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The Vocabulary of Defensive Structures in Egypt's History

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ABSTRACT

Like any imperial power, the pharaohs of Egypt built mighty fortresses to secure themselves and their holdings and to project power outwards onto their enemies. While this fact is certain, the words they used to describe these constructions are less so. This paper endeavors to find a precise meaning for all those terms for fortresses for which it is possible, using both written and archaeological evidence to get a sense of the technical meaning of each word during each period in Egyptian history. Each word for fortress attested will be examined separately in each period in which it occurs in order to describe the shades of meaning of the word as it changes and develops over time.

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Chapter 1 The Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period

Ith

Before we begin a full discussion of this word it is important to explain another word of note from the Old Kingdom, *rth*. The word is attested only once in the Fifth Dynasty, although this attestation appears in a number of dictionaries, including the *Concise Dictionary*.¹ It appears in the tomb of a military official named Nesutnefer, one of only a very few tombs from the Old Kingdom where the military titles of the owner are given equal or greater prominence than civilian or religious duties. However, while *ith* is attested repeatedly afterwards, this word appears only in this tomb. *Rth* also has the meaning “bakery” (with different determinatives), and it would certainly be a common word for the scribes making the tomb inscription. Furthermore, a quickly-spoken *imy-r ith* may well have been homophonic with *imy-r rth*, since *i* in Egyptian could serve simply to mark a word with an onset vowel, having in those cases no phonetic value of its own.² We can perhaps envision why a scribe might make this error in writing a relatively uncommon word with its much more common homophone. It is also certainly possible that Nesutnefer’s title was simply a variant spelling of the same root as *ith*. In any case we may, in the absence of any other *rth*-forts in the canon, conclude that the fortresses in the tomb inscription are basically *ith*.

Nesutnefer’s tomb provides us with a good launching point for a discussion of the broader meaning of *ith*. Nesutnefer himself was a remarkably accomplished official of the Fifth

¹ Faulkner, 154

² Allen, 16

Dynasty. He held no fewer than 20 titles, including royal acquaintance (*rh nswt*) and several titles relating to the construction of the pyramid of Khafre.³ Of particular note here, however, are the titles related to his administration over three nomes: U.E. 8 and 10 and L.E. 13. In the two Upper Egyptian nomes he held several civilian titles as well as *imy-r mnnw* (a title to be discussed later). In Lower Egypt, all his titles were military: *imy-r mnnw nswt*, *imy-r rthw* (*ithw*), and *imy-r zmjw* (given by Kanawati as “overseer of desert places”).⁴ It is the last two of these titles that are most important for our understanding of *ithw*-forts.

The most immediate conclusion that can be gleaned from this is that there is a definite distinction between *ithw* and *mnnw*. After all, why have two separate titles for overseeing the same kinds of forts in the same province? Unfortunately this alone does not answer the critical question of what that distinction is. As will be discussed in the section on the Middle Kingdom forts (where sufficient evidence exists to make statements about the appearance and shape of forts,) the classification of a fort seems to have had nothing to do with form and everything to do with function.

The key to the function of the *ithw* may be found in the other of Nesutnefer’s titles, the overseer of desert places. That both titles are present together in one nome (one notably near to the Sinai) and absent on the other two may well imply some sort of connection between the two. It is entirely possible that *ithw* are a type of fort chiefly concerned with controlling the “desert places,” perhaps small garrison forts that would be sufficient to protect traders and mining expeditions from roving bands of nomads, without requiring the full investment of the *mnnw*-forts (which, as will be discussed later, seem to have been considerably costlier).

³ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 38

⁴ Kanawati, 33

This theory is supported by the other known instance of the title *imy-r ith*, from a graffito located in Khor el-Aquiiba.⁵ The graffito, dating from the late Old Kingdom, is located in a spot that would have been near the periphery of Old Kingdom Egypt's reach. It was found among lists of titles of several administrators and officials of the region. With the title *imy-r ith* once again seen tied to the deserts on the borders of Egypt rather than Egypt proper, it seems entirely clear that *ithw*-forts were generally small border garrisons rather than large defensive emplacements for defending the homeland.

If we take this as the model for the *ith* of the Old Kingdom, then an example may recently have been uncovered. In the late 2000s, excavations at a place called Tell Ras Budran uncovered a small fortress just off the shore of the Red Sea, dating to the Old Kingdom.⁶ It was an irregular circular enclosure, measuring about 50 meters in diameter.⁷ Being in the Sinai, it certainly qualifies as a "desert place." Its small size would have made it easy to supply and defend with a small garrison, but it nonetheless would likely have been sufficient to ward off raids and provide protection for the mining expeditions that regularly passed through the Sinai in search of raw materials. While we unfortunately lack a label precisely identifying the fortress, we can be all but certain that it was a fortress of this sort that Nesutnefer commanded (in fact, Mumford goes so far as to suggest Nesutnefer or one of his successors likely oversaw Ras Budran in particular.).⁸

Of particular note regarding *ithw*-forts is their apparent abundance in the First Intermediate Period. While only one or two of the dozen or so references to forts that could be found in the Old Kingdom dealt with *ithw*, practically every fort discussed in the First

⁵ Lopez, 52-53

⁶ Mumford, 16

⁷ Mumford, 16

⁸ Mumford, 52

Intermediate Period (albeit from an admittedly limited corpus) falls into this category. As we will see as we delve deeper into these texts, this gives us an excellent clue as to what type of forts exactly *ithw* were.

One of the most important of these references comes from the very end of the First Intermediate Period. Intef II, grandfather of Mentuhotep the Great, unifier of Egypt, left behind not only a brilliant grandson but also a stele telling us the part he played in setting up the unification. It is fragmentary, but one of the lines that survives describes the conquest of the Thinite nome. Intef II boasts about how he “opened all of the *ithw*” of the nome through his martial prowess.⁹ This simple statement gives us a great deal of information about this type of fort in the First Intermediate Period. The fact that Intef’s enemy, the rump Tenth Dynasty, could afford to build multiple such forts to fortify just one of its nomes means that *ithw* must have been quite small.

Looking at other sources, it appears that *ithw*-forts proliferated during the 1st Intermediate Period. From the opposite side of the civil war, the tomb of Mereri at Dendara lists among the accomplishments of the nobleman and high priest the construction of a fort (an *ith* to be specific).¹⁰ In the context of a destabilized state, it is especially interesting that Mereri attributes the construction to himself, and it is reasonable here to take him at face value and believe he may well have built this *ith* with his own assets. This gives a tighter meaning to what an *ith* could be in the First Intermediate Period: not only was it small, but it was the sort of structure a local noble could be interested in building in a time of conflict. While few, if any, archaeological remains exist of these forts from this time, extrapolation from similar, later

⁹ Breasted, 200. Picture of stele from the Metropolitan Museum used to locate *ithw*

¹⁰ Fischer, 140

periods of local lords in conflict give us the examples of European or Japanese castles: small, well-built structures designed to protect a lord and his retainers but not always local civilians.

Two other Egyptian notables wrote about *ithw* in their funerary inscriptions. The first, Ma'aty, listed himself as an overseer of *ith*, the only man known to have held this title in the First Intermediate Period.¹¹ This is enough to tell us that at least some *ithw* were state projects, but unfortunately it provides little other information. The second, Ankhtifi, writes a summary of his military campaigns. The text is unfortunately somewhat fragmentary, and portions of it rely on reconstruction, but it seems to refer to a number of *ithw* (listed in the plural) in foreign territory which Ankhtifi besieged.¹² These two documents indicate that *ithw* were common in many nomes of Egypt during this time, a conclusion supported by Fischer.¹³

One more use of the term *ith* is known from the First Intermediate Period, albeit a little indirectly. It comes from tomb III at Siut as described by Griffith.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the text has a section missing almost immediately before the critical word occurs. From what remains, it seems clear that the text was part of a relatively standard passage describing how a local ruler had put in order that which had been in disarray (such as what is found in the tomb of Khnumhotep II in the same period).¹⁵ The inscription picks up mid-sentence and reads “right down to the fort of the shore” (*ḏr-r- ' ith n mryt*) and continues with several clauses also beginning with *ḏr-r- '* that seem to describe rebuilding or recreation of boundaries.

Unfortunately, this is insufficiently detailed to tell us much about the *ith* themselves. At the very least, we know some are riparian, which makes sense given the importance of the Nile

¹¹ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 37

¹² Vandier, Khafaga, and d'Abbadie, 198 and Fischer, 140

¹³ Fischer, 140

¹⁴ Griffith, Pl. XI, line 18

¹⁵ Newbury, 59

as a means of transport and the military maxim to control the roads and cut them off from one's enemy. At the very least, we know they were common enough to be used as landmarks in the administration of nomes.

With every known instance of the word discussed, all that remains is to concisely define *ith*. As hinted at earlier, it seems the closest definition is "castle." In the times and places castles were in use, most notably feudal Europe and feudal Japan, they were small forts that mostly served the needs of a garrison. They were prolific in the areas they were built and were often erected and maintained by local nobles, although monarchs sometimes built them in places of great strategic importance. Such a definition explains both their association with deserts in Nesutnefer's tomb (since a small fort would suffice to keep out desert nomads) and their proliferation in the First Intermediate Period (a time of strife in which many cheap forts would be both necessary and the only form of defense a divided nation with a weak economy could reliably afford).

Wnt

Of the three terms for forts in the Old Kingdom, and indeed of any term for fort used by Egyptians at any point, none has been the source of such confusion in the literature as *wnt*. This is because as a noun *wnt* refers to no fewer than three distinct objects (in rough order of commonness): the *sanctum sanctorum* of a temple, a type of fort, and a location (or perhaps a tribe) in the southern Levant, probably near the Egyptian border. It is the second meaning in which we are chiefly interested, although all three will make an appearance.

Wnt appears most famously in the biography of Weni, an official of the Sixth Dynasty.¹⁶ Weni is most well known for his remarkable military campaign against the Asiatics. In a poem celebrating his victory and the safe arrival of his men, Weni lists among the victories the destruction of the *wnwt* of the enemy.¹⁷ Perhaps the most notable aspect of this boast is that *wnt* appears in the plural, refuting the claim made by some (such as Vogel) that *wnt* refers to a single specific Egyptian fort.¹⁸ (Adding to the confusion surrounding the word, however, is the fact that it does refer to a single foreign place in the Levant, albeit in this case it is a town, not a fort, as evidenced in other texts). Here it is also clear that what is being destroyed is indeed a fort thanks to the presence of the distinctive fort-determinative that shows up commonly in other words for forts and fortifications, such as *mnnw* and *inb*.

One other Old Kingdom tomb makes reference to *wnt*-forts: that of Mereri. This is not the same Mereri who built *ithw* in the First Intermediate Period; this Mereri lived earlier, during the Sixth Dynasty. He was, among other titles, an overseer (*imy-r*) of *wnwt*.¹⁹ Once again the term

¹⁶ Breasted, 143

¹⁷ Sethe, *Urkunden I*, 103

¹⁸ Vogel, 27

¹⁹ Jones, 103

appears in the plural, denoting a class of forts rather than a particular fort. Here too it is important to note the presence of house-determinatives, showing that what is meant is a building and not merely a foreign place. This seems to show that not only were Egyptians involved in the destruction of *wnwt*, they also seemed to be in the business of building and administering them.

The final clear attestation of *wnt* as fort comes not from a fort overseer or general but from a scribe stationed with the army for much of his career. The tomb of the scribe Ka'i-apr lists among his accomplishments a posting as the "scribe of the royal army in *wnt*."²⁰ It is here that we suffer for Old Egyptian's lack of articles, for we cannot know if he means the land or a fort (as both meanings certainly did exist), but in any case it is clear that the Egyptian army had an interest at maintaining garrisons in some fortified *wnt*. Given the fact that there were also administrators of such *wnwt*, it seems more likely to be the latter, although in the interest of fairness it is worth noting that Fischer prefers the former interpretation, which may well be correct.²¹

Before proceeding to define what exactly a *wnt* is, it is necessary for the sake of completeness to list references to *wnt* that pre- and post-date the Old Kingdom, although none of these seem to refer to forts. In the Archaic period, two depictions of *wnt* are attested. While they lack full written descriptions, both of these images appear to show the city of *Wnt* under attack. The clearer of the two, attributed to Den, shows *Wn.t* as possible the target of an expedition or being "opened" (a common Egyptian term for siege, one that shows up in several of the *ith* inscriptions of the First Intermediate Period).²² Unfortunately neither gives us clear enough

²⁰ Fischer, "Scribe", 261

²¹ Fischer, "Scribe", 261

²² Both attested in Kahl, 117

evidence to assert *wnt*-forts as being a fixture of Egyptian military strategy, but at the very least it shows us that *wnt* is a very old term in the Egyptian military and geographical vocabulary.

The other instances of *wnt* come from the Middle Kingdom. Two attestations of *wnt* have been attributed to *wnt*-forts by Chevereau (and, in the second case, others) from this time. The first comes from a very brief inscription upon a scarab of one Hor, which seems to read *imy-r wnt*.²³ However, this *wnt* lacks any determinative for forts or for foreign lands, making it seem more likely to refer to the third meaning of *wnt* (and one well established for Middle Egyptian,) a temple sanctuary.²⁴ The second of the two records is much more detailed. It describes the titles of a high priest of several pyramid-temples, primarily that of Teti, who lived during the Middle Kingdom.²⁵ Among his titles is also *imy-r wnt*, with *wnt* here enclosed by a wall. While it is easy to see how this could be taken as a fort, there are instances of temples having their names enclosed²⁶ as well as civilian settlements (such as the original *wnt*),²⁷ and given this and the fact that the tomb owner in question was a temple overseer it seems that this *wnt*, too, was likely a temple sanctuary and not a fortification. With no certain genuine examples from the Middle Kingdom it seems that *wnt*-forts were likely limited to the Old Kingdom.

With all instances of *wnt* accounted for, it is possible to attempt to define the term. The most important piece of information available about the word is the fact that it was a structure which was well within the reach and needs of the tribes of the southern Levant. It could not, then, represent a fort on the order of Buhen, with vast walls and well-made towers. Moreover, the fact that it was in regular use by a mobile people meant that it must not have been designed

²³ Martin, Pl. 42A, no.5

²⁴ Faulkner, 61

²⁵ Quibell, 113-114

²⁶ As an example, see Kahl, 296

²⁷ Fischer, "Scribe," 261

as a place for a permanent garrison. Such structures were most likely created to protect shepherds and their herds in the event of a sudden raid.

Here, as with *ithw*, we find a word from another part of history that translates this concept quite well: hillfort. A hillfort is a small defensive structure, not quite makeshift but certainly not meant as a permanent emplacement, placed on a piece of natural high ground to help a civilian population defend itself against attacks. In the hill country of Palestine and the Negev locations for such forts abound. Hillforts would have met the needs of Egyptians as well, who could have made good use of the structures as forward operating bases to protect troops and supplies on expeditions to hostile foreign lands. While this would not have been common (hence the dearth in sources discussing *wnwt*), it seems likely enough of an explanation to fit all of the evidence found thus far.

Mnnw

Mnnw, rather unlike the other terms used for Old Kingdom forts, has a remarkably clear etymology. The verb *mn*, meaning “to stand firm,” is commonly attested in both Old and Middle Egyptian, and there is no reason to doubt that *mnnw* is a nominal form of this verb, with a meaning like “that which stands firm” (implicitly against enemies). This also makes *mnnw* the linguistic cousin of the common word *mnw*, meaning “monument,” and the whole class of verbs derived from *mn* dealing with making firm or great (*smn*, etc.).²⁸

We begin our exploration of the exact meaning of *mnnw* with a familiar tomb inscription: that of the nomarch and military leader Nesutnefer. Among the many titles of the Fifth Dynasty nomarch are three involving *mnnw*: two as *imy-r n mnnw* and one as *imy-r n mnnw nswt*.²⁹ The first two titles occur in connection with his rulership over Upper Egypt nomes 8 and 10 and the latter with Lower Egypt nome 13. It is tempting to attempt to ascribe a unique meaning to *mnnw nswt* over *mnnw*, since it occurs in a separate nome, but the phrase does not appear distinguished from *imy-r mnnw* in any other title of Old Kingdom officials. It seems more likely, then, that the “overseer of royal forts” did not oversee some other category of forts from a regular fort overseer but rather was rewarded with a more prestigious sounding but otherwise identical title after years of faithful military service.

Another title of note among those of Nesutnefer is *imy-r wpt mnnw*, according to Chevereau the “head of the department of fortresses.”³⁰ Unfortunately we find no further elaboration, but this seems to indicate at least in some areas and at some times in the Old Kingdom the existence of a multilayered bureaucracy responsible for overseeing forts. One other

²⁸ Faulkner, 107-109

²⁹ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 38

³⁰ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 36

instance of the title may exist; at the tomb of Wehem-ka, the inscription contains among the titles a damaged *imy-r wpt* with a missing glyph following immediately before *imy-r mnnw*.³¹ If so, this might lend additional credence to the idea of multiple fort-overseeing officer titles. Nonetheless in the absence of more evidence any further claims on the matter belong in the realm of speculation and seem to be best avoided.

Of particular note regarding the tomb of Nesutnefer is that it contrasts *ithw* and *mnnw* as different entities within the same nome. This lends strong credence to the idea that the two words described two wholly different classes of forts, rather than being mere synonyms. If they were identical, the double title would not have been necessary, but the fact that Nesutnefer has been entrusted with both means they must have differed in some important respect, although what that respect is is not immediately clear from Nesutnefer's biography alone.

Looking at other tomb inscriptions mentioning *mnnw*, the first property we find is their great frequency (relative to other terms for forts of the same period). Chevereau lists no fewer than 6 officials who held the title of either *imy-r mnnw* or *imy-r mnnw nswt* (although one or two of these may be spurious).³² In contrast to *ithw*, which are much more rarely attested in contemporary texts, this seems to imply that *mnnw* formed the core of Egyptian defensive strategy in the Old Kingdom.

Of the other tombs listed in Chevereau's titulary, the most interesting is that of Inti. The student of Egyptian military history will likely recognize this name quickly. Inside of Inti's tomb is one of the most famous and most important pieces of art in Egyptian military history: a (relatively) accurate depiction of what a siege may have looked like during his lifetime.³³ This is

³¹ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 37

³² Chevereau, *Ancien*, 37

³³ Vogel, 43

not the only such depiction (a number appear in the Middle Kingdom), but it is the first one we have. It seems that this may have been a depiction of a real incident, since he certainly had a military-focused career, with titles including *imy-r mnnw*. It is tempting, therefore, to take the fort that Inti and his men seem to be laying siege to as a *mnnw*, but this seems unlikely, since the fort depicted is distinctly foreign. Although it is unlabeled, if we were to ascribe any word to it, *wnt* would probably be the most appropriate, given the likelihood that it depicts a Levantine construction.

The other holders of the title *imy-r mnnw* are, broadly speaking, similar in almost all respects. Wehem-ka, Herwi, Seref-ka, and Ka-Khent (or Kai-Khenti) were all officials of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties.³⁴ They are, apart from their roles in fortress administration, chiefly civilian officials; not one *imy-r mš'* general ranks among them. Rather we find royal companions and settlement overseers who count forts among their responsibilities. The geographical and temporal spread of the officials testifies to the commonness of *mnnw*-forts at the tail of the Old Kingdom, while their complete resumes speak to a task generally less military and more administrative in nature (although Inti, as well as others on this list, were likely not strangers to military matters, as the siege scene in Inti's tomb makes clear).

If the Old Kingdom is remarkable for the abundance of *mnnw*, then the First Intermediate Period is more remarkable for their paucity. It is not that this time was one without forts, as the many *ithw* constructed, administered or captured during this time attest. Rather, it seems that some distinguishing feature of *mnnw* made them unnecessary or impractical to build during the turbulent civil strife of the First Intermediate Period. The only possible exception is the *Instructions of Merikare*, a text supposedly addressed to the First Intermediate Period king.

³⁴ Chevereau, *Ancient*, 37

While it does genuinely contain the word *mnnw* (in the context of instructing the reader to tend to their *mnnw*), it is not clear if the text is of genuine Tenth Dynasty composition as the title would suggest. Some authors believe that the work was composed some time in the early Middle Kingdom,³⁵ and given that *mnnw* was by that period a common way to refer to a fort, this seems likely to be the case. (As we will see in the later case of *ith* in the Middle Kingdom, it is also not unprecedented for outdated words for forts to be used in non-technical contexts long after they have passed out of military and administrative use.) A few siege scenes do also survive from this period, including Kaemhezet³⁶ and Montuhotep II.³⁷ They certainly attest to a plethora of siege warfare in the period, and the existence of some forts of size, but they lack accompanying inscriptions to determine if they are *mnnw* or *ith*.

Much as in the analysis of *ith*, the temporal distribution of *mnnw* gives a clue to their form and function. *Mnnw*, being common in the centrally organized Old Kingdom, must have existed to serve the needs of a strong state. Simultaneously, they must also have been within the reach of such a well-organized bureaucracy, but not of the squabbling fiefdoms of the First Intermediate Period.

This implies, above all else, that *mnnw* must have been quite large. To earn a separate classification from the fort at Ras Budran (a known *ith*), a *mnnw* must have differed substantially. That this difference was one of scale comes from the presence of *mnnw* in times that could organize substantial labor for public works and their absence in periods without central authority capable of building such projects. (This is further confirmed by the size of the forts labelled *mnnw* in the Middle Kingdom, but that discussion will be borne out in full later.)

³⁵ Darnell, 107

³⁶ Vogel, 42

³⁷ Vogel, 55

The size of these forts is also attested by the men chosen to run them. Skilled administrators all, their other titles speak to careers spent overseeing logistics. One can imagine that, for a country largely safe from attack, managing a border fort successfully would have mostly hinged on the ability to get food and weapons to critical points on the border of Egypt proper rather than the ability to command in the heat of battle (there were no shortage of generals or commanders of the auxiliary troops who could have adequately filled that role, as Chevereau attests).

This gives us some idea about what role the *mnnw*-fortresses must have played. It is probable that they were the keystones of Egyptian border defense. They were probably located at the most likely points of attack against Egypt, in the Eastern Delta and at Elephantine. (Elephantine is known to be a *mnnw* in the Middle Kingdom, although it is never attested as such in the Old.)³⁸ While *ith*, as smaller fortresses, would have served in less easily accessed locations such as the Sinai and plugged gaps in defense (or, later, been used by lesser rulers as cheaper substitutes for larger *mnnw*), the *mnnw* themselves would have been the primary bases of defense. Though we at present lack a certain archaeological site for one, if one is located it will likely be on the scale of the well-known *mnnw* of later periods as bastions against outsiders.

³⁸ Vogel, 102

Chapter 2 The Middle Kingdom

Ith

The word *ith* does not appear once in the substantial titulary of the Middle Kingdom. Admittedly, terms for fortress administrators are less common among Middle Kingdom biographies, as a comparison of Chevereau's treatments on the Old and Middle Kingdoms will attest. But *ith* is conspicuously completely absent, unlike the other two primary words for forts used during this period, which will be examined later. The only two instances of the word that can be found are both cited in the *Concise Dictionary*, one among the tombs at Siut and the other at Hatnub. Neither Vogel nor any other author cites any other texts containing the word after the end of the First Intermediate Period.

The only inscription to mention *ith* in the Middle Kingdom comes from Hatnub. The owner of the tomb is described as "a fighting bulwark in the midst of the city, to which the people clung" (with *ith* translated as bulwark), a sentence that (as before) does not change regardless of what word for fortress is used.³⁹ In fact, a very similar sentence is known from the late Eleventh Dynasty using *khnrt* (a term that may mean fort and certainly means prison), as noted in Doxey's list of epithets.⁴⁰ This is not a sentence that gives us any real clues towards a definite meaning of *ith* in this period.

Considering the lack of evidence for any specific military or administrative uses of the word, and given that none of the existing uses of *ith* in the Middle Kingdom ascribe anything more than a general meaning to it, it seems foolhardy to try and ascribe a clear meaning to *ith*.

³⁹ Anthes, 20,13

⁴⁰ Doxey, 74

Instead, we may say that it was a word used to mean forts in literary or figurative contexts, but that it likely lost its technical use and would not have been used by military professionals to describe forts they were constructing or attacking. This parallels in some ways modern uses of the word “castle;” we find it used mostly in historical contexts or in popular idiom (“a man’s home is his castle”) but it has long since been abandoned by military planners in favor of terms that describe more modern kinds of forts. That being said, it seems best for the translator to choose any word for *itḥ* that best fits the context and flow of the passage rather than choosing a specific English word in every instance (as is often appropriate for other terms discussed in this paper).

Mnnw

In general, when ascribing definitions to words for forts, the greatest difficulty is found in assigning the word to one or more physical sites. Poor preservation, temporal ambiguities, and an absence of written evidence for the administration of specific forts makes such attributions a matter of conjecture and guesswork. Thankfully, for the Middle Kingdom, the word *mnnw* suffers from none of these problems, being instead easily definable and easily ascribable to existing well-documented forts.

The reason for this is a well-studied document known as the “Ramesseum Onomasticon.” This papyrus, attested from the late Middle Kingdom, consists of a series of lists, mostly of geographical terms. For our purposes, the most interesting is a list of 17 fortresses, running from Nubia into Upper Egypt. Among these forts are Elephantine and the famous Nubian forts of Buhen and Semna. Most notably, repeated several times in front of the list in columns is the word *mnnw*.⁴¹ No doubt can be left: the word in the Middle Kingdom referred to the forts that guarded the southern border of Egypt, as well as any other forts of a similar scale.

Before looking at other instances of the word, let us first examine what exactly a *mnnw* entails, using the well-studied fortress at Buhen as our example. Built along the banks of the Nile in view of the Second Cataract, where the granite cliffs make passage difficult, the massive structure would have once dominated all that surrounds it. The site itself is of great archaeological interest, containing several major temples, two cemeteries (one from the Middle Kingdom, one from the New), and later remains from the Roman period. But for our purposes, the most interesting part of the fort is the two rings of walls that served its main purpose:

⁴¹ Vogel, 62

exerting Egyptian control over the local stretch of the Nile and projecting Egyptian power out into Middle Nubia.

The outer wall is damaged, and it is hard to ascertain its exact size, but it was a large rectangle 130 meters at the shortest side⁴² and perhaps 700 on the long side.⁴³ The walls themselves, between 8.5 and 10 meters in width, were constructed of brick and were at points hollow (Randall-Maciver speculates that this was for a mixture of magazines and of areas where the walls might have been filled with sand).⁴⁴ These walls form an outline that is nearly rectangular, with bends in the walls to allow for local geography (good evidence for the general fact that Egyptian fort classification was based on size, not on shape, for the latter varied often with terrain). The wall expanded outwards at points into towers and, at one point in the center of the north wall, a massive gatehouse complete with its own towers and more than 1400 square meters in area. Around the perimeter of the outer walls were a smaller pair of perimeter walls, which “would not have been manned by the defenders but would give assailants a pause during which they would be subjected to fire from the wall proper.”⁴⁵

Complementing the outer walls was a further set of walls on the inside of the fortress. The area between the two sets of walls was largely empty, and they met along the river, which as a natural border was the anchor to both walls. The inner wall was considerably smaller in width and in area, but it was nonetheless imposing. Inside stood several massive building complexes, including multiple temples from various periods and the palatial house of the commandant, as

⁴² Randall-Maciver and Wooley, 119-121

⁴³ Raue, 373

⁴⁴ Randall-Maciver and Wooley, 119

⁴⁵ Randall-Maciver and Wooley, 119

well as the barracks, granaries, and stockpiles necessary for the maintenance of the garrison (and, in later periods, the civilian residents).⁴⁶

The massive scale of this fort must be understood in the context of the 16 other forts of comparable size. The construction of the entire series of forts, although conducted over the course of several generations of Twelfth Dynasty rulers, nonetheless represents a truly colossal investment of men and materiel. Though we have no conclusive estimate as to the size of the garrisons or from where they were drawn, it must surely number in the many thousands, and it must have drawn heavily upon the resources of state to maintain so many such structures.

This makes clear, then, how central these forts must have been to the military and imperial strategy of the Middle Kingdom pharaohs. The role of these fortresses was twofold. First, in a more practical sense, they served as launching points for forays into Nubia, through which the pharaohs would gain the wealth of the region. It is not hard to imagine the sort of resources and armies that could be amassed for one of the frequent “expeditions” launched by Egyptian monarchs into the Nubian countryside at such a base. The second was more psychological: the construction of such fortresses would have been an incredible feat in the eyes of the locals, and their mere existence would serve to cow local herdsmen and traders into submission, making Egyptian trade routes safer and expeditions easier to mount.

Beyond its attestation in the Onomasticon, the word *mnnw* appears in the administrative and military titles of the period, albeit in a slightly different form than in the Old Kingdom. Previously, the only title associated with *mnnw* was *imy-r*. In the Middle Kingdom, however, this title seems to have fallen out of use for fortress administrators; only one holder of the title relating to forts is known, and his title did not include the word *mnnw*. Instead, the main titles

⁴⁶ Randall-Maciver and Wooley, Chapter 5

used were *hry tst* or *tsw*, followed by an appropriate description. (These two titles translate roughly to “chief of the garrison” and “commandant,” respectively). The former was much less common, belonging only to a single individual who also held other titles of great military esteem, such as *mr mš'* (general) and *mr msh wr* (field marshal) in addition to being *hry tst m mnnw shm* (chief of the garrison of the fort of Semna).⁴⁷ The rest of the titles are all *tsw*, all omitting the word *mnnw* but all mentioning a specific fort. Of those whose monument survives with the full title, the forts listed are Coptos, Buhen, Semna, and Abydos, which speaks to the commonness and broad geographical spread of the title.

Overall, it seems that these forts represented both the most common and the largest class of permanent Egyptian military structures during this period. Given that, it seems perfectly acceptable to translate *mnnw* not only as “fort” but also by more poetic terms for truly massive fortifications (“citadel” comes to mind as particularly appropriate). The main goal for anyone attempting to describe these forts in translation is to get across the sense of scale that a speaker of Middle Egyptian would have understood from the vast complexes that *mnnw* describes and their role in Egyptian imperialism of the age.

⁴⁷ Chevereau, *Moyen*, 60-61

Ḥnrt

The etymology of *ḥnrt* is quite clear. It comes from the verb *ḥnr* (or sometimes *ḥnri* or *ḥni*), with the general meaning of “to restrain.” This particular root is quite productive in Middle Egyptian; producing *ḥnr* “prisoner,” “harem” and *ḥnrwt* “women of the harem;” all with the basic sense of “that which is restrained;” as well as *ḥnr* “reins” and *ḥnrt* “prison,” “council-chamber;” with the sense of “that which restrains.” *Ḥnrt* as “fortress” has this second sense, meaning something between “keeping the enemy at bay” and “holding those inside secure.”⁴⁸

When we try to find examples of the term, however, we run into the same problem we did with *ith*: the word seems to be used primarily in metaphorical and literary contexts. In Doxey’s list of epithets, in the only epithet dealing directly with forts, a nomarch is described as being like a “fortress on the day it fights,” using *ḥnrt*.⁴⁹ At a glance, it seems that any word for a fort could fit here. In truth, not much would change if, say, *mnnw* were substituted into this sentence. But if we look more closely at the implications of a word derived from “restrain,” we might get a better sense of the specific simile that is meant here. It is not only that the man described is like a fortress, he is a bulwark (a sense captured well by the translation of Anthes as the German “Bollwerk”)⁵⁰ who keeps enemies at bay, restrained away from those he protects. This sense is retained by those other inscriptions that bear this word as well. In both cases known from the Hatnub inscriptions, it seems to denote a sense of personal strength and reliability, but not a particular structure. In fact, these two examples from Hatnub are basically identical in

⁴⁸ Faulkner, 193

⁴⁹ Doxey, 74

⁵⁰ Anthes, 55

context, meaning that the phrase “a *hnrt* for the city on the day that it fights” may be something of an idiom during the late Eleventh and early Twelfth dynasties.

The final known use, from Sethe’s *Lesestücke*, seems to refer to an assault by the author of the inscription on forts held by various foreigners, which are described as *hnrtw*.⁵¹ This is a particularly interesting use because, if representative of a real event, it breaks the pattern of the other less literal uses of the term. While no administrative documents refer to this sort of fortress, this should not put it in the category of *wnt*. The uses in Egyptian idiom make it not something ascribed solely to foreigners in the collective consciousness of the Egyptian people even if it may not have been built by Egyptians. It is possible that Egyptians did build *hnrtw* as fortresses (as opposed to such prisons, which they certainly built) and simply did not write about it in any surviving documents, but in the absence of such evidence we must assume that in the Egyptian mind it referred to a kind of fort which others used and which they could use but did not.

In translating *hnrt*, then, we are left in a difficult position. If one word is to be chosen, as is generally best, it must be usable both in the abstract and in the concrete. But even in choosing a concrete meaning we must be careful, for these foreign forts could not have compared to the *mnnw*-forts discussed earlier. Perhaps, then, the word that fits all of these meanings is “defenses.” One can be a city’s defenses, protecting it from harm, and a foreigner can rush to hastily made defenses to hide from an onrushing army. This is not the only good choice, as both “rampart” and “bulwark” work well for the same reasons, but “defenses” seems the most appropriate in all of the known instances of the word.

⁵¹ Sethe, *Lesestücke*, 82, 13

Ḥtm

For the Egyptologist unfamiliar with military history, the word *ḥtm* will be more recognizable than others described here. It is attested from the oldest stages of the Egyptian language, although its meaning of “fort” only appears from the Middle Kingdom. The term originates from the verb *ḥtm* meaning “to seal,” which in turn led to it being used as a noun (often with feminine suffix) for seals as well as for that which might reasonably be sealed such as storehouses, treasuries, and chests. In this context, it appears many times in Jones’s titulary, all in the titles of overseers of government warehouses or keepers of official seals.⁵² In the Middle Kingdom, the term began to be used to refer to fortresses, perhaps referring to their role as “locks” keeping foreigners out of Egypt.

Of all of the words for fortress found in the Middle Kingdom, this is the only one Chevereau attests as being in the familiar *imy-r* form so well known from the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period.⁵³ Interestingly, this inscription lists its owner (one Djefa-hapi) as being both *imy-r ḥtm* and *imy-r ḥtmt*, although it is likely that these refer to the same position. Although the inscription’s honoree has several other titles, none of them are military, largely in keeping with the traditions of the civilian fort overseers of the Old Kingdom. This unfortunately makes it hard to draw any firm conclusions about *ḥtm*-forts from this tomb inscription, however, except that they existed and were administered in a way similar to forts of the Old Kingdom.

This is, unfortunately, the sum total of the evidence attested for *ḥtm*-forts during the Middle Kingdom. While we have enough to say they existed, a precise definition remains painfully out of our reach. Instead, we must rely on conjecture to provide a meaning to the term.

⁵² Jones, 195 etc.

⁵³ Chevereau, *Moyen*, 60

Looking at what categories of forts are already covered, we know that *htm* cannot refer to the great Nubian forts such as Buhen. In the next section, we will cover other terms for the forts on the Sinai and in the Levant, a list which also excludes *htm*. This leaves only the possibility of the forts along the Libyan border and in the various wadis, which must have been protected by some structures during the defense-minded Middle Kingdom. It is to these forts that we may tentatively assign *htm* during this period (with a footnote that *hnrt* was nearly as likely to have been used for those defenses, given the relative sparse evidence for either). Assuming this is true, we may translate *htm* as simply unqualified “fort” and connote a fort of moderate size and character.

The Ways of Horus and the Walls of the Ruler

It is, in general, the rule for this paper not to devote sections to individual named forts. In general, no individual fort or fort chain in Egyptian history rises above the importance of the terms that classify it to warrant an individual discussion. The astute reader will also notice that basically no attention has been paid thus far to the Levantine frontier (as opposed to the forts of Nubia and the Sinai which have been discussed in detail). The exceptions to both of these rules are the Ways of Horus (*w3t Hr*) and the Walls of the Ruler (*inbw hq3*). (These were probably at least somewhat separate institutions, but owing to a lack of evidence and the similarity of existing evidence these two will be treated in the same section in all of their Old and Middle Kingdom attestations.)

Of the two, only the Ways of Horus are known to have existed in the Old Kingdom. It first appears in a tomb inscription of the Fifth Dynasty, that of one *Hkni-Hnmw*.⁵⁴ A man very much in the mold of Nesutnefer, he held many powerful civilian and military titles (including the prestigious *imy-r mš*). He also is the only known holder of the title “overseer of the Ways of Horus.” The other instance of *w3t Hr* found in the Old Kingdom is unfortunately nondescript. Found in the Pyramid Texts of Teti in a short sentence, it tells us basically nothing about the Ways of Horus, other than that term was used. As such we must rely entirely on *Hkni-Hnmw*’s tomb to provide us with information.

Ordinarily, when only one individual holds a title such as this, it is hard to make any inferences about it. However, among the other titles of *Hkni-Hnmw* are “district chief of the

⁵⁴ Chevereau, *Ancien*, 38

desert” and “overseer of the desert” (the latter of which is similar to titles of Nesutnefer). The fact that this man was appointed to oversee both the Ways of Horus and the deserts gives strong evidence that the former was located in or near the latter, especially given descriptions of the role and location of the structure from the Middle Kingdom. This permits us to safely conclude that the Ways of Horus in the Old Kingdom were largely identical in their role to that of the Middle Kingdom, even if we cannot be sure of the relative size or location of the two fortifications given the lack of archaeological evidence.

In the Middle Kingdom, the term continues its use, sometimes in works of greater literary significance. One example comes from the *Wisdom of Merikare* (a book that, as discussed earlier, may have been pseudepigraphic and from the Middle Kingdom, not the First Intermediate Period). In this wisdom text, meant to provide a model for the ideal ruler (and as such cast as advice to a historical king), Khety is advised to defend against the Asiatics by (among other measures) seeing to the manning of the Ways of Horus.⁵⁵ Here the meaning could not be clearer: the Ways of Horus are a keystone of the defensive system keeping Asiatics out of Egypt. That they were mentioned by name in a text on how to rule the ideal Egyptian state while other, similarly important forts such as Buhen were not speaks to how critical the Ways of Horus were to Egyptian military strategy.

The more interesting and more famous example of the Ways of Horus in literature is from the famous *Story of Sinuhe*. This tale, widely studied by Egyptologists and ancient scribes alike, describes in some detail the journey of the titular character into the Levant and his adventures while there. What concerns us here is a particular episode at the end of the work, where Sinuhe is returning home, having been granted clemency and the right to a fine tomb by

⁵⁵ Tobin, 161

the pharaoh. On his way, he stops at the Ways of Horus and hails the commandant, who sends a courier to the palace to inform the king of Sinuhe's arrival.⁵⁶ It is only with royal permission that Sinuhe is allowed to enter. The Asiatics who came with him are not; instead they are given generous gifts and sent on their way.

From the word choice here alone we can learn something about these forts. The man in charge of the fort is given the title *ṯsw*, the same title given to the overseers of forts such as Buhen. (This term *ṯsw* comes from a verb *ṯs* meaning "to join" that took on the meaning of joining together an army and, by extension, could be nominalized as one who puts an army together; i.e., its commander.)⁵⁷ This implies that the forts must have been on a similar scale, as the title conferred on their leader was identical. Although any such fort has not been found until the New Kingdom, clearly no small amount of administrative energy was being spent on the northern frontier.

The fact that this commander commanded a "border patrol" gives us some idea of one way the Ways of Horus might have functioned. It is improbable that the entire coastline of the Sinai and southern Palestine was walled up, as that would be impractical. It is more likely, given how the forts of Nubia operated, that forts were built at intervals, all placed under a single central administration. If this is true, the patrols mentioned by Sinuhe probably traversed between these forts, looking for those who might slip through against the pharaoh's wishes. Unfortunately, a sparse archaeological record makes it hard to tell whether this was the case during the Middle Kingdom. Until more evidence is found, it is difficult to make a determination as to whether the Ways of Horus were guarded at one point or several.

⁵⁶ Gardiner, *Sinuhe*, 174

⁵⁷ Faulkner, 304

The final use of the term known to scholars comes from a stele that lists events and foundations in the reign of Amenemhat II. The inscription mentions the Ways of Horus once, describing a temple built on the Ways of Horus in the town of Senwosret.⁵⁸ As Al-Ayedi points out, this means that there was not just a fort, but “a well-organized social structure.”⁵⁹ We might logically compare Buhen; it too had a sizable administrative and religious complex in addition to its military features.

The other great military structure of the Sinai, the Walls of the Ruler, do not have Old Kingdom attestations as do the Ways of Horus. We are forced to rely only on sources from the Middle Kingdom. According to Hoffmeier, we find only two; one from the Story of Sinuhe and the other from the Prophecy of Neferti. (The latter text is pseudepigraphically attributed to the Old Kingdom, but modern scholarly consensus places it in the Middle Kingdom along with the events it “predicts.”)

In the first text, the Walls of the Ruler make an appearance as Sinuhe travels out of Egypt. Sinuhe “crouched down in a bush” to avoid detection by guards stationed on the walls.⁶⁰ This tells us that the Walls were stationed with a guard who patrolled it but also that they could not be a massive continuous wall (as the name might literally suggest,) as there was room enough to hide in scrub out of view. Furthermore, we get an idea of where the Walls of the Ruler were located based on the text of the story. As Hoffmeier notes, Sinuhe states that he is in the *Km-wr*, the area around the Bitter Lakes in the Sinai.⁶¹

The other primary reference to the Walls of the Ruler is the Prophecy of Neferti, which gives a description of the reason they were constructed. According to the text, Ameni

⁵⁸ Al-Ayedi, 15

⁵⁹ Al-Ayedi, 15

⁶⁰ Hoffmeier, “Walls of the Ruler,” 8

⁶¹ Hoffmeier, “Walls of the Ruler,” 8

(Amenemhat I) will build the Walls of the Ruler “to prevent the Asiatics from coming down to Egypt.” It seems that, at this time, Asiatics in the Sinai regularly came to Egypt’s border to water their flocks, and according to the Prophecy of Neferti the Walls of the Ruler served to regulate this process and keep Asiatics from entering Egypt while allowing them to water their animals.⁶²

Before addressing the form and function of these structures, it is necessary to discuss claims by Hoffmeier that we should be more skeptical of the existence of the Walls of the Ruler due to its inclusion largely in propagandistic sources. It is true that the Prophecy of Neferti and the Story of Sinuhe are products of Middle Kingdom propaganda. It would be reasonable to be skeptical about them on points such as royal benevolence or Egyptian strength, which are the main point of the propaganda in the texts. But it seems unlikely that even the most blatant propagandist would go so far as to produce novel locations. Instead, it seems more likely that the Walls of the Ruler did exist, for if they did not, it would be immediately to any reader of the text and the result would be embarrassment rather than effective propagandizing for the pharaoh.

Given all the evidence, what to make of the Walls of the Ruler and the Ways of Horus? First the question whether or not the two represented the same institution. On the one hand, both terms do appear in the same text at different points, which might indicate separate institutions. On the other, later texts such as the Karnak inscriptions of Seti I (as discussed in Chapter 4) make it abundantly clear that the Egyptians were not above using multiple toponyms for identical locations, especially in literary texts where stylistic flair was as or more important than geographical accuracy. Therefore, we will proceed to define the terms without differentiating them, but with the knowledge that such a differentiation may have existed and may be proven in the future given further archaeological or textual references from the period.

⁶² Hoffmeier, “Walls of the Ruler,” 8

As in Nubia, the Egyptians had two primary objectives when it came to the Sinai and Western Asia. First of all, foreigners should not be able to enter Egypt *en masse* without the express permission and knowledge of the central government, or at least a representative thereof. Second, the Egyptians should be able to launch military and trade expeditions into foreign territory with a minimum of losses and a maximum of logistical ease. The fortresses in Nubia were clearly designed to solve these problems, and no evidence exists to indicate that the fortresses of the Sinai had been any different in their goals. That they have not survived to the present day (in spite of some Middle Kingdom evidence at known later sites like Tell Haboua)⁶³ makes it unlikely that they were as colossal as locations such as Buhen that survived (until, of course, their drowning under Lake Nasser).

Unfortunately, other than that they must have been at least a little smaller than Buhen, we can say little with certainty about these once-great fortresses. There may have been one of them or several (as is known from later eras), as the name “Walls of the Ruler” may have meant “one structure with multiple walls” or “multiple walled structures,” although the former is more probable. Certainly they had some function connected to water, and as such they were almost certainly situated by a canal or lake which served the local people (so as to better observe them or their movements). Beyond this, however, the paucity of evidence means that it will take until the Ramesside Period for a truly full understanding of the function of the Ways of Horus or Walls of the Ruler (one that cannot be retroactively applied, as their functions may well have changed).

⁶³ Hoffmeier, “Walls of the Ruler,” 9

Chapter 3 The Eighteenth Dynasty

Although this thesis seeks to cover all of Egyptian history, it is an unfortunate fact of Egyptian history that almost no records survive from the Second Intermediate Period (except for those at the very close of that time which may safely be grouped with the Eighteenth Dynasty). Of those records that do survive, only one mentions fortresses: a single stele from the Thirteenth Dynasty that serves as evidence that Buhen, at least, remained manned for part of the period.⁶⁴ This, unfortunately, is not enough to make meaningful statements on the vocabulary of military architecture during the Second Intermediate Period and it must be unfortunately omitted from this work.

It is also worth noting that, between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, something of a sea change occurs in the words used by the Egyptians to describe their fortifications. For a variety of reasons, likely including both linguistic changes and changes in the nature of the administration between the two dynasties, the vocabulary of the Nineteenth Dynasty is much larger than that of the Eighteenth when it comes to fortresses, a trend that largely continues into the Twentieth. As such, the New Kingdom will be divided into two chronological sections.

⁶⁴ Neale, 8

Mnnw

Mnnw is, in the New Kingdom, the oldest surviving word for “fortress” by far. In the Old Kingdom, it denoted large border-forts that fell out of use in the First Intermediate Period. In the Middle Kingdom, mighty *mnnw* forts like Buhen and Semna protected Egypt’s southern border, deterring local raids while aiding in the economic exploitation of the region. New Kingdom Egypt made use of both the term *mnnw* and the structures so denoted, sometimes at the same locations as their predecessors. However, the meaning of the word changed in important ways that reflected changes in New Kingdom imperial policy.

As with terms past, we turn to Cheverau’s prosopography for our first evidence of *mnnw*. In contrast to the Middle Kingdom, we find the term only once for the whole New Kingdom, from the era of Tutankhamun. It is an unusual title: “*idnw mnnw nbhprwr’ shtp ntrw*,” roughly “deputy of the fortress of ‘Nebkhepperure pleases the gods’.”⁶⁵ The immediate standout here is the use of the word “deputy” rather than *imy-r* “administrator.” *Imy-r* is the more common title among fortress overseers historically and for *htm*-overseers in the New Kingdom. The fact that a different title is used, one that is (based on its translation) much more subsidiary, implies that the *mnnw* were seen as less of a responsibility for a military officer than a *htm* command. It is also interesting that this fortress has been specifically named in the title, whereas ordinarily only *htm* would have sufficed (except in the case of the important post at Tjaru, as we shall later see).

The first inscription of note to mention the *mnnw* comes from the time of Hatshepsut, but it references the earlier reign of Thutmose I. Although it is upsettingly fragmentary, it still provides us with an important insight about the role of *mnnw*. Up to this point, the determinative for *mnnw* has always been the sign for *inbw*, indicating a wall or fortification. In this writing,

⁶⁵ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 62

however, the *niwt* city sign is used instead, indicating a more economic and less military role for the *mnnw* in question.⁶⁶ This writing pattern will be repeated throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty in reference to other *mnnw*.

The next time we hear of *mnnw*-forts, we find them referenced in relation to the Megiddo campaign of Thutmose III.⁶⁷ As Thutmose advanced through the Levant, he secured his gains not only with his army but with infrastructure construction. Based on its formal name, Morris believes it was built to help suppress raids from the Apiru who were causing trouble in the region at that point (an idea supported by the similar role of the many *htm*-forts at the time).⁶⁸ While this tells us little about what exactly the *mnnw*-fortress was, it does give the important insight that there were *mnnw*-forts in Lebanon during the New Kingdom, something not known to be true in the Middle Kingdom.

Thutmose's next inscription mentioning the *mnnw* gives us a substantially better impression of the precise role of the fortresses in Lebanon. Unfortunately a few words are missing, but the general gist of the text is that a *mnnw* in the Levant served as the center for manufacture of boats made of Lebanese cedar, both as a hub for the collection of timber and as a drydock for their construction.⁶⁹ This sheds light on why Hatshepsut might wish to use the city determinative for *mnnw*: they seem to have been forts that had an economic, as well as military, role. It is likely that this role varied from place to place, but in most cases the *mnnw* would have been a location from which the Egyptian government could coordinate economic activity, with the military power of the fort as backing in the event the locals were uncooperative in procuring resources.

⁶⁶ Morris, 97

⁶⁷ Morris, 153

⁶⁸ Morris, 153

⁶⁹ Morris, 156

Another interesting use of *mnnw* comes not from a royal inscription but from the *Duties of the Vizier* as inscribed on the tomb of Rekhmire, a vizier of the Eighteenth Dynasty.⁷⁰ According to this text, the vizier would be the ultimate overseer for the affairs “of the southern and northern *mnnw*-forts.”⁷¹ Morris discusses several ideas about what the “northern and southern” of this phrase could be; either it is archaic, refers to Upper and Lower Nubia in turn, or does in fact mean all *mnnw*-forts on any border, before ultimately concluding that it indicated a single Nubian fort and perhaps one or more Lebanese fortresses.⁷² Regardless of which fortresses are meant, it lends further evidence to the idea that *mnnw*-fortresses were largely economic in nature. The vizier, being in effect chief steward of the nation, would be more interested in reports of harvests and craft production than in military patrols and skirmishes. For him to take a direct interest in particular forts, then, means that they must be of enough economic importance to require oversight from the highest bureaucrat in the land.

The first inscription to associate the term *mnnw* with a specific term also comes from the tomb of Rekhmire, this time in reference to gifts received by the vizier upon his ascension from various locales. He cites Elephantine and the *mnnw*-fort of Bigeh as among the tributaries.⁷³ The existence of such a fort on Bigeh is known from earlier periods; it is listed by both Gardinier and Vogel as being among the forts of the Omnasticon (where it is known as Senmut).⁷⁴ While this once again tells us nothing directly, it does give us the indirect insight that there is continuity between Middle and New Kingdom *mnnw*-fortresses.

⁷⁰ Van den Boorn, 48

⁷¹ Morris, 157

⁷² Morris, 160

⁷³ Morris, 99

⁷⁴ Vogel, 62; Gardiner, *Onomastica*, 11

Two more relevant stele are known from the reign of Thutmose III, both concerning the establishment of temples at sites in Nubia. One temple was built in the *mnnw*-fortress of Shaat, at the city of Sai, and the other was built in the *mnnw*-fortress at Napata.⁷⁵ It is interesting that temple construction would be heavily emphasized at ostensibly military installations such as *mnnw*, since this seems a more decidedly civilian activity. More importantly, archaeological evidence does not provide for Buhen-style forts at either of these sites during this period. Instead, as Morris describes, it seems that only walled cities existed at Napata and Sai during the New Kingdom, even though both are unambiguously described as *mnnw*.⁷⁶ It seems fairly certain, then, that by the time of Thutmose III walled economic centers were the primary recipients of the *mnnw* designation, rather than the great defensive fortifications of old.

A later inscription, from the reign of Amenhotep III, reminds us that *mnnw* were hybrid installations, not merely another name for towns. Merymose, viceroy of Kush, erected a stele to describe an expedition he undertook to pacify Nubia. He mentions beginning his campaign with the mustering of troops at the *mnnw*-fortress of Baki and sailing downriver to another *mnnw*-fortress, Taroy. Taroy is not clearly identified, but Baki is known to be a fort from the Middle Kingdom also known as Kubban.⁷⁷ In any case, it is clear that the *mnnw* were still being used as staging bases for campaigns into Nubia, much as they were in the Middle Kingdom. This does not directly challenge the idea that they were largely civilian centers, but it does mean that they must still be understood as fortresses as well as fortified cities.

The last known mention of *mnnw* in the Eighteenth Dynasty comes from the reign of Tutankhamun, from the tomb of his vizier Huy. In this inscription, a number of dignitaries meet

⁷⁵ Morris, 204

⁷⁶ Morris, 205

⁷⁷ Morris, 330

with Huy, several who are from the *mnnw*-fortress of “Satisfying-the-gods.” As Morris elaborates, however, this fortress was in fact a town located about a mile from the Middle Kingdom *mnnw* of Faras.⁷⁸ Moreover, these dignitaries were not military commanders but civilian representatives of the local government. Unfortunately, a lack of archaeological evidence (due to the flooding of the site by the Aswan Dam) means that we cannot positively identify the nature of Faras at the time. However, it seems likely that it was a more civilian-leaning hybrid structure based on the other *mnnw* so far discussed.

Before defining *mnnw*, it is worth revisiting the great fortress of Buhen and seeing how it evolved in the New Kingdom. Pottery and inscriptions both attest to the continued use of the fortress during the New Kingdom, with the first evidence of its reuse coming from Kamose at the end of the Seventeenth Dynasty. During the New Kingdom, archaeological evidence shows little was done to the outer walls, but the inner walls were rebuilt and a thinner wall erected around them.⁷⁹ This may indicate a shrinking of the fort, as some claim, although this is unclear and it is possible that the outer walls were deemphasized but not removed. Interestingly, defensive features between the two walls (such as protective ditches) were removed and replaced with a road and a brick terrace. As well, the archaeological record attests to the rebuilding of many of the houses and other economic buildings within the town.⁸⁰ This paints the picture of a fortress transitioned from a fully military role into an economic hub contained within a still-formidable military institution.

Unfortunately, the precise meaning of *mnnw* and their role within the Egyptian empire is not as clear as in previous eras. Morris, for her part, sees *mnnw* of the Eighteenth Dynasty largely

⁷⁸ Morris, 333

⁷⁹ Trigger, 120

⁸⁰ Trigger, 120

as fortified towns serving almost exclusive economic roles. This is, in the author's estimation, partially correct. Certainly, *mnnw* played a major economic role. But plenty of evidence suggests that they maintained their military role as well. Otherwise, why would Thutmose build one while on campaign in Lebanon, if not to secure his military hold on the region? And we know from other inscriptions that they were still being used as launching points for campaigns. While the *mnnw* of the Eighteenth Dynasty certainly were not as imposing as those of the Twelfth (for example, Buhen was reduced only to its inner walls), they were still partially military institutions capable of fulfilling various roles within the burgeoning Egyptian empire.

Htm

The word *htm*, in its New Kingdom usage, derives directly from its Middle Kingdom usage. Originally, it comes from the verb *htm*, meaning “to seal,” and the noun of the same root referring to a seal that might be placed on a door or storehouse.⁸¹ The use of this term to refer to a fortress gives it two basic meanings, both pointed out by Morris. The more literal interpretation is that it refers to the *htm*-seals used to certify the legality of those passing through the fort. The more metaphorical interpretation is that the forts themselves served as seals, keeping unwanted people out of Egypt.⁸² Both of these ideas lead to a general sense of these forts as barriers at the border of Egypt, a sense validated by the textual and archaeological records of such fortresses in the Eighteenth Dynasty.

As with other terms in other periods of Egyptian history, it is often wise to begin our exploration of a new term with the titles of military officials as provided by Chevereau. In contrast to the relative paucity of men bearing fortress-related titles during the Middle Kingdom, the Eighteenth Dynasty yields more than a half dozen such officials. Nearly all of them bear titles including the word *htm*, most commonly *imy-r htm*. The first in the authoritative list is one Aia. He served at the very end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, ending his career under the short reign of Ramses I (although certainly serving most of it under Horemheb and Ay). He was, among other titles, an *imy-r htm* who made a dedication to the priests of the temple within his command, which led to his immortalization in a stela. Of particular note, Aia refers to his fortress as a *bhn* (a term of somewhat controversial provenance certainly meaning “estate” and perhaps also

⁸¹ Faulkner, 199

⁸² Morris, 808

“castle”) as well, the first hint of the flexibility of terminology to be found in the New Kingdom and especially the Nineteenth Dynasty.⁸³

The next Eighteenth dynasty example that Chevereau lists comes from one Nebi, of the Eighteenth Dynasty in the time of Thutmose IV. Nebi also served as an *imy-r htm*. Moreover, he was also titled “chief of the regiment of Tjaru,” making clear the location of his command as the fortress at Tjaru. Nebi’s enfeoffment as nomarch of Tjaru only makes this more certain.⁸⁴ He also held the unique title of being the *imy-r* of the fortresses “of the country of Wawat,” a toponym generally believed to be in Lower Nubia.⁸⁵ This is particularly interesting as it is quite far from the location of his eventual primary command. It lends evidence to the idea that a single military officer might well serve in many posts distributed throughout the Empire during his career rather than being assigned to a single specific region.

Unfortunately, the next representative of Dynasty XVIII in Chevreau’s work, one Kenamon, is listed incorrectly and the title *imy-r htm* does not appear among his many positions in his tomb.⁸⁶ This leaves us only one more holder of the unmodified *imy-r htm* post to investigate: Thutmose (not, in this case, the pharaoh).⁸⁷ Thutmose’s name comes down to us not from a grand tomb or imposing stele but from the rather mundane label on several wine jugs. Evidently, the wine from Tjaru was quite well known in Egypt, a fact not lost on Morris.⁸⁸ Thutmose, as commander of this fort, signed off on the wine, which was then sent to the palace of Amenhotep III. While this unfortunately tells us little about Thutmose’s life to this point, it does inform us of the multifaceted roles the *imy-r htm* must have played, especially at such an

⁸³ Morris, 400; Kitchen, 3-4

⁸⁴ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 59

⁸⁵ Morris, 785

⁸⁶ Davies, 10-17

⁸⁷ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 59

⁸⁸ Morris, 282

important fort as Tjaru. He must have not only been responsible for the military affairs of the fortress, but also the economic and logistical. That the fortress could maintain a vineyard implied both that it was of considerable size and that it saw little battle, as a fortress constantly raided would have a hard time growing crops outside its walls. This gives further support to the idea that Tjaru in particular was more important as a border crossing than as a defensive emplacement, although it could ultimately play both roles.

As the hundreds and hundreds of official titles in Dilwyn's titulary will attest, the Egyptians were fond of variance in similar titles, and *imy-r ḥtm* is no exception. We have already met one holder of such a title, Nebi, who commanded the forts of Wawat. Another variant title belongs to Paramheb, who is listed as "overseer of fortresses of the good god (*ntr nfr*)."⁸⁹ This title is clearly of the ornamental sort; it harkens back to Nesutnefer's title as "overseer of royal *mnnw*." It is certainly interesting from a cultural perspective, but it tells us little about *ḥtm* fortresses themselves.

Not so with the next two holders of variant *imy-r ḥtm* titles. The first is one familiar to all Egyptologists, Parameses (or, as he would later be known, Pharaoh Ramses I).⁹⁰ Ramses attained his high station at the end of a long military career, and one of his most important posts was at Tjaru, where he served as fortress overseer. It is easy to see why someone with experience at Tjaru would make a good candidate for succession for a pharaoh with no heirs. To run a fortress like Tjaru would have taken great military, economic, and bureaucratic expertise, and anyone who could do so successfully would have a strong case for running the whole of Egypt. Ramses' rise from overseer of Tjaru to pharaoh also provides further evidence for the great prestige of this fort in particular.

⁸⁹ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 60

⁹⁰ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 60

Another officer of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Satamun, held not one but two variants of the *imy-r htm* title. One credited him as overseer of the “forts of the northern country,” while the other had him overseeing the forts “of the Great Green (the Mediterranean Sea).”⁹¹ Such forts must have been in the Delta, likely to protect against incursions from seagoing peoples (a form of defense that would become famously useful in the Twentieth Dynasty). Nonetheless, it seems that the Egyptians were interested in defending this boundary even at the height of their empire. Given the known role of *htm*-forts as border crossings, we can safely assume that Satamun was responsible for supervising most or all of the traffic between the Delta and the Nile and ensuring that only those with permission to enter were granted access to Egypt.

Before the New Kingdom, in dealing with terms for fortresses it was necessary to rely almost totally on non-royal inscriptions. It was relatively rare for kings themselves to leave a record of the construction of a fortress, and we had to rely largely on the accounts of administrators of such structures for evidence of their existence. Thankfully, this is not so for the pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty. In an effort to show off their military prowess, rulers of this period were eager to brag about their conquests and campaigns. As with any wise tacticians, these campaigns often included the use of existing fortresses as places of resupply and organization or the construction of new ones to meet strategic aims.

The first example we find of this comes from Thutmose III, who details multiple *htm*-forts in his account of the Meggido campaign in the Levant. The first instance of *htm* merely adds to the pile of evidence that Tjaru was a *htm*-fort, something that has already been established; Thutmose calls it as such as he departs the fortress and heads off to fight the

⁹¹ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 61

Canaanites.⁹² It is the second portion of this inscription which is more interesting. It describes the state of the Egyptian army after it had laid siege to Megiddo. Although Thutmose had been victorious in battle, he was unable to seize the city quickly, and as such had to resort to starving out the Canaanites. In a move that paralleled Caesar's famous actions at Alesia, he opted to surround the city with his own series of fortifications, providing shelter for his troops while simultaneously preventing the Canaanites from being relieved. His boasting about this tactical decision gives us two more examples of the word *htm*.⁹³

The first use of *htm* to describe the siege is somewhat unclear. Morris elaborates several possibilities. The first, she says, is that Thutmose commandeered some sort of existing structure in order to oversee the construction of his new walls. The second was that the Egyptian built a small fort to serve as command headquarters for Thutmose during the siege. The third, and the one Morris sees as the most likely due to the lack of archaeological evidence, is that *htm* was used to refer to a gate in the fortifications the Egyptians were constructing.⁹⁴ (The author will here make no judgement one way or another, as a lack of archaeological evidence for the fort found thus far does not rule out one having existed and then having been worn away completely, especially if it were a purely wooden structure as was the wall built around Megiddo.) The second usage of *htm* is less open to interpretation. Describing the newly built encirclement, Thutmose brags “[it was not allowed that even on]e of them [go] outside of this fortification, except going to knock of the door of their *htm*.” In this case Morris's answer seems more than sufficient: that the word refers to the gate of the fortifications, “upon which the Canaanites would

⁹² Morris, 148

⁹³ Morris, 151

⁹⁴ Morris, 151-152

have to knock if they wished to leave their town” (i.e., that the structure Thutmose built encircled the town and starved it out).⁹⁵

With inscriptions exhausted, it remains to turn to the archaeological evidence for *htm*-forts in the Eighteenth Dynasty. Until relatively recently, perhaps as late as the 1970s and 1980s, it was held that basically no such evidence existed, all fort remnants from the time (at least in the Levant) having been worn away by the wind and swept into the desert. But the work of Eliezer Oren and others has changed this, and now we can say with confidence that we have found a number of important fortresses from throughout the New Kingdom throughout Southwest Asia. As we shall see, these remains prove an invaluable tool in understanding the military policy of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Of all of the fortresses in the Levant or in northern Egypt proper found to date, none was so important to the Egyptians or to us as Tjaru, now identified as Tell Haboua I and II (two separate but closely connected sites). Tjaru is frequently mentioned in inscriptions during this period, far more than any other named fort. Listing them all is beyond the scope of this work, but Al-Ayedi and Morris both provide quite comprehensive analyses. In summary, Tjaru was seen as the dividing line between Egypt and the foreign lands of Canaan.⁹⁶ It was a large fort, large enough to support its own vineyard (as many wine seals from Tjaru survive). It also seems to have played host to a penal colony; one common punishment for serious crimes was the chopping off of the convict’s nose, followed by deportation to Tjaru.⁹⁷ Of particular interest, the city of Tjaru served as a nome capital for the Fourteenth Nome of Egypt.⁹⁸ Commanding the fortress was seen as a very important post, with commanders of the fortress sometimes going on

⁹⁵ Morris, 152

⁹⁶ Morris, 283

⁹⁷ Morris, 286

⁹⁸ al-Ayedi, 3

to attain high station (as we have seen already with Ramses I). Most importantly for our discussion, it is repeatedly and unambiguously referred to as a *h_{tm}*-fort in several sources. As such, it can serve as an example (if an unusually large one) for the role *h_{tm}*-forts played in the Eighteenth Dynasty and beyond.

One of the first notable features of the site at Tell Haboua is the large ditch, known to have contained water, connecting sites Tell Haboua I and Tell Haboua II. Al-Ayedi reports that it is more likely to be the remains of a series of lagoons that persisted in this region of the Sinai throughout ancient times.⁹⁹ This is supported by the presence of a crocodile skeleton within the ditch as well as depictions on the reliefs of Seti I of the king travelling across a waterway adjacent to the fortresses. Furthermore, in the Middle Kingdom it is well established that one of the roles of border fortresses was to allow the provisioning of Asiatic nomads and their animals with water without requiring their entry into Egypt. It does not seem likely that that need went away in the New Kingdom, and the construction of Tjaru at a natural body of water would facilitate that goal.

Tell Heboua I is by far the larger of the two sites. If the theory that it is Tjaru is correct, which seems to be the case, then this tell represents the town proper and associated large military base. The whole site is ringed by mighty walls, of which only two survive to any appreciable length (350 meters and 280 meters respectively,) giving a sense of the massive scale of the fortress, which was within an order of magnitude of Buhen in the Middle Kingdom.¹⁰⁰ A second enclosure wall, rare in the New Kingdom, ringed the fortress, providing additional protection. Gatehouses some 12 meters wide would have accommodated chariots and marching armies entering and leaving the fort. Hundreds of square meters of area in the city was devoted to

⁹⁹ al-Ayedi, 97

¹⁰⁰ al-Ayedi, 112

granaries, meant to supply not only the city but also the armies that would have left from here for distant lands. Magazines were built within the fortress to supply the defenders of the fort and armies preparing for an expedition.¹⁰¹

The site is not totally devoid of civilian structures, however. In addition to everything needed to supply the armies and garrisons, there are also houses, clearly small enough to be meant for a few individuals and not as barracks. Bread-baking furnaces attest to civilian economic activity. Temples and cemeteries would have supplied the religious needs of soldiers but also of the lay people of the city.¹⁰² While it is classified as a *htm*, Tjaru is clearly as much a town as a fortification, and it was nearly as important economically and administratively for the Egyptian empire as it was militarily.

Not all *htm*-forts were of scale or importance of Tjaru. Just a few kilometers away from Tell Haboua II, at a site named Tell el-Borg, archaeologists have uncovered the remains of another Eighteenth Dynasty fort that served a smaller role in Egypt's defenses. Unfortunately, prior to any digs at the site, the Egyptian military built defenses anew atop the ancient fortress, which led to the destruction of much of what remained of the structure as new trenches were dug to hide men and artillery.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, some valuable information can be gleaned from the site at Tell el-Borg, in spite of the fact that much of the area has been damaged.

Of particular interest is that there are no fewer than three ancient fortresses at the site. The newest dates to the Ramesside Period, and on an adjacent ridge sit two other forts, the remains of one atop the other. These forts, labelled as Field IV in Hoffmeier's excavation notes, are unfortunately ill-preserved. But they certainly did exist, and at a site only a few short

¹⁰¹ al-Ayedi, 112-115

¹⁰² al-Ayedi, 122

¹⁰³ Hoffmeier, "Tell el-Borg," 2

kilometers from Tell Haboua no less.¹⁰⁴ The fact that they were so close to one another makes it unlikely that Tell el-Borg was unlikely to mark a full stop along the campaign route for northern-bound armies; we would expect such a fort closer to 10-15 kilometers away, not five. But this fort was clearly of some importance for the Egyptians to keep building on the site. More likely, its role was as a further border check against Asiatics trying to get around Tjaru. On a clear day it would likely be possible to see as far as Tell Haboua II and between Tjaru and this fortress it would be easy to police the entire southern coast of the ancient lake on which the two forts sat.

It is also of interest that the fort exists on two layers in the same site. The latter of the two has been dated to Thutmose III; the former is certainly older, probably early Eighteenth Dynasty or of Hyksos construction.¹⁰⁵ The circumstances under which the former became the latter are unclear. It is possible that the fortress was assaulted and heavily damaged at some point before the Megiddo Campaign or Thutmose III rebuilt the fort to better support offensive operations. Unfortunately, in the absence of better written or archaeological evidence, it is unwise to speculate and only further discoveries can prove this one way or the other.

To make an overall assessment of the *h_tm*-fort is difficult. On the one hand, its name has a clear meaning; it is a gate which seals out foreigners. On the other, no consideration of size seems to have been made, and the scale of *h_tm*-forts differs greatly between examples. It seems that *h_tm*, then, was a “big tent” of sorts, into which any fortress whose role was chiefly defensive could be placed. Rather than a size contrast as in earlier eras, it seems that the main difference among the two primary Eighteenth Dynasty terms for fortresses was one of role, with the *h_tm*-forts being the more military of the two.

¹⁰⁴ Hoffmeier, “Tell el-Borg,” 2

¹⁰⁵ Hommeier, “Tell el-Borg,” 5

Ways of Horus

The Ways of Horus are famously depicted in a relief by Seti I at Karnak, a source which forms the bulk of current knowledge about not only that chain of fortresses but also Egyptian imperial policy in the Levant during the period. As such, a full discussion of the Ways of Horus will be undertaken only in the following chapter. Nonetheless, it would be an omission not to discuss the great military highway in some capacity before moving on fully to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties.

According to al-Ayedi, the Ways of Horus are mentioned a grand total of four times between the Hyksos period and the ascension of Ramses I.¹⁰⁶ Two mentions, one from the Fifteenth Dynasty and one from the Eighteenth, simply use the phrase in a list of toponyms or as a place travelled to without further context, letting us glean no information. More informatively, we know from another inscription that Djehuty-hay held the title of “Director of the Ways of Horus,” showing that it was still a genuine military institution during the Eighteenth Dynasty. Finally, the tomb of Puymere tells us that the Ways of Horus produced a regular tribute that was sent to the tomb’s owner for inspection, including wine. Unfortunately, these represent the only instances of the Ways of Horus proper during the period and provide us with precious little to work with.

That being said, we can learn quite a bit about the Ways of Horus by inference. We need look no further than the title of al-Ayedi’s work to see that Tjaru was itself part of the Ways of Horus as its starting point and anchor in Egyptian territory. Even though we do not get the full

¹⁰⁶ al-Ayedi, 16-17

topology of the military highway in the Eighteenth Dynasty, knowing the existence of a fort of that scale on the Ways of Horus implies that it must have held a great deal of weight in Egyptian military strategy. We can safely presume that it held the role it was known to in the Middle Kingdom and the Nineteenth Dynasty: a means both to protect Egypt and to launch expeditions outward into the Levant.

Chapter 4 The Ramesside Period

Bḥn

Unlike many of the neologisms used to refer to fortresses during the Ramesside Period, *bḥn* seems to be of native extraction. No clear etymology exists for the term, however; the only word from the same root that has a definite meaning is *bḥnt* “pylon,” although Morris cites a Hebrew cognate.¹⁰⁷ That being said, ascribing a precise definition to *bḥn* has historically proven as difficult as it has for the majority of the Semitic loanwords in use during this period. Thankfully, sufficient evidence exists to at least get some sense about what the word may have meant.

The first piece of this puzzle can be found in the famed Karnak Inscription of Seti I. This text forms one of our primary sources on the Ways of Horus and is of special interest to the discussion of several of the terms in this section. A fuller description will be given in the Ways of Horus section, but here suffice it to say that it was a record of an expedition launched under Seti into the Levant that follows the army as it travels to each fort along the Ways of Horus. One of these fortresses, encountered by Seti late in his journey, was the “*bḥn* of Menmaatre.”¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, this is another of those many records of fortresses that gives us merely a name and a (not necessarily true-to-life) image without much by way of real description of the structure or its use. This is doubly unfortunate because this is the only case where it can be said for certain that the *bḥn* in question is a military installation.

¹⁰⁷ Morris, 821

¹⁰⁸ Morris, 430

Another instance of *bhn* cited by Morris as evidence of the word referring to fortresses comes from the very beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty. In it, an overseer of *htm*-forts named Aia donated land for the purpose of making offerings to Amun-Re “of the *bhn*.”¹⁰⁹ That a fortress-overseer had some association with a *bhn* is certainly an argument for *bhn* meaning fortress, although without other associations of *bhn* and *htm* it is a stretch to claim synonymity, and with *bhn* also being known to mean “estate” it is easily that to which Aia could have been referring.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, all this can really tell us is that a *bhn* existed somewhere in the vicinity of a *htm* commanded by Aia.

In contrast with the relative rarity of *bhn* in monumental inscriptions and records of war, we find several instances of the word in economic records of the Twentieth Dynasty. One appears in the *Tale of the Two Brothers*, a fascinating read found among Gardinier’s *Late Egyptian Miscellanies*. We find the word at a point in the tale in which the brothers, having come into conflict, have gone their separate ways, and one constructs a *bhn* for himself in which to dwell.¹¹¹ Now it is quite inconceivable that what is meant here could be a castle or any other military installation. Instead the author means that he has built a large home (or perhaps small estate) for himself, something much more in line with the needs and capacities of a civilian trying to make a living for himself. Clearly we have here an instance of the latter “estate” meaning of *bhn*, rather than the possible “fortress” one.

Turning to a more concrete papyrus than the fanciful *Tale of the Two Brothers*, we find many more instances of the word *bhn* on the Wilbour Papyrus. This papyrus was written in the reign of Ramses V, at or shortly after the onset of the New Kingdom’s decline. It is a tax survey

¹⁰⁹ Morris, 399

¹¹⁰ Morris, 400

¹¹¹ Moldenke, 99

of sorts, detailing the parcelling out of the land of Middle Egypt into fields which were tilled under the direction of particular individuals.¹¹² It also records the toponyms of many landmarks in the area (such as villages and towns, as well as *bhn* and *sgr* as we shall see later,) providing us with something of a “map” of how Egypt was internally organized at the time.

As we read through this papyrus, we find several words translated by Gardiner as “castle.” Lesko’s *Late Egyptian Dictionary* makes clear that the original word meant is *bhn* in at least some cases (more instances are likely, but cannot be confirmed at this time as the author can only read hieroglyphics and not hieratic).¹¹³ Certainly the Nile River was dotted up and down with these structures. If we take the translation as “castle,” though, this paints an unusual picture of the region. It would be quite odd to find, in a kingdom with a still-functioning system of border-fortresses, dozens of castles dotting the interior of the country in agricultural regions.

The idea that these *bhn* were military in nature becomes even less tenable when we look at what these structures were associated with. Whenever we see a *bhn*, it is someone’s *bhn*. Without fail, we find them associated with personal names: the *bhn* of Meryset, the *bhn* of Roma,¹¹⁴ the *bhn* of Meryre.¹¹⁵ It seems odd that individuals should build castles for themselves within a country still functional enough to conduct a large tax survey. Moreover, they are sometimes paired with distinctly unmilitary features. The *bhn* of Hotpe, for example, evidently had a pond of some note.¹¹⁶ Taken together, the secure identification of *bhn* as “castle” seems unlikely.

¹¹² Antoine, 1

¹¹³ Lesko, 15

¹¹⁴ Gardiner, *The Wilbour Papyrus*, 25,8; B25,6

¹¹⁵ Antoine, 3

¹¹⁶ Gardiner, *The Wilbour Papyrus*, 36,37

We are left, then, in the unenviable situation of reconciling the use of *bhn* to refer to one of the forts that Seti visited and the fact that, in the great majority of instances of the word, it clearly means “estate” rather than anything military. It is possible that both meanings were true, but given that the second case occurs so rarely in comparison (and is never associated with any official titles) this explanation seems unsatisfying. What seems more likely, then, is that the word had only the economic meaning, and was on occasion applied to forts named after kings (since they were, after all, the domain of the pharaoh). Morris raises this as a possibility (by comparison with *t*, which certainly underwent this process), and the corroboration from the Wilbour Papyrus from which she does not draw only makes this more likely to be the case.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Morris, 822

Mnnw

By the Ramesside period, the term *mnnw* had been in active use for no less than a millennium, changing its shades of meaning but never its overall sense. It is no surprise, then, that this trend continues into the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. Indeed, *mnnw* is one of the most common designators for fortresses during this period, along with *htm*. It is applied to fortresses of several distinct regions that firmly establish its use very much in line with the *mnnw* of epochs past.

Our exploration of the word takes us to a part of the world rarely touched upon by this paper thus far: Libya. While the Egyptians had some interest in Libya (as attested in the *Story of Sinuhe*, among other places,)¹¹⁸ we hear no records of any fortresses or other military constructions taking place there until the Nineteenth Dynasty. According to O'Connor, this change was likely in response to the Libyans attempting for the first time to enter Egypt in considerable numbers.¹¹⁹ The result was a considerable building-up of Egypt's military bases on her western frontier during the reign of Ramses II.¹²⁰ This is evidenced at the important site of Zawiet Umm el-Rakham (to be discussed in more detail later), at which Ramses left an inscription that clarifies his construction of *mnnw*-forts around wells in the region¹²¹ (a logical decision, given the need to secure water supplies for friendly troops and keep them away from hostile ones).

Egyptian activity in Libya during the Nineteenth Dynasty reached its height under Merneptah, Ramses II's successor. According to Merneptah, the "Nine Bows" (here Libyans)

¹¹⁸ Gardiner, *Sinuhe*

¹¹⁹ O'Connor and Quirke, chapter 6 (no page numbers)

¹²⁰ Thomas, 376

¹²¹ Morris, 624

regularly assaulted and penetrated *mnnw*-fortresses before going on to plunder the Delta.¹²² (The fact that the fortress of Tell Aqba'in had walls 10m high and nearly 5m thick should attest to the level of danger the Libyans must have posed.)¹²³ Unfortunately, as Kitchen attests, little of Merneptah's victory stele remains.¹²⁴ What is certain is that by the late Nineteenth Dynasty the Egyptians had established a number of *mnnw*-fortresses along their Western border and were concerned with maintaining their integrity, going as far as launching major offensive operations to keep them safe.

In the Twentieth Dynasty the matter of the Libyan forts becomes somewhat more complicated. On the one hand, at no time does the word *mnnw* itself actually appear during the period; on the other, Ramesses III depicts at his famous temple at Medinet Habu the use of what are clearly fortresses to repel Libyan invaders.¹²⁵ Thanks to depictions of these fortresses as multi-tiered structures,¹²⁶ we can be fairly certain of their massive size. Given this, and given the unlikelihood of a large construction project going unreported in the brief interval between Merneptah and Ramesses III, it seems entirely reasonable to identify the great forts guarding the Libyan border during the Twentieth Dynasty as *mnnw* just as those of the Nineteenth Dynasty were known to be.

While we are somewhat lacking in references to the *mnnw* of the Libyan border, excavations at several sites in the Western Desert have revealed many details of these important fortresses. One notable site already touched upon is Tell Aqba'in, located just past the Western Delta. It has been dated by Thomas to the reign of Ramesses II, which matches closely with the

¹²² Morris, 629

¹²³ Thomas, 375

¹²⁴ Kitchen, Vol. IV, 2

¹²⁵ Morris, 779

¹²⁶ Morris, 780

written historical record.¹²⁷ Of particular note, Thomas speculates that the walls were built wide and high primarily so that the vast border region could be more easily observed;¹²⁸ this correlates neatly with the record in Merneptah's victory stele that the commander of the *mnnw* had sent word back to the palace of the Libyan leader's retreat.¹²⁹

A yet grander fortress, one better excavated and understood than Tell Aqba'in, lies far to the west near the village of Zawiyet Umm el-Rakhan, for which the site has been named. Excavations have been ongoing here intermittently since 1946, with a concerted effort in the past two decades or so being led by Dr. Steven Snape of the University of Liverpool.¹³⁰ Thanks to these efforts, a reconstruction of the floor plan has been made possible, and it has revealed a fortress to rival the mighty *mnnw* of the Twelfth Dynasty at such famous sites at Buhen and Semna. Measuring at over 18,000 square meters, and complete with magazines and a temple with attached chapel, this fortress would have towered over the local landscape and made easier the business of controlling the local area.¹³¹ There even seems to be evidence that the site acted as a local economic hub, producing enough food and goods to supply its sizable garrison autonomously without taxing the central government.¹³² While without other sites we lack a good sense of the lower bound of the scale of Libyan *mnnw* of the period, this magnificent fortress clearly represents the upper bound of Egyptian investment on their western frontier.

Since the Twelfth Dynasty, the Egyptians built *mnnw* in Nubia to secure their control over the region, and in addition to the building of *mnnw* in Libya the Ramesside pharaohs seem to have continued this policy at least into the reign of Seti I, if not later. Unfortunately (and in

¹²⁷ Thomas, 371

¹²⁸ Thomas, 376

¹²⁹ Kitchen, Vol. IV no. 2 7:5

¹³⁰ Snape and Wilson, 1

¹³¹ Snape and Wilson, 7

¹³² O Connor and Quirke, Chapter 6, no page numbers given

keeping with the scant textual evidence for the Libyan forts) only one inscription unambiguously makes reference to a *mnnw*-fortress in Nubia. In it, Seti describes a *mnnw* (whose name is, unfortunately, lost) at which he and his army stop before going off to smite Nubians.¹³³ This does not tell us much about the nature of the *mnnw* directly. Drawing inferences from earlier periods, however, it is quite probable that some of the many *mnnw* of the Eighteenth Dynasty were still in use during this era. If that is the case, then this stele supports a very similar definition of *mnnw* as that of the Eighteenth Dynasty: hybrid military-civilian installations just as capable of resupplying an army on the march as they are of defending Egypt's borders or exploiting local economies.

This definition is also well supported by the evidence from Libya. As we have seen, the fortresses built there and termed *mnnw* were massive, certainly capable of acting as a base for military operations (such as that of Merneptah, although the fragmentary nature of his inscription makes it impossible to tell for sure one way or the other). They were also known to be centers of economic exploitation, at least to support themselves if not more. As such, we may simply repeat the definition of *mnnw* from the Eighteenth Dynasty and use it in the Nineteenth and Twentieth with confidence: large military structures with a dual purpose as civilian centers, able to flexibly meet the needs of empire.

¹³³ Morris, 662

Mktr

Of the various Semitic loanwords in use for fortresses and related structures during the late New Kingdom, *mktr* (also spelled *mgdr*) is by far the most famous. It appears in sources no less famous than the Bible (where it appears six times, in the Exodus narrative as well as in prophecies).¹³⁴ It is well-attested across Semitic languages, appearing with minor variation in Aramaic, Phoenician, and even Akkadian.¹³⁵ It is no mystery as to why loanwords of this sort became common in Late Egyptian: garrisons of fortresses would have interacted regularly with the locals, picking up their names for military terms in the process. This is not by any means a historical outlier; many of the English words we associate with nineteenth-century colonialism, such as *khaki*, were adopted from the languages of the colonized, and it is no stretch to imagine the Egyptian language undergoing the same process.

While it is unambiguous that Semitic speaking peoples regularly used words like *mktr* to denote fortresses, what exactly the word meant in Egyptian after being transferred into the language requires some investigation. The earliest known occurrence of the word is as a toponym, in a list of Thutmose III's.¹³⁶ Another instance of the word shows up among Seti's fortress list, although all we get is its name "Migdol of Menmaatre" and a depiction.¹³⁷ A fortress labelled *mktr* also shows up in a relief somewhat later, at the temple of Ramses III in Medinet Habu.¹³⁸ Interestingly, examining the two fortress depictions alongside one another, they are both rather small (Seti's migdol is smaller than other fortresses around it) and they both lack towers or a multi-tiered structure, unlike many of the *htm* and other fortresses along Seti's route.

¹³⁴ Hoffmeier, *Migdol*, 1

¹³⁵ Hoch, 211

¹³⁶ Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, 784

¹³⁷ Kitchen, Vol. 1, p.10, 1

¹³⁸ Medinet Habu, Pl. 42

One more place in which *mktr* shows up is in the Onomasticon of Amenope.¹³⁹ As part of a long list of structures, in a section listing words for fortress and related terms (such as *sgr* “tower” or *inb* “wall”).¹⁴⁰ On the surface this does not tell us much. But the mere existence of the word in a record such as the Onomasticon demonstrates that it was, in fact, a separate concept with a real meaning and not simply a rarely-used artistic term. As such, unlike some shakier terms on this list, we can be confident *mktr* were indeed forts.

From what little evidence we have, it is nonetheless possible to construct something of a definition. First of all, it is clear that the *mktr* were smaller than other fortresses, such as Tjaru or even the lesser fortresses of Seti’s stele. Secondly, at least some of them were likely by the sea, considering Ramses III shows one near his defeat of the Sea Peoples in a battle at the shore. This is enough to describe a class of fortresses: small yet defensible forts holding down lesser points of defense so major centers such as Tjaru could be the focus. It would make sense to build such fortresses at the mouth of the Nile, where invasion would be seen as possible, but unlikely. Given that, it is possible that *mkdr* fell under the umbrella term *htm*, as it is known that a class of “*htm* of the sea” existed throughout the New Kingdom. (It is also possible that, as the language shifted and *mktr* appeared more often, forts once called *htm* were redesignated. If this is true, no titulary evidence survives to confirm it.)

¹³⁹ Gardinier, *Omnastica*, Vol. 3, Pl. XIIA, 1

¹⁴⁰ Gardinier, *Omnastica*, Vol. 2, 213-215

Nḥtw

While the Ramesside Period does present to us the first time in which the word *nḥtw* might represent a military structure, the use of *nḥtw* for buildings does predate Ramesses I. From Thutmose III onward, Eighteenth Dynasty rulers used the term to denote a settlement of captured foreigners.¹⁴¹ *Nḥtw* (without any determinatives indicating structures) is of course a much older word, coming from the root *nḥt* for strength (a root common in many Egyptian names). As a noun, it means “victories,” and is in this form often encountered in the braggadocious military stele of New Kingdom pharaohs.¹⁴² But the term acquires both greater use and possible novel meaning in the Nineteenth Dynasty.

Like so many of the neologisms of the New Kingdom military, we find *nḥtw* applied to fortresses most prominently among Seti’s list of fortresses built along the Ways of Horus. Several of the fortresses which Seti used on his campaign are labelled as *nḥtw*, including those Gardinier identifies as J and Q; fortress J is also identified with a *nḥtw* listed in Papyrus Anastasi I (in the famous letter that also lists off fortress names).¹⁴³ After another half-century’s research, Morris proposes a slightly different scheme of fortress identification; in order to reconcile double-names and the Papyrus Anastasi I with Gardinier’s interpretation of the Seti inscription, she suggests that forts K, S, and H should be properly called *nḥtw* rather than those Gardinier identifies;¹⁴⁴ this paper will follow those identifications. In any case, it is abundantly clear that several *nḥtw* forts existed in the Levant in the time of Seti I and his immediate successors. What

¹⁴¹ Morris, 173

¹⁴² E.g., Morris, 153, 205, etc.

¹⁴³ Gardinier, “Military Road,” 113

¹⁴⁴ Morris, 406

is not clear from the evidence so far examined is what exactly separated *nhtw*-forts from the *hmtw* and other military installations in Palestine at the time.

As with other terms that seem to genuinely refer to military installations, we find overseers of *nhtw* among the accomplished military men recorded by Chevereau. Unfortunately, one of these two men, Menmaatre-nakhtu, proves difficult to pin down. His existence is recorded in Cheverau's work as well as the name-list of Ranke, but between the citations listed in these two texts it has proven hard to locate an original copy of the inscription attesting to its title.¹⁴⁵ As such, all we know was that Menmaatre-nakhtu had an impressive resume, including general, *rp*'-prince, *h3ty*'-, and "commander of the five *nhtw* of the Sherden" at the end of the New Kingdom.¹⁴⁶ (The association with the Sherden is of some note here, since we already know of some association of *nhtw* and foreigners.)

The other overseer of *nhtw*, Setekhemheb, is easier to pin down. He left behind a record of his titles on an offering stela at Ehnasya.¹⁴⁷ He held several titles, including general and "overseer of the great *nhtw* of the Sherden."¹⁴⁸ Once again, we see a correlation between Sherden (foreigners) and *nhtw*, as well as an unambiguous military connection in that a general oversaw the *nhtw*. Although this is not enough evidence to construct a full definition, it shows that the structures must have been multifaceted in their roles.

Outside of the Karnak king list and the titulary of military officials, the older use of *nhtw* to refer to prisoner-of-war settlements continued in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. Ramses II, for example, seems to have engaged in a deliberate policy of moving subject peoples around his empire, placing them into *nhtw* in regions far from their homelands. Especially

¹⁴⁵ Ranke, 150

¹⁴⁶ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 62

¹⁴⁷ Petrie, Pl. XXVII

¹⁴⁸ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 24

interesting here is a formulation found in a laudatory inscription on Seti's temple: Ramses II is credited as a builder of "villages, *nḥtw* ..., and towns."¹⁴⁹ It is probably that this listing was meant to draw an explicit comparison between the roles of the three types of settlements, showing that their basic function was similar (economic centers aided by the magnanimity of the king).

The greatest number relocations into *nḥtw* on the record took place under Ramses III as part of his defensive campaigns in the turbulent Late Bronze Age. Beset by enemies on all sides, he attempted a permanent solution in forcing his enemies into pacified residence in Egyptian territory. At sites like Deir-el-Medina and Medinet Habu, Ramesses III recorded a systematic policy of forcing problematic foreigners into *nḥtw* in order to control them; going so far as to make them learn Egyptian in order to better integrate them into Egyptian society.¹⁵⁰ There is some debate among historians about the location of these *nḥtw* (in Egypt, Palestine, or both,)¹⁵¹ but there is no doubt that these represented a major part of Egypt's foreign and domestic policy under Ramses III.

What remains is to reconcile the two meanings of *nḥtw* with each other. On the one hand, two uses of *nḥtw* in Seti's inscription corroborated with the Papyrus Anastasi, as well as the oversight of such buildings by military officers, make a compelling case for *nḥtw* being an official term for military bases (rather than a rarely-used synonym, as with other terms used only once). On the other hand, the repeated use of the word for civilian settlements of captives (and especially its linkage with towns and villages in the Ramses II Abydos inscription) implies a definition linked with the economic and political spheres rather than the military one.

¹⁴⁹ Morris, 471-474. Abydos inscription also found at 330,15 of Kitchen's Ramesside Inscriptions

¹⁵⁰ Morris, 732

¹⁵¹ Morris, 733

Furthermore, the fact that at least some *nḥtw* were built in Egypt makes a purely military definition unlikely, since (as we found with *bḥn*) the Egyptians were not likely in the business of building large military installations in the middle of friendly territory.

To reconcile these ideas, it makes sense to turn to a much more common word for fortresses: *mnnw*. As the term evolved, in the Eighteenth Dynasty, it took on both an economic and military meaning. It meant, all at once, a large type of military installation and the walled towns that sprung up among such institutions. Indeed, it eventually seemed to apply to towns in that mold that served no military purpose at all, even if many *mnnw* were still used for their original purpose. A similar process may have applied to *nḥtw*. It is not unreasonable to imagine a standard *ḥtm* fortress (or other border fort) being used as a *nḥtw*-colony and, in the process, acquiring *nḥtw* as part of its name. Certainly, placing a resettlement facility inside of an existing fortress would make the task of guarding the foreigners and supplying them substantially easier. As such, it would be a reasonable conclusion to say that *nḥtw* were resettlement camps first and military facilities second, but the term could certainly apply to both categories (although the latter mostly for those buildings that had once been or were currently the former).

Ḥtm

In the earlier part of the New Kingdom, *ḥtm* rose to become the primary attested term for fortresses of the era. The term referred to a class of fortresses of various sizes which served as figurative seals (*ḥtm*'s original meaning), keeping the borders of Egypt closed tightly, as well as keepers of literal seals used to regulate the transit of foreigners across the border. In spite of the diversification of fortress names during the Nineteenth and later Twentieth Dynasties, the *ḥtm* remained the primary type of fortress built and administered by the Egyptians, especially along their northern boundary. Nowhere is this better evidenced than in the titulary of military officials of the period, in which the term abounds.

When looking through the list of men appointed to oversight roles in *ḥtm* of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties, one stands out in particular: Seti.¹⁵² This is, indeed, none other than the great pharaoh Seti I.¹⁵³ As we saw at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Ramesses I, Seti's father, was himself commander of the fortress at Tjaru (among other military titles) before his ascension to the throne. At some point, Seti I also held this command; whether this was during the three-year reign of Ramesses I or at some earlier point is not made clear from the sources. What is clear is that, in the early Nineteenth Dynasty and late Eighteenth Dynasty, command over Tjaru was seen as a worthy resume-builder for a future pharaoh.

This evidence is supported further by another, later overseer of a *ḥtm*: none other than a royal prince. Merneptah, son of Ramses II, himself had a son named Merneptah, who served in the Egyptian military.¹⁵⁴ He held titles such as general and *imy-r msh' wr* (perhaps "field marshal") but he was also an *imy-r ḥtm*. Even at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty, the fact that

¹⁵² Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 60

¹⁵³ Morris, 289

¹⁵⁴ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 11

Merneptah would appoint a royal prince to oversee a fortress shows that this was seen as a good stepping-stone to higher office, perhaps even a way of preparing a favored son to rule outright. Of course, there was no Merneptah II, so we do not know how effective this training would have been, but even by the waning days of the Nineteenth Dynasty the kings felt that a position in the *h̄tm* made a great preparation for rule.

This lends some support to the idea that Tjaru was much the same in the Nineteenth Dynasty, at least, as it was in the Eighteenth. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Tjaru was a bustling fort, complete with vineyards (which are attested in the Nineteenth Dynasty as well),¹⁵⁵ a large garrison, and the responsibility to oversee the transit of foreigners in and out of the country. To oversee such an institution would be a massive undertaking, a microcosm of Egypt itself. As a matter of course, a military department of such size would have its own bureaucracy of quartermasters, non-commissioned officers, and other minor officials who would have reported to the *imy-r* just as the great bureaucracy of state reported to the pharaoh. The overseer would have had to manage military affairs as well as agricultural ones and the import of craft goods for the soldier's use. It is easy to see why a childless pharaoh would want a man of such talents to succeed him, and the fact that not one but two pharaohs oversaw this fort in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Dynasties shows that Tjaru (and perhaps other *h̄tm*-forts as well) remained important and a focus of much economic and military activity.

We know of other fortress overseers, too, although their careers did not progress to such heights as Seti or Ramesses. Chevereau attests to four men holding the title *imy-r h̄tm* without further differentiation; Merneptah was discussed earlier in this section and Iia in the Eighteenth Dynasty (since it seemed appropriate to group him with the men with whom he spent his

¹⁵⁵ Morris, 452

career).¹⁵⁶ Of the other two, Huwy (who is only attested on a single stele in Bologna on which secondary sources cannot easily be found) does not tell us much, but Neb-nekhtu does have something interesting to tell us. Although most *htm*-forts found thus far have been located in the Levant, Neb-nekhtu left records of his activities in the south of Egypt, at Elephantine. While this is not absolute confirmation the Elephantine in particular was a *htm*, it makes a convincing argument that it may have been, or that if not other such forts had been built in the region. This idea is confirmed by fragmentary evidence from the Turin Tax List, which lists Bigeh and (possibly) Elephantine as being overseen by *imy-r htm*.¹⁵⁷

As we have seen in earlier periods, the Egyptians were quite fond of augmenting their titles with additional descriptors, sometimes to add further context (such as geographic locations) and sometimes merely to embellish the title with a greater degree of prestige. We have, for example, one Hor, who was the overseer of “the fortresses of the lord of the two lands.”¹⁵⁸ Since all fortresses were in the royal demesne, this is clearly redundant and meant only to add prestige to Hor, not to indicate that he held additional power over a typical *imy-r htm*. Two further *imy-r htm* oversaw Bigeh specifically, one attested by Morris.¹⁵⁹ This further confirms that Bigeh, just south of Egypt in Nubia, was indeed a *htm*. One final *imy-r htm* with an embellished title, Huy-nefer, was overseer of the fortresses of the sea, a position he shared with a representative of the Eighteenth Dynasty.¹⁶⁰ His title probably referred to defensive structures along the northern Delta, which are also referenced on a tax document from the same era.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 59

¹⁵⁷ Morris, 670

¹⁵⁸ Chevreau, *Nouvel*, 60

¹⁵⁹ Morris, 670; Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 60-1

¹⁶⁰ Chevereau, *Nouvel*, 61

¹⁶¹ Morris, 454

Much of the rest of the evidence for *htm*-forts during the Ramesside period comes from several sources dealing with the Ways of Horus, a series of fortifications along the road from Egypt into Palestine through the Sinai. These began at Tjaru, which has already been discussed under the Eighteenth Dynasty and was still known to be a *htm* during this period (from the title of Seti I). Tjeku, the next major fortress, was also identified as a *htm* in Papyrus Anastasi VI (it was also at one point identified as a *sgr*, which is discussed in the relevant section).¹⁶² The remaining fortresses are somewhat more difficult.

The trouble is primarily in the many names applied to fortresses along the route Seti takes on his Karnak Stela, the main source we have on the Ways of Horus and the fortresses that composed it (along with a somewhat sarcastic letter that served as a scribal exercise and listed a similar set of toponyms). Tjaru is clearly identified as a *htm*, as expected. The next fortress, however, is called *t* by both sources, which means “dwelling.”¹⁶³ As is described in more detail under *bhn*, this use of terms for houses and the like for fortresses was persistent and non-technical. Instead, it seems to have been a bit of wordplay, helping the scribe avoid repetition and adding flair to what would otherwise be a rather dry work. The next fort is called “migdol” and will be discussed in that section in more detail. Of the following forts, two are *nhtw*,¹⁶⁴ another a *bhn*, and several more *dmi* “towns.”¹⁶⁵ That the *nhtw* represented a legitimate class of fortified structures (specifically, one connected with the Egyptianization of battle captives) is established in the section by that name. The *dmi* are rather more interesting. On the one hand, the art of the stele clearly depicts a fortress. But on the other, if we take *dmi* literally, it means

¹⁶² Morris, 486

¹⁶³ Morris, 410

¹⁶⁴ Morris, 426

¹⁶⁵ Morris, 439 etc.

“town,” which is not a designation one would expect for a fortress. Clearly, there must have been some other technical term by which the *dmi* were known.

What that term was, however, is not totally clear. On the one hand, fortified towns were most commonly known as *mnnw* during the New Kingdom, especially those in Nubia. On the other, records from the Eighteenth Dynasty (and a few from the Nineteenth)¹⁶⁶ indicate the existence of a number of *htm*-fortresses in the Levant during this period, and only one example of a *mnnw* from the region is known (from the reign of Thutmose). As such, the evidence leans overwhelmingly in favor of declaring the *dmiw* as *htm* of a sort, perhaps differentiated in some small way but in general conforming more to the plan of Tjaru or Tjeku than any other sort of structure.

Evidence abounds for *htm* of the late New Kingdom. Morris lists dozens of instances of the word, referring to Tjaru, Tjeku, or generically to *htm* found in the period. But between the titles and the stela of Seti, we have enough evidence for a definition; to list any more would merely be to recapitulate Morris’s ideas on the matter without further addition. Based on the available evidence, it seems that the Eighteenth Dynasty definition holds. A *htm* was a fortress of moderate size, not quite so large as fortresses like the Middle Kingdom’s Buhen or that at Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham, but still quite considerable in size. It was primarily designed to regulate the movement of people and goods across Egypt’s borders, and as such the most important were at Tjaru and Tjeku in the Sinai (at the dividing line between Egypt and Asia) and at the First Cataract at Elephantine and Bigeh (the dividing line between Egypt and Nubia). In addition to being checkpoints, they could and often were used as launching points for campaigns

¹⁶⁶ Morris, 463 etc.

into foreign lands, their stores of supplies and wells used to provision the army for the march ahead.

Sgr

As noted above, the later New Kingdom presents us with a series of novel terms used for fortresses and related structures during the period, many derived from Semitic languages. Of these, *sgr* presents to us the most difficult sense to tease out of the original texts. Its etymology, though a matter of debate in the specific, is in general not hard to ascertain. The general consensus (after Hoch and Morris) is that the word originated in Sumerian as *SI.GAR* and thereafter entered the Semitic languages as a term denoting a fortress (as well as related words meaning “to close,” “prison,” etc.).¹⁶⁷ In any case, by the Ramesside Period (and likely not much earlier) the word had entered Egyptian as *sgr* (or occasionally *sgʒr*).

Some evidence, beyond the etymology, suggests a “fortress” meaning for *sgr*. This largely comes from a famous section in the Papyrus Anastasi V, concerning a story about several runaway slaves.¹⁶⁸ (It is this section that is cited both by Hoch and Morris in their discussions of this term.) The troop commander of Tjeku who has been sent after the slaves makes haste to the border-fortress of Tjeku, well-known from as early as the Eighteenth Dynasty, which he calls a *sgr*. In this capacity, it seems not unlike other words of Semitic origin we have seen (such as *mdkr*), as it has been used as a non-technical or otherwise artistic substitute for the more common terms of Egyptian origin (such as *htm* and *mnnw*) that usually denote border fortresses.

The puzzle appears when we consider the other known instances of *sgr*, all of which appear on the Papyrus Wilbour. This papyrus, whose origin was discussed under *bhn*, gives a unique look into the economic administration of the northern part of Upper Egypt

¹⁶⁷ Hoch, 329

¹⁶⁸ Gardinier, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* 19:7

(roughly terminating at Abydos). In this text, the work *sgr* appears no fewer than seven times.¹⁶⁹

In each case, it is used as a marker of a region in which some land is being cultivated by a particular individual (although the individuals are generally only listed on the “A” part of the papyrus). Gardinier, who prepared a commentary and translation of the papyrus in full, translates *sgr* as “keep” in each case.¹⁷⁰

If we accept this translation at face value, we are left with something of a conundrum. Certainly, *sgr* had something to do with fortresses if it could be used to refer to Tjeku. But on the other hand, it would be surprising if a half-dozen fortresses could be found in areas of agricultural cultivation in Egypt’s heartland. While it is possible that a large number of small fortresses were built inside Egypt in the Twentieth Dynasty, this seems militarily unnecessary, and no evidence in the archaeological record supports this idea. What is more likely is that the meaning of *sgr* was more subtle than only referring to some class of military structures.

Looking back at the etymology of the word, it is well-established that the term came from Semitic languages into Egyptian. Looking at the Wilbour Papyrus, when we see instances of *sgr* associated with an individual, we find that it is associated with Sherden. The land near the *sgr* of Sha’, for example, was worked by the Sherden Tja’o,¹⁷¹ and the *sgr* of Wadjmoshe was worked by the Sherden Pkhore and the Sherden Khensemwese.¹⁷² Now these were not the only people to work these areas, and there are a few Sherden elsewhere. As well, most of the references to *sgr* that Lesko identifies are in Papyrus B, which does not correlate individual land tracts with their cultivators. But it is interesting that in both of the cases where

¹⁶⁹ Lesko, “sgr”

¹⁷⁰ Gardinier, *The Wilbour Papyrus*, 13 28:6 etc.

¹⁷¹ Gardinier, *The Wilbour Papyrus*, 28:6

¹⁷² Gardinier, *The Wilbour Papyrus*, 33:35-40

Lesko cites *sgr* in the individual text in an area where we are told who cultivates the land (rather than merely whose responsibility the general region falls under), we hear of Sherden tilling the soil.

It is well known, from the famous temple at Medinet Habu, that following a Sherden-led coalition attack on Egypt being defeated, Ramses III had a number of these peoples resettled, mostly in the Levant.¹⁷³ But given their presence here in the Wilbour Papyrus, it seems that some of these Sherden must have later moved around within Egypt, with some coming to settle in the area the papyrus describes. It is not hard to imagine small groups of Sherden, upon immigrating into Egypt proper, building for themselves a village in the manner they would have in Syria-Palestine. If these settlements were walled or otherwise enclosed, then *sgr* would have been an appropriate word for them: the general sense of “walled or enclosed” would be preserved, and the use of a loanword for a foreign settlement would be quite appropriate. The definition of the word, then, is not only “fortress” (although it seems it could be used for this, at least on the Palestinian border) but more commonly “walled settlement of Asiatics” (or perhaps settled foreigners more generally). Note that a *sgr* under this definition need not be exclusively built and maintained by Sherden or other peoples from that area, but if this idea holds up they should have founded the majority of such settlements and any others simply be areas they built and then left.

It is worth making a brief comparison here between *nhtw* and *sgr*. The former term also denotes structures used for the housing of foreigners in the Ramesside Period. There seem to be, however, two key differences; one, *sgr* seemed to be used almost exclusively later in an official context; and two, *sgr* are not nearly as well-correlated with military institutions, and indeed are correlated with civilian ones. They must have been separate types of constructions, with *nhtw*

¹⁷³ Morris, 732

more fortified and sharing a role as military centers and reeducation camps while *sgr* were purely civilian settlements (whether or not they played a role in Egyptianizing the Sherden or other peoples is, to date, unclear but decidedly possible).

The Ways of Horus

Like *mnnw*, the *w3t Hr*, or Ways of Horus, date back to the earliest phases of Egyptian royal activity. Inscriptions mentioning them can be found as early as the Old Kingdom. However, we do not get a full overview of these fortresses until the Nineteenth Dynasty. Two important documents, both mentioned earlier in this paper on several occasions, were composed at this time. Seti's Karnak Stele and the Papyrus Anastasi V both give a full picture of the Ways of Horus as they existed during the reigns of Seti I and Ramses II, respectively, and are invaluable historical records for the study of the fortresses. For this section, we will use them not to construct precise definitions for each name applied to fortresses along the route (that task having already been completed) but rather on the Ways of Horus overall, in their structure and function in the grand strategy of Egypt.

The first of these fortresses was Tjaru. Located at Tell el-Habua, it served as the gateway into Egypt and the first stop on any journey outward. Seti I, for example, records his campaign as having begun at the fortress.¹⁷⁴ Adjacent to the fort, Seti depicts a large canal (possibly named “the dividing canal,” or simply “the canal”) across which his army travelled on their way into Syria. Al-Ayedi contends that this was not a literal canal, however, but a “network of lagoons” that were known to have existed in the vicinity of Tjaru.¹⁷⁵ This makes a great deal of sense: if one is trying to build a large fortress meant to host a sizeable garrison, it is logical to do so near a steady source of water. The knowledge that Tjaru hosted a significant winery only adds to the reasons a lagoon or other water source would be a requirement for the fortress.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Al-Ayedi, 22

¹⁷⁵ Al-Ayedi, 98

¹⁷⁶ Morris, 453

Tjaru itself was discussed in great detail in the section on *h̄tm* of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but it bears a brief recapitulation here. The fortress was colossal, with one side of its walls measuring 350m and another 280m; if rectangular, this would be about 5 times larger than Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham.¹⁷⁷ A gate 12 meters wide and huge bastions added to the splendor and defensibility of the fortress.¹⁷⁸ As we saw in the *h̄tm* section of this chapter, command of it was so important that several of its commanders rose to become pharaohs and another was a royal prince (although he never ascended to the throne). As the furthest fortress on the border of Egypt, it was the keystone to her defense and a nigh-impenetrable barrier against invasion.

Much has been said in this paper already about Tjaru, but not so much about the forts further down in the Ways of Horus. For this, we turn to the century-old work by Gardiner on the subject, which remains (subject to certain revisions by Morris) the authority of the Ways of Horus, especially in its lesser forts. When looking at the images Gardiner reproduces, we note that several of the fortresses were connected to wells.¹⁷⁹ For example, Gardiner's Fort G, called "Buto of Seti Merneptah," was associated with the well H (whose original name was too badly damaged to be read in full).¹⁸⁰ This demonstrates that the Egyptians were deeply interested in the control of water supplies in Palestine, something confirmed by Morris.¹⁸¹

Indeed, this may have been the better part of the purpose of the Ways of Horus. If the Egyptians merely wanted a fort to defend themselves, then it would have been sufficient to build the impenetrable Tjaru and leave it at that. The other forts, then, must have served an offensive purpose as much as a defensive one. Seti's campaign stele makes abundantly clear that major

¹⁷⁷ Al-Ayedi, 112

¹⁷⁸ Al-Ayedi, 113-115

¹⁷⁹ Gardiner, "Military Road," Pl. XIa

¹⁸⁰ Gardiner, "Military Road," 110

¹⁸¹ Morris, 429, 483

military undertakings would have passed by and perhaps through these fortresses, almost certainly making use of their wells and water supplies and using the bases themselves as defenses against any local counterattacks. As suggested in earlier sections on the subject, then, it is abundantly clear that in the era of Seti, the Ways of Horus were an offensive institution through which the Egyptians projected power onto foreign communities.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Looking back upon 1500 years of Egyptian fortresses, we may draw a few general conclusions from an overview of the terms used. First of all, it is notable that the Egyptians preferred function to form in deciding on the classification of their forts. The astute reader will have noticed that discussions of shape do not occur in this paper, and this is due to the general Egyptian policy of building the fort not from some general master plan but rather to meet the needs of the local geography, ranging from rectangles to circles to irregular polygons on misshapen riparian islands. Size is the only purely physical characteristic that the Egyptians seemed to have used in distinguishing their military infrastructure.

Above all else, we can say that the Egyptians were flexible in their use of terminology. This is at times frustrating, as the Egyptians seem to have varied fortress names for artistic reasons as much as military ones (for example, in the Karnak stela). While this is most prominent in the New Kingdom, when terms for forts diversified greatly, it is present to some extent in all periods of Egyptian history, such as the use of older terms in Middle Egyptian in certain literary contexts. Indeed, the Egyptians were so adaptable that they were not above lifting terms wholesale from other languages for their own use. So long as it fit the needs of their military bureaucracy or propagandistic artistry, the Egyptians were willing to adapt technical terms to whatever end was necessary.

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EDUCATION

- The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College May 2021
- Bachelor of Science in **Computer Science** and Bachelor of Arts in **Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies**
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EXPERIENCE

- Student Instructor** University Park, PA
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- Designed, led, and taught CAMS 197/RLST 197A
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- RPA Development Intern** Trexlerstown, PA
Air Products May 2020-July 2020
- Developed several automations in support of both business and IT processes
 - Worked closely with international team for oversight and project collaboration
 - Networked with numerous Air Products employees across departments to gather project requirements and implement solutions
 - Wrote pages of documentation for internal wiki, collaborating closely with other interns and full-time employees
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- Teaching Assistant** University Park, PA
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- Graded weekly written assessments for undergraduate students
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LEADERSHIP

- Under-Secretary General for Crisis and Committee Development** April 2019 – Nov 2020
- Selected and coordinated the running of 8 educational Model United Nations committees for fall conference, reporting directly to head of conference
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- Computer Skills: C (advanced,) Java (advanced,) UiPath (advanced,) RPA Development (advanced,) Verilog (advanced,) VB (advanced,) SQL (intermediate,) Python (intermediate,) AgilePoint (intermediate,) HTML (intermediate,) SharePoint (intermediate,) MS Office (intermediate,) JavaScript (beginner)
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