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The god Shepsy “jmy Ḥmnw”

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Abstract

The Egyptian god Shepsy was a minor deity whose evidence mainly survived in the period following the Second Intermediate Period (1800 BC–1570 BC). Indeed, the apex of his popularity lay in the 19th Dynasty, during which the god is overwhelmingly present in a vast body of sources. He is best known as a solar, lunar, and funerary deity, but was also a cosmic god. The current study aims to examine the emic understanding of the Egyptian god Shepsy by providing a detailed analysis of his iconography. This identifies *who* the god Shepsy was, *what* he did, *when* he performed his functions, *where* he performed them, and most importantly, *why*.

Keywords: Shepsy, Thoth, Nehmet-away, 19th Dynasty, Hermopolis

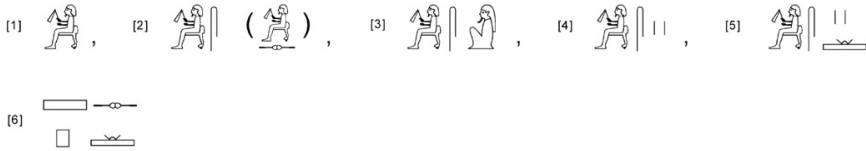
I. Previous work on Shepsy

No monograph has yet focused on the god Shepsy. However, many scholars have offered their understanding of his nature and the functions assigned to him within the Egyptian pantheon. The previous works on Shepsy were principally carried out by Kurt Heinrich Sethe, *Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis: eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Wesen des aegyptischen Götterkönigs*, *APAW* 4, Berlin 1929, pp. 50-51; Jacques Parlebas, *Das Pantheon der Statue des Prinzen Siptah*, «SAK» 8, Hamburg 1980, pp. 227-232; Bettina Schmitz, *Ein weiterer Beleg für den Gott Schepsi: Hildesheim Pelizaeus-Museum 5134*, in F. Junge (ed.), *Studien zu Sprache and Religion Ägyptens: zu Ehren von Wolfhart Westendorf, überreicht von seinen Freunden and Schülern* 2, Göttingen 1984, pp. 841-853; Wolfhart Westendorf, *Schepsi*, in W. Helck; E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Band V, *Pyramidenbau- Steingefässe*, Wiesbaden 1984, col. 584; Andrea-Christina Thiem, *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh: Analyse der architektonischen und ikonographischen Konzeption im Rahmen des politischen und legitimatorischen Programmes der Nachamarnazeit, teil 1: Text und Tafeln, teil 2: Architektonische Pläne und*

Umzeichnungen, ÄAT 47, Wiesbaden 2000, pp. 128-130; Leitz, Christian *et al.* (2002), *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen VII*, OLA 116, Leuven; Paris; Dudley 2002, p. 67A-C, and Jean-Pierre Corteggiani, *L'Égypte ancienne et ses dieux: dictionnaire illustré*, Paris 2007, pp. 101-102.

II. The name “Shepsy”

II.1. Graphical forms of the name





The name of this god occurs with considerable frequency in the texts of the New Kingdom. The name is principally written with its standard logogram meaning «a man of rank with flagellum seated on chair (Gardiner A51)», with the addition of the phonetic complement s |, or — (graphical form [2]¹). This form of script is probably the most widely used in all the periods. It is sporadic to find the latter group writing followed, either by two vertical strokes | | «used to indicate duality (Gardiner Z4)» (graphical form [4]²), or the determinative «seated god with a slightly curved beard and straight wig (Gardiner A51)» (graphical form [3]³). The group writing may occasionally



¹ About this script, see *LGG VII*, 67B [1-2, 5, 10, 12, 14-17, 20, 22-26].

² About this method of writing, see *LGG VII*, 67B [4].

³ About this graphical form of the god's name, see *LGG VII*, 67B [3 and 21].

be followed by the determinative of «a papyrus rolled up, tied, and sealed  (Gardiner Y1)» (graphical form [5]⁴). The non-phonetic method of writing the god’s name is a bit less frequent (graphical form [1]⁵). However, the god’s name can also be written phonetically with a group of three signs completed with the determinative  (Gardiner Y1)” (graphical form [6]⁶).

II.2. *Meaning of the name*




The god’s name is derived from the term Šps meaning «noble, august, valuable, splendid, costly, precious, venerable, rich»; this etymology seems preferable to that of «greatness, noblesse». The reasonable probability which emerges regarding the name of the god is that it presents a *nisbe*-form, similar to that of the god Dḥwty (Thoth).⁷ As a consequence, the god’s name is to be translated as Špsy. However, his most common script during the New Kingdom, Šps, which is a compromise between the ideograph  and the phonetic complement s , being an abbreviated writing of the god’s name. In addition to this

⁴ See *LGG* VII, 67B [6].







⁵ About this symbolic writing of the god’s name, see *LGG* VII, 67B [8-9].

⁶ About this fully written out form of the god’s name, see *LGG* VII, 67B [13].

⁷ See BOYLAN (1989), *Thoth, the Hermes of Egypt: A Study of Some Aspects of Theological Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 10.

familiar name, the god Shepsy is referred to as «: Špsy wr»⁸, «: Špsy ʕ»⁹, and «: Špsy Ḥmnw»¹⁰.

III. Epithets


The god's name is often followed by the geographical epithet «: jmy Ḥmnw¹¹: he who is in Hermopolis»¹². In spite of this fact, he is sometimes called «: nb Ḥmnw¹³: lord of Hermopolis»¹⁴, or «: nb Ḥwt-k3k: lord of Hout-Kak»¹⁵ and «: ḥry-ib Ḥwt-k3k: He who resides in Hout-Kak»¹⁶. These titles refer to the geographical implantation of the god and link him with his main cult centres at Hermopolis Magna (anciently Ḥmnw) in the 15th Upper Egyptian nome, and at Hout-Kak (anciently Ḥwt-k3k) in the 10th Upper Egyptian nome. The titles  and  are specific to the god Shepsy and are exclusively applied to him. They might refer to his place of origin, or

⁸ LGG VII, 67C [1-2]; GARDINER; PEET (1917), *The Inscriptions of Sinai. Part I, Introduction and plates*, EES 36, pl. 65, no 217; ANDREU-LANOË; RUTSCHOWSCAYA AND ZIEGLER (1997), *L'Égypte ancienne au Louvre*, pp. 121-122, no 52; BOREUX (1932), *Musée national du Louvre : département des antiquités égyptiennes*, p. 481, pl. 6.


⁹ LGG VII, 67B-C [1]; BRUYÈRE (1934), *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1931-1932)*, FIFAO 10,1, fig. 35.

¹⁰ LGG VII, 67C [1]; KRI III, pp. 112, 16 and 133, 2.

¹¹ LGG I, 247C-248A.

¹² Shepsy is most frequently entitled «: jmy Ḥmnw: he who is in Hermopolis», see LGG VII, 67B [2-12, 15-16, 22-26].







¹³ LGG III, 716B-718B.


¹⁴ The god Shepsy sometimes bears the title «: nb Ḥmnw: lord of Hermopolis», see LGG VII, 67B [16, 24].


¹⁵ It's probable that this epithet solely refers to the god Shepsy, LGG III, 695A; LGG VII, 67B [1]; Nims (1952), *Another Geographical List from Medinet Habu*, «JEA» 38, fig. 2, p. 43; KRI VI, 326, 2.

¹⁶ This title is exclusively applied to the god Shepsy, see LGG V, 342A; The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII, The Temple Proper*, part 3; OIP 93, pl. 546.


to a particular locality in his original local cult centre in the 10th Upper Egyptian nome.

In parallel, Shepsy holds the banal epithets of «: wr biꜣyt¹⁷: great of character»¹⁸, «: ntr ʕ¹⁹: Great god»²⁰, «: nb pt: lord of the sky»²², « ḥry-tp ntrw²³: who is the chief of the gods»²⁴, «: nb nrw: lord of fear»²⁶ and «: nb nḥḥ²⁷: lord of eternity»²⁸, which he shares with many other deities.


¹⁷ For further references to the epithet «», see *LGG* II, 434B.

¹⁸ Shepsy is very rarely «: wr biꜣyt: great of character», see *LGG* VII, 67B [17]; FEUCHT (1978), *Zwei Reliefs Scheschonqs I. aus el-Hibeh*, «SAK» 6, p. 72, fig. 1.

¹⁹ *LGG* IV, 395B-398C.

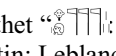
²⁰ Shepsy sometimes holds the title «: ntr ʕ: Great god», see *LGG* VII, 67B [2, 11, 17, 20]; CRUZ-URIBE (1988), *Hibis Temple Project I*, p. 73; Davies (1953), *The Temple of Hibis*, MMAEE XVII, p. 14; SPENCER *et al.* (1989), *Excavations at El-Ashmunein, Vol. II: The Temple Area*, pl. 97; FEUCHT (1978), «SAK» 6, p. 72, fig. 1; THIEM (2000), *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh I*, ÄAT 47, 1, pp. 315-315, pl. 34; Lepsius (1849), *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien. Tafelwerke, Abtheilung III, Band VI: Neues reich*, pl. 119.

²¹ *LGG* III, 624A-625C.


²² Shepsy is rarely termed «: nb pt: lord of the sky», see *LGG* VII, 67B [20]; THIEM (2000), *Ibid.*, pp. 315-315, pl. 34; LEPSIUS (1849), *Ibid.*, pl. 119.

²³ *LGG* III, 624A-625C.

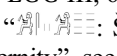

²⁴ *LGG* V, 395A-B.

²⁵ Only one example presents Shepsy while holding the epithet «: ḥry-tp ntrw: who is the chief of the gods», see *LGG* VII, 67B [22]; Barbotin; Leblanc (1999), *Les monuments d'éternité de Ramsès II: nouvelles fouilles thébaines*, pp. 35-36 (no 9).

²⁶ *LGG* III, 664B-666A.

²⁷ It's very rarely to find Shepsy being qualified «: nb nrw: lord of fear», see *LGG* VII, 67B [17]; FEUCHT (1978), *SAK* 6, p. 72, fig. 1.

²⁸ *LGG* III, 667A-669B.

²⁹ «: Špsy Ḥmnw» appears once while being described «: nb nḥḥ: lord of eternity», see *LGG* VII, 67C [1]; *KRI* III, pp. 112, 16 and 133, 2.

IV. Iconography

In art, Shepsy manifests himself in many ways depending on the era and the aspect the artist wished to convey. His representations are of two main types: purely anthropomorphic and hybrid form.

IV.1. Anthropomorphic

Shepsy is most frequently represented anthropomorphic in different attitudes, either striding, or enthroned.

IV.1.1. Striding

IV.1.1.1. With solar symbols on head

For certain reasons, Shepsy has solar features, and he can thus be represented with the solar disk as crown. This becomes an essential element for the identification of the god.

Shepsy, in a completely human form as striding man crowned with a solar disk, is seen in a ritual scene from the temple of Gerf Hussein, reconstructed at New Kalabsha (pl. I, fig. 8)²⁹. He wears a long tripartite wig surmounted by a solar disk like-crown (fig. 1).

²⁹ LGG VII, 67_B [3]; TANBOULI *et al.* (1975), *Gerf Hussein III, La grande salle (E), mur est –piliers et colosses*, pl. 63, pl. 26.

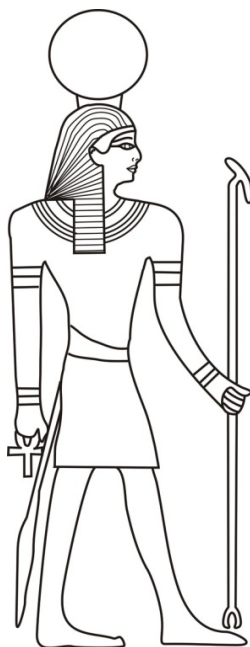


Fig. 1. The god Shepsy as a man crowned by a solar disc.

(Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

Some indicators of such phenotype are found at:

- The temple of Hibis, columns in Hypostyle B, northwest column, right scene, north face (PL. I, fig. 9).³⁰
- The Memphite tomb-chapel of Mose, room III, the right-hand interior wall, north wall (PL. II, fig. 10).³¹
- The temple of Amun at Hermopolis Magna, pylon, south side of the passage (PL. II, fig. 11).³²

³⁰ See *LGG VII*, 67_B [2]; CRUZ-URIBE (1988), *Hibis Temple Project I*, p. 73; DAVIES (1953), *The Temple of Hibis*, *MMAEE XVII*, p. 14.

³¹ *LGG VII*, 67_B [6]; ĠĀB ALLĀH (1977), *The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose*, pls. 26-27.

³² *LGG VII*, 67_B [7]; ROEDER (1959), *Hermopolis 1929-1939. Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis, Ober-Ägypten, in Verbindung mit zahlreichen Mitarbeitern*, *WVPM 4*, pl. 64.

- Statue of Ramesses-Siptah (Louvre E. 25413) (PL. III, fig. 12).³³
- A wall relief from El Hiba dating to pharaoh Hedjkheperre Setepenre Shoshenq I (PL. III, fig. 13).³⁴
- The temple of Ramesses II in the domain of Amun at Wadi es-Sebua, exterior facade of the dark room leading from the southwest of the antechamber (PL. IV, fig. 14).³⁵
- The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, second court, west wall, middle register, 4th scene north of the doorway (PL. IV, fig. 15).³⁶

IV.1.1.2. With lunar symbols on head

On rare occasions, Shepsy is shown as a human crowned with the crescent of the new moon encasing the disk of the full moon (fig. 2). One such example is found at the Valley of the Queens, in the tomb of Prince Khaemwaset QV44 (PL. VI, fig. 18).³⁷

³³ LGG VII, 67_B [14]; VANDIER (1971), "Ramsès-Siptah", *RdE* 23, pl. 10, A.

³⁴ LGG VII, 67_B [17]; FEUCHT (1978), *SAK* 6, p. 72, fig. 1.

³⁵ LGG VII, 67_B [26]; GAUTHIER (1912), *le temple de Ouadi es-Sebouâ* II, pl. 53, B.

³⁶ The Epigraphic Survey (1957), *Medinet Habu V, The Temple Proper, part I*, OIP 83, pl. 298.

³⁷ HASSANEIN *et al.* (1997), *La Tombe du Prince Khaemouaset [VdR n° 44]*, pl. 73, (b)

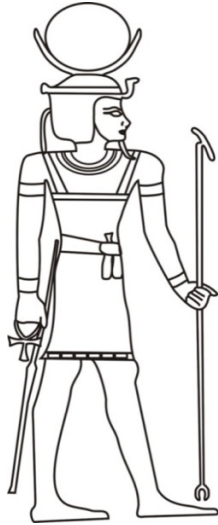


Fig. 2. The god Shepsy crowned with crescent and moon disk.
(Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

IV.1.1.3. Adult male without crown

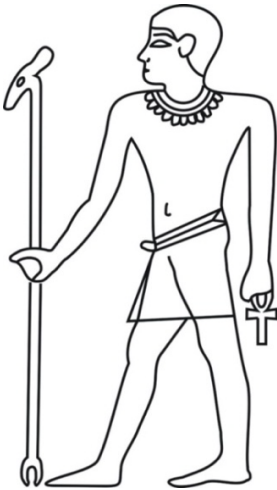


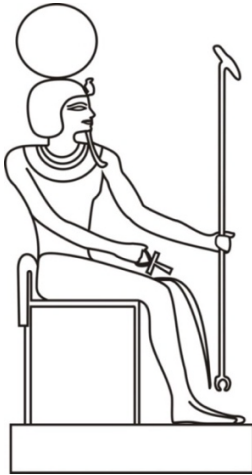
Fig. 3. The god Shepsy as an adult male without crown. (Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

In some contexts, Shepsy is exceptionally depicted purely anthropomorphic without any crown. The only representation occurs on the temple of Hibis, sanctuary (A), south wall, 5th register³⁸ (PL. VI, fig. 19), where the god appears as a male figure holding an *ankh*-sign in one hand and a *was*-sceptre in the other (fig. 3).

³⁸ See LGG VII, 67B [2]; CRUZ-URIBE (1988), *Hibis Temple Project I*, p. 32; PARLEBAS (1984), *Die Göttin Nehmet-Awaj*, p. 12 n° 40, p. 35 n° 37; DAVIES (1953), *The Temple of Hibis*, MMAEE XVII, pl. 4 and p. 11.

IV.1.2. Enthroned

IV.1.2.1. With solar symbols on head



Shepsy is seated on a throne with a low back, wearing a long tripartite wig surmounted directly by a solar disk (fig. 4), as seen on a wall decor of the lateral hall's third central pillar (west face) of the Great Speos of Horemheb at Gebel el-Silsila³⁹ (PL. V, fig. 16).

Fig. 4. The god Shepsy enthroned. (Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

Another instance of Shepsy represented in such a way occurs on a limestone stela dedicated to the god Thoth from Deir el-Medina (PL. V, fig. 17).⁴⁰

IV.2. Hybrid form

Besides the purely human form, Shepsy appears also in two other forms, as an ibis-headed man, and as a falcon-headed man.

³⁹ See *LGG* VII, 67B [20]; THIEM (2000), *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh* I, *ÄAT* 47, 1, pp. 126 and 315, pl. 37a, b, 38a. and II, *ÄAT* 47, 2, pl. 34; LEPSIUS (1849), *Denkmäler III, Band VI: Neues Reich*, pl. 119; SHAIKH AL ARAB (2019-2020), "The Adoption of Hathor's Personal Attributes for Nehemt-away's Iconography", *ANKH* 28/29, p. 60, pl. I (fig. 16).

⁴⁰ *LGG* VII, 67B-c [1]; BRUYÈRE (1934), *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1931-1932)*, *FIFAO* 10,1, p. 45, fig. 35.

IV.2.1. Ibis-headed man

In the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu (PL. VII, fig. 20)⁴¹, a striding male figure shares all the personal attributes of the god Thoth. In spite of this, he is epigraphically identified as Shepsy. He is depicted with the head of an ibis; the curve of the ibis' beak may be seen as resembling the crescent moon. He wears a long tripartite wig surmounted directly by the *atef*-crown (fig. 5).

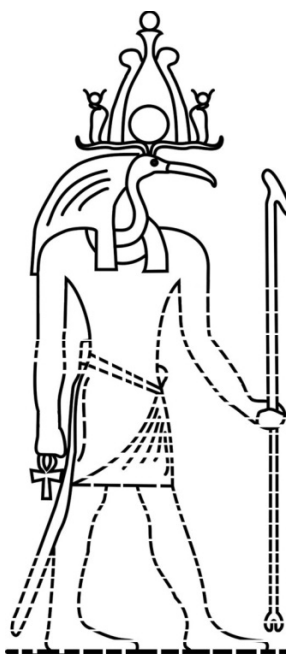


Fig. 5. Reconstructed image of the god Shepsy as an Ibis-headed man.

(Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

⁴¹ The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII, The Temple Proper, part III*, OIP 93, pl. 546.

IV.2.2. Falcon-headed man



The falcon may also represent the god Shepsy, as seen in the great temple at Abu Simbel, room F (PL. VII, fig. 21).⁴² There, Shepsy is shown as if he were the god Ra-Horakhty, or the god Horus, as a falcon-headed man wearing the *Pschent*-crown, signifying the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt (fig. 6).

Fig. 6. The god Shepsy as a falcon-headed man. (Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

As detailed above, the iconography of Shepsy during the New Kingdom is rich and varies in several aspects. Most frequently, he is shown purely anthropomorphic crowned with the solar disk, or with the lunar disk and crescent. At the same time, he sometimes appears similar to the gods Thoth, Horus, or Ra-Horakhty, by integrating their distinctive iconographical elements into his own representations. In such forms, Shepsy is indistinguishable from them, and needs an inscription to be identified.

V. Mythology

Shepsy seems to be nothing more than a form of the universal god Thoth, the principal god of Hermopolis Magna (anciently Ḥmnw, the capital of the 15th Upper Egyptian hare-nome) and Hermopolis the ibis

⁴² See *LGG* VII, 67B [16]; LEPSIUS (1849), *Denkmäler* III, pl. 188, f.

(B^ch today Tell el-th Baqliya, the capital of 15th Delta nome). He then becomes conceptualised as a sky-deity, integrated into the solar cult. This role is confirmed by his representations as a human with the sun disk, or as a falcon-headed man wearing the double crown.

Playing a Thoth-like role also made Shepsy a moon god, as emphasized by his anthropomorphic depiction crowned with the moon’s crescent and full disk (fig. 2)⁴³. At the same time, it should be remembered that the lunar deities Thoth, Khonsu, Iah and Iah-Thoth also appear as a man wearing the lunar disk and crescent on the head.⁴⁴

Due to his identification with Thoth, Shepsy can be associated with kingship and the king himself. Hence, numerous representations of Shepsy are receiving offerings or adoration from the king. In these scenes⁴⁵, Shepsy is an active participant.

In addition to the characterisations mentioned above, Shepsy acts as a cosmic deity and a primeval creator. He is closely linked – at least conceptually – with the Hermopolitan idea of creation. Indeed, the eight original deities, the so-called “Ogdoad”, or “Group of eight”, who represented aspects of the original cosmos, have their place in Ounou, beside their father Shepsy.⁴⁶

⁴³ See *supra*, p. 137

⁴⁴ See, for example, The Epigraphic Survey (1970), *Medinet Habu VIII*, OIP 94, pl. 607; HART (2005), *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, p. 77; BUDDE (2000), *Die Göttin Seschat: Forschungen zum griechisch-römischen Ägypten*, *Kanobos 2*, 172.

⁴⁵ See, for example, THIEM (2000), *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh*, *ÄAT 47*, 1, pl. 37; HASSANEIN *et al.* (1997), *La Tombe du Prince Khaemouaset [VdR n° 44]*, pl. 73, (b); The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII, The Temple Proper, part 3*, OIP 93, pl. 546; LEPSIUS (1849), *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien III*, pl. 188, f.

⁴⁶ In the Ptolemaic Period, one text indicates that the so-called “Ogdoad” have their place in Ounou, beside their father Shepsy, see CORTEGGIANI (2007), *L’Égypte ancienne et ses dieux*, pp. 101-102.

VI. Cult and worship

There are no certain attestations of the god Shepsy before the 18th Dynasty. In spite of this, he became one of Egypt's most important gods during the New Kingdom. The origins for his worship are challenging to pinpoint and are shrouded in obscurity. Unlike many other deities, no town in Egypt claimed to be his place of origin or location of his burial, and he was not usually associated with any particular locality or worshipped in his own temples.

Nevertheless, a town in Middle Egypt might be his place of origin as two captions, from Medinet Habu's geographical list depicted on the rear terrace⁵⁹ and on the temple proper, roof terrace, north wall⁶⁰, mention Shepsy as “𐎃𐎃𐎃𐎃: nb Ḥwt-k3k: lord of Hout-Kak” and “𐎃𐎃𐎃𐎃: ḥry-ib Ḥwt-k3k: He who resides in Hout-Kak”. In his discussion of the Ramesside texts relating to the taxation and the transport of corn and especially of the tax-payers of Tjebu, Gardiner concluded that 𐎃𐎃𐎃𐎃 Ḥwt-k3k: Hout-Kak lays in the 10th Upper Egyptian nome.⁶¹ However, Daressy identified it with El-Agagieh located 20 kilometres north of Sohag.⁶²

The apex of the development of Shepsy's cult dates to the Ramesside period, when he is overwhelmingly present in a vast body of sources. His attestations are found on temples and funerary monuments built throughout Egypt.

⁵⁹ DARESSY (1895), “Notes et remarques”, *RecTrav* XVII, p. 119.

⁶⁰ The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII, The Temple Proper, part 3, OIP* 93, pl. 546.

⁶¹ GARDINER (1941), “Ramesside Texts Relating to the taxation and transport of Corn”, *JEA* 27, pp. 67-68.

⁶² GAUTHIER, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques* IV, pp. 138-139; DARESSY (1895), *RecTrav* XVII, pp. 119-120.

Reference should here be made to the relationship united Shepsy, Thoth and Nehemt-away. Indeed, the first known representation of Shepsy occurs on a wall relief decorating the lateral hall's third central pillar (west face) of the great Speos of Horemheb at Gebel el-Silsila⁶³ (pl. V, fig. 16). There, Shepsy appears followed by his divine counterpart, Nehemt-away (fig. 7). The parallel scene is depicting Thoth followed by Hathor.



Fig. 7. The god Shepsy followed by the goddess Nehemt-away.
(Drawing by Shaikh Al Arab)

Then, in the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, the temple proper, Roof terraces, North wall, Thoth is depicted followed by Shepsy

⁶³ See *LGG* IV, 285A [38]; THIEM (2000), *Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh* I, *ÄAT* 47, 1, pp. 126 and 315, pl. 37_{a, b}, 38_a. and II, *ÄAT* 47, 2, pl. 5; LEPSIUS (1849), *Denkmäler III, Band VI: Neues Reich*, pl. 119; SHAIKH AL ARAB (2019-2020), *ANKH* 28/29, pl. I (fig. 16).

and Nehemt-away⁶⁴ (PL. VIII, fig. 22). After that, Nehemt-away frequently appears behind the god Thoth as his divine consort (PL. IX, figs 23-24).⁶⁵

Accordingly, during the New Kingdom, one might wonder if Shepsy had not, in fact, been the object of a theological re-creation that would have masked his original nature to become the most appropriate form of the god Thoth. It is highly probable, therefore that the identification of Shepsy with Thoth may have been the only legal way that enabled the priests to change Thoth's feminine counterparts from Seshat, Ma'at⁶⁶, or Hathor⁶⁷ to Nehemt-away. To play such an important role, Shepsy was dotted with features and qualities that are characteristic to Thoth. This may be supported by Shepsy's name suggesting a relatively artificial theological creation. The god's name which has been derived from the word meaning "noble, august...etc"⁶⁸, is a common epithet applicable almost nearly to the principal gods of the Egyptian pantheon.

VII. Conclusion

Špsy is far the most common and widespread name for the god Shepsy. However, the god is also referred to under: "𓂏𓂏: Špsy wr", "𓂏𓂏𓂏: Špsy 𓂏" and "𓂏𓂏𓂏: Špsy 𓂏mnw". The geographical epithets applied to Shepsy: "𓂏𓂏𓂏: jmy 𓂏mnw: he who is in Hermopolis", "𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏: nb 𓂏mnw: lord of hermopolis", "𓂏𓂏𓂏𓂏: nb 𓂏wt-k3k: lord of Hout-Kak"







⁶⁴ The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII*, OIP 93, pl. 541.

⁶⁵ See for example, The Epigraphic Survey, *Medinet Habu VIII*, OIP 94, pl. 607, 3; DAVIES (1953), *The Temple of Hibis*. Part III, MMAEE XVII, pl. 51.

⁶⁶ Thoth's feminine counterpart was Seshat, and his wife was Ma'at See Cline; O'CONNOR (2006), *Thutmose III*, p. 127.

⁶⁷ Thoth is occasionally paired with Hathor, see for example, LEPSIUS (1849), *Denkmäler, Abtheilung III, Band VI: Neues reich*, pl. 119, h.

⁶⁸ About the name "Shepsy" and its meaning, see *supra*, pp. 131-132.

and “: hry-ib Ḥwt-k3k: He who resides in Hout-Kak” are the most important ones because they highlight the link between Shepsy and his main cult centres at Hermopolis Magna in the 15th Upper Egyptian nome and at Hout-Kak in the 10th Upper Egyptian nome.  is his most common epithet in all the periods. However, Shepsy can be described with the common epithets of “: ntr 3: Great god”, “: nb pt: lord of the sky”, “: hry-tp ntrw: Who is the chief of the gods”, and “: nb nhh: lord of eternity”, which he shares with many other gods.

The Egyptians preferred to represent Shepsy in human form, at least, since the 18th dynasty. In the 19th dynasty, Shepsy gains more importance and his manifestations have been enriched with new phenotypes. Whereas Shepsy as a man crowned with the solar disk is quite standard, the falcon and the ibis-headed man who presumably stand for Shepsy are rather exceptional. The solar disk-like crown was his specific ornamental headdress; it is a key element and an identification index for the god. Nevertheless, other crowns are considered less common and occur in specific contexts. Shepsy was sometimes seen to be wearing the lunar disk with the crescent as crown, the *atef*-crown, or the *Pschent*-crown, the United Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Due to his identification with Thoth, Shepsy becomes conceptualised as a sky-deity, integrated into the solar and lunar cult. At the same time, he can be associated with kingship and the king himself as he appears in many representations as an active participant. Besides, Shepsy is found acting as a cosmic deity and a primeval creator.

To sum up, it is possible that, during the New Kingdom, the god Shepsy was the object of a theological re-creation which would have manipulated his original nature to be the most fitting form of the god Thoth. Keeping in mind that Nehmet-away was originally the divine consort of Shepsy, such assimilation with the god Thoth was the only legal way that enabled the priests to change Thoth's feminine counterparts from Seshat, Ma'at, or Hathor to Nehmet-away.

VIII. Plates

Pl. I



Fig. 8. The temple of Gerf Hussein, great hall (E), showing Ramesses II burning incense in front of Shepsy, and offering rnpwt-fresh plants to Thoth.

After: Tanbouli et al. (1975), Gerf Hussein III, La grande salle (E), CEDAE 87, Pl. 26.

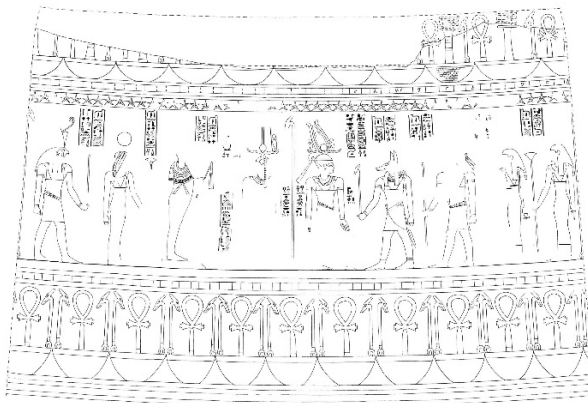


Fig. 9. The temple of Hibis, columns in Hypostyle B, northwest column, right scene (north face), depicting Shepsy, in a fully human form, participating in a ritual scene.

After: Davies (1953), The Temple of Hibis, MMAEE XVII, p. 14.

PL. II

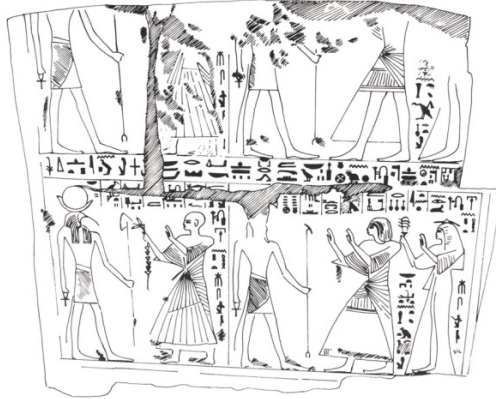


Fig. 10. The memphite tomb-chapel of Mose, room III, the right-hand interior wall (north wall), showing the god Shepsy, in a fully human form, receiving adorations from its owner and his wife.

After: Āb Allāh (1977), The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose, Pl. 26.

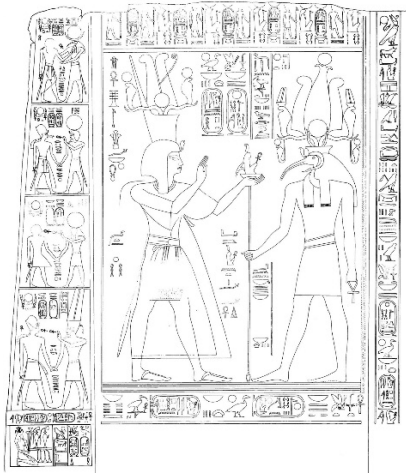


Fig. 11. The temple of Amun at Hermopolis Magna, pylon, south side of the passage, showing Sethy II offering maat to Thoth, and receiving life from the gods Thoth, Shepsy, Horus *hnty-hnty* and Amun-Ra.

After: Roeder (1959), Hermopolis 1929-1939. Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis, Ober-Ägypten, in Verbindung mit zahlreichen Mitarbeitern, WVPM 4, Pl. 64.

PL. III



Fig. 12. Statue of Ramses-Siptah (Louvre E. 25413), front face, right leg, depicting Shepsy as a human crowned with a solar disk.

After: Vandier (1971), “Ramsès-Siptah”, RdE 23, Pl. 10, A.

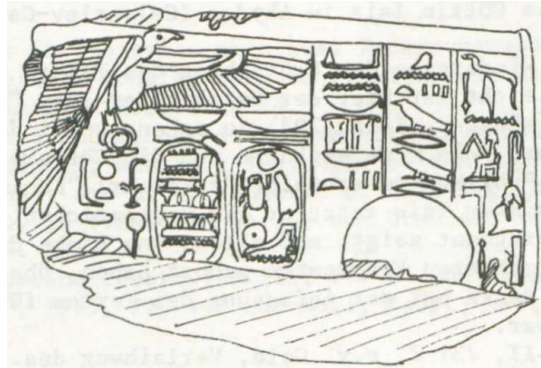


Fig. 13. A wall relief from El Hiba dating to Hedjkheperre Setepenre Shoshenq I, depicting the god Shepsy in a purely anthropomorphic form with the solar disk like-crown.

After: Feucht (1978), “Zwei Reliefs Scheschonqs I. aus el-Hibeh”, SAK 6, p. 72, fig. 1.



PL. IV

Fig. 14. The temple of Ramesses II in the Domain of Amun at Wadi es-Sebua, exterior facade of the dark room leading from the southwest of the antechamber, depicting Ramesses II offering two wine-vases to Shepsy (right) and two oil vases to Thoth (left).

*After: Gauthier (1912), Les Temples immergés de Nubie :
le temple de Ouadi es-Sebouâ II, Pl. 53, B.*

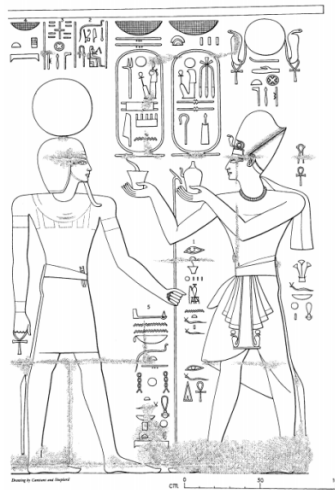


Fig. 15. The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, second court, west wall, middle register, 4th scene north of the doorway, showing Ramesses III offering incense and libation to Shepsy.

*After: The Epigraphic Survey (1957), Medinet Habu V:
The Temple Proper, part I, OIP 83, Pl. 298.*



PL. V

Fig. 16. The great Speos of Horemheb at Gebel el-Silsila, lateral hall, third central pillar (west face), representing Shepsy enthroned in a ritual scene.

After: Thiem (2000), Speos von Gebel es-Silsileh, ÄAT 47, 1, Pl. 37.



Fig. 17. A limestone stela dedicated to the god Thoth from Deir el-Medina, representing the gods Thoth and Shepsy enthroned and receiving offering.

After: Bruyère (1934), Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh (1931-1932), FIFAO 10, 1, p. 45, fig. 35.

PL. VI



Fig. 18. The tomb of Prince Khaemwaset, room M, north wall, showing Ramesses III performing purification ritual before Shepsy.

After: Hassanein et al. (1997), La Tombe du Prince Khaemouaset [VdR n° 44], Pl. 73, (b).



Fig. 19. Temple of Hibis, sanctuary (A), south wall, 5th register, depicting Shepsy as an adult male without crown in an offering scene.

After: Davies (1953), The Temple of Hibis, Part III: the Decoration, MMAEE 17, Pl. 4.

PL. VII

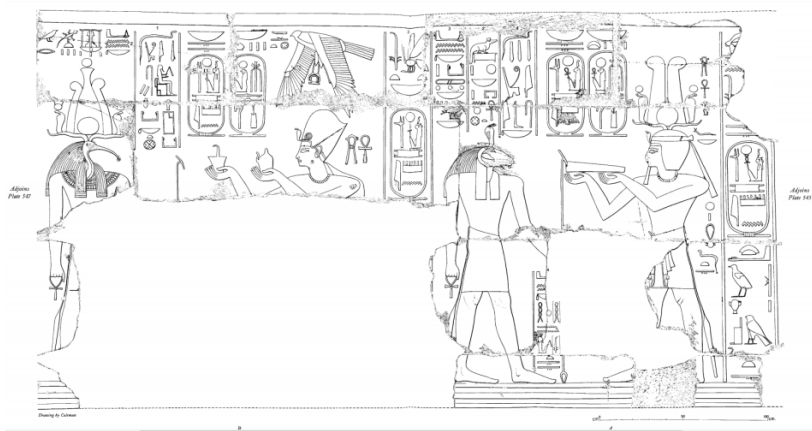


Fig. 20. The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, temple proper, roof terrace, north wall, showing Ramesses III offering a loaf to Sobek-Re (right), and incense and libation to Shepsy (left).

After: The Epigraphic Survey (1964), *Medinet Habu VII, The Temple Proper, part III, OIP 93, Pl. 546.*



Fig. 21. The great temple of the gods Amun, Ra-Horakhty, Ptah, and the deified Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, room F, Pillar, showing Ramesses II offering two *nw*-jars to Shepsy.

After: Lepsius (1849), *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien III, Pl. 188, f.*

PL. VIII

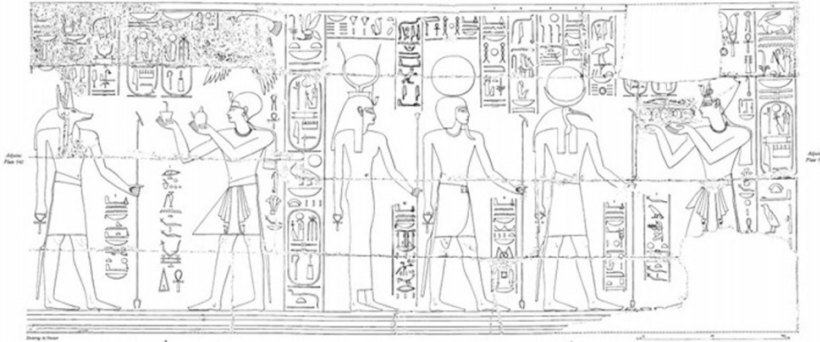


Fig. 22. The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, the temple proper, roof terraces, north wall, showing Ramesses III elevating a food offering to Thoth, in the presence of Shepsy and Nehemt-away.

After: The Epigraphic Survey, Medinet Habu VII, OIP 93, Pl. 541.

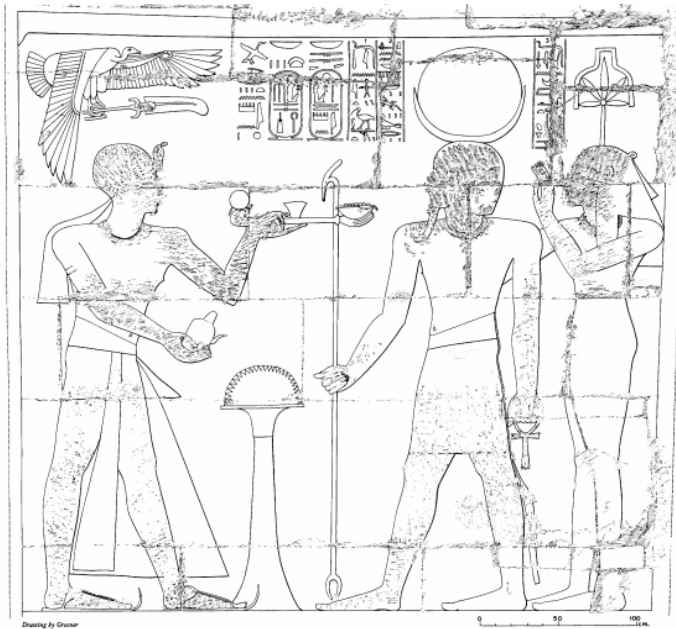


Fig. 23. The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, eastern high gate, passage, south wall, upper register, showing Ramesses III offering incense and libation to Thoth, in the presence of Nehemt-away.

After: The Epigraphic Survey, Medinet Habu VIII, OIP 94, Pl. 607, 3.

PL. IX

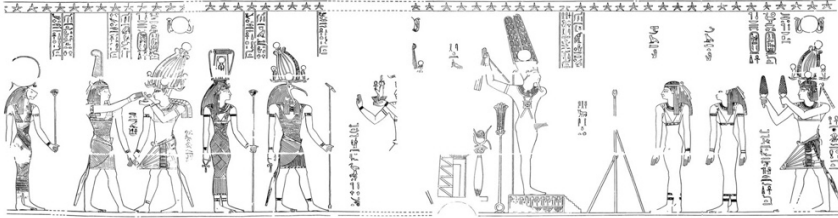


Fig. 24. The temple of Hibis, south exterior wall, upper register, left center, representing Darius I offering Maat to his father Thoth, in the presence of Nehem-away.

After: Davies (1953), *The Temple of Hibis*. Part III, *MMAEE* XVII, Pl. 51.

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