

A (Re)investigation of Middle Kingdom Speech Captions in Wrestling Scenes

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Abstract

This article studies the *Reden und Rufe* present in Middle Kingdom wrestling scenes found in the tombs of Senbi (Meir), Neheri I (Deir el-Bersha), and Khety (Beni Hassan). Based on a systematic study, some improvements are suggested to previous translations. After offering commentaries and translation(s) for each speech, the relationship between these scenes and those in Old and New Kingdom tombs is considered, and distinctive features highlighted.

Keywords

Reden und Rufe, Middle Kingdom, private tombs, wrestling scenes

أورورة موتة

إعادة دراسة للغة الحوار المصاحبة لمناظر المصارعة من عصر الدولة الوسطى

يقوم هذا المقال بدراسة لغة السرد والإلقاء المصاحبة لمناظر المصارعة التي ترجع للدولة الوسطى والتي عُثِرَ عليها في مقابر سنبي بمير ونيجري بدير البرشا وخيتي بني حسن. إعتدماً على دراسة ممنهجة يمكن عمل تعديلات على الترجمات السابقة. عقب تقديم الترجمة الجديدة والتعليق عليها لكل نص، يتم تحديد العلاقة بين هذه المناظر وتلك التي ترجع للدولة القديمة والدولة الحديثة، هذا بالإضافة لتحديد الخصائص المميزة لتلك المناظر.

Introduction

This article presents the results of a study of the wrestling¹ scenes in First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom elite tombs.² Although speech captions in these scenes form a homogeneous subgroup within the *Reden und Rufe* corpus, they have received little close study and the few existing translations³ are not always accurate. The aim of this article is threefold. First, a description is given of the tombs and necropoleis wherein wrestlers' speeches can be found during the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom. Secondly, philological commentaries and literal translations⁴ are offered for

each speech exchanged between wrestlers. Finally, the relationship between these wrestling scenes and the broader decorative programme of private tombs is discussed. In particular, the possible relationship between these scenes and those found in Old and New Kingdom tombs will be considered in order to establish whether the wording of the wrestlers' speech captions is transmitted over time as a discursive tradition. This article does not address the broader historical-cultural background of the wrestling scenes, which has already been thoroughly discussed elsewhere.⁵

¹For a discussion of the Egyptian terms meaning 'wrestling', see e.g. F. Förster, 'Altägyptische Ausdrücke für "Ringeln" und "Stockfechten"', *Nikephoros* 18 (2005), 71–83. I would like to thank one of my anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to this reference.

²This article follows the concept of 'elite tomb' as defined by R. van Walsem, *Iconography of Old Kingdom Elite Tombs: Analysis & Interpretation, Theoretical and Methodological Aspects* (MVEOL 35; Dudley, 2005), 19: '... an architectural complex completely or partially freestanding, respectively cut from the rock, consisting of one or several (substantial) space unities, which is inextricably and consciously connected with the mortal remains of the elite, and (was planned to be) provided with decoration, that is iconography and/or texts'.

³E.g. the DZA cards 21.666.150, 21.924.180, 22.067.140, 22.231.640 and 26.637.110 available on <<http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/Tla-Login>> accessed 4 December 2015; W. Decker and M. Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport im Alten Ägypten: Corpus der bildlichen Quellen zu Leibesübungen, Spiel, Jagd, Tanz und verwandten Themen* (HdO 14/1–2; Leiden, 1994); and H. Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf im alten Ägypten* (Körperliche Erziehung und Sport 3; Würzburg-Aumühle, 1939).

⁴My aim is to stick as close as possible to Ancient Egyptian sentences. For this reason, English translations may sometimes seem clunky.

⁵See *inter alia* Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*; A. D. Touny and S. Wenig, *Der Sport im alten Ägypten* (Leipzig, 1969); W. Decker, 'Neue Dokumente zum Ringkampf im alten Ägypten', *Kölner Beiträge zur Sportwissenschaft, Jahrbuch der Deutschen Sporthochschule* 5 (1976), 7–24; A. R. Schulman, 'The Battle Scene of the Middle Kingdom', *JSSEA* 12 (1982), 165–83; H. Willems, 'The Nomarchs of the Hare Nome and Early Middle Kingdom History', *JEOL* 28 (1985), 80–102; W. Decker, *Sport und Spiel im alten Ägypten* (München, 1987); Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*; W. Decker, 'Le sport dans la décoration murale des tombes privées de l'Égypte pharaonique', in *Spectacles sportifs et scéniques dans le monde Étrusco-italique, Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'Équipe de recherches étrusco-italiques de l'UMR 126 (CNRS, Paris) et l'École française de Rome, Rome, 3–4 mai 1991* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 172; Roma, 1993), 443–62; W.

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Tomb speech captions range from a single onomatopoeia to brief dialogue exchanged between toiling workers⁶ in scenes of ‘daily life’.⁷ They were first characterized by Erman, in several Old Kingdom tombs⁸ and have subsequently been commonly known as *Reden und Rufe*. Since Erman, the most detailed study of *Reden und Rufe* has been by Guglielmi⁹ who concentrated on private tombs from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, with a focus on four themes: agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, and bird-hunting scenes. Dialogues of this sort are also found in seven

Decker and J.-P. Thuillier, *Le sport dans l'Antiquité, Égypte, Grèce, Rome* (Antiqua e Picard; Paris, 2004); and P. F. Houlihan, *Wit and Humour in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2001), 38–9 for a possible trace of humour in the wrestling speeches from the tomb of Senbi (B1).

⁶This generic term includes all the professions of the lower strata of the social scale, such as bakers, boatmen, brewers, butchers, craftsmen, dancers, fishers, fowlers, herdsman, musicians, offering-bearers, peasants, traders and so on, depicted on the walls of the tombs.

⁷For a discussion of the meaning of ‘daily life scenes’, see R. van Walsem, ‘The Interpretation of Iconographic Programmes in Old Kingdom Elite Tombs of the Memphite Area: Methodological and Theoretical (Re)considerations’, in C. J. Eyre (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3–9 September 1995* (Leuven, 1998), 1205, n. 1; and D. Kessler, ‘Zur Bedeutung der Szenen des täglichen Lebens in den Privatgräbern (1): Die Szenen des Schiffsbaues und der Schifffahrt’, *ZÄS* 114 (1987), 60.

⁸Erman, ‘Reden, Rufe und Lieder auf Gräberbildern des Alten Reiches’, *APAW* 15 (1919).

⁹W. Guglielmi, *Reden, Rufe und Lieder auf altägyptischen Darstellungen der Landwirtschaft, Viehzucht, des Fisch und Vogelfangs vom Mittleren Reich bis zur Spätzeit* (TAB 1; Bonn, 1973). For more *ad hoc* studies, see *inter alia* P. Montet, *Les scènes de la vie privée dans les tombeaux égyptiens de l'Ancien Empire* (Strasbourg, 1925); H. Junker, *Zu einigen Reden und Rufen auf Grabbildern des Alten Reiches* (SAWW 221/5; Vienna, 1943); R. Merzeban, ‘Tired Workers in Old Kingdom Daily Life Scenes?’, *MDAIK* 63 (2007), 225–46; St. Grunert, ‘Bierbrauer unter sich: Über den Nutzen eines Wörterbuches beim Übersetzen nicht nur lockerer Reden’, *GM* 173 (1999), 91–112; St. Grunert, ‘Neues aus den Rufen und Reden im Doppelgrab der Königinnen Nebet und Khenut’, *GM* 174 (2000), 59–63; St. Grunert, ‘Des Schnitters Rede und ihr wechselndes Verständnis in moderner Zeit: Zu einem Zuruf auf Grabbildern des Alten Reiches’, *GM* 181 (2001), 43–9; St. Grunert, ‘Sprachen Schlächter schlechter? Rufe und Reden aus dem Grab des Anchnahor in Saqqara’, *GM* 186 (2002), 43–57; H. Altenmüller, ‘Bemerkungen zum Hirtenlied des Alten Reiches’, *CdÉ* 48/96 (1973), 211–31; H. Altenmüller, ‘Zur Bedeutung der Harfnerlieder des Alten Reiches’, *SAK* 6 (1978), 1–24; H. Altenmüller, ‘Das “Sänftenlied” des Alten Reiches’, *BSEG* 9–10 (1984–1985), 15–30; H. Altenmüller, ‘Die sog. Kornspeicher in den Ernteszenen des Alten Reiches’, *SAK* 14 (1987), 1–26; H. Altenmüller, ‘Kälbhirte und Schafhirte: Bemerkungen zur Rückkehr des Grabherrn’, *SAK* 16 (1989), 1–20; H. Altenmüller, ‘Die Reden und Rufe beim Dreschen in den Gräbern des Alten Reiches’, in B. M. Bryan and D. Lorton (eds), *Essays in Egyptology in Honor of Hans Goedicke* (San Antonio, 1994), 9–23; H. Altenmüller, ‘Reden und Rufe auf zwei Gräberbildern des Alten Reiches’, in F. Feder, L. D. Morenz, and G. Vittmann (eds), *Von Theben nach Giza: Festsitzellen für Stefan Grunert zum 65. Geburtstag* (GM Beihefte 10; Göttingen, 2011), 19–22; P. Vernus, ‘Autobiographie et scènes dites “de la vie quotidienne”: De la parodie à la fiction du paysan prototypique’, in R. Legros (ed.), *Cinquante ans d'éternité: Jubilé de la Mission archéologique française de Saqqâra. Mission archéologique de Saqqarah*, V (BdÉ 162; Cairo, 2015), 309–21;

Table 1. Distribution of First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe* in Guglielmi's and Motte's studies.

	Guglielmi (1973)	Motte (2013)
Agriculture	32	37
Animal husbandry	52	63
Fishing	28	38
Hunting	9	13 ¹²
Butchery	/	58
Cooking	/	30
Craftsmanship	/	17
Dance and music	/	24
Offerings	/	45
Wrestling	/	27 ¹³
Total	121 speech captions	352 speech captions

other types of Middle Kingdom ‘daily life’ scenes: butchery, cooking, craftsmanship, dance and music, desert hunting, offerings and wrestling. Together, these seven categories represent no less than 66% of the Middle Kingdom corpus of *Reden und Rufe*. My research on *Reden und Rufe* in private tombs intends, among other things, to define exactly in which kinds of scenes they are found for each period from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period; the first phase of my work analyses the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom,¹⁰ when such speech captions are mostly found in elite tombs located in provincial necropoleis. My study of the Middle Kingdom, based on Guglielmi's study, has revealed 231 new¹¹ speeches (see Table 1).

Th. Vonk, ‘Von Betrügern und schimpfenden Hirten: Über den Humor einiger “Reden und Rufe”’, *GM* 245 (2015), 79–93 for Old Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*; B. Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches* (SAGA 10; Heidelberg, 1994) for Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*; P. Vernus, ‘Comment l'élite se donne à voir dans le programme décoratif de ses chapelles funéraires: Stratégie d'épure, stratégie d'appogiature et le frémissement du littéraire’, in J. C. Moreno Garcia (ed.), *Élites et pouvoir en Égypte ancienne: Actes du colloque Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille 3, 7 et 8 juillet 2006* (CRIPEL 28; Lille, 2009–10), 67–116; and P. Vernus, ‘Du moyen égyptien au néo-égyptien, de *m* à *m-jr*: l'auxiliation de l'impératif à la dix-huitième dynastie’, in Z. Hawass and J. Houser Wegner (eds), *Millions of Jubilees: Studies in Honor of David P. Silverman*, 2 (SASAE 39; Cairo, 2010), 315–35 for Middle and New Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*; and B. Kroeber, *Die Neuägyptizismen vor der Amarnazeit: Studien zur Entwicklung der ägyptischen Sprache vom Mittleren zum Neuen Reich* (PhD thesis, University of Tübingen; Tübingen, 1970), who studied several New Kingdom speech captions, especially in the tomb of Pahery.

¹⁰See A. Motte, *Les discours des travailleurs dans les tombes privées de la Première Période Intermédiaire et du Moyen Empire* (Master's thesis, University of Liège; Liège, 2013).

¹¹Most of these inscriptions have previously been translated (sometimes partially or inaccurately) in tomb publications, but they are ‘new’ in the sense that they have never previously been studied as a coherent group.

¹²Scenes of hunting desert game are included here under the generic topic ‘hunting’, whereas Guglielmi focused solely on bird hunting.

¹³Four speech captions from the tomb of Baqet III (tomb 15, Beni Hasan) have erroneously been identified as occurring in wrestling scenes. From a comparison with Old Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*, it would however appear that these four captions relate to the depictions of beating as punishment in a scene of rendering accounts.

Table 2. Distribution of wrestling scenes across Middle Kingdom necropoleis.

Location	Tomb owner	Speech caption
Thebes Meir	Djari (TT 366)	No inscription ¹⁶
	Senbi (B1)	6 speeches ¹⁷
	Ukhhotep (B2)	No inscription / unfinished tomb ¹⁸
Deir el-Bersha ¹⁹ Beni Hassan	Neheri I (DeBh 4)	7 speeches ²⁰
	Baqet I (BH 29)	No inscription ²¹
	Khnumhotep I (BH 14)	No inscription ²²
	Baqet III (BH 15)	No inscription ²³
	Khety (BH 17)	10 speeches ²⁴
	Amenemhat (BH 2)	No inscription ²⁵

Corpus

During the First Intermediate Period,¹⁴ *Reden und Rufe* occur in el-Hagarsa, el-Hawawish and Mo'alla, while during the Middle Kingdom, up to the reign of Senwosret III,¹⁵ workers' speeches are present in no less than eight necropoleis: Thebes, Deir Rifeh, Asyut, Meir, Deir el-Bersha, Beni Hassan, Heracleopolis Magna and Saqqara. Wrestling scenes are found in four of these (see Table 2).

Wilsdorf's study, which is devoted to wrestling scenes in all ancient Egyptian monuments,²⁶ described the tomb of Sarenput I (QH 36), in Qubbet el-Hawa, as containing wrestling scenes. According to the tomb description in the *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte*

antique,²⁷ however, the surrounding scenes (water scenes such as boating and fishing) would rather suggest fights between fishermen than wrestlers.²⁸ The north wall of Senbi's tomb at Meir (B1; see Plate 1) is illuminating in this regard: one of the central registers shows the wrestlers, whose speeches are the subject of this article, while the other is about marsh-related activities. Next to a scene of fishing with a hand-net, fishermen are fighting with sticks on two small boats. It thus seems the 'wrestling scenes' in the tomb of Sarenput should rather be fishermen fights. Such scenes are rather rare in Middle Kingdom private tombs,²⁹ unlike those of the Old Kingdom.³⁰

As Table 2 shows, wrestling scenes are essentially found in the necropoleis of Middle Egypt, in nomarchal tombs built from the end of the Eleventh Dynasty into the reign of Sesostri I. Of the nine tombs containing such scenes, only three include speech captions of wrestlers: Senbi, Neheri I, and Khety, all dated to the reign of Amenemhet I.³¹

¹⁴Several tombs are approximately dated 'late Sixth Dynasty – First Intermediate Period'. Only tombs securely dated from the First Intermediate Period are mentioned in this study.

¹⁵After the tomb of Djehutyhotep in Deir el-Bersha, *Reden und Rufe* are no longer included in the decorative programme of elite tombs. They reappear in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs, in the necropoleis of el-Kab, Saqqara and Thebes, after a hiatus of almost 300 years.

¹⁶MMA photo M.12.C.65.

¹⁷A. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir, I: The Tomb-Chapel of Ukh-hotep's Son Senbi* (EES ASM 22; London, 1914), pl. III.

¹⁸A. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir, II: The Tomb-Chapel of Senbi's son Ukh-hotep (B, No. 2) with two Appendixes on Hieroglyphs and Other Details in B, Nos. 1, 2, 4* (EES ASM 23; London, 1915), pl. II.

¹⁹According to P. E. Newberry, *El Bersheh, I: The Tomb of Tehutihetep* (EES ASM 3; London, 1894), 14, the left-hand wall of the outer chamber in Djehutyhotep's tomb might have been devoted to scenes of wrestling and fighting. But, as this section of the wall is completely destroyed, the tomb is not included in the present study.

²⁰P. E. Newberry, *El Bersheh, II* (EES ASM 4; London, 1895), pl. XI.

²¹P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan, II* (EES ASM 2; London, 1894), pl. XXXII.

²²P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan, I* (EES ASM 1; London, 1893), 85 and pl. XLVII.

²³Newberry, *Beni Hasan, II*, pl. V.

²⁴Newberry, *Beni Hasan, II*, pl. XV and pl. XIX.

²⁵Newberry, *Beni Hasan, I*, pls XIV–XVI.

²⁶Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*.

²⁷J. de Morgan, U. Bouriant, G. Legrain, G. Jéquier, and A. Barsanti, *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'égypte antique, I: De la frontière de Nubie à Kom Ombos* (Vienne, 1894), 191: 'Paroi gauche de la salle: dans l'angle formé avec la paroi précédente, chasse au marais totalement effacée; ensuite viennent deux registres. Au registre inférieur, traces d'une barque montée par trois hommes dont l'un est à la barre et les deux autres manoeuvrent les rames; le reste de la scène a disparu. Près de l'angle formé par cette paroi et celle de la porte d'entrée, scènes au bord de l'eau, *des hommes lutent*, tandis qu'un autre remplit un vase □ ...' (my emphasis).

²⁸QH 36 still awaits full publication of its decorative programme, which would make it possible to confirm either interpretation. E. Edel, K.-J. Seyfried and G. Vieler, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el Hawa bei Assuan, I. Abteilung: Architektur, Darstellungen, Texte, archäologischer Befund und Funde der Gräber [QH 24 – QH 209]* (Paderborn, 2008), 967: 'Über diesen 1971 erreichten Stand ist die Dokumentation von QH 36 bisher nicht hinausgelangt'.

²⁹According to L. Klebs, *Die Reliefs und Malereien des Mittleren Reiches (VII–XVII Dynastie, ca 2475–1580 v. Chr.): Material zur ägyptischen Kulturgeschichte* (AHAW 6; Heidelberg, 1922), 153, besides the tomb of Senbi, they are also found in the tombs of Amenemhat (Newberry, *Beni Hasan, I*, pl. XXXIV) and of Baqet III at Beni Hassan (Newberry, *Beni Hasan, II*, pl. IV); in the tomb of Djehutyhotep at Deir el-Bersha (Newberry, *El Bersheh, I*, pl. VIII) and in the tomb of Ukhhotep (B2) at Meir (Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir, II*, pl. IV).

³⁰For an exhaustive list, consult the Oxford Expedition to Egypt, scene-details database: <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/oe_ahrc_2006/queryThemes.cfm?orderType=CHRON&browseType=scrolled§ion=tombs&theme=1.8&refForm=short&columns=1&columns=2&columns=3&columns=5&columns=6&columns=9&CFID=16&CFTOKEN=7732F9F1-7BC5-445D-8A9048868BC5BA24> accessed 13 September 2016.

³¹For Senbi B1, see Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir, I*, 8–9, for Baqet III, and Khety, see Willems, *JEOL* 28, 91–3. On the date of Neheri I, see W. Schenkel, *Frühmittelägyptische Studien* (Bonn, 1962), §33–4; E. Brovarski, 'Ahanakht of Bersheh and the Hare Nome in the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom', in W. K. Simpson and W. M. Davies (eds), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan: Essays in Honor of Dows Dunham on the Occasion of his 90th birthday, June 1, 1980* (Boston, 1981), 14–30; Willems, *JEOL* 28, 91–3; E. Brovarski, 'The Hare and Oryx Nomes in the First Intermediate Period and Early Middle Kingdom', in A. Woods, A. McFarlane and S. Binder (eds), *Egyptian Culture and Society: Studies in Honour of Naguib Kanawati* (CASAE 38; Cairo, 2010), 31–85.

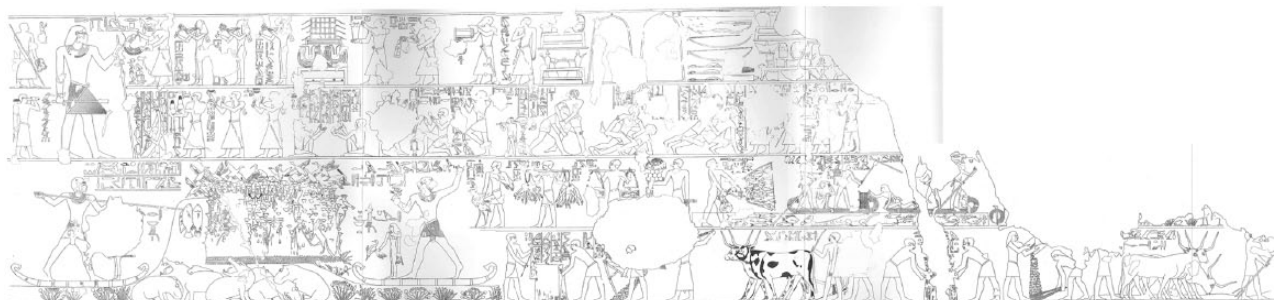


Plate 1. The tomb of Senbi, north wall (Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, I, pl. III-IV – copyright: the Egypt Exploration Society).

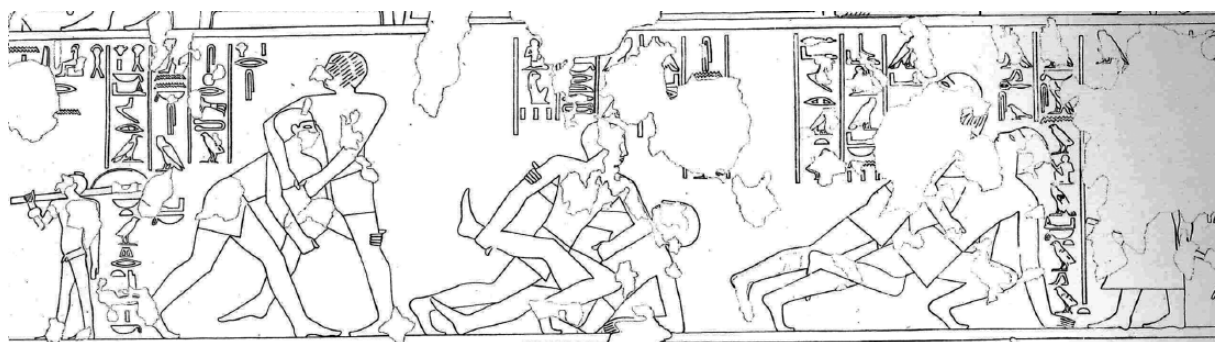


Fig. 1. Wrestling scenes in Senbi's tomb (Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, I, pl. III; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

Senbi (BI) – Meir

On the north wall of the inner room of the tomb of Senbi at Meir (Plate 1), several topics of 'daily life' are depicted. The lower registers are devoted to agricultural matters, fishing and officiants bringing fish offerings to the tomb owner. In the third register, some men dedicate their songs and dances to the nomarch Senbi, some fight with each other (Fig. 1), and others, bearing offerings, complete the scene; the rest of this register is partly missing. In the top register, women and men bring additional offerings, such as necklaces, sistra, vessels, and weapons.

Speech captions are written in columns above the three pairs of wrestlers. Some are in a poor state of preservation. The plaster has fallen away in many places, taking with it the hieroglyphic inscriptions, which complicates their reading.

Speeches above the left-hand group of wrestlers

On the first scene, the left-hand wrestler catches his opponent by his thighs in order to throw him to the ground. His opponent says:

𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳 𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳

in.n=k s(j) / in(=i) n=k s(j)

'You have got it'.³² / 'I will bring it to you.'

³²The pronoun *s(j)* refers either to the thigh (*mn.t: Wb. II*, 68.8–15) or the leg (*w^cr.t: Wb. I*, 287.4–8).

mk shr(=i) tw hr=s

'Look, I will make you fall because of it.'

Two interpretations are possible for the first sentence³³ and the lack of parallels makes it difficult to favour one reading over the other. The hieroglyphs 𓇳𓇳 could be read either as an adverbial group *m^c=k* 'with your arm' or as the presentative *mk*, which could be written with 𓇳 as well as 𓇳.³⁴ The sense of the passage favours nevertheless reading *mk* 'behold'. It should be noted that the dividing line between the columns is not extended down to the level of the presentative *mk* and indeed a space of the size of roughly one sign-group separates the *m* from the rest of the word. This could simply be due to a wish to avoid clashing with the axe of the child drawn to the left of the inscription (see Fig. 1). As inscriptions were added after the carving of the scenes, this might explain the strangeness of this writing.

In the same scene, the left-hand wrestler says:

𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳 𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳 𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳 𓇳𓇳𓇳𓇳

w3h-ib=k di(=i) mA=k tw hr s.t-r3=k

'Be patient. I will cause you to see yourself as you described!'³⁵

³³The second interpretation was already suggested by Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*, 554 and by Houlihan, *Wit and Humour*, 38.

³⁴See DZA 23.624.210 ff. on TLA website <<http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

³⁵The speech was translated 'Mit Verlaub (?), ich will geben, dass du dich unter dem Ort deines Mundes siehst (d.h. du sollst auf deine Nase fallen)!' by Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*, 554;

Spiegelberg, working from New Kingdom documents, understood *hr-s.t-rʒ* as a compound preposition.³⁶ In the present speech, however, it is not yet fully lexicalized. The process is completed from Late Egyptian onwards.³⁷ Compounds with the word *s.t* and a body part, such as *rʒ* here, are used to express the activity exercised by the body part in question.³⁸

The synthetic *s*-causative of the perception verb *mʒʒ*, *smʒʒ*, is attested twice in ancient Egyptian documentation.³⁹ Yet, the analytic causative *rdi mʒʒ* is more common as in this case.

The second person singular dependent pronoun is written differently in both speeches: once it is spelled \Rightarrow in the left-hand group of wrestlers above and once \circ in its younger counterpart,⁴⁰ in the present speech.

Speeches above the middle group of wrestlers

In the second scene, a wrestler pushes his knee in his opponent's belly and his elbow on his neck to keep him on the ground.

m [c. 3 groups]=*k r-gs rmt*

'[4 groups] you beside the people'.

In the middle of the lacuna, a few traces of a bird sign are obvious but not more closely identifiable. One plausible restoration would be *m[k di(=i) tw hr sʒ]=k r-gs rmt* 'Lo[ok, I shall put you on] your [back] in front of everybody!'.⁴¹ However, the sorry state of preservation of the text and the lack of parallels prevent any secure reading.

The second speech is even more damaged. Only few signs are legible, though unintelligible.

and as 'Please be patient! And you'll see yourself on your face!' by Houlihan, *Wit and Humour*, 38.

³⁶See W. Spiegelberg, 'Varia', *RT* 21 (1899), 43. The phrase is found in the tale of the two brothers (P. d'Orbiney 3,8) and a Twenty-first Dynasty letter (P. BN 198 II, 5). According to the *Ramses* database, the same expression is also found in a Nineteenth Dynasty letter to the dead (P. Leiden I 371, r° 12 and v° 37) and in Horus and Seth (P. Chester Beatty 1, 5, 11).

³⁷See J. Černý and S. I. Groll, *A Late Egyptian Grammar* (2nd edn; StudPohl series maior 4; Rome, 1978), 121, and A. H. Gardiner and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead, mainly from the Old and Middle Kingdoms* (London, 1928), 24 (comments VII, 12).

³⁸See E. Edel, *Altägyptische Grammatik I* (AnOr 34; Roma, 1955), 111 §260.

³⁹Once in the Pyramid Texts (PT 69 = Nt 216), see G. Jéquier, *Les pyramides des reines Neit et Apout* (Fouilles à Saqqarah; Cairo, 1933), pl. XII, and J. P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (WAW 23; Atlanta, 2005), 319; and once in the adoration of the sun-god, for which see E. Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei): Nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, I: *Text* (AH 2; Geneva, 1975), 8; and E. Hornung, *Das Buch der Anbetung des Re im Westen (Sonnenlitanei): Nach den Versionen des Neuen Reiches*, II: *Übersetzung und Kommentar* (AH 3; Geneva, 1976), 100 n.23.

⁴⁰J. F. Borghouts, *Egyptian: An Introduction to the Writing and Language of the Middle Kingdom*, I: *Grammar, Syntax, and Indexes* (EU 24/1; Leiden, 2010), 58 §10.c.(ii).

⁴¹As suggested by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015).

?*mʒʒ*?*ʒʒ*?*rʒ*? / ?*irʒ*? [1 group]=?*snʒ*? [3 groups]

The beginning of the sentence could perhaps be read⁴² *m di r* [...] 'Don't make [...]', probably followed by the pronoun =*sn*, but the damage is too great to allow for a plausible restoration.

Speeches above the right-hand group of wrestlers

In the third scene, the left-hand wrestler attempts to force his opponent to the ground by pulling his foot out from under him, while he boasts about his upcoming victory:

m(j) hs m ksm n wi mk tw iw.t(i)

'Come on, (you) miserable one, one who defies me! Look, you have come.'

The verb *ksm* is not recorded before the Middle Kingdom.⁴³ It occurs three times in *Coffin Texts*, strikingly on coffins from Deir el-Bersha: B6C, B2L and B1Bo.⁴⁴ Since a negative imperative *m ksm* does not make good sense, the most likely reading is as an 'm of equivalence',⁴⁵ followed by a participle.

Another difficulty is the apparently unexpected *n* written between this verb *ksm* and the dependent pronoun *wi*. Three interpretations are conceivable: (a) reading **ksm n(=i) wi*, which does not give a clear sense of the sentence;⁴⁶ (b) Faulkner observed that, in a few cases, a 'liaison' *n*, as he called it, could be added between a word with a final *-n*, as a plural suffix for instance, and the 1st singular dependent pronoun *wi*.⁴⁷ Borghouts pointed out that it is a case of phonological overlap, known in linguistics as 'sandhi'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Roccati suggested that **nwi* could be a tonic form of the pronoun, especially in the *Coffin Texts*.⁴⁹ The present verb certainly ends with the nasal labial *-m* instead of the

⁴²As suggested by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015).

⁴³See *s.v.* *ksm* (lemma-no. 165480) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁴⁴See *CT* IV, 85c for the spell 312 on coffin B6C, and *CT* IV, 143j for the spell 319 on coffin B2L in A. de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, IV: *Texts of Spells 268–354* (OIP 67; Chicago, 1951); and see *CT* III, 387f for the spell 261 on coffin B1Bo in A. de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, III: *Texts of Spells 164–267* (OIP 64; Chicago, 1947). In those three spells, the verb is construed with an animate direct object.

⁴⁵As suggested by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015). For a quite recent study on the *m* of predication, see F. D. Scalf, 'Statements of Identity and the *m* of Predication', *LingAeg* 16 (2008), 135–51, who questions the interpretation of A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford, 1957, 3rd edn), §38. I thank here the anonymous reviewer who drew my attention to this reference.

⁴⁶This reading was suggested by one of my reviewers.

⁴⁷R. O. Faulkner, "'Liaison' *n* between *-n* and *wi*", *JEA* 64 (1978), 129; R. O. Faulkner, 'A Coffin Text Miscellany', *JEA* 68 (1982), 29–30.

⁴⁸Borghouts, *Egyptian Grammar*, 87 §19.c. NB 2.

⁴⁹A. Roccati, 'Sulla tradizione dei "sarcofagi"', *OrAnt* 6 (1967), 173–80.

nasal dental $-n$, but this apparently unexpected $-n$ could possibly be the ‘liaison’ n highlighted by Faulkner ($ksm \{n\} wi$); (c) a third possibility could be to understand the n as a historical spelling⁵⁰ of the verb ksm to indicate a phonetic change ($ksm > ksn$), like the verb swr ‘to drink’, where the last phoneme r dwindles into i , which explains spellings like $\text{𓂏} \text{𓂏} \text{𓂏}$. This is, however, unlikely as other examples of ksm do not show such a spelling, and it is unclear how widespread the phenomenon of historical spelling was for the Middle Kingdom.

Behind the dividing line of the last column, a hieroglyph m is written (see Fig. 1). It probably belongs to the beginning of the horizontal inscription written above the character in the scene to the right of the wrestlers, which is partially destroyed. There is not enough space between the dividing line and the character to contain another column of hieroglyphs.

The last sentence, $mk \ tw \ iw.t(i)$, can be linked to another wrestling speech in the tomb of Khety (see speech D in the section Khety (BH 17) – Beni Hassan, later in this article). Although the syntax of the last sentence is perfectly clear, the sense remains elusive. Both contexts provide little help in establishing meaning.

The left-hand wrestler seeks to moderate his opponent’s language:



$m \text{ } ^c b^c \text{ } mk \text{ } n \text{ } ^c 3 \text{ } m 3 \text{ } tw$

‘Don’t boast!⁵¹ Behold, we are here. Watch out.’

Neheri I (tomb no. 4) – Deir el-Bersha

The tomb of Neheri I is severely damaged.⁵² Only eight wall fragments are left; one of them (fragment 7, see Fig. 2) depicts five men wrestling.⁵³

Speech on the left side of the fragment

The first duel of the left no longer survives, with only the last part of one speech partly readable:



[...] $m \text{ } ^c \text{ } wy=k$
‘[...] with both your arms.’

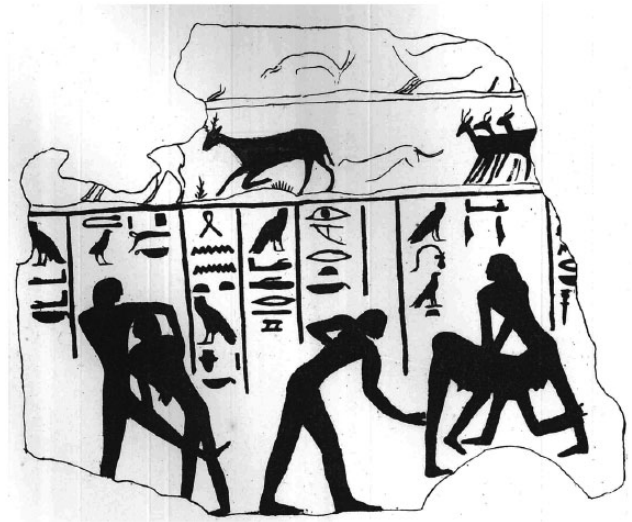


Fig. 2. Wrestling scenes in the tomb of Neheri I (Newberry, *El Bersheh*, II, pl. XI; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

[...] $m(k) \text{ } ^c=k$
‘[...] Behold, your arm!’

The first reading is more probable than the second, which assumes a defective spelling of the presentative mk followed by c in the singular.⁵⁴ I know of no other example of such a way of writing the presentative mk among the entire corpus of Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*.

Speeches above the left-hand group of wrestlers

The second fight, which is actually the first surviving on the remaining fragment, shows a wrestler raising the leg of his opponent, who is holding onto him to avoid falling.



$p \text{ } \check{s}d=k \text{ } tw / p \text{ } mh=k \text{ } tw$

‘Pi (?), you should save yourself’

‘Pi (?), may you bow (down) yourself’.

‘Pi (?), you will grab yourself!’

‘Pi (?), get a hold of yourself!’

Wilsdorf provided two interpretations of this speech:

\square unbekannt, kaum eine Form des Demonstrativums. $\check{s}dj.k \text{ } tw$ könnte heissen: du mögest Dich bewahren, der Text schreibt offenkundig sehr defektiv. An das $\check{s}dj$ der Pyramiden-Texte ‘einen Gegner packen’ wird man nicht denken dürfen, denn man müsste ein aktiv. und dazu merkwürdig geschriebenes Pseudop. annehmen, wenn es heissen sollte: ich halte Dich gepackt (???). (Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 53)

⁵⁰As cautiously suggested by J. Winand (pers. comm., 30 November 2015).

⁵¹In Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*, 554, the verb $^c b^c$ has not been recognized: ‘Siehe [...], wir sind hier. Paß du bloß auf dich auf!’

⁵²Since 2002, the site of Deir el-Bersha has been reinvestigated by the KU Leuven. See <<http://www.dayralbarsha.com>> accessed 4 December 2015.

⁵³Although Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*, 555 described the wrestling scenes in the tomb of Neheri I, they did not discuss the speech captions accompanying them.

⁵⁴As suggested by Ch. Reintges (pers. comm., 9 December 2015).

As he suggested it, an initial demonstrative without a noun is improbable. Vocatives are very common in *Reden und Rufe*, written either in front or at the end of the sentence. In either case, four possible constructions occur:

- Noun⁵⁵ and/or title(s) designating the person addressed, without further components, e.g. *sšm* ‘(Oh) butcher’.
- Noun and/or title(s) followed by a demonstrative, e.g. *mniw pw* ‘Oh herdsman’.⁵⁶
- Noun and/or title(s) preceded by the interjection 𓂏 *i* ‘Oh!’, e.g. *i rh.w* ‘Oh mates’.
- Or a combination of the last two, e.g. *i wh^c pw* ‘Oh fowler’.

However, I am not aware of any examples of the demonstrative occurring by itself as a vocative. Reading 𓂏 either as the noun *pw* ‘base’⁵⁷ or as the toponym *pw* ‘Bouto’⁵⁸ offer no better sense. Two further possibilities are worthy of mention, despite the difficulty of finding parallels. 𓂏 could be understood either as onomatopoeic⁵⁹ or as the rare interrogative *pw* ‘what?’.⁶⁰ Yet I do not know further examples where this interrogative would stand by itself at the beginning of a sentence, comparable to the interjection ‘What?’ in English or ‘Quoi?’ in French. Moreover, the interrogative pronoun *pw* is even rarer without the following particle *tr*.⁶¹

⁵⁵Or noun phrases, such as *nty-hn^c(=i)*.

⁵⁶See J. P. Allen, *The Heqanakht Papyri* (PMMA 27; New York, 2002), 90 for a comment on the use of *pw* and *pn* in vocatives and n. 34 for further references.

⁵⁷See s.v. *pw* (lemma-no. 58650) on TLA website <<http://aaww.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁵⁸See s.v. *pw* (lemma-no. 58670) on TLA website <<http://aaww.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁵⁹As suggested by Ch. Reintges (pers. comm., 9 December 2015). As noted in Sc. B. Noegel and K. Szpakowska, “‘Word Play’ in the Ramesside Dream Manual”, *SAK* 35 (2006), 195, onomatopoeia are words that imitate the things to which they refer or which imitate sounds and are therefore one kind of ‘pun’ or ‘word play’. On this subject, see *inter alia* A. Loprieno, ‘Puns and Word Play in Ancient Egyptian’, in Sc. B. Noegel (ed.), *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, 2000), 3–20; O. Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes: Word Classification in Ancient Egypt*, (GOF IV/38,3; Wiesbaden, 2002). I would like to thank one of my anonymous reviewers for pointing out those references.

⁶⁰As suggested by R. Enmarch (pers. comm., 29 September 2016). See Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §256, 497–8, Borghouts, *Egyptian Grammar*, §28.a–b; and M. Malaise and J. Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée de l'égyptien classique* (Aegyptiaca Leodiensia 6. Liège, 1999), 141–2, §204. This interrogative, which is probably related to the demonstrative pronoun *pw*, is non-existent in Old Egyptian. See Edel, *Aäg*, §203, §1010. Nor is it used in Middle Kingdom documentary texts, which prefer the combined form with *tr*. See M. Brose, *Grammatik der dokumentarischen Texte des Mittleren Reiches* (LingAeg StudMon 13; Hamburg, 2014), §61.3. In contrast, *pw* is found alternating with *ptr* in the *Coffin Texts*. See for instance de Buck, *Coffin Texts* IV, 217a and 223c.

⁶¹E. Oréal, *Les particules en égyptien ancien: De l'ancien égyptien à l'égyptien classique* (BdE 152; Cairo, 2011), 500–2 provides a short discussion on the interrogative *p(w)tr*, where she incidentally points out that the process of combining *pw* with *tr* has not been thoroughly studied yet.

Studies on onomatopoeia and interjections are still lacking in Ancient Egyptian, which prevents a conclusive reading. Therefore, the spelling 𓂏 could maybe be linked to a name [*p* + semi-vowel], such as *pw* 𓂏 ,⁶² *pw* 𓂏 ,⁶³ or *pw* 𓂏 / 𓂏 .⁶⁴ Other examples of an omitted semi-vowel (with the demonstrative *pw* written *p*) are known in a few Old Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*.⁶⁵ While no other examples of a personal name used as a vocative are known either in Old Kingdom or Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*, in the New Kingdom tomb of Horemheb (TT 78), in the butchery scene on the west wall of the tomb, there is a speech caption: *tnt hws ikr sp-sn šsp n=i imn p3 iw3 ir p3 sš nswt* [...]. It has been suggested by Brack that the group *tnt* here could actually be a name.⁶⁶ Inasmuch as the names *tnt* and *tnti* are recorded for the Old and Middle Kingdoms,⁶⁷ one could understand that *tnt* underwent a consonant shift (*t* > *t*).⁶⁸ This speech could thus be translated as follows: ‘O Tenet, eviscerate excellently, eviscerate excellently, so that Amun may receive the ox from me and that the royal scribe acts/does ...’ This last interpretation, though not fully convincing, is at least consonant with the syntax.

After this still debated initial 𓂏 , Wilsdorf read the verb ‘*šdj*’ (𓂏), which provides the first translation above. Yet the hieroglyphic sign could also be understood as the biliteral sign *mḥ* (𓂏). Among the several *mḥ(i)* verbs recorded on the TLA,⁶⁹ two of them could fit: *mḥ* ‘to bow’, and *mḥ* ‘to fill’, which has the derivate meaning of ‘holding, seizing’.⁷⁰ The verb *mḥ* ‘to bow’, is attested only once in Edfu according to the DZA.⁷¹ Even if the unique attestation of the verb *mḥ* ‘to bow’ known so far is linked to the Greek period, it could of course have been used before that time. Such a meaning would fit the context: one of the wrestlers tries to make his

⁶²H. Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen*, I: *Verzeichnis der Namen* (Glückstadt, 1935), 129, 21.

⁶³Ranke, *PN I*, 131, 18.

⁶⁴Ranke, *PN I*, 131, 21–2.

⁶⁵See *inter alia* Hetepka (Saqqara, Fifth Dynasty) in G. T. Martin, *The Tomb of Hetepka and Other Reliefs and Inscriptions from the Sacred Animal Necropolis North Saqqâra, 1964–1973* (TEM 4 = Excavations at North Saqqâra, Documentary Series 2; London, 1979), pl. 8 (3); Idut (Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty) in N. Kanawati and M. Abdel Raziq, *The Unis Cemetery at Saqqara, II: The Tombs of Inyefert and Ihy (Reused by Idut)* (ACE Reports 19; Warminster, 2003), pl. 54; and Nyankhnisut (Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty), fragment AS 5970 held in the Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst in Munich.

⁶⁶A. Brack and A. Brack, *Das Grab des Horemheb – Theben Nr. 78* (AV 35; Mainz, 1980), 27.

⁶⁷Ranke, *PN I*, 392, 8 and 10.

⁶⁸Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, 21–2, §23.

⁶⁹*mḥ* ‘to fill’ (*Wb.* II, 116.6–118.10), *mḥ* ‘to hold’ (*Wb.* II, 119.5–18), *mḥ* ‘to bow (?)’ (*Wb.* II, 121.3), *mḥ* ‘to coil around’ (*Wb.* II, 123, 2–4), *mḥi* ‘to care for’ (*Wb.* II, 120, 13–16), *mḥi* ‘to be in water’ (*Wb.* II, 121–122,11), and *mḥi* ‘to flee’ (*Wb.* II, 126.16–18).

⁷⁰See s.v. *mḥ* (lemma-no. 854514) on TLA website <<http://aaww.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015, and R. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen (Marburger Edition)* (5th edn; Mainz, 2009), 372. Indeed, filling oneself with someone/something is not very far from holding someone/something.

⁷¹See s.v. *mḥ* (lemma-no. 73380) on TLA website <<http://aaww.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

opponent fall. Inasmuch as the word determinatives in captions are usually not written within the caption⁷² – because the scene itself can perform as determinative – the hieroglyph of the man bowing down (𓂏) could be one of the wrestlers. The other alternative, *mh* ‘to fill, to hold’, can be understood either ‘Pi (?), you will grab yourself’⁷³ or ‘Pi (?), get a hold of yourself.’⁷⁴ In the first, the left wrestler gets an upper hand on his opponent and so warns him about his imminent defeat by saying that he will be doubled up shortly. In the latter case, the reverse applies: the wrestler on the left tells his adversary to react, instead of accepting defeat.

The absence of any secure parallels in a similar context prevents us from opting for a preferred reading; the issue remains unresolved.

The wrestler on the right then replies to his opponent:



šn(=i) ntt m ib=k

‘I wonder what you have in mind.’

Wilsdorf tentatively suggested ‘*Umschließe, was in deinem Herzen ist*’,⁷⁵ but the reading is more coherent with the verb *šnj* ‘to question’⁷⁶ than *šnj* ‘to surround’.⁷⁷ Moreover, a similar expression occurs in a New Kingdom letter, in which an unnamed woman consults a wise woman about the death of her two children: *m-ir šn.t ḥ3ty=t m dhr[.t] [?] ‘Don’t question your heart with bitterness’* (O. Nelson 8, v^o 4).⁷⁸ The resemblance between both sentences is striking, even if the latter refers to the *ḥ3ty* instead of the heart *ib*.

Speeches above the right-hand group of wrestlers

The last sequence on the fragment depicts three men (see Fig. 2, and see Tables 3 and 4). One encourages the losing

⁷²H. G. Fischer, *The Orientation of Hieroglyphs*, I: *Reversals* (Egyptian Studies 3; New York, 1977), 3–4.

⁷³As suggested by Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015).

⁷⁴As suggested by Enmarch (pers. comm., 29 September 2016), as well as R. Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch*, II: *Mittleres Reich und Zweite Zwischenzeit* (Lexica 4 – KAW 112; Mainz, 2006), lemma no {13494} (Hannig), which provides the translation ‘festhalten’ for this speech.

⁷⁵Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 53.

⁷⁶See s.v. *šni* (lemma-no. 155490) on TLA website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁷⁷See s.v. *šni* (lemma-no. 155450) on TLA website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁷⁸Unpublished ostrakon recorded in Černý Notebook 107.30, which is encoded in the *Ramses Database*. See O. OIM 16974 (= O. Nelson 8, O. OIC 16974) on the Deir el-Medina Database <<http://www.leidenuniv.nl/nino/dmd/dmd.html>> accessed 24 November 2016. This ostrakon is probably the answer to O. Letellier, a letter written by Qenherkhepeshef on the same topic. See D. Sweeney, ‘Women’s correspondence from Deir el-Medina’, in J. Leclant (ed.), *Sesto congresso internazionale di egittologia: atti*, II (Turin, 1992) 527, n. 7 and J. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen’s Community during the Ramesside Period* (EgUit 15; Leiden, 2001), 229.

party, while the likely winner throws his comrade on the ground and boasts:



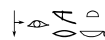
my m w3.t(=i)

‘Come on, you two (lit. ‘Come into (my) way, you two!’)’

The writing of the verb suggests a plural imperative of the verb *iwi*, formed here with the stem *mi*,⁷⁹ albeit lacking the initial complementing sign *m*. While in Old Egyptian, dual and plural imperatives occasionally show an ending *.i* or *.y*,⁸⁰ in Middle Egyptian the imperative uses a short form.⁸¹ The dual meaning is thus inferred from the context.

This sentence can be contrasted with the expression *ir n(=i) w3.t* ‘let me pass’, which is quite frequent in Sixth Dynasty *Reden und Rufe*.⁸²

The loser replies to his adversary:



ir(=i) mr.t=k

‘I’ll do what you want.’

Wilsdorf⁸³ suggested that the beginning of the sentence should be read either *ir* (imperative) or *ir(=i)* (*sdm=f* with

⁷⁹For other unusual writings of the imperative *my* in *Reden und Rufe* and in *CT*, see Edel, *Aäg*, §610.

⁸⁰J. P. Allen, *The Inflection of the Verb in the Pyramid Texts* (BAe 21/2; Malibu, 1984), 89, §159 and Edel, *Aäg* §599 and §610.

⁸¹Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §335–6 and Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, 511, §833–5.

⁸²See *inter alia* from North to South: Ankhmahor (Saqqara) in N. Kanawati and A. Hassan, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*, II: *The Tomb of Ankhmahor* (ACE Reports 9; Warminster, 1997), pls 41, 61; Khentika (Saqqara) in T. G. H. James, *The Mastaba of Khentika called Ikheki* (EES ASM 30; London, 1953), pl. XXII; Mehu (Saqqara) in H. Altenmüller, *Die Wanddarstellungen im Grab des Mehu in Saqqara* (AVDAIK 42; Mainz, 1998), pl. 74; Nikauisesi (Saqqara) in N. Kanawati and M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*, VI: *The Tomb of Nikauisesi* (ACE Reports 14; Warminster, 2000), pl. 61; Wernu (Saqqara) in W. V. Davies, A. el-Khouli, A. B. Lloyd, and A. J. Spencer, *Saqqâra Tombs*, I: *The Mastabas of Mereri and Wernu* (EES ASM 36; London, 1984), pl. 25; Pepyankh the Old (Meir) in A. Blackman and M. Apted, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, V: *The Tomb-Chapels A, No. 1 (that of Ni-‘ankh-Pepi the black), A, No. 2 (that of Pepi’ onkh with the ‘good name’ of Heny the black), A, No. 4 (that of Hepi the black, D, No. 1 (that of Pepi), and E, Nos. 1-4 (those of Meniu, Nenki, Pepi’ onkh and Tjetu)* (EES ASM 28; London, 1953), pl. XXX; Ka-Hetep called Tjeti-iqer (el-Hawawish) in Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish: The Cemetery of Akhmim*, I (Sydney, 1980), Fig. 14; and Kheni (el-Hawawish) in N. Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of el-Hawawish: The Cemetery of Akhmim*, II (Sydney, 1981), Fig. 26. One can add the Middle Kingdom tomb of Ukhhotep (B4) at Meir who copied several speeches, including this one, from the tomb of Pepyankh the Old. See A. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, III: *the Tomb-Chapel of Ukh-Hotep son of Ukh-Hotep and Mersi (B, No. 4)* (EES ASM 24; London, 1915), pls VII–VIII.

⁸³Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 53.

Table 3. First reading based on orientation of signs.

Wrestler on the right	<i>ir(=i) mr.t=k</i>
Wrestler in the middle	<i>my m w3.t(=i)</i>
Wrestler on the left	<i>m (w)d(i)/(r)d(i) r t3</i>

present meaning). This sentence can be linked to the very common expression *iry(=i) r hs.t=k* in workers' speeches, but its formulation with *mri* seems to be a unique occurrence among all the Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*. When the first person pronoun is implied, the verb *iri* is indiscriminately written with double reed-leaves or with a brief stem, in contrast to the imperative, which is consistently written with a brief stem or with a complementing *r*. In this case, the ambiguity can be resolved by looking at the scene itself. Indeed, the orientation of the hieroglyphs might at first glance imply that the first speech – *my m w3.t(=i)* – was uttered by the wrestler in the middle, who is struggling on, even if he is in an awkward position, and the second speech – *ir(=i) mr.t=k* – by the right-hand wrestler (see Table 3).

However, hieroglyphs in speech captions are not systematically drawn looking in the same direction as the speaker. Indeed, they can be written facing the talkative worker.⁸⁴ It seems thus to me that, notwithstanding the ambiguous orthography of *iri*, *ir(=i) mr.t=k* has to be interpreted as an answer to the first speech – somehow as a way to admit his defeat – rather than as an order. Accordingly, the three utterances of this scene have to be linked in the following way:

Table 4. Reading taking into account content of the text and the scene context.

Wrestler on the right	<i>my m w3.t(=i)</i>
Wrestler in the middle	<i>ir(=i) mr.t=k</i>
Wrestler on the left	<i>m (w)d(i)/(r)d(i) r t3</i>

The third individual then cries out:



m (w)d(i)/(r)d(i) r t3

‘Don’t push (him/me)⁸⁵ to the ground.’

⁸⁴See for instance the speech of the servant Ptahsankh in the ploughing scene of TT 212 (Ramose; Nineteenth Dynasty, Deir el-Medineh) in B. Bruyère, *Rapports sur les fouilles de Deir el Médineh: (1923–1924)*, [FIFAO 2,2; Cairo, 1925], 65, pl. XIX. Other variations in the orientation of hieroglyphs are also found in other speech captions, for example, those in the tomb of Ankhmahor (Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty): Kanawati and Hassan, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara II*, pls. 37a (agricultural scenes), 38 (bread-making scene) and 49 (butchery scenes) where hieroglyphs are written in the same direction as either the body of the speaker or his head.

⁸⁵It is not quite clear whether the speaker speaks for himself, for fear of being the next, or if he suggests to the winner to let the underdog go.

The initial *m* has to be read as the imperative of the negative verb *imi*.⁸⁶ Reading the particle *m(k)* written without the pronoun,⁸⁷ as in the *Pyramid Texts* (giving ‘Behold, I will push (him) on the ground’) is unlikely, as there are no clear parallels for this in the whole corpus of *Reden und Rufe* (see discussion earlier of another possible example in the speech caption on the left of this fragment). It is possible that this writing of *mk* in the tomb of Neheri I was an idiosyncratic use: the fragment (Fig. 2), already in bad state of preservation at the time of its publication in 1895, is now completely destroyed.⁸⁸

Frequent in nautical context,⁸⁹ the expression *wdi r t3* must be taken here in its literal meaning ‘to push (someone) to the ground’.⁹⁰

A variant of this expression occurs in a caning scene from the tomb of Baqet III at Beni Hassan:⁹¹ three men hold a peasant to the ground so that his back is exposed and can be hit with a stick. The chief oversees the scene and says: *dī=k sw r t3 n ib(=i)* ‘Put him onto the ground as I wish.’ In Old Egyptian, the meaning of the verb *wdi* is gradually replaced by the verb *rdi*, so that its spellings are to be understood in Middle Egyptian as graphemic variants of the verb *rdi*. As already pointed out by Allen, ‘apart from a few isolated, probably archaizing, instances ... the verb *wdj* ‘put’ does not seem to exist as an independent entity after Old Egyptian’,⁹² which explains why in subsequent attestations of the expression *wdi r t3*, such as in the tomb of Baqet III, the verb is written *(r)di*. The present example is maybe an intermediate writing, i.e. a composite written form of *wdi* and *rdi*. However, the DZA cards for both verbs⁹³ do not give this orthography for either verb.

Speech on the right side of the fragment

Next to the last sequence, part of a speech is visible but illegible. The remaining signs are too fragmentary to provide reading hypotheses:



⁸⁶Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, 513, §840.

⁸⁷As suggested by Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015).

⁸⁸As told by Willems (pers. comm., 28 January 2016).

⁸⁹As, for example in the tombs of Ptahhotep (LS 31, Fifth Dynasty) and of Ti (D22, Fifth Dynasty), where the expression *wdi r t3* meaning here ‘to put to shore’ is found five times in navigation scenes. See R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV. nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842–1845 ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition, Abtheilung 2, Band 4. Denkmäler des Alten Reiches* (Berlin, 1849–59), pl. 104b; and L. Epron, Fr. Daumas and G. Goyon, *Le tombeau de Ti, I: les approches de la chapelle* (MIFA0 65/1; Cairo, 1939), pls XXII, XXIV.

⁹⁰See *s.v.* *wdi (r t3)* (lemma-no. 51550) on TLA website <<http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

⁹¹See Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. VII (second register).

⁹²Allen, *Inflection*, 91–2.

⁹³See *s.v.* *wdi* (lemma-no. 51510), *wdi (r t3)* (lemma-no. 51550), and *rdi* (lemma-no. 96700) on TLA website <<http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 7 September 2016.

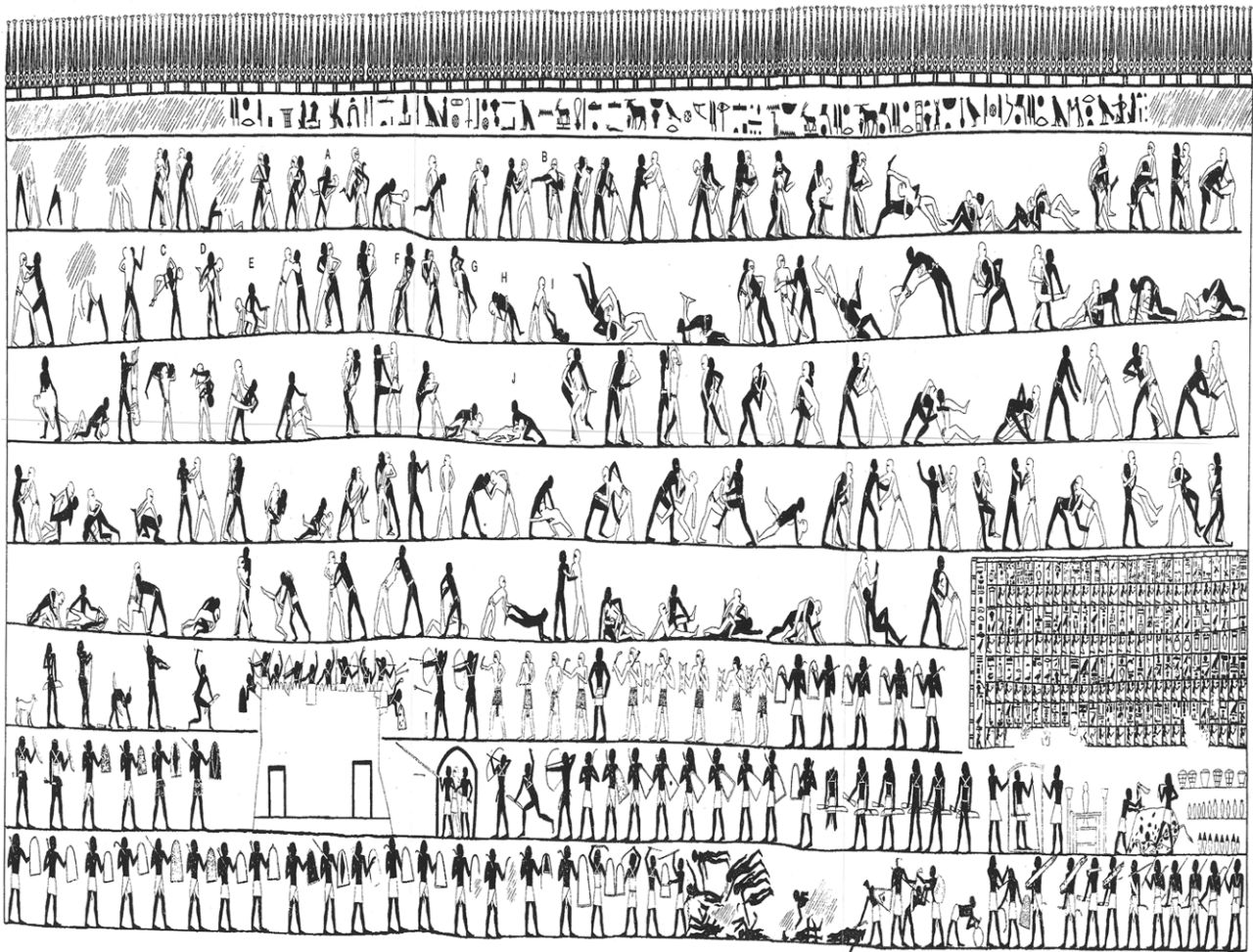


Plate 2. The tomb of Khety, east wall (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV – copyright: the Egypt Exploration Society).

Khety (BH 17) – Beni Hassan

The east wall of the tomb of Khety (see Plates 2 and 3) is exclusively devoted to wrestlers and military scenes: on the last three registers a fortress is besieged while on the five registers above, 122 duels are depicted in different wrestling positions. On the north part of the wall, 10 speeches are written next to the duellists.⁹⁴ In Newberry's publication, they are listed with letters (A to J), written next to each corresponding group, without further explanation. The notes of Champollion are a little more explicit.⁹⁵ In the following headings here, therefore, the position is accordingly specified in brackets for each speech. Besides this approximate position, it should be noted that the speeches are indifferently written from right to left. All of this complicates the identification of the speakers.

The classification of Newberry has been followed here for the sake of clarity. Unlike the other *Reden und Rufe*, written or carved exclusively in hieroglyphs, these 10 speech captions are *dipinti*, written in cursive hieroglyphs with red ink.⁹⁶ Despite this fact, they belong to the corpus of workers' speeches and are therefore studied in this article.

⁹⁴Although Decker and Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport*, 551–2 described the wrestling scenes in the tomb of Khety, the speech captions are not discussed.

⁹⁵J.-Fr. Champollion, *Notices descriptives*, II (Collection des classiques égyptologiques; Genève, 1974), 348–9.

⁹⁶Champollion, *Notices descriptives*, II, 348.

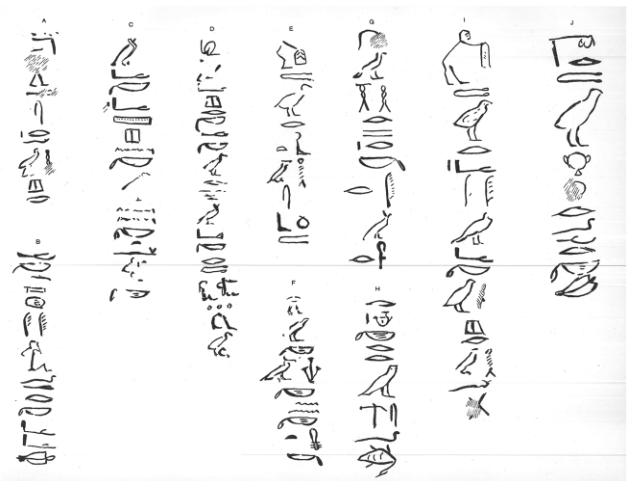
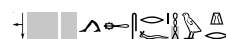


Plate 3. The tomb of Khety, inscriptions from the east wall (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV – copyright: the Egypt Exploration Society).

Speech A (above the group)

A man is holding his opponent by his knee and gives him a nudge to the chin (Fig. 3):



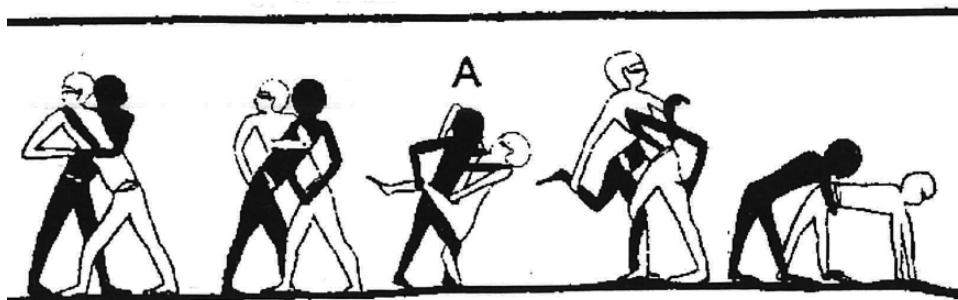


Fig. 3. Wrestling scenes in Khety's tomb, speech A (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

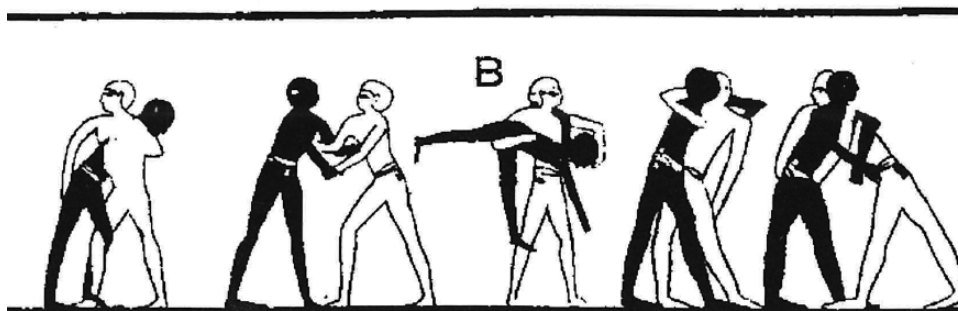


Fig. 4. Wrestling scenes in Khety's tomb, speech B (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

[1 group] [my] *hs(i) r3=f hw(=i) hr(w)*
 ‘[1 group] come, you wretched-mouthed one! I’ll strike (you) down!’

[1 group] [my] *hs(i) r3=f hw hr(w)*
 ‘[1 group] come, you wretch whose mouth is struck down.’⁹⁷

The speech can be understood slightly differently depending on the segmentation carried out. The verb *hwi* can be interpreted either as a main verb, beginning a new sentence, with the first person pronoun implied or as a participle⁹⁸ accompanying the noun *r3=f*. Yet it seems to me that the second interpretation makes less sense than the first, a threat, which fits better in context.

Speech B (in front of the group)

The wrestler suspends his opponent in the air and advises him to concede (Fig. 4):



(w)d(i)=k [1 group] hy dd(=i) r=k iw^c

‘You may push (me) [down]. What could I say against you, (oh) heir (?)?’

⁹⁷As suggested by Ch. Reintges (pers. comm., 9 October 2015).
⁹⁸As suggested by R. Enmarch (pers. comm., 29 September 2016), a stative would also be grammatically possible, although it yields poor sense in context.

The second sign-group is not easily readable. One could possibly restore this space with the noun *t3*, written with its determinatives ($\overline{\text{r}} \overline{\text{w}}$), in order to get the expression *wdi (r) t3*, as in the foregoing speech of the right-hand group of wrestlers in Senbi's tomb, here with the omission of the preposition.

The expression *hy dd(=i)* ‘what could I say’ is also found in the Heqanakhat papyri,⁹⁹ letter I, v^o 4: *hy dd.t=i nfr w(y) st* ‘what can I say? How good it is.’¹⁰⁰ Goedicke¹⁰¹ understood it as an early occurrence of the Late Egyptian admirative particle *hy*, which is used in two main cases, *hy qd=k* and *hy c=k*,¹⁰² to say, ‘How are you doing?’ Instead of *dd*, Wilsdorf¹⁰³ cautiously suggested to read *fdr=k*, with *fdr* being an archaizing writing for *fdi* ‘to uproot’. Although the verb could possibly be plausible in a wrestling context, it would not make sense combined with the particle *hy*, unlike the verb *dd*, for which parallel expressions are known. The rhetorical question followed by a vocative – *iw^c* – with the same possible ironic meaning induced by *hy*,¹⁰⁴ is syntactically correct and fits well in this context. Therefore, it seems that Wilsdorf's interpretation has to be discarded.

⁹⁹As pointed out by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015).
¹⁰⁰Translation of Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri*, 16.
¹⁰¹H. Goedicke, *Studies in the Hekanakhte Papers* (Baltimore, 1984), 64.
¹⁰²The noun *c* can also be followed by another suffix pronoun or a noun.
¹⁰³Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 55.
¹⁰⁴Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri*, 30, and Goedicke, *Hekanakhte Papers*, 64.

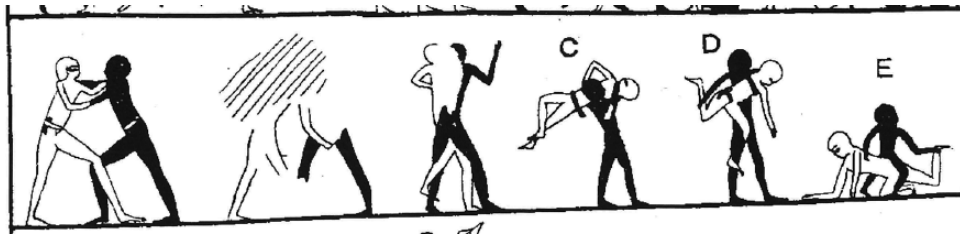


Fig. 5. Wrestling scenes in Khety's tomb, speeches C, D, and E (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

The spelling $\overline{\text{w}}$ for iw^c looks unusual, but the DZA 21.666.150 corroborates the assumption that it represents the verb iw^c 'to inherit', used here as a substantivized participle. The present speech might suggest understanding it as a way to designate the winner, although no parallels – apart from speech J (depicted later in Fig. 7) – are known.

The wrestlers underneath speeches C, D, and E seem to perform a sequence (see Fig. 5). The first position is shown in the left corner, while the black wrestler who claims his victory in speech E performs the last one on the right.

Speech C (behind the group)

The black wrestler carries his opponent on his shoulder (Fig. 5). One of them cries out:

$\overline{\text{m}} \overline{\text{k}} (=i) \overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} . n = k [w(i)] \overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{k}} \overline{\text{t}} = k$

$mk (=i) \overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} . n = k [w(i)] \overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{k}} \overline{\text{t}} = k$

'Look, (my) arm! You have blinded/raised [me]. The one you moved is mine.'

$\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ lacks determinatives and its meaning has to be gathered from the context. Several verbs $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}(i)$ are inventoried in Ancient Egyptian dictionaries: $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to flow out',¹⁰⁵ $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ 'to blow up',¹⁰⁶ $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to leap',¹⁰⁷ $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to be blind',¹⁰⁸ and $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ 'to erect'.¹⁰⁹ Except for $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to be blind', these verbs are attested only after the Second Intermediate Period according to the *TLA*. In this inscription, $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ appears to be transitive, as the following quail chick w , albeit partially erased, is easily recognizable (compare the other quail chick drawn in the other wrestler speeches of Khety on Plate 3 of this article).¹¹⁰ This writing of $w(i)$, highly frequent in Old Kingdom *Reden und*

Rufe,¹¹¹ is found in other Middle Kingdom speech captions,¹¹² next to $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$,¹¹³ $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$,¹¹⁴ and $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$.¹¹⁵ The direct object excludes $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to flow out' and $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to leap', just as the meaning of the second verb ($\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ 'to blow up') appears inappropriate in a wrestling context. This leaves either $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ 'to be blind' or $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ 'to erect'. Either would fit in the present scene, depending on which wrestler utters this speech (although the motion verb $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ is known only from the New Kingdom onwards).¹¹⁶ As the available publications¹¹⁷ do not clarify the exact position of the caption in relation to the wrestlers, there is no way to decide between possible readings and both options seem equally likely.

In the last sentence of the speech, the writing $\overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{k}}$ is a contracted spelling standing for $n(i)$ (i) $\overline{\text{n}} \overline{\text{k}}$, a possessive variant of the independent pronoun.¹¹⁸ This predicative

¹¹¹See for instance in the tomb of Ptahhotep II Tefi (Saqqara), in R. F. E. Paget and A. A. Pirie, *The Tomb of Ptah-Hetep* (BSAE/ERA 2; London, 1898), pls XXXII, XXXVI; of Ankhmahor (Saqqara), in Kanawati and Hassan, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*, II, pl. 43c; of Mereruka (Saqqara), in N. Kanawati, A. Woods, S. Shafik and E. Alexakis, *Mereruka and His Family*, III.2 (ACERpts 30; Oxford, 2011), pl. 76; of Thauti (Kasr es-Sayad), in T. Säve Söderbergh, *The Old Kingdom Cemetery at Hamra Dorn (El-Qasr wa es-Saiyad)*, (Stockholm, 1994), pls 26–7; of Ka-hetep called Tjetiqer (el-Hawawish), in Kanawati, *el-Hawawish*, I, Figs 11, 15; Kheni (el-Hawawish), in Kanawati, *el-Hawawish*, II, Fig. 26; and of Pepyankh the black (A2; Meir) in A. Blackman and M. Apted, *The Rock Tombs of Meir*, V, pls XXXV, XLII.

¹¹²In the tomb of Baqet III at Beni Hassan, see Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. IV.

¹¹³In the TT 60, see De Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker, Vizier of Sesostris I, and of his Wife, Senet (no. 60)*, (TTS 2; London, 1920), pl. IX (first and second registers).

¹¹⁴In the tomb of Khety at Thebes, see A. H. Gardiner, 'The Tomb of a Much-travelled Theban Official', *JEA* 4 (1917), 33 and in the tomb of Senbi, see above the speech $m(j) \overline{\text{h}} \overline{\text{s}} m \overline{\text{k}} \overline{\text{s}} m n \overline{\text{w}} i \overline{\text{m}} \overline{\text{k}} \overline{\text{t}} = k$ (see earlier in the main text).

¹¹⁵In the TT 60, see De Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Antefoker*, pl. IX (last register).

¹¹⁶See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ (lemma-no. 153690) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015, Meeks, *AL 2* (1978), 78.4088, and Meeks, *AL 3* (1979), 79.2974.

¹¹⁷See Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pls XV, XIX, and Champollion, *Notices descriptives*, II, 349.

¹¹⁸Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §114.3; Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, §503 and §1062; and the previous works of K. Sethe, 'Das Pronomen I. sing. $n-nk$ und die Eingangsworte zum 17. Kapitel des Totenbuchs', *ZÄS* 54 (1918), 40–9 and 'Noch einmal zu den Worten $n-nk \overline{\text{t}} m$ am Anfang von Totb. 17', *ZÄS* 58 (1923), 53–4.

¹⁰⁵See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ (lemma-no. 153630) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁰⁶See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} j$ (lemma-no. 852498) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.


¹⁰⁷See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ (lemma-no. 153650) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁰⁸See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}}$ (lemma-no. 153620) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁰⁹See s.v. $\overline{\text{s}} \overline{\text{p}} i$ (lemma-no. 153690) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015; D. Meeks, *Année lexicographique. Egypte ancienne. Tome 2* (1978) (Paris, 1981), 78.4088; and D. Meeks, *Année lexicographique. Egypte ancienne. Tome 3* (1979) (Paris, 1982), 79.2974.

¹¹⁰Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 45, §43 and Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, 105, §150.

possession construction is rather rarely used,¹¹⁹ with very few occurrences of *nnk* outside religious and funerary corpora.¹²⁰ An in-depth study on this construction falls beyond the scope of this article.¹²¹

A further difficulty concerns the verb *tf*. In the lacuna, traces suggest a bird sign, though it is not more closely identifiable; conceivably ,¹²² although there is no match with the traces drawn by Newberry (see Plate 3).

Speech D (behind the group)

The wrestler raises his opponent to put him on the ground (Fig. 5):



ph [di(=i) (wi) / r(=i)] hr=k(w)d(i)=k w(i) r [t3] mk rmt iw(w)

‘Attacker, [I will put (myself) / (my) arm will be] under you if you push me to [the ground]. Look, people have come.’

The sign *t3* is partially extant. As discussed earlier, the expression *wdi/rdi r t3* occurs once in a wrestling scene from the tomb of Neheri I and again in a punishment scene from the tomb of Baqet III. Wilsdorf¹²³ interpreted this section *di=k* [...] as ‘*veranlasst*’ + missing word beginning with an *3*. However, if this bird sign is compared with the last one of the column (see Plate 3), they are clearly similar. Therefore, instead of reading it as an aleph, the sign could be read as a quail chick (*w*) as part of the writing of the first person dependent pronoun.

The last part of the speech, *mk rmt iw(w)*, can be compared to the speech of the right-hand group of wrestlers in Senbi’s tomb (see Fig. 1), where a similar construction occurs: (...) *mk tw iw.t(i)*.

Speech E (above the group)

The black wrestler performs the last step of the sequence, as shown in Fig. 5, sitting astride on the back of his opponent and grasping one of his feet, in order to get full control on him. A speech is written above the group:

¹¹⁹Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §300; Borghouts, *Egyptian Grammar*, 84 §18.c.; 107 §27.d.1.; 306 §85.e.; 340 §96.d.

¹²⁰According to data gathered from the *TLA* and the aforementioned grammars.

¹²¹It may be relevant to mention that several occurrences are from Deir el-Bersha coffins – see spell 137 in A. de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, II: *Texts of Spells 76–163* (OIP 49; Chicago, 1938), 165d (B2L, B2P); spells 1034, 1071, 1133 and 1181 in de Buck, *Coffin Texts*, VII, 280b (B12C, B13C, B6C, B4L, B2Bo, B1L, B2L, B1C, B2P), 337b (B9C, B1L, B2L), 476f (B1Be, B5C) and 518l (B1P, B1Be, B5C) – but the writing *nnk* is also found in coffins from various other places: see spell 335 in de Buck, *Coffin Texts*, IV, 185b (M8C, M7C, M54C, M1C, L1N4, T1Be, L3Li, T2Be, T3Be, T3L, M57C, M1N4, BH1Be, T3L) and spell 953 in de Buck, *Coffin Texts*, VII, 168m (P. Gard. III).

¹²²See the DZA cards of *tfi* (lemma-no. 171780) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 21 September 2016.

¹²³Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 55.




(1) *h3 tw r w^r.t h3 shb(=i) t(w)*



‘Watch out for (my) leg. Let me catch you!’

(2) *h3 tw r w^r.t h3 shb(=i) t(w)*



‘Watch out for (my) leg. Let me enclose you!’

This speech is mostly erased, which (along with its cursive hieroglyphic nature) raises several reading difficulties. Several signs become more comprehensible when compared to their hieratic form rather than the hieroglyphic one.

The first sign is a hieraticising *h3* ().¹²⁵ The expression *h3 tw* ‘watch out’ is also found several times in Heqanakht’s letters.¹²⁶

The second difficulty concerns the group . Wilsdorf,¹²⁷ Decker,¹²⁸ and the DZA card 22.231.640 all read *r w^r.t(=i)* ‘against (my) leg’: for  compare sign 122 of Möller’s palaeography.¹²⁹ This is the preferable reading, though the lack of determinatives leaves open another possibility, which would be to take *w^r.t* as ‘the district (of the necropolis), the desert-plateau’.¹³⁰ According to Meeks,¹³¹ it can also signify ‘flanc du plateau désertique, côté’. This notion of ‘side, edge’ could fit the context of a fight, where it might be understood as ‘the edge (of the wrestling area)’.

The following *h*-sign seems to be halfway between the hieratic and the hieroglyphic form. Combined with the aleph, it has to be understood as the wish particle *h3* ‘would

¹²⁴Ch. Reintges (pers. comm., 09 December 2015) suggested reading this verb as an Old Perfective (‘you are caught!’) with a palatalization of the second person singular ending ( instead of ). Yet, as pointed out in Borghouts, *Egyptian Grammar*, 163 §43.a, the ending *-t* is rare. Moreover, this interpretation would be syntactically correct only if the particle *h3* was followed by a dependent pronoun, which would give a pseudo-verbal construction (cf. Malaise and Winand, *Grammaire raisonnée*, §§731, 761, 772). In this perspective, a telling example is the stela of Antef (BM EA 562, 9), which is dated to Senwosret I: *h3 t3 mh(.w) m mit(y).w=f*, ‘if only the land was full of the likes of him’ (translation following R. Landgrafova, *It is My Good Name that You Should Remember* [Prague, 2011], 122 [Nr. 39]).

¹²⁵G. Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie: Die ägyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit*, I (Leipzig, 1909), 10 (sign 113) and G. Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie: Die ägyptische Buchschrift in ihrer Entwicklung von der fünften Dynastie bis zur römischen Kaiserzeit*, II (2nd edn revised; Leipzig, 1965), 10 (sign 113). All hieratic signs discussed in the present article are tabulated in appendix 1.

¹²⁶More precisely in letter I (r², r³, r¹⁰, r¹³, r¹⁷, v⁵, v⁶, v¹² [twice], v¹³, v¹⁷). The plural counterpart *h3 tm* is also present in letter II (r³⁰, r³⁹, v³). For this expression, see Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri*, 95. For an explanation on the language of those letters, see Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri*, 101.

¹²⁷Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 56.

¹²⁸Decker, *Sport und Spiel*, 85.

¹²⁹Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie*, I–II, 11 (sign 122).

¹³⁰See s.v. *w^r.t* (lemma-no. 44760) on *TLA* website <<http://aew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹³¹See Meeks, *Année lexicographique (1977–1979)*, nos 77.0874, 78.0908 and 79.0636, ‘flanc du plateau désertique, côte, nécropole’.

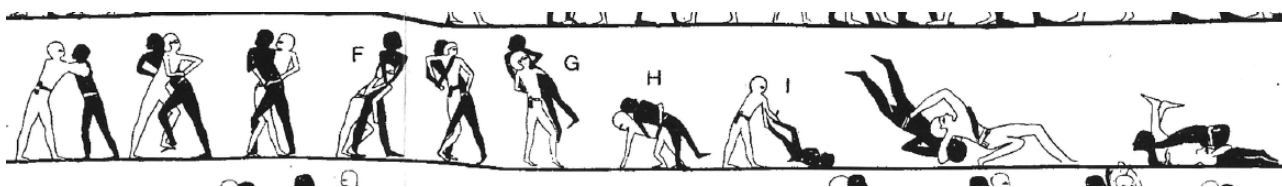


Fig. 6. Wrestling scenes in Khety's tomb, speeches F, G, H, and I (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).

that', followed by a subjunctive *sdm=f* form.¹³² In Old Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*, *hw 3* occurs as an imitation of vernacular language.¹³³ The writing *h3* occurs in literary texts from the Middle Kingdom onwards but it is also found in a few Middle Kingdom texts of everyday life, such as the Heqanakht letters (𓆎𓆏𓆑)¹³⁴ and the Semnah dispatches (𓆎𓆏𓆑).¹³⁵

The term *shb*, which seems to be a *hapax*,¹³⁶ can be related to the verb *shbh* 'to ensnare, to catch',¹³⁷ known at present only from the New Kingdom onwards.¹³⁸ Both verbs derive from the same stem. While the first is a causative, the second is a pluriactional stem formation,¹³⁹ here with a reduplication of the first consonant, followed by a causative derivation with the same prefix *s-*.

An alternative reading¹⁴⁰ would be to take *shb* as a writing of the verb *sbh* 'to enclose (with the arms), to enfold (in the arms)',¹⁴¹ here with the inversion of the second and the third consonant, as found in some later examples.¹⁴² This verb, mostly used in religious and funerary corpora, is usually followed by the direct object *ꜥꜥ.wy* and the preposition *h3*.¹⁴³ Although this is not the case here, such a meaning would make sense if uttered by the white wrestler (reading 2).

The present context is insufficient to determine which interpretation is more likely but the speech content suggests that the speaker is the white wrestler in both cases, who fears for his leg.

¹³²See Oréal, *Les particules en égyptien ancien*, 49–55 for a summary of the particle *h3* and previous literature on the subject.

¹³³According to Oréal, *Les particules en égyptien ancien*, 55.

¹³⁴In letter II, r^o 39; see Allen, *Heqanakht Papyri*, 44 and pl. 30.

¹³⁵In despatch no. 4, 11; see in P. C. Smither, 'The Semnah Dispatches', *JEA* 31 (1945), pl. Va.

¹³⁶The word is unattested in Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, as much as in the *TLA*, or in R. van der Molen, *A Hieroglyphic Dictionary of Egyptian Coffin Texts* (PdÄ 15; Leiden, 2000).

¹³⁷As suggested by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015). See s.v. *shbh* (lemma-no. 141980) on *TLA* website <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹³⁸Data gathered thanks to the *TLA* and the *Ramses Project* (ULg).

¹³⁹The pluriactional derivation is one of the three known reduplicative stem formations in Ancient Egyptian, used to indicate multiple, iterative or intensified action. See S. Bendjaballah and Ch. Reintges, 'Ancient Egyptian Verbal Reduplication: Typology, Diachrony, and the Morphology-syntax Interface', *Morphology* 19/2 (2009), 135–9.

¹⁴⁰As suggested by one of my reviewers.

¹⁴¹See s.v. *sbh* (lemma-no. 131940) on *TLA* website <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin> accessed 19 September 2016.

¹⁴²See for instance the DZA 29.114.950 and 29.115.140. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who pointed out these examples.

¹⁴³See the examples mentioned by the *TLA* and the *Wb*. IV, 91.10.

In the next sequence (Fig. 6), the black and white wrestlers face each other before starting the struggle. Speeches F to I seem to be the commentaries on the movements performed by the two wrestlers beneath.

Speech F (above the group)

The wrestler traps his opponent under his arm:

𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑

rwi=k h3=k nnk mit(y)=k

'Get back (if you can).¹⁴⁴ I've got you [lit. 'One like you is mine'].'

The term *rwi* has been recorded with the prepositions *m*, *n*, *r*, *hr*¹⁴⁵ and even *r-h3.t*¹⁴⁶ but not so far with *h3* 'behind'. Reading *h3* as the verb *h3* 'to mourn, to screech'¹⁴⁷ would have been meaningful if *rwi* could have been understood as the aspectual auxiliary 'to cease from', but this sense of *rwi* is only known from the New Kingdom, when it is followed by the preposition *hr* and an infinitive, or by an Old Perfective.¹⁴⁸ Hence, the first interpretation is to be preferred.

The compound form *nnk*, which has already been discussed in speech C (in Fig. 5), is also used here to denote the possession, as a way of saying 'you're mine', 'I've got you'. Accordingly, the first part of the sentence can be understood as a sarcastic note: 'get away (if you can)'.

Speech G (in front of the group)

The wrestler carries his opponent:

𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑 = 𓆎𓆏𓆑

(1) *w3h(=i) r t3 r3=k ir m(h)r*

'I'll lay (you) down on the ground. Your mouth is going to suffer.'

¹⁴⁴A literal translation would give 'go behind you'. In French, we say 'va-t'en' but in English an idiomatic equivalent is hard to find. I would like to thank R. Enmarch for his help trying to find a similar sense in English.

¹⁴⁵See *Wb*. II, 406,2–407,4.


¹⁴⁶In the *Tale of the Two Brothers* (P. d'Orbiney 5,9): *rwi=k tw r-h3.t=f*.

¹⁴⁷See s.v. *h3* (lemma-no. 100650) on *TLA* website <http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin> accessed 20 September 2016.

¹⁴⁸See J. Winand, *Temps et aspect en égyptien: Une approche sémantique* (PdÄ 25; Leiden, 2006), 342.

(2) $w^3h(=i) r t^3 r^3=k ir(=i) m^3b r(=i)$

‘I’ll lay (you) down on the ground. Your mouth is against me. Don’t move away from me.’

At the end of the speech, one can read the sign  between the *m* and the *r* signs. Neither DZA record card (22.067.140) nor Wilsdorf suggest readings,¹⁴⁹ but the sign can be compared with signs 484 and 485 in Möller’s palaeography.¹⁵⁰ The absence of determinatives within the inscription allows two interpretations.

In the first interpretation, the verb is read $m(h)r$ ‘to be ill’,¹⁵¹ along with its phonetic complements, in order to understand the sequence $r^3=k ir mr$ as a pseudo-verbal construction, with a future meaning.¹⁵² Against this reading stands the unexpected spelling \llcorner for the preposition *r* within this kind of construction. However, this spelling is quite common in front of a suffix pronoun, which supports the second interpretation: $r^3=k ir(=i) m^3b r(=i)$, where the sequence is composed of two clauses: an adverbial predication and a negative imperative, with the verb 3b ‘to cease, to avoid, to tarry’, which is already attested in the Middle Kingdom according to the *TLA*.¹⁵³ The exact same expression $m^3b r(=i)$ is found in another example of direct speech from the Ptolemaic papyri New York MMA 35.9.21, 49,3: $mk gs-dp.t=i m^3b r=i$ ‘Behold my protection. Do not remain apart from me.’¹⁵⁴

The context does not favour one interpretation over the other and no other parallels – in wrestling speeches or in any other Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe* – are currently known.

Speech H (above the group)

The white wrestler bends forward with his adversary on his back:



(1) $ir ib=k ir m snd$

‘Make your wish. / your will is done. Act and don’t fear.’

(2) $ir ib=k ir r(=i) m snd$

‘Make your wish / your will is done. Attack (me), don’t fear!’

The absence of determinatives complicates considerably the reading and the understanding of this caption.

¹⁴⁹Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, 57.

¹⁵⁰Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie*, I, 46, more specifically the examples coming from Illahun (sign 484) and from Elephantine (sign 485).

¹⁵¹*Wb.* II, 95.1–15.

¹⁵²As suggested by Ch. Reintges (pers. comm., 09 December 2015).

¹⁵³See s.v. 3b (lemma-no. 72) on *TLA* website <<http://aaew.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁵⁴Translation following M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2009), 161.

Two plausible readings with the verb *iri* may be suggested, although the traces of the eye sign seen here on Plate 3 are not an exact match with its standard hieratic form,¹⁵⁵ and there are no other examples of *iri* on the same wall for comparison. The alternative reading of this first sign would be *r*, which is palaeographically more plausible but syntactically odd ($\llcorner r ib=k r rm snd$ ‘for your heart / wish, for weeping and fearing’), even for *Reden und Rufe* that supposedly imitate the spoken language.

An excerpt in the *Coffin Texts* supports the reading *iri*:¹⁵⁶ $ir ib=k nw irr=k r ib=k$ ‘Make your wish / Your will is done. Observe that you may act according to your wish’ (*CT* VII, 100e). The first sentence can be understood either as an imperative followed by a direct object or as a passive form with a nominal subject,¹⁵⁷ the orthography is indecisive. Two similar speech captions – one from the mastaba of Mereruka (Saqqara, Sixth Dynasty),¹⁵⁸ one from the tomb of Dagi (TT 103, end of the Eleventh Dynasty)¹⁵⁹ – are enlightening in this regard. In the latter, two herdsmen are sitting opposite one another to work on a mat. The scene is labelled $w^3h^3 kn$ ‘beating the mat’. The left herdsman speaks to his companion: $ir r ib=k$ ‘Act according to your wish’, to which the latter replies: $iry(=i)$ ‘I will do (so).’ Even if a passive form cannot be excluded, both examples support the first analysis, i.e. an imperative. Incidentally, they are especially telling for the realization of *iri*, which seems to hesitate between the direct and the indirect construction (‘Do your wish’ vs. ‘Act according to your wish’).¹⁶⁰

The second spelling of *iri* is just as ambiguous. Two readings are equally possible: an imperative with its complementing sign r ¹⁶¹ or an imperative followed by the prepositional group $r(=i)$ ‘against me’,¹⁶² which would mean ‘Attack (me) (i.e. act against [me])’. To sum up, despite the indecisive spellings, the speech becomes more comprehensible, if one accepts the special shape of *iri*.

Speech I (in front of the group)

The white wrestler holds his opponent by his feet and warns him:

¹⁵⁵See Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie* I–II, 7 (sign 82).

¹⁵⁶This sequence is known by coffin S10C only, see in de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, VII, 100.

¹⁵⁷This defective writing is also found in Middle Kingdom documentary texts. See Brose, *Grammatik der dokumentarischen Texte*, §16.3 (32).

¹⁵⁸Kanawati, Woods, Shafik, and Alexakis, *Mereruka and His Family*, III.2, pl. 76.

¹⁵⁹N. de Garis Davies, *Five Theban Tombs (being those of Mentuherkhepeshef, User, Daga, Nehemawäy and Tati)* (ASEG 21; London, 1913), pl. XXXV.

¹⁶⁰This was the subject of a talk given by J. Winand and me at the *Crossroads* V, held in Berlin, 17–20 February 2016.

¹⁶¹The brief stem and the variation with a complementary *r* are both recorded in Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe*.


¹⁶²*Wb.* I, 111, 20. As suggested by R. Enmarch (pers. comm., 29 September 2016).



ḥ3 tw r ʿ(w)y(=i) mk [t]w hr ḥ3f(=i)

‘Watch out for my arms. Look, you are under (my) twisting [i.e. I will wring you out].’

The expression ḥ3 tw is identical to the instances in speech E above and those found in Heqanakht’s letters. In speech E, two interpretations were given regarding the word wʿr:t, i.e. ‘leg’ and ‘edge’, with a slight preference for the first. The comparison to the present speech, using another body part after the warning ḥ3 tw, could be further evidence in favour of the reading wʿr:t ‘leg’ in speech E.

The noun ḥ3f could possibly be a variant of ḥf3,¹⁶³ which is written  in the *Coffin Texts*.¹⁶⁴ Such a metathesis could be an indication of a dialectal variation.¹⁶⁵ By saying ‘Look, you are under (my) twisting’, the white wrestler tells his opponent that he will “wring him out”, which is incidentally noticeable in the scene. He has grabbed the right leg of his adversary with his right hand and the left leg with his left hand. If he had not started twisting his opponent around yet, he would be holding the right leg with his left hand and the left leg with his right hand, since both opponents face each other.

¹⁶³As suggested by J. Allen (pers. comm., 13 October 2015). See s.v. ḥf3 (lemma-no. 104340) on TLA website <<http://aaweb.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁶⁴As pointed out by van der Molen, *Dictionary of Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 310. See CT IV, 145i for the spell 320 on coffin B2L in de Buck, *Coffin Texts*, IV, 145 and CT, VII, 338a for the spell 1071 on coffins B12C, B2Bo, B4Bo, B4L, B9C, B1C, B1L and B2L in de Buck, *Coffin Texts*, VII, 338.

¹⁶⁵For a study of dialectal variations in Late Egyptian, see J. Winand, ‘Dialects vs. Idiolects/Sociolects in Deir el-Medina’, in A. Dorn and St. Polis (eds), *Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact: Describing the Interactions within and outside the Community of Workmen* (AegLeod; Liège, forthcoming), especially the case study of 3tp ‘load’, which could be another example of metathesis indicating a dialectal variation. About dialects in Ancient Egypt, see *inter alia* O. Goldwasser, “‘Low’ and ‘High’ Dialects in Ramesside Egyptian”, in St. Grunert and I. Hafemann (eds), *Textcorpus und Wörterbuch: Aspekte zur ägyptischen Lexikographie* (PdÄ 14; Leiden, 1999), 311–28 with further references. For the existence of dialects in Middle Egyptian, see the stela of Menthu-weser (MMA 12.184) published in C. L. Ransom, *The Stela of Menthu-weser* (New York, 1913) and discussed in L. D. Morenz, ‘Sprechen statt Grunzen’, *GM* 187 (2002), 9–10; however, for another interpretation of the sentence *ink mdw r r ʿ srw šwy m dd p3w*, ‘I am one who speaks in the manner of officials, free of saying p3’s’, see J. Allen, ‘Old and New in the Middle Kingdom’, in D. P. Silverman and J. Wegner (eds), *Archaism and Innovation: Studies in the Culture of Middle Kingdom Egypt* (New Haven, 2009), 263–75. Further evidence of dialects in Ancient Egypt is provided by P. Anastasi I, 28, 5–6: *n3y=k sdd.w šhw hr ns.t=i mn hr-tp sp.t=i iw=w thth m sdm bn 3ʿ whʿ=f sn st mi md.wt n s idh.w hnʿ s n 3bdw*, ‘Your discourses are collected on my tongue and remain fixed on my lips, but they are so confused when heard that no interpreter can unravel them. They are like a Delta man’s conversation with a man of Elephantine’, translation after E. F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Writings from the Ancient World 1; Atlanta, 1900), 109.

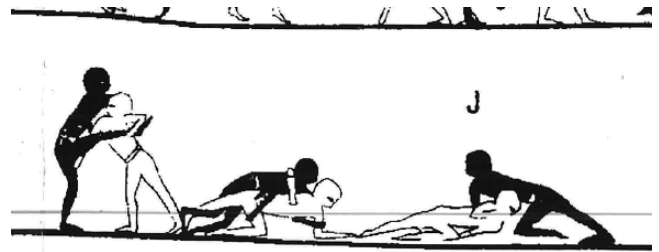


Fig. 7. Wrestling scenes in Khety’s tomb, speech J (Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. XV; courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society).


Speech J (above the group)

The opponents wrestle on the ground (Fig. 7):



dr tw hr(=i) hr dd(=i) r=k iwʿ

‘Get off me and then I’ll call you [lit. ‘Remove yourself from on me and then I’ll say about you’]. ‘the heir (?)’!’


The reading *dr* is suggested by the card DZA 21.924.180 (without translation) and DZA 31.678.100.¹⁶⁶ The sign  agreed with the standard hieratic form of *dr*¹⁶⁷ and can be linked to the verb *dr* ‘to remove’,¹⁶⁸ which can be written with the palatal *d* instead of the usual dental *d*. It could thus be rendered idiomatically into English as ‘Get off me!’¹⁶⁹

The word *iwʿ* occurs in the same environment as speech B discussed earlier, i.e. introduced by *dd(=i) r=k*. However, the present expression is linked to the beginning of the speech with the conjunction *hr*, instead of the Late Egyptian admirative particle *hy*, as in speech B.

What about the other periods?

In Old Kingdom royal funerary complexes, episodes of wrestling are recorded in two causeways: Unas¹⁷⁰ and Sahure.¹⁷¹ In the latter, two captions describe the scene: *qm3 ḥft-hr in ʿpr smrw s3hw-rʿ [m iriw.w] x.t* ‘Wrestling in public by (the boat) crew of companions of Sahure [with the work] ers’ and *qm3 hr b3wi*¹⁷² *n šʿ* ‘wrestling on an arena of sand’,

¹⁶⁶See on TLA website <<http://aaweb.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.


¹⁶⁷See Möller, *Hieratische Paläographie*, I, 28 (sign 294). The shape somewhat recalls the hieroglyph , but the orientation of the sign would be opposite to the one of the rest of the inscription.

¹⁶⁸See s.v. *dr* (lemma-no. 180130) on TLA website <<http://aaweb.bbaw.de/tla/servlet/TlaLogin>> accessed 14 October 2015.

¹⁶⁹I am very grateful to R. Enmarch for his help with English idioms.

¹⁷⁰Y. Harpur, ‘Re-used Blocks in the Eighteenth Dynasty Tomb of Maya at Saqqara’, in D. Magee, J. Bourriau, and St. Quirke (eds), *Sitting beside Lepsius: Studies in Honour of Jaromir Malek at the Griffith Institute* (OLA 185; Leuven, 2009), 208–10 and Fig. 4.

¹⁷¹T. el-Awady, *Abusir, XVI: Sahure – the Pyramid Causeway: History and Decoration Program in the Old Kingdom* (Excavations of the Czech Institute of Egyptology; Prague, 2009), pl. 12.

¹⁷²El-Awady suggested reading it as , ‘battlefield, arena’ (*Wb.* I, 415, 1–2) but it could actually be a spelling of *bw*, ‘place’, which can be construed with a genitive (*Wb.* I, 451, 10–11).

respectively.¹⁷³ In private tombs, the first known wrestling scene between young men is found in the mastaba of Ptahhotep II Tefi (D64) at Saqqara, dated to the reign of Djedkare.¹⁷⁴ There is no speech above the wrestlers, only the names *3h.t-htp* above the second duel and *tfw* next to the sixth duel. To the right of the wrestling scene, six young men follow a seventh and speak to the lord Ptahhotep: *iy šm3 i.sdm n ib=f* ‘A foreigner comes. Listen to his wish.’¹⁷⁵ A similar scene with exactly the same speech is found in the tomb of Mereruka¹⁷⁶ amidst dance and game scenes, which suggests this so-called wrestling scene could be part of a game. The precise meaning of this scene is still not quite clear. Another wrestling match is depicted in the tomb of Aba (Deir el-Gebrawi). Two men are engaged in a fight – labelled *qm3*,¹⁷⁷ just as in Sahure’s causeway – next to a scene where the estate manager is receiving a beating.¹⁷⁸ Both scenes form part of the audit of the estate manager’s accounts. All these scenes demonstrate that wrestling scenes have roots in Old Kingdom decorative programmes, either royal or private.

Similarly, some other scene types, such as those of a besieged city and of soldiers running to the battlefield as in the tomb of Khety below the wrestling scenes,¹⁷⁹ are also not specific to the Middle Kingdom decorative programme. Warfare-related activities are already depicted in Old Kingdom royal funerary monuments – in the causeways of Unas¹⁸⁰ and Sahure¹⁸¹ – but also in Old Kingdom elite tombs, such as those of Inti¹⁸² and Kaemheset.¹⁸³

After the creation of the tomb of Ukhhotep (B2), dated to the reign of Senwosret I, wrestling scenes disappeared from the decorative programme of Middle Kingdom private tombs but they recur in Medinet Habu temple¹⁸⁴ and in at least four New Kingdom tombs. In TT 74 (Tjanuni, Eighteenth Dynasty), a troop of Nubians carries a banner with two men wrestling.¹⁸⁵ In the tomb of Kherouef (TT 192, Eighteenth Dynasty),¹⁸⁶ no fewer than 20 men are fighting in groups of two or three. The label *mn.t* (a *hapax*

meaning ‘to box’, recorded only in this tomb according to the DZA card 21.721.380 and Hannig’s lexicon)¹⁸⁷ indicates that this is a different kind of fight than the wrestling shown in Middle Kingdom tombs. The third Eighteenth Dynasty example comes from the tomb of Meryra II¹⁸⁸ at Amarna in an anepigraphic scene of wrestling and fighting, which occurs among scenes devoted to the presentation of tribute, suggesting it is a friendly fight rather than related to warfare. A final telling example is found in the tomb of Amenmose (TT 19, Nineteenth Dynasty),¹⁸⁹ where both wrestling and fighting with sticks are shown as part of a religious festival. While two men are engaged in wrestling, another stands up and takes the floor. The inscription shares many parallels with other captions of New Kingdom ceremonial games for the appearance of the king, like in Medinet Habu for instance. As inscriptions in the context of ceremonial games have already been studied by Wilson,¹⁹⁰ suffice it to note that this speech caption utilizes the same expression *hsy* ‘miserable’¹⁹¹ and the admiring particle *hy*, just as in the Middle Kingdom wrestler speeches.

In short, wrestling scenes have roots in Old Kingdom funerary monuments, both private and royal, and are still found after the Middle Kingdom. Nonetheless, in Middle Kingdom tombs they took on added significance, notably with the introduction of speech captions.

Conclusion

The major goal of this study was to improve translations previously suggested either by Wilsdorf or the DZA cards, and to draw attention to these rather neglected speeches. Because of the poor state of preservation, this could not be accomplished in each instance, such as speeches of Senbi (above the middle group), and Neheri I (the left-hand speech on the fragment), which remain partially indecipherable. Nevertheless, several lacunae have been filled thanks to a better understanding of the phraseology, such as *my hsi* in the tombs of Senbi and of Khety, and *wdi/rdi r t3* in the tombs of Neheri I, Baqet III and Khety (twice) – the latter expression could even be linked to Old Kingdom nautical scenes. Phraseological parallels were also noted in the case of Khety’s tomb: the expression

¹⁷³Translations following el-Awady, *Abusir XVI*, 210–11.

¹⁷⁴N. de Garis Davies, *The Mastaba of Ptahhetep and Akhethetep at Saqqarah*, I (EES ASM 8; London, 1900), pl. XXI, and Paget and Pirie, *Ptah-Hetep*, pl. XXXIII.

¹⁷⁵Paget and Pirie, *Ptah-Hetep*, pl. XXXIII (1st register).

¹⁷⁶Kanawati, Woods, Shafik, and Alexakis, *Mereruka and his Family*, III.2, pl. 76.

¹⁷⁷For a commentary on the verb *qmA* and its meaning in such scenes, see Förster, *Nikephoros* 18, 73–80.

¹⁷⁸The inscriptions above this scene of beating have recently been discussed in Vernus, in Legros (ed.), *Cinquante ans d'éternité*, 309–21.

¹⁷⁹The same topic is depicted in the tomb of Baqet III, see Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, II, pl. V, and in the tomb of Khnumhotep I, see Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, I, pls XIV–XVI.

¹⁸⁰S. B. Hassan, ‘Excavations at Saqqara 1937–1938’, *ASAE* 38 (1938), pl. XCV.

¹⁸¹El-Awady, *Abusir XVI*, pl. 12.

¹⁸²N. Kanawati and A. McFarlane, *Deshasha: The Tombs of Inti, Shedu and Others* (ACE Reports 5; Warminster, 1993), pl. 27.

¹⁸³A. McFarlane, *Mastabas at Saqqara: Kaiemheset, Kaipunesut, Kaiemsenu, Sehetepu and Others* (ACE Reports 20; Oxford, 2003), pl. 48.

¹⁸⁴See Wilsdorf, *Ringkampf*, Abb. 28.

¹⁸⁵A. Brack and A. Brack, *Das Grab des Tjanuni: Theben Nr. 74* (AVDAIK 19; Mainz, 1977), 41 and pl. 32.

¹⁸⁶The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kherouef: Theban Tomb 192* (OIP 102; Chicago, 1980), pl. 47.

¹⁸⁷Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch*, {5211}. This verb is linked to the verb *mnq* {12994}. Another possible connection would be with *qmw*, ‘Kampfart’ {5176}, which is unattested either in R. Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch*, I: *Altes Reich und Erste Zwischenzeit* (Lexica 4 – KAW 98; Mainz, 2003) or in Hannig, *Ägyptisches Wörterbuch*, II.

¹⁸⁸N. de Garis Davies, *The Rock Tombs of el Amarna*, II: *The Tombs of Panehesy and Meryra II* (EES ASM 14; London, 1904), pls XXXVII–XXXVIII.

¹⁸⁹G. Foucart, *Tombe thébaines: Nécropole de Dirâ‘ Abû ‘n-Nâga, le tombeau d’Amonmos (tombeau no. 19)* (MIFAO 57/4; Cairo, 1935), pl. XIII.

¹⁹⁰J. A. Wilson, ‘Ceremonial Games of the New Kingdom’, *JEA* 17 (1931), 211–20.

¹⁹¹Interestingly enough, Wilson pointed out that this term was used for Egyptian opponents only. For foreign adversaries, the word *hfty*, ‘enemy’ was preferred. See Wilson, *JEA* 17, 212, Text 1.

dd(=i) r=k iw^c occurs twice, with a slight variation, as does the expression *ḥ3 tw*, which has the same admonitory meaning as in Heqanakht's letters. Speech E reveals a new possible *hapax*, the verb *shb*, whose meaning is identical to the verb *shbh*.

These workers' speeches cast valuable light on the *état de langue* in which Middle Kingdom speech captions are written (true vernacular or imitated language?). Furthermore, they have demonstrable links with both the *Coffin Texts* and texts from everyday life, especially the letters of Heqanakht and (to a lesser extent) the Semna dispatches. It is to be hoped that this study has highlighted new possibilities for the interpretation of still ambiguous speeches and encouraged future study, such as a closer investigation of links between royal and private decorative programmes.

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Author biography

Aurore Motte is a final year PhD Student at the University of Liège, studying the so-called *Reden und Rufe* (or *Arbeiterreden*, or 'speech captions') in the daily-life scenes in private tombs (from the Old Kingdom to the Late Period). She intends to provide a philological commentary for every speech since this corpus has rather been neglected so far, then show this corpus is in fact a literary genre with its own rules. She has written three papers on the subject: one will be published in the *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, another in the proceedings of the XI International Congress of Egyptologists, held in Florence in 2015 and the third in the proceedings of the Deir el-Medina Conference, held in Liège in 2014 (see: <http://www.egypto.ulg.ac.be/a4.htm>). Her research interests include the relationship between text and image in private tombs, the decorative programme of elite tombs, the notion of 'literary genres' and the *matérialité de l'écrit* and the *mise en écriture* of a text. She co-organized a conference ('Signs in Texts') with three colleagues in the University of Liège last year (<http://www.egypto.ulg.ac.be/a4.htm>). She has a deep interest in the Egyptian languages (more specifically the Old Egyptian, the Middle Egyptian and the Late Egyptian) and the issue of *niveaux de langue* (language level) and of diglossia. (<http://web.philo.ulg.ac.be/antiquite/aurore-motte/>)

Appendix I. Correspondence between hieratic signs from Möller's palaeography and signs from speech captions shown on Plate 3 (tomb of Khety) discussed in the article.

Hieratic signs from Möller's palaeography	Signs discussed from speech captions on Plate 3 (tomb of Khety)
Sign 222 	 Speech C
Sign 113 	 Speeches E and I
Sign 122 	 Speech E
Sign 485 	 Speech G
Sign 82 	 Speech H
Signs 294 and 91 	 Speech J