

Some notes on the handwriting of the scribe of the Tomb Dhutmose

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Abstract

The large number of documents attributable to one of the most notable scribes of Deir el-Medina allows a first case study of some characteristics of his handwriting.

In 1987 Jac. J. Janssen¹ published his contribution on some aspects of the handwritings of the scribes Dhutmose, his son Butehamun and the army-scribe Qenkhnum. This first study ever on the characteristics of handwriting was based on the then available images of personal documents from the corpus of the Late Ramesside Letters and one administrative document, the Turin Taxation Papyrus.

For his study, Janssen selected the forms of the hieratic sign-group *p*, the masculine definite article. Among his conclusions were also more general remarks and suggestions for further research. Since then, only few studies have been devoted to individual handwritings.²

Mention should first be made of contributions by Deborah Sweeney³ and, as a reaction to her article, by Jac. J. Janssen⁴. After comparing several hieratic groups in four letters Sweeney concluded: “Which factors are significant? How great a degree of variation is to be expected within one person’s handwriting?” Janssen himself commented on her study and added interesting remarks on scribal characteristics in Papyrus Amiens-Baldwin. His conclusion is worth quoting in full:

“Obviously, the range of possibilities within the handwriting of an individual is fairly wide. Exactly how wide in a specific case can only be defined by looking at the way he usually formed his signs; for instance, whether he connected them by refraining from lifting his brush. But it is only the consistency of such a habit that is decisive; a single deviation proves nothing. Therefore, single letters, in which various words tend to occur only once or twice, are not the most suitable

1 JANSSEN, in: *JEA* 73, 1987, 161–167. This article was inspired by his own expressed skepticism regarding the possibilities of dating a hieratic text other than, very roughly, on the basis of individual signs – JANSSEN, in: *BIFAO* 84, 1973, 305.

2 Some pitfalls of the palaeography of Egyptian handwriting have been pointed out before by EYRE, in: RUFFLE et al. (edd.), *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt*, 86–87, and GASSE, in: DEMARÉE & EGBERTS (edd.), *Village Voices*, 51–70.

3 SWEENEY, in: *JEA* 84, 1998, 101–122, esp. 113–122.

4 JANSSEN, in: *JEA* 86, 2000, 52–56.

material for this type of study. A correspondence would be preferable if the sender is known. Still better is a fairly large administrative papyrus with many repetitions. From such sources it may be possible to attain reliable conclusions as to the degree of variation in one person's handwriting.”

In their study on palaeography, Hans van den Berg and Koen Donker van Heel⁵ briefly commented on the articles by Sweeney and Janssen. Moreover, they showed useful new approaches by comparing the writing of several sign-groups and words from a closed dossier of mid-20th dynasty ostraca. Notably, personal names and words such as month-names or administrative terms repeatedly occurring in these texts proved very useful in determining whether two or more texts might have been written by the same scribe.⁶

The handwriting of the famous scribe of the Tomb Amennakhte was the subject of a thorough contribution by Andreas Dorn for „*Binsen*“-*Weisheiten II* in 2013.⁷ In his article, he made valuable remarks on the difference between “literary” and “administrative” texts, the characteristics of the brushstroke (*Duktus*), and the grammatical and lexical features as additional clues for the attribution of a text to a specific scribe. He further devoted special attention to the way the scribe wrote his own name.

Almost unnoticed so far is a recent comprehensive study on the palaeography of the Late Ramesside Letters by Mizuki Miyanishi.⁸ After a brief review of the methodology adopted by Janssen, the first chapter of this study provides a structural analysis of the 13 different forms of the masculine definite article *pꜣ*. The next chapter deals with two case studies: the first examines Dhutmose and his son Butehamun, and based on the empirical findings of the first case study the second focuses on the letters sent in the name of the general Paiankh in order to evaluate whether the author's proposed methodology can be used to distinguish or relate scribal hands within the confines of the limited examples available. The author concludes that these studies reveal the limitations of the typological methodology, which appears to be primarily the case when the comparison is between an unknown hand and a hand whose idiosyncrasies have already been identified.

5 VAN DEN BERG & DONKER VAN HEEL, in: DEMARÉE & EGBERTS (edd.), *Deir el-Medina in the Third Millennium AD*, 9–49.

6 Their work on mid-20th dynasty scribes has been continued in as yet unpublished studies by Stephanie Hudson (PhD Oxford 2013) and Maren Goecke-Bauer (München).

7 DORN, in: VERHOEVEN (ed.), *Ägyptologische „Binsen“-Weisheiten I–II*, 175–218.

8 MIYANISHI, *Palaeographical Study*. I was unaware of this study when I presented my contribution at the ‘Ägyptologische „Binsen“-Weisheiten III Symposium in Mainz, April 2016.

All scholars mentioned above reacted positively on Janssen's article, but more importantly they also presented new suggestions and arguments. Maybe the most practicable suggestions were to look for more complete groups of signs, words or names instead of regularly used signs or small sign-groups, while also taking into consideration aspects like characteristics of the brushstroke and other writing peculiarities of a scribe. Of course, this approach is only viable if the available documents permit it.

While studying a fragmentary administrative document⁹ from the Turin collection, which contains on its verso part of a ship's log written by Dhutmose, I realized that it would be worthwhile to look more closely into the handwriting of this scribe of the Tomb. Not only do we now have at our disposal better images, more letters and several more administrative texts written by Dhutmose, but thanks to a recent discovery also a kind of private notebook.

As indicated above, research into the handwriting of Dhutmose began with Janssen's note about the three forms of the masculine definite article *pꜣ* used by this scribe. In her study, Mizuki Miyanishi concluded that Dhutmose even used six different forms.¹⁰ She also closely examined several other characteristic sign-groups in Dhutmose's handwriting, such as the shapes of verbs like *iri* and *pꜣtri* and substantives like *rmꜥ* and the name of the scribe.

Whereas Miyanishi's study is limited to the corpus of the Late Ramesside Letters, I had already decided to examine not only the private letters of Dhutmose, but also administrative texts that can be ascribed to him based on internal evidence. Close inspection of such potential documents resulted in the following provisional list:

Private letters

- Papyrus Berlin ÄMP P. 10494
- Papyrus Geneva D407
- Papyrus Leiden I 369
- Papyrus Leiden I 370
- Papyrus London BM EA 10326
- Papyrus London BM EA 10419
- Papyrus London BM EA 75017

9 Cf. DEMARÉE, in: POLIS & DORN (edd.), *Deir el-Medina and the Theban Necropolis in Contact*.

10 MIYANISHI, *Palaeographical Study*, 107.

- Papyrus London BM EA 75021
- Papyrus London BM EA 75025
- Papyrus Oxford Ashmolean Museum 1945.93 (Papyrus Griffith)
- Papyrus Paris Bibl. Nat. 196, II
- Papyrus Paris Bibl. Nat. 197, II
- Papyrus Paris Bibl. Nat. 197, IV
- Papyrus Paris Bibl. Nat. 199, 5–9 + 196, V + 198, IV
- Papyrus Turin 1972
- Papyrus Turin 1973
- Papyrus Turin 2026
- Papyrus Turin 54100

Administrative documents

- Papyrus London BM EA 9997, some columns on the verso, years 14 and 15 of Ramesses XI (*KRI* VII, 389–394)
- Papyrus Turin 1895+2006, Turin Taxation Papyrus, year 12 of Ramesses XI (*GARDINER, RAD*, 36–44)
- Papyrus Turin 1888+2095, Turin Necropolis Journal, year 17 Ramesses XI (*GARDINER, RAD*, 64–68)
- Papyrus Turin Cat. 2098+2100/306 verso, a ship's log, year 9 of Ramesses XI (see note 9)
- Papyrus Turin 2018, years 8–10 of Ramesses XI (*KRI* VI, 851–863)
- Papyrus Turin 2061+2106 (unpublished grain accounts, years 9 and 10 Ramesses XI)
- Papyrus Turin 2090+2096 (unpublished grain accounts, year 10 Ramesses XI)
- Papyrus Turin fragment, temporarily in cover F494 (fragment of a grain distribution list, year 10 Ramesses XI; somewhat similar to the list in Papyrus London BM EA 10054 verso 2–4, of year 6 of the Renaissance Period)
- Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321, years 5 and 6 of the Renaissance Period (a private notebook of Dhutmose, in preparation for publication)

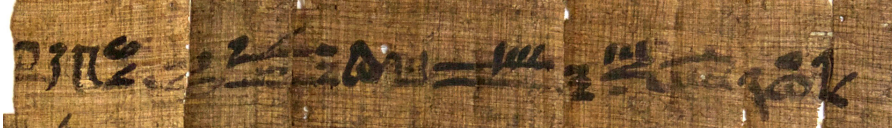
Upon inspection of the available documents, the sign-groups that immediately caught the eye were, apart from the obvious article *p*, *mp.t-sp* and the verb *šp*.

The first group regularly begins with a typical form of the *mp.t-sp*-sign in the group $\left. \begin{array}{c} \textcircled{\text{p}} \\ \textcircled{\text{t}} \end{array} \right\}$. Fig. 1 shows examples from a private letter and several administrative texts. The last two examples in this figure demonstrate that Dhutmose also used less peculiar forms of this sign, even in one and the same document.

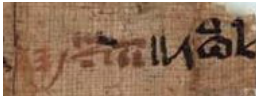
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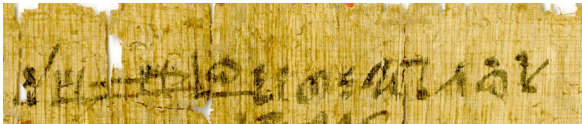
Papyrus London BM EA 10326 recto 6



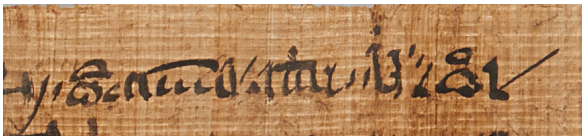
Papyrus Turin 2098+2100/306 recto (verso ship's log)



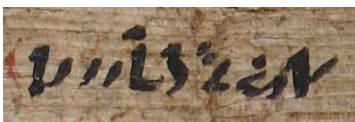
Papyrus Turin 1888+2095 recto (Taxation Papyrus)



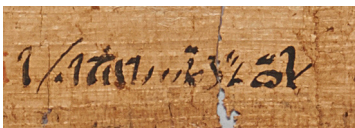
Papyrus London BM EA 9997 verso



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 verso



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321

Figure 1: Examples of the *mp.t-sp*-sign.

The second and the fourth example in fig. 1 also contain the verb *šsp*, with the characteristic elongated form of the initial sign. Other examples are presented in fig. 2, followed by examples of another very cursive form of this group. Variants of this cursive form were used by other scribes as well during the second half of the 20th dynasty.¹¹



Papyrus Turin 1888+2095 (Taxation Papyrus)



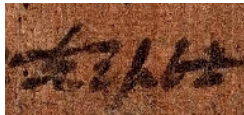
Papyrus Leiden I 370 recto



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 recto



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 verso



Papyrus Turin 2061+2106/387 verso

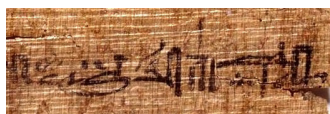
Figure 2: Examples of the *šsp*-sign.

A clear distinctive feature of Dhutmose's handwriting is also the way he wrote his own name¹² including his title *sš n p; Hr*, scribe of the Tomb. Fig. 3 shows several examples, both from letters and from administrative texts. Characteristic are the form of the first element of his name, the rather flat elongated *Dḥwty*-bird, and the

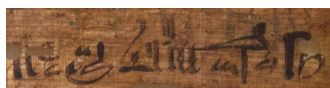
11 See the note by Sir Alan Gardiner on Papyrus Turin 1887, vs. 1,11 (GARDINER, *RAD*, 79a).

12 See also the remarks by Andreas Dorn on the name of the scribe Amennakhte (DORN, in: VERHOEVEN (ed.), *Ägyptologische „Binsen“-Weisheiten I-II*, 175–218).

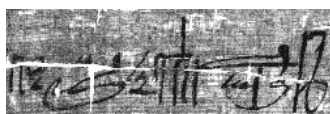
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Papyrus Leiden I 370



Papyrus Turin 1973



Papyrus London BM EA 10419



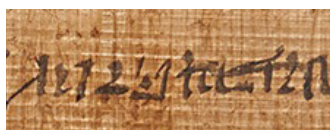
Turin Taxation Papyrus (1888+2095)



Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 recto



Papyrus Turin 1972

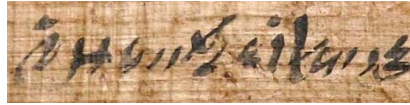


Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 verso

Figure 3: Examples of Dhutmose's name.

form of the expressive *ms*-sign. Not surprisingly, the final element *Hr* in his title can also appear in its more cursive form, as seen in the last two examples in this figure.

A typical orthography is seen in Dhutmose's writing of the personal name Shedsuamun: *šd-sw-łmn*, with the omission of the curl *w* in the element *sw*, probably inspired by the initial curl *ł* in the last element of the name (fig. 4). This phenomenon was first noted by Jaroslav Černý¹³ in his edition of Papyrus Turin 1972 and the same spelling is found twice in Papyrus Vienna ĀS 10321. The first example in this figure also shows his writing of the word *rmł*, which is the common form of this group in all his documents, for example in Papyrus Turin 2026 (fig. 5).



Papyrus Vienna ĀS 10321 recto



Papyrus Vienna ĀS 10321 verso



Papyrus Turin 1972 verso

Figure 4: The name Shedsuamun.



Papyrus Turin 1973



Papyrus Turin 2026

Figure 5: Examples of the group *rmł*.

In addition to the characteristic forms of signs or sign-groups, also other remarkable scribal aspects can be observed in texts of his hand. First of all, one may note the fact that even in a brief text passage different forms of a sign or sign-group are used, as exemplified by the group *pš* in some lines of Papyrus Turin 2026 (fig. 6).

Also noteworthy is the variety of forms Dhutmose used for one sign-group within one text column, for instance the forms for the relative adjective *nty* or his two

13 Cf. ČERNÝ, *LRL*, 8a note 10c–d on vs. 2.

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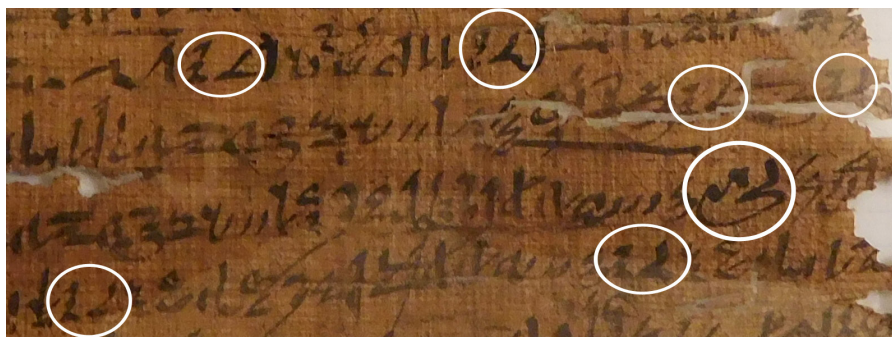


Figure 6: The group *p*: in a section of Papyrus Turin 2026.



Figure 7: Examples of the groups *nty* and *gmy.t* in Papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321.

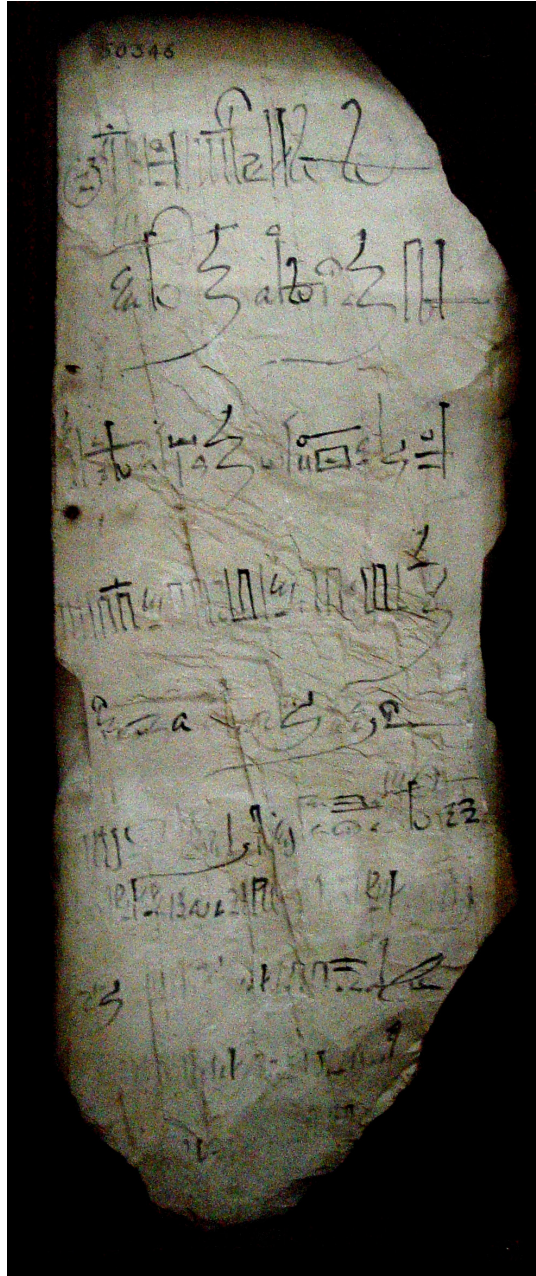


Figure 8: Ostracon Cairo CG 25745.

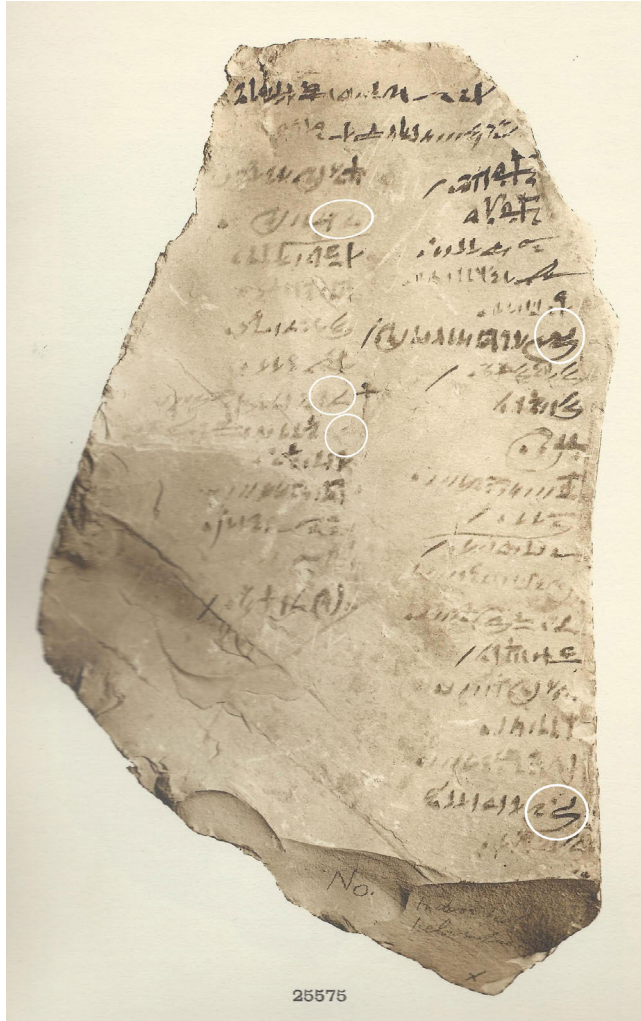


Figure 9: Some *p3*-groups on Ostrakon Cairo CG 25575.

different forms for the participle *gmy.t*, both examples from papyrus Vienna ÄS 10321 (fig. 7).

So far, we have only examined examples from his writings on papyrus. A final question could be whether we might discern the handwriting of Dhutmose also in the texts on some ostraca from his time. For this, I first looked at Ostrakon Cairo CG 25745 (fig. 8), traditionally ascribed to Dhutmose as a pendant to Ostrakon Cairo CG 25744, which was clearly written by his son Butehamun. Both texts are

drafts of letters to their common superior, the general Paiankh. The problem in this case is that Ostrakon Cairo CG 25745 is written in a kind of *Kanzlei-Schrift* for which the only parallels in the hand of Dhutmose are the first columns of Papyrus Turin 1888+2095 (the Turin Taxation papyrus) and Papyrus Turin 2018.¹⁴ Unfortunately, in these texts there are no clearly comparable sign-groups.

A second case might be Ostrakon Cairo CG 25575 (fig. 9), a list of names of workmen dated in a year 7, following Černý traditionally ascribed to year 7 of the Renaissance Period. The *mp.t-sp* sign-group is not conclusive, but there are a couple of *p3*-signs characteristic for Dhutmose.

In conclusion we may say that some of Dhutmose's scribal idiosyncrasies have been discovered, but more detailed study will be necessary to be able to securely identify texts in his handwriting.

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¹⁴ The fact that both father and son were able to write *Kanzlei-Schrift* is also demonstrated by a letter, Ostrakon London BM EA 10375, written by Butehamun: the name and title of the addressee and the introduction are written in *Kanzlei-Schrift* and thereafter the scribe continued in his “daily” handwriting.

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