Shulem, One of the King’s Principal Waiters

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Abstract: Shulem is mentioned once in the Book of Abraham. All we are told about him is his name and title. Using onomastics, the study of names, and the study of titles, we can find out more about Shulem than would at first appear. The form of Shulem’s name is attested only at two times: the time period of Abraham and the time period of the Joseph Smith papyri. (Shulem thus constitutes a Book of Abraham bullseye.) If Joseph Smith had gotten the name from his environment, the name would have been Shillem.

Buried in the facsimiles from the Book of Abraham is the statement that one of the figures represents “Shulem, one of the king’s principal waiters” (Book of Abraham, Facsimile 3, figure 5). There are a number of things we can say about this figure.

The first is the name Shulem. The name itself is widely attested in Semitic languages. The name is a hypocoristic form of the name meaning that it normally appears with a divine name attached but the divine name is omitted. The name first appears in Old Akkadian in the Sargonic Period (2334-2154 BC) with a hypocoristic form as Salimmu, and without a hypocoristic form as Salim-aḫu, Salim-beli, and Salim-Šamaš. In Eblaite, the form of the name used is the hypocoristic Sulum. During the Ur III Period (2112-2004 BC), the forms Šalim-beli, Šalim-MI, and Šalim-šillum are attested. In the Old Assyrian Period (1900-1814 BC) the hypocoristic form is not found, but the forms Šalim-Adad, Šalim-aḫum, Šalim-Ăššur, Šalim-beli, Šalum-aḫum, and Šalum-Ăššur are. The name is not popular during the Old Babylonian period (1894-1595 BC), but it still occurs, appearing, for example, in its hypocoristic form as both Salimu, and Sulum, and in non-hypocoristic forms as Šalim-Anum, Šalim-Ăšar, Šalim-belu, Šalim-kaluma, Šalim-kinum, and Šalim-palîh-Šamaš. The name appears in Middle Babylonian texts (1595-1155 BC) in two forms: in the hypocoristic form, Sulum, and with a divine name attached Šullim-Adad. Contemporarily
at Ugarit, the name is attested both as a hypocoristic form Šlmy,\textsuperscript{31} and in non-hypocoristic form Šlmym.\textsuperscript{32}

In Neo-Assyrian times (1132-627 BC),\textsuperscript{33} the name still survived as Šullumu,\textsuperscript{34} but it also survived in an alternate forms. The hypocoristic forms were Šullumă,\textsuperscript{35} Šulmī,\textsuperscript{36} Šulmu,\textsuperscript{37} and Šulmû for men,\textsuperscript{38} and Šulmitu for women.\textsuperscript{39} Neo-Assyrian non-hypocoristic forms include Šulmu-ahhe,\textsuperscript{40} Šulmu-ahhešu,\textsuperscript{41} Šulmu-ahi,\textsuperscript{42} Šulmu-ahu’a,\textsuperscript{43} Šulmu-Aia,\textsuperscript{14} Šulmu-Aššur,\textsuperscript{45} Šulmu-beli,\textsuperscript{46} Šulmu-beli-lamur,\textsuperscript{47} Šulmu-beli-lašme,\textsuperscript{48} Šulmu-birati,\textsuperscript{49} Šulmu-ereš,\textsuperscript{50} Šulmu-ilani,\textsuperscript{51} Šulmu-ilī,\textsuperscript{52} Šulmu-iqiša,\textsuperscript{53} Šulmu-Issar,\textsuperscript{54} Šulmu-lamur,\textsuperscript{55} Šulmu-lušeri,\textsuperscript{56} Šulmu-mat-Aššur,\textsuperscript{57} Šulmu-matī,\textsuperscript{58} Šulmu-Sin,\textsuperscript{59} and Šulmu-šarri\textsuperscript{60} for men, and Šulmu-abiša\textsuperscript{61} for women.\textsuperscript{61} In Neo-Babylonian times (625-539 BC),\textsuperscript{62} the name is attested both in hypocoristic forms, like Šullumu,\textsuperscript{63} and non-hypocoristic forms like Simil-bel,\textsuperscript{64} Šulum-aḫti,\textsuperscript{65} Šullumaya,\textsuperscript{66} and Šulum-ana-Babili.\textsuperscript{67}

In Hebrew, the name is attested in a number of forms. There are two hypocoristic forms, Šillēm (κυρίως: Shillem; LXX: Συλλῆμ and Σελλῆμ),\textsuperscript{68} and Šelomī (κυρίως: Shelomi),\textsuperscript{69} and the non-hypocoristic forms Šelumīʾēl (κυρίως: Shelumiel),\textsuperscript{70} Šelemyā (κυρίως: Shelemiah),\textsuperscript{71} and Šelemyāhū (κυρίως: Sheleemiah).\textsuperscript{72}

So the name is Semitic, though the form of the name varies across time and place. The form in the Book of Abraham is closest to the second millennium forms and the third century Alexandria form found in the Septuagint, matching the time periods of Abraham and the Joseph Smith Papyri, respectively.

Not only does the vocalization of Shulem match Abraham’s day, the social situation of that day is informative as well. Egyptian interest in the Levantine littoral had increased in the last few reigns of the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty, mainly those of Sesostris III and Amenemhet III.\textsuperscript{73} This included military incursions as far north as Ullaza\textsuperscript{74} as well as military campaigns further south in the area that is now Israel.\textsuperscript{75} That empire seems to have disappeared by the end of the Twelfth Dynasty.

The Twelfth Dynasty was succeeded by the Thirteenth Dynasty in the Nile valley and the Fourteenth Dynasty in the Nile delta. The Fourteenth Dynasty was “a local dynasty of Asiatic origin in the north-eastern Delta” who are notable for “kings with foreign, mostly West Semitic, names.”\textsuperscript{76} “The names of the royal house and of the treasurers of the Fourteenth Dynasty are mainly of foreign origin, though there are a few Egyptian names among them.”\textsuperscript{77} While some have argued that the Fourteenth Dynasty “ruled in the Delta contemporary with the Thirteenth Dynasty,”\textsuperscript{78} others argue that “some overlap between the
14th and 13th Dynasties does seem probable, but the evidence suggests that this occurred toward the end of Dynasty Thirteen rather than at its beginning.” The exact extent of Fourteenth Dynasty territory is in doubt “due to the scarcity of monuments, the complete lack of contemporary documents from this dynasty, and the fact that the Delta, archaeologically speaking, is extremely poorly documented as regards to this period (with the notable exception of Tell el-Dab‘a).” Four reasons have been suggested for this lack of documentation: (1) the lack of available stone in the Delta, (2) Canaanite tradition may have avoided making monuments, (3) deliberate destruction of monuments during the New Kingdom, (4) lack of excavation in the Delta, since only three of twenty-nine sites with Second Intermediate Period material have been excavated. The Second Intermediate Period levels are generally below the water table in the Delta. It does not help that “scholarly controversies concerning the absolute dates of Middle Kingdom-Second Intermediate Period archaeological deposits both in Egypt and the Levant attest to the problematic nature” of dating archaeological deposits from the time period.

Whether one dates the arrival of the Fourteenth Dynasty toward the beginning or the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, there would have been a dynastic change during Abraham’s life, with rulers of a different dynasty in Egypt at the time of his visit than had been in charge during his attempted sacrifice.

Early in the Thirteenth Dynasty (in the reign of Sobekhotep III), we have an account of various servants in the vizier’s household who were transferred. “The main item is a fragmentary list of ninety-five servants, of whom at least forty-five are of Asiatic origin.” Many of the Asiaties have Northwest Semitic names, but many of them have been given Egyptian names “copied or built on the names of their masters,” in this case, the vizier Resseneb, or his father, the vizier Akhu. Since “all eight of the Asiatic children and at least five of their elders have Egyptian names,” one can conclude that “the Semitic names borne by most of the adults of our group suggest that they, at least, were relatively recent importations.” Since those with Egyptian names were named after the owners, it suggests also that the owners, or someone in their families, may have given the names to the children.

Shulem’s title is “king’s principal waiter” which seems like a different translation of the title wdpw “butler” or “cupbearer,” or wb; “butler.” There are a number of variations on the title from the Egyptian Middle Kingdom. These include wdpw iry irh “butler and keeper of the crescent,”


Of these titles, the closest to “king’s principal waiter” is wdpw n hqs “butler of the ruler.” This title is attested once, on a Twelfth Dynasty stele from Abydos in the Musée de Marseille dating to late in the reign of Amenemhet III;109 the title is borne by a man named Pepy, who seems to be the son of Senuseretseneb-Sobekhotep.110 It is important to recognize that the butler of the ruler did not own the stele, his father who was a htmw hry-n imy-ri htm “sealer and assistant to the overseer of the treasury”111 did. Generally, owners of stele are only very high government officials; a high government official might be able to afford a stele, but a butler might not. During the time when Abraham visited Egypt, probably the Fourteenth Dynasty, personal monuments are even rarer.112 Therefore we should neither expect the title or those who held it to appear much in the archaeological or historical record. It also indicates that the title is not a very high ranking one.

Another possibility is the wdpw hnty “the cupbearer of the outer palace.” The outer palace (hnty) was “the sector for state affairs, in opposition to the private quarters of the palace.”113 The cupbearers of the outer palace served as “intermediaries” who supplied the palace.114 Conceptually, the palace consisted of “the main palace building(s), divided into two principal sections, the official quarters at the front (hnty) and private quarters at the back. Around these would stand the storerooms and general servicing quarters (šn).”115

In a ritual context, the most likely candidate is the wdpw iry ëch “butler and keeper of the moon”116 or “cupbearer, keeper of the crescent”117 because he was “the cupbearer of the king in the context of sacred ceremonies.”118 The title seems to be used “as a designation for the cupbearer who had to bring food to the king himself.”119 This title “first appears in the reign of Amenemhat III.”120 One of the holders of the title
claims that he was “one truly known to the king, his beloved, pure of arm in the sight (?) of Horus, when he offers the vital sustenance of the king, overseer of stores.”

One of the duties of the wdpw “butler” or “cupbearer” was to convey orders for goods from the palace to the scribes in the outer court who would write it down to be delivered to those who would provide the supplies. The cupbearer would also “have brought the food from the preparation room to the place of eating.” In later times, the butler or cupbearer was an attendant on royal family members along with bodyguards.

Another possibility is that the term “waiter” represents the Egyptian title wbꜣ, since “the wbꜣ ‘foodbearer’ seems to have represented the same function [as the wdpw ‘cupbearer’], perhaps lower status or less formal expression.” The title wbꜣ is also translated “butler.” Besides the generic term, there existed more specific titles, including wbꜣ n it-nṯr “butler of the god’s father,” wbꜣ n ṭ hmqt “butler of the beer-pantry,” and wbꜣ n šnꜥw “butler of a storehouse.”

The precise form of the title, wbꜣ or wdpw or variants, is not determinable at this point. There are a number of possibilities which give a general indication of position and function of the principal waiter.

So from Shulem’s name and title and we can surmise the following: From the form of his name, we know that Shulem lived during the late Middle Kingdom or the Second Intermediate Period. Shulem was not a native Egyptian. He was probably a first generation immigrant. He served in the court of a Fourteenth Dynasty ruler, who was probably not a native Egyptian either. If we had the entire translation of the Book of Abraham, we might be able to see how Shulem might have fit into the story or know more about him.

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Endnotes

1 For a general discussion see, Johann Jakob Stamm, Die akkadische Namengebung (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 121, 316, 369.


5 E.g. CUNES 49-09-015 15, in Milano and Westenholz, *The “Šuilisu Archive” and Other Sargonic Texts in Akkadian*, 80.

6 E.g. CUNES 49-13-086 r 5, in Milano and Westenholz, *The “Šuilisu Archive” and Other Sargonic Texts in Akkadian*, 59.


11 Watson, *Neo-Sumerian Texts from Umma and Other Sites*, 49.


15 Ibid.


19 Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 337.


23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.


32 Ibid.


34 *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 3/II:1269

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 3/II:1270.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 3/II:1269-70.

40 Ibid., 3/II:1270-72.

41 Ibid., 3/II:1272.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., 3/II:1272-74.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 3/II:1274-75.

49 Ibid., 3/II:1275.

50 Ibid., 3/II:1275-76.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., 3/II:1276-77.

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 3/II:1277.
60 Ibid., 3/II:1277-80.
61 Ibid., 3/II:1270.
64 MMA 86.11.68, 86.11.226, and 86.11.88m in Spar and Jursa, *The Ebabbar Temple Archive and Other Texts*, 38, 47, 57.
65 MMA x.706.2, in 86.11.88m in Spar and Jursa, *The Ebabbar Temple Archive and Other Texts*, 48.
67 Ibid.


75 John Garstang, *El-Arabah* (London: EEF, 1901), pls. IV-V.


78 Ibid., 94.


80 Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*, 103.

81 Ibid., 116-17.

82 Ben-Tor, Allen, and Allen, “Seals and Kings,” 53.

83 William C. Hays, *A Papyrus of The Late Middle Kingdom In the Brooklyn Museum* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1955); Stephen Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom* (New Malden, UK: Sia Publishing, 1990), 127-54. For the origin of the servants in the vizier’s household, see Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 148-49.

84 Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 147.

85 Hays, *A Papyrus of The Late Middle Kingdom In the Brooklyn Museum*, 92, 99.

86 Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 148.
87 Hays, *A Papyrus of The Late Middle Kingdom In the Brooklyn Museum*, 93.

88 Ibid., 99.


90 Stephen Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom* (New Malden, UK: Sia Publishing, 1990), 36.


92 Ibid., 91; a more recent translation is provided in Stephen Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt 1850-1700 BC* (London: Golden House Publications, 2004), 35.


95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., see also the comment in Henry George Fischer, *Egyptian Titles of the Middle Kingdom: A Supplement to Wm. Ward’s Index* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 63.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., 92.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 36.

Ibid.

Ibid.


For the individual, see Franke, *Personendaten aus dem Mittleren Reich*, 310. For the title, see Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*, 139.

Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period*, 359-83 lists only king Nehsy as being attested by anything other than scarab-seals and the Turin King List. If royal monuments are so rare as to be almost non-existent, we should expect private monuments to be even rarer.

Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 37.

Ibid., 38.

Ibid., 39.

Ibid., 91.

Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt*, 35.

Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom*, 195.

Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt*, 35.

Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt*, 66.

Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Later Middle Kingdom*, 99 n. 7.

Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt*, 66.
125  Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*, 84-85.

126  Ibid., 85.

127  Ibid.

128  Ibid.