MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 118 (2019), p. 317-362

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A Remarkable Set of Blocks from the Reign of Nectanebo II Found at Awlad Musa, near Suez

MAHMOUD RAGAB, CLAIRE SOMAGLINO*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente 33 blocs inédits en calcaire datant du règne de Nectanébo II, retrouvés sur le site d'Awlad Mosa au nord de la ville de Suez par le Conseil suprême des antiquités entre 1995 et 2006. Une partie d'entre eux est désormais exposée au musée de Suez. Ces blocs inscrits étaient utilisés en réemploi dans un édifice plus tardif, mais l'étude des dieux qui y sont figurés et de leurs épithètes indique qu'ils pourraient venir du site de Tell el-Maskhouta dans le Ouadi Toumilat. La plupart des scènes sont fragmentaires et font figurer le roi officiant auprès d'une série de divinités, dont la plupart sont rattachées à la sphère héliopolitaine. Une procession géographique figurait sur le soubassement et l'on y remarque la plus ancienne attestation connue à ce jour d'Osiris « maître de la Porte orientale », qui n'était jusqu'alors mentionné que sur deux stèles ptolémaïques trouvées à Maskhouta.

Mots-clés : Nectanébo II, Tell el-Maskhouta, Awlad Mosa, Suez, Ouadi Toumilat, Atoum, religion solaire, Osiris « maître de la Porte orientale », procession géographique, Piqereh, Tjékou, Pithom.

* Our warmest thanks to Annie Forgeau and Sylvain Dhennin for their rereading of the paper. We benefited also greatly from the advice of Lorenzo Medini, to whom we wish to express our gratitude. And last but not least, many thanks to Chloé Ragazzoli and Adrian Travis for checking the English and for their support.

BIFAO 118 (2019), p. 317-362 Mahmoud Ragab, Claire Somaglino
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ABSTRACT

This article presents 33 unpublished limestone blocks dated to the reign of Nectanebo II and found in Awlad Musa, north of Suez, by the Supreme Council of Antiquities between 1995 and 2006. An assemblage of a few of them is now on display in the Suez Museum. These inscribed blocks were reused material, as indicated by the fact that they were randomly included in the masonry of a latter building. It is extremely likely, given the identity of the gods they feature, that these blocks came from Tell el-Maskhuta in Wadi Tumilat. Most of the scenes are fragmentary and represent the king offering to different gods, the majority of which are linked to the Heliopolitan sphere. A geographic procession is carved on the basement featuring the most ancient occurrence of Osiris "lord of the Eastern Gate," an epithet known up until now only on two Ptolemaic steles found at Maskhuta.

Keywords: Nectanebo II, Tell el-Maskhuta, Awlad Musa, Suez, Wadi Tumilat, Atum, solar religion, Osiris "lord of the Eastern Gate", geographic procession, Piqereh, Tjeku, Pithom.

THE DISCOVERY

In 1995, a farmer in the Suez Governorate found by chance a few limestone blocks while working in his fields. The place is known as Awlad Musa and is situated in a small village named Abo Tourk, about 12 km north of Suez, between the Suez-Ismailia fresh water canal and the Suez Canal. This is an area of flat land, cultivated with various sorts of crops and fruit trees, and run through by one of the drainage channels of irrigation common in the region.

Following the discovery, a first mission of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, directed by Magda Elsayed Mostafa, discovered some sort of stone building (8 × 4 m), built with reused material, as indicated by the fact that inscribed blocks were randomly included in the masonry. The decorated blocks showed representation and titles of Nectanebo II. Unfortunately, the work could not be completed during the course of this first mission. The plundering of the site in 2004 prompted the dispatch of a second mission in 2006, under the supervision of Mostafa Nour, Ahmed Halem and Noubi Mahmoud. They discovered 200 uninscribed blocks and 11 decorated blocks, some of them again bearing the name of Nectanebo II. During a third season in 2007, a mission directed by Mahmoud Ragab and Mahmoud Mansour was able to resume the excavations, and they discovered another building some 10 m west of the first.[1] This second construction was built with the same kind of blocks as the first and inscribed with the

1 We would like to thank the inspectors of the Service and the team who worked on the site during the different expeditions: Noubi Mahmoud. Mahmoud Mansour, Mosaad Abd Elraziq, Hassan Abd El-Aziz, Eid Hussein Eid, Mostafa Nour, Ahmed Halem, Magda Mostafa, Adel Farouk. Restoration team: Khaled el-Tokhi, Abd Allah Sukar, Amer Elmsery, Hani Shaker, Eslam Saleh, Waled el-Ghareeb. Our gratitude also goes to the IFAO: at the time of the discovery, Laure Pantalacci, then director of the Institute, agreed to commission the photographs of the decorated blocks (all made by Ihab Mohamed, photographer at the IFAO).

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same royal name. A total of 33 decorated blocks were then transferred to the Suez Museum in order to be restored[2] and stored, and an assemblage of a few of them are now on display. All this work was done under very difficult conditions since the structures are partly under the water table, which meant that pumps had to be used.

There are more remains of these structures still in Awlad Musa that are underwater part of the year. The function and dating of this site are still unclear although a few shards of pottery found during the excavations could be dated from the Byzantine and Islamic periods.[3] Were these blocks part of a sort of quay along the canal? If some of these questions cannot yet be fully answered without more investigation, the issues of the provenance of the decorated blocks and of their significance can, however, be tackled.

The discovery is of great importance and these blocks represent a significant addition to the corpus of reliefs from the reign of Nectanebo II.[4] They are in a very good state of preservation in spite of their prolonged exposure to a very wet environment, and they display an extremely skilled workmanship. There are some remarkable pieces of art, without doubt of the best quality that could be expected from this period.

There is a strong possibility, as we will discuss below, that these blocks were hailed from the temple of Atum in Tell el-Maskhuta, of which only very few elements are known since it was almost completely destroyed before the first archaeological explorations in Egypt in the 19th century.



Fig. 1. One of the two structures in Awlad Musa in 2009 (photo Mahmoud Ragab).

2 Bader, Al-Gharib 2013.

3 Many thanks to Julie Marchand for the dating of the shards.

4 For a list of the decorated blocks from the reign of Nectanebo II, see Mysliwiec 1988, pp. 71–73. See in particular a kiosk in the Hibis temple in Kharga (Davies 1953, pl. 60 ff.), blocks from Behbeit el-Hagara (Favard-Meeks 2003) and Bubastis (Rosenow 2003).

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Fig. 2. One of the two structures after pumping during the 2007 expedition (photo Mahmoud Ragab).

DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPUS

All the blocks are limestone and with sunk relief, except for block 22, which is half in raised relief, half in sunk relief, and block 32, which has raised relief only. The numbers used here to identify the blocks are those given on the field. We chose to describe them in two groups: the first includes 24 decorated blocks with scenes of offerings, royal names, etc.; the second, 11 blocks from the "soubassement," features a geographic procession. We will describe the first group in order of ascending block number except when some assembly can be proposed.

6. L. 65 × l. 40 × H. 40 cm [PL. 1 above]

Striding legs of a male figure, facing right. The left leg is preserved from the middle of the thigh to the middle of the calf and only a very small part of the right thigh is still visible. On the right half of the block, two columns of hieroglyphic captions are carved. The left one, to be read from right to left, corresponds to the male figure on the left:

[…]  *[…]*

[…]ꜥf jrꜥf dj ꜥnḫ mj Rꜥ [ḏ.t]

[…] which he made, given life like Ra [forever]

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The second column, written from left to right, would have matched another male figure, facing the first one (compare with the layout on block 3). It was a god, given the nature of the caption, so the first one was for the king.

[…]  *[…]*

[dj.n=j n]=k t3.wy nb m ḥtp ḫ3s.t [nb mj Rᶜ ḏ.t]

[I gave] you the entirety of the Two Lands in peace, [all] the foreign countries [like Ra, forever].

8. L. 80 × l. 47 × H. 51 cm [PL. 1 below]

Block with four fragmentary columns of hieroglyphic text, written from right to left. On the right edge of the block, the limit of the scene is still visible. On the left edge, three papyrus stems are carved.

1 *[…]*  *[…]* 2 *[…]*  *[…]*

3 *[…]*  *[…]* 4 *[…]*  *[…]*

[1] *[…] r Ḏ.t dmḏ=tn n=f […]* [2] *[…] nn mkḫ3 sprw.w […]* [3] *[…]sḏm njs.w=f mj mrw […]* [4] *[…rd]t n=j sw r ḥq3-ᶜnḫ.w […]*

[1] *[…] for Eternity, may you assemble for him […]* [2] *[…] the petitions are not neglected […]* [3] *[…] listen to his summons like a servant […]* [4] *[…] I [gave] it to the ruler of the living ones […]*

Notes:

Col. 1. *Ḏ.t* with the god determinative designates the personification of eternity-*ḏ.t* (*Wb* V, 510, 2).

Col. 2. *sprw* could be either for "petitioners" (*Wb* IV, 104, 4) or "petitions, supplications" (*Wb* IV, 104, 5–10), given the lacuna here.

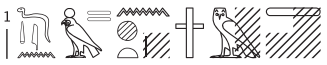
Col. 4. *ḥq3-ᶜnḫ.w,* "ruler of the living ones" is an epithet mostly employed for Osiris (*LGG* V, 501).

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10. L. 76 × l. 47 × H. 50 cm [PL. 2 above]

Six columns of a very carefully carved hieroglyphic text. Only the upper part of the columns is preserved, except for the last one on the right, where the first signs are also missing.

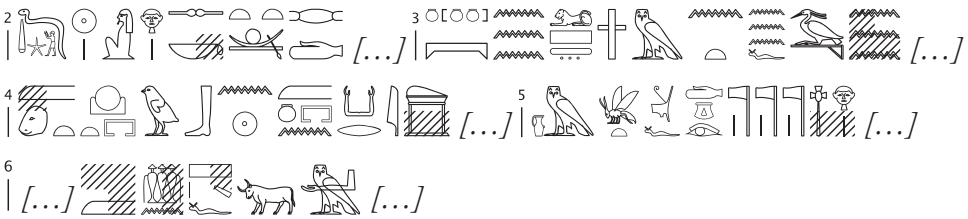
Left edge of the block, column written from right to left:



[1] *ḏd mdw jn Rʿ-Ḥr-ɜḫ.ty n ḫt (?) […] jmy tɜ (?) […]*

[1] *To be pronounced by Ra-Horakhty […] who is on earth (?) […]*

Then five columns written from left to right:



[2] *ḏd mdw: dwɜ Rʿ ḥr (m)skt.t (m)ʿnḏ.t […* *nḥḥ pr m]* [3] *Nw[n] rw-štɜ jmy nt=f bʿḥ […* *psḏ]* [4] *m-ḫnt ɜḫ.t wbn m-ḫnw n kɜr […]* [5] *ḫnm-bjt=f dg nṯr.w nḏ-ḥr […]* [6] *[…] m-ḫnt š=f kɜ m[šrw=f …]*

[2] *To be pronounced: praise Ra on the nocturnal solar bark and the morning solar bark […* *the old one who emerges from the]* [3] *Nu[n], the mysterious lion who belongs to his water, who floods (?) […* *the one who shines]* [4] *within the horizon, the one who rises from [his] shrine […]* [5] *the one who unites with his Red Crown and who looks at the gods, the protector [of his father?]* [6] *[…] within his lake, bull […, his] af[terglow…]*

Notes:

This hymn to Ra has a parallel in the 19th Dynasty tomb of Amenmose at Thebes (TT 373, reign of Ramses II?): for its publication, see Seyfried 1990; Assmann 1983, pp. 358–361 (STG 254). This New Kingdom version is also very patchy in the first columns. Nectanebo's version lets us partly fill in one of the lacunae of the Theban copy: in the first column, following immediately *dwɜ*: *Rʿ ḥr (m)skt.t (m)ʿnḏ.t*. If the entirety of this hymn was copied in Nectanebo II's temple, then block 10 represents only a small fragment of it. For more comments on the nature of this text, see *infra*.

Col. 2. The epithet *nḥḥ pr m Nwn* is employed in Amenmose's version of the hymn (STG 254, 2).

Col. 3. *rw-štɜ* is usually a designation of solar divinities (*LGG* IV, 652–653). The text is here better preserved than in the Theban version. We may also have a slight difference in the interpretation of *bʿḥ* between the two versions, but the text is too incomplete on both monuments to assert more. The epithet *psḏ m ḫnt ɜḫ.t* appears in TT 373 hymn (STH 254, 3).

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Col. 5. Following the *LGG,* the epithets *ḥnm-bjt=f* (*LGG* VI, 16) and *dg nṯrw* (*LGG* VII, 577) are known only in Amenmose's tomb.

Col. 6. This part of the text is also missing in Amenmose's hymn, where there is *[…] kȝ=f mšrw=f,* translated by J. Assmann "[…] sein Ka […] seine Abendröte" (STG 254, 5 = Assmann 1983, p. 359). So there seems to be a slight variation between the two texts here.

11. L. 114 × l. 37 × H. 46 cm [PL. 2 below]

This block is joined to blocks 9 and 3 in the Suez Museum display.

On the right, the block features the heads of Amun and Mut, facing right. Amun is wearing his traditional flat-topped crown with two high feathers, whose upper part is missing. Behind him, a goddess, certainly Mut, is standing, wearing the *pshent* and the vulture headdress with the uraeus, on a curled wig. She is raising her right hand before her face, towards Amun's neck.

Three vertical lines are still visible and must have delineated the hieroglyphic captions corresponding to the gods. One sign and half of another one are still visible in front of Amun, and also visible is a place name behind the head of Mut.

[…] 

Notes:

If these few signs stand alone, a toponym *Mw* would be an *hapax*. But it could also be the last signs of a name beginning above the head of the goddess and now lost. In the case of Mut, it could be the end of *jšrw*, the goddess' sacred lake at Karnak (*DG* I, p. 108).

On the left half of the block are traces of another scene, with a short caption in two columns. It involves the king, as proven by the bottom part of the cartouche with his birth name.

[…]  *[…]*

[… nḫt]-Ḥr-(n)-ḥbyt […] ḏ.t

[… Nect]anebo […] forever

3. L. 137 × l. 38 × H. 50 cm [PL. 2 below]

This block is joined to blocks 11 and 9 in the Suez Museum display.

The block seems to be the lower part of the scene featuring Amun and Mut (11). A god and a goddess, on the left, are facing the king, carved on the right. The striding god is wearing a short, partly pleated kilt with the bull tail and is holding a stick or a sceptre in his left hand. He must have raised his right hand since it is not visible along his thigh, maybe making the king breathe the *ʿnḫ*-sign, given the caption. Behind him a goddess is standing, of whom we only see the left hand holding a *ʿnḫ*-sign, and her left leg. She is wearing a long sheathed dress, adorned with vulture wings. The king is facing them and is wearing a short kilt with

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a projecting triangular apron, as well as an adorned belt. Between them, two columns of hieroglyphs are written, from right to left:

[…]  *[…]*

[…] t3.w ḥqȝ=k ḫȝs.wt nb n […]

[…] the lands, may you govern all foreign countries, for […]

[…]  *[…]*

[…] dj.n(.j) n=k ʿnḫ ḏd wȝs nb r šr.t=k n […]

[…] (I) place for you every life, stability and power to your nostril […]

9. L. 80 × l. 35 × H. 45 cm [PL. 2 below]

This block can be joined to blocks 11 and 3 in the Suez Museum display.

Block with fragments of two scenes, divided by a vertical line. On the right can be seen the lower part of a long wig with neatly carved curls and the back of a goddess facing to the right and wearing a sheathed dress adorned with wings (preserved from the wig to the top of the thigh). On the left, a few hieroglyphic signs are to be read from left to right:



m [ʿnḫ] ḏd wȝs

in [life], stability and dominion

12. L. 122 × l. 41 × H. 46 cm [PL. 3 above]

Upper part of a scene. One-third of the relief, on the right end of the block, is not preserved. The remainder is levelled, thus difficult to read. A round hole was dug in the right half of the block. What remains is a starry sky and the upper part of the hieroglyphic captions of the scene, all to be read from right to left.

x+1 *[…]* x+2  *[…]* x+3  *[…]*

x+4  *[…]* x+5  *[…]* x+6  *[…]*

[x+1] *[…]* [x+2] *nb ns.t […]* [x+3] *m (?) […]*
[x+4] *Jw=s-ʿȝ[=s…]* [x+5] *ḥnw.t Jwnw […]* [x+6] *jr(.t) Rʿ […]*

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[x+1] *[…]* [x+2] *lord of the throne […]* [x+3] *[…]*
[x+4] *Iusaa[s] […]* [x+5] *mistress of Heliopolis […],* [x+6] *Eye of Ra […]*

From these captions we may infer the representation of the goddess Iusaas, mistress of Heliopolis, following a god, maybe Atum, as she is very often represented with him. We can still see the very faint traces of the tip of a horn belonging to her usual hathoric headgear, between the penultimate and last hieroglyphic columns on the left end of the block.

15. L. 120 × l. 38 × H. 47 cm [PL. 3 middle]

A large part of the decoration on this block is destroyed. On the right was a representation of the king as a sphinx, whose front part only is still visible. He is wearing an uraeus and a straight false beard. In front of him, two hieroglyphic signs are written: .

On the left part of the block at least two columns are carved, but only the first one is filled with a text written from right to left. The signs are roughly engraved, with a technique very different from the one employed on all the other blocks, where the signs are very carefully carved.



[…] nḫt m r(ɜ)-ʿ.wy=k ḫf (?)[t-ḥr?…]

[…] strong with your two arms [in front of (?) …]

17. L. 122 × l. 35 × H. 41 cm [PL. 3 below]

Lower half of an offering scene. On the left part of the block, a standing goddess and a seating god are facing to the right. The goddess, wearing a long dress, is holding a *ʿnḫ*-sign in her right hand and a sceptre in her left hand. The god is seating on a throne placed on a podium and is holding a *wɜs*-sceptre. His mummified form suggests that this is Osiris. On the right end of the block very little is left of the king but the faint profile of his striding leg and the lower part of a kilt, just above the knee. Facing the gods he is holding a long stick. Between the two groups, a pile of offerings is carved: two sacrificed bulls on a rectangular-shaped pedestal, and the traces of another pedestal for a third group of the same nature. Each bull is beheaded, with its hind legs fastened by a rope; the head, a front leg (*khepesh*) and maybe the heart of the animal are represented above the carcass. The usual representation for the great offering is three or four sacrificed bulls, topped with loaves of bread and vases.

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Between the pile of offerings and the king a hieroglyphic caption identifies the whole scene:

[…] 

[…] ꜥ3b.t ꜥ3.t n jt=f

[…] the great offering to his father

Notes:

The verb most often used before *ꜥ3b.t ꜥ3.t* in this kind of scene is *mꜣꜥ* or *smꜣꜥ*, "to present," "to make present," "to bless (an offering)." Some variations may nevertheless be found, as shown by the various scenes in the temple of Amun in Karnak, with the use of *rdj*, "to give" (Biston-Moulin [ed.] 2017, p. 44). The most likely restoration would be: *rdt mꜣꜥ/smꜣꜥ ꜥ3b.t ꜥ3.t n jt=f,* "Bless the great offering to his father," or *n(y)-sw.t ḏs=f smꜣꜥ ꜥ3b.t ꜥ3.t n jt=f*, "the king himself is blessing the great offering to his father."

19. L. 132 × l. 40 × H. 40 cm + **29.** L. 127 × l. 38 × H. 41 cm [PL. 4]

Given the presence of Osiris on both blocks and the fact that texts and images have the same scale blocks 19 and 29 are considered together.

Upper part of a scene featuring the Osirian triad. Under a starry sky the triad, on the left, was facing a now lost king. A pile of offerings separates them, of which can still be distinguished two pieces of bread or cake and a goose in the lower part, and two stands on a register line in the upper part. Osiris is wearing an *atef*-crown complemented with horns and a long false beard curved outward at the end. His representation is only preserved from the top of his shoulders up. He is holding in his left hand a *wꜣs*-sceptre, whose upper part is visible in front of him. Isis is following him. The upper part of the *st*-sign on top of her head can still be distinguished. She was holding a floral sceptre. In third position is Harsiesis, wearing the *pshent*, as shown by the tip of the red crown on the bottom-left corner of the block.

11 columns or lines of texts are partially preserved, all written from right to left. The first one details the gift given to the king by Osiris. Columns 2–5 are the caption related to Osiris, columns 6–8 to Isis and columns 9–11 to Harsiesis.

1 *[…]*  *[…]*

[1] *[… Snḏm-jb-Rꜥ stp].n [-Jn-Ḥr] jr ḥḥ.w m ḥb-sd […]*

[1] *[… Senedjemibra-Setep]en[inhur], the one who celebrates millions of heb-sed […]*

Osiris:

2 *[…]* 3 *[…]* 4 *[…]* 5  *[…]*

[2] *[…] nṯr ꜥ3 ḫnt* [3] *[…] ḏf3.wt (?) n=f* [4] *[…] šps* [5] *nty twtw sšm pꜣ […] jm=s rꜥ nb*

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[2] *[…] the great god, foremost of* [3] *[…] provisions (?) for him (?)* [4] *[…] the noble one (?)* [5] *whom one follow […] in her, every day*

Isis:



[6] *S.t wr.t mw.t nṯr […]* [7] *s3 sn=s Wsjr* [8] *m s3ḥ r s3 s […]*

[6] *Isis the great, god's mother […],* [7] *protection of her brother Osiris* [8] *as Orion for her son […]*

Harsiesis:



[9] *Ḥr-s3-S.t […nb]* [10] *Ṯkw nḏty jt[=f…]* [11] *nb pt n(y)-sw.t nṯrw*

[9] *Horus-son-of-Isis […lord of]* [10] *Tjeku, protector of [his] father […],* [11] *lord of heaven, king of the gods*

Notes:

Cols. 2–3. Osiris may have been here designated as "foremost of Piqereh" (*ḫnty Pr-Qrḥ*) as in the Pithom stele and Ptolemy IV's stele (Thiers 2007, pp. 14, 17, 85; Gauthier, Sottas 1925, p. 16).

Col. 6. The two signs can be considered as part of *Qrḥ* or *Pr-Qrḥ*. On Ptolemy IV's stele, Isis is designated as *S.t wr.t mw.t nṯr ḫntt Pr-Qrḥ* (Gauthier, Sottas 1925, pp. 5, 17–18). The beginning of the sequence is exactly the same on block 19, but the lacuna may not be long enough for this epithet.

Col. 7. According to *LGG*, the epithets *s3-sn=s* and *s3-sn=s-Wsjr* are found only in the Graeco-Roman period (*LGG* VI, 121–122), during which 8 examples of the former and 4 of the latter are listed.

Col. 10. Compare with a block of the same reign from the temple of Behbeit el-Hagara where Harsiesis is "protector of his father, lord of Hebyt," that is to say, lord of Behbeit el-Hagara (Forgeau 2010, p. 214). This is the first mention of Harsiesis in relation to Tjeku. As stressed by A. Forgeau, Harsiesis is rarely mentioned outside Abydos: she listed 43 such occurences. Tjeku is a place-name known since the 18th Dynasty to designate the region of Wadi Tumilat. It is used sometimes, during later periods, as the name for the town of Tell el-Maskhuta, this being the site for the main city of the whole area, as well as the name for the entire region (last comments and references on a much debated question: Thiers 2007, pp. 4–6).

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20. L. 77 × l. 18 × H. 42 cm [PL. 5 above]

Block with fragments of two scenes. On the right are the shoulder, upper part of the right arm and of the torso of a man looking right. He is wearing a large necklace. On the left, a goddess is looking left. The bottom of her long tripartite wig is still visible, as well as a large necklace. Her right arm is hanging along her body, whereas her left arm is raised before her face. In front of her and on the left edge of the block, are the delimitation of a text column and maybe part of a hieroglyphic sign. A vertical line is separating the two scenes.

18. L. 140 × l. 39 × H. 40 cm [PL. 5 middle]

Lower part of two offering scenes, separated by a vertical line. On the right the king is walking towards the right. He is wearing a short kilt and a bull tail. His representation is preserved from the top of the thigh to the middle of the calves. Behind him three hieroglyphic signs from the caption:

[…] 

[…] ḏ.t

[…] forever

The other scene features the king and a goddess (?), walking towards the left. They are also preserved from the middle (for the king) or the top (for the goddess) of the thighs to the middle of the calves. There are no traces of the king's clothes, but he must have worn a short kilt. The bull tail is still visible. He is holding a *ꜥnḫ*-sign in his left hand, which hangs along his thigh. Two vertical elements, one thick, one thin, are carved in front of him, maybe belonging to an element he was holding with his right hand. The goddess (?) is wearing a long sheath dress. Her right hand, along her body, is holding a *ꜥnḫ*-sign. Her left hand is not visible, so it must have been raised.

21. L. 64 × l. 37 × H. 15 cm [PL. 5 below]

Fragment of a milk-offering scene. The central section of the king's head is preserved from the lower part of the uraeus to the middle of the chin. He is looking right and is wearing a short wig. In front of him is the upper part of a milk jug. Behind the head, two hieroglyphic signs in column, not completely preserved, constitute the usual formula of protection.



sꜣ ḥꜣ[=f?]

Protection is around [him?]

At the right end of the block faint traces of a column of hieroglyphs can still be detected, with maybe a *nb*-sign.

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22. L. 51 × l. 35 × H. 35 cm (with block 32?) [PL. 6 above]

This block shows fragments of three different scenes. On the left is a portion of a large-scale scene in sunk relief, with a standing male figure looking left, whose left part is preserved from the hips to the armpits. The belt and the upper part of the kilt are still visible and his left arm is hanging along his body. On the right two small-scale scenes in raised relief are delimited by a vertical line: on the top, on a register line, the right foot of a male standing figure walking to the right and wearing a bull tail; underneath, a starlit sky and the tip of a white crown.

The two types of scenes are separated by a deep groove and are not carved on the same level (the right part is slightly protruding). This kind of layout may belong to a door. The same technique and layout are visible on block 32.

32. L. 69 × l. 36 × H. 37 cm (with block 22?) [PL. 6 above]

One of the two raised reliefs of the group of blocks published here.

The king, preserved from the hips to the middle of the face, is looking towards the right. He is standing and raising his right arms horizontally. He is wearing a crown. In his left hand, he is holding a stick and a mace. Those two instruments are often held by the king for the dedication of the great offering or of the chosen meat pieces.

The scale, the technique and the orientation are the same as on block 22. Furthermore, there is a similar vertical line delimiting the left of the scene and what seems to be a difference of level to the left of this line. The tip of the white crown still visible on block 22 may belong to the crown of the king featured here.

24. L. 49 × l. 37 × H. 78 cm [PL. 6 below]

Fragment of the upper part of a scene, as indicated by the row of stars on the top. Underneath, the relief seems to be unfinished, since only the shape of the signs and motives are engraved, while on the completed ones, we can observe a wealth of neatly carved details inside every individual sign. On the left end of the block we can still see the tip of a falcon wing, pertaining to a winged disk, according to the hieroglyphic caption alongside, to be read from right to left:

[…] 

[bḥd.ty nṯr ʿ3 nb pt] s3b-šw.t pr m 3ḫ.t

[Behedety, the great god lord of heaven], many-coloured of plumage, who comes forth from the horizon

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Underneath, the caption, inscribed from left to right, describes the king:



ʿnḫ nṯr nfr nb tꜣ[.wy] n(y)-sw.t bjty […] sꜣ-Rʿ […]

(Long) live the good god, lord of the [Two] Lands, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt […], the son of Ra […]

25. L. 124 × l. 37 × H. 47 cm [PL. 7 above]

Upper part of a scene involving Ra-Horakhty and Hathor on the left, the king on the right. A row of stars is carved on the top. Just below parts of the protagonists' captions can be read.

The left of the scene features the god Ra-Horakhty. Only the upper part of his crown is preserved, as well as his name and parts of his epithets, written in three columns above him. He was wearing the *atef*-crown topped with a small sun-disk.



Rʿ-Ḥr-ꜣḫty nṯr ʿꜣ nb […] Ṯkw gmḥ[sw psḏ-]m-wḏꜣ.ty=f

Ra-Horakhty, the great god, lord of […] Tjeku, the Falc[on the-one-who-shines]-with-his-two-eyes

Notes:

From the multiple divine epithets beginning with *gmḥ*, *gmḥsw*, "the falcon," is the only one recorded for Ra-Horakhty, following *LGG* VII, 313–314. From the combination of *Gmḥsw* and *m wḏꜣ.ty=f* we propose to re-establish here *Gmḥsw psḏ-m-wḏꜣ.ty=f*, "The Falcon, the-one-who-shines-with-his-two-eyes" (*LGG* III, 121), observed in a few later texts, usually to designate Horus Behedety (*Edfou* VII, 87, 14–16; *Edfou* VII, 45, 5–6).

Behind Ra-Horakhty the goddess Hathor must have been featured, since her name is written on the left end of the block.



Ḥw.t-Ḥr nbt ḥtpt […]

Hathor, lady of Hetepet […]

The king was represented on the right of the scene, facing the gods, as indicated by the representation of the protecting vulture on the upper right corner and the mentions of his Horus name, his throne name and his birth name. Of the vulture, one wing and the *shen*-sign held in its claws are preserved, as well as its caption:

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Wꜣḏyt nb(.t) pt

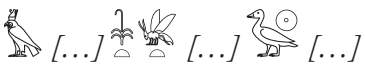
Wadjet, lady of heaven

Only the upper part of the king's names is preserved: the double-crowned falcon on top of the *serekh*, with a solar disk from which is hanging an uraeus combined with a *ʿnḫ*-sign on its right; the titles "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" and "Son of Ra," to be read from left to right. Facing this group, a small representation of the vulture goddess Nekhbet with the *atef*-crown, holding a *shen*-sign and a sceptre. In this classic kind of composition the goddess, whose name is written just above her, is usually perched on a *nb*-sign and three long-stemmed lily flowers.[5]



Nḫbt

Nekhbet



[…] […] […]

Ḥr […] n(y)-sw.t bjty [Snḏm-jb-Rʿ stp.n-Jn-Ḥr…] sꜣ-Rʿ [Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr…]

The Horus […], the king of Upper and Lower Egypt [Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur…], the son of Ra [Nakhthoreb-Meryinhur…]

26. L. 145 × l. 35 × H. 40 cm [PL. 7 middle]

The row of stars above the text and the symmetric disposition of the hieroglyphs indicate that this block was a lintel.

From right to left:



ʿnḫ[6] *n(y)-sw.t bjty Snḏm-jb-Rʿ stp.n-Jn-Ḥr dj […]*

(Long) live the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur, given […]

5 Same composition on block 27.

6 The *ʿnḫ*-sign, carved on the centre of the lintel, is common to the two formulae.

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From left to right:



ʿnḫ sꜣ-Rʿ Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr […]

(Long) live the son of Ra Nakhthoreb-Meryinhur […]

27. L. 120 × l. 40 × H. 47 cm [PL. 7 below]

Block with the upper part of two different scenes. On the right is preserved what seems to be the upper part of a Hathoric headgear. It belongs to the left part of a lost scene. On the rest of the block another scene was carved, with at least the king on the right and the god Sopdu on the left, according to the captions. Their images are no longer preserved.

As on block 25, the king was under the protection of a vulture identified by the caption on its left as "Wadjet, lady of heaven."



Wꜣḏyt nb(t) pt

Underneath are written his Horus name, throne name and birth name, of which only the epithets are preserved: *Ḥr, n(y)-sw.t bjty, sꜣ-Rʿ*, to be read from left to right.



One may guess the faint trace of the top of the *serekh* under Horus' claws, and the upper part of the first sign of Nectanebo II's Horus name, *Mry-tꜣ.wy*.

Facing the three names of the king is the representation of the vulture Nekhbet on a *nb*-sign. Her name is written above her:  .

Two other columns of text are partly preserved on the left end of the block and are to be read from right to left. They give the name and epithets of the god facing the king. The second column is too badly damaged to be read.

 *[…]*

Spd-Ḥr-jꜣbt[.t …]

Sopdu-Horus-of-the-East […]

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28. L. 128 × l. 38 × H. 41 cm (with block 13) [PL. 8 above]

This block shows part of a scene with the king on the left, facing a god and a goddess on the right. Of the king, only the right hand is preserved and of the gods, their head as well as the upper part of their torso. In the display at the Suez Museum this block is adjacent to block 13, featuring the upper part of the gods' crown and fragments of their caption.

On the left end of the block the king is presenting to the gods two bags of eye-paint. The god in front of him is holding the *wꜣs*-sceptre in his right hand and must have held or presented something else in his left hand, since his arm is not hanging along his body. He is wearing a mortar (for the complete description of his crown, cf. block 13), a false beard curved outward and a large necklace. Behind him, Hathor is raising her left hand towards the god's neck. She is wearing a vulture headdress above her long wig. The details of her wig or headdress are not carved, as they are for Mut on blocks 9 and 11. Maybe this scene was not entirely completed.

13. L. 67 × l. 41 × H. 44 cm (with block 28) [PL. 8 above]

Block with the upper part of a scene, featuring the top of two gods' crowns, separated by a vertical line, and fragments of their captions. The texts are written from left to right. Another vertical line is still visible behind Hathor.

The first crown on the left is a pairing between the red crown and the *hemhem*-crown in its variant with three solarized falcons instead of the simple sun-disk. The second headgear is the Hathoric headdress with two cow-horns surrounding the solar disk.

The first caption is badly preserved:

? ?

[…] 

[…] šps jp (?) -Rᶜ (?) […]

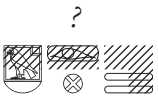
[…] the noble […] (of) […]

From the many child-gods known in the Egyptian pantheon, Harsomtus (*Ḥr-smꜣ-tꜣ.wy*) seems the most likely to be featured here, since he is described on the Pithom stele as one of the gods of Tjeku, as well as on Ptolemy IV's decree, from Maskhuta. On the two steles he is depicted with exactly the same crown as the one featured here,[7] but also with the traditional childhood plait, which he is not wearing on our block.

7 THIERS 2007, pp. 20, 84–85 (l. 3 of the stele).

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The second caption lets us read at least the name of the goddess:



Ḥw.t-Ḥr nb(.t) [ʿnw?…] tȝ.wy

Hathor, lady of [Anu?…] the Two Lands

Notes:

First caption: The sign A17 may be read in different ways (*nwn, ḫrd*, etc.), and be part of an epithet for a child god. It could also be a determinative for a god's name. We can propose the epithet *nwn šps* (*LGG* III, 553); for *nww, nn*, its transcription and its meaning, cf. Wilson 1997, pp. 497–498. A toponym follows, as indicated by the *njwt*-sign at the end of the word, but it cannot be completely read and the remaining signs do not match any place-name that we know of.

Second caption: From the determinative, it is clear that a toponym was written after *nb.t*. The sign above *njwt* is large and flat, but not sufficiently preserved to be read. We can propose *Anu* (*ʿnw*), because Hathor is known as "lady of Anu" on a few other monuments from the region of Tjeku from the Ramesside period onwards, and in some texts related to the East Harpoon nome (discussion and all the references in Thiers 2007, p. 21, (6); *LGG* IV, 27). Hathor is thus designated for instance on a votive sistrum dedicated by Nectanebo I (Ismailia Museum No. 655: Bruyère 1949–1950, p. 67), on the Pithom stele (l. 2, Thiers 2007, pp. 20–21) and on Ptolemy IV's decree (Gauthier, Sottas 1925, pp. 5, 17), all objects found in Maskhuta temple.

30. L. 131 × l. 41 × H. 51 cm [PL. 8 below]

Upper part of a scene featuring the king on the left, facing the god Atum on the right. Only their heads are preserved. The king is wearing the *khepresh*-crown with an uraeus, and Atum the *pshent*. The upper half of the hieroglyphic text above the king and the god, which specifies their identity, is missing.

The column just before Atum is to be read from left to right and corresponds to the god:



[…]

[Tm nb Ṯ]kw nb pt

[Atum, lord of Tj]eku, lord of heaven

The rest of the hieroglyphs, on the left, are to be read from right to left and are not included in formal columns. First are the two cartouches with Nectanebo's names.

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[…]  *[…]* 

[…] Snḏm-jb-Rᶜ stp.n-Jn-Ḥr […] Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr

[…] Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur, […] Nakhthoreb-Meryinhur

On the left, a column of text is encompassed between two *wꜣs*-signs facing each other, topped with another sign, no doubt a *ᶜnḫ*-sign.

[…] 

[…] nṯr ᶜꜣ nb pt

[…] the great god, lord of heaven

The beginning could be the lower part of a group constituted of a sun-disk with a hanging uraeus (the lower part of one of them can still be seen on the left), with the caption *Bḥdty nṯr ᶜꜣ nb pt* between two symmetrical rows of topped *ᶜnḫ* and *wꜣs*-signs.[8]

On the left end of the block there is a *yod*-sign. Behind the king is the traditional protection formula *sꜣ ḥꜣ*,  .

On the right end of the block the column of text does not belong to the same scene, as indicated by the slight difference of level, the orientation of the signs (from right to left) and their different scales. It gives the Golden Horus name of Nectanebo:

[…]  *[…]*

[…] Ḥr nbw smn ḥ[p.w …]

[…] the Horus of gold The-one-who-establishes-the-laws […]

Maybe this block was part of a door, with this last column belonging to the king's string of titles, usually displayed on the doorjambs and lintels.

8 One of many parallels: Epigraphic Survey 1932, pl. 96.

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31. L. 73 × l. 40 × H. 41 cm [PL. 9 above]

The right part of this block is inscribed with the lower part of a column of text. It is slightly protruding, maybe indicating that the block was included in a doorjamb.

[…] 

[…][9] *n(y) Tkw*

[…] of Tjeku

Geographic procession

Nine blocks belong to a geographic procession, carved on the lower part of the walls. The Lower Egyptian nomes were represented in a procession walking to the left whereas the Upper Egyptian are shown in another walking to the right. Eight blocks belong to the former (as proved by the two nome-emblems on block 1) and only one to the latter (16).

Procession of the Lower Egyptian nomes

1. L. 130 × l. 40 × H. 49 cm [PL. 9 below]

Three columns of text showing the birth name of the king are carved on the right half of the block. On the left, and separated by a thin projection, is a part of two scenes. On the upper part is a god followed by a goddess: on the left, the heel of the right foot of the god and three toes of his left foot remain; of the goddess we can still see her two assembled feet and the lower part of her long dress on her right ankle. Under the register line is the upper part of the Lower Egyptian geographic procession. Under a starry sky (stars enclosed within the *pt*-sign), we can see, from left to right (i.e. the reading direction here), the top of the IX LE *sepat* emblem and behind him the beginning of a column belonging to the caption of this fecundity figure. The five other columns of texts form the caption of the last *sepat* featured here, the X LE *sepat*.[10] Four columns are in front of the fecundity figure and the last is behind him.

1  *[…]*

[1] *r d.t=k n[=f …]*

[1] *in order for you to give him […]*

9 The faint traces above the *n*-sign may suggest that there was a vertical sign on the left part of the quadrat.
10 The shape of the element before the bull is unusual, but it seems to fit more with the *km*-sign of the X LE than with the *ḫsb*-sign of the XI LE.

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Notes:
Little is missing from this column, maybe one or one and half quadrat, if compared with block 14. This is the end of the formula written for every *sepat.*



[2] *ḏd mdw jy.n nb tꜣ.wy [Snḏm-jb-Rᶜ stp.n-Jn-Ḥr ḫr=k Wsjr…]* [3] *Šꜣ-tp-nt […]* [4] *[r?] nw=f rd.t n[=k]* [5] *nb ḫᶜ.w Nḫt-[Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt] mry-Jn-Ḥr* [6] *r d.t=k n=f […]*

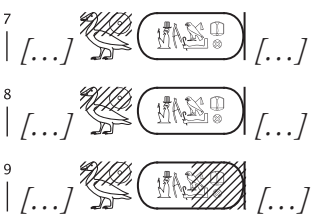
[2] *To be pronounced: The lord of the Two Lands [Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur] came [to you O Osiris…]* [3] *Sha-tep-net […]* [4–5] *in his time, The lord of the crowns Nakht[horeb]-Meryinhur made a gift to [you]* [6] *in order for you to give him […]*

Notes:
Very little is missing from columns 3 to 5, if we compare it to block 14, maybe one or two signs for cols. 3–4, half of the cartouche for column 5.

Col. 3. The toponym *Šꜣ-tp-nj* appears often during the Ptolemaic period in geographic processions, as the agricultural land (*ww*) of the IX LE (G*DG* V, 110–111; Tattko 2014, p. 190). Its earliest known occurence is found in the Middle Kingdom text *Pleasures of Fishing and Fowling*. The mention of this *Šꜣ-tp-nt* here is intriguing though, as the IX LE is represented in this very block. But the caption in which it is written, given the layout of the decoration, would logically be related to the X LE, not the IX LE.

Col. 4. *n=k* seems the most probable restitution here, given the usual phrasing of this formula (cf. Yoyotte 1962, p. 83).

Col. 6. Perhaps one or one and a half quadrat is missing in this column, if we compare it with block 14.



[7] *[…] sꜣ Rᶜ Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr […]*
[8] *[…] sꜣ Rᶜ Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr […]*
[9] *[…] sꜣ Rᶜ Nḫt-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt mry-Jn-Ḥr […]*

[7] *[…] the son of Ra Nakht[horeb]-Meryinhur […]*
[8] *[…] the son of Ra Nakht[horeb]-Meryinhur […]*
[9] *[…] the son of Ra Nakht[horeb]-Meryinhur […]*

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Notes:

Cols. 7–9. Usually, the last name of the king's string of titles is followed by the mention *dj ʿnḫ* (*mj Rʿ ḏ.t*) or *mry* + name of a god or goddess. The first solution seems not to fit within the traces left. Col. 7: traces of the upper part of three signs below the cartouche, the central one seems to be a sun disk; col. 8: after the cartouche, traces of a horizontal line, a vertical thick sign on the left of the column, and the head of a falcon.

2. L. 127 × l. 42 × H. 43 cm + **14.** L. 122 × l. 42 × H. 51 cm [PL. 10]

We propose here a mounting of these two blocks which differs from the one displayed in the Suez Museum, as it shows some tiny discrepancies at the level of the offerings hanging from the tray held by the central fecundity figure. With the new joining proposed here, these discrepancies disappear. As a matter of fact, the presentation of the hanging elements underneath the trays is slightly different from one figure to the other, depending on the space available for the artist. On block 14 there are only three vertical lines on each side of the *wȝs*-sceptre to link ducks and lotus to the tray. But if we observe the central figure on block 2, four lines on each side are needed. On the contrary, only three are required for the figure on the right end of this same block, since the elements hanging from the tray have been slightly compacted, breaking off the symmetry of the pattern: on the left side of the tray the duck is linked with only one line from its neck whereas on the right side the duck is held by the usual two lines, but the lotus blossom is attached to one of these two links and has not its own independent link. The same kind of adaptation can also be observed on block 4.

Following this new suggestion we would have four fecundity figures on this panel. The upper part, which showed part of the caption and the nome-symbols on their head, is lost. Progressing from left to right: of the first figure, only part of the legs is preserved; of the second one, we have the back of the head with a long tripartite wig and half of the torso, adorned with a broad necklace. All of the lower part is preserved. He was carrying an offering tray of which only the hanging elements are still visible on each side of the *wȝs*-sceptre: two blossoming lotus as well as two buds, and two ducks with *ʿnḫ*-signs around their neck. The lower part of one column of text and the last sign of the last column, behind his head, go with him.

The third fecundity figure is the best preserved, both in terms of image and text. Only the rear part of his left leg is missing. He is wearing a long tripartite wig with parallel strands of hair,[11] a long false beard curved outward at the end and a broad necklace with parallel bands of neatly carved beads. He has long pendulous breasts, but the rendering of his body is not too fat (the stomach does not spill over the belt nor are there rolls of fat). The figure is only dressed with a belt with strips.[12] Part of the *spȝt*-sign is still visible on the top of his head. He is carrying an offering tray with two *ḥs*-jugs, three pieces of breads or cakes and two blossoming lotus. A *wȝs*-sceptre is represented behind them. We have already described the layout of the elements hanging from this tray. The caption is partially preserved, with one column running from the top to the bottom of the register, and four shorter columns above him, of which

11 BAINES 1985, p. 87, fig. 50, type 4 and p. 92.
12 For the iconography of the male fecundity figures, cf. BAINES 1985, pp. 85–109.

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nearly nothing is preserved. Three of them are in front of the fecundity figure, another one behind him. The nome emblem is missing too.

Of the fourth fecundity figure, we have only the upper part: his face, one hand and his legs are preserved, as well as the tray he is carrying, which displays exactly the same elements as for the third figure. As for the caption, we can read the upper part of the long column and faint traces of two of four of the shorter ones.

As already observed on some other blocks, the level of finish of the carving is not even. The third fecundity figure presents more details than the second, with the strands of hair carved on the wig, and all the beads detailed for the necklace, whereas only the outer string of beads is detailed for the second fecundity figure. If we observe the hieroglyphs, we can see that the details of the basketry are shown for the *k*-signs in the first two long columns, but not for the third.

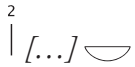
Texts:

With the second fecundity figure:



[1] *[…] ḫr ḫ.t nb nfr.t jmy.wt=f d=f n=k*

[1] *[…] under every good thing that is within him and that he offers to you*



[2] *[r d.t=k n=f] nb*

[2] *[in order for you to give him] every […]*

With the third fecundity figure:



[3] *[ḏd mdw jn.n nb tꜣ.wy] Snḏm-jb-Rᶜ stp.n Jn-Ḥr ḫr=k Wsjr nb Rꜣ-jꜣbt.t jn=f n=k […]m ḫr ᶜꜣ.t n(y) Bꜣḫw d=f n=k* [4] *[…] nb n* [5] *[… rd.t] n=k* [6] *[nb ḫᶜ.w nḫt]-Ḥr-(n)-Ḥbyt-[mry-Jn-Ḥr]* [7] *[r d.t=k n=f …].wt nb*

[3] *[To be pronounced: The lord of the Two Lands] Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur [came] to you O Osiris, lord of the Eastern Gate, he brings to you […]em carrying the precious stones of Bakhu that he offers to you,* [4] *[…] every […] for* [5–6] *[…]. [The lord of the crowns Nakht] horeb-[Meryinhur made a gift] to you* [7] *[in order for you to give him] every […]*

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[8] *[ḏd mdw jn.n nb tɜ.wy] Snḏm-jb-Rˁ stp.n Jn-Ḥr ḫr=k Wsjr nb Rɜ-jɜbt[.t jn=f n=k …]* [9] *[…]* [10] *[nb ḫˁ.w nḫt-Ḥr-(n)]-Ḥbyt [mry-Jn-Ḥr]* [11] *[…] nb*

[8] *[To be pronounced: The lord of the Two Lands] Senedjemibra-Setepeninhur came to you O Osiris, lord of the Eastern Gate. [He brings to you …]* [9] *[…]* [10] *[The lord of the crowns Nakht]horeb-[Meryinhur]* [11] *[…] every […]*

Notes:

Col. 1. A toponym was written before *ḫr* as indicated by the faint traces of a *.t* and *njwt* signs. We expect one here, following the pattern of the traditional formula.

Col. 3. The place-name written between blocks 2 and 14, was the name of a border area or a place outside the Nile Valley, as proven by the *ḫɜst*-sign on block 2. The *m*-sign preserved at the end of the name is not sufficient for it to be understood. Usually, the name of the *sepat* or of its main town or sanctuary would be mentioned here.
ʿɜ.t designates "semi-precious stones or minerals" (Wilson 1997, p. 138; *Wb* I, 165, 13–21). The toponym *Bɜḫw* is originally used to name a western mountain but became afterward a designation of the eastern side of Egypt or of the place where the sun rises (Wilson 1997, p. 203; *Wb* I, 422, 8–13; G*DG* II, 4–5).

Col. 6. Restitution of the epithet of the king according to block 1, col. 5.

Col. 7. According to block 1, the beginning of the column can be reconstructed as *r d.t=k n=f […].*

Cols. 9–11. There seems to be a departure from the usual formula here, since the cartouche of the king is written on the penultimate column in front of the fecundity figure and not in the last, as is the case for the caption in front of the second figure on the same block or again on block 1.

4. L. 58,5 × l. 41 × H. 41 cm[13] [PL. II above]

The fecundity figure is walking towards the left and is preserved from the hips to the feet. The rear of the left leg is lost as is the tray. The elements hanging from it are displayed in a similar fashion as for the third fecundity figure on blocks 2 + 14 (see description above). In front of the fecundity figure is the lower part of a column of text. The rear part of the left foot and calf of the next fecundity figure is still visible on the left end of the block.



[…]=f nfr.t ḫr ḥsb.t nb nfr.t n tɜ

[…] his good […], carrying all the good portions (?) of the land

13 This block is not fitting with blocks 2 + 14.

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Notes:

The name of the *sepat* or of its main town or sanctuary is usually written here in the formula. The lower part of a sign above *nfr* is still visible, but not enough is preserved for it to be read. It could be an architectural element.

The transcription *ḫsb* for the Aa2 sign seems the best here. The absence of determinative does however make it difficult to be sure of the meaning of the word. It could be either "portion (of quota achieved)" (*Wb* III, 167, 17) or a plot of land (Wilson 1997, pp. 677–678). We note that in one geographic procession in Dendera, the word *ḫsb* is mentioned in the product brought by the *sepat* of *Ḥsb* (XI LE) in a kind of pun very common in religious texts (Dümichen 1865, pl. LXXII). Another explanation here would be a confusion between *ḫ* and Aa2: the best solution would be then to read the traditional formula *ḫ.t nb.t nfr.t*, "every good thing."

5. L. 50 × l. 17 × H. 40 cm + **7.** L. 40 × l. 25 × H. 42 cm + **23.** L. 48 × l. 23 × H. 40 cm [PL. 11 below and PL. 12 above]

Lower part of a fecundity figure walking towards the left and its caption. It is preserved from the upper part of the thigh to the register line. The offerings hanging from the tray are still visible. They show the same layout as the ones for the third figure on blocks 2 + 14 (see above). Behind the figure is a vertical line belonging to another column of text, which would have matched the next *sepat*.

In front of the fecundity figure, the lower part of a column of hieroglyphs is to be read from left to right and is delineated by two vertical lines. The layout displayed in the rest of the procession shows that the text matching every figure seems always to be written in front of it, not behind.



[…]

[…].w tꜣ-mḥw ntt m-ḫꜣw-ḥr mḥ ḫnkꜥf n sḫ.wt […]

[…] of Lower Egypt, that are more than a cubit (?) he offered to the marshlands […]

Notes:

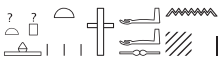
The pattern of the formula in this column seems slightly different from the one on the other blocks that belong to the geographic procession. The column has the same width as the others and presumably the same height. That would not give enough room for both *jnꜥf nꜥk* and *[…].w tꜣ-mḥw*, and we do not have either the *ḫr* + name of products part, which usually appears before the *dꜥf* part. Nor do we have *dꜥf nꜥk*, but *dꜥf n sḫ.wt*.

33. L. 78 × l. 38 × H. 39 cm [PL. 12 middle]

Fragment of the lower half of the Lower Egyptian procession, since the text is to be read from left to right. The left part of the block is almost destroyed. To the right of the column of hieroglyphs are some elements hooked to the offering tray held by the fecundity figure that

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is here completely missing. Two blossoming lotus flowers with a lotus bud between them are still visible, as well as a vertical line, which was part of the *w3s*-sceptre. The pattern here seems different from the other offering trays carved on blocks 2 and 4.

[…]  *[…]*

[…] ḥtp.wt (?) jmy ˁ.wy=s n […]

[…] the offerings (?) being in her arms for […]

Procession of the Upper Egyptian nomes

16. L. 128 × l. 40 × H. 42 cm [PL. 12 below]

This block has most of its decorated surface destroyed, except for the left end. It belongs to the Upper Egyptian geographical procession since the fecundity figure is walking to the right, as is showed by the only leg left, which is preserved up to the upper part of the thigh, and by the fact that the hieroglyphs in the column behind it are to be read from right to left. On the left side of the column, we can see some traces of the elements hanging from the offering tray of another fecundity figure: part of a duck, and a vertical line belonging to the *w3s*-sceptre.

 *[…]*

[…b3?]-nṯr m 3ḫ.wt=s sḥtp=s tw m s3=s […]

[…] the divine [ba?] with its provisions (?) so she would satisfy you with her son […]

Notes:

3ḫ.wt: one is compelled to think of the translation "provisions" here, as the word is often employed in the formula within geographic processions. But usually, it is written with a bread determinative (*Wb* I, 17, 8; Wilson 1997, p. 14).

COMMENTARY

Style of the reliefs

The reliefs show great craftsmanship, enhanced by the high quality of the limestone. It seems though that the decoration of the temple had not been completed since all the blocks are not carved with the same level of detail, either for the depiction of gods and the king, or the hieroglyphs (24, 15, 2 + 14). That would explain the differences in the details of the faces for instance, particularly in the eyes and eyebrows.

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Four depictions of the king's face are preserved, of which two are too badly damaged to be commented upon (15, 32). Two others (21, 30) show the usual idealized and youngish portrait-type known on most of Nectanebo II's depictions:[14] a small smiling mouth with drilled corner, a short straight nose, rounded cheeks and almond-shaped eyes. The chin and neck are not sufficiently preserved on either of them to allow comment on their contour, nor are the eyebrows and cosmetic line of the eye.

The gods' faces are however more numerous and somehow better preserved, allowing more comments. The best one is Harsomtus' on block 28. It shows all the characteristics already listed for the king's portrait, as well as an almond-shaped eye extended by a long and thin cosmetic line, paralleled by a thin eyebrow. Amun and Mut's eyes are carved in the same fashion on block 30. Harsomtus' chin has a sagging contour and a double chin is discreetly suggested. Hathor has a similar chin on the same block, as well as Atum on block 30, Osiris on block 29 and the two fecundity figures on block 14.

The geographic procession

A geographic procession is carved on the "soubassement"[15] of Nectanebo II's temple. This is a new example of pre-Ptolemaic date, to add to the list compiled by Jean Yoyotte, who proposed a Memphite origin for such processions, dating back before the New Kingdom.[16] In Awlad Musa at least eight *sepat* in the Lower Egyptian procession and one for the Upper Egyptian one are preserved.

Four other geographic processions have, at the time of writing, been assigned to the reign of Nectanebo II, in the temples of Sebennytos, Bubastis and Tod. The formula written for every *sepat* in Awlad Musa seems shorter compared to the majority of the Third Intermediate Period and Late Period processions. The procession from Bubastis appears to be the closest, but its state of preservation is too patchy to gain any definitive idea.[17] Even closer to this example the procession on the door of the enclosure wall of Mut temple at Karnak, dated back to the reign of Ptolemy II, shows simple and short texts.[18] Unfortunately, the same *sepat* are not preserved in Awlad Musa and Karnak so only limited comparisons can be drawn.

14 Mysliwiec 1988, pp. 81–83.

15 The quotation marks here indicates that by "soubassement," we mean here the first decorated register, under the offering scenes, but not necessarily architectural soubassement (base) of the building: cf. Collombert 2014 and Coulon 2014, p. 979.

16 Yoyotte 1962, p. 86, n. 1. For the 30th Dynasty, add now Nectanebo I's procession from the temple of Heliopolis (Ashmawy, Raue 2017, pp. 42–44); Collombert 2014; Coulon 2014.

17 Habachi 1957, p. 135.

18 Sauneron 1983, pl. XIV–XVII.

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Gods and goddesses on the Awlad Musa blocks

Though it is impossible to determine the identity of some of the gods and goddesses represented on the Awlad Musa blocks due to the fragmentary state of some of them, the names or pictures of no less than ten divinities are still preserved: Atum (12?, 30); Osiris (allusion in 8, with the mention of the "ruler of the living ones," 14, 17, 19 + 29); Isis (19 + 29, 17?); Harsiesis (19 + 29); Harsomtus (13 + 28); Amun (11); Mut (11); Ra-Horakhty (10, 25); Hathor (25, 13 + 28); Iusaas, lady of Heliopolis (12) and Sopdu-Horus of the East (27). To this list may be added the usual protective divinities depicted above the king and his names: Wadjet, Nekhbet and Horus of Behedet.

Apart from one representation of Amun and Mut, all the representations and texts in Awlad Musa show a strong Heliopolitan influence, with Atum, Ra-Horakhty, Hathor and Iusaas lady of Heliopolis. Sopdu-Horus of the East and Osiris of the Eastern Gate are also closely linked to Ra and Atum. This is not very surprising, given the fact that all the eastern fringe of the Delta was strongly influenced by Heliopolis since as far back as the Old Kingdom.[19] Heliopolis was the point of departure for a number of roads leading to the eastern Delta and was also one of the most important religious centres at the apex of this region. Hence the designation of the eastern border during the New Kingdom as "the border of Ra" (*pȝ-rwḏ-n-pȝ-Rʿ*).[20]

What is most striking here is the strong similarity between the gods represented on the blocks of Awlad Musa and those featured on the Pithom stele and Ptolemy IV's stele, both from Tell el-Maskhuta. In these documents, the main gods of Tjeku are "Atum, the great god, the living one of Tjeku," the Osirian triad composed of "Osiris, lord of the Eastern Gate," "Isis the great, mother of the god, foremost of Piqereh," Horus, and last of all Harsomtus and "Hathor, lady of Anu."[21]

Atum is represented on block 30, and what remains of his caption gives the epithets "lord of Tjeku, lord of the sky." Usually, Atum in Tjeku bears the epithets "great god, the living one of Tjeku."[22] This local form of Atum seems to have appeared during the Third Intermediate Period or the beginning of the 26th Dynasty, when the theology of the Eastern Harpoon nome was created.[23] But Atum was the main god of the Wadi Tumilat area from the New Kingdom onwards. Several monuments from his initial temple in Tell el-Retabah were moved to Tell el-Maskhuta when the former was abandoned.[24]

Ra-Horakhty appears in two scenes (blocks 10 and 25). On block 10 part of a prayer addressed to the god is preserved, which might have been written in front of his depiction, as well as the god's answer. This hymn addressed to Ra is a very rare text, whose only parallel is to be found in the Ramesside tomb of Amenmose in Thebes (TT 373). Jan Assmann stressed

19 Raue 1999, pp. 19–20; Laurent 2012b, pp. 422–425; Somaglino 2016.
20 About this designation, cf. Tallet 2003, pp. 477–478.
21 Thiers 2007, pp. 83–85; Gauthier, Sottas 1925, pp. 2–5, 8–19.
22 Atum has this epithet on a decorated block remaining in Awlad Musa.
23 Laurent 2009, pp. 45–49; Laurent 2012a.
24 Laurent 2012b; Mysliwiec 1978.

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in his publication the peculiarity of this text, whose precise meaning escaped him and which he deemed closer to ritual texts,[25] mainly the Rituel of the Hours. The Awlad Musa block certainly confirms his intuition of a ritual origin.

On block 25, Hathor, lady of Hetepet, a form of the goddess characteristic of Heliopolis, is following Ra-Horakhty. Hathor is featured on another block (13 + 28) with the epithet "lady of [Anu?]," more specifically linked to the Wadi Tumilat. She is standing behind Harsomtus, as on Ptolemy IV's stele. This last monument shows moreover that Harsomtus was clearly attached to Tjeku, since he bears the epithets of "great god, residing in Tjeku, lord of the sky." Iusaas (block 12) is also a goddess from Heliopolis. She appears here in her form of "lady of Heliopolis, eye of Ra," who played the role of Atum's mother.[26]

Sopdu is a god who appeared very early in Egyptian history with a link to the north-eastern fringes of Egypt and its protection.[27] He was the patron of Saft el-Henneh, a city that monitored the western entrance of the Wadi Tumilat and where Nectanebo I erected, by means of a set of four naoi, a powerful theological barrier against the enemies from the East, i.e. the Persians.[28] A policy resumed by Nectanebo II. The particular form of Sopdu depicted in Awlad Musa, "Sopdu Horus of the East," is attested from the Middle Kingdom onwards;[29] it also possesses a Heliopolitan aspect, since "Horus of the East" is either an epithet or an epiclesis of Ra-Horakhty.[30]

One of the most interesting gods on the Awlad Musa blocks is Osiris lord of the Eastern Gate (*Wsjr nb r3-j3bt.t*, block 14). This form of Osiris was, until the discovery of the Awlad Musa blocks, only known on Pithom and Ptolemy IV's steles.[31] The two occurrences here would thus be the most ancient ones. This "Eastern Gate" is a designation of the Wadi Tumilat, and late religious texts locate *Pr-Jtm* as well as Tjeku within this area.[32] Such a designation alludes quite obviously to the geographical position of the Wadi Tumilat and Tell el-Maskhuta, located on one of the two main roads leading to the eastern Delta. The geographic procession is dedicated to this Osiris and we may presume that this particular form of the god is also depicted on blocks 17 and 19 + 29, where Isis and Harsiesis follow him. This is the case once again on the Pithom and Ptolemy IV's steles, even if on the former the form of the falcon-headed god (Horus or Harsiesis) cannot be surely asserted in the absence of a caption.

25 Assmann 1983, p. 361.
26 About this goddess, see Vandier 1964, 1965, 1966; Brunner 1980.
27 Yoyotte 1989. Horus-Sopdu was mentioned on a Ramses II's stele found at Gebel Mourr, a site between the Bitter Lakes and Suez (Goyon 1938). The god is offering the foreign countries to the king.
28 Virenque 2006, pp. 19–28.
29 *LGG* V, 241–242.
30 Yoyotte 1989, p. 38.
31 *LGG* III, 680; Thiers 2007, p. 16 (3).
32 For references, see Thiers 2007, p. 16 (3).

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The origin of the blocks

It is certain that all the decorated blocks were reused in the structure within which they were found, which leaves open the question of their origin. The nearest structure dating from the reign of Nectanebo II that we know of in the whole area is the temple of Tell el-Maskhuta, in the east bound of the Wadi Tumilat. But one has to keep in mind that the Suez-Bitter Lakes region is not very well known from an archaeological point of view. There is albeit a range of other arguments in favour of an origin in Tell el-Maskhuta and its neighbourhood.

First, the few blocks left from the temple of Maskhuta are also in limestone and of high quality in term of craftsmanship, judging by the small fragments preserved.[33] Most of them are in raised relief, but the only royal profile preserved is of a somewhat different style from ours, in particular regarding the design of the eye and eyebrow, and the sagging chin and double chin. Two better-preserved and larger scenes are mentioned by Jean Clédat: the first, on "bluish limestone" and featuring a hawk-headed god (maybe Horus), is recorded only by way of description; the second, of "white limestone," shows the goddess Nut but is solely known by a rough drawing, which forbids all comparison in terms of style and craftsmanship.[34] Édouard Naville also reported the find of a carved pillar in "calcareous stone of a bluish colour" bearing the name of Nectanebo II and a mention of Tjeku, as well as "sculptures of the best workmanship" representing offering scenes to Atum.[35] One of its faces was gilded. Unfortunately, only the fragment mentioning Tjeku is reproduced in the plates.

It is well known that the temple of Tell el-Maskhuta had been dismantled, partly for making lime as attested by the lime kilns found there. However, all the blocks may not have been used in this manner and some of them, perhaps, had been removed elsewhere for reuse. All in all, very little is known of the 30th Dynasty temple in Maskhuta dedicated to Atum of Tjeku,[36] and should these blocks hail from there, the Awlad Musa blocks would contribute a significant part to our knowledge of this building and its cults.

Now, if we consider representations and texts, many arguments speak in favour of a Maskhuta origin. The toponym Tjeku (*Ṯkw*), which designates Maskhuta and its region, is used on three of the blocks from Awlad Musa (19, 25 and 31). There may also be a mention of Anu (block 13), a place-name also linked to Wadi Tumilat in various sources.[37] Moreover, the deities featured on the blocks are coherent with Wadi Tumilat theology, as shown on the Pithom stele and Ptolemy IV's decree.

The epithet of "Osiris lord of the Eastern Gate" (*Wsjr nb Rꜣ-jꜣbt.t*), displayed in the geographic procession (block 14), may give even more precise information. On the two other sources mentioning this form of Osiris, i.e. the Pithom stele and Ptolemy IV's decree retrieved in Tell el-Maskhuta, the god, lord of the Eastern Gate, is "residing in Piqereh" (*ḫnt Pr-Qrḥ*).[38]

33 PETRIE 1885, p. 28, pl. XII, 7; 69 fragments stored in the British Museum (BM EA 1014).

34 CLÉDAT 1914, pp. 111–112. PM IV, 54 indicates that they are stored in the Ismailia Museum. There are not on display, but further enquiry must be made at the museum.

35 NAVILLE 1885, p. 14.

36 For an overview and all the references, see LECLÈRE 2008, pp. 558–559.

37 Cf. references given *supra*.

38 C10–11: THIERS 2007, p. 14.

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Christophe Thiers has stressed in his analysis of the Pithom stele that *Pr-Qrḥ* (also named *S.t-Qrḥ* or *Ḥw.t-Qrḥ*) was dedicated to a primaeval snake, a form of Atum most particularly linked with Osiris.[39] The temple of Piqereh would be at, or near, Tell el-Maskhuta, a "satellite shrine" of the main temple of Atum (*pr-Jtm*) as Donald Bruce Redford described it.[40] It is therefore very likely that at least part of the blocks retrieved in Awlad Musa hail from this "satellite shrine" of Piqereh.

CONCLUSION

This set of reliefs retrieved in Awlad Musa are another fine example of Nectanebo II's remarkably dynamic building policy[41] and of the skill of the craftsmen of his time. This policy seems to be at its most energetic in the Delta, the most strategic region in Egypt at that time.

To assert their border, the kings of the 30th Dynasty were eager to build a true theological rampart on the main Delta gateways, all the more so on the eastern Delta, a very sensitive area at that time, due to the Persian threat.

The Wadi Tumilat region was always a particularly strategic area for the Egyptians. Since the Old Kingdom at least, its western bound was carefully monitored and protected, with the establishment of fortified buildings.[42] The "wall(s) of the ruler" (*jnb(.w) jty*) of the Middle Kingdom were famous in literary texts as a way to "repel the Asiatic." During the New Kingdom a fortified border-post, the "*khetem* of Tjeku," was built in the middle of the wadi, near the central lakes (now Tell el-Retabah), to monitor the road from Egypt to Sinai and to the Red Sea.[43] Already, an important temple dedicated to Atum was built inside the fortified settlement. This "eastern door" of Egypt was moved to Tell el-Maskhuta during the 26th Dynasty, a decision to be linked to the digging of the Nile-Red Sea canal.[44] With the Persian threat rising and the Red Sea and Arabic trade expanding since the end of the New Kingdom, Maskhuta was indeed given much attention by the central power. In such a context it makes much sense that Nectanebo II should have ordered the building of a first-rate temple there.

39 Thiers 2007, pp. 17–18.
40 Redford 1982, col. 1055.
41 Arnold 1999, pp. 124–136; Forgeau 2018, pp. 141–200, 334–347, for an up-to-date summary and analysis of the 30th Dynasty building policy.
42 Somaglino 2010; Somaglino 2016, pp. 41–49.
43 Somaglino 2010; Somaglino in preparation.
44 Redmount 1995; Cooper 2009; Thiers 2007, pp. 107–117.

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Block 6



Block 8

Pl. 1. Blocks 6, 8. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 10



Blocks 3 + 9 + 11

Pl. 2. Blocks 10, 3 + 9 + 11. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 12



Block 15



Block 17

Pl. 3. Blocks 12, 15, 17. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Blocks 19 + 29

Pl. 4. Blocks 19 + 29. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 20



Block 18



Block 21

Pl. 5. Blocks 20, 18, 21. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Blocks 22 + 32



Block 24

Pl. 6. Blocks 22-32, 24. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 25



Block 26



Block 27

Pl. 7. Blocks 25, 26, 27. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Blocks 13 + 28



Block 30

Pl. 8. Blocks 13 + 28, 30. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 31



Block 1

Pl. 9. Blocks 31, 1. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Blocks 2 + 14

Pl. 10. Blocks 2 + 14. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 4



Blocks 5 + 7

Pl. 11. Blocks 4, 5 + 7. Photos: Ihab Mohamed.

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Block 23



Block 33



Block 16

Pl. 12. Blocks 23 (photo: Mahmoud Ragab), 33, 16 (photos: Ihab Mohamed).

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