

CHRISTIAN ORSENIGO

A Newly Identified Relief from the Tomb-Chapel of Mose at Saqqara*

Hierzu Tafel XXV–XXVI

Twenty years ago, Jaromír Málek wrote in a review article of Gaballa's publication of the tomb-chapel of Mose, scribe of the Treasury of Ptah under Ramesses II, that 'sections of the decorated walls of Mose's chapel must have either been destroyed or, unrecognized, still await identification'.¹ This is no longer the case of the relief here presented.

I have recently published an article on the tomb-chapel of Mose², based on the archival documentation left by Victor Loret following his discovery in November 1898 of the official's tomb in Saqqara³. These records, mostly preserved in the Egyptological Archives of the Università degli Studi di Milano⁴, are part of the rich documentation that was collected by the French

scholar during his excavations in the area North of the pyramid of Teti from 1897 to 1899⁵.

Among Loret's documentation relating to the tomb-chapel of Mose, I have found the photograph of a relief lying still in situ⁶ that does not appear in the publication of the tomb by Gaballa Aly Gaballa in which he collected all the identified blocks known to him so far (Taf. XXV, Abb. 1)⁷.

Gaballa also used for his monograph Batiscombe Gunn's documentation relating to the tomb-chapel of Mose which is kept at the Griffith Institute. This includes notes and drawings of the blocks, which were still scattered in situ, and were made by the British archaeologist while working in Saqqara for the Antiquities

* I am deeply grateful to Stephen Quirke for having corrected my English. Also I must express here my sincere gratitude to Elmar W. Seibel, president of Ars Libri Ltd., Boston, and Mr. Lucien Viola for their valuable help with my search.

¹ J. Málek, 'Two problems connected with New Kingdom tombs in the Memphite area', *JEA* 67 (1981), 163.

² P. Piacentini/C. Orsenigo, 'The discovery of the tomb of Mose and its «juridical inscription», in P. Piacentini/C. Orsenigo (eds.), *Egyptian Archives. Proceedings of the First Session of the International Congress Egyptian Archives/Egyptological Archives*, Milano, September 9–10, 2008 (Quaderni di Acme 111; Milano, 2009), 83–102.

³ PM III²/2, 553–555. Loret located the tomb-chapel of Mose on 29 November 1898, and assigned it the number 5. For the numbering of the tomb and its location, see V. Loret, 'Fouilles dans la Nécropole Memphite (1897–1899)', *BIE* 10, III Sér. (1899), 95–96, and the plan following p. 100.

⁴ Piacentini/Orsenigo, in Piacentini/Orsenigo (eds.), *Egyptian Archives*, 84.

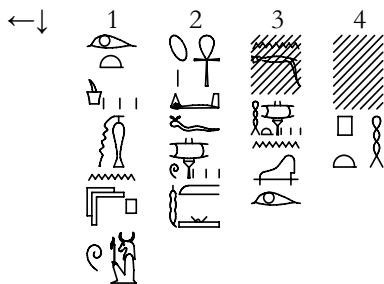
⁵ P. Piacentini, 'Saqqarah, 15 août 1897–12 février 1899. Les journaux de fouilles et autres documents inédits de Victor Loret', *Aegyptus* 84 (2004), 3–20; P. Piacentini (ed.), *Victor Loret in Egypt (1881–1899)*. From the Archives of the Milan University to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Cairo, 2008), 11–14 and cat. no. 18–25. Some other documents from the Egyptological Archives of Milan relating to Loret's excavations in Saqqara are reproduced in P. Piacentini (ed.), *Egypt and the Pharaohs. From the Sand to the Library. Pharaonic Egypt in the Archives and Libraries of the Università degli Studi di Milano* (Le vetrine del sapere 9; Ginevra–Milano, 2010), 18–19, 23, 78–79.

⁶ The photograph has been reproduced for the first time in Piacentini/Orsenigo, in Piacentini/Orsenigo (eds.), *Egyptian Archives*, 101 Fig. 6a.

⁷ G. A. Gaballa, *The Memphite Tomb-Chapel of Mose* (Warminster, 1977). While finishing this brief contribution I heard news of the death of Prof. Dr. Gaballa Aly Gaballa, to whom we still owe the fundamental study on the tomb-chapel of Mose.

A male figure with shaven head, wearing a long kilt with a pleated front-section, stands facing the shrine. He is holding out an incense burner and a libation jug in front of an offering table. Two women and a man between them, with their hands raised in the attitude of greetings to the god, can still be seen in a procession following the first officiant. The first woman wearing the same long, transparent robes as the other female figure, holds a flower in her left hand. The procession appearing on the right hand portion of the relief is accompanied by a hieroglyphic text apparently preserved only in the first four columns. The surviving text unfortunately does not bear any name that could identify the figures depicted. It might be a representation of the owner of the tomb-chapel, Mose, in company of some members of his family such as his wife and his parents¹⁷. At the same time it cannot be excluded that the last two persons in the procession are a couple represented only once in the tomb in a banquet scene, whose family relationship with Mose is not clear¹⁸.

From the photograph it is not so easy to identify all the remaining hieroglyphic signs of the inscription above the procession. I tentatively suggest to interpret the first four columns as:



¹⁶ Ibid., II, 521. See also, e.g., D. Devauchelle, 'Une invocation aux dieux du Sérapéum de Memphis', in W. Clarysse, A. Schoors and H. Willems (eds.), *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years. Studies dedicated to the memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, I (OLA 84; Leuven, 1998), 593.

¹⁷ From the scenes and the inscriptions of his tomb-chapel, it emerges that the immediate family of Mose was composed of his father Huy, his mother Nubnerefret, his wife Mutnerefret, five or six children and one grandson; see Gaballa, *Mose*, 28–29, 32 (family tree).

¹⁸ Gaballa, *Mose*, 29. On the aforementioned banquet scene, see appendix at the end of this article and Taf. XXV, Abb. 2.

(1) *jrt sntr qbḥ n Hp* (2) *ḥnh d=f tʿw ndm* (3) *[n m]hyt n Wsjr* (4) *[sš pr-ḥd n ?] Pth*

The performing of censuring and libation to the living Apis, that he may give the sweet north wind to the Osiris, [scribe of the Treasury of ?] Ptah.

The photograph that has been found in Loret's Archives is labeled in his own hand on the verso: "Stèle tombée sur le sol"²⁰. Loret, in his article on the 'juridical' inscription of Mose, names the first of the two remaining rooms of the tomb-chapel "la salle à la stèle"²¹, even though no stela was reported to have been found²². Most probably Loret was referring to the block here presented. According to the plan of Gaballa emended by Málek, it can be assumed that the relief was part of a wall of 'room I', or 'main cult chapel', probably the Western one²³.

As mentioned above, I have focused my attention mainly on identifying the current location of the relief. After presenting my inquiry to colleagues and curators of museum collections, Geoffrey T. Martin found in his archive of New Kingdom Memphite reliefs a photograph showing part of the block – the left hand portion – which shows the Apis bull in his shrine, two columns of text – the second one partly broken away –, the arms with the censer and the libation vessel of the first men, and the offering table below²⁴. The right edge of the relief appears in the photograph very jagged and a visible crack runs through the figure of the shrine and the bull. It can be assumed that the block broke into two when it was taken from the tomb wall.

The back of the photograph is annotated with measurements and a brief description: "Bas

¹⁹ See above, note 15.

²⁰ Piacentini/Orsenigo, in Piacentini/Orsenigo (eds.), *Egyptian Archives*, 101 Fig. 6b.

²¹ V. Loret, 'La grande inscription de Mose à Saqqarah', ZÄS 39 (1901), 1.

²² Gaballa, *Mose*, 3: "On the West wall Loret considered that there may have been a stela. But of that wall nothing has recognisably survived except a tiny fragment recorded by Gunn." See Gaballa, *Mose*, 9, pl. 13c.

²³ For the location of 'room I' inside the tomb-chapel see the plan published in Gaballa, *Mose*, pl. 1 and that by Málek, *JEA* 67 (1981), 161.

²⁴ I am deeply grateful to Prof. Geoffrey T. Martin for having provided me with this information.

relief en calcaire représentant le boeuf Apis de la XIX^{ème} dynastie environ 1300 av J.-C. en 2 morceaux”. In addition, there is a stamped name and address of the person whom I afterwards identified as the owner of the piece, Mr. Robert Viola.

After many attempts I succeeded in contacting the son of the late Robert Viola, Mr. Lucien Viola, who remembers having seen the relief – actually the left half portion – during his childhood in New York at his father’s art gallery²⁵. He didn’t recall having seen with his father other adjoining fragments as shown in the photograph by Loret but he provided me with the information that the block had previously belonged to Maurice Nahman, the world famous Egyptian art dealer based in Cairo, who, moreover, was his grandfather²⁶. In addition, Mr. Viola gave me the date on which his father consigned the relief for sale to Sotheby’s New York: May 16, 1980²⁷. The block appears in the catalogue sale as lot 319 and is attributed in the description to Khaemwaset, probably because of the presence of the sacred bull Apis. Thanks to Victor Loret’s documents it is now certain that this attribution has to be rejected.

The relief is today kept at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum of San Jose, where it was probably accessioned following the sale at Sotheby’s (Taf. XXVI, Abb. 3)²⁸. The location of

the other portion of the relief – the right one appearing in Loret’s photograph – remains an open question, one that I hope to solve in the future.

Appendix

I take the opportunity of this article to reproduce in the accompanying plates another photograph likewise found in the Archives of Victor Loret preserved in Milan (Taf. XXV, Abb. 2), whose original glass-plate is kept at the University of Lyon²⁹. A similar – or possibly the same – print has been reproduced in the monograph of Gaballa but due to lack of consistency in the quality many details do not appear³⁰. Gaballa asserts that the original photograph, once in possession of Rudolf Anthes, was destroyed during World War II and the one he reproduced was a print provided by Steffen Wenig on behalf of the Egyptian Department of the former Staatliche Museen zu Berlin³¹.

The photograph shows the right-hand northern interior wall of ‘room I’ (see above) at the time of Loret’s excavation. Today the wall no longer exists, but portions of it are preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo³² and in the Museum August Kestner, Hannover³³.

the person in charge of the collection of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum; therefore, I am not able to provide any inventory number for the relief.

²⁹ Lyon, Me-16 (inventory number S. 91). A print from this glass plate is reproduced small size and low resolution, in F. Buyer, ‘Les plaques photographiques de Lyon, témoins de l’activité archéologique de Victor Loret à Saqqara’, *KYPHI* 5 (2006), 24 pl. 7c.

³⁰ Gaballa, *Mose*, pl. 11.

³¹ Gaballa, *Mose*, 35 n. 1. See also R. Anthes, ‘Das Bild einer Gerichtsverhandlung und das Grab des Mes aus Sakkara’, *MDAIK* 9 (1940), 105–109, pl. 18.

³² Egyptian Museum, Cairo: TR. 22.5.25.1. PM III²/2, 554 (16); Gaballa, *Mose*, 8, pl. 13.

³³ Museum August Kestner, Hannover: 1935.200.190-191. PM III²/2, 554 (for the block 1935.200.191); Gaballa, *Mose*, 8–9, pls 11–12; now add to bibliography: Martin, *Corpus of Reliefs of the New Kingdom*, 32, no. 79; R. Drenkhahn, *Ägyptische Reliefs im Kestner-Museum Hannover: 100 Jahre Kestner-Museum Hannover 1889–1989*, (Hannover, 1989), 120–124, cat. no. 40/41. I am grateful to Christian E. Loeben, Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities at the Museum August Kestner for having shared with me much information on the blocks. On their provenance from the collection of Friedrich von Bissing, see Piacentini/Orsenigo, in Piacentini/Orsenigo (eds.), *Egyptian Archives*, 100 and 102.

²⁵ Lucien Viola, renowned art collector and dealer in ancient and contemporary art, owned and directed L’Ibis Gallery Ltd. in New York until the early 1990’s. For more information see, e.g., www.galerie.com/eng/lucienviola-eng.swf.

²⁶ Bierbrier, *Who was who*, 397. See also R. Pintaudi, ‘Documenti per una storia della papirologia in Italia’, *AnPap* 5 (1993), 156–170, with amazing photographs of Nahman’s antiquities gallery in Cairo on pp. 167 and 169.

²⁷ Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc. (New York) Sale Cat. May 16, 1980, no. 319.

²⁸ PM VIII/5, www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/8rel100.pdf (working file, May 30, 2011), 67 no. 804-055-355. We have signaled the identification of the block to the Griffith Institute, Oxford, in May 2012. A good photograph of the relief as displayed in the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose, can be found at: www.flickr.com/photos/mharrsch/316503863/in/set-72157594303869444. I am indebted to Mrs Mary Harsch for this information. I was unable to contact

Summary

A photograph has recently been found among the records left by Victor Loret following his discovery in 1898 of the tomb-chapel of Mose at Saqqara, of a relief lying still in situ, that does not appear in the publication of the tomb by Gaballa. The relief, very probably part of a limestone wall, is decorated with an offering scene showing a man, accompanied by a little procession, censuring and libating before the

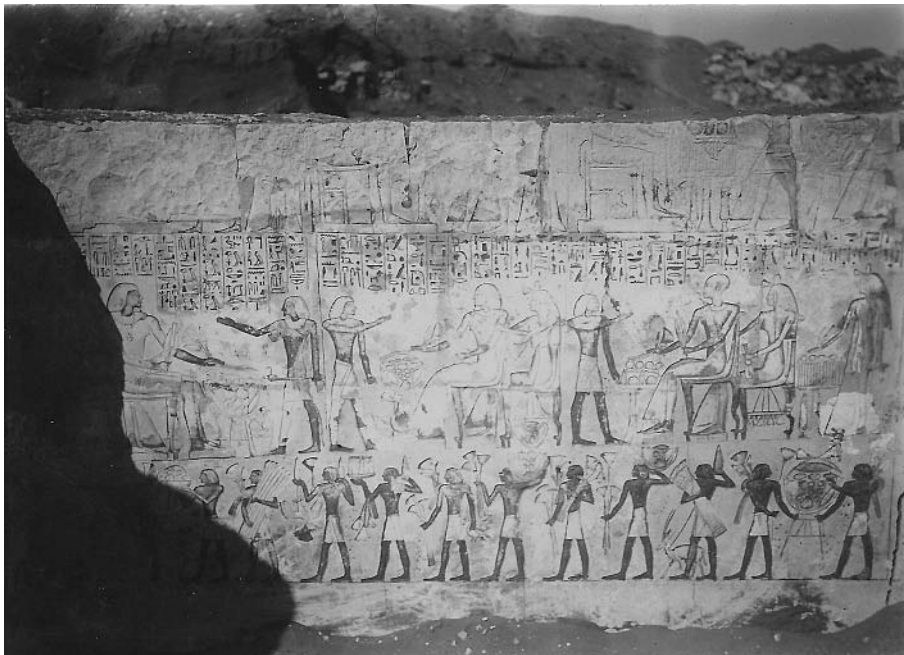
Apis-bull in a shrine. The paper retraces the path of the relief from the art gallery of Maurice Nahman to the current location of its remaining left hand portion at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose.

Keywords

Apis – Loret, Victor – Mose – Nahman, Maurice – San Jose, Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum – Saqqara



1. The relief at the time of Loret's excavation (Egyptological Archives & Library, Università degli Studi di Milano, Victor Loret Collection) (zu Orsenigo, Relief of Mose).



2. The right-hand northern interior wall of 'room I' at the time of Loret's excavation (Egyptological Archives & Library, Università degli Studi di Milano, Victor Loret Collection) (zu Orsenigo, Relief of Mose).



3. The portion of the relief now kept at the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum, San Jose, CA
(Egyptological Archives & Library, Università degli Studi di Milano, Bernard V. Bothmer Collection)
(zu Orsenigo, Relief of Mose).