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An Overview of the Nature and Functions of the Bovine Goddess Sematweret in the Old Kingdom

Andrea RODRÍGUEZ VALLS

This paper presents an analysis of the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts that refer to the aurochs-deity Sematweret. This study will consider the writing of her name, her physical attributes and the actions in which she is involved, mainly as the mother of the deceased. For a better understanding of this deity, it is also relevant to examine the relationship with other female deities, such as Nekhbet or the White Crown, and with divinities that appear alongside her, like the goddess Hewenetweret or the god Semawer. The observation of all the elements linked to her is a perfect example of the fluidity of ancient Egyptian myths, and could even indicate the fusion of mythic references in the composition of PT 703 and PT 548, as well as the attribution of some aspects to Nut at an undetermined date prior to the reign of Pepy I.

Una visión general de la naturaleza y funciones de la diosa bovina Sematweret en el Reino Antiguo

Este artículo presenta un análisis de los *Textos de las pirámides* del Reino Antiguo que hacen referencia a la divinidad uro Sematweret. El estudio tiene en cuenta la escritura de su nombre, sus atributos físicos y las acciones en las que se implica, principalmente como madre del difunto. Para una mejor comprensión de esta deidad, también resulta necesario examinar su relación con otras divinidades femeninas en este corpus textual, como Nekhbet o la Corona Blanca, y con las deidades que aparecen mencionadas junto a ella, como la diosa Hewenetweret o el dios Semawer. La identificación de los elementos vinculados con la diosa ofrece un buen ejemplo de la fluidez que existió en los mitos del Egipto antiguo, e incluso podría indicar la existencia de fusión de referencias míticas en PT 703 y PT 548, así como la atribución de algunos aspectos de Sematweret a Nut en un momento indeterminado previo al reinado de Pepy I.

Keywords: Gender roles, fluidity and transmission of mythic references, Hewenetweret, Mother of the deceased, Nursing, Nut(weret).





Palabras clave: Fluidez y transmisión de referencias míticas, Hewenetweret, lactancia, madre de los difuntos, Nut(weret), roles de género.

Attestations of bovine goddesses are scattered throughout the Pyramid Texts;¹ however, these texts provide limited information about the deities, which are always defined by their relationship with the deceased king. Some prominent bovine goddesses from ancient Egyptian religion, such as Hesat or Mehetweret, are mentioned in this corpus,² but one of the bovine goddesses with the most significant number of citations is Sematweret, who is mentioned in six spells. The only way to securely identify these

* I would like to thank the useful comments given by the anonymous peer-reviewers to my original manuscript.

1 Most of the references to the cow goddesses in the Pyramid Texts were studied in Favard-Meeks 1986 (see specially 63–78).

2 Mehetweret is clearly named in PT 254 (§ 289c), PT 317 (§ 508a), PT *493 (§ *1059e), PT 496 (§ 1065c, 1066d), PT 510 (§ 1131a–b), and PT 1146 (§ 01146d); Hesat is mentioned in PT 688 (§ 2080d–e), PT 485 (§ 1029c), and PT 696A (§ 2167b).

deities as bovine lies in the classifiers or determinatives appended to their names, generally Gardiner's signs E1 , E2-female , or the metonymic F1  and F2 . These classifiers confer key information about their divine essence.³


This study begins with a survey of the most basic information about Sematweret—the group of hieroglyphs that form her name and their meaning—and it is followed by a commentary on the mythic references, mythologemes or mythemes in the texts associated with the goddess. Given the importance attributed to Sematweret's name, it is also essential to consider the nature of her connection with the god Semawer.

1 | Sematweret in the Pyramid Texts

Most of the total preserved information about this deity comes from references within the Pyramid Texts.⁴ The goddess Sematweret is explicitly named in six spells: PT 271, PT 412, PT 554,⁵ PT 582, PT 675, and PT 1002.⁶

1.1 | The structure of Sematweret's name

The name Sematweret (*sm3t-wrt*) is usually translated as 'The Great Wild Cow'.⁷ It is formed from the feminine noun *sm3t* 'wild bovine', and the feminine adjective *wrt* 'great' which denotes importance and antiquity.⁸

The words *sm3* and *sm3t*⁹ appear to refer to non-domesticated bovines, and are probably aggressive, since they could be related to the word *sm3* 'kill' or 'destroy'.¹⁰ The identification of the *sm3*-animal  with the aurochs (*Bos primigenius africanus*) is almost certain,¹¹ and this bovine can be clearly found in some documents from Old Kingdom onwards (figs. 1 and 2), standing out significantly in textual documents of the Eighteenth Dynasty.¹²

Our knowledge of the aurochs is limited because it is an extinct species. These bovines were the ancestors of domesticated cattle¹³ and differed from them in respect to their greater size and weight. Preserved skulls also show thick horns of a particular shape that includes both

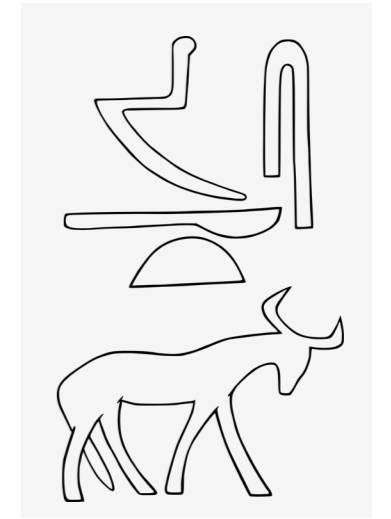


Figure 1. Detail of the female aurochs (*sm3t*) on the ÄM 20036 relief preserved in the Neues Museum, from Niuserra's solar temple in Abu Gurob. Photograph by Manna Nader, Gabana Studios Cairo.

Figure 2. The term *sm3t* as it appears in PT 271, § 389a, from Unis' pyramid. Author's drawing based on Piankoff 1968: pl. 24.

an inward and an outward curve. The aurochs species was marked by sexual dimorphism that was reflected in both size and colour, which was usually black for males and reddish-brown for females.¹⁴ Their habitat was the semi-desert steppes and grassy marshes,¹⁵ and during the Late Palaeolithic and Epipalaeolithic, aurochs, as well as hartebeest and gazelles, were the most represented among the animal remains.¹⁶ This

bovine probably disappeared from the Nile Valley due to competition with humans and domestic cattle, but survived longer in Lower Egypt.¹⁷ In the Predynastic period, aurochs seems to have lost their importance as hunting prey.¹⁸ However, a probable aurochs burial was probably identified in Tomb 19 from the elite cemetery HK6, in Hierakonpolis, found in a similar fashion to human remains.¹⁹ Although there was a decline of

³ Hathor's case is quite striking because her name does not include a complete bovine classifier in any of the three spells, PT 303, PT 335, and PT 405, in which she is mentioned. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that PT 405 (§ 705a) mentions that the goddess holds the solar disk between her horns.

⁴ See Verhoeven 1984: 836–837.

⁵ B. Mathieu provides a different reading of the text, see n. 32.

⁶ Spell PT 1002 was classified by J.P. Allen as PT *712 (2013; 2015), and was recently identified and reconstructed from several Pyramid Texts fragments and CT 517 by the MafS team (see Pierre-Croisiau 2008: 264–265; Mathieu and Pierre-Croisiau 2015).

⁷ 'Die grosse Wildkuh' (Ger.), see Leitz 2002: 329–330. Recently, B. Mathieu (2018) translated 'la Vache semat vénérable' (Fr.).

⁸ Hannig 2006: 215 [7737, 7738], 216 [7785].

⁹ A. Erman and H. Grapow presented them as different words: *sm3* in *Wb* IV, 124 [1–7] and *sm3t* in *Wb* IV, 124 [8–10]. This is not found in other dictionaries: see Faulkner 1962: 226 [13] and Hannig 2006: 760 [27872]. Meeks 1980: 322 [77-3575] translates *sm3* as 'taureau sauvage' (Fr.). See also the lexicon related to bulls in the Pyramid Texts by Mathieu 2019: 94, fig. 2. The use of 'wild bull/cow', 'taureau/vache sauvage' (Fr.), 'der Wildstier/die Wildkuh' (Ger.), should be avoided because bulls and cows are a different species than aurochs and it certainly generates confusion, as sadly happens in *sm3* and *sm3t* entries in the lexicon of S. Mastropaolo (2013: 78–80).

¹⁰ The verb *sm3* is normally determined with the knife hieroglyph T7. See *Wb* IV, 122 [7]; Faulkner 1962: 226 [12]; Hannig 2006: 760 [27861]. P. Vernus (2005a: 72–73; 2005b 84–84) highlights the notable number of animals named by their –considered to be– main quality or action.

¹¹ Brentjes 1971; Störk 1984: 257.

¹² Mainly alluding to the king's control of the hostile forces. See Yoyotte 2005: 562–563.

¹³ Ajmone-Marsan *et alii* 2010; Beierkuhnlein 2015: 108. See Vigne 2011 on the origins of Neolithic animal domestication. D.J. Osborn and J. Osbornová included several representations of *Bos primigenius* (1998: figs. 1–18, 1–24, 1–30, 1–32, 7–29, 7–38) which appear to be rather similar to the image of a *sm3t*, although they do not include that the term *sm3t* refers to the aurochs (1998: 194–196).

¹⁴ Van Vuure 2002: 4, table 1; Linseele 2004.

¹⁵ Vernus 2005c: 497; Yoyotte 2005: 562; Linseele and Van Neer 2010: 53–54.

¹⁶ Linseele and Van Neer 2010: 51, fig. 3, tab. 1.

¹⁷ Linseele, Van Neer and Friedman 2009: 123–124.

¹⁸ Linseele and Van Neer 2010: 58–59, tab. 3.

¹⁹ Warman 2000, 2003: 39; Friedman, Van Neer and Linseele 2011: 176–178. This burial, together with the presence in the HK6 of other rare or "exotic" animals, maybe reflected the power or wealth of their owners (Linseele, Van Neer and Friedman 2009: 126).

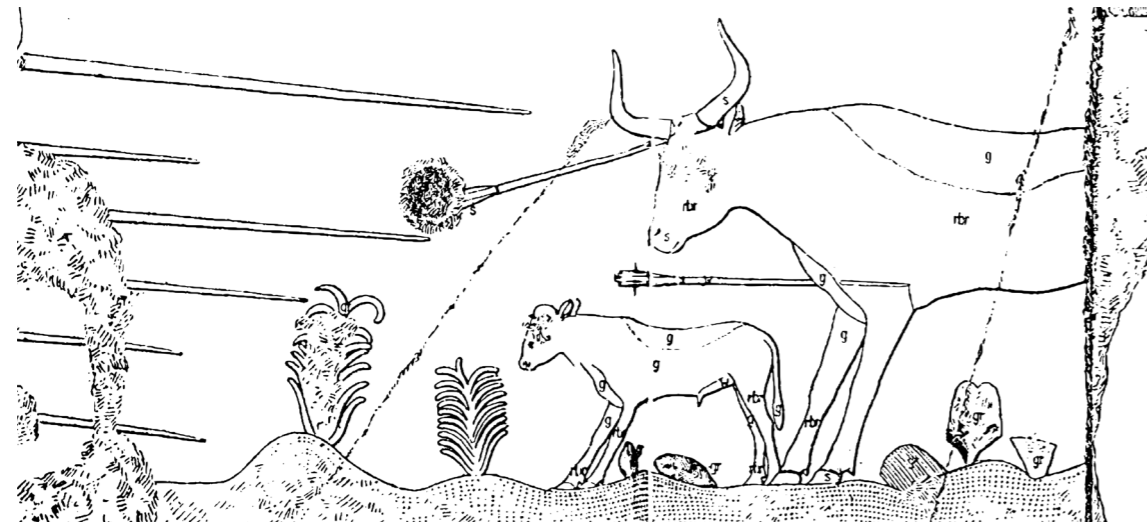







Figure 3a. Detail of the female aurochs and her brood depicted in the hunting scene of the funerary complex of Sahure. From Borchard 1913: pl. 17.

the aurochs population during and after the Predynastic Period,²⁰ depictions of aurochs in hunting scenes continued to be found in Old and Middle Kingdom private tombs.²¹

Accounts generally agree that this bovine could be aggressive and dangerous.²² If we observe some Egyptian hunting scenes of wild animals, the aurochs usually confronts its attackers or hunters, which could support the idea of its aggressive nature (fig. 3b).²³ In the funerary complex of Sahure there is a depiction of an aurochs and its calf in a hunting scene, facing the king himself (fig. 3a).²⁴

The most common bovine classifiers in the Pyramid Texts for *sm3t* are E2-female  and F2 . These two signs both depict the animal with its head down and its horns presented as if in a threatening attitude.²⁵ This feature is consistent with the aggressive reputation of the aurochs, and it is important to note the difference between these classifiers and those normally used for domesticated cattle (*ih*t or *ih*), E1  and F1 . It is also important to note that the normal bovine hieroglyph associated with Sematweret is the E2-female sign , since the traditional

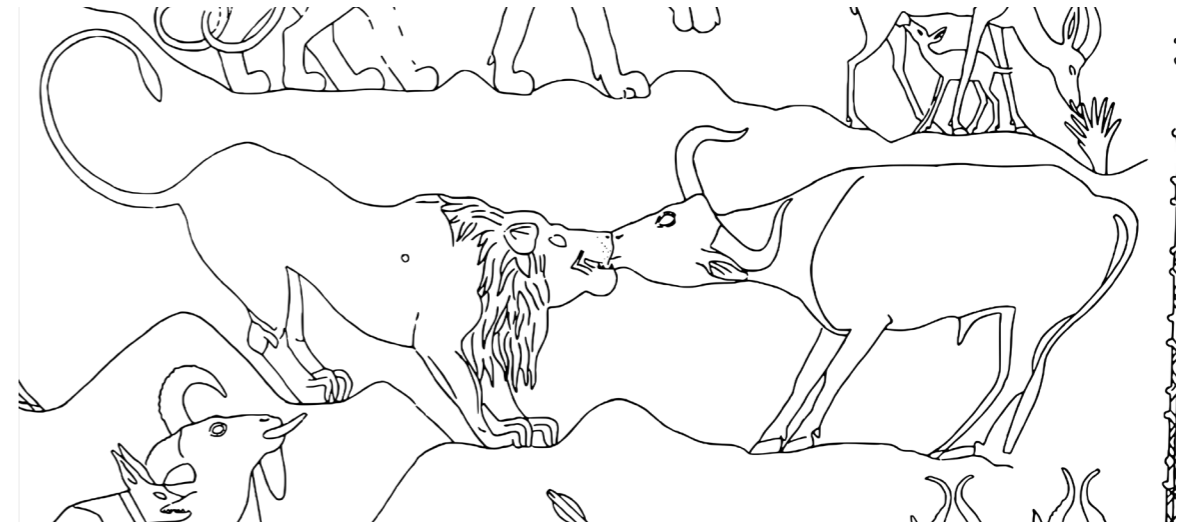




Figure 3b. Detail of an aurochs being attacked by a lion in the hunting scene of Ukhhotep's son Senbi (Meir, tomb B1, Twelfth Dynasty). From Blackman 1914: pl. VIII.

E2 sign includes a penis and testicles: .²⁶ Accordingly, it is more appropriate to translate Sematweret's name as 'The Great Aurochs (fem.)' than as 'The Great Wild Cow'. The different ways in which her name is recorded are shown in table 1: Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts only include the E2-female sign for Sematweret and the female aurochs (see fig. 2) in the corpus of Unis (PT 271, § 388c–389a). Thereafter, when her name includes a bovine classifier, it is the aurochs protome F2 . The complete bovid is again documented in the corpus of Aba.²⁷

In his investigation of mutilated signs, P. Lacau included modifications to Sematweret's name as a case study (signs E2 and F2). The changes recorded for this god's name are similar to those documented for Sematweret, so it is likely that the use of F2 in the name of both divinities was the result of a mutilation of the sign E2, with the aim of mitigating any form of magical aggression against the deceased;²⁸ if the animal lacks a body, it is not able to charge at him, but the use of F2 is still efficient in exposing the action: the head has a threatening or attacking position,

20 Linseele and Van Neer 2010: 65, tab. 5. Also, E. Otto noticed that, in early documents, the bull seemed to embody a more indomitable power than the lion (1964 [1938]: 2).

21 It stands out the hieratic list documented in the hunting desert scene from the tomb of Khnumhotep II, in Beni Hasan. This unique example registers presence (or maybe the killing) of 320 aurochs between other wild mammals (Newberry 1893: pl. 30, pl. 38.1).

22 Van Vuure 2002: 6–7; Brass 2018: 103.

23 Similar images have been documented in Old Kingdom reliefs, as in the tomb of Ptahhotep and Akhetotep (see Davies 1900: pl. 22).

24 Both specimens are depicted in front of the king's arm, receiving a rain of arrows, but they are facing him, not running away like other wild animals. See Borchard 1913: pl. 17.

25 Vernus 2005a: 74.

26 A. Gardiner (1957: 458) only included a male version of the E2 sign in his list of hieroglyphs, apparently conceiving it as masculine, when E2 ought to hold the same functions as E1 and have its shape vary according to the sex of the animal. R. Faulkner used a schematic, hand-drawn determinative, which makes it impossible to tell whether he intended the determinative for *sm3* to be E1 or E2, female or male; R. Hannig makes use of the sign E1 instead of E2, but A. Erman and H. Grapow clearly distinguished between the determinatives of the words *sm3* and *sm3t*, with E2-male and E2-female signs collected in different entries of the dictionary (references in n. 9).

27 In this case, the sign represents a more stylized animal, with horns closer together, which may not be a bovine but a bovid. See Jéquier 1935: pl. XI (col. 530); Mathieu and Pierre-Croisau 2015: 83.

28 Lacau 1914: 39. Also suggested by P. Vernus (2005a: 68, 75). The brave bull is a wild animal of the margins that should undoubtedly be kept under control in burial contexts (Roth 2017: 294).

	PT 271 (§ 388c // 389a)		PT 412 (§ 729a)	PT 554 (§ 1370a)	PT 582 (§ 1566a)	PT 675 (§ 2003a)	PT 1002 (§ 01002a)
	Sematweret	<i>sm3t</i> aurochs	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret
Unis							
Teti	not preserved						
Pepy I			not preserved			not preserved	not preserved
Merenre	not preserved		not preserved			not preserved	not preserved
Ankhesenpepy II			in course of publication				in course of publication
Pepy II				very damaged			
Neith			A 	B 			
Iput II							
Aba						not preserved	

Table 1. Writing of Sematweret's name in the Old Kingdom spells of the Pyramid Texts. Note that PT 271 also includes the writing of the word *sm3t* "auroch" that precedes the name of the goddess. In the gray boxes, there are the spells that are not documented for that pyramid. Marks 'not preserved' or 'very damaged' indicate that the spell was included in the corpus but the name Sematweret is poorly preserved.

which appears to be a distinctive element of an aurochs compared to other bovines and cattle.

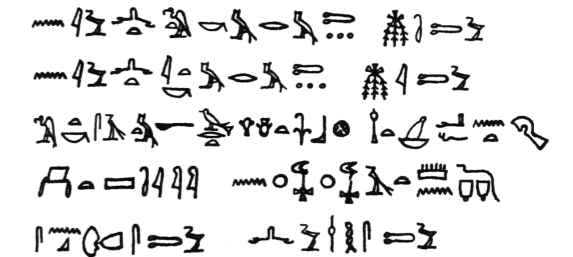
The cases presented in table 1 show that some of the forms of the goddess's name did not include any bovine classifier, as in Teti's PT 412 and PT 1002,²⁹ Pepy I's PT 582, and Neith's (A) PT 412. In PT 271 (§ 389a), the reference to the generic fem. aurochs includes the signs N42 + X1 (𓏏𓏏 *idt/hmt*) after the name *sm3t*;³⁰ this could have been a way to depict the sex of the animal, classified as type I by P. Vernus.³¹ The inclusion of N42 + X1 was also used for Pepy I's PT 554 (§1370a) in allusion to Sematweret;³² it could be a confusion or a deliberated change (compare Pepy I's and Merenre's version).³³ In fact, none of the preserved texts of Pepy I included classifiers alluding to the bovine nature of the goddess.

1.2 | The features of the goddess according to the Pyramid Texts

The following paragraphs present the mythic references related to Sematweret from the spells that include her name.³⁴ These features have been summarized in tables 2 and 3.

1.2.1 | Sematweret, mother and nurse of the deceased

All of the spells that explicitly mention her either point out that Sematweret is the mother of the deceased (*mwt*),³⁵ or that the deceased is her son (*z3*).³⁶ This affiliation must have been of great importance in the composition of the texts since it is emphasized in different ways. PT 554 (§ 1370a), for example, notes that Sematweret 'conceives and gives birth' to the deceased (see table 3, action A);³⁷ therefore, she is not only understood to be the putative mother of the deceased, but also the biological mother. Spells PT 675 (§ 2002b-c) and PT 412 both affirm, with slight grammatical variations, that the deceased does not have a human mother or father.³⁸ The mention of Sematweret in PT 412, dated to the reign of Teti,³⁹ reads:



29 Note that these two spells in Teti's corpus show a graphic variant that includes the sign G1 in the word *sm3t*; the so-called "alphabetical" spellings appear frequently in this pyramid (Bene 2006: 157). Interestingly, the suppression of the bovine classifier in these examples is not motivated by the intention to protect the deceased, since numerous examples of full-body male bovines are documented in this pyramid, see Bene 2006: 168-169.

30 After the bovine determinatives in Unis and Pepy II's versions; without bovine determinative in the case of Pepy.

31 See Vernus 2005b: 82, n.113. Also, R.O. Faulkner (1969: 79, n. 2) considered the writing of N42 + X1 a tautology that reinforced the sense that a *sm3t* was a female aurochs. See also Faulkner 1972; Collombert 1995: 206, n.19.

32 B. Mathieu translated PT 554 (§ 1370a) 'C'est le Pépy, le fils de la Vache sémat. C'est la Gravide vénérable (...)', not considering the spell to be related to Sematweret (2018: 536-537).

33 See table 1. See also the facsimile of Pepy I's PT 554 in Berger-el Naggar *et alii* 2010: pl. XXII (P/V/E 8); and Merenre's in Pierre-Croisiau 2019: pl. XXI (M/V/E 28).

34 The texts are presented mainly taking into consideration the works of J.P. Allen (2005, 2013, 2015) and B. Mathieu (2018).

35 In PT 271 (§ 388c), PT 412 (§ 729a), PT 582 (§ 1566a), PT 675 (§ 2003a), and PT 1002 (§01002a).

36 In PT 554 (§ 1370a), regarding to the *semat*-bovine.

37 In § 1370a, *iwr=s sw msi=s sw*, 'she conceives you and gives you birth'.

38 The expression 'you have neither human father nor mother' has been regarded as a priestly motif by H. M. Hays (2012: 529). This expression is discussed again in Section 2, in relation to Semawer.

39 From Sethe 1908: 399. For the occurrences of PT 412, see Mathieu 2018: 296, n.276.

§ 728b–729c: *n iwt mwt=k m rmt msti tw n iwt it=k m rmt msi tw mwt=k sm3t-wrt hrt-ib nhb hdt fnt 3wt šwty nh3h3tmndwy snq=s tw n wdḥ=s tw*

You do not have a human mother who gives you birth, nor do you have a human father who gives you birth. Your mother is Sematweret, who is in the midst of Nekheb, with a white *afenet*-headdress, two wide feathers and pendulous breasts. She suckles you and does not wean you.

In addition to being referred to as a mother, Sematweret is associated with breastfeeding the deceased as a nurse goddess.⁴⁰ The description of Sematweret's role in breastfeeding is reinforced when she is described as having 'pendulous breasts', indicating that they are full of milk (see table 2, trait C). So, the goddess matches the usual roles of feminine bovines in Ancient Egypt: motherhood and nouriture,⁴¹ but, in comparison with other cases, here Sematweret embodies these roles while being a potentially violent bovine. Of all the examples that refer to Sematweret as a mother, the only one that mentions the existence of a father, named Semawer, is PT 1002 (see table 2), and will be discussed below.

1.2.2 | Physical traits attributed to Sematweret

A description of the goddess' features can be found in the fragment of PT 412 translated above, and in parts of Spells PT 582, and PT 675, all of them summarized in table 2. These references are all similar, with slight but curious differences. As stated in PT 412 (§ 729a–b), Sematweret wears a

white *afenet*-headdress, two wide *feathers*, and has pendulous breasts' (*hdt fnt 3wt šwty nh3h3tmndwy*). Meanwhile, PT 675 (§ 2003b) notes 'long hair' (*3wt šmw*) instead of feathers. This spell, first documented in Pepy I's corpus, is the only one related to Sematweret that uses the term 'hair'. The mention of the feathers could indicate darker spots in the bovid skin;⁴² this may be sustained by the use of 'hair' in PT 675. However, the *3wt šwty* is most likely to be a two feathered crown.⁴³ It is not possible to state that the information in PT 412 is earlier than that of PT 675, but the inclusion in the latter of the much more explicit term 'hair' could indicate that the text was clarified at a later date.

Also documented for the first time during Pepy I's reign, Spell PT 582 (§ 1566a–c) includes a similar description of Sematweret as having 'wide feathers, a bright *afenet*-headdress and pendulous breasts' (*3wt šwty sšpt fnt ng3g3t mndwy*); this version varies the description order with respect to PT 412, and the most relevant difference is that it includes the use of *sšpt* 'bright' instead of *hdt* 'white'.

An exact set of these physical traits also appears in PT 1002. This spell points to Sematweret as being the mother of the deceased; however, the traits seem to refer to the White Crown because they follow her name, not Sematweret's (see table 2). This Spell, as well as the use of the adjective *sšpt* 'bright' or *hdt* 'white', will be commented upon in Section 3.

All of these versions coincide in the use of white or bright *afenet* by Sematweret. This headdress was a kerchief that probably covered the hair completely, having a wrapped back part,⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The spells dealing with nursing in the Pyramid Texts were studied by J. Leclant (1951).

⁴¹ As pointed out by Favard-Meeks 1986: 65. See also Vernus 2005d: 604.

⁴² J.P. Allen (2015: 64, n.82) considered that the word *šwt* alludes to the skin of the god Sobek in PT 317 (§ 507b).

⁴³ J. Capart also considered that the feathers made part of the headdress in his lecture of § 729b (1946: 4). Related to the *shuty*-crown, see Abubakr 1937: 43–46.

⁴⁴ Probably related to the verb *fnt* 'to wrap'. See Goebis 2008: 189.

	PT 271 (§ 388c-389a)	PT 412 (§ 728a-729c)	PT 582 (§ 1566a-c)	PT 675 (§ 2002a-2003c)	PT 1002 (§ 01002a-b, § 01002 f-h)	PT 438 (§ 809b-c)	PT 470 (§ 910a-911a)	PT 548 (§ 1344a- 1345a)	PT 697 (§ 2171a-b)	PT 703 (§ 2204a-b)
	Spells mentioning explicitly Sematweret					Spells including mythical references in common with Sematweret				
Mother	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Hewenet	The White Crown	Nutweret	Nut	Heweretweret ⁱ
(=?) Another deity'	-	-	-	-	The White Crown ⁱⁱ	-	-	-	-	-
Ascription'	-	-	-	-	of Nekhen	-	-	-	-	-
Ascription	-	in the midst of Nekheb	-	in the midst of Nekheb	in the midst of Nekheb	-	in the midst of Nekheb	-	-	in the midst of Nekheb
Another places	on the Mountain of the Grass and on tain of the Stork	-	-	-	-	-	lady of the <i>Perwer</i> , lady of the Land of the Grass, lady of the Secret Land, lady of the Fishermen's Fields, lady of the Satisfied One's Valley	-	-	-
Trait A	-	white <i>afenet</i>	bright <i>afenet</i>	white <i>afenet</i>	white <i>afenet</i>	-	bright	-	-	white <i>afenet</i>
Trait B	-	two wide feathers	two wide feathers	long hair	two wide feathers	-	thick	long horn	long hair	outstretched plumage
Trait C	-	pendulous breasts	pendulous breasts	pendulous breasts	pendulous breasts	-	-	pendulous breasts	pendulous breasts	pendulous breasts
Mentions another goddess	-	Hewenetweretⁱ	-	Hewenetweretⁱ	-	-	The Red Crown	-	-	-
Ascription	-	in the midst of Heliopolis	-	in the midst of Heliopolis	-	-	lady of the Banks of Dep	-	-	-
Mentions Semawer	-	-	-	-	Semawer (father of N)	Semawer (father of N)	Semawer (the deceased)	-	-	-

(i) Probably, Hewenetweret and Heweretweret are the same goddess, see Section 4.
(ii) The reference to the White Crown precedes the information given in PT 1002 about the aforementioned mother, Sematweret.

Table 2. Mythical references and geographical identifications in PT related to Sematweret and in common with another mother-goddesses: The White Crown, Hewenet(weret) and Nut(weret). The three bottom rows contain information about other deities associated with the mother-goddess mentioned in each spell.

very similar to the *khat* (*h3t*), and frequently connected to the *nemes* (*nms*).⁴⁵ G. Jéquier drew attention to the use of the *afenet*-headdress by women and goddesses, in contrast to other headdresses worn by male figures.⁴⁶ The emphasis on the light and radiance of the *afenet* could indicate the presence of a divinity linked to the solar re-birth.⁴⁷

1.2.3 | Actions undertaken by the goddess: breastfeeding, raising the deceased to heaven, and protecting and carrying the reborn

The contents of PT 412, PT 582, PT 675, and PT 1002, which mention Sematweret's features, also have some of the actions attributed to this deity in common. Breastfeeding the deceased was included in PT 412 and PT 675, but the goddess also acts to move the deceased to and through the sky (see table 3).

The act of raising the deceased to heaven is found in spell PT 582 (§ 1566b–d): *f3.n=s ppy ir pt n w3h=s ppy ir t3 m-m ntrw 3hw*, 'she has lifted up⁴⁸ Pepy towards the sky, and she does not put Pepy on the ground, among the powerful gods'. According to this, Sematweret takes an active part in placing the deceased among the gods who are in the celestial realm.

Although PT 1002 is discussed further in Section 3, related to the White Crown, it is important to note that it includes Sematweret's active involvement in the deceased's journey (§ 01002a–b): *it=k sm3-wr mwt=k sm3t-wrt m3^c=sn tw sm=k gb is hnt psdt*, 'Your father is Semawer, your mother is Sematweret; they guide you, and you go as Geb who is at the front of the Ennead'. In this case, guidance is carried out by both parents.

It has already been noted that PT 554 includes an explicit reference about Sematweret giving birth to the deceased. It is also the only spell that mentions the goddess protecting the reborn and helping him cross both still and running water (§ 1370a–c): *dd in ppy pn z3 sm3t-wrt iwr=s sw msi=s sw d.n=s sw m-hmw dnh=s d3=s š im=k nm=s siw im=k*, 'Pepy is Sematweret's son. She conceives him and gives him birth, and she places him inside her wing. She crosses the lake with you and crosses the waters⁴⁹ with you'. Although the statement regarding her wing is obscure, it is probably not literal, and refers to the protection that she gives to him.⁵⁰

Finally, Spell PT 271⁵¹ provides exclusive information about Sematweret (§ 388c–389a): *wnis pi dmdt mwt=f sm3t-wrt mwt n wnis sm3t tpt dw-sm⁵² tpt dw-zhzh*, 'Unis is united with his mother Sematweret,⁵³ the mother of Unis is a

45 See Eaton-Krauss 1977: 23–25; Goebis 1995: 159, n. 43; 2001: 324.

46 Jéquier 1921: 5; also sustained by Goebis 1995: 159, n. 43.

47 See Goebis 2008: 29–30, n.45.

48 J.P. Allen (2015: 189) and R.O. Faulkner (1969: 236) translated the ascensional verb *f3i* as 'lift up'—in the sense of putting something up— as the way of moving offerings or presents over the head (Faulkner 1962: 97; Hannig 2006: 321).

49 R. Hannig translated 'Gewässer' (Ger.) (2006: 719 [26166]). Hannig 2006: 321 [11608].

50 As vultures seem to act with their nestlings (Anthes 1959: 190).

51 For the occurrences of this spell, see Mathieu 2018: 540, n. 292.

52 Hannig 2006: 1074 [39750].

53 Hannig 2006: 1074 [39751] translated *dw-zhzh* as 'Storchenberg' (Ger.). It probably refers to a bird of the *Ciconiidae* family, although it is not possible to determine the species.

	PT 412 (§ 728a-729c)	PT 554 (§ 1370a-c)	PT 582 (§ 1566a-c)	PT 675 (§ 2002a-2003c)	PT 1002 (§ 01002a-b, § 01002 f-h)	PT 470 (§ 910a-911a)	PT 548 (§ 1344a-1345a)	PT 697 (§ 2171a-b)
	Spells mentioning explicitly Sematweret					in common with Sematweret		
Mother	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	Sematweret	The White Crown	Nutweret	Nut
(=?) Another deity'	–	–	–	–	The White Crown ¹	–	–	–
Ascription'	–	–	–	–	of Nekhen	–	–	–
Action A	–	conceives N and gives birth to N	–	–	–	–	–	gives birth to N
Action B	suckles N and does not wean N	–	–	suckles N and does not wean N	suckles N and does not wean N (larger!)	suckles N	–	–
Action C	–	places N inside her wing	–	–	–	–	–	–
Action D	–	–	lifts up N to the sky, and does not put him on the ground	–	lifts up N to the sky, and does not put him on the ground	–	lifts up N to the sky, and does not put him on the ground	lifts up N to the sky, and does not put him on the ground
Action E	–	crosses some waters with N	–	–	–	–	–	–
Action F	–	–	–	–	guides N (Sematweret together with Semawer)	–	–	–
Mentions another goddess	Hewenetweret	–	–	Hewenetweret	–	–	–	–
Action Aa	gives her arms towards N	–	–	gives her arms towards N	–	–	gives her arms towards N	gives her arms towards N
Mentions Semawer	–	–	–	–	Semawer (father of the deceased)	Semawer (the deceased)	–	–

(i) The reference to the White Crown precedes the information given in PT 1002 about the aforementioned mother, Sematweret.
(ii) This Action also includes a reference to the mother offering her breast to the deceased. See Section 3.

Table 3. Actions performed by Sematweret compared with similar references to the White Crown and Nut(weret) in PT. The three bottom rows contain information about other deities associated with the mother-goddess mentioned in each spell. The table only includes those spells that mention actions developed by the goddesses (PT 271 related to Sematweret, or PT 438 and PT 703, related to Hewenet and Hewenetweret respectively, are not included here).

female aurochs that is on the Mountain of the Grass and on the Mountain of the Stork'.⁵⁴ The geographical features referred to in this passage are poorly known. They might refer to mythical or symbolic mounds, related to the creation of the world, but they might equally refer to the harsh environment around Nekheb (Elkab), where PT 412 and PT 675 place the goddess Sematweret, as explained in the next section.

1.2.4 | The goddess who is in the midst of Nekheb

As mentioned before, another notable feature of PT 412 and PT 675 is Sematweret's link to Nekheb (modern Elkab).⁵⁵ This location was essential to the ideology of ancient Egyptian kingship, but it is mentioned in few Pyramid Texts spells.⁵⁶ In six of them, comes out the epithet of divinity *hrt-ib nhb* 'who is in the midst of Nekheb', which is the exact expression used in the cases that connect Sematweret with Nekheb, as well as in PT 1002 and PT 470 (see table 2, Ascription). The formula also appears in PT 508, which is discussed below.

The deity usually associated with the location of Nekheb is Nekhbet, which is generally said to be a vulture goddess,⁵⁷ and whose name, *nhb(y)t*, is certainly related to the place.⁵⁸ However, none of the spells that name the goddess Nekhbet quote the site of Nekheb.⁵⁹ There is no evidence that Egyptian divinities were worshipped only in one location, but they could certainly originate from a specific area or could have had a pre-eminent cult place, which could also have changed over time.

Out of the spells that mention Nekhbet, none include descriptions that resemble Sematweret or name the bovine deity explicitly. But there are points among Sematweret's Pyramid Texts spells that could suggest some sort of relationship with Nekhbet. First, the aforementioned epithet 'two wide feathers' (*3wt šwtj*), if taken literally, it could be associated with a vulture. Secondly, Nekhbet's epithet *3wt-ꜥ*, 'she of the broad-arm',⁶⁰ shows some resemblance: both descriptions include the term *3wt* and might be referring to the same subject. However, the *3wt šwtj* could have been part of a headdress or even an aspect of the skin of Sematweret, since

PT 675 used "hair" (*šmw*) instead.⁶¹ Also, regarding the expression in PT 554 (§ 1370b), 'she places him inside her wing', it may be literal (thus, the divinity is a bird),⁶² but I find this more likely to be a metaphor about the protection of the reborn.

In PT 1002 there is a reference to 'the White Crown, that of Nekhen', *hdt nhn(y)t*, and some Old Kingdom nursing scenes from royal monuments describe the goddess Nekhbet as *hdt nhn*, 'the White Crown of Nekhen'.⁶³ These examples provide an obvious connection between Nekhbet and the White Crown, but not between Nekhbet and Sematweret. The same applies to Spell 470,⁶⁴ where the White Crown is said to be 'Lady of the Perwer'; this epithet is also documented for Nekhbet in nursing scenes in Old Kingdom funerary complexes.⁶⁵

The epithet *hrt-ib nhb* is included twice in PT 508,⁶⁶ but there are no names directly associated with it: in § 1107b it is stated that the lady of Dep is joyful and she in the midst of Nekheb rejoices, and § 1111a–b seems to mention three different goddesses taking part in diverse actions ('his mother Bastet has elevated him, she in the midst of Nekheb has nursed

him, and she in the midst of Dep has given her arms towards him').

In any case, it is evident that both Nekhbet and Sematweret have a decisive relationship with the personification of the royal insignia, and it is one of their main points of connection.⁶⁷

Apart from the previously mentioned spells, G. Meurer considered the allusion to Nekhbet in PT 400 (§ 695b–696d) as an example of association with Sematweret as this spell may refer to the mother's milk necessary for life,⁶⁸ but I must disagree because a goddess could breastfeed without necessarily being a cow.

According to the Pyramid Texts spells, Nekhbet and Sematweret seem to be different divine entities⁶⁹ who are not mentioned together. Although, it cannot be ignored that Sematweret is clearly referred as "the goddess who is in the midst of Nekheb", while Nekhbet's name is a nisbe of the city. Maybe the information given by the spells is not consistent because it seemed redundant or obvious for the theologians that composed the spells. Even though these texts did not establish a direct connection (a=b) between them, Sematweret and Nekhbet could be different approaches to describe one divine entity.⁷⁰

54 I regard this spell as containing an explanatory phrase about Sematweret, so the translation here differs from that of J.P. Allen (2015: 53), whose interpretation is for the existence of two bovine goddesses, each associated with a mountain; in that point I feel closer to B. Mathieu's interpretation (2018: 540), but considering that § 389a includes a tautology, to remark that the aurochs (*sm3t*) is female (ⲃⲟ). See notes 31 and 32.

55 See Limme 2000.

56 Spells that mention Nekheb are PT 34 (referring to a type of natron), PT 468 (related to the White Crown *imt nhb*), PT 508 ('anonymous'), PT 1009 B (=CT 66; related to Isis and Nephtis); PT 412 and PT 675 (concerning Sematweret); PT 1002 (related to the White Crown and probably to Sematweret); PT 470 (alluding the White Crown) and PT 703 (concerning Hweretweret*). The last three spells are discussed in Section 3 and 4.

57 Van Voss 1982: 366–367; Troy 1986: 116–119; Wilkinson 2003: 213.

58 On the reading of Nekhbet's name, see Capart 1946: 12–15.

59 The goddess appears in PT 6 (§ 4a), and PT 400 (§ 696d). Contrary to what E. Brovarski (1987: 38) and Chr. Leitz (2002: 300–303) report, spell PT ^N570A (§ 1451b) does not mention Nekhbet but the Heliopolitan deity Nekhebut, as in PT 205 (§ 123b), PT ^N491 B (§ 1057b), and PT 522 (§ 1229c).

60 The epithet *3wt-ꜥ* for the vulture goddess is documented in the funerary complex of Sahure (Borchardt 1910: pl.10; 1913: 83–84, pl. 8 [fragmentary]) and could refer to the goddess having spread wings (Capart 1946: 1).

61 As mentioned in Subsection 1.2.2.

62 R. Anthes found almost certain the relation of the *semat*-bovine with a vulture in this case (1959: 190); also B. Mathieu considered here the bovine identified as the vulture goddess Nekhbet (2018: 536, n.268).

63 In a relief of the lower temple of Sahure's funerary complex (Borchardt 1910: 20, fig. 15; 1913: 93, pl. 18) and in Pepy II's lower temple (Jéquier 1940: 8–9, pl. 9). See Borrego Gallardo 2011: 31–34 (cat. 3), 55–58 (cat. 11), 107.

64 Discussed in Section 3.

65 Borrego Gallardo 2011: 55–58 (cat. 11), 107.

66 For the different occurrences of this Spell, see Mathieu 2018: 364, n.110.



67 Probably because of this, K. Goebis assumes that PT 412, PT 582 and PT 675 refer to the 'crown-goddess Nekhbet as the mother of the deceased in the form of the Great Wild Cow in Elkab' (2008: 188).

68 Meurer 2002: 42.

69 Already pointed out by H. Kees (1941:37).

70 Which seems clear to J. Yoyotte, that stated that the mother goddess of Elkab was both a vulture and an aurochs (2005: 562).

2 | The god Semawer, 'The Great Aurochs (masc.)'

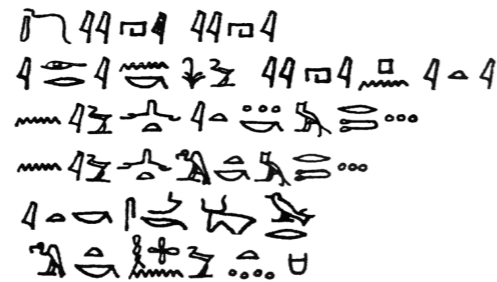
Sm3-wr is mentioned in spells PT 222, PT 365, PT 438, PT 470, PT 509, PT 510, and PT 1002,⁷¹ some of which are related to Sematweret. His name, similar to the goddess, is usually⁷² written including the E2-male classifier  or F2 .

Spell PT 509 (§ 1124a–c) records the strength of Semawer, whose bovine legs, together with lion heads, make up the chair on which the king would sit.⁷⁴

Not only do the legs of Semawer support the king, but the deceased could appear as the powerful god himself: In PT 365 (§ 625b),⁷⁵ it is stated that the deceased's *akh* is like Semawer (*ḥc 3ḥ pn ʿ3 pḥty db3 m sm3-wr*; 'Stand up, this *akh* of great strength, arrayed as Semawer'),⁷⁶ while PT 510 (§ 1145c)⁷⁷ and PT 470 (§ 913c–d)⁷⁸ note that the deceased *embodies* Semawer.

However, the information of most relevance to this paper is the reference to this god as the father of the deceased. In PT 222 (§ 201a),⁷⁹ Semawer appears as one of many fathers, some of whom are abstract divine entities, and there is no

reference to any mother. On the other hand, the god is mentioned together with a mother in PT 438 and PT 1002, in both cases, after the aforementioned formula 'you have neither human father nor mother' (table 4); Semawer and Sematweret seem to have had an active role leading the deceased to the Hereafter (PT 1002, § 01002a; see also table 3); in PT 438, in similar terms to the previous Spell, the mother is referred as Hewenet, 'lass, young-woman',⁸⁰ (§ 809a–b):⁸¹



yhi yhi irr=i n=k sw yhi pn it=i n iwt itw=k m rmt n iwt mwwt=k m rmt it=k sm3-wr mwt=k ḥwnt

Hey, hey! I do this for you, this declamation, my father. You have neither fathers among the people nor mothers among the people. Your father is Semawer and your mother is Hewenet.

71 Some of them were included in the study E. Otto published about the bull-cult in Ancient Egypt (1964[1938]: 2–3, 55–56).

72 Out of a total of sixteen occurrences in spells of kings' pyramids, twelve include bovine determinative (one E2-male, eleven F2), and only PT 365 (Teti) and PT 510 (Pepy I) do not include bovine determinative explicitly. Meanwhile, two Teti versions are poorly preserved.

73 The determinative E2 in Unis' PT 222 (§ 201a) shows a penis, contrasting with the E2-female sign of Sematweret in Unis' PT 271 (§ 389a), shown in fig. 2; see Piankoff 1968: pl. 50, pl. 24 [pls. 24 and 50].

74 See Borrego Gallardo 2015 on the meaning and etymology of the chair *ḥndw*.

75 Preserved in the corpus of Teti, Pepy I, Merenre, Ankhesepepy II, Pepy II and Behenu (see Mathieu 2018: 256, n. 67).

76 B. Mathieu (2018: 256, n.71) considered that here Semawer alluded to Seth of Nubet (Naqada), probably considering Spell PT 510 (§ 1145b–c) where the Ombite god is mentioned just before Semawer.

77 § 1145c: *sm3-wr pr=i m ḥnt(y)-imntyw* 'Semawer, emerged as Khentiamentiu'. Versions from the reigns of Pepy I, Merenre, and Pepy II (see Mathieu 2018: 442, n. 23).

78 § 913c–d: *ḥdh in nw n ppy pn sm3-wr* 'Hedjhedj, bring that (a boat) for Pepy, Semawer'. This spell occurs, with different degrees of preservation, in the corpus of Teti, Pepy I, Merenre, Ankhesepepy II, and Pepy II (see Mathieu 2018: 312, n. 50).

79 Versions from Unas, Teti, Pepy I, Merenre, Ankhesepepy II, Pepy II, Neit, Udjebten, and Behenu (see Mathieu 2018: 178, n. 73).

80 See *ḥwnt* in Faulkner 1962: 166 [10]; Meeke 1980: 241 [77.2633]; Hannig 2006: 553 [20024].

81 Pepy I's version, from Sethe 1908: 446. This spell was documented in the pyramids of Pepy I and Pepy II (see Mathieu 2018: 273, n. 166).

Table 4 includes the five cases of the expression 'you have neither human father nor mother'⁸² in PT. The study has already mentioned those concerning Sematweret (PT 412, PT 675 and PT 374 + PT 1002), and related to Semawer (PT 374 + PT 1002 and PT 438), but there is also another reference that concerns a goddess named Heweretweret* that will be discussed in Section 4. The connection between PT 374 (§ 659c–d) and PT 1002 (§ 01002a), was pointed out by I. Pierre-Croisiau;⁸³ in this group, the end of one spell—with the expression 'you have no human parents'—and the beginning of the latter—with the mention to Sematweret—, give a similar structure than PT 412 or PT 675.

In conclusion, most of the spells mentioning Semawer demonstrate a close link with Sematweret, beyond the obvious shared elements of their names. Some of the spells refer to Sematweret explicitly, while others include mythic references related to her. In this context, the figure of Semawer in the Pyramid Texts seems to be conceived as a male counterpart to Sematweret, and with whom the deceased himself is linked.

3 | The mythic references related to the White Crown

The most relevant connection between Sematweret and the White Crown lies in PT 1002,⁸⁴ where both are regarded as mother of the deceased. Additionally, a link could also be identified in the use of the term *ḥdt* associated with Sematweret's *afenet*-headdress, as well as in the information on the White Crown included in PT 470 (see tables 2 and 3).

The set of features listed for Sematweret in PT 412 and PT 675, as well as the given information about nursing, coincides exactly with that provided by PT 1002. This text also provides additional information about the breastfeeding act, including that the mother brings her breast towards her child's mouth (§ 01002h: *ḏ3=s mnd=s m r3=k*). In addition, PT 1002 (§ 01002g) concurs with another spell related to Sematweret, PT 582, both reporting that the mother elevates the deceased towards the sky (see table 3).

Note that PT 1002 mentions Sematweret, together with Semawer, as parents of the deceased at

Spell	Main statement	His/her (divine) father is...	His/her (divine) mother is...
PT 374 (§ 659c–d) + PT 1002 (§ 01002a) ⁱ	N has neither father among people, nor mother among people ⁱⁱ	Semawer	Sematweret
PT 412 (§ 728b–c)		.iii	Sematweret
PT 438 (§ 809b)		Semawer	Hewenet
PT 675 (§ 2002b–c)		.iii	Sematweret
PT 703 (§ 2203b)		.iii	Heweretweret*
<p>(i) Regarding this group of spells, see n. 83. (ii) The occurrences of this expression show slight variations in their structure, but deliver the same meaning. The typological motif 'Has No Father, Mother among Men' was defined by H.M. Hays (2012: 529). (iii) In these cases, the father is not mentioned.</p>			

Table 4. The occurrences of the expression 'you have neither father, nor mother', related to the god and goddess that immediately follows the expression.

82 See n. 38.

83 Regarding PT 374 + PT 1002, see Hays 2012: 92–93; Pierre-Croisiau 2008: 264–265; Mathieu and Pierre-Croisiau 2015: 77–78. For the different occurrences of this spell see Mathieu 2018: 186, n. 114.

84 Regarding the occurrences of PT 1002, see Mathieu and Pierre-Croisiau 2015: 78; Mathieu 2018: 187, n.118.

the beginning of the spell, but the reference to the White Crown immediately precedes the set of features and actions developed by the mother. It is difficult to be sure if there is a direct identification (a=b) of Sematweret and the White Crown in this text. But the possibility that the adjective *hdt* of the *afenet*-headdress, present in PT 412 or PT 675, was split in two references in the composition of PT 1002 (§ 01002e–h) can be considered: *in mwt=k is twt hdt nhnt tw hdt fnt hrt-ib nhb 3wt šwty nh3h3t mndwy*, ‘regarding your mother, the White Crown of Nekhen, the white *afenet*-headdress, who is in the midst of Nekheb, with two wide feathers and pendulous breasts’. At certain point, the use of the adjective *hdt* ‘white’ could have been mentally associated with the *hdt* ‘White Crown’. This could have caused not only the duplication or split in PT 1002, but also the use of a similar adjective *sšpt* ‘bright’ to make reference to the *afenet*-headdress and to the White Crown, in order to avoid confusion (PT 582, § 1566b) or repetition (PT 470, § 910b).

Regarding the strong connections between Sematweret and the White Crown and, specifically, regarding the use of the word *hdt*, K. Goebis stated that PT 412 actually named the personification of the White Crown,⁸⁵ here considered as a quality of the *afenet*-headdress (see table 2). The use of the adjective *sšpt* in PT 582 and, also, the existence of a version without the crown classifier in the corpus of the royal spouse Neith,⁸⁶ could support the idea that *hdt* might be a quality of the headdress and not a personification of the crown.

Apart from this, Spell PT 470⁸⁷ is one of the most explicit funerary texts that refers to the maternal

symbolism of the royal crowns, including both the White and the Red.⁸⁸ As mentioned before, the spell presents the deceased as Semawer (§ 913c–d), but it also stands out for including mythic references about the White Crown that are identical to some of the references of Sematweret (§ 910a–911a):

i rh ppy pn mwt=f n hm ppy pn mwt=f hdt sšpt wmtt hrt-ib nhb nbt pr-wr nbt t3-smi nbt t3-šB nbt šht-whšw nbt int-hptiw tmst dšrt nbt idbw-dpw

This Pepy knows his mother, this Pepy is not ignorant of his mother, the bright and thick⁸⁹ White Crown, who is in the midst of Nekheb, lady of the Perwer, lady of the Land of the Grass, lady of the Secret Land, lady of the Fishermen’s Fields, lady of the Satisfied One’s Valley; the red one, the Red Crown, lady of the Banks of Dep.

Here, the *hdt sšpt* could be easily related to the bright *afenet*-headdress of Sematweret in PT 582 (§ 1566b: *sšpt fnt*), and specifically to the information given by PT 1002 (§01002e–f), see table 2. Also, PT 1002 and PT 470 both used the exact same formula to describe the White Crown: *hrt-ib nhb*. This is significant, because in PT 468 (§ 900a–b) the White Crown is classified as *im(y) t nhb* ‘that is in Nekheb’; thus, the two spells that link the crown with that place do not use the same formula. However, the most relevant coincidence with Sematweret could be the mention of the Land of the Grass (*t3-smi*, PT 470), very close to the Mountain of the Grass (*dw-sm*, PT 271, § 389a). As can be seen in table 2, no other spell on Sematweret refers to this location.

Related to the White Crown				Related to the White Crown and/or Sematweret			
Spell	Subject/agent	Action	Object/receiver	Spell	Subject/agent	Action	Object/receiver
PT 470	Reborn	asks her breast to	Mother	PT 1002	Mother	brings her breast	Reborn
	Mother	offers her breast to	Reborn		Mother	suckles and does not wean	Reborn
	Mother	states that her son will succeed.	–		Mother	lifts up, and does not put on the ground	Reborn
	Reborn	will suck and will elevate	Reborn		Mother and Semawer	guide	Reborn

Table 5. Actions performed in PT 470 and PT 1002 related to the mother goddess and the (reborn) deceased.

Despite these parallels with Sematweret’s references, PT 470 also includes information not explicitly linked to her: that is the case of the epithet ‘lady of the *Perwer*’;⁹⁰ and also of some other locations mentioned along with the Land of the Grass, ascribed to the White Crown under the formula ‘lady of...’ (*nbt* . . .).⁹¹

Furthermore, the maternal actions in PT 470 (§ 911b–913b) differ substantially from what is said about Sematweret. The difference lies in the syntactic role of the participants —mother and (re)born— referred to as subject/agent and object/receiver of the action, not in the actions that take place —breastfeeding and elevation— that are almost the same (see table 2). Comparing the information provided by PT 470 and by PT 1002, shown in table 5, it can be seen that the deceased is the initiator of the scene and subject/agent of the most relevant actions: he accepts the breast of the mother, feeds himself and raises himself towards the sky as Semawer.⁹² That contrasts with the information in PT 1002, where the mother (Sematweret and/or the White Crown) is always the subject of the action received by the deceased. The same syntactic roles

are found in all spells mentioning Sematweret (see table 2), where she also is conceiving and giving birth to the deceased, protecting him or crossing aquatic environments with him (PT 554, § 1370c).

It is clear that PT 470 has many points in common to Sematweret’s mythic references, and an allusion to the god Semawer (§ 913c–d). But these elements have been presented differently in PT 470, having the deceased placed in the subject/agent role. Also, it could be possible that the communicative differences present in this text are due to gender roles: there is a direct request to the goddess, as if the speaker has the authority to order to perform the action; and there is a mitigated or intimate request from the goddess to her child, also explaining to him the motive of the request ‘accept my breast (...) that you may live (...) though you are small’.⁹³ It is not possible to assert that the common references found in the spells belonged originally to Sematweret or to the White Crown, but the way the scene between mother and son is presented in PT 470⁹⁴ may suggest that the composition of this spell is more recent than those mentioning Sematweret.

85 Goebis 2008: 188–189.

86 Neith’s pyramid has two versions of PT 412: in §729, one does not include crown classifier $\text{𓏏}=\text{𓏏}$ (a), and the other includes the S2 sign $\text{𓏏}=\text{𓏏}$ (b).

87 See n. 78.

88 See the study of PT 470 by K. Goebis (2008: 183–187).

89 Here K. Goebis read *wtt* ‘the progenitrix/snake’ (2008: 183, n. 441), and B. Mathieu, ‘Uraeus’ (2018: 312, n. 51), but I feel closer to the interpretation by R.O. Faulkner (1969: 159) and J.P. Allen (2015: 131), alluding to an aspect of the White Crown.

90 Which is generally associated with the goddess Nekhbet (see Subsection 1.2.4).

91 Spell PT 271 uses ‘the one over/which presides...’ (*tp(y)t* . . .). See Subsection 1.2.4.

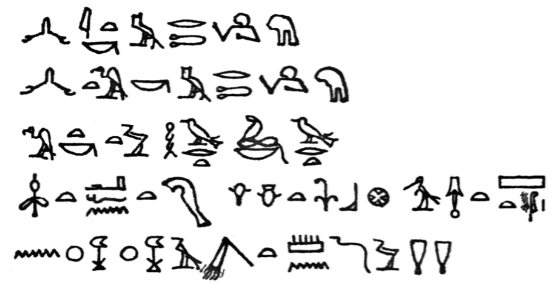
92 With the eventual assistance of the boatman Hedjhedj.

93 Concerning a study of gender in communication in the Ramesside Period, see Sweeney 2003.

94 In similar terms to the syntax of the nursing scenes in Old Kingdom funerary complexes (see Borrego Gallardo 2011: 149–164).

4 | Hewenetweret and Nut(weret) and their relation to Sematweret

In addition to the previously discussed ties between Sematweret and Semawer and the White Crown, there are also remarkable similarities with some texts in which the goddesses Hewenetweret, Nutweret and Nut are mentioned as mothers of the deceased. Starting with PT 703,⁹⁵ the end of the spell reads (§ 2203b–2204b):⁹⁶



*n it=k m rmt n mwt=k m rmt mwt=k tw hwrt-wrt hdt
fnt hrt-ib nhb wb3t šwt nh3h3t mndwy*

You have neither father among people, nor mother among people. Your mother is Heweretweret*, with the white *afenet*-headdress, who is in the midst of Nekheh, with outstretched plumage and pendulous breasts.

First of all, the text includes the previously mentioned expression ‘you have neither father,

nor mother among people’ (see table 4). Secondly, the description of the goddess’ features could be compared to the information provided by PT 412, PT 582, PT 675, and PT 1002 related to Sematweret, see table 2. Here the point of greatest difference is found in the *wb3t šwt*, literally ‘open feather’ (PT 703), instead of *šwty šwty* ‘two wide feathers’ (PT 412, PT 582, PT 1002) or *šwt šnw* ‘long hair’ (PT 675).⁹⁷

Despite the resemblance to Sematweret references, PT 703 clearly mentions a deity called Heweretweret*, only preserved in Pepy II’s version. J.P. Allen translated her name “the Great Impoverishing Uraeus”,⁹⁸ considering the sign I13, but it could be just a classifier of a feminine goddess.⁹⁹ The word *hwrt* shares its roots with terms like *hwrtw*, ‘poor, weak, helpless’¹⁰⁰ and *hwrt*, ‘untrustworthy’;¹⁰¹ a translation of Heweretweret* related to these words seems striking. Nevertheless, T.T. Shmakov pointed out a confusion between *r/n* in that name that should have been *hwnt* “lass, girl”.¹⁰² Indeed, the name Hewenetweret (*hwnt-wrt*) / appears in PT, usually translated as ‘The Great Young-woman’ or ‘the Great Lass’.¹⁰⁴

Spells PT 412 (§ 728a–b) and PT 675 (§ 2002a) both include an almost identical reference to this deity, ‘Hewenetweret in the midst of

Heliopolis has given her arms towards you’, prior to the reference of ‘Sematweret in the midst of Nekheh’, see table 2. In these two cases, the two divine entities mentioned one after the other seemed to be complementary, but they are clearly differentiated.

Two more Pyramid Texts spells name the goddess Hewenetweret, PT 389¹⁰⁵ and PT 1107,¹⁰⁶ and none of them are apparently related to Sematweret.

Additionally, Hewenet (*hwnt*) appears in PT 438 (§ 809c) together with Semawer as parents of the deceased, as mentioned previously;¹⁰⁷ and in PT 574 (§ 1487c)¹⁰⁸ as Hewenet-hetepet (*hwnt htpet*), a ferocious entity that perhaps recalls the sycamore-goddess mentioned in the first part of the spell.

Given the information provided by PT 412 and PT 675,¹⁰⁹ where Sematweret and Hewenetweret are two clearly differentiated goddesses that perform different actions towards the deceased (see tables 2 and 3), the information linked to Heweretweret* in PT 703 seems striking, especially the use of *hrt-ib nhb*¹¹⁰ when Hewenetweret is otherwise referred as *hrt-ib iwnw*. With this evidence, I think it is possible that, during the composition of PT 703, some phraseology linked to Sematweret ended up being attributed to Hewenetweret, which also resulted in her name misspelled as Heweretweret*. This mistake

could have been a confusion on the copy of Pepy II’s text.

Finally, Spell PT 548 refers to the goddess Nutweret in the following terms (§ 1344a–1345a):¹¹¹

*di nwt-wrt wy=s r=f šwt ‘b nh3h3t mnd snq=s mry-r
pn n wdlh=s sw šd=s n=s sw r pt n pth=s sw ir t3*

Nutweret gives her arms towards him. She of long horn and pendulous breast suckles Meryre and does not wean him. She has taken him to the sky and she does not drop him to the earth.

Here, the nursing action and the raising of the deceased to the sky is the same as described for Sematweret in PT 412, PT 582, PT 675 and PT 1002 (see table 3), and similar physical traits are mentioned (see table 2), also alluding to a ‘long horn’ (*šwt ‘b*) that seems close to the ‘long hair’ (*šwt šnw*) reported in PT 675 (§ 2003b). Additionally, it includes the action of giving arms towards the deceased, documented for Hewenetweret in PT 412 (§ 728a–b) and PT 675 (§ 2002a).

Frequently, scholars associate PT 548 with the goddess Nut and used its content to set the bovine aspect as one of her main features. But analyzing the content of this Spell compared with those about Sematweret and Hewenetweret (see tables 2 and 3), I consider the possibility that PT 548 contains, as could happen in PT 703, a combination or fusion of mythic references related

95 G. Meurer linked this spell with Sematweret and Nekhet (2002: 42). See Subsection 1.2.4. The best-preserved version of PT 703 is that of Pepy II (N/V/N 36–38 = N 1385–1387); also occurrences in the corpus Pepy I (P/F/Se 45–46), and Merenre (M/V/E 3–6), see Mathieu 2018: 188.

96 From Sethe 1910: 535.

97 The number of variations in passages that refer to this aspect of the goddess seem to indicate that even for the Egyptians it was a very abstract description. It may be that this variation indicates exploration; a search for meaning.

98 Allen 2015: 296.

99 In her study about divine classifiers in the Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts, N. Beaux documented the use of the sign (I12) as a classifier for female divinities, not necessarily snakes (2008: 45–46, 49–50).

100 Meeks 1980: 241 [77.2636]; Hannig 2006: 553 [20044].

101 Hannig 2006: 554 [50012].

102 Shmakov 2015: 366.

103 Examples from § 728a, Teti’s version, and from § 2002a, Pepy II’s version respectively.

104 See n. 80.

105 G. Meurer (2002: 295) noted that the goddess mentioned in PT 389, PT 412 and PT 675 is probably an allusion to Mafdet, regarding the phraseology used to describe this deity that confront snakes. See the resemblance of spell PT 384, and other allusions to Mafdet’s defensive role in PT 295, PT 297 and PT 519. J.P. Allen (2015: 356) considered *hwnt-wrt* an epithet of Mafdet, but also an epithet of Nut. Concerning the feline goddess Mafdet in the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom, see Minault-Gout 2017, 2019: 205–207.

106 A very fragmentary reference was documented in the corpus of Merenre (M/B/Se 80–81), see Pierre-Croisau 2019: 246, pl. II.

107 Spell PT 438 was discussed in Section 2, together with Semawer. See also table 4.

108 For the occurrences of this spell see Mathieu 2018: 520, n.175.

109 Respectively in § 728a and § 729a, and in § 2002a and § 2003a.

110 As pointed out in Subsection 1.2.4. Most of the occurrences could be ascribed to Sematweret.

111 Only preserved in the corpus of Pepy I, see Mathieu 2018: 498, n. 42.

to the Nekhebit Sematweret and the Heliopolitan Hewenetweret. It is also certain that Hewenetweret could have been an aspect of goddess Nut, but she was not claimed to be a bovine goddess. This may indicate that Nut was not originally a bovine goddess.

In fact, the name used in PT 548 is $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} \text{𓂏}$. It not only lacks any bovine classifier, but also lacks the sky hieroglyph (N1) that is always present in Nut's identity 𓂏 .¹¹² So, the other possibility is that PT 548 Nutweret (*nwt-wrt*) could have been a confusion in the copy, and the text should have included the very similar Hewenetweret (*hwnt-wrt*).

However, there are a few PT spells that cite Nutweret $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} \text{𓂏}$, that is the case of PT 7 (§ 5a: *nwt-wrt hrt-ib hwnt šnit*) and PT 302 (§ 459b *nwt-wrt r mn ʿwy=s n wnīs*); probably also cited as 'Nut the Great Akh' and 'Nut the Great Sprout'.¹¹³ In the latter case, the mention of the word *nhbt* could be relevant to the association with Sematweret and/or Nekhbet, but the little information the text provides about the goddess does not allow any further conclusions. None of these spells show any other links to Sematweret, however, the expression of the arm towards the deceased could establish a relationship with Hewenetweret (see table 3, action Aa).¹¹⁴

In any case, the Spell PT 697 could clear up the doubts raised by Nutweret's name and her attributions in PT 548.¹¹⁵ It includes a very close description related to the goddess Nut 𓂏 (§ 2171a–b),¹¹⁶ as can be seen in table 2 and 3.

She is described with long hair (*3wt šn*) and pendulous breasts, and giving her arm towards the deceased and carrying him to the sky. It could be said that in this spell there is no trace of bovine aspects: the long hair and the pendulous breasts could refer to the arched body of Nut as the sky vault. No other spell talks about Nut in the same terms as PT 697, so close to Sematweret's references. Even so, PT 697 is one of the furthest spells from what the original paradigm could have been, especially considering the significant difference between some words used in PT 697 and those written about Sematweret.¹¹⁷

5 | Conclusion

The information in the Pyramid Texts about Sematweret defines the divinity's bovine qualities, identifies her as the deceased's mother, and always gives her a determinant role in the birth, breastfeeding, protection and guiding of the deceased towards the sky (see table 3). The goddess is also claimed to have quite specific features: she wears an *afenet*-headdress and two wide feathers, has pendulous breasts, and is attached to the heart of Nekhebit (see table 2). The spells that refer to Sematweret, PT 412, PT 582, PT 675, and PT 1002, all contain similar and consistent information about her. Also, Hewenetweret is mentioned as a counterpart to Sematweret in PT 412 and PT 675.

¹¹² Although J.P. Allen (2015: 176) translated it as Nut.

¹¹³ Respectively, in PT 1 (§ 1a) *nwt 3ht wrt* and in PT 6 (§ 4a) *nwt nhbt wrt*.

¹¹⁴ However, this expression is not specific for Nut or Hewenetweret, as it is used in some other cases of interaction between gods and the deceased.

¹¹⁵ B. Mathieu noted that PT 697 is a variant of PT 548 (2018: 498, n. 42, 554, n. 360).

¹¹⁶ It is preserved from the corpus of Pepy I onwards, for the occurrences see Mathieu 2018: 554, n. 360.

¹¹⁷ Regarding the verbs in the expression "lifts up N to the sky, and does not put him on the ground" (action D in table 3), PT 582 (§ 1566b–c) and PT 1002 (§ 01002g), related to Sematweret, used the verbs *ḥ* + *wd* and *ḥ* + *w3h* respectively, while Nut(weret)'s PT 548 (§ 1345a) and PT 697 (§ 2171b) used *šd* + *pth* and *hnt* + *pth* respectively. Also, PT 697 used the word *shdhdt* instead of the usual *nh3h3t* to refer to the pendulous breast (trait C in table 2).

Despite the fact that Nekhbet and Sematweret seem to have been very close divine entities in the Old Kingdom, perhaps one and the same, this fact is not alluded in the Pyramid Texts. On the contrary, the spells show a clearer bond between Sematweret and The White Crown. In the case of PT 1002, it is possible that the White Crown was inserted among the mythic references of Sematweret by a mental association with her white *afenet*-headdress.

Some of the features and actions developed by the White Crown in PT 470 are also similar to some aspects documented for Sematweret. It seems that the composers of this spell have used the same mythemes that are observed in the texts of Sematweret, because it includes, in addition to the actions that the goddess performs in each case, the reminiscence of the physical traits (bright, thick), as well as the location in Nekhebit (using the formula *hrt-ib nhb*), and the obscure reference of the Mountain/Land of the Grass present in PT 271 (see tables 2 and 3).

Comparison between PT 1002 (Sematweret and/or the White Crown) and PT 470 (the White Crown) contents shows that PT 1002 mentions the involvement of the mother and a divine father (Semawer) taking care of the deceased, while PT 470 discusses a nursing situation with Semawer, the deceased himself. Although the actions described are very similar, the syntax regarding the participants in the actions and the aspect of the requests are quite different: Sematweret (and/or the White Crown) is described in her spells as a subject/agent of the actions, but the White Crown in PT 470 is mostly an object/receiver of them, carried out by the deceased. This significant variation could also be a chronological marker.

Examination of the spells that mention Semawer shows a powerful god with whom the deceased

wants to be related or identified in any form (PT 271, PT 365, PT 470, PT 509, and PT 510). This god appears sometimes referred to as father alone (PT 222), or paired with Sematweret (PT 1002) or Hewenet (PT 438), and having a close link to the expression 'you have neither human father nor mother' remarking that the deceased's parents were divine entities. However, this formula is followed in all cases by an explicit mention of the mother (see table 4), which seems to indicate that the presence of the father in the formula was not essential. The mothers linked to this formula are Sematweret (three cases out of five), but also Hewenet/Hewenetweret (two out of five).

Regarding Hewenetweret, it has been pointed out that she appears together with Sematweret in PT 412 and PT 675, but is clearly differentiated from her. That contrasts with PT 703, where Heweretweret* seems to integrate some mythologems related to Sematweret. Unfortunately, Spell PT 438, where Semawer is paired with Hewenet, does not provide information on the features or actions of the goddess (see table 2), so we cannot be sure if the fusion of references is also present in this case.

While the identification (a=b) of Hewenet with Hewenetweret (and Heweretweret*) seems possible,¹¹⁸ the same goes for the identification of Nut with Nutweret; especially considering the resemblance between the information in PT 548 and PT 697 (see tables 2 and 3). For their part, Hewenetweret and Nut share the action of the act of giving the arms towards the deceased, that appears occasionally in the spells referring to Nut;¹¹⁹ indeed, they could have been two aspects of the same divinity, because there are no elements to exclude this possibility. However, Nut and Sematweret do not appear to be equivalent;

¹¹⁸ Also, the information about Hewenet and Hewenetweret is too limited to observe clear points of difference between them.

¹¹⁹ This goddess is mentioned in more than a hundred and ten Pyramid Texts spells. This paper does not include a detailed study of them, but at least nine of them refer to Nut giving her arms towards the deceased or taking his arms.

even though the mythic references associated with Sematweret are inserted in PT 548 and PT 697, only two of more than a hundred spells alluding Nut(weret). I consider that both spells contain a combination of the mythologems related to the Nekhebite Sematweret and the Heliopolitan Hewenetweret and that, probably, Nut should only be identified with the latter.

Thus, if there was a transfer of references, it was probably due to the relevance that Sematweret must have had as mother of the reborn. To be breastfed by a goddess was key for a king to acquire his divine status, as well as to ensure his survival,¹²⁰ but Sematweret is also claimed to be the one who conceived, lifted and guided him. Her spells seem to have been relevant funerary texts because PT 412, PT 675 and PT 1002 were also preserved in CT and in later copies of PT,¹²¹ but outside the funerary texts, there is no mention of the king's divine filiation with Sematweret. During the Old Kingdom, it is not common for maternal goddesses¹²² to have an aggressive and dangerous bovine-like appearance, which is generally manifested through felines (e.g., Bastet) and birds of prey (e.g., Nekhbet). It seems clear that Sematweret did not comply with the dominant political theologies of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties.¹²³

Despite the fact that the information about the gods is restricted to what is preserved, and that several deities might have been related to one or more localities, the formula *hrt-ib nhb*

appears mainly linked to Sematweret or to mythologems alluding to her.¹²⁴ The way of expressing her provenance is relevant, since she is not a goddess merely 'from Nekheb', or 'that is in Nekheb', or even 'who presides Nekheb', but a goddess being part of the actual creative center (*ib*) of a key site in the conception of Egyptian kingship.

The goddess Sematweret seems to have been previous to the Osirian cycle, and her references in the Pyramid Texts could pertain to the non-Heliopolitan Protodynastic group defined by B. Mathieu.¹²⁵ Indeed, the recurrent use of the formula *hrt-ib nhb* for Sematweret could actually link her to the Elkab area, and to a relatively ancient time that may pre-date the Old Kingdom. The mythologems documented for Sematweret could probably be considered integrated into the Osirian cycle when they were associated with Nut(weret).

There is no certainty that all the spells referring to Sematweret were composed or written at the same time; in fact, the slight variations in her references might suggest otherwise: the mention of a long hair instead of the two wide feathers (PT 675), the use of the adjective bright instead of white (PT 582), and the insertion of the White Crown next to the white *afenet* (PT 1002). These differences seem to be clarifications of a hypothetical original reference, made when the spells that included Sematweret were composed or even when they were copied to be inserted in some

¹²⁰ Leclant 1951: 126. From a study of nursing scenes in Old Kingdom funerary complexes, it has been established that this action was a fundamental expression of the power of kingship, and that it had great importance in rituals, not only in funerary contexts but also as part of the coronation (Borrego Gallardo 2011: 189).

¹²¹ Spell PT 412 is recognized in multiple monuments and coffins, and in CT 839 (see Allen 1950: 82–83; Mathieu 2018: 296, n. 276); in fewer cases for PT 675 (see Allen 1950: 98); PT 1002 text was recently identified by using CT 517 (see Mathieu and Pierre-Croisiau 2015: 78, 83–95).

¹²² Regarding the mythic female prototype see Troy 1986: 53–68.

¹²³ See Borrego Gallardo 2013.

¹²⁴ In PT 412 and PT 675 linked to Sematweret; in PT 1002 related to the White Crown and/or Sematweret; in PT 470 linked to the White Crown; in PT 703 for Heweretweret*; and in PT 508, referring an 'anonymous' goddess.

¹²⁵ About this theory of conception and writing of the Pyramid Texts spells, see Mathieu 2018: 9–14.

funerary ritual or corpus. The existence of different layers in the composition of the texts would have led to some contradictions between spells. For example, spells PT 548 and PT 697, ascribed to Nut(weret) could have belonged to a more modern phase of conception and/or writing, with the appearance of a clear Heliopolitan figure assuming the role of a more ancient or different mother goddess and her mythic references.¹²⁶

The funerary corpus of Pepy I contains all of the known spells that mention Sematweret.¹²⁷ It also includes the other spells collected in tables 2 and 3.¹²⁸ Given the extension of his corpus, it could easily include ancient compositions and more modern references, or it could even contain texts from different traditions. It is very difficult

to separate the layers that make up the corpus of Pepy or others. However, I consider that spell PT 412, and maybe PT 271 and PT 554, would be the closest to the original information on Sematweret, while the furthest—maybe the most recent—references would be found in PT 470, related to the White Crown, and in PT 697, related to Nut.

In essence, the appearance of Sematweret in several spells and the use of her mythic references related to different mother goddesses shows the real influence of her actions on the rebirth of the deceased, even in those cases—probably the most modern ones—where the attributions of the mother goddess seem to have been modified and the main focus is on a powerful and brave deceased that acts almost on their own.

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¹²⁶ See n. 125.

¹²⁷ PT 271 (P/V/E 16–18 = P 621–623), PT 412 (P/E/Sw 27–37), PT 554 (P/V/E 8–9 = P 613–614), PT 582 (P/E/W 80–83), PT 675 (P/F–A/S 3 (?)–13), and PT 1002 (P/F/Se 44–45).

¹²⁸ PT 548 has no other parallel, but his variant PT 697 has five occurrences (see n.111, 115, 116). Regarding PT 470, see n. 78. Concerning the occurrences of PT 438, see n. 81.

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