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

Magda GAD
Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University
Magdagad2009@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT
The gods $3sb$, $3sbt$, $3sbw$, and $3hb$, $3hbtt$, $3hbw$, 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) $Akr(w)$.

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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 \(Re^r\), 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
Wn n.k \text{wy } 3kr \ldots pr.k br \text{ hrw Inpw}^4
\end{align*}
\]

"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:

\[
\begin{align*}
n ngr.t(w).k^6 \text{ in } 3krw
\end{align*}
\]

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 \(Wd\)-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, 1, 83. About the god \(3kr(w)\) in Coffin Texts, see: Altenmüller, Synkretismus in den Sargtexten13-14. \(3kr\) as the protector of \(Re^r\) 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 \(\text{lsbw}: \text{whw htmw lsbw ipw tptw }\text{lsbw ts-phr} \text{‘the fishermen who catch are the swallowers who are before the fiery ones - and vice versa’} \text{ CT VI 39u; whw htmw s(y) lsbw pw tptw }\text{3krw} \text{‘the fishermen who fish it are the swallowing who are before the earth - gods }3krw\text{’} \text{ CT VI 44r. The }\text{lsbw}: \text{n-ntt N pn r\, n whw htmw s(y) lsbw pw imyw lsbw pw p\,wtyw-ntrw} \text{‘because this N knows the name of the fishermen who fish it, they are the swallowers who are with the fiery ones, the most primeval of the gods’} \text{ CT VI 24g-h; whw s lsbw pw imyw lsbw whw.s pw htm ws pw km im.s pw lsbw ‘its fishermen are the swallowing who are with the fiery ones. Its fishermen who fish with it are they of Abydos’} \text{ CT VI 36c-d. The }\text{kl\,wv w: r-ntt tw.i r\, kw. n whw s kl\,wv pwy} \text{‘because I know the name of its fishermen, they are the baboons’} \text{ 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 sd\(m\)\(f\) form.
"You will not be seized by the earth-gods".¹ 

According to these spells, Akr(w) play the same role that of a net holding the deceased tightly, seizing his capacity for motion. For this reason, the Egyptians later connected the earth-gods with the spells intended to escape nets in the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts:

\[ \text{Prt m } \text{i3dt (… …) n ndrw.t(w).i in } 3krw \]
"Escaping the i3dt-net² (… …) I will not be caught by the Akrw".³

Among those catchers - of which are the Akrw - the gods 3hbw and 3sbw attracted my attention. They are mostly mentioned in the same context as 3krw; so I will try through the texts in which they are mentioned to elucidate their function in their plural or singular form.

Furthermore, in the course of this article, we shall have to ask as well, however, whether the god 3sb and 3sbt, and as well 3hb and 3hbt have the same function played by the gods 3sbw and 3hbw, and finally their relevance to the earth-gods Akrw.

Furthermore, in the interests of clarity, I have purposely confined this article to the texts dating back to the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead in which these six gods are first attested. Only the goddess 3sbt appeared previously in the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts.

I- The god 3sb ‘The Burning One’

First attested in the Coffin Texts, the god 3sb holds many roles that connect him to the deceased.⁴ 

In a spell in which he emphasizes that Horus and Isis are the gods who have already protected him against Seth,⁵ the deceased identifies himself with the god 3sb, the brother of 3sbt:

\[ \text{…} \]

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¹ PT 658; cf. 2202c; cf. CT I 280f. For other terms for 'grasp' see: CT I 398a (n b3f b3.i in 3krw); CT II 112e (n 3m3.i i in 3krw); CT VI 46g.
² The Tidt-net refers to a hexagonal type of net used for capturing birds. It consists of two side pieces, placed on either side of a stretch of water that could be closed over the birds on the water by a system of ropes and pulleys: Wilson, A Ptolemaic Lexikon, 38.
³ CT VI 46 a-b, g.
⁴ This god is one of the seven spirits who was attributed the role of guarding the double gate of the tribunal of Osiris:

\[ \text{ir 3hw 7 ipw}w \ldots \text{3sb-hr-pr-m-htht "Those seven spirits are … Flame-faced-coming-out-backwards" in: Urk. V 43,11.} \]

⁵ About the positive and negative aspect of Seth, see Turner, Seth - A Misrepresented God in the Ancient Egyptian Pantheon? See BD spell 40 where its vignette shows the deceased spearing a snake which swallows an ass. The donkey-swallower of the title (r n b5f n m 3) presumably evokes the general notion of enemy of order, by the redoubled evil of a consumer of the impure. The strident braying links donkeys with Seth, god of disorder. Quirke, Going out in Daylight prt m hrw 116; Vandenbeusch, Sur les pas de l’âne dans la religion égyptienne, chapter 11.

- 41 - | REMARKS ON THE GODS 3sb(w), AND 3hb(w)
Beihefte 18 (2016), where the author provides in chapters 5 into, and who is not content with being a crocodile, as he transformed himself at one time a bull, at could remove the impurity away through the dread he obtained from the god Horus:

“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 thighs 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 \(\dot{3}sb\)\(^7\), could remove the impurity away through the dread he obtained from the god Horus:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ss.p.i nhd}^8 \text{ imy-}^c Hr \text{ hsf}^\text{bw} \text{ im.f (…) ink rs-hr s3 } \dot{3}sb^9 \text{ wr}
\end{array}
\]

“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 \(\dot{3}sb\) the great”.\(^10\)

Furthermore, \(\dot{3}sb\) is one of the guards protecting the paths on which the deceased walks:

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\(^1\) In other versions \(k\dot{s}sw\) and \(n\dot{t}wrt\) have a superfluous suffix, see: \(FAE\text{CT} I 180.\ n. 4.\)

\(^2\) In other versions \(N\dot{d}wt\) may well be a miswriting of \(n\dot{t}wrt\ ‘bonds’, see: \(FAE\text{CT} I 180.\ n. 5.\)

\(^3\) \(CT\ II 260.\ a, d, g, 261c\ (P. \text{Gard II})\)

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

\(^5\) Cf. \(BD 69:\ \text{ink } \dot{3}sb \text{ sn } \dot{3}sb \text{ sn } W\dot{s}ir \text{ sn } \dot{3}st \ “I am the burning one, brother of the burning one; I am Osiris, brother of Isis” in: Quirke, \textit{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 \(dvn-ht\), 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, \(\textit{GM}\ 31, 27-34.\ \); Another Hymns to Sobek see: Gardiner, \(\textit{RdE}\ 11, 43-56.\)

\(^7\) The deceased is identified once again in an almost obscure text as a son of \(\dot{3}sb:\ \text{hprw } m \ \text{\(\dot{s}\)w ink w\(\dot{y}\f\) s\(\dot{t}\) \(\dot{3}sb\ \dot{S}w\ “\text{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 \(\text{\(sdj\), see: \(FAE\text{CT} II 209.\ n. 16.\ \)} About \(nhd\ see: \text{\(K\dot{h}\text{hler, \(SAK,\ Beihefte 18 (2016), where the author provides in chapters 5-6 an in-depth analysis of the semantic field \textit{”Wur” in Egyptian linguistics.}\)}

\(^9\) Cf. \(BD 69.\)

\(^10\) \(CT\ VII 215 b-e.\)
his role from the service of the living, the embalmer knowledge is necessary to ensure free passage to the deceased: Netherworld, whose keeper, guard, and reporter the deceased must know. This the paths but as well the reporter of the second gate represented in spells 144 and 147 might have linked with the ceremony o

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:

rnyt 2 (...) 3bs 
“Second gate (...) Burning-3bs is the name of the reporter in it”.

rnyt 2 (...) rnyt 3sm n smi im.s Wsd 
“Second gate (...) the name of the reporter in it is the god-Wsd”.  

Another function ascribed to the god 3sb is evident from the spells intended to help the dead escaping from the net. The wdpw-ntr ‘butler/servitor of the god’, 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:

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1 Translation suggested by Faulkner, but the word is not attested in the Wh. 
2 Other variants are here attested: 3bl. 3bs. 
3 4999c-i. 
4 It is a variant of the god’s name 3sb, see LGG I 79. 
5 BD 144: Quirke, Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, 324. 
6 For a variant see: LGG I, 79. 
7 BD 147: Quirke, Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw, 351. 
8 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.  
9 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-wdp who might have linked with the ceremony of water-pouring; Gardiner, JEA 24 (1938), 85; Simonet, CiE LXII (1987); cf. Gad, Journal of historical & Archaeological Studies. Faculty of Arts, Menufiah University, (2009) 1-20. 

- 43 - | REMARKS ON THE GODS 3sb(t/w), AND 3lb(t/w)
“Such is the man who receives the fish from you; it is 3sb, the servitor of the gods”.\(^2\)

This function of 3sb could be linked to that of 3sbw discussed below.

**II-The goddess 3sbt ‘The Burning Lady’**

As stated above, only the goddess 3sbt appeared previously in the Old Kingdom *Pyramid Texts*. the deceased who mentioned above in the *CT* III 260d, is on one hand, the brother of the goddess 3sbt: *ink 3sb sn n 3sbt “I am the burning one, brother of the burning Lady”;\(^3\) but on the other hand he introduces himself to 3sbt, Isis, and Nephthys as a son to all three of them:

\[ N \ pw \ 3st \ N \ pw \ 3sbt \ N \ pw \ Nbt-ht \ my \ m3.\ t \ s3.\ t \]

“Here am I, O Isis; here am I, O 3sb; here am I, O Nephthys. Come that you may see your son”.\(^4\)

Consequently, the role of the goddess 3sbt does not correspond to that of the god 3sb.

**III-The god 3hb ‘The Swallower’\(^5\)**

Apart from that his name means the ‘swallower’, the god 3hb acts positively towards the deceased. In one of the spells recited to assert the deceased’s refusal to eat faeces, to drink urine, or to go upside down as it is his detestation;\(^6\) the deceased gives here his reason: He is the Great One Wr, and the one to whom the god 3hb – as a son of Ishnn – offered nine meals from the magazine of the god Osiris:


\(^1\) In SIC it is written as 3\(\text{šb}\).\(^2\) *CT* VI 32d.
\(^3\) See above, n. 14.
\(^4\) *PT* 556a here 3sb. is connected with Athribis and the White Crown, see Wilson, Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu. Part I 42
\(^6\) Walking upside down 3\(\text{šdhw}\) is one of the punishments carried upon the enemies. See the six pits filled filled with fire in which the enemies of Osiris are burned, the sixth of which contains the inverted figures represented in the 11\(\text{th}\) hour of the Book of Amduat: Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. 344.
This function of the god 3ḥb is evident in a text that comes from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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 3ḥby \(\text{\textcopyright} n\text{\textregistered} \) with a star in his lap.\(^4\) The text above is for all the deities represented in the 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’.\(^7\)

\textbf{IV-The goddess 3ḥbyt ‘the Swallower lady’}

The 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} 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. 3ḥbyt is repelling the enemies and removing the obstacles away from him:

\begin{equation*}
\text{dd- mdw in NN ... ind hr.t i.n Hr sbht 14 nt wrd-ib ir n.i wāt lw.i rḥ tn rḥ.kwi rn.t rḥ.kwi rn n nty m-حنw.t wr(t) bįw dšrt gṃhw.t Tǐḥbyt pr(t) m ḥ3wy dr(t) sbyw m kmḥ.f nty ddw ṣwy.s n wrd-ib}
\end{equation*}

\(^1\) Faulkner has transliterated .thumbnail as 3ḥhhb depending on the following sp-sn sign, see: Faulkner, AECT 1, 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 3ḥb(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 3ḥb.

\(^2\) For this god who is once mentioned, the reading is not certain as Barguet thinks that ‘is’ 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 3ḥb not 3ḥbyt 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). 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, 3hbyt, who comes forth by night and repels the rebels away from his form, who gives her two arms to the weary-hearted (god).”

V- The gods 3sbw ‘The Burning Ones’

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 3sbw 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.

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

\[wh\textsuperscript{5}w \ h\textsuperscript{3}mw \ 3sbw\textsuperscript{6} \ lpw \ tpw-\textsuperscript{5} \ 3sbw \ ts-phr\]

“The fishermen who catch fish are the swallowers - 3sbw who are before the burning ones - 3sbw and vice versa.”

In another text, the 3sbw together with the 3hbw become the most primeval of the gods:

\[N-\text{ntt} \ N \ pn \ rt \ rn \ n \ wh\textsuperscript{5}w \ h\textsuperscript{3}mw \ sy \ 3hbw \ 3sbw \ pw \ p\text{wtrw} - ntrw\textsuperscript{8}\]

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1 About Wrd-ib see: LGG II 512; Wirz, Tod und Vergänglichkeit, 24-32.
2 Budge. The Book of the Dead II, chap. CXLV, 232 (Lepsius, Th, 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, pr\text{t 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 3sbw and 3hbw.
4 See Gad, ASAE 86 (2015) 179-209
5 T\text{dt} and Th\text{t}-\text{t3} nets and the T ss\text{wt} and D\text{sf} fish-traps are names mentioned in this spell.
6 3hbw is a variant of 3hbw.
7 CT VI 39u.
8 It is mentioned in LGG III 22 that P\text{wtrw-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 swallowers (who are with) the burning ones, the most primeval of the gods”.

In the same context, a part of the net, with which the fishers catch, is identified with the $Asbw$:

$nwh\ pw\ h3mw.fn\ 3sbw\ pw$

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

**VI- The gods $3hbw$ ‘The Swallowers’**

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

$Tw\ N\ pn\ rh\ rn\ n\ whw\ h3mw\ sy\ 3krw\ pw\ pw$ $tpyw-\ 3hbw$

“This N knows the name of the fowlers who fish using it; they are $3krw$, who are before the $3hbw$”.

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

$whw\ h3mw\ sy\ 3sbw\ pw\ tpyw-3krw$

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

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

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1 CT VI 24 g-i.
2 CT VI 32 K-L.
3 Superfluous.
4 Faulkner saw in $3hbw$ 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 $rh.kwi\ rn\ n\ whw\ h3m\ sy\ 3krw\ pw\ tpyw-3hbw$ “I know the name of the trappers fishing with it: it is ancestral earth-gods of $3hbw$-gods”, in: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, prt m $krw$, 379.
7 CT VI 39 c. cf. CT VI 44r.
8 CT VI 24 g-i.
The writing of the names acted as an evidence to the function those gods played and where they are first acknowledged. The orthographical variants:

Except for the goddess CT, were first attested in Old Kingdom, who first appeared in Middle Kingdom, with many orthographical variants: 3sb with the brazier with rising flame, or

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.

The writing of the names acted as an evidence to the function those gods played and hinted at the roles they play later. 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, or with

1 The htyw-3β, 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 3β-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; 3b; 25n
2 CT VI 36 c-e. Faulkner, AECT II p. 119.
3 Cf. n. 40, 41 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 आ, आ; सभ with no determinative, and वसद with a knife determinative. 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 झ, who is attested at different periods, remains the same; he is positive, protecting the deceased thanks to his power. Contrary to झ, the positive aspect of झ्ब concerning the deceased seems to be changed over time. In the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus, the nature of झ्ब underwent an alteration, that she became a new more active protectress, able to destroy the enemies, those who threatened the king or the gods.

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

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

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 3hbt – attested as well up to Greco-Roman period - does not change over time. 7 Both 3sbt and 3hbt 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 3sbyt and 3hbt, 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, 3sbyt, and 3hbt, 3hbt, 3hbt, 3hbt) 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

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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: 3sbyt(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: MéI. 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: Altenmuller, Synkretismus, 176-179.
5 LGG V 77f; about Hathor in the Coffin Texts see: Altenmuller, Synkretismus, 132-136.
6 LGG II 271; about Wadjet in the Coffin Texts see: Altenmuller, Synkretismus, 35-36.
7 See, LGG I 60: he is the god who protects the king from the one who is in his phyle int-y3.sf (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 \( \textit{Asb} \) has to do with fishing, a function that is considered negative by the gods \( \textit{Asbw} \).

The gods \( \textit{Asb} \) and \( \textit{Asbt} \), both play a positive role, as \( \textit{Asb} \) and \( \textit{Asbt} \). \( \textit{Asb} \) provides the deceased with meals, and \( \textit{Asbt} \) repels the rebels away from the god Osiris. The gods \( \textit{Asbw} \) in contrast to \( \textit{Asb} \) and \( \textit{Asbt} \), are considered to be dangerous. They together, with either \( \textit{Asbw} \) or \( \textit{Askhw} \), functioned as the fishers who used nets and traps to catch the dead while going to the Netherworld.

The gods in singular form \( \textit{Asb}, \textit{Asbt}, \textit{Asb}, \) and \( \textit{Asbt}, \) hold functions that are all different except for their positive aspect. However, the gods with a plural form \( \textit{Asbw} \) and \( \textit{Asbw} \), hold negative functions analogous to that of the gods \( \textit{Askhw} \); 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.
REMARKS ON THE GODS

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.