

The site of Nedit and its importance in Ancient Egyptian Religion

D. Nehad Kamal El-deen *

Abstract

This research deals with one of the places which was mentioned many times in the ancient Egyptian religious texts. The place of Nedit was mentioned in the pyramid texts as the place where Osiris was killed by his brother Seth. The scientists disagreed on the exact location of Nedit. Some of them believed that it was a mythological place, while others believed that it currently lies near Abydos. In this research I will explain the origin and the meaning of the word Nedit, and its importance in Egyptian religion according to the religious texts. I will also present the different opinions of scientists about the real place of Nedit.

1. The meaning of word "Nedit"

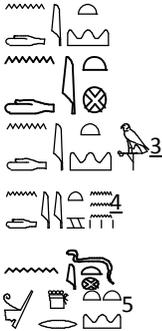
The meaning of Nedit was unidentified. Some scientists believed that the word was derived from the verb *ndj* which means "throw down"¹, this interpretation is based on texts describing Nedit as the place of throwing Osiris down by Seth. If this interpretation is right, then it means that this place was called Nedit because of the Myth of Osiris's assassination which took place upon its land. So we must search about the ancient name of this place.

* Egypt

¹ *LÄ* IV;372;. R.Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch* (2800-950v.Chr.)Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt 64 (2006),471; T. Hare, *Remembering Osiris: Number, Gender, and the Word in Ancient Egyptian Representational Systems*, Stanford University Press (1999) 251.

1.1 different writings of the word:

The word Nedit was written in various spelling as following²:



From the previous writings, we notice that the word Nedit was written with different determinatives. Sometimes it takes the determinative of a mountain which refers to an obscure place, where Osiris was killed. At other times, it takes the determinative of a town which refers to the place that embraced Osiris, encircled his limbs and gathered his flesh to revive him again. It also takes the determinative of water which indicates the island where the flooded body of Osiris landed at the end to arise as the sun god, when he appeared for the first time upon the primeval hill.

We can observe the consonant nd replaced nd , and the word in this case was read as *ndjt* ndjt , it may be derived from verb *nd*⁶ which means "to protect" or "to save", that interpretation indicates the role of Nedit as the place which protected and saved the corpse of Osiris.

2. Location of "Nedit"

² Wb II, 367.

³ Pyr. 721.

⁴ CT IV, 40a.

⁵ H. Junker, *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirismysterien nach den inschriften von Dendara, Edfu und Philae* (Wien, 1910) 52 E.V (16).

⁶ Wb II, 374

The location of Nedit was not identified, some archeologists believed that Nedit located near Abydos⁷. Brested believed that Nedit was an ancient name for the region of Byblos. Others saw that Nedit was not a real place but a mythological place and the home of the 42 judges of hell⁸.

2.1 Nedit and Osirion

Most of views have been gathered on the existence of Nedit near Abydos⁹. They saw that the Osirion which exists behind the great temple of Abydos was built in the place of Nedit and was constructed to imitate the shape of the island of Nedit in which the body of Osiris was buried. The Osirion became the center of celebrating the mysteries, illustrating the death and the revival of Osiris. Fortunately, a certain high official named I-kher-nofret has left us an account of the Osiris passion-play as being performed under his oversight in the nineteenth year of Sesostris III, nearly two thousand years before Christ¹⁰. The play began by the procession of the statue of the jackal-god Wep-wawet (the road-opener) going forth to help his father Osiris. Then the statue of Osiris himself in the Neshemet boat¹¹ came forth as the triumphant king of the earth. Sham battles took place referring to the conquest of the earth by Osiris. These processions were only introductory. The principal procession took place on the following day (or days), when Osiris went forth to his death at Nedit. The actual death scene certainly took place in secret. But when the dead body was found, the multitude joined in the wailing and the lamentations. The god Thoth went

⁷ P.Montet, *Géographie de l'Égypte ancienne*, II,(Paris,1957) 104; H.Gauthier, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*, vol. III, (Cairo,1925) 110

⁸ H.Gauthier, *Dictionnaire III*, 110

⁹ Thom F. Cavall, *Embodying Osiris: The Secrets of Alchemical Transformation* (united states of America, 2010)107.

¹⁰ H. Schäfer: *Die Mysterien des Osiris in Abydos unter König Sesostris III. Nach dem Denkstein des Oberschatzmeisters I-cher-nofret im Berliner Museum*, UGAÄ 4(2), 1904,1-42

¹¹ *nšmt* the divine boat of Osiris in Abydos, *Wb II*, 339(15).

forth in a boat and brought back the body of Osiris. The body was prepared for burial and was taken in funeral procession to the grave at Peker. Osiris was avenged on his enemies in a great battle on the water at Nedit. Finally, the god, his life revived, came from Peker in triumphant procession and entered his temple at Abydos.

3. the importance of "Nedit" according to religious texts.

3.1 Nedit was the place where Osiris was killed

The religious texts mentioned that Nedit was the place where Osiris was laid down by his brother Seth



*dd mdw hr r.f ti*¹² *wr pw hr gs.f ndj r.f imj Ndjt*

"This Great One has fallen on his side, he who is in Nedit is felled".¹³



ndj.n sw sn.f Stš r t3 m ndjt

"his brother Seth having laid him low in Nedit".¹⁴



sh3 Stš dr ib.k mdw pw dd .n Gb r.k f3w pw ir .n ntrw r.k m hwt sr imjt Iwn m ndj.n.k wsr r t3 m ndjt

"Remember, Seth, and put in your heart this word which Geb spoke against you, this threat which the gods made against you in the mansion of the prince which is in On when you felled Osiris to the earth of Nedit".¹⁶

3.2 Nedit was the burial place of Osiris

¹² *ti* is a writing of the enclitic *tr*; R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford, 1962) 148 fn.1

¹³ *Pyr.* 819 a; R.O. Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 147.

¹⁴ *Pyr.* 1256; R.O. Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 200. see also *Pyr.* 2188

¹⁵  came probably in place of the determinative  of Nedit

¹⁶ CT VII,37(837); R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts III* (England, 1978), 23.

The texts told us also that Nedit was the place where Osiris was buried in.

The following text of coffin texts describes a knife that is very sharp like the teeth of Osiris when he buried in Nedit



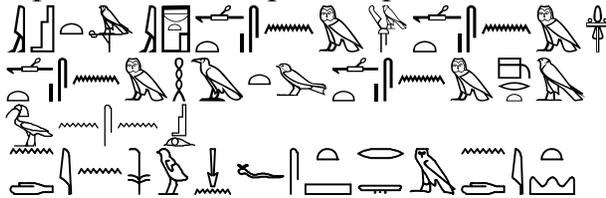
md3t.s tsw wsir m hr hpt.n.f t3 m Ndjt

"Her *md3t* are the teeth of Osiris when he fell and embraced the earth in Nedit".¹⁷

4. "Nedit" the place of mourning and lamentation

According to a spell in the Pyramid Texts, Isis searched for her husband's body with the aid of Nephthys.¹⁸ They found him beyond the shore of Nedit, where they lamented upon him. When searching for or mourning Osiris, the two goddesses were often likened to falcons or kites,¹⁹ possibly because kites travel far in search of carrion,²⁰ because the Egyptians associated their plaintive calls with cries of grief, or because of the goddesses' connection with Horus, who was often represented as a falcon.

The Mourning was not just an expression of grief, but it played a great role in the revival and resurrection of Osiris, so it represented an important part in the funeral rituals.



ii 3st ii nbt ht wct.sn m imnt wct.sn m i3bt wct.sn m h3t wct.sn m drt gm.n.sn Wsir ndj.n sw sn.f Stš r t3 m ndjt

"Isis comes and Nephthys comes, one of them from the west and one of them from the east, one of them as a screecher, one of them as a wailing

¹⁷ CT V 133(389); R.O. Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* II, 34.

¹⁸G.Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press. (2004) 79.

¹⁹ J.Gwyn Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris and His Cult* (Netherlands,1980) 49-50.

²⁰R.H.Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. Thames & Hudson (2003) 147f.



Snt.k wrt s3k.t iw.f.k kfn.t drwt.k shn.t sw gm.t tw hr gs.k hr wdb
Ndjt

"Your eldest sister is she who gathered up your flesh, who clothed your hands, who sought you and found you on your side on the river bank of Nedit"²³

In other text we read that she prevented Osiris's flesh from falling to the land

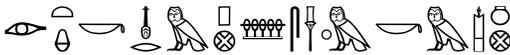


Wsr pw²⁴ ii hr tn ntrw šw m iw.f.f snhm.n n.s 3st iw.f.f r dw.f r t3

"This is Osiris who comes to you, you gods. Osiris indeed is devoid of his flesh, and Isis has stopped for herself his flesh and his efflux(from falling) to the ground".²⁵

5.2 Raising of the head and awakening

This act was done by many gods especially the sun god Re



W pi W ts tw hr gs.k ir wd.(i)

Msdd(w) kdd sb3g.y h^c imj Ndjt

irt.k nfr m P šsp shm.k m Twnw

"O king, o king, be yonder ! o king, o king, raise yourself on to your side and do my command, o you who hate sleep but who

²³ Pyr.1008b-c; R.O,Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 169.

²⁴ The demonstrative pw was written here wrong nw

²⁵ CT VII,40 h-j; R.O, Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* III,26.

were made limp, arise, o you who were in Nedit! Your good bread is prepared in pe, take your power in On "26.



nmnm imj ndjt ts tp.f in R^c bwt.f kdd msd.f b3gj

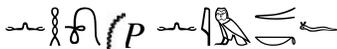
"He who is in Nedit quivers, his head is lifted by Re, he detests sleep, he hates inertness"27.



dd mdw hr r.f ti wr pw hr gs.f ndj r.f imj Ndjt sšp 3.k in R^c ts tp.k in Psdtj

"This Great One has fallen on his side, he who is in Nedit is felled.

Your hand is taken by Re, your head is lifted up by the Two Enneads"28.



d wsr hr gs.f jn sn.f Stš

nmnm jmj ndjt ts tp.f in R^c

bwt.f kdd msd.f b3gj

n hw3 P n imk.f

²⁶ Pyr.260; R.O,Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 60.

²⁷ Pyr.721; R.O,Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*,135.

²⁸ Pyr.819; R.O,Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 147.

n šnw P pn n dnd.tn ntrw

rs.k m htp

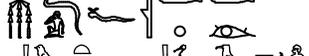
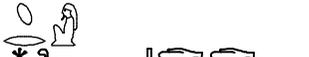
rs wsr m htp rs imj Ndj t m htp

"Osiris was laid low by his brother Seth, but he who is in Nedit moves, his head is raised by Re ;he detests sleep and hates inertness, so the king will not putrefy, he will not rot, this king will not be cursed by your anger, you gods. May you wake in peace, may you wake, Osiris in peace, may you wake, o you who are in Nedit in peace"²⁹



hr wr hr gs.f nmn m imj Ndj t i N pn ts tp.k in R^c bwt.k kdd msd.k b3gj hr r.sn m hr snh.k snh.t

"The Great One falls upon his side, he who is in Nedit quakes. O N, lift up your head, says Re. Detest sleep, hate inertness, be far from them as Hours , that you may live".³⁰

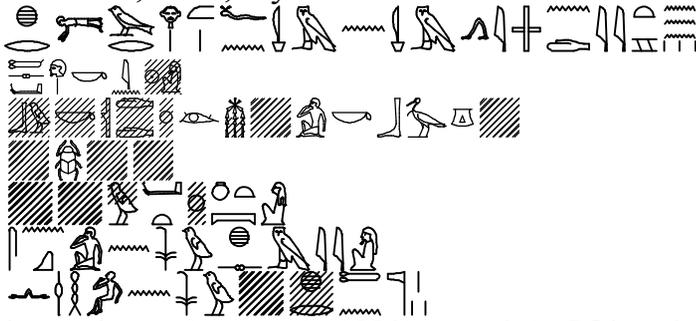


²⁹ Pyr. 1500-1502; R.O,Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 231.

³⁰ CT I,292; R.O,Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* I, 65.

*N pw N pw M33.t ptr.t N pw N pw sdm.t wn.t im N tn ts.tw hr gs.k
Wsir msd.f kdd bwt.f b3gj h^c imj Ndjt*

"O N! ON! See and behold! O N! O N hear and be yonder! O N,
raise yourself on your side, Osiris, who hate sleep, who hate
inertness, arise, o you who were in Nedit!"³¹

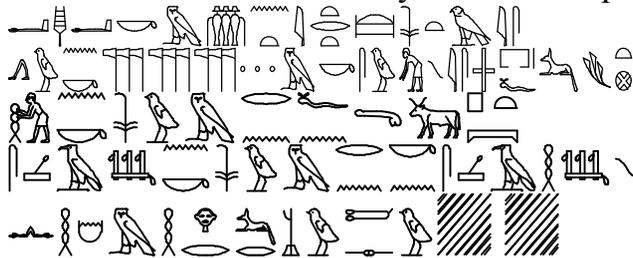


*hr wr hr gs.f nmm imj Ndjt ts tp.k in R^c bwt.k kdd msd.k b3gj
....hpr.....wt Nwt snk.n sw hsmj n Wdh.n sw....hr. tn ntrw*

"The Great one falls on his side, he who is in Nedit quakes. Raise
your head says Re. you shall detest sleep and hate interness[.
.....] Nut the nurse has suckled him[.....]will not wean him with
you, you gods"³²

5.3.defeating the enemies of the dead

The texts told us that Nedit was the place where the enemies of
Osiris were defeated by him or by his son Horus. The previous
spell continues and asks Osiris to be at the head of the ennead
and told him that his enemy Seth was captured by his son Horus.



*h^c.k m hnt itr hr is iw n.k psdt m ksw Mn is imj pr.f sth hnt
hwj.n.k sw m rn.f n k3 pt s3h.n.k sw m rn.k n s3h nhm hr Stš r ts
sw [h3t.k hr w3^c.k pw]*³³

³¹ CT IV,383; R.O,Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* I, 283

³² CT VII,40; R.O,Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* III,26.

³³ R.O,Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* III,26. Fn.13,14

"May you stand up at the head of the Conclave of Upper Egypt as Hours, for the Nine Gods come to you bowing as(to) Min³⁴ who is in his House and seth of Hnt. Smite him in his (*sic*) name of Bull of the sky, kick him in your name of Orion, for Hours will capture Seth in order to raise up your [corpse(?)] bearing this staff."³⁵

The idea of defeating enemies in Nedit appears clearer in the following text:



ts-tw imj Ndj

tmtj im(?) irj r.k

*dr dw nb hf sd3 nb spII*³⁶

"Raise yourself, O you who is in Nedit. *Im* who act against you was destroyed. All evils are removed, all fear was dissolved"

We note that the name of Nedit was written here as *ndrt*. It may be derived from the verb *nd* which means to protect or to save from enemies³⁷

6. Nedit was the place of unification between Osiris and Re

From the above it is clear that Nedit was the place, where death, burial and resurrection occurred, so it is probably to be also the place, where the sun god Re, who represented the *b3*, united with Osiris, who represent the *ht*. It is known that this unification took place in the period between death and resurrection, both happened in Nedit, so the unity as well have happened in Nedit. When Re united with Osiris they became a Giant god who was called *št3*.³⁸ Some Egyptologists translated the

³⁴ Mn was represented here by the slanting stroke; R.O.Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* III, 26 Fn.10

³⁵ CT VII,40 k-q; R.O,Faulkner, *Coffin Texts* III,26.

³⁶ H.Junker ,*Stundenwachen*,52 E.V (16).

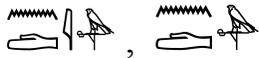
³⁷ R.Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*,473

³⁸ J.C.Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the solar-osirian unity: cryptographic compositions in the tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI, and Ramesses IX* (Chicago,=

ancient name *t3 wr* of eighth Nome of Upper Egypt, where Nedit is located, not as the great land, but as the land of the Great One or the land of the Giant referring to the place of unification. If Nedit was the place of unification between Osiris and Re that would mean that Nedit was the place where life renews every day.

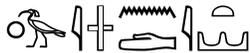
7.Nedit in the titles of gods:

The name of Nedit appeared in many titles of gods especially Osiris who called as:



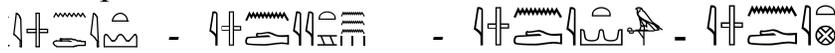
Ndj

the "thrown one"³⁹



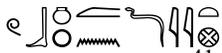
3h imj Ndit

"The spirit who is in Nedit"



*Imj Ndit*⁴⁰

"Who is in Nedit"



*Wbn m Ndit*⁴¹

"Who rises in Nedit"



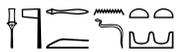
Wsir m Ndit

"Osiris in Nedit"



*K3 Ndit*⁴²

"The bull of Nedit".



=1995),550ff, N.Billing, The Secret One. An Analysis of a Core Motif in the Books of the Netherworld, *SAK* 34,2006,51ff.

³⁹ This name was used also as title for Re. *Wb* II,367.

⁴⁰ Ch.Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen* I (2002),240.

⁴¹ Ch.Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter* II,317.

⁴² Ch.Leitz, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter* IV, 577.

