

Secondary epigraphy in the North Asasif tombs: The “restoration label” of Paser in Khety’s tomb TT 311, year 17 of Ramesses II



Abstract: Recent work by the Polish mission in Asasif brought to light 11 fragments of an inscription in the name of the vizier Paser, coming from the chapel, the cult space of Khety’s tomb (TT 311). The fragments, along with two found earlier and exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, form an almost complete inscription, which sheds light on Paser’s self-fashioning as a scholar and a kind of Khaemwaset of the South. This hieroglyphic graffito can be considered as a restoration label in the name of Paser on a monument of an illustrious predecessor. By raising himself to the level of his eminent ancestors whose monuments marked the sacred landscape of his time, Paser demonstrated his scholarship and social pre-eminence.

Keywords: graffiti, restoration, Paser

People interact with their environments, shaping them and being shaped by them. Societal links with places of remembrance are an adequate reminder of this ontology. Thus, just as one can retrace the journey of a person, one can also approach objects and monuments through their biographies, namely, their definition, function, and

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The author has studied these visitors' inscriptions within the framework of a survey of secondary epigraphy inside the Theban Tombs, carried out under the aegis of the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in Cairo and in collaboration with the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology. A full edition and commentary of the documents is forthcoming (Ragazzoli forthcoming a), an extended version of the author's habilitation thesis: *L'Épigraphie secondaire dans les Tombes thébaines. Ouvrage original présenté pour l'habilitation à diriger des recherches*, Université Paris Sorbonne, 2016. For preliminary papers see Ragazzoli 2011; 2013; 2016; 2017a; 2017c; 2018a; 2018b; 2020; Ragazzoli and Frood 2013; Hassan and Ragazzoli forthcoming.

the evolution of their use over time. The distance between the architect's intention and the last use before abandonment or ruin may be significant. The monuments at the site of Deir al-Bahari are no exception. Numerous visitors' inscriptions, found in several private tombs from the early Middle Kingdom, corroborate this view.

Inscriptions of this kind (German "Besucher Inschriften") represent a genre in Egyptian secondary epigraphy, reflecting a certain practice (Helck 1952; Wildung 1975). These graffiti—usually in hieratic—were left in the public parts of the visited funerary monuments. The inscriptions often enter into a dialogue with the decoration of the tomb; they are systemic, in the sense that they interact with the original meaning and functioning of the monument.

The graffito edited and discussed in this paper, almost complete with the addition of the 11 fragments discovered recently at Asasif, is exceptional from a number of points of view. While visitors' graffiti were usually written in literary hieratic as part of the self-presentation of the signatories and the display of their learned status as scribes, the graffito under consideration is painted in beautiful hieroglyphs, not by the author of the text but by a draughtsman (*sš-qd*) who signed his piece of fine penmanship. While the visitors' graffiti were signed by scribes belonging to an intermediary elite, this graffito is authored by the most senior member of the inner elite, Paser, vizier of Ramesses II. It throws new light on Paser's self-fashioning as a scholar and a kind of Khaemwaset of the South.

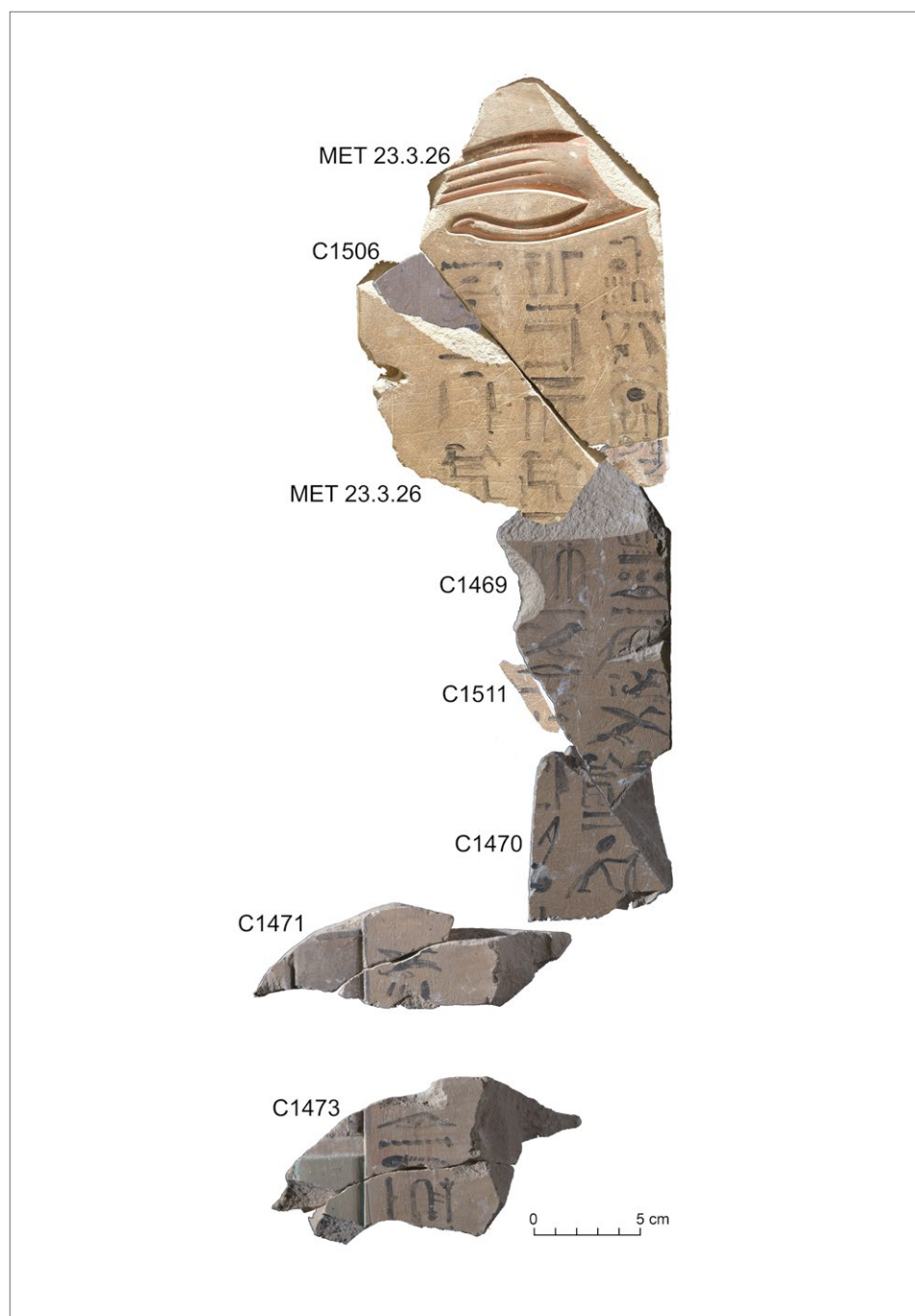
1. PASER'S INSCRIPTION

The two joining blocks on exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York have been known since Herbert E. Winlock's expedition to Thebes in the 1920s and are referenced as MMA 23.3.26 (Winlock 1923: 16, Fig. 9; Kitchen 1979: 386; 1982: 148; Wildung 1984: 50, §44; Donohue 1988: No. V.3; Negm 1998: 118; Peden 2001: 105; Raedler 2004: 326–327; KRI III, 23, 17; KRITA III, 18). An additional 16 fragments were found recently by Patryk Chudzick in the cult space of the tomb of Khety (TT 311) in Asasif.

1.1 ORIGINAL LOCATION

The original location of the graffito within the chapel is unknown because whole sections of the decorated stone walling had been chipped off already in antiquity. The two fragments found by Winlock in the winter of 1922/1923 were from such "chips of relief";¹ Newberry copied in facsimile five graffiti (Ms. *MMA The Theban Expedition III*: 91–93) and the stones were left on site. Reexamination by Chudzick's team of Winlock's archaeological dump originating from inside TT 311 uncovered numerous

1 Ms. *Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Theban Expedition III*: 89: "About a half dozen graffiti were noted on the chips of relief. Of these only one, that of Nebneteru taken to New York, was really legible; the rest are very much washed out. In the tracings on the following pages where they are inked in they have been done by Newberry, where they are in pencil they have been done by Winlock".

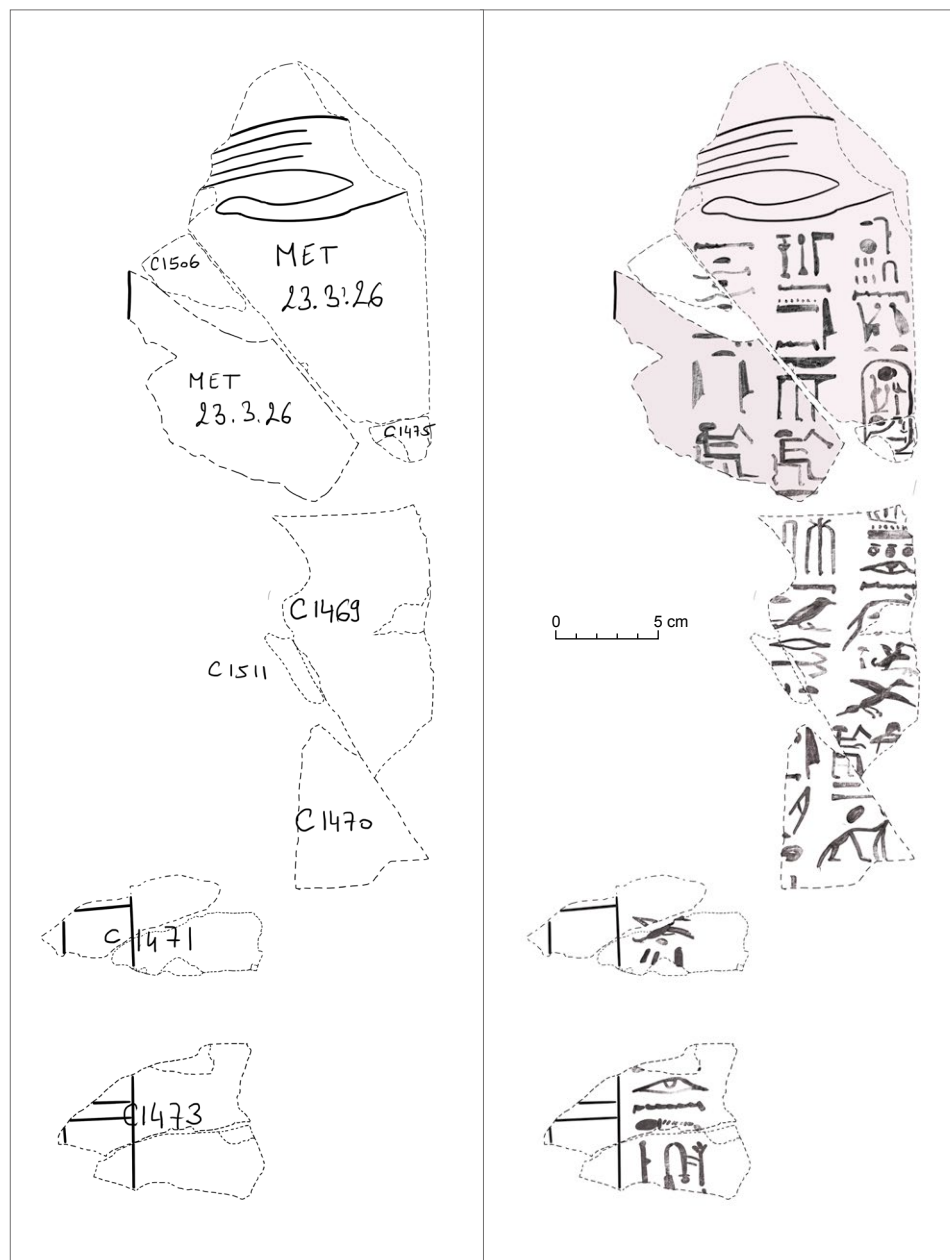


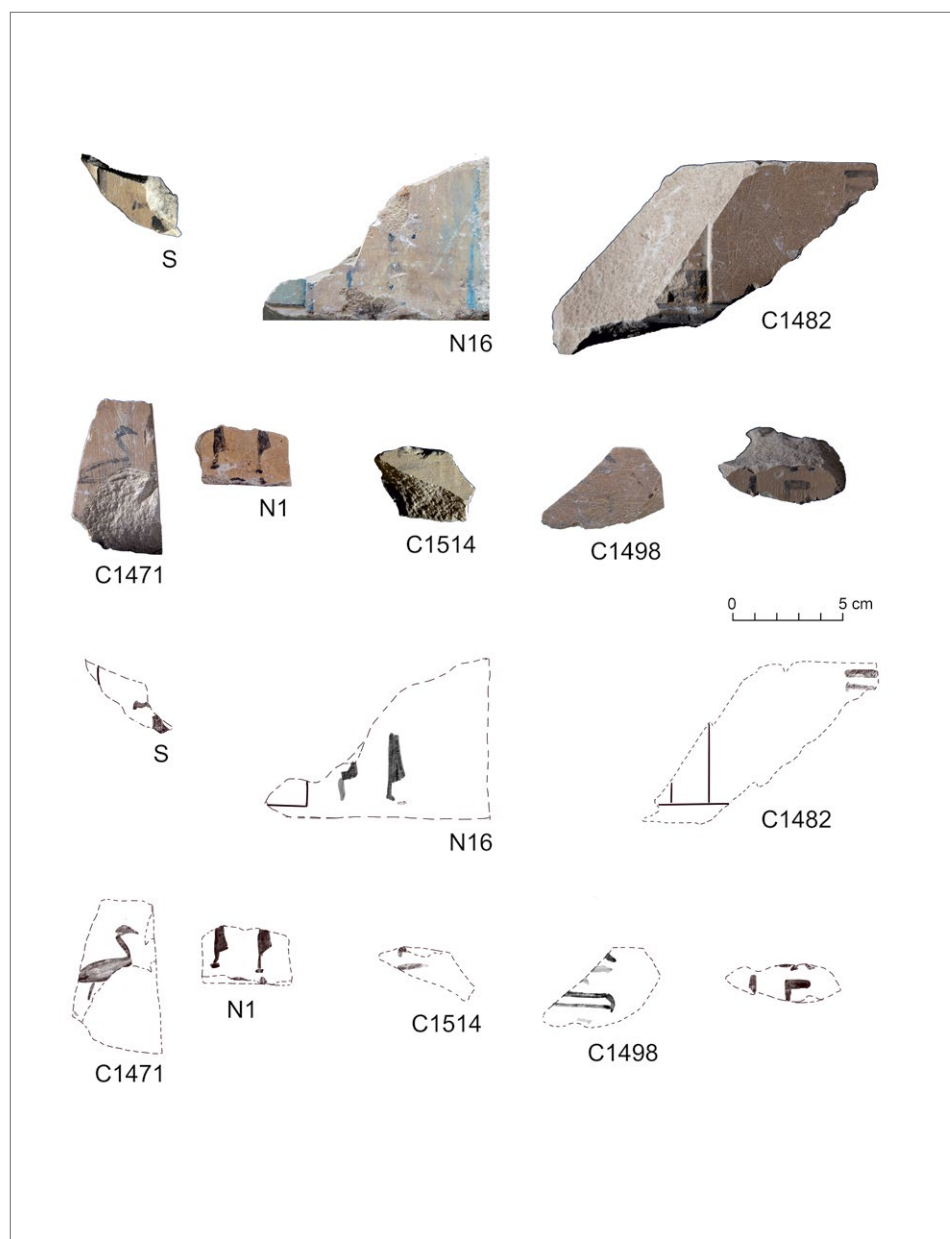
Placed fragments (Courtesy MET; PCMA UW | photos M. Jawornicki; on the opposite page: facsimiles by the author, the MET fragments in pink; and hieroglyphic transcription)

pieces of a relief with graffiti, whole or fragmentary (Chudzik 2020).

The graffito appears below a hand held forward, palm down, depicted in front of a pair of decorated vertical lines. The lines

could be the jamb of a structure, which the owner of the hand, probably Khety, was standing in front of. The structure could have sheltered a royal figure, maybe the king himself (see below).





Non-placed fragments likely belonging to the same inscription (Courtesy PCMA UW | photos M. Jawornicki; facsimiles by the author)

(Col. 1) *h3t-sp 17 n(y) Nswt-Bjty Wsr-M3^ct-R^c Stp-n-R^c [ˈw.s. sm3]wy mnw jr~n (j)m(y)-r(3) [njw]t t3t(y) P3-sr m3^c-hrw s3 s3b [...]*

(Col. 2) *hm-ntr tpy n(y) Jmn Nb-ntrw m3^c-[hrw] ms~n wrt hnr t n(yt) Jmn Mr[yt]-R^c [m3^c-hrw...]*

(Col. 3) *n jt jt jt(f) Hty [m3^c-hrw...]*

(Col. 4) *P3y [...] jr~n w^b sš-qd*

(1) Regnal Year 17 of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Usermaatrê Setepenrê [l.p.h., renewing] the monument made by the Overseer of the City and Vizier Paser true-of-voice, the son of the magistrate [...]

(2) the high priest of Amun Nebnetjeru true-of-[voice], born to the Chief of the Harem of Amun Merytrê [true-of-voice...]

(3) for the father of the father of (his) father Khety [true-of-voice...]

(4) Païry [...] made by the pure-priest and draughtsman...

1.2 THE DOCUMENT

Notes on the translation

(Col. 1)

Nswt-Bjty: a rare but attested spelling of the title, with the white crown of Upper Egypt and the red crown of Lower Egypt, each placed on the basket-*nb*, standing literally for *nb hdt nb nt*, “lord of the white crown, lord of the red crown” (see Fischer 1974: 98–99; Collombert 2010: 129).

[*sm3wy*] *mnw jr~n*: a narrative infinitive found in mission reports (Malaise and Winand 1999: § 1037; Hsieh 2012: 120–121). On formula structure see Brand 2000: 47. Here the formula clearly refers to the royal annals of construction and more specifically to the royal inscriptions of restoration; see, for example, *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt-bjty Mn-M3^ct-R^c m pr jt(f) Pth nb m3^ct* (stela Cairo CG 34013, Lacau 1909: 27–30); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt bjty Mn-m3^ct-R^c n jt(f) Jmn-R^c nswt ntrw nbw* (Cairo CG 34011, stela of Thutmose III from

Pylon VII in Karnak, renewed by Seti II (Lacau 1909: 22); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt-bjty Mn-M3^ct-R^c n jt(f) Jmn-R^c nswt ntrw nbw* and *whm mnw jr~n hm.f n jt(f) Jmn* (Cairo CG 34025, stela of Amenhotep III renewed by Seti I, Lacau 1909: 47); *sm3wy mnw jr~n s3 R^c Mr~n-Pth-šthy* (Cairo CG 34026, stela of Amenhotep III renewed by Seti I and borrowed by Merenptah, Lacau 1909: 59).

Scenes in the Karnak temple, from the Karnak project (<http://sith.huma-num.fr/vocable/1300>): *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt-bjty Mn-M3^ct-R^c m pr jt.f Jmn-R^c* (KIU 2067, 7: relief of Thutmose III renewed by Seti I, Pylon VII); *sm3wy mn jr~n nswt-bjty Mn-M3^ct-R^c m pr jt.f Jmn-R^c* (KIU 2068, 5: relief of Thutmose III renewed by Seti I, pylon VII); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt-bjty Dsr-hprw-R^c-stp~n-R^c n jt.f Jmn-R^c nb nswt t3wy jr~n.f d.Ø nḥ wd3 snb* (KIU 3474, 4: relief of Thutmose III renewed by Horemheb, Pylon VI); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nswt bjty*

Dsr-hprw-R^c-stp~n-R^c n jt.f Jmn-R^c (KIU 3477, 5 and 3478, 8: reliefs of Thutmose III renewed by Horemheb, Pylon VI); *sm3wy mnw jr~n Nswt Bjty nb t3wy Mn-m3^ct-R^c* (KIU 4723, 9 and 4727, 8: reliefs of Thutmose III renewed by Seti I, court of Pylon V); *s3 R^c Sthy-mr~n-Pth sm3wy mnw n jt.f* (KIU 3333, 2: relief of Hatshepsut renewed by Seti I, North obelisk); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nb h^cw* (KIU 3347, 2: relief of Hatshepsut renewed by Seti I, North Obelisk); *sm3wy mnw jr~n nb t3wy Mn-M3^ct-R^c m pr jt.f Jmn* (KIU 4388, 7 and 4389, 7: reliefs of Amenhotep II renewed by Seti I, court of Pylon IV). Commentary: see below § 2.3.
On *sm3wy*: Wb IV, 126, n° 1–16; *AnLex* 77:3590, 79:2560; Biston-Moulin 2017: vocable 1300.

P3-sr: on his career and monuments, including graffiti, see, e.g., Donohue 1988; Obsomer 2012: 286–291; Raedler 2004: 309–354 with retrospective bibliography.

(Col. 2)

Nb-ntrw: father of Paser, high priest of Amun under Sethos (Lefebvre 1929:

115–117; Kitchen 1979: 386; Donohue 1988: 106; Obsomer 2012: 288).

wrt hnr̥t n(yt) Jmn: chief of the harem of Amun, a title usually held in this period by the wife of the high priest (Gitton 1984: 105).

Mryt-R^c: mother of Paser, e.g., *KRI* I: 286, 12: TT 106, Paser's tomb; Obsomer 2012: 288; she also wore the titles of *hst 3t n(yt) ntr jmy.s*, "Great chantress of the god inside her"; *jm3hyt nfr̥t n(yt) W3st*, "The beautiful favoured one of Thebes".

(Col. 3)

Hty: one of the most important court officials of the end of the Eleventh Dynasty (Grajetzki 2009: 47–53).

(Col. x + 4)

Jr~n: the document contains two *jr~n* PN-formula, one as a dedication mark, the second as a signature of the actual maker/scrip̥tor of the inscription symbolically authored by Paser (on the various uses of this formula, see Dorn 2017).

P3-jry: frequent name in the Ramesside period, Ranke, *PN* I: 101, No. 17.

2. PASER'S SYMBOLIC LINEAGE

Paser chose a venerable monument of the past in order to contrive for himself a prestigious lineage from a distinguished predecessor in the same position. In doing so, he followed the professional ethos of paying homage to the acknowledged head of the Egyptian administration in the New Kingdom, but he did so at a different social level—vizier to vizier—in a form that borrows from the

kind of discourse used to legitimize royal succession.

2.1 THEBAN TOMB 311: PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

The tomb itself was recognized in literate circles of the New Kingdom as a monument of the past, a *lieu de mémoire*. This is shown by the presence of at least 38 visitors' inscriptions, mainly dating

to the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and inscribed on the walls of the chapel and the corridor.² In several cases, these graffiti follow the generic incipit *jw(t) pw jr~n sš X r m33 Y* (“this is a visit made by scribe X to see monument Y...”). The words used to describe the monument indicate the way the community perceived it when visiting. The expected designation is *js*, the generic lexem for a tomb (*Wb* I: 126, No. 21; Vandersleyen 1967: 147; Régen 2006; 2007; for an example of visitors’ inscriptions from Theban tombs see TT 60, Ragazzoli 2013: 291). This is the case of one of the graffiti from TT 311:

*jw(t) pw jr~n sš K3-[...] r [m3]
3 js[...]
This is a visit made by scribe Ka[...]
to see the tomb [...]
(Graffito TT311.13; Inv. No. C1480)*

In one other case the locus visited is identified as a *hwt-ntr*, “a divine house”, in other words, a “temple”. The word refers to the sacred aspect of the building, while *r(3)-pr* is linked to its institutional status (Fischer-Elfert and Grimm 2003: 72). The use of *hwt-ntr* here posits Khety’s monument as the place where a divine entity resided, and rituals took place (Meeks 1988: 433–434):

*jw(t) pw [...] sš Htp [...] r swtw t r
[...m33...] hwt-ntr nfr [...]
This is a visit [made] by scribe Ho-*

*tep [...] to get a stroll and to [see]
the beautiful temple [...].*

(Graffito TT311.7; Inv. No. C334; facsimile by Newberry, Ms. MMA *Theban Expedition* III and block Inv. No. C334)

This recalls the situation of the tomb of Antefiqer, a social and votive place for scribes from the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, referred to in numerous graffiti as “the temple (*r(3)-pr*) of Antefiqer” (*r(3)-pr*: TT 60.17, see Ragazzoli 2013: 292). *Hwt-ntr nfr* appears in visitors’ inscriptions from the same period in the royal funerary temples of the Memphite area, with the phrase *gm~n.f hwt-ntr nfr*, “and he found the temple beautiful” (e.g., Navrátilová 2015: M.1.5.P.18.2, l. 4). The use of *swtw t* is also specific to the phraseology of Memphite visitors’ inscriptions (*Wb* IV: 77, 12–13; Navrátilová 2015: 170–173, M.2.3.P.19.3) but it appears in the appeals to the living to which visitors’ inscriptions are one possible answer (Martin et al. 2012: 19–20, Pl. 13–14; KRI III: 163, 5–7; KRI III: 185, 7).

The sanctity of the tomb of Khety, with its prominent position in the hills of North Asasif, overlooking the sacred site of Deir el-Bahari, is made evident by the number of visitors’ graffiti concentrated there, including some from the Ramesside period. Indeed, it is one of the Theban tombs with the largest number of visitors’ inscriptions. At the time of writing, a survey of visitors’ inscriptions in elite tombs in the Theban

2 Eight of them are copied in Winlock’s expedition notebook (kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York); the others, found on fragments recovered by the Polish expedition, were recorded by the author in 2020. They will be published together in the general publication of visitors’ inscriptions from the Theban Necropolis.

necropolis has yielded more than 400 documents, of which only a hundred were known beforehand, often incompletely. More than half of this corpus is concentrated in a few spots, mainly in tombs from the Middle Kingdom. This is especially the case in Deir el-Bahari, in the so-called Scribes' Cave, the unfinished tomb MMA 504 inscribed with 71 graffiti by the scribal staff of the Hatshepsut temple, which was situated just below (Ragazzoli 2017a). Two other tombs also seem to have attracted scribal attention: TT 319 of Princess Nefru from the time of Montuhotep II, with 24 graffiti documented to date, and TT 311 belonging to Khety, with at least 38 such inscriptions. Most of these graffiti date to the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty and coincide with the dignitaries of this period exploring the past and establishing the decorum of a new era. The quantity of the graffiti in the chapel also shows that people returned to this place and helped to continue the practice, shifting the graffiti from a process of building an individual memory to that of a social memory (Taylor 2011: 97). Still, some of these tombs, especially in the Ramesside period, were also considered as sacred space, where the divine realm could actually be experienced thanks to the images of divine entities decorating their walls (Assmann 2003; Den Doncker 2019).³

2.2 SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TOMB

Addressing Khety as “the father of the father of (his) father” (*jt jt jt(f)*), Paser emphasized his own social and professional links with Khety, a predecessor from the time of Montuhotep II holding the same offices as Paser.

Drawing on anthropology and sociology of religions, Alexis Den Doncker notes how engagement with tomb iconography depends “clearly on interests highly influenced by socio-professional predispositions” (Den Doncker 2019: 178). Secondary epigraphy often emanated from members of the social group of the deceased, especially in the Ramesside period. It is striking in the case of the gardener Nakht (TT 161), whose titles are surprisingly modest (PM I, 1: 274–275). Attached to the temple of Karnak, he was a mere “florist of the divine offerings of Amun” (*k3ry n(y) ḥtpw-nṯr Jmn*)⁴ and a “bearer of the offerings of Amun” (*ḥtpw n(w) Jmn*). And the signatories of the graffiti in Nakht's tomb belonged to his professional circle, holding equally modest titles of gardeners and floral offering bearers. The professional world of Nakht is thus revealed through his visitors.⁵ Similar professional links are obvious between Ameneminet, the owner of TT 277, and his visitors. Ameneminet was a priest of Ptah and Nebmaâtré under Ramesses II: the visitors' signatures that are found on the walls of his tomb were probably inscribed during or soon after his funeral, includ-

3 On the role of graffiti in the redefinition of the tomb in the Ramesside era see Ragazzoli forthcoming b.

4 Provider of plant offerings, see Haring 1997: 244.

5 TT161.1: *k3ry S3-Jmn ḥtpw n(y) Jmn*; TT161.4: *ḥtpw n(w) Jmn Jmn-nḥt*; TT161.9: *sš [...] n(y) p3 ḥtpw-nṯr Jmn* (Quirke 1986: 79–80, Figs 1–2; 80–81, Figs 1–2; 88–90, Fig. 5).

ing two that were left by *wāb*-priests and scribes of the memorial temple of Amenhotep III. Furthermore, the tomb, which is in Gurnet Muraï, is aligned with the axis of this temple. Finally, in TT 139, the tomb of Païry, *wāb*-priest of Amun from the time of Amenhotep III, there are two graffiti that are signed by visitors with a similar professional and social background (Sartori forthcoming).

Homage to patrons and authoritative figures is a common feature of the scribal world in the Ramesside era, both in literature and in secondary epigraphy. In the *Teachings of letters* (*sb3yt š'wt*), known in egyptology as *The Late Egyptian miscellanies*, the scribes who compiled these collections of short texts dedicated their work to the head of the office they belonged or to their master (Ragazzoli 2019: 140–145). In a mirror image of this literary practice, the graffiti from the already mentioned Scribes' Cave (MMA 504) show members of the staff of the Temple of Hatshepsut dedicating several inscriptions to local figures of authority, high priests of the temple and the overseer of the works, Senenmut. In self-presentation by the intermediary elite, texts are similarly addressed to the officer in charge, such as when Amenemhat, a scribe of the vizier Ouserhat, addresses his biography to the latter in his tomb TT 82 (Ragazzoli 2017b).

Something similar played out in the inscription of Paser, only on a different social level. Through the choice of the tomb of Khety and the phraseology of his inscription, he established his lineage with a venerable ancestor in a similar office, designated as a forefather (*jt jt jt(.f)*, “the father of the

father of his father”. Khety was in office under Montuhotep II, an age of re-establishment of the State. His highest title was (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) htmt*, “overseer of what is sealed”, in other words the “official responsible for the personal property of the king” (Allen 1996: 3). He was also *jry-p't h3ty-^c*, “hereditary prince and governor”; *htmty bjty*, “seal-bearer of the King of Lower Egypt”; *smr w'ty*, “sole friend”; *hrp rhw nswt*, “administrator of the acquaintances of the king”; *rh-nswt [jmy]-jb.f*, “acquainted with the king within his heart”; *jt ntr mry ntr*, “godfather beloved of the god”; (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) prwy-hd*, “overseer of the Dual Treasure”; (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) hd hn^c nbw*, “overseer of silver and gold”; (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) hsb^d mfk3t*, “overseer of lapis-lazuli and turquoise”; (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) 'b whmw nšmt šw*, “overseer of horn, cattle, scale and feather” (Allen 1996: 5–6).

Paser shared the same titles of rank, his being (*j*) *r(y)-p't h3t(y)-^c jt-ntr mry ntr*, “hereditary prince, governor and godfather beloved of god” (University College, Swansea, Wellcome Museum W.232, Donohue 1988: 104, No. 3; KRI III: 10, 4–5) or (*j*) *r(y)-p'(t) h3t(y) htmty bjt smr w'ty*, “hereditary prince, governor, chancellor of the king of Lower Egypt and sole friend” (KRI III: 10, 11). Like Khety, his career led him to be head of the economic resources of both the State and Pharaoh. His titles of *hrp ht nswt* (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) htmt*, “administrator of the royal goods, overseer of the sealed things”, placed him as the supervisor of the royal wealth while his titles of Treasurer ((*j*) *m(y)-r(3) pr-hd* (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) pr.wy hd* (*j*) *m(y)-r(3) prwy nbw*)⁶ made him, just as Khety, the head of state finances and resources.

6 For example, Statue Caire JE 38062 (KRI III, 12, 14; KRI III, 15, 8; KRI III, 16, 9).

2.3 ROYAL EMULATION

While Paser may have placed himself in the footprints of a prestigious predecessor who held the same offices, his inscription and action clearly emulate royal phraseology and position. The intertextuality is here indexical and Paser draws a parallel between his action within the sphere of the inner elite and the royal action in the

divine realm of the gods and forefathers.

The phraseology of Paser's inscription borrows from royal discourse and his inscription with the incipit [*sm3wy*] *mnw jr~n* corresponds word for word to royal restoration "labels". These "labels" with the formulaic "a restoration of the monument made by king N" were usually inserted into a wall relief (Brand 2010: 8–9, Figs 7–8):

restoration verb
(*sm3wy* or more rarely *wḥm*) + *mnw jr~n* king's name + dedication (*n jt.f*) god's name

restoration verb
(*sm3wy*) + *mnw jr~n* Paser's name + dedication (*n jt.f*) Khety's name



Fig. 1A ►

Paser's own inscription follows the pattern, albeit closely adapted to his social standing and situation:

Even the graphic appearance of Paser's inscription, which is unusual for a *grafito*, summoned up the layout of restoration labels, placed in columns within the restored scene, just below the hands

of the divine and royal characters of the scene [Figs 1A–B, 2].⁷

The bulk of “restoration labels” of this kind is due to Seti I, the king under whom Paser conducted a substantial part of his career: as an overseer of construction works, Paser oversaw the actual restorations and the addition of such labels (for a complete catalogue see Brand 2000:



Fig. 1A–B (on preceding page). Scenes of Thutmose III “restored” by Sethos I, with the “label” under the arm of Amun-Râ (Karnak, Court of Pylon V) (© CNRS-CFEETK 157113-KIU 4723, CNRS-CFEETK 157109-KIU 4727)

7 For restoration labels of Seti I in the Karnak temple see the Karnak database (<http://sith.huma-num.fr/karnak>): KIU 2067, 7; KIU 2068, 5; KIU 4723, 9; KIU 4727, 8; KIU 3333, 2; KIU 3347, 2; KIU 4388, 7; KIU 4389, 7; and also KIU 2604, 2 (Horemheb); KIU 3474, 4 (Horemheb); KIU 3477, 5 (Horemheb); KIU 3478, 8 (Horemheb).



Fig. 2. Scene of Amenhotep II "restored" by Seti I, with the "label" under the arm of the king (Karnak, court of the Pylon V) (© CNRS-CFEETK 171268)

45–118). Here, he simply took this *habitus* to his own benefit.

Finally, it must be noted that Paser's graffiti in Khety's tomb is placed under a hand, which could have been Khety's according to Winlock. The remnant of what could have been a vertical jamb suggests a baldachin, which could mean that Khety was standing in front of a royal figure. The scene itself, where the label was inserted, is comparable to the royal scenes that were usurped and adorned with such labels.

Paser claims to be descended from his forefather (*jt jt jt.f*) Kheti, building a spiritual affiliation across the generations. The claim of such kinship and ancestry is common in the legitimacy discourse of ancient Egypt. Kings chose their links to the past by claiming descent from august ancestors or by drawing inspiration from their monuments. In Paser's time, Seti I drew a link with

the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty Amenemhat I (e.g., Mathieu 1998). The same king paid homage with his son Ramesses II to their royal ancestors in the royal canon of the Abydos temple (David 1981: 108–111). *jr~n.f m mnw.f n jt jt jt(f)*, “he built (it) as his monument to the father of the father of (his) father” (KRI I: 177, 1). On the Year 400 stela, the addition by Merenptah is presented as a similar act of devotion toward “the fathers of his fathers”: *wđ hm.f jrt ḥ'w 3 m jnr n(y) m3t hr rn wr n(y) jw.t.f n-mrwt s ḥ' rn n(y) jt jtw.f nswt Mn-M3't-R' s3 R' Sthty-mr~n-Pth mn w3h n dt mj R' r' nb*, “His person ordered the erection of a large stela of granite stone in the great name of his (fore)fathers to establish the name of the father of his fathers, the king Menmaatse son of Rê Sethy-merenptah, stable and lasting for ever like Rê every day” (KRI II, 288, 5–6).

3. PASER'S VISITS TO ILLUSTRIOUS COLLEAGUES: PASER'S GRAFFITO IN QENAMON'S TOMB

There are other graffiti in Paser's name that document his visits to the Theban necropolis and his engagement with the past. The ones in Qenammon's tomb (TT 93) shed light on the graffito from TT 311, as they obviously shared the same rationale.

3.1 PASER'S GRAFFITI IN TT 93

Qenammon was one of the top officials in the reigns of Amenhotep II and then Amenhotep III, and his tomb is located on a prominent part of the Sheikh Abd el-Qurna hill, in a prominent position, like Khety's (PM I, 1: 190–194; Davies 1930; Kampp 1996: 352–356).

The tomb counts at least one and possibly two hieroglyphic graffiti in the name of Paser (Davies 1930: Pls X, LXVIII, IX; Kitchen 1982: 148; Peden 2001: 104; Den Doncker 2019: 183). It contains a total of 11 Ramesside visitors' inscriptions, placed mainly on one of the focal walls and, secondly, on the west wall of the naos, where the deceased is shown adoring Anubis and Osiris (PM [24]).

The graffiti in the name of Paser appears on the north side of the west wall of the transversal hall, a focal wall depicting important episodes of Qenammon's career

(PM [17–16]; Eichler 2000: 519, No. 314). The scene represents festivities in Peru-nefer, in the presence of king Amenhotep II, depicted as a child, on the knees of his nurse [Fig. 3]. Qenamun was indeed the brother of the royal nurse (*sn mn^cj n(y) nb t3wj*) and overseer and great steward of Peru-nefer, the Eighteenth Dynasty

harbor at Tell el-Daba (*j)m(y)-r(3) pr wr n(y) Prw-nfr*) (Bietak 2009).

Through its graphic register, the graffito in the name of Paser is very evocative of the one in Khety's tomb [Fig. 4]. It looks toward the king and reads (*j)r(y)-p^ct h3t(y)-^c jt-ntr mry t3yty s3b (j)m(y)-r(3)) t3t(y) P3-[sr]*,⁸ and the line

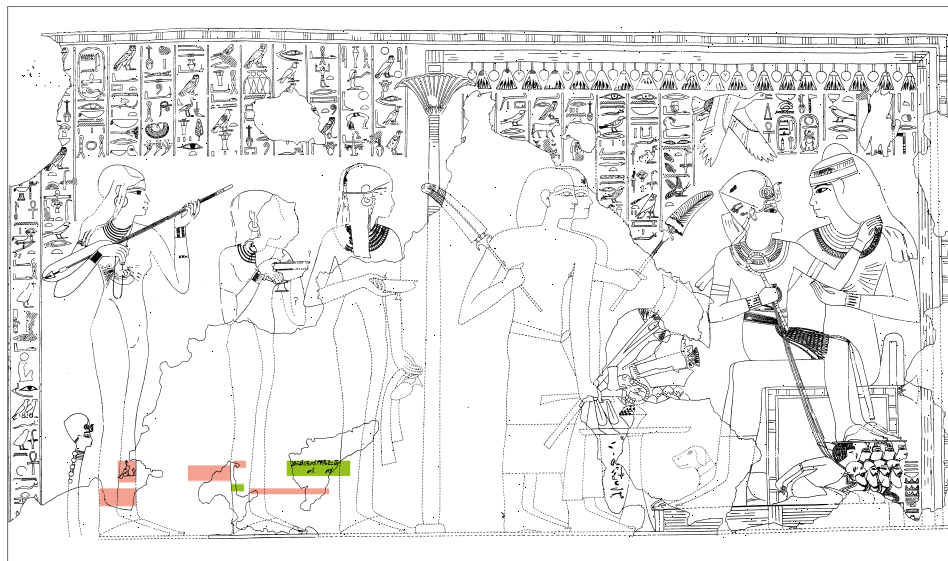


Fig. 3. TT 93: graffiti on the north side of the west wall in the transversal hall; Paser's graffiti is in green (After Davies 1930: Pl. IX)



Fig. 4. TT 93: graffito of Paser on the north side of the west wall in the transversal hall (After Davies 1930: Pl. X, with addition by the author)

8 The honorific and viziral titles *s3b t3yty* are found on many monuments of Paser, such as his statues Cairo CG 630 (KRI III, 13, 9) and Cairo JE 39062 (KRI III, 15, 3). The ring (*j)r(y)-p^ct h3t(y)-^c jt-ntr mrw*: Statue Cairo JE 38062 (KRI III, 15, 8). On these titles of Paser, see Donohue 1988: 106–107.

below reveals two trial presentations of the sign *s3b*. A second graffito probably followed the first one, on the legs of the second servant; the few remaining signs conjure up Paser's name, with the *sr*-sign and the epithet *m3^c-hrw*.

3.2 THREE OFFICIALS, ONE COMMUNITY

Paser, Qenamun and Khety are of similar elite rank, and they are hereditary princes and governors ((*j*)*r*(*y*)-*p*^c(*t*)*h3ty*). Neither Qenamun nor Khety may have actually been viziers like Paser, still the three of them oversaw the finances of Egypt and its resources. Qenamun was also the head of the Treasury ((*j*)*m*(*y*)-*r*(3) *prwy hq*) as well as of the private estate of the King ((*j*)*m*(*y*)-*r*(3) *htmt*).

Qenamun and Paser are both Overseers of royal building works, (*j*)*m*(*y*)-*r*(3) *k3t nbt* for the former, (*j*)*m*(*y*)-*r*(3) *k3wt nb(w)t m mnw wrw* for the latter: in other words, they are the architects and contractors of the monumental building activities of the Egyptian State. Finally, they both have diplomatic and military titles such as “royal herald” (*whmw nswt m t3 r-dr.f* for Paser, *tpy* for Qenamun) and “standard-bearer on the right of the king” (*t3y hw hr wnmy n(y) nswt*). The titles refer to positions of high political significance [Table 1].

The link to the king may have motivated Paser's epigraphic activity in the tomb, attested by other graffiti as well.

As a vizier answering to the king and as the face of the administrative state for the country, Paser was fully aware of his position as mediator between the ruler and the people he administered, especially in the community of Deir el-Medina (see Raedler 2004: 349–350). The rock inscriptions of Paser—two in the Theban Mountain and two in the island of Sehel—show him adoring the royal cartouche. In the tomb of Qenamun, he clearly places his imprints in front of the king in the focal scene showing the royal figure of Amenhotep II as a child. The pictorial graffiti drawn on the legs of the lute player, showing a figure of Horus with the Dual crown and preceded by a cobra (Graffito TT93.1: Davies 1930: Pl. IX), may be part of the same action [see Fig. 4].

Paser and Qenamun shared their connection with the royal rituals.⁹ As the son of the high priest of Amun Nebnetjeru under Sethos I, Paser was appointed as the sole companion and chief chamberlain under this king. As noted by Donohue, this function “involved placing the crowns and other regalia upon the person of the king” (Donohue 1988: 106 and Note 9), which may be reflected here by the hieroglyphic spelling of *Nswt-bjty*, written with the two crowns, for Ramesses II, a king for whom he may have performed the act of coronation (Kitchen 1982; Donohue 1988).

9 “Bei der Krönung des kaum zwanzigjährigen dann auch im Rahmen des Zeremoniells offiziell als ‘Vorsteher der Kammerherren und Hoherpriester der Werethekau’ hatteteilnehmen können” (Raedler 2004: 346).

Table 1. Titles of Khety, Paser and Qenamun

Khety	Paser	Qenamun
<i>(j)r(y)-p^ct h3t(y)</i>	<i>(j)r(y)-p3(t) h3t(y)-^c</i>	<i>(j)r(y)-p^ct h3t(y)-^c</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) (j)m(y)w-r(3) hmwt nbwt n(yt) nswt</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) j3t hntt</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) jmyw hnt n(y) nb t3wy</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) jryw-3 n(w) šnwtj n(y) Jmn</i>
<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) ^cb whmw nšmt šw</i>		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) ^cb whm</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) js.wt m St-M3^ct</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) jhw n(y) JKmn</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) jhw šm^cw Mhw</i>
<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) prwy-hd</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) prwy hd</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) pr(wy) hd nbw</i>
<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) hd hn^c nbw</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) prwy nbw</i>	
<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) hšbd mfk3t</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) njwt t3t(y)</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) pr wr n(y) Prw-nfr</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) hwt wrt 6</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) pr wr n(y) nswt</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) pr wr n(y) nswt m Prw-nfr</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) hmw-ntr n(w) ntrw nbw</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) pr n(y) Prw-nfr</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) nfrt</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) nfrt n(y)t Jmn</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) r3 h3t</i>
<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) htmt</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) htmt</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) htmt</i>
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) k3wt m St-m3^ct</i>	
	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) k3wt nb(w)t (m mnw wrw)</i>	<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) k3t nbt</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) h3swt nbt mht</i>
		<i>(j)m(y)-r(3) šn^c n(y) Jmn</i>
<i>jt ntr mry ntr</i>	<i>jt-ntr mry ntr</i>	
	<i>whm nswt m t3 r-dr.f</i>	<i>whmw nswt tpj</i>
	<i>R(3)-Nhn</i>	<i>hrj-jhw n(y) nswt</i>
	<i>hm-ntr M3^ct</i>	<i>hrj pdt</i>
	<i>hry-sšt3 n(y) mdwt-ntrw / hry-sšt3 n pr-nswt</i>	
	<i>htmty-bjty</i>	<i>Sn mn^cj n(y) nb t3wj / Sn mn^cj n(y) nswt</i>
	<i>hr(y)-hb(t) hry-tp Hr-p3-hrd</i>	
	<i>s3b t3j.tj</i>	
<i>smr w^cty</i>	<i>smr tpy n(y) ^ch / smr w^cty</i>	
	<i>sš nswt</i>	<i>sš nswt</i>
	<i>sšm hb n(y) Jmn</i>	
	<i>t3y hw hr wnmj n(y) nswt</i>	<i>t3j hw hr wnmj n(y) nswt</i>

4. PASER AS A SCHOLAR IN SEARCH OF MODELS AND AS AN OFFICER OF RESTORATIONS: A KHAEMWASET OF UPPER EGYPT

Beyond building up his lineage with preeminent forerunners, Paser's graffiti are certainly linked to his activities as vizier of the South and Overseer of royal works. They also serve his self-presentation as a scholar learned in things from the past.

4.1 VISITS OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTOR OF EGYPT

In this capacity Paser oversaw the building works of the King. Other aspects of his graffiti can be linked to his activities as chief constructor and architect of Egypt.

Paser's inscription in Khety's tomb was signed by a *sš-qd* who must have accompanied him on his inspection tour and observed or even copied for him selected motifs from the visited monuments. In Qenamon's tomb, more hieratic graffiti were inscribed on the western wall of the naos, the most sacred point of the tomb, while at least three graffiti were inscribed around the figure of Osiris venerated by Qenamon. The titles of the signatories suggest that they may have accompanied Paser on his visit, half professional, half votive (as in the phrase by Jean Yoyotte: the Egyptians did not go on pilgrimage, they passed by on pilgrimage, see Yoyotte 1960: 49). One of them is a *sš-qd*, another a *sš* or a *sš-qd* and the third a *sš Hwꜣ sꜣ Hꜣw n(y) hꜣ n(y) tꜣt(y)* (Davies 1930: Pl. LXVII and unpublished record by the author).

All these aspects confirm the suggestion, already developed by Den Doncker, that Paser was looking for models from the past that he could use in the State architectural works that he supervised and in the design of his own tomb:

“his function as vizier included among others the responsibility of overseeing the works commissioned by the king, the workshops and artisans employed in such works, as well as the overall control of the Theban necropolis. Paser's graffiti is in straight connection with black inked squaring-up lines that cover the body of the three female figures. One can assume that these grids were planned for copying the figures” (Den Doncker 2019: 184).

Paser looked at the tomb and copied motifs that are reused in monuments, the construction of which he supervised. Den Doncker inventoried the motifs from the tomb decoration that find counterparts in monuments overseen by Paser (Hofmann 2004: 184, Note 57; Den Doncker 2019). A striking example is the nursing scene in the temple of Sethos I at Abydos, which is almost identical to the one in TT 93, in front of which Paser had his graffiti written (Calverley, Broome, and Gardiner 1933: IV, Pl. 20). Other examples include the harp with the head of the king or the complex headdress of Amenhotep II on the knees of his nurse.

4.2 PASER'S SELF-FASHIONING AS A SCHOLAR AND ANTIQUARIAN

Paser fashions himself as a *literatus* and a scholar, and leaving graffiti in chosen spots of prestigious monuments is part of this effort. These secondary inscriptions reflect what is expected from the visitors to this funerary chapel, and even work as a reception commentary on the song of entertainment addressed to the king in the primary epigraphy of the wall:

- (1) *Šhmḥ-jb m33 bw nfr* (2) *ḥs(w) ḥbt šm^c* (3) *ḥ^ct ršwt m jb* (4) *m33 [w...]* *n(y) ḥm.f* (5) *m ḥntš n(y) Prw-nfr* (6) *wrḥ 'ntjw* (7) *gs m b3q jrt* (8) *hrw nfr tsw w3ḥw* (9) *m 't-n(y)-ḥt.k, sšn r fnd.k* (10) *Jmn-ḥtp jr.k n.n ḥḥ*"

"Rejoice and look at the goodness, the melody, the dance, the song, the jubilation and the joy at heart, the watching of the troop of his Person in the pleasance of Peru-nefer, the ointment in myrrh, the rubbing in oil, the beautiful day, the tying of crowns in the orchard, a lotus flower to your nostril, Amenhotep, may you give us eternity!" (Davies 1930: Pl. IX).

This is in keeping with his monumental discourse and self-presentation where he considered scholarship to play an important role and is slightly unusual for the Ramesside period.

Like Qenamun, Paser was a *sš nswt*, a royal scribe, a status-title that entailed distinction through scholarship and literacy (Onasch 1998; Ragazzoli 2019: 450–451; Luzianovich 2021). He had other

titles, including functional ones, in relation to restricted knowledge, such as "chief of the secrets of the hieroglyphs" (*ḥry-sšt3 n(y) mdwt-ntrw*) (statue Louvre E 25980; KRI III: 10, 10–11), "chief of the secret of the royal domain" (*ḥry-sš-t3 n pr-nswt*) (KRI III: 16, 13–17, 5), "chief lector-priest of Horus child" *ḥr(y)-ḥb(t) ḥry-tp Hr-p3-ḥrd* (KRI III: 16, 13–17, 5). Scholarship holds a key place in Paser's self-fashioning and self-presentation.

The value of knowledge of the past is explicitly praised in Paser's tomb. For example, in the hall of the tomb, on the south side of the east wall, there is a workshop scene overseen by Paser and taking place in the house of gold (PM I, 2: 221 (6); Assmann 1992):

[(j)m(y)-r(3) njwt] t3t(y) P3-sr m3^c-
ḥrw dd.f
ḥsy t(w) Pth p3 s^cnḥ
nfr nfr p3y twt n(y) nb jr~n.k
jm ḥpr.f mij p3 jsy
ḥr.tw m pr-ʿ3 ʿ.w.s

"[The overseer of the city] and vizier Paser justified says:

'May Ptah praise you, sculptor!

This statue of the lord that you made is beautiful, beautiful

'Let it become like (a statue) from the old ones!'

So they say in the palace, l.p.h'"

KRI I: 293, 11–13; Assmann 1992: 44–45; Raedler 2004: 348)

The craftsman answers then:

[...] *dd.f*
jr prrt nb(t) m r(3).k ḥry ḥm.f ḥr.f
ntk jrty n(y) nswt
ḥḥwy n(y) bjt

[mh] {hr} <jb> mnḥ n(y) nb.f
wn.k hr n j3wt nb(t)
sb3(y)t.k phr<.tj> [m] ḥmw

“[The sculptor] says:
‘As for everything that comes out
from your mouth, his Person will
be pleased of it!
You are the eyes of the King of Up-
per Egypt,
The ears of the King of Lower
Egypt,
The efficient [intimate] of his lord
May you open the attention of all
offices,
Your teaching having entered work-
shops” (KRI I: 293, 13–16; Assmann
1992; Raedler 2004: 46)

Paser’s biography is addressed to Ra-
messes II. In it, he presents himself with
his title of royal scribe in the final sub-
scription:

jn sš-nswt m3^c mr.f
ḥsy 3 n(y) ntr nfr
(j)m(y)-r(3) k3wt m mnw wrw
(j)m(y)-r(3) (j)m(y)w-r(3) ḥmwt
nb(w) n(w) nswt
sšm ḥb n(y) Jm
(j)m(y)-r(3) njwt t3t(y) P3-sr m3^c-
hrw

“(all this) by the true royal scribe
whom he loves,
the greatly favored one of the per-
fect god,
the overseer of the works in the
great monuments,
the overseer of the overseers of all
workshops of the king,
the festival-leader of Amun,

the overseer of the city and vizier
Paser true-of-voice” (KRI I: 299,
12–13)

The scribal self-presentation of Pas-
er extended to his funerary equipment,
as indicated by his well-known scribes’
water pot, currently in the Louvre Mu-
seum. It is inscribed with epithets that
link the vizier to the divine patrons of
scribes and writing, Seshat and Thot,
such as “favoured by Thot and Seshat”
(ḥssw *Dḥwty Sš3t*), “the servant of Thot,
master of hieroglyphs” (*sšm Dḥwty nb
mdwt-ntr*) (Louvre E 5344; Barbotin 2005:
54, No. 17; Ragazzoli 2019: 509–510).

Imprinting his mark on prestigious
monuments belonging to principal
figures of the past is part of the same
logic. Borrowing from them is part of this
self-presentation strategy: quotations or
copies from their monuments in his own
funerary decoration prove his scholarship
and conjure up his closeness with presti-
gious forebearers. His tomb TT 106 shows
some of the highest craftsmanship of his
time and indeed a clear “historical aware-
ness of past models” (Hofmann 2004: 137).
It contains elements and references to
the Duties of the Vizier and the related
texts (KRI I: 290–291; Kitchen 1978: 15;
van den Boorn 1988: 365, 371; Frood 2007:
149), which is the only known example of
such allusions from the Ramesside peri-
od. Similarly, his scene of royal reward
borrowed from tomb decoration from
the Eighteenth Dynasty (Frood 2007: 148)
and from the time of Thutmose III; some
of the religious texts are obviously copied
from earlier monuments dating to Amen-
hotep III (Kitchen 1978: 15–16); the form
of the north stela next to the entrance of

his tomb derives from decoration from the tomb of Khaemhat under Amenhotep III (Kitchen 1978: 16; *KRI* III: 1–3).

Both through the display of his scholarship and by virtue of his restoration activity, Paser appears as a kind of Theban Khaemwaset, son of Ramesses II, high priest of Ptah in Memphis (Paser is high priest of Amun in Thebes), who had an ambitious monumental program in the North capital (Snape 2011). He liked to leave marks of his passage and fashioned himself as a restorer of things of the past, with an intensive (secondary) epigraphic activity in the Memphite necropolis (Gomaà 1973: 61–66, 105–106). Khaemwaset oversaw the Memphite chapter of the royal jubilee “in a context where association with past kings, and the idea of the antiquity of kingship itself, were explicitly visible” (Snape 2011: 467). As a vizier of the South, Paser had equivalent responsibilities in Upper Egypt. From this point of view, both Khaemwaset and Paser are witness to the Ramesside “consciousness of lineage” (Snape 2011: 469).

4.3 SELF-FASHIONING AND GRAPHIC REGISTERS: THE IDENTITY VALUE OF THE CHOSEN SCRIPT

Paser’s graffiti in TT 311, as well as in TT 93, stand out because of their graphic register. Visitors’ inscriptions in general were mostly in literary hieratic, which worked as an identity marker and an index of the social world of the scribes and administrators, for whom hieratic was a professional script (Ragazzoli 2017a: 76–80). On the contrary, Paser’s graffiti are in beautiful painted hieroglyphs, whether in ink in the Theban tombs or engraved in rock on the Theban Mountain (*KRI* III:

22, 4–6, 9–14; *KRITA* III: 17; Spiegelberg 1921: Nos 1–2; Černý et al. 1971; Donohue 1988: 109) and on Sehel island (Gasse and Rondot 2007; *SEH* 371 and 484). All four are in the same full hieroglyphs albeit cut in the rock. An appraisal of the graphic registers indicates that Paser did not belong to the same social world as the scribes who signed the other graffiti in the tomb. This is made explicit by an inscription from TT 311 crafted by a *ss-qd*. In such cases, graffiti reveal the social semiotics attached to graphic registers: the concept of a “graphic register” refers to the visual and material aspect of a piece of writing, including its script (in ancient Egypt: hieroglyphs, cursive hieroglyphs, ceremonial hieratic, literary hieratic, administrative hieratic, etc.), its layout or the medium used (ink, paint, incision, engraving) and the associated meanings. A given register indexicalizes a given sphere of activity (world of administration, ritual activity, etc.). The graphic register has a semiotic value that contributes fully to the meaning of the text and its reception (Ragazzoli and Albert 2021).

From this perspective, the inscription of Paser is a “visually evocative device” (Christin 2001) that conjures up the realm of royal monumental action through reference to restoration labels. He emulates the royal action but at his own social level, restoring the monument of one of his predecessors, a vizier, another member of the inner elite.

Visitors’ inscriptions are mostly written by people negotiating their status as scribes and their belonging to the intermediary elite of administrators (Ragazzoli 2019: 524–525). Their inscriptions are usually in literary hieratic and the layout

is close to that of manuscripts, whether on an ostrakon or papyrus. In such cases, hieratic is an identity mark and a sign of belonging to the social world of scribes: hieratic is their *hmwt*, their art and craft and a reflection of how they act in the world, whether they have administrative control of institutional activities (scribes) or act on the invisible powers of the world through their written rituals (lector-priests).

Paser set himself as part of another scriptural world (and a title such as *hry-sšt3 n(y) mdwt-ntr* confirms this). In ancient Egypt, the written landscape is organized around two poles orchestrating a rich set of graphic scripts and registers (to name but a few: engraved hieroglyphs, polychrome painted hieroglyphs, cursive hieroglyphs, literary hieratic, rapid, or administrative hieratic, etc.). At one end of the graphic spectrum, hieroglyphs constitute a sacred and monumental script. Associated with the divine word, hieroglyphs set the framework for the world, archetypal and eternal. At the other end

of the spectrum, hieratic is the cursive script of Pharaonic Egypt, a tachygraphy in ink used for all texts of everyday practice and literacy (administration, epistolary, *belles lettres*, science, magic, rites, etc.). It is ordinary writing, engaged in the world. It is the first form of writing, whereas hieroglyphs correspond to a much more advanced stage of erudite knowledge, reserved for a narrow elite of scribes. Hieratic writing also bears the mark of its scribe. It is the professional tool—the *technè*, one might say—of the administrator scribe and the ritualist priest. Both act through cursive writing: the first on the institutional course of the world, the second on its invisible forces (Donnat Beauquier 2014: 194–208). Hieroglyphs belong to another sphere, the sphere of the enunciation of the makeup of the world: they are the script of gods and of kings, and, by delegation, of the inner elite. The graffiti of Paser—in TT 311, as well as in TT 93—and his rock inscriptions on Sehel island all contribute to his monumental self-presentation as a high dignitary.

RECAPITULATION

Secondary epigraphy unveils a range of interactions between individuals and their community, their pathways in their environment and heritage, and their tactics for appropriating structures. Negotiation of this kind takes place at all levels of society and is presented by a variety of means of expression. The scribes, who signed the hieratic visitors' inscriptions, emulated the *habitus* of the inner elite for whom they worked; just like them, Paser, the powerful vizier of first Sethos I and then Ramesses II, who conducted official

royal architectural endeavors in the name of the king, imported the discourse of royal legitimation and restoration into his self-fashioning. He adapted this verbal and graphic expression to his own social world, building solidarity between a network of treasurers and high officials throughout the ages. By raising himself to the level of the illustrious ancestors whose monuments marked the sacred landscape of his time, Paser demonstrated his scholarship and social preeminence close to the king.

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Abbreviations

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