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# CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE W3 IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN LANGUAGE

BY

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## ABSTRACT

[AR]

الدلالات السياقية لـ W3 في اللغة المصرية القديمة

وردت كلمة W3 في النصوص المصرية القديمة بمرادفات عدة، اختلفت وتنوعت حسب السياق الواردة فيه، حيث أن السياق كان له دور هام في تحديد دلالة الكلمة على وجه الدقة، مما دفع الباحثة إلى تتبع الوجوه الدلالية لـ W3 والوقوف على معانها، حيث تتناول الورقة البحثية التعريف بالـ W3 ومغزاها والمدلولات السياقية المختلفة لهذا اللفظ، وترتكز الورقة البحثية على لعنة الـ W3 وكيفية وقوعها على الأشخاص وأسباب التحاقها بهم، ودوافع البعد وذلك من واقع النصوص.

[EN]

The word *w3* appeared in ancient Egyptian texts with several synonyms, which differed and varied according to the context in which it was mentioned. Because context has an important role in determining the exact significance of the word, the researcher was prompted to trace the semantic aspects of *w3* and determine its meanings. The topic of this paper deals with the definition of *w3*, its meaning, and the different contextual connotations of this term. This research focuses on the curse of *w3*, how it affects people, the reasons for its use, and the motives for remoteness, throughout the texts.

**KEYWORDS:** Curse, far, furthest, guilty, mortal, remoteness, punishment, *w3*.


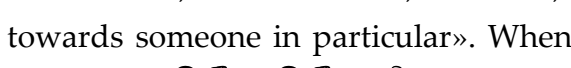

## I. INTRODUCTION


The meanings of the word *w3*, varies according to context, which prompted the researcher to trace its semantic aspects and clarify its identification as a curse, which deprived the deceased of their name, which is an important part of their journey in the other world<sup>1</sup>. To deprive a person of their name would prevent resurrection. The word is a title given to a person and is used in the countryside of Egypt, or as an order of isolation to avoid something.

«Far», is the antithesis of «near» and it means «perished, far beyond–far away–farther–away». The word can also refer to «damned people» or «animosity» «bū'dā». «Further, damned» is the name given when you curse someone or something. It is said that «god perished the distant one». In the hadith, a man came to the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, and said, «The mortal» distant one« has committed adultery»<sup>2</sup>.

## II. *w3* VOCABULARY

The ancient Egyptian language includes many words that are pronounced *w3* such as «rope», and «thread». Also *w3t* means «road». When *wA* is written like the following,

 ,  , it means «conspiracy, rebellion, and evil intentions towards someone in particular». When the preposition (*r*) or (*m*) is included, the word also embodies  which means «thought, plan, and design».

*w3*  is a 3-lit weak verb is followed by the preposition (*r*) to give the meaning of «distance from», and in Coptic  $\sigma\gamma\epsilon^3$ . However, this paper focuses on a specific meaning of *w3* as «a curse, cursed, a prayer for loss, and a prayer for evil»<sup>4</sup>, as this word began to appear in Middle and New Kingdom texts, accompanied by the prepositions (*r*).(n)<sup>5</sup>, as:

 ,  <sup>6</sup>,  ,  <sup>7</sup>, and in Coptic  $\sigma\gamma\alpha$ .<sup>8</sup>

It also gave the meanings of «far, remote, far away, far off, far gone, farther<sup>9</sup>, farthest, further<sup>10</sup>, afar » «afār»<sup>11</sup>, and there are many forms of this term as follows:

<sup>1</sup>For the name and its role see: ABU DARHAT 2015 :190.

<sup>2</sup>AL-MŪĠAM AL-WASĪT 2004:63; IBNMAKRAM 2003: vol.3, 90; AL-AZHARI 1964: 244; IBNZAKARIA 2008: 268; AL-GOHARI 1990: 448.

<sup>3</sup>BADAWI & KESS 1985: 45; WPL 1997: 191; SCHWEITZER 2020: 1529.

<sup>4</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; HWB 2005: 182; MEEKS 1998: 78; BADAWI & KESS 1985: 45.

<sup>5</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; BADAWI & KESS 1985: 45.

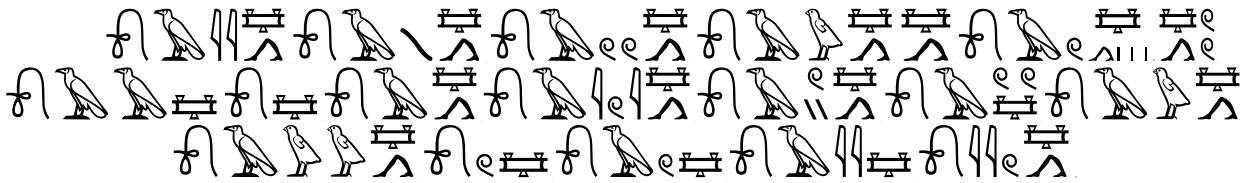
<sup>6</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; HWB 2005: 182.

<sup>7</sup>HWB 2005: 182.

<sup>8</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; BADAWI & KESS 1985: 45.

<sup>9</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; HWB 2005: 182, LESKO 2002: vol.1, 87; MEEKS 1998: 78.

<sup>10</sup>WB 1926: vol.1, 14-16; CD 2017 :52; HWB 2005: 182; LESKO 2002: vol.1, 87; BUDGE 1920: vol.1, 144.



### III. CONTEXTUAL CONNOTATIONS OF W3

#### 1. The Curse

According to Helck, a curse intends to damage someone with the aid of supernatural forces, whereas punishment is carried out with the aid of the higher powers<sup>14</sup>, According to the following example, *w3* was portrayed in various books to define a curse or to grant it to particular persons to be classified as cursed.



*d3ir .n. f w3w im f*

He has subdued those who conspired against him-« his cursed»<sup>16</sup>

It was stated in the text of *s3 nht* forbidding conspiracy and participation in the rebellion:



*imi rh .f rn .k m šni w3w r hm .f*

Let him know your name, and don't pronounce a curse against his majesty<sup>18</sup>.

*W3* was mentioned in this context to mean a curse as it carries the idea of conspiracy and rebellion, which will damage the government. Perhaps the author may have intended to say «make him recognize you without muttering, insulting, or cursing against his majesty», but Allen and Lichtheim translated it as «let him know your identity as one who inquires about his Incarnation from afar». While both translate «m» as resemblance and not a negation form of the verb «*imi*», Gardiner considered *w3* as a curse that befalls the name of the person or the person himself<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>14</sup>BUDGE 1920: vol.1, 144. « āfār عفار » is from «al-‘ūfr العفر» far distance, which is the distance and length of the covenant, and from the « al-‘ūfra العفرة », also includes the meaning of whiteness mixed with his red and becomes like the color of the Afar al-‘ūfr العفر ». *AL-MŪĠAM AL-WASĪT* 2004: 610; Also, this term is still used in the Egyptian countryside to insult or curse a person. For instance, one could say « illi it'afar اللي يتعفر » who does such-and-such. Or when drawing attention to someone other than him, it is said colloquially, this is his shame « دا عليه عفره » meaning he is not normal and uncontrolled in his behavior and work.

<sup>12</sup>LESKO 2002: vol.1, 87.

<sup>13</sup>BUDGE 1920: vol.1, 144.

<sup>14</sup>HELCK 1977: 276.

<sup>15</sup>DE BUCK 1956: vol.6, 358 b, Spell.728.

<sup>16</sup>FOULKNER 1973: vol.2, 358 [277], Spell.728.

<sup>17</sup>BLACKMAN 1972: 22, B74; KOCH 1990: 39, B74; ALLEN 2015: 88. B.74.

<sup>18</sup>HASSAN 1999: 48.

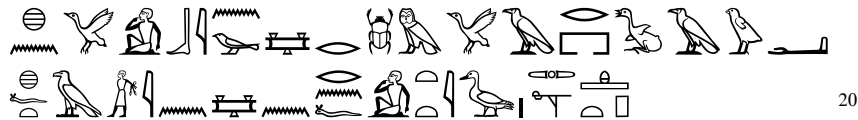
<sup>19</sup>GARDINER 1909: 53.

## 2. Cursing the Name

The reason for this curse to strike certain people is their transgression against the gods, such as stealing from the temples. Other transgressions include spreading sedition and pushing rebellion against authorities. The consequences of such actions include being cursed, being sentenced to death, and erasing or depriving someone of their name.

### A. The Distant One Is Called *w<sup>c</sup> n rn. f*

In the decree of King Intef V, "Nub Khepr Ra", *w<sup>3</sup> n rn. f* was mentioned in context as a result of an accident during an inspection at the Min Temple in Qift, as follows:-



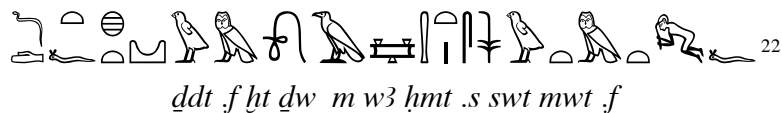
*hn bin hrw- r hpr m p3 r pr t3w hftyw in w3 n rn f tti s3 mnw htp*

an evil thing happened in this temple, *hftyw* was robbed by a distant one is called *tti s3 mnw htp*<sup>21</sup>

The phrase *w<sup>3</sup> n rn. f* means curse, so its literal translation is the distant one is called, which is followed by the name of the person. This phrase is still used in the Egyptian countryside, where people may say, the distant one «al-bīīyd», the cursed so and so «al-māl'wn», sometimes the one whom we wish to fail in his life «illi maiw'āš», and the one who does not have a specific name «illi māitsmāš».

### B. The Furthest *w<sup>3</sup>*

Acts of rebellion against the king would result in punishing a person by not mentioning his name. This curse was mentioned in a text dating back to Queen Hatshepsut, warning rioters that the consequence of disloyalty is death:



*ddt .f ht dw m w3 hmt .s swt mwt .f*

The furthest who will speak badly against her majesty will die.

*W<sup>3</sup>* came into this context giving the meaning of «damned» without specifying the identity of a particular person. The context of the word makes it a curse and an epithet given to everyone who has been tempted by rebellion and betrayal against the king.

Likewise, the texts of the Temple of Habu describes Rameses III as the griffin<sup>23</sup> when chasing his enemies, indicating that he evokes fear, warning every enemy who has tempted himself to harm the king, as follows:

<sup>20</sup>PETRIE 1896: 10; LES 1924: 98; HELEK 1983: 73; ' ABD AL-SALAM 2005: 172-178.

<sup>21</sup>BAR 1906: vol.1, §777; WINLOCK 1924: 226; HARARI 1957: 338; LORTON 1977:18-23.

<sup>22</sup>URK 1929: vol.4, 15, 257; MUHLESTEIN 2007:120.

<sup>23</sup>Griffin is a Greek word originating from griffin, which means «to fear, scared», and refers to a mythical beast that frequently had a lion's body and a falcon's head with spread wings. It was one of the images of evil that the appearance represented. KHALED 2006: 183.



*snḏw .tw n w3i n šfyt tw.f ḥḥ pd nmtt nb dnhwy*

(Man) is afraid of the distant, because of his prestige, as he is the genie (griffin) with two wings<sup>25</sup>.

It is noted that «the distant» here is an epithet of Ramses as evidence of his strength. The word is not intended to express disdain for not mentioning his name. The word is to compare him to the griffin, as he is far, unknown, and mysterious to everyone who fears him.

#### IV. LEADING MOTIVES TO REALIZE THE IDEA OF DISTANCE

##### A. Remoteness for Safety

Ptah hotep advises his son to leave and stay away from the man who forgave and reconciled with him in case that man is away from him.



*sw3 ḥr .f m sh3 sw ḏr gr .f n .k*

As long as he is silent about you, stay away from him and avoid mentioning him<sup>27</sup>.

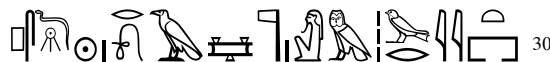
It is mentioned in the instruction of Khiti to his son in the following context:



*ir šmt .k m ḫwḥy smsw m tkn w3w m rh nfr*

If you want to attract very prestigious individuals, keep your distance and look at the positive aspects<sup>29</sup>.

in spell N<sup>o</sup>.60 in the coffin texts inscriptions that depict the deceased waking up to the sound of sistrum and rising with the mummy to travel from death and burial to resurrection and immortality while being guarded by the gods and priests.



*psḏ ḥrw r w3w ntr m writ*

The day dawns so that the god departs from the great hall<sup>31</sup>.

In Coffin Text spell N<sup>o</sup>.148, Hur makes an appearance after his birth and addresses the gods, proclaiming his supremacy over them and his capacity to vanquish his enemy.

<sup>24</sup>KRI 1983: vol.5, 26, [2-3].

<sup>25</sup>ARE 1906: vol.4, 25, §46; KRIT 2008: vol.5, 26[1].

<sup>26</sup>ZÁBA 1956: 50[13, 5].

<sup>27</sup>LICHTHEIM 1973: 71; LALLWETT 1996: 340.

<sup>28</sup>BRUNNER 1944: 190.

<sup>29</sup>LALLWETT 1996: 275.

<sup>30</sup>DE BUCK 1956: vol.1, 252 e, Spell. 60.

<sup>31</sup>FOULKNER 1973: vol.1, 252, 55, Spell. 60.



*w3w st .i r sth hfty ni it.i wsir*

my place is far from Seth, the enemy of my father Osiris<sup>33</sup>



*ink hr w3w st r rmt ntrw*

I am Horus who is far of place from humans and gods<sup>35</sup>.

And in spell N<sup>o</sup>.885, the dead speaks to the gods about his refusal to remain in the underworld persisting on urine and feces. The deceased also states he will not live upside down because he has become Horus and can travel on both the ground and the sky.



*iw w3 r.i*

get away from me<sup>37</sup>.

Depending on their function, lakes in the other world come in a wide variety of forms. There are lakes that serve to purify, lakes of bliss, lakes of pain, and lakes that combine all of those functions. According to the scriptures, the deceased must go across perilous ponds and lakes on his way to paradise. He must take great care to avoid falling into these hazards because they pose a risk to the condemned dead and the evildoer, which is why the texts forewarn of them<sup>38</sup>.



*s3w .tw š wr ir mwt nh .k sw 3b .k w3t r .f*

Beware the great lake, as for death, you shall flee it, slow down and stay away from it<sup>40</sup>

It was mentioned in the Book of the Dead, chap 92.



*n irt .sn dwt r.i isi w3t n.i*

they won't hurt me, go away from me<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>DE BUCK 1956: vol, 224 a, Spell. 148.

<sup>33</sup>FOULKNER 1973: vol.1, 224, 126, Spell. 148.

<sup>34</sup>DE BUCK 1956: vol.2, 225 f. Spell. 148.

<sup>35</sup>FOULKNER 1973: vol.1, 225,126, Spell. 148.

<sup>36</sup>DE BUCK 1956: vol.7, 97 c., Spell. 885.

<sup>37</sup>FOULKNER 1977: vol.3, 97, 49, Spell. 885.

<sup>38</sup>ATALLAH 2011: 10-11

<sup>39</sup> DE BUCK 1956: vol.1, 284 f-h, Spell. 67; DE BUCK 1956: VII, 41g, SPELL.839

<sup>40</sup>FOULKNER 1973: vol.1, 284 e-h, 62, SPELL. 67.

<sup>41</sup>BUDGE 1898: 196, 2-3, chap.92.

<sup>42</sup>EL-SAYED 2009: 285.

## V. CONCLUSION

There are multiple written forms of the word *w3*.

All synonyms for *w3* revolve around one idea, which is the idea of distance or remoteness, whether as a curse, as a punishment or as a nickname.

There are various sources from which the verbal synonyms for «*w3*» were obtained. The verbal synonyms for «*w3*» differ depending on the context for which they are intended.

The term «far» or «remote» has continued to be used in certain situations in modern Egypt.

The two leading motives for distancing are different: one is peace, avoidance, and repelling harm, and the other is the infliction of harm or punishment on the individual to be punished.



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