Milk Vessels in Ancient Egypt

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Milk in ancient Egypt was referred to using terms like; 𓊤𓊩 𓊤 (“iAtt”) and 𓊤𓊩 𓊤 (“Hd”), but the most frequently used term was 𓊤𓊩 𓊤 (“irtt”). In addition, terms like 𓊤𓊩 𓊤 𓊤 𓊤 (“hs”) and 𓊤𓊩 𓊤 𓊤 𓊤 (“bs”) were mostly used in Religious texts. Milk was widely used by the ancient Egyptians not only in their daily life diet, but also in medicine. It was also frequently mentioned in the religious books; Pyramid texts, Coffin texts and Book of the dead, as a symbol of purity, purification and rejuvenation thus it played an important role in the ancient Egyptian religion. It was defined as white, light and sweet liquid or water in the breasts of women. It was closely associated with sacred water and its different terms such as; flood, inundation, swishing of the lake and primeval waters of the ocean.

According to the religious books, it was considered as a substance responsible for forming the flesh of the body, making the dead king greater than the god and making his limbs mightier than those of the gods. It was a purification substance that purifies the mouth, the whole body of the dead as well as the outfits of the tomb. Moreover, milk was perfect nourishment for the dead king to live on in the afterlife to the

1Wb I, p. 27
2Wb III, p. 211.
3Wb I, p. 117.
5Wb I, p. 475 (5).
14J. P. ALLEN, (2005), The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, Atlanta, p. 110.

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extent that he will never feel hungry or thirsty.\textsuperscript{16} It makes the dead king capable to rejuvenate himself and reborn as a young child in the afterlife where he will be a complete being. It helps the dead king ascend to heaven to be among or as one of the gods.\textsuperscript{17} It was also a means to make the deceased a milk-brother of the gods in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{18} Milk was presented in the opening of the mouth rituals,\textsuperscript{19} the six day festival\textsuperscript{20} and at the seven gates of the underworld.\textsuperscript{21} It played an important role not only in the liturgy of the royal ancestors' ritual,\textsuperscript{22} but also in the quenching of flames ritual.\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, it was used in divine festivals like the Opet festival\textsuperscript{24} and Soker festival\textsuperscript{25} to purify the roads in front of the sacred barks. In the Beautiful Feast of the Valley,\textsuperscript{26} milk was used to rejuvenate the powers of both god Amon and the ruling king.

\textsuperscript{18}R. NYORD, (2009), Breathing Flesh. Conceptions of the Body in the Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts, Copenhagen, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{24}L. BELL, (1985), "Luxor Temple and the Cult of Royal Ka", \textit{JNES} 44, p. 272.
\textsuperscript{25}EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY, (1940), \textit{Medinet Habu. Festivals Scenes of Ramses III}, vol. IV, Chicago, pl. 226.
\textsuperscript{26}S. A. NAGUIB, (1990), "Le Clerge Feminin D' Amon Thebain a la 21\textsuperscript{e}Dynastie", \textit{OLA} 38, p. 128.
Due to its importance, milk was considered as a means of legitimization for the king, used through being suckled from goddess Isis, Hathor, Mut, Sekhmet, Satet or Iat who are regarded as mothers and milk providers or presented as an offering in the Sed festival. In addition, milk was also one of the declarations of Innocence stated by the deceased in the judgment hall before the gods.

Milk was one of the important offering materials that have been frequently offered by Kings to their gods from at least the Middle kingdom onwards. It was also among the significant offerings that were mentioned in the festival calendars since the reign of king Neuserre and in offering processions. Hence, milk was repeatedly mentioned and depicted in the ancient Egyptian iconography covering the walls of religious and funerary architecture. This article will shed light on the different types of milk vessels that were used to contain milk and repeatedly depicted not only in daily life scenes, but also in religious and funerary ones. These milk vessels can be classified chronologically into the following types;

33 P. Lacau, H. Cheverier, (1956), Une Chapelle de Sesostris Ier a Karnak, le Caire, p. 88.
36 Epigraphic Survey, (1934), Medient Habu. The Calendar, the "Slaughterhouse", and Minor Records Ramses III, Chicago, pl. 168.
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1. **Mr. Jar, ﻓﻲ ﺔرْبَاءٌ ٍ ﻓﻲ ﺔرْبَاءٌ ٍ**

*Dating and Appearance*

This is an oval-shaped jar with a short flaring neck and round or pointed base. It dates back to the Old Kingdom and it was mentioned in PT 41:  

\[ \text{mtp n mnd n Hr n dt.fn.kirr\textaremark3.kirtt} \]

Take the tip of the bodily breast of Horus; take it in the mouth, a jug of milk.

The *Mr. jar* was usually made out of pottery or alabaster. It is possible that the pottery used for making this jar was an imitation of alabaster that was commonly used during the 5th and 6th dynasties. It is believed that the shape of the jar is a symbolic representation of the woman’s breast. As for its stopper, according to Gardiner’s sign lists, is a leaf, however both of Montet and Du Buissan describe it as a plug made out of grass. Some other opinions suggest that the stopper was made out of reed.

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37 Wb II, p. 105.
43 2008
44 2008
45 2008
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Davies,²⁶ believes that the stopper is mostly grass based on the fact that one of the stoppers of the milking jars depicted in the tomb of Ptah-Hotep at Saqqara, is painted green (pl. 1).

Name

The lexeme has been used with several determinatives classifying the meaning of the word such as ²⁷ meaning to "love, want, wish and desire", ²⁸ or ²⁹ meaning to "tie up, bind and fasten" as for ³⁰ to mean "connect and join". It seems likely that the name of this jar has been driven from the verb "love," consequently it is possible that this name might mean "The desirable" referring, most likely, to the milk. This interpretation may find support in the private texts of the Middle Kingdom where the milk of goddess Hesat has been described as substance that the ³¹ of the dead people "like, love, wish for or desire" to feed on.³² In the New Kingdom, the private texts also express that they are "wishing or desiring" to drink a jug of goddess Sekhethor’s milk.³³ On the other hand, it is also possible that the name of this milk jar would refer to some of the characteristics of the jar itself not the milk. The verb ³⁴ with classifier ³⁵ which means “tie up” might refer to the rope that is

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encircling the body of the milk jar. This shape of the mr jar is frequently depicted in most of the milk offering scenes on the walls of the Egyptian temples. In this case, the name of this jar might mean "tied up jar or fastened jar". As for the verb mr with classifier, it is important to mention that the German verb "anschliessen" which means "connect" in both of Erman and Hannig dictionaries could also mean "plug in and lock". So, it is possible that the jar’s name might mean "plugged jar, the jar with a plug or the locked jar". This might reflect the use of a plug made out of grass or reed to plug this milk jar as it is shown in daily life scenes such as the milking scenes (pl. 1) and the offering processions scenes in the Old kingdom tombs.

Usage

This jar is frequently depicted in milking scenes from the Old Kingdom, as after collecting the milk in a wide-mouth container, they used to pour the milk in the mr jars to transport it to the houses. Sometimes the mr jar was used to collect milk directly from the cow (pl. 2). Moreover, it not only appeared in scenes of the funerary estates (pl. 3), but also in those of the offering bearers (pls. 4A&B) of the Old kingdom. In addition to its general usage as a milk jar, the mr jar has been used as a determinative, inscribed in two different shapes;

(W 20) in Gardiner’s sign list,

52 H. BRUNNER, (1977) Die Sudlichen Raume des Temples von Luxor, Mainz, pl. 76; EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY, (1964) Medinet Habu. The Temple Proper, the Third Hypostyle Hall and all Rooms Accessible from it, Vol. VII, part. III, Chicago, pl. 583; J. IWASZCZUK, (2013) "Imn khnty ipwt.f From the Middle Kingdom to the Mid-Eighteenth Dynasty", EtuTrav 26, pl. 9b, p. 308.
This shape is the most common determinative of the term *irtt* (milk) in all the periods of the ancient Egyptian language. It was either represented as single or double jars. In scenery, it occurs as a ceremonial milk jar depicted in most of the offerings scenes of both cult and funerary temples of the New Kingdom (pl. 5) but, it also occurs in one of the daily life scenes in the tomb of *Manefert* at Saqqara. (pl. 6)

Similar to (W 20) in Gardiner’s list but, only lacking the two ropes on the body.

This shape of the *mr jar* occurs mostly in the Old Kingdom texts as determinative of milk. In some cases the sign precedes the last letter of the word *irtt* (milk) as in the royal decree of king *Pepi II* from Abydos (pl. 7).

In scenery, this shape occurs in both milking scenes and scenes of the offerings bearers of the Old Kingdom. Furthermore, the *mr- jar* was used as measuring unit; this can be confirmed by one of the harvesting scenes in the tomb of *Ir.n-ka-Ptah* of the 5th dynasty at Saqqara, where the *mr jar* is depicted on top of a granary. (pl. 8)

Also it was sometimes used as a beer-jar, a fact that can be concluded by the scene in the tomb of *Pepi-ankh-hr-ib* of the 6th dynasty at Meir where an overseer is standing in the middle of a field holding in one hand the *mr jar*. The scene is inscribed by a line of inscriptions mentioning "beer for the harvesters of the barley." (pl. 9)

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58 Wb I, p. 117.  
59 Urk IV, p. 1469.  
62 Urk I, p. 279.  
66 A. M. BLACKMAN, (1953), *The Rock Tombs of Meir. The Tomb- Chapels, A, No. 1 (that of Ni-`Ankh-Pepi the black), No. 2 (that of Pepi`onkh with the "Good Name" of Heny the Black), A, No. 4 (that of Hebi the Black), D, No. 1 (that of Pepi) and E, Nos. 14 (those of Meniu, Nenki, Pepi`onkh and Tejtu)*, Part V, London, pl. VIII.
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During the Middle Kingdom, the mr jar replaced the beer-jar in some of the htp-di-nsw formulae. The fact that can be explained by CT 826 (VII, 27, a)

\[\text{t(w)} t \ wnm t \ n \ Gb \ s'm m \ hnt t \ nt \ Hs3t\]

Complete is he who eats the bread of Geb and Swallows the beer of milk-goddess. 68

In this spell the word beer is a metaphor of the milk of goddess Hesat. The spell points out the great benefit of drinking the milk of Hesat for the deceased who will only then be "complete."

An example of such replacement is inscribed on limestone funerary stela of the lady Ti (CG 20445) from Abydos (pl. 10), where the beer jar was replaced by the mr jar:

\[\text{htp di nswWsir nb } 3bdw \ di.f \ pr-hrw t \ hnt k3w } 3pdw } ss \ mnht sn-ntr mrht h3t \ nbt \ nfrt wfrt } nht.ti ntr \ im\]

An offering that the king gives (and) Osiris, lord of Abydos, he gives offering invocation bread, beer, oxen, fowl, clothes, alabaster, ointment and everything beautiful and pure that the god lives on there.

The other shape of the milk jar mr also appeared used as a beer-jar in the htp di nsw formula inscribed on the funerary stela of Neferhotep(CG 20642) from Rizagat. 70 (pl. 11)

\[\text{htp di nswWsir nb } Ddw \ nfr } 3t } nb } 3bdw } lnpw } hnty } sh-ntr } tpy } dw.f } lmy \ wt \ nb } BS\]

70 A village located near Luxor in Upper Egypt.
An offering that the king gives (and) Osiris, lord of Busiris, the great god lord of Abydos, Anubis who is in front of the divine booth, who is upon his mountain, who is in the embalming tent, lord of the sacred

$\text{dser di.} f\text{ pr-hrw t lnkt k3w 3pdw ht nbt nfr t wbt 'nfh.ti ntr im}$

Land, he gives offering invocation bread, beer, oxen, fowls, and everything beautiful and pure that the god lives on there.

**Examples**

*Mr jar 1*

Pottery examples of the *mr*-jars from the Old Kingdom;

Provenance: Tomb No.44, Meydum

Date: End of the 3rd dynasty or beginning of the 4th dynasty

Height: 26, 9 cm

![Fig. 1, *mr* jar 1](image)

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72 إشترف تاربخ (2008) *فخار الدولة القديمة: دراسة تصنيف وتاريخ ومقارنة* للآثار المقبورات في غيز منشأه، كلية الآثار جامعة القاهرة، ص 117
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Mr jar 2
Provenance.: Valley temple of king Mycerinus, Giza
Date: the 4th and the 5th dynasties
Height: 30.2cm

Fig. 2, mr jar 2

2. **Mns₂, Mns₂-šwJar**, 🕊yük, 🕊yük, 🕊yük, 🕊yük 🕊yük 74

Dating and Appearance

The **Mns₂** jar is a tall pot very similar to the **ḥš-jar**. 75 It dates back to the Old Kingdom as it was mentioned in the PT 42:

\[ m \ mndsnt.k \ 3st \ ilik \ r \ r3.k \ mns₂-šw \]

Take the breast of your sister Isis, the milk-provider (?), which you shall take to your mouth—an empty **mns₂-jar**.

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Name

If, according du Bussion,\textsuperscript{77} the name of this jar was a name of certain kind of milk, so it is possible that it refers to some of the proprieties of the milk. The name \textit{mns\text appeals} seems to be a compound noun that consists of two verbs, the first is \textit{mn}\textsuperscript{78} which means "be firm, establish or enduring" and the other one is \textit{s\text appeals} which means "protect and protection". Consequently, the noun \textit{mns\text appeals} might mean "establishing and protecting" in reference to the milk.

It is worth mentioning that lexeme \textit{mn} has been used in several verbs and nouns related to milk such as the verb \textit{mna} "nurse"\textsuperscript{80} with the classifier \textit{or} and the noun \textit{mnat} "wet nurse"\textsuperscript{81} with classifier \textit{or}.

It also has been used for the noun \textit{mnD} "breast"\textsuperscript{82} with classifier and in the noun \textit{mnat} "milk cow"\textsuperscript{83} with classifier. On the other hand, the lexeme \textit{s\text appeals} has been used as root for the title \textit{bs\text appeals} of goddess Isis which is translated either as milk provider\textsuperscript{85} or protector\textsuperscript{86} as well as the name of milk \textit{bs\text appeals/bs\text appeals w}.\textsuperscript{87}

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Usage
In general, the mns³ was a jar for libation purposes, as it was not only used for milk, but also for water and beer. Moreover, it was used as a measuring unit. This jar appears in the offering-lists of the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. (pl. 12) Jequier connected between this jar and another one called "Ankhi". He believes that both of them played a role in the purification of the deceased’s mouth.

3. **Ds Jar, 𓊣𓏙𓊪**

Dating and Appearance

A small milk jar usually placed on a stand. It has a wide mouth, wide shoulders tapering towards a narrow base (fig. 3). The history of this jar dates back to the Old kingdom where it occurs in PT 17 associated with water that was used in the opening of mouth ritual.

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88Wb II, p. 88, 10.
89 محمد صلاح بن محمد احمد ( 1980). المكاييل والمياسين فى مصز القذيمح, رساله ماجستير ( غير منشوره) كلية الآثار, جامعة الاقاهر, ص. 80.
91Wb V, p. 485, 8.
92S. HASSAN, (1948), Excavations at Giza. The Offering-list in The Old Kingdom, Vol. VI, Part II, Cairo, p. 162.
94S. HASSAN, (1948), Excavations at Giza. The Offering-list in The Old Kingdom, Vol. VI, Part II, Cairo, p. 162.
Usage
According to Wb, it used to contain not only milk, but also beer and water.  

4. **Nmst Jar**,  

**Dating and Appearance**

The most famous shape of this jar shows a hole-mouth jar with broad shoulder body and a flat base (fig. 4). This jar was made out of pottery or stone as well as metal such as fine gold or electrum and silver.

in the milk pails and ewers of electrum (fine gold).  

The history of this jar dates back to the Old Kingdom where it occurs in PT 16 associated with water as it was used for purification in the opening of
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the mouth ritual\(^{102}\).

Fig. 4, nmst jar

Name

It is highly possible that the name of this jar has been driven from the verb \(\text{nms}\)\(^{103}\) which is generally accepted to mean "clothe or clothing". However, Quack\(^{104}\) suggests, that the exact meaning of it should be "to wipe (clean)" not "to clothe". So, it is possible according to the previous opinion that the name of this jar might mean “a jar that keeps a substance to cleanse" or "to purify." Moreover, milk is a substance that has been used for purification as attested in several contexts, for example in the opening of the mouth ritual\(^{105}\) in the Pyramid Texts and in the processions of the scared barks during religious festivals such as Opet festival.\(^{106}\) This in turn conforms with the meaning of nms suggested by Quack above, consequently

it clarifies and explains the reason to use the nmst jar for milk.

Usage
It was used for milk in the festival calendar of Thutmosis III on the southern wall of the Akhmenu\(^{107}\) where milk jars were presented to god Amon-Ra by King Thutmosis III. It was also used to contain the milk product smi as mentioned in Harris papyrus I.\(^{108}\)

5. **Mn**\(\text{Jar}^{109}\)**

   **Dating and Appearance**
   The mn jar is a wide mouth jar and sometimes it takes the oval shape with a narrow base. It was usually made out of limestone.\(^{110}\) According to Wb,\(^{111}\) the history of the mn jar dates back to Middle Kingdom, but the private offering list of Sebky\(^{112}\) from the 6th dynasty, (pl. 13) indicates an earlier appearance of this jar where it was associated with milk.

   **Name**
   The name of this jar has been driven from the verb \(\text{mn}\) which means "be firm, establish, enduring," consequently it refers to the content of the jar not to the jar itself.\(^{113}\)

   **Usage**
   The mn jar was also used for wine and beer.\(^{114}\)

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\(^{107}\) A. GARDINER, (1952), “Thuthmosis III Returns Thanks to Amoun”, *JEA* 38, p. 16.

\(^{108}\) W. ERICHSSEN, (1933), *Papyrus Harris I. Hieroglyphische Transkription*, Bruxelles, p. 45.

\(^{109}\) Wb. II, p. 66.

\(^{110}\) زينب عبد الاتواب (2010) تطور الأواني الحجرية في مصر منذ عصور ما قبل التاريخ حتى نهاية عصر الدولة الوسطى، رسالة دكتوراه، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص. 230.

\(^{111}\) Wb. II, p. 66.

\(^{112}\) Sbky was a great seer of god Ra. His tomb is located at Heliopolis. See: S. HASSAN, (1948), *Excavations at Giza. The Offering-list in The Old Kingdom*, Vol. VI, Part II, Cairo, p. 151.

\(^{113}\) Supra p. 10-11, see: *mnsi- šw jar*.

\(^{114}\) Wb. II, p. 66.
6. **Mhr, Mhn Jar.**

*Dating and Appearance*

This jar had a wide rim, narrow neck, broad shoulder body, and flat base.\(^{118}\) It was made out of wood, in some occasions, but sometimes it was made out of metal such as electrum, gold, silver and bronze.\(^{119}\)

\[ Mhrw \ nw \ d^m \]
\[ mhrw\]-jars of electrum

\[ Mhrw \ nfrw \ nw \ hdt \ nw \ b Hmt \]

Beautiful *mhrw*-jars made of silver, gold and copper.

According to *Wb*,\(^{122}\) the history of this milk jar goes back to the Middle Kingdom but, further evidence prove that it dates back to an earlier date since

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\(^{116}\) Wb II, p. 115, 5-15.


\(^{118}\)  زينة عبد التواب, (2010), تطور الأواني الحجرية في مصر منذ عصر ما قبل التاريخ حتى نهاية عصر الدولة الوسطى. رسالة دكتوراه (غير منشورة) كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص. 238.

\(^{119}\) محمد صلاح بن محمد أحمد, (1980)السكندري والموازين في مصر القديمة. رسالة ماجستير (غير منشورة)، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص. 82.

\(^{120}\) Urk IV, 743, 15.

\(^{121}\) محمد صلاح بن محمد أحمد, (1980)، المكابيل والموازين في مصر القديمة. رسالة ماجستير (غير منشورة)، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص. 82.

\(^{122}\) Wb. II, p. 115.
it occurs in some of the offering lists of the 1st intermediate period.\(^{123}\)

**Name**

The name of this milk jar has been driven\(^{124}\) from the lexeme \[\begin{array}{c}
\text{大象鼻}
\end{array}\] with determinative \[\begin{array}{c}
\text{乳}
\end{array}\] which means "to milk, milking a cow".\(^{125}\) The determinative D 40 in Gardiner sign list\(^{126}\) refers to "forearm with a hand holding a stick". It is possible that this classifier has been used with the verb \(hr\) "to milk" to point out to the stick that was held by the herdsmen while they were driving the cattle herds in the herdsmen scenes in the private tombs.

Both of Hannig\(^{127}\) and Erman\(^{128}\) pointed out that the verb \(hr\) "to milk" is late Egyptian, but the milking scenes of both the Old and Middle Kingdoms indicate that the verb was one of three verbs\(^{129}\) that have been used to caption this type of daily life scenes. There are two examples from the Old and Middle Kingdoms for using this verb in the milking process in Ancient Egypt. The first example comes from the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep at Saqqara\(^{130}\) where the hieroglyphic above the milking scene mentions \[\begin{array}{c}
\text{牛奶}
\end{array}\] \(hr irt\) "milking the milk". The second example comes from the Middle Kingdom tomb of Kheti TT 311\(^{131}\) at Dier el-Bahari, where

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\(^{129}\) The other two verbs are \(sr\)r and \(sr\)r. See: R. O. FAULKNER, (1991) A concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian, Oxford, p. 244; Wb. IV, p. 295, 1-3.

\(^{130}\) M. A. MOUSSA, H. ALTENMULLER, (1977) Das Grab des Nianchknum und Chnumhotep, Germany, p. 154, Taf. 76.

\(^{131}\) A. H. GARDINER, (1917) "The Tomb of Much-Travelled Theban Official", JEA 4, p. 33.
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the hieroglyph above the head of the overseer watching the milking process mentions hr nfrw .... di.tw k3m ? irt "milk you, good fellows ... cause the milk to be produced." The verb hr "to milk" has been used to form the noun mhr "milk jar or jar that keeps milk" by adding the prefix "m" to the verb. It also has been used to form several nouns related to milk such as mhr (or mhit) milk cow, mhr milkman, mhr suckling baby, infant. The name of mhr jar had several variations and pronunciations; In the 18th dynasty it became known by mhi, and the 19th dynasty it became known by either mhn or mhni.

Usage

This mhr-jar occurs frequently in most of the offering lists (pl. 14 A & B) of both the Middle and New Kingdoms. It is also depicted in scenes of offering processions in both cult (pl.15) and funerary temples (pl.16). It is remarkable to mention that some scholars believe that the word for situla is mhr because of the appearance of the situla as a determinative for the mhr in New kingdom texts, but this opinion is still debated. In addition to its usage as milk jar, it was used as measuring unit for milk as well as a wine-jar.

133 Wb. II, p. 115, 17.
137 M. G. DARESSY, (1917) "La Statue No.35562 du Musee du Caire", ASAE 17, p. 83.
139 محمد صلاح بن محمد أحمد. (1980)، المكاييل والموازيين في مصر القديمة، رسالة ماجستير (غير منشوره)، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، ص 83.
7. **Gngnt Jar**, 𓊵 𓊵 𓊚 𓊲 𓊚 𓊵 𓊱 𓊵 𓊸 𓊴 140

**Dating and Appearance**

This milk jar dates back to the New Kingdom. It appeared usually in the offering list type D (pl. 17 A & B) that was presented to some gods such as god Amon, god Khonsu and the deified Amenhotep I in festivals such as the Opet festival. It was always inscribed with either the ceremonial milk jar 𓊱 in Gardiner’s sign lists or the bowl 𓊚 W 10 as determinatives. The appearance of this jar is unclear since it has never been depicted in iconography.

**Name**

It is possible that this name is a reduplication for the noun 𓊵 𓊵 𓊚 𓊵 gn141 which means "stand for ritual bowl". In this case the name gngnt would refer to the pot or the ritual bowl that was placed on the stand. On the other hand the name of this jar might have something to do with the noun 𓊵 𓊵 𓊚 𓊵 gn142 or 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 ng143 which was an abbreviated writing for ng3w144 long-horned cattle.

8. **Wšm Jar**, 𓊶 𓊵 𓊴 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 𓊵 145

**Dating and Appearance**

This milk jar usually had a short neck, broad shoulder and a flat base146 (pl. 18), however it sometimes appeared to have an oval or cylindrical shape (pl.19)147 It was usually made out of metals such as bronze, silver, copper and

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140 Wb. V, p. 177, 11.
142 Wb. V, p. 172.
143 Wb. II, p. 348.
144 Wb. II, p. 349, 1.
146 D. Polz, (1997), "Das Grab des Hui und des Kel Theben Nr.54", Mainz, AV 74, pl. 17
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gold.¹⁴⁸ Most scholars¹⁴⁹ believe that this milk jar made its first appearance during the 18th Dynasty, but Radwan¹⁵⁰ points out that this type of vessels might have been known from the early Dynastic period, based on a similar jar with a moveable copper handle that was found in the tomb of king Khasekhemwy. Scholars believe that this jar has various other names,¹⁵¹ քwšb¹⁵², or մhր¹⁵³ Moreover, it continued to be used during the Greco-Roman era and became known as the Situla.¹⁵⁴ This jar was depicted on the walls of temples and tombs of the New Kingdom since the reign of Thutmosis III onwards. For example, two wšm jars are shown depicted among other jars on the eastern wall of the south court of king Thutmosis III at Karnak temple¹⁵⁵ (pl. 20). It is also depicted on one of the walls of the treasury room of KV.11 of king Ramses III¹⁵⁶ (pl. 21).

¹⁵² Wb. I, p. 373.
¹⁵³ EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY, Medient Habu, (1934), The Calendar, the "Slaughterhouse", and Minor Records Ramses III, Chicago, pl. 160, line. 1068; M. G. DARESSY,"(1917), La Statue No.35562 du Musee du Caire", ASAE 17, p. 83.
¹⁵⁴ Situla is a vessel that was used to hold water or milk during the Greco-Roman era. It became closely associated with goddess Isis as one of her attributes. Through holding water the situla associates Isis with sacred water of Nile and through milk it refers to her role as mother of Horus. P. REMLER, (2010), Egyptian Mythology A to Z, New York, p. 180.
¹⁵⁶ PM II, p. 95 (277).
¹⁵⁷ PM I², p. 521 (19).
**Name**

This jar is known as \( w\text{s}b \) (or sometimes \( w\text{s}m \), \( w\text{s}mw \)). It is likely that the name \( w\text{s}b \) has been driven from the noun \( w\text{s}bt \), which means "mineral or metal". Consequently, the name of the vessel might mean "the metal vessel or a pot that is made out of metal." It is also possible that the name of his vessel is connected with the noun \( w\text{s}b \) which means "bull".

**Usage**

According to Lichtheim, there are several types and shapes of this jar, which were not all regarded as milk jars, except for those used in the funeral processions. This jar was depicted on the walls of several private tombs of the New Kingdom, whose scenes were either part of the milk sprinkling rituals, funeral processions (pl.22 A& B) or offering bearers. Examples of these tombs are tombs of Simut TT 409 (pl. 23), and Benia TT 343 (pl. 24).

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H. HANNIG, *Die Sprachw der Pharaonen Grobes Handworterbuch Agyptisch-Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.),* Kulturgeschichte Der Antiken Welt 64, Mainz, 1995, p. 221.


163 M. NEG, (1997), The *Tomb of Simut called Kyky. Theban tomb 409 at Qurnah,* Warminster, , pl. 10.

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Examples
Examples of these jars, dating back to the New kingdom, were found in some private tombs such as the tomb of Kha\(^{165}\) while others were found among the ruins of the temple of Aton at Tell EL-Amarna\(^{166}\).

\(W\text{\`{e}m}\) Jar 1
Provenance: Thebes?
Date: 18\(^{th}\) dynasty
Height: 21.8cm
Material: Bronze

Fig. 5, broad shoulder milk situla

\(W\text{\`{e}m}\) Jar 2
Provenance: Dendara
Date: 19\(^{th}\) dynasty
Height: 13.5cm
Material: Bronze

\(^{165}\)E. SCHIAPARELLI, (1927), La Tomba Intatta dell' Architto "Cha' Nella Necropoli di Tebe, Torino, p. 84,110, 135, 173.

\(^{166}\)M. LICHTHEIM, (1947),"Situla No. 11395 and some remarks on Egyptian Situlae", JNES 6, p. 172.
Miscellaneous Jars

In Inscriptions

In addition to the aforementioned milk jars, there are other miscellaneous ones also associated with milk depicted in inscriptions;

The sign $\text{mi}$ (W 10) in Gardiner’s sign list is a milk jar carried in a net.\(^\text{167}\) It occurs as a determinative for mhr in offering list type B from the Middle Kingdom tomb of Ukhhotep\(^\text{169}\) at Meir (pl. 25). As for this jar $\text{mi}$ is not in the Gardiner sign list, but it appeared as determinative of milk in the offering lists of king Ramses III in his great calendar at Medinet Habu\(^\text{170}\) (pl. 26). Despite the fact that it looks different from the common shapes of the mr-jar, yet it shares the two ropes on the body. Hence, it might be a New kingdom

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\(^\text{170}\) Epigraphic Survey, Medinet Habu. The Calendar, the “Slaughterhouse”, and Minor Records Ramses III, Chicago, 1934, pl. 160, line. 1068; pl. 167, line. 1468; pl. 148, line. 360-361.
variation of W 20. As for \(\mathcal{W} \quad 20\) in Gardiner’s\(^{171}\) sign-list, it is originally two wine-jars, but they were used as a determinative of the term \(irtt\) (milk) in both the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) Dynasties with three strokes in most cases.\(^{172}\)

Moreover, \(\mathcal{W} \quad 21\) in Gardiner’s\(^{173}\) sign-list is originally a beer-jug, but it was used as determinative for the term \(irtt\) (milk) in both the Middle\(^{174}\) and New Kingdom\(^{175}\). It was also used as determinative for both the terms \(hdjt\) (milk) and \(i3tt\) (milk) in the Old Kingdom.\(^{176}\) Other jars for beer, but was also used as a determinative for the term \(irtt\) (milk) from the Middle Kingdom\(^{177}\) onwards. Also the bowl \(\mathcal{W} \quad 22\), (variation \(\mathcal{W} \quad 23\)) known as \(nw\) jar (W 24) in Gardiner’s\(^{178}\) sign-list, occurs as determinative of \(irtt\)-(milk) in the New Kingdom,\(^{179}\) always inscribed as two jars next to each other. As for \(\mathcal{W} \quad 24\) this jar which is not in Gardiner’s sign list, it occurs as determinative for the milk jar \(mhr\) in offering list no. 43\(^{180}\) (pl. 27) and offering list no. 47\(^{181}\) (pl. 28) in the great calendar of Ramesses III at Habu.

\(^{172}\) KRI I, p. 313.
\(^{175}\) KRI V, p. 454.
\(^{176}\) S. HASSAN, (1948), Excavations at Giza. The Offering-list in The Old Kingdom, Vol. VI, Part II, Cairo, p. 385.
\(^{179}\) Urk IV, p. 1617.
\(^{180}\) SH. EL-SABBAN, (2000), Temple Festival Calendar of Ancient Egypt, Liverpool, 105.
In Scenery

In addition to the typical mr- jar (W 20) of Gardiner’s sign-list and its other shape (W 20), other jars appeared in milk offering scenes, particularly in private tombs of both the Middle and New Kingdoms. Among those are; b3jar(W 2) in Gardiner’s sign-list, which is a sealed oil jar that occurs in the milk offering scene in the tomb of Menna (pl. 29) of the New Kingdom. Moreover, the cup shaped symbol (W 10) in Gardiner’s sign-list, appeared in the offering milk scene of the New Kingdom tomb of Pehsukher. However there are other jars that weren’t included in Gardiner’s sign-list, among those are; A small cylindrical jar, that appeared in the milk offering scene on the sarcophagus of princess shayit (pl. 31) of the Middle Kingdom. Also, a bottom pointed jar (W 30) is depicted in the milk offering scene of King Intef II (pl. 32).

Conclusion

Milk played a very important role in both the earthly and the afterlives of the ancient Egyptians and thus it was frequently used not only as part of their diet or medicine, but also as offerings to their gods, in their rituals and among their offering lists. The fact that explains their need for creating and manufacturing different types and shapes of milk vessels, which developed throughout the ancient Egyptian history and were used among the symbols that formed the ancient Egyptian Language.


183 M. MAHER-TAHA, (2003), *Le Tombe de Menna*, Z. HAWAS (Ed.), Cairo, pl. LXIX.


185 P. VIERY, (1891), "Sept Tombeaux Thebains de la XVIIIe Dynastie", *MMAF* 5, 2 fascicule, p. 298.

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pl. 2, Sarcophagus of Kawit

pl. 3, Milk estate, tomb of Ti, 5th dynasty, Saqqara
After (G. Steindorff, (1913), *Das Giab des TI*, Band I, Leipzig, pl. 114)
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pl. 4A, Offering bearers, Tomb of Ti, 5th dynasty, Saqqara
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pl. 5, Seti I offering the milk jar *mr* and cows to ithyphallic Amon and Hathor

pl. 6, Procession of offerings bearers carrying milk jars (*mr*), tomb of Manefer, Saqqara
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pl. 7, Royal decree of Pepi II
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pl. 8, mrm as a measuring unit, tomb of Irenkaptah, Saqqara
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pl. 9, mrm as a beer jar, tomb of Pepiankherieb, Meir
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pl. 10, funerary stela of lady Ti
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pl. 11, funerary stelae of Neferhotep
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pl. 12, part of Amenemhat offering list
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pl. 13, part of $bky$ offering list
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pl. 14A, offering list no. 1
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pl. 14 B, offering list no. 9
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pl. 15, mhr jars, Luxor temple
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pl. 16, mhr jar, Medient Habu
After (EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY, (1934), Medient Habu. The Calendar, the "Slaughterhouse", and Minor Records Ramses III, Chicago, pl. 168)

pl. 17 A, Gngnt jar in offering list type D, great colonnade, Luxor temple
pl. 17 B, *Gngnt* jar in offering list type D, Karnak, Red chapel, sanctuary, inner south wall, fifth register, block no. 136
After (C. feetk photo 1696)

pl. 18, type of *wšm* milk jar
After (D. Polz, (1997), "Das Grab des Hui und des KelTheben Nr.54", Mainz, AV 74, pl. 17)

pl. 19, type of *wšm* milk jar
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pl. 20, vessels among them two wšm jars, eastern wall, south court of king Thutmosis III, Karnak temple
After (Schott photos 7946)

pl. 21, vessels among them wšm (situlae), treasury room, tomb of king Ramesses III, KV 11
pl. 22A, funeral procession of Userhat

pl. 22 B, funeral procession of Hewy
After (D. POLZ, (1997), “Das Grab des Hui und des Kel Theben Nr.54”, Mainz, AV 74, pl. 17)

pl. 23, Simut offering four calves and milk
After (M. NEGM, (1997), The Tomb of Simut called Kyky. Theban tomb 409 at Qurnah, Warminster, pl. 10)
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pl. 24, Attendants bringing offerings including the wšm milk jars
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pl. 25, part of Ukh-Hotep offering list
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pl. 31, as milk vessel, sarcophagus of Ashayet
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pl. 32, Intef II offering milk and beer
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