MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 117 (2018), p. 261-280

Khaled Hassan

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An 18th Dynasty Writing-Board from Saqqara in the Cairo Museum (Prophecy of Neferti – CG 25224, JE 32972)

KHALED HASSAN*

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a wooden board which is in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo containing a well-preserved copy of the Prophecy of Neferti (§ VIII: XV),[1] one of the earliest versions of this text yet known, dating back to the first half of the 18th Dynasty. It was discovered in 1897 during the excavation performed by Victor Loret around the pyramid of King Teti at Saqqara, and now stored in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo.[2]

The Cairo board measures about 36 cm wide and around 27 cm high. It is well known that most pharaonic wooden writing boards were made up of a wooden part, wrapped in linen and then covered in stucco thus forming the writing surface.[3] This seems to have been the case here, although it is apparent that the layer of linen and stucco containing the hieratic inscriptions has been re-mounted by modern conservators on a new piece of wood the same size, presumably because the original wood had rotted away.[4]

Some parts of the original layer of stucco are chipped, especially on the recto, and some of the remaining lacunae have been covered with a new layer of stucco by the conservators. There are a number of cracks on the writing surface, most of them concentrated on the verso.

* I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Frederik Hagen (Copenhagen University) for reviewing this paper and drawing my attention to many interesting points. I am also grateful to Dr. Dietrich Raue for sending me the photos of this object, Andréas Stauder and Robert Demarée for their valuable comments.

1 These chapters are based on the division by Helck 1970.

2 Daressy 1901, no. 25224. It is worth noting that several objects have been discovered along with this tablet during the investigation in this area.

3 Hagen 2013, p. 82; Eyre 2013, p. 31. For more information about the writing tablets see Vernus 1984, cols. 603–709.

4 The current state of preservation of the board is very similar to the Ashmolean wooden board (number 1964.489 a, b), where the wood had almost entirely rotted away, and the conservators re-mounted the inscribed plaster which covered the board, on two modern sheets of glass. For more details see Barns 1968, p. 71.

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The colour of the stucco is bright on the recto but not on the verso where some dark patches exist, especially down the left side. Most wooden boards had a hole on one side, probably for either suspending it or tying it to other objects.[5] It is clear that the current writing-board has a hole exactly in the middle of the right margin of the recto, although the hole is not apparent on the verso because the plaster is missing on that part.

The text is inscribed in a graceful and coherent hieratic script on both sides; the main text was written in black ink, with some insertions in red. The inscription on the recto is divided into two paragraphs forming fourteen legible and well-organized lines, while the verso is comprised of fifteen lines also divided into two paragraphs. The hieratic inscriptions on both sides contain red verse-points that are regularly used by the scribe throughout the text; however some of them are very faint and difficult to see. Most of these points are placed above the hieratic signs rather than lower down. In the same area the recto (line 11) includes a date in red ink. Such dates are often associated with scribal exercises, although they also appear in literary manuscripts that are not generally regarded as students' exercises.[6] Usually the dates are inscribed following the final chapters and most appear to have been written by the same hand as the main text.[7] Kaper stated that most of the exercises were dated on weekdays (days 1-8) rather than on a weekend (days 9-10).[8] At Deir el-Medina, most of the exercises were found near the village rather than on work sites, such as the Valley of the Kings, and this could suggest that education in Deir el-Medina was dispensed on free days, when the men were on vacation, bearing in mind that weekdays were not always workdays, especially in the later phases of a king's reign when the men often remained at home.[9]

The Cairo writing board shows palimpsest traces on the form of some hieratic signs on the right margin of the verso in addition to some ink traces visible behind the final layer of texts.[10] The advantage of the writing board as a working medium lies both in its durability for working outdoors and its suitability for reuse.[11] Thus, many writing boards show palimpsest traces, while the physical structure of the boards implies repeated use, the different phases of use may be difficult to isolate and identify.[12]

The Prophecy of Neferti presented here has been the subject of previous scholarly attention. A preliminary hieroglyphic transcription was made by Georges Daressy in the *Catalogue général*,[13] and it was also used by Wolfgang Helck in his monograph on this text.[14] However, as far as I am aware, this tablet has never been fully published, no photographs of it have been presented, and the hieratic text has never been examined. The handwriting displays a number of interesting characteristics that can be observed in some 18th Dynasty hieratic texts, especially from the earlier part of the dynasty. Certainly, the board in Cairo Museum will be a very interesting addition to the scarce hieratic palaeography of the 18th Dynasty, where only a very few sources are available, and also to texts from the Saqqara area. Palaeographic comparison with the contemporary papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B recto will also be presented.

5 Hagen 2013, pp. 82–83.
6 Hagen 2013, pp. 79–80; McDowell 1996, p. 601.
7 Kaper 2010, p. 123.
8 Kaper 2010, p. 123.
9 McDowell 1996, p. 605; Kaper 2010, p. 123.
10 Perhaps the number 4 in the right margin on the verso indicates that the earlier text was administrative (F. Hagen, personal communication).
11 Eyre 2013, p. 31.
12 Hagen 2013, p. 85.
13 Daressy 1901, no. 25224.
14 Helck 1970. Complete translation and comments also presented by Goedicke 1977.

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This article will try to link the board to its social setting, contextualizing it against other literary texts found in the Memphite region and against the backdrop of education in ancient Egypt, particularly through consideration of scribal errors and memory gaps.

TRANSLATION[15]

Recto:

[1] *Desert flocks will drink water at the river of Egypt, they will rest [on its shores …]*
[2] *The land is in turmoil, and [no one knows] what comes, what will come to pass is concealed in [my] words […]*
[3] *The land in distress, what should not be happen [men will seize weapons of warfare; the land will live in uproar • End].*
[4] *Every mouth is filled of how I wish • all happiness has vanished • the land is ruined, its fate decreed, what is destroyed (is) in what was [created], what has been [found].*
[5] *One (will) seize a man's goods, give them to a stranger • I show you the master in need, the one who was slothful now is filled, but he who was diligent has nothing, [one gives only].*
[6] *[with] hatred • to silence the mouth of the speakers • to answer […], one speaks by killing him.*
[7] *Speech falls on the heart like fire • and none can endure what issues [forth from the mouth, the land in shrunk, its rulers are many].*
[8] *Its taxes [are great] • the grain is low • the measure is large • for it is distributed as if it were abundant. As for Re, he has withdrawn [himself from men].*
[9] *He will rise at the appointment time • but none will know when noon has come • no one will discern his shadow, no face will be dazzled by seeing [him].*
[10] *No eyes will moisten with water, he will be in […] like the moon • his nightly course unchanged. •*
[11] *His rays on his face • as in the past. Day 27*
[12] *[I will show you the land] in distress • the weak is now • a strong one salutes him who saluted; I will show you lowly men in exalted position.*
[13] *[He who followed] obediently now goes his own way, men will live amidst the tombs; the wretched will be enriched; only the poor they will eat*
[14] *[bread], the slaves will be exalted, the Nome of On shall be more on earth, the birthplace of every god.*

Verso:

[1] *[… a king] will come from [the south Ameny …]*
[2] *[…] child […]*
[3] *Of Upper Egypt, he will take the [white crown …] red crown, he shall unite the [powers].*
[4] *He will satisfy the two lords with what [they] wish, with filed-circler in his fist, oar in grasp.*

15 The translation of both recto and verso are based upon the translation by LICHTHEIM 1973, pp. 139–145; SIMPSON 2003, pp. 213–220.

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[5] *The people of [his] time will rejoice, the son [of man] will make his name • forever and eternity [End].*
[6] *But those who fall into evil, those who raise the cry of rebellion, they have lowered their voices through dread of him, the Asiatics*
[7] *will fall to his sword, Libyans will fall to his flame; rebels will fall before his wrath.*
[8] *Traitors to his might • as the serpent on his brow subdues the rebels for him.*
[9] *One will build the walls of the Ruler L.P.H • to bar Asiatics from entering Egypt, they shall beg water.*
[10] *In the manner of beggars • so that their herds may drink • then will return to her throne • and chaos is [driven]*
[11] *away. • Rejoice he who may behold • he who will serve the king • the wise man will pour*
[12] *water for me, when he sees [my] prophecies fulfilled •*
[13] *They will make arrows from copper • they will seek blood as food. They will laugh gleefully over suffering, and [none]*
[14] *will weep at the death • none will lie awake fasting at the time of death • for each man's heart cares for himself alone. • None will make mourning today. • [Heart]*
[15] *has entirely turned away from it, a man sits [with his back …] while one murders another [I show you the son as enemy].*

THE PROPHECY OF NEFERTI

The Prophecy of Neferti is one of the most significant discourses in ancient Egypt, constituting the only complete example of this genre,[16] which usually forms elegies describing such events as the reversal of the Nile, death, and the transfer of power. The discourse of Neferti is a widely copied literary text dating back to the Middle Kingdom, which is regarded as a piece of political propaganda, glorifying the founder of a new dynasty.[17] The story revolves around the presentation of the great lector priest of Bastet, Neferti, to the court of King Snefru to amuse the king with a few perfect words. The king chooses to know about the future rather than the past, Neferti's composition of "imagined reality" predicting wide-ranging future chaos, the collapse of the country from a civil war and its rescue through the rise of a great king called Ameny,[18] who can be identified with Amenemhat I.[19] The only complete copy of the text is preserved on the 18th Dynasty papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B recto.[20] Excerpts and small parts are inscribed on two 18th Dynasty writing boards: Cairo CG 25224 presented here, which contains most of the second half of the composition, and tablet BM EA 5647 (fig. 1).[21] Later in the New Kingdom, it seems that this prophecy was a preferred topic for students' exercises,

16 Parkinson 2001, p. 193; Blumenthal 1982.
17 Simpson 2003, p. 214. The exact date of the prophecy is still debated; however the most likely dating is to the Middle Kingdom, contemporary with Amenemhat I or later in the 12th Dynasty, or the Second Intermediate Period. Parkinson 2001, p. 304. For more detailed information about the dating of this composition cf. Stauder 2013, pp. 337–433.
18 Lichtheim 1973, p. 139; Parkinson 2001, p. 169.
19 Parkinson 2001, p. 303.
20 Golenischeff 1913; Helck 1970; Gardiner 1914, pp. 100–106; The verso of this papyrus contains accounts dating to the reign of Amenhotep II, 18th Dynasty, cf. Golenischeff 1993; Helck 1961, pp. 890–893.
21 Gardiner 1914, p. 106; Peet 1927, pp. 91–98; Kyriakidis 1990, p. 218.

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therefore numerous Ramesside ostraca were found in the village of Deir el-Medina with this text.[22] Similarly, three hieratic graffiti of the prophecy are found on the walls of Tomb N 13.1 of the Nomarch Iti-ib-iqr at Assiut,[23] most probably written by apprentice scribes and also dating back to the 18th Dynasty.[24]



Fig. 1. Writing-board BM EA 5647, 18th Dynasty, with five lines of Prophecy of Neferti (II. b-h) visible on the left side. Kyriakidis 1990, p. 218, fig. 3.

NOTES ON THE TRANSCRIPTION

It is noteworthy that some hieratic inscriptions that no longer exist on the board were observed and recorded by W. Helck in his transcription. Thus, the hieroglyphic texts that are mentioned by W. Helck will be added to the current transcription in square brackets [ ]. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the transcription of W. Helck and the recent transcription, these are set out below:

Recto:

4. W. Helck added the word  before *ḥḏḏ*, which does not exist in the original text.[25]
6. The sign is not present in the word *sm3*.[26]
7. here are clear traces of the sign  in the word  instead of  as stated by W. Helck, and also no evidence of the sign  after .[27]
8. The dead man before the bird-sign in the word  is not attested, it could be merely a smudge.[28]

22 The updated list of these ostraca is mentioned in Mathieu 1993, p. 343, no. 43. In addition to these there are six unpublished hieratic ostraca in IFAO, cf. Gasse 1992, p. 54 and a copy published recently by Demarée 2002, p. 39, pl. 63, BM EA 65599+65600 r, containing eight incomplete lines of the prophecy.

23 Iti-ib-iqr himself lived at the very end of the First Intermediate Period. Dozens of hieratic graffiti such as visitors' graffiti, instructions, prophecies and hymns were found on the walls of his tomb. Cf. Verhoeven 2012, p. 52; Kahl, El-Khadragy, Verhoeven 2012, pp. 207–209.

24 Verhoeven 2013, p. 143; Stauder 2013, pp. 337–338.

25 Helck 1970, p. 37, X-b.

26 Helck 1970, p. 39, X-i.

27 Helck 1970, p. 42, XI-a.

28 Helck 1970, p. 42, XI-c.

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Verso:

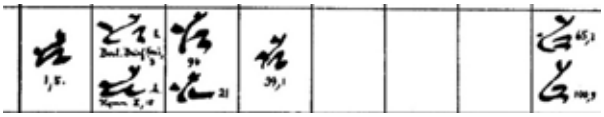
1-2. It seems that the fragments of the first two lines were positioned incorrectly during the restoration process. There is more space than expected between the lines of the text here, and there may originally have been just one line rather than two.

6. Most probably the scribe forgot the pronoun , and then added it above the duck-sign, unnoticed by W. Helck.[29]

NOTES ON THE PALAEOGRAPHY

The high quality of handwriting on the Egyptian tablets has led some scholars to suggest that these were teachers' copies rather than student exercises.[30] This board is inscribed in elegant, well-organized handwriting, and reflects the skills of the scribe who copied the text carefully. The writing size on the verso is somewhat bigger than that of the recto, where the scribe wrote in a small and thin literary hand, most probably due to the use of a thin reed-brush. The margins on the recto are very narrow and regular throughout the text, while the right margin on the verso is broad and of variable width throughout most of the text. Thus the hieratic lines on the recto are longer than the verso. As in most of 18th Dynasty hieratic texts, the scribes were inclined to write the signs in separate forms, thus ligatures are relatively infrequent, although some classic 18th Dynasty ligatures do occur e.g. . The surviving inscriptions are very clear, and for the most part legible. In light of the fact that the palaeography of this board has never been examined before, comments on the following forms are offered.

r 1: : An early and unique writing form for the goat . This sign is written two additional times on this tablet, i.e. r 10  and v 10 , in very similar but not identical forms. Characteristic forms are not attested earlier; however many other closely related forms occur in manuscripts dating shortly before the 18th Dynasty.[31]



The contemporary papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r displays a very similar form to the one on this tablet (L.52) .[32] Most examples of this sign, especially earlier ones, concentrate on its upper part, and also on the dot above the animal's back, the latter occurring in many later forms as well. Mounir Megally stated that the goat sign is one of the more difficult signs because of the delicacy of the details that distinguish it from similar signs, such as the vulture (G14) , .[33] This difficulty is apparently the reason behind its replacement with other signs as a determinative,[34] such as the diagonal stroke , or the cow's skin .[35]

29 Helck 1970, p. 52, XI-v.
30 Hagen 2013, p. 48.
31 Möller 1909, no. 139.
32 Golenischeff 1913, pl. xxv.
33 Möller 1909, no. 194.
34 Megally 1981, p. 122, n. 50.
35 *Wb* I, p. 170.

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It is noteworthy that Georg Möller in his Palaeography specified two forms of the kid (Möller II 138 , 139), and Gardiner in his sign list added one more form (E8#), representing the jumping kid, which is not found before the 19th Dynasty.[36] This leaves us with three hieroglyphic signs for goat , , . It seems that these signs are not easily recognizable for us in the hieratic, because their writings overlap with each other. The following table shows that the scribes generally used the same hieratic form for different hieroglyphic transcriptions of the goat. The goat with two long horns is sometimes written in the same form of the kid and also for the jumping kid.

It is very difficult to determine a characteristic feature that allows each sign to be easily differentiated. Most of the earlier forms are written with a dot above the goat's back. The sign of the goat is found three times in the Cairo board, one of them transcribed by W. Helck as while the others are transcribed as even although they have the same forms. The same happens in the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r. Both transcriptions and probably most of the other hieroglyphic transcriptions of these signs seem to have no sound palaeographic basis.

Sign			
Möller[37]			
Möller[38]			
St. Petersburg 1116 A, B r[39]	1116 A, l. 58	1116 B, l. 35	1116 B, l. 52
Posener[40]	1035 1203 1261 1226		
Grandet[41]			XI, 10248 X, 10016
Gasse[42]	1799		
Leitz[43]			Pl. 2, 3
Goedicke[44]	Reisner pap.		

36 Gardiner 1973, p. 459.
37 Möller 1909, no. 138.
38 Möller 1927, no. 138, 139.
39 Golenischeff 1913.
40 Posener 1934.
41 Grandet 2006; Grandet 2010.
42 Gasse 2005, p. 49, no. 1799.
43 Leitz 1999, pl. 2, l. 3.
44 Goedicke 1988, p. 9b.

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r 4: this form as is in its earlier version such as in papyrus Ebers , [45] rather than its Ramesside forms which always show a dot above the sign , , , .[46]

r 5: with the two long legs of the sky was the popular form during the first half of the 18th Dynasty ,[47] ,[48] [49], .[50]

r 8: is a unusually detailed form of especially with the additional middle tick above the back of the sign.

r 9: , a close writing form as found in the papyrus Louvre E 3226 ,[51] and in earlier sources e.g. Ebers papyrus .[52]

r 9: a typical writing of attested in the Ebers papyrus .[53]

r 10: this sign of bubalis could display the skills of the scribe in drawing such difficult and complicated ticks. In contrast, in the same word on the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r, the scribe preferred to use simply a diagonal stroke instead of writing it.[54]

r 11: , a similar form to the Ebers papyrus .[55]

v 4: this fist has similar writing technique to the form found in the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r , although not identical.[56]

v 9: Unusual form of .

v 10: : this form is very close to other 18th Dynasty handwriting especially in the two long wings ,[57] .

v 14: , is also very close to the form represented in the Ebers papyrus .[58]

EDUCATION IN ANCIENT EGYPT

According to thousands of didactic literary texts as student copies, ancient Egyptian society considered education largely as a privilege and a sure guarantee of a significant position in the state.[59] Several texts concentrate on the prestige and high status of the literate among society generally, and also in the administrative system. Apparently education was not restricted to

45 Möller 1909, no. 81.
46 Möller 1927, no. 81.
47 Megally 1981, p. 221.
48 Navrátilová 2007, pp. 39, 75.
49 Hagen 2013, p. 75.
50 Hassan 2016, p. 43.
51 Megally 1971, pl. vii.
52 Möller 1909, no. 223.
53 Möller 1909, no. 208.
54 Golenischeff 1913, pl. xxv, 53.
55 Möller 1909, no. 146.
56 Golenischeff 1913, pl. xxv, 61.
57 Hayes 1942, pl. 18, no. 87.
58 Möller 1909, no. 193.
59 Ikram 2005, p. 423.

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male members of the family; there is clear evidence, especially from Deir el-Medina, that elite and some non-elite female were literate.[60] Nevertheless, there is no definite evidence of the existence of schools for women who were, thus, presumably taught in private in very wealthy and privileged families,[61] or somewhere else such as in temples.[62] Most of our knowledge about ancient Egyptian education is derived from documents from the village of Deir el-Medina.[63] The materials from this site are the best evidence of the methods of education in Egypt as a whole. In order to teach the young boys, i.e. the students, they needed to be gathered together within a school. The earliest attestation for the word *ꜥ.t sbȝy.t* as "school" is in the tomb of the First Intermediate Period nomarch Kheti of Asyut.[64] It can be understood from the Instruction of Kheti to his son Pepy that there was a school situated at the residence, which included children of high-ranking officials and of provincial leaders such as Kheti himself. Documents of the New Kingdom tell us, similarly, that the rulers of neighbouring countries sent their children to the Egyptian court to be educated along with youths from families of middle and higher class Egyptian officials.[65] The documents and texts of the New Kingdom refer to schools in different locations of Egypt. The inscriptions on the statue of Bakenkhonsu, High Priest of Amun in the time of Ramses II, refer to a school in the Temple of Mut at Karnak.[66] It is apparent that local schools where students came home after each day's lessons existed in ancient Egypt as well. These schools appear to have had some basic structure and housed students of different ages and levels.[67] Their role was not only to teach writing but also, in some instances, skills related to warfare.[68]

Schools may have varied in nature, their curriculums differing according to the roles their students were expected to fulfill as future scribes or priests[69] and also the nature of the teachers. The colophons of the texts from Deir el-Medina could reinforce this theory and show that the tutors were draughtsmen, scribes and chief workmen.[70] Most probably the purpose of education here, i.e. in Deir el-Medina, was to qualify students for a future career in the community as workmen too. At the elementary stages of their education the students had to learn to write either whole words[71] or single signs repeated many times.[72] The students probably also learnt by chanting and singing their lessons aloud, since silent reading was unknown in ancient Egypt and that until Roman times.[73] Copying texts was a very important stage in education, students sometimes copying their texts at home.[74]

60 This includes the fact that approximately 14 % of the letters of Deir el-Medina involve women either as writers or recipients. Wente 2002, p. 314.

61 F. Hagen, personal communication.

62 Ikram 2005, p. 424.

63 McDowell 2000, p. 217. For more information about the education of women in ancient Egypt see Brunner 1991, p. 45 ff.

64 Williams 1972, p. 215; McDowell 2000, p. 217. The text reads "Now as for every scribe and every sage […] who entered the school, who may pass by this tomb-shaft or who may enter this tomb," Williams 1972, p. 215.

65 Fischer-Elfert 2001, p. 439.

66 McDowell 2000, p. 219; Bakenkhonsu mentions that he spent four years as an "excellent child" at the school of the Temple of Mut. McDowell 2000, p. 219.

67 Williams 1972, p. 215; McDowell 2000, p. 218.

68 McDowell 2000, p. 218; "He was sent to school and learned to write very well, he practiced all the arts of war," Gardiner 1932, p. 32, 10–15.

69 Fischer-Elfert 2001, p. 441.

70 McDowell 1999, p. 129; McDowell 2000, p. 230.

71 Fischer-Elfert 2001, p. 439.

72 Gasse 2005, pp. 13, 14, 17, 20.

73 Fischer-Elfert 2001, p. 439.

74 McDowell 2000, pp. 222–223.

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MEMORY GAPS

Student copies of texts were probably written down from memory by individual pupils who had learnt the text by heart beforehand. Burkard suggested that pupils usually copied their texts individually rather than receiving group dictation.[75] This component, at least, of the learning process was thus an individual rather than group activity.[76] Sometimes, the student got lost in his text and jumped back one or two columns before recognizing his fault.[77] This is what happened in the copy of Kemyt on Amheida ostracon,[78] where the scribe mixed up the usual order of the sentences in his exercise, leaving the text without meaning.[79] This could be a typical memory gap rather than a copy from a written text *Vorlage*.[80] A similar mistake was made on the current writing board; after the first three lines on the recto (§ VIIIa-VIIIf), the scribe jumped one paragraph of at least three hieratic lines (§ IXa-IXf) leaving the usual sequence of the composition disordered.[81] Interestingly, the scribe of the Cairo tablet continued his writing without any attempt to edit the text, moving on to the verso and keeping to the normal sequence of the text. On the one hand, perhaps the missing part was memorized by the scribe somewhere in the text and he preferred to add it at the end after finishing the text. On the other hand this was a mistake revealed when the text was reviewed by the teacher or by the student himself.

PAPYRUS ST. PETERSBURG 1116 B R AS "*A CONTEMPORARY MANUSCRIPT*" FROM SAQQARA

As stated previously, the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r is considered as the essential source for the Prophecy of Neferti, preserving a complete copy. The text is inscribed in six hieratic pages; each page contains about 11 lines, and the text as a whole consists of 60 horizontal lines, as well as 6 separate columns. One of these columns is inscribed in the left margin of page two (col. 23) and five columns are in the left margin of the last page in faint and clumsy handwriting (cols. 67-71). Similar columns occur also on the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 A r containing the Instruction of Merikare (cols. 118-120).[82] These columns were put in the normal sequence of the text and also represent the last section of the page, thus one could suggest that they were added by the scribe himself or by someone who reviewed the text, and there

75 Burkard 1977, pp. 124–125; Kaper 2010, p. 123.

76 McDowell 1996, p. 607; Kaper 2010, p. 123.

77 Kaper 2010, p. 124.

78 The book of Kemyt was considered as one of the most important sources for teaching in ancient Egypt, from the First Intermediate Period onwards. It has been described as "the oldest school book in the world literature." The earliest copy of this book was found in tomb no. 200 at Sheikh Faraj in Naga ed-Deir, where the text was inscribed on a broken vessel. Of the estimated total of over 410 Kemyt ostraca known today, about 340 were found in Deir el-Medina. Galán 2007, pp. 110–111; Hassan 2014, pp. 197–198. For more information about the book of Kemyt see Petersmarck 2012.

79 Kaper 2010, p. 123.

80 Kaper 2010, p. 124.

81 Another type of memory gap could result from the homophonous sound of the phonetics such as the mix up between and that occurs on HO. Cairo 308 a typical memory failure rather than a copy mistake; Hassan 2014, pp. 193–200.

82 Golenischeff 1913, pl. 13.

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not being enough space in the lower margin to write them horizontally. At the same time, the existence of these columns could be an interesting indication of the early writing of this text, where the scribe was still influenced by archaism in using the hieratic columns inside the horizontal texts. Presumably the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r formed part of a large roll with 1116 A, because their handwriting and topics are the same.[83] In contrast with the current writing board, this papyrus was written in an unorganized and untidy hand, with some writing errors also occurring thoughout the text.[84] The scribe wrote some sentences in red ink "rubric," whilst at the same time using the verso-points regularly throughout the whole text, even in the columns. The prophecy in the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r was divided into paragraphs, each opening phrase of which (prologue) started in red ink (rubric),[85] with almost every paragraph given the same number of lines. The scribe of the Cairo board was very committed to repeating these sections exactly as in the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r i.e. beginnings and endings, but without the rubrics; even the forgotten part on the writing board represents a complete paragraph as inscribed on the papyrus. This could be an interesting indication that the student of the Cairo board was learning the text by heart in paragraphs, section by section, without knowing their sequential order, and thus he forgot a complete section, not just a few words. In the satirical letter of the papyrus Anstasi I (Pap. BM 10247), the scribe Hori mocks Amenemope's wisdom, and for not knowing the right sequence of the paragraphs of the Instruction of Hordedef: "You have come loaded with great secrets, by telling me a maxim (*ḏzw*) of Hordedef and knowest not whether it be good or bad, what chapter (*ḥw.t*) comes before it?"[86] This could be another indication that such texts were learnt in paragraphs and the student needed to know the right sequence by heart.

Notwithstanding the fact that the handwriting on the Cairo board is more skillful than the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r, they both share some similar features and also display a number of common palaeographic features (as in the following table) reflective of their era i.e. the early 18th Dynasty. Rubrics were not used on the Cairo board, except for the date and the end-sign; however the scribe was committed to using the verso-points throughout the entire text and, moreover, in the same places as on the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 B r.

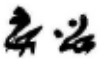
83 GARDINER 1914, p. 21. The papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 A r contains the Instruction of Merikare.

84 GARDINER 1914, p. 21.

85 GOLENISCHEFF 1913, pl. 24–25. The scribes of the New Kingdom divided literary texts into paragraphs by means of red ink (rubric). This system can also be seen in the Instruction of Merikare papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 r. Sometimes these rubrics are not judicious, but introduced automatically without regard to content; LICHTHEIM 1973, p. 98. A similar approach can be seen in the Complaints of Khakheperreseneb (Writing Board EA 5645), where the text is broken into four sections by means of short lines as dividers, although without rubrication except for the date, in red. GARDINER 1969, pl. 17–18, LICHTHEIM 1973, p. 146. The scribe of the Admonitions of Ipuwer divided his text using a small number of introductory formulae consisting of a few words or short phrases usually inscribed in red ink. GARDINER 1969, p. 5.

86 GARDINER 1911, p. 14; FISCHER-ELFERT 2007, p. 32. For more information about this letter of Hori see FISCHER-ELFERT 1983; FISCHER-ELFERT 1986.

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Hieroglyph	Pap. 1116 B r	Cairo board
		
	 L:37	
	 L:35 L:52	
	 L:38	
	 L:36	
	 L:41	
	 L:42	
	 L:35 L:42	
	 L:65	
	 L:57	
	 L:57	
	 L:63	
	 L:66	

Hieroglyph	Pap. 1116 B r	Cairo board
	L:61	
	L:43	
	L:6	
	L:47	
	L:51	
	L:52	
	L:65	
	L:55	
	L:66	
	L:21	
	L:64	

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It is noteworthy that the papyrus St. Petersburg 1116 A, B was discovered somewhere in Memphis i.e. in Saqqara,[87] and thus the two main sources of Neferti come from there. Most probably, this could play a role in shedding the light on the role of Lower Egypt, i.e. Memphis and Saqqara, in producing literary texts and as a cultural centre as compared to Upper Egypt. In addition to the Prophecy of Neferti, at least two known literary texts came from Lower Egypt, e.g. the Instruction of Merikare and the Admonitions of Ipuwer. The text of Ipuwer is preserved in a single papyrus, Leiden 344, which dates back to the 19th Dynasty and was discovered in Saqqara.[88] As far as I know there are no parallel texts or any other copies thereof. The Teaching for King Merikare was found on the same papyrus as Neferti and comes from the same place. In sum, the three abovementioned compositions probably indicate the existence of a cultural centre in this area.

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87 Gnirs 2006, pp. 207–265.

88 Gardiner 1969, p. 1; Lichtheim 1973, p. 150.

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Fig. 2. Wooden board of Cairo (CG 25224-JE 32972) (recto), photograph courtesy of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo.

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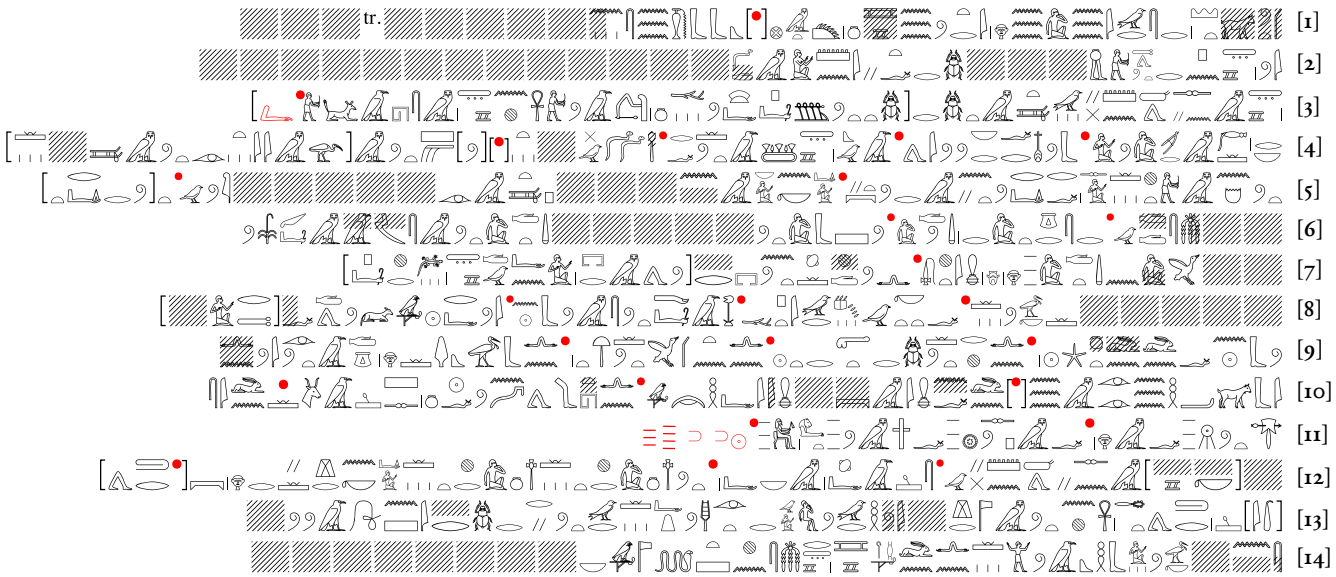


Fig. 3. Hieroglyphic transcription (recto [89]) by Kh. Hassan.

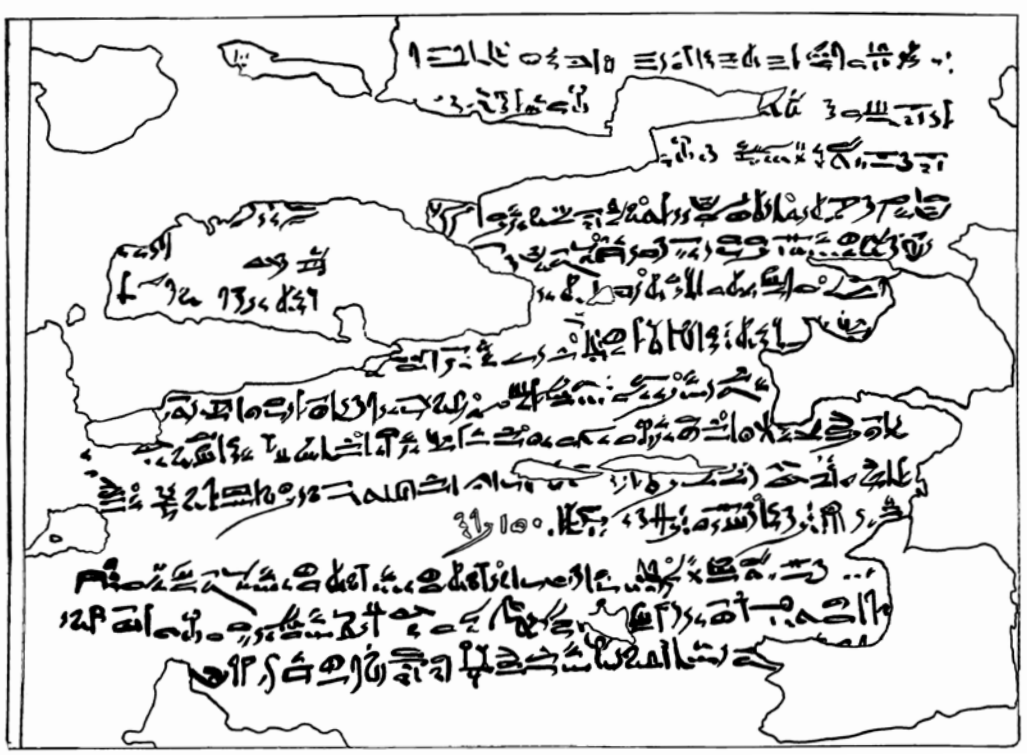


Fig. 4. Facsimile drawing (recto) by Kh. Hassan.

89 This side is marked wrongly as verso on the frame of the Egyptian Museum. It is remarkable that W. Helck in his transcription saw some more signs that no longer exist at the present time on the board, thus I would prefer to add them between square brackets in my transcription.

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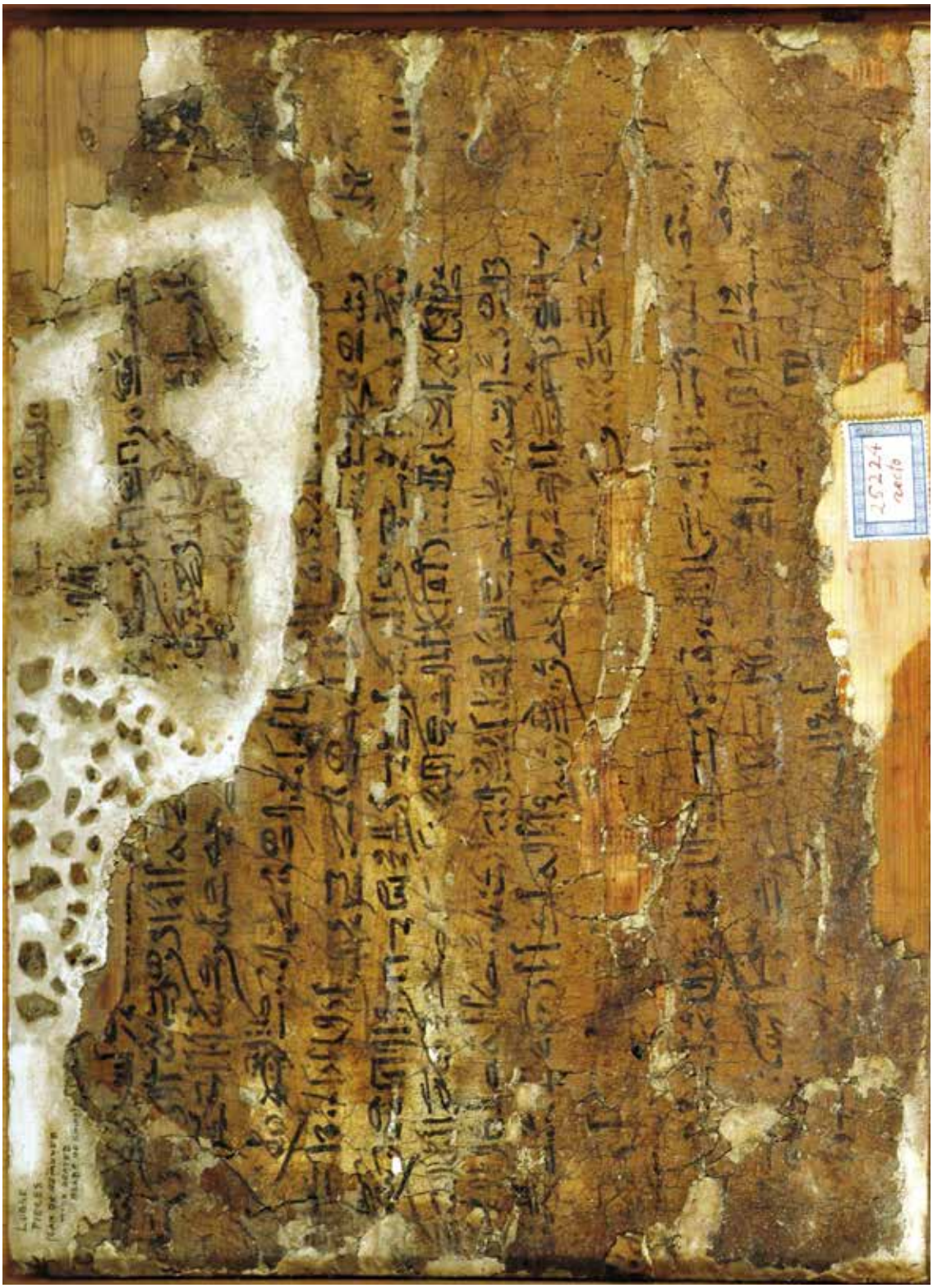


Fig. 5. Wooden board of Cairo (CG 25224-JE 32972) (verso), photograph courtesy of the Egyptian Museum of Cairo.

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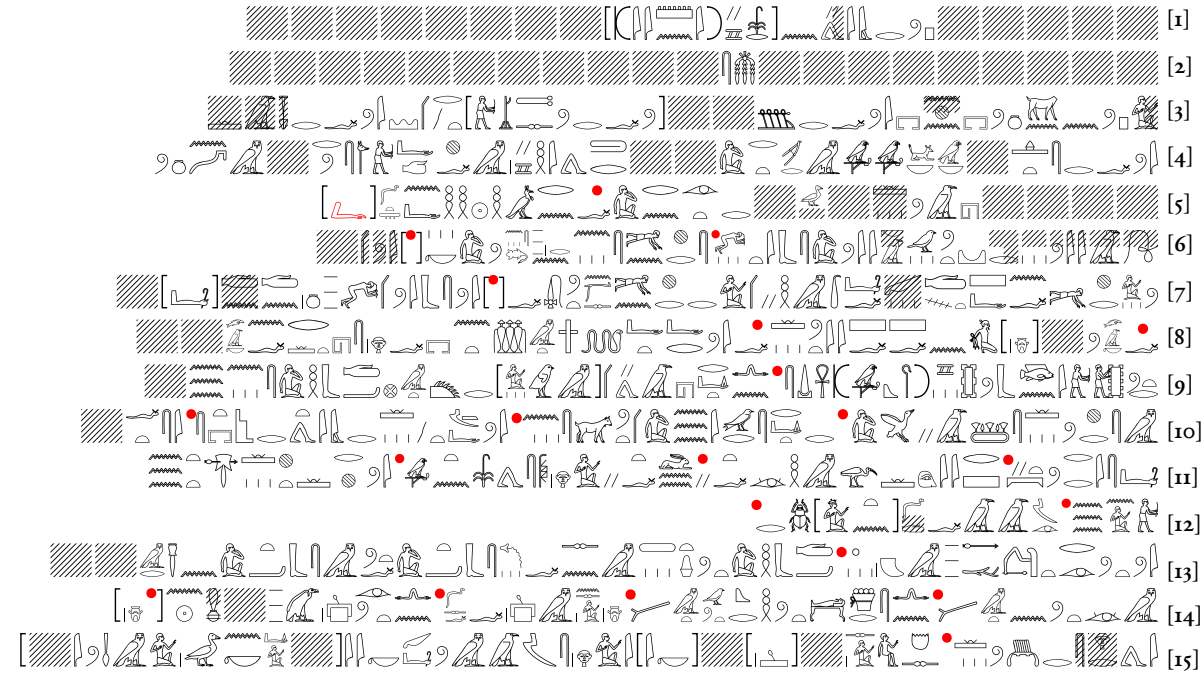


Fig. 6. Hieroglyphic transcription (verso) by Kh. Hassan.

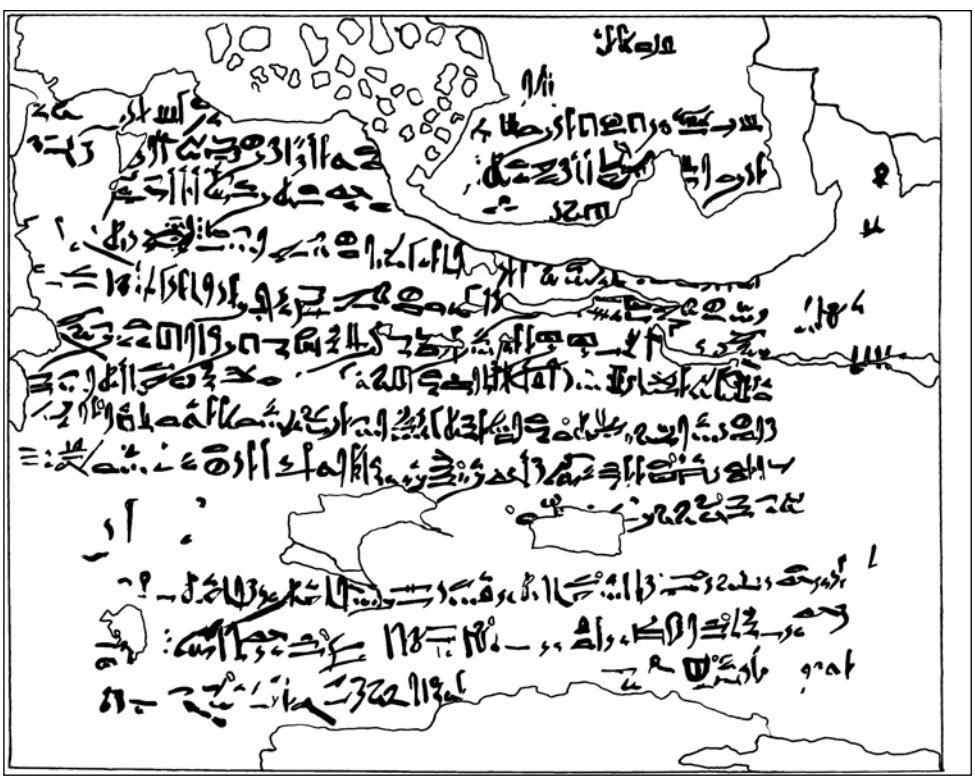


Fig. 7. Facsimile drawing (verso) by Kh. Hassan.

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