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### Female Family of Amenemhat II

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# Hommages à Fayza Haikal

Extrait



**INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE**

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## The Female Family of Amenemhat II: A Review of the Evidence

SCHOLARLY disagreement continues over which women were wives or daughters of King Amenemhat II of the Twelfth Dynasty. Schmitz lists six daughters of Amenemhat II in her 1976 study of the titles *s3-nsw*, "king's son", and *s3t-nsw*, "king's daughter".<sup>1</sup> Troy, in her 1986 work on queenship, lists six slightly different women as daughters of this king, and two women as his queens.<sup>2</sup> Most recently in her study of the sculpture from the reign of this king, Fay considered evidence for ten possible daughters and three possible wives of Amenemhat II, but concluded that only four of the women could have been daughters, while there is no clear evidence for a queen.<sup>3</sup> I agree with her conclusion about the lack of clear evidence for a queen of Amenemhat II, but will review the evidence below. I disagree with some of the women accepted or eliminated as daughters of Amenemhat II by Fay, and five of them will be discussed below in some detail.

There are several problems in working with the evidence for these royal women. On the one hand, it involves grappling with royal female titulary for the Middle Kingdom, a complicated subject since the titularies of the queen and the princess were not clearly distinguished in the Middle Kingdom, as they had been in the Old Kingdom. On the other hand, it is difficult to establish dates for the burials within the pyramid precinct of King Amenemhat II, and this ties into the dating of secondary burials in Middle Kingdom pyramid precincts in general, another far from clear-cut subject.

### THE EVIDENCE FOR QUEENS

A woman named *Km.j-(m)-nwb*, whose tomb was found in the precinct of the pyramid of Amenemhat II at Dahshur, traditionally has been accepted as his queen. Her tomb was one of three double tombs found on the western side of the pyramid. A north-south corridor led to two burial chambers set off on the west side. The first burial chamber

<sup>1</sup> B. SCHMITZ, *Untersuchungen zum Titel s3-njswt*, Bonn, 1976, pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup> L. TROY, *Patterns of Queenship*, Uppsala, 1986, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> B. FAY, *The Louvre Sphinx and Royal Sculpture from the Reign of Amenemhat II*, Mainz, 1996, p. 43-49.

belonged to an official named *Jmn-ḥtp*, and the second to *Km.j-(m)-nwb*.<sup>4</sup> Only wooden coffin fragments were discovered in her burial chamber, one of which names:

*Ḥmt-nsw Km.j-(m)-nwb*

The king's wife, *Km.j-(m)-nwb*.<sup>5</sup>

The owls, quail chicks, and cobras in the hieroglyphic text on her coffin fragments have been cut off at the legs. Snakes and birds in the inscriptions found in the other burial chamber belonging to *Jmn-ḥtp* also have truncated bodies. Such birds without legs are common in inscriptions from the end of the Twelfth Dynasty, and these truncated signs were first inscribed on the burial equipment of *Nfrw-Pth*, daughter of King Amenemhat III.<sup>6</sup> Based on the use of these signs, the burial of *Km.j-(m)-nwb* should be dated much later than the reign of Amenemhat II, removing her as a possible queen.<sup>7</sup> The name *Km.j-(m)-nwb* also fits a Second Intermediate Period pattern: it uses the element *nwb*, such as the queens' names *Nwb-m-ḥꜣt*, *Nwb-ḥtp.ty*, and *Nwb-ḥꜣs*, all of whom belong to that time period.<sup>8</sup>

Another woman named *Nfrw* has been suggested as daughter of King Senusret I and wife of King Amenemhat II.<sup>9</sup> This *Nfrw* is mentioned in an inscription at Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai, associated with a statue of King Amenemhat I and two statues of King Senusret I.<sup>10</sup> Her titles are given as:

*Snt.f jryt-pꜣt Ḥmt-nsw*

His sister, hereditary noblewoman, king's wife.

*Nfrw* is surely the daughter of Amenemhat I and sister/wife of Senusret I, named on monument fragments from Lisht, and mentioned in the Story of Sinuhe.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this particular *Nfrw* is not connected with the reign of King Amenemhat II.

<sup>4</sup> See the plan given by J. DE MORGAN, *Fouilles à Dahchour en 1894-1895*, Vienna, 1903, p. 69, fig. 112.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71, fig. 116.

<sup>6</sup> N. FARAG, Z. ISKANDER, *The Discovery of Neferwptah*, Cairo, 1971, p. 55. See H.G. FISCHER, "Archaeological Aspects of Epigraphy and Paleography", *Ancient Egyptian Epigraphy and Paleography*, MMA, 1976, p. 32, n. 19.

<sup>7</sup> A later dating has already been suggested by Chr. LILYQUIST, *Ancient Egyptian Mirrors from the Earliest Times through the Middle Kingdom*, MÄS 27, München, Berlin, 1979, p. 32, n. 368; and P. JANÓSI, "Kemlnub-eine Gemahlin Amenemhats II?", *Zwischen den beiden Ewigkeiten, Festschrift Thausing*, Vienna, 1994, p. 94-101. Although, if *Km.j-(m)-nwb* had a 50 year plus life span, it would have been possible for her to have been queen within the last ten years of the reign of Amenemhat II, and lived into the latter part of the reign of Amenemhat III.

<sup>8</sup> See L.K. SABBAAHY, *The Development of the Titulary and Iconography of the Ancient Egyptian Queen from Dynasty*

*One to Early Dynasty Eighteen*, Univ. of Toronto, unpublished dissertation, 1982, p. 389.

<sup>9</sup> L. TROY, *op. cit.*, p. 158, 12.11, Neferu V.

<sup>10</sup> A. GARDINER, T.E. PEET, J. ČERNÝ, *The Inscriptions of Sinai I*, EES, 1953, p. 71, pl. XXI.

<sup>11</sup> W. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt I*, MMA, 1968, p. 176. stone fragments from a shaft at Lisht name her king's daughter. Fragmentary basin MMA 34.1.10 preserves portions of only two titles of *Nfrw*, *ḥnwt ḥmwt nbwt* and *Ḥmt nsw*. W. Hayes (*ibid.*, p. 194) restores the title *Ḥmt-nsw wrt*, "king's great wife", a title not known until the Second Intermediate Period. Cf. B. SCHMITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 190-191; who apparently transliterates *Nfrw*'s titulary back into Middle Egyptian from Hayes's English. Now see D. ARNOLD, *The Pyramid Complex of Senusret I*, MMA, 1992, pl. 70, for the offering stand fragments, and other fragments with the name of *Nfrw*, *ibid.*, p. 58-59. For the Story of Sinuhe, refer to A. BLACKMAN, *Middle Egyptian Stories*, BtAeg 2, Bruxelles, 1972, p. 2.

On the basis of a cylinder seal inscription, Brunner has suggested that a woman named *K3-nfrw* may have been a wife of King Amenemhat II.<sup>12</sup> The seal reads:

*Hnwt hmwt nbwt K3-nfrw Nwb-k3w-R*<sup>13</sup>

Mistress of all the wives, *K3-nfrw*, King Amenemhat II.

In the early Twelfth Dynasty, *hnwt hmwt nbwt* was not an exclusively royal title, as it was held by *S3t-jp*, the wife of the nomarch Khnum-hotep at Beni Hasan.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear from this title, therefore, that *K3-nfrw* was a royal woman, and if so, a queen or a princess.<sup>15</sup> Brunner does bring up the possibility that she was a daughter of King Amenemhat II.<sup>16</sup>

## THE EVIDENCE FOR PRINCESSES

Women with the title *s3t-nsw*, "king's daughter", were buried in two other double tombs on the west side of King Amenemhat II's pyramid. In a tomb virtually identical with, and located parallel to, the tomb of Queen *Km.j-(m)-nwb*, the burials of *S3t-mry-Hwt-Hr* and *Jt-wrt* were discovered. The coffin and canopic chest belonging to *S3t-mry-Hwt-Hr* only give her name and no titles. Even so, de Morgan called her a princess, and others have followed this.<sup>17</sup>

The inscriptions on the coffin and canopic chest of *Jt-wrt* give her the title *s3t-nsw*, "king's daughter", and *s3t-nsw Hnmt-nfr-hdt tn*, "king's daughter and this She-who-is-joined-to-the-White-Crown". Two monuments from the reign of Amenemhat II also bear the titles *s3t-nsw Hnmt-nfr-hdt*, a cylinder seal,<sup>18</sup> and a broken seated statue.<sup>19</sup> Fay accepts *Hnmt-nfr-hdt* as a name, and lists a Princess Khnemmet-nefer-hedjet as daughter of Amenemhat II.<sup>20</sup> I have suggested previously that *hnmt-nfr-hdt* was a title, not a name, and was held by only one queen and one princess at a time.<sup>21</sup> When the proper name of the royal woman was unimportant or superfluous, the title could be used by itself.<sup>22</sup> The cylinder seal and the broken seated statue should then be assigned to *Jt-wrt*,<sup>23</sup> or the princess *Hnmt* who will be discussed just below.

In the third double tomb in the pyramid precinct of King Amenemhat II, north of the other two tombs, were buried *Hnmt* and *Jt*. The inscription on the sarcophagus of each

<sup>12</sup> H. BRUNNER, "Eine neue königlichen Frau der 12. Dynastie", ZÄS 115, 1988, p. 171-173.

<sup>13</sup> Name in a cartouche.

<sup>14</sup> P.E. NEWBERRY, *Beni Hasan I*, London, 1893, pl. XLVI.

<sup>15</sup> H. BRUNNER, *op. cit.*, p. 173. This would be like the cylinder seal with the titles *s3t-nsw hnmt-nfr-hdt* discussed below, see note 20.

<sup>16</sup> H. BRUNNER, *loc. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> J. DE MORGAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74. B. SCHMITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 193, admits *S3t-mry-Hwt-Hr* holds no title, but still lists her as a princess. L. TROY, *op. cit.*, p. 158, 12.12, lists her with the title *s3t-nsw*.

<sup>18</sup> O. PERDU, "Khenemet-nefer-hedjet: une princesse et deux reines du Moyen Empire", RdE 29, 1977, fig. 1.

<sup>19</sup> F.-A.C. SCHAEFFER, *Syria* 13, 1932, pl. XIV, 1.

<sup>20</sup> B. Fay (*op. cit.*, p. 46) does not identify this princess with the one named on the broken seated statue, which she wants to date later in the reign of King Amenemhat III.

<sup>21</sup> L.K. SABBAGH, "Comments on the Title *hnmt-nfr-hdt*", SAK 23, 1996, pp. 349-352.

<sup>22</sup> In this way it is similar to the use of the title *wrt hts* in the Old Kingdom (*ibid.*, p. 351).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

woman names her *s3t-nsw*, "king's daughter".<sup>24</sup> *Hnmt* is also named *s3t-nsw Hnmt-nfr-hdt tn*, "king's daughter and this She-who-is-joined-to-the-White-Crown", and *Hnmt-nfr-hdt tn*, "this She-who-is-joined-to-White-Crown" on her canopic box.<sup>25</sup>

Because a stela naming the king's son *Jmn-m-h3t-nh* was re-used as a paving stone in this double tomb, Williams redated the tomb later to the Thirteenth Dynasty, along with his similar redating of the tomb of *Snb.tysy* at Lisht: "the reuse of the stela as paving should sever Khemet and Ita from any direct connection with Amenemhat II".<sup>26</sup>

Because the tomb construction and grave goods of *S3t-mry-Hwt-Hr* and *It-wrt* were similar to those of *Hnmt* and *It*, Williams also dates their tomb later to the Thirteenth Dynasty as well. His redating was not universally accepted,<sup>27</sup> and most scholars have returned to a late Twelfth Dynasty date for the tomb of *Snb.tysy* at Lisht and the two double tombs of princesses at Dahshur.<sup>28</sup>

Fay accepts a date of the latter part of the Twelfth Dynasty for these two double tombs at Dahshur,<sup>29</sup> and because of the time range involved, eliminates these women as possible daughters of King Amenemhat II. "Although daughters of Amenemhat II might certainly have outlived their father to have been buried near his pyramid at a later date, the length of time involved here, makes this unlikely".<sup>30</sup>

What exactly constitutes the "latter part of the Twelfth Dynasty", and what is the length of time between the reign of Amenemhat II and the "latter part of the Twelfth Dynasty"? The period from the death of Amenemhat II to the ascension of Amenemhat III is roughly 48 years.<sup>31</sup> If these women were born during the period of the last ten years of the reign of Amenemhat II, for example, and they lived an average ancient Egyptian life span of about thirty-five years,<sup>32</sup> they would easily have lived into the period of the last years of King Senusret III. Couldn't this be considered "latter part of the Twelfth Dynasty"? If these women lived to the age of fifty years, something ten percent of the ancient Egyptian

<sup>24</sup> *Hnmt* is given the title *s3t-nsw* once in the inscription on the coffin, de Morgan (*op. cit.*, p. 58) and *It* is given the title *s3t-nsw* twice, but not in connection with her name (*ibid.*, p. 47).

<sup>25</sup> This occurrence of *hnmt-nfr-hdt* was erroneously left out of Sabbahy (*loc. cit.*).

<sup>26</sup> B. WILLIAMS, "The Date of Senebtisi at Lisht and the Chronology of Major Groups and Deposits of the Middle Kingdom", *Serapis* 3, 1975-1976, p. 43.

<sup>27</sup> The redating was initially questioned by Chr. LILYQUIST, "A Note on the Date of Senebtisi and other Middle Kingdom Groups", *Serapis* 5, 1979, p. 27-29.

<sup>28</sup> A. DODSON ("The Tombs of the Kings of the Thirteenth Dynasty in the Memphite Necropolis", *ZÄS* 114, 1987, p. 42) originally accepted the later dating of *Snb.tysy* and the double tomb of *Hnmt* and *It*. He has since changed his mind (see A. DODSON, "The Tombs of the

Queens of the Middle Kingdom", *ZÄS* 115, 1988, p. 131). Based on the ceramic evidence, as well as the coffin lid style, J. Hoffmeier ("The Coffins of the Middle Kingdom: The Residence and the Regions", *Middle Kingdom Studies*, 1991, p. 73) suggests a Twelfth Dynasty date for *Snb.tysy*. The date of the double princess tombs at Dahshur would move back into the Twelfth Dynasty as well.

<sup>29</sup> B. FAY, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Following the chronology given in J. BAINES, J. MÁLEK, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1980, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> J. NUNN, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, (London), 1996, p. 22: "The arithmetic mean age at death was thirty for the Predynastic period and thirty-six for the Dynastic period."



population achieved,<sup>33</sup> they could have died at a time well into the reign of King Amenemhat III, certainly 'latter part of the Twelfth Dynasty'.

Schmitz made the interesting observation, which I think is supported by the evidence, that Middle Kingdom princesses, if they did not marry and become queens, did not marry.<sup>34</sup> If women live through their childbearing years, they outlive males. Throughout the world, even in undeveloped countries, female life expectancy on the average is higher than that for males.<sup>35</sup> We could theorize long-lived spinster daughters of King Amenemhat II, dying long after the end of their father's reign, and being buried in his complex.

There are two identical seated statues of the royal woman *Nfrt* in the Cairo Museum. One of the statues preserves her full titulary.<sup>36</sup> Schmitz and Fay accept *Nfrt* as daughter of King Amenemhat II and wife of King Senusret II. Her titles are: *jryt-p't*, "hereditary noblewoman",<sup>37</sup> *wrt hts*, "great of affection", and *wrt hst*, "great of praise",<sup>38</sup> *smjyt mryt Nbty*, "beloved-one-who-joins-the-Two-Crowns",<sup>39</sup> and variation *smjyt mryt H'-hpr-R'*, "beloved-one-who-joins-King Senusret II", *hnwt Lwy*, "mistress of the two lands",<sup>40</sup> *hnwt hmwt nbwt*, "mistress of all the wives",<sup>41</sup> *syt-nsw*, "king's daughter", and *syt-nsw nt ht.f*, "king's own physical daughter".

No title in *Nfrt*'s titulary shows without a doubt that *Nfrt* is a queen, rather than a princess. She is not called *hmt-nsw*, "king's wife", but she does have titles like *wrt hts* and *wrt hst*, which belonged to queens in the Old Kingdom. In fact, except for *hmt-nsw*, "king's wife", there is no other title which conclusively identifies a queen in the Twelfth Dynasty, and the inability to distinguish between a queen and a princess by titulary is a major problem in dealing with the titles of royal women in the Twelfth Dynasty. These queens and princesses share the same royal insignia, as well, and the lack of distinct symbols belonging just to the queen is the most dramatic change seen in royal female status since the Old Kingdom.

In the Old Kingdom, the titles of a queen and princess are always readily distinguishable. Even with a fragmentary titulary there is no confusion between the two. In the Twelfth Dynasty, however, some royal women have a "mixed titulary" in which they are called *syt-nsw*, "king's daughter", but then also use titles which in the Old Kingdom belonged to a queen. The institution of co-regency would explain this confusion in titulary, especially if

<sup>33</sup> R.M. JANSSEN, J.J. JANSSEN, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1996, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> B. SCHMITZ, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>35</sup> R. JURMAIN *et al.*, *Introduction to Physical Anthropology*, Belmont, 2000, p. 463.

<sup>36</sup> L. BORCHARDT, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten II*, CGC, Berlin, 1925, p. 1-2, n° 381; and p. 2, n° 382. For n° 382, see also W.M.F. PETRIE, *Tanis II*, EEF, London, 1888, pl. XI, n° 171.

<sup>37</sup> A standard title of queens in the Middle Kingdom first used by three queens of Pepi II in the Old Kingdom.

<sup>38</sup> Standard titles of the queen in the Old Kingdom.

<sup>39</sup> This is the only time that this particular title appears in the Twelfth Dynasty; it has not been used since the reign of Pepy II in the Sixth Dynasty. The Old Kingdom examples of the title were written *Smjyt mry Nbty*, not *mryt*, so that *mry* referred to the king. H.G. FISCHER ("Nbty in Old Kingdom Titles and Names", *JEA* 60, 1974, p. 99) has suggested that *nbty* at this point refers specifically to the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt.

<sup>40</sup> There are few other examples of this title from the Middle Kingdom, but it becomes a popular queen's title by the New Kingdom.

<sup>41</sup> See note 13 above.

we accept brother-sister or brother-half-sister marriages for the Twelfth Dynasty.<sup>42</sup> I propose that the "mixed titulary", which used the main title *syt-nsw*, "king's daughter", along with queen's titles from the Old Kingdom, distinguished the woman who was wife of the younger co-regent from the older reigning queen of her father. In fact, this "mixed titulary" would express the lesser status of the younger queen.<sup>43</sup> Based on her mixed titulary, *Nfrt* could have been daughter of King Senusret II, and wife of Senusret III.

One woman, *Wrt*, should be added to a list of the probable daughters of King Amenemhat II. From the scarabs incised with the names of Amenemhat II found in the jewelry of Queen *Wrt* at Dahshur, it would appear that she was his daughter.<sup>44</sup>

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

A few points in regard to these royal women and their titulary should be reiterated. *Hnmt-nfr-hdt* is a title, not a name, and any monument carrying the phrase *hnmt-nfr-hdt* should be assigned to a contemporary princess or queen with that title. King Amenemhat II, therefore, did not have any daughters with the name *Hnmt-nfr-hdt*. The four princesses buried in the pyramid precinct of King Amenemhat II at Dahshur, *Syt-mry-Hwt-Hr*, *Jt-wrt*, *Hnmt*, and *Jt* could be daughters who outlived him by perhaps two reigns, explaining why their burials fit a style belonging later in the Twelfth Dynasty.

The royal woman *Nfrt*, represented by two statues in the Cairo Museum, was daughter of King Senusret II, not Amenemhat II, and held the "mixed titulary" used by a woman who was wife of the younger co-regent. This "mixed titulary" is a distinctive feature of royal female titulary which appears only in the Twelfth Dynasty.

<sup>42</sup> See note 33 above.

<sup>43</sup> See a full discussion in L.K. SABBAGH, *The Development of the Titulary*, Excursus, p. 218ff.

<sup>44</sup> See A. OPPENHEIM, "The Jewellery of Queen Weret," *Egyptian Archaeology* 9, 1996, p. 26; and *id.*, "A First Look at recently Discovered 12th Dynasty Royal Jewellery from Dahshur", *KMT* 6/1, 1995, p. 10-11.