



A Unique Classifier of a Palm Frond

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Function
Classifier

Value
[Slaughter, Evil]

The burial chamber of Tjaennahebu, located south of the Pyramid of Unas, is decorated with religious texts drawn from the *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts*, and the *Book of the Dead*. As in several other shaft tombs from the Saite-Persian Period, the inscriptions are characterised by a high level of detail, particularly in the internal elements of the hieroglyphic signs. In *Pyramid Text Spell 77* (§ 53a), the noun š‘.t, ‘slaughtering; terror’ (Lemma ID 152300) is written with a distinctive classifier resembling a palm frond. The sign features a horizontal petiole or midrib, with its broad base oriented to the viewer’s left and the pointed tip extending to the right. Spines or leaflets branch from both the upper and lower edges. This particular form is unparalleled in other Saite-Persian tombs, as well as in Old and Middle Kingdom versions of this spell. The Old Kingdom copies (see Allen, 2013) exhibit the sign  TSL1_7158 (cf. Gardiner 1951), depicting a bundle of stalks tied and sealed. The Middle Kingdom versions (see Allen, 2006) can be grouped as follows:

1. The first group comprises eight attestations using sign  T31, a knife sharpener.
2. The second group includes three attestations featuring sign  F41, a vertically written section of vertebrae.
3. One attestation contains sign  F37, a spine with four ribs.
4. One attestation employs the same classifier as in the Old Kingdom, i.e., .

The Saite copies predominantly employ variants of sign F37, particularly the angled form  F37B. This is evident in the tombs of Amunefnakht, Hur, and Padienet at Saqqara (see Drioton 1952; Maspero 1901), as well as the recently discovered tomb of Djehutiemhat at Abusir. The tomb of Psamtik presents a variant of sign F41 (see Maspero 1900a), while Padienist’s tomb displays another unique classifier for the same noun (see Maspero 1900b). In the case of Tjaennahebu’s tomb (see Maspero 1900c), the artisan appears to have consciously reverted to the Old Kingdom conception of using a classifier derived from vegetal components, which is notably positioned before the feminine gender morpheme -t, as also attested in the copies of Unis, Teti, and Pepi I. Nevertheless, the classifier employed does not constitute a direct replication of Old Kingdom prototypes; rather, it reflects a further adaptation consistent with the predominant Saite Period copies—specifically, a single palm midrib with projecting spines, in contrast to the earlier rendering of multiple stalks bound and sealed. This palm frond



form appears to have been intended to evoke the likeness of a backbone with ribs, as exemplified in the F37B variant, thereby transforming the classifier from a mammalian-based image into a vegetal one (cf. Engsheden 2014), while preserving its underlying conceptual significance.

References:

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Document: Burial Chamber of Tjaennahebu

Date: Late Period, Dynasty 26 (ca. 664–525 BCE)

Provenance: Saqqara

Current location: *In Situ*

Object type: Wall in the Burial Chamber

Material: Limestone

Hieroglyphic source

MdC: D37:V13-N37:D36:M54\R90:X1:I9-G17-D4:D4-G25:
G25:G25-V30

Transliteration: *di.t š't.f m irty ʿḥw nb*

Translation: You shall place his terror in the eyes of all Akhs

Location: 20th Column, North Wall