

## The Goddess *sht* in Ancient Egypt

*Mona Abou El Maati\**

### **abstract:**

The goddess Sekhet was the lady of fields and marshes, She was the lady of fowling and fishing in ancient Egypt. She held a lot of titles and epithets which show her importance to the deceased and to the king.

Her name is mentioned in most of the hunting scenes which were represent on the walls of the tombs throughout the pharaonic period. the owner of the tomb held titles to show his relation to the goddess as “the beloved and companion of Sekhet.

Sekhet appears holding a lot of goods especially in the Nile god processions which were very common on the walls of the Greco-Roman temples. She formed a triad with Hapy and the king, as she was mentioned as the mother of the king who begot him and who suckled him. From this research i found how important is the goddess Sekhet through what she held from titles and epithets and her functions so i considered her to be the goddess of inundation which the Egyptian waited for every year to renew their life and bring fertility to the lad.

### **Key words**

Goddess ,Field , Sekhet , Hapy , Plant , Offering , Dendera , Edfou


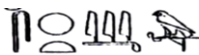

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## Introduction

*shṭ*<sup>1</sup> is a field goddess, known and attested from the Old Kingdom to the Greco-Roman period<sup>2</sup>. She is a personification of the flooded and watered land, and is also the patron of fish spearing and bird catching<sup>3</sup>.

She does not have a cult, but she is mentioned wherever there is fishing, fowling and hippopotamus hunting<sup>4</sup>. It is said that the bird catcher god “*hb*” is her son<sup>5</sup>, and she was considered to be the patron of the Nile god Hapi especially from the Middle Kingdom and later on<sup>6</sup>.

Her name is written with the sign of field  with different determinatives such as: The god Horus on the sacred holder(*ḥt*) as  <sup>7</sup>, or as a seated woman  <sup>8</sup>, as a

<sup>1</sup> The sign *shṭ* shows reeds growing side by side with shoots between them and originally referred to a marshland or reed thickets where birds and fish were caught

, in the Old Kingdom it was written by a similar sign *sm*  meaning “grass”.

see; H.Altenmüller, Feld in *LÄ II*, 148-149; Wb IV, 120, 11-12

<sup>2</sup> W.Guglielmi, “Sechet” in *LÄ V*, 778; Ch.Leitz, in *LÄGG VI*, 495; P.Wilson, A Ptolemaic Lexikon, A Lexicographical study of the texts in the temple of Edfu, Leuven 1997, p.912.

<sup>3</sup> H.Altenmüller, Die Jagd im Alten Ägypten, Hamburg 1967; Id., in *LÄ III*, 219-236; Decker, Wolfgang, and M.Herbst, Bildatlas zum Sport im alten Ägypten, *HdO 14*, 1994; K.Martin, Vogelfang, jagd, netz,-steller, in *LÄ VI*, 1051-1052; A.Blackman, The Rock tombs of Meir II, The Tomb of Senbi’s son Ukh-Hotep, *Archaeological survey of Egyptian Memoir 23*, London 1915, pl.11; III, pl.5; VI, pl.13 right; P.Newberry, Beni Hassan I, London 1893, pl.34; II, pl.18; III, pl.6, fig.96; J.Vandier, Mo’alla, La Tombe d’Ankhtifi et la Tombe de Sebekhotep, *BdE 18*, Le Caire 1950, p.262; P.Wilson, *PTL*, p.912.



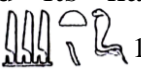
<sup>4</sup> Säve-Söderbergh, On Egyptian representations of Hippopotamus hunting as a religious motive, 1953, s.38, Anm.5; Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.912.

<sup>5</sup> Ch.Leitz, *LÄGG V*, 110; Pyr.555d; B.Behrmann, Das Nilpferd in der vorstellungswelt der Alten Ägypter, Bd II, 1996, 88; E VII, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Ch.Leitz, *LÄGG VI*, 496; J.Baines, Fecundity figures, Egyptian personification and the iconology of a genre, 1985, 198-207; A.Gutbub, Kôm Ombo I, 1995, 255 right.

<sup>7</sup> Pyr.555d.

<sup>8</sup> Wb IV, 231, 8-10; P.Newberry, El Bersheh, The Tomb of Tehuti-Hotep, *Archaeological Survey of Egypt Memoir 3*, part I, London 1895, pl.20/22; Urk.IV 1202, 1203, 1606;

woman holding a bird in one hand <sup>9</sup> and a lotus or water plant in the other hand, as  an egg<sup>10</sup>, in the Greco-Roman Period its name is written with the cobra as a determinative <sup>11</sup>. Sometimes her name is written without a determinative<sup>12</sup>.

In her study of Sekhet Guglielmi<sup>13</sup> said that Sekhet was not a goddess by the full means of the words, she remarked the absence of a cult and the rarity of offerings made to her. She used the definition of Morenz about her that she is a goddess of a special nature or an administrative and a place goddess<sup>14</sup>.

I present this study to prove that we have a very important deity and I will try to give some clues to her importance. Also to answer to the questions which came to my mind after the remarks of Guglielmi: Is Sekhet really not having a great importance? Is she just a personification of place? Does she had a family or not? so in this study I will focus on some aspects of the deity to strengthen the idea of her importance.

### The Goddess Sekhet in Texts:

Sekhet's name was first mentioned in **Pyramid Texts**, showing her relation to a bird catcher god whose name is *hb* to be her son, as we read:

*Irt nb(t) sht n s3.s hb*

Norman de Garis Davies, The Tomb of Ken-Amun at Thebes, *Metropolitan museum of Art Egyptian Expedition V*, part I, New York 1930, pl.51; Urk IV, 917.

<sup>9</sup> N.De G.Davies, The Rock Tombs of Deir El Gebrawi, London 1902, Tf.5

<sup>10</sup> Wb IV, 231, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Caminos, Literary fragments in the Hieratic script, 1956, Tf.1 section A, 2,5.

<sup>12</sup> L.Speleers, Recueil des Inscriptions égyptiennes des Musées royaux du cinquantenaire à Bruxelles, 1923, Nr.83,13

<sup>13</sup> W.Guglielmi, Die Feldgöttin *sh.t.*, *WdO 7*, Tübingen 1974.

<sup>14</sup> S.Morenz, Ägyptische religion, 29.a "Ressortgott" oder "Sondergott"

“All which the goddess Sekhet produces belongs to her son *hb*”<sup>15</sup>.

**In Coffin Texts**, She is mentioned as the one who helps the deceased to be a fowler of the gods who gives water<sup>16</sup>, and that she is the one who brings the birds and put them in the net of the deceased:

*Rdi n.i sht ...r tpw i3dwt*

“ Sekhet has put (something may be birds) for me at the tops of the nets”.

She is also mentioned after Hapy in another text, as she is:

*In sht inn.s 3pdw*

“ By Sekhet who brings the birds”<sup>17</sup>

Her name usually occurs accompanying the fishing, fowling and hunting scenes , Those activities which were performed by the deceased to secure his needs of food and also to show his excellent sportive skills in front of his people.Those scenes were very popular on the walls of the tombs from the Old kingdom throughout the pharaonic period.The texts which are registered with hunting scenes called these activities as the “*k3t sht* “ which means the “work of Sekhet”<sup>18</sup>

In the following examples of some monuments and tombs, we read the name of Sekhet followed by her epithets , to show her functions and her relation to the deceased, as we read:

- **The Tomb of *dʿw*** in Deir el Gebrawy<sup>19</sup>, the goddess is mentioned in the texts as:

<sup>15</sup> Pyr.555 d; S.Mercer, The Pyramid texts in translation and commentary, 1952, p.115.

<sup>16</sup> CT VII, 234 b and d.

<sup>17</sup> CT VI, 171 K.

<sup>18</sup> Säve-Söderbergh, Four eighteenth dynasty tombs, Private Tombs at Thebes I, Oxford 1957, pl.7, 14; Urk IV, 1422.

<sup>19</sup> N.De G.Davies, The rock Tombs of Deir El Gebrawi, London 1902, Tf.5

“*nfr.wi iww sht nbt hb hr m ir rmw r 3pdw n k3 n NN*”

“How beautiful is the coming of Sekhet mistress of the catch, (carrying ) with fishes and birds for the soul of NN”

- **On a Sarcophagus of *hnnw***

This sarcophagus is from wood, from Assiout, dated back to the Middle Kingdom, the deceased is mentioned as:

*im3hy hr sht* “The blessed before Sekhet”<sup>20</sup>

- **The Tomb of *nh-tifi***

In his hunting scene the following text is in front of him<sup>21</sup>:

*ndr tp ndr shr sht t3 hnwt htp nfr n k3 n nh tifi ikr m3c hrw*

“Harpoon the head for Sekhet the lady of the good offering for Ankhtifi the excellent the justified”<sup>22</sup>

- **The Tomb of *hnm htp***

It is located in Beni Hassan he is called “The beloved of Sekhet”<sup>23</sup>

- **In Other tombs (TT 165)<sup>24</sup>:**

*hns š3w hbhb sšw shmḥ ib stt mhy.t m pḥw in mry  
sh.t sm3y n nbt hb in NN*

<sup>20</sup> L.Speleers, Recueil, Nr.83,13.

<sup>21</sup> J.Vandier, Mo<sup>c</sup>alla, 262.

<sup>22</sup> There is also “presenting the staff of Sekhet, Where the king has a true harpoon blade like Sekhet and the staff is shown with birds attached to it. See: W.Guglielmi, Zur Symbolik des Darbringens des Straußes der *sh.t*, ZÄS 103, Berlin 1976, s.100ff.

<sup>23</sup> P.Newberry, Beni Hassan I, pl.34, p.70

<sup>24</sup> This tomb dated back to king Thutmosis IV-Amenhotep III, only fragments of inscriptions survived but the name of the owner of the tomb does not survive fully intact in any of the inscriptions. The owner was a Scribe and counter of grain. Budge suggested to be **Amenemhab** in: W.Budge, Wall decorations of Egyptian tombs, London 1914, pp.10-2. But Manniche said he was probably **Neb-Amun**; see:

L. Manniche, Lost tombs, A study of certain Eighteenth dynasty monuments in the Theban necropolis, London 1988, p.137.

“Traversing the swamp , going round the pool of birds, amusing by fishing with harpoon by the beloved and companion of the mistress of the catch by NN.<sup>25</sup>

- **In the tomb of *sn ndm*<sup>26</sup> and *Imn m hb*<sup>27</sup> :**

Dated back to the New Kingdom, these two are called the beloved and companions of the lady of hunting” “*mry sm3y n nbt hbw*”

- **In the tomb of *rḥ mi r*<sup>28</sup>**

The deceased is called:

*Mry (n) sḥt sm3y nbt hbw*

“ Rekhmire the beloved of Sekhet and companion of the mistress of the catch...”<sup>29</sup>

And also the servants say that: “ lo... Sekhet comes with a good will (hunting)”<sup>30</sup>

- **The tomb of Antef (No.155) New Kingdom<sup>31</sup>**

In a Hunting scene of a hippopotamus, we read the following text:

*wd3 in NN r stt hb swtwr r sd3 hr.f m k3.t sh.t r wdn n nb.t hb m phw mrw ir.s mrwt.f r nb*

“ Going out by NN for hunting the hippopotamus by the harpoon enjoying the work of Sekhet for bringing the offerings to the lady

<sup>25</sup> Urk IV, 917, 980, 1203, 1397, 1421, 1600, 1607; L. Manniche, op.cit, p.152 (b).

<sup>26</sup> TT 127; Urk IV, 512, 16

<sup>27</sup> TT 85; Urk IV, 917, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, The Tomb of Rrekh-mi-Re at Thebes, vol.I, New York 1973, Tf.41, 1 and 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.41, pl.XLI, 1; pl.XLI, 2 left

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. , p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> A.Dieter, Das grab des Antef, *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen* 4, 1971.

of hunting in the marshes and canals, so she is doing what he loves daily”<sup>32</sup>.

**- Tomb of *Pedštrt* in Baharia oasis** <sup>33</sup>

From the late period, 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty the text say:

*ind hr.k in šht m rmw.s hn̄....*

“praise to you by Sekhet with her fish and...”

**- The Tomb of Petosiris** <sup>34</sup>:

*wḏ n.k šht nb(t) ḥbw rsf ʔpdw m šht ḥft iʔdt.k*

“It is she who gives you the birds and fish assembled in the field before your net”

*wḏ (n).k šht imi.s kʔw.k imʔḥ wr snf rnnw.k ms.sn n.k ḥšw ḏḏw*

“Sekhet gives you that your blessed bulls are productive, your young cows give birth for you fat calves”

**The Greco Roman period-The temple of Dendera** <sup>35</sup>:

In the Greco-Roman period, Sekhet had a lot of titles that show her functions and her importance, as we read in the following text:

*Nswt bity ʔnht nbt ʔnhwt ḥkʔt hnt ḥnb šht nbt šht thnt nbt thn ifdt m ifdw nw tʔ dpyt?nbt tʔ wh̄ʔt nbt ḥnkt ḥtpt nbt ḥtpw ḏḏw*

“Lady of upper and lower Egypt, The living uraeus, lady of the grains of life, Sovereign of canals and marshes, Sekhet lady of

<sup>32</sup> Säve-Söderbergh, Hippotamus Hunting, p.10.

This rite is connected to the myth of Horus when he kills Seth in the form of a Hippotamus by a Harpoon.

See :A.M.Blackman and H.W.Fairman, The Myth of Horus at Edfu, in *JEA 29*, London 1943, p.9ff; M.Alliot, Le Culte d’Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées, *BdE XX*, Le Caire 1954.

<sup>33</sup> PM VII, s.303; A.Fakhry, Bahria and Farafra Oases, in *ASAE 40*, Le Caire 1940, s.859; id., The Egyptian Deserts, Baharia Oasis I, Cairo 1942, P.113, fig.79.

The goddess is shown sitting on the floor with her right hand on her knee, unfortunately her head is missing

<sup>34</sup> M.G.Lefebvre, Le Tombeau de Petosiris, Le caire 2007, Inscr.58,11.14f

<sup>35</sup> S.Cauville, Le Temple de Dendera, La Porte d’Isis, Le Caire 2009, 58, 12-15.

the country , the shining lady of the shining ones, The fourth of the four corners of the land, The gourmand ? Lady of bread, the provider and lady of beer, The satisfied and lady of offerings and feedings”.

From the previous examples throughout the pharaonic periods and later in the Greco-Roman period we understand the great importance of Sekhet as she held many titles refer to her functions, in conclusion:

- **Her titles:** The name of Sekhet is very important in the fowling and fishing activities of the deceased, she is called:

- *Nbt hb* means “ The lady of catching” and the *hb* word takes the determinatives of both birds and fish.

- *hnwt htp nfr* means “lady of the good offerings”

- *Nbt mrw* :means “lady of canals”and *hk3t hnt hnb* “lady of canals and marshes”.

- *nh̄t nbt* she is the living uraeus

- *nbt nh̄wt* lady of the grains of life

- *nbt sh̄t* “lady of country”.

- *th̄nt* The Shining lady (bright)

- *ifdt* she is one of the four corners of the world

- *dpyt?* The gourmand this title may refer to the strong side of the goddess.

- *nbt t hnkt* The provider of bread and beer

- *htpt* the satisfied<sup>36</sup> and *im3* the friendly<sup>37</sup>

**1- Her Functions:**Besides her relation to the deceased as his beloved and companion she is the one who:

- Facilitates his catching by putting the birds in his net.

- Causes the bulls of the deceased to be productive and his young cows give birth of fat calves.

-Provides the deceased with his needs from bread and beer.

<sup>36</sup> R.A.Caminos, Literary fragments in the Hieratic Script, Oxford 1956, s.7f.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., s.11



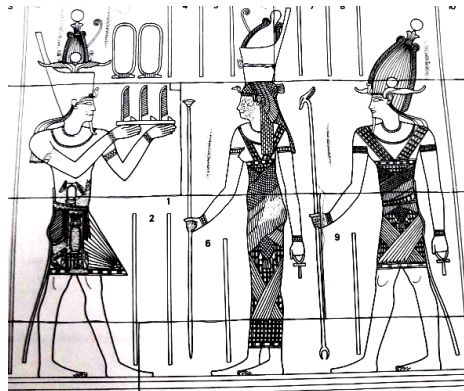
After we studied some of Sekhet's titles and epithets we can say that we have a very generous goddess who brings every thing to the people and that make me see in this goddess the inundation which the ancient Egyptian waited for every year to renew their life, bring every good things to them and fertilize their lands . When we see the abundance of birds and fish in the fowling and fishing scenes we may relate that to the coming of the inundation (and of Sekhet).

Sekhet was called *3ht* in the Greco-Roman Period<sup>38</sup>

### Representations of Sekhet:

Sekhet appears on the walls of the great temples and especially in the procession of the Nile gods<sup>39</sup>. The gods bring different kinds of goods for the benefit of the king , who is by his turn gives them to the supreme gods of the temples. These processions are very popular in: Dendera, Edfou , Esna, Kom Ombo, Deir el Medina, Opet, Philae , Dakka and others.

Sekhet's role is very prominent and the king is seen in many scenes to offer the sign of field to the gods in different temples (fig.1).



**Fig.1**  
**Cauville, Porte d'Ísis, T.43**

<sup>38</sup> G.Roeder, *Les Temples immerges de la Nubie, Der temple von Dakke*, Le Caire 1930, pl.41, 44.

<sup>39</sup> LD Text III, p.90; A.M.Blackman and H.W.Fairman, in *JEA* 29, p.34.

Sekhet appears on the walls of the great temples among other gods, She is depicted from D.18 in the Nile god processions as a symbol of fertility and regeneration.<sup>40</sup>

Her appearance is similar with differences in the offerings, we see her as:

- **A woman holding offerings alone** , with or without the sign of field on her head.

- **A woman holding offerings among other gods** bringing offerings .

- **A divine goddess** among the supreme gods, receiving offerings from the king.

- **A pair goddess** who is like Hapy bringing offerings to the temples.

- **A pair goddess** doing the unification of the two lands (*sm3 t3wy*).

The first appearance of the goddess Sekhet dated back to the 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty, as she appeared in front of the king Sahure -who is catching birds in his temple at Abusir. Unfortunately the scene is very much damaged, just fragments show the goddess standing with traces of her sign of field above her head in front of the king<sup>41</sup>.

From the Middle kingdom we see the goddess giving offerings to the king as she was known as the “lady of the good offerings and feedings”<sup>42</sup>, she is giving offerings of different kinds , as we see in the following :

<sup>40</sup> Guglielmi, *WdO* 7, 1974, 206-22; *LÄ* V, 778; *PTL*, p.912.

<sup>41</sup> L.Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sa hu re II*, p.88, 101, Blatt 21.

<sup>42</sup> S.Cauville, *Le Temple de Dendera* , La Porte d’Isis, Le Caire 1999, 58, 13-14.

**-1-Making offerings without the field sign on her head:  
(fig.2)**

The goddess is standing in front of king Mentuhotep II who is sitting inside his shrine, holding a flail in his right hand and greeting the goddess with the other. A falcon is hovering above his head giving him the sign of life. The name of Sekhet is written in front of her face, she is holding two birds in each hand presenting them to the king.



**Fig.2**

**L.Habachi,MDAIK 19, fig.7**

In the temple of Dendera (fig.3) we see the goddess holding two wheat spikes in her hands accompanied by two bulls. In front of her is the Nile god Hapy and the Ptolemaic king and queen making offerings to Hathor and Horus. Hathor's son Ihy is pacifying the goddess by the sistrum to make her accept the offerings.



**Fig.3**

**D IV,pl.CCXCIX**

## 2-Making offerings with the sign of field on her head(fig.4):

The goddess Sekhet appears in this period (GR) in a unique appearance , she holds a great deal of offerings such as:birds, bird nests, bird eggs, plants (lotus,Papyrus,water plants), fish and accompanied by animals:a bull, a goat and a cow.

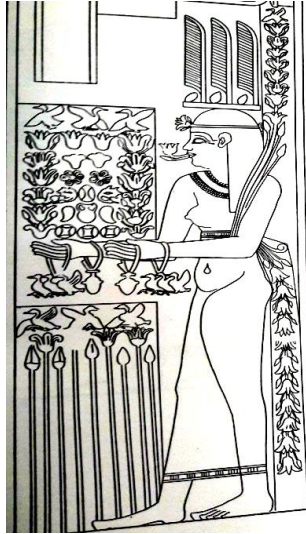


Fig.4

Daumas,Mam. Dendera, pl.LXXV

As for **the birds** Sekhet was called “the mother of birds”<sup>43</sup> and “Mistress of birds who captures them” *sht* gives all birds in their pools<sup>44</sup> , wild fowl are considered to be the children of Sekhet<sup>45</sup> .

- and we read in a text the kinds of birds that she holds:

*sht nbt hb hnwt hbsw km3(t) rsf ir(t) hdw mwt nt gnw ms(t) 3pdw hK3(t) r3w hrp(t) t3yw*

Sekhet, the lady of the chase, mistress of *hbs*-birds who created fish and fowl,who made the *hdw*-birds, mother of the *gnw*-

<sup>43</sup> E IV,199,9-10.

<sup>44</sup> E II, 164,3.

<sup>45</sup> E VII, 124, 13

birds, who gives birth to the birds (ducks), queen of the r3- geese who cares for the nestlings<sup>46</sup>.

The goddess Sekhet is described as the one who gives every bird flying up from its nest to the king.

In October birds migrate to the south, so the swamps would be full of them and is appropriate for the goddess to catch them.<sup>47</sup>

As for **the plants**

*In n.k sht w3dty hr w3dw rdw nb m Kb.s nd.s hr.k m pr im.s shtp.t*

“Sekhet brings to you the green plants carrying the green stems and all the perfumed plants she refreshes and makes green your face with all that coming out from her to make you satisfy”

*sth.n.s hwt.k m rnpw.s*

“She adorns your temple with her fresh plants”<sup>48</sup>

- As for **the animals:**

She is holding her offerings accompanied by a cow (fig.5)



**Fig.5**  
E XI, Tf.XVIII m

<sup>46</sup> E II, 163, 7

As for the birds see:

P.F.Houlihan, The birds of ancient Egypt, Cairo 1988.

<sup>47</sup> L.A.Christophe, Les fêtes agraires du calendrier d'Hathor à Edfou, in *CHE VII*, 1955, 36, n.13

<sup>48</sup> E I, 567, 8 und E IX, Tf.38m

She is holding two large Tilapia fish<sup>49</sup>, five geese, two ducks lying on four eggs (Fig.6)



Fig.6

Guglielmi, Die Feldgöttin..., Abb.2

Accompanied by a goat and a bull with a twisted horn<sup>50</sup> (fig.7)

I think these goat and bull are red in color, as the red is the color of evil and the color of the god Seth whom are to be sacrificed in the festivals which were held in Edfou during the marriage festival<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Fish occur with the utmost rarity

See: G.I.Wallert, Fische and fischkulte im alten Ägypten, *Ägyptologische Abhandlungen* 21, 1970.

<sup>50</sup> The twisted horn was an operation made to the new born bull that was devoted to be offered when he grows up:

L.Chaix, Les Boeufs à cornes parallèles: archeology et ethnographie, *Sahara* 8, 1996, pp.95-97; M.Murray, The yale ox, *Man* 44, 1944, p.87; H.Kees, Ägyptische Kunst, Breslau 1926, s.96.

<sup>51</sup> H.W.Fairman, Worship and festivals in an Egyptian temple, Liverpool 1954(a lecture), p.198.



Fig.7

D VIII, pl.DCCCXIX

**-Offering of the wind sign on a sarcophagus from 26 dynasty(fig.8)<sup>52</sup>:**

Sekhet is not only seen with food offerings, but she also gives the deceased the fresh air to help him to breathe as we see her on a sarcophagus from Wien Showing her standing with her sign on her head and holding the sign of wind with the sign of life in her right hand while holding the sign of life in her left hand.

<sup>52</sup> Ch.Leitz, Der Sarg des Panehemis in Wien, Wiesbaden 2011, p.207-8 §10,8-10; E.von Bergmann, Der Sarkophag des Panehemis , Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, Vol.I, 1883, s.23.



Fig.8

Ch.Leitz,Sarg des Panehemis,§10,8-10

*dd mdw in sht mh(n)yt nfr m3c r šrt.y.k šnbt.k ḥtp hr.k bs.k rhnt  
iw.k rwt nn ḥm nmtt.k m dw3t*

“ Words said by Sekhet the beautiful north wind reaches your nose your body rest with you , you go to the inner (the tomb) and may come out not to die in the underworld”

- **3-Making offerings with a nest**  **on her head (fig.9):**

In the temple of Opet we find Sekhet as a kneeling woman on a high base, making offerings of birds with the sign of nest on her head<sup>53</sup>, she was Known as “the mother of birds”, and as I said before she is: *hrp(t) t3yw* “who cares for the nestlings”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> DeWit, Opet I, pl., p.205.

<sup>54</sup> E II,163,7

As for the birds see:

P.F.Houlihan, The birds of ancient Egypt, Cairo 1988.





**Fig.9**  
**Opet I,205.**

The accompanying text says that:

*in n.k sht mwt 3pdw hbt msy p3yw r3w*

“Sekhet the mother of birds brings to you (as) the lady of hunting who gives birth to birds”

#### **4-Making offerings with Hapy:**

Sekhet appears in a very close relation to the Nile god Hapy on the walls of the Greco-Roman temples. She appears either :

- Behind him
- In front of him.
- Between a pair of Hapy (of the north and of the south).

They are represented in a procession of gods and they always take the first position, they come directly after the king.

Sekhet and Hapy make offering to the king who also makes offerings to the supreme god of the temple either alone or with the queen.

As we see in following examples:

**A- Sekhet and Hapy in Offering processions:**

**- Behind Hapy(fig.10):**

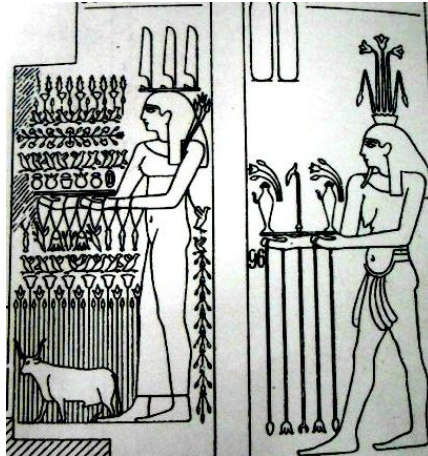
In the hall of offerings Sekhet and Hapy are making offerings , the king and queen are usually opposite to them making offerings as well as Sekhet and Hapy.



**Fig.10**

**Kom Ombo I,344**

**- In front of Hapy (fig.11)**



**Fig.11**

**E IX,38m**

Sekhet stands in front of Hapy, she always carries food, while Hapy carries jars.

- **Between a pair of Hapy (fig.12):** In Es-sebua Temple<sup>55</sup>, Sekhet is represented between Hapy of the south (*šmꜥy*) in front of her and Hapy of the north (*mhy*) behind her.



Fig.12

B- J.Bains, Fecundity figures,fig.102

## B- Sekhet and Hapy with the king:

### 1- Following the king:

#### In the temple of Dendera (fig.13)

The king is burning incense and directly behind him is Hapy and Sekhet then come the other goddesses with their offerings.

<sup>55</sup> PM VII, s.63; C.M.Firth, The Archaeological Survey of Nubia, report 1910-11, pl.31, 32; J.Leibovitch, Gods of Agriculture and welfare in ancient Egypt, in *JNES* 12, Chicago 1953, s.108f.



Fig.13

D VIII Pl.DCCCXVI

## 2-Following the king and queen (fig.14)

### In Edfou:

The king and the queen are making offerings to the god Horus with a human body and the head of a falcon, behind them are Hapy and Sekhet.

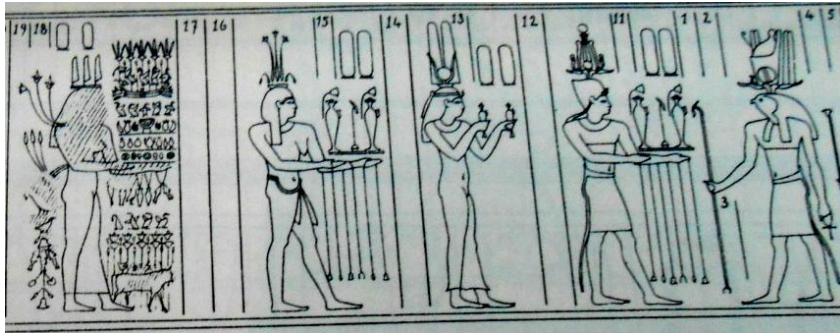


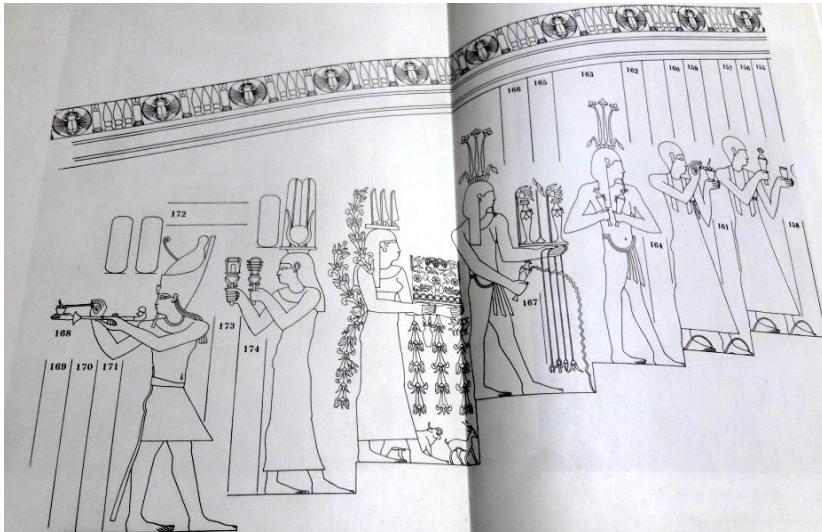
Fig.14

E IV, Tf.98

## 3-Preceding the king and queen (fig.15):

In Esna Sekhet is behind a pair of Hapy who follow two priests and behind them is the king who is burning incense, and the

queen who is holding the two sistrums (symbols of the goddess Hathor). This scene seems to be a festival in Esna.



**Fig.15**

**Esna III,pl.DCLXXXVI**

From the previous scenes we noticed a close relation between Sekhet and Hapy and the king. Sekhet and Hapy are represented in precedence of other gods in the offerings procession. We deduce the importance of both Sekhet and Hapy to the king, the three are forming a triad. From Sekhet, Hapy and the king.

The father is the Nile god Hapy as the king was called the son of Hapy in the inundation Hymns<sup>56</sup>.

As for Sekhet she had a very close relation to the king she is considered to be his mother and his protectress as we read in the following texts:

<sup>56</sup> Ch. Leitz, *LAGG V*, 44-47; and the king is his son see: D II, 18,1; III, 120,5; XI, 33,10-11.

- **The mother of the king:**

The king was considered to be Sekhet's son, he was raised and born from her<sup>57</sup>.

*Rnn n ḥ3 whm drt mhr n sht*

“He was raised and suckled repeatedly by Sekhet”<sup>58</sup>

- **The protectress of the king:**

On a Hieratic fragment belong to the king Amenemhat II, during his hunting activity in Fayoum, the goddess is considered to be the protectress of him who causes his safety.<sup>59</sup>

- **The Helper of the king:**

The goddess Sekhet helps the king in his hunting activities and I see the king as a son of Sekhet that he is also the bird catcher god *ḥb*.

She helps the king in the hunting of Hippoptamus rite as Horus who killed the god of evil Seth in the form of a Hippoptamus, and that is by using her harpoon.

She helps the king in bird hunting and in the following scene we read the text:

**5-Receiving offerings among other gods from the king (fig.16):**

In a ritual (*ḥbt*) scene from Edfou, the king is standing in front of a group of deities making offerings to them from different kinds.

<sup>57</sup> E II,163,7; E IV, 360,5; IV, 382, 11; VII, 82, 2

<sup>58</sup> E VI, 256, 11; pl.CLIH

<sup>59</sup> W.Guglielmi, op.cit.,p.214.

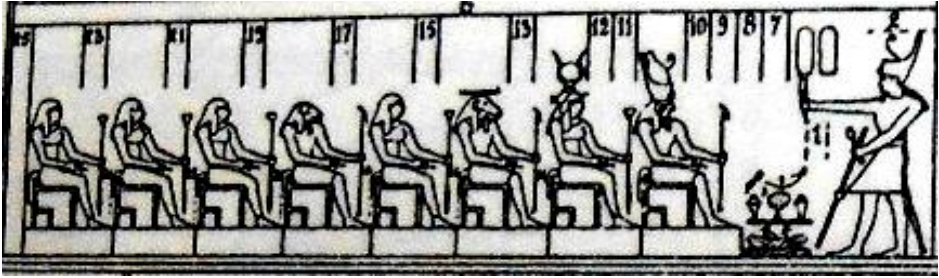


Fig.16

E IX, Tf.XLIib

Here the Ptolemaic king is making offerings to the gods respectively: Horus, Hathor, Khnum, **Sekhet**, Nem?, *nbt -ntrw*, *hd -htp* and Tait<sup>60</sup>.

The text with sekhet says:

*di.i n.k p3y nb m sš.sn*

“ I gives you all birds in their nest”

### 6-A Pair of the goddess Sekhet (fig.17):

In Esna:

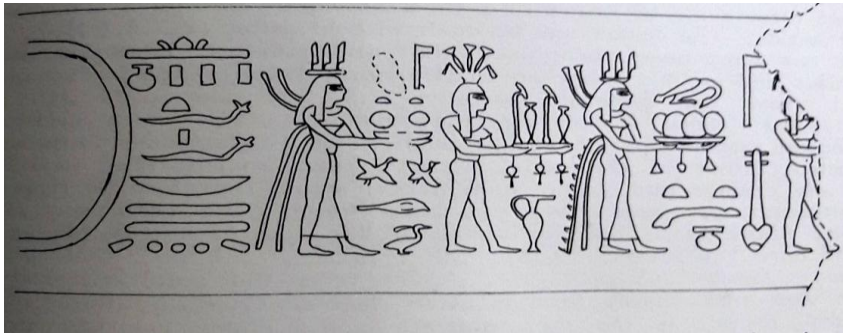


Fig.17

Baines, Fecundity figures, fig.83

<sup>60</sup> E II, 164, 3; IX, Tf.XLIib

## - On an Isiac tablet from the Roman period in Turin

(fig.18):

It is made of bronze and other materials, dated back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. We see a pair of Sekhet on the right side of the altar making the *sm3 t3wy* rite by the Lotus plant, while on the left the Nile god Hapy making the same rite with the papyrus plant.

On the head of the goddess we see her emblem of the land but here there are two reed plants between them a sign of corn, behind the goddess on the right there is a baboon standing on his back legs, raising his front arms in an adoration form. Behind the other goddess there is a frog over a plant. All this represent the field and the fertility.

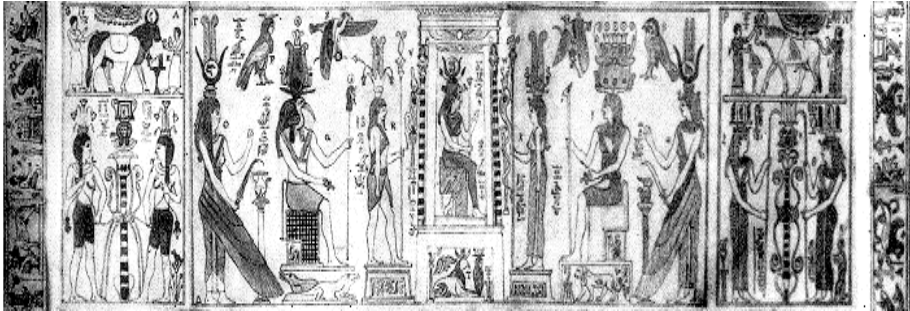


Fig.18

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/odnotes/bembo.html>



more detail is the following picture (fig.19)



Fig.19

Leospo, La Mensa....,pl.7

Sekhet figures are immortalized for western tradition on this Mensa Isiaca<sup>61</sup>

**-Her relation with other goddesses:**

Sekhet was identified with the great goddess such as: Hathor, Isis, Nebtuu-Menhit and Meret. Her relation to these goddesses was related to the nature of these goddesses as mother goddesses, have an agriculture side and responsible for the fertility of the land . So we find each one of them with her name followed by the name of Sekhet as we follow:

**-Hathor:**

Sekhet was a designation with Hathor in a ritual scene<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> Leospo, La Mensa Isiaca di Torino, 1978, pl.5, 7.

<sup>62</sup> S.Cauville, Dendera, La Porte d'Isis , p.58, 13-14.

In the Greco Roman period sekhet had a festival on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the third season Akhet (Athyr)(8<sup>th</sup> October)<sup>63</sup> held at Edfu, the feast occurs during the Hathor-Horus festival<sup>64</sup>. Hathor here is an aspect adopted, who was also known as “lady of the grazing land” and “lady of Hunting”<sup>65</sup>.

### - Isis:

As Isis was a mother goddess, the goddess of the cultivated land<sup>66</sup>. She was represented while watering corn and was connected to the famous star Sopdet who appears in the sky at the beginning of the inundation declaring the beginning of the new year<sup>67</sup>. Isis took the title *sh̄t*<sup>68</sup> and her name is followed by the name of Sekhet<sup>69</sup>.

### - Menhit Nebtuu

Nebtuu, queen of the fields a local goddess venerated together with Khnum in Esna, the ancient Latopolis<sup>70</sup>

### - Meret<sup>71</sup>

The goddess Meret is identified with Sekhet as she was related to the inundation and she share in festivals which were held for his coming<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> L.Christophe, Les Fêtes agraires du calendrier d’Hathor à Edfou, in *CDH VII*, 1955, p.36; Alliot, Le culte d’Horus à Edfou au temps des Ptolémées, p.225 note.5.

<sup>64</sup> E V, 350, 6.

<sup>65</sup> L.Christophe, op.cit., p.36.

<sup>66</sup> M.Münster, Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis vom Alten Reich bis zum Ende des neuen Reiches, in *MÄS II*, 1968.

<sup>67</sup> G.Clère, Isis-Sothis in *Hommages à Maarten J.Vermaseren*, Leiden 1978,247-281; B.Altmüller, *Synkretismus*, 192-193; M.Münster, *Isis*, p.153.

<sup>68</sup> J.Bergman, *Ich bin Isis*, s.227,246.

<sup>69</sup> Esna II, 223

<sup>70</sup> Esna III, 249, 6(§26); Esna III, 218, 12

<sup>71</sup> W.Guglielmi, *Die Göttin Mr.t, Entstehung und Verhrung einer personification*, Probleme der Ägyptologie, 1991, 18ss.

<sup>72</sup> J.Berlandini, Meret in *LÄ IV*, 83; *pr̄r hr̄ mks̄ ḥn̄c̄ Mrt̄ Mḥw̄* ( the royal running during the festival of the inundation)

DeWit, *Les Inscriptions du temple d’Opet à Karnak I-2*, in *BAe 11-12*, Bruxelles 1958-1962, 195, tab.15, col.2.

Finally the goddess Sekhet is identified with the great goddesses of the main temples in which the celebration of the inundation and the New year was held in ancient Egypt, as: Hathor in Edfou and Dendera, Isis in Philae, Nebtuu in Esna. Sekhet is identified with every mother goddess in the great temples and that have a connection to the harvest festivals in which Sekhet is the lady of fields.

### **Conclusion:**

At the beginning of this research I thought that I am dealing with a limited goddess who has little and repeated informations, but at the end of this study I found out a very important goddess who is responsible for the welfare of the ancient Egyptians, who is related to the great activities performed in ancient Egypt. she is the patron of fowling , fishing Hippoptamus hunting.she formed a triad with Hapy, and the king.

She is the goddess of inundation , we deduce that from the abundances of her offerings and the abundances of birds, fish plants which she offers.

She had a very important role to the king she is his mother, protectress and helper.

### **Summary:**

The goddess Sekhet was the lady of fields and marshes, She was the lady of fowling and fishing in ancient Egypt.She held a lot of titles and epithets which show her importance to the deceased and to the king.

Her name is mentioned in most of the hunting scenes which were represent on the walls of the tombs throughout the pharaonic period.the owner of the tomb held titles to show his relation to the goddess as “the beloved and companion of Sekhet.

Sekhet appears holding a lot of goods especially in the Nile god processions which were very common on the walls of the Greco-

Roman temples. She formed a triad with Hapy and the king, as she was mentioned as the mother of the king who begot him and who suckled him. From this research I found how important is the goddess Sekhet through what she held from titles and epithets and her functions so I considered her to be the goddess of inundation which the Egyptian waited for every year to renew their life and bring fertility to the land.

## المعبودة سخت فى مصر القديمة

د. منى أبو المعاطى النادى\*

### الملخص العربي:

المعبودة سخت هى ربة الحقول والأحراش، ربة صيد الطيور والأسماك وأفراس النهر. حملت العديد من الألقاب والصفات التى توضح أهميتها سواء للمتوفى أو للملك.

يذكر اسمها فى أغلب مناظر صيد الطيور والأسماك وأفراس النهر التى كان يقوم بها صاحب المقبرة كنشاط أساسي له لإظهار مدى قوته ، ولضمان وفرة غذاؤه.

حمل صاحب المقبرة ألقابا تقربه من سخت كـ "المحبوب من سيدة الصيد" و"الرفيق لسيدة صيد الطيور والأسماك"

صورت سخت بهيئات مختلفة جميعها تصورها كمعبودة معطاءة ، تحمل العديد من أصناف الطعام و تصور عادة ضمن مواكب آلهة النيل على جدران المعابد ، يرافقها المعبود حعبى إله النيل الذى يعتبر زوجها لها.

تكون سخت مع حعبى والملك ثالوثا خاصا ، حيث ذكرت بانها أما للملك ويذكر حعبى بأنه أب الملك.

ومن خلال البحث اتضح أهمية المعبودة من خلال ما حملته من ألقاب وصفات عديدة توضح دورها، ويمكن أن نربط بينها كالهة خيرة وبين عطاء الفيضان الذى كان ينتظره المصريون القدماء كل عام لي جلب لهم الخيرات كلها ويجدد لهم الأرض ويغمرها بالطيور والنباتات والأسماك.

### الكلمات الدالة:

سخت - حابي - الحقل - الطيور - النبات - تقدمة - المعبودة - القرابين - المقابر - البطلمى - بتوزيريس

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