

Original article

A REINVESTIGATION OF THE *dt* EXPRESSIONS FOR INFINITY

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the *dt* expressions that represent the infinity in various meanings, across different texts, including PT, CT, BD, ... etc. *dt* and *nhh* represented infinity with diverse meanings, although the expressions in-question vary in usage depending on the word order or the relation-ship between *dt* and *nhh*, all these expressions were used to guarantee the eternal life. *nhh* precedes *Dt* to continually guarantee eternal life, such as *nhh hn^c dt*, and *nhh dt*, although *nhh* follows *dt* as in *dt nhh* and *dt r nhh*, to secure the extension of eternal life, from immortality to the eternal life in the netherworld. Besides these expressions, there is another expression in which *Dt* appears twice, as *dt-dt*, and *dt sp-sn*, in which a duplication of *dt* ensures eternal life. The research time tracks the appearance of these expressions, furthermore tracking the researched expressions in various kinds of texts.

1. Introduction

The Ancient Egyptians held a unique perspective on concept of eternity and infinity in ancient Egypt, their conduct towards death was affected by their belief in eternalness, including the idea of a future life after bodily resurrection, leading to eternal existence. They considered death as a transitory mediation, instead of life. To guarantee the coherence of life after death, they had to offer various distinctive rituals to the deities, both during and after their life on earth. To ascertain the deceased's wellbeing after death, he had to ensure many perspectives, of which composing and writing funerary texts comprising of spells or prayers that ought to assist the perished on his way to the afterworld [1]. Usually they sanctified life after death, and gave it more significance in their religious texts; in any case, the interminable life on earth had its claim significance as well. Thus, eternal life refers to proceeded life; it might be the eternal life in the form of a human being in an immortal form, or an interminable life after death [1]. The Ancient Egyptians actively pursued and placed their faith in the promise of eternal life, they accepted that life on earth was only as it were portion of a continuous voyage, which can be concluded with an everlasting bliss. As a result, death was a route to partitioned life on earth and the endless afterlife. When one is born, the seven Hathors decreed his fate in his destiny on earth, as mentioned


in the tale of the Doomed prince (Pap. Harris 500 – P. BM 10060) [2]. The expressions “eternity and everlasting” are two different expressions; “eternity” refers to when something or someone that has no beginning and has no end, on the other hand, “everlasting” refers to something or someone that has a beginning but no end [3-5]. Furthermore, there is a slightly difference between “eternal life” and “immortality” expressing eternity by using *dt* and *nhh*, this difference could be cleared by collecting the different forms in which *dt* could be used alone or besides *nhh*.

2. Methodology

The religious texts (PT, CT, and BD) and other texts (e.g., papyri and stelae) were analyzed to identify occurrences of the expressions under examination, and accordingly the expressions were divided depending on word-order as follows: *) *dt + nhh*, *) *nhh + preposition + dt*, *) *dt + preposition + nhh*, *) *dt + dt*.

2.1. *dt + nhh* expressions


Both *dt* and *nhh* words have been discussed by many researchers; Thausing [6] and Assman [7] concluded that *dt* refers to the spatial aspect, and *nhh* refers to the aspect of time, although Bakir cited that *dt* refers to the eternity [8] and everlasting [9], and *nhh* refers to the infinity. Waziry

[1] noted an example in which *nḥḥ* had the determinative of the land N23  giving the meaning of spatial infinity, instead of the temporal infinity. He also mentioned that *nḥḥ* is related to the god *šw*, however *dt* is related to the goddess *Tfnt*. Griffiths [10] noted that “The ancient Egyptians had two words for eternity: *dt* and *nḥḥ*, with *dt* are associated with the night and the underworld and *Osiris*; with *nḥḥ*, the present day and order and the renewal with the support of gods *Ra* and *Horus*. However, Wilson [11] noted that *dt* could represent the “future” end of time, and that *nḥḥ* could represent the “past” beginning of time. Although the expression *dt r nḥḥ* shows the transition from an eternity to another, so it can’t be from the future (end of time) to the past (beginning of time). In the end, both *dt* and *nḥḥ* could refer to eternity through different aspects of life; most probably, *dt* refers to the actual life on earth along the living, however, *nḥḥ* is more related to the eternity in after life. There are a few expressions in which *nḥḥ* and *dt* appeared side-by-side through the text, these expressions are noted below:

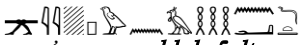
2.1.1. Examples of *nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt*

In this expression, the conjunctive *ḥnꜥ* links *nḥḥ* and *dt*, as shows below:

ex.1 CT I 241b (Spell 53) – B12C^b [12]


ntrw imyw pt dy m šmsw n wšw.k n nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt
 “The gods (the unwearied stars - *iḥmw-wrd*)
 who are in the sky, who are placed as followers
 of your bark forever and ever” [13].

ex.2 CT IV 201f (Spell 335) – BH1Br [14]


isy pw n nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt
 “what is it? (it is) forever and ever” [13].

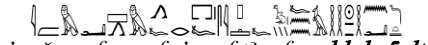
No other variants show this passage, all the other variants ended with *nḥḥ pw ḥnꜥ dt*. Faulkner translated this passage as follows “As for what exists, it is eternity and everlasting” although, *isy pw* [15,16] could be also used in questioning as “who/ what?”, so it should be translated as “what exists? (it is) eternity and everlasting”. As appears in another passage from the same coffin (CT IV 199b-c) as *isy pw Wsir pw* to be translated as “who is he? He is *Osiris*”.

ex.3 CT V 209d (Spell 405) – M1C [17]


n pr.n.f n nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt

“He shall not go forth forever and ever” [18].

ex.4 CT V 210e (Spell 405) – M1C [17]


im šmw.f r pr.f sipw.f tšw.f n nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt

“Cause that he goes to his house and inspects his children forever and ever” [18].

ex.5 Papyri of Nesmin from Thebes, Papyrus “Brenner Rhind” (pBM 10188), 4th book on the overthrow of Apophis (line [28,12]) [19].



nn rdi.tw pry bšw.sn im.sn r nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt
 “<One> will not let their Bas escape from there
 (“out of them”) forever and ever!”

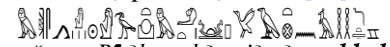
■ Commentary

All the previous examples show that *nḥḥ ḥnꜥ dt* means not being perished and remaining for eternity on both earth and in the afterlife both in equal terms. The expression demonstrates the conjunction between *nḥḥ* and *dt*, in this exact order, likely to emphasize eternal life. This expression lasted till the Ptolemaic era.

2.1.2. Examples of *nḥḥ dt*

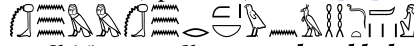
In this expression, *nḥḥ* is directly followed by *dt* as a conjunction, as noted in the following:

ex.1 CT II 222a (Spell 148) – S1P [20].


m šmsw Rꜥ 3ḥt m ḥ3t wi3 p3wt nḥḥ dt

“In the suite of Re of the horizon in the prow of the primeval bark forever and ever” [13].

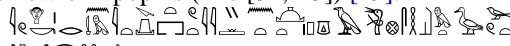
ex.2 CT III 112h (Spell 194) – B9C [21]


wꜥb(.i) m-m wꜥb.w r-gs nbw nḥḥ dt

“I am pure among the pure ones in the presence of Lords of eternity” [13].


Faulkner suggested a different reading for this passage, as: *wꜥb <wi> m-m wꜥb.w r-gs nbw nḥḥ dt*, where he added the dependent pronoun *wi*. This pronoun should be used in verbal sentences only as an object; in this case, there must be a subject.

ex.3 Papyri of Nesmin from Thebes, Papyrus “Brenner Rhind” (pBM 10188), 4th book on the overthrow of Apophis (line [31,2-3]) [19].


iw ḥr.k r nmt twy nt i3t-pg3 štḥm tw im.s r nḥḥ dt

“Your face is turned straight towards the place of execution at Iat-Pega, where you will be destroyed for the eternity!”


■ Commentary

The above-mentioned examples show that *nḥḥ dt* could be used to guarantee the eternal life. Despite of not being common in the religious texts either in literary texts. In the second example there is a remarkable usage as a noun ended by the classifier of Gods A 40, as “Lords of eternity” [22], also the word *dt* has an unusual classifier as  instead of the land sign N 16.

2.1.3. Examples of *dt r nḥḥ*


In this expression, the preposition *r* links *nḥḥ* and *dt*, as follows:

ex.1 PT 274 (T) Vol I p. 216 §414b-c [23].


n šḥm irw ir.wt m ḥbs st-ib nt (Tt) m ḥnhw m t3 pn dt r nḥḥ

“Those who execute orders will not have control of hacking up the favorite place of Teti (and) among the living in this land from the *dt* time up to the *nḥḥ* time” [24].

ex.2 PT 274 (T) Vol I p. 215 §412a-c [23].


 ḥꜥw pw n (Tti) nhḥ dr pw n (Tti) dt m sꜥh.f pn n
 mrr.f irr.f msdd.f n ir.n.f imy drw 3ḥt dt r nhḥ

"The lifespan of Teti is eternity, the limit of Teti is infinity in this his dignity of (if) he wishes he does, (if) he hates, he doesn't do, who is within the boundary of the horizon from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [25,26].

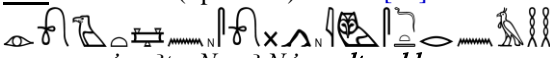
There is a remarkable synonymy in this example where ḥꜥw pw n Tti nhḥ and dr pw n Tti dt are used in parallel to give the meaning of "the lifespan of Teti is eternity", by using both words for eternity nhḥ and dt, besides another two words related to timespan ḥꜥw and dr. However, there is a great difference between the last two words; ḥꜥw that conveys life-time and duration [15], and dr that conveys an end or limit of a time [15], which is logical considering dt refers to eternity on earth which is limited.

ex.3 CT II 165a-c (Spell 136) – Sq3Sq [21].


 pr.n N pn wnn N pn m pt ḥnh(.w) dt r nhḥ

"This N has gone forth, and this N will be in the sky, alive from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [13]

ex.4 CT IV 53d (Spell 301) – L1Li [14].


 ir w3t n N sw3 N im.s dt r nhḥ


"Make a path for N, (that) N may pass on it, from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [13].

ex.5 CT VI 79c-d (Spell 497) – B3L [27].



 ir w3t n b3.i n 3ḥ.i n šwyt.i m šmsw n Rꜥ n Hwt-Hr
 m 3wt dt r nhḥ




"Prepare a path for my soul, my spirit, and my shade in the retinues of Re and Hathor for the duration/ span from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [18].

ex.6 CT VI 80g-81a (Spell 498) – B3L [27]


 ist šd.n.k b3.i 3ḥ.i ḥk3w.i šwyt.i hnꜥ Rꜥ Hwt-Hr r
 bw wnn Rꜥ im rꜥ nb r bw wnn Hwt-Hr im rꜥ nb m
 3wt dt r nhḥ

"You have taken my soul, my spirit, my magic, and my shade with Re and Hathor to the place where Re is every day, to the place where Hathor is every day, for the duration/ span from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [18].




De Buck [27] copied the passage 

as , in which the pronoun .i/  is used for both nouns b3 and 3ḥ, also the pronoun .i  is used for both nouns ḥk3w and šwyt, thus it should be read as shown above (b3.i 3ḥ.i ḥk3w.i šwyt.i).


ex.7 CT VI 83c-e (Spell 499) – B3L [27].


 n šhm.tn m s3t.i m hnr b3.i 3ḥ.i šwyt.i sp.f dt r nhḥ
 ink šhm m rd.f dt r nhḥ

"You shall not have power to watch over me or to constrain my soul, my spirit or my shade at the time from the dt time up to the nhḥ time, I am one who has power in his leg from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [18].

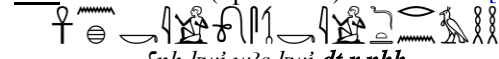
De Buck [27] copied the passage  as , in which the pronoun .i as  is used for both nouns b3 and 3ḥ, thus it should be read as shown above (b3.i 3ḥ.i).

ex.8 CT VI 93b (Spell 507) – B9C [27].


 ddw rmt ntrw 3ḥw m(wt)w ir.sn sw r.i m rnpt tn m
 grḥ pn m hrw pn sk dt r nhḥ


"What men, gods, spirits, or the dead may say they will do against me in this year, in this month, in this night, or in this day, indeed from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [18].

ex.9 CT VII 227a (Spell 1011) – P. Gard. II [28].


 ḥnh.kwi w3s.kwi dt r nhḥ

"I am alive and flourishing from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [29].

ex.10 Gebel Barkal, stela Sethos I, stela year 11 Sethos I. (line [1]) [30].


 dd-mdw in (di.n.i) n.k ḥꜥw rꜥ dt dt s3 ḥnh nb ḥ3.f
 mi rꜥ dt r nhḥ

"Recitation by [name is missing]: (I have given) to you the lifetime of Re for all eternity. All protection (and) all life are behind him like (it is) Re (is) from the dt time up to the nhḥ time" [31].

■ Commentary

All the previous examples show that dt r nhḥ means not being perished and residing for eternity on both earth and afterlife in equal terms. Although, the expression shows the preposition that links dt and nhḥ, in this exact order, likely to guarantee the eternal life. This is the only expression in which dt is shown before nhḥ, which emphasizes that reaching eternity needs two consecutive steps in a specific order; the 3rd example is exceptional, in which there are four found variants [20], three of them are read as: pr n N pt wn N m mw/t3 "N has gone forth from the sky, and N will be in the waters/ earth"; the only variant that has dt r nhḥ is that of (Sq3Sq) and is read as mentioned in this example. The text has a transformation of the deceased who has gone forth then will be in the sky, so he wants to be alive forever during his going forth by using dt, then staying alive in the sky forever by using nhḥ. Despite of that all the verbal expressions, that are used in this sentence,

which are in the *sdm.f* form, they nevertheless, are treated differently here, where there are two consecutive actions; 1- going forth to the sky, 2- staying in the sky/earth, so the first action should happen first, for this transaction the preposition *r* was used between *dt* and *nhh*.

2.2. The repetition of *dt* expresses eternal life on earth

2.2.1. Examples of *dt-dt*

ex.1 PT 172 (N) Vol I p. 63 §101c-d [24].


di n.k hñkt nbt wht nbt mrit.k nfrt n.k im hr ntr n
dt-dt

"Every offering and every donation that you desire and through which you will prosper with God for eternity have been given to you" [26].

ex.2 PT 364 (T) Vol I p. 333 §621a-c [23].


ñht nmm.k rñ-nb 3h.ti m rn.k n 3ht prrt rñ im.s
w3š.ti (sp)d.ti b3.ti šhm.ti n *dt-dt*


"May you live and move every day, transfigured in your name 'Horizon from which Re emerges', respected, sharp, b3-powerful, mighty **for eternity**" [26].

ex.3 PT 537 vol II p. 226 §1301a-c [32].


pr.k m hr-dw3t.ti hnt i.hm-sk hms.k hr hndw.k bi3
tp mr.k kbhw ñht m ñh ddit m dd n *dt-dt*

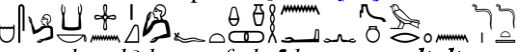
"You shall emerge as the underworld Horus at the head of the non-perishing and sit on your metal throne above your channel belonging to the water area (the sky), living as ñh beetle, permanently as a Djed pillar, **for eternity**" [26].

ex.4 PT 468 vol I p. 507 §905a-c [23].


hñp-di-nsw rdi n.k t.k hñkt.k p3d.k ipn pr.w hr hrw
im wsht šhtp.f ib.k im Ppy pn n *dt-dt*


"A royal sacrifice: your bread, your beer, these two p3d-breads of yours (?), which came from Horus, who is in the broad hall, were given to you so that he could satisfy your heart, this Pepi, **for eternity**" [26].

ex.5 PT 436 vol I p. 433 §789c [23].


hms k3.k wnm.ft hññ.k n nswr n *dt-dt*

"Let your Ka sit down, that he may eat bread with you, continually (literally: without trembling) **for eternity**" [26].

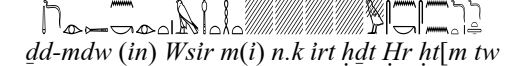
ex.6 CT I 811-p (Spell 29) – M.C.105 [12].


n itm(w).t n htm(w).tw wt.t n snn(w) [...] t n
sk(w).t(w).t n *dt-dt* ñh.ti nhh(w).t wsr.ti dd.ti m-
b3h.t ñh(w).t m-ht nhh m ir n.t Hr ds.f nb pñt
iñr(w).t n Rñ m 3ht

"You shall not perish, your members shall not be destroyed, your [members] shall not suffer, and you

shall not be wiped out **for eternity**. May you live, grow old, have dominion, have permanence in your presence, and live after old age through what Horus, Lord of Patricians, himself has done for you, when you ascend to Re in the horizon" [13].

ex.7 CT VII 63a-c (Spell 860) – Sq2Sq [28].


dd-mdw (in) Wsir m(i) n.k irt hñt Hr hñ[m tw
im.s] *dt-dt*

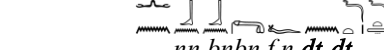
"Recitation by Osiris, take the white Eye of Horus, [provide yourself with it....]: them for you for eternity" [29].

ex.8 Papyri of Nesmin from Thebes, Papyrus "Bremner Rhind" (pBM 10188), 4th book on the overthrow of Apophis (line [24,16-17]) [19].


nn B3.k n *dt-dt*

"You can't (ever) copulate **for eternity**!"

ex.9 Papyri of Nesmin from Thebes, Papyrus "Bremner Rhind" (pBM 10188), 4th book on the overthrow of Apophis (line [29,13]) [19].


nn bñbn.f n *dt-dt*


"He can't have an erection **for eternity**!"

■ Commentary

All the previous examples show that *dt-dt* was used, ensuring the eternal life on earth, since the old kingdom, till the Ptolemaic era, although there are no evident examples from New kingdom or late period.

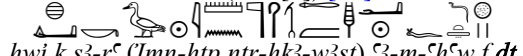
2.2.2. Examples of *dt sp-sn*

ex. 1 Amarna period, private tombs, No. 25: Ay, entrance, east wall (line [19-23]) [33].


rht ipt dw.w 3i m mh3t šwt n 3pd drdr n snw m
h3b sd n nsw wñ-n-rñ *dt sp-sn*

"The list and enumeration of the mountains, weighed on a balance, the feathers of the birds, the leaves of the trees are the (number) jubilee feasts of King Wa-en-Re, **for eternity**".

ex. 2 Statue fragment 1722, National Archaeological Museum of Florence (line [6]) [33].


hwi.k s3-rñ (Imn-hñp ntr-hk3-w3st) 3-m-ñw.f *dt sp-sn*


"May you protect the son of Re (Imn-hñp ntr-hk3-w3st / Imenhotep II), who is great in his time **for eternity**".

ex. 3 Brussels E. 2171, Large Sinai stela (No. 244), 1st expedition inscription Ramses I. (line [God]) [30].


nswt *dt sp-sn*


"<before the God> ... King **for eternity**" [31].

ex. 4 Abydos decree of Sethos I at Nauri (line [3]) [30].


dd-mdw in Imn-rñ di.n.i n.k nhh m nswt 3wy *dt sp-sn*
hri r in ib.k mi rñ *dt sp-sn* nb 3wy


"Recitation of Amun-Re: I give you eternity as King of the Two Lands, Eternity in acting according to your desire as Re, **for eternity**, (oh) Lord of the Two Lands".

ex.5 CG 34511 (The second Hittite Marriage of Ramesses II) (line [19]) [34].


in pth-t3-tnn it-ntrw dt nb.w h3swt nb hrrdwy n
ntr-nfr pn **dt sp-sn**

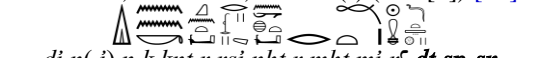
"It was Ptah-Tatenen, the father of the gods, who gave all lands and all foreign lands under the feet of this perfect God (= Ramesses II) for eternity".

ex.6 Abu Simbel, The Great Temple, Battle of Qadesh Reliefs, Main Hall, S. wall (I) (line [6-7]) [34]


bw dd.w why w^c im.sn iw ib.sn mh m t3 ph.ty 3.t n
pr-3 nh(w) wd3(w) snb(w) p3y.sn nb nfr iw.f
h3.sn mi dw n bi3 mi sbti bi3-n-pt **dt sp-sn nhh**

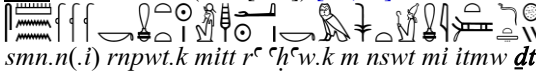
"They prevented one of them from escaping, for their hearts were filled with the great strength of Pharaoh LHG, their good Lord, who was behind them like a mountain of copper, like a wall of iron, for eternity and everlasting".

ex.7 Abu Simbel, The Great Temple, Battle of Qadesh Reliefs, Main Hall, S. wall (I) (line [2]) [34].


di.n(i) n.k knt r rsi nht r mht mi r^c **dt sp-sn**

"(I) give you (hereby) strength against the South and power against the North as Re for eternity".

ex.8 CCG 34504 (line [1-2]) [34,35].


smn.n(i) rnpwt.k mitt r^c h^cw.k m nswt mi itmw **dt sp-sn**

"I have established your years like those of Re, your duration as king is like (that of) Atum, for eternity" [36].

■ Commentary

All the previous examples show that *dt sp-sn* was used, ensuring the eternal life on earth, only during the new kingdom, the first attestation was under the reign of Akhenaten till the Ramesside period. Although in ex. 6 *nhh* followed *dt sp-sn* maybe to emphasize that their king will be behind his soldiers, providing steadfast support like a mountain of copper, like a wall of iron for eternity on earth and in his afterlife.

3. Results

The study confirms that *dt* gave the meaning of both eternity and lasting forever which were used in the examined forms across various ancient Egyptian texts; these of different types of texts are listed distinctly in tab. (1).

Table (1) distribution of *dt* expressions across textual genres

Source form	PT	CT	Other texts
<i>nhh hn^c dt</i>	✓	✓	
<i>dt r nhh</i>	✓	✓	
<i>nhh dt</i>	✓	✓	
<i>dt-dt</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>dt sp-sn</i>			✓
Source form	PT	CT	Other texts
<i>nhh hn^c dt</i>	✓	✓	
<i>dt r nhh</i>	✓	✓	
<i>nhh dt</i>	✓	✓	
<i>dt-dt</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>dt sp-sn</i>			✓

4. Discussion

The temporal distribution of *dt* expressions reveals distinct patterns. As shown below in table no.2, the five formulaic types: *nhh hn^c dt*, *dt r nhh*, *nhh dt*, *dt-dt*, and *dt sp-sn*, exhibit varying prevalence across the ancient Egyptian historical periods as listed in tab. (2). The expression *nhh hn^c dt* was the only one attested in all historical periods, *dt r nhh* didn't show any example during the Ptolemaic era, *nhh dt* and *dt sp-sn* didn't show before LE, and *dt-dt* is the only expression that was used during OE, LE, and Ptol. without showing any example during ME.

Table (2) chronological distribution of *dt* expressions across historical periods

Era form	OE	ME	LE	Ptol
<i>nhh hn^c dt</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>dt r nhh</i>	✓	✓	✓	-
<i>nhh dt</i>	-	-	✓	✓
<i>dt-dt</i>	✓	-	✓	✓
<i>dt sp-sn</i>	-	-	✓	-

5. Conclusion

This systematic analysis elucidates five principal *dt* expressions in ancient Egyptian Texts; three of which demonstrate semantic interdependence with *nhh*, elaborated as follows: The 1st expression shows *dt* preceding *nhh* only once as *dt r nhh*, to show the transition from *dt* eternity to *nhh* eternity suggesting temporal progression (the direction expression). The 2nd and 3rd expressions show the conjunction between *dt* and *nhh* in which *dt* followed *nhh* twice as *nhh hn^c dt* and *nhh dt* to emphasize symbiotic eternity. The 4th and 5th expressions show the duplication of *dt* in its different forms, as: 1. *dt-dt*, 2. *dt sp-sn*. Both expressions serve as emphatic markers of perpetuity. As explained before, not all the expressions have been used throughout the ancient Egyptian different eras, all these expressions lasted till the End of the Greco-Roman era except for *dt r nhh*, although 2 of them (*dt-dt*, *dt sp-sn*) didn't appear before New Kingdom.

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