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Olaf E. Kaper

A Kemyt Ostracon from Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis

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A *Kemyt* Ostracon from Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis

OLAF E. KAPER

Archaeological Context

Amheida, located in the western end of Dakhleh Oasis, is a large settlement site that contains archaeological remains from all historical periods of antiquity. Since 2004, excavations have been conducted at this site, bringing to light important remains from the 4th century AD and earlier.[1] The presence of a pharaonic temple at the site was known already previously from the presence on the surface of a block of temple relief and a scatter of stone fragments.[2] The recent excavations have identified these remains as a temple dedicated to Thoth built in pharaonic and Roman times. The temple was demolished and survives only in the form of loose blocks and fragments carrying the names of the following kings: Pedubast I, Necho II, Psametik II, Amasis, and Darius I. In the Roman period a second major building phase commenced in the reigns of Titus and Domitian, and there are the empty cartouches of an anonymous later emperor.

The temple was built at the highest point of the site, on top of earlier settlement remains. The underlying remains of mud brick walls may be dated to the Old Kingdom on the basis of

1 I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Robert J. Demarée, who discussed the ostracon with me and pointed out several unpublished parallels. Roger Bagnall and Paola Davoli read the manuscript and provided additional comments; the final version was improved thanks to the anonymous reviewer of the Ifao.

Excavations at the site are directed by R.S. Bagnall (New York University) with P. Davoli (Lecce University) as field director. For the site, cf. the general overview in R.S. Bagnall, P. Davoli, O.E. Kaper, H. Whitehouse, "Roman Amheida: Excavating a Town in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis", *Minerva* (L) 17/6, 2006, p. 26-29.

2 Located during the first survey of the site by the Dakhleh Oasis Project in 1979; cf. A.J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Second Season of Survey, September-December, 1979", *JSSEA* 10/4, 1980, p. 272, pl. XIVd.

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ceramics found with them. This early settlement at Amheida was thus contemporary with those at ʿAyn Asil and ʿAyn al-Gazzareen in Dakhleh. It is clear, however, that habitation continued in later times, as the ceramic assembly also contains material from most subsequent periods. The town may plausibly be identified with the "town of the Back of the Oasis" (*dmi ꜣ-wḥꜣt*) that is mentioned in the larger Dakhleh Stela from the time of Shoshenq I.[3] Thus far, the excavations have not progressed sufficiently to indicate the size and nature of this settlement. Also, it is not yet clear whether the earlier remains also included a temple at this location. The earliest dated remains of the temple consist of a relief block from the reign of Pedubast I and a stela from the reign of Takeloth III, both of dynasty 23.[4]

The present article focuses on a single find from the site of the later temple to Thoth. It is a New Kingdom ostracon found among rubble in an otherwise heavily disturbed context.[5]

Description [FIG. 1, 2, 3]

Excavation season: 2006.
Find spot and designation: Amheida, area 4.1 (the site of the later temple); deposition stratigraphic unit 61; inventory code 11050;[6] SCA no. 2879.
Dimensions: H. 18 × W. 15 cm; Th. 1.6 cm.
Fabric: P29 in the classification of C.A. Hope. This is a plain ware of a calcium-rich fabric from Dakhleh oasis regularly used for amphorae.

The sherd is inscribed on the convex side with 4 columns of hieratic script and a date written in black ink. The columns run perpendicular to the wheel marks; they are bordered by thin red lines that are irregularly marked by small crossing bars in the same colour.

The surface is damaged at the upper right corner and parts of the first two columns of text have disappeared. Apart from this damage, the ostracon is complete.

3 K. JANSEN-WINKELN, *Inschriften der Spätzeit*, II, *Die 22.-24. Dynastie*, Wiesbaden, 2007, p. 23 (Text no. 12.28); the translation as "Mut" still advocated in R.K. RITNER, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period*, Atlanta, 2009, p. 176 is to be amended. The toponym *ꜣ-wḥꜣt* designates Amheida and its *hinterland*; O.E. KAPER, "Egyptian Toponyms of Dakhla Oasis", *BIFAO* 92, 1992, p. 124-132; updated in O.E. KAPER, R.J. DEMARÉE, "A Donation Stela in the Name of Takeloth III from Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis", *JEOL* 39, 2005, p. 34-35.

4 Cf. O.E. KAPER, R.J. DEMARÉE, *op. cit.*, p. 19-37; The stela of Takeloth III mentions the temple of Thoth, Lord of *ꜣ-wḥꜣt*; K. JANSEN-WINKELN, *op. cit.*, p. 329 (no. 30.14). In general on the remains from the Third Intermediate Period in Dakhleh, cf. O.E. KAPER, "Epigraphic Evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period", in G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée, O.E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties*, Leiden, Leuven, 2009, p. 149-159.

5 A brief description of the temple also in P. DAVOLI, O.E. KAPER, "A new temple for Thoth in the Dakhleh Oasis", *EgArch* 29, 2006, p. 12-14.

6 In the field records of the expedition, the context is summarized as A06/4.1/61/11050.

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FIG. 1. Photograph of the Amheida ostracon.[7]

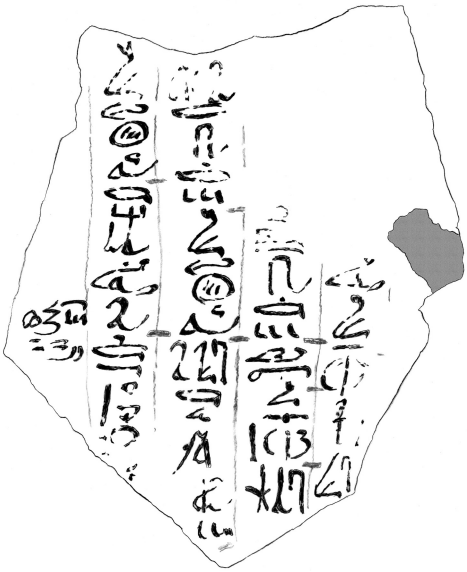


FIG. 2. Facsimile drawing.

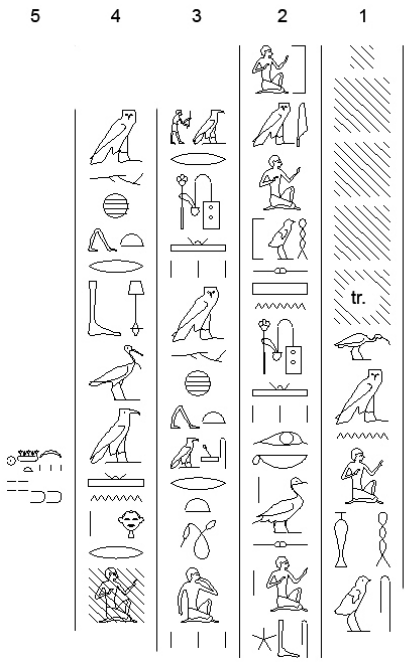


FIG. 3. Hieroglyphic transcription.

7 The photograph was taken with a UV camera by R. Ast in 2009. It has been digitally enhanced. The facsimile in figure 2 was drawn by the author from the original.

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[1] *[nḏr=f ˁ=f ḥˁ ḏ3w=ỉ*[8]*] gm.n=ỉ ḫs(y)w*
[2] *[ỉm=ỉ ḫw] sn sšw ỉr=k s3-s sb3*
[3] *r sšw m-ḫt s3rwt(=ỉ)*
[4] *m-ḫt {r} wb3 n ḫr[=ỉ]*
[5] *ỉbd 3 3ḫt sw 24*

[1] ([*Kemyt* §XVI:] …) *I found a favoured one*
[2] (*in me* / [§XV:] Pray), *open up the writings and become a wellborn son who is educated*[9]
[3] *in writings* / [§XVI:] *as a consequence of my wisdom*
[4] *and my perspicacity*.
[5] *Month 3 of the Inundation season* (*akhet*), *day 24*.

Remarks on the Writing and the Dating of the Text

There are no signs indicating the ends of sections, as would be expected in three locations in this ostracon, after *r sšw*, *s3rwt=ỉ* and *ḫr=ỉ*. Only very few parallels show this omission. The red border lines of the inscription are marked at a few places by small red bars, but these appear to be random and not related to the contents of the inscription. These marks were possibly placed to assist in drawing the vertical lines correctly.

Another notable deviation of standard practice is the colour of the date, which is in black, whereas dates are usually added in red ink.[10]

What could be the date of the Amheida ostracon? The script is particularly difficult to date, because *Kemyt* is written in a deliberate archaizing fashion. The earliest attestation of *Kemyt* was found among papyrus fragments of the late Middle Kingdom from Lahun,[11] after which school texts are attested from the 17th dynasty onwards,[12] and becoming increasingly common. Most copies date from the Ramesside period, after which the use of the text seems to have ceased. The sherd used for the exercise at Amheida is from a large jar or amphora, which may well date to the New Kingdom, but there is no information as to its shape. At this moment, a more precise dating of the Amheida ostracon within the New Kingdom is not possible.

8 Faint traces of this section do not provide enough evidence to confirm the transliteration suggested here on the basis of the parallels.

9 In this line, the translation follows the transliteration *s3-s sb3*, which occurs again in a single parallel from Thebes: O. Brux. E 3208. The three other preserved copies of this phrase read *s3 sb3*.

10 A.G. McDowell, "Student Exercises from Deir el-Medina: the Dates", in P. Der Manuelian (ed.), *Studies in honor of William Kelly Simpson*, 2, Boston, 1996, p. 603.

11 P. UCL 32271B rto published in M. Collier, St. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious, Literary, Legal, Mathematical and Medical*, *BAR-IS* 1209, 2004, p. 50-51.

12 G. Burkard, "Ein früher Beleg der Kemit (O DAN hierat 5)", in N. Kloth (ed.), *Es werde niedergelegt als Schriftstück; Festschrift für Hartwig Altenmüller zum 65. Geburtstag*, *BSAK* 9, 2003, p. 37-48. A colour photograph of this jar is published in U. Rummel (ed.), *Meeting the Past: 100 Years in Egypt, German Archaeological Institute Cairo 1907-2007*, Cairo, 2007, p. 36, no. 20.

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The Book of *Kemyt*

The text is part of the literary composition known by its ancient designation as *Kemyt*, of which it contains §XVI, and also a part of §XV in the numbering introduced by Posener in 1951.[13] Only a single papyrus fragment has been preserved with a part of *Kemyt* and there are five writing boards and an inscribed scribal palette known with a section of the text.[14] Recently, also a few graffiti have been noted with parts of the text, described further below. Astonishingly, an estimated total of over 410 *Kemyt* ostraca are known today,[15] some 340 of which were found at Deir al-Medina alone.[16] The Ifao in Cairo is said to possess more than 330 ostraca with the text, nearly all of which stem from Deir al-Medina and the remainder from other locations in the Theban West Bank.[17]

Posener first assembled the texts of eight ostraca as basis for his reconstruction of section XV of *Kemyt* and nine ostraca for section XVI.[18] In the most recent study of these sections, by Mathieu and Ritter published in 2008, the number of sources was increased to 23 ostraca.[19] Many of these ostraca, however, are damaged or otherwise incomplete and the find of a new attestation of this part of the text is significant, therefore, also because the translation is still open to improvement. Apart from the Amheida ostracon, one further ostracon from the Ifao collection has been published by A. Gasse,[20] and another unpublished ostracon is in Chicago,[21] bringing the list of sources for the sections XV and XVI of *Kemyt* currently known to 26.

In the translation above, I have chosen to follow the interpretation of Mathieu and Ritter (2008), which is based on the largest number of sources. They defined the final part of the text, sections XV-XVII, as a *microtext* of a didactic nature. However, many other interpretations of the text have been made, as listed below. Their substantial differences demonstrate the great difficulties encountered in this part of the text.

13 G. Posener, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques littéraires de Deir el Médineh,* II, *(Nos 1109 à 1167)*, 1, *DFIFAO* 18, 1951.

14 The papyrus is mentioned in n.11 above. Four writing boards with the text are listed in R. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt. A Dark Side to Perfection*, London, 2001, p.322, n. 2. A fifth was found in TT11: J.M. Galán, M. el-Bialy, "An apprentice's board from Dra Abu el-Naga", *EgArch* 25, 2004, p. 38-40. The scribal palette is published in É. Drioton, "La cryptographie par perturbation", *ASAE* 44, 1944, p. 18-22, pl. I.A.

15 V. Ritter, "La littérature à Deir el-Médineh: entre tradition et création", *Les Dossiers d'Archéologie* 272, 2002, p. 33; B. Mathieu, V. Ritter ("Les sections finales du manuel scolaire Kémyt (§ XV-XVII)", in Chr. Gallois, P. Grandet, L. Pantalacci (eds.), *Mélanges offerts à François Neveu*, *BiEtud* 145, 2008, p. 193) indicate that over 410 sources are known today, which include four writing boards, one scribal palette and a papyrus. R.J. Demarée informs me that he knows of at least seven further unpublished *Kemyt* ostraca in various collections.

16 A. Gasse, *Catalogue des ostraca littéraires de Deir al-Médîna,* V, *Nos 1775-1873 et 1156*, *DFIFAO* 44, 2005, p. 86, n. 20.

17 A. Gasse, *op. cit.,* p. 86, n.17.

18 G. Posener, *op. cit.*

19 B. Mathieu, V. Ritter, *op. cit.,* p. 196-197; their additions are the following: O. DeM inv. 2573; O. DeM C 6139; O. DeM C 277; O. DeM C 1577; O. Michael. 78; O. Turin CG 57554. Posener had already listed the following ostraca with sections XV or XVI: O. Brux. E 3208; O. Brux. E 7627 rto; O. Cairo JE 54949; O. Cairo JE 56842; O. DeM 1145 vso; O. DeM 1153 rto; O. DeM 1157; O. DeM 1158; O. DeM 1159; O. DeM 1161 vso; O. DeM 1162; O. DeM 1163; O. DeM 1164; O. DeM 1165; O. DeM 1166; O. DeM 1167; O. MMA 36112 vso.

20 This is O. DeM 1873. B. Mathieu, V. Ritter, *op. cit.,* did not know of this publication at the time of writing, as their most recent bibliographic source dates from 2004.

21 O. Chicago OIM 16992, containing sections XIV-XVI. I owe knowledge of this piece to R.J. Demarée, who provided me with a transcription from his notebooks.

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Published Translations of Sections XV-XVI

Brunner 1957	O Schreiber (?), Du sollst dir einen „Sohn“ machen, der von vornherein zu den nützlichen Schriften erzogen wird. Mich hat mein Vater ebenfalls zu den nützlichen Schriften erzogen, die ihm überkommen waren. … Ich habe dann gefunden, dass man mich gelobt hat, nachdem ich weise geworden war (?), nachdem mein Gesicht geöffnet worden war.[22]
Barta 1978	Ach öffne deine Schriften denn du sollst einen Schüler annehmen (wörtlich: einen Sohn machen) der erzogen wird zu den nützlichen Schriften. Am Anfang auch mich hatte erzogen mein Vater zu den nützlichen Schriften seines Vorfahren. Er faßte meine Hand wegen des Bösen (um ihn vor Ablenkungen zu bewahren). Ich fand daß ich gelobt wurde dabei (beim Lernen). Danach (jedenfalls) war ich klug; danach war mein Gesicht geöffnet.[23]
Wente 1990	Pray, open up your papyrus scrolls and become a son who is educated in texts profitable from the start, as my father educated me in texts profitable even before him, so that he checked himself from wrongdoing (?). I found that this favoured one that I am was impelled ahead as a consequence of my wisdom and my perspicacity.[24]
Dakin 1992	Do open your books so that you can produce a “son” well instructed about books, a credit to you in my sight, as my “father” instructed me about books to be a credit to his predecessors. Let him hold back his hand from crime (comment: this is perhaps the most difficult section - and perhaps my most risky suggestion). I found there was in me something people praised (lit. I found a praised man in me), but it was a blow to my self-esteem (lit. my face was struck) when I was shown the truth and my eyes were opened.[25]
Brunner 1998	Öffne doch deine Bücher, denn du sollst (dereinst) einen Schüler (wörtlich Sohn) annehmen, der erzogen wird zu den nützlichen Schriften, an der Spitze (seiner Altersgenossen). Auch mich hat mein Vater erzogen zu den nützlichen Schriften seines (geistigen?) Ahnherrn. Er packt seine Hand wegen meiner Unart, und ich fand, daß ich dabei gelobt wurde, auch wenn mein Gesicht geschlagen wurde. Danach aber war ich weise, danach war mein Blick geöffnet.[26]
Parkinson 2002 (part only)	O open your book! Make yourself a son who is taught according to books![27]
Quirke 2004	Persevere (?) in writing, and when you have a son, instruct in writings, the benefit from before me, as my father instructed me in writings, a benefit from upon his hands. He exercises his arm on the bad pupil: I have found (how to be) praised there; he is struck after need, after opening up to my sight.[28]
Peust 2006	[Anrede an den Schüler durch seine Eltern oder den Lehrer:] Hoffentlich öffnest du die Schriftrollen (var. deine Schriftrollen) und wirst ein Sohn, der zum Schreiben ausgebildet ist! [Antwort des Schülers:] Mir steht nützliches bevor, (denn) mein Vater hat mich zum schreiben ausgebildet, was (schon) seinen Vorfahren nützlich war. Er (der Schreiber) kann seine Tätigkeit auch in Bedrängnis beibehalten. Ich habe festgestellt, was für ein Begünstigter ich bin, der (früher) ins Gesicht geschlagen wurde, (jetzt) nachdem ich weise geworden bin und nachdem mir die Augen geöffnet sind.[29]

22 H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, Wiesbaden, 1957, p. 158.

23 W. Barta, “Das Schulbuch Kemit”, *ZÄS* 105, 1978, p. 13.

24 E.F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, *Writings from the Ancient World* 1, 1990, p. 16.

25 A.N. Dakin, “Kemit: a revised translation with material for a commentary”, in *Atti; Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia*, 1, 2nd ed., Turin, 1992, p. 466.

26 H. Brunner, *Die Weisheitsbücher der Ägypter. Lehren für das Leben*, 2nd ed., Düsseldorf, Zürich, 1998, p. 369.

27 R.B. Parkinson, *Poetry and Culture*, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 324.

28 St. Quirke *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC. Questions and Readings*, *GHP Egyptology* 2, 2004, p. 54; the same is published on the website of UCL: www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/literature/kmyt.html.

29 C. Peust, “Das Lehrstück Kemit”, in M. Lichtenstein (ed.), *TUAT N.F.*, *3: Briefe*, 2006, p. 312-313.

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Burkard and Thissen 2007 (part only)	Ach, öffne deine Schriften und werde ein Sohn (=Schüler), der erzogen ist in den Schriften, die nützlich sind von Anfang an. (Auch) mein Vater hatte mich erzogen zu den Schriften, die (schon) für seine Vorfahren nützlich waren […].[30]
Mathieu and Ritter 2008	C'est ma volonté : ouvre tes écrits ! Tu deviendras un fils instruit dans les écrits : ce te sera utile face à moi. Si mon père m'a instruit dans les écrits, c'est que c'était déjà utile avant lui. Tandis qu'il pointait du doigt ma faute, j'ai compris que j'étais un privilégié. Son attention s'est portée sur mes capacités intellectuelles et sur mon discernement.[31]
Popko 2010	Ach, breite die Schriften aus, indem du (wie) ein Sohn bist [?]; oder: schaffe dir einen Sohn [?]), ausgebildet gemäß (?) den Schriften, die in meiner Anfangszeit (?) nützlich waren! Mein Vater erzog mich gemäß den Schriften, die nützlich waren für (?) seinen Vorfahren (?). (Pause-Zeichen: Strophenende) Beim Unrechttun packt er (?) seine (eigene [?]) Hand. Ich fand, dass <ich> da belohnt wurde (?), (auch wenn) {sein} <mein> Gesicht geschlagen wurde (?) trotz (wörtl.: nach) meiner Klugheit und obwohl ich erfahren war (wörtl.: nach dem Öffnen meines Gesichtes). (Pause-Zeichen: Strophenende).[32]

The genre to which *Kemyt* belongs is difficult to define because it shares characteristics with several genres. It is usually classified as a kind of literary letter, as does Wente, but Brunner and Assmann grouped it among the instructions.[33] In fact, the work contains elements from letter writing, (auto)biography, instruction and narrative. The contents may be described as a compilation of different types of exercise sentences taken from various types of text that the Egyptian official might encounter. We may distinguish four independent parts in *Kemyt*: sections I-VIII contain greetings used in letter-writing; IX-XI contain a narrative concluding with a letter; XII-XIV have a selection of phrases drawn from the genre of ideal biography;[34] and XV-XVII are drawn from the wisdom texts or instructions.[35]

The text was divided into 17 sections in nearly all copies of the text by the insertion of horizontal bars and sometimes also the sign for "pause", "end" (*grḥ*).[36] These marks were the equivalents of verse points in horizontally written hieratic.[37] It is noteworthy that the Amheida ostracon has no dividing marks, as in only few other examples of *Kemyt*.[38]

30 G. Burkard, H.J. Thissen, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte*, I, *Altes und Mittleres Reich*, *Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie* 1, 2nd ed., 2007, p. 201.

31 B. Mathieu, V. Ritter, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

32 L. Popko, on *Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae* on http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/ (Altägyptisches Wörterbuch, Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften > Varia > Kemit), accessed 21 April 2010.

33 J. Assmann, "Cultural and Literary Texts", in G. Moers (ed.), *Definitely: Egyptian literature. Proceedings of the Symposion 'Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms', Los Angeles, March 24-26, 1995*, *LingAeg Studia monographica* 2, 1999, p. 9.

34 E.F. Wente (D.B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, 2001, 2, p. 227, *s.v.* "Kemit") distinguished only three parts, taking the sections XII-XVII together, as did J.-L. Chappaz ("Remarques sur un exercise scolaire", *BSEG* 13, 1989, p. 33-43), who divided the text into sections I-V: "salutations et voeux"; VI-XI "récit"; XII-XVII "formules loyalistes". W. Barta (*ZÄS* 105, 1978, p. 6-14) distinguished three parts: A "Die Begrüßungsformeln"; B "Die Erzählung" and C "Die Sentenzen".

35 My division in four parts corresponds to that in V. Ritter, *Les Dossiers d'Archéologie* 272, 2002, p. 33 and B. Mathieu, V. Ritter, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

36 On this sign, see A. Erman, *Neuaegyptische Grammatik*, I, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1933, §57.

37 O. DeM 1116 and O. DeM 1117 employ verse points instead of bars, see G. Posener, *Catalogue des ostraca littéraires* II, *op. cit.*, 1951, pl. 1. On verse points in the Ramesside didactic texts, see N. Tacke, *Verspunkte als Gliederungsmittel in ramessidischen Schülerhandschriften*, *SAGA* 22, 2001.

38 The only parallel for the final part of the text without division marks is O. MMA 36112 vso of the 18th dynasty from Thebes, published in W.Chr. Hayes, "A Much-Copied Letter of the Early Middle Kingdom", *JNES* 7, 1948, pl. III.

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The Text as an Educational Tool

The word *kemyt* is the designation for the text or its title.[39] The work was used in the education of officials, and the frequently irregular handwriting upon the ostraca shows that it was one of the first texts to be taught in this particular form of the script. It has been aptly called "the oldest school book in world literature".[40] Chappaz has shown how well the text had been conceived didactically, making up for the lack of internal cohesion in its contents.[41]

The word *kemyt* has been translated as "summation" or "completion" by Wente,[42] and similarly as "Abschluß, Vollendung" by Peust.[43] These translations suggest that the text may have served as a kind of student examination. However, the vast majority of *Kemyt* ostraca preserve only the beginning of the text. Peust and also Gasse concluded from this that most students would focus on repeating the beginning and that only very few would write the text as a whole.[44] It is significant to realize that the same phenomenon is observed more generally in Egyptian literary texts,[45] and that this reflects common practices in teaching rather than examination. Parkinson has opted for the translation "compendium", which draws attention to the diverse contents of the work, which was apparently principally employed in the early stages of literacy classes. Another translation was proposed by Brunner already in 1957, who took the grammatical form of *kmyt* into account. In his view, the term should be translated as the passive "completed" or "perfected", and this refers to the state of the pupil after he had mastered the work of that name.[46]

The script employed for *Kemyt* is always hieratic that leans towards the cursive hieroglyphic script. This resembles the hieratic of the early Middle Kingdom,[47] and it is normally written in archaic fashion in columns. Often red lines separate the columns, as also here. The use of horizontal lines is only very rarely encountered in copies of *Kemyt*.[48] These features are explained by the conservative nature of the Egyptian administration, which valued its traditions. Mathieu has recently taken position against the accepted view that the practicing of hieratic in

39 H. Brunner (*LÄ* III, 1980, col. 383, *s.v.* "Kemit") rejects the possibility that *Kemyt* could be the title of the work, but the latter option is now made more likely by the findings in Assiut; U. Verhoeven, ("Von der 'Loyalistischen Lehre' zur 'Lehre des Kaïrsu': eine neue Textquelle in Assiut und deren Auswirkungen", *ZÄS* 136, 2009, p. 88) remarks that the literary texts written on the walls of tomb Assiut N13.1, all start with a title. Since there are two copies of *Kemyt* among these texts, as Ursula Verhoeven has kindly confirmed to me, it is possible that the title of the work was included also here.

40 H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, *op. cit.,* 1957, p. 83; A. Grimm, "*Kmjt* - Texte: zwei Ostraca littéraires d'un type particulier der Staatlichen Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst München", in D. Kessler, R. Schulz (eds.), *Gedenkschrift für Winfried Barta*, *MÄU* 4, 1995, p. 165.

41 J.-L. Chappaz, *BSEG* 13, 1989, p. 33-43.

42 E.F. Wente, in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 2, 2001, p. 227.

43 C. Peust, in *TUAT* 3: *Briefe*, 2006, p. 309.

44 A. Gasse, *Catalogue des ostraca littéraires* V, *op. cit.,* 2005, p. 86; C. Peust, *ibid.*

45 B. Mathieu, V. Ritter, *op. cit.,* p. 194. The occurrence of the opening of a work far more than any other part may also be observed in Greek literary school texts, as R.S. Bagnall informs me.

46 H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, *op. cit.,* 1957, p. 83.

47 This is especially noticeable in the shape of the sign Gardiner A1 = Möller no. 33; cf. the remarks by Posener, in B. van de Walle, *La transmission des textes littéraires égyptiens avec une annexe de G. Posener*, Brussels, 1948, p. 41.

48 Two examples are cited in A.N. Dakin, in *Atti; Sesto Congresso*, *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 471: O. BM 5641 vso. and O. DeM 1129, both containing section V.

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vertical columns would pose advantages for beginning students.[49] Instead, he sees the practice of *Kemyt* as a study in calligraphy, in which more advanced pupils would be familiarized with earlier writing styles.

McDowell has studied the ostraca from Deir al-Medina containing dates.[50] Over 100 ostraca are known with at least one date, which is less than one tenth of the total of student exercises. Usually they were written in red at the end of a chapter of the text. According to Brunner, the dates were normally written by the same hand as the main text, but this has been disputed by McDowell.[51] The purpose of the dates is not exactly clear. Were they tutor's check marks or were they intended to keep track of the copied passages and perhaps keep them in order?[52] The later Greek school exercises also contained dates similar to these, but they seem to be exclusive to the models that the instructors prepared to be copied.[53] There is no evidence that the same system was employed at Deir al-Medina.

As in the Amheida ostracon, most exercises are dated to a weekday (days 1-8) rather than a weekend (days 9-10). Day 24 was a weekday in the third week of the month.[54] In the case of the Deir al-Medina ostraca, the find spot for nearly all of them was close to the village, rather than at the work place in the Valley of the Kings. McDowell concluded from this that the education in Deir al-Medina took place on days off, when all the men were at home, mainly in the later part of a king's reign.[55]

In his study of the wisdom literature, Burkard has shown that the texts were usually copied individually by the pupil, not dictated.[56] This means that copying was an individual activity and not carried out in a class situation, as is also suggested by the lack of shared dates on the ostraca. The Amheida ostracon has a contribution to make to this discussion.

In the Amheida ostracon, the scribe has mixed up the usual order of the sentences in his exercise. The internal parts of sections XV and XVI have been changed around and with that, the meaning of the sentence was lost completely. This confirms Burkard's observation that the texts were never dictated by the teacher to the pupil. According to Burkard the reasons for deviating from the standard text were always the result of a mistaken understanding,[57] and this seems to be the case also here. The mixed-up sentences are now without sense, but even the

49 B. Mathieu, "La littérature égyptienne sous les Ramsès d'après les ostraca littéraires de Deir el-Médineh", in G. Andreu (ed.), *Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois: la vie en Égypte au temps des pharaons du Nouvel Empire*, Paris, 2003, p. 117-137, esp. p. 121.

50 A.G. McDowell, in *Studies Simpson*, *op. cit.,* 1996, p. 603.

51 H. Brunner, *Altägyptische Erziehung*, *op. cit.,* 1957, p. 76; A.G. McDowell (*op. cit.,* p. 604) disagreed because of the location of the dates, which is often out of line with the main text.

52 A.H. Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Stories*, XIII-XV; G. Posener, "Les ostraca numérotés et le Conte du Revenant", in *Drevnij Vostok*, 1975, p. 108.

53 R. Cribiore, *Writing, teachers, and students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Atlanta, 1996, p. 88, 90.

54 Although the weekdays were not always working days, cf. the evidence collected in H. Jauhiainen, *"Do Not Celebrate Your Feast Without Your Neighbours": a Study of References to Feasts and Festivals in Non-Literary Documents from Ramesside Period Deir el-Medina*, *Publications of the Institute for Asian and African Studies* 10, 2009, p. 58-63. The same date of the Amheida ostracon, III akhet 24, was once used for a gathering of the *ḫnbt* at Deir al-Medina, which did usually not coincide with a working day; cf. S.P. Vleeming, "The days on which the *ḫnbt* used to gather", in R.J. Demarée, Jac.J. Janssen (eds.), *Gleanings from Deir el-Medîna*, *EgUit* 1, 1982, p. 185.

55 A.G. McDowell, in *Studies Simpson*, *op. cit.,* 1996, p. 605.

56 G. Burkard, *Textkritische Untersuchungen zu ägyptischen Weisheitslehren des Alten und Mittleren Reiches*, *Äg.Abh* 34, 1977, p. 68-71, 142-145.

57 G. Burkard, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

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conventional version was already difficult to understand as appears from the widely divergent translations in modern times, cited above. A deliberate rearrangement of the text is certainly to be excluded, but then what is the explanation for this obvious mistake?

Burkard has concluded that the school texts were always copied after written examples,[58] so that we may perhaps assume that the scribe got lost in his *Vorlage* and jumped back one or two columns before realizing his mistake. After commencing with the first line of section XVI, the scribe jumped back to the beginning of XV, of which he wrote only the first line, after which he continued with section XVI as if no mistake had been made. Instead of the expected *ḥw n ḥr=ỉ* or *ḥw ḥr=f*, the scribe wrote *ḥw sn sšw ỉr=k sꜣ-s sbꜣ r sšw*. This mistake seems, however, not to be a mere visual error of the scribe. The mistake is being made while he is in the middle of a sentence in section XVI, and he switches back to a sentence from the beginning of section XV. Even though this *Kemyt* ostracon does not have the section separators found in other copies, it is remarkable that a copyist would switch from the middle of one sentence to the beginning of another that looks entirely different. It is significant that there are no similar looking words or signs at the end of section XIV that would explain the confusion as an error of vision.

The mistake may be more plausibly understood as a memory mistake, resulting from the homophonous first words of the confused passages: both transliterated as *ḥw*. This being the case, the ostracon speaks against the assumption that the texts were copied from a written *Vorlage* directly. The text seems to have been memorized by the pupil and at the beginning of a particularly obscure subsidiary clause in the text, he continued inadvertently with a previous passage that started with a similar sounding word. The scribe worked mechanically and seems not to have noticed that his text did not make sense anymore until he had completed nearly a full column. At that moment, he realized his mistake, dipped in his brush and continued with section XVI, leaving out a few words to cover up his slip. He then wrote correctly until the end and closed with the date of his exercise as if nothing had happened.

This was a typical failure of memory rather than a copy mistake. Already Barns, in his commentary on the highly corrupted Sinuhe ostracon in Oxford observed "In the case of phonetic errors one suspects that dictation has played a part …; this, however, is not necessary; for a text learned by heart, by ear and without comprehension, will produce just such errors when the learner writes it down."[59] Burkard cited Barns in agreement, concluding that the texts were either copied from a *Vorlage* directly or memorized and written down from memory.[60] The Amheida ostracon is a specific case of the latter, and it provides an argument for reassessing the role of memory in scribal education.

58 G. Burkard, in *Festschrift Altenmüller*, *op. cit.,* 2003, p. 46.

59 J.W.B. Barns, *The Ashmolean Ostracon of Sinuhe*, London, 1952, p. 35.

60 G. Burkard, *Textkritische Untersuchungen*, *op. cit.,* 1977, p. 144.

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Kemyt and the National Curriculum

Thus far, the *Kemyt* ostraca have been found in large numbers in Thebes. Yet, this was not the only place where the text was used in education. The oldest attestation of the text, P. UCL 32271B recto, was found at Lahun.[61] Two ostraca have been found at Amarna, containing sections IV and VII respectively.[62] Their editor, Fairman, felt compelled to make an exception of these two pieces when he suggested their date to be "possibly Ramesside", because of the parallels known to him, even when all other textual material at Amarna was contemporary with the city's habitation.[63] Because more copies of *Kemyt* from the early New Kingdom have come to light, a dating of *Kemyt* copies to the Amarna period is no longer a problem today.[64] One of the Amarna ostraca contains the addition of a date: "day 16", which is a valuable indication that the text was part of the training of an apprentice scribe at Amarna.[65]

A single *Kemyt* ostracon, containing section VIII, has been found at Saqqâra outside the tomb of Horemheb.[66] It has been dated to the 19th dynasty. In the neighbouring tomb of Ptahemwia at Saqqâra, discovered by the Leiden mission in 2007, a graffito was written in red ink on the southern wall of the entrance to the northern chapel by an inexperienced scribe, which contains the first line of *Kemyt*.[67] Even more recently, two similar graffiti of the first line of *Kemyt* have been found at Assiut, among a series of literary graffiti on the walls of tomb N13.1 of the nomarch Iti-ibi(-iqer) of the 11th dynasty. The graffiti in this tomb are all of New Kingdom date, from the 18th as well as 19th dynasty.[68]

A single ostracon with *Kemyt* is known from outside Egypt, found in 1930 at Kuban in Lower Nubia.[69] It contains parts of the sections III and IV. The fortress of Kuban had been reoccupied in Ramesside times, and Černý dated the ostracon to that period.

The Amheida find now adds a further locality where *Kemyt* was being used in the scribal training. The ostracon was found among the remains of the later temple of Thoth. Even though there is no evidence as yet for a New Kingdom temple at this same location, as mentioned above, it is conceivable that the *Kemyt* was practiced around a temple building. Some schools are known to have been located within a temple enclosure. The temple of Mut at Karnak is

61 P. UCL 32271B rto published in M. Collier, St. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri*, 2004, p. 50-51.

62 O.EA 329 and O.EA 330; J.D.S. Pendlebury, *City of Akhenaten, Part III: The Central City and the Official Quarters*, EES *ExcMem* 14, 1951, 1, p. 162, 2, pl. 97.

63 H.W. Fairman, in *City of Akhenaten, Part III*, 1951, p. 160.

64 Cf. J. Osing, "School and Literature in the Ramesside Period", in *L'impero ramesside; convegno internazionale; in onore di Sergio Donadoni*, *Vicino Oriente* 1, 1997, p. 133; R.B. Parkinson, "The Teaching of King Amenemhat I at el-Amarna: BM EA 57479", in A. Leahy (ed.), *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H.S. Smith*, London, 1999, p. 222.

65 A.G. McDowell, "Teachers and Students at Deir el-Medina", in R.J. Demarée, A. Egberts (eds.), *Deir el-Medina in the Third Millennium AD; a Tribute to Jac. J. Janssen*, *EgUit* 14, 2000, p. 231.

66 Chr.J. Eyre, in H.D. Schneider, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tutankhamûn,* II: *A Catalogue of the Finds*, Leiden, London, 1996, p. 13, no. 31, pl. I.

67 R.J. Demarée, "A Hieratic Graffito in the Tomb of Ptahemwia", *Saqqara Newsletter, Friends of Saqqara Foundation* 7, 2009, p. 11-12.

68 U. Verhoeven, *ZÄS* 136, 2009, p. 97. I thank Ursula Verhoeven for providing me with additional information about this important find.

69 W.B. Emery, L.P. Kirwan, *The Excavations and Survey between Wadi es-Sebua and Adindan 1929-1931*, Cairo, 1935, p. 529, pl. 58.1. No photograph is given, but only a facsimile. The ostracon was found in "the rubbish in the later fort ditch".

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known from inscriptions to have had a scribal school,[70] and the school at the Ramesseum has been attested archaeologically, even yielding copies of *Kemyt*.[71]

The addition of the date on the Amheida ostracon indicates that it had been written as part of the curriculum. It provides additional proof of uniformity in the training of officials in Egypt, which was already in evidence by the Memphite *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* that were commonly used in the scribal training at Thebes.[72] Apart from the *Kemyt* found at Kuban in Nubia, two ostraca with *The Teaching of Amenemhat* from the 19th dynasty have been found at Amara West (Lower Nubia), which confirms that the same country-wide syllabus was in use also there.[73] We conclude that the teaching of *Kemyt* was practiced throughout the country even as far as Nubia and the schools in the oases of the Western Desert.[74]

70 According to the biography of Bakenkhons: K*RI* III, p. 295-299; translated in E. Frood, *Biographical Texts from Ramessid Egypt*, *Writings from the Ancient World* 26, 2007, p. 43 *sq*.

71 Chr. Leblanc, "L'école du temple (ât-sebaït) et le per-ankh (maison de vie): à propos de récentes découvertes effectuées dans le contexte du Ramesseum", *Memnonia* 15, 2004, p. 93-101.

72 A.G. McDowell, in *Tribute to Janssen*, *op. cit.,* 2000, p. 230.

73 R. Parkinson, N. Spencer, "The Teaching of Amenemhat at Amara West", *EgArch* 35, 2009, p. 26.

74 A much later example of a Greek literary text used in teaching at Amheida may be cited from late antique times, see R. Cribiore, P. Davoli, D.M. Ratzan, "A teacher's dipinto from Trimithis (Dakhleh Oasis)", *JRA* 21, 2008, p. 170-191.

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