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The Longest Visitor’s Ostracon Concerning the Temple of Deir el-Bahri. A Recombination of Two Pieces, Ostraca Cairo 430 and 432

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The Longest Visitor’s Ostracon  
Concerning the Temple of Deir el-Bahri  
A Recombination of Two Pieces, Ostraca Cairo 430 and 432  

KHALED HASSAN  

INTRODUCTION

It seems that visiting ancient monuments of ancestors was a popular habit during the New Kingdom, particularly in the 18th Dynasty, and continued during Graeco-Roman times. Ancient visitors were keen to record their visits on the walls of the monuments i.e. tombs and temples. Visitors’ inscriptions constitute an interesting epigraphy, where the authors were careful to integrate them among the original decoration of the monument, and complied with the rules of tombs’ decorum. A few texts of this kind were recorded on three ostraca in hieratic script, all of which were found in the vicinity of Deir el-Bahri and date back to the first half of the 18th Dynasty. Each ostracon contains elements of the visitors’ formula, i.e. the incipit of the text īw.t pw īr n šš […] r mȝȝ. These ostraca most probably did use this with a didactic aim, and they were probably considered as literary excerpts for students’ exercises.

In 2013 the first half of this ostracon (no. 432) has been published with a full commentary to its content. Dr. Chloé Ragazzoli drew my attention to its second half (no. 430), which was found like the first half in the basement of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo: after their recombination, the two texts form a large visitors’ inscription. This ostracon is therefore exceptional, both for being one of the rare ostraca that contain this kind of text and for recording the longest version of it on ostraca.

1 Den Doncker 2012, p. 25.
2 Hassan 2013, p. 189.
4 Hayes 1942, p. 25, no. 97, pl. XX; Hassan 2013, p. 184; Ragazzoli 2016, pp. 66–67. Another visitor’s formula is partially mentioned on ostracon O. Campbell 22 in a hymn dedicated to Amon. Cf. McDowell 1993, pp. 29–30, pl. XXXI.
5 For more information about this hypothesis cf. Ragazzoli 2016, pp. 79–80.
6 This number represents the serial number that has been assigned by a team at the Cairo University, who was authorized to make a classification of the whole ostraca that are housed in the basements of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and does not relate to the entry or the temporary numbers of the museums’ registers.
DESCRIPTION

This new piece of limestone is about 16 cm high and 19 cm wide with nine incomplete hieratic lines. Now the whole ostracon, after recombination, consists of twelve lines in black ink. It is clear that the two pieces were written by the same hand and belong together. Some of the beginnings of the lines are broken and most of their endings are wiped off. The last two lines are broken, and thus most of their content is missing.

TRANSLITERATION

[1] […] iw.t pw ḫr n ss P2[…]
[2] [r mỉr ḫw.t-nṯr] Dsr-ḏsrw gm.n.f [s.t …]
[3] [ṁỉ p.t m ḫnw sš Pȝ[…]
[4] [p.t m ‘nṯw wḏ] ḫḏ[s] ss m ẖn.t ḫr tp-nṯw n s.t wr.t nty NN]
[5] im.s ‘ḥ’.n dd.n.f ṯr gb mỉ[…]
[6] mỉ bth[s] ḫr ḫs, ṭmt
[7] [t]t[s] ss Mỉ bnr, ẖw.w ḫr […]
[8] btp ḫr nb nṯw ḫbr df bnt-brw […]
[9] ḫȝw, ḫp.w ḫt nb ṯbr wr(t) w’t.b(t) n […]
[10][…] ūmḥ ḫd.n.f ẖp[…”] Mḥ n […]
[11][…] ṭty […]
[12][…] rm […]

TRANSLATION

[1] […] then the scribe Pa[…] came (lit.: It is coming made by scribe Pa)
[2] [to visit the temple] Djoser-Djeseru, he found [it]
[3] [as if there were heaven in it. Ra] rising from it. Then he said: Let
[4] [heaven drip fresh myrrh], and pour incense on the top [of the great place in which the god NN]
[5] is staying, then he said, as for night, look […]
[6] like wonder […] for Khaa, Tēmt
[7] Tētstesh, Mēbnerw, they have […]
[8] offerings given by the king and Amun-Re, king of the gods, that he may give invocation-of
fererings consisting of
[9] oxen, fowl, and all the beautiful, great, and pure things for […]
[10][…] excellent? Said to him (called) the […] son of […]
[11][…] ṭty […]
[12][…] weep […]
THE LONGEST VISITOR’S OSTRACON CONCERNING THE TEMPLE OF DEIR EL-BAHRI

Fig. 1. Photograph of O. Cairo Museum no. 430.

Fig. 2. Facsimile drawing by Kh. Hassan.

TRANSCRIPTION

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Fig. 1. Photograph of O. Cairo Museum no. 430.

Fig. 2. Facsimile drawing by Kh. Hassan.

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NOTES ON THE PALAEOGRAPHY

As previously stated, the hieratic is written by the same hand throughout the text in a regular, compact, experienced, and well-organized appearance. The text is displaying the characteristic features of the early and middle of 18th Dynasty hand. The scribe was inclined to write each sign separately, thus the ligatures are relatively few; this attitude can be seen in the majority of the first half of the 18th Dynasty literary texts. In certain sections of the text, some signs are closer to their hieroglyphic shape than hieratic and this is clear in the forms of \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \). This could be a kind of renovation in the script in the middle of the 18th Dynasty, especially the time of Tuthmosis III, where the scribes tended to use full forms of the signs bringing them closer to the hieroglyphic forms.

1. \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \) most probably stands for \( mȝȝ. \)
2. \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \) both signs are identical to the forms in ostracon 140 r of Deir el-Bahri.
3. \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \) it is difficult to read the first sign, while the second sign \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \) could be read as \( \text{mȝȝ} \) but this is still uncertain reading.
4. The name of the scribe in the middle of the line is too faint to recognize it.
5. \( \frac{\text{mȝȝ}}{\text{grḥ}} \) according to the context, most probably to be read as \( \text{mȝȝ} \).

COMMENTARY

This ostracon displays a classical visitor’s text, descriptive, followed by an offering formula, most probably dedicated to the scribe of the text. The significance of this ostracon is that it constitutes, as far as I know, the longest visitor’s text written on ostraca.

1. \( \text{sš Pȝ [...]} \): most probably the name of the scribe, identical to the one named at the end of the text (l. 10), being both the author and the beneficiary followed by the name of his parents. This way of writing the name of the graffist with his filiation is known in the graffiti of the scribe Men in the tomb of Iti-ib-iqr with his title and the name of his mother and brother.

5. The meaning of this line after \( \text{ḥḥ n ḏḏ n.f} \) is a bit unclear, where the text is wiped away and the reading of the rest of it is uncertain. However, based on the reading of the word as \( ġrḥ \) and also the context, one could suppose that the text describes the monument at night: “As for the night, look […] it looks like wonder for the” and then mentions the four individuals of the text. As far as I am aware, similar text with the night or proper names in the middle of the formula is unknown.

11 Hayes 1942, pl. XXV, 140 r. Based on palaeographical point of view, perhaps this ostracon is inscribed by the same scribe as the ostracon of Senmut tomb, cf. Hassan 2013, p. 190.
12 Verhoeven 2012, p. 52.
6–7. The individuals of the text do not occur in any other published visitors’ graffiti; however some of their names are attested in other texts such as $\text{\textit{ḏd.n.f}}$, but it cannot be proved that they are the same individuals.\textsuperscript{13} It is remarkable that two of the names are inscribed with the seated man as determinatives, while the others are inscribed without determinatives.

10. The name of the scribe is preceded by $\text{\textit{ḏd.n.f}}$; a similar expression is mentioned in the graffiti of the scribe Tourny in the tomb of Khnum-hotep II at Beni Hasan.\textsuperscript{14}

**OFFERING FORMULA IN THE VISITORS’ INSCRIPTIONS**

In her study Hana Navrátilová classified the visitors’ graffiti into four categories i.e. antiquarian (or) descriptive, signature, piety-oriented, and the stroll-formula.\textsuperscript{15} The antiquarian formula shows an interest for the visited monuments, mentioning their names, owners and/or architectural elements.\textsuperscript{16} At the same time piety-oriented graffiti do not show any interest for the monuments themselves, the visitors having just written prayers and invocations to the deities of the site,\textsuperscript{17} or to anybody else. These prayers and offerings could be considered as a kind of ritual act.\textsuperscript{18} As for the offering formula, sometimes it was attached to the antiquarian texts as a combination between them,\textsuperscript{19} or it was inscribed in a separate space as a single piety text with solely the signature of the scribe. Most probably the scribe of the text dedicated these offerings to the efficacious souls of the ancient owners of the monuments’ or to the benefits of the visiting scribes themselves.\textsuperscript{20} The offering formulae in these texts vary between brief texts to a long and detailed formula, maybe accompanied by some rituals. The position of these formulae also varied from one text to another as follows:

– at the end of the antiquarian formula (1, 3, 4 A–B, 5 E);

– in the middle of the text, sometimes embedded in the antiquarian formula (2 A). This latter kind is very rare;

– pure offering text with the signature of the scribe at the end, maybe this text constitutes a piety formula (2 B, 5 A, C–D);

– the incipit $\text{ḥtp di nsw}$ was regularly used as an introduction to the offering formula (2 B, 4 A, 5 A–E), however it could start with $\text{pr.t hrw}$, or with the offerings directly.
Funerary Temple of Sahure

[1] ḫȝ.t sp 2, ṣbd 3, ṣḥ.t, [sw] 7, ḫr hm [n] nswn bitj […] ‘w.s
[2] ḫw.t pw irr n sš ḫmn-m-[hȝ.t ṣ ṣ ‘n]t-mnti
[3] r mżż ḫw.t ntr n.t ḫr n nswn bitj sẖw-r’ mš’-ḥrw
[4] gm.n.f sš ḫr ḫb.ṣr ‘c.t wṣ m ḫr.f
[5] mỉ tż pt s.WRITE ‘ḏ hy’.n dd.n.f nfr wī
[6] [c] ḫw.t ntr n.t ḫzż] ḫm n nswn bitj sẖw-r’ mš’-ḥrw
[7] […] nž n ḫz.w ṣḏp.w t.w […]

[1] Year 2, month 3 of akhet, day 7, under the Majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, […] l.ḥ.
[3] to see the temple of the Majesty of the King of Lower and Upper Egypt, Sahure justified.
[4] He found it beautiful in his heart, in his eyes [it] was great.
[5] As heaven lit in white by moon, thus he said: this is beautiful
[6] [the temple of ka of the Majesty] of King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Sahure, justified

North Chapel, Djoser Complex – Saqqara

A

[1] ḫw.t pw irr n ss ḫh(-ms) sž ḫḥt r mżż
[2] ḫw.t ntr n.t ḫr gm.n.f sš mỉ ḫn.w.s ḫr
[3] ḫr wbn im.s ‘ḏ’ n dd.w.n.f ḫmm ḫzż t.w […] Kž.w
[4] ṣḏp.w ḥt.(w) nb.w(t) nfr.w(t) wšb.w(t) n Kž n ḫr gm.n.f ṣḏp.w t.w…
[5] ḫw t mn ‘ntw […] wzd […] dʃfs m snwṛ
[6] in ss n’.t[n.t]-ḥb2 ṣḥ-b-ḥb2 in ss nds ḫh(-ms)

[1] There came the scribe Ah(mose), son of Iptah to see
[2] the temple of Djoser. He found it as if [there were] heaven in it, Re
[3] rising in it. Then he said let be caused that there come loaves of bread, […], bulls,
[5] May the heaven send down myrrh, and provide incense for it.
[6] (Written) by the scribe, schoolmaster Stethemheb, and the apprentice scribe Ahmose.
The Longest Visitor’s Ostracon Concerning the Temple of Deir el-Bahri

B23

1. htp di nsw [...] nb nṯr.w im.yw
2. htp di nsw ḫmn-r. nb ns.wt t2. wry ḫm.t.y nṯrw ḫm.y[w]
3. pr.t hrw t, ḫnk.t, k2, ṣḥd [...] ym? ḫ(wt) nb.(w)t r [...] 
4. [...] iw ḫw.t? n k2 n ṣḥ mn [...]? bs [...] 
5. ? [ṁḥb ...] ḫmn-m-ḥt m3-ḥrw.

The offering that the king gives to [...] lord of gods that are in?

The offering that the king gives so that Amun-Re, lord of the thrones of the Two Lands, foremost of gods in [...] may give

Offering of bread, beer, bulls and fowl [...] and all [good and pure] things

which are on an offering-table [...]? for the ka of the [...] 

[excellent] Amenemhat, justified.

The Tomb of Khnum-hotep II, Beni Hasan24

1. iw.t pw ḫry sš ḫr n db’.w 
2. ṭw-r ṭ m22 ḫw.t-nṯr nt [...] m3-ḥrw 
3. gm.n.f sy nfr sy ḫb.f ḫr ḫw.t-nṯr nb.t 
4. ‘ḥʾ <.n> ḫd.n.f [...] šs k2.w ṣḥd.w 
5. ḫt nb.t nfr.t.tj [...] w’b.[t ...] n k2 [...] ḫ. ṭ [...] m3-ḥrw 
6. in sš ḫr n db’.w sš ḫsb it 
7. ḫd[n].f ṭw-r ṭry

Then the scribe of excellent fingers Tōury came
to visit the temple of the god [...] justified. 
He found it more beautiful in his heart than any other temple.

Then he said: [...] alabaster, oxen, and fowl, 
and all good and pure things [...] to the ka of [...] justified 
by the scribe of excellent fingers, grain account scribe.

Said to him: Tōury.

The Tomb of Iti-ib-iqr, Assiut

A25

1. iw pw ḫr.n sš Mn 
2. ḫr n m22 ḫw.t-nṯr nfr.t ḫw.t- 
3. hrw nb.t Mdd (n) gm.n.f sy 
4. nfr.ti ḫr-ḥb.f[r]hw.t-nṯr nb.t nfr.t ‘ḥʾ.n

25 Verhoeven 2012, p. 52.
Then the scribe Men came,
having come to see the beautiful temple of Hathor,
lady of Medjeden. He found it
more beautiful in his heart [than] any other beautiful temple. Then
he said: May the king give an offering to Osiris, lord of Ta-anhk, and Anubis, lord of
Ra-qer[ret]. Made by the truly able scribe, the true
silent one, with [able] character, the humble one, beloved by the people.
For the ka of the scribe Men, son of the wab-priest of Wepwawet Wepwawet,
born by the lady of the house Nut. His brother (is) Duau.

There came the scribe Kha-em-wast to see the beautiful temple of Wepwawet.
He found it more beautiful in his heart than any other temple and the temple of Djefat-Hapi.
For the ka of the excellent spirit Iti-ibi, offerings of bread, beer, bulls, fowl, and all of what
comes out […]
and all good and pure things for the excellent spirit of Ghedi.

The Tomb of Antefoker, Thebes
[1] Offerings given by the king and Osiris Khent[y-Imentyu …]
[2] [a thousand … and fowl] and all things good and pure […]
[3] that come out [on the offering-table] in Karnak […]
[4] on a just mission […] justified […]
[5] […]
[6] […]
[7] [the scribe Amenem]hat makes/making (?) “[Offerings] given by the king” […]

B28
[1] [ḥtp] d(i) [nswt] Ṽṣjr Ḥnty-Jmntyw (m) t h(n)kt jḥ zpd
[2] [prt]-ḥrw m hr(y)t-nṯr ssnt m ḏwꜣt s[wrj] ḣr bbt
[3] mwt ḣt nbtw tp ṯ-dṣr n kṣ ʿkṣ jḥ
[4] jkr shrw šw m jṣi ṛd(w) ṣf r ḫw-ḥw ḫr(w) mzČ t
[5] r mty š mzČ m ḣt mwtf šš R-ms-s(w)-nfr mzČ-ḥrw ms […]
[6] m-T(j)m(y)-r(ṣ), ṣš ḏḥwty ṭḥn m ʿnh nb jmzḥ

[1] [Offerings] given by [the king] and Osiris Khenty-Imentyu (of) bread, beer, meat, fowl,
votive offerings in the necropolis, breathing in the Duat, drinking from a fresh stream,
all things useful in the sacred land for the ka of the precise-minded,
extcellent of counsels, devoid of evil, who has turned his back against the wrong, who accom
plishes maṭt
[5] with exactitude, the true scribe from the womb of his mother, the scribe Ramosenefer, justified,
born of […]

C29
[1] ḥtp d(i) nswt Ṽṣjr nb […] n kṣ n(y) šš […] Jʿḥ-ms

[1] An offering given by the king and Osiris, lord of […] to the ka of the scribe […] Iahmes

D30
[1] ḥtp d(i) nswt Jmn-Rṣ nswt nṯrw
[2] Ṽṣjr nb ḏḥwty t didSelectRowAtIndexPath ṭḥ ḫw-ḥw m st nbt
[3] wṣtn rḏ m st <ṣḥt?>
[5] šš Snfr

[1] Offerings given by the king and Amun-Re, king of the gods,
[2] and Osiris, lord of the great hall, and Ptah, great at the south of his wall,
[3] and Anubis, foremost of the white land, (for) the pure of face in all places,
[4] free of leg in the <secret?> place,

E

[1] jw(t) pw jr-n ś ś Jmn-m-hȝt s snw Dhwty-ms ms-n[...]
[2] r mȝȝ j[s pn n(y) tȝty] Jnt.f-jkrä wn-jn.f nfr hr jb[,...]
[3] [...] nw hpr shw n(y) dt wnn mn.f [...]
[4] [...] jm ≤dd htp d(i) nswt
[5] Ws[r Hnt[y-Jmntyw ... Jmn-jRʿ ntrw nbw hr(y)t-ntr prt
[6] brw (m) t h(n)kt [ib] ≤pdw ss nfr mr t ht nbt nfr[t]
[7] wʿb[.t] dd pt km₂ ≤ jnnt [h]ʾpy m htpw.f n k₂ n(y) Jnt.f-jkrä mʿ-hrw

[1] This is a visit made by the scribe Amenemhat, son of the elder of the forecourt

Djehutymose and whose mother is [...] 
[2] to see [this] tomb of Antefoker. And it was perfect in his opinion  
[3] [...], useful for eternity. His name shall exist [...] 
[4] [...] saying: “Offerings given by the king,
[5] Osiris Khent[...]-Imenyu ... Amun-Re and all the gods of the necropolis. A votive
[6] offering (of) bread, beer, ox, fowl, alabaster, incense, oil and all the pure good things
[7] that are given by the sky, fashioned by the earth, brought by the flood as his offering to the

ka of Antefoker true-of-voice.”

[31] Ragazzoli 2013, p. 313; Garis Davies, Gardiner 1920, p. 28, pl. XXXVI–XXXVIa, no. 33.
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