerary Stelae of the 22nd Dynasty (c. 1069-715 B.C.E.)*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2004. Moreover, PhD in Arabic, H. El-Leathy, *Painted Wooden Stelae from Thebes, from the 21st to the 26th Dynasties*, PhD Dissertation, Cairo University.

² A. Zayed, *Painted Wooden Stelae in the Cairo Museum*, *RdE* 20, 1968, 149-150.

³ It is suggested that the Late Period wooden stelae were a Theban phenomenon (H. Saleh, *Investigating Ethnic and Gender Identities as Expressed on Wooden Funerary Stelae from the Libyan Period (c. 1069-715 B.C.E.) in Egypt*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley 2006, 3), although some stelae may have come from Abydos (A. Leahy, *Two Late Period Stelae in the Fitzwilliam Museum*, *SAK* 8, 1980, 169-180).

⁴ Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, ÄF 25, Glückstadt 1973, 213.

⁵ This may have been clear for the recipient because it was placed in the tomb of the owner. We know this from statues, which often have no or only few titles, because they are mentioned in the local context.

⁶ Cf. P. Smither, "The writing of htp-di-nsw in the Middle and New Kingdoms", in: *JEA* 25, 1939, 34.

⁷ The following examples are known to me: Cairo T. 26/10/24/1, c. 650 B.C. = Munro, *Totenstelen*, 266, Abb. 109; London BM EA 639, c. 650 B.C. = Munro, *Totenstelen*, 268, Abb. 11; Wien KHM 5070, c. 660-650 B.C. = Munro, *Totenstelen*, 194, Abb. 11; Stela Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum E.55.34, c. 630 B.C. = A. Leahy, in: *SAK* 8, 1980, 175-180.

⁸ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 213

⁹ A. Moret, «Monuments égyptiens du Musée Calvet à Avignon», *RT* 35, 1913, 52-53, no. XXVII, pl. VII.2

¹⁰ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 311, fig. 155 – wrongly numbered 21971

¹¹ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 307

¹² Cf. J. Leclant, «Enquêtes sur les Sacerdotes et les Sanctuaires Égyptiens à l'Époque dite, Éthiopienne» (XXV Dyn.), *BdE* 17 (1954), 19-20; A. Leahy, *SAK* 8, (1980), 176, n. 29.

¹³ For the presence of dj=f instead of dj=sn, Cf. Obsomer, di.f prt-xrw et la filiation ms(t).n/ ir(t).n comme critères de datation dans les textes du Moyen Empire, Individu (ed.), *société et spiritualité*. Mélanges Théodoridès, 1993, 169ff

¹⁴ A. Zayed, *RdE* 20, 1968, 163, pl. 14.A

¹⁵ Cf. Wb. I, 359.5.

¹⁶ Cf. Ranke, *PN* I, 66.1

¹⁷ P. Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt*, 1961, 11, n. 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Ranke, *PN* I, 169.13; M. Cramer, Ägyptische Denkmäler im Kestner-Museum zu Hannover, *ZÄS* 72, 1936, 108 (8. Inv.no. 2941).

¹⁹ For the date of this stela, see: G. Vittmann, Ein Neuer Wesir der Spätzeit, *GM* 15 (1975), 47-49; Well, *Die Veziere des Pharaonenreiches*, Straßburg, 1908 139 (&9a); Munro, *Totenstelen*, 211-212.

²⁰ G. Vittmann, Ein Neuer Wesir der Spätzeit, in: *GM* 15, 1975, 47-49; G. Vittmann, "Von Kastraten, Hundskopfmenschen und Kannibalen", *ZÄS* 27 (2000), 169ff.

- ²¹ G. Vittmann, "Ein Neuer Wesir der Spätzeit", *GM* 15 (1975), 47, 50, Ann. 7.
- ²² M. Malinine, G. Posener and J. Vercoutter, *Catalogue des stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis*, Paris 1968, 67f, pl. 32; E. Chassinat, "Textes provenant du Sérapéum de Memphis", *RT* 22 (1900), 15 (L).
- ²³ Cf. *WB* I, 235.3.
- ²⁴ M. Malinine, G. Posener and J. Vercoutter, *Catalogue des stèles du Sérapéum de Memphis*, Paris 1968, 67f, pl. 32; E. Chassinat, "Textes provenant du Sérapéum de Memphis", *RT* 22 (1900), 15 (L).
- ²⁵ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 211-212.
- ²⁶ J. Monnet-Saleh, *Les antiquités égyptiennes de Zagreb. Catalogue raisonné des antiquités égyptiennes conservées au Musée Archéologique de Zagreb en Yougoslavie*, Paris 1970, 38.
- ²⁷ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 264.
- ²⁸ Munro, *Totenstelen*, 264.
- ²⁹ Cf. G. Vittmann, *GM* 15 (1975), 47.
- ³⁰ G. Vittmann, *GM* 15 (1975, 47, Anm. 9
- ³¹ P. Munro, "Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen", *Orientalia* 47 (1978), 8-9 (211), cf. Munro, *Totenstelen*, 211-212.
- ³² G. Vittmann, Ein Neuer Wesir der Spätzeit, in: *GM* 15, 1975, 47.
- ³³ D. Silvermann, *Searching for Ancient Egypt: Art, Architecture, and Artifacts from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology*, Dallas 1997, 284; El-Leathy, in: *OLA* 150.1 (2007), 585; A. Niwinski, *Sarcophagi, Stelae and Funerary Papyri of the Third Intermediate Period and the Late Period*, in: *The Egyptian Museum of Turin. Egyptian Civilization: Religious Beliefs*, Milan 1988, 212-225; A. Niwinski, "Iconography of the Twenty-First Dynasty: Its Main Features, Levels of Attestation, the Media and their diffusion", *OBO* 175 (2000), 21-43.
- ³⁴ P. Munro, in: *Fs zum 150jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums. Mitteilungen aus der Ägyptischen Sammlung* 8 (1974), 195-204.
- ³⁵ Cf. R. Drenkhahn, "Kebehsenef", *LÄ* 3 (1980), 379; A. Eggebrecht, "Amset", *LÄ* 1 (1975), 226; A. Eggebrecht, "Duamutef", *LÄ* 1 (1975), 1150-1151; A. Eggebrecht, "Hapi", *LÄ* 2 (1977), 951-952; M. Heerma van Voss, "Horuskinder", *LÄ* 3 (1980), 52-53.