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Jmjwt
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Jmjwt إمبوت

Terence DuQuesne

Jmjwt *Jmjwt*

The Egyptian term *jmjwt* (*imiut*) had two meanings: it was both an epithet of the god Anubis, relating to his role as patron of mummification, and a designation of the deity's particular sacred object, which took the form of a pole set into a pot, with the hide of an animal attached to the pole.

التعبير المصري القديم إمبوت كان له معنيان: فهو صفة معروفة للإله أنوبيس متعلقة بدوره كراعي التحنيط. المعنى الثاني هو إشارة إلى الشعار المقدس الذي مثل الإله و الذي أخذ شكل عود موضوع داخل أنية و مربوط به جلد حيوان.



jmj-wt as an Epithet of Anubis

One of the most frequently encountered epithets of the god Anubis is *jmj-wt*, which occurs from the Old Kingdom until the Roman Period (Leitz 2002: 232 - 234). It is first found in the 4th Dynasty, after which it becomes increasingly common (DuQuesne 2005: 157 - 160). Most scholars have translated the expression as “He who is in the place of embalment” or “He who is in the mummy-wrappings.” The term *wt* does indeed refer to the bindings used for the body after mummification, and it would be appropriate to describe Anubis, who presided over the preservation of the body, as one who was in the wrappings himself: hence the frequent use of pectorals and other amulets bearing representations of the jackal god. On the other hand, *wt* may have been a toponym (Gauthier, H. 1925: 202, 208ff.): perhaps it was originally read as *whst*, “oasis,” as first suggested by Jéquier (Gauthier, J.É. and Jéquier 1902: 52 n. 1).

The jmjwt Emblem

Iconography. Like the divine epithet *jmj-wt*, the *jmjwt* emblem is closely associated with

Anubis and images of it occur virtually continuously from the Predynastic until the Roman Periods. Although many variants of its form are found, the fundamental elements are an upright pole, a pot or vase, and an animal's pelt. The pot serves as a base for the pole, to which the animal skin is attached in two places (fig. 1). It makes its earliest appearance on a vessel of the Naqada II Period (Logan 1990) and occurs on a number of Protodynastic labels from Abydos. Representations of the *jmjwt* on four blocks from the temple of Niuserra (Dynasty 5) show that the emblem may have been planted in the ground and/or carried at the Sed Festival (DuQuesne 2005: 102 - 109). In the Pyramid Texts (§2080), the rungs of the ladder on which the king ascends to the sky are composed of “leather of *imiut*,” the name being written with a schematic figure of the *jmjwt* emblem followed by the falcon-on-standard signifier. The object is there stated to have been born from the cow-goddess Hezat. Indeed representations of the *jmjwt* on which the color survives indicate that the pelt often, if not always, belonged to a cow or an ox. An actual example of the *jmjwt* has survived from the Middle Kingdom. This was discovered in the pyramid temple of Senusret I at Lisht



Figure 1. An *imiwt* from the 12th Dynasty, Lisht. (Dynasty 12). It is 62 cm high and contains remnants of the pelt of an animal that cannot

now be identified (Lythgoe 1915a; 1915b: 151 and fig. 8). In the tomb of Tutankhamen (Dynasty 18) two replicas of the emblem were found: they are made of wood and gilded, and stand 1.67 m tall (*PM* I,2: 586). Throughout the New Kingdom and later, the *jmjw*t is an essential component in the funerary iconography, appearing particularly in the judgment scenes in the *Book of the Dead*, in close proximity to Osiris (Seeber 1976: 35, 50, 127, 182, 191).

Interpretation. The Jumilhac Papyrus, which is probably of late Ptolemaic date, contains numerous, often etiological, myths about the XVIIth nome of Upper Egypt, and particularly about its local deity Anubis. One of these stories records how Hezat, named as the mother of Anubis, separated the god Anti's bones from his soft organs, placed the assemblage in an *jmjw*t, and squirted her milk over it, with the result that Anti was restored to life (Vandier 1961: XII 22 - XIII 14, pls. 12 - 13). Although this version is of late date, the myth that it records is, as we have seen, already discernible in the Pyramid Texts, where an *jmjw*t is stated to have been born of Hezat. The emblem is a powerful symbol of healing and rebirth (DuQuesne 2000).

Bibliographic Notes

Fundamental for study of the *jmjw*t is the monograph by Rössler-Köhler (1975), which provides a thorough taxonomy and documentation of images of this object. The same author has provided a brief overview of the *jmjw*t (Rössler-Köhler 1980). Logan (1990) has studied the earliest forms of the *jmjw*t. The author has published an analysis of the object's iconography up to the 10th Dynasty (DuQuesne 2005: 102 - 109, 157 - 160) and also an account of its symbolism (2000).

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Figure 1. An *imiut* from the 12th Dynasty, Lisht. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 14.3.19, Rogers Fund and Edward S. Harkness Gift. <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/100002037>.