

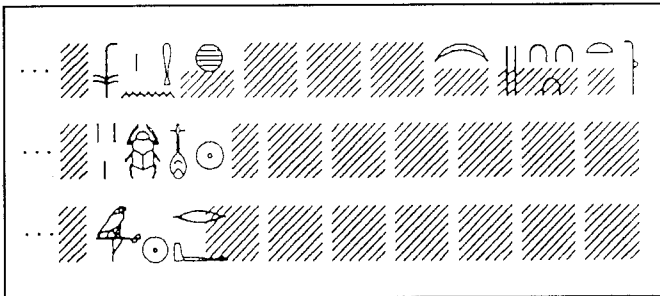
FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR THE COREGENCY OF AMENHOTEP III AND IV?

Three Views on a Graffito Found at Dahshur

In volume 140 (1994) of *Göttinger Miszellen*, James P. Allen, associate curator of ancient Egyptian art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, published his transcription of a graffito discovered at Dahshur during the Museum's 1992 season excavating at the site. Amarna Letters is pleased to be able to republish this brief article by Dr. Allen and to append to it the reactions to his interpretation by two other leading authorities who have in the past expressed scholarly opinions about whether Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten did or did not rule jointly for a period of a few to several years: Dr. William J. Murnane of the University of Memphis and Dr. Jacobus van Dijk of Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in the Netherlands. EDITOR

During its 1992 season at the Pyramid of Senwosret III at Dahshur, the expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, under the direction of Dieter Arnold, uncovered part of a papyrus-bundle column from the complex south of the pyramid enclosure. Like many of the columns from this complex, the block bears the remains of several graffiti penned by New Kingdom visitors to the building. Among these is the fragmentary inscription reproduced at left.

The inscription was first transcribed by Felix Arnold, as part of a study of the graffiti to be included in the Museum's final publication of its work at Dahshur. I was able to examine the text firsthand in 1993 and confirm both the extant traces and their transcription. The inscription is apparently to be transcribed as follows:



The traces at the end of line 3 and in line 4 are too scant

to be read with any certainty.

Both from their physical arrangement on the block — which cannot be reproduced here: the dotted line in the facsimile represents the central ridge of the papyrus stalk — and from the uniform size of the signs, there can be little doubt that these 3+ lines belong to a single inscription. Although context is lacking, the signs in line 2 seem to be those of the prenomen of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, *nfr-hprw-rꜥ* [*wꜥ-n-rꜥ*]. The year date in line 1, though broken, is most likely “32”: the top of the first sign shows the characteristic “ears” of the hieratic sign for “30,”¹ and the traces to the left can hardly be other than the tops of the two strokes for “2” and the partially preserved “month” sign.

Given the apparent presence of Amenhotep IV's prenomen in line 2, the year date in line 1 can only be that of Amenhotep III, since by the time of Rameses II, the next nearest king to rule at least thirty-two years, the name of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten had evidently been proscribed.² Despite its fragmentary state, therefore, the graffito seems to preserve the first evidence for a double-dated monument of Amenhotep III and IV as coregents. The text can be reconstructed as follows:

- 1 *hsb[t]* 32 3*bd* [*x... sw y*] *h[r]* *hm n* (*n*)*sw-bjt nb-*
m3ꜥt-rꜥ]
- 2 [*hft*³ *hsbt z hr hm n* (*n*)*sw-bjt*] *nfr-hprw-rꜥ* [*wꜥ-n-rꜥ*]
- 3 [*jwꜥ pw jr.n zh3*] *rꜥ*-[...]

Year 32, month [x of ..., day y], under the reign of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt [Nebmaatre], [corresponding to Year z under the reign of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt] Neferkheperure [Waenre].
[There came the scribe] Ra-[...]

This reconstruction implies a joint rule of the two Amenhoteps by Year 32 of Amenhotep III — a minimal coregency of seven years. The recent work of W.R. Johnson has suggested a coregency beginning in Year 28, prior to Amenhotep III's first Sed Festival, on iconographic and religious grounds.⁴



As with all other evidence for this most problematic of Egyptian coregencies, however, the text is far from unequivocal. Its fragmentary state, and the partial preservation of both the year date in line 1 and the name in line 2 require a firm note of caution to any historical conclusions drawn from it. Nonetheless, it offers yet one more — tantalizing — piece to the Amarna coregency puzzle.

James P. Allen
Metropolitan Museum of Art

1. Cf. J. de Morgan, *Fouilles à Dahchour, mars-juin 1894* (Vienna, 1895), figs. 193 and 195, both graffiti from the same area as the fragment under discussion here.

2. See A. Gardiner, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (1938), 124. Discoveries of the MMA expedition show that graffiti at the site begin in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty.

3. Cf. *Papyrus Abbott A 1/19*: T.E. Peet, *The Great Tomb Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty* (Oxford, 1930), II pl. 23.

4. W. Raymond Johnson, "Images of Amenhotep III in Thebes: Styles and Intentions," in L.M. Berman, ed., *The Art of Amenhotep III: Art Historical Analysis* (Cleveland, 1990), 26-46.

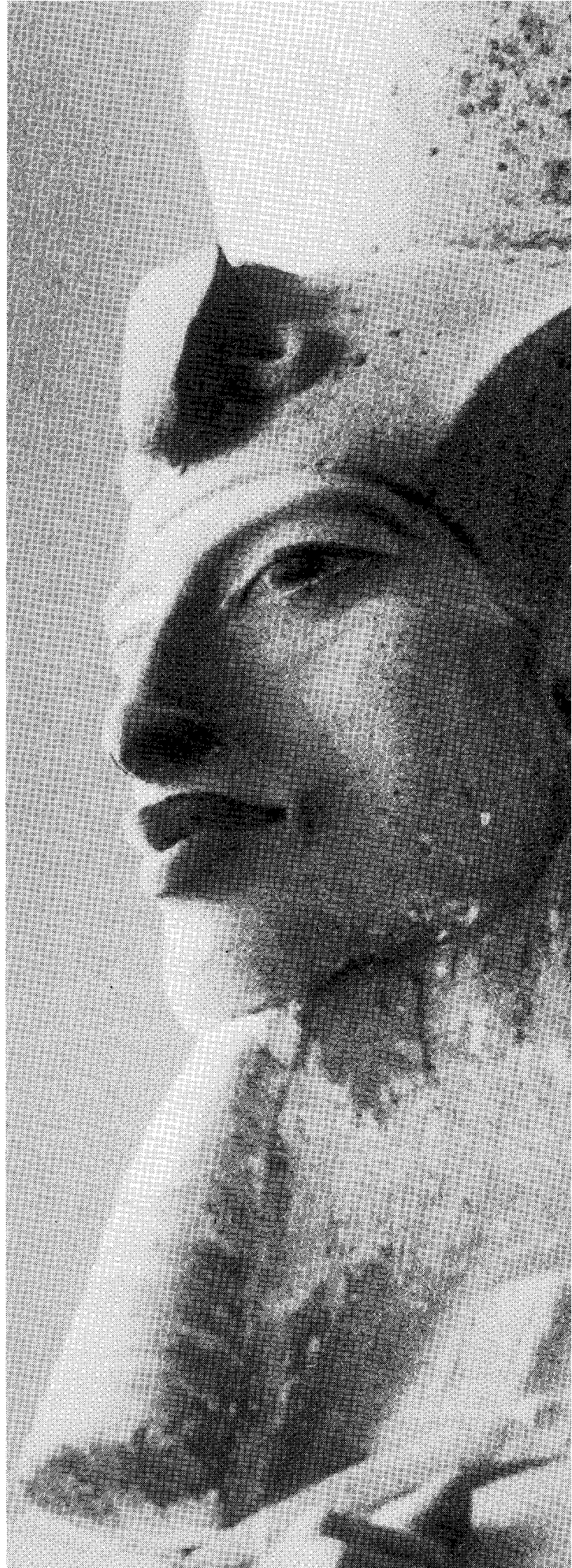
Every so often there surfaces a fresh document so startling yet so ambiguous that one cannot help wondering at the fates which conspire to keep us guessing. The new graffito from Dahshur recently published by James Allen opens with a dateline which, if the signs are correctly interpreted, fell in regnal Year 32 of a king whose name is broken away, but who is plausibly to be identified as Amenhotep III because the name "Neferkheperure" — the throne name of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten — appears in the remnant of the second line. If these readings are accepted, it must follow that the reigns of Amenhotep III and his son overlapped for at least seven years, from some point in the father's thirty-second year to the end of his thirty-eighth, which is the highest year-date attested for him. Only the minimum duration possible for this overlapping of the two reigns is supplied by the new graffito: Amenhotep III could have reigned somewhat longer, after all, even though we have no evidence he did; and his son might have received his royal titulary before Year 32. In any case, the recently collated text of the "Earlier Proclamation" on the El Amarna boundary stelae tell us that the younger ruler had already changed his personal name to "Akhenaten" and founded his new cult-center of Akhetaten by his fifth regnal year¹ — shortly after completing four full years on the throne — which means that these events had happened well before the period of joint rule with his father (seven-plus years) had come to an end.

What we seem to have here, in other words, is nothing less than the most persuasive evidence to date for a substantial coregency of Amenhotep III with Akhenaten. Moreover, the overlap to which it attests is far longer than the short coregency of less than two

years which was proposed (by this writer, among others) as an alternative to no coregency at all. Instead, the graffito from Dahshur appears to give renewed credibility to the theory of a long coregency, which has fallen out of most scholars' favor. The maximum (eleven years) is based on another vexed dateline in hieratic, written on the side of a cuneiform tablet, EA 27² — vexed because here, too, the signs are damaged: either "[year of] the reckoning 2" or "[year of the reckoning] 10 + 2" (i.e., regnal Year 2 or Year 12, depending on how the broken first sign is interpreted). A recent study by Volkmar Fritz³ opts for the lower date. My own first-hand examination of the docket in East Berlin, back in 1984, was less conclusive: the signs indicated by the traces are shaped somewhat eccentrically, no matter which readings are adopted, so neither option can be excluded and a coregency of up to eleven years is still possible.

With at least seven years already accounted for by the new Dahshur graffito, it now seems beyond dispute that Amenhotep III and Akhenaten shared the throne for a substantial part of the latter's reign. If so, then I along with everyone else who has argued against a coregency have been wrong, although I will continue to insist that we were wrong for the right reasons — for the fact is that there were (and still are) facts, such as the decoration of the Tomb of Kheruef at Thebes, which cannot be fitted into any long coregency without special pleading; and, besides, up to now, no theory was supported by the sort of evidence needed to make it more than an attractive possibility.

But is it really any more now? Before accepting all the implications I have outlined above, I would like answers to the following questions. First, is the reading of the year-date as "32" inescapable? As drawn, the top of the alleged "30" has the irregularity one might expect in a plausible example of this sign — but is this deliberate, or is this effect due to the scribe's maladroitness (a blob of ink) or to wear? Instead of "30" could the sign be a "10" — i.e. "regnal Year 12" of Akhenaten? Second, if all of Allen's readings are valid, does it follow that this is a double date, as he reconstructs it: "regnal Year 32, [month X, day Y] under the Person of the [Dual] King [Nebmaatre, corresponding to regnal year Z under the Person of the Dual King] Neferkheperure"? A comparable text which is plausibly assigned to the coregency of Seti I with Rameses II mentions "the Son of Re Seti-Merenptah together with his royal son, Usermaatre...."⁵ Could not the much-restored graffito from Dahshur be similar? If so, can we be certain in a single-dated monument that the junior partner had already begun numbering his regnal years independently? A comparandum, again, might be the coregency of Rameses II with Seti I: although a case for two overlapping dating systems can be made,⁶ it rests for the most part on analogy and most scholars have remained unconvinced — some even speaking of an



indeterminate period during which Rameses, as “prince regent,” assumed significant elements of the royal style before he actually became king.⁷ If such a model can be considered seriously for Rameses II, why not also for Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten? To do so would not violate the evidence, such as it is, nor would it involve the serious interpretative problems which would arise if events dated to the first years of the heretic king are forced into alignment with the last years of Amenhotep III.







William J. Murnane
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1. W.J. Murnane and C.C. Van Siclen, *The Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten* (London, 1993), 35, 48 (a).
2. Now available in a modern translation by William L. Moran in *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992), 86-90.
3. In *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 18 (1991), 207-214.
4. Still forthcoming in G.D. Young and B.J. Beitzel, eds., *Tell el-Amarna 1887-1987* (Winona Lake).
5. See A.H. Gardiner, T.E. Peet and J. Černý, *The Inscriptions of Sinai I*, pl. lxviii (no. 250); vol. II, 176-177.
6. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies* (Chicago, 1977), 80-87.
7. For example, K.A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant* (Warminster, 1982), 27-41.






At first sight the highly interesting graffito inscribed on a column fragment found at Dahshur and published by J.P. Allen in *GM* 140 seems to provide the much needed confirmation of the hotly debated coregency of Amenhotep III and IV. By bringing this graffito to our attention, Allen has done us a great service, even though, in the end, he had to admit that the evidence provided by this new text is, again, inconclusive.


It is a great shame that Allen was apparently unable to supplement his short article with a photograph or photographs of the graffito. This means that, for the time being, we have no means of judging whether he is right in confirming “both the extant traces and their transcription.” I would like to stress that, unlike Allen, I have not myself been able to see the graffito in question and the reservations concerning its reading that I somewhat reluctantly express here are, therefore, not based on a first-hand examination of the text. Experience at Sakkara has taught me, however, that ink-written texts on rough and damaged limestone surfaces can be extremely tricky, and a note of caution is thus in order.

The relevance of the graffito for the coregency problem rests on two assumptions, viz., that Amenhotep III is implied by the Year 32 date in line 1 and that line 2 provides the prenomen of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten. It would seem to me that, in both instances, the reading of the relevant signs is open to debate. In line 2, I am reluctant to accept Allen’s tran-

scription of the group  as  : *hprw*, as it occurs in hieratic cartouches of the relevant period written as ,  or ; a further possibility is  (e.g.

in *Mn-hprw-Rs*). All of these writings are, in my opinion, ruled out by the traces shown in Allen’s reproduction. The only way to “rescue” the reading of Akhen-

aten’s prenomen would be to read [...     ],

which agrees fairly well with the traces reproduced in the facsimile, but is, as far as I know, unparalleled, at least in hieratic. But then, how certain is the  at the beginning?

I also remain unconvinced of the necessity to read the year-date sign in line 1 as “30.” I don’t find the “ears” all that characteristic, taking into consideration that nothing more than the very top of the sign survives; again, experience in the field shows that traces like this can be very misleading. Allen refers to two graffiti of Year 34 of Amenhotep III published by De Morgan (drawn by Jéquier); but these are both written in a neat, graceful Eighteenth Dynasty hand which has very little resemblance to the handwriting displayed in this new text, at least in the published facsimile. In fact, what is perhaps the most disconcerting about the reproduction published by Allen is the almost total absence of the distinction between thick and thin lines so characteristic of a skilled hieratic hand. Of course this kind of writing does occur from time to time, especially on rough surfaces; but I cannot help wondering whether this particular scribe’s pen really was that blunt. But if it was, can one exclude the reading of the sign in question as “10,” resulting in the date “Year 12”?

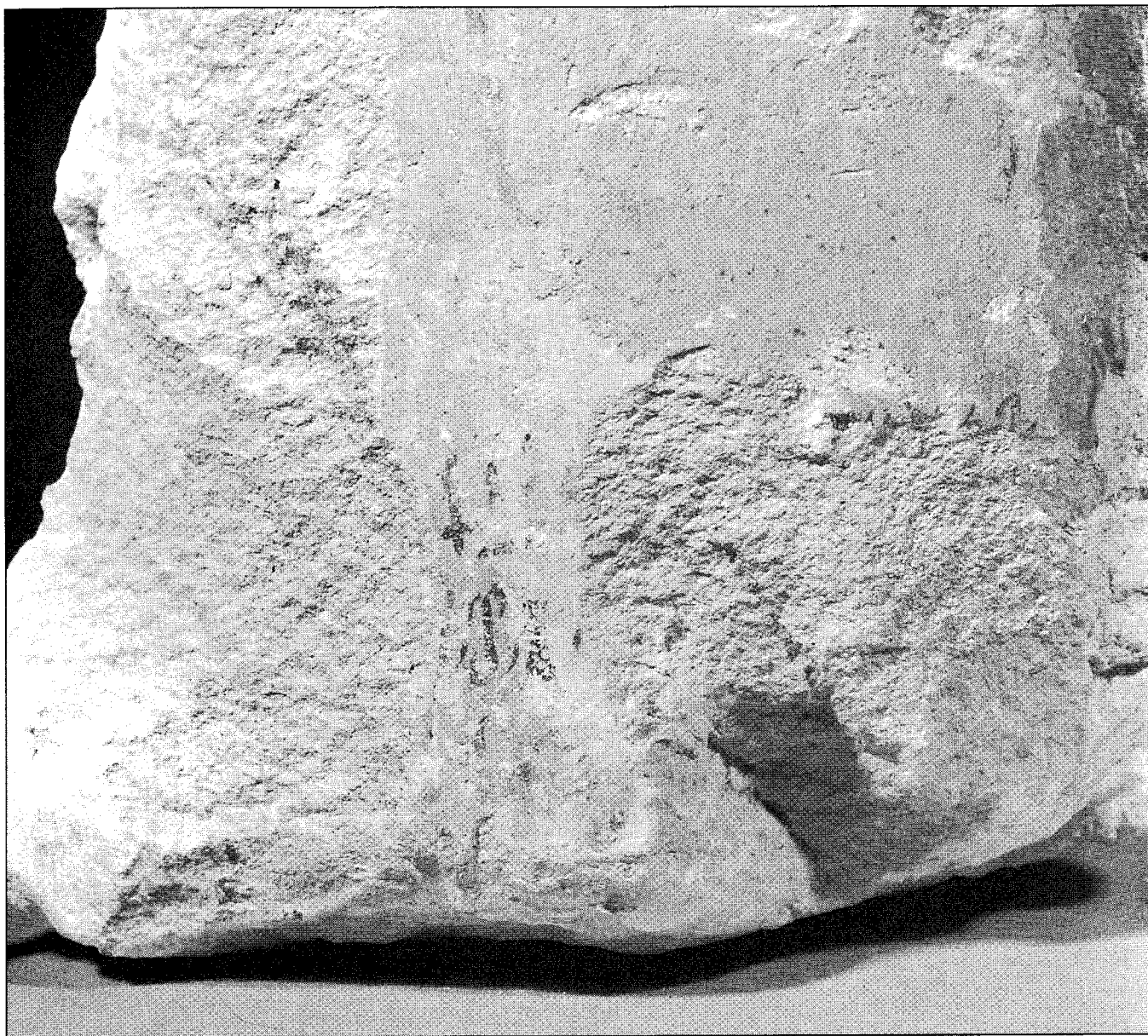
Finally, the reconstruction of the text depends to a large extent on the original length of the four fragmentary lines in the facsimile. Without a photograph or a drawing showing the exact position of the graffito in relation to the papyrus-column fragment on which it has been transcribed, it is impossible to judge the possibilities and impossibilities of any restoration of the original text.

In short, it would seem wise to reserve judgment on the reading of this tantalizing text until at least good photographs have been published.

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Opposite, Early relief-depiction in the Tomb of Ramose at Thebes (TT55) of Akhenaten and Nefertiti in the new art-style of their reign, with the Aten in its rayed-disk form. Ramose was vizier of Upper Egypt during both the last years of Amenhotep III and the first years of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (also depicted in Ramose’s tomb in the style of his father’s reign), leading some to argue this as circumstantial evidence for a coregency.

Addendum



Even as this volume of *Amarna Letters* went to press, Metropolitan Museum of Art Associate Curator James P. Allen returned from a brief fall, 1994, season at the Museum's Egyptian Department concession at Dahshur, where he had the opportunity to re-examine and photograph the problematic graffito discussed in the "Round Table" on pp. 26-31. Above is his photograph of the graffito and at right his reconsideration of its reading.

EDITOR

New graffiti discovered at Dahshur by the Metropolitan Museum Egyptian Expedition during the fall 1994 season are dated in at least one instance to Thutmose III as *ḏḥwtj-ms nfr-ḥprw*, and in another to what is probably the early 30s of Thutmose III. In this light, I now think that the graffito I published in *Göttinger Miszellen* is more likely to be dated to Year 32 of Thutmose III *nfr-ḥprw* than to Year 32 of Amenhotep III = Year X of *nfr-ḥprw-r** Amenhotep IV.

I must admit, however, that the trace at the beginning of the name — which I originally read as the left side of the *r** sign — does seem to be more compatible with that reading (i.e., *r* nfr ḥprw* = *nfr-ḥprw-r**) than with the *s* or a determinative of *[ḏḥwtj-m]s nfr-ḥprw*. Van Dijk's suggestion about the traces at the end of the name is certainly correct: I had read them as plural strokes and he as the righthand side of the second of three *ḥpr* beetles (= *ḥprw*); the original supports his reading.

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