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## THE FAMILY OF THE THEBAN PRIEST NESBANDEBDJEDET

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**Abstract:** Theban tomb no. 190 is one of the scant historical sources bearing evidence of several generations of a Theban priestly dynasty living in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Presumably, the tomb's owner Nesbanebdjed(et) performed his duties in the Karnak Temple of Khonsu under Nectanebo II. The present publication provides an improved copy of the hieroglyphic inscriptions in TT 190 and discusses the obvious relevance of identifying people with similar names known from the monuments as Nesbanebdjed(et)'s relatives. A list of the personal names is supplied. The statues Cairo JE 37075, JE 36579 and the stelae Budapest MBA 51.1928, Prague MN P 1636 are also discussed, but the stela from Budapest was not considered as a monument belonging to the members of the family in question.

**Keywords:** Thebes; Nectanebo II; priests; biography; personal names

### Introduction

According to the topographical bibliography (PM I, 297), the tomb built in the Ramesside period was usurped during the 26th dynasty. J. Quaegebeur, who published the texts decorating the tomb in question (Quaegebeur 1995, 146-149, Pl. IV-V)<sup>1</sup>, proposed that later inscriptions were made at

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<sup>1</sup> The inscriptions at the tomb entrance are partly given by J. Quaegebeur. A recent photo of the inscription with a scene is published by Th. P. Landvatter (2013, 129, Fig. 4.6).

the beginning of the Ptolemaic period. The priest Nesbanebdjed(et) became the new owner of the tomb. Today members of his family are known from various monuments; each record provides additional information for dating the record under discussion.

One of the most important criteria for proper dating of the tomb inscription is an occurrence of the title *hrj-tp-nsw* ‘king’s liegeman.’ The pharaoh, whose name remained unknown, chose Nesbanebdjed(et) from among the inhabitants of Thebes and appointed him to carry out the functions of *hrj-tp-nsw*. A reference to the palace (*ḥt*) gives reason to suppose that Nesbanebdjed(et)’s duties might have included control or administration of certain affairs inside the royal palace; traditional interpretation of this ancient title ‘chamberlain’ is acceptable but not exclusive. I am uncertain about this occupation in Thebes in the times of the first Ptolemaic rulers<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, it is unclear whether Ptolemy I or Ptolemy II needed to nominate somebody to that position in that place, where he spent less of his time. Nesbanebdjed(et)’s son Ahmose was involved in the cult of ‘Nekhthorheb the Falcon.’ Accordingly, he himself could have lived and performed his duties under Nectanebo II, (see statue Cairo JE 37075, e2 (Fairman 1934)).

Ahmose’s titulary is impressive and his rank of *ḥztj-ꜥ jnbw-ḥd* ‘count of Inbuhedj (i.e. Memphis)’ (Cairo JE 37075, c4), which reveals a connection between the nobleman and another Egyptian capital, is worth special consideration. This title does not occur in any other document from Ptolemaic Memphis, so accordingly he might have taken that high position (if it was not nominal or fictitious) for quite a short period, most likely, under Macedonian rulers, until the new priestly and administrative elite was formed in Memphis. This timeline matches the date of the cuboid statue of Ahmose (Cairo JE 36579), Nesbanebdjed(et)’s grandson and Ahmose’s nephew (Cairo JE 37075), who may have performed his duties under the first Ptolemies: four priestly orders (phylae) are mentioned in the text, which suggests that the monument was made before 238 BC.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, there is the latest date of the statue Cairo JE 37075, as falling in the reign of Ptolemy III. This proposition is based on Ahmose’s words about some decoration he added in one of the constructions in Khonsu’s temple.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The title is also known from the Memphite priests’s titularies under the Ptolemies, see M. Panov (2017, 398, n. 791). Cf. translation by M. C. Betrò (1990, 9-10).

<sup>3</sup> For an alternative dating, see K. Jansen-Winkel (2001, 200-201).

<sup>4</sup> Namely, J. Quaegebeur’s proposal to date the monument considering the use of the word *mšht* ‘gateway, doorway’ (Cairo JE 37075, a7), which was not a name, but might denote various constructions of that type, see discussion by T. Mekis (2016, 388-389).

In such a case, the date disagrees with stela Cairo JE 36579, according to which Ahmose the nephew and his uncle Ahmose would have died in the same year. Otherwise the nephew would have died a few years earlier.

L. Coulon (2006, 16-17, n. 40) dates tomb 190 and the statue Cairo JE 37075 to the 4th century BC. All things considered, a reasonable time frame is as follows: TT 190 (end of the 30th dynasty), Cairo JE 37075 (Macedonian period), Cairo JE 36579 (early Ptolemaic period).

Two more stelae with possible references to the members of the same family have become known from the recent publication of T. Mekis (Budapest MBA 51.1928 and Prague MN P 1636).<sup>5</sup>

Criteria to divide five sources into two groups (of three and two).

#### *TT 190 + Cairo JE 37075*

The title *hrj-tp-nsw* is attested in Nesbanebdjed(et)'s tomb, and the fact that his *elder* son Pakherkhonsu stands next to him implies the existence of another younger male child. As for Ahmose, he speaks of his father Nesbanebdjed(et) bearing the same rare title. Other titles are not decisive, since the priests in question are mentioned in the Theban tomb and the statue was discovered in Karnak.

#### *TT 190 + Cairo JE 36579*

The statue of Ahmose, a son of Pakherkhonsu. Identification of the last as Nesbanebdjed(et)'s *elder* son is undeniable, as priestly titles are inherited. This affiliation stated by K. Jansen-Winkel was disputed by H. de Meulenaere (2003, 325, n. 32). However, the identical rare titles (relating to Khonsu-Amunipet in particular) indicate close kinship: 'god's father and prophet of Amun in Ipetsut, henek-priest of Nun, prophet and wab-priest of Khonsu-Amunipet of four phylae... Ahmose, justified, son of (a person) of the same position, prophet of Amun in Ipetsut Pakherkhonsu, justified.' (l. c2-3).

#### *Budapest MBA 51.1928 + Prague MN P 1636*

Two funerary stelae tell us about two women (the inscriptions are painted; both stelae have similar distinctive features: the offering formula is replaced by the text of 'Osiris's decree'; the technique is poorer than that of Ahmose's two statues):

<sup>5</sup> See the family tree further; the tree follows K. Jansen-Winkel (2001, 200).

1) ‘Musician-priestess of Amun-Re Tameritit (?),<sup>6</sup> justified, daughter of the god’s father and prophet of Amun in Ipetsut Nes(baneb)djed(et) (?), justified, born to the mistress of the house, musician-priestess of Amun-Re Tanebut, justified’ (Budapest MBA 51.1928, 6-8).

2) ‘Musician-priestess of [Amun-Re], [Iset]emkhebe, justified, daughter of the god’s father and prophet of Amun in Ipetsut, prophet of Khonsu-Amunipet Nesba[nebdjed(et)] justified, born to the mistress of the [house], musician-priestess of [Amun-Re] Tanebut, [justi]fied’ (Prague MN P 1636, 4-5).

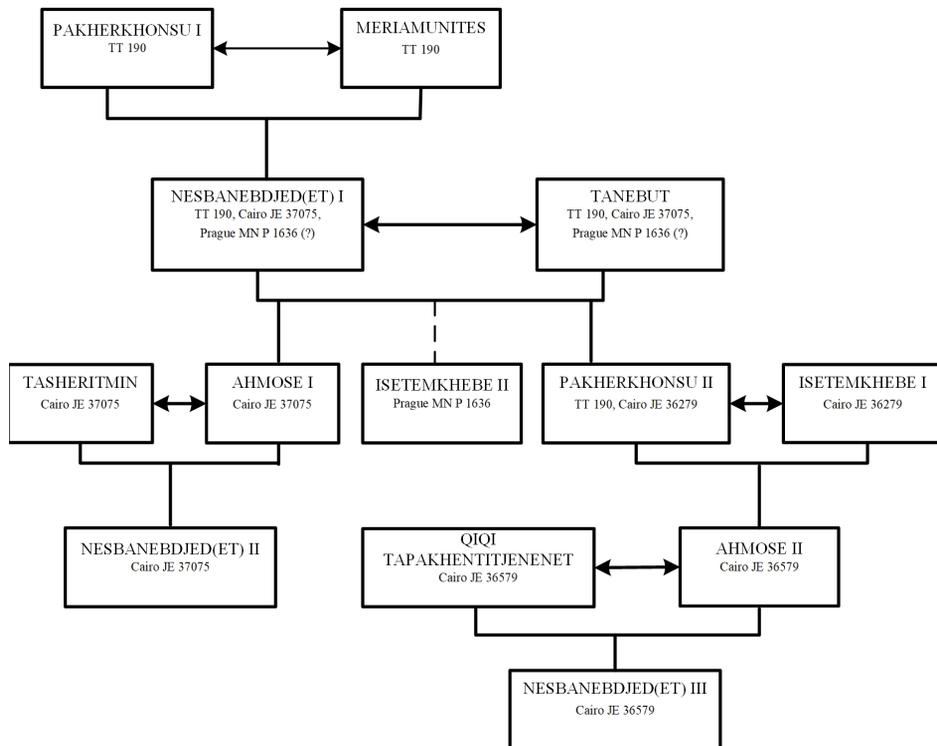
The stelae do not indicate clearly the same family. Recognition of Nesbanebdjed(et) and his wife mentioned on the monuments and their namesakes known from the inscriptions in TT 190 (see Mekis 2016) needs further discussion. Considering the parents’ designations, the most favorable monument is the stela Prague MN P 1636. The only occurrence of the father’s title on the stela Budapest MBA 51.1928 and doubts about uncertain reading of the name Nes<baneb>djed (?) do not support correct identification of the people.

The most honorific of Nesbanebdjed(et)’s titles is certainly the above-mentioned *hrj-tp-nsw*. It is his exclusive position and his helpfulness to the pharaoh that he proudly declares in the inscription at the entrance into his burial place. For his relatives it was above all to demonstrate the privileged status of their father specified by the word *nsw* ‘king’. Similarly, Nesbanebdjed(et)’s designation is missing on the two stelae. The information about his wife Tanebut is of little importance, as the practice of using identical names among the members of the priestly families was frequent. When comparing the family known from the group TT 190 + Cairo JE 37075 + Cairo JE 36579, the most exact parallel is represented by the individuals from the Prague stela. Moreover, reliable evidence of two more Nesbanebdjed(et)s, sons of Ahmose, one of which might be married to the woman named Tanebut, should not be ignored. In the currently accepted bloodline of the priestly family under discussion, Isetemkhebe presumably can be recognized as a daughter of Nesbanebdjed(et) I.

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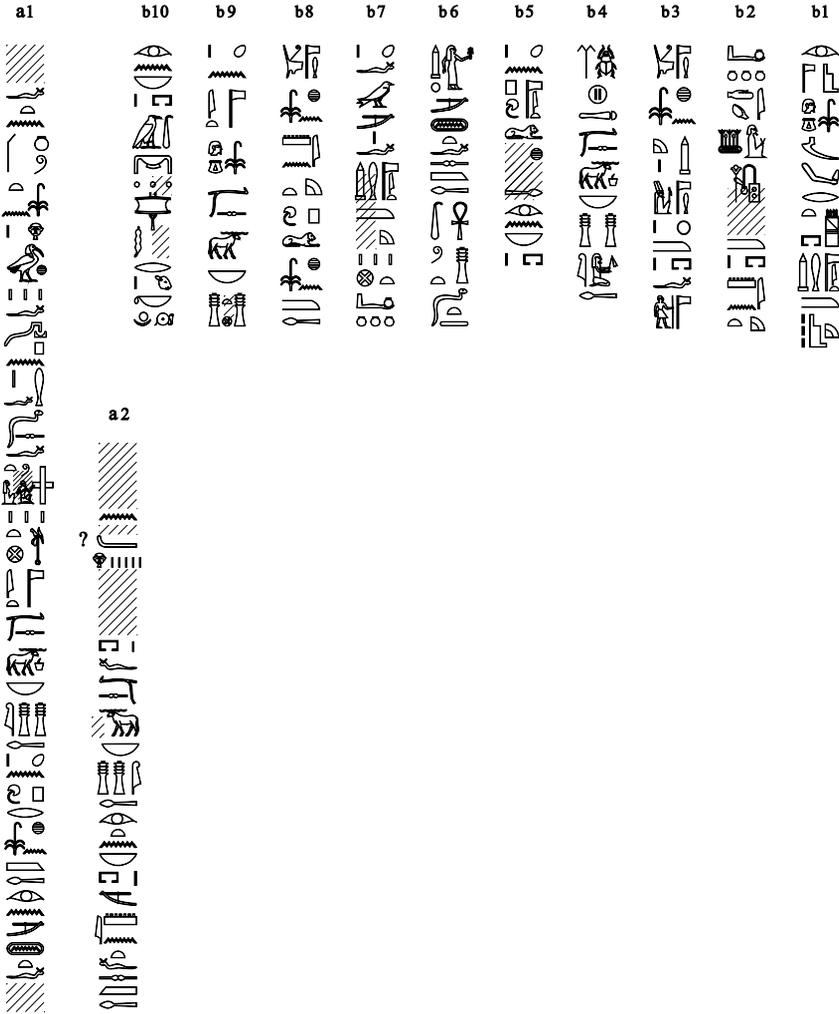
<sup>6</sup> For this name, see further.

### The possible family tree of Nesbanebdjed(et) I



### Copy of the inscriptions (TT 190)

The copy is based on the available photos; the text of the a-columns is considerably augmented; the text of the b-columns differs slightly from the publication of 1995.



### Inscriptions at the tomb's entrance

Two columns of the text are written at the tomb's entrance: on the left – a1 and on the right – a2.

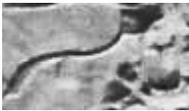
(a1) [...] = f  
 tnw nsw hr 3hw = f  
 stp<sup>7</sup>.n hm = f ds = f jmj.tw rmt<sup>8</sup> w3st  
 jt-ntr ns-b3-nb-dd(t) m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw  
 s3 p3-hr-hnsw m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw  
 jr n mrj-jmn-jt = [s m3<sup>c</sup>(t)-hrw]

(a2) [...] n[...] hr 5 (?) [...]m] pr = f  
 ns-b3-nb-dd(t) m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw  
 jr n nb(t) pr mrj-jmn-jt = s m3<sup>c</sup>(t)-hrw

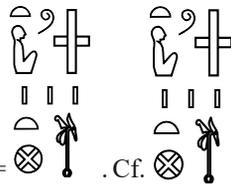
‘(a1) [...] his,  
 distinguished by the ruler for his merits,  
 chosen by his person himself among the people of Waset,  
 god’s father Nesbanebdjed(et), justified,  
 son of Pakherkhonsu, justified,  
 born to the mistress of the house Meriamunit[es, justified].’

(a2) [...in] his house<sup>9</sup>  
 Nesbanebdjed(et), justified,  
 born to the mistress of the house Meriamunites, justified.’

<sup>7</sup> In the text:  
 337.



. The sign □ is omitted in J. Quaegebeur’s copy. Cf. *Wb* IV,



<sup>8</sup> In the text: = . Cf. *jmy.w W3st* ‘les habitants de Thèbes’ (Quaegebeur 1995), the word *rmt* ‘inhabitants’ is omitted in hand-copy and transliteration.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. a title in col. b3.

## Main inscription

Ten columns of the text occupy part of the wall just above the representation of two figures: the owner is sitting in front of the altar; his elder son is standing behind his father.

(b1) *wsjr hrj-tp-nsw*

*m33 dsr(w) ht*

*jt-ntr hm-ntr jmn m jpt-swt*

(b2) *hnk nwn jdnw jrj-š(n)*

*sš [t3j] m pr jmn-jpt*

(b3) *hm-ntr n hns-w-jmn-jpt*

*hm-ntr jmn-r<sup>c</sup> m pr=f ntr wr (b4) hpr m sp tpj*

*ns-b3-nb-dd(t) m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw*

(b5) *s3 n jt-ntr p3-hr-h[ns-w] m3<sup>c</sup>-hrw*

*jr n nb(t) pr (b6) jhijt (nt) jmn-r<sup>c</sup> mrj-jmn-jt=s m3<sup>c</sup>(t)-hrw*

*nh.tj dd.tj dt<sup>10</sup>*

‘(b1) Deceased royal chamberlain,

who saw sacred (chambers) of the palace,

god’s father and prophet of Amun in Ipetsut,

(b2) *henek*-priest of Nun<sup>11</sup>, *idnu*<sup>12</sup>-deputy, *iri-sh(en)*<sup>13</sup>-priest,

scribe of [the chest]<sup>14</sup> in the house of Amunipet,

(b3) prophet of Khonsu-Amunipet<sup>15</sup>,

<sup>10</sup> In Greco-Roman Egypt there was a tendency to use epithets and wishing formulas, applied aforesaid to the ruling elite only, for men and women from noble and rich families. The case under discussion illustrates that practice, cf. *Edfou* VI, 206.8 (prob. to Ptolemy X).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Wb* III, 118.8, I read ‘Nun’ based on DZA 26.990.800. For the title, see K. Jansen-Winkel (2001, 30-32, n. 4).

<sup>12</sup> The designation defines substitution of an office of any type.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. H. de Meulenaere (1993, 57.b).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. a title of another priest from the same temple (restoration proposed by J. Quaegebeur)

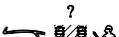
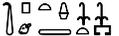
on the situla BM 38214: . For further discussion, see Ph. Collombert (1997, 20-21); G. Vittmann (2019, 30).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *LGG* V, 763. The Lexicon lists examples from TT 190 and the statue Cairo JE 37075 discussed here, also the statue Cairo JE 36579, c2; statue Cairo JE 38061, c; stela Prague MN P 1636, 5 is to be added.

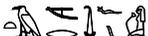
The number of cases when an indirect genitive adjective is used with Khonsu and Amunipet suggests that a short form of ‘Khonsu in/ of (the house) of Amunipet’ might be



## List of the personal names

<i>j<sup>c</sup>h-ms</i>		Cairo JE 37075 (frequently); Cairo JE 36579, d1
		Cairo JE 36579, c3
		Cairo JE 36579, e4
<i>jst-m-3h-bjt</i>		Cairo JE 36579, c4
		Cairo JE 36579, e4
		Prague MN P 1636, 4
<i>p3-hr-hnsw</i>		TT 190, a1
		TT 190, b8
		TT 190, b5
		Cairo JE 36579, c3
		Cairo JE 36579, f4
<i>mrj-jmn-jt=s</i>		TT 190, a2
		TT 190, a1
		TT 190, b6
<i>ns-b3-nb-dd(t)</i>		Cairo JE 37075, e1, e2
		Cairo JE 37075, f2
		TT 190, a1
		TT 190, a2
		TT 190, b4
		TT 190, b9
		Prague MN P 1636, 5
		Cairo JE 36579, c5
<i>ns-dd (?)<sup>17</sup></i>		Budapest MBA 51.1928, 7
<i>qjqj</i>		Cairo JE 36579, c5
<i>t3-(nt)-p3-hntj-tnnt</i>		Cairo JE 36579, c6

<sup>17</sup> Cf. PN I, 180.2.

<i>t3-mrt-jt (?)</i> <sup>18</sup>		Budapest MBA 51.1928, 7
<i>t3-(nt)-nbw(t)</i>		Cairo JE 37075, e1, e2 TT 190, b10 Budapest MBA 51.1928, 8 Prague MN P 1636, 5
<i>(t3)-šrjt-(nt)-mnw</i>		Cairo JE 37075, f3

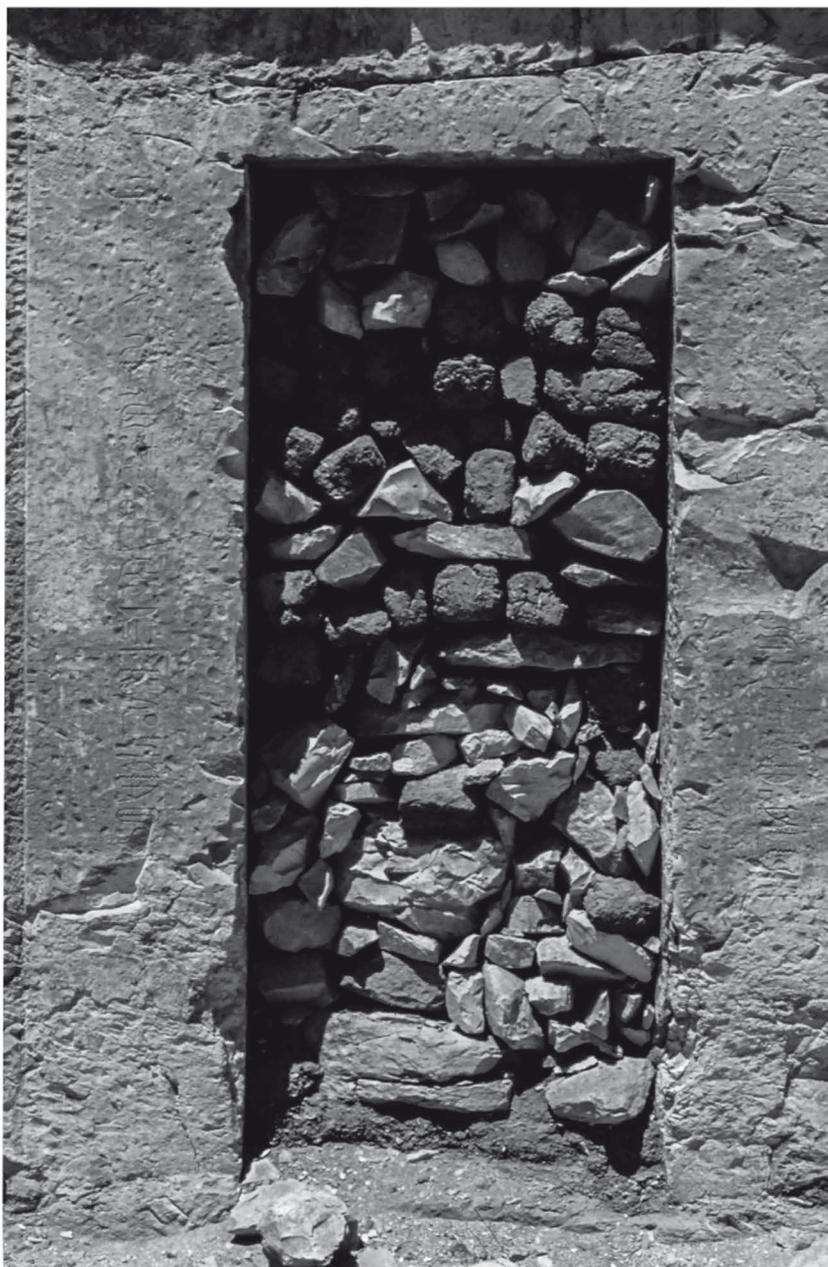
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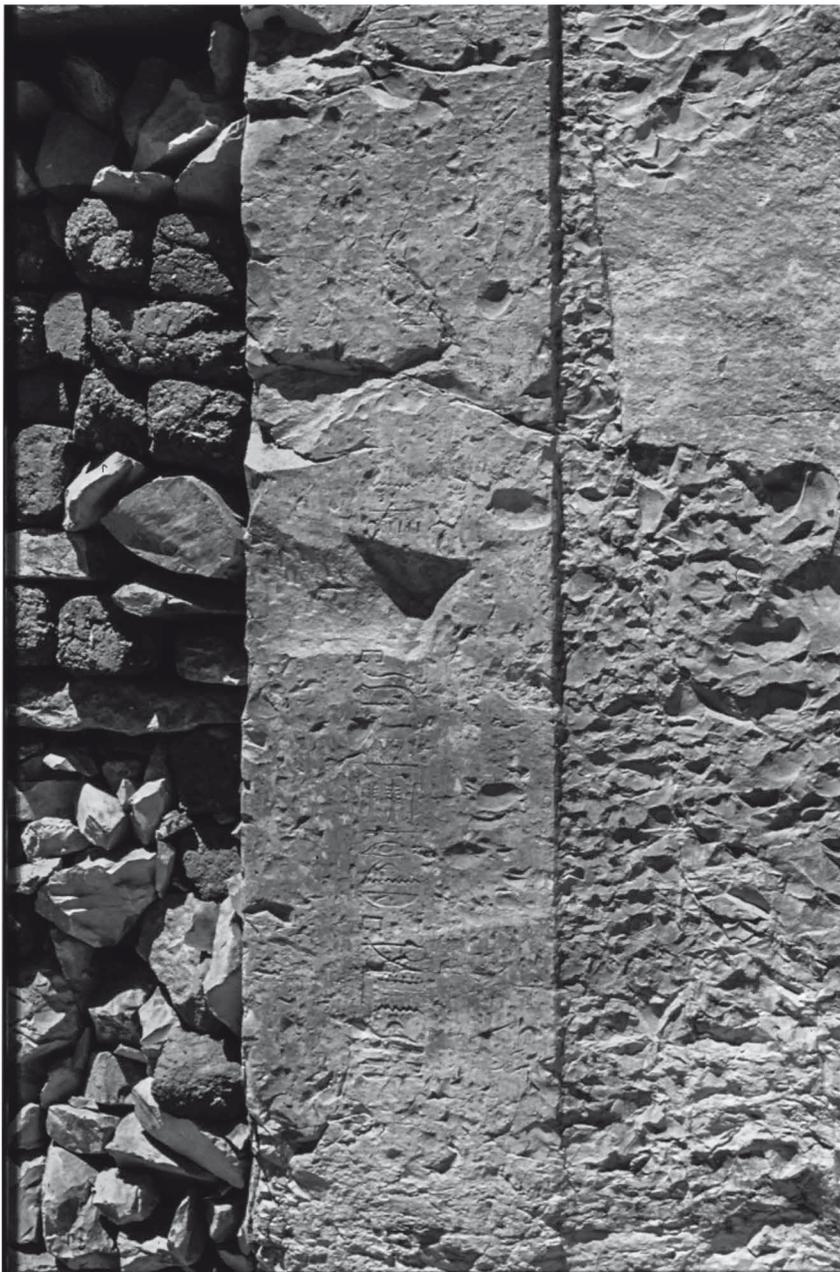
<sup>18</sup> Cf. Th. Mekis (2016, 391): *{T3}-Mr-Jmn-jt=s*. In the Late Period the sign  might replace ; the final sign is illegible, it is hardly , but a stroke filling the empty space; phonetic value *mn* of  is well-known, although no example where the sign is used in Amun's name is given.

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Pl. 1 – TT 190, inscription at the entrance. Photo by G. Vittmann



Pl. 2 – TT 190, main inscription (inside). Photo by G. Vittmann



Pl. 3 – TT 190, inscription at the entrance. Photo by G. Vittmann