Evidence of a master copy transferred from Thebes to the Memphite area in Dynasty 26

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During a photographic survey at Cairo Museum in 2001, members of the Book of the Dead Project in Bonn photographed more than 60 glass frames of different sizes and five envelopes which together contained about 3000 papyrus fragments from three different Book of the Dead documents (Figs. 1a–b, 3–4; Munro 2002, 2:831–41, pls. 1 and 2).

The first document, consisting of about 1500 fragments, in most cases has a blank space where one would expect the name of the papyrus owner. Hence, this papyrus was a stock-produced copy of the Book of the Dead. Only at the very beginning of the roll has the name and filiation of the owner been inserted (Fig. 2). It was written on behalf of a lady named Ta-sheret-en-Aset (Tš-šrt-n-3st). The Cairo papyrus proved to form part of a Book of the Dead document that is preserved in the Völkerkunde-Museum in Heidelberg. It was previously thought to be anonymous (Verhoeven 1998, 224–25, pls. 26, 27).

The owner of the second manuscript—comprising over 1150 fragments and clearly distinguishable by its neat and elegant handwriting—was a certain Djed-khi (Dd-ḥi), who held the priestly title hm-nṯr Mntw in addition to some other designations (Fig. 3). The name of his father Bes-en-Mut (Bs-n-Mwt) is mentioned twice; he held the same titles as his son. The owner's mother Taweret (Ṭw-irīt) is mentioned in the manuscript more frequently than his father.

There is evidence from a third document that comprises about 300 fragments, some of which clearly show the name of the owner Taweret (Fig. 4). There is no information regarding their provenance or when these three groups of fragments entered Cairo Museum. Since the pieces have been juxtaposed and mounted between glass all together, one may conclude that the fragments must have been found in close proximity, for instance in a family tomb.

As Bes-en-Mut and his son Djed-khi practised their priestly duties in Thebes, it is not overly speculative to assume that this family tomb was located somewhere in the area. It is known that the tomb of the grandson Irty-ru-tjaw (Irīt-rw-ḥw) was definitely situated at Deir el-Bahri (Dabrowska-Smektala 1966a; 1966b). The texts from his coffin record Djed-khi and Ta-sheret-en-Aset as the parents of Irty-ru-tjaw. The Book of the Dead papyri of Bes-en-Mut's wife Taweret, of Djed-khi and his wife Ta-sheret-en-Aset unquestionably have their origin in the Theban region.

In fact, the data available are sufficient to reconstruct in detail the family tree with Taweret and Bes-en-Mut as parents, Djed-khi and Ta-sheret-en-Aset as son and daughter-in-law, and with a son of this couple named Irty-ru-tjaw. The latter is the owner of a Book of the Dead papyrus of which additional fragments were found at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (Dabrowska-Smektala 1966, pl. 47). Djed-khi and his son are well-known as choachs in the necropolis of Thebes: they are mentioned in a land-lease document from year 37 of King

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1 I am indebted to my colleague T. DuQuesne for correcting and amending this article.

1 P. Toronto ROM 910.85.222, to be published by I. Munro.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Amasis dated to 534 BCE (Donker van Heel 1996, 21–27, 216–17). Fortunately it is also possible to trace these individuals and their genealogy from their sarcophagi, which are held in Cairo and have been published by Moret (1913; CG 41011, 41037) and Gauthier (1913; CG 41065, CG 41066, CG 41070).

Meanwhile, even more fragments than the aforementioned 3000 pieces in Cairo have been found in nine other collections; there too, the fragments of the three papyri have been mixed up and reflect the close context of the three burials:


An attempt to reassemble the pieces in Cairo Museum was unsuccessful due to administrative difficulties. The team therefore had to be content with the virtual joining of fragments on the basis of digital images. The results of this digital reconstruction of the Cairo papyri will be published in part as one of the next volumes in the HAT series. The virtual restoration of approximately 90 per cent of the manuscript (Fig. 5) now provides a reasonably adequate basis for research on P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset, which is the subject of the present article. The papyrus proved to be of considerable length—about 17 m—and is complete except for a number of lacunae and a missing section from BD chapters 19 to 29. Its fragmentary state, however, has not prevented the identification of special features, both in the text and in the vignettes. Some 139 spells and 90 vignettes are suitable for comparison and have provided a solid basis for our research.

Like all the other Theban documents of Dynasty 26 (see Table 1), the papyrus of Ta-sheret-en-Aset is written in hieratic script, in contrast to the two previously known documents dating to Dynasty 25, which are written in hieroglyphic script. It has a layout that is typical of contemporary Saite papyri and corresponds to Style 2 in Mosher’s classification (1992, 143–72). It has double lines for borders at the top, bottom and sides of each chapter, a horizontal line for the headings of spells, and all vignettes are situated above the text. Mosher’s Style 2 is by no means an exceptional layout, but has a format characteristic of Dynasty 26 Book of

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2 HAT 12 (in preparation).
3 P. Nemti and P. Ta-shep-en-Khonsu.
the Dead manuscripts in Thebes and the Memphite region.\(^4\)

The sequence of spells is particularly noteworthy. P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset does not follow the Saite recension, which usually features in manuscripts from Dynasty 26 onward. Instead of a variable text sequence from one manuscript to another—as is usually the case during the New Kingdom until Dynasty 25—the later Book of the Dead collators codified spells in the sequence with which we are familiar from Lepsius’s edition *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter* (1842), based on P. Turin 1791. Lepsius numbered its spells consecutively, so that we can now easily compare the order of spells in different manuscripts.

It is impossible to be certain when the so-called ‘Saite’ text revision took place. There is, however, convincing evidence that the two known Book of the Dead papyri dating from Dynasty 25—one of them from the end of Dynasty 25 (Munro 2009)—do not yet follow the Saite recension, while Book of the Dead papyri from the beginning of Dynasty 26 do so entirely. See Table 2 for the sequence of spells in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset, where the breaks within the numerically ascending order of spells are indicated in red.

Examination of the Book of the Dead archive in Bonn reveals that there is only one document, from a total of 859 data sets of the Late and Ptolemaic Period manuscripts, which has a strikingly similar, almost identical sequence as P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset: this is P. BM EA 10558. Another document, P. Turin 1842, may also have followed the same sequence, but unfortunately it ends after chapter 81.\(^5\) To demonstrate the striking similarity of both manuscripts in terms of their sequence of spells, their text sequences have been assembled so that one can easily identify where they have the sequence in common and where they show some differences (Table 2). Of particular note is the occurrence of an adoration scene at the beginning of P. BM EA 10558, which is absent in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset; the insertion of spell 123 and 122; the inversion of vignette 150 and spell 152; the insertion of vignette 151 in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset; and the addition of chapters 163, 164 and 165 in P. BM EA 10558. But if one takes into consideration the fact that there are more than 130 spells in common and that these even follow the same non-canonical order, it may be concluded that both manuscripts must have been copied from the same template, which was written during Dynasty 25, before the so-called Saite recension.

The two manuscripts P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 not only share the same unusual sequence of spells; they also have the same general layout and share the overwhelming majority of vignettes. Out of 91 vignettes in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558, 89 have the same layout and accompany the same spells; they even share the same motifs. The two papyri differ in only eight cases, where P. BM EA 10558 shows a vignette that is not in the scheme of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and vice versa. In six cases the position of a vignette in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset is the same as in P. BM EA 10558, but the illustration is absent.

What is most impressive in the case of both papyri, however, is the fact that in almost all cases they possess similar—if not almost identical—motifs in their vignettes. Some of them appear only in these two papyri. This cannot be coincidental and suggests that the same source must have been used. The following is a selection of some of these motifs:

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\(^4\) P. Vatican 48832; P. Louvre N. 3091; P. BM EA 10558.

\(^5\) M. Mosher’s suggestion of two additional manuscripts (P. New York MMA 35.9.20 and P. Chicago OIM 10486/P. Milbank) proved to be invalid.
Vignette to chapter 72 and vignette to chapter 73 (Fig. 6)
The vignette of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset shows the deceased before three deities: Horus, Shu and a goddess, probably Tefnut. P. BM EA 10558 differs only in representing a third male deity instead of a female: this combination is comparable to the iconography known for the vignette to chapter BD 115 in the Late Period. The next vignette, accompanying spell 73, corresponds in both papyri with the iconography of BD 72. In this case, the position of the vignette has shifted only one spell forward.

Vignette to chapter 80 (Fig. 7)
P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 show a vignette normally associated with BD spell 79 as an illustration to BD 80: the deceased with a staff, or in adoration before three overlapping figures of deities. This vignette seems also to have shifted its position.

Vignette to chapter 63 (Fig. 8)
Usually the deceased is represented with upraised hands holding two nw-pots and pouring water before a large sign for fire, as in P. Turin 1791. Alternatively, the deceased is seen pouring water-jets from his hands into a vessel. In P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 the deceased is shown pouring water onto a fire pot or fire sign that stands on the ground.

Vignette to chapter 110, illustrating the Elysian fields (Fig. 9)
Although P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset omits the vignette to chapter 110c, the illustration of the Elysian fields is in most details—in text and iconography—largely comparable with P. BM EA 10558. In both documents there are four registers that show the same arrangement of scenes. The only difference seems to be the scene of sowing behind the scene of ploughing in the third register, for which there is a blank section in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset. Another marginal difference is the gesture of nini in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset, while in P. BM EA 10558 the deceased is depicted with his arms raised in adoration.

Vignette to chapter 122 (Fig. 10)
A unique vignette, only attested in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558, is the illustration to chapter 122: two male figures standing back to back before a shrine with an open door.

Vignette to chapter 68 in combination with vignette to chapter 91 (Fig. 11)
Also unique, but with one parallel among the mummy bandages (M. Princeton Pharaonic roll Nr.8, dated to the Ptolemaic Period, from Saqqara), is the combination of two vignettes. The illustration accompanies BD chapter 68 in both papyri, P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558. To the left is the figure of the goddess Hathor in a kiosk and an offering-table, elements already familiar from vignette BD chapter 68, as for example in P. Turin 1791. The next components are from BD chapter 91 and show the deceased together with his Ba-bird. The reason why these two components have been combined is not obvious and therefore this motif is strong evidence for a common master copy.
These few examples may be sufficient to demonstrate that P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 not only shared a common master copy relating to their textual order and extent, but also relied on it in using the same motifs of vignettes.

The close relationship between P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 can also be observed in their texts. Throughout, many close and significant analogies are attested in the most extraordinary way: in both manuscripts there are unusual headings for spells not known from other documents (BD chapters 107, 109, 114); a congruence of text passages such as the deification of the members in BD chapter 42; and the composition of BD chapter 141/142, in which the list of the names of the various deities normally differs from one manuscript to the other in position, omission or the addition of a name. It is also noticeable that there are many common features in both manuscripts in which the spell has been cut off abruptly, many congruent omissions of passages and some curious spellings of words. The occurrence of a nearly identical text sequence, the similarity in choice and position of the vignettes and the close relationship between the texts in both manuscripts are strong arguments for their derivation from the same master copy. This conclusion would not be problematic if one accepted that the two papyri under consideration had been produced in the same region and during the same period. Regarding the provenance and dating of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset: the manuscript is clearly from Thebes and dates to Dynasty 26, but what can be said about the provenance and dating of P. BM EA 10558?

The dating of this papyrus is a controversial issue among researchers. Mosher dates the document to the 3rd century, followed by Budek (2008, 35, n. 96) in her study on the full-scale vignette of BD chapter 15. The Ptolemaic dating of P. BM EA 10558 is based on the occurrence of the sun-child sitting between the horns of Mehet-weret in vignette BD 17 and 71, which according to Mosher (2001, 18) is not attested in any Dynasty 26 manuscript and not before the 3rd century. As noted above however, this motif already occurs in the Dynasty 26 papyrus of Ta-sheret-en-Aset (Fig. 12). Style 2 as another argument for a 3rd century dating cannot be valid either, because this is the usual style observed in Dynasty 26 documents. A second suggestion that P. BM EA 10558 belongs to Dynasty 26 was proposed by Kockelmann (2008, 197–98) and Pinch (1984, 104), but neither adduced any specific arguments. Nevertheless the following criteria confirm their opinion:

First, the script of the document clearly points to a Dynasty 26 date, as do the single signs and the characteristics of its handwriting. Second—and this is the major point—the close relationship of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset and P. BM EA 10558 and their almost identical sequence indicates that both are more or less contemporaneous copies belonging to Dynasty 26. It is inconceivable that P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset was copied in Dynasty 26 and that P. BM EA 10558 was produced from the same source document three hundred years later.

There is no assured report about the origin of P. BM EA 10558 either, so it must be deduced from internal criteria. Some features, which Mosher (1992, 143–72) has found to be distinctive or nonexistent for the Memphite and the Theban tradition respectively, point to a Theban rather than a Memphite tradition. Mosher himself, however, repeatedly assigns a Memphite origin and, in his publication of P. Hor, would assign a Middle Egyptian provenance for P. BM EA 10558 (Mosher 2001, 20, n. 119 and 23, n. 134).

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6 P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset, BD 136 A, BD 124; see the forthcoming publication HAT 12.
7 P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset, BD 69, BD 121, BD 124; see the forthcoming publication HAT 12.
The rightward orientation in the vignettes to chapters 91, 92, 93, 98 or 117, which signals a Memphite tradition, is not a reliable argument, as P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset shows the same orientation. Nor does the argument in favour of a distinctive provenance, the repetition of spells or their absence, work with respect to P. BM EA 10558 due to the generally consistent source document from which the two papyri derive (Mosher 1992, 156–57). Nevertheless, Mosher proposes an argument that may indeed indicate a Memphite provenance for P. BM EA 10558. This is the illustration to chapter 143. In accordance with some other Memphite documents, P. BM EA 10558 shows the full-scale vignette in three registers, as stated by Mosher (1992, 153) for the Memphite tradition. This vignette is lacking in P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset. In favour of a Memphite origin may be the concluding passages of P. BM EA 10558: the fact that chapters 163–164–165 follow chapter 162, a phenomenon hitherto known from the Memphite P. Louvre N. 3091 and P. Vatican 48832 (Gasse 2001). Mosher (1992, 158–69) goes so far as to select P. BM EA 10558 as one of the basic documents of the Memphite version for the synopsis of chapter 163. These statements do not contradict the evidence for a Memphite origin of P. BM EA 10558.

An iconographic detail, observed by Kockelmann (2008, 197–98) in his handbook of mummy bandages, is the missing spike on top of the Iun-pillar in BD chapter 75 (Fig. 13), attested so far only in Memphite documents, both in papyri and on mummy bandages.

When one compares P. BM EA 10558 with contemporary papyri, it becomes evident that its vignettes do not show the same polychromatic colouring attested in Theban documents which include vignettes (Fig. 12a). In P. BM EA 10558, only the black outlines survive and in rare cases also some red-coloured strokes for rendering details like branches or fire (Fig. 14a). The contrast in impression is extreme. A lack of polychromatic colouring can also be observed in P. Vatican 48832 and later Memphite documents.8

Another feature relating to the vignettes is noteworthy: the figures do not show the slender characters, overlength and elongated forms that are one of the typical stylistic features of the Theban Dynasty 26 style (Fig. 15). This is where P. BM EA 10558 differs from the twin manuscript, that of the Theban P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset.

But the crucial factor that supports the hypothesis of a Memphite workshop is a small but very important stylistic detail. In scenes where a figure is depicted in the gesture of adoring with two arms raised or with arms bent forward, often only one shoulder can be seen, while the other is concealed by the socket of its arm, so that the line from the neck to the back is rendered in profile (Fig. 16). This is a feature often attested in the Old Kingdom that was revived in the Late Period; it was frequently used in the Memphite area, while it occurs in Upper Egypt only in exceptional cases (Munro 1993, 156–57).

If one accepts a Memphite provenance for P. BM EA 10558 and assigns it to Dynasty 26, one is confronted by the evidence of a text transfer between Thebes and Memphis and we need to explain how this text transfer took place. The question must be asked: did the source document derive from Thebes from whence it was exported to Memphis, or vice versa?

There is no doubt among scholars that an exchange of model manuscripts between libraries in the two areas existed. Verhoeven (2001, 341) assumes that there was a regular exchange of manuscripts between the libraries of Thebes, Memphis and other smaller sites in Egypt, especially at a time when the priests were heavily occupied in copying earlier monuments and

8 E.g., P. Khonsu-iw or P. Cairo CG 40029.
documents.

More explicitly, Rössler-Köhler states that Thebes developed from the beginning as a religious centre for composing Book of the Dead texts in Dynasty 18 and even before. During the Third Intermediate Period and later, the city also remained the centre of the Book of the Dead tradition, its maintenance and recension. Rössler-Köhler (1991, 279–80) provides four examples of a text transfer from Thebes to Memphis during Dynasties 18 and 19.

In her research on the tradition of Coffin Texts in the Late Period, Gestermann (2005, Teil 1: Text. 403, 435) refers to the earliest occurrence of Coffin Texts at the end of Dynasty 25 in Thebes, where high-ranking individuals such as the owner of TT 33, Pa-di-Amen-opet, had access to archives and were able to provide their tombs with a collection of Coffin Texts, Book of the Dead spells and other religious texts. Systematic research and investigation by the priests must have taken place prior to this time. From Thebes, these texts found their way to the necropolis of Saqqara, where shortly afterwards the high official Bak-en-renef also equipped his tomb with Coffin Texts. In the case of the transfer of Coffin Texts, all available information points to a transfer from Thebes to the north. In accordance with the transfer of the Coffin Texts, we may assume also a Theban redaction and a transfer to the north for the Book of the Dead, a theory that can be supported by a further argument: most of the manuscripts of Dynasty 26, the period when the recension must have taken place, derive from Thebes. Their layout is derivative of Theban manuscripts of Dynasty 18. More precisely, they copied a layout that was used only in a very limited phase: from the time of Hatshepsut/Thutmosis III to the first years of Amenhotep II. This time had a particularly strong influence on the textual compositions in tombs of the Late Period, such as those in the tombs of Basa or Ibi (Gestermann 2005, 446, n. 1791), and was regarded by later generations as one of the most prosperous and glorious epochs—one of the ‘golden ages’ of Egyptian history—which they wished to revive. Thus, the adoption of a Theban layout for newly arranged manuscripts strongly indicates a Theban source for the Saite recension.

In conclusion, the occurrence of a document produced in a Memphite workshop, but with distinctive features in common with a Theban manuscript, can only signify a transfer of the model copy from Thebes to Memphis. In addition to the four examples of a text transfer in Dynasties 18 and 19, a fifth example now corroborates the evidence for a transfer from Thebes to Memphis.

Cover image. P. BM EA 10558.10

Bibliography
Dabrowska-Smektala, E. 1966a. Coffins found in the area of the Temple of Tuthmosis III at Deir el-Bahari. BIFAO 66: 171–82.


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<th>Manuscript/Location</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
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<td>early Dynasty 26$^1$</td>
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<td>P. Nehem-su-Mut (\textit{Hm-sw-Mwt})</td>
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<td>P. Turn 1842</td>
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<td>P. Taweret (\textit{Tsw-irit})</td>
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<td>Dynasty 26$^{18}$</td>
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Table 1: List of Dynasty 26 manuscripts.

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1 Verhoeven 2001, 17.
4 Verhoeven 2001, 17, 71.
5 Verhoeven 2001, 18–19.
6 Evidence from its script, Mosher 2008, 238, n. 4.
7 Mother of Djed-khi.
9 Wife of Djed-khi.
11 Leblanc and Nelson 1997, 75, fig. 12.
12 Verhoeven 2001, 18, 72; 1993, 3–12.
13 Allen 1960, 14; Verhoeven 2001, 18, 72–73.
14 Verhoeven 2001, 18.
15 Verhoeven 2001, 18, 73–74.
17 Strong similarity in sequence and motifs of vignettes with P. Ta-sheeret-en-Asct.
18 Verhoeven 2001, 308–18.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
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<td>150    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>151    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>152    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>153    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>154    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>155    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>156    135</td>
<td>102V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Sequence of spells on P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset (Theban) and P. BM EA 10558 (‘Memphite’). Breaks within the numerically ascending order of the spells are indicated in red.
Fig. 1a: Fragments of P. Ta-ther-en-Aset in Cairo.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 1b: Fragments of P.Ta-sheret-en-Aset in Cairo.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 2: BD 1 with the names completed afterwards.
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Fig. 3: Fragments of P. Djed-khi in Cairo.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 4: Fragments of P. Taweret in Cairo.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 5: Reconstructed section of P. Ta-šeret-en-Aset.
Fig. 6a: Vignettes BD 72 and 73 of P. BM EA 10558.10

Fig. 6b: Vignettes BD 72 and 73 of P. Ta-sheret-en-Azet.
Fig. 7a: Vignette BD 80 of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset.

Fig. 7b: Vignette BD 80 of P. BM EA 10558.9.

Fig. 8a: Vignette BD 63 of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset.

Fig. 8b: Vignette BD 63 of P. BM EA 10558.10.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 9a: Vignette BD 110 of P.Ta-sheret-en-Aset.
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Fig. 9b: Vignette BD 110 of P. BM EA 10558.15.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 10a: Vignette BD 122 of P. Ta-sheret-en-Aset.

Fig. 10b: Vignette BD 122 of P. BM EA 10558.14.
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Fig. 11a: Vignettes BD 68 and 91 of P. BM EA 10536.14.

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_15/munro.aspx
Fig. 12a: Vignette BD 71 of P. Ta-šeret-en-Aset.

Fig. 12b: Vignette BD 71 of P. BM EA 10558.13.

Fig. 13: Missing spike of Iun-pillar in Vignette BD 75 of P. BM EA 10558.8.

Fig. 14: Colouring of P. BM EA 10558.10; outlines in black, some details in red.

Fig. 15: Theban style, shown in Vignette BD 145 of P. Djed-khi.

Fig. 16: Rendering of the shoulders in the Memphite P. BM EA 10558.10.