



REMARKS ON THE GODS $3sb(t/w)$, AND $3hb(t/w)$: THEIR RELEVANCE TO THE DECEASED AND TO $3krw^*$

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ABSTRACT

The gods $3sb$, $3sbt$, $3sbw$, and $3hb$, $3hbt$, $3hbw$ are six minor gods that are authenticated mainly from the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts. Their names which could have reflected an aggressive attitude towards the deceased, are by no means, do not express clearly their function. Only the plural form, namely $3hbw$ and $3sbw$, who carry this negative aspect, especially when it comes to the earth-gods $3krw$ who played an outstanding role in the field of netting. It is worth mentioning that using nets and traps in fishing and fowling is evident in many texts in the realm of mythology. Netting the dead, which was expressed for the first time in many of the *Coffin Texts* passages, was embodied - in addition to these texts- in the vignettes accompanying the Chapters 153A&B of the *Book of the Dead*. It can be argued, therefore, that this rite could have been originated in the Old Kingdom *Pyramid Texts*. This was through the function played by the earth-gods $3krw$, who were the catchers or fishers, using their nets or traps to prevent the deceased from arriving to the Otherworld or even wandering into it. This raises the question, whether these gods, either in their singular or plural, feminine or masculine form, do they have the same function or not, this is the object of this article.

KEYWORDS

Pyramid Texts; Coffin Texts; Book of the Dead; Amduat; The earth-god(s) Akr(w).

الملخص

$3sb$, $3sbt$, $3sbw$, $3hb$, $3hbt$, $3hbw$ إن AXbwt ستة من الآلهة الصغرى التي وثقت في المقام الأول في نصوص التوابيت من الدولة الوسطى. تعكس اسماءهم جانبا سلبيا تجاه الموتى وان كان ذلك لا يعبر إطلاقا عن وظيفتهم، حيث انه من خلال النصوص تبين ان $3sbw$ وكذلك $3hbw$ هم فقط من لهم دورا سلبيا والذي يبدو انه جاء من خلال تواجدهم مع الهة الأرض $3krw$. تلك الآلهة التي كانت لها دور في صيد الموتى اثناء وصولهم للعالم الآخر. ان استخدام الشباك والفخاخ في عملية الصيد وردت في العديد من نصوص الأساطير بالاضافة الي الرسوم المصاحبة للفصل 153 أ، ب من فصول كتاب الموتى. ولقد ظهرت هذه الطقوس بنصوص الأهرام وذلك من خلال الوظيفة التي لعبها الهة الأرض $3krw$ والذين كانوا صيادين يستخدموا شباكهم وأفخاخهم لمنع المتوفى من الوصول للعالم الآخر. وهنا يظهر التساؤل هل تلعب هذه الآلهة بصورها المختلفة (المفرد أو الجمع المؤنث أو المذكر) نفس الوظيفة؟ أم لا وهذا ما سوف تجيب عليه هذه الورقة البحثية.

الكلمات الدالة

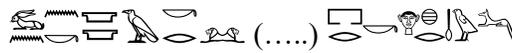
نصوص الأهرام، نصوص التوابيت، كتاب الموتى، كتاب الإيمى دوات، الهة الأرض الكرو.

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INTRODUCTION

According to a study that dealt with the origin of the rites of hunting the king's enemies in the domain of myths and religious texts,¹ it has been proven that this rite was traced back to one of the roles played by *3kr(w)*.² Regardless of the fact that the catchers, responsible for catching the dead, the foes of Osiris and *Re^c*, or the real enemies of the king, they have been equated and identified with many gods in texts dating back to the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts and to the New Kingdom Book of the Dead;³ the god *3kr*, the most ancient of them all, was also equated with the catchers, though related with the dead in many phases. Therefore, it seems that *3kr* is the clue to the origin of this rite.

Two groups of spells from the Old Kingdom-dating *Pyramids Texts* highlight the relationship of *3kr(w)* and the dead. The first group contains spells that refer to *3kr* setting the dead free:



Wn n.k ʿwy 3kr ... pr.k hr hrw Inpw⁴

"The doors of Akr are opened for you (...) you come forth at the voice of Anubis".⁵

The second associated with the earth-gods hindering the dead while ascending to heaven:



n ndr.t(w).k⁶ in 3krw

¹ Depending on texts and scenes, this idea changed as nets and traps are variously involved: catching the dead, catching the wicked souls, catching the enemies of the gods, catching the real foes of the king. Furthermore, the notion of catching appears also in the mythological conflict of Horus and Seth and in the story of Osiris: see Gad., *ASAE* 86, (2015), 179-209. Some of the references on which this article depends are: Alliot, *RdE* 5 (1946), 57-118; Bidoli, *ADAIK* 9, (1976). About raising high the *Wd3t*-eye of the god Osiris by Thoth and Shu in a net: Derchain., *RdE* 15, (1963), 11-25.

² The texts occasionally mention the earth-god Akr in its singular form, but usually in the plural form as the earth-gods *3krw*, *LGG*, I, 83. About the god *3kr(w)* in Coffin Texts, see: Altenmüller, *Synkretismus in den Sargtexten* 13-14. *3kr* as the protector of *Re^c* and defeater of Seth, see: Bergmann, *Rec. Trav.* 6, (1885), 150. About *3kr* when containing the serpent in a design specific to the domain of Sokar in the 5th Hour of Amduat and earlier, see: Bisson De La Roque, *BIFAO* 30, (1930), 576.

³ As the *3sbw*: *wh^cw h3mw 3sbw ipw tpw-^c 3sbw ts-plhr* 'the fishermen who catch are the swallows who are before the fiery ones - and vice versa': *CT* VI 39u; *wh^cw h3mw s(y) 3sbw pw tpw-^c 3krw* 'the fishermen who fish it are the swallows who are before the earth - gods *3krw*': *CT* VI 44r. The *3hbw*: *n-ntt N pn rh rn n wh^cw h3mw s(y) 3hbw pw imyw 3sbw pw p3wtiw-nt^rw* 'because this N knows the name of the fishermen who fish it, they are the swallows who are with the fiery ones, the most primeval of the gods': *CT* VI 24g-h; *wh^cw.s 3hbw pw imyw 3sbw wh^cw.s pw h3m im.s pw 3bdw* 'its fishermen are the swallows who are with the fiery ones. Its fishermen who fish with it are they of Abydos': *CT* VI 36c-d. The *kfdnww*: *r-ntt tw.i rh.kwi rn n wh^cw.s kfdnww pwy* 'because I know the name of its fishermen, they are the baboons': *BD* 153B, 7. See fig.6, where three baboons are pulling a net filled with fishes.

⁴ The vignette of *BD* 117 depicts the god Anubis leading the dead towards a false door representing the entrance of the Netherworld (Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 112). Frankfort mentions that the earth opens its gates when Anubis, the god of the necropolis, calls for the dead king who passes through the sacred region of Abydos, where the kings of earlier dynasties were buried, and finds the entrance to heaven. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*, 115.

⁵ *PT* 796b - c; cf. *BD* 61, 72, 91, 92.

⁶ The second *r* should be emended into *t*, as it is the passive form of *sdm.f* form.



hpr m sty n Wsir (...) ink 3sb sn n 3sbt ink Wsir sn n 3st (...)
iw nd.n wi s3.i Hr hn^c mwt.f 3st [m-^c hfty] pw iry nw r.i (...) iw (r)di.n.sn ^cwt¹ r ^cwy.f km3w² r iw^c.f hr irt.n.(f)
 r.i³

“Becoming the counterpart of Osiris (...) I am the burning one, brother of the burning Lady; I am Osiris, the brother of Isis (...) My son Horus and his mother Isis have protected me [from that foe] who would harm me; they have put cords on his arms and fetters on his thighs⁴ because of what (he) has done to me”.⁵

But in another spell it is said that the deceased, identified as *rs-hr*⁶ the son of 3sb,⁷ could remove the impurity away through the dread he obtained from the god Horus:



s3p.i nhd⁸ imy-^c Hr hsf^cbw im.f (...) ink rs-hr s3 3sb⁹ wr

“I receive the dread which is in the hand of Horus, and the impure ones are repelled by means of it (...) I am the vigilant one, the son of 3sb the great”.¹⁰

Furthermore, 3sb is one of the guards protecting the paths on which the deceased walks:



¹ In other versions *k3sw* and *ntwt* have a superfluous suffix, see: *FAECT* I 180. n. 4.

² In other versions *Ndwt* may well be a miswriting of *ntwt* ‘bonds’, see: *FAECT* I 180. n. 5.

³ *CT* III 260 a, d, g, 261c (P. Gard II)

⁴ This text evokes the scene depicting Seth fettered and placed upside down under the seat of Osiris: Vandier, *Le Papyrus Jumilhac* X, 140 where the description of the scene and the translation are to be found.

⁵ Cf. *BD* 69: *ink 3sb sn 3sbt ink Wsir sn n 3st* “I am the burning one, brother of the burning one; I am Osiris, brother of Isis” in: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 168.

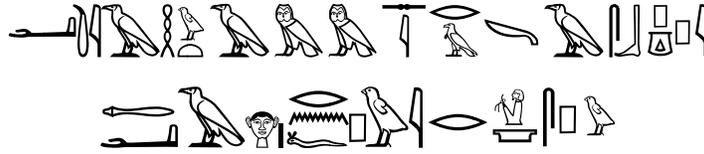
⁶ Cf. *LGG* I 716-17; *Rs-hr* is a Netherworld demon gatekeeper that is mentioned in *CT* VII 418a with two names, *rs-hr* and *dwn-h3t*, as two epithets of the god Sobek whom the deceased seeks to transform into, and who is not content with being a crocodile, as he transformed himself at one time a bull, at another a ram, and at a third a lion, see: Grimm, *GM* 31, 27-34. ; Another Hymns to Sobek see: Gardiner, *RdE* 11, 43-56.

⁷ The deceased is identified once again in an almost obscure text as a son of 3sb: *hprw m t3w ink wyt s3 3sb Šw* “Becoming air. I am the Tosser (?), son of the fiery one of Shu”, in: *CT* IV 39 i-j.

⁸ *Nhd* is a word nearly synonymous with *snd*, see: *FAECT* II 209. n. 16. About *nhd* see: Köhler, *SAK*, Beihefte 18 (2016), where the author provides in chapters 5-6 an in-depth analysis of the semantic field “Wut” in Egyptian linguistics.

⁹ Cf.  in: *BD* 69.

¹⁰ *CT* VII 215 b-e.



*rn n 3hw s3w w3wwt iptn ntyw im.s ʿty3hwt 3mm sirtyw(?) 3sb Pgy
ʿ3-hr rn.f pw iry.s pw*

“The name of the spirits who guard these paths. Those who are in them: ʿty3hwt, He who grasps, Knife-wielder,¹ 3sb,² and Pgy, His name is Large-face and he is its³ gatekeeper”.⁴

In conformity with this aspect, the god 3sb is seen once again not only as the guard of the paths but as well the reporter of the second gate represented in spells 144 and 147 of the *Book of the Dead* (Fig.1-2). This gate is one of seven leading to the Netherworld, whose keeper, guard, and reporter the deceased must know. This knowledge is necessary to ensure free passage to the deceased:



ʿrryt 2 (...) S3bs⁵ rn n smi im.s

“Second gate (...) Burning-S3bs is the name of the reporter in it”.⁶



ʿrryt 2 (...) rn n smi im.s Wsd⁷

“Second gate (...) the name of the reporter in it is the god-Wsd”.⁸

Another function ascribed to the god 3sb is evident from the spells intended to help the dead escaping from the net.⁹ The *wdpw-ntr* ‘butler/servitor of the god’,¹⁰ whose function is confined only to his role of getting the fishes caught by nets to the table of those gods, he carries each time -according to the texts in which he is mentioned- a different name. One of these names given to those butlers is 3sb:

¹ Translation suggested by Faulkner, but the word is not attested in the *Wb*.

² Other variants are here attested: 3bs.

³ ‘s’ should be emended into ‘sn’ referring to the paths.

⁴ *CT VII 499c-i*.

⁵ It is a variant of the god’s name 3sb, see *LGG I 79*.

⁶ *BD 144: Quirke, Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, 324*.

⁷ For a variant see: *LGG I, 79*.

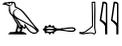
⁸ *BD 147: Quirke, Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, 351*.

⁹ See *BD 151* where it is recited to protect the deceased from being attacked by a lasso; Gad, *Abgadiyat Abgadiyat* 8 (2013), 67-74. See too Lüscher, *Untersuchungen zu Totenbuch Spruch, 151*.

¹⁰ See Wilson, *A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfou*, 276-7. The 4th dynasty funerary repasts involved the co-operation of three officiants; the butler- *Wdpw* who evidently derived his role from the service of the living, the embalmer- *wty* who was of funerary origin and *hry-wdb* who might have linked with the ceremony of water-pouring: Gardiner, *JEA* 24 (1938), 85; Simonet, *CdE LXII* (1987); cf. Gad, *Journal of historical & Archaeological Studies. Faculty of Arts, Menufiyah University*, (2009) 1-20.

iry n.f ht 9 m wd3 n Wsir iw ht 4 m pt hr R^c iw ht 3 m t3 hr Gb iw ht 2 m hwt-ntr i 3hb
sp-sn¹ s3 Ishnn²

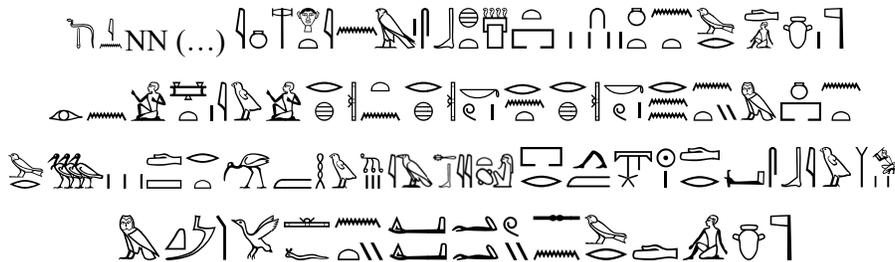
“For whom are made nine portions from the store of Osiris; four portions are in the sky with *Re^c*, three portions are on earth with *Geb*, and two portions are in the temple - O 3hb, O 3hb son of *Ishnn*”.³

This function of the god 3hb is evident in a text that comes from the 2nd hour of the *Book of Amduat*. In the middle of the lower register, three deities are depicted mummiform, seated on thrones (Fig.3 a-b); the second is a human-headed god 3hby  with a star in his lap.⁴ The text above is for all the deities represented in the lower register. The depiction of the star in the lap refers to the fact that these gods guarantee the right sequence of the agricultural year, thus ensuring that fresh plants will be always available for the blessed dead.⁵

This text corresponds with the previous spell of the *Coffin Texts* aforementioned, apart from the name of the god is not translated by Warburton.⁶ On the contrary Leitz translates the god’s name as ‘der Einschlürfer’ i.e. ‘the one who sips or the swallower’.⁷

IV-The goddess 3hbyt ‘the Swallower lady’

The 14th and 15th gateways of the kingdom of the god Osiris in the Netherworld - BD 145 - were given the name of this goddess who helps the dead Osiris. 3hbyt is repelling the enemies and removing the obstacles away from him:



dd- mdw in NN ... ind hr.t i.n Hr sbht 14 nt wrd-ib ir n.i w3t iw.i rh tn rh.kwi rn.t
rh.kwi rn n nty m-hnw.t wr(t) b3w dšrt gmhwt T3hbyt pr(t) m h3wy dr(t) sbyw m km3.f
nty ddw ʿwy.s n wrd-ib

¹ Faulkner has transliterated  as 3hbhb depending on the following sp-sn sign, see: Faulkner, *AECT* I, 155; but it is better to consider this word as referring to the sentence as a whole. It is obvious that this is the name of the god 3hb(w) mentioned in other spells. This word is written twice as a singular, and once here as plural; it is better to consider it as the god 3hb.

² For this god who is once mentioned, the reading is not certain as Barguet thinks that ‘ts’ is a particle see: *LGG* I 557; Barguet, *Textes des sarcophages*, 386.

³ *CT* III 85a-86b.

⁴ Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. 63-5. The caption attached to the god is 3hb not 3hbyt as Warburton mentioned, see below (Fig. 3b).

⁵ Abt & Hornung, *Knowledge for The Afterlife*, 41.

⁶ Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. 63.

⁷ *LGG* I 60.

“Words spoken by NN (...) Hail! Says Horus, O the 14th gateway of the weary-hearted (god)¹. May you make a way for me, as I know you and I know your name, I know the one who is inside you: Mighty of souls, red of plaited hair, *Bḥbyṯ*, who comes forth by night and repels the rebels away from his form, who gives her two arms to the weary-hearted (god)”².

V- The gods *ṣsbw* ‘The Burning Ones’³

In spells cast to let the deceased escape from the net spread between the sky and the earth, he enumerates the parts of the net, making them analogous with parts of the body of different gods and those of fishermen. The function of *ṣsbw* is confined to that of fishers, those who are dangerous as they catch the souls of the dead while moving within the Netherworld or on their way to it.⁴

The deceased asserted that he could escape from those nets and traps which are of many kinds,⁵ thanks to his knowledge of their names as well as those of the catchers:



whꜥw ḥṣmw ṣṣbw⁶ ipw tpw-ꜥ ṣsbw ts-phr

“The fishermen who catch fish are the swallowers - *ṣṣbw* who are before the burning ones - *ṣsbw* and vice versa”⁷.

In another text, the *ṣsbw* together with the *ḥḥbw* become the most primeval of the gods:



N-ntt N pn rh rn n whꜥw ḥṣmw sy ḥḥbw ṣsbw pw pṣwtyw - ntrw⁸

¹ About *Wrꜥ-ib* see: *LGG* II 512; Wirz, *Tod und Vergänglichkeit*, 24-32.

² Budge, *The Book of the Dead* II, chap. CXLV, 232 (Lepsius, *Tb*, Tf. LXIII, Zl. 50-52). According to a papyrus of the 26th Dynasty, this text is for the 15th gate, see: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 339.

³ In the teaching of P. Insinger, there is an advice to men to respect even the minor deities, as they should fear their revenge, see: ‘Do not slight a small god, lest his retaliation teach you’, in: Lichtheim, *AEL* III 204, 24, 1. This concept is to be applied on the *ṣsbw* and *ḥḥbw*.

⁴ See Gad, *ASAE* 86 (2015) 179-209

⁵ *Bdt* and *Ibt-ḥ* nets and the *I sswt* and *Dsf* fish-traps are names mentioned in this spell.

⁶ *ṣṣbw* is a variant of *ḥḥbw*.

⁷ *CT* VI 39u.

⁸ It is mentioned in *LGG* III 22 that *Pṣwty-ntrw* is dating to the Greco-Roman period, but according to this text, it seems that it is already attested since the Middle Kingdom. About the Egyptian primeval gods in Egyptian religion and the comparisons with the ‘Olden god’ in the religions of other ancient Near Eastern peoples see: Hollis, *JARC* 35, (1998) 61-72.

“Because this N knows the name of the fishermen fishing with it, they are the swallows (who are with) the burning ones, the most primeval of the gods”.¹

In the same context, a part of the net, with which the fishers catch, is identified with the *3sbw*:

nwḥ pw ḥ3mw.tn 3sbw pw

“This ropes with which you fish, they are the *3sbw*”.²

VI- The gods *3ḥbw* ‘The Swallowers’

In the text concerning the gods-*3sbw*, we noticed that, that the *3sbw* are ancestral of the *3sbw*. In the same spells cast to let the deceased escape from the net mentioned above, the *3ḥbw* are accompanied here, instead of *3sbw*, with the earth-gods *3krw* functioning the same role, i.e. fishers of the dead (Fig. 4a-b):

Tw N pn rh rn n wh'w ḥ3mw sy 3krw pw pw' tpyw-ᶜ 3ḥbw'

“This N knows the name of the fowlers who fish using it; they are *3krw*, who are before the *3ḥbw*”.^{5,6}

In a similar spell, the *3ḥbw* are those gods who come into being before the *3krw* contrary to the previous text:

wh'w ḥ3mw sy 3sbw pw tpyw-ᶜ 3krw

“The fishermen who fish it are the swallowers who are before *3krw*”.⁷

The gods *3ḥbw*, like the *3sbw* and *3krw*, are also known as primeval gods.⁸ The deceased wished to avoid them, lest he fell down into their nets but their traps as well:

¹ CT VI 24 g-i.

² CT VI 32 K-L.

³ Superfluous.

⁴ Faulkner saw in *3ḥbw* the swallowers, while Leitz translates it as die ‘Einschlürfenden’ see: Faulkner, *AECT* II 112; *LGG* I 60.

⁵ Faulkner, *AECT* II 112 where his translation differs somewhat from mine: ‘the fishermen who use it; they are the earth-gods, the forefathers of those who swallow (?)’.

⁶ CT VI 18k-l. Cf. too *BD* 153A: *Tw.i rh.kwi rn n wh'w ḥ3m sy 3krw pw tpyw-ᶜ 3ḥbw* “I know the name of the trappers fishing with it: it is ancestral earth-gods of *3ḥbw*-gods”, in: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 379.

⁷ CT VI 39 c. cf. CT VI 44r.

⁸ CT VI 24 g-i.



ky r n prt m issyt i M3-h3.f (...) i issyw issyt tw isst.tn htyw-t3 im.s ...
 iwy.i ... iw.i rh.kwi sy rh.kwi rn n 3h3h.s (...) wh^cw.s 3hbyw pw imyw
 3sb

“Another spell for Escaping from the fish-trap. O you who look backward (...) O you Trappers of the fish-trap in which you trap those who are all over the land¹ (...) I will escape (...) I know it, I know the name of its parts (...) its fishermen are the swallows who are with the 3sb(w)”.²

Apart from the word 3sbw, which is sometimes used as a variant of 3hbw, as stated above,³ there is a text briefly summarised all the characteristics ascribed to 3hbw while catching or fishing:



3šbw rs -ib rs -hr spd-hr spdwt smtw

“He who swallows; He who is alert; He who is vigilant; He who is sharp-sighted; He who is acute; He who listens”.⁴

Discussion

This article dealt with two groups of minor gods, each formed from the root of the same verb and appearing in the singular, masculine, and plural forms. The first group is 3sb, 3sbt, and 3sbw; the second is 3hb, 3hbt, and 3hbw. This study is confined to texts that connect these gods to the deceased, the *Coffin Texts* and the *Book of the Dead*, where they are first acknowledged.⁵

The writing of the names acted as an evidence to the function those gods played and hinted at the roles they play later.⁶ According to the spelling of these six deities' names, one expected that their functions were analogous to one another. They are, except for the goddess 3sbt, were first attested in Middle Kingdom *Coffin Texts*.

The god 3sb is written differently; first with or without the god-sign in texts of the Middle Kingdom ; then in the New Kingdom, with many orthographical variants: 3sb with the brazier with rising flame ⁷ , or with

¹ The htyw-t3, which could be translated as 'those who pass through the earth', seem to be here 'birds of the passage', representing the dead who themselves might be caught in nets, and thus face unfavorable destiny. 'Birds of the passage' which presumably means the b3-souls, passing to the Netherworld, is an expression taken from Bidoli, *Die Sprüche der Fangnetze in den altägyptischen Sargtexten*, 52-53. See: *LGG* V 968; cf. *CT* VI 3h; 4b; 25n

² *CT* VI 36 c-e. Faulkner, *AECT* II p. 119.

³ Cf. n. 60, 61 above.

⁴ *CT* VII 296 d-i.

⁵ Except for the goddess 3sbt who first appeared in Old Kingdom *Pyramid Texts* as said above n. 35.

⁶ Through the texts of the Ptolemaic Temples. For this discussion, I relied on the data given in: *LGG* I 60, 80.

⁷ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, Sign-list Q7.

a knife determinative  ; *S3bs*  with no determinative, and *Wsd*  with a knife determinative.¹ The inclusion of the brazier or the knife might appear convenient for the function of a reporter of the gates of the kingdom of the god Osiris. The function of this god *3sb*, who is attested at different periods,² remains the same; he is positive, protecting the deceased thanks to his power.³

Contrary to *3sb*, the positive aspect of *3sbt* concerning the deceased seems to be changed over time. In the *Bremner-Rhind Papyrus*, the nature of *3sbt* underwent an alteration, that she became a new more active protectress, able to destroy the enemies, those who threatened the king or the gods:⁴



R n šsp ds r hwi ʿ3pp dd-mdw ndrī sp-sn mnḥ šḥr ḥḥty n R^c m ds.k ndrī sp-sn mnḥw šḥr ḥḥty n pr-ʿ3 m ds.k tpw.tn nn-n sbyw d3d3t.k pfy nn ʿ3pp š^cd n ʿh3-ʿ m ds.f Spd Spdt nsrt 3sbyḥ hry tk3 šḥr.tn dwi-kd m ds.tn bḥn.tn Wnty m ds.tn

“A spell to take a knife to smite Apophis. Recitation: Seize, seize, O butcher,⁵ fell the foe of *Re^c* with your knife. Seize, seize, O butcher, fell the foe of Pharaoh with your knife. These are your heads, you rebels, this is that head of yours, O Apophis which are cut off by ‘the one with fighting arm’⁶ with his knife. Be sharp, O Sothis,⁷ O flame

¹ *S3bs* and *Wsd* are two variants of the god ‘name.

² He is attested also in Late Period and Greco-Roman period in the same positive function, see: *LGG* I 79.

³ About the ambivalent aspect of fire present in this verb *3sb* and other similar words see: Cannuyer, Une flamme égyptienne aux vertus contrastées:  In: *Mélanges offerts à Claude Vandersleyen*, 55-60.

⁴ Wilson, *A Lexicographical Study of the Texts in the Temple of Edfou*, 41.

⁵ This is a term applied to the executioners who serve Osiris, cf. Seth, *Dramatische Texte*, 170; Gaber, *Mnḥ*, “the butcher” and lord of the butcher demons, 78-95; Gaber, *The Mnḥw* demons: benevolent and malevolent, 246, 31-36.

⁶ *Wb* I 216, 7; *LGG* II 184. The head of the god Seth is cut off by the sharp knife of ʿh3-ʿ: *Urk* VI 49, 7.

⁷ About Sothis see: *LGG* VI 291. As a punisher goddess, destroying Apophis and together with Anukis, she arranges what should be done against him, see: *Bremner-Rhind* 27, 19; 31, 12.

flame of *3sbyt* who has authority over fire, you fell ‘The evil one’ with your knife, you cut *Wnty*¹ with your knife”.²

Paralleling with the same idea, *3sbt* functioned also in Greco-Roman period as one of the four lions directing their flames towards Seth and his confederates,³

3sbt became also as an epithet of many goddesses such as Isis,⁴ Hathor,⁵ and Wadjet.⁶

This last offensive function which has been ascribed to her, might have been derived from the determinative of the flame  (Sign-list Q7).

The positive aspect of *3hb* – attested as well up to Greco-Roman period - does not change over time.⁷ Both *3sbt* and *3hb* are written either without a determinative or with the  - sign (A10). On the contrary, the goddess *3hbt* is written with the  - sign (Aa2), a sign that usually accompanied words of terrible or morbid conditions. This could be convenient to her function as the guardian of the 14th and 15th gates of the Netherworld.⁸

Apart from their negative function, the gods *3sbw* and *3hbw*, whose names are written just with  are attested only in the *Coffin Texts*, in contexts associated with the earth-gods *3krw*.

Changing the roles those gods played or keeping the same function along the time, the reason for which is not enough clear from the texts or might need further study. It is noticeable as well that to those gods no priesthood or temples are consecrated.

CONCLUSIONS

As is evident from the coffin texts, most of which date back to the Middle Kingdom, these gods (*3sb*, *3sbt*, *3sbw*, and *3hb*, *3hbt*, *3hbw*) are somehow connected to one another. This is demonstrated using textual and lexicographical evidence.

The god *3sb*, with whom the deceased is identified, is also the brother of *3sbt*, whereas in another text the deceased is her son. The god *3sb* plays a positive role. He holds the

¹ *Wnty* as a designation of Apophis, see: *Wb* I 325, 14; *LGG* II 418 (n. 6,8)

² *Bremner-Rhind* 22, 20-22, 23; Faulkner, *JEA* 23, 168. At Edfu, in the Sokaris chamber, four female hippopotami holding torches are described as:  *3sbt(yw) hryw-tk3.sn* ‘the *3sbt* goddesses who are in charge of their torches’. The inscription attached indicates more clearly for their function: “The great goddesses *3sbt* of the foremost of the West, who protect by day and night and drive away foes”. See *E* I 195, 10-11; Gutbub, in: *Mél. Masp.* I/4, 39.

³ See, *LGG* I 80.

⁴ In a ritual scene to set up a fire basin: *E* I 490, 10, see: *LGG* I 64ff; about Isis in the *Coffin Texts* see: *Altenmüller, Synkretismus*, 176-179.

⁵ *LGG* V 77ff; about Hathor in the *Coffin Texts* see: *Altenmüller, Synkretismus*, 132-136.

⁶ *LGG* II 271; about Wadjet in the *Coffin Texts* see: *Altenmüller, Synkretismus*, 35-36.

⁷ See, *LGG* I 60: he is the god who protects the king from the one who is in his phyle *imy-s3.f* (as in *E* I 513, 5).

⁸ Attested in versions of the Book of the Dead dating to the Ptolemaic period. See: *LGG* I 61.

function of guarding the paths on which the deceased walks, and the second gate of the kingdom of the god Osiris. In addition, he is the servitor who receives the fish laying it on the gods' table. Thus *3sb* has to do with fishing, a function that is considered negative by the gods *3sbw*.

The gods *3hb* and *3hbt*, both play a positive role, as *3sb* and *3sbt*. *3hb* provides the deceased with meals, and *3hbt* repels the rebels away from the god Osiris. The gods *3hbw* in contrast to *3hb* and *3hbt*, are considered to be dangerous. They together, with either *3sbw* or *3krw*, functioned as the fishers who used nets and traps to catch the dead while going to the Netherworld.

The gods in singular form *3sb*, *3sbt*, *3hb*, and *3hbt*, hold functions that are all different except for their positive aspect. However, the gods with a plural form *3sbw* and *3hbw*, hold negative functions analogous to that of the gods *3krw*; they are all the fishers who catch the deceased in a net or a trap on its way to the Netherworld, or even while wandering into it.

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THE PLATES



Fig. 1: Spell BD 144 after Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 134

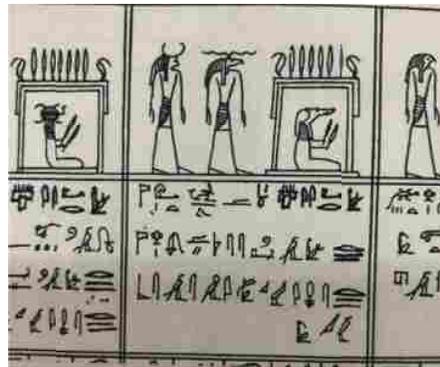


Fig. 2: Spell BD 144 after Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, GHP Egyptology 20, 324.

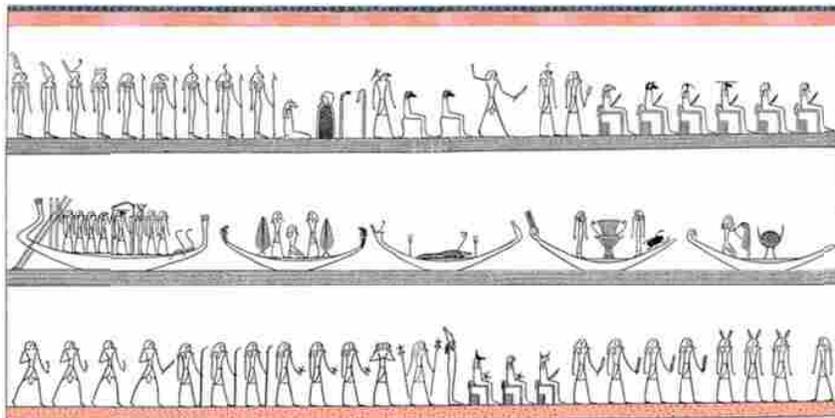


Fig. 3a: after Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat. The Book of the Hidden Chamber*, revised and edited by Hornung & Abt, Zürich 2007,45.

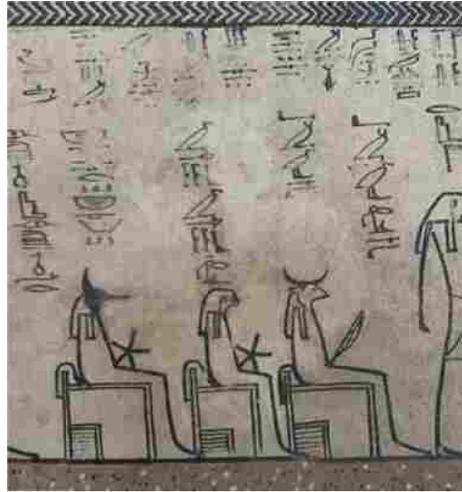


Fig. 3b (detail): after Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat. The Book of the Hidden Chamber*, revised and edited by Hornung & Abt, Zürich (2007), 45.

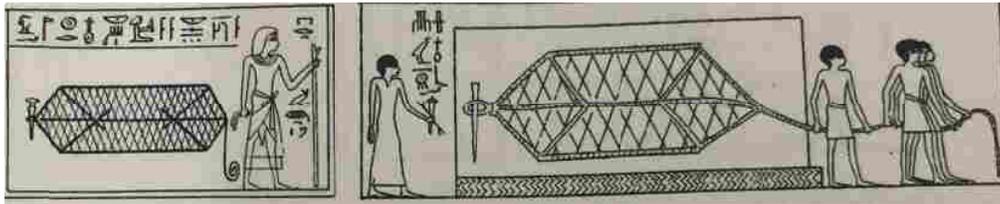


Fig.4a (spell 153A): after Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 378.

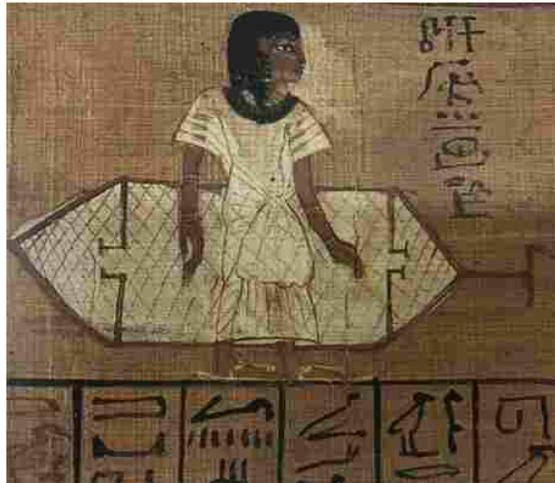


Fig. 4b (spell 153A): after Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. 151.