The Iconography of Goddess Tjenenet from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period

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ABSTRACT

The Egyptian Goddess Tjenenet was a local goddess whose evidence survived from Middle Kingdom to Ptolemaic and Roman Period. She is known mainly as the divine consort of god Montu and a dweller in his chief cult centers, especially at Tod, Armant, and Medamoud. She is often represented anthropomorphically crowned either with two cow’s horns with an integrated sun disk, or with a Bicornuate uterus. Considering that her worship extended over nearly three thousand years, it seems inevitable that her iconography has seen some changes. This paper aims to shed light on the principal development moments of the iconography of goddess Tjenenet by responding to the following inquiries: how far is the possibility to recognize goddess Tjenenet despite the absence of her legends? Could the various aspects of her character influence her iconography? Does the form of this goddess vary according to the role she plays or the period in which she was depicted? Is it possible to consider the representations of Tjenenet as a measure of dating? Therefore, this paper tries to present and clarify the personality of Tjenenet by highlighting her iconography.

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1. Introduction

The Egyptian Goddess Tjenenet 1, was a local goddess whose evidence mainly survived from the Middle Kingdom to the Ptolemaic and Roman period. Tjenenet was first appeared2 at the village of Tod3, where in the Coptic time, it was called “7nnt...” For more information about Tod, see G. Bonnefois, “Tod”, in Redford, B. Donald (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Vol. 3, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 411-412; F.

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3 Located in the 4th Nome of Upper Egypt, on the eastern bank of the Nile approximately 20 kilometers south of Luxor, the village of Tod, El-Tod or the modern Arabic name “طود” houses a main dedicated temple for god Montu in which the cult of goddess Tjenenet took place. Tod was called in the ancient Egyptian language “Drτ or Drτy – ﲡ١٥٥٣٠. Meanwhile, in the ancient Greek, it was called “Touphion – Τούφιον” and in Latin “Tuphium” while in the Coptic time, it was called “touyτ – tοουτ.”
“hry.(t)-ib 9rt” meaning “goddess Tjenenet the one who resides at Tod”. Later she took place at Armant⁴, and Medamoud⁵. She was the consort of the prominent god, Montu⁶, who was a falcon-headed god with increasing importance since the 11th Dynasty at Thebes region. Both were once considered as the parents of Horus-Re the Infant⁷. Having radiant worship for many centuries, if not millennia, it is understandable that the representations of this goddess have seen many changes during this long period. Her manifestations could be traced only, starting from the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2030 – 1650 B.C.), precisely during the 11th Dynasty at Tod. The earliest representation of the goddess Tjenenet depicts her in a complete human form, wearing the basic vulture-style headdress with no head-emblems on the stone blocks of Montuhotep III at Tod⁸. By the New Kingdom (ca. 1550 – 1070 B.C.), the popularity of Tjenenet grew, and her depictions can be found on temples and funerary monuments, where she was associated with different goddesses like Iunit⁹ and Rettawy¹⁰. Her representations have been enriched with new phenotypes. She acquires new forms and obtaining her remarkable “Bicornuate uterus”¹¹ emblem and many other head-emblems.

This paper aims to recognize and clarify the principal development moments of the iconography of goddess Tjenenet by responding to the following inquiries: how far is the possibility to recognize goddess Tjenenet despite the absence of her legends? Could the various aspects of her character influence her iconography? Does the form of this goddess vary according to the role she plays or the period in which she was depicted? Is it possible to consider the representations of Tjenenet as a measure of dating? Therefore, this paper tries to present and clarify the personality of Tjenenet by highlighting her iconography. The paper is divided chronologically into three main parts: the Middle Kingdom, the New Kingdom, and the Late Period. Each part contains her different representations, organized in different sets.

2. Iconography

2.1 The Iconography of Tjenenet during the Middle Kingdom


Located in the 4th Nome of Upper Egypt, on the western bank of the Nile approximately 20 kilometers⁴ south of Luxor, the village of Armant or the modern Arabic name “أزمات” houses a mainly dedicated temple for god Montu in which the cult of goddess Tjenenet took place. Armant was known in the ancient Egyptian language with “Tem-Tiw-sntrw – the Southern Iun”. Meanwhile, in the ancient Greek, it was called “Hermonthis – Ερμονθής” and in Latin “Hermuntis” while in the Coptic time, it was called “ερμονθιτς – ΑΡΜΗΝΤΗΣ.” See H. Gautheir, Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans Les textes Hiéroglyphiques I, 1929, p. 53.

The village of Medamoud is located within the 4th Nome of Upper Egypt, on the eastern bank of the Nile approximately 5 kilometers northeast of Karnak. The village of Medamoud or the modern Arabic name “مديامود” housed one day a mainly dedicated temple for Montu in which the cult of goddess Tjenenet took place. It was known in the ancient Egyptian language with “Mstwr.” Meanwhile, in the ancient Greek, it was called “τῆς Καρπουζά” and in Latin “Ceramice”, while in the Coptic time, it was called “υστεξθυτ.”


For further readings, see É. Driton, G. Posener, et J. Vandier, Tôd: les Inscriptions du Temple Ptolémaïque et Romain I, la salle hypostyle, textes nos 1-172, Le Caire, p. 4, pl. 1.

F. Bisson de la Roque, Tôd, FIFAO 17, 1937, pp. 79-80, fig. 32.

Iunit was a local goddess of mainly importance in the Theban region, precisely in the town of Armant. For more information, see LGG I, pp. 190₋192; LÄ III, col. 212; R. H. Wilkinson, The Complete Gods and Goddess of Ancient Egypt, Thames & Hudson, 2003, p. 150; M. el-Weshahy, “The Goddess Iwnj.t”, in Association of Arab Universities For Tourism and Hospitality, JAAUTH, Vol.4, No 2, pp. 123-149.

Rettawy appeared for the first time within the texts of the Pyramid Texts since the 5th Dynasty, where she was assigned as the counterpart of god Re. For further readings, see LGG IV, pp. 647₋649; LÄ V, col. 151₋155; R. H. Wilkinson, The Complete Gods and Goddess of Ancient Egypt, Thames & Hudson, 2003, p. 164; A. Enany, “Representations of the Goddess Rait-Tawy in Ancient Egypt” in Studies in the Antiquities of the Arab World 16, pp. 123-144.

The earliest known representation for goddess Tjenenet came out in the Middle Kingdom, as, at least, no evidence of her can be traced in the Old Kingdom (ca. 2647 – 2150 B.C.). Tjenenet appeared for the first time during the reign of king Montuhotep III on few blocks of limestone, which were found at Tod. These documents are considered the only pictorial depictions of goddess Tjenenet during the Middle Kingdom. Only one representation for goddess Tjenenet in complete human form has survived. Four pictorial representations can be traced on the block-stones which were unearthed by Fernand Bisson de la Roque in 1937, as relics of the Middle Kingdom temple of Montu at Tod. Two of these block-stones (JE 66337, and JE 66333) have only traces of goddess Tjenenet, wearing the vulture-style headdress (fig. 1, pl. 1) with no head-emblems.

**Fig. 1**
Head of goddess Tjenenet.

One survived representation portrays her in a complete human form (fig. 2, pl. 2), she is standing in adoring attitude, wearing the vulture-style headdress, and a long, close-fitting tunic, and holding within her right hand three “nh” signs.

**Fig 2**
Goddess Tjenenet in adoring attitude.

On one block of stone (E. 15144) which is housed nowadays in Musée du Louvre, department of Egyptian Antiquities, Tjenenet is depicted with the same features, holding the “wAs” scepter (fig. 3, pl. 3).

**Fig 3**
Tjenenet holding the “wAs” scepter.

### 2.2. The Iconography of Tjenenet during the New Kingdom

The representations of the goddess Tjenenet in the New Kingdom have reached a new popularity level, as her fame continued to increase remarkably. This period has witnessed unprecedented blending for goddess Tjenenet, where she was merged with goddess Iunit and goddess Rettawy. Although the fact that the earliest recorded pictorial representation for the goddess Tjenenet-Rettawy dates to the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, there is a block of stone (UC. 14402) that dates to King Ahmose I, housed in

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12 F. Bisson de la Roque, *Tôd*, FIFAO 17, 1937, pp. 79-80, fig. 32.
13 F. Bisson de la Roque, *Tôd*, pp. 86-87, p. 93, fig. 38, 45.
14 F. Bisson de la Roque, *Tôd*, FIFAO 17, 1937, pp. 79-80, fig. 32.
Petri Collection Museum, has remnants of her name.

2.2.1 Standing, wearing the Bicornuate uterus

The eldest time for Tjenenet to be presented with the Bicornuate uterus emblem (fig. 4, pl. 4) came in relief on the northern wall of the Red Chapel of Queen Hatshepsut¹⁸ at Karnak temples, which dates to the 18th Dynasty, as Tjenenet-Rettawy. She is depicted standing, with her emblem over a tri-partite hair wig, fixed by a headband, and wearing a long, tight tunic, and holding the “wSs” scepter and the “nḥ” sign. Furthermore, as goddess Tjenenet-Rettawy, the goddess is also represented with her uterus-emblem over a tri-partite hair wig, fixed by a headband¹⁹, supporting King Thutmose III (fig. 5, pl. 5) while his coronation by Montu.

Fig. 4

Tjenenet standing, wearing the Bicornuate uterus.

Fig. 5

Tjenenet standing, wearing the Bicornuate uterus.

²¹ On the eastern and the western banks of the Nile, in the 2nd Nome of Upper Egypt, and between Kom Ombo and Edfu, the area of Gebel el-Silsila is approximately 65 kilometers north of Aswan. The area was called “Ḥny” meaning “the rowing place.”
²² I. Rosellini, I Monumenti dell’ Egitto e della Nubia, Tomo III, Parte I, Pisa, 1838, p. 135, pl. XXXI (2).
goddess Tjenenet (fig. 9, pl. 9) is depicted behind her husband Montu, wearing the uterus-emblem over the “ḥst” headdress with its protective cobra.

Fig. 6
Tjenenet wearing the Bicornuate uterus, supporting Thutmoses III.

Fig. 7
Tjenenet wearing the Bicornuate uterus.

I. Rosellini, I Monumenti dell’ Egitto e della Nubia III, 1838, pl. XXXI (2)

Fig. 8
Tjenenet standing in adoring attitude, wearing the Bicornuate uterus.

H.H Nelson, The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, OIP 25, 1936, pl. 56.

2.2.2 Enthroned, wearing the Bicornuate uterus

On the stela of Neb-Imentet at Voronez Museum (Inv 157), which dates to the 19th dynasty, the reign of king Ramses III, goddess Tjenenet .Dispatches to Thun统筹推进，is depicted with her unique Bicornuate uterus emblem and enthroned on a low-back throne (fig. 10, pl. 10). Furthermore, she is holding the “wṣḏ” scepter and the “ḥḥ” sign.

Fig 10
Tjenenet-Nefr-nt-Twnw enthroned, wearing the Bicornuate uterus.

2.2.3. Enthroned, with no head-emblems

Starting from the 18th Dynasty, precisely since Queen Hatshepsut to the end of the New Kingdom, goddess Tjenenet enjoyed a constant place within the Great Ennead of Karnak Temples. Tjenenet was often portrayed enthroned wearing a tri-partite hair wig and a long, tight tunic,(25) (fig. 11, pl. 11) holding the “wṣḏ” scepter and the “ḥḥ” sign, or enthroned, wearing a tri-partite hair wig and a

completely covered body by a mantle, holding the “\textit{w3s}” scepter and the “\textit{nh}” sign. In the 19\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty, precisely during the reign of Ramses II, goddess Tjenenet was depicted enthroned, within the Great Ennead (fig. 12) wearing a tri-partite hair wig and a long, close-fitting tunic. Additionally, in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty, during the reign of Ramses III, goddess Tjenenet is depicted enthroned before a shrine-like building, wearing a tri-partite hair wig, and holding a basket, provided with the “\textit{nh}” sign and the “\textit{w3s}” scepter.

\textbf{Fig. 11}

Tjenenet enthroned wearing a long, tight tunic.

\textbf{Fig. 12}

Tjenenet enthroned with a mantel covering her body.

26 This is considered the earliest example, dating to the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, according to the available evidences, see Fr. Burgos, Fr. Larché, La Chapelle Rouge. Le sanctuaire de barque d’Hatshepsout, I, Paris, 2006, p. 253.


Fig. 13

Tjenenet enthroned holding a basket contains the “\textit{nh}” sign and “\textit{w3s}” sceptre.

\textbf{Fig. 14}

Tjenenet standing in adoring attitude.


2.2.4 \textit{Standing, with no head-emblems}

During the reign of Ramses II at Karnak temples, goddess Tjenenet was depicted standing, in adoring attitude (fig. 14, pl. 14), wearing a tri-partite hair wig and long, close-fitting tunic.

2.2.5 \textit{Standing, wearing the vulture headdress.}

On Thutmoses III’s Armant stela (JE 67377) in the Egyptian Museum, goddess Tjenenet is...
depicted in fully-human manifestation, wearing the vulture-style headdress (fig. 15, pl. 15). She is standing at the back of King Thutmoses III, holding with her right hand his left hand, while she is raising her left hand upward

**Fig. 15**

Tjenenet wearing the vulture headdress, holding the hand of the King.


2.2.6. *Standing, wearing Hathor Crown*

The wall reliefs of Medinet Habu temple hold many representations for goddess Tjenenet. She is represented as if she were identical to the goddess Hathor or Nehemt-away. She is wearing the so-called Hathor Crown which is composed of the sun-disk, flanked by two cow horns, extended outwards. She is depicted standing after god Atum wearing Hathor Crown (fig. 16, pl. 16), holding the “wḏ” scepter and the “nh” sign. Furthermore, in another scene, Tjenenet is standing (fig. 17, pl. 17), supporting god Khepry. Moreover, in another scene, she is represented standing behind god Montu, in adoring attitude (fig. 18, pl. 18), raising her right hand upward, while with her left hand, she is holding the “nh” sign.

**Fig 16**

Tjenenet standing, wearing Hathor Crown, and holding the “wḏ” scepter.

**Fig 17**

Tjenenet standing, wearing Hathor Crown, and supporting god Khepry.

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31 The temple of Medinet Habu is situated at the southern end of Luxor, on the western bank of the Nile. In ancient Egypt, it was a part of the 4th Nome of Upper Egypt “Wzr”, and it was known with “Ds-Mwt”. Meanwhile, in the ancient Greek, it was called “rā Meqṣwēt” and in Latin “Mommoneia” while in the Coptic time, it was called “xniḥ ḫnḥ” and nowadays, its modern name is “مدينة هابو” in Arabic.

32 The goddess Nehemt-away freely adopted the hathoric personal attributes for her own iconography from the New Kingdom until the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Shaikh Al arab, “The Adoption of Hathor’s Personal Attributes for Nehemt-away’s Iconography”, *ANKH* 28/29 (2019/2020), pp. 44-77.


2.2.7. Enthroned, wearing a vulture headdress and Hathor Crown

On the stela of Netery, the priestess of god Montu, which is housed nowadays in Petri Collection Museum (UC 14436)\textsuperscript{37}, goddess Tjenenet-Rettawy is represented sitting on a low-back throne (fig. 19, pl. 19), receiving adoration from her. Remarkably, Tjenenet is wearing the vulture-style headdress over a tri-partite hair wig, with the crown of goddess Hathor which consists of the sun-disk, flanked by two horns of a cow, above all. Furthermore, she is wearing a long, close-fitting tunic and holding the “\textit{wAD}” scepter and the “\textit{\(nl\)}” sign.

2.2.8 Standing, wearing double feathers crown

On one of the donation stelae of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty, the stela\textsuperscript{38} of Medamoud that belongs to King Thutmose IV, shows goddess Tjenenet-Rettawy exceptionally portrayed standing, wearing a Double-Feathers Crown fixed into a pedestal with a cobra on the forehead, and a long, tight tunic (fig. 20, pl. 20). She is raising her left hand upward, while with the right hand, she is holding the “\textit{\(nl\)}” sign.

2.2.9 Lioness-headed human form

For the first time, during the 19\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty, the time of Ramses III, Tjenenet-Rettawy is portrayed with the head of a lioness, surmounted by a sun-disk encircled by a cobra (fig. 21, pl. 21), on column 29\textsuperscript{39} of the west colonnade of Medinet Habu temple’s second court. She is standing, wearing a long, tight tunic and holding the “\textit{wAD}” scepter and the “\textit{\(nl\)}” sign.

At the time of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Dynasty, On the stela of Raia\textsuperscript{40}, the chantress of Montu, in Florence Egyptian Museum, (Inv. 6390), the goddess Tjenenet is represented standing, in lioness-headed human form (fig. 21, pl. 22), holding the “\textit{wAD}” scepter and the “\textit{\(nl\)}” sign.

2.2.10 Lioness-headed human form with the sun-disk emblem, encircled by a cobra.
2.2.10 Cobra-headed human form

Once and for all, on the Chamber E’s ceiling of the tomb41 of Ramesses VI42 (KV9) at the Valley of the Kings, goddess Tjenenet is depicted with the head of a cobra and the body of human (fig. 22, pl. 23), within the Seventh Hour of the Book of the Night43. She is represented standing, wearing a tri-partite hair wig and a long, close-fitting tunic ornamented with straps.

Fig 22

Tjenenet in cobra-headed form, standing with no head emblems.


2.3. The Iconography of Tjenenet during the Late Period

Just two shreds of evidence can be traced for goddess Tjenenet during the Late Period. Although the lack of resources at that time affected the process of studying Tjenenet iconography, adversely, yet the two scenes can tell about how did Tjenenet maintain her rank and role

2.3.1 Standing, wearing a vulture headdress and Hathor Crown

At the time of the 21st Dynasty, precisely to the reign of king Herihor at Karnak temples, goddess Tjenenet is portrayed standing, wearing the so-called Hathor crown, which is composed of the sun-disk, flanked by two cow horns, extended outwards, over a vulture-style headdress with double heads of both the vulture and the cobra on her forehead (fig. 23, pl. 24). Furthermore, she is wearing a long, tight tunic, decorated with double wings and feathers. Moreover, she is holding the “wAd” scepter and the “nh” sign.

Fig. 23

Tjenenet-Rettawy, standing wearing Hathor Crown of the vulture-headdress with two heads of the vulture and the cobra.

H.H Nelson, The Temple of Khonsu at Karnak, OIP 100, 1979, pl. 32.

2.3.2 Enthroned, with no head-emblems

In a relief45 that dates back to the 25th Dynasty, to the reign of King Taharqa’s birth at Karnak


42 LA V, p. 124.


45 M. Pillet, “Les scènes de naissance et de circoncision dans le temple nord-est de Moût, à Karnak” in ASAE 52,
temples, the goddess Tjenenet appears within the Theban Ennead, enthroned with a half of a mantel only covers her body, reaching her thighs (fig. 24, pl. 25). She is wearing a tri-partite hair wig and holding the “wAs” scepter with her right hand, while she extends her opened palm over her knees.

Fig. 24
Tjenenet, enthroned with no head-embles.

M. Pillet, “Les scènes de naissance et de circoncision dans le temple nord-est de Moût, à Karnak” in ASAE 52, 1952, fig.1. p. 78.

3. Results and Discussion

After this enumeration of Tjenenet’s iconographical features from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, certain points are determined as follows. It is now evident that the study of Tjenenet’s iconographical details is still in its beginnings. Further excavations, particularly in the areas around the principal cult centers of her divine consort (Montu) at Tod, Armant, and Medamoud, would inevitably increase the list of her images proposed here.

The first conclusion one can confidently reach is that Tjenenet’s iconography remained with many variants throughout the centuries despite her relatively narrow theological profile. The Egyptians have always preferred to represent Tjenenet in a fully human form, from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period. The other phenotypes of Tjenenet enriched her iconography; however, they have never replaced the standard representation. The Bicornuate-uterus-like crown or the two cow’s horns with integrated sun disk were specific to Tjenenet, where they could become a key element and an identification index for the goddess, especially on appearing without inscription. Other crowns are considered less common and occur in specific contexts.

The study revealed that Tjenenet’s hybrid forms are attested only in the New Kingdom. The historical development of the cult of Tjenenet, especially from the New Kingdom, was characterized by such increasing associations with other deities, particularly Iunit and Rettawy. This partially contributed to her specific manifestations. Further, due to her association with the god Montu, Tjenenet gained some diffusion in terms of geographical distribution and semantic contexts as well.

Moreover, the occurrence and use of Tjenenet images seem not to be geographically restricted. Her traditional, main cult cities at Tod, Armant, and Medamoud revealed through the times several attestations. Nonetheless, the other cult centers also contributed to the list of Tjenenet’s representations. As for the Egyptian deities in general, it is rather difficult to describe an exact profile of Tjenenet’s iconography. The goddess can be closely associated with other deities, exchanging roles and attitudes. As shown above, according to the few attestations within the vast visual art of the Middle Kingdom, Tjenenet is only represented in anthropomorphic form as if she were similar to the goddesses Nekhbet by integrating their special iconographical elements into her own representations. In such forms, Tjenenet is indistinguishable Nekhbet and she can only be identified by the inscription accompanying her figures.

In the New Kingdom, Tjenenet obviously shares the characteristic personal iconographical elements which exclusively belong to the goddess Hathor, Sekhmet and Nehemt-away and her identification is only possible by means of inscriptions.

All in all, the personal attributes of Nekhbet, Meskhenet, Hathor or Nehemt-away are freely transferred to the goddess Tjenenet. Accordingly, it is virtually impossible to differentiate between her and these goddesses without inscription or archaeological context.

4. Conclusion
In conclusion, the Egyptians have always preferred to represent the goddess Tjenenet in a fully anthropomorphic form at least from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period. It is significant to note that the representations of Tjenenet before the Middle Kingdom are unknown. The most popular depiction of Tjenenet is that of a standing or enthroned woman. However, her other phenotypes, which enriched her iconography, have never replaced the standard representation. The Bicornuate-uterus-like crown was specific to Tjenenet; it is a key element and an identification index for the goddess, especially on appearing without inscription. Other crowns are considered less common and occur in specific contexts.

In brief, dotted with characteristic iconographical features of Hathor, Nehemt-away, Nekhbet, or Meskhenet was theologically invented at least from the Middle Kingdom to the fitting counterpart or female double of Montu. Without inscriptions, her Bicornuate uterus or archaeological context, it is nearly impossible to distinguish Tjenenet from Hathor, Nehemt-away, Nekhbet, or Meskhenet. As a goddess of birth and motherhood, her iconography was affected starting from the New Kingdom, as she started to bear the cow uterus as her emblem. Moreover, being the counterpart of Montu-Re, and her blending with goddess Rettawy, Tjenenet obtained the solar nature, bearing the crown of Hathor.

The representations of goddess Tjenenet could be a dating key, where in the Middle Kingdom she did not obtain any head emblems but the vulture headdress. Meanwhile, starting from the New Kingdom, she obtained the distinctive Bicornuate uterus, Hathor crown, Double Feathers crown.

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F. Bisson de la Roque, Tôd, FIFAO 17, 1937.
Plates

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Tjenenet blessing Mentuhotep III.

F. Bisson de la Roque, Tôd, FIFAO 17, 1937, fig. 38.

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Bisson de la Roque, Tôd, FIFAO 17, 1937, fig. 32.

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H.H Nelson, *The Temple of Khonsu at Karnak*, OIP 100, 1979, pl. 32.

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M. Pillet, “Les scènes de naissance et de circoncision dans le temple nord-est de Moût, à Karnak” in *ASAE* 52, 1952, fig.1. p. 78.