



NOTE CONCERNING THE SWORD AT THE RAMESSIDE PERIOD

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ARTICLE INFO Abstract



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The sword is a scimitar attested in Ancient Egypt in two kinds; First is the curved sword, it joins traditional weapons, appeared as a royal divine weapon, certainly as a symbol of domination, usually held by a god or presented by a god to a king, as the king represent the living Horus. Second is the pointed sword, represented on battle scenes, held by Egyptian and foreign soldiers, alike, during the time of the Egyptian Empire, especially during the Ramesside Period, showing development from short to enlarged long sword. Archaeological resources present two swords engraved with Royal names(Mernptah, and Seti II) symbolizing them as Victorious Kings, as well, referring that the sword produced locally in the Egyptian military workshops during Empire Period. The research aims to shed light on the archaeological, iconographic, and textual resources concerning the sword at the Ramesside Period, giving new insights of the sword in Ancient Egypt, following the historical method.

Introduction

The sword is a scimitar attested in Ancient Egypt in two kinds; the curved sword¹, and the pointed sword². The curved sword, also called sickle sword because of its shape³, but unlike the sickle sharp on the outside, has been used as a weapon in Egypt since the New Kingdom⁴. The Egyptian word for curved sword  *hpš*,⁵ originally referred to a shank of cattle and was adopted for similarity in shape⁶. The consonance with  *hpš* (force or power)⁷ was certainly important as a symbol of domination⁸.

¹ S. SCHOSSKA, *LÄ* III, 1980, cols. 819-821, s. v. «Krummschwert».

² W. HELCK, *LÄ* V, 1984, col. 765, s. v. «Schwert».

³ W. WOLF, *Die Bewaffnung des altägyptischen Heeres*, Leipzig 1926, pp.66-68.

⁴ W. WOLF, *loc. cit.*



⁵ *Wb* III, 270.

⁶ W. WOLF, *op. cit.*

⁷ *Wb* III, 269.

⁸ R. DUSSAUD, «Dédicace d'une statue d'Osorkon Ier par Elibaal, roi de Byblos», In *Syria* 6, 1925, p.106.

The curved sword joins traditional weapons, usually held by gods (fig.1) or presented by a god to a King (fig.2)⁹. Presenting by a god is a new motif from the New Kingdom onwards¹⁰. The curved sword does not only appear as a royal divine weapon, it also carried by Soldiers in battlefield¹¹.

The Egyptian word for the pointed sword is  *sf.t*, the feminine form of  *sf*, which means knife, and of which derived the Arabic word (Seif/ سيف) (Seif in Arabic means sword)¹². It is usually depicted on Temple wall scenes carried by Libyans¹³, Sherden¹⁴, and Egyptians as well¹⁵. One was found engraved with the name of king Merenptah in Ugarit (fig. 6)¹⁶, another pointed sword engraved with the name of king Seti II was found in Tell el-Faraun/Nebeshe (fig.7)¹⁷.

Early in the reign of Ramesses II (1279-1213 BC.), Sherden troops are represented on the north wall of his temple at Abydos (fig. 3)¹⁸. The soldiers wearing military costume, with their representative horned helmets with a globular top, holding a round shield in one hand and a short sword in the other. From this time onwards, the Sherden represented as a special unit in the army of the Egyptian Empire, fighting against Libyans and Asiatics alike, even against other Sea peoples¹⁹.

In the reliefs of the battle of Qadesh represented on the north wall of the Main Hall in the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel (fig. 4)²⁰, Sherden represented with their characteristic features holding Long swords. They may work as a special unit in the Egyptian Army or worked as special guards for the king, hence they have a special level of trust from king Ramesses II²¹. It seems likely that the time between the scene (3) and the scene (4) was the time needed to development of the sword to be enlarged.

The representation of the sea battle of king Ramesses III against Sea Peoples, depicted on the walls of Medinet Habu Temple, the artist excelled in depicting Egyptian ships is fully equipped with crews of sailors and oars in addition to sails, that depiction fit the troops of the Empire that owned those ships, in contrast to his depiction of the enemy invaders' ships as

⁹ LD III, 197.

¹⁰S. SCHOSSKA, *LÄ III*, 1980, cols. 819-821, s. v. «Krummschwert».

¹¹W. WRESZINSKI, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte II*, Leipzig 1935, pp.19,25.

¹² *Wb III*, 442.

¹³W. F. EDGERTON, J. A. WILSON, «Historical Records of Ramses III», *SAOC* 12, 1936, p.66, pl.72e.

¹⁴ CH. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, S. DONADONI, E. EDEL, *Grand Temple d'Abou Simbel, la bataille de Qadech, vol. II*, Centre des études et de documentation sur l'ancienne égypte, Collection scientifique 47, Cairo, 1971, pl. 13.

¹⁵H. H. NELSON «The Naval Battle Pictured at Medinet Habu», *JNES* 2/1, 1943, fig.4.

¹⁶ C. F. SCHAEFFER, *Ugaritica III, Mission de Ras Shamra VIII*, Paris, 1956, fig. 124.

¹⁷M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, «Pharaohs, swords and sea peoples», *AHL*, 2007, p.212, fig.1.

¹⁸M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, *op.cit.*, 2007, p. 225, fig. 12.

¹⁹ W. WRESZINSKI, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte II*, Leipzig 1935, pp.66-70.

²⁰ CH. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, S. DONADONI, E. EDEL, *Grand Temple d'Abou Simbel, la bataille de Qadech, vol. II*, Centre des études et de documentation sur l'ancienne égypte, Collection scientifique 47, Cairo, 1971, pl. 13.

²¹ A. H. GARDINER, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Oxford, 1947, pp. 194-199.

simple sailboats without such equipment. The Egyptian ship is distinguished on its prow by the head of the goddess Sekhmet.

The Egyptian army wearing the Egyptian body armour and a helmet looking like a wig, holding the characteristic Egyptian shield, equipped with various kinds of weaponry of which is the long sword²². In the first level, the Egyptian navy is in combat with one kind of Sea peoples, wearing an armored costume, a feathered helmet, and holding around shield, equipped with short and long swords. The Egyptian army kills the invaders and captures them. Close examination of the two long swords, both of them have long sword, but they aren't alike, they differ in shape or form.

In the second level, the Egyptian navy is in combat with another kind of Sea peoples, wearing an armored costume and a horned helmet, which isn't alike with that of the Sherden, holding a round shield, short sword and a spear. The Egyptians are killing them and captured a great number in the Egyptian ship. In the third level, the Egyptian army is leaving the battlefield after destroying the enemy, the enemy boat was turned upside down as it was sunk, while the Egyptian ship is full of captured soldiers of feathered helmets.

Archaeological resources present us with two long swords inscribed with royal names, both dating to only ten years apart; the first is inscribed with name of king Merenptah found at Ugarit (Ras Shamra on the North Syrian coast)(fig. 6)²³. The name of the king Merenptah (1213-1203 BC)²⁴ is inscribed below the hilt, enclosed in a Cartouche crowned with the epithet (*nb ḥꜣw*) "Lord of Diadems", the name reads (*mri n pth ḥtp ḥr mꜣt*). The thin incised signs were made in cursive fashion by a professional with a steady hand²⁵. It seems that the inscribing of the royal name was made at the same time the sword was made²⁶.

The second sword is inscribed with the name of king Seti II (1200-1194 BC.)²⁷. It came from Tell el-Farain, also known as Tell Nebeshe, ancient *Imet*, a site in eastern Delta²⁸. The king's name is enclosed within Cartouch topped with the *Atef* crown, probably as a symbol of the sky god Horus²⁹. The king's name reads (*wsr ḥprw Rꜥ Mri Imn*)³⁰.

The two swords inscribed with Royal names are quite similar to those depicted in hands of the Egyptian army on the Temple walls³¹. The two swords, with their typological characteristics and the hieroglyphic inscriptions, have no typological parallel in Italy, the

²² H. H. NELSON «The Naval Battle Pictured at Medinet Habu», *JNES* 2/1, 1943, fig.4, shipE1; S. C. HEINZ, *Die Feldzugsdarstellungen des Neun Reiches, Eine Bildanalyse*. Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Osterreichischen Archaologischen Institutes XVII, Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2001, p.304 (1.12), 306 (1.15.16).

²³ C. F. SCHAEFFER, *Ugaritica III, Mission de Ras Shamra VIII*, Paris, 1956, fig. 124.

²⁴ J. VON BECKERATH, *Chronologie des Pharaonischen Ägypten*. Munchner Ägyptologische Studien 46, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz, 1997, p.190.

²⁵ M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, «Pharaohs, swords and sea peoples», *AHL*, 2007, p. 216.

²⁶ M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, *loc. cit.*

²⁷ C. F. SCHAEFFER, *Ugaritica III, Mission de Ras Shamra VIII*, Paris, 1956, no 4.

²⁸ K. MARTIN, *LÄ* III, 1980, cols. 140-141, s. v. «Imet».

²⁹ P. KAPLONY, *LÄ* III, 1980, cols. 610-626, s. v. «Konigsring», p.611.

³⁰ J. VON BECKERATH, *Handbuch der Ägyptischen Konigsnamen*. Munchner Ägyptologische Studien 49, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz, 1999, pp.160-161.

³¹ M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, *op.cit.*, 2007, p. 215.

Aegean or anywhere else in Europe. Therefore, it must be regarded a product of Egyptian manufacture³². Those two swords, dating to the end of the 13th century BC, Were made in military workshops of Egyptian smithies³³. The sword of king Seti II discovery site at ancient Imet, located 25 km north of Piramesses at Qantir³⁴ on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, large Ramesside military workshops have been found at Piramesses produced various types of weapons, ancient Imet could have been another military base like piramesses³⁵.

Results:

- 1- The sword is a scimitar used by the ancient Egyptians, passing through many stages, witnessing diversity in shape, size, or length a longtime, depending on availability of appropriate materials, and the development of industry technology, according to what was required at a specific time.
- 2- The traditional sickle-sword is presented by the deities to the king in scenes of the deities supporting kings or blessing them before going to the battlefield, so that victory is theirs and that the deity's blessing protects them from dangers.
- 3- One of the Royal titles was the title (*nb hpš*), Lord of power, the word *hpš* (power) of which derivation is the word *hpš* (sword), Without a doubt, the sword is a symbol of a victorious king and a symbol and term for victory in battles, of which the sword was undoubtedly the most prominent factor in achieving this victory.
- 4- The sword, like other weapons, was a commodity that was bought and sold in its various forms throughout periods and a tool for trade exchange between the countries of the ancient Near East, it means that it is natural to trade such a weapon between regions, kingdoms and countries of the region and not This means that the countries of East Asia are countries that produce this weapon, while Egypt is unable to produce it, which is the powerful dominant country in the region. This is an unacceptable and illogical proposition.
- 5- The swords engraved with royal names may refer that they are royal swords or swords of a member of the king's personal guard. The names of the kings on the long sword refers that they were Lords of the sword, as it indicates that they took, or at least kept pace with, progress in the military industries. Also, the places where these swords were found may indicate the locations of the workshops for manufacturing this weapon, which means that the sword was produced in Egypt by the hands of Egyptian professionals, or it may indicate the locations of military fortifications.
- 6- The armored costume worn by the Egyptian troops in (fig.5) is the appropriate when combat at battlefield, while the military costume depicted in (figs.3,4) is a processional or worn in military parades, they are all Egyptian made.

³² M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, *op.cit.*, 2007, p. 213.

³³ M. BIETAK, R. JUNG, *op.cit.*, 2007, p. 219.

³⁴ E. B. PUSCH, «Metallverarbeitende Werkstätten der frühen Ramessidenzeit in Qantir-Piramesside/Nord, Ein Zwischenbericht», *Egypt and the Levant* 1, 1990, pp. 75-113; idem, «Qantir, PiRamses», in *L'Égypte du Delta les capitales du nord, Dossier d'Archeologie* 213, 1996, pp. 54-59.

³⁵ M. BIETAK, *Tell el-Dabca 2. Der Fundort im Rahmen einer archäologisch-geographischen Untersuchung über das ägyptische Ostdelta*, Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts 1, Denkschriften der Gesamtkademie 4, Vienna, 1975, pp. 103-104.



Fig. (1) Amun holding a curved sickle sword in his right hand, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

After: M. HILL, D. SCHORSCH, *Gifts for the Gods: Images from Egyptian Temples*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007, no. 19.



Fig. (2) Amun presents Mernptah the *hpš* sword, Mernptah victory Stela, Cairo Egyptian Museum.

After: K.A. KITCHEN, «The Victories of Merenptah, and the Nature of their Record», *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, 2004, pp 259–272.



Fig. (3) Sherden troops with short swords, north wall of Ramesses II temple at Abydos.

After: M. BIETAK, R. JUNG «Pharaohs, swords and sea peoples», *AHL* , 2007, p. 225, fig. 12.



Fig. (4) Sherden troops with long swords as part of the army of the Egyptian Empire, battle of Qadesh, north wall of the main Hall in the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel.

After: CH. DESROCHES-NOBLECOURT, S. DONADONI, E. EDEL, *Grand Temple d'Abou Simbel, la bataille de Qadech, vol. II*, Centre des études et de documentation sur l'ancienne égypte, Collection scientifique 47, Cairo, 1971, pl. 13.

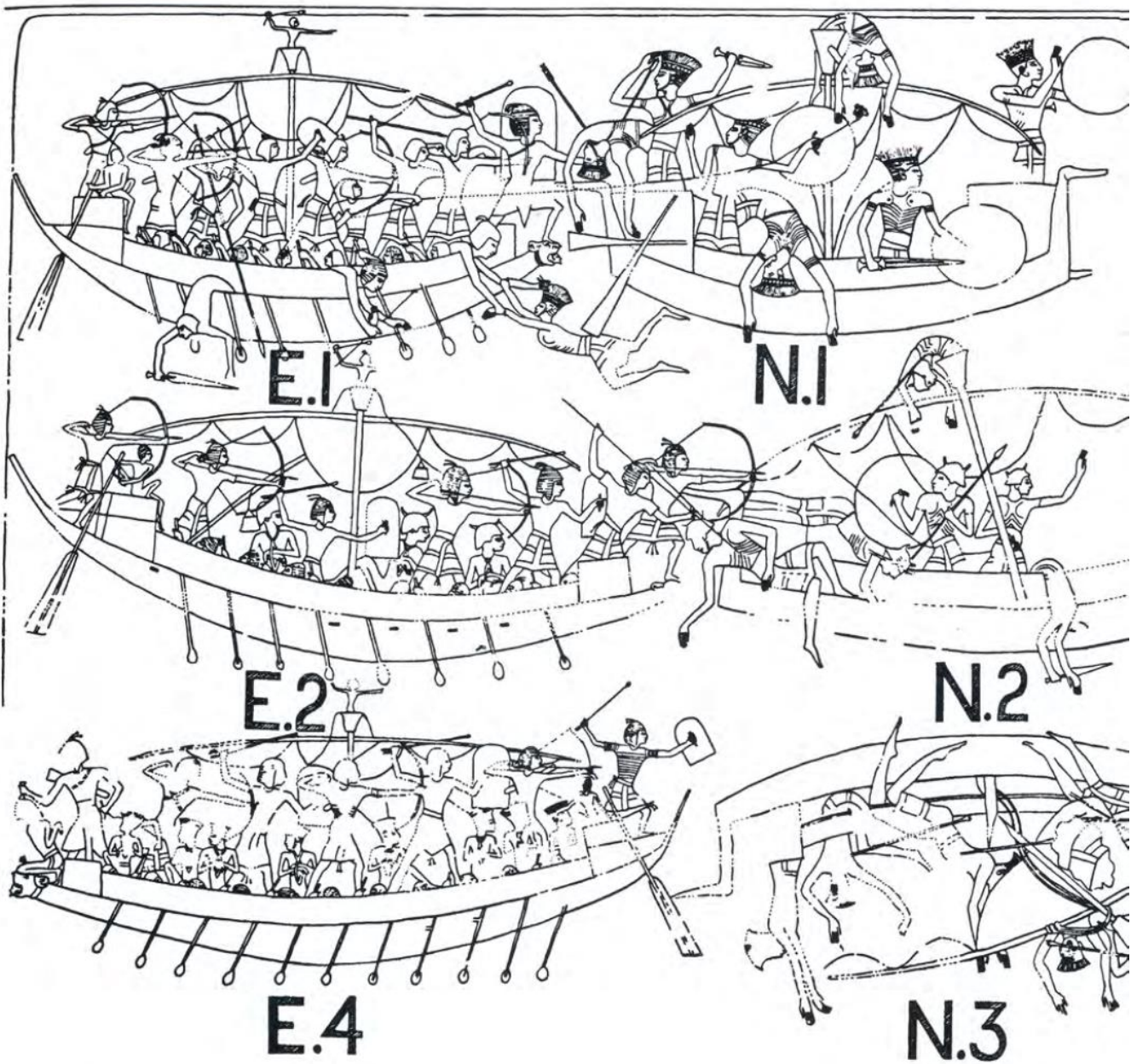


Fig. (5) Egyptian marines with long swords, battle of Ramesses III against sea peoples at Medinet Habu Temple.

After: H. H. NELSON «The Naval Battle Pictured at Medinet Habu», *JNES* 2/1, 1943, fig.4.

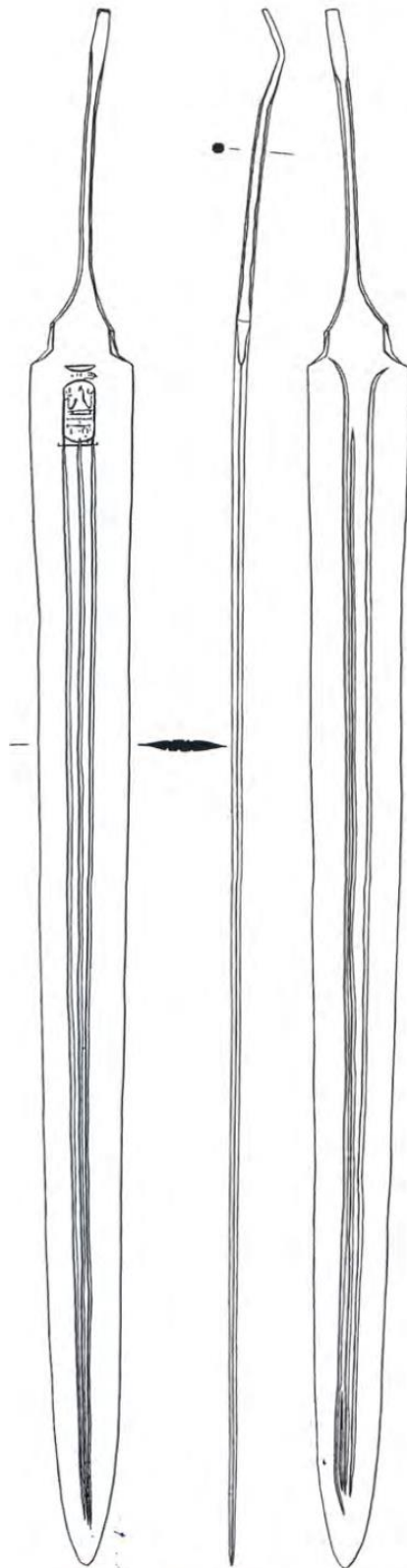


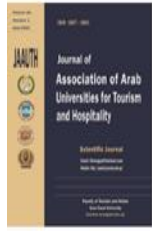
Fig. (6) Sword engraved with name of King Merneptah from Ugarit.

After: C. F. SCHAEFFER, *Ugaritica III, Mission de Ras Shamra VIII*, Paris, 1956, fig. 124.



Fig. (7) Sword engraved with name of King Seti II from Tell el-Faraun/Nebeshe, Berlin Museum.

After: M. BIETAK, R. JUNG «Pharaohs, swords and sea peoples», *AHL*, 2007, p.212, fig.1.



تعليق على السيف في عصر الرعامسة

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الملخص

شهدت مصر القديمة صنفين من السيوف، أولها السيف منجلى الشكل، و ظهر فى المناظر الطقسية و الاحتفالات، فى أيدي المعبودات و الملوك كرمز للسيطرة و بسط النفوذ، كما ظهر فى مناظر إهداء المعبودات للملوك، بوصف الملك يمثل حورس الحى و كرمز لمؤازرة المعبود للملك فى المعارك و أن المعبود يهب الملك نصراً مؤزرأ. أما الصنف الثانى فكان السيف المدبب، و هو أحد أسلحة الحرب، و قد ظهر فى أيدي الجنود المصريين و غير المصريين على حد سواء، فى مناظر المعارك خلال عصر الإمبراطورية المصرية و خاصة خلال عصر الرعامسة، و أظهرت المصادر التصويرية مرور السيف بالتطور من سيف قصير لسيف طويل بمرور الزمن، كما أمدتنا المصادر الأثرية بسيوف تحمل أسماء ملوك مصريين (سيف الملك مرنبتاح- سيف الملك سيتى الثانى) كرمز لأحد الألقاب الملكية، بوصف الملك المنتصر، صاحب البطولات و الانتصارات، رب السيف و سيد المعارك. كما يدل أيضاً على أن السيف كسلاح قد انتج محلياً فى مصر و طرأ عليه التطوير فى ورش الصناعات الحربية المصرية خلال عصر الامبراطورية المصرية.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

السيف؛ السيف
المعقوف؛ السيف
الطويل المدبب؛
مصر القديمة.

(JAAUTH)

المجلد ٢٣، العدد ٢،
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