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Svenja A. Gülden, Tobias Konrad, Ursula Verhoeven (Hrsg.)

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Hieratic at the turn of the 20th and 21st dynasties: the case of the 21st dynasty graffiti from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari

MIROSŁAW BARWIK^I

Abstract

Since the great discoveries at the end of the 19th century it has been known that the area of the Deir el-Bahari temples played a prominent role as a burial ground for the Theban priesthood, including high priests of Amun. A number of hitherto unpublished ostraca dating to the 21st dynasty, found in the area, provides a testimony of institutional activity in that place. The abundant material still awaits publication, so its chronological framework cannot be effectively correlated with the available archaeological evidence. Strangely enough, such intense activity of the necropolis crew in the area is hardly reflected by the graffiti, quite common in other areas of the necropolis. New hieratic graffiti found recently in the temple of Hatshepsut significantly fill this gap.

New hieratic graffiti recently found in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari provide a new basis for studying the activity of the institution of the Theban necropolis in the period of the 21st dynasty. Two of them were, in fact, known earlier. One of them is a large hieratic dipinto painted on the southern wall of the north wing of the lowermost portico (marked as "A" on the diagram; cf. fig. 1), transcribed by Spiegelberg in 1899.² The second is a graffito found by Winlock, and subsequently rather hastily transcribed by Gardiner in the 1922–23 season.³

The former text is of special importance as it is explicitly dated to the year 49, apparently of Psusennes I or Menkheperre,⁴ though once wrongly related to a group of texts connected with the building of the temple of Thutmosis III at Deir el-Bahari.⁵ The dipinto in question gives also the name of a hitherto unknown mayor of Western Thebes – Ankh-Hor-en-Aset, who appears to be the son of the high priest Menkheperre. This is evident from the text of a further graffito, located on the adjoining north wall of the lower ramp of the temple, ca. 8.5 m to the east (fig. 1:

¹ Acknowledgement: I am grateful to Paul Barford for revising my English.

² Spiegelberg's Notebooks WS 121; now in the archives of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago (courtesy J. A. Larson).

³ Winlock's Notebooks VII, 160; courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁴ Cf. Barwik 2011, 294–297, pls. 2–3.

⁵ Cf. Van Siclen 1982–1983.





"D").⁶ Here we read: "(1) Son of the high-priest of Amun-Ra, king of the gods, general of the entire army of Upper and Lower Egypt, (2) the leader Menkheperre [who is at the head of the] great armies of the whole of Egypt, (3) mayor Ankh-Hor-en-Aset of [the] west of Thebes [...]".

Significantly, the name of the high priest is not encompassed in a royal cartouche, which sheds some light on the alleged kingship of Menkheperre, providing that the text is not too distant in time from the year 49 of the dipinto in the nearby portico. Certainly, the precise dating of this graffito is open to debate, but nevertheless it may be related to the dipinto of "year 49", as well as other graffiti written in the adjoining area. It seems that graffito written about two metres to the left of the preceding one (fig. I: "E"), was inscribed by the same person, as the handwriting is exactly the same.⁷ This time, however, it was written in the name of another son of the high priest Menkheperre: "(I) Son of the high-priest of Amun-Ra, king of the gods, god's [father of Amun, god's father of Mut] (2) the great, lady of *Asheru*, prophet of Pakhet, the great, lady of *Seret* (i. e. Speos Artemidos), prophet (of) Shepes?, lord of [*Hut-ka*?], chief (3) of "cadets" of the general, the leader Ankhefenmut".

What was the purpose of writing these two memoranda in this particular place? Was it a commemoration of a burial of one of the persons mentioned in them, or else their role as supervisors, directing work of some sort conducted nearby? Significantly, priest Ankhefenmut son of Menkheperre was buried in the Bab el-Gasus tomb,⁸ a little bit to the north of the lower courtyard of the Hatshepsut temple, not far away from the latter graffito. There can be no doubt that he is the same person as the Ankhefenmut of the graffito (though the titles of the latter are more expanded than those attested on the furniture found in Bab el-Gasus).⁹ So it is possible that the graffito in question commemorates preparations for his burial (which apparently took place slightly later, during the period of office of Smendes II, another son of Menkheperre).¹⁰

The activities of the institution of the Theban necropolis in the period of the 21st dynasty, were hitherto known mostly from the Theban graffiti, and also from a group of ostraca from the Deir el-Bahari area (mostly unpublished).¹¹ There are four ostraca dating to the 21st dynasty among those found by the Polish Mission in the

⁵ To be published by the present author.

⁶ To be published by the present author.

⁷ Daressy 1907, 13 (A 140); Sadek 1985, 163–168 (C 20); Niwiński 1988, 130–131 (no. 140); Niwiński 1989, 289–290 (nos. 103, 105); Niwiński 1995, 126–134, pls. 22.2–3; Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 188 (11.14); Aston 2009, 190–191.

⁸ Cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 188.

⁹ Compare, however, Niwiński 1988, 46; Niwiński 1989, 290 ("late 21st Dyn."); Niwiński 1995, 133–134.

¹¹ Cf. Demarée 2003, 245–250.

area of the Deir el-Bahari temples. One of them (the limestone ostracon O. DeB inv. no. F.8958) was found during clearance of the eastern slope of the platform of the Thutmosis III temple in the 1980s.¹² The text written on the *recto* relates to the "inspection (of) the [work] of those who are at the mountain". Unfortunately, the date once written at the beginning has not been preserved, though several day dates are mentioned in the text of the ostracon. The text gives a lengthy list of 29 workmen's names, most of which are known from other available sources. Unfortunately, none of the leading authorities of the necropolis staff are enumerated here, and the precise dating of the document therefore still needs further study. In accord with the practice of the Ramesside period, the presence of workmen was marked by dots or a cross, and once the absence of sick workman was precisely annotated by adding the *mr*-sign (U23) in front of the name. For unknown reasons, the efforts of only three of the workmen were subjected to a more detailed records, as the days of their work are enumerated.

The inscriptional material relating to the activity of the necropolis crew can now be substantially enlarged on the basis of a newly recognised list of workmen, and a form of necropolis journal, inscribed on the walls of the Hatshepsut temple. Unlike the texts presented until now, written with large hieratic signs in the *Buchschrift*, these inscriptions are written in hieratic cursive with extremely small signs incised apparently with a fine implement, perhaps a flint flake. The first of these inscriptions (here marked as "B", cf. fig. 1),¹³ which can be divided into seven separate "groups", was located on the *dado* ornament on the south wall of the lower north portico, in the vicinity of the above mentioned dipinto of "year 49", and below an erased depiction of Hatshepsut as a sphinx trampling Egypt's foes. Here a date was written at the extreme right, alongside a general description of an action undertaken: "Year 40, first month of *akhet*, day 1: coming (to) the mountain; Penparei, Ha[...], Padiamun, Pehsuhor, Meheftahut" (this is the text of "Group 1").

More workmen's names are written to the left on both bands of the *dado* ornament. These are arranged in groups dated to the successive days of the first month of *akhet* (day 2, 4, 5, 5 to 7, 8, and 10), and each of the groups comprises from two to five names. The overall number of workmen whose presence at Deir el-Bahari was registered in such an unusual way amounts to 19 names. Certainly this is not very many if one compares it for example to the strength of the crew given by the ostracon discussed above (29 names) or another one published recently (O. Cairo 524 of approximately the same time),¹⁴ where the number of workmen amounts to 87 persons, which is the highest known number of men engaged in the work in the area of the Deir el-Bahari temples during the 21st dynasty. The persons registered here

¹² To be published by the present author.

¹³ To be published by the present author.

¹⁴ Hassan 2016, 131–134, pl. 37.

include the following: Hori, Nesamun, Nebwenenef, Padikhonsu, Pamay, Kabenefnebi, and Penkai. Strangely enough, only three of the workmen appear twice in these series, and this is a certain *Shakater/Shakaiunter(y)* ("Groups" 3 and 6), as well as Nesamun and Hori. It is open to question whether this *Shakater* is the same person as the *Shakaiuntery* attested by the aforementioned ostracon from the Polish excavations, as well as a newly published ostracon from the Cairo Museum (O. Cairo 450 *recto* I, 5).¹⁵ The latter is apparently a foreign name, possibly of Nubian (or more precisely Nilo-Saharan) origin, and this would perhaps explain the different spellings of the name used in the cited documents. If this is the case, the presence of the name of *Shakater/Shakaiuntery* would enable us to date the two aforementioned ostraca and the graffito to approximately the same period.

No titles or functions are attached to the names registered in the inscription on the *dado*, so it is unclear whether Penparei and Meheftahut are the persons known from the archives of the necropolis as the scribes of the necropolis.¹⁶ It seems in fact that this may be a result of a simple homonymy. On the other hand, the exposed position of the name of Penparei, placed at the beginning of the *dado* lists, may allow us to assume that he played an important role (perhaps as the scribe of the royal necropolis).

Unfortunately, there are no names in the kind of "journal of work" written high up on the northern wall of the lower ramp (here marked as "C", cf. fig. 1).¹⁷ Instead, a series of dates makes this document a precious hint as regards the organisation of work in this area of the necropolis in the late period of existence of the institution of the necropolis. Even if the year date of the previous inscription is not preserved perfectly, here the text is dated again to year 49 (line 1), and year 1 (line 2), besides the highly doubtful year date of line 4 (rather illegible mostly because of the erosion and crystalline structure of the stone, but possibly also to be read as "year 1"). These year dates are presumably those of Psusennes I and Amenemope according to the "traditional" chronology (an alternative would be the years of high priest Menkheperre and the Tanite king Amenemope).¹⁸

The form of this graffito, as well as the quite unusual place where it was located, make it an extraordinary document among graffiti dating to the 21st dynasty. Even if some elements of it are still doubtful in reading, the general sense seems to be clear: it is a register of work done by relatively small groups of workmen at some particular

¹⁵ Hassan 2016, 126, 129, pl. 35; compare also unpublished O. DeB inv. no. F.8959 (line 4).

¹⁶ Cf. Černý 2004, 206–207 (30), 211 (38).

¹⁷ To be published by the present author.

¹⁸ For a discussion, cf. e.g. Jansen-Winkeln 1992, 34–37; von Beckerath 1995, 49–53; Kitchen 1996, XVII–XVIII (§§ L-M); Jansen-Winkeln 2006, 226–232; Lull 2007, 257–267; Kitchen 2009, 191–192 (§ 75); Lull 2009, 245–249; James and Morkot 2013, 218–219, 223–225, 237–240; Jansen-Winkeln 2016, 92–96.

dates. It is worth noting that the text was inscribed about 2 m above the stairway leading to the adjoining portico (cf. fig. 1), so it seems that this area was at least partly covered by debris at that time. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain the reason for locating the graffito in such an inconvenient and barely accessible place. It is hardly likely that a scribe or scribes used some kind of scaffolding or ladder to reach the upper sections of this wall to make this inscription, especially if we bear in mind that the text had been written during a prolonged span of time.

As a matter of fact, the apparent differences of handwriting in particular sectors of the register seem to suggest that the text was not inscribed in one moment, but rather that the process of completing the graffito took place over some span of time. First of all, however, the dates themselves point to such a conclusion. The successive dates inscribed on the wall comprise at least 34 entries, within a period from I *peret* 9 to at least the second decade of I *shemu* of the next year. An exact evaluation of the period covered by the register depends, however, on the adopted sequence of the entries, as they were successively written on the wall. If we assume a natural sequence of lines as they are distributed on the wall, then the span of time would amount to about 17 months. This could be reduced perhaps to about 5 months on the assumption that line 2 of the text was inscribed after the entry of line 19 was written, but this seems highly doubtful.

The dates are followed by what seems to be the workmen's signs, in the lower part often replaced by the *ditto*-sign (1) (1) to omit repetitions. The number of discernible signs amounts to about 6 or more items. It is worth noting that the signs used here are not recorded in any other documents from the Theban necropolis. As in the case of notes made on the *dado* of the lower portico, the number of workmen who appear under each particular date is never high: it ranges from two to four signs. Certainly, this poses a serious problem in determining the kind of work done in the vicinity of the temple by such a meagre crew. Significantly, in the lower part of the inscription, beginning with the first day of I *shemu* (of the first year of unnamed reign), just two signs prevail: these are signs having a literal value *pn* (or else the numeral 90?) and *ib*, not to take into consideration the rather doubtful signs at the end of lines 17–19. For an unknown reason, the sign which could be read as *pn* was also written, in a slightly larger scale, to the left of the first column of enumeration, and below the second one (perhaps this was just a scribal exercise?).

The parallels for such an unusual journal may be sought in graffiti dating to the 20th and the 21st dynasties, especially those located in the Valley of the Kings, and in the area of the Deir el-Bahari royal cache (TT 320).¹⁹ Among these, graffito 1696 (from the Valley of the Kings) dating to the 20th dynasty is noteworthy, as here too

¹⁹ Cf. graffiti nos. 561, 562, 1310, and 1319: cf. Spiegelberg 1921, 46–47, pl. 63; Černý 1956, 20–21, pl. 59.

the day dates are followed by workmen's signs (there is no certainty that lines 9-10 are of the same date as the preceding lines).²⁰

The reason for inscribing all of the graffiti discussed here on the north wall of the lower ramp, and adjoining portico, must be sought perhaps in special topographical circumstances, as this is a place hidden in deep shadow during all the day – a factor which would prompt any group of workmen engaged in work conducted in the area of the lower terrace to take their rest precisely in this highly convenient place. On the other hand, the reason for the presence here of the working party must be explained by work on the tombs and burials behind the northern boundary walls of the temple, well attested by the available archaeological evidence. Winlock discovered here two small tombs built or reused during the 21st dynasty (MMA tomb 59, and 60).²¹ In addition, the tomb of queen Meritamun of the early 18th dynasty (TT 358) was inspected and reused in the early period of the 21st dynasty.²² More significantly, however, the so-called Deir el-Bahari second cache (Bab el-Gasus) is located directly to the north of the lower courtyard of the temple. The activity of the necropolis crew, documented by some of the graffiti from the temple, may be related perhaps to the work conducted in this tomb.

Only two graffiti datable to this period are located outside the shaded area of the lower ramp and adjoining portico. One, the earlier it seems, had been written on the wall above the Lower Chapel of Anubis, and this is the sole example of the 21st dynasty graffito written in the area of the upper terrace of the temple, but outside the restricted cultic area of the Upper Court. The other one was placed on the left doorjamb of the north-west gate of the lower courtyard of the temple.

The first of the texts has the form of large tableau (fig. 2), well documented among graffiti of the Theban mountain at the turn of the 20th and the 21st dynasties. It commemorates members of the illustrious family of the scribes of the royal necropolis – Thutmosis and his son Butehamun, and more precisely their descendants active in the period of the 21th dynasty: "(I) Royal scribe of the necropolis Thutmosis; his son (2) scribe in the Horizon of Eternity of the domain of everlastingness Butehamun; (3) his son *wab*-priest of Amun scribe Meniunefer; his son scribe in the Place of Truth Ankhefenamun; (4) son of his son, scribe in the Place of Truth of the necropolis Meniunefer; his son (5) scribe in the Place of Truth of the necropolis Amenmose".²³

There are good reasons to believe that the second of the Meniunefers, enumerated here beside two or three sons of Butehamun, was a hitherto unknown grandson of the latter, and son of the scribe Ankhefenamun. The exact genealogical position

²⁰ Cf. Černý and Sadek 1970a, pl. 10; Černý and Sadek 1970b, 10.

²¹ Winlock 1924, 21–29; Winlock 2001, 93–98; Niwiński 1984, 78–79; Aston 2009, 198–202.

²² See below.

²³ Cf. Barwik 2020.

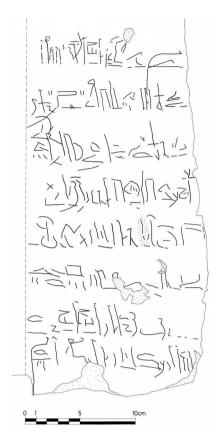
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Fig. 2: Facsimile of the graffito with the names of the descendants of the scribe of the royal necropolis Thutmosis (drawn by the author)

of Amenmose, placed at the end, cannot be elucidated satisfactorily due to the specific structure of the graffiti of this type. As often is the case with graffiti of this kind, naming several members of a family, the authorship of the graffito remains obscure. One can only presume that it was written after the death of Butehamun, having in mind the extraordinary and somewhat artificial titulary attached to his name. A possibility exists that it dates to Ankhefenamun's tenure of office, and consequently this would place it within the period of office of the high priest Masaharta, when the nearby tomb of Meritamun was entered by an inspecting party, as documented by inscriptions on the shroud and bandages used to rewrap her mummy, relating to years 18 and 19, and giving the name of Masaharta.²⁴

The text inscribed on the side gate of the lower courtyard (fig. 3) seems to be one of the latest among those presented here. It contains a prayer to the Amun of the temple in Medinet Habu written by "the *wab*-priest of Amun (of) United with Eternity, overseer of recruits (in) the Place of Truth Nespaneferher, son of the army

²⁴ Winlock 1932, 48, 53, pls. 40, 41(B); cf. Jansen-Winkeln 2007, 28–29 (3. 52–53).



Hieratic at the turn of the 20th and 21st dynasties

Fig. 3: Facsimile of the graffito of Nespaneferher (drawn by the author)

scribe of the royal necropolis Ankhef".²⁵ It seems that this Nespaneferher must have been the son of the well-known necropolis scribe Ankhef/Ankhefenamun – a relationship already attested by the Theban graffito no. 3251,²⁶ though it has never been taken into consideration in previous discussions on the descendants of Butehamun who were active during the 21st dynasty. The Nespaneferher of graffito no. 3251 is titled "scribe of the royal necropolis" (similarly in graffito no. 897),²⁷ and presumably he attained the office some time after the graffito in the Deir el-Bahari temple was written.

It remains a moot question whether he supervised work conducted in the area. More probably he was only one of the officials responsible for it, having in mind

²⁵ Cf. Barwik forthcoming.

²⁶ Sadek et al. 1972, pl. 218; Sadek 1972, 165.

²⁷ Spiegelberg 1921, 74, pl. 94; cf. also Černý 2004, 214 (46).

his relatively humble position, judging by his titles given by the graffito. It is worth noting here, that the name of the foreman Horemkenesi also appears in the Deir el-Bahari texts, though his exact chronological position remains obscure – one can only speculate that he lived one or two generations earlier, apparently being a contemporary of the scribe Butehamun and his elder sons.²⁸ His name was mentioned in one of the Deir el-Bahari ostraca (O. DeB 781),²⁹ but the reason may be sought merely in fact that he was buried there – in the area of the temple of Mentuhotep II Nebhepetre.³⁰ The circumstances connected with making of the ostracon would perhaps have been clearer had the text written on the verso been preserved better. Unfortunately, it has been severely damaged, perhaps an effect of prolonged contact with water.

A slight possibility exists of course that the Ankhef mentioned in the graffito of Nespaneferher was not the same person as Ankhefenamun the son of Butehamun, thus not connected with the famous family of the necropolis scribes. One of the candidates would be for example Ankhef son of Nes[amun] from O. DeB inv. no. F.8958.³¹ An unusual "military" title ascribed here to the scribe Ankhef(enamun) (*sš mš^r n p*; *hr*), with no exact parallels in the preserved sources relating to Ankhefenamun son of Butehamun, must not obscure the mere fact that he was indeed the scribe of the royal necropolis. The addition of the graffito, of which nothing certain can be said.³² In consequence, the identification of this Ankhef with the well-known necropolis scribe Ankhef/Ankhefenamun, son of Butehamun, seems to be the most plausible solution. In such a case, the graffito would be the latest piece of evidence regarding this influential family of the necropolis scribes, descendants of the scribe Amennakhte son of Ipuy.

One can presume that Nespaneferher son of Ankhef commemorated his name in the graffito placed on the gate because it is on the way leading to the area where 21st dynasty burials and reburials had taken place. Understandably enough, his presence here would have had something to do with preparations of these burials, though no further details are known connected with this. There are good reasons, however, to connect Nespaneferher with the two British Museum ostraca published by Demarée (nos. O. BM EA 51842 and O. BM EA 51843),³³ both containing short prayers or invocations (?) of similar contents. They were written in the name of a

²⁸ Cf. Taylor 1995, 19-20; Häggman 2002, 349-351; compare, however, Antoine 2019, 114, 120-121.

²⁹ Cf. Barwik 2011, 297–298, pl. 4; compare also O. Cairo 524, line 5: Hassan 2016, 132–133, pl. 37.

³⁰ Cf. Taylor 1995; Dawson, Giles, and Ponsford 2002; Aston 2009, 219.

³¹ See above.

³² Or simply relating to the institutional background of the complex in Medinet Habu; see a comment by Antoine 2019, 104.

³³ Demarée 2002, 37, pls. 148–150.

person whose identity is unknown due to their state of preservation but can be restored perhaps as that of Nespaneferher from the tiny traces preserved on the latter ostracon (line 5). The titles of the person in question, as documented on O. BM EA 51842, are extremely similar to those of the Deir el-Bahari graffito. What is more, his father and grandfather are respectively Ankhef and Butehamun.

The exact chronological relationship of the graffito written above the Lower Chapel of Anubis and that naming Nespaneferher son of Ankhef cannot be evaluated properly, though both seems to be broadly related to the second generation after the death of the necropolis scribe Butehamun. Both Meniunefer and Nespaneferher appear to be hitherto unknown grandsons of Butehamun. A cursory palaeographic comparison of the hieratic forms of the *Buchschrift*, attested in these two graffiti (cf. figs. 4–8) leads to the conclusion that their authors must have been different persons. Substantial differences are observable also between all the graffiti of the group discussed here, except the noteworthy affinity of graffiti "D" and "E", commemorating the names of two of the sons of the high priest Menkheperre.

The question of the authorship of the graffiti is of vital importance for the chronology of the texts in question but also for the chronology and aim of the actions undertaken in the area by the institution of the necropolis. To verify the hypothesis about the suggested authorship of the two BM ostraca, it would be necessary to compare them with other texts written in all probability by Nespaneferher himself. Unfortunately, there are only incised graffiti which could be taken into consideration, and any comparison of these with hieratic texts written on ostraca is of course highly unconvincing, as the writing technique is different in both cases. The question becomes even more complicated due to the fact that the editor of the two British Museum ostraca suggested that they were in a different handwriting.³⁴ Moreover the palaeography of the ostraca and the graffito seems to be substantially different (cf. fig. 9).

Leaving apart the graffito commemorating the sons and grandson(s) of Butehamun (which is in fact a separate entity, at least regarding its location), the question arises what is the relationship of the graffiti to each other. It is possible that some of them at least relate to one particular stage of work done in the area during a relatively restricted span of time (about a year and a half). Unfortunately, this idea cannot be substantiated in more detail, and the date of year 40 of the graffito on the *dado* of the lower portico points rather to a longer period of time. Interestingly, however, it seems that the group of texts presented here would be dated to the short period from the very end of the reign of Psusennes I (or alternatively the pontificate of Menkheperre) to the very beginning of the reign of Tanite king Amenemope.³⁵

³⁴ Demarée 2002, 37.

³⁵ The chronological consequences of the graffiti in question will be discussed in detail in a separate paper.

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Fig. 4: Palaeographic table of the Deir el-Bahari graffiti

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Fig. 5: Palaeographic table of the Deir el-Bahari graffiti (continuation)

Hieratic at the turn of the 20^{th} and 21^{st} dynasties

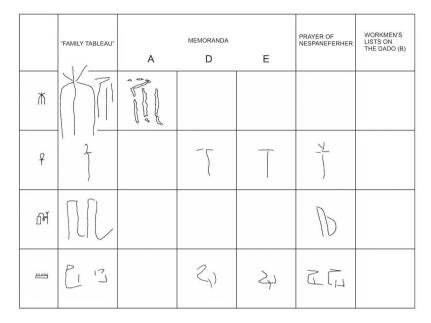


Fig. 6: Palaeographic table of the Deir el-Bahari graffiti (continuation)

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Fig. 7: Palaeographic table of the Deir el-Bahari graffiti (continuation)

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Fig. 8: Palaeographic table of the Deir el-Bahari graffiti (continuation)

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Hieratic at the turn of the 20^{th} and 21^{st} dynasties

Fig. 9: Palaeographic table comparing hieratic signs in the texts related to Nespaneferher

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