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Early evidence bearing on two puzzles in hieroglyphic writing

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These notes have their distant origin in comments made by John Baines when I was a pupil in his text classes. Although I have space here to deal only with pre-Middle Kingdom evidence, both topics (especially the second one) might benefit from examination of the much more considerable body of evidence from the Middle Kingdom.

1 The use of the house-sign (O1) as a determinative for 'seat'

It has long been known that the hieroglyph depicting a 'house' or simple building, which is used both as the logogram for *pr* 'house' and as the generic determinative for words referring to buildings or parts of buildings, can also be used as determinative in the two words *st* 'seat, throne, place' and its partial synonym *nst* 'chair or seat of office'. Gardiner (1957: 492; not in earlier editions) included this usage in his sign-list with the caveat 'Less suitably also in …', which I take to mean that he could not think of any special reason why this should be the case and assumed that it arose from a rather strained extension of the concept of 'building' to include 'seat' (after all, we do have examples of apparently solid structures used as seats in innumerable statues, as well as the well-known modern Egyptian *mastaba* or bench made of the same mud-brick material as house walls; moreover the sign is in fact quite suitable in the numerous compounds and idioms formed with *st*, in the sense of 'place', that refer to structures: see *Wb.* IV, 5, 9–13).

I hope to shed at least a little light on this situation by examining the evidence of the earliest writings of the two words. In the case of *st* there are three types of writing attested from the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period, that is (1) with no determinative at all, (2) with O1 as determinative, and (3) with a determinative not included in Gardiner's sign-list, depicting a chair with legs and a low back (of the sort that forms the lower part of A50–51; for reproductions see Piankoff 1968: pls. 1, 11, 12, 18–19). The overwhelming majority of examples have no determinative, which is not surprising given that the word is written logographically with the block-throne sign (Q1). I have not been able to find any examples of the carrying-chair sign (Q2) used as a determinative in words for seat before the New Kingdom (e.g. small Sphinx stela of

Amenophis II, l. 3: Hassan 1938: pl. 9; Zivie 1976: 69, n. bb), although the sign itself was in use earlier (e.g. as determinative of *ḥms* in PT 511, §1154b P), and could sometimes be used (as a variant of Q1) as the logogram for *st* from the Middle Kingdom on.

The chair-with-legs determinative is rare; the only five examples that I have been able to find all come from the Pyramid Texts of Wenis (and all from the west wall and gable of the antechamber and its entrance). In the only case (PT 257, §306e) where the same text is found in a later pyramid (Teti) *st* is written without determinative, as it is in the majority of occurrences even in the Wenis pyramid. The examples are PT 248 (§263b), 249 (§264c), 251 (§270a), 257 (§306e), and 317 (§509c). In all of these the word has the literal sense 'seat, throne' as an item of furniture, except possibly for the case of §270a, which might just mean a notional 'place' for the king in the solar barque (that is the only reason I can offer for the note 'auch wo nicht Thron gemeint' under this sign in *Wb.* IV, 1).

The use of O1 as determinative of *st* is considerably more frequent, but absent from earlier periods and still a minority usage until the Middle Kingdom; I have been able to find the following examples, probably the earliest of which (and the only one from the Pyramid Texts) occurs on the same wall as one of the examples using the chair-with-legs determinative.

5th Dynasty
- Pyramid of Wenis (Saqqara; end of 5th dyn.), entrance to antechamber, w. wall (PT 317, §508b); Piankoff 1968: pl. 1)
- Tomb of Iuu (Abydos, middle cemetery?; possibly 5th dyn., acc. Lepsius), offering inscription (Lepsius 1904: 176, l. 5)

6th Dynasty
- P. Berlin 8869 (from Elephantine archive), l. 5 (Smither 1942:17; Berlin 1911: 3–4; N.B. the only pre-MK hieratic example known to me)
- Tomb of Djau (Deir el-Gebrawi 12), shrine, e. wall, l. 6 (Davies 1902: pl. 13; *Urk.* I, 147, 2; N.B. exactly the same phrase *m st wꜥt* is written without determinative in l. 18 of the same text)
- Tomb of Seshemu (Giza, central field), false door of Seshemu, lintel, l. 2; also false door of his wife Tjetut, left side (Hassan 1941: figs. 69, 70)
- Decree of Pepi I (Dahshur), block now Berlin Mus. 17500, col. 3 (Borchardt 1905: 5 (10) and pl. 2; *Urk.* I, 210, 4)
- Tomb of Kagemni Memi (Saqqara, LS10; *temp.* Teti), façade (Edel 1953: pl. 2, l. B2; *Urk.* I, 195, 4)

– Tomb of Weni (Abydos, middle cemetery; *temp.* Teti/Merenre), block, now CG 1435, col. 20 (Mariette 1880: pl. 44; *Urk.* I, 102, 11)
– Tomb of Menankhpepi Meni (Dendera; *temp.* Pepi II), false door, now CG 1662, text on side (Petrie 1900: pl. 2A (bottom middle))
– Tomb of Ni(ka)pepi (Saqqara O1; *temp.* Pepi II), lintel, formerly Leipzig Mus. 359, now lost, l. 2 (*Urk.* I, 260, 11)
– Tomb of Meri (Hagarsa C2; *temp.* Pepi II?), chapel, w. wall, top line (Kanawati 1993: pl. 44)
– Tomb of Penu (Saqqara M7; end of 6th dyn.), lintel, l. 3, also w. wall, superscription (Jéquier 1929: 46, 42)

First Intermediate Period
– Stela of Intef (Dra Abu el-Naga?, now CG 20003), l. 9 (Lange and Schäfer 1902–1908: I, 3)
– Inscription of Djehutinakht III (Hatnub inscription Xb), l. 7 (Anthes 1928: pl. 6)
– Coffin of Khenticheti (Sidmant el-Gebel, near Gurob), buried *in situ* (Petrie and Brunton 1924: pl. 18, top right)
– Stela of Heni (Naga ed-Der), now in Cairo Mus.?, l. 2 (Dunham 1937: 82 and pl. 24.2)
– Stela of Inhuretnakht (Naga ed-Der), now in Cairo Mus.?, l. 2 (Dunham 1937: pl. 25.1)
– Stela of Seni (Naga ed-Der), now Chicago OI 16954, rightmost col. (Dunham 1937: pl. 30.2)
– Tomb of Mereri(qer) (Dendera; 7th dyn.), false door, now CG 1664, right middle col. (Petrie 1900: pl. 8A)
– Tomb of Hetepi (Dendera; 9th–10th dyn.), block from architrave, caption at top left (Fischer 1968: fig. 31(b) and p. 166)
– Tomb of Tefibi (Asiut III; 9th–10th dyn.), l. 34 (Brunner 1937: 47)
– Tomb of Cheti I (Asiut V; 9th–10th dyn.), l. 21 (Brunner 1937: 67)
– Tomb of Cheti II (Asiut IV; 10th dyn.), ll. 18, 25 (Brunner 1937: 54, 56)
– Stela of Rediuchnum (Dendera; 11th dyn.), now CG 20543, l. 19 (Petrie 1900: pl. 15 (left); Lange and Schäfer 1902–1908: II, 166)

Further examples might be obtained from the earliest exemplars of the Coffin Texts, but I have excluded the whole CT corpus because of the difficulty of assigning precise dates to many of the coffins.

By contrast, for the word *nst* I have not been able to find any examples at all of the use of O1 as determinative before the Middle Kingdom (e.g. already sometimes in the Coffin Texts: CT I, 258g; II, 258b, 258c; III, 378e; V, 197a; VI, 151f; VII, 25d – typically in only some variants where there are several); until then the word is written either logographically with the jar-stand sign (W11/12) or phonetically with W11/12 as determinative. In two Coffin Text passages (IV, 82g; VII, 20p) which contain *st* and *nst* in parallel the former is written with O1 but the latter is not. To judge from the *Wb.* references, the use of O1 in *nst* remained rare until the New Kingdom.

In summary it would seem that until the 5th dynasty (very probably the end of the dynasty) *st* was never written with determinative, but then two different determinatives (the chair with legs and O1) appear

simultaneously, the former being used in only one source and then disappearing again, and the latter gradually spreading over time, but not becoming normal until the Middle Kingdom. Only then did it begin to spread to writings of the partially synonymous *nst* (and there too it took time to become established). Apparently in later periods a further development took place whereby O1 could be used by itself as a logogram for *st*; the only example I know is from the tomb 'stela' inscription in the 18th dynasty tomb of Djehuty (Kom el-Ahmar), l. 10 (*Urk.* IV, 132, 3): 〔hieroglyphs〕 *swt nt šms ib* 'places of recreation' *vel sim.* This orthography of *st* is not recorded in *Wb.*, and Sethe translates 'Häuser der Belustigung', but to read *prw* here would require ignoring two *t* signs together; for the idiom cf. CT I, 269a.

If a sign of little if any appropriateness became a normal feature of a common word that had managed perfectly well without it for centuries there was probably some special reason for the change, but the evidence gives more scope for speculation than for certainty. The disappearance of the chair-with-legs sign could be explained if it was merely an innovation of a highly specialised group of craftsmen and never had any wider circulation, or else by the fact that it tended to look too much like an early form of the bed sign A55 (used mainly as determinative of *sdr* 'lie down, sleep'), *viz.* the form showing an empty bed, examples of which can be seen in the Wenis pyramid at PT 294 (§§437a, 437c) and 302 (§460b) (photographs: Piankoff 1968: pls. 33, 3; this is probably also the source of the hieroglyphic example in Möller 1909: I, no. 384). However, it might be worth considering whether the chair sign could instead have been confused with O1, which seems unlikely in hieroglyphs but may have been much easier in hieratic. This argument is hampered by lack of evidence, but if the chair sign resembled the bed sign in their hieratic forms – especially without the upper stroke present in the examples of the latter recorded by Möller, which probably represents a human form lying on the bed – then it is easy to see how confusion could arise; moreover, the addition of this human form could itself have been motivated by a desire to make A55 more distinct from the chair sign and/or O1. The single occurrence of O1 in the Wenis pyramid could then be explained as the first (known) result of such confusion. All this is not necessarily to deny, however, that the conceptual considerations outlined at the beginning of this article may also have exercised some influence on the orthographic development.

For the sparsity of the evidence this suggestion must remain tentative; but one might compare *inter alia* the use of both O1 and N1 to determine the words *rwt* 'gate' and *hyt* 'portal' in place of a distinct earlier sign which fell out of use (see under N1 in Gardiner 1957: 485),

and the use of O1 as an alternative to O32 to write *sbꜣ* 'doorway', which presumably arose from similar causes.

2 The use of the life (*ꜥnḫ*) sign to begin royal titularies

2a The interpretation of the *ꜥnḫ*-sign

The role of ☥ (Gardiner's S34) when it appears in continuous text immediately before the name of a king has been explained in different ways. Sethe (1927: 105, commenting on 70, 14) translated the sign as 'es lebt …' and stated that from early times ('seit alter Zeit') it had been the normal introduction for royal names used to date a monument, but that it was early misunderstood ('früh misverstanden') and then taken for a meaningless (i.e., presumably, pictorial rather than textual) adjunct of the Horus title; he cited as an example 81, 12 in the same book (stela of Nesmont), on which he commented that the sign is 'schon bedeutungslos' (1927: 129). By contrast Gardiner (1944: 51) took it for granted that scholars will translate the *ꜥnḫ*-sign as 'Lives …', but suggested that the Egyptians themselves may have understood the sense as 'Life (given) to …', by which I take him to mean not that they would have supplied the preposition as such but that they would have understood the arrangement pictorially as analogous to scenes in which a deity holds out ☥ towards the figure of a king. Another solution has been offered by Allen, who in PT 8–10 (2005: 100, 211–12, 241) translates the *ꜥnḫ* at the beginning of the royal titularies nominally ('the living one, the Horus *N*.', etc.).

I agree that Sethe must be right on one point, since in the rare cases where the titulary follows on from the dating formula it does not seem possible for ☥ to have been read in either of the ways proposed by Gardiner. The only two examples that I have been able to find are the stela of Nesmont (Louvre C1, *temp.* Amenemhat I and Senwosret I; Gayet 1886–1889: I, pl. I), which begins *rnpt-sp 4 ꜣbd 4 n šmw ḫr ḥm n* ☥ *Ḥr Wḥm-mswt*, and the stela of Minnefer (British Museum EA 829, *temp.* Amenemhat II: British Museum 1913: pl. 5), which begins *rnpt-sp 29 ḫr* ☥ *Ḥr Ḥkn-m-mꜣꜥt*. On the stela of Nesmont the *ꜥnḫ*-sign appears slightly smaller than usual and inclined towards the face of the falcon (as if held out to the falcon by an invisible deity), so that its appearance supports the interpretation of it as an adjunct of the falcon-sign, but on the stela of Minnefer it appears like a normal hieroglyph, as it would if it were meant as the word for 'to live'. Given these two cases in which ☥ cannot have been read as a separate word I believe it is worth investigating whether there is any clear evidence that it ever was so read. I suspect that both Sethe and Gardiner were probably arguing largely from the way that ☥ appears in so many texts as if it were an ordinary hieroglyph, so that the viewer's

instinct is to try to read it as part of the text; however, since it also appears thus on the stela of Minnefer, this approach seems not to be valid.

A full discussion of this topic would need to take into account the many examples of ☥ used not only within texts but in scenes representing the king (either as a human figure or as a schematic arrangement of his name) receiving the symbol of life from a god; however, there are so many examples of such scenes that it would be impossible to deal with them adequately within the scope of a short note. Instead I will offer an examination of the ways in which the *ꜥnḫ*-sign is found in conjunction with royal names (whether within texts in the narrow sense or with royal names in schematic arrangements) up to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. The abbreviations used are: H, Horus name; N, *nbty* (Two Ladies) name; G, Gold Horus name; T, throne name (prenomen); E, personal name (nomen); *ᵛ* or *ʰ*, inscribed vertically/horizontally.

2b Examples from before the Middle Kingdom

From the Protodynastic Period we have the isolated example of the ivory comb of the Horus Djet from Abydos (Gardiner 1944: pl. VI.4), inscribed with ☥ H*ᵛ* (between two *wꜣs* sceptres). Another example might be the flint bowl of Nebre and Hotepsekhemwy from Giza (Reisner 1931: 102, 2(1); 179, B(1); pl. 70c), showing a cat-headed goddess proffering *wꜣs* and *ꜥnḫ* (or else *zꜣ*?) to the falcon perched on the nearer serekh.

From the Old Kingdom we have rather more evidence, including several notable inscribed objects: first, some of the wooden imitation vessels from the mortuary complex of Neferirkare at Abusir, if correctly restored (Borchardt 1909: 64–65, pls. 1, 3, 8), inscribed TH ☥ HN *vel sim.*, probably in a double-semicircular arrangement concluding with *dy ꜥnḫ ḏt vel sim.* on the reverse; second, an egg-shaped calcite vessel of Wenis (British Museum EA 4603, checked by author; Gauthier 1907: 140, no. vi gives only the left side, reversed) which is surrounded by a double-semicircular arrangement of *ꜥnḫ ḏt* E *niswt-bity* H ☥ H *niswt-bity nbty*, in which the *ꜥnḫ* of *ꜥnḫ ḏt* was probably meant to fall diametrically opposite the initial *ꜥnḫ* (thus making the arrangement fully circular), although poor execution has spoilt the symmetry; and third, a calcite jar lid (British Museum EA 22961: Petrie 1889: no. 57, pl. 3; 1923: 100, fig. 64) which bears the name of Teti arranged symmetrically as ⸢☥⸣ E ☥ E ⸢☥ʰ⸣, all in one cartouche (E here preceded by *niswt-bity*). Further Old Kingdom examples include an offering table of Pepi I from Abydos (Petrie 1902–1904: II, pl. 20 lower right), which is damaged but clearly began the titulary with ☥ Hʰ (in a register by itself above tabular records of offerings); and the base of a copper-sheathed statue of Pepi I from Hierakonpolis (now in

Cairo: Quibell 1900: pls. 44–45), inscribed ☥ H *niswt-bity z3-R^c* E *dy ^cnḫ w3s*(…)*[h]*, all within one cartouche.

Old Kingdom architectural inscriptions displaying ☥ with royal names consist mostly of the symmetrical arrangements found above doorways etc., the earliest being the architraves in the mortuary complex of Niuserre at Abusir (Borchardt 1907: 66, cf. pls. 4 and 5), which if correctly restored consisted at least typically of TGNH ☥ HNGT with *^cnḫ ḏt* at either end; a similar arrangement, in this case EH ☥ HE, occurs in the Wenis complex (Barsanti 1901: 255); analogous arrangements in the Sahure complex, however, appear to have centred not on ☥ but on a sun-disc with double uraei (Borchardt 1910–1913: I, 35 fig. 29, pls. 6, 8; note p. (151) n. 1 correcting pl. 11). A later example of this type of arrangement is furnished by a lintel of Pepi II from Abydos (Petrie 1902–1904: II, pls. 19 left, 21.16), which is inscribed with T ☥ T (T preceded by *niswt-bity*), with the epithets *dy ^cnḫ ḏdt w3s ^cnḫ mi R^c ḏt* at either end. Apart from these horizontal symmetrical arrangements we have the inscription round a doorway in the Sahure complex including a cobra supported on a *w3s*-sceptre presenting ☥ *behind* the falcon at the top of HT*[v]* (Borchardt 1910–1913: I, pl. 10). The most intriguing example, however, is of a quite different sort: a relief of the decorated sail on Sahure's ship (Borchardt 1910–1913: II, pl. 9, top; Gardiner 1944: pl. 6.1) shows a vulture goddess holding out ☥ to the falcon at the beginning of the king's full titulary; this is notable because the titulary is written horizontally and the size and position of the *^cnḫ*-sign associate it closely with the hieroglyphs as well as the figure of the vulture, in such a way as to integrate the two types of representation.

The closest thing to textual evidence from the Old Kingdom comes from the pyramids of Pepi I, Merenre Nemtyemzaf, and Pepi II, where royal titularies are preserved that were included in Sethe's edition of the Pyramid Texts as PT 8–10 (somewhat inappropriately, as they do not constitute spell texts in the usual sense). Of these, the sarcophagus inscriptions all have, or probably had before they were damaged, ☥ before the titulary; this begins with the Horus name on the east and west sides (PT 9) and on Merenre's lid but with *niswt-bity* on the north and south ends (PT 8). In addition the west wall of Merenre's burial chamber displays an elaborate titulary (PT 10) on a horizontal line (numbered M130) situated below the texts and above an area of false-door decoration, on a level with the top of the sarcophagus. This begins with ☥ H *niswt-bity* ET NET GET and continues with theophoric epithets including further repetitions of ET before concluding with *dy ^cnḫ ḏdt w3s snb mi R^c ḏt*. The burial chamber of Pepi II contained very similar arrangements on the west wall (numbered N134, damaged in the middle)

and (necessarily shorter, since opposite the ends rather than a side of the sarcophagus) on the north (N136, beginning with ☥) and south (fragmented, beginning of line lost) walls, assigned for some reason to PT 9 along with the sarcophagus side inscriptions. All these titularies are isolated, not forming parts of longer texts (moreover they are distinguished from the Pyramid Text material proper by their horizontal alignment and larger size). By contrast a titulary of Pepi I near the top of the west wall of his burial chamber (forming the closest analogue to the titularies of Merenre and Pepi II lower down on their west walls) is not isolated but forms (the greater) part of the short spell 435; however, this titulary is not introduced by ☥.

I have not been able to find much evidence from the First Intermediate Period. There is one more symmetrical example, an elaborate arrangement on a scarab of a King Neferkare which is difficult to interpret (British Museum EA 16419: Petrie 1889: pl. 4 no. 102; Petrie 1923: 123 fig. 74 left; Gauthier 1907: 185 with n. 1), but which clearly shows ☥ centred between two falcons at the top; there were also probably meant to be two *^cnḫ*-signs flanking the vertical nomen cartouche at the bottom. We also have the copper openwork brazier bearing the name of Meryibre Chety from Meir (now Louvre E 10501; Petrie 1923: 132, fig. 85; Aldred, de Cenival, and Debono 1978: 260 fig. 253; André-Leicknam and Ziegler 1982: 145 no. 91), which had an unusual circular arrangement beginning/ending with a symmetrical group ☥⚏☥, of which one *^cnḫ* is presumably to be taken with the Horus name to its left and the remainder read as *dy ^cnḫ* after the prenomen to its right.

2c Summary

The evidence shows the frequent association of ☥ with royal names from an early date, but it does not seem to support the rest of what Sethe says about the use of the sign: so far from there being any especial connection 'seit alter Zeit' between the use of ☥ and the dating formula, I have been unable to find a single example with such a connection. Nor does the use of the sign seem statistically normal in any other context, except possibly that of symmetrical inscriptions above doorways; in most cases counter-examples are more frequent, and even above doorways other symbols are sometimes found instead, like the sun-disc with uraei in the mortuary complex of Sahure.

One thing which this evidence does show is that the use of the *^cnḫ*-sign is not confined to Horus names. It does occur more often with them than with other names, partly no doubt because when more than one name is used the Horus name, if present, comes first; also because in representations of gods bestowing life on the

king represented by his name(s) the falcon of the Horus name provides a suitably animate figure to receive it. Nevertheless, in examples where there is no Horus name ♀ is also found before the *niswt-bity* title (not associated exclusively with the prenomen in the Old Kingdom), as on the Teti jar lid (*niswt-bity* plus nomen, although in Teti's case there was no prenomen/nomen distinction), the Pepi II lintel (*niswt-bity* plus prenomen), and some of the royal sarcophagus inscriptions (north and south ends, PT 8: *niswt-bity* plus prenomen for Pepi I and Pepi II, but *niswt-bity* plus *nbty*-name, Gold Horus Name, and prenomen for Merenre) – the *niswt-bity* title is also written with animate figures which could be seen as representing the king.

Our evidence is less clear on the question of how ♀ is to be understood before whichever of the king's names it precedes. However, there are some indications that suggest to me it was probably not taken linguistically (i.e. as form of the verb 'to live') but as a 'decorative' motif associated with the presentation of the royal name(s), on a par with, say, the sun-disc which often appears above the falcon of the Horus name (especially in vertical inscriptions) and is not read as a separate word. It is particularly significant that ♀ in the centre of symmetrical arrangements above entrances alternates with other symbols (notably the sun-disc with uraei in the Sahure mortuary complex), which are not open to linguistic interpretation; moreover, the placement of ♀ within the cartouche on the Pepi I statue base might also be taken to indicate that it was originally understood as part of the way the titulary was laid out and not as a separate word, since a verb with the king's names as subject might be expected to fall outside the cartouche. The comb of Djet associates not only *ꜥnḫ* but also *wꜣs* with the king's name, and there is nothing to indicate that the former is to be read any more than the latter.

In examples where a god is explicitly depicted as proffering ♀ (with or without other symbols such as ⸢ or ⸣) to the king or his names, the sign is always understood symbolically rather than linguistically. I incline to believe, with Gardiner, that in cases where no deity is shown the same type of idea is intended, if less obviously. Two of our pieces of evidence can be taken as indications of the kind of development that could have led to such a situation. The Abydos lintel of Pepi II locates the symmetrical arrangement of ♀ and royal names directly beneath a winged sun-disc; this configuration – especially given the difficulty of depicting the sun holding anything – could be taken as a way of indicating that the sun-god should be understood as proffering life to the king. The same argument may also apply to the many later examples of ♀ before royal titularies which occur on stelae surmounted by a winged sun-disc. The examples from the complex of Sahure,

with the sun-disc in the centre instead of ♀, show the same type of idea in a different way, this time omitting the proffered symbol and associating the sun with the king's names more directly – as perhaps in a different way do the examples from the complex of Niuserre, since the restorations show the architraves surrounding an open courtyard where the actual sun's visible presence could have made artistic representation of the sun-god seem unnecessary.

The design on the sail of Sahure's ship also demonstrates how the proffered sign could cross over from picture to text, because of the way that ♀ has been assimilated to the hieroglyphs in size and (almost) in alignment, even though the presenting deity is still shown, in this case in the form of the vulture. This striking arrangement may have been chosen because in the case of the ship-sail the king is represented by his name alone; a more typical expression of this theme involves the presentation of ♀ to both an image of the king and his accompanying name(s) simultaneously. Good early examples of this are the six niche-stelae beneath the step-pyramid complex of Djoser (Firth, Quibell, and Lauer 1935, pls. 15–17, 40–43), which show a hawk deity presenting a *šn*-ring (in four cases) or *ꜥnḫ* (in two cases). Of these the northern stela under the South Tomb (pl. 42) is of particular interest, as the *ꜥnḫ*-sign seems to point more at the *serekh* of the Horus name than at the king himself, as although it may be accidental it may show a desire on the part of a draughtsman to include both within the scope of the *ꜥnḫ*-sign.

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