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# **Social aspects in ancient Egyptian personal correspondence**

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## **Abstract**

There has been considerable interest in ancient Egyptian letters, but the methodology of the research has resulted in a “compartmentalisation” of attention. Rather than considering a wide range of extant personal correspondence from a societal perspective across the various periods of ancient Egyptian history, the focus has been on individual letters, or on specific collections or letters within collections. This study will look at a selection of private letters from the Old Kingdom to the Twenty-first Dynasties under the topic headings of Complaints, Religious affairs and personnel, Military and police matters, Daily Life. By analysing the content, personalising the writers and recipients, indicating differences in style and modes of address, defining historical context, it will show how such private letters can provide insight into aspects of lifestyle, belief, social behaviour and the issues and customs of daily life. It will also identify any similarities and changes that may have occurred over the timeframe. This study will show the important contribution such personal correspondence can provide as a primary source of social history in ancient Egypt.

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\*Bibliography and footnotes following the style of the *SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient, Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*, edited by Patrick H. Alexander, Peabody, Mass.: Hendriksen Publishers, 1999.

## Introduction

Prompted by a person's need to communicate in writing to a recipient at a distance, over the years private letters have been an important source of social and historical information. The personal correspondence from ancient Egypt can be seen to exemplify the extra insight that such letters provide. They are a source of knowledge of the ancient Egyptian people, their personalities, their daily life, the issues that concerned them, their religious customs and beliefs. They are able to augment the information sourced from the reliefs and inscriptions in the tombs, tomb chapels and monuments of private individuals. They give an extra dimension to the scenes portrayed there, and to the artefacts and objects that were possessed by the deceased during his or her lifetime.

There has been considerable interest in this genre of ancient Egyptian letters. As introductory information Wente contributed an overview to their background and context covering such aspects as their sources, the identification of specific collections and groups of letters, the means of writing and transmission. Also included is a concise bibliography.<sup>1</sup> A further source of referencing for letters, which provides background, examples of letters in their historical context together with details of writing materials and delivery, has been made by Caminos. The text itself is fully referenced to an accompanying comprehensive bibliography.<sup>2</sup> A volume of translated individual letters, 355 in total, dating from the Old Kingdom to the Twenty-first Dynasty has also been published by Wente.<sup>3</sup>

The following overviews are of studies undertaken of bodies of correspondence – those which form part of a collection, letters relevant to a specific period, correspondence grouped by topic or by the same sender and/or recipient, letters analysed with respect to specific aspects of their structure and focus. The attention paid to the social and historical aspects of the letters will also be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Wente, "Correspondence," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. Edited by Donald B. Redford. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Ricardo Caminos, "Brief," in *Lexikon der Agyptologie Band 1*. Edited by Wolfgang Helck and Otto Eberhard. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975): 855-863 .

<sup>3</sup> Edward Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990).

### Letters within collections

*The Hekanakhte Papyri* have been an ongoing focus for study since their discovery by Herbert Winlock during his 1921-22 excavations at Deir el-Bahri. Dated to the early Twelfth Dynasty they are concerned with aspects of daily life and the economics of land management. The papyri included five letters as sources of information in these areas. Working from these original papyri work on translation and interpretation was started by Battiscombe Gunn, but due to his death was not completed. Winlock had begun to prepare an Introduction and Preface to Gunn's work, the texts of which have been included by Allen.<sup>4</sup> Although the Introduction is unfinished it provides interpretations "still valuable...because of his unique position as the discoverer of the Heqanakht papyri..."<sup>5</sup> Subsequently the Metropolitan Museum commissioned T.G.H. James to further the project, and the publication of his *The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents* appeared in 1962.<sup>6</sup> This provided extensive coverage of the letters which were part of the collection. This comprised transcription, translation, and detailed comment on grammatical points and interpretation. General notes regarding content were also given. "The Structure of the Letters and their Epistolary Formulae" was covered in James' Appendix D to his work.<sup>7</sup> This extensive analysis of "certain epistolary usages for the early Middle Kingdom" looks at seven aspects in turn – the introductory sentence/conventional phrases of greeting/reference to the sender's well-being/reason for writing/any greeting to another person/closing phrase/address. The Hekanakhte letters are commented on in this way.<sup>8</sup> The appearance of this work prompted an article by Klaus Baer<sup>9</sup> on the letters. He had access to the originals of the documents and his study focuses primarily on Letters I and II, with mention of Letters III. The letters are given in translation only but with detailed comments on his translation and where his interpretation differs from that of James. The article concludes with details of the insight given by the letters regarding husbandry and aspects of economic information. A further study of the papyri which included analysis of the four letters was undertaken by

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<sup>4</sup> James P. Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), 243-255.

<sup>5</sup> Allen (2002): 243.

<sup>6</sup> T.G.H. (Thomas Garnet Henry) James, *The Hekanakhte Papers and Other Early Middle Kingdom Documents* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1962).

<sup>7</sup> James (1962): 119.

<sup>8</sup> James (1962): 119-130.

<sup>9</sup> Klaus Baer, "An Eleventh Dynasty Farmer's Letters to his Family," *JAOS* 83 (1963): 1-19.

Goedicke.<sup>10</sup> His introductory chapters look at discovery and provenance, dating and their geographical setting. Each letter has an introductory overview with an explanation and evaluation of its content followed by his translation and a commentary. The commentary looks at translation issues with references to both Baer and James, as well as discussing the agricultural issues that are found in the reason for writing. The original plates in hieroglyphic form are also included. The most comprehensive study of the papyri has been undertaken by Allen and includes a translation of letters I-IV and the fifth additional letter designated “Letter P.”<sup>11</sup> The section of translations and textual notes is preceded by one with detailed descriptions of the individual papyri – dimensions, textual orientation, folding technique. The textual notes following the translations provide comprehensive information on epigraphy, grammar and new interpretations, including comparative referencing to the comments from the authors of the previous works cited above.<sup>12</sup> The papyri for the five letters and the hieroglyphic transcriptions are reproduced in the Plates section.<sup>13</sup>

From the societal and economic aspect Goedicke has noted the letters as “virtually the only source for Egyptian agriculture before the New Kingdom,”<sup>14</sup> and regarding this aspect Baer has provided extensive commentary on the information on land management, grain production and quantifying contained in the letters. Allen has studied the letters with regard to the information they provide about Heqanakht himself, the people mentioned and their relationships, the organisation of his household, his neighbours and the Thinites.<sup>15</sup> Additionally he identifies, where possible, place names related to Heqanakht’s home and the Thinite Nome.<sup>16</sup> He notes his recognition of the papyri as containing “a wealth of information about the language, history, society, and economy of the early Middle Kingdom.”<sup>17</sup> In his conclusion<sup>18</sup> he draws together all the factual information, including that discerned from the letters. Initially there is the personal

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Goedicke, *Studies in the Hekanakhte Papers* (Baltimore: Halgo, Inc., 1984): 13-38, 77-85, 98-101.

<sup>11</sup> Papyrus Purches.

<sup>12</sup> Allen (2002): 15-52.

<sup>13</sup> Allen (2002): Plates 8-15, 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> Baer (1963): 1.

<sup>15</sup> Allen (2002): 105-119.

<sup>16</sup> Allen (2002): 121-126.

<sup>17</sup> Allen (2002): 179.

<sup>18</sup> Allen (2002): 179-189.



background for Hekanakhte, the historical context for the letters and the reasons for writing. The content of each letter is noted with regard to the economic aspects of grain provision, land cultivation and land allocation. From the personal perspective he points out the insight given into a family issue by the sender's concern over the mistreatment of his wife. His final conclusion is an overall summary of the previous content, written as an addition to the "coherent picture of the background, circumstances and history"<sup>19</sup> drawn from the individual studies in the main body of the work. This in order "to present that picture in more sequential fashion, both as a summary of this study and as an aid to those more interested in its results than in the detailed argumentation...."<sup>20</sup>

*The Lahun Papyri*: Also from the Middle Kingdom are the letters which are part of the Lahun papyri discovered by Petrie in 1889. The part of the collection currently in the possession of University College, London was extensively catalogued in 1898 by Francis Llewellyn Griffith.<sup>21</sup> His publication, with plates of the original papyri and his accompanying transcriptions, remained the principal source of information until in 1991 Mark Collier and Stephen Quirke were commissioned to work on the collection and their findings were published in 2002.<sup>22</sup> A number of previously unpublished letters are included and the content covers firstly a group of these, then the letters previously published by Griffith, followed by a second group of previously unpublished letters. The transcription for each letter is shown opposite its transliteration, translation and a description of the original papyrus, providing an extensive overview of this body of original letters. Acknowledging that "identification of precise findplace is so important for studies of literacy and social context of writing,"<sup>23</sup> their introduction covers details of their discovery. This is followed by a history of publication and a list of the lot numbers recorded by Griffith. Letters from a further deposit of papyri from Lahun, discovered in a rubbish dump at the Valley Temple, are in the possession of the Berlin Museum and have

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<sup>19</sup> Allen (2002): 179.

<sup>20</sup> Allen (2002): 179.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Llewellyn Griffith, *The Petrie Papyri. Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob, principally of the Middle Kingdom*. (London, 1898).

<sup>22</sup> Mark Collier and Stephen Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Letters* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): v.

been studied by Scharff<sup>24</sup> and Luft.<sup>25</sup> In his article Scharff published a selection of these letters (55 in number), eight with translation and comment on grammatical detail and interpretation, the rest with just a short summary. In his work Luft focused on 20 of this selection of 55, providing translation, transcription and notes on grammatical and other points of detail. A brief individual letter has been considered by Grdseloff,<sup>26</sup> who provides a transcription with translation and notes on grammatical points. He also discusses provenance and the dimensions and conformation of the papyrus.

A considerable number of the letters are fragmentary but the more complete provide information regarding the daily issues of the officials and workers in the town who were maintaining the funerary cult of Sesostri II. In the following examples a letter from the servant of the estate Khemem to the overseer of the chamber, is a complaint that no one has been in touch with the writer regarding decisions made by his recipient in response to previous correspondence. His concern is that a boat taken downstream has left him alone apart from an attendant Ita. This person had then requested a cargo-boat as he had been assigned the duty of catching fish. The result of the catch is itemised by Khemen who notes an additional reason for writing as being that he wishes the overseer to count the catch on the quay of Per-kheny.<sup>27</sup> The servant of the estate Kemeni's primary reason for writing to his lord is to draw his attention to the matter of his royal-servant Wadjhau 'in assigning him his documentation without allowing him to evade.'<sup>28</sup> A letter to the lord from the servant of the estate Mershenet advises that the king's food has been allocated from various grain sources and queries the amount of additional deliveries to the overseer of fields for apportionment.<sup>29</sup>

The translations and commentaries regarding the letters within the corpus enable an insight, as shown by the above examples, into social aspects and historical context, but overall do not focus on these in order to provide an additional analysis within the study undertaken.

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander Scharff, "Briefe aus Illahun," *ZÄS* 59 (1924): 20-51.

<sup>25</sup> Ulrich Luft, *Das archiv von Illahun: Briefe I* (Berlin: Akademie, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Grdseloff, "A New Middle Kingdom Letter from El-Lahun," *JEA* 35 (1949): 59-62.

<sup>27</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): 121.

<sup>28</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): 133.

<sup>29</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): 111.

*Deir el-Medina*: The writings from the Ramesside village of Deir el-Medina have been the focus of considerable study. Their content has been a source of considerable information and insight into the Deir el-Medina community. Amongst the numerous texts are letters pertaining to the affairs, people and work crews that lived there. Translations of a large number of these letters (157 in total) have been made by Wentz and are included in his work *Letters from Ancient Egypt*.<sup>30</sup> These are presented in translation only but with full referencing for primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources. An introduction provides background and covers, in general terms, provenance, historical context, scribal involvement in their writing, materials used and means of delivery. The original sources for the letters in his work and referenced by Wentz are found in several major publications.

Descriptions and texts of ostraca, including letters in facsimile and transcription only, were published by Černý and Gardiner in 1957<sup>31</sup> from which the transcription for nineteen letters have been sourced for his translation.<sup>32</sup> Five of these also reference transcriptions from Kitchen.<sup>33</sup> Work begun by Černý on the papyri from the site and completed by Posener in 1978 has translation for fifteen letters together with transcriptions, descriptions of the papyri and notes on grammar and interpretation.<sup>34</sup> Wentz has included his own translation of seven letters from Černý's study referencing the transcriptions sourced for his translations.<sup>35</sup> and edited by Koenig in 1986 is the continuation of the work edited by Posener.<sup>36</sup> A further nine letters are among the seventeen documents considered. Descriptions of the papyri regarding measurement and structure are given. Transcriptions have been provided alongside reproductions of the original papyri, but without translation. The transcriptions have been a source for two

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<sup>30</sup> Wentz (1990): 132-170, Letters 157-187.

<sup>31</sup> Jaroslav Černý and Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, Volume I (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957).

<sup>32</sup> See Wentz (1990): 229-233 for the specific reference to the Plate numbers for the selected letters.

<sup>33</sup> *KRI III* (1969-): V, VI. See Wentz (1990): 229-233 for references.

<sup>34</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *Papyrus hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh I: Nos I-XVII* ed. George Posener *DFIFAO* 8 (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1978): 13-27.

<sup>35</sup> Černý (1978): Pls.18,19,21,22,23,24,25,26,28,,30.

<sup>36</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *Papyrus hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh II: Nos XVIII-XXXIV* ed. Yvan Koenig *DFIFAO* 22 (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1986).

letters translated by Wente.<sup>37</sup> Further work by Černý concerned with texts of non-literary ostraca includes letters which have been transcribed, but not translated, with accompanying relevant information for each ostrakon. These have been published in several volumes covering several years.<sup>38</sup> A large number of the letters translated by Wente are from Černý's transcriptions in these volumes.<sup>39</sup> Other studies which are primarily focused on the full range of ostraca but include transcription and analysis of selected letters have been made by Sauneron<sup>40</sup> and Grandet.<sup>41</sup> Thirteen letters transcribed by Sauneron have been referenced by Wente for his translation. A translation by Borghouts of an individual letter without transcription but with notes and comments was published by Demaree and Janssen in their volume *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*.<sup>42</sup> The letter is from the deputy of the gang regarding slackness at an unspecified fortress. The notes to the translation cover grammatical points and discuss interpretations. The commentary discusses the people involved and their responsibilities. Detailed comment is made on the events mentioned in the letter and the reasons for the accusation of slackness. A further letter found at Deir el-Medina has been translated by Frandsen. This is an unusual letter addressed to a dead wife's coffin, and could perhaps belong to the genre of Letters to the Dead discussed later. His translation is without transcription, but with a section with commentary and notes to the translation.<sup>43</sup> These combine the grammatical discussion and interpretations with any relevant comment on the content at that point. An extensive bibliography providing an overview of books and articles that are concerned with Deir el-Medina has been compiled by Zonhoven.<sup>44</sup> The list has been classified under topic headings relevant to the village and has been chosen with the

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<sup>37</sup> Černý (1986): Pls.1, 20, Wente (1990): 135, 167, Letters 164, 282.

<sup>38</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el-Médinéh Vols 2-6 DFIFAO 4-7, 14* (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale 1937-1970).

<sup>39</sup> Fully referenced under his list of sources. Wente (1990): 228-234.

<sup>40</sup> Serge Sauneron, *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el-Médinéh (Nos 550-623), DFIFAO 8* (Le Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1959).

<sup>41</sup> Pierre Grandet *Catalogue des ostraca hiératiques non littéraires de Deir el-Médinéh. (Nos 706-830, Tome VIII, DFIFAO 39* (Le Caire, Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 2000). Letters come under numbers 783-793.

<sup>42</sup> Joris Borghouts, "A Deputy of the Gang Knows his Business," in *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina* (ed.R.J.Demaree and Jac J. Janssen; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabje Oosten, 1982), 71-99.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Frandsen, "The Letter to Ikhtay's coffin: O.Louvre Inv.no 698," in *Village Voices* (ed. R.J.Demaree and A. Egberts; Leiden: Centre of Non-Western Studies, Leiden University, 1992), 31-49.

<sup>44</sup> L.M.H Zonhoven, "A Systematic Bibliography on Deir el-Medina," in *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina* (ed.R.J.Demaree and Jac J. Janssen; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabje Oosten, 1982), 247-290.

criterion that “one or more of the three main aspects...namely the village, its inhabitants and their documents, particularly ostraca, must play a more or less substantial role in an article or book.”<sup>45</sup> One classification covers “Related material: Late Ramesside Letters.”

The letters translated by Wente are a considerable source of information regarding the village and its people, their occupations, responsibilities and issues. The reasons for writing cover such topics as administrative matters, cult matters, illness, family and personal relations including adultery. There is a large number related to needs and transactions.<sup>46</sup> As part of the total documentation of Deir el-Medina the letters studied in the cited publications provide additional “comprehensive treatment of the Deir el-Medina village community.”<sup>47</sup> However, there appears to be no separate study specifically focused on an historical and social analysis of the letters themselves.

### **Letters from a specific period**

*Amarna Letters* This collection of cuneiform tablets from the site of Akehetaten was first transcribed and translated by Hugo Winckler in 1896.<sup>48</sup> Subsequently two volumes, including further tablets that had been found were published in transcription and translation by Knudtzon.<sup>49</sup> The first volume encompasses the translation with transliteration and notes. The second volume provides commentary letter by letter regarding translation, letter content and context. Over time the letters have continued to be the subject of an extensive range of studies which have focused both on the corpus as a whole and on individual aspects. These include two works by Moran. The first in French<sup>50</sup> provides translation of the letters with notes regarding translation and general comment. The second publication with a similar format of presentation was intended to update his previous work.<sup>51</sup> He states in his Preface that translation is his main objective and that the purpose of the accompanying notes is to “indicate the reading of the cuneiform text on which the translation is based and offer the arguments – grammatical,

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<sup>45</sup> Zonhoven (1982): 245.

<sup>46</sup> Wente (1990): 153-164, Letters 217-269.

<sup>47</sup> Wente (1990): 133.

<sup>48</sup> Hugo Winckler, *Die Thontafeln von Tell-el-Amarna*. Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek 5 (Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> J.A. Knudtzon *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln Vols 1 and 2* (Aalen: Otto Zeller, 1964).

<sup>50</sup> William L. Moran, *Les Lettres d’el-Amarna* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987).

<sup>51</sup> William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

lexical, and contextual – that support the translation.” In the introduction information is given regarding discovery and publication, the archive itself, language and writing, collection and contents. Within the focus on the archive there is some historical and social background related to Knudtson’s interpretations but Moran does not focus specifically on these aspects. A recent and comprehensive study has been made by Rainey.<sup>52</sup> In the Introduction to Volume 1 full information is given regarding discovery and publication, language and writing, collection and contents, historical and social background. A further section is on the topic of discovery, research and excavation. Following are the texts presented in transcription and English translation, supplemented by a glossary. In Volume 2 for all the letters Rainey provides initial notes giving the Text, Copy, Collation and Photographic references. Following are details of other transliterations and translations and a description of the material composition of the tablet. Each letter has extensive commentary on his translation and transliteration and cites and comments on the varying interpretations and their reasoning. With regard to a specific study of the language Mynářová’s work<sup>53</sup> covers letter format and analysis of structure in conjunction with epistolary Peripheral Akkadian, insight into senders and recipients and extensive notes on the language from the grammatical perspective. Translation and transliteration are presented in his Appendix with appropriate source references. The detailed bibliographies provided by both Mynářová and Rainey give insight into the considerable number of publications and articles that have appeared over the years since the first discovery of the Amarna tablets.

While some information is found in the previous works by Moran and Knudtson Rainey’s Introduction<sup>54</sup> has the most extensive analysis of the historical and social aspects of the letters. He initially covers their overall historical background. He then discusses the information in the letters by analysing them by origin/destination under the headings of International Correspondence (Babylon/Egypt, Mittani and Egypt, Alashia)

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<sup>52</sup> Anson F. Rainey, *The El-Amarna correspondence: a new edition of the cuneiform letters from the site of El-Amarna based on collations of all extant tablets*, 2 vols.(ed. William M. Schniedewind and Zipora Cochavi-Rainey). Handbook of Oriental Studies, section 1: The Near and Middle East 110 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015).

<sup>53</sup>Jana Mynářová, *Language of Amarna – language of Diplomacy. Perspectives on the Amarna Letters* (Prague : Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University in Prague, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Rainey (2015): 14-32.

and Levantine correspondence (Amurru Affairs, Lebanese and Damascene, Southern Canaan) which include discussion of letters related to Egyptian military planning and campaigns. He provides extensive detail of the people involved in the letters, and full information regarding the occurrences and issues in which they are involved set within their historical context. This recent work contains full referencing to previous relevant studies and opinions, reflecting the overall focus there has been on this corpus over time.

*Late Ramesside Period:* Letters from the late Ramesside period published in 1895 by Spiegelberg<sup>55</sup> provided transcription, translation and commentary. However, his work did not include other papyri available at the time and since then more papyri have been identified as belonging to this corpus of correspondence. Černý undertook the task of a new study of the letters. After examining all the collections held in various museums and libraries his transcriptions of the letters was published in 1939.<sup>56</sup> In addition to the transcriptions and accompanying notes his comprehensive study includes descriptions of the papyri and their provenance, although in many cases this has not been possible to establish. He notes this lack of adequate records and details their current locations in a number of different museums and a few private collections. Additionally he provides information regarding external form and address style, an index of personal and place names together with a complete list of the papyri contained in his work. Regarding any specific social or historical reference Černý comments that his notes “aim at concision and avoid any discussion concerning the content of the letters and the meaning of particular passages,” as this aspect is “reserved for a special volume of translations and commentary.”<sup>57</sup> This has been provided by Wente.<sup>58</sup> His translations are accompanied by extensive notes of grammatical comment and referencing and are presented in the order in which they appeared in Černý’s work. However, he has provided an introductory overview of his suggested chronological order of the letters and a Tabular Summary of

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<sup>55</sup> Wilhelm Spiegelberg, “Correspondences du temps des roi-prêtres,” *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale XXXIV 2* (Paris: 1895): 199-317.

<sup>56</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *Late Ramesside Letters* (Brussels: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1939).

<sup>57</sup> Černý (1939): VI.

<sup>58</sup> Edward Wente, *Late Ramesside Letters*. Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilisation no. 33 (Chicago & Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Also translated in his *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (1990): 172-203, Letter 288-331..

Chronology.<sup>59</sup> In the majority of cases the letters are to or from the necropolis scribe Dhutmose and were written during his travels in and outside of Thebes and in Nubia. Some social and historical background is provided in the chronology overview by the noting of the movement and location of Dhutmose, and his involvement in the Nubian campaign. His chronology is based on information from the letters which has enabled comparison between the “titles and names of the persons mentioned with those found in documents whose dates have been established and to interrelating the letters on the basis of their contents.”<sup>60</sup> Social aspects can be interpreted from a reading of the letters. For example the collection of grain,<sup>61</sup> issues regarding provisioning and the failure to provide the correct amounts of grain,<sup>62</sup> means of transportation of supplies and daily tasks to be carried out.<sup>63</sup> In two of the letters, one of which also deals with fruit and wood provisioning, there is mention of payment for weapons and their delivery.<sup>64</sup> However there is no specific commentary on social/historical aspects of the letters in either work.<sup>65</sup>

A further number of papyri from this period at the British Museum and not included by Černý have been published by Janssen.<sup>66</sup> In addition to actual letters are the “communications”, given this connotation because they contain no inner address followed by an introductory formula or outer address lines. In total nine papyri have been translated with notes to the translation together with a full description of the papyrus itself. A commentary follows (although in some cases the source is too fragmentary to allow detailed insight) regarding the topics discussed, historical context and the people involved in the letters and communications. From the social aspects of relationships and husbandry, one letter includes detail of an adulterous relationship and the threat of violence to the woman concerned (BM 10416). Another, although Černý notes the difficulty of interpretation, gives some insight into agricultural organisation at the end of the Ramesside period (BM 10373). The concluding section comprises not only the

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<sup>59</sup> Wente (1967): 16.

<sup>60</sup> Wente (1967): 1.

<sup>61</sup> Wente (1967): 81, Letter 47.

<sup>62</sup> Wente (1967): 71, Letter 37.

<sup>63</sup> Wente (1967): 27, Letter 5.

<sup>64</sup> Wente (1967): 70, Letter 36, 83, Letter 50.

<sup>65</sup> Due to their relevance to the particular topic, four letters from this period, one regarding the provision of bandaging and three the killing of two policemen are discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter Three, Military and Police Affairs, Letters 6-9.

<sup>66</sup> Janssen, Jac J. *Late Ramesside Letters and Communications* (London: British Museum Press, 1991).



transcriptions and plates of the original papyri from the British Museum which are the focus of this work, but also all those included by Černý in his *Late Ramesside Letters*.

*Late Egyptian letters* A collection of late Egyptian letters sourced from a wide range of different papyri from various Museum collections was compiled by Gardiner.<sup>67</sup> His introduction provides descriptive notes and details of the provenance of these individual papyri. They are presented in transcription with “such annotations as bear directly on the readings.” He specifically notes that he “will not attempt to anticipate the projected Commentary”<sup>68</sup> which was subsequently put together under the same title by Caminos and published in 1954.<sup>69</sup> His study contains translation of the texts transcribed by Gardiner and a commentary. He provides a list of previous translations followed by his own. His commentaries discuss in detail aspects of translation and difficulties of interpretation. They support and explain the translation but do not discuss content with regard to the social or historical aspects. There is consideration of distinctions between what appear to be genuine letters and those that are considered to be “simple models of epistolary style”<sup>70</sup> written for scribal training. A large number of the letters reflect the superiority and status of the scribal profession. The transcriptions, translations and commentaries in these publications from Gardiner and Caminos are important references for further research into societal and historical context.

*Letters to the Dead:* Letters to the dead rather than the living were identified and addressed by Gardiner and Sethe as being a significant corpus requiring collective study, and their work looking at nine letters was published in 1928.<sup>71</sup> The first chapter, Translations and General Descriptions, contains the translations for six letters. Each is accompanied by an introductory note regarding provenance, material, dating and some epistolary comment. The general interpretation and comment following the translation identify the people involved and comment on the content. For example the introduction

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<sup>67</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*. (Brussels: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937).

<sup>68</sup> Gardiner(1937): xii.

<sup>69</sup> Ricardo Caminos, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

<sup>70</sup> Gardiner (1937): ix.

<sup>71</sup> Alan H.Gardiner and Kurt Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead, Mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1928). These and the following letters cited also translated in Wente (1990): 211, Letters 340-352.

preceding the translation of the Kaw Bowl notes its discovery by Petrie's society in 1924 at Kaw el-Kebir. The dimensions of the bowl are given and the forms of the signs inscribed are discussed in order to reach a conclusion regarding its dating. It concludes with the description and measurements of the tomb in which it was found, noting that the burial was undisturbed, contained one body and that the bowl was placed behind the head.<sup>72</sup> The general description and comment first gives a resumé of the content. This is followed by the comments prompted by the text. There are actually two letters, one to the writer's mother, the other to his father. The letter to the mother is looked at first as being the less ambiguous of the two, and the content is explained. The letter to the father is more complicated and the comments on this are more detailed in their interpretation and elucidation of the letter in order to fully explain that the "suspected source of Shepsi's woes, was a deceased brother."<sup>73</sup> This approach is evident in the analysis of all the letters including the further three letters translated and discussed in the Appendix. The second chapter is devoted to philological commentaries and deals "exclusively with philological difficulties and points of interest arising in connection with the texts translated and explained in the preceding chapter."<sup>74</sup> Looking again at the example of the Kawa Bowl which exemplifies the method for philological detail, the analysis is extensive.<sup>75</sup> The reading of the hieroglyphic transcriptions are discussed in detail as well as grammatical points. There is also background given to the custom of loaning corn and valuing loans of commodities in corn.<sup>76</sup> A final section of Plates provides their hieroglyphic transcriptions for each letter derived from its original source. Further additions to the corpus were subsequently identified and studied. In 1930 Gardiner published transcription and commentary on a letter to a dead father found on a jar-stand belonging to the Haskell Oriental Museum, Chicago.<sup>77</sup> In the style of his work with Sethe he discusses content and provides full philological notes. A letter found during the excavation of the Tomb of Meru at Nag ed-Deir from a son to his deceased father, was the subject of a study by

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<sup>72</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 3.

<sup>73</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 4.

<sup>74</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 13.

<sup>75</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 17-19.

<sup>76</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 18.

<sup>77</sup> Alan H., Gardiner, "A New Letter to the Dead," *JEA* 16 (1930): 19-22.

Simpson.<sup>78</sup> His article includes the provenance and a description of the papyrus, the transcription, translation and philological notes, together with commentary on content and the individuals appearing in the letters. He also published for the first time a study of a further letter found at Nag ed-Deir.<sup>79</sup> In a similar approach he gives the provenance and description of the papyrus. The brief letter is presented in transcription and translation with accompanying commentary of grammatical and interpretational notes. A letter on a stela of unknown provenance from a man to a dead woman, commented on by Simpson in his article on the letter from the Tomb of Meru, was later the subject of a full study by Wentz.<sup>80</sup> His article provides translation, transcription and notes to the translation concluding with comment regarding lack of knowledge of provenance and that he understands the letter to be “a very ancient reference to the incubation of dreams.”<sup>81</sup> From the social perspective the comments relating to each letter in the first chapter of Gardiner and Sethe’s work give insight into the people involved, their status, relationships as well as observations on the issues involved. At the end of this chapter a Summary and Conclusions section discusses historical context and the significance of the letters in their reflection of a widespread custom rather than with “an exceptional course of action to which a few individuals were driven by some unusual extremity.”<sup>82</sup> Passages from other inscriptions and texts are included and referenced in comparison. In this way both social and historical context are analysed and discussed.

### **Summary**

In some cases a specific analysis of social and historical aspects has been made. The inclusion of this additional insight, as noted, can be found in Allen’s study of the *Hekanakhte Papers*, Rainey’s work on the *Amarna* correspondence, Gardiner and Sethe’s *Letters to the Dead*. Regarding the other works cited, Collier and Quirke acknowledge the omission of such an analysis with reference to the *Lahun Papyri*,<sup>83</sup> They explain in

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<sup>78</sup> William Kelly Simpson, “Letter to the Dead from the Tomb of Meru (N 3737) at Nag ed-Deir,” *JEA* 52 (1966): 39-52.

<sup>79</sup> William Kelly Simpson, “A Late Old Kingdom Letter to the Dead from Nag el-Deir N 3500,” *JEA* 56 (1970): 58-64.

<sup>80</sup> Edward Wentz, “A Misplaced Letter to the Dead,” *Or.Lov.Per.* 6/7 (1975-6): 595-600.

<sup>81</sup> Wentz (1975-6): 599.

<sup>82</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 10.

<sup>83</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): iii.

the Preface that due to the number of letters “in this the first comprehensive publication of this corpus...it has not proven practicable to attempt publication with detailed commentary for each item, paleography or a full set of photographic plates.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, when discussing the *Late Ramesside Letters*<sup>85</sup> Wente states that his “primary interest in translating these letters has been philological rather than historical...”<sup>86</sup> and Gardiner regarding his *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* includes only “such annotations as bear directly on the readings.”<sup>87</sup> Additionally Caminos in his translation and commentary has no specific focus on the social and historical aspects of the correspondence. The numerous letters from the Deir el-Medina collection of documentation are an important part of the sourcing of studies into the people, their relationships, issues and the work carried out there,<sup>88</sup> but there is no separate study specifically focused on an historical and social analysis of the letters.

These omissions do not detract from the overall valuable contribution that these translations, transcriptions and accompanying commentaries and interpretations have made. The importance of ancient Egyptian correspondence as a primary source of information has been illustrated by these studies, within a specific timeframe, of letters comprising the whole or part of a collection. They each represent a discrete entity of research related to specific periods in ancient Egyptian history. As such I would argue that any further discussion and analysis of these letters, focusing on the social aspects which have not been addressed, should be within the collective context of their timeframe. The purpose of this study is to show how research into the primary sources represented by a range of individual personal letters across the timeframe of ancient Egyptian history outside of a collective approach, can extensively widen and increase the knowledge of the social aspects that have been found in such studies.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Collier and Quirke (2002): iii.

<sup>85</sup> Wente (1967): 1.

<sup>86</sup> Wente (1967): 1.

<sup>87</sup> Gardiner (1937): xii.

<sup>88</sup> For example Jac J. Janssen, *Commodity Prices from the Ramessid Period: an economic study of the village of necropolis workmen at Thebes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

<sup>89</sup> For this reason with the exception, as noted, of four letters from the Late Ramesside period, letters from these studies have not been included.

Studies have also been done on small numbers of letters grouped together by topic, or by the same sender and/or recipient.

### **Letters grouped by topic**

The *Semnah Despatches* comprise six letters dated to the time of Amenemhat III, concern activities at the Nubian fort at Semnah. Their content provides information that shows its function was not only as a military base but also as a frontier post to prevent border crossing and as a location for trading. They were the topic of a study by Smither which was published posthumously with an introduction by Battiscombe Gunn.<sup>90</sup> The article contains an original transcription of the letters with accompanying notes which Smither had managed to complete before his death. In his introduction Gunn comments on “such a brilliant feat of decipherment” and that it was decided to publish with the “sort of translation and additional notes that the present writer (with whom Smither discussed many difficult points...) believes that he would have supplied.” Gunn’s introduction provides a commentary on provenance, style and the overall content of the letters.

*Religious practice* is evidenced in private letters from the New Kingdom – the topic of an article by John Baines<sup>91</sup> which looks at how they might show “greater involvement with temples and a more pervasive personal engagement with formal religion...”<sup>92</sup> He looks first at the introductory formulae and their context, noting their hierarchical structure from the bottom up, placing the gods last after recipient and king. The ways in which the style and content of the formulae have changed over the period of the New Kingdom are discussed together with the reasoning for this – for example whether in the letters from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties it was due to “social milieu, to personal predicaments, and to purely stylistic development” or did it “reflect changes in religiosity.”<sup>93</sup> Specific letters are also referred to with regard to the elaborate structure of the introductory wording, such as one to the scribe of the tomb Thutmose which invokes

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<sup>90</sup> Paul C. Smither, “The Semnah Despatches,” *JEA* 31 (1945): 3-10. Also translated by Wente (1990): 70-72, Letters 79-83.

<sup>91</sup> John Baines, “Egyptian Letters of the New Kingdom as evidence for religious practice,” *JANER* 1.1 (2001): 1-31.

<sup>92</sup> Baines (2001): 3.

<sup>93</sup> Baines (2002): 22.

for him the favours of numerous deities and prominent people.<sup>94</sup> Overall the content of the letters is discussed to indicate the varying ways deities are addressed in differing circumstances and to what extent they reflect actual religious wishes for the recipient or whether they are indeed just “formulaic.” Baines comments in conclusion that the “letter material appears to demonstrate both personal religiosity and a widespread and pervasive orientation toward cult temples of the gods....”<sup>95</sup>

*El-Hibeh and “Horus of the Camp”* are the topic of letters dated to Dynasty Twenty-one which form part of an extensive archive of papyri found at el-Hibeh and are spread across nine collections in several countries and continents.<sup>96</sup> Situated at a strategic point on the Nile some 20 miles south of Heracleopolis, el-Hibeh was at the boundary of the northern base of Theban rule. It became a fortress that could stand guard over southward moving river traffic. The letters found there give insight to an obscure deity known as “Horus of the Camp.” In 1917 Spiegelberg published 16 letters from the considerable number of texts and fragments held by the Bibliotheque Nationale and Universitaire in Strasbourg.<sup>97</sup> His transcription is given first followed by the translation.<sup>98</sup> There are footnotes regarding interpretation and a note and comment on content is provided where appropriate for some letters. A further letter from this period in a different collection (*P. Berlin 8523*) was also studied by Spiegelberg in a separate article.<sup>99</sup> In 2006 Müller published his translation, with footnote comments but without transcription, of nine of these letters.<sup>100</sup> In addition to those already published by Spiegelberg are two from the Louvre collection (*P. Louvre 25359/25360*). His study included an introductory overview of background to discovery and archiving together with the historical context of the correspondence. Another additional letter found in the collection of the Moscow Pushkin Museum (*P. Moscow 5660*), although fragmentary, was studied by Posener.<sup>101</sup> He

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<sup>94</sup> Baines (2002): 15.

<sup>95</sup> Baines (2001): 31.

<sup>96</sup> These letters are discussed fully in Chapter Two, Religious Affairs, Letters 5-12.

<sup>97</sup> Wilhelm Spiegelberg, “Briefe der 21 Dynastie aus El-Hibe,” *ZÄS* 53 (1917a): 1-30.

<sup>98</sup> In some cases of fragmentary texts just the transcription is given.

<sup>99</sup> Wilhelm Spiegelberg, “Varia 10: Eine zurückgezogene Pachtkündigung,” *ZÄS* 53 (1917b): 107-111.

<sup>100</sup> Matthias Müller, “Ägyptische Briefe vom Beginn der XXI Dynastie,” in *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, N.F. Vol.3: Briefe*. (ed. Bernd. Janowski and Wilhelm Gernot; Güterslohe: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 2006), 330-339.

<sup>101</sup> Georges Posener, “Un Papyrus d’El-Hibeh,” *JEA* 68 (1982): 134-138.

includes his transcription and translation with notes on interpretation. His following commentary gives his insight into the background of the sender Menkheperre and offers Posener's explanation for his interpretation given the difficulties arising from the fragmentary nature of the letter. Wentz has also published his translation of these letters, five sourced from Spiegelberg's study of the Strasbourg papyri, the other two from Posener and Spiegelberg's studies of single letters.<sup>102</sup> With regard to social and historical analysis further study of these letters is ongoing by an international group of researchers. An article by Müller identifies the members of the group and "presents a preliminary overview of the current state of our research, including an outlook on the socio-cultural information to be gained from the archive."<sup>103</sup> It is comprehensive in its coverage of knowledge and opinion regarding the actual provenance of the papyri and additional referencing of content and personalities cited in the archive of so-far unpublished texts. Additionally prior to this article one of the group, Dominique Lefèvre, published two studies of el-Hibeh. In one he considered the possibility of a familial relationship between two of the correspondents – Horpenese and Horkhebe – that could represent a family archive.<sup>104</sup> In a later work he discussed the history of the site, commented on the diverse topics found in the letters and the information provided regarding the people and their background.<sup>105</sup>

### **Letters grouped by same sender and/or recipient**

Four letters dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty involving the same recipient and sender – the scribe Ahmose of Peniati – are the subject of a study by Glanville.<sup>106</sup> He notes that these four – British Museum papyri 10102, 10103, 10104 and 10107 – were "written at a period of which we have very few epistolary remains."<sup>107</sup> Referencing these sources he

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<sup>102</sup> Wentz (1990): 206-209, Letters 332-339.

<sup>103</sup> For full details see Matthias Müller, "The "El-Hibeh" Archive: Introduction & Preliminary Information," in *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st -24th dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University 25-27 October 2007* (eds. Gerard P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée and O.E. Kaper; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten; Leuven : Peeters, 2009), 251-264.

<sup>104</sup> Dominique Lefèvre, , "Les papyrus d'el-Hibeh : Archives de Temple ou archives familiales?" in *La Lettre d'Archive* (ed. Laure Pantalacci; Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, (2008): 116.

<sup>105</sup> Dominique Lefèvre, "La forteresse d'el-Hibeh : papyrus inédits de la XXIe dynastie," *BSFE* 165 (2006) : 32-47.

<sup>106</sup> S.R.K. Glanville, "The letters of Aamose of Peniati," *JEA* 14 (1928): 294-312.

<sup>107</sup> Glanville (1928): 294.

has rendered transcriptions for each of the letters. The topics covered in the first two are instructions as to the building of a house (10102),<sup>108</sup> and a brief note wishing Ahmose life, prosperity, health in the favour of the Gods. “May they grant thee favour and love and enterprise in all thy undertakings (10103).”<sup>109</sup> Regarding the other two – one is addressed to him and is concerned with a dispute over ownership of a female slave (10107).<sup>110</sup> The other is from Ahmose himself (10104) and is only a few lines of opening greeting to the Controller of the Household, Waḏtrenput. There is also an additional transcription and short note to this letter at the conclusion of the article. Prefacing Glanville’s translation is an introductory background to Ahmose himself as evidenced by the letters and by inscriptions and the inscribed objects of a shabti figure and a kohl pot. His translations have Notes on the Translation as well as a Commentary on content and historical context. Although he does not provide translation or transcription Glanville includes a commentary of two other letters, one to Ahmose, the other from him.<sup>111</sup> His comments relate to the authenticity of Ahmose as the actual writer of the second letters (3230b) with just a brief note regarding the first (3230a). These two letters are fully discussed by Peet whom Glanville references in his commentary.<sup>112</sup> From an historical perspective in his introduction Glanville looks at evidence of Ahmose “as an historical person,” in office under “five successive rulers, namely Amenophis I, Tuthmosis I and II, Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III.”<sup>113</sup> Commentaries to the letters look at specific interpretation of any social and historical information found in the reason for writing. For example the discussion of the letter regarding house building analyses the content for evidence of structure, building material and as an indication of Ahmose’s knowledge of this process; comment on the letter of dispute about a servant discusses the societal question of the nature of servitude as opposed to slavery; the opening formula, which is all that remains of BM 10104, mentioning the individual Waḏtrenput, prompts comment

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<sup>108</sup> Due to its relevance to the particular topic, this letter is discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter Four, Daily Life, Letter 1.

<sup>109</sup> Glanville (1928): 303.

<sup>110</sup> Due to its relevance to the particular topic, this letter is discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter One, Complaints.

<sup>111</sup> Louvre 3230a, 116 and Louvre 3230b, 309.

<sup>112</sup> Due to their relevance to the particular topic, these letters are discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter One, Complaints (3230b), Letter 5 and Chapter Four, Daily Life (3230a), Letter 6 .

<sup>113</sup> Glanville (1928): 295.



on the historical context of this letter which suggests under which ruler the letter was written by Ahmose.

Three letters with the same sender have been studied by Allam.<sup>114</sup> These pieces of correspondence are from a standard-bearer named Maiseti. Allam cites a first transcription by Golenishchev<sup>115</sup> but has himself referenced the transcriptions by Bakir for the translations he has made for this work.<sup>116</sup> The letters from Maiseti are to three different recipients and cover various topics related to interference with the god's personnel, the rounding up of soldiers and mobilisation of prisoners.<sup>117</sup> The translation of each letter is accompanied by detailed notes covering language and content. A further group of three letters collated by Allam<sup>118</sup> are on differing topics. The first concerns the return of a ship and the payment that needs to be made if the recipient does not return it. The second is regarding the charge of cattle and the taking of the cattle census.<sup>119</sup> The final letter is fragmentary. It appears to deal with various matters asking the recipient – to make the seasonal measure of barley due, to prepare to complete the harvest which is in the village, and several other requests which are unclear due to the *lacunae*. As in the previous article Allam notes the work done on these by Golenishchev and references the transcriptions done by Bakir<sup>120</sup> for his translations. These are again provided with detailed notes regarding language and content.

A group of letters from the time of Ramesses II is the focus of an article by Janssen.<sup>121</sup> They were bought by G. Anastasi in Egypt and purchased from him by the Leiden Museum in 1928. He notes they have “never been published in a modern way.”<sup>122</sup> He sees the letters as a “unity” due to the “occurrence of the same people in more than

<sup>114</sup> Schafik Allam, “Trois missives d’un commandant (Pap. Cgc 58053-5),” *ASAE* 71 (1987): 5-25.

<sup>115</sup> V.S. Golenishchev, *Papyrus hiératiques* (Le Caïre : Impr. de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1927-).

<sup>116</sup> Bakir, Abd-el-Mohsen, *Egyptian Epistolography from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty* (Cairo: BdÉ 48, Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1970): P. Cairo 58053, 58054, 58055/Pls 1, 2, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Due to their relevance to the particular topic, these letters are discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter Three, Military and Police, Letters 1-3..

<sup>118</sup> Schafik Allam, “Trois Lettres d’affaires” (P.Cairo CG 58056, 58, 60)” in *Melanges Gamal eddin Mokhtar, vol.1* (ed. Paule Posener-Kriéger; Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1985) :19-30.

<sup>119</sup> Due to their relevance to the particular topic, these two letters are fully analysed as part of this study. The former in Chapter One, Complaints, Letter 11 and the latter in Chapter Four, Daily Life, Letter 7.

<sup>120</sup> Bakir (1970): Pls 4, 6, 7.

<sup>121</sup> Jac J. Janssen, “Nine Letters from the time of Ramesses II,” *OMRO* 41 (1960): 31-47.

<sup>122</sup> Janssen (1960): 31.

one letter.”<sup>123</sup> This viewpoint is evidenced by naming the people concerned in the context of their appearance in the correspondence. Janssen’s translations of the nine letters have descriptions, notes and full transcriptions derived from the original papyri. His introduction looks at the content of the letters with regard to the historical context of placing them in the reign of Ramesses II<sup>124</sup> and in a postscript he suggests that a person referred to as “the general” could be Ramesses II himself.<sup>125</sup>

### *Summary*

These letters grouped by topic and those by sender and/or recipient provide a focus on people and the specific events and issues in their lives. The letters studied within a particular topic have provided comment from the social and historical perspective. The military and trading functions of the fort are revealed by Smither’s translation of the *Semnah Despatches*. Baines’ analysis of the religious practices in the New Kingdom enables recognition of the differing styles of formulaic address that could reflect a social status or deference, as well as from a historical perspective the period in the New Kingdom when they were written. The translations and study of correspondence from the el-Hibeh archive has initiated their ongoing study by an international group focusing on the obscure deity “Horus of the Camp” and the socio-cultural information that can be discerned.

Regarding the correspondence looked at within the same sender and/or recipient group, in the letters involving Ahmose Glanville has included interpretation of social aspects and historical context in his commentaries, as does James in his study of the nine Ramesside letters. The correspondence discussed by Allam has given detailed notes and comment regarding language and content but without any specific reference to social aspects or historical background. As noted some letters involving Ahmose from the Glanville study and those from the soldier Maiseti discussed by Allam have been selected for this study, as are the letters from el-Hibeh. Although part of a topic or group they do not represent the discrete entity of a collection covering a specific timeframe and as such can be viewed as individual letters relevant for inclusion in this study.

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<sup>123</sup> Janssen (1960): 33.

<sup>124</sup> Janssen (1960): 33-34.

<sup>125</sup> Janssen (1960): 46.

### **Letters studied with respect to specific aspects of structure and focus**

The epistolography of letters is the focus of a work by Bakir, covering a period from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Dynasty.<sup>126</sup> In his introduction he discusses such aspects as provenance, methods of writing and materials, how the letters were folded and sealed and their means of delivery. He then follows “the natural sequence in dealing with the subject.”<sup>127</sup> The chapter themes are in the order Address, Introductory Formulae, Complimentary Preamble, Terminal Formulae, with a final chapter covering the whole subject of epistolary style. In each chapter the various formulae appropriate to content and period are discussed and given in transcription. There is also an Index of Epistolary Formulae and one of Syntactical Usages. Plates and transcriptions for twenty-five letters from various museum collections, some previously unpublished, are included as referencing for the epistolary themes identified. This comprehensive study of the epistolography of these periods enables analysis of a letter’s structure with regard to sender/recipient status, the personal or business related nature of the reason for writing, the dating of the letter, the style as it relates to the writing material.<sup>128</sup>

Intercessory prayer in the letters from the Late Ramesside period is a topic discussed by Sweeney.<sup>129</sup> She comments that these letters “show a picture of a community trying to protect one of its endangered members by praying for him,”<sup>130</sup> and defines intercession as “one person undertaking to pray to a god to help another person.”<sup>131</sup> The person concerned is the scribe Dhutmose who, while on his travels in Nubia and the Middle Egypt, felt that he was in danger and wrote a number of letters asking his recipients to pray for him. The reason suggested for the “unique stress on intercession in the late Ramesside letters” is because Dhutmose was so far away “he had to be reassured...that his family and friends were praying for him.”<sup>132</sup> The vocabulary used in the intercessory prayers to achieve this is given as are the names of the gods invoked.

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<sup>126</sup> Bakir (1970).

<sup>127</sup> Bakir (1970): xiii.

<sup>128</sup> The following Chapters of this study will exemplify these aspects.

<sup>129</sup> Deborah Sweeney, “Intercessory prayer in Ancient Egypt and the Bible,” in *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity*.(ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll; Jerusalem: 1985), 213-230.

<sup>130</sup> Sweeney (1985): 213.

<sup>131</sup> Sweeney (1985): 213.

<sup>132</sup> Sweeney (1985): 216.

In further studies Sweeney also discusses the concepts of offence, reconciliation, wrongdoing and forgiveness that can be found in letters. Regarding an individual piece of correspondence from the Late Ramesside period she looks at the issue of offence and reconciliation.<sup>133</sup> The sender is complaining about his recipient's anger because of a joke which the sender had told the chief taxing master in a letter. He complains that because of this his recipient has caused him to be the subject of insults.<sup>134</sup> A translation of the letter is followed by the author's commentary on interpretation and a discussion which looks at the "offence" and the possible reasons for the seeming severity of his recipient's reaction. "Reconciliation" is noted as being signified in the closing lines when the sender asks "Do you not know the nature of my heart, that it is concerned about you, that my desire is to have you discover memories of me for yourself daily."<sup>135</sup> He may have committed an offence in his recipient's eyes, but looks at reconciliation by his expression of previous friendship.

In a further more comprehensive study of reconciliation Sweeney discusses a number of letters from differing periods<sup>136</sup> and notes the rare examples of forgiveness. The instances of occurrence she discusses are from a letter from the time of Akhenaten, a letter to the dead on a bowl from the First Intermediate Period, a letter from Dhutmose to his family, letters from Deir el-Medina, the Late Ramesside letter noted above. The content is looked at with regard to the reasons for which forgiveness is required and to the ways in which this unusual emotion is expressed. She concludes that "we should note that the issue of forgiveness is framed in terms of concrete examples of the connective virtues – care for other people, loyalty to one's family and friends."<sup>137</sup>

An analysis of wrongdoing and offence implied or expressed in letters from the Late Ramesside Period is the topic for a paper published in 2003.<sup>138</sup> The content of this paper covers definitions of wrongdoing as related to this period, compares the vocabulary

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<sup>133</sup> Deborah Sweeney, "Offence and Reconciliation in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Late Ramesside Letter no. 46," *GM* 158 (1997): 63-79.

<sup>134</sup> Due to its relevance to the particular topic the letter is further discussed fully as part of this study in Chapter One, Complaints, Letter 15.

<sup>135</sup> Sweeney (1997): 67.

<sup>136</sup> Deborah Sweeney, "Letters of Reconciliation from Ancient Egypt," in *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*. (ed. I. Shirun-Grumach; Wiesbaden: ÄAT 40, 1998), 353-369.

<sup>137</sup> Sweeney (1998): 369.

<sup>138</sup> Deborah Sweeney, "Wrong doing and Offence in Letters from the Ramesside Period," in *Papers for Discussion* 3. (ed. Sarah Groll; Jerusalem: Shirun-Grumach, 2003) , 99-139.

used to describe wrongdoing against the gods with that used to describe offences against people. Also looked at are the means by which complainants deal with the problem, the distinctions that can be drawn between wrongdoing and offence. Wrongs and offences (for example rudeness, quarrelling, insulting behaviour) are listed with the reference to the appropriate letter in which they occur. The paper concludes that “wrongdoing in letters is immediate and personal” that the “concepts of wrongdoing discussed in these letters are connected to wider concepts of good behaviour in society....”<sup>139</sup>

Late Ramesside letters are also the subject for a comprehensive work by Sweeney on the subject of correspondence and dialogue.<sup>140</sup> The chapters in this volume cover classification of speech, the definition, forms and tactics for requests, questions, information and complaints. Each chapter is divided into sections under these sub-headings. The final chapter looks at the definition and presence of courtesy. The points being made are illustrated by extensive references to the specific letters with appropriate footnotes to indicate the sources of other occurrences and comment. The in-depth analysis results in a successful outcome to Sweeney’s “aim to investigate how the sender asks questions, makes requests, offers information and complains, and what the other party’s options for replying are in each case”<sup>141</sup> as well as identifying the factors of relative standing and making comparisons with style found in other non-literary texts.

### *Summary*

Social and historical knowledge is provided by the content of these publications. Bakir’s epistological work shows how the formulae for the wording and structure of a letter can reflect the status of the sender, the reason for writing and enable a dating of the correspondence. Similarly, Sweeney’s focus on correspondence and dialogue shows how the structure and wording of a letter can reflect the many ways in which differing reasons for writing can be expressed and structured depending on status and topic. Societal custom can be found in her works which analyse ways of expression and reaction involved in forgiveness, reconciliation, wrongdoing, and prayer. These studies of

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<sup>139</sup> Sweeney (2003): 139.

<sup>140</sup> Deborah Sweeney, *Correspondence and Dialogue: Pragmatic factors in Late Ramesside Letter-Writing*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001).

<sup>141</sup> Sweeney (2001): 28.

structure and focus reflect the important contribution to social and historical knowledge that is a result of this approach to ancient Egyptian correspondence.

### **Selection of letters**

Wente's volume of letters has been referenced for the Deir el-Medina letters as well as translations for some of the other correspondence in the collections and studies discussed above.<sup>142</sup> The individual letters which comprise the rest of the translations in this publication have been used as the primary reference for the selection of personal letters analysed in this study.

### **Definition**

Personal in the context of the letters chosen for this study denotes a private letter between people in the general population regarding their affairs and issues. The letters in Wente's work which fall outside of this definition and the reasons for their non-inclusion in this study are as follows:

### **Other categories of correspondence:**

*Letters to and from Royalty.*<sup>143</sup> Royal letters (which can also be termed decrees) focus primarily on orders, administrative matters and as evidence of kingly approval. Several have been copied onto stelae as a public display. One decree from Sesostris III to his chief treasurer Ikhnofret (Berlin Stele 1204)<sup>144</sup> is an order to sail upstream to Abydos to make a monument for his father Osiris. His recipient has been chosen for the task as a former pupil and companion to the king. Because of this prior tutelage and relationship the king believes that there is not anyone else who is capable of carrying out the mission. In an order from Thutmose I to Turoi, viceroy of Kush (Cairo Stele 34006) the recipient is told to have divine offerings presented to the gods of Elephantine.<sup>145</sup> In a letter addressed to officials in Coptos (Cairo Stele 30770) Nubkheperre Iniotef demands an investigation into the stealing of a sacred relic from the temple of Min. He orders that the

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<sup>142</sup> Wente (1990).

<sup>143</sup> Wente (1990): 18-40, Letters 2-39.

<sup>144</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Aegyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht*. Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs, 1924, Wente 24, Letter 10.

<sup>145</sup> Pierre Lacau, *Stèles du Nouvel Empire* (Cairo: Musée des antiquités égyptiennes, 1909-1926): 11-13, Wente 27, Letter 15.

culprit and his name be removed from the temple and that he should be “cast upon the ground and his food stipend, his title deed and his meat taken away.”<sup>146</sup> A letter on papyrus from Ramesses IX to the high priest Ramessesnakht (P. Cairo B) is a complaint about the quality of galena sent for his eye-paint. He commands that as soon as his recipient receives the letter he should speedily resend some of the correct strength.<sup>147</sup> A the reason for a letter to Ramesses II from the chief treasurer Suty is to give him full details of the amounts of provisions which have been given as wages to the workers at the Place of Truth.

*Letters to and from the vizier.*<sup>148</sup> In close contact with the king, the vizier was in charge of the administration, the judiciary and their associated bureaucracy. He acted as an intermediary to deal with matters that did not demand royal attention. A letter from Iniotefoker, who gives his title as vizier and overseer of the six great lawcourts, is addressed to stewards of the palace. Their instructions relate to the need for organising provisions for the Residence – measures of wheat, barley, loaves – and also to supply a slave girl.<sup>149</sup> An administrative order is reflected in a letter from the city prefect and vizier Khay to a foreman named Nebnefer. He is ordered to make sure that no crew’s wages derived from the treasury are held in arrears as he has received notification that they should be issued.<sup>150</sup> A piece of correspondence from the city prefect and vizier Neferonpe to the necropolis foremen covers instructions related to payment of wages, as well as mentioning the sending of drawings and telling them to look to their self-improvement so that he can boast about their prowess.<sup>151</sup> The vizier also received reports from subordinates in his administration. A letter addressed to the city prefect and vizier Paser by a scribe [Inu]shesu confirms the deliverance of wages to the necropolis and notes the problem he has had in having additional men sent to him to assist him on his

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<sup>146</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Aegyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im akademischen Unterricht* (Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs, 1924): 9, Wente (1990): 25, Letter 13.

<sup>147</sup> *KRI* VI (1969-): 518-519, Wente (1990): 37, Letter 35.

<sup>148</sup> Wente (1990): 42-53, Letters 40-61.

<sup>149</sup> William Kelly Simpson, *Papyrus Reisner II: Accounts of the Dockyard Workshop at This in the reign of Sesostris I* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1965): 21-22, Wente (1990): 43, letter 42.

<sup>150</sup> *KRI* III (1969-): 45-46, Wente 47-48, Letter 51.

<sup>151</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *Papyrus Hiératiques de Deir el-Médineh I: Nos I-XVII DFIFAO 22* (Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1986): 1-7, Wente (1990): 52, Letter 59.

journey.<sup>152</sup> In another letter to Paser a scribe named Nebre reports that the village of Pharaoh is in order and secure and the servants have been given their wages.<sup>153</sup> There are also issues raised. In a letter to the vizier Khay, chief of police Mininuy reports that the Great Place of Pharaoh is all in order regarding wages and provisions before informing Khay about the behaviour of another chief of police whom Mininuy asserts has been negligent in his duties of upkeep of the Great Place of Pharaoh and has been taking for himself the vizier's share of provisions as well as the sender's and distributing them to other officials.<sup>154</sup> Similarly in a letter from the scribe Kenhikhopeshef to the city prefect and vizier of Upper and Lower Egypt, Panehesy, the sender first confirms that the Great Place of Pharaoh is in good order before stating his problem. This is to report that they are not getting a supply of spikes and gypsum. The workmen have run out of them. He asks that his recipient write to those responsible and order them to send spikes and also tools. He feels that requirements are not being attended to due to his location.<sup>155</sup>

### ***Summary***

The reasons for writing in the examples cited are representative of royal correspondence and of those sent and received by a vizier. Those from the king reflect what has been noted as "...a royal letter of instructions: an assertion of hierarchical authority for particular actions."<sup>156</sup> The content of the letters to and from the vizier are appropriate to his responsibility for overall administration. Their concerns and issues evidence the social aspects related to court affairs and bureaucratic procedure. The focus of this study is the social aspects found in personal correspondence rather than those of the ruling class. For this reason, while recognising their importance as a primary source, this study, with some exceptions, does not include letters within these categories of correspondence, viewing them as appropriate collections for the focus of future, separate studies.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *KRI III* (1969-): 29-30, Wente (1990): 44, Letter 44.

<sup>153</sup> *KRI III* (1969-): 31, Wente (1990): 45, Letter 45.

<sup>154</sup> *KRI III* (1969-): 41-43, Wente (1990): 46, Letter 48.

<sup>155</sup> *KRI IV* (1969-): 85-88, Wente (1990): 48, Letter 52.

<sup>156</sup> Christopher Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 101.

<sup>157</sup> As noted by Wente (1990): 18 "There has been no comprehensive treatment of the royal letters from ancient Egypt."



A few exceptions have been made due to their perceived relevance and importance to the topic under consideration. A letter to the vizier and chief justice has been discussed under the topic of complaints.<sup>158</sup> This has been included in order to provide a letter of complaint dated to the Old Kingdom. It is a complete piece of correspondence, notable for the direct manner in which the sender registers his complaint. In contrast to the usual deference shown to a recipient of this status there is no polite greeting or terminal address. From a social aspect it is a source of information regarding the possible use of military personnel in the Tura quarries, the practical requirements for clothing and the opposition of a commander of troops to a vizier's authoritative demand.

From the Twenty-first Dynasty three letters concerning Masaharta and Menkheperre could be regarded as coming under the category of royal letters. Holding the title High Priest of Amun both Masaharta, and later Menkheperre, held the position of sole ruler and military commander of Thebes and Upper Egypt. Menkheperre's name has been found enclosed in a cartouche and Masaharta is noted as referring to himself as the son of King Pinudjem, enclosing the king's name in a cartouche.<sup>159</sup> The letters are written by Menkheperre and have been included due to the additional source of religious information they provide in connection with el-Hibeh and the deity "He of the Camp". They also contain personal information concerning Masaharta and Menkheperre which has not been found in other sources.

Letters selected which do not involve royalty or the vizier but which do have an administrative aspect have been included under the topics of complaints and daily life. A letter from the Mayor of Elephantine to the chief taxing-master Menmarenakht concerns what he considers an unjustified tax demand, a mistake in the bureaucratic process. While there is an administrative aspect in a letter from the mayor of the southern city (Thebes), Sennofer, to a cultivator, the reason for writing is to order his recipient to attend to the preparation of various provisions such as lotus blossoms, flowers fit to be offered, boards of wood and planks.<sup>160</sup> These pieces of correspondence have been included as relevant from a social aspect. Meron's reason for writing enables insight into a differing structure

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<sup>158</sup> Complaints, Letter 1.

<sup>159</sup> See I.E.S Edwards ed. *Cambridge Ancient History Vol.III: Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 647-648.

<sup>160</sup> Daily Life, Letter 9.

of land management under his jurisdiction.<sup>161</sup> In the second letter insight is given into Sennofer's responsibilities as mayor and the range of provisions needed for the city and its estates.

### **Criteria for the letters selected**

The letters have been chosen as being examples of individual pieces of personal correspondence within the definition of "personal" cited above. The time frame covered will be from the Old Kingdom to the Twenty-first Dynasty. The letters have been chosen with regard to their relevance to particular reasons for writing and topics – Complaints, Religious affairs and personnel, Military and police matters, Daily life. Each topic will be given a chapter within which the appropriate letters will be studied in chronological order. The chapter on Daily life will be divided under the sub-headings of building work and labour, husbandry, provisions, personal enquiries and health. The research for this paper has of necessity covered an extensive number of letters. Because of the number involved, those letters have been chosen which provide the most information relevant to the overall topic of social aspects, and are representative in their content of the chosen chapter subject. This is in order to provide a more concise and detailed focus. The most complete letters have been chosen except in some cases where, despite the *lacunae*, the content is extremely informative and relevant. This has resulted in a total of 52 pieces of correspondence. Numbers within the various topic headings are 17 letters of complaint, 12 letters related to religious affairs and personnel, 9 regarding military and police matters, 14 specific to daily life. It has been possible to select significant letters of complaint from each period of the paper's timeframe. Letters relevant to the other topic headings have been identified within the period from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Dynasty

**Approach:** As noted the selection has been drawn from Wente's volume of letters. The research into the existing studies of these individual letters indicated that while comment on social aspects and historical context were included in some commentaries, the focus primarily was on discussion of the grammatical points and differing interpretations of translation.

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<sup>161</sup> Complaints, Letter 16.

The approach for this study will be to focus on the content of each letter to identify the social aspects which will be discussed over differing timeframes and studied within the various topic headings by following the criteria listed below:

- the senders and recipients themselves, their occupations, personalities and relationship.
- the background of other people mentioned in the letter and their relationship to the sender and recipient.
- hierarchy and societal structure indicated by the forms of address – how interpretation of the differing styles of greeting shows the ways in which, as noted by Bakir,<sup>162</sup> they can be related to status, relationships, and in some cases the subject.
- societal information, beliefs and custom indicated by the reason for writing.
- the insight given to issues occurring in daily life and the means of resolving them.
- differences in these aspects that may (or may not) have occurred during the timeframe.
- an overall summary will be provided at the end of each chapter. Within this under sub-headings there will be specific analysis of forms and structure of address.
- there will be a final chapter of analysis.
- followed by a conclusion.

While personal translations based on the primary material for the letters will have been made<sup>163</sup> the evaluation of each letter will initially give details of the content rather than a full literal translation of the complete text. In some cases, where appropriate for clarification, transliteration references and specific translation will be included in this introductory overview. In the following analysis of the letter in question a translation/transliteration will be included of specific words and phrases as confirmation of the content. The transliteration of single words will be included to confirm the specific translation as referred to in the analysis of the letter. It will also be provided where necessary to enable discussion on any differences in translation and interpretation that may, for example, affect the letter's message, the information regarding writer and

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<sup>162</sup> Bakir (1970).

<sup>163</sup> These primary sources will be fully referenced.

recipient or the meaning of specific words. The relevant transliteration from the primary source will be looked at alongside any comparative translation in order to make a conclusion as to the most appropriate interpretation. The individual analyses will also draw on and include primary source transliteration/translation to identify modes of address, grammatical points, historical context and emotional implication.

Following the criteria noted the content of the letter will be looked at with regard to the personalities and background of sender and recipient and the differing ways in which they address each other; the reason for writing and historical context; information about societal structure and custom. A summary will be provided at the end of each chapter to compare and contrast these aspects within the various letters under that particular chapter topic heading. The chapter on complaints will study the different ways in which the complaints are formulated and structured – for example whether in the form of a question or a statement and how this relates to the reason for writing and when it was written. Similarly, in the three chapters on religious affairs/personnel, military/police matters, daily life, the differing modes of address and their relevance to the sender/recipients and letter subject will be discussed. The various chapters will be concerned with the protocols and custom related to their topic – the duties of the people concerned, the issues raised and the social aspects revealed by this information. A table will be included at the conclusion of each chapter summary. This tabular reference for the information regarding the variations of address discussed will itemise, in chronological order,<sup>164</sup> the sender and recipient, their social position, the variations in the formulae of the address and the dating of the letter.

The final chapter will look at the specific social aspects which are reflected across all the pieces of correspondence. These will fall under the sub-headings of agricultural organisation and natural resources, religious aspects, aspects of feeling and emotion, the role of women, the question of delivery, writers and recipients. It will then discuss the distinctiveness of the data which the letters can provide in comparison with other sources such as the visual representations of tomb walls, temples, and personal stelae, material evidence and administrative documents.

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<sup>164</sup> An exception is the Table for Chapter Four, Daily Life, which is in chronological order within each differing daily life topic rather than overall.

As discussed, the studies of ancient Egyptian letters – within collections, relevant to a specific period, grouped by topic and the same sender and/or recipient, looking at aspects of structure and focus – have shown them as an invaluable source of information. Focusing on the need for a more in-depth look at individual personal correspondence<sup>165</sup> this study will argue how, by researching and analysing a wide range of letters following the criteria and approach detailed above, important additional societal, historical and personal information can be obtained. It will confirm how private letters of the kind exemplified in this study are an important primary source of social information in ancient Egypt.

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<sup>165</sup> For a comment on this previous lack of attention to the information in private letters see Robert J. Demarée, “Letters and Archives from the New Kingdom necropolis at Thebes., in *Le Lettre d’Archive* (ed. Laure Pantalacci ; Cairo : Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2008), 48-49.

## Chapter One

### Complaints

This chapter looks at a selection of letters of complaint. Correspondence of this nature occurs in all the timeframes, and the overall nature of the content of these letters is to draw attention to, as Sweeney puts it, “an unsatisfactory state of affairs.”<sup>1</sup> Within these complaints the letters provide information regarding social structure and societal custom as well as administrative duties and procedures. They also give insight into the background and identities of the sender and recipient, together with the other people mentioned in the correspondence – information that can, as it were, “bring them to life.” The differing styles and modes of address are also significant in revealing more about status of the complainant and the way in which a sender and recipient relate to each other. Another important aspect of the writing which will be considered is the ways in which the complaints have been formulated and expressed and how a particular structure relates to the reason for the letter. In all these areas there are similarities and differences which are considered to provide comparisons and contrasts relevant not only to the content, people and structure but also to the period of writing.

The selection is based on correspondence in which the total reason for writing is to complain, as opposed to letters in which the “unsatisfactory affair” is only a minor issue mentioned amongst the sender’s interest in other topics. It is focused primarily on issues of a personal nature rather than on administrative and bureaucratic letters.

The timeframe covers the Old Kingdom through to the Late Ramesside Period. Letter 1 is from the Old Kingdom and was discovered amongst several fragments of papyrus in the Step Pyramid at Saqqara. These have been dated to the Sixth Dynasty<sup>2</sup> because of the palaeography and referencing to pyramid building and names. The provenance of Letter 2 is unknown but has been dated to the early Twelfth Dynasty based on the reference to Montu in the invocation. Remarkably, from the following Eighteenth Dynasty there are few extant letters. With the exception of the letters from Tell el-Amarna, those that exist were found, or presumed to come from, the Theban necropolis.

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<sup>1</sup> Sweeney(2001): 190.

<sup>2</sup> Battiscombe Gunn, “A sixth dynasty letter from Saqqara,” *ASAE* 25 (1925): 242.

From the total of 18, there are seven letters of complaint, Letters 3 to 9. Specific locations are cited for Letters 3 and 4 which were found at Deir el-Bahri in the forecourt of the temple. A greater number of letters have survived from the Nineteenth and Twentieth dynasties. Letters from the former, for example Letters 10 and 11, mainly come from the Memphite area or are focused on Lower Egyptian affairs, while those from the latter, for example Letters 12 and 13, are from Upper Egypt. The correspondence from the Late Ramesside Period, Letters 14 to 17 also indicates a Theban origin.

### **Letter 1**

*Dynasty 6: P. Cairo JE 49623.*<sup>3</sup>

A general is responding to a letter from the chief justice and vizier which requires him to bring a detachment of crewmen of the Tura quarries to get clothing in his presence at the Western Enclosure. He protests at having to travel to his recipient's location given that the letter carrier comes to Tura with the barge (and presumably could have brought the clothing with him). Instead he has to spend six days at the Residence with this detachment before it gets clothing. The general argues that this is what obstructs the work in his charge contending that "it is one day only that needs to be wasted for this detachment to get clothing."

The sender begins with the abrupt opening words *dd jmy-r-ms*<sup>c</sup>/Says the general, omitting his own name as well as that of his recipient. There is no kind of initial formal greeting, citing the chief justice's responsibilities. His complaint is in the form of a declaration of fact, a response to a previous communication and is not couched in the form of a question. The commander does not ask "Why" his recipient has acted in this way. It is a statement of the recipient's action in a pejorative manner. There appears to be a deferential tone when he writes that the letter has been brought to *b3k jm*/this servant. The general refers to himself as *b3k jm*/this servant of his recipient five times in his letter, which might be a mere term of politeness with no status connotation<sup>4</sup> or as an indication of the slightly more exalted rank of the recipient. Gardiner cites other Old Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Alan H. Gardiner, "An administrative letter of protest," *JEA* 13 (1927):75, Wente, (1990): 42, Letter 40.

<sup>4</sup> Gunn (1925): 244 n.1.

references that imply this latter usage.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand the general might be observing one of the conventions of letter writing during the Old (and later the Middle) Kingdom. However, it is implicit in his words that the recipient should rectify the situation and amend his request by appreciating the detrimental effect that his action has had on the carrying out of the work at Tura.

The reason that the sender of the letter does not give his name is possibly because the title *jmy-r-mšꜥ*/general/commander of soldiers signifies that he is too important to need naming,<sup>6</sup> his name will be known already. This hypothesis could also apply to the unnamed chief justice and vizier recipient who prompted the letter. It seems probable that the two people concerned are of almost equal standing. The general, despite his abrupt address, would be unlikely to make a complaint couched in these critical terms if he were in a significantly subordinate role to the recipient. The person whom he was addressing would need to be someone with the authority to have issued such an order to him in the first place and therefore be responsible for retracting it upon receipt of his letter.

The quarries at Tura lie south of Cairo on the eastern shore of the Nile, about 13-17km from Giza, and were the primary source of stone for pyramid building. Hence the commander there would have been in charge of a large number of men providing work of considerable importance, given that the stone was pre-cut at the quarries before being shipped up to Giza. Gunn suggests that the letter confirms the use of soldiers for manual work at times when they were not needed for military purposes.<sup>7</sup> Presumably they were working alongside the regular quarrymen while at the same time providing security at the site. This underlines the importance of maintaining a continuity of major supplies from the quarries.

The place he has been asked to come to is not precisely identified – it is referred to as the *srḥ pr-nfr-wrt*/“very beautiful *srḥ* temple”, but was likely to be at the Djoser pyramid complex at Saqqara. The document was discovered there amongst other fragments which related to pyramid building and the letter later refers to the *hnw*/Residence as being the place where the general complains he had to spend six wasted days. In terms of administration it could be inferred that the responsibilities of a

<sup>5</sup> Gardiner (1927): 76 n.1.

<sup>6</sup> Gardiner (1927): 76.

<sup>7</sup> Gunn (1925): 244-245. However, *mšꜥ* can also refer in general terms to a “host” or “workforce”.



chief justice at this time included being in charge of operations related to building work and supplies. He seemingly desired to emphasise his authority in this area by insisting that the men should be brought to him, to get the clothes *r-gs*/in his presence. It would also enable him to review the men in terms of their well-being and capability. The tone of the commander's letter could therefore be reflecting his annoyance at what he might see as a slur on his capabilities in seeing to the well-being of his men and as a military leader. The letter also indicates that bureaucratic requests were not automatically obeyed without question. The commander is offering a very much to the point alternative when he refers to the fact that the clothes could have been brought on the stone-barge, writing that the bringer of the letter came *hn*^/together with it. The directness of the general's request is in contrast to his seemingly deferential use of the word "servant." Perhaps the fact that the letter was discovered folded tightly and torn in half was a result of the chief justice's immediate reaction to what he saw as insubordination and insincerity in the general's use of the word *b3k*.

## Letter 2

*Dynasty 12: P.BM 10549.*<sup>8</sup>

A general, Nehsi, complains to a person named Kay that Senet has written to him saying no provisions had been delivered to her, although he had sent measures of barley to his household and to Kay himself in the charge of Kay's son and daughter who had fetched it with the barge. Additionally Nehsi asks why Kay is allowing himself to be turned away from his own daughter. He suggests that by not handing over the provisions Nehsi sent, Kay will have succeeded in killing her and asks whether Kay is pursuing his wife's wish. He writes "Now that word is sent to me that there are no provisions there, can I remain confident that I have given provisions to my household?" and that he will send back the barge again as soon as it has reached him.

The opening words are a variation on a form of address from this period *dd n*/ sender speaks to recipient, which is an introductory opening normally used in letters between relatives. Here the form is *r dd jn* which translates as a "communication" by the

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<sup>8</sup> Primary and secondary source references: James (1962): Pls. 24, 24A, 25, 25A, Wente (1990) 65, Letter 75.

general Nehsi.<sup>9</sup> Although differing slightly this could be seen to confirm a relationship between Nehsi and Kay. It is followed by the first two lines of a more elaborate greeting which, although a characteristic epistolary feature of this period, could be designed to flatter Kay and make him more responsive to Nehsi's urgent request – “How are you? Are you alive, prospering, and healthy? ... May Montu, lord of the Theban nome, and all the gods [help] you and provide you with a million years in [life, prosperity] and health...” Invoking Montu as “lord of the Theban nome” suggests a dating to the early years of the Twelfth Dynasty when this god had been elevated subsequent to the defeat of the Heracleopolitan dynasty.

The “unsatisfactory state of affairs” prompting this letter is the failure to follow instructions and provide food. The complaint is structured in the form of questions that invite the recipient to explain his actions and in the case of the first question to rectify them. The questions begin with the words *jn ir*<sup>10</sup>/What is the meaning of? In the first instance it is concerning Senet's letter that states *n jnj n j ḳw/* “not brought to me provisions.” Nehsi confirms their despatch with Kay's daughter and son and follows this with a direct request to Kay to *jnj tn sk sp/* “bring them again, that they should be fetched *m mhy/*in full.” Nehsi's second question of complaint, again introduced by *jn ir*, asks the meaning of Kay's behaviour towards *s3t.k/*your daughter – why he has allowed himself to be *hsf/* “turned away” from her. He writes that by this failure Kay will have *wnn jr.n.k sm3 s/* “succeeded in killing her.”<sup>11</sup> He continues by stating that he knows the *ḳd n ḥmt jt.j/* “character of my father's wife” and asks *mdd.k jb n ḥmt.k m sm3 pr.j/* “do you follow your wife's wish in killing my household?”<sup>12</sup> The structure of this question is not one that requires a solution from the sender, but in its criticism of Kay's actions requires the recipient himself to offer an explanation for his behaviour.

The letter is lacking in personal details for the sender and recipient except that Nehsi is a general, whose letter reflects an authoritative personality used to having his orders carried out correctly. There is no indication of Kay's occupation or social status, although Kay's son is referred to as *nfr sš/*Nefer the scribe.

<sup>9</sup> See James (1962): 120.

<sup>10</sup> For a full discussion of this form see James (1962): 102-103.

<sup>11</sup> Line 7.

<sup>12</sup> Line 9.

From a societal point of view the letter indicates familial responsibilities and the importance of food supplies, but is not definitive regarding relationships (which would obviously have been known to the people involved). The inference is that Senet is Kay's daughter with responsibility for Nehsi's household. In what can be interpreted as a derogatory comment Nehsi refers to knowing the character of his father's wife. This is preface to the suggestion that Kay is following his wife's wish by killing Nehsi's household, linking the two as similar personalities. Despite his rank of general Nehsi has to rely on what appear to be family members to ensure the supply of provisions, in this case barley, to his household. There is no indication of their exact location or of where the general himself is based. It would seem that there is some distance between them as the provisions are being transported by barge. The urgency of the general's letter could be caused by a state of famine in the area where he and his family live, as the reference to Kay killing his own daughter implies that by not receiving the required provisions, *10 ḥk3t n jt/10* measures of barley, she and Nehsi's household will die from starvation. It appears vital for him to ascertain what has happened as Senet's letter could have taken some time to reach him. From a personal aspect this piece of correspondence reflects the family frictions which could occur in everyday life – in this case caused by the failure of delivery of an urgent food supply.

### Letter 3

*Dynasty 18: P. Deir el-Bahri 2.*<sup>13</sup>

This letter from Tet to his lord Djehuty from the time of Hatshepsut concerns Djehuty's interference with one Ptahsokar in the matter of the personnel of Heliopolis. He tells Djehuty to speak with the herald Geregemennefer and then that "both of you send a letter about him to the Chief of Seers."

This brief note of complaint is a direct request to investigate the unsatisfactory situation of interference with the workforce. Its structure reflects a bureaucratic problem using the introductory sender to recipient style *ḥr-swd3-jb n nb.f*<sup>14</sup> in which the phrase *swd3-jb* "to make the heart prosper" or "to please" was originally used, in most cases, to

<sup>13</sup> Primary and secondary source references: William C. Hayes, "Varia from the Time of Hatshepsut," *MDAIK* 15 (1957): 81, Fig. 1.O, Wente (1990): 90, Letter 111.

<sup>14</sup> Bakir (1970): 41.

indicate that the following would be good rather than bad news. The connotation appears to have changed so that now the words seem to have become a formality, to be read as “a communication.”<sup>15</sup> This opening address, while polite with its adjunct “in the favour of Amun-Re,” is followed by a very terse message with a grammatical emphasis placed on the word *twt/you* when Tet writes “it is you (Djehuty) who interfered with him.” The writing has been described as characteristic of the “business” hand of Hatshepsut’s day – “small and neat with thickset, squarish signs.”<sup>16</sup>

The identity of the sender is not clear as the only name so far associated with *tt* in the New Kingdom has been a woman.<sup>17</sup> The recipient Djehuty’s tomb was discovered in the Theban necropolis, and his status as Hatshepsut’s treasurer and architect is attested by the extensive list of titles inscribed there. These include “Superintendent of the two silver-houses, the Superintendent of the two houses of gold...,” “the Hereditary Mayor, the Treasurer and Superintendent of all the works of the King.” Other inscriptions tell how he “guided the workmen to execute (their work) according to the works,” and describe his building achievements in the temples of Deir el-Bahri and Karnak together with his involvement in overseeing the measuring of the tribute of Punt. (He is shown in this capacity in the Deir el-Bahri Punt reliefs.)<sup>18</sup> He can thus be seen as a high authority in the funding and overseeing of major construction projects.

The status of Tet is unknown, but although he addresses the recipient as “his Lord” in the sender to recipient style which would indicate Tet’s lower rank, this would appear to be only part of an address formula rather than indicating a considerable difference in status, given Tet’s emphasis on Djehuty’s action. This is also reflected in the way in which Tet asks Djehuty to *mdw whm/* “have words” with another ranking official at the site, Geregemenfer, whose two alabaster canopic jars bear the title of “Chief/First Royal Herald.”<sup>19</sup> As the actual location of the people from Heliopolis is not

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<sup>15</sup> Bakir (1970): 43.

<sup>16</sup> Hayes (1957): 89.

<sup>17</sup> Hayes (1957): 89. See also Hermann Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen: I* (Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1935), 383.

<sup>18</sup> Wilhelm Spiegelberg, Marquis of Northampton and Percy E. Newberry, *Report on some Excavations in the Theban Necropolis during the winter of 1898-9* (London: Constable and Co., 1908), 15-17. See also Hayes (1957): 90.

<sup>19</sup> Caroline Ransom Williams, “The Egyptian Collection in the Museum of Art at Cleveland, Ohio (continued),” *JEA* 5 (1918): 278.

stated it is unclear whether Djehuty's interference has taken place at Deir el-Bahri or Heliopolis. The fact that Djehuty has to send a letter to the *wr*/greatest of Seers, that is the high priest of Heliopolis, would make the latter location more likely. The tone of the letter, together with the request that Djehuty speak with Geregmennefer and *k3 h3b.tn šꜥt hr.f n wr*/ "then you write a letter about it to the Great Seer,"<sup>20</sup> suggests the seriousness of his action. There is a need to explain what actually occurred with Ptahsokar to the Heliopolitan High Priest and restore the situation.

The letter gives some insight into levels of responsibility. It shows how problems could arise within the bureaucratic hierarchy that existed in carrying out the important work of temple building – an example of the issues that could arise from conflicts of authority in the organisation of the workforce. Ptahsokar's role is not defined and no reference to the name is listed for the New Kingdom, but the interference from Djehuty would indicate that Djehuty saw himself as his superior. He perhaps had countermanded Ptahsokar's orders or tried to tell him how he should instruct the people from Heliopolis in his charge to undertake their work. This provoked this letter from Tet, who appears to be involved with working together with Djehuty, sharing the overall responsibility for whatever project was underway. While the background for the sender, Tet, is not clear, the identification from other sources of the other protagonists in the complaint provides additional personal knowledge of the people, involved. Through its focus on a specific incident, this piece of correspondence gives insight into an incident and the people involved which otherwise would have remained unknown.

#### **Letter 4**

*Dynasty 18: O. Deir el-Bahri 7.*<sup>21</sup>

This short note to the scribe of the high priest of Amun Re is regarding a worker he allotted to the sender. This man is described as an "old man causing a little trouble for his [son], Senenmut's stone-cutter." There are some missing words before a reference is made to twenty blows, implying the punishment given out by the sender to the person causing the trouble.

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<sup>20</sup> Line 3.

<sup>21</sup> Primary and secondary source references: William C. Hayes, "A selection of Tuthmoside Ostraca from Deir El-Bahri," *JEA* 46 (1960): 35, Wentz (1990): 90, Letter 112.

Inscribed on a shale flake, this brief correspondence was found in the first terrace of Hatshepsut's temple and is again concerned with "an unsatisfactory state of affairs" concerning the workforce, in this case the behaviour of one person. The initial greeting giving the name of the sender is missing, but appears to be in the simple sender to recipient style. Apart from this, and "not more than two to three groups from the beginnings of lines 2-6..."<sup>22</sup>, the complaint appears complete, and is structured as a direct statement of the problem. The sender is not asking for advice or assistance in resolving the issue. It is in a way a retrospective complaint – the sender is complaining about a situation he has seemingly already resolved.

The brevity of both the greeting, with its simple invocation "In the favour of Amun," and the text, is consistent with the restricted space available to letters written on ostraca. The material chosen reflects the business-like nature of the complaint.

The sender greets his recipient as "the scribe of the High Priest of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, in the favour of Amun." This title can be seen to identify the recipient's master as Hapusonbe, Hatshepsut's High Priest of Amun and Overseer of Works. His statue in the Louvre provides the source for his biography and his dating.<sup>23</sup> He was appointed by Hatshepsut who made him "chef de tous les emplois de la maison d'Amon, chef dans Karnak, dans le domaine d'Amon, dans toute la terre d'Amon."<sup>24</sup> In effect his principal title was High Priest of Amun, and this title appears on all his monuments.<sup>25</sup>

It shows that the sender of the note, who had obviously been put in charge of the workforce, is making it clear he is not allowing family friction to get in the way of productivity. It can be concluded that he has punished the old man with 20 *sh*/blows. From the societal point of view it shows that he feels it necessary to advise the person who allotted the old man to his workforce. The Senenmut referred to would certainly be the same as Hatshepsut's influential first steward. So the fact that the old man's son was working for Senenmut as a *jky*/stone-cutter would make the trouble the old man was causing even more undesirable. In case of repercussions from above the High Priest would need to be informed that the sender of the letter had taken action. A previous

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<sup>22</sup> Hayes (1960) : 35.

<sup>23</sup> Gustave Lefebvre, *Histoire des Grands Prêtres d'Amon de Karnak jusqu'à la XXIe Dynastie* (Paris : Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929), 77.

<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre (1929): 77.

<sup>25</sup> Lefebvre (1929): 77, 228-230.

ostrakon, a limestone flake found in the same area,<sup>26</sup> lists numbers of workmen who have been supplied by various people for building work at Hapshepsut's temple. Hayes suggests that the old man referred to could have been one of the 5 men in this listing to be provided by the First Prophet, i.e. Hapusonbe.<sup>27</sup> Although brief, this note shows highly placed people involved in a distant workforce dispute, and brings alive this incident of a father/son altercation.

### **Letter 5**

*Dynasty 18: P. Louvre 3230b.*<sup>28</sup>

The following letter of complaint was found stuck to mummy wrapping and is from "Ahmose, Peniati's (man), to his lord the chief treasurer Tai" regarding a maidservant who has been taken away and given to someone else. He complains that she is only a child and unable to work. He suggests that either he make payment to get her back, or Tai commands that he be made to bear her work load just like any maidservant. He cites a letter from the girl's mother in which she reprimands him for allowing her daughter to be taken away even though she was in his charge and like a daughter to him which was why she had not complained to Tai herself.

This is a state of affairs where it appears Tai has exercised his authority to arbitrarily take the girl, possibly renegeing on an agreement. The complaint is structured in the form of a question which asks *hr-m*/why the sender's maidservant has been taken away, and is followed by instructions as to how the complaint might be rectified. Ahmose suggests he himself remedy the situation and achieve the maidservant's return by making payment for her or by bearing her workload. It is implicit in the wording of the letter that it was sent in order to get an explanation and have the affair addressed and resolved. In addition there is a "complaint within a complaint" in this piece of correspondence. This is the reference to the letter from the girl's mother to Ahmose saying that it was his fault, the girl was in his charge, and implying it is up to him to obtain the girl's return.

The letter has no elaborate greeting, using a style which Bakir refers to as a variant of what he calls the *dd* formula, where a sender is addressing a recipient.<sup>29</sup> In this

<sup>26</sup> Hayes (1960): 34.

<sup>27</sup> Hayes (1960): 35.

<sup>28</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Thomas Eric Peet, "Two 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Letters: Pap.Louvre 3230," *JEA* 12 (1926): Pl. XVII, Wente (1990): 92, Letter 117.

letter the wording is *dd-tn*/what says Ahmose to the treasurer Tai.<sup>30</sup> He sees this style as being indicative of business or official matters, a kind of modern “memo form,” and feels that this usage is emphasised in the letter by the combination with the use of “master/lord.”<sup>31</sup> While the opening address could indicate a complaint being regarded as a business matter, this abrupt beginning, combined with Ahmose’s concern that the girl is only a child, seem rather to indicate a complaint prompted by personal feelings and responsibility. His offer of payment appears deferential in nature, taking the burden of the child’s return on himself rather than putting the onus on Tai to suggest a solution.

Ahmose refers to himself as “Peniati’s man.” In a second letter of complaint (see Letter 6) he is greeted as, “the scribe Ahmose.” The explanation for the reference to Peniati and the confirmation of Ahmose in his role as scribe are found on a wooden palette now in the Louvre (E.3212). Dated to this period it gives him his full title “The scribe Ahmose, of the director of works of Hermonthis, Peniati.”<sup>32</sup> While the office of the recipient Tai as treasurer designates him as a superior to the scribe’s master Peniati, Ahmose’s referral to himself as being “of” the director of works is an indication to the recipient of a scribal status that imbues his complaint with increased authority. The fact that Ahmose took over the full duty of director of works, possibly after Peniati’s death, is indicated by a shabti-figure and a kohl pot, both inscribed with the name of Ahmose as director of works (BM 24427/BM5337).<sup>33</sup> The former is of alabaster and the latter is of wood. At this point there is no more background to the treasurer himself.

The situation which has prompted this letter could be seen as an example of social domestic *mores*. Glanville comments on our lack of knowledge “on the subject of slavery and servitude” at this time,<sup>34</sup> but the relationship implied does not suggest that the child in question is a slave. While Bakir cites this as an example that a slave could be claimed back, the term used here is *b3kt* not *hmt*, and as he notes she is described as *hn<sup>c</sup>* /together

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<sup>29</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

<sup>30</sup> S.R.K.Glanville, “The Letters of Aahmose of Peniati,” *JEA* 14 (1928): 309-310.

<sup>31</sup> Bakir (1970): 48.

<sup>32</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Ägyptische Lesestücke zum Gebrauch im Akademischen Unterricht : Texte des Mittleren Reiches IV* (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: Olms, 1983), 52, no.19.

<sup>33</sup> Glanville (1928): Pl. XXX.

<sup>34</sup> Glanville (1928): 310.



with Ahmose<sup>35</sup> when he makes the suggestion *jmj šsp.tw šbt.s ḥnꜥ. j/* “let one exchange payment for her to be together with me.”<sup>36</sup> He adds she is only a child and *n rh.s b3k/* “not able to work.” The offer of his own services – *jmj nb.j rdt.f 3tp b3kw/* “let my lord cause that I bear the workload,”<sup>37</sup> shows a concern for the child and a need to rectify the situation. The mother has written that it was he who *ntk rdj jtj.tw t3y šryt s/* “caused that one take away her daughter,”<sup>38</sup> when she was *ḥnꜥ.k/* “together with you” (again *ḥnꜥ*). She also later uses the expression *m-ꜥ* /in the charge of....<sup>39</sup> Although a reason for the girl being in his care is not specifically stated, it is possible the mother was in some way related to Ahmose, and that she had entered into an agreement with Ahmose to be something of a father figure to the girl while her daughter was undergoing training as a maidservant. I would argue that this piece of correspondence reflects a personal and private concern rather than any administrative issues, and as such paints a picture of people and their problems rather than being a formal bureaucratic document, providing some societal knowledge about domestic responsibility – and as James comments “in letters like these we come closest to the ancient Egyptian.”<sup>40</sup>

## Letter 6

*Dynasty 18: P. BM 10107.*<sup>41</sup>

A second letter involving Ahmose is one from Ptahu to the scribe Ahmose and refers to the case of a maidservant now in the charge of the mayor Tetimose. An overseer of slaves, Abuy, has been sent to Tetimose asking him to enter into litigation over her with, presumably, her previous employer. But the mayor refuses to be legally answerable to this person whom he names as Mini just because an overseer of fieldworkers, Ramose, had said that she belonged to Mini, the skipper, and that Mini would not take notice of any litigation brought by Ramose in the court of magistrates.

<sup>35</sup> Abd-el-Mohsen Bakir, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt* (Cairo: L’Organisation Égyptienne Generale du Livre, 1978), 78-79, 78 n.2.

<sup>36</sup> Line 4.

<sup>37</sup> Line 5.

<sup>38</sup> Line 7.

<sup>39</sup> See Glanville (1928): 306 for comment regarding the usage of *m-ꜥ*.

<sup>40</sup> T.G.H. James, *Pharaoh’s People: Scenes from life in Imperial Egypt* (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), 177.

<sup>41</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Glanville (1928): Pl. XXXV, Wente (1990): 91, Letter 115.

This complaint is structured as a straightforward statement regarding a failure to follow instructions using the sender to recipient style of introductory greeting *hr nd-hrt*. Bakir<sup>42</sup> identifies this as being used when the sender is expressing some concern regarding the recipient. He also notes that this form is indicative of familiarity between the correspondents which suggests some previous contact between the two men. No information regarding himself is given by Ptahu, which would confirm that Ahmose is familiar with the sender. The scribe Ahmose is the same person “he of Peniati” as identified in the previous letter. Bakir indicates<sup>43</sup> that the form of greeting is one not used when writing to inferiors, suggesting that the two are of equal rank or status.

The greeting is followed by the brief *h3b pw rdjt rh.k/* ‘this is a missive to inform you.’ Ptahu then continues by outlining the circumstances that prompted the letter, revealing that this statement of complaint contains some legal overtones with references to litigation and legal responsibility. He does not suggest ways that Ahmose might resolve the issue or indicate that he himself has taken any action.

It is not clear why Ahmose is being notified of this situation, or what Ptahu’s status or role in the matter might be. The style and brevity of the greeting possibly signifies that this is a continuation of a prior communication. In the previous Letter 5 Ahmose has also been involved in correspondence regarding the case of a maidservant. It is possible knowledge of this has prompted Ptahu to previously consult with him, and is now keeping Ahmose informed of the current state of affairs. Looking at the social aspects – differences of domestic responsibility are suggested in that the maidservant is *m-<sup>c</sup>/* in the charge of Tetimose but is described by Ramose as *njt/* belonging to Mini, but she is referred to as *b3k*, a servant not a slave. This terminology differentiating her status between the two households implies ownership, in that she has left her rightful owner and Tetimose is acting as her “minder.” The letter shows that it was possible for someone in her position to take refuge with a third party. Unlike the previous letter the claim for her return is being made through official jurisdiction. The reason for this flight appears to be a serious one in that Ramose is seeking to instigate legal proceedings against *nfr/* the skipper Mini. Ramose holds a position as *jmy-r shty/* overseer of fieldworkers, but the

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<sup>42</sup> Bakir (1970): 46.

<sup>43</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

letter reveals a social hierarchy that requires him to get the *ḥ3ty-mryw*/master of slaves Abyu to intervene on his behalf and ask Tetimose to take up the case against Mini. Ptahu writes that Tetimose has refused to enter into any litigation based just on Ramose's declaration that Mini *jw n sdm.n.f n. j r wpt ḥnꜥ. j m t3 ḳnbt nt srw/* "does not acknowledge me in order to litigate with me in the court of Magistrates."<sup>44</sup> Ramose is not the social equal of Mini and therefore Mini would not recognise him as having the right to take him to court. There is no reason given for Ramose's interest in resolving the case of this particular maidservant, but possibly she was related to, or was well-known to him. The question is left unanswered as to the outcome of the case. From a social perspective this piece of correspondence has evidenced the ability to resort to legal proceedings in the matter of servant or slave ownership and has given further insight into social hierarchy and domestic responsibility.

### Letter 7

*Dynasty 18: O. Colin Campbell 21 + Berlin 10616.*<sup>45</sup>

Found in the Theban area this is a personal letter of complaint on an ostrakon from a *wꜥb* priest Userhat to his sister Resti which covers several issues. Firstly there is the attitude to him of the woman Iupy "in the midst of my followers." Then he queries why chaff has been given to him. Seemingly it has been left at his house and he queries why he should have to fetch it himself from there. There are several *lacunae* within the following text in which he appears to tell his sister that she should advise Iupy, who also might be able to help her in some way. He writes that he has taken good care of her and that no accusation has been brought against him. He mentions again that whenever he undertakes the role of *wꜥb* priest he has to fetch for himself. He concludes by ordering his sister to reprimand Iupy and not let her continue with her attitude.

The letter is structured as statements and questions. The initial statement of complaint is regarding Iupy's behaviour. He comments on her *wj3wj3*<sup>46</sup> *m ḥry-jb n3y*

<sup>44</sup> Lines 11 and 12.

<sup>45</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý and Gardiner (1957): Pl. 42/4, Wente (1990): 93, Letter 120.

<sup>46</sup> Wente renders this as "indifference." Alternative renditions suggest "helpless" and "weakness." Sweeney, (2003): 116-117, sees the term in this later period as indicating more serious abuse and suggests "wrong" as the translation. I feel "attitude" is a rendering which reflects these connotations.

*jry*<sup>47</sup> / “attitude in the midst of my companions.”<sup>48</sup> A complaint in the form of a question follows. Userhat asks *hr-m*<sup>c</sup> / why chaff has been given to him so that he has to fetch it from his own house, even though he has no *hr* / magazine there in which to store it. He continues by telling his sister to *shr s mj sšr* / “advise her in a proper way”<sup>49</sup> and that he has taken *shr nfr* / good care (of Iupy). He then states that *n jnj hnw m<sup>c</sup>rk* / “no sworn accusation has been brought”<sup>50</sup> and reiterates the complaint of having to fetch for himself. His order to reprimand Iupy is doubly emphasised *b<sup>c</sup> sp-sn sp-sn ḥ3*. Userhat offers no suggestions as to how he might rectify the problems but places the responsibility on his sister Resti. The introductory greeting is in the *dd.n* sender-says-to-recipient style<sup>51</sup> without any elaborate greeting. While the form of address using *dd* was used primarily in official correspondence<sup>52</sup> this would not appear to be the case here, given that Userhat is writing a letter to his sister. The complaint’s directness of style, however, is appropriate to the limited space available on an ostrakon.

The identification of the people involved in this correspondence is tenuous. In the brief opening greeting the sender is identified as the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Userhat and the recipient just as his sister Resti. The tomb of a person named Userhat was discovered in the Theban necropolis, and among his other titles he is referred to as guardian of the temple. A scene in his painted tomb shows him bringing offerings to Amenophis II,<sup>53</sup> which ties in with the dating of this brief note to a date in the Eighteenth Dynasty. While the Userhat of this letter refers to his role as a *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest, it is possible that by the time of his death he had moved up the priestly hierarchy. The only attested name of a woman named Resti is as the wife of Neb Amun<sup>54</sup> inscribed in his tomb and dated to the time of Thutmose I/II.<sup>55</sup> Of the two identities the provenance for Userhat seems the more plausible.

Although it is not specifically stated, there seems to be an underlying personal problem between Iupy and Userhat. The complaint about Iupy’s indifference, and

<sup>47</sup> Wente renders this as “adherents” giving a more formal interpretation.

<sup>48</sup> *Verso* Lines 2 and 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Recto* Line 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Recto* Line 6.

<sup>51</sup> Bakir (1970): 48.

<sup>52</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

<sup>53</sup> M. Robert Mond, “Report of work in the Necropolis of Thebes during the winter of 1903-1904,” *ASAE* V (1904): 67.

<sup>54</sup> Ranke (1935): 227.

<sup>55</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 153/62.

Userhat's comment that he has taken good care of her, followed by the words that no accusation has been brought (against him?) imply a possible relationship that has ended in discord. An indication of the status that the sender feels is appropriate to the role of *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest is shown by Userhat's repetition, with emphasis, of the fact that he must fetch for himself. His final imperative to his sister to reprimand Iupy and rectify her indifference shows an angry feeling of rejection. His wish is to correct whatever has prompted Iupy's behaviour towards him, especially when they are amongst other people, his "followers." Here is a glimpse of personal feelings – of embarrassment caused by her behaviour towards a person of his higher status, and of anger at what appears to be her rejection of him after his attention to her welfare. The medium used is an unusual one for such an emotional letter. The glimpse of such feelings is an example of the importance of personal letters in enabling insight into actual personality.

### Letter 8

*Dynasty 18: O. Amarna 1.*<sup>56</sup>

An ostrakon fragment from Amarna records the need for a scribe named Ramose to give ten *deben* to Piay, and 50 handfuls of what have been construed to be rushes to an unnamed carpenter. There has obviously been a delay in fulfilling the requests, particularly the one for rushes, but the sender is complaining about complaints made to him regarding this inaction. He points out that at the time he had told Ramose to organise the transaction and that Ramose had instructed the person looking after the rushes to provide them.

This is basically a complaint about receiving a complaint. Following the words regarding the money for Piay, there appears to be the request for rushes (the *lacunae* lead to this interpretation based on the rest of the letter) to be given to another person (unknown due to the *lacunae*). It appears there has been a delay, causing complaints instigated by an unnamed third party. Ramose was the person whom the sender originally told to give *šwyw dṛt 50 n p3 ḥmww/* "50 handfuls of rushes to the carpenter."<sup>57</sup> This was

<sup>56</sup> Primary and secondary source references: J.D.S.Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten : Excavations of Tell el-Amarna during the seasons 1926-1927 and 1931-1936 Part III Vol.2* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), Pl. LXXXIV/1 Wente (1990): 96, Letter 125.

<sup>57</sup> Line 3.

when he and Ramose *ḥꜥ ḥnꜥ* / “stood together,” possibly in *ḫnbt/court*.<sup>58</sup> He notes that Ramose told the *s3w nty ḥr s3w šwyw* / “keeper who kept the rushes”<sup>59</sup> to give them to him. He therefore sees it as Ramose’s responsibility rather than his to rectify the situation. While the introductory greeting and the details of the sender are missing, it appears to be in the abbreviated *ḏd.n*/sender says to recipient style<sup>60</sup> for official or business matters. The sender presumes Ramose has no need of any further instruction as to how to fulfil his requests. The material on which the letter is written contributes to the brevity of the communication. It is written on a potsherd which has been described as being of “good Amarna ware.”<sup>61</sup>

Within the main body of the text the relationship of Piay to the sender is not stated, nor the reason for the 10 *deben* he should have received. Additionally the meaning of *šwyw* to be taken as “rushes” is uncertain. Gardiner notes it as a poor kind of food or as a remedy for rubbing down a sick ox and feels “the conjecture ‘rushes’ lacks any sound foundation.”<sup>62</sup> However in an earlier publication he has rendered the word as “rushes.”<sup>63</sup> In this context I would argue that “rushes” or at least some kind of vegetation seems an appropriate requirement for a carpenter who is possibly in need of them for mats or roofing for building work. Janssen notes the use of the word in the context of material for mat making, and suggests “dried grass” as a rendering.<sup>64</sup> The main interest in this fragment lies in the scarcity of personal letters (as opposed to the corpus of Amarna letters) such as this from the time of Akhenaten. As Pendlebury comments the vast majority of ostraca were inscribed as “hieratic docketts” placed on wine jars as an indication of contents.<sup>65</sup> Although only a short piece it provides a rare example of a personal problem occurring in the everyday life of this time.

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<sup>58</sup>For comment on this restoration see Pendlebury (1951): III/1, 161.

<sup>59</sup> Line 4.

<sup>60</sup> Bakir (1970): 48.

<sup>61</sup> Pendlebury (1951): III/1, 160.

<sup>62</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica: Text, Vol.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 63\*.

<sup>63</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, ed., *Hieratic papyri in the British Museum: Vol.1 Text* (London: British Museum, 1925): 21.

<sup>64</sup> Jac J. Janssen, *Commodity Prices from the Ramessid Period: an economic study of the village of necropolis workmen at Thebes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 154.

<sup>65</sup> Pendlebury (1951): III/1, 160.

## Letter 9

*Dynasty 18: Moscow Bowl 3917.*<sup>66</sup>

The following letter from the scribe Neb to his lord the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Khenenenuskhet covers several issues. The first is regarding a woman Tit. He asks the priest to have her brought and to reprimand her by asking her whether Tit's share should really belong to him. He declares that it is no use for him to speak further because of his impatience in divorcing her due to what appears to be a matter concerning her "share," the text is unclear. The writer then asks his recipient to write to another woman named Tey and tell her that if she approaches him he will strike her. He finishes with the threat that if the recipient "cease your kindness toward me, I shall do the same."

The letter is structured as a mixture of complaints and requests directed to a third party recipient. The nature of the first complaint is contained in the action Neb requires from the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest. He is to have the woman named Tit brought to him and he is to *ḥ3 s/* reprimand her and ask *bn psšw nt tjt jḥ pw p3y-j drt-j/* "is not the portion of Tit in my charge?"<sup>67</sup> He feels that he has been denied property belonging to him. He has involved the priest as intermediary to make his feelings felt because he was *s jtj ḥr ḥ3ᶜ ḥmt/* "a man impatient to divorce the woman." He gives no reason for his antagonism towards the second woman, Tey. That she has acted in some way against him is implicit in the threat he asks the priest to convey. The closing threatening words *jw.s r. j ḥr ḥwj.s/* "if she comes to me I will strike her,"<sup>68</sup> imply a serious disagreement. The opening greeting is in the form sender to recipient with their name and title "The scribe Neb to his lord, the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Khenememuskhet" but there is no use of the *dd* or *dd.n* formula or its variants<sup>69</sup> which contain "says" or "a communication to." Instead it uses the formal *h3b pw rdjt rh.k* which translates as "a missive to inform you" or "this is a letter for the information of..."

Only the names and status of the sender and recipient are given – the scribe Neb and his lord the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Khenememuskhet. The name *nb* has been attested as a personal name in two New Kingdom instances.<sup>70</sup> There is a *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest with a similar

<sup>66</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Gardiner and Sethe (1928): Pl.IX, Wente (1990): 96, Letter 128.

<sup>67</sup> Lines 2 and 3.

<sup>68</sup> Line 4.

<sup>69</sup> Bakir (1970): 47-50.

<sup>70</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928), 27 n.1.

name to Khenememuskhet from the time of Amenophis I,<sup>71</sup> but the transcription for his name differs from this text.

The text was written on the interior of a red pottery bowl. The letter is in five concentric lines of hieratic, completely filling the inside of the vessel. For this reason it has received some consideration as being an example of a Letter to the Dead.<sup>72</sup> However, the content of the letter suggests that, despite its unusual material and positioning, this is in fact a letter from a living sender to a living recipient. There is no evidence to suggest that it was addressed to a relative, which differentiates the writing from other letters to the dead. There are also two women involved in the correspondence, and the fact that Neb talks about striking Tey, the second woman mentioned, implies that she is a living person. As Gunn comments “it seems both futile and imprudent to try to hit a ghost.”<sup>73</sup> Another major difference is that the text deals with more than one topic. From a personal point of view the first topic of the letter gives an insight into the feelings of a husband expressing regret at an impatient divorce and anger at the resulting loss of a share in his wife’s unspecified property.

Societal structure can be found in the fact Neb appeals to the authority of a *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest. He not only asks him to reprimand his wife but twice introduces *ky dd*/another matter, firstly to write to the woman named Tey to advise her that Neb will strike her if she comes near him, and secondly to tell Khenememuskhet that if he ceases his kindness towards Neb, the latter will do the same to him. This would seem to imply some ongoing contact between Neb and the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest, an indication perhaps that they have helped each other resolve problems in the past. The wording and structure of the letter paint a picture of the writer as a person prone to anger and with an impatient and volatile nature. In this way Neb becomes a personality rather than just the anonymous sender of the letter. As in Letter 7 this is an example of the way in which personality and emotion can be found in personal correspondence.

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<sup>71</sup> Bertha Porter and Rosalind L.B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings: 1. The Theban necropolis. Part 1. Private Tombs. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum: Griffith Institute, 1960), 344.

<sup>72</sup> Gardiner and Sethe (1928): 27.

<sup>73</sup> Battiscombe Gunn, review of Alan H. Gardiner and Kurt Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead, mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms*, *JEA* 16 (1930): 154.



In the belief that this is a piece of correspondence between the living, it is interesting to speculate on the reason for it being written on the interior of a bowl. Perhaps it was chosen as symbolic of a votive offering, given that both the sender and the recipient were *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests.

### **Letter 10**

*Dynasty 19: P. Cairo 58057*<sup>74</sup>

This letter is a complaint from Dhutmose regarding the return of a donkey. The animal is a donkey for hire which the recipient Paury has been allowed to use. But now a servant named Piay needs to take it as it has been assigned to him as a hired animal “for the farmland of the Estate of Menpehtyre, which is on the island of Pekha, under the authority of the soldier Mesha.” Dhutmose informs/reminds Paury that it was given to him by a soldier named Tenen “of the regiment ‘Glittering like the Aten’ in the year of the bow of Djeper” who “told you to give it to Dhutmose, but you didn’t give it.” Dhutmose goes on to describe how he and the stable master Amenmose apprehended Paury in Memphis telling him to give it back, but he has failed to do so. Dhutmose complains that the cost of it is being exacted from him year after year even though it is still in Paury’s possession.

This letter is structured in a very straightforward manner – the sender’s opening statement simply asks his recipient to return the donkey. It is only then he goes on to remind him of why he is complaining about this failure to perform a previously requested action and asking him to rectify the matter. He has been told to return it by Tenen, and Dhutmose is suffering financially because of Piay’s failure to comply. In order to get a result Dhutmose is demanding in tone but does not use threatening language. He addresses Paury using the introductory words *hr nd-hrt* which, as has been noted, was a form of greeting used when enquiring about the condition or state of the recipient, and in previous letters from the Eighteenth Dynasty appeared to imply concern for the recipient, or as a greeting to members of the same family or friends. In this context its use could be seen as a tactic to make his recipient more receptive to the complaint he was making.

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<sup>74</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI I* (1969-): 238/no.108, Wente (1990): 112, Letter 130.

The sender of the letter, Dhutmose, gives his title as the *s3w*/guardian (or warden) of the estate of Menpehtyre (Ramesses I). His recipient Paury, an overseer of cattle is presumably at Memphis which is where the sender found him with the donkey still in his possession. While the letter refers to an estate of Ramesses I, and could be dated to his time, the briefness of his reign makes it possible the letter was written later during the reign of Seti I.

Dhutmose is very descriptive in his references. He feels he has to tell Paury exactly where the donkey will be put to work and gives a full description of the person who gave the donkey to Paury. A regiment or company had its own standard bearer and name. The soldier Tenen named here is from the company *thn mj Jtn*/Glittering like the Aten. A form of this company name has been found dated to the reign of Amenophis III where it appears on the statue of a standard bearer, Ka-nakht<sup>75</sup> who was of “the regiment of King Nebmare Aton-glitters.”<sup>76</sup> Ships were also given regimental names. One has been identified that bore the exact title of this letter “Glittering like the Aten,”<sup>77</sup> and in the Timber accounts of Seti I on *P. BN211* there is another reference to the “standard bearer Paury-en-Hemef of the ship ‘Glittering like the Aten’.”<sup>78</sup> The reference to the time when the animal was given to Paury, *rnpt n t3 pdt d3pr/* “the year of the bow of Djeper” suggests a reference to an event or a battle, so far unknown, which made this a memorable year.<sup>79</sup> Dhutmose states that when he and the stable master confronted Paury he exclaimed “Don’t take me to court.” Instead he swore an oath to return the animal “by the lord l.p.h.” Given that this was an oath undertaken outside of a court of law implies that Dhutmose could not resort to enforce it by legal means. The focus of the letter is on the fact that this is a hire-donkey. Janssen notes the number of recordings of disputes concerning donkeys for hire.<sup>80</sup> The actual phrase used is a donkey *g3t.f m bj3/* “its hoof in copper.” This has been seen as a possible allusion “to the money represented by the

<sup>75</sup> Kenneth Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated: Notes and Comments 1* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), no.108/314, 156.

<sup>76</sup> Raymond O. Faulkner, “Egyptian Military Standards,” *JEA* 27 (1941): 17.

<sup>77</sup> Faulkner (1941): 18.

<sup>78</sup> *KRI* I(1969-):277.13, 228.

<sup>79</sup> See *RITANC* I: no.108/314, 157 for a suggested alternative reading “in the charge of the troop/garrison of Djapir,” putting Tenen in the position of an officer.

<sup>80</sup> Janssen (1975): 167.

cattle hired out for use in the fields,” and is a phrase used elsewhere where agricultural work is discussed.<sup>81</sup>

From a social aspect this piece of correspondence, with its focus on a complaint regarding the return of a donkey, has provided considerable reference to time and custom. There is the confirmation of the existence of an estate named after Ramesses 1 on an island named Pehka. This island is described as being in charge of a soldier which shows a military involvement in the management of the land. A hierarchy is indicated as Dhutmose writing in his capacity as warden of the estate would report to him. By its reference to Tenen’s regiment it has shown how a military man was identified with the name of his company. The manner of dating when Paury received the animal shows the use of a memorable event as a calendrical reference. From the legal perspective, the fact that Paury swore an oath out of court but has still not returned the donkey implies that such an undertaking was not enforceable in court otherwise Dhutmose would be taking legal action. The letter is also confirmation of the practice of hiring animals for personal use, and the custom in which a hiring of a donkey was described in terms of its monetary value.

### **Letter 11**

*Dynasty 19: Cairo 58056.*<sup>82</sup>

From the reign of Ramesses II is a complaint concerning the use of a boat, one of two now at Memphis. The sender, whose name is missing, addresses his recipient as “his brother... Akhpet.” He refers to the ships as belonging to him. He writes about a previous conversation when his recipient had “set out from here during mobilisation of the army” and when Akhpet had told him “Be silent, don’t speak. I’ll send you the ship upon my arrival.” He requests that a soldier named Pasanesu be written to and told to hand over the ship to him because it is *p3 hrw n ʿk* / “the day of benefit.” If, however, his request is denied he tells Akhpet he must write to his wife. He must tell her to give either the 80 *deben* of copper or the eighty *khar* of emmer which Akhpet had promised to give three

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<sup>81</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, “Ramesside Texts relating to the Taxation and Transport of Corn,” *JEA* 27 (1941): 19 n.3. See also Janssen (1975): 167-172 for other examples of amounts and means of payment for hired donkeys during the Ramesside period, and in which *debens* of copper are mentioned in several instances as the price.

<sup>82</sup>Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* III (1969-), 254/no.135, Wente (1990): 117, Letter 139.

years ago. Additionally he instructs Akhpet that when he writes to Pasanesu he should make it direct and to the point.

The “unsatisfactory affair” prompting this complaint is the failure to carry out a promise. The complaint is structured as a statement of the situation followed by the way in which the recipient should rectify the matter. In order to reinforce the request the sender uses the tactic of a threat – that failure to comply would result in the calling in of a three-year-old debt.

As in previous letters from this period the opening greeting *hr nd-hrt* follows the style for correspondence between members of the same family<sup>83</sup> which would suggest that Akhpet is indeed the brother of the unnamed sender, but the tone of the letter is not one of concern or an inquiry after needs. However, while this is primarily a letter of complaint, the sender does follow the courtesy of the “complimentary preamble” form preceding the subject of his complaint, beginning with “In life, prosperity and health.”<sup>84</sup> The actual name is missing from the following invocation “in the favour of” but would have been Amun.<sup>85</sup> In accordance with letters from this period other gods are also invoked with their customary descriptions.<sup>86</sup> Here it is “Ptah the Great, South of his Wall, Lord of Anktowy, upon his ennead, upon Sakhmet the Great, beloved of [Ptah, and upon] all [gods] and goddesses of Hatkuptah (Memphis).” They are then called upon to keep the recipient, Akhpet, healthy with further wishes that the sender may “see you well” here with the additional adjunct that he may “fill my embrace with you.” This blessing is expressed using the form beginning with *jmj snb.f*. While Bakir notes this form as being used between persons of equal rank or to superiors when, as in this letter, the full complimentary preamble is written, it can also be seen as an appropriate greeting for a brother. It is only now that the subject matter is introduced with the words *hn<sup>c</sup> dd* with the implication of “then” or “next” and translates as “a further matter” or “and further.”<sup>87</sup> The letter finishes with *nfr snb.k* /may your health be good.

The name of the sender is missing. The only word visible “Ptah” indicates a connection in some capacity to the god. The recipient Akhpet, addressed as his brother is

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<sup>83</sup> Bakir (1970): 46.

<sup>84</sup> Bakir (1970): 51.

<sup>85</sup> Bakir (1970): 57.

<sup>86</sup> Bakir (1970): 60-61.

<sup>87</sup> Bakir (1970): 82-83.

described as “the standard-bearer” but no company is designated for him as was the case in the previous letter. Allam suggests that the title *t3y-sryt*/standard-bearer would be a role indicating the rank of a man qualified to command.<sup>88</sup> It has also been noted that it is possible the title “reflects a duty which he once performed personally, but which eventually came to be performed by his subordinates.”<sup>89</sup> The word used here for “ship” is *kr* which Jones notes as being a “kind of small boat”<sup>90</sup> so it is unclear whether they are supply vessels or connected with military use, but the military association of his brother is confirmed by the referral to his involvement in the *h3w mšc*/army mobilisation. In another letter dated to this period the scribe Meh is also concerned with two boats. His directive, to go to the mayor and tell him to find these boats which were assigned to him by Pharaoh, is similarly addressed to an officer, on this occasion a chariot soldier named Merymose,<sup>91</sup>

This complaint gives further insight into issues of daily life, as well as the transactional values related to the buying and selling of provisions. From a societal perspective the instruction that Akhpet write to his wife telling her to send the owed provisions or their value in copper reflects the ability of a wife to manage affairs in the absence of her husband. The letter is one of three cited by Janssen which give copper/emmer equivalents in their content.<sup>92</sup> The other two are dated to Amenophis II and III. In this letter to Akhpet the 80 *deben* of copper is equated with the quantity of emmer giving a price of 1 *deben* of copper per *khar* of emmer. Averaging this price with the values from the other two examples gives a possible benchmark of 1 to 2 *deben* of copper per *khar* for this period.

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<sup>88</sup> Allam (1987): 6 n.1.

<sup>89</sup> Alan Richard Schulman, *Military Rank, Title and Organisation in the Egyptian New Kingdom* (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Hessling, 1964), 71.

<sup>90</sup> Dilwyn Jones, *A Glossary of Ancient Egyptian Nautical Titles and Terms* (London & New York: Kegan Paul International, 1988), 149/81.

<sup>91</sup> P. Northumberland I, see Chapter Four, Daily Life, Letter 14.

<sup>92</sup> Janssen (1975), 116.

## Letter 12

*Dynasty 20: P. Louvre E. 27151.*<sup>93</sup>

A more bureaucratic “unsatisfactory state of affairs” dated to the Twentieth Dynasty, is from Khay to the mayor of Elephantine Montuhi[khopeshef] about a jar of honey. The honey has been sent by the mayor for use in the divine offering, but Khay complains that when he extracted 10 *hins* from the *3<sup>c</sup>w n bjt j.jnj.k n p3 ntr* / “jars of honey you had obtained for the god,”<sup>94</sup> he found it was *gs dbwt* / lumps of *gs*, an ointment used for anointing. He writes that he resealed it and sent the jars back south to his recipient. He asks the mayor to find some good honey or if there is none to send a *menet* jar of incense by the hand of the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Netjermose until he finds some. He also asks for some dry sycamore wood.

The structure of the letter is similar to the previous one, a straightforward statement of complaint. The whole tone of the letter is very restrained and polite. There are no demands to know “why” or “how” this has happened, and the sender is very careful not to attach blame to his recipient who sent the honey. In this case Khay, having specified the problem provides the solution as well, which is just a simple request to replace the honey or to send some incense instead. In order to ensure replacement he uses the tactic of introducing a third party as the one to blame by adding *jw nn m ky rdj.s sw n. k jmj ptr.f sw* / “if it is another man gave it to you let him inspect it.”<sup>95</sup> He gives his recipient the benefit of the doubt as being the person who made the error, perhaps not wanting to antagonise a person in higher authority and get himself into trouble.

Overall the tone of the letter is a calm response to an administrative mistake. Khay’s greeting uses the introductory standard form for sender to recipient *hr nd-hrt* indicative of some familiarity. He continues with a full complimentary preamble invoking the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, calling upon him as “Amun-Re Harakhti when he rises and sets” together with “Harakhti and his ennead” to keep him healthy and alive and in the favour of Harakhti. He also includes phrases such as “Let Pre keep you healthy” and “Then shall Amun keep you healthy.” While the initial

<sup>93</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Paule Posener-Kriéger, “A letter to the governor of Elephantine,” *JEA* 64 (1978): Pl. XIV/XIVA, Wente (1990): 128, Letter 153.

<sup>94</sup> Line 5.

<sup>95</sup> Line 8.

greeting does not follow the rule of precedence by putting his recipient's name first, the use by Khay of the full complimentary preamble before the subject of his letter shows the respect due to a superior recipient. It is in line with the polite wording of his complaint. The dating of this letter is possible as the invoking of "Amun-Re Harakhti when he rises and sets" does not occur before the Twentieth Dynasty.<sup>96</sup> The possible timeframe suggested is from the end (or shortly after) the reign of Ramesses III until Ramesses V.<sup>97</sup>

Khay's title is lost, but he is "of the house of Harakhti" which is a possible reference to the solar chapel on the roof of the temple of Amun at Karnak.<sup>98</sup> The name of the mayor of Elephantine is incomplete but has been read as Montuhikhopeshef / Mentuherkhepeshef.<sup>99</sup> In the Turin Indictment Papyrus *P.1887* from the reigns of Ramesses IV and Ramesses V<sup>100</sup> this name is also cited as belonging to the Scribe of the Treasury who was then acting as Mayor of Elephantine. According to this text thieves had stolen garments from the temple of Anket. Montuhikhopeshef confirmed their guilt and that they had sold the garments to a workman at the Place of Truth. However, as acting Mayor he accepted a bribe from the thieves and let them go.<sup>101</sup> Given the dating of this letter to a similar period it therefore appears that the recipient of this letter is the same Montuhikhopeshef, and that the delivery of *gs* ointment instead of honey was possibly not a mistake but the action of this corrupt official.<sup>102</sup>

The letter notes that the honey which is at the centre of this complaint was intended as a divine offering, showing the importance of the product as part of temple ritual. The role of bee-keepers in the Theban area in the Eighteenth Dynasty is attested by the tomb of Rekh-mi-Re at Thebes. Here can be seen a representation of the hives and the smoking out of the bees as well as the extraction of the honeycomb, "a rare illustration of

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<sup>96</sup> Bakir (1970): 59.

<sup>97</sup> Wente (1990): 128 and Posener-Kriéger (1978): 85.

<sup>98</sup> Posener-Kriéger (1978): 85 footnote 8.

<sup>99</sup> Wente (1990): 128 and Posener-Kriéger (1978): 87 n.o.

<sup>100</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, ed., *Ramesside Administrative Documents* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948b) : xxiii, 73-82.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Eric Peet, "A Historical Document of the Ramesside Age," *JEA* 10 (1924): 122, Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca and London : Cornell University Press, 2003), 100-101.

<sup>102</sup> As Vernus (2003): 101 comments "Would an official so corrupt as to set thieves free in return for a bribe have hesitated to appropriate the god's honey, replacing this valuable foodstuff with crude unguent?"

bee-keeping, an important Egyptian industry.”<sup>103</sup> The need for bee-keepers to be protected is noted in the Elephantine Decree of Ramesses III,<sup>104</sup> and a “head of the bee-keepers of Amun” is on the list of temple officials at Karnak.<sup>105</sup> Another indication that honey could be sourced in Upper Egypt are jar inscriptions from the City of Akhenaten which refer to two different varieties of honey *stf* and *gmgm*.<sup>106</sup> Confirmation of the use of honey in the divine offering is seen in texts from the temple of Seti I at Abydos. In the words to be spoken the offering of honey is associated with the sweet eye of Horus and the secretion of the eye of Re.<sup>107</sup> It continues to play a part throughout the ritual of anointing and fumigation. An allowance of honey of 4 *hins* per day was included amongst the offerings to be placed on Ramesses III’s table of silver at Karnak,<sup>108</sup> and 1065 *menet*-jars have been noted in *P. Harris I* for delivery to the temple of Amun for the ordinary service.<sup>109</sup>

The request for the *menet* jar of *sntr*/incense as a replacement would have been prompted by its comparable value to the 10 *hins* of honey.<sup>110</sup> The reason for the *ht n nh šw*/dry sycamore wood in this context is unclear.<sup>111</sup>

As an insight into customs, daily problems and personalities, this letter has illustrated the importance of honey as a product for divine offerings. From a personal point of view it paints a picture of the disgust of the sender of the letter when he opens the jar and finds solid fat instead of the honey he expected. While Khay has been careful not to apportion blame it has also provoked thoughts as to whether this was an accidental bureaucratic mistake in supply, or a purposeful replacement of the correct goods by a fraudulent official, providing insight into the irregularities, whether intentional or not, that occurred in such areas. The fact that Khay had to source his honey from Elephantine rather than from the Theban area is a possible indication of demand exhausting supply, confirming the extensive use of the product in the divine rituals.

<sup>103</sup> Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Re at Thebes* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 44-45, Pl.XLIX.

<sup>104</sup> F.L. Griffith, “The Abydos Decree of Seti I at Nauri,” *JEA* 13 (1927): 208.

<sup>105</sup> Lefebvre (1929) : 46.

<sup>106</sup> Pendlebury (1951): Vol.1,175.

<sup>107</sup> Alexandre Moret, *Le rituel du culte divin journalier en Egypte* (Geneva : Slatkine, 1988), 71.

<sup>108</sup> Harold Nelson, “Three Decrees from Ramses III at Karnak,” *JAOS* 56 (1936): 237-239.

<sup>109</sup> Posener-Kréiger (1978): 85-86.

<sup>110</sup> See Janssen (1975): 352-353 and 445-446 for analysis of pricing for honey and incense.

<sup>111</sup> Janssen (1975): 370, notes its use for statues and corn measures.



### Letter 13

*Dynasty 20: P. Bankes I* <sup>112</sup>

Another piece of correspondence from the Twentieth Dynasty is from Wenenamón to Amenkhau and is a complicated complaint involving a *hmt* /slave-woman and her son, also referred to as *hm*/a slave. In his letter Wenenamón describes how they had been entrusted by him to Amenkhau, who had then given them to Hori and a fisherman named Pamershenuty. These people then told Amenkhau that *jw ḥḥ.tw jw irt.tw t3wt t3 rmt m-t3wt*/ “one was involved,<sup>113</sup> one took this woman secretly,”<sup>114</sup> suggesting that Wenenamón had stolen her. Amenkhau tells them Wenenamón told him this was a *ḥd3* /lie,<sup>115</sup> that Wenenamón had bought her with *hd*/payment from the *hry mrt* /master of weavers, Ikhterpay. However they want to *jrj wḥ jr.mp3 rmt jw rdj n k*/ “corroborate<sup>116</sup> with the man who gave the woman to you.”<sup>117</sup> Wenenamón writes that he went before Iupehy, commander of Tuhir-troops who commanded that the maidservant be left entrusted to Amenkhau. He adds that Amenkhau has sent the scribe Efnamón with this letter of complaint to him implying that Wenenamón should deal with the matter. But Wenenamón sees it as Amenkhau’s problem. He tells him how he should resolve the matter by going to the *rmt jw t3y sw*/ the people who took her. He tells him that *wnn.w nht r.k mtw.k*/ “if they are more powerful than you,”<sup>118</sup> go to the master of weavers and get him to replace her with a *b3kt hr jb*/ “contented maidservant” who has a *šrj m knj r mjtt*/ “young son at her bosom likewise.”<sup>119</sup> Wenenamón notes that the letter will provide *mtr*/authorisation, and finishes by reminding Amenkhau of the “many good things that I’ve done for you” with the adjunct *m smḥ n3y.k d3yt mḥ k*/ “do not forget or your wrongdoing will fill you.”<sup>120</sup>

The letter is structured as a series of statements from the sender to the recipient that outline the details of the occurrences that are causing him to write and providing his

<sup>112</sup> Primary and secondary source references: I.E.S Edwards, “The Bankes Papyri I and II,” *JEA* 68 (1982): Fig. 1/127-9, Pl. XII, Wente (1990): 129, Letter 154.

<sup>113</sup> See Edwards (1982) for idiomatic use of *ḥḥ* in this context.

<sup>114</sup> Lines 6 and 7.

<sup>115</sup> For discussion of use of this term to indicate false statements see Sweeney (2003): 109-110.

<sup>116</sup> Literally “join up.”

<sup>117</sup> Line 9.

<sup>118</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>119</sup> *Verso* Lines 4-5.

<sup>120</sup> *Verso* Lines 6- 7.

solutions to the problem. The actual complaint is from the recipient Amenkhau regarding the fact that the maidservant entrusted to him has been taken away, introducing a third party as the offender, and expecting Wenenamon to rectify the matter. Wenenamon is adamant that it is not for him to deal with the situation, that he is not to blame, writing “you shall deal with the affair of the maidservant.” He continues with very clear instructions on the action Amenkhau should take, using the tactic of an implicit threat when he warns him if he ignores the order *d3yt mh.k/* “your wrongdoing will fill (take possession of) you.”

The form of greeting is in the sender to recipient style using the form *hr nd-hrt* and invokes the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods. A full complimentary preamble follows using the simple form of Amun in which he is mentioned in a triad, in this case Mut and Khonsu. The initial greeting is the one used when implying concern on the part of the sender, as here, and also indicates some familiarity between the two men.<sup>121</sup> Dating of this letter is uncertain, but sometime in the Twentieth Dynasty seems probable as this form ceased to be used after this point.<sup>122</sup> The sender identifies himself as a builder and his recipient as a merchant, both being “of the temple of Amun-Re, King of the Gods.” This is also consistent with this greeting form, which was used when the sender addressed someone of equal rank but not an inferior.<sup>123</sup> The commander Iupehy, who instructs that the maidservant be left with Amenkhau, is given the title of *3 thr/* commander of troops. The term *thr* was a connotation for non-Egyptian forces,<sup>124</sup> so Iupehy was in charge of such a detachment. These *thrw* were originally noted as being in the service of the Chief of Tunip, and are known from the Kadesh inscriptions of Ramesses II in which they are associated with the Khatti chief, and shown armed with spears and javelins.<sup>125</sup> The higher ranking commanders are known to have been granted possession of estates and in some cases, as noted in the *Wilbour Papyrus*, put in charge of land belonging to the “god of Pharaoh.”<sup>126</sup> Given that Iupehy is referred to as Amenkhau’s superior by the sender of the letter, and that both Amenkhau and the sender

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<sup>121</sup> Bakir (1970): 46.

<sup>122</sup> Bakir (1970): 89.

<sup>123</sup> Bakir (1970): 46.

<sup>124</sup> Schulman (1964): 20-21.

<sup>125</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, *The Kadesh Inscriptions of Ramesses II* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1960): 40.

<sup>126</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, ed., *The Wilbour Papyrus Vol. II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948a), 81.

are “of the Temple of Amun-Re,” it is possible that Iuhepy held such a position. Also noted in the *Wilbour Papyrus* are a small number of skilled craftsmen who also held land, among them a builder.<sup>127</sup> The fact that Wenenamon was in a financial position to purchase servants could indicate that he was among this number.

The woman Tentuendjede who is at the centre of the complaint is referred to both as a *b3kt*/maidservant and as a *hmt*/slave. She is referred to first as slave-woman at the beginning of the text in lines 4 and 5, but elsewhere as maidservant in lines 11,12,14, and vs lines 2 and 3. The letter states that “payment” was given for her, the implication being that she had been sold as a slave.<sup>128</sup> In *P. Cairo 65739*, dated to the beginning or middle of the reign of Ramesses II, which concerns a lawsuit arising from the purchase of slaves, there is a similar alternation in the use of the words, despite this focus, in lines 16 and 29.<sup>129</sup> As Gardiner comments, “information as to slave-dealing in Pharaonic times is very scanty.”<sup>130</sup> From the societal aspect this piece of correspondence provides some confirmation that servants were purchased, although the alternation of the words “slave” and “servant” shows ambivalence as to how the person involved in this particular case was viewed. It provides an example of the complex situations that could arise with regard to servant/slave ownership.

#### Letter 14

*Dynasty 20: P. Bibl. Nat. 198 III*<sup>131</sup>

This letter, from an unspecified sender and addressed to an unknown recipient, (the beginning of the letter is lost) is from the time of Ramesses XI. The complaint is apparently about the failure of the recipient to obey orders regarding the fetching of grain. The sender accuses him of being “idle in this commission from Pharaoh....” He then refers to the *rmt nty dy hms*/ “the men dwelling there,” writing that they cannot have work if *wn bn b3kw*/ “there is no work.” There appears to be a suggestion that the grain is for them as well. (The *lacunae* here make it unclear.) The sender notes that his recipient

<sup>127</sup> Gardiner (1948a): 82.

<sup>128</sup> For further detail regarding sale contracts involving slaves see Bakir (1978): 71-72.

<sup>129</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, “A Lawsuit Arising from the Purchase of Two Slaves,” *JEA* 21 (1935): Pl.XV.

<sup>130</sup> Gardiner (1935): 145.

<sup>131</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939), 68, Letter 47, Wente (1967):81, Letter 47, Wente (1990): 172, Letter 288.

has ignored his instruction “to despatch Nessobek, your scribe,” and to “cause him to go with the doorkeeper and guardian Dhutmose and the scribe Efnamon and have the grain fetched.” He tells his recipient that the men, now referred to as fishermen, had come to the necropolis complaining they had been waiting around waiting for work, saying *t3y.k n3y.n rmt mh3t t3y b3k ptr t3y.k n3 rmt ʿnn t3y b3k* / “you took our people in the beginning to acquire work. See, you took them again to acquire work.”<sup>132</sup> The sender once more orders immediate dispatch of the recipient’s scribe and the scribe of the necropolis and the doorkeeper Dhutmose, or the doorkeeper Khonsmose, to fetch the grain.

The essence of this letter is that the recipient has not listened, that he has ignored, the orders sent to him in the past. The correspondence is structured firstly in the form of a rhetorical question using a negative verbal form construction regarding the failure to carry out his duties. *jj3 jh p3 mdw m-dj.k mtw.k tm sdm m[tw].k* / “What is the use of speaking to you if you do not listen?”<sup>133</sup> This comment is later re-enforced when, after telling his recipient to have the grain fetched, he writes *bw pw sdm n.j n3 whʿ.w* / “you did not listen to me.” Again later, after noting the situation regarding the fishermen, he writes *ptr bw jrj.k sdm n.j* / “See you do not listen.” The complaint by the fisherman constitutes a complaint within the overall complaint. Its inclusion, and the previous reference to them as the men with no work, implies his recipient has been remiss in allowing the situation. The sender is very clear about the tasks he has expected his recipient to undertake and is direct in telling him how to remedy the problem. The tactic he uses to emphasise the order and get a result is to warn of the adverse consequences that would result if his words are ignored – that if the work people are not properly fed and employed, they will blame the recipient and cause trouble. “Dispatch them to fetch the grain lest the people grow hungry and become idle in the commission from Pharaoh l.p.h. and cast blame upon you.”

While the sender is unnamed it appears almost certain that he was “the well-known scribe of the Necropolis Dhutmose.”<sup>134</sup> According to the Turin Taxation Papyrus<sup>135</sup> in Year 12 of Ramesses XI Dhutmose was associated with grain farming and

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<sup>132</sup> Line 14.

<sup>133</sup> Lines 3 and 4.

<sup>134</sup> Wente (1967): 1.

<sup>135</sup> Gardiner (1948b): 37, line 3.

taxation and is noted there as scribe of the Necropolis. Wente notes that this reference is the earliest date attested for Dhutmose in this role.<sup>136</sup> There could be two holders of this office at any one time and Efnamon is also mentioned in the letter as necropolis scribe. He is attested in this role in the House List of *BM 10068*. This was a list of 182 houses which have been of historical value in providing information regarding population and geography.<sup>137</sup> It has been dated to Year 12 of Ramesses XI.<sup>138</sup> The two doorkeepers Dhutmose and Khonsmose are also mentioned in the Turin Taxation papyrus<sup>139</sup> so a dating of the letter to this year of his reign is highly likely. Following the *lacunae* for the names and titles of the sender and recipient, is reference to “he of Ombos” (Seth) who is *hnt nb-r-dr/* in front of the Lord of All. This introductory structure using a location reference implies that the writer was in the vicinity of Ombos, north of Thebes.<sup>140</sup> Additionally there is a reference to Seth’s position in the solar bark. The greeting continues using some aspects of the complimentary preamble, wishing the recipient life, prosperity and health and favours in the presence of Amun-Re, King of the Gods. However, after this courteous beginning the tone of the letter and its wording would indicate that the (presumed) sender Dhutmose was his superior. The content of the letter gives some insight into some daily life problems concerning labour and supply at the necropolis, and the titles of the people in charge whom Dhutmose sees as responsible for rectifying the problems. Apart from his recipient these include the recipient’s scribe, the necropolis scribe and two doorkeepers, an indication of the additional responsibilities that could be asked of such people and the bureaucracy that was part of this major administrative and religious centre.

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<sup>136</sup> Wente (1967): 2, n.5.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Eric Peet., *The Great Tomb Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 97 and Pl. XVI.

<sup>138</sup> Peet (1977): 86.

<sup>139</sup> Gardiner (1948b): 40, line 8, 14.

<sup>140</sup> Bakir (1970): 90.

## Letter 15

*Dynasty 20: P. Bibliotheque Nationale 198 II.*<sup>141</sup>

Mention of the chief taxing master in another letter from the Late Ramesside period could associate it with other papyri of year 12 relating to tax collection.<sup>142</sup> This would indicate a dating to around Year 12 of Ramesses XI. The beginning of the letter is missing, so the identities of the sender and recipient are unknown. The sender is complaining about his recipient's anger because of a joke which the sender had told the chief taxing master in a letter. He complains that because of this his recipient has caused him to be the subject of insults. The sender then blames a person named Henuttawy for encouraging him to do it. He follows this excuse by comparing his recipient to a woman married for twenty years and blind in one eye whose husband leaves her for another woman because of this defect. This despite the fact he has lived with her in this condition for all this time. He notes that an official, such as himself, does not have to submit to this. He questions whether his recipient is being fair, but writes of his concern for him and instructs him not to "display weakness" because his elder brother Efnamon "has cast blame upon those things you have done."

The main focus of this letter is the sender's annoyance at his recipient's angry reaction *hry-st-r-n t3y.j mdw.j sbj dd.j n ʕ3-št n t3 šʕt/* "on account of my joke which I told and I said to the chief taxing master in the letter."<sup>143</sup> He writes that he has caused him to *š3ff m šhwrj/* "swell up with insults."<sup>144</sup> This piece of correspondence is structured as a direct statement of complaint in response to a complaint. To excuse the action which has caused his recipient's anger, the sender uses the tactic of blaming a third party, writing that it was Henuttawy who told him to tell some jokes in his letter to the chief taxing master. A further tactic to mitigate his action could be seen in the fact that he refers to a single joke (*t3y sbj/my joke*) although Henuttawy had suggested he tell *nhy/some*. His inherent sense of humour is confirmed when he is unable to resist the following passage in which he compares his recipient to the case of *t3 hmt k3mn wʕ jrt m p3 pr n wʕ rmt m 20*

<sup>141</sup>Primary and secondary source references: Černý, (1939): 67-68, Letter 46, Wentz (1967): 79, Letter 46, Sweeney (1997): 63-79, Wentz (1990):173, Letter 289.

<sup>142</sup>Wentz (1967): 2.

<sup>143</sup>Line 5.

<sup>144</sup>Line 4. See Sweeney (1997): 64 n.10. Wentz (1967) translates as "maligned (?) through slander."

*rnpt/* “the wife blind in one eye, in the house of a man for twenty years,”<sup>145</sup> who, when he found another woman, told his wife that because she was blind in one eye *jw.j h3<sup>c</sup>.st/* “I will leave you.” Her response is to ask if he has only just discovered this after twenty years. The sender concludes by writing *jnk p3y p3 sbj.j jrt jrm.k/* “such am I and this my joke which I have made together with you.”<sup>146</sup> As Sweeney comments these words constitute “an allegory to the correspondents themselves.”<sup>147</sup> In other words, like the husband with his wife, has the recipient only just noticed the sender’s nature?

The form of introductory greeting with which the sender greets his recipient is missing, but despite the fact that this is a letter of complaint, he includes a complimentary preamble in the form which does not occur before the Twentieth Dynasty, invoking Amun-Re Harakhti, when he rises and sets.<sup>148</sup> The blessing which follows also conforms to the style of this period, using the introductory formula *jmj n.k* before continuing “life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, a good great old age, and very many favours in the presence of Amun, your lord.”<sup>149</sup>

This form, rather than formulaic, could be because it appears he is addressing a family member, his elder brother. He writes that if he were a *nmh/* poor man then Nesamun<sup>150</sup> would *kbc jrm.j jw.j šsp.w/* “make fun of me and I would endure.”<sup>151</sup> However, the sender states he is in fact a *sr 3/* high official who should not put up with being made fun of *hr j dd n p3y-f sn 3/* “even if said by his elder brother.”<sup>152</sup> Following these words the sender comments “it was when I was in the household that you were born,” and refers to being *m- b3h p3y.k jt/* “in the presence of your father,” and asks *bw rh.k p3 šhr n h3ty.j r-dd m-s3 k/* “do you not know the nature of my heart, that it is behind you.”<sup>153</sup> The familial inference is also found when he concludes by telling him not to be concerned about the blame put upon him by *jw.f-n-jmn p3j-k sn 3/* “Efnamun your elder brother,” because of the things he has done.

<sup>145</sup> Lines 7 and 8.

<sup>146</sup> Line 11.

<sup>147</sup> Sweeney (1997): 76.

<sup>148</sup> Wente (1967): 4, suggests Year 20/Year 2 of the Renaissance.

<sup>149</sup> See Bakir (1970): 63-64.

<sup>150</sup> This is presumably the name of one brother and the following Efnamon that of another, elder to the first.

<sup>151</sup> Line 13.

<sup>152</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Verso* Lines 5 and 6.

While the identities of the sender and recipient are not known, the letter gives some idea of their respective personalities – the sender as a not too serious person despite his assertion of official status, while his recipient has a more conventional outlook. With regard to the other people referred to in this piece of correspondence, the sender of a letter dated to later in this period is identified as “the chantress of Amun, King of the Gods, Henuttawy.”<sup>154</sup> It is interesting to speculate whether this is the same Henuttawy who suggested that the sender include a joke in his correspondence, a frivolous action undertaken earlier in her life, before she was appointed to this position. There is a person named Nesamon attested as chief of policemen and mentioned as being in office from year 12 of Ramesses XI.<sup>155</sup> The position had the title “Chief of the Medjay” referring back to a time when the Medjay assisted in policing the western desert. The need originated due to the requirement for security in the royal necropolis.<sup>156</sup> It is therefore possible that this is the Nesamon referred to in the letter, in which case he would have every right to ridicule the sender, despite the latter’s officialdom. Finally, given the similar dating, the person whom the sender refers to as his recipient’s “elder brother Efnamon” could be the same Efnamon as the necropolis scribe mentioned in the preceding letter.

This piece of correspondence gives an indication of the appropriate conduct expected – to include jokes in a letter to an official is not acceptable. However, the sender shows no remorse for his action. He does not offer any apology for following Henuttawy’s suggestion. There is no indication in this letter that he has expressed his regret to the chief taxing master himself for the inclusion of the joke, which would presumably have been inappropriate to such an official in a hierarchical society, and incurred some anger on the chief taxing master’s part as well as on the part of his brother.

From a societal aspect the sender’s action and his lack of apology show that humour and a lack of respect for officialdom existed. The sender would hardly have been alone in portraying this characteristic. An insight is given into an ancient Egyptian

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<sup>154</sup> P. Geneva D191. See also Wentz (1990): 174, Letter 290 and Wentz (1967): 71, Letter 37, Deborah Sweeney, “Henuttawy’s Guilty Conscience (Gods and Grain in Late Ramesside Letter no 37),” *JEA* 80 (1994): 208-212.

<sup>155</sup> Jaroslav Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramessid Period* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1973), 267-268.

<sup>156</sup> Černý (1973): 34-36.



personality trait. There is no indication as to how or why the recipient has become involved in the issue. His reaction could be based on a comment made to him by the chief taxing master because of a friendship or bureaucratic relationship, with the result that given his connection with the sender his anger is due to the embarrassment that this action has caused him. While the reason for the letter is the sender's complaint about this reaction, he nevertheless offers a conciliatory gesture by writing of his concern for his recipient "Do you not know the nature of my heart, that it is concerned about you..." perhaps hoping to soften the tone of the complaint. Despite this he then feels it necessary to remind his recipient that he is not entirely without fault, as demonstrated by the blame put on him by his elder brother for things he has done. In addition to being an expression of anger expressed by the recipient to the sender's action, it has provided information about expected standards of behaviour and the offence incurred by their disregard. It has also indicated the use of words of reconciliation rather than an explicit apology or request for forgiveness. In this way the letter has provided an insight into emotion and feelings, an insight not often found in personal correspondence.

### **Letter 16**

*Dynasty 20: P. Valençay No. 1.*<sup>157</sup>

A letter dated to the time of Ramesses XI is from the mayor of Elephantine, Meron, to the chief taxing-master Menmarenakht, regarding what he considers are unjustified tax demands. While calling upon all the gods to keep the taxing-master healthy, Meron goes on to complain that the scribe Patjauemdiamon of the House of the Votaress of Amun has come to demand grain specified for the House of the Votaress of Amun. Meron details the measures of barley being demanded, over 100 *khar* measures, and points out that there are no field holdings yielding such an amount. The scribe explains that it is because of certain land holdings Meron has, namely the "*khato*-land of the *gezira* of Ombi." But Meron denies ownership, declaring that the land in question is a holding of private persons who pay gold directly into Pharaoh's treasury and is nothing to do with him. He then mentions the matter of another holding "in the vicinity of Edfu," which the scribe has brought up "a mere four arouras of land...upon which I had put one man and one

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<sup>157</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Gardiner (1948b): 72-73, Wente (1990): 130, Letter 156.

yoke of oxen who cultivated the scrap of land which they found usable in it.” But avers that all the barley that came from there he had handed over to the scribe Patjauemdiamon, that he didn’t touch “a single measure or a single half measure thereof.”

The complaints in this piece of correspondence are not expressed as direct questions demanding to know “why.” Instead, Meron advises Menmarenakht in a restrained and factual manner about the reasons he feels these tax demands are unjustified. It has the tone of a bureaucratic communication which reflects the administrative status of the sender and recipient as mayor and chief taxing master respectively. While a third party is involved in the complaint, Meron does not address his letter to the scribe Patjauemdiamon, but goes to a much higher-ranking official. However he does not attribute blame either to him or his recipient. Menmarenakht’s higher status than the mayor would require a certain deference in Meron’s approach. The complaints in the letter are expressed in a calm tone, not lodged as personal grievances demanding, in an angry manner, explanation and redress.

The opening form of address uses the rule of precedence in which the sender defers to a superior by putting the latter’s name first. The sender asks briefly “May Amun-Re favour Menmarenakht” and follows with the words “The mayor of Elephantine sends a communication” using just the words *swd3-jb* from the introductory formula without the following *n nb.f*. In another letter (*P. Geneva D191*) Menmarenakht is given the additional title of Overseer of the Granaries<sup>158</sup> which would signify his responsibility for Egypt’s two main sources of wealth. So Meron is taking his complaint to a high financial authority rather than processing his complaint through lesser officials. As appropriate for his recipient, Meron continues with a full complimentary preamble.<sup>159</sup> It begins with the invocation to life, prosperity, health in the favour of a god, here Amun-Re. The latter is called upon again as Amun Re-Harakhti, followed by the words “when he rises and sets,” as previously noted a title not found before the Twentieth Dynasty. The sender then invokes his own local gods, Khnum, Satis and Anukis, the local gods of Elephantine. He prays they may keep the recipient healthy that he may enjoy a good old age. It finishes with asking for favours in the presence of both Amun-Re and Pharaoh

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<sup>158</sup> Černý (1939): 59.

<sup>159</sup> Bakir (1970): 55.

which, while following the style of the time, varies in that Pharaoh is mentioned as well as the king of the gods. This style of introductory address and greeting is consistent with the status of the person to whom Meron is writing. He addresses him using the imperative *ssnb* which translates as “make/keep healthy” and is used only in reference to persons of very high rank.<sup>160</sup> This complete elaborate preamble could have been included by Meron as a tactic to flatter and ensure a positive receipt, not just as a formulaic procedure.<sup>161</sup>

The content of the letter can be seen as an insight into a differing structure of land management under Meron’s jurisdiction. The management of royal estates *h3-t3/khato-land*<sup>162</sup> was normally in the hands of people like Meron – the mayors of provincial towns.<sup>163</sup> As such he would have been responsible for the cultivation of the land and its produce, and would have had to accept liability for any lack of stipulated provisions to the Treasury or any other recipient to whom they were directed. In this case it appears the land in question is no longer in this category. Meron writes that it is in the charge of *nmhy*/private persons, who *f3y nbw*/pay gold which they *‘h’ swd*/regularly hand over to Pharaoh’s treasury. On this occasion the scribe demanding the due taxes of grain payment is from the House of the Votaress of Amun.<sup>164</sup> Gardiner’s transcription and his analysis of the Wilbour Papyrus fragments reveal that this “house” owned and drew income from land around the country and is here demanding payment in the traditional fashion.<sup>165</sup> Her ranking at this time was that of a person of royal blood with a position as high, or higher, than the royal wife. One of her many responsibilities was for the distribution of revenue from provisions and grain.<sup>166</sup> The scribe Patjauemdiamon refers to it as the grain *r tks tw r pr dw3-ntr n jmn*/ “which has been fixed for the House of the Votaress of Amun.”<sup>167</sup> Katary suggests that the journey of the scribe to make the demand in person, and the use of the word “fixed,” indicate what she terms a “vested interest in the revenue to be

<sup>160</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, “A protest against unjustified tax demands,” *RDE* 6 (1950): 118.

<sup>161</sup> On the other hand it has been suggested that the two men worked in the same Theban region and were “at least indirectly acquainted,” prompting the full preamble of invocations on the recipient’s behalf. See Baines (2001): 19-20.

<sup>162</sup> A term meaning literally “a thousand of land.” Was used as a field-measure equal to 10 arouras. For full details see Gardiner (1948a): 166.

<sup>163</sup> Gardiner (1948a): 165. See also Sally L.D. Katary, *Land Tenure in the Ramesside period* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 207-208.

<sup>164</sup> See Gardiner (1941): 68-71.

<sup>165</sup> Gardiner (1950): 124.

<sup>166</sup> Lefebvre (1929): 35-36.

<sup>167</sup> Line 7. For comment regarding the meaning and use of *tks* see Katary (1989): 209.

collected.”<sup>168</sup> However, the fact that Meron complains to such a high authority as Menmarenakht appears as confirmation that this situation is an authorised one, that Meron has not taken a unilateral decision in this regard, and is not fabricating a story in order to avoid paying taxes, indicating that this was the usual arrangement in the case of *3ht n nmhy/a* holding of private persons.<sup>169</sup> In the final part of the letter he declares that he had given the scribe Patjauemdiamon all the measures of barley that had been harvested from 4 arouras of land near Edfu. He refers to it as *nkt n 3ht/a* scrap of land, implying that this was considered a comparatively small area compared to the usual size of holding.<sup>170</sup> The location of these 4 arouras is an indication of the extent of the jurisdiction of the Mayor of Elephantine. However whether this applied just to responsibility for the cultivation of the land and payment of taxes or also included mayoral administrative duties is unclear.

### **Letter 17**

*Dynasty 20: P.Turin (unnumbered)*<sup>171</sup>

In this brief and to the point communication, the principal of the harem of Amun-Re, Herere, is berating the troop captain Peseg for not providing rations to the workers at the necropolis, a matter she has already written to him about. She demands that upon receipt of this letter Peseg looks for the grain she wrote about and gives the men their rations. The conclusion of the letter is fragmented but indicates a previous letter she has received from Peseg that was not to her liking.

This letter has been dated to the ten year period of the Renaissance era, which coincided with the last 10 years of the reign of Ramesses XI. This was a time marked by the emergence of military control at Thebes, and was the end result of a time of turmoil which involved what has been termed the suppression of Amenhotep, the high priest of Amun, by the King’s son of Kush, Panehsy. However, Ridealgh argues that interpretation

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<sup>168</sup> Katary (1989): 208, Gardiner (1948a): 205, n.3, suggest that, due to the use of the pronoun “they” in connection with the scribe’s arrival, it is possible that the scribe was accompanied.

<sup>169</sup> For an overview of the usage of this term see Katary (1989): 210-212. See also Jac. J. Janssen “Prolegomena to the study of Egypt’s economic history during the New Kingdom,” *SAK* 3 (1975): 149. He notes that this is a type of field arrangement “not occurring in any official document...and about the importance of which nothing is known.”

<sup>170</sup> For analysis of areas see Gardiner (1948a): 178-181 and Katary (1989): 214.

<sup>171</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939): 60-1, Letter 38, Wente (1967): 74, Letter 38 and Wente (1990): 200, Letter 324.

of the word *thj* as “suppression” should be changed to “transgression” or “to lead astray.” He suggests that “instead of a sustained ‘suppression’ of *Jmn-ḥtp* at Medinet Habu where the High Priest was trapped behind the *tenemos* wall of the temple, the ‘War of the High Priest’ consisted of a series of violent transgressions against *Jmn-ḥtp*, which resulted in the removal of the High Priest of Amun for a period of time.”<sup>172</sup>

This complaint follows the form of a question introduced by *jh* followed by a direct request to rectify the situation, prompted by the recipient’s failure to act on a previous order. The complaint is not one that invites any explanation or justification. The introductory formula is of the form sender to recipient, without the use of *dd/says*, as was appropriate to the high status of Herere as *wr ḥnty n jmn r<sup>c</sup>*/principal of the harem of Amun-Re, enabling her to express herself in this way to a male troop captain. Any form of complimentary preamble is missing – this is a terse note structured as a question stating the complaint followed by the means by which the recipient can rectify it. First Herere asks *jh n3 rmt<sub>1</sub> n n3 hr<sup>c</sup> šps j.h3b n k r-dd jmj n.w dj tw.k tm rdt n.w<sup>c</sup>n/* “What about the personnel of the great and noble necropolis, I wrote to you saying ‘give them rations’ you have not yet given to them?”<sup>173</sup> She then orders Peseg *jw.k ptr n3 jt mtw.k rdt n w dj m w/* “you shall look for the grain and you shall give to them from it.”<sup>174</sup> She concludes by telling him *m-di smj.k<sup>c</sup>n/* “do not complain to me again.”

It has been suggested that Herere was the mother of the general Piankh<sup>175</sup> who was a major figure at Thebes, assuming high office there while Ramesses XI was still officially Pharaoh. In a letter dated to the same year 10 of the Renaissance she is noted as being in Elephantine.<sup>176</sup> It is possible that this letter was written during this time. Given his responsibility for providing rations to the “noble necropolis” it would appear that the troop captain Peseg was stationed close by at Thebes.

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<sup>172</sup> For a full discussion of this point see Kim Ridealgh, “A Tale of Semantics and Suppressions: reinterpreting Papyrus Mayer A and the so-called ‘War of the High Priest’ during the reign of Ramesses XI,” *SAK* 43 (2014): 359-373.

<sup>173</sup> Lines 2-4.

<sup>174</sup> Lines 5-6.

<sup>175</sup> John H. Taylor, “Nodjmet, Payankh and Herihor. The End of the New Kingdom Reconsidered,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Egyptologists* (ed. Christopher Eyre; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1142-1155.

<sup>176</sup> Wente (1967): 20 (*P. Turin* 1973).

Once again the importance of food supply is apparent and the hierarchy within the social structure is shown. Because of her position a woman is able to address a male troop captain in this way. The manner in which she writes shows the authoritative nature of her position, that Peseg has been insubordinate in not carrying out her previous command regarding rations. The letter also shows the additional responsibility that the position of troop captain entails in terms of welfare for the personnel of such an important location, and could be seen as confirmation of the military control at Thebes at this time.

### **Summary**

While it can be seen how these letters have all been motivated by “a state of affairs which is unsatisfactory,” where the recipient has done, or failed to do, something that the sender of the letter wants him to rectify, they can be compared and contrasted in several ways, such as the reason for the complaint, the forms of address and the structure of the complaint’s expression.

*Reasons for the complaints:* These have shown similarities as well as differences. Five of the letters have been prompted by a failure to follow instructions. In three this failure is related to the supply of provisions. In Letter 2 the general Nehsi is complaining that the barley he ordered delivered to his household has not arrived. In Letter 14 an unknown sender is berating his recipient for not providing grain and allowing the people to go hungry and possibly to become idle. Letter 17 from Herere, the principal of the harem of Amun-Re, has been prompted by her troop captain’s failure to follow instructions and provide rations to workers at the necropolis. The other two deal with different matters. Letter 8 is a brief note from an unknown sender and appears to be related to building work. The complaint is about the failure of the scribe Ramose to organise the provision of rushes to a carpenter as instructed. The final piece of correspondence within this topic, Letter 10, is from Dhutmose about the failure of Paury to follow an order to return the donkey he has been allowed to use.

Bureaucratic issues are the subject of four letters. Two of these are concerned with workforce problems. Letter 3 is a short note of complaint from Tet about interference in the work of the personnel at Heliopolis. Letter 4 is another short piece

from the high priest of Amun-Re regarding the trouble an elderly worker is causing for his son. Other complaints of this nature are Letter 12 which is from Khay to the Mayor of Elephantine with a polite complaint about receiving anointing ointment instead of honey, and Letter 16 in which Meron is complaining about unjustified tax demands to another mayor of Elephantine.

Three complaints are related to maidservants and domestic responsibility. Letter 5 from Ahmose is related to the maidservant who has been taken from him and given to another, and he is the recipient of the following Letter 6 which is concerned with litigation over a maidservant's ownership. In Letter 13, from Wenenamon, the situation is a complicated one concerning a maidservant who has been taken away and the accusation that he had stolen her.

Three of the remaining five letters are concerned with matters of a more personal nature. Letter 7 is from Userhat to his sister and involves a complaint about the indifference being shown to him by a woman. Letter 9 involves the complaints from a scribe Neb regarding property and divorce as well as threats of physical violence. Inappropriate behaviour is the subject of the complaint in Letter 15. The unidentified sender complains about the anger of his recipient caused by the joke he included in his letter to the chief taxing master.

The remaining letters differ in their reasons for writing. Letter 1 from the unnamed commander of troops is a statement of complaint about the way in which he has to get clothing for his troops. Letter 11 from an unknown sender has been prompted by failure to carry out a promise – in this case the use of a ship.

*Forms of address:* The similarities and differences in the forms of greeting used can be seen to indicate the status of the people involved, the reason for the complaint, the medium used. The style and the presence of the complimentary preamble can establish the chronology enabling a dating to the period in which the letter was written.<sup>177</sup> In the first letter from the Sixth Dynasty the commander of troops gives neither his name nor that of his recipient, the chief justice and begins with the brief “It is the commander of troops who says...,” which is appropriate to the terseness of the correspondence. In

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<sup>177</sup> Table 1 at the end of this chapter provides an overview of the information regarding senders/recipients, formulae/phraseology of greetings and chronology detailed in this chapter and its summary.

Letter 2 dated to the early Twelfth Dynasty the general gives his name in his opening greeting which is in the form *r dd/*communication, a variation of the form *dd.n* from this period which could suggest a relationship between Nehsi and Kay. He also includes some extra words of greeting asking after his recipient's health and invoking the blessing of the gods in a style which is again characteristic of this time and another possible indication of familiarity. In the correspondence from the Eighteenth Dynasty the greeting used by the sender in Letter 3 is *hr-swd3-jb n nb.f/*a communication to his Lord, with just the adjunct "in the favour of Amun-Re." The opening greeting of the brief Letter 4 is missing, but it also includes "in the favour of Amun-Re." Letter 5 has no elaborate greeting but uses the introductory words *dd.tn/*what says the sender to recipient. This "business style opening" fits with the status of the sender Ahmose and his recipient Tey the chief treasurer. In the following Letter 6 the greeting is in the sender to recipient style *hr nd-hrt*. This is normally associated with familiarity or concern for the sender's recipient, as it is here. It is followed by the brief preliminary words *h3b pw rdjt rh.k /* "This is a missive to inform you" which suits the factual business-like content of the letter, and is indication of previous contact. In Letter 7, although the letter is addressed to the sender's sister, the greeting is in the brief business-like sender to recipient *dd.n* form due to the limited space available on ostraca. Similarly in Letter 8, while the name of the sender is missing, the style is in the sender to recipient *dd.n* style appropriate to the potsherd used for the communication. In Letter 9, the final piece of correspondence from this period, the greeting uses the brief sender to recipient form, followed by *h3b pw rdjt rh.k /* a missive to inform you, which would indicate the sender viewed his complaint as a serious business related one. The senders of Letters 10, 11, 12 and 13 from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties also use the form of introductory greeting *hr nd-hrt* in the sender to recipient style. As in the previous Letter 6, the use of this form in these letters is an indication of previous contact between the sender and his recipient rather than showing personal concern. From this time the greeting can be found followed by the complimentary preamble. The sender of Letter 10 moves straight on to the subject matter of the letter after this introductory greeting, but in the other correspondence the sender follows his greeting with the full complimentary preamble which calls upon the favour of Amun and invokes the favours of other gods. In Letter 11 the final blessing uses the



Nineteenth Dynasty form *jmj snb.f*, thus helping in the dating of this writing. An indication of dating to the Twentieth Dynasty is also provided in Letter 12 which includes the invocation of “Amun-Re Harakhti when he rises and sets” which does not appear before this time. In letter 13 there are invocations to Amun and his triad. The initial greeting is missing from Letters 14 and 15, although a form of complimentary preamble is present before the main body of the letter. After this time the *hr nd-hrt* form of greeting disappears. Overall the style of the greeting in these four letters is consistent with their straightforward business-like structure, the reasons for complaint and the status of sender and recipient. The obvious use of a greeting form to indicate status can be found in Letter 16. Here can be seen the rule of precedence in which the recipient is placed before the sender. The inclusion of an elaborate form of full complimentary preamble also emphasises that this is a letter to a superior. The sender invokes not only Amun-Re-Harakhti but also the sender’s local gods, praying that they keep his recipient healthy and with a good old age and includes favours in the presence of both Amun-Re and Pharaoh. This could be seen as a tactic to smooth the way before he gives the reason for his complaint. In contrast, and appropriate to its content and the status of the sender, the final Letter 17 from a principal of the Harem of Amun-Re to a troop captain has the brief sender to recipient greeting with no preamble.

*Structure of Expression:* The ways in which the complaints are expressed also show similarities and differences.<sup>178</sup> Five letters are in the form of questions but they differ in their style and structure. In Letter 2 there are two questions. The sender asks “What is the meaning/*jn ir*” firstly of the failure to deliver provisions and secondly of his recipient’s behaviour. He offers a solution as to how to rectify the first issue and expects an explanation regarding the second. In Letter 5 the sender asks the question Why/*hr m* has the maidservant been taken away and then provides the solution. In Letter 7 the sender also introduces his complaint with *hr m*, following his question with a series of statements which do not provide a solution, but imply the responsibility of his sister to resolve the matter. A different questioning style is found in Letter 14 in which the sender utilises a rhetorical question in a negative verbal form *jj3 jh p3 mdw m-dj.k mtw.k tm sdm/* “What is the use of speaking to you if you don’t listen.” But he provides a solution in the

<sup>178</sup> These differing forms are shown in Table 1.

form of a direct order to his recipient to organise the supply of provisions. Letter 17 is in the form of a direct question *jh n3*/what is the meaning of this. As in the previous letter the solution is provided in the form of a direct order to supply rations.

In comparison, in other letters the sender makes his complaint as a statement of fact, but offers a way in which the complaint should be rectified. Three of these letters fall into the bureaucratic category and have been seen to follow a business-style approach. The brief complaint regarding interference with the workforce in Letter 3 is a direct business-like statement of the issue, a communication and a direct request as to the action to be taken. In Letter 12 the style is appropriate for pointing out a bureaucratic mistake. The sender provides a straightforward, factual account about his receipt of anointing ointment instead of honey, and politely suggests the solution while introducing the possibility that a third party was responsible. In Letter 16, a complaint about the bureaucratic mistake that has resulted in an unjustified tax demand, the sender uses a similar style and gives a factual statement. However, in this piece of correspondence the sender does not offer a solution but expects his problem to be rectified given the circumstances he has stated.

The remaining six pieces of correspondence are also structured as statements of fact to detail the complaint, and as in the previous three letters a few offer a solution. In Letter 1 the sender uses a pejorative tone to state his complaint which appears to be in response to a previous letter from the recipient. He does not explicitly offer a solution but implies how his recipient could do something about his problem. The complaint regarding the old man and Senenmut's son in Letter 4 is in the form of a short, factual statement and includes the detail of its resolution by the sender. In Letter 6 the complaint regarding the maidservant is again in the style of a straightforward statement of the situation, but the sender does not suggest a way in which it can be rectified. The writing on the fragment of Letter 8 is a statement regarding complaints the sender has received with the instruction to his recipient as to how to resolve the problem. In Letter 9 the sender's complaint is in the form of a statement concerning the situation that has transpired regarding his share of marital property. Unrelated to this is a request for his recipient to write to a particular woman. The statement of complaint from the sender of Letter 10 is immediate and to the point. The problem is stated in his opening words – his

recipient has failed to follow the instruction to return a donkey. The straightforward structure details the circumstances with the presumption that the donkey will now be given to the appropriate person. Letter 11 is a statement regarding the unfulfilled promise of a ship and the sender advises how the situation should be rectified. The sender of Letter 13 uses a series of statements to provide all the aspects of his complaint. He outlines all the occurrences dealing with the circumstances of the maidservant who has been taken away, and is direct in telling his recipient how he should resolve the issue. The final piece of correspondence using this structure is Letter 15 in which the sender makes a direct statement about his annoyance at the anger shown by his recipient with regard to the joke in his letter to the chief taxing-master.

There have been similarities and differences in the “unsatisfactory state of affairs” which has prompted these letters of complaint, but they are primarily concerned with practical problems. In this way they have given insight into everyday life and issues such as the importance attached to the supply of provisions, the customs associated with domestic servants, the problems that could arise in the administrative bureaucracy with regard to taxation and the requirements for religious ritual, and the personal issues and interaction which could cause complaint. However, emotions and belief were not the primary *raison d'être* for writing – first and foremost they were written to rectify what the sender considered was wrongdoing. The letters do not explicitly express feelings such as anger, sorrow, happiness, love and friendliness, although these emotions can be discerned implicit in the tone of the sender’s writing as an incentive to the recipient to take action – offering flattery, using a calm and polite official style, subtly suggesting a mistake without apportioning blame, being deferential, pointing out the adverse effect to the recipient if he does not comply. Only in Letters 7 and 9 can the emotion of anger be discerned in the way the sender expresses himself.

The majority of the letters have been structured in a straightforward way consistent with the issues involved in the reason for writing. While underlying anger or concern can be found in the tone of some, the senders use a factual statement or series of statements to describe their complaint. Those pieces of correspondence that differ are in the form of questions. With this structure the senders convey a sense of urgency and concern, with the need to know reasons and outcomes. In terms of style, the letters

structured as questions show differing interrogative grammatical structures according to their period, and there is more emotional feeling implicit in this style. The similarities and differences in the form of greeting have been related to the period when the letter was written. They have given indications of the status of the sender and recipient and reflected the importance of the complaint and the overall tone of the letter.

Unlike letters dealing with other topics which are conveying information or enquiring after the recipient's health and well-being, letters of complaint are not rhetorical, but require active action from their recipient. However, it appears that while the recipient was expected to take action he or she was not requested, or seemingly obliged, to respond and write to confirm that they had done so. While it has been possible to attribute approximate dating to the correspondence, given their provenance, palaeography and content, the letters themselves do not provide an historical context by specific reference to a ruler, local occurrences, foreign affairs or military matters.

It does have to be borne in mind that on the question of literacy Baines and Eyre calculated a literacy quotient for the general population during the Old Kingdom of only 1%.<sup>179</sup> Because of this continuing questionable standard of literacy, in most cases the sender of the letter used the services of a scribe. It is interesting to postulate whether the structure and nuances which have been discussed were the structures and tactics of the scribe, or the sender him- or herself.

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<sup>179</sup> John Baines and Christopher Eyre, "Four Notes on Literacy," *GM* 61 (1983): 67.

Table 1

No.	Sender name/social position	Recipient name/social position	Formulae of address	Dated to
1	Unnamed/general	Unnamed/vizier, chief justice	<i>dd/says</i>	Dynasty 6
2	Nehsi/general	Kay/no other information	<i>r dd/a communication jn jr/what is the meaning</i>	Early Dynasty 12
3	Tet/no other information	Djehuty/treasurer and architect to Hapshepsut, overseer of major construction projects	<i>hr-swd3-jb n nb.f/a communication to his lord</i>	Dynasty 18/ Hatshepsut
4	Name and title missing	unnamed/scribe of the High Priest of Amun-Re, King of the Gods	words of address missing	Dynasty 18/ Hatshepsut
5	Ahmose/scribe of the director of works, Peniati	Tai/ chief treasurer	<i>dd-tn/what says hr m/why</i>	Dynasty 18/ Hatshepsut
6	Ptahu/no other information	Ahmose/scribe of the director of works, Peniati	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets (inquires the health of)</i>	Dynasty 18/ Hatshepsut
7	Userhat/ <i>w<sup>c</sup>b</i> priest	Resti/no other information	<i>dd.n/says to hr m / why</i>	Dynasty 18
8	Name and title missing	Ramose/scribe	Words of address missing	Dynasty 18/ Akhenaten
9	Neb/scribe	Khenememuskhet/ <i>w<sup>c</sup>b</i> priest	<i>n/to h3b pw rdjt rh.k/a missive to inform you</i>	Late Dynasty 18
10	Dhutmose/warden of the Estate of Ramesses I	Paury/overseer of cattle of the herd	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets (inquires the health of)</i>	Dynasty 19/ Ramesses I
11	Name and title missing	Akhpet/standard bearer	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets (as familial contact) Complimentary preamble calling on "Ptah the Great, South of his Wall, Lord of Anktowy, upon his ennead, upon Sakhmet the Great, beloved of [Ptah, and upon] all gods and goddesses of Hatkuptah to keep you healthy, alive, to let me see you in health and and fill my embrace with you."</i>	Dynasty 19/ Ramesses II
12	Khay/title missing	Montuhi[khopeshef]/mayor of Elephantine	<i>hr nd hrt/greets (as sign of familiarity) Complimentary preamble calling on "Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets, and upon Harakhti and his ennead to keep you healthy, alive and to keep you in the favour of Harakhti your lord who looks after you."</i>	Dynasty 20/ Ramesses III-V
13	Wenenamon/builder of the temple of Amun-Re	Amenkhau/merchant of the temple of Amun-Re	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets (inquires the health of) Complimentary preamble calling on "Amun, Mut and Khonsu to keep you alive, to keep you healthy and to invigorate you."</i>	Late Dynasty 20

14	Name and title missing	Name and title missing	No initial address. <i>jj3 jh p3 mdw m-dj.k mtw.k mtw.k tm sdm m[tw].k</i> /what is the use of speaking to you if you do not listen. Calls on "...the Ombite who is in front of the Universal lord, the great god of the primal occasion, to give you life, prosperity and health and very many favours in the presence of Amun-Re, King of the Gods."	Dynasty 20/year 12 of Ramesses XI
15	Name and title missing	Name and title missing	Initial address missing but calling on "Amun-Re Harakhti when he rises and sets to give you life, prosperity and health and a long lifetime, a good ripe old age, and favours in the presence of Amun, your lord."	Dynasty 20/year 12 of Ramesses XI
16	Meron/Mayor of Elephantine	Menmarenakht/Chief Taxing Master	<i>swd3-jb</i> /a communication Complimentary preamble calling on "Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets and upon Khnum, Satis, Anukis and all the gods of Elephantine to keep the chief taxing master healthy, to give him favours in the presence of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, his good lord, and in the presence of Pharaoh, his good lord."	Dynasty 20/Ramesses XI
17	Herere/principal of the harem of Amun-Re	Peseg/troop captain	<i>n/to jh n3</i> /what is the meaning of this	Dynasty 20/Renaissance

## Chapter Two

### Religious affairs and personnel

The correspondence being looked at in this chapter is of a personal nature as opposed to oracle petitions and letters to the dead. The eleven letters are from the New Kingdom and the Twenty-first Dynasty. Those from the New Kingdom appear at this point to be the only extant pieces of personal correspondence from this period directly related to religious matters. The seven letters from Dynasty Twenty-one form part of a much larger corpus, presumed to have come from el-Hibeh. Of these the letters selected are the most complete. While analysis of these letters is structured as in the previous chapter – looking at forms of greeting and researching the references made in the letters to reveal more about the personalities involved – the focus is on the social aspects of religious protocols, cults and customs, together with historical context.

#### Letter 1

*Dynasty 18 O. Cairo 25667<sup>1</sup>*

This short note, written on an ostrakon, orders a statue to be sent to the sender and deals with temple related issues, giving directions as to where divine offerings should be sent, with the directive that “the builder’s workman should remain at the work.”

No names for the sender or recipient are recorded. In the abrupt beginning the only name mentioned is that of the scribe Amenemone. He is the person who has to be told by the unknown recipient to send the statue to the sender of the note. There is a request regarding information related to an apportionment to be given, but to whom is unknown due to the *lacunae* in the text. The sender names the temples of Djoseret and Akhset, i.e. those of Hatshepsut and Mentuhotep II at Deir el-Bahri. He instructs the recipient that the divine offerings are to be handed over to the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests of these temples, following this order with the comment regarding the builder’s workman who is to continue his work, implying that he is also located at these sites.

The brevity of the style is consistent with, and typical of, a piece of official communication written on an ostrakon. It is possible that no sender or recipient needed to

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<sup>1</sup>Primary and secondary source references: Jaroslav Černý, *Ostraca Hiératiques* (Cairo: Musée des antiquités égyptiennes, 1930-35), 74, pl.71, Wente (1990): 94, Letter 122.

be named, that the people involved were well-known to each other, and that this was part of an on-going correspondence. The reference to *dsr(t)*, Hatshepsut's temple shows that it was already built at the time, indicating that the letter can possibly be dated to the reign of Tuthmosis III.<sup>2</sup> While this is only a brief text its importance lies in that it appears to be so far the only extant piece of a personal nature from the Eighteenth Dynasty specifically related to the religious environment.

## Letter 2

*Dynasty 19: O.BM 5627*<sup>3</sup>

This is a letter from the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest, Minmose addressed to the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Sobekhotep. The sender first instructs his recipient to be “attentive in observing the festivals of the gods and also in making their divine [offerings in] the chapel of each god who resides within the Temple of Nebmare....” He names them as “Amun who is in his solar disk, Nefertem-Horus the Exultant, Sakhmet the Great... Wepwawet of Upper Egypt and Wepwawet of Lower Egypt, the gods of Amun-Kamutef, and to every god and goddess.”

As a further communication he asks that Sobekhotep remind the cultivator of his fields about the harvest assessment which is due for the granary, that it not “be lacking in barley and emmer for it is upon its granary that a house stands firm.” He also tells him to “attend to the cattle stable,” and to make sure that the cattle are properly cared for.

As Bakir notes the style of greeting that Minmose uses had been shortened by this time to the form *r dd n*/sender says to,<sup>4</sup> and is without any elaborate complimentary preamble. The final words *nfr sdm.k*/It is good if you take note, is seen to indicate correspondence between persons of equal rank,<sup>5</sup> as shown in this piece of correspondence between two *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests.

Minmose writes that he is the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest of Ptah-Sokar while his recipient is that of Sekhmet. Their location at the Temple of Nebmare, west of Thebes, was established originally as the funerary temple of Amenophis III. Sokar was the ancient falcon god of

<sup>2</sup> See Dominique Valbelle, *Les Ouvriers de la Tombe* (Cairo : Institut Français d'archéologie Orientale, 1985), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý and Gardiner (1957): Pl. 90, Wente (1990), 126, Letter 148.

<sup>4</sup> Bakir (1970): 48.

<sup>5</sup> Bakir (1970): 65.



Memphis who became linked with the Memphite god Ptah. Sekhmet was looked upon as the consort of Ptah and in Memphis Nefertem was viewed as their child. Inscriptions found on fragments from the temple site show the name of Amun in conjunction with that of Ptah-Sokar, suggesting a division of the temple site between the two. Additionally, titles of attendants at the temple are designated as both belonging to the temple of Nebmare, as well that of Ptah-Sokar.<sup>6</sup> The titles of the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests who are sender and recipient of this letter, and the gods invoked, reflect a continuation of this division and the focus that Amenophis III had on Memphis and its related cults.<sup>7</sup> Amun-Kamutef – literally *jmn k3 mwt.f*/Amun-Bull-of-his mother – was a designation of strength and fertility. The reference here could reflect the Theban festival of Amun-Min-Kamutef which has been referred to as “the second most important annual celebration after the *Opet* festival.”<sup>8</sup> The reference to Min could be omitted.<sup>9</sup> Scenes depicting this festival have been found at Luxor in the temple and on the pylon of Ramesses II.<sup>10</sup> A shrine to Kamutef has been identified at Karnak.<sup>11</sup> Amun-Kamutef is a form of Amun found predominantly there and at the temple of Luxor. This piece of correspondence attests the renewal of the temple of Amenophis III in Ramesside times after the hiatus of the Amarna period. The actual dating – whether the revival should be attested to the Nineteenth or Twentieth Dynasty – is uncertain. Kanel argues that it was not until the Twentieth Dynasty that the temple was revived,<sup>12</sup> and Gaballa notes the predominance of Sekhmet and Nefertem-Horus the Exultant in scenes at the Medinet Habu temple complex of Ramesses III.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from their occupation as *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests no personal background is available for the sender and his recipient, except for the fact that Sobekhotep is the son of *ʿ3-jmn*

<sup>6</sup> See Gerard Haeny, “New Kingdom ‘Mortuary Temples’ and ‘Mansions of Millions of Years,’” in *Temples of Ancient Egypt* (ed. Byron E. Shafer; New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 101-102.

<sup>7</sup> For a full overview and discussion of the temples see Martina Ullmann, *König für die Ewigkeit - Die Häuser der Millionen von Jahren : eine Untersuchung zu Königskult und Tempeltypologie in Ägypten*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Lanny Bell, “The New Kingdom ‘Divine’ Temple: the Example of Luxor,” in *Temples of Ancient Egypt* (ed. Byron E. Shafer; New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 178.

<sup>9</sup> Richard H. Wilkinson, *Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 115.

<sup>10</sup> Bell (1997): 178.

<sup>11</sup> Bell (1997): 159, Fig.65.

<sup>12</sup> Frédérique von Känel, *Les Prêtres-Ouâb de Sekhmet et Les Conjurateurs de Serket* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 66.

<sup>13</sup> G.A.Gaballa, “The Feast of Sokar,” *Orientalia* 38 (1969): 29-30.

/Aamon. However, in terms of information about religious practices this piece of correspondence has provided knowledge of the re-establishment of Amenophis III's temple at Thebes, with its on-going cults and the necessary requirements attached to the festivals relating to them. The second request that Minmose makes in the letter concerning the adequate supply of barley and emmer and the instruction to see to the cattle and their stable, shows the importance of provisioning the establishment through the work of the priests themselves giving insight into the responsibilities of these "pure priests" in addition to their religious duties related to rituals and the carrying of the sacred barque in processions.

### Letter 3

*Dynasty 19: O.Michaelides 85*<sup>14</sup>

From a garrison scribe Ipuy to a standard-bearer names Bakenamon, this is part of a piece of correspondence in which the sender advises his recipient that the towns in every district are prosperous, as well as possibly the people (the *lacunae* here make this unclear) who are calling on [the gods] and goddesses who are in the region of the land of Khor, regarding Pharaoh, with "every land cast down beneath his sandals." A further communication follows regarding "the festival of Anath of Gaza." Here the *lacunae* could refer to offerings which have arrived, as in the following extant words Ipuy writes "I received your [...] for the goddess." There is also mention of a scout and a ship, but again the *lacunae* make it unclear and the remainder of the letter is missing.

The *lacunae* in the opening address also make it unclear how Ipuy addresses Bakenamon or Bakenamon's status, although the title "standard bearer" has been suggested.<sup>15</sup> Presumably Ipuy is at a garrison in or near Gaza, but Bakenamon's location is unclear. The garrison where he is stationed could be in the same region as Ipuy, or possibly in Lower Egypt or Thebes. Although incomplete, this piece of correspondence is a confirmation of the ancient Egyptian presence in Palestine – the land of *ḥ3r/Khor*. Its Shasu tribal chiefs Seti I recorded at Karnak as being "united in one place, stationed on

<sup>14</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Hans Goedicke and Edward Wente, *Ostraka Michaelides* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962), Pl. XC111, Bernard Grdseloff, *Les Débuts du Culte de Rechef en Égypte* (Cairo: Institut Français d'archéologie Orientale, 1942), pl. 7-8, Wente (1990): 127, Letter 150.

<sup>15</sup> See Wente (1990): 127, Letter.150 and Grdseloff (1942): 37.

the mountain ridges of Khor...they disregard the edicts of the palace...”<sup>16</sup> whom he subdued in his campaign into Canaan and the Sinai. He recorded on his Beth-Shan stela, Year 1 that he caused “the chiefs of Khor to go back on all the boasting of their mouths.”<sup>17</sup>

The goddess Anat was a goddess of the Near East/East Mediterranean area, with a major presence in the region of Ugarit, but who, along with other deities, over time was introduced into Egypt.<sup>18</sup> She is represented as primarily a martial figure holding a shield, a spear and a battle-axe, one arm raised with one of her weapons in a threatening gesture.<sup>19</sup> It has been noted that this is the first referral to a festival of the goddess at Gaza<sup>20</sup> and given the proximity of Gaza to the Egyptian border could be a sign of her transition from the Near East to the Delta region. Stadelmann notes the attestations for Anat during the Ramesside period when she had a temple in Piramses.<sup>21</sup> A war hound of Ramesses II was named “Anat in Strength.”<sup>22</sup> It has been suggested that the *lacunae* after the words “A further communication” which precede the reference to the festival, would have read “The offerings that you sent for...”<sup>23</sup> In the further broken text of the remaining extant part of the letter appear the words *n t3 Ntrt*/for the goddess, followed by the start of a new sentence referring to *jw w<sup>c</sup> n h3ptw*/ scout or spy. There is then another break after which are the words *k3r mnš* which could refer to a barge, but also to a warship.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, the *k3r* could be read as referring to Khor and the scout/spy could be checking the cargo of a ship coming from further up the coast of Khor/Palestine or, if a warship, spying on a potential enemy. In *P. Anastasi IV* there is reference to a ship

<sup>16</sup>Kenneth Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated Vol.1* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 9:1, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *KRITA* I:1993: 12:5, 10.

<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive study of the presence of Asiatic deities in Egypt see Rainer Stadelmann, *Syrisch-Palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten* (Leiden: E.J.Brill 1967).

<sup>19</sup> Depicted with spear, shield and raised battle-axe in the lower register of the Nineteenth Dynasty *Stele of Qeh*: BM: EA 191. Also depicted with raised battle-axe on red granite column of Merenptah at Heliopolis where she is referred to as “Anat, mistress of every land.” See Sakkie Cornelius, “The Egyptian Iconography of the Goddesses Anat and Astarte,” in *Les civilisations du bassin Méditerranéen. Hommages à Joachim Silwa* (ed. K.M. Cialowicz and J.A. Ostrowski; Cracovie: Université Jagaelonne, 2000), 72, 77 Fig.2.

<sup>20</sup> Grdseloff (1942): 36.

<sup>21</sup> Stadelmann (1967): 91-95.

<sup>22</sup> For this and further references to the goddess in Egypt see Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie Band 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975), 254-258.

<sup>23</sup> See Wentz (1990): 127, Letter 150 and Grdseloff (1942): 37.

<sup>24</sup> For this suggestion see Jones (1988): 138:36.

coming from Khor.<sup>25</sup> Another suggestion is that *k3r* is a proper name “Kar” and can be interpreted as the name of the captain.<sup>26</sup> Because of the *lacunae* here the reading has to be hypothetical.

This letter, although incomplete, has indicated the ancient Egyptian military presence in Palestine and the existence of the cult of Anat in the area, specifically Gaza, illustrating her transition into the pantheon of ancient Egyptian goddesses. It has also shown the responsibility that a garrison commander has over and above military duty in overseeing such a festival and its offering requirements.

#### **Letter 4**

*Dynasty 19: Ramesses II O. Gardiner 362*<sup>27</sup>

From the scribe Ramose to the royal scribe and overseer of Cattle, Hatia, this letter first addresses the delivery of provisions and cattle for the Feast of Opet. He is concerned that “...the Feast of Opet has approached to within [?] from today...but boats of the Temple of Amun have not come to us from [...] for the Feast of Opet as well as the cattle to be introduced for offerings to all the gods...” Hatia needs to rectify this so that “Pharaoh’s demand may be executed,” by loading up all the boats of the Temple of Amun as well as fifty barges.

While the sender identifies himself as just “the scribe Ramose,” his recipient Hatia is “the royal scribe and overseer of cattle” and is possibly the person mentioned in one of the inscriptions from the reign of Ramesses II at Amara West<sup>28</sup> as being the deputy of the Master of the Two Lands. Ramose’s initial greeting to Hatia uses the formula *hr swd3-jb n nb.f* which originally was used to introduce pleasant news to the recipient (*swd3-jb* meaning “to be pleased/make the heart prosper). By the period of this letter it had acquired the straightforward meaning “communicates” or “informs,” but it did on occasion, as here, preface unpleasant news as well.<sup>29</sup> In this case it is that the boats are overdue with the Opet supplies of provisions and livestock. Ramose tells Hatia to

<sup>25</sup> Gardiner (1937): 5:3, 10, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Grdseloff (1942): 39, n.n., and Wentz (1990): 127, Letter 150.

<sup>27</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* III (1969-): 637-639, Černý and Gardiner (1957): Pl. 107, Wentz (1990): 119, Letter 142.

<sup>28</sup> *KRI* III (1969-): 117-119.

<sup>29</sup> Bakir (1970): 43.

load *br nb n p3 k3wt pr-jmn/* “every scow of the fleet of the Temple of Amun,” and that 50 *wsht/fifty* barges need to be loaded with *nkt mjtt n3y.f k3/* “provisions as well as its cattle.”<sup>30</sup> He emphasises the urgency by pointing out that *hpr sw n sf/* passed the day yesterday and urges that *jryw nty r k3 10 p3 hrw st wd hr/* “its fellows<sup>31</sup> transport 10 today, they should depart now.”<sup>32</sup>

From a nautical perspective the terms used for the vessels involved vary. The boats of the temple of Amun are described as *k3wt n pr-jmn*<sup>33</sup> the word *k3wt* denoting a type of barge or cargo boat.<sup>34</sup> The term used for the boats to be loaded is *br* which was a boat used for transport and can be rendered as “scow” or “freighter.”<sup>35</sup> The second term used for the fifty boats is *wsht*, a word also denoting a cargo boat or barge.<sup>36</sup> This use of different words for the types of vessels involved in the transportation suggests a variance in the design even though the functions were similar.

The *lacunae* in the following part of the letter prevent an accurate interpretation, but it appears Ramose has received a communication from Paser, Viceroy of Kush, who is *r p3 htm snmwt/* at the fortress of Senmet, an island to the south of Elephantine and Aswan. The details of the letter Ramose passes on to Hatia. Paser has written that when Ramose receives the letter – the word *št* is used to designate an official document – *rk jw.k thn[ ] n3 whrt/* “you now summon together ... of the shipyard,”<sup>37</sup> and have 20 *wsht hr whrt/* “20 barges made ready at the dockyard.”<sup>38</sup> Ramose then refers to having loaded and sent something (details unknown due to the *lacunae*) to Hatia telling him to “Send your scribe to meet up with them.” He follows by mentioning his letter to the mayor of Elephantine, Nebseny, regarding *prw /* excesses and telling him that *t3 šnwt r-h.t.k/* “the granary is under your authority.”<sup>39</sup> Ramose then adds that he is exceedingly poor, and refers to a troublemaker who had taken away men from the shipyard, but again the *lacunae* make this difficult to follow

<sup>30</sup> Lines 4-6.

<sup>31</sup> Wente (1990): 120 renders as “crewmen” but queries this translation.

<sup>32</sup> Line 7.

<sup>33</sup> Jones (1988): 147:75 .

<sup>34</sup> Jones (1988): 147:76 .

<sup>35</sup> Jones (1988): 136:30 .

<sup>36</sup> Jones (1988): 135:24 .

<sup>37</sup> Verso Line 1.

<sup>38</sup> Verso Line 2.

<sup>39</sup> Verso Line 6.

While the primary focus of Ramose's letter is the urgent request for provisions and cattle for the Feast of Opet, the rest of the correspondence is concerned with other transportation issues. However, both the reason for Paser's request regarding the getting together of men and preparing 20 barges, and the information about the load that Ramose has already sent to Hatia are unknown due to the missing text. Given Paser's title it is possible the reason could be related to his authorisation for the transportation, among other goods, of more Nubian cattle for future festival requirements. On the walls of the Colonnade Hall in the Luxor temple the Feast of Opet is represented in great detail, and on the East wall of the northern section, while the bark of Amun is lost, those of Khonsu, Mut and the king are shown being carried from the Nile, and below them the sacrificial cattle depicted are the long-horned Nubian variety.<sup>40</sup>

Paser is denoted under his name and title as Viceroy of Kush under Ramesses II on stelae at Abu Simbel – one to the north of the temples, one between and one to the south. On the stela to the south the king's words indicate his respect for Paser "...known to the king because of his excellent character, efficient confidant of his Lord, to whom he opens his palace...." He recognises his involvement in the building, and possibly the rebuilding of the temple "Montu praises you and the Spirit of Pharaoh, I.p.h. praises you! One is con[tent concerning] the Temple that you have (re-) made."<sup>41</sup> The rebuilding possibility was occasioned by the fact that sometime after year 31, under Paser's viceroyship, the temple apparently underwent damage from an earthquake.<sup>42</sup> According to Christophe<sup>43</sup> it was "perhaps a shaking of the earth, probably the widening of a sudden fissure which shook the edifice and tested in particular the weakest parts." He points out some cracks in the fourth pillar to the south, which had to be propped up by the walls, resting upon the one facing south of the room, the other against the neighbouring pillar. Kitchen paints a more dramatic picture.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Epigraphic survey. *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple Vol. I: The Festival Procession of Opet in the Colonnade Hall* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1994), Pl. 101.

<sup>41</sup> KRITA III (1993): 53.

<sup>42</sup> It has also been argued that Paser was in office before year 20 and was therefore not connected to the earthquake and its after-effects. See Claude Obsomer, *Ramsès II* (Paris: Pygmalion, 2012), 371-372.

<sup>43</sup> Louis.-A. Christophe, *Abou-Simbel et l'épopée de sa découverte* (Bruxelles: 1965), 206-209.

<sup>44</sup> Kenneth Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd, 1982), 135-136. He refers to how "inside the Great Temple the mighty pillars cracked and crumbled...the south arm of the colossus just north of the entryway came crashing down ...with a thunderous roar...."

By the urgency in Ramose's words, and the directness with which he addresses his recipient, from a religious aspect this letter, despite its *lacunae*, has confirmed the importance of the Opet festival. It has also shown that a royal scribe and overseer of cattle at Thebes, such as Hatia, would be responsible for the provisioning of the festival and despatching all the requirements to Ramose at Luxor. While Hatia's titles are included in the address Ramose does not attribute himself to a particular official, so possibly he has sole responsibility for the organisation of the provisioning of the festival. From the details of Paser's letter to Ramose, although incomplete, there is the implication of the connection between Upper Egypt and Nubia for supplies, and the means of transport for such provisions including the Nubian cattle required for the offerings. His location at Senmet shows its use as a staging point for the transport of goods to Luxor and Thebes from Egypt's southern borders.

The following letters from the Twenty-first Dynasty form part of an extensive archive of papyri which has been spread across nine collections in several countries and continents, a large number of which remain unpublished.<sup>45</sup> The early years of this Dynasty saw a divided structure of power develop. Smendes I, situated in Lower Egypt at Tanis, was recognised as pharaoh of all Egypt. This recognition was based on an understanding that he in turn recognise the authority of the line of the Theban priesthood in Upper Egypt in their role as High Priest of Amun and military commander of Upper Egypt. It was a reciprocal arrangement in which "one half of Egypt (Tanis) ruled the whole realm only by kind permission of the other half (Thebes)."<sup>46</sup> The boundary point between the two and the northern base of Theban rule was at el-Hibeh. Situated at a strategic point on the Nile some 20 miles south of Heracleopolis, it became a fortress that could stand guard over southward moving river traffic and has been seen as the provenance of this archive of letters. This has been based on references to the location of the correspondents and

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<sup>45</sup> For full details see Müller (2009), 255 n.42.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 BC)* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. With supplement, 1986), 256 §214.

incidents as being at *dhnt*/the Promontory, a description fitting the geography of el-Hibeh.<sup>47</sup>

While these letters are not related to specific religious duties and rituals, their inclusion within this chapter is appropriate due to the insight they give to an obscure deity known as “Horus of the Camp.” The senders or recipients of these letters give themselves the title “god’s father priest and temple scribe of He of the Camp.” The “He” of this association has been attested as Horus. Herihor, the chief priest of Amun, who also assumed the title Army-leader and Viceroy of Nubia,<sup>48</sup> is depicted in a relief at Karnak in the temple of Khonsu making an offering to a god named as “Horus of the Camp”<sup>49</sup> showing that he was regarded as a deity of high ranking status. In the Book of the Dead there is a reference to Horus as being Lord of the Promontory/*hrw nb t3-dhnt*.<sup>50</sup> Two Oracle petitions found at Nag el-Deir are specifically addressed to Horus of the Camp with the connotation “He of the Camp.”<sup>51</sup> However, despite these references, as Ryholt comments “To say that Horus of the Camp is obscure is to put it mildly.”<sup>52</sup> Excavations at el-Hibeh have uncovered the remains of the fortress’ mudbrick wall and the remains of a temple bearing the inscriptions of Shoshenq I and Osorkon I. So far no evidence has been found of a temple dedicated to Horus of the Camp whose priestly officials are the writers of these letters.<sup>53</sup> Apart from these pieces of correspondence and the previous references the background and history of Horus of the Camp remain so far unknown.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Müller (2009): 256-259 presents his argument for a location at el-Ahaiwah as an alternative. Although his reasons are viable they are not conclusive, so for the purposes of this paper I have chosen to reference el-Hibeh as the more likely original location.

<sup>48</sup> Kitchen (1986): 248.

<sup>49</sup> Epigraphic Survey, Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (1994): Pl.14.

<sup>50</sup> Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Cairo: American University Cairo Press, 2010), 162.

<sup>51</sup> Kim Ryholt, “A Pair of Oracle Petitions Addressed to Horus-of-the-Camp,” *JEA* 79 (1993) :189-198.

<sup>52</sup> Ryholt (1993) :195.

<sup>53</sup> See report from Carol Redmount, on the U.C Berkeley Excavations at el-Hibeh :

[http://neareastern.berkeley.edu/hibeh/03\\_report\\_observations.htm](http://neareastern.berkeley.edu/hibeh/03_report_observations.htm),

<sup>54</sup> Also discovered at this site was a papyrus of *A Tale of Woe*, a story in the epistolary form in the template of a single letter. See Ricardo Caminos, *A Tale of Woe* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum), 1977. Also found at the site were the onomasticon of Amenemopet and the story of Wenamun, perhaps suggesting the existence of an archival library there.



## Letter 5

*P. Strasbourg 31*<sup>55</sup>

In this letter Horpeneze responds to his recipient regarding a message delivered by a weaver named Besbes in which he has been instructed to remove/evict all the people belonging to a captain/military leader who are in the house of Saupaankh. Horpeneze writes that he has sent someone to remove them from the house and advises his recipient that he himself has now come north to the promontory, where he will stay until tomorrow.

The actual text is missing, but the initial greeting appears to be in the simple sender to recipient style, which came to replace the more elaborate introductory phrases. It does, however, invoke Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your good lord. It is followed by a complimentary preamble mentioning forms of Amun. In the style of this period the sender calls upon Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets, who is *hr-jb*/content of heart, the great god.<sup>56</sup> The blessing is also consistent with the Twenty-first Dynasty, being introduced by *jmj n.k* and wishing the recipient a long life, a good and great old age, and many numerous favours in the presence of the gods and men every day.<sup>57</sup>

The sender describes himself as “the god’s father priest and scribe of the temple Horpeneze of *pn p3 jh3*/He of the Camp. The upper right of the recto of the original *P. Strasbourg 31* containing the full name of the recipient is missing.<sup>58</sup> However, a fragment was subsequently identified by Černý as a match to this *lacunae*, so that the full name and title can be discerned as “the scribe and priest *Ns-p3-k3w-m-Kmt* / Nespakauemkemet.”<sup>59</sup> The address line contains the concluding words “of the Camp” which implies he is also in the same priestly service. As noted the connotation “He-of-the-Camp” is found in two oracle petitions discovered at Nag el-Deir which are addressed to “Horus, He-of-the-Camp.”<sup>60</sup> “He-of-the-Camp” in this and the other letters to be

<sup>55</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 6-7, Müller (2006): 335, Karl Jansen-Winkel, *Inscriben der Spätzeit: Teil I: Die 21. Dynastie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 198-199, Wente (1990): 206, Letter 334.

<sup>56</sup> Bakir (1970): 57-58.

<sup>57</sup> Bakir (1970): 63-64.

<sup>58</sup> Dominique Lefèvre, “La forteresse d’el-Hibeh : papyrus inédits de la XXIe dynastie,” *BSFE* 165 (2006) : 45, Fig.7.

<sup>59</sup> Müller (2009): 255 n.42.

<sup>60</sup> Ryholt (1993) :193.

discussed is seen as being a reference to Horus as the local god of el-Hibeh.<sup>61</sup> This is also shown by the sender's name which is compounded with Horus, *hr-pn-ws*/Horpenese. Ryholt notes that the phrase "your good lord" in the introductory greeting is added "only when the god invoked in the greeting is not identical with the god of the writer,"<sup>62</sup> another indication that the sender was serving a local god rather than Amun.

Horpenese notes that he has received the message via Besbes, a *shtw*/weaver.<sup>63</sup> The reason for sending it by his hand is not given. Possibly he was just someone available to the sender at the time. There is also no reason given for the request to *wj3*/remove the people in Saupaankh's house, nor an indication of why they were there. They are described as being *n p3 h3(w)ty*/of the leader. This was a general military connotation, used in a descriptive sense rather than as an indication of rank, and signified anyone who held a military command.<sup>64</sup> This would imply that the people in the house were soldiers of some kind. The sender does not name their leader and Saupaankh's identity (his name translates as "belongs to the living"/*s3-p3-ϵnh*)<sup>65</sup> and the location of the house are not provided.<sup>66</sup> Horpenese presumably has this information since he writes that he has sent someone to carry out the order for their removal. This knowledge and action suggest that the house and people are in his vicinity. He then notes that he has now come north to *dhnt*/the Promontory and will stay until the next day. This statement implies that his duties take him away from his usual place of residence. The designation "of the Camp" for his recipient as well suggests that both are in the same priestly service. From the action that has been requested and undertaken it appears that in his role as "god's father priest and temple scribe" Horpenese had both policing and military authority.

<sup>61</sup> Ryholt (1993): 189, Muller (2006): 332.

<sup>62</sup> Ryholt (1993): 196.

<sup>63</sup> Rainer Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, c. 2003), 751.

<sup>64</sup> Schulman (1964): 49/116 .

<sup>65</sup> Ranke (1935): 302, 2 .

<sup>66</sup> Muller (2006): 335, n.25 and (2009): 258 suggests that the house in question was that of General Piankhy.

## Letter 6

*P. Strasbourg 33*<sup>67</sup>

In this letter Horpense replies to a message from the commander of shield-bearers Shepti, writing that he has taken note of his message which has come by the hand of Horpesh. Shepti has told Horpense to let him know whether any horses have come to him. Horpense writes that he has not received any, but that when they have arrived he will write again at which time Shepti should send him some men. He tells Shepti to treat severely warriors living at el-Hibeh, and to send a watch onto the ramparts because he has received an order with the words “Do not send anybody out [to] the countryside, be he soldier, a weaver, or a person of any sort.”

As in the previous letter Horpense describes himself as “the god’s father priest and scribe of the temple Horpense of *pn p3 jh3*/He of the Camp.” The initial greeting and complimentary preamble follow the same style and content except the words *hr-jb*/content of heart have been omitted.

Horpense’s recipient, Shepti, is given the title *hry-krw*/commander of shieldbearers. The term “shieldbearer” has been designated as one of three connected with chariot personnel, but as the instances of a named shield-bearer are few, it has been suggested that this did not refer to a rank but to a task taken on by one of the charioteers.<sup>68</sup> This does not seem consistent with Shepti being “commander of shieldbearers” as this implies that “shieldbearer” was actually a designated title. The few specific references to “shieldbearer” noted are from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties,<sup>69</sup> so this could be an indication of a differing status occurring in the Twenty-first Dynasty. Alternatively in this context it has been seen to still have the generic meaning of “charioteer.”<sup>70</sup>

No title is given to the bearer of the message, Horpesh. The name is again compounded with Horus so it is likely that he was also associated with the god’s temple.

<sup>67</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 7-8, Muller (2006): 336, Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1 (2007): 200, Wente (1990): 207, Letter 335.

<sup>68</sup> Schulman (1964): 67-68.

<sup>69</sup> Schulman (1964): 162, nos. 477, 478.

<sup>70</sup> Pierre-Marie Chevereau, *Prosopographie des cadres militaires égyptiens de la Basse Époque* (Paris: Antony, 1985), 270.

Horpenese's response to Shepti's question as to whether horses have arrived is in the negative. Shepti and Horpenese both refer to *htr* rather than *ssmt* but write *nhy*/some giving the sense of a number rather than just a single team or yoke of horses. It is when they have arrived that Horpenese will write to Shepti to send him *nhy rmt*/some men. The men that Horpenese asks to be sent are not given any particular military connotation, but this request combined with the anticipated arrival of horses implies that they are connected either with stabling and upkeep or with actual charioteer duties (or perhaps both). The military context of the letter is continued with Horpenese's instruction to Shepti to deal severely with *n3 ḥ3wty nšw nt(y) ḥms dhnt*/ "those warriors of Neshyet who are living on the Promontory."<sup>71</sup> This would seem to refer to a location near present-day Sohag on the west of the Nile. Shepti is not told why they are there or the reason for Horpenese's request. There appears to be a threat of some kind at the Promontory since Horpenese instructs Shepti to send a *rs-tp*/watch onto the ramparts because he has received an order<sup>72</sup> that nobody "of any sort" should be sent out into the countryside. There are two occupations mentioned specifically. One is a "soldier," the other is a *shwtw* which has been translated, as noted previously, as "weaver." However, as has been suggested, a more appropriate translation in this instance would be "bird-catcher" given that someone of that trade would be more likely to need to go outside into the country.<sup>73</sup>

This piece of correspondence can be seen to confirm a military presence at the Promontory. Horpenese's authority over Shepti and his requirement for horses and men indicates the involvement of the Horus-of-the-Camp temple personnel in both military and civil administration. An actual hierarchy is unclear. While the order Horpenese has received and passed on to Shepti is presumably from a superior, there is no indication as to whether he is a religious or military person. Horpenese is at a different location from his recipient and the implication is that he is responding to a letter sent to him at the temple.

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<sup>71</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>72</sup> See Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1 (2007): 200 n.v.5.

<sup>73</sup> Müller (2006): 33.

## Letter 7

*P. Strasbourg 25*<sup>74</sup>

This third letter is one in which Horpenese is the recipient. The sender cannot be identified due to the *lacunae* in the greeting and in the subsequent address lines. He writes that his mistress has sent the fowler of migratory birds downstream, following the fowlers of migratory birds, to where Horpenese is. He is told to put these people in his charge but not to let the fowler leave before Horpenese has provided him with other men for assignment. It is only then that Horpenese should send him on as fast as possible and note in a letter, which the fowler should bring, the date when he dispatches him.

Once again Horpenese is addressed as “He of the Camp,” but in this instance the Horus bird determinative has been added. The following complimentary preamble has a content similar to the previous letters, except that the blessing is introduced by *rdj.f n.k* rather than *jmi n.k*. The only information regarding the sender is that he refers to his mistress as being the *dw3-ntr n jmn*/Votaress of Amun, which indicates his location as being Thebes, and additionally the letter states that the fowler has been sent downstream to deliver his message. The *w<sup>c</sup>*/fowler is named as Horiutowy. The men additional to those fowlers Horpenese has already put in his charge are to be *s<sup>c</sup>w wpwt*/worthy of the mission, the same *mt*/trustworthy men that he took charge of once before. To emphasise there should be no delay in returning, the sender notes the date that the fowler left, which was *3bd 2 prt sw 15*/second month of winter day 15. He asks that Horpenese write the day of his departure with the men in a letter, and give it to Horiutowy to bring with him. Presumably the return trip with the men is again by boat and the sender wanted evidence to ensure there was no unnecessary delay on the way back.

The date given for the fowler’s departure is an indication of the time of year for fowling, but the reason for such a request to be sent by the divine votaress of Amun is not stated. Perhaps the fowlers’ catch was needed for provisioning of offerings, and the additional men for temple duties. The fact that reference is made to a previous assignment of men of this calibre to Horiutowy implies on-going contact between the

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<sup>74</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 11-12, Jansen-Winkeln, Teil 1(2007): 202, Wente (1990): 207-208, Letter 336.

sender in Thebes and his recipient, and is a further indication of Horpene's administrative duties and position in the hierarchy.

### Letter 8

*P. Strassbourg 26*<sup>75</sup>

Once again Horpene is the recipient. This brief letter is addressed to him by Pashed of the Estate of Amun-Re, and asks that Horpene look for some servants belonging to a god's father priest named Padiamon, who have fled to the Promontory. He tells Horpene that when he has apprehended them he is to hand them over to Padiamon's servant who will take them back south.

The greeting is in the straightforward sender to recipient style<sup>76</sup> and the following complimentary preamble follows the usual form but omits the reference to Re-Harakhti. Pashed addresses Horpene as "He of the Camp," and refers to himself as being the scribe both of the *shn*/business of the Estate of Amun-Re, King of the Gods and as *jmj-r-ms*<sup>c</sup>/belonging to the general. He demands that Horpene act immediately in finding the servants who are here referred to as *sdm-š*, literally "one who hears the call" rather than the usual *b3k*. This could suggest that they are specifically priestly related in their duties which could explain Pashed's urgency and interest. No reference is made to their number or the reason for their flight to the Promontory. It was possibly to escape from the priestly jurisdiction of their Theban master in the south and cross over into the northern domain of the Pharaoh.<sup>77</sup> The name of their master is incomplete in the original papyrus only *jmn* is readable. However, a fragment, so far unpublished, has enabled a completion of the name to read *nfr-jmn*/Nafiramun.<sup>78</sup> Pashed's location and titles indicate his superior rank. The reference to being the scribe of both administration and the general suggests his status as being in the personal service of the High Priest of Amun/Commander in Chief at Karnak.

<sup>75</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 9-10, Müller (2006): 336-337, Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1(2007): 201, Wente (1990): 206, Letter 333.

<sup>76</sup> Bakir (1970): 51.

<sup>77</sup> See Müller (2009): 261 regarding an alternative to this argument – in discussing the different site to el-Hibeh (el-Ahaiwah) noted previously, he suggests the runaways were heading for the oases.

<sup>78</sup> Müller (2009): 256, no. 58.

From this brief letter Horpenese's place in the hierarchy is attested and again an indication is found of the wide-ranging duties expected of the god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp." In this case it is the policing role of apprehending runaway servants and handing them over to the servant sent for them with the implication that they are in priestly service. This letter from Pashed indicates an efficient communications system which has enabled him to know where the servants are.

### Letter 9

*P.Strasbourg 39*<sup>79</sup>

This letter is addressed to Horkhebe, also god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp." The sender is a god's father priest of Onouris named Bakhonsu. Horkhebe is advised that a servant named Bakenhor belonging to Ankhef has run away and is in the Promontory. Bakhonsu writes that he has sent Ankhef to get him back, and that Horkhebe is to send one of his servants in pursuit of him. He says he has been told the runaway is at the house of a laundryman named Aay. Horkhebe is to apprehend him and hand him over to Ankhef. If he is unable to find him then he is to give an oath to the people Ankhef directs him to, and take them to where they can swear by their god.

The initial greeting is in the straightforward sender to recipient style, here using the words *nty jw.f n*/which is to, and there is no complimentary preamble. Both the sender and recipient are given the same title in the initial greeting of "god's father priest," and so the relative status of the correspondents is uncertain. However, the lack of any elaborate greeting suggests that the recipient is inferior. The sender, Bakhonsu, is of the temple of Onouris – the Egyptian Anhur, the god of war and hunting. The centre of his cult was at Thinis<sup>80</sup> which implies this is from where Bakhonsu is writing. When Bakhonsu writes of the whereabouts of the runaway servant he specifically refers to the Promontory as *p3y.k dmj/your* town, in this way confirming not just the location of Horkhebe but also of the other correspondents with his title "He of the Camp."<sup>81</sup> A hierarchy is indicated which runs from Horkhebe to Ankhef, who is responsible to him, to Bakenhor who is the

<sup>79</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 20-21, Jansen-Winkeln, Teil 1 (2007): 203-204, Wente (1990): 206, Letter 332.

<sup>80</sup> Wilkinson (2003): 118.

<sup>81</sup> As noted previously see Müller (2009): 256-9 for detailed discussion of possible locations other than el-Hibeh.

servant of Ankhef. The lower status of Bakenhor is emphasised by the fact that he has taken refuge in the house of a *rhtyw*/laundryman. The reason for the final instruction in the letter, which is to be followed if Bakenhor is not found, is unclear. Who the people are and the reason for the oath and visit to the *wb3*/open court is not stated, nor is their god identified. It is not introduced as “a further matter,” suggesting that it is connected in some way with the issue of the runaway servant.

The details in this letter are again indicative of the Promontory as being the destination for a runaway servant, this time seemingly from Thinis. It confirms once more that it is the responsibility of the god’s father priest of “He of the Camp” to organise the apprehension of such a fugitive and hand him over to a person sent to him by the writer of the letter. The question of relative status is uncertain but a hierarchy is suggested by the mode of address. The fact that Bakhons has been informed of the servant’s whereabouts again indicates on-going communication between the administration in a southern location and the Promontory in the north.

The three following letters, 10 and 11, 12 concern Masaharta and Menkheperre, High Priests of Amun during the Twenty-first Dynasty. Analysis of the texts indicates the writer as Menkheperre and the recipient as the local deity who has been identified as He of the Camp.

### **Letter 10**

*P.Strasbourg 21*<sup>82</sup>

The beginning of this letter is missing but allows the name of Masaharta to be discerned, with the attribution “the servant of He of the Camp.” The letter is an appeal from the sender to He of the Camp to cure Masaharta of an illness and listen to the latter’s plea. The sender asks that he (Masaharta) may be preserved, made well and given back, in response to the sender’s petition, in the same way that previous requests for help have been granted.

The extant evidence for the chronology of the early Twenty-first Dynasty indicates Masaharta as High Priest of Amun in Thebes, the son of Pinudjem I and the

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<sup>82</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 13-14, Müller (2006): 339, Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1 (2007): 205-206, Wente (1990): 208, no. 337.



brother of Menkheperre.<sup>83</sup> The sender notes that Masaharta is *m-b3h pn-p3-jh3y p3y.j nb/* “in the presence of He of the Camp, my good lord,”<sup>84</sup> using the Horus determinative to indicate that it is a divine presence and to indicate this same status for his “good Lord.” He refers to Masaharta as *p3y.f šrj p3y.f shpr /* “his son and his ward” and asks *mtw.f šd sn p3y.b3k swt/* “that he may preserve [my] brother, this servant of his.”<sup>85</sup> In each case the pronoun and possessive pronouns again have the Horus determinative to signify a divine attribution, and the letter’s interest lies both in the fact that it is addressed to a local deity and that it does not refer to him directly but in the third person. This suggests a certain deference, and the letter’s address line reads to “the majesty of this noble god He of the Camp, the great god residing in...,” (the final words are missing), which appears commensurate with this being a local god of a prestigious nature.

The reference to “brother” implies that the sender was in fact Masaharta’s brother Menkheperre, who was to become High Priest after the former’s death.<sup>86</sup> The appeal to the local god “He of the Camp” indicates the sender’s presence there as well as being the place where Masaharta has been taken ill. From the historical perspective it has been suggested that Masaharta may not have survived the illness referred to in the correspondence, which precipitated a “hiatus period”<sup>87</sup> resulting in Menkheperre’s succession. The style and mode of address used for this petitioning, combined with the content, have resulted in an unusual piece of correspondence directed specifically at a deity.

## Letter 11

*P. Moscow 5660*<sup>88</sup>

This fragmentary letter is from Menkheperre – only some of the greeting remains and a few broken lines of the content. While the initial greeting is incomplete, it has been construed as being the same wording as the address line of the previous letter 10.<sup>89</sup> The

<sup>83</sup> See Kitchen (1986): 4-5, Lefèvre (2006) : 40-42.

<sup>84</sup> Line 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> Line 8 and *Verso* Lines 1 and 2.

<sup>86</sup> Kitchen (1986): 4, Lefèvre (2006): 41.

<sup>87</sup> Kitchen (1986): 259-260.

<sup>88</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Posener (1982): 134-135, Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1 (2007): 205-206, Wente (1990): 208, Letter 338.

<sup>89</sup> Posener (1982): 136, Wente (1990): 208, Letter 338.

reason for his writing appears to be a confirmation that he has “taken note of the good decisions...which he has proclaimed as apt for me.” The “he” has the Horus determinative suggesting the sender is directly addressing the same local deity “He of the Camp.” The style of greeting is that of the basic sender/recipient, but in this case the formula is inverted to recipient/sender. This has been noted as being a rare occurrence and an “abbreviated variant” of the form used in addressing superiors.<sup>90</sup> Menkheperre gives himself the titles of “[beloved] son, the high priest of [Amun]-Re King of the Gods, the *jmj-r-mšꜥ smsw*/general-in-chief of Upper and Lower Egypt, who is *ḥ3(w)tyw mšꜥ* ʕ3/leader of the great armies of all Egypt.” As noted by Posener<sup>91</sup> references to the military title of other High Priests of Amun have mentioned a command only of the army of Upper Egypt not of the whole country. Given the additional titles that Menkheperre attributes to himself, his use of the recipient/sender style of address shows that he considered his recipient to have an even higher status. This respect is commensurate with his letter again being directed to the local deity personally, and this argument would be in line with the indication that the previous Letter 10 was also written by Menkheperre.<sup>92</sup> The Horus determinative in this piece of correspondence has been seen to refer to Amun.<sup>93</sup> However, its presence as a determinative in the title of Horpenese in Letter 7<sup>94</sup> indicates an association with Horus as the “He” of the Camp. Also, as noted in the previous Letter 10, it is the determinative for “He of the Camp” and “good Lord” indicating Horus as the divine presence, and the pronoun and possessive pronouns again have the Horus determinative to signify the local deity. The continued interpretation of the determinative in this letter as Horus rather than Amun therefore seems appropriate.

It has been noted that Pinudjem I, father to Masaharta and Menkheperre, had his seat for a time at el-Hibeh, and that Menkheperre would have done likewise.<sup>95</sup>

Masaharta’s presence at the fortress was suggested by the previous letter, and building

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<sup>90</sup> Bakir (1970): 45, 51.

<sup>91</sup> Posener (1982): 136.

<sup>92</sup> On this point I agree with Posener’s argument, his “*idée pour le moins audacieuse*” (1982): 137-138.

<sup>93</sup> Wente (1990): 209, Letter 338.

<sup>94</sup> Line 1.

<sup>95</sup> José Lull, *Beginning and end of the High Priest of Amun Menkheperre,* in *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st -24th dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University 25-27 October 2007*(ed. Gerard P.F. Broekman, R.J.Demarée and O.E.Kaper; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten; Leuven : Peeters, 2009), 242-243, Kitchen (1986): 259.

activity by Menkheperre indicates his presence there. Excavations at the site have confirmed bricks stamped with his name showing he was instrumental in the building of its massive town wall.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, given the strategic importance of el-Hibeh with its military camp, and Menkheperre's additional title of general-in-chief, it is possible that this was a main place of residence for him. This is also evidenced by the words of the "Banishment Stela,"<sup>97</sup> which states how Menkheperre was "summoned to Thebes by Amun himself to 'come South in valour and victory to pacify the land...'"<sup>98</sup> This need could have been prompted by the death of Masaharta from the illness which was the subject of the previous letter, and confirms that Menkheperre was at a location in the North. If, as seems the case, he was stationed at el-Hibeh, this can be seen as substantiation of the argument that he was petitioning his local deity, He of the Camp, regarding Masaharta and himself.

Although these two letters are incomplete due to the *lacunae* in each, an analysis of the content has provided an insight into the lives of these two high priests of Amun, as well as adding credence to current historical knowledge of this period. However, most importantly they are characterised both by the fact that the sender, who is a High priest of Amun and General-in-chief of Upper and Lower Egypt and leader of the great armies of Egypt, is giving higher status to a local deity about whom evidence is scarce, and by their showing the continuing belief that a god could be petitioned in this way.

## Letter 12

*P. Louvre 25359*<sup>99</sup>

This brief letter is again from Menkheperre but in this case is addressed to the priest and scribe of He of the Camp, Horkhebe, rather than directly to the deity himself. It is regarding a dispute between a commander and his brothers. Menkheperre tells his recipient to stand them before He of the Camp so that he can settle the matter which is regarding the *pš* /apportionment or sharing of a servant.

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<sup>96</sup> Jaroslav Černý, "The Twenty-First Dynasty," in *Cambridge Ancient History Vol. II Part 2 History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 BC. I* (ed. I.E.S. Edwards; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 652, Kitchen (1986): 269-270. See also Redmount: Report from the excavations at el-Hibeh from U.C. Berkeley 2007: [http://nes.berkeley.edu/hibeh/references\\_finds.htm](http://nes.berkeley.edu/hibeh/references_finds.htm).

<sup>97</sup> Stele Louvre 256.

<sup>98</sup> Lull (2007): 241-242, Kitchen (1986): 260 and 260 n. 93.

<sup>99</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Müller (2006): 338, Jansen-Winkel, Teil 1 (2007): 204.

The identity of Menkheperre is revealed by the address line. In the initial greeting of the letter he does not state his name, only his title as “High Priest of Amun, King of the Gods,” and the style is in the direct “sender to recipient” form. The commander is named as Ajafnehor but no names are given for the brothers. His title of commander suggests a military rank which would be in line with their location being at the military camp at el-Hibeh. The fact that Menkheperre does not include any complimentary preamble, and the use of just his title in the greeting gives an added authority to his directive to the local priest, and his final words to Horkhebe are *m33 h3b mt.k* /see your precise communication. Given that the commander and his brothers are at el-Hibeh, then Menkheperre’s knowledge of the dispute would be possible by his own presence there, as indicated by the previous correspondence.

Although brief, the letter is another confirmation of the importance given to this local deity. From a social aspect it has also provided an example of the kind of problem occurring for a family in their everyday life. It has also shown the involvement of a high-ranking person such as Menkheperre in the kind of familial issue that occurred amongst the people under his command.

### **Summary**

Although comparatively few in number, letters from the New Kingdom have provided insight into religious matters and the people concerned with them. The first piece of correspondence, written on an ostrakon, is only a brief note regarding the sending of a statue and divine offerings with no indication of the names of the sender and recipient. However, the temples of Hatshepsut and Mentuhotep are named and, as noted, it is so far the only piece of writing found from this period relating to the religious environment. It shows that communications regarding religious matters did exist at the time. The writer and recipient of Letter 2 are both *w<sup>c</sup>b* priests resulting in a more factual piece of correspondence which confirms the renewal of the temple of Amenophis III in Ramesside times and gives an indication of additional priestly duties involving husbandry. In the third letter the comments of the garrison scribe sender revealed the spread of the cult of Anat together with the involvement of a military person in cult festival organisation. Also from an historical perspective it provided confirmation of the ancient Egyptian presence

in Palestine at this time. Letter 4 gives confirmation of the importance of the Opet festival with its related requirements for cattle and supplies, and provides insight into the sources for the provisions and the problems associated with transportation and timely arrival.

From an overall religious perspective the letters from Dynasty Twenty-one have confirmed the continued importance of the deity known as “Horus of the Camp” or “He of the Camp” depicted originally before Herihor in the temple of Khonsu. This original appearance and connection with Herihor, who had become head of the army, implies a military connotation for “Camp.” This connotation and his presence in these letters as a local deity of high status suggest the senders and recipients of these letters as being based at a military site. The content of the letters and the references to the Promontory can be seen as a confirmation of el-Hibeh as their location given its fortress and its importance as a military base.

Individually the letters give insight into the lives of the High Priest and god’s father priest of “He of the Camp,” and the diverse societal issues that are additional to the latter’s religious duties. It is possible that Horpenese and Horkhebe were related, but so far no information has been found regarding their family background. Lefèvre suggests that if there were a relationship between the two, then this collection of papyri at el-Hibeh could represent a family archive.<sup>100</sup> These letters reveal aspects of daily life, together with historical and personal information. Letters 4 and 5 show the involvement of Horpenese with military issues and action. Letter 4 is concerned with the eviction of what appear to be soldiers from a house. In Letter 5 he has issues with a shield bearer regarding the provision of horses and men. Also in this letter there is the suggestion of an external threat to security – the order that no-one venture outside the walls. From an historical aspect this could imply an issue with the rulers in the North given the position of el-Hibeh at the strategic North/South boundary point. The request that Horpenese has to fulfil in Letter 6 provides an insight into an occupation of daily life – the following of migratory birds by the fowlers downstream. It also once again shows a non-religious responsibility in that he has to take charge of them and send them back with the “trustworthy” men he took charge of once before. It also indicates, for reasons not stated,

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<sup>100</sup> Lefèvre (2008): 116.

the involvement of the “divine votaress of Amun” in the request. In the following two letters a societal problem of runaway servants is the issue. Letter 7 is a request for Horpenese to find and apprehend some servants who have fled to the Promontory. The request in Letter 8 is for the apprehension and return of a single servant who is also thought to have found refuge at the Promontory. This could be an indication of el-Hibeh as a destination for runaways such as this because of its position on the boundary to the North. The letters also indicate an ongoing method of communication between the North and South. The final three letters in this chapter involve the High Priests of Amun at Thebes – Masaharta and Menkheperre – and their importance lies in both the religious and personal information they contain, together with the fact that they were written by Menkheperre himself. Letters 9 and 10 are addressed specifically to the local deity “He of the Camp” which underlines the status of this local deity and emphasises the ongoing custom of appeal to a god to alleviate adverse circumstances. In Letter 9 the request involves a cure for Masaharta’s ill-health, so this piece of correspondence provides personal information regarding this high official not available elsewhere. Letter 10 also has historical relevance in its confirmation of the Banishment Stela as to Menkheperre’s location in the North. In the case of Letter 11 it is the priest whom Menkheperre requests to intervene with the local deity to settle a disagreement. The nature of the problem – a dispute between family members regarding the sharing of a servant – gives insight into the problems that could arise in the domestic daily life of a military family.

*Forms of greeting:* Due to the *lacunae* positive interpretation of the greeting for the initial address has been possible for only four of the letters.<sup>101</sup> These forms have reflected the chronology of the letters. Letter 2 has the form *r dd.n / says to.* Letter 4 is in the style *hr swd3-jb n nb.f/a* communication to. Letter 6 is in the brief sender to recipient style and Letter 9 is in the form *nty jw.f/* which is to. In Letter 11 the sender has used the inverted style to indicate the status of his recipient. A complimentary preamble appears in some of the correspondence from the Twenty-first Dynasty. The wording has followed the overall Twentieth Dynasty-onwards style that includes “Amun-Re Harakhti when he rises and sets,” but its usage is one of courtesy towards colleagues rather than of deference.

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<sup>101</sup> Table 2 at the end of this chapter provides an overview of the information regarding senders/recipients, formulae/phraseology of greetings and chronology detailed in this chapter and its summary.

Specific information relating to religious duties and practices has come from the New Kingdom correspondence but the Dynasty Twenty-one letters differ. While they are religious from the perspective that they involve religious personnel and the presence of a local deity of high status, there is no reference to actual religious duties, if any, or festivals. In contrast to the New Kingdom letters it appears a much higher emphasis was now placed on administrative duties. It was possible that these priests were actually within the military jurisdiction. As can be seen, despite the length of the period considered in this chapter,<sup>102</sup> few individual pieces of personal correspondence have survived which are specifically sources for religious practices and personnel,<sup>103</sup> but the analysis of these has provided an insight both necessary and relevant.

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<sup>102</sup> ca. 1570-992 BC.

<sup>103</sup> That is individual letters studied outside the collections of the Late Ramesside Letters and Deir el-Medina.

Table 2

No	Sender name/social position	Recipient name/social position	Formulae of address	Dated to
1	Unnamed	Unnamed	No initial address	Dynasty 18
2	Minmose/ <i>w<sup>c</sup>b</i> priest	Sobekhotep/ <i>w<sup>c</sup>b</i> priest	<i>r dd n/says to</i>	Dynasty 19
3	Ipyu/garrison scribe	Bakenamon/garrison scribe	words of address missing	Dynasty 19
4	Ramose/scribe	Hatia/royal scribe and overseer of cattle	<i>hr swd3-jb n nb.f/communicates to</i>	Dynasty 19/Ramesses II
5	Horpenese/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"	Nespakaemkemet/no title	words of address missing. Complimentary preamble calling on "Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets, and upon Amun, Content of Heart, the great god, [...] to give you life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, a good ripe old age and very many favours in the presence of gods and people."	Dynasty 21
6	Horpenese/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"	Shepti/captain of shield-bearers	<i>n/to</i> followed by a complimentary preamble calling on "Amun-Re-Harakhti when he rises and sets, to keep you safe, to give you life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, a good ripe old age and very many favours in the presence of gods and people."	Dynasty 21
7	Name and title missing	Horpenese/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"	Words of address missing. Complimentary preamble "May Amun give you life, prosperity and health, very many favours in the presence of gods and people, while you are alive, prospering and healthy [...] every single day."	Dynasty 21
8	Pashed/god's father priest of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, the scribe of the business of the Estate of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, and the scribe of the general	Horpenese/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"	<i>n/to</i> followed by a complimentary preamble "May Amun give you life, prosperity and health, a long lifetime, [a good ripe old age] and favours in the presence of gods and people every day."	Dynasty 21
9	Bakhonsu/god's father priest of Onouris	Horkehbe/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp"	<i>nty jw.f/</i> which is to	Dynasty 21
10	Name and title missing	"He of the Camp"	Words of address missing	Dynasty 21



11	Name and title missing	Menkheperre/high priest of [Amun]-Re, King of the Gods, the general-in-chief of Upper and Lower Egypt, leader of the great armies of all Egypt.	Words of address missing *recipient preceding sender	Dynasty 21
12	Unnamed/High Priest of Amun, King of the Gods (i.e. Menkheperre)	Horkhebe/god's father priest and temple scribe of "He of the Camp."	<i>n/to</i>	Dynasty 21

## Chapter Three

### Military and police matters

While current and previous research has provided considerable information regarding ancient Egyptian military campaigns, equipment, rank and custom, this information has come primarily from reliefs, inscriptions and military scribal documents. Personal correspondence not only gives additional insight into military practices and personnel, but is also able to personalise the senders and recipients as well as provide first-hand information about the daily responsibilities of a soldier's life when not involved in active duty. The first five pieces of correspondence from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties focus on a variety of topics that fall within the remit of military and police personnel, including situations and actions not necessarily connected primarily with military and police duties. Letters 7 to 9 from Dynasty Twenty reveal the involvement of a high-ranking general in the murder of two policemen.

### Letters 1, 2 and 3

*Dynasty 19: Seti I P. Cairo 58053<sup>1</sup>58054<sup>2</sup>, 58055<sup>3</sup>*

These three letters are all from a standard-bearer named Maiseti.

The first (*Cairo 58053*) is to the garrison commanders in the Northern region, protesting about their interference with the god's personnel in the Island of Amun, who are under the authority of the Royal scribe Iuny.<sup>4</sup> Maiseti states that if he learns that they continue to do this they will be in real trouble. He himself is being reprimanded by Pharaoh's officials. He asks that they pay attention to previous orders he has sent regarding the procurement of men, telling them to stop creating a disturbance in such an important place. He concludes with the order that they not allow service to the god there to remain inactive. Failure to do this will mean they will be jailed.

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<sup>1</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* I (1969-): 322, Bakir (1970): Pl.I/I-II, Wente (1990): 114, Letter 133.

<sup>2</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* I (1969-): 323-324, Bakir (1970): Pl.2-3/III-IV, Wente (1990): 115, no.134.

<sup>3</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* I (1969-): 324-325, Bakir (1970):Pl.3-4/V-VI, Wente (1990): 115, no.135.

<sup>4</sup> While this letter does have a religious connotation, the military involvement has led to its inclusion in this chapter.

The name of the sender Maiseti is not one attested by Ranke, but the form of the name which begins with *m3j/lion*, followed by the name of a divinity is not uncommon.<sup>5</sup> It would be logical to presume that the title of standard bearer was given to the person who actually carried the standard. However, it has been noted that the evidence for this is lacking, that it is possible the title “reflects a duty which he once performed personally, but which eventually came to be performed by his subordinates.”<sup>6</sup> In this letter the people he is addressing are described as *hrj jwꜥyt/garrison* captains. This designation makes it unclear whether the garrisons they were in charge of were large or small.<sup>7</sup> The fact that Maiseti addresses them in an extremely forceful manner to ensure they carry out his orders, writing *jh pw p3y.tn jri mjtt/* “why do you act thus,”<sup>8</sup> and *jw.j r ꜥh3 ꜥ3 hnꜥ.tn/* “I shall reprimand you greatly,”<sup>9</sup> makes it credible that his status is now one of a man qualified to command. Conforming to this style the greeting has no complimentary preamble just the introductory *dd.n/sender* says to/addresses recipient.<sup>10</sup> The letter ends with the terse *jh rh.k sw/take* notice of this, which has been recognised as the terminal formula for business letters, especially those which are “a curt injunction to inferiors.”<sup>11</sup> This again offers confirmation of Maeseti’s status as someone now in a position of command.

The Island of Amun is noted in the Edfu nome list as the capital of the Seventeenth Nome of Lower Egypt. The royal scribe Iuny who had authority over the god’s personnel there was a Lector and Administrator under Seti I. His titles are attested on several monuments and artefacts – kneeling statues of himself, a double statue with his wife, a naos, a stela, a shabti figure and amulet. The most extensive list is on the double statue with his wife. He is named as Chief of Secrets in the House of Morning, Royal Scribe, Chief Lector, Chief of the Priests of Sekhmet, Steward and Chief over departments, Secretary of the Good god. He is also given the title Dignitary and

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<sup>5</sup> Ranke (1935): 144.

<sup>6</sup> Schulman (1964): 71.

<sup>7</sup> Schulman (1964): 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> Cairo 58053, Line 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cairo 58053, Line 5.

<sup>10</sup> Bakir (1970): 48, comments that there are many examples of this formula being used on ostraca (as in Chapter 1) but hardly at all on papyri.

<sup>11</sup> Bakir (1970): 68. Černý and Groll suggest that this should not be given an imperative interpretation, see *Late Egyptian Grammar* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993): 405. In this context I would argue that Bakir’s viewpoint is appropriate.

Administrator, one “whom the king has made great in the entire land.”<sup>12</sup> The letter does not state the nature of the interference, but given the high ranking positions that Iuny held any intrusion into the activities of those under his authority would necessarily lead to Maiseti being personally reprimanded by officials of the Pharaoh, resulting in his strongly worded response to the garrison commanders. His final threat is that they *tm rdt sdr b3k n p3 ntr/* “not cause inactivity in the service to the god”<sup>13</sup> or they will be *ddh/*imprisoned.

In line 7 the word for letter is *md3t* an Old Kingdom usage that in the New Kingdom came to mean “a document in a general sense in its rolled up state.”<sup>14</sup> Here the determinative used is the tree branch which implies this piece of correspondence was written on wood. Bakir suggests a “wooden tablet...covered with plaster” a medium usually used “for notes of provisional character.”<sup>15</sup> This would also account for the *dd-n* style of greeting. This suggests Maiseti going about his duties, dictating to a scribe taking notes, who later created the finished letter on the papyrus found at Saqqara.

The second letter (*Cairo 58054*) is to a soldier named Hat whom Maiseti is berating for arresting some labourers/detainees. He points out that the orders he gave clearly stated whom Hat was to apprehend and asks whether this is a deliberate error. He tells the soldier to address what he has done and put matters right by letting the falsely arrested men go.

There follow several “further matters.” He orders that any soldiers in the villages in the vicinity be rounded up and that any left in the villages be kept busy until he reaches Memphis. He states that none of his orders must be ignored. This is followed by an instruction to find some good men. On a totally different topic is the next matter which is an order to tend a pig which a person called Neby will give him, and to ensure that there is no interference with anyone belonging to Neby. Returning to military matters he instructs Hat not to allow soldiers to delay in the northern districts and to secure those marked who might try and evade the round-up.

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<sup>12</sup> KRITA I (1993): 286-292.

<sup>13</sup> Cairo 58053, *Verso* Line 1.

<sup>14</sup> Bakir (1970): 18.

<sup>15</sup> Bakir (1970): 19.

Following the business-like “memo” style of the previous letter, there is no complimentary preamble, just the introductory *dd.n*/sender says to/addresses recipient, but in this case there is no terminal ending *jh rh.k sw*/take notice of this. The further matters are introduced using the transitional phrase *ky-dd*/another saying, used when preceding instructions and so far found only in letters of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>16</sup> In the address line of the letter Maiseti refers to himself as being of the *k3 m T3-Nhsy*/ Bull in Nubia.<sup>17</sup> The designation “Bull in Nubia” would refer to the regiment of soldiers to which Maiseti belonged.<sup>18</sup> This military unit has been attested as being in the Memphite region. Maiseti in his first order to Hat uses the words “until I reach Memphis,” so from this second letter there appears to be confirmation of Maiseti’s military location.

The status of the recipient Hat is given as *w<sup>c</sup>w*/soldier. Normally there would be a qualifying description to associate him with a specific army unit or to suggest a general association, for example with the king. The role was that of a serving soldier with a rank of infantryman, low in the military hierarchy, not a commander. References indicate that Hat would have been conscripted into the military and his training would have been severe, his duties and lifestyle harsh.<sup>19</sup> The manner in which Maiseti addresses Hat emphasises this status and confirms Hat’s position as a subordinate to Maiseti, who accuses him of deliberately arresting the wrong men in order to *dhdh j*/humiliate me. He emphasises a previous order *rdj.n.j m dr.t.k m šs*/ “I gave to you by hand in writing,”<sup>20</sup> in which he had told Hat whom to *mḥ*/seize. He tells him to *mtr nn jr.n.k.*/ “examine this which you have done”<sup>21</sup> and not to hold on to them any longer.

The first “further matter” is to *htht w<sup>c</sup>w nty m dmj(w)*/ “round up”<sup>22</sup> soldiers who are in the villages.”<sup>23</sup> This could indicate the use of the military to police the area, or that the soldiers in question had been on inactive duty, tending their homes until being called

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<sup>16</sup> Bakir (1970): 82-83.

<sup>17</sup> Allam (1987): 14, 19 n. (uu), (vv).

<sup>18</sup> Raymond O. Faulkner, “A Statue of a Serpent-Worshipper,” *JEA* 20 (1934): 155.

<sup>19</sup> Schulman (1964): 36-37.

<sup>20</sup> Cairo 58054, Line 4.

<sup>21</sup> Cairo 58054, Line 7.

<sup>22</sup> Wentz (1990): 115, Letter 134. Alternatively Allam (1987): 13 renders as “bring for an inspection,” and at 16 (p) notes background and references regarding usage of *htht* in other contexts and the reasoning for his interpretation. Either translation seems appropriate here.

<sup>23</sup> Cairo 58054, Lines 9-10.

upon. The latter situation could be an earlier example of the words of Ramesses II in the Kadesh Poem, when he talks of allowing his soldiers to sit in their villages “without performing the duty of an infantryman.”<sup>24</sup> He tells Hat that if any soldiers *jsk*/linger in the villages they should *grg n3 g3w3(t)*<sup>25</sup> *n n3 hry-jhw n n3 dmj(w)*/ “make ready the horses of the stablemasters<sup>26</sup> in the villages.”<sup>27</sup> His following further matters are to tell Hat to make sure the orders given so far are carried out and that he is to procure especially (emphasised) good men/*rmt nfr sp-sn*. On an unrelated further matter Maiseti then tells Hat to *jni tw.k š3*/fetch the pig which will be given to him by Neby, and to *s3w.s*/take care of it. Returning to the “round up” of soldiers, Maiseti refers to *db<sup>c</sup>(w) nb nty jw wh(j)*/ “all the marked men who try to escape”<sup>28</sup> and advises *mḥ tw jm sn drdr*/ “seize hold of them very securely.”<sup>29</sup> The suggestion that they might try to escape implies a non-voluntary situation. The mention of a form of marking suggests a means of conscript identification, an apparent confirmation of other references indicative of the conscription process.<sup>30</sup> In his final words Maiseti once more exhorts Hat to put together a *jst nfr sp-sn*/an especially good company,<sup>31</sup> again suggesting a conscriptive process.

The duties are connected to military matters, and this piece of correspondence gives insight into some everyday matters of jurisdiction which a soldier could face. While they are not mentioned, and Hat has not been associated with a particular unit, there must have been other soldiers with him to assist in carrying out his orders. It is Hat whom Maiseti has tasked with the organisation, but rounding up soldiers, procuring men and seizing escapees would need a company of men. So in his role as “soldier” Hat appears to have been given some additional responsibility, suggesting there could be a hierarchy, perhaps an unofficial one, amongst infantrymen when circumstances demanded it. The only matter unrelated to military issues is the request for Hat to look after a pig and make sure that the family of the person, Neby, who gives it to him are not

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<sup>24</sup> Schulman (1964): 114, ref.159.

<sup>25</sup> For background and references to the rendering of *g3w3(t)* as “horses” see Allam (1987): 17 (u).

<sup>26</sup> See Schulman: (1964): 51-53 regarding the duties of a stablemaster, and references that would indicate he would not have had an active military role.

<sup>27</sup> Cairo 58054, Line 12.

<sup>28</sup> Cairo 58054, *Verso* Line 6.

<sup>29</sup> Cairo 58054, *Verso* Line 7.

<sup>30</sup> Schulman (1964): 76.

<sup>31</sup> The word *jst* was primarily used to relate to the crew of a ship, but here has been used to denote a land-based company. For full background for usage see Černý (1973) : 99-100.

mistreated. This appears in the middle of the letter as a *non sequitur* amongst the military orders – perhaps a request that has suddenly occurred to Maiseti, offering a personal touch outside of military matters.

The third piece of correspondence from Maiseti (*Cairo 58055*) is to another person named Hat, Chief Taxing master. Apparently he has previously told Hat to mobilize sometime soon, but warns Hat in this letter against doing anything until he has received a message. The mobilisation in question is apparently related to a prison in Hat's charge. The message will be that someone is coming to fetch the prisoners in which case he will be told to come with them. Maiseti tells him to make sure everyone is accounted for and if he fails Maiseti threatens to kill him. He follows this threat with a polite request for a good piece of rope to replace one which has been stolen.

This letter omits *dd.n/says to* in the opening address. Instead it uses just the sender to recipient style, which does not appear before the Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>32</sup> As in his first letter Maiseti ends with the terminal formula for business letters, especially those to inferiors, *jh rh.k sw/take notice of this*.

In the greeting the recipient Hat is referred to as being “of the Island of Debu” currently an unidentifiable location and his role is given as *ʕ3 št /Chief Taxing Master*. Maiseti refers to a previous letter in which he told Hat to *thm dw3/move tomorrow*, but now he tells him to *ptr n.k bʕ sp-sn/ “look to yourself very carefully,”* and not to *thm p3y.k jth ʕ3/ “move your prison there.”* He is to wait, since if *wn.tw hr jjt r jnt n3 n jthw nty m p3 jw/ “one comes to fetch the men of the prison on the island,”* then he will get a message *jmi jj hnʕ sn/ “come together with them.”* Hat is to make sure that everyone in his charge is accounted for. He is told *m rdt šnj.tw wʕ nty m drt.k / “do not cause one to call in question a single one in your hand.”*<sup>33</sup> To add even further emphasis to his orders Maiseti writes *h3 n.k wʕ n hrw n ʕnh r3- pw jw.k r mt hr drt.j/ “leave to you one day of life or you will die under my hand.”*<sup>34</sup> In a similar fashion to the *non sequitur* in the previous letter, the next further matter is a request for *kyy nwh nfr sp-sn/ “another really good rope,”* to replace *p3 wn jtj.tw p3 nty hnʕ.n/ “because the one which was with us has*

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<sup>32</sup> Bakir (1970): 51.

<sup>33</sup> Cairo 58055, Lines 3-6.

<sup>34</sup> Cairo 58055, Line 6-7.

been taken.”<sup>35</sup> While Allam notes that *nwh*, the word used here, has in many cases been associated with boats,<sup>36</sup> it is unclear in this context to what use it is being put. The sharp contrast between Maiseti’s death threat and this following request suggests his drawing a deep breath after the forcefulness of his death threat before attending to such a practical matter. As in the previous letter this gives an extra personal aspect to Maiseti the military commander. This piece of correspondence shows that an administrative civilian, such as the ꜥꜣ *št*/Chief Taxing Master,<sup>37</sup> was also responsible for a prison and the moving of its inmates. He was expected to respond to orders from a military commander such as Maiseti, with the extreme threat of possible death if he was slack in fulfilling the responsibility.<sup>38</sup> The location of Debu is not given, but the reference establishes knowledge of the existence of what is possibly a military prison there, given that it is a military commander who is issuing the orders regarding prisoner movement.

#### Letter 4

*Dynasty 19: Ramesses II P. Leiden 1, 349 vs*<sup>39</sup>

This is a letter from the scribe Kenyamon to the charioteer Huy. Kenyamon is replying to a previous letter from Huy. His letter is a communication to inform his lord that he has complied with the requests previously made – to attend to the people under Huy’s supervision, to the welfare of his horses and to give grain rations to the soldiers and the Apiru who are drawing water from the well of Pre Ramesses II, south of Memphis. He notes that Huy will not find fault with him. He is giving grain to the horses daily and has taken note of his instruction regarding the food for the soldiers and Apiru.

Kenyamon addresses Huy using the simple sender to recipient *hr swdꜣ-jb n nb.f* form, which had now come to mean a “communication.”<sup>40</sup> He precedes it with a complimentary preamble in honour of Ramesses II, in which he associates the king with Horus, Mighty Bull, beloved of Ma’at, the Two Ladies, Re, Horus of Gold, and as being “the son of Re, Ramesses II l.p.h., given life forever and ever like Re.” This preliminary

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<sup>35</sup> Cairo 58055, Line 8.

<sup>36</sup> Allam (1987): 24, n. (y). See also Janssen (1975): 438-439.

<sup>37</sup> For comment and background on ꜥꜣ *št* see Katary (1989): 197.

<sup>38</sup> This could be a case of hyperbole on Maiseti’s part.

<sup>39</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* III (1969-): 250-251, Bakir (1970): Pl. 17-18/XXIII-XXIV, Wente (1990): 123, Letter 145.

<sup>40</sup> Bakir (1970): 43.



introduction, before the sender identifies himself and his recipient, is appropriate for a letter to this charioteer whom Kenyamon notes is of the stable of Ramesses II. He concludes by saying *nfr snb.k*/May your health be good which in the New Kingdom replaced the previous *nfr sdm.k* terminal greeting and was used by the sender to a person of superior or equal rank. In this case probably the former. As in the previous letters the three requests or “further matters” are introduced using the transitional phrase *ky-dd*/another saying, used when preceding instructions.

The people to whom Kenyamon has been asked to attend are described only as *rmt nt r-h3tj*/people under my supervision, so it is unclear whether they are military personnel. The horses are referred to as *htr* which implies a pair or yoke of animals consistent with Huy’s profession as a *kdn*/charioteer. Kenyamon describes them as being *nfr sp-sn*/extremely good! The soldiers, who together with the Apiru are drawing water from the well, are *rmt mšc* which is a term attested only during the Nineteenth Dynasty to distinguish soldiers from men of the chariotry and also as “a general designation to distinguish soldiers from non-military.”<sup>41</sup> The Apiru as a separate people were noted as captives on the Memphis stela of Amenophis II.<sup>42</sup> In the time of Tuthmosis III they are represented as wine-makers in the tombs of the herald Intef and the Second Prophet of Amun Puyemre at Thebes.<sup>43</sup> Their continuing role as workers during the time of Ramesses II is also attested in *Leiden P. 348*. In this letter they are noted as *jth jnr r t3 bhnt 3 n...Rc-ms-sw mry-Jmn*/ “dragging stone to the great pylon of... Ra-messe-amun.”<sup>44</sup> They are also mentioned on an ostrakon, possibly from the Theban area. This somewhat fragmented text denotes the number of stones quarried by the Apiru under the direction of *n3 rmt-mšc n imnt*/the army men of the Right (side), and notes the total number of stone blocks as 20.<sup>45</sup> In the context of the current letter they are also described as *jth*/dragging but in this case it is from a *hnmt*/well so can possibly be

<sup>41</sup> Schulman (1964): 49, 109 ref.133.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Der Manuelian, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1987), 226.

<sup>43</sup> TT39 and TT155.

<sup>44</sup> Gardiner (1937): 134-135, *Verso* 6-7.

<sup>45</sup> See Kenneth Kitchen, “High, Middle and Low Ramesside life, from Thebes to Pi-Ramesse,” in *Timelines Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak Vol.1* (ed. E. Cerny, I. Hein, H. Hunger, D. Melman, A.Schwab; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 183-184 and Yvan Koenig, *Les Ostraca Hiératiques Inédits de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg* (Le Caire : Institut français d’archéologie orientale 1997, Pl. 96.

rendered as “drawing,” presumably water, although this is not stated specifically. Whether they are willing or captive workers is unclear. Other than the Memphis stela inscription (which could be a boastful claim) there has been no further reference to the Apiru as an enemy.

The matters to which Kenyamon refers indicate the concern that a charioteer would have for his horses as well as for people in his charge. Although brief this letter has shown that a person of scribal status was also expected to accept orders from one of the military such as the charioteer Huy, and undertake tasks of administration and provisioning at his bequest.

As a charioteer Huy would have been one of two. The designation *kdn* was used for the actual driver of the chariot, although in some instances he is shown engaged in fighting from the chariot and shield bearing to protect the other chariot occupant.<sup>46</sup> Hoffmeier notes the first appearance of this second person, termed *snnj*/chariot warrior, in the time of Tutankhamun.<sup>47</sup> Huy’s whereabouts is not stated. This piece of correspondence has given confirmation that “the personnel of the chariotry were not always obliged to be on active service.”<sup>48</sup> It is possible that Huy had returned home to remain in reserve temporarily. It has also confirmed the separate designation of the infantry as opposed to the chariotry, and shown that ordinary soldiers could also be used for manual work in conjunction with foreign labour. It has provided an overall insight into the integration of military and administrative duties as part of society.

## Letter 5

*Dynasty 20: Ramesses IX P. Valençay No.2*<sup>49</sup>

The senders of this letter are a stablemaster Pahun and a chief of police Sahnufe. The right-hand side of the papyrus is missing so the recipient is unknown. This *lacunae* also leads to some difficulty in interpreting the content. The senders are confirming receipt of a previous piece of correspondence from the recipient asking them to “Search for him.”

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<sup>46</sup> Schulman (1964): 67.

<sup>47</sup> James Hoffmeier, “Observations on the Evolving Chariot Wheel in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty,” *JARC* 13 (1976): 44.

<sup>48</sup> Schulman (1964): 16.

<sup>49</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* VII: 371-372, Gardiner (1950):132-133, Wente (1990): 130, Letter 155.

They mention being in the presence of “Hathor, lady of Dendera,” and that they then sailed northward to continue the search without any delay. The *lacunae* make the reading unclear but it appears they submitted the matter before possibly a god, who tells them the person they are seeking is to the south of them. They finish by noting that they will not hesitate to take action if the person attacks them.

The form of address appears to follow the formula in which the recipient precedes the sender, indicating that the unknown recipient was in a superior position, although this inversion has been noted as a “rare occasion in the XXth Dynasty.”<sup>50</sup> The name of Amun is apparent which could be part of the recipient’s title or the end of the phrase “in the favour of Amun.”<sup>51</sup> The following text is missing but appears to follow the form of the complimentary preamble invoking various forms of Amun and/or the names of other deities. Its final words are readable and constitute the blessing, the usual conclusion of this form, in what Bakir notes as “a style characteristic of this period.”<sup>52</sup> The words *jmi n.k*/to give you are followed by the blessings wishing the recipient *ʿnh*/in life, prosperity, health, *ʿhʿw k3*/a long lifetime, *j3wt ʿ3t*/a great old age.

The senders have clearly stated their occupation and status as *hry-jhw*/chief stablemaster and *hry-md3j*/chief of police. Gardiner notes that a chief of police named Sahnufe is also mentioned in *P. Turin 93*.<sup>53</sup> Only one other example of the name is attested<sup>54</sup> and on this basis it is possible that this is one and the same person. While the role of a chief of police in a search of this kind is appropriate, it is interesting to speculate as to the reason for a stablemaster to be involved.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps Pahun was in some way answerable to the unknown recipient and had some sort of responsibility for the actions of the person whom they had been asked to look for.

In referring to the previous communication they had received, in which they were asked to *wh3 sw*/search for him, they write that the *šmsw jw*/the retainers came. So it would appear that Pahun and Sahnufe were not alone in the search. The subsequent *lacunae* make understanding unclear, but they state *[jw].tn ʿhʿ.tj ptr t3y.k hnwt*/ “you

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<sup>50</sup> Bakir (1970): 51.

<sup>51</sup> See the commentary of Gardiner (1950): 125.

<sup>52</sup> Bakir (1970): 63.

<sup>53</sup> Gardiner (1950): 125.

<sup>54</sup> Ranke (1935): 299/24.

<sup>55</sup> However, as noted previously, Schulman (1964): 51-53 notes the many references which attest to the varied duties a stablemaster actually undertook.

stand beholding your mistress”<sup>56</sup> and they identify her as Hathor, lady of Dendara. The “you” in “you stand beholding” is *tn* plural, whereas “your” in “your mistress” is *t3y.k* singular.<sup>57</sup> This could imply that the recipient had a role connected with her temple, but whom the “you” refers to as beholding Hathor is unclear.<sup>58</sup> It is possible that the reason for doing this before heading northward was to consult Hathor for advice, but they are quick to add that they have [*bwpw*].*n* *ḥḥ m ḥḥ nb*/ “not stood still at all (delayed).”<sup>59</sup> Following is a specific reference is to the sending of men to “Setsankh [...] the town of Sheneset.” Gardiner has pointed out the appearance elsewhere of Setsankh as a personal name. He suggests that given the presence of Seth in the name the *lacunae* could read [who is the prophet of Seth, lord of] the town of Sheneset.<sup>60</sup> This would mean that when the writers say *hr w3ḥ.n t3 mdt m-b3ḥ [p3 ntr]*/ “submitted the matter in the presence of the god,”<sup>61</sup> they are in fact consulting the god to get guidance in their search. They write that the answer given is that he is south of them and *hr jw.tw (r) gmt.f.j.n.f*/ “he will be found, so he said.”<sup>62</sup> This can be interpreted as coming from the god. The determinative of the falcon of Horus is used for the pronoun “he” in the words *jw n.f*/so he said. Pahen and Sahnufe conclude with the words *bn jw.n (r) nnj n mjtt jw.f (r) ph r.n*/ “we will not be slack either if he attacks us.”<sup>63</sup>

This letter exemplifies the way in which such personal correspondence can provide an insight into incidents of ancient Egyptian life. Although the text of the letter is incomplete so that the full background of the problem they face is uncertain, there is a clear glimpse into this occurrence in the lives of Pahen and Sahnufe and how they go about fulfilling the orders of the unknown recipient. Their writing conveys a certain sense of alarm and the need to reassure him that they are following instructions to the best of their ability, that they have even invoked the help of a god in the search. The reason for the imperative demand *wḥ3 sw*/search for him can only be surmised, but there is the implication that he may be a criminal or perhaps a foreign fugitive who has evaded

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<sup>56</sup> Lines 5-6.

<sup>57</sup> See comment Gardiner (1950): 126 (c).

<sup>58</sup> Wente (1990) in his translation has rendered as “we”.

<sup>59</sup> Line 8.

<sup>60</sup> Gardiner (1950): 127, n.f. See also his *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica: Text I*(1947): 31:344.

<sup>61</sup> Line 9.

<sup>62</sup> Line 10.

<sup>63</sup> Line 11.

capture. He could be dangerous given their comment about his attacking them. The fact that they have seemingly turned to divine oracular help shows the importance given to the influence and power of their gods, the belief held by the people in the ability to interact with them through an appropriate intermediary.

Following is a series of letters from the Late Ramesside period of Ramesses XI and the Renaissance era.

### Letter 6

*Dynasty 20: Year 10 of the Renaissance P. Bibliotheque Nationale 197, V*<sup>64</sup>

This letter is from the general of Pharaoh to the scribe Tjaroy telling him to send some cloth rags to be made into strips for bandages for the men. The general notes that his recipient knows about the journey he is going to make and his final words emphasise the urgency of his request.

The sender of this letter with the title *wr mšꜥ n ꜥ-pr*/the general of Pharaoh, is presumed to be Piankh.<sup>65</sup> While his recipient gives himself the name *tꜥry*/Tjaroy, this person was in fact Dhutmose, the scribe of the tomb in the time of Ramesses XI. The two names occur together in many letters.<sup>66</sup> The most comprehensive overview to show that this was one and the same person has come from Černý, although he comments “why the surname Tjaroy was given to Dhutmose escapes us completely.”<sup>67</sup> The address to this brief letter is in the short sender to recipient style with no elaborate greeting, appropriate to a piece of military correspondence.

The dating has been suggested as Year 10 of the Renaissance,<sup>68</sup> and, although only short, this request to Tjaroy provides information regarding military movement and requirements. The *nꜥy*/journey which the general mentions he is about to make suggests that Piankh was about to embark on a campaign, a venture in which he expected casualties. Given the probable dating of the letter, this could have been the military move

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<sup>64</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939): 35-6, Wentz (1967): *LRL* 20, 52-3, Wentz (1990): 182, Letter 300.

<sup>65</sup> Kitchen, (1986): 41, n.170, Wentz (1967): 8.

<sup>66</sup> For example Wentz (1967): *LRL* 1,18, *LRL* 14,46.

<sup>67</sup> Černý(1973) : 363-366.

<sup>68</sup> Wentz (1967):16.

into Nubia against Panhesi.<sup>69</sup> His imminent departure is indicated by the urgency in the letter when the general urges action *wnn spr k/as* as soon as it reaches you, and concludes with the imperative *j-3s st n.j m dy ʕḥ.w gr mntk/* “bring them to me. Do not delay on your part.”<sup>70</sup> Regarding military requirements, the letter gives insight into the kind of provision made for medical care, showing the resources they relied on to tend the wounded – the use and need of *ḥbs jsw m ʕrk knw/* “old clothes (in the form of) many strips,”<sup>71</sup> which would be made into *pry r wt rmt/* “bandages to bandage the men.”<sup>72</sup>

The following three letters are also from Piankh. They are addressed to three different people, and are all regarding the same issue – the punishment of two policemen and the way in which Piankh wishes them dealt with.

### Letter 7

*Dynasty 20: year 10 of the Renaissance P. Berlin 10487*<sup>73</sup>

The first letter is again addressed to Tjaroy and is in reply to a previous letter. The general writes that he has noted all the matters in the letter and then refers to the mention Tjaroy made of the matter of the two policemen, saying “They spoke these charges.” He tells Tjaroy to “join up with Nodjme and Payshuuben as well, and they shall send word and have these two policemen brought to this (my) house and get to the bottom of their charges in short order.” What the two policemen have said is not revealed, but the general orders that should Payshuuben and Nodjme decided the charges were true “you shall put them [in] two baskets and they shall be thrown [into] the water by night – but do not let anybody in the land find out.”

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<sup>69</sup> Wente (1967): 8, 12.

<sup>70</sup> *Verso* Line 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Verso* Lines 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>73</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, Wente (1967): 53, *LRL* no. 21, Wente (1990): 183, Letter 301.

### Letter 8

*Dynasty 20: Year 10 of Renaissance P. Berlin 10488*<sup>74</sup>

The second letter is in reply to Payshuuben, mentioned in the first letter. Evidently he had also written to the general about “this matter of the two policemen,” and is given the same instructions – to “join up with Nodjme and the scribe Tjaroy as well and send word and have these two policemen brought to this (my) house and get to the bottom of their charges in short order.” However, in this letter while the general also tells Payshuuben to “kill [them] and throw [them] into the water by night – but do not let anybody in this land find out about them,” he does not mention putting them in baskets or give him a direct instruction to determine whether the charges are true.

### Letter 9

*Dynasty 20: Year 10 of Renaissance P. Berlin 10489*<sup>75</sup>

The third letter is in reply to the other person mentioned in the first letter, Nodjme. It appears that she has also written to him about “this matter of the two policemen,” and is likewise told to “join up with Payshuuben and Tjaroy, this scribe, and have these two policemen brought to this (my) house and get to the bottom of their charges in short order.” As in the second letter he does not mention putting them in baskets or to determine whether the charges are true and he omits the adjunct “but do not let anybody in this land find out about them.” However, he does tell Nodjme to have them killed and thrown into the water by night.

The introductory address in the first two letters is in the brief sender to recipient style, commensurate with Piankh’s authority and the issuing of an order. Payshuuben is referred to as the general’s *rwd*/agent or inspector but no further background is given. The third person involved is referred to by name only as Nodjme. The third letter, which is addressed specifically to her, designates her “the great one of the harem of Amun-Re” and as the *špst*/noble lady Nodjme. There follows a more elaborate greeting in which Piankh asks *ntr nb ntr.t nb r-nty tw.j (hr) snj hr.w* “every god and every goddess whom I

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<sup>74</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939): 53-54, Letter 34, Wentz (1967): 69, *LRL* no. 34, Wentz (1990): 183, Letter 302.

<sup>75</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Černý (1939): 54, Letter 35, Wentz (1967): 69, *LRL* no. 35, Wentz (1990): 183, Letter 303.

pass, to keep her alive and healthy,”<sup>76</sup> to let him see her when he returns so that he can *mtw <j> mh jt.ty <j m> prt.t r<sup>c</sup> nb sp <sn>/* “fill my eyes with the sight of you every day.”<sup>77</sup> The inclusion of the intensifying particle appears to imply some emotional attachment between the two.<sup>78</sup> The nature of their relationship is the subject of much speculation. Kitchen noted her as being associated with Herihor, Piankh and Pinudjem, and argues that she was in fact Herihor’s wife, Piankh’s mother, and grandmother to Pinudjem.<sup>79</sup> The role of grandmother was prompted by the title “King’s Mother” in various funerary inscriptions, an attestation which could not refer to Piankh.<sup>80</sup> However, based on additional evidence from the Temple of Khons at Karnak, he subsequently proposed that Nodjme was in fact the daughter of Herere, an earlier principal of the harem of Amun-Re, (Herere A), that she was the wife of Herihor and mother to a daughter also named Herere (Herere B) who was married to Piankh. She was therefore Piankh’s mother-in-law.<sup>81</sup> An alternative genealogy has been suggested by Taylor<sup>82</sup> who, after reviewing in detail the arguments put forward by Kitchen and others, put forward the hypothesis that Herere A was the mother of Piankh, that Nodjme was his wife and Pinudjem their son. He also suggests that Nodjme was later the wife of Herihor.

Piankh’s tone in this third letter would seem to reflect this husband/wife relationship. He addresses her in a manner totally in contrast to the usual abrupt authoritative manner of the first two letters and which is present in his other correspondence. Personal feelings are evident in his desire (emphasised) to “fill his eyes with the sight of her,” and the fact that he is asking her to be complicit in the killing of the two policemen by writing *mtw.t djt hdb.<w>/* “you cause (them) killed,”<sup>83</sup> appears commensurate with the trust of a spousal relationship. Additionally, this involvement is an example of the power and authority that a high-ranking woman such as Nodjme – *wrt hnrt*/Great one of the harem and *špst*/noble lady – could exercise.

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<sup>76</sup> Lines 2-3.

<sup>77</sup> Line 4.

<sup>78</sup> Kim Ridealgh notes that “no other letters sent by Piankh have survived that include this emotional overtone.” See “Yes Sir! An analysis of the superior/subordinate relationship in the Late Ramesside Letters,” *Lingua Aegyptia* 21, (2013): 186.

<sup>79</sup> Kitchen (1986): 40-3.

<sup>80</sup> Edward Wente, “On the Chronology of the Twenty-First Dynasty,” *JEA* 26 (1967): 174, n.148.

<sup>81</sup> Kitchen (1986): 536.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor (1998): 1142-1155.

<sup>83</sup> Černý (1939):54, Letter 35, *Verso* Line 2.



The charges made by the policemen that have so angered Piankh are not specified. From the wording of the letters it is apparent that he expects his recipients to be able to determine whether they are true. The fact that they are to be killed if this is the case implies that whatever they have disclosed must be kept secret, indicating the trust which Piankh placed in his recipients. The latter have various actions designated to them. Tjaroy is ordered to put the men into *mstj 2*/two baskets, Payshuuben is expressly ordered to kill them, while Nodjme is told *mtw.t djt hdb.<w>/* “you cause (them) killed.” Each of them is told that they must be *mtw.k h3<sup>c</sup>.w <m> p3 mw m grh/* “thrown into the water by night,”<sup>84</sup> but Nodjme is told *mtw.t djt h3<sup>c</sup>.w p3 mw/* “you cause (them) thrown into the water.”<sup>85</sup> The secrecy necessary is emphasised by the fact that this has to be done at night and as regards Tjaroy and Payshuuben they must *m dj <sup>c</sup>m rmt nb n p3 t3/* “not cause to know anybody in the land.”<sup>86</sup> So the sequence of events when Tjaroy, Payshuuben and Nodjme got together and exchanged instructions would have been that Nodjme oversaw events and was responsible for seeing Piankh’s orders carried out, Payshuuben was to be the actual assassin and carry out the killing, and Tjaroy was then to put the bodies into two baskets before they were thrown into the river.

Returning to the first piece of correspondence to Tjaroy – after his instructions regarding the two policemen, the general continues by asking how Pharaoh will reach this land, and whose superior is he after all? He then asks why, although he has sent a barge, three months have gone by and Tjaroy has not sent him a *deben* of gold or a *deben* of silver either, with the additional comment “That is alright. Do not worry about what...he has done.” The general concludes by demanding that these amounts should be sent by barge as soon as Tjaroy gets the letter.

The content of this second half of the letter appears to be a reflection of the political situation. Ramesses XI was still Pharaoh in name, ruling over a country which was now divided into two regions – northern and southern. In the southern region with its centre at Thebes and a northern boundary at el-Hibeh, his power had been gradually usurped by the high priests of Amun who had also taken on the role of commander of the army, roles which Piankh held at the writing of this and the other letters. At this time his

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<sup>84</sup> Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, Line 7; 54, Letter 34, Line 6.

<sup>85</sup> Černý (1939): 54, Letter 35, *Verso* Line 2.

<sup>86</sup> Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, Line 8; 54, Letter 34, *Verso* 1.

military efforts were directed against Panhesy in Nubia in order to implement the new administrative structure and bring Nubia back under Theban control.<sup>87</sup> His words regarding the Pharaoh appear to reflect the current political situation of the “Renaissance” era in which the influence and administrative control of Ramesses XI had diminished. He asks with additional emphasis *mj-jh sp-sn/* “how he will reach this land,”<sup>88</sup> presumably Nubia, and rather derisively asks *n(y)m hry m-r-ʿ/* “who anyway is superior,”<sup>89</sup> implying that it is now himself who holds the reins of power. As noted by Ridealgh this “indicates not only a high level of trust between Piankh and his subordinate, but also reinforces the lack of Pharaonic power in the Theban area...”<sup>90</sup> In this capacity he is commanding Tjaroy to send him gold and silver by barge, after a time lapse of three months, telling his recipient *m dj h3.ty.k <m-s3> p3 ir .f/* “not to worry about what he has done.”<sup>91</sup> Seemingly another derogatory comment regarding Pharaoh and another reminder to Tjaroy that Piankh is his master now.

In contrast to the practical nature of the reasons for writing found so far in the personal correspondence studied these three letters detail what appears to be a politically motivated act, sanctioned and overseen by such a high-ranking personage as Nodjme. Her involvement could be seen as a result of her relationship as the wife of Piankh, so there is the additional implication of marital influence and obedience. This, in conjunction with the historical context, gives an insight into actual plans and thoughts which are not often portrayed in ancient Egyptian letters.

## Summary

In this correspondence concerning military and police matters, the first three from Maiseti give insight into the varied duties which could come under the remit of one with the title “standard-bearer,” covering as they do a complaint about interference with religious personnel, issues with a subordinate regarding wrongful arrest, the conscription and rounding up of soldiers and the movement of prisoners. Letter 4 shows the authority that a charioteer had over a scribe with regard to the care and provisioning of his horses

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<sup>87</sup> Kitchen (1986): 248-253.

<sup>88</sup> Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, Line 9.

<sup>89</sup> Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, *Verso* 1.

<sup>90</sup> Ridealgh (2013): 194.

<sup>91</sup> Černý (1939): 36, Letter 21, *Verso* 3.

and soldiers, the letter implying that Huy was elsewhere “in reserve” and having to delegate such duties. From a societal perspective this piece of correspondence also provides information about the use of foreign labour and military personnel in the everyday workforce. Letter 5 is a police matter (although a stable master is also involved) regarding an urgent search for an unnamed person. The content gives insight into the custom of oracular guidance to assist in such a search. Letter 6 gives information regarding care of the wounded. In the final section, Letters 7, 8 and 9 from the Late Ramesside period have revealed details of a conspiracy to murder, a very different topic. However, in Letter 8, as a contrast to his instructions regarding the killing of two policemen, the general Piankh reveals personal feelings and emotions which are not often expressed in personal correspondence, particularly by a high-ranking military commander. From the historical perspective the letter also evidences the decline of Pharaonic influence.

*Forms of address:* The forms of address have reflected the military and policing nature of the content, as well as the status of the writer to recipient and *vice versa*.<sup>92</sup> The first two letters are in the form *dd.n*/sender says to recipient, while the third letter follows the brief sender to recipient style, omitting “says to.” All three have no complimentary preamble as befits the sender’s status as a military commander. A similar style omitting “says to” is used in Letters 6, 7, 8 and 9 from the general Piankh. There is no complimentary preamble in Letters 6, 7 and 8, but in contrast in Letter 9 it is used to show Piankh’s affection and concern for his recipient Nodjme. Letter 4 shows the deference of the writer to his charioteer recipient, who is “of the stable of Ramesses II,” by the inclusion of the preamble in honour of the king which precedes his greeting “a communication to his lord.” In Letter 5 deference is shown in the greeting by the sender placing his recipient’s name first. Due to the brevity of address of all but two of these letters, the chronology has been dependent on the dating of the content and the senders/recipients.

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<sup>92</sup> Table 3 at the end of this chapter provides an overview of the information regarding senders/recipients, formulae/phrasology of greetings and chronology detailed in this chapter and its summary.

From the social aspect the letters in this chapter have provided not only insight into the duties related to military personnel and related societal background and hierarchy, but also have given a unique glimpse into an ancient Egyptian assassination plan.

**Table 3**

No.	Sender name/social position	Recipient name/social position	Formulae of address	Dated to
1	Maiseti/standard-bearer	Unnamed/garrison captains	<i>dd n/says to</i>	Dynasty 19
2	Maiseti/standard-bearer	Hat/soldier	<i>dd n/says to</i>	Dynasty 19
3	Maiseti/standard-bearer	Hat/Chief Taxing Master	<i>n/to</i>	Dynasty 19
4	Kenyamon/scribe	Huy/charioteer	<i>hr swd3-jb n nb.f/a</i> communication to his lord. Complimentary preamble preceding calling on "Horus, Mighty Bull, beloved of Ma'at, the Two Ladies, Re, Horus of Gold, rich in years and great in victories; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Usermare-setepenre, l.p.h., the son of Re, Ramesses II, l.p.h., given life forever and ever like Re."	Dynasty 19/Ramesses II
5	Name and title missing	Pahen/stablemaster and Sahnufe/Chief of police	Words of address missing. *Recipient preceding sender	Dynasty 20
6	Piankh/general	Tjaroy/scribe	<i>n/to</i>	Year 10 of the Renaissance
7	Piankh/general	Tjaroy/scribe	<i>n/to</i>	Year 10 of the Renaissance
8	Piankh/general	Payshuuben/no title	<i>n/to</i>	Year 10 of the Renaissance
9	Piankh/general	Nodjme/principal of the harem of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, the noble lady	<i>n/to</i> Complimentary preamble calling on "every god and every goddess by whom I pass to keep you alive, to keep you healthy, and to let me see [you] when I return and fill my eyes with the sight of you"	Year 10 of the Renaissance

## Chapter Four

### Daily Life

The purpose of this chapter will be to provide insight into daily life – the people, their personalities, customs, and societal structure – by looking at correspondence on a variety of topics from a timeframe covering the Eighteenth to the Twenty-first Dynasty. As previously the correspondence selected is primarily of a personal nature rather than to or from royalty or dealing with administrative affairs. The analysis of the letters is structured in a similar manner, looking at the forms of greeting as they relate to the subject and status of the correspondents, and by researching the references made in the letters discovering more about the personalities involved. The focus will be on the insight given into aspects of societal structure, customs and everyday issues within the historical context.

With regard to the topics chosen Letters 1 to 5 are related to building work and labour, Letters 6 to 8 to husbandry. Provisions are the focus for Letters 9 and 10. Finally, Letters 11 to 14 are concerned with personal enquiries and health.

### Building work and labour

#### Letter 1

*Dynasty 18 Hatshepsut P. BM 10102<sup>1</sup>*

In this letter the mayor Mentuhotep is instructing the scribe Ahmose with regard to the building of a house. His instructions cover the height of the walls and doors, that of the house itself and its width, and at what point the mats and beams of the storerooms at the rear of the house should be installed. The builder is named as Amenmose. Mentuhotep tells Ahmose to make sure Amenmose follows these instructions and comments how pleased he is that his, that is Mentuhotep's, brother, is there as well to help. Additionally a shelter is to be made of matting for someone called Benia. He finally asks Ahmose to make payment for the site to its owner, but to be sure that the payment is well received as he does not want to find himself involved in a dispute about it when he returns.

The introductory formula follows the sender to recipient *hr nd-hrt* style, “The mayor Mentuhotep greets/speaks to the scribe Ahmose, he of Peniati,” which was

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<sup>1</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Glanville (1928): Pl. XXXV, Wente, (1990): 90, Letter 113.

normally used to inquire after the needs or condition of the recipient, and implying some degree of concern for him, as well as showing familiarity and similar rank between sender and recipient. In this case the correspondence is more business oriented, but the content does indicate familiarity through previous contact.<sup>2</sup> Mentuhotep precedes the subject of the letter with the complimentary preamble beginning “in life, prosperity, health, in the favour of...” and continues in a form where various gods are mentioned, but are mostly forms of Amun.<sup>3</sup> Here it is “Amon-Re, King of the Gods, of Atum, lord of Heliopolis, of Re-Harakhti.” The other gods invoked are Thoth, lord of sacred writings and, in an unexpected conjunction with Thoth, Seshet, mistress of script. The preamble ends with the standard blessings and petitions “May they give you favour, love and proficiency wherever you may be.” The use of the full preamble signifies Mentuhotep’s deference to Ahmose, and his invocation of Thoth and Seshet his recognition of his recipient’s scribal status. It is an indication that although the mayor is giving specific instructions to Ahmose to ensure that the building work is carried out to his satisfaction, he is also aware that he is communicating with someone higher in the administrative hierarchy. The elaborateness of the greeting is possibly designed to smooth the way before his “to-the-point” requests.

The sender, Mentuhotep has only his title as reference. Other details regarding his background or location are not included and there is no specific reference to him from other sources. The recipient however is again the scribe Ahmose, who, as noted previously,<sup>4</sup> was assistant to Peniati, the Director of Works of Hermonthis and later Director of Works. As a holder of these positions it would have been possible for him to gain the knowledge of building and architecture that would qualify him for overseeing the work Mentuhotep was asking to be done.

The body of the letter after the formal greeting begins with the words “A further matter.” This and the following further matters are introduced with the transitional phrase *ky-dd*/another saying, used when preceding instructions and so far found only in letters of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties.<sup>5</sup> This first instruction is that Ahmose put in

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<sup>2</sup> Bakir (1970): 46-47.

<sup>3</sup> Bakir (1970): 57.

<sup>4</sup> See Letter 5 in Chapter One.

<sup>5</sup> Bakir (1970): 82-83.

place the *jnw*/matting and *s3yw*/beams *n p3 šn<sup>c</sup>w hn<sup>c</sup> pḥwy n p3 pr/* “of the storerooms as well as the rear of the house.”<sup>6</sup> The use of *jnw* has been interpreted as matting, (the usual word was *tm3*) and its determinative is one that indicates wickerwork.<sup>7</sup> This conforms to the style of roofing found in Eighteenth Dynasty building work where mats were bound together and placed above the main roof beams.<sup>8</sup> He tells Ahmose that *p3 jnb ḥpr mḥ 6 m k3/* “the wall has attained 6 cubits in height.”<sup>9</sup> The instruction appears to be a continuation of some previous correspondence regarding the building work and assumes that Ahmose will know which wall is being referred to. The question arises of whether these storerooms are inside or outside the house. However, he then instructs Ahmose that the doors of the storerooms are to be 5 cubits high and those for the *st ḥms*/living room, 6 cubits. Associating the doors of the storerooms with those of the living area in this way seems to suggest that the storerooms were part of the internal layout and were acting as storage closets.<sup>10</sup> The wall in question would then be that dividing the living area from the storerooms and the rear of the house. This would conform to a layout in which the rooms were built around a central area rather than the more elaborate architecture of a separate complex of external storerooms and servants’ quarters. The differing height of the doors would relate to the importance of the areas they were accessing. The heights specified, 6 cubits for determining the height of the roof from the floor and 6 and 5 cubits for the two doors, are higher than those deduced from excavations at Amarna sites.<sup>11</sup> This fact could be relevant in assessing the findings of other domestic dwellings, giving some additional insight into housing construction and architecture, as well as confirming structural rules apparent from excavations.

His next instruction is that Ahmose *3s kd p3 pr b<sup>c</sup> sp-sn/* “hasten the building of the house with extra care.” He comments how *nfr.wy wn p3y.j sn m-<sup>c</sup>.k/* “fortunate it is my brother is with you.” Then he adds because *djdj.j ḥr.j ḥr.k* – literally “cause my head,

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<sup>6</sup> Line 8.

<sup>7</sup> See Glanville (1928): 298 n. 4 for further discussion of this point.

<sup>8</sup> Pendlebury (1951): Part I, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Line 9.

<sup>10</sup> Pendlebury (1951): Part I, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Glanville (1928): 302, Pendlebury (1951): Part 1, 18.

your head”<sup>12</sup> or perhaps as suggested by Glanville “two heads are better than one,”<sup>13</sup> or by Wente “It is you I am pre-occupied with.”<sup>14</sup>

Three *ky-dd*/further matters follow which reflect more concern regarding management of the project. Firstly Mentuhotep addresses another practical matter regarding the building, advising Ahmose he will send him the height and width required for the house. Secondly is the request that some mats (again *jnw*) be kept and given to Benia, possibly for protection or shelter. Alternatively they could be a gift to Benia for his own house. His connection with the building is not specified, but possibly he is a workman on the site. The third matter is for Ahmose to give *šbt n p3 jwtn n pr n p3y.f nb/* “the price of the site of the house to its owner” in order to *jmj dj.tw rš ḥ3ty.f b<sup>c</sup> sp-sn/* “cause that his heart rejoice exceedingly now.”<sup>15</sup> Mentuhotep does not wish that he be *s3w jrj.f mdt ḥn<sup>c</sup>.j/* “caused to dispute with me.”<sup>16</sup> This involvement in the details of the project and the fact that his brother is involved with the work suggest Mentuhotep is either building for himself or for a family member. The comment “How good it is that my brother should be with you” implies that he can give Ahmose a hand or that he is concerned about Ahmose’s competence. Mentuhotep himself is evidently experienced in building requirements, which from the bureaucratic aspect could indicate that this knowledge was one of the attributes necessary for a mayor.

This piece of correspondence has provided additional evidence regarding the design and materials involved in house-building, while at the same time giving insight into the administrative process and the people involved in the project. In particular the mayor Mentuhotep is given character by the way he ensures that his writing mixes instructions with explicit orders in a way which indicates his own view of his status, while employing a style of greeting that shows his recipient that he is acknowledging his higher rank.

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<sup>12</sup> Line 16-17

<sup>13</sup> Glanville (1928): 299, n.7.

<sup>14</sup> Wente (1990): 91.

<sup>15</sup> *Verso* Lines 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Verso* Line 7.



## Letter 2

*Dynasty 18 O. Berlin 10614*<sup>17</sup>

In this short letter the sender Kenamon appears to be advising the recipient Hormose about work completed by eight stonemasons. He tell Hormose to write and let him know “about the other one that you desire” so that he can have it brought to him. He also asks for payment to be sent.

The introductory greeting follows the *dd.n* style. Here the formula followed is “Says (sender) to....”<sup>18</sup> without any elaborate greeting, as appropriate to a piece of business correspondence, with the brevity necessary for correspondence written on an ostrakon.<sup>19</sup> This choice of writing surface is appropriate to the occupation of stonemason.

Only the names are written, the sender Kenamon and the recipient Hormose. There is no reference to the titles and relative status of the correspondents. The tone of the letter suggests that Kenamon is a foreman of works of some kind and that Hormose is the client who needs to pay him. The piece was found in the Theban area but there is no confirmation in the content to indicate the location of the two correspondents.

While it is in a form used for business correspondence, the letter reveals no specifics regarding the kind of work in which the stonemasons have been involved. The text just states they “have finished with these.” The range of stone used in ancient Egypt included limestone, sandstone, basalt, granite as well as alabaster and quartz – materials employed both for building work and for artefacts.<sup>20</sup> The reference “these” being finished and the request that his recipient write about the “other one that you desire” so that Kenamon can provide it, suggests that the stonemasons had been working on statuary or artefacts of some kind that had been ordered by Hormose. Although brief, the letter adds a personal touch to the known stone-working industry.

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<sup>17</sup> Primary and secondary source references: zu Berlin, Königliche Museen , *Hieratische Papyrus: Vol. III, Schriftstücke der VI Dynastie aus Elephantine, Zaubersprüche für Mutter und Kind, ostraca* , (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1911), Pl. 30-30a, Wente (1990): 93, Letter 119.

<sup>18</sup> Bakir (1970): 49.

<sup>19</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed description of the different types of stone and their usage see Paul Nicholson and Ian Shaw, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20-63, and Alfred Lucas and John Harris, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. rev. (London: Histories and Mysteries of Man, 1989), 52-63.

### Letters 3 and 4

*Dynasty 18 Akhenaten O. Amarna 2 and O. Amarna 3*<sup>21</sup>

The first of these two ostraca is a letter regarding a requirement for gypsum, the second is asking for the issue of seven bundles of an unstated item.

The letter on the first ostrakon is from a scribe named May to another scribe Meh. May is “of the city of Assiut,” the location of Meh is not specifically stated but is probably Amarna where the letter was found. The opening words of this first letter follow the introductory formula style of sender to recipient without the inclusion of “says”<sup>22</sup> but with the addition of the occupation and location of the sender and the occupation of the recipient. No elaborate greetings are included. The structure implies an order from a scribe of higher status than his recipient. May begins his letter with the imperative that Meh write to him *sš r k/write*, which again seems to indicate a senior position, suggesting that the two have been in previous communication but that Meh has been out of touch for a while.

Pendlebury notes that the word *kd/gypsum* occurs on specimens found at Amarna and on the Boundary Stelae, where it is written that the inscriptions not be obscured with gypsum.<sup>23</sup> The gypsum referred to in this first letter is for the House of Sehetep-Aten and the House of Nebmare (Amenophis III). He cites the frequent occurrence of *pr shꜥp jtn* and suggests that it is an epithet of the king citing a scarab on which this occurs.<sup>24</sup> Gypsum was the material used for mortar or plastering work, so some building work was obviously being undertaken at these two locations, one of which was a royal building. The gypsum being requested could have been needed either to act as a cushion between stones to prevent damage, or in its plaster form for walls and ceilings to provide a suitable surface for painting. It could also be used for repairing defects in walls prior to relief work. The gypsum could then be carved, as well as repairing damage in the reliefs themselves.<sup>25</sup> This letter gives confirmation of its use and from it can be inferred on-

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<sup>21</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Pendlebury (1951 III/II): Pl. LXXXIV, Wente (1990): 96, Letters 126, 127.

<sup>22</sup> Bakir (1970): 42.

<sup>23</sup> Pendlebury (1951 III/I): 161.

<sup>24</sup> Pendlebury (1951 II): 198.

<sup>25</sup> Lucas and Harris (1989): 75-77. They also note here the discovery at El Amarna of lumps of gypsum with hieratic inscriptions which they cite as being specimens of plaster preparation submitted for inspection.

going building work or repair at two major royal sites. The location of these sites could be at Assiut where May is writing from or at Amarna. The style of the note implying his superior position could mean he had responsibility from Assiut for the work being done at Amarna.

On the second ostrakon both sender and recipient are missing. There is just the one line “Open the magazine and issue seven *hrjrj*/bundles.” The translation for *hrjrj* as “bundles has been given by Wente,<sup>26</sup> possibly following the precedent of *hrš* as noted by Hannig.<sup>27</sup> Pendlebury has designated it as “apparently a new word.”<sup>28</sup> This single sentence gives no clue as to a reason for the request or to the items being issued. Its relevance is due to the scarcity of individual correspondence from this period.

### Letter 5

*Dynasty 20: Ramesses IV P. Mallet III-IV*<sup>29</sup>

This is a letter from a cattle overseer named Bakenkhons to several people – the policemen Maiseti and Setemhab, the administrator Paukhed, the cultivators Paiuten and Usekhnemtet, and herdsmen of the altar of Amun. He tells them that as soon as his servant Amenemwia comes they should set out with him and do corvée labour for the sender on the farmlands to which Amenemwia will take them. He advises these need to be cleared since they will be living off them. He tells his recipients it was when Amun-Re, King of the Gods brought the water for Pharaoh his son, that he came to inspect who should perform corvée labor for him and to see who should not. He tells them not to oppose his servant, as that will put them in the wrong. Bakenkhons advises the reason he has written is to provide them with testimony. For this reason they should guard his letter so that it can be used another day as testimony on their behalf.

The greeting is in the brief *dd.n* style used for an official letter<sup>30</sup> and is addressed to various recipients with differing occupations – two *md3j*/policemen, an *rwd*/administrator who is designated as being *n p3 knjw jhwty n swt* / “of the portable

<sup>26</sup> Wente (1990): 96, Letter 127.

<sup>27</sup> Rainier Hannig, *Grosses Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.)* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, c.1995): 618.

<sup>28</sup> Pendlebury (1951 III/I): 161

<sup>29</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* VI (1969- ): 66-67, Wente (1990): 127, Letter 151.

<sup>30</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

shrine of the king”<sup>31</sup> (who is named as Setnakht), two *jhwtj*/cultivators and *mnjw nb n t3 h3wt jmn nty m t3š n hrjw/* “every herdsman of the altar of Amun who is in the district of Kheriu.”<sup>32</sup> In his greeting Bakenkhons gives his title as “of the Estate of Amun-Re, King of the Gods,” and his ability to order them to do work clearing farmlands, particularly as three of them have occupations unconnected with farming, implies an authority within society of a cattle overseer with this title. The letter is an order for compulsory service – *bhw*/corvée labour. This system for conscripting work can be traced back as far as the Fourth Dynasty, and more recent references can be found in the Nauri Decree of Seti I.<sup>33</sup> Bakenkhons’ letter implies that his recipients have been particularly selected given that he states *mk jj.kw r ptr p3 nty jw.f <r> šmt r jr.t n.j bhw r ptr p3 nty bn jw.f r šmt/* “See, I have come to see the one who should go to do for me corvée labour and to see who should not go.”<sup>34</sup> There is no indication his recipients were aware of his presence or were consulted, that therefore this is an unexpected order. He tells them that his servant will take them to the *jht* /farmland to be cleared. He explains that they will be *nh jmw*/living there, that is living off the land they have cleared, which is why he tells them not to *hf p3y šmsw*/oppose the servant when he comes to them. It is in their interest not to complain or refuse. However, the fact that Bakenkhons uses the designation for an official letter *št* and advises them to *s3w*/guard the correspondence as *mtr*/testimony, could indicate, particularly in the case of the policemen and the administrator, that they were being taken away from ongoing duties and might need to ratify their new work to other officials. The fact that the letter would provide sufficient authorisation is another sign of Bakenkhons’ ranking in the hierarchy. The provenance of the letter is thought to be Thebes, and the sender’s name *b3k hnsu*/servant of Khonsu reflects this as the sender’s likely location. It is unclear where the people are whom he is addressing. The herdsmen are described as being in the district of *hrjw*/Kheriu, thought to be possibly located in Middle Egypt, and the reference Bakenkhons makes that he “came to see” whom to choose infers he is writing from a distance.

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<sup>31</sup> III Lines 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> III Lines 4-5

<sup>33</sup> See *KRITA* I (1993): 51:5, 57:9, also Kitchen, “Egypt, Ugarit, Qatna and Covenant,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (1979): 455.

<sup>34</sup> IV Lines 2-3.

The content of this letter, while an apparently straight-forward order, from the social aspect has provided insight into the hierarchy within society which enables such an order to be followed, as well as the customs associated with agricultural labour. It has indicated that it was customary, regardless of rank, to make people responsible for their own food source by taking on the preparatory work of land clearance. It has also shown that, despite royal immunity decrees in the past, the custom of enforced *corvée* labour regardless of status was still in force – even policemen or an administrator of a king’s portable shrine could be seconded into the labour force to carry out this work. With regard to the titles of the people concerned, it has been noted that a person referred to as a *jhwtj*/cultivator could be identical to someone cited elsewhere with a different title.<sup>35</sup> This could mean that the two cultivators mentioned might also have had some other higher status, and while Bakenkhons gives himself the title of “Overseer of Cattle,” the same name has also appeared on a Theban tomb dated to the Ramesside period with the title “Scribe of the divine book of Khons.”<sup>36</sup>

## **Husbandry**

### **Letter 6**

*Dynasty 18 Hatshepsut P.Louvre 3230a*<sup>37</sup>

This piece of correspondence again involving the scribe Ahmose assistant to Peniati, the Director of Works of Hermonthis and later Director of Works, is the upper piece of the two pieces of papyrus Louvre 3230 gummed onto mummy wrapping.<sup>38</sup> Here he is addressed by Teti, his brother, who asks after his well-being and tells him how much he looks forward to seeing him. He advises him about the barley and flax he has grown for him, and promises that while he lives he will always fulfil his obligations to his brother. He also asks that Ahmose see to the finishing of Teti’s house. He looks forward to entering it as soon as he arrives.

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<sup>35</sup> With regard to the title “cultivator” see Gardiner (1948a), 69-70. He comments “What is not clear, however, is whether some of these ‘cultivators’ are not identical with persons of the same name bearing different titles elsewhere,” and cites several examples of possible duplication.

<sup>36</sup> See Porter and Moss (1960): 369: 288.

<sup>37</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Peet (1926): Pl. XVII no.1, Wente (1990): 91, Letter 116.

<sup>38</sup> For Louvre 3230b see Letter 5 in Chapter One.

A reason given for the lack of any title or descriptive background for Teti is that the previous section on the upper part of the papyrus has been lost. However, any signs from a line above are missing. As Peet comments the scribe would not have needed a full line for Teti's titles and then had to write his name on a second line.<sup>39</sup> It therefore seems more plausible that Teti gives himself no title because he is writing to his brother, who would not need to be given this kind of information.

The opening address by Teti is in the sender to recipient style, where the sender greets/speaks to the recipient using the introductory formula *hr nd-hrt*. This, as has previously been noted, is used when the sender “inquires after the needs, or condition, of recipient” and “implies some degree of concern on the part of the sender,” and “may be seen in letters among members of the same family.”<sup>40</sup> This is consistent with the recipient possibly being Teti's brother. There follows a complimentary preamble which begins with “in life, prosperity, health,” and continues “in favour of Amon-Re, King of the Gods, your august god who loves you.” It invokes other various gods, in this case Thoth “Lord of sacred writings,” as appropriate for Ahmose's scribal status, and “Ptah the great, South-of-his-Wall, Lord of Ankhtowi.” The names of gods invoked in most cases are those related to the neighbourhood of the recipient which could indicate here that Ahmose is located in Memphis and it is there that Teti's house is being built. The preamble finishes with the prayer that the gods “give you favour, love and proficiency in everyone's presence.” The inclusion of this elaborate greeting is another possible indication of Teti's respect for an older brother.

The letter is written in a very personal manner providing a picture of family interaction and responsibility. Teti greets Ahmose as his *sn mrj*/beloved brother and *hnms n hrt-jb.f*/friend of his heart's desire. That there is a familial relationship, that Teti is not using the words just as a term of endearment, is suggested by the personal content – how is he, provision of food, involvement in his house. Teti is concerned for Ahmose's well-being and writes that he desires *r m33 n.k wr sp-sn*/to look at you very much. He continues with *ky-dd*/a further matter – *sk3.j n.k jt knw hr st hpr*/ “I have cultivated for you much barley, now it has become” (grown), *hn<sup>c</sup> n3y.k mhy(t)*/ “together with your

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<sup>39</sup> Peet (1926): 72.

<sup>40</sup> Bakir (1970): 46.

flax,”<sup>41</sup> an indication of the produce that was farmed. The letter appears to be from a younger brother, who is minding the family home, to his older sibling who has left to take up the responsibilities of scribe and assistant to the Director of Works. Teti promises he will never be neglectful of his obligations to Ahmose *r jrt.j nb ʿnh* /in order to make a long life, reflecting a familial respect that society demanded. In contrast he continues with what appears to be a direct order. He tells Ahmose to *jmj-jb.k r kn... ʿt hr m3ʿ/* “pay attention to finishing off (his or your, the *lacunae* make this unclear) house on the riverbank.”<sup>42</sup> He emphasises that he expects Ahmose to do a good job *jmj jrt mj sš sp-sn mj sp.k nb nfr/* “have it made according to a proper way like you do everything well.”<sup>43</sup> Although these words seem more in line with those of an elder brother, they are perhaps occasioned by Teti’s previously expressed desire to see Ahmose. The tone prompted by the fact that it is not until it is finished that he can come *r ʿk r.f/* to enter into it. Also the flattery in his reference to the fact that Ahmose does everything well appears more in keeping with correspondence from a younger brother. In Letter 1 Ahmose was involved in a more official building project for a client. This correspondence shows an involvement of a more domestic nature, giving an insight into his personal life.

### Letter 7

*Dynasty 19: Ramesses I - Seti I P. Cairo 58058*<sup>44</sup>

This letter is from a scribe Mesha to Piay asking him when he receives the letter to inspect the contribution of cattle of the House that are in the charge of the slave Ruru. Mesha also asks that Piay “look into the state of affairs of Pabak, who follows him...” as Mesha has heard he has left him and no longer has charge of any cattle. Mesha then refers to the taking of the cattle count and tells Piay to have the cattle made ready, but further details are unknown as the end of the letter is missing.

Mesha’s introductory greeting to Piay follows the sender says to recipient *dd.n* structure without any elaborate preamble or greetings, placing his name first to establish his higher rank and following the style for official or business matters that Bakir

<sup>41</sup> Lines 5-7.

<sup>42</sup> Lines 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> Line 9.

<sup>44</sup> Source references: *KRI* III (1969- ): 156, Bakir (1970):Pl.6/VIII, Wente (1990): 113, Letter 131.

compares to the modern memo form.<sup>45</sup> He addresses his recipient as “the servant Piay,” using the word *sdmw*, but refers to the person in charge of the cattle of the House as *hm rwrw*/the slave Ruru. He tells Piay to *‘dd n.f drj sp-sn*/oppress him very strictly. The word *hm*, without any specific definition regarding the status of the person referred to, has been found in a few documents from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, but from the Eighteenth Dynasty onwards the context in which it is usually found indicates it as having the meaning “slave.”<sup>46</sup> While in this case it appears an inappropriate status for a person in such a responsible position, there is evidence that people referred to as *hm* could also be holders of land, as was also the case for *sdmw*.<sup>47</sup> Piay’s location is referred to in the letter as just *pr*, but the letter implies that Mesha is referring to a major estate, possibly that of Ramesses I, the House of Menpehtyre. The status of both Piay and Ruru could therefore be higher than their titles indicate.

The other person mentioned is Pabak who is described as *m-s3* /at the back of, or following, Ruru. The use of this phrase could be interpreted as referring to Pabak being subservient to Ruru rather than physically following him around as his overseer. This would further imply that Ruru was not in the typical slave’s position of being amongst the lowest in the social hierarchy. In either case the fact that Mesha had heard that Pabak had departed from Ruru and *nn wn jhw m-‘f* /the cattle were no longer with him, would cause Mesha to be concerned about the stock which were in his care. The use of the word *‘dd* to Piay when he tells him to get information about Pabek from Ruru, with its connotation of “oppression,” gives further emphasis to the importance of the request. This concern was possibly due to the number of animals in Pabak’s care. In a letter from the same period detailing the resources of the Estate of Amun<sup>48</sup> mention is made of “men, with cattle by herds, each man having 500 beasts,” a reference that could indicate the number of animals for which Pabek was responsible.

Mesha’s final concern is that they have come to take the *hprw*/form or shape of the cattle, a phrase that has the implication of a count or census. In his following words

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<sup>45</sup> Bakir (1970): 47-48.

<sup>46</sup> For specific examples see Bakir (1978): 29-32.

<sup>47</sup> Gardiner (1948a): 84.

<sup>48</sup> O. Gardiner 86, *KRI* III (1969- ): 138-140.



Mesha tells Piay to make sure that the *jḥw n nḥb grg/* “cattle of the requisition”<sup>49</sup> are made ready. Here, and in his opening words when Mesha asks Piay to *sjp p3 nḥb k3/* “inspect the requisition of cattle,”<sup>50</sup> he uses the word *nḥb* which also has the meaning “harnessed” or “yoked.” In this context “requisition” appears the more appropriate interpretation.<sup>51</sup>

That their actual place of work is the Ramesses I estate could be substantiated by Letter 10 (C. 58057) in Chapter 1. Here mention is also made of “the servant Piay” who, in this piece of correspondence, is associated with the House of Menpehtyre. Mesha is also mentioned as being of this estate, and although his title is given as “soldier” it is possible that he fulfilled both roles, being both a military man and a scribe. The two letters could therefore be providing incidents in the lives of the same two people.<sup>52</sup>

As noted the end of the letter is missing, but from the extant short piece of correspondence insight has been gained into hierarchy and responsibility regarding livestock, and the existence and importance of a cattle count. The manner of address that Mesha uses in his letter indicates his higher rank and his expectation of his request being addressed without delay. The ambivalence of slave status and the difficulty of definition is shown by the Ruru/Pabak working relationship and Ruru’s possible involvement, as indicated by Mesha to Piay, for the cattle requisition. Like Pabak he could have been in charge of a large number of animals despite his status of “slave” as well as being a holder of land despite this connotation.

## Letter 8

*Dynasty 21: P. Berlin 8523*<sup>53</sup>

This piece of correspondence is from Shedsukhons of the Temple of Khonsu to a recipient named Painebenadjed. Shedsukhons advises the latter that although he had told him he would not let him have further ploughing rights, when he returned to Thebes his wife had told him not to withdraw this landholding from Painebenadjed’s charge but to

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<sup>49</sup> *Verso* Line 1.

<sup>50</sup> Line 2.

<sup>51</sup> Regarding *nḥb* as meaning “requisition,” see Allam (1985) : 25/32 for further background on the appearance and use of the word.

<sup>52</sup> Allam (1985): 28 sees an additional similarity by referring to the fact that both letters are involved with issues regarding animals in the care of someone.

<sup>53</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Spiegelberg (1917): 107-111, Wente (1990): 90, Letter 339.

restore it to him. So he now advises Painebenadjed that “As soon as my letter reaches you, you shall attend to this landholding and not be neglectful of it.” He gives instructions about the work to be done and tells Painebenadjed that with regard to someone who may dispute this arrangement, he should keep the letter and take it as testimony to Serdjehuty, the person to whom Shedsukhons has entrusted his holdings of land.

The introductory greeting is in the straightforward sender to recipient style followed by the expression of wishes in the style of the period – that the recipient may be granted “life, prosperity and health and be in the favor of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your good lord.” The sender, Shedsukhons, gives his title as *hry-pdt*/Commander of a Host, which has been seen as one of the highest ranking officers subordinate only to a general.<sup>54</sup> It has been noted that while a person with this title would usually be associated with combat duty, he could also be concerned with administrative requirements.<sup>55</sup> Here Shedsukhons gives himself the additional title of scribe. The presence of such a high-ranking officer at the Temple of Khonsu would be in keeping with the political division between Upper and Lower Egypt, in which the Theban priesthood in Upper Egypt fulfilled not only the role of High Priest of Amun but also that of general in military command of Upper Egypt. Shedsukhons’ title would place him as the second-in-command, possibly to either Masaharta or Menkheperre. The status of Painebenadjed is unclear. He is addressed as *mnḥ n k3š*. In other documents *mnḥ* has been translated as “youth” or “tenant farmer.” In this context of husbandry requirements “tenant farmer” appears appropriate,<sup>56</sup> although given the military role of the sender the word has also been rendered as “cadet.”<sup>57</sup> He is therefore either a “tenant farmer from Kush” or a “cadet from Kush.” In either case it is of interest that Shedsukhons refers to his origin when he addresses him. The greeting is a polite one, but perhaps in this way Shedsukhons is reminding his recipient that he is a foreigner and thus of a lower status both in this regard and in terms of rank/occupation – one of the commander’s men who possibly needed to be differentiated from an Egyptian soldier.

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<sup>54</sup> Schulman (1964): 52.

<sup>55</sup> Schulman (1964): 55.

<sup>56</sup> See Spiegelberg (1917): 109, n.2.

<sup>57</sup> See Wentz (1990): 90, Letter 339.

While the sender of the letter holds military and administrative rank, he is also a landholder, and the reason for the correspondence is related to the farming of the land in his possession by the recipient. The issue which has prompted Shedsukhons to write gives insight into the status of a married woman with regard to property. He has to rescind the order to Painebenadjed denying him further ploughing rights because his wife *t3y hnwt n p3y pr.j/* “this mistress of my house,” has told him, with imperative emphasis, *m nhm t3y 3ht m drt p3-nb-n-ꜥdd/* “not to take away the land from Painebenadjed’s hand,”<sup>58</sup> but to *swd st n fjmj sk3.f st/* “hand it over to him, let him plough it.”<sup>59</sup> This can be seen as an example of the rights of a married woman in the management of property. It has been noted that a woman “married or unmarried is quite free to perform legal acts with regard to her own property without the interposition of her husband for legal validity or without there being any question of other restrictions whatsoever.”<sup>60</sup> While, as Harari suggests, the husband could presumably oppose the desires of his wife,<sup>61</sup> the fact that here he chooses not to do so could reflect that his wife was total owner, not the part owner. Pestman notes that “During the marriage the husband may acquire further property. In some cases from the New Kingdom onwards it appears that the wife is allotted a part of it, usually a third.”<sup>62</sup> He suggests that this is a case of “Lease of the land by the husband at the instigation of the wife.”<sup>63</sup> From this piece of correspondence it appears that the status of the husband with regard to property management was not necessarily related to his societal status – in this instance as a high-ranking commander and administrative official.

Shedsukhons continues by detailing the agricultural tasks that Painebenadjed must undertake and tells him *mtw.k tm nnj n.s/* “be not ineffective in this.” He asks specifically that he *t3y p3y km3 sk3 wꜥ st3t 3ht w3d-smw n t3y šdyt/* “remove the reeds, cultivate one aroura of land in vegetables at this well.”<sup>64</sup> His final instruction reflects the fact he has

<sup>58</sup> Alternative reading *m-dr p3-nb-n-ꜥdd/* away from Painebenadjed.

<sup>59</sup> Lines 8-11.

<sup>60</sup> Pieter Willem Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1961), 152-153.

<sup>61</sup> Ibram Harari, “La Capacité juridique de la femme au Nouvel Empire,” *Revue Internationale des Droits de l’Antiquité* 30 (1983): 52-53.

<sup>62</sup> Pestman (1961): 153.

<sup>63</sup> Pestman (1961): 153, n.11.

<sup>64</sup> Lines 13-17.

already re-allocated the tenure of the land and now, due to his wife's intervention, this has to be rescinded. He writes *hr jr p3 rmt nty jw.f mdt jrm.k/* "as for the man who may disagree with you,"<sup>65</sup> his recipient should take his letter and go before Serdjehuty *p3y sš hsb n pr Wsjr/* "accounting scribe of the temple of Osiris," because *hn.j n.f t3y.j 3ht n p3 nhbw t3y.j 3ht n t3y mct mjtt/* "I have entrusted to him my holding of the low lands and holding of this mudflat as well."<sup>66</sup> He concludes by telling Painebenadjed to *s3w t3y sct iry st n.k mtr/* "guard this letter as testimony for you."<sup>67</sup> The temple of Osiris was located at Abydos so it could be inferred that it was from there that Shedsukhons had returned after re-assigning his holdings to Serdjehuty, and where Painebenadjed and the land were located.

Apart from the information in the introductory greeting there is no further insight into the personalities or background of the sender and his recipient. While initially this piece of correspondence appeared to be a straightforward instruction from a landholder to his tenant, on closer analysis it has provided information regarding a woman's authority in the management of property and the domestic responsibilities that could be part of a high-ranking soldier's life. It also raises the question of the status of Painebenadjed, whether he was a soldier under Shedsukhons' command who was fulfilling agricultural duties in peacetime, (perhaps indicating the development of the Ramesside policy cited in the letter from Maiseti, *Cairo 58054*<sup>68</sup> when soldiers on inactive duty were allowed to tend their homes); whether he was working in this capacity as an independent tenant-farmer; or whether he was a servant brought from Kush at some point during cultural interaction. The instructions given to him provide information about husbandry and land ownership. Additionally this piece of correspondence has provided important insight both into land management and cultivation, as well as the property rights of married women.

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<sup>65</sup> Lines 18-19.

<sup>66</sup> Lines 23-25.

<sup>67</sup> Lines 26-27.

<sup>68</sup> Military and police matters: Letter 2.

## Provisions

### Letter 9

*Dynasty 18 Amenhotep II P. Berlin 10463*<sup>69</sup>

This is a letter from the mayor Sennofer to a tenant farmer named Baki advising him that he will join Baki “when one will land at Hut-sekhem within three days.” He then issues a series of orders with the stricture that Baki should not let him find fault with his post, that Baki should not have it lacking in proper order. Baki is instructed to collect lotus blossoms and flowers for presentation. He is also reminded that no wood has been cut this year and he needs to remedy this with 5000 boards and 200 planks so that the boat bringing Sennofer can take them on board. He tells him to get help from the mayor of Hu if necessary, and points out that the herdsmen of Qus and the herdsmen of the cattle under Sennofer’s authority can be called upon to join Baki’s existing workers. He also orders Baki to make sure that there is fresh milk on his arrival. He finally orders Baki not to be slack and ends with the caustic remark that he knows that he is lethargic and enjoys eating lying down.

The introductory greeting has the sender says to recipient *dd.n* structure without any elaborate preamble or greetings, following the style for official or business matters. The direct abruptness of the letter is in the style of a superior to one of lower status.

The sender identifies himself as the *h3ty-ꜥ n njwt rsy*/mayor of the southern city (Thebes). Apart from this prestigious title he is known to have held many other posts of consequence under Amenophis II.<sup>70</sup> These included Overseer of the orchard of Amun, Overseer of the tenant farmers of Amun, Overseer of the cattle of Amun and Overseer of the Fields of Amun. The exact order and timeframe of these positions is unclear as is the date of his tenure as mayor of Thebes, but he is the first known holder of this office since the reign of Hatshepsut. One of the titles attributed to him is Overseer of priests of Horus, lord of Qus.<sup>71</sup> This letter also links Sennofer to the place when he mentions “the herdsmen of Qus.” His background is also known from his funerary equipment found in tomb 42 in the Valley of the Kings and more especially from his picturesque “Tomb of

<sup>69</sup>Primary and secondary source references:: Ricardo Caminos, “Papyrus Berlin 10463,” *JEA* 49 (1963): Pl. VI/VIa, Wente (1990): 92, Letter 118.

<sup>70</sup>Der Manuelian (1987): 118-119.

<sup>71</sup>Der Manuelian (1987): 118.

the Vines” among the Tombs of the Nobles at Sheikh Abd el-Qurna. The decoration in the burial chamber reflects his responsibilities for the land and produce. The ceiling is covered with grapes and vines and other scenes depict him being offered flowers, together with a tree goddess scene.<sup>72</sup> The recipient Baki, as a *jhwtj*/cultivator, had an occupation which involved management of areas of land.<sup>73</sup> The letter places him in the Sistrum nome of Upper Egypt and the name of his father is given as Keysen. There is no other information about him, but Sennofer’s comments regarding Baki’s laziness suggest contact on previous occasions.

The letter seems simply an order for various provisions such as *knw nhbw hrnt wmw<sup>c</sup>*/many lotus blossoms and flowers fit to be offered, as well as *sbw*/boards of wood. There is also an unusual request to Baki that he *hn<sup>c</sup> ntk hn n n3 mnjw r rdt dj.sn grg jrnt m hnw m3wt*/ “command to the herdsmen in order to cause them to make ready milk in fresh vessels.”<sup>74</sup> It was perhaps to take back to use for offerings. As mayor of Thebes Sennofer would have the authority to demand such things for state-related events and building projects. From this perspective the letter provides details of requirements in the running of a major city. These requirements might also have been needed for the estates of Amun, responsibility for which could have continued as part of Sennofer’s mayoral duties. The wording *tw r mnj*/one will land, could be a reference to a royal entourage or just to Sennofer himself. Caminos notes that “*tw*, ‘One’, for Pharaoh is well known and may occur without the kingly determinative.”<sup>75</sup> As a reference to just the mayor it is possible he was making personal acquisitions rather than carrying out his duties in supplying provisions for the city and its estates, wielding his influence to provide himself with floral tributes and building material for his own private projects. If in the company of the king then it is unlikely he would load up such goods on his own personal behalf. He obviously expects to be able to take it all back on his boat, but he gives no indication of how long he will be moored at Hut-Sekhem. His announcement that he will come to Baki when the boat arrives in three days does not give Baki much time to organise so much wood. He has asked that he *š<sup>c</sup>d sbw h3 5000*/cut 5000 boards and *200 mrhnn*, an obscure

<sup>72</sup> See Porter and Moss (1960): 197-203 and for an overview of the tomb at [www.osiris.net/tombes/nobles/sennefer/e\\_sennefer\\_01.htm](http://www.osiris.net/tombes/nobles/sennefer/e_sennefer_01.htm)

<sup>73</sup> See Katary (1989): 134-135 re the varying areas of plots.

<sup>74</sup> *Verso* 1.

<sup>75</sup> Caminos (1963): 32.

word which has been rendered as planks.<sup>76</sup> Caminos suggests that the wood may be already cut and stored,<sup>77</sup> but the wording *n sꜥd.k ht m t3 rnpt/* “you have not cut wood in a year,”<sup>78</sup> and the possible need for so much extra labour to achieve this quota implies that the wood still had to be taken from standing trees. Sennofer refers to *mnjw n gsy njwt/* “herdsmen of the town of Qus” and *mnjw n t3 mnmnt nty r-ht.j/* “herdsmen of the cattle who are in my charge,”<sup>79</sup> as being additional resources Baki can turn to. On the other hand it could refer to the need to cut wood already felled but still not in a transportable length. From this order for boards and planks can be inferred the unusual existence of woods in the area. New Kingdom texts mention “The trees of Seth” in the vicinity of Hut-Sekhem<sup>80</sup> and this letter appears to confirm this. Sennofer presumes that the letter will arrive before him *n hrw 3/* in three days, but there is no reference to where he was when it was written. During the time of Sesostri I Hut-Sekhem became the main town of the VIIth nome of Upper Egypt. On the west bank of the Nile it was some 117km downstream from Thebes. Its origin was as an agricultural estate and, as in this letter, over time its name came to be shortened to *hwt/Hu*.<sup>81</sup> The timeframe of three days before his arrival fits with a departure from Thebes.<sup>82</sup> The messenger bringing the letter must have been sent by a quicker route. Sennofer has shown his authority over Baki throughout the letter. At the beginning he writes *m rdj t3y.j n.k hr t3y.k st m ng3 s(t) m sšr sp-sn/* “do not cause that I find fault with you on account of your office. Do not let it be lacking in extremely good order.”<sup>83</sup> His final remark to Baki is *jmj.k b3gt/* “you not be remiss,” because he knows he is *wj3wj3 mri.k wnm m sdr/* “lethargic<sup>84</sup> and enjoys eating lying down.”<sup>85</sup> Rather than being a reference to an actual habit of Baki’s, this could be an

<sup>76</sup> Caminos (1963): 33, Wente (1990): 93, Letter 118.

<sup>77</sup> Caminos (1963): 37.

<sup>78</sup> Line 5.

<sup>79</sup> Lines 6-7.

<sup>80</sup> Caminos (1963): 37 and Gardiner (1947): 31:344.

<sup>81</sup> Phillipe Collombert, “The Gods of Hut-Sekhem and the Seventh Nome of Upper Egypt,” in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists OLA 82* (ed. Christopher Eyre; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 290.

<sup>82</sup> However, Caminos (1963): 36 comments that this point of departure “should not be taken for granted.”

<sup>83</sup> Lines 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> See Sweeney (2003): 116-117 regarding the translation of *wj3wj3* as “slackness” which could be an alternative rendering here.

<sup>85</sup> *Verso* Line 3.

example of the kind of insulting phrase in use at the time by a highly-placed person such as Sennofer to someone of Baki's lower status.<sup>86</sup>

This piece of correspondence has provided a glimpse into Sennofer's responsibilities and the range of provisions needed for his city and its estates.<sup>87</sup> It has shown the necessity for him to personally travel to ensure they were correctly supplied. The form of address and the tone of the letter have shown the hierarchical gap between the sender and recipient, emphasised by the closing remark concerning Baki's lack of energy and eating habits. The letter was folded flat into an oblong package before being sealed.<sup>88</sup> The seal is incomplete due to its size relative to the width of the folded letter, but there is enough remaining to enable the prenomen of Amenophis II to be identified providing positive dating to his reign. The provenance and place of discovery are unknown, but the letter was received intact by the Berlin Museum, the seal unbroken, so Baki never received the letter, or if he did decided not to open it. Because of this the question arises of whether Sennofer was successful in getting the provisions he needed.

### **Letter 10**

*Dynasty 20: Ramesses IV P. Mallet V-VI*<sup>89</sup>

This is a further piece of correspondence from the overseer of cattle Bakenkhons, on this occasion to the scribe of the offering table Iryaa. He advises his recipient he was given a letter and a verbal request by the overseer of the treasury Khaemtore who "passed me by in the district of Kheriu," to provide 1000 measures of wood and 70 of charcoal, because Khaemtore had no wood in his storehouse apart from his annual appointed tax. He then states how Khaemtore returned with the request in a written document, so he had the wood and charcoal cut and put on the quay of Kheriu. He then tells Iryaa that he also had an additional 700 measures of wood and 50 of charcoal cut and put on the quay of Permaten. Bakenkhons writes that while travelling southwards he learned that Iryaa had sailed north, adding that he has sent a retainer with a load. He has told him to look after Iryaa and give him a bundle of vegetables. He asks that Iryaa attend to him and "prevent

<sup>86</sup> However, *jmj.k b3gt* can be seen as a politer form of address than the imperative.

<sup>87</sup> I feel this is the more likely reason for the requirements rather than acquiring for his own use.

<sup>88</sup> Caminos (1963): 30.

<sup>89</sup> Primary and secondary source references: *KRI* VI (1969- ): 67-8, Bakir (1970): Pls. 22-23/XXIX-XXX, Wente (1990): 128, Letter 152.



my people from being interfered with....Don't make me quarrel with you.” He adds that he has sent Iryaa a copy of the order.

The introductory greeting is in the sender to recipient *hr nd-hrt* style, indicating equal status and some familiarity.<sup>90</sup> Bakenkhons gives himself the specific title “of the altar of Amun-Re, King of the Gods” in contrast to “of the Estate of Amun-Re” which he attributes to himself in his previous letter.<sup>91</sup> His recipient is *šs-wdhw n p3 wd3 n jnw/* “scribe of the offering table of the storehouse of deliveries,” a title appropriate to the letter’s message regarding allocation of provisions. The following complimentary preamble calls upon Pre-Harakhti, as was customary for this period, followed by the words “as he rises and sets” to confer the blessings. These differ slightly from the usual construction by using just *jmj* before each blessing to read, “may you be healthy, may you be alive, may you be vigorous.”<sup>92</sup> In his previous letter regarding corvée labour,<sup>93</sup> Bakenkhons also mentions the district of Kheriu, with the implication that he travelled to the region to select the people for the workforce. This piece of correspondence confirming his presence in the area could mean that the meeting with Khaemtore occurred while he was there fulfilling this objective.

Khaemtore states that he does not have *ht m wd3 jnn p3y.j htr rnpt/* “wood in my storehouse except for my yearly tax,”<sup>94</sup> so Bakenkhons has been told to *grg p3 h3 n ht 50 n gsr n d<sup>c</sup>bw mjtt/* “make ready 1000 of wood and 50 measures of charcoal likewise.”<sup>95</sup> As has been noted and demonstrated by archaeological findings, wood was used extensively for a broad range of artefacts as well as, for example, furniture, weaponry, building construction and boat-building. The amount of wood requested by Khaemtore, and that which Bakenkhons put together for Iryaa, would have been to supply requirements such as these. The charcoal would have been needed for smelting and was “used extensively in the smelting of metal ores, since it enabled high temperatures, sometimes exceeding 1000 degrees Celsius.”<sup>96</sup> An example of this was its extensive use

<sup>90</sup> Bakir (1970): 41, 46-47.

<sup>91</sup> See Letter 5 in this chapter.

<sup>92</sup> Bakir (1970): 63 notes “the style characteristic of this period” as *jmj n.k* followed by the blessings.

<sup>93</sup> See Letter 5 in this chapter.

<sup>94</sup> V Lines 8-9.

<sup>95</sup> V Line 7.

<sup>96</sup> Nicholson and Shaw (2000): 354.

in the copper producing areas in the Sinai and Eastern Desert.<sup>97</sup> Acacia wood, because of its small size, was one of the primary woods used for the charcoal,<sup>98</sup> and the provision of both wood and charcoal from the Kheriu district implies that this was a prime area for acacia and other forestry in a country which overall had a “paucity of indigenous trees.”<sup>99</sup> Bakenkhons writes that initially Khaemtore *rdt n.j w<sup>c</sup> š<sup>c</sup>t*/gave me a document regarding his requirement. However, it appears that Bakenkhons was not allowed to keep it. It was only later when Khaemtore returned with *mjtt sš m d<sup>r</sup>t.f/a* a copy of the letter in his hand, that Bakenkhons *rdt š<sup>c</sup>d.tw/* “caused to be cut” the wood and charcoal, writing *jw.j w<sup>3</sup>h hr t<sup>3</sup> mryt p<sup>3</sup> t<sup>3</sup>š hrw/* “which I have deposited upon the quay of Kheriu.” He continues to say that he has cut *ky št 700 n ht ky 50 n gsr d<sup>c</sup>bw w<sup>3</sup>h hr t<sup>3</sup> mryt prm<sup>c</sup>tn/* “another 700 of wood and another 50 measures of charcoal placed upon the quay of Permaten,”<sup>100</sup> seemingly for Iryaa’s own use. Whether this is another location or the actual name for the place which he previously referred to as “the quay of the district of Kheriu” is unclear.

He does not specify what the *3tp*/load might be that he has sent with his retainer, but that he will give Iryaa a bundle of vegetables, *mrw w<sup>3</sup>d-smw* as well. Janssen discusses the distinctions and confusion between *w<sup>3</sup>d* and *smw* – whether the former refers to fresh vegetables planted in fields while the latter is used for those planted in gardens. In this case as a combination of the two it could refer to either. There is no clear conclusion. Given that *w<sup>3</sup>d* seemed to be measured only in *mrw* /bundles, then this is probably a reference to vegetables from the field.<sup>101</sup> The term “bundle” in this context does not provide an indication of amount, but transactions have shown a “more or less constant price (...where 70 bundles all seem to cost ½ *deben* each) points to a fairly fixed quantity.”<sup>102</sup>

The generosity and concern shown are then countered by the final words which are an order to attend to the person he has sent and *tm dyt th<sup>3</sup>.tw n<sup>3</sup>y.j rmt/* “do not cause that one interfere with my people.” He gives no reason, presuming that his recipient will know from a previous communication. He concludes by telling him *m dyt jrj.j tttt jrm.k/*

<sup>97</sup> For full details of various ores and locations see Nicholson and Shaw (2000): 148-176.

<sup>98</sup> Nicholson and Shaw (2000): 335.

<sup>99</sup> Nicholson and Shaw (2000): 354.

<sup>100</sup> VI Lines 3-5.

<sup>101</sup> Janssen, (1975): 359-360.

<sup>102</sup> Janssen (1975): 360.

“do not make me quarrel with you.”<sup>103</sup> This final instruction is perhaps intended to avoid too much familiarity and to indicate that, although the greeting has suggested a similar status as well as concern for his recipient’s well-being, the writer is in a superior position.

From this piece of correspondence further insight has been given into Bakenkhons’ responsibilities and his travels as overseer of cattle, in addition to those found in the previous Letter 5 – duties which are still related to estate management. A certain hierarchy and a deference to administrative protocol is implied by his delay in cutting the wood and charcoal until he has received a copy of the order from Khaemtore. The exact amounts of wood and charcoal in terms of volume and weight are unclear, and the specific use to which these supplies will be put is not stated. But by the concern of the treasurer Khaemtore for his lack of storehouse stock, the promptness of Bakenkhons’ provision of it, together with his unrequested amount for Iryaa, this letter has indicated their importance and the ongoing focus on their use in ancient Egyptian industry and daily life.

## **Personal enquiries and health**

### **Letter 11**

*Dynasty 18 Hatshepsut P. BM 10103*<sup>104</sup>

This is a complete letter in which the sender just asks his recipient how he is, and adds that he, the sender, is alright.

The writer of the letter is Hori who omits any title or reference to his own status. The recipient once again, as evidenced by the address on the *verso*, is “the scribe Ahmose of Peniati, his Lord.” The greeting follows the introductory formula sender to recipient in the style *hr nd-hrt* which is used when the sender is showing some concern regarding his recipient.<sup>105</sup> In this case it is for the well-being of Ahmose. Based on the wording of the *verso* address, in which Hori uses the words *nb.f*/his lord or master to describe Ahmose, and on his view that “the restoration fits the gap exactly,” Glanville<sup>106</sup> has restored these words to follow *hr nd-hrt* in the opening greeting, which suggests that Hori was of lower

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<sup>103</sup> VI Lines 10-11.

<sup>104</sup> Source references: Glanville (1928): Pl. XXXV, Wente (1990): 91, Letter 114.

<sup>105</sup> Bakir (1970): 47.

<sup>106</sup> Glanville (1928): 303.

status.<sup>107</sup> The complimentary preamble which follows would seem to confirm this, although the form of opening greeting has also been seen to indicate familiarity and equal rank. Hori mentions only one form of the Sun god “Amon-Re, King of the Gods,” but continues by invoking “Ptah South-of-his-Wall,” “Thoth lord of sacred writings” and the “gods and goddesses who are in Karnak.” The reference to these latter deities shows a location for himself, and possibly his recipient, in the vicinity of Thebes. His final reference to “the gods and goddesses in Karnak” is a more specific reference that could indicate the place at which Hori had administrative duties. Seemingly the only purpose of this apparently unofficial letter is concern for Ahmose’s health and well-being. The actual subject matter is contained in just a few words *hj kdw.k jn jw.k mj šs mk .j mj šs /* “How are you? Are you alright? See, I am alright.”<sup>108</sup> The reason given for such a briefly focused message is unclear. The tone of the letter is one of deference. It is included in this selection as the possible forerunner of a request for a favour or the need for an administrative action of some kind that required his recipient’s permission, rather than being just an example of a formulaic piece of writing.

### Letters 12 and 13

*Dynasty 18 Akhenaten P. Robert Mond 1<sup>109</sup> and 2<sup>110</sup>*

These two letters were sent together by Robert Mond to Thomas Eric Peet in a photographic-plate box labelled “from the tomb of Hes.” Written on two papyri by the same person to two different people it is unclear whether the recipients received the letters. Peet comments on their “exceedingly bad condition”<sup>111</sup> which has made them hard to decipher, and the resulting *lacunae* in the texts makes them difficult to interpret.

The first letter is from Ramose of the house of Princess [Meritaten], to Meh. Initially he is concerned with Meh’s well-being and reprimands Meh for not keeping in touch. There then seems to be some concern regarding a woman that Ramose wants sent

<sup>107</sup> Bakir (1970): 47 points out that this would make it the single example of *nb.f* being included in this particular form of the introductory formula.

<sup>108</sup> Line 4.

<sup>109</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Thomas Eric Peet, “Two letters from Akehetaten,” *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, University of Liverpool 17 (1930): Pls. XVIII-XXV, Wente (1990): 94, Letter 123.

<sup>110</sup> Primary and secondary source references: Peet (1930): Pls. XXVII-XXX, Wente (1990): 95, Letter 124.

<sup>111</sup> Peet (1930): 82.

to him, and he is asking Meh to arrange this. If the woman in question does not take heed of Meh to come, then Ramose sees the need for magistrates to be involved. The conclusion appears to be relevant to other matters which have been brought up in the missing text. He advises Meh that he had asked the Aten for guidance and the Aten has provided this guidance. He mentions a servant (the name is missing) who is to bring an unnamed person, possibly the woman mentioned earlier. The final words seem to imply that Meh is to bring this servant to stay with Ramose in the house of Meritaten until Meh returns.

Ramose, the sender of this letter, is *ht sgnn*/the unguent preparator (heater of oil) of the house of Princess Meritaten. He names the recipient Meh as *sn.f sšpr-hd* /his brother, the treasury scribe, but it is not clear whether he uses the term “brother” to denote family or as a term of friendship.<sup>112</sup> Ramose states that he is in the city of Akhetaten but the whereabouts of Meh is not stated, although as a scribe of the treasury he is possibly also in the city.

The introductory greeting follows the *hr nd-hrt* style of sender to recipient in which the sender (as here) follows the greeting by enquiring after the needs and health of the recipient and is addressing someone of similar status or a family member. This latter point could be seen to confirm a filial relationship between Ramose and Meh. The importance of this letter lies in the fact that there is no invocation of the traditional deities. In his greeting Ramose appeals to the Aten as the source of favour and assistance. He uses the words *ʿnh wḏ3 snb m ḥst p3 jtn ʿnh rʿ nb/* “in life, prosperity and health and in the favour of the living Aten every day.” He continues that he is *ʿ3 ḏd.n hr p3 jtn ʿnh/* “here calling upon the Aten, life, prosperity, health.”<sup>113</sup> Later in the letter he writes that he has asked the Aten for advice and has received it */jry.n.j p3 jtn šhr jw n.j šhr jry.f.*<sup>114</sup> To emphasize his status the Aten’s name is enclosed in the royal cartouche. In terms of societal structure and religious custom it provides evidence of the shift from the traditional deities to the Aten, and shows that a person other than Akhenaten himself was able to invoke the name of the god.

<sup>112</sup> The scribe Meh is also the recipient of Letter 3 in this chapter, dated to the same period.

<sup>113</sup> Pl. XXIII Line 2.

<sup>114</sup> Pl. XXIII Line 17.

The second of these two letters found in the tomb of Hes is also from Ramose, this time to his sister Sherire. As in the letter to Meh he asks after her health. He berates her for not writing to let him know how she is. It has evidently been a number of years, since he has heard from her. He comments that if she has committed a million faults he has forgotten them as he forgets his own. Once again the fragmentation of the papyrus makes it difficult to interpret the other matters about which Ramose writes. He appears to tell his sister to return as soon as she receives this letter. He expresses his concern for her once again, warns her to keep watch over the things in her possession and that he has no woman with him. The final matters of the letter concern a request to his sister to denounce a person whose name appears to be Nebnefer to the magistrates, an instruction to his sister to ignore his daughter and messages to various people named as Towy, Sehen, Huy, and to Weri wishing them good health.

As in Ramose's previous letter the introductory greeting follows the *hr nd-ḥrt* structure of sender to recipient which is followed by the sender enquiring after the needs and health of the recipient and is addressing someone of similar status or, as in this case, a family member, Sherire. He refers to her as *st nbt pr*/the lady of the house. Again there is no invocation of the traditional deities but, despite some *lacunae*, the same words "In life, prosperity and health and in the favour of the living Aten every day" can be construed. In his greeting to Towy he writes, as in the previous letter, that he is *dd.n ḥr p3 jtn ḥnh*/calling upon the Aten, life prosperity, health, writing *sndm-jb sndm-jb*/rejoice, rejoice, and adding *jry-w n j shr*/guidance has been given me.

The *lacunae* make interpretation difficult in terms of societal structure and personalities. Points that can be discerned are firstly that Ramose once again invokes *jtn*/the Aten rather than the traditional deities, both when he addresses his sister and Towy. Secondly, with regard to the personal and social content of the letter, Ramose complains to his sister about her lack of contact, asking why she has never written *m dt rmt nbt nty ḥr jj*/ "by the hand of every person who comes." The timespan of this neglect appears to be a number of years but the exact figure is unclear.<sup>115</sup> He mitigates the complaint by stating if you have *jry n.j ḥḥ* [...] *ḥm.j sn mj-ḳd p3y.j ḥm nty m j*/ "made to

<sup>115</sup> With regard to a possible timespan of four years, Baines comments that this would represent perhaps a third of the possible timespan within which letters from el-Amarna were sent. Baines (2001): 21, n.62.

me a million [faults] I forget them just as I forget those which are in me.”<sup>116</sup> The word *hm*/forget, in this context can be seen as synonymous with forgiveness.<sup>117</sup> In this way he implies that one person should forgive another because they themselves also do wrong on occasion. Sweeney comments on the rarity of examples of forgiveness in ancient Egyptian letters and cites this as the “most explicit instance.”<sup>118</sup> This mutual forgiveness is followed by Ramose’s series of requests and questions, perhaps as a way of showing that he has moved on to continue with normal brother/sister matters unaffected by the previous complaint.

The importance of both these pieces of correspondence lies in their demonstration of the change which had taken place in the focus of worship under Akhenaten, reflecting the spread of the influence of the new religious focus to the people themselves. It shows that the Aten could be asked by them to grant a request directly without the use of an intermediary. The greeting does not invoke the favour of the conventional deities of previous periods but that of the “living Aten every day” and it is the Aten that Ramose calls upon to keep Meh and Sherire in good health, putting his reference *jtn* within the royal cartouche. This interpretation indicates that even Akhenaten in the position of king no longer had the status of an intermediary or a godlike figure in this context. There is the implication that this is an accepted change. However Assmann<sup>119</sup> argues that Akhenaten resisted this and that his loyalist teachings, preserved in the tomb inscriptions of his followers, reflect his attempt to “die Stellung des Königs als ‘Gott des Einzelnen’ ... zu restituieren.”<sup>120</sup> Overall, there are few examples of personal letters from the Eighteenth Dynasty, and these two papyri are the only ones so far found from the time of Akhenaten giving personal evidence of the focus of worship change and contain so far the only hieratic writing of his name.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Pl. XXVII Line 6.

<sup>117</sup> For an argument supporting this see Sweeney (1998), 356.

<sup>118</sup> Sweeney (1998): 355.

<sup>119</sup> For full discussion see Jan Assmann, “Weisheit, Loyalismus und Frömmigkeit,” in *Studien zu altägyptischen Lebenslehren* (ed. Erik Hornung and Othmar Keel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979), 11-72.

<sup>120</sup> Assmann (1979): 51.

<sup>121</sup> Peet (1932): 89:2/Pls. XVII-XXII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII.

## Letter 14

*Dynasty 19: Ramesses I-Seti I P. Northumberland I*<sup>122</sup>

This letter is from the scribe Meh to a scribe Yeh the younger. He asks repeatedly after the welfare of his recipient before continuing with the “further matter” which involves a chariot officer named Merymose. He tells Yeh to give Merymose his personal attention as Meh has told the latter to go to the mayor to “Seek out those two boats which Pharaoh, I.p.h., assigned to him and have them sought for him wherever they may be.” He again asks Yeh to give Merymose his personal attention and asks him to ensure Merymose is not treated as Meh was by Yeh. Following is a message from the chantress of Amun, Nefrese, telling Yeh how much she longs to see him, calling upon Thoth and all the gods at the temple of Thoth to keep him healthy. Meh once more asks that Yeh give Merymose his personal attention and to write to him about his state of health. He also mentions an assignment from the general of which Yeh has to take note. He asks that Merymose bring him a roll of papyrus and “some very good ink.” He concludes with another request that his recipient “write to me all about your state of health.”

In the simple sender to recipient initial greeting the scribe Meh inquires about the condition of Yeh, using the form *hr nd-hrt* which is appropriate for the expression of concern which follows and reflects familiarity and similar status. This familiarity is emphasised by further questions. *hj kd-k*/What is your condition? *tw-k mj jh sp-sn*/How are you? (using the intensification of *sp-sn*). He repeats again *hj kd-k* and continues by asking *jn jw.k m-šsr*/Are you alright? *mk tw.j šs*/I am alright. These expressions of concern can be seen as part of the salutation<sup>123</sup> and are followed by a short-form complimentary preamble. Meh calls upon Amun, Ptah, Pre-Harakhti and the gods of the Temple of Thoth, concluding with the blessing formula *jmj snb.k jmj nḥ.k jmj wn.k m ḥst pth*/ “May you be well, may you live, may you be in the favour of Ptah.” The use of *snb* has been noted as “a peculiarity of XIXth Dynasty letters.”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Source references: John Barns, “Three Hieratic Papyri in the Duke of Northumberland’s Collection,” *JEA* 34 (1948): Pls. IX-X/36-37, *KRI* I (1969-): 239-240, Wente (1990): 113, Letter 132.

<sup>123</sup> Bakir (1970): 76-77.

<sup>124</sup> Bakir (1970): 63.



Meh then turns to the first business issue of the letter, a further matter introduced by the transitional *ky-dd* to introduce instructions.<sup>125</sup> This is in regard to Merymose, who is given the title *snnj*/chariot-warrior,<sup>126</sup> whom Meh has sent to the mayor to ask him to *wh3 p3y kr2 jw djt n.f pr-ꜥ3 ꜥnh mtw.k djt wh3 n.f m st nb sp-sn*/ “look for the two boats which Pharaoh gave to him, to cause that one look for them in every place”<sup>127</sup> (emphasised by *sp-sn*), and in giving attention to Merymose *m dj hpr.f mj p3 shr jr.n.k n. j*/ “not cause it to become like the way you did to me,” when evidently Yeh had kept *gs n ꜥkw r swn.f m hd*/ “half of the provisions to trade them for money.”<sup>128</sup>

He continues by including the words of the *šmꜥyt n jmn*/chantress of Amun, Nefrese, which (in contrast to the previous and following business related issues) are a personal communication to Yeh. She asks Yeh *tw.k mj jh*/How are you, and emphasises this forcefully by the inclusion of *sp-sn* four times. She continues *jb.j r ptr.k r jh sp-sn*/ “my heart longs to see you.” She emphasises her feeling further by saying *jw jrty.j mj ꜥ3 Mn-nfr p3 wn tw.j hkr.kwj m ptr.k*/ “my eyes are as great as Memphis, because I hunger for the sight of you.”<sup>129</sup> She also calls upon Thoth and all the gods of the Temple of Thoth to keep him well and to live.

Meh then continues with *ky dd*/further instructions to Yeh, to note the business which the general had written to him about, but does not include any details. There follows a *non-sequitur* similar to previous letters<sup>130</sup> when he asks Merymose to bring him *wꜥ n ꜥw dmꜥ*<sup>131</sup> *mjt nkt n ry nfr sp-sn jw m dj jn.tw bjn*/ “a roll of papyrus, likewise some really good ink, do not let bad be brought.”<sup>132</sup> He finishes by telling Yeh to write to him about his own health.

There are several insights into life and customs that can be found in this piece of correspondence. The concern shown in the introductory wording by the sender for his recipient has been balanced by his need to advise about his own condition – an interesting combination of worry and reassurance which, apart from being just formulaic, is perhaps

<sup>125</sup> Bakir (1970): 52-53.

<sup>126</sup> See Schulman (1964): 59 for overview of the duties of a chariot-warrior.

<sup>127</sup> Lines 7-8.

<sup>128</sup> Lines 9-10.

<sup>129</sup> Line 12 – *Verso* Line 1.

<sup>130</sup> See Chapter Three, Letters 2 and 3.

<sup>131</sup> See Barns (1948): 40, n.6 for comment re divergent spelling.

<sup>132</sup> *Verso* Lines 6-7.

also reflecting genuine social courtesy. A societal aspect of this letter is the integration of military and administrative duties – the fact that Merymose is a chariot-warrior carrying out administrative tasks at the behest of a civilian scribe. Yeh is to make sure not only that Merymose locates the two boats, but also that he take back papyrus and ink to Meh, indicating that persons of this rank were “not always obliged to be on active service” and could be “subject to the civil administration for clerical purposes.”<sup>133</sup>

Of additional interest is the fact that the letter contains, as it were, another letter within it which is in total contrast to the business requests. The content of the addition is unusual in that such an expression of emotion is not often found in personal letters. Here, as noted above, the references to “eyes as great as Memphis” and “I am so hungry for the sight of you” reflect desire and the implication of a previous relationship. It is interesting to speculate whether, given the indication of an ongoing correspondence and relationship between Meh and Yeh, whether Meh is in fact “teasing” his recipient with what could be a contrived message. While there is no background given for the subject of her emotion, in order to claim the attentions of a chantress of Amun Yeh perhaps held additional status to his scribal position. His location is uncertain but the invocation of Thoth and the Temple of Thoth as well as Ptah by the writer and the chantress indicates a location in Memphis

### Summary

*Analysis of topics and forms of address:*<sup>134</sup> Analysis of these letters has identified a variety of topics related to aspects of daily life and the people involved. Regarding building work and labour – in the first letter the subject is the building of a house. The details given in this piece of correspondence provide knowledge regarding layout, materials and dimensions of a domestic dwelling. The sender addresses his recipient in the *hr nd-hrt* form to suggest in this instance familiarity. It is followed by the full complimentary preamble appropriate to a recipient of higher status, and possibly to smooth the way for his building work requests later in the letter, when he gives specific orders to his recipient to hasten the building of the house and to give the costing to its

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<sup>133</sup> Schulman (1964): 16.

<sup>134</sup> Table 4 at the end of this chapter provides an overview of the information regarding senders/recipients, formulae/phraseology of greetings and chronology detailed in this chapter and its summary.

owner to avoid dispute. Insight is given into the administrative process that could occur regarding the building of a house and the knowledge of building work a mayor could have in addition to his other duties. Letter 2 concerns the work of stonemasons and a request for payment. Although brief with only the names of sender and recipient given in the *dd.n/says* to form, and containing no specific detail of the finished work or the work to be done, it is of interest as a piece of personal information concerning stone-working. Letter 3, between two scribes with the brief sender to recipient style address, is a short note providing confirmation of the need for gypsum at the Houses of Sehetep-Aten and that of Nebmaure, indicating that building work was being carried out at these locations requiring this material. The first building mentioned is related to Akhenaten himself. Letter 4 from this period is a single fragment referring to seven bundles of unspecified product that need to be taken from a magazine. While brief these letters have relevance due to the lack of such private correspondence from the Amarna period. The organisation of agricultural labour is the subject of Letter 5. The sender addresses his recipients using the *dd.n* form of an official letter. From a hierarchical perspective it shows that an overseer of cattle had the authority to order selected people of various rank and occupation to undertake the compulsory service of clearing farmland off which they would be living. The significance of this letter lies in its confirmation of the on-going custom of *corvée* labour during this period regardless of status and occupation and the societal structure which enabled its enforcement.

There are two letters under the topic of Husbandry. The first letter (Letter 6) is another piece of correspondence concerning Ahmose of Peniati. It is apparently from his brother as it is written in a personal manner with the familial use of the *hr nd-hrt* greeting. He addresses his recipient with an elaborate preamble and uses terms of endearment. This letter is of interest as evidence of familial interaction and the responsibilities of a younger sibling in managing their property in the recipient's absence. The crops that he mentions, such as barley and flax, give an indication of the importance of certain produce at the time. Letter 7 is concerned firstly with the requisitioning of cattle. The sender is the scribe Mesha who address his recipient using the business-like *dd.n* form, appropriate to their relevant status. The differing terms he uses for the people involved in fulfilling this requirement are of interest as they reflect an ambivalence as to

their status as a servant or slave. His second concern is regarding a cattle census, providing confirmation of an administrative need to take a count (census) of livestock. Letter 8 is concerned with the cultivation of land and from a societal aspect provides insight into the status of a wife with regard to property. The sender uses the business-like *dd.n/says* to recipient form.

Letters 9 and 10 are concerned with provisions. In Letter 9 the sender asks his recipient to fulfil a number of tasks related to their supply using the brief *dd.n* style of address. His letter provides an insight into the range of supplies, including an unusual request for fresh milk in vessels, which could be demanded by an authority such as the sender Sennofer. His requirement for cut wood indicates the presence of trees in the area, an interesting point as this is an unusual occurrence. As an insight into personality or as an example of humorous insult, his recipient Baki is characterised by the reference to his slackness and habit of eating lying down. Letter 9 indicates the importance of the provisioning and use of wood and charcoal as well as the unusual presence of trees in the area of Kheriu, although the district's actual location is uncertain. The sender of Letter 10 addresses his recipient using the *hr nd-hrt* form indicating a familiarity and the sender's status.

There are four letters that are mainly concerned with personal enquiries and health. The first Letter 11 uses the greeting *hr nd-hrt* that here is indicating the sender's concern for his recipient and which he follows with an elaborate preamble. It gives no specific societal or personal insight but interest lies in the fact that it is a complete letter from this period. It prompts speculation as to whether, rather than being a formulaic piece of correspondence, it was designed to incur the recipient's pleasure as a preliminary to a specific request.

Letters 12 and 13 from Ramose of the House of Princess Meritaten are concerned initially with the welfare of the recipient, but continue by covering matters which provide a more interesting insight into problems, relationships and the new religious focus of society. The *lacunae* of the first letter to Meh, apparently his brother, make it difficult to follow, but the writing contains important allusions to the Aten as being the source of influence over personal well-being and the source of guidance for personal problems, showing the change in focus from the traditional gods. This change is also apparent in the

greeting which also omits the usual gods and names the “living Aten.” In the second letter, to his sister Sherire, Ramose initially is concerned with her welfare and lack of communication. From the emotional perspective there is the suggestion of forgiveness which, as Sweeney comments, is a feeling not usually found expressed in personal letters. In these letters the recipient is addressed initially with the *ḥd nd-ḥrt* greeting of concern and indication of familial contact. The sender of Letter 14 uses this greeting form to show concern, and the content is another reflection of the integration of military and administrative responsibilities. It also contains the unusual expression of emotions in its message from the chantress of Amun within the letter.

The people in the above range of letters have varied in occupation and title as have modes of address. Looking at the forms of address has enabled interpretation of the status of the writer to recipient and *vice versa*, and the way they could relate to the subject matter of the letter. The structure of the greetings has also shown whether the people involved have been in previous communication, are concerned with each other’s well-being or are demonstrating authority in a business situation. These differing styles have also given some insight into personality and character. There has been the brief “sender says to recipient” form and the variation of this which has the addition of titles and status. In some cases a full complimentary preamble has been included, its presence reflecting a confirmation of the chronology as shown in the Table below.

As Baines comments “letters addressed to superiors, to equals, and occasionally to inferiors, can include similar phraseology; the features of social hierarchy that they exhibit have their centre elsewhere...”<sup>135</sup> From a social aspect the analysis of the letters in this chapter has revealed these “centres” by giving insight into the social aspects under the various topics, providing a wide range of information. It has confirmed the importance of such personal communication in providing additional knowledge of ancient Egyptian society and the issues and customs of daily life over the periods considered.

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<sup>135</sup> Baines (2001): 6.

Table 4

No.	Sender name/social position	Recipient (s) name/social position	Formulae of address	Dated to
1	<b>Building works and labour</b> Mentuhotep/mayor	Ahmose/assistant to Peniati, Director of Works of Hermonthis	<i>hr nḏ-hrt</i> /greet (as possible sign of familiarity) Complimentary preamble calling on "the favour of Amun-re, King of the gods, of Atum, Lord of Heliopolis, of Re-Harakhti, of Thoth, lord of sacred writings, of [Seshat], mistress of script, and of your august god who loves you, may they give you favour, love and proficiency in everyone's presence."	Dynasty 18/Hatshepsut
2	Kenamon/no title	Hormose/no title	<i>dd.n</i> /says to	Dynasty 18
3	May/scribe of the city of Assiut	Meh/scribe	<i>n/to</i>	Dynasty 18/Akhenaten
4	no name or title	no name or title	No words of greeting or address	Dynasty 18/Akhenaten
5	Bakenkhons/cattle overseer of the Estate of Amun-Re, King of the Gods	Maiseti and Setemhab/policemen. Paukhed/administrator of the portable shrine of the king. Paiuten and Usekhnemtet/cultivators. Herdsmen/of the altar of Amun	<i>dd. n</i> /says to	Dynasty 20/Ramesses IV
6	<b>Husbandry</b> Teti/no title	Ahmose/scribe	<i>hr nḏ-hrt</i> /greet (as familial contact) Complimentary preamble calling on "the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your august god who loves [you], of Thoth, lord of sacred writings, and of Ptah the Great, South-of-his-Wall, lord of Ankhtowi, and of your august god who loves you."	Dynasty 18/Hatshepsut
7	Mesha/scribe	Piay/servant	<i>dd.n</i> /says to. Short preamble "in the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your good lord. May he give you life, prosperity and health."	Dynasty 19
8	Shedsukhons/ troop captain and scribe of the Temple of Khonsu	Painebenadjed/cadet of Kush/tenant farmer of Kush	<i>dd.n</i> /says to Short preamble "in the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, your good lord. May he give you life, prosperity and health."	Dynasty 20

9	<b>Provisions</b> Sennofer/ mayor of the Southern City	Baki/cultivator	<i>dd.n/says to</i>	Dynasty 18/Amenhotep II
10	Bakenkhons/cattle overseer of the altar of Amun-Re, King of the Gods	Iryaa/scribe of the offering table of the magazine of deliveries	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets</i> (as sign of status/familiarity) Complimentary preamble "in the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods. Every day I am calling upon Pre-Harakhti when he rises and sets to keep you healthy, to keep you alive and to keep you vigorous."	Dynasty 20/Ramesses IV
11	<b>Personal enquiries and health</b> Hori/no title	Ahmose/no title	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets</i> (inquires the health of) Complimentary preamble "in the favour of Amun-Re, King of the Gods, of Ptah South-of-his-Wall, of Thoth, lord of sacred writings and of the gods and goddesses who are in Karnak. May they give you favour, love and proficiency wherever you may be."	Dynasty 18/Hatshepsut
12	Ramose/unguent preparator of the House of Princess Meritaten	Meh/treasury scribe (?brother)	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets</i> (inquires the health of/possible familial contact) "in the favour of the living Aten every day."	Dynasty 18/Akhenaten
13	Ramose/unguent preparator of the House of Princess Meritaten	Sherire/lady of the house	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets</i> (inquires the health of/familial contact) "in the favour of the living Aten every day."	Dynasty 18/Akhenaten
14	Meh/scribe	Yeh/scribe	<i>hr nd-hrt/greets</i> (inquires the health of/familiarity/status) Complimentary preamble calling on "Amun, Ptah, Pre-Harakhti and all the gods of the Temple of Thoth to keep you healthy, to keep you alive, to keep you in the favour of Ptah, your good lord, to let you undertake things and have them succeed, and to let you be rewarded for whatever you have achieved."	Dynasty 19/Ramesses I-Seti I

## Chapter Five

### Further analysis

The previous chapters have discussed and analysed the correspondence by focusing on individual topics. This chapter will first look at the specific social aspects and *mores* reflected by an analysis of the letters in totality. It will then discuss the distinctiveness of the data which the letters can provide, in comparison with other sources, regarding details of ancient Egyptian society and custom.

### Aspects of agricultural organisation and natural resources

In his discussion of societal structure and agricultural practices, Moreno García comments that “herders, foragers and traders...played a crucial role in the exchange of goods and in the exploitation of natural resources (grazing land, salt, plants, honey, game, charcoal, fish etc.),”<sup>1</sup> and points to evidence from current research into administrative documents that have led to “recent evaluations of the very foundations of Egyptian agriculture...and its social organisation.”<sup>2</sup> The following analysis shows that personal correspondence can also be an important primary source of information in these areas.

Examples can be found from the selection of letters concerned with daily life. Information regarding the social organisation of agriculture is given in Letter 5, which is an order for *corvée* labour to clear farmland. While the sender is a cattle overseer, the recipients he is addressing are two policemen, an administrator of the portable shrine of the king, two cultivators and the herdsmen of the altar of Amun. This variety of occupations shows that even those with some societal status within the community were still subject to enforced agricultural work at the command of an overseer of cattle. In Letter 7 the sender uses a form of address that indicates a higher rank over his recipients. He refers to himself as “scribe,” addressing his recipient as “servant” and a third party as “slave.” The person referred to in the letter as *hm* could also be a holder of land. The social category of “slave” could be seen here in the context of the use of a general term

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Carlos Moreno García, “Recent Developments in the Social and Economic History of Ancient Egypt,” *JANEH* 1/2 (2014): 4.

<sup>2</sup> Moreno García (2014): 14.



which disguises greater status and wealth. This example of social organisation within agriculture is related to the management of cattle, and confirms the practice of a cattle count or census and shows that a scribe could have additional responsibility for agricultural matters. In the following piece of correspondence, Letter 8, the sender is a high ranking military officer and his recipient a tenant farmer/cadet from Kush. The sender is writing to withdraw a previous order to his recipient which rescinded further ploughing rights. While he initially appears to be the primary decision-maker with regard to this tenanted land, an authority appropriate to a person of his status, he reveals that it is his wife who has told him to restore the ploughing rights. This letter provides evidence of a societal structure of agricultural organisation in which a married woman has rights of property management. It shows that a “Commander of a Host” – a rank subordinate only to a General – could be involved in an agricultural matter of this kind at the instigation of a woman. Additionally there is some information on the cultivation of the land by the sender’s instructions to his tenant regarding the removal of reeds and the cultivation of one *aroura* in vegetables.

Information about natural resources and the social organisation for its exploitation is given in Letters 9 and 10. In the former piece of correspondence a large quantity of wood – 5000 boards and 200 planks – is amongst the supplies which the mayor of Thebes is ordering his cultivator recipient to organise for transportation. The requirement for this amount of wood gives some insight into the work expected from a person with the title of cultivator, who is accused of not having cut wood in a year. From the perspective of agricultural organisation this indicates “the responsibilities of a *jḥwty* who clearly does not actually cultivate the land” and indicates the existence of what can be termed “pseudo-cultivators because of their primarily managerial role.”<sup>3</sup> It is herdsmen from Qus, and “of the cattle” that the mayor cites as being available to assist in cutting the wood, an indication that those with other occupations in the agricultural sector could be drafted to provide the additional labour-force for such a requirement if needed. In Letter 10 it is again an overseer of cattle, seemingly the same overseer who was named in Letter 5, who is the person within the social hierarchy responsible for

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<sup>3</sup> Sally L.D.Katary, “The Administration of Institutional Agriculture in the New Kingdom,” in *Ancient Egyptian Administration* (ed. Juan Carlos Moreno García; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 748.

organising the provision of 1000 measures of wood and 70 of charcoal for the overseer of the treasury, giving insight into the amount of these natural resources that needed to be available in his storehouse to fulfil building and smelting requirements. These measures have been left on the quay of Kheriu. An additional 700 measures of wood and 50 of charcoal have been left at the quay of Permaten specifically for the recipient of the letter who is the scribe of the offering table of the storehouse of deliveries. Although the actual geographical location of the overseer and the quays where he has left the supplies is unclear, the fulfilled requests in this letter indicate the presence of the natural resources of acacia and forestry in the locality.

The above insights which these letters have provided into agricultural and natural resource organisation, show their importance as an additional primary source to “the bulk of documentation and archaeological evidence at our disposal which only concerns a slight segment of Egyptian society.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Religious aspects**

The individual chapters and their summaries have noted and discussed the use of the introductory formulaic variations which invoke a specific deity or series of deities to keep the recipient alive, well, and in the favour of the gods invoked.<sup>5</sup> But interestingly there are few instances of other religious terms of reference within the actual content of the letters to enable insight into religious attitudes and belief. The writers of the letters of complaint do not invoke the aid of the gods to resolve their problems or to inflict harm on the recipient of their complaint. As Sweeney comments, “wrongdoing is discussed in terms of wrongs between human beings, rather than in terms of sins against divine commandments.”<sup>6</sup> In the chapter focusing on religion and religious personnel it is only two letters involving the High Priests of Amun<sup>7</sup> which directly invoke a god, in this case the local deity “He of the Camp.” The second letter which is from Menkheperre is too fragmentary to ascertain the exact nature of the appeal. The first, which could also be attributed to him, is a direct request to cure Masaharta of an illness, showing a belief that a god could be petitioned to provide divine help in such a circumstance. This belief is

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<sup>4</sup> Moreno García (2014): 22.

<sup>5</sup> See also Baines (2001): 1-31.

<sup>6</sup> Sweeney (2003): 128.

<sup>7</sup> Religious affairs: Letters 10 and 11.

again evidenced by a specific reference to the goddess Hathor in one of the pieces of correspondence related to military and police matters.<sup>8</sup> In their search for a missing person the senders of the letter note that they have “stood to behold Hathor, lady of Dendera,” with the implication they are consulting her for advice in their search. Although the *lacunae* make interpretation difficult it appears they later consult another god, possibly Seth, for guidance and get a response that the person they are looking for is to the south of them and that they will be successful in finding him. From the letters relating to daily life there is just one<sup>9</sup> in which the sender states that he has asked for divine guidance and received it, in this case from the Aten. It shows a change from the need for the king as intermediary, an example of the personal piety that could be expressed by the individual in the time of Akhenaten.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of the religious aspect, implicit in many of the reasons for writing is an underlying belief in the right behaviour and order in life occasioned by the concept of Ma’at. In particular the letters relating to Complaints and Daily Life can be seen to reflect “the social domain in which the focus is on right relations and duty in the context of community” and the “personal domain in which following the rules and principles of Ma’at ... is to realise concretely the universal order in oneself; to live in harmony with the ordered whole.”<sup>11</sup> Interpreted in this way the letters show the assimilation by ordinary people of the duty of the king to uphold order and avert chaos. The audience for this ancient Egyptian ideology, so well documented in the royal instruction literature, would have been the king and the literate court entourage. However, some of this thinking would have permeated to the local bureaucracy and priesthood, enabling dissemination to the senders and recipients of letters such as these. Another aspect of the letters which could be seen as a belief in order and right behaviour is the way in which the initial greetings reflect the social status of sender to recipient. There is also a certain attention to order in the structure of the writing – for example the phrase “a further matter” used to introduce an additional topic. With regard to the letter of complaint from

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<sup>8</sup> Military: Letter 5.

<sup>9</sup> Daily Life: Letter 12.

<sup>10</sup> See Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat. Ritual and legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1997), 84.

<sup>11</sup> Maulana Karenga, *Maat: the moral ideal in ancient Egypt* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 7.

the commander of troops,<sup>12</sup> Lipson suggests that here the concept of Ma'at is being invoked obliquely “as inferiors could and did invoke concepts of expediency.” In this instance the “need to save workers’ time in order to allow the important work of the state to get done.”<sup>13</sup> The lack of specific expression of Ma'at could be due to the fact that personal correspondence of this nature was “simply not considered an appropriate forum for discourse about *mꜣt*.”<sup>14</sup>

The reason for the lack of specific reference to religious concepts and practices in the content, as opposed to the introductory formulae, of such personal letters could be because the people involved invoked and communicated with their gods and the afterlife in other ways. While ordinary people did not have access to the inner sanctum of a temple, issues for resolution could be presented at public festivals when gods were carried from the temple in a portable shrine. Oracles could be addressed through an intermediary regarding questions related to personal and everyday matters. Divine access could also be represented on votive stelae. A belief in the afterlife is shown by contact with relatives and friends in the corpus of Letters to the Dead. The absence of any religious invocation or focus in these letters should not be seen as a lack of religiosity, but as the absence of any need to do so in personal letters of this nature.<sup>15</sup>

### **Aspects of feelings and emotion**

In this range of personal correspondence the reasons for writing do not primarily convey feelings and/or emotion. For example, the writers do not state specifically “I am angry” or “I am sad.” In a few of the letters, however, such aspects can be interpreted from the tone and structure of the content. In the chapter on complaints, embarrassment at rejection can be discerned in Userhat’s letter to his sister regarding the indifference of the woman Iupy. There is also anger in his emphasis that she be reprimanded.<sup>16</sup> Anger reflected by a threat is apparent in two of the letters. There is the threat from Neb that he

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<sup>12</sup> Complaints: Letter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Carol S. Lipson, “Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric: it all comes down to Ma'at,” in *Rhetoric before and beyond the Greeks* (ed. Carol S. Lipson and Roberta A. Binkley; Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004), 92-93.

<sup>14</sup> Sweeney (2003): 129.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive overview of this funerary culture see Juan Carlos Moreno García “Oracles, Ancestor Cults and Letters to the Dead: The involvement of the Dead in the Public and Private Family Affairs in Pharaonic Egypt,” in *Perception of the Invisible: Religion, Historical Semantics and the Role of Perceptive Verbs* (ed. A. Storch; Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe, 2010), 1-21.

<sup>16</sup> Complaints: Letter 7.

will strike the woman Tey if she approaches him.<sup>17</sup> Wenenamon threatens that Amenkhau's wrongdoing will take possession of him if he ignores his order.<sup>18</sup> In a fourth letter the sender describes the anger expressed by his recipient regarding a joke the sender has told. He also indicates a potential angry reaction even if he were just to mention his recipient's name again.<sup>19</sup> In one of the letters related to military and police matters anger is implicit in a threat Maiseti makes to his recipient, writing that he will kill him if he fails to carry out his orders.<sup>20</sup> In contrast in another letter it is feelings of desire which are apparent when Piankh expresses, with much emphasis, his wish to fill his eyes with the sight of Nodjme every day when he returns.<sup>21</sup> In one of the pieces of correspondence under daily life a similar feeling of desire occurs. The sender passes on a message to his recipient from the chantress of Amun, Nefrese, saying (with extreme emphasis) that her heart longs to see him and that because of her hunger for the sight of him, her eyes are as great as Memphis.<sup>22</sup> In the previous letter there occurs the rare example of an expression of forgiveness,<sup>23</sup> in this instance from a brother to his sister, in which the sender also apologises for his own anger at his sister's failure to write.<sup>24</sup>

There is an absence of any correspondence either reflecting sadness at death, injury or personal loss, or expressing feelings of condolence in such circumstances. The reasons for writing the majority of letters have been to address purely practical issues.

### **The role of women**

Several different aspects of women and their role in ancient Egyptian society appear in these letters.

Firstly is evidence of authority and active participation within both the familial and religious sphere. Authority given to a wife is shown in the course of a complaint regarding ownership of a ship.<sup>25</sup> The sender writes that if his brother Akhpet is unwilling to hand over the ship then he should write to his wife and tell her to give him the

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<sup>17</sup> Complaints: Letter 9.

<sup>18</sup> Complaints: Letter 13.

<sup>19</sup> Complaints: Letter 15.

<sup>20</sup> Military: Letter 3.

<sup>21</sup> Military: Letter 9.

<sup>22</sup> Daily Life: Letter 14.

<sup>23</sup> See Sweeney (1998): 356.

<sup>24</sup> Daily Life: Letter 13.

<sup>25</sup> Complaints: Letter 11.

amounts of copper and emmer which are owed, showing that a woman could be given the authority to manage financial affairs of this nature in her husband's absence. In another letter of complaint religious status is evidenced. It shows that a principal of the harem of Amun-Re, Herere, is able to wield authority over a male troop captain on the subject of the supply of rations.<sup>26</sup> Religious status is also found in a letter from el-Hibeh in which the divine votaress of Amun has authorised the sending of a fowler of migratory birds downstream.<sup>27</sup> One of the letters from Piankh provides further confirmation regarding the authority associated with the role of the principal of the harem of Amun-Re. In this piece of correspondence she is given the responsibility of ensuring the interrogation and killing of two policemen.<sup>28</sup> The authority of a married woman with regard to matrimonial property is reflected in the letter from Shedsukhons rescinding his recipient's ploughing rights. He has to restore the rights because his wife has said to him with considerable emphasis "Do not withdraw his landholding."<sup>29</sup>

Secondly is the appearance of women as the reason, or part of the reason, for writing. Central to the letter of complaint from the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Userhat is a woman named Iupy. Despite his good care of her he accuses her of indifference, with the implication of a previous personal relationship.<sup>30</sup> Two women are the reason for Neb's letter to the *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest Khenememuskhet. The first one, named Tit, is the wife whom he has divorced too hastily. Now he feels that she has wrongful possession of his due share and ration. The second, named Tey, is the object of a threat – that he will strike her if she approaches him.<sup>31</sup> Controversy regarding the possible abduction of a woman, who was either a slave or a maidservant, is the subject of another letter of complaint. She has seemingly been taken from the person to whom the sender of the letter, Wenenamon, had entrusted her. Wenenamon argues that it is not his responsibility but this other person's to resolve the problem.<sup>32</sup> While the *lacunae* make the content difficult to interpret fully, the sender of the first letter from the time of Akhenaten, Ramose, has written requesting his recipient

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<sup>26</sup> Complaints: Letter 17.

<sup>27</sup> Religious affairs: Letter 7.

<sup>28</sup> Military: Letter 9.

<sup>29</sup> Daily Life: Letter 8.

<sup>30</sup> Complaints: Letter 7.

<sup>31</sup> Complaints: Letter 9.

<sup>32</sup> Complaints: Letter 13.

to arrange for a woman to be brought to him.<sup>33</sup> In the second it is a woman who is the recipient, in this case the sender Ramose's sister. There are other further matters in the letter which he asks her to attend to, but she is first mentioned because of his concern about her well-being. He evidently has not heard from her for a considerable period of time.<sup>34</sup>

Thirdly is the question of authorship and literacy. It has been argued that overall only 1% of the population were literate.<sup>35</sup> The female literacy within this calculation has not been calculated. Looking at the letters within this range of personal correspondence there is no definitive reference to address this issue. With regard to authorship there is only one letter where the sender is a woman. This is the complaint from Herere, the principal of the harem of Amun-Re, to the troop captain Peseg.<sup>36</sup> It is possible, given her elite position, that she was able to pen the letter herself.<sup>37</sup> The only other piece of correspondence in which there is the suggestion of female literacy is in the letter from Ramose to his sister Sherire.<sup>38</sup> He instructs her to *ptr*/look at the letter when it reaches her. This could imply that she is able to read it rather than depend on an oral delivery. Wentz has interpreted it to mean this and has translated as "read,"<sup>39</sup> but the reference remains ambiguous.

The above letters from the selection studied have provided aspects of female personality and behaviour as well as giving insight into women's societal responsibilities and status. They have shown the contribution of such personal correspondence to an understanding of ancient Egyptian women and their role.

## **Delivery**

In the absence of any postal system personal correspondence such as this would have been sent by a trustworthy messenger. However, in these letters details of the identity of the messenger are infrequently noted. In Wenenamon's letter of complaint to

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<sup>33</sup> Daily Life: Letter 12.

<sup>34</sup> Daily Life Letter 13.

<sup>35</sup> Baines and Eyre (1983): 67.

<sup>36</sup> Complaints: Letter 17.

<sup>37</sup> For an in-depth study of overall female literacy see Baines and Eyre (1983), 81-85.

<sup>38</sup> Daily Life: Letter 13.

<sup>39</sup> Wentz (1990), 9.

Amenkhau,<sup>40</sup> he mentions that the latter had sent the scribe Efnamon with his message. One of the letters from Dynasty Twenty-one, is noted as being sent by a weaver, Besbes,<sup>41</sup> another by the hand of Horpesh.<sup>42</sup> An overseer of the treasury Khaemtore is noted as the bearer of the letter to Bakenkhons.<sup>43</sup> These are the only pieces of correspondence containing this particular information. There is an absence of any reference to the formal *wꜣꜣꜣ* role which is found in royal and high administrative documents and inscriptions.<sup>44</sup> It has been assumed, and these letters would confirm, that private correspondence of this kind was entrusted to a friend or servant known to the sender.<sup>45</sup> The absence of a named messenger would be due to the sender not knowing at that point to whom he would be entrusting his letter. The chosen messenger was possibly entrusted with several letters for differing addresses.<sup>46</sup> The senders who were of scribal status possibly passed their letters on to another administrative official to organise delivery, and would therefore be unaware of the messenger's identity. The length of time taken for the letter to reach its recipient would obviously vary dependent on distance and mode of travel. An indication of the need for efficiency and speed of delivery can be found in the letter regarding the delay in the provisions for the Feast of Opet.<sup>47</sup> Confirmation that the system was capable of relaying urgent information can be found in the two letters from Dynasty Twenty-one<sup>48</sup> regarding the apprehension of servants who have fled to the Promontory. The senders of the letters would have needed to have speedy delivery to ensure that the servants concerned were still in the Promontory and had not escaped over the border and out of their jurisdiction. In these cases an official *wꜣꜣꜣ* might have been used.

Apart from the three examples cited, the correspondence does not provide specific information as to the ways in which the letters reached their recipients. This

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<sup>40</sup> Complaints: Letter 13.

<sup>41</sup> Religious affairs: Letter 5.

<sup>42</sup> Religious affairs: Letter 6.

<sup>43</sup> Daily Life: Letter 10.

<sup>44</sup> See Michel Valloggia, *Recherche sur les "Messagers" (wꜣꜣꜣ) dans les sources Égyptiennes Profanes* (Geneve-Paris: Librairie Droz, 1976).

<sup>45</sup> Bakir (1970): 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Bakir (1970): 29 suggests this presence of addresses confirms delivery of several letters by one person.

<sup>47</sup> Religious affairs: Letter 4.

<sup>48</sup> Religious affairs: Letters 8, 9.



omission would seem to confirm the lack of any formal “postal” system or the use of any regular or official means of delivery for private letters of this kind.

### **Writers and recipients**

The question of literacy amongst the senders and recipients of personal letters of this nature means that scribal involvement would have been needed in their composition and writing. However, in a number of these letters a scribe is the actual sender or the recipient or both. There are five letters from one scribe to another – two from Dynasty Twenty-one involving the temple scribes of “He of the Camp,”<sup>49</sup> one very brief note from Dynasty Eighteen regarding the supply of gypsum,<sup>50</sup> one from Dynasty Nineteen covering several matters including the message to the recipient from the chantress of Amun.<sup>51</sup> Also from Dynasty Nineteen is a letter involving provisions for the Feast of Opet.<sup>52</sup> The scribe is identified in eight letters as the sender. For example the Dynasty Eighteen letter of complaint from the scribe Neb to his sister;<sup>53</sup> from Dynasty Nineteen the letter on the topic of husbandry to a servant from the scribe Mesha;<sup>54</sup> also from this period a charioteer is the recipient of a letter from the scribe Kenyamun.<sup>55</sup> In some cases the scribal status is in conjunction with another title. In a Dynasty Twenty-one letter the sender is a troop-captain as well as scribe.<sup>56</sup> In some letters, such as the complaint to the mayor of Elephantine regarding honey<sup>57</sup> and the complaint to the standard-bearer Akhpet about the handing over of a ship,<sup>58</sup> the sender’s name is missing due to *lacunae*, so it is possible that he could fall into this category.

Letters in which a scribe is not the sender but the named recipient are also present. These include a letter from the unguent preparator Ramose to the treasury scribe Meh dated to the time of Akhenaten;<sup>59</sup> the Dynasty Twenty communication from a cattle

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<sup>49</sup> Religious affairs: Letters 8, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Daily Life: Letter 3.

<sup>51</sup> Daily Life: Letter 14.

<sup>52</sup> Religious affairs: Letter 4.

<sup>53</sup> Complaints: Letter 9.

<sup>54</sup> Daily Life: Letter 7.

<sup>55</sup> Military” Letter 4.

<sup>56</sup> Daily Life: Letter 8.

<sup>57</sup> Complaints Letter: 12

<sup>58</sup> Complaints: Letter 11.

<sup>59</sup> Daily Life: Letter 12.

overseer to an offering-table scribe;<sup>60</sup> the two Dynasty Twenty letters from Piankh to the scribe Tjaroy.<sup>61</sup> There are also the letters addressed to the scribe Ahmose “Peniati’s man.”<sup>62</sup> The letters in this category are addressed to their scribal recipient as the intended receiver of the message. There is no indication that they were to be relayed to a non-literate third party. With regard to the scribe to scribe and the scribe as sender correspondence, there is again no evidence of the involvement of any such third-party.

Other letters across various periods do not mention any scribal involvement but were likely to have needed the employment of a literate scribe to both write and verbally communicate their content. These are to and from a variety of people with differing occupations. There are complaints from a general to a chief justice and from a general to his family; from a *w<sup>c</sup>b* priest to his sister and from the warden of an estate to an overseer of cattle; from a builder to a merchant and from a mayor to the Chief taxing master; from the principal of the harem to a troop captain.<sup>63</sup> Among the issues under daily life a cultivator is addressed by the mayor of Thebes, an unguent preparator Ramose writes to his sister, and policemen, cultivators and an administrator of the portable shrine of the king are the recipients of a letter from a cattle overseer.<sup>64</sup> From a military perspective the standard bearer Maiseti is the sender of letters to garrison captains, a soldier and a chief of impressment.<sup>65</sup> There are also the letters from Piankh to an agent and to the principal of the harem of Amun-Re.<sup>66</sup> In his comments on Egyptian handwriting Janssen has seen the presence and style of handwriting of the “general’s scribe Kenykhnum” in the address lines as plausible confirmation that these letters were penned by the scribe in his role as one of the General’s secretaries.<sup>67</sup> The letters from the standard-bearer Maiseti have been noted as being written by the same hand.<sup>68</sup> This appears to indicate that either Maiseti himself was the writer or he had a single scribe in his service. The latter situation seems more likely. As noted, in the first letter from Maiseti the word used for “letter” has

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<sup>60</sup> Daily Life: Letter 10.

<sup>61</sup> Military: Letters 6 and 7.

<sup>62</sup> Complaints: Letter 6, Daily Life: Letters 1, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Complaints: Letters 1, 2, 7, 10, 13, 16, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Daily Life : Letters 9, 124, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Military: Letters 1, 2, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Military: Letters 8, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Jac J. Janssen, “On Style in Egyptian handwriting,” *JEA* 73 (1987): 166.

<sup>68</sup> Allam, 91987): 24, Bakir (1970): 26-27.

the determinative of the tree branch, suggesting the original was written on a piece of wood and later transcribed onto papyrus – a task more appropriate to a scribe than a standard-bearer. The scribal identity of the writers of the other letters is unclear, as is the intermediary who would have communicated the content to the recipient.

Details of the sender and recipient are missing in only a few letters due to the *lacunae*, so it has been possible to analyse the writers and recipients for the majority of the correspondence discussed. This has shown firstly that a large number of letters in this selection of correspondence have scribal writers and recipients – a result congruent with the literacy issue; secondly that other writers/recipients in everyday occupations also used this medium of communication, presumably by employing the services of a third party; and thirdly from the societal aspect insight has been given into the differing status and responsibilities of both the scribal senders/recipients and the other writers with various occupations.

While summaries have been provided at the end of each chapter, as can be seen from the above this further focused analysis has provided important additional insight, confirming the important contribution these letters make to knowledge of social aspects in specific areas.

### **Aspects regarding distinctiveness of data**

The importance of personal letters lies in the additional dimension and insight they give into ancient Egyptian society – the social aspects of daily life, issues and concerns, customs and beliefs are personalised – in comparison with other types of evidence from the differing sources discussed below.<sup>69</sup>

The visual representations on tomb and temple walls are a source of information regarding ancient Egyptian daily life, religious affairs and military achievements. However, they are unable to provide this personal dimension. Among the scenes of workers and craftsmen of various trades depicted in the tomb of Rekh-mi-re at Thebes are images of apiculture,<sup>70</sup> of stoneworkers<sup>71</sup> and of the harvesting of flax.<sup>72</sup> Letters

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<sup>69</sup> Given the extent of these other sources, selected examples representative of the topic being discussed will be referenced. Similarly the letters cited, to evidence the distinctive nature of their data in comparison, will be representative examples chosen from those analysed in the preceding chapters.

<sup>70</sup> Davies (1973): Pls. XLVIII, XLIX

personalising actual people, events and issues relating to these images are the letter of complaint regarding the jar of honey which turned out to be anointing ointment which evidenced the importance of honey as a product for divine offerings. From a personal point of view it reflects the sender's disgust when he opened the jar and found solid fat instead of the honey he expected.<sup>73</sup> By the naming of the actual people involved there is a personal touch in the note about the completion of work by stonemasons and a request for payment.<sup>74</sup> A letter noting the sender's cultivation of his brother's flax provides an actual instance of its importance in a domestic context.<sup>75</sup>

A letter regarding the sending of a fowler of migratory birds to follow other fowlers downstream<sup>76</sup> details the event and the reasons and circumstances surrounding it. The date given for the fowler's departure indicates a time of year when this activity took place. The involvement of the Votaress of Amun in the request and the naming of the fowler sent, Horiutowy, add an additional personal aspect. In this way the content of this piece of correspondence gives societal input to the visual images depicting fowling such as those from the tomb chapel of Nebamun,<sup>77</sup> the tomb of Nakht<sup>78</sup> and of that of Menna.<sup>79</sup>

Agricultural scenes can be seen in the tomb chapel of Itet,<sup>80</sup> Djhutynakht at Bersha<sup>81</sup> and in unnamed tombs from Thebes.<sup>82</sup> They show images of seed sowing, cultivation and farming. Actual personal knowledge of people who, regardless of rank, could be held responsible for this kind of work is given in the letter from an Overseer of Cattle.<sup>83</sup> His named recipients are policemen, cultivators, herdsmen and an administrator

<sup>71</sup> Davies (1973): Pls. LVIII, LXII. See also Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997) : 28, Figs 21/22.

<sup>72</sup> Davies (1973): Pl. XXXIX. See also Richard Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1991): 82 - a scene of flax harvesting from the tomb of Sonebi at Meir.

<sup>73</sup> Complaints, Letter 12.

<sup>74</sup> Daily Life, Letter 2.

<sup>75</sup> Daily Life, Letter 6.

<sup>76</sup> Religious affairs, Letter 7.

<sup>77</sup> Robins (1997): 22, Fig. 11, 54, Figs. 49/50.

<sup>78</sup> Melinda Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes 1419-1372BC* (Turnout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004): 212, Fig.10, 239, Fig. 38.

<sup>79</sup> Cyril Aldred, *Egyptian Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), 160, Pl. 123.

<sup>80</sup> Robins (1997): 54, Pl. 49.

<sup>81</sup> Robins (1997): 102, Pl. 108/109.

<sup>82</sup> Hartwig (2004): 240, Fig. 39, William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1959): 164, Fig. 90.

<sup>83</sup> Daily Life, Letter 5.

of the king's portable shrine. The letter evidences the continuing need for enforced *corvée* labour and the hierarchy which was able to enforce this custom of land clearing. The letter is a source of actual agricultural custom and the people involved – in contrast to a one-dimensional image. A Memphite private tomb has a representation of an inspection of estate cattle.<sup>84</sup> Personal input to this image is given in a letter in which the scribal sender's requirement is for an inspection of the cattle contribution at a major estate and for a cattle count or census.<sup>85</sup> The letter raises issues involving hierarchy, working relationships and the ambiguity of slave status. A letter of complaint is concerned with the return of a donkey and the status and occupations of those involved.<sup>86</sup> The issue of its return is caused by the fact that the donkey is a hired animal and now it is required by someone else. This fact evidences the custom of donkey hire and the amount for its hire indicates its monetary value. The content of this letter brings to life an actual issue regarding a working donkey and the people concerned in the problem who include the sender, who is warden of the estate, a soldier and an overseer of cattle. This is in contrast to visual representations of donkeys at work such as that in the tomb of the priest Panhesy,<sup>87</sup> and the tomb chapel of Werirenptah at Saqqara.<sup>88</sup>

With regard to religious affairs two examples of these private letters give a personal insight to religious festivals. Scenes from the major festival of the Feast of Opet are depicted on the walls of the Luxor temple,<sup>89</sup> one of which depicts the sacrificial cattle. Insight into the actual people involved in its organisation, together with an actual problem in fulfilling festival requirements, is given in a letter concerned with the non-arrival of these cattle for offerings.<sup>90</sup> It names the person responsible for the provisioning whose title is Royal Scribe and Overseer of Cattle. The due day has passed, the boats have not arrived and the sender demands in an urgent manner that his recipient load up every boat immediately. A representational scene of the sacrificial cattle is given the extra personal dimension of an actual incident regarding their appearance.

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<sup>84</sup> Hayes (1959): 319, Fig. 201.

<sup>85</sup> Daily Life, Letter 7.

<sup>86</sup> Complaints, Letter 10.

<sup>87</sup> Arpag Mekhitarian, *Egyptian Painting* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1978): 145.

<sup>88</sup> Robins (1997): 23, Fig. 13.

<sup>89</sup> Epigraphic survey. (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1994): Pl. 101.

<sup>90</sup> Religious affairs, Letter 4.

A letter from a garrison scribe to a standard bearer<sup>91</sup> suggests the need for offerings for the festival of Anat at Gaza. It has been noted as the first referral to the goddess at a place in such proximity to the Egyptian border, indicating her transition from the Near East. The mention of this in the letter provides background from a personal perspective to visual representations of the goddess being worshipped such as that on the stela of Qeh at Deir el-Medina.<sup>92</sup> It also indicates the responsibility of military individuals for a religious duty of this nature.

The visual representations of military action such as those of Seti I against the Hittites, and Libyans,<sup>93</sup> Ramesses II fighting at the Battle of Kadesh,<sup>94</sup> Ramesses III against the Sea Peoples,<sup>95</sup> are scenes of battle, propagandistic representations of triumph over their enemies, designed to promote the king's bravery and fighting skills. They depict their troops in battle around them and evidence the design of chariots and military fighting equipment.<sup>96</sup> The inscriptions that accompany these images, for example the accounts of *The Bulletin* in which the king was "like Seth in his moment of power...one could not stand before him," and *The Poem*<sup>97</sup> which declares "A thousand men cannot withstand him" are also as focused as their visual representations on the majesty and bravery of the king and the defeat of his enemies. It is the data found in letters relating to military matters that is able to personalise individual soldiers and provide detail of their life and responsibilities in society when not engaged in fighting. For example the standard-bearer Maiseti has to deal with a complaint regarding religious personnel, a problem regarding wrongful arrest, the conscription and rounding up of soldiers and the movement of prisoners.<sup>98</sup> His correspondence evidences a societal hierarchy that recognised the authority of a military officer to order and ensure the resolution of such issues and the custom of off-duty soldiers to stay in their villages. Personality is given to the sender Maiseti by his sudden *non sequitur* comments regarding care of a pig and the

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<sup>91</sup> Religious affairs, Letter 3.

<sup>92</sup> Wilkinson (2003): 137.

<sup>93</sup> Anthony Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt* (Blackwell, 2005): 194, Fig. 12.1, 196, Fig.12.2.

<sup>94</sup> Spalinger (2005): 223, Fig. 13.6a.

<sup>95</sup> Epigraphic survey, *Medinet Habu Vol. I.* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1930): Pls. 32, 36.

<sup>96</sup> Aldred (1980): 195, Pl. 160

<sup>97</sup> *KRI II* : 2-124, Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol.II* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1976):60-71.

<sup>98</sup> Military matters, Letters 1,2,3.

need for good rope. The letter to Huy<sup>99</sup> reflects the personal concern a charioteer had for the welfare of his horses, reassurance needed due to his absence in reserve.

Personal stelae also include textual inscriptions in addition to visual representations. As memorials they provided the permanence necessary for commemoration within the funerary culture after death. The visual images of the deceased, usually shown seated, often with family members,<sup>100</sup> were accompanied by texts which could reflect status, occupation, achievements in life, religious duty and afterlife belief. However, the societal information they contain is an idealised representation. Their wording was intended as a eulogistic record of the person's life and character and the following of the codes of right behaviour, such as "I was a worthy citizen who acted with his arm,"<sup>101</sup> "I am knowing to him who lacks knowledge, One who teaches a man what is useful to him,"<sup>102</sup> "I was a man of virtue, patient and calm-tempered, free of falsehood."<sup>103</sup> They were designed to provide an example to those who came with offerings as well as to serve as a monument visible to anyone who happened to pass by.<sup>104</sup> Also idealistic in their content are the written texts, without visual content, from the genre of Instruction literature which are concerned with the concepts of individual behaviour. The *Instruction of Any*<sup>105</sup> is an educational instruction from a father to his son regarding how he should conduct himself in order to lead an exemplary life – not to raise his voice in the house of God, not to indulge in drinking beer, not to sit when another is standing, to take a wife while he is young, not to reveal his heart to a stranger – are just some of the maxims the father judges to be important. *The Instruction of Amenemope*<sup>106</sup> is an instruction about life and presents the concept of the ideal man. He should beware of stealing, not set his heart upon seeking riches, not defraud a person,

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<sup>99</sup> Military matters, Letter 4.

<sup>100</sup> For example Hayes (1959): 169, Fig. 93, Robins (1997): 187, Fig. 220, Detlef Franke, *Egyptian Stelae in the British Museum from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasties Vol. I, Fascicule I: Descriptions* (London: British Museum Press, 2013): Pl. 8, Fig. EA 209.

<sup>101</sup> Stela of Iti. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 89.

<sup>102</sup> Stela of Intef. Lichtheim (1975): 122.

<sup>103</sup> Stela of Senofer. Geoffrey Thorndike Martin, *Stelae from Egypt and Nubia in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge c.3000 BC-AD1150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 58-59, Fig. 36.

<sup>104</sup> For extensive textual and illustrative information regarding stelae see Martin (2005) and Franke (2013).

<sup>105</sup> Lichtheim( 1976): 136.

<sup>106</sup> William Kelly Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 224.

not laugh at a blind man. These are some of the qualities that identify the “intemperate, hot-headed man and the tranquil, truly silent man...”<sup>107</sup> In contrast to the stelae and these textual behavioural concepts private letters provide a more realistic view of ancient Egyptian society – the people, their personalities and their issues. A scribe’s anger and volatile nature are revealed in a letter demanding the reprimand of his divorced wife and his threat to kill another woman if she comes near him.<sup>108</sup> A letter regarding the incident of a joke told to the Chief Taxing Master evidences humour – that lack of respect for officialdom, although not appropriate, did exist.<sup>109</sup> In a letter from Ramose to his sister Sherire he complains that she has not written. He has not heard from her for some years. However, he allows himself to overcome this annoyance and expresses his forgiveness.<sup>110</sup> Insight into the actual issues of family life is found in a general’s letter complaining about the non-delivery of provisions and behaviour towards a daughter.<sup>111</sup> Letters involving a maidservant who has been taken away, and a case of domestic responsibility regarding another,<sup>112</sup> raise questions of the interpretation of slave status in a domestic situation. The letter from Sennofer illustrates the actual needs of an estate and the practical problem of provisioning it.<sup>113</sup>

Also from the genre of Instruction literature are texts from the Middle Kingdom focused on the required behaviours, attitudes and structure of society encompassed within Ma’at, the code for right behaviour. In the *Instruction for King Merikare* they are found within the directives that he gives to his son. At the heart of the adjuncts in the *Instruction* is the belief in the responsibility of the ruler, by example and action, to restore order to the chaos that results from the absence of the observance of right behaviour. In the *Prophecy of Neferti* social aspects are found within the vivid images the speaker uses to describe a chaotic world devoid of Ma’at. Society’s need for a strong ruler to restore order is answered by the arrival of the king from the south. It is in this

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<sup>107</sup> Simpson (2003): 223.

<sup>108</sup> Complaints, Letter 9.

<sup>109</sup> Complaints, Letter 15.

<sup>110</sup> Daily Life, Letter 14.

<sup>111</sup> Complaints, Letter 2.

<sup>112</sup> Complaints, Letters 4 and 5.

<sup>113</sup> Daily Life, Letter 9.



way that the *Prophecy* shows the role of the king in achieving order from chaos. Insights into social aspects in the *Instruction of King Amenemhat* are indicated within the framework of the king's account of his assassination. The result of the lack of right behaviour is shown by his reference to a non-existent society, suggesting a state of non-being which forms a chaotic force. However, these texts are focused primarily on the figure of the king and his role in ensuring the ultimate example of right behaviour with the responsibility for the restoration and maintenance of order out of chaos. They do not provide the specific insight into social aspects of the lives of people which, as shown in the preceding chapters, can be found in personal correspondence.<sup>114</sup>

The extensive text of the Wilbour Papyrus is an important late New Kingdom source of information regarding land revenue, management and holdings related to the temple of Amun. It indicates “the complexity of tenure and of overlapping responsibility for management and collection of revenues from farm lands, and the similarly complex and overlapping responsibility for management and collection of revenues.”<sup>115</sup> Mention is made in the listings of the names and titles of officials, landholders and tenants but its purpose was primarily as an official document for revenue collection. As Eyre comments “Precisely how it was used remains obscure.”<sup>116</sup> However, insight into its relevance to an actual incident and the people concerned is found in the letter regarding unjustified tax demands.<sup>117</sup> The demand from the scribe of the House of the Votaress of Amun appears based on its documentation for assessing the amount of grain due and the person responsible for its provision. The letter in which the mayor of Elephantine refutes this responsibility for grain and presents his argument against fulfilling the demand, once again illustrates how a piece of personal correspondence is able to reflect the actual issues of life in ancient Egyptian society, evidencing the practical application of the requirements of an official document such as the Wilbour Papyrus.

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<sup>114</sup> With regard to how the letters have reflected the ways in which the people themselves followed these concepts, see the discussion in this chapter under the heading “Religious Aspects.”

<sup>115</sup> Eyre (2013): 182.

<sup>116</sup> Eyre (2013): 180.

<sup>117</sup> Complaints: Letter 16.

The data provided by actual sites is a further source of information regarding ancient Egypt. The remains of individuals have led to skeletal, cranial and facial reconstruction studies to establish the appearance and origins of the ancient Egyptian population.<sup>118</sup> From the aspect of daily life there is the material evidence provided by such items as pottery and other domestic pieces, personal possessions, jewelry, amulets, clothing. From these and other artifacts can often be discerned the names, occupations and status of the people concerned. Overall, conclusions can be drawn as to physical characteristics, varying lifestyles, resources and religious belief, but without the insights into daily issues and relationships – the personalised societal detail that has been evidenced in the private letters discussed under their various topic headings.

Excavation and stratification of the site has been able to establish a settlement history and gain architectural insight. The layout design and building statistics of room size can be confirmed by visual means and measurement and the use of modern technology. But from the perspective of ancient Egyptian building methods and planning, as Kemp comments, “it remains extremely difficult to determine the specific purpose for which individual rooms and sometimes whole buildings were made”<sup>119</sup> and that lack of evidence regarding any working sketches implies “Ropes and pegs and simple sighting instruments took the place of scribal equipment...”<sup>120</sup> A letter from the Eighteenth Dynasty<sup>121</sup> focused on the building of a house illustrates the distinctive manner in which a piece of personal correspondence can provide information in addition to visual assessment. From a mayor to a scribe of high status, this piece of correspondence provides evidence of an actual project involving the design and materials required in house-building. The detailed instructions cover the height of the walls and doors, that of the house itself and its width, and at what point the mats and beams of the storerooms at the rear of the house should be installed. At the same time it gives insight into the administrative process and the people involved in the construction.

In conclusion, while evidence from other sources has been invaluable to knowledge of ancient Egyptian history and society, the importance of the additional data

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<sup>118</sup> Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London & New York: Routledge, 2006): 46-59.

<sup>119</sup> Kemp (2006): 193.

<sup>120</sup> Kemp (2006): 194.

<sup>121</sup> Daily Life, Letter 1.

from private letters has been shown. Their distinctiveness lies in their information about the ancient Egyptian people and the actual events and issues occurring in their lives. They provide insight at a personal level – insight that adds an important extra dimension to the knowledge of ancient Egyptian society found in the other sources discussed.

## Conclusion

The chosen approach to this topic of social aspects in ancient Egyptian correspondence has found societal information, beliefs and customs in the varied reasons for writing. Analysis of letter content has identified sender/recipient occupations and personalities together with the hierarchy and societal structure indicated by the forms of address. For each individual letter the various forms of address that the senders of the letters have used are discussed to indicate how the differing styles are related to the content of the letter, the social status and occupation of the sender and the dating of the correspondence. The details of sender/recipient, their social position, formulae of the address have been noted in the summary for each topic, and for additional clarification this information has been presented in tabular form in chronological order with their dating. Further analysis has given insight into issues occurring in daily life and the means of resolving them. In some cases additional research has enabled the background of other people mentioned in the letter and their relationship to the sender to be included. This approach has resulted in knowledge about the ancient Egyptian people and the actual events and issues occurring in their lives and shown the importance of personal correspondence as a source for such insight.

While the senders and recipients of the letters have in most cases been identified, together with their occupations and status within the hierarchy, there is no overt “self-presentation” by the writer. The initiators of these personal letters do not provide any specific detail of personal background or achievements in the context of historical or social events, either as information additional to the reason for writing, or as a possible record for posterity. Their emphasis is primarily on practical matters. The letters of complaint are concerned with such problems as the supply of provisions, return of property and domestic responsibility. Similarly, within the topic of religious affairs and personnel, the senders and recipients focus on their administrative duties. While there are letters regarding assassination amongst those discussed under the military/police affairs topic, the majority are focused on military duty and custom. Requirements regarding building work and materials, husbandry, personal enquiries/health are the primary subjects of daily life. There are just a few instances in which emotions or feelings are expressed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Five: “Further analysis” for details regarding any occurrence of expressions of feeling and emotion in the letters under the various topics.

The forms of media for texts of a self-presentation or biographical nature were private tombs, personal stelae and temple walls. These provided the permanence necessary for commemoration within the funerary culture after death. Their content was intended as a eulogistic record of the person's life, character and adherence to the codes of right behaviour, designed as well to provide an example to those who came with remembrance offerings and to the unexpected passer-by. This content would have in the majority of cases been commissioned by family and/or friends rather than by the now deceased subject.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, while the living writers of the correspondence studied here may have used the services of a scribe, the content of the letter would have been initiated by him or her.<sup>3</sup> This could be the basis for additional research of further letters not considered in this study and could focus specifically on evidence of aspects of self-presentation and biographical information inherent in personal correspondence instigated by the actual person concerned. From this perspective an implicit self-presentation through recognition of the concept of Ma'a/right behaviour in this selection of letters has been discussed in Chapter Five.

Categories of correspondence other than private letters have been identified of letters involving the kings and their viziers. Those to and from the king illustrate royal letter of instructions and assertion of hierarchical authority. Those to and from the vizier are appropriate to his responsibility for overall administration. The letters evidence the issues related to court affairs and bureaucratic procedure. The value of evaluating correspondence, as shown by this study, indicates that an analysis should be undertaken of these categories of letters. This research would provide more personal knowledge of the kings and their viziers, their character, their relationships, their attitude to the people and members of the administration as well as new historical information and detail of bureaucratic procedures.

In conclusion, this study has shown how research into a selection of ancient Egyptian personal correspondence over a timeframe from the Old Kingdom to the Twenty-first Dynasty has enabled insight into the social aspects of ancient Egyptian life and the differences in these aspects that may (or may not) have occurred over time. It has substantiated the argument that individual personal letters are an important primary source of social information and custom in ancient Egypt.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter Five for full details.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that the letter was penned by someone else would not alter the reason for writing.

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