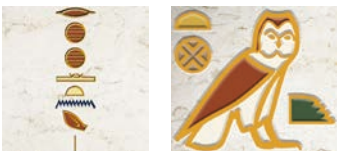
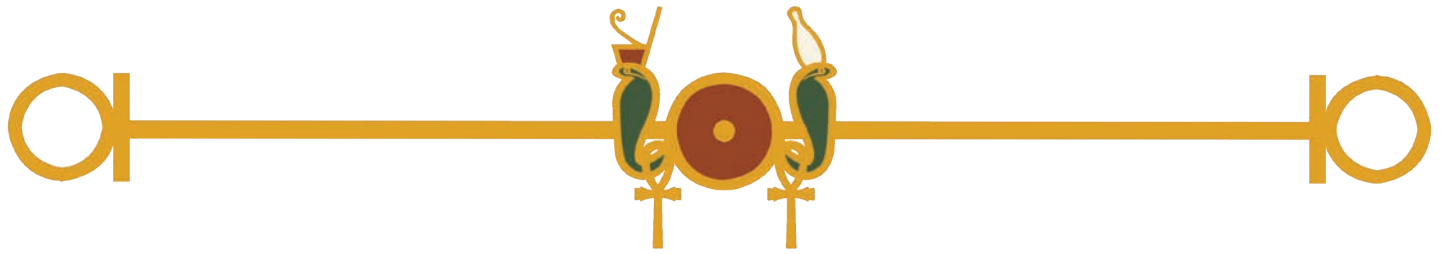


ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LITERATURE

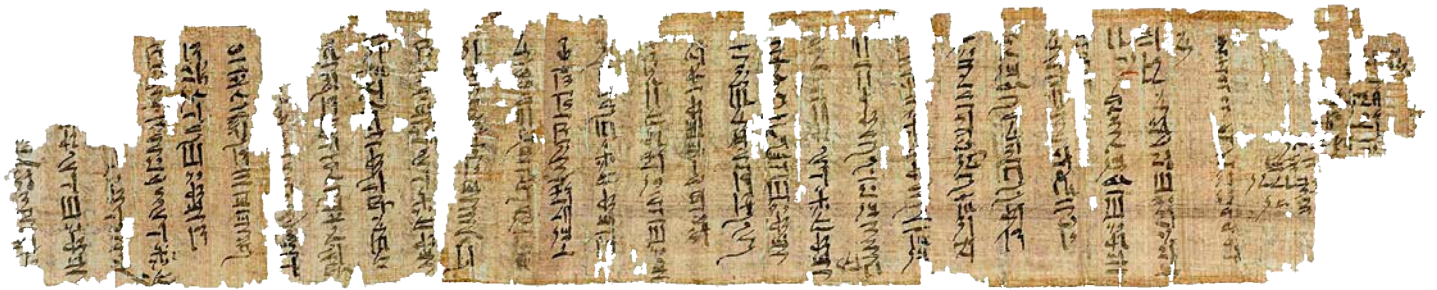
The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant



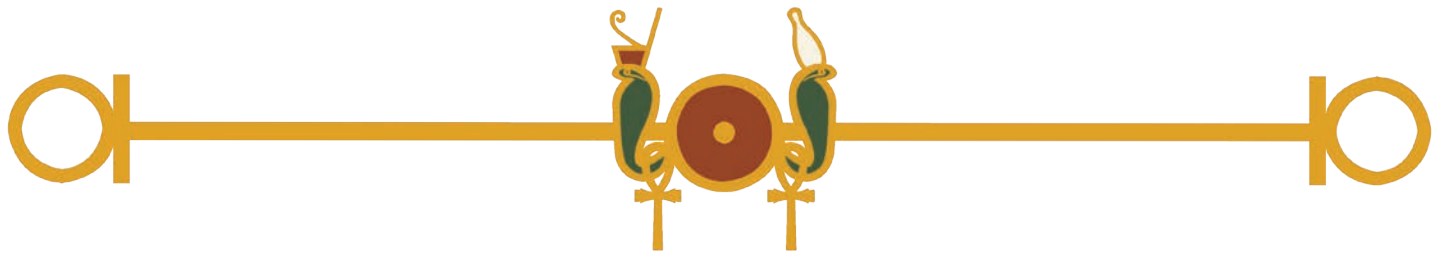


INTRODUCTION

The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant is a story from the Middle Kingdom of ancient Egypt, but set in the era about a hundred years before, in what is called today as the First Intermediate Period. It is a tale of truth, justice, balance, and righteousness, what the ancient Egyptians called *mꜣꜥt*. There are many culturally significant facets to this story which will be explained in detail after the conclusion of the story.



Introduction of the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant
Found in Thebes, 12th dynasty, Middle Kingdom, c. 1991 BCE – 1802 BCE
British Museum number EA10274, London, UK



THE TALE OF THE ELOQUENT PEASANT

There was a man called *hw.n-inpw*. He was a peasant of the *sh-t-hm3t*, and he had a wife named *mrt*. This peasant said to this wife of his, “See, I am going to *kmt* to fetch provisions there for my children. Go and measure for me the barley that is in the barn as the remainder of yesterday's barley.” Then he measured for her six *hk3t* of barley. Then this peasant said to this wife of his, “See, save two *hk3t* of barley for rations to you and your children. But prepare for me the six *hk3t* of barley as bread and beer for every day, so that I shall live on it.”

Then this peasant left for *kmt* after he had loaded his donkeys with vine, purple nutsedge, natron, salt, sticks pieces of wood from *t3-ihw*, hides of panthers, skins of golden jackals, pondweed, *rw*-stone, *nm*-plants, wild carrot, serpentine, *miswt*-plants, ochre, wild mint, hedge plants, pigeons, *n'rw*-birds, gutted fish and plucked fowl, *wbn*-plants, *tbsw*-shrubs, *gngmt*-beans, fenugreek, and anise abound with all good products of *sh-t-hm3t*. This peasant then went south to *nnt-nswt*, and he arrived in the district of *pr-ff*, to the north of *mdnit*. He came across a man standing on the embankment. His name was *nmt-nht* and he was the son of a man called *isry*. These were liegemen of the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*. And this *nmt-nht* said, when he saw the donkeys of this peasant, which were desirable to his heart, “Would that I had some divine image with which I could rob the goods of this peasant!” Now, the house of this *nmt-nht* was at a waterside path that was narrow, it was not broad: it measured the width of a loincloth. Its one side was underwater, the other under barley. This *nmt-nht* then said to a servant of his, “Hurry and bring me a cape from my house!”

And it was brought to him immediately. Then he spread it out on the waterside path, so that its hem came to rest on the water, and its selvege on the barley. And this peasant came on the public path. This *nmt-nht* then said, “Beware, peasant! You will not step on my clothes!”

And this peasant said, “I shall do what you wish; my way is good.” And he went up higher.

Then this *nmt-nht* said, “Is my Upper-Egyptian barley to be a path for you?”

And this peasant said, “My ways are good, the bank is steep, and the ways are under barley for you block our path with your clothes! Will you then not allow us to pass on the path?” As he had finished saying the words, Then one of the donkeys filled its mouth with a wisp of barley.

And this *nmt-nht* said, “But See, your donkey is eating my barley! See, I shall take away your donkey, peasant, because it ate my barley! It will tread grain for its offense!”

This peasant then said, “My ways are good! A single thing has been destroyed; I will buy my donkey back for ten times the value if you take it away for filling its mouth with a wisp of barley. Now, I know the lord of this district; it belongs to the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*. He is the one who restrains every thief in this entire land. Shall I now be robbed in his district?”

Then this *nmt-nht* said, “Is this not the proverb that people say, ‘One mentions the name of a commoner only on account of his lord?’ I am the one who is speaking to you, and it is the Chief Magistrate whom you are referring to.” Then, he took a rod of fresh tamarisk to him, and he thrashed all his limbs with it, took his donkeys away and drove them to his district. Then this peasant proceeded to wail very loudly on account of the wickedness of what was done to him. But this *nmt-nht* then said, “Do not raise your voice, peasant, or you will go to the abode of the Lord of Silence.”

Then this peasant said, “You beat me, you rob my goods, and you even deprive me of the lament from my mouth! Lord of Silence, may you give me back my things, so that I need not scream to your fearsomeness to startle you.” Then this peasant spent a period of 10 days pleading with this *nmt-nht*, but he did not pay attention to it. This peasant then went south.

This peasant then went to *nnt-nswt* in order to plead with the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*. He found him emerging from the door of his house, to step into his official boat. And this peasant said, “May I be allowed to inform you

about this grievance. Perhaps one may have a servant of your choice come to me, so that I may have him report to you about it.”

And the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, had a servant of his choice go to him, and this peasant had him report back about this entire matter. Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, accused this *nnty-nht* to the officials who were with him. But then they said to him, “Perhaps it is a peasant of his who went to someone else beside him. See, that is what they do to peasants of theirs who have gone to others beside them. That is what they do. Is this a cause for punishing this *nnty-nht*, on account of a little *hsmn* and a little salt? If he is ordered to replace it, then he will replace it.” But the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, remained silent. He did not answer these officials, nor did he answer this peasant. Then this peasant came to plead with him.

Then this peasant came to plead with for the first time. The Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*. He said, “Chief Magistrate, my lord, great one, lord of the great, Chief Magistrate, my lord, greatest of the great, leader of all that is not and all that is, if you go down to the Lake of *m3t*, you will sail on it with a fair wind, the bunt will not strip away your sail, your ship will not lag, no disaster will befall your rudder stock, your yards will not break, you will not founder when you land, no wave will carry you off, you will not taste the evil of the river, you will not see the face of fear, but shy fish will come to you and you will catch fatted fowl. For you are a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, a brother to the divorced and an apron to the motherless. Let me make your name in this land according to every good rule: leader free of greed, great one free of arrogance, destroyer of falsehood, creator of truth, cast evil on the ground! One who comes at the voice of the caller. I speak so that you will hear. Do justice, praised one whom the praised praise! Relieve my distress, for I am laden with sorrow! Relieve the distress, for I am burdened and faint from it in distress! Examine me, I am at a loss!”

Now, this peasant said these words in the time of the majesty of the *nswt-bity nb-k3w-r*, True of Voice. The Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, then went before His Majesty and said, “My lord, I have found one of these peasants who is truly eloquent. By a man who is my peer, his goods have been robbed and he has come to plead with me about it.”

And His Majesty said, “As you wish to see me in health, you will delay him here without answering anything he says. So that he keeps speaking, remain silent. So that his speech will be brought to us in writing. Then it will be brought to us in writing so that we may hear it. But provide sustenance for the wife of this peasant. But provide sustenance for his wife and children. That one of these peasants comes here is because his house is empty. Furthermore, provide sustenance for this peasant himself. Furthermore, provide sustenance for this peasant himself without him knowing. You will let the provisions be given to him without letting him know. They were given to friends of his, that it is you who gave them to him.”

And his friends gave them to him. And he was given ten loaves of bread and two jars of beer every day. The Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, gave them, but he gave them to a friend of his, and it was he who gave them to him. Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, sent a message to the mayor of *sht-hm3t* about making provisions for the wife of this peasant, consisting of three *hk3t* measures of barley every day. Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, gave provisions to this peasant, consisting of fifty jars of beer and fifty loaves of bread. He gave them to friends of his, and his friends gave them to him.

Then this peasant came to plead with him for a second time, and found him emerging from and said, “Chief Magistrate, my lord, greatest of the great, richest of the rich, whose great ones have one greater, whose rich ones have one richer, rudder of heaven, beam of earth, plumb-line that carries the weight! Rudder, do not deviate! Beam, do not tilt! Plumb-line, do not swing awry! A great lord takes what is without owner and robs only that. Your possessions are in your house. A jar of beer and three loaves of bread, what is it you expend to satisfy your dependents? A mortal man dies along with his underlings, or will you be a man of eternity? Is it not wrong, a balance that is crooked, the pointer of a balance that errs, a truly correct man who strays? See, justice is fleeing from you, expelled from its place. Officials are doing evil, the norm of speech is biased and judges are carrying off what it seizes. This means that he who twists speech from its correct sense is acting corruptly thereby. He who should give breath is suffocating on the ground, he who should rest is making people pant, the arbitrator is a cheat, he who should relieve distress is ordering its creation, the harbor is flooded, he who should punish injustice is doing evil.”

Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, said, “Is what is on your mind of greater concern to you than that my servant might seize you?”

But this peasant said, “He who measures heaps of barley is pilfering for himself; he who fills for another is withholding that amount; he who should govern according to the laws is ordering theft. Who then will repel evil? He who should

dispel weakness is acting corruptly; he who should correct another is being crooked; he who should reproach another is an evildoer. Do you find anything for yourself? Redress is short but evil is long. A good deed returns to its place of yesterday. This is the precept: act for him who acts, to make him act; it is thanking him for what he does; it is parrying a thing before shooting; it is commissioning something from a craftsman. Would that a moment would destroy, havoc in your vineyard, decimation of your birds, destruction among your water-fowl! He who should see has turned blind, one who should hear deaf, and one who should lead has gone astray. Basket! Have you not gone too far? Why do you act against yourself? See, you are strong and powerful, your arm is strenuous, but your heart is greedy and mercy has left you. How lamentable is the poor man you ruin! You are like the messenger of *hnty*. See, you surpass the Lady of Pestilence; if something is not for you, it is not for her; if something is not against her, it is not against you; if you won't do it, she won't do it. Who possesses bread should be merciful whereas brutality is for the criminal. Theft suits those without belongings, things are robbed by a criminal. But an evil act of someone without need, is he not to be rebuked? It is self-seeking. But you are sated with your bread and drunk with your beer, and you are rich in every respect. While the face of the helmsman is forward, the ship deviates as it pleases. While the king is in the stateroom and the helm is in your hand, evil is placed near you. My plea is long, and the division is difficult. 'What's with him there?' People say. Create shelter so that your shore will be safe, for see, your harbor is surrounded by crocodiles! May your tongue be truthful so that you won't go astray! That organ in a man is his canker-worm. Don't speak falsehood! Beware of officials! The judges are a fattened basket; speaking falsehood is their herbage, it lies light on their hearts. O wisest of all mankind, are you unaware of my case? Relieve all distress on the water! See, I am laden with sorrow. See, I am in your hands, See, I am under way without a ship, so you should take account of me! See, I am in distress. Rescue all who are drowning, save the shipwrecked, in the domain within your reach! Rescue me in the domain that is within your reach!"

And this peasant came to plead with him for a third time. He said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, you are *r*, Lord of Heaven, with your courtiers. Everyone has a need for you, like water. You are *h'py*, who makes the meadows green and restores mounds that have been ravaged. Punish theft and protect the poor! Don't become a flood against the suppliant! Beware of the approach of eternity. Desire to last, as is said: "Doing *m3't* is breath for the nose." Inflict punishment on him who ought to be punished, and none will surpass your rectitude. Does the hand-balance err? Is the stand-balance biased? Is *dhwty* lenient? Then may you do evil! You should set yourself equal to these three; if the three are lenient, then you must be lenient. Do not answer good with bad. Do not put one thing in place of another. The spoken word is more persistent than *snmyt*, to reach the smellier with its retort. The one who waters mischief to make deception grow, this is three times to induce him to act! Steer according to the sail. Withdraw the flood, so as to do *m3't*. Be careful that you do not run aground, while at the tiller. To straighten out the land is to do justice. Do not speak falsehood, for you are mighty. Do not be light-hearted, for you are weighty. Do not speak falsehood, for you are the balance. Do not be careless, for you are the key. You are just like the balance: if it is crooked, then you must be crooked. Do not deviate, but operate the rudder, pull on the tiller rope. Do not rob, but act against the robber. A great one who is greedy is not great. Your tongue is the pointer of the balance, your heart is the weight, and your lips are its arms. But if you shut your eyes to the impudent, then who will repel evil? See, you are a dishonorable washerman who is keen on destroying friendship, one who wrongs his confidant for his client; anyone who comes and supplies to him is his brother. See, you are a ferryman who ferries across anyone who has the fare, a righteous man whose righteousness has crumbled. See, you are the chief of a workhouse who won't let an unemployed person through at once. See, you are a hawk to the people, one who lives on defenseless birds. See, you are a cook whose joy is to slaughter, and who is not touched by the gruesomeness thereof. See, you are a herdsman; is it not bad for me then that you cannot be prudent? May you become less like a ravenous crocodile, for shelter has vanished from the harbor of the entire land. Hearer, you do not really hear. But why do you not hear? Now I have spoken out against the aggressor, and the crocodile retreats. But what is the gain thereof to you? The secret of the truth will be found, and falsehood will be cast on the ground. Do not make provision for the following day before it has come, since one cannot know what is going to happen in it."

When this peasant had said these words, the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, went to the entrance of the portal, and made two guards turn against him with whips, and they thrashed all his limbs therewith. Then this peasant said, "So the son of *mrw* must go astray, since his face is blind to what he sees and deaf to what he hears, and is straying from what it is reminded of. See, you are a town without a mayor, like a meeting without a chairman, like a ship without a captain, like a gang without a leader. See, you are a policeman who steals, a major who accepts bribes, a district overseer who should accumulation of it, nor is there casting of falsehood on the ground. Has the ferry sunk? Who can be ferried across when the

one who should bring about the deed is unwilling? Crossing the river on foot, a good crossing, or not? Now, who can sleep till dawn? For obstructed are going by night, traveling by day, and letting a man attend his truly good cause. See, it is no use to tell you this, for mercy has left you. How lamentable is the poor man you ruin! See, you are a hunter who slakes his desire, bent on doing what he wants, who harpoons hippopotami, shoots wild bulls, catches fish and snares birds. Yet there is none hasty of speech who is free of spluttering, and none light of heart who is weighty of thought. Be tender-hearted, so that you will learn justice! Suppress your choice for the good of him who enters humbly. For there is no brute who attains excellence, and there is no impatient man whom one turns to. Let the eyes see so that the heart be informed. Don't be haughty in proportion to your might, so that evil doesn't reach you. Tolerate one misdeed, and it will become two. It is the eater who tastes, so one who is questioned replies; it is the sleeper who dreams. As for a judge who ought to be punished, he is a pattern for the criminal. Fool, See, you are found out! Ignoramus, see, you are questioned! Urinator, See, you are noticed! Helmsman, don't let your ship go off course! Giver of life, don't let people die! Destroyer, don't let people perish! Shade, don't be as the blazing sun! Shelter, don't let the crocodile snatch! The fourth time already of pleading with you; shall I spend all day at it."

And this peasant came to plead with him for a fourth time, and found him emerging from the gate of the temple of *hry-š-f*. He said, "Praised one, may *hry-š-f*, from whose temple you have come, praise you! Goodness has been harmed; there is noting from his amount; he who should govern according to the laws is ordering theft. Who then will repel evil? He who should dispel weakness is acting corruptly; he who should correct another is being crooked; he who should reproach another is an evildoer. Do you find anything for yourself? Redress is short but evil is long. A good deed returns to its place of yesterday. This is the precept; act for him who acts, to make him act; it is thanking him for what he does; it is parrying a thing before shooting; it is commissioning something from a craftsman. Would that a moment would destroy, havoc in your vineyard, decimation of your birds, destruction among your water-fowl! He who should see has turned blind, one who should hear deaf, and one who should lead has gone astray. Basket! Have you not gone too far? Why do you act against yourself? See, you are strong and powerful, your arm is strenuous, but your heart is greedy and mercy has left you. How lamentable is the poor man you ruin! You are like the messenger of *hnti*. See, you surpass the Lady of Pestilence; if something is not for you, it is not for her; if something is not against her, it is not against you; if you won't do it, she won't do it. Who possesses bread should be merciful whereas brutality is for the criminal. Theft suits those without belongings, things are robbed by a criminal. But an evil act of someone without need, is he not to be rebuked? It is self-seeking. But you are sated with your bread and drunk with your beer, and you are rich in every respect. While the face of the helmsman is forward, the ship deviates as it pleases. While the king is in the stateroom and the helm is in your hand, evil is placed near you. My plea is long, and the division is difficult. 'What's with him there?' People say. Create shelter so that your shore will be safe, for see, your harbor is surrounded by crocodiles! May your tongue be truthful so that you won't go astray! That organ in a man is his canker-worm. Do not speak falsehood! Beware of officials! The judges are a fattened basket; speaking falsehood is their herbage; it lies light on their hearts. O wisest of all mankind, are you unaware of my case? Relieve all distress on the water! See, I am laden with sorrow. See, I am in your hands, See, I am under way without a ship, so you should take account of me! See, I am in distress. Rescue all who are drowning, save the shipwrecked, in the domain within your reach! Rescue me in the domain that is within your reach!"

And this peasant came to plead with him for a fifth time. He said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, the netter is the fish, the *nyw*-fisherman is killing *iy*-fish, the fish-spearer is harpooning *ʿwbbw*-fish, the *dšbhꜣw*-fisherman is after *pškr*-fish. The fisherman ravages the river. See, you are the same. Do not defraud a poor man of his property, a slight man whom you know. The belongings of a pauper are his breath, to take them away is to stop up his nose. You were appointed to hear cases, to judge between litigants, and to punish the robber. But See, what you are doing is supporting the thief. You are trusted, yet you have become a transgressor. You were appointed to be a dike for the pauper, so take care that he doesn't drown! But See, you are the lake that pulls him under."

And this peasant came to plead with him for a sixth time, and he said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, lord who eradicates falsehood, who creates truth and creates all goodness, who destroys evil, like when satiety comes and ends hunger, and clothes end nakedness, like when the sky becomes calm after a heavy storm and warms all who are chilled, like fire that cooks what is raw, like water that quenches thirst! See with your own eyes: the arbitrator is a cheat, the appeaser is causing misery, and he who should mitigate is causing suffering. Cheating diminishes justice, so render good account, and *mšꜣt* will be neither insufficient nor excessive. So act accordingly! If you acquire, then give to your fellow man, for chewing is without merit. And your share of the cargo will be what you seize, my anguish leads to separation and my accusation brought depar-

ture; one cannot know what is in the heart. Don't be negligent, act at the accusation! If you sever, who will join? The sounding rod is in your hand, a rod that makes waters accessible that have stayed behind during low tide. If a ship goes down, it is looted and its cargo perishes on the ground at every embankment. It is known: You are educated, enlightened and accomplished, but not for cheating! You act the same as everyone, and your environment is corrupt. And every man in your environment is corrupt. Molester of the entire land! The cultivator of wickedness is watering his garden with evil, to make his garden grow with falsehood and to water everlasting doom."

And this peasant came to plead with him for a seventh time, and he said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, you are the helm of the entire land, the land sails in accordance with your command. You are the equal of *dhwti*, who judges without being partial. My lord, may you condone that a man calls upon you concerning his just cause. Don't be outrageous, it is not for you! One who was happy becomes anxious. Do not scheme for what has not yet come, do not rejoice in what has not yet happened! Considerateness extends friendship and dismisses an offence that happens; one cannot know what is in the heart. Subverter of the law, destroyer of rectitude! There will be no poor man alive if justice does not attend to him when he is robbed. Now, my body is full of misery and my heart is laden with grief. It comes from my body because of the condition thereof: it is the breach of a dike, its waters pouring through, as my mouth opens to speak. So, I have now plied my sounding rod, bailed my water, given vent to what was on my mind and washed my dirty linen. My speech is done and my misery has ended up before you, what more do you need? Your neglect will lead you astray, your avarice will befool you and your greed will make you acquire enemies. Will you even find another peasant like me? Or will the lazy petitioner be waiting at the door of his house? There is none silent whom you let speak, none sleeping whom you roused, none sleeping whom you roused, none downcast whom you enlivened, none speechless whose mouth you opened, none ignorant whom you let know, none foolish whom you educated. Uneducated whom you instructed. Yet officials should be people who dispel injustice, lords of goodness, craftsmen in creating what is, people who mend a severed head."

And this peasant came to plead with him for an eighth time, and said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, one sinks low through greed. A greedy man is without achievement, he achieves only failure. You are greedy but it does nothing for you, you steal but it's of no benefit to you. You who should let a man attend his truly good cause! In fact, your possessions are in your house and your stomach is full; the barley brims over since it is so abundant and its excess perishes on the ground. Thief, robber, snatcher! The officials who were appointed to repel evil should be shelters from the aggressor; the officials who were appointed to eradicate falsehood! And the fear of you wouldn't permit appealing to you? And the fear of you wouldn't permit me to appeal to you? You do not perceive my heart! The humble man who returns to make a complaint to you, he cannot fear him to whom it is submitted, to make his complaint, you cannot fear him who submits it to you. Though no brother of his can be fetched to side against you in the street. Your plots of land are in the country, your earnings are in the estate and your provisions in the storehouse. Officials are giving to you, are giving gifts to you, and you are still robbing. Are you a thief? People are ushered in to you, Are you a thief then? Are people ushered in to you, troops being with you, for the division of plots of land. Soldiers being with you, for the division of plots of land? Do *mꜣꜥt* for the Lord of *mꜣꜥt*, whose *mꜣꜥt* has *mꜣꜥt*! Pen, papyrus, palette of *dhwti*, beware of doing evil! The goodness of a good man is good to him, but justice is for eternity. When goodness is good, goodness is good indeed, It goes down with him who does it to the necropolis. When he is buried, and earth envelops him, his name is not effaced on earth and he is remembered on account of the goodness. This is the norm of the divine word. If it is a hand-balance, The norm of the divine word: then it is not crooked. If it is a stand-balance, then it is not biased. See, I will come, and another will come, so you should inquire! But do not respond as one who questions a humble man. Do not attack one who cannot attack. You show no mercy, you are not troubled, you do not destroy, you do not flee, nor do you give me a reward for this good speech that comes forth from the mouth of *ra* himself! Speak *mꜣꜥt* and do *mꜣꜥt*! For it is mighty, Do *mꜣꜥt* to me! It is great, it is enduring, one will find its trustworthiness, it will lead to blessedness. Can a balance be crooked A balance cannot be crooked when it is its pans that weigh things? There can be no excess of rectitude. An evil deed cannot reach harbor, but the hindermost will reach land.'

And this peasant came to plead with him for a ninth time, and said, "Chief Magistrate, my lord, the tongue of people is their 'stand'-balance, and it is the 'hand'-balance that detects deficiency and inflicts punishment on him who ought to be punished. One sets the standard after you. Falsehood comes when its need arises, but the *mꜣꜥt* returns to correct it. *mꜣꜥt* is an aspect of falsehood, which means it is made to thrive but it is not gathered in. When falsehood sets out, it goes astray. It cannot cross in a ferry and it cannot row. As for him who is enriched by it, he has no children and no heirs on earth. As for him who sails with it, he cannot reach land, his boat cannot moor in its harbor. Don't be heavy, you haven't been light! Don't delay, you haven't been swift! Don't be partial! Don't listen to the heart! Don't disregard someone you know! Don't be blind

to someone who Sees to you! Don't fend off someone who appeals to you! May you abandon this neglect, and may your verdict be announced! Act for him who acts for you and don't listen to anyone who is against him! Summon a man concerning his just cause! There is no yesterday for the negligent, no friend for him who is deaf to truth and no holiday for the greedy. The accuser becomes wretched, wretched to be a suppliant, and the opponent becomes a murderer. See, I am pleading with you but you do not hear it. I will go and plead concerning you with *inpw*."

Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, sent two guards to bring him back. And this peasant was afraid, thinking it was done to punish him on account of these words that he had said. And this peasant said, "A thirsty man's approach of water, the reach of a nursing's mouth for milk, such is death for him who prays to see it come when his death comes tardily for him."

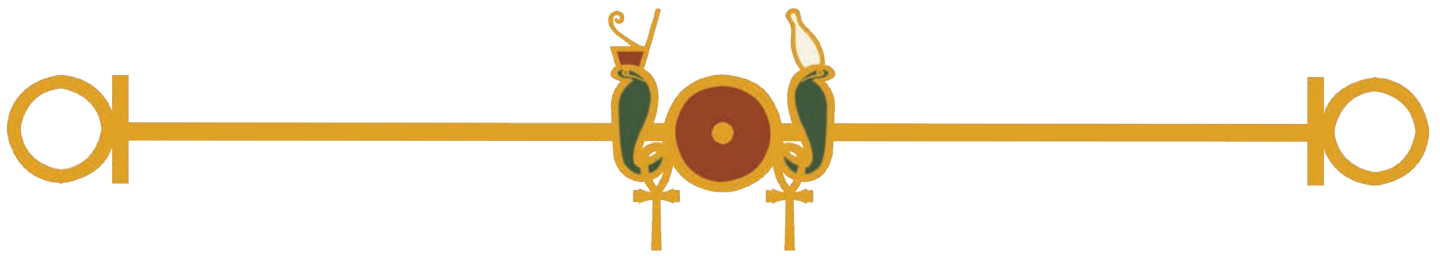
Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, said, "Do not be afraid, peasant! See, you will arrange the matter with me."

But this peasant swore an oath, "So I will eat your bread and drink your beer forever!"

The Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, said, "Now wait here and hear your petitions!" And from a new papyrus roll he had every petition read out according to its content.

Then the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, delivered them to the majesty of the *nswt-bity* of Upper and Lower *kmt*, *nb-k3w-r*, True of Voice, and they pleased His heart more than anything in this entire land. Then His Majesty said, "Pass judgment yourself, son of *mrw*!"

And the Chief Magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*, sent two guards to fetch *nmty-nht*. Then he was brought and an inventory was made of his possessions. He found six persons as well as *nmty-nht*, his barley, his emmer wheat, his donkeys, his swine, his small cattle, and all his possessions. This *nmty-nht* gave to this *h3w-n-inpw* all the possessions of this *nmty-nht*. This was copied from start to finish as found in writing.



DISCUSSION

The protagonist of our story, *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw*, meaning Appearance in Glory of Anubis, is named for the jackal god of the netherworld and guide of the dead. His wife's name *mrt*, meaning beloved, and his children are residents of *šḥt-ḥmꜣt*, meaning field of salt, which is known today as the Wadi Natrun, Valley of Natron, a naturally occurring mixture of salts and sodas used to clean and purify, as well as mummify.

He says to his wife *mrt* to measure the grain for him, and presumably had eight *ḥkꜣt* measures of grain. A *ḥkꜣt* is a standard measure of grain in ancient Egypt, measuring 4.74 liters, 7.91 lbs., 19.19 cups, enough to make 5 loaves of bread, or about 4 gallons of beer. *ḥꜥw* measures two *ḥkꜣt* measures of grain for bread and beer for *mrt* and her children, and six for himself. Called *ḥnkt*, beer was the primary way ancient Egyptians of all classes could drink water.

ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw loads up his donkeys with his goods to travel to *kmt*, the black Locality. This is one of the names of ancient Egypt. While *šḥt-ḥmꜣt* is also considered part of *kmt*, in this context it is referring directly to the narrow strip of fertile black soil that is on the banks of the Nile river that is the black locality. Among his wares to sell in *kmt* are a number of products which identities are unknown. Pieces of wood from *tꜣ-ḥw*. *tꜣ-ḥw*, or land of oxen herds, is known today as the Farafra Oasis. This locality is known for two types of wood in ancient times. The still standing palm wood forest, and an acacia wood forest that was cut down by the Romans. As wood was scarce in ancient Egypt it was used for a variety of furniture from chairs and chests to shrines for the gods and ancestors. *ꜥnw*-stone is most likely limestone, as *ꜥnw* is also called AINU, a place of limestone quarries. *tnm* are probably aromatic herbs used in *tnmw* beer. *mꜣswt*; the *mꜣswt* is a name of the white crown of Upper Egypt, which is reminiscent of a modern bowling pin. It is theorized that the construction of the *mꜣswt* crown is a cartonnage or paper mache with a woven sedge plant at its center, which in the ancient Egyptian language the is the *swt* plant. *nꜥrw*-; the only known relation to *nꜥrw* is *nꜥr* - catfish. There are in fact birds known a catbirds whose song are reminiscent to cat meows and were referenced in ancient times. *wbn*; *wbn* means to shine or glitter and is a common adjective for the sun. *thsw*; a related word morphologically is *thwty*, or *thwty*, which means sandal soles. It could be the *thsw* shrub is used to be sandals. *gngnt*; the word *gng* means falsehood. It could be the word *gngnt* means false beans, which could refer to a legume like peas or nuts.

ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw traveled to *nni-nswt* – Herakleopolis Magna, district of *pr-ffī*, north of *mdnit*. *nni-nswt* – child of the Pharaoh, is the capital city of the 20th district of Upper Egypt, *ꜣtf-ḥnt*, Southern Sycamore. It lies to the north of *mdnit*, meaning knife, the 22nd district of Upper Egypt. *pr-ffī* is unknown, but *pr* means 'house', and *pr-ffī* could be a region or village that is lost. It is in *pr-ffī* that *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw* meets the villain of the story, *nmtꜣ-nḥt*, son of *isry*. *nmtꜣ* is a falcon deity and



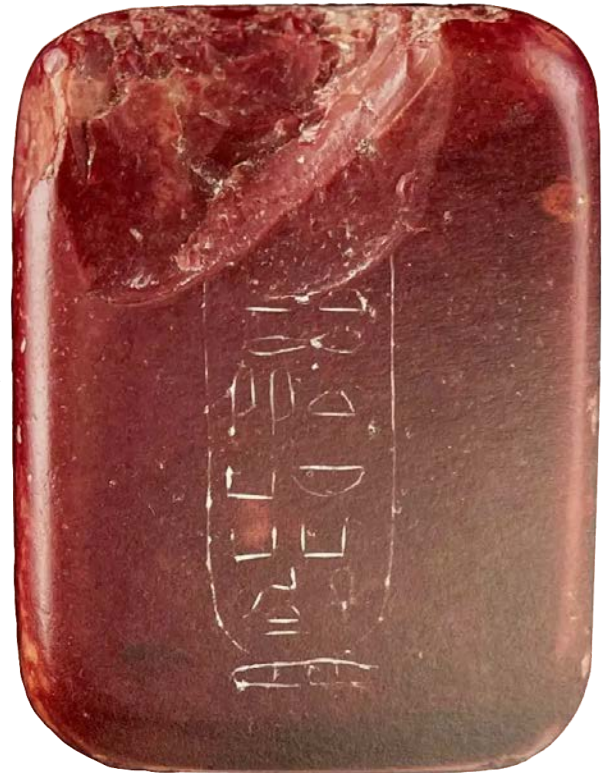
patron to ferrymen. *nḥt* means strength or champion. His father *isry* means he of the tamarisk tree. A bit of foreshadowing when *nmtꜣ-nḥt* thrashes *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw* with a stick of tamarisk. He laments at not having a divine image to rob *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw*'s goods. He is referring to statues that have been imbued with the *kꜣ*-spirit of a god through the ritual of the opening of the mouth and eyes, whereby the statue becomes a living image of the deity. Despite being a bonded servant to *rn-sī*, son of *mrw*, not only does he rob the goods of our protagonist *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw*, but he sneers at the invocation of his master. *nmtꜣ-nḥt* mentions an old proverb that tells *ḥꜥw-n-ḥnpw* that *nmtꜣ-*

nht is the commoner of the proverb, and he is immune to the law of his master. After thrashing *hꜥw-n-inpw*, *nmti-nht* then invokes the abode of the Lord of Silence. This is the *dwꜣt* netherworld, the place where deities and the dead live, ruled by *ꜣsir*, or Osiris, Pharaoh of the dead.

hꜥw-n-inpw then travels to *nmi-nswt* to petition to chief magistrate *rn-si*, son of *mrw*. *rn-si* means ‘Her name.’ The goddess he is named for does not appear, which probably means his name refers to her secret name, the name of her *bꜣ* spirit, spoken by the god at her creation. *rn-si*’s ancient Egyptian title is *imy-r pr-wr*, or over the mouth of the great house. The *pr-wr* is the administrative center of the district, making *rn-si* the official who hears grievances and makes proclamations.

When *hꜥw-n-inpw* first approached *rn-si*, officials went to investigate, and was rebuffed due to his being a peasant. In *hꜥw-n-inpw*’s first petition, he swayed *rn-si* so much he went straight to the *nswt-bity*, he of sedge and bee, pharaoh of lower and upper Egypt, *nb-kꜣw-rꜥ*. This pharaoh was ruler of upper Egypt during the first intermediate period, a time after the fall of the pyramid builders of the old kingdom, an era of upheaval, when for the first time in a thousand years the Upper and Lower Egypt had divided rulership. Despite *nb-kꜣw-rꜥ* carrying the title of *nswt-bity*, strictly speaking he was the *nswt* ruler of Upper Egypt with his capital at the city of *nmi-nswt*.

The *nswt* then commanded *rn-si* to provide daily provisions to *hꜥw* and his family. *hꜥw* receives ten loaves of bread and two jars of beer every day. Ten loaves were a standard daily wage from a man of the peasant class. Common bread loaves during the First Intermediate period were about the size of the palm of the hand and baked in dome shaped single clay bread ovens put over a fire. The bread leavened with brewers’ yeast would rise and fill the form of the oven, making a handheld loaf. Beer jars were approximately a half gallon, or two liters. Like bread, beer was also a wage, but *hꜥw* received more than a usual peasant’s daily wage. The pyramid workers received one and a half jars of beer, while workers on the quarries of Wadi Hammamat would receive one third of a jar. This is perhaps a way for the Pharaoh to keep *hꜥw* talking? Or to interfere with his speech?



Jasper cartouche of Nebkaure Khety
Found at Tel-el-Rataba, 9th-10th dynasty
Petrie Museum UC 11782

During his first petition, *hꜥw* attempts to appeal to the ego of *rn-si*, but also makes the first invocation of *mꜣꜥt*, with traversing the Lake of *mꜣꜥt*. There are a lot of references to sailing on lakes and rivers, as this is the primary mode of transportation in ancient Egypt. *mꜣꜥt* is probably the most important in ancient Egypt, as she is not only a goddess, but also representative of all that is right in the dualverse of ancient Egypt. It stands for truth, justice, balance, the laws of man and also of nature.

In his second petition, *hꜥw* refers to the rudder of heaven. This is referring to the sacred boat of *rꜥ* the sun god, who traverses the sky. *hꜥw* makes his case stronger but also speaks of the flood. This is literal and metaphorical. *hꜥw* is not only speaking of the annual inundation, but also the inundation flood that happened at the first time of creation. This mirrors the inundation that four

Ma'at
KV66 Tomb of Nefertari
New Kingdom c.125 BCE

months of the year. The inundation of the Nile provided the rich silt that made *kmt* the black locality, but it had to be in balance. Too little flood and there would be no fertile land. Too much flood and it brings chaos, pestilence, and death. Only *mꜣꜥt* balance could make the flood beneficial.

ḥꜥw then accuses *rn-si* of being a messenger of *ḥnty*. This is *ḥnty-ḥty*, or Khenty Khety, which during the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom was a crocodile deity worshiped in Lower Egypt. His name means Foremost Retreater. *ḥnty-ḥty prty* is also the name of a month in the second month of the season *šmw*, the ritual procession of the Foremost Retreater. This was the time of the harvest and heat season, where all would take the months to prepare for the season of the inundation of the Nile.

This sentiment is echoed in his next invocation to

Green steatite amulet of Khenty-khety
Late Period, c. 664-332 BCE

the lady of Pestilence, who is *šhmt*, whose messengers are the unseen illnesses who were her slaughterers.

In his third petition, *ḥꜥw* invokes *rꜥ*, the sun god and source of all life. He invokes *ḥꜥpy*, the *ntr* personified of the Nile and annual inundation, the flooding of the Nile.

In his fourth petition, *ḥꜥw* meets *rn-si* outside the temple of *ḥry-š-f*. Known today commonly as Heryshaf, his name means, Who is Over His Lake. A ram headed *ntr* of the locality of *nnt-nswt*, *ḥry-š-f* was a creator god related to *itmw*, and is known as the *bꜣ* of both *rꜥ* and *ꜣsir*.

In his fifth petition, *ḥꜥw* makes metaphors by not only speaking of overfishing, but of specialist fishermen trying to catch a kind of fish they have the inappropriate equipment in the catching of those fish. It would be like trying to catch a minnow with a harpoon.

ḥꜥw's sixth petition gives more understanding to the concept of *mꜣꜥt* as balance and appropriateness, and how falsehood can destroy its balance.

In his seventh petition, *ḥꜥw* invokes *ḏḥwtj*, or Thoth, *ntr* deity of writing and wisdom. His last similes are of particular interest, as it compares *rn-si* to craftsmen who created what is, or people who mend a severed head. This is clearly the craftsmen who create the living images of deities and the dead, as well as the ritualists who perform the rite to animate the statues, mending their severing by opening their mouth and eyes, whereby a statue can see, speak and eat in the seen world.

ḥꜥw's eighth petition is much like his sixth, where he invokes *mꜣꜥt* as being the ultimate balance in the dualverse.

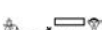
Finally, in his ninth petition, *ḥꜥw* says that *mꜣꜥt* is an aspect of falsehood, in that when the need for falsehood arises, *mꜣat* will come to balance it, for falsehood immediately goes astray. Good intentions, optimistic speech, rhetoric, exaggerations, and hyperbole could be considered falsehood, but in the appropriate amounts they can be used to inspire togetherness and victory. *ḥꜥw* concludes his petition with invoking *inpw* – Anubis, lord of mummification and guide of the dead. *ḥꜥw* is saying that even in death he will continue his petition of *mꜣꜥt*. *ḥꜥw* makes an oath that he will eat *rn-si*'s bread and drink his beer forever. This was known as an *ꜣnh* oath. *ꜣnh* is known as the key of life, *ꜣnh* is the eternal life that is given by the *ntrw* deities. *ḥꜥw* is making an oath that for eternity he will bind himself to *rn-si*, and feed upon his bread and beer stores forever.

The story ends with, "This was copied from start to finish as found in writing." This is a common statement to make on copies of papyri for their veracity of completeness.



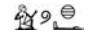
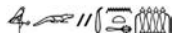
Heryshaf votive
Late Period
c. 664 - 322 BCE

Glossary

Term	Hieroglyphs	Definition
<i>ꜥnw</i>		Limestone.
<i>ꜥnh</i>		Swear, oath.
<i>ꜥsir</i>		Osiris, <i>ntr</i> of agriculture and lord of the dead, depicted as a green mummified Pharaoh crowned with the <i>ꜥtf</i> white crown with ostrich plumes. Called Wesir, Ausar, or Osiris, <i>ꜥsir</i> was the first born of <i>gbb</i> and <i>nwt</i> during the <i>hrw hryw rnpt</i> .
<i>ꜥst</i>		Known as Aset, Auset, or Isis, this <i>ntrt</i> was born of <i>gbb</i> and <i>nwt</i> during the <i>hrw hryw rnpt</i> . Known as <i>wrt ꜥkꜥw</i> , Great of Magic.
<i>ꜥtf-hnt</i>		Southern Sycamore, 20th District of Upper Egypt.
<i>ꜥwbbw</i>		Small fishes.
<i>bꜥ</i>		The core spirit of a person or deity.
<i>dꜥbꜥhw</i>		A type of fisherman.
<i>dꜥhwtꜥ</i>		He of the Ibis. Thoth, <i>ntr</i> of intelligence, wisdom, reason, logic, and writing, depicted as an ibis, an ibis headed man, carrying his writing palette and rush pen to record the knowledge of the seen and unseen world. or baboon. He wears the moon disk headdress to signify his association with it. He also represents the West.
<i>dwꜥt</i>		Netherworld, the unseen world inhabited by the <i>ntrw</i> and the deceased spirits.
<i>gbb</i>		Place of the Goose. Geb or Seb, <i>nTr</i> of the world. Eldest child of <i>šw</i> and <i>tfnt</i> , consort and brother of <i>nwt</i> . <i>gbb</i> is of the <i>psdt-wr</i> of <i>iwnw</i> or Heliopolis, and presides in his broad hall over a dispute between <i>ꜥhr</i> and <i>stš</i> for the right of <i>nswt-bity</i> .
<i>gngnt</i>		A type of bean.
<i>ꜥkꜥt</i>		Standard measure of grain in ancient Egypt, 4.74 liters, 7.91 lbs., 19.19 cups, enough to make 5 loaves of bread, or about 4 gallons of beer.
<i>ꜥhr</i>		Horus, falcon deity of the <i>nswt-bity</i> and of the <i>nswt</i> 's side of order, representing the North. Horus, son of <i>ꜥsir</i> and <i>ꜥst</i> is embodied in the Pharaoh.
<i>ꜥhry-š-f</i>		Who is Over His Lake. A ram headed <i>ntr</i> of the locality of <i>nnt-nswt</i> , <i>ꜥhry-š-f</i> was a creator god related to <i>itmꜥw</i> , and is known as the <i>bꜥ</i> of both <i>ꜥr</i> and <i>ꜥsir</i> .
<i>hrw hryw rnpt</i>		Days Above the Year. The days outside the 360 day calendar that was created by <i>dꜥhwtꜥ</i> so the the <i>ntrw ꜥsir</i> , <i>ꜥhr</i> , <i>stš</i> , <i>ꜥst</i> , <i>ꜥnd nbt ꜥwt</i> could be born.

Term	Hieroglyphs	Definition
<i>ḥsmn</i>		Natron. A naturally occurring salt compound of sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium chloride, and sodium sulfate. Used by the ancient Egyptians to purify their bodies, clothing, and dry food, and in mummification.
<i>imy-r pr wr</i>		Over the mouth of the Great House, Overseer of the District Administrative Center.
<i>inpw</i>		Royal child. Anubis, jackal <i>nṯr</i> of mummification and guide to the dead through judgment.
<i>isry</i>		He of the tamarisk tree, the father of <i>nmti-nxt</i> in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>itmw</i>		Totality. Atum, a creator deity in <i>iwnw</i> or Heliopolis. Atum is the head of the <i>psdt wr</i> , the great Ennead of nine deities in the creation myth of Heliopolis. Atum was syncretised with <i>r</i> the sun deity to become <i>r-itmw</i> or Atum-Ra.
<i>mꜣꜥt</i>		Rightness. Ma'at, probably the most important cultural concept in ancient Egypt, as She is not only a <i>nṯrt</i> but also representative of all that is right in the dualverse of ancient Egypt. It stands for truth, justice, balance, the laws of man and also of nature. Depicted as an ostrich feather or a <i>nṯrt</i> with a single ostrich plume in Her headband.
<i>mdnṯ</i>		Land of the Knife, the 22nd District of Upper Egypt.
<i>mṯswt</i>		An herb or plant. Also the name of the White Crown of Upper Egypt.
<i>mrt</i>		Beloved. The wife of the protagonist <i>ḥꜣw-n-inpw</i> in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>mrw</i>		Beloved, father of <i>rn-si</i> in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>nꜣrw</i>		A type of bird.
<i>nb-kꜣw-r</i>		Nebkaure Khety, ruler of Upper Egypt during the First Intermediate Period, reigning in <i>nnt-nswt</i> between 2160 and 2130 BCE.
<i>nbt-ḥwt</i>		Lady of the House. The <i>nṯrt</i> of death, and consort of <i>stš</i> . She is the sister of <i>ꜣst</i> who joins Her in the Lamentations of <i>ꜣst</i> and <i>nbt-ḥwt</i> for the death of <i>ꜣsir</i> .
<i>nmty-nḥt</i>		Strength of Nemty (falcon god of ferrymen). <i>nmty-nḥt</i> is an antagonist in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>nnt-nswt</i>		<i>ḥwt-nn-nswt</i> , House of the Child of the Pharaoh, Herakleopolis Magna, a city in Upper Egypt's 20th District of <i>ꜣtf-nḥt</i> , and cult center of <i>ḥry-š-f</i> . The 9th and 10th dynasties of the First Intermediate Period were founded in <i>nnt-nswt</i> .
<i>nswt</i>		Pharaoh.
<i>nswt-bity</i>		He of Sedge and Bee, the main title of what was called pharaoh by the ancient Greeks.

Term	Hieroglyphs	Definition
<i>nṯr</i>		The ancient Egypt word for deity, or divine. <i>nṯr</i> referred to both the great gods of Egypt but also lesser spirits such as messengers of gods or nether world demons.
<i>nṯrt</i>		Female deity, goddess.
<i>nṯrw</i>		Plural of <i>nṯr</i> , gods or deities. See <i>nṯr</i>
<i>nwt</i>		Water, feminine. Nut or Nuit, the <i>nṯrt</i> who is the celestial sky. She is a child of <i>šw</i> and <i>tfnt</i> and consort of <i>gbb</i> . Her children are the five <i>nṯrw</i> born during the <i>hrw ḥryw rnpt</i> : <i>ʒsir</i> , <i>ḥr</i> , <i>stš</i> , <i>ʒst</i> , <i>ʿnd nbt-ḥwt</i> .
<i>pʒkr</i>		A type of fish.
<i>pr-ffl</i>		An unknown region or district in Upper Egypt referenced in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>psdṯ wr</i>		The Great Nine. The <i>nṯrw</i> of <i>iwnw</i> created by <i>itm-w-rʿ</i> , consisting of <i>šw</i> , <i>tfnt</i> , <i>gbb</i> , <i>nwt</i> , <i>ʒsir</i> , <i>ḥr</i> , <i>stš</i> , <i>ʒst</i> , <i>ʿnd nbt-ḥwt</i> .
<i>rʿ</i>		Ra or Re, the <i>nṯr</i> deity of the invisible power of the sun in ancient Egypt. Associated with a number of <i>nṯrw</i> and bearing the red sun disk headdress. His cult center is <i>iwnw</i> . Ra was syncretized with several other deities, including, Amun, Khnum, Atum, Kheperi, and Horus.
<i>rn-si</i>		Her name, the <i>imy-r pr-wr</i> in the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>snmyt</i>		A rank weed.
<i>stš</i>		Seth, deity of pharaohs, war, and confusion. <i>nṯr</i> of the <i>nswt</i> 's side of chaos, representing the South Predynastic ruler of Lower Egypt. Seth murdered his brother Osiris. He disputed the succession of Horus as the rightful heir of Egypt. In the New Kingdom, Rameses II formed a new division of 5,000 troops and named it after Seth.
<i>šḥmt</i>		Power (female). Sekhmet, lioness deity of disease, war, and in some myths the mother of the pharaoh. Sometimes <i>šḥmt</i> is also depicted as a cobra. Sekhmet was created during the myth of the Destruction of Mankind, when Ra sent his Eye as Hathor to punish rebels who rose up against His authority. His magical speech transfigured Hathor into Sekhmet, who slaughtered half of mankind before being drunk on red beer She mistook for blood.
<i>šḥt-ḥmʒt</i>		Field of Salt, a region in Egypt known as Wadi Natrun, Desert of Natron.
<i>šw</i>		Ascend. <i>nṯr</i> of the lower sky, atmosphere. <i>šw</i> was created by <i>itm-w-rʿ</i> and is the consort of <i>tfnt</i> . Father of <i>gbb</i> and <i>nwt</i> .
<i>tʒ-iḥw</i>		Land of Oxen Herds, Farafra Oasis.
<i>tbsw</i>		A shrub.
<i>tfnt</i>		Tefnet or Tefnut, meaning 'She who was spat out' <i>nṯrt</i> creation of <i>itm-w-rʿ</i> .
<i>tnm</i>		An herb used in <i>tnmw</i> beer.
<i>tnmw</i>		A type of beer.

Term	Hieroglyphs	Definition
Wadi Hammamat		Desert Valley of Many Baths. A dry river bed in the Eastern Desert of ancient Egypt, which served as a migration path from the Red Sea to the ancient city of Naqada. It served as a quarry for the building projects of Rameses IV.
<i>wn</i>		A type of plant.
<i>hꜥw</i>		Appearance in Glory. Shortened name of the protagonist of the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>hꜥw-n-ḥpw</i>		Appearance in Glory of Anubis. Protagonist of the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant.
<i>ḥnty-ḥty</i>		Foremost Retreater. He began as a crocodile deity in Athribis in Lower Egypt, he was associated with Horus by the New Kingdom.