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A description of Egyptian kinship terminology of the Middle Kingdom, c. 2000-1650 B.C.

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Introduction

Until quite recently, the study of kinship terminology was much neglected by Egyptologists. It is true that it was soon recognized by many that the structure underlying the ancient Egyptian set of terms was different from those found in modern Western Europe, but attempts to give a more positive description of it remained scarce. Aside from isolated remarks on points of detail, the only accounts of the terminology for a long time were those by Clère (1953) and Černý (1957). Neither of these now seems adequate. They provide no evidence for the meanings attached to each term, and are in conflict with each other and with the results of more recent investigations. Nevertheless, most later publications on the subject are based on these articles (e.g. Allam 1975:105; Fattovich 1979:217 f.; Vernus 1981:109).

Some new publications on the matter, which will be discussed later, have appeared recently. These have put the investigation of the problem on a much more solid basis. However, neither these nor the earlier articles seem to have been noticed by social anthropologists. In the latest edition of Murdock’s Atlas of World Cultures (Pittsburgh 1981, pp. 110-111) it is still assumed that nothing is known about the Egyptian terminology. It is my aim to fill this gap by providing the formal rules governing the Egyptian set of terms. My conclusions will be based as far as possible on texts dating from the Middle Kingdom, texts which are often hard to date more exactly, but which generally appear to belong to the latter half of this period, i.e., the end of the XIIth Dynasty and the XIIIth Dynasty. But before proceeding with this, some points left undetermined by earlier publications will have to be discussed.

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The Terms and Their Primary Meanings

One is struck by the small number of terms used by the Egyptians. The whole system appears to comprise only six terms: *h3y*, *hmt*, *it*, *mwt*, *sn* and *s3*, while feminine forms can be made of the latter two by adding a -f-ending. In the vernacular of the New Kingdom (N.K.), *s3(t)* was gradually replaced by *sri(t)*. However, since I will occupy myself mainly with the terminology of the Middle Kingdom (M.K.), this latter word will be left out of consideration here.

Properly speaking, the term *sm(t)* should be added, because it was used to indicate in-laws. But in the texts of pharaonic date that have come down to us its frequency is extremely low (it appears to be attested only about four times in texts from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period, i.e. over a span of about 2000 years), and I believe it to have been of little importance (see for this word Fischer 1976; Roquet 1977; and Nur el-Din 1980:95, for which last reference I am grateful to Dr Borghouts). For this reason I will leave it out of consideration in this discussion.

Another term which has been interpreted as a kinship term is *hnms(t)*. The traditional rendering of this word is 'friend', but Piehl (1900) suggested a meaning ZS for it. His argument is not very strong, however, being based on one ambiguous reference. His hypothesis never gained much support. Other scholars thought *hnms(t)* rather meant 'in-law' (Matthieu 1954:62 ff., followed by Meeks 1974:56, n. 3, and Wildung 1974:259) or 'relative' (Berlev 1978:141 ff.). There is something to be said for both suggestions. In a small number of texts a *hnms(t)* mentioned indeed appears to be related to ego in some way. But there are also cases where this is impossible or at least improbable. For this reason I keep to a reading like 'friend'. Cases where a relative appears to be called a *hnms(t)* need not contradict this view.

So the Egyptian terminology probably comprised just the six terms mentioned above. These may be translated as follows: *it* as 'father', *mwt* as 'mother', *sn(t)* as 'brother (sister)', *s3(t)* as 'son (daughter)', *h3y* as 'husband' and *hmt* as 'wife'.

Of course this range does not cover all categories of kin. More distant kin could be indicated descriptively by juxtaposing the appropriate terms or connecting them by the genitive *n* (feminine *nt*). Hence a FB could, for instance, be labelled *sn* (*n*) *it*, literally 'brother of the father', and a DD *s3t* (*nt*) *s3t*, literally 'daughter of the daughter'.

A special form of this descriptive use is patterned as follows: *sn.f* (*n*) *mwt.f* (in which *f* is the possessive pronoun 'his'), 'his brother', literally 'his brother of his mother'. Zába (1979:57 f.) has proposed a meaning 'half-brother' for this, but as far as I know, there is no positive evidence for this as yet. It should be noted that this form of
designating kin almost exclusively occurs with \(sn(t)\) in the first and \(mwt\) in the second position (cf. Robins 1979:205 ff.).

Problems of Identifying the Extended Meanings of the Terms

All languages can of course indicate kin in a descriptive way like that just outlined. But this method is only very seldom found as the only, or even the normal way of denoting kin. So it is to be expected from the outset that the Egyptian terms have wider meanings than those explained above. This same conclusion has been reached by many Egyptologists drawing up genealogies on the basis of ancient texts. These often did not seem to fit together logically if one wanted to interpret the terms in a restricted sense. But what were the extended meanings of the terms then?

In 1979, the results of a first attempt at a systematic investigation of the problem were published by Robins. In spite of the fact that the title of her essay suggests that it discusses “the relationships specified by the Egyptian kinship terms of the Middle and New Kingdoms”, the bulk of her source material is actually of M.K. date. The advantage of using texts of this latter period was that large numbers of relatives, friends, servants, etc., were often represented on funerary monuments then, not only with their names, but also with the kin terms used to refer to them. Further, in many cases the texts indicate the descent of the people depicted (“A whom B begot/conceived”). Where this kind of information was given it was possible to draw up genealogies. The next step was to look for the relative position of ego and a particular other person in the genealogy denoted by a given term. In this way it was possible to establish the terms for many kintypes.

The principle is simple enough, but unfortunately it is often hard to put into practice. For those not acquainted with this kind of material, I will illustrate the sort of problems one is confronted with by means of one actual example: the stela Geneva D 50\(^8\), the relevant part of which is reproduced in fig. 1. From its uppermost line it becomes apparent that the stela belonged to a man called “\(Imeni, \) whom \(Sat-Imeni\) conceived” (the stela actually employs the word “begot”, but the following name points to a female, as elsewhere in the same text). He is numbered 1 in the figure. The other persons are “his \(mwt\) \(Sat-Imeni, \) whom \(Sat-Sobk\) conceived” (2); “his \(s3\) \(Sa-setit, \) whom \(Sat-chetwerner\) conceived” (3); “his \(it\) \(Iynotef, \) whom \(Renef-onkh\) conceived” (4); “his \(sn\) \(Hor-Imeni, \) whom \(Sat-Sobk\) conceived” (5); “his \(sn\) \(Imeni\) junior, whom \(Sat-Sobk\) conceived” (6); “the \(mwt\) of his \(mwt\) \(Sat-Sobk, \) whom \(Sat-Hathor\) conceived” (7); “the \(s3\) of his \(sn\) \(Hor-Imeni\) junior, whom \(Sat-Nemti\) conceived” (8); “his \(sn\) \(Senwosre-sonb, \) whom \(Nemtet\) conceived” (9); “his \(sn\) \(Sat-Imeni-senut, \) whom \(Nemti\) conceived” (10); “his \(sn\) \(Hor-hemaw, \) whom \(Sat-Nemtet\) conceived” (11); “his \(sn\) \(Senwosre\) junior, whom \(Sat-Nemtet\) conceived” (12); “the \(s3t\) of the
‘count’ Sat-tep-ihu, whom Sat-khenticeti conceived” (13); “her s3 Senwosre Nehy, whom Sat-tep-ihu conceived” (14); and a woman “Net-menet, whom Sat-nemti conceived” (15). The text in the bottom lines mentions a man called Iychernoofre (16).
Most probably the genealogical information of the upper register is to be interpreted as follows:

a) 

- **Sat-Hathor**
  - **Sat-Sobk** (7)
  - **Imeni jr.** (6)
  - **Hor-Imeni** (5)
  - **Fysat-lmeni** (2)
  - **Inyotef** (4)
  - **Qref'enkh**
  - **Sat-chetiwer**
  - **Imeni** (1)
  - **Sa-setit** (3)

b) 

- **Sat-khenticheti**
  - **Sat-tep-ihu** (13)
  - **Senwosre**
  - **Nehy** (14)

Further, there is the man **Iychernofre**, who must remain unplaced.

Though the fact that all these people are mentioned together is an indication that they may have been related, it seems impossible to connect genealogies a, b and c. A clue might be provided by the fact that no. 8 is called the “s3 of his sn”, “his” possibly referring to the ego of the stela (no. 1). If this were true, no. 8's siblings would be ego's BCh. Assuming that “his” still refers to the same ego, the circumstance that these siblings are labelled “his sn(t)” would indicate that sn(t) here denotes BCh. But, as Robins (1979:199) has pointed out, terms in larger family groups are often found to refer to different egos. If this is the case here, too, “his” in “his sn(t)” may refer to a male other than no. 1, for instance his BS, **Hor-Imeni** jr. (8). Sn(t) would then simply indicate a Sb. Similarly, it is possible that **Hor-Imeni** is not the BS of ego (1), but of another male, for instance one of Imeni's MBs.
There is consequently some measure of uncertainty about any reconstruction of the genealogical connections of the persons depicted on this stela, and this has consequences for the interpretation of the kin-terms used. Unfortunately, most of the monuments raise similar or other problems. The reader can imagine the confusion occasioned by texts in which 30 to 40 relatives are mentioned, or where several persons have the same names, or where parts of inscriptions are damaged. Many other texts cannot be used at all for our purpose, simply because they contain only descriptive terminology, or because they do not indicate descent.

It is not surprising, then, that Robins was able to produce only little or no evidence for the labelling of some kintypes. In a few cases she tried to compensate for such difficulties by referring the reader to texts of later date than those of her main corpus (M.K.). In cases where the time difference is relatively small one can still approve of this procedure. But in some cases she also adduces material from as late a date as the Late New Kingdom, approximately 600 years later. Now comparison may establish that the terminology remained the same over that period, but to start from this assumption does not seem methodologically sound. Further, there is some reason to doubt some of Robins' other conclusions. In sum, there are a number of kintypes for which the corresponding M.K. terms still remain to be established.

An article similar to Robins' was published a year later by Bierbrier (1980). Here the terminology used in texts from the village of Deir el-Medina (Ramesside Period, c. 1300-1080 B.C.) is discussed. Though it has no direct bearing on the problem of M.K. terminology, it will sometimes be referred to for the sake of comparison.

Robins’ Conclusions — Comments

Robins' Conclusions are tabulated below. To the right of the terms the corresponding kintypes as inferred from the material at her disposal are listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Kintype</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>F, male ascendant (1979:199 f.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwt</td>
<td>M, MM, female ascendant (1979:200 f.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s3</td>
<td>S, DS, male descendant (1979:201);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s3t</td>
<td>D, female form of s3, with presumably the same sphere of reference (1979:201);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sn</td>
<td>B, ZH, MB, BS, ZS, H (1979:202 f.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snt</td>
<td>Z, FZ, MZ (?), BD, ZD, perhaps MZD, W (1979:203);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h3y</td>
<td>H (1979:209);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hmt</td>
<td>W (1979:208).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, for FB only the descriptive sn (n) it was used; according to Robins it could also refer to a FMB (1979:204). Similarly, for MZ the descriptive snt (nt) mwt would have been normal (1979:204);
see also genealogy on p. 217, which schematizes the distribution of the terms over the kintypes).

As far as the terms \textit{it}, \textit{mwt}, \textit{s3}, \textit{s3t}, \textit{h3y} and \textit{hmt} are concerned, most Egyptologists would readily admit that these can have the meanings attributed to them by Robins. The designation of the remaining, non-lineal kintypes is more problematic. It has long been known that some of these may be designated by the term \textit{sn(t)}, and Robins’ work confirms this. But not all of her conclusions will be generally accepted. Consequently, a close scrutiny of the arguments for her interpretation of the word \textit{sn(t)} is necessary.

According to Robins, \textit{sn} can indicate, apart from B:
a) ZH. For this, however, she refers the reader to Bierbrier (1975: XIV), a publication which is concerned not with the M.K., but with the Late N.K.;
b) MB. For \textit{sn} as a designation of this kintype, see, apart from the references cited by Robins, my genealogies V and VI in the appendix to this article, and, possibly, Zába (1979:38 and 57);
c) BS. Robins’ references for this are from the early N.K., which is not very long after the date of much of her other material, deriving from the XIIIth Dynasty;
d) ZS;
e) H. This use is known to have come into existence during the XVIIth Dynasty (Cerny 1954:25), and need not concern us.

\textit{Snt} could denote the following kintypes, besides Z:
a) FZ. But here, Robins’ evidence is inadequate. Her first source is a royal text in which there is mention of Pharaoh Tuthmosis II, “his \textit{s3}” Tuthmosis III, and “his \textit{snt}” Hatshepsut (Sethe 1906:60, l. 1). Hatshepsut was Tuthmosis II’s Z and W, though not Tuthmosis III’s M. According to Robins, “his” in “his \textit{snt}” refers to Tuthmosis III. If this interpretation were correct, \textit{snt} would here refer to a FZ (= FW). But the text is usually interpreted differently, whereby “his” is taken to refer to Tuthmosis II, not Tuthmosis III, in which case \textit{snt} simply designates a Z.

A second argument is drawn by Robins from a religious text (Barns 1956:pl. 18), in which the goddess Nephtys is said to be the \textit{snt} of Horus. Nephtys was generally considered to be the Z of Osiris, Horus’ F. Consequently, Robins concluded that Nephtys as Horus’ FZ could be referred to as his \textit{snt}. However, Nephtys was also the Z of Horus’ M Isis. Hence this text gives no unequivocal evidence that a FZ could be designated by the term \textit{snt}.
b) MZ (?). Though Robins has not a single example of this use, and doubts whether it occurs, examples are, in fact, easy to find; see genealogies I, III and V;
c) BD. See for this what has been said above about the use of *sn* to refer to a BS.

d) ZD.

e) Perhaps a MZD. Robins refers the reader to her note 5 on p. 203, which refers him again to p. 202, n. 10. No MZD is mentioned there at all, though Robins discusses a dubious instance of the use of *sn* for a MZS. An uncertain instance of the use of *snt* for MZD is investigated by her elsewhere (p. 203, n. 4);

f) W. This use is known to have come into existence during the XVIIIth Dynasty (Cerny 1954:25) and need not concern us.

In view of the above arguments, some of Robins' ideas have been modified. The following meanings can now be attributed to *sn(t)*:

- **sn**: B, MB, BS, ZS, MZS (?).
- **snt**: Z, MZ, BD, ZD, and MZD (?).

This leaves the following questions:

1) What are the terms for cousins?
2) What are the terms for FZb?
3) What are the terms for affines?

**The Terms for Cousins**

There is a quite general tendency among Egyptologists to believe that *sn(t)* could be used to designate members of ego's generation, probably because it is known to have been used as a general term for 'friends' (who are obviously usually of ego's age) (e.g. Anthes 1928:74; Bierbrier 1980:104; Clère 1953:36; Janssen 1980:140; Janssen 1981: 63). Consequently, one would expect that *sn(t)* could, among others, also indicate cousins.

That this is indeed the case, at least with respect to some categories of cousins, is testified by genealogy III, and, possibly, by genealogy I, in both of which *snt* denotes MZD. We may safely assume that *sn*, the male counterpart of *snt*, could thus denote MZS. I have no texts containing evidence that *sn(t)* could also indicate other cousins, but I consider this very plausible. At least for MBCh there should be no doubt on the matter, as we have seen that all other matrilateral non-lineals were referred to as *sn(t).*

The least one can say is that *sn(t)* could denote some categories of cousins. I am grateful to Prof. Janssen for pointing out to me that under the New Kingdom, in the village of Deir el-Medina, *sn(t)* appears to have been a normal word for 'cousin'.

**The Terms for FZb**

We have seen that Robins' identification of *snt* as a term for FZ was unfounded, at least on the basis of the material at her disposal. But
in that case what are the terms for this kintype and for its male equivalent, which latter, according to Robins, is always sn (n) it (see p. 157 f. above)?

The texts are unfortunately of little help here, for M.K. stelae are often heavily biased towards the maternal side. Only one text, the data of which are reproduced in genealogy II, provides an example of a FB being referred to as sn, but this man may just possibly also be ego’s WB. Later sources might encourage one to believe that sn was indeed a term for FB. Two examples of this are cited by Bierbrier (1980:106). But their date is so late that I would not like to have to use them as sole evidence.

Fortunately there are also other ways of establishing this. The “rule of uniform reciprocals” recently discussed by Scheffler (1977:246) states that “recognition of any specific kind (or class) of genealogical relationship logically entails recognition of the reciprocal kind (or class) of genealogical relationship”. Consequently, if we posit that BS → B (or: “let one’s brother’s son be regarded as structurally equivalent to one’s brother”), which is implied by the fact that a BS was designated by the term sn, we automatically posit the reciprocal rule FB → B. Normally this would imply that the uncle would be referred to as ‘brother’ (sn). Though deviations from this rule are possible (Scheffler 1977), the fact that there are a possible case from the M.K. and certain cases from the N.K. where sn denotes a FB makes me feel confident that this was indeed true. Of course the same rule involves that snt designates a FZ, as snt was also the term for BD. Consequently the rule is that FSb → Sb, and, in view of what has been said above about the terms for MSb, even that PSb → Sb.

The Terms for Affines

In Robins’ M.K. examples, no reference is found to in-laws. In the Late New Kingdom texts studied by Bierbrier, however, such references are found quite often. Here it appears that ego uses the same terms for his in-laws as his wife does for her blood-relatives. So, for instance, a WF could be called it (Bierbrier 1980:101). Other categories of affines lacked special terms as well. So a ChSp could be designated by the term for Ch.

What was the M.K. rule?

Again through the matrilateral bias of the stelae, we possess very little information on this point. However, the few examples we have seem to confirm that the N.K. rule already existed in the M.K. In genealogy IV there is a probable case of a WMB being designated sn, the term also used for MB. A possible, though uncertain, case of sn = WB is contained in genealogy II.
Doubts

Before proceeding to a discussion of the classification of the Egyptian system, first one other point should be dealt with. It concerns a remark made by Bierbrier regarding his reconstruction of the Late Egyptian terminology, which could also be applied to the M.K. system.

As we have seen, the term \textit{sn(t)} covers a wide range of kin, referring to people in all generations. Bierbrier states quite the opposite to be true in his discussion of the use of \textit{sn} for FB (1980:106). He thinks that this use is explainable from the fact that uncle and nephew were probably not distant in age. In this way he tries to reconcile genealogical facts with the view that \textit{sn(t)} principally denoted members of the same generation. If Bierbrier is right, the examples we seem to have of \textit{sn(t)} referring to persons who are not of ego's generation would be quite meaningless. But it is highly doubtful that he is right. He seems to mix up two things: relative age and the structural distinction of generations. Something of this nature may happen where kinship terms are used as terms of address. It would, however, be exceptional in the case of terms used referentially, and it is with this latter kind of use that we are dealing here (cf. e.g. Scheffler 1972: 119). Furthermore, there are actual examples which testify that \textit{sn(t)} could be used where there was a difference in age between ego and the person referred to as \textit{sn(t)}. Also this disproves Bierbrier's theory about the influence of relative age on the terminology. One of these examples is presented in my genealogy III, where both ego's MZ and her daughter are referred to as his \textit{snt}. If one of the two were of ego's age, the other would of course be a generation older or younger. In a text referred to by Robins (1979:202, n. 9, first example) a second case is found: Tuthmosis III is here said to be Hatshepsut's \textit{sn}, while it is known that he was her BS and about a generation younger. Similarly, in the Story of Horus and Seth the latter is called Horus' \textit{sn}, while it is explicitly stated that he was Horus' MB and older than he.

Conclusions

It is now possible to state the rules underlying the Egyptian terminology (see also the reconstruction in genealogy VII). These rules are as follows:

a) Half-sibling rule: $\text{PCh} \rightarrow \text{Sb}$ (or: "let one's parent's child be regarded as structurally equivalent to one's sibling").

b) $\text{PP} \rightarrow \text{P}$ (cf. p. 157 f. above) and its reciprocal $\text{ChCh} \rightarrow \text{Ch}$ (cf. p. 157 f. above).

c) $\text{SbCh} \rightarrow \text{Sb}$ (cf. p. 158 f. above) and its reciprocal $\text{PSb} \rightarrow \text{Sb}$ (cf. p. 159 f. above).
Taken together, this last rule and its reciprocal account for the extension of the terms for Sb to PSbCh).

d) Probably σ W ... → ... (cf. p. 160 above).

The terminology does not distinguish siblings from cousins, and so might be called Hawaiian. In a typical Hawaiian system, however, a similar merging would be found in the other generations as well. Relatives of parents' generation would be called 'father' and 'mother', while those in the generation of ego's children would all be classified as 'son' and 'daughter'. Although deviations from this rule are found in some variants of the Hawaiian system, adjacent generations are terminologically marked off from each other in every Hawaiian system (Buchler 1964). Janssen (1981:63) has suggested that the Egyptian system was Hawaiian, pointing out that the terms distinguished mainly between generations. However, this is true only of lineal kin (i.e. ego's parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, etc.), and every kinship system differentiates lineals by generation.

The rules formulated by Buchler (1964) for the Hawaiian type fail to generate the Egyptian system. The main distinction in the Egyptian terminology is not one between generations, but rather between lineals (for whom the terms it, mwt and s3(t) were used; the lineals of ego's spouse and possibly also his ChSp (n. 9 above) apparently also come under this heading) and non-lineals (including those of ego's spouse), who were all termed sn(t).

The data at my disposal do not allow any firm conclusions as to the use of the terms in the generations of the grandparents and grandchildren, or in generations yet further removed. There is a well attested use of it for 'forefather', 'ancestor', while Robins (1979:201) quotes examples of s3(t) being used for 'grandchild'. There are, therefore, grounds for supposing that the 'lineal' terms could also be applied to persons in generations ± 2, or even more distant. I know of no examples of the use of sn(t) for non-lineals in these generations, but this may be accidental, for the greater the genealogical distance between ego and a given person, the more difficult it is to ascertain how their genealogical relationship was classified.

This is clearly an unusual system of kinship classification, but it is not unique. It fits, for example, into Scheffler's class of "Systems with intergenerational extension rules", together with the Magyar system (Scheffler 1972:121-123).

Postscript: After the completion of this article I was informed by Mr. D. Franke of Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany, that he is working on a doctoral dissertation which is also concerned with the kinship terminology of Middle Kingdom Egypt. This study, entitled Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen im Mittleren Reich Altdgyptens, will probably be published later in 1983.
Appendix — Genealogies

Genealogy I (stelae Cairo 20043 and 20681)

The combined data of the abovementioned stelae yield this genealogy. The egos of the stelae are the man Wah-ka, and Djerwi respectively. On the first stela, Bebu and Kehepeti are both called the first ego's snt. It is possible that they were related to ego through the woman Wah-ka, who may have been identical with ego's MM Wah-ka-Iufsonb. It is a well-known fact that people bearing double names (such as Wah-ka/Iufsonb) might be called by the constituent elements of the double name as well (Vernus 1971). In the stela Cairo 20681 there is an actual example of Wah-ka-Iufsonb being referred to by her second name in a shortened form: Sonb. Though the proposal to equate Wah-ka with Wah-ka-Iufsonb cannot be backed with data from the material at my disposal, it is at least plausible. If I am right, the man Wah-ka's snts are his MZ and his MZD respectively. See also note 9.

Genealogy II (stela Cairo 20153)

Sonbef, ego's sn, is his FB. The name of his M is Sat-khenticheti, just like that of ego's WM, though the writing of the latter person's name differs from that of the former. Our reconstruction has taken account of this fact (an argument which, however, is not strong), and of the fact that, if Nofert-ii's M were identical with Sonbef's M, Nofert-ii, being a Z of Sonbef and Sobknodjme, would have to have been either much younger than her brothers or much older than her husband S^-onkh-Pepi. Still, this possibility should not be ruled out altogether. I know of a case of FZ-marriage in Egypt from the Late Period (Bierbrier 1975, Chart XIII), though it occurs in a Libyan family and may well be atypical for Egypt. We consequently have to reckon with the possibility that the use of sn to indicate Sonbef was dictated by the fact that he was ego's WB.
Genealogy III (stela Cairo 20156)

The terms sn(t) found on this stela refer to ego's B, Z, MZ (2.x), and, most probably, his MZD. As far as this last assertion is concerned, there is some uncertainty, albeit a very slight one. The problem lies in the fact that Semut-ib is called 'Semut-ib, whom Bebi bore', whereas in my reconstruction her mother's name is not Bebi, but Bb. But no person Bebi is to be found on the stela and the ending -i after names was often irregularly written. Hence it is not improbable that Bb and Bebi were in fact one and the same person.

Genealogy IV (stela Cairo 20245)

The other persons mentioned on the stela cannot be genealogically placed. Possibly, in 'his sn Mersu', 'his' refers not to ego, but to one of these other persons. I have here assumed that this is not the case, for everywhere else 'his' at least probably refers to ego. Assuming that my reconstruction is correct, sn here refers to a WMB.

Genealogy V (stela Cairo 20271)

Sn(t) here refers to ego's B, MB and MZ.
Genealogy VI (stela Cairo 20431)

Many more persons are represented on the stela, who cannot be genealogically placed. Sn here refers to ego's MB.

Genealogy VII
(showing the suggested meanings of the terms in generations 0 and ± 1)

Leiden, June 1982

NOTES

1 I should like to thank Dr J. F. Borghouts and Professors J. J. Janssen and A. J. Kuper, all of Leiden University, for reading earlier drafts of this article and offering their criticism and suggestions. I am grateful to Professor Kuper also for supplying me with most of the references to the anthropological literature used here.

2 See for the theoretical assumptions regarding kinship terminology the remarks made by Scheffler (1972:113-119).

3 For the phonetic script used here see Gardiner (1957:27).

4 I am unable to read the original article, which is in Russian. I have inferred this to be Matthieu's conclusion from Meeks' publication mentioned in the text.

5 Though Wildung quotes Matthieu's article as his source, according to him hnms means 'relative'. I owe this reference to Dr Borghouts.

6 This is again a Russian publication. According to Meeks (1981:282, no. 78.3051) Berlev thinks hnms indicates 'relatives' and 'friends'.

7 A term hbswt is also known from the M.K. onwards. Though this term is sometimes translated as 'concubine' or 'fiancée', I believe that Pestman (1961:10-11, n. 7) is right where he states that it is used "promiscuously with hmt". Cases of the same woman being referred to as a person's hbswt as well as...
his *hmt* are known. In the M.K., the term was still quite rare, and it does not occur at all in the text studied by me.

8 Simpson (1974: pl. 1-4) mentions other monuments relating to the same family.

9 I know nothing definite about affinal relationships where the linking relative is not the spouse. In genealogy I such a relationship (that between *Djerwi* and his ZHM) is expressed by means of the term *snt*. But because one has to reckon with the possibility that there was also a consanguineal relationship, this single example does not prove much. An instance of a ChSp being referred to as Ch may possibly be contained in a ‘Letter to the Dead’ from the early M.K. (Gardiner 1930:20).

10 An excellent translation of this text is provided in Lichtheim (1976:214 ff.). For the kinship terms and relations in this story, cf. Köhler (1972), Leach (1976) and Oden (1979).

11 Murdock (1949 [1965]:223 f.) bases his classification of kinship terminologies on the terms used for cousins. A Hawaiian system according to him is one where “all cross and parallel cousins (are) called by the same terms as those for sisters”. From Buchler’s survey of Hawaiian terminologies (1964) it appears that it may be more generally stated that in this kind of system no terminological difference exists between siblings and cousins.

12 This might be the right place to refer to another attempt to classify the Egyptian terminology, made recently by Fattovich (1979:217 f.). Assuming that the kinship terminology of historical times reflects the social structure of prehistoric Egypt, he first lists the denotations of each term, on the authority of Allam (1975:105). On the basis of this he posits that “all elders in fact were classified as father and mother [something Allam does not say, stating instead that all ancestors (‘Ahne/Vorfahr’) were so termed]; the male cousin, the nephew and the brother-in-law as brother; the aunt and the female cousin as sister; the nephew and the son-in-law as son; the niece as daughter”. The hypothesis of this classification of nephew and niece must have been borrowed via Allam from Clère (1953), an article which, as I observed above, is not very reliable.

From this weak premise, Fattovich arrives at the conclusion that the terminology mirrors a system of cross-cousin marriage “comparable to the Kariera one”. Why this should be so remains an enigma. No one has yet suggested the existence of a ‘four-section system’ in Egypt, as in the Kariera system. The connection between the Kariera type of system and the lineage, which Fattovich appears to suggest (p. 217), is moreover debatable (see for an account of the Kariera system, Buchler & Selby 1968:283 f.). Consequently, Fattovich’s classification must be rejected.

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