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Marion Claude

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Nakhtmin, high priest of Min and Isis in Akhmim and overseer of works for Ay. His career, his tomb and Ay's memorial temple

By MARION CLAUDE

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to reconsider the current knowledge of the life and career of Nakhtmin, who was one of the most important individuals in Akhmim at the end of the 18th Dynasty, as high priest of Min and Isis in that city and overseer of works for King Ay. Through this new analysis, as well as the rediscovery of a little known relief from his tomb, it is possible to give a more detailed account of his career and his family. In a second part, a close study of Nakhtmin's monuments leads to the new hypothesis that the location of his tomb is in Abydos rather than in Akhmim and therefore to the possibility that there was a memorial temple of Ay not only in the Theban area but also in Abydos¹.

Keywords

Abydos – Akhmim – New Kingdom – prosopography – memorial temple

One of the most influential individuals in Akhmim at the end of the 18th Dynasty, Nakhtmin was favoured by King Ay who appointed him at the head of the clergy of Min and Isis and put him in charge of the restoration of the city and its temples after the troubled times of Akhenaten. Despite this very prominent position in Akhmim, he has drawn rather little attention² and his life remains obscure, even though he is known by quite a large number of monuments. It is the close study of these monuments that is at the heart of the present research. It will lead first of all to a synthesis of his career and family relationships between the time of Akhenaten and that of Ay. Then, we will proceed with a new hypothesis concerning the location of his tomb, usually supposed to have been built in his hometown of Akhmim, before investigating the problem of the location of the memorial temple of Ay he is reported to have built.

The titles of Nakhtmin in the inscription of Ay at el-Salamuni

On the façade of the rock-cut sanctuary of Ay in el-Salamuni, in the mountains north-east of Akhmim, a long text in the name of King Ay³ is inscribed. It mostly deals with the restoration and reconstruction of the city of Akhmim and its temples after the reign of Akhenaten. Therefore, one of the main decisions it contains is the appointment of a man named Nakhtmin at the head of the restoration project:

(10) ... wn~jn Hm=f Hr rd.t [aS/njs (?)] =tw sS [...] Nxt-Mnw Hr nD.t{y} xr.t m-(a=f). (11) sTA=w, jn=tw n=f {jb}(Hr)-a wn~jn=f Hr X.t=f m-bAH Hm=f wn~jn Hm=f Hr rd.(t) m Hr=f [...] dh=f [Hm nTr tpy(?)] Hna (j)m(y)-r(A) kA.t r jr.t mnw.w m-Xnw{t} Jpw ...

(10) ... Thus his Majesty had the scribe [...⁴] Nakhtmin [sent for] in order to have a word with him. (11) Having been summoned, he was brought in immediately. He threw himself on the ground in front of his Majesty. His

¹ I would like to thank JOHN ROGERS for his careful proofreading of this paper; any remaining mistakes are of course mine.

² See GABOLDE 1994, p. 275, fn. 72; GABOLDE 2015, pp. 463–465; KUHLMANN 1979, p. 174.

³ KUHLMANN 2007 provides a facsimile of the inscription. For a normalised rendering of the hieroglyphic text as well as a complete translation, see GABOLDE 2015, pp. 456–461 and p. 457, fig. 214; for a transliteration, traduction and commentary, see lastly LURSON 2019. The transliterations and translations from this text in this paper are based on those publications.

⁴ For a possible restitution of the missing title, see below and fn. 5.

Majesty said to his face [that he was] promoted to the rank of [high priest?] and overseer of works in order to build monuments inside Ipu (= the sacred area of Akhmim) ...

The text states that Nakhtmin is appointed overseer of works and – if the *lacuna* is indeed to be filled this way – high priest, two functions providing him with the right status to make all decisions regarding the restoration of the local temples.

Bearing witness to this promotion, Nakhtmin himself is depicted twice under the main text, on each doorjamb of the entrance to the rock-cut chapel. He is kneeling in a position of adoration and is accompanied by legends giving his full titulary. While the right-side inscription is mostly lost, the left-side one is well enough preserved:

(j)r(y)-pa.t Htmty bjty [... sS? ...] nb [...] rd x[t] nb.t [...] (j)m(y)-r(A) Hm.w-nTr (j)m(y)-r(A) kA.t m pr [Mnw Hna nTr.w?] nb Jpw, wab n HA.t As.t [... Nxt-Mnw] mAa-xrw nb jmAx

Prince, royal chancellor, [... scribe? ...] doing everything [...] overseer of the priests, overseer of works in the domain [of Min and] all [the gods?] of Ipu, *wab*-priest at the front of Isis [... Nakhtmin] justified, possessor of veneration.

According to these two texts, we can establish that Nakhtmin was probably a simple scribe before his appointment by Ay as high priest and overseer of works. With these new titles, he possibly also acquired the aulic title of (j)r(y)-pa.t and xtmy bjty, whereas we may wonder if his priestly title of wab n HA.t As.t was one that he held previously – and might be the missing title after sS in the text of Ay⁵.

Using this reconstruction of the two main phases of Nakhtmin's career, according to this pivotal text, we can attempt to identify the various objects that belonged to him. As we will see, if this is rather straightforward for the second part of his career, it is more problematic for the first part.

Nakhtmin's monuments and career

Before his appointment by Ay

Before his appointment to some of the highest functions in the town of Akhmim by Ay, Nakhtmin was a rather lowly official.

Considering his titles of sS and the rarer wab n HA.t As.t⁶, we may identify with a high level of certainty the Nakhtmin of the chapel at el-Salamuni as the owner of a stelophorous statue now in the British Museum in London (EA 1222, fig. 1)⁷. On this object, the man holding the stela is named Nakhtmin and bears the titles of sS, wab n HA.t As.t and HAty-a. Various members of his family are also depicted: his wife Mut-tuy (fig. 2) and eight of their children.

Fig. 1 Stelophorous statue of Nakhtmin, British Museum, London, EA 1222 (© Trustees of The British Museum)

Fig. 2 Detail of the left side of the statue British Museum, London, EA 1222 showing Nakhtmin's wife Mut-tuy and three of their daughters (© Trustees of The British Museum)

Two other monuments mentioning a scribe named Nakhtmin should also be considered to determine whether they belonged to the same person or not.

The first one (Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, ÄM 23718, figs. 3–7)⁸ is a sculpted block in the shape of some sort of shrine or niche inside which is carved a stelophorous statue of Nakhtmin, from whom only the head is visible behind the slab. The stela is inscribed with a hymn to the Sun God Ra by the scribe Nakhtmin. Above his head, on the upper part of the shrine, the cartouches of the God Aten as well as of Akhenaten and Nefertiti are engraved. On each side of the shrine are depicted the scribe Nakhtmin and his wife,

⁵ This would be supported by the fact, as underlined by LURSON 2019, p. 171 (q), that NESTOR L'HOTE (VANDIER D'ABBADIE 1963, pl. XVI.1) saw the name As.t written before Nakhtmin's name. Where BENOIT LURSON suggests to restore the title Hm-nTr tp(y) n Mnw As.t, we would rather read wab n HA.t As.t, which also fits the *lacuna* and makes more sense when considering the chronology of Nakhtmin's career.

⁶ It is only attested for Nakhtmin in Akhmim to our knowledge. On the title of wab n HA.t + theonym, see GOYON 1998.

⁷ EDWARDS 1939, pp. 52–53, pl. XLIV.

⁸ ANTHES 1934, pp. 95–98; SANDMAN 1938, pp. 144–145; VON BISSING 1929.

the Mistress of the House, Tuy. Over them, on top of the monument, two figures of Wepwawet as a canid lying on a chapel have been carved.

Figs. 3–7 Monument of Nakhtmin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, ÄM 23718 (Photo unknown photographer, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)

That this monument belonged to the same Nakhtmin who was later overseer of works at Akhmim remains hypothetical. Indeed, he holds only the title of scribe and none other, and his wife is named only Tuy and not Mut-tuy. This could be due to the time of the monument's creation, during the reign of Akhenaten⁹: Tuy is well attested as a shortening of Mut-tuy¹⁰, and in this case it could also be a way to avoid a reference to the wife of the banished God Amun. As for the titles of Nakhtmin, it might be either the testimony of the same historical situation where the traditional gods of Egypt were deprived of their cults, or of a very first stage in his career, when he was only a scribe. If so, he would only have become *wab n HA.t As.t* after the reign of Akhenaten and the reinstatement of the previous cults, but before his promotion by Ay.

Another monument, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 622 (fig. 8)¹¹, should also be considered. This statue depicts a couple sitting on chairs in front of an offering basin and belonged to a scribe Nakhtmin and his wife Tyy, who was chantress of Isis. This title, also held by Mut-tuy, was a common one for elite women in Akhmim in the New Kingdom¹². Since Nakhtmin was also a frequent name in the city at this time, and the only title of *sS* is not very conclusive, it is difficult to say for sure whether the statue CG 622 belongs to Nakhtmin, the future high priest of Akhmim, or not. This decision depends on the variation of the wife's name: is Tyy merely a variant of the name Tuy or are they two distinct names and therefore two distinct persons? To our knowledge, this question has not been answered by a definitive study¹³, but no evidence in favour of the identity of the two names with one person has been found yet. What is more, one of the daughters of Nakhtmin and Mut-tuy on the stela EA 1222 is named Tyy and one may, therefore, wonder if this Tyy may not have inherited her mother's title and married a man also named Nakhtmin. In this case, the CG 622 statue would belong to them. At this point, it is impossible to state with any certainty who the couple on this statue are, though they quite probably are of Akhmimic origin.

Fig. 8 Statue of Nakhtmin and his wife Tyy, Egyptian Museum Cairo, CG 622 (BORCHARDT 1925, pl. 113)

The attribution of these monuments to Nakhtmin and his family remains uncertain at present, especially for the last one (CG 622). If one assumes that they do in fact apply to the same Nakhtmin, one may suggest the following reconstruction of the early stages of his career: Nakhtmin probably began his career as a scribe under the reign of Akhenaten and married a woman called Tuy, which might be an abridged form of Mut-tuy. After Akhenaten's reign and before his promotion under Ay, Nakhtmin also held the priestly title of *wab n HA.t As.t*, meaning that he was the leading *wab*-priest during the processions of the bark of Isis, probably in Akhmim. He also held the rank title of *HATy-a*, while his wife was a chantress (*Smay.t*) of the Goddess Isis.

⁹ GABOLDE 2015, p. 465 proposes a creation date between year 3 and 13 of Akhenaten, based on the form of the name of the God Aten. For ANTHES 1934, pp. 96–97, the object probably belonged to the beginning of his reign, based on the presence of the two jackals at the summit, reminiscent of the former cults; for him it might also be an indication that it was not carved in Amarna itself but in a provincial town where the ancient cults remained more influent.

¹⁰ The parallel use of Tuy and Mut-tuy is attested even without any obvious political reason, such as in the name of the wife of Sethi I: see HABACHI 1969. On a larger scale, hypocoristics formed on a theophoric name by removing the name of the divinity are well attested, cf. VERNUS 1986, pp. 110–111.

¹¹ BORCHARDT 1925, pp. 167–169; MARIETTE 1880b, p. 41, n° 374.

¹² Among the other women holding it, one should mention: Tuy from the wooden statue Louvre, E10655 (BARBOTIN 2005, p. 162, n° 88), who might be identical to Tjuyu mother of Queen Tiye or another woman of this family (TEFNIN 1971, p. 49); Iuy, mother of the general Nakhtmin (JE 36526, *Urk.* IV, pp. 1908–1910); Ta-khâ, second wife of Nakhtmin (on the relief Spink & Son, see *infra*); Aset, wife of Djehutyemheb (Louvre, SN22, unpublished), who may or may not be identical to the daughter of Nakhtmin named on the stela London, EA 1222.

¹³ Though ZIVIE 1994, p. 424 seems to think that such variants stand for the same name, we have not yet been able to find a case where Tuy and Tyy are two different writings of the name of the same woman. Both the names of the Queen Tiye and her mother Tjuyu seem to be rather consistently written – there are some graphic variants, but they are always marginal and no alternance t/tj/T or w/y seems to be attested, though the alternance is w/A (compare the writings in QUIBELL 1908 and the ones on the scarabs celebrating the marriage of Amenhetep III and Tiye). Of course, the rather fixed orthography of their names could be only a result of their public status rather than of a definite distinction between the names.

After his appointment by Ay

Nakhtmin's monuments are much easier to identify after his promotion by Ay. Indeed, his titles of high priest in Akhmim as well as of overseer of works are important enough to ascertain the identity of their owner.

As it stands, eight monuments of Nakhtmin are now known for certain while a further monument may have existed, although it has not yet come to light:

- A headless block statue, found during excavations in Akhmim in what used to be the courtyard of the temple of Isis, behind the doorway flanked by the famous statue of Meritamun, the only remains of the temple of Isis in Akhmim currently visible¹⁴.
- Two large stelae: Louvre, C55 (148 × 89 cm, fig. 9)¹⁵ and Berlin, ÄM 2074 (155,8 × 91,7 cm, fig. 10)¹⁶, both engraved with long texts beginning with a date in the reign of Ay.
- Three small stelae: Louvre, C215 (77,5 × 53 cm, fig. 11)¹⁷ and C216 (78,5 × 53 cm, fig. 12)¹⁸ as well as Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, D47 (76 × 53 cm, fig. 13)¹⁹. The three smaller stelae depict Nakhtmin in adoration in front of either Wepwawet of the South (Louvre, C215) or the North (Louvre, C216), or Ra-Horakhty (Geneva, D47). If one assumes that these stelae functioned in pairs, like the two large stelae did, and corresponded to the cardinal points, a fourth one depicting another sun god in a bark may have existed. It would have stood for the East, since the Geneva stela contains a hymn to the setting sun in the West.
- A pyramid window: Louvre, E10265 (35 × 25,5 cm, fig. 14)²⁰. It shows a high relief of Nakhtmin in adoration towards the sun. If the fourth stela did not exist, the pyramid window may have stood in its stead on the fourth side, over the entrance.
- A fragmentary tomb relief (77 × 47 cm, fig. 15): probably now kept in a private collection, it was advertised for sale by Spink & Son in 1963²¹. This relief also depicts Nakhtmin in the company of a lady named Ta-khâ, who is said to be "his wife, the mistress of the house, the chantress of Isis Ta-khâ". The left part of the slab, on which the divinities adored by the couple were represented, is missing.

Fig. 9 Large stela of Nakhtmin, Musée du Louvre, Paris, C55 (Photo C. DÉCAMPS, © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais)

Fig. 10 Large stela of Nakhtmin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin, ÄM 2074 (Photo P. LEHMANN, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung)

Fig. 11 Small stela of Nakhtmin, Musée du Louvre, Paris, C215 (Photo G. PONCET, © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais)

Fig. 12 Small stela of Nakhtmin, Musée du Louvre, Paris, C216 (Photo C. DÉCAMPS, © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais)

Fig. 13 Small stela of Nakhtmin, Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, D47, donation of BERNARDINO DROVETTI, 1825 (Photo N. SABATO, © Musées d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva)

Fig. 14 Pyramid window of Nakhtmin, Musée du Louvre, Paris E10265 (Photo C. DÉCAMPS, © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais)

Fig. 15 Relief from the tomb of Nakhtmin, advertised for sale by Spink & Son, now in a private collection (?) (Photo from the archives of the Griffith Institute, Oxford, n° 3804)

All of these monuments, apart from the block statue which was placed in the temple, belonged to Nakhtmin's tomb. On these various monuments, Nakhtmin is given many titles, as follows:

¹⁴ EL-MASRY 1998, pp. 761–762, p. 762, fig. 2; EL-SAWI 1987. The statue of Ramses II completing the pair at the entrance of the temple has recently been re-erected next to Meritamun's, in April 2019.

¹⁵ BARBOTIN 2005, p. 167, n° 91.

¹⁶ ROEDER 1924, pp. 122–125.

¹⁷ BARBOTIN 2005, p. 121, n° 66.

¹⁸ PIERRET 1878, p. 65.

¹⁹ WIEDEMANN 1896, p. 123.

²⁰ <http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=19633, last access 02.07.2019>.

²¹ *The Connoisseur* 1963, pl. LXXXVIII. A picture of this object is also kept in the archives of the Griffith Institute in Oxford, under n° 3804. I sincerely thank the members of the Griffith Institute archives team for their kind permission to publish this picture of the object, and specifically CAT WARSI and FRANCISCO BOSCH-PUCHE.

- 1) Hm-nTr tpy (n Mnw As.t (m Jpw)/n Mnw nb Jpw), high priest (of Min and Isis (in Ipu)/of Min lord of Ipu)
- 2) jmy-rA Hm.w-nTr n nTr.w nb.w Jpw, overseer of the priests of all the gods of Ipu
- 3) jmy-rA kA.t n nb.w Jpw, overseer of works for the lords of Ipu
- 4) jmy-rA kA.t m tA Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t mn mnw m s.t nHH, overseer of works in the sanctuary of Kheper-kheperu-Ra-ir-Maat (= Ay) whose monuments are stable in the place of eternity
- 5) jmy-rA Snw.ty n nTr.w nb.w m tA qaH.t nty-Mnw, overseer of the double granary of all the gods in the district of Khenty-Min (= city of Akhmim)
- 6) jry-pa.t, prince
- 7) HAty-a, count

The last two (6, 7) are rank titles already known for him in the inscription of Ay as well as on the stelophorous statue in the British Museum. Titles 1 and 2 bear witness to his appointment to the head of the local clergy, granting him the authority to carry out his third function: overseer of works in the sacred domain of Akhmim, Ipu (3). These titles derive directly from the decree of Ay in el-Salamuni.

The remaining two titles (4, 5) are more surprising in this respect. One of them (5) also deals with the area of Akhmim, this time in the administration of the temple domain. The toponym Khenty-Min indeed refers to the administrative name of the town of Akhmim, while the reference to the granaries implies Nakhtmin's position of power over part of the financial resources of the temples, a necessary position to ensure the completion of the construction program.

His other title, overseer of works (4), highlights Nakhtmin's important status in the eyes of the king. Indeed, not only does he handle the reconstruction of the temples of Akhmim, which was probably the hometown of King Ay, but also the building of the memorial temple of the king which was supposed to be the main place of the cult of the deceased sovereign.

Thus, we can assume that Nakhtmin indeed benefited from a very high status in the royal entourage of Ay and that his career was very much furthered by his relation to the king.

Nakhtmin's family and life

As stated earlier, some of the monuments that can be rather securely attributed to Nakhtmin mention members of his family. In this respect, the most complete one is the stelophorous stela in London (EA 1222), where his whole family seems to be depicted:

- his wife, the lady of the house, the chantress of Isis, Mut-tuy
- his son, the scribe Kay
- his son, the scribe Tuy
- his son Minmes²²
- his daughter Aset
- his daughter Tyy
- three other daughters whose names are lost

Significantly, the objects dating from before his appointment mention his wife (Mut)-tuy alongside him, and sometimes other family members as well. However, on those objects produced after his appointment, Nakhtmin is rarely accompanied by his family, with the exception of the relief from Spink & Son.

This latter monument is little-known to Egyptologists since it has never been published before, though it holds some very interesting information relating to Nakhtmin's family. Indeed, he is accompanied by his wife, who bears the same titles as Mut-tuy but is named Ta-khâ.

This could imply different things: either the Nakhtmin from the early-career monuments is different from the Nakhtmin appointed high priest and overseer of works by Ay; or Ta-khâ is the double name of Mut-tuy though no definitive evidence points this way; or Nakhtmin remarried, possibly after the death of Mut-tuy, with a

²² It is fitting to mention here the hypothesis of ALEXANDRE HERRERO (HERRERO 2002, pp. 78–79) that this Minmes son of Nakhtmin might have been his successor at the head of the clergy of Min and Isis in Akhmim as well as the father of the King's Son of Kush Paser II. It should be noted though that it is more probable that that Minmes was high priest of Min and Isis in Coptos rather than in Akhmim and should therefore not be identified with Nakhtmin's son Minmes. I thank EDWIN DALINO for this information, to be found in his PhD dissertation, DALINO 2019.

According to this chart, we can follow Nakhtmin's career and life for around 25 years. We do not know how old he was at the beginning of Akhenaten's reign, but we may assume that he was at least around 15 to 20 years old when he had his first known monument built (Berlin, ÄM 23718), where he is represented with his wife.

We may even suggest a further hypothesis concerning the birth of his children. Indeed, though it is quite difficult to ascertain from the stelophorous statue London, EA 1222 in which order they were born, one may think that the two eldest were Kay and Tuy, two boys depicted on the space between their father's head and the stela he holds and presenting offerings to him as eldest sons are wont to do. Therefore, Minmes, Aset and Ty, depicted on the right-hand side at the back of the stela, could be the following ones, and then the three daughters whose names are lost on the left-hand side. However, as the boys are mentioned before the girls, it is difficult to know the precise birth rank of the girls among the siblings.

Though speculative, one cannot help but notice that the first two bear hypocoristics which do not contain any theonym, whereas Minmes and Aset are named after the two main divinities of Akhmim, Min and Isis. Could this be a sign that they were born right after the traditional cults had been officially reinstated after the death of Akhenaten, whereas Kay and Tuy were born before? If this were the case, Kay and Tuy would have been born before 1329 BC, with the next six children born between 1329 and 1317 BC, which is humanly quite possible in a span of twelve years.

It is difficult to prove whether these hypotheses about Nakhtmin's children are true or not. However, one thing is for certain. After Ay's death in year 4 of his reign, we seem to lose track of Nakhtmin, either because he died – he would have been at least 40 or 45 years old – or because he fell out of favour during the reign of Horemheb, who put an end to the so-called “Akhmim connection” to the royal family²³.

About Nakhtmin's tomb and its location

The various monuments from Nakhtmin not only provide a more precise idea of both his career and family life, but they also raise the question of the location and layout of his tomb where they would have been installed.

Looking for the provenience of Nakhtmin's monuments

As Nakhtmin was a high official from Akhmim, it has been assumed that he was buried in the necropolis of this city. This hypothesis was furthered by a comment from GASTON MASPERO in one of his brief reports on the excavations of the then newly discovered necropolis of Akhmim: he mentions in 1897 the discovery in 1884–1885 of “les tombeaux des princes d'Akhmîm, contemporains de Khouniatonou et de ses successeurs, dont on a des stèles à Paris et à Berlin”²⁴. As for the excavation report from this period, it simply states the discovery of several tombs “de la XVIII^e et même du règne de l'hérétique Toutânkhamon, celles-ci violées dès l'antiquité et changées en véritables charniers”²⁵.

The mention by MASPERO of the princes of Akhmim to whom belonged stelae now in Paris and Berlin logically led researchers to believe that Nakhtmin's tomb had indeed been rediscovered by MASPERO in Akhmim, though it remained unpublished.

Nonetheless, this very assumption might be challenged in light of a more precise study of the origin of the different monuments attributed to Nakhtmin. Indeed, apart from the text of el-Salamuni and the block statue found *in situ* behind the gate of Isis in Akhmim, none of the monuments of Nakhtmin can be assigned with certainty a provenience from Akhmim or its area. What is more, all these other monuments belong to the funerary sphere and must have been adorning his tomb since the epithet mAa-xrw always follows Nakhtmin's name in the inscriptions, indicating that he is deceased.

A closer look at these objects and the information we have on their origin might help shed light on their former location. The following chart gives, for every object the circumstances of their acquisition, as far as we know them:

²³ For the notion of “Akhmim connection” as the links between the notability of the city and the reigning family of the end of the 18th Dynasty at least from Amenhotep III onwards, see HERRERO 2002, p. 78.

²⁴ MASPERO 1897, p. 488, n° 3.

²⁵ MASPERO 1885, p. 87.

Object	bought from	in
Geneva, D47	DROVETTI (through PIERRE JEAN FLEURET in Marseille)	1825
Louvre, C55	DROVETTI (n° 406)	1827
Berlin, ÄM 2074	GIOVANNI D'ATHANASI	1843
Louvre, C215 & C216	SABRAN	1857
Louvre, E10265	CATEB	1886
Private collection?	Spink & Son	1963

As we may see, the monuments of Nakhtmin were mostly acquired quite early on, through antique dealers and private collectors, which renders the identification of their place of origin rather difficult.

Firstly, one must state that the necropolis of Akhmim was only discovered by MASPERO in 1884²⁶ and that, previous to that discovery, very few objects if any can be attributed with certainty to Akhmim²⁷. Though we cannot rule out that the tomb may have been discovered fortuitously at the beginning of the 19th century without triggering more research in the area, there is no evidence to suggest that this was indeed the case.

Another hypothesis should then be taken into consideration. We can indeed trace back the stela nowadays in Berlin to an auction catalogue of the D'ATHANASI collection, in which it bears the number 586²⁸. The depiction of the object matches the Berlin stela even though the dating, as well as part of the interpretation, is less coherent. What is more, in this catalogue, the stela belongs to a group of objects gathered under the header “sepulchral tablets taken from the interior of the tombs at Abydos”. According to this statement, the stela would come not from Akhmim but from Abydos and, therefore, so would the rest of Nakhtmin’s monuments, since they all probably were placed together in his tomb.

It is known that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the town of Osiris was one of the sites throughout Egypt that were excavated for antiquities – though not as much as the Theban area. Be that as it may, we cannot rule out either that a fortuitous discovery in Akhmim would have led to the objects being transported to the nearest town where excavations were taking place, and therefore where prospective buyers would be present. Thus it remains a possibility that the object was only bought in Abydos and not truly excavated there, though the title of the catalogue section is quite explicit²⁹.

A look at the activity of the other owners of the monuments of Nakhtmin in the years before they sold them to various museums renders this possibility less probable. While none of them seem to have links with Akhmim, we know for sure that DROVETTI³⁰, who was competing in Thebes with HENRY SALT³¹ for the discovery of antiquities, also had people excavating for him in Abydos. We know as much through the travel diary of the baroness WOLFRADINE VON MINUTOLI who visited the site in January 1822: “De Girgé, nous fîmes, sur des

²⁶ About the rediscovery of the necropolis of Akhmim, see CLAUDE 2020; KUHLMANN 1983, pp. 54–58. The original, short, reports were published in MASPERO 1884, MASPERO 1885 and MASPERO 1886. Attempts to find the necropolis previous to 1884 were unsuccessful.

²⁷ Amongst the objects belonging to inhabitants of Akhmim – and sometimes said to be from Akhmim based on their contents rather than any precise archeological context – found before 1884, most of them come in fact from Abydos. See for example such objects found by AUGUSTE MARIETTE *in situ* in Abydos (MARIETTE 1880b, pp. 42, n° 376, 454, n° 1206, 529, n° 1371); the stela Bologna, Museo Civico Archeologico, KS 1940 (acquired before 1828 by GIUSEPPE DI NIZZOLI); or the stelae Berlin, ÄM 7700 and probably 7587 and 7588, all of them war losses, said to belong to inhabitants from Akhmim (KÖNIGLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN 1899, p. 265, gifts from the Generalkonsul GUSTAV TRAVERS in 1877) but stylistically attributable to Abydos. I thank JANA HELMBOLDT-DOYE for sending me an old black and white picture of ÄM 7700 as well as photographs of the remains of the other two. For ÄM 7700, see also JANSSEN-WINKELN 2014, pp. 1010–1011.

²⁸ *Catalogue* 1837, p. 53, n° 586.

²⁹ For more evidence that the stelae from D'ATHANASI's collection were indeed excavated in Abydos, see SIMPSON 1974, p. 5.

³⁰ About DROVETTI's biography, see BIERBRIER 2012, pp. 161–162.

³¹ BIERBRIER 2012, pp. 484–485.

ânes appartenant au couvent, une excursion à *Arabamat foun*, l'ancien *Abidos*, où ce religieux [= father Ladislaus³²] surveillait des fouilles pour le compte de M. Drovetti³³.

Moreover, the catalogue by WALDEMAR DEONNA on the antiquities of the Musées d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva states, for the section in which the stela of Nakhtmin is to be found: "Stèles funéraires. Plusieurs faisaient partie d'un envoi que le consul Drovetti, le créateur du Musée de Turin, fit à l'Académie en 1825, provenant sans doute de fouilles faites à Abydos"³⁴. Indeed, many of the stelae in this section seem to come from Abydos, based on stylistic and internal criteria³⁵.

This could, therefore, account for the discovery in Abydos not only of the stela Geneva, D47 but also of the stela Louvre, C55, which also belonged to DROVETTI and was bought by the Louvre only two years later.

Thus, at least three of the seven objects from the tomb of Nakhtmin, and the ones that arrived earliest in Europe, can be traced back to Abydos with some certainty, whereas none of them can even remotely be attributed to Akhmim.

The two smaller stelae bought by the Louvre through SABRAN in 1857, C215 and C216, previously belonged to the private collection of AMBROISE COMARMOND, a physician and curator of the Musée archéologique de Lyon whose collection was sold at his death in 1857. Unfortunately, the means of acquisition of the Egyptian antiquities in his possession remain unknown³⁶.

As for the objects bought from CATEB by the Louvre, as well as the relief sold by Spink & Son, there is too little information as to their origin to further the investigation. They may have spent some time in the art market before their acquisition by their current owners.

Concerning the objects that may account for the early career of Nakhtmin, we have no certainty about whether they were also placed in his later tomb or not. The statue Cairo, CG 622 was found later on by AUGUSTE MARIETTE during his own excavation in Abydos. According to his publication, it was found in a tomb in the "nécropole du nord, zone de l'est"³⁷, that is to say at the heart of the New Kingdom necropolis, near the Osiris complex of Kom el-Sultan (fig. 16)³⁸. MARIETTE might thus have rediscovered the tomb of Nakhtmin in this area, or, more probably, the tomb of this almost homonymous couple who might have been related to Nakhtmin and Tuy. The other two early objects, the stelophorous statue and the shrine-like monument, were bought respectively in 1897 through Robert Johnston MOSS by the British Museum and in 1910 by FRIEDRICH WILHELM VON BISSING on the art market, which brings us no information on their previous location.

³² On this Italian missionary and his activities in Abydos, see BIERBRIER 2012, p. 306.

³³ VON MINUTOLI 1826, p. 144.

³⁴ DEONNA 1923, p. 13.

³⁵ It is the case of stela D50, as well as D46, D48, D51, and D52.

³⁶ I thank ELSA RICKAL for these informations on COMARMOND and his collection.

³⁷ MARIETTE 1880b, p. 41, n° 374.

³⁸ For a map of the area, see PM V, p. 38.

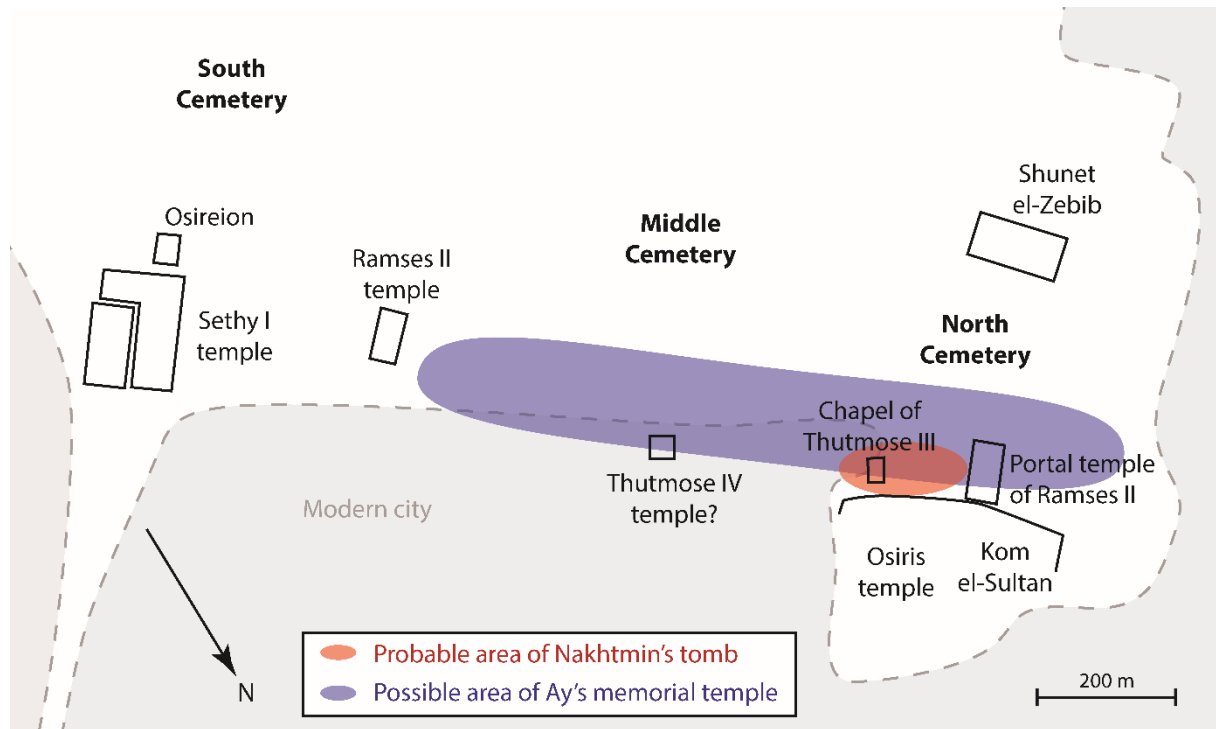


Fig. 16 Map of the archaeological area between SETHY I temple and ShUNET el-ZEBIB in Abydos, showing the possible areas for the location of Nakhtmin's tomb and Ay's memorial temple (Drawing M. CLAUDE)

Internal evidence from Nakhtmin's monuments in favour of their original location

Abydos is, therefore, the provenience that can be reconstructed for a number of Nakhtmin's monuments, whether from his early career or his later life. But is this origin supported by internal evidence from the monuments themselves?

The hypothesis that first led to locating Nakhtmin's tomb in Akhmim derives from the fact that all of Nakhtmin's titles and functions appear to be in connection with this city; but apart from his titles, neither the name of Ipu or Khenty-Min nor the local divinities such as Min and Isis are mentioned on his funerary monuments. On the contrary, the various divinities that are invoked are Amun-Ra, Ra, Ra-Horakhty, Osiris lord of Abydos, Wenen-nefer, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, Anubis and Wepwawet. They all are funerary and solar gods, whose presence on funerary material from the New Kingdom is all but surprising and is not sufficient to hint at an Abydenian provenience.

However, one may wonder if the recurring mention of the toponym Abydos is not simply due to the funerary context in which it is found, but is a reflection of reality. Such a view is reinforced by the references to the dwelling place of the two Wepwawets of the North and the South in the lunette of the two large stelae, or after Ay's titulary on the stela Louvre, C55, where the royal names are followed by the expression *mry Wsjr nb AbDw*, "beloved of Osiris lord of Abydos". This fact, combined with the previous assumptions on the finding place of some of the monuments, reinforces the possibility of the Abydenian location of the tomb.

This is all the more so as, according to ROBERT HARI³⁹ in his study of the Geneva stela, some iconographical details also suggest a link to Abydos: he states that, for example, the depiction of a frog at the basis of the prow of the solar bark is an Abydenian trait, paralleled by the coffin of Djehutymes found in his tomb in Abydos⁴⁰. The shrine-like monument Berlin, ÄM 23718 also hints at an Abydenian origin. Its shape is indeed rather unusual in the Egyptian statuary but is reminiscent of the small votive chapels built in bricks in front of the temple of Osiris from the Middle Kingdom onwards, a type of building that is very much specific to Abydos⁴¹. These chapels usually consisted in a single vaulted room inside which stelae and statues were placed.

Nakhtmin's monument reproduces the overall aspect of these chapels in stone, with the stelophorous statue occupying the whole 'entrance' of the chapel. The monument could therefore very well stem from Abydos too,

³⁹ HARI 1975.

⁴⁰ PETRIE 1902, p. 48, pl. LXXI.

⁴¹ About these chapels, see O'CONNOR 2009, pp. 93–95 and p. 94, figs. 45–47.

but whether it was placed among the brick chapels facing the temple of Osiris at the west of the Kom el-Sultan area, or inside the tomb-chapel proper of Nakhtmin, is impossible to tell.

Towards a more precise location and account of Nakhtmin's tomb in Abydos

To sum up, it now seems quite certain, from the information we have gathered on the origin of Nakhtmin's monuments as well as from the internal evidence, that his tomb was located in Abydos and not in Akhmim. The choice of such a location is hardly surprising: capital city of the nearby province, around 50 km south of Akhmim, Abydos was not only rather close, it was also the main cultic center of Osiris in Upper Egypt, where the god was thought to be buried and therefore made a perfect place for one's burial or funerary monument. Nakhtmin must have had at least a large surface chapel there, if not a proper burial place, since it is to be noted that none of his funerary equipment, such as a coffin, papyrus, canopic chest etc. have been found yet. Whether this lay in Abydos⁴² or somewhere else remains to be seen.

Indeed, in his *Instruction*, Amenemipet, a few decades later, states that he had "a pyramid tomb (mHr) at the West of Senut (= the necropolis of Akhmim) and a sepulchre (js) in Abydos"⁴³, which shows both the links between the two necropoleis and the possibility of having funerary monuments in both places. At this time, it remains impossible to know for sure whether Nakhtmin was buried in Abydos and his mummy and coffin were lost as with so many others in this necropolis, or in Akhmim where he might have had another tomb⁴⁴.

In Abydos, Nakhtmin's tomb thus comprised at least a cult chapel probably built in mudbrick. According to excavations of 18th Dynasty tombs in the area, they could be very extensive and consist, for the larger ones, of 'a pillared forecourt, one or more outer courts, an inner court containing the pit, and a narrow arched passage connecting with the inner court by means of three doors. This last was the place of offerings and in it was deposited the statue. A simpler form of mastaba was also in use at this time, which had but one court, one corner of which was walled off to form an inner chamber'⁴⁵.

The exact layout of Nakhtmin's tomb is impossible to reconstruct but, based on these elements, we can suggest that it had at least a forecourt behind which lay the offering chapel surmounted by a mastaba or a pyramid⁴⁶. It contained at least the monuments belonging to the later part of his career. The two large stelae now in Paris and Berlin are symmetrical and probably lay on the same wall: one (Louvre, C55) to the North and the other (Berlin, ÄM 2074) to the South. They would therefore have been facing East and were probably placed on either side of the entrance to the chapel.

The lintel (Spink & Son) was certainly placed above a doorway, whether at the entrance of a court or over the door to the chapel. Its original shape is lost but it probably depicted Nakhtmin and Ta-khâ in front of a deity or two, possibly with a mirroring scene on the other side of the lintel, with a reconstructed length of around 1,5 to 2 m.

Over the door to the chapel, in the Eastern façade of either the mastaba or the pyramidal superstructure, was placed the pyramid window (Louvre, E10265). All these elements can be hypothetically replaced on the façade of the chapel (fig. 17) but whether they were all placed on the same façade or on different porticoes along the axis of the tomb remains impossible to say.

⁴² Very little material belonging to proper burials has been excavated in Abydos, MARIETTE 1880b, p. 527. It may be the sign that most of the monuments there were only memorial chapels and cenotaphs while the individuals were actually buried elsewhere. Though, as burial shafts have nonetheless been unearthed, another explanation could be that they were robbed early on, leaving no material behind. All the more so as, contrary to Theban tombs which were dug into the cliff, the shafts in Abydos were very shallow due to the poor quality of the stone in the area and often the burial chambers were also only built in mudbricks and half buried in sand, see for example the descriptions and excavation reports of MARIETTE 1880a, p. 34; PEET/LOAT 1913, pp. 29–33; RANDALL-MACIVER/MACE 1902, pp. 63–76, pls. XXIII–XXVIII for various burial types in Abydos.

⁴³ pBM EA 10474/1, col. II, 9–10. Cf. BUDGE 1923, pl. III for a facsimile of the text and LAISNEY 2007, p. 30 for a transliteration and traduction and pp. 36, 38–39 for a commentary.

⁴⁴ This could account for the report by MASPERO about the discovery of contemporary tombs in Akhmim, though no material from this period and place ever made it to the Cairo Museum *Journal d'Entrée* around that time.

⁴⁵ RANDALL-MACIVER/MACE 1902, p. 64, pls. XXIV–XXV.

⁴⁶ On the question of whether the chapels were topped by a complete pyramid or only by a truncated one, i.e. a mastaba, see PEET 1914, pp. 87–88.

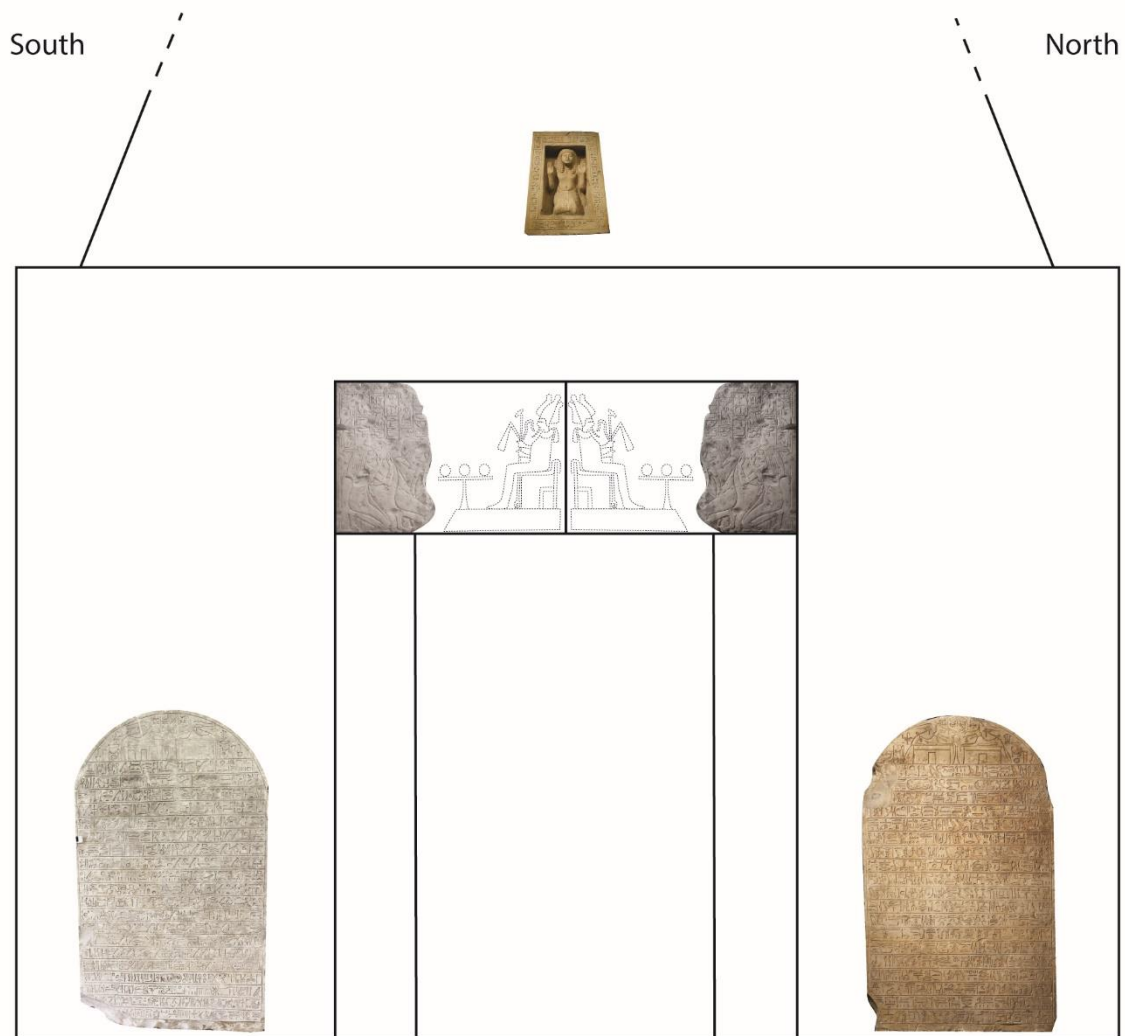


Fig. 17 Possible restitution of Nakhtmin's monuments on the Eastern side of his tomb, in the hypothesis that they were all placed on the same façade. The objects are depicted in relative size (Drawing M. CLAUDE)

Inside the chapel proper must have been placed the three smaller stelae, Louvre, C215 to the South, Louvre, C216 to the North and Geneva, D47 to the West. Since the Eastern wall held the entrance to the room, there may not have been room for a fourth stela on this wall. The only problem with this reconstruction is that the two small stelae now in Paris are not of symmetrical but of parallel layout, that is to say that, when placed on opposite walls, the figures of Wepwawet look in opposite directions and so do the figures of Nakhtmin. This chiasm structure was probably voluntary but it differs from the usual idea that deities are depicted looking outwards, while human beings usually head inwards.

The chapel may also have contained the monuments dating back to the first part of his career, notably the stelophorous statue London, EA 1222 and the shrine-like monument Berlin, ÄM 23718. As for the statue Cairo, CG 622, whether it did belong to Nakhtmin or not, it would have been placed in a tomb of the same period – probably of a family member or fellow inhabitant of Akhmim. Therefore, one may consider that both tombs presumably lay in the same area. Since the Cairo statue was found, according to MARIETTE, in the eastern area of the northern necropolis, which housed many tombs of this period⁴⁷, this might be a good place to look for Nakhtmin's tomb (fig. 16).

⁴⁷ MARIETTE describes the area in this way: “à l'est, un ensemble de tombes de la XVIII^e et XIX^e Dynasties réparties sur une bande de terrain qui s'étend à une quarantaine de mètres parallèlement à la grande enceinte”, MARIETTE 1880a, p. 42, and further: “Tombes de la XVIII^e et de la XIX^e Dynastie. Elles occupent une zone de la nécropole qui s'étend du petit temple de Ramsès II, déjà décrit, à l'angle sud-ouest de la grande enceinte”, MARIETTE 1880a, p. 44.

About the location of Ay's memorial temple: Thebes, Akhmim or Abydos?

Having established that Nakhtmin's tomb, from which his currently known objects proceed, most certainly lay in the sands of Abydos, while himself spent his life and carried out his functions in Akhmim, there remains one more question: where was the temple named tA Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t mn mnw m s.t nHH, the construction of which Nakhtmin was responsible for, according to the end of stela Louvre, C55 (l. 19), located?

At first sight, one would think it was obviously a reference to the Theban memorial temple of Ay. Indeed, the remains of such a temple, later usurped by Horemheb, were excavated near Medinet Habu and mudbricks stamped with the inscription tA Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t were found in the third pylon and allowed for the identification of its owner⁴⁸.

The similarities between the two names of the temple could indicate that Nakhtmin, who gave the full name of the temple on his stela, was the architect of the Theban temple. But, since the two names are not exactly identical and there is so far no evidence of the activity of Nakhtmin in Thebes, one may wonder if this was really the case. Could the memorial temple of Ay mentioned on Nakhtmin's stela has been located elsewhere?

Considering that Nakhtmin's building activity and career, according to all of his other titles, seemed to have taken place in Akhmim, this could be an alternative location for the temple. All the more so as Ay's inscription in el-Salamuni states (l. 7), "my name will be in his (= Min, lord of Akhmim) temple in the place of eternity (njw.t n.t HH) like the name of Atum is in the temple of the Magistrate". The mention of the temples of the necropolis in Akhmim combined with the title of Nakhtmin could have indicated that this was indeed the location of one of Ay's memorial temples, built locally by Nakhtmin⁴⁹ – all the more so when it was thought that his tomb and monuments, with the complete titulary of Ay, came from the Akhmim necropolis.

But the relocation of Nakhtmin's tomb in Abydos offers another solution which may prove more satisfying. Indeed, the memorial temple of Ay is also known from other, more explicit, sources. A shabti now kept in the Musée du Louvre belongs to the Hmw wr n Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t m AbDw n As.t m Jpw Hwuy "great craftsman of the sanctuary of Kheper-kheperu-Ra-ir-Maat in Abydos, of Isis in Akhmim, Huy" (fig 18)⁵⁰. According to this object, it seems that Huy participated in building activity both in Abydos and in Akhmim. What is more, it seems to confirm that there was indeed a memorial temple of Ay in Abydos, provided that the reading of the cartouche, which is admittedly very poorly written due to its small size, is right (fig. 19a). The reading Ra at the beginning of the cartouche and the jr mAA.t in the end are rather clear, but the middle signs which should be scarabs are quite unclear: they may represent two scarabs side by side over the three strokes of the plural (fig. 19b) or maybe mistakenly three scarabs (fig. 19c) or something else altogether. Though to my knowledge, no other royal name could fit there but Ay's.

Fig. 18a–b Shabti of Huy, Musée du Louvre, Paris, E3074 (© Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Christian Décamps)

⁴⁸ HÖLSCHER 1939, pp. 63–117; PM II², pp. 457–460. For the mudbricks, see HÖLSCHER 1939, p. 80, fig. 70; *Urk.* IV, p. 2108, n° 814.

⁴⁹ For this hypothesis that we had, at first, briefly considered, see GABOLDE 2015, pp. 467–468.

⁵⁰ Bought during the sale of the D'ANASTASI collection in 1857, it probably also comes from Abydos, according both to the inscriptions and the early date of its discovery. It could not be traced in the catalogue of the collection by LENORMANT 1857. I wish to thank JeanLuc BOVOT, ingénieur d'études at the Musée du Louvre, for allowing me to study this object for my research. BOVOT is to publish the object in a forthcoming issue of *Égypte, Afrique & Orient* dedicated to Akhmim.

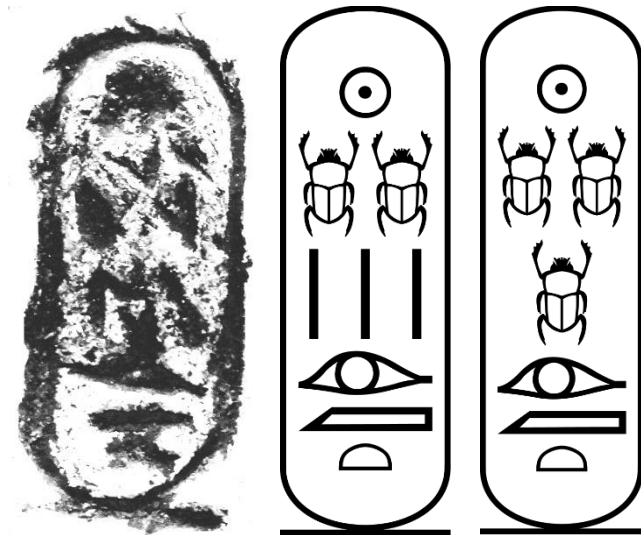


Fig. 19a–c Possible readings of the cartouche on the back of the shabti of Huy, Musée du Louvre, Paris, E3074 (Illustration M. CLAUDE)

This reading seems to be confirmed by another stela in the Louvre, C56⁵¹ naming a Hry TAY mDA.t m tA Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t m AbDw Jmn-m-Jp.t “supervisor of the sculptors in the sanctuary of Kheper-kheperu-Ra-ir-Maat in Abydos Imenemipet”.

These two documents, combined with the localisation of Nakhtmin’s tomb in Abydos, strongly hint at the presence of a memorial temple of Ay not only in Thebes but also in the city of Osiris, the latter being built by Nakhtmin. If the Theban area is well known for its numerous royal memorial temples, such buildings also existed in Abydos and other areas of Egypt, such as Memphis or in Nubia (el-Derr and Abu Simbel for example). Other sovereigns are known, like Ay, to have had memorial temples in both Thebes and Abydos – not least of all Thutmose IV⁵², Sethy I and Ramses II⁵³.

Therefore, through the study of these documents, one must conclude that the Hw.t pr-xpr.w-Ra-jr-MAa.t mn mnw m s.t nHH “sanctuary of Kheper-kheperu-Ra-ir-Maat whose monuments are stable in the place of eternity” mentioned on stela Louvre, C55 of Nakhtmin was located neither in Thebes, nor in Akhmim, but in Abydos. The stela itself being erected in the same city, it was not necessary to explicitly state the temple’s location on it.

On the contrary, the presence of the full titulary of Ay on Nakhtmin’s monuments along with a date in year 4 of the sovereign, which is rather rare on New Kingdom funerary stelae, becomes clearer in this context. It has been interpreted as either the date of the death of Nakhtmin or the death of Ay himself, since he is said to be “beloved of Osiris lord of Abydos”⁵⁴, but it could also be, more simply, a significant date such as the inauguration of the memorial temple of Ay in Abydos. Since Nakhtmin was the architect, he may very well have built his tomb in the immediate vicinity of the temple to which he refers in his stela. If so, excavations in Abydos may one day happen upon both the remains of Nakhtmin’s tomb and Ay’s temple.

With Nakhtmin’s tomb possibly being located in the eastern part of the northern necropolis, near the Osiris temple complex, Ay’s memorial temple could also have been built in the area now called “votive zone” at the West of the Osiris precinct⁵⁵, or somewhere between the temple of Osiris and the area later occupied by the memorial temples of Sethy I and Ramses II (fig. 16).

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⁵¹ *Urk.* IV, p. 2112, n° 824, erroneously numbered C65. The correct number is given by the authors of the *Wb* slips (*cf.* slip DZA 24.507.270). This stela appears to be now lost.

⁵² BICKEL 1989.

⁵³ For example, one of the names of the Ramesseum, memorial temple of Ramesses II in Thebes, was Hw.t Wsr-MAa.t-Ra-stp-n-Ra Xnm.t WAs.t (PM II², p. 431) whilst the one in Abydos was called Hw.t Ra-ms-sw-mry-Jmn Xnm.t TA-wr, PM VI, p. 33.

⁵⁴ GABOLDE 2015, p. 463.

⁵⁵ On recent excavations in this area, see POULS WEGNER 2012.

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MARION CLAUDE

École Pratique des Hautes Études, section des Sciences religieuses

UMR 8546 AOROC – Archéologie, Philologie, Histoire d'Orient et d'Occident (CNRS, ENS, EPHE, PSL)

France