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An Official Seal from Kom Ombo – the Earliest Attestation of the Ancient Name of the Town

Abstract: Since 2017 the Austrian Archaeological Institute/Austrian Academy of Sciences, Cairo in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) is working at the town of Kom Ombo, in southern Egypt. Excavations have uncovered part of a cemetery and a large administrative building of the First Intermediate Period containing silos north of the modern temple enclosure wall. While this administrative building dates to the later First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom, the cemetery has a longer use, and is built on top of a town quarter from the Old Kingdom. Some of the most interesting and numerous finds from the recent work in both domestic and cemetery contexts are sealings, which shed a new light on the importance of the town of Kom Ombo in the Old Kingdom. In this paper we discuss an official seal issued under Neferirkara, reconstructed from three seal impressions, which provides evidence for a *pr-šn^c* installation at Kom Ombo – probably connected to the “royal repast” – in the 5th Dynasty. Apart from its economic significance, its historic value lies in being the earliest attestation of the ancient name of Kom Ombo currently known.

1 Introduction

We are pleased to offer this paper to the Festschrift of Stephan Seidlmayer as a modest contribution to research concerning the Old Kingdom in Upper Egypt.

As part of its research on ancient urbanism, the Austrian Archaeological Institute/Austrian Academy of Sciences, Cairo, started work in 2017 at the town of Kom Ombo, in southern Egypt. It is located about 45 km north of Aswan on the eastern bank of the Nile. While modern Kom Ombo is about 1 km inland, the ancient town lies directly on the Nile. Kom Ombo is mainly known for its double temple, dedicated to the falcon god Haroeris and the crocodile god Sobek. However, the research of the Cairo branch of the Austrian Archaeological Institute (in the following ÖAI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) is concentrated upon the tell surrounding the temple, and has the aim of examining the nature of the occupation from the earliest period of settlement to the latest activity, an Anglo-Egyptian fortress of the late 19th century. Prior to this work, the identification of Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period remains at the site of Kom Ombo itself has, up to the most recent investigations, been equally limited. De Morgan in his 1895 publication of Kom Ombo was the first scholar to refer to occupation in the 5th and 6th Dynasties, although unfortunately without citing any evidence for this.¹ He suggested that Kom Ombo at this time was a fortification built to prevent Nubian incursions from the eastern desert.² Kemp’s survey of the archaeological remains on the tell concluded that Kom Ombo was a sizeable settlement in the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period. The only investigation of the tell was Kemp’s survey, which provided proof of existence of a settlement of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period.³ The work of a project to lower the groundwater at the site from 2017 to 2019 demonstrated that the existing temple and the modern museum are built on top of the First Intermediate Period town.⁴ Recently, the ÖAI survey has shown that the settlement of the First Intermediate Period extended at least under the northern half of the modern tell,⁵ and excavations have uncovered part of a cemetery and a large administrative building containing silos north of the modern temple enclosure wall (Fig. 1).⁶ While this administrative building dates to the later First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom, the cemetery has a longer use, and preliminary results hint at a date for the earlier phase in the late Old Kingdom or early First

1 De Morgan et al. 1895, 1.

2 *Ibid.*, 1.

3 Kemp 1985.

4 Sadarangani et al. 2019.

5 Rose 2019, 66–67.

6 Forstner-Müller et al. 2019, 68–76.

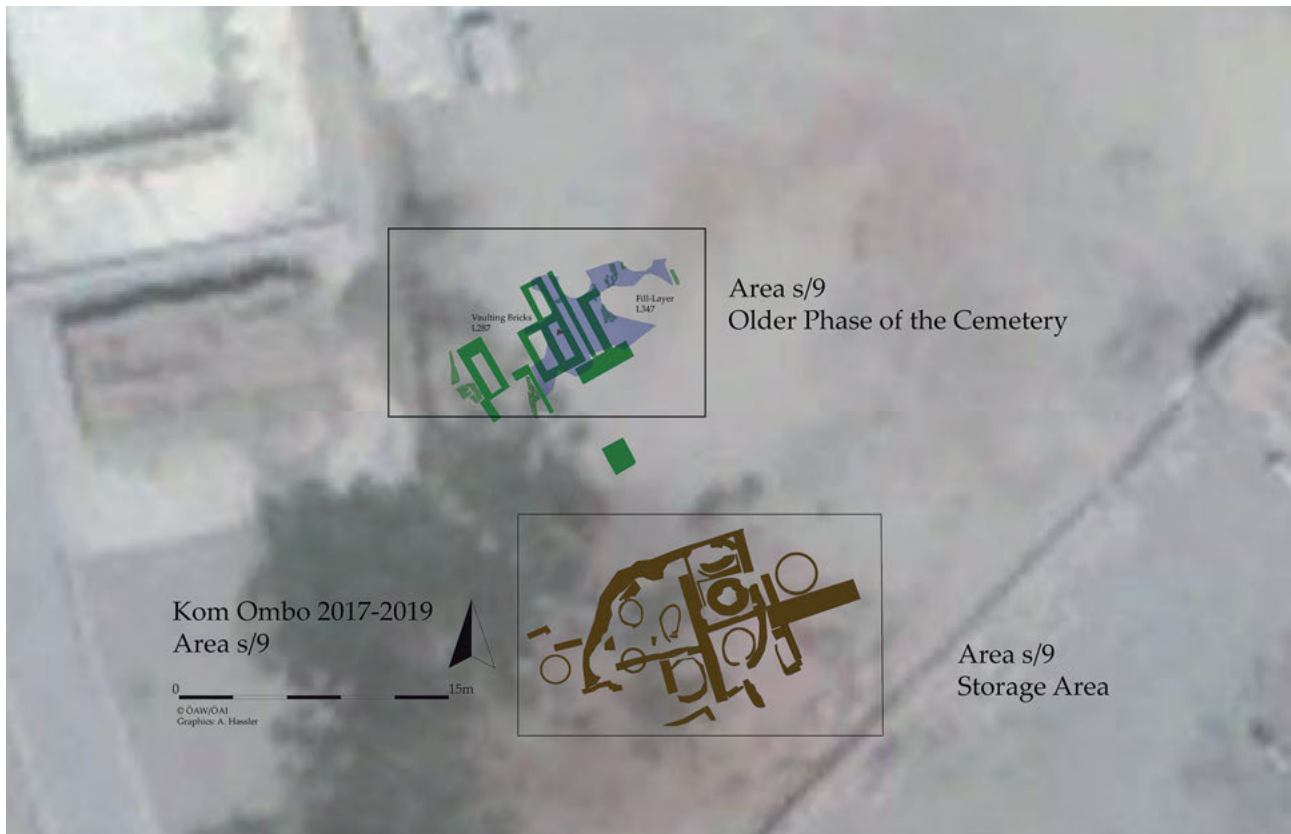


Fig. 1: Overall plan of the area excavated by the ÖAI.

Intermediate Period. The cemetery is built on massive levelling layers over a domestic town quarter with several phases of structures of buildings and courtyards.

2 The Sealings

Some of the most interesting and numerous finds from the recent work in both domestic and cemetery contexts are seal impressions, which shed a new light on the importance of the town of Kom Ombo in the Old Kingdom. During the first three seasons, sieving of all excavated material yielded a corpus of 281 fragmented clay sealings, among which about 220 are made by cylinders and c. 40 by stamp seals.⁷ Generally speaking, the seal impressions from Kom Ombo can be classified into three groups according to the type of seal used:⁸

1. *Beamtensiegel* (officials' seals) which bear the names, titles and epithets of officials traditionally dated to the late 2nd–early 4th Dynasty⁹

⁷ The corpus of sealings was briefly presented by Forstner-Müller et al. 2019, 84. Similar seal impressions dating to the Protodynastic period and the Old Kingdom were found during the rescue excavations by the Ministry of Antiquities conducted within the framework of the Kom Ombo Ground Water Lowering Project (Sadarangani et al. 2019, A2–170–199).

⁸ For a general overview of the typology of Old Kingdom seals see Kaplony 1978; Pätznick 2005; Nolan 2010, 60–72; Nolan 2018, 272–275. Our classification adopts the terminology of Nolan 2010.

⁹ Among these phrases figure the title *mitr* (Jones 2000, 424, n° 1571; Kahl 2004, 176–177; Pätznick 2005, 137–140; Florès 2015, 24–30; Engel 2018, 134–137) and the phrases *nfr qd mšꜥ.t* (Pätznick 2005, 150–155; Regulski 2009, 41–44; Engel 2018, 137–138), *rnw* (Pätznick 2005, 124–137; Regulski 2009, 41–44; Engel 2018, 111–112) and *šꜥd* (Pätznick 2005, 155–160; Engel 2018, 141–142); cf. Bußmann (2010, 448–454) who proposes – based on the sealings of Buhen mentioning *nfr qd mšꜥ.t* – that this type of *Beamtensiegel* might have also existed in the 4th or 5th Dynasty.

2. *Amtssiegel* (official seals) mainly naming kings of the early 5th Dynasty and the seal-owners' titles, but not their names¹⁰
3. Stamp seals of different shapes displaying geometric/abstract motifs or human/animal figures, covering the period from the end of the 6th Dynasty to the late First Intermediate Period¹¹

As the only textual sources extant so far on site, the sealings offer a first glimpse of the local key institutions in the 3rd millennium B. C. and the economic status of Kom Ombo within the framework of the Old Kingdom provincial administration.¹² For this purpose, the approximately 50 so-called “official seal” impressions – characterized by the royal *serekh* or birth name set in a cartouche and the titles of the seal-owner – form a particularly relevant group. Based on the prominent display of the royal protocol, they are generally considered as belonging to functionaries of the central administration.¹³ At Kom Ombo, the earliest official sealings were recovered in archaeological units prior to the 5th Dynasty, but their fragmentary state – just parts of the *serekh* or other elements of the royal titulary are preserved – do not yet allow them to be assigned to any specific ruler. The majority of the official sealings, however, bear the names of the 5th Dynasty kings Userkaf (*ḥr ir̄-m̄īḥ.t*), Sahura (*ḥr nb-ḥ̄w*), and Neferirkara (*ḥr wsr-ḥ̄w*). Although most of them were found in the levelling layers under the early phase of the Old Kingdom–First Intermediate Period cemetery and thus give no indication of their primary contexts, they seem to form a relatively coherent corpus of container, chest, and rarely door sealings.

3 A Reconstructed Seal from the 5th Dynasty

A substantial group of the official sealings was impressed from identical cylinders and thus offers the opportunity to partly to reconstruct the inscriptions of several of the seals employed; given the abundance of overlapping seal impressions, future excavations are likely to contribute to the still-missing parts. Nevertheless, we present here an official seal issued under Neferirkara, due to its particular historic and economic significance, and as evidence for the first appearance of the name of Kom Ombo in the 5th Dynasty. The seal's current reconstruction is based on the impressions of the sealings KO-KF 546 (Fig. 2a–b) and KO-KF 1436, both from the major levelling layer L347 which directly underlies the first phase of the cemetery, and KO-KF 207 (Fig. 3a–b) found within the mud-brick vault of a tomb in the latter. All three are fragments of larger sealings which are made of extremely fine non-tempered darkish-



Fig. 2a–b: The sealing KO-KF 546 (left) and its rear (right).

¹⁰ Alternatively, this type is also called “royal seal” (e.g. Engel 2009).

¹¹ We are highly indebted to Laure Pantalacci for her guidance in the study of the sealing corpus, discussions on numerous details and her critical comments on this contribution.

¹² Cf. Martinet 2019, 502.

¹³ Kaplony 1977, 5–52; Pantalacci 2001; Pätznick 2005, 63–87; Bußmann 2010, 445–446.

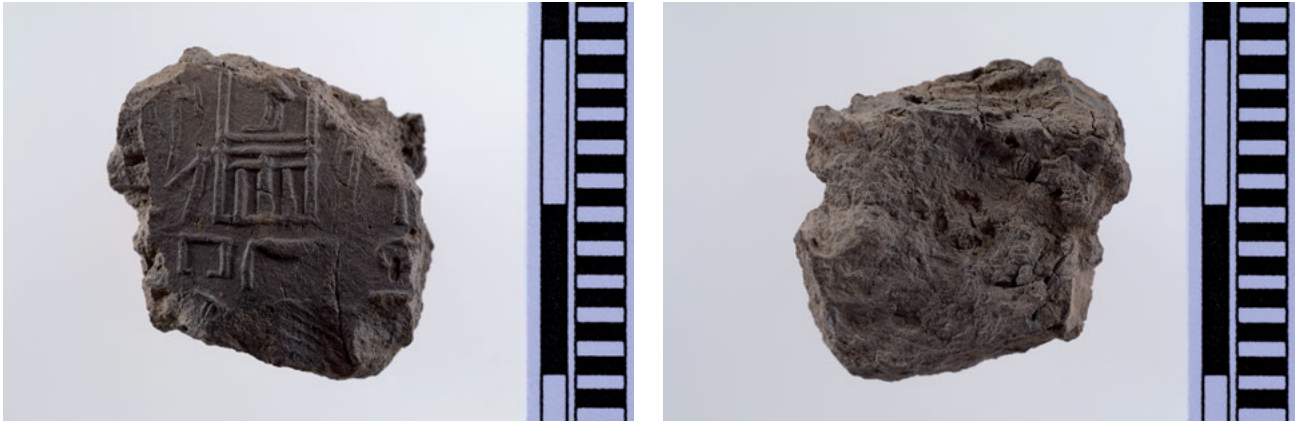


Fig. 3a–b: The sealing KO-KF 207 (left) and its rear (right).

brown clay and bear traces of just one seal impression. Fingerprints appear on their original edges and illustrate the way they were pressed onto the sealed commodity. The small, sealed surface of KO-KF 207 is flat and its rear displays no recognizable traces of the object to which it was fixed. Significantly different, KO-KF 546¹⁴ and KO-KF 1436 – half-rounded in shape – preserve the blurred impression of textile folds on their rears and of strings fabricated by twisted vegetable fibres in one of the breaks; they were thus probably employed for closing containers.¹⁵

By a fortunate coincidence, the overlapping impressions preserve a large segment of the inscription's lower part, and consequently its horizontal bottom line which indicates the titles of the seal-owner. By contrast, its upper part displaying the royal protocol accompanied by different epithets is largely lost. A comparison to stylistically similar 5th Dynasty seals¹⁶ indicates that parts of the inscription are still missing. Firstly, all inscriptions with one or more bottom lines consist of six to eight vertical lines (among them three to five built up by *serekhs*),¹⁷ while the reconstructed Neferirkara seal currently has only five, two of which are filled by *serekhs* (Fig. 4). Secondly, if one had – in its current state of reconstruction – the full circumference of the seal, it would measure 3.35 cm, its diameter being approximately 1.1 cm. However, the diameters of comparable cylinder seals lie between 1.75 and 3.5 cm, the height of the cylinder measuring as a general rule about one and a half times to twice its diameter, i.e. its width.¹⁸ As the proportions of its *serekhs* suggest, the height of the Neferirkara seal (currently preserved: 2.1 cm) must have reached approximately 3.2–3.7 cm¹⁹ and as a consequence its original diameter must have measured between 1.6 and 2.4 cm. Thus, the current state of reconstruction probably lacks three or more vertical lines. One of the missing *serekh*-lines could have constituted a group with the rightwards-oriented line at the inscription's extreme right – as suggested by the fragmentary bird's tail. As to the seal's material, the sharp contours of the elaborate signs and most of the comparable seals from the 5th Dynasty indicate that it might have been of metal.²⁰

14 Numerous cracks fracture the sealed surface. They might be due to the drying process of the sealing or to the composition of the clay.
15 Many of the other official sealings were fixed to the same kind of “possible container” (Nolan 2010, 112; cf. Pätznick 2005, 48–52, tab. 2b), which might be a textile bag (Engel/Müller 2000, 39, type B2) or a vessel, the mouth of which was closed with a piece of textile fastened by strings to its neck (Ibd. 37–38, type G4 or Pätznick 2005, 13–22, Gv. I). Concerning the challenges and possibilities connected to the study of back of the sealings cf. also the recent discussion Jeřábek 2020.

16 Baltimore WAM 57.1748, silver, d. 2.3 cm (Ibd., 185–186, pl. 59, *Sjhw-r*^c 16; diameter according to <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/12274/royal-seal-of-king-sahure/> vs. Kaplony 1981, 185 “23 (16 mm)”; Brooklyn Museum 44.123.30, limestone, d. 3.25–3.5 cm (Ibd., 235–236, pl. 70, *Nfr-ir-k3-r*^c/*Nj-wsr-r*^c 1); London BM EA 48988, “grey stone”, d. 2.3 cm (Ibd., 239–240, Pl 72, *Nj-wsr-r*^c 5); Cairo JE 44200, “terre émaillée”, d. 2.5 cm (Ibd., 266–267, pl. 77, *Nj-wsr-r*^c 37); Private Collection Zurich, “bronze”, d. 1.75–1.85 cm (Ibd., 278–279, pl. 79, *Nj-wsr-r*^c 52); London UC 11106, copper(?), d. 2.2 cm (Ibd., 281–283, pl. 80, *R^c-nfr-f* 1); Chicago OIM 10482, “bronze”, d. 1.9–2 cm (Ibd., 306–307, pl. 84, *Mn-k3w-hr* 10); Boston MFA 68.115, gold on a core of burned clay, d. 3 cm (Ibd., 339–340, pl. 92, *Dd-k3-r*^c 38).

17 With one exception (Kaplony 1981, 211–215, pl. 65, *Nfr-ir-k3-r*^c 7), this consideration is also valid for 5th Dynasty seals reconstructed from their impressions (cf. Ibd., pl. 58–88).

18 These and the following calculations are based on the seals cited in n. 16 *supra*. By contrast, the diameter of the 4th Dynasty Pottery Mound seals as reconstructed by Nolan measures between 1.17 and 2.99 cm (Nolan 2010, 139–140).

19 This mainly depends on the question of whether the falcon wore a crown (cf. Kaplony 1977, 174–182).

20 Cf. n. 16 above.

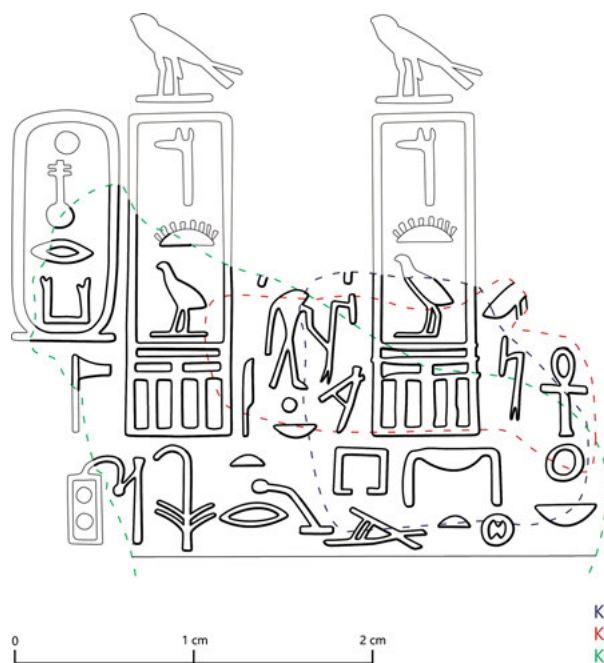


Fig. 4: Preliminary reconstruction of the seal of Neferirkara. The reconstruction aims to illustrate the possible original appearance of the inscription's preserved lines. The added signs were taken from the corpus of the other 5th Dynasty official sealings found at Kom Ombo. Furthermore, the outlines of the inscriptions preserved on the individual sealings are rendered in different colours.

3.1 Transcription and Translation of the Seal's Inscription

Transcription

[⁻] *nfr-irj-kj-r^c* *ntr* [*nfr*/^ᜪ]
 [*hr wsr-ḥ^cw*]
 [⁻] *mry* [⁻] *r^c nb*
 [*hr wsr-ḥ^cw*]
 [⁻] *m ᜪⁿḥ wšs r^c nb*
 [⁻] *zš(.w) pr-šn^c ᜪbw-nzw nbw.t*

Translation

“[⁻²¹ Nefer]irkara, the [perfect/great]²² God,
 [Horus Mighty-of]-Appearances.
 [⁻²³ beloved of [⁻] every day,
 [Horus Mighty-of-Appearanc]es.
 [⁻] in life and might²⁴ every day.²⁵
 [⁻] of the scribe(s) of the *pr-šn^c* of the royal repast(?) (at) Nebut.”

²¹ Above the cartouche might have stood either the king's gold Horus name *šḥm nbw* as in the sealing of Userkaf KO-KF 566 (Seyr (2022); cf. for example Kaplony 1981, 224–225, pl. 68, *Nfr-ir-kj-r^c* 20) or *nzw bit* (e.g. *Ibd.*, 192–193, 196–197, pl. 61, *Šḥw-r^c* 24, 25 and 27; Verner 2006, 263, n° 231).

²² The first half of the square between the cartouche and the horizontal bottom line preserves the upper part of the sign ^ᜪ. Its position implies that it functioned as a royal epithet and thus there remain the possibilities *ntr nfr* or *ntr ᜪ* (Kaplony 1977, 208, 232 n. 405).

²³ As there seems to be space for several groups at the beginning of the line, a part of the royal name might have preceded the name of the divinity. For this common arrangement cf. *Ibd.*, 121–124.

²⁴ The inverse orientation of the *wšs*-sign – towards the preceding *serekh* – is probably due to the fact that the king is considered as its recipient and to the orientation of the sceptre in the hand of the divinity on the other side of *serekh*; both might aim to frame the royal name (cf. Fischer 1977, 83–85 “destination”).

²⁵ According to the parallel formula *ᜪⁿḥ wšs r^c nb* on the seal of Sahura Baltimore WAM 57.1748 (Kaplony 1981, 185–186, pl. 59, *Šḥw-r^c* 16) the upper part was most likely filled with the king's *nb.ti* name *ḥ^cw m nb.ti*.

Commentary

In its upper part, the inscription consists of at least five vertical lines prominently displaying the protocol of king Neferirkara under whom the seal was issued. In its current state of reconstruction, the text is built up from two *serekhs* containing the king's Horus name, which alternate with three so-called *Zwischenglieder*²⁶ mentioning his birth name and probably more elements of the royal titulary together with royal epithets. This part of the inscription is arranged in pairs of two lines, one *serekh* and one *Zwischenglied*, facing each other. Unfortunately, the phonetic(?) spelling of the name of the divinity by whom Neferirkara is stated to be loved (Kaplony's *mirj*-Vermerk)²⁷ is – except for the traces of two signs' bottoms – missing. Its classifier depicts a striding male divinity who wears the tripartite wig and holds a *wšs*-sceptre in his left hand.²⁸ As regards the horizontal bottom line, it remains unclear whether the beginning of the seal owner's title is entirely preserved, while it certainly ends before the group *r^c nb*. The central group $\text{𓆎}^{\text{𓆏}}$ appears to be – at least according to our current knowledge – palaeographically unique. At a first glance, it could be read as a title formed according to the well-known pattern *iri NN nzw*.²⁹ This suggests that the “scribe” (*zš*) at the beginning of the line belongs to a preceding title composed by a preceding (and now missing) noun;³⁰ this reasoning would lead to the translation [-] *zš iri pr-šn^c nbw.t* “scribe of [-], custodian of the royal 𓆎 of the *pr-šn^c* (at) Kom Ombu”. It has to be noted that the toponym *nbw.t* at the end of the phrase is most probably employed in apposition specifying the installation's location,³¹ as there is no Old Kingdom evidence for the construction “*pr-šn^c* + toponym”. If the institutional affiliation of a *pr-šn^c* is indicated at all, the installations appear to be connected to sun temples, royal pyramid complexes, royal foundations, (temples of) divinities, or rarely elite tombs.³² As a consequence, the group $\text{𓆎}^{\text{𓆏}}$ could also represent the name of a royal institution for honorific reasons transposed in front of to its subordinate *pr-šn^c* installation.³³ This said, $\text{𓆎}^{\text{𓆏}}$ might be a palaeographic variant of $\text{𓆎}^{\text{𓆏}}$ *bw-nzw* “royal repast”³⁴ – its last sign being inverted.³⁵ It is well known that the curved line³⁶ on top of the mouth-sign 𓆎 (D154)³⁷ occasionally emerges from a pot³⁸ and was consequently perceived as water jet which eventually broadened the path for variants ending in peculiar forms.³⁹ In our case, the rectangle on top of which the stream ends might be explained as an offering basin/offering table onto which the libation is poured.⁴⁰ The latter reading has the advantage that the “scribe” (*zš*) at the beginning of the line could be linked to the following words as forming the

26 *Ibd.*, 84–94.

27 *Ibd.*, 121–124.

28 Cf. the representation of the god Ra used on seals of the administration of sun temples in the 5th Dynasty (*Ibd.*, 247–250).

29 E. g. *iri mčb.t^c w nzw* “archivist of the royal documents” (Jones 2000, 318, n° 1168) or *iri hri.t^c nzw* “custodian of the royal writing case” (*Ibd.*, 334–335, n° 1232).

30 E. g. *zš^c w nzw* “scribe of the royal documents” (Nolan 2010, 257–260) or *zš hri.t^c nzw* “scribe of the kings writing case” (Nolan 2010, 269–271).

31 Although in most cases one would expect the preposition *m* introducing the toponym, the construction with a simple apposition has also been observed (Edel 1955, 132, § 313). For a *pr-šn^c* linked to a toponym through a relative phrase cf. the name of the funerary domain (*pr*)-*šn^c ppy nti m rš-qmšw* mentioned in the funerary temple of Pepy II (Jacquet-Gordon 1962, 194, n° 67).

32 Andrassy 1993, 23–26; Papazian 2012, 75–83; cf. n. 53 *infra*.

33 For *pr-šn^c bw-nzw* installations see Papazian 2012, 75.

34 Dorman 1994; for the transcription *bw-nzw* instead of *i^cw-nzw* as found in the *Wb.* see de Meulenaere 1981.

35 This inversion occurs occasionally in titles connected to the *bw-nzw* (Lloyd et al. 1990, 24, pl. 16 and 33; Kanawati/Hassan 1997, pl. 22 and 62) and Old Kingdom offering lists (Hassan 1948, pl. X, XI, XVIII, XXXIV, LXVI, LXVII, LXXIV, LXXXIII, CVII, CXVI, CXVII, CXXXV). It has not yet been sufficiently explained, but might aim to avoid squeezing the water jet between 𓆎 and 𓆎 .

36 The water jet can be plain, formed by round dots or a combination of both. In many cases, it broadens towards its lower end (cf. Corteggiani 1973, 152, n. 6; Der Manuelian 2003, 191; Callender 2019, 48–50, § 66–70).

37 Sign TSL_1_1944 (<http://thotsignlist.org/mysign?id=1944>), in: *Thot Sign List* (<http://thotsignlist.org>), edited by Université de Liège and Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften.

38 The variant of the sign seems already present in the 4th Dynasty (Hassan 1948, 286–289; for other examples cf. Épron/Daumas 1939, pl. XXXVI; Martin 1979, pl. 31, n° 73; Leclant 2001, fig. 8, pl. 1, B.3). Like the water jet (see n. 36), the pot also appears in many variants ranging from simple horizontal ovals to more elaborate perfectly round variants with an emphasized rectangular rim (cf. the examples cited in n. 35).

39 The water jet terminates in a fork on a late 6th Dynasty or FIP example from el-Hawawish (Callender 2019, 49, § 68).

40 This item might be inferred by reduced writings of 𓆎 *zšt* as 𓆎 (Hassan 1948, 164–170). Cf. 𓆎 in the pyramid of Unas (PT 262, 27 = § 335c; Allen 2013) and 5th Dynasty variants of 𓆎 with a similar rectangle under the water jet (Épron/Daumas 1939, pl. CIII).

title *zš pr-šnc*.⁴¹ If this interpretation is correct, the horizontal line should be translated as *zš pr-šnc ḳbw-nzw nbw.t* “scribe of the *pr-šnc* of the royal repast (at) Kom Ombo” or *[-] zš(.w) pr-šnc ḳbw-nzw nbw.t* “[...] of the scribe(s) of the *pr-šnc* of the royal repast (at) Kom Ombo”. The latter alternative – the preceding word could have been *imi-rš* or *šḥd*⁴² – would furthermore explain the fact that the honorific transposition was applied just to the last two elements of the title, as this occurs occasionally in titles consisting of three or more components.⁴³

3.2 Discussion

The majority of the official seals issued under Neferirkara, or rather their impressions, come from the Memphite area.⁴⁴ Apart from two cylinders acquired at Dendera⁴⁵ and Elephantine⁴⁶ and single sealings from Abydos,⁴⁷ Balat,⁴⁸ Elephantine⁴⁹ and Mendes,⁵⁰ the most extensive corpus of sealings mentioning the king was found at Buhen where they attest to mining expeditions under the guidance of *smnti.w*.⁵¹ The Kom Ombo seal of Neferirkara, is thus among the most revealing sigillographic evidence for this king from a provincial context.⁵² It has two main points of interest. Firstly, the sealings attest to the existence of a *pr-šnc* installation⁵³ at Kom Ombo, which was established at the latest under the reign of King Neferirkara.⁵⁴ It seems that the institution was responsible for the production, processing, and storing of products⁵⁵ pertaining to the royal administration, which is further indicated by the high quality of the seal probably made from metal. As supervisor of the scribes or simply subordinate scribe, the seal-owner was charged with the registering and sealing of incoming and outgoing commodities. Other sealings fixed to the same kind of

41 Cf. Jones 2000, 851, n° 3110. Although there is abundant evidence for scribes of the *pr-šnc* in the seal impressions found in the 3rd Dynasty city of Elephantine (Pätznick 2001, 143), curiously the title is rarely attested in the following dynasties (Épron/Daumas 1939, pl. LXXI; Florès 2015, 124).

42 Neither variant, *imi-rš zš(.w) pr-šnc ḳbw-nzw* “overseer of the scribes of the royal repast” or *šḥd zš(.w) pr-šnc ḳbw-nzw* “custodian of the scribes of the royal repast”, is yet attested in Old Kingdom sources. This might be linked to the general dearth of attestations of the title *zš pr-šnc* during this period (cf. n. 41).

43 The phenomenon (cf. Peust 2007, 100–101: A [B C] → A C B) is attested since the 4th Dynasty, e.g. in the title *imi-rš iz ḥkr-nzw* “overseer of the king’s regalia” (Fischer 1976, 29, fig. 2, pl. VI, fig. 5). It appears more often in longer constructions to which the later elements were added as indirect genitives, e.g. *imi-rš zš n c.w nzw* “overseer of the scribes of the king’s documents” (Jones 2000, 209–210, n° 780) or *imi-rš zš n mḳb.t c nzw* “overseer of the document scribes of the royal decree” (Jones 2000, 215, n° 799). Furthermore, totally missing honorific transpositions are also attested in titles related to the *ḳbw-nzw*, e.g. *qbḥ nm.t ḳbw-nzw* “master butcher of the king’s repast” in the tomb of Irukaptah at Saqqara (McFarlane 2000, pl. 22 and 50). Cf. also Schweitzer 2005, 559–567. However, we are not aware of any example of missing honorific transpositions concerning the word *nzw* within titles in the corpus of Old Kingdom seal inscriptions (but cf. perhaps *wḏ nzw* in Kaplony 1981, pl. 61, *Šḥw-r^c* 27).

44 The corpus assembled by *Ibd.*, 207–233, pl. 65–70 comprises 38 (reconstructed) seals – 16 coming from the Memphite area. Since then, it was mainly enriched by the numerous sealings found by the Czech Mission at Abusir (Verner 1995, 97–132; Verner 2006, 212–258; Odler et al. 2019, 64–65, fig. 16; cf. Jěřábek 2018).

45 Boston MFA 03.1509 (Kaplony 1981, 224–225, pl. 68, *Nfr-ir-kj-r^c* 20).

46 Cairo, without number (*Ibd.*, 207–208, pl. 65, *Nfr-ir-kj-r^c* 1).

47 Kaplony 1981, 210, pl. 65, n° 6; Bußmann 2010, 442.

48 Pantalacci 2015, 523–526.

49 Pätznick 2005, 575, Cat. n° 572; Engel 2009, 372.

50 Adams 2009, 192–194.

51 Emery 1963, 119–120; Kaplony 1981, 216, pl. 66, *Nfr-ir-kj-r^c* 8; *Ibd.*, 227–233, pl. 69–70, *Nfr-ir-kj-r^c* 28–37; O’Connor 2014, 327–338.

52 Within the current sealing corpus from Kom Ombo, we can partly reconstruct two seals of Neferirkara. The first is presented in this study, the second – characterized by the extremely small size of its signs – is currently attested by one impression bearing only the king’s Horus, birth, and *nb.ti* names.

53 The first mention of a *šnc* installation probably goes back to the seal of a princess from the 2nd Dynasty (Kaplony 1963, 1142–1143, pl. 94, fig. 367; Papazian 2012, 66–73; Engel 2006, 30–31; Engel 2013, 34–35; Florès 2015, 98–101). In the 3rd Dynasty a *pr-šnc* is attested by several seal impressions at Elephantine (Pätznick 2005, 92–94, 369, Cat. n° 194; 434, Cat. n° 322; 601, Cat. n° 622). For a general overview of the *pr-šnc* in the Old Kingdom see Perepelkin 1960; Savelieva 1993; Andrassy 1993; Papazian 2012, 58–83; Florès 2015, 93–164; Martinet 2019, 388–391.

54 Cf. the first entry for the king’s regency in the Palermo stone, which mentions two *pr-šnc.wi* provisioning the offering table of Ra and Hathor (Schäfer 1902, 39–40; Wilkinson 2000, 172–173; Florès 2015, 131–133; Nuzzolo 2017, pl. XXII–XXIII).

55 The activities within a *pr-šnc* are depicted in several tombs of the 5th and the 6th Dynasties (Florès 2015, 155–156), e.g. in the mastaba of Ty (Épron/Daumas 1939, pl. LXVI–LXXI).

containers and coming from identical levelling layers indicate that the *pr-šn^c* had a complex administrative structure headed by an *imi-r3 pr-šn^c* “overseer of the *pr-šn^c*”.⁵⁶ If our current interpretation is not contradicted by additional sealings, which will likely be found in coming seasons, the *pr-šn^c* at Kom Ombo was linked to the *cbw-nzw* “royal repast”, in other words “provisions prepared by the royal estates as a ritual meal to be presented by the king (or on the king’s behalf) to a god”.⁵⁷ This said, it has to be noted that titleholders connected to a “*pr-šn^c* of the royal repast” like the *imi-r3 pr-šn^c cbw-nzw*,⁵⁸ the *imi-r3 pr-šn^c cbw-nzw pr-c3*⁵⁹ and the *šḥd.t pr-šn^c cbw-nzw*⁶⁰ are so far exclusively attested in the Memphite area.⁶¹ As comparable sigillographic evidence from 5th Dynasty provincial contexts is still largely lacking⁶² and the economic status of the southernmost provinces of Egypt during this period is little known,⁶³ the seal might point towards the existence of either *cbw-nzw* offerings at a temple or another cultic installation at Kom Ombo,⁶⁴ or a *pr-šn^c* responsible for the processing and packaging of local products which were subsequently delivered to the royal residence.⁶⁵ Secondly, the graphical rendering of *nbw.t* is of particular interest as it differs from most later attestations. It demonstrates that the difference in spelling between the two toponyms *nbw.t/nby.t* (Kom Ombo)⁶⁶ and *nbw.t* (Tukh), attested in later epochs,⁶⁷ might not yet have been common in the 5th Dynasty (see Tab. 1).

The seal pushes the earliest safe attestation of the ancient name of the town Kom Ombo back to the Old Kingdom.⁶⁸ Until recently, the first evidence for Kom Ombo came from the First Intermediate Period. It is mentioned in inscriptions in the tomb of Ankhtifi at Moalla, some 140 km to the north.⁶⁹ Ankhtifi, ruler of the Third Upper Egyptian Nome, extended his authority over the Second and First Upper Egyptian Nomes, and claims “*I brought life to Hierakonpolis and Edfu, Elephantine and Ombos*”,⁷⁰ that is, that he rescued the inhabitants of these towns from famine. Furthermore, the new evidence from Kom Ombo raises the question whether the Old Kingdom personal name *nbw.ti* should be interpreted as “the one of Tukh” or “the one of Kom Ombo”.⁷¹ There has been much speculation about Kom Ombo’s role and administrative importance in the Old Kingdom. It has, for example, been suggested that Kom Ombo was then the capital of the First Upper Egyptian nome⁷² but there is no clear evidence for this,⁷³ and it has even been doubted whether the state administration fully encompassed the region.⁷⁴ Neither has the likely alterna-

56 Unfortunately, it is not completely certain whether this refers to the same *pr-šn^c* as the seal of Neferirkara, because all fragments recovered so far are broken just after that word. According to our current knowledge this is the first attestation of the title in the provinces of Upper Egypt prior to the 6th Dynasty (cf. Martinet 2019, 388–391).

57 Dorman 1994, 466.

58 “Overseer of the *pr-šn^c* of the royal repast” (Jones 2000, 251, n° 906; Florès 2015, 108).

59 “Overseer of the *pr-šn^c* of the royal repast (at) the palace” (Jones 2000, 251, n° 907; Florès 2015, 108).

60 “Custodian of the *pr-šn^c* of the royal repast” (Jones 2000, 971–972, n° 3586).

61 Florès 2015, 122.

62 Bußmann 2010, 453–454. In contrast to the view that a *pr-šn^c cbw-nzw* was a unit directly supplying the palace (Andrássy 1993, 26), some attestations of the title *imi-r3 pr-šn^c cbw-nzw* extended by the phrase *m s.wt=f nb.t* “in all its places” might be taken as indirect evidence for similar institutions in the provinces (Dorman 1994, 458, 465–466).



63 Moreno García 2013, 116; Martinet 2019, 498–509.

64 Florès (2015, 107–108, 112–119, 159–160) and Martinet (2019, 385–391) recently supported the connection between *pr-šn^c* and local temples in the 6th Dynasty.

65 A *pr-šn^c* delivering products is attested in the Gebelein Papyri (Florès 2015, 134–139, 159).

66 The generally observed development *-^cw- > -^cy-* in the First Intermediate Period might explain the evolution *nbw.t* (OK) > *nby.t* (FIP onwards); cf. Peust 1999, 139, § 3.13.3; Peust 2010, 101.

67 Cf. Gardiner 1947, 5* and Peust 2010, 101. According to demotic sources *nby.t* “Kom Ombo” lost the final *t* at some point while *nbw.t* “Tukh” retained it, cf. *imb.t* in Ashmolean D.O. 956 (Smith 1988, 78, pl. 25). This might indicate that the latter’s original form was *nbw.ti* “Tukh”.

68 However, there exist two earlier attestations of a city called *nbw.t* which could be identified as ancient name of Tukh or Kom Ombo:  on the stone vessel BM EA 68689 dated to the 2nd dynasty (Spencer 1980, 42, pl. 26, nr. 278; Peust 1999, 326) and  on the seal impression Brussels MRAH E. 0187 from the tomb of Peribsen at Abydos (Kaplony 1963, 1185, pl. 125, nr. 750).

69 Wenig 1968, 71 n. 1 with further literature.

70 See n. 77 and Wenig 1968, 71 n. 1 with further literature.

71 For the two currently known attestations of the name, one from the Qubbet el-Hawa and the other from Gebelein, see Gourdon 2016, 113, 138.

72 For further information see Helck 1974, 69; Martin-Pardey 1976, 196–197; Franke 1994, 11, n. 18.

73 *Ibid.*, 11.

74 *Ibid.*, 11.

Tab. 1: Spellings of the ancient names of Kom Ombo and Tukh from the Old to the New Kingdom.

	Kom Ombo	Tukh
OK ⁷⁵		
FIP		
MK ⁷⁸		
SIP		
NK ⁸⁵		

tive candidate for the nome capital, Elephantine, produced any evidence for this status: at the Qubbet el Hawa, the burial place for the highest official residents of Elephantine, there is no evidence for the title of nome governor in the late Old Kingdom tombs.⁹⁵ Bearing in mind this ambiguity, a text from the *Chapelle Blanche* at Karnak should be considered. It was erected by Senwosret I⁹⁶ in the Middle Kingdom but may copy texts dating back to the 6th Dynasty.⁹⁷ One is an inscription stating that the main temple of the capital of the First Upper Egyptian Nome was a Horus temple. If Kom Ombo is meant, this would not only be the earliest evidence of a temple at Kom Ombo but would add to the evidence that the town had a long-standing association with the Horus cult, predating its association with Sobek.⁹⁸ The recent excavations of the Austrian-Egyptian mission have provided a fascinating insight into the early occupation of Kom Ombo and have shown that it was an important administrative centre in the Old Kingdom.

75 For a full list of the attestations of *nbw.t* (Tukh) see Zibelius 1978, 108–109.

76 Pyramid W and Nt (§ 204a = PT 222,7 after Allen 2013); Pyramid W, An and Nt (§ 370b = PT 268, 2); Pyramid M and N (§ 1667a = PT 601, 20).

77 Tomb of Ankhtifi (Vandier 1950, 239–240, pl. XX).

78 For a full list of the attestations of *nby.t* (Kom Ombo) see Gomaà 1986, 29–30 and for *nbw.t* (Tukh) see *Ibd.* 162–163.

79 Statue New York MET 25.6 (Arnold 2009); Cylinder seal Chicago OIM E18358 (Pier 1906–1907, 76, 85, n° 1129; cf. Yoyotte 1956, 88).

80 Stela Chicago Field Museum 31685 (Allen 1936, 19–20, pl. VI).

81 Ramesseum Onomasticon, 189 (Gardiner 1947, 5*, pl. II).

82 Statue CG 417 (Borchardt 1925, 26).

83 Statues CG 412, CG 414, CG 416, CG 420 (Borchardt 1925, 23–26, 28–29).

84 Cylinder seal BM EA 15701 (Hall 1913, 270; cf. Yoyotte 1956, 88).

85 Because of the numerous attestations in the New Kingdom, the listed spellings should be considered as representative rather than exhaustive.

86 Shrine inscription at Gebel el-Silsila (Lepsius et al. 1897–1913, IV, 91).

87 Door lintel Thutmose III (de Morgan 1905, 328–329, n° 978) and door jambs Thutmose III (de Morgan 1905, 329–330, n° 982); P. BM EA 10401, line 27 (Janssen 1991, 80–81).

88 Inscriptions in several shrines at Gebel el-Silsila (Caminos 1963, pl. 19, 20, 42, 44, 52 and 54) and the list of gold-tributes in TT 100 (Newberry 1900, pl. V).

89 P. Valençay 1, vs. 1 (Gardiner 1951, pl. 5).

90 Writing board BM EA 21635, vs. 3 (Gardiner 1947, 5*, pl. XXII).

91 Writing arranged for the disposition in columns: Stela Accra (Kitchen 1989, 34, 3 and 7); shrine inscription at Gebel el-Silsila (Caminos 1963, pl. 23 [without classifier]).

92 Petrie/Quibell 1895, pl. XLIII.3, LXXVII, LXXVIII, LXXIX; Thiem 2000, 332.

93 Great Hypostyle Hall, Karnak (Nelson 1981, pl. 202, line 13).

94 P. Harris I, LIX, 4 (Grandet 1994, pl. 60).

95 Franke 1994, 11; Edel et al. 2008; Martinet 2019, 498–507.


96 Lacau/Chevrier 1956, 220, pl. 3.

97 Convincingly argued by Franke 1994, 11, n. 18.

98 Martin-Pardey 1976, 196–197; cf. also Kockelmann 2017, 294.

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