

Tracking the writings of a 19th dynasty scribe. The ‘messy polygraph’ from Deir el-Medina

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When he published the prayer to ‘Amun, judge of the poor’ (O. IFAO inv. 2181 = Fig. 1), Posener (1971) pointed to a couple of related prayers to Amun on ostraca, which share striking palaeographical features with this text (O. Borchartt s.n. and O. Gardiner 45). Resorting to the methodology developed by van den Berg & Donker van Heel (2000), namely taking into account the provenance of this prayer to Amun (which is known as ‘Maison G’), one can identify additional texts written by the same hand, esp. in the unpublished literary material of the IFAO (O. IFAO OL 4219a-c, O. IFAO OL 4224, O. IFAO OL 4225, O. IFAO OL 5684).



Fig. 1. O. IFAO inv. 2181

In a second step, using lexicographical and phrasaeological criteria (Donker van Heel & Haring 2003) as well as specific palaeographical features (Janssen 1987; Sweeney 1998; Hudson 2018) and habits in terms of layout (Gasse 1992), additional ostraca from the Theban necropolis with the same handwriting can be identified in the published material, such as O. DeM 1055 (Posener 1938), O. DeM 10249 (Grandet 2017), O. Gurna 647 (Burkard 2001: 5–10).

The goal of this lecture will be (a) to present the variety of texts produced by this hieratic hand during the 19th dynasty (see the case of Amennakhte (v) for the 20th dynasty; see recently Dorn 2015 and Polis 2018), (b) to show that the traditional division between ‘literary’ and ‘non-literary’ hands does not apply (since the scribe’s handwriting does not vary much according to genres), and (c) to try and identify the individual behind this hand, so as to enrich to list of scribes, such as Ramose or Qenherkhopshef, who can be recognized based on their idiosyncratic handwriting.

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