

The Complex Genealogy of the Senbi – Wekhhotep Family¹ of Meir

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the background of the Senbi - Wekhhotep family, governors of El-Qusiya in the Twelfth Dynasty and owners of tombs Nos. B1-B4 and C1 at Meir. The prevailing hypothesis is that following Senbi I and Wekhhotep I, Senbi II died prematurely and his full sister Mersi, who was buried in her brother's tomb B3, married a noble named Wekhhotep, son of Iam/Ima (tomb A3), and their son, Wekhhotep II (tomb B4) became the governor of El-Qusiya, establishing a new line of rulers of the province under Amenemhat II. The large distance between tombs A3 and B4 would argue against the identification of Wekhhotep II with the son of the owner of tomb A3. The analysis of the honours held by both Wekhhotep I and Wekhhotep II and their wives, the likelihood of multiple marriages and of marriages of close relatives or even brother-sister marriages have been examined. The analysis of the data found in the Middle Kingdom tombs at Meir suggests that members of the ruling family of El-Qusiya had royal ancestry, were polygamists and practised consanguineous marriages. Senbi I of tomb B1 was succeeded by his son Wekhhotep I (tomb B2), who was successively followed by three sons, by three different wives, Senbi II (tomb B3), Wekhhotep II (tomb B4) and Wekhhotep III (tomb C1). The last of the brothers came to power at a relatively old age as he appears in some scenes and statues.

Objectives

The main research questions for this paper are whether the Middle Kingdom governors of El-Qusiya belonged to one family and whether their successions were always from father to son. The locations of the tombs, the names, kinships and titles of the main represented individuals, and the state of completion of the tombs will be examined in

¹ The numbering of individuals named Wekhhotep who are buried at Meir is disputed (Blackman, 1914-1953B, passim). Here, only individuals who governed the nome, i.e. who held the title of *jmj-r hmw-ntr* "overseers of priests", were given numbers. Thus Wekhhotep I is the owner of tomb B2, Wekhhotep II is the owner of tomb B4, and Wekhhotep III is the owner of tomb C1. The owner of tomb A3 was not included as he was not a governor, even though he held the title of *h3tj-3* "count".

order to establish the most likely genealogy of these governors. This will be contrasted with the genealogy suggested by earlier scholars and now widely accepted.

Introduction

The present article discusses the genealogy of the Middle Kingdom governors of El-Qusiya who were buried in five tombs at Meir. These are: *Snbj* I ‘Senbi I’ (tomb No. B1); *Wh-htp* I ‘Wekhhotep I’ (tomb No. B2); *Snbj* II ‘Senbi II’ (tomb No. B3); *Wh-htp* II ‘Wekhhotep II’ (tomb No. B4); *Wh-htp* III ‘Wekhhotep III’ (tomb No. C1). The case of *Wh-htp* ‘Wekhhotep’, son of *J3m* ‘Iam’ (tomb No. A3) will also be discussed.

Wekhhotep II, the owner of tomb No. B4, was the son of Wekhhotep and *Mrsj* ‘Mersi’ (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 9, 12, 19, 27). It has been suggested by Blackman, and now accepted somewhat hesitantly by Favry, that Wekhhotep II represented a new branch of the noble family of Meir: that he was the son of Mersi III, the daughter of Wekhhotep I, who was buried in the neighbouring tomb of her brother, Senbi II (No. B3), while his father, Wekhhotep, son of Iam/Ima, was the owner of tomb A3 (Blackman, 1914, 11-12; Blackman, 1953B, pls. 2, 5; Favry, 2005, 68). According to this reconstruction of the family tree, Wekhhotep II the owner of tomb B4 would have prepared tomb A3 for his father, while his mother was buried with her brother in tomb B3. This scenario is not impossible, but highly unlikely considering the small size of tomb A3, its location at a great distance from group B, and being very close to group A of the late Old Kingdom. Certainly, many other suitable spots for such a small tomb were available near group B in the vicinity of the other tombs of this family and close to tomb B3 where Mersi III is buried. Furthermore, if Iam/Ima, the suggested grandfather of Wekhhotep II, were the same as the person depicted in the list of ancestors shown in Wekhhotep II’s chapel, then his wife was called *Snb* ‘Seneb’ (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 10). It is therefore curious that of the many individuals preserved in the scenes and inscriptions of tomb B4 no male relative of the tomb owner was called Iam/Ima, or a female relative called Seneb. It seems more likely that the owner of A3 was an ancestor of Senbi I of B1,² rather than the husband of Mersi III of B3 and the father of Wekhhotep II of B4.

Examination of the evidence

Wekhhotep II

The location of Wekhhotep II’s tomb certainly associates him with the main branch of the noble family, the descendants of Senbi I of tomb B1. Wekhhotep (II) had at least three brothers carrying the same name, Wekhhotep (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 14, 22). It may be argued that this was the result of his being the son of Wekhhotep who the son of Iam/Ima was. Yet in this case, it would be difficult to explain the fact that his eldest son as well as a second son were both named Senbi (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 18:2). It was usual among members of the noble families for sons to be named after their fathers or grandfathers and daughters after their mothers or grandmothers. Not only was the mother of Wekhhotep II called Mersi, but both his sister and his daughter carried the same name (Blackman, 1915B, pls.6, 14). The wife of Wekhhotep II was called *Dḥwtj-*

² Although Senbi’s father was called Wekhhotep, he is unlikely to be the owner of tomb A3, which was made for him by a son also called Wekhhotep (Blackman, 1914, pl. 9).

hṭp II ‘Djehutihotep II’, and in one instance was described as the daughter of Wekhhotep (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 7, 18:1, 27).³ It is possible that she was the daughter of Wekhhotep I and Djehutihotep I of tomb B2. If so, then she was probably named after the distinguished wife of Wekhhotep I, who is constantly represented of equal size to her husband and in one instance is depicted in front of him, holding a papyri-form staff (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 2; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, 49, pls. 55, 89), a type of staff usually held by goddesses and members of the royal family.⁴

Due to the poor preservation of some sections of the wall decoration in tomb B4 it is uncertain whether Wekhhotep II’s name was ever followed, like those of Senbi I of tomb B1 and Senbi II of tomb B3 (Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 74a; Blackman, 1953B, pl. 8), by the determinative of a seated figure on a block chair with the *hwt*-sign at the side. This was a type of chair used by individuals with royal heritage (Lashien, 2017, 276-283). However, Wekhhotep II’s decoration of the architrave above his statue recess is noteworthy. It is immediately opposite the entrance to his chapel, and shows the winged disk below an elongated sign of heaven full of stars painted on it. The inscriptions on the architrave give the titles and names of King Nubkaure/ Amenemhat II (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 19), although no Middle Kingdom king is mentioned in any other tomb at Meir. The close association of Wekhhotep II with King Amenemhat II may be perceived in the epithets he held, including *mḥ-jb n nswt m ssm.f nb* “confidant of the king in all his conduct”, *jmj-jb Hr nb t3wj* “confidant of Horus, lord of the Two Lands”, and *mdd w3t nt smnh sw* “one who is loyal to him who promoted him” (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 9, 19; Favry, 2005, 54). More importantly is the fact that he was the only one at El-Qusiya to hold the rare title *jt ntr mrjj ntr* “father of the god, beloved of the god” (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 19). This title is attested from the late Old Kingdom onwards, but only with individuals very close to the king and the palace, although the exact relationships are disputed.⁵

A few examples of the holders of this title may indicate its importance and the type of men holding it. These include for instance Pepy I’s possible vizier *R^c-wr* ‘Rewer’ (El-Fikey, 1980, pls 9, 21), who only held the title *mrj ntr* “beloved of the god”, and who may have been the son of *Špsj-pw-Pth* ‘Shepsipuptah’, the king’s brother-in-law.⁶ Pepy I’s father-in-law *Hwj* ‘Khewi’ was *jt ntr jrj-p^ct* “father of the god, hereditary prince” (Fischer, 2000, fig. 27), while his son *D^cw* ‘Djau’ was *jrj-p^ct mrj ntr* “hereditary prince, beloved of the god” (Borchardt, 1937, 111, CG 1431). The vizier *Ttj* ‘Teti’ who was

³ Blackman, 1915B, pls. 7, 18:1, 27. Blackman’s copy of her designation on the west wall, south of statue recess, as the daughter of Wekhhotep (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 18:1), has been checked on location.

⁴ See for example Queens *Jpwt* ‘Iput’ and *Wdb-tn* ‘Wedjebten’, wives of Pepy II (Jéquier, 1933, fig. 22; idem, 1928, fig. 3. See also examples collected by Harpur, 1987, 332.

⁵ For some examples see Jones, 2000, 345[1283], 439[1626]; Ward, 1982, 69[570h]; Birrell, 1998, passim; Baud, 1999, 148-50.

⁶ A man named *R^c-wr* ‘Rewer’ is depicted in the tomb of *Špsj-pw-Pth* ‘Shepsipuptah’ in the Teti cemetery described as his eldest son. The tomb owner was married to a king’s daughter of his body, named *Sšsšt* ‘Seshshet’, who may well have been Teti’s daughter. However, as she is represented with the pigtail of youth, Rewer may have been the tomb owner’s son by a previous marriage (Kanawati and Abder-Raziq, 2001, 12-13, pls. 1a, 37).

buried in the cemetery of Pepy II enjoyed the honours of being *jt ntr mrjj ntr jrj-p^ct s3 nswt smsw sdtj nswt* “father of the god, beloved of the god, hereditary prince, king’s eldest son, foster child of the king” (Jéquier, 1940, 67-74).⁷ Although his exact kinship to the king is not known, vizier Teti must have been very close to the king and probably a royal relative. *Wsr* ‘Weser’ of Khosam, whom Fischer believes was the eldest son of at least a queen of lesser importance, held the titles of “father of the god, beloved of the god, hereditary prince, king’s eldest son” (Fischer, 1964, 41-42, pl. 13). Both *Šm3j* ‘Shemai’ and his son *Jdj* ‘Idi’ of Coptos also enjoyed the distinction of being “father of the god, beloved of the god, hereditary prince, foster child of the king” (Fischer, 1964, 37; Goedicke, 1967, figs. 17, 20-21; Mostafa, 2014, 25ff.). We know that Shemai’s wife held the title “king’s eldest daughter”. Whether this title should be taken literally or not, it seems likely that she was related to the king. *B3wj* ‘Bawi’ of Akhmim was a vizier and overseer of the army and claimed the honours of being “father of the god, beloved of the god, hereditary prince, foster child of the king”. He probably belonged to the Heracleopolitan period (Kanawati, 1989, 33-34, fig. 17). Facing King Montuhotep II on a relief from Shatt el-Rigal is a man named *Jn-jt.f* ‘Intef’, who is described as *jt ntr mrjj ntr s3-R^c Jn-jt.f^cnh(.w) dt* “father of the god, beloved of the god, Son of Re, Intef, may he live forever” (Habachi, 1958, 189). The exact status of this man is disputed, but he certainly claimed royal attributes. A Twelfth Dynasty vizier named *Mntw-htp* ‘Montuhotep’ held the titles of “hereditary prince, father of the god, beloved of the god” (Lange and Schäfer, 1925, 153ff.), but his background is not entirely clear.

The above examples show that the title “father of the god, beloved of the god” probably indicates royal kinship, even if a distant one (also Helck, 1954, 94-95). Birrell concluded that as the living representative of the gods at investiture, the *jt-ntr mrjj-ntr* was the medium by which the king gained his legitimacy. The *jt-ntr mrjj-ntr* placed the crown on the king’s head and assumed various cultic functions in the realm of mythology (Birrell, 1998, 406-408). As mentioned above, royal heritage is claimed by both Senbi I and Senbi II, as might be deduced from the seated determinative after their names. Although such a symbol is not preserved in the tomb of Wekhhotep I, it should be taken into consideration that the scenes and inscriptions of the chapel are largely unfinished, that the original façade and entrance are badly damaged, and that the tomb owner was almost certainly the son of Senbi I and the father of Senbi II.⁸ Furthermore, Wekhhotep I is the only Middle Kingdom governor of El-Qusiya to bear the title *hrj-tp 3 n Ndft* “great overlord of nome 14” (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 12:1; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 94a). The reason for granting such a title to the nomarch of a province traditionally governed by an “overseer of priests” is uncertain, and the only previous holder of this title in this province was *Hnjtt/ Nfr-k3w* ‘Heny/ Noferkau’, the eldest son of *Ppjj-^cnh km* ‘Pepyankh the Black’ of tomb A2, who is dated to the very end of Pepy II’s reign or later (Blackman, 1953A, pls. 26-27; Kanawati and Evans, 2014B, 18, pls.

⁷ For the reading of the titles see Jones, 2000, 345[1283], 439[1626], 315[1157, 799[2913], 986[3645], respectively; Ward, 1982, 69[570h], 102[850], 145[1245], 174[1506], respectively.

⁸ Wekhhotep I refers to himself as Senbi’s son (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 12:1, 3), and although no sons are depicted in his chapel, Senbi II, of the adjacent tomb, B3, refers to himself as Senbi, son of Wekhhotep, son of Senbi, borne to Djehutihotep (Blackman, 1953B, pl. 8).

87-88). As no tomb is known for Henyt/ Noferkau and that of Wekhhotep I was left largely unfinished, it is reasonable to think that the granting of the title “great overlord of nome 14” was associated with periods of instability, and perhaps the need to give the governor of the province more powers and authority to raise a local army.

Wekhhotep I

Wekhhotep I held other titles which were used for the first time in the province. On the west wall, south of the statue recess and opposite the tomb entrance, he is described as *hw w^c jw^{tj} snw.f* “sole protector, without equal” (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 15; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, 34, pl. 88).⁹ The title is written immediately after his ranks of *jrj-p^ct h3tj-^c* “hereditary prince and count”. His concern with “protection” may also be deduced from the depiction on the north wall, opposite his standing figure with his wife, of four pairs of wrestlers, with similar representation found only in his father’s neighbouring tomb (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 2; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 89). A connection between wrestling and bodybuilding as army training may be deduced from the contemporary tombs in the nearby site of Beni Hassan (Newberry, 1893, pls. 14-16; idem, 1894, pls. 5, 15; Kanawati and Evans, 2016, pls. 97-102; idem, 2018, pls. 73-78; Lashien and Mourad, 2019, pls. 73-74). Titles related to the concept of ‘protection’ are not very common, but they were held, for instance, in the neighbouring province of El-Bersha by *Dhw^{tj}-htp* II ‘Djehutihotep II’, who is dated to the reigns of Amenemhat II to Senwesret III (Favry, 2005, 39, 56-58) and was designated *hw-^c n jmj^c h* “Protector of he who is in the palace” (Newberry, 1895, pls. 6, 18). Amenemhat of Beni Hassan (tomb No. 2) held the titles *hw-^c* “protector”, as well as *jmj-r mš^c wr n M3-hd* “overseer of the great army of the Oryx nome” (Newberry, 1893, pls. 8B, 17; Kanawati and Evans, 2016, pls. 84b, 103), under Senwosret I (Favry, 2005, 39). On the same west wall, but north of the statue recess, Wekhhotep I’s name is followed by the epithet *jkr* “the excellent”. Nowhere else in the tomb was he so designated, nor was anyone else so described at El-Qusiya at any time. It might also be significant that while most of the other preserved scenes and inscriptions in the tomb are in sculpture, even if in part unfinished, the seated figure of the tomb owner and the accompanying inscriptions where his name is appended by the epithet *jkr* “the excellent” are all in drawings with intact gridlines (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 10; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pls. 48-49, 87). It seems likely that these were the last additions to the decoration, shortly before the presumably early death of the owner and the interruption of the work on the tomb, or even immediately following his death.

Fischer has already collected examples of men who added the epithet *jkr* to their names and in one instance of a man who wrote it “probably as a posthumous distinction” to the name of a predecessor (Fischer, 1968, 130-131, n. 576). While Egyptians distinguished the similarly named individuals of contemporary or successive generations by the addition of epithets like the Elder, the Middle, the Younger, the Black, the Red, etc., *jkr* “the excellent” and probably 3 “the great” were attributes that one presumably gained through achievements, probably military achievements. 3nh-tj-fj ‘Ankhtifi’ of Mo^calla, for example, repeatedly added *jkr* after his name and he was

⁹ The title is unattested in its present form in Jones, 2000, 686[2510], or Ward, 1982, 131[1123].

obviously keen to emphasise his military activities (Vandier, 1950, *passim*). *Mrjj-ʕ3* ‘Mery-aa’ of El-Hagarsa died before his tomb was completed so his eldest son, *Nnw* ‘Nenu’, decorated it for him (Kanawati, 1995, 33, pl. 35). We are not informed how he died, but evidence of wars and death is abundant in the neighbouring and probably contemporary tombs of *W3hj* ‘Wahi’ and *Hffj* ‘Hefefi’ (Kanawati, 1995, 15, pl. 19b.; *idem*, 1993, *passim*). *Ttj jkr* ‘Tjeti-iqer’ and *Ttj ʕ3* ‘Tjeti-aa’ were nomarchs of Akhmim, presumably at the end of the Sixth Dynasty and in the Eighth Dynasty, respectively. The former died before completing his tomb, which was undertaken by his eldest son and successor, Kheni (Kanawati, 1980, 19, fig.19a). The scenes and inscriptions in the tomb of Tjeti-aa are very poorly preserved, while his fragmentary biography mentions war (Kanawati, 1988, fig. 12). A link between the epithets *jkṛ* and *ʕ3* and military achievements might explain their appearance at the end of the Old Kingdom, and their increase during the Heracleopolitan Period and continuation in the earlier part of the Middle Kingdom.

An examination of tomb representations at Meir shows that *Dḥwtj-ḥtp* I ‘Djehutihotep I’, wife of Wekhhotep I of the Twelfth Dynasty, and *Hwt-jḥ* ‘Hewetiaah’, wife of *Ppjj-nḥ ḥrj-jb* ‘Pepyankh the Middle’ of the Sixth Dynasty, enjoyed a special status and were depicted of equal size to their husbands.¹⁰ Also, Hewetiaah was shown on the lintel of the entrance to their offering chamber seated next to her husband on a block chair with the *ḥwt*-sign at the side. Djehutihotep I was depicted standing in front of her husband holding a papyri-form staff (Blackman, 1924, pl. 5; *idem*, 1915A, pl. 2; Kanawati, 2012, pl. 75a; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 89), with both items, the special types of chair and the staff, used by individuals with royal heritage. However, Djehutihotep I appears to be represented seven times in equal size to Wekhhotep I, although occasionally her name is damaged or not written, and it may be argued that some of the depicted figures represent a different woman (Blackman, 2015A, pls. 2, 5-6, 9, 13-15; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pls. 83, 86-89, 94-95). In addition, the tomb owner is shown as a large figure seated on a chair and accompanied by the small figure of a woman, sitting on the floor and holding a lotus flower in one hand, while clasping his leg with the other. She looks backward and upward affectionately into his face while they are enjoying the singing and the music played by a harpist and a flute player (Blackman, 1915A, pl. 3; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 90). It is unfortunate that the woman’s name was not written, or has not been preserved, but it seems likely that she is a different woman to Djehutihotep I.

Evidence suggests that the death of many men in domestic and external wars during the period from the latter part of the Old Kingdom to the earlier part of the Middle Kingdom probably resulted in many changes in social customs at the time. Among these changes is the increase of polygamy and perhaps the encouragement to marry close relatives or even brother-sister marriages. A most obvious case of polygamy is recorded by Wekhhotep III of tomb C1 at Meir (Blackman, 1953B, pls. 13, 15-17, 19). Furthermore, we should bear in mind that some polygamists might not have represented all their wives. The reference to Mersi I, wife of Senbi I, as *jm3ḥjtt pr ḥmwt* ‘the honoured one

¹⁰ This excludes the representations of the wives in fishing and fowling trips where the emphasis is on the husband’s actions.

of the house of women/ wives” (Blackman, 1914B, pl. 9; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 77), most probably indicates the presence of more than one wife/ concubine. *S3t-Jp* ‘Satip’, the wife of Khnumhotep I of Beni Hassan, was given a similar epithet, where she was described as *hnwt hmwt nbwt* “mistress of all women/ wives”, and the recent re-recording of the tomb clearly shows that Khnumhotep I had multiple wives (Lashien and Mourad, 2019, 14, pls. 68, 71; Newberry, 1893, pl. 46).

Marriage, or ‘partnership’ with a close relative may also be deduced from the fact that Khnumhotep I had a daughter named Tjat, while Khnumhotep II had a concubine/ partner with the same infrequent name, with whom he had children and probably later married (Lashien and Mourad, 2019, pl. 69; Ward, 1984, 51-59). A most obvious case of brother-sister marriage is found in tomb B3 at Meir (Kanawati, 2017B, 254). The inscriptions in the tomb belong to Senbi II and Mersi III, with each clearly identified as the son of Wekhhotepe I and Djehutihotepe I (Blackman, 1953B, pls. 6-8). Mersi III is repeatedly described as *nbt-pr* “lady of the house”; an epithet which indicates that she was a married woman. Probably refusing to accept the practice of consanguineous marriages outside the royal family and the gods, Blackman suggested that Mersi III married Wekhhotepe son of Iam/ Ima, owner of tomb A3, and produced Wekhhotepe II of B4 (Blackman, 1914, 11-12), a suggestion which is widely accepted (see Favry, 2005, 68; Grajetzki, 2009, 114). Yet it seems almost inconceivable for a woman to be buried in her brother’s tomb and emphasise her marital status, although with no reference to her husband whose tomb lies at a huge distance in the cemetery. Equally unlikely is it for Wekhhotepe II to refer to his father simply as Wekhhotepe, with no reference to his being the son of Iam/ Ima, when his own tomb lies in the immediate vicinity of the better-known Wekhhotepe I of tomb B2. A more likely interpretation of the evidence suggests that Wekhhotepe II’s choice of location for his tomb B4 indicates that he belonged to the same branch of the family. Accordingly, his father, Wekhhotepe, is probably the only other Wekhhotepe in this group of tombs, the owner of tomb B2. If so, his mother Mersi was thus a second wife of Wekhhotepe I, presumably the one depicted in his tomb as a small figure clasping his leg.¹¹

The above analysis suggests that Wekhhotepe I married Djehutihotepe I, a distinguished woman, with possible royal heritage, and as a second wife, he took his full sister Mersi II. From the first marriage he had Senbi II, Mersi III, and probably Djehutihotepe II (unless the last was also the daughter of Mersi II), and from the second marriage he had Wekhhotepe II. Senbi II married his full sister Mersi III and succeeded to the nomarchy but died after a short period in office and before their tomb was completed. Presumably having no heir, at least not one of a suitable age, Senbi II was succeeded by his half-brother, Wekhhotepe II, probably the eldest son of Wekhhotepe I by Mersi II, who married his sister, or half-sister Djehutihotepe II, in whose tomb she is described as “his wife, Djehutihotepe, daughter of Wekhhotepe” (Blackman, 1915B, 18:1).

¹¹ It is interesting that Mersi I, the wife of Senbi I and possible mother of Mersi II has also been regularly represented in small size in her husband’s tomb (Blackman, 1914, pls. 2, 9; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pls. 77-78, 80).

That Wekhhotep I had at least two wives (as against a wife and concubines) may be gleaned from the fact that while Senbi I identified himself as the son of a Wekhhotep, and Wekhhotep I as the son of Senbi (I), with neither of them mentioning the name of his mother (Blackman, 1914, pl. 9; idem, 1915A, pl. 12; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pls. 77, 94-95), the following governors, Senbi II, Wekhhotep II, and Wekhhotep III felt the necessity to record the names of both their fathers and mothers (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 4, 13, 19, 27; idem, 1953B, pls. 8, 15, 17, 18). In the case of multiple marriages, it was customary to mention the name of the mother for precise identification. Clear examples of such tradition may be found in the tombs of Isi of Edfu, Mery-aa of El-Hagarsa and Khnumhotep II of Beni Hassan, all of whom had children by a number of women, with each child ascribed to his/her mother (Alliot, 1935, 25; Kanawati, 1995, pl. 42; Newberry, 1893, pl. 35; Kanawati and Evans, 2014A, pl. 139). Wekhhotep I named his eldest son by Djehutihotep I Senbi (II) after his own father and probably his eldest son by Mersi II Wekhhotep (II) after his grandfather. He called his eldest daughter by Djehutihotep I Mersi (III), presumably after his own mother, and his second daughter Djehutihotep (II) after his distinguished wife. Senbi II married his full sister Mersi III, and succeeded to the nomarchy, followed by his half-brother Wekhhotep II, who, presumably, was married to his half-sister Djehutihotep II. He named two of his sons Senbi, no doubt after his grandfather and founder of the governing family of the Middle Kingdom, and named his only daughter Mersi, after his mother, or perhaps after his grandmother and wife of Senbi I. That this nomarchic family appears to have practised consanguineous marriages should not be surprising, particularly considering that they claimed royal ancestry.

Wekhhotep III

Wekhhotep II was presumably succeeded by Wekhhotep III of tomb C1, whose relationship to the former is uncertain. Wekhhotep III recorded that he was the son of Wekhhotep and *Hnjj hrj-jb* 'Heny-heryib' (Blackman, 1953B, pls. 13, 15, 17, 18). Blackman suggested that Wekhhotep III, whom he dated to the reigns of Senwosret II and III, was the nephew of Wekhhotep II (B4), and raised "the possibility of there having been a brother-sister marriage". Thus his mother, Heny-heryib, married a brother of Wekhhotep II, also named Wekhhotep (Blackman, 1914, 13; idem, 1953B, 13; Favry, 2005, 38, 54-55, n.142). As Wekhhotep II had a number of sons, it seems unlikely that he would be succeeded by a nephew. It is more plausible that Wekhhotep, the father of Wekhhotep III, was either Wekhhotep I or Wekhhotep II. A man bearing the name, Heny-heryib, is depicted in the tomb of Wekhhotep II among brothers and sisters of the tomb owner, although the inscription referring to his kinship is damaged (Blackman, 1915B, pl. 14). If he was the brother of Wekhhotep II, which seems likely,¹² then he probably was the son of Wekhhotep I. Two alternatives may then be suggested: a) that Heny-heryib (the man) was named after his mother, in which case Wekhhotep III would have been the son of Wekhhotep I; b) that Heny-heryib was the brother of the female Heny-heryib, who was the mother of Wekhhotep III. In this case Wekhhotep III would have been the son of Wekhhotep II and his sister Heny-heryib. The first alternative seems more likely, as no son named Wekhhotep, or a wife named Heny-

¹² Blackman also raises this possibility (1915B, 4).

heryib is preserved in tomb B4, although it should be emphasised that the decoration of the chapel is in a poor state of preservation, with missing parts of scenes and inscriptions. It is possible that the name Heny-heryib was borrowed from Pepyankh-heryib of the Sixth Dynasty, who also bore the name Heny, and who once wrote it on the thickness of the entrance to his offering chamber as Heny-heryib (Blackman, 1924, pl. 6; Kanawati, 2012, pl. 78). That the Middle Kingdom nomarchs had access to information on the Old Kingdom nobles may be gleaned from the list of ancestors, which Wekhhotepe II was able to inscribe in his tomb, and which includes correct information recorded in tomb D2 of Pepyankh-heryib (Blackman, 1915B, pls. 10-11).¹³ Perhaps as the founder of the Middle Kingdom governing family, Senbi I named one of his daughters after the distinguished governor Heny-heryib (/Pepyankh-heryib) of the Sixth Dynasty who, according to his own biography inaugurated the cemetery of Meir (Blackman, 1924, pl. 4A; Kanawati, 2012, pl. 76). Like Pepyankh-heryib, Senbi represented himself seated on the block chair with *hwt*-sign at the side, usually used by individuals with royal heritage (Blackman, 1924, pl. 5; Kanawati, 2012, pl. 75a; Kanawati and Evans, 2017A, pl. 74a).

Similarity between the decoration in the tombs of Wekhhotepe II and Pepyankh-heryib may be found in the offering table scenes. Offering tables are depicted on both sides of the false door on the west wall of the offering room in Wekhhotepe II's chapel (Blackman, 1915B, Pl. 27). While the upper part of the wall on either side of the false door was reserved for the tomb owner's offering tables,¹⁴ the lower part of the wall depicted similar scenes pertaining to members of his family. Thus, his parents share a table on the right side and his wife, Djehutihotepe, has a separate table on the left, their figures being approximately 2/3 of those of Wekhhotepe II in dimensions. While the representation of the wife in one's tomb was quite common, the depiction of parents is exceedingly rare;¹⁵ however, parents are frequently mentioned in tomb inscriptions, presumably for precise identification of the tomb owner himself. The only other depiction of parents at Meir is in the Sixth Dynasty tomb of Pepyankh-heryib, tomb D2. There, the tomb owner equally shows his parents in somewhat smaller size than his own, but with each sitting at a separate table. In addition, unlike the representation of the family at offering tables in the tomb of Wekhhotepe II, where his wife is shown, the wife of Pepyankh-heryib, Hewetiaah, is not included, although a separate table scene is allocated to her on the adjacent west wall (Blackman, 1924, pls. 14-15; Kanawati, 2012, pls. 83-84).

Conclusions

The above reconstruction of the genealogy of this family suggests that Wekhhotepe I was succeeded by three sons born of different wives. The governing family of El-Qusiya seems to have practised polygamy on a large scale, but perhaps none exceeded

¹³ The man whose name is now missing and whose wife is Hewet-iah, might be Pepyankh-heryib himself. He is followed by Hepi and his wife Pekhert. This may well represent Pepyankh-heryib's father and his mother Pekher-nofert.

¹⁴ The scene continues on the south wall, thus while the left figure of the seated tomb owner is drawn on the west wall, the offering table before him is depicted on the south wall (Blackman, 1915B, Pl. 25).

¹⁵ For a possible reason of this phenomenon see Kanawati, 1981, 213-225.

Wekhhotept III who represented himself surrounded by many women, each described as *hmt.f* “his wife”, or *nbt-pr* “lady of the house” (Blackman, 1953B, pls. 13, 15-17, 19). The possible reason for the succession of three brothers, or half-brothers, is probably the early death of members of this family, as demonstrated by the unfinished state of their tombs, particularly tombs B2 and B3, probably before their eldest sons reached an appropriate age to govern. Wekhhotept III was the last of the brothers to occupy the top position in the province. He accordingly must have succeeded his brothers at a relatively old age, and this may be gathered from the representation of numerous wives in his tomb, as well as from his depiction as an elderly man in some of the scenes in his chapel as well as in statues (Figures 1–3).

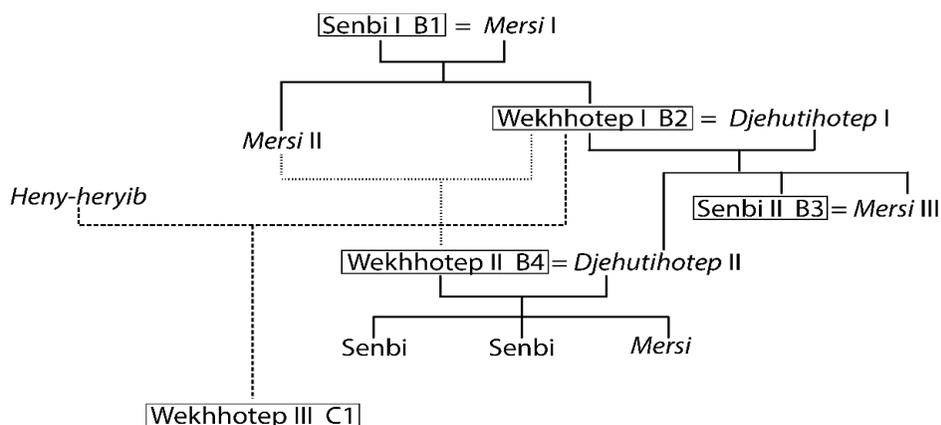


Fig.1. Family tree of the Senbis and Wekhhotepts of Meir.

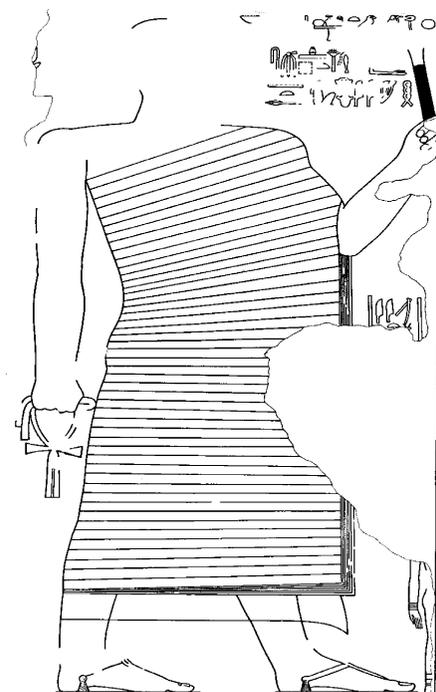


Fig.2. Wekhhotept III as a mature aged man (Blackman, 1953B, pl. 18)



Figure.3. Wekhhotep III and family (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Accession No. 1973.87)



Figure.4. Wekhhotep III and family (photograph courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

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الانساب المعقدة لعائلة سنبي واوخ حتب بمنطقة مير

سامح شفيق

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الملخص

بحث هذا المقال في خلفية عائلة سنبي و اوخ حتب التي حكمت القوصية خلال الأسرة الثانية عشر والتي دفنت في المقابر B4-B1-C1 بجبانة مير. الإفتراض السائد أنه بعد سنبي الأول و اوخ حتب الاول ، مات سنبي الثاني في سن مبكر وتزوجت أخته الشقيقة والتي دفنت معه في نفس المقبرة رقم B3 من نبيل اسمه اوخ حتب، ابن يام / ايما صاحب المقبرة A3، وأصبح إبنهما، اوخ حتب الثاني صاحب المقبرة B4 حاكما للقوصية، مؤسسا بذلك خطا جديدا من حكام الإقليم تحت حكم الملك امنمحات الثاني، وقد ترجع المسافة الكبيرة بين المقبرتين B4-A3 أن اوخ حتب الثاني هو نفسه ابن صاحب المقبرة A3. وقد تمت دراسة تحليلية للتكريم الذي ناله كل من اوخ حتب الأول و اوخ حتب الثاني وزوجتيهما، وكذلك احتمال تعدد الزوجات وزواج الأقارب من الدرجة الأولى وحتى زواج الأخ بالأخت. تشير تحليل المعلومات المسجلة في مقابر الدولة الوسطى في مير إلى أن أعضاء الأسرة الحاكمة في القوصية كان لديهم أصول ملكية وكانوا متعددي الزوجات ويمارسون زواج الأقارب، وقد جاء بعد سنبي الأول صاحب المقبرة B1 إبنه صاحب المقبرة B2 والذي خلفه على التوالي ثلاثة من أبنائه من زوجات مختلفات هم سنبي الثاني، اوخ حتب الثاني، اوخ حتب الثالث، وقد تولى الأخير السلطة في سن متقدم كما تبين المناظر والتماثيل.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

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