

THE CHILDREN OF THE KING:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE IDENTITY AND RITUAL ROLE OF THE *MSW NSWT* IN
PHARAONIC EGYPT

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Dedication

For Ginger, Gail, Pick, Luis, Sayed,
and my late great dogs Gilligan and Sunny,
for helping me to stay happy. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

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The *msw nswt*, or “children of the king,” as this term is most commonly translated, are an enigmatic group of individuals found in the iconographic, literary, and official records of ancient Egypt. This term is used to label or describe children, adults, mixed-, and same-gender groups. Scholars have accepted a definition of this term as relating to the biological offspring of the king, but this identity is problematic when applied to some artistic representations and literary instances of the term. This thesis collects all known instances of the *msw nswt* in art and literature to address the apparent incongruency between the identity of this group and the use of the term as a label, and concludes that the *msw nswt* are best interpreted as children of the current *or* of previous kings with respect to the institutional role of kingship.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Theban tomb of Kheruef (TT192)¹ contains relief carvings that depict details from two of the three known *Heb Sed* celebrations of King Amenhotep IV.² On a wall in the portico west of the court, to the north of the doorway, is a badly damaged scene in which the king and queen stand in a boat and are towed to shore. Awaiting them are several female figures who hold *naos*-sistra and are labeled *s3t nswt*, or “daughters of the king” (fig. 8C).³ Although the text is not clearly visible in the Oriental Institute reproduction, Wente states that the label *msw nswt* is also present,⁴ thus these figures are not only *s3t nswt*, but *msw nswt*, an enigmatic term that is commonly translated as “children of the king.”⁵ In another scene in the same tomb is a scene in which the king stands, pulling a rope to erect the *Djed*-pillar (fig. 8B). This scene occurs on the wall of the portico west of the court, but is located to the south of the doorway. Behind the king stands the queen and directly behind her stand sixteen female figures holding *naos*-sistra in their proper right hands and *menat* necklaces in the left. These figures, although clearly

1. Bertha Porter and Rosalind L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*. I. The Theban Necropolis, Part I. Private Tombs, (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1985), 298-299

2. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Epigraphic Survey: The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192*. Oriental Institute Publications 102 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1980), pls. 47 and 57.

3. Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* III, 409, 412; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 330, 651, 652; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 207, 106.

4. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 61.

5. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* II, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1928), 139; Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, (Oxford: Griffith Institutes, 1962), 116; Rainer Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen: Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch—Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.)*, (Mainz: Phillip von Zabern, 1995), 361.

female, are labeled only *msw nswt*, “children of the king” and not “daughters of the king.” Thus, these female figures are labeled with two different terms that appear to mean basically the same thing. The seemingly incongruent use of these two labels in this tomb sparked my interest in the term *msw nswt*, where it occurs, and how it is used.

In many cases the term *msw nswt* appears to be used as a kinship term, based on its generally accepted translation as “king’s children,” but in some contexts it also appears to be used as a ritual title. As its usages in the Tomb of Kheruef reliefs demonstrate, however, its function seems ambiguous.

To date, scholars have not addressed the issues surrounding this term adequately. Furthermore, in the published scholarly analysis of this term, there seems to be an academic propensity to consider only all-female groups.⁶ Although some scholars acknowledge that male and mixed-gender groups of *msw nswt* existed, few address this gender diversity in their work. Such an academic bias may have been precipitated, in part, by chance survival. There are a greater number of representations of female *msw nswt* groups than representations showing all-male or mixed-gender groups, although these representations do exist. The term *msw nswt* is used in literature and funerary records in reference to groups of all male individuals as well as mixed- gender and all female groups. This thesis examines the *msw nswt* in the iconographic, literary, and official records of ancient Egypt in order to attempt to provide an interpretation of this

6. Lana Troy only considers all female groups of *msw nswt* and completely ignores evidence of male groups, as does Georgia Xekalaki. See Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, (Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Versitatis Upsaliensis, 1986); and Georgia Xekalaki, “The Procession of Royal Daughters in Medinet Habu and Their Ritualistic Role: Origins and Evolution,” *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists*, edited by Jean Claude Goyon and Christine Cardin, (Leuven: Peeters Publishers and Department of Oriental Studies Bondgenotenlaand, 2007).1959-1965. In his dictionary Rainer Hannig defines *msw nswt* as “king’s children (mainly princesses),” Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 361.

label that might fit all of the various usages and illuminate its curious usage in the tomb of Kheruef.

While my primary interest is in the artistic representations of the *msw nswt*, this thesis commences with an examination of the grammatical construction and textual usage of this term, along with an overview of Egyptian kinship terms. This organizational choice is predicated upon the idea that a better linguistic understanding of the term *msw nswt* will inform my visual analysis of the scenes in which the *msw nswt* appear. Chapter 2 presents an analysis of the scholarly literature that treats this topic. This chapter also presents an analysis of the grammatical considerations surrounding each of the two parts comprising this term: *msw* and *nswt*, before examining the term as a whole. A discussion of ancient Egyptian kinship terms, including an examination of royal kinship terms, concludes this chapter. Chapter 3 examines the textual occurrences of the term *msw nswt*. The sources examined in this chapter are: funerary, which include primarily the Pyramid and Coffin Texts and tomb autobiographies; and literary, which include works of literature not of an explicitly religious nature. Based on these occurrences, the term *msw* will be analyzed, in order to clarify its uses as a kin term rather than a class descriptor. This distinction is very important for interpreting the textual uses of the *msw nswt* as well as their iconography.

Chapter 4 collects and examines the iconographic evidence for the *msw nswt* starting from the Predynastic Period, through the Old, Middle and the New Kingdoms, and concludes with the one example that survives from the Third Intermediate Period: the *Sed* Festival reliefs of Osorkon II. In each of these examples, particular attention is given

to the iconographic elements that may help illuminate the identity and ritual roles of the *msw nswt*.

Chapter 5 includes a critical discussion of previous scholarship on the *msw nswt*, and proposes a more nuanced interpretation of this group, substantiated by evidence from the textual and iconographic records presented and analyzed in this thesis. This thesis suggests that the term *msw nswt* may be best interpreted as a royal title that reflects a kin relationship, and proposes that this relationship is structured on the institutional rather than the personal identity of the king.

Chapter 2

Previous Scholarship, the Term *msw nswt*, and Egyptian Kinship

2.1. Previous Scholarship

To date, the scholarly treatment of the *msw nswt* is limited, consisting of only two journal articles and tangential references in larger works. The term's appearance in the standard reference works is also sporadic and cursory. This topic is so understudied that it lacks an independent entry in the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, hereafter *LÄ*, appearing there only in entries dedicated to other subjects.¹ Because the *msw nswt* are only tangential to the main subject of such *LÄ* articles, even when they are mentioned, their title is treated only briefly, even in the most thorough of these discussions.² The *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* similarly lacks a dedicated entry for the *msw nswt*, and does not even include a discussion of this term in the section on childhood.³

My preliminary review of the literature revealed that few scholars have subjected the topic of the *msw nswt* to an extended analysis. Although it appears to be a kinship term based on its generally accepted translation as “king’s children,” it also appears to be used as a ritual title. For example, Redford translates *msw nswt* as a kinship term, “king’s

1. See Schafik Allam, “Family Structure” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* II, ed. Wolfgang Helck, and E. Otto. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977, 110-111; Wolfgang Helck, “Huni” in *Lexikoner der Ägyptologie*, III, 85 ; Emma Brunner-Traut, “Krokodils” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* III, 797; Ursula Rössler-Köhler, “Repit,” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* V, 240; and Wolfgang Decker, “Schwimming” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* V, 765-766.

2. For example, under the heading “family structure,” (*Lexikon der Ägyptologie* II, 110-111). Allem mentions that the *msw nswt* were educated at the palace along with children from distinguished families, but that their function in later life is not well-known.

3. See Erika Feucht, “Childhood,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 1, edited by Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 261-264.

children,” but then treats it as a title, including it first in a listing of “Titles Borne by the Most Influential Individuals” from Karnak *talatat* blocks.⁴ These blocks contain depictions of the first *Heb Sed* celebration of Amenhotep IV that include *msw nswt* figures in processions with the king and queen. Redford states that these “king’s children” play a “formal role” at the *Heb Sed* celebrations.⁵ However, because these depictions show adult female figures labeled as *msw nswt* while Amenhotep IV had no adult daughters at the time of this festival, their presence in these scenes is problematic. Redford’s understanding of a “blood relationship” for the kinship aspect of this term creates an interpretive situation in which he is obligated to explain the presence of “royal children” in these procession scenes as “stand-ins playing a role,”⁶ but he does not go on to analyze this interpretation or offer any explanatory discussion.

There are only three published works known to this author that discuss the term *msw nswt* with any degree of thoroughness. However, not one of these focuses primarily on this topic. Kaiser’s 1983 article elucidates the title’s connection to the goddess Repit.⁷ To support his theory of an Akhmimic origin for this goddess that points to a very early occurrence of a rebirth ritual practiced during the *Heb Sed* celebrations, Kaiser focuses on one specific type of representation of the *msw nswt*. This article thus deals only with those representations that show the *msw nswt* (regardless of whether they are explicitly

4. Donald B. Redford, *The Akhenaten Temple Project: The Excavation of Komel Ahjmar*. (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1988), 102.

5. *Ibid.*, 102.

6. Donald Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 118; Xekalaki. “Royal Daughters ” 1963.

7. Werner Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu der älteren Bilddarstellungen und der Bedeutung von *rpw.t*,” *MDAIK* 39 (1983): 261-296.

labeled as such) in hooped palanquins.⁸ Kaiser's work does not include a comprehensive survey of all known representations of the *msw nswt*.

Likewise, Xekalaki's article, "The Procession of Royal Daughters in Medinet Habu and Their Ritualistic Role: Origins and Evolution,"⁹ examines a very specific set of figures in her analysis of the cultic role of a group of princesses that appears in the decorative program of the mortuary complex of Ramses III at Medinet Habu. Although this article presents a useful compilation and analysis of most of the known iconographic representations of the *msw nswt*, Xekalaki's article fails to include/ omits two important sources for the iconography of the *msw nswt*, namely, the Pylon of Sesostri I at Memphis,¹⁰ and the *msw nswt* figures depicted at Medinet Habu, participating in a procession during the Min Festival of Ramses III.¹¹



8. Kaiser analyzes iconographic material from Old Kingdom monuments and ceremonial art, as well as one 12th Dynasty monument. He includes depictions from the pyramid temple of Sahure, published in Ludwig Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahu-Re II: Die Wandbilder*, Leipzig: 1913, Pl. 65; as well as from the sun temple of Niuserre, published in Friedrich W. F. Von Bissing and Hermann Kees. *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-Woser-Re (Rathures)* 2. Die Kleine Festdarstellung. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1923): Pl. 3, 7b; 18, 44d; 21, 50a. Also examined are the macehead of Narmer, published in J.E. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis I*. London: BSAE 4, 1900; and the Pylon of Sesostri I, published in W. M. Flinders Petrie, *The Palace of Apries (Memphis II)*. (London: School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909): Pls. IV, V, VI, and IX.

9. Georgia Xekalaki, "The Procession of Royal Daughters in Medinet Habu and Their Ritualistic Role: Origins and Evolution," in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists: Grenoble 6-12*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006): 1960.

10. Located on the site later used for the palace of the 26th Dynasty King Apries (589-570 BCE), this monument was published by W. M. Flinders Petrie. *The Palace of Apries (Memphis II)*, (London: School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909), pls. IV, V, VI, and IX.

11. The Epigraphic Survey. *The Epigraphic Survey: Medinet Habu IV: Festival Scenes of Ramses III*. Oriental Institute Publications 51, (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1940), pl. 197.

The only other publication that deals with the *msw nswt* in any direct way is Troy's *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*.¹² In this scrupulously documented book, Troy provides an analytical framework for understanding the Egyptian institution of queenship based on a dualistic understanding of sexual difference. She only includes the *msw nswt* in this work as part of her argument that mother-daughter dualisms were as important to the regeneration of the kingship, and of the universe, as the father-son dualism that comprised the cycle of the kingship.

To date, the scholarly treatment of *msw nswt* is limited and results in conflicting conclusions. The term itself is not even spelled consistently by scholars. Some scholars spell it *msw nsw*, intentionally dropping the final letter, “t,” of the second element of the title, while others retain it, spelling the title as *msw nswt*. Gardiner states, “The word var.  ‘king of Upper Egypt’ probably originally read *ni-swt* ‘he who belongs to the *swt* plant’,¹³ but before [the Middle Kingdom, the title] had become  *nsw*.”¹⁴ Thus, while the choice of usage for modern scholars is a matter of personal preference, I believe that the grammar calls for *nswt* and will accordingly use that spelling in this thesis. Further grammatical analysis of the title is the subject of the next section.

12. Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis, 1986), 89-91.

13. See page 11 below.

14. Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an Introduction to the Study of Hieroglyphs*. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 482.

2.2. Grammatical Analysis of the Title

Of the published material on the *msw nswt*, only the work of Kaiser examines the grammar and translation of the term, and his treatment of this aspect is very brief.¹⁵

Instead, most scholars generally accept the translation ‘the children of the king.’¹⁶

Because this translation is based on the grammar, it seems prudent to begin an analysis of this group with an examination of the term as a grammatical structure. A noun phrase consisting of two nouns, *msw* and *nswt*, comprises this title. Each of these nouns derives from other forms, *msw* is the plural form of a participle derived from the verb *msi*, which means “to bear” or “to give birth,”¹⁷ while *nswt*, as discussed above, is a contraction.

2.2.1 *msw*

The first unit of the noun phrase, *msw*, is a masculine, plural participle, derived from the verb *msi*, “to birth” or “to bear,” which can be interpreted actively as well as passively. This verb is used not only in reference to human birth, but also to describe the creation of humans by the gods. It can also be translated “to bring forth,” as from a field, and “to make or fashion.”¹⁸ The semantic richness and fine nuance of this verb are generally confirmed by its contextual usage where certain translation choices are clearly

15. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 270.

16. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 262; Xekalaki, “Royal Daughters,” 1960; and Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 59.

17. Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow. *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* 2. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1927), 137; Rainer Hannig. *Die Sprache der Pharaonen: Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch—Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.)*, (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 360. R. O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, University Press, 1962), 116.

18. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962): 116; Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow. *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* 2. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1927), 138; Rainer Hannig. *Die Sprache der Pharaonen: Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch—Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.)*, (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 360.

indicated over others. However, in the context of *msw nswt*, the inherent flexibility of Egyptian participles to be translated actively or passively complicates a secure interpretation.

Egyptian participles convey the notion of an agent that acts, an active participle, or is acted upon, a passive participle.¹⁹ Generally speaking, the Egyptian participle is adjectival in nature, providing more information about a noun, and as such is marked to indicate gender and number. Thus, the participial form of *msi* could be used to express the active notion of “one who gives birth,” especially when it occurs in the feminine singular form. As a passive participle, it means “one to whom birth is given,” or, “one who is born.” Unfortunately, morphology and usage do not consistently provide enough evidence to make this distinction in voice, thus, even the grammar seems to be ambiguous.

It is possible that in some situations this multivalent term was intentionally fluid, bearing the dualistic potential for an active or passive translation. This concept is seen in the work of both Kaiser and Troy who connect the *msw nswt* figures to deities and interpret them as symbolic of child-bearers *and* children of the king. Kaiser identifies the *msw nswt* with Repit, the consort of Min, and suggests that these figures represent two aspects of an evolving ritual of rebirth.²⁰ Troy connects these figures symbolically with the mother-child duality expressed in Hathor-Sekhmet as mother and daughter of Horus,²¹ as well as Nut who, as the night sky, acts as the wife and mother of the god Re.²²

19. James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 319; and James E. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar* (Mississauga: Benben Publications, 1997), 132.

20. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 262.

21. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 21.

Hannig’s alternative translation in his dictionary for *msw nswt* as “childbearer of the king,” adds support to this interpretation.²³ Both Troy’s and Kaiser’s interpretations, however, are based on analysis of the *msw nswt* as an all-female group. Because male *msw nswt* are depicted engaged in ritual activities during festival scenes,²⁴ the passive interpretation of *msw* as “child bearer” does not seem to be an appropriate interpretation for this group as a whole. Thus, *msw* is best translated as the plural passive participle, “those who are born.”

2.2.2 *nswt*

The second semantic unit of this noun phrase, *nswt*, is commonly translated as “king” but it is actually an instance of a *nisba* adjective formed from the contraction of the genitival adjective *n(y)* with the noun *swt* meaning “sedge.”²⁵ This construction is used to indicate a person’s place of origin or cultural group.²⁶ Thus, the resulting compound, *nswt*, traditionally translated “king,”²⁷ probably means “he who has the sedge.”²⁸ Although the sedge is the iconic plant of Upper Egypt, this compound came to be used as a generic reference to the Egyptian king. Because the king is referenced with respect to this symbol of office, however, this title emphasizes an institutional, rather than a personal aspect of the king.

22. *Ibid.*, 26.

23. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 361.

24. The Epigraphic Survey. *Medinet Habu IV: Festival Scenes of Ramses III*, pl. 197.

25. Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* IV, 58.

26. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, §54.

27. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 64.

28. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 64; and Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, 30.

The living king in ancient Egypt was not simply a son of the previous king. He was ritually understood and represented as the temporary embodiment of Horus in a cyclical process of renewal. The king was at once human and divine.²⁹ Or, as David O'Connor describes Egyptian kingship,

Kingship is a divine institution, in a way itself a god, or at least an image of the divine and capable of becoming its manifestation; each incumbent, each pharaoh, is fundamentally a human being, subject to humankind's limitations. When the king took part in the roles of his office, especially in rituals and ceremonies, his being became suffused with the same divinity manifest in his office and the gods themselves. With this capacity, the king would be empowered to carry out the actual and symbolic acts that contributed to the maintenance and rebirth of the cosmos. Indeed, in these contexts, the king acted as a creator deity and became the sun-god.³⁰

The symbolic imagery of the king's relationship to the sedge plant is central to this term. It is, thus, primarily the *institution* of kingship that is invoked in the noun *nswt*, and not the body of any individual king, a distinction that is very important to an understanding of the *msw nswt*. For consistency, I will translate *nswt* as "he who has the sedge" throughout the rest of this thesis.

2.2.3 msw nswt


The term *msw nswt* is an example of a bound genitival expression. The genitival relationship in Egyptian was indicated with the genitival adjective *ny*, the equivalent of the English word "of." Alternatively, two nouns are juxtaposed, one next to the other, in a "bound construction," so that the possessor immediately follows the possessed.³¹

29. Lanny Bell, "Luxor Temple and the Cult of the Royal Ka," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (1985): 251–294.

30. David O'Connor and David P. Silverman, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (New York: Brill, 1994), xxv.

31. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 40.

According to Hoch, the closer the relationship expressed by the genitive, the more likely it is that the bound construction will be used.³² Thus the bound genitival construction of the term *msw nswt* suggests a very close relationship between these terms, although this does not necessarily indicate a biological relationship.

For example, Černý notes that in the community of workmen at the royal cemetery at Thebes, the “boys of the community who could reasonably be expected to become workmen of the [royal] tomb were called  *ms hr-pr*, ‘child of (the) Tomb’.”³³ Remarkably, Černý does not consider the active participial option of *ms* for a translation that would read “maker/fashioner of the Tomb.” Either translation, however, supports the assertion that this genitival relationship need not express a parent-offspring relationship and highlights the flexibility inherent in the translation of Egyptian kinship terms. An analysis of the ways that ancient Egyptians used kinship terminology is therefore essential to understanding the term *msw nswt*.

2.3. Egyptian Kinship Terminology

Although apparently ambiguous, it is clear that Egyptian kinship terms functioned systematically and were not applied arbitrarily. Current western notions of what constitutes “basic” kinship terminology dominate approaches to Egyptian kinship systems: that approach complicates our understanding of the Egyptian concepts. Scholars have tended to accept, uncritically, the “basic” terms mother/father, sister/brother, daughter/son, and to apply these to Egyptian models. This results in the common

32. Hoch, *Middle Egyptian Grammar*, 30.

33. Jaroslav Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period*. (Cairo: Institut Français d'archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1973), 117.

assumption that any application of these kinship terms to individuals who fall outside the nuclear family group need to be understood as extensions or metaphorical usages.³⁴

Although most scholars appreciate that the Egyptian kinship system does not directly correspond to contemporary western kin terminology, “these differences are still explained in the context of European kinship and family relationships.”³⁵ Bierbrier’s work demonstrates this process. He suspects that “the [kinship] terms themselves may have a wider meaning than has hitherto been supposed”³⁶ but continues to examine kinship terminology based on definitions of these terms that correspond to western models, a decision that results in his having to interpret other uses of these terms as somehow obscuring a “true blood-relationship.”³⁷

This highlights the problem that “using western terminology to describe non-western social relationships, thereby making them seem familiar, can mislead scholars into believing that they comprehend other societies, reducing appreciation of non-western methods of ordering relationships.”³⁸ Lustig references the anthropological work of Leach to caution that, “the uses of terms in multiple contexts should be examined without

34. For example, Jean Revez writes that, “the word *sn*, which means “brother” in *its basic sense*, encompasses a great range of family ties in its *broad, extended* meaning” (Jean Revez, “The Metaphorical Use of the Kinship Term *sn* “Brother.”” *The Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 40 [2003]: 123, (emphasis mine). Troy states that the Egyptian terms, “cover *only* the members of the nuclear family”, *Patterns of Queenship*, 104, (emphasis mine). Bierbrier suggests analyzing official documents to determine “a *true* relationship” (“Terms of Relationship,” 107, emphasis mine).

35. Troy D. Allen, “Problems in Egyptology: Ancient Egyptian Kinship,” *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no.2, (November 2000): 139-148, at 140.

36. M. L. Bierbrier, “Terms of Relationships at Deir El-Medinah.” (*The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 66, 1980): 107.

37. Bierbrier, “Terms of Relationships,” 102.

38. Judith Lustig, “Kinship, Gender and Age in Middle Kingdom Tomb Scenes and Texts,” in *Anthropology and Egyptology: a Developing Dialogue*, edited by Judith Lustig, 43-65. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 46.

assuming that some are more central to meaning than others.”³⁹ Basing her work on decorated Old and Middle Kingdom tombs from Meir, Aswan, Beni Hasan, Giza and Saqqara, Lustig examines kinship terminology as it corresponds lineally or collaterally to a central “ego” position (Figure 1). While kinship analysis in an English language publication will always necessitate the use of these terms in English, this approach clarifies the usage without privileging any particular kin relation as a primary meaning.⁴⁰ Summarizing her findings, Lustig states “from ego’s point of view, male and female kin are in one of three groups: they are either (1) ascendants, who preceded ego, (2) descendants who followed ego, or (3) nonlinear kin (collaterals and affines).”⁴¹ This corresponds to the findings of both Willems and Franke, that “Egyptian terminology strictly separates lineal and collateral kin” in such a way that, for example, ego’s sons and ego’s sons’ sons are all labeled *s3*, with respect to ego, whereas ego’s brother and his male offspring are both *sn*.⁴² Thus, it is apparent that terms describing lineal descendants, at least in the funerary contexts examined in Lustig’s work, clearly exclude collateral relations.

The Egyptian analogues of the “basic” western kinship terms, mother/father, sister/brother, daughter/son, do not represent exact counterparts to these relationships.

The adoption of Lustig’s framework, however, mitigates some of the confusion

39. *Ibid.*, 46.

40. Lustig’s graphic figure (47, Fig. 4.4) illustrating this system has been reproduced here in Figure 1.

41. *Ibid.*, 48.

42. *Ibid.*, 47. The studies referenced are H. O. Willems, “A Description of Egyptian Kinship Terminology of the Middle Kingdom c.2000 – 1650 BC” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en-Volkenkunde* 139 (1983): 152- 168; and, D. Franke, *Altägyptische Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen im Mittleren Reich*, HÄS 3 (Hamburg, 1983), 400.

associated with this incongruity. The word *mwt*, for example, commonly understood as “mother,”⁴³ would be better translated as “female lineal ancestor,” since it also designates a grandmother.⁴⁴ This usage is attested in multiple contexts such as funerary stelae,⁴⁵ and in tomb and legal inscriptions.⁴⁶

Using Lustig’s kinship framework, the use of the word *snt*, commonly translated as “sister,”⁴⁷ may be more accurately translated, “female collateral relative.” Because the person specified as such is neither an ancestor nor descendent, she is neither below nor above ego with respect to generational status. The use of this term to refer to a female love interest is well documented in Egyptian love poetry,⁴⁸ and became the most frequent word for “wife” beginning in the 18th Dynasty (1550-1307 BCE), and for any collateral female relative.⁴⁹ Similarly, the term *sn*, usually translated as “brother,”⁵⁰ is better translated as “male collateral relative,” because, although used in love poetry to denote

43. Erman and Grapow. *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* II, 54; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 330; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 106.

44. Gay Robins, “The Relationships Specified by Egyptian Kinship Terms of the Middle and New Kingdoms,” *Chronique d’Egypte* 54, no. 108 (Juillet 1979): 200, footnotes 5 and 6.

45. CG20075, for example, uses the term *mwt* to describe the deceased’s grandmother (Robins, *Kinship Terms*, 200 n 5).

46. See, for example, Gardiner’s translation of The Inscription of Mes. This tomb inscription recounts a court case in which the protagonist begins his argument with a statement of his lineage in which he uses the term *mwt.i*, “my mother” to describe his father’s mother.

47. Hannig. *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 714; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 230.

48. For all of the extant love poetry with hieroglyphic transliterations and annotated translations see Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 370-408.

49. Gay Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 61.

50. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 713; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 230.

the male lover or love interest,⁵¹ it can refer to a brother-in-law.⁵² Jean Revez argues that, “the kinship term *sn* ‘brother,’ may metaphorically convey a wide range of meanings, including ‘friend,’ ‘lover,’ ‘husband,’ ‘colleague’ and ‘confrere.’”⁵³ All of these possibilities can be seen to extend metaphorically from the status position of *sn* relative to ego within the Egyptian kinship framework. Revez also provides several examples of cases in which the best translation for *sn* is “rival,” basing this interpretation on his understanding of the term as indicative of a relationship of equality.⁵⁴ That *snw* also translates as “two” and “second” supports this metaphorical usage to express parity.⁵⁵

The Egyptian terms usually translated as “daughter” and “son,” *s3t* and *s3*,⁵⁶ are also attested with wider referents. It is more accurate to translate these terms as, “female lineal descendent,” and “male lineal descendent,” because, as Robins states, “in many cases grandchildren are referred to by [these] terms.”⁵⁷

Some of these terms, however, do have attested metaphorical uses. Revez provides instances of this in his analysis of the term *sn*, showing that this term was used by Amenhotep III to address the foreign king of Kardunish in a letter, and by king Snefru

51. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 370-408.

52. Bierbrier, “Terms of Relationship at Deir el-Medina,” 104.

53. Revez, “The Metaphorical Use of the Kinship Tem *sn* ‘Brother’.” 127.

54. Revez, “The Metaphorical Use of the Kinship Tem *sn* ‘Brother’.” 127- 130.

55. Hannig. *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 713.

56. Erman and Grapow. *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* 3, 411, 408; Hannig. *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 651, 651; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 207.

57. Robins, “The Relationships Specified by Egyptian Kinship Terms of the Middle and New Kingdoms,” 202.

in a greeting to the lector priest Djadjaemankh.⁵⁸ Thus this term, which generally connotes equal status between the designees, was also used, according to Georges Posener, “as an amicable and affectionate way of talking to people.”⁵⁹

Although metaphorical uses of kinship terms are attested, when scholars take into account the use of one term to describe multi-generational, lineal relationships, many relationships that at first appeared metaphorical can be understood in their literal sense.⁶⁰ One area that remains problematic, however, is that of royal kinship terminology.

2.3.1 Royal Kinship Formulae

While Lustig’s Egyptian kinship framework functions well in the cases of non-royal individuals, the fact of the king’s divinity affects the application of her theories to royal kinship. The dual nature of the king, as an individual and an institution, adds an element of ambiguity to interpreting these relationships. While the king is a human who has human biological connections to his family, he also serves as the temporary embodiment of the royal *ka*, and is “the living Horus.” Thus, it can be unclear to which of these two aspects of the king these kinship terms refer. However, an analysis of the royal kinship terms demonstrates that these terms do operate on the same structural principles as in non-royal families.

The bound genitival construction of *msw nswt* suggests that the relationship between the elements of this compound is very close. The structure of other royal kinship

58. Revez, “The Metaphorical Use of the Kinship Tem *sn* ‘Brother’.” 125.

59. Revez (125) cites G. Posener, *Littérature et Politique dans l’Égypte de la XIIe dynastie* (Paris, 1956), 31.

60. It is possible that the commonly used epithet, *n ht.f*, “of his body,” is used literally as a generational limiter, to indicate immediate offspring.

terms clarifies that it was the king who was at the center of these relationships. For example, the queen was consistently referred to as *hmt nswt*, “wife of the one who has the sedge,” highlights the centrality of the king to Egyptian social and religious structures. Other royal kinship relationships employed the same construction. The king’s mother was the *mwt nswt*, “lineal, female ancestor of the one who has the sedge,” his son was *s3 nswt*, “lineal, male descendent of the one who has the sedge,” and his daughter was *s3t nswt*, “lineal, female descendent of the one who has the sedge.”⁶¹

This type of terminology, in which members of the royal family did not exist independently of the king, explicitly renders kinship to the king, an institutionalized position, with the king serving as the focal point for these institutions. This suggests that all of these positions were conceptualized as functioning to preserve, support, and serve the institution of kingship. This, in turn, opens the possibility that these individuals are not simply relatives of the current king, but had concrete roles whose purpose was to support the institution of the kingship. Constructed in relationship to the institution rather than the individual, this understanding also allows for the possibility that these individuals might be related to the reigning king or any of his predecessors. This distinction becomes important with respect to the *msw nswt*, as this group of individuals is named using the same pattern.

61. Standard reference dictionaries translate all of these terms into contemporary western kinship terms such as “mother,” “son,” and “daughter.” See Erman and Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* III, 409, 412; Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, 330, 651, 652; Faulkner, *Concise Dictionary*, 207, 106. However, these translations appear less accurate than the one suggested by the kinship system established by Judith Lustig which includes multiple generations of these lineal kin relations.

2.4. Summary

The grammatical structure of the term *msw nswt*, considered along with the structure of Egyptian kinship terminology and the institution of kingship, provide a basis for the interpretation of this term as referring to the children of the current and previous kings. Some ritual role(s) of these individuals is also implicit in the title, which is constructed in relationship to the king in his institutional capacity. The ways that this term is used in the literature, as will be discussed in the next chapter, provides further support for this interpretation.



Chapter 3




Textual Occurrences

As has been demonstrated, the grammar of the term *msw nswt* and the structure of ancient Egyptian kinship terminology provide theoretical support for many different interpretations of this title, some far more likely than others. It seems that the most likely interpretation of this title, however, is the “children of he who has the sedge,” which includes children of previous as well as current kings. The ways that this term was actually used in texts will now be examined.

3.1. Funerary Texts

The passive participial form of the verb *ms*, “male lineal descendent” is not, to my knowledge, attested as a kinship term in non-royal funerary or administrative contexts. As *ms* appears to function as the equivalent of *s3*, it would be unlikely to occur in these types of inscriptions that require gender precision. Where the participial form of *ms* does occur frequently, is in royal funerary texts and literature. In these contexts, it occurs in the plural and always as a kinship reference. For example, 14 of the first 450 Utterances in the Pyramid Texts (PT) include the participial form of *ms*. In all of these instances, the reference is to children as someone’s kin rather than describing an age class.¹ In the single instance, PT 378, in which a child is mentioned independent of a kin relationship,


1. For example, PT 33: 24(d), from the pyramid of Teti, mentions , *ms(w) Hrw*, “children of Horus” (Sethe, 17). Similarly, PT 450: 836(c) admonishes the deceased king to protect , *msw.k*, “your children” (Sethe, 465).



the word , *hrd*, is used as the indefinite noun.² In the instances where particular children are referenced, the word , *s3*, “lineal descendent,” or its feminine equivalent, , *s3t* is used.³




In the Pyramid Texts, the plural *s3w* does not occur, but the participial *msw* appears instead, consistently used for the plural lineal descendents. This usage supports the interpretation of *msw* as a kinship term, functioning as *s3w*. The substitution of *s3* for *msw* in one version of PT 224:221(b) demonstrates this equivalence.⁴






3.2. Tomb Biographies

Unlike most other kinship designations, the term *msw nswt* appears to consistently refer to a mixed group. However, occasionally it possibly refers to an exclusively female or male group. There is some evidence from tomb contexts suggesting the existence of same-sex *msw nswt* groups. For example, an inscription on a doorjamb in the tomb of Khnumemhab at Assasif (TT 26) mentions a woman who worked with the *msw nswt*, but apparently only with female members of this group. The inscription reads

2. This occurs in Utterance 378: 663(c) and 664(a) both of which describe Horus as , *hrd nḥn ḏbꜥ.f m r.f*, “a young child, his finger in his mouth” (Sethe, 365).

3. While the word *s3* is commonly used in the Pyramid Texts, the combination  , *s3 s3t*, is used twice to indicate a pair of opposite-sex twin children of Atum in PT 215: 147(a), 148(c), 149(c); and 437: 804(a) (Sethe 84,85; 443).


4. All extant versions of this Utterance agree that the deceased is exhorted to protect children, but the pyramid of Unis text reads , *msw nb*, “all the children,” the versions from the pyramids of Teti and Pepi I read , *msw.k*, “your children,” and the version from the pyramid of Pepi II reads , *s3 nb*, “every lineal descendent” (Sethe, 128). This variation suggests the possibility that these terms were understood as interchangeable, but it is important to note that this is the only instance in the pyramid texts of this variability.

, *msw nswt n Stht Mrnptḥ*, “female lineal descendents of the king (i.e. the royal lineal descendents of) Seti-Merenptah,”⁵ and describes a woman named Qedemerut who worked as a governess to this group of women. This interpretation relies on the female determinative used for this term, , Gardiner’s sign # B1, instead of the seated child,  (A17) or the mixed gender pair,  (A1 and B1). If this determinative can be interpreted as a reliable indicator, this instance attests the existence of a single-sex subgroup of *msw nswt*. Exclusively male groups of *msw nswt* are possibly acknowledged as well in tomb inscriptions. For example, an inscription from Middle Kingdom Tomb 8 at El Bersheh, describes the deceased as a , *sbzw n msw nswt*, “teacher of the *msw nswt*.”⁶ The choice of the seated male determinative over the plural strokes, rather than a male and female, is suggestive of an all male constituency for this group. These usages suggest that the determinatives might vary by context, although this is not a certainty.

Inscriptions such as these give little information about the internal makeup and workings of the *msw nswt* but do provide evidence that this term was conceptualized as an institutionalized group and that one’s association with this group was a source of pride for non-royal individuals. A limestone stela in the British Museum from the tomb of Ptah-Shepses (EA682), a son-in-law of King Shepseskaf (2503—2498 BCE) in Saqqara

5. Wolfgang Helck, “Zwei Thebanische Urkunden aus der Zeit Sethos II,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 81 (1956): 86.

6. F. L. Griffith and Percy E. Newberry. *El Bersheh: Part II*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1895), pl XXI.

describes this priest as having been educated among the , *msw nswt*, in the palace of two successive kings, Menkaure (2532—2503) and Shepseskaf.⁷



Tomb biographies, like funerary texts, provide insight into the composition and status of the *msw nswt* as a group, but neither of these sources provides information about the lives of this group. The ways that this group was understood and imagined in Egyptian culture is available only through literature. Although these perspectives may not have been an accurate reflection of the lived realities of the individual *msw nswt*, they remain valuable.

3.3. Literary Texts


Of particular importance in the literature is the Story of Sinuhe, because this fictional narrative specifically mentions the *msw nswt* as part of the king's court. Scholars disagree on the value of this story as a historical document, the most recent interpretations of the text were presented at the as yet unpublished symposium “The Alpha and Omega of Sinuhe: Reinterpreting a Classical Middle Egyptian Text. Workshop 27-29 November, at Leiden University 27-29 November 2009. However, it provides glimpses into the workings of the royal court from the perspectives of the literate elite. The only extant narrative description of the *msw nswt* and their roles at the palace are from this document, surviving in several copies on papyri and ostraca from the Middle and New Kingdoms. The story follows a courtier named Sinuhe who flees from the palace after the death of the king and goes into exile in foreign lands for many years before returning home to be praised by the new king and given a hero's welcome. The

7. P. D. Scott-Moncrieff, *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum. Part 1*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), pl.13.

story is written in the first person with Sinuhe narrating the events from his own perspective.

As the story begins, the king's eldest son is engaged in a battle on the western front. This individual is described as  *s3.f*, "his son."⁸ Accompanying the king's eldest son, on this expedition, Sinuhe tells us, were the , *msw nswt*, a phrase that can be most accurately translated as "the lineal descendents of he who has the sedge." Although two of the three sources for this passage use the seated man and seated woman determinative for this compound term,⁹ these individuals were deployed for battle and most likely comprised only males. Based on the grammar and comparative usage of this term, these males described as *msw nswt* were probably sons and/or grandsons of the current king, and sons and/or grandsons of previous kings, all of whom would be *msw* for the current king. That the living brothers of the king would be included in this designation is a logical assumption. The title *sn nswt*, as Jean Revez documents, did not occur in Egypt until the 25th Dynasty.¹⁰ These men would likely have been lineal descendents of the previous king, thus in a double relationship to the living king, as brothers, uncles, and cousins, and as *msw nswt*. The use of the term *msw nswt* in Sinuhe is unique, in my research, for its use within a non-ritual context. I believe it functions here simply as a kinship term, as it would obviate the need to describe anyone as the *sn* of

8. All hieroglyphic texts reproduced here are from Aylward M. Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 2. (Bruxelles: La Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1972). The translation of *s3.f* as "son" is from R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940-1640 BC*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

9. Blackman's hieroglyphic text is from multiple copies of the Story of Sinuhe, from various papyri and ostraca. In this instance, three copies of the original text survived, two of which used Gardiner's A1 and B1 determinative. The Berlin Papyri 10499, in this instance, uses  (Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories*, 7).

10. Revez, "The Metaphorical Use of the Kinship Term *sn* "Brother"," 130.

the living king, as the word *sn* implies a parity with the king that would have been potentially destabilizing for the government and society.

When the reigning king dies suddenly, Sinuhe flees across the desert to Western Asia, where he is adopted by a local chieftain and elevated in status due to his hero-like abilities. He builds a life in foreign lands, but eventually grows old and longs for home. At this point, the story provides an interesting passage in which the mechanics of the words *hrdw* and *msw* may be parsed. Beginning at line 167 of the Berlin Papyrus 3022¹¹, a curious succession of terms occurs. First Sinuhe daydreams of working at the palace again and attending the errands of the queen's *hrdw*.¹² Then, he hopes the queen will say good things about him to her *msw*.¹³ When *hrdw* is read as an age-class descriptor, this term includes all of the children, collateral as well as lineal descendents, of the queen. Effectively, this term would include all of the children living in the palace, whose errands Sinuhe would be charged with carrying out. The use of *msw* is a more specific reference to the lineal descendents of the queen. In this usage, Sinuhe is describing the queen as Nut whom he hopes will "pass eternity above" him,¹⁴ thus, he hopes she will praise him to her lineal descendents. As Nut is a member of the Ogdoad, her lineal descendents include Osiris as well as Horus and, when understood as a literal kinship term, it is clear that it is to these descendents that Sinuhe wishes to be commended. Following this, Sinuhe says that the *msw nswt nty m pr.f*, the *msw nswt* who were in his (the king's)


11. Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories*, 30.

12. *Ibid.*, 30, line 167.

13. Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories*, 31, line 172.

14. William Kelly Simpson, "The Story of Sinuhe," in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, edited by William Kelly Simpson, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 54-66, at 61.

palace, let him hear their messages.¹⁵ Because the lineal descendents of the king as the *nswt*, or he who has the sedge, would include descendents of previous kings, this group is larger than the *msw* of the queen. While it is also possible that these terms function as synonyms, used rhetorically in Egyptian belles-lettres, they provide more information and assist in clarifying the passage when interpreted as semantically distinct.

Although the determinatives are Gardiner's seated male and female (A1 and B1),, it is impossible to be certain of the gender makeup of the *msw nswt* who send messages to Sinuhe here. The relative adjective, "who," which should agree with *msw nswt* in gender and number, is given as  *nty*, a masculine singular form. Yet, the grammar does not aid us in determining the gender since, according to Allen, "the feminine and plural forms of adjectives gradually disappeared from Egyptian, leaving only the masculine singular form."¹⁶

The king's royal decree that urges Sinuhe to come back to Egypt to die in dignity, states that the *msw nswt* have limestone pillars in their tomb chapels, implying that the mortuary needs of this group is provided by the king in a lavish fashion. Once more, this passage does not give information about the gender makeup of the *msw nswt* group specifically referenced here, and scholars disagree. For example, Oriental Institute Ostrakon 16991, a copy of a letter sent to the Vizier To by the workers at Deir el Medina during the latter part of the reign of Ramses III, mentions construction work on tombs for the *msw nswt*. There is no indication in the spelling or determinative to indicate that this refers to only male *msw nswt*, but Edward Wente assumes a masculine subject and

15. Blackman, *Middle-Egyptian Stories*. 31, line 176.

16. Allen, *Middle Egyptian*, 131.

translates *msw nswt* here as “princes” in his publication of the ostrakon.¹⁷ Jehon Grist, in contrast, in his discussion of this same ostrakon states, “*msw nsw* suggests that tombs for both royal sons *and* daughters were built at Ramesses’ command.”¹⁸

Near the end of the story, when Sinuhe returns to Egypt and goes to the palace, he makes frequent mention of the *msw nswt*. They stand “in the gateway” of the palace “between the sphinxes,” to greet Sinuhe.¹⁹ They bring *menat* necklaces, rattles, and sistra to the king and sing hymns of praise to the king and Hathor, the “Golden One,” upon learning of Sinuhe’s identity.²⁰ Then, they take Sinuhe’s hands as he leaves the presence of the king. The gender identity of the *msw nswt* is unclear in these passages, although scholars assume it to be an all-female group because of the association with *menat*, sistra and rattles.²¹ However, a recent study of the iconography associated with sistrum and sistrum playing by Flora Brooke Hesse, provides many examples of men using the sistrum and *menat* necklace in ritual and funerary contexts.²² Additionally, in the Story of Sinuhe, in every instance but one,²³ the mixed-gender (seated male with seated female)

17. Edward Wente. “A Letter of Complaint to the Vizier To,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 4, (October, 1961): 252-257.


18. Jehon Grist, “The Identity of Queen Tyti,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 71, (1985): 79.

19. Simpson, “The Story of Sinuhe,” 64.

20. *Ibid.*, 65.

21. See Kekalaki, “The Procession of Royal Daughters,” 1963; and Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 89.

22. Flora Brooke Hesse. “The Iconography and Use of the Sistrum in the Pharaonic Period,” (M.A. Thesis, The University of Memphis, 2007): 49-65.

23. The only exception from the Story of Sinuhe to the consistent spelling of *msw nswt* using a mixed gender determinative, occurs in line 23 on the version copied from the Berlin Papyrus 10499, in which the term is written , employing only the seated child determinative and the plural

determinatives are used to write *msw*, and the participle is expressed as a masculine plural, thus suggesting a male or mixed-gender group.

The age of the group that the author(s) of Sinuhe refer to as the *msw nswt* is also unclear. The amount of time spanned by the story is difficult to assess. But Sinuhe was clearly away from Egypt long enough to prosper and produce children of his own who are described as adults by the time Sinuhe leaves them to return to his homeland. Thus, the *msw nswt* of the palace who knew him before he left and showed such enthusiasm at his return, would have been adults if the chronology of the story can be understood as realistic. This factor adds support to the interpretation of this term as a kinship term and not an age-group classifier and could explain the use of the mixed-gender determinative, even in cases where the constituent members of the referenced group of *msw nswt* might have been exclusively female or male.

3.4. Summary

This review of the textual usages of the term *msw nswt* provides some additional information concerning their ages and genders, which further advances our understanding of these individuals. None of these examples, however, explicitly treats the ritual role(s) of this group. While the fundamental association of this word with reproduction and generative activity are suggestive, these aspects of the *msw nswt* must be explored in the iconographic record. It is primarily in the graphic representations of this group that their ritual roles can be accessed, and, perhaps, the question of why female representations have a gender-neutral label might be answered.

strokes. In this case, it may be relevant that the term specifically referred to the, presumably, male *msw nswt* who accompanied the king's eldest son into battle. (Blackman, 1972), 7.

Chapter 4

Iconographical Occurrences

Grammatical and textual analyses of the term *msw nswt* support its interpretation as a kinship term, and also point to its use as a courtly title whose bearers' primary function revolved around the king. The images of these figures are another very important source of information concerning this group. Although surviving examples are skewed towards predominantly female representatives of the *msw nswt*, mixed gender groups and all male groups do exist. These individuals, regardless of gender, are represented as engaged in royal and cultic activities, alongside other court officials. This chapter analyzes all of the known artistic representations of the *msw nswt*, along with some Predynastic examples that are presumed by scholars to be *msw nswt* based on common elements such as shared seated positions in palanquins and bodies wrapped up to the necks.

4.1 Predynastic and Early Dynastic Representations

Four unlabeled images of figures that resemble the *msw nswt* of later, labeled, images survive from the Predynastic (Before-3100 BCE) and Early Dynastic (3100-2890 BCE) periods.¹ Because scholars identify these images as *msw nswt* based on the iconography, and some scholars presume an evolution in the depictions of these figures,² they are examined here in chronological order.

1. Dates from Amélie Kuhrt. *The Ancient Near East c.3000—330 BC I*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 124 and 128.

2. Kaiser, "Zu den Mesu-Nesu," 262-263; Kekalaki, "The Procession of Royal Daughters," 1963, 1964. It should be noted that Eva Lange cautions against assuming any evolution of ideas or

4.1.1. Predynastic Images of the *msw nswt*

The ceremonial mace-head of King Scorpion of Dynasty 0 (ca. 3100 BCE), currently in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (AN1896-1908.E3632),³ bears the earliest suggested extant image of a *msw nswt* figure (fig. 2A). This ceremonial limestone mace-head is decorated in low relief with scenes arranged in at least five surviving registers. The central figure in the largest surviving section of this piece is the king. He is dressed in a short kilt and wears the ceremonial bull's tail and White Crown of Upper Egypt, and holds a plow with both hands. The king's figure faces proper left and is depicted in three-quarter profile. Behind his figure, the field is divided into three registers, the bottom of which is damaged, but the top register contains very large papyrus plants and one complete figure, depicted in profile facing proper right, seated in a palanquin.


This figure seated in the palanquin is followed by a male figure holding a paddle or *sekhem* scepter. This entire group follows behind what is surely a second palanquin, although all that remains is the back of the carrying pole, footrest, and part of the base.

The middle register, below these figures, contains a partial row of at least four female figures that appear to be dancing. While all of the figures in this scene wear short kilts, the males are flat-chested, while the females exhibit more developed breasts.

Additionally, the males are also, sometimes, represented with beards. The female dancing

representational strategies and advises that each representation be assessed on its own terms, Eva Lange, "The Sed-Festival Reliefs of Osorkon II at Bubastis: New Investigations," in *The Libyan Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies Into the 21st – 24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, edited by G. P. F. Broekman, R. J. Demarée and O. E. Kaper, (Leiden: Peeters Leuven, 2009), 203-218, at 213.

3. Line drawing published in Barbara Adams and Krzysztof M. Cialowicz. *Protodynastic Egypt*. (Buckinghamshire, UK: Shire Publications. 1988), 45; photographs published in J. E. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis I*, (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1900), pl. XXVIc.

figures are depicted with long hair or wigs, tied back from their faces. The wigs hang down behind their shoulders, past their waists. The figure in the palanquin, in contrast, appears wrapped in cloth or blankets up to the neck (fig. 2B). The hair is also hidden with a cloth covering, and only the face is exposed. The legs and feet are hidden under the wrap and the knees are not protruding, suggesting a seated position with feet tucked under the body, reminiscent of Gardiner's sign # B2 or C18 determinatives .⁴ Because of their hidden arms and hands, which seem to be wrapped inside layers of cloth or bandaging (fig. 2B) they appear “mummy-like.”⁵ The palanquin in this depiction is open, unlike some later depictions in which the occupant is enclosed in a hoop-type covering. Nothing in the details of the scene, except possibly the lack of a beard, provides any evidence for interpreting this figure as male or female.

The next appearance of figures that resemble *msw nswt* occurs on the mace-head of King Narmer, from Dynasty 1 (c. 3100-2890 BCE).⁶ This ceremonial mace-head is decorated in low relief with a scene that has been interpreted as a *Heb Sed* celebration (fig. 3).⁷ Unlike the striding figure from the Scorpion mace-head, this king is depicted in profile facing proper left, seated on a throne, which is situated in a small pavilion placed at the top of a stepped dais. The king wears the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. The field in front of him is divided into three horizontal registers, the center of which contains,

4. Gardiner. *Egyptian Grammar*, 448, 449. This comparison is used to clarify the unusual position of the feet in these figures, tucked up under the body, and is not meant to imply that the figures were meant to represent pregnant women (B2) or the god Tjanen (C18), although these associations are interesting and possibly relevant to the interpretation of these figures.

5. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 261.

6. Photographs and line drawing published in Quibell, *Hierakonpolis I*, pl. XXXVIb. Date is estimated from the conventional chronology provided by Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 128.

7. Erik Hornung and Elisabeth Staehelin. “Studien zum sedfest,” 16.

immediately facing the king, a hooped palanquin holding a figure. The figure in this palanquin appears to be depicted identically to the seated figure from the Scorpion mace-head: seated and depicted in full profile, facing proper right, feet either crossed or tucked under the body, and completely wrapped in a cloak or blanket that goes up to the neck. Only the figure's head is exposed. Unlike the figure from the Scorpion mace-head, the facial features of this figure are not depicted, however, the face is beardless. The hairstyle is impossible to identify. The figure could be bald, or with close shorn hair, or the hair could be wrapped in a cloth. The palanquin itself here has two short legs supporting it and it rests on the ground line, fractionally lower than the king's own feet. The legs of the palanquin here appear to be in the shape of bovine hooves. Above this figure is depicted a large and a small bovine, encircled in a rope or enclosure. As in the Scorpion mace-head, nothing in this scene except the lack of a beard indicates the gender of the figure in the palanquin.

The interpretation of this figure is the subject of much scholarly debate. While it has many elements in common with later *msw nswt* figures including general appearance, wrapped to the neck, feet tucked under, and no facial hair, there are other possibilities. Wilkinson suggests these figures are statues of divinities that the king will ritually dedicate, thus he interprets the later use of the term *ms nswt* that is associated with these images, as referring to a metaphorical giving birth to the statue of the god by the king through the performance of the "opening of the mouth ceremony."⁸ Kemp proposes a similar interpretation of "divine images,"⁹ noting the resemblance to models of tent

8. Toby A. H. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 268.

9. Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), fig. 20G.

shrines from early deposits in Abydos.¹⁰ Alternatively, Williams and Logan interpret this and other similar figures as sacrificial victims and read them as part of a motif representing ritual human sacrifice during the *Heb Sed* celebrations.¹¹ Comparing these figures to those depicted in seal impressions from the ancient Near East, Wengrow, proposes that the individuals depicted seated in palanquins are people of “high status.”¹² The fact that these figures are represented as adult, mainly female, individuals in later Heb Sed representations, however, suggests to me that these images had likely always represented the children of the king.

4.1.2. Early Dynastic Images of the *msw nswt*

During Dynasty 1 (c.3100 – c.2890 BCE),¹³ two representations of figures that might be identifiable as *msw nswt* appear on small labels, one dating to the reign of King Djer (c. 2952/2902 -2939/2889)¹⁴ who ruled during the early Dynasty 1,¹⁵ the other from the reign of King Den (c. 2939/2889-2892/2842)¹⁶ who ruled in the middle of Dynasty 1, both of whom ruled after Narmer. These labels are very roughly carved, thus details are

10. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, fig.33.4.

11. Bruce Williams and Thomas J. Logan, “The Metropolitan Museum Knife Handle and Aspects of Pharaonic Imagery Before Narmer,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 no. 4 (1987): 271.

12. David Wengrow, *The Archaeology of Early Egypt: Social Transformations in North-East Africa, 10,000 to 2650 BC*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 164.

13. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 128.

14. Jürgen von Beckerath, *Chronologie Des Pharaonischen Ägypten: Die Zeitbestimmung der ägyptischen Geschichte von der Vorzeit bis 332 v. Chr.* (Mainz: Philipp Von Zabern, 1997), 187.

15. Walter B. Emery *Excavations at Saqqara: The Tomb of Hemaka*, (Cairo: Government Press, Bulaq. 1938), 35, Fig.8.

16. Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 187.

difficult to make out. Together, however, they provide a clear link between the hooped palanquin figures and the open palanquin figures from the earlier representations on mace-heads.¹⁷

The ebony label associated with King Djer (Cairo, JE 70114) was recovered from Saqqara, from the tomb of an official named Hemaka and was apparently tied to a leather bag with a cord threaded through the hole in the top right corner (fig. 4). It is incised and the figures had been painted green and red.¹⁸ This label depicts a procession of individuals approaching the *serekh* of King Djer, carrying various items and standards. This label is divided into three horizontal registers, the center of which contains five figures that appear to proceed to the viewer's left. The two figures at the end of this row are seated on what appear to be very roughly depicted palanquins. These figures are depicted in profile, facing proper right and, like the predynastic figures, are completely wrapped up to the neck. Both figures are depicted with hair hanging in a triangular wedge behind their heads and with what is possibly one lock of hair falling from the crown of the forehead forward in front of the face.¹⁹ The first of these figures is seated under an image that appears to carry some semantic information related to the identity of the figure, although it is not an identifiable hieroglyphic symbol. This symbol has the shape

17. Emery also makes this connection and ties all of these images to the *msw nswt* images from Niuserre's Temple at Abu Ghurab. Emery *Excavations at Saqqara*, 37.

18. Emery *Excavations at Saqqara*, 35.

19. Williams and Logan interpret these wrapped figures in palanquins, as examples of the bound prisoner motif that they associate with the presumed Predynastic and Early Dynastic practice of ritual human sacrifice. What I describe as a lock of hair, Williams and Logan describe as blood spurting from the foreheads of bound and cloaked prisoners (Williams and Logan, "The Metropolitan Museum Knife Handle," 271).

of two, side-by-side, concave triangles incised with a grid pattern, vaguely resembling baskets. Petrie interprets this symbol as *nb nb* and translates it as “the double lord.”²⁰

The ivory label from the reign of King Den depicts the king seated on a throne on a stepped dais (fig. 5).²¹ The king faces the viewer’s right and in front of him the pictorial elements of the scenes are not arranged in proper registers, but appear to be systematically depicted to fill the remaining space in a visually balanced manner. A figure in a hooped palanquin faces the king. This figure is depicted directly under an image in the shape of two, side-by-side, concave triangular forms that are incised with a grid pattern, identical to that on the Djer label. Thus, this “*nb nb*” emblem occurs with both types of palanquin figures, hooped or open, in a manner that strongly suggests a label and links the identity of these figures. Directly under this figure is a figure in a kilt (apparently male) with his back to the king while he stabs or points a spear-like object at an antelope.

These early, unlabeled figures correspond in form and style to the later figures depicted in *Heb Sed* scenes that are specifically labeled as *msw nswt* (fig. 7B). Thus, it is reasonable to interpret these earlier figures as *msw nswt*. These depictions demonstrate the long history of these figures in cultic representations. They appeared, stylistically nearly identical, in festival and processional scenes for at least one thousand years.²² Their depictions in the Scorpion mace-head, the Narmer mace-head, and the Den and

20. Ibid., 37.

21. Francesco Raffaele, Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/labels/xxden41.htm> (accessed on 29 March 2010).

22. Gay Robins chronology lists Kings Scorpion and Narmer’s reigns as occurring at approximately between 3100-2920 BCE, and Sesostri I from approximately 1971-1926 BCE. Gay Robins. *The Art of Ancient Egypt*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8.

Djer labels, however, is passive. They do not appear to perform or even move around. Their presence, then, might be symbolic, but their central placement in these scenes (with the exception of the Scorpion mace-head) points toward a role that should be understood as very important. It is likely that, since the artists who created these pieces clearly believed that the viewers would understand the role of these figures, this role is related to the mythic framework(s) that structured the Egyptian understanding of kingship. The later representations, with more extensive scenes, provide more material for analyzing this mythic role.

4.2. Old and Middle Kingdom Images

During the Old Kingdom (c. 2686-2181)²³ *msw nswt* figures appear clearly labeled in monumental decorations, in *Heb Sed* celebrations at Abu Ghurab, and Investiture Ceremonies at Memphis. The *msw nswt* in these scenes appear in hooped palanquins, and, because of their physical proportions, appear to more clearly represent children than those from earlier representations. Although there is nothing overtly indicating the sex of these children, some elements of the scenes may suggest a female interpretation.

4.2.1. The Sun Temple of Niuserre at Abu Ghurab

The earliest extant images of labeled *msw nswt* figures occur in the *Heb Sed* scenes from the Sun Temple of Niuserre at Abu Ghurab.²⁴ This temple was constructed

23. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* I, 135.

24. Von Bissing and Kees. *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-Woser-Re*, pls. 2:7b, and 18:44d.

during the 5th Dynasty reign of King Niuserre (c. 2494-2345 BCE).²⁵ Although much of this original scene has not been recovered, the *msw nswt* can be seen to be positioned in prominent areas of activity of this festival (figs. 6A and 6B). As with the earlier examples, these figures appear in very close proximity to the depictions of the king, appearing to accompany him as he walks, and is carried, in two different processions.


Block 7b (fig. 6A) preserves two horizontal registers, with the king's feet and lower legs appearing in the upper register near the center of the block.²⁶ In the register below the king and occupying the space directly beneath and between his feet is the hieroglyphic inscription $\text{𓄏} \text{𓄏} \text{𓄏}$, *msw nswt*, although this is written in the singular. In front of this label are three individuals seated in palanquins. The three, hooped palanquins are arranged in a row, with the figures inside all facing proper left, the same direction as the king above them. These *msw nswt* figures, along with their palanquins, appear identical to the one depicted on the Narmer mace-head. The only difference is in the number of individuals. In the extant Abu Ghurab scenes, these figures appear in sets of two and three.

The line drawing of this scene available to me is incomplete, probably because the original depiction is damaged in this area. However, faint lines below the palanquins suggest that these figure are being carried at waist level by some individuals. A series of officials follow these palanquins, each with a title above his head. Immediately behind the palanquins, however, is a female adult figure that might be part of the *msw nswt*

25. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* I, 136.

26. See Gay Robins. *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 21, 67. Although only the feet are visible in this depiction, this individual must be the king because of the size of the feet. Egyptian art functioned on a hierarchical scale and the king was always the largest figure in any group except for deities.

group, as the hieroglyphic label is centered directly over her head. Behind this female figure is a row of male figures, each of whom is labeled with a title above his head:

 *smr*, *hry-hbt*, *šm^c-wr*, *h3-wr*, “Sole companion,” “lector priest,” “Great One of Upper Egypt,” and, “Great One of Lower Egypt.” The location of the *msw nswt* at the head of a row of individuals depicted with these titles implies a similar titular function for this label. The unlikely alternative is that *msw nswt* functions in this case as a kinship term, describing the figures in the palanquins and the woman behind them solely as individuals related to the king through lineal descent. This alternative is unlikely because it would represent the only example in this monument of individuals being labeled in terms that do not convey any sense of ritual function.

One element of this scene that suggests a gender interpretation of the *msw nswt* figures is the row of baskets beneath them in Block 44d (fig. 6B). These baskets are not triangular like those above the *msw nswt* figures from the first Dynasty labels, but are reminiscent of those depictions. As in the case of the baskets depicted at Abu Ghurab, the loaves of bread above them could link this scene symbolically to PT 219: 188 B in which Osiris is urged to eat his daughter as an offering meal.²⁷ It is possible that the passive figures of the *msw nswt* in these *Heb Sed* scenes represent at a mythic level, the daughter of the god who functions at once as the meal and the vehicle by which he is renewed. Although scholars disagree about the purpose of the *Heb Sed*, there is general agreement that it functions as a renewal of the king or kinship at some level. And, although the king may not have been understood as completely divine, he was understood as becoming divine and performed ritual explicitly in his capacity as mediator between the gods and

27. Sethe, Kurt. *Die Altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte* 1. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908), 107 (Utterance 219; 188b).

humankind. As the only individual who embodied some aspect of the divine, only the king could act in this function. He was also the living manifestation of the royal *kꜣ*.²⁸

4.2.2. The Pylon of Sesostri I at Memphis




The next representation of *msw nswt* is found at Memphis on a pylon. Petrie believed these depictions represented the investiture of the Crown Prince Sesostri I,²⁹ and were produced c. 1971—1926 BCE.³⁰ Although executed about five hundred years after the *Heb Sed* scenes from Abu Ghurab, these surviving images of *msw nswt* are nearly identical to those earlier depictions. The vignettes in which these figures are presented are different, but the style of representing the *msw nswt* remained the same. These figures were still represented as child-like figures, completely wrapped and seated in hooped palanquins.

These figures appear in prominent positions in the scenes, depicted on three of the six vignettes that survive from this doorway that led to an area that Petrie believed to have been the residence of the Crown Prince (fig. 7A). In his reconstruction, Petrie placed the images along either side of the doorway, with the three images of the king in the Red Crown of Lower Egypt on the viewer's right, and the three images of the king in the White Crown of Upper Egypt on the viewer's left. The *msw nswt* figures appear in two of the Upper Egyptian scenes and one of the Lower Egyptian scenes. In the central scene, to the viewer's left of the doorway, the king appears in profile, facing proper right,

28. David O'Connor and David P. Silverman, editors. *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*. (New York: Brill, 1994), XXV; Bell, "Cult of the Royal Ka," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 (1985): 256.

29. W. M. Flinders Petrie. *The Palace of Apries (Memphis II)*. (London: School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1909), 8. *msw nswt* scenes illustrated in pls. IV, V, VI, and IX.

30. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 162.

walking out and wearing the White Crown (fig. 7B). The space behind this figure has been divided into three partial horizontal registers, separated by ground lines. There are three figures arranged in this space, all facing the same direction as the king. The uppermost of these figures is labeled , *ms nswt*, and depicts a figure seated in a hooped palanquin. Although this label is placed below the ground line that separates this image from the figure below it, it appears to correspond to the palanquin figure. There are two figures below the palanquin. Both figures appear to represent adult males as they are depicted wearing kilts with developed bodies and shoulder length hairstyles. These figures each have a hieroglyphic label in front of them. The central figure is labeled , *smr wꜥty hrp-ḥ*, “Sole Friend [of the king], Administrator of the Palace.” The figure in the lowest register is labeled , *smr wꜥty hry-ḥbt*, “Sole Friend [of the king], Lector Priest.” The juxtaposition here of these three figures with their titles suggests that the figure in the palanquin, like the figures below it, is present in its ritual capacity here, as indicated by the title *ms nswt*. The symbolic role of the *msw nswt* in the other depictions on this monument is more ambiguous.

The *msw nswt* depicted on the viewer’s left at the bottom of the doorway are particularly interesting (fig. 7C). In this scene, as in the one above it, the king is depicted running the *Heb Sed* race between markers. The *msw nswt* in the central register in front of the king, are depicted as a pair, with their palanquins resting, neither on the ground line, nor on legs, but on tiny figures of what Petrie identified as *couchant* ibexes.³¹ It is possible that Petrie is mistaken and these are gazelles. The ibex and the gazelle are both members of the antelope family, and are distinguishable primarily by the degree of

31. Petrie. *The Palace of Apries*, 10.

curvature of their horns, with the ibex horns curving more than those of the gazelle. Members of both species, however, use “a specific strategy that optimizes the survival of their young. It hides the fawn from predators...”³² While no specific research has been done on images of ibexes in Egyptian art, Strandberg’s comprehensive study of the uses of the gazelle might be appropriate to extrapolate here, as both are antelopes with the same strategy for protecting their young. The safety and seclusion of the *msw nswt* depicted in palanquins is visually reinforced with the recumbent antelope imagery, be it ibex or gazelle. As Strandberg notes concerning the gazelle, these images are used to express “nurturing regeneration and healing for the deceased in a funerary context, as a representation of the protective action of the mother hiding her child in preparation for the ascent of a new generation.”³³ Thus, the use of recumbent antelopes as supports for the palanquins of the *msw nswt* connects to mythic scenarios of Isis hiding the child Horus to protect him from Seth. As with the bread and baskets found in the Abu Ghurab depictions, the imagery associated with these *msw nswt* figures suggests a symbolic role in this ceremony and suggests an interpretation of these figures at Abu Ghurab as children of the king rather than captives or images of deities.

4.3 New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period Representations

At some point between the depictions from Sesostri I at Memphis and the depictions from the reign of Amenhotep III at Thebes and Soleb, the *msw nswt* grew up. No longer represented as child-like figures seated in hooped palanquins, these figures

32. Asa Strandberg. *The Gazelle in Ancient Egyptian Art: Image and Meaning*. (Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Universitet, 2009), 27.

33. Strandberg, *The Gazelle in Ancient Egyptian Art*, 193.

were, by the New Kingdom, consistently represented as mature individuals with the bodies of adults. The ritual role of the *msw nswt* as a cultic group bearing a cultic title is nowhere more apparent than in New Kingdom imagery. The celebratory cultic scenes of Amenhotep III and Ramses III are particularly informative, as they include depictions not only of individuals labeled *msw nswt*, but also, individuals labeled *s3t nswt* and *s3 nswt*. Although Amenhotep III is known to have celebrated at least three Heb Seds, representations of only two of these have survived in monumental depictions.³⁴ In both instances the *msw nswt* appear as mature women, with developed breasts, clothing, and hair. These two cycles of representations also include depictions of individuals labeled as *s3t nswt*. It is impossible to know whether these two groups included the same individuals. But, the differing labels imply some kind of distinction. This distinction is very likely related to a distinction in ritual function, hence, the different titles.

4.3.1 Amenhotep III Scenes

The surviving depictions of the first and third *Heb Sed* celebrations of the 18th Dynasty King Amenhotep III (1403-1364 BCE)³⁵ are located at his temple in Soleb, Nubia,³⁶ and the other in the tomb of one of his courtiers, Kheruef, at Thebes (TT 192).³⁷

34. Lawrence M. Berman, "Overview of Amenhotep III and His Reign." In *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign*, edited by David O'Connor and Eric H. Cline, 1-25. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 16.

35. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 194.

36. The inscriptions from the Temple at Soleb are reproduced only in line drawings in Michaela Schiff Giorgini, Clément Robichon, Jean Leclant, and Nathalie Beaux, ed. *Soleb V: le temple, bas-reliefs et inscriptions*, Pls. 94, 97, 117, 127, 130, and 131.

37. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Epigraphic Survey: The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192*. Oriental Institute Publications 102, (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1980), Pl. 47.

4.3.1.1. The Tomb of Kheruef at Thebes

Possibly because he arranged the *Heb Sed* celebrations of Amehotep III, Kheruef was able to get royal permission to have these scenes carved into his tomb decoration.³⁸ The west portico, north of the doorway, in the tomb of Kheruef (TT192),³⁹ in the section of the wall south of the doorway, contains a scene in which the king pulls on a rope to erect the *Djed*-pillar (fig. 8A). The queen stands immediately behind the king, both figures face the viewer's left, and behind them the space is divided into two horizontal registers, each of which contains four pairs of female figures who hold *menat* necklaces at their sides in their proper left hands and Hathor-headed sistra, raised in their right hands (fig. 8B). These female figures wear the same type of dress as the queen: a floor-length transparent sheath dress that flares out just below the waist. They also appear wearing other queenly insignia, a *wesekh* collar and modius crown. But in contrast to the queen, each has a short hairstyle with side-lock. These figures are depicted as identical to each other, but the style of the side-lock alternates between a single braid and loose hair from pair to pair. These figures face in the same direction as the royal couple, and, participate in the scene by shaking their sistra and *menat* necklaces.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions label these individuals as *msw nswt* and describe what they are doing. Wente translates these inscriptions in the top register, written in four sections to fit evenly in front of the pairs of faces, "The king's children who extol the august *djed*-pillar."⁴⁰ In the lower register the inscription written in front of the four pairs

38. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, 13.

39. *Ibid.*, pl 57.

40. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, Pl 61.

of figures translates, “The king’s children who propitiate the august *Djed*-pillar.”⁴¹

Between these figures in columns is written, “To your *k3*, the sistra; and to your kindly face, the *menat* necklaces and *sekhem*-sistra as you arise, o august *djed*-pillar...Osiris-Sokar, the Lord of Shetyet.” Thus, the inscriptions explicitly connect the presence and participation of the *msw nswt* to the ritual importance of the ceremony.

In a different scene located on the west portico, south of the doorway, more female figures appear in pairs. This entire area, including the inscriptions, is very badly damaged, and much of the detail is lost. From what can be seen of these female figures, however, they appear to be depicted in pairs and hold sistra in their raised hands. They face the viewer’s left, toward the bark upon which the king and queen stand, facing the viewer’s right, so as to create the impression that these female figures are welcoming the king to the shore as the bark is towed by figures in the register beneath these women. In contrast to the plain modius crowns worn by the *msw nswt* in the *djed*-pillar scene, these welcoming female figures wear crowns with flowers sticking up in clumps from them (fig. 8C). Two labels survive from the hieroglyphic text above the head of these pairs, naming them *s3t nswt mr.f*, or, “lineal female descendent of the one of the sedge, beloved of him.” The recoverable text here explains that these figures play the sistra, and Wente details in a footnote that the title *msw nswt* has been restored from the text in the vertical lines between the pairs of figures.⁴² Thus, these individuals are named female descendents of the king in individual labels, but collectively they are referred to as *msw nswt* in the description of their actions.

41. *Ibid.*, Pl 61.

42. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef*, pl 61.


4.3.1.2. *The Temple of Amenhotep III at Soleb*

Amenhotep III's Temple at Soleb in Nubia contains one of the most complete sets of scenes describing a *Heb Sed* celebration and contains eight hieroglyphic references to *msw nswt*.⁴³ This temple also contains one scene that depicts female figures that are named in cartouches as specific daughters of the king (fig. 9A). These princesses stand behind the queen who stands behind the king as the king is carried, seated in an open palanquin. The line drawing reproduced by Giorgini is incomplete in this section, thus the spatial relationship of the queen and the princesses to the king is difficult to interpret and it appears that these female figures stand on some sort of solid ground behind the king. Behind the princesses, in a column of vertical text, the title *msw nswt* is inscribed after what appears to be the word "in" or "therein."⁴⁴ This inscription is located above the heads of a pair of male figures who carry poles at their shoulder-level, upon which, behind these bearers, is the bottom corner of a structure that looks like the palanquins of the Old and Middle Kingdom depictions. Unfortunately, the corner is all that remains of this representation. Because the *msw nswt* label occurs here in a bordered column between the two sets of figures, it is possible that it refers to the princesses. However, this would be the only example from the extant scenes in this temple of a label placed behind the head of the person it identifies. It, therefore, seems more likely that the title refers to the figure(s) depicted in the palanquin in the now-missing section of this block.

In every instance of *msw nswt* depictions in this temple, the figures are clearly female, and are placed near the king. They are depicted in pairs, in sets of four, six, or eight, with looped sistras and *menat* necklaces (figs. 9B, 9C, 9D, and 9E). One scene,

43. Giorgini, et al, *Soleb V*, pls. 94, 97, 117, 127, 130, and 131.

44. The sign is clearly a bird and is possibly an owl, Gardiner Sign # G17, but it is incomplete.

however, is arranged very differently (fig. 9F). In this scene, the king stands in a pavilion, wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, dressed in a long robe from which his hands protrude at the waist to hold the crook and flail. He faces three registers of deities lined up in rows of four. These deities are depicted at about one third the size of the king. The area below the bottom register of deities is missing along with the ground line upon which the king stands. Directly below the king's figure, however, and facing in the opposite direction of the king above her, is a lone female figure that stands with one arm raised to her chest. The details are missing from this figure, but she faces a column of hieroglyphic text that reads: , *n msw nswt t3yw hmwt irw hnw R*, "to the *msw nswt*, men, women, and those born of the royal family of Ra." Unfortunately, the depictions of the figures that might have been the referents of this text are completely missing and only the lone female figure remains.

The word order in this column of text is very similar to the syntactical structure of Coffin Text Spell 146, in which the relatives and acquaintances of the deceased are listed in order to be assembled for him in the afterlife: “his paternal ancestors, his maternal ancestors, his men and his women, his children, his loved ones, his friends and associates, his lineal descendents...”⁴⁵ This resemblance suggests that this scene might in some way parallel the funerary text. If this is the case, then the unusually small size of the deities compared to the king could be explained as a case of hierarchical scale in which the king has become the solar creator deity, calling his “children” (the rows of small deities) to him in the afterlife as a source of comfort and, perhaps, renewal. Supporting this interpretation is the appearance of the lone female figure here, which, although

45. R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts: Volume I Spells 1-354*. (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1973), 123.

incomplete, is depicted like the figure of the *msw ntr* that stands behind the royal couple in another scene (fig. 9G).

4.3.2. The *Talatat* Depictions of Amenhotep IV at Karnak

Another place where the role of the *msw nswt* might be most clearly seen as a ritual title is in the *Heb Sed* representations of the 6th year of the reign of Amenhotep IV (1364-1347 BCE).⁴⁶ The *talatat* blocks, once used to construct the Aten temple at Karnak, were decorated with scenes from this *Heb Sed* celebration.⁴⁷ Among the figures represented in these ritual scenes are *msw nswt* who are carried in hooped palanquins (fig. 10). Unlike the hooped palanquin figures of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, however, the figures that ride in these palanquins are depicted as fully adult women. They are depicted as the same proportional size as other adult figures in this scene, with the exception of the king who is much larger, and are clearly meant to be female as evidenced by the developed breasts and sheath dresses. These figures cannot be the biological daughters of this king, because at the time this celebration took place, none of his daughters was born.⁴⁸

Although Amenhotep IV had no daughters to perform this role at the time of this festival, the term *msw nswt* refers to the “lineal descendents of the one who belongs to

46. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 194.

47. Line drawings published in Jocelyn Gohary. *Akhenaten's Sed Festival at Karnak (Studies in Egyptology)*. (London and New York, Keegan Paul International, 1992), pl. I. Line drawings and photographs published in Redford, Donald B. *The Akhenaten Temple Project: The Excavation of Komel Ahjmar*, (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1988), pl. 41, 44, 47, 48, and 58.

48. Donald Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 118; Xekalaki. “Royal Daughters ” 1963.

the sedge.”⁴⁹ The descendents of this royal spirit include the children and grandchildren of previous kings, without generational limits. Thus, there would likely have been enough *msw nswt* available for these performances and Redford’s explanation that these roles were played by actors becomes unnecessary.⁵⁰

4.3.3. The Min Festival of Ramses III at Medinet Habu

These multitudes of children of the king show up in the relief carvings of the Min Festival of Ramses III at this king’s mortuary temple at Medinet Habu (fig. 11). The Festival of Min procession depicted in this temple is unusual in that it provides examples of male *msw nswt* in ritual representations.⁵¹ Dating to the 20th Dynasty reign of Ramses III (1184-1152 BCE)⁵² this representation is depicted on the North wall of the second court. The scene that contains labeled *msw nswt* figures is the one in which the king is carried, seated on a throne, in an elaborate enclosed palanquin from the palace to the site of the festivities. He is preceded and followed in this procession by many male individuals who appear to be organized into groups and who carry different types of ritual paraphernalia such as ostrich feather scepters and small axes or flags. These figures appear to be of varying ages, but all are depicted as youthful. Some wear side-locks, some have shaved heads, and some wear short wigs. Many of these figures appear to have two feathers in their hair that extend above their heads at jaunty diagonal angles.

49. See section 2.2.2 “*nswt*,” 11.


50. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, 118; see above page 6.


51. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Epigraphic Survey: Medinet Habu IV: Festival Scenes of Ramses III*. Oriental Institute Publications 51, (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1940), pl 197.

52. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East I*, 194.

this qualifier to the first generation from the king, thus the translation “son” or “prince” in these cases would be accurate.

4.3.5. The Temple of Osorkon II at Bubastis

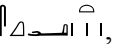

There is only one other depiction of *msw nswt* in the artistic record of ancient Egypt and this occurs in the Temple of Osorkon II (874-850 BCE)⁵⁴ at Bubastis from Dynasty 22.⁵⁵ These are depictions of scenes from the *Heb Sed* celebration of Osorkon II. The scenes are located at the entryway of the temple and cover the inner and outer doorjambs as well as the short inner walls of the passageway (fig. 12A). Gohary notes that this representation “appears to follow very closely that of Amenhotep III at Soleb.”⁵⁶ Three of the scenes at this monument depict figures labeled *msw nswt*, two of which depict female figures with this label, but one of which describes a mixed-gender group as *msw nswt*. The all-female *msw nswt* in this monument are unique among all of the images of *msw nswt* in Egyptian art, in that they are labeled in hieroglyphic text using Gardiner’s seated woman determinative, , B1. This sign has been altered in the style common in the Third Intermediate Period so that the seated woman holds a flower. These figures appear in sets of three in both all-female scenes, which could indicate more than specifically three women, as three was used to indicate the plural.


These figures appear among a multitude of priests, dancers, and officials who, as the accompanying hieroglyphic text explains: , *msw nswt swꜣi irw st*,

54. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East II*, 624.

55. Édouard Naville, *The Festival Hall of Osorkon II in the Great Temple of Bubastis*, (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, Memoir, 1892), Pls. XIV, XVI, XXIII, XXVIII, and XXXI.

56. Jocelyn Gohary, *Akhenaten’s Sed Festival at Karnak (Studies in Egyptology)*, (London and New York, Keegan Paul International, 1992), 18.

“the *msw nswt* pass the maker of the seat.” In Plate XVI, block 9 (fig. 12C), these three figures stand behind the queen, who stands behind the king, but the text here only provides the label *msw nswt* and does not describe what they do. Their presence appears to be ritually important, however, as the field behind the king and queen is divided into three horizontal registers, the top which is occupied by the *msw nswt*, the center register is occupied by three male figures who are described as , *skꜣw*, “ones who exhalt,” and the bottom register is occupied by three male figures who are labeled , *šspt nt dhꜣn*, “chorus of singers.”

The apparently mixed-gender group of *msw nswt* occurs on the viewer’s left of the inner face of the doorway (fig. 12D). On the register that runs directly below the king who sits on his dais, one male figure stands facing proper left, like the king above him, holding a baton, while three figures, one male and two female,⁵⁷ face him with one arm stretched out toward this figure, palm facing up. The hieroglyphic text arranged vertically between the actors in this scene reads , *hrw msw nswt hry-hbt* “above the *msw nswt* is the lector-priest,” although there are some damaged areas here that possible held signs that are now missing after the word *hrw* and after the word *msw nswt*.

Significantly, in this case, there is no determinative in the title *msw nswt*, female or otherwise. Here, the *msw nswt* appear to be engaged in a dance, or some ritual movement that looks as if that movement was coordinated by the lector priest, whom they face. Occupying the bottom register of this block, they also appear to be part of a procession that will eventually reach the king in his dais.

57. The gender distinction here is based on wig form, as the body type is non-specific, and the block is missing the lower portion where the costume would signal a clear gender reading.

4.4 Summary and Conclusion

All of the known images of *msw nswt* depict these individuals' participation in cultic ritual, the most common of these ritual scenes is the *Heb Sed*, accounting for all but two of the monumental representations of *msw nswt*. While scholars disagree over the meaning and purpose(s) of the *Heb Sed*, and even over the interpretation of the name of the festival itself, there appears to be a general agreement that this festival was an occasion to celebrate the institution of kingship with ritualized activities aimed at the renewal of his power, priestly or otherwise, whether this renewal is understood as the renewal of the vitality of the king himself as ruler,⁵⁸ the renewal of the vitality of the institution of kingship through the acknowledgement of the successor to the office,⁵⁹ the renewal of his office as high priest,⁶⁰ or the renewal of his divine pedigree,⁶¹ the elements of this celebration, as can be determined by surviving depictions, function ritually to invigorate and rejuvenate the strength of the king in some capacity.

There are two representations of *msw nswt* known to this author that occur in contexts other than *Heb Sed* celebrations. The Pylon of Sesostris I at Memphis, which Petrie believed depicted a celebration of the investiture of the Crown Prince Sesostris I, and the Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, which depicts the *msw nswt* in a

58. Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed Festival*, 1.

59. Petrie, *The Palace of Apries*, 8; Eric Uphill, "The Egyptian Sed-Festival Rites," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 24, no. 4,2. (October 1965): 386.

60. C. J. Bleeker. *Egyptian Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 121-122.

61. Eva Lange. "The Sed-Festival Reliefs of Osorkon II at Bubastis: New Investigations," in *The Libyan Period in Egypt: Historical and Cultural Studies Into the 21st – 24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, eds. G. P. F. Broekman, R. J. Demarée and O. E. Kaper, (Leiden: Peeters Leuven, 2009), 203-218

procession scene celebrating the Festival of Min. Both of these celebrations have strong elements of regeneration and renewal, like the *Heb Sed*, thus the ritual function of the *msw nswt* in these scenes, like the other constituent elements, works to support the overall theme of renewal.

Although the ritual roles of the *msw nswt* are depicted very differently in these two monuments, the two groups might be interpreted as performing the same function in different ways. The investiture celebration at Memphis, for example, according to Petrie, was, because of the presence of *msw nswt*, “connected in some way with the Sed festival.”⁶² Kaiser, moreover, treats it as a *Heb Sed* scene.⁶³ The *msw nswt* figures in this scene are depicted as child-like, completely wrapped, and seated in hooped palanquins. Although their presence is central to these scenes and presumably crucial to the rituals enacted, they do not appear to move or otherwise participate actively. The representations of *msw nswt* at the Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, in contrast, depicts these individuals, all clearly male in this case, engaged in activity accompanying the king as he sets forth from the palace to attend the festival of the god Min. These figures carry implements with clear ritual significance. The presence of this group is ritually important in supporting and assisting the king in his duty as mediator to the gods, as the text states that they are needed to accompany the king so that Min might appear. Min, always represented as an ithyphallic anthropomorphic deity, is emblematic of fertility, thus the regenerative context is the same for all of the *msw nswt* representations. As their title

62. Petrie, *The Palace of Apries*, 8.

63. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 261.

suggests, this group, whatever the specific constituency, supports the institution of kingship in its divine aspects during rituals associated with renewal.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

In this thesis, the term *msw nswt* was studied from multiple perspectives in order to address what appeared to be the unusual usage of a gender-neutral term as a label for an all-female group of individuals in the New Kingdom Theban tomb of Kheruef (TT192). Previous research on the topic of the *msw nswt* has been consistently skewed by the same assumption I made before looking at the extant representations: that this is always, or primarily, an all-female group. This assumption, which has been shown to be unfounded, is common and can be seen in most scholarly work dealing with this topic.

Kaiser, focusing on the Predynastic and Early Dynastic representations, presumes a female identity for the *msw nswt*. Because of the ritual role that he assigns this group, he dismisses the idea that the figures in these early depictions could be male.¹ Kaiser identifies these figures with the goddess Repit, especially in her role as consort of Min. Thus, he explains the *msw nswt* as ambiguous female figures, who can simultaneously represent the child and the child-bearer of the king in a symbolic role, paralleling that of Repit, as they participate in rituals centering on rebirth or renewal.² Kaiser bases this conclusion, in part, on the potential of the term *msw* to function as passive or active participle,³ an interpretation that is bolstered by the alternative translation, “child-bearer of the king,” given by Hannig.⁴

1. Kaiser, “Zu den Mesu-Nesu,” 263.

2. *Ibid.*, 295-296.

3. *Ibid.*, 270; See page 8 above.

4. See page 8 above.

Troy accepts Kaiser's identification and explanation of the *msw nswt* and uses these conclusions to support her work in explaining the role of the feminine element in the Egyptian concept of kingship.⁵ In her analysis, Troy ignores all evidence relating to male *msw nswt*, examining only those representations and references that support her thesis. For instance, as discussed above, the Story of Sinuhe opens with an account of the *msw nswt* accompanying the Crown Prince to the western front.⁶ Since, in this instance, the main activity in which the *msw nswt* are engaged in is war, it seems prudent to assume that the reference here is to *sons* of the king.⁷ In a different part of the story, the *msw nswt* appear as part of the festivities welcoming Sinuhe back home. There, they shake *sistra* and sing at the court. Even though Troy states her intention to look for clues to aid with the identification of the group, in her analysis of the term, she ignores the martial instance, focusing instead on the palace performance.⁸ Her assertion, in reference to the Story of Sinuhe, that "it is made clear that the *msw nswt* are members of the harem"⁹ seems unwarranted.

5. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 89.

6. Section 3.3 pages 29-30.

7. The suggestion has been made, by Dr. Patricia Podzorski, that female members of the royal family may well have accompanied the crown prince to war, as the type of siege tactics used during this time period were amenable to whole families traveling with the males to the areas of battle, (personal communication, 7 April 2010). While I believe that the reference to *msw nswt* in the early passages of the story of Sinuhe is to male members of the royal family, the possibility that this group was female or mixed-gender must be recognized.

8. Troy is not alone in this omission. Lynda Green's brief dissertation section "The Role of the MSW NSW at the Sed-Festival" identifies this group as androgynous figures in hooped palanquins or female members of the royal family, only examining the female instances of literary and artistic representations. Lynda Green. "Queens and Princesses of the Amarna Period: The Social, Political, Religious and Cultic Role of the Women of the Royal Family at the End of the Eighteenth Dynasty." (Ph. D. Dissertation, The University of Toronto, 1988), 439-440. Xekalaki also discusses Sinuhe without mentioning the male *msw nswt* at the beginning (Xekalaki, "Royal Daughters," 1963).

9. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 89.

Xekalaki addresses the various types of *msw nswt* in her work, but, like Troy, she ignores the male attestations of this group. Referring to the Story of Sinuhe, Xekalaki claims that the *msw nswt* are the agents of Sinuhe's "rebirth" when he returns from his self-imposed exile in foreign lands.¹⁰ Xekalaki even states that these individuals are "defined as females but unnamed,"¹¹ completely ignoring the *msw nswt* mentioned at the beginning of the story who are evidently male individuals. This focus on the female-only *msw nswt* groups has led these scholars to conclusions that, while possibly accurate in some ways, cannot be extended to all members of this group.

For example, an assumption of the *msw nswt* as an all-female group led Kaiser, Troy, and Xekalaki to similar conclusions with regard to the ritual role of this group as symbolic of the female reproductive role. Xekalaki proposes that the ritual relationship of the *msw nswt* to the king "parallels the relationship of Hathor to the sun-god, Re."¹² As discussed above, Kaiser proposed Repit as the mythic prototype. Troy seems to conflate all of the female deities into versions of a mother-daughter duality that she sees as the prototype for the *msw nswt*. She cites as models the mother-child duality expressed in Hathor-Sekhmet as mother and daughter of Horus,¹³ as well as Nut who, as the night sky, acts as the wife and mother of the god Re.¹⁴ Troy's work interprets these mother-daughter models as being just as important to concepts of regeneration as mother-son models, and

10. Xekalaki, "Royal Daughters," 1963.

11. *Ibid.*, 1963.

12. *Ibid.*, 1963.

13. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 21.

14. *Ibid.*, 26.

she emphasizes the mother-daughter continuum as the “medium of renewal,”¹⁵ because the daughter represents the medium of renewal for the next generation.

Evidence from the all-female groups tends to support this type of analysis and these conclusions. While the term *msw nswt* certainly refers to the lineal offspring of living and previous kings, the grammatical possibility that it could also mean the king’s child-bearer fits the mythic mother-daughter prototype that is necessary for the regeneration and renewal of the solar deity. The androgynous and child-like depictions of these figures in early representations also fit this analytical frame, as these figures are amenable to being read ambiguously as mother, consort, and daughter. The visual association of these figures with ibexes or gazelles,¹⁶ bulls and calves,¹⁷ and bread and baskets,¹⁸ also suggest symbolic associations of these individuals with the female element necessary for the regeneration of the king, although Petrie interpreted the baskets as “lord, lord.”¹⁹ This symbolic association is achieved by tying the *msw nswt* to specific funerary texts used in religious rituals in order to assure regeneration after death.

These conclusions, however, cannot be extended easily to groups of male *msw nswt* who, as I have shown above, clearly participate in cultic ritual, although sometimes in different ways than the females.²⁰ Another problem with this type of analysis is the

15. *Ibid.*, 30.

16. See page 44 above.


17. See page 37 above.

18. See pages 39, 41-42 above.

19. Emery, *Excavations at Saqqara*, 35.

20. Section 4.3.3 (pages 52-54) discusses the male *msw nswt* who accompany the king in the Min festival procession of Ramses III; and section 4.3.5 (54-56) discusses the participation of male *msw nswt* in the *Heb Sed* scenes from the Temple of Osorkon II at Bubastis. As discussed in Section 4.3.5 (55-56), mixed-gender groups can sometimes perform the same ritual actions.

circularity of its argument. The presence of *msw nswt* figures is used to identify scenes as ritual enactments related to regeneration and renewal, and these types of ritual scenes are used to support an identification of figures in palanquins as *msw nswt*. As noted above,²¹ Petrie makes this argument in his publication on the Pylon of Sesostri I, when he connects the ritual depicted in this monument with the *Heb Sed* based on the presence of *msw nswt*. Kaiser's argument runs along the same lines: the early depictions of *msw nswt* occur in the context of *Heb Sed* celebrations. As these celebrations function to renew the kingship, thus, the *msw nswt* figures fit this ritual role.²²

Xekalaki's analysis not only ignores instances of male *msw nswt*, but also begins with a misidentification of a group of princesses, thus compromising her conclusions from the outset. Xekalaki takes as her starting point a group of *unidentified* female figures depicted in a procession scene in the second court of the temple of Ramses III, and identifies them as *msw nswt* based on several factors, but primarily on their resemblance to female figures from a different section of the same temple who, she argues, are labeled *msw nswt*.²³ However, the hieroglyphic inscription given for this group of "*msw nswt*", ,²⁴ is not an attested logogram for *msw*, as she claims, because it lacks the requisite *ms* sign. Instead, this inscription should be read *hrdw*.²⁵

21. See page 57 above.

22. Kaiser, "Zu den Mesu-Nesu," 265-266.

23. Xekalaki, "Royal Daughters," 1960.

24. The Epigraphic Survey, *The Epigraphic Survey: Medinet Habu VIII: The Eastern High Gate*. Oriental Institute Publications 94. (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1970): pl, 648.

25. This seated child with finger in mouth determinative, A17 in Gardiner's Sign List, is identified as the abbreviated form of the word *hrd*, "child" (Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 443).

Xekalaki's work is complicated by this initial assumption as well as by her somewhat confusing subsequent analysis. She conducts a brief survey of the representation of *msw nswt* in ancient Egypt, noting the great variation in their representations, but not their gender variation. Some *msw nswt*, she notes, are represented as small, seated, childlike figures in hooped palanquins, others are depicted as adult women, also sitting in hooped palanquins, while still others are depicted as young adult women standing or walking, sometimes with sistra and *menat* necklaces. She maintains, however, that all groups were connected to the ritual rejuvenation of the king and that this ritual function remained stable while representations changed over time.²⁶

In spite of these methodological problems, my research shows that the emphasis on regeneration, renewal, or rebirth that these scholars give to interpretations of the *msw nswt* is warranted. There appears to be a tangible connection between these figures and ritual celebrations that center on regeneration, renewal, or rebirth. Of the seven surviving representations of *msw nswt* known to me, five are depicted in *Heb Sed* scenes, one in a Min festival scene, and one in a coronation or investiture scene, all of which center on some aspect of assumption or renewal of divine, priestly, or royal power. All of the most extensive surviving *Heb Sed* reliefs contain *msw nswt* figures: Niuserre's Sun Temple at Abu Ghurab, the reliefs of Amenhotep III at Soleb, and the reliefs of Osorkon II at Bubastis.²⁷

Analysis of the images of *msw nswt* in the artistic record shows that these figures were very important, if not always central, to rituals involving the institution of kingship.

26. Xekalaki, "Royal Daughters," 1963-1964.

27. Gohary, *Akhenaten's Sed Festival*, 9.

They appear seated, as passive, yet significant, cast members in the early scenes.²⁸ In the New Kingdom they all accompany the king in royal processions or stand near him in a supporting role, at times accompanied by texts describing their actions and the ritual importance of this action.²⁹ The female *msw nswt* may hold sistras and *menat* necklaces and provide music to support the king in his cultic duties,³⁰ while the male *msw nswt* carry cultic paraphernalia such as *khu* fans or small ceremonial-type axes, as they accompany the king in the Min procession.³¹ The mixed-gender group depicted at the Temple of Osorkon II at Bubastis, appears to perform a coordinated dance under the guidance of a lector priest, in the register just below the king.³² The female *msw nswt* of the Karnak *talatat* scenes participate more symbolically than actively, as they appear in the royal procession behind the queen, but do not carry sistras or *menat* necklaces.³³

The curious fact that the *msw nswt* described in the Story of Sinuhe do not match the *msw nswt* depicted in monumental representations from the same time period, is suggestive. While the *msw nswt* were apparently conceptualized as adults in some cases, capable of military action, they were also imagined as youthful, childlike figures that screamed in glee at the return of a beloved hero and were ushered in and out of the

28. Discussed above in 4.1.1., 4.1.2., 4.2.1., and 4.2.2.

29. The textual indicators used in the Tomb of Kheruef are discussed above in Section 4.3.1.1 (47-48); the descriptive text from the Min Festival procession at Medinet Habu is discussed above in Section 4.3.3 (53); and the text describing the actions of the female as well as the mixed-gender group at the Temple of Osorkon II at Bubastis is described above in Section 4.3.5 (55-56).

30. As depicted in scenes of Amenhotep III and Osorkon II, discussed above in Sections 4.3.1.1. (47-48), 4.3.1.2. (49), and 4.3.5. (55).

31. See page 53 above.

32. See pages 55-56 above.

33. See pages 51-52 above.

presence of the king at court, for his amusement.³⁴ This disparity between the ideal image of *msw nswt* in art and in the literature of the Middle Kingdom further supports the interpretation that this title was at once a kinship term and a courtly title with ritual obligations. It might have been necessary for some rituals to be enacted by very young children and some by more mature individuals.

As the surviving representations of the *Heb Sed* celebration do not contain all of the rituals involved in this festival, and the scenes that survive from different monuments do not necessarily depict the same vignettes, the ritual roles of the *msw nswt* in this festival may never be fully understood. The inscription from the Soleb Temple, for example, in which the *msw nswt* are listed along with the men, women, and those born of the royal family of Ra,³⁵ appears to link the king explicitly to the solar deity, Ra, a deification that would not normally take place until after the death of the king.³⁶ The *msw nswt* in this case appear to be assembled with the task of regenerating the king, as he bypasses death and moves immediately to godhood.

Rather than engage in an analysis based on religious paradigms and festivals whose purposes are highly contested by scholars, this thesis approaches the subject of the *msw nswt* through the language first. The apparent contradiction of female figures labeled with a gender-neutral term, even though specifically female terms were available, made

34. See R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940-1640 BC*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; and William Kelly Simpson. "The Story of Sinuhe," in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, edited by William Kelly Simpson, 54-66. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003.

35. See page 50 above.

36. Johnson, W. Raymond. "Monuments and Monumental Art under Amenhotep III: Evolution and Meaning." In *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign*, edited by David O'Connor and Eric H. Cline, 63-94. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 87. The interesting possibility of this as an example of early Atenist tendencies was suggested by Dr. Patricia Pozorski, personal communication, 7 April 2010.

the language a prudent place to start. Analysis of the grammar suggested the interpretation of this title as a kinship term and a courtly title referencing the kingship in its divine manifestation, not the individual king. Because Egyptian kings presumably share the same *ka*, the lineal descendents of the king would not be limited to those of the living king, but would include the offspring of previous kings. This interpretation conforms to what is known about the ancient Egyptian kinship terminology,³⁷ and the institution of kingship.³⁸ This interpretation also fits with the ways in which this term is used in texts and in graphic representations,³⁹ accommodating the various styles of depictions and activities of the *msw nswt* whether these groups are depicted as children, adults, male, female or a mixed-gender group.

Representations of *msw nswt* support the interpretation of this group as children or grandchildren of either the living or previous kings, particularly in cases like that of Amenhotep IV. Amenhotep IV clearly did not have daughters at the time his Karnak *talatat* scenes depicted adult *msw nswt*. When the *msw nswt* are interpreted as children of previous kings, these scenes are no longer inconsistent. The images of *msw nswt* also support the interpretation of this term as simultaneously a kinship term and a courtly title with ritualistic duties. It is significant that in the scenes from Kheruef's Tomb (TT192),⁴⁰

37. See Lustig, "Kinship," 48; see pages 19-20 above.

38. See Bell, "Cult of the Royal Ka," 251-294; see page 11 above.

39. This interpretation, for example, can account for the use of the term in describing various age and gender groups in the Story of Sinuhe as discussed above in Section 3.3, as well as accounting for the different gender makeup of examples from tomb autobiographies and inscriptions as reviewed in Section 3.2.

40. See pages 47-48 above.

and from the Min Festival at Medinet Habu,⁴¹ there are figures labeled *msw nswt* that are also labeled as *s3 ht.f* or *s3t ht.f*. This seems to emphasize the ritual title, as the offspring of the living king are specifically identified as the individuals performing acts as *msw nswt*.

Although the ritual performances of the *msw nswt* may never be fully understood, due to the lack of complete descriptive records and representations, their participation in the cult of the king is clear in the surviving images. The research presented in this thesis supports the conclusion that the *msw nswt* served important ritual functions, which were assigned to them as members of their official court position. This position is reflected in the title that is used to label them and their activities in many ritual scenes. This title also functions as a kinship term, specifying lineal descent from a king and in both the kinship and official aspects is gender neutral, equally including female and male royal children. This interpretation of the *msw nswt* helps clarify the use of this term, not only as it is used to describe female figures in the Tomb of Kheruef (TT192), but in every other usage that I have been able to find.

41. See pages 53-54 above.

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