


The Social Lives of *mdw-ntr*

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Abstract. This paper explores the discourses surrounding *mdw-ntr* and the contexts in which they appear. Having been translated as both “hieroglyphs” and “god’s words,” it purportedly reveals the Egyptians’ attitude toward this script throughout Egyptian history. By analyzing its attestations from the Old to the New Kingdoms, this paper highlights shifts in discourses surrounding *mdw-ntr*, especially in how it was employed and by whom.

Keywords. Writing, identity, Thoth, Scribes, *hr.j-sšt*, script.

Much ink has been spilled on  *mdw-ntr* and the ancient Egyptian writing system it describes. Standing both for “god’s words” and “hieroglyphs,”¹ the compound noun purportedly reveals the ancient Egyptian attitude toward the hieroglyphic script as inherently potent and divine.² The script and its mysteries are thereby only known to a select few and, above all, to Thoth, whose epithet, Lord of *mdw-ntr*, reflects his role in the script’s genesis.³

However, ink and papyri continuously appear in ancient Egyptian sources as the media for *mdw-ntr*. The Ptolemaic decrees of Memphis (the Rosetta Stone), Alexandria, and other sites refer to their hieroglyphic section as engraved in writing (*zh³.w*) of *mdw-ntr*, while the demotic part is described as done in the writing of letters (*š^c.t*).⁴ Yet, the Demotic, Greek, and Hieroglyphic texts differ in more than just in the nature of their signs, and one would not argue that *š^c.t* is the Egyptian name for its Demotic script. Moreover, no other sources place *mdw-ntr* on stone, and Neferhotep I unrolls a papyrus to read the *mdw-ntr* at the house where papyri are held (*pr-md³.t*), and in the

1 Wb. II, 180–1.

2 See, for example, Goelet 2003; Meeks 2018: 142–145.

3 LGG; Cf. Boylan 1922: 93. More recently, see Stadler 2009.

4 Demotic, *sh-md-ntr* (Lemma ID dm2109; <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/lemma/dm2109> accessed July 7, 2023); Instead of *zh³.w*, one reads *šfd n mdw-ntr*, and other forms in other decrees.

Book of the Dead, one wishes for Thoth to come with a papyrus (*md̥³.t*) of *mdw-n̥tr*.⁵ Since ancient Egyptian papyri bore texts in various scripts, a unique connection to only one of them seems the exception, not the rule.

mdw-n̥tr could, therefore, hardly serve as the ancient Egyptian name for the hieroglyphic script. Untethered to this function, it invites a reconsideration of its significance in ancient Egypt. Previous pursuits have focused on what *mdw-n̥tr* might mean,⁶ but as this paper will show, it is as significant to inquire by whom it was used and how. Through this vantage point, *mdw-n̥tr* appears to shift away from an individual's restricted knowledge and prestige to that which is mostly associated with scribal identity and mediated by Thoth, the divine scribe.

In order to explore *mdw-n̥tr* and its social lives, this investigation will study this compound noun through its occurrences, building on Egyptological dictionaries and lexicons.⁷ This approach is bound to miss relevant aspects, especially when *mdw-n̥tr* is not explicitly mentioned in the text.⁸ Other issues, such as the role of lector priests and Thoth or the nature of rituals and writing, will only be dealt with in a cursory fashion through their relationship to *mdw-n̥tr*.⁹ Nevertheless, this approach invites more care in evoking this term in contexts to which it might be foreign. In addition, as the nature of the evidence changes during the first millennium, and especially in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, these will remain beyond the scope of this investigation.

The sources explored here suggest that *mdw-n̥tr* is inseparable from its circulation. Far from a dictionary entry with a fixed meaning, its significance was continuously shaped by those who employed it. While a few kings were involved in its dissemination, *mdw-n̥tr* was most significant in the self-definitions of men and later groups within the elite, thereby countering expected models of restricted knowledge. Rather than reflecting the nature of hieroglyphs, *mdw-n̥tr* sheds important light on how these men understood themselves and how their thinking changed through centuries of Egyptian history.

1. *Mdw-n̥tr* and the written word

On his round-topped stela, the Overseer of Artisans Irtysen professes his unique skill set and knowledge, among which literacy is clearly indicated:

5 pTurin Museo Egizio 1791, Spell 68, l. 6, Backes 2022 in TLA.

6 Saleh 1969.

7 Hannig 2003, 2006; Meeks 1980, 1981, 1982; Wb., TLA, Ramses Online <http://ramses.ulg.ac.be/>, and LGG.

8 This approach, therefore, differs from that taken by Saleh 1969.

9 Similarly, the paper will not be able to delve into the nature of *mdw* and *n̥tr* in each period, as each deserves its own separate investigation.

jm.j-r'-hmw.tyw zh'.w qs.ty jr.ty=sn dd
jw rh.kw sst' n mdw-ntr
sšm.t-'.w n.w h'b.yt
hq' nb 'pr.n(=i) sw


The Overseer of Artisans, Scribe, and Sculptor Irtyesen (who) says:

I know the secrets of the *mdw-ntr*

The conduct of festive rituals,

All magic—I equipped (myself with) it.¹⁰

The secret knowledge to which Irtyesen is alluding has often been taken to refer to the divine nature of hieroglyphs.¹¹ However, already a century ago, Patrick Boylan challenged whether *mdw-ntr* and hieroglyphs were as closely tied as one assumes:

There is, indeed, no doubt, that “Divine words” often mean “hieroglyphs” in the texts of the late period. But in the texts of the M.K... the “Divine words” seem to be something other than mere script: they are carefully distinguished from the  (= the written sign, script) and seem to be what is conveyed or expressed by the written signs, rather than the signs themselves.¹²

Following Boylan, Abd el-Aziz Saleh reaches similar conclusions regarding the mistranslation of *mdw-ntr*, pointing to the medium that is often evoked and its role in scribal education.¹³ Despite Boylan’s discussion and Saleh’s paper, the translation of *mdw-ntr* as “hieroglyphs” persists. A closer review of the sources shows that, as Boylan notes above, *mdw-ntr* were primarily not signs but words that bore in themselves divine, or creative, efficacy.¹⁴ The Sixth Dynasty nomarch Idu Seneni, for example, evokes such efficacy when describing his state as an akh, a glorified spirit, in the afterlife:

jnk 'h jqr mn'h
jw rh.k(w) sst' nb n mdw-ntr
'h n=f m hr.t-mdw-ntr

I am an excellent and effective akh.

I know all the secrets of the *mdw-ntr*,

which are beneficial for me in the necropolis...¹⁵

10 Louvre C 14, 6–7; See most recently Stauder 2018; Delange 2015.

11 Baines 1990: 9; Bryan 2017: 4.

12 Boylan 1922: 93.

13 Saleh 1969.

14 In a similar fashion, Dimitri Meeks 2018: 143 writes: “L’écrit est étroitement lié à la parole créatrice.”

15 The text literally reads ‘beneficial for him in the necropolis,’ but Idu is clearly referring to himself, and a similar switch from first to third person appears in a similar inscription in the tomb: *jnk 'h jqr rh r=f jw rh.k(w) sst' nb n mdw-ntr 'h n=f m hr.t-ntr*, “I am an excellent Akh who knows his utterance; I know all the secrets of the *mdw-ntr* which are beneficial for him in the necropolis,” cf. Edel 1981: 67, 15–25, Abb. 1 & 4; Strudwick 2005: 188–191; Säve-Söderbergh 1994: 28, 32–33.

Similar notions are called upon in the Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom, in which the deceased declares:

pr=i r p.t m-m ntr.w
jn.t=i whm=i mdw-ntr
hqʹ pw

May I ascend to heaven among the gods,
 May I bring and repeat the *mdw-ntr*.
 It is magic.¹⁶

The spell makes reference to an object associated with the *mdw-ntr*, which the deceased will bring with him. Other attestations of the compound noun similarly refer to the close relationship between *mdw-ntr* and textual objects. An inscription on the Coffin of Djehutynakht from the early Middle Kingdom wishes that every good thing would be done for the deceased according to the writings (*zhʹ.w*) of *mdw-ntr*, which Thoth has made.¹⁷ Similarly, a spell in an Eighteenth Dynasty Book of the Dead tells of Hathor carrying writings of *mdw-ntr*, which it also describes as a papyrus of Thoth.¹⁸ The written aspects of *mdw-ntr* are also explored a millennium later on a Thirtieth Dynasty naos which refers to a papyrus (*šfd*) of *mdw-ntr* alongside a temple-scroll (*ʹr.t n(.t) ḥw.t-ntr*).¹⁹

These connotations of efficacious words, which were written down, seem to fit the context in which the term *mdw-ntr* appears in Irtysen's stela. Knowledge of the hieroglyphic script seems out of place here as the section speaks of rituals and magic. In contrast, it would make perfect sense for him to speak here of his deep understanding of efficacious phrases that allow him to be equipped with magic.

While these aspects of *mdw-ntr* appear throughout Egyptian history, Irtysen's stela is part of this term's changing landscape. The following sections will explore how it was used through its occurrences in the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms.

2. Old Kingdom–First Intermediate Period: High Officials and Lector Priests (27 occurrences)²⁰

mdw-ntr is predominantly a matter of the elite in the Old Kingdom. The phrase first appears in the Fourth Dynasty in non-royal tombs and becomes more prevalent in similar contexts during the

16 CT Spell 473 (CT VI 15d–f); A similar notion appears in Spell 651, see below.

17 CG 28094 (B6C) from El-Bersheh. A similar text can be found on CG 28089 (B12C); BMFA 20.1822-7 (B1Bo); CG 28085 (B3C) and CG 28086 (B4C).

18 pBM EA 10477 (pNu), Spell 68: *jw=s wdʹ=s r jwn.w ḥr zhʹ.w n mdw-ntr mdʹ.t n.t ḏḥwtj*, cf. Backes 2022 in TLA.

19 CG 70021, DZA 24.480.930, cf. Schumacher 1988: 172.

20 Instances in which similar phrases or titles appear in the same tomb or object are counted as one. Only two instances are documented from the First Intermediate Period, continuing trends described here, and they are therefore counted within this section. For the full list of instances, see the Appendix.

Fifth Dynasty. A sole king of the Sixth dynasty inscribes this phrase on the walls of his pyramid.²¹ Otherwise, the term does not reappear in other Pyramid Texts or Old Kingdom royal inscriptions. The rest of the occurrences come from non-royal funerary complexes in contexts that evoke rituals and restricted knowledge.²²

Among the elite, the phrase overwhelmingly appears within the title *hr.j-sšt³-n-mdw-ntr*, “Privy to the secrets of *mdw-ntr*”—in twenty-one of the twenty-seven occurrences of this period.²³ Like many titles of the Old Kingdom, its holder enumerates it alongside a string of similar compounds, rarely revealing much about its meaning, scope, or how and when it was acquired.²⁴ However, the element of *sšt³*, in the title, referring to what is “hidden, concealed,” could speak to one’s access to hidden knowledge and confidential matters, depending on the context.

Kjell Rydström shows that most men bearing these titles had relatively little ties with temples and funerary cults. Therefore, he concludes that *ntr* here refers to the living king and one’s access to the ruler.²⁵ However, about half of the men bearing this title enumerate it immediately after the title *hr.j-ḥ³b.t*, “lector priest,” or in its vicinity.²⁶ Similarly, Khentika of the Sixth Dynasty notes in his mastaba:

pr.[k(w)... š]t³ n mdw-ntr n ḥmw.t hr.j-ḥ³b.t

[I] was equipped...[se]crets of the *mdw-ntr* of the craft of the lector priest.²⁷

Khentika’s mention of the secrets of *mdw-ntr* thus suggests it was understood to be relevant to the realm of ritual texts with which lector priests were engaged. Another inscription of this time makes a similar reference to lector priests and efficacious words:

*jr.t n=f ḥmw.t hr.(j)-ḥ³b(.t) k³.t wt(.j) s³ḥ jn hr.(jw)-ḥ³b(.t) m zh³.w ḥ³(.w) n mdw-ntr sm
mr.w jn rmt*

Making for him the crafts of the lector priesthood, the work of the embalmer, and the transfiguration through the beneficial writings of the *mdw-ntr* and the help of being beloved by the people.²⁸

21 Spell 262 in the Pyramid of Teti reads: *jn wp.wt[yw]=tn jnn.t sw mdw-ntr sj³(r) sw* (PT 333a). A fragment from the Pyramid of Pepi I suggests this version of the spell was also employed there.

22 Cf. Baines 1990.

23 Jones 2000: no. 2281.

24 See, for example, the discussion on *hr.j-sšt³* and whether it is honorific or functional in Baines 1990; Rydström 1994; Beatty 1999.

25 Rydström 1994: 74.

26 Niankhre (Hassan 1943: 151 [5], fig. 108); Ti (Wild 1953: CIII–IV; 1966: CLXX); Iydfefa (Lepsius 1849: II. 101a; Mariette 1889: 133); Mereruka (Sakkarah Expedition 1938: I. 62; II. 159); Rawer (Hassan 1932 [1]: 22–24, pl. XXVIII); Ptahshepses (Verner 1977: no. 30 [34, 146]; 183 [119, 179]) and others.

27 James 1953: 36, pl. 5, I. A5.

28 Mehu’s tomb in Saqqara (Hawass 2002).

Therefore, while many of the men who mention *mdw-ntr* held scribal titles, this phrase seems to be associated in this period more closely with the work of the lector priest. While various men in the Old Kingdom bore the title lector priest, holders of the title *hr.j-sšt³-n-mdw-ntr* rank relatively high and include at least five heads of departments and six viziers, among which one counts Mereruka, Ptahshepses, and Kagemni.²⁹

As John Baines notes, titles built on *hr.j-sšt³* do not reveal what might be secret. They nevertheless make public the fact that one knew it.³⁰ In the case of *mdw-ntr*, men of the higher echelons presented it as a sign of distinction. This view of *mdw-ntr* is unparalleled in the following periods.

3. Middle Kingdom: Thoth and the Afterlife (31 occurrences)³¹

The primary use of *mdw-ntr* in the title “Privy to the secrets of *mdw-ntr*” continues into the Middle Kingdom. Perhaps due to the nature of documentation preserved from this period, only thirteen men are known to carry this title, mainly among the provincial nobility of Assyut and el-Bershah.³² Nevertheless, new ideas regarding *mdw-ntr* started appearing, especially concerning Thoth and scribes.

Among the bearers of the title *hr.j-sšt³-n-mdw-ntr* of this period, one counts the vizier Mentuhotep, one of the most memorable figures of the early Twelfth Dynasty.³³ Another bearer of this title, Ikhernefret, inscribed it on the outer edges of his stela (Berlin 1204), while the main text speaks of a journey he made to Abydos to perform rituals and carry out a festive procession of Osiris’s image between his temple and his tomb.³⁴ Ikhernefret notes that he had all the priests know the ritual of every day and the feasts of the beginning of the seasons. Ikhernefret also notes that he clothed the god in his regalia in his office as *hr.j-sšt³*, “Privy to the secrets,” but the text neither explicates to which of the two *hr.j-sšt³* titles he is referring—“Privy to the secrets of Two Ladies (Nekhet and Wadjet)” or “Privy to the secrets of *mdw-ntr*”—nor that he has specifically either of them in mind.

29 Rydström 1994: 74.

30 Baines 1990: 9.

31 No instances are documented from the Second Intermediate Period.

32 The most comprehensive and up-to-date list can be found in the online database Persons and Names of the Middle Kingdom (title 639; accessed July 7, 2023; <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/3/title/639>).

33 Stela CG 20539 (Lange & Schäfer 1902: vol. I, 51–54, vol. II, 153); The statues he positioned in Karnak, for example, were restored in the Ramesside Period, see Lorand 2016.

34 Schäfer 1904; For translation and bibliography, see Landgrafova and Dils in TLA 2022.

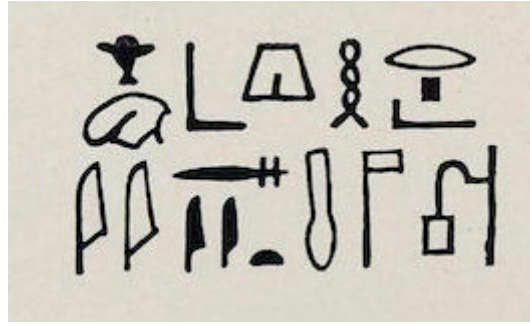


Figure 1: Khety's Rock Inscription with his Title as Scribe of *mdw-nṯr* (Winlock 1947: 38E)

In the Middle Kingdom, *mdw-nṯr* also begins appearing in scribal titles, although in fewer examples. As with *ḥr.j-sšt*, it appears as the title of named individuals in a tomb and in a rock inscription in Wadi el-Shatt el-Rigal (see fig. 1).³⁵ Toward the end of the Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period, the royal stela of Neferhotep I uses this title to describe a group of men rather than a specific person:

ḏd ḥm=f n s'ḥ.w smr.w wnn.yw m-ḥt=f zh'.w m's' n mdw-nṯr ḥr.yw-tp št'.w nb

His Majesty spoke to the dignitaries, the companions, those who are in his following, the true scribes of the *mdw-nṯr* who are upon all secrets.³⁶

Neferhotep I specifically addresses the scribes since he wishes to unroll the scrolls holding the primordial texts of the god Atum in order to know the true forms of the god and the Ennead and to fashion an adequate statue and provide proper offerings. The stela is remarkable for its celebration of royal literacy, but in a similar fashion to the Old Kingdom, it is the sole reference to *mdw-nṯr* in royal inscriptions of this period.

In contrast, the corpus of the Coffin Texts shows a wide spread of spells in which *mdw-nṯr* plays a significant role. For example, Spell 225, an earlier version of the above-mentioned Book of the Dead passage, speaks of Hathor carrying the writings of *mdw-nṯr*. The spell appears on one papyrus and the coffins of thirteen individuals from Assiut, Meir, el-Bersha, and Thebes. Other spells with *mdw-nṯr* come from Gebelein and Qau el-Kebir, such as Spell 351:

r' n rdi.t r' n s n=f m ḥrt-nṯr...

jnk jr.j ' n mdw-nṯr

35 In the tomb of Djefaihapi in Assiut <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/3/inscription/4800>; DZA 24.480.880 (and so does Hannig II.21483) cautiously proposes to read Amenhotep's title on CG 20639 as *zh'.w-mdw-nṯr*, but Simpson, Franke, and Illin-Tomich read it as *zh'.w-md'.t-nṯr*, "scribe of the divine scroll," see PNM (accessed July 7, 2023; <https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/3/inscription/380>).

36 JdE 6307 (Helck 1983: 21); Brose 2023 (in TIA) reads the final epithet as a separate group of men "allen hochrangigen Geheimräten," but the seated man classifier (Gardiner A1) which follows the other groups in this line is missing here according to Mariette's facsimile of the text (Mariette 1880: vol. II. pls. 28–30).

A spell of giving a mouth to a man for him in the necropolis...

(for) I am the keeper of the document of the *mdw-ntr*³⁷

Altogether, spells referring to *mdw-ntr* appear on coffins and other objects of about twenty individuals from five different sites, emphasizing the power of these *mdw-ntr* and the ability of the deceased to harness it, as for example, in Spell 651:

jr rh mdw-ntr pn

wnn=f m p.t hn' R' m-m ntr.w n.t(y)w m p.t

jw di.t(w) n=f m^{3'}-hrw...

As for the one who knows these *mdw-ntr*,

he shall be in heaven with Re among the gods who are in heaven.

Vindication shall be given to him.³⁸

A number of these spells, as well as other inscriptions on coffins and stelae, ascribe the *mdw-ntr* to the god Thoth. A Thirteenth Dynasty stela, for example, describes Thoth as saying good (*nfr*) *mdw-ntr*,³⁹ while the coffin of Iha from el-Bersha wishes for everything good for the deceased according to the writings (*zh'.w*) of *mdw-ntr*, which Thoth has made.⁴⁰

This association of Thoth with this phrase is reflected in a new epithet he acquires in the Middle Kingdom. While *nb-hmn.w*, “Lord of Hermopolis,” accompanies Thoth since the Old Kingdom,⁴¹ the epithet *nb-mdw-ntr* appears only four times in the Middle Kingdom. A scribal statue from Karnak represents its patron seated on the ground reading a papyrus. Unfortunately, the text on the papyrus is badly preserved, with the patron’s name now missing, but the offering formula is still readable. It addresses Amun-Re, Ptah-Sokar, Osiris, and Thoth, with his epithet as Lord of *mdw-ntr*.⁴²

Another reference comes from the Theban tomb of Senet, in a scene that shows a woman offering a mirror and an ointment vessel to Senet, who was buried in the tomb. The woman, who is presenting the offerings, possibly wishes—the text is also here badly preserved—that Thoth, the Lord of *mdw-ntr*, shows favor to Senet (see fig. 3).⁴³ While the statue and Senet’s tomb are dated to the Twelfth Dynasty, a single royal reference to Thoth as Lord of *mdw-ntr* comes from the reign of Sobekhotep I of the Thirteenth Dynasty, a forerunner of its much wider distribution in royal sources of the New Kingdom.⁴⁴

37 The red parts of the text reflect red ink in the original; Following the coffin of Henet from Assiut (S14C; CT IV 386a–389a).

38 CT VI 273d, preserved only on a fragmentary coffin from Gebelein.

39 Stela of Sahi, Rio de Janeiro 644 [2434] (Kitchen 1990: vol. III, pls. 9–10).

40 CG 28089 and see also above.

41 LGG III: 716–718.

42 CG 42040

43 Davies 1920: 26, pl. XXX; Another reference arrives from the tomb chamber of Hesu in Kom el-Hisn, see Silverman 1988: 10: 30, l. 21.

44 Cottevielle-Giraudet 1933: pl. VI.



Figure 2: Scribal Statue with Offering Formula Evoking Thoth, Lord *mdw-nṯr* (CG 42040)

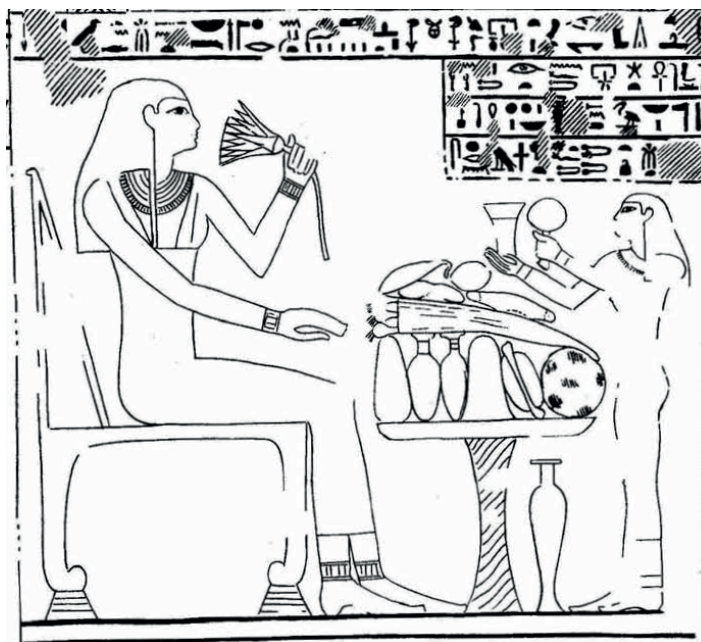


Figure 3: An offering scene naming Thoth Lord of *mdw-nṯr* from the Tomb of Senet (TT 60)

As the nature of preservation differs from one period to another, it is often problematic to point at precise moments of new beginnings. As much as the written evidence allows us to say, earlier trends continue into the Middle Kingdom, but elite people of this period expand their exploration of *mdw-nṯr* and its nature, primarily in the funerary literature. Thoth's significance and epithet become even more prominent in the following period.

4. New Kingdom: Scribal Culture and the Lord of *mdw-nṯr* (80 occurrences and counting)

In more ways than one, there is nothing new in the New Kingdom. This period shares all the elements that were present around *mdw-nṯr* in the Old and Middle Kingdoms: bearers of *ḥr.j-sšṯ-n-mdw-nṯr*, its place in funerary literature (the Book of the Dead), its association with scribes, and Thoth as the Lord of *mdw-nṯr*. However, the composition is almost entirely different, highlighting significant shifts in its place in society.

The title *ḥr.j-sšṯ-n-mdw-nṯr* continues into the New Kingdom, but the Eighteenth Dynasty marks the end of its use. Only two men bear this title: Amenemhat, called Surer, who mentions this title in his tomb and on two statues he commissioned, and Nebmerutef, who includes this title on his two statuettes that show him seated with a papyrus under the watching eye of a baboon, one of Thoth's representations in this period (see fig. 4).⁴⁵

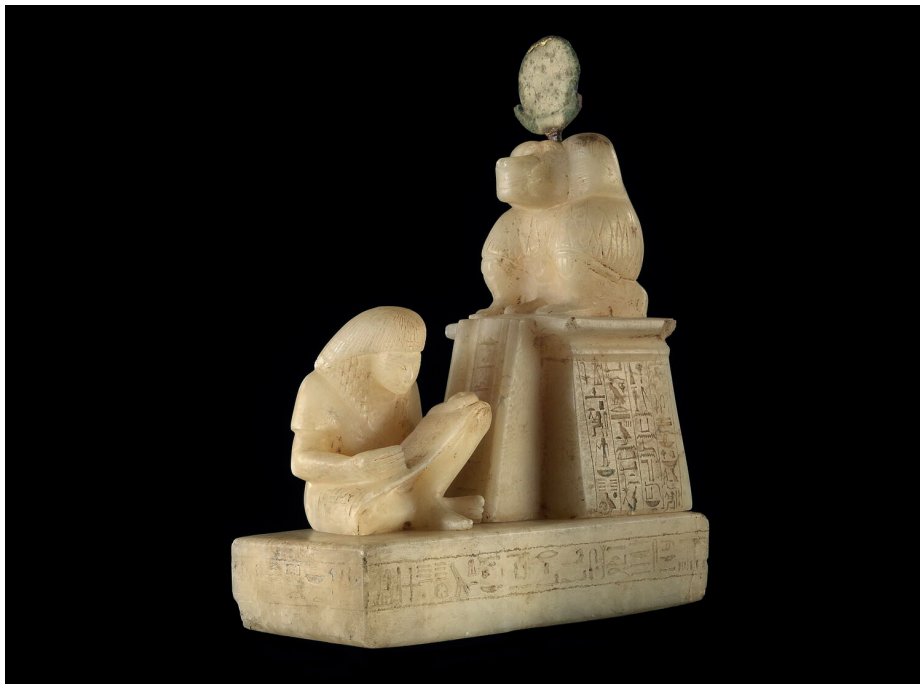


Figure 4: The statuette of Nebmerutef (Louvre E11153)

45 With a variant of *ḥr.j-sšṯ-n-mdw-nṯr*, Louvre A 57; BM EA 123; and the tomb of Amenemhat (Säve-Söderbergh 1957: pls. XLVIII, LX, LXIX, LXXI). On statues of scribes and baboons, see Allon 2013.

Both Amenemhat and Nebmerutef hold scribal titles, but neither associates *mdw-nṯr* with these positions. With the disappearance of the *ḥr.j-sštʿ-n-mdw-nṯr*, no other title incorporating *mdw-nṯr* replaces it. Instead, epithets such as wise (*sšʿ*) or skilled (*spd-ḥr*) in *mdw-nṯr* occur throughout the New Kingdom. Early in the Eighteenth Dynasty, Paheri says:⁴⁶

*j nḥ.w wnn.yw wr.w rmt tp.(y)w-tʿ ḥm.w-nṯr wʿb.w jr.yw=sn zhʿ.w nb šzp gstj šsʿ ḥr m
mdw-nṯr...*

O the living who are great, people upon earth, Hm-priests, wab-priests and theirs, all scribes who receive a palette, who are wise in *mdw-nṯr*⁴⁷

Toward the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, Imiseba similarly says:

*j jtj-nṯr wʿb.w ḥr.yw-ḥʿb.t zhʿ.w nb r{t}<ḥ> mdw-nṯr šsʿ m drf nb
ʿq=sn ḥr sʿ r nḥḥ
ḏd=sn ḥtp di nswt...*

O god's fathers (a priest), wab-priests, lector priests, all scribes who know *mdw-nṯr*, who are skilled in documents,
May they enter (this tomb) until eternity,
saying the offering formula (*ḥtp di nswt*)⁴⁸

A similar embrace of *mdw-nṯr* as pertinent to scribal identity appears in the Late Egyptian Miscellanies, which following Chloé Ragazzoli's analysis, are texts written by scribes, for scribes, about scribes.⁴⁹ In these texts, one is often reproached for abandoning the pursuit of a scribal profession:

*ḏd.tw n=i
ḥʿ=k zhʿ.w
šm=k m ʿb.w
ḥʿ=k ḥʿ=k r mdw-nṯr
rwj=k jʿw.t {w} t[w]y <n> ḏḥwtj
I was told
You have left writing
going after (your) desires
You turned your back on *mdw-nṯr*
You have abandoned this office of Thoth⁵⁰*

Abd el-Aziz Saleh considers such references in the Miscellanies to suggest that *mdw-nṯr* encompass the classic literature—broadly defined—of ancient Egypt since students' training was often “of a

46 Mose, Scribe of the Treasury of Ptah, is an exception to this rule, describing himself as *zhʿ.w [wr] m jʿ.t=f jp jb m mdw-nṯr*, see Gaballa 1977: 19, pl. XLIV.

47 Tomb of Paheri in Elkab (DZA 481.150); On the so-called Appeals to the living, see Salvador 2014.

48 Tomb of Imiseba, TT 65 (DZA 24.481.160; KRI VI: 546).

49 For a comprehensive study, see Ragazzoli 2019.

50 pBM EA10244 (pAnastasi V), lines 6.1–2.

secular nature.”⁵¹ However, he also acknowledges that a clear definition and division of secular and religious seems almost improbable here. On a more positive note, the father in the Teachings of Hori is a role model for bearing *mdw-nṯr* and therefore being in good condition.⁵² Therefore, these epithets seldom describe an individual but rather relate to scribes in the plural and their group identity.

Many objects relating to scribes and writing evoke Thoth in his epithet as *nb mdw-nṯr*. The Eighteenth Dynasty wooden palette of Meryra is inscribed with *ḥtp-di-nswt* formulas on both sides of the slot for pens (see fig. 5). The one on the proper right calls upon Amun-Re while the other one says:

ḥtp di nswt ḏḥwtj nb mdw-nṯr

dī=f rḥ zh³.w pr jm=f wb³-ḥr m mdw-nṯr

n k³ n jr.j-p³.t ḥ³.tj-ᶜ wr m-ḥ³.t šps.w-nswt jm.j-r³-pr wr n nswt mr.y-r³

An offering which the king gives and Thoth, Lord of *mdw-nṯr*

May he grant knowledge of writing that comes forth from him and clear sight in *mdw-nṯr*

for the nobleman, the nomarch, the great one at the head of the king's nobles, Chief Steward Meryre.⁵³



Figure 5: Wooden Palette of Meryra (BM EA5512) © The Trustees of the British Museum

ḥtp-di-nswt formulae are often oriented toward the afterlife and ask for provisions. Here, however, Meryre calls upon Thoth and asks to be knowledgeable in his texts and to receive clear sight or deep understanding in *mdw-nṯr*, which Thoth, as the divine scribe, could help mediate.⁵⁴ This capacity of Thoth comes forth as one of the main reconfigurations of *mdw-nṯr* in the New Kingdom.

51 Saleh 1969.

52 oGardiner 2 (Gardiner & Černý 1957: pls. VI–VIa; Dils 2022 in TLA).

53 Glanville 1932: 55–56.

54 Thoth is sometimes described in the New Kingdom as *zh³.w-m³.t-n-psd.t*, ‘scribe of Maat of the Ennead,’ see for example on the signet ring MMA 26.7.825; see Posener 1963 and Thoth’s role in the Late Egyptian story of Horus of Seth (Gardiner 1932: 37–60; Lichtheim 2006 [1976]: 2: 214–223).

While royal references to *mdw-nṯr* in the Old and Middle Kingdoms amounted to three, the New Kingdom saw a large number of references to this phrase. Almost all of these occurrences refer to Thoth in his epithet as *nb mdw-nṯr*, and in a few cases, the goddess Seshat also receives the female counterpart of this epithet.⁵⁵ With these references to *mdw-nṯr* through Thoth's epithet, its occurrences almost double compared to previous periods, with more than half of them appearing within this epithet. This broader distribution in royal and non-royal texts seemingly suggests a greater appreciation of *mdw-nṯr*, but its limited repertoire calls for a more balanced view. Perhaps it even became more widespread because of its restricted form, which places Thoth as the mediator of *mdw-nṯr*.

Thus, the core connotations of *mdw-nṯr* continues to intersect with knowledge, textuality, and efficacy from the Old to the New Kingdoms. Nevertheless, its distribution within royal and non-royal discourses indicates significant shifts throughout time in how it is employed and by whom.

5. Three Shifts in the Social Lives of *mdw-nṯr*

More than two millennia separate the Roestta stone from Babaef's tomb of the Fourth Dynasty. Both employ the phrase *mdw-nṯr* in their inscriptions, but each does so in a very different fashion that a technical translation as "hieroglyphs" immediately obscures. This large span of time, which includes the periods discussed within the more limited scope of this article, mainly allow us to compare the constellations around *mdw-nṯr* in each period, rendering any attempt to outline developments and shifts highly tentative. Nevertheless, a few trends seem worthwhile to point out, even if very cautiously.

From non-royal to royal: At least at its beginnings, *mdw-nṯr* seem to fall neatly along hierarchies surrounding restricted knowledge, with the higher echelons of society being privy to its secrets.⁵⁶ However, throughout its history, *mdw-nṯr* does not directly draw power from the royal sphere, which is otherwise considered the apogee of restricted knowledge. Kings rarely evoke it in their inscriptions, and they mostly do so in the New Kingdom through Thoth's epithet, which has its roots in non-royal sources of the Middle Kingdom.

From restricted to limited: Alongside the shift from purely non-royal to both royal and non-royal sources for *mdw-nṯr*, the groups within which it circulates seem to change significantly in nature. In the Old Kingdom, viziers and high officials note it in their titles that celebrate its mysterious nature. In contrast, student scribes in the New Kingdom are reproached for abandoning it. What seemed restricted earlier appears to be more widespread in the New Kingdom while still limited—to scribes.

55 LGG III: 654 & LGG IV: 68.

56 Baines 1990.

From personal to group identity: In its growing association with scribes, *mdw-nṯr* ceases to serve as a sign of distinction one presents on tomb walls or stelae. Beginning already in the Middle Kingdom with Neferhotep I's stela and growing much stronger in the New Kingdom, one does not employ *mdw-nṯr* to define oneself but rather to describe the scribal community, whether in appeals to the living or in the community's own texts.

The three shifts seem to be related as *mdw-nṯr* becomes more widespread, less personal, and shared across royal and non-royal discourses in a limited fashion. While many of these shifts come to the fore in the New Kingdom, they seem to be apparent already in the Middle Kingdom when Thoth becomes more central to the notion of *mdw-nṯr* and scribes as well. While the mechanisms motivating these shifts would require further study, the hieroglyphic script and its nature do not seem to be at the heart of it.

Appendix. The Social Lives of *mdw-nṯr*: Sources

a) Old Kingdom–FIP Sources

		Source	Reference
1	It is...the <i>mdw-nṯr</i> that cause him to ascend	The Pyramid Texts of Teti, Spell 262	PT 333c; Allen 2015: T186
2	beneficial writings (<i>zh³.w</i>) of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Mehu	Hawass 2002; Kloth 2002: fig. 3
3	[I] was equipped with... the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Khentika	James 1953: 36, pl. 5, l. A5
4	I know the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Idu Seneni	Edel 1981: vol. 67, figs. 2, 11–12; 4, l. 4–5
5	...according to these writings (<i>zh³.w</i>) of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Desheru	Osing et al. 1982: 28: 24 (no. 14), pls. 3, 57
6	...excellent of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Kagemni	Firth & Gunn 1926: vol. II: pl. 59; <i>Urk.</i> I: 196
7	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> (<i>ḥr.j-sšt³-n-mdw-nṯr</i>)	Tomb of Kagemni	Harpur & Scremin 2006: 513; DZA 29.623.940
8	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Statue Base of Babaef, BMFA 14.1686	Babaef (G 5230, Digital Giza); Sculpture base of Babaef (BMFA Online Collection) ⁵⁷
9	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Niankhre	Hassan 1943: 151 (5), fig. 108
10	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	The tomb of Rahotep	Verner 1994: 304, fig. 9
11	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Netjerweser	Mariette 1889: 166
12	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> ⁵⁸	Tomb of Ankhemakai, Cairo 1485	Mariette 1889: 214

57 Digital Giza <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/ancientpeople/2020/full/>; BMFA Collection Online <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/453676/sculpture-base-of-babaef%26linkname=Sculpture%20base%20of%20Babaef%26linknote=>; This reference and all following ones were accessed July 7, 2023.

58 Ankhemakai also held a similar title adding a suffix: *ḥr.j-sšt³-n-mdw-nṯr=f* (Mariette 1889: 214), similar to Khenu's title (see no. 16)

		Source	Reference
13	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Offering Stand of Zetefka, CG 57048	Abou-Ghazi 1980
14	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Neferseshempepy, called Seneni (= Alexandria National Museum 20) ⁵⁹	Fischer 1968: 119–20; Aman 2018: 51
15	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr=f</i>	Tomb of Khenu	Mariette 1889: 185
16	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ; Privy to the secrets of the hidden words of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Ptahshepses	Verner 1977: no. 30 (34, 146); 183 (119, 179)
17	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Mereruka	Sakkarah Expedition 1938: I. 62, II. 159
18	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ; Privy to the secrets of the hidden writings (<i>zḥʿ.w</i>) of <i>mdw-ntr</i> of the house of books	Cylinder Seal Impressions from the Tomb of Djati (Sahure)	Junker 1944, 72: 233–36, fig. 96 a–b, pl. 39a
19	...who reads the hidden words (<i>mdw</i>) of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Cylinder Seal Impressions from the Tomb of Djati (Sahure)	Junker 1944: 72: 233–336, fig. 96 a–b, pl. 39a
20	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Cylinder Seal Impressions from the Tomb of Djati (Neferirkare)	Junker 1944: 72: 236–38, fig. 97, pl. 39b; Kaplony 1981: 3, pl. 65 (7)
21	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ; Privy to the secrets of the hidden words of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Ti	Wild 1953: CIII–IV; Wild 1966: CLXX
22	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Washtpah, Copenhagen National Museum 5129	Mariette 1889: 270; Fischer 1996: 3: 10, pl. 1
23	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Rawer, JdE 66626	Hassan 1932: [1]: 22–24, pl. XXVIII
24	[Privy] to the secrets of [<i>mdw-ntr</i>] ⁶⁰	Tomb of Idu I	Fischer 1968: 99–100, fig. 16
25	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Iydjefa	Lepsius 1849: II. 101a; Mariette 1889: 133
26	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	False door of Irenakhet, Vienna ÄS 8009	Junker 1928: 64, pl. 2; Digital Giza ⁶¹
27	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ⁶²	Tomb of Mereri, mDundee C9	Petrie 1900: pl. 8

59 Formerly CG 1661=JE 15569.

60 Fischer (1968: 114–16) also suggests correcting Nyibunesut's title "Privy to the secrets of *wḏt-mdw*" to "Privy to the secrets of *mdw-ntr*," comparing it to those of Idu (OK 26, also called Seneni) and Mereri (OK 29) and noting its rarity among nomarchs. One wonders if its rarity does not lead to the contrary conclusion (*Lectio difficilior potior*).

61 <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/objects/45375/full/#details>.

62 Jones includes a reference to the tomb of Neferiretnef under "Privy to the secrets of *mdw-ntr*" (Jones 2000: no. 2281). However, Neferiretnef held similar titles—Privy to the secrets of *wḏt-mdw*, of *nb=f*, and of *ntr=f*—according to Walle's publication, but none that relate to *mdw-ntr* (Walle 1978).

b) Middle Kingdom Sources

		Source	Reference
1	(according to) this decree (<i>wḏ</i>) of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> , which Thoth has made	Tomb of Djehutinakht (el-Bersha, Tomb 10)	Griffith & Newberry 1894: II. 45
2	(according to) these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> , which Thoth has made in the house of scrolls	Coffin of Djehutinakht, BMFA 20.1822–7 (B1Bo, el-Bersha, Tomb 10)	Terrace 1968: pls. 10–11
3	(according to) these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> , which Thoth has made	Coffin of Sathedjhotep, CG 28085 (B3C, el-Bersha)	Lacau 1903–1906: I. 206
4	(according to) these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> , which Thoth has made	Coffin of Kay, CG 28094 (B6C; later inscribed for Djehutinakht, el-Bersha)	Lacau 1903–1906: II. 70
5	(according to) these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Coffin of Ihy, CG 28089 (B12C, el-Bersha)	Lacau 1903–1906: II. 26
6	(Hathor) travels...bearing the writings of Thoth's <i>mdw-nṯr</i> ⁶³	Coffins S2Cb, T1L, T9C, B4C, B2Bo, B4Bo, Y1C, M2NY, B1L, B2L, B1C, S1Cb, T1Be, T2Be, T2L; papyrus Berlin 10482 ⁶⁴	CT spell 225 (CT III 240b–241b)
7	I am (his) keeper of the document of the <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Coffins S14C, K1T	CT spell 351 (CT IV 389a)
8	...reciting this scroll of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Coffin M1C	CT spell 405 (CT V 2101)
9	I will bring and repeat the <i>mdw-nṯr</i> . It is magic.	Coffins B9C, B14C, B1C	CT spell 473 (CT VI 15e)
10	As for him who knows the <i>mdw-nṯr</i> , he shall be in heaven with Re...	Coffin G1T	CT spell 651 (CT VI 273d)
11	It is I who sends (<i>zbi</i>) the <i>mdw-nṯr</i> to the god.	Coffins B3C, B12C, B1Bo, B2Bo, B4Bo, B4L, B9C, B1C, B1L, B2L	CT spell 1067 (CT VII 328a)
12	writing board (<i>'n</i>) of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Coffin of Sen, BM EA30842 (B3L; probably el-Bersha, tomb 11)	Taylor 2010: 65, no. 20
13	That Thoth said to him the good <i>mdw-nṯr</i> is so that he might be vindicated	Stela of Sahi, Rio de Janeiro 644 [2434]	Kitchen 1990: III, pls. 9–10
14	I know the secrets of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Irtysen, Louvre C 14	Stauder 2018: 243; Delange 2015
15	This is the standard of the <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	The Eloquent Peasant (pBerlin P 3023; pBerlin 3025)	Parkinson 2012: 277–278
16	May your Majesty read (<i>mʿ</i>) the <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Neferhotep I, JdE 6307 (Abydos)	Helck 1983: 22

63 A few copies of the spell, such as T1Be and T2L, do not mention Thoth here.

64 A few of these instances are inscribed on the outer and inner coffins of the same owner, e.g. the coffins of Gawa (B1L and B2L) or Mentuhotep (T1Be and T2Be). Similarly, Spell 1067 (MK 13), appears on coffins of Djehutinakht (B1Bo and B2Bo) or Sen (B4L and B3L).

		Source	Reference
17	True scribes of <i>mdw-ntr</i> who are upon all secrets	Stela of Neferhotep I, JdE 6307 (Abydos)	Helck 1983: 21
18	Scribe of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Rock inscription of Khety (Wadi el-Shatt el-Rigal)	Winlock 1947: 69, pl. 38E
19	Scribe of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ⁶⁵	Tomb of Djefaihapi I (Assiut, tomb I)	Griffith, F. L. 1889: pl. 9; Montet 1930: 76
20	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ⁶⁶	Tomb of Djefaihapi I (Assiut, tomb I)	Griffith, F. L. 1889: pls. 1, 9; Khadragy 2007: 49–50
21	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ⁶⁷	Tomb of Imhotep (Lisht)	Allen 2021: 42–43
22	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Sobekaa, BM EA1372 (Thebes)	DZA 24.481.740; BM Online Collection ⁶⁸
23	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Djehutihotep II (el-Bersha 2; Florence 7596, 7597)	Griffith & Newberry 1894: I. pl. 8; De Meyer & Willems 2017: 37–44
24	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Mentuhotep, CG 20539 (Abydos)	Lange & Schäfer 1902: vol. I: 51–54, vol. II: 153
25	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Ikhernefret, Berlin 1204	Schäfer 1904
26	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Khnumhotep II (Beni Hasan 3)	Kanawati & Evans 2014: I: 54, pls. 613a, 132
27	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Statue and stela of Khentikheti, Barracco 11 & Berlin 1191 (Abydos)	Simpson 1974: 20 (ANOC 40), pls. 58–59
28	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Relief fragment	PNM https://pnm.uni-mainz.de/inscription/6322#38370 ⁶⁹
29	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Scribal Statue (CG 42040; JdE 34625)	Legrain 1906: 24, pl. XXV
30	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Antefoker	Davies 1920: pl. XXX
31	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Hesu	Silverman 1988: 10: 30, l. 21
32	(Thoth)...Lord of <i>mdw-ntr</i> ⁷⁰	Medamud, Sobekhotep I's chapel, JdE 56496B	Cottevielle-Giraudet 1933: pl. VI

65 In the literature (Lange & Schäfer 1902: 51–54: 276), it is proposed that the owner of CG 20639 was also a Scribe of *mdw-ntr*. However, the hieroglyphs seem to write *mdj.t-ntr*, as read by Simpson 1974: ANOC 27.

66 It has been suggested that one of Djefihapi II's titles also referred to *mdw-ntr* (DZA 24.480.690), but the sign read as *mdw* has been interpreted elsewhere in varying ways (Griffith 1889: pl. 10; Montet 1930: 88). A recent study of the tomb has suggested it should, instead, be read as *ntr* ʿ, “great god,” (Becker 2012, 84).

67 Arnold 2008: 33–34 lists [Scribe?] *mdw-ntr* (no. 9) and *hr.j [sš]š n...* (no. 11) among Imhotep's titles. However, the two comprise one title, as shown in Allen 2021: pl. 43; Allen's transcription on pl. 42 reads Imhotep's title as *hr.j sšš n mdj.t ntr* (𓇑𓏏𓏏𓏏) but the photograph on the next plate suggests it should be read *hr.j sšš n mdj.t ntr* (𓇑𓏏𓏏𓏏).

68 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA1372

69 Current location unknown; First published in L'Oeil, Revue d'Art Mensuelle, Nr. 314, September 1981.

70 The inscription appears above the image of an ibis-headed god who is also called “Lord of Hermopolis.”

c) New Kingdom Sources

		Source	Reference
1	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Statuettes of Nebmerutef, Louvre E11153 & E11154	Delange 1996 ⁷¹
2	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Statues of Amenemhat Surer, BM EA123; Louvre A51	Säve-Söderbergh 1957: LXIX, LXXI ⁷²
3	Privy to the secrets of <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Amenemhat Surer (Theban Tomb 48)	Säve-Söderberg: 1957, pls. XLVIII, LX
4	O the living...all those who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Pehsukher (TT 88)	DZA 24.481.270 ⁷³
5	O...all scribes who receive a palette, who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Paheri (Elkab)	Francis. L. Griffith & Tylor 1894: pl. 9
6	O...all scribes who receive a palette, who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Nebamun (TT 24)	Urk. IV: 151; DZA 24.481.310
7	O the living...all those who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Menkheper(reseneb) (TT 79)	Guksch 1995: 153–54, pl. 34
8	... all those who are sharp-sighted in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57)	Tanbouli 2017: 213 (G.2)
9	O...all scribes who receive a palette, who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Senemiah (TT 127)	Urk. IV: 509
10	O...all scribes who kn<ow> <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Tomb of Imiseba (TT 65)	KRI VI: 546
11	... all those who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Nakhtmin, Louvre C55	Barbotin 2005: 167–169 ⁷⁴
12	O all men...all scribes who interpret scrolls (<i>drf</i>) and who enter in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Bakaa, BM EA164	KRI II: 387 ⁷⁵
13	O.. all scribes...who are clear-sighted in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Pay, BM EA156	KRI III: 210 ⁷⁶
14	O all scribes who are wise in <i>mdw-ntr</i>	Stela of Tia, Florence 2532	Martin 1997: pls. 27, 140 (no. 40)

71 <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004935>; <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010005947>.

72 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA123; <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010013459>.

73 Most of the painted stela's text was damaged before the end of nineteenth century (Piehl 1886: Pt. 1: 104; Virey 1891: 300). The dictionary slip (DZA 24.481.270) notes the reconstructed text is based on Dümichen's copy, though his referenced publication includes only six lines from a different section of the text (Dümichen 1866: pl. 104B).

74 <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010022054>.

75 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA164.

76 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA156.

		Source	Reference
15	Your father is carrying <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Teachings of Hori (oGardiner 2)	Gardiner & Černý 1957: pls. VI–VIa; Dils 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁷⁷
16	You have turned your back on <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Late Egyptian Miscellanies (pAnastasi V = pBM EA10244)	Gardiner 1937: 64; Dils 2021 in <i>TLA</i> ⁷⁸
17	You have turned your back on <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	LEM (pChester Beatty IV = pBM EA10684)	Dils 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁷⁹
18	You have [tu]rned your back on [<i>mdw</i>]- <i>nṯr</i>	LEM (pChester Beatty XVIII = pBM EA10698)	Popko 2021 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸⁰
19	May he (Thoth) grant wisdom in writing and sharp-sight in <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Scribal Palette of Tena (Berlin 8042)	Roeder 1924: 304
20	May he (Thoth) grant...clear sight in <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Scribal Palette of Meryra (BM EA5512)	Glanville 1932: 57 ⁸¹
21	Guard yourself from your fingers nearing <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Satirical Letter of Hori (pAnastasi I = pBM EA10247)	Fischer-Elfert 1983: 99
22	A craftsman of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> —there is nothing he does not know.	Satirical Letter of Hori (pAnastasi I; oDem 1070)	Fischer-Elfert 1983: 11; Dils 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸²
23	A scribe who is experienced (<i>jp jb</i>) in <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Mose	Gaballa 1977, 19: pl. XLIV
24	[according] to these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Amenhotep	DZA 24.481.050
25	[according] to these writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Iamnedjeh (TT 84)	DZA 24.481.030
26	All writings of <i>mdw-nṯr</i> he institutes (them) in Lower Egypt	Great Hymn to the Nile (pBM EA10222, pBM EA10182 and other copies)	Plas 1986: 40
27	As for every efficient scribe who knows <i>mdw-nṯr</i> ...	Tutankhamun's outermost gilded shrine (Cairo JdE 60664)	Hornung 1982: 30

77 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd3WjmVWxLMEvtKOo3zeElnY>.

78 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd2LYkYw4KUAojZHak8Luk1E>; <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBdQWafvRaE28mIVmLI8dRk4>; https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10244-6; https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10244-2.

79 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBdQEY506YnEZAxB9i7zrZjFo>; https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10684-3.

80 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBgBkByrcQ8VWUuehTAm5mDykFQ>; https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10698.

81 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA5512.

82 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd2ffwu3tkbhqZsCOsbx4Y>.

		Source	Reference
28	May Thoth himself come to you with a scroll of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Book of the Dead, pParis Louvre 3092, Spell 170	Backes 2019 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸³
29	These <i>mdw-nṯr</i> are to be spoken over (6 divine figures) written upon a fresh papyrus-sheet	Magical papyrus (pDeM 36)	Sauneron 1970
30	...of the throat...names...with <i>mdw-nṯr</i> so that he might live	Magical Text (pBM EA 9997)	Stegbauer 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸⁴
31	...this scroll looses the legs, being sealed by a scribe of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Berlin Medical Papyrus, pBerlin P 3038 (163a)	Brose 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸⁵
32	The Royal Scribe, Overseer of the Treasury... who is clear-sighted in <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	LEM (pSallier IV = pBM EA 10184)	Gardiner 1937: 98
33	One says your <i>mdw-nṯr</i> to god's fathers	Book of the Dead of Spell 177 (pNebseni = pBM EA 9900)	Backes 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸⁶
34	...which the writings of the <i>mdw-nṯr</i> say: Act against him!	The Morgan Library, Amherst Egyptian Papyrus 5	Newberry 1899: 22
35	His Majesty found[...]of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Ramesses IV, Cairo JdE 48831 (Abydos)	<i>KRI</i> VI: 21
36	(Thoth says: I am)... scribe who is excellent in <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tomb of Nefersekheru (TT 296)	Feucht 1985: 2: 44, pl. XVI
37	Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Karnak Inscription of Thutmose III	<i>Urk.</i> IV: 872
38	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stone Scribal Palette, Louvre E901	Louvre Online Collection ⁸⁷
39	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Scribal Palette, Louvre N3023	Tallet 2002 ⁸⁸
40	O Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Ritual Text (pChester Beatty IX = pBM EA 10689)	Dils 2022 in <i>TLA</i> ⁸⁹
41	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Cubit Rod of Amenemope (Museo Egizio, Turin 6347)	Monnier, Petit, Tardy 2016: 5
42	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Nauri Decree of Seti I	<i>KRI</i> I: 46

83 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBd5ziqvFDkELVg3GTjzQu3R8>.

84 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBkBmEWMbBKSaUTmibYj7EUWVg0>.

85 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBcAve7chW5WBkSTgK5cpBT8kc4>.

86 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBUBdymWu5t7tOYQoaoIQFIVAsc>.

87 <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010007394>.

88 <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010008826>.

89 <https://thesaurus-linguae-aegyptiae.de/sentence/IBgDNOBIZaYVvUB4oHQN3ggWB8g>.

		Source	Reference
43	Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Bakaa, BM EA166	<i>KRI</i> II: 389
44	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela (CG 34183)	Lacau 1909–1926: vol. II. 226
45	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Neferhotep (Louvre N297)	<i>KRI</i> III: 219 ⁹⁰
46	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Stela of Mery (Louvre N229)	Louvre Online Collection ⁹¹
47	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Statue of Haremhab (MMA 23.10.1)	Winlock 1924: pl. IV
48	Thoth, Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Hori's Letter to Ahmose of Peniati (pBm EA 10103)	Glanville 1928: pl. XXXV
49	Lord of <i>mdw-nṯr</i>	Thutmose III, Karnak, Festival Hall	<i>Urk.</i> IV: 860; Grallert 2001: I. 277 (T3/Wf048)
50–80	LGG lists 31 additional sources, to which more can be added		

References

Abbreviations

- DZA** Digitalisierten Zettelarchiv des Wörterbuches der ägyptischen Sprache.
- LGG** Leitz, C. 2002–2003. *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 110–116; 129. Leuven: Peeters.
- CG** Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire.
- CT** Buck, A. de. 1935–1963. *The Egyptian Coffin Texts I–VII*. Oriental Institute Publications 34, 49, 64, 67, 73, 87. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- PT** Sethe, K. 1908–1922. *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte: nach den Papierabdrücken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.
- TLA** Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae, Corpus issue 17, Web app version 2.01, 12/15/2022, ed. by Richter T. S. & Werning, D. A. by order of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Fischer-Elfert, H.-W. & Dils, p. by order of the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig.
- Urk. I** Sethe, K. 1903. *Urkunden des Alten Reichs*. Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums I (1–2). Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.
- Urk. IV** Sethe, K., Helck, H.W. et al. 1903–1984. *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums, Band 4. Leipzig & Berlin: J.C. Hinrichs & Akademie-Verlag.
- Wb.** Erman, A. & Grapow, H. 1926–1963. *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

⁹⁰ <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010024049>.

⁹¹ <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010022890>.

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