

## The Symbolism of the Foreleg (*hpš*) Amputation in Ancient Egypt as an Offering

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

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### Abstract

The animals were important to the ancient Egyptians and a number of animals were considered as deities completed with personalities and attributes. Animals were also important for food and the meat held a special place in the hearts of the ancient Egyptians and in their diet. The foreleg was called “*hpš*”. This foreleg is represented on the walls, the ceilings of the tombs and on the offering tables. The amputation of the foreleg is considered one of the most significant scenes that had been depicted and this study helps to explain why the ancient Egyptians gave much attention to the foreleg, even before it was cut and presented as an offering. Also, the paper studies the astronomical symbolism of the foreleg “*hpš*” that appeared in the texts as Ursa Major, a circumpolar constellation in the northern sky and one of the prominent constellations in the sky and also focuses on the other name for Ursa Major termed “*Mshtyw*” and the appearance of the foreleg as a determinative in the name of “*Mshtyw*”. The paper also concentrates on the role of the foreleg in the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth and its association with the four Sons of Horus and god Seth. The constellations “*Mshtyw*” or the foreleg “*hpš*” was also used to express the daily cycle of regeneration of the deceased.

**Keywords:** Foreleg, Bull, *Mshtyw*, *hpš*, Opening of the Mouth, Seth, Horus, adz, Regeneration, Big Dipper, Great Bear.

### I. Introduction

The foreleg or the thigh is called , , “*hpš*” (*Wb* III: 268.10-269.19; Faulkner, 1962: 189). Also, the foreleg , “*hpš*” means “strong arm” or “strength or power” (*Wb* III: 268-269; Faulkner, 1962:189) and it was a symbol of the divine and the royal strength. Also, the foreleg (, , ) represented the constellation of Ursa Major (also known as the Great Bear) or the ancient Egyptian “*Mshtyw*” (Faulkner, 1962: 189; Mendoza, 2017: 117-119).

The scenes of the amputation and presentation the foreleg are more frequently depicted on the paintings of the tombs and the wooden models. The butchered parts, mainly the foreleg, have a great religious and ceremonial importance from the late Third or early Fourth Dynasty and remained until the New Kingdom (Winlock, 1955: 23-25; Gilbert, 1988: 78-89; Ikram, 1995: 41, 82, 297-303).

## II. Slaughtering Process

The animal was led either directly to the slaughterhouse from the field or to a place where it was fed by force and fattened and then conducted to the slaughter site where the animal was tied to a stone (Winlock, 1955: 22-23; Gilbert, 1988: 73-78). The animal had been led by a rope. The assistants of butcher tied a rope to one of the front legs and passed it over its back and holding this rope and pulling it up. Then the animal was forced and wrestled to the ground and its legs bound together (Vandier, 1969: fig .88.3-4). As soon as the animal fell on its back and the butcher's assistants holding the animal up, the butcher turn the throat of animal into one side and then slaughter (Fig. 1, 2), as the slaughter habits that happened now in Egypt (Vandier, 1969: fig. 95.1; Gilbert, 1988: 83-86; Strouhal, 1992: fig. 139). Some scholars believe that an earlier custom involve beating the victim on the head before slaughtering, but there is no evidence to support this idea (Otto, 1950: 164-177; David, 1973: 320; Ikram, 1995: 45-46).



Fig.1:Amputation of the foreleg, tomb of User-netjer at Saqqara (Murray, 1905: pl.xxi)



Fig.2:Amputation of the foreleg, tomb of Sekhemka at Saqqara (Murray, 1905: pl.vii)

During this butchery process, there was a standing servant holding a bowl with his two hands to catch the first blood that flowed out and he presented this blood to the priest of the temple for inspection and examining the blood of the animal to be sure about the purity and the health of the animal, as done by modern day veterinary inspector (Wilkinson, 1878: 375; Paget & Pirie, 1898: pl.xxxvi; Fischer, 1976: 98-99, note 14). Also, another depiction from the tomb of Ptah-Hetep at Saqqara (Fig.3) is showing a *w<sup>c</sup>b*-priest standing and a man who holding the haunch of the ox, extending his hand to the *w<sup>c</sup>b*-priest and saying “see this blood” and the priest smells the blood on his hand and gives his decision, “this is purity” (Quibell, 1898: 31, pl.35).



Fig.3:A man extending his hand to the priest for examining the blood; (tomb of Ptah-Hetep at Saqqara) (Quibell, 1898: pl. 36)

The blood drains from the body by pumping the foreleg of the animal. It forces the blood to get out of the veins and arteries of the neck and it is considered as a vital element that helps to empty the body of blood. Thus, it prevents the meat from being damaged. This helps to explain why the ancient Egyptian gave much attention to the foreleg, even before it was cut and presented as an offering (Ikram, 2000: 657).

According to the use of this collected blood, there is a model tomb, found in a secret chamber of the tomb of an official Meket-Re (TT280) in the southern Asasif at Thebes and displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 4), represents the interior of a slaughterhouse where the butchering of animals takes place. The main scene of the model shows two oxen ready for the slaughtering and the servants ties their legs. This process takes place under the supervision of an overseer who standing behind the head of each animal. In front of the animal, there is a man waiting with a bowl to collect and catch the blood for testing it (Mendoza, 2017: 117-119). It is uncertain for what purpose this collected blood was later used, whether employed in some ritual or prepared in some fashion as a food or make into an additive for sausage or blood pudding. In several paintings near the butchery scene, a man brought a kettle and placed it over the fire and some scholars mentioned that the collected blood probably being boiled to make a pudding (Winlock, 1955: 24; Ikram, 1995: 180-182; Wilson, 1988: 41; Gilbert, 1988: 79-80).

By looking closely at this model of butchering scene, one can learn a number of things about this process. One can note the practice of butchering the oxen and preserving the meat, as well as the practice and the tools that are being used. These tools will be smaller versions of actual tools that the Egyptians used in daily life. Also, the butchering was performed by male workers than female workers (Mendoza, 2017: 117-119).



There are many scenes that depicting a group of servant carrying the foreleg on the walls of the tombs and also this foreleg is considered the preferred part on the offering tables because it is believed to provide the deceased with strength as the interpretation of its name as the strong arm or the power (Fig. 6).

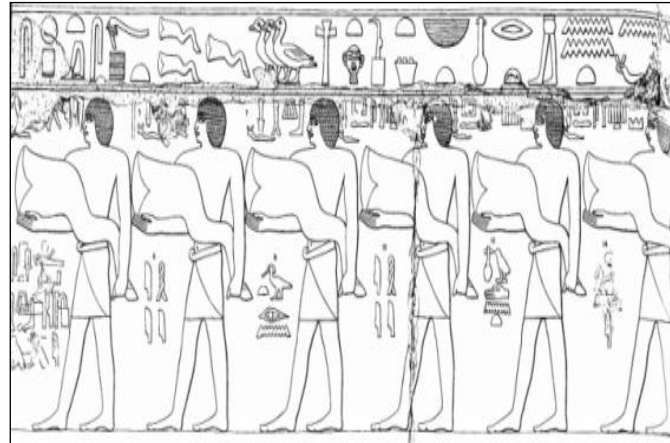


Fig.6: The servant carrying the foreleg, the Mastaba of Mereruka (Duell, 1938: pl.65)

Other important representations in the Egyptian tombs were the extracting the heart and the amputation of the foreleg during the funeral (Fig. 7). The heart and the foreleg were taken by the priests and they quickly run to the mummy while they were still warm with life. After cutting and presenting the foreleg and the heart to the mummy, the rite of the Opening of the Mouth had been achieved on the mummy as in the papyrus of Hunefer from the reign of Seti I and preserved in the British Museum (Fig. 8) (Assmann, 2005: 324; Taylor, 2010: 88).

Also, other representations of the amputation of the foreleg from a living calf during a funeral had been observed in the reliefs of the tombs. The foreleg of the living calf was amputated while the animal was still alive and its mother stood behind it, mourning her young calf with upraised head and her tongue stuck out (Fig. 9). In the Theban tombs of the New Kingdom, there are many representations of this rite (Weigall, 1915: 10).



Fig.7: Amputation the foreleg and extracting the heart (Quibell, 1898: pl.35)

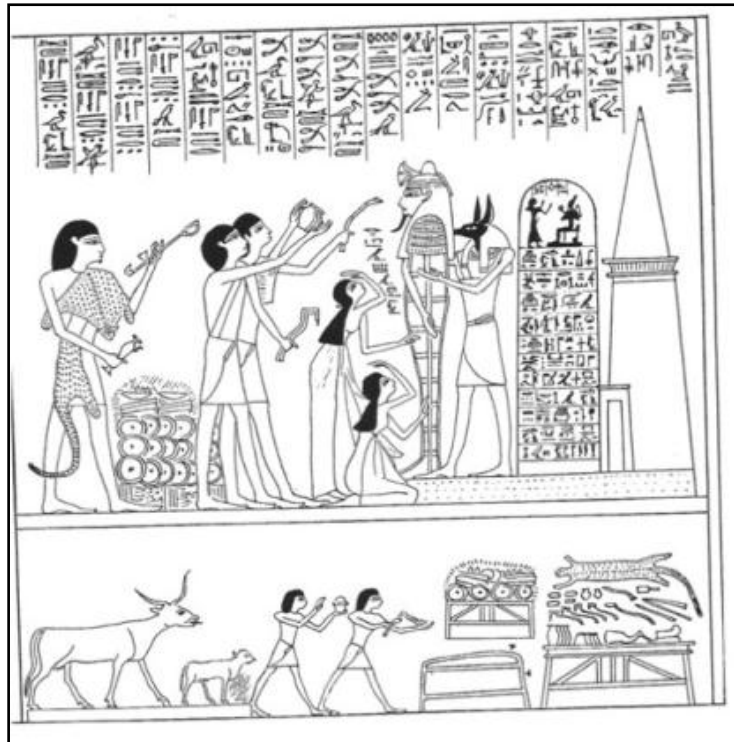


Fig. 8: Cutting the foreleg of the calf and the Opening of the Mouth of Hunefer (Neville, 1886: pl.ii).

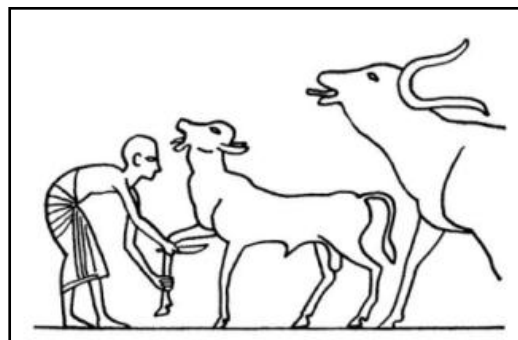


Fig.9: A relief in the Cairo Museum, No. 396, from the tomb of Ptahmose of Dynasty XIX, shows the leg being cut off (Weigall, 1915: 10.fig.i).

The papyrus of Hunefer (Fig.8) depicted the calf standing on three legs and the two running priests with the heart and the foreleg, but it is not acceptable that the heart and the foreleg had been cut from the standing calf while he was still alive. Therefore, it is probably that the heart and the foreleg related to another calf which was slaughtered in the funeral. There were many documents confirmed this idea. For example, the hieratic papyrus from Abydos which preserved in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago depicted a priest carrying a foreleg and a small calf try to run away towards its mother and the calf depicted with its four legs (Fig. 10). Also, another papyrus depicted the bull on an alter and its legs tied with the ropes and a priest ready to cut its foreleg and beside the bull, a small calf try also to run away (Fig. 11) (الصياد، ٢٠١٧: ص.٢٤٧-٢٤٨).

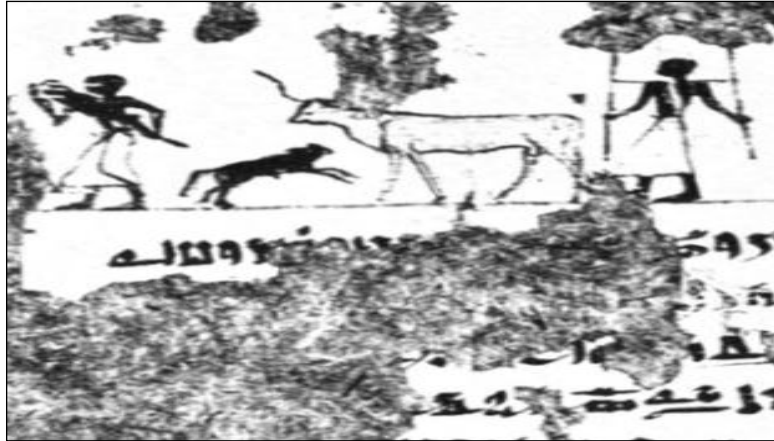


Fig. 10: The hieratic papyrus of Abydos (Allen, 1960: pl.vi)

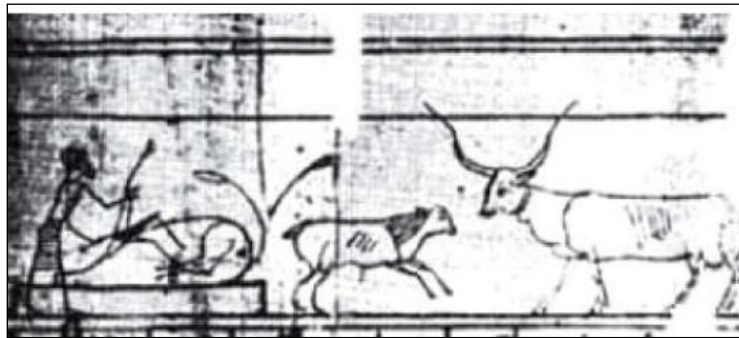


Fig. 11: The papyrus of Hapi-ankh (Bosse-Griffiths, 1996: 98)

Therefore, the prevailing belief about the relationship between amputation of the foreleg of the calf and its used in the ritual of Opening the Mouth became unacceptable. It is clear that the foreleg belongs to bulls, not to small calves. The bull was presented as a sacrifice in the funeral procession to be slaughtered and then cut the foreleg to be used in the Opening of the Mouth, due to its magical power which continues to a short time. So, it is not strange to find that the priest asked the one who carry it to run quickly (Majno, 1957: 107; Teeter, 2001: 141). By this means the life force in the still-pulsating limb was transferred to the dead person or another expression of the function of the rituals of the renewal of life. This scene had showed not only the role of the warm flesh of the calf in the rite, but also the mournful of its mother. Both of these, the fresh foreleg and the bellowing of the cow which was interpreted as mourning over the deceased, were supposed to have a life-endowing, “mouth opening” effect on the mummy (Assmann, 2005: 324; Taylor, 2010: 88).

### III. The Astronomical Concept of *hpš*:

Ursa Major is one of the well-known constellations in the sky. It was located in the northern stars that never set. Ursa Major was called “*hpš*”, “an image of the foreleg” by the ancient Egyptian as appeared in the Pyramid Texts. Ursa Major also called “*Mshtyw*”, “an image of the bull” (Beatty, 1998:153). Its name is mentioned in the book of the day and the night as “*Mshtyw*” according to the bull which is represented in the middle of this constellation (Piankoff & Doriton, 1942: 24; Brugsch, 1883: 123).





“The enneads have purified for him in the form of *Mshtyw*, the imperishable star (Wainwright, 1932:380; Mercer, 1952 I: 101; Krauss, 1977: 98)”. This text confirmed the constellation was regarded as part of the imperishable stars.

This constellation is found containing a group of seven stars that called as the Big Dipper or the Plough and these seven bright stars are *Alkaid*, *Mizar*, *Alioth*, *Megrez*, *Phecda*, *Merak* and *Dubhe* (Fig.14) (Neugebauer & Parker, 1969 III: 183). It is believed that the image of the foreleg as Ursa Major does not refer to the totality of the constellation and to see this constellation of the Great Bear, it must not only look at the seven stars of the Big Dipper, but also add many fainter stars situated to the west and south. Therefore, the image of the foreleg represents the prominent asterism commonly known as the Big Dipper within the total circumpolar constellation of Ursa Major which was called “*Mshtyw*” (Beatty, 1998: 153).

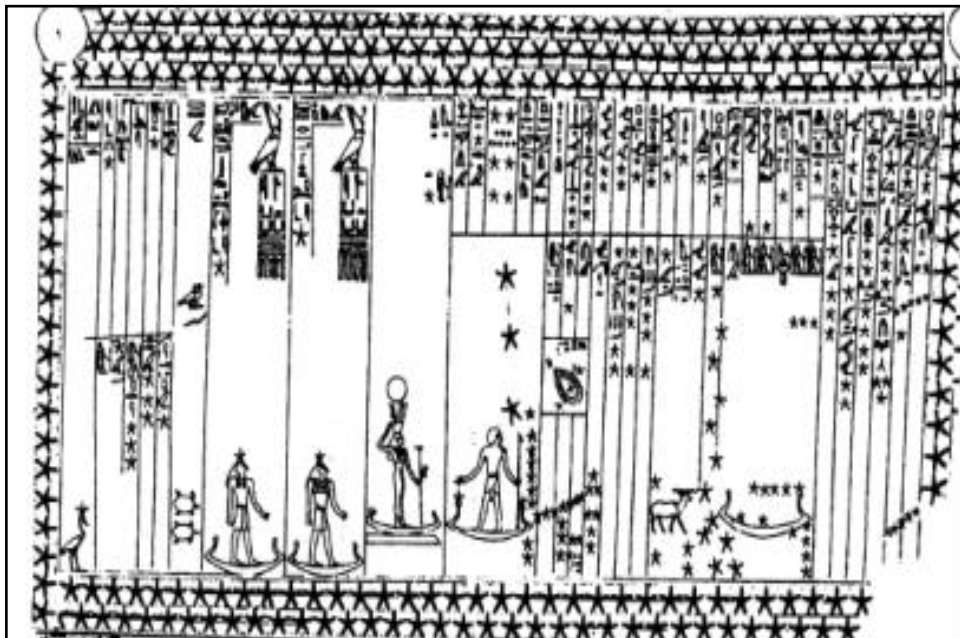


Fig. 13: The star map in the tomb of Seti I (Neugebauer & Parker, 1969 III: pl.3).



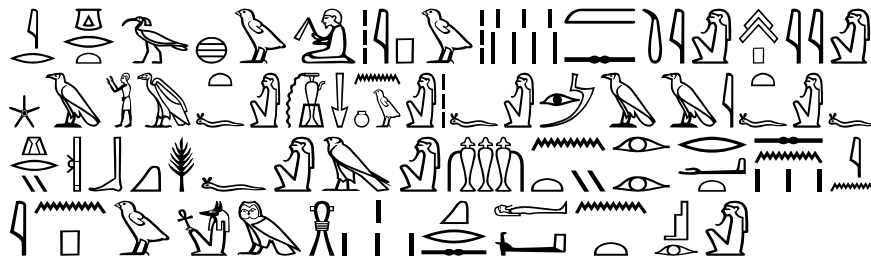
Fig.14: The seven bright stars of the ancient Egyptian constellation of *Mshtyw*, the Bull's Foreleg (Belmonte, 2009: 215)

The first depictions of this constellation appeared on a lid of sarcophagus of princess *m-s3ht* from the Middle Kingdom and represented the thigh of bull clutters stars between groups of deities (Daressy, 1900: 79).



names for the individual stars. These four divinities of Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef and Qebehsenuf, behind the asterism of the Big Dipper, are probably a reference to  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  of Ursa Major which are the four individual stars that compose the image of the meaty part of the thigh of the asterism. The names of these four divinities are always cited in ancient Egyptian texts in the same order and this fact could also suggest that the ancient Egyptian were the first to conceptualize a star ordering system (Beatty, 1998: 155).

Another text from the same chapter refers to the four Sons of Horus as four out of seven “*Mshtyw*”, thus possibly referring to the seven stars of “*Mshtyw*”, of which these gods represented four and this text could be read as (Budge, 1898: 59):



*“in grt 3hw ipw.7 msty h3py dw3 mwt.f kbh snw.f m33 it.f hrt b3k.f hr hnty irty rdit.sn in inpw m s3 krs(t) nt wsir”*

“Now as for these seven spirits, Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef, Qebehsenuf, he who sees his father, he who is under his moringa-tree and Hours with his two eyes, Anubis placed them as protection for the burial of Osiris (Faulkner, 2000: 47)”.

All the seven stars which make up the asterism of the Big Dipper, were referred to them collectively as the seven effective spirits and placed by Anubis as protection for the burial of Osiris (Beatty, 1998: 155). This text refers to the four Sons of Horus as four out of seven stars of the asterism of the Big Dipper, thus possibly referring to the seven stars of “*Mshtyw*”, of which these gods represented four. The association between the four Sons of Horus and “*Mshtyw*” is not mentioned in the Coffin Texts where “*Mshtyw*” almost exclusively appears to have been regarded as an individual deity (Wallin, 2002: 100).

The constellation “*Mshtyw*” was used to help the deceased to ascend to the sky and there are many texts that confirming this role. These texts are showing “*Mshtyw*” as the representative for the northern sky as appeared in the following spell 61 (Spell. 61b-h) (Buck, 1935 I: 264):





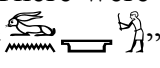
“*s3h dd.f n mshtyw ity m š.k ity.i m š.i ir.[s]n st n wsir N pn ‘h<sup>c</sup>.k w3t nt d3t r pt*”

“Sah says to the Great Bear (*Mshtyw*); take from your lake what I take from my lake, that we may prepare a place for N, Grant the crane’s way to the sky”.

Through this spell “*Mshtyw*” assist the deceased to ascend to the sky (Faulkner, 1962 I: 57). Concerning to the lakes, Willems suggests that the lakes represent the northern and southern skies (Willems, 1996: 185). The lakes may refer also to the purification of the deceased (Krauss, 1977: 97). This interpretation supported by another text from the Pyramid Texts (pyr.458c) as mentioned above.

The “*Mshtyw*” and the Sah were identified collectively as the two crew of the solar barks. They helped the deceased to ascend to the sky and accompanied the journey of the sun god Re. “*Mshtyw*” was as the representative for the northern sky and *Sah* as the representative of the southern sky. There are many spells from the Coffin Texts that emphasize the combined roles of Sah and “*Mshtyw*” (spell.61b-h) (pyr.458c) (spell.399d-g). These texts are interpreted as a reference to the regulation of the hours performed for the rebirth of the deceased. It was seen that the imperishable stars, in which “*Mshtyw*” was included, were identified as the crew of the Day Bark and that the Unwearying Stars, in which *s3h*-Orion is included, were identified as the crew of the Night Bark. With this in mind, “*Mshtyw*”, as one of the members of the crew of the Day Bark, regulated the hours during the day and *s3h*-Orion, as one of the members of the crew of the night bark, regulated the hours of the night. Further, although no barks or boats are mentioned in this text, it is possible that these two constellations were regarded as the leaders of the crew of the Night Bark and the Day Bark (Wallin, 2002: 125-126).

#### IV: *hpš* and the Opening of the Mouth:

The ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth is one of the most important rituals in ancient Egypt. The ritual was called “”, “*wp.t-r3*” (Wb, 1971 I:300), “Opening of the Mouth”. There were two verbs interpreted as “open” and they were “”, “*wpi*” and “”, “*wn*” (Wb, 1971 I: 298,311; Gardiner, 2007: 560-561). The two verbs are not exact synonyms for the “Opening of the Mouth”, but it seems that the *wpi* verb was used more than “*wn*” and “*wpi*” is more probably favoured because the Opening of the Mouth entails the parting of the lips, although *wn* often appeared in parallel with it (Roth, 2001: 606).

The Opening of the Mouth was performed upon the divine statues of the god with the aim of bringing it to life in the divine temple while in the tomb and the mortuary temple, it was performed upon the mummies, the *k3*-statue with the aim of making the soul of the deceased go forth into the afterlife (Alford, 2004: 181) and also performed upon the coffins and mortuary statues (Quack, 2005: 165-18). Briefly, this ritual performed to allow the mummy to eat, breathe, see and hear.

The Opening of the Mouth ritual itself is not attested until the New Kingdom, although the term of Opening of the Mouth appeared with no special explanation in the Palermo stone and in the tomb of the royal official *Metjen* (Mastaba L6, found by German Carl Richard Lepsius at Saqqara in 1842 and now completely display at the Egyptian Museum of Berlin) in the early Fourth Dynasty (Lorton, 1999: 148; Roth, 2001: 605-609).

The Pyramid Texts contains many references for the Opening of the Mouth where the deceased king is identified with Osiris whose body must be assembled and restored to life and Osiris is said to open his own mouth, but it is usually opened by his son Horus or the four Sons of Horus and Horus is called a loving son priest of his father (Alford, 2004: 181). The text translated as (pyr.1330a-b) (Sethe, 1910 II: 237) “your mouth is opened by Horus with his little finger, with which he opened the mouth of his father, with which he opened the mouth of Osiris” (Mercer, 1952 I: 216).



Fig.15: Opening of the Mouth by Ay for Tutankhamon (Roth, 1993: 58).

The Pyramid Texts mentioned that the Opening of the Mouth could be performed with various implements which were touched to the lips (Roth, 2001: 606). These implements are the foreleg of a bull and an adz and these implements were a special tools (Fig. 8, 15) whose distinctive forms were modelled the pattern of the northern circumpolar stars either Ursa Minor or the Plough in Ursa Major (pyr. 11–15) (Sethe, 1908 I: 7-8). According to the scenes of the butchering of a bull, the heart and foreleg are severed and pointed towards the deceased and followed by Opening of the Mouth rituals. The hieroglyph for foreleg denoted strength and perhaps it was considered that the foreleg transferred the life-force of the bull to the recipient of the Opening of the mouth (alternately, the bull may have had to do with reviving sexual powers) (Otto, 1960 II: 81-83; Cooney & McClain, 2006: 57, 67, 69).

The foreleg which had been used in the ritual of the Opening of the Mouth, gave the deceased with his senses to live a new life after death. Since the constellation “*Mshtyw*” was depicted as the foreleg, Wainwright saw a connection between the ritual and the constellation (Wainwright, 1932: 11; Otto, 1960 II: 81-83). This suggests a translation for (pyr. 14a) (Sethe, 1908 I: 8) as:



“*mshtyw bi3 wp r n ntrw*”

“The *Mshtyw* of *bi3* which open the mouth of the gods” and *bi3* identifies as a meteoric iron which indeed was used in the manufacture of the ritual and this adz has been found in tombs (Wainwright, 1932: 11; Otto, 1960 II: 107).

*Mshtyw* in (𓆎𓅓𓆏𓆑𓆒𓆓𓆔𓆕𓆖𓆗𓆘𓆙, pyr.458c), “*mshtyw ihmw-sk, Mshtyw*”, “the imperishable stars”. It has both a star and an adz as determinatives, thus further associating “*Mshtyw*” with the Opening of the Mouth ritual. This adz in the shape of the foreleg of an ox, with its power issuing from “*Mshtyw*”, used to give new life to the deceased via the Opening of the Mouth ritual. Gardiner regarded this funerary ritual as partly derived from the importance of the “*Mshtyw*” constellation (Sethe, 1908 I: 235; Gardinar, 1947 I: 4; Wallin, 2002: 109).

The association of the foreleg of the ox with the Opening of the Mouth ritual and “*Mshtyw*” could be concluded from the slaughtering scenes that the act of severing the foreleg took place while it was still warm with life and it is believed that the foreleg when presented to the deceased, symbolized the power of regeneration. The depiction of the constellation “*Mshtyw*” as a foreleg, as well as its symbolic status, may have derived from ritual practice (Gordon, 1998: 461-469).

The Coffin Texts offers another spell that mentioned the connection between the ritual of Opening of the Mouth and “*Mshtyw*” (Willems, 1996: 450. n. 1). This text (spell. 399) could be read as (Buck, 1954 V: 167):



“*Mshtyw wp r N*”

“*Mshtyw* who opens the mouth of the deceased”.

This text mentioned the connection between “*Mshtyw*” and the Opening of the Mouth ritual, thus implying a link between this constellation and the resurrection of the deceased. The daily appearance of “*Mshtyw*” in the northern sky symbolized the power of giving life which incorporated into the Opening of the Mouth ritual (Wallin, 2002: 110).

Also, the mouth was opened by the eye of Horus. The relation between the eye of Horus and Seth had been related to the northern circumpolar stars and the battle of Horus and Seth. The ancient Egyptians worshipped the god in the form of a bull and the dismembered parts of his body had been spiritualized in the sky. It was believed that the northern stars formed the pattern of two forelegs or two thighs (Fig. 16, 17), which were held to be the limbs of Seth. These stars are known today as Ursa Minor and the Plough in Ursa Major, but the Egyptian name was “*Mshtyw*”, determined by the sign of the foreleg of bull. These northern stars are showing the magical symbolism for the Opening

of the Mouth ceremony. Firstly, the adz takes the form of one of the forelegs of Seth (either Ursa Minor or the Plough in Ursa Major and given stellar name “*Mshtyw*”, determined by the sign of adz). Secondly, the key offering in the ritual was the foreleg of bull “*hps*” which was the principal form of the Eye of Horus. In Utterance 20, the text reads as: “O Osiris-the king, I split open your mouth for you with the “*hps*” of the Eye of Horus, one foreleg “*hps*” (Alford, 2004: 181-182).

According to the myth of Horus and Seth, there is much interwoven symbolism: Firstly, the foreleg offering that splits open the mouth of the king is identified as the foreleg of Seth which Horus has torn off. Secondly, the adz that splits open the mouth is made of the iron which issued from Seth. Thirdly, the eye that splits the mouth signifies the subjugation of Seth because he failed in his attempt to control it. The seven northern circumpolar stars that formed the adz and the foreleg of the bull symbolised the eternal life (Fig. 16, 17, 18). These stars always appeared and visible in the sky and never disappeared below the horizon and to make the adz in this shape created a magical symbolism which ensuring the rebirth of the king (Alford, 2004: 181-182).

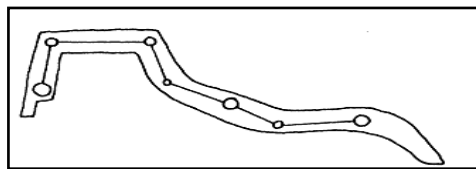


Fig. 16: The constellation Ursa Major interpreted as an adz (Roth, 1993: 70).

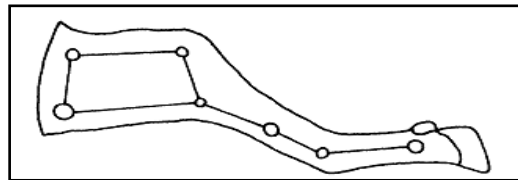


Fig. 17: The constellation Ursa Major interpreted as a foreleg (Roth, 1993: 70).

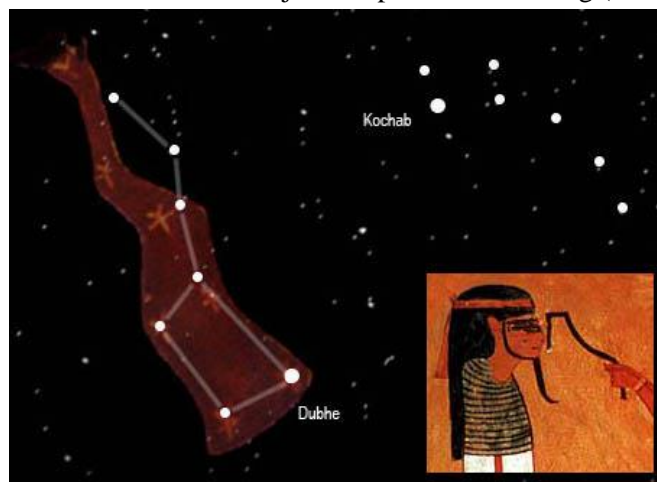


Fig.18: Celestial diagram of the northern skies (Belmonte, 2009: 248).

The general view of the Opening of the Mouth enabled the deceased to breathe and speak in the realm of the afterlife. This ceremony is thus regarded as an attempt to translate the deceased to the afterlife via archaic, magical associations with the world of the gods.

## **Conclusion**

The amputation and the presentation of the foreleg are often represented on the walls of the tombs. This butchered leg has a great religious and ceremonial importance. The selected animals for the butchery were force-feeding for fattening to be suitable as scarifies. The animal was tied with a rope to be ready for slaughtering. During the process of the butchery, a man holds a bowl to catch the first bleeding blood and he gives this blood to a priest to examine it and to ensure its purity. This collected blood was probably later used, whether in some ritual or prepared in some fashion as a food or make as additives. The amputation of the foreleg is considered a vital element, because it helps to drain the body and get out and empty the blood from the body to prevent the meat from being damaged. The foreleg is the preferred part on the offering tables because it is believed to provide the deceased with strength and power as the meaning of its name. This explains why the ancient Egyptian gave more attention to the foreleg, even before it was cut and presented as an offering.

The foreleg or the thigh is called “*hps*” and also translated as “strong arm” or “power” and it was a symbol of divine and royal strength and transferred the life-force of the bull to the recipient. “*hps*”, as an image of the foreleg, refers to Ursa Major which is one of the well-known constellations in the sky. The Egyptians have another name for this constellation Ursa Major termed as “*Mshtyw*”. This constellation is depicted as the thigh of bull with its seven stars between groups of deities and it had been widely depicted on the ceilings of the tombs of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties.

This foreleg is considered as one of the imperishable stars in the northern stars. It is associated with the god Seth. The texts stated that the leg of Seth was cut off and thrown up to the heaven, to the “*mshtyw*” in the northern sky and was guarded by the imperishable stars. It was also guarded by the four Sons of Horus. These four divinities of Imsety, Hapy, Duamutef and Qebehsenuef probably refers to  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  of Ursa Major and these four individual stars composes the image of the meaty part of the thigh of this constellation. This constellation helped the deceased to ascend to the sky and accompanied the journey of the sun god Re. It was seen that the imperishable stars, in which “*Mshtyw*” was included, were identified as the crew of the Day Bark and regulated the hours during the day.

The foreleg of a bull was used in the ritual of Opening of the Mouth. Also, an adz had been used to touch the lips of the deceased in this ritual. These foreleg of a bull and the adz were modelled the pattern of the northern circumpolar stars either Ursa Minor or the Plough in Ursa Major. The northern circumpolar stars that formed the adz and the foreleg of the bull symbolised the eternal life. These stars always appeared and visible in the sky and never disappeared below the horizon and created a magical symbolism which ensuring the rebirth of the king. The daily appearance of this constellation in the northern sky symbolized the power of giving life which incorporated into the Opening of the Mouth ritual. Also, the mouth was opened by the eye of Horus.



The eye of Horus and Seth had been related to the northern circumpolar stars. The ancient Egyptians worshipped the god in the form of a bull and the dismembered parts of his body had been spiritualized in the sky. It was believed that the northern stars formed the pattern of two forelegs or two thighs which were held to be the limbs of Seth.

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## رمزية بتر القدم الأمامية (الخبش) في مصر القديمة كقربان

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### الملخص العربي

حظيت الحيوانات في مصر القديمة بالتوقير كآلهة واستمرت في أداء دوراً هاماً في حياه المصري القديم، هذا واحتل الطعام أهمية كبيرة في حياة المصريين حيث كانت تلك الحيوانات مصدراً مهماً للطعام، حيث أن لحوم تلك الحيوانات كانت لها مكانة خاصة في النظام الغذائي للمصري القديم. وعبر عنها في اللغة المصرية القديمة تحت مسمى "hps" أو القدم الأمامية للحيوان. وتم تصوير القدم الأمامية على جدران المقابر وعلى موائد القرابين، هذا وبالإضافة إلى أن مناظر بتر القدم الأمامية كانت واحدة من أهم المناظر التي تم تصويرها على جدران المقابر، وتساعد هذه الدراسة على توضيح إعطاء المصريين القدماء اهتماماً كبيراً للقدم الأمامية للحيوان وتقديمها كقربان، ولذلك ألفت الضوء على مراحل الذبح ومن ثم بتر القدم الأمامية وأهمية تلك القدم كواحد من القرابين المقدمة للمتوفى ودراسة الرمزية الفلكية لـ "hps" والتي ذكرت في العديد من الإشارات في نصوص الأهرامات، هذا والتركييز على الإسم الآخر لتلك القدم والتي تعنى "Mshtyw"، والتي تشير إلى مجموعة النجوم التي توجد في السماء الشمالية والتي اتسمت بصفة الخلود حيث أنها دائمة الظهور في السماء ولا تختفى خلف الأفق، ودور تلك القدم في طقس فتح الفم وإرتبطها بالمعبود ست وحمائها من جانب أبناء حورس الأربعة. هذا وبالإضافة إلى دورها في إعادة الحياه وميلاد الملك المتوفى مرة أخرى في العالم الآخر.

الكلمات الدالة: النجوم الشمالية، الخبش، القدم الأمامية، طقس فتح الفم، القوم، حورس، ست.